

# Voices of Kansas

A Journal of the Kansas Association  
of Teachers of English

Voices of Kansas Vol. 5 (2019)

# **VOICES OF KANSAS**

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# Author's Guide

*Voices of Kansas*, digitally published by the Kansas Association of Teachers of English, welcomes manuscripts and artwork in the categories of Perspectives & Literary Criticism, Artistic Expression, Poetry, and Creative Fiction & Non-Fiction from educators, student teachers, and students in grades 3-7 & 8-12. Our mission is for this journal to be a place for young writers to have a voice through both written and visual expression. Editor's choice entries are featured with lesson plans aligned to Common Core Standards for use by English-Language Arts teachers in the state of Kansas.

## **Deadline: January 31, 2020**

Please submit all entries through our Google Forms submission process. *Voices of Kansas* does not accept physical or hard-copy submissions.

## **Guidelines:**

Submissions must be made by a KATE member and include student and teacher name, school address, teacher or school telephone number, teacher email address, and school affiliation at the time of the submission. Also include preferred ebook format: .epub (iBooks), or .pdf (computer/Kindle). Submissions to *Voices of Kansas* are reviewed by editors and reviewers of the journal. By submitting student work, teachers also agree to be part of our double-blind review process. The editors then share critiques and work with the authors advancing toward publication in the journal. We acknowledge reception of manuscripts by email, and constructive feedback is provided for all submissions. *Voices of Kansas* publishes in the spring, and all applicants receive an emailed copy of the journal.

# From the Editors

It's both beautiful, and at times harrowing, to be a part of this process. Providing a venue for our bright young voices has always been the goal of our publication, but that's not always an easy road. While our submission numbers did not reach the heights of last year, it is very clear that our days of 70 submissions annually are far behind us. There's precious validation in the work we are doing—the work Kansas teachers are doing in their classrooms every day to foster creativity and innovation.

We truly value the diversity of submissions we receive, and a clear picture of the skills our Kansas students possess has emerged. We could not be more proud to offer this year's journal.

Again, competition was fierce.

Difficult decisions were made.

And we know some are disappointed.

But we believe firmly that the lessons learned by going through an authentic publication process are incalculable. The final product showcases the tangible talent we are nurturing in our classrooms across the state.

We want to thank the teachers who give of their time and energy to teach engaging lessons about writing. We also want to thank the teachers who took extra time to review and provide feedback in our blind-process, so that all submissions received real feedback. What *you* do matters; what *we* do matters. We hope you enjoy this year's issue of *Voices of Kansas*.

Nathan G. Whitman, Burrton High School  
April Pameticky, Wichita East High School

# Younger Voices

*Grades 3-7*

# Battle

**Julian Garza**

Death after death  
Soldier's last breath  
Into the battle fields  
Rode the U.S. military  
Forward the big tanks

The tanks could eat you  
Up like sharks  
That day was dark  
The men would throw the  
Grenades like it was a park  
But they knew it was a  
Risk to put on a helmet and hold a gun

And face the bloody  
Massacre some would  
Not reload quickly enough  
And blunder then we  
Ask "Why do they do  
It? Why do they continue  
To risk their lives? They  
Have kids and wives.  
I'd rather be at home then  
Get stabbed by a knife

Why? Because they love  
Their country. They love  
Their people. They're willing  
To die for us.  
There were survivors but  
They weren't in one place

But they had courage to fight for us.

# Dimension Known

**Blaise Strecker**

## **Prologue**

A tall cat figure opened his eyes to see what looked like an infinite galaxy, hearing a voice repeat over the same words.

“Under the desk.”

He woke with a start “Whoa... What was that” ...

## **Chapter 1**

Cat-Saint rolled over in his bed. “Ma, do I have to go to school?” he shouted.

“Yes, we can’t afford you losing education,” she shouted back.

“Ugh...” he mumbled as he rose out of bed. He got to the table to eat his cereal and ate silently. He went to school quietly, and when he got to there he was early.

“Yes, early!” he shouted. “Now I can work on homework.” He spoke. Suddenly he felt something under the desk, and the words repeated in his head,

*Under the desk.*

He slowly reached under the desk, and a key was taped under the bottom of the desk drawer. A note was attached. He stared at it for a second and stuffed it in his pocket as the bell rang, *I’ll read it later*, he thought. He watched as his friends Dog-Sophie, Cat-Zen, and Cat-Ickis walked into the classroom along with five other students.

“Did you study?” Cat-Zen whispered in Cat-Saint’s ear.

“Yeah, till 12:00, I was so tired!” Cat-Saint responded

“Hush, the teacher is coming.” whispered Cat-Ickis.

Everyone turned and looked as the teacher, Mr. Dog-Shepard, walked into the classroom.

“Okay class, today we will learn about dimension systems.” The teacher spoke. “Dimension systems are small groups of dimensions that make up a system. The only way to travel from

dimension to dimension is by the special sword of that dimension you are in. You can also use a special room hidden in each dimension. But the only way to travel from dimension system to dimension system, is through Dimension... X...:

## Chapter 2

When Cat-Saint walked out of his last classroom of the day, he remembered the note. He quickly pulled it out of his pocket. It said. *The abandoned warehouse.*"

Oh, this must be the key to the abandoned warehouse he assumed. He walked over to his friends and asked if they wanted to check out the warehouse.

"Yeah, sure," each of them said. It took thirty minutes to get to the old building, and when they got there the door was wide open. Inside there was a large door with a keyhole

"I think I know where that key of yours goes." whispered Dog-Sophie

"Yeah I think I do to" whispered back Cat-Saint. He stepped forward and inserted the key to the keyhole and slowly twisted the key.

Before he could fully twist it Cat-Zen shouted "Hey, you got to come look at this!" as Cat-Saint turned around he saw a very blue item.

"I think it's a sword" he said as he swung it back and forth "Let me see." Cat-saint said. Cat-Zen handed it over, Cat-Saint inspected the sword. It was blue with a cat-head shaped handle and 3 lines across the blade

"Hmmm." he said as he looked at it. He turned around to walk to the door. He grabbed the key and finished twisting, the door flew open almost hitting Cat-Saint

"Woah!" He yelped, on the other side of the door was a black void with white dots

"Stars... THEY ARE STARS!" Cat-Ickis yelled. It was a portal to Dimension X

## Chapter 3

As everyone stood in awe looking at the portal, Cat-Saint leaned forward to get a better look and stumbled and fell into the portal. The last thing he heard was ...

“Cat-Saint nooo...” just then the sword started to shake and glow and he levitated still a second before levitating up and entered back through the portal.

“ARE YOU OK?!” Was the next thing he heard.

“I’m fine.” he replied

“HOW DID YOU GET BACK!” shouted Cat-Zen

“Dunno, I was falling and the next thing I knew, this sword was glowing and shaking, then I went up,” responded Cat-Saint

“Cool!” Dog-Sophie huffed.

“YOU WERE GONE FOR AN HOUR!” Cat-Ickis shouted

“WHAT?! That only felt like 6 seconds!” yelled Cat-Saint  
“Is that true?” Cat-Saint said while looking at everyone. He watched as Dog-Sophie, Cat-Zen, and Cat-Ickis all nodded.

#### **Chapter 4**

Cat-Saint stared with his mouth wide open. He looked down at the sword, he lifted it, and he swung it. It ripped a hole in the fabric of the dimension. Through the hole he swore he could see teeth.

“Woah what’s that?” Spoke Cat-Zen

“Dunno.” Cat-Saint said as he looked at his feet in horror, they were moving, The portal was dragging him in... suddenly he warped into the other dimension. He quickly got up and looked around.

“Dog-Sophie, Cat-Ickis, Cat-Zen” Cat-Saint shouted for his friends. “I guess I’m here alone” He sighed. He looked around, in the distance he could see a tall scaled creature with two meaty legs and two tiny arms plus a large row of teeth. Wait, it looked as if it was fighting something, then he saw it. It was fighting a long, scaled creature with a long snout and 4 stumpy legs, also it had a long tail and a line of bigger scales on its back. Cat-Saint began to walk forward to see what was going on. By the time he got there it looked like the tall creature was about to finish off the long snouted one, but before it could, the long snouted one curled around something

“Big-scale, I’ll call you Big-scale.” He said to himself as he watched the long snouted creature “And you, I’ll call you Small-arm” He observed as the small-arm finished off the big-scale, he realized it was curled around a nest with eggs in it...

## Chapter 5

The small-arm began to walk away, Cat-Saint couldn't help but feel furious At the animal. After all it just killed a mother and walked away without even eating the meat. He walked up to the poor creature and looked at. he shook his head. He went over to the eggs and couldn't help feel sympathy for the things, Cat-Saint picked up two of them and put them in his bag. Suddenly Cat-Saint realized that the way out was probably the same way he got in, He grabbed the sword, and swung. A new portal appeared, this time he could see his friends through the portal. He took a step forward. for, this time he would be back to his dimension.

“Here we go,” he said as he took the final step toward the portal and warped into his dimension

“CAT-SAINT!!!” All three of his friends shouted as he came back. Cat-Saint turned to see a Dogoid without fur.

“Hi, My name is Sketch.” It said.

## Chapter 6

Cat-Saint stared at the strange creature in confusion “OH, sorry I’m a creature called a human.” He spoke “I come from a place called Dimension Pencil.” he continued. Cat-saint looked at his friends, they each looked like they had been with this... This... Thing for a little while now, Dog-Sophie looked calm but excited, Cat-Zen looked confused but fine, and Cat-Ickis looked in awe and happy.

“D-Different dimension.” Cat-Saint stuttered.

“Yeah, I saw you just come back from one,” replied Sketch. He reached his hand out for a handshake. “Nice to meet you.”

# If you See my Grandma

**Peyton Remus**

If you see my grandma in Heaven,  
She won't be hard to find.  
She'll be the one to greet you first,  
Because she is so kind.

She'll be the one with the softest voice,  
The nurse helping all the land.  
Or she will be in God's garden,  
with a shovel in her hand.

She'll sit among the farmers and storytellers,  
For that's what she likes best.  
She will tell you about her life on earth,  
Before she was blessed with rest.

Now if you haven't found my grandma yet,  
She's probably feeding the cattle,  
She loved working them one by one  
Which to her was an easy battle.

She wasn't famous in this world,  
Nor did she complete any brave deeds.  
She was a caring, hard-working lady,  
Taking care of others' needs.

For you see, she was my hero.  
She was larger than life to me.  
She taught me all a granddaughter should know,  
And how important the Lord should be.

So if you see my grandmother in Heaven,  
Tell her I'm doing fine.

Let her know how much I miss her,  
And that I think of her most of the time.

You know she was my hero,  
So will you give her a hug or two for me?  
Tell her how much I love her and,  
Someday soon together we will be.

# The Key

**Justin Wright**

“Yes finally.” Carter exclaimed. As the bell rang. The school day was finally over. Carter was a quiet kid. He doesn’t have a lot of friends. His grades aren’t good and he lives in a small old house. There is an old folks tale that a woman once cursed the house that. There they told him that they were moving.

He went up to the attic to get his stuff. When he was up there his eye caught something shining. He walked over and grabbed it. It was a key. It was small and golden. It said the one who picks up this key will never be free Carter took the key and heaved it out if the window. He went down stairs to tell his mother Patricia.

“There was a key with a curse on it” Carter exclaimed.

“Honey, your just imagining things,” Patricia stated “It is just the stress of moving to Iowa.”

“Yeah, you’re right” Carter mumbled.

Carter, Patricia, and Robert went in their full car and they were on their way to Iowa. it was a 28 hours there. It was 1845 miles. Halfway there they got a flat tire, in Wyoming. Carter went out to check it with his dad.

“There it is” Carter shouted.

“What?” Robert questioned.

Carter ran to the tire and pulled out the key it was the same key he found in the attic. He took the key and threw it as far as he possibly could. He threw it so hard it hurt his arm.

They got back to the car and Carter was terrified and his dad was puzzled. After a while, both of them shook it off. They stopped at the Omaha Zoo. Carter had a great time looking at the animals until they got a bite to eat there. He took a big bite out of it and something hit his tooth. “Ow!” Carter yelled “What was that?” He spit out his hamburger out.

It was the key again.

Carter ran out of the zoo and straight to his car. In there he locked the doors, and hid.

Thirty minutes later his parents found him. They calmed him down and they got on the road again.

Carter was just waiting for the key to show up again, but it didn't until they got to their new house, and there it was. Now they were all terrified. Robert picked it up and put it into the door lock and It fit.

It opened.

# Older Voices

*Grades 8-12*

# Poetry

# A Resting Place

**Brett Seaton**

Spinning fans disrupt the darkened room.  
Looking for the world like a lullaby.  
Lying in bed, glancing around at the dusty gloom.

The dresser is slightly off center.  
A wallet on the wood where it shouldn't be.  
My clothes set out for a world where things are better.

Old tones drift through the quieted room.  
Melody, harmony, and the likes of me.  
The symphony is not new to me, I'm changing soon.

Outside that door, that shuddered window--  
I look for signs of mine, all I see is theirs.  
Maybe I will grow, so I don't have to feel the show.

The flashing lights, the bright whites, dark blacks.  
Booming thunder, but lightning is all the rage.  
Too much meaningless movement for my eyes to keep track.

This treaty, this squandered symphony--

# Abhor

**Robyn Godsy**

Hate  
Crime, Violence  
Loathing, Punching, Dying  
Dislike, Despise, Disdain, Degradation  
Glaring, Disrespecting, Humiliating  
Prejudice, Intolerance  
Abominate

# Beneath You're Beautiful

Olivia Dieter

Wonder filled the room as we looked at each other. Would  
He be so hungry for my heart if he knew what it held? You  
Convinced yourself that I am everything that the world is not. Let  
It be known that I am not what I seem. Yet you followed me  
With an accepting smile that I still see  
In my dreams. Beneath  
All the chaos I couldn't help but feel my worries slip away. You're  
Relentless ambition opened up the stainless steel door to my heart  
and we became something beautiful.

# Black & Blue

Deron Dudley

B.I.B.L.E – Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth

The colors black and blue go in two

One is the color of King Zulu

The other comes from the Ku

Once upon a time the color black represented royalty, true?

Now the color black is beaten till their blue

What's a nigga to do?

Being beaten until I'm stained purple by stark blues

Put it on T.V, presenting you with a different view

When you call the police, but the trigger is on you

But what's your point of blue?

*\*with special thanks to Killah Priest for the inspiration of B.I.B.L.E.*

# Board Games

**William Crow**

Board games were thought to be lame always the same average and plain constant suffering of playing a board game.

# Broken Heart

Leyni Gomez

In the depths of sorrow,  
what I've done to you can't be taken back.  
My love for you is true,  
but it isn't to you.  
My heart aches for you,  
but yours pushes me away.  
Then you board yourself up,  
and I lose you altogether.  
I miss your smile and laugh.  
I miss your touch and kiss.  
Most of all, I wish you would miss me, too.

# Brown Eyes

Olivia Dieter

I watch the tears fall from your eyes as if it was the first rain on an  
early April morning.

Your brown eyes wander around the room

As if you were looking for a reason as to why things are the way they  
are.

I came to a realization.

That continuing this journey of heart ache will make us believe that  
everything is not as it seems.

The best of days will outshine the rainy days and we have to  
recognize it.

Or else we will be defeated by things we cannot control.

# Can You Love a Monster?

Jasmine Fountain

Her heart is cold. Can  
You tame her? You  
Made a beast, how do you love?  
Her life was cut short. A  
Beast - untamed, she was a monster

# Diamond of Passion and Lust

Ana Crawford

Heart  
Red, Colossal  
Beating, Loving, Living  
Alive, Happy, Depressed, Lifeless  
Decaying, Fading, Sinking  
Black, Insignificant  
Love

# Dream

Roby Kelley

Let me dream  
Of a future  
Brighter than the eye can see.

Let me dream  
Of a future  
Where my friends and family  
Are free to be  
Who they were born to be.

Let me dream  
Of a day  
Where I don't have to be afraid.

Let me dream of a future that I can get behind,  
Of a new era,  
A new generation.

Let me dream  
That someday my brothers and sisters  
Of all races  
In every country  
Will be safe  
From oppression,  
From a cruel hand,  
From demeaning words,  
From the wolves of a world.  
If everyone was free,  
Free to dream,  
Free to be the people they needed to be,  
Then this dream I have  
That they call a fairy tale  
Wouldn't be fiction anymore.

Let me believe.

# Existing Existence

Desiree Epps

Existing can mean that you're alive,  
but being alive doesn't always mean that you're living.

A world based on tight waists and fast cars,  
It is hard to dream that living is something you're doing.

As hateful as the time has been,  
I remain as kind as the day I was born and as cautious as the day I  
was first hit.

Living has been slim of an option,  
mindlessly holding onto the words of those who don't know me

But then again, how could they ever know me?  
How could they ever love me, clothed?

My existing existence has been selfishly defined  
by the size of my thighs, by the clothes I can't fit, and the shoes I  
never wear

My brain's power silenced by an artificial necessity in the people  
around me  
and their need for their parents' money to make them shine out in  
the economy

Shy is what they used to call me because I chose to be quiet.  
Correction: I was forced to be quiet.

Who am I in my existing existence?  
That's a question I can not answer.

One day I will be thriving on my living,  
but for now I am simply existing.

# Ex-Junkie

Brylee Ingram

Mama smoked, so life wasn't all too great – always up crying, started  
losing my faith  
It had been a couple days since I'd seen your face  
When the cops busted in I prayed - We were safe and life was about  
to turn for the great

Not really remembering too much about you I moved in with you  
I was 8, and yet again you were always high  
You rarely showed emotions – but I never really knew the difference  
Between 'real' love and "high" love - I will never forget  
I didn't think that would have happened - it was all thrown at me  
I finally realized reality - now when I think of you I remember that  
night

The night I found out that drugs were more important to you  
The night your friend molested me  
That night I lost my best friend and my dignity  
I couldn't sleep for weeks, so I prayed and asked 'Why me?'  
In 2015 my anxiety got the best of me and I started following in your  
footsteps

I thought that drugs was the only way, the only life I thought I had  
– 13, partying like a college student

I just needed something to take the pain away  
Then I cut out all the so called junkies out, forced myself, my real  
self to break through

My junkie body to be me again - Now I'm sober  
I cried a lot of tears throughout the years, but the past is the past  
Still, I have no mom I have anxiety - But right now, right here, I am  
happy

So. Hello. My name is Brylee  
None of that should have mattered but society makes it seem like  
we need to hide our stories

Here was a little about myself. Maybe you'll learn why I am how I  
am.

-Sincerely, An ex junkie

# Face Book

**William Crow**

Face Book gets people hooked with all the memes and different things. Ads trying to sell you bling and songs that will make you sing.

