

Voices of Kansas

A Journal of the Kansas
Association of Teachers of
English



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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, 2021

Please send all submissions via the online submission form at <http://www.kansasenglish.org>. *Voices of Kansas* does not accept physical or hard-copy submissions.

Submission Guidelines

Submissions must be made by a KATE member via our online submission system. Submissions to *Voices of Kansas* are reviewed by editors and reviewers of the journal, and the editors 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. The present year's publication can be downloaded for free on the KATE website; however, previous volumes can be accessed via a KATE members-only archive.

Written Manuscripts:

criticism, poetry, fiction & non-fiction

- Maximum of 1,000 words
- Poetry: maximum of 100 lines
- Typed (Times New Roman 12-point font)

- Double-spaced
- Number by page; conform (if applicable) to MLA or APA
- Save attached work as:
 - (.doc/.docx) for Word,
 - Rich Text Format (.rtf), or
 - Google Doc format
- No identifying information should appear on the manuscript.

Artistic Expressions

Submit photographs of non-digitized art (pottery, etc.) and digital art in one of the following formats:

- .jpg,
- .jpeg,
- .png

Include a 100 word (maximum) written description of the piece

Lost & Deleted Journal Copies

If you are a student who was published in a previous volume and have lost your copy of the journal, or if you were a teacher who had students published in a previous volume, please email us at voicesofkansas@gmail.com! We'll happily send you a new file.

From the Editors

Surviving a school year is one thing; surviving a pandemic is another. This journal somehow did both. While it took reviews a lot longer than normal due to the nature of remote learning, we are proud of what students in Kansas are writing and our colleagues who supported us throughout this process.

If there's one takeaway from all the hardship of the pandemic, it's that we've realized strengths within ourselves that we didn't know we had, and we've also discovered weaknesses in the publication process that we didn't know were there. Now, we can move toward the seventh edition with greater surety as we work to fix those issues so that come tornado, pandemic, or earthquake, we'll be able to publish on time.

We appreciate your patience and understanding, and more than anything else, we hope you'll read, savor, and find hope in the voices of students whose school year was cut too short, too soon.

Monica Swift, Derby High School
Nathan Whitman, Burrton High School

Younger Voices: Grades 3-7

Autumn

Camden Goebel

Autumn,

Bright and beautiful color-filled leaves cover the ground outside.

Quiet, except for the soft breeze in the trees and the water lightly splashing in the
lake.

Filled with the sweet smell of freshly baked bread and cookies in the kitchen as
your mother calls you in for dinner.

The taste of cookies as your mother bakes some fresh goodies.

Soft, crunchy leaves beneath your feet and the softness of cookies in your hands
and mouth.

Autumn

Amelia Smith

It's a beautiful Autumn day with wind blowing through the trees,
Leaves swirling around with the strong morning gust.
The smell of ripe green grass taking over everywhere,
Pumpkin spice soaring through the air.
Crisp, crunchy leaves under children's feet,
The bright orange pumpkins waiting on the porch.
The final bright leaves saying a goodbye,
Autumn is near; Summer is no longer here.

Autumn Speaks to Me

Alison Henderson

I close my eyes to listen to the words of autumn
I whisper into the wind, "Where are you?"
It whispers back with beautiful leaves flying through the air
As the wind takes them away to lay at rest
It answers with the crisp aroma that fills my nose and turns it red
It answers with the wind blowing my hair all over my face as I try to put my hat
on
It answers with the sound of the wind howling softly in my ear
It answers with the sun just barely fighting the cold as it shines happiness and
warmth on my face
It answers with me sticking my tongue out just to put it right back in because the
sweet crisp air dries it right out
It answers with the fun sound of leaves crunching under my feet as I walk sadly
to the warmth of my home to leave autumn for today
But, I whisper to the wind as I open the door,
"Don't worry! I'll be back tomorrow!"

Feels Like Fall

Audrey Malaby

Leaves swirling, wind howling,
the chilly dance of autumn engulfing all near,
as green hues shift to yellow, orange, and maroon.

Fall tastes like fireplace s'mores and pumpkin spice
leaving you begging for more, more, more.
It feels like warmth on the coldest of nights,
It feels like FALL.

Gracie Mayci

Reagann McDonald

Zoey Macintire has just left my desk. She was asking me about the dance on Friday. I don't think I'm going, but it was nice that she asked. Zoey Macintire has everything she wants, except perfect brains, which contrary to popular belief, I have. What people don't realize is that I'm actually very intelligent. I go to gifted services every Thursday at ten, but they probably assume that I'm going somewhere to work with my seizures, but no, I'm not.

Mr. Marimoto starts to lecture and I begin my regimen of zoning out. First stage: Find something else to focus on. Second stage: Focus all of your heart into it. Final stage: Zone back in when he calls on you.

He's droning on about who knows what, and that's when I start to feel it. The world around me starts to shake, and my hands grow clammy, and my throat is clogs up. My toes begin to tingle until I can't feel them. My mind starts to travel to unknown places. Afterwards, I feel my hands shake, and it develops into a tremble, and then worse. My brain feels as though at any moment it will explode, and people stare. It was probably only thirty seconds, but it felt like hours before I collapsed onto the floor. My arms sprawl out to my sides, and my back is shaking wildly. Maybe I'm screaming, and judging by the faint voices I still hear, I must look awful. This is no ordinary seizure, this is the seizure that changed everything.

I'm later told that I was in this state for nearly ten minutes. Maci and Emiley were huddled over me, their tears falling gently down their cheeks. I couldn't make out any words, or distinguish any voices or

even make out the shapes of people. I don't even have a concept of time. After ten minutes I suddenly stopped shaking, and just was unconscious. Apparently, Mr. Marimoto called the ambulance as soon as he realized this was different, and it took nearly four hours before I regained consciousness.

Now, I'm laying in a hospital bed, strapped up to an IV. My dad is sitting in an armchair, and the second my eyes flutter open he comes over to my bed. I don't even understand what happened.

Minutes later, the doctor is in the room, and so is my mom. I'm laying there, in an extreme amount of pain, and I'm too scared to move. I doze off before the doctor can start telling me about what happened. I don't want to know. I don't want to know what's going on, and I don't really want to know why this time it was so bad, or what's going to happen to me now.

By the time I wake up in my own bed, in my own house, mom appears in the doorway. "I have something I need to talk to you about."

She speaks calmly, but whatever.

"I'm just going to come right out and say it. We have to move. We have to move to Salem in order to get you better treatment. We can never let something as bad as this happen again. The consequences are too severe." Her voice is chilly. And my face turns from curiosity to stone in a heartbeat.

Our new home could never be a home to me; to me it will always be a two story colonial building with grey siding and white trim. The bay window on the right side appears to look into the living room, and coincidentally, the one on the second story is attached to my room...on the second story. I just sit in the car and look out at the place I will be expected to call home – this house.

I started going to school a week after I start walking again, after over a month of physical therapy, after unholy wakeup calls every morning at 6:00 A.M. from an alarm that went *BEEP, BEEP, BEEP!* My mother tried to make the best of it by being overly sweet, but I could feel myself burden her each morning that she carried me down the stairs.

I still have to sit in my wheelchair and wear the brace, but I do get to walk every morning and for a little while every night.

The people here are all nice, and they seem to know what's going on

with me. And when I do have a seizure about two weeks after I start, it's not bad and I don't even fall out of my wheelchair. I just sit and tremble and then suddenly go limp and we all let it pass. Everyone is kind of freaking out but not anymore than you would expect them too. Everyone who meets someone who has a medical disorder will be a little disturbed the first time they see it affect you. But I guess I'm used to it by now, I'm used to all of it.

I never thought that people would like me because I'm disabled, but I guess that they do.

A couple of weeks later the doctor lets me start walking on my own. I'm able to do everything that I used to do, and it's great to see the world again. I really enjoy not sitting and looking up at literally everyone in an effort to maintain a conversation. But now that I can walk, things feel great, and so do I. My life is looking up, and although I'm still small enough that I still have to look up at everyone, it's nice to see the world how everyone else sees it.

On the morning of May 2nd, 2020, I walk into class and everything feels light and airy. I plop down at my desk and start talking to Maggie, the girl I've connected with the most this year, but she's not the only one. Most of my classmates are nice to me, talk to me, and act like they love to be around me. Ms. Alabair starts droning on with the lesson, but then my throat starts to close up and my heart starts pounding. Everything becomes blurry and I fall to the floor. My body is not limp this time, this time it's trembling worse than ever. My limbs are spread out sporadically, and I can't make out any shapes. I hear voices and screams as people realize the severity of this seizure. I feel a cold hand grasp mine and beg me to stay, but I can't.

It was May 2nd, 2020, at the time of 8:24pm. My mom's hand grasps mine as I begin to drift away. They were told about two hours ago that I probably wouldn't make it, but that doesn't make it any easier. My dad can barely stand the sight of me, and he is kneeling on the floor praying to the Lord up above. But none of it matters. I drift away, out of this world, and into the next, into Heaven.

Without seizures, I'll be able to do all the things I was never able to do before, like play sports and be involved in school productions. Everyone and everything will change, but I'll always remember them, and no matter how far away I am, they'll always remember me.

Janet's Key

Elizabeth Larson

Janet was licking the ice cream off her lips when she spotted a flash of gold. Why was there a key in the ice cream cone?

"Ooh!" her sister Jenessa squealed, "Maybe it's for buried treasure!"

"No," sighed Janet, "I bet it's just a dumb trick that Mr. Beal from the ice cream truck tried to pull. You know how he likes to tease you."

Jenessa rolled her eyes.

That night, Janet couldn't sleep. She stared up at the ceiling. All of a sudden, she heard a scraping noise on her desk. The key flew into the air and landed right on her chest. Annoyed, and tired of keys, Janet dragged herself out of bed and set the key back on her desk. She flopped back into bed and shut her eyes tight.

At two o'clock in the morning, Janet woke up with a start. There was the scraping noise again! Janet prepared herself to catch it, but the key instead slid off the desk, and under her dresser. Frustrated that the key had woken her up once again, she rolled out of bed and put the key outside her door. Janet decided that if she couldn't see it, she couldn't hear it.

The next morning, Janet was pulling on her shoes when the doorbell rang.

"Arf! Arf! Arf!" Bailey was jumping up on the window. Who ever rang the doorbell must have been pretty exciting, since Bailey usually slept until ten in the morning.

"Bailey, quit it!" snapped Janet.

"Arf! Arf! Arf!"

"Come on, Bailey." Janet grabbed Bailey's collar and put her in the backyard.

Janet hurried to the door and flung it open. No one was there. Sitting on the doormat was the key that she had set outside her bedroom door the night before. Suddenly, she heard ice cream truck music playing. It was only seven-thirty. A shiver ran down her spine. Who had bothered to steal a rusty key in the middle of the night?

That day at school, Janet jumped at every little sound.

That key should not bother me! She told herself as she opened her locker. Janet gasped. Sitting on her neat stack of books was the key. It glinted exactly how it had in Jenessa's ice cream cone. When Janet reached out to pick up the key, it flew up and hit her in the forehead. Janet fell with a thud to the floor. The key had knocked her out.

"Janet! Janet! Wake up!"

Wavy figures swam before Janet's eyes.

"What happened?!" The school nurse hovered over her.

"The key," Janet groaned. "It hit me."

"You can't be serious! Honey, I think you're probably dehydrated. It's time for you to go home."

As Janet stood up, she felt the key poke her leg in her pants pocket. *How did it get in my pocket?* Janet wondered.

When Janet's mom came to pick her up from school, she stared out the window the whole way home. She did not want to explain to her mom about how the key had knocked her out.

As they drove by the park, she saw Mr. Beal and his ice cream truck. He looked up and waved at her. What Janet saw next, made her shudder for what felt like the rest of her life. Mr. Beal held up her key, and winked. The key had dematerialized from her pocket. She looked back at Mr. Beal. He tucked the key in his pocket and vanished into thin air.

"Wow! Aunt Janet! Look, I found a key! I bet Mr. Leab wanted me to have it. I think he likes me," said Emmaline.

"Oh, that's nice." Inwardly, Janet rolled her eyes. Emmaline was only five. *Huh, why is there a key in the frozen yogurt?* Janet wondered. Then memories from thirty years ago hit her like an ice cream truck. She bit her tongue to keep from screaming.

No, that is not nice. Keys in frozen dairy products are not nice. Janet thought to herself. *Why has it come back for me? I'll have to find a way to*

get it away from Emmaline. Plus, that guy with the frozen yogurt truck reminds me of someone.

As Janet and Emmaline walked back to her apartment, Janet felt the key in her pocket. She tried to ignore it, but it felt like it was burning a hole through her pants. Janet told herself over and over: *I can't touch it, I can't touch it, I can't touch it.* Janet knew that if she touched the key, it would try to follow her.

Finally, Janet couldn't take it anymore. She yanked the key out of her pocket and tried to throw it as far from her as possible. As Janet watched the key fly in the air and land on the street, she breathed a sigh of relief. Suddenly, Emmaline screamed. The key was flying through the air straight towards them.

The Key

Noah Macy

Kyler ran, shouting and panting as he tripped and fell over his own feet with less than perfect agility. He was in a forest and was jumping over rocks and roots as he ran., running from someone – or rather, something – and it was fast. He had nothing but one small key. He gripped it with all his strength, trying to keep it safe.

Three Hours Earlier

Kyler was 14 and tall, about six-foot, and he wore tattered clothes. He was an orphan and had been that way ever since his parents left him at the age of two. Right now he was living at his 36th foster home, but this one was different than the others. The parents had four kids, and every one of the children seemed worried. Kyler didn't think much of it until one day one of the kids, named Jack, gave him a key and told him to protect it with his life. The next day, Jack was gone and so were all of the others.

Kyler was scared, scared of what took the children and scared that it would take him. So, he ran; he ran as far as he could away from the house and out of sight. As he ran, he realized that he forgot the key. He immediately stopped, turned around, and ran back to the house only to find the windows smashed and a message written on the wall saying, "W3 WILL FIND YOU KYL3R."

He grabbed the key and started to run again, but this time he was followed.

* * *

Present

He ran through the forest as fast as he could, but the monster was faster. He gripped the key so hard that his hand hurt, but he wouldn't let go. He didn't know what it was for, but he had to protect it, for Jack.

He ran and ran for what seemed like hours until finally he stopped and listened: nothing. The monster was gone. He started to walk away, back to the city, when all of a sudden – *Boom!* – he was slammed against a tree and knocked unconscious.

