





Impressions

2010 - 2011

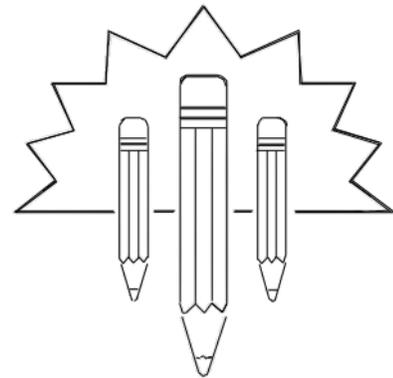


CENTER *for* EDUCATION
RICE UNIVERSITY



THE
School
Literacy
AND Culture
Project

The School Literacy and Culture Project provides professional development in early literacy. Our Classroom Storytelling Project incorporates theater, music, and visual arts as key components of early reading and writing instruction. Through our new Literacy and the Arts program, we use our university voice to advocate for continued emphasis on creativity, imagination, and problem-solving in the schools.



The School Writing Project provides teachers opportunities to work on their own writing, to learn new ways of teaching writing, and most importantly, to learn ways of engaging students to find their voices as writers.

HoustonGrandOpera



HGOco

HGOco's Song of Houston makes opera relevant through stories that engage hearts and minds. These stories are told through collaborative community and educational projects that push the limits of the traditional arts and incorporate music-making, photography, creative writing and visual art.

Impressions

*Impressions is a publication
of the School Writing Project
Rice University, 2011*

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*Layout design and photography
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Letter from the Director

THE LEGACY OF WORDS

In the Center for Education offices hangs a plaque that says “Imagine the Possibilities.” It is our reminder that in working with teachers and children, anything can happen. Anything is possible. We are limited only when we fail to imagine. This collection of student writings is the product of many steps in the imagining process.

When we read in the press that US children are not readers and that their scores on writing tests haven’t improved in years, we don’t suggest that teachers drill their students in ever more hours of writing to conform to the format on the state test. Instead, we ask, if children found their voices as writers, what would they have to say? What would their words tell us about the way they see the world? What is really “good” student writing and how can writing be a part of kids’ sense of who they are?

And we would ask, what could make school a place where children feel motivated to write, to feel free to experiment with words and ideas? Can students become writers at school? Our answer is yes. It is an emphatic yes because more than 20 years ago, we in the Center imagined that children could become writers if their teachers were writers, if their teachers loved the power of words and created a writing culture in their classrooms. Children could become writers if their teachers could imagine all that their students could be and could become if they found their voice as writers.

The student writings in this collection come from classrooms where the teachers are those engaged, inspired writers. Through an exceptional series of monthly seminars centered on Writing and the Arts, these teachers have explored the connections between writing and the imagination. Through the Writing and the Arts seminars, these teachers explored settings outside the classroom, settings meant to jar their perceptions and evoke fresh ways of seeing and describing. Field trips organized by poet Mary Wemple to Rice Gallery to experience the visual installation of the trees that weren’t trees and shadows that weren’t shadows altered perceptions and inspired poems of memory and word play and speculative imaging – including imagining what students might write in that same setting. The teachers experienced Houston Playback Theater’s enactments of their words. They explored themes of home and place with Long Chu of WITS and themes of legacy in collaboration with Houston Grand Opera’s Song of Houston series of operas based on the stories of Houston’s diverse communities. Exploring legacy in their own writing, the personal and the mythic, the speakable and the intimate, gave a frame for engaging their students in exploring the legacies they inherit – in their families and cultures and neighborhoods – and the legacies they are creating right now in their lives and in their writing.

Creating a writing culture in a classroom means imagining writing as thinking with words, as playing with words, as extending yourself to others through words. It means helping children find their voice as writers. A special feature of this year’s teacher workshop was that teachers of very young children, even pre-K, came together with teachers of all grades, from kindergarten through high school. High school teachers came to imagine new possibilities for their teenage students when they saw what even the youngest children could do with words. We offer this anthology with gratitude to the teachers who worked on their own writing, who helped these students find their voice as writers, and who expand our imaginations about what teaching – and writing – can be.

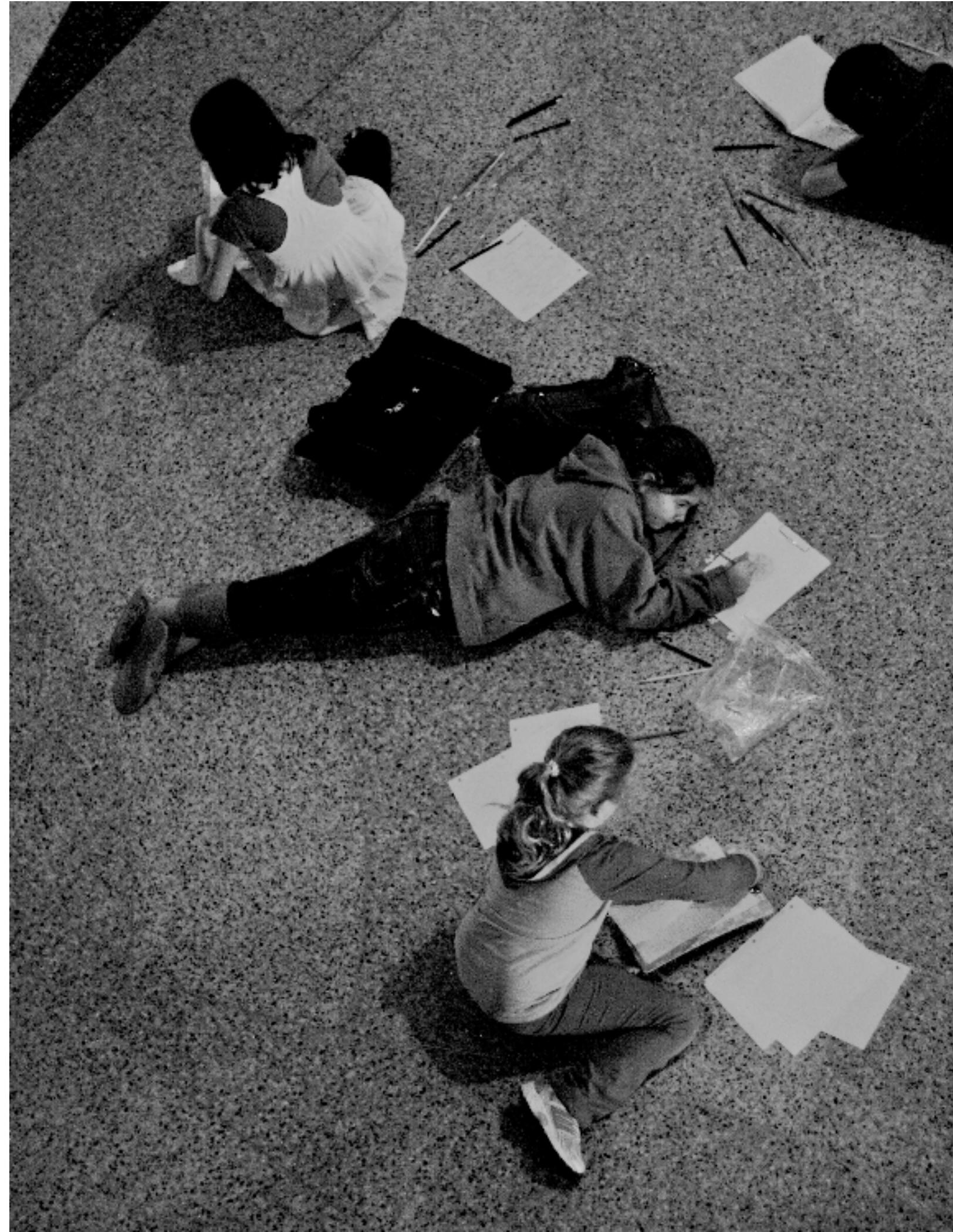
Linda McSpadden McNeil
Director, Rice Center for Education

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The Fay School

Teacher: Laurie Dreyfuss

I Remember

Julia Cook, 3rd Grade

I remember when I was born....
I got presents, a stuffed bunny and a blue bunny

I remember when I was such a pill at dance class
Running to my mom asking, "Am I doing great!!!!!"
Mom would answer, "Yes."