# Faucet

Daphne Copp

I stand under cold water  
To cool my body down

To hope it might creep  
Into my lungs  
So that I may drown

The face in my shower  
Will look at me and cry  
And it looks to the right  
So it doesn't have to watch me die  
Unless out of the corner of its eye

And that's fine

I'd rather die in solitude  
The water from this faucet  
Will rain  
And take away  
My exhausted pain

I'll be someone you can forget  
A corpse in a corset  
Put me in a casket  
And bury me in the ground 6 feet down  
Maybe drowning from a faucet  
Will leave a deposit  
On our brains  
"Maybe we're not so insane."

Better days are now  
Life's worth living  
But will always be unforgiving

With this faucet  
It seems  
I've lost it

But the water  
It doesn't sneak  
Its way in and  
Begin to slowly  
Kill me

I'm honestly angry

It's drip, drip  
Dripping  
Leaking my sanity  
Whatever good there may be

This faucet is  
Unforgiving

# Free Write

Robyn Godsy

When I look at my baby pictures I do not recognize myself  
I see a helpless baby, barely the size of a human hand  
Born fifteen weeks early, weighing one pound and seven ounces  
A twenty percent chance at living  
My challenge was bravery  
First home was an incubator for seventy-nine days  
Unable to breathe on my own  
I had to fight for breathe  
I remember my parents telling me  
The doctors witnessed me  
Yank that breathing tube out of my own mouth twice  
Being the age I am now  
I applaud my perseverance  
Knowing that I am a fighter  
Being a miracle baby has made an impact of my life  
I am different from other people  
I am capable of achieving my goals  
By having determination pushes me to succeed  
Over the years I feel happy and joyful  
That I was a premature baby  
I am a brave, unique individual

# Fuzzy Socks

Leyni Gomez

Fuzzy feeling in my heart  
warm hand in mine  
arm 'round me.  
You're soft and  
comforting like them  
and always there.  
Just like the fuzzy socks  
on my feet,  
you keep me happy.

# Garden of Holorfernes

Tarynn Gillette

The Garden of Holorfernes

This once was a garden, bearing fruit and inquisitive streams of  
water,

Beaten down, now an array of chiseled stones murmuring sad,  
meaningless, repetitive phrases.

Pacing the creaky metal gates, guarded by Holorfernes,

A child enters.

She knows not of the truth that she wanders on, dozens of lives in  
slumber just feet below.

These stones mean nothing to her; merely a bleak memory for her  
future self to dwell on.

Carefully, the mother places a single plastic rose upon a worn  
placard, weeds intertwining above

The weak engraving, as she commands the child to pray.

Obediently, she drops to her knees, closes her eyes, and folds her  
tiny knuckles into a clam.

The mother disrupts the eerie silence with familiar lines the child  
has yet to memorize;

Not even a bird's morning song dwells here.

She inquisitively stretches an eye open to see a gradient blue  
emerging through the sky;

Afraid of being scolded, she stares down into the crusted dirt,  
Allowing her mind to wander into new dimensions, continuing to  
ignore the prayer.

The stiff, yellowing grass grounds roots she could never hope to dig  
up.

The cue of amen signals to her to rise again and view a single  
raindrop upon her mother's face.

She does not question the origin, somehow, she now understands

her own ignorance will salvage  
Her from the horrors she has yet to discover.

Two moments of silence pass before the girl and her mother tread  
on the late autumn grass  
Beneath their sandals, the disruptions echoing throughout the  
infertile garden.  
They wave a solemn goodbye to Holofernes as they exit, to return  
the following year.

# Ghost

Olivia Deiter

How are you?

I see you scream, cry, and smile.

I am curious about you.

You didn't seem to be doing so well for a while but as time goes by  
you are growing into who you want to be.

I know you don't know me but I have questions.

When I try to make myself known, why do people get scared?

Who invented dryers?

How do lights go from dim to bright?

What year is it?

I don't understand many things in this world anymore, it is nothing  
like when I was alive.

You and everyone else in the world is lucky to live in such an  
advanced generation.

Although it seems that regardless of these advancements we are  
declining in humanism.

Humans are treating each other like they aren't the same species.

When did this start?

Why did this start?

Who started it?

I know it is none of my business but take this advice.

Be the person nobody has anymore.

Be a good friend, a good stranger, a good example.

Be the person everyone is scared to be.

# Heartbeat

Garett Bogle

Heartbeat The moment when it all began A  
crimson collage Of image and imagination  
Sound takes color, and image takes wavelength  
And soon normalizes When it opens his eyes.

Heartbeat Another one after another one Pulsating  
ephemeral and weak Growing moment to moment In a  
symphony of sickening joy and wondrous sorrow  
All is good But all is absolutely terrifying.

Heartbeat Movement is sensed through pallid  
Eyes, windows to the weak new soul. The  
horrid splendor of the world without Is too  
much to bear. Its eyes slam shut in  
frustration, A blink of time, lasting as long as  
a heartbeat.

# Heartbeat Reprise

Garett Bogle

Heartbeat. The bombastic rhythm drums on throughout the years  
Sometimes as wild as the western wind Sometimes passionate,  
proud, a cardiac warrior clad in crimson Sometimes as poignantly  
as

a wilting rose Sometimes as quiet and soft as velveteen socks on  
soft-stepping toes. But always, always echoing that earliest sign of  
hope.

Heartbeat. Your song is nearing its end. With the final measure  
‘round the corner,  
you surge To life. Grandeur, majesty, and such happy sadness all  
compound  
together In that able old form of yours, sending shivers through the  
concepts Of old  
age and mourning. This is not a death bed, no, it is a daybed! You  
pa-rum-pa-pum-pum your last happy beat to welcome the coming  
light of dawn!

Heartbeat. Teardrop stains of blood beat their way through you,  
silencing the happy beat  
reaching its Foretold end. But just as one song ends, another  
begins, starting in tragedy,  
then Wondrous splendor! Then another, and another, a hundred  
million future songs  
Waiting to be heard by the masses! That first sad, happy little  
heartbeat Though gone, is  
not lost forever. Because the most wondrous thing about a simple  
beat Is that it is  
impossible to forget.

# Her

**Daphne Copp**

Her tears Leave abstract hearts on my sleeve  
Drops of moisture hang off of her eyelashes like the early  
morning dew on blades of grass in the summer  
Her eyes turn a deep green when she cries; A sorrowful  
color She messes with a decorative strip on her bra  
Intricate movements with delicate yet strong favors  
Her hair dangles in her face like a lazy spiderweb  
It sticks to random eyelashes and spots on her face  
The cloudy light streaming from the windows lands in  
her eyes, brightening and darkening the green  
The black ring around her iris bleeds into the white; An  
unknown cause Flecks of gold lie there  
She watches a movie while she writes  
Who is she? A stranger  
Waiting, writing, watching, Sort of living.

# Hide & Seek

**Brett Seaton**

My favorite me is an upstanding guy  
And when I come play I'm high as the sky  
But then the next day, I don't want to play  
And I tell my best me: stay away

# House

Nicholas Sandoval

My house, what would it say to me if it could talk.  
It would tell me to stop looking at the clock.  
Telling me not to worry about the time.  
Instead, worry about the dime, you don't have.  
Nick, you need to get a job.  
Get out go and grab the door knob.  
Come on its time to get this bread.  
Stop laying in your extremely warm and comfortable bed.  
I know you miss me after long days at school.  
Unfortunately it is time to grow up you fool.  
So stop staying home so much, it's not cool.

# Hydrangea

Gabrielle Kerr

I hear them, as the wind blows through.  
I see the glisten, as the sun shines through.  
I feel the soft petals, as I reach through.  
But then I wake up, back in the world.  
The world that people before me scorched and poisoned.  
When we gloomily walk through the riots they created,  
They blame the cellular device I use as a shield.  
They left us a world tainted, a world destroyed.  
A world they gave up on, they assume we will be happy.  
How disrespectful we are, for we fear the death they have handed  
us.

I want to grasp the threads of light still shining on our dying world.  
I want to climb the stars like a ladder, before I sink into the crust.  
Let me scale the moon before it disappears.  
It is nothing but a thin grin, mocking us for our sins.

I hear them--The wind blows through--I hear their cries. The cry of  
the hopeless, and the damned.  
I see the glisten-- as the sun shines through--The tears on their  
cheeks, as they continue flowing.  
I feel them--fragile as a petal--a single touch and they could  
crumble.  
The children left with this world, fragile as a hydrangea.  
They have no other way to fight, save their voices.  
Yet when they talk, the generation before them laughs.  
The children are crying out for refuge, yet they receive nothing but  
more scars.  
The world is eating them alive, and all we can do is hide.

Do you hear them?  
Do you see them?  
Do you see they are breaking?

Do you see I am breaking?

Do you see I am falling, Why am I falling?  
I am falling, because you took my world, threw it down.  
Stomped my hopes and dreams.  
I tried to paint over the cracks and graffitti you left on my life,  
The life you destroyed before I was born.

Can you hear my screams, I am calling out!  
Can you see I am reaching, reaching out!  
Can you feel me pulling your tail coats, asking you why you  
destroyed the one, the one thing not created in greed, and  
yet here you are,  
blaming generation Z.

# I Just Want to Write

Roby Kelley

I just want to write  
Write music  
Write poetry  
Prose  
Stories  
History  
I want to write it all  
Let me rewrite the stars  
I'll make a constellation beautiful and bright  
People will turn off their lights  
Let me write  
About the future  
I hold in my heart  
I don't care  
If I don't go far  
Just let my fingers type  
My pen scratch  
At the crazed speed of light  
Let me write  
That's when I'm happiest  
I'll never have to say goodbye  
My dreams can live in the light of day  
My words will continue on  
Even after the day that I die  
Don't tell me how to live my life  
Just let me write

# If Wishes Were

Cheyenne Grant

If wishes were wyverns, what would you say?  
Would you bring them home and beg them to stay?  
Or would you cast them out and drive them away?

For I know a young girl in a far away land  
Who didn't have this information at hand,  
And so, her wishes took a stand.

She wished to be taller.  
Oh! If only the wish had been smaller!  
A wyvern flew in from the south  
With a collection of daggers set in its mouth.  
The teeth were so sharp and so sparkly white,  
That the girl was afraid to let it stay even a night.  
So she said, "Off you go!" To the poor scary beast.  
It was sad to leave; it had not been there to feast.

She wished to be happier,  
But this wyvern made her much sappier.  
He lumbered in with wings all tattered,  
And the girl was not the least bit flattered.  
The beast smelled like trout! It was time it was out!  
So she said, "Leave me, you stink!" To the withered cleome.  
He wept as he left, for he needed a home.

She wished to be able to barter,  
But by now she was a bit smarter. The wyvern came,  
All teeth and claws and flame,  
But she was plenty prepared  
For whatever scheme it dared.  
So when it reduced her curtains to bits,  
She trimmed its claws and gave it new mitts.

If wishes were wyverns, what would you say?

Would you tell them to leave or go away?  
Or perhaps invite them to stay for a day?

I ask you, how different would the world be  
If our wishes were more solid than both you and me?

# I'm Not Answering That

Sydney Ralstin

It's 7pm Wednesday and the page is still blank  
Poetry is not my thing  
Sharing is caring – but I don't care  
This \*@#! Is full of feeling and I don't do that  
Give me a bottle so I may fill it up  
Give me a box so I can continue compartmentalizing  
Give me a coffin so I can bury my thoughts  
Writing isn't bad, but poetry is for everyone  
Everyone learns your emotion  
So you ask me to write what I feel?  
I'm not answering to that

# I Thought I Knew

Roby Kelley

I thought I knew what to do.  
I thought I figured out,  
What my life was supposed to mean.

I had my life planned out  
By the second  
To the day that I die.

Soon enough,  
However,  
Plans started to change.

I am no longer sure  
Where I'm going.

And that's okay.

I refuse to plan out my life  
By more than a day.

# John R Fountain

Jasmine Fountain

How does it feel to just wake up and love yourself?  
To wake up not wishing you were at rest  
When you're at rest everything is okay  
When you're resting you don't have to endure the agony  
The pain that comes when you least expect it  
Text received at 12:05 pm on Sunday while you're at church  
April 29, 2018 - "Uncle Ricky is dead. Call me asap!"  
Pain returns at 2:13 am on Monday while you're lying in bed  
Wondering why you weren't taken to rest instead

# Jungle Shades

Cameron Phillips

The jungles at the South  
Shine from up above the skies  
But shroud in darkness below  
Hold the deepest secrets in the earth  
Keeper of the finest fruits  
It stores the softest water  
Guest rains and quickest of sands  
The smallest of creatures call it home  
Alien-like plants dwell here  
This is the most beautiful place  
And also the worst  
Holding the darkest secrets  
The coldest of hearts live  
Deadly creature known nowhere else  
Evil regions supreme in the dark  
Live struggles to stay alive  
Inhabitable to human and animal alike  
Poison is abundant in its corners  
Life is well to all  
It is a perfect balance

# Just a Girl

Jasmine Fountain

I am just someone.  
A body in which I am.  
I am not special.  
I am a body, a girl, a child.  
I am the one with the plain, white pearl.  
I sit along shore,  
Dreading my return home,  
Knowing that when I get home the storm starts.  
Dark, gloomy clouds  
Over my shoulders  
They hold the most pain.  
Knowing that it's going to start pouring  
I go into the water  
Never to be seen again.

# Kisses of Moonlight

Kiba Nichole

Standing in a field covered in flowers,  
I stand being kissed by the moon.  
Light being borrowed from the sun,  
Follows me wherever I run.  
Kisses of Moonlight  
Pepper my face.  
And I sit and relax in this peaceful place.

# LIFE

**Ethan Barrow**

Living through the good and the bad  
Interacting with yourself and others  
Finding your meaning and maybe love  
Enjoying the little things throughout it all

# Lifeboat

Roby Kelley

A lifeboat alone  
Is the place I've always known,  
Struggling to keep with the tide.

Some days are easy.  
Some days it feels  
As though,  
I fear,  
That I must fight the beasts  
Which in water reside.

One day  
Of recent past  
A strange fog did set in,  
And since I feel as though I have no light.

I fear not the Dark.  
I've known her all my life.  
She comes and is clear  
But this time I fear  
She brought a friend  
That is no friend of mine.

It seems that before  
The fog rolled in,  
I had all I needed  
In this lifeboat raft of mine.

The stars were my map  
But now I fear  
the clouds do not wish to clear,  
And in so I must guide  
On blind faith alone.

The flashlights I gathered  
Since I first learned how to scour,  
Were stored properly,  
Once upon a time,  
Full of battery,  
Full of life.  
Now they fall over  
Into the water that rages,  
And the batteries  
Were used long ago.

The lighthouse in the distance,  
Oh how it would listen  
To my dreams that seemed to go on,  
Now a faint glow  
Is something I dream to know,  
So I could find my once calming guild.

I could spot the sun  
With ease  
as I laid  
in my raft all alone.  
But content,  
I was at peace  
With myself and the world,  
But now  
it seems there is only fog  
And this looming dread.

I lay now  
On my raft,  
All alone.  
My dreams leave me  
With no peace of mind.

My lights are gone,  
Darkness my only friend.  
All alone with her  
by my side

As she lends her ear.  
I do solemnly fear  
That she'll leave me too.  
For when I share  
The tales of my past,  
She all but weeps.

The fog is here  
But one day it will clear,  
And I'll return to my peaceful life  
In my raft  
In the ocean of my mind.

# Mel

Roby Kelley

Mel,  
A girl with choppy dark hair,  
Dull skin  
Clouded eyes,  
Exists in this state  
Where no one seems to smile.  
In a place  
Where the sky is always grey.  
She waits patiently for the rain.  
There is this dream,  
Told to everyone who sits in her slump,  
They say the rain will take the grey away.  
There is a belief  
That the rain will make some great change,  
Her hair might grow,  
No longer will it be as rigid as her days,  
When the sun comes out,  
Her skin might be bright once again,  
The clouds in her eyes make the rain.  
Sadly this rain only brings more pain.  
She sulks further and further,  
Watching while others brighten but she only dulls.  
She'll try again tomorrow.  
The sun should come then.  
Her shy smile  
As fake as those who tell her it will happen on it's own.  
Mel sits in this state,  
This grey, somber state.

# Miracle

Olivia Deiter

What does a miracle look like?

I believe it is defined differently by every person.

It could be a new born baby or a recovery from a life threatening illness.

It could be the heater in your car turning on early on a snowy morning.

Maybe it is a lone flower growing in a field of grass.

When I think of the word miracle I envision the ones I hold close.

A black cat curled up on the couch.

Or the morning sun shining through the window.

A miracle is the finer things in life.

# Mirror

Daphne Copp

I watch in sadness  
As you explain how you're afraid to die  
But also afraid to live

+

What a way to exist....  
But I can do nothing.

I watch in sadness as you scream at yourself through me.  
You scream how stupid you are,  
How much you failed,  
What you should've done...

But I can do nothing.

I watch in horror as you wipe away blood from your legs and your  
wrists.

You wipe the blade clean and stash it behind an old photo, hoping  
to forget it.

But I see it.

It's still there.

It scares me, too.

But I can do nothing.

I get startled as the door slams and you stomp upstairs.

You crash on your bed and try to breathe.

In, out, in, out....

Counseling was rough tonight?

As usual?

What'd she accuse you of this time?1

I can only ask these questions in silence as you scream the answers  
to yourself.

But I can do nothing.

I watch in sympathy as you model yourself through me.

You suck in your stomach,

Push your breasts up,

And make modeling faces.

Just hoping to look prettier,

Wanting to slim down,

Craving to be accepted.  
Then you cry again...  
But I can do nothing.  
I watch in awe as you enter one of  
Your few moments of true happiness.  
You turn up an album to full volume  
And dance!  
Oh, how you dance!  
You watch yourself in me,  
And smile,  
Knowing it's not good,  
But you're happy.  
And that's all that matters  
In this moment.  
You love yourself now,  
And that makes me happy.  
Then the cycle starts again.  
And I can only watch,  
Wishing to help comfort,  
Assure,  
And be happy.  
All with you.  
But I'm your mirror...  
I can only watch  
And reflect....

# My Confession

Maylana Figures

Feeling the same way I did yesterday  
Keep telling myself if I repeat the same prayer, it will make it alright  
If I try to forget what happened yesterday  
Then the memories of it would suddenly fade away and die – but it  
                  doesn't

Under my desk is my confession,  
I'm confessing to Him  
Yet, two steps away I sinned.  
He forgives, right? He sees everything...right?

It feels like I'm dying – but not physically  
I'd do anything to get rid of it.  
So I make it go away, my tears running down my wrist  
My heart hurts a little less  
“I can't do it”  
He says, 'You can' as he is stitching up my water way with a  
                  temporary damn  
Or at least a bridge held by toothpicks

Today I will smile  
I will laugh  
I will speak  
I will remain here

# My Mind

Cade Scheibler

My mind is a playground for my thoughts,  
All the little things that I have sought,  
All the little things that I will jot,  
All the ideas that I have shot.

