



# Midsummer Assemblage

The Action of Gathering or Fitting Things Together

A collection of writings by Anne Burgevin's creative writing students

August 2019

## Dedication

For my students—their accomplishments, hard work,  
and creative minds—and to the beauty of midsummer time.

moon

midsummer meadowsweet

through pines

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## **Preface**

### **Midsummer Assemblage: The Action of Gathering or Fitting Things Together**

Writers assemble  
words, scenes, couplets, lines, plots, stanzas, and chapters,  
in order to create  
stories, characters, poems, beginnings  
and endings, and more.

Writers struggle to overcome  
writer's block, do research, find the right words, know their characters,  
express their inner sentiments,  
and persevere.

They collaborate, seek support,  
and revise, revise, revise...

Midsummer Assemblage illustrates  
my students' creative powers  
as well as  
their willingness to struggle,  
their humility in the face  
of critiques, and their love of writing.

Midsummer Assemblage  
like a midsummer field of  
lightning bugs, Queen Anne's Lace,  
crickets, grasses and dew,  
the whole greater than  
the sum of its parts.

A collection of 26 writings by 27 authors, *Midsummer Assemblage* will not only delight you but also inspire you to appreciate the efforts my students continually make to become accomplished writers. I am confident *Midsummer Assemblage* will be an enjoyable read for you and your family.

—Anne Burgevin

Pine Grove Mills, PA

August 1, 2019

## Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Susan Graham for permission to use her painting, *Into the Light*, on the cover of *Midsummer Assemblage*. Susan is a local artist and supporter of the arts. More of her work can be seen at [www.susangrahamstudio.fineartamerica.com](http://www.susangrahamstudio.fineartamerica.com).

Thank you to the parents of my students who dedicate themselves to their children's education and wellbeing, and to Christine Robinson, the woman "behind the curtain." Without her help this book would still be in the planning stage.

**Letter to the Earth: *Dear Universe***  
**Faith Kingsley, 10th grade**

Dear Universe,

Thank you so much for blustery wind,  
for mountains and towering trees.  
Thank you so much for crystals and rocks,  
for boulders and buzzing bees.

Thank you,  
oh, thank you  
for birds that soar  
for wounds and healing scars.  
Thank you so much for friend and foe,  
and a sky so full of stars.

Thank you for soil  
so plants can grow,  
so we can eat their roots.  
Thank you so much for the trees that make such sweet  
and delicious  
fruit.

Creatures that fly,  
creatures that crawl,  
I love them,  
love them,  
love them all.

Thank you so much for the cuddly kind,  
for fuzzy, furry, friends.  
Thank you so much for glad beginnings,  
and,  
bittersweet ends.

Thank you so much for twists  
and turns,  
for unexpected rides.

Thank you so much for the moon that creates  
ever moving tides.

Thank you,  
oh, thank you  
for eyes that tear,  
that wash our pain away.  
Thank you so much for stormy nights,  
and bright and sunny days.

Thank you so much for lakes  
and streams  
and rivers  
and oceans  
and rain.  
Thank you so much for all that goes,  
and all that comes back again.

Thank you so much for snow  
and ice  
for blustery, white, winter days.  
Thank you so much for boredom  
and thought  
for wandering minds that stray.

Buds in the spring,  
leaves in the fall,  
the seasons,  
I love them  
I love them all.

Thank you so much for the unwanted things,  
for anger  
frustration  
and doubt.  
Thank you so much for mistakes that we make,  
they bring a new wisdom about.

Thank you so much for the uncanny times,  
for strange and unreal moments too.



Thank you so much for the times that we pause,  
and build ourselves anew.

Thank you so much for the fickle, old leaves  
that can never decide where to fall.

Thank you so much for those that stoop low,  
so I can learn to stand tall.

Dear Spirit or Spark-whatever you are-  
I've traveled wide,  
and I've traveled far.  
But wherever I go,  
I always have found  
that life,  
love,  
and balance abound.  
So, whatever happens,  
I always will say,  
that everything,  
everything,  
is,  
and will be,  
okay.

With much love and gratitude,  
Faith Kingsley

## **An Unusual Accomplishment<sup>1</sup>: *The Rabbit Hurdler***

**Tiffany Chen, 8<sup>th</sup> grade**

Whoosh! Crack! Boom! Bang! Thumper and his littermates were born during a terrible storm that no one had ever seen the likes of before. His parents huddled in their burrow under the great big oak tree awaiting the birth of their kits. Thumper was the last one to be born and everyone could see immediately that he was different. He was smaller than all his siblings but his hind legs were larger than normal. He was soon called Thumper because he always thumped his tail when he was really happy, scared, sad, or angry.

As Thumper grew up he was the outcast and not treated well by his littermates, due to his smaller size and interesting ability to jump higher than all the other rabbits. Whenever it was time to eat he was pushed away and forced to have whatever was left when everybody else had finished eating. Somedays his littermates left him with nothing to eat. He learned to blend into the shadows and stay quiet so no one would see or notice him. His two oldest brothers would always lead his other siblings in making fun of him. They would hurl insults at him and push him around.

He finally found solace in a book he had found when he was three months old. It had images of people jumping high over hurdles. Thumper constantly copied the humans in the book by finding objects tall enough to jump over. At first, he found a tiny box and attempted to jump over that. Over time he got better at clearing the box and moved on to taller objects. Eventually, he could easily jump over a pile of logs. As he practiced, his parents and siblings came to watch him. Some of his siblings even started jumping with him but they could never jump as high as him.

Even though some of his siblings admired him, he was still an outsider in his family. Thumper often left the burrow and wandered around. One day he followed the sound of laughter and shouting to a field. In that moment he didn't realize the field was being used by a high school track and field team to practice. Thumper hopped around and saw a couple of objects just like the ones in his precious book. He immediately bounded over to them. Concentrating and calming his mind he jumped over the lined-up hurdles consecutively with ease. As he turned around to try them again he was met by a group of speechless teenagers. They were staring at him with a mixture of awe and surprise. Thumper was equally surprised and his tail immediately started to twitch and thump the ground; he was frozen in fear. Some of the humans walked toward him and his tail started to thump even quicker along with his heart. He was almost ready to hop away

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<sup>1</sup> Editor's Note: *Business Pig* by Andrea Zuill is a children's picture book about a pig who is comes into the world business minded. He does not fit in with his family on the farm and thus searches for a way to express his interests and gifts, and to find a home more suitable for himself. Tiffany uses this theme in her story.

when someone scooped him up and carried him toward the other people. They all crowded around him and started talking quickly and excitedly. Thumper didn't know what was going to happen to him.

After what felt like an eternity, the kids finally put him down. They seemed to be encouraging him to do what he had just done again. So, he did just that and hopped over the obstacles with ease. That sent the teens chattering with excitement again and caught the attention of an old grumpy man, who immediately stomped over to Thumper and the kids surrounding him.

He growled at the kids, "What are you doing here staring at this bunny?" The kid who had scooped Thumper up said, "We were practicing when we noticed this rabbit jumping over the hurdles and we got distracted. Sorry, Coach."

"Well, Terrence if you know you shouldn't be standing here then why don't you go back to practicing. All of you guys should go back to practicing. And you, you bunny, shoo get out of here!!" With that, the coach stomped away to yell at another group of kids and the happy teens, now feeling deflated, all drifted away. Thumper, suddenly all alone, decided to turn around and head back home. The next day he decided to see if the kids would still be at the field and as it turned out they were. Learning from his lesson the other day, Thumper decided to hide behind a bush and secretly watch the kids practice the hurdles. Just so he would not attract the attention of the grumpy old man. Thumper watched as the kids practiced various heights of hurdles and lengths they had to run. Terrence was clearly the best hurdler on the team. He could jump over the hurdles with ease and speed. Thumper watched the kids practice for the whole day. When they started to leave, Thumper hopped up to the boy that had picked him up. He started thumping his tail which caused Terrence to turn around and look for where the sound had come from. A look of surprise came over him when he realized it was the rabbit from yesterday.

Terrence heard his mom calling for him and all he could do was wave goodbye to the rabbit. He turned around and headed towards his car and mentally made a note to try to get to practice early tomorrow. The next day Terrence made it to practice an hour earlier than usual and went in search for the rabbit. He didn't have to go far because he found the bunny jumping over the hurdles. He watched in awe at the skill the bunny possessed. Terrence walked up to the rabbit and gently touched him. That immediately scared Thumper and made his tail start to thump like crazy. Terrence was immediately taken aback, but when Thumper noticed who it was he immediately calmed down. He hopped over to Terrence who stood frozen and cocked his head and looked at him. Terrence noticed for the first time how Thumper's tail seemed to thump against the ground. So, with that, he decided to name this peculiar rabbit Thumper. He scooped Thumper up and carried him towards his gear. As Terrence got ready he started to explain to Thumper what each piece of gear was. The things he seemed to have the most interest in were his track sprint shoes with spikes, meant to help with traction, on the bottom.

With all his gear on Terrence headed towards the hurdles but didn't go there directly. Terrence first stretched and did a couple of short warm-up laps around the track. Thumper was looking at Terrence in confusion and wasn't sure why he did not just start jumping over the hurdles. But thankfully Terrence finished quickly and they finally started to hurdle. Terrence jumped over some warm-up hurdles and Thumper followed right behind him. They kept doing this until the coach arrived and called everybody into a team huddle. As Terrence's other teammates started trickling in for practice they stared as they watched a rabbit and a human jumping together over hurdles in synchronized motion.

The coach noticed Terrence missing and called his name. Terrence snapped his head up and tripped over one of the hurdles. He saw Coach motioning him and turned around to say goodbye to the rabbit but Thumper had already disappeared. Terrence jogged over to the huddle and wondered what had just happened. He was doing hurdles with a rabbit and he had felt calm and at peace for the first time in a long time. After practice, he stayed a little longer to see if the rabbit would show up again, and he did. As he was about ready to leave he saw a head poke out from underneath a bush. It was a rabbit's head. Thumper hopped out with his tail thumping nervously as he hopped toward Terrence.

They practiced until Terrence had to leave and Thumper reluctantly went back to his burrow. For several months, Terrence arrived early for practice and find Thumper patiently waiting for him at the hurdles They practiced together. When the practice they continued practicing until Terrence had to leave. Every single time Terrence left, Thumper felt lonely. He desperately wanted to follow Terrence. As track and field season started there were fewer practices and more meets, so Thumper saw Terrence less and less. But whenever the team had a meet at home Thumper always watched from his safe spot near the tree line as Terrence jumped over hurdles with ease and speed.

Near the end of the season, many thunderstorms poured rain and sent lightning striking down all around the town. Some practices had to be canceled due to the rainy weather and thunder. There was finally a clear, sunny day and Terrence arrived at the field early to practice with Thumper like usual. But there was something different, Thumper wasn't where he usually met him. Terrence decided to wait a little while longer and see if he would arrive. After waiting for almost half an hour and with no sign of Thumper, Terrence decided to just start jumping over the hurdles by himself.

Throughout practice that day everybody could tell something was off and even the coach could see Terrence was bothered about something. He snapped at Terrence, who is usually the best hurdler, managed to trip over two hurdles in a row. He pulled him away from the group and had Terrence sit on the bench for the rest of practice.

After practice, Terrence decided to walk home so that he could search for Thumper. He called his mom to tell her, so she wouldn't have to come to pick him up. With that done he could explore the area surrounding the field to see if he could find Thumper's burrow. He gathered up his gear and headed in the direction Thumper usually left after practice. After walking around for twenty minutes the only things he found were clumps of grass and a couple of bushes.

But all of a sudden Terrence smelled something burning. He followed the smell and it led him to a giant tree, a part of which had fallen over. Lightning must have split it in half! Terrence sprinted towards the tree and came to a halt when he noticed rabbits huddled near its base. Terrence frantically searched for Thumper as a bad feeling washed over him. He noticed a rabbit that had the same long legs and coloring as Thumper. One of the hind legs seemed to be bent at a weird angle. Terrence rushed to the rabbit and was shocked that it was Thumper. His cheerful, high jumping friend, was now a huddled mass on the ground. He immediately scooped him up and held him close. A weird sound came from Thumper. It seemed like he was grinding his teeth together. Thumper shivered and shook and Terrence worried he was in a lot of pain. Terrence decided to take a quick look around for any more injured rabbits. He noticed there were some rabbits that had bumps and bruises, but none that seemed as severely injured as Thumper.

