

The Writers' Slate, published by The Writing Conference, Inc., features some of our 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 available online.

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. It is also encouraged to submit article ideas for feature article consideration.

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

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Submissions, including electronic submissions, **should clearly indicate the writer's name, school, grade level, and home address. The teacher's name should be included if appropriate.** Due to the number of submissions and mailing costs involved, the editor will only respond to those submissions that have been accepted for publication. Submissions will not be returned.

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

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John H. Bushman
Director, The Writing Conference, Inc.

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October 15, 2009

Greetings!

Welcome to the fall edition of The Writers' Slate. We have just had our first snowfall here in Colorado, and many of our thoughts have turned to snuggling into our homes with a good read. That's where our new edition comes in. In the following pages, you will find numerous reading options.

First of all, there are many young adult literature options noted in our two feature articles that focus on the Holocaust and the works of Chris Crutcher. If you haven't read the titles already, you must check them out.

Secondly, we have a wide range of narratives for you by students from elementary through high school. Each piece is unique; each author used creativity, coupled with the power of language to invoke imagination and emotion in the reader. Some stories will make you smile to yourself, other will make you laugh, and one might even draw a tear or two. Thank you to everyone who submitted their work to us. We had an incredibly difficult time narrowing submissions down.

Lastly, we also have a wide range of poems in this issue, and although there is no overarching theme that connects all of these poems, they all represent excellent writing and creativity. There are poems written by elementary to upper high school students, which include topics ranging from war to nature to hard relationships to big philosophical questions. All of these poems are unique, relevant to real life, and offer inspiration to fellow writers and readers alike.

We sincerely hope you enjoy reading these articles, narratives, and poems, as they were a pleasure for us to read. Thank to everyone who submitted work, and we look forward to reading more submissions in the future.

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Words that Changed the Reading World

Kimberly Peacock

For young adults, reading can be a chore or a pleasure. However, reading can also be more than pleasure--it can be educational. Words have an impact in some way on every person, whether it is a novel, a magazine, a comic book, a poem, or a play. Words have saved lives, ended lives, and changed lives. Each of the four authors who wrote the books reviewed here are from different countries around the world: Ireland, Australia, Germany, and the United States, and they represent different generations. These words-- the words that helped to create these stories, the words that changed the world in a way that all of them felt was an important topic to write about--are words heard and read around the world. The thread that connects them is not only in the stories of children and young adults involved in the Holocaust, but the way the Holocaust affected them enough to craft stories so powerful and so painful that all of them have become best sellers. This is a topic that will forever remain in our history books, in our memories, and in the hearts of millions of readers who have read, and will continue to read, the tales these talented authors have designed.

These words—the words that helped to create these stories, the words that changed the world in a way that all of them felt was an important topic to write about—are words heard and read around the world.

For the main characters in each of the following four novels, words became the most important factor in what was to become of them. In the first, it was fairy tales, the words that made up the stories, which kept a young girl's heart alive and hope for the future. For another, his own words and stories took him into a destiny unexpected. In the third, words told her story after she met her fate. For the fourth, words were her life saver. The other common thread amongst these four tales, besides the importance of words in each, is that all four are from deep inside World War II and the Holocaust. Only one character was a Jewish child, and she died but her words have lived on as one of the most powerful stories to come from the Holocaust: Anne Frank. The others were all children of different nationalities, but all affected by the horrors of Hitler and his powerful words. His words changed the world, and the tales of these four children are no exception. Words are powerful, as everyone knows, but for these children in *Number the Stars*, *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, and *The Book Thief*, their words tell individual stories that together create an image of a war that was fought by men, but suffered by children. These words are some of the most powerful words one could ever read about a time when words altered life and history; one man whose words revolutionized a country, transformed a war and affected the world and the impressions of children and young adults during that time.

NUMBER THE STARS BY LOIS LOWRY

Lois Lowry has been writing for generations of young readers. Her books have stood the test of time, the test of culture and the test of human compassion. She was born the middle child of three; her father was a career military man, the family travelling all over the world. Lowry married young, at the age of nineteen, to a Naval officer and had

four children of her own. She divorced in 1977, and now splits her time between Massachusetts and Maine. Lois Lowry chooses her books to focus on “the importance of human connection” and “through [her] writing, to convey [her] passionate awareness that we live intertwined on this planet and that our future depends upon our caring more, doing more, for one another”. In regards to her book *Number the Stars*, she states:

"*Number the Stars*, set in a different culture and era, tells the same story: that of the role that we humans play in the lives of our fellow beings." *Number the Stars* is meant for students in upper elementary or middle school, which is a great beginning place for students to start their journey into the stories of the Holocaust.

In Lois Lowry’s *Number the Stars*, the main character Annemarie is a young girl of ten growing up in Copenhagen, Denmark. Her best friend Ellen Rosen is a Jew living

in the same apartment

German occupation of

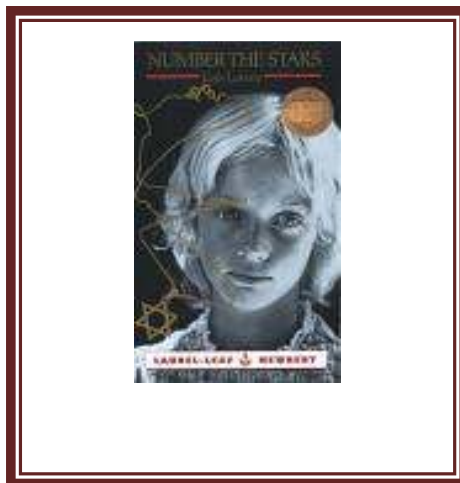
German soldiers were on

in every town throughout

the Danish government

are going to begin

which includes Ellen and



building. During the

Denmark during WWII,

every street corner and

Denmark. At one point

learns that the Germans

“relocating” the Jews,

her family.

Annemarie’s mother, her uncle Henrik, her papa and Peter, a close family friend, devised

a plan to help Ellen and her parents escape to Sweden, just across the water from

Henrik’s house. Throughout the story, however, Annemarie leans on fairytales. She

recalls often the ones she tells to her younger sister, ones her mother had told her. Then

there is the one she remembers as she is running through the woods to Henrik’s boat just

before sunrise to deliver a package. For Annemarie, it is not her own words that make the difference in her life, but rather the words of others that become her power when needed.

