

Hand in Hand:  
An Anthology of  
Student Writing

Gorman Learning Center  
2004-2005 Anthology

**INTRODUCING THE 2005-2006  
GORMAN ANTHOLOGY  
COVER ART CONTEST**

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Dear Gorman Community:

We are very pleased to present the second edition of the Gorman Learning Center Anthology. The writings gathered here are some of the standouts submitted to the Writing Program throughout the last year. Strong writers abound in the Gorman community; because of this, making the final selections was a difficult task. Indeed, those students who have work included in these pages should be very proud of their accomplishments.

“Hand in Hand,” this year’s title, is inspired by the beautiful cover art by Jill Neptune. Her art can be seen as a metaphor: putting our hands together symbolizes the strength of the many individuals working together in the Gorman community, making Gorman such a successful environment for learning and growth.

It also symbolizes the individual insights brought together in this anthology. As was the case in last year’s edition, “Hand in Hand” includes a variety of modes and subjects. We’re certain you will find the selections engaging and enjoyable to read. Among the contents you will find exciting and suspenseful stories, well reasoned and argued persuasive essays, insightful responses to literature, and delightfully descriptive pieces. Without question, all of the contents serve to highlight the possibilities in strong writing.

Once again, thanks to Executive Director Waldo Burford and Director of Public Information Adam Cornish for helping to make this year’s anthology a reality. Thanks also to Sue Page, of Gorman School, who recommended the cover art. Most of all, thanks to the students whose work is included within these pages. Each of you deserves a round of applause.

Please visit the link to the Writing Program on Gorman’s website. There you will find all of the writing prompts and rubrics (many of which have been revised and updated), submission deadlines, links to email addresses set up for student inquiries about both academic and creative writing, and information on the exciting new portfolio process. As the Writing Program continues to thrive and grow, we look forward to many years of exceptional anthologies.

Now, without further ado, sit back and enjoy the read!

Sincerely,  
Eric Magrane and Greg Grewell  
Gorman Writing Program  
July 2005

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To contact us or to submit an essay, use the following.

*For grades K through 8:*

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Tucson, AZ 85719

Email: [writingk-8@gormanlc.com](mailto:writingk-8@gormanlc.com)

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150 North Highland Ave.  
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A Sunset on my Mountain

Every evening, a beautiful sunset happens on my mountain. I like the sunset because it makes a very pretty pink moment! Every time I gaze at the sunset, the sparkly, silver ocean reflects the colorful rays of the evening sun. The hills are many shades of pink and purple. The pink, fluffy clouds look like pink cotton candy. It is a time when the animals come out and the insects come alive.

My dream is to be sitting around the fire, watching the sunset, holding hands with my family!

IST: Kari Todo  
Mode: Expository  
Grade: 1

The Boy Who Jumped off the Train

Once upon a time, there was a boy named Mike McGee. He was nine years old and not that smart. He loved to jump on the trampoline.

The setting takes place in the state of Tennessee, when Mike was watching the Titans versus Raiders game. Suddenly, his dad rushed in.

“Didn’t I tell you not to watch T.V. without asking?” his dad asked.

“B-b-but...,” said Mike.

“No buts,” said Mr. McGee firmly.

“Oh, okay,” Mike grumbled.

So he turned off the T.V., went to his room, lay down on his bed, and played GameBoy. Then an hour passed, then another. Just then, his mother opened his door.

“Guess what?” Mrs. McGee asked.

“What?” asked Mike, in an unhappy voice.

“We are going on a train to Arizona to meet your grandparents!” she said.

“When?!” asked Mike, excitedly. He really didn’t like his grandparents, but he loved going to Arizona.

“Today!” said Mrs. McGee.

Mike jumped up, and started packing for the trip. He packed all long-sleeved shirts and jeans.

When his dad saw what Mike had packed, he yelled, “Mike!”

“What!” Mike yelled back.

“You need to pack short-sleeved shirts and shorts! It is hot in Arizona,” said Mr. McGee.

“Oops,” Mike said to himself. (I told you he wasn’t smart.)

When they were on the train, Mike said, “I’m bored.”

“Well,” said his father, “find a way to entertain yourself!”

Mike sighed. He had forgotten to bring his Game Boy. Just then, he remembered that he had brought his trampoline. But then he thought, *I can’t take it out; it’s too big.*

He thought and thought. Suddenly, he came up with something. *I don’t like my grandparents who I am going to see, so I am going to open the window, jump on the seat, and get out of here!*

So out he jumped. While Mike was falling, he realized that he was foolish. When Mike landed, he noticed that the landing was soft. He was relieved to find out that he had landed on a whoopee cushion!

He wanted to go back on the train, but how could he? Suddenly, he heard a faint train whistle. The train was coming back!

When the train stopped, Mike happily climbed aboard, went to Arizona, met his grandparents, and he actually had a good time! From then on, he was afraid to go on trains.

IST: Mary Hartung  
Mode: Narrative  
Grade: 1

**Suddenly, he heard a faint train whistle. The train was coming back!**

The Big Rain

Once upon a time it rained and rained. It rained so hard, water came up to our balcony. I decided to dive in and go for a swim. A whale went by me and I hopped on. He squirted me right in the face. Then, I saw some dolphins. I grabbed on to one of their fins. He jumped and jumped through the water. My hands were hurting really bad, so I let go.

Cars were floating around. My neighbors were swimming around too. Then the rain

stopped, so I decided to swim back home. I climbed onto my balcony and told my mom all about my adventure.

IST: Ruth Ortiz  
Mode: Narrative  
Grade: 2

My Neighborhood

I love the community I live in. When my grandparents come to visit, we go on long walks through my neighborhood.

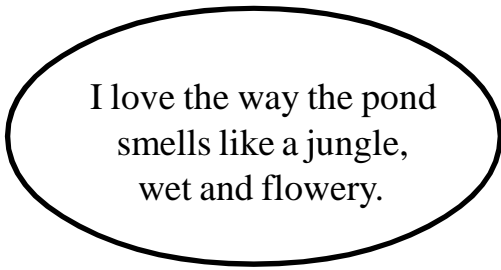
Sometimes we walk to the restaurant on the corner called Twain's. I always order fluffy pancakes with maple syrup dripping off of them. They taste so sweet! I also order creamy, sweet hot chocolate that is very good. Sometimes they serve whipped cream that is so fluffy and good that I absolutely can't stop eating it! I feel so full after eating there that I absolutely can't eat another bite!

After eating a delicious breakfast at Twain's, we go across the street to the duck

pond. I can hear the ducks quacking before we even get there. There are lots of pretty, colorful flowers at the pond. I love to feel the flowers. They are so soft, they feel like velvet. I love the way the pond smells like a jungle, wet and flowery.

After we visit the duck pond we walk to my cozy home. It is always fun to go on walks in the neighborhood with my grandparents.

IST: Colette Backus  
Mode: Expository  
Grade: 3



My Big Problem

Have you ever had a problem? Everybody has had problems. One problem I had was that I didn't know how to ride a bike. I did learn, but that's another story. My big problem was that I did not like to read. This was a problem because I didn't want to read, but my mom made me. She wanted me to enjoy reading. She knew it was an important part of life.

It was the summer after first grade. I was seven years old. I knew how to read, but I did not like to read. My mom came up with a plan. I thought it was a good plan, even though it was just for the summer. She paid me ten cents for every story I read. Every time I read a story, my mom would put a sticker on a chart. Each sticker meant ten cents. I spent my first dollar on

a Hotwheel, but then I started to save my money. I read and read and read for the money. I had money coming out of my ears. My mom said that she was going to go broke, but she was happy that I was reading.

At the end of the summer I was thrilled because I had earned \$30.50 from reading. I bought a space shuttle Lego set that I had seen. I had read so many books that the Austin who did not like to read had changed to an Austin who loved to read. Now, my mom does not pay me, but I read every day. I read a book called Thomas the Tank Engine: The Complete Collection, with 405 pages, in just three and a half

weeks. I read a twenty chapter Hardy Boys book in two days. These books were great.

People who have problems have to solve them. With my mom's help, my big problem was solved. At first, I would get upset when my mom made me read. Now, she doesn't even have to tell me to read. Reading is one of my favorite things to do.

...the Austin who did not like to read had changed to an Austin who loved to read.

*IST: Diane Sachs*  
*Mode: Narrative*  
*Grade: 3*

..... Ana Hebbard .....

## Experiencing Autumn with Tom

This is a story about Tom, who was a leaf on an apple tree in Oak Glen. It was fall in Oak Glen, which starts in September and goes all the way to December. The weather was starting to get cold and Tom was changing colors.

Tom saw lots of squirrels gathering food for the winter. Once a squirrel came to Tom's tree and started to shake some of his friends off the tree, but luckily Tom was holding on to his twig really tightly. The squirrel went away after a while and Tom was safe.

Tom saw some clouds up above. He knew it would rain, and sure enough, it did, and now his tree was all nice and clean. As it was raining, a caterpillar was about to bite Tom from his tree, but the rain wiped the caterpillar right off! Soon the rain stopped and Tom saw some people coming to his tree carrying some bottles.

"I wonder what that is?" Tom questioned, as the people came closer to Tom's tree.

Before he could say anything, the people sprayed some insecticide on Tom's tree.

"Yikes!" Tom yelled. "What do you think you guys are doing, spraying that sticky stinky stuff on my tree?"

Then Tom saw all the bugs dying and falling from the tree. "Wow! Those bugs die pretty quickly," Tom said, as he watched all the bugs fall from his tree.

After Tom thought that the people were gone, he felt his tree shaking! "Hey what's going on here?" Tom wondered.

Then Tom saw the people picking all of his apple friends!

"Help me!" yelled one of the apples, as it was being picked.

"Mommy come back!" cried one of the baby apples as its mom was being picked.

"I wish people would just leave us alone!" Tom cried out. People were walking through the orchards and Tom was tired of people!

Tom saw something else walking through the orchards. It wasn't a person; it had four legs. "I wonder what that creature is?" Tom thought. It came closer to his tree, and Tom realized it was a deer. Tom had never seen a deer before. He had heard a lot about them from his friends, but he was always asleep when they came, and when he woke up they were gone.

Suddenly the deer smashed right into Tom's tree. "Hey! Watch where you're going!" shouted Tom. Soon the deer was gone and the orchards were quiet again.

A few hours went by and Tom was very bored. Tom saw a big black spot on a nearby tree. "I wonder what that could be?" Tom asked himself. The black spot came closer to his tree. "Oh, I know what that is,

that's just a bear; wait a minute, a bear! Oh no! Help me!" cried Tom. The bear crawled even closer to his tree; the bear started to climb his tree. "Oh no! Oh no! Oh no!" Tom shouted very loudly. The bear climbed even higher.

"Ro-o-o-err!" The bear was very very loud!

Tom was holding on to his twig really tightly.

The bear was eating all the apples. Even the little ones! After a while the bear left, but Tom's twig was still shaking. "What now?" Tom said, exhausted. It wasn't shaking as much as the bear or the squirrel had shaken it, but what was it? Tom saw a little dot crawling towards his twig.

"Ahhh! Oh no!" Tom thought for a while. "I know what it is; it's a bark beetle. Oh no! Oh no! Oh no!"

The bark beetle came closer to his twig! And suddenly, before Tom could call for help, the bark beetle snapped him right off his tree! "H-e-l-p!" cried Tom. He fell to the ground when suddenly a deer came up to Tom and ate him right up, and what happened to Tom the leaf next is a whole different story.

*IST: Lisa Hopkins*

*Mode: Narrative*

*Grade: 4*

..... Harriette Tuntomo .....

A Day at the Beach

Meandering along the sandy path, I delight in the sights and sounds of the beach. Majestic in power, the sun arrays its brilliance in the turquoise, cloudless sky. Sea gulls fly overhead. In the freedom of the ocean, a vigorous game of volleyball is played between a group of teenagers. Screams of joy and laughter from little children playing on the shore mix with the sounds of the rolling waves. The salty smell of the ocean and

the aroma of barbeque wafts in the air before being blown away by the cool breeze. Putting a pearly white seashell in my pocket, I skip over to my mother to tell her all that I have seen and heard.

*IST: Charles Bosanko*

*Mode: Expository/Descriptive*

*Grade 4*

..... Joycelyn Choo .....

Changes in California During the California Gold Rush

The California Gold Rush, which started in 1848, changed a number of things in California. These changes included changes in towns, industries, and people.

Towns were some of the things that changed. San Francisco and Sacramento were greatly transformed by the Gold Rush. Before 1849, San Francisco was a peaceful little seaport. Its population was as little as about five hundred, and only two ships came in a year. But in 1849 alone, the population rose up to 32,000, and 1,000 ships came. Another city that came into being was Sacramento. Originally, the site of Sacramento was owned by John Sutter. His son sold parcels of land as building lots which then started the

city of Sacramento. Eventually, it became the official capital of California when California became a state.

Within the towns, the most obvious change was the rise in crime. There was no law in the land; people often took matters into their own hands by fighting. The two most feared gangs were the Hounds and the Sydney Ducks. The Hounds were ex-military men from New York; the Sydney Ducks were escaped convicts from Australia. These gangs threatened businesses to get free foods and goods. If the people they threatened refused, the gangsters would destroy and rob the business. Gangsters were not the only ones who robbed; young kids were pickpockets and muggers, too. As a result, vigilance committees were formed. A

vigilance committee was organized to put robbers to justice, something like the police today. Some vigilance committees became the governments, and they formed rules for resolving problems.

Another change in towns was the coming of industries. Industries were significantly changed by the Gold Rush. Some newcomers who had no luck in finding gold set up small businesses which catered to the needs of the miners. These included general stores, restaurants, saloons, bakeries, grocery stores, and blacksmith shops. Women who cooked and laundered were in great demand. Prices of various goods were high: for example, \$10 for a hat, \$100 for a blanket, and \$150 for a shovel. Foods were very expensive: for example, \$1 for a slice of bread and another dollar to butter it; and \$3 for an egg, when a miner was lucky to earn \$2 a day.

Those who struck gold, or people who came to California with money, invested in larger industries. Mining, naturally, had become a major industry. The rise in population also raised the demand for cattle raising, agriculture, and manufacturing. The banking industry also started after 1849 because the miners needed to exchange their dust and nuggets for coins and bills. Other industries that grew rapidly were the shipping, housing, railroad construction, and transportation industries, all due to the Gold Rush.

The Gold Rush turned almost everybody in the world into miners. Miners who came from all over the world, including South America, China, Europe, and Mexico, in 1849 were called “forty-niners.” The immigrants were treated unfairly by white men. Foreigners were often insulted, bullied, beaten up, attacked, murdered, and lynched. Properties and claims

of immigrants were often stolen by white men, yet the white men were usually not punished. Moreover, white men passed laws of unfair taxes to tax foreigners for a monthly fee on their claims. This forced many foreigners to give up their claims and return to their countries, or turn to other businesses for employment. The ones who suffered the most were the Native

Americans, who often lived by the gold fields. The Native Americans had their crops and homes destroyed. Some were even murdered.

In conclusion, the Gold Rush gave rise to two major cities, San Francisco and Sacramento. It also brought about industries such as cattle raising, agriculture, manufacturing, shipping, and construction. It brought many immigrants to this country, who contributed to the development of California.

#### Bibliography

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Kallen, Stuart A., and P.M. Boekhoff. The Gold Rush. San Diego: Kid Haven Press, 2002.

Steenwyk, Elizabeth V. The California Gold Rush: West with the Forty-Niners. New York: Franklin Watts, 1991.

*IST: Helen Chan Young*  
*Mode: Research*  
*Grade: 5*

Industries were significantly changed by the Gold Rush.

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Timothy Edwards

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### Response to The Winter at Valley Forge

“These are the times that try mens’ souls,” said Thomas Paine. When he said this, he was referring to that terrible winter at Valley Forge. The Winter At Valley Forge is a book about the camp of the Patriot army during that first winter of the Revolutionary War. The trying events that took place there changed the course of history.

In the beginning, Washington and his army are fighting the British for independence, but they are losing almost every battle. The men aren’t united, and their supplies are limited. When Washington’s army retires to Valley Forge for the winter, more hardships come. The British think the Americans won’t last, but instead of dying, the Patriots’ hopes are lifted. After the

winter, the army is united, hopeful, and ready to face the British again. Valley Forge strengthened them. But how did they survive? How did they come out of Valley Forge stronger than when they first entered it?

During the winter of 1777, things were hard at Valley Forge. Due to the bitter weather and lack of food, shelter, and proper clothing, the spirits of the Patriots were nearly crushed. The very thought of a satisfying meal was wonderful, but such a thing hardly existed at Valley Forge that winter. The British and Tories had stripped all the food from the countryside, and stealing food was forbidden. The men disagreed and fought among themselves. One character, named Silver Hawk, faced prejudice because he was an Indian. The Patriots didn't have much with which to face the British. It's hard to believe anyone could withstand the things described in The Winter at Valley Forge.

The author, F. Van Wyck Mason, knows how to influence his readers' perspective. He describes and mentions the Tories in such a way that the readers would think them evil. Tories were people who lived in the colonies yet were still loyal to England and the King. To me, they were cruel traitors and thieves. Mason points this out by writing about the Tories stealing from civilians and fighting with the British, enemies to the main characters and "the Cause." The way the author describes them makes me despise them too. Mason also says that times were very hard at Valley Forge, by his description of the lack of food and clothing, because the British and Tories were taking away all the livestock

He describes and mentions the Tories in such a way that the readers would think them evil.

and crops left in that area. There wasn't time to build proper shelters.