Terrence, carrying Thumper, immediately ran back to the field, where he grabbed his phone and gear. While he raced to his house, Terrence called his mom. He asked her to get ready to drive him to the local veterinarian and prepare a basket with some blankets to carry Thumper in. He skidded into the driveway, got into the car, put Thumper in the basket, and got his mom to drive as quickly as she could. On the way to the vet, Terrence worried about Thumper and how weak he looked. He hoped he had found Thumper in time and his leg was not too badly injured. When they arrived, Terrence went straight to the counter and told the receptionist he needed to see a doctor immediately. The receptionist looked up, surprised. When she saw Thumper's injury she immediately ushered Terrence, his mom, and Thumper into a room and promised the veterinarian would be there as soon as possible.

Terrence carefully took Thumper out of the basket and laid him gently on the examining table. As the seconds ticked by Terrence got more and more nervous and couldn't stop moving. His mom stood up, put a hand on his shoulder, and asked him to sit down and calmly wait for the doctor. Finally, the veterinarian walked in. She immediately walked over to Thumper and started examining him. While she did that she asked Terrence various questions, such as, where did he find the rabbit, how long has he been like this, do Terrence know what happened to him? Terrence answered as best he could. After nervously waiting for the doctor to finish examining Thumper, Terrence was relieved when the doctor finally broke the silence and said that all would be fine. She was pretty sure that Thumper had broken his leg but she wanted to take an x-ray to see the severity of the break. The vet picked up Thumper, took him to the x-ray room, and told

Terrence and his mother she would be right back with the results. A couple of minutes later the vet came back with Thumper, followed by a nurse who carried the x-ray results.

“Everything's fine,” she said, “I just need to splint his leg. It will need to stay that way for six to eight weeks. During that time, he can only have minimal movement. After that Thumper will need to work on renewing the strength in his leg.”

With that said, Terrence was finally able to let out all the air he didn't know he was holding inside, and sighed in relief. Terrence and his mom took Thumper home after the doctor got the splint on. Terrence fell into a routine of waking up and caring for Thumper right away, going to school, rushing home to check on Thumper, going to practice, and finally going home and spending the rest of the evening with Thumper and helping him recover. Terrence also made occasional visits after practice to the tree Thumper's family lived in to see how they were recovering from the lightning strike. They seemed to be recovering well. Terrence brought food, blankets, and whatever else he felt was useful when he visited.

After a long eight weeks, Thumper and Terrence headed back to the vet for Thumper to get checked and have his splint taken off. As the vet took the splint off, Terrence saw the difference between the uninjured leg and the injured one. He fully realized then how much strengthening and exercising Thumper was going to need to do to help regain his strength and be able to jump as well as he used to. Thumper seemed to have also realized how serious his injury was and how it had changed his life, because his tail started to thump and started to shake. Terrence immediately reached out and stroked Thumper until he was able to calm down. The vet finished her check-up and told Terrence that with enough rest and physical therapy Thumper would be back to normal in about a month. With that said, Terrence picked Thumper up, thanked the doctor, and headed out to the car.

It was a quiet trip home with Terrence thinking about how to help Thumper recover. Thumper had fallen asleep from the lulling motion of the car and it was soothing to watch him sleep. Terrence decided to help train Thumper every day after school, and, with summer quickly approaching, he knew he would have more time to help Thumper. At first, Terrence just tried to help Thumper get up on his two hind legs. Gradually, Thumper was able to hop around the room albeit at a slower pace than normal. As each day passed Thumper got stronger. Soon he was able to hop around the room by himself without the aid of Terrence. The next step was to help Thumper get ready to jump over hurdles. First, Terrence put one textbook on the floor and had Thumper jump over it. Then, as Thumper improved, he stacked more and more books.

“Come on Thumper, let's go Thumper,” shouted Terrence in excitement. A week of summer had passed and both Terrence and Thumper were beyond excited as they finally headed to the track field. There were a couple of hurdles set up begging to be jumped over. First, Terrence gave a try at the hurdles and jumped over them with ease. Then he motioned for Thumper to follow

him. Thumper did not seem to look excited anymore. He started to thump his tail and twitch in anxiety and fright. When Terrence saw this he immediately rushed over to help calm Thumper down.

“Hey, buddy, there is no need to worry. You can do this.” With that said, Terrence motioned for Thumper to try again. Thumper hopped a few steps then looked back, hesitant, not completely sure of himself.

“Come on you got this. Just jump right over. Yess...come on... just right over.” Terrence encouraged Thumper and he could see the tension leaving Thumper’s body which meant he was getting ready to jump. He gave one last thump of his tail and went for the jump.

“YES, THUMPER!”

**National Haiku Writer's Month (NaHaiWriMo)<sup>2</sup>: Two Haiku**  
**Tony Schaufler, 12<sup>th</sup> grade**

a crow's feather  
fresh snow  
this morning<sup>3</sup>

next year's forest  
an endless rain  
of maple helicopters<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Editor's Note: Tony participated in the writing challenge, National Haiku Writer's Month, this past February. "Write one haiku a day for the month of February! Why February? Because it's the shortest month—for the world's shortest genre of poetry. Join poets around the world who pledge to write at least one haiku a day for National Haiku Writing Month during the year's shortest month. Or write haiku every day of every month, all year round, on the [NaHaiWriMo](#) site on [Facebook](#), with daily writing prompts to inspire you."

<sup>3</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the 2019 United Nations International School Haiku Contest, High School Division

<sup>4</sup> Honorable mention in the 2019 United Nations International School Haiku Contest, High School Division



## **Advanced Food Writing: *KFC***

**Jolie Oakman, 9<sup>th</sup> grade**

Picture this: a long, hot car trip with peanut butter cracker crumbs everywhere, in your hair, ears, and other crevices. Yes, I am describing the 12-hour plus dreaded drive to Grandma Ruby's house. We all love getting there, but what 6, 9, 12, or 14-year old likes a car trip? And can you imagine what makes this long drive go even more slowly? When watching the same movies every time. First, Teletubbies, then SpongeBob, and then my 9-year-old brother's preschool video.

There seems to be no end in sight. But then, when your stomach starts to growl, you start to see the end, the light of day, the denouement, and this terrible story comes to a close. A KFC sign appears in view. The clock on the dashboard reads 7:00 p.m., which really means 6:30, so we can get to places on time. It's dinner time for this family of six.

Hoping and praying that the answer is yes, you ask Flubby, your Dad, if you can stop here. When he exits the highway, your mouth starts to salivate with the thought of mac and cheese, a biscuit with honey, and your favorite Kentucky Fried Chicken, original recipe. You get out of the car and, while walking into the restaurant, you smell the delicious aroma of food. You can't wait to sink your teeth into the crispy, deep-fried chicken with just the right amount of seasonings.

Then your mother asks if you need to use the bathroom. Just hearing those words makes you realize that your bladder is full from all the lemonade you drank earlier. So, you go and when you come out, you find to your delight your dad has already ordered a bucket, including mashed potatoes with gooey gravy, cheesy mac and cheese, and, of course, you have to have your green beans. You then sit down to the lovely meal that brings back so many good memories. You grab your half of a biscuit, because when you get the twenty-dollar family bucket it comes with three biscuits. You can split anything if you try hard enough. (Believe me, I have split a chicken nugget into thirds.) Anyway, you sink your teeth into the biscuit's squishy center and it turns into Play-Doh in your mouth. And, yes, this is an amazing experience.

After finishing your half of a biscuit, you decide you that you could go for something cheesy. At age 6, your favorite food is mac and cheese, so you grab your spoon and take a bite of the creamy cheesy elbow macaroni that gives you a little taste of heaven. When you think things can't get any better, you ask your mother how long until you get to Grandma Ruby's house. She replies, "Only one more hour." Remembering you are still hungry, you take a bite of the crispy chicken that is so tender it would fall right off the bone if it wasn't fried. This is really convenient considering you are missing some teeth. Then, you dip into the mashed potatoes with gravy, and your heart and soul are satisfied! Satiated in almost every way, you walk out of the Godsent oasis and are on your way to Grandma's house—the next best thing to heaven!

## Write About a Painting: *The Warping of Time*

Jack Guo, 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade



*The Persistence of Memory, Salvador Dali*

### Warping of Time

Time ripples, time bends  
Melting like mozzarella  
Slipping away.  
Time bends, time warps  
Scarce and priceless  
It falls down the drain.  
Time wrinkles  
Warping  
Slipping from our grasp.  
Every second, every minute  
Counts as time, falling, slipping  
Going out the door.

This is an interesting piece of art because it makes a “melting clock” scene. To me, it looks like the clocks are warping which seems really cool to me. There aren’t any people in this painting but I think it is a fun painting to think about.

## **Nursery Rhyme Continued: *Incy Wincy Spider and the Rest of the Story*** **Lorelei Keil, 4<sup>th</sup> grade**

Incy Wincy Spider  
Climbed up the waterspout,  
Down came the rain  
And washed poor Wincy out,  
Out came the sunshine,  
And dried up all the rain,  
And Incy Wincy Spider  
Climbed up the spout again.

Incy was trying to climb the waterspout again, but this time she could not. All the spiders could climb the waterspout except for Incy. They thought that it was so funny that she couldn't climb it every time. They thought her name was funny, too, because it was tiny. Only four letters.

One day Incy was having a tea party with her three best friends: Lucylee Kamali, Cynthia Souplachaisha, and Suzette Hamperlot. All had to go by shortened names because they had long first names. Suzie was a coffee grinder and babysitter by trade. Lucy was a dress maker, and Cindy was a chef. During tea, Incy did not say a word the whole time; she was so depressed. Suzie could not stand the silence any longer and so she said, "Today I babysat for a lovely couple. They only had one hundred babies, so it was very easy work. They were very well tempered and only five got lost. I found them right away. They were at the top of the spout!"

Incy interrupted, "Oh, it is not fair! Why can't I have babies? WHY does everybody laugh at my name? And why can't I climb the spout?"

"I do not know. What I do know, is that you are a super great friend and a really cool spider in general," assured Lucy.

"Yes," agreed Cindy.

"Maybe you could take some climbing lessons or something," Suzie suggested.

"Yes," said Incy with a sad sigh.

Teatime was over and the friends all said goodbye. Incy shut the door and gazed into the sad, quiet, and lonely room. She took the dirty teacups into the kitchen and started to wash them. She looked out the window above the sink and opened it to let the fresh air blow in and rid her kitchen of the smell of scones and butter. When she opened the window, she overheard her

favorite artist, Frela Kaso, tell another spider she thinks Incy is a very weak spider and even a newborn spider with only six legs could climb better than Incy. Incy was furious! She was so tired of all of the spiders calling her names and telling her what she can and can't do! She was tired of hiding from everyone. She was going to go outside, climb that waterspout and show those spiders who she is and what she is made of!

So, she ran to the door, swung the door open and ran to the waterspout.

She took a deep breath and yelled so loudly that everyone heard her, "I am going to climb the waterspout!" All the spiders turned to her and laughed. Then, she began to climb.

"Oh!" exclaimed one gentleman spider. "She is going to do it!" Everyone gasped as she crept higher and higher. Everyone oohed and aahed.

Then some said, "You can do it!" and began cheering her on. All the spiders chanted, "Go Incy go! Go Incy go!" until she got to the top of the spout.

"I did it!" Incy told herself. She turned around to see the prettiest view ever. There were mountains, fields of apple trees in bloom, and, standing in front of her, the spider of her dreams holding a bouquet of the sweetest smelling yellow flowers. His name was Mike-the-Spider (only four letters like Incy). Soon after Incy and Mike got married. They had two hundred kids. The next spring Frela Kaso named two of her babies Incy and Wincy.

THE END.

## Historical Fiction: *The 50's*

### Barry Decker, 9th grade

“Hey Frank,” called his younger sister, Betty, as he walked into the yard coming home from school.