I remember when I broke my arm on the monkey bars
while waiting for my brother to come out of school.

I remember when we first bought our ranch
And the first night sleeping in a trailer
I remember screaming, hearing coyotes howling all night long.
I remember my parents were laughing saying it's OK.

I remember on my 5th birthday...
I left my own party in the living room
And went upstairs to play.



Green is Everywhere!

Max Shellist, 3rd Grade

Green is the gentle leaves on the weeping willow.
Green is the soft grass on a soccer field.
Green is the mucky water in a fresh water marsh.
Green is the warm water in the Atlantic Ocean.
Green is the moss growing on a young oak tree.
Green is everywhere!

I Remember

Aamir Lateef, 3rd Grade

I remember trudging back and forth, back and forth
In the foamy crystal blue swimming pool while my Dad and brother threw a plastic torpedo.

I remember my uncle's 43rd birthday
My tiny unbehaved cousin smacked his face in the delicious chocolate cake.

I remember cutting my hair for the first time. Aaahhh!!!
The sharp buzzer was zooming towards the tiptop of my hair. OH NO now it's the scissors! The sharp metal cut a bit of my hair! The slight hair dropped down down, down until it was on the slippery ground.

I remember having my first birthday party
Everything went crazy! Balls scattered all over the floor! Children screeching as loud as they can! Icky cake splattered all over the floor! Floats crushing the ground!

I Remember

Asha Ayyar, 3rd Grade

I remember when my Mom, who died and Dad would read us a bedtime story,
which we called Story Bears
I remember when my grandmother said, “Raja” (which means honey).
As if she meant to say that to my baby brother.
I remember when my Mom tried to teach me to dance and I would say, in my cute voice,
“What’s next Mommy?”
I remember when Thara figured out our Mommy died..... and she cried like crazy.
I remember a toy train that spelled out Asha..... A S H A
I remember meeting my new Mom at “Gelato Blue”
I remember my first day at Early Childhood and meeting all my new friends
I remember my Mom every time I hear or see the word X-ray because she was a X-ray doctor.

Dear Mommy

Thara Ayyar, 3rd Grade

I really like when you make us a special dinner or read to us in bed. I remember your wedding in the Bahamas when Asha danced like crazy at your Garba and I kind of did too. I also remember when Asha, Shiva, and I met you at Gelato Blue. I remember the day you had Raja and after school we came and saw you and Raja at the hospital. I remember the February before you got married we went to India and saw the Taj Mahal. I remember at the Black Walnut Café we ate and got ice cream. I remember at Hermann Park when you brought food and a blanket and we had a picnic. I remember when you weren’t married to Dad yet and I didn’t like that you had to leave us to go home. I remember when you were packing your stuff to move to our house. I remember going to Memorial Park and racing you to the swings and swinging high. I remember you coming home from work and ziplining in the backyard. I remember giving you a rose. I love it when we come home from dance and see you cooking or we play together. I love helping you prepare dinner. I love when Thatha comes and you make Indian food or pizza. I love going to Nani’s house. I love you so much!

I Remember

Beatrice Graubart, 3rd Grade

I remember my old dog pushing me down when I was just learning how to walk.
I remember when my brother, sister, and I would fight on who would get to pick rooms first in the new house,
I always went last
I remember when my dog Maxie died after 13 years of a great life.
I remember my first piano recital, I was supposed to play with my sister but she chickened out, so I played
alone, I was really scared but still got a gold medal for most improved player, and practicing the most.
I remember planting a garden in my back yard, and trying to pick out what flowers I was going to plant
I remember my first Hanukkah Tea Party,
and our face painting lady painted a flower and a vine on my face and arm.
I remember when my grandma died.
I remember the first tooth that I lost
I remember

Sounds I Hear

Pipa Powers, 3rd Grade

I hear
Strumming guitars
Striking pianos
Noisy birds
Rustling wind
Kids talking
People laughing
I also hear
Singing children
Loud music
Quiet and soft music
My younger sisters screaming
My baby brother crying
My cats purring quietly
My dog barking loudly
People running everywhere, down the halls, in bedrooms and outside
And last but not least
I hear cars on the highway and on busy streets

Army Sounds

Daniel Schaan, 3rd Grade

The tanks rumbling with the stomps of American soldiers.
The American hearts pounding on the chests, the rattling of the backpacks.
The flaring engines against the humid air.
The bullets clinking in the pack.
Thumping shoes on the ground.
The propellers of the submarine gliding through the water like hot knife through butter.

The Important Thing

Chandler Levinthal, 3rd Grade

The important thing about sisters is that they can be
As sweet as a lollipop or
As mean as a shark
As cool as the summer breeze or
As sneaky as a fox
But the important thing about sisters is that they can be sweet!



I Remember

Christopher D'elia, 3rd Grade

I remember running all around the house with my cousin, laughing, laughing
I remember climbing the tall tree in my backyard
I remember at my first Communion and seeing my Mom cry
I remember my dog, Veshe circling my crib to make sure I was OK
I remember when my brother, Collin was born
I remember when my dog's stomach twisted like a beach ball.

I Remember

Jason DeGeorge, 3rd Grade

I remember when I had my old glove playing shortstop and making an amazing play during the play-offs.
We were ahead by one run and the other team had bases loaded.....
A player hit a super hard hit ball to my right side
I dove and fielded the ball and stepped on second for a FORCE OUT!
I remember

I remember two years ago, having my old baseball bat
I hit solid line drives to the fence, getting doubles, triples and even inside the park homeruns!
I remember getting my first basketball goal and hearing a peaceful swishing sound
I remember

The Shlenker School

Teacher: Sherry Dubin

Emotions

Ellie Spier, 5th Grade

Thinking mind
Staring eyes
Open mouth
Wishing time would stop
And I could begin this amazing journey all over again
This is my adventure,
This is my wish,
This is my dream

Colors of the World

Jason Diebner, 3rd Grade

Blue like the deep ocean
White like the fluffy clouds
Yellow like the bright sun
Black like darkness of space
White dots like burning stars
Green like the tall grass
Brown like silky sand
Red like hot fire
All these colors make our world

Colorful Fall

Zachary Gowe, 5th Grade

The emerald green grass has died and the golden brown hay has taken over
The burnt orange pumpkins have said, "It's my turn!"
The big coal colored bulldog is posing for a picture in a vast field of pumpkins
Fall is the most wonderful time of year!