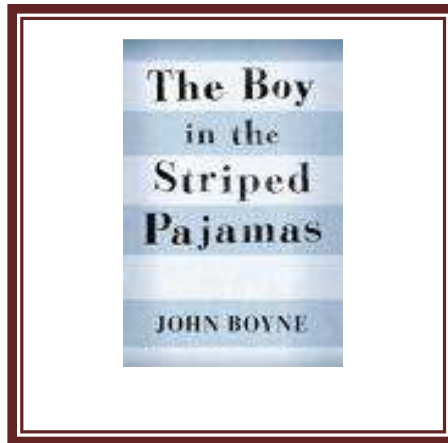
The first time the girls, Annemarie, Ellen and Annemarie's younger sister Kirsti, encounter the German soldiers on the street corner it is Kirsti's brave words that get them out of trouble. She smarts off to the soldier with no fear, and because she reminds him of his daughter he lets them alone without any further trouble. Annemarie realizes to herself, after the encounter with the soldiers, the drastic changes around Denmark, and the increasing presence of the Nazi's, "Papa had changed, too. He seemed much older and tired. The whole world had changed. Only the fairy tales remained the same." It is the fairytales she tells to Kirsti in the night and Little Red Riding Hood that she recalls on her trek through the woods to Henrik's boat. At one point, Peter reads a Psalm and the words he speaks give Annemarie something to think about including new hope for her friend. At one point when Henrik and Annemarie are talking alone in the barn, he tells her that sometimes not knowing is safer than knowing, therefore shedding light on the power of words both spoken and unspoken. It is her lack of knowledge that saves her when she is questioned by the soldiers on her way to Henrik's boat. Later, after she knows the entire story, the fairy-tale becomes her own, the words her power. Peter was later caught and executed by the German soldiers. He writes a letter the night before he's to be shot to Annemarie's parents. This letter was Peter's power, the power of his words travelling to Annemarie. All of the tales and her experiences becoming part of Annemarie's power, the words of others becoming the power behind one young girl and her growing understanding of the world around her.

THE BOY IN THE STRIPED PAJAMAS BY JOHN BOYNE

John Boyne, author of *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*, was born in Dublin, Ireland in 1971. He studied English Literature at Trinity College in Dublin then followed that with creative writing at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, where he received the Curtis Brown award. Boyne's novel has been made into an award winning movie, won two Irish book awards, spent 80 weeks at number one in Ireland, topped the New York Times best seller list, and was the bestselling book in Spain 2007 and 2008. Boyne's *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* is also great for upper elementary or middle school readers interested in the Holocaust.

The Boy in the Striped Pajamas is about a nine-year-old German boy named Bruno. His family has moved from Berlin to Auschwitz when his father is made the Commandant of the camp.

As a young child he doesn't understand why they have to move, what this new place is, and why all the people on the other side of the fence all wear striped pajamas. One day he decides to go exploring and he walks a long distance along the fence, and eventually comes across another



little boy. Bruno comes to find out that this little boy's name is Shmuel, and they share the same birthday and are exactly the same age. Day after day Bruno and Shmuel meet and talk, and then every evening they each return to their respective dwellings on their side of the fence. Shortly after they meet Bruno asks Shmuel, "Why are there so many people on that side of the fence? And what are you all doing there?" That innocent question from a nine-year-old boy becomes the center of the power of words for Bruno

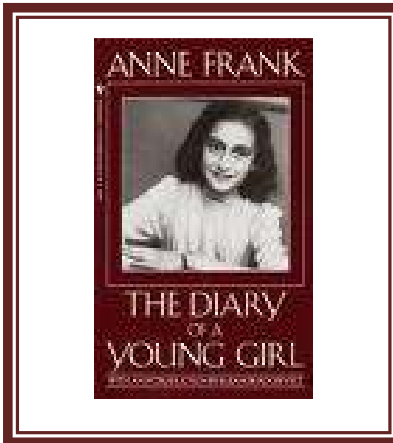
and Shmuel. Every day that Bruno and Shmuel spend together, Bruno asks when he can crawl under the fence so they can play together. Shmuel continually tells him that he wouldn't like it over there. At one point, Bruno's father's birthday is being planned and the German soldiers bring Shmuel to the house because he has tiny hands, the better to polish the glasses for the party. An incident occurs in which Bruno denies his friendship with Shmuel and later it appears that Shmuel receives a beating and isn't around. Eventually Shmuel returns to the place at the fence and Bruno is able to apologize. A little while after this Shmuel's father disappears and he is greatly saddened and Bruno offers to help should he ever get to go to Shmuel's side of the fence. After a year at Auschwitz (which Bruno calls Out-With), his mother is decidedly unhappy and wants the family to return to Berlin. Bruno, on hearing this news is saddened and feels he needs to tell his new best friend.

Bruno and Shmuel make a plan for the last afternoon they have together to sneak Bruno into the camp so he can see what Shmuel's life is like. Shmuel steals a pair of striped pajamas and in the muddy, rainy afternoon Bruno changes clothes and climbs under the fence to explore the other side. As in *Number the Stars*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, and *The Book Thief*, words became the power for Bruno. His words befriended him to a young Jewish boy held in Auschwitz and keeping a promise he made to another young boy, Shmuel, and those words, that promise, lead to a surprising end.

THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK BY ANNE FRANK

Anne Frank, born June 12, 1929 in Frankfurt, Germany, became a young girl in the throes of adolescence forced to leave behind her life, go into hiding with her own family, a second family, and the family dentist in Amsterdam after the Nazi party was elected in Germany. They went into hiding in 1942, and by August 4, 1944 their annex had been discovered and they were all sent to concentration camps. It is believed that Anne died in either February or March of 1945 of typhus. The only survivor of all those from the annex was Otto Frank. He was able to recover Anne's diary from the annex and published the first copy, in German, in 1947. Later,

"Eleanor Roosevelt wrote the introduction to the diary's American edition, 'one of the wisest and most moving commentaries on war and its impact on human beings that I have ever read.'" *The Diary of Anne Frank* has some very personal tale of a



the introduction to the diary and described the diary as a moving commentary on human beings that I have read. *Anne Frank* has some very personal tale of a

young girl in the midst of the Holocaust and is recommended for readers in middle school or the lower levels of high school.

The Diary of Anne Frank is all about a young girl and the words she writes, describing the unfortunate situation her family has gotten into. For her birthday on June 14, 1942, Anne receives a diary as a gift, as she wants to be a writer or journalist when she grows up. She is very excited by the gift and starts writing immediately. In the beginning of her diary entries she is writing as any other young girl would, taking about her school, her friends and her family. Soon after however, on Sunday July 5, 1942, they are forced to hide from the S.S., the Nazi soldiers, and they begin their two years of

hiding the Wednesday following. They are Jews in World War II, fleeing Frankfurt several years earlier and hiding in Amsterdam, and on the eve of Margot being sent away to camps, the Frank's are hidden by Anne's father's friend Meip.

The attic (or annex) in which they spend the next several years is small, cramped and houses two full families plus the family dentist. Anne even includes a map of the attic, and the reader gets a very clear idea of how truly undersized and confined the attic was. They were to remain silent during daylight hours while there are people below them working and have only a few hours each day to go about their normal business. Anne writes in her diary letters to Kitty (what she names her diary as if she is writing letters to a friend), regularly about the experiences they all share and the experiences she has alone as well. She tells about the tensions between the families, her older sister, the son of the other family Pieter, her eventual crush that could have turned into something more had they more time in the attic before being found by Nazi soldiers. In May of 1943, Anne has fully realized the weight of the war, and what other Jews are experiencing outside of their small hiding space. May 1, 1943 she writes, "If I just think of how we live here, I usually come to the conclusion that it is a paradise compared with how other Jews who are not in hiding must be living." Her words are nearly always hopeful and forward-looking, until the very end. For Anne, words were her therapy, they were her future, and they became the voice of a generation of Jews who survived the concentration camps of World War II and the Holocaust, as well as those who died. In the end it is her father, the only survivor of the Frank family, who finds her diary and publishes it so that the world may know Anne's story. Her dream was to be a journalist and her father helped that

dream come true by publishing her story. Her words defined a war and brought the world to its knees.

