

The Writers' Slate, published by The Writing Conference, Inc., features some of the nation's top quality writing by students, kindergarten through 12th grade. The national journal is published three times a year, including one issue filled with award-winning prose and poetry. The publication is now available online at

The editor of **The Writers' Slate** invites original, creative and expository writing by students in kindergarten through 12th grade. The editor also invites submissions of book reviews of children's or young adult literature, written by students. Educators are also encouraged to submit article ideas for consideration.

The deadline for the fall issue each year is June 15. The deadline for the spring issue is December 15.

Send submissions to: Shelly McNerney
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Submissions, including electronic submissions, **should clearly indicate the writer's name, school, grade, school and home addresses, and the teacher's name.** Due to the number of submissions and mailing costs involved, the editor will only respond to a student author's submission if a self-addressed stamped envelope is included. Submissions will not be returned.

The editor reserves the right to edit manuscripts for clarity, style, and according to space limitations.

This program is presented in part by the Kansas Arts Commission, a state agency, and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

Shelly McNerney
Editor

From the Director

It is, indeed, a pleasure to present this special issue of *The Writers' Slate* because it contains the winning entries of those young people who entered the 2005-2006 writing contest. This is one way that teachers can support writing in the schools by encouraging students to enter contests. We at The Writing Conference, Inc., hope that we can contribute to that effort by publishing the winning entries.

These winners were chosen from a total of 142 entries -- 11 elementary school students, 47 junior high/middle school students, and 84 high school. The elementary school entries included the following categories: 5 poetry, 5 narration, and 1 exposition; at the middle level we had 15 in poetry, 17 in narration and 15 in exposition; at the high school level we had 30 in poetry, 15 in narration, and 39 in exposition. We had entries from across the United States.

The Writing Conference, Inc., is very proud of those students who write and of those teachers who encourage their students to write.

Congratulations to the winners and to all who entered. May you continue to have success in writing!

We also want to thank the judges who gave of their time and talent to assess these entries: Bob Sailer, Eudora Middle School, Eudora, Kansas; Jill Adams, University of Kansas; April Hawkins, Piper Middle School, Kansas City, Kansas;; Judy Bakalar, Mission Valley Middle School, Shawnee Mission, Kansas; Amanda Witty, Blue Valley North High School, Overland Park, Kansas; Rachael Buckley, Baldwin High School, Baldwin City, Kansas; Shelly Todd, Olathe, Kansas; Heather Reilly, Ruskin High School, Kansas City, Missouri; Jennifer Gooding, Mill Creek Elementary, Belton, Missouri; Megan Gearhart, Overland Park, Kansas; Becky Hart, Tomahawk Elementary, Shawnee Mission, Kansas; Shelly McNerney, Olathe South High School, Olathe, Kansas; and Charlie Huetten, BlueValley North High School.

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John H Bushman

Writing Contest Winners

2005-2006

Elementary School Division

Poetry

First Place

Nicole Payden
Community Elementary
Coffeyville, Kansas

Second Place

Jennifer Kealey
Morse Elementary
Overland Park, Kansas

Third Place

Cheyanna Johnson
Allensville Elementary
McArthur Ohio

Narration

First Place

No Winner

Second Place

No Winner

Third Place

Brady Pelzer
Central Elementary
Bellevue Nebraska

Exposition

First Place

No Winner

Second Place

No Winner

Third Place

Cassie Johnson
Morse Elementary
Overland Park, Kansas

Jr. High/Middle School Division

Poetry

First Place

Alex Rosenberg
Elwood Middle School
East Northport, New York

Second Place

Mohsin Ismail
College Prep School of America
Carol Stream Illinois

Third Place

Vanessa Horie
Leading Edge Academy
Queen Creek, Arizona

Narration

First Place

Holt Jones
Hadley Junior High
Glen Ellyn, Illinois

Second Place

Monica Chen
Harvard Westlake
Los Angeles, California

Third Place

Erin Lung
Leading Edge Academy
Queen Creek, Arizona

Exposition

First Place

Yanran Lu
Creskide Middle School
Rohnert Park, California

Second Place

Cory Carone
Clarkston Junior High
Clarkston, Michigan

Third Place

Eric Chang
Bridgewater-Raritan Middle
Bridgewater, New Jersey

Senior High School Division

Poetry

First Place

Katie Hartnett
Westhill High School
Syracuse, New York

Second Place

Max Oknefski
Ridgway Area High
Ridgway, Pennsylvania

Third Place

Kortney Adoremos
Columbus Unified High
Columbus, Kansas

Narration

First Place

Hollis Karoly
Corona del Sol High
Tempe, Arizona

Second Place

Mark Chen
Campbell Hall
North Hollywood, California

Third Place

Michelle Brown
Olathe North High
Olathe, Kansas

Exposition

First Place

Amy Huang
Stuyvesant High School
New York, New York

Second Place

Adan Duarte, Jr.
El Monte High School
El Monte, California

Third Place

Linett Luna
Garey High School
Pomona, California

Elementary Poetry
First Place

In addition
From our competition
In anyway
We always say
Something mean
But nothing is seen
To the other teams
We all just hear screams
And shouts
Raising snouts
Saying you're better
When you're not
Feeling really hot
Your face is turning red
Everything on your mind is said
No matter what it is
All the fizz
Is bubbling up
Dumping your cup
On someone else
Then you feel bad or sad
About what you did
Like trying to cover everything with a lid
You'll get tough
It'll be rough
You'll do anything to win
Like a wren
And a jay
Fighting over something to say
Like when you cheat

You're sweating in your seat
You're worried about competition
You want to change this station
But you can't find the switch
Always about to twitch
When someone says something competitive
You never have a chance to live
Always had to practice
So you could be better
Kind of like a prickly cactus
Don't go near me
Is what everyone sees
It's like it's written on your face
Squirming around
When in place
Trying not to look down
Not making one sound
It doesn't matter if you win or lose
Just as long as you choose
The right thing

Nicole Payden
Community Elementary School
Coffeyville, Kansas

Elementary Poetry
Second Place

Competition

Basketball, soccer, softball and more.

There are tons of competitions games to explore.

Competing means to thrive.

You run a race, you do not drive.

If I were you, I wouldn't put up with place #10.

When you compete you get beated or be defeated.

And sometimes you manage a spectacular win!

Come on let's go compete.

Follow me get on your feet.

Jennifer Kealey
Morse Elementary
Overland Park, Kansas

Elementary Poetry
Third Place

Pressure

My hands are shaking.
My mind is racing.

My mind reminds me of being told
That even losers can take the gold.

A competition is a chance;
An opportunity too great,
For it decides a person's fate.

My team is cheering.
My eyes are tearing.

One last hit is all it takes,
Or it's back to the yards and rakes.

Our money would be wasted;
A win never tasted.

Our competition isn't over.
Our team has taken over.

I'm up to bat.

Here it comes;
And in come three runners and I,
I'm running so fast that I seem to fly.

To a greater competition we will go.
To a greater competition we will win.

My hands are shaking.
My thought are racing.

Cheyanna Johnson
Allensville Elementary
McArthur, Ohio

Elementary Narration
Third Place
Pressure

It was an early Saturday morning when I started to get the butterflies. My dad and I got in the car to go to my basketball game I told him how nervous I was. He told me to take a couple of deep breaths. Once we got to the basketball court I saw how big the other team was. Here the butterflies come again but this time they hurt even worse!

Then that fast it was tip off We won the tip and right away Allen scored 2 points then I got right back on defense and stole the ball to get 2 points. We went on a 12 to 0 run. Right before the first half ended my dad took Allen and me out and the other team scored 10 points. At the end of the first half it was 14 to 10, my team's favor.

At the beginning of the second half Allen and I came back in and Allen scored right away. Then they scored 2 points. They stole the ball from one of my teammates, Matt, and scored. They stole the ball from Matt again and scored. I took a shot but missed and they got the rebound and scored again! They went on a 5 to 0 scoring run until the end of the third quarter. At the beginning of the fourth quarter the score was them 23 us 16.

Then I stepped up and scored 2 points. Allen stole the ball and passed it up to my teammate Joey and Joey scored 2 points. Our team was fired up and it caused the other team to call a timeout. In the timeout my dad told the team on offense to pass the ball around and on defense double team. We started double teaming on defense and we forced a turnover. On offense we passed the ball around and we scored but only with 10 seconds left in the game!

I got right back on defense and stole the ball with 4 seconds left. I hustled down court and made a lay up with 8 tenths of a second left! That put my team one point ahead. They put a Hail Mary shot up but they missed. The final score was 24 to 23.

On the way home I realized I didn't have the butterflies all throughout the game. Competition gave me butterflies, but I did great in the game. I shouldn't get nervous before a basketball game.

Brady Pelzer
Central
Bellevue, Nebraska

Elementary Exposition
Third Place

Competition

Competition means lots of things to me. When I think about competition I think about my soccer tournaments and my swim meets. Sometimes competition gives you butterflies in your stomach because you are in front of a lot of people and you don't want to mess up. Butterflies in your stomach are a bad thing and a good thing. Bad because it feels uncomfortable, and good because you know everybody is watching you and you think to your self if I mess up I will humiliate my self and so you will play well every game. The main thing that competition mean to me is learning from your mistakes because if you're in a soccer game and someone gets by you and scores, you won't let them do that again because you have learned what you did wrong. To me competition also means playing against somebody because a competition wouldn't be a competition without playing against someone. Without competition there would be no yelling at the T.V. or fun or any SPORTS! Without competition I would be sad because when you win you feel so proud of your self and that couldn't feel any better.

