

Illinois English Bulletin

Fall	2016
v. 104	n. 1



Illinois Association of Teachers of English

IATE is a professional organization for teachers of English/language arts. IATE publishes the *Illinois English Bulletin* and the *IATE Newsletter* and hosts an annual fall conference. IATE is organized by districts throughout the state, each district having a district leader and providing local activities to members throughout the year.

IATE also maintains standing committees that address a number of professional interests and works with other professional organizations to further the interests of teachers. Composed of over 1,000 teachers throughout the state, IATE provides a working network for the exchange of teaching tips, current research, and professional development as well as enduring friendships.

Published quarterly. Subscription price \$20.00 per year, single copies \$5.00. Postmaster send address changes to IATE, Campus Box 4240, Normal, IL 61790-4240. Send all inquiries to IATE, Campus Box 4240, Normal, IL 61790-4240. Address business and editorial communications to Janice Neuleib, Executive Secretary. Periodical postage paid at Normal, IL, and additional mailing offices.

The *Illinois English Bulletin* and the *IATE Newsletter* are produced at the Publications Unit of Illinois State University's English Department.

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Cover: © Steve Halle

Illinois English Bulletin
ISSN 0019-2023
Illinois Association of Teachers of English
Illinois State University
Campus Box 4240
Normal, IL 61790-4240
IATE Homepage: www.iateonline.org

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INTRODUCTION TO THE BEST ILLINOIS STUDENT POETRY AND PROSE OF 2015

JANICE NEULEIB

At this year's National Council of Teachers of English conference in Minneapolis, I participated in a session that included editors of NCTE Affiliate journals. As a part of my work at the session, I presented our latest Best Illinois Student Poetry and Prose issue. The other editors were amazed and had many questions about the work that our organization does to produce this issue. Luckily, I took samples of the Fall 2015 issue so that I could show the wonderful work of our young writers. We editors agreed to continue this session at next fall's NCTE conference. I will continue to encourage other affiliates to follow our example by celebrating our amazing young Illinois writers and their teachers and parents. Join me in my celebration of these mentors and writers.

At the Advanced Placement English Language Exam reading, I participate in the readers' poetry reading and

always mention the *Bulletin's* young writers issue; this year I mentioned the outstanding poetry by these students as a part of my reading. Teachers from all parts of the USA are impressed with our efforts to celebrate young writers.

In last year's introduction, I stressed the value of this *Bulletin* issue for teachers. This Fall issue always provides classroom writing assignments cogency and purpose. Students know that they may have a chance to publish their work and be read widely in the state and beyond. Now I am certainly someone who loves to write for the sake of writing, but I often think of a senior professor here at ISU when I first came. He used to wander the halls of the ISU Department of English muttering, "Oh, to be drunk on love and life and seeing your name in print." He was right, of course. Writing is its own reward, but being published is lovely.

As always, the teachers who have worked with these writers deserve our praise and appreciation. They have responded to the students' work and thus continued to enrich the writing of all their students. These teachers, many of them, have also submitted their own writing to the *Bulletin* and demonstrated the need for teacher-writers to interact with and contribute to the wider teaching community. Role modeling has always been the most powerful means of leading the young to achieve.

In her introduction to the prose winners, Delores Robinson notes the themes of change that run through the pieces. I was particularly struck by the poetic nature of many of the prose works. The students wrote with a glorious vigor that showed the intensity of their enthusiasms.

This Best Illinois Student Poetry and Prose issue of the *Illinois English Bulletin* has a certain romantic flair to it, especially the poetry, but the prose evokes a tougher, more demanding romanticism. "The Wiry, Little Boy" by

Eric Chang reveals a sensitivity to his parent's youthful experiences and struggles, while "Underneath the Evaporating Rain" by Annamarie Wellems evokes the charms and challenges of life in a wild and challenging country. On the other hand, "The Following Will Be All Multiple Choice" by Alex Walinskas creates an ironic whimsy that seems to cross Monty Python with Lewis Carroll. All these young prose writers promise much more in their futures as writers. Their teachers and parents deserve our gratitude and congratulations. And I offer a thank you for the pleasure of reading these texts.

The poetry brought back, for me, memories of what it felt like both to love and lose at fifteen (my boyfriend went off to college, and we broke up). These poems evoked memories and feelings and a smile or two as well as a tear. In "A Girl's Weak Spot," Laura McAllister laughs a bit at notions of what a girl is or perhaps ought to be, whereas "Detox" by Samantha Merrick reminds the reader of just how painful a breakup can be. The poem is anything but "How Do I Love Thee?" Writing about love always involves risks. I'm delighted to see these young poets take these risks.

As ever, I thank Kevin Stein, Illinois Poet Laureate, for his work with the poetry entries. As always, I am so grateful for his sensitive readings of the texts and his great generosity to the poets and to IATE. We at IATE can never thank you enough, Kevin.

Finally, I'm ever grateful to Steve Halle, Director of the ISU Publications Unit, for his editorial work on this issue of the *Bulletin*. Thanks also go to Maegan Gaddis, Office Manager for IATE, for her work with our coordinators, Robin Murray for Poetry and Delores Robinson for Prose. To these coordinators, we owe so much, and we thank them for their untiring work, their introductions, and their devotion to the

young writers and the teachers without whom this volume of the *Bulletin* could not exist.

**TEACHERS WITH STUDENTS PLACING IN
ANY CONTEST CATEGORY**

Frank Alletto	Cyn Koukos
Jennifer Arias	Karen LeMaistre
Becky Bernardi	Adam Levin
Hasham Bhatti	John Lodle
Angelique Burrell	Cherise Lopez
Gina Chandler	Melissa Mack
Debbie Cohen	Elizabeth Maxwell
Heather Corral	Kevin McNeill
Maggie Davis	Erin Palmer
Tarrie Dullum	Alisa Remke
Judi Elman	Diane Riley
Denise Foster	Cheryl Staley
Jared Friebe	Karen Topham
Susan Hersam	Nell Wiseman
Martha Keller	

IATE POETRY RUNNERS-UP

Abbie Borgstrom, “Guardian Angel,” Grade 9, Morris Community High School, Morris, Teacher: Becky Bernardi

Jazmin Shenouda, “How the Light Hits,” Grade 12, Hinsdale Central High School, Hinsdale, Teacher: Angelique Burrell

Lily Glaubinger, “Hopes and Dreams (a Fibonacci sonnet),” Grade 8, Northbrook Junior High School, Northbrook, Teacher: Heather Corral

Maya Belcove, “Oh, Come Sweet Night and Please Don’t Take so Long,” Grade 7, Lycée Français de Chicago, Chicago, Teacher: Cyn Koukos

Hannah Green, “Anatomy,” Grade 11, Oak Park and River Forest High School, Oak Park, Teacher: Adam Levin

Hannah Green, “Anniversary,” Grade 11, Oak Park and River Forest High School, Oak Park, Teacher: Adam Levin

IATE POETRY HONORABLE MENTIONS

Cayden Olsen, "Future," Grade 12, Lyons Township High School, LaGrange, Teacher: Frank Alletto

Anastasiya Loos, "June's Rain," Grade 12, Adlai E. Stevenson High School, Lincolnshire, Teacher: Jennifer Arias

Libby Ostrem, "Photographic Memory," Grade 11, Morris Community High School, Morris, Teacher: Becky Bernardi

Mina Rao, "Experimental Typing," Grade 12, Hinsdale Central High School, Hinsdale, Teacher: Angelique Burrell

Gina Kim, "Burnt Rice," Grade 10, Glenbrook South High School, Glenview, Teacher: Debbie Cohen

Joey Martnes, "A Lost Dancer," Grade 8, Northbrook Junior High School, Northbrook, Teacher: Heather Corral

Sarah Pitafi, "Rain," Grade 10, Carbondale Community High School, Carbondale, Teacher: Tarrie Dullum

Arina Martin, "Dark," Grade 10, Carbondale Community High School, Carbondale, Teacher: Tarrie Dullum

Madison Williard, "Starry Nights," Grade 10, Carbondale Community High School, Carbondale, Teacher: Tarrie Dullum

Mary Neubauer, "Ballerinas are Poets," Grade 12, Lake Forest High School, Lake Forest, Teacher: Susan Hersam

Jane Gordon, "Where is the Jim Crow Section?", Grade 8, Lycée Français de Chicago, Chicago, Teacher: Cyn Koukos

Kara Jackson, "Grandma," Grade 10, Oak Park and River Forest High School, Oak Park, Teacher: Adam Levin

Kara Jackson, "Period," Grade 10, Oak Park and River Forest High School, Oak Park, Teacher: Adam Levin

Grace Johnson, "Man's Work," Grade 10, Oak Park and River Forest High School, Oak Park, Teacher: Adam Levin

Riley Wilson, “What It Meant,” Grade 12, Belleville West High School, Belleville, Teacher: John Lodle

Rebecca Nelson, “Deep Time,” Grade 12, Adlai E. Stevenson High School, Lincolnshire, Teacher: Elizabeth Maxwell

Alex Taylor, “Revelations of Summer,” Grade 12, Carbondale Community High School, Carbondale, Teacher: Cheryl Staley

Jemima McEvoy, “Preferring the Other,” Grade 12, Lake Forest High School, Lake Forest, Teacher: Karen Topham

IATE PROSE RUNNERS-UP

Riley Burr, "The Game of Opportunities," Grade 11, Hinsdale Central High School, Hinsdale, Teacher: Hasham Bhatti

Austin Eichhorn, "Shining Armor," Grade 12, Marion High School, Marion, Teacher: Maggie Davis

Annika Hawkinson, "Only Eyes," Grade 12, Libertyville High School, Libertyville, Teacher: Karen LeMaistre

Katie Hayes, "@SocialMedia," Grade 11, Hinsdale Central High School, Hinsdale, Teacher: Jared Friebe

Jillian Kronvall, "Shining Glass," Grade 12, Marion High School, Marion, Teacher: Maggie Davis

Kijung Kwak, "The Time All Was Well," Grade 11, Adlai E. Stevenson High School, Lincolnshire, Teacher: Martha Keller

Xinru Li, "Technology: The New Family," Grade 10, Hinsdale Central High School, Hinsdale, Teacher: Erin Palmer

Daniel McCully and Matt Christensen, "The Prodigal Customer," Aurora Central Catholic High School, Aurora, Teacher: Alisa Remke

Omar Nabulsi, "Three Bullets," Grade 11, Hinsdale Central High School, Hinsdale, Teacher: Jared Friebe

Rebecca Nelson, "In Defense of the Silent," Grade 12, Adlai E. Stevenson High School, Lincolnshire, Teacher: Elizabeth Maxwell

Mita Ramani, "13 Minutes," Grade 12, Hinsdale Central High School, Hinsdale, Teacher: Angelique Burrell

Julia Rosenstengel, "Goodbye to my Childish Ways," Grade 12, Belleville West High School, Belleville, Teacher: John Lodle

Cindy Yao, "Behind the Melody," Grade 11, Adlai E. Stevenson High School, Lincolnshire, Teacher: Melissa Mack

IATE PROSE HONORABLE MENTIONS

Sarah Feng, “Something Beautiful,” Grade 12, Hinsdale Central High School, Hinsdale, Teacher: Angelique Burrell

Ivy Graham, “Emotions,” Grade 11, Carbondale Community High School, Carbondale, Teacher: Kevin McNeill

Matt Hall, “The Death of a Fishy,” Grade 12, Lake Forest High School, Lake Forest, Teacher: Susan Hersam

Minsoo Kim, “One or the Other,” Grade 12, Hinsdale Central High School, Hinsdale, Teacher: Gina Chandler

Anna Legutki, “Blinds,” Grade 9, Libertyville High School, Libertyville, Teacher: Karen LeMaistre

Laura McAllister, “Thermostat,” Grade 12, Lyons Township High School, LaGrange, Teacher: Frank Alletto

Laura McAllister, “Pink at the Tips,” Grade 12, Lyons Township High School, LaGrange, Teacher: Frank Alletto

Jemima McEvoy, “Butterfly Break,” Grade 12, Lake Forest High School, Lake Forest, Teacher: Karen Topham

Jet Mendes, “Mother Knows Best,” Grade 12, Highland Park High School, Highland Park, Teacher: Judi Elman

Ryan Millman, “My Turtle Tried to Run a Marathon,” Grade 11, Adlai E. Stevenson High School, Lincolnshire, Teacher: Melissa Mack

Julia Multer, “How Rat Got Its Whiskers,” Grade 6, Lycée Français de Chicago, Chicago, Teacher: Cyn Koukos

Sarah Pitafi, “Apple Pie Flavored Baklava,” Grade 10, Carbondale Community High School, Carbondale, Teacher: Tarrie Dullum

Samara Steinbock, “Confident Swans,” Grade 10, Carbondale Community High School, Carbondale, Teacher: Tarrie Dullum

Tracy Wohlever, “Callouses,” Grade 11, Hinsdale Central High School, Hinsdale, Teacher: Gina Chandler

Sabrina Zhang, “When the Ground Shifts,” Grade 11, Adlai E. Stevenson High School, Lincolnshire, Teacher: Denise Foster

**TO CELEBRATE OR TO LAMENT:
POETRY'S EENIE MEENIE MINEY MO(DE)**

KEVIN STEIN
ILLINOIS POET LAUREATE

Poetry—like the human body—loves the binary. All poetry falls on one side or the other of this blunt-knife divide: Poems are written either to celebrate or to lament.