Shadowy Trees

Sterling Rosenthal, 5th Grade

Calm, dark shadowy trees in a cold cubical-shaped room
Inviting you to stop time
To think back on memories of the past
When you had the best time of your life
The big gray colored room was not vivid
Or exploding with color
But the trees were life like shadowy memories of my past

The Seaside

Gabriel Lewis, 3rd Grade

A calm, deep, salty ocean
With golden sand everywhere
Shiny rocks at the edge of the seaside
Waving bushes by the shore
Clouds hovering over the salty waters

Lying down and relaxing
Earth, a world of many things

Trees of Four Seasons

Noam Yaari, 3rd Grade

Tall reaching trees with
Red, yellow, green, and brown leaves falling

Fruit growing on the trees
People gathering fruit

Bare trees
Freezing cold trees

Trees shading kids
Kids climbing on trees

Trees reaching, people picking, trees freezing, trees shading

Rainbows

Callie Caress, 4th Grade

The gleaming joy after a rain storm
The rainbow across the land brings joy to everyone
Rainbows make babies stop crying
And dogs stop barking
The gleaming joy of a rainbow
Is just above in the blue cloudless sky
The rainbow frees
Thoughts and imaginations

A World of Many Things

Ethan Spiegel, 3rd Grade

Sun, blazing hot sun setting over yellow sand of the boiling desert air
Air, the deep cool air blowing from the ocean breeze
Water, cool water refreshing animals and flowing calmly, very calmly
Sand, smooth sand spreading and blowing in the air from desert to beach just sand
Lying down and relaxing
Earth, a world of many things

Dancing Sparks

Aaron Hall, 5th Grade

The crackling sound of steaming hot fire
Tearing through everything in its path
Spewing thick black smoke

Dark blue clouds rumbling madly
Ash clouds venturing away from the pack
Sparks dancing around the landscape

The sickening smell of burning dirt and rock
Erupting madly every few wretched minutes
Lava rocketing everywhere
Attempting to blind you with every opportunity

It's dying down, saying its final words...
It's all over
The volcano is no more

Everything is silent, not a sound heard
The nuclear powered pit of lava...finally deceased
Now and forever...
Never to be heard from again



Mark Twain Elementary

Teacher: Marilena Marroquin

The Lost City of Atlantis

Matthew Galli, 4th Grade

Julian! Mrs. Wick yelled. Don't go out so far! I couldn't hear her because I was looking for seashells underwater. Lucky me I had my scuba gear on now so I could go really far! The water started to rise. Uh Oh! I thought. This can't be good! I tried to go back to shore but my energy level was going down fast. I just stayed there like a bobber floating up and down. At 12:00 I was pulled under the water. The water was as clear as a crystal. I could see perfectly!

I swam to the bottom of the ocean and started walking.

I noticed a huge ditch. It looked like a giant comet hit! But man was I wrong!

I went in the ditch. I didn't see any comets, only a stone wall. I swam to the top. Lucky me when I looked to my left I saw a store selling submarines! Rats, I only had \$5, but I went in the store anyway.

Maybe they would have a sale. Rats, no sale! But wait, what's that over there? An old submarine for only \$5?!? So I bought it and pushed it in the water. And it came with a torpedo! Just what I needed! I dove back down to the stone wall and fired the torpedo. Blam! The wall blew up! Behind the wall... My jaw felt like it was breaking off! Behind the wall was Atlantis, the lost city! It sparkled like a zillion diamonds. That's how I found Atlantis!

Baby Brother

Jourdan Golding, 4th Grade

My surprising day is coming soon. It's coming now. It just has to come.

My dad told me I had a baby brother. I felt kind of anxious to have a baby brother. I heard that sometimes they get more attention than you. I also heard sometimes your family ignores you. I'm so mad because my bother gets more attention than me. Although I always wanted a baby brother, this is confusing. How does this happen?

I was happy when the baby was born. I came to be psyched to see my baby brother. The baby looked like me when I was little. I thought it would be good to have a baby brother. It's because I won't be so lonely all the time. I did beg for a baby brother. I just didn't expect to see a baby that looks just like me! He had wood brown eyes and toe as little as fingernails. I love him so much. I did not expect this to happen. I glanced at him with joy. Although he is a little annoying, I will always love him.

Beaten Compassion

Elizabeth Linsenmayer, 4th Grade

Broken, Beaten
Dumped on the side of the road
Never loved
Never cared for
Messed up in many
People stare in many faces
Disgust
Worry
Sadness
And
Best
Of
All
Compassion.
Only one
Word
Compassion
The only joy
In
My
Life
Compassion.

Home Again

Aleksandra Daniluk, 4th Grade

I have ridden the car for
Hours from Washington D.C.
But finally I could see my
House I live in. We have
Parked in the parking lot and
Got out from the car.
Everyone has taken as much
Luggage as he could to carry
Them to the house. We have
Climbed the stairs and turned
To the left. We have opened
Our door and finally we are
Home again!

My Ipad

Sam Frank, 4th Grade

The water slowly trimmed down to nothing as I stepped out of the shower on the Saturday of my birthday. But nothing had happened yet, no presents, ditto with surprises.

I wrapped my white towel around my waist and trudged into my parent's room feeling refreshed but under the water. I saw my twin sister Sarah and asked "Gotten any presents yet?"

"No," Sarah replied. That moment is when my parents pranced in with smiles painted on their faces. "What?" Sarah and I both as if on cue. Our parents replied, "We have a surprise for you." That's when I saw it, the surprise. A 32 gigabyte Ipad! I sat there in amazement and basked in its glory. My towel still around my waist. I waddled to my parents with such speed that I left skid marks on the ground. I grabbed the Ipad and excitement swept over me like a storm cloud over a city.

The box was solid white with just a picture of the Ipad. There were colors everywhere, not a simple centimeter was left colorless. The light from the morning sunrise glistened off of the box while I heard an announcer in my head say, "Miracles can happen." There was so much to do with this gift as the thoughts bounced around in my head like friends

on a trampoline. I kissed, hugged and thanked my parents for this gift. But I realized, this is just the box! There is a ginormous Ipad just waiting to be tampered with just inside. I sprinted down the hall and grasped the stair handle. I rushed down the stairs as if in an Olympic race. I reached the floor but I wasn't done yet. I dashed to the kitchen and grabbed a pair of scissors all in one fluid motion. I slowly set the Ipad onto the table not wanting the delightful present to break. I took the scissors and began to cut the thin layer of plastic wrap being a guard to this wonderful present. I finally ceased cutting the wrap and tore the rest off. I lifted the top piece of the box and there it lay. The Ipad sitting in the box. The sunlight dancing across the fresh, black, polished screen. I held it up and I felt like I was holding the World Series trophy in my hands. I pressed the small circular home button, and the bright light burst onto the screen. I said, "I've waited so long, now I have the key to a cyber world of fun!"

Even though the unexpected surprise that day was big, the fact that I would like for my Ipad to stay with me my entire life is bigger. I will always love and cherish my Ipad.

Mark Twain Elementary ...continued

Teacher: Rebecca Zirczy

The Crash

Kate Kortum, 4th Grade

"Have a nice day!" Rebecca said. Another sad day at McDonald's she thought. Rebecca was 16 and worked at McDonald's. She had \$200 and wanted to buy a car. Her grandmother had loaned her \$2,000. Rebecca bought a \$2,000 black Pinto. Unfortunately it was a stick shift. She was terrible at driving stick shifts.

That night Rebecca decided to drive to her friend's house. There was a train track in between their houses. One train took fifteen minutes to cross. Rebecca was out of luck. The bridge had just started to come down. Rebecca thought she could make it. She shifted into gear three and started to speed up.

She was just on the track and lifted up the shift pedal too fast. The car stopped. She gasped. Her mind went completely blank. The train was racing down the track. She opened the door and ran out as fast as she could. Then it happened. A screeching noise came into Rebecca's ears. The train dragged Rebecca's brand new Pinto for two whole blocks.

Finally, the people behind her took Rebecca home. That night Rebecca slept with her mother. Her mother woke up with her and said, "I'm so glad I'm not picking out coffins today." Rebecca hugged her mom and learned to never speed up life!