Cassie Johnson
Morse Elementary
Overland Park, Kansas

Junior High Poetry
First Place

Competition- it means the world to me
It starts with practice and it ends in glee
I'm very competitive; I do all it takes to win
Maybe a little nudge, a shove, or a kick to the shin
I love all sports, whether its "touchdown," "home run," or "it's good"
I play pretty fair, just as everybody should
But the best chant from the best sport, of course, is "goal!"
If my speed happens to burn you, you better stop, drop, and roll
In football, you got to get pumped, tough, and mean
Step onto the field, the longest ten yards ever
3rd and long, that first down seems like a dream
Yet anything's possible when you work as a team
Baseball is tough, get the bat on the ball
One tiny error could just ruin your chances in all
I'm no Cy Young, but I'm actually pretty great
The enemy is fine, but the fly balls I hate
I obey the rules of soccer, at least the ones that I like
The game plan is play dirty, that's what gets me psyched
The rules that are non-physical can really make me mad
Slide-tackling is great, but if I hurt him, it's bad
Competition is my life, without it, there are no sports
Got to play dirty to win; mud on my face, dirt on my shorts
Live on the wild side for once, it's great
When I play sports, danger and I have a date

Alex Rosenberg
Elwood Middle School
East Northport, New York

Junior High Poetry
Second Place

Competition Ruining Myself

The pressure is on
It won't be gone
My fear is in front of me
It's my worst enemy
It is the feeling that no one will envy
Have I always been this shy?
Why? Why me? What has it against me?
With strangers different I feel
For with every sentence I utter
There comes at least one stutter
And every competition I enter
I feel like I am in the center
I have to stop this
Have I always been this shy?
My arms are sweaty
My hands ice cold
The competition has not started yet
Am I going to win? Am I going to lose?
Or will I just be in between?
It is pain for my heart
It is tearing me apart
I see no one else like this
Or is it just my imagination?
Have I always been this shy?
One day it will change
I will be in control of my nerves
I won't care about being center of the spot
This is my dream anyway
Maybe it's true, maybe it's not.

Mohsin Ismail
College Prep School of America
Carol Stream, Illinois

Junior High Poetry
Third Place

The Race

We're in line, beginning to start,
I know the course, I looked at the chart.
Looking to my side, I see my competition.
I have to win, this is my mission.
All of a sudden I hear a loud "BANG,"
In my ears, loudly it sang.
I burst out running at the speed of light,
I know that this race is going to be a perilous fight.
I am ahead for a while,
Thank goodness there is only 1 more mile.
My competitor is going fast,
I suddenly see my memories and past.
Chilling nightmares and warming fun,
Going places, having fun in the sun.
Now I go back to the race,
I very quickly pick up my pace.
200 yards left to go!
I have to hurry and win this show.
I finally cross the finish line,
While flickering cameras shine.
I guess my competitiveness won,
I'm just thankful that the race is done.

Vanessa Horie
Leading Edge Academy
Queen Creek, Arizona

Junior High Narration
First Place
My Pitching Debut

As I stumbled out of the dirty, mud stained, silver suburban with my raggedy black and gray Franklin bag in hand, I paced across the freshly cut moist grass, and it finally dawned on me that this was the big game. This game determined who would be league champs of the eleven and twelve year old Pinto League. Wow, it was an honor to participate in this competition. During my lolly gagging to warm-ups, I listened to the ridiculous jeering coming from the opposing team. It sure was intimidating to look at their team and see all the gigantic players they had. As I strolled to warm-ups, I pondered the fact that our team might go home with the agonizing feeling of loss, or we might prevail and win the Pinto League.

While I stood in a single file line for fly balls, I frantically watched the enemies, the Rockies, warm-up. Boy their fielding was flawless. At bat they exhibited even more skill. In addition, I observed that their team consisted largely of twelve-year-olds, which our team lacked. In fact we only had three twelve year olds, one of which did not attend this game. I just slumped over right there in awe, as I thought to myself about the challenge the Rockies presented to us.

Our coach sat us down on the steel dugout bench. He was an excessively intense man. I just listened to him bark out various things, but I couldn't make any sense of what he was saying. I just sat there next to Jack envisioning our team winning the game and going on to be league victors. Occasionally I glanced over at Mr. Nevin's sun damaged skin and acknowledge him. At least it appeared like I understood what he was saying, but I was so overwhelmed by this build up of tension I couldn't process anything. I glanced over at him so he didn't think I wasn't paying attention to his boring commentary, although this would be an accurate assumption. After about fifteen minutes of a strategy lecture, it was time for the game.

I squatted against the fence in excitement only to see our first three batters go down in order. I headed out to the field and nothing happened. The first few innings of the game were pretty bland.

We finally did put a run on the board due to a screaming line drive R.B.I. up the middle by me. Our Phillies' team took the lead by one, but we knew the almighty Rockies would come back. So we needed some insurance runs. Sure enough the Rockies did battle back. Our game after seven innings of play ended up a ten to ten tie.

But, the top of the eighth rolled around and our bats were silent, with the exception of some scattered walks and a single, which resulted in potentially the game determining run. This was somewhat reassuring, but we weren't completely certain this game would be won by us.

We headed out to the field in hopes of a victory and in hopes that this battlesome game would result in triumph after this inning. Our team ran out of pitching so unfortunately our coaching staff resorted to me as a pitcher! I was a rather inexperienced pitcher, in my opinion because I often lacked control. I could not defy the coach's orders. Although this was an extremely risky move I thought to myself, as I strolled to the pitching mound, I should still have confidence and I should just do my best.

Finally, after warming up it was the moment of truth, and I fired three straight strikes to the first batter and he was out. This was definitely a boost of self-esteem. Now I felt like I could take on anyone, but I couldn't get too conceited, as this contest was certainly not over. The next eleven-year-old boy stepped to the box and roped a powerful shot down the third base line, and was granted three bases, a triple. At this point, I thought to myself, I need to buckle down right here and get two quick outs. The next batter stepped to the plate with an ambitious facial expression. Fortunately, he

repeated the performance of the first batter and again struck out on three pitches. This was potentially the second to last out, of hopefully, the final inning of the 2005 Pinto League Championship. I had just humiliated that kid terribly, but I had no intentions of backing down now. We needed this game badly, and the next kid, a scrawny seventh batter slowly strolled from the Rockies dug out to the plate. This player appeared to display no power but exceptional speed. The small brown haired, blue-eyed boy squeaked a dribbler in a tough spot, and at this point I didn't know if we would win or not. Luckily our exceptionally athletic shortstop, Kevin Loftus, sped to the ball and fired it to first base. It was a very close play but the umpire exclaimed, "Out!" This was a controversial, and perhaps slightly biased decision, I thought to myself, but we will certainly take the win. After all baseball is an imperfect science.

We defeated the almighty Rockies!! Everybody on the team sprinted and started piling on me. That was an amazing feeling of triumph that I have never experienced before. As our coach received the trophy cheering arose from teammates and fans. We are now the victors of the 2005 Pinto League, and we are extremely proud to have won the game. This was an experience that I will always keep with me as long as I live.

Holt Jones
Hadley Junior High
Glen Ellyn, Illinois

Junior High Narration
Second Place
Competition

Autumn is a time for new beginnings. School starts, and the ice-cold lemonade drinking times are over. Sports seasons, music competitions, and tests begin to tumble by. It seems that our entire lives are based on competitions. Like trying to get a better job, it never stops.

Some might argue that competition brings out the best in people. However, in some cases, it just tears people apart.

"Monica, wake up!" Today was the day that the six a.m. wakeup calls have led to. It was the Bach festival.

When it was my time to perform, I stepped up to the purplish tinted stage. As I slowly took my seat, I visualized the Bach Fantasy in my mind. The various images began to pop into my head. The liveliness of a young kitten, the innocence of a baby, and the gentleness of a mother all pranced through my mind.

As the students began to file into the Pasadena Concert Hall, I noticed my friend, Annie. I began to wave at her, but she turned away and looked stonily forward. Enormously surprised, I slowly returned to my seat. Slowly but surely, I began to play. I felt my heart soar with the music, as if I was releasing something locked inside me for years. Eventually, the piece finished and I smiled and bowed.

When Annie went to the stage, I witnessed something extraordinary. As she began to play, at least in my eyes, she began to writhe as if she was being tortured. My heart went out to her. When she finished her piece, I clapped as hard as I could in order to make her smile, but it didn't work.

The next day at school, Annie seemed to be her usual self. I never asked why she didn't say hi to me that day, but I suppose she must have been so nervous. Whatever the reason, I have decided that competition is a monster. It was able to turn a lively and happy girl into a heartless human being. The pressure was able to get to Annie, maybe from her parents or from herself. However, I have a suspicion that Annie's aggressive mother may have been a prime factor.

I have come to despise competition. It defeats the whole purpose: to exercise one's talents and enjoy oneself in front of an audience.

Monica Chen
Harvard Westlake
Los Angeles, California

Junior High Narration
Third Place

“Yes!” Chelsea shouted. “We’re in the talent show!” It was a day after the Talent Show auditions and the girls had been tense. “Yes!” “That’s great!” The girls laughed and high-fived each other. There was Chelsea and Erin, the oldests, who were in 6th grade. Nancy, who was Chelsea’s sister, was in 5th, and Shelby and Deloreas, who were in 4th. “This is going to be so cool!” Shelby shouted. “I know! I wonder what the competition will be like?” Erin said. She and Shelby were sisters so they fought a lot, but now they were thinking the same thing. “Who cares? All I know is that I want to win, and go onto district!” Nancy said with her hands on her slim hips. “So we have got to practice, practice, practice!”

Practice they did. For the next two weeks they practiced day and night until their feet were numb. Three days before the competition Erin said, “Maybe we’re overdoing it.” They had just finished they dance and were taking a drink break. Everyone else almost spat their drink out. “What?!?” they said in unison. “Look, I know we want to win, but look at us. We haven’t even picked out our costumes!” “She has a point,” said Deloreas. “I guess we just got carried away with winning,” Chelsea said. “Thanks Erin.”