“Hi Betty,” he replied without thinking. He was too focused on what was going to happen in the coming hours. You see, he knew that something big was going to happen that Friday. He just didn't know how big. If he had, he wouldn't have been able to concentrate on anything.

After saying hi to his mom, Sarah, he went up to his room to do his homework. He did his homework as fast as he could, then came downstairs to wait.

He walked out the door to see what Betty was doing. She was playing with a brand-new hula-hoop she had just gotten. When she saw him she asked, “Do you want to try?”

“Sure, how hard could it be?” he replied. He stepped off the porch into the grass and Betty handed him the hoop. Here goes nothing he thought, only to find out it was not as easy as it seemed. After what seemed like never-ending tips and chuckles from Betty, he got slowly better and better until he was doing it like he had been doing it forever. Then, he heard it. His dad's car in the driveway.

After his dad had taken a shower, they ate a small supper. Frank and his dad went out and got in his dad's 1952 Ford F2 pickup. They drove towards town on the back roads. Every time they went to town Frank always wondered why they lived in what seemed like the middle of nowhere.

Frank started counting all the cars they passed. As they got closer to town he couldn't keep up, so he quit. Then he saw his best friend, Tim. His dad told him to be good as he pulled over. Frank got out of the car, said he would be, and closed the door.

As Frank stepped onto the sidewalk Tim walked toward him. “Where have you been?” asked Tim.

“Traffic” replied Frank.

“Oh,” said Tim. “We've all been waiting, are you ready?”

“Yep,” said Frank as he followed Tim to the place where their friends were waiting.

When they got there, everyone was ready so they went to the park gate and got in line for the tickets. It was a long line but as they got closer they got even more excited. After buying their tickets they found seats. The seats they found were so good they could see the whole stage. They couldn't wait for the show to start.

Then the opening act ran onto the stage. After a short introduction, they started playing. He couldn't believe he was watching Johnny Cash live! After a couple of songs, it was on to the next act. As the singer came onto the stage, the crowd roared and he helped as much as he could. It was the king himself. Elvis Presley! He could not believe he was watching Elvis live. He pinched himself to make sure he was not dreaming. He wasn't. After what seemed like seconds but was closer to an hour the show was winding down. Elvis announced he was going to donate all the profit of the night to different charities in the town. Then it was over.

After dealing with a mad rush of people who all wanted to past the gate, the friends made their way to Tim's house for the sleepover they had planned. They knew sleep wouldn't happen but they told their parents they would try anyway. There were five friends, along with Frank and Tim and the rest of Tim's family. It was a fun night but no one slept.

The next morning was Saturday. After everyone but Frank went home, Tim's whole family, including Frank, crawled into Tim's dad's car and they started out for Frank's house for a big picnic. When they got to Frank's house a few aunts uncles and cousins were already there along with Frank and Betty's grandparents. Tim's little sister, Janet, ran over to play with Betty and her hula-hoop. Frank and Tim went to see Frank's new dog he had just gotten a few days before. After lunch, everyone sat around talking

The kids got ready to go play in the creek. Just before they were about to leave, Frank's dad, Ben, said he had an announcement to make. He said that last night he had received word his military unit was being sent to Korea on Wednesday and that he was to report to the base for a refresher course on Monday. Everyone was stunned.

He said, "Don't worry I'll be back."

Sarah said, "I'm going to hold you to that," and everyone nodded their heads in agreement.

On Monday, as Frank was about to leave for the bus and his mom was getting ready to take Betty to her school, they all had to say goodbye to their dad for what might be the last time. They hugged him and told him to be careful.

The last thing he said before getting in his car was, "I won't forget my promise."

At school that day Tim asked if he and Janet could come over after school.

Frank said, "I think, but I'll have to make sure Mom thinks it's o.k." It was o.k. with his mom so Tim came over that evening after he had done his homework. He and Frank mowed the yard, watered the flower garden, pulled weeds, and trimmed the hedges while Betty and Janet did some cleaning inside then played. Then Sarah called them for supper. After supper, Tim's dad came and picked up Janet and him. Soon it was bedtime.

The next day Frank got a letter in the mail with a ticket for a couple to attend a carnival in town. It was from his friend who had won it at last year's carnival, but couldn't go this year. The only problem was Frank didn't have a girlfriend. The ticket was for a "couple" so he would have to find a date. The next day in school Frank asked Tim what he should do. Tim said that Frank should find someone that he liked being around and ask her out. He also said that he should talk to his mom first to make sure she approved.

After school he talked to his mom and she approved of his going on a date. Later that evening he went on a bike ride down the road to a neighbor's house. When he got there the only person home was the one he was looking for. It was a girl from his grade named Patricia. He had always liked her and they had been friends for as long as he could remember. When he to her house he started talking as if he had just come to visit. After a long talk, and as he was getting ready to leave, he remembered why he had come. He couldn't bring himself to just say it until it was almost too late.

Finally, he asked, "Patricia, will you go to the carnival with me on Saturday?"

She blushed and said, "Yes."

Frank asked, "Should I pick you up at 7?" Patricia said that she would have to check with her parents but she thought it would be o.k.

That Saturday Frank could barely wait for seven o'clock. He kept looking at his watch and counting the minutes. When it was time to go he got on his bike and pedaled as fast as he could. He got to Patricia's house in record time. From there, they rode to town with another neighbor who was going to town.

Once they got to the carnival they listened to a local band for a few minutes then rode the Ferris wheel. Afterward, they played a few games and walked around. It was almost time to go so they decided to have a quick snack then head back to meet their neighbor for a ride home.

Monday morning in school Tim asked Frank how the carnival was. Frank smiled and said, "It got my mind off of dad for the first time this week."

Tim said, "I'm glad you liked it. Would you and Betty like to come over tonight?"

Frank said, "Sure, we would like that."

Later, after school and homework, Sarah took Frank and Betty to Tim's. As their parents talked, Betty and Janet played and Frank helped Tim mow the yard and water the garden. Then, leaving the girls to play outside, they went up to the attic where Tim was building another room. He wouldn't tell Frank what it was. After they had finished that night's work on the room Tim guessed it would be another week or two until it was finished.

The next day after school Frank walked out to get the mail. On his way back to the house, as he leafed through what he assumed was mail for his mother, he saw familiar handwriting. He pulled that envelope to the top in disbelief. The handwriting looked just like his father's. When he got back to the house, he handed the envelope to his mom and she was just as surprised as him. Frank then said, "You better open it." After what seemed like forever she handed Frank the letter. It said:

*Dear Family,*

*I am now in Korea and we are winning the fight but I don't know how long we can keep pushing back now that we are in North Korea. There is no way to get away from the noise so there isn't much sleep. I am doing a lot of behind the lines stuff like driving supply trucks and fixing airplanes and anything else that gets broken. Things break down often. I can't wait to see you all.*

*Love,  
Dad*

*P.S.  
I haven't forgotten my promise.*

The next day in school everyone seemed to be in a happy mood. Frank almost forgot about the war. That night he slept well. Pretty soon it would be his sixteenth birthday. The morning of his birthday was a bright, sunny one. He couldn't wait for the school day to end. When he got home, and after he finished his homework, some of his friends started showing up. By supper time almost all his friends were there. Tim was one of the last to show up. He told Frank "Happy birthday."

Frank looked at him and said, "Just think, I am old enough to get a driver's license and you still have to wait three more months."

Tim was about to say something but just then Patricia walked in and turned to face Frank. She said, "I hope I'm not interrupting but I just saw everyone was here and thought I would see what's happening."

"You're not interrupting anything," replied Tim, "It's Frank's birthday."



“Oh, happy birthday, Frank,” said Patricia.

“Thank you,” said Frank, “you’re welcome to stay awhile.”

Patricia said, “I might just take you up on that.” Then they heard a call from the kitchen announcing there was food for everyone. As Frank walked into the room everyone started singing happy birthday. Then Tim and Patricia slipped into the other room and when the singing was over Patricia walked in with a cake covered in candles. Frank blew them out and Tim handed him a knife. After everyone had their cake they went outdoors and didn't come in until well after dark.

The next day Frank went and took his driver’s test. He had driven around the neighborhood so he had a general idea of what to do when he got there. He did very well.

Not long after, Frank drove into town to get some supplies for some odd jobs around the house. When he got to the hardware he noticed all the people were talking excitedly. As he was checking out, he asked the cashier why everybody was so happy.

The cashier looked at him and said, “Well haven't you heard the good news?”

“I’m afraid not,” replied Frank.

“Really?” asked the cashier. “The fighting in Korea is over.”

As Frank drove home he wondered if it was really true. As he walked up to the steps he saw the mailman put something in his mailbox. After dropping his bags on the porch, Frank ran to the mailbox. He pulled out the mail and thumbed through the letters. Then he saw it, the one he had hoped to see. It was another envelope with familiar handwriting. After opening and reading it he gave it to his mom. Then she read it aloud. It said,

*Dear Family,*

*The fighting is over and we are getting ready to come home. Two planes will land directly at the airport close to town. I get home on Saturday. I have to go.*

*Love,  
Dad*

*P.S.  
I haven't forgotten my promise.*

Later that day Frank's mother got a call informing her that two planes were flying together on their way home from the base where their father had been when one of them crashed into the ocean. No one knew exactly who was on the plane so there was still hope, she was told.

An hour later as people walked off the plane, Frank stood there waiting, hoping that his dad would be the next one. As person after person filed off and found their families, the line slowed. Then, the line stopped. Finally, one more person came to the door; it was his father.

Betty ran to meet him at the top of the steps. When she got to him he picked her up and carried her. She was crying. Frank couldn't wait for him to get down the stairs.

When he was almost halfway down the steps, Frank's dad, Ben, started to lose his balance. He managed to put Betty down on the steps but he couldn't get his balance back before he fell. He slid to the bottom of the steps on his back. Frank and Sarah ran to him and got there just as he got to the bottom of the steps.

Ben found himself looking at the ceiling from a hospital bed. Then Frank realized he was awake. "How long was I out?" asked Ben.

"Almost two hours," replied Frank. "What was the last thing you remember?" asked the doctor as he walked into the room.

"Losing my balance getting off the plane," replied Ben. After a few questions, the doctor said that Ben would be fine except for a few bumps and bruises, a slight concussion, and broken arm.

Then Frank's dad said, "I can survive a war overseas but I can't get off an airplane at home!" Everyone laughed.

**Letters for Literature<sup>5</sup>: *Dear Ester and Jerry Hicks***  
**Almila Dukel, 8<sup>th</sup> grade**

Dear Esther and Jerry Hicks,

What a beautiful day! The sky is overcast, the grass has a wilted appearance, and it is unbearably cold ten feet beyond the wood stove, yet still, what a beautiful day. It's beautiful because the fire is a cheerful orange and burning brightly, and the sparrows are flitting from bush to bush, gossiping over the latest news. I have an excellent book to read and the mountains upon the horizon are my favorite color. Yes, in my opinion, it is a beautiful day.

But would I see it in such a positive light had it not been for Sara and Solomon? I think not. Before meeting them, I would have been sulking over the cold weather, and complaining of boredom. Solomon, along with Sara, taught me not to let things beyond my control, such as the weather, affect my happiness.

After listening to the first book in the Sara series (and listening to it again, again and again) I began to look at the world differently. I began to notice that the things I wanted to happen, did happen, if I thought about them in a joyful, clear way. Like waking up with a strong desire see a friend, and chancing upon one later in the day. I also began to be more appreciative of the world around me. Even the little things. Today, as I look around me, I can find reasons to feel deep appreciation for everything I see: my wooden chair, for making me thankful that I have a support for my back, my cork board, for allowing me to look at the things I love every day, and for the atoms that make me a person, a human being who can laugh, cry, and most importantly, be happy.

There was once a time when I would have been envious of others' triumphs, and longed for what I knew I could never have. Now, after reading the Sara series, I feel glad that other people can achieve their goals, and I can respect their hard work. I realize that I already have all I need: a loving and caring family, friends I can depend on, and the knowledge that I am content.