THE BOOK THIEF BY MARKUS ZUSAK

Markus Zusak was born in 1975 and raised in Sydney, Australia. His book, *The Book Thief*, has spent more than a year on the New York Times bestseller list and has won numerous awards including the 2007 Printz Honor for excellence in young adult literature and the 2007 Book Sense Book of the year award. He currently resides in Sydney with his wife and daughter. *The Book Thief* is a much longer and complicated story with much more difficult language about the Holocaust and is recommended for high school readers.

The Book Thief is quite literally about the power of words for one young girl by the name of Liesel Meminger. Before World War II, near Munich, Germany, a young girl finds a new home, a new family, friends, and most importantly books, words, and the passion to learn. The power begins as she is learning to read and write at the age of ten when she is given by her mother to a foster family, and in the midst of her nightmares, her new foster father takes his time to read to her from the first book she stole. From there she finds the desire to learn to write. Together, she and her new father teach each other. That first book began the tale of the book thief and her new addiction to the power of words. As she grew older, her reading and writing improved, and before long she was reading on her own, teaching herself new words, and her passion became her obsession.

The first book was taken at her brother's funeral of her in a strange town, one of the gravediggers, a young apprentice, dropped his copy of *The Gravedigger's Handbook*, and seeing it on the snow-covered ground, she stole it, unable to read or understand it, but

it was the final memory of her brother which she could hold in her hand. The second book came to her quite auspiciously. After a rally for the Führer, Hitler, she noticed the pile of smoldering items and realized that on the very bottom were several books. She discreetly made her way over to the pile and carefully pulled out a book, still partially smoldering and burning. This second book began the path to the next group of stolen books which came from the Mayor's library. It was the power of the words, the draw of language that kept Liesel returning to the Mayor's library, the place of several of the later thieveries. She and her best friend Rudy, would continually steal books, and although

they always stole

goes to the mayor's house

Reaper tells it, "Without

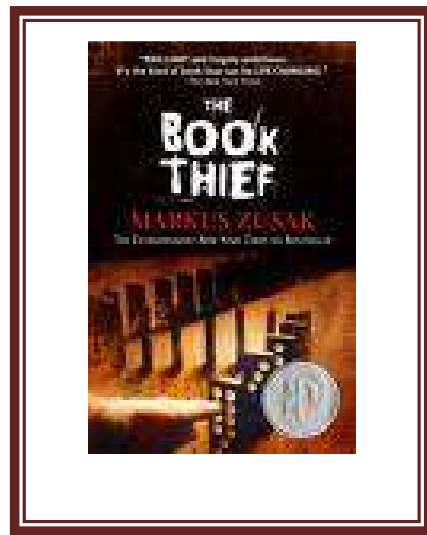
degree of absence, but on

for some reason, the book

At one point, Ilsa, the

Liesel in a curious way to

proper guest if she should



together, at one point she

alone to steal, and as the

Rudy, she felt a good

that particular morning,

thief was happiest alone."

Mayor's wife, invites

visit the library as a

so chose. The draw of the

books and the power of the words and stories they contained were more than Liesel could stay away from.

In the meantime, her father becomes the caregiver for a Jew, the son of a friend of Hans Hubermann and they hide Max for many months in their shallow, cold basement.

Liesel and Max become friends strictly out of her curiosity and his politeness. They end up sharing nightmare stories, and time together becomes the most precious to both of

them. Max writes a story for Liesel at one point after he's been ill and this one becomes

the most prized of all her stories because it came from Max; they are his words, their stories, combined into one beautiful, loved tale that she may carry around with her forever. His words become her power and her words were the power behind his desire to create something so wonderful for Liesel. As the story is told from Death's point of view and a stolen book, he too is a book thief, not unlike the young Liesel in the story he is telling. His own thoughts and words are strewn throughout the tale, few and carefully chosen; making them just as powerful as the words that captured young Liesel to begin with. In her books, Liesel finds hope, new words, and other worlds. In her story, Death finds hope, passion, and true love, things he rarely sees in his line of work. What he does notice is the color that each soul leaves behind after their death, and the power he feels with the colors compares to the power of the words Liesel feels from her books.

WORDS OF CHILDREN TEACHING THE WORLD

For Annemarie, Bruno, Shmuel, Anne, and Liesel, words changed their worlds and their families in ways unimaginable to young adults and children today. Their words are now affecting a new generation, telling the stories that history books cannot tell. History books can teach you why something happened, who was involved, how many people died, and any other facts you may want to know. What these books offer their readers is the exclusive view from a child's eyes. These are the tales of the horrors one man's determination and his power with words from the inside. Their tales bring a new life to a war that happened long before the current readers of these novels were alive, but the words bring a past horror to a present understanding. The story of Anne Frank and the time in the attic is one of the most well-known holocaust stories that several generations of teenagers have read and perhaps even seen the play on stage or the movie.

It is warm, tragic, sad, and disheartening that a girl with such talent with words would only know the true power of them once she was dead rather than having the chance to use her talent to further her life. Hers are words of a typical pre-teen and teenager in a very atypical situation and making the best of it. Her words and the power behind them are the reason so many other holocaust stories are around today. Young adults can try to comprehend and empathize with the words of Anne Frank as well as the other characters in these stories. Each tale is told in a different form, a different narrator, a different nationality, a different view of the war that killed so many. So many readers can identify with at least one of the children in these books, making the individual story have more impact on a heart, a memory. A story from the past bringing itself forward through the words of a child. Words created the war. Words tell the tales from within the confines of the war. Words influence a reader in a way that pictures cannot always do. As Markus Zusak said about *The Book Thief*: "Soon I realised that words were a good metaphor for Nazi Germany. It was words (and Hitler's ability to use them) that contained the power to murder and ostracise." Words impact everyone that reads or hears them, and that was one of the main goals of each of these books: to impact those who took the chance and time to read them. The words of the Grim Reaper, Bruno, Anne Frank, and Annemarie will forever live on in the pages of their respective books. The words of a generation of children, some of whom lived and some of whom died, live on even today and will continue to do so as long as future generations of students and readers have room in their hearts to open these books and read about the brave children of World War II.

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Kimberly Peacock is a recent graduate of Metropolitan State College of Denver with a degree in English Literature. Kim feels that connecting history and literature can bring new life into young adult literature and will enhance reading enjoyment.