He awoke in a strange room full of lab equipment and gizmos. He tried to sit up, but he was tied down with solid steel cuffs. They were cold and so was the air around him. He saw something scuttle in the corner and run off. He tried to yell but soon realized that no one could hear him; no one was near.

From what he could tell, he was in an underground room, and it was small with just enough space to work. Kyler looked around for somewhere to escape but had no luck. Then, he realized that the cuffs had keyholes and that maybe, just maybe, he had the key. He put the key in and *click*, Kyler was free. He sat up, and suddenly, out of nowhere, a huge rat-like beast grabbed him and shook him.

The monster shook him so hard that he woke up. He sat up in his bed at his foster home and looked around: no monster, no room, no key. It had all been a dream.

Kyler got up that morning and did his normal routine. He went into town later and saw a big sign on the window of all the stores, it read "Beware of the monster that lurks in the night, for it will take children, steal their voice, and they will wake up thinking it was a dream, Beware." That's when Kyler realized he couldn't speak.

The Key to His Death

Isabelle Blackwood

I sat on the old carpeted bench and stared out the window. Snow swirled outside, and it was getting dark. All I could see was the jack-o-lantern on my porch. My father had been gone for the past eleven hours, leaving earlier that morning without a word. I sat on that bench without moving for the next five hours until I drifted asleep. I awoke to a crash in the kitchen, rose from the bench, and tiptoed toward the noise. I peeked around the corner and saw pots and pans all over the ground. Movement. From the shadows in the corner, I saw my cat standing on the counter, and I breathed a sigh of relief. It was just that dumb cat. I crept upstairs to see if my father had come home and was asleep. I opened his door and saw a pool of blood on the floor. He lay lifeless on his bed, and his blue eyes were open, staring right at me. Blood trickled down his head from a large gash.

“Papa!” I ran to him.

I stood in black and thought about his death, as I watched my father’s casket lower into the ground. As it reached the depths, I tossed my flowers onto it. Bye, daddy.

I still couldn’t believe my dad was killed. The cops had no idea what had happened to him and were likely to give up and call it a suicide. I knew that’s not what happened. I knew he loved his life... and me. Someone did this. I was about to leave when a tall man in a black cloak tapped my shoulder.

“Meet me behind the trees.”

Was this the man who killed my dad? Should I even meet him? What if he knew who killed my dad? I followed him behind a tree. I looked around and couldn't see him anymore. I was about to walk away when I heard him behind me.

"Go to your father's old apartment building in London. You will find the key to solving his murder there."

Before I could turn around to ask him anything, he was gone into the night.

That night was the first night I hadn't cried since my dad's death. I sat in bed wondering what the man meant. The key to solving my dad's death? As I pondered it more, I drifted off to sleep.

That morning I woke up knowing I had to go to London. I had to try. If the key to my dad's death was there, I had to find it.

I held onto the little hope I had that I could possibly get an idea of what happened to my dad. He was a great man. He baked me cookies when I had a cold. He let me sleep in his bed every night for four months after my mother passed away. My dad did not deserve whatever happened to him. I was determined to solve his murder.

I stepped off of the bus into London. The air was cold. The wind bit into my skin. Should I turn back? I couldn't. I told myself, "You can do this, Marybeth. Do it for dad." This was the only thing that kept me going. I caught a bus that brought me to the outskirts of London, which is where my father's old apartment was. Then, I had to walk two kilometers in the bitter cold. I could barely see anything in front of me because of the snow. I took out my phone and turned on the flashlight. I looked to the top of the screen. No service. Great. If anything happened to me I would have no way of getting help. I tried to not think about that. I kept going.

After twenty minutes of walking, I reached his old apartment. The building was abandoned, unlit, faded, surrounded by dead plants, and looked like it was falling apart. I stepped onto the porch of the old apartment building whose wooden steps creaked at my every move. My phone's flashlight unmasked old furniture, cobwebs, and a terrible smell. How long ago did my father live here? I looked around and wondered what I should be looking for. A map? A safe? A person? What would be the key to his death? I had no idea. When I noticed a safe, I went to and tried to open it. It was locked. I was just about to give up and leave when I heard a strange noise. A pigeon sat on the window sill with a key in its mouth. Before I could walk up to it, it dropped the key and flew away. I cautiously walked to the window

and grabbed the key. I looked at it wondering what it was for. Then, my mind flashed to the safe, and I ran to put the key in the hole, praying it fit. The key went in, and the door to the safe came open. Thank God! I looked into the safe and saw a small slip of paper. On the paper was an address. Was this the key? Is this where I need to go to find out what happened to my dad? I felt certain that I was about to find out.

I stepped outside, and the snow had stopped. It was darker, but I could still see better than before. I held onto the little piece of paper with the address in my pocket. I wasn't going to lose this. I wasn't going to lose the last piece of hope I had for finding my dad's killer.

The next day, a cab dropped me off at the address. It was a stone cottage with a rock fence around it. The place seemed peaceful, as I followed the stone pathway to the house. I walked slowly to the front door., stepped onto the porch. Beside the door, a black cat stared at me with piercing, yellow eyes. I proceeded to the door, spotted a small doorbell on the right side of the old screen door, inched my finger to the doorbell. I was shaking. I took a breath and pressed the button. *DING-DONG!* I stepped back, startled by the loud sound. Hurried steps approached the door. My heart was beating out of my chest. My palms became sweaty. My breathing quickened. The door began to open before I could panic any more. As the door opened, I saw a tall old man with long gray hair behind the door.

"I wondered when you'd arrive," he asked sounding annoyed. There was no mistaking his voice. It was the man in black.

I took a deep breath before answering, "I-I-I'm here, well, I-I was wondering if you knew my father. Paul Hamelson."

The man looked shocked, "Come in child, come in."

I stepped into his house. It was warm and smelled like fresh baked bread.

He pointed to a chair, "Sit, sit."

I looked around; the house seemed normal. The man seemed normal. I hoped he could help me.

The man grabbed his tea and took a sip before speaking.

"I am very sorry for your loss Marybeth."

"How do you know my na -"

"I knew your father... and mother. I was with your mother when she died."

"How?"

"I was your mother's counselor. The day she died she was here. She

came to me for advice. She was being stalked by her ex-lover. By the time she got here he had poisoned her, and it was too late.”

“How did I never know this?” A million thoughts went through my head.

“Your father – he kept it a secret from you because you were so young.”

“Then what happened to my father?”

The man breathed deeply before answering. “The man who poisoned your mother wanted revenge for a broken heart. Since he’d already killed her, he wanted to go after the family too. Instead of you, he found your father.”

As I listened to the old man talk, tears started streaming down my cheeks. How could someone possibly do that? I couldn’t comprehend what I had just been told. I couldn’t control all the thoughts going on in my mind. I couldn’t control the tears springing out of my eyes. I couldn’t control my hands shaking and my head pounding.

I tried to be happy – to be happy I found out what happened to my father, to finally put my thoughts to rest. Even though I found out what had happened to my dad he was still gone, and there was nothing I could do to change that.

“I am so sorry this happened to you Marybeth. Don’t you worry about the man coming for you though,” the old man reached and grabbed a string from around his neck. The was a little glass container on the end of the string. Inside the container there was a green liquid. “This is the same poison he used to kill your parents.”

“Why do you have it?” Pedro asked.

“I used it on the man who killed your parents. He is dead now.”

I felt relieved. I didn’t know why. I hadn’t worried about the man. I hadn’t thought about it since the old man told me about him. I should be able to actually sleep tonight. I had barely slept at all since I found my father. Maybe now I could. Maybe now that I found out what had happened to my parents I could finally be calm and even happy. I was safe from the murderer. But, I wasn’t happy. I didn’t think I could ever be happy again, even though the old man told me everything I never knew about my parents.

That morning he made me breakfast before I left. I had only met this man the night before but he already seemed like a family member. To my parents, he was.

After spending the rest of the week mourning my parents, I finally went home. I missed my father so much. I had grown used to not

having a mother. I didn't think I could ever get used to being an orphan. I was 23-years-old, and I was on my own for the first time in my life. I stayed alone until I decided to move back to London.

It took me two years to finally accept happiness. To finally sleep in peace. And, every now and again I see a pigeon who seems to linger around and just look at me. I always wonder if it could possibly be the same pigeon the brought me the key, the key to my father's death.

Older Voices: Grades 8-12

Artistic Expression

Alien Nation

Alyssah Martin & Haiden Gibbs

* * *



We created exquisite corpse images, drawing on one panel, folding the paper with only a couple of lines crossing it, and passing to the next person. Nobody knew what the final image would be until we unfolded all three panels.

Aloe

Blake Coyle

* * *

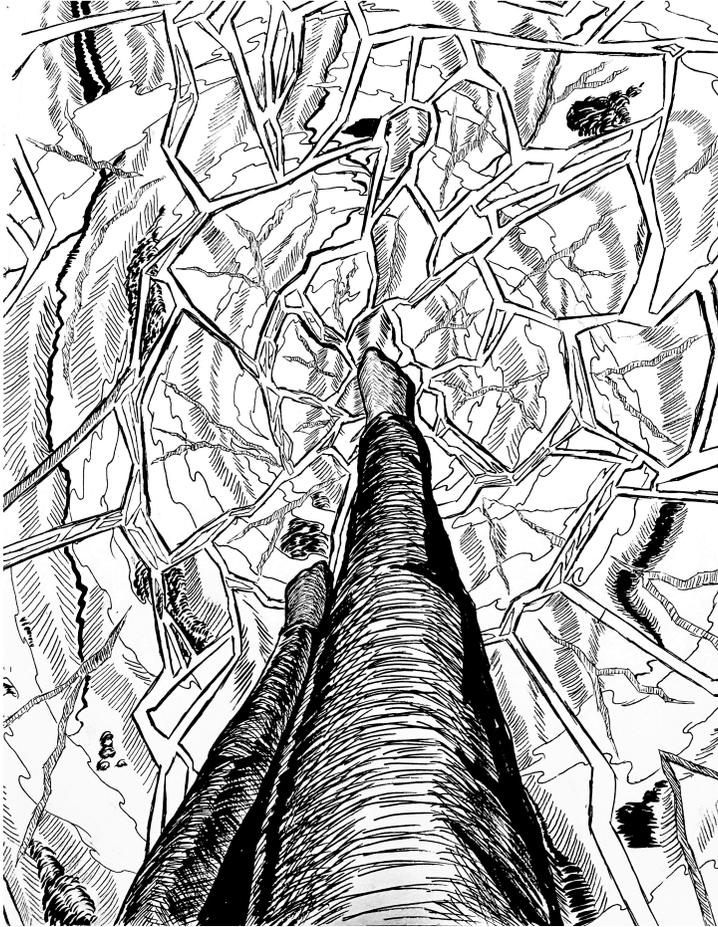


For this project, we manipulated photos we had taken, printed them on card-stock, and then hand-cut them as stencils. Then, we spray-painted those stencils to create our pieces.

Broken Skies

Ethan Le

* * *



This was meant to portray a fear of failure and the expectations held of what may happen if we do. It is like walking along a surface of broken glass in the sky, able to shatter at any time and fall too far for anyone to live another day. This is much like the high expectations we have for ourselves and the consequences of failure; thus, there's a hesitation to not continue forward, but to stay still only ensuring that the ground beneath will give way. However, without ever having gone forward in the first place one has a meager chance at success.

Cole

Sydney Grauer

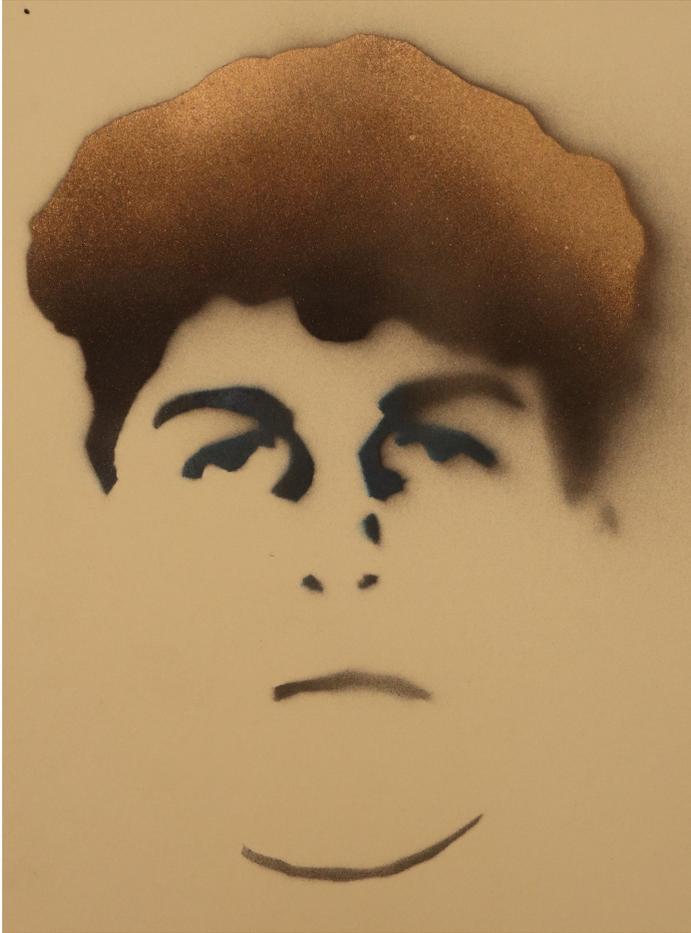


For this project, we manipulated photos we had taken, printed them on card-stock, and hand-cut them as stencils. Then, we spray-painted those stencils to create our pieces. This triptych includes three different painted images.

Dalton

Noah Ackerman

* * *



For this project, we manipulated photos we had taken, printed them on card-stock, and hand-cut them as stencils. Then we spray-painted those stencils to create our pieces.

Emma

Gabbi Martell

* * *



I made this piece a year ago and am proud of how it turned out. It is a vector illustration that I made using Adobe Illustrator, which took 17 hours to complete, of my cat, Emma. This portrait is important to me because, though it may sound silly, I have a special connection to her. We grew up together. She is like a sister to me: we are always competing for my mother's attention, and she is as sassy as a teenager. I love her deeply, which is why I chose her for my illustration.

Flying Through Time

Audrey Poulsen

Editor's Choice Award Winner

* * *



The artwork is a piece put together about flight. The vertical way it's drawn is to represent our further improvements in the growing world of flight. From the earliest planes a few feet off the ground to more modern soaring thousands above, this piece inspires the thought of flying through all the yesterdays of the past, today, and the tomorrows of our fast-approaching future.