I know a lot.  
People say I am stupid, but I'm really not--  
I'm no robot.

Sometimes I feel I've gotten what's already got.  
I ain't got a rappin' tutor.  
Yeah, I'm self-taught. All these rappers sayin' that they gonna get it  
like a boss--  
Well, I'm a god.

When it comes to rappin',  
I spit tomahawks--  
I got the talks.

I am so high I can never come down.  
I am high off the music, not dope, you clowns.  
I dream of the mic and cities and towns.  
You'll never fly if you don't hit the ground.

# My World

Samantha Mendoza

Music is so much more than lyrics as it connects me with my  
culture,  
Making an impact as it has in my past and now in my future.  
As I dance away with the rhythm to bachata or reggaeton,  
Nothing rehearsed but rather feeling it in my *corazon*.  
As people say, I do shake what my mama gave me,  
Side to side and one foot after another being so carefree  
I watch my mama move and glide trying to dance her heart out  
My Papa guiding her across the floor as they both dance about,  
Hips never lying  
Heritage never dying  
I do not just hear the acoustics  
But I rather feel the music,  
As the lyrics tell a story some could relate to.  
As the strums of the guitar of the mariachi man and his crew  
Or as the mood of the song can lift me up or bring me down,  
The melody swifting in the air and around the town  
Morning music sets the mood for morning cleaning.  
Having Vicente Fernandez in the background singing,  
Singing my heart out to Como la flor by Selena and seeing my lover  
with someone new.  
Blasting the song and pouring my heart out on the avenue  
My heartstrings pull as I understand the heartbreak in the lyrics,  
Crying along because the song is saying everything I feel for my  
dearest  
As the outside world continues to weep form grieving.  
The music blurs my mind from the chaos and keeps me from  
screaming.  
There's nothing better than hearing the romantic sound  
Of your lover belting out his undying love with words that are  
beyond profound  
It's also blasting some oldies music while cruising in our low riders,  
Riding slow and low sticking out like outsiders,  
Maybe listening to King Lil G,

Or taking it back to Ben E King

With Stand By Me

Mixed with the breeze.

The music is the one thing that no one can take away from us

Music is what makes my world mine and that's what I wanted to  
discuss

My world is filled with melodies and harmonies that work as one

Making the darkest of days the lightest for everyone

It's how I get through the day when I have my bluest days

It would crack through dark clouds and let itself become the  
sunrays.

Without it in my life,

I would already be in the afterlife.

Music is my savior

It would continue to be my lifesaver.

# Nature is Beautiful

**Payton Bruning**

Do you ever just go outside and look at what's around you?  
The birds chirping  
The wind blowing through your hair  
The sound of all the cars and people  
Everything is beautiful in its own way  
Nature is beautiful  
The birds and bugs flying  
The squirrels and lizards walking in the grass  
Reminds me that we all have a place in this world we just might  
not know where to go  
Nature is beautiful  
Nature and people are alike in many ways  
Even with its flaws and imperfections, it's beautiful just like  
people  
Everyone sees different beauty in nature just like everyone sees  
different beauty in different people  
Nature is beautiful  
You will realize if you just go outside and put down the smart  
phones, enjoy life outside

# Neptune

Autumn Hughey

A broken heart  
A half of a magnet, it's pole unknown and confused  
A kind heart and a warm embrace are all this man knows  
A man owns a map with little X's scattered about  
Imagining all the places he'll go... alone  
His voice is a Mockingbird inspired by love tragedy watching what  
is there  
His eyes, his eyes- where do I begin?  
They are the clocks  
Zeus made these  
They begin and end with the world  
In Ocean lives in his mind, endless like a sea takes you by surprise  
like an array of waterfalls  
A hazy Tuesday afternoon inhabits his voice a melting rumble of  
thunder in his song  
This Melancholy God has minor notes in his harmonies, always a  
confused compass, but he is a breeze, a mighty wind  
The blue you see right before the sun sets  
A dedicated Warrior fighting for what is good and righteous  
A modern-day Poseidon  
The whispers come in with the tide  
Rocking me to sleep like I am Aphrodite  
A riptide embrace  
He is a beacon of hope, a lighthouse

# Not a Curse

Cade Scheibler

I got the lyrics tucked inside my lip.  
Open the mind like a can of dip.  
Smoking the lines like they're cigarettes.  
I decimate 'til there's nothing left.  
Made a deal with the devil, but that ain't no sweat.  
I want a heart put inside of my chest.  
I want a brain put inside of my head.  
I want the courage to ask what that meant.  
Cue the chorus--It's coarse, hoarse, and horride.  
I'm in the car, I floor it; off a cliff I'm soaring.  
Cue the chorus--It's coarse, hoarse, and horride.  
I'm in the car, I floor it; off a cliff I'm soaring.  
My lyrics cut you like rusted barbed wire--it's infectious.  
I think twice more than you, so am I mentally ambidextrous?  
I got the pen and paper, and I'm asking what the test is.  
Got the Christmas lights strung around me--ultra festive.  
Maybe if you think twice, you will learn your lesson.  
I think life's not a curse but a blessing.

# The Tide

Alicia Hartley

The tide is full, the water lays still  
A distant call of the ocean deep  
It calls to me, does it call to you

Come to the window, smell the sea  
Only from the moonlit waves  
Where sea meets sand  
On a cool crisp night

When I see you standing next to me  
I look out to the ocean blue  
The reflections of the times untouched  
Never let me go

Looking high into the night  
I see the endless diamond sky  
Where the brightest colors paint the stars  
And the ocean's cry calls to me

Peaceful giants  
Floating through the ocean blue  
Side by side, an endless dance  
Singing a song we all cannot hear

# Poem 2

**William Crow**

Days long and days gone your life is wrong wasted for reasons you  
find strong. Looking back at all your bonds friends, family enemies  
all gone. In the end left to fend for one's self still stuck with my own  
self-doubt my own mind will never let me go all out.

# **(Poem) For a Suicide**

**Daphne Copp**

How could we come to this? Popularity  
contest Social anxiety terrorist They shove  
the fear inside your year And keep reminding  
you through the year It makes you drag the  
blade across your wrist Your thigh, your arm  
The best of it And now I sit Resist the urge to  
make it merge Anything that's in my way  
Becomes non-existent today Self-acclaimed  
psychiatrist Everyone comes to But who I  
have to talk to When I feel everything's  
through? And when I feel like giving up On  
everyone and everything? But you and them  
And once again I'm through  
Watch me, watch me I can give up, too.

If you or someone you know is considering suicide, please contact  
the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255.

# Reminders

**Tarynn Gillette**  
**Editor's Choice Award**

You are like a summer day away from the city following a hectic  
collection of nine to fives;  
Overgrown iridescent leaves and bicycle bells echoing  
Divine devotion to simplicity and laughter and freedom;  
A picnic blanket soaked in blood of the fruit we eat, so sweet.

You are yellow-toned Christmas lights decorating a snow covered  
home,  
The warmth from the chimney attacking my frosty pink cheeks.  
The crisp taste of wine after a dinner crafted from scratch  
With the smell of burning wax circulating through delightful  
conversation.

You are the nostalgic yet vivid image of a chalkboard decorated in  
looped handwriting,  
Bright yellow number two pencils with worn down erasers.  
Sliced apples, candy hearts, gradient tiling, talcum powder;  
The feeling of a community, comfort, creativity, capability.

You are a grocery store at one in the morning.  
A euphoric experience transporting you to a new dimension; the  
same as before, but different.  
Empty aisles barren from Pepsi-Cola labeling and herded sheep,  
The vibrant display of produce is unveiled and becomes clear for the  
first time.

You are when I notice the beauty in something I hadn't before.

# Replayed

Kisura Gunter

My dad recently came back into my life  
All because I sent him a picture of my grades  
I only did it because my grandma asked me to  
Not wanting to disappoint, I obliged

I really don't know how to feel about it  
I guess I'll be alright  
Like always he was back, tryin' to explain why he didn't call me  
Dude! You're the adult. You could have just called.

He then had the nerve to give me the same ol' speeches  
Telling me to never trust a man  
Why would I?  
I can't even trust him and he is supposed to be my Main Man!  
I just wish I could tell him how I really feel

All these rappers always talk about not having a father and  
sometimes I can relate  
He is only around when he wants  
Always wanting us to kiss his ass

I try not to hold a grudge against him  
Because I know if he were to die tomorrow I'd be main one crying  
as they take him away  
I don't understand why I can still feel this way  
I'm older now  
I don't know why I feel obligated to play this game.

# Road Trip

Miranda Fitchett

Depression is like a cold road trip in winter  
I'm lovely and freezing, hoping that happiness blossoms into the  
impossible  
Sadness runs through my veins like sedative  
It makes life tolerable  
Driving down the road, taking detours  
Wanting to get to my destination  
I try to live and love with no hesitation  
Looking out the window, capturing misery in every unique,  
beautiful snowflake  
I try to put on so many layers to keep heat  
But I am never really warm  
I crave positivity to creep onto my face  
If I should die before I wake, I pray to God my soul to take,  
If I should die other days, I pray the Lord to guide my ways  
My sorrow is like traveling through a winter storm  
In the most beautiful form.

# Roommate

Ana Crawford

I curl into a ball as I'm surrounded by darkness

I try to swat away all the negative emotions

I try to escape but I'm pulled right back

And this new roommate?

He isn't helping me at all guys

My roommate is a demon that wraps itself around you

Captivating you in a black hole that's in deep space

My roommate is a mosquito that sucks the life out of you

Leaving you with nothing

My roommate is a tsunami that just crushes you

Without a warning

Without a sign

Living with him is like waking up every morning and feeling like everyone you knew the day before was viciously murdered by him in the dead of night

Living with him is like having the best day of your life then you get a phone call saying your dog died

Living with him is like reliving the same depressing event day after day, night after night

It gets tiring, and strains all the energy you have

He's like a toddler who makes a mess everywhere

I have to pick up after him every single day

He leaves his clothes in the middle of the hallway for me to trip over

He leaves his dirty dishes in the sink when he's done using them instead of putting them in the dishwasher

He even leaves the bathroom without flushing the toilet

I know, disgusting right

He can lead you to suicidal thoughts and actions by what he says

He is like a malevolent demon that is constantly trying to possess me every night and to take over my body

He is in general basically bad juju

I have to force him to take meds every night before bed to make him leave me alone

I have to document everything down in my phone so my doctor can see if there have been any changes in his actions that have affected me

I have to go to a therapist with him every few weeks to talk about how he's been feeling when he is or isn't on the medication

If he has been feeling like cow manure

If he's been feeling like he is on top of the world or...

If he has been feeling like a Viking corpse buried 20 feet below the earth's surface

Some days it's like he just up and packed his bags

Those days I feel like I'm the king who is standing on a mountain of corpses of all the people who wronged him

Other days....It feels like he brought his friends

Now those days, I feel like the titanic at the bottom of the North Atlantic Ocean

Being eaten away by bacteria, and being crushed by the pressure of the water

Then there's days where it's just neutral

Those days he and I are like a couple, sitting on the couch while it's raining outside, watching Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire.

That's our favorite movie together by the way

Not every day do I like living with him

I don't like living with him because he makes a mess of everything, and I mean EVERYTHING

I don't like living with him because he likes being the third wheel during dates...It gets pretty awkward when he's around

I don't like living with him because he makes me feel worse about myself

But...

I'm stuck with him

At least until the day these meds that I've started giving him make him move away for good

So until then

I will tolerate his presence

I will still enjoy his company when he's being an asshole

I will continue to ignore him when he tries to make me melancholy

But I'm stuck with this dick face of a buddy who is 10% nice....and 90% a jackass

So say hello to my new friend guys!!  
His name is depression.

# Small Collection of Thoughts

Daphne Copp

Under warm water, My body calls  
for blood. Good. Maybe my brain  
will stop swelling.

When his hands touch mine  
And the skin that preludes,  
I feel extra safe. I feel  
beautiful.

Loving you is as close to  
Heaven As I'll ever get.

When Death should stop my heart,  
I will still truly love you. When  
Death should take that heart, It will  
still be yours.

When I lose you- Which, I  
will one day- I'll still think of  
and love you.

# Surfing

Brett Seaton

I rode way out past the wake one day  
But what do I know about surfing?  
I should have figured out my fallacy  
When the five-foot waves crashed down on me

But I brushed it off and bore the pull  
That sent me bent and broken to the dark  
The salty pull sucking an awful toll  
From my sealed lips, my music, my soul

I kept swimming atop my shaky board  
To prove I could swim, could surf, could see  
I made it to the malevolent place  
I marked my progress and did about face

The journey begins I jest to myself  
So far that I've come to justify change  
The time has come, I continue my quest  
Back where I came, when can I rest?

One glance behind, I guess now is the time  
To shine surf and surfer resigned to fate  
The wave works wonders on my board and I  
As we work our way toward the stretching sky

Tentatively, we test the waters  
Trapped, our tide will take the tempered board far  
But our swinging strokes like a swan in flight  
Searching for solutions in the midnight

More likely there than in the things above  
That vainly think they know where we should go  
The southern storm approaches our northly norm  
Forgive us my cherished board, love not borne!

For as the wave soars solemnly acrossd us  
I think of our journey, the white crests  
A drowned smile crosses my lips as we sink  
The abyss distorted by our vortex

# Survive

Garett Bogle

Survive. A lonesome song of heartache and triumph lilting on the wind  
Wonderfully whispered by youth while still it takes hold. Red, green and brownish-black. The colours of nature pulse like resoundings war-drums Across the contours of our hearts.

Survive. If our heartbeat forms the rhythm of life, Then our actions form the bass in ragtime fashion And our souls surge as a crescendo melody. Songs of heroes and villains and greatness rise from the ashes Of humble phoenix chicks, stillborne.

Survive. The bluebird singing its sorrow And the musician belting a mile-long note Are one and the same, machines of misery And hope, and love, and chaotic divinations. And yet one's struggles are lauded, the others' suffocated on the wind. One conquers all, while conquering none; Paradox in paradise.

# The Boy Who Doesn't

Matt Bice

For the boy who sits in the back of class and doesn't raise his hand  
when a question is asked

For the boy who is too scared to be wrong, to disappoint another  
person

For the boy engulfed by your own mind, your own darkness

I too am that boy.  
Sometimes I am scared too  
Scared to disappoint,  
Scared to say no

For the girl who sits in the front of class  
Answers every question with her hand wrapped around her sweater  
sleeve  
Petrified when it falls,  
A wave of relief rushes over her when the scars stay hidden one  
more day

I too hide my scars  
Every mark of regret on my skin is a storybook the contents of  
which I wish not to tell.  
Every scar holds a story, a scar shows a story of triumph,  
Triumph that you made it one more day

For those of you who cannot stand to hold food down  
Those of you who wish you took up less space,  
Because if you took up less space you'd be happier, right?

Happiness doesn't equate to the size of your waist or the definition  
of your collar bones,  
Happiness is about finding self-love

I too have kneeled in bathrooms vomiting up hours of anxiety,  
I too struggle to find self- love,  
The road to find self- love is the hardest thing I've ever tried  
But I will not give up,  
I will keep trying to move forward, trying to heal  
Join me on the game of life, don't play the card of death on yourself  
Play the card of recovery and get help,  
Speak up about the demons you're fighting everyday.  
No great hero completed their journey without the help of another

# The Common Walk

Brett Seaton

A wandering stream blocked my way one day  
I was going  
But I stopped  
And I wondered  
If the larks would mind my journey

Yes, I thought, and continued  
It pulled me in and I couldn't help  
But search for solutions in the stream  
I moved delicately  
Between the banks, I splashed against the increasing strength

Muddy sworls sucked my ill-prepared sneakers  
Into distraction and near destruction of protection  
The birds, survival dependent on seduction  
Oh, the sweet sirens  
I plodded on, conflicted

Here lies a tributary to the stream  
No not a tributary  
A convergence  
An intersection  
I stopped, seeing what I had come to see

Watched and listened  
The Y shape invading my brain, taking no hostages  
Involuntary occupation  
And then, as a sigh leaving a man awaiting death  
Vacancy

The species borne in the dead of night  
After a balancing day  
My eyes suddenly duller, the sun, a shade darker  
And I look down out of discomfort  
I darted an incompetent glance at my question

Then back the way I had come  
Embarrassed  
The loss lost me  
Not in thought but in transit  
My feet shift back and forth  
As if blaming each other for my incompetence

I silence their bickering with ice  
Then with the stubbornness of ignorance  
I throw back my shoulders  
Straighten my spine  
Give the Y one last intimidating stare  
Involuntarily tilting my head as I pick out each incessant chirp of  
the chorus  
I take one step, then another, and another

I only glance back once as I pop an earbud into my spotless right  
ear  
Turning up “wham-bam shang-a-lang” by Silver until it  
Reverberates off every inch of the inside of my skull like the Liberty  
Bell  
The look wasn’t long  
Nor laborious  
In fact, it was rather lazy  
The word “beautiful” almost reaching my lips  
Before it is swallowed in the melodious tones of the lark

# The Lie of Life

William Crow

My life is a shelter. Protected on all sides from people that wish I die. A fabricated lie that was believed best for life. My life is a lie that was made to protect me from the demons inside. My life was a lie. Living up to people's expectations and my own delusions. What I as about became self-doubt the mold this life made for me just becomes bigger anxieties. The masks I ware just to bear the unending march of time never stopping never wining. Day by day night by night is just another saying for a never ending fight. That is life and it is a lie. Life was given and maid to be blind and live up to false hopes and past goals of a generation that will never stop asking. This is a truth in a life time of lies. People's goals for their lives are born from another success and failure born for a life of glamor only to end as a failure. They pity themselves but are forgotten by the ones who originally got them on their goal the story of your story is always written by some one ells. Success is a lie successes is not the accomplishments you make but how many people recognize them.

# The Sun

William Crow

Bright lights before every night and during dusk it casts a glow over  
both of us. Me and the moon, the earth with all its girth  
every day the sun has a new birth.

# The Walk of Service

Jesus Lira

The walk of service represents all different walks of life in the armed  
forces

Enlist, wait, answer

Many men and women serve to fight

They leave children and families

Some come

So do not

The walk of service continues

War never changes

Politicians control soldiers' fate

Without ever stepping foot on the battlefields

Destruction does not only affect architectural structures

It decimates mental ability and physical health

It is not an option many take

The walk of service expires

Some make it in, but others choose an "out"

Atrocities happen, but lives are saved

Revenge is taken, but it never helps

After their service many more are lost

The walk of service has its final step

# The World We're Given

Ethan Barrow

We are given a world  
Left by people from the past. Their ideals still  
Lurk and seep into us and our futures. We  
Strike forward in an attempt to leave to leave our mark, possibly  
through a song we sing  
Sing or the people we've touched. The veil between people is  
Thin, for loneliness is a darkness that slows you and the world.  
Some use  
Jazz to form connections and bring light to the abyss of  
loneliness, so that when they  
Die they leave a bright future to those who will take up our world  
after them.