These Aren't Just Sports Stories: An Examination of Themes in Select Chris Crutcher Novels

Casey Rock

Angry Management. This title is not just a class that people have to take when their emotions get the best of them--this is the name of Chris Crutcher's new book. In it, Crutcher pulls together some of his most memorable main characters, who just happen to be placed in an Anger Management course together. Readers get to catch up with Angus Bethune and Sarah Byrnes, among others. In the spirit of revisiting these old friends, then, it's also important for us to return to some of Chris's most popular novels: *Whale Talk*, *Stotan!*, and *Athletic Shorts*. –Jill Adams

Many kids have been fans of Crutcher's since middle school. There are many things that make Crutcher popular among young readers, especially his dark humor and unflinching honesty in the face of heavy issues. Crutcher uses sports in his novels as he tackles such extreme topics as physical and mental disability, racism, child abuse, and the generally-difficult lives of teens.

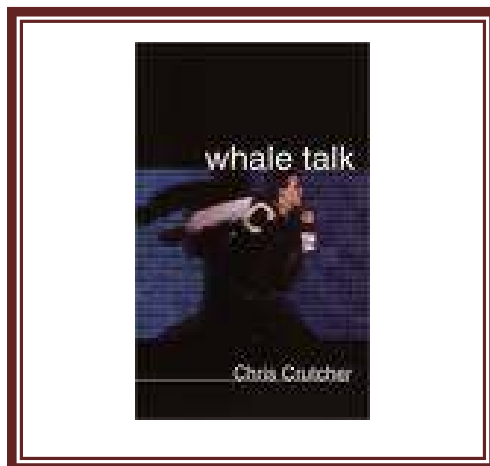
Crutcher's novels are about athletes, but they aren't sports stories. This is an important distinction to make because it can be a turn-off to many young readers. Not everyone wants to read a story about the underdog quarterback throwing the winning touchdown in the championship game. Many people can't be bothered reading about sports because they just aren't interested in them. The important distinction where Crutcher is involved is that the stories are about love, death, heroism, acne, friendship...just about everything the normal teen will experience in their life, but he uses sports as a background and catalyst for the story instead of the main plot.

When such serious issues are at hand, and with young readers taking it all in, it's vital that the story is coming from a reliable, well-intentioned source. Teens can smell a fake from the moment they open a book, so it's critical that the author comes

from a place of honesty and personal experience. It seems that if you were judging by these criteria along, Crutcher is the man you want to write these types of books.

Crutcher grew up in Cascade, Idaho, a small logging town. Although he wasn't a gifted athlete (as he mentions more than once in his autobiography *King of the Mild Frontier: An Ill-Advised Autobiography*), he was recruited to play many sports as he grew up because the town was so small. According to Crutcher, "If you could breathe, you could play." One big success in the sporting world was competing at the collegiate level at

Eastern Washington State College, where he received his degree in psychology and sociology. Crutcher later returned to school to get his teaching credentials and later taught high school through the 1970s but left the job in order to work at the Spokane Community Health Center and Child Protection team. In addition to writing and lecturing, he still

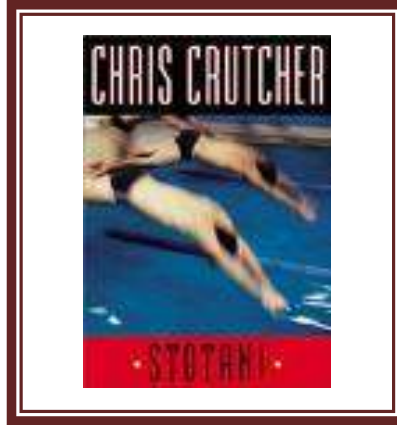


works as a therapist and child-protection advocate. With this background, Crutcher is a perfect candidate to be the author of young adult fiction, and he (thankfully) has the writing ability to create funny, heartbreaking, and incredibly honest stories that appeal to a wide audience of young readers.

Whale Talk follows a high school student named The Tao Jones (better known at T.J.) through his life at Cutter High School. T.J. is a great athlete but doesn't play any sports for his school as a protest against the favoritism shown toward star athletes, for anyone wearing a letter jacket at Cutter High seems to be able to get away with anything, including bullying the mentally and physically handicapped students. As a favor to one of his teachers (who wants to start a swim team to avoid having to be an assistant coach for wrestling), T.J. recruits a group of boys to join the newly-created swim team. The group that eventually signs up is a group of misfits including the mentally-handicapped Chris Coughlin, the obnoxious and extremely intelligent Dan Hole, the kind and talented Tay-Roy Kibble, the rude and antagonistic Andy Mott, and quiet and generic Jackie Craig, and the obese Simon DeLong. The

teams ends up forming a uniquely close bond and learn a lot not only from the experience but each other as well.

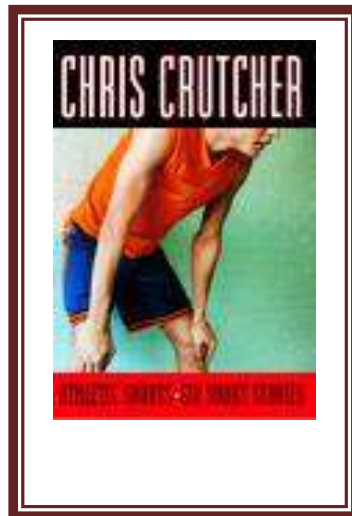
Stotan! takes place mostly during one week and centers around four friends that are on the swim team. The boys voluntarily sign up for something their coach calls Stotan Week, hour-a-day workouts team up and prepare. During Stotan Week, the each other and become also a major theme. One dates an African American



at Frost High School. up for something their which is a series of 4- designed to toughen the them for success. boys also learn a lot from close friends. Racism is of the characters, Nortie, girl named Milika. The

main problem with this is that his father is extremely racist, and goes so far as to publish a white-supremacist newspaper. Nortie also clashes with one of the school's racist baseball players.

Whale Talk and *Stotan!* aren't the only books in which Crutcher includes racism. We also see it very explicitly in *Athletic Shorts*. In the short story "Telephone Man," the main character is openly racist against anyone of color. He isn't overtly racist to anyone's face, but the narration of the story (in his voice) is strewn with racial slurs. It becomes apparent during the story, though, that his bigotry is learned from his father, and he is heard. During the story, it although he hates been taught that black can't explain it, but it's he figures it must be true. "Telephone Man," as jumped by a gang of he is rescued by a black heart, and he beings to father has taught him.



just reiterating things he's becomes apparent that everyone of color, he has people are the worst. He what his father told him, so At the end of the story, the everyone calls him, gets Asian kids at his school, and boy. It sparks a change in question the lessons that his

“Telephone Man” in *Athletic Shorts* is a deviation from the theme of sports because there simply are no sports in the story. It’s valuable to look at in the context of his other work because it fits so strongly with the themes of his other novels. It also helps show that he doesn’t lose his style or storytelling ability when he doesn’t have a sport to lean on. It helps reinforce the idea of sports just being another way of setting up a story, not necessarily being the entire plot.