*Lesson Plan for Artistic Expression Editor's Choice Award
Winner*

Using Art to Teach Chronological Order

Materials Needed

Copies or a copy of "Flying Through Time," writing utensils, paper, vocabulary words for time and organization

Time Frame: One Class

Objectives

- Students will learn to use transition words for time and organization.
- Students will practice writing in chronological order.

Essential Questions

- How does art connect to written response?

- How can art and writing show chronological order?

The Assignment

Students will write a written response, using chronological order and language, to the art piece “Flying Through Time.”

Bell Work / Opener

When students enter the room, have the picture of “Flying Through Time” either on each desk or displayed at the front on a screen. Instruct students to do the following: “On a piece of paper, write what you observe about this art piece? Write everything that comes to mind: style, organization, details, layout, people.”

Give students 5-10 minutes to free-write. Then, have students share their observations using shoulder-partners or by a round-robin discussion. As students discuss, take notes on the white board or a piece of paper and see what patterns emerge. Discuss these observations with students, including queries regarding artist intent, and then segue into the main activity.

Main Activity

Read the artist statement from *Voices of Kansas* that goes with “Flying Through Time.” Explain to the class the concept of chronological order and how it works in the picture. Conversely, you could ask students if any of them know what chronological order is and how it relates to the picture based upon the description.

Then, distribute a handout of vocabulary words relating to time and chronological organization. Transition words (conjunctive adverbs) can work well with this activity.

Ask students to only look at the words, not any definitions, and star words that they’re unfamiliar with and to put checkmarks next to any that they’d like to check their understanding on. Allow students to share all their stars, while you discuss and elaborate upon the word and its usage, followed by the checked words.

Finally, students are to write a new draft of their free-write from the opening activity that incorporates a handful of these transition and

chronological words (you determine the number based upon age-appropriateness and time).

Closing Activity

Wrap up the day by asking students to share their original and new version of their artistic observations with a shoulder partner and discuss how the new vocabulary shaped and changed the two pieces of writing. Then, have students turn in their work for you to review.

Standards Alignment

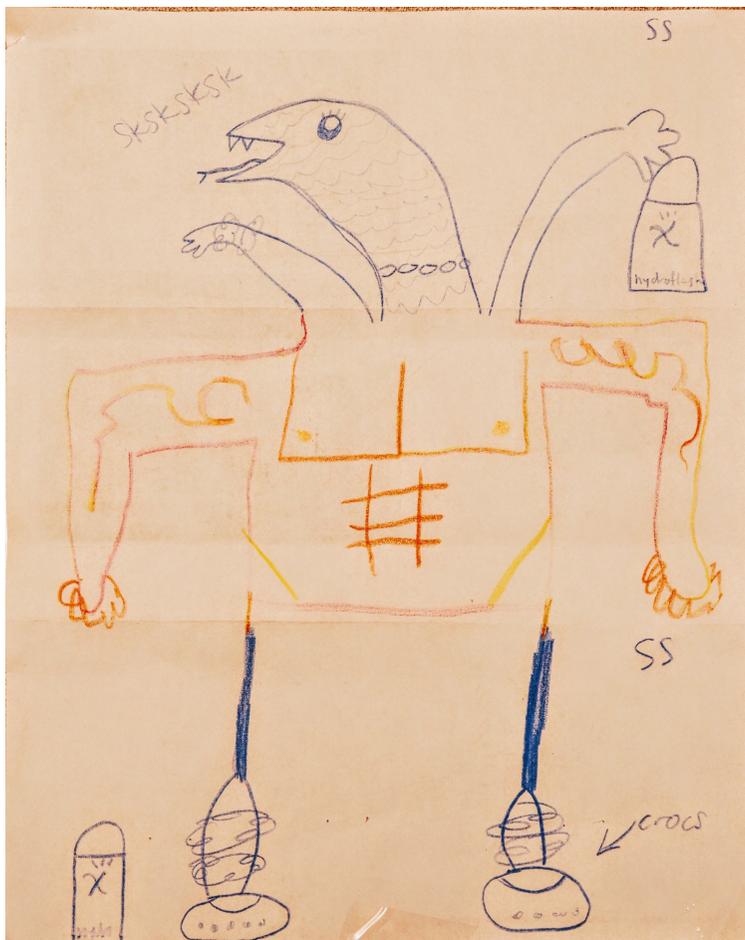
W.2: 6-12

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey ideas, topics, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of content.

Pop Goes the Culture

Summer Seematter

* * *



We created exquisite corpse images, drawing on one panel, folding the paper with only a couple of lines crossing it, and passing to the next person. I unknowingly completed the image I started. My co-artist is anonymous.

Ribs & Roses

Ashlee Taylor

* * *

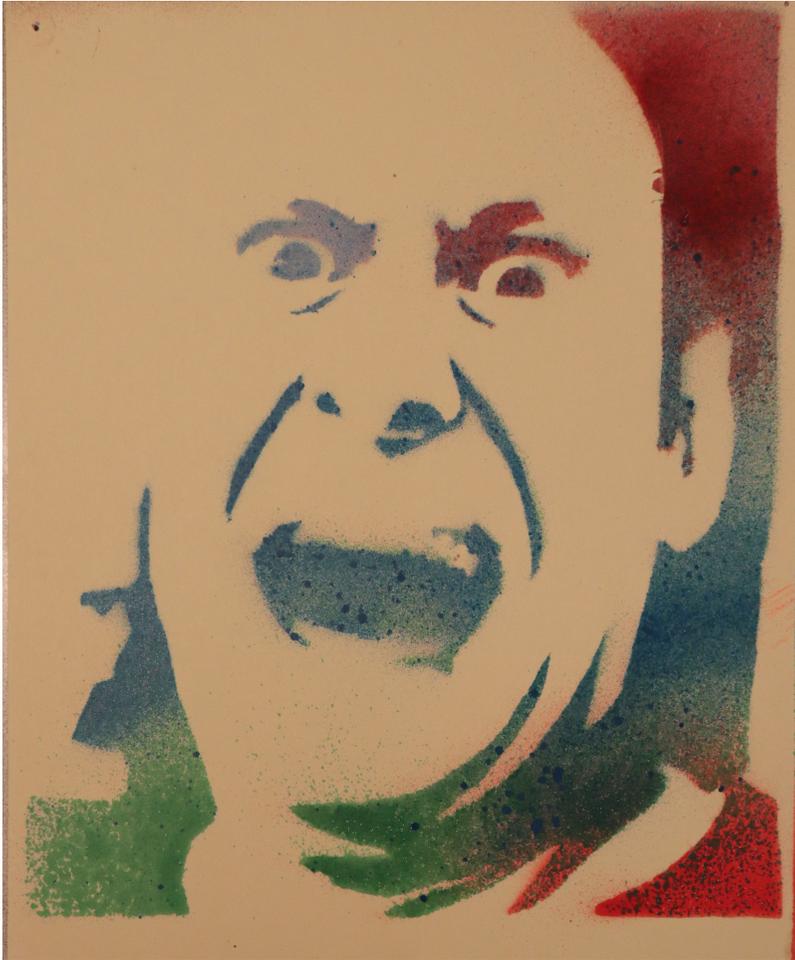


My piece reminds me of one of my favorite movies titled *Jack and the Cuckoo-Clock Heart*. My inspiration is from Mathias Malzieu's book *The Boy with the Cuckoo-Clock Heart's* character, Miss Acacia, who sprouted thorns whenever she got angry or upset. As I was sketching how this phenomenon would look, I was reminded of a band named The Grateful Dead. So, I tie-dyed the background like most of their album covers; however, it ended up looking more like flames than tie-dye. Although the background didn't turn out the way I hoped, I think I liked it better this way. It turned out to be a realistic rib cage with roses and thorns with a colorful, "fiery" background.

Wert

Jack Butler

* * *



For this project, we manipulated photos we had taken, printed them on card-stock, and hand-cut them as stencils. Then, we spray-painted those stencils to create our pieces.

Creative Fiction & Literary Non-Fiction

Brigand

Michael Isbell

Inglam, gone and dead.

Ketcher, gone and dead.

Smith, gone and dead.

Kasotov is missing, presumed dead.

Newton is missing, presumed dead.

Bruce "Brutus" Batholemew, taken prisoner of war. He is likely dead.

I am missing. Presumed dead.

Not dead. But lost. Very lost.

What noises that are left to be heard with my one good ear -- my left having been nearly blasted entirely away by shrapnel -- are often garbled through blasted drums and broken thoughts, my mind and my movements moving ever so swiftly against the currents of things that should be done.

Shelter, and fire, and water. I'll need food, but that can wait.

I scale a tree and see more trees; some of them are aflame, napalm's kiss, and others are barren of leaves, abundant in ash, having already simmered in the warzone.

Behind me I see a cleared area with emptied out tents.

No, that isn't true. They're filled with the dead.

But that was their fault. Throwing up such a large fire in such a horribly concealed area, not even bothering to post guards. They deserved to be raided.

My left hand merged tightly with the tree, I reach with my right into

my pocket, remove a small talisman taken from the camp. It's a small medallion engraved with a language I can't read or speak. I took it off a man down in the camp. I don't know if I was the one who killed him or not, but I took the talisman anyway.

I hold it up to the light. A bear clutching a flag.

The enemy's flag.

The enemy I might have killed, might not.

The man might have earned this, might not.

We aren't the only pillagers in this jungle.

We're only one of many.

E pluribus unum.

I put the talisman back into my pocket and lower myself back on the ground, filthy and scratched.

I head in the direction where last we were ordered to direct ourselves, disappointed that nothing more than apocalypse could have been seen from above the tree line.

Not more than a three-night passage deeper into the jungle and still I have not found any redeemable sight of my team. Enemy camps are ever more populous, and I fear the worst.

I do what I can to stop my heart from such a high pitter-patter so that my enemies, as I slink by their fires at night, might not hear me in the drunken darkness. With each dawn the fires are put out, and the enemies move further and further into my own country's territory.

I keep in front of them in the hopes of finding a group to retaliate with, but none materialize.

It is only enemies, and more enemies, and behind them, and in front of them, and next to them, I see enemies all around.

I find myself surprised by their presence; enemies in the trees, hanging most nimbly by the tips of their fingers on the weakest branches, searching for a displaced American soldier in the green; enemies in the dirt, or under large tree roots, waiting to grasp you about the ankle as you walk by, thinking you're safe; I see them, too, in the skies at night, pulling the stars right down like searchlights and hunting me.

It must be the talisman that they seek. It must be.

They must know I have it. They want it.

But it is my talisman, and I may or may not have earned it with my own gun.

As soon as daylight touches the jungle floor, I can hear the snakes

and frogs and mosquitoes scampering back to the enemy camps to tell them where I've gone and what I've done. To the enemies, they whisper which of their amphibious comrades I've scrounged up from the puddles and eaten in order not to starve, and what insectoid others I've smacked to death on my arms and legs and neck as they try to pump me full of poison, trying at all times to slow me down so that the enemy may grasp me, choke me, kill me dead, and find my brothers that I can no longer protect and kill them dead, too.

They may pursue me as they please. I will persist, and will not fall by their hand, by their pawns, or by their greed for the talisman that is mine, which belongs to me, which I earned with my own gun, and nobody else's, and which I will keep forever and ever more until I die, where it will be incinerated with me, and buried in my grave.

I've been rooted in these trees for more days than I can count. The vegetation and the pawns of the enemy will not satisfy any longer. The trees, too, whisper to the winds, and carry their message to the men who seek me out. I tear off their branches and burn them and they scream at me, but I ignore them. I am not afraid of trees.

I am afraid of the eyes.

The eyes which seem to corner me at every inch of my peripheral vision, promising to finally come for me, but which do not. They taunt me, plaguing me with my isolation, laughing. They squint and I can see them lighting cigarettes in the dark.

They care less and less about hiding. They have found me.

In the dawn I will flee, not stopping until the jungle ends.

A day later and I find myself on a beach, stripped naked of energy, and sanity. The enemies are too afraid of the sun to abandon their jungle home, but they watch and wait for it to stumble over the horizon, and doze.

As I near the water I find a shell; a small, glittering golden one.

I put it up to my ears, and I listen.

Roaring waves.

Ocean winds.

Artillery shells.

Yelling.

Booming.

Dying.

I drop the shell, and fish for my talisman.

I hold it to the light, and the enemies chitter among themselves from behind.

They watch as I enter the water to thigh's height.

I step further in, and their growls clear the dimming air before them. Their ten-inch claws paw the sand out of the jungle's shade.

I swim, I am set free.

And the enemies seek their talisman.

Mrs. Daley

Trevor Quintero

An eccentric, elderly character, Mrs. Daley dyed her hair honey-brown, not to avoid the shame of being old, but to claim the time as something that wouldn't bring her down. I met her through my mother, as Koreans in Japan were a rarity, especially in the cold, barren region that I lived in, so they confided in each other's presence when opportunity struck. They bonded further on the basis that they married American military service members.

To this day, I hold her near my heart, like a grandmother, considering my own passed away the year prior. She invited me and my mother to her home frequently, and her desire to assure that a thin boy left with contentment urged her to prepare a plethora of food upon my arrival, more suitable for a party than a teenager.

My memories of Mrs. Daley's home include the multitude of portraits that decorated the walls of the house. The drawings were her own: recreations of her two children, one son and one daughter, or the seaside that reminded her of former Hawaii home. In the corner of the house was her studio room. A clothesline sailed across the room strung with pastel and oil works secured by clips, strings, and even a hairpin. A white dove flying in the sunset was my favorite piece from her collection.

Throughout the years of 2015 and 2016, Mrs. Daley took upon the task of teaching her craft. While we painted canvas and drew pictures, she told me stories of her children and how fond she was of her old home. Her journey to Japan aligned closer to solemnity, contrary to the

many who lived in adventure when moving to another country. The voices of her children became seldom, with fewer calls exchanged over the years she spent abroad.

Then, in December of 2016, Mrs. Daley invited me over with no notice as usual. My mom wanted to buy groceries at the same time as dropping me off, so the honor of being the only guest fell upon me. When we arrived to Mrs. Daley's home, my mother reminded me on behavior. "Bow and greet her," she said with a firm tone. I detected no hesitation as she pulled out of the driveway since her trip to the grocery store took thirty minutes by car.

I took small steps to her door because ice lined her sidewalk. I rang the doorbell, hoping she would answer quickly so my body wouldn't freeze. She opened the door ever-so-slightly, and upon the sight of my glacial temperament, ushered me in as the frigid air seeped into her dwelling.

While entering her home, the sight of Mrs. Daley in her auburn coat foreshadowed the activity we'd be doing, and it definitely did not relate to art.