# You're Not a Girl

Kass Schumacher

In. Out. Shallow breaths taken with a bound chest  
Tightness. Cough. Eyes on you feel like silent  
Judgment. Tug. Adjust. Constricting fabric  
concealing a burden from birth Stifling. Wrong.  
Your body is the prison Ma'am. Girl. They are  
being polite but all you hear is Not. Boy. Enough.  
Gulp. In. Out. You force this body to breathe  
He. You. "I'm not a girl," you say You're not a girl.

# LESSON PLAN: POETRY

## Using Poetry to Explore 2nd Person Understanding Perspective and Point of View

### Materials Needed:

- Sample poem “Reminders” from Voices of Kansas
- Paper / pencils
- Laptops / computers for web search and final drafts

### Time Frame:

Variable

### Objectives:

Students will use poetry to explore and gain understanding in multiple Points of View

### Essential Questions:

- How does word choice affect a piece of writing?
- How do poets use 2nd person to address an audience? (or someone in particular?)
- How can writers effectively communicate with audiences?
- What happens when Point of View is changed?

### The Assignment:

Students will use sample poems to both write fresh poems (epistles) and to revise pre-existing poems.

### Bellwork/Opener:

Have students read “Reminders”

### Main Activities

Through discussion of the elements of the poem, students will consider write their own epistle poems to a specific (and unnamed) person.

### **Some Possible Variations:**

- Write a poem/letter as a character from a story. Then have students switch the point-of-view within the poem. Try reading it aloud. Is the subtle change noticeable?
- Write a poem to oneself--in the second person. How does the poem change by shifting the “Is” to “Yous?”
- Write a poem to someone that inspires strong feelings, either disgust, admiration, or even adoration.

Here’s an example of what students might do, adapted from “Reminders:”

OG: You are like a summer day away from the city following a hectic collection of nine to fives;

Variation: I am like a summer day

Variation: She is like a summer day

Variation: We are like a summer day

The pronoun shift itself isn’t powerful, but the tone and address do change. How much more significant is the change if the poem is written originally in a certain perspective? Students will gain insight as to author’s purpose when taken through these tasks. Consider also revision tasks that force students to reconsider the focus of the poem, and what other subtle changes might occur with this process.

### **Standards Alignment**

#### **Reading Standards for Literature**

Determine

- . . . the figurative and connotative definition of various diction used in the text; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone; include words with many meanings or language that is fresh or beautiful

Analyze

- . . . how an author’s textual structure affects meaning, and aesthetics.
- . . . how authors draw on themes, patterns, and other

sources to create a dialogue among works.

## **Writing Standards**

### **Write**

- . . . narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events; use techniques, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
- . . . often over extended and shorter time frames for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

### **Miscellaneous**

- Create clear writing; style, organization, and development are appropriate to audience, purpose, and task.
- Develop and strengthen writing; plan, revise, edit, rewrite, or try a new approach; address what is most significant for purpose and audience.
- Use technology to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to feedback; include new arguments or information.

## **Language Standards**

### **Demonstrate**

- . . . command of standard English grammar and usage conventions.
- . . . command of standard English conventions: capitalization, spelling, and punctuation when writing.
- . . . comprehension of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

### **Acquire**

- . . . and use general and domain- specific diction for reading, writing, speaking, and listening for college and career readiness; independently gather vocabulary knowledge when considering diction important to comprehension or expression.

### **Apply**

- . . . knowledge of language to grasp its functions in various contexts, to make choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend when reading or listening.

### **Determine**

- . . . or clarify the meaning of unknown and layered diction

based on grade- specific content; choose from a range of strategies.

### **Speaking and Listening Standards**

- Initiate and participate in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on specific grade topics; build on others' ideas; express their own.
- Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks; demonstrate command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

# **Artistic Expression**

# Alaskan Nights

Alicia Hartley



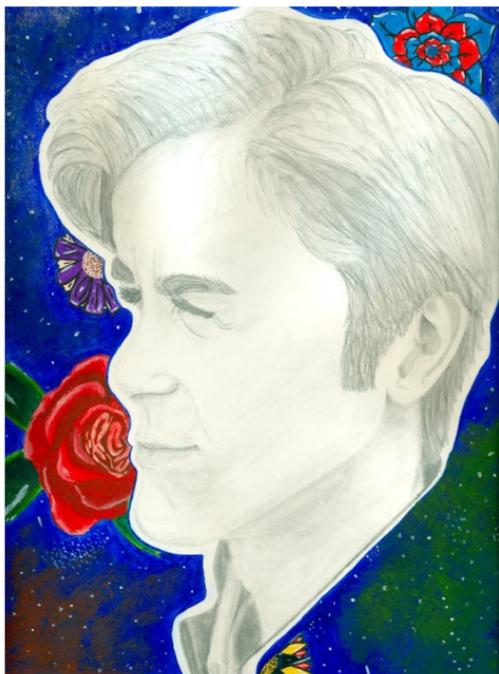
# Childhood

**Tudsaley Vongsena**  
**Editor's Choice Award Winner**



# Him

Daphne Copp



# Lady Moon

Megan Rivera



# Melanie Martinez

Daphne Copp



# Trees

Daphne Copp



I know where you stand  
Silent in the trees

# Wolf's Song

Alicia Hartley



# LESSON PLAN: ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS

## The Ekphrastic Poem

### Using visual art to inspire creative expression

#### Materials Needed:

- Sample images from Voices of Kansas
- Samples from The Ekphrastic Review  
<http://www.ekphrastic.net/> and [Poets.org](http://Poets.org)  
<https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/text/ekphrasis-poetry-confronting-art>
- Paper / pencils
- Laptops / computers for web search and final drafts

#### Time Frame:

Variable

#### Objectives:

- Students will use visual art to create ‘found’ poems using a free-write, free-association process

#### Essential Questions:

- How does word choice affect a piece of writing?
- How do poets minimize unnecessary language?
- How can writers effectively communicate with audiences?

#### The Assignment:

Students will use images from visual art to find creative description using active verbs, concrete nouns, and exacting adjectives. Then through a revision process that eliminates some articles and prepositions, and simplifies verbs, students learn to create a ‘found’ poem that is imaginative yet sparse.

**Bellwork/Opener:**

Show an art sample, something striking or emotive. Give students 2-3 minutes to free-write about what they see.

**Main Activities:**

Using student writing generated from above, take students through this step- by-step process to ‘revise’ and improve their writing.

The Articles:

1. Have students cross some out, especially the ‘extra’ ones we all use when free-writing. [a, an, the]

The Prepositions:

2. Have students consider those pesky prepositions. Is every single one needed? Can some prepositional phrases be reversed in order or rephrased?

The Line Breaks:

3. Where are the phrases and natural images emerging? By eliminating some of the superfluous words, the focus of the poetic line becomes the image.

Sample Before:

(taken from a student journal writing in response to an Nighthawks by Edward Hopper (1942))

She is waiting to see if he’ll offer to buy her another cup of coffee.  
They have been waiting here at this all-night diner for a long time.  
And the cook is tired and just wants to close up shop and go home.  
But the bus isn’t here yet and no one is going anywhere.

Student opted to eliminate conjunctions also. He then looked at his verbs and decided to shift tense from the original as well. The result, including line breaks, is below:

Sample After:

She waits to see

if he'll offer,  
maybe buy her coffee.  
They wait,  
all-night diner waiting.  
Cook tires,  
just wants to close shop,  
go home.  
Bus isn't here yet.  
No one  
Goes  
Anywhere.

### **Wrap-Up/Closer:**

Students LOVE to share their writing after an activity like this. If time allows, have them type their final 'drafts' and possibly share small group, or even whole class.

### **Standards Alignment**

#### **Reading Standards for Literature**

Determine

- . . . the figurative and connotative definition of various diction used in the text; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone; include words with many meanings or language that is fresh or beautiful

Analyze

- . . . how an author's textual structure affects meaning, and aesthetics.
- . . . how authors draw on themes, patterns, and other sources to create a dialogue among works.

#### **Writing Standards**

Write

- . . . narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events; use techniques, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
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### **Miscellaneous**

- Create clear writing; style, organization, and development are appropriate to audience, purpose, and task.
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### Demonstrate

- . . . command of standard English grammar and usage conventions.
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### Acquire

- . . . and use general and domain- specific diction for reading, writing, speaking, and listening for college and career readiness; independently gather vocabulary knowledge when considering diction important to comprehension or expression.

### Apply

- . . . knowledge of language to grasp its functions in various contexts, to make choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend when reading or listening.

### Determine

- . . . or clarify the meaning of unknown and layered diction based on grade- specific content; choose from a range of strategies.

## **Speaking and Listening Standards**

- Initiate and participate in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on specific grade topics; build on others' ideas; express their own.
- Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks; demonstrate command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

# **Creative Fiction & Literary Nonfiction**

# Changeling

**Emma Buhman-Wiggs**

The fae cannot be trusted.

“The fae cannot be trusted,” the grandfather said to the bright eyes that surrounded his creaking chair. One pair brighter than the rest. Dimmer, too. Brighter and dimmer and sharpened by what seemed to be a life that couldn’t have been lived yet. The grandfather shivered, but said nothing more.

She couldn’t know.

“The fae cannot be trusted,” the medicine woman said, speaking over the chaos of the market with unshakable confidence. Her wiry hands scraped the rough skin of the herb into her pot, her knife glinting every so slightly.

“What are you making, Goodwife?” a lilting voice asked.

The medicine woman’s knife dropped to the floor with a clatter, but she was frozen in place.

“Forgive me, Goodie. Here-- let me help.” A thin hand reached towards the knife, but the medicine woman snatched it up with desperate haste. The hand recoiled, the girl confused.

“I do not need your help. Run along,” the medicine woman said stiffly. The girl nodded, dumb. The medicine woman did not meet her eyes.

She knew better than to owe the girl a favor.

Even if she didn’t know.

A favor owed was a favor owed, regardless of recognition.

“The fae cannot be trusted,” said the older sister, calling to her brothers. The boys whooped and hollered, racing into the forest anyway.

The ferns underfoot were dappled with filtered sunlight,

dancing and shifting with every breath of wind through the canopy. The air hung thick with loam and pollen. The boys ran, laughing, through the trees until--

One stopped, staring.

His face was pale.

She was there, lying in the clearing, fast asleep.

Around her was a ring of white-capped mushrooms, treacherous mushrooms, mushrooms that grew when delicate feet danced heavy with hatred.

The boy remembered his sister's warning and ran away with panicked abandon.

"The fae cannot be trusted," the mother thought, stroking the girl's hair.

She was sobbing, her shoulders shaking.

"Why do they run?" she whimpered, curling her back into a tighter curve.

"Children are unthinking," the mother responded, sympathy warming her chest.

But then she felt the girl's hair, downy and soft, thick and light, shifting colors when seen at different angles--

The mother shivered and moved her leg to avoid a falling tear.

She couldn't know.

The girl could never know.

"The fae cannot be trusted," the girl whispered, shaking, unable to break away from the gaze of those eyes, her eyes, staring back in the glass.

The eyes were cold.

The eyes were warm.

They were bright and dim and far too old.

She could not look away.

She remembered the grandfather's shiver when he saw her among the children. The medicine woman refusing to let her help her-- refusing to owe a favor. The buzzing afternoon when she woke up in the circle of mushrooms, her hair braided with ivy by someone she did not remember, her lips slick with drinks she had forgotten. The day her mother could not look her in the face.

A single word appeared in her mind's eye, offering a hated explanation: Changeling.

The girl stared into her own betraying eyes, her lip trembling, her knuckles white with tension. She recited the words she had been taught, time and time again, spoken more than her own name had been. "The fae cannot be trusted. The fae cannot be trusted. I cannot be—"

The words burned her mouth. A single tear, caught on her eyelash, broke free and tumbled to the ground.

The girl screamed and the glass shattered into thousands of pieces.

# Forest of Mysteries

**Joseph Bradford**

The cold bitter wind blew across her thinned, rough-like face as she sat waiting for something to shoot at. Her long pointed ears cold and red, her hair gold and bright never seeming to get dirty.

She had not eaten in days and was starting to grow weak from starvation.

“Time to go home,” she said to herself, as she jumped down from the tree she was waiting in.

She then began to make her way home when she heard leaves crunching in the distance. She slowly made her way toward the noise. When she had found a spot to scout from she was immediately tackled and pinned to the ground. She went to turn over and was met with a mean holding a glass container with some sort of green liquid.

“Sorry it has to end this way” said the man.

He then started slowly pouring the liquid from the glass unto her head. The moment it made contact it burned like hellfire and stung like a thousand wasps.

As Arithia was being drowned in the acid she saw behind him a small boy with long golden hair.

“Hey you!” yelled the boy.

And as the man turned his head he was run through with a sword like weapon made from metal scraps.

It was close to dark when she made her way to her little home built within a giant willow tree. The leaves remained a constant orange and the bark was as hard as stone. It smelled like freshly picked fruit and had a kind aura about it.

“Sit” said Arithia.

She had just made her way back home bringing the boy along. He had convinced her to let him stay the night there one night and no more. He saved her life but she still hated him. But not just him, all of them. Those disgusting humans who call

themselves people. But the only reason she let him stay was because he also knew where to find some very useful supplies nearby..

“What’s your name?” She asked in a hurtful tone.

“Its Jacob.” The way he talked, it was the same way all of them talked. It was uneducated with slurs and diction with no flow. But his voice was light and he talked with a stutter. “What’s yours?” asked Jacob.

“It’s Arithia.”

“Well, Jacob. Go to bed we have a long day tomorrow.”

The day later Arithia and Jacob went to go scout out a human village that had been abandoned when they started tearing down the forest. When they got there she didn't know the layout of human villages so Jacob dragged her around until Jacob said.

“Finally found it!”

“Found what?” said Arithia.

“It’s called a store and is where food, tools and other stuff is sold,” said Jacob.

When they went inside they found enough food to feed them for months so they grabbed as many bags as they could and filled them to the rim. Jacob picked up this round oval thing that became a point at both ends. It was also brown and had these little white stripe like things on one side of it.

“It’s called a football. You throw it to each other and catch it,” said Jacob.

“Well we don’t have time for fun. I’m getting my share then I’m out and you are gone.” said Arithia.

“Oh, right.” replied Jacob in a moody sad tone.

As Arithia was walking down a row of goods she stepped onto a tripwire and was lifted up into the air hanging upside down. Jacob turned as this happened and he went to go help her when he heard someone yell in a high pitched voice.

“I finally got one”

Jacob ran over to a big box full of holes and hid behind it. The man walked with a limp and quietly cackled when he took a look at what he caught.

“Your a pretty one. Shame i have to kill you,” said the old man. Arithia was to choked up to say anything and watched as he pulled out a dagger and right before he went to drag it across her throat his face froze. He fell over with a thud. Arithia looked down

to see a sharp chunk of metal stuck deep into the back of his head. Jacob had killed the man about to slit her throat.

Arithia was teaching Jacob to hunt and what berries were edible. It been a few weeks since she met the child and she got to know him. Surprisingly enough she had gotten tolerant.

He had saved her life twice and she felt like it could be beneficial to keep him around so she decided to let him stay a while more. Also she had taken him to the tree her family loved so much and died protecting. She told him to never tinker with it or it would eat him alive. Which she found a bit funny when he actually believed it, but it was necessary to keep it safe.

“So i put the arrow in between my first and second finger?” Jacob asked.

“That's right and when you pull the arrow stick your chest out and rest the end of it next to your eye, then aim for the hip and let it fly,” said Arithia.

She had learned a lot about Jacob. She found out that his favorite food were these things he called doritos. Arithia had found it so interesting when he described them and they had a whole days worth of talk just on human food. All the elves ate were the plants they grew the animals they hunted and the bread they made. He also liked to play on this thing called an Xbox. When Jacob tried to explain that to her she had no clue what any of these things were. So she decided to show him what she played as a kid. He found it boring though because it consisted of singing and dancing and jumping from tree to tree which he made clear he wasn't doing.

“We should head back,” said Arithia. “It's getting pretty dark.” As they made their way back home it started to rain and they heard some voices nearby. “Oh no,” said Arithia worriedly. They slowly made their way to a clearing and their the saw the magical tree. There were 2 humans in long brown coats. One with long black hair and the other with this ridiculous bright red. Jacob gently tugged on the bottom of her tunic.

“That, that was them. They are the ones who killed my parents.” he said. Tears were dripping down his face as he started to sob quietly.

“So this is it.” said the red haired man. Arithia slowly pulled her bow from her quiver and nocked an arrow. “Alright Rob, get the goods so we can get out of here.” said the brown haired man.

Immediately Arithia jumped up loosed an arrow directly into Robs knee and she walked out already having another arrow ready.

“Touch that tree and your dead,” growled Arithia.

“From what i hear if i touch that tree you're the one that will be dead.” said the red haired man. “Anyway that tree has healing properties in the sap that will go for a pretty penny.”

“Do it Rege, then patch me up so we can go collect our earnings.” said rob.

“Oh right, i forgot you were there.” Rege pulled out a gun from his jacket pointed it at him and fired. The sound was loud and reminded Arithia of what had happened to her family. She had almost forgotten about it being with Jacob that short while. She was full of anger and sadness.

“You kill your friend. You killed my family, and you killed Jacobs parents. And for that you do not deserve to live another second.” Arithia yelled.

Rege took out a small silver box and when he flicked the top off fire came out, and that second he launched it toward the tree, as Arithia loosed her last arrow and it hit him directly in head. He was clearly dead and Arithia was feeling light headed and a sudden rush of pain fell upon her. Then suddenly collapsed to the ground and blacked out.

She started to wake finding Jacob in front of her. They were in her home with a fire going. “What happened? Why am i still alive?” said Arithia.

“The tree burned completely. It's no longer there.”

“Then why am i still alive?” said Arithia.

“Look at your reflection” Jacob said.

Arithia looked down into the bowel of water Jacob handed her. Her eyes filled up in tears and she looked to the sky and screamed. She had the ears of a human.

# Insensate Incarnate

**Michael Isbell**

The secretary handed Orville a clipboard and instructed him to his seat among the others. At the top of the sheet was written ICIC - that is, International Computer Interface Corporation. Under that, the introduction:

Welcome! The new technology that you will be so fortunate to test just a few months before it hits the market is a new type of neurological scanner, which harbors the ability to image the entire brain, every neuron, every synapse - all simultaneously. The implications will be huge. Disorders such as epilepsy and dementia can be diagnosed, studied and treated with modern medicines, surgery, and devices that target the specific disorder in a patient. More awaits!

Patients? Orville pondered. Is that what we are? The technology was still under a trial phase, evidently with good results from numerous groups of participants (or so the secretary had been so kind to tell him whilst preparing his sheet). But still ... patients? It sounded too formal. Too close to subject. And perhaps that was what bothered Orville the most; the idea that maybe all he had ended up volunteering for was the opportunity to be used as some sort of lab rat.