In addition to racism, one of the most difficult topics that Crutcher deals with is child abuse. Heidi from *Whale Talk* is a powerful example. This pre-schooler’s family consists of her mother, stepfather, and stepbrothers. What separates her from them, however, is that she is black and they are white. Her stepfather is racist, and her existence is proof of his wife’s affair with a black man. This has horrible consequences for Heidi, who isn’t allowed to sit at the dinner table with her white siblings, only gets hand-me-down toys, and is so ashamed with her skin color that she tries to do something about it in one of the most dramatic scenes in the book.

It is situations like these where Crutcher really shines. He is incredibly talented at contrasting humanity at its best and worst, side by side. He doesn’t sugarcoat the tough stuff, and the heroes of his stories are just normal people who have the guts to stand up for what is right. This is an important thing; nobody in his books is superhuman or has all the answers. The characters that turn out to be the hero have weaknesses and fears, but they overcome those things in order to help other people. They stand up for basic human morality and kindness.

Racism and child abuse aren’t the only issues in Crutcher’s stories. On the Cutter High swim team in *Whale Talk*, there are both mentally and physically handicapped students. They suffer at the hands of the bullies because they are different and because the people who antagonize them are ignorant. This is one thing that Crutcher makes very clear yet manages to do with seemingly subtle ease: He doesn’t excuse the behavior but makes it very clear that anyone discriminating against you because of race or disability is totally misinformed and wrong.

If you were only given this information about *Whale Talk*, you’d never guess that it was about seven misfits on a swim team. It’s important to acknowledge this face. The sports in Crutcher’s work do little more than the time period does in a historical fiction novel. It gives you a time and place and occasionally a push in a

certain direction but in the end, it's just the setting. T.J. is a great athlete, but he becomes a better person throughout the book. The swim team gives him a way to help others reach their potential and defeat the bad guys at their own game.

It is clear that Chris Crutcher doesn't write only sports stories aimed at athletes. He writes stories about life. His characters often play sports, but they don't define them as people. At the beginning of his stories, the characters might be known for the sport they play, but they grow and learn throughout the books. They become more than athletes to the readers—they become champions in life.

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Casey Rock is an English education student at Metropolitan State College of Denver and first became acquainted with the works of Chris Crutcher in middle school.

To Me It's Poetry
By Christian Lemus

The A's and B's and onomatopoeias,
The format that makes poetry look like leaning Pisa,
As long as I get it down on paper,
And it's subject to the eraser
Its poetry to me,
Its poetry for all to see,
The poetry that touches you and makes you feel,
Or the kind that teaches you how to deal,
I just rhyming it like I bop it, twist it, and pull it,
And rhyme it to get the point across or like I'm full of it,
Either way the poetry gives all of us a craze,
The simplicity or complexity could leave us all in a daze,
And to me it's poetry,
It's the kind that lets my emotions be,
My territory and my capsule,
My blueprint on how with history I will battle,
The work that is my declaration to others,
And the same work that shows my love for friends, life, and my own
mother,
If my poetry seems like it's an autobiography,
Then to me it's definitely poetry.

Nine Ways of Looking At a Mirror: A Tribute to Wallace Stevens
By Eleana Binder
California

1

Reflections of how things are,
and how we want them to be,
desire overcomes reality.

2

I look at it and see a backwards door,
a darkened hallway,
a passage to the unknown.

3

A lake covered in ice, slick and cold,
a palette that glistens with mystery.

4

Falling into a backward spiral,
into a world that is inside out,
nonsense reigns beyond the glass,
and time is meaningless.

5

Imperfections exist there,
and on the beholder.
Cover it when we do not want to see,
falling short of beauty.

6

Murmurs of surprise arise,
when you see your eyes,
stretched out like taffy,
staring back at you.

7

Stare long enough,
your eyes open wide,
and you will see
a ghastly ghost of me.

8

Symbol of duality,
it lends perspective to our thoughts,
and scolds us for our self absorption.

9

“Who’s the fairest of them all?”
she asked.
Luckily mine does not choose to answer.

The Color Red / Promised Pain
By Ryan Tilley

A whisper the size of a pea
The tone of a piano key
So quiet so abrupt
Like a stop sign he sees at the last second
Remember when, remember when he cried
When she cried and they cried and everyone cried
As the whisper reaches the next person
More and more tears fall
They escape silently and they fall quickly with heaviness
That same stop sign, which *you* almost missed - he thinks -
The same stupid stop sign
Please promise that everything will be okay
Remind him red draws blood, red signs red blood
Red ride in his red car and the red stop sign
And the red blood from his little boy
He hates the color red he hates it
He hates it he hates this

No matter how fast he goes
It's not going to take pain away
Pan promises that memories are forever
Pain
Did he feel pain
Did he feel his bones crush, crunch under the car
Does he hear, does he hear his father as he screams his name
As he screams his lungs of love
Does his son hear him
Does he know he will never forget
Someday, someday
Never will he forget, but someday,
He will forgive

HEADPHONES
BY CASSIE LOWELL

IF YOU LISTEN THROUGH YOUR HEADPHONES
IT'S DISTORTING WHAT YOU HEAR
AS YOU RUN 'CROSS TOWN, LOOK ALL AROUND
DOESN'T IT SEEM QUEER?

THAT EVERYONE'S GOT THEIR MP3S
PLAYING FROM A POCKET FROM OR BACK
RAP, HEAVY METAL, ROCK,
POP, COUNTRY, SOUNDTRACK...

BUT YOU'VE GOT TO LISTEN UP SOMETIMES
SOMETHING NO RECORDING WILL EVER DO
IS TELL YOU THAT IT LOVES YOU
OR YOU'RE ITS BEST FRIEND, THROUGH AND THROUGH

SO PUT A PAUSE ON THAT LAST SONG
AND LEND AN EAR, THESE WORDS
YOU'VE GOT TO HEAR THINGS THROUGH YOUR HEART
THAT'S HOW YOU *LISTEN* IN THIS WORLD.

Broken But Blessed
By Montori Foreman

Decisions made, but not thought over.
You tell me I lost but deep down inside I've won.
Kicked, punched, dog bites, and spit on,
But I still stand tall, head up high with a smile on my face.
You took somebody that was a real close friend to me,
my boy, and both of my brothers, but you still think you got me.
You try and put me down telling me what I did is illegal,
But just in case you don't live in truth,
Recession is here and this is an illegal world.
I've lost everything and everyone
but to those people who've never done wrong,
understand, I've never lost my faith & hope.
I learned that to be happy, is to be favored by luck or fortune.
But in my case to be happy is to be favored by God.
I've been in an uncomfortable position for a long time,
But a wise man once told me...
"God will put you in an uncomfortable position to show he's God"
So to those people that try and fault me for what I did,
change towards me after you hear what I've done,
I CAN DO BAD ALL BY MYSELF.
What do you see when you look at me?
Fire & fierce, or happiness & to be saved?
I'm a warrior, a fighter, a soldier, so when you meet me,
Meet the BLOOD that surrounds me.