Untitled

Jackie Nathan, 4th Grade

So much depends
upon
A dad
Gazing at his
children
with happiness
filled inside.

The Lawnmower

Sophie Thomas, 4th Grade

Grrrr! went a lawnmower crunching the grass. Dave was riding on the lawnmower in his front yard by the pool. He was acting like a pro, thinking he was the best lawnmower man in the world, heading right for his sisters, then looking professional he would do a sharp turn. His sisters were tanning while he mowed the grass to an inch like his parents said to do. He always tried to do his best so he could get a raise on his \$50 allowance.

Now I'm going to do my favorite trick, he announced, "picking up clothing." "We don't care!" yelled his sisters. Dave had never practiced this before and was very nervous inside. So he leaned down carefully, touched the pink, flowery, and stained shirt. Then, picked it up with his two fingers thinking, Okay Dave you got this, just do it carefully.

But, while he was leaning to grab the shirt his foot had accidentally pushed the lever that makes the lawnmower go backwards. Dave didn't know the le-

ver had been pushed. So he said, "I did it!" and pushed the gas pedal. Then quickly he flew back, "Ahhhh!" he screamed. The next thing he knew he was upside down in his pool.

Oh no, my parents are going to be mad! he thought as he stared at the mower with bubbles and oil spreading around the crystal clear pool that turned into a gray-blue pool. His dad had heard his scream and ran outside. "What have you done to my lawnmower!" he yelled. Then Dave's mom came out. "Oh no!" she screamed, "now we need a new lawnmower!" "How did this happen young man?" said his dad. "Well I was picking up a piece of clothing but then the lever went back, I pushed the gas pedal and, well I flew back!" "So it was an accident?" "Yep." "Okay then, let's go get that lawnmower out of my pool!" After they got a new lawn mower Dave started thinking, I've learned that you have to be careful before you do something you've never done before.

Learning about Greek Mythology

Kirsty Leech, 4th Grade

At first you think it's alright. Then you think it's o.k. And the next thing you know you're in the story. You're alone on a raft and Poseidon attacks with his mighty wave. You're crying and screaming but he just advances. As you are seconds away from drowning you are transported to Hades palace. It's as if you were in a castle dungeon. Then you look up. Cerberus bites at your head and you shut your eyes to get it over with. You're trembling with fear. Then your eyes flash open and you're on a chariot looking up at the great goddess Athena. She is eighty feet tall and her armor glistens in the sun. For some rea-

son her true form does not blind you. From behind a spear appears. It's already dripping human blood. It is going to strike you straight in the chest and you're dreading every moment, but then you get a twirling feeling and all of a sudden a wood nymph is chasing you. You are running your fastest, but it's just so fast. And then, you go back to reality. Your face is drenched with sweat and you're panting, but you still want to go back. You go through shelves of thousands of libraries. You read through books about Romans and captains but it just is not working. Then you find your treat.

Untitled

Hannah Shi, 4th Grade

Tweet! Tweet! Tweet! I woke up one early summer morning. Who is making all this noise? It is summer and I want some sleep! I looked at my watch, 5:00 a.m.! This can't be true! I was so annoyed by this sound. I jumped off my bed. To my surprise I saw two birds. One larger, one smaller. I saw twigs in their mouth. I realized they were making a nest by my window. My anger melted away to know these birds chose my house out of many others. I rushed downstairs to get Grandma and my sister Abby. Then they saw what I was talking about. We said they were so cute for about 10 minutes. I knew they were looking at me since once every 15 minutes they would turn their head around and say, Tweet!

Tweet! Tweet! Tweet! I woke up in the early morning again. This time I was happy instead of being mad. I rushed to the window and saw two beautiful eggs. I was so excited to see the life cycle of a bird.

The eggs were like a blue sky. The eggs were an inch long, and a half inch wide. The eggs were dotted in white. Just like the white snow that falls in the winter. The mother rubbed her warmth on the eggs which must of felt like a warm soothing fire in the middle of winter.

Tweet! Tweet! Tweet! I woke up early in the

morning to hear the crackling sound of eggs, as two white puffy birds appeared from behind. They looked like big, white cotton balls with a head sticking out. Their heads were the size of a cap to a glue stick. Their beaks were the size of a sharp pencil lead. They seemed like the most adorable little things on Earth! I realized the mother bird had flown away. I waited a few minutes until she came back. When she did come back she had a worm in her mouth. The white cotton balls opened their mouths. The mother bird leaned forward, bent her head and legs, and, Plop! Plop! Plop! I was disgusted but it seemed cool all at the same time!

Tweet! Tweet! Tweet! The cotton balls grew their feathers and were ready to learn how to fly! They spread their wings and flopped but they fell right back on the nest. They fell about three times! It did seem really cute, but I still wanted them to learn how to fly.

I woke up late this morning because the birds flew away. I knew it was right to let them go, but having the birds here, well it was never a bad day. I knew I would never forget those white cotton balls chirping for food. I would always remember the honor when I found those birds on my window.





Middle School Writers



Rice Middle School

Teacher: Laurie Dreyfuss

Light

Michael Simms, 6th Grade

Shining light
Oh, so bright
Gives me hope
through the night.

Oh God,
please show me the right.
I need you now --
I'm stuck in this fight.

I need your hand
Please give me a friend
or an angel in disguise
Because I'm stuck
in this hole and
He has my soul

Please show me the right.

My Safe Place

Eme Offiong, 6th Grade

My safe place is the place that I'm in my room
in my house.
It's cozy and it helps me feel calm.
When I get mad, my room helps me calm down.
When I'm sad, it helps me feel better.

Confusion

Nuejah Outten, 6th Grade

Why won't my mom let me have a phone?
Why is life unfair?
Why can't we stay at school until 12:00?
Why do the guys have it easier?
Why do bullies bully?
Why is my hair curly and unwanted?
Why is there homework?
Why do we have to take a dumb test
to pass a grade?
Why am I sooooo bored?
I don't know.

I Remember

Victoria Martinez, 6th Grade

I remember when my stuffed animal was soaking wet in tears
when my grandmother passed away. So many tears were cried those days.

I remember being alone thinking no one cared
when, in reality, everyone was there.

I remember throwing fits when I didn't get my way.
Now, looking back, I laugh at my old childish ways.
Oh, I remember.

I remember when you told me that I had to let go.
I remember me screaming, "No!"
I remember your line going flat.
I remember all the pain I went through because of that.
I remember.

That Was Me

Meha Mohapatra, 6th Grade

That was me, a kid who loved Barbies
and playing with nothing else.
That was me who wanted everything to be pink.
That was me trying to run away from sports.

This is me trying to solve a puzzle or two.
This is me who charges after every sport.
This is me, an aunt to a bunch.

This will be me, a CIA agent/worker.
This will be me having a big collection of stuffed animals.
This will be me asking all my questions without being embarrassed.



I Remember

Jonathan Cruz, 6th Grade

I remember my first soccer shoes.
That takes me to my old neighborhood, the neighborhood that let me learn the hard way
And happy times.
When I played outside all day and all night.
All my friends.
Now all I have is memories.

I remember when I was little, like four or five
In my mother's warm hands. She would hug me.
My dad would be next to me and it smelled fresh like out in the wild fresh air.
I used to go sleep in their bed when I was sad, mad or confused.
I wouldn't have shared it with no one but now that I grew up, I would let people be there.

I remember when I lived with my dad
All the times I cried alone having a feeling that times are just going to get worse.
The time I saw my dad for the last time. No one could take that place in my heart.
The time he hugged me at night. It's been six years since I hugged him or even touched him.
The time we played.
I want that feeling back, just for a minute.