During that winter, the Patriots didn't have much to hope for, but Mason shows how George Washington and the other generals gave them hope and courage. George Washington inspired the men by his example of courage, faith, and sacrifice. He did not move into any comfortable place until his men had their

houses built. Others helped to supply and train the men, and slowly but surely, an army began to rise up. They were forced to work together to survive, and through that, the soldiers learned to respect each other. Even Silver Hawk, who had provided a lot of his squad's food, became respected. In all of this, the Americans were strengthened by what they went through and were

able to fight the British with new courage and determination!

The Winter At Valley Forge is a book that seems very real, like you are really there. It is almost all true. This book shows how Valley Forge was really the turning point of the war, and how the Americans got the strength and courage to win the American Revolution. If it were not for Valley Forge, the Patriots may have lost the war, and no freedom would have come. Valley Forge should be remembered as one of the greatest times in the history of our country. I'll always remember it that way.

IST: Nathleen Albright

Mode: Response to Literature

Grade: 5



Qays Monsour



## One Special Birthday

I have had so many special days in my life. If I had to pick one, I would pick my eighth birthday.

On December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2002, I turned eight years old. The day started with my parents and I going to Shakey's Pizza. Some of my friends were there waiting to surprise me. My friends and I ate pizza and played some games. I had so much fun, and thought, "Could this day get any better?" After eating a birthday cake, my parents and I returned home.

At home, my parents surprised me with a lot of gifts. They got me a Play Station 2, some games, a guitar, and a box full of books. I started going through the box of books. They were all good books, but one book caught my eye. It was The Tales of Yemen!

The Tales of Yemen is about people and places in Yemen. This book talks about the culture in parts of Yemen. It is a very interesting book, and I was mesmerized by just reading it.

My mother grew up in Yemen. She grew up in mansions with many servants. Every night before I went to bed, my mother would tell me about her childhood. The way she told the story sounded like a fairy tale. She actually lived this King-Sized life.

The more I read this book, the closer I got to this beautiful place. I have heard this story many times. Every time I hear this story it fascinates me more and more. This book made me feel a very special boy.

You might think, what is special about this book? You have to hear the story from my mother or read the book to understand. This book made me understand a lot of things about my heritage, such as how the people of Yemen lived before and after the war. This book also talks about the ugliness of war.

Finally, I can tell people about my parents' rich culture. I can make people understand why my parents left their country. They are not just foreigners without a land.

After reading this book, I started to ask a lot of questions. I could imagine how it must have felt to

leave everything and everyone behind. I know this was not easy for my parents, or anyone who had to go through that. It was a painful experience!

Reading this book gave me a lot of hope. I hope some day there will be no war in the world. There will be peace everywhere and in Yemen. Someday I would like to visit Yemen to experience it all.

My eighth birthday was just like any other birthday. I have gotten a lot of gifts and books on my birthdays before, but this book was unique. When I read this book I was in my bedroom, but with every page I read I was going places. It was a great experience!

This was one of the most special days in my life. I will cherish this day for eternity!

Peace to everyone everywhere.

*IST: Chavonne Long*

*Mode: Reflective Narrative/Response to Literature*

*Grade: 5*

The more I read this book, the closer I got to this beautiful place.

.....

Farhana Bholat

.....

### Persuasive Letter to the City Council

1902 Orange Tree Lane, Suite # 170  
Redlands, CA 92374  
(909) 307-6312

3 April 2005

City Council  
Los Angeles, CA 90065

Dear City Council,

I found out that you are closing down one very important animal shelter, the Los Angeles Animal Shelter for Homeless Pets. You may think that having an animal shelter is not important, but it is. I do not think that you should close down the animal shelter because it is the only animal shelter in this city. I also found out that you are closing the shelter down because it is low on money. Therefore, I have a few suggestions about raising money for the shelter. If you approve of

these ideas, I really hope you will keep the animal shelter open.

If you take the animal shelter away, then the streets will be filled with dogs, cats, and various other animals. Animals would start roaming the streets for food, and most animals would get sick and some of them would eventually die. There would also be a lot of diseases, such as rabies, because the animals would not be fed well and would be dirty due to the environment.

People love pets because they keep you safe, and some are there for you when you are sad. Others just make you feel happy and are also very comforting. If pets are kept at the shelter, people would buy them. But if they are living on the street, then people would not feel comfortable with having a "street" animal. The animal would probably not be tame. It also would not be healthy. These are a few reasons why I think you should keep the animal shelter.

Since you are low on money, I have a few ideas to help. One really good idea is to have a “Pets Annual Field Day.” We put all of the pets in a certain category and they then can race, do tricks, play games, and do other exciting activities. People can pay a certain amount of money to enter, and that money can go to help the shelter. On the other side of the field, we can have games, rides, and food for women, men, and children. We can put signs on trees, in newspapers, and spread the word by mouth about this event.

Another idea on how to raise money for the shelter is to put donation boxes in stores, malls, and grocery stores. We can also have people donate dog, bird, and cat food to the shelter. We can ask schools to send notes home to let parents know that the animal shelter needs money and that it might be closed down. People can also donate any animals they find on the streets.

Before I end this letter, I want to say that I love animals, as do a lot of other people. I got a bird from the Los Angeles Animal Shelter. I am glad that I have this bird because it makes me feel happy. I am sure that there are a lot of people who feel the same way. So please keep this animal shelter alive so others can feel the same way I do about my pets. Thank you for your time; if you have any questions, please contact me at the phone number above.

Sincerely,  
Farhana Bholat

*IST: Kelly Westlake*  
*Mode: Persuasion*  
*Grade: 6*

.....  
Caron Harada  
.....

## Too Much Mythology

One day, when I was reading a book, I saw a dragon flying past my window. It set fire to the tree out front with a breath of flame! I climbed onto the roof of my house to get a better view and was almost hit by a flying horse. It was pure white with a blue mane, its rider wearing Greek warrior regalia. The warrior was fighting a cyclops with a gold sword, saying, “Onward, Pegasus, there are only infinity more to go!” He slashed off the monster’s head and immediately began lopping off the heads of another monster, which grew them back as fast as the warrior could chop them off.

I looked south and saw a pale, weird looking guy sipping a grub martini. His hair seemed to be comprised of blue fire, and he was making monsters out of thin air. Meanwhile, there was a lot of screaming and yelling while a crazed Zeus was throwing lightening bolts and people were dodging them. He kept saying, “Darn, missed again!” One man tripped and was hit by a bolt. There was a sizzling sound, his hair stood on end, and he started coughing up smoke. Then, my town’s mayor tried reasoning with the gods, but a chimaera ate him. It gave a loud burp and coughed up the mayor’s lime green bowler hat.

Monsters were pouring out of it, leaving the pages empty.

Everyone took sanctuary in the library. My friend and I explored around the building to see if there was a book about how to fight monsters. Instead, we found another book the size of a Volkswagen entitled The BIG Book of Greek Mythology. Monsters were pouring out of it, leaving the pages empty. My friend and I tried to close the book, but a whistle, a whip, and a piece of parchment popped out. The parchment read:

*Dear would-be-hero,*

*I see you are trying to close my book. Well, nice try. It won't close 'til everyone who came out of it goes back in. Here are my favorite tools. Good luck!*

*-Guy-who-wrote-this-book*

Another loud pop and the parchment disappeared.

I picked up the whip, and my friend picked up the whistle. She blew it loud and hard. There was a sound like thunder as all the monsters, gods, and heroes came running back to us. I cracked the whip loudly and said, “Okay, everyone back in. You’re in the wrong continent, not to mention the wrong millennium.”

Everyone slowly filed back into the book. “Who’s missing?” I asked my friend.

She just shrugged and pointed. Hades and Aphrodite were sulkily strolling back, each clutching a Starbucks coffee. “Is that everyone?” said my friend.

Aphrodite shook her head. “Fluffy hasn’t gone back in yet.”

My friend and I looked at each other. “Fluffy?”

Hades pulled out his own whistle and blew a loud, shrill blast on it. A gigantic, black, three-headed dog came trotting up to him like a Labrador puppy. It gave him a huge lick on the face, which extinguished Hades’ fiery blue hair. Hades pointed at the book and the dog trotted inside, shortly followed by the chimaera that ate the mayor.

Hades and Aphrodite waved and said together, “Ta,” and departed back to ancient Greece. With a loud sucking noise, the mayor popped out of the book. He

shook himself and helped my friend and I close the book.

It is a lot safer since we shut the book; everything is back to normal, for now. The mayor gives himself full credit for taking care of the monsters. I don’t really mind; it was fun saving our town. But my friend boos and blows air horns when the mayor gives his speech on saving the town. I wonder if there are any science fiction books in the library...oh, the possibilities.

*IST: Rebecca Unetic*

*Mode: Narrative*

*Grade: 6*



Gabriella Mayfield



## My Best Talent

I love to bowl! I think that bowling is one of my better talents because a lot of older bowlers tell me that I am very good for my age. I try to go bowling every chance I get, which is three or four times a week.

I started bowling seriously about a year ago. My parents bought me a cool yellow ball for my birthday last year. It has 1960’s retro designs all over it, and it glows in the dark! It weighs ten pounds and it was drilled out to fit my fingers perfectly. They also bought me a pair of Brunswick shoes. You need to wear special shoes to go onto the wood flooring on the lanes. I carry my ball and shoes in a bright purple bag.

When I started bowling, my scores were not very good. I would get between 60 and 80 points per game. Now, I can often bowl a game of 150 points, and my all-time high score is 171. My parents have helped me a lot, and so has my coach, Bill LaThorpe.

Bill LaThorpe is 75 years old and has been bowling since he was 12. He is an awesome bowler! He is left-handed and throws a mean curve ball. He usually gets a strike. Bill bowls in tournaments all the time and wins lots of money. I am very lucky to have him as a coach.

Bill taught me how to throw a curve ball from the right side and it works really well for me. He has also shown me how to slide on the boards and hit my mark. Bill is always encouraging me, even if I have a bad game. He says, “As long as you are having fun, that’s all that matters.”

However, bowling wasn’t always a fun game or sport. It is written that bowling originated in the monasteries of Europe in 300 A.D. It was done as a religious ritual. Priests stood clubs in a corner and peasants rolled a large stone, or a ball, at them. If they succeeded in hitting all of the clubs down, they were praised. If they were to fail, they were told to lead a better life. The clubs represented evil or the devil.

About a month ago, my dad and mom set up a home school bowling league. I was not able to bowl in their league on Friday nights, so they helped me get a league of my own. A lot of kids have been coming to it. It is really fun. We bowl for about two hours, and some of the parents bowl, too. Bill is always there to help coach and teach those who need it.

Bowling has really enriched my life. It works hand-eye coordination and it is good exercise. Every time I bowl, I challenge myself to get a good score. I also enjoy spending time with my friends doing something so fun. I think bowling is a great sport. Who knows, I might become a professional bowler some day. That would make my mom and dad really proud!

*IST: Robert Jackson*

*Mode: Expository*

*Grade: 6*

## Basketball & Cooking

As an eleven-year-old boy, my favorite things change every day. One day I like basketball; the next it's football. Baseball is cool and so is soccer, but soccer is so boring to watch. I always love to play video games, but even my favorite game changes every day. If I had to pick a sport that I love more than all the others and that I am passionate about, it would have to be basketball. Speaking of passions, there is another thing that I love to do A LOT. That thing is to cook. I know most boys my age don't really like to cook, but I do. My mom loves to cook and she taught me how. So I guess you could say the perfect day for me would be playing basketball, then cooking something for dinner. These are two totally different activities, but they also have many things in common.

Basketball is the perfect sport. You don't have to have good weather, you can play it almost anywhere, you can practice by yourself, and it's great exercise. It is fun to watch on television or at a professional game. I love to watch the Los Angeles Lakers! Even though all these things are true, the one thing I love most about basketball is playing with my friends. Teamwork is awesome. Not only does it make you a better player, but you get to help everyone else too. You will never win a game in basketball unless you work as a team.

Shooting is the best part of the game. There is no better feeling than setting up a shot and watching it go right through the "hoop." Your shoulders get sore after practicing shot after shot! Hearing the crowd cheer is exciting. I like feeling tired after a game. My favorite position is guard. This is a great position because you get to block the outside shots.

Cooking is also a perfect hobby. You don't have to have good weather, you can cook almost anywhere, and you can cook by yourself or with a bunch of friends. Cooking is also fun to watch on television. My favorite chef is Emeril Legassi. Just like basketball, cooking is fun to do with friends, but my favorite cooking partner is my mother. Cooking is fun, but you also learn a lot about math and science.

I know you can't cook a basketball or dribble a turkey, but there are some things about cooking and

basketball that are alike. In both activities there are time limits. However, the buzzer in basketball is much louder. Listening is important. In cooking you must follow directions, or your food won't come out right. In basketball you must listen to what the coach says, or you might have to sit on the bench and not play. Each activity takes specific equipment: pots and pans in the kitchen, and a ball and net for basketball. They both can be done inside or outside. If you do them both correctly, you will have great results in the end. Another way they are alike is their smells. I always love the smells in my mom's kitchen: melted chocolate, cookies, dinner—they smell great. Basketball smells are different but wonderful too. The gym smells like sweat and leather. I can think of distinct sounds for cooking and basketball too, such as the sounds of all the balls hitting the ground as warm-ups start, and whistles blowing as the teams come to attention. Cooking has a

lot of sounds, as well: the clatter of bowls, the mixer, water running, and knives on the cutting board. Practice is essential to each and can be done alone or with other people. Although each can be and are done for fun, they can both be highly competitive. They can both be done professionally, although basketball stars make a lot more money. I think that each one is

a great way to show off talent, and each takes a lot of hard work. Last, but not least, the thing that connects basketball and cooking are my parents. My dad has always coached my basketball team, and all the cooking lessons come from my mom. So even though these two activities seem different, in a lot of ways they are the same.

There are so many differences between cooking and playing basketball. Basketball is played for physical fitness, and cooking is to eat. To cook you need lots of preparation, but to play basketball all you need is to pick up the ball and dribble. To be a great cook you need lots of equipment, but not so for basketball. When you cook there is usually a big mess (at least there is when I cook), but no one on my basketball team has ever had to clean up the gym! A really cool part about basketball is that you have a crowd of people cheering you on, but

**I know you can't cook a basketball or dribble a turkey, but there are some things about cooking and basketball that are alike.**

that many people cannot fit into my kitchen. Cooking isn't a team sport, and basketball isn't much fun to do alone.

I love both of these activities for different reasons. I know I will never make a living playing basketball. There are very few professional basketball players but a lot of professional chefs. Not everyone likes basketball, but everyone loves to eat. I would very

much like to be a chef when I grow up. Who knows, maybe I'll be the first professional basketball-playing chef!

IST: *Letitia Clark*

Mode: *Expository/Comparison & Contrast*

Grade: *6*



Gabriel Choo



## Forgiveness

Protecting Marie by Kevin Henkes, is a book that exemplifies the relationship between father and daughter and the power of forgiveness and love. This story, in my opinion, is about the transcending power of love and the ability of the human heart to forgive. It shows how powerful the little bit of good inside each and every one of us can be when it shines through the darkness of bitterness, anger, and fear, and touches another hurting soul. I shall, in this essay, attempt to analyze how the author develops the main character, Fanny, and to bring out the ever-so-simple yet amazingly powerful themes that ask questions about humans and human nature itself.

In this story, Fanny (the main character) is traumatized emotionally by an event that happened over 2 years ago. Read this excerpt:

*The first night she (Nellie, the dog) belonged to Fanny, Nellie cried. Fanny heard her and plucked her from her crate and took her to bed with her. As Fanny petted her and watched her relax and fall asleep, she knew that happiness was not exactly what she felt. This was better. She had never experienced this feeling before. For a moment she thought she might burst, and then as she drifted off to sleep, she felt enveloped by such warmth that she thought she might never wake up. Raising a puppy was a lot of work, but Fanny was ready for it. And since it was summer, she had all day to devote to Nellie...But then Nellie sneaked up to Henry's [the father] studio and peed on his Oriental rug. Twice, Nellie chewed on the legs of the dining room table,...chewed on the legs of Henry's antique Cromwellian chair,...had diarrhea all over the sun porch,...cried at night,...growled at Henry,...nipped,...and dug...." (Henkes 36-39)*

Henry just cannot stand having Nellie around. He cannot paint anymore. Nellie has to go. Fanny

protests: "...this is the worst thing that's ever happened to me" (Henkes 36-37). Finally, Fanny has to give Nellie away:

*...the night they [Nellie's new owners] came to pick her up, Fanny made a pile of all Nellie's belongings near the front door. She waited on the couch with Nellie curled up beside her. It was forbidden for Nellie to be on the couch, but Henry said nothing. Fanny had sobbed for so long that her eyes were sore and swollen. 'Will I ever see you again?' Fanny whispered. Nellie sighed. Her tail curved into a sleek question mark. (Henkes 39)*

In this passage, Henkes is emphasizing the fact that Fanny loves her dog, and when her father Henry takes away that love, he also loses her trust and pulls the rug right out from underneath her feet. The book is divided into three sections—*Without*, *With*, and *Within*—to show Fanny's emotional progression and development through the book.

In the first part of the book, *Without*, Fanny Swann is a 12-year-old girl who is emotionally insecure, sad, worried, and angry because of the dog incident described above. Her father has cancelled his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday party and disappeared to their cabin in the woods. She is sad, worried, anxious, and afraid because she blames herself and feels responsible for her father's disappearance.

In the second section, *With*, Fanny's father returns after two days and gives Fanny a dog named Dinner. Fanny is confused and afraid to trust her father: "...Fanny didn't know where to look. If her eyes rested on Dinner for more than five seconds, she was afraid she'd be taken with her. If she looked at Henry, she was afraid she'd forgive him" (Henkes 77).