Two years ago, my living room ceiling collapsed, and my family and I had to eat our meals outdoors in the chilly October air. In addition, we had to sleep in a single bedroom. But I did not view this as a calamity. For me, it was an interesting time, because I ate my meals outside for

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<sup>5</sup> Editor's Note: "Letters About Literature is a reading and writing contest for students in grades 4-12. Students are asked to read a fiction or nonfiction book, book series, short story, poem, essay, or speech (excluding song lyrics) and write to the author (living or dead) about how the book affected them personally. Letters are judged on state and national levels. Tens of thousands of students from across the country enter Letters About Literature each year. If you are in grades 4-12, you are eligible to enter the [Letters About Literature](#) reading and writing contest."  
—The Library of Congress

several weeks, pretended our backyard was a campsite, and spent my days in the sun. And even though it took nearly two months for the ceiling to be rebuilt, it is now stronger than ever, and there is no doubt that it will stay up for a good many years to come. This experience also allowed me to respect the skills of painters, carpenters, and everyone who helped make our home a livable place again.

Because of Sara and Solomon, I have evolved into the person I am today. Without them, I might still be the sulky, impatient little girl I once was. So, thank you. Thank you for creating two amazing characters who have taught me, in the funniest way possible, to be happy, to appreciate the world around me, and to understand that all, truly, is well.

Sincerely,  
Almila Dukel

## Personal Narrative: *Joining Apex—Don't Cut Yourself Short*

**Ben Kaplan, 9<sup>th</sup> grade**

It all started with me wanting to make a Fortnite team, but I didn't know what to name it. In a short amount of time I decided on the name BK (which did stand for my name, but eventually changed it to "Born Kings").

After that, I asked my friend, "I want to make an esports team, wanna help me grow it?"

And he responded, "Yeah, for sure, man!"

I was more excited than a kid meeting Santa. So, we created an Instagram account named @bk.esports. We grew and grew and picked up good players for our team; however, BK was not that organized, and, after a little while, a lot of our best players were picked up by better and more well-known teams. Unfortunately, after that BK was starting to split apart even more, and I didn't do too much to save it. There was conflict between some of the members.

"You are so stupid and so frickin' bad at the game. Why are you even in here?" said a member.

Other members defended him saying, "You are SO TOXIC!" and other stuff I can't say because it isn't appropriate. Most of our members left because of the toxicity. All of the members remaining were around 10 average players and 1 to 4 good trickshooters.

This event caused something else I personally didn't like at the time, but it helped me get to where I am today. I got put into a group chat named "Merge?" And I the first words I saw were,

Yeah, I will

I kept scrolling up, looking at the messages and it said,

We should merge

After a little while, a merge happened with BK and a strictly twitter team named Crimson. I didn't know what to feel at the time. When the merge happened, the leader of Crimson kicked most of the BK roster and that was the start of why I didn't like Crimson. I was more mad than Rasool not getting my Dragonite. I was in Crimson only as a Team Captain at first, not as a leader like I was in BK. I felt like that was just not right. I thought Crimson was going to be the

best team I could possibly be on. My face was super red, more red than an apple, from all the anger I had in me; but I kept it on the low because I did not want to get kicked from Crimson.

Now let's take a second to think about what I said. I thought Crimson was going to be the best team I could manage to stay on, so I definitely sold myself short. So, I stayed in Crimson for 3-4 months, doing nothing, just recruiting people. It was so boring, and when I was demoted from team captain to a normal member for no reason, that was the last straw because it wasn't a very "unique" team. I took initiative and left Crimson and looked to join another Fortnite team named Apex. I shot them a DM (direct message) on Instagram and asked if they were looking for trick-shooters.

Yeah, Maybe 🙄

Apex responded to my DM.

My heart raced faster than Usain Bolt. I was so happy because I knew they were such a good and supportive team. Apex is also a well-known team with nearly 100,000 followers on Instagram and the leaders and members of Apex are just super active and kind. The first time I joined, I just hit a few trick-shots, and people said some of them were "insane."

I asked one of the Apex leaders,

How did you find my DM on Instagram because you guys must get a TON of DMs every day?

To which they responded,

Well, one of our members has been scouting for trick-shooters and we are new to the scene, and when we were about to DM you, we saw you DM us first, so we responded

The first week I joined it was so fun. I got to play with members that were considered to be "famous," and they were so nice! I felt something with Apex that I never did with Crim. Apex was more supportive and helpful about anything I needed, so it made me feel happy. They are also more engaging, making them good teamtages (team montage), which is when you get a lot of clips of your team and make a good montage out of it, which shows the Apex members coordinate well with each other.

Now let's pause a second, if BK never merged with Crim, I would still happily be the leader of BK. I would never have taken initiative to join a better team like Apex if that didn't happen. I would not be as happy as I am now. Apex has very supportive people and consistent meetings. It really does feel I am part of a great organization! They even post clips of their members to give them exposure on Instagram. My post alone has 140,000 views on their Instagram page, which gave me quite a bit of followers myself. Just that one event, that I did not like, led me into another and I am very happy where I am right now. Even though it took me time to take initiative, still better late than never. Now, you can apply this lesson anywhere, like school. Don't only go for a B, go for an A in a class. There are many more ways you can apply this lesson. **DON'T CUT YOURSELF SHORT!**

**Choice: *Wheels of Rain***

**Rachel Zhang, 4<sup>th</sup> grade**

I didn't care that I had no helmet. The whole point of this hill was to have no helmet, let the wind rush around you, let it wrap you up in a chilly and damp hug. Let the wheels be soaked in water, and laugh at the fun you are having.

Without a helmet, I could speed down the hill on nothing but my scooter. Air would dive in and out of my hair streaming behind me, like dolphins leaping out of water. Droplets would fly out behind, indicating my speed.

The gray sky is not ugly. The gray sky is a different shade of blue, a different sky smiling down at you.

This was the point. There was nowhere to go, no final destination. The scooter was all that mattered.

Children are not beastly demons made to ruin. Instead, we are a flower bud, ready to bloom. Ready to show the world its true inner beauty. And most adults, they are what remain of the flower. A shrunken stem and a couple of withered petals. They cannot fly, take on the world like us children. They dwindle away in piles of worries and stress.

But there are some adults. The chosen ones to live on, just like bigger versions of children. They laugh, talk, enjoy. They fully appreciate us. They are the only ones to understand. They remember. The children with those deep eyes, looking into yours. They want you to understand what it is like being underestimated. Every time I see a 'Keep away from children' label, I feel anger. Who do you think we are? Ten-year old's **do not** suffocate themselves in plastic bags. They do not choke themselves with window strings. We are children. Children who are enjoying our lives. Playing. Laughing. Thank you, Anne. Thank you, Andrew Clements. Thank you for understanding.

And I wasn't going to take childhood for granted. Enjoy your life when you can, because when you are older, you'll wish you had more time like this. More time to speed down the biggest hill on the street, with no helmet and on only two wheels. Let the puddles be your friends, rush through them, and laugh, just laugh when it rains. Feel the water come down on you. Rain is Nature's waterpark. Rain. How beautiful it sounds. Live for the joy of emotionally flying.

And I spend my days urging my scooter through the puddles, washing off the wheels with natural water. My wheels shine beautifully, with an orange color. Time flies as fast as you are,



with you down the hill. It's my favorite pastime. Speeding through puddles, down the hill, on my scooter.

Going to the top to speed down again, I see him. Then, we speed down, in the rain, together. Both with no helmet.

## Poetry: Free Verse and Haiku

### Wyatt Keil, 6<sup>th</sup> grade

#### *Rain Spreads the Earth*

like lightning hitting the water.  
The rain starts dripping on my  
dry skin, the cold sensation  
is frightening.  
The puffy moss  
gets gently misted  
with dew.  
The hemlocks  
trickle with rain.  
All of a sudden the rain stops.  
    The world stops.

spring rain  
muddy  
between my toes<sup>6</sup>

screaming sister  
a chattering squirrel  
in the old oak tree<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> United Nations International School Haiku Contest, 2018, second place

<sup>7</sup> United Nations International School Haiku Contest, 2018, honorable mention

## Meetings with Fame: The Fourth Branch of Government

Aaron Chen, 6<sup>th</sup> grade

On a cold day, I headed to my favorite place—Starbucks. When I stepped inside I noticed the smell of dusty old books at Starbucks? I saw a regular, listening to music while sipping some coffee, a girl typing on her laptop, and George Washington along with the rest of Presidents. Hmm, I wondered, where is that funny smell coming from? Wait. I stopped in my tracks; did I just see George Washington and all the other Presidents? I grabbed a coffee and sat near them, but not close enough that they would notice me. I glanced over. Every one of the Presidents was there except for Donald Trump and William Howard Taft. Then I glanced over at the door and saw Donald Trump carrying bags from McDonald's, Wendy's, Burger King and a box of pizza. He awkwardly opened the door, sat down at the head of one of the tables and dropped a burger and a slice of pizza in front of all the Presidents.

Soon I heard a loud squeaking sound as William Howard Taft tried to fit through the door. Out of the blue, a team of people started pushing him while another team started cutting the wall around the door. For some reason, no one seemed to take notice and everyone kept talking. Finally, with the Starbucks door destroyed, William Howard Taft came in and ordered tea.

When George Washington heard this, he ran up to Taft and shouted, “How dare you drink the drink of the Red Coats. You are a disgrace to this country.” He grabbed the drink and slammed it into the trash.

“But I love tea!” Taft replied.

“Not anymore,” George Washington said. Taft sighed and got a coffee. But then things got even worse for Taft. He tried sitting down on a chair and the chair broke. His crew had to bring in a chair that was made of concrete. Taft made himself comfy (as much as he could) and, with a frown on his face, he sipped the coffee.

In another conversation I overheard, the Presidents compared their pets. Calvin Coolidge who has a wide assortment of dog breeds, also has a number of bird species, domesticated raccoons, a bobcat, wallaby, pygmy hippo, and a bear. The President who claimed to own the most animals of them all was Theodore Roosevelt. He boasted about his snakes, badger, lion, hyena, zebra, five bears, dogs, cats, horses, birds, rats, and guinea pigs. Rutherford Hayes fired back, hollering that he had the first Siamese cat breed in America, and owns Jersey cows, a goat, canaries, and a mockingbird. James Buchanan laughed at these Presidents as he announced that he was the recipient of a herd of elephants given by the King of Siam. He even kept one elephant at the White House, along with his pair of bald eagles and his Newfoundland dog. Soon the

competition was narrowed down to Calvin Coolidge and Theodore Roosevelt. Since George Washington never lies (except for that time he lied to a British spy, but we don't talk about that) everyone closed their eyes and told George Washington who they wanted to win. In the end, George Washington announced Theodore Roosevelt as the winner. Once he heard this, Theodore got up and started to dance. While Theodore was busting some moves, Calvin Coolidge sat in the corner and looked angry and hurt. While everyone was still cheering and booing, Washington stood up and went to next door to an ice cream store.

He came back with what looked like tea flavored ice cream. Still annoyed by what happened earlier, Howard Taft got up and tackled Washington to the ground with all his force, then sat on him with all of his three hundred fifty pounds.

Barely able to breathe, George Washington whispered, "That was vanilla, not tea!" Howard Taft stood up looking embarrassed. Soon all the Presidents left. When Starbucks emptied out except for President Taft who had bent down to pick up the ice cream and torn his pants in half, I wondered whether I had been dreaming or not.

## **Halloween Mash-up Story: *Untitled***

**Ariana Macneal, 9<sup>th</sup> grade**

When Sylvia woke up, the sun shined in her eyes through the window facing her bed. She squinted and put one of her hands in front of her face. Had she forgotten to shut the curtains last night? She looked down. Her drab brown curtains were covering her body. She remembered taking her blanket to the couch last night to keep warm while she read a book. She remembered how she accidentally dragged it too close to the fireplace and how the flames swallowed her only blanket. To avoid freezing to death, she had taken down her curtains, the only thing that shielded her eyes from the piercing sun rays, and used them as a blanket. Oh well. When you were as poor as she was, sacrifices had to be made.