Fancy Footwork

Dailyn Simpson, 7th Grade

My feet feel kind of happy and they tickle.
My toes are straight and hard.

My ankles don't hurt as much now.
My knees kind of hurt because I have bad knees.

My legs feel good and in pain.

My belly is cramping.

My hips are shaky.

My arms are hot.

My head hurts much more.

My mouth is dry.

My eyes are ready to close.

I feel good and not bored.
The dance made me happy.



I Remember

Tierra Harris, 7th Grade

I remember that day when everything went great.
I remember that day when I ate my first piece of cake.
I can just remember that day when my little brother was born
thinking about the one on his way in four weeks.
I remember that day my papa died and the tears and the pain
and the fear and the shame.
I remember at my track meet thinking about my papa
and I got first and didn't know that day was his birthday.
I remember the time I almost died because I swallowed a penny.
I remember the days I had fun with my family.
Hoping to remember more days as I live.

Lanier Middle School

Teacher: Susan Lovejoy

I Am Me

Indigo Ghonima, 7th Grade

I am Indigo Dewdrop Ghonima
I am a masterpiece,
a wonderful, messy creation
I am the colors beyond what our eyes can see,
but so close that we can feel in our souls
I am the monster inside of me
Even though I'm not supposed to be
I am also the halo poised on top of my head
I am the gust of cold, chilling the air's neck
The neck which is everywhere
I am the soft sand beneath your feet
I am the autumn leaves dancing in the wind
I am imagination, the imagination that is wandering
In the desert with rain and life and colors
I am strewn every where
I am Indigo, a deep chill of violet and blue
I am a Dewdrop, carefully placed on the tip of a blade of grass
I am Ghonima, a rich Egyptian tradition that I will never let go of
I am me



My Life

Katie Craig, 7th Grade

I will put in my life

The blanket that will keep me safe and warm
The hug I will get from my mom when the monsters are out to get me

I will put in my life

The special recipe that my grandma will make me only on my birthday
The first time I will be proud

I will put in my life

The first kiss that will ever touch my lips
The pint of ice cream and that sad, romantic movie that somehow will make me feel better

I will put in my life

The moment I will say "I do"
The one that will someday be mine for forever and ever

Big Sister

Kennedy Cowart, 7th Grade

The time I became a big sister was on September 8, 1999. That was the day my little sister was born. She was born at Texas Women's Hospital, and she weighed 7 pounds and 13 ounces. But, our story begins before that, 9 months before that to be exact.

I was sitting on the floor in the living room playing with my yellow dump truck and purple pig. Then, my parents came in where I was playing from their bedroom and told me they wanted to talk to me. My dad picked me up and told me my mom was going to have a baby. I was only 1 so I didn't really understand what they were telling me. I figured since they were happy I was happy. So, I clapped my hands and said "yay." Then, (to ruin the moment), I had an epic fail and dropped my pacifier and my dog ate it. Now, that that's over I'll skip to the day my sister was actually born.

It was about noon when my mom was folding laundry. When suddenly, my mom stopped folding clothes. She called my dad and the next thing I know, we're in a rush to get to the hospital. In case you didn't notice, my mom was about to deliver my sister.

When my sister was delivered, she was crying (of course). When I finally was able to see her, she was still crying and I asked my mom if she was broken. Remember. I was only 1 so I wasn't all that bright. I assumed that if something cried, it was automatically broken because it meant something was wrong. My mom explained to me that when babies are first born

they're supposed to cry, and that my sister was fine. What I thought was really cool, was when they took her fingerprints and footprints.

To amuse myself, I pushed this little baby cart around the hospital room. I almost wound up in a hospital bed myself, because I was going too fast and it tipped over and fell on me. Luckily, it didn't hurt me or I would've been in big trouble. Even though I almost hurt myself it was so much fun. Right after it fell, I got back up and started pushing it all over again. My dad even took a picture of me pushing the cart around. Every time I look at it I think of the day my sister was born, so basically this whole story all over again.

Obviously, then I didn't realize it, but sometimes having younger siblings can be a pain and an embarrassment, they're not all that bad. They just want someone to look up to. The only reason they act like they do is because that's how you used to act at their age. They remind you of yourself (sometimes). Even though you think you hate your siblings, you really don't because you just hate yourself. Because your siblings are little mini-versions of you when you were their age. No one wants to be hated, disliked, mistreated, or feel like they don't belong. Do something nice for them, and make them feel like they do belong. Show them that you love them and care for them and respect them, and maybe they'll do the same for you. So, go out there and share the LOVE!

My Heart

Hannah McCall, 7th Grade

In My Heart
I Have A Happy Side
I Have A Sad Side
And A Mad Side
In My Heart
I Have Love
I Have Passion
And I Have Drive
In My Heart
There Is A Hallway Of Shame
There Is A Roomful Of Crushed Dreams
But Most Importantly
In My Heart
I Have You



She Didn't Mean It

Lauren Nyquist, 7th Grade

“Hey EV, did you ever wonder what would happen if I told Ali about your crush on Yasin?” I softly teased over my shoulder to one of my best friends as we watched the guys play a competitive game of four-square knowing that I had no real intention of doing what I had been suggesting. Suddenly, time stopped. The noise of the kids playing on the blacktop faded as Evangeline gripped my arm, with unnaturally cold fingers, and pulled it behind my back as she pulled my head to the side. Pain sliced through my arm as it traveled from my neck to the very tip of my finger, I couldn't breathe because her hand covered my mouth and nose and I thrashed wildly just trying to free myself of her iron grip. The next thing I knew was that I felt the cool black concrete under my cheek as I lay there with no feeling in my right shoulder breathing heavily as I tried to regain the oxygen that my body had been deprived of. My friend Mallory helped me up, brushing the gravel off my now disheveled uniform, as she gently hauled me to the teacher on duty. I was rushed to the nurses' office as a few appointed kids ran ahead moving packs of curious kids to out of the center of the hallway as they, along with other curious teachers, swamped each vacant area as they tried to get a peak of the “injured child,” in hope that nothing could touch my shoulder and make the entire situation worse. Ms. Stanton helped me into the cold, white, and barren nurses' office as she called my mom. Teachers came by giving me their condolences, which varied from teachers asking me if I was alright to teachers who would try and make me feel better as they desperately tried to make my warm tears halt, and the principal came in and sat with me until my mom came in to take me to the ER. What I was prescribed that night in the ER room, which stood barely noticeable in the middle of a desolate white corridor in Texas Children's, would change my life so much that I could no longer live life as fun and enjoyable but rather what they were trying to tell me was that I was going to be living in torture, agony, and constant distress. What happened on April 1st, 2009 changed the way I lived and will live in the future and that will always be a burdensome and merciless thing for me to live with.