Cut Me Loose

Too many times
I've been through the motions
Singing, dancing blindly in the night
Not hearing the words or feeling the fight
A regular cycle
An effortless tire
I can't stop and look
Why should I
I'm not anyone at all
I'm not beautiful or tall
Average and meager
Lost in the crowd
All I want to do
Is make you proud

Condemned to try but never succeed
Contented at nothing
Always a need
Here I am with you
Yet I cannot feel
I'm thrown back
Again
Back to the start
On a road going nowhere
A racing heart
Choking on my own despair
I struggle to breath
Cut me loose
Please don't make me shout
I'd rather lose it all
Than never get out

My Brother
By William Liu
California

courage is the strength to stand above the crowd
to initiate the step forward and lead

it is the convictions to explore unfamiliar horizons
though easier to follow what we've been told.

courage is the desire to maintain honesty
despite temptation to look the other direction

it is the sensation of summiting the mountain zenith
though easier to never leave the earth.

courage is facing what must be done
no matter the odds or challenges

it is leaving your family behind
to defend the country you love.

courage is being a soldier
fighting in the greatest army.

it is staring the enemy in the eye
having fear yet staying strong.

O brother,

when you leave her,
the of your heart
behind.
that is courage.

when you separate hands and future from her
leaving a young mother, eyes full of promise
behind.
that is courage.

when you fail to cry amidst the wild epilepsy of tears from your family,
and quarantined thoughts behind those burnished eyes
tell them you will return and everything will be alright.
that is courage.

when you wave farewell on the plane
acknowledging the weight of the many on your shoulders
and prepare yourself with your brothers over the ocean.
that is courage.

when you storm across the desert
parched miles and fatigued days of blinding sand
the fire of sleep hate cremating your eyes.
that is courage.

when you fight to terminate a tyrant's iniquity and crimes
blood splashing daily from streetfights,
simply growing numb.
that is courage.

when you brave another fight...watching yet not seeing
With frozen eyes and a phlegmatic face
hoping for home sweet home so that you may resume your life.
that is courage.

when your companion collapses amidst fire, claimed by the weapons of the Devil
you take the life of that heartless wolf
one grinning bullet between those eyes of bleeding steel.
that is courage.

when you hurl yourself onto your brother's body
many shattering soundless seconds passing
losing consciousness.
that is courage.

when you mourn your lost brother
a paroxysm of tears rushing down the dirt masked face
surely not human.
that is courage.

when you rest flowers of crimsons and azuls on his shoes
imagining that was you
yet still braving the solitude.
that is courage.

when you brave the final assignments, duties soon done
returning home much more than just a fantasy affair
you joyously yell to your brothers.
that is courage.

yet in that one moment of inattention
you take one shattering shot to the chest
keeling over in the icy fire of sand,
staring Death in the face
a bright inferno of cremating fire.
that is courage.

when you fall for certain, bullet in chest
watching yet not seeing, holding non-existent breath
a tear rolling down that flushed cheek
silently crying not for yourself, but for your family.

that
is courage.

brother,
i can never anticipate the joys of tomorrow anymore
because I know they will never be the familiar days of before.
not seeing your warm welcoming face
not hearing your encourage voice,
I wish there could have been more choice.

I wish there was some way
I could have said goodbye.
The thought of you runs through
my head as I stare, chin high
into the cerulean sky.

Knowing you are looking down on me
with a smile on your face,
forever remembering the life you lived
before you left this place.

every day with courage.

The Window Ajar

By Adithi Lyer

A room may stand intent, with all the furniture polished and clean,
In the curtains may stand brilliance,
In the velvety seating may stand kindness,
And in the parlor may hide fear,
In the lamp may be beauty,
But o'er the curtains and through the window,
A light of talent pounds ruthlessly to be let in, but the wind shall carry it,
And there the talent breaks,
But Lo!
As the towering curtains begin to seal,
Yet another light,
More temperate, more warm,
Lets itself in through the door—
And all at once life is abundant forevermore.

Ocean Scene**By Blair Donahue****The ocean water smoothing the sand,****Children's feet wrinkle it up again.****Seaweed sways back and forth,****Like a butterfly opening and closing its wings.**

Follow the Second Star

By Saloni Kumar

The tears on my face
The anger in my body
My heart melts as I close my eyes
I feel like I'm trapped
A prison with metal bars
And rooms that smell of sweat and mold
I am not free to speak
For my lips are sewn together
Her fury sends chills up my spine
She slams the spatula on the counter
And her teeth grind together like drilling equipment
I understand I have not pleased her
But does that mean she must turn
Into a monster everyone loathes?
Onlookers surround her with calming words
I stifle a sob and run
To where I do not know
Outside, the night is humid
And the stars polka dot the sky
My mind plays back the anger on her face
All I can think about is that this hasn't happened before
She used to love me
My heart aches and my eyes run out of tears
Now there are only sobs
Why must she behave like this?
I cannot bring myself to turn back
I am walking, but to where I do not know.

Two Aspirations
By: Gaby Melgar

Two Worlds
Two hopes
Bind me
Together
Yet unwind me
Separately
Stretching me
Two ways
Two dreams,
Inspired by
Contrasting
Experiences

My younger days
In which my seed of life
Reached to be a stem
That catches air,
Gasping with the
Overflow of living:
I was in El Salvador,
A country of simple living,
Hot days, long naps
Seafood at the warm water beach
With family all around
Yet also,
Saddening poverty.
Young kids begging for change
With home-made circus acts
Swallowing fire
While painfully drowning
The aches within
For what might be,
Their next meal.
Lost children,
Stolen hope
Roam the streets
Sniffing shoe glue
At the corner,
My tender eyes
Still understood
The desperation
San Salvador's streets
Lived and breathed

Coming to
Los Estados Unidos
Was like a dream.
The streets almost seemed
Paved in gold
Where dreams get made
Everyday
Where desperation is quietly
Stuffed under the red carpets
Where everyone seems to know
Ignorance is bliss
Caution:
Capitalism can cause
A strong craving
For what's not real

These two worlds colliding
Cause a stir in me
I want the simple life
Where I'm just grateful to eat
Where all I'm around is what
Can be loved
Yet growing up Americana
This yearning for the superficial
Has captured my attention

These two aspirations
Can't coexist
Can't blend, Can't mix
Two experiences
That bind me
Unwind me
Which will it be?

Walk Away
By Julie Oshee

Blue Streaks into the night
Wondering for hours,
Searching for some kind of serenity
Scared like never before
Looking deep into the dark
Never seeing anything
You wonder if you will make it past the next few minutes
As time itself stops
And it seems you are frozen for eternity
The pressure it builds upon you
As you feel you can't take it anymore
You just want to scream
Let the unbearable pain escape you
Turn and walk away

Waves

By Ioana Grosu

We are all waves
Traveling across the seas of time
We all leave our mark
Sweep others along with us,
Leave them behind
And continue forth.
Some of us do harm,
While others remain things of beauty
But really, we are all the same.
We share a core,
And we are all connected
In the ocean of fate.
Eventually, we catch sight of land,
But it is not a melancholic view,
For we have finished our voyage
And we must all eventually break
On the shore of death.