That this notion is fundamental in no way makes it less profound. Humans write poems mostly in the throes of despair or the ecstatic. Still, even one's mundane Wednesday morning poem begun in rote has mysterious means of finding its way to unexpected locales of hurt or pleasure, sometimes both at once.

Poetry—like nature—loves symmetry. It offers a way to frame chaos into some semblance of order, no matter how partial and inconsolably momentary that balance must be. For each thing there is its other, opposites made twins by necessity of the contrary. We know joy because we've felt grief. We recognize the toothache of sadness because we've tasted sugary bliss.

We've two eyes, ears, arms, and legs but only one mouth. That one locale is the shared source of our airborne cardinal of joy and the earthworm of gloom. From it spouts fire or flower, a blossoming that burns or enthralls—an act itself enthralling because we're never sure which will find voice in us. One thing, after all, spills into another before we recognize the revelation *as* revelation, the said thing serving as host of awareness arriving after the fact and without a suitable bottle of dinner-party wine.

In her poem “Tenderness and Rot,” Kay Ryan puts the matter in unalloyed terms refusing any tinge of the romantic:

Tenderness and rot
share a border.
And rot is an
aggressive neighbor
whose iridescence
keeps creeping over.

Ryan's notion of affection forever threatened by creeping rot sifts through all of this year's splendid winning poems, a group uncannily focused on the nature of familial and romantic love. Congratulations to all of our winners.

Ms. Ryan's lament for sweetness gone sour finds particular poignancy in the pieces I have selected as 2016 Poems of Special Merit. In the first of these, “Detox,” high school junior Samantha Merrick posits this transformation as congenial buzz become destructive addiction. From the initial line, Merrick's speaker sets out to detail the unhealthy aspects of a former relationship, sweetly slamming her ex via direct address: “You were a drug.” From there, Merrick employs an inventive extended conceit playing off the parallels between infatuation and addiction. There's the allure of a young woman's “escape” by means of exotic “risk,” the

partner's "touch" itself a "gateway drug" to her heart, and the gradual-but-certain dependency she felt for "each and every kiss."

Over time this addled love, like most drugs, required the speaker to ingest more and more of it simply to make herself "numb." Eventually, even that failed to deliver the "high" for which she hankered. Note the speaker's apt use of past tense to encapsulate fleeting elevation and its grounded aftermath:

Nothing could intoxicate me the way you did.
You fixed me in ways that nothing else could.
I became addicted to your touch, scent, hugs,
and how your eyes light up when you talk about something
you love.
I always longed for your eyes to light up when you spoke
about me.

You were a drug, and now I'm wishing there was rehab for
a broken heart.

Here "rehab" implies the speaker's need to kick the habit and become herself again. In the poem "*edges*," ninth-grader Anna Legutki extends that view by noting the ways that giving oneself to another can result in loss of identity. Her speaker offers a keenly detailed past tense portrait of herself as edgily individualistic:

I was straight edges
dark hues against icy skin
leather jacket and red lipstick
spiked hair and sharp eyes

To be sure, all that spikey sharpness had its appeal. But Legutki's speaker discovered to her dismay that her partner

had a different idea of who she was and what she might become. Like her, we've all encountered the sweetheart who would adore us even more if we just changed these few things, *ahem*—a list that grows ever longer and more impossible to fulfill. Legutki's speaker traces the distance between her personal geography and what her partner preferred to alter about her:

you were looking for curved edges...
 looking for femininity
 in its purest form

but when you found only
 rough edges and tough bone
 you took your chisel and
 chipped away at the parts you didn't like

The sculptural metaphor brings to mind Pygmalion's falling in love with one of his statues, an ivory figure that by Aphrodite's godly intercession transfigures to flesh and blood woman. Here, though, the partner's refashioning proves to be both clumsy and injurious, inverting the Pygmalion myth's dollop of hope into a darker hammer of unmaking: "you crushed every part of me."

At this venture, the poem might easily swoon into despair and self-pity, but Legutki avoids that tumble. After all, the speaker recounts her tale in past tense. Since then, she has enacted her own form of restorative rehab, as she lets readers know via the assertive present tense declaration that follows: "I *am* straight edges / dark hues against icy skin" [my emphasis].

Elsewhere, Legutki's second Poem of Special Merit "*we grew accustomed to uncertainty*" echoes these same concerns given physicality bordering on abuse. The speaker admits to writing "all these poems because / they connect" her both to the formerly tender partner and to herself as she used to

be. Note the dramatic shift in tone and practice between the speaker's fond memory of their bond:

You brought me roses so often
I grew accustomed to the smell of
freshly cut blossoms in my room

and the suffocating relationship it devolved into

I grew accustomed to Your hand
around my throat and how I had to
gasp struggle plead scream gasp gasp

All relationships rooted in trust risk human vulnerability both emotional and physical. Often we learn too late what pain may come from the handshake between trust and exposure, as senior Laura McAllister's "A Girl's Weak Spot" suggests in visceral terms. Set on a playground—slyly blending realms of innocence and experience—the poem opens with a literal low blow:

Ryan, his uncertain head
shiny with fear, guided my foot—
right between the legs, he muttered,
moments before he crumbled
onto the slippery woodchips

The poem's playfulness belies its crotch-clutching message about the hook up of love and pain. When the young man asks the female speaker for reciprocity in the form of her revealing a "girl's weak spot," the speaker plays as coy as she is demure. She promises to give him access to that knowledge (and locale) on some forever receding "tomorrow."

Though the speaker doubts she's "ever found" that weak spot, she and her readers likely know it resides "right

between the legs.” That site represents the pyretic domain of beauty and ruin adults inhabit. And its risks loom there, despite the speaker’s wish to negotiate the “balance bars” linking youth and adulthood as well as the young man’s yearning to “summit” that high moment like a playground slide climbed and ridden.

All these poems examine the viral interplay of “tenderness and rot” as Kay Ryan describes it. With notable sophistication, they offer readers episodic instances of love and love-gone-fetid. As Dean Young reminds us, “Poetry is an art of beginning and endings. You want middles, read novels. You want happy endings, read cookbooks. Not closure, word filched from self-help fuzzing the argument” (87). Samantha Merrick, another double winner of Poems of Special Merit recognition, renders the matter as metaphor and summative statement in her “Fleeting Humans.” She gives us loveliness made all the more haunting by its evanescence:

You were peach and lilac flowers planted in a garden that
bloom on the first warm day of the year
You were tire swings
lemonade stands
recess
Sunday afternoons
and everything else beautiful yet temporary.

The ephemeral quality of beauty beset by rot is the tiger we catch by the toe. By doing so, though, *we* become the ones who holler our eenie meenie poems either to celebrate or to lament the human condition.

Works Cited

- Ryan, Kay. *The Niagara River*. New York: Grove Press, 2005: 24.
Young, Dean. *The Art of Recklessness*. Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2010: 87.

Poems of Special Merit
2015–2016 IATE Poetry Competition

It is my pleasure to recognize these students' submissions as
Poems of Special Merit:

"A Girl's Weak Spot," Laura McAllister, Grade 12, Lyons Township High School, LaGrange, Teacher: Frank Alletto

"we grew accustomed to uncertainty," Anna Legutki, Grade 9, Libertyville High School, Libertyville, Teacher: Karen LeMaistre

"edges," Anna Legutki, Grade 9, Libertyville High School, Libertyville, Teacher: Karen LeMaistre

"Fleeting Humans," Samantha Merrick, Grade 11, Adlai E. Stevenson High School, Lincolnshire, Teacher: Martha Keller

"Detox," Samantha Merrick, Grade 11, Adlai E. Stevenson High School, Lincolnshire, Teacher: Martha Keller

Congratulations to these students and their teachers.

ILLINOIS POETRY 2015

BENEFITS OF POETRY WRITING

ROBIN L. MURRAY

Every year middle and high school students submit amazing poems to the *Illinois English Bulletin* poetry contest. Last year, we highlighted how poetry writing aligns with multiple Common Core Standards. But there are many more reasons why children, teens, and adults should write poetry. Here are just a few:

Poetry helps us know each other and build community. As Phoenix Suns' owner Richard Jaffe explains, "poetry provides a gift of inspiration or education to others. One thing we know—we are not alone! Universal questions, fears, and emotions are called 'universal' because everyone, no matter what country or culture they're raised in, experiences them. Once we've done the work of exploring and finding our own answers, we can help others by sharing them. I like to share my poem 'Eternal Happiness' because

it describes what I've found to be the source of my own eternal happiness."

Poetry opens venues for speaking and listening, much neglected domains of a robust English Language Arts curriculum. When read aloud, poetry is rhythm and music and sounds and beats. Reading poetry aloud can improve vocabulary and pronunciation and help students discover culture and history. According to a study conducted by social worker Nadia Alvarez and psychotherapist Jack Mearns, "connecting with a [spoken word poetry] community, having a forum of communication, emotional development, and having an internal drive to write and perform help the poets to feel balanced in everyday life. The performance aspect of spoken word poetry seems to confer several benefits that would not be found in writing alone, such as social support through connecting with others."

Poetry provides a space for English Language Learners. Because poems defy rules, poetry can be made accessible for ELLs—poems can be easily scaffolded and students can find ways of expressing their voices while being limited in their vocabulary. Teach For America's digital initiative specialist, Emily Southerton asserts "Poetry ignites students to think about what it's like to share their opinion, be heard, and make a difference in their world." Southerton sees poetry as a safe place to write. For Southerton, "Students can let go of traditional writing rules with poetry. I tell the kids the most important thing about poetry is that people feel differently after reading it."

Poetry builds resilience in kids and adults; it fosters social and emotional learning. As poet and visiting writer at Ursinus College Anna Marie Hong asserts, "Writing poetry remains one of the best tools we have for knowing what we think and what we really feel." For Hong, "Writing provides

a way for us to process experience, which is often difficult for young adults, to understand it better, to connect our lives with the experiences of others, and to change events through this new understanding." The students who submit to IATE's poetry contest are well-served by their writing!

A GIRL'S WEAK SPOT

Ryan, his uncertain head
shiny with fear, guided my foot—
right between the legs, he muttered,
moments before he crumbled
onto the slippery wood chips
and I, laughing, played anchor with my toes
and tugged at his hand. It melted into mine
like a quivering star begging an eye
for recognition.
When will you show me
a girl's weak spot? he asked
and once again I said tomorrow
though I wasn't sure I'd ever found one.
So I swept droplets from the balance bars
as he chased the summit of the rain-greased slide
and slid back down.

Laura McAllister

Grade 12

Lyons Township High School

LaGrange

Teacher: Frank Alletto

TEARS OF THE SKY

Tears of the world
Tears of the sky
Tears of endless
days gone by

Their numbers uncounted
Their meaning unseen
Their sorrow reflected
in only their sheen

Source of beauty
Source of rebirth
Source of new life
sprung up from our Earth

Rejuvenating
Remaking
Remodeling
and Renaming

Refreshing our world
Forcing us to remember
Providing chances anew
and quenching the Ember—

Tears
 of the
 Sky.

Maria Petrova
Grade 8

Northbrook Junior High School
Northbrook
Teacher: Heather Corral

OH LOVE, WHY DO YOU ALWAYS MAKE ME CRY?

(Act One: Romeo Speaks)

Oh Love, why do you always make me cry?
Relationships to me are all accursed,
With Rosaline my grief was at its worst:
She was so cold to me, I thought I'd die.
My endless pain dragged on as days went by.
She gave no love, this woman I loved first.
I felt so sad I thought my heart would burst.
I loved her far too much to say good-bye;

Until I saw my one-and-only one.
In just one look, I knew it was true love
With her, I thought my lack of love was gone.
Still cursed am I when all is said and done;
To share my love is all that I dream of.
Oh why of Montague, am I his son?