As the story progresses, Fanny can't help falling in love with her new dog, and they become inseparable over the summer. As she is just coming out of her

emotional shell, something happens. When she comes home from school, she discovers that her father has taken away Dinner. Old emotions that she thought were gone forever begin to boil. She begins to cry and utters the words that have hurt many: "I hate him." But when Dinner returns home with her father, Fanny feels both confused and relieved.

Before I continue, there is an aspect of this story I would like to address, which is the author's use of symbolism. In the book, a paper doll named Marie is used to portray the relationship between Fanny and her father. When she was young, Fanny had a paper doll named Marie. She loved this doll, but in the eyes of her father, it was trash. Each week, Henry would have "stupid hunts" in which he looked around in Fanny's room for "stupid things" to throw away. Every week she would "protect" Marie from her father by hiding it in a different place. Protecting Marie, therefore, symbolizes her protection of Dinner: "...and in the same way that she protected Marie she began protecting Dinner" (Henkes 140).

A few moments before she has the talk with her father (see the paragraph after this), Fanny destroys Marie. This probably represents both a new beginning (because she hugged her father right after destroying Marie) and the ending of the need to protect Marie and Dinner because of her renewed trust in her father. A few days later, she creates a new Marie, which means a new relationship with her father that no longer includes lack of trust and fear. In other words, Henkes uses Marie as a vehicle to bring out the main theme of forgiveness. It is only when Henry learns to value things from Fanny's view and appreciates Dinner and Marie, even against his own wish, that he finally earns Fanny's trust.

The final redeeming scene of the story happens near the end, as the conflict comes to a close. Fanny

finally decides to tell her father how she feels about him: "I'm always trying to make things exactly the way you want them to be...I feel like I have to cover my tracks. Why can't I just be a kid? And why can't Dinner just be a dog? I'm always worrying that you're going to take something away from me" (Henkes 177). She conveys to her father how she feels as if she is always guarding something from him. It is then that her father tells her that he is just as afraid of her as she is of him, that they both have the power to take away something from each other, something that they each treasure: Fanny, her trust in her father; Henry, Dinner. She decides that everybody deserves a second chance:

*...And suddenly, in his arms she felt safe, strangely so, because her father, strong, formidable Henry, needed to be hugged just as much as if not more than she did. And she was certain, as certain as she was of anything, that Dinner was safe, too. (Henkes 180)*

And so the story ends with Fanny knowing that she is loved, that her dog is safe, and that she has finally "found" her dad. She realizes that forgiveness is when that little piece of good inside each of us takes flight and heals another heart. One final note, the last section, *Within*, is basically an epilogue that ties up the loose threads of the story. I hope you will read this book and discover, as I have, the wonderful themes that it portrays.

### Bibliography

Henkes, Kevin. Protecting Marie. New York: Penguin Books USA Inc., 1995.

*IST: Helen Chan Young*

*Mode: Response to Literature*

*Grade: 7*

In the book, a paper doll named Marie is used to portray the relationship between Fanny and her father.



Kelly Coats



### My Room

#### BRIGHTEST

I see a box surrounded by other boxes. The roof spirals above me. The sun is coming in with all its force. Something on the wall is reflecting the mood of

the day. But I see darkness as well, looming over the boxes. In this room and this time of day, I can see the universe, the forest, the mountains, and the moon.

DUSK

The boxes are darker now, almost invisible. Yet there is still a patch of gold saying its goodbye until the morning sun. Something is turning in a slow rhythm, reflecting the dark room. The walls jump out at you as each shadow appears. Two moons I can see, while the forest thickens in the darkness. The mountains stand tall and proud. Wait...can you hear it? Wings flapping in the darkening sky.

DARKEST

You can no longer see the boxes. Yet the moonlight leaves a gap on the wall. A red light glows in the darkness. Anticipation is around, swirling with the roof. The howling lays thick in the air but stops at the

beat of wings. Their scales gleam in the moonlight. The forest is now too thick to tell where a trunk starts to where it stops at the top. The mountains look deeper in the darkness. The universe has lost its gleam. And the pounding of running paws is my own heartbeat.

The eye of a creature is deeper than it appears. You can tell the fierceness and the softness of a dragon by looking in its eye. The wolf's eye reflects who you are.

And this is my room. My room reflects who I am and what things I like. I love my room just the way it is.

IST: *Christine Stewart*  
Mode: *Expository/Descriptive*  
Grade: 7



Taylor Joris



Back to Back

On Sept. 6, 1620, it all started with Lady Mary saying, "Samantha, dear, it's time to get on the ship. Come on, please?"

"Just one moment, please," Samantha said, while hugging one of her close friends. She had so many friends in England who she was never going to see again, never. It made Samantha sad to leave England, but her father and mother said it was the best thing that they could do for the family. Samantha was the only child in the Blackburn family. Some of her friends were like sisters to her.

"Dear, come on now. It will be okay," Lady Mary said to Samantha with a grin on her slender face.

"Yes, Mama, here I come," said Samantha, while letting go of her friend, Maymi.

"Goodbye, Maymi, I will always have a memory of you," Samantha said with tears in her eyes.

Samantha walked up the ramp to a huge ship. Samantha and her family were going to The New World (now America) where they could settle and raise a family properly. Lady Mary was Samantha's step-mother, because Samantha's mother died when Samantha was only 2 years of age.

"Samantha, we are on the ship now; we just set foot on the Mayflower!" Lady Mary said to Samantha, trying to control herself.

"Bloody Hell, the ship is moving!" a young man said who was sitting right next to Samantha, Lady Mary, and Samantha's father.

Samantha could hear Maymi calling, "Wait, wait! Samantha, your present I gave you, it is here!" But there was nothing they could do about it; the boat was already drifting out to sea. They were on the Atlantic Ocean pretty soon after leaving the dock. Samantha was tired because she woke up at 3:00 A.M. to start to get ready to leave. Samantha laid her head on Lady Mary's shoulder. Samantha's father was talking to the young man next to him. Lady Mary and Samantha had fallen asleep. When they woke up, it was almost lunchtime.

A man came by and said, "Excuse me. Can I show you your beds?"

"Oh, please do!" said Lady Mary. The man showed them to their beds. They were almost piled up on each other. Samantha got a bottom bunk; she had another bed two feet above her. She couldn't even sit up. If she did sit up she would have hit her head. Lady Mary slept above her, and on top of Lady Mary, Samantha's father slept.

"This is going to be an interesting trip," said Samantha to her father. They were going to be on this ship for a long time, but they didn't know how long it would take! There were 110 people, but they were divided into groups: 44 pilgrims who were called "Saints" and 66 other people who were called "Strangers." After two weeks, everything stunk and it was miserable for Samantha. Her only comfort was her diary, which she wrote in every night and day. She

wrote this....

Dear Diary, Sept. 20, 1620

I am still on the ship to America, but I never knew that it could be this hard to be on a ship. It has been two weeks. It stinks because of the waste from people and the rotting meat. Father has a new friend who is named Shey. He is very nice but he drives me nuts! He says "Bloody Hell" all the time! I am lying on my bed, wishing that I could sit up, but I can't. Two little girls are fighting over a doll. Lady Mary says "Hello" to whomever might be reading this later. I drew a picture of this ship, but it might decay before I get to America. I hope that this is the worst entry. I do not want it to get worse! Sorry I have to stop writing because father wants me to meet his new scraggly, bearded friend in front of me now. Talk soon.  
P.S. Pray for me? NOW!

Love, Samantha

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Dear Diary, Sept. 27, 1620

I am still on the ship to America. My last entry was one week ago and it is getting worse! It stinks really bad now and everyone stinks, because we cannot take baths. Now remember, I am a girl and I do like to be clean, and I am dirty! Oh no! I drew a picture of Shey yesterday. I think it looks a lot like him! Shey is my best friend right now! He brought his favorite book on the ship and he said that he would read it to me tonight! I can't wait! Father and Lady Mary are in the kitchen making mush for Shey and me. I am starving now, I have not eaten in a day, and Shey says that he has not eaten in four days! Wow! Well, Shey is here next to me and he wants to draw some pictures with me so I need to go! Bye!  
P.S. Shey is the only reason I sound happy now. I am 11 now and he is 20! So talk soon!

Love, Samantha

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Dear Diary, Oct. 4, 1620

Hi, it is really bad. It has been one week from my last entry. I am very sick. The food is always cold because there is a danger of the ship catching on fire. We eat every other day if we are lucky, and we have to make it ourselves. It is usually mush or bread. Tasty though, if you have nothing else. Well, I need to go.

Love, Samantha

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Dear Diary, Oct. 11, 1620

Hello, Diary! I am very sick. My father is very sick. He slipped two days ago and broke his arm and neck. Everyone is telling me that he will be all right, but I know that he is not. Shey is still reading the book every night to me. We are on chapter 20 now. My throat hurts and so does my stomach. Shey is one of the few people who is not sick, so he is helping everybody else. I am worried for him; I hope that he does not get sick. Lady Mary is with Father and I can tell that she is worried. Maybe this was a bad idea, but Father does not think so. Father wanted to come here so we could be whatever religion we want. Lady Mary is pregnant and the baby is not doing well. This ship is crowded. Everywhere you go, people are lying down and throwing up. It is getting really bad! My picture of the ship is fading. I love England more and more every day! Love you, Diary.

Love, Sick Samantha

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Dear Diary, Oct. 18, 1620

Hi, Diary. I am sorry. My father just died and Lady Mary is not doing well. Lady Mary is going crazy. All except Shey, Daisy (one of my good friends), and I are crazy. I am not sick any more, but Daisy is just a little. It is so depressing. If Shey dies, then I will be a wreck. Lady Mary is feeling ill and the baby inside of her is underfed. I can't describe

how it is now. All I can say is “Bloody Hell!”  
Shey just finished the book, and I am so sad.  
Nothing is going right! I love Shey; he is like  
a brother to me.  
I have nothing else to say. Goodnight.

Love, Samantha

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Dear Diary, Oct. 25, 1620

Hello, Diary. Lady Mary had her baby way  
too early, almost two months early! I hope he  
lives; he is so cute and so tiny! He is four  
pounds. Lady Mary is very unhealthy; I do  
hope she lives. Shey loves my baby brother  
too. He holds him in the nook of his arm.  
Shey has a thick jacket that he wraps the baby  
in! I love the baby so much! It is freezing on  
the ship. Shey needs me to hold the baby for  
a minute so I need to go! It’s funny to think  
that good and bad things happen back to  
back. Bye.

Love, Big Sis Samantha

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Dear Diary, Nov. 2, 1620

Lady Mary died last night. I have been crying  
all day. The baby is three days old, and seems  
to be healthy. Shey and I will take care of  
him. We really need to find someone who can  
nurse him, or he might die also. Shey takes  
care of the baby and me now. Shey sleeps  
with the baby on his chest all bundled up. All  
three of us sleep in one bed so we can keep  
warm. Shey is holding the baby. We named  
him Daniel after my father. Daniel is  
beautiful! I love both of my brothers. It is  
freezing!

Love, Samantha

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Dear Diary, Nov. 6, 1620

Daniel is six days old and is cute as a bug!  
Thank God that we found a young woman  
named Sarah who can feed the baby. She has  
a baby boy too. Having Lady Mary die and

then finding Sarah so Daniel won’t die is  
amazing—like God is putting bad things and  
good things back to back. I told Shey to stop  
saying “Bloody Hell” in front of Daniel—I  
told him that Daniel might start to say that  
when he is older. When Shey talks, the baby  
looks around for him. Daniel loves Shey.  
Shey needs help with the baby, so I will help  
him. I just realized that Shey is stuck with us!

Love, Samantha

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Dear Diary, Nov. 10, 1620

I do not know what is going to happen to us!  
It is freezing. I miss my father and Lady Mary  
more and more every day. Daniel is doing  
great and so is Shey. I am crying now. I need  
to go, sorry. Oh, there have been three deaths,  
I think. Oh my! I just got word that we saw  
land!

Love, Samantha

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Dear Diary, Nov. 20, 1620

Hi! We found land and stopped, but we do  
not like it. I don’t know what is wrong with  
it—it looked wonderful to me. So the men  
on the ship are looking for another piece of  
land. Got my hopes up. Too bad. We are  
fine.

Love, Samantha

Samantha was not too well. Lots of things had  
happened to her. On Dec. 11, 1620, they finally found  
the right piece of land to settle on: Plymouth Rock!  
Captain John Smith named Plymouth Rock in 1614.  
The Pilgrims had the worst winter, a devastating winter  
it was. Samantha hardly survived. Shey and Daniel  
were not doing so well either, just because of the cold  
and the starvation. This winter was so bad that less  
than 50 people out of 110 stayed alive! Samantha lost  
one of her closest friends, Daisy. She was so sad. Shey  
lost his mother and sister. It was a harsh winter for  
every pilgrim there. On March 10, 1621, an Indian  
walked into the Pilgrims’ settlement. They were  
frightened because they had heard so many scary stories  
about Indians. When he said “Welcome” in English,

they were excited. His name was Samoset. He got to know the pilgrims quickly. One day he brought his friend Squanto. Squanto taught the pilgrims a lot about farming. He showed them everything. They were so happy because they could grow food! They had a great harvest that next October. They wanted to celebrate, so they had a feast. They invited 90 Indians and their chief, Chief Massasoit. They feasted for three days straight! Now this event took place in the middle of October. It was a wonderful day for Samantha, Shey, and little Daniel!

Dear Diary,

We had so much fun these last few days! I had real food! OH YUMM! Thanks to God we are safe and alive here in this beautiful

land of Plymouth. After a whole year of people dying, we now have plenty to eat and houses to live in—the greatest “back to back” that God has done. Shey, Daniel, and I should grow up and live happily ever after! Well, Goodday, and goodbye forever diary! I will put you into a river and I hope that someone finds you—My Diary!

And This Glorious Day Was Called Thanksgiving!

*IST: Eileen Mastro*

*Mode: Narrative*

*Grade: 7*



Priscilla Sayles



### My Self-Assessment

Over the years, I have written many essays. Through them, I have learned a lot about the correct way of writing them, and I have also learned a lot about myself. Though there are a lot of things I have learned, they all fit under three things. The first thing is to pick a subject you know a lot about, so you can write knowledgably about that subject. The second thing is to be original and not copy anyone else in their ideas or otherwise concerning essays. The third and final thing is called my strengths and my weaknesses, which determines how well I use the two other subjects above.

My strengths consist of making my essays unique by using descriptive words and phrases, using a good imagination, and picking a subject I know a lot about so I can write knowledgably about that subject. I think I am good at using my imagination and descriptive words and phrases to make my essays unique because I enjoy doing it, and whenever you enjoy doing something, you are usually good at it. I have also realized that when you write knowledgably about something, it makes that essay a lot more interesting, because the readers can sense you are confident in what you are writing. It also makes the readers enjoy what they are reading.

As for my final draft, I go over it myself, slowly analyzing every sentence.

I also have weaknesses, as all writers have. Whenever I do not have a “brainstorm,” I am as helpless as a crying baby. When that happens, I must read through my other older essays. That snaps me out of my “helpless” mode and puts me in my “essay” mode. As soon as I get into the “essay” mode, I quickly scribble down my thoughts that are now coming in “thick n’ fast.” My last two weaknesses are not being able to write a good introduction and conclusion. I think that happens because I write down too much in

the body, which leaves me with no more to write down in the introduction and conclusion. That, in turn, makes my introductions and conclusions very repetitive. There are two different ways I could fix this problem. The first way would be to write my introductions and conclusions first and then write my body, so I would not steal all

of the ideas and information from my introductions and conclusions. The second way to fix this problem would be to save things to write in my introductions and conclusions. But it would take more time because I would have to write a an outline.

My writing process is not very organized. I rarely write a plot outline. I only write one when I have a really good idea. I don’t always follow the outline

perfectly, since I always get more ideas when I actually start writing the essay. I never take anything out of the outline, though; I only add. Whenever I revise, I go to Mother. She tells me ideas and tells me how to fix my mistakes. I go back, fix my mistakes, and then pick and choose among her ideas, adding them, and also adding my own. As for my final draft, I go over it myself, slowly analyzing every sentence. I also correct all of my spelling and grammar mistakes for the last time. Then, I skim over it, making sure it meets up to all of the writing prompt standards. Finally, I neatly print it all out on paper, or I type it on the computer.

I think one thing I could improve in my writing process is to pay more attention to my outline so that I will not have to add anything, except for the details, of course. I hope that by next year I will be able to write,

“I do not have any weaknesses.” In order to be able to write that down, I will have to accomplish four things. The first thing I will have to do is be able to have a “brainstorm” whenever I have to write an essay. The second and third things I will have to do are to be able to write a good introduction and conclusion. This will be simple with the aid of a “brainstorm.” My fourth and last thing to accomplish will be able to write an outline that has all of the details, so that I will not have to add anything. I am looking forward to accomplishing all of these things by next year!

*IST: Nathleen Albright*

*Mode: Writing Self-Assessment*

*Grade: 7*



Julia Zezza



## Mountain Mood

When the sky is filled with painted colors of pink, orange, and gray, the mountain awakens, releasing golden rays of sun, glistening on the crisp brown shrubs of the desert mountain. The birds tweet good morning, and the rocky mountain peaks stand tall, like knights protecting their noble king. The shadows of the early morn parade around the awakening animals of the mountain, and dance around the soft, golden sand. At this hour, so early in the new day, the mountain is alive with creatures and shadows. The land is golden and covered with scattering animals, and soft golden poppies peep out of the rocky sand, hoping for lush rain to end their desire for a misty sprinkle.

The shadows start to run away and the sky turns fluffy and blue: noon is setting in. The animals race for a warm, red desert rock, and the sun rises up to its view of the world, way up in the noon sky. The mountain is now quiet and soothing, and soft winds blow through the few straggling willows. The only noise is the flapping of the birds’ wings, and the soft sounds of escaping sand hitting the massive rocky peaks.