Bull, Orville convinced himself. Rat or no rat, the money is what counts. Five hundred bucks more than I had yesterday, and that's all this is going to be. A money scheme.

Now more comfortable with greed at his side, Orville read on. Lined up were a series of questions followed by blank lines for answering. He jotted his name and examined the first:

D.O.B.:

His pen scratched a date against the sheet.

Home Address, City, State, ZIP:

More scratching.

Next of kin:

Orville paused. Was this necessary? He wrote his mother's

name.

Place of Employment:

He wrote the name of the law office in which he worked (he would not disclose, however, that he was a custodian).

Allergies:

N/A.

Favorite color:

He frowned. Was this part of the experiment? Looking round at the other participants, he decided it must be. Yellow was what he wrote.

Then, finally, the instruction Orville had known was coming:

Using the lines below, describe, as accurately as possible, the moment in which you would like us to examine and refine for your pleasure.

Orville took a deep breath and put pen to paper.

“This is the one I want, Papa.”

Teresa raised a stuffed pink rabbit to Orville’s face, or at least as close as she could come to it. At only seven years, that wasn’t far. Orville grinned.

“You sure?”

“Mhm.”

“Lots of other toys here. You’re only getting one.”

“I know.”

Ugh. So innocent. He pulled out his wallet.

“Alright, hon. Let’s head up to the register.”

The duo found themselves in front of a pretty, brunette cashier, who’s name tag revealed the fact that her name, too, was Teresa.

“Hello there, baby doll!” Cashier-Teresa said to Teresa. “How are you today?”

Teresa’s face flushed. “Okay,” she said politely, and not without her mother’s farm-girl smile.

“Will this be all I can help you with today?”

Orville nodded.

“Alrighty,” Cashier-Teresa said, “that’ll add up to five-seventy-eight.”

Orville handed her the cash. He was running short; he’d

have to cut corners until this Thursday. And that slimy crook Russell had him working overtime near the entire week. Who was he going to find to babysit Teresa? Her mother hadn't watched her since the Big C - terminal breast cancer - took her life back in 2028, when Teresa hadn't even been able to walk on her own two feet yet. How big she's gotten, too. Healthy, and youthful, a hopeful product of life. It seemed that in all the evil of the world, nothing could harm her. Nothing could penetrate that bubble that surrounds the innocent, nothing, not even a full metal-

There was a pop, a scream, and a thud as bodies hit the floor all around Orville, save for himself, the cashier, and Teresa. Cashier-Teresa's eyes were nearly out of her sockets, so wide with the unexpected that Orville wondered, for a split second, if something was about to pop them right out. Little Teresa had clasped her arms around Orville's legs, and as he looked down at her, there rang throughout the mall another pop.

It must have been some sort of silly putty, or perhaps some kind of red children's goo. Whatever it was, it was suddenly all over Orville and Teresa's faces, and the cashier dropped. Orville looked over the counter, insensate. What happened to her head? Jesus. What kind of-

Pop, pop, pop, and suddenly people were up and running. The large glass windows of the toy store, featuring rock-horses and play guns, had suddenly grown cracked, and shattered. The noise was ear-piercing.

As Orville gazed round, he noticed that more of the mystery red had covered everything - the walls, the puzzles, the calendars and toy soldiers. What in the name of-

"Christ, man! She's booked!"

A man sprinting past Orville had made the mistake of looking over the counter at Cashier-Teresa. Booked she had been, and dead she was, and though Orville understood what was happening with the kind of surreal clarity one only experiences before death, he could not pull himself to react.

He looked at Cashier-Teresa's name tag. It got him thinking. Why was that significant again?

Upon realization, he spun around. There she was. She was fine. Little Teresa, so full of hope and joy and innocence, she hadn't been hurt at all. The bullets must have just completely missed, and-

Pop.

Oh, no. Jesus, no, it can't be this way, she can't-

Orville dropped beside his daughter. Those flowers had started to bloom on her blouse, those red, deep, death roses. As they spread out, they began to envelop - consume - everything around Orville. His hands, his shirt, the floor. His vision had started to turn red, too.

There was one final burst - a pop - and Orville's world went dark.

# Into the River

**Cheyenne Grant**

My feet crushed the brittle, brown grass underfoot. I sat down on the bitterly cold rocks, ignoring the way it chilled my skin through my tattered clothes. Placing my heavy backpack beside me, I stared at the river far below; it was cold, but not yet frozen because of the chemicals coursing through it. A shiver went down my spine. Unzipping my backpack, I took out my sketchbook. Flipping through it absentmindedly, sketches popped out here and there, but there was one piece of art I was looking for; the real-looking rabbit with the button eye.

I loved it. For some reason, It made me feel better when I looked at it. It was made with watercolor paints and black puff glue. I smiled at it, stroking the page softly with a finger. Smiling sadly at the beautiful rabbit, I laid the notebook on my lap and rested my forehead on the page. Then I cried, still smiling.

I cried, angry with my race.

I cried, because I would never see the other animals in my sketchbook.

I cried, because the rabbit was happier than me.

Finally I stopped crying. The tears turned to anger and frustration. I shot up from where I sat on the cliff above the vast, running river, powerful and everlasting. The notebook in my hand felt heavy, so I brought it back up to eye level with both hands. Then I saw what I had done. The rabbit, brave and proud, had lost his true colors. They mixed with each other and blotched and smeared and destroyed his happy features. All because of the water in my tears.

Angry, I tore the rabbit's page from my notebook. I tossed it over the edge of the cliff and watched it fall into the river. It was almost therapeutic; the self-destructive power of that one little action. I began to tear out more pages and watch them fall, one by one, into the flowing current to be swept away. I tore until the notebook was a plastic cover and a cardboard

back. My angry, sad, green eyes watched the filthy water take all my joys, wishes, hates, prides, and pains with it.

I tore off my oxygen mask in a fit of rage. The doomed planet could take me if it wished! Why should I care if the air had been poisoned and the oceans acidified? No one else did! I breathed deeply, choking on the toxic air. Realizing my mistake, I put it back on. With tear-stained eyes, I turned away from the river and dropped the empty notebook on the dead grass. There was no reason to keep it anymore; I had thrown all its treasure into the river. Without looking back, I kicked it over the cliff and heard it splash into the water.

Still, I had only taken a few steps when I heard it: dripping. It was a light tip-tap on the ground that was just barely audible. I looked up, but there were no rain clouds. I looked around- there!

A small speck of brown dotted the stone. I moved closer and dabbed a finger in it. It looked like... paint? There was another dot to my left, and another beyond that. I curiously followed the line of color spatters to the tree line. Something moved behind one of the trees, seeming to duck in fear.

I moved closer to the tree and cautiously peeked around it. The figure was quite small; no more than the size of my arm, and it looked rather strange. It was a gross mix of colors, and it had no details. An unnatural sight, if I ever saw one. Tentatively, to see if I was hallucinating, I reached out and poked it. It was solid.

The creature jumped in surprise, its little chest rising up and down in quick rhythm. It turned, and for the first time, I saw what it really was. Two ears like spearheads sprang from the top of its head, four paws connected it with the ground, a tail white as silk and fluffy as a cloud popped up in terror, and it blinked up at me out of a single button eye. It was my rabbit. The one I threw into the raging river; the one I ruined and smudged with my tears. The same one who was my friend.

Paint leaked off of it, dripping onto the ground, and it wiped at it with its paw, harboring a terrified expression. "Shhh," I soothed, reaching down with a hand to scratch him behind the ears. He flinched but accepted the touch. When I withdrew my hand it was covered in paint. His eyes took on a new panic when he saw his paint on my hand, as did mine. My rabbit! Not my rabbit! Quickly I picked him up and gathered the pine nettles

around us into a nest. I sat him in it, attempting to dry him off as he lay in the makeshift nest. But it didn't help. His colors still bled onto the ground, staining the dead nettles a deep mahogany brown. My friend was dying again, and there was nothing I could do about it.

I felt something watching me. Turning, I saw the other creatures of my drawings approaching. They sat in a ring around my rabbit and looked from me to him, visually pleading to help him. I knew not what they could do, but nodded at them. In chorus, they put their heads on the ground and their stable colors fell off of them at once. They collapsed, forming a raging river all their own. This river washed the ground clean. Everything became bright at once, and the air became fresh! But most importantly, my friend blinked up at me, smiling once more. I lifted him up in a loving embrace; we were together once more. I whispered softly to him, "I can be happy, now, too."

# The Leopard's Cage

Chase Kellogg

The leopard's padded paws carry it silently back and forth within the confines of its cage, the motion like a flowing liquid.

It's a beautiful animal; its bulging, rippling muscles underneath its flank stretch and pull as it paces. Between the iron bars, its golden eyes shimmer softly.

The leopard resides in a lonely back alley somewhere on the trashy side of town. In the same spot, a low rent circus tent flops in the cool breeze. Its giant red banner promises shows every night at seven.

I've never seen a show and never will. Circuses have never really appealed to me. But when I'd first seen the poor cat, locked in a cage not fit for a Shetland pony, I was immediately drawn to it.

I'd been impressed with the animal's grace, beauty, and power, but there had been something else too, something deeper.

"Hi again," I say, smiling at the cat.

The beast stops only for a moment to lock eyes with me. Then it continues its pacing, as if I'm nothing more than a figment of its imagination.

I sigh and take a deep breath, my hands between my knees as I stare down at the bits of gravel sprinkled on the asphalt.

"You know, it's really a shame," I whisper. "They keep you locked up like this, barely feed you, and then expect you to perform for the kiddies. I mean, I know it's a circus, but surely they can treat their main cat better than this."

Again, those golden eyes stare into mine, just for the briefest of moments. Amidst the cat's dark fur the eyes are like two shining stars, lost in an empty universe.

"I know just how you feel," I say, watching the long, flexible tail flick as the cat walks. "I know how it feels to be trapped, to be put on display like a freak. It's what happens when you join a gang at the age of fifteen and then wind up arrested. Mom and Dad didn't want to have anything to do with me after that. How can I

blame them? I was a freak of nature, a runaway thug. Still, it sucks having your family disown you, you know?"

Seemingly tired of pacing, the leopard lies down in the center of the cage and yawns, bearing its massive carnassial fangs.

"Yikes! You've got some big teeth, don't you?" I say with a chuckle. "I bet any impala galloping across the Serengeti would shiver at the sight of those choppers."

I pause a beat and then smile. "You know, in my day, I was one tough little punk. In sixth grade, I beat up an eighth grader who was two inches taller than me and about forty pounds heavier. It wasn't easy I can tell you, but hey, he was getting on my nerves. Funny thing is, I bet you fight the same way, don't you? You're small, lightweight, but you're tough. No one ever expects that, do they?"

In response, he sneezes, and then begins grooming the tufts of fur around his neck.

"Ever had a girlfriend?" I ask. "I'll bet you've had quite a few. Yeah, I've dated a few chicks in my time. Nothing ever comes of it though. Most of 'em don't want to associate with an ex-criminal anyways. It's easy for you. You've got the law of the jungle, kill or be killed. It's not murder to kill for survival. Humanity just ain't the same way."

I sigh again and lean back against the bench, my hand creeping over the wood to touch the handle of the bolt cutters sitting next to me.

"You know, If I'd told anyone what I came here to do tonight, they'd say I needed rehab again. I guess most sane people don't go around letting wild jungle beasts run free. But I know how they treat you. They don't feed you enough, they slap you around with sticks, poke you and prod you. It's all for the kids they say, it's just a silly act. I've been around the block enough times to know there's no such thing as a free lunch. You've got to fight just to get the bare bones, and what do you get in return? You get locked up every night in a cramped, rusty cage, with no one to talk to but me."

I pause to take in a deep breath, wishing I had the strength to tell all of this to another human being.

"I know what it's like to be locked up and pushed around, but I don't know what it's like to be locked up just to entertain somebody." After a brief moment of silence I add, "It's a shame you

have to know.”

I stand, grimacing as I feel pain course through my weak knees.

Picking up the bolt cutter, I walk over the rusty iron bars of the cage and bring the jaws of the cutter up to the silver lock.

“If I do this, you won’t eat me will you?” I ask.

In response, the leopard grunts halfheartedly.

“Okay then,” I say.

Using what little strength I’ve got left, I snap the jaws together and cut cleanly through the lock.

Throwing it aside, I start to pull the cage door open. A sharp metal whine cuts through the air as I do, making me pause for a brief moment.

Once I’m sure no one’s taken any notice, I open the door the rest of the way.

Nimbly, the cat leaps down from the cage onto the asphalt, its pads still silent in the darkness.

I lock eyes with the leopard one last time, the only sad semblance of a goodbye he gives me.

Then he’s gone, another shadow in the dark of the night.

I smile and then turn down the dreary alleyway and head for home.

# The Perils of Guardianship

**Natalie Nagel**  
**Editor's Choice Award Winner**

"I expect you'll make a full recovery. You're very lucky," the doctor said, flipping through test results. "Quite frankly, Mr. Garmer, the smoke inhalation you suffered should have been fatal. It's a miracle."

The patient, a pallid man hooked up to several beeping machines, nodded weakly. His voice was raspy when he spoke. "A miracle...yes, I have no doubt. Thank you, Doctor." Once the doctor left him alone, the man called out to the empty hospital room: "I know you're here, Remiel."

Indeed, Remiel was there, standing unseen by the window and watching in silence. He shed his invisibility like a cloak, allowing his charge to see him.

"You are a foolish man, Jacob Garmer," were the first words from Remiel's mouth.

The patient, Jacob, waved a bandaged hand dismissively. "I'm not a fool."

"Careless, then."

"It was a calculated risk."

"It was madness," Remiel countered sharply. "Had I not purged the smoke from your lungs, I would be having this conversation with a corpse. But at least then you would not argue with me."

Jacob barked a laugh, which turned into a violent cough. "Was that a joke I heard?" The man asked once he'd recovered.

"It was a fact," Remiel stated dryly. "You should be dead right now."

"But I'm not," Jacob protested. "Thanks for that."

Remiel bristled, not appeased by the man's thanks. Why must his charge insist on such recklessness? It was just Remiel's

luck to be charged with protecting the most self-sacrificing firefighter on earth.

“I’ll be fine, Remiel,” Jacob repeated, sensing his companion’s irritation. “Don’t get your feathers in a twist.”

“My feathers are perfectly in order,” Remiel insisted. It wasn’t a lie. Though his wings were raised in annoyance, the feathers lay neatly in place. “And that is not the issue. Your reckless behavior is the issue. Need I remind you, just because you have a guardian angel does not mean you can throw your life around simply because I can save you.”

Jacob scowled. “I’m a fireman, Rem. Danger comes with the job.”

“You took off your mask!”

“She needed it more!” Jacob snapped loudly, before doubling over in a fit of coughing. Remiel crossed the room and pressed a hand to the man’s back, concerned he may have missed some of the toxicity that had invaded Jacob’s lungs. However, it was all gone. Assuaged, Remiel stepped back.

“How is she?” Jacob asked. Remiel’s head tilted to the side. It was a human gesture, something that had rubbed off on Remiel after serving as a guardian angel for so long. Jacob was one of many charges he’d had in his long life.

“Amelia Bradshock will make a full recovery,” Remiel said.

“Amelia?”

“That is her name,” Remiel said. “The little girl you carried out of the fire, the one you gave your mask to.”

“Amelia,” Jacob repeated the name softly, like it was something sacred. He was silent for a long time. To a human, it would have become awkward, but Remiel was unfazed. “I’m glad she’s okay.”

“I should think so,” Remiel said coolly. “You nearly died to save her.”

“I’d do it again,” Jacob said, unapologetic.

“I know,” Remiel sighed, even though for him, breathing was unnecessary. “Jacob, what you do is noble, truly. But why must it always be you? When someone has to face death, why do you think it has to be you?”

“The men and women I serve with, they have families waiting for them at home,” Jacob said. “Come to think of it, they

need a guardian angel more than me, too.”

“Who says they do not have one?” Remiel replied cryptically.

Jacob blinked, and then shook his head. “Anyway, they have people who need them. That’s why it should be me. I just have myself. My family waits for me elsewhere.”

“You mustn’t rush to join them,” Remiel said sternly, but not unkindly. “You shoulder guilt you needn’t bear.”

“My guilt is where it should be,” Jacob replied firmly. “The people I didn’t save, my family included, are on me.”

They always ended up here. “It was not your fault.”

A derisive scoff was all the response Jacob gave.

“It was not! Your wife and son, their deaths are not your fault.”

“I don’t want to talk about this.” The man muttered. He sounded very tired all of the sudden.

“You cannot be there all the time. You had no cause to suspect one weekend away would be the weekend a fire broke out in your absence,” Remiel said sternly. When Jacob didn’t respond, Remiel shook his head. “You cannot save everyone. This is survivor’s guilt, Jacob.”

“Well,” Jacob said with a forced laugh. “Sorry I’m so much trouble.”

Remiel sighed inwardly. Unlike poisoned lungs, the angel could not heal emotional scarring with a simple touch. That would require time, and patience. Fortunately, as an immortal being, Remiel had both in spades.

“Yes, you are much too high maintenance,” Remiel said. Humor always did appeal to his charge. “I want to be reassigned.”

“No, you don’t,” Jacob replied, and this time his accompanying laugh was real. “You’d miss me.”

“I would be significantly less stressed.”

“You’d be bored.”

Remiel gave a rare laugh. “Yes, perhaps I would be. Furthermore, you would not last a day without me.”

Jacob chuckled. “You’re not wrong.”

The man yawned and blinked tiredly. Remiel, taking this as his cue to go, shook out his wings and moved towards the window. “I shall let you rest.”

Jacob hummed, settling further under his blanket. “See you soon, Rem.”

“Yes,” Remiel replied dryly as he walked right through the glass and took to the air. “Yes, I fear you will.”

Doubtless there would be more days like today, days with close calls and days Remiel would have to intervene. There would be more days where Jacob’s demons would rear their ugly heads. Those were simply the perils of guardianship, he supposed.

Remiel paused in his flight, cool night air ruffling his feathers as he swooped downwards to a different hospital window. Inside, a young girl lay partially on the bed and partially on her mother’s lap, while her father embraced them both. Even from outside the room, Remiel could feel the warmth of their joy and the soaring feeling of their relief. Thanks to Jacob, this girl still lived. Thanks to Remiel, Jacob still lived. That was enough for now.

# LESSON PLAN: CREATIVE WRITING

## What Would My Guardian Say?

### Materials Needed: .

- Sample story “The Perils of Guardianship” from Voices of Kansas
- Paper / pencils
- Laptops / computers for writing

### Time Frame:

Variable

### Objectives:

Students will use a model student short story to explore and gain understanding of characterization and plot structure.

### Essential Questions:

- How does one create realistic characters?
- How does one drive plot forward effectively?

### The Assignment:

Students will use the model short story to create their own fictionalization of a real-life incident.