Raphael Azziza

Grade 7

Lycée Français de Chicago

Chicago

Teacher: Cyn Koukos

WE GREW ACCUSTOMED TO UNCERTAINTY

I think I write all of these poems because they
connect me to You or more accurately who
You used to be and who I used to be before
You tore me apart

I miss who I used to be and
I miss who You used to be
You loved me You were so kind to me
You held me like a delicate piece of art

You brought me roses so often
I grew accustomed to the smell of
freshly cut blossoms in my room
I grew accustomed to You loving me for me and not
what I did to keep You grounded
to keep You sane to keep You alive

I grew accustomed to respect but
that all came crashing down when
You began to throw Your words
at me like daggers and spit them
at me like venom and held Your arms
around me with the intention of
suffocating me and I grew accustomed to
daggers scraping off my skin and I grew
accustomed to venom burning my arms

and I grew accustomed to Your hand
around my throat and how I had to
gasp struggle plead scream gasp gasp gasp
for breath I grew accustomed to You
but You never grew accustomed to me

You only grew accustomed to how I would
bend over backward and break my damn
spine just to keep You happy—just to keep
Your grip on my throat as loose
as possible You grew accustomed
to how I would tear up at Your words

You would tell me the tears were
caused by my daily teenage angst not
Your hand around my throat You
grew accustomed to me drowning in Your
lies You grew accustomed to me drowning in
your pain You grew accustomed to me
drowning

Anna Legutki

Grade 9

Libertyville High School

Libertyville

Teacher: Karen LeMaistre

EDGES

I was straight edges
dark hues against icy skin
leather jacket and red lipstick
spiked hair and sharp eyes

you were looking for curved edges
so you traced your fingers over me
looking for femininity
in its purest form

but when you found only
rough edges and tough bone
you took your chisel and
chipped away at the parts you didn't like

you fractured my edges
blue lines running on ivory
like crystal streams
you crushed every part of me

I am straight edges
dark hues against icy skin
leather jacket and red lipstick
spiked hair and sharp eyes

you liked curved edges
but you weren't skilled enough
to make my rough edges
smooth again

Anna Legutki

Grade 9

Libertyville High School

Libertyville

Teacher: Karen LeMaistre

FLEETING HUMANS

How beautiful is it?

The permanent impression we can imprint onto others
Both the joy and agony humans just like ourselves can bring
to one another

You meet many people in your lifetime
raging oceans
delicate flowers
colorful skies

How splendid it is the emotions these people can make you
feel

You will meet towering thunderstorms and lightning that
will knock you down

You will meet sunrises and moons that illuminate your life

It's awful isn't it, this power we give to others

It creates so much happiness yet sorrow

Putting our emotions in someone else's hands

Because they drop it, they drop it every time

And you were no exception

People always ask me to talk about our love

but you are so much more than a poetic line or even a grand
story.

You were the blood that pumped through my veins,
keeping me alive.

You were the fragrance of the ocean after a ferocious storm.
Placidly calm.

Scared but powerful.

You were those days where everything is happy and good

but you know won't last.
You were peach and lilac flowers planted in a garden that
bloom on the first warm day of the year.
You were tire swings
lemonade stands
recess
Sunday afternoons
and everything else beautiful yet temporary.

Samantha Merrick

Grade 11

Adlai E. Stevenson High School

Lincolnshire

Teacher: Martha Keller

DETOX

You were a drug.

The type of thing you hear about when you are small
and decide never to do,
out of fear.

You and your best friends make a pact and run off with
laughter and giggles,
unaware of the wound to one day be felt.
As you get older, though, you begin to hurt, you need an
escape,
and it almost sounds too good to be true.
At first you were a risk, something different and out of the
ordinary.

I took a chance, intrigued by the idea of us.

Your touch was a gateway drug to my heart,
and once I had you, I only wanted you.

My thoughts became consumed with you,
and I quickly succumbed to your love.

I could not get enough.

I slowly became dependent on each and every kiss.

You no longer gave me a high,
but I even needed you to feel normal.

I could not physically function without you there.

Without you I was empty, numb.

Nothing could intoxicate me the way you did.

You fixed me in ways that nothing else could.

I became addicted to your touch, scent, hugs,
and how your eyes light up when you talk about something
you love.

I always longed for your eyes to light up when you spoke
about me.

You were a drug, and now I'm wishing there was rehab for
a broken heart.

Getting over you was fall.

The chill of the air matched the feeling in my heart,
And the color of the leaves reflected the crimson red my
insides burned when you told me you loved someone else.
Our love was scorched foliage
Leaving a horrible stench that never fades.
Carved pumpkins imitated my desire to be able to scoop out
all of the bad
The wonderful memories shared
And the unfinished goodbyes.
Scalding tea filled my body, yet I still felt numb.
Numb to everything.
My loneliness was reflected in the crisp air that makes you
want to stay inside
Shut off from the rest of the world, like my emotions became
to you.
My emotions are the wild autumn wind.
Untamed, undecided, and confused.

Getting over you was fall, and the blowing wind.
I can't help but wonder what next season will bring.

Samantha Merrick

Grade 11

Adlai E. Stevenson High School

Lincolnshire

Teacher: Martha Keller

STARGAZING

My parents spend their days
Looking up at the sky.
A sky full of stars,
Only two catch their eyes.

My sister and I,
We are their stars.
And they continue their toil
So that we may go far.

Have you ever seen,
In all of your years,
Parents revolving around their son,
As planets do to theirs?

Generations of stars,
All in their parents debt.
But Mom, Dad don't worry.
Because of you, your son is set.

Eric Chang

Grade 11

Hinsdale Central High School

Hinsdale

Teacher: Cherise Lopez

ILLINOIS PROSE 2015

STUDENTS WRITING CHANGE

DELORES R. ROBINSON

Change is inevitable. The teachers flipping through this year's *Illinois English Bulletin* annual issue of student writing know this because they've seen students return to the halls of their schools after summer break, and the young people they knew last year are nearly unrecognizable: taller, changed voices, differently styled hair, maybe sporting a piercing or a tattoo that they didn't have last school year.

Some students return to school having experienced profound loss. During the summer they've faced the passing of a close relative or friend, parents who are no longer together, friendships that seemed strong but have ended. Others have changed in more subtle ways. They worry a bit more, or they feel more stress over their classes and their world. Observing the chaos around them, our students wonder what might be in store for them in the future. They scroll phone screens and

click through social media feeds, seeing evidence of disharmony, of troubling and persistent injustices, of economic and racial unrest. They read the memes and inhabit the digital world with its echo chamber of often hate-filled cross talk.

Yet, the thoughtful and compelling writing the judges have been lucky enough to read helps alleviate much of our concern about these young students. Their work shows that they are keen observers of people and of the world. Their writing proves that they understand the pain, the loss, and the inequities that are part of the human condition. Not only do they understand, but they have armed themselves against such troubles with the beauty of words, the rhythm of language, and the power of verse and of narrative. They take their concerns, and they create art to share with others. These students write into existence the changes they need to see.

Thank you to the many students and their dedicated teachers across Illinois who, each year, grace us with their best work and whose efforts never go unappreciated.

Delores R. Robinson, on behalf of the judges at Illinois Valley Community College:

Jean Forst

Kaushalya Jagasia

Tracy D. Lee

Kirk D. Lockwood

Adam Oldaker

Kimberly M. Radek

Randy Rambo

IF YOU GIVE A PERSON A STORY...

No. 1 life rule: keep both feet rooted in the ground.

The summer I turned five, I was plucked from my garden bed. I was eroded by the instability of my parents' jobs, and discarded into an unfamiliar plot of dirt.

The summer I turned five, I immigrated to the United States.

Sowed into the New York public school system, I attended the first day of kindergarten with little knowledge of the English language. I felt exposed and vulnerable in this foreign environment. Every time someone addressed me, each syllable became an utterance strung together to form incoherent, verbal blades that hacked away at my pride and drove me to frustration. In the midst of the lingual chaos, my ears were screaming *ting* while my head was sobbing *wo bu ming bai*, but my lips were sealed by fear. Fear trampled my budding confidence, and it was as if someone pressed mute on this episode of my life.

Speechless. Scared. Estranged.

During those first few months, silence and isolation were my only companions. I made few attempts to adapt to my new surroundings, but unknowingly, a transformation had already begun.

It was not through Homer's epics that I discovered the ability to transcend place and time. Nor was it through Charlotte Brontë's novels that I began to toy with the notion of love. Ironically, the book that had the most significant impact on my life was *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* by some lady who probably had too much time on her hands. That was one of the first English books I recall reading in ESL class. My ESL teacher would force us to sound out each syllable in our broken accents, reminiscent of our native tongues.

“C-c-coo-key.”

Despite our protracted struggle with each word, non-sensical syllables became comprehensible; words became grammatically acceptable sentences. I started to make the connection. Why would the mouse request milk, a creamy drink usually supplied by a cow, after he devoured his cookie, a rounded, chewy biscuit with chocolate pieces embedded in it? Because the cookie made him thirsty! Afterward, he might want to use a *jingzi* to check his reflection for a milk *huzi*. The two languages melded and merged in my head until it was no longer a matter of translating from one language to another but a single language comprised of vocabulary from both English and Chinese vernacular.

A decade later, I would still conjure up my days with the mouse and his cookie as I struggled to pick up a third language.

When we first read “La siesta del martes” in Spanish class, I was baffled.

What does this story have to do with siestas? What is the narrator doing in this town? Why is she at a church? What happened in the church?

Reading, rereading, sounding the words out, pulling out Google Translate in my desperation, I finally understood the gist of the story about a girl and her mother traveling back to their former *pueblo* to visit her brother’s grave. The *ladrón* died while robbing a wealthy lady because his own family couldn’t afford food. Through the eyes of Gabriel García Márquez, I was introduced to a foreign country and culture—my very own private tour. Along the journey, Márquez expressed to me his distress toward the class conflict occurring in his country. He made me aware of the inequalities between *clases altas* and *clases pobres* in a single train ride. He introduced the tradition of siestas in the Latin American culture. He sparked my desire to examine the Latin American culture through his narrative.

He reignited my passion for story.

A great story would become my passport to unexplored lands and a foreign language, transcending time and cultural boundaries.

I no longer wished to remain firmly planted on the ground. My mind ached to travel, to see where a story would take me next. Maybe I'll lend a hand to the once familiar Yugong, who persuaded his sons to help him move two mountains and touched the gods with his sincerity. Or, I could attend the vigil of "El ahogado mas hermoso" and listen to the village women contemplate the subject of beauty. Even so, I could explore uncharted territories of French romances and Russian tales. Wherever I choose to go next, one thing's for certain: I will not stay grounded.

In my travels around the world, I have discovered that with a little bit of curiosity and perseverance, my fears become a source of exhilaration. Spanish, Chinese, American novels, alike, became the reservoir of my identity and the identity of their respective people. The seed of reading planted in me long ago would once in a while be nourished by the discovery of a piece of cultural context, and I am resolute in collecting as much as I can from these stories because...

...if you give a person a story, they will thirst for more.

Keyu Guo

Grade 12

Adlai E. Stevenson High School

Lincolnshire

Teacher: Jennifer Arias

BREAKING DOWN THE GREAT WALL

"It's very fashionable to be Asian right now."

I read the line over and over. I'm nine years old, poring over *The Princess Diaries* in the backseat of the family van, and the phrase keeps resonating in my head, even though my eyes are already moving down the page. It's a small line, but it still makes me uneasy. *When was it ever unfashionable to be Asian?*

"It's not a fashion," my mother tells me when I finally muster up the courage to ask.

"Being Asian is just your ethnicity."

Still, I think to myself, it's always been fashionable to be white.

This was not the first time where my culture made me feel like I was inferior. When I was seven, my mother and I attended a small social event together—my friend Isabel's mommy-daughter birthday tea party—and my mom brought Isabel's mother a traditional Chinese tea set as a gift, customary to our Asian values of showing gratitude by giving a present to the hostess of an event. Her mother cooed, "How exotic!" over the red lacquer tea set and clapped her hands over the miniature tea cups. Later, after the festivities, I went home and googled the word "exotic."

Exotic, adjective.

Foreign—nonnative—unusual—alien.

From that moment on, I began to view everything Asian as abnormal, a feature that branded me as atypical in a community where anything remotely unconventional, from the agenda of PTA bake sales and ballet carpool schedules, was considered peculiar. It was a culture that was embedded in my hair color and skin tone, something that was unwanted, yet far too permanent. In my elementary school mindset, where difference denoted death, I felt that being Asian was

a defect I had to conceal. My childhood closet was made up of blue jeans and corduroy skirts, with my exquisitely made cheongsams shoved in the back of my wardrobe. I quickly discerned that Western-style clothing was associated with sophistication, while ethnic clothing was stigmatized as unprofessional. I began to build my own Great Wall of China, a fortification between myself and the culture that I felt could only cause me harm.

However, Western figures over the years have slowly warmed up to Asian culture. Celebrities have begun to wear cheongsams and kimonos in their music videos of the same distinguishable style that I had refused to wear for Chinese celebrations, but theirs are decidedly sexualized, a more fetishized version of the original. They are both too exotic and too Westernized at the same time, a clear representation of selective appreciation.

Appropriation is so often misconstrued as appreciation that it is hard to speak out about it without stepping on a few oh-so-sensitive toes. The problem is that Western figures often wear Asian culture as an ensemble, one that they can put on and take off whenever they wish. They exploit a trend with non-Western roots that is deemed original or innovative when they take it for themselves, but when the style is employed by the people of the culture from where it originated, it leads to racist generalizations and stereotypes. They pick and choose the parts of a separate culture that they wish to represent and profit from—primarily through clothing and jewelry—but they do so by debasing the original culture and objectifying it into a symbol of exoticism.