Sylvia yawned and crawled out her blankets, or rather her curtains. She picked up the baseball cap sitting on her nightstand and put it on her head. She didn't even bother to brush her hair. It wasn't like she was going anywhere. She didn't have any places to go to.

She went downstairs to the kitchen. She decided to have waffles for breakfast. Waffles were a rare treat, mostly because you needed electricity to make them. Sylvia hardly had enough money to pay the electric bill every month. In fact, it was the only bill she still paid.

All the others had been revoked from her because she couldn't pay them. She had no water, no phone, no internet, and no medical insurance. She had nothing. She didn't even have a friend anymore. Her birding dog, Oreo, had escaped outside a few nights ago and ran deep into the forest.

After finishing her waffles, Sylvia decided to go hunting. She went back to her bedroom and pulled a Nerf gun out from under the bed. This was what she hunted with, which didn't really help her catch anything, although occasionally she would get lucky. One time she had shot at a deer and when it had run, it had stepped on a half-broken branch and triggered a tree fall, which had ended the deer's life. But luck wasn't always on her side, and so most of the time, she went hungry until she stole enough money from unsuspecting hikers to go to the store and buy two or three things.

Sylvia used to have a real gun, but one day she had bought it to school, and the school wasn't exactly pleased about it. Unfortunately, even after she quit school, they never returned it to her. The school people did not care about her situation at all. It made her mad. It wasn't like she could go out and buy another rifle. The good ones costed seven hundred to one thousand bucks at the local sporting goods store. Someday, she hoped to be able to afford a real gun, but that day was far away.

Sylvia went down into the woods and tried to be as quiet as possible. She couldn't step on a single twig. To hunt, you needed the element of surprise. Not that it was hard to be silent. Sylvia wasn't used to making noise anymore. She had been alone for so long.

Suddenly a bat flew over her head. Sylvia did not try to shoot at it though. Although a Nerf bullet could likely knock a bat to the ground, Sylvia didn't hunt bats because they weren't big enough to eat.

"Why do you have a Nerf gun instead a real gun?" a mysterious voice asked.

Sylvia froze and looked around slowly. "Who's there?" she asked.

"I am." The bat that had just flown over her head soared down to make eye contact with Sylvia. "Now can you please answer my question? I really want to know. Why don't you have a real gun?"

Sylvia decided to ignore the fact that bats weren't capable of forming cognizant human speech. "Because I can't afford it, and also because the school doesn't exactly appreciate real guns." Sylvia then decided not to ignore the fact that bats weren't capable of forming cognizant human speech. "How can you talk?"

"Magic," said the bat. "My owner's a witch."

*Wow, a witch,* Sylvia thought. Her parents had always told her that witches existed but she had never been sure whether she believed them or not.

"What's her name?" Sylvia asked. "And I'd like your name, too."

"My name is Spooky," said the bat. "My owner's name is Ariana. We live in that castle in the middle of the woods. You're a hunter. You've been around here before. I'm sure you've seen it."

"I have, I think," Sylvia said, remembering a big stone castle that she had spotted once last year when she had ventured into the deepest part of the forest.

"Ariana's only fifteen, but she is very skilled for her age," said Spooky. "The problem is, she takes advantage of it and uses her magic all the time, even for little things she could do on her own."

"That must be really annoying," Sylvia said, hoping she sounded sympathetic enough. She hadn't had a conversation in over a year, and she was out of practice.

“It is,” said Spooky. “She’s basically the embodiment of the term “annoying” and she talks too much.”

“I’m sorry to hear that,” Sylvia said. “Is that why you’re out here? Did you run away, or rather fly away?”

“Well I did run, or fly, away, but not because of that,” said Spooky. “I played a prank on her, and now I’m hiding so I don’t get in trouble.”

“What did you do?” Sylvia asked.

“I duct-taped all her stuff to the ceiling,” Spooky said. “I’m very proud. It’s my best prank yet. I worked all night and it was really hard.”

“Why?” Sylvia asked.

“Because I kept getting stuck to the duct tape,” Spooky said. “But her face was worth it. She was so shocked.”

“You don’t really like your owner, do you?” Sylvia asked.

“No, I like her,” Spooky said. “I’d do almost anything for her, but what can I say? I like to have fun, too.”

Sylvia was about to respond when a screaming noise came from the sky. Something fell to the ground with a thump, right in front of her. It was a tall guy with pointy ears, dressed in green and red. A pointy hat had fallen off his head.

“Oh, come on,” the guy said, picking his hat up and brushing it off. He put it on his head, but it fell right off again. He sighed and picked it up again. It stayed on his head this time, but the guy started groaning.

“You got it to stay on your head,” Sylvia said. “What’s wrong?”

“Look at it,” the guy said. “It’s bending down. It’s supposed to stand up! That’s what normal elf hats do! I don’t get why Santa gave me the worst hat in the North Pole! I’m his right-hand man! You think he’d give me a better wardrobe!”

“You’re an elf?” Spooky asked.

“Yeah!” the elf yelled. “I’m Barry, the elf! I’m Santa’s personal elf!”

“You’re too tall to be an elf,” Sylvia said.

“And too grumpy,” Spooky said.

“I’m an elf,” Barry said. “You see my clothes, and my ears? Do any human beings wear these stupid clothes? Do any human beings have ears this pointy?”

“Okay, okay. I believe you,” Sylvia said. “Why are you here though? Shouldn’t you be at the North Pole or something?”

“I should,” Barry said. “But I fell out of Santa’s sleigh.”

“Santa’s sleigh?” Spooky asked. “It’s October. It’s not even snowing yet.”

“We were taking it for a test run,” Barry said. “We do it every Friday before Halloween.”

“Halloween?” Sylvia asked. “I thought it was still summer.”

“How stupid are you?” Barry asked. “Do you live in a cave or something?”

“A cottage, actually,” Sylvia said.

“So, you’re cut off from the world, too?” Barry asked.

“What do you mean?” Sylvia asked.

“I’m Santa’s personal elf,” Barry said. “That means I can’t interact with or even see other elves. And it’s not like I can talk to people when I’m helping deliver presents. Most people don’t think elves are real. You two are the first people I’ve talked to besides Santa in the past five years.”

“Wow,” Sylvia said.

“Are you holding a Nerf gun?” Barry asked.

“Yeah,” Sylvia said. “Why?”

“I’m pretty sure I delivered you that Nerf gun three or four years ago,” Barry said. “Did you get that for Christmas?”

“Yeah, actually,” Sylvia said. “It was the best Christmas gift I ever received, and the only thing I could save from the fire that destroyed my house and killed my parents. I was smart to



save it, because it's the only thing that keeps me fed besides the occasional 10 dollars I pickpocket from hikers or hunters."

"That keeps you alive?" Barry asked. "It can't even kill anything. Wouldn't a real gun be better?"

"The school never gave it back to me," Sylvia said.

"Hey," Barry said. "Not to change the subject, but you guys wouldn't happen to have any hot chocolate, would you?"

"Nope. I'm a bat," Spooky said.

"Nope. I can barely pay for waffles and the electric bill," Sylvia said.

"Do you guys have cookies?" Barry asked.

Sylvia and Spooky both shook their heads no.

"Ugh! Just my luck!" Barry said. "I fall out of Santa's sleigh and the only people I meet are a talking animal and an underprivileged, destitute pickpocket/hunter! And neither of them has hot chocolate or cookies!"

"I could find a few crumbs of something at my house," Sylvia said.

"My owner, Ariana, has fruit and water," Spooky said.

"No," Barry said. "I'm an elf. I live off of hot chocolate and cookies. I eat them for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks. I can't –" in the middle of his sentence, his hat collapsed on his head. "OH, COME ON!" Barry yelled.

"So that's why he's so grumpy," Spooky said.

"Because of his crumple hat?" Sylvia asked.

"No. Because of the constant sugar high," Spooky said.

"Hey," Sylvia said. "Your owner's a witch, right?"

"Yeah," Spooky said.

"Maybe she can conjure up some hot chocolate for him," Sylvia said. "Maybe that'll make him happier."

“Or crankier, because of the sugar high,” Spooky said.

“You know I can hear you guys, right?” Barry asked. “Whatever. It doesn’t matter. I’m never going to feel the hot, sweet, creamy taste of hot chocolate on tongue or the chewiness of a cookie against my teeth again. I’m gonna die out here in the woods! I’m gonna die!”

“No, you’re not,” Sylvia said. She sighed and looked up at Spooky. “Can we take him back to your castle?”

Spooky sighed. “Sure,” she said. “I don’t know if Ariana will help him though.”

“Is she not a helpful person?” Sylvia asked.

“No, she likes to help,” Spooky said. “She just has a hard time deciding which power to use to help.”

“I’m gonna die,” Barry whined.

“No, you’re not,” Sylvia said, rolling her eyes. “We’re going to the castle.”

“I never said we were –” Spooky began.

“We’re going to the castle and that’s final,” Sylvia said. “Show us the way, Spooky!”

After trekking through the wilderness for a few hours, they came to the big stone castle that Sylvia had seen. A young witch walked out with a big smile on her face.

“Spooky!” she said. “I thought you got lost! I’m sorry for getting upset about the duct tape thing! I’m better now!” Ariana turned to Barry and Sylvia and gave them another big, bright smile. “You bought some friends home this time, Spooky!”

“Not friends,” Barry said. “Just a hungry elf and a penniless, orphaned hunter.”

“Well if you’re hungry, you’re out of luck,” Ariana said. “I’m out of food. I was actually just running out to the store.”

“I thought you had magic powers,” Barry said.

“Well sometimes they drain out if I use them too much,” Ariana said.

“But they were working fine last night,” Spooky said.

“I was running low,” Ariana said. “Normally I use my remaining magic to conjure up an antidote but seeing as I had to use it to *tear off duct tape* –” Ariana paused to glare at Spooky. “I have to wait for them to replenish on their own. While I wait, I’m going to the store to buy food.”

“Can we come?” Sylvia asked. “I’d like to buy some real food, and we can get cookies and hot chocolate for Barry.”

“Who’s Barry?” Ariana asked.

“Me,” Barry said, pointing to himself. “I’m Barry.”

“Oh, cool,” Ariana said. “Now let’s go.”

They planned to drive until they realized that Ariana couldn’t conjure up a car. So, they walked for a few hours. Ariana talked about pointless things the whole time, which was really annoying. Barry complained the whole time, which was also annoying (but not as annoying as Ariana.) Sylvia was just silent, mostly because she didn’t know what to talk about. She didn’t know what people talked about anymore. She didn’t even know if people still used the words that she had grown up using. Who knew? Maybe the word for “house” wasn’t “house” anymore. But she didn’t really have to think about that now. They had arrived at the store. Now it was time to get some food.

They went inside. Ariana led them to the produce section.

“I thought we were getting hot chocolate and cookies,” Barry said.

“We’re getting fruit first,” Ariana said. “Apples, watermelon, strawberries, blueberries, tangerines...”

“Grapes? Bananas?” Sylvia suggested.

“Not bananas,” Spooky said. “They’re her weakness.”

“OH MY GOD!” a voice shouted. Ariana, Spooky, Barry, and Sylvia all looked up. A big, fluffy, pink bunny carrying a drum set and wearing sunglasses was staring right at them. Sylvia recognized him from battery commercials she had seen on the TV when she was little. It was the Energizer Bunny, and he looked terrified.

“IT’S A BAT!” the Energizer Bunny screamed. “IT’S A BAT! IT’S A BAT!”

“It’s okay!” Sylvia said. “Spooky is a friendly bat.”

“BUT BATS SOMETIMES CARRY DISEASE!” the Energizer Bunny said. “DISEASE! AND THEY EAT BUGS! BUGS! THAT’S SO... SO GROSS! AND THEY HAVE RABIES! I DON’T WANT TO GET RABIES!”

“It’s okay, Mr. Bunny!” Spooky said. “I don’t have rabies. And bats aren’t really bad or scary. I’m very nice. I promise.”

“But you’re from nature,” the Energizer Bunny said, shivering. “The woods, and trees, and anything natural are all scary.”

“Mr. Bunny,” Sylvia said. “That banana you’re holding comes from nature.”