"Are we going out?" I asked in Korean. I paused to gather my objection to the idea. "It's too cold to do anything."

"I have lots of warm jackets and clothes if you need it," she said while bouncing on her feet.

It would be futile to try to convince her not to go into the evil wind, destined to make me suffer by its unwelcoming role.

Mrs. Daley took me to Miss Veedol Beach, the site of the first trans-pacific flight. Her winds, volatile as expected, dealt damage to my spirit, but Mrs. Daley's warmth kept me safe. We climbed the observation deck to gander the seacoast, and she carried a small parcel. The waves crashing into the breakers echoed even as we rose, and Mrs. Daley mentioned to me that the atmosphere was bringing back latent memories.

When we reached the top, she turned toward me. "It's for you." Her hair swept across her face.

Trying to hide my eagerness, I slowly opened the gift, attempting to stuff all the scraps into my pockets. It was a portrait of myself with a Candian family house in the background, the first thing she taught me how to draw.

This was my last visit to Mrs. Daley.

Unaware of this at the time, I look back, wishing I appreciated the setting more.

Ten months passed before I saw Mrs. Daley again. During that time, her place in my life faded into haze. Practicing piano in preparation of a lesson, my mother said that Mrs. Daley would be arriving to say goodbye.

“Goodbye? Is she moving?”

“Yes,” she replied. “Please be gentle with her. She has been diagnosed with Alzheimer’s.”

“Oh, I didn’t know.” The piano reverb stopped.

“It was recently diagnosed, but her husband says it’s progressing quickly.”

Mrs. Daley arrived by a car driven by her husband because she wasn’t able to drive herself anymore. As she stepped into the house, I bowed to her. The softer steps of her stride and her fading hair color emanated a gradual shift of personality to the morose. Getting old was something I never thought I could see dispirit her, but those moments told a different story.

My mother and Mrs. Daley spoke for the majority of the time, but I didn’t mind, as Mrs. Daley drank her coffee with vigor and had a smile that mirrored my own. The conversation between them became heavy. My mother grew weary over the paranoid fluster and forgotten details in her words.

At one point, I told my mother that I was fixing a snack, which prompted Mrs. Daley.

“You should make your son his snack.” Always insistent on spoiling me, it made me happy that she still held high to her peculiarities.

“I’m okay. It’s a sandwich. Super easy,” I replied.

At this point, she began to pester and guilt-trip my mother. “He’s ten, you can make his snack for him.”

“He’s fourteen.” I wished my mother hadn’t said that. I’d rather let her believe I’m ten than let her know that she didn’t remember me.

My mother left to the kitchen to prepare dinner, so I was left with Mrs. Daley by myself.

“Where are you moving to?” I ask.

“Closer to my kids. I miss them,” her voice quiver.

“That must be nice. Do you think you’ll still draw while over there?”

“Until I can’t.”

“Then what?” My heart sank at the thought.

“I’ll enjoy my Hawaii home that I’m returning to.”

I never heard from her again, but whenever I reminisce on those

days, wondering if she remembers me, I look to my portrait hanging in my room.

My Old Man

Coltrane Curry

Editor's Choice Award Winner

It was a windy day in October when the house fell down. The sturdy frame had stood tall for some time, but it was ancient now, frail from age and wear. Not much was left, save for the memories and creaking floors. But it was one final, God-given, conclusive breeze that brought down the home.

I hadn't believed the old bastard could do it—die, that is. His heart hadn't worked in years, but there it was, still beating like the belt he used to be so fond of swinging. And there he was, griping about how "the world don't work the way it used to" and how my mother was "the only good thing to happened to him" and how I wasn't "more than a disappointment with arms". In the final moments, he made me look away, promising him his pride was still there, unyielding. No apologies, no explanations, no "I do love you son," no nothing. Just a cold whisper telling me to "turn away" and his soul finally raising the white flag. Actually, his soul would've went fighting on its knees, struggling until the end. That's how I like to look at it. The other way would be too easy, and I know that's something he would never allow.

I never knew him completely. Just the outside. Get up, work. Eat, drink some coffee, work some more. His hat on, some dry grass to chew in his mouth, and his favorite belt around his waist. That was the outside. That stubborn smirk of distrust on his face, as if he expected us to fail and wanted to see if we couldn't. Mom must've seen the

inside of him at some point. She was the only one who loved him fully—we did some, but not all the way because love was for her, not him, who took our love and beat us with it. She wasn't like him at all: she was the one who sat by our beds and made us feel like we had a place in the world, a purpose that would be our own someday. But somehow, she saw light in him. To us, he wasn't nothing but the man who made us work until our backs broke. To us, she was the light I saw under the door as I laid in my bed, scared half-to-death but not going to tell anyone that I was still scared of the dark, scared of him.

After Mom got sick, there wasn't really anyone to take care of the house or him. I think that's what finally broke him—loving one thing for all those years, and then watching it fade away, scared but smiling—that's what did it. Hell, it broke all of us. The saddest part was that she went without her favorite part of herself. Mom always had the nicest hair—strong, thick, soft, a brilliant blonde that made you look twice: once because it caught your eye and second because you couldn't believe how one man could ever be so lucky. Well, her hair started going on a windy day in October. I remember because the roof was shaking like how it used to, before it fell in on itself. After that night, more and more started falling out, and one trip to the doctor confirmed my worst fear. By Christmas she was gone. What had once been the light underneath my door became the tears I wiped on my pillow, broken and heavy with the realization that if I called out, she would not answer.

As time went on and he got meaner, we all got tougher. "Never ask for anything you can't earn," he told us, "and you'll never owe anyone a thing". Well, I didn't ask him for nothing from that day on. From then on it was us and him, until one-by-one, everyone else left and then it was me and him, until I was old enough and then it was just him. I like to think he preferred it that way—a simple man needn't be bothered by distractions that children only offered. He knew there wasn't a future for us there and he raised us knowing there never would be. If there was, why would he swing so hard with that damned belt?

What finally did bring me back home was the news that he wasn't going to be here much longer. The old bastard didn't even tell us, it was the concerned town preacher. Well, I was the only one who came back. They had their own lives to live, and he never exactly showed much care for them, so, why would they? I don't blame them, but still—no one should die alone—not even him. When I got there, I thought

the house might flatten if I spoke too loudly. But God held it up, just long enough for me to try to see him off, until he told me to turn away so he could die without me ever seeing the inside— seeing him alone, seeing him afraid. Not 30 seconds after I walked out the house did God give my old man a burial of his liking.

It began with the roof—it went this way, then that, and finally decided to go inside itself, as if it were exhaling a sigh of relief, tired from the weight of the stars and the pain underneath. After the roof was laid to rest, the structure soon followed, like children returning to their mother's call. "Coming," said the walls, joining the floors on their descent to the ground. When all was said, and done, there was a heap of wood, plaster, tile, and furniture laying, finally at rest. It was almost silent, the way the memory and time-worn house collapsed upon itself. Grateful to have lived and to have served so many, it dropped to one knee, then the other, and then laid, the house finally going home.

Lesson Plan for Creative Writing & Literary Non-Fiction
Editor's Choice Award Winner

Using Flashback Effectively

Materials Needed

Sample piece ["My Old Man" from Voices of Kansas],
Paper / pencils / highlighter, Laptops / computers for
active reading the story and final drafts

Time Frame: Variable

Objective

- Students will identify the use of flashback as a literary technique in fiction.

Essential Questions

- How can past details help foreshadow events in the story?

- What does flashback reveal about the protagonist or the narrator?

The Assignment

Students will analyze the writer's use of flashbacks in order to understand the character's attitude and the story's overall tone.

Bellwork/Opener

Have students read "My Old Man" aloud (from Voices of Kansas) in small groups - have them highlight the flashback passages as they read.

Main Activities

Have students create a timeline of events from one of their previously written narratives and determine what details could be told using a flashback. Then have them switch out a passage and inject the flashback into the work. The next class period could be used to have a student present both versions of his/her story and see which the class felt was most effective.

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.

Some Possible Variations:

Students could write in teams (one working on the past and one the present aspect of the story) and have them read it aloud with each student taking his/her part. This would allow the students to better identify the flashback.

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. Do we care about the protagonist? Do we care more about the narrator?
2. How effective is the use of first-person in this story?
3. What is the obstacle to overcome?
4. Where is the climax of the story (the breaking or turning point of highest tension)?
5. How did the flashback earlier in the story lead to the climax?
6. 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)

Don't forget to have your students share their work! Have students practice reading their stories and — of course — submit them to Voices of Kansas next year by Jan. 31, 2021!

Standards Alignment

W.11-12.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

- a. Engage the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation, establishing one or multiple points of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.
- b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
- c. Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome.
- d. Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.
- e. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

W.11-12.10

Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing.

- a. Vary syntax for effect, consulting references for guidance as needed.
- b. Apply the understanding that usage is a matter of convention, can change over time, and is sometimes contested.
- c. Resolve issues of complex or contested usage, consulting references (e.g., Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of English Usage, Garner's Modern American Usage) as needed.

W.11-12.5

Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

Route 66

Laura E. Soper

Next gas, 200 miles. Stop now, or stop never. The tacky neon sign flashed its bright green light against the beige backdrop of the desert. Lee intended for his last stop to be just that: his last, but the bright words of the sign had him reconsidering that decision. He filled up not even an hour ago, but the thought of being stranded in the middle of nowhere had him checking his gas gauge again and again. He drove past the station before stopping less than 500 feet away and turning around after finally deciding to fill up. He knew that he had just filled up, and he knew that he would have had enough gas in his tank, but what if? What if he didn't have enough gas in his tank? What then? He would much rather spend a few bucks now than having to hitchhike with some stranger to get gas for his car.

Pulling up to one of the pumps, Lee knew that he was being absolutely ridiculous. His car had excellent mileage, and he could probably go 2,000 miles with the amount of gas that he had, but what if? He sighed to himself and decided that he might as well use the bathroom and grab some snacks while he was here. It would be 200 miles before another gas station (or rest stop as he soon found out), and he didn't fancy the idea of what might happen if he didn't take advantage of indoor plumbing while he had the chance. Stretching his legs out, Lee finished pumping what little gas would fit in his car before collecting his receipt and moving towards the small convenience store.

Upon setting foot indoors, Lee couldn't help but notice that the

inside was as tacky as the outside. Large neon signs littered the walls, advertising booze and bars. The shelves were sparsely stocked, with large gaps in between the products, leading Lee to wonder when the last shipment was brought in. A quick glance at a bag of chips revealed a best-by label marking the heavily preserved treat as two-years expired. Lee silently prayed that this would not be the case throughout the store and quickly moved to the counter. As he approached the chipped counter, he had the disturbing realization that the chips were far from the only thing expired. The tin cans and jars that lay on the shelves were stained and cracked. The plastic packaging that was meant to protect the sugary foods seemed to have melted into them, a potential cause of the rank odor that Lee realized was now invading his nose. Shivering, Lee figured that he would just find the bathroom and use it, snacks be hanged. Suddenly, he froze. He had just rounded the corner, when he spied the checkout counter and who, or rather, what was behind it.

Sitting behind the desk... was a skeleton. Although, skeleton wasn't the right word for it. It was covered in skin, and clothing, but that seemed to be all. No muscle, no fat, and its tendons and veins stood out starkly against the very visible skeletal structure underneath. Its skin had gone past pale three shades of white ago, and now had a translucent appearance to it, allowing a good look at what little remained of its organs as he approached.

Lee gasped as he struggled to hold back his vomit. By some miraculous feat, that thing was alive. Its heart, no matter how slow, was beating. Lee had had enough at that point. He turned on his heel, made a dash towards the door, and slammed into something solid. He assumed that he had run into a shelf, but when he looked up, he felt himself go as pale as the man behind the counter. Whatever he had run into was most certainly not a shelf; it was something far stranger. Tall and cold, the thing had to bend nearly in half just to fit under the ceiling. It didn't have a presence, but was more of a lack of presence, a void where something should have been something. Lee quickly realized that he hadn't actually run into it, as there was nothing to run into, but he had run into the stuff that was escaping it, the light, and air, and matter that was incapable of existing in the same space as that, that thing. Like all other matter Lee wanted, no, needed to get away from that thing. Every urge, every instinct, every primal essence of being in him needed to get away.

Lee lurched backwards and once again froze, although this time it

wasn't his fault. Something was holding him in place. He shook, and squirmed, but he could do nothing more than that. He felt himself shivering. Not only his muscles but also his atoms; the very core of his being was vibrating in an attempt to get away from that utterly terrifying *thing*. Lee let out a sob. He had to get away. He struggled against the invisible bonds holding him, and he began to sob even louder as his efforts were met with indifference. Then, with blood chilling horror, he realized that he was being pulled closer. His sobs turned into screams as he fought with his entire strength against this force that pulled him in. Every muscle strained as he did what he could to escape – only to be met with a low voice hatred-dripping voice that spoke into his very mind.

You're mine now.

Lee felt his mind go numb and grey as his consciousness started to slip from him. He thought vaguely of his brother, before he stopped struggling, and let the darkness of that thing consume him.

Slap Happy Grand Pappy

Timothy McLemore

My Grandpa was the nicest man the world has ever known. I knew him as Grandpa McKeever, but he deserves a better title than that. I don't know, like The Cool Grandpa or The Grandpappy of Motorcycles.

Ever since I can remember, he was nice to all of us. He gifted us things; he was our very own blood-relative Santa Claus who rode motorcycles! I loved seeing him. We would play poker for hours and listen to his stories of Vietnam. He was in the Navy back in those days, but that didn't stop him from doing other things. He was a scuba diver, ballerina shoe maker, and trucker. He even trained the Navy seals! He was one cool guy.

When I was a little kid, we would visit him on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and whenever we wanted. He lived on a large patch of land in the poorest county of Oklahoma. However, it didn't matter because we always had fun. He used to smoke, but he quit because the smell usually made us sick. We used to dream about going on exciting motorcycle rides.

One day, while we ate Chinese and played poker, he told me what became one of my favorite stories. It started a bit like this:

“One time, I was stationed on an aircraft carrier, and we were loading our ship down in Panama, and one of my friends took me to the side and said, ‘Hey, I’ve got something I need to tell you about.’

“‘What?’ I asked because I was busy loading crates and other things, and I didn’t want an officer to come yell at me.

“Handle that crate with care.’ He pointed, and just as he did, it started to wiggle and bounce up and down. I looked at him with disapproval. We weren’t allowed to have animals on board.

“What’s in it?’ I asked.