While Western culture oftentimes demands assimilation, Asian culture does not. Western civilization, throughout history, is known for its conquering and reshaping of other societies to mold to its own culture. Western religion, clothing, and

language is universally considered to be more refined—the dominant culture—while its Eastern counterparts are viewed as mystical and less sophisticated. Though Western society does not actively try to demean Asian culture, it recurrently simplifies symbols of Asian heritage into sellable products through Americanization, and in doing so, marginalizing the people of that culture into an aesthetic. They turn Asian culture into a costume, an experience that non-Asian people can pay for and then discard later.

My childhood nightmare was that people would brand me as strange because of my culture; now, it is that people do not know or care about the customs and traditions that have defined my life. I am afraid that people will exploit symbols of my culture as a means of self-expression but will not acknowledge or even attempt to learn about the lifestyle that they are taking from.

I used to believe that my culture held me back, that all Asians in America were viewed as perpetual foreigners and that it reflected badly on me. I saw the clothing that my mother brought out every Chinese holiday and I would groan at how unconventional they looked.

However, I've come to see that my culture is the factor that individualizes me, that culture is inherent and not a fashion statement, that there is an element of respect to each culture, and that I deserve it as well.

I am breaking down the Great Wall.

Grace Meilin Lu

Grade 11

Hinsdale Central High School

Hinsdale

Teacher: Gina Chandler

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE PEOPLE I'VE KILLED

An open letter to the people I've killed:

How do I start a letter like this? I'm not quite sure. I've never really been a people person.

Proper etiquette would tell me I should say sorry, but it would also tell me I'm not supposed to lie.

Sometimes I wonder about you. I wonder what happened before I arrived and after I left. About the lives you led.

Were you getting ready for work? Heading to a secret lover's house? Washing up for bed? I suppose I'll never know. And maybe that's the trouble with this line of work: unanswered questions. But that doesn't trouble me.

I'm good at making up stories.

There's a saying: You can tell the most about people from their hands and their shoes. It makes this imagining game quite easy.

Baby hands, calloused hands, wrinkled hands.

Boots, high heels, gym shoes.

In case you were wondering, my hands are small and thin with well-manicured fingernails.

And I'm wearing Converse.

Maybe it's odd that to go to sleep at night I don't de-humanize you. I don't turn you into objects that the world can do without: easily replaced, anyone can buy more of, or anything but one of a kind.

Instead I turn you into who you probably were. Real people with thoughts, feelings, and opinions.

Parents, children, siblings, friends, and enemies.

I imagine the children that you had. Or maybe you didn't.

Your dogs that liked to bark at nothing and everything. Rooms that were getting ready to be repainted, clothes you

were giving away, teeth you were going to brush, music that you were going to play.

When the others arrived, could they still sense the palpable cowardice that always seems to follow me around?

Cowardice. That's an interesting word. Am I really a coward? Is any of this my fault? Is it a bad thing that I'm more worried about the fact that I'm a coward than the fact that I'm a killer?

I think I've gotten off track, but I don't know if there really was a track to begin with.

I get worried when I see my family. I try not to look empty, but I don't know how well I'm doing. When my mom asks me questions, I just try not to scowl at her smiling face, and try not to get too attached to yet another husband. What is she on? Five? Six? Cocaine? Probably.

Why am I asking all these questions? Am I just curious or seeking some sort of closure? Closure. That's also an interesting word. It sounds like closing something, but in reality, it's opening more things up. Wounds that are in the process of healing but we insist on keeping a Band-Aid on them just in case that speeds up the process. Trying to speed up nature's natural processes. People don't understand that things will begin and things end whether they're paying attention to them or not.

I find too much comfort in words. The fact that they are just marks on a page. Words on paper. They provide us so much superiority. I like to write. Actually write. With a pen. Never pencil.

Never pencil because we can't just take things away in real life. We can't unsay things, undo things, unkill things.

I think that last words written are more important than last words spoken. One can tell much more about a person from their last words written than you can from their last

words spoken. We get to choose our last spoken words. What were your last written words? Last words.

I don't think about my own death very much. When one surrounds oneself with death every day, there isn't really a whole lot of time to think about their own demise.

I should know better than anyone that my time is limited. That these could be my last written words.

I know they aren't. I know that as much as I try to hurt myself through other people, I'll still wake up in the morning. That as far as my efforts to feel something will go, I'll always be numb.

My room isn't very nice. Not as nice as yours. I live in an admittedly appalling apartment. I could live a life of luxury with the money I get. But I don't do this for the money. Honestly, I donate most of it.

Not because I care about who it's going to, but because these days it seems like dark irony is the only way to make myself smile.

My floorboards are cracked and have stains from most liquids except water. They're like little tattoos that will stay here, get passed on to whomever lives here after me. They are my legacy.

My bed probably has bed bugs in it, but I don't sleep very much. There are a few ratty pillows and blankets scattered about, but I'm always cold. The mirror in the bathroom is still intact, but I hate looking at myself. There is no heat or air-conditioning, but I hardly pay attention to the weather anymore. There's a single grimy window, but the sun hurts my eyes. My refrigerator isn't very well stocked, but I can't remember the last time I ate.

I think this letter has become a lot more about me than about you. I'm pretty sure I should say sorry for that. But really, I'm not. I've never really been a people person.

After all this, I haven't answered your question.
Why do I do this?
It's a way to pass the time.

Abby Tzinberg

Grade 8

Northbrook Junior High School

Northbrook

Heather Corral

DEFENSE MECHANISMS

*I turn my words over in my mouth
I coat them in sugar and cinnamon
I make them smooth and quiet*

Almost ten years ago, students in one of my elementary art classes started to throw clay at each other, blue-gray goo sticking to tables and chairs. Our teacher, Mrs. Nollin, a particularly eccentric woman, stopped the class. Rubbing her temples, the bridge of her nose, she spoke coarsely, "Every day, I visualize these little pink roses, six or seven of them, floating around me in the air. Like little shields protecting me from all of the negativity and all the craziness." As she spoke, she gestured with her hands, rounding little imaginary flowers in the air. The teacher paused, one hand holding up an invisible rose, "In the morning, they are bright, pretty flowers. By the end of the day, they are all wilted and brown, their petals are all falling off."

I went home imagining floating flowers and shields, beams of "bad energy" in my head, deflected by my armor. For a week or two after, my mind conjured walls of flowers, towering high above me, hundreds of orchids and carnations. Years later, these flowers have floated about my mind and memory. They often drift in and out of my vision. They glow in faint gold and wisps of silver, tendrils of light swaying from their cores. I have wondered if my flowers were to manifest into reality, what they would be then.

*I tune my voice to reverberate in your harmony
I tune it to trickle like honey
I make it smooth and sweet
I make it quiet and easy on the mind*

While studying film last summer, I read that good directors emphasize focus on conveying story. After reading movies' screenplays and watching each cinematic work, I found that many great films relied on the subject, or diegesis, to carry the movie's quality. Mediocre films depended on superfluous componenets. Movies add more fight scenes, larger explosions. Children's movies feature cheesy montages and a romantic subplot to "reach a larger audience." These unnecessary components tended to act as filler pieces and, ultimately, never advanced the plot with any substance.

But they did distract from the lackluster stories with beautiful visuals and attractive subplots. The elements acted as a veil, concealing the void that the director failed to fill with meaning. By adding these facets, directors evaded the risk of ridicule and negative criticism by the public. Some of the worst accounts ever conveyed in film have used this defense mechanism to deflect incredible amounts of censure.

Later in the summer, I had begun to write my own screenplays, alongside other literature. Files of random notes and old Word documents overrun my computer, notebooks still sit stacked at the foot of my bed. The other day, while attempting to manage the clutter, I found myself cross-legged on the floor of my bedroom, surrounded by an array of open notebooks and papers. Marks of red pen flitted across some of these sheets, circling misspelled words and grammatical mistakes. Small suggestions by my writing coach were scribbled in nearly illegible fonts down every margin. After laughing at some of my previous mistakes, a poem jotted sloppily on a half sheet of paper caught my eye. On the top of the poem, the word "Vague" was written in bold, black pen, my handwriting curving the *e* and flicking the tail on the *g*.

*I file the edges of my words
I make them curved and dull
They are smooth and sweet
They are quiet and easy to hold*

My older cousin works in accounting and computer firms. A very intelligent woman, she works diligently at her job and has succeeded far beyond her years. A few weeks ago at a family dinner, however, she told me about some of the difficulties she's faced in the field. She explained that she often deprecated herself in order to shy away from confrontation.

"I would say, 'I just wanted to see XYZ,' or, 'Sorry, do you have a moment?' Though it's a slight difference, when I added 'just,' I vilified my need. Without even hearing what they had to say, I was already lessening myself to keep myself out of the way. But I thought, if I want to see something, I should ask for it."

She laughed, "I don't add 'just' anymore. No disclaimer needed."

At first, I was confused. *Just* was only a word to style speech and express singularity. *Just* was never a show of disesteem. Then, while rereading several of my essays and poems, I realized my *justs* and *sorrys*. They came in vague complexities, understated opinions, weak generalizations.

Within my writing, appealing clichés surrounded my ideas, obfuscations draped my words. Like my cousin and most directors I had ever studied, I had found my garrison.

*As you swallow my words, I watch the curvature of your
mouth*

*They are coated in my sugar and cinnamon
You turn your words over in your mouth
They are sour and sharp*

"I didn't spend a lot of time editing yet. And if you think you have any suggestions, go ahead and tell me. Or if you don't want to, that's OK, too. I'm sorry, I hope I'm not bothering you. If you have something more important to do, that's OK too."

I tuck the hair behind my ear; I wipe moisture from my hands on my jeans. There are flowers in the inflections of my voice, soothing to the ear. They manifest themselves in my mind and take the form of benevolent words, calming to an uneasy mind. I know I dull my consonants, elongate my vowels. This indecisiveness is just another way to shield myself. I know I am nervous. This indecisiveness is just a defense mechanism.

*You raise your voice, and I am already shrinking mine
My words are tiny while suspended next to yours
They are smooth and sweet
I am quiet and easy to intimidate*

Emily-Nicole Pease

Grade 11

Adlai E. Stevenson High School

Lincolnshire

Teacher: Denise Foster

OUR VAUNTED LEGACY

So I'm flipping through the TV guide on my 2010 flatscreen, and I happen upon PBS, my preferred childhood TV channel. I've got that lazy two o'clock feeling, so I stay on public broadcasting to see what's up, and I am astounded—absolutely astounded!—to find my favorite homey ol' channel broadcasting computer-generated, condescendingly synthetic garbage!

How dare PBS retire the classics played when I was a kid! *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* is absolutely brilliant and not at all boring. How will any of today's children know "we're a happy family" if they don't have a man in a purple dinosaur costume singing it to them from their television screens? Honestly, you have to wonder what kids are learning these days.

Huh. That's a familiar mantra. I've read it from the imaginary lips of cantankerous old men in YA novels; I've heard it snarked by the sassy grandmother on just about every quirky family comedy-drama, her exclamation immediately followed by the laugh track. I've even seen it in the way my mom tried to goad me into reading *David Copperfield*, which I petulantly abandoned not forty pages in despite her staunch disapproval.

But why are people so obsessed with what the kids are learning? Why do they think the kids'll grow up *wrong*? When I was about eleven years old, my mother pushed me to peruse every classical novel from *Little Women* to *The Call of the Wild*. My mother, a Chinese farm girl who had received only the most technical English lessons, who would not send an e-mail without asking me to help proofread, who could hardly differentiate "taboo" from "tattoo," was somehow familiar enough with classical literature to have browsed through Austen's novels and Tolstoy's tomes and become worshipful enough to cajole her daughter into reading them, too. This remarkable awareness can only be attributed to the

pervasiveness of high opinions on older “classical” novels in American culture. Consequently, a low opinion is also formed about newer books due to their lesser eminence; modernity makes novels more susceptible to adults’ criticism because of unestablished prestige. My mother never did recommend that I read *The Lightning Thief* or *Maximum Ride*. And she never stopped insisting on my perusal of a secondhand copy of *David Copperfield*. Evidently, the fear that children will become “wrong” is a result of believing that newer media is inferior to older, more established ones.

Yet you might protest that this is a leap in logic. I’m just a teenager; what would I know? And *Little Women* is obviously a masterpiece and not a wonderful sleep aid. How would such an age-biased cultural outlook spread so far in the mightily progressive US of A anyway? What force could homogenize even one of the Melting Pot’s eclectic societal views?

Answer: the Internet.