“I only eat batteries and bananas,” the Energizer Bunny said. “I don’t like the taste of anything else.”

“Not even carrots?” Ariana asked, obviously worried about the banana.

“I’m not a regular bunny,” the Energizer Bunny said. “I don’t conform to the social norms. Most bunnies like the woods and live a quiet life. I’m always going. I never take a break. I’m just always wandering around the world playing the drums and advertising the Energizer batteries. It’s quite lonely sometimes.”

“I’m sorry to hear that, Mr. Bunny,” Sylvia said. She did feel sorry. She knew all too well what loneliness could do to a person. She suspected Barry did too. Maybe even Spooky and Ariana too. “Hey,” Sylvia said. “I could be your friend. We could all be your friend.”

“All of us?” Barry asked, wrinkling his brow and tilting his head a bit. His hat fell off his head. He rolled his eyes, sighed, and picked it up again. It took him three tries to get it back on. Everyone watched this happen in silence, even Ariana.

“Yes. All of us,” Sylvia said, breaking the silence. “We can all be friends.”

“But I can’t be friends with a bat,” the Energizer Bunny said.

“Yeah, you can,” Ariana said. “Spooky may play annoying pranks sometimes, but other than that, she’s harmless. She won’t hurt you. You can trust me. I don’t tell lies. I’ll make up a lie detecting spell to prove it to you when I get my magic back.”

“Sometimes you should face your fears,” Spooky said. “Don’t worry, Mr. Bunny. I’ll keep my distance until you feel comfortable. I promise.”

“Promise?” the Energizer Bunny asked.

“Promise,” Spooky said.

“Hey, guys?” Barry asked. “This is really nice and all, but I really want some hot chocolate and cookies. We need to go buy some.”

“Just let me get my fruit first,” Ariana said. She reached into her pocket. “Oh no. I didn’t bring any money. And I don’t have my powers, so I can’t conjure anything up.”

“I make lots of money from selling Energizer batteries,” said the Energizer Bunny. “I’ll pay for your guys’ stuff.”

“Great!” Ariana said.

They all continued shopping together. Ariana got her fruit. The Energizer Bunny got batteries and bananas (he kept the bananas in a separate cart though, in case they tainted Ariana’s food.) Barry finally got his hot chocolate and cookies. He took them to the checkout immediately so he could eat and drink them while he was in the store. Sylvia bought a couple of random things. But little did she know, she would come across something she really truly wanted to buy.

When they were on their way to the frozen food aisle, they passed the weaponry aisle, and a beautiful rifle in a glass case caught Sylvia’s eye. It looked just like the rifle that the school had taken away from her. She wished she could have it, and then she realized that with the Energizer Bunny’s money, she could. After asking, she went over and paid the person behind the counter. The guy took the rifle out of the case and handed it to her. A smile spread across Sylvia’s face. She had a gun. Her greatest ambition had been fulfilled. Now she could hunt without having to rely on random falling trees.

After they paid for everything, the Energizer Bunny asked his new friends if they wanted to travel across the world with him. Everyone said yes. They waited until Ariana got her powers back, so she could pack up her belongings and Spooky’s belongings without any actual effort.

Barry quit his job as Santa’s personal elf. He had been Santa’s personal elf for nine years, and he was ready for a change. He was actually feeling kind of optimistic for once. Sylvia packed up her Nerf gun and her real gun, and left her house behind. It didn’t matter if the electricity bill didn’t get paid. She wasn’t going to be living there anymore.

They traveled all over the world, advertising Energizer batteries, sightseeing, and exploring new places. Spooky and the Energizer Bunny eventually became friends, but the Energizer Bunny was still a little wary around forests, which made it very hard for Sylvia to hunt with her new gun. Ariana was still very loud and annoying. Barry was still a big grump. But besides that, life was good, and they all lived happily ever after.

## Nursery Rhyme Continued: *The Queen of Hearts*

Quiana Guo, 8<sup>th</sup> grade

The Queen of Hearts

The Queen of Hearts

She made some tarts,

All on a summer's day;

The Knave of Hearts

He stole those tarts,

And took them clean away.

The King of Hearts

Called for the tarts,

And beat the knave full sore;

The Knave of Hearts

Brought back the tarts,

And vowed he'd steal no more.

“OFF WITH THEIR HEADS!!”

Sorry, I need to find out WHO STOLE MY TARTS AGAIN!!! The nursery rhyme is such a terrible representation of me! Who wrote this rhyme? Whoever it was OFF WITH THEIR HEADS! Now, since there are so many exclamation marks on this page already, you may be wondering why I keep shouting. I used to be a kind and fair queen until the Knave of Hearts, one of my subjects, and the heir to the throne, kept stealing my tarts! I used to make my own tarts for the King of Hearts, my dear husband, until the Knave STOLE MY TARTS! Here's the real story.

In our beautiful red Kingdom of Hearts, I was a trustworthy and righteous queen and the King of Hearts was a trustworthy and righteous king. Together, we had the fairest and most beautiful kingdom in the Land of Cards. We planted roses all around our castle and even had our own little servant, the KNAVE. He used to be the heir until HE STOLE MY TARTS. I used to love my kingdom until the Knave of Hearts was born. Born to 4 of Hearts and 9 of Hearts, the KNAVE OF HEARTS was the naughtiest boy on earth. Even saying his name makes me ANGRY!!! His name, Ilosovic Stayne, was originally given to him by his parents, but after four years of naughtiness, his parents gave him the nickname of Knave of Hearts. The 4 of Hearts is my best friend and I didn't want to have any children so I made *her* first-born the heir to the throne.

One day, I just finished baking tarts in the kitchen and turned around for only a second because I was looking for a plate to put the tarts on. Then, when I turned back to take the tarts

out of the pan, I found that they were all gone! I went to tell my husband and he made a declaration that whoever took the tarts should return them or else I, the Queen of Hearts, would chop his or her head off. The King of Hearts made me seem ruthless and I don't know what made him do it, but HE JUST DID IT! Urgh! I hate him right now!

So, when the Knave returned with the tarts, I wasn't surprised. He gave back the tarts because he didn't want his head chopped off and continued to make messes everywhere else except for the kitchen. He even said that he wouldn't ever steal my tarts again, except he did. Even though he gave back the tarts, the King of Hearts still beat him until his butt was sore. I was okay with that. As long as the Knave didn't make more messes that were too big, I was okay with him making messes. If the King of Hearts didn't eat his Sunday noon tarts, he used to get REALLY mad!

The next time I made tarts, I was washing my hands and the next thing I knew, the tarts were GONE!!! This time, I knew who did it. It was obviously the KNAVE! Since he was the heir to the throne, I didn't want him to get into more trouble, so I baked some more tarts and gave them to the king, who said, "These tarts don't taste as good as the ones I had last week! They taste terrible! Make some more and make them taste good!"

When he said that, I thought, *Well, if the Knave didn't steal the tarts, then I wouldn't have had to make them three times!* So, I told the king that the KNAVE stole the tarts and the king proclaimed that if the KNAVE didn't return the tarts, then I would chop his head off. I NEVER SAID THAT I WOULD CHOP HIS HEAD OFF, but I guess that's what I became known for.

Instead of hearing, "Oh look, it's the nicest and prettiest queen of the Land of Cards," I heard, "Oh look! It's the queen who always wants to chop her heir's head off because he steals her tarts!" Because I heard this enough times, I intended to chop the KNAVE'S head off and, in the end, that's what I did. I thought he had a fair and just trial, and I chopped his head off even with this nosy girl named ALICE in the way. Nosy Alice wanted me to stop the trial right away, but I chopped his head off, and from then on, even for a small crime, I always say, "OFF WITH THEIR HEADS!"

## **Allegorical Story: *The Great Nickel Run***

**Sylvia Decker, 8<sup>th</sup> grade**

Once upon a time there was a nickel, and every boy and girl wanted that nickel. They all tried hard to get it, but nobody could, except for one little girl, who I'm going to tell you about. Every year you had the chance to get it. All you had to do was be at the start gate for the Nickel Run, on August 1<sup>st</sup>, at noon. Then you had to run three miles, climb up a wooden fence that was fifteen feet tall, swim another mile, jump twenty jumps each three feet tall, crawl under a bridge, and then tell the Nickel Guard the password which you had to guess.

It started at the fairgrounds and you had to be done in two hours. Boys and girls trained all year for it but only a few made it to the end, and none could tell the Nickel Guard the correct password.

One year an eight-year-old girl, named Susan, decided she would try to win the nickel. But there were a few problems. Susan wasn't good at running, she wasn't good at climbing, she wasn't good at swimming, she wasn't good at jumping, she wasn't good at crawling, and she was really bad at guessing. So, as you can imagine, when she said she was going to try, everyone roared with laughter.

She started training with the other boys and girls. At first, she lagged behind, but gradually she started getting faster. By the fifth month of her training, she could keep up with even the strongest boys and girls. Everyone saw how determined she was and how good she was getting so they stopped laughing at her.

She practiced every single day after school and even on Saturday, although she didn't practice on Sunday because she went to church instead. Her training consisted of a three-and-a-half-mile run, a ten-foot climb up the fence around her yard, a swim across the pond behind the house five times in a row, jumping over an old tree that had fallen down twenty-five times, and crawling across the lawn twice.

Finally, the big day came, and she was ready. All the boys and girls lined up at the start gate and then the gun went off. Everyone started running as fast as they could, except for Susan. She stayed behind and paced herself, and soon she was passing everyone. She made the first three miles with ease and then she started to climb the fence. She flew right over it and then jumped down the other side. She was winning, but not for long. One of the older boys ran by her and called back, "Give up, you don't have what it takes."



Then two other girls and a boy passed her, all of them laughing. “Just keep going steady now,” she told herself. She was getting more and more determined every second. Next, she started to swim. It felt like she was swimming forever, but she just kept going. As she got to the edge of the pond she ran up the bank and started to jump.

At this point, she was getting very tired but now she knew she could make it. Suddenly, she tripped and fell. She laid there for a second and then got up and kept going. Running blindly, madly, she then jumped. Then she was running again, and jumping, and running, and jumping, and running, and jumping until she was through the jumps. Finally, she came to the last obstacle. The easiest one. All she had to do was crawl twenty feet under a bridge, which didn’t take her long at all.

Once she was through, she saw a few other boys and girls who had already made it, and they were taking turns guessing the password.

“Nickel.”

“Nickel Guard.”

“Honey.”

“Honey badger.”

“Money.”

And then it was Susan’s turn. “May I please have the nickel?” she asked.

“Yes, you may,” said the Nickel Guard.

Everyone stared in astonishment. Then finally one of the boys spoke up. “How did you do that?” he asked.

“It’s simple.” she said, “All you had to do was ask politely and it would have been yours. Now let me tell you a story.” The girls and boys stood around Susan.

“Once upon a time, there were two dogs. One was always polite and the other one rude. The polite one always got fed first and played with more. He also got to stay inside, and when the owner of the two dogs talked of him, he always said how great he was. But the rude one was fed last, hardly ever played with, always stayed outside, and when their owner talked of him he never had anything good to say.

So, one day the rude dog asked the polite one, ‘How come our owner likes you so much more than me?’

‘Because,’ replied the polite dog, ‘You are always so stuck up and rude. Try being polite, and then he will pay just as much attention to you.’ So, then the rude dog tried it, and to his surprise, the owner paid just as much attention to him as he did to the polite dog.

The rude dog came back to the polite one and asked, ‘How did you know what to do?’

‘Well,’ replied the polite dog, ‘when you are polite, you have a lot better of a chance of getting what you want.’”

**Schlow Library Novel Writing Contest: excerpt from *Shattered*<sup>8</sup>**  
**Emily Chen, 5<sup>th</sup> grade and Grace Yang, 5<sup>th</sup> grade**

Griffin

The end was almost near,  
It brought along the fear.  
The world we knew had shattered,  
The broken pieces mattered.  
A mighty group we are,  
Brighter than a star.  
The final sound of cheers,  
Still ringing in our ears.  
A beautiful sight,  
We were meant to make it right.