For about a year and a half, starting after the incident, I attended physical therapy at Texas Children's Hospital at least once or twice a week missing a good two and a half hours of school. At these sessions I worked with my therapist, Kiki, as we worked to try and regain my muscle in my shoulder, stop pain and

cramping in my shoulder, neck, and arm, and just try and fix the problem. During our sessions she would work with me by doing exercises, lifting one pound weights and expanding my range of motion by stretching a thick elastic band, but also working out the painful cramping in my shoulder. It wasn't long before I began to call each therapy session “torture” but truly each session was precious and without a doubt I can say each session helped. What had happened that fateful day is that I had nerve damage, muscle atrophy, severe muscle loss, and all of this occurred because of a simple friendly tease that never held a bit of harm in its meaning. As the weeks passed symptoms kept popping up and nothing seemed to be improving and, more or less, the injury was getting worse. After a couple more conferences with my sports medicine doctor I agreed to participate in a MRI (magnetic resonance imaging). That one test led to an ultra sound of my shoulder, an EMG (Electromyography), which is when a doctor sticks needles, that have small microphones attached to the ends, into a muscle which detect the electrical potential generated by muscle cells when these cells are electrically activated which detect muscle abnormalities, another MRI, and X-rays. As the results came back they didn't help me at all but rather confused my doctor and physical therapist to the point where they began consulting other doctors and physical therapists. No one seemed to recognize my symptoms and they were all baffled. Only to add to the confusion symptoms in which my shoulder would begin popping when I moved it, my spine, in my neck, appeared as though it was not aligned, and I was not gaining any muscles in my shoulder. In simple terms I was getting worse, not better as I should have been. I was soon prescribed a new type of “exercise” called a Tens Unit which electrically shocked my muscles and caused them to contract and relax. I could not last five seconds let alone the two minutes in which I was supposed to be doing without tears falling down my cheeks and piercing screams breaking free of my mouth which sent chills down my spine and we soon gave up on that form of medication.

I could not last a day without the pain and numbness that stretched from the base of my skull and continued through my shoulder to the tip of my fingers on my right hand. The injury was not only taking away time from my education but I was forced to stop playing viola and volleyball which were the two things that I was good at and made me “Lauren” at school.

By taking these away I felt as though the world was ending. These were things that were important to me and made up my life and I couldn't image a life without them. People started to look at me with pity and sympathy and wouldn't take me seriously. People had to carry my backpack for me, get things off shelves because I was not allowed to reach above my shoulder because of my restricted shoulder movement, and I wasn't able to separate who was my real friends from the people who were just being nice to me because it was the "nice" thing to do. I started becoming interested in foreign relations and I began to look at things with a clouded mind. I looked at everything pessimistically, I guess you could say I was depressed, but mostly I was confused. I was confused because I couldn't understand why something like this would happen to me. Meanwhile as I started my second year of having the injury, my sports medicine doctor introduced me to a new doctor named Dr. Cianca. Again we went through a couple tests and everything once again came back just fine. He assured me that just because the test was coming back normal that that didn't mean that everything was perfectly fine. But as time passed he too became baffled because I was not getting better. He didn't give up on me though, he was determined to help me and he seemed to understand me just fine. He was the first person to look at me and see me as "Lauren" not just some injured girl. He would always ask me how I felt about the injury and we always led to a one word summery I was "pissed," he would ask me about school, friends, extra-curricular activities, we would discuss political events, but mostly he would tell me the truth. That truth was that for all we know is that I may have this pain when I die. It was sad thing to hear but it was what I needed to know. Another thing that I had been trying so hard to avoid was that I needed to start building a new reality. My old reality consisted of doing almost anything that had to do with sports, volleyball, viola, getting those few things down for teachers from the top shelf, but mostly I used to live a life with no physical pain. That can't and couldn't be my life anymore and though I had tried to avoid telling myself that but deep down I knew that that was going to be the case. It was a miracle if I could go without a few seconds of pain, cramping, or numbness. Slowly I began to transfer my physical training at Texas Children's to a home training program so that I didn't miss school any more. In the summer before seventh grade I worked hard at volleyball camps as I desperately tried to find ways of doing things that others could do but in a way that I

could do them also. I also began trying out new activities as I looked for different hobbies, I slowly began to fall back into the habit of playing viola but this time I played with the knowledge of "do it longer than your arm can sustain and you have to deal with the consequences" playing in my mind at all times. The biggest thing I had to adjust was my writing habits. I used to write by hand for hours every evening but now if I even try to write by hand for more than an hour my hand cramps up and I can't feel my arm. What I used to love just isn't a reality any more. My mom sends notes in to my PE teachers telling them that I can't do certain activities and in volleyball I have to know when to stop or I end up sobbing my heart out because it hurts so much. Nothing symptom wise has changed since the day of the incident other then the fact that I have learned what my body can handle and what is too much for it to try to sustain. I permanently live with pain and it is something that I will have to deal with. I have regained very little muscle in my shoulder and am still struggling with muscle atrophy, pain, numbness, and cramping. People though don't see me as that injured little girl anymore, they look at me as the person I am, and because of that my attitude has changed drastically since that first year of the injury. This is my life now and I need to learn how to live with it.

I have approximately been to a hospital 230 times in the last two years and it has been 1,339,200 minutes or 22,320 hours since I last was without pain. I no longer think I will be able to feel the pain in simple injuries such as bruises or scrapes but one thing I am sure is that I know I will not be able to walk by a person or child, see them in pain, and not feel the need to help them. During every visit to the hospital I see people with diseases and injuries that range from fixable and curable to permanently injured and incurable and see how easily it affects their lives as well as the people around them. The sad but true truth is that my life can never go back to what it used to be. I will always be different than what I had been when I was born. Pain is now just another thing that I live with, just like my hair and eyes. There are somethings you just can't change but I now feel as though I need to help fix and cure those things that I can change. I promise I will (!!), because last week I had my first and maybe last, four hours without pain and I owe all my thanks to my doctor but now it is my job to help pass along what he helped me feel to others who deserve it just as much as I did.

Salaries: My Opinion

Harold Owens, 7th Grade

Take a moment to think about your teacher, doctor, or even your barber. Think about how they dress or what their car looks like. Now compare that mental image to a movie star, musician, or athlete. From my point of view, this is like comparing a peasant to a king. Personally, I don't care about the outside image. I am only concerned about the salaries. Think about it, a person whop recites lines in front of a camera, plays an instrument, or can "Air Jordan" a basketball hoop receives more cheddar annually than a service provider.

My first point is, stars are more popular amongst people than teachers, doctors, or any other service provider. For example, if a famous person or group of people started a fundraising campaign or commanded a charity event, the majority of people would want to support this person or group of people. Teachers and doctors, on the other hand, aren't exactly eye catching and you don't get that "Hey, that's the famous person I saw on TV!" feeling when you see one.

Next, stars have sponsors. In some way, shape, or form, a star has a record deal, shoe brand, clothing line, perfume, cologne, movie, partnership, or even an action figure. For example, If you've seen the commercials with Dwayne Wade and "X-Treme" the Goldfish® cracker that encourage getting outside and being active, then you've been staring the words PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN DWAYNE WADE AND GOLDFISH® straight in the face.

Finally, service workers help people or pro-

vide services to them in some way. Have you ever seen Brad Pitt perform CPR? Or Katy Perry carry someone out of the flames of an apartment fire? We, as pedestrians, average joes, and normal people, do not have to worry about makeup, hair, and script memorization. Whenever someone is in need and it is within our power, we try our best to help those in need.

I am not saying that I hate these people, I am just suggesting that they actually do something instead of sitting at a reserved table at Becks Prime with fellow cast members, musicians, or dancers. I am suggesting that they hop off of their plush couches while watching Desperate Housewives and plopping maraschino cherries in their pieholes. I am suggesting that instead of just sending money to a charity in need, that the person actually go to the site of the problem, find out what they can do in the area, and do some community service in the area. If they were to do that, then they might deserve their salaries. Service providers, on the other hand, have earned their money by providing things for people like us.