I love the Internet like I love my dog; Donnie is heartwarming to have around, but he listens to my parents too much. Also, sometimes he stinks. At least once a week, I see something on the Internet along the lines of, “Modern kids are weak; they can’t even imbibe their coffee black with a side of engine fuel,” or, “When I was your age, I didn’t have a single trophy in my room because we only got awards if we *deserved* them,” or “If you don’t appreciate this movie icon from the ’80s I will punch you in the face, you uncultured swine.” These posts reek of insipid egocentrism, condescendingly directed toward my “unlearned” generation and me.

But what’s really funky is that some of those writers are probably in their twenties. Some may be in their teens. People of those ages watch *Say Yes to the Dress* and drop smartphones into toilets and read John Green’s romances; they shouldn’t have the perspective to address us from on

high. They shouldn't have the incentive to cast judgement on a culture they're a part of.

But, they do. *I* do. It's strange. We're so adamant about supporting what we grow up with: hometown sports teams, dialects, childhood TV shows, cultural heritage. Yet, when it comes to generational culture, we bash ourselves like the parents we abhor listening to. Maybe it's because there really is something wrong with kids today. God knows I've heard that said enough. But I think it's because older generations, to preserve *their* lifestyles, relentlessly teach us to debase our beliefs and culture. Adults have been much more influential with the youth through viral fads, so by internalizing popular web content, we learn unconsciously to value their criticism of our technophilic culture, though we've also learned to resist change. Just last year I wrote passionately about how smartphones are sucking the life out of face-to-face interaction, and last month, I upgraded to an iPhone 6. I call myself a staunch devotee to Kurt Vonnegut and Hermann Hesse. Have I finished even a page of *Demian*? ... Not exactly. But simply saying this allows me to feel the satisfaction of cultural superiority and self-righteousness, like a real adult. And that's enough to recompense for the eternal bit of self-loathing that grows with every hypocritical criticism I broadcast to the younger generations.

But that's just me. So, am I the only rotten apple in a bushel of well-adjusted, properly respectful, filially devoted teenagers? Well. That depends on what kids are learning these days.

Helen Hu

Grade 11

Hinsdale Central High School

Hinsdale

Teacher: Jared Friebe

UNDERNEATH THE EVAPORATING RAIN

I should. Have left. Earlier.

The New Mexican sun floats directly overhead, burning my neck and bleaching my hair. If I had gotten out before the sun rose, forgetting sunscreen wouldn't have been an issue. My stride grows heavier, and the suffocating heat forces me to slow down and stop. I place my hands on my knees, buckle my arms, and try to breathe in as much oxygen from the high altitude as I can.

It's so. Damn. Hot outside.

A blue-tailed lizard scurries past me into the dead brush. I'm surrounded by the Sandia Mountains, "watermelon" in Spanish for their striped green and red hues, but they don't seem any closer than they were a few miles ago. My fingers stretch to the ground as I try and regain some feeling in my legs. I pout my mouth and blow away the pieces of hair stuck to my sweaty forehead, shutting my eyes, and opening them to—

Red.

It's everywhere. All over my shoes, my legs, my socks. It's even crusted under my nails, and ground into the lines in my knuckles.

Not again.

The notorious rusty red dirt in New Mexico is relentless and won't be coming out in the washing machine anytime soon.

The dirt may be a pain, but ironically it's something I appreciate the most about New Mexico. You won't find the same colors anywhere else. My family should know; we're the ones with my grandmother's paintings of the landscape. Her watercolors perfectly depict the eerie virga, precipitation that stretches down from the clouds but evaporates before

hitting the ground, contrasting against the sharp lines of the mesa. My dad's parents live in an adobe-inspired home out in Placitas, New Mexico, and Grandma would sometimes shuffle the kids up the twirling staircase to the tower, which was built by my grandpa and functioned solely as her art studio. She would hand us a sketchbook or open the dark wooden drawers and show us our first scribbled masterpieces. At other times she would guide us through an art lesson, pleased at how my brother, Christopher, had a dominant left hand that mimicked her own. His room slowly accumulated hundreds of drawings, and his art degree years later didn't surprise Grandma at all.

Christopher functions in a slightly "different" manner than most other people, and not just because of his left hand. I walked out into my grandparents' yard one afternoon and saw him squatting by the fence, his frizzy white curls a halo above his head. At a closer look, there, in his palm, was a big black scorpion. We sat there studying it, he moved it closer to me, and I squirmed away. He laughed. It was a vinegaroon, also called a whip scorpion, both names derived from their long thin whip-like tail that sprays an acid resembling vinegar. He's gotten it on his hand before, and the smell lingers for a week. It wasn't unusual for Christopher to catch creatures, recruiting my sister and me to help him dig holes for five-gallon-bucket traps. He'd fly back home with his treasures placed in a sandwich container inside his suitcase. I never really questioned if that was completely legal or not. If we drove home, I'd sit as far away from the specimens as I could. Christopher didn't always have time to make his own catch though, and sometimes we would receive a package on our stoop in Illinois from my grandpa. Boxed up was another scorpion or tarantula and a note: "Found this inside my shoe in the garage."

Burnt and exhausted, I pull up to the anthills lining my grandparents' driveway in my newly reddened sneakers. I hated those anthills when I was younger and was afraid to step out of the van and walk the ten-foot journey to the door. In fact, I hated *a lot* of things when I was younger, and New Mexico allowed plenty of opportunities to kvetch about everything wrong with my family. Whenever I told my friends where I was going for spring break, they responded with, "You can relax on the beach at the resort!"

Then I would say, "Not Mexico. *New Mexico*."

You know, the landlocked desert state.

"Oh. Where's that at?"

I tried to talk to them about nopales, also called the prickly pear cactus. You can make jam and eat the fruit or shave off the needles and eat the green part in a salad. I talked to them about how, out on the desert trail, my dad would pluck a purple prickly pear off the cactus and hand it to my sister and me, telling us not to hold it in our palm or we would get splinters. We did anyway and spent the rest of the night under the lamp in the family room with tweezers. But nothing I said felt comparable to swimming with dolphins in Florida, or Disneyland, or screaming at a waterpark like everyone else did.

"Ew, you eat cactus?" may have sent me running in tears before, but right now I lie still, a blanket cocoon on my grandparents' deck. The itchiness and restlessness I used to feel have long sifted through the wool fibers, and I embrace the stillness that wraps around me. Eyes pasted to the Milky Way slicing the sky, which is only visible away from the city lights and bustle, I gaze at the ever-growing number of stars and listen quietly as my uncle tries to explain astrophysics to my sister and me. In the background, my grandfather recalls his days as a colonel in World War II. The scent of juniper fills

the dry air, creating an atmosphere only New Mexico offers.
I fall asleep to my heartbeat resonating in my ears, matching
the rhythm of tomorrow's dirt crumbling under my shoes as
they make their way down the trail, soaking up the desert
before I return home.

Annamarie Wellems

Grade 11

Adlai E. Stevenson High School

Lincolnshire

Teacher: Martha Keller

SIX YEARS OF PLANNING

The room was dark. There were remnants from the ravages of the evening feast. Over my lifespan, I had orbited the sun on earth over six times, and this was my chance. I had spent too much time here at the place where two walls of our kitchen merge at a perpendicular point, and now I would finally triumph. Or so I thought. I had been sentenced here for my less-than-stellar behavior. I scoped out my surroundings, and all I saw was a place on my plate still chock-full of an abominable green vegetable. As soon as my father had left the room, I did what we young kids should have done years before, I freed myself from the corner prison of ninety degrees.

Having pre-calculated my escape route, I knew exactly where to go in order to elude my father. I tiptoed over certain parts of the floor in order to avoid the squeaky spots, and in the living room I waited. As soon as my father took out the garbage, I dashed up the stairs as fast as a predator chasing its prey. The thing I was hunting was freedom. Once upstairs, there was one more obstacle standing between my room and me; however, my mother, also known as the Queen, could not be as easily deceived as her counterpart. So I did what needed to be done. Crash! Somehow, a vase fell off of the royal bedroom dresser. This sound drew her majesty out of the hallway and into the room like a bee drawn to honey. Before her highness could even process the broken vase, I had already darted behind her and made my way to my room. As I was about to lock the door, I pondered whether or not I could teach my parents a lesson so enduring that they would never even put that dreaded green vegetable on my plate again. I had then decided my fate, so I slipped into my closet.

So firmly hidden was I that it would be nearly impossible for my presence to be detected. So then I waited. It was not long before I could hear my parents frantically seeking me. By the time that they were considering calling the authorities, I knew my work was done.

I crawled out of my safe haven behind two suitcases and emerged from my isolation. My mother and father were so happy to see me that they did not even remember I had not eaten my broccoli. My mother even forgot about the vase. Out of the corner of my eye, I could just barely see my older brother gazing at me, disapprovingly. This was the moment I knew I was a six-year-old to be reckoned with.

Zachary Dane Belanger

Grade 12

Marion High School

Marion

Teacher: Maggie Davis

DO I FEAR DEATH?

There was once a point in my life where I was comfortable with the idea of dying. I was thirteen, I had just accepted the Christian faith, and, in my blissful ignorance, I trusted everything the church leaders told me. I wholeheartedly believed that after I die, I'll be able to go to heaven and live happily ever after, basking in God's love or whatever. In the two years that followed, I gradually lost my faith, but I didn't give my mortality much more thought until, one morning, I woke up sobbing because I got shot and was promptly bleeding to death.

I tend to have startlingly vivid dreams. This one started with me in an empty prison cell, having just received the message that I was due to be executed in the morning. All other details regarding that scene, such as why I was in a cell in the first place or what that cell looked like, were hazy and unclear. Such is the nature of dreams. However, the vagueness of the scene didn't make the experience any less psychologically shocking. At that moment, I genuinely thought that my brain was about to get blown to pieces.

Denial and acceptance started their inevitable battle as I processed the information.

In a few short hours, the invisible threads of memory and thought that reside in the neurotic network of my brain are going to unravel, becoming meaningless splatters of gray on the wall.

No. No. Excuse me, no. This isn't the sort of stuff that happens to me. I'm supposed to have an entire lifetime to prepare for this.

In a few short hours, this abstract entity that I call myself, and my awareness of said entity, is all just going to... disappear. Poof. Gone like flower petals in the wind, never to become a flower again.

No. This can't be happening. Not to me. I still have so much left to do. I want to write books, make movies, share ideas, change society. I can't go now. I've barely started living!

In a few short hours, I will no longer *be*.

I had been sitting motionless in a corner of the cell as I pondered all of the above, but at that moment, I screamed.

Let's fast-forward.

It didn't take me very long to realize how pointless it would be to spend the last few hours of existence sobbing in fear. A much more useful way to pass the time would be to get myself mentally prepared for my impending demise. I didn't want to die afraid and panicked; I, like most people, wanted to die in peace.

With that in mind, I spent what I thought was the last night of my life writing a letter, using a pen and paper that materialized out of thin air. It's a dream, so screw logic. I addressed it to my parents and others who might care about me and told them not to mourn or feel sorry on my behalf. By the time they read that letter, I would be dead, and dead people don't care about how dead they are. Instead, I asked them to focus on their own lives, to use my death as an incentive for them to live. I addressed a few specific people, telling them, in detail, how much I loved or despised them. I also planned my own funeral, just so I could control some aspect of this crazy situation. Finally, after spending the entire night writing down everything I had ever wanted to say to anyone, I felt a calm settle over the cell. It was going to be all right. I had poured my entire soul out onto those pieces of parchment; there was nothing more I could do. My story had been sufficiently wrapped up.

It was time to close the book.

I walked out to my death with my head held high. However, as the bullet raced toward me, all of my feelings of

closure fled before it. A blind, irrational instinct to live took over, freezing my mind and body with fear. When the bullet stuck, I realized I would not die in peace after all.

With a disorienting jolt, I woke up.

I was not dead. Nor was I about to die. I didn't even get shot.

Instead, I was lying facedown in the middle of my small, mundane bed, uncomfortably warm under the tangle of blankets I've piled into that cramped space. The tangle was welcomed. Familiar.

That was the single, most relieving moment of my entire existence. For the first time in my life, I could appreciate life for what it was—simply the state of being alive, no strings attached. That feeling has never left me. Whatever happens, I have been and always will be able to draw consolation from the fact that at least my heart is still beating.

Lesson learned: I am not comfortable with dying. At all.

Maybe it's time to look into that whole afterlife thing again.

Susan Cao

Grade 10

Hinsdale Central High School

Hinsdale

Teacher: Erin Palmer

THE WIRY, LITTLE BOY

The wiry, little boy trekked the half mile to the community well under the beating sun, sweat glistening on his brow. Arriving at his destination, he came upon a long line of weary neighbors, waiting their turn to fill up their buckets and begin their journey home. This trip, repeated two or three times a day, was the only means of ensuring that his grandma, sister, and he had water to cook with, to wash with, to bathe in, and to drink. Years of cranking the same rusty handle showed as he filled his buckets with ease and headed home, careful not to spill a single, valuable drop as he teetered on. As he walked, he passed those in his community who were “well-off” and could afford the luxury of running water in their homes. He trudged on, determined one day to be able to afford running water for a family of his own.