That settled things down, that is, until the competition. “Look at everyone!” Shelby wailed. “They’re so good! How could we possibly win?” “There is one way, Miss Desperate,” Erin teased. “Yeah,” Chelsea said. “All we have to do is use our secret-weapon.” At this, everyone leaned in closer. “Teamwork!” Chelsea whispered. “So let’s go out there and have fun!” Nancy shouted. “Hey” Deloreas giggled. “If you blow our ears out we won’t be able to hear the music!”

“Please give all our contestants a hand, ladies and gentleman!” It was the end of the competition, and Mr. Hanson was giving a speech on the great job that everyone did. “I’m betting that we got 10th place!!” Shelby whispered. “Shhh” Erin hissed. “He’s about to announce the top ten.” As Mr. Hanson got near first place, the girls hung their heads at not hearing their names in the top ten. “We would like to congratulate the winners of this year’s talent show, Christ Girls. “What!?” Nancy croaked. “We did it!” Doloreas screamed. The applause was thunderous as the girls walked onto the stage. “We want to thank our family and friends who helped us, and we want you to know that we couldn’t have done it without you!” Erin said speaking for all the girls. Everyone applauded. In the locker room Nancy said, “We’re going onto district so that means,” “We know Nancy!” Shelby said. “Practice, practice, practice!”

After that girls had a winning streak. They won district, city, and almost county. It had been a tie between them, and Girl Rock. They had even had a tie-breaker and it was a tie. Now, they would just have to work out who was going to state. “I can’t believe them!” Nancy whined. “They will never let us go to State!” “This competition is bogus!” Chelsea said and banged her locker shut. “It’s wrong that people should be this competitive over a silly dance competition!” “Heah” someone yelled. The girls turned and saw Hidy, Devynne, and Mary, the girls from Girl Rock, coming toward them. “You guys still talking about the competition?” Hidy hissed. “What are you guys doing at our school?” Delores shot back. “Whoa, small fry!” Devynne said, “We just want to tell you this: Have a towel.” “What?” At that moment a balloon fell on them that was full of water. As the girls moaned, Mary said, “Oh, and the competition to see who is going to state starts in three

minutes.” “We have got to beat them!” Nancy shouted. “Yeah,” Shely and Deloreas said. “Let’s go,” sighed Chelsea.

“I can’t believe it. We won!” Shelby screamed. It was ten minutes later and they were walking away from the gym. The girls had danced their hearts out and were finally declared the winners. “It felt so good to beat them, didn’t it Erin?” Erin nodded, unsure. It had felt great to win, but she felt bad. She just had a knot in the pit of her stomach as she saw the other girls walk away.

“What? I can’t believe this!” “What?” The girls crowded around Chelsea. It was a week since the final competition and Chelsea was holding a letter from the Dance Competition Committee. “It says in the rules that we can have no more and no less than eight people in each group, and we only have five!” “Oh no!” Nancy moaned. “Who in the world could help us?” “Let me think a minute, Miss Helpless,” said Erin. All of a sudden, an idea hit her, “How about the girls from Girl Rock?!” “You’ve got to be kidding me!” Shelby said. “Just be quiet you! Listen, we’ve all been over-competitive. We were just as mean as they were, only a different kind of mean. I mean, competitions are cool, but not if you have to be this competitive.” The girls sat there for a minute. “You know, Erin’s right. She was right when she stopped us at the Talent Show, and she’s right now. I say we ask them right now!” Deloreas shouted.

So they did. They talked to them after school the next day, and, with a little persuasion, they agreed. They practiced and practiced more than ever. By the contest, they were great friends. They even changed the name to Christ Girl Rock. “Do you think we’re ready?” asked Mary nervously. “Of course we are!” scoffed Nancy. “We just need to go out there and have fun!”

“Come on, we’re going to miss the announcements!” It was after everyone had gone, and Hidy was impatient to hear who won. “We’re coming!” the girls yelled. They walked quickly back to their seats. “Everyone did great, ladies and gentleman, but there can only be one winner and this year they are Christ Girl Rock!” The girls screamed and hugged each other. “We are going on to Nationals!” Nancy screamed. “Erin was the one who brought us together.” Chelsea said. “She finally spat out what she thought about the competition.”

Erin Lung
Leading Edge Academy
Queen Creek, Arizona

Junior High Exposition
First Place

Competition: Boy vs. Girl

Not long ago, males were completely dominant over the world. They did better than females in all subjects, went to top universities, took all the good jobs, and made their wives stay at home.

That's not the case anymore.

Women are turning the tables on their male counterparts. Girls are the ones who excel now. No more of the stay-at-home image for them. They want to be doctors, lawyers, engineers, and many professions that their grandmothers never dreamed of doing. And one day, there will be a female president.

Statistics show that girls now beat guys in every subject except Math and Science. They are more likely to get straight-As, take AP classes, and they have higher median class rankings. Already, girls dominate in Humanities and English. In my sister's high school Honors English class, the girl vs. boy ratio is an alarming 5 to 1. Boys still have a small advantage in Math and Science, but even that is shrinking fast.

The performance gap between boys and girls reaches crisis level when they get to college age. Now, female students account for more than 57% of all college students, according to the New York Times' article Mind over Muscle. In liberal art schools, the ratio goes up to 60% or higher. This year, 133 women will graduate from college for every 100 men. This new reality prompts some universities to start to consider affirmative action for boys in an attempt to create a more gender-balanced campus.

But what causes this sudden shift in the battle of sexes? The American educational system did not change much in last 20 years but the outcome has been very different. Experts are clearly puzzled. Is it that people are just not giving birth to smart boys anymore? They don't think so. But then why all of the sudden, boys have started to lag behind? And it is not just in the United States but a worldwide phenomenon. Some experts suggested that boys are simply outsmarted and out competed by girls in modern society.

Girls have always done better than boys in Elementary school. But they used to have problems in Middle and High schools where intellectual success often equaled social suicide. Many gifted girls dumbbed themselves down in order to blend in. In fact, the IQ of girls actually drops about 10 points during puberty, according to Barbara Kerr's study Smart Girls: A new psychology of girls, women and giftedness. This allows boys to pass them by in High school. But this scenario is no longer true. In the last decade, girls have become more confident about themselves. They've worked hard and maintained their leads all the way to college and beyond.

There are a couple of reasons that are leading to the downfall of boys' academic performance, the foremost being video games. Boys of all ages spend hours every day playing this additive nonsense. Girls may like similar things, but for some reason they exercise more self-control. The peer pressure is also working against boys. In many middle schools, girls with good grades are somewhat tolerated. However, boys who do well in school often are branded as "nerds" and "geeks" and are persecuted mercilessly.

Though sexism was officially abolished years ago, it still exists in people's minds. It might prompt Harvard's president Lawrence Summers to suggest that women's alleged weakness in Math and the Sciences is the result of innate differences. And to an extent, there is evidence for this theory. While participating in competitions such as MATHCOUNTS and the National Geography Bee, I noticed that the ratio is still frighteningly in the favor of boys. In fact, only once in history has a girl ever won the National Geographic Bee. Even at the State level competition, the boys outnumber the girls about 4 to

1. It is obvious to me that boys are smart enough. The trouble is that girls are charging ahead and a large number of boys are not keeping up.

In order to get boys to do better and learn at the rate that their grandfathers did, some drastic measures may have to be taken; primarily, the cutting back of TV and computer use. Many parents use the TV as a babysitter so their kids won't bother them. But I think that books would work just as well, and actually nurture the mind. Parents and teachers should encourage boys to read more books.

The gender war is as old as our species, Homo sapiens, itself. But today, women are finally on the winning side. Indeed, they have come a long way since 100 years ago, when they just secured the right to vote. Although women still face obstacles in career advancements and lag far behind in terms of lifetime achievements, the trend is very clear. Now we must pay attention to the difficulties of boys. Obviously, there is difference between boys and girls in the way they learn and respond. We must find the root causes of the problem and make changes to our educational system. Girls, it is not the time to gloat about boys' misfortune. We are yin and yang of same species. If we don't help boys to keep up, their problem will become ours very soon.

Yanran Lu
Creekside Middle School
Rohnert Park, California

Junior High Exposition

Second Place

Thoughts on Competition

I think competition is a good thing. It can motivate you to do your very best. Competition also can make you tougher mentally. If you succeed in competition, it can give you a feeling of self-achievement. I think competition is a good thing because it can motivate you, it can make you mentally strong, and it gives you a feeling of self-achievement.

First, competition is good because it motivates you. Competition gives you a reason to work hard at something. It gives you a goal, which makes you achieve at a much higher level. Competition helps you reach your personal best. A good example of competition giving motivation is professional athletes. They are so good because they are strongly motivated to become better everyday. The competition to be the best in the world is why professional athletes are so motivated, and why they are the best of the best.

Second, competition is a good thing because it can make you mentally strong. Competition is usually a one on one. It is you versus someone else. The goal is to beat the other person. You personally have to work hard, so you can beat the other person. While you are working to become better there are obstacles. While you are working to get over the obstacles you are becoming mentally stronger. An example of this is Tiger Woods. While Tiger was working to become the best golfer, he faced many obstacles. Some of these were his race, finances, and his young age. While he overcame these obstacles he got stronger and stronger mentally. Now Tiger Woods is the most mentally strong person you could meet.

Third, competition is a good thing because it gives you a feeling of self-achievement. It takes a lot of hard work to be your best, and to win a competition. After all your hard work pays off, and you win a competition you feel great. You get a great feeling of self-achievement. Nobody can take away that feeling because you did what it takes and you know it. A quote that describes this feeling is: "I firmly believe that any man's finest hour, the greatest fulfillment of all that he holds dear, is that moment when he has worked his heart out in a good cause and lies exhausted on the field of battle - victorious." by Vince Lombardi. He is saying is that a man's greatest time is when he has worked hard and it pays off because he feels a sense of selfachievement from being victorious in a competition.