“Just a couple of spider monkeys, nothing too big.’ I let it slide because, first of all, he was my friend, and second, I just found the situation hilarious. We all went to bed that night knowing there was a ‘couple’ of spider monkeys on board. When we got up that morning, however, that’s when all hell broke loose.

“They got out,’ He said to me.

“Shit! How many are there actually?’

“About fifty.’ Just then, we were all called to the deck, where our officer was there to ‘greet’ us.

“Ok, first of all, who brought all these damn monkeys on board?’ We didn’t say anything. ‘If you guys don’t say anything, we’ll just leave you here in Panama.’

“Well, that doesn’t sound too bad,’ I said. Then I pointed at my friend. ‘He brought them,’ I laughed.

“My friend turned around and looked at me as if to say, ‘What the eff, man?’

“Alright, your dumb ass is going to round every one of those monkeys up and send them overboard!’ The officer was not amused.

“Man, it was a funny day. Fifty-four monkeys, all being thrown off the deck of an aircraft carrier. Let me tell you, them sons of bitches are not easy to catch! The sharks sure had fun.”

As weird as this story sounds, it was true; I believed him. He had countless stories like this, but if I talked about all of them, it would fill a book.

As nice as it was to spend time with him, good times came to an end. In February of 2017, he fell ill and went into the V.A. in Muskogee Oklahoma. He would recover and go back down to his house for a few days; then, he would sicken again and go back to the V.A. It was like this all through 2017. We visited him every time we could. He rallied towards August, and we all had a month of rest from taking the three-hour car ride to Muskogee – or the six-hour ride to his house.

I was at school when it happened. The last hour of the day. I got a text from my dad saying Grandpa was sick, and they didn’t think he was going to make it. That’s all I could think about on the twenty-minute bus ride home. The second we arrived home, my sister and I all

jumped into the car and headed straight down to the V.A. We arrived at about 10:00pm. It was the saddest thing I have ever been through. He was laying there: oxygen, life support, you name it, and it was in him. The moment we all saw him, the reality of the situation hit us. My mom and my sister started to cry. My dad, brother, and I all stood there trying not to. At about 11:30 P.M., my mom told me to say something to him. These were my words:

“It’s ok Grandpa. All of my friends worry for you. We’re all here for you.”

He was pronounced dead at 12:00 A.M., September 25. When they said he was gone, that was when we all lost it. My dad, brother, my Uncle Tom whom I’ve never – ever – seen cry , and I, just burst out crying like babies. The V.A. nurses and doctors put him in a ceremonial coffin and took him through the hospital to the hearse. While they were doing so, it was announced on the intercom. We still cried as we watched it drive away. We said goodbye and left. During the car ride back, no one spoke to one another. We were all too sad . We got home at around 3:30 A.M. I had school the next day, but I couldn’t sleep. I lay there remembering the one thing my grandpa always told me: “Live your life, have fun, do everything you can do to make it last.”

I wear his dog tags whenever I can, or his jacket, or I carry one of the countless silver dollars he gave me. I will never forget him, even if I die, because we still have to go on that motorcycle ride that I always dreamed of.

That Night I Snuck Out

Jazmyn Roberts

I don't live that fun of a life. I'm not gonna lie, but this one night was the most fun I have ever had. Now, I guess you wanna know what happened, right? Well, great! Because I'm gonna share.

It was summer break, and I was in love with a ridiculously cute boy. We hung out all the time, and one night, Makenna and I were bored, so I decided to see if Kaden and his friend would wanna hang out.

Everything was great. Kaden picked us up and that's when it all started. Well, nothing really fun happened at first. Well, I guess you could say the bad stuff happened first.

We went to cruise around and decided to go on a dirt road. It was Kaden, Christan, Makenna, and I in a three-seater truck, so it was pretty jammed full.

Kaden said, "Why doesn't Jazzy drive, so me and Christan can stick our heads out of the window?"

We all agreed, so I started to drive and everything was great. Makenna wanted to drive as well, so I let her. She kept driving in the sand on the side, and we all kept telling her to move over, evidently, she didn't hear us because she drove right into a sand pile. I yelled at her to stop and get back over, but she panicked and she slammed on the brakes.

I bet you can guess what happened, but I'm gonna tell you anyways. She got us stuck. This was Kaden's truck and he was not happy. Makenna was mad because Christian told her she should have stopped, and, yes, she does have anger issues. Meanwhile, I started

digging in the sand to get the tire unstuck.

There were two dogs that just wouldn't stop barking, and I was getting scared that the owners were gonna come out.

Kaden was on the phone with his brother Brayden, when a couple of older guys drove by and offered to help us get the truck unstuck. As that was happening, the owners of these dogs came out, and I was sure they were gonna call the cops. We got the truck unstuck thanks to those guys. We all were covered in sand from the road and could literally taste the grit. We got into Hutchinson, and we decided to stay off of dirt roads and leave it to Kaden to drive. It was about two o'clock in the morning, so we decided to go to Walmart.

Makenna said, "We should go our own ways in the store and meet up at the truck around 2:30."

Kaden said, "Ok, but what are we gonna do? There's literally nothing for us to do."

Makenna said, "You'll figure it out."

Then, she pulled me into to the girls' bathroom where we took pictures like normal girls do. Later, we met back up with the boys, and as we were driving down Main Street, we noticed the truck was acting up, and we couldn't drive over 15 mph.

The boys spent a lot of time going to different shops buying different parts to try to fix it, but they ended up wasting their money because nothing ended up helping.

We ended up going to a bunch of parks, and I got really cold, so Christan gave me his jacket, and then we just messed around.

We ended up leaving town around seven in the morning because my dad gets up around eight o'clock. I live about twenty minutes away, and it took us about an hour to get home. But, we ended up just parking, and Brayden came and took Makenna and I the rest of the way home.

"Well, you guys are up early," my dad said.

"Yeah, we went to bed early last night," I lied.

"Well, do you guys wanna go get breakfast?" my dad suggested.

"Yeah, sure," I said.

While we were eating, Makenna was just about to fall asleep.

When we went home, Makenna took a shower at her house, and I watched a movie at mine. When she came back over to my house, we fell asleep, but not for long because my dad woke me up screaming.

"You wanna tell me why the cops are here?"

I walked out into the living room and saw three cop cars in my

driveway and four police officers in my house. The cops told my dad that the car broke down right outside of town, and the cops thought we were only out for a couple of hours. I did not argue with that.

Then the cop asked, "Do you have the boy's jacket?"

"Yes, I do," I replied.

I ended up getting screamed at at first, then later my dad ignored me.

In the end, the night was totally worth the punishment. I would do it again in a heartbeat.

The Test

Yashima Armstrong

"Honey, it's time for dinner," Ann called for the second time waiting for her daughter to come downstairs.

Feeling as though something was wrong, she went up to Emery's room to check on her. Little did she know that she would be greeted with such a sight as the one before her eyes. She let out a piercing scream that was such a desperate cry for help that John, her husband, rushed up the stairs to find out what the ruckus was about. She immediately called the police, as well as an ambulance; although, she knew there was no hope for her daughter now. Even after leaving the forsaken room, the image of her daughter hanging from the ceiling fan burned into her mind. For in that instant, she knew that she would never be able to speak to Emery again.

When the police arrived, they at once started investigating the room. At first glance, the room looked like any other teenager's: messy. Under the deceased girl's feet lay a note addressed to her parents. It read, "I'm sorry, but it had to be this way. I love you, Mom and Dad." This led the police to believe that she had, indeed, committed suicide.

The police's questions came rapid fire. "When did you find the body?"

"After finding the body, how long did it take you to call?"

"Did your daughter say anything to you that may have indicated a suicidal thought?"

"Was there anyone close to Emery who could be questioned?"

However, neither Ann nor John was in a state to reply. All they

could say was, "I'm sorry, I don't know," and, "All I know is that she was very close to her boyfriend, Peyton."

Ann pondered her daughter's death for the next couple of days; in fact, it was all she could think about, and yet she could not bring herself to believe that Emery would take her own life. "John, I can't believe it. She wasn't depressed, and there never seemed to be anything that bothered her."

"Honey, I don't believe that she committed suicide either. I can't believe that. If it is true, then that would make us pitiful parents for not noticing her pain," replied John.

"Then what about the note? The police's tests even proved that she had written it."

"There must be another explanation. There must be."

Wanting answers that the police could not give her, she started her own search for the truth: were the police right or was it murder? She thought that maybe her daughter was forced to write the note. Although the tests proved that it was Emery's handwriting, it was quite a bit shakier than normal. She also checked her room not leaving a single inch unchecked. In the bathroom, next to Emery's bedroom, Ann found a box. It was not just any box: it was for pregnancy tests. She knew there must be a connection between the box and her daughter's death because no matter how hard she tried, she could not find the test itself. She pondered this for some time and showed John the empty box.

"I could have been a grandmother." This thought brought tears to her eyes, for she had always wanted grandchildren, but now that could never happen. She then thought, "Maybe that's the reason? Emery would never abort her baby. If she didn't abort it, then the father would have to pay child support as well as be responsible for the baby. The father to the baby must be Peyton. Did he kill her?"

Without losing any time, she went to the police to show them what she had found and to tell them her theory. After considering Ann's story, they checked the box for fingerprints and ran a prenatal paternity test on Emery's body. Upon finding Peyton's prints on the box and getting a positive paternal hit, they deemed her theory plausible and obtained a search warrant for Peyton's house.

The house was unkempt and disorderly. Neither inside nor outside was cared for to the point of it being rundown. A disheveled man answered the scratched door and told them that Peyton was gone. They started the search in Peyton's room. It did not take the police

long to find the test in the trash can covered by rubbish. The test became the key piece of evidence against him in court where he was found guilty.

After hearing the news that he had been the killer, Ann was outraged. Nevertheless, rather than living the rest of her life in despair she decided to speak to Peyton in jail.

“Why did you do that? Do you care how much suffering you caused? How could you?!”

“I’m truly sorry. I wasn’t thinking at the time, I just wanted to stop her from having the baby. I come from a broken home, and my mom left, and my dad and I can’t afford even the things we need.”

“You are sickening! I have nothing else to say to you.”

“I’m so sorry.”

Even after returning home, Ann was split between emotions. Part of her wanted to forgive him, but the other part of her could not. He had done something unspeakable. She got in the car and drove far away as though escape from the pain was possible. However, the farther she went the guiltier she felt. To flee would be the same as to abandon the memory of her daughter. She returned home. Emery’s room was peaceful with the dazzling sunshine pouring through the windows and the sound of the birds singing their sweet melodies. Suddenly, she felt as though it would all be all right. A wave of contentment washed over her. It was the first time she had felt happy since the death and maybe, somewhere far away, Emery was happy too.

The Woodcarver's Daughter

Ashdon Childs

At the edge of the mountains, in a grassy field, lived a woodcarver and his daughter. The woodcarver's name, as he told me long ago, was Carver Wood. His daughter, whom he called his "Little Flame," was named Mishal Wood. Carver lived with no wife, and each day, he carved magnificent creations. His daughter loved playing with fire. In fact, it was all she played with. She didn't want wooden-made dolls or a swing of birch. She never found fun in wood making, only flames. Carver often made many things for Mishal, but all she did was burn them, as if she never cared at all.

Once, I walked over to their cabin to see how things were going. As I approached, Mishal told me that her father was not home. I decided to walk around and admire the small garden in the back, waiting for Carver to return. I saw a small pile of wood that had been charred and burned black. At that moment, Mishal came up to me.

She spoke softly. "That's the pile of all my burnings. Everything father has given me, I burned them here."

I looked at her oddly, and questioned the sight. "Why must you burn such wonderful gifts?"

She scoffed and turned her head away from me. "Why should I care?" she replied, her sapphire-colored eyes glared at me. "He doesn't understand me." Then she walked off, back into the cabin, pulling her long, red hair into a ponytail a gesture she adopted whenever she was angry or upset.

Later that day, I returned to my home. My wife greeted me at the

door. Seeing that I was troubled, she asked, "What's wrong, Dear?"

"Carver's daughter doesn't seem to understand how much he does for her." I looked at my wife. She smiled softly at me,

"I think it's her way of showing love." She tried to make me feel better about the situation. After a couple of hours passed by, Mishal called me. She spoke quickly and fearfully.

"Please, Sir, come quick!"

"What's wrong?" I asked in a rushed voice.

"My father! The cabin! Please help!" She pleaded before running out.

I immediately suspected what was wrong and drove to the cabin. Mishal was outside, and the flames glared off her eyes. I ran to her and looked at the inferno. I could barely see the figure of Carver's still body inside. I rushed inside, trying not to breathe in the smoke. I grabbed Carver and dragged him out. He had severe burns all over his body. I looked over at Mishal, "Get in the car! We must take him to the hospital!"

She nodded, crawled inside, and then she opened the back door so I could set her father in without trouble. During the ride, Mishal kept whispering to herself, "It's my fault. It's all my fault."

I looked over at her and sighed, "It isn't your fault, Mishal. You just didn't know the consequences of your actions."

"But I do know the consequences of my actions. I just don't understand why I did it."

I was a little stunned from her response but kept driving. As we arrived at the hospital, Mishal looked back at her father who was passed out, and she seemed to emotionally beat herself.

The emergency staff rushed Carver inside. Hours passed. Then, we were told that he was in a coma. It should have lasted a couple of days, approximately a week. But it dragged on longer than expected.

For weeks, Mishal visited Carver, hoping he would awaken to see her. But no luck was ever found, not even after a month passed. While Carver recovered, Mishal lived with me and my wife, who often comforted her with blankets and cookies.

Each day seemed to drag on longer and longer. I noticed that Mishal held a small wooden doll. She never parted from it, as if it was the only hope she had left.

"My father gave it to me when I was only three." Her eyes stayed focused on the doll when she spoke to me. "It's the only thing I never burned into ashes."

I noticed Mishal gripped the doll harder when I placed my hand on

her shoulder. My wife spoke softly to her, "He will be OK, I promise."

After three months of waiting, we received a call about Carver. Mishal expected bad news, but I answered anyway, my voice shaking with worry. "Is he dead?"

"Of course not, Sir! We called to inform you that Mr. Wood is actually awake and would like to see his daughter."

I was surprised by this response and looked over at Mishal with a wide grin on my face, "Guess who wants to see you?" She looked at me, confused. After about a minute or two, she finally understood.

We drove to the hospital and entered Carver's room. Mishal wanted to jump into his arms. Instead, she walked over and sat next to him, tears rolled down her face. Carver looked at me with his soft, blue eyes, as if thanking me for keeping Mishal safe.