The day is ending, and as dusk sets in, grayness covers the desert mountain. The animals and rodents come out into the cold evening, and once again the shadows appear. The mountain turns into a place of lurking shadows and prowling animals. The sky is dark, and the sun disappears into the cloudy sky. The mountain becomes black, and there are no longer prancing golden rays of sun. A blanket of blackness covers the land. For us, it may be the end of the day, but for the mountain, and all of its life, it is only the

beginning. The world may be silent and dark, but the mountain is active and alive. So the next time you go to sleep, imagine the world of shadow and life on the mountain. When you shut your eyes, imagine a playful mountain lion pouncing on its prey, and when you are deep in sleep, imagine a world of active creatures playing, eating, and living on the silent desert mountain mood.

*IST: Esther Pidal*

*Mode: Expository/Descriptive*

*Grade: 7*

For us, it may be the  
end of the day, but for the  
mountain, and all of its life,  
it is only the beginning.

The Techniques of Mark Twain in The Prince and the Pauper

Mark Twain is a very entertaining author, but sometimes his books have special meanings that people do not always catch. Recently, I read the delightful tale of The Prince and the Pauper, which took place in early 16<sup>th</sup> century London.

After analyzing this book, I found that Twain is trying to get across the point that paupers in the 16<sup>th</sup> century were treated terribly. He wants to unveil the injustice that went on and nobody spoke of. He wants people to understand more about that time period.

This story begins as the two characters are brought into the world: one being the “scum of the country” and the other being the “prince of the country.” One is wrapped rags and the other in satins and silks. Twain most probably puts this illustration right in the start of the book so that the reader will know the vast differences of the lives of these two boys from the very beginning.

To make the story more interesting, Twain adds differences to the two boys. A great difference between them is the food that they consume. The poor pauper boy has almost nothing to eat all the time. On the other hand, the prince eats at large banquet halls every night that have many courses that make him so full he has leftovers.

The pauper boy lives in a small, one-room apartment house which he shares with his mother, father, grandmother, and two sisters. His mother and sisters are kind souls and are always good to their little boy. His father and grandmother, unfortunately, are drunkards, and each beats the young child every night he comes home empty-handed.

The prince, however, lives in an awesome castle with many servants. His father is a noble king and a good man to his son. His mother is deceased and his sister is the princess Elizabeth. The prince lives his joyful days as a king’s son, while the pauper spends most of his time wishing he could be a prince.

Twain puts these great differences in the book to show how different each of these two boys’ lives are, even though they are two very similar people. No one should have to live in the despair that the young pauper boy lives in. I think that was what Twain is trying to tell us.

Although born in different ranks, there are some similarities to the boys. Obviously, they were born in the same country. They are also the same age and look alike, and they both think that the other’s life is

better, until they find out for themselves that the “grass isn’t always greener on the other side.”

I think that Twain puts these similarities between the characters to remind the reader that two boys, who, if you were to look at them, are almost exactly alike, have very different lives because of the families they were born into. Making them look alike also adds more story and visual for the reader.

The characters in this book meet, decide to try on the other’s clothing, and are accidentally mistaken for each other. They learn how to get along living in someone else’s shoes, but one thing they learn that they will never forget is the way their station is punished. The pauper learns how the prince is punished while he is studying with the prince’s tutor. He is not being punished for the mistakes he makes, but instead he has a whipping boy to receive his punishment. The pauper is astonished.

The other finds out that for the smallest, slightest thing, a pauper will be thrown in jail and sometimes killed. Most paupers who are in prison are there because it is against the law to beg, which they do often. Another reason is that hunger drives them to steal food for themselves and their families. The prince is astonished also.

With these illustrations, Twain is able to portray the feeling of unfairness to all the readers. He gets his point across, but is held back by some difficulties. The major of these is the fact that he did not live in the 16<sup>th</sup> century or in London and probably had to do a lot of research in order to make this book seem so realistic.

I especially enjoyed reading this book because it took me back in time and made me realize what kind of poverty paupers went through in that time period. I hope that others who read this book realize the same thing and appreciate the amount of work that went into writing this book.

*IST: Kelly Westlake*

*Mode: Response to Literature*

*Grade: 8*

## Operation Election Day

Part 1

High Valley Street was a peaceful suburban road lined with oak trees and small one-story houses. Nothing exciting usually happened there, so when something did, it was usually remembered in tales passed down from neighbor to neighbor. There was that time when Mrs. Plum’s cat, Fluffy, became wedged in her chimney and had to be rescued by the fire department, and there was another time when.... Actually nothing else happened that was important in any way. At least not until Mood Ssenkard moved in.

The High Valley Street Club (HVSC) was a bunch of kids who made lemonade, sold lemonade, and played together. The club had been around for as long as anybody could remember, sometimes having as many as twenty participants. At the time, the HVSC consisted of three members: Alisa, a rational girl who claimed she was only in the club because she had nothing better to do; Petro, a big, burly boy who knew a lot about cars and hacking computers; and Mike, or “Brains,” who was very smart and good at making electronic things. On the day of September 6, Labor Day, they were selling lemonade in front of Brains’ house. Suddenly, a large moving truck came around the corner followed by an important-looking black sedan. The truck and the car came to a halt in front of the neighboring house. Brains, who was always very talkative, quickly started to gossip.

“Aha! So this is the person who’s buying Nick and John’s house. I used to go over there almost every day, you know. Nick was one of my best friends. Did you know that?”

Petro grunted. Brains continued talking.

“From the looks of that car, he must be very rich. I wonder if he wears a suit and is part of the FBI.”

“Where did you get that idea?” asked Alisa.

But before Brains could answer, the man got out of the car. He wasn’t wearing a suit, but he was wearing black jeans with a dark red long-sleeved shirt, black boots, black socks, black gloves, and a black cowboy hat, and carrying a large black briefcase. All they could see of his face was one eye. It was red and bloodshot with a big scar under it. They couldn’t see

his mouth, but from the black plume of smoke they knew he was smoking. The kids watched as three men in various darkly-colored garb got out of the truck and quickly started carrying strange pieces of equipment into the house. One of the men gave them an evil look.

“Is this lemonade-selling session over?” Alisa whispered.

Petro grunted and Brains nodded.

Part 2

After dinner, Alisa’s family always watched the news. It was one of their family traditions. Most newscasts were boring to Alisa. This one, however, got her attention.

“This is the ATGN evening headlines.” Some flashy music spouted from the speakers.

“Tonight we have breaking news from Washington. The Declaration of Independence was stolen from the National Archives today. This security camera witnessed the event.”

A camera showed four men in black breaking into a glass case and pulling out a yellow and crinkled document. The lead man stuffed it into a black briefcase and took off, pistol in hand. The three other men followed, wielding machine guns. All four looked very familiar.

“This heist happened eight hours ago, but since every security device was tricked and all the guards killed, it was only ten minutes ago during a shift change that we found out. It is unknown who the robbers are, but we must say: If you see these people, REPORT THEM TO THE AUTHORITIES!!! The President released a report saying that he would ‘track down the villains like the dogs they were.’ Keeping up his image as a strong, tough president, he said, ‘I’ll kill them. I promise’.”

Alisa was shocked. These crooks were living on her street!

Part 3

The next day, Petro and Alisa were waiting for Brains to come out of his house. They weren’t sure if he had heard the news that a robber was living next to

**...nothing else happened that was important in any way. At least not until Mood Ssenkard moved in.**

his house. Both of them had heard the news and immediately told their parents what they suspected. Both of them were told that they were crazy and that they were hallucinating. Hopefully, Brains' mom was more into listening. Brains came up to them slowly, with his head down. He looked up and saw them.

"You heard the news?" asked Alisa.

"Yep," was the reply.

"And your mom didn't listen." It was more of a statement than a question.

The HVSC walked the rest of the way to Blueton Middle School in silence.

After a day of classes, the three children went to a corner of the playground at Brains' bidding.

"I have a plan."

Petro cursed. Brains went on ignoring him.

"I think that we could persuade old Mister Helmado that we're telling the truth about this man."

"You mean Mood Ssenkard," said Petro.

They both stared at Petro.

"How did you find out?" asked Alisa.

"Hacking."

"Did you find out anything else?"

"Nope."

"Well, keep hacking, O.K.?"

"O.K."

They all looked at each other for a minute.

Petro had that effect when he talked. It kind of slowed down time. Alisa broke the silence.

"I think you have a good idea, Brains. Let's go talk to old Helmado."

#### Part 4

The three kids were soon at the door of old Helmado's. His house was on the other side of Mood Ssenkard's. They rang the doorbell, and about a minute later, old Helmado was at the door. He was about 70, and his age was showing. He had a ring of gray hair around a medium-sized bald spot, and a bad stoop. He was obviously surprised with the three kids who had knocked on his door.

"Yes?" he said in a dry voice.

Alisa took charge.

"Hi! This is the High Valley Street Club. We were wondering if we could talk about your new neighbor."

"The High Valley Street Club?"

"Yes. We would like to know what you think about this neighbor."

"Oh, yes, the new neighbor. Very spooky. You guys must be annoyed that he doesn't have any kids for you to play with."

"Well, yes, but what we wanted to talk to you about is —" Alisa paused. "We think he may have stolen the Declaration of Independence."

All that Brains was thinking was, *This is so stupid. We must sound like complete idiots.* The old man looked at them and burst into crackly laughter. Finally he spoke.

"Where did you get that idea? I suggest you go home and have some lemonade."

With that, the old man started to close the door.

"Wait a minute! Won't you at least hear us out?" Alisa yelled.

"You don't mean you actually believe that rubbish, do you?"

"We believe it all right, and you will too!"

"All right then, convince me."

"First off, he has a scar."

"So what? Lots of people have scars!"

"I mean on his face, in the exact same place as the man on the news's scar."

"If you ask me, that's a coincidence."

"Well, that's not all! He drives a big black car. He has three cronies who pretended to be moving people —"

"One has a limp," said Petro. Alisa was annoyed at being interrupted.

"What!?"

"One of the men on TV had a limp, and one of the 'movers' had a limp."

"Could have told me," Alisa grumbled and then looked up at old Helmado. "You see? We have plenty of evidence to support our case."

"I guess. I mean, if you're wrong it's not like they'll blame me if it's a false alarm."

Then with a swiftness that none of them could have thought possible of the old man, he was at the telephone dialing 911.

#### Part 5

The kids quickly holed up in Brains' house. From the den window, they would have an unobstructed view of Mood Ssenkard in his large living room. They could also see outside his house through a second window. Brains was first to see the police coming around the corner.

"Here they come," he told Alisa, who was looking at Mood. "They're taking out their guns and surrounding the house."

"He's on the phone now," reported Alisa.

"Wait a sec! There's another car coming around the corner. It looks exactly like the one Mood arrived in!"

A man in a black suit stepped out and yelled something at the police. They all stopped moving. The commander came over to the man and said coolly to him, "And by what authority do you do that?"

The man in the suit pulled out a card.

“FBI. I want all these cops back in their cars and out of the neighborhood. As far as you are concerned, this was a false alarm. No questions asked.”

The commander stuttered.

“Look, we can do this the easy way, or the hard way. The hard way spells NO MORE POLICING FOR JOE, O.K.? Just want to be clear on that.”

Slowly, the commander signaled the retreat.

“That’s right.”

The FBI agent waited until all the police officers left. Then he went up to the door and knocked. Mood opened the door. The kids watched as the crook poured the agent a drink, led him into the living room, and sat down at the table next to the window. The HVSC could hear their every word. They talked like old friends.

“A toast to the President! May he have a long and fruitful career!” said Ssenkard.

“He’ll have a long career only if you complete your mission, Moody!”

There was a clink.

“I don’t like how you were almost exposed. Operation Election Day is held very close to the President’s heart.”

“It’s no problem! However, I would like that old man next door ‘taken care of.’”

“No way! I’m not like that any more. How many times do I have to tell you!”

“Oh fine. Now scat! You’ve probably blown my cover.”

The agent left. The children were stunned.

#### Part 6

The three children were in Brains’ bedroom. They felt safer away from Mood Ssenkard. Finally, Alisa spoke.

“We have to stop them.”

“What?!? We don’t even know what their plan is. All we know is that an undercover FBI agent stole the Declaration of Independence! Maybe this is for the good of the country!”

Brains was on the verge of tears, but he continued speaking.

“Besides, how would we save the document if we knew it was an evil plot?”

All the while, Petro had been using Brains’ computer. Suddenly, he spoke.

“We know this is an evil plot.”

“We do?”

“Yes, we do. Operation Election Day is the President’s fast track to reelection. Three days before the election, the FBI, under the President’s wise guidance, will find Mood. A big celebration and lots of votes. This email says it all.”

“What?”

“Mood wants more money. Apparently, after he gets captured, he will be part of an elaborate ruse. He’ll be tried, convicted, and sentenced to death. Everyone will say he’s dead, but he won’t be. He’ll be in a country of his choice with \$100,000,000.”

There was silence.

“Oh yeah, and his name is Doom Darkness, not Mood Ssenkard.”

After a few minutes, Alisa spoke.

“Well, Brains, let’s see you earn your nickname. What’s the plan?”

#### Part 7

The next week was spent planning and watching. Brains wanted to find a time that they would have at least an hour when Doom would be dependably away from his house. Brains also made a floor plan and searched for any sign of a security system. Finally, on Sunday, they made their plans. It appeared that on all the weekdays Doom went to work to be inconspicuous. He probably just went to amusement parks or malls, but that didn’t matter very much. Petro had read all Doom’s emails and mail and found out that Doom had bought a state-of-the-art vault and laser security system for the Declaration. He had placed the vault in the wall behind the fireplace. Brains would disable the regular house security system, and then Petro would cut power to the entire house. This hopefully would disable the vault security. They would then snatch the document, replace it with Alisa’s fake, restore power, fix the house security system, and depart. They would call the authorities and show them what happened. It was simple. They set the date of the operation for Tuesday and waited.

#### Part 8

It was 3:00 on Tuesday. School had already gotten out. Brains and Alisa stood in front of the house and Petro in the back. Alisa and Petro both had short-range walkie-talkies.

“Are you check, Petro?”

“Yep! Rubber gloves, grounding wire, and crowbar.”

“Then we’re going in.”

Alisa and Brains walked up to the door. Alisa started the countdown.

“Ready? On three. One...Two...Three!”

Brains jammed a little piece of wire into the key-hole and twisted. The door swung open and Alisa hit a button on her electronic watch. They now had 30 seconds to disable the basic security system that protected the house. Brains ripped off the plastic panel in front of the code box. He quickly cut and tied some wires. After 25.67 seconds, he was done. Alisa spoke into her walkie-talkie.

“Okay, we’re in. We’ll now commence looking for the safe.”

“Okay.”

It didn’t take long for Brains and Alisa to find the safe. Brains lifted a brick in the fireplace, revealing a sleek, silver number pad.

“Petro?” Alisa asked. “We need you to cut the power.”

Outside, standing over the concrete slab he had just levered out of its place, Petro stood looking at some wires. He was supposed to push down one of the three levers that were connected to the black box.

However, Brains hadn’t specified which lever. Instead of asking Alisa, which, in his opinion, would have been a waste of words, Petro pushed all three down. The power was turned off for nine blocks.

Inside Darkness’s house, Alisa and Brains were heaving open the safe. Its lid had turned out to be a 3x3 slab of the brick in front of the fireplace. They lifted it off and saw the Declaration of Independence. It was laid out flat in the same black briefcase that Doom had brought it in. With shaking fingers, Brains lifted it out of the safe. They turned and quickly walked towards the door....

“Where do you think you’re going, little children?”

## Part 9

They slowly turned around. There, standing in front of the safe, was Doom Darkness. His gun was pointed directly at them.

“You didn’t think you could get away with that, did you? I have twenty security systems, and you only disabled two. You see, I had a surveillance cam watching your friend, so I had enough time to divert all my power to the emergency battery.”

“But I checked all the wires...” Brains was astounded. He didn’t even ask how Doom could be here when they saw him leave that morning.

“Well, some of us are very smart, and others... Needless to say, I would like my little document, if you will...” Doom reached out a hand.

“No! Never!”

“Oh well. I’ll just take it from your dead body. But have no fear, I was going to kill you anyway.” Doom cocked his gun.

“Say bye-bye.” Doom aimed his gun.

Suddenly Darkness’s face was aglow, as fifty little red dots speckled his face. Even as Doom’s finger tensed on the trigger, a bullet hit the gun. There was an explosion and a scream of pain. Doom’s gun had exploded in his hand. There was the sound of helicopters and cars. A loud speaker blared:

“DOOM DARKNESS! PUT YOUR HANDS IN THE AIR IN THE NAME OF THE BLUETON

POLICE! WE ARE PLACING YOU UNDER ARREST!”

“But...How? I had ten security cams! Two guards! A radar station! Undercover cops! The support of the President!!!”

“WE BRIBED YOUR GUARDS. NOW, IN THE NAME OF THE BLUETON P.D., SURRENDER YOUR ARMS. THE TWO CHILDREN MAY NOW EXIT THE BUILDING!”

The next few hours passed by slowly. Alisa and Brains exited the building to see their parents and Petro waiting. It seemed that Petro had heard everything on the walkie-talkie. He had called the police who, after some intense moments, bribed the guards into shutting down the security system. SWAT snipers had surrounded the building and the two guards were escorted out. However, they did not go easily. They knocked two police officers unconscious and escaped. They were later found in Fourleaves and captured. Five minutes after his minions escaped, Doom Darkness was locked up in a bomb-proof truck and searched. After that, the HVSC members were taken to Blueton Police headquarters and questioned. After six hours, the three kids were released and warned that they might be called as witnesses. When they returned home, they each saw the scene in Washington on their families’ TVs. Cameras rolled as the President was escorted into a massive jail truck and then locked in a maximum security jail. He issued a statement saying that he wished all his supporters would still vote for him. He was ignored and became the single least popular president in history. He was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment. In short, Operation Election Day was the biggest flop in history.