I think competition is a good thing because it can motivate you, it can make you mentally strong, and it gives you a feeling of self-achievement. Competition can motivate you to be your best just like professional athletes. Competition can make you mentally stronger by overcoming obstacles like Tiger Woods. Competition can give you a sense of self-achievement when your hard work pays off. Without competition, a lot of people would not be able to accomplish what they have.

Cory Carone
Clarkston Junior High School
Clarkston, Michigan

Third Place Competition

To many, life is a fierce competition where people struggle against each other to attain a dominant spot. Motivations vary widely between people, anything from achieving dominance to attaining a reward or goal. Although many types of competition incite negative behavior, healthy contention can bring benefits and successes in the future.

The most basic, primal, and necessary form of competition is that of survival. But in this day and age, most parts of the world have structured systems and safe economic backup plans. Basically, times of chaos and weak governments are over. Shelters and soup kitchens provide sufficient aid to the needy. The government offers social security and food stamps. With the common ideal of fairness and equality in mind, the present generation

What is there to gain from competition? The most prevalent rewards from competition are money, power, and fame. Because these things are not given freely, workers contend for employment opportunities, celebrities do silly things for attention, and candidates compete for presidency. Those are only a few of the various activities that humankind competes in.

Competition is the focal point in America's most popular form of entertainment: sports. All sports are a form of competition, either subtly or obviously. From collision sports like football and rugby to non-contact sports like golf and tennis, the sole purpose of participating is to win. Competing in athletics is an outstanding way to experience competition because it is regulated, fair, and elicits good sportsmanship.

An earlier time in life when people compete is during their academic career. Competition and interaction with others is a vital part of the growth process that spurs the path to success. An environment in which a person has to outperform others brings motivation, desire, and triumph while an environment with a sole person trying to beat himself or herself brings boredom, and a lack of purpose. Eventually, a student's college application will be reviewed and compared with thousands of others. Getting into an excellent college is a competition (either with oneself or others) as well as applying for a job in later years.

Competitive striving can also be harmful for the participants. Some examples are athletes that injure themselves because they exceed the physical tolerances of their bodies, and companies that pursue unprofitable paths while engaging in competitive rivalries. Despite the fact that baseball is usually a placid sport, the pressure of being in the occupation also leads to the use of steroids; it eventually brings negative effects on the body. The use of steroids and other illegal body enhancing products is enough of an indication that people will seek drastic measures just to succeed.

The quality of competitiveness can be established by the examples that an adolescent's parents set. The demeanor and decision making of a child's idol predetermine their tendency in the future to be more competitive than others. Varying situations and conditions like social environment may determine this trait. Some believe that the certain competitiveness of a person is determined preceding birth.

Competition is definitely a vital, necessary part of everyday life. Because there is more to gain than lose, more positives than negatives, competition is definitely something that everyone should have a positive attitude towards and participate in actively.

Eric Chang
Bridgewater-Raritan Middle School
Bridgewater, New Jersey

First Place

she stands there
with everything at stake
her feet curved with lace
tantalizing movement
creates the sound
of whispering beauty
breathing astounds
twirling she breaks
a demand she makes
telling herself
no one is worse
no one can hurt
more
but tell her to live
and tell her to die
she goes again
but no one's told
her she can't fly.....

Katie Hartnett
Westhill High School
Syracuse, New York

High School Poetry

Second Place

The Game

Competition, it's what separates the best from the rest.
Teams competing,
playing with all their heart and soul to win.
The pressure,
the roar of the crowd.
Awakens the fire inside,
I explode through the line.
The thoughts of my father's encouragement swirling in my mind.
The power of one thousand men,
courses through my veins,
I lower my shoulder and run.
"Son, play with everything you have,"
were my father's words.
Legs pumping like pistons,
pushing through the crowd.
Holding the ball,
Like the mother holds the newborn babe.
Never letting up,
Never letting go,
The pressure only makes me stronger.
Nothing can stop me,
my run will earn the win.
The 40,
still sprinting.
The 30,
won't slow down.
The 20,
my goal will be reached.
The glory,
of the state championship,
relies on this run.
I reach my destination,
the end zone, touchdown,
but still down by 1.
Two points,
we go for it.
The crowd is silent,
eager eyes look on,
people begin to pray.
The ball is snapped,
one last chance.
Diving over the line,
the miracle is realized.
The competition is won.

High School Poetry
Third Place

No Escape

Like a river driving us to excel,
It taunts to exceed the limit.
Not to settle for what we have or what we are,
It comes in the form of progress.
Striving for the things of tomorrow,
The world and its people merely pawns.
Whether it's internal or external,
It appears at some point in life,
Between friends, lovers, rivals, and family.
It's there for good or bad,
This heavy phantom that lingers everywhere.
School, home, work, events
This word that everyone knows,
From the unnoticed to the famous.

Kortney Adoremos
Columbus Unified High School
Galena, Kansas

High School Narration

First Place

May the Best Woman Win

For months, my dreams were haunted with visions of her bouncy blond ponytail darting off in front of me, growing smaller and smaller in the distance as I struggle to keep her in sight. It's as though there is some invisible force field keeping me from overtaking her, constraining me like a dog on a leash. My eyes are locked on the back of her head as she bobs and weaves her way through the crowd. I am, as she likes to put it, "eating her dust".

I first met Ramona at an early morning cross country practice the summer before our senior year. After five miles together, we were chatting as though we'd known each other all our lives. We noticed that we ran in the same brand of shoes. As the weeks went on, we learned that shoes were not all we had in common. Our summer training was filled with long workouts, tedious miles that grow weary without some kind of companionship. On the more mellow runs, we talked. I had never met anyone who loved running the way I did, who could talk about it endlessly, think about it constantly and, more importantly, had the urge to do it as much as possible. On the difficult runs, there was no speaking, just our symmetrical footfalls, rhythmic breathing, and the occasional "You ok?" If one of us was not ok, the other was faced with the executive decision of backing off a bit or inspiring her tired counterpart to stick it out. But we ran together—always together. During the summer, there are no races, no politics, no drama. Only running. We knew we would likely be among the top two or three runners on the team, but we hadn't given the specifics any thought. We were both too elated by our newfound knowledge that two runners are better, or at least, have more fun, than one. We became friends.

The season started. A few weeks later, it was time for our first meet. We approached the starting line, filled with nervous energy. The unspoken fact that one of us had to beat the other had been a constant, looming shadow in both of our minds. Twenty seconds until the gun, we gave our final handshake, without knowing that neither of us would ever again start a race without that handshake. Bang! I was surprised that I got out of the box faster than she did—I'd always had the sinking feeling that she was the better sprinter. I was even more surprised when I beat her by over a minute (the equivalent, in cross country time, of a decade).

At the second race, my margin of victory had lessened, and at the third, it happened. I knew something would be different as soon as it was time for our handshake. Her eyes were angry, full of purpose. For the first time, my race consisted of one thing and one thing only—staring helplessly at her back. Ramona and her ponytail won. As much as I hated to admit it, this meant war.

And war we did. Trepidations about the next race consumed me. I vowed that it would be my ponytail in her face this time. Twenty seconds until the gun, it was time for our customary handshake. I was determined. But her expression was one of strength and grit. The angry eyes were back for more. Let the best woman win, said our handshake, as long as that woman is me! One shot, and we're off. Thirty seconds later, all I saw was ponytail and I swelled with the resolve to beat her. We had trained together and had always shown equal capabilities, yet somehow I was failing. I was failing myself, and I was failing my friend. Ramona and her ponytail were victorious again.

In subsequent races, we swapped victories and defeats. The pressure mounted, and for days before each race, my mind was filled with one unsettling question. Who will win this time?

Fast forward a few weeks to the State cross country meet. It was the first time either of us had been to such a prestigious competition. I'd been out for two weeks due to a hip-flexor strain, and went to the starting line still injured. But as fate would have it, my rival was not in a much better position. Three days after I incurred my hip injury, she fell during a trail run, badly spraining her ankle and hindering her training. The races were always about who could push harder, because we both knew we were equally fit and capable. In my mind, this race would be no different, since we both had our own injuries to overcome. First came the handshake. The usual look of determination on her face was gone, filled instead with an expression of utter panic. I assumed it was just nerves, as I too was experiencing more anxiety than usual. Bang! We were neck in neck for nearly 800 meters, then, in what I thought at the time to be one of my most glorious moments, I took off, leaving her with only the bouncing of my ponytail, which, I imagine, has haunted more than one of her dreams as well. I knew I wouldn't be setting any personal records due to my injury, so I was alarmed that I could get so far ahead of her. In fact, it was not long before I looked over my shoulder and could no longer see her. A few minutes later, I saw a golf-cart driving off the course. The tear-stained occupant was Ramona, betrayed by her ankle. For a moment, our eyes locked. Something about her expression puzzled me. For the first time all day, Ramona looked like herself. She flashed me the angry eyes. She was still as determined as ever. It didn't matter that she wasn't the one doing the running. I was suddenly compelled to pick up my pace.

The rest of the race was a blur, and I barely remember the actual running. When I saw my best friend, not my rival, sitting there on the golf cart, I understood that Ramona had never really been my rival. Throughout the course of our competitive streak, I often found myself wondering why it mattered so much that I could run faster than this girl, since there were plenty of people slower and plenty of others faster than both of us. What I have come to understand is that competition from the outside is much simpler than a challenge from within—success was easier to quantify when all I had to do was compare myself to Ramona. A worthier task, I began to realize, would be to compare myself to me. So that morning, as she willed me on, presenting the same challenge she always did, I finally understood that my challenger had been me all along. How could I face myself if I had not pushed as hard as possible? I respected my friend just as I wanted, so desperately, to respect myself. And I competed with her as a cover for my own inner competition. This tactic worked because I knew that, since we are so similar in our mental resolve and physical fortitude, I could always count on her to pace me, even when I didn't feel like racing. And when our eyes met that day, something finally clicked. Her challenge will be ever-present in my life. Whether on or off a cross country course, and whether Ramona is in front of me, behind me, or by my side, it will always be there. That metaphorical ponytail will always be out in front of me, just a little beyond my reach. But that's just where I like it, bouncing along through the crowd, willing me not to eat anybody's dust.