~

I raced around the house in my swim trunks with anticipation. It was finally here: the day for my weekly bubble bath. My sister and I watched as the torrent of water slowly filled the bath, our anticipation and bubbles rising higher and higher. When the wait became unbearable, we both broke from the grasp of our smiling father and jumped into the tub, giggling as warm, soapy water greeted us. We splashed around, played with our floating toys, and settled down as we directed our attention to the television protruding from the far wall, showing the familiar cartoon sea creatures who, like us, had not a care in the world as they embarked on their underwater adventures. My father looked on, our laughter fading into the background; a placid, pensive look glazed over his eyes.

~

The wiry, little boy, not as little now, looked on curiously as his mother stacked the hundreds upon hundreds of matchboxes in neat little rows in her bedroom.

"You're too young to understand," she said as the wiry, little boy piped up questioningly. She kept on stacking.

As the weeks continued, a gradual change took hold of his community. Every morning, he watched shivering strangers line up outside of his apartment, eager to buy a handful of matches to last the day. Every afternoon, he watched his neighbors bicker over the prices of candles, pencils, towels, and cloth. Every night, he watched his dinner grow smaller and smaller. He understood.

~

I didn't understand. What made the swollen white tips crackle and burst into flames so suddenly? I lit the last match of the matchbook and observed its short life, from a brilliant eruption to a steady glow to a final sizzle as it reached its resting place: the depths of the toilet bowl where it joined its nineteen burnt-out siblings.

As I reached for a new matchbook, familiar footsteps approached. "Eric? Are you playing with the matches again?"

"N... Yes," I confessed sheepishly, my lie collapsing as my father walked into the bathroom, detecting the lingering, smoky smell. He gazed down at the incriminating evidence I had not flushed in time and sternly turned toward me.

"Remember what I told you? Matches are expensive. You should only use them if you need them. This is a horrible waste."

I chuckled incredulously. "Expensive? Dad, these matchbooks aren't even worth a quarter each."

He opened his mouth, and I braced for yet another lecture on the necessity of being frugal, but the droning words never came. He closed his mouth, returned his gaze

to the twenty wet matches, and sighed a long, heaving sigh. I glanced up and watched as he fell silent, losing himself in the folds of his mind.

"So... am I in trouble?" I asked after the silence became deafening.

Snapping out of his pensiveness, he lifted his gaze to me. "No son, just know that for some people, even nickel matchbooks don't come easy. 'The scraps of one man are the feast of another.' Do you understand what that means?"

I nodded my head obediently, but I didn't understand.

~

Two steps. Pause. Another two steps. Another pause. The wiry, little boy, taller now, patiently held his place in the long, snaking line. To his parents' dismay, changes for the worse continued to sweep through his community, whose members chafed under the destitution. Their agitation grew as their money bags shrank. Thoughts of putting food on the table weighed heavily on their minds while they themselves weighed less and less. Tempers were cut shorter as lines, like this one, grew steadily longer.

Looking down, the little boy once again examined the small book full of tiny stamps. One read "*1 Pound of Corn*," another "*1/4 Pound of Beef*," and another "*1 Tube of Toothpaste*." Upon making his way to the front of the growing line, he flipped to the page in his worn-out ration book that allotted him "*1 Spool of Thread*." His father needed a new shirt.

~

Years later, I met the wiry, little boy. He was no longer wiry, no longer little, and no longer a boy. He was my father, whose family had running water, closets bulging with clothes, and food enough to feed a small village.

As I sat there listening intently to the stories of his childhood, of his communal well, of his ration stamps, of the source

of his frugality, my gaze was cast down in contemplation. I thought of my bubble baths, my burnt matches, and my impatience at the grocery store lines and asked, "Is this why you've told me to always be grateful?"

"Yes, son," he replied, "Always."

As my father looked up to meet my eyes, a now humbled, little boy stared back at him.

"Thank you," said the humbled, little boy to his father. I finally understood.

Eric Chang

Grade 11

Hinsdale Central High School

Hinsdale

Teacher: Cherise Lopez

THE DRAGON IN MY MIND

"Mom just come with me; it's OK." The boy holds his hand out to me, and I want to grab it but don't know why. I don't know who he is. I dip my toes into the ocean and close my eyes.

"Leave me alone. I love the beach." I can hear seagulls crying around me, and I feel the gritty sand under my fingers. I am at peace.

"Put your shoes back on. This isn't the beach; we need to get you home." His words reach a place deep in my brain, and it wakes up groggily, as if it has been asleep for years. I look around. I am not at the beach. I look down. I am sitting on a curb on a city corner, and the "ocean" I made myself is a puddle of murky gutter water. Just like my disease-ridden mind, it is clouded with muck that I can't see through, nothing like the clear ocean.

"All right, take me home." His hand is still outstretched, and I grasp it just like the neurons in my brain are trying to grasp onto the last bit of what is left of me.

I hate my mind. I hate the dragon that is Alzheimer's that forces my thoughts and consciousness to fight like a knight in shining armor to arouse my awareness. Every day drags on as the war and the soldiers of sanity get pushed back farther and farther, until soon, nothing will be left to defend. The moments of lucidity are fleeting, few and far between, and I try to savor each one.

"Tom, you know how much I love you, right?" In his eyes, I see the pain that I usually don't recognize; his joy that I know who he is but also the knowledge that it will not last for long. I wish I could thank him more often for how much he sacrifices for me. He smiles a sad smile that seems to sum up everything he is feeling, and I know that he knows. Even though I hardly know he is my son.

As we walk along, I look up at the alarmingly blue sky that peeks out from between the buildings, and my train of thought trails off again. My gaze wanders downward, and it surprises me to see that Johnny is holding my hand. Somehow this feels wrong, but I can't place my finger on what it is. We usually walk home from school together, but he doesn't "like like" me, or does he? I turn to him to ask why he has suddenly shown interest in me, when I see the man holding my hand isn't Johnny at all. He looks like him in a softer way, less of the angles and lines that make his face harsh. But I do not know who this boy is, and I definitely don't want him holding my hand, so I draw it back.

"Sorry, I'm interested in someone else." I try to be polite to the boy and not hurt his feelings, but his face falls. I give an apologetic smile and begin to walk away, kind of quickly, because you never know if someone you meet on the street is an ax murderer.

"Wait, Mom!" He shouts and catches up to me quickly, grabbing my arm a little too firmly. The sudden pressure and hearing what he called me brings me back to the present. Embarrassment and frustration floods my face. Why can't I get anything right?

"I'm—I'm sorry." He can tell how upset I've gotten.

"Don't apologize; it's OK."

"No, it isn't," my words come out sharper than I mean, "A mother is supposed to take care of her son, not the other way around." We keep walking in silence, and the sky no longer seems to be freeing but pressing down on me on all sides.

Finally, we arrive home, which I only know because we stop, and Tom leads me inside. Once I am through the front door, I stay a step behind him, pretending like I know where the rooms are and what I'm supposed to be doing. Trying to focus on the map in my head is like trying to keep your eye

on one wave in the ocean; right as I am about to remember, it slips out of my sight yet again.

"Lisa and her husband are coming for dinner tonight. I have to start cooking, so just stay here and watch some TV." Lisa. The name rings a bell, but one that is rusty, old and hasn't been used for a while. "My sister, Lisa." He says it in a way that is not accusing me of forgetting anything. Not like saying "your daughter," even though that is the truth, and I should know it. I nod and sit on the couch, looking at the moving pictures in front of me that are supposed to make up my alleged favorite show. I try so hard to focus, but everything is too fast: pictures pass in a blur and conversations stream by that are over before my brain can catch up and make sense of the words. A woman is rushed into the emergency room with a gash on her forehead, and I jump up.

"Somebody, help her! Please, anybody, there is a woman who is very injured, and she needs an ambulance. Help!" My shrieks bring someone rushing into the room, but it doesn't register. Arms wrap around me.

"Mom, calm down! You're at home; it's OK!" The words in my ears are like bullets firing from the enemy lines. They pierce holes through my skull, my understanding. I continue crying for the girl, for somebody to help her. Please, can somebody, anybody, help me?

Janey Oline

Grade 12

Lake Forest High School

Lake Forest

Teacher: Susan Hersam

THE FOLLOWING WILL BE ALL MULTIPLE CHOICE

The following quiz will be all multiple choice. Please be sure to use a number two pencil, and refrain from any erasure marks, as otherwise your answers will not be properly graded. Best of luck!

1. Am I an artist?

- a. Yes.
- b. No.
- c. For the sake of humanity, *please* just get back to work.

2. Define work.

- a. Writing strange poems in crayon in your notebook and attempting to justify it as part of the creative process.
- b. Not doing your legitimate, grade-producing homework because you are writing strange poems with crayons.
- c. Taking a break to sharpen the crayons that you have been writing strange poems with for the past hour.
- d. All of the above.
- e. None of the above (again, for humanity's sake, *please* just pick this one)

3. True or false: The Internet puts forth so much written social commentary that mine is irrelevant and unnecessary.

- a. True. Please just go read a book—like, a real live one, with paper and words and shit.
- b. False. I can't think of *anyone* who wouldn't want to have another "Top 10" list shoved down their throats!

4. Writing is a plausible career path.

- a. ...
- b.
- c.if all else fails, your little brother's middle school newspaper could use a freelance journalist...right?

5. At least you're writing *something* right now. Does that count as a success?

- a. My dog thinks he's a cat. Does that make him a cat?
- b. You know what they say—practice makes perfect!
(And according to every private college in America, so does \$60,000 a year.)
- c. The fact that you got out of bed this morning and put on real pants is honestly an accomplishment in itself, so props to you no matter what.

6. The polar ice caps are melting.

- a. This quiz was weird enough to begin with, but...really?
- b. Just like your future career plans!
- c. True. Permanent ice cover is shrinking at a rate of 9% per decade.

7. Is there a right time and place to write?

- a. Yeah—your fourth grade class during the poetry unit (and to be fair, you should've just left it at that...)
- b. Your local McDonald's. Two a.m. Back booth. Meet me there?
- c. Anywhere and anytime you're caffeinated out of your mind.

8. This quiz was worth my time.

- a. If by time you mean the minutes of existence that would've been otherwise spent binge-watching *Wet Hot American Summer* on Netflix, then sure, believe what you want!
- b. I showed up at the back booth, but you weren't there... so *no*, this wasn't worth my time.
- c. Just get back to work, please. Maybe you could try writing something?

Alex Walinskas

Grade 12

Lake Forest High School

Lake Forest

Teacher: Susan Hersam

JULIET, A LOVING PROTAGONIST

"But soft, what light through yonder window breaks? / It is the East, and Juliet is the sun!" (Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, 2.2.2–3). These lines are spoken about Juliet Capulet, the female protagonist in Shakespeare's tragedy, *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*. The male protagonist, Romeo Montague, speaks these words about Juliet during Shakespeare's famous balcony scene. In this scene Juliet instructs Romeo to arrange plans for their marriage, even though they have just met. Juliet proves to be a dynamic, round character whose flaw lies in being too hasty with her actions, a flaw the reader finds in both protagonists. However, she proves to be a kindhearted girl who will do anything for her love.

Juliet first appears in act one during the exposition of the play when her mother, Lady Capulet, proposes the idea of marriage by informing her that there is a man named Paris, who would like to marry her. He is invited to the party hosted by the Capulets in honor of Juliet. Paris is related to the Prince of Verona, so Lady Capulet would very much like for Juliet to marry Paris since this marriage would help the family rise on the social ladder. Lady Capulet asks her, "What say you? Can you love the gentleman?" (1.3.85). She further instructs Juliet to "[r]ead o'er the volume of young Paris's face, / [a]nd find delight writ there with beauty's pen" (1.3.87–88). Juliet replies, "It is an honor that I dream not of" (1.3.71). Her response suggests that Juliet is in no hurry to be married, despite the fact that the party is to celebrate her coming-of-age.

Later after meeting Romeo at this same party, Juliet falls deeply in love, and he falls in love with her as well. While on her balcony after the party, she suggests that "[i]f that thy bent of love be honorable, / [t]hy purpose marriage, send me word tomorrow" (2.2.150–151). Just earlier Juliet had suggested that

she was not interested in marriage, and now she appears to be the one proposing marriage to Romeo. Her sudden change, therefore, demonstrates irony, which also contributes to the dynamic change one sees in Juliet.

Her haste to be married to Romeo again is unusual, considering that she has only known him for a few hours prior to her proposal. Even though the reader can assume that her actions came from love, she is indeed being very hasty with such an important decision. According to Friar Lawrence, a secondary character who becomes close to Juliet, “[t]hey stumble that run fast” (2.3.101). This quote suggests that there are consequences to those who go through life too fast by listening more to their emotions than to their reasoning. Friar Lawrence warns both Juliet and Romeo of this theme throughout the play, but neither listen. In the end, this costs them their lives.