"I'm so sorry, Papa!" Mishal apologized.

"What is there to apologize for?" replied Carver. "You will always be my little girl, but may I ask something of you?" Mishal nods slightly, then her father continues, "Why have you burned all of my gifts for you?" Mishal looks down slightly then responds slowly. "I thought you would never understand me. I wanted to be myself, to not live a wooden existence, but to be free. You seemed to not care about my freedom."

"I will always care, Mishal."

It has been over a year since that incident. Carver and Mishal are even closer than before. Mishal threw away all her destructive matches and fire-making tools. They even started a small pyrography business together. As for me, I still see them every once in a while, to check up on them, and Mishal always greets me with a spark in her eyes.

Unlikely

Heidi Hudson

When Max came home after an eventful day at school, she grabbed her phone to text her friend Peyton about Trace, her crush.

OMG! Peyton, guess what!

What?? Peyton replied.

Trace finally asked me on a date! We're going to the movies, and he's picking me up at 7. We're going somewhere in Denver. OMG! I'm so excited!!

Aww, you guys are finally going on a date. I'm so happy for you! Too bad I don't go to your school :(.

I know, I wish I could see you Bro. I feel like we've connected on a different level, like I've never had a best friend like you. Anyway, my stupid mom is calling me to do chores, TTYL.

Wait, please don't go, I have a question. So, my friend Brynne is in a situation rn. Her boyfriend wants a picture, you know, one w/o her shirt, but she's around people and can't go to her room can you help her out?

My mom is going to get mad if I don't go downstairs right now, I have to go. Tell Brynne I said sorry, I'm busy. Maybe later.

Yeah whatever. Bye.

Max thought back, "That was a sign. How did I not realize that? I'm so stupid. I wish I had realized sooner."

"Hey! What do you think you're doing?" The voice continued, "You're needed in Colorado, Springs by tomorrow at 10 pm."

Max sat, her now-red eyes filled with tears, hopeless.

“Hurry up!”

Max remained seated.

“Alright, I’ll just have to come get you, then.”

Max fought and fought, with every bit of strength she had in her. The hulking man pulled her by the arm, grabbed her legs, and then tossed her into the trunk of his car and slammed it shut. She frantically searched for the trunk release, her hands awaiting the touch of the handle.

Peyton! I have so much to tell you! Max had gotten on her phone to, once again, text Peyton.

Hey, what’s up? Peyton replied to Max.

Trace and I had such a great date!! I think we might end up being boyfriend and girlfriend!

Aww I’m so happy for you! Hey...can you do me a favor?

Does Brynne need another picture?

Yes, how’d you know??

Hold on, give me a second.

Wow! Max, you’re so beautiful. I love your curves so much. You’re perfect.

Well, thanks, I guess.

“Where is the damn handle?” Max whisper shouted to herself, “I can’t find it!” Her brown eyes tearing up, her body rapidly filling with fear, knowing what was soon to happen, she broke down and cried. Crying herself to sleep, Max was disconsolate.

She awoke from her nap when she felt the car come to a stop. Max wished to never wake up, to stay asleep, to die -- for all she cared at this point. She didn’t want to be here. She wanted to go hug her little sister, hug her mom and dad. She wanted to go to school. She wanted to go play sports. She dreaded what was coming for her.

Hey girl! Peyton texted Max, Why aren’t you responding to me? Maaaaaaax, hello??

What? Max finally responded. She didn’t want to talk to Peyton today.

Finally! Where have you been?

I’m busy. Text you later.

Yeah, no. You don’t get to be mad and not text me.

Okay, I’m sorry. What did you need?

I’ve been thinking that we should meet.

Oh yeah! That'd be fun! When would work for you? Anytime, really, will work for me because my mom is on a business trip for the next month.

I was thinking Saturday, my parents will be busy and I can do whatever I want.

Okay! Sounds like a plan! I'm so excited!

Alright, is Sonic a good destination for you?

Yeah, sounds perfect. Wait, but Sonic is closed this Saturday.

Oh yeah, I know. I just don't know how to get anywhere else but Sonic.

Oh okay, that's fine.

Max was snatched by the super huge man that she once knew as Peyton and was thrown over his shoulder like a sack of potatoes. She was nothing to the tall man carrying her. She was a sex object that he could sell for money and use for his own enjoyment whenever pleased. "She's here! Now where's my money, Damian?" the tall man shouted.

"Okay, okay. Calm down, Isaac. I know you said she was pretty, but damn, I wasn't expecting that. You know? I'm not one for tall girls but she makes it work." said Damian.

"Isaac." The name repeated in Max's head over and over again. "Isaac, Isaac." Her thoughts were interrupted by Damian.

As Max arrived at the closed Sonic, she saw dark figures standing around a car. They seemed almost as if they were waiting for someone's arrival. Max pulled into the lot and parked as far away from the mysterious figures as she could.

"Hey Peyton, I'm at Sonic. Where are you?" Max began to type faster as the figures approached her, "There are strange guys here, I'm about to leave." She saw that one of their phones light up when she delivered the text. Max filled with angst. She reached for the lock button, started the car, and sped out of there.

The figures ran back to their car and chased her to a dirt road where she finally got out and yelled, "What do you want from me?" and before she could continue, the men grabbed her and tossed her into the back of their car.

All Max could think anymore was, "I could have prevented this. If I would have seen the signs I wouldn't be here. My life has no meaning anymore. I am just a sex slave. Unless I get away. Yeah, unlikely, I know."

If you, or if you suspect someone you know, are the victim of human trafficking, please contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline: 1 (888) 373-7888.

Perspectives & Literary Criticism

For the Love of Reading

Kelsey Wilson

I run across the forest floor. I stop and whirl around to face my pursuers when suddenly –

“It’s time to eat!”

I peel myself away from my book, promising to come back later because reading is my passion, almost an addiction. I adore wedging myself in a corner, holding a book so loved that the pages are yellowed and falling out, and losing all track of time as I watch a movie unfold vividly onto the theater of my mind. I love it, but I am losing it. Let me go back to when my passion first diminished.

On my first day of high school, it rained. Hard. The constant pitter-patter of the rain only added to the nervousness sprouting in the pit of my stomach. I stepped out into the rain in my brand-new Sperrys, neat khaki skirt, and stiff white button-down, clutching my purple and white rabbit umbrella in my shaking fist. This was the first day in eleven years that I would trek into school without my best friend; the loneliness felt cold and tasted bitter. The next four years of school shone before me, diminished by the rain of isolation.

Test after quiz after project piled up from that day forward, and I was being pulled deeper by the riptide of tasks until I was drowning in responsibility. Meanwhile, the standards I held myself to soared into the exosphere. Good enough was no longer good enough. The idea of taking a few minutes to enter a world where the sweet scent of strawberries ripening in the cozy sun accompanied by pure, soothing water gliding its way down my parched throat while I adventured

with the characters I had known for years was thrust aside to make room for another assignment, for more studying.

I was prisoner to expectations, tied up by the frayed ropes of grades and ACT scores that chafed my delicate passion for reading. The memory of the wonder of reading faded into a dull melody, but it swelled into a crescendo when I picked up *The Royal Ranger: The Red Fox Clan*. When I opened a portal to the lush forests of Araluen and once again visited the characters I knew so well, I was awakened to the reality that I had been so busy trying to be perfect that I had forgotten to live.

I still battle to find a balance between reading and schoolwork, but I persevere through the damp, musty trenches of my perfectionism. No longer will I let a missed point drag me through the mud of despair. No longer will I sacrifice my health for a perfect score. Parting the soft pages of a story of friends and enemies, love and hate, sacrifice and victory has given me back some of my own humanity; indeed, I would have been overrun by my overwhelming thirst for perfection had it not been for the love of reading.

Beauty in Many Forms

Ryan Austen

“Beauty is in the eye of the beholder,” the ever-famous proverb declares. An application of this proverb is present in 20th-century American writing. Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald, while from the same period of American literature, exhibit different writing styles across their works. In examining chapter 5 of *The Great Gatsby* by Fitzgerald and “Hills Like White Elephants” by Hemingway, readers will notice the diverging tactics of each author after the opening paragraphs.

In the first paragraph, the two authors use similar styles of description, strengthened by similar use of rhetorical devices. After this, however, Fitzgerald enters into a method of dialogue followed by description; whereas, Hemingway utilizes extensive dialogue with minimal breaks or descriptions. Thus, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway exhibit different styles of writing through use of dialogue, structure, and characterization.

F. Scott Fitzgerald is widely known for his vivid description of scenes. These descriptions are present throughout *The Great Gatsby*. For example, in chapter 5, Fitzgerald sets the scene, saying, “The rain cooled about half-past three to a damp mist, through which occasional thin drops swam like dew. Gatsby looked with vacant eyes...and informed me, in an uncertain voice, that he was going home” (1). These descriptions do not end with scene descriptions, however. Fitzgerald rarely leaves his readers guessing as to the outcome of a situation or even the thoughts and feelings of individual characters.

Hemingway, on the other hand, does not lack description, but simply uses it in a much different manner. Throughout "Hills Like White Elephants," Hemingway only gives description through the verbal dialogue of the characters. For example: "'They look like white elephants,' she said" (Hemingway 1). This method of injecting description, along with strings of dialogue with few breaks, often only causes more confusion within the reader, rather than clarity. This sparseness of detail contributes to the overall style and narration difference of Hemingway as well.

Despite these monumental differences, however, Fitzgerald and Hemingway do indeed share a few similarities in their writing: both value character and plot

For Fitzgerald, the underlying intention is to create a fully developed plot with fully developed characters in the mind of the reader. For Hemingway, on the other hand, the intention is to develop the plot and characters only enough to give readers a starting point, allowing the readers to decide the rest of the story on their own. "Hills Like White Elephants" is a strong example of the famous "Iceberg Theory" coined by Hemingway, in which only a bit of the whole story is "above water," leaving the reader to develop the rest of the story in their mind. The iceberg style is not for everyone, however. While some readers find the lack of detail and opportunity to come to one's own conclusion to be beautiful, others find the style difficult to comprehend. These readers often prefer Fitzgerald's more traditional, yet still innovative, style of writing. Fortunately, since every reader has a different view of each author, there is an opportunity to choose between styles and for each to find their definition of "beauty." This allows nearly any reader to find 1920s or 1930s American Literature that is enjoyable.

Comparing the famous works of F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway creates an interesting dynamic. While both use some similar figurative language, the way in which they are presented is where a great divergence occurs. This divergence in the use of stylistic approach and narrative style is where Fitzgerald solidifies his detailed, meticulous approach, and Hemingway solidifies his approach of leaving the reader to decide for themselves what they believe the story is and means. These two vastly different stories represent different styles of character and plot development, each ideal for different readers. Thus, the beauty within these two stories is truly within the eye of the beholder.

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Mental Illness Prevalence in American Correctional Systems

Claire Ebersol

Mental illness is prevalent in American correctional systems, and the criminal justice system is incarcerating individuals who live with a mental illness. Prisoners with mental illnesses deserve to receive the help they need, but for that to happen there must be a system set in place that educates prison workers on how to help them. Prison is often a replacement for mental institutions, and many studies show that there are more mentally ill individuals in correctional systems than hospitals. The prison system that the United States has does not know how to help these people who are mistreated and abused. They have no voice or representation. Treatment in and out of prison needs to be provided for inmates. Prisons should not be a place where people are put when society thinks they are too much of a problem; rather, they must receive proper treatment.

Deinstitutionalization, which occurred in 1955, was one of the first and most significant events that caused the rise of incarcerating people with a mental illness. According to a study from 1972 by Marc Abramson, a psychiatrist in San Mateo County, there was a 36 percent increase of mentally ill prisoners in county jail (Torrey). When mental hospitals emptied, many patients ended up in prison or homeless. Individuals thrown in with criminals did not obtain proper care. Guards and prison workers were not trained to work with and help those who have extreme mental illnesses, and this led to the mistreatment of prisoners; furthermore, “[n]ational surveys and

individual state reports both suggest that at least 15 to 20 percent of jail and prison inmates are seriously mentally ill. We have thus effectively returned to conditions that last existed in the United States in the 1840s" (Torrey). In the United States' past, people with mental disorders were always isolated from the rest of society because little was known about how to help them then, but today that is not the case. America has an abundance of tools and research that to help these people instead of locking them away and treating their mental illness as a crime. According to an article written by Lerner Collier, America is 5 percent of the world's population but has 25 percent of the world's prisoners. The number of incarcerated people continues to rise, and "[o]ver the past four decades, the nation's get-tough-on-crime policies have packed prisons and jails to the bursting point, largely with poor, uneducated people of color, about half of whom suffer from mental health problems" (Collier). Instead of continuing to ignore the problem and going back to old ways, America must use its resources to help these people.

When inmates have a mental illness and then are put in prison for years, mistreated in objectionable ways, and receive no help, their mental state is only going to worsen. In fact, "[a] systematic review of 62 surveys of the incarcerated population from 12 Western countries showed that, among the men, 3.7 percent had psychotic illness, 10 percent major depression, and 65 percent a personality disorder, including 47 percent with antisocial personality disorder" (Daniel). Some imprisonment tactics like solitary confinement contribute to a mental illness by causing even more psychological stress. Overcrowding, due to funding shortages, is common in the U.S. prison system, and this also has deep psychological effects on inmates. According to Collier, reports show that poor funding worsens health outcomes, a person's well-being, and increases the risk of suicide. Daniel's report agrees, stating that "[a]mong the women, 4 percent had psychosis, 12 percent major depression, and 42 percent a personality disorder". In some cases, imprisonment causes the mental disorder because prisoners are not treated like humans or given the constitutional right to receive any mental healthcare. In Torrey's study, the odds of a seriously mental ill person being in jail or prison compared to a hospital in Arizona is 9.3 to 1, and in Florida the odds are 4.9 to 1; Texas' odds are 7.8 to 1. If prisoners cannot receive mental help in prison, something else needs to change because a person should not be deprived of that right. Moreover, a more efficient system

must be in place when arresting a person to know whether or not they are mentally stable. According to an editorial written by Anasseri Daniel, suicide is the third-leading cause of death in the U.S. state and federal prisons. If a prisoner has a severe mental disorder and experiences inhumane treatment, their odds of survival plummet. Suicide prevention in prisons need to be made a priority, and all prison staff must be educated, not just the medical staff.