Rhiannon
By Helen Vassiliou

On the darkest night
With the brightest moon
And the whitest ground,
Is a haven, which no mortal man has seen;
Just me.

Where the bleached white trees
Show no life,
Not that I can see.

But the closer I look,
The more I can see
A snowy rabbit
A slender white deer
And flying high overhead,
A dove;
First mistaken for a star.

Even farther in the whitened bush,
I see a shadow moving
A delicate shadow
Belonging to a girl.

As she comes into sight,
Her head turns towards me
Her eyes like the darkest night,
Her face like the brightest moon
Her hair like the whitest ground.

A paler face you never would see,
The girl's ethereal features
Transfixed me and only then,
Only then
Did I see
When she looked right at me
Only then did I understand
I had seen the essence of winter.

An Almost Perfect World
By Karan Sarkar

Perfect Peace
Is the
Perfect Goal
For a
Perfect World.

But Never Will It Be
A Possibility
For a
Changing World.

With Time and People,
Our World Changes.

With Time and People,
A Dearth
Of
Problems
Should Not Be
Considered

Every One Problem
Has
A solution,
Hidden in People,

From Different Times,
From Different Places,

All Carrying an Idea.

A Perfect World
Will Never
Become Reality.

But by using
All Ideas,
Civilization
Will Scrape the Sky.

We Will Never Have
A Shortage of Problems.

But We will Have
Unlimited Solutions.





First, she tried being a flower shop owner.
There were lots of pretty flowers!



Next, she tried being a chef.
There was steaming and yummy spaghetti!



Third, Sophie tried being a teacher.
There were such well-behaved children!



Next, she tried being a movie star.
There were so many bright cameras!



Fifth, she tried being a fashion designer.
There were lots of beautiful dresses!



Next, Sophie tried being a
librarian.
There were tons of old
and new books!



Seventh, she tried being a zookeeper.
There were so many interesting animals!



Next, she tried being an artist.
There were millions of vibrant colors!



Sophie had tried being eight different jobs, but there was only one job that Sophie liked the best. And that job was...



Getting Back

By Kelly Ye

There are so many things that can change in just three years, but I never imagined how drastically an entire country could change in such little time!

After just three years of being back in America, it was finally time to take a long deserved vacation back to China. I was utterly shocked when my plane hit ground and we were finally on our way to Grandpa's house. There were so many new and different buildings scattered throughout the city, and the new sights and sounds were just jaw dropping. Just the sight of those little shops and shiny black cars in the new pavement was just amazing.

I was staring in awe when we finally pulled up to Grandpa's house. As I climbed out of the taxi, I was immediately slapped in the face with the familiar smells of friend dumplings and the putrid odor of raw fish. Oh how I've missed this place!

"You're here!" I heard. Turning around, I saw my grandparents with open arms; I sprinted to them and hugged them tightly. They returned the favor. I just love the location of their house. It's right in the middle of all the fun and action, and I didn't skip a beat. I probably could've counted a million people, but I lost count at thirty. Oh well.

"Come on, you must be starving," Grandma said, and she led us all into their home. As my family and I sat down, plates of fried rice, sesame balls, and meat buns were being brought to the table, and how delicious they were!

After I stuffed myself and felt content, I made myself a little chair of pillows right beside the window and looked out into the streets. You could see everything that was happening from up there! I finally felt at home.

Ah...I think I'm going to like this place even more now!

Little Miss Muffet Searches the Web

By Elizabeth Stottlemyre

Little Miss Muffet sat on her tuffet
Eating her curds and whey,
Along came a spider and sat down beside her
And frightened Miss Muffet away.

After this dreadful and frightening experience, Little Miss Muffet quickly ran to her home as fast as she could run. Now poor Little Miss Muffet had a bad case of arachnophobia. She really needed to get over it because Jim, the second of The Three Little Pigs, was going to have a party in exactly a week, and the theme was “Spiderman.” Now Little Miss Muffet really wanted to go to Jim’s party so there was only one more thing to do. She turned on her computer and searched the “web” until she found a site that was called, dontbescarespiders.com.

This website was absolutely amazing, thought Little Miss Muffet. It had all the facts she would need. For example one of the facts that was written in bold print at the very top of the page said – **Spiders are not insects**. “Wow,” said Little Miss Muffet. “I’ve got to learn more!” Then she scanned the page until she saw “**Facts about Spiders**.” And on the top of the list were the 2 main body parts of a spider. They are the abdomen and the cephalothorax.

Now there was no stopping Miss Muffet. She was going to overcome her fear and learn a lot about spiders. So after that great thought she started reading more.

A common question is how and where do spiders spin webs? Well, the spider spins its web by little things called spinnerets in the very back of the abdomen. The spinnerets spin silk that is a liquid till it hits oxygen. This silk for its size is about as strong as a steel bar.

“That’s is totally amazing and really cool,” said Little Miss Muffet who was really excited to learn more about the mouth and head.

“First I’ll start by reading about the fangs,” said Little Miss Muffet. This is what it said. The fangs inject venom into the prey or insect. “Oh, I can’t read that. All I need

to know is that the fangs put venom in the insects. I'll read the next paragraph. Let's see, the pedipalps."

Pedipalps are little things that stick out by the fangs but the pedipalps are on the side of the mouth. They are used to hold the prey while sucking out blood.

Legs – The legs are connected to the head and chest also known as the cephalothorax.

Eyes – Spiders can have 2 to 8 eyes, but the most common number is 6 to 8 eyes. Most spiders have blurred vision compared to ours.

Remember most spiders are small and you're bigger, so there is not any reason to be scared of spiders!

"Wow," thought Little Miss Muffet, "maybe they are right. There is not any reason to be scared of spiders. I'm bigger than most spiders, and I bet most spiders are probably scared of me."

Then Miss Muffet heard her belly rumble and she realized how late it was. So she went to the pantry to get more curds and mild and looked up and there was a big spider in a tipped over basket looking right at her. Miss Muffet jumped back in fright, but remembered what she read on the web. She simply reached up by the spider and grabbed her curds and milk and closed the pantry door. That's when Miss Muffet absolutely knew she was ready for Jim's party.

Jim's party was amazing and Little Miss Muffet had a wonderful time. She played pin the tail on the donkey and many other games until it was time for the cake and presents. Jim opened the first present and got an action figure superhero Spiderman. That's what she was scared of, Spiderman?

The next time she was eating curds and whey, along came a spider and sat down beside her and Little Miss Muffet said, "Isn't it a beautiful day!"