If you want to learn more about salaries please examine the table below:

| | |
|---------------|-------------------------|
| Actor/Actress | \$25,200-\$80,760 USD |
| Musician | \$24,370-\$83,870 USD |
| Athlete | \$35,000-\$520,890 USD |
| Teacher | \$40,440-\$44,030 USD |
| Doctor | \$121,410-\$243,780 USD |

Inhale

Susan Lovejoy

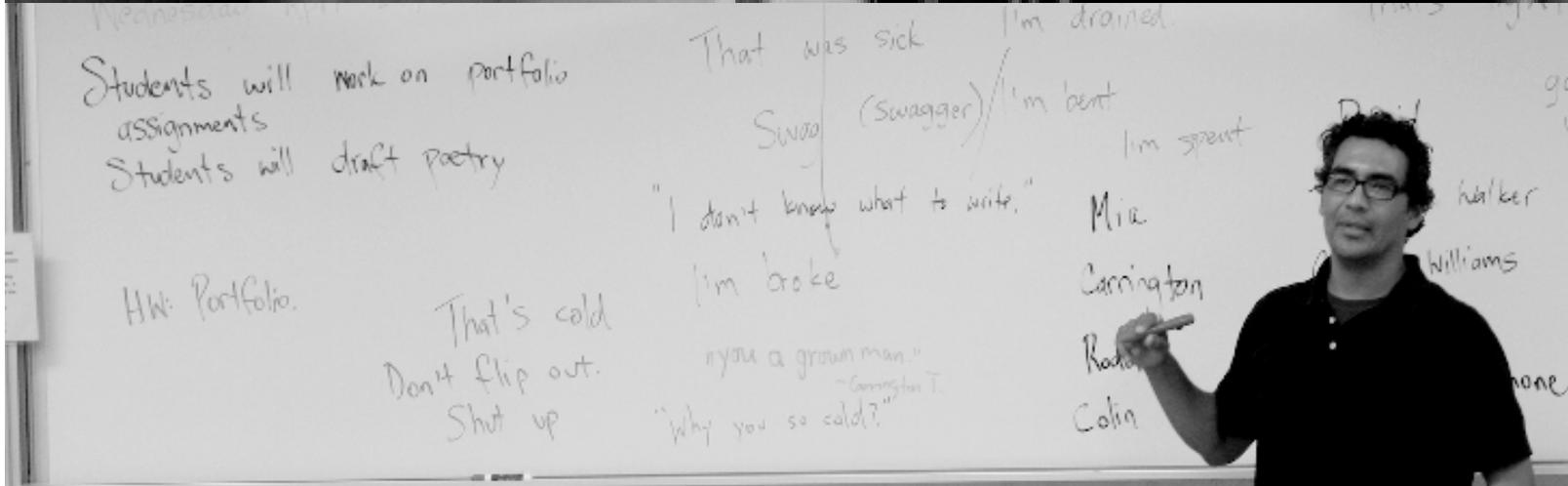
I will put the yellow orange sunrise of Galveston in my box
The soft green mosses and looming trees of my Alaskan summer
The crystal sparkling blue water of the Pacific, Hawaiian, Ocean as I taste the salty water

The tiny fluttering Hummingbirds of the Costa Rican rainforest
The brilliant white ice of the Antarctic
The music of the streets of the Dominican Republic
The colored material stacked of the heads of women in Haiti
Mt Fuji
The caves of New Mexico
New York's busy streets
Bikes in Amsterdam
I will hold my box tight and exhale.



High School Writers





Challenge Early College High School

Teacher: ~~Matthew~~ Martinez

Untitled

Marizza Villarreal, 10th Grade

She has bright pink hair
cotton candy electric hot pink—
color of a young girl's spirit.

Her dress white as vanilla cupcake icing,
a fitted corset;
waves of white fabric that reaches her knees.

Eyes like blue sky on a hot day at the beach.

She is forever frozen—in a pose.

To pose is normal;
she knows no other life.

She is plastic;
thoughts and actions
are not her own.

She lives her perfect life
in a tiny house
with a picture perfect boyfriend
forever frozen, too
in posing.

Closet full of clothes
she cannot wear—
but clothes are just
for looking at right?

Far from normal,
but she will never know.

As she walks around on tiptoe—
no shoes.

Yet she often wakes up
in strange places—
sleeps for days.

Other times she roams a world
of giants she refuses to see.

Questions nothing—
thoughts and actions
are not her own.

She lives her life never wondering.

She travels, but does not know
what she sees.

Her life—
a series of events
she cannot comprehend.

Untitled

Mia De La Fuente, 9th Grade

If I could count the stars in just one night,
I would make a billion wishes, and my future would be bright.
No more algebra or biology or chores,
I would travel the world; there would be no closed doors.
The sky would comfort me and the moon would be my bed,
I would stay up as long as I want; the planets whispering secrets in my head.
I would look down at earth and giggle and laugh,
Tickle the clouds, their notes hanging on my staff.
If I could be the air beneath an eagle's wings,
I would soar above cities, hear the blue-jays sing.
I would do all this; I would open all doors,
But until then I'm stuck with algebra, biology, and chores.

You

Simone Perry, 10th Grade

My mind is blank, and words won't come out
Feelings for you are like fireworks in a midnight sky
Bursting forth from my open heart
Sight of you makes me want you more each day
Your sweet scent makes me lose control
Your voice makes me tingle
Can't help myself around you
Feels like forever when you're away,
But even apart I still smell fresh cologne
Minutes you are from me, but feels like miles
You make a difference in life—
Melting a little each time as you hold me in your arms
Dancing in the light of twinkling stars
Night would never end as long as we're not apart



Illusions

Collin Ostroff, 10th Grade

Another day passing by,
As far as I know I've yet to die.

But....

What if this life is nothing more than an Illusion?
Am I sure I can trust this clouded vision?
I walk outside to see beautiful trees swinging in the wind.
I see the green of the leaves.
The brown flaking bark falling off a nearly dead tree,
In a nearly forgotten corner of a deserted parking lot,
On a nearly freezing night...
It's nearly morning now.
You walk by and I nearly faint, more than mesmerized by your definite beauty.
In an insane world nearly avoiding destruction with near disregard for others.
In a world nearly gone wrong, and with lies told from all sides.
In a clouded world, nearly uncertain, why am I so certain in your beauty?
In a world with nearly no absolutes, why is the illusion of your beauty without
Uncertainty, the most absolute thing in this desolate world?
The only Illusion that doesn't dissipate into smoke when I am near.
Why is the Illusion that is you, so certainly true?

Mistake

Rodolfo Solorzano, 9th Grade

You called us a mistake,
So you ignored us for half of our childhood.

You never paid attention; nor cared to.
You never took us to the zoo, movies, carnivals—

I strived to get your approval, but you didn't care.

Now that I've grown up you've tried to make it up;
Trying to buy our love.

But it's too late for you dad;
Can't forget how you ignored us.

Or how you made us feel unwanted.

I felt like the runt of the litter—left behind, no attention,
But you didn't care.

I'm sorry—
but now that I'm older I've realized something:
I never had a dad.

Yeah, don't have a dad—
because a dad is someone

who cared for you since you were an infant.

A dad is someone who spends time to raise you,
who loves you—unconditionally.

And you weren't any of these things.

And you never will be.

You're just the one who gave me life.
Other than that—
you're nothing to me.
Luckily mom has been there for me,

So I never needed you.

Just forget you ever had a son,
Because I forgot I had a father a long time ago.

Mom

Carrington Townsend, 9th Grade

When I was born, you cared about me.
When I was young, you and dad made sure I had what I needed to survive.
You take the heat from dad when we mess up in school, or in life—
Like when I failed a class in 7th grade, you stopped dad from getting on me.
You cry rivers of tears because you care about us so much and you want the best for us.
But what have we done to you?
Time and time again, I failed you;
Put other people before you, like Granna.
Many times, I didn't really care about you—
And now I regret that.
I see what you go through for me and Colby.
Mom, as much as it seems like I didn't care about you in the past.
Know this: I love you.