## EPILOGUE

After all the turmoil of the election, the HVSC members’ lives returned to normal. The HVSC’s membership increased, and soon the club was 15 members strong. A family of five moved into Doom Darkness’s home a year and a half after the scandal and two of the children joined the club. It was old Helmado who told the family all the lore of High Valley Street. He told them about the previous owner of the house and the SWAT snipers. The mom of the new family listened intently, then said, “Any other things I should know about this neighborhood?”

Old Helmado told her about Mrs. Plum and Fluffy.

*IST: Cindy Hamman*

*Mode: Narrative*

*Grade: 8*

## Poetry

I have been asked to write about my favorite art, and, as the title suggests, that art is poetry. Poetry seems to be about the least common of all the arts, and though people like to listen to it, few actually care to compose it. I partly like composing poetry because it takes up spare time and flows in rhythms and rhymes. Poetry is quick, easy, and fun.

I like coming up with stories using poetry, and using it to explain feelings of the main character, like sorrow or anger. You can make it quick and gripping, or bouncing and joyful (which I haven't quite mastered yet). You can make poems slow and sad. There is no limit to what you can do with poetry if you have enough imagination, and imagination is not my problem. Living on Desert Front Road, certainly not one of the forested parts of San Bernardino County, where nobody else cares to live, there is nothing to do *but* imagine, and one gets very good at it.

I like making stories using poetry because a short story is more interesting when it rhymes and flows, and is a lot more interesting for me to write because I can go with the flow of it. I like being able to design characters, their strengths and weaknesses, and have them overcome their weaknesses.

I tend to write mostly about battles and wars and raiders. It is hard for me to get away from that kind of mindset, and my two poems are about battles. I am planning on making a peaceful poem or a happy poem, maybe about things like being a brother or living away from the major cities, or even something simple, like rain.

I have written two poems. My first poem, "The Sentinel," did not have any morals and was mostly battles, because the characters were in a war. On top of that, "The Sentinel" was too vague for anybody to understand it. "The Sentinel" was sixteen hundred words and had three parts. Part one was a siege, part two was the plot, and part three was another battle. Since "The Sentinel" was too vague, with my next poem

I tried to make it less so. I called my next poem "The Gate."

"The Gate" is about a Roman guard who deserts his post out of fear when he hears word of the Huns approaching. He is sorry until, by mercy and love, he gets a second chance.

"The Gate" is much better than "The Sentinel," because though it is a hundred words less than "The Sentinel," it is more detailed, better written, and tells a moral. The moral to "The Gate" is bravery.

When I got done with "The Sentinel," I had a big feeling of accomplishment because it was my first poem. When I wrote "The Gate," I didn't feel much until my grandmother read it; she almost made me feel like I should pin some badge on my chest that read "POET." I guess grandmothers are like that.

I haven't read or listened to many poems, and I don't know of many English poets. Nonetheless, however much poetry I have heard, I write it. If somebody asked me what really makes me like writing poetry, I would have no answer. I just like it. It's not just boredom that makes me write. Poetry is something in me.

### The Gate

Ah, for life was well, on my duty, at the gate,  
How I loved that feeling, that I'm sure none could hate,  
The skies were very blue, and the air felt so good.  
Children moving fast on their sleds made of wood.  
All the things they told me, all about other lands,  
Many of them told me not with words, but with their  
hands.

Life was full of joy, I was a Roman volunteer.  
Many passersby, so happy, spoke with cheer.  
It was too good to last, and my joy went away,  
Though I was a guard, I had not been in a fray.  
Oh, the dreadful Hun, that murderous, evil knave.  
I was cowardly and I was not strong, wasn't brave,  
And it was Attila, Attila, the Hun.  
All the guards around me were saying, "We must run!"  
And I looked around me, "What difference does *one*  
make?"

Living on Desert Front  
Road, certainly not one of the  
forested parts of San Bernardino  
County, where nobody else cares  
to live, there is nothing to do *but*  
imagine, and one gets very good  
at it.

Oh, I was making a dreadful mistake.  
That horrible mistake....

They, riding through and burning  
I, watching, stomach churning,  
And sitting there discerning  
Sound from sound.

People yelling, people screaming,  
And inside me, sorrow streaming,  
And my face no longer beaming,  
As it had when peace did abound.

I, quietly in hiding,  
Under rubble, I abiding,  
To escape the fearful riding  
Of the chilling, killing Huns.

All those poor civilians dying,  
People all around me crying,  
And I was down there lying,  
Wondering why a person runs.

All the village was on fire,  
Death and slaughter very dire,  
And the toll was getting higher,  
All because we left our post.

Oh, that horrible mistake!  
How much chaos it did make!  
Our dear town left in the wake  
Of the mighty Hunnish host.  
And when I came out of hiding, I was sorry as could  
be,  
Walking through the rubble, which was all that I could  
see.

No one left to talk to, except for those who hid,  
I would always be so sorry for doing what I did.  
The wreckage, the carnage, everything was ash,  
Nothing left, nothing there, it had all turned to trash.  
And I said,

“I’ll never leave my post again!”

“I’ll never leave my post again!”

Things would never be the same,  
Yet from all my remorse, all of my shame,  
I found myself a better name,  
Much better than I became.  
The town then started all anew,  
Even though it had been through  
The worst to ever hit a town.  
It was a spirit none could put down.  
Determination to recreate  
The town, the church, the wall, the gate,  
Never give in. Always believe  
That when it’s not there, you don’t just leave:  
You can build back the town. You can remake the wall.  
It’s giving up that makes you fall.  
In and out the gate they went,  
Asking bricks to be sent,

And when the villages could not,  
They made their own, and on they fought.  
Brick by brick, and piece by piece,  
Their hope and faith would never cease.  
As for me, they saw my gloom,  
I told my tale, love did bloom,  
Forgiveness! What a wonderful trait!  
They trusted me to guard the gate.  
A second chance had come by fate,  
They trusted me to guard the gate....

The town was rebuilt in January.  
In May, I was so joyful and merry.  
Oh, yes, I loved that day.  
Ah, joy, the middle of May.  
Except there was a problem nigh,  
There always is a reason to cry.  
They’d not finished, they weren’t done.  
It was they, the host of the Hun.  
Then I remembered the oath that I gave,  
But most, the love with which they forgave.  
Though Attila was killed, and now was dead,  
And most of the Hunnish host had fled,  
Their rations to eat were very crude,  
The retreating men needed much food.  
I took my position atop the gate,  
I knew they’d come very late.  
I could not run and would not run.  
I stopped, turned, and looked towards the sun,  
And I knew this would be a battle....

One o’clock. I see them by  
Their torches, which seem to light the sky.  
I tell the friar to evacuate,  
And he starts the line out another gate.

Two o’clock. They’re closer still.  
I stay in place, not just by will,  
But by my oath, I stay in place,  
Yet on the wall, I pace and pace.

Three o’clock. My fingers numb,  
I grab my spear, for eight have come.  
I use a rope to swing off the gate,  
And raise my challenge to the eight,  
One speared through; another unhorsed,  
And one who sees me, not sure-coursed.  
Three more come to take their place,  
But are held still by what is on my face;  
Determination to hold them off.  
Two more look at me and scoff,  
They draw their swords and charge at me,  
But my spear they plainly see,  
So I roll down and lie prostrate,  
And instead of me, they hit the gate.  
They decide to ride back and report,  
How that eight were now three short.

Four o'clock, I'm reinforced.  
Twelve men come, and I get horsed.  
Three bows, three pikes, and seven swords,  
Against a tenth of the Hunnish hordes,  
But we get ready to hold them at bay  
Until the citizens get away.  
Then we look west toward that host,  
Which was really just a ghost,  
Of what it used to be....

Five o'clock, the skirmish starts,  
We know fear deep in our hearts,  
That we will die for this cause,  
For we are in the Hunnish jaws....  
The riders come. We spear them through.  
Others come and they fall too.  
The dismounted men turn 'round,  
Charge us in the immense sound,  
And the skirmish grows and grows.  
How many Huns? No one knows.  
Five more come to join our ground,  
And to tell all's safe and sound,  
Because the citizens are gone,  
And the battle can end, instead of go on.

Six o'clock, we all can leave,  
Yet we come up with a plan the Huns can't conceive.  
We tie lots of ropes to the gate,  
To pull and give the Huns their fate.  
But somebody must stay behind  
To pull the ropes and make things grind.  
I step up and say 'tis me,  
So I won't be known as cowardly,  
And to settle things, way down inside,  
From which I cannot hide.  
Whether I die or whether I live,  
What I took I now must give.

Seven o'clock, I am alone.  
Everyone's gone, for reasons well known.  
They all have a family, friends, and a home,  
But I have none in the empire of Rome.  
They'd died when I was but two years,  
Pleading my case to deaf ears.  
Until the Romans picked me up,  
And fed me from their bowl and cup.  
I grip the rope, I know they're there,  
I hear them so I pull the snare,  
I hear their yells and panic rise,  
I've done it! I made them a big surprise!

Eight o'clock rings the bell,  
I jump out and raise a yell,  
"I will never leave my post again!"  
Then rush out to confront these men.  
I see them and their surprised faces,  
Standing still with clubs and maces.  
I charge and fight two at a time,

And cast into one's face a handful of lime.  
And when they get over my yell and my run,  
Up has come the morning sun.  
Though they come and encircle me,  
I fight back vigorously.

Nine o'clock, all seems lost,  
But the Huns will have killed me at greater cost.  
As I remember the town *we* built,  
My hand clasps tighter to the hilt.  
But they charge, in fullest strength,  
Knock my sword quite a length,  
And then... They close in.

Though I'm helpless, I stand tall,  
Ready to meet the saddest fall.  
Only a small length away,  
I look into his eyes and still I stay.  
But lo! Something from the sky!  
Lo! Something coming nigh!  
Faster in speed than any horse,  
Surer than any arrow in course,  
It hits the ground and causes the man  
To fall off his horse, and run fast as he can.  
The object is radiant and blue,  
It's round and it can be seen through,  
The others cautiously close in,  
But I just look both ways and grin,  
In the ball, or so it seems to be,  
There's a sword shining radiantly.  
I gather my courage and plunge in my arm,  
And the ball doesn't give me any harm.  
I grip the sword and pull it out,  
Then point it towards them and raise a shout.  
And after three are gone with ease,  
The army doesn't wait, just flees.  
I clean the sword, put it back in the sphere,  
And back off to let it disappear...

There's the story I wanted to tell,  
It has its morals and rhymes which cast the spell.  
Determination, faith, and hope,  
The ability to cope,  
But most of all, as you see,  
This poem's about bravery.

### The End

*IST: Eileen Mastro*

*Mode: Expository & Poetry*

*Grade: 8*

Ruthie and Mary

If someone were to compare Mary Ingalls and me, Ruth Tengbom, just by looking at us they would probably say that the only thing we have in common is our eye and hair color. I am going to investigate beyond what we look like and how many letters there are in our names. I am going to compare our personalities and who we actually are. We may have different backgrounds, but we have a lot in common.

Out of the many things we have in common, I believe that the strongest thing we have in common is our big sisterhood. Mary has a younger sister named Laura. My younger sister, Esther, is a lot like Laura. Both are very creative and invent games. They are also curious and have tons of energy. Laura and Esther are always out playing and looking for trouble. They are also tomboys. They both get dirty and they do not care one bit about their clothes or what they are in. Mary and I, however, are clean and organized, and we do not want to get our clothes dirty.

Mary and I are very clean and careful, like a mother bear is protective of her cubs. We never want to mess up our hair, or get our clothes dirty, or go play in the dirt. We are also organized and responsible. Our mothers can always trust us to do the right thing. We are also great helpers. We help a lot with babies and around the house. We also love to read and dream of one day becoming teachers. It is never hard for me to curl up with a book on the couch or in bed and read. Mary loves to read too. I have wanted to be a teacher for quite a long time now, and I plan on doing that for a career. Mary enjoys going to school and dreams of being able to stand up by the board and teach. Mary and I have many things in common, but we also have differences.

Mary is the oldest child. I am the fourth out of five children. Mary also moves a lot. When her family moves, they move long distances and they travel in a covered wagon. I have only moved four times and I have traveled by car. I have never lived out of the state. I have only lived in California.

My daily routine is quite different from Mary's. She makes clothes and does chores every day. I buy my clothes and I do not do chores. Mary has a routine for every morning. I just wake up when I wake up, have breakfast when I want to, and then I go on with my day from there. Mary wakes up, has breakfast with her family, does her chores for that particular day, and never watches TV!

Our biggest difference is that Mary becomes blind. I cannot say that I will not become blind, but I am not blind now and I certainly do not want to be.

Being blind is one of the things that Mary has to go through, and I do not have to.

I do wonder how Mary handles her blindness so well. I think that to be blind would be miserable. I cannot imagine not being able to see. I would always wonder what is going on. I am so glad that I do not have to go through the struggle of being blind. However, I did

have to go through something Mary did not: divorce. My parents are divorced, and I have to go to visit my dad for visitation. My mom has to go to court, and it really stinks. Mary's parents are never upset with each other. When something goes wrong they work together and find some way to get out of it: "No pesky mess of grasshoppers can beat us! We'll do something! You'll see! We'll get along somehow" (Wilder 209). Everyone has to go through tough times, but we have to face the fact that life will do that.

I learn a lot of things from On the Banks of Plum Creek, by Laura Ingalls Wilder (Harper Trophy, 1937). I learn to be kind to my sister and to play with her while we are still young. I especially learn to be grateful for what I have. I have a lot more things than some people. I also gain a lot of respect for blind people. I understand a little more what it would be like to be blind. I look forward to reading the next book in this series.

*IST: Rebecca Unetic*

*Mode: Response to Literature*

*Grade: 8*

We may have different backgrounds, but we have a lot in common.

Letter to the President

President of the United States of America  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.  
Washington D.C.

Dear President George W. Bush:

Congratulations on your recent presidential election victory. I am writing to you today to recommend a beautiful and inspirational speech, "Glory and Hope," written by President Nelson Mandela, which was given to his countrymen at his inauguration in 1994. It is a speech about **reconciliation** and one most appropriate for a President who may need to unify the people of his country. I recently studied this speech in my English 9 class and I thought you should read it as you begin your new presidency. The Republican victory was made possible by 51% of the population. The other 49% of the American people who did not vote for you is still a very large number of people. A reconciliatory agenda would be beneficial and advantageous for your next four years.

Every four years, Americans get the chance to elect a new President to lead the United States of America. This presidential race usually boils down to the selection of a winner between two rival candidates from either the Republican or Democratic parties. The morning after this last presidential election—one in which the Republican party won the office of President and the majority of seats in both the Senate and the House of Representatives—the people of the United States and the world saw the complete and total control over the United States system of government by the Republican Party.

Our constitutional forefathers sought to balance our new government by three separate branches of government. We know from past experience that a balance of these branches of government works best when the people feel both parties are in positions of power for balanced representation. The dejected Democratic Party members—saddened and confused by the loss of their candidate John Kerry and the loss of the Senate—now creates a lopsided representation of ideology in this country. Many times after a contentious election, people start to wonder, question, and even

sabotage their support of the American government. It is the long-held view in this country that, in a democratically elected government, it is the first and most important responsibility of the party voted into power and its President to **reconcile** with the losing party in order to keep all of its citizens secure in the knowledge that a government works for the good of all the people.

We must remember how fortunate we are to live in a country where we have the opportunity to freely elect our leaders. The speech "Glory and Hope," given by President Nelson Mandela in 1994 to the people of South Africa to celebrate their first free election and the policy of majority rule, is truly an inspiring and uplifting speech to people of all nations. It is a speech that enlightens and gives hope to all

people. It gave hope to the poor disenfranchised Black population and hope to the rich ruling White minority citizenry, who were then uncertain about losing their dominant position in that society.

Given that 49% of the American population may be feeling discouraged and

downhearted by the recent election results, I strongly recommend reading this speech. It will put citizenship and leadership in perspective and renew your commitment to supporting a government that tries to speak for the concerns of all the people of the United States, regardless of their differing political ideologies.

In his speech "Glory and Hope," Mandela states that in the process of forming a new democracy "a society" must be "born of which all humanity will be proud." The citizens' and the leader's "daily deeds" must produce "a reality that will reinforce humanity's belief in justice," "strengthen confidence in the nobility of the human soul," and "sustain all our hopes for a glorious life for all." I believe Mandela's explanation is the primary reasoning behind why we want our leaders and our form of governing to work for the good of all people. Black or White, Republican or Democrat, every individual in a government or group of people is directly impacted by the policies of the government. We as Americans must not lose hope but must continue to have faith in the structure built by our country's forefathers.

A reconciliatory agenda would be beneficial and advantageous for your next four years.

All people can and should be inspired to adapt the goals of this speech for their own current lives. Mandela states, “We know that none of us acting alone can achieve success.” He continues, “We must therefore act together as a united people for ***national reconciliation*** for nation building” and “for the birth of a new world.” It is my sincere hope that you, Mr. President, will also hold these deeply-held beliefs in mind as you progress in your presidency and lead our

country toward reconciliation with the Democratic leaders and citizens.