Eriocnemis Godini

Eriocnemis Godini,  
The voice was one that boomed.  
“You must believe me,  
You were almost doomed.”

The voice was one that boomed,  
All animals surprised,  
“You were almost doomed.”  
Some stopped, paralyzed.

All animals surprised,  
“The earth was shattered,”  
Some stopped, paralyzed,  
“Good thing none of you are tattered.”

“The earth was shattered,

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<sup>8</sup> Editor’s Note: This narrative poem, written and illustrated by Emily and Grace, tells a re-creation story from the point of view of a number of animals and mythical creatures. It has a message woven into it about the dangers of climate change and species loss. Emily and Grace studied different types of poems this past fall, such as a pantoum and an aubade. Readers will enjoy the variety.

You must believe me.  
Good thing none of you are tattered,”  
Eriocnemis godini

Griffin

The sun rises in the distance,  
Reminds me of my bleak existence.  
Dewdrops glisten in the blinding light,  
Morning breezes blowing away the night.  
Violets bloom under the sun’s soft gaze,  
Birds fly through the peaceful rays.  
Oh, how we are inferior to the morning,  
Shining in all of its honoring.

Eriocnemis godini

Eriocnemis godini,  
Turquoise-throated puff leg hummingbird.  
Fly with the wind freely,  
Now injured and hurt.

Turquoise-throated puff leg hummingbird,  
Only forty-nine left.  
Now injured and hurt,  
Was going southwest.

Only forty-nine left,  
Critically endangered.  
Was going southwest,  
Got help from a stranger.

Critically endangered,  
Fly with the wind freely.  
Got help from a stranger,  
Eriocnemis godini.

## Historical Fiction: *Factory Fever*

**Huck Tritsch, 7<sup>th</sup> grade**

I walked down the dirty street, the dull gray buildings looming above me. On the street I saw a homeless old man holding a battered sign. But no one stopped. Everyone was on their way to the next busy stop in their breathless lives.

It was the first day of my first job. I couldn't help it; I was a little scared. I wondered what it would be like. What job would I get assigned? How much would I get paid? My father had died a few years back and my mother had broken her leg two weeks ago. She wanted me to stay in school, but I knew that someone had to work, so I signed up to work at the shirt factory. Ahead I saw the factory. I could see a stream of people flowing up the steps into the dark chasm of the factory. When I arrived, I saw a man waiting just inside wearing a suit and holding a watch.

"You there! Boy! Get to work!" he shoved a broom into my hands and pushed me into the factory. I swept endlessly. Machine after machine, room after room, floor after floor. Then, finally, the work day was over. When I got home my mother was waiting for me at the door.

"How was it?" she asked.

"Hot," was the only word I managed before I collapsed on my bed.

My mother woke me up in the morning. Actually, I wouldn't really call it morning. It was 4:45 a.m. and I had to be at work in 15 minutes. I dragged myself out of bed and stumbled down the street to the factory. When I arrived at the factory I saw the same man waiting.

"You're late!" he yelled as I walked in. "That's five cents off your paycheck at the end of the week!"

I couldn't believe it! "You're gonna take five cents off my paycheck because I'm two minutes late?"

The man grabbed me by the collar of my shirt and lifted me up off the ground. "You shut your mouth, boy," he growled at me. "I'm your boss. You do as a say, you hear me, YOU DO AS I SAY!" With that, he threw me onto the ground and tossed a broom at me. "Get in there!" he yelled and I hurried into the factory.

"Don't worry. He does that to everyone," a boy about my age yelled in my ear over the already roaring machines. "What's your name?" the boy asked.

“I’m Samuel,” I replied.

“Nice to meet you Sam. My name is Daniel.”

“No talking!!” the boss screamed. I didn’t understand how he could have heard or seen us.

Inside the factory it must have been about 95 degrees and there was no ventilation.

“Why do they keep all the windows shut?” I asked Daniel at the short dinner break.

“If the wind blows, the threads don’t work well,” Daniel answered simply.

“Do you think I will ever get a job better than sweeping?” I asked.

“Eventually you will,” he replied.

The next few days went about the same: drag myself out of bed at 4:30, eat a quick breakfast, get yelled at by my boss, sweep, have supper, and repeat. Finally, it was Sunday. In the morning I helped my mother hobble to church. After church I went back to the apartment to lounge around for a while before it was time for supper.

I did not like work. Even after only one week I was already dreading the next day. I missed school, too. I longed to go back to the old school house and learn to read and write and do arithmetic. The next thing I knew it was Monday morning. I made it to work just in time. I had found out that my boss’s name was Jim and that his favorite activity was criticizing people.

“You’re late! Hurry up and get that brooming done! No talking! No slouching!”

Jim had a whip, too, and if he found you falling behind he wouldn’t hesitate to use it. By the end of the day I had a few gashes in my back. It was nothing compared to what Daniel got when he fell asleep though.

When I got home from work, I found my mother was not doing well. She had a bad fever and her leg was hurting horribly. “Blanket,” I heard her mutter from her bed. She was barely strong enough to talk. I got her a blanket and a wet rag but there was nothing else I could do. I needed to get her to a doctor. There was one problem; I didn’t have enough money yet. I just needed her to hold on for one more week.

The next morning, she was even worse. I considered not going to work but I knew there was nothing I could do. She had to make it through the week. The day dragged on and on. It seemed especially hot and I had almost passed out a few times. The work day was almost over when I smelled it.

“Do you smell that?” I asked Daniel.

“No, I don’t smell anything,” he replied.

“I must be overheating,” I told myself. But it really did seem like...the smell of....

Suddenly there was a tremendous crash and a part of the ceiling came smashing to the ground. The smell was smoke. The factory was on fire.

Everyone panicked. Workers were yelling and screaming, pushing their way through to the doors. Another part of the roof collapsed, blocking the doors. Fire was everywhere now and the smoke was so thick I could barely breathe. I ran to the pile of debris and tried to climb over to the door. I skidded to a halt as I looked up and saw the wall above the door beginning to crumble, flames cutting through it like a beaver sawing down a tree. Jim ran past me and started climbing up the pile of debris.

“Stop!” I yelled. He paid no attention. The wall was beginning to fall. I ran up after him and grabbed him by the shirt.

“Let go of me, you stupid pile of...” I yanked him off the pile and jumped to the side just as a section of wall slammed down right where we had been standing. I dragged Jim away from the collapsing wall and looked around. I saw a place where the wall had fallen leaving a clear path into the street. There was one problem though: it was a solid 25-foot drop onto the street in that spot. But I had a plan. It was risky but there was no other way. Then I saw Daniel. He had passed out and was laying on the ground. I ran over.

“Daniel! Wake up!” I shouted. I shook him by the shoulders but he wouldn’t wake up.

“Let me help,” Jim said, stepping in between me and Daniel. He pulled out his whip and cracked it over Daniel’s head.

“Ouch! Hey!” Daniel exclaimed, jumping up.

“Come on!” I yelled. The three of us ran blindly toward the opening in the wall. At the last second, I yanked Jim and Daniel to the side and dove through the thin wall to the left of the opening. Down and down we went, rolling and tumbling through the air. Flump. We thudded into the shirt filled wagon. My plan had worked. The loading dock had been where I thought it was. But then I realized there was one thing I hadn’t accounted for. We were at the top of a hill. A steep hill. We began to roll down. Faster and faster we went. The wagon began to wobble. We were veering from side to side on the road, and almost hitting the buildings. My apartment was just ahead, right in front of us. Then it hit me, *my apartment was right in front of us.*

“JUMP!!” I yelled to Daniel and Jim. I dove forward and crashed through my kitchen window, pots and pans flying everywhere. Jim and Daniel landed on top of me. We rolled into the door and came to a stop. My head was spinning and I felt like I was going to vomit.

“Sam, is that you? Are you home early?” I heard my mother call in a weak voice.

“Yeah, I’m home early,” I said in an even weaker voice.



**Schlow Library Writing Contest: *Empty Notebook Blues***

**Abby Chen, 6<sup>th</sup> grade**

Just flipping the pages  
of my brand, new notebook.  
Guess I've got a case  
of empty notebook blues.  
Shiny new notebook  
with nothing much inside it.  
What's waiting for me  
behind that cover?  
Brand new pages  
I've never seen before!  
Maybe they're good.  
Maybe they're bad news.  
I'm just flippin'  
I'm just starin'  
Got those empty notebook blues

**Advanced Food Writing: *The Cheese Shop, Schaffhausen, Switzerland***  
**Katie Loomis-Adams, 10<sup>th</sup> grade**

Home to charming cafes, elegant boutiques, and opportunities for indulging in authentic cuisines, downtown Schaffhausen is a gem of northern Switzerland. Pedestrians mingle in the maze of wide, cobblestone streets. Window boxes filled with sprigs of pine and holly dwell beneath shop windows. Rows of handmade wooden spoons and wildflower honey pots sit in whimsical window displays. Above the shops, apartments in solid hues of bold pink, blue and green create a circus of passionate colors. Occasional onlookers peer down through open apartment windows, watching the typical downtown bustle from a safe distance above. The air is brisk, and small, rosy-cheeked children, bundled in plentiful layers of knitted, wool hats, sweaters and scarves, spin around town on bikes. Everyone is on a mission as they carry their cloth bags and baskets in their arms. Loaves of fresh bread peek out of these grocery bags.

After sipping a comforting cup of chai rooibos in a quaint street corner cafe and exploring a variety of local artisan stores, my travel companions and I continue down the main street. A large piece of sculptured swiss cheese sits prominently outside a shop, *Beat Hofstetter Chäs Marili*. My attention is immediately drawn to it and I usher the others toward what promises to be an experience ripe with possibilities. A cluster of bells on the door announces our entrance and a potent aroma of intensely aged cheese envelopes me as I step inside the shop.



*Schaffhausen, Switzerland*

“Halo,” the women at the counter say warmly.

The sight is slightly overwhelming. There are at least three hundred cheeses of extraordinary shapes and sizes in the glass display case under the counter and along the walls. As we stand like deer caught in the headlights, a local woman walks in and, in rapid German, purchases multiple blocks of different cheeses. Before I know it, she is gone in the blink of an eye, heading off to run her next errand, I imagine.

I ask for a type of sheep or goat cheese which is commonly enjoyed, intending to take some home to my host family as a gift. The woman pulls out an enormous circular block of sheep cheese and places a generous slice in my outstretched hand. This cheese is from a neighboring Swiss village she explains in German. The tang of this aged cheese is delectable and has an explicitly nutty aftertaste. The flavors remind me of a melody of sunshine and sweet mountain air. She hands me another sample of sheep cheese made from the local region. Again, I am pleasantly surprised by the pungency. In the midst of sampling, I gleefully exclaim, “I am so happy,” as the woman at the counter offers yet another sample. Up to that point she has only conversed in German. I am therefore surprised when she grins and replies in English, “I am so happy too!”

I leave the cheese shop with three varieties of cheeses, including one type of cow cheese infused with small flakes of basil. How my mother and I didn’t purchase the entirety of the cheese in that store will remain a mystery to me. Just as Schaffhausen is a gem of Northern Switzerland, this cheese shop is a gem in this charming town for any cheese-lover. The next time you are strolling through downtown Schaffhausen, Switzerland, make sure to stop by *Beat Hofstetter Chäs Marili* for an unforgettable experience, and to sample some the world’s finest *Käse*.

**Four Haiku**  
**Grayson Ruble, 8<sup>th</sup> grade**

my cat twitches  
preying on birds  
through the window<sup>9</sup>

a simple daisy  
standing 'lone in the grass  
petals drooping

words escape my mouth  
the cat listens  
intently

steaming mug  
resting beside me  
dozing cat

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<sup>9</sup> Published in [hedgerow](https://hedgerowpoems.files.wordpress.com/2019/05/under-16s.-live-1.pdf) haiku journal, May 2019  
<https://hedgerowpoems.files.wordpress.com/2019/05/under-16s.-live-1.pdf>

## Science Writing: *The Infinite Stars upon Us!*

Linda Wang, 4<sup>th</sup> grade

### Introduction - What are stars?

Have you ever looked up at the sky and wondered if there are punched holes instead of stars in the sky? Have you ever looked at a sunset, and wondered if the Sun is just sitting on the horizon? Well, believe it or not, black holes are also a type of star. Here, you will learn not only about black holes, the Sun, but also how stars form and die, etc.! You will love to learn about these magnificent stars that shine in the night! Are you ready?