High School Narration
Second Place

Sunset in the City of Light

The sun peaked over the horizon almost reluctantly, bathing the city with a glow that was a pale imitation of the sun's full glory. In most buildings of the city, the tinted windows brushed away the meek rays of light while the people within slept in a dreamless oblivion. They would remain sleeping for a long while. However, by the cloudy and murky windows of a beaten up house, a woman watched the sun rise. She had been waiting for the sun to break the hold of night and bring light to the world. But the grime cloaked the window from sight, and she was separated from the warmth of the sun.

Though it was dreadfully irrational, she still looked through the window, hoping against all reason that the sun would banish the filth and illuminate the house. From within the house, she heard, "Heather, are you ready for the interview?"

She turned towards the source of the sound and looked into the hazel eyes of her husband. He gave her a small smile, for he had watched many times before from that same window, dreaming those same thoughts. He said, "We should get ready."

Heather got up reluctantly to prepare for the most important interview she would ever have. She desperately hugged her husband, whimpering a little. He softly crooned, "Don't worry about it Heather. We'll get through it. We always do."

Heather asked him, "This is different from everything we've ever faced before. How can you be sure?"

He said in a singsong voice, "The battle is won, we shall overcome, for we two are one."

Heather giggled at the cliché and said, "I don't know how you always manage to be so cheerful."

Byron said, "It's just that you're always so depressed."

She said, "It's annoying that you're always right. I'll get ready now." She left the room, not seeing that a crack of light lit the cradle beside her.

Heather stood before the mirror tarnished from the drizzle of people brushing their teeth. She pulled over her nightshirt a t-shirt that proudly presented the insignia of the Department of Destiny, the DOD within the golden circle. She weaved through her jeans a belt that displayed the numerals 01, the primary units of binary. Then she stopped.

Heather looked deeply into the mirror before and saw her reflection. She thought she looked ridiculous and wrong in the pro-formulaic propaganda. She knew though that a single slip would lead to a denial of their application, a thought she could not bear to think of. She brushed her long chestnut hair casually with one hand. She knew that she did not possess the perfect ratios of form determined by the Board to determine a person's beauty, nor looked like one of the hideously obese bookophiles parodied daily in the prime time sitcoms. But unlike most women, she had no wish to undergo the painful reconstructive surgery required to achieve a state of perfection.

In the mirror, she saw her husband attempting to surprise her. She folded her arms, as if to disapprove. He wrapped his hands around her waist and reassured her with a kiss. She smiled and held his hand. They walked out of the house together into the light.

Byron hailed one of the roving taxis that prowled the streets of the city day and night. The door opened to reveal the red-tinged eyes of the night shift driver. Byron said to the driver, "Can you take us to the Department's headquarters?"

The driver said efficiently, "The drive time to the Centre will be approximately thirty minutes. Please seat yourselves in the back and feel free to indulge on the latest logic games on the back."

Heather said meekly, "Thank you sir, but we don't need these."

The driver said, "Possessing updated puzzle games creates a fifteen percent boost in the amount of repeat attendance and an almost sixty percent increase in customer satisfaction. Customers #34516 and #34517 refused the logic games." The man rubbed his tired eyes and apologized, "I'm sorry, but it appears as if my chip is malfunctioning. Because I value your patronage so much, I will drive you to the Centre for free." He gave them his card, "Whenever you may need transportation, make Freedom your number one choice."

Byron and Heather sat in silence during the trip. They were thinking of the trial that was to befall them and creating plans, sayings, and gestures to get them through it. Though they did not have the chip, they were still very intelligent.

When the taxi drew to a sudden halt, Byron was thrown from his seat. When he recovered, the taxi driver's trembling hand was on the door. Freedom said, "Please sir, my chip's been malfunctioning. I'm not so inefficient a driver."

Byron, about to launch a tirade, was interrupted by Heather, "It's fine sir. Just make sure that such problems do not occur again."

The taxi driver gave a sigh of relief as he saw the pair disappear into the gathering cloud of the plaza of the Centre. He laid his head on the taxi, and walked to the repair shop.

Awe radiated from Heather's face. The sight before her was beyond the scope of anything that she had ever scene. While she knew that the Centre was a complex of buildings that housed the headquarters of the Department of Destiny, she never knew that it would be so big.

Beside her, Byron looked at the buildings with a great amount of fear. All around him, shapes of every polynomial leapt out at him. A series of squares that formed the Maintenance building looked like a prowling tiger waiting to devour him. The Factory where the chips were made was built under a layer of water. Byron shivered as smoke came from the factory. He could have sworn that it was an alligator eying him hungrily. Then, they saw the heart of the Department of Destiny

In mutual shock, they stood flabbergasted by the towering pinnacle of black jade. It had to be at least a hundred stories tall and in the light seemed to be an elevator to the heavens. Though it was in its own way beautiful, with perfect proportions, there was such a sense of coiled strength and power that made the duo quiver in fear. They heard a loud laugh and turned in fear that the tower was coming to crush them. A voice said, "Look behind you."

They both turned and saw a white haired man who appeared neither old nor young. He smiled and said, "It's beautiful isn't it? It's so hard to believe that such a thing could be built in the ashes of one of those foul libraries."

They nodded nervously and pressed on. Two circles with the insignia of the Department of Destiny opened the way to the lobby of the heart of the Centre. They walked in timidly, feeling as if they had entered the maw of the monster.

The lobby of the Centre was full of mathematic equations and geometric shapes arranged in a specific way in order to create the greatest amount of harmony. Heather and Byron went to the receptionist, who ushered them to a side door

The room was very nice. (Not done yet)

The man leered over the seated pair and said, "I welcome you Mr. and Mrs. Thurman. I am Earl Ur and I will determine whether or not you will get a chip for..." The man rummaged through his drawers for the name.

Heather said, "Our son Corwin sir."

Earl said, "Corwin, is it? That's an English name, isn't it?"

Byron said, "Yes, it is."

Earl snapped, "Then you have to change it. If you are to be granted the wondrous gift of chip, then all remnants of the old must be cast away. You should change his name to that of some famous Mathematician, say..."

Heather said, "But sir, it's just a name. Corwin was the name of my father and I just thought that..."

Earl snarled, "That's even worse. Alone, without tradition a name is bad, but naming a person after a person who lived in the past is terrible. It creates a sense of expectation and is irrational."

Byron said, "Why should we name our kid..." Heather squeezed Byron's arm to silence him.

Earl smiled and said, "You shall call your child Isaac, after a great hero of logic, Isaac Newton."

Heather said grimly, "Of course sir, that is a very rational and sensible decision."

Earl smiled and said, "Yes, I am a very rational and sensible man." He thought for a moment and said, "Oh yes, there's also the issue of little Isaac's future. What would you like him to be?"

Heather said, "Whatever he wants to be."

Earl laughed and said, "We here at the Department of Destiny aren't about individuals. We fight for the greater good. We influence the future in order to increase stability."

Byron said, "So?"

Earl said, "I will present to you the facts. You two are disloyal bookophiles. As it is, it would be more efficient to eradicate the lot of you traitors and rid society of a heavy burden. Unfortunately, the powers that be will not allow the Department to do its job and maintain stability. So some of the most efficient members of the workforce such as me are forced to integrate bookophiles into society. But just because I'm integrating you back into society, this doesn't mean I will give your child any special privileges."

Byron and Heather were stunned by the man's words. He laughed and said, "There was a sixty-five percent probability of such a reaction. It is amusing to me that while your kind endorse chaos and unexplainable feelings, you're just as unprepared as the rest of us." He put the papers down on his desk, as if he was finished, "Your son will be given education in toiletry. Perhaps he will clean the shit that people like you leave."

Earl put the papers back into the file and said offhandedly, "And of course, you will have to surrender all prohibited books you own and publicly burn them."

Byron said, "I won't do that!"

Earl said, "Do you wish to return to your shack of a house?"

Heather said, "We agree to all of your terms sir." Byron was about to say something, but one look from Heather was enough. Their cause was lost, and they had to cut the best deal they could get.

Earl monologued, "All people will give in, if the price is right. What gift could be greater than the ability to compute the most advanced equations instantaneously?" He looked back at the two bookophiles and said, "Two agents will come at the end of the lunar cycle to ensure that you fulfill your part of this agreement."

Heather said, "Thank you very much sir." They got up from their seats and left the Centre. The taxi-driver was there, looking smug.

He said, "Well, lookey here. A bunch of no good bookophiles. I can't believe my chip was malfunctioning so much that I wouldn't be able to see the signs."

Byron said, "Can you just take us back home?"

Freedom said, "Of course, but it's going to cost you. I have to get my cab cleaned because you dragged in all of your filth."

Byron said to Heather, "We don't have time for this."

Heather said, "I don't want to walk home Byron." She asked, "How much?"

Freedom said, "1000 Pi."

Heather gripped Byron's forearm and walked away from the taxi driver. They heard pounding and cursing behind them. Freedom screamed, "Don't you dare walk away from me bookophiles. That's no way to act to your superiors."

Freedom paled as he saw a white haired man in black who said to him, "Sir, it's not wise to accost citizens. Especially these citizens. They're going to be getting Z-31s."

Freedom's mouth hung open. The white haired man said to Heather and Byron, "I'm sorry about that."

Heather stammered, "Thank you very much sir."