Sincerely,

Chris Bowles

*IST: Ruth Ortiz*

*Mode: Persuasion*

*Grade: 9*



Andrew Brown



### Green Power

I woke up this morning to a bright, sunny, hot day in southern California. I walked outside of my hilltop home to enjoy the view while sipping my glass of orange juice. As I looked out, I noticed a dark brown haze over the valley obscuring my view. My eyes burned and my breathing was uneasy. I started to cough lightly. I decided to drive my gas-guzzling sports utility vehicle to the beach for some fresher, cleaner air and relief from the summer heat. I then realized that my fossil fuel-powered car was adding toxic pollutants into the air. The air at the beach was cleaner, cooler, and breezy. I slapped on 45 SPF sunscreen to block out the harmful UV rays from penetrating my skin. As I stepped into the waves to start boogie boarding, I noticed a dead fish in the water, and a black, oily, tarry substance stuck to my foot. Obviously, we need to use less fossil fuels and more solar and wind to power our planet.

Fossil fuels have been used for over a hundred years. Fossil fuels can be expensive to obtain and use. Furthermore, the extensive use of fossil fuels has caused a serious and rapid decline of the earth’s limited supply. Fossil fuels provide energy, yet they also have harmful and serious side effects. We have destroyed large quantities of land to build open-air mines in the process of drilling the oil from beneath the earth’s surface. Drilling for oil is also done in the ocean. The crude oil is then loaded into ships and tanker trucks where it is then moved to a refinery for processing into a usable fuel source. The process of obtaining and transporting oil leads to a risk of oil spills, which can cause extensive damage to the oceans, land, and wildlife. The burning of fossil fuels to power our automobiles, airplanes, trains, power plants, and ocean liners are sending out pollutants, toxins, and carcinogens that are destroying both the air we breathe

and the ozone layer and that are exposing us to harmful UV rays from the sun. The pollutants also cause acid rain, which can harm animals, plants, crops, and people.

Furthermore, most of the crude oil supplied to our nation comes from other countries. Some of these countries do not share the same political views as our nation, and our relationship with some of these countries is tenuous at best. Should one of these countries ever cut off our supply of crude oil, our lifestyle and livelihood could drastically change. We need to stop depending on fossil fuels as our primary source of energy.

Solar and wind power do not have any of these harmful effects on the Earth. They can provide energy and electricity without creating pollution. Solar power comes from solar panels absorbing the sun’s light, turning the sun’s energy into energy that can be used. Solar power is unlimited and doesn’t release toxins into the air. Solar panels have become smaller and more efficient, making solar power a reasonable and logical way to produce energy.

The wind can be harnessed to generate power through the use of windmills. The wind spins the propellers on the windmill, thus turning a turbine to produce electricity. Wind is a natural phenomenon that occurs everywhere in the world and has been used for centuries to provide power to ships and farms. Wind power also gives off no pollutants, is virtually unlimited, and is not very expensive.

Solar and wind power have been proven to work just as well and just as efficiently as power derived from fossil fuels. Through the use of solar and wind power, we can eliminate gasoline-powered cars and replace them with electric and/or solar-powered cars. Electricity generating power plants can use solar and wind power to create electricity instead of using fossil

fuels. Those power plants could provide the electricity needed to operate electric automobiles and trains, factories, lighting, heating, air conditioning, and other household appliances.

Our world would be a much better place if the energy we required to live were provided by the power of the wind and of the sun. Our Earth would be free of the toxic pollutants put into the air by the use of power generated by fossil fuels. The air would be

cleaner and appear much more blue. The oceans would also be cleaner and a safer environment for sea life and humans. The earth would be greener and people could live longer, healthier, and more productive lives.

*IST: Bobbi White*

*Mode: Persuasion*

*Grade: 9*



Elizabeth Joris



## Adoptive Sides

What is adoption? Is it some horrible thing where a mother abandons her baby and leaves it to someone else's care? Or is it something beautiful where a baby is given to a couple who can provide a loving and secure home for it? This paper will show the emotions that each party has when they get involved with adoption. We will explore the mindsets of the birthmother, the adoptive parents, and the adopted child. I hope you can open your mind to my way of thinking. After all, who better to write this paper than a child adopted and raised with other adopted siblings by two wonderful parents?

When a birth mother considers adoption, she might think, in horror, that if she chooses to give her baby up for adoption people might think that she doesn't care about the precious little human inside of her. The birth mother might also think of how it would be if she kept the child: "Would it grow up and do what I did?" Unfortunately, that is what would probably happen.

Children raised in broken homes are very likely to feel insecure and then repeat the cycle of their parents. If the mother decides to let her young child be adopted, she will then probably come to the tearjerking question of whether or not she will ever see or talk to the child again after adoption. This can only be decided by the adoptive parents and, later, the child (I know that my mom gets cards from my birth mom, and I also know that I really want to meet her some day). In truth, giving a baby up for adoption is a very noble thing to do. It shows that, no matter how

attached the birth mother feels, she is always going to think of her baby first.

Now for another side of the story, that of the adoptive parents. When a couple considers adoption, they might be a little nervous, wondering, "What if the birth mother doesn't choose us? Will this child feel like our own? Should we tell the child everything from the start? What if the process doesn't go smoothly? What if the birth mother has to stay in contact with this child for the rest of our days?" The truth is that the adoption agency does most of the matching before the adoptive parents and prospective child even meet. Since they are pretty skilled at choosing the right adoptive parents for

the birth mom, there is a great likelihood that the adoptive parents she is introduced to will be the ones she picks. Once someone has watched a child grow, nurtured it, lived with it, and basically lived with and for it, the baby will become the adoptive parents' child.

As for the process of adoption running smoothly, it really depends on the agency that is used. Although one hundred different agencies would provide the best adoption experience possible, there are just as many that would make it miserable. When parents tell the child everything, from the time the child asks whether she or he came out of Mommy's tummy or not, it gives the child a feeling of security. It lets the child know that not only its parents love it, but that its birth mom loved it a lot, too. To know everything makes the child feel special and

**After all, who better to write this paper than a child adopted and raised with other adopted siblings by two wonderful parents?**

unique. Now, staying in contact with the birth mom is not mandatory; however, staying in contact with her will make the adjustment easier (for her more than anyone else). This will also give the parents something to tell the child as it gets older, sort of a way to give the child updates on how the birth mother is getting along.

Now for a look at the final side, that of the adopted child. Adoptive parents shouldn't be surprised when the child starts thinking or even voicing certain questions. Even when a child comes to ask its mother if being adopted was the best thing for it, there should be no alarm. Children will often wonder what it would be like living with their birth mom. Though children may ask whether they can ever write, or even meet, their birth mom, it doesn't mean that the children don't love their adoptive parents. How could they not? These were the people who raised, fed, clothed, comforted, and gave up their lives for them.

Now that I have stated my point of view, I can only hope that you, the reader, have come out of this

with an enlightened mind and changed heart. I know that at this present time many are convinced that if a woman doesn't raise the child she bore, she obviously doesn't love it. But in assuming this they fail to look at the two other sides, those of the adoptive parents and of the child. Often the adoptive parents are a couple who for some reason can't have children but desperately want a child to love, adore, and watch grow. As for the child, what kind of a life is it not ever to get to see the one parent she or he has because that parent is always at work in order to be able to feed and clothe the child? That isn't a very healthy life. If you have read my paper all the way through, I thank you for being so open-minded that you felt inclined to do so.

*IST: Eileen Mastro*

*Mode: Persuasion*

*Grade: 9*



Laura Schneeberger



## Behind the Mask

When deciding which two books I would like to write about, the ones that came to mind were The Phantom of the Opera, by Gaston Leroux, and Cyrano de Bergerac, by Edmond Rostand. Both books are set in late 19<sup>th</sup> century France. In his book, Leroux blends a thrilling mystery with a gripping love story. The Phantom of the Opera is the tale of a musical genius, Erik, who has a disfigured face and who uses a beautiful young opera singer, Christine Daae, as his way to vent his amazing melodic abilities. In Cyrano de Bergerac, Rostand's love of poetry is clearly evident in his characters. Cyrano is an extraordinary swordsman and excellent poet, but because of his hideously enormous nose, he is considered ugly. Both Cyrano and Erik are hindered in life because of their outer appearance, whereas their inner, seldom-seen talent is incredibly more fascinating.

Love is the main theme in both books. In The Phantom of the Opera, the Phantom (also known as Erik) loves the prima donna Christine. Using his great knowledge of singing, he teaches her the art of opera and makes her a star. Yet his love for her is a selfish love: he tells her that only as long as she remains his and his alone will he continue to instruct her. Christine feels sorry for Erik because of his bitterness toward

people who have mocked his face, and thus promises that she will love no one. Though she tries hard to live up to her promise, she finds that she loves her childhood playmate Raoul de Chagny. She soon realizes that she can not be with him because of Erik's wrath, and when she tells Raoul, he is very jealous of the Phantom and becomes his rival.

In Cyrano de Bergerac, Cyrano, despite his fame and prestige, finds himself depressed and lonely. He loves his cousin, Roxane, but thinks that she could never return his feelings because of his large nose. Roxane is enthralled by poetry, of which Cyrano is a connoisseur. Yet she loves Christian, a handsome youth who is a cadet in Cyrano's military academy. Her feelings are reciprocated by Christian, but he is shy around women and cannot express his love in the poetry that she wants to hear. Cyrano's love is unselfish: for Roxane's sake, he makes sure Christian is safe and not sent to battles.

Friendship takes on a twisted form in these stories. The relationship between Raoul and the Persian—a man who knew Erik and once saved his life—is hardly a friendship. Both men are after the Phantom—the Persian to put a stop to his murderous tirades and Raoul to rescue Christine. It just so happens

that they find each other and realize that one needs something the other has that both lack. This is the same case in Cyrano de Bergerac. Cyrano sees that Christian has the looks he desires, and Christian realizes that Cyrano has the poetic ability he desires to woo Roxane. They develop a friendship: Cyrano gets to tell Roxane how he really feels by writing love letters under Christian's name and good looks, and Christian lives out the dream that Cyrano always wanted.

Betrayal is not as clearly evident as the other traits in each of the stories. Christine's love for Raoul serves as a betrayal to the Phantom, breaking her promise to love only him. She even sneaks off with Raoul up to the highest place in the opera house so that Erik cannot find them together. In Cyrano de Bergerac, the only real betrayal is Cyrano's betrayal of himself. He does not see his own worth, his own talents, and instead uses Christian to write to Roxane. Because of this, Roxane believes that Christian has not just the looks, but even more important to her, the heart and soul that she loves. Thus, Cyrano does not gain her love, which he would have, had he not been so wrapped up in thinking she would be repulsed by his unattractive features.

In the end of both stories, there is redemption of the characters, however tragic. Erik discovers *true* love, sparing Raoul's life. He lets Christine leave and marry Raoul, even though she had promised to be his wife in order to save Raoul. This, of course, makes Erik tremendously heartbroken, which is the reason for his death. In the conclusion of Cyrano de Bergerac, Roxane finds out that it was really Cyrano who had written her all those letters. She discovers this while he is dying, and unfortunately never gets to express her love to him.

In both stories, many things greatly influence the themes. The Phantom of the Opera is set in the Paris Opera House. Events in the book often take place in dark cellars, in a basement, or in the underground lake where the Phantom lives. The Phantom, like where he lives, is shadowy and mysterious. In contrast, Cyrano de

Bergerac is outdoors most of the time, so it is not as dark and gloomy a theme. While Cyrano is thoughtful, though sometimes depressed and bitter about his looks and Roxane's love, he is more closed about his feelings, which he only expresses in poetry.

These classic books both have what I consider to be good messages. In Leroux's book, the Phantom learns selfless love by letting Christine live happily with Raoul, even though he loves her also. I believe this is a good message because it shows that, despite personal feelings towards someone, if an individual loves someone, that individual will want that person to be happy, even if that happiness does not include the individual. In today's society, the true meaning of love is very much degraded to physical things. Likewise in Cyrano de Bergerac, Cyrano and Roxane learn that a pretty face is not as valuable as a beautiful mind and soul, and that the latter is much more important and precious. This is important for teens today because people are so obsessed with their outer appearance that very few look past the superficial.

These two books are very dear to my heart because of the above-mentioned messages. The characters learn to look past the flesh and at the soul beneath it. Sometimes I find myself judging people because of the way they look and thus must hastily admonish my thinking. I remember the Phantom, who hid himself away from the world because of people with my attitude. He wore a mask to cover his facial distortions. This, I believe, is symbolic of this society. Many people, whether their distortion is physical or emotional, are forced to wear a mask—a façade to disguise who they are or what they look like. All the Phantom wanted was acceptance, and that is all he deserved. This greatly influences the way I treat others who may look different than me or than everyone else. After all, there could be a genius underneath the mask.

*IST: Rebecca Unetic*

*Mode: Response to Literature*

*Grade: 9*



Mohammed Mana



## Dreams for a Better Tomorrow

In the history of Black Heritage many individuals have, through their actions, writings, or speeches, presented themes from day-to-day lives of Blacks in America. Two of those individuals are Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Langston Hughes. Both men worked diligently to show the lack of opportunity and discrimination Blacks faced everyday, the extreme

conditions many lived in, as well as the ongoing prosecution and what they had to do just to get by. But they also stressed dreams: dreams for a better tomorrow, dreams for opportunities for Blacks to study, learn, work, and even govern and lead. Dr. King gave sermons and lectures and taught at prestigious Black universities, while Langston Hughes wrote books,

stories, and articles. Even though these two men differed in their style of writing and speech, they shared the same goals and they both achieved many great accomplishments. The following paragraphs compare the way King and Hughes treated the two topics of lack of opportunity and dreams, in two of their most notable writings: King's "I Have a Dream" and Hughes's "Thank You Ma'am."

The first issue that the two writings deal with is lack of opportunity. King stresses how much Blacks suffer injustice, captivity, segregation, discrimination, and poverty. He says that while the majority of people around Blacks enjoy "material prosperity," Blacks themselves are still drowned in poverty. One of the reasons King offers for why Blacks live the way they do is because they are constantly tormented by unjust prosecution and uncalled-for police brutality. These instances make it hard for them to achieve the most basic standards of living. From reading the speech, I deduced that King was angered by the fact that Blacks are robbed of simple rights (i.e., using water fountains, waiting rooms, and bus seats). This adds to their hardship and daily suffering.

Hughes, on the other hand, uses a humorous fiction story to express his thoughts and display the lack of opportunity for Blacks. He does this by showing a young Black boy resorting to theft in order to pay for a common necessity: shoes. At the same time, an old woman who typically should not have to work spends her whole day well into the night working just to be able to support herself to get by. The story also shows the lack of opportunity for families and children. The young boy is taught simple manners not by his own mother, who he probably doesn't even have, but by a stranger. Because of the environment he lives in, the young boy is forced to live on the streets, to steal to get food and clothing, and to accept being dirty and dishonest. All of these situations that are depicted in Hughes's short story are examples of the poverty that existed in most Black communities at the time this author wrote.

The second issue the two authors deal with is their dreams for a better future for all Blacks. King expresses his dreams very clearly in his speech. He hopes that one day all men, Black and White, will live in peace, harmony, and equality. He wishes that the children of slaves and slave owners will become

"brothers in friendship." King has hopes for his own children as well. He wants for his children to succeed him and live in America with the same rights as white people, where they will not be judged or discriminated against because of their race but judged by their intelligence and character. In his speech, King also extends his feelings to other Blacks living in states such as Mississippi and Alabama, where Blacks have been discriminated against the most. In one of his more direct statements to the government, he demands freedom, justice, citizenship rights, and equality for all Blacks as guaranteed them by the Constitution. To conclude all his dreams and prospects for the future, King prays that all Americans, no matter the color of their skin, will live, work, suffer, pray, struggle, and share together.

King and Hughes almost share the same dreams. The only difference between them is how they

express these dreams. Whereas King discusses them in his speech, Hughes uses the actions of his characters in his short story to present his dreams to his readers. The old woman had dreams for the youth to have more opportunities, to be more prosperous and worthy of respect. Apparently she did not have any children of her own. So she did the next best thing and tried to admonish a young boy concerning stealing. Instead of taking him to be punished by (white) authorities, she took him to her own home and treated him like her own son. Even then, she

washed him, gave him food, entertainment, and in the end even money. Through her noble deeds she changed the way the boy behaved that night and probably for the rest of his whole life. She clearly had been devoted to seeing her dreams come true. Hughes uses this remarkable character to represent his dreams for a better future for all Blacks in America.

King and Hughes, as I mentioned earlier, share the same basic goals. They both want to gain rights for their fellow Blacks. One major relationship between King's "I Have a Dream" and Hughes's "Thank You Ma'am" that I have noticed is that they are complementary. What King does not address Hughes attends to, and viceversa. For example, King speaks from a very general overview of the situation most Blacks live in. Hughes, however, gives specific lessons and morals in his story. The old woman, for instance, signifies to the whole Black population that if they work

**King and Hughes almost share the same dreams. The only difference between them is how they express these dreams.**

together as a family, as one body, one team, they can achieve their aspirations.

From comparing and analyzing these two pieces of literature, I have learned an important lesson in the history of Black heritage. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Langston Hughes have encouraged people to work for freedom and advancement. They had known that acquiring the right to vote, own land, and be treated equal to a white person is not an easy task. Through their work they heartened all African-Americans to

resist segregation, discrimination, and all other factors of inequality by raising the standards of living, acquiring higher educations, and cooperating with each other. Only then would the Black community be able to achieve full freedom, erase all signs of dissimilarity, and live a better tomorrow.