Another incident that reveals Juliet’s hastiness occurs when her Nurse informs her that cousin Tybalt “...is gone and Romeo banished. / Romeo that killed him—he is banished” (3.2.75–76). Having heard that Romeo just killed her cousin, Juliet quickly curses Romeo, calling him “[a] damned saint, an honorable villain” (3.2.85). Yet when the Nurse exclaims, “Shame come to Romeo!”, Juliet quickly realizes her mistake in cursing her husband and condemns herself by saying, “... what tongue shall smooth thy name / When I, thy three-hours wife, have mangled it?” (3.2.107–109). The scene reinforces her flaw, which might contribute to her death in act five.

Despite this flaw, the reader cannot overlook her loving nature. One can tell she is deeply in love with Romeo. For instance, after their brief honeymoon in act four and he must leave Verona for killing Tybalt, Juliet insists that “[i]t is not yet day,” for she does not want him to leave for Mantua (3.5.1). She knows that once he leaves, she may not see him

again, so she desires he "...need'st not to be gone" (3.5.16). Yet when she realizes that it is daylight, she yells, "...Hie hence, begone, away!" (3.5.26). Even though she does not wish him to leave, she loves him so much that she would prefer to say good-bye than have him be discovered.

Furthermore, Juliet demonstrates a loving nature also toward her family. In act three, when Lord Capulet expresses his desire for Juliet to marry Paris, and Juliet refuses because she is secretly married to Romeo, Lord Capulet flies into a rage yelling, "Out, you green-sickness carrion! Out, you baggage!" (3.5.161). Juliet expresses sorrow; she kneels before him saying, "Good father, I beseech you on my knees. / Hear me with patience but to speak a word" (3.5.164–165). Even though she cannot marry Paris, she desperately tries to please her father. She, then, resolves her problem with Friar Lawrence.

When she returns to her father to apologize, her loving nature is revealed when she says, "...Pardon, I beseech you. / Henceforth, I am ever ruled by you" (4.2.22–23). Having heard what he wanted to hear, Lord Capulet once again showers his love for her obedience and loving nature.

Throughout the play Juliet proves to be a kindhearted girl, who would do anything to protect her love even if it means sacrificing her own happiness. By falling in love with Romeo and rushing into marriage, she demonstrates her obvious flaw of rushing through life. Yet, the reader sees that all of this makes Juliet a round, dynamic character thereby making Juliet a loving protagonist in Shakespeare's classic tragedy.

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Maya Belcove

Grade 7

Lycée Français de Chicago

Chicago

Teacher: Cyn Koukos

THE TAXICAB

The driver picked up his next customer: sleek, slim, and young, a man of no more than twenty-one.

"Thirty-six East Seventy-Sixth Street," he said, sniffing the unusually odorless air of the taxi cab.

The meter began to run. Neither the driver nor the man spoke. It was a comfortable silence in the sea of heat undulating around the two. The driver stopped outside a building, and a young woman got in followed by clouds of perfume. Lights from the city shone through the windows of the cab. The couple in the back seemed to become one the longer they sat together, sinking into each other's arms. The taxi driver adjusted the rearview mirror and made eye contact with his young customer. The man's eyes wandered down to the taxi driver's identification card. Suddenly, the once suave man, now frazzled, sat up straight. He removed the girl from his arm.

"Oh, good evening, Professor!" he exclaimed. The driver greeted the man politely, inquiring of his summer endeavors.

"Well, I have been studying," the man replied, "but I mostly have been relaxing." The woman had retreated to her side of the taxi, sinking into her seat, face red. She coughed.

"Oh, yes, sorry dear this was my philosophy professor." There was a rustling, and the woman leaned close to the man. She whispered something that the driver couldn't completely understand. One phrase floated forward to meet the cab driver's ears.

"...qualified to teach...?"

The man shrugged her off with subtle assurances of sorts. Silence fell over the cab once again. Clouds fell over the city. Thunder clapped. Rain poured from the sky. The young couple hadn't yet found another comfortable position, and

they remained separate, a leathery canyon between them. The cab pulled up to a restaurant, and the man paid. The cab driver thanked him and the couple began to exit the taxicab.

“Miss,” the driver began, “to quote Confucius: ‘Life is really simple, but we insist on making it complicated.’ Don’t make life too complicated, Miss. Good night.”

Sophie Richardson

Grade 10

Libertyville High School

Libertyville

Teacher: Karen LeMaistre

FINDING MY VOICE

Great gestures. Natural tone. Fine mixture of emotion and reason.

"It was pretty good, but there's just one thing... could you try to sound a little less gay?"

The question caught me off guard. My unapologetically honest speech coach, Ms. Sharma, stared at me inquisitively as I thought back to my performance; nowhere did I break into a Lady Gaga medley or complain about how badly *Brokeback Mountain* was snubbed at the Oscars. What tipped her off?

From my childhood obsession with the Pink Power Ranger to my weekly adolescent viewing of *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, I've never tried to hide my being gay. But this was different. For the first time, it didn't feel like it was my decision to share this part of my identity, but rather my sibilant /s/ and valley girl uptalk were revealing it for me.

I recorded my voice that night so I could hear it myself, almost not believing what she had said. Sure enough, what came from my phone's scratchy, low-grade speakers sounded like George Takei and Tim Gunn's love child. I was a little distraught. The worries of never being taken seriously haunted my mind that night.

At the beginning of high school, I made it my mission to define myself beyond my sexuality. I wanted people to see me as the school-driven, hard-working student I saw myself as, not as the token homo and certainly no one's "gay best friend." But I never quite escaped being called "sassy" or "fierce" by my peers. They meant well, but in my head, it just seemed like they were congratulating me for something that was out of my control.

I've gone through most of high school regrettably trying to sound as straight as possible. It went so far that the sound

of the “gay voice” coming from anyone started to irritate me. I was ashamed that my own struggle was influencing how I felt about others based solely on how they sounded.

Flash forward a few years.

Excellent poise. Great levels. Impressive volume.

“I just had one problem with your performance... I feel like I’m not getting the *real* you. Frankly, you just need to make it more *you*, more *gay*.”

This was when it clicked for me. The similarly blunt Ms. Melendez had just made me realize something I will hopefully never forget. My voice, no matter how gay sounding or flamboyant, is part of me.

After that, no longer would I hide my voice behind a veneer of straightness.

I am a valley girl. Hear me roar. The Kardashian-like creak of my voice is a badge I wear with honor. Yes, I can name every contestant in the history of *RuPaul’s Drag Race*, and you can bet I know every word to Madonna’s “Vogue.” And while these things are true, none of them defines me.

After realizing this, I was liberated. Letting go allowed me to discover what I’m really about; I want everyone, no matter how *different* they may sound, to have a voice in their community. Growing up in a place defined by its lack of racial and socioeconomic unity has given me a perspective that’s changed my entire outlook on life and inspired me to study government and politics. I hope to bring this perspective with me wherever I go and use it to help combat the seemingly unceasing distrust of the political process.

So, while I’m no longer ashamed of my stereotypically gay voice, it’s helped me discover that the way I sound isn’t all there is to me, and I’m determined not to let anyone assume that’s the case.

Samuel Geiger

Grade 12

Belleville West High School

Belleville

Teacher: John Lodle

WE COMPLETED EACH OTHER

Like clockwork, she came to our appointments. We had several every day. After all, I was her closest confidant, yet she was still so distant. Every moment was fleeting with her—only empty air rushed out between my fingers when I tried to grasp for any substantial pieces of her.

When we were younger, she was more willing to share with me. Chubby hands reached out excitedly to touch my own as cheerful babbles escaped her lips. Her interest in me, then, had flattered me. It seemed as if her bright eyes would never be able to stop peering at me from underneath her delicate eyelashes, like how I would be unable to take my eyes off of her for the years to come. I was utterly entranced. My entire existence depended and hung on her every breath, her every thought.

We were so similar from the very beginning. Our same hair seemed to catch on fire in the sunlight, bleached from our time in swimming pools. Our same hands were covered in splotches of color, stained temporarily from our wild, frenzied painting sessions. Our same lips became neglected every year, chapped from the dry and relentless winds of winter. But nobody ever commented on our likeness—it was expected. Our commonalities drew us together, but our differences completed each other.

She had the power to fulfill her dreams and aspirations; I merely fed them to her. She was capable of researching topics and developing the relationships that I could only dream of; I merely pondered the possibilities with my hands idle by my side. She had the future and reality; I merely meandered in the past and sifted through memories. I worshiped her for everything that she was and everything she could be. Misguided, she envied me for my immortality. It was her dynamic

character that kept her ephemeral and beautiful. I was forever destined to be static, locked into place by a photograph or a memory, incompetent of change. It was in my nature to crave to be like her, and I couldn't help but imitate her. By default, she started to want nothing of me.

Whereas she grew to be indifferent toward me, I tangled myself more thoroughly in the complex web of infatuation with her. The sight of her unruly hair not yet combed and eyes that still had to have the sleep rubbed out of them was for my viewing and my viewing only. The idea that she trusted nobody with this image but me enthralled me. When no one else's eyes were upon us, the taut muscles in her rigid face would loosen, and I would be able to catch glimpses of her younger self flashing across her face as she practiced poses for the upcoming pictures. After a succession of unsuccessful attempts at winking, we burst into laughter, clutching our stomachs and gasping for breath.

I had missed her. *This* her, the one whose cheeks would flame feverishly and whose eyes would gleam excitedly. Not the girl who stood in front of me so limply and drained of life. Not the girl who had let insomnia clumsily smear dark circles underneath our eyes. Not the girl who no longer had the time to visit me. But I couldn't blame her. I was never her first priority.

Despite her neglect of attention to me, I always found new ways to see her. I couldn't live without her. She hardly ever noticed the vague shape of my face following her, for the tines of her fork, the glass of a store's window, and the puddle on the sidewalk concealed it. What I could see was faint and distorted, but I was too eager to drink in her image that any thoughts of complaints escaped me.

Occasionally, her eyes would fall upon me directly. She never saw me though. At times, a clear, concave filament

would press me against stormy clouds whirling around an azure center. Frigid winds would batter and chill me to the bones, leaving me watery and faint. But it was in those eyes that she gazed at me with love. Other times, I would awake drowning in thick, heavy mud. It would permeate my very atoms, oozing over my face and covering my view of my beloved. But it was in these eyes that she looked at me with compassion. Never had she looked into *my* eyes with such emotion.

* * * * *

Even the stolen glimpses into her life couldn't solve the puzzling mystery of what had happened to her. All that I knew was when we returned home, she collapsed in front of me. Her head was buried behind her knees, refusing to look up at me. The door was carefully shut to exclude all others. The water rushing out of the faucet drowned her sniffles and mimicked the stream of tears carving a path down her swollen face.

I was powerless to help the one dearest to me. I was desperate to show her the pictures propped on her nightstand of the times where the worry was erased from the wrinkles in her brow and replaced with the crinkles of a smile. But she had locked that part of me out when she shut the door. All I could show her was the part of me that was in front of her now, her mirror image. When our bloodshot eyes met, her anxiety and fears instantly overwhelmed me, and for now, I was just content to share her burden.

* * * * *

Where is she? She has been gone for days now. Worry and exhaustion consume me, but I cannot break free from my bounds. The sliver of cold metal that stands between me and reality holds firm despite my near lunatic efforts to punch and kick it down.

* * * * *

She had my soul, which was hers to take from the beginning.

For I am a mere reflection. Without her, I am nothing.

But what I didn't realize was that *without me, she was nothing as well.*

Christie Kang

Grade 11

Adlai E. Stevenson High School

Lincolnshire

Teacher: Melissa Mack

ON NEW AND FRAGILE WINGS

Molting into someone else is natural but not easy. You emerge as a cicada in the summer dusk, slipping off your exoskeleton, leaving it bare, exposed on bark, as you try out your wings, fresh and supple, new and translucent in the inky night. You are at once a ripple of yourself but a splash of someone new, someone who sees the clacking branches, the starred sky through different lenses. In such ecdysis lies the challenge and joy of writing fiction: living, not controlling, my characters' lives.

Characters are not puppets, wooden marionettes with fixed faces for me to manipulate at will as some fickle goddess. My own characters' faces are slightly out of focus: half-blurred portraits in my mind. They are wispy as the silk of cecropia moths. I give them life not through their external appearances but through their inner identity, struggles, beliefs—the loyal friend, the woman fighting grief, the girl adhering to her moral principles above all else. I weave them from threads of myself but watch as they spin off toward their own desires. I can only plod along after them on the keyboard. My hands, real and solid, struggle to keep up with the moth flight of their mythic lives.

The inverse of writing fiction is writing memoir. Instead of shedding layers of myself away to become a character, I thread a chrysalis out of the mundane colliding of atoms, the solid chaos of my life. I must strike a balance between truth—the disorderly jumble of facts that shape my experiences—and storytelling—splicing my memories into a hive of neat, compact combs.