Progressive and inclusive programs must be created or revamped to treat prisoners and help inmates once they are released so that they can rejoin their communities. Some states are starting to make changes. Torrey says, "We should expand the use of Mental Health Courts, which essentially give offenders a choice between following a treatment plan (including the taking of medication) or going to jail. Studies have shown that mental health courts are effective." By having another court system provided as an option for offenders with mental health issues, a judge who is educated on mental disabilities can provide the correct help. This could be obtaining treatment, certain medication and possibly serving time. All people involved in prosecution, or those that work in prisons, need to be educated on how to help people with mental illnesses. The treatment of prisoners should be a priority, but "[t]he present funding system for mental health services is a large part of the problem" (Torrey). If money is not put in the correct places, then nothing will be fixed. Instead of solely releasing prisoners or patients from the hospital, there needs to be a program set in place that makes sure these individuals do not relapse via preventative check-ups. Torrey also highlights that state reform and intervention are imperative: "Mentally ill individuals should be able to access treatment before they become dangerous or commit a crime, not after." In order for there to be change in the number of people incarcerated that have a mental illness, people in prison need help, as well as those already out in their communities. If the number of people with mental illness decrease, and people gain the help they need, the number of incarcerated people would also decrease.

Mental disorders cannot be controlled by the individual, and the system America has set in place now does not help those with mental illness survive in society or adjust to their community. Two million people who have a mental illness are incarcerated per year and grow worse rather than better because the proper treatment is not provided (Daniel). Inmates with a mental disorder are victimized and ignored even after release. Change will only come if people who work for

correctional systems are educated on mental disorders, federal money is used in the correct places, and if treatment programs are provided for inmates in and out of prison.

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*The Effectiveness of Rehabilitation in Modern Incarceration
Systems*

Emma Davis

Editor's Choice Award Winner

One of the most critical elements of a functioning society is the justice system. In recent years, the United States' justice system fails those who fall victim to it. With incarceration rates higher than the international average, our system needs to change. Historically, the United States has prioritized retribution. Many countries, one of which being Sweden, utilize rehabilitation in their justice systems. According to a study by Christopher Hartney from the National Council on Crime and Delinquency, Sweden's incarceration rates are under half the international average; whereas, the United States, at four times the international average, has the highest incarceration rates in the world. The current system demonstrates that the state of our incarceration system is ineffective. Systems that focus more on rehabilitation such as Sweden are more effective.

Throughout the history of the United States, the justice system's purpose has mainly served to punish crimes committed by its citizens. On the other hand, the evolution of the Swedish incarceration systems over the past century has transitioned its priorities from free labor as a source of rehabilitation to focusing on individual needs. Roddy Nilsson, an author from the Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention, published an article showing the

development of the Swedish penal system. Before World War II, rehabilitation was defined by productive work done by the inmates. Though this tactic provided experience for the prisoners and products for the community, it was not accomplishing any individual rehabilitation for the inmates. By the 1960s rehabilitation by mandatory work became heavily criticized by the public. This started the Prison Reform that converted the Swedish system to one that prioritizes individual recovery. Many new programs were introduced to alter the destructive behavior that inhibited many inmates. When these inmates return to society, these programs assist them with techniques to avoid any future conflicts that could result in recidivism.

The success of these programs significantly alters the recidivism rates in Sweden. When the definition of success for an incarceration system is the number of people who have served their time and reentered life as a productive member of society, the difference between the effectiveness of the Swedish penal system and the U.S. system reveals the room for improvement in the current U.S. system. The main difference between these two systems is the focus on rehabilitation versus retribution. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, after only two years, 59.5% of all released prisoners in the United States will return to prison; this rate increases to 67.8% after one more year (Durose). These statistics are greatly influenced by the lack of support that the United States provides its inmates. Sweden designed programs to provide support for people with different obstacles that range from drug addiction to extreme aggression (Nilsson). These programs help inmates adapt to their situation and apply coping mechanisms to avoid future conflict to become a functioning member of society. As each of these programs become more personalized, the more effective the treatment will be. Sweden's concern for the wellbeing and rehabilitation of its inmates affects the overall productivity of its justice system.

Along with multiple rehabilitative programs Sweden has multiple alternatives to imprisonment. *Corrections Today* contributor Bertel Osterdahl includes many different solutions other than incarceration in his article "Prison and Probation: The Swedish Perspective," which highlights that a considerable amount of inmates are serving between three months and one year. Probation frequently provides an alternate solution, especially for minor offenses, where it matches the severity of the crime. In the United States, the length of the conviction often outweighs the severity of the crime. This reduces the effectiveness of

the punishment and does not effectively provide rehabilitation to its inhabitants. In Sweden, community sanctions are also another option differing from imprisonment. They are often used to keep up social interactions between inmates and encourage productive behavior. Giving the convicted a sense of community creates a positive environment for rehabilitation. Introducing community as an important contributor to recovery provides inmates with reliable social skills that are useful in society. These alternatives give an affordable and more successful system.

Sweden provides a wide range of programs that proved productivity occurs when the wellbeing of the inmates is a priority. Conversely, the United States remains stuck in a cycle of crime, conviction, and release without concern for the people incriminated. Focusing on rehabilitation provides inmates with life skills on how to avoid reincarceration once they are released. The United States' system uses incarceration to punish those who have a debt to society. The victims in this system end up in and out of jail because it makes no effort to help them return to society as law-abiding citizens. The unwillingness to aid the powerless shows the poor judgment in not only the incarceration system but the judicial system as a whole.

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Lesson Plan for Perspectives and Literary Criticism

Fact-Checking Argumentation

Materials Needed

Copies of “The Effectiveness of Rehabilitation in Modern Incarceration Systems,” 1:1 technology for accessing documents on its Works Cited — or copies of the research from the Works Cited, highlighters, writing utensils, college-ruled paper

Time Frame: 1-2 Classes

Objectives

- Students will compare claims made from an article to the source material
- Students will evaluate the truthfulness of the sources and draw conclusions about the argument

Essential Questions

- How can I know a source is trustworthy?

- What means are there to verify the truthfulness of a source's claim?

The Assignment

Bell Work / Opener

At the beginning of class write the following prompt on the board and have students respond to it: "How do you know that a source or document is truthful and trustworthy?" Give students five minutes to write and reflect before leading a group discussion and share session. Round Robin or team-then-teacher strategies may work well for this.

Main Activity

Once students have shared, and you've provided feedback to their thoughts on how sources can be truthful, distribute copies of the argumentative essay from *Voices of Kansas* as well as highlighters: at least two colors per student. One color should be used for highlighting claims that are tied to cited materials; the other color should be used for highlighting author claims that are not tied to sources. Give the students time to annotate the essay with highlights, and then ask them if they notice any patterns.

A good argument from an author will be balanced: any opinion should be later reinforced with evidence from sources. However, it isn't enough to just have cited material. Explain to students that sometimes authors will cherry-pick information that appears to support them, but the source may say something radically different.

Now, students are going to become fact-checkers. Using technology to access the documents from the essay's Works Cited — or using handouts of the documents, have students divide into fact-checking groups. Each group will read a different source from the essay. To fact-check, each group will need to do the following:

1. Read the whole source document all the way through.
2. Locate the information cited by Davis in her essay and check it for veracity.
3. Identify any information in the source that contradicts Davis's

claims.

Closing Activity

Have students generate a presentation on their findings. This could be done via an oral report, a summative poster, etc. Each group should share its findings with the class. Then, overall, the class should come to a conclusion about Davis's arguments: whether or not your students agree with Davis's claims — are they valid?

Standards Alignment

S&L.1: 9-12

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on GRADE-APPROPRIATE topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

S&L3: 9-12

Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric . . .

- 9-10: . . . identifying any fallacious reasoning or exaggerated or distorted evidence.
- 11-12: . . . assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.

W.8: 6-12

Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism.

Unjust Ways Children are Dealt With in the U.S. Criminal Justice System

Jazmyne Le

Every day children under 18 living in America commit minor and major crimes and have to go through some type of process regarding the consequences for their actions; deciding what process they should undergo is the most pressing issue. The idea of trying children as adults in court is extremely controversial and includes different parameters everywhere. Many people believe that trying children as adults in court is wrong and unjust, as they are only children, and they do not know any better. For the most part this is true, with the exception of older teenagers and children who commit multiple criminal offenses. However, children should not be tried as adults in court because it takes away the rehabilitation opportunities that juvenile programs offer, and it does not take into account the maturity and competency level of the child, and it can possibly put the child in a very unsafe prison environment where they are more likely to be harmed.

A main reason why children should not be tried as adults is that trying kids as adults takes away the various rehabilitation opportunities that juvenile programs offer. The American adult prison system seems to focus more on punishment than it does rehabilitation, and although children should still be punished for their wrongdoings, they need guidance on how to fix themselves and change their ways. Children placed in the adult system miss out on education and learning opportunities they will need for the future if they are released

from adult prison. According to Robert Muller, education has also been linked with lower delinquency rates and behavior improvements in incarcerated juveniles. Some juvenile programs offer counseling and therapy, which usually provides better results and a lower rate of recidivism once they are released from incarceration. Rehabilitation is the key to helping out these youth offenders and creating less child crime.

Another reason why children should not be tried as adults is that trying children as adults does not take into account their maturity and competency level. Many cases where children are tried in the adult system deal with a child at least 15 years or older, but there are numerous cases that deal with children not even in middle school yet; for example, in an article by Maya Chung, it is described how in October of 2018 a 10-year-old girl dropped an infant and stomped on it so that it would stop crying, and she would not get in trouble. Furthermore, the infant was taken to the hospital but died of its injuries. The 10-year-old was said to have cried in court, which makes sense, as youth have some awareness but are still not fully mature and cannot comprehend the full consequence of actions committed. It was said that she would most likely not even pass the competency test to stand trial. The idea of punishing a 10-year-old child as an adult for something that may have been an accident, and a really bad judgement call, for numerous years of their life is unjust. According to an article published by the University of Rochester Medical Center, "The rational part of a teen's brain isn't fully developed and won't be until age 25 or so" (Fetterman). Most children and teens who commit some form of crime are not doing so with rational thought because they lack the uppermost form of rationality. Courts do not take these things into account when trying children as adults, and it makes the process unjust and unfair.

Finally, children should not be tried as adults because it can put them in an extremely dangerous prison environments where they are likely to be harmed. Prisoners in incarceration facilities range from those who have committed petty theft to third degree murder. Every day prisoners harass and harm other prisoners and create extremely unsafe environments that prison facilitators do nothing about. According to T.J. Parsell of the *New York Times*, "juveniles were five times as likely to be sexually assaulted in adult rather than juvenile facilities — often within their first 48 hours of incarceration." Children are far more at risk of being physically and emotionally abused while

in adult prisons. Their mental states are warped and they experience major trauma. They are not only assaulted by other prisoners but also by the staff , giving them no hope of justice. Parsell also tells how juveniles in adult prisons are 36 times more likely to commit suicide than juveniles incarcerated in juvenile detention centers. The mental health issues and disabilities children and teens develop while in prison most often go untreated, so when reentering society they function even worse than they did before entering incarceration. Some states do not even have a minimum age for children entering adult correction facilities, creating a huge imbalance of power. Putting kids in adult facilities sets them up for abuse and failure of rehabilitation.

To conclude, trying children as adults is simply unjust and puts them in far more danger. Children tried as adults who end up in adult facilities end up physically and mentally abused and with a far worse mental states than they had when they entered incarceration. They are given no chance of rehabilitation. Trying children as adults does not serve justice; it makes them more likely to commit crimes and heinous acts if they are to be released. The maturity and competency is not there in children who are taken to court as adults, and most of them probably cannot even stand trial. The justice system is corrupt and is in need of serious reform, and it should start with how the U.S. deals with youth offenders.

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Poetry

Auditory-Tactile

Jenna McFall

The speakers bump harder and harder,
intruding not only my mentality but my physicality.

The vibrations roll through the cords and into my ears,
surrounding my mind with waves of the waves and the drums radiate in my back,
harnessing my thoughts, touch, ears, and feelings
to its control.

And the piano adds in,
as little touches of brighter and harsher sounds
are scrambled like egg whites along the rear delt of my back,
between my shoulder blades and move out towards my shoulders.

As the synth is added to the mix,
the tops of my shoulders, just where my traps lie,
is where the gentle but cold sound is brought about on top and tickle a little.

The voices take over, surrounding my neck,
and it feels that I may suffocate underneath these words and syllables
that are being etched into my neck.

But as the music ends, the piano and the voices slowly cease,

and as the song closes out
only the drums stay longer than the time allotted.

I guess that's what I get for having Auditory-Tactile Synesthesia.

Daisy

Cailyn Smith

She was my go-to dog when I needed her.
She died before I could say goodbye.
Now, every time I see a picture of her, I want to cry.

She had white fur and big brown eyes.
She had my heart.
I wish she was still with me now.

Every time I hear the word, *daisy*, it reminds me of her.
She was the one.
I really miss Daisy.

Dear Disturbed Dad

Heidi Hudson

Dear Disturbed Dad,
You were mad.
You broke the vase,
broke her nose,
and wiped the coke from your face.

Who are you?
Showing up unannounced.
Having left without hesitation, but eager for more,
returning, reckless as a wild wolf,
damaging us.

You broke us.

Dead to me as a nail in a coffin.
Never to be the same.

If you or someone you know is the victim of domestic abuse, please call the National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE(7233).

I'm Sorry

Mareie Barry

I'm sorry I made you mad,
Wasn't there when things went bad.
I guess it's hard knowing I can't truly be me;
I Just wanted you to see the good side of me,

To see me as someone who's perfect,
Someone that has no flaws,
Trying to be perfect to show others their loss.
I'm here to say, "I'm sorry."
I let myself down; it wasn't only me:

Letting you down was hard;
I can't forgive myself no matter how hard I try.
Never able to get over it,
Through the night I cry;
I'm sorry.

in this city

Grace O'Brien

Editor's Choice Award Winner

are you alive?
who knows anymore.
in this city,
this city of chaos and peace,
this city of endless noise and still silence,
your bones glow like neon lights
and ashes glitter like diamonds.
in this city
a skyscraper can fall
and no-one hears a thing.
their minds are dulled by their luxury.
days can pass
without meaning
and nights seem to last a decade.
but even here
in this wondrous and horrible city
there are broken people.
they sulk silently in back rooms
and drive quiet cars.
they seldom speak

and when they do,
it is bleak but unafraid.
finding clarity in cynicism, they step out
of the darkness
but only for a moment.
oops.

Lesson Plan for Poetry Editor's Choice Winner

Using Poetry to Describe Setting

Materials Needed

Sample poem ["in this city" from Voices of Kansas], Paper / pencils
- clipboards / notebooks, Laptops / computers for active reading the
poem and final drafts

Time Frame: Variable

Objective

Students will use poetry to explore and gain an understanding of narrative writing using the stream of consciousness approach and the importance of strong word choice to establish a poem's setting.