*IST: Jennifer Sanchez*  
*Mode: Response to Literature*  
*Grade: 10*



Sloane Powers



## Video Games Have a Negative Impact on Children

The games that children played in the early part of the twentieth century are very different from the games they play today. Apart from being entertaining, the games of one hundred years ago helped develop a variety of skills in a child. For example, games that involved teamwork encouraged social interaction, memorization games developed mental skills, and outdoor play promoted physical fitness. The participation in these games would be to a child's benefit not only as a youth but also as an adult when that person could apply these skills in the real world. These skills were not something learned in school, though they had just as much of a positive impact on a child. Unfortunately, many of these games of the previous century have been replaced with other forms of entertainment such as video games, which do not have the same benefits as their predecessors. In my opinion, the use of video games negatively affects the physical, social, and mental development of a child.

I agree that video games are a fun activity for a child to participate in with a friend, one that is both competitive and not physically dangerous, but playing video games is not the only activity children can do together. There are many productive activities that can be engaged in that do not involve the use of electronic devices. If a child enjoys video games for their competitive nature, a physically active sport may be a good substitution. Although physical activities have potential for injury, the benefits exceed the possible risks of injury. In fact, playing video games increases the risk of childhood obesity.

Physical activities as a substitution for video games will not work in the case of an overly competitive child whose competitiveness includes high-risk behavior or extreme sports. To satisfy the

competitive nature of this type of child, other activities that are not physical but competitive—such as reading competitions, science fairs, or other school competitions—would be a practical substitution. The physical needs of the child can be supplemented with non-competitive activities such as walking, yoga, or jumping rope, to name just a few.

Some might argue that video games put computer skills to practice. Computer skills are very important to have in this computerized age, though playing video games will not teach or improve these skills. It is true that video games require following directions and pressing buttons to achieve tasks, but overall this argument is misleading. Although the skills in video games may seem similar to those used on a computer, they are not. The buttons on a video game controller are much different from the ones on a keyboard, and although following directions is involved in gaming, these do not include learning to type or to use a spreadsheet. The only skill a player will learn from video games is how to play them, and this knowledge will not help the person to operate a computer.

Parents can use video games as an award system for their children to motivate them to read, finish homework, and do chores. Reward systems can be very successful at accomplishing these objectives, although this system may also give children the wrong message. This message says that everything they do that is required of them will need to be rewarded. It is important to give a correct message. Children are very impressionable and many of the beliefs they form at a young age will be carried with them the rest of their lives. What then is the solution for a parent of an unmotivated child? Without the distraction of video

games and other forms of electronic entertainment, a child will most certainly look for amusement elsewhere. Here is the perfect chance to introduce reading. Like video games, reading is a sedentary activity with an often adventurous subject. A simple solution to the obstinacy towards homework and chores is to limit special activities such as play dates with friends and after-school activities. It is more effective to discipline bad behavior than to reward it.

Playing video games has the potential to cause health problems. One of these problems is obesity, which is increasingly becoming an epidemic in the United States. The main contributors to obesity are lack of exercise and over-eating. Video games contribute to obesity because playing them is a sedentary activity. Many children use video games as their primary free-time activity. This results in lack of exercise. Another way that video games contribute to obesity is by means of snacking. Many children enjoy snacking while playing their games. They are not necessarily hungry when they snack, but use it as a form of extra stimulation. Since it is a snack that they are consuming, it is most likely not nutritious, and even if it is healthy, the children are not burning off the extra calories because they are not exercising. With the consumption of junk food and lack of exercise, the risk of obesity is increased. People with obesity have a higher risk of getting diabetes and heart disease than people of normal weight.

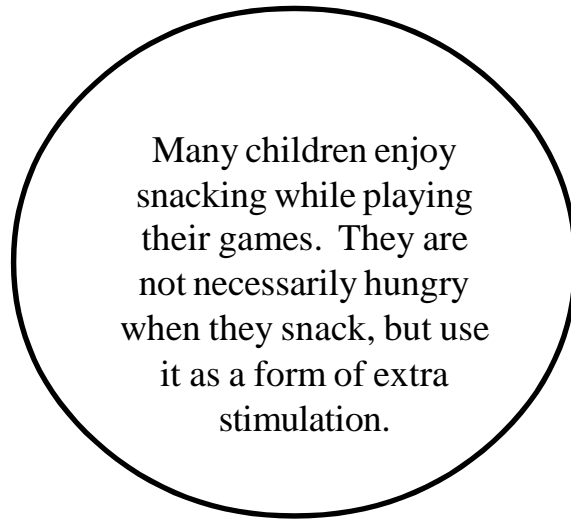
Video games are a very stimulating form of entertainment, easily accessible, and simple to use. Although they may seem like an easy solution to boredom, they have a negative impact on the user. Children who play video games have trouble finding adequate stimulation in everyday activities. This is due to the fact that the stimulation is much greater in video games than in an average everyday activity. Naturally, a child will prefer to be entertained as easily as possible, so that once a child is introduced to video games, she or he will probably want them to be the chief free-time activity. This can be problematic to the child, because once the child gets used to playing video games, then

she or he becomes less social and will not likely want to exercise the imagination. Without socialization and imaginative play, the child may forget how to use the imagination altogether and also may lack manners. Imaginative play is crucial in a child's development, and without manners a child will not get very far in social situations. If a child never plays video games, the child will not experience this extreme form of stimulation and instead will more likely continue entertaining her or himself in activities such as reading and by means of imagination.

The physical, social, and mental development of a child is affected negatively by the use of video games. It is disappointing that in such an advanced world as we live in today, video games are more encouraged than discouraged. The games of the past were more beneficial for their participants than video games are for their participants today. All hope of regaining constructive activities for the current generation is not lost, however. It is still possible for children today to play the games of the previous century. Playing games of the past

may seem an anachronism and a strange activity for children today to partake in; however, without electronic devices to aid a child's amusement, the ways of the past are the most likely place children will turn in order to get their entertainment. By encouraging this traditional playtime, children can receive the games' healthy benefits. How can these activities be encouraged? By not allowing video games as an optional activity—in other words, by not owning them.

*IST: Jennifer Lew*  
*Mode: Persuasion*  
*Grade: 10*



Many children enjoy snacking while playing their games. They are not necessarily hungry when they snack, but use it as a form of extra stimulation.

Final Fantasy XI as Part of the School Curriculum

Often, while I am doing school work, I wonder to myself, “How am I ever going to use this information? What practical use could this possibly have?” On the other hand, when I’m playing Final Fantasy XI, I am constantly comparing it to the real world, and vice versa. Why not make this game part of the school curriculum, then? After all, it teaches important concepts, such as work experience and supply and demand, as well as how to behave around other people and how to find meaning in what one does.

When one comes into this world, he or she is young and inexperienced. As one grows, though, that person gains experience, knowledge, and the friendship of other people. The same holds true in the Final Fantasy world of Vana’diel. A player starts out as a level one character<sup>1</sup> with no subjob,<sup>2</sup> no idea of what do do, and no friends. At first, much of one’s time is spent wandering around, trying to figure things out. Eventually, the player figures out how to go outside the city gates<sup>3</sup> to begin leveling up – the epitome of Role-Playing Games (RPGs).<sup>4</sup>

Much like in the real world, the more one does a certain job, the better one becomes at that job. In Final Fantasy XI, one becomes better at a job by “leveling up.” In order to level up, the player must kill monsters to gain experience points. At first, this is relatively easy. A player can kill monsters on his or her own without much trouble, and leveling up is easy since the player needs very few experience points to do so.<sup>5</sup> Eventually, though, a player needs to form a party, or group, with other players in order to progress.

In our lives, we depend heavily on other people for many things. As children, we need our parents to provide things such as food, shelter, and clothing and also to care for us. Later, we need other people to provide jobs, support, friendship, protection, information, and many other things for us. The same is true in Vana’diel. In order to level up successfully, a player must join with other players to fight incredibly tough monsters.<sup>6</sup> A party’s ability to work as a team plays a large part in the team’s success. Each person needs to know his or her job’s strengths and weaknesses and how to use these effectively in varying situations.

Each new level brings new people, new enemies, new places, and new challenges. Just as we must learn to adapt to changes such as moves, deaths, or new jobs, each player must learn to adapt appropriately to these new situations.

As a result of leveling up, a player meets hundreds of new people. Forming friendships with people one meets is not only enjoyable—no one wants to be totally isolated, and this holds true even in the online world—but it is also beneficial. Friends cannot only support and guide a player, but they can also help him or her with things that can’t be done alone, such as fighting tough monsters or obtaining certain items.

By now it should be obvious that community is a large part of Final Fantasy XI. As a result, reputation is very important. If a player found out someone had befriended him or her simply to use him or her, the player probably wouldn’t want anything to do with that person after that incident.

Similarly, a player’s actions online will have an effect on how people will respond to the player. Word gets around if one behaves inappropriately; cheating on one person could result in dozens of people turning against a player. It is important to make appropriate actions so as not to damage one’s reputation.

While reputation is important amongst other players, it is also important to have a good reputation with Vana’diel’s Non-Player Characters (NPCs).<sup>7</sup> One can gain fame with NPCs by doing quests, which are basically favors that one does for the residents of a city. One can also be assigned missions, which determine one’s rank in the home country. Again, this can benefit a player greatly, just as doing favors for people in the real world can. One’s level of fame and rank can help determine what areas, items, or forms of transportation one has access to, as well as how one is viewed by peers.

Surprisingly, the world of Vana’diel has its own economy. In order to buy the items one needs (or, in some cases, just wants), a player need gil, which is the money used in Final Fantasy XI. Money is constantly a problem for most players in the world of Vana’diel. As a result, people have devised various methods of

**Much like in the real world, the more one does a certain job, the better one becomes at that job.**

obtaining the largest amount of gil in the shortest amount of time. How much gil one earns depends on how much time and effort one is willing to put into this endeavor. For example, doing things like killing certain monsters for rare items can be very profitable, but it takes significantly more time than doing easier tasks such as mining for ores.

Once a player finally has some gil, it is usually a good idea to manage it well. Although having good items is nice, having the absolute best is not totally necessary. While these items may make a character better, they are often dozens of times more expensive. In addition, having the best items doesn't necessarily make one the best; it is also important to be good at what one does. This is an important lesson for life as well.

Once a player has learned to make some gil and manage it well, that player can spend time figuring out the Auction House, a large part of playing Final Fantasy XI. At the Auction House, players can put items up for sale to be bid on by other players. This is both convenient and necessary. Not only essentials such as clothing, furniture, and food can be bid on at the Auction House, but items as diverse as flowers and fireworks can be purchased there as well. In many ways, this is depressingly similar to the real world. Although understanding these concepts is necessary in the real world as well as in Vana'diel, they are also a source of great frustration. Again, learning to manage frustration and move on is an important life lesson.

To sell an item at the Auction House, a player must pay a transaction fee. This fee is based on the price the item is being sold for, which is frustrating for several reasons. If an item doesn't sell within a certain amount of time, it is returned and the transaction fee is lost. This is especially troublesome if the item is expensive. For example, the fee to sell an item for 500,000 gil can be as much as 10,000 gil. Having to pay such a fee only to have an item returned is incredibly discouraging. However, this can teach an important lesson on taking investment risks and assessing risk aversion.

Auction House prices can also fluctuate rapidly, sometimes varying from one hour to the next. Supply and demand and inflation also have a great effect on the cost of items. The more of an item there is in stock, the lower the price will be; conversely, the less of an item there is, the higher the price. Changes within the world of Vana'diel also affect prices;<sup>8</sup> if an item suddenly becomes twice as hard to make,<sup>9</sup> the price will double. The rarity of items also affects prices.

Despite these drawbacks, the Auction House can be very useful if one knows how it works. A player can use the "buy low, sell high" tactic to earn a good

deal of money. By bidding lower than the average price, one can sometimes get lucky and purchase an item for much less than it is actually worth. The item can then be sold at the regular price for a large profit.

Most of all, the Final Fantasy XI world resembles our own in that people within each world are searching for meaning. Everyone wants to have fun and feel like they're accomplishing something, and everyone plays the game in a different way. Playing the game is about finding one's own style, about finding a job one enjoys and befriending the people one likes talking to. Everyone has different goals, too. Do you want to be the player with the highest level? The most money? The best equipment? Or do you want to have the most friends and the best reputation? In Final Fantasy XI, a player can experiment with what gives life meaning, which may help the player assess his or her own life and career goals.

In light of all the evidence I have presented, it seems to me that Final Fantasy XI would be an effective method of teaching real-world concepts. It is extensive and interactive; because it is a lot of fun, it is less likely that students would complain about devoting time and energy to it. Wouldn't it be nice if all schools would take my suggestion into consideration? I think so, but somehow I just don't see that happening—at least, not in the real world.

*IST: Gayoshi Rodrigo*

*Mode: Persuasion*

*Grade: 11*

#### **(Endnotes)**

<sup>1</sup> The strength of a character is dependent on its levels, with one being the lowest and 75 the highest.

<sup>2</sup> All characters have a job, which determines each character's attributes, fighting styles, abilities, etc. The main job is the job one is currently using. Later on, one can get a support job (subjob), which is half the main job's level. One gains additional attributes, abilities, etc. from a subjob. For example, if a player has Black Mage (BLM) level 30 and White Mage (WHM) level 20 with BLM as the main job and WHM as a subjob, that player will be BLM30/WHM15. If a player has WHM level 20 as the main job and BLM level 30 as a subjob, that player will be WHM20/BLM10. In other words, no matter what level the job one sets as a subjob, it will always be reduced to half of the main job's level.

<sup>3</sup> Monsters, which must be defeated to gain experience to level up, can only be found outside of cities.

<sup>4</sup> RPG stands for Role-Playing Game. Final Fantasy XI is an MMORPG, or Massively Multi-Player Online Role-Playing Game.

<sup>5</sup> Experience points are given based on the difficulty of the monster defeated. At level one, only 500 experience points are needed to reach level two. This number increases with each new level.

<sup>6</sup> Monsters have different difficulties depending on their level compared to a player's level. These difficulties are "too weak," "easy prey," "decent challenge," "even match," "tough," "very tough," and "incredibly tough." The harder the monster, the more experience points gained upon its defeat.

<sup>7</sup> NPCs are Non-Player Characters—computer-generated characters with automated responses.

<sup>8</sup> These changes by Square Enix, the creator of Final Fantasy XI, come every once in a while in the form of patches, which alter the game in various ways.

<sup>9</sup> Items can be made by crafting (also known as synthesis), in which several items are combined to make a better item. If changes to synthesis recipes are made, prices can rise. For example, if a patch makes it so twice as many ingredients are needed to make the same number of items, the price of the resulting item will double.



Krystal Gordon



## Democracy and Capitalism

Although democracy and capitalism are separate systems, there is no way to separate economy from government or understand government without relating it to economics. Yet, to compare such drastically different systems involves examining two coexistent planes while somehow residing within both. On the one hand, the two depend upon each other, in that true democracy must allow freedom of commerce and that without the freedoms of democracy we could not have capitalism. On the other hand, the dominant ideology of democracy, its concern with the "greater good of society," and capitalism's pursuit of profit "at any cost" are contradictory premises that cannot continue to support each other. Hence, it is my intent first to explain the relationships between capitalism and democracy as well as discuss some of the conflicts between the rules of capitalism and the premise of democracy.

In order to compare two so drastically different systems, it is necessary first to explain my perception of each. In its simplest form, democracy is a governmental system in which laws are established and enforced by the will of the people. We are to work together as a unit to achieve incremental progress for the greater good of that same unit. Every individual should be granted an equal opportunity to have his or her voice heard...and more importantly, be listened to. Democracy is to allow each citizen his or her personal

freedom, only to be limited when one's actions impair another citizen's right to the same freedom. Our goal as a democratic society should be to create a better future for ourselves, our children, and their children.

Within this system, where each person is supposed to focus on the greater good of the society as a whole, arises the opportunity and the necessity to earn money...to capitalize on the assets around us. The fundamental objective of the capitalistic system is nothing more than free enterprise...the ability of one citizen to earn a livelihood in and by the society in which he or she lives.

**The United States is a prime example of what democracy can do for capitalism. And yet it is so easy for the greed of human nature to carry capitalism so far that it threatens the democratic lifestyle.**

Democracy is a form of government, whereas capitalism is an economic policy. In their simplest forms there is no conflict between them. They both share many of the same principles. Both can be considered forms of self-government in which people decide for themselves what is best and then strive to accomplish it. And thus each system *should* be one in which the "best" is defined by the greater

good.

The problem arises when capitalism becomes a lifestyle...an "ism" by which its participants live. The problem comes when a citizen of democracy abandons the premise of democracy to become a citizen of a system that is tweaked to say that free enterprise at the expense of others is our right (strangely enough) under the democratic code. The problem comes when the citizens of a democratic society are carnal human

beings with infinitely more desire to be wealthy now than to provide for their grandchildren to be comfortable.

The short-sightedness of a system, which in and of itself is nothing more than free enterprise, may very well undermine the base of the government that cultivates it. The United States is a prime example of what democracy can do for capitalism. And yet it is so easy for the greed of human nature to carry capitalism so far that it threatens the democratic lifestyle.

It is true that a business cannot conduct itself as a democracy. No business could or should consider asking its employees to vote on the next CEO. But there is a difference between refraining from conducting a business as a democracy and refusing to acknowledge that the business itself is part of a larger community... a *democratic* community. As I stated earlier, the fundamental objective of capitalism is to make a profit, but for capitalism and democracy to coexist, this objective must be balanced by the values of the community in which that business resides.

But this is so often not the case. A prime example is that of “soft money”: the campaign contributions, free of limitations, that corporations can legally make to political parties, for “general use” throughout their campaigns. In this way democracy and capitalism come to the ultimate compromise, and in the end it is democracy, not capitalism, that is compromised. By doing this, by going directly to the source, to the legislators, a corporation can buy those

who are supposed to represent the will of the people. Should this be the situation, then the people have elected a congressperson who—instead of representing the diffuse, distracted, and powerless public—represents a large corporation that has given to and influenced him or her more than the people ever could.