I cocoon the details—the burble of thrush song overhead as I hike through a dawn forest's solitude, the smoky smell of autumn clinging to my cousin's sweater as we bounce on

the trampoline, the fading memory of my grandmother's leaf-crackled laughter, filling the room. Beautiful, ordinary moments that are the turning points, the subtle patterns of significance in my life.

I write for the thrill of stitching words into gossamer pupae. I write to share the hidden beauty in the ordinary: the gleam of red pebbles as I collect them from the creek bed, the reedy buzz of katydids in morning stillness, the cinnamon smell of baking apple pie with my mom. I write to shatter the calcite crystal preconceptions of my readers. I write to spark someone's empathy, to make my reader look at human nature from underwater or from slits in the trees. I write to unearth the wooden problems rotting under red tape and paper, beetle-chewed by ignorance.

But, above all, I write in hopes of making the readers' hands twitch. To inspire them to write stories of their own with the caterpillar silk of their words. I hope my readers will molt into writers. That they will shed their earthly skins and float up into the leaves of their minds on new and fragile wings.

Rebecca Nelson

Grade 12

Adlai E. Stevenson High School

Lincolnshire

Teacher: Elizabeth Maxwell

CAFETERIA CONFESSIONS

Dozens of crumpled pamphlets were tacked to windows, hindering light into the cafeteria like makeshift shutters. I suddenly remembered the upcoming pep rally. My usual company at lunch wouldn't show up today—they were in band rehearsing their performance. Neither reminded me about this. Neither of them, when I considered it, seemed to make any genuine efforts to stay posted on each others' lives, to develop a meaningful friendship. Glancing at the barren seats beside me, newfound frustration spotting my vision, I decided it would only do to start my homework; I lugged out my German *Mosaik* textbook and discarded my lunch sack that slumped to the edge of the table like a forgotten companion. *Mit wem sitzt du zum Mittagessen?* The German text asked me in a preposition warmup. *Who do you sit with at lunch?*

Are you all alone? A watchful artist-friend leaned over as she headed to her table nearby. *You can sit with us, if you'd like.* I declined and lied that my friends were just running a little late. I dismissed her readily as I tried to make eye contact with the pallid boy who crossed my table to the next. Color rose to his cheeks as he consciously avoided my gaze. I shifted in my seat disappointedly. I made my feelings for him clear a week ago, certain that he would return them. He still hadn't given me a direct response.

Was hast du in der Schule gemacht? The *Mosaik* pressed further, as if to snap me out of my brooding. *What have you done in school?* Defiantly trying to find something else to be angry about, I glanced at my artist-friend nearby who now intently took to her sketchbook. My frustration with the pallid boy instantly switched over to my feelings about the art show results that had just released. Answering the

Mosaik with new force in my pencil that nearly tore through the unfeeling paper, I wrote: *ich habe viele Bilder gezeichnet. I have drawn plenty.*

I had envisioned the Best of Show badge as I composed a meticulous drawing of graphite for the school art show. I had spent hours fussing with the minute crosshatches delineating the portrait of a woman, detailing her blissful air and confident stance—she was secure, all her lifelong hopes fulfilled, her high standards met. I assured myself that this piece would unarguably outshine other competitors; none of my past works matched with the confidence I had in this. Just an hour ago, I went to view the gallery to discover the show's results. The lighting grew harsher as I searched the room expectantly for badges of recognition, only to find them adorning works other than my own—works that shouldn't have had a chance against mine. A waterlogged, wrinkled watercolor piece received Best of Show; its amateurishly cut matte frame was indeed a complement to the absurdly painted masses of anatomically impossible figures whose faces contorted in plastic, ridiculous theatricality.

The chaos of my deafening thoughts, echoing my failures, competed with the polluting din of the cafeteria. You thought the boy would respond by now. You thought you'd win the show. You were so sure. I reached for my earphones to drown it out. But the rattling laugh from the pallid boy at the table nearby still snuck its way past the music I blared. The table as an ensemble now trumpeted in laughter. I stared directly at the pallid boy, desperate for inclusion from him—only to receive none. For the first time I noticed how his grin, making all his other features contort, suggested no endearment, no sign of wanting my attention; the ugliness of the realization was a complement to his sniggering all too familiarly like the repetitive metal clunking

in a broken heater. I returned with even greater spite to the *Mosaik* text that greeted me with a single concern, *Alles klar? Is everything OK?*

An wen denkst du oft? My German teacher asked the class that morning as a warmup, giggling at the question's romantic connotation: *Who's always on your mind?* I perked up; the pallid boy answered so that I might hear. *Wirklich niemand*, he said simply. *Truly, nobody*. The question, I reminded myself, meant nothing, but still I inched myself away ever so slightly. His unfeeling, foreign words stung my ego.

It struck me as the bell rang that my built-up anticipation, which appeared so possible behind my rose-colored glasses, had piled far too high and reduced me to mere dashed hopes. It had seemed easier to imagine winning the art show and the feelings of the pallid boy than to consider the stakes of being at the losing end of cheap paintings and averted glances. Unfortunately, confronting the questions of an unsympathetic German textbook was enough to shatter the fragile promise of high expectations.

Anushka Tina Nair

Grade 10

Hinsdale Central High School

Hinsdale

Teacher: Erin Palmer

THE LOCKET

A bronze, beaded chain extends from the top of the locket with a faded, antique sheen. Each end of the chain fuses with two small prongs which bear the weight of the locket like the head of a ring holds a diamond. The pendant is circular and displays a number of intricate designs that layer together. A symmetric pattern bursts from the center of the locket like a flower, and a thin river of light bronze encases the design. From here, another circle surrounds the first, its deep, chocolate luster contrasting the middle. Finally, a thicker ring of penny-bronze and peanut-brown silhouettes form the boundary of the locket; the two colors swimming together as though a toothpick had been swirled through them. At the top of the pendant, a light, smoky quartz gem rests across from a dark, tourmaline stone sitting at the bottom, and I remember studying the necklace as a child, wondering what secrets it held.

The locket hangs around my grandmother's neck. She sits in her favorite pale blue chair with worn down cushions and a small red wine stain on the left arm rest. The aroma of homemade, chocolate chip cookies flows from the oven, and traces of flour cover her navy blouse as she rests. Gently, her chest rises and falls as the early morning sunlight pierces through the window, creating a soft halo of light around her thin silhouette. Her wrinkled hands are placed in her lap, one on top of the other, and her sock-covered feet dangle in the air, just shy of meeting the beige carpet below. Deep lines pull at the corners of her closed eyes, and the dark shadows beneath them contrast with the rosy flush of her cheeks. The steady rise and fall of her chest continues as she subconsciously lifts her right hand and slowly wraps her weak fingers around the locket. The faint shimmer of her

pink-polished fingernail covers the face of the pendant, and gradually her eyes begin to open.

My mother's left eye is closed, and the other stares directly through the lens of her bulky, film camera. She walks fluidly, moving with the Canon, and a deep crease cuts across the middle of her forehead. One after another, her footsteps crunch the autumn leaves beneath them, and a cool breeze rustles the trees along the trail, creating a buzz of empty whispers. Her chestnut-brown, frizzy hair blows with the wind, and the corners of her mouth are pulled into a soft smile. Her right index finger moves up and down, the camera clicking with every new captured image. A low rumble of thunder rolls through the atmosphere, and she lowers her arms. Dark clouds hang heavily in the sky, and the gentle pattering of raindrops is accompanied by the distinctive scent of petrichor in the air. Glancing upward, her head tilts back and her eyelids fall shut, the lines on her forehead smoothing out. The wind blows quicker now, and she moves her right hand to clasp the bronze locket hanging around her neck.

I am sitting in the first row of pews at church. The quiet hum of conversation fills the room behind me, and the sweet scent of gardenias encases the sanctuary. A large cross is mounted on the back wall with several lights illuminating it from behind, and the symbol glows radiantly in the dimly lit room. Dozens of small, white candles crackle on the railing in front of the casket, and a light shines on a picture of my grandmother; a picture that my mother took. In the photo, my grandmother's hazel eyes sparkle, and the same locket that rests on her neck is now clasped around mine. A small picture of her resides in the pendant, hidden from view, and I gently lift my right hand, clutching the locket between my fingers.

Haley Cox

Grade 11

O'Fallon Township High School

O'Fallon

Teacher: Diane Riley

**CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS TO
*THE ILLINOIS ENGLISH BULLETIN***

As the written forum in which Illinois English teachers share their ideas, the *Illinois English Bulletin* welcomes all kinds of materials related to the teaching of English.

We seek articles dealing with literature, writing, language, media, speech, drama, film, culture, technology, standards, assessment, professional development, and other aspects of our profession. Any combination of research, theory, and practice is appropriate. Some articles take a formal and conclusive approach, while others are informal and exploratory.

Book reviews, poetry, black-and-white photographs, and line drawings are also welcome.

When you are ready to share your work with your colleagues across the state, please consult the submission guidelines on page 106. We look forward to hearing from you. If you have questions or suggestions for the editor, please don't hesitate to get in touch (contact information on page

108). Thank you for reading, supporting, and contributing to the *Illinois English Bulletin*.

Submission Guidelines

(See page 108 for the editor's contact information.)

- Via U.S. mail, send one clean, paper copy of the manuscript to the editor. See below for manuscript formatting guidelines and information to include in your cover letter.
- Attached to an e-mail message addressed to the editor, send an additional copy of the manuscript in an MS Word or PDF attachment. See below for manuscript formatting guidelines and information you should include in your e-mail message.
- In your cover letter (mailed with hard copy) and in your e-mail message (with electronic copy attached), include the following information: your manuscript title, name, mailing address, institutional affiliation, and phone number. Also indicate whether you are currently a member of the Illinois Association of Teachers of English (IATE). State that the manuscript has not been published or submitted elsewhere.
- Manuscript formatting guidelines: follow either the current *MLA Handbook* or the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* guidelines for parenthetical in-text citations, the works cited section, and other technical elements; follow NCTE's "Guidelines for Gender-Fair Use of Language"; place page numbers at the top right corner of every page; type and double-space throughout (including quotations, endnotes, and works cited), with one-inch margins all around.

- With both your paper and electronic manuscript submissions, please also include a biographical blurb of 50 words or fewer. (Blurbs for manuscripts with multiple authors should total 50 words or fewer.) Blurbs usually mention institutional and professional affiliations as well as teaching and research interests.
- The *Bulletin* editor will acknowledge receipt of your manuscript via e-mail.

Submission Deadlines

You are welcome to submit your materials at any time to the editor of the *Illinois English Bulletin*. Traditionally, the *Bulletin's* spring issue features shorter articles based on presentations made at the previous autumn's IATE annual conference. Summer issues may be themed or all-inclusive. The fall issue presents the "Best Illinois Student Poetry and Prose." The winter issue is the program for our annual IATE fall conference.

To be considered for inclusion in the spring issue, materials must be received by the editors by the previous November 1.

To be considered for inclusion in the summer issue, materials must be received by the editors by the previous January 15.

To be considered for inclusion in the fall issue ("Best Illinois Student Poetry and Prose"), materials must be submitted electronically through the IATE submission manager (iate.submittable.com/submit) by the previous January 31. Please see page 109 for the two-page special submission guidelines for fall issues. Please note that as of 2005, the poet laureate of Illinois will designate several of the poems selected for publication in the *Bulletin* as "Poems of Exceptional Merit."

These poems will be identified in a message written by the poet laureate and published in this issue of the *Bulletin*. The poets will receive a certificate from the poet laureate in the U.S. mail.

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**CALL FOR STUDENT WRITING FROM
ALL LEVELS FOR IATE'S BEST ILLINOIS
POETRY AND PROSE CONTEST**

DEADLINE: Submit all contest entries electronically through the IATE submission manager (iate.submittable.com/submit) no later than January 31, 2017.

FORMAT: Accepted file types include .doc, .docx, and .rtf.

COVER LETTER: The "Cover Letter" field must include:

- Full name of student
- Student's grade level at time piece was written
- Full name of school
- School's complete mailing address
- Full name of teacher (indicate if IATE member)
- E-mail address of instructor

IMPORTANT: The student's name, the school's name, and the teacher's name must not appear anywhere other than in the "Cover Letter" field.

LIMITS:

- 1) Five prose and ten poetry entries per teacher.
- 2) One thousand words of prose per entry; forty lines of poetry per entry.

SOME SUGGESTIONS FROM THE JUDGES:

- 1) Please see that students abide by the line and word limits. Have them revise and shorten pieces that exceed these limits.
- 2) Please emphasize to students that prose and fiction are not synonymous. Encourage them to explore the possibilities of expository essays, arguments, and personal narratives.

CONTEST COORDINATORS:

Delores R. Robinson
Illinois Valley Community College
IATE Prose Contest

Robin L. Murray
Department of English
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