The white haired man had already gone, going somewhere else to fulfill his duties. Heather clasped Byron's hand and they walked through the city. It was noon by then and should have been light, but clouds of gray had bound the sun. The streets were silent, for people were at work, each being a little piece of the machinery. When Byron and Heather reached their house, true darkness had replaced the clouds.

On the threshold of the door, Byron said, "Heather, we can't just give up books. They're part of us and not matter what the Department says, it will continue to be that way."

Heather said, "There is nothing we can do. We have to bow our heads sometimes and accept things as our fate."

Byron said, "We shouldn't have to."

Heather said, "But that's the way it is."

Byron raced to second story of the house and asked Heather, "What do you think was the most important book that you've ever read?"

Heather said, "I don't know, there's too many. How about *The Grapes of Wrath*?"

Byron said, "We don't have that here."

He picked up a dusty book from his mantelpiece, gently caressing its age worn spine. He brushed the dust from the book and saw an image of knights in open battle. Byron said, "This will do."

Heather walked up the stairs and saw Byron with a wild look in his eyes. She asked, "What are you going to do with that?"

Byron said, "There are more ways to make a book than just printing it."

Heather said, "There's no way that when the Department goons come here they'll miss a copy of a book."

Byron said, "We live in a world of probability. The checkers, they only do what is expected. They are no better than robots and if I write in the Bible of their text, they will never be able to think it there."

Heather said, "You've only got three days to copy an entire book. How the hell are you going to do that Byron? I don't want you to get hurt. We just have to move along and accept that our art is dead, ok!"

Byron said, "Heather, calm down please. We don't have a chip installed in our brains that is turning us into robots. We can still think, dream, and improvise."

Heather muttered, "Dreams." She shouted to the obscured stars above, "What have they ever done for us?"

Byron sighed and took out a pen. He opened the dust-covered book and started copying. He heard Heather stomping around the room muttering curses.

There was coffee on the table. Byron's eyes were blood shot for he had not slept a moment since the interview. Corwin, Little Isaac was crying again. Byron took another sip from the cold coffee and continued to copy into the handbook. His hand trembled and bled, but he pressed on. The doorbell rang. He froze, fearing that it was the Department of Destiny. Heather opened the door and they saw a white haired man neither young nor old with the trademark black and gray uniform of the Department of Destiny. He said to them, "Nice to meet you Mr. and Mrs. Thurman. I am Scott Handler and I'm here today to install a chip in your child."

Heather pointed upstairs. Scott smiled and picked up his gear. Heather rushed over to Byron and gripped his arm tightly. Their eyes met and they knew the game was up. Byron closed the handbook and walked up the stairs. He saw Scott setting up his equipment in the Nursery.

He held the handbook in his hands and placed it in the front counter. When Scott came down after finishing prepping little Isaac, he said, "The handbook, it's one of the best things you can ever have."

Heather laughed nervously and said, "Yes, it's a lot more interesting than the works of some dead guys in the past."

Scott smiled and said, "It's good to see that you've integrated so well. I'm sorry that my partner is a bit late, but he's really into his work."

Byron asked, "His work?"

Scott heard the door ring and opened the door to reveal a black haired man in a black suit with a tie laced with pictures of calculators. He grinned, showing his flossed teeth and said, "Let's get this started."

In the distance, there was a flash of light that rustled the leaves of a grove of oaks. A man was there, his face hidden by the darkness. He climbed onto the top of a tree and waited for what he knew would come next.

Byron and Heather were marched by the man in the black suit into the street. He motioned to the oily yellow canister that was nursing a healthy fire and to the books he collected on the side.

The fire crackled, causing sweat to build on Byron's forehead. The man in the black suit said, "Into the fire. Now."

Byron's hands trembled as he thumbed his raggedy copy of the works of William Shakespeare. He held the book over the fire, his hands feeling the heat of the flame. He let go of Shakespeare and the fire was fed. Hidden from the light of the fire, a figure in the distance whispered, "Whether tis' nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, or to take arms against a sea of troubles and by opposing end them."

Shakespeare laid in the fire, slowly melting, slowly dying. The flames reared as if to call for more food, and spit bits of ash into the air. The man in black ordered, "Again."

Byron held over the crackling fire Orwell, Huxley, and Herbert. He let go of the books and winced as they crashed down the side of the barrel. The man in the shadows recited, "But I don't want comfort. I want God. I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness. I want sin."

As *1984* disappeared under the flame's hungry lips, the man in black shoved Tolstoy and Dostoevsky into Byron's arms. He said, "These are always my favorites to burn."

Heather looked at her husband, suffering as he was forced to deny the past and embrace a dark future where the sun was turned away. She walked into the light that the devouring flames cast and said to the demon in black, "I'll burn the books."

Byron, back hunched, pride broken, looked at her and by the look in his eyes, thanked her more than he could have in words. Heather pulled his sweat-soaked hands up and held him tightly, softly singly, "We shall overcome, for we two are one."

Hot tears streaked down Byron's face as his wife finished what he could not. Heather held out to the heavens *War and Peace*. She loved the book, with its rhythms and themes. But for her husband, for her child, she threw the book into the fire, where it recoiled as it struck the heart of the fire. The book was burning and the fire savored the large tome, slowly singing its edges.

The man on the perimeter whispered, "Above all, do not lie to yourself. A man who lies to himself and listens to his own lies comes to a point where he does not discern any truth either in himself or anywhere around him."

The man in black shoved the hardbound copy of *Paradise Lost* into Heather's hands. She felt the grainy texture of the book and knew it was her copy. She had gotten it from her father, and he had gotten it from his father. It was the first book she ever really truly loved, and it was the book that she still loved the most. She put her hands in the fire, carefully laying the book at the bottom. She felt her hands blister and crack but she bit her lip.

The man in the distance whispered, "Add Faith, add virtue, patience, temperance, add love, by name to come called Charity, the soul of all the rest: then wilt though not be loth to leave this Paradise, but shall possess a paradise within thee, happier far."

Byron, his face perspiring saw his wife's hand touched by flame and lost all his pain, all his weariness. When the man in black shoved the last book into Heather's burnt hands, he snatched it before it could cause his wife more pain.

He didn't look at the title, for he didn't care much. Book after book went into the fire, throwing sparks into the air. The fire turned from yellow to white and some pages fell from the canister into the ground, on fire. The man in black laughed and reveled in the orgy of destruction. And then there was one book left.

Byron felt the pages that he had painstakingly copied and smiled as he hurled the book into the fire. The man in black thought the smile was of joy of books lost and said, "Now your sins are clean and you may embrace your fate wholeheartedly."

Byron was silent, but inside his heart, he said in unison with the man in the distance said, "And suddenly Sir Lyonel knew why Lancelot would gallop down the centuries, spear in rest, gathering men's hearts on his lance head like tilting rings. He chose his side and it was Lancelot's. He brushed a dungfly from the sleeping face."

Byron staggered back to the house, tired from the ordeal. The fire was slowly dying, and the words of thinkers past were no more than in ash. The man sitting in the oak trees watched his parents go back to the house to attend to their wounds. He whispered, "Thank you." He pulled from his jacket a metal orb and pressed it. There was a flash of light, and he was gone.

Mark Chen
Campbell Hall
North Hollywood, California

High School Narration
Third Place
Bippedy, Bopped, What?

"Celie! Celie! Look! Come see what your sister has done!"

"Oh, she's wonderful. She is-wonderful-our daughter. Look at it Celie, look!"

The success my eyes couldn't seem to bear was the black and white spotted pup gifted sister had manifested. And it seemed my father and mother just couldn't get enough of the splotched thing. Sometimes I just absolutely hated being the sister of Hattie. Yes, if your mind skipped a beat, it was correct in doing so for my crystal ball has told me of all my sister's later life adventures and by 'later life' I mean next week.

She is to be the one that is to poison Snow White with that blasted, soon-to-be-famous, red apple and when she does this she'll not only win a spot in fairy tale history, but a place in the WHOOSH Academy. Yes, Witches Helping Objectively Outrageous Selfish Housemaids. The very Academy the Queen had direct contact with when she decided to have Snow White taken care of! It just so happens that WHOOSH would refer the Queen to Hattie just because she shows an early advancement in the art of witchcraft and they're considering accepting her early.

Well I see it as most certainly unfair! Just because Ms. Selfish decided to suck up all of the witch blood for herself and barely leave enough for me. Because of her I was almost deemed legally mortal during the Bippedy-Bop questionnaire! Well, if Hattie thinks she's going to get her fame and place in the Academy without a fight, she is very wrong. I plan to put up a very good fight, quarter witch or not, fm getting my spot in the Academy if it kills her!

"Oh, Celie, where are you going? Don't you want to play with the puppy some more before it melts?"

"No, we can have puppy stew for all I care!"

The next morning was a less than perfect setting. I ended up stumbling upon my sister in the middle of a brewing session. There she was, always hard at work. I had learned from experience to never bother her once she pulled her hair back. Heaven knows I didn't want to be turned into a Goblin King again.

At least her annoying conjuring had inspired me to do some of my own. I grabbed a few of the things I thought I'd need, and headed back to my room with a small kettle and stand. After a few quick minutes of step up-the only step I had mastered so far-I began my mixing.

"A bit of pond scum mixed with desert newt ...perfect! Now, a bit of sliced beetle's root and some cinnamon for good measure." The pot bubbled and brewed. Not quite the same as my sisters, but it was good enough to get my enthusiasm going.

"Mother and Father will be so excited to see what I've made!"

The pot stopped bubbling.

"Hm, I guess those were the magic words."

I inched closer, excited to see what had come of all my hard work. I bent my neck, struggling to stick my head in far enough to see. Spotting things only became harder to do as my round face had a tendency to block tiny spaces, completely sealing off any chances of

light. Since my eyes didn't seem to be doing any good, I decided a nice firm yell would do the trick.