We all enjoy the privileges of democracy, and either directly or indirectly we all enjoy the freedom of enterprise that is capitalism. Because of this, the citizens and the residents, the family businesses and the large corporations share a responsibility in maintaining democracy. There is an obvious truth in the saying that self-government (the process by which we legislate and enforce law in this democracy) requires *self* government (personally governing ourselves throughout daily interaction). While researching for this paper, I came across a statement that John Adams made in 1798:

Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other.

We must always bear in mind that there is a price to pay for freedom, and that price is responsibility. In order for the privilege of free speech to become a right, we must earn it by governing our tongues. In order for the privilege of free enterprise to become a right, we must bear in mind the responsibility capitalism owes to democracy.

*IST: Daniel Hamman*

*Mode: Expository*

*Grade: 11*

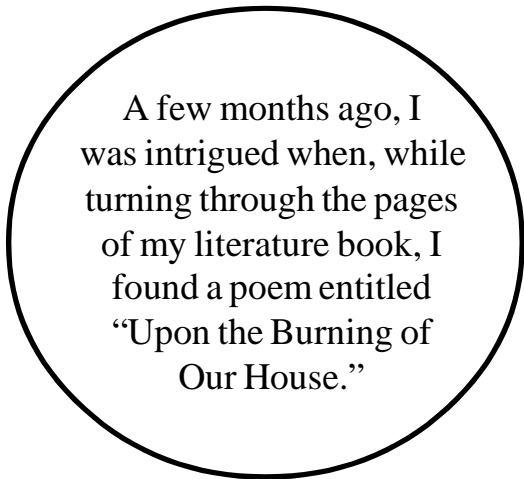


Jennifer Sayles



### A Fire: One Woman’s Perspective

A few months ago, I was intrigued when, while turning through the pages of my literature book, I found a poem entitled “Upon the Burning of Our House.” As my family and I have just suffered through the traumatic experience of nearly having our house burned down, I have great empathy for all people who have had their houses nearly or completely burned down. I felt very curious about what the poem, written from the viewpoint of an American pilgrim during the 1600s, Anne Bradstreet, would have to relate.



When our house was so closely threatened, I know I had a lot of fear and not a very patient attitude towards the thought of possibly and very probably having our house burned down. Since we live back in the mountains and have done a lot of work on our property, I did not think it would be fair if it were all to go up in flames. What would a deeply religious pilgrim have to say and think in such a situation, especially when that person would have done many more times the work on the property? During the 1600s, when almost everything

was so many times harder to do, I believe that a house destroyed back then would be many times worse a trial than a house destroyed in the present day, since, for one thing, a house took much longer to build as there was essentially only the family and sometimes friends to build them. Secondly, it would take many years to make all new furniture and other interior furnishings. So, sympathizing with Anne Bradstreet, I turned the page and began to read.

As I read through the poem, I was amazed by Bradstreet's good and uncomplaining attitude. The following offers a perfect example of her reaction: "Then coming out, behold a space / The flame consume my dwelling place. / And when I could no longer look, / I blest the name that gave and took" (11-14). She had such a great and simple faith in God that, while she considered this a sad trial, she, rather than getting angry and bitter, simply said everything was His to give and take, for, anyway, her real treasure was stored in heaven: "The world no longer let me love; / My hope and Treasure lies above" (53-54). She only let herself think sadly about some of her destroyed things for a short while: "My sorrowing eyes aside did cast / And here and there the places spy / Where oft I sate and long did lie: / Here stood that Trunk, and there that chest, / There lay that store I counted best. / My pleasant things in ashes lie / And them behold no more shall I" (22-28). Bradstreet continues, "Adieu, Adieu, All's vanity. / Then straight I 'gin my heart to chide" (36-37).

After reading Bradstreet's poem, I was quite embarrassed remembering my irritated words and complaining, when, after all, our house had not even burned! I was very impressed by Bradstreet's attitude, as I saw that, by not letting herself dwell on the sadness and instead being more optimistic, she was able to keep herself from becoming too discouraged.

I believe Anne Bradstreet was and is a very good example to everyone, especially me, who has been going through a hard time. When everything had seemed hopeless, she displayed a good attitude and did not let herself dwell on the heartbreak she could have let herself succumb to. In other words, she didn't let herself be brought down, which can be very difficult, yet she does it faultlessly. She had a lot of self-control, as well as a powerful faith in her God, which I believe would be an excellent ideal to attempt to reach.

I hope that in the future, near or far, when I experience another trying time, I can remember that little pilgrim woman who, in the middle of a new land, had all her possessions taken away from her but still reacted so sweetly yet sincerely. While the critic in me says that is not a realistic reaction to such difficult circumstances, I know that at least one person was able to, over four hundred years ago, and thus I would like to be able to follow her example in this day.

*IST: Nathleen Albright*  
*Mode: Narrative*  
*Grade: 11*



Jordan Walton



### My Choice of Location, Location, Location: The Place Where I'd Like to Live

One of the most exciting times in my life, I believe, will be when I decide where I will spend the majority of my time living in the future. I will initially need to determine what type of setting will be the most enriching and enjoyable for my daily lifestyle, whatever that may turn out to be. Although there are so many varieties to choose from, it will all have to narrow down to one final conclusion. Where will it be? Will I be able to find a good job in any of the areas that are of my preference? What kind of people might I have for neighbors in any of these given locations? These are some of the many questions that I will have to address when making my final decision. There are endless possibilities, and I'm interested and excited to discover what region I will finally be able to settle in for the future.

My number one predilection for the type of setting I would like to live in would be one made up of a breathtaking landscape riddled with lakes, rivers, mountains, and countless possibilities for adventures. The first place that comes to mind when I think about exciting adventures is the great state of Alaska, which my cousins have enjoyed living in for around a decade. Although the ruggedness of the "last frontier" is very appealing to me, I'm a little put off by the subzero temperatures and dangerous blizzards. I enjoy a snowstorm as much as the next person, but blizzards that leave every thing under at least five feet of snow sound a little intimidating to me. I think that I'd prefer living in a slightly warmer region.

If I found a warmer place with the same rugged, untamed beauty of Alaska's snow-capped

mountain ranges, mighty rivers, swift streams, lush green meadows, dense forests, crystal clear babbling brooks, and lakes so pristine that even the magnificent eagles—kings of the wilderness, tamers of the wind, and masters of the sky—deem their waters worthy of supplying their daily feast of fresh salmon, trout, and bass, *then* I would know I had found my home. If I discovered such a place, and if I thought that I could find a substantially paying job and a suitable house there, I would probably begin planning toward achieving this goal right away. In a place like this, I *know* I could live contentedly.

Such a place would distract the human trait and curse of constant greed for possessions.

The primary purpose of living in a rural, forest, mountainous, or even extremely rugged location would be to experience nature and life in general at its very finest and fullest. Such a place would distract the human trait and curse of constant greed for possessions. Instead of longing for a new car or bigger house, I would start the day pondering what would be the best activity or project to accomplish or indulge myself in for the day (if it was the weekend or a holiday). I would decide whether I wanted to go biking, hiking, fishing, running, kayaking, or exploring with friends or family members. Instead of worrying how much money I *should* earn, or how many possessions I *should* acquire, I would be more concerned about how many miles of wilderness I desire to explore, how long I wish to stay out in my canoe fishing on a lake, or which one of my friends or neighbors I want to drop in on for a visit. As long as I had a steady paying job in a location such as this, then hopefully everything else would work out satisfactorily.

Another of the pleasant aspects of living in a rural, small-town community is that almost everyone living around you knows you, and you know them as well. If a stranger arrives in town, you are instantly aware of it. I believe that this makes a rural setting a much safer and enjoyable place to live. My cousins and aunt and uncle, who live in Alaska, would definitely agree with that. They are acquainted with and are good friends of many of the citizens in their town of Seward, Alaska. Because Seward is a small town, in regard to population, it is easy to get to know the majority of the people living there. Most people in small towns are friendly and welcoming of new residents in their community. On the other hand, in large cities, even though houses are so closely grouped together, it is common that one might not even know his or her neighbors very well. When there are so many people clustered so closely together, it is very likely that one won't even know some of the families who occupy the homes that flank his or her own home. Smaller towns seem a lot more inviting to me because of the "friendly factor."

I hope that one day I will achieve my dream of living in a small community of adventurous people who appreciate the wilderness as much as I do. To be able to work in an area where I could also leave my back door to immediately begin an exhilarating exploration of untamed terrain would be a dream come true for me. I look forward to the day when this fantasy will hopefully become an exciting reality.

*IST: Joel Clelland*  
*Mode: Expository*  
*Grade: 11*



Angelica Adewale



### Coulda, Shoulda, Woulda

During my years throughout high school, I was very lazy and put forth very little effort in my schoolwork. In the classroom, I was usually very attentive and for the most part enjoyed my classes. None were completely boring. However, for some reason, one which I have yet to figure out, I did not do

much outside of the classroom and it often showed in my homework and also my test and quiz grades. I often procrastinated and waited until the last minute to complete and turn in assignments. At times, I wouldn't even turn in assignments. If I didn't think I had enough time, I decided it just wouldn't be done. I usually did

this when I thought I could afford to miss a couple of assignments. I just made sure that I did enough work to pass my classes and keep my GPA at no less than a 3.0.

I also did not manage my time very well. I participated in extracurricular activities without taking into consideration the time it would take for each. Some activities meant that I would have to get some homework done during lunch instead of talking with my friends, which was usually the case. This was actually the case outside of school too. Many of my friends did not have bedtimes, so they could spend two or three hours on the phone, even if they had not finished their homework. I could not because I had a weekday bedtime of 10:00 p.m. that I could not skirt. Also, I often took hour-long naps after school. Sometimes, I would sleep until six or seven. Depending on how late I stayed after school, this sometimes was too long of a nap. My friends either don't take naps or aren't asleep that long. Either way, they would have been doing their homework during the time I was asleep. So, when they called twenty or thirty minutes after I woke up, they probably already had most of their homework done already. Meanwhile, I would have barely even started mine.

One of my most time-consuming extracurricular activities was acting. I wasn't the only high school student who participated in a theatrical production, so I figured if they could do it, then I could do it. And I was right. However, I believe the difference between them and me was that they knew how to focus and manage their time. I hadn't learned how to do that yet.

Since I didn't have good time-management skills, I wasn't very organized, either. I woke up each morning without a plan for my day. I almost never studied for tests. I never read ahead and I didn't take efficient notes. Often, in class I would fall asleep, and when I'd wake up I'd be lost. I was too proud to ask any of my classmates for help. Many of them were under the impression that I had some miraculous way of falling asleep in class and never doing my homework, yet still passing the class. This was further from the truth than they could imagine. Time management was also the reason why many times when the assignments I did do got handed back to me, they had red marks on them. These red marks were usually on mistakes that I could have prevented had I taken the necessary time to prepare or do the assignment.

If I could do it all over again, I would never procrastinate when I receive an assignment. I would work on it the first chance I get. I would make a time chart with all my classes and the times of my extracurricular activities and make sure that I worked in time for assignments and other things I might have to

do between classes and extracurricular activities. I would make sure I turn in all my assignments on time. I would take good notes and study for tests and quizzes. I would review my lesson for the day to be prepared for a popquiz. If I was confused about a lesson, I would be sure to ask the teacher about the lesson before the day is over and before the teacher has moved on to another lesson. I would also practice meditation. I believe that meditation would possibly help me concentrate better and help me focus on my work. I am not sure why I cannot focus well. I believe I might have a slight case of ADD, or maybe there's too much on my mind. I'm not quite sure. It could be both. That is something I have yet to figure out. Even now as I write this essay, I get up and down from the computer. I text-message on my phone. I play games on the computer and do various other things and I am not fully focused on writing this essay.

Instead of trying to study with friends who are often unreliable, I would form study groups with people who are. I would also make sure that they all have decent grades or are trying to make decent grades. A person who does not care about his or her education isn't going to care about yours either. I believe the reason why I would never form a study group was because it did not seem that important to me then. It is said that a person often forgets to do things that he or she doesn't find important enough to remember doing. Well, I always forgot to ask people if they wanted to form a study group with me. I was probably also scared of being rejected. If I was, I don't think I'd ever admit it, even in an essay. I have convinced myself and even others that I don't care what other people think, feel, or say about me. I am determined to make this a truth. People are too finicky about what they want, feel, think, and say. To base life off the words, thoughts, and feelings of others would be a pure waste of time.

If I had been regularly studying and organizing my time in school, then other tests, such as the SAT I and II and the ACT, would have been a bit easier to prepare for. I would already be used to studying and drilling myself. I would have been able to apply my methods for studying for tests in school to studying for the SAT. I would have a much higher GPA and I would qualify for more scholarships for college. I would already have my acceptance letter from Howard University with a full Presidential Scholarship. But the best lessons are usually learned the hard way. This lesson may not have been hard to learn, but it was not easy either.

*IST: Erica King-Waring*

*Mode: Expository*

*Grade: 12*

Looking into my Past

When I look back on the last four years of my high school experience, I am in awe of how much has happened and changed in my life. As a child I always heard that when one gets into high school everything changes and that high school is not like anything one has ever experienced before. All those words of wisdom never meant as much to me then as they do now. I am very proud of the young woman I have become and glad for all the experiences that I have had during the last four years. These experiences include challenges, accomplishments, adjustments, and even switching schools; in the process, I was still able to find the strength within to mature into who I am today.

If I had to give to advice to a young teenager taking that nervous first step into her or his high school career, it would be on dating.

Teenage dating is a scary topic for young teens. I know because I've gone through all sorts of relationship situations over the last four years. I wish I were able to give advice to young boys, but I believe a senior boy would be a better adviser to a male freshman than I would be as a senior girl. Instead, I will be directing most of my advice towards young teen girls.

I am a week away from turning eighteen, and I am still amazed that I will be considered an adult in the government's eyes. I know that I still have so much growing to do, but at the same time I am stunned at how much I have learned these last few years. Only recently have I noticed that my relationships now are less stressful than those of my freshman year. How is it that certain situations that bothered me so much a couple of years ago don't have the same impact now? The purpose of this essay is to share what I have learned and how it might calm and advise a young girl just beginning her high school dating experiences.

I started dating at about the age of fourteen. At fourteen or fifteen, a girl is very young emotionally, physically, and mentally. As fourteen, I was trying to act and look seventeen or eighteen. Besides those involving dating, there are so many other changes going on in a girl's life that affect how she will react to boys and new

situations. When I was fourteen years old, I had plenty of new experiences coming at me from all directions. I was making new and important decisions right and left—concerning drugs, school, and family life—and on top of it all my hormones were raging!

Now a senior, I could create a list of all the activities a girl could spend her time doing instead of constantly worrying about her social life. But I must start by discussing what I did at that age. I was getting swept away by every new boy I had a crush on. Fortunately, I never got involved with the world of drugs because I was blessed by owning a horse, which made me more responsible and focused. I still dealt with grades and family issues, but a lot of stress was created by my social life. Even though I do feel it is

important for a young girl to mingle with different types of people, at fourteen and fifteen years old we have no idea what we want to do or what we are really interested in. So teens need to be careful about the people they associate with. At eighteen, I am just now beginning to understand who I am and what I want to aspire to be, both of which affect my choice of friends now.

Throughout high school I have associated with people of all different crowds. Some of the guys I have dated from these different crowds were good for me, and some were not. But I have no regrets knowing any of them because of what I have learned. I have learned something new from every group and along the way I have discovered whether one had a positive or negative influence on my life. This doesn't mean that every girl has to go through a rough period in order to mature positively. But this is my story and how I came to realize what is important to me.

Girls are so sensitive and because of this we all must learn to understand what our bodies, minds, and emotions are telling us. I remember every time I became attracted to a guy that I would let my heart get the better of me and I would just soar on cloud nine. I really should not have done that. Why? Because that boy I liked then was in and out of my life so fast there

How is it that certain situations that bothered me so much a couple of years ago don't have the same impact now?

is no way I was in love or anywhere close to it. As I got older, I started to differentiate between love and infatuation.

How was I able to do that? Unfortunately, by going through the process of getting hurt and hurting others. I know that sounds depressing, but it is nonetheless very true. After having some breakups where I was the one who got hurt, and then, where I was the one who hurt the other person, I began to think twice about letting infatuation get the better of me. When I begin a relationship now, I am much more cautious of how I present my feelings, how carried away I let my emotions get, and how much I read into the boy's feelings. By learning how to do these, I have eliminated an enormous amount of stress from recent relationships. This is because I have realized that boys don't know what they want any more than girls do at that age. Therefore, if a girl can realize this reality, then she has the ability to end stressful situations possibly before they begin.

I wish I could say that by reading this a girl will be able to realize instantly that she may be letting what a guy said to her last night affect her too much. In a movie this may happen, but in reality a girl just has to learn to know herself before ever understanding another person's life lessons. Over the last four years, I have matured into the young woman I am now. Although many times I have tried growing up faster, all

I needed to do was find what makes me happy first in my interests and schoolwork, and then in a variety of friends—both male and female.

Since dealing with boys and friends in high school is a stressful and emotional experience, my advice is to have faith in oneself. A person needs always to make sure that when doing something or talking with someone she or he is honest and is using her or his head instead of only emotions. I have matured and developed into someone I am really glad to be, but I would have never gotten to this point if I hadn't gone through knowing all the people I have throughout my last four years. While this has been my learning experience, young high school students will follow their own paths. Students should not let their emotions run away with them and instead use common sense. They must learn to direct their energy to finding out what they love and are interested in. I believe that by following this advice they will meet people who share common interests and allow for a social life that is much calmer, enjoyable, and fulfilling.

*IST: Colette Backus*

*Mode: Expository/Narrative*

*Grade: 12*

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