The Beauty in Me

Titianna Walker, 11th Grade

Yes,
My hair statics with a light touch,
And I'll only fix it if I must,

My lips paper thin,
Match perfectly my brown skin,

Weigh as much as a twig,
My dark eyes—round and big,

I'll listen to you, but I make the rules,
Never thought I belonged in school,

Outside I'm nice and inside I'm cruel,
Bad attitude, but I still play it cool,

Don't really know if I know myself,
Thus I rarely put trust in anyone else,

I spot a cute boy and quickly grow shy,
I'd get a boyfriend then toss him goodbye,

Hear others talking 'bout sex—(Join the club?)
But soon feel like an outsider 'cause I never been in love,

I'd get loud and then quiet,
Start off tame, then I riot,

Say I'm weird and yet I don't care,
Lose these qualities?
Wouldn't dare!

Imperfections shine perfectly,
And I don't lie when I say I love me,

Flawed?
Oh yes, I may be—
But these flaws represent the beauty in me.



Fort Bend Baptist Academy

Teacher: Deborah Bailey

Saw Me Leaving

Zeus De Leon, 12th Grade

I wanted to know the places you go
When you're alone
You called me your home
You've been mine all along

I never knew the difference
Between living or just an existence
Our days on repeat
We waited for a new beginning

Lets pack, pack all our things
Take to our dreams

I've been meaning
To leave
I saw on the silver screen
All the places I wanted to be

I never knew the difference
Between living or just an existence

Just a few more hours
Until we say goodbye
You came into my life
In the most mysterious of way

My Hope

Jennifer Lockemeyer, 12th Grade

The late hours of the night passed, giving way to the first glimmers of morning sunshine. But no one felt compelled to leave the church. Even though our eyes were heavy from our vigil and our hearts were burdened by sorrow and regret, we could not forget all that had passed the day before. Anne Harmond, a strong young woman in our community, had been killed out of pure hatred. She had been a leader. She had visionary ideas and embraced the new integration laws. Killing her was a threat against us all.

The wicks on the candles were dwindling, but we would not let their light die. The smoke was thick and made our lungs ache, but the discomfort reminded us of why we were there, praying through the night. Where there is a flame, there will always be smoke; where there is a desire, there will always be sacrifice. In the midst of the darkness and the smoke, the candle-light was so serene, so beautiful, that it stirred something in our souls and inspired our prayers to continue through the night. Our vivid memories and steadfast hope bound us to the smoky room, and gave us a purpose that the smoke and sorrow would not squander.

I held a candle in both my hands, which were rested on the wooden back of the pew in front of me. My knees ached from kneeling so long, so I sat back on the pew, next to my daughter. She was only a baby at the time, just barely two years old. Yet, I felt like she understood that something was hurting me. I always talked to her as if she did understand. I told her what was on my mind and she would always listen.

"Ms. Anne went to be with Jesus, Darlin'," I had told her earlier in the night, "tonight we're goin' to church to say our prayers." She had slept most of the night, but now she was awake and watching the faces of those around her. It was not just me that she paid close attention to - she followed people with her eyes, taking in every detail. She presently examined a woman who was sobbing and rocking back and forth in solemn prayer, and she pressed her lips together and furrowed her brows in concern. A young man crouched in the corner was raising his hands, praying aloud to the Almighty. Her eyes grew wide with wonder.

"Do you want to pray to Jesus too, Darlin'?"

She turned to me and examined my face, those bright eyes pondering for a moment. Then she nodded, a smile spreading across her round face, the pearly baby teeth glinting. So I placed my candle in an empty candle-stick and picked her up onto my lap. I pressed her tiny, warm hands together, as I did every night before bedtime. I always smiled and the dimpled knuckles and miniature fingernails.

“How do we start?” I coaxed her.

“Dear Jesus,” she lisped in response, the smile still glowing on her luminous face.

“Dear Jesus,” I repeated, “Lord, I thank you for my baby girl. Make her strong, Father. Show her what is right. Don’t let her be hurt by hate, like we have been, Lord. Surround her with love- your love...” I can’t recall what I prayed next, because at that moment, my eyes fluttered open for just a second- just long enough for me to see that her eyes were fixed on my face and that she was absorbing every word I said- mesmerized. I saw love in her eyes, love and admiration. At that moment I knew that she saw my pain and wanted to understand. I prayed for a moment longer, then patted her back, and muttered ‘amen,’ sort of in a daze.

“Amen!” She echoed, and then continued to gaze about the room. I did as well. The candles cast lacey shadows on the wall, flickering and swaying, like spirits watching over us. The faint morning light was filtering through the threadbare drapes, reminding me that the world had not ceased its spinning during the course of the long night. Once exposed by the light, the sorrow of the vigil would fade into a mere shadow in my past. The pain was not permanent. The pastor had told us that “the weepin’ may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the mornin’.” And the morning was passing quickly. Others had already left the church. I rose from the pew, taking my darling’s hand in mine and picking her up from her seat. She rubbed her sleepy eyes, but when I tried to lift her into my arms, she fussed; she wanted to walk beside me. So we walked down the aisle of the church hand in hand.

I felt others’ eyes on us as we progressed slowly towards the doors. They once looked at us with contempt and misunderstanding, since her skin was light, and her eyes were hazel. They would look at her with compassion- a pained expression. Then they would shift their critical gaze on me, punishing me with unspoken words, as if I were a sort of traitor. But tonight, they looked at my baby girl in a new light. They did not seem sympathetic. They looked at her with smiles and admiration, as if she was one of their own children. In retrospect, I realize that their eyes were opened by the death of Anne Harmond. She died because she believed in a society that wasn’t divided

by skin color. To the people gathered in the church, my daughter was suddenly a symbol of Anne’s vision. She represented a love that was not hindered by difference in race.

Still in a daze, I opened the door to the church building, stepping into the searing sunlight. I shielded my eyes from the sky, and stepped into the shadows of the buildings. I remember wanting to hurry into our own dark apartment and slip into a heavy sleep. I was not quite ready to face the heat of a new day. But suddenly my little girl stopped toddling along beside me. She was in direct sunlight, the sun shining into her eyes, but she did not squint, or even seem to move. She seemed frozen to the spot, staring across the street, again mesmerized. I squinted, searching for what arrested her attention, and suddenly caught sight of a police car with two white policemen in the front seat.

In a second, I surmised that they were exhausted. One of them held his head in his hand, his eyes were glassy. The other one leaned forward, and massaged his temples as if suffering from a headache. But in an instant, they both caught sight of my daughter and seemed to meet her gaze. I was taken aback. When they raised their eyes to me, I instinctively ducked my head in submission. But a part of my soul was stirred. They were stationed in front of the church to protect us. It was yet another symbol of Anne’s vision being lived out- a small step, and yet so encouraging. I looked up at them again and saw that they were smiling at my daughter. Then I looked at her face....

She was thinking very hard about something. Again I was overwhelmed by the feeling that she understood that this wasn’t normal. She had only seen white men in passing and they had never paid her any attention before. Just as she had read the faces of the people in our church, she was now reading these white men’s faces. She understood that though they were different, they were kind. A thought crossed my mind: maybe she would grow up differently than I did. Maybe life would be better for her because of the struggles we were going through now. The thought quickly became a prayer. I nodded respectfully to the policemen and they returned the gesture. I felt a little safer walking home now, a little more confident than I had the day before.

If my daughter had not been with me, that night would have been darker, harder to bear, and seemingly without a purpose. But it had always been that way. She brought joy to my life every day. She made me look at things through a different perspective. I knew that she would continue to change my life in these ways. There was a reason, after all, that I had named her ‘Hope.’