### Day 1

#### Bellwork/Opener:

Leave copies of the short story on student desks as they arrive to class. Students should read the short story for the first fifteen minutes of class and respond to the board prompt: If I had a guardian, what would it be? An angel? A demon? A familiar spirit? An invisible friend? Something else? What would they be like?

#### Main Activity:

After reading the story, ask students to briefly share -- if they're

comfortable -- about their guardians and why they'd choose them. Then, move into a discussion of the short story and its guardian and plot.

If students need to review plot structure or characterization, now is the time to do so. As you discuss the plot and characters, consider the following questions.

1. Why do we care about the main character?
2. What is the obstacle to overcome?
3. Where is the climax of the story (the breaking or turning point of highest tension)?
4. How did the guardian make or break your expectations for a guardian angel?
5. What is the writer's message to the reader (theme)? What is the reader supposed to learn about life? (Don't confuse this with a moral)

It may be handy to use diagrams for plot structure or have students write notes alongside discussion and use of a whiteboard. Use whatever tools are best for your students. Maybe a Socratic circle, even.

### **Wrap-up:**

For a ticket out the door, have students briefly do a prewriting activity for the prompt, "A time when I had or needed a guardian angel was . . ."

## **Day 2: Pre-Writing & Drafting**

### **Bell Work:**

Distribute students' exit tickets from the day before. Then, introduce the short story workshop.

### **Work Time:**

Today's tasks include pre-writing and beginning to draft stories.

Pre-writing: Create an original guardian character who you will write into a real-life incident that you only could have gotten through with the help of a guardian. It's okay to add in cultural

elements: familiar spirits, shikinami, imaginary friends. Remind students to refer to the previous day's bell work. Once students have created a character and outlined their life experience as a story (especially, what was the climax and how it was resolved) allow them to start drafting. Give them the rest of the hour to write.

### **Wrap Up:**

Like the previous day, ask students to write a ticket out the door — this time with areas they need help addressing with writing.

### **Day 3: Full-Fledge Drafting**

Set the expectation for students to complete their drafts either in class or, if unfinished by the bell, for homework. Throughout the hour, visit with them individual for progress monitoring and to address questions from the previous day.

### **Day 4: Revision**

At this point, have students work in workshop groups (three-per-group) to review each others' stories for content and organization: can they identify the plot structure, character, and the personal obstacle that is overcome? If not, students are to rewrite and revise those issues in class or for homework.

### **Day 5: Editing**

At this point it is appropriate to address issues of grammar and spelling. For the sake of the workshop, it is encouraged to focus on verb tense, tone, grammar, and diction. You might want to spread this out over several days or provide checklists with examples for editing.

- **Verb Tense:** A good short story will use either simple past or present tense. Anything else bloats the story and slows down the pace.
- **Tone/Diction:** In any story, diction is important. Stress the importance of imagery (what one can see, touch, taste, smell, and hear) so that the experience is memorable. Furthermore, make sure that the conversation and dialogue appropriately characterizes both the student and the fictional guardian. Are there two distinct personalities? For

example, if a student tends to be quite formal, having a guardian that acts irreverently or mischievously might be a nice contrast.

- **Grammar:** Focus on your students' needs based upon your working knowledge of them. Don't use prescriptive grammar approaches. If a student is struggling with commas, don't preach about how to use a preposition because today is the day the department said to talk about prepositions. Do what will help your students' stories be the best that they can be.

At the end of the process, have students publish their writing!

### **Day 6: Publication**

Don't forget to have your students share their work! Have students practice reading their stories in a seminar-style conference in the library, and — of course — submit them to *Voices of Kansas* next year by Jan. 31, 2020!

### **Standards Alignment**

#### **Reading Standards for Literature**

##### Analyze

- . . . how an author's choices develop and relate elements of a story or drama.
- . . . how an author's textual structure affects meaning, and aesthetics.
- . . . how authors draw on themes, patterns, and other sources to create a dialogue among works.

##### Determine

- . . . several themes or central ideas of a text; analyze developments and how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; objectively summarize the text.
- . . . the figurative and connotative definition of various diction used in the text; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone; include words with many meanings or language that is fresh or beautiful.

##### Miscellaneous

- By the end of respective grades, read and comprehend

literature in the respective grades text complexity band.

## **Writing Standards**

### **Write**

- . . . narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events; use techniques, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
- . . . often over extended and shorter time frames for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

### **Miscellaneous**

- Create clear writing; style, organization, and development are appropriate to audience, purpose, and task.
- Develop and strengthen writing; plan, revise, edit, rewrite, or try a new approach; address what is most significant for purpose and audience.
- Use technology to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to feedback; include new arguments or information.

## **Language Standards**

### **Acquire**

- . . . and use general and domain-specific diction for reading, writing, speaking, and listening for college and career readiness; independently gather vocabulary knowledge when considering diction important to comprehension or expression.

### **Apply**

- . . . knowledge of language to grasp its functions in various contexts, to make choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend when reading or listening.

### **Demonstrate**

- . . . command of standard English grammar and usage conventions.
- . . . command of standard English conventions: capitalization, spelling, and punctuation when writing.

### **Determine**

- . . . or clarify the meaning of unknown and layered diction based on grade-specific content; choose from a range of strategies.

## **Speaking and Listening Standards**

- Initiate and participate in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on specific grade topics; build on others' ideas; express their own.
- Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, evidence and rhetoric; asses stance, premises, linked ideas, word choice, emphasized points, and tone.
- Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks; demonstrate command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

# **Perspectives & Literary Criticism**

# A Common Misconception

Vasuma Chaparala

Pageants. The word itself seemed controversial. I had no reason why. Something about having women strut around and judged for their looks somewhat scared me. The crown and the sash all seemed so superficial and insignificant in life. Maybe it was my inner feminist voice speaking out, but as a five-year-old, I remember heavily sighing whenever the Miss USA competition was shown on television. “Do we have to watch?” I would ask impatiently. Year after year my mother would watch, and so would I. Forcefully. But as I grew older, I began to admire the women. I mean walking out in front of millions of people was truly brave. I knew I could never do that, so I respected the courage and determination that those women had. When it came time for the evening gowns, the women all looked so beautiful, so elegant, and so confident. I was amazed. As the competition continued, the women began to answer the final questions impressively. Each young woman had a fresh perspective, a unique voice, and a strong sense of confidence. “Wow!” I thought. These women are more than just a pretty face. Their intellectual capability was astounding.

As the years went by, I saw more and more women competing who were involved in professional fields. Serving as a strong advocate for women in STEM, I realized that a woman can do both; she can work in a male-dominated profession without losing her femininity. I suddenly realized why these women take part in pageants. It is not just for the title. Not only do they compete to advocate for their passion, but it is also simply a way to feel empowered for themselves.

Being a part of a large Indian community in Wichita, I have seen several girls compete for the Miss Asian Festival Scholarship

Pageant that is held each October. As a middle schooler I never imagined myself competing, but as I got older, I grew more and more confident, believing in myself that I could compete. With nervous excitement, I applied for the Miss India Wichita Pageant, the winner then goes on to the Miss Asian Festival. As a contestant, I found a strong desire to represent my beautiful culture in the Wichita community. As the stages of the competition rolled around, I felt excited. I was thrilled to have the opportunity to raise awareness for the areas that I am truly passionate about - improving the global healthcare scene. The pageant flew by fast, like a whirlwind and I placed runner-up. I hate to say that I was disappointed. It wasn't necessarily because I wanted the title, but more because I felt that I had let myself down. As time went by, my disappointment turned into a sense of achievement. I realized that even though I didn't win, I still gave it my best shot. I opened myself up to something that I never in a million years imagined. Competing alone made me a winner. I was proud that I put aside my initial misconceptions about pageantry and therefore decided to try it for myself. Although I didn't garner any specific attention from this event, I grew tremendously internally. I became more vocal and more confident as a person. Walking across the stage wearing a traditional Indian saree made me proud to represent my rich heritage and that is something that I will cherish forever. Winning does not mean everything, it is the personal growth that truly matters. I have learned never to assume something right off the bat. It is far more important to reach a conclusion only after experiencing it for yourself.

Reflecting on my five-year-old self I now know that I never should have felt that pageantry was subjective. The women who compete have brilliant minds and fiery passions. With my own pageant experience, I feel that I have accomplished much. With the Miss America Pageant changes made this year, pageantry has become a place for empowered women to advocate for themselves. I no longer see pageants as a place of controversy, but as a place for success.

# A Song for Mama

JoAnna Marks

“A Song for Mama” by Boyz II Men is a song dedicated to mothers and shows an appreciation for how much mothers impact each of our lives. The singers express how their mothers love them and how much she means to them in return. I chose this song as my story because my mother is very important to me and loved me greatly. Unfortunately, I do not feel I appreciated her as much as I should have while she was living. I was 13 years old when she passed away and during that time I just wanted to hang out with friends, but as I grow older I am able to reflect in depth on how much my mother really means to me and this song aided in that after her death.

I always appreciate songs that are dedicated to mothers because they do so much and especially after losing a mother, I realize I wish I had expressed my appreciation for her better than what I did. I did not realize this song specifically was important to me until around my sophomore year when it came on and it made me cry in class; I had never reacted to a song in that manner, especially not in a public setting. The language in the song is straightforward, except that I could not decipher whether or not the mother in the song was still alive or had passed as well. This specifically is what helped me. Soon after she died I did not know how to refer to her. It felt wrong for me to say “I love my mom” because she is gone, but it also felt wrong to say “I loved my mom” because I still love my mom a lot. Not knowing whether or not the mother in the song is still alive allows me to continue to appreciate and love my mother in the present, which makes me more content. Some lines in the song says, “Never gonna go a day without you// Fills me up just thinkin’ about you”, which makes me feel that I can continue to praise my mother even though she is not here with me physically. A day does not go by without me thinking of my mother.

This song or story contributes to my understanding of love and appreciation after someone has died. I appreciate “A Song for

Mama” because it is simple to understand, so it reaches a larger audience. It is easy to connect to because the singers say lines that I can specifically relate to and I believe a lot of others can too. The simplicity of it allows younger and older people to understand it and connect to the meaning. It also enables both groups of people to appreciate their mothers: those whose mothers passed and those who are able to still hug theirs. Just looking at the comment section under this song on YouTube shows how many different people are impacted by the meaning of the song. This song connected people who simply appreciate their mothers or people who are a part of the “Dead Moms Club”. Being part of that club affected my life tremendously. On top of losing my mom, I moved back to Wichita the very same day she passed. I was rarely around my brothers or my grandparents, so to become completely reliant on them in a day was immense. A big part about losing my mom is the amount of people who ask how she is doing or the times I forget and I get excited to go home and tell her about my day, just to realize that is not an option. Having to appreciate your mother after death is a considerable life change, but the song opens my eyes to that being an option.

“A Song for Mama” is an important song or story to me because it allows me to reflect on my relationship with my mother and appreciate the time we had together and the love we had. It has shown me that I can love my mother and still learn from her even though she is gone physically and that is a very freeing feeling to have. Losing a mother is a lot to take in, but after understanding that my mother is not really gone allows me to breathe a little and this song helped me with that.

# A Story to Remember

Vasuma Chaparala

Listening to the stories told by family members as a child serves as a true blessing. The stories undoubtedly make up for who I am as an individual. When I was five years old, my grandfather came to the States and exposed me a plethora of traditional Indian myths/fables ranging from comedic to serious tales. Due to my young age I merely thought of each story lightheartedly, never understanding the meanings and life lessons behind each one of the stories. As I grew older and reheard the stories, I came to a new insightful understanding of each story and I grasped the symbolism and depth behind each story along with how each story made my culture heritage unique. Although the stories once served as a lighthearted fable, they allowed me to not only understand my culture but also myself.

My favorite story that my grandfather told me was the story of “Rama and Sita,” which follows the wild tale of a young bride, Sita kidnapped by an unknown stranger. Rama, the son of a dethroned king, was exiled to a forest where he lived with his new bride and his younger brother. One afternoon, in order to hunt, the two brothers carefully warned Sita not to open any doors to any strangers, even drawing a danger line around the hut. Sita, a kind-hearted soul agreed, but soon broke her promise with the sight of a lost stranger. The stranger began to woo Sita who in turn opened the door and crossed the danger line, losing her freedom in the process. Rama and his brother meticulously searched for Sita as she was kidnapped by a king of another land. Once the brothers realized the kidnapping, they sought revenge. After many countless months, Sita returns home to her husband and her brother-in-law, vowing to never break a promise again.

The tale of “Rama and Sita” connected with me personally because of my strong connection with my grandfather and the rule of “do not talk to strangers.” I first loved the simplicity of the story, but I later realized an essential rule of Hinduism, live a Dharmic life

- free from sin. As a child, I only saw the perspective of Rama and Sita, and as I grew older I began to see the stranger's perspective, seeing the "sin" that he committed. I also understood the "sin" that Sita committed as she broke a promise that nearly cost her her life. I came to the conclusion that both individuals committed a sin, not just one. This story allows me to connect with other people from my culture as we are all connected by the core values taught in Hinduism. With this fable, I connected with my grandfather, who lived a far different life than me. This showcased that individuals from different backgrounds and upbringings can, in fact, share similar beliefs and morals.

The traditional story of "Rama and Sita" served as a vital factor in the unification between my culture and myself. The tale marks my first known memory of authentic Indian beliefs and traditions. This story allowed me to connect with my cultural identity and I certainly grew as a person after considering both perspectives of the story along with the historical beliefs that lie behind the story itself. Although my grandfather passed away a few years after telling me the story, I will always remember the story and my grandfather together as they both taught me valuable lessons and connected me to my Indian roots.

# Felons have Rights Too

**Taygen Altenburg**  
**Editor's Choice Award Winner**

The treatment of former felons in the electoral system cries out for reform. Currently, six million Americans are affected by disenfranchisement (Sherman). Their privilege and right to vote has been stripped from them and the simplest and fairest solution would be to remove the prohibitions on felon voting. Even in states that recognize felons right to vote, they are rarely notified of it when they are released from prison. Prisoners should be given all this information during their discharge process, and they should be helped with the paperwork. The paperwork requirements are burdensome and even those who apply can be presumed ineligible (New York Times). Once felons have completed their conviction sentence and paid their debt to society they should have restored voting rights. Prohibiting them from voting is unconstitutional and can be considered to violate the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

The right to vote is decided on by the states and not the federal government; this makes the rehabilitation of former felon voting rights more difficult than other situations. Only 14 of the 50 states allow for the automatic restoration of voting rights after felons are released (nctl). Automatic restoration means that election officials are notified that this person can vote, but the felons are then responsible for the act of re-registering themselves to vote in the next election. Other states either force these former felons to pay hefty fines, present their case to a judge, wait for a period of years, or they are never restored their voting rights. If some states will allow their felons to vote, why will not all states allow it?

The Voting Rights Act (VRA) of 1965 was originally made to prohibit states from imposing racially discriminatory voting laws. Today, it is being used to fight for felon's rights to vote. The VRA was revised in 1982 to prohibit any voting restrictions that have a discriminatory intent (Handelsman). Due to the fact over 1/3 of disenfranchisement cases are effecting African Americans, plaintiffs are using the VRA to fight disenfranchisement laws. Attorney Lauren Handelsman says that, "Because the racial impact of felon

disenfranchisement is so great, many of these laws could be declared impermissible restrictions on the right to vote” (Handelsman).

In addition to violating the Voting Rights Act, disenfranchisement can be considered unconstitutional based on three amendments. The fourteenth, twenty-fourth, and eighth amendment all deal with punishments or rights of citizens. The six million felons that cannot vote are currently a minority group in the United States. The fourteenth amendment, the Equal Protection Clause clearly states, “No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the U.S.” (U.S. Const. amend. XIV, sec. 1). If the states cannot make laws that limit the privileges of the citizens, then why are felons, U.S. citizens, not able to express their opinion through voting? Another amendment that is being broken is the twenty-fourth. This amendment states that citizens have the right to vote in any primary or other election and that right shall not be denied. By not allowing former felons to vote, their rights guaranteed to them by the Constitution are being violated. Finally, even for the felons who can vote, they cannot afford it because they have to pay such heavy fines. This goes against the eighth amendment that states, “excessive fines shall not be imposed” (U.S. Const. amend. XIII.)

Many people believe that felons should not regain the right to vote after their sentence completion due to the fact that they are untrustworthy or irresponsible. If a person cannot follow the law, then why should they get to vote for it? Most felons have made one mistake in their life, and after going to prison, they want to come back out into the world and regain their life. These people have now paid their debt to society after the completion of their prison sentences. They should no longer have to continue paying for their mistake after the courts say they are done. One major thing a court system focuses on with former felons is making sure they are being a positive influence to the society. Voting is a way to show they want to be involved in what is going on and are staying active in the community. Last, but not least, felons are less likely to commit another crime if they feel valued and respected in their community. By not allowing them to vote and show their opinions, how can they feel valued?

So now that the facts are known, should former felons get to

express their rights, or should their rights continue to be stripped from them? These six million Americans, who have paid their debt to society, are being prohibited from voting and for what reasons? If the states are being totally true to the American way of living then why are they violating the Voting Rights Act and the Constitution? People cannot show that they are trustworthy and responsible until they are given the chance, and these former felons do not have that chance. Removing this prohibition and returning their privilege and right to vote is the only way to show that these felons are still citizens and fellow members of society.

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# I Can't Hear You

**Diego Garcia**

I was born in the middle of the night on September 14, 2002. I was born in Dodge City, Kansas at the Western Plains Western Medical Center. at 7 Pounds, 6 ounces, and 20 inches long. I was a happy and healthy baby. As I got older, I would start to notice that I couldn't hear out of my right ear.

If I was on a call with someone, I'd begin with the phone on my right ear only to switch it to the left ear because I couldn't hear any noise when I would press the phone up on my right ear. My dad shook it off and didn't really think anything was wrong, but my mum felt that there was something wrong with my ear. After some time, it had become apparent to my dad that there possibly could be something wrong with my ear. We decided to go to a doctor to see if he could diagnose a problem, and if there was anything we could do about it.

After many visits to many different doctors, I still had no diagnosis of what was wrong with me. It was a sort of a medical mystery. Nothing would show up on my CAT-scans, so they couldn't exactly figure it out. The doctors would say to my parents, "Your son is perfectly fine. There is nothing wrong with him."

My mum didn't believe it and was very persistent at trying to find a doctor that could figure out what the exact problem was. After a long time of taking the same tests time after time without the results that we were looking for, we finally got back a positive result. As the doctor made his way back into the room, he sat down, took a deep breath, strained his collar. He said, "Mrs. Garcia your son is 90% deaf in his right ear." My mother, who is a very bright person, had already suspected that I had hearing loss; she just didn't want to acknowledge it. One thing my mum didn't know was that hearing loss has many "side effects." In my case my side effect to hearing loss was that I have a speech impediment.