"Hello! Is anybody or anything in there?" Nothing.

"Come on out ...I know I brewed something." That's when it appeared. Chirping away as it waddled its way over to me. "Aw, are you adorable."

Splat.

"Ick! What was that? What is wrong with you--you little monster?" The little creature had spat on me and it seems it didn't take kindly to what I had said about it either because that's when it began to attack me.

"Ah!"

I screamed and screamed and pushed and screamed some more, but the pot wouldn't budge and the little animal wouldn't stop its tirade of cinnamon saliva and pecking. My voice only echoed me back as I slammed around my room, knocking over the stand and everything else that could possibly be standing upright.

"Stop it, stop you horrible little creature!"

It wasn't exactly the correct thing to scream at a monster when your face was confined to the very small area they just happened to occupy. I could feel myself spinning around the room, half crazy, while the little thing had at it with my face. By now I was sure that I would vomit everywhere and just drown the little beast, but it couldn't be an option since I had opted out of breakfast this morning. Scrambled eggs and left over puppy stew just wasn't my thing.

The spinning seemed to do nothing but fail miserably while making me very dizzy. I couldn't help but scream `get off about a thousand more times before I slammed my hands against the pot's sides. That's when I felt my body hit the door and it became completely self evident that my embarrassment had just spilt out into the eyes of my family as I flung my arms wildly. "Get it off!" Get it off now!"

"Oh my goodness, Celie, what's wrong with you?" I heard my sister's voice and all I could do was pray that she had somehow cooked up a spell for ultra human strength to pull this pot off my face.

"Just get it off!"

"Okay, well just, just hold still!" She said this as she placed her foot on my chest and pulled with all the might she could muster. I had to admit, that for such a small girl, her muscles must be getting quite the workout from this little faux pas of mine. She continued to tug while I screamed and pushed. It seemed the more I struggled the harder she stomped on my chest cavity-by this point I was barely able to breathe.

Pop!

I swear it sounded just like a suction cup being pulled off a window when the darn thing finally came off. But the embarrassing noise had been worth it. The bird flew away, dazed, out the window just after laying one last dollop of cinnamon saliva on me. I could tell by the expression on Hattie's face as she held the pot that mirrors were not going to be good friends of mine for quite some time.

"What was that?" Her voice peaked in question as to why she had to save me from my own stupidity once again.

"A bird, couldn't ya tell?"

I ended up in the bathroom scrubbing my face raw for what seemed the next twenty years when the knocker was sounded.

"Celie, could you? I'm in the middle of something."

I trudged from the bathroom, still picking at what little cinnamon was left on my face with the wash cloth.

"Hello?" I answered as I swung the door open. The expression on the boy's face was message enough as to how frightful my current state must truly be.

"I have a letter for a Ms. Hattie Hitchker." I snatched it up from his hands, knowing exactly what it was.

"Thank you!"

The door was swung half shut by time I realized I had forgotten to say goodbye or tip the poor lad. Letting my feelings get the best of me, I pulled the door open and threw a few coins at the back of his head screaming `thanks!' at him once more. He didn't seem to appreciate the tip. I tore threw the wax seal which had been stamped over with the WHOOSH emblem. I traced over it quickly, my eyes becoming like sponges, soaking up every word. But at the letters end I still found them thirty for more. Perhaps a letter of my own, addressed to me, telling me how I was accepted into WHOOSH early-taking the last available spot this year.

"Well don't worry my little eyes. After this wonderful plan of mine you'll be able to soak up all the acceptance letters you want!"

"You shouldn't mutter alone by the door, Celie. Some might figure you as crazy. What's that in your hands?"

"Oh, nothing, just a letter for you. WHOOSH has asked you to eliminate some woman by the name of Snow White, but you wouldn't be interested..."

"Oh, yes I would. Give me that! This could be the very thing that gets me into WHOOSH early!" "Yes, it very well could..." I whispered behind her back.

"What was that?"

"Nothing, just overjoyed for you that's all."

"Oh, I have to send note to Mommy and Daddy about this! They'll be thrilled." She scurried off to the lettering table while I sent for the messenger boy. It was true, Mother and Father would be thrilled, even more so when I got accepted and Hattie didn't. I quietly practiced my witch laughter as I schemed in my mind. "Hattie won't see it coming."

The week since the letter's arrival date had passed, meaning it was the very day my crystal ball had told me of. And there she was Snow White, just where the Queen said she would be, running around with those silly dwarves. Honestly, didn't those dwarfs known any better. People of their size shouldn't spend time with a woman like her. What if she were to accidentally trip and crush one of them? I'm sure it'd be the cover story of *The Witch Work Times*, leading to a slew of dwarf self help books: *How to Empower Yourself against the Big People*. My sister arrived on time as well, clutching that disgusting red apple of hers. I had even been there when she made the thing. Because of this I had decided to capitalize on the idea and use a banana instead. If the witch that gets the job done is going to change, then the fruit might as well change too. She had even come up with a much better costume than mine-full out, cliché witch. She crowned this brilliant jewel of a costume with one lone, wart, on the tip of her disgusting nose.

I couldn't help but pin my greedy eyes to the red bowed, black haired goddess as she swirled around the yard joyfully. Oh, how I'd bring so much misery to her and so much fortune to myself at the same time. I inched closer, crouching in the bush, and listened to Hattie speak Snow into a spell. She was most certainly going all out for this one. With good reason too, the WHOOSH scout had just taken his place in the woods and begun to watch her con Ms. White into making a deal she'd soon regret. A minute passed before Snow White finally accepted the apple. I watched my sister in her wicked act as she hobbled away with false aspirations of success.

"My turn to pop in on the scene."

I stepped out from the bush in my toned down costume. I had put far less time and spell energy into it. As a result, my best attempts at fooling a bouncy brunette would be my mother's old apron, some house slippers, and a few old clothes I had dug out of the basement. I pulled an old dust rag over my head and scooted toward the fair-skinned beauty. I shot a smile at her. She cringed.

"If you want that spot, your efforts are going to have to be much better than this." I changed my voice, forgetting that it didn't quite match my put together costume.

"Hello deary, would you like to buy a banana?"

"Oh, no that's quite alright. I've already got an apple."

"Apple, why those-you just shouldn't eat apples!" I fumbled with my words as I tried to convince Snow White into a trade.

"And why not?" She questioned this as she shined it before me.

"Why, it's always such a hassle ...getting the skin stuck in your teeth and all. But I wouldn't know much about that these days." I wrapped my lips around my teeth and smiled. I hoped to play on the assumption that anyone crazy enough to live in a house full of furniture half her size was too far gone to notice the bits of white poking out from the corners of my smile.

"Oh, well I don't mind the skin too much. I can just peel it." She wouldn't give.

"Now, why go through all that trouble when you can just peel a banana in three simple tugs? And they're much tastier too!"

"I have to disagree ...besides I think I'll be just fine with an apple and nothing else." She turned.

"You can't have an apple for desert!"

"Can so." She looked me over with a suspicious eye.

"And how would you know?"

"Because I just made an apple pie not even a week ago. I'm sure you've never heard of banana pie before."

"...No, but I know for a fact that dwarfs adore banana pudding."

"We do not!" One of the little beings had decided to speak up out of turn.

"Go away!" I shoved his large head, toppling him to his side. "Now, deary, I do insist that you take my banana instead of that nasty ol' apple!" I said this while beginning a very difficult game a `grab and take' with her. So far she was doing none of the taking and I had yet to grab that shiny red jewel from her hands.

"Just take the banana!"

"No!" She pulled back angrily. "Now, if you'll excuse me; I have some very important housework to get done for seven very special friends of mine. Good day!"

"Why won't you just take the banana?" My temper finally got the best of me as I leaped through the tiny kitchen window onto a surprised Snow White. We battled as I tried to shove the yellow death trap passed her pinched lips.

"Just eat the darn thing!"

It turns out that Snow White was quite capable of defending herself, at least more so than I had expected. This led to me bludgeoning her with my smashed yellow fruit, leaving bits of it stuck in her dark hair. They only seemed to be more prominent when she threw me out of the house and I landed, face first on the ground. I concluded that it must've been the intense red reflecting off her face that gave the banana shrapnel its brightened yellow color in her hair. I dusted myself off and stood there awkwardly while feeling the strange stare of the WHOOSH observer. I knew that this would be the latest buzz around campus this afternoon. 'Quarter witch attacks Snow White and loses.' The impression it would make upon my ego already singed with shame.

"And take your banana too!" Smack!

And that's when I learned that it was never acceptable to throw coins at the back of messenger boys' heads-tips or otherwise.

It only took a few days for my sisters predicted success to set in. The papers were just gushing with details of how my sister had done it. How she had coerced Snow White into devouring the poisonous apple. And with this success came her acceptance letter from WHOOSH. I still remember the party my parents threw. How could I forget? We were still shoveling down leftover 'congrats' cake. She had done it-unknowingly beat me by taking the final early admission spot into WHOOSH. I decided that being defeated wasn't that bad. At least I'd get her room until spring break.

Michelle Brown
Olathe North High School
Olathe, Kansas

High School Exposition
First Place

“A horse never runs so fast as when he has other horses to catch up and outpace.”
-Ovid

Competition has existed for over millions of years, from the age of reptiles to the age of man. Organisms evolved to adapt to changing environments, resulting in a differentiation of suitability for survival. Competing with other organisms for resources, the better adapted species gets to survive. This applies to modern people in that competition brings forth innovations and ideals that help in the survival of society. As people pass on the values of competition to their children, they give them the gifts of dignity and self-determination. They are encouraged by the rewards that come out of effort, such as prizes, trophies, ribbons, and later in life, political power and dominance. But however great are the rewards also comes downfall. Athletes, companies, and other people are harmed when competition exceeds the limits of tolerance and reality. Nonetheless, our practices of competition influence the academic, economic, moral, and political frameworks of society.