Essential Questions

- How important is emotion in a poet's message?
- What advantage does a poet's message have when he/she

uses vivid verbs and precise adjectives?

- How can word choice affect the poet's communication with various audiences?

The Assignment

Students will use sample poems to both write fresh poems (epistles) using the technique modeled in the mentor texts.

Bellwork/Opener

Have students read "in this city" (from *Voices of Kansas*) and "Chicago" (by Carl Sandburg) — then have them discuss which poem they felt was more powerful and why.

Main Activities

Have the students highlight (either on hard copy or on their computers) words within these two poems that resonate with them. Next, have the students move to another part of the room or to the hallway, and have them write from a completely different vantage point about their school or classroom in poetic verse.

Some Possible Variations

- Have the students make a T-Chart and list on one side adjectives that describe their favorite place and on the other side describe their least favorite place - then analyze which of the two poems used words that evoked the most passion.
- Have the students write a poem about either their favorite or least favorite place and analyze why they chose the one that they wrote about - this could easily spin into a lesson about author's purpose.

Here's an example of what students might do, adapted from "in this city:"

* * *

OG: "this city of chaos and peace"

- Variation 1 - using the style: This school of defeat and victory
- Variation 2 - using personification: She is filled with defeat and victory
- Variation 3 - using simile: Like a survivor, experiencing both defeat and victory

Allow the students to experiment with the duelling imagery presented in the poem and to align it with their own experiences.

Standards Alignment

W.11-12.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

- a. Engage the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation, establishing one or multiple points of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.
- b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
- c. Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome.
- d. Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.
- e. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

It's Time to Say Goodbye (For Daniel)

Corinne Lyda

I remember first meeting you;
I remember your smile,
Every little hue,
Every small mistake.
From your laugh to your jokes,
I remember all your little things.

It's time to say goodbye
To every little thing, I've ever known,
Every song I've ever sang,
Every heart beat I've given to you.
This is goodbye
For now, my friend.
I wish you could see
What you had meant to me.

I remember when we'd talk at night
Like the world never mattered.
I had a need:
The need to be near to you,
The need to be far from you,
But I can't be with you.

* * *

So it's time to say goodbye
To all the hopes and dreams I've built,
To every small conversation,
To all the songs I wrote to you.
This is goodbye
Only 'til tomorrow
When I can't taste your name on my tongue
And your words on my lips,
And your arms around me.
Only 'til tomorrow
When I can be okay
Knowing you won't see me another day.

If you or someone you know is considering suicide, please call the
National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-8255.

Liar Liar Pants on Fire

Coltrane Curry

I felt like writing today
I was wondering-- I am trying to find the words to say:
 'Am I going to be okay?'
I am broken—your words have spoken,
 but I don't wanna go away!

I couldn't carry a conversation,
I obviously never planted a memory worth saving,
 Do you feel how I feel?
Or, are you just saying: 'I love you, but I'm not staying'
 Why can't the sun shine without it raining?

Your words are tearing me apart
You're not honest—you've been lying!
 The teardrops blend with my heart
I know nothing—you owe me everything, I can't keep going on!
 The love I know that I can't find.

The life that I'll leave behind,
 For you, for you, for you.

I'll give it up just to start again
Please my love, you're my only friend!
I know this end can't be true.

And at this moment, I see the girl you are
For the first time, I'm letting myself hurt
This is our goodbye song; we've got to go on
And for the first time,
I'm letting our love burn.

Lose Your Cool

Kelsey Wilson

What if being a nerd becomes cool?
What if the outcasts become popular at school?
What if the weirdo is no longer the fool?
What if a book was more impressive than a Juul?
What if those elevated were not the most cruel?

What if the athletic budget became stricter?
What if skinny was out and what's in was fat?
What if knowing every game character
Was more common than knowing a football stat?

What if girls went to the mall for the bookstore?
What if an evening was spent talking deeply
And a good shopping trip was done cheaply?
What if pop music became the real bore
And classical music became what the people adore?

When the weird becomes popular,
Will the popular become weird?
Will the bullies be bullied?
Will the jocks be mocked?

* * *

Will that fix the depression
And the serial obsession
With complete perfection?

Motions

Gracie Shelton

Going through the motions, trying to keep my heart open
But something inside just dies every time
I wish I could've had more time to hold you close
but since you didn't try, I didn't want to waste my time
I'm sorry I gave up, but whenever I tried, you never did the same
So, every time I hear your name, my heart grows harder to tame
To the point where my anger gets the best of me
I'm sorry I gave up on you
I neglected you like you did me
But your death is the karma I never asked for...
I wish I could have helped you, been there to give you the love that you needed
You found other ways to cope
The pills I guess just weren't enough and so you started shooting up
last time I spoke to you
you said you had been clean for a week and I was so proud
but you still hung out with the wrong crowd
They were no good for you I wish you could have seen that,
The way the world saw them as toxic people
I just wish you didn't sell yourself to feed your addiction
Even with all the wrong that happened between us, Mom
I still feel like it's my fault
I'm sorry.

Nothing

Yashima Armstrong

It is always nothing
Never anything
Maybe it is better like this
Never changing
Always the same
Nothing bad
But also, nothing good
The same bleak days repeat
Repeat
Like a carousel moving, never changing, always dull
The days frown down upon me
Sneering
Scowling
Same days
Same people
Same schedule
Always

of Nothingness

Grace O'Brien

into My abyss they fall
reaching out, grasping for a wall;
anything to hold,
because some of them are afraid
of Nothingness.
you, who fear Me
so unaware
that I am truly only
Time.
Like all others, you flee
but run only into Me
I am inescapable
I am so sorry
because inevitably, My gravity
draws you in and you
cannot
break free.
you are so afraid.
how can I help you?
I cannot-

and it is only you in particular
who catches My eye.
they ask,
Why?
Why do the good
die
young?
It is because they are beautiful.
they have not known hatred
or pain
and they are unspoiled by this terrible world
and so, they still bring My heart joy
like a flower, plucked at its prime
and you are My rose
and though you die,
I still treasure you.
I can press you between the pages of My books
and save you
but time runs out
and you decay nonetheless.
so, do not be afraid
of Nothingness
because it is I,
and I
will not harm you.

Off Those Shores of Tinseltown

Michael Isbell

Off those shores of Tinseltown,
Those waters gripped me, fettered, bound,
And with great haste, I saw I'd drown,
My mind treading water,
Shivering off those shores of Tinseltown.

And then I saw you,
Yea, a mile down that waterway,
Sifting through foddors.

One leg kicked, and then the other,
My hands finding those hidden holds,
In those Tinseltown waters.

Selim

Corinne Lyda

Time stops.
I've lost connection,
little touches
and broken chords,
a special song for us
with a different note each day;
you walk a pace faster,
and here I will stay.
I promised forever with you;
you promised time to me;
we took down the road,
and I fell in-between
the cracks of broken hearts,
the sound of darker days,
the white noise whisking me away.
I'm okay, thank you;
you'll be okay.
I'm always going with you.
Life was always supposed to end this way,
and it wasn't until that very day
I realized something new –
that you'll be okay now

if I'm not with you.
So I left to a new place,
and finally I can see
those boring old days were not the same
as the ones you and I found together,
but hopefully you'll find
new days to come,
even if I'm not there.

Statue

Jenna McFall

Stay with me.
You don't need to run.
Blood, freeze!
Constrict into the confines
Of your tiny
Tubular homes.

Freedom shall ring
In this statue.

Feet grip onto the cold metal.
Friction holds yourself in place
Grip the book and torch --
It's not that hard.

Freedom shall ring in this statue.

Tears of Salem

Yashima Armstrong

Solemn train tracks
Lay on the rigid rocks in Salem,
Tracks that conspire to rock trains afar.
A train's light pierces the gray gloom like a sword.
The rumble and clacking is a fight that neither tracks nor train can win.

As the days pass, clouds form heavy rain drops that fall like tears.
Tears roll down metal cheeks.
Forlorn fog forms.
Grass sputters and springs from the ground, enveloping the wooden planks.
Trees moan as the shrill wind miserably squeals.
Gray to color,
Despair to bliss:
The end has come to the gloomy train tracks.

That One Park

Jazmyn Roberts

My favorite park:

The craziness we had as children,
Always meeting new friends and playing,
But in a blink of an eye, it's all gone.

What remains are dead trees, corpses of the ones that we would climb,
That one yellow slide, and those squeaky, rusty swings.
The smell of the flowers we would pick linger vibrantly in the air.

I see those trees and recall those good times, in sorrowful and yet wild memories.
I hear the laughter, humorous loud laughter, and see faded children smiling.
Those trees still stand as strong and steady as all of those insane memories do.

The Boy

Coltrane Curry

He had not held power; he had been beaten with it
The lash marks on his back
A testimony to the triumphs of a destructive heart.
The lashes held gratification
In them
Fear was as good as Sunday.

He grew,
Shaped by the tenderness of belligerent violence,
Cared for by the leather's long-lasting influence on his back.
In his heart
Black and cold, yet warm with pain,
He was still that abandoned little boy.

Perhaps it was revenge,
Perhaps it was anger,
Perhaps it was just perhaps.

Perhaps the boy

Was merely searching for
A light in the darkness and hell in his soul

Perhaps the boy
Was merely searching for
A hand instead of fist
A hug instead of kiss
A life instead of this
A heart to replace his.
Perhaps, perhaps, perhaps, perhaps.

Who is to say? Not the boy
He died by the second drink.

The Curious Feline

Ashdon Childs

The curious feline
Sits at the table.
Her blue eyes
Spy
Petals from pink roses

That dance
From a rain-sent breeze.
Thump,
She jumps
Toward the vase with ease,

Swats,
Watches it shatter,
Scampers away
To silence.

The Friendship We Share

Cassie Dunlavy

You're the person who has done everything with me my entire life
We share so many memories
We annoy each other
We tell each other everything about everyone
We tell each other every stupid thought we think
You know all my flaws and insecurities
You know when I'm mad and angry
You listen to all my stupid drama and gossip
Life would be different if you weren't ever here
I would be lost without you
I love you so much

The Injury

Jaxson Penner

Fast like a cheetah:
Into the trampoline pole!
I woke to birdsong.

The Man in the Window

Michael Isbell

In a window, I see a man standing
Like an unstuffed scarecrow
On the ledge of the next tall building.

The people below stare up at him,
And he, at his lowest life's point,
Gazes back at them with wonder,
Wonder at where they were before now.

I look from the window at this man,
And he back at me,
And silently we communicate with one another
Of what next is to occur.

He tells me of his scars, this
Man, in the window, and with hot eyes
He shows me the depths of his pain,
And like broken floodgates of the heart,
New emotions release themselves.

* * *

In the window I see yet another figure,
Approaching behind this tortured man
With stealth.

The two of us, watery eye meeting watery eye,
Know this second figure's intentions,

Know to act first.

In this window, I look at the man,
At a face that I know better than anyone.

And together, we jump.

The Mongrel of Manchester

Michael Isbell

It's a damp, dark closet in which I find myself,
Though my thoughts and hearing lay just outside of it,
 Searching, hoping, praying,
That the most brassy demon machine
 Does not, to this closet anyway,
 Find his next meal.

 He is a mongrel, unnamed,
By daylight simmering under the earth, in a den,
 Scheming.
By moonlight he treads these grounds, and through frosted grass
 Trails his snout,
 Steaming.

He has found his own way here, that great brawny
 Mongrel of Manchester,
My innards pump adrenaline,
 My heart fully festered.

Within moments, the clanging,

Within seconds, the banging,
In just minutes he slides
With great compassion for silence,
Through the front door,
Inside.

There's great heat,
From his metallic hide, no doubt.
As I pull closer my trembling feet,
Under the door, a shadow emerges, of snout.

There is a whirring, a purring,
a purely android-esque noise.
Within thin moments,
My old nemesis, Death,
Pounces, with acid poise.

The Puppeteer

Jaden Brown

There's a man sitting behind a curtain making a marionette out of my body. He's forgotten the call time, never knowing the end is nigh, and I don't understand why he pokes and prods at the pools under my pupils, but I know he wants to see me cry. He wants to watch the water works work their way down till my hands wipe them to the wayside.

I'm not the one pulling the strings that propel me forward in the morning and push me under at night. I don't remember getting out of bed or leaving the house or even sitting through pre-calc, but I know it happened. I spend all day watching thoughts get pulled across the main stage, but I can feel strings dragging lifeless limbs out of bed and tugging tired lips upward in response to questions I can't recall.

The Sickest Getting Sicker

Jenna McFall

Ya know, I used to be fine, no one ever really crossed the line. But then, nine were dead, and one the killer: the sickest and getting sicker. With a gun in his hand and a wish turned command, a nation found the broken ordinance by which hundreds die, and the government still turns a blind eye. While teenagers everywhere live in terror, begging for change, all that happens is another discussion with no new interruption to the destruction. School is no longer cool, as in it's filled with hot, boiling, deafening fright; every time someone says, "I might," and nothing is learned when survival is perched in the back of our minds at all times. The chimes through the day cause the peace to quake, and with each newfound mention of destruction poses immediate threat to our population. And yet, these discussions call for change, but the pace is incomprehensibly sluggish, even for a congress who can impeach but can't agree on safety – even when the children's cries penetrate the night, when they can't sleep because nightmares fill their dreams and invade their minds not only at school but in the confines of their homes and their humanity.

Two Trees

Angel Serna

Two short, thin trees,
swaying in the middle of a
seemingly infinite field.
Two trees in a field,
no one thinks much about them.

But,
what have the two trees seen?

These two trees have been around for years even decades,
standing
in the same field,
every hour,
every day,
every week,
every single second.
They have been through every stormy night,
where powerful winds
blew everything away.
They have been through every snowy night,
where icy sheets of sleet buried everything beneath it.
They have been through scorching summer days,

where the sun beats down onto the earth.

These trees have seen everything,
been through everything.

And yet,
they still
stand.

unnatural disaster

Alondra Aguilera

the sun sets. it paints
with watercolors on the sky
while corpses and carcasses
on the ground lie.

love sets hearts on fire.
fire will also kill.
the vast greenery
has become pale and ill.

hating love and those who love
is not uncommon.
others hate darker skin
because it's less common.

mushrooms are growing
from the green ground.
mushrooms are growing
at the explosion's sound.

control becomes power.
the orange fire, the sun,

judges the world from afar.
disaster has won.

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