As I got older, the more confirmation I would get that I was in fact 90% deaf in my right ear. Along with my speech

impediment, I was very paranoid of what people would think of me. In my head I heard voices saying, "You're different," and "Nobody will like you." I became a little bit isolated from everyone else. As I began school I was forced to wear a hearing aid, so I could hear what the teachers and other students were saying. In kindergarten kids didn't really seem to notice or care why I had a hearing aid. Of course there were always a few bad apples, but other than that, my medical condition didn't really attract too much attention from people, thankfully.

Everything was going smoothly until in second grade when I was leaving school. One day on the ride home, I decided to sit in the very back of the bus. As the bus began to fill up, I waited. This big, round boy walked to where I was seated and said, "Move. This is my seat." Normally, when I was done with school I would leave my hearing aid in the classroom because I didn't need it at home. So, when the boy who was in fourth grade at the time ordered me to move, I didn't know what he said.

"I'm sorry I didn't hear what you said," I told him.

The boy got very angry and yelled, "What did you say to me?" Before I could speak again, he hit me square in the chest, then my face.

The last thing I remember from the incident was laying in my bed. I don't know whether I got knocked out or if my mind has simply blanked out the situation. For the most part, all I can remember is that after I got beat up, I didn't wear my hearing aid anymore because I was afraid that I would get beat up again for being different.

The hearing aid had really been helping me because my hearing loss percentage had gone down from ninety percent to around fifty percent, but after the bus incident, I completely stopped wearing it. To make up for my hearing loss, I had to adapt and find new ways to use my other senses to figure out if someone was trying to get my attention or what people were saying when they were talking to me. I got really good at reading lips. I got really good at knowing the way lips move and the shape lips make when they create sounds. I learned how to use different parts of my body such as my arms and feet to feel vibrations from people hitting things to get my attention.

At one time my hearing loss had caused me to be very shy

and not a big talker because of my speech impediment. I had to take a speech therapy class when I was in kindergarten. I had problems saying big words. When I would talk, I would always stutter unless I was singing or yelling. As I grew older, I became very reclusive until my eighth grade year when I sat with my English teacher, Mrs. Waldman. During that thirty minutes, she completely changed my outlook on life by telling me stories of other people who are different who have accomplished great things. I am forever thankful to her for helping me understand that it's okay to be different than everyone else. To this day I can't "hear" the people who might mistreat me because I'm different. Instead, I listen to Mrs. Waldman's voice in my head, encouraging me to accomplish great things, too.

# Last Game of the Season

**Leif Hernandez**

“Today is it,” I thought to myself, “It is my last game of middle school football!” I had mixed feelings about the game. I was so excited to play Pretty Prairie, whose team was not the best. It was our last chance to get a win for our middle school career. It would be tough since our head coach was not going to make it, I thought to myself. But I believed that coach Wright had just as much football knowledge as our head coach.

I had hope that we could and would win this game. On the other hand, some of my teammates didn't think we could pull it off just like the other games. I had high hopes when it came to Michael. All season Michael had a hard time getting a physical for football until he did. He was a football player who surprised with his speed, strength, and integrity. The whole season throughout eight-man we had only seven players. We ended up playing all of our games except our last game with seven players. The referees said to me one day, while I set up for a kick, “We should call you guys the magnificent seven.” I replied, “You could, but we don't look so bad with only seven players.” My positions in eight men football were: Quarterback, Kicker, and Defensive End.

That season I had zero touchdowns and I wanted my first one this game. I had a flashback to when I almost scored a kick return touchdown. I was nervous and scared because we were playing Skyline. They started screaming different words after the kick like, “Kill the Quarterback,” “Hit Him,” “Hurt the Quarterback.” I ran past all of the defenders except for one little kid that was between me and the end zone. I just wanted to do a quick juke, but I thought I was close enough that I would be able to truck this little kid. I ended up short of the goal because the kid flew straight towards my bad ankle. I could not be taken out, because we only had seven players, so I just handed it off to Austin, who is as blind as a worm, for the touchdown. I certainly wanted to score for our last game of the season, which was what went through my mind

all day. I started to think of various cool ways I could score a touchdown. My heart pounded like a train on its tracks.

As I lined up for the kickoff all I thought about was how nervous I was. Right as the kick was off I said to myself out loud, "Game time!" Austin, with his small eyes, ran it to the thirty-yard line before he was smacked in the air on the side of his ribs. We decided to run a trick play to the right and throw it to our lead wide receiver Braiden, who is whiter than a piece of paper, after the faked hand-off. Our center was not the best snapper, but he was the only one we had. He was a little bigger than the others, but he was not the strongest peach out there. The snap was bad and the ball ended up on the ground out of my hands. I picked it up and ran it all the way to the end zone. It was not the way I imagined my first touchdown to be, but it was really ironic to me. Every single pass that I threw was on point. It was really hard for my wide receivers to catch because I do not think they have had a whole game with perfect passes. We were told by coach Wright, after we were scored on three times, that we are playing the whole game no matter how much we are down at the half. We ended up staying pretty close to Pretty Prairie the entire game. Then came the most intense quarter, the 4th quarter.

We were down by twelve points with seven minutes left in the game. Kaleb forced the fumble as Austin and I dived on top of the ball. We did our play action pass play right to Braiden, who ran it to the one-yard line before he was tackled. We gave it to Alex, a big strong, skilled player, for the touchdown. We were down by five points, so we decided to go for the onside kick. I decided to have our center kick it so I could get to the ball really quick for the turnover. The other team was on the ball way before I could get there so we brought out our best defense. On the third play, the ball was lost and we recovered the ball. We ran our play action again but the other team finally caught on to the play. We decided to put Alex at quarterback and me at wide receiver because I could catch better than our wide receivers. The only problem was that when Alex left the line it was easier for the other team to get in the backfield. After three plays it was fourth down. We were about twenty yards from the endzone and really wanted the lead. So we put me at wide receiver and ran a flood right pass play that was focused on me. Kaleb, a tall stick like kid, also ran a route on this play. Alex stepped

back with Kaleb and I wide open. Alex through it right to Kaleb to give him a chance and Kaleb jumped in the air with the ball right in his chest and dropped it. I was really angry and started thinking about how I could have jumped up in front of him and caught it myself. I finally let it go and was ready for defense. Pretty Prairie ended up scoring making us down by twelve. We received the kick and we were already back on offense. As the time ticked away we had to score on this play and kick an onside kick and receive the kick. We decide to go in option, which was one of the least ran plays in Middle School. I read the defensive end as he bit on the run, so I tucked it and ran forward. As I saw the linebacker coming straight for me I pitched it to Austin as a player hit me. I saw two people on me and saw an open path for Austin right to the endzone. Then I heard the worst thing ever, the whistle. It was considered forward lateral. The other team received the kickoff then kneeled it for the game.

I was pretty frustrated with all the mistakes that could have been touchdowns and also the win we could have had without those mistakes. I thought to myself about the game and realized that this was our last chance at winning a game before high school began. We could not quite pull things together for the win, but we sure did have fun playing that last game. With the mistakes that we made and the work we put in we were surprised -- not surprised with the work we put in, but the result in our thoughts and emotions after. We were not sad, and we were not happy, but we were surprised by how one game change everything.

# Leaving Gender Roles Behind

Destiny Lazenby

People use stereotypes, perceived images based on oversimplifications, to determine the value and characteristics of individuals. They influence gender roles on both sexes. Inaccurately, men and women receive labels based off of the former roles of men and women and the way that parents raise children today; these stereotypes affect not only the way society sees them but also the way they see themselves. The gender division continues to affect the youth and adults of all ethnicities around the globe.

Derived from historical gender roles of men and women that were in place for thousands of years, stereotypes remain relevant. These customs occurred during the famous Renaissance in Europe, a time period dating back to the 14th century. According to Amanda Cloud, an academic writer who wrote about the roles of women during the Renaissance, “[w]omen were inferior to men.” These women could not work or live alone; if she was unwedded then she would have to live with a superior male relative or become a nun because there were no other options for them during this time (Cloud). Women who expressed themselves would be looked down upon by society. Due to of the negativity this brought on, no one would want to be associated with these women; men overpowered all women (Cloud). Wealthier women could engage in expressive activities, such as learning to read and paint. However, they still faced limitations to their expression and ability to expand their knowledge.

In addition to this, it is not uncommon to see these duties being modernized and portrayed by women today in Northwestern Asia; for example, in Iran women remain legally limited to what they can do and say. Mike Celizic, an American author who wrote both books and informative articles during his life, wrote the article “Beyond the Veil: Life of Women in Iran.” Celizic highlights the limits that women face in Persian nations today; women in Saudi

Arabia can not drive, acquire an education or hold political power in any way; women in Iran must be treated as half: “a man in court the testimony of two women equals that of one man; a man’s son inherits twice as much as his daughter; [and] compensation for the accidental death of a man is twice that for a woman” (Celizic). These legal bounds come from the older generations that made the laws.

In comparison to this, laws and parents alike enforce these gender roles. They encourage boys to go out and participate in activities outside of home life while encouraging girls to stay home to perform house duties (Luscombe). Belinda Luscombe, an Australian journalist, mentions in her article “Gender Straitjackets[;]” these metaphorical contraptions “are restrictive” to children. These “straitjackets” (Luscombe) come from the idea planted into the minds of children that men remain tough and girls remain soft. Those who experience this separation of expectations often live their entire lives believing them. According to Luscombe, “what starts as ‘protection’ can become an expectation that girls should accede to the demands of others rather than making their own choices or taking risks.” The gender division is seen affecting children as they age into adults.

Although the younger generation is less susceptible to stereotypes, it does not mean that a significant number of the youth of the world is not affected. In New Delhi and Baltimore, young girls expressed their concerns with their appearance; the girls in New Delhi girls reported “... their bodies as a big risk that needs to be covered up, while in Baltimore girls told us their primary asset was their bodies and they need to look appealing—but not too appealing” (Mmari qtd in Luscombe). Those girls feel this way because of what they hear, whether it is to look attractive or to cover up. Though girls more commonly fall victim to gender role, boys do too.

In addition to this, boys have their own standards; because of this, “toxic masculinity” is a topic of debate. Colleen Clemens, director of Women’s and Gender Studies at Kutztown University, defines “toxic masculinity” in her article “What We Mean When We Say Toxic Masculinity” as a “repressive description of manhood . . . defined by violence, sex, status, and aggression.” Society encourages men to engage in fights and promiscuity in order to

achieve manhood. However, not all men feel compelled to accede to these standards, therefore they become emasculated. For example, displaying emotions and vulnerability causes a man to lose his status and no longer be considered a “man” (Colleen). This isolation leads a man to a deprivation of social interactions; insecurities lead him to become aggressive in order to cope with the negative feelings developed. Giving that society praises aggression, the man can find comfort in knowing that their unhealthy coping mechanisms become acceptable. This creates a vicious cycle that not enough men are able to escape.

Historical and current laws alongside parental upbringing leave men and women all over the world unable to feel and do as they wish. As a reaction to this, the world’s younger generation is doing all it can to bring an end to the discrimination and gender division that the traditional gender roles left behind. This is the start of a new revolution that everyone can be involved in. Whether it is a vocal or silent protest, men and women come together to stress that the world needs to raise boys and girls the same: to follow their passions; to express their feelings; to say “no” to social prejudice, and to rise up against sexist authority.

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# Plastic

**Danika Hickman**

Every year, almost 300 million tons of plastic are produced with over 8 million tons of it ending up in the ocean (Plastic Oceans International). Out of these 300 million tons, only about 50% of it is used more than a single time. This means that 150 million tons of plastic is almost immediately disposed of after it is produced. Is this really how the Earth should be treated? Take nonrenewable resources from it to just throw them away and potentially harm it and its occupants? No, it is not. This is why the use and production of plastic needs to be reduced; it is dangerous to marine ecosystems, and human health, and also has a very long, hard recycling process.

Plastic in the oceans is a major hazard to marine mammals and their ecosystems. Each year, between 8 million and 12.7 million tons of plastic debris ends up in the ocean with about 269,000 tons of it on the surface of the alone (Brittanica). There is also millions of tons of plastic that has sunk to the bottom of the ocean, where it can be even more harmful because it does not decompose that far away from the surface. Marine mammals often become entangled in objects, like nets or other fishing gear, and can die from this, by sinking to the bottom or not being able to properly breathe. Plastic debris is also commonly mistaken as food to these animals. Sea turtles, seabirds, plankton and many other animals ingest plastic each day. This endangers their lives because the plastic has the same characteristics as a sponge. It soaks up toxic chemicals from the surrounding water and concentrates those in the animal, causing harmful effects on that animal, along with animals higher up in the food chain.

As well as harming marine mammals and ecosystems, plastics can affect human health as well. Animals consume the toxic chemicals in plastics, and then humans consume many of those animals. Bisphenol A (BPA) is a chemical commonly found in plastic. It has been proven to negatively impact the human endocrine system as well as cause cancer, neurological problems, tumors, and birth defects (Cronin). Plastic is also broken down

into micro-plastics, which cannot be filtered. These micro-plastics are found in large quantities in fish and also enter the environment and the air we breathe. Micro-plastics have major negative effects on humans, causing circulation and respiratory problems.

In addition to causing many health problems for marine mammals and humans, recycling plastic can be problematic as well. To recycle plastic, it must first be sorted. If it's not sorted correctly then it becomes useless to use for manufacturing. There are seven resin codes to differentiate between the types of plastic, but there are thousands of variations due to color, shaping, and texture. Most recycling centers only collect plastics with resin codes one or two, and plastics with resin codes three through seven are simply incinerated or put in a landfill. Because of this, very little plastic is actually recycled. The small percentage that is, is typically recycled to a lower grade product and is only recycled once because the plastic degrades each time it is heated for manufacturing. This means that although recycling delays the process, plastic always ends up being disposed of in some way, whether that way is incineration, being put in landfills, or being thrown in the ocean. According to statistics, about 46,000 pieces of plastic are thrown into the ocean each year (Cronin). This plastic that is being thrown into the ocean, due to its difficult recycling, is what is harming marine mammals, ecosystems, and humans.

Some people argue that we need to continue producing large quantities of plastic because it better protects against contamination and is more durable. This may be true, but these capabilities don't last forever. Once plastic is no longer protecting items from contamination, it is contaminating the environment. When it is incinerated, the chemicals contaminate the air that every human breathes; when it is put in a landfill, it takes up more space than other products and takes longer to decompose; when it is thrown in the ocean or river, it endangers the animals, their ecosystems, and eventually the humans that may eat those animals. In the end, plastic contaminates more than it protects. Even though it might be more convenient or useful at the time, it is more detrimental after it is no longer in use.

In conclusion, plastic production and use needs to be reduced due to its damaging effects. Plastic negatively affects marine mammals and the ecosystems they live in. It also has multiple

negative affects on humans and the air that we breathe, as well as having a hard and physically demanding recycling process. Plastic may have some useful qualities, but it has many more consequential qualities. Overall, plastic production needs to be reduced to help protect the environment and keep the Earth a safer place for all of its inhabitants.

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# Sleeping Problems

Tiffany Stanton

I have always had trouble falling asleep. It normally takes me around an hour, but it's no surprise if many hours have passed and I am still awake. On these nights, my eyes lose the sleepy feeling of heaviness and adjust to the darkness, easily discerning the indistinct objects from their warped shadows when I look around. So I have to get up and wait to feel sleepy again. I used to paint whenever this would happen. These paintings were supposed to reflect the surreal feeling of being alone in the night, surrounded by silence and sleepers. Instead, I would just wake up the next morning and realize I lost my sleep over nothing remarkable. Out of all my sleepless nights, none of them have given me a painting to be proud of.

As a kid I had terrible breathing troubles layered on top of my sleeping problems. There were some nights I would call my mother crying, telling her I thought I was going to die because I couldn't breathe when I tried to sleep. On these nights, I was in a house that was no longer hers and she could only listen to me cry over the phone. If she desperately needed to comfort me, the most she could do was come to the driveway so we could look at the night sky and be together for a few minutes. Colorful letters of stores and restaurants contrasted with the empty darkness. I remember my mother trying to laugh at the signs for reading as nonsense when some of their letters burnt out. I was too little to know how to read and I would never understand how she could find the strength to be amused on such a sad night like this. Those are the sleepless nights that I have no desire to remember.

Years later, there is a morning I am awake hours before my alarm will ring. I put my headphones on. This usually helps me fall asleep, but sometimes the songs randomly pause. It may not seem like anything terrifying, but it happens too often and only when I am trying to sleep. The room is so dark and shadowy that anyone could be lurking across from me and I would not know. I just

imagine a long, skinny arm that always reaches out from under my bed to pause my music. But this morning is different. Instead of pressing pause, the arm turns my phone off completely. I have to open my eyes to play the music again. Noticing that my eyes are open, a strange, whiny voice begins calling to me.

“Why won’t you talk to me?”

“I’m sleeping.”

“Oh, you’re awfully mean to me. Just say something. Anything!”

I recognize these words. They have been said to me before on the days when I want to talk more and know I should. For some reason I never can. I want to explain that my speaking problems are the same as how I can’t sleep or breathe no matter how much I wish I could, but it must be hard for anyone to believe that. Instead I just close my eyes and turn my music up to drown out the voice that keeps calling to me. Without ever falling back asleep, I hear my alarm ringing. I get myself ready for the day and head to the bus stop. Outside the house I don’t feel the rain or hear it until a car passes by, its headlights illuminating the raindrops so they are visible for just a second. I mean to turn back for a jacket, but somehow I am already crossing the street. And then another car appears from around the corner, its headlights glaring at me. They get brighter and brighter as they speed towards me so fast that I have to start running. Cars keep speeding past me in the rain until the bus comes and there is time to try to sleep again.

Subtle disorienting moments like these seem to continue throughout the day. When I try to explain it all to my friends, they stop listening after I describe the arm that pauses my music. They point out that I’m too old to be afraid of a monster under my bed. I must have missed out on the days when I was young enough to be scared of a silly monster. Back then there were bigger worries that would keep me awake at night.

# The Importance of Friends and Family

McKinsie Hoopes

Truman Capote's short story, "A Christmas Memory," and Luis Omar Salinas' poem, "My Father Is a Simple Man," have similar meanings, even though they are by different authors. "A Christmas Memory" conveys two friends who live with each other forever until one of the friends moves away. Likewise, "My Father Is a Simple Man" has two family members, who love each other, but one of them is close to death. The short story and poem both talk about how friendship and family are important even if a problem occurs between them.

Firstly, the short story, "A Christmas Memory," by Truman Capote talks about how friendship is essential even if an obstacle occurs. Buddy, a seven-year-old boy, and an older woman are two best friends. Each year, they both gather materials to make fruit cakes as the woman says, "Oh my, it's fruitcake weather!" (Capote 64). The two friends make fruitcakes each year because of their Christmas tradition. Capote then writes, "This is our last Christmas Together. Life separates us" (72) because Buddy is leaving for military school. The separation is "miserable" between the two friends (Capote 72). Buddy and the woman send each other letters, and "every letter she encloses a dime" (Capote 72). Even though distance stands between the two, they continue to keep in touch.