### How do stars form and die?

Stars form inside giant clouds of gas and dust called **nebula**. Each Nebula gives birth to millions and millions of stars, but most stars and galaxies we see today formed billions of years ago from the “**Big Bang**.” Stars die like cars. Stars die when they run out of fuel. Some stars shine for a few million years. Some other stars last for trillions of years. When stars die, they change. Some stars puff out and expand and become **red giants**. When the stars cool off, they shrink and become **white dwarfs**. Some other stars explode when they expand and puff out.

### Different stars

There are lots of different stars. There are stars that are just born and they are the color blue. Another way to say it is the **main sequence**. There are also some stars called the “middle” stars. It is the star after the main sequence. Then there is the red star, which is the oldest star. Our sun is a “middle” star. There is also a star called the giant star. Then after giant stars is the supergiant star. Supergiant stars are really rare. The sun can fit right inside the supergiant stars. We probably have more than infinite stars in the sky, because almost all the stars stay alive for more than a trillion years. And there are tons of other stars still waiting to be discovered.

### Constellations

Did you know that constellations are stars that form a type of shape? An example is the Big Dipper. Did you know that constellations used to remind and still remind us about stories long ago? Right now, there are 88 constellations accepted by **astronomers**. There are also 12 zodiacal constellations. Here are the 12 zodiac signs in order: **Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, and Pisces**. The 12 zodiac signs are important. They all represent something. You may even see all of the zodiacs in the night sky if you look really closely. Do you know any constellations that I did not mention?

## The Sun

The Sun was born about 4.6 billion years ago. The Sun is a burning ball of gas. At one point, it will run out of fuel and die. It still has at least 5 billion years before it runs out of fuel and gas and burns out. The Sun has a mass of about 1,000 times the combined mass of the planets (Approximately 99% of the solar system's mass). Our solar system is composed of the Sun and the **celestial bodies**, such as planets, moons, comets, and asteroids, in the Sun's **gravitational pull**.

## Black Holes

Did you know that there are two different types of black holes? There are stellar black holes and supermassive black holes. The stellar black hole is between 10 and 24 times as massive as the Sun. Supermassive black holes are larger than stellar black holes. The supermassive black holes are millions of times as massive as the Sun. A black hole is defined as an invisible region of space where the gravitational force is so strong that nothing, including light, can escape. Theoretically, over time a black hole will shrink and eventually "die." Black holes also form and die like stars. A black hole with the mass of the Sun will take  $10^{65}$  years to evaporate in this way, a time span unimaginably greater than the age of the universe. Do you know anything about black holes?

## Stars Size

Do you know how stars bring light to us? Well, you are about to find out. Inside a star, the pull of gravity squeezes the gas into a tight ball. It heats up. A huge amount of energy is released and a burst of starlight appears!!! Stars have a range from a thousand times greater than the **solar radius** to about five hundred times less the size.

## Lights will shine on!!!

When one considers that stars are too bright, it's clear that they haven't learned what stars really can do. Every star has its type of light, and color. Our Sun is a medium star and will die in at least 5 billion years. I am wondering what will happen without our Sun. Will there be a new one? You may be wondering why stars are so important. The reason why stars are so important is because they have helped humans navigate on Earth. In addition, stars are very important because they make life on Earth possible. One star that is very important is the Sun, because without it there wouldn't be life on Earth. Earth would just be a big chunk rock and ice. "Not just beautiful, though—the stars are like the trees in the forest, alive and breathing. And they're watching me," Haruki Murakami, in *Kafka on the Shore*, said. Stars are important.

## Glossary

**nebula** - A cloud made of gas and dust.

**"Big Bang"** -A theory that the universe began and expanded after a powerful explosion of a tiny amount of dense matter.

**red giant** - Is a name for stars that puff out and expand.

**white dwarf** - Is a name for when stars cool out and shrink.

**main sequence** - Is a stage that stars go through to form.

**astronomers** - People who study outer space.

**zodiac signs** Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, and Pisces

**celestial bodies** - One of the celestial bodies is Mercury. Celestial bodies are planets, moons, etc. Celestial bodies are in the Sun's gravitational pull.

**gravitational** - Gravitation is when you sink or fall, but gravitational is an adjective. It is a nearby word to gravitation.

**$10^{65}$**  -  $10^{65}$  is a number and an exponent. An exponent is a number times that number again by the small number that many times.

**solar radius**- Solar radius is a unit of distance used to express the size of stars in astronomy relative to the Sun.

## **Two People, an Apple, and a Disagreement: *The Apple Sorter***

**Renee Macneal, 5<sup>th</sup> grade**

Klaus strutted around the front yard and then he saw it. The door leading into the apple shed was open. Klaus ran in. As soon as got inside, he saw his friend, Splash, the Polish chicken.

“Hi Splash!” Klaus said.

“Hi Klaus,” Splash said.

“What are you doing?” Klaus asked Splash.

“I just came in for apples,” Splash replied happily.

“Well, I am so sorry but the apples are mine!” Klaus said.

“No!” Splash said “The apples are mine!”

“No! No! No! The apples are mine!!!” Klaus screamed.

“Nope,” Splash replied. Klaus ran up onto the apple sorter.

“What are you doing?” Splash asked angrily.

Klaus put his foot on the last apple. “I just claimed the last apple!” he screamed.

“No, you didn’t!” screamed Splash. Splash flew up on the sorter next to him.

“Get off!” Klaus tried to kick the white Polish off.

“No!” Splash spat back. Klaus heard a noise. It was loud and he recognized it. It was Chase, the duck. Klaus screamed. Splash looked up. Tricked by Klaus, Splash tumbled off the table but then quickly flew back up. Klaus also flew back onto the table and started to battle Splash again.

“Okay, I surrender!” Splash said. Klaus was happy. Then when Klaus turned around he saw Chase. Chase, the duck, had just eaten the last apple.

“No!” Klaus screamed.



## **Halloween Mash-up Story: *Untitled***

**Ruth Anstrom, 7<sup>th</sup> grade**

Once there was an Artist, but no one knew her name. Everyone called her the freaky lady with the unibrow. One Halloween, the Artist was treating her panda to a complimentary face painting session, because costumes don't fit bears, but he wasn't sitting still.

"Oh, come on, Juice Box," said the Artist to her panda. You should be glad I'm not doing it in oils. You'll leave unwanted décor every time a stingy, old lady slams her door in your face." Juice Box wasn't listening. He kept squirming. "Oohh, I'm just giving up on you!" She went to check on dinner, pumpkin curdle, which she was making in honor of Halloween.

Juice Box started to wander around. Suddenly, the door flew open. A bunch of scared-looking kids stood on the doorstep.

"Erm, trick or treat?" one said.

"See, I told you not to go to the unibrow lady's house!" said another. Juice Box thought these kids were probably going to get annoying, so he jumped up and hollered at them. They screamed and ran.

The Artist scurried into the kitchen. "Juice Box, you're supposed to give them candy, not scare them off." Juice Box's head dropped. Just then, the doorbell rang again. "Wow, two in a row. This never happens!"

These kids were more nervous. One just squeaked. The Artist smiled and dropped 16 oz. chocolate footballs into their buckets. Their eyes grew wide.

"Wow!" said one. "I call dibs on the unibrow lady's house."

"I'm allergic to chocolate," whispered another one.

"That's o.k.," said the Artist. "I'm making pumpkin curdle. Come on in." She was excited to have actual trick-or-treaters. The kids entered cautiously.

"Cool," said the boy who was allergic to chocolate, "you have a panda." Juice Box grinned and chucked a lollipop at him. The boy gave him a strange look.

The Artist went into the kitchen and squealed. “The pumpkin curdle overcooked!” It was true. The pie had congealed and turned into a jellylike substance. “I’m sorry, kids. No pumpkin curdle tonight.” But as she said this, the kids had already started eating it.

“This ish gort,” one said with his mouth full. The Artist was surprised.

“You like it? Well—you can have it.” They all dug in. The Artist was very pleased that someone had finally noticed her (and her fine cooking).

Right then, it occurred to one of the kids to ask the Artist her name. “Hey, what’s your name, anyway?”

The Artist was surprised and a little embarrassed by her weird name. “My name is Frida,” she said with a little grimace.

“Frida?” asked one of the boys.

“I know. Stupid.”

“Yeah...how about Fritos?” he suggested.

“Fritos...” said the Artist. “Yes, that sounds good!”

“Okay, *Fritos*,” asked the boy, “can I have some more pumpkin stuff?” He held out his plate.

Fritos smiled. “Yes, you may.”

From then on, every Halloween (and lots of times in between) the kids came over to see the lady, formerly known as the lady with the unibrow, and have some of her pumpkin stuff. They also enjoyed Juice Box’s antics.

So that is how pumpkin pie was born. There, that’s the end.

## **Advanced Food Writing: *Bread***

**Gus Tritsch, 8<sup>th</sup> grade**

Bread is such a simple thing, really. Water, flour, maybe a pinch of salt. Nothing to change the world. But from this benign mixture of materials can spring the most fantastic fusion of sensation. Bright punches, dark undertones, the entire harmonic series in taste. A truly mouth-watering combination of sweet and sour.

But where do these incredibly complex flavors come from? What could transform such benign ingredients into this incredible complexity? The culprit, the hidden alchemists of this magic, are all around us; they are bacteria.

Deep within a rising loaf of bread, these microorganisms, yeasts and *Lactobacillus* feed on the carbohydrates found in flour. As they grow and multiply, they break down fibers that humans find indigestible, releasing gases and inflating the loaf. And in doing so, they create the single most important food for we humans.

Bread has been a staple of our diet since the dawn of agriculture, and, likewise, civilization. For hundreds of years, alchemists searched in vain for the power to change one substance to another. This ability is harnessed every day in the form of bread. The act of changing a substance in order to create something useful is one of the defining traits of humans, and bread epitomizes this. Without bread, you could say we would not be human.

In this way certain microorganisms, from which we parted so many millions of evolutionary years ago, have helped to shape our identity, the identity of the most advanced species on the planet, one that holds the power to change the world.

## **Dust Jacket Description: *When We Find Marie***

**Maia Lindsay, 8<sup>th</sup> grade**

England in the 1830s was a country caught up in times of great change. The last of a series of four King Georges died in 1830, and the country was moving from the Georgian era to the Victorian era — Queen Victoria herself ascended to the throne in 1837. During this decade, England saw the beginning of the railroad age, the passing of the Great Reform Act, and the first novel of Charles Dickens.

Now take a leap of the imagination, in a westward direction... For the purposes of this tale, west of the British Isles there lies another island containing the countries of Herenland, Lindscomb, and Kerascana. Far from experiencing the same progress as Britain, these countries are mired down by poor government and dictatorship.

This journey follows the lives of two young women living in Kerascana and Herenland in the late 1830s. Told through their own eyes, their emotional stories follow them through good times and bad, and watch them both in their extraordinary rises. Yet as they rise, under their feet grows the troubling story of another young woman who lived centuries before them: Marie Juliana Schuyler.

Just when resolution seems found, it is not: Following a savage attack on one of them, the whole island is soon swept up in fighting and revolts. Now united together in the fight for a common good, they struggle onward, yet are unable to bring resolution to their world.

With help from the most unlikely place, they realize that they cannot resolve either their stories or the stories of their countries until they find out one last thing.

*Who was the real Marie?*

## Four Haiku

Susan Ciolkosz, 7th grade

a gentle spring rain  
softly spilling from the clouds  
making flowers bloom

the strong winter wind  
slicing through the frigid air  
chills you to the bone

dainty buds emerge  
sweet fragrance wafts through the air  
the orange tree flowers

lone zebra hiding  
stripes blend with waving grasses  
lions on the hunt

Midsummer Assemblage: The Action of Gathering or Fitting Things Together

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