In the academic field, competition generates gifted students by way of encouraging them to compete with one another for scholarships and honor. In most developed countries such as, China, Singapore, and the United Kingdom, gifted programs are set up to accommodate the very best students, while other children are motivated to perform better in their studies so they can achieve this privilege. These programs form the basis of academic elitism, a system in which the most intelligent students are given the most resources and attention. Students that are not on this level are excluded, leaving a gap in new ideas and hampering the progress of society. Furthermore, the fear of failure in entrance exams to top universities and schools might promote a lack of confidence in many students. Despite this, competition allows a child to grow through his or her independence and fosters an active learning environment. When competing with other students for higher grades, he is motivated to do well on his own, promoting good study habits and practices that serve him well in the future. In academics, the values of competition are not taught by parents, but are learned unaided. A student realizes his or her own weaknesses by comparing to others and learns to improve on his skills. Additionally, praise and other rewards give confidence to one's abilities. As children mature by putting their talents to use, they serve to do well later in life.

Since competition is the foundation for capitalism, it affects our economy as well. As companies and corporations struggle to maintain sales, they create room for innovation and efficiency. New products and services are created out of sheer competition, resulting in greater profit for companies and better products for consumers. Competition also eliminates monopoly, lowering prices of items and giving people a wider variety of products, services, and technologies. On the other hand, fluctuating prices may affect consumers and commercial firms detrimentally. Prices may be raised too high or too low, causing companies to lose profit and go out of business. While companies rival with other firms, they might follow unprofitable paths and gains that lead to their demise. Moreover, competition is costly. Millions of dollars have been spent on advertisement, draining companies of money that can be spent on manufacturing new products. Yet, competition has improved the lives of many people, from the days of the Model T Ford to the days of cellular phones.

In politics, competition is manifested in political elections where the winners attain positions of power. Various parties and departments compete for funding, laws, and influence,

often resulting in disagreements between leaders. In the international sense, countries are constantly competing for dominance in world affairs. Once the discrepancies have created a schism in agreement, competition shifts to worldwide tensions, and oftentimes, to war. An example would be that of the Cold War, a struggle between the Soviet Union and the United States for military strength and international supremacy. While this kind of warfare did not end in human casualties, it did portray the coming of the superpowers. To this day, competition still is exemplified by the struggles between nations.

While the concept of competition applies to situations in the physical sense, it also pertains to those of both psychological and moral significance. As we build upon the societal foundation in which we live in now, we establish relationships with others and with the environment. With competition, some of those relationships harm both the person and the one influenced. In sports, the use of steroids has caused a widespread controversy that questioned the ethics of some athletes. Competitive sports have their own rewards for winning games, such as money and internal pride. However, when that pride is lost due to a player's inability to keep up with others, he or she might resort to the use of steroids to boost performance. This goes against the principles of good sportsmanship, deteriorating the morals of playing sports and setting examples for other people. On the other hand, competitive sports also bring people together. Every four years, the Olympics are held to promote friendship and understanding between countries. This event boosts the morale of the country in which the athletes are representing and strengthens the ties of goodwill worldwide, providing a stable framework for society's values.

Even though society goes through rapid modernization, the concept of competition hardly ever changed. Like an evolving organism, competition adapts to changing environments, shifting to suit its needs. Its ecological models still include the theories of natural selection and evolution, however, age-old concepts that still pertain to humans today as we compete with other organisms for resources. From academics to economics, competition has ingrained our societal foundations with a basis for our actions. What would civilization be without rivaling companies and corporations? What will happen if all the students in the world were receiving the same form of education as everyone else? As implied, we are nonexistent if not for the values of rivalry taught by our predecessors. While competition is not all about being triumphant, success still has been the reason for it. To quote a saying from American sports culture, "Winning isn't everything; it's the only thing."

Amy Huang
Stuyvesant High School
New York, NY

High School Exposition
Second Place

In today's society, most individuals are doing the "survival of the fittest". As Charles Darwin stated that, only the strongest competitor will make it through. There are obstacles, failures and triumphs in the world of competition. Competition may be between two or more forces, life forms, systems, individuals, or groups, depending on the context in which the term is used. There are many places or events where people compete to become the best of the best or just get special recognition. In politics, candidates run for federal, state or local government. High school seniors applying to colleges compete with other seniors to get into a college. Competition is defined as the act of striving against another force for the purpose of achieving dominance or a goal.

Competition will only get harder for society because of the higher expectations society is imposing on people that want to reach a goal. Charles Darwin's theory was, that the strongest competitor will win and the weak will stay behind. Charles Darwin explains my philosophy of competition because I think that the strongest competitor will succeed and the weak will stay behind. In politics, two or more people run against each other in order to reach their political goal. Competition can lead a person to take extreme measures so that they can win or reach their goal. An example of that was The Watergate Scandal, involving two of the presidential candidates, Nixon had fellow men break into the opponent's building to steal and stop his opponent's strategy. I have not taken extreme measures where I had to face the consequences. Therefore, competition can lead a person, animal or thing to take extreme measures to reach a certain point.

There are other types of competition where people take extreme measures. Seniors in high school apply to colleges of their choice in order for them to reach a post-secondary education. The competition is growing every year when high school students apply to college. Most students applying to college must be truthful when writing an essay or filling out the required information on the application. People who cheat their way through school, sports, and tests will never succeed because it will accumulate and get to them later in life. In track and field a 100 meter sprinter competes individually to get first place. There are people that cheat their way through, but later they face the consequences. For example, many football and baseball players take illegal drugs to make them stronger, but later they face the bad or deadly consequences.

Competition revolves around everybody and there is no way to avoid it. In school I compete with other students to get better grades and try to get Top Ten in class. Competing in a friendly and good environment will prevent violence and hate. For example, in Cross Country I have to run 3 miles and have to try to get a first place or a top five to score points for the team. It is very hard and demanding when competing because an individual does not want to be in the dark and lose. I always try my best and work hard to get the win or reach the goal that I wanted to accomplish.

In conclusion, competition will only get stronger and the fight to reach the goal will last longer because more people are living up to the requirements that are needed to win. I compete against other people in Cross Country, Wrestling and Track and Field, but I also compete academically. I am part of the strong competitors that will make it through the great fight and that will reach my goal. I am a strong believer of competition because without it society will never advance to a new level.

Adan Duarte Jr.

El Monte High School

El Monte, California

High School Exposition

Third Place

Never have I met a person that has won everything he or she has been a part of: every contest, every game, every competition overall. Maybe because such person doesn't exist, everyone at some point has experienced the bitter feeling of losing or failure. We have made competition a part of the world we live in, trying to find out who the best is at a certain thing, and possibly unconsciously encouraging people to strive for their best. But have we ever stopped to think what the other side of the story is? What happens to dreams of the kid that didn't make the team? To the attention that the son or daughter that isn't as smart as his or her sibling deserves? To the one that simply didn't succeed as he or she would have liked? Competition might be the reason why people give out their best at times, but it is also the filter used to laud a selected few and look down upon the ones left behind.

Competition is present at all times in one's academic life. From playing games in preschool to being ranked in your high school years according to your GPA, every student is always being part of a competition. We'll obviously look up to the students on top, the winners, the ones that stand out, the captains of the teams, the top students, but at the same time neglect and even ridicule the ones that are left. Those that don't make the team, that lose the game, that didn't succeed, among others, will be the ones with the crushed self-esteem. The more competition, the more pressure that's put upon the students, and the more they look beside them hoping the others are doing worse, completely eliminating the chance of help between each other. A world of recognized successful students spends its time celebrating them, not worrying about the state of those that are still aiming for the top or perchance gave up trying.

Perhaps a scenario that provides us with the best example of competition and its negative effects might be a typical family. Especially common in families with brothers and sisters close in age, competition creates a rivalry between siblings. Who the smartest is, who the most polite is, who the most obedient is, etcetera, eventually lead to the bigger question of who the favorite is. Brothers and sisters find themselves in a contest to prove which of them is best and deserves the most attention, the most money or even the most love. It isn't any wonder that we often see tense relations towards a certain or certain members of a family instead of a home with a more harmonious atmosphere. The expectations of parents provide an environment fit for their children to do their best to stand out, but as these sons and daughters try to climb up they end up using each other as stepping stones, forgetting they can easily help each other up instead.

When competition is encountered in everyday situations, such as the workplace, it makes it harder for one to establish better social relationships and maintain a good character. If coming first is on the line, then one automatically turns into a competitive, independent person whose sole focus is on being better than his or her colleagues. In such situations, an individual forgets about doing the right thing and thinks twice before offering assistance or engaging in any kind of association that might affect his position in the race. Where is teamwork's place in these situations? A person in the presence of competition becomes isolated and completely dependent on her or himself, missing out on the opportunities of a pleasant working experience, of a bond among co-workers and getting acquainted with others.

It is evident that competitions not only bring out "the best" individuals in our society but also show us who the "losers" are, and with this, the fall of their spirits. There are other ways to motivate students and children to reach out for their goals or ambitions without

making the situation a process that will have byproducts regarded as failures. Competition isn't something necessary, comparing yourself to others only results in two negative ways: jealousy and arrogance, or a low self-esteem and lack of motivation. We would find our daily experiences far more enjoyable and the ability of opening up to the world if we were to spare ourselves the fear and aftertaste of not succeeding.

Linett Luna
Garey High School
Pomona, California

*Coming in the fall issue of Writers' Slate: An interview with author Chris Crowe. Mr. Crowe has written several books, including *Mississippi Trial, 1955* (historical fiction), *Getting Away with Murder: The True Story of the Emmett Till Case* (non-fiction), and *Presenting Mildred D. Taylor* (biography). Guests at the spring Conference on Writing and Literature at the University of Kansas in March heard Mr. Crowe speak about his writing, and his interests in young adult literature.*