In comparison to Capote's short story, Salinas' poem "My Father Is a Simple Man," explains the value of family even when a problem strikes. Not only does Capote's short story have an older adult and a young child but so does Salinas poem. The two relatives, a father, who is older, and a sixth-grade child talk about death: "I ask him what he thinks about death" (Salinas 16-17), and the child's mindset is, "I'd gladly give my life for this man"(21-22). The child explains how hard of a working man the father is: "I can always remember that here was a man who was a worker and provider"(28-29), for the child looks up to the father. Then when the father dies without

being noticed, the child “learned what little there is about greatness”(36-37). Altogether, the young child learned a life lesson about greatness.

Overall, “A Christmas Memory” and “My Father Is a Simple man” have similarities dealing with losing a loved one. Capote’s short story, “A Christmas Memory,” explains what it is like to lose a best friend; likewise, Salinas’ poem, “My Father Is a Simple Man” explains the death of a family member. Together the short story and poem help support the idea of how problems occurring between loved ones is tough but never impossible to overcome.

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# The Keys to Success

**Isaac Patteson**

The steady tap of fingers on keyboards, discussion within conference rooms, and the constant thrum of working people. The sounds of a thriving and flourishing business of commerce and sales! But what truly develops a company from either being one of many or one of a kind? Like most things in the world, it begins, grows, and builds from the very beginning. If business owners start their companies on a stable foundation, then success and money will come easily to a starting, hard-working entrepreneur, not only to the owner but most importantly to the workforce that is their lifeline. Understanding how to build the right footholds that will outlast all other competition within trade or industry are the keys to the immediate success but also the long term more important kind of success. To understand how starting entrepreneurs can develop themselves and their businesses by realizing the importance of the keys of success for business, we must first examine the outlook of a successful company and also a failing one.

The first step for an entrepreneur is to find what you enjoy doing and building from there! Now for most of us success probably won't come immediately, it may take a couple months or a couple years or even a couple decades but believing that you will succeed and using your failures as purpose and knowledge will carry you further than possibly imaginable. My father is a self-employed oil producer and runs majority of his small business on his own. My father works very hard and is passionate for what he loves to do and it shines through. Why does he do it? Because he loves his job and wouldn't ask for anything different. Building a workforce is my father's biggest regret and weakness because even though he has been ready multiple times throughout the past two decades to expand, he could not because he did not have the ability to find good, trustworthy help to jump spring his business into a multi million dollar company. So understanding when the time to buy a house or to hire a worker or to sell your oil could save you hundreds

or even thousands of dollars a year. Why would someone want to sell their oil at rock bottom prices? Well the most common answer is that they don't have enough money to afford not too. Realizing the differing market prices and using that to your advantage could allow you to expand quicker than your competition and thus become successful. But once you reach that ultimate success than you must decide HOW you can convert that into providing a safe and fulfilling environment for your workers and customers alike. These principles are referred as a business ethics structure, critical for the long term benefits of a company and must be followed accordingly for the stable reputation that is crucial for the sales of products or services in any industry.

Something huge for a business man or woman is too have sight of growing markets or even entire industries that indicate signs of great opportunity. The most dry and redneck way of saying it is just "get out there jump in with both feet and get some something done" that's the best advice a young and hopeful entrepreneur can stand by. Cornelius Vanderbilt was able to accomplish this feat in the American Railroad and actually sold all of his assets in the shipping industry because he foresaw the opportunity and he ran with it, making himself within a decade the richest man on American soil in the late 1800s. Vanderbilt speaks volumes for how evolving your business towards "the path of least resistance" and following where the markets takes you can push you towards a road of wins to the eventual outcome of massive wealth. However even though finding and securing this path should secure your future as a business owner there are a few other key ideas that without consideration could crumble the entire operation such as understanding key expenses for a business, area with better resources, economical ideas, and potential customer proactivity. For example picture two teenage high school graduates both of whom are very self driven and are interested in the floral industry. Both of whom are in lack of a greenhouse luckily they are both blessed to have parents who can actually provide the land for them to build this infrastructure on. Boy A does utilize his parents' land. On the other hand, boy B chooses to do his research and due diligence and found there was some land for sale that he could buy that had a history of natural gas reservoirs and an old water well that he was told that could be put into operation, and he

immediately bought it. Boy A chose to save money on a lease agreement with his parents vs. considering any other expense including customer circle/activity. Boy B chose to save money on future business expenses and also owns his own strip of land all by himself. Both boys did not consider the most likely customer buildup and the future business growth within the area they are situated. Now even though Boy A is using his parents' land he is still getting out beat by Boy B and in the next few years it will be obvious as Boy A goes under and Boy B prospers. These boys give the perfect example of how choosing your "where" is so important. Looking out for important resource benefits, paying attention to your job growth in the area, and the overall population growth can help guide you to a strong, solid foundation for your business to be built upon.

A good business leader focuses on making his or her business stride through the clouds. However a great business leader focuses on not only being successful but also giving their workforce and customers the best experience possible, always, while doing that in a safe and ethical way. If someone can accomplish that after building the foundation and considering every angle of business, failure is not, cannot, be an option. Thank you.

# Today, I am Happy

**JoAnna Marks**

I can do this on my own. I do not need a counselor. I told myself in the mirror as tears dripped down my face. I felt empty, like I was a black hole collapsing into myself. I wondered if, “I will ever be happy again?”

This emptiness had gotten there on February 10th, 2014 when I was called into the office. I was met with a police officer and my sister with blood shot eyes telling me, “Momma is gone”. I was taken aback as I stumbled into the hallway and collapsed as it felt like a bullet tore through my heart. On my knees, gasping for air, teary eyed, telling myself, “We’ll be okay”. This became a part of my everyday routine.

After missing weeks of school I felt as if I had gone through my steps of mourning. However, one day I was paralyzed at school and got sent to a counselor to discuss why I was “acting out” and not doing my work. About six months later, I was diagnosed with bipolar depression. Oddly enough, this was a relief to understand who I have become and how I could fix it.

I avoided talking about my mother dying by helping others figure out their problems; it made me feel helpful and overall better. Mr. Boykins my IB counselor finally told me I need to face my own problems. It was no easy feat. I did not know where to begin. Depression caused a lot of anxiety and insecurities and I chose to deal with them first by joining debate and forensics. Honestly, I cried before every debate and forensics round, but they were all great rounds and I grew after each and every one of them. I may not have won every round, but my communication skills and confidence has greatly improved since.

All of this progress made me feel on top of the world. Of course, with depression having no cure made me think this was it, “this is as far as I am getting”. Things changed, the world fell on me; I missed weeks of school again. Each night in my room I ate ice cream, talked in accents and got into a ring to air fight my

depression. Probably would have looked weird if someone walked in, but it is me, my way of winning.

After sessions with Mr. Boykins, air fights, helping others, debate/forensics, and volunteer work, I feel genuinely happy. It has taken a lot of work and years to actually be able to say that and mean it, but I have accepted that I am living with depression and I do not regret it. I am actually grateful for the experience. At this point, I think I could wrestle alligators and win.

Depression has put obstacles in my life, which has made me grow in areas I did not even know that I needed growth in. I have learned to find happiness in the littlest of things, which many people lack the ability to do. I have learned to fight through various barriers and stay strong because sometimes life, or those air fights, could be tough. My communication skills and research skills have heightened since the diagnosis. I work harder; I find a reason to stay afloat, for myself and my family. I smile, laugh, run, breathe and do the things that my depression once told me I could not do any longer.

Today, I feel tired because I can barely close my eyes when I am bursting with happiness, like a can of biscuits. Today, I feel free and alive again. I have grown mentally and emotionally competent, except for some movies hitting the feels. I still have some bad days, but today, I am happy.

# Trust

Tarynn Gillette

You were my first date; I was sixteen and naïve and excited. I asked my friends for advice on my hair and makeup, dressed myself in my trusty denim jacket and spent more time than usual in front of the mirror. I was ready with almost an hour to spare, leaving time to pace nervously and overthink the coming night.

We had met online, for a lack of natural romance, but nonetheless you were sweet and came to my door to meet my mother. It was a chilly night in late December. You were courteous! You took me to a place you knew I wanted to eat at. The conversation was unexpected yet calming; you eased my nerves with compliments, reassuring words, and genuine interest in my stories. I found you extremely attractive. You respected my space, flashed me welcoming smiles, and paid for dinner, no questions asked.

We attempted to watch Christmas lights, but soon became bored. You wanted to show me your favorite show, assuring me your roommate would be at your apartment, prohibiting us from being completely alone. My initial reaction was apprehensive, but I knew I could trust you. I knew I could trust you.

Your two-bedroom apartment was not too far from my dwelling. It was an apartment complex I recognized, as I visited it throughout my childhood, and it close to some of my favorite restaurants. It was on the ground floor, and the lights were off. You said your roommate must have gone to bed, since it was almost ten in the evening. We walked to your room. You assured that I could tell you if I became uncomfortable and you would take me home immediately. You definitely wanted to see me again. You admitted it, you liked me! You had fun, you thought I was an interesting person.

You were twenty-one and had access to alcohol. You offered me a red solo cup filled almost to the brim with hard liquor. You said I didn't have to drink it of course, and I didn't have to drink all of it. Being sixteen, I was in no position to turn down the rare

chance of drinking alcohol. It smelled stronger than anything I had experienced before, stung the back of my throat, and felt warm in my stomach. I knew I could trust you. I lay down on the bed, laughing; you kissed me. I hadn't kissed anyone in a while, and it felt nice. It felt right. You told me you wouldn't take anything too far, you knew I was a virgin and didn't want to have sex. I knew I could trust you. The television became harder to focus on and the lights appeared to flicker, but I could no longer comprehend the situation to the full extent. I knew I could trust you.

I knew I could trust you.

My hands were tied. I tasted a condom.

The next morning, I miraculously woke up in my bed, my makeup still on, and immediately felt sick and sore all over my body. I had drunk before, but this feeling was different than a hangover. I realized my white sheets were covered in a thin layer of a reddish-brown and fresh but quickly decaying liquid.

I thought I could trust you.

# LESSON PLAN: PERSPECTIVES & LITERARY CRITICISM

## Who's Right about Rights?

### Materials Needed:

- Sample essay “Felons Have Rights Too” from Voices of Kansas
- Paper / pencils
- Laptops / computers for web search and final drafts

### Time Frame:

Variable

### Objectives:

Students will use a model student essay to explore and gain understanding of argumentation, citation, and source reliability.

### Essential Questions:

- How does point of view and background shape one's opinion of an issue?
- What stylistic devices and tools help writers effectively argue their main ideas?
- What constitutes a reliable and unreliable source?

### The Assignment:

Students will use the model essay to frame their own arguments and prepare to write argumentative essays through analyzing research and rhetorical modes of persuasion.

### Day 1

#### Bellwork/Opener:

Have students respond to the following prompt in a free write of

5-10 minutes: “What is privilege? Do some people have more rights than others? Why or why not?” Following the bellwork, ask students to share their definitions of “privilege.” Then, conduct a Values Line activity, where students should stand on one side of the room for if they agree or disagree with the statement “Some people have more rights than others.” If a student chooses to stand in the middle on the issue, have him or her stand in the middle of the class and not at either wall. Again, allow students to share their thoughts and perspectives on the topic.

### **Main Activities:**

Following discussion, have students return to their desks. Explain via a small 5-10 minute lecture that they’ve just practiced the art of argumentation. Arguing is not yelling the other side of an opinion down, it is sharing one’s thoughts and having valid reasoning behind those thoughts that may or may not convince another person to believe what was said. More than likely, most students expressed opinions not backed up by evidence, or the evidence that was shared may have been from an anecdotal experience. These types of evidence stem from emotions and can be quite persuasive when used effectively. It is now appropriate to introduce to students the three types of argumentative tool used by people with opinions: pathos, ethos, and logos. In short:

- Pathos: arguments from emotion
- Ethos: arguments from belief
- Logos: arguments from fact and logic

Survey students for types of arguments that they’ve seen in television commercials: e.g. sad puppies and music for the humane society (pathos), political campaigns focusing on religion to get people to vote for a candidate (ethos), toothpaste commercials using statistics to sell a brand (logos). When you feel students understand this concept, introduce the model essay from Voices of Kansas.

Distribute copies of “Felons Have Rights Too” and have students take out colored pencils, markers, or highlighters (at least three different colors), as they will be reading and highlighting the essay for its argumentative style: one color for pathos, ethos, and logos.

While students read the essay, they are to highlight it and annotate it for its arguments so that a further discussion can be had about privilege. Give students about 15 minutes to read and highlight.

On a whiteboard or butcher paper, label each of the three types of argument. Following annotation time, either have students take turns adding to each column what they found in the essay or have students call out what they discovered and annotate it for them on the display. Then, ask students what they thought about the essay: was it effective in its use of pathos, ethos, and logos? Did it lean too heavily on one form of argumentation over another? How would they have improved the essay -- even if they don't agree with what the writer said?

### **Closing:**

Allow students some time to journal again. This time, have students reflect on the day's lesson: I agree with the author of "Felons Have Rights Too" because . . . OR I disagree with the author of "Felons Have Rights Too" because . . .

Remind students to hang on to all their journals and writings, as these will be steps working towards an essay of their own.

### **Day 2**

#### **Bellwork/Opener:**

Have students warm up by reviewing their closing journal from yesterday and then sharing their thoughts regarding the piece from Voices of Kansas. This again can be performed via general class discussion, a values line, or a round-robin approach. Remind students that the goal is not to be the "right" person in class, and that they aren't to interrupt one another; the goal is to share thoughts and hear others' opinions. This should take 10-15 min.

#### **Main Activities (15-20 minutes):**

Following discussion, remind students of how yesterday they explored the persuasive rhetorical devices in "Felons Have Rights Too," and they offered feedback regarding the essay. Today, they're going to look a bit deeper at its credibility via its sources. Redistribute or have students take out their copies of the essay, and have students turn to the Works Cited page. Ask students if they

know the purpose of a Works Cited, or, if you've already covered this topic in your class, ask students to survey the sources on the page.

A Works Cited records the sources used for research that are credited within the paper. It is different from a bibliography, for a bibliography is a list of all sources looked at while researching for a paper -- even if they weren't ultimately used.

Once you've instructed or reviewed about Works Cited pages, ask students to look at the entries and if they can identify the types of sources that were used. This can also add to the persuasiveness of a piece of writing. An argument with solid research from trustworthy sources should be more readily believed than one garnering research from less reputable source offerings. Have students rate the sources on a scale of 1-5 (1 being weakest, 5 being strongest).

- **1 = Crowdsourced documents and webpages** (e.g. Wikipedia, Quora). It's up to the reader to determine trustworthiness. Some articles will be more accurate than others.
- **2 = Websites and blogs.** Nearly anyone can make a website, but people typically have to pay for domains. Scholars may have a personal blog to share findings. Like a crowdsourced webpage, some will be more trustworthy than others. Some websites may have a political bias or agenda (e.g. Fox News, MSNBC).
- **3 = Articles, books from established newspapers.** These are written for general audiences by paid members of the media who've had to have their writing looked at by an editor before publication. However, you'll have to determine if this is research or an opinion piece. Furthermore, like websites and blogs, even some established newspapers can have political slants.
- **4 = Trade or professional publications.** Written for niche audiences by experts. For example, an environmental pamphlet published by GreenPeace.
- **5 = Scholarly and peer-reviewed publications.** Written by professors, students, and experts in the field. Typically found in trade and professional publications and also in

online databases.

If students have 1:1 access to technology, give them some time to look up the sources in the Works Cited and rank them individually or in small groups before discussing as a class. Conversely, you can model for students how to look up the Works Cited sources and determine ranking, and then have the class work together to determine credibility.

### **Wrap Up:**

For homework, have students find two sources on the rights of incarcerated inmates. Ask students to purposefully find one that they deem is trustworthy and one that they feel is not trustworthy at all. Students should print off the articles or email the educator links for display.

### **Day 3**

#### **Bellwork/Opener:**

Have students gather desks into a large circle for a sharing session.

#### **Main Activity:**

At first, treat this like a show and tell via a round-robin sharing session. Let students reveal their trustworthy and untrustworthy sources and how they came to the conclusion. Encourage them to refer to what they learned about argumentation (pathos, ethos, logos), and source reliability. This first activity's time will vary depending on the number of students.

Then, facilitate a Socratic discussion about the topic of incarceration and rights versus privileges. Based on all that they've researched and heard: Where do they stand and why? Again, remind students of the rules of sharing, to take turns, not interrupt, to feel free to disagree peacefully and practice good argumentation by citing the sources they've been using as reference.

### **Wrap Up:**

Give students ten minutes to free write on a revised iteration of the writing topic earlier in these lessons: "Felons should / should not have rights because . . ." This activity can serve as a reflection to end

this lesson or as a diving point as early drafting into a larger writer's workshop on argumentation.

## Works Cited

"Finding Reliable Sources: What Is a Reliable Source?" *University of Georgia Libraries*, 1 Mar. 2018, <https://guides.libs.uga.edu/reliability>.

## Standards Alignment

### Reading Standards for Informational Text

Determine

- . . . an author's point of view or purpose in a text with effective rhetoric; analyze how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text.

Analyze

- . . . and evaluate the structure an author uses in the exposition or argument; include if the structure clarifies, convinces, and engages.
- . . . how various authors and texts from various time periods in various formats provide conflicting information about the same topic.

Miscellaneous

- Cite strong textual evidence to support analysis and inferences of the text. Determine textual ambiguity.
- Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of presented in different media, including written formats, in order to address a question or solve a problem.
- By the end of respective grade, read and comprehend literary nonfiction in respective grade's text complexity band.

### Writing Standards

Write

- . . . arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts; use valid reasons and relevant, sufficient evidence.
- . . . often over extended and shorter time frames for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Miscellaneous

- Conduct short and sustained research projects to answer questions or solve problems; narrow or broaden inquiry as needed; synthesize many sources on a subject, demonstrate understanding of the subject.
- Gather information from many sound print and digital sources; use advanced searches; assess pros and cons of sources in terms of task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text to maintain the flow of ideas; avoid plagiarism; follow a standard citation format.
- Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

## **Language Standards**

### **Apply**

- . . . knowledge of language to grasp its functions in various contexts, to make choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend when reading or listening.

## **Speaking & Listening Standards**

- Initiate and participate in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on specific grade topics; build on others' ideas; express their own.
- Integrate sources of information in diverse formats and media to make informed decisions and solve problems; evaluate source credibility and accuracy; note any discrepancies among the data.
- Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, evidence and rhetoric; assess stance, premises, linked ideas, word choice, emphasized points, and tone.
- Present information, findings, and evidence; convey a clear and distinct view; address opposing perspectives; organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.