The Shack

By Alana Kominski

I wake up to the crisp smell of salty water filling the little blue room packed with so many memories. I look around the room, but it is empty. My sister is downstairs in the small but cozy kitchen. I jump out of bed, get dressed, and then run as fast as I can down the narrow creaky stairs. I say “Good Morning” to everyone, and without any hesitation I run out the white front door and throw open the screen door. The familiar hot and humid air hits me the second I get outside and fill my lungs with one quick breath. The first thing I see is the brownish-golden German Sheppard that lies under the oak tree, sprawled out. Before I am halfway out the door his big ears stand straight up and he runs over to me, but I continue on my way.

I run through all of the weeds sticking out here and there on the big open path leading toward the bay, looking out for random slimy snakes that might be in the long grass. It is so serene this early in the morning that I can hear the soft pitter-patter of the water hitting the dock. The winding path leads directly to the dock, which runs into the bay. As I look around for the first time, I realize how beautiful everything is. I am in the middle of nowhere! Looking back at the gravel driveway I see our cars at the end, and remember I am miles away from home. I look at the small blue and white run-down shack, getting smaller as I run. I finally get to the dock and see something that had not been there in past years; wild flowers grow tall by the dock. Without a second thought, I leap onto the narrow dock.

Slowing to a walk, I observe everything around me; the salty air, the fresh smell of the wildflowers, and the sunrise. I remember that I haven’t been here in a year and a lot of things have changed. All the memories pour into my head. I keep walking, hearing the water slowly slap back and forth against the dock. As I get closer, I see that the boat is already in the water, and ready to go. I walk up to the old ash-colored bench that faces the bay, sit down, and gaze into the water. I watch the blue-green water sway this way and that; I cautiously note all the jellyfish, which are always there during high tide. Then something catches my eye; the yellowish-brown sun slowly lifting up into the sky. The morning sunrise lights up the sky, the trees and all the houses on the other side of the bay. I turn around to see my sister walking toward me. Her blondish, short curly hair bounces

up and down as she trots closer. Not too far behind her are my Uncle Tim, with his grayish-white short hair and old t-shirt, my Aunt Lisa, who has brownish short hair and a yellow blouse on, and finally my mom with her curly strawberry-blonde hair pulled back into a ponytail. They all get onto the boat. Fearing that they would leave me behind and I would miss out on all the fun, I get up, walk over to the boat, and hop in. Uncle Tim then starts the boat, which is very loud. I hear the water under the boat swishing and washing around. Then, before I know it, we are out past the dock, the wildflowers, and the blue and white run-down shack. All of it gets smaller as we move faster into the bay, until everything familiar is out of sight.

In an instant, we pass the mouth of the bay, the wind whipping in our faces. The icy water splashes up into our faces every time we bounce over a wave. My sister and I scream with excitement and my mom, aunt and uncle all laugh. The hot and humid air that once filled my lungs turns into the crisp, cold, moist morning air down on the bay. We stay out for only a short time because it's the Fourth of July and we have a lot to do when we get back. When the dock is back in view, I remember that we have to tie up the boat. We climb up the ladder to the dock. Everyone hurries back to the house and I just take it all in.

I see all the little crabs swimming around in the now greenish water. I remember that we'll be packing up the boat, loading the car, and leaving this time tomorrow. No more icy water slashing up into my face every morning. No more early sunrises and sunsets. Every year this trip gets shorter. It's all going by so fast; when I think about the first time I'd been to the bay house three years ago, it seems so much longer. I love waking up every morning in the humid blue room. No more anything; it will all be gone soon out of my mind, until next year. Slowly I pick up a seashell that was lying on the dock. I sit on the bench and turn it over and over again in my hands. I feel every small crevice run against my skin. Slowly I stand up, walk over to the edge of the dock and open my hands, then slowly drop the seashell back into the bay. I turn on my heel and walk slowly away from the dock. Once I get to the end of the dock I kick something small. I see purple and blue flash up at the thing I kicked, then I bend down to pick it up. It's another seashell, with purple and blue lines running down the sides. I put it in my

pocket and walk back to the house, pack up my bags and get ready to go, wishing I didn't have to leave.

The Lucky Rainbow

By Paloma M. Perez

Introduction

One day, Bridget woke up on a very sunny morning. Bridget was a girl with deep brown hair that surrounded her head in ringlets that looked like slinkies. Today just might be the best day of her life. She is about to go to the Bahamas, the place she had been longing to go since she was very little. Suddenly, a loud noise shot her up in bed.

“Oh no!”

It was her older brother, Benjamin. Benjamin looked NOTHING like Bridget. He had blonde, knife-straight hair that went down almost to his shoulders. He had deep green eyes that looked almost like a grasshopper. His eyes were pointed straight towards his elongated nose.

Benjamin said, “Wake up time! It’s time for the Bahamas! Get your stuffs packed up, we’re leaving in two minutes!”

Well, Benjamin liked to exaggerate. They were really leaving in two hours. Since Bridget knew that it couldn’t be two minutes, she knew her mom would wake her up at midnight and fuss with her hair and clothes, so she thought it would probably be in about two hours. As soon as her feet touched the floor, her mom and dad came running and said, “What in the world was that loud noise? You guys scared us half to death!”

“Oh, mom!” said Benjamin. “I was just waking Bridget up because we’re leaving in two minutes. Now for my allowance, does it get raised? At all?”

Well, you may be wondering why Benjamin was saying this. But he was a kid who loved money. He absolutely adored it. One time, he said he loved money so much he even wanted it to be a person so he could marry it. Their mom said, “And now for the allowance, that goes down about a penny because we’re leaving in two hours and you haven’t even got your sneakers on!”

Does your mom say you’re supposed to get your shoes on at one o’clock in the morning? I bet not. But in their house, their mom thought you should always have your shoes on so you don’t have to make a fuss over your shoes later on. Like she really thinks a boy is going to make a fuss over shoes.

When Bridget finally got out of the shower, she joined her family for breakfast. The first thing her eyes fell upon was her dog, Pekoe. Pekoe was a puppy with milky soft hair which was really the color of orange pekoe tea (that’s why they called her Pekoe). Her little dog Pekoe jumped up on her knees and of course wanted to get picked up. So Bridget said, “Down, Pekoe, down. I have to eat my breakfast.”

Suddenly her father stormed into the room. “Great. Now you’re talking to the dog? Sheesh, you treat her like a human!”

“But Dad!” Bridget said.

Before Bridget knew it, it was time to go on the plane. And before Bridget knew it again, they were in the Bahamas. But the only problem is, it was HOT! Probably around 120 degrees! Maybe not. But when she looked over to her brother, he seemed to be chattering cold. No wonder her brother seemed to be always cold.

Since her mother didn't seem to know how to rent a car yet, she walked over to the car station and asked for a car. The color red. The man at the desk said there were no more red cars. Then Bridget piped up and said, "What about maroon?"

The man behind the desk smiled at her and whispered, "Actually, I think I can get a red car."

Before Bridget knew it the THIRD time, she was at the Hilton Hotel. The first thing she wanted to do was go to sleep.

"Yawn!" Oh boy, Bridget was sleepy. Without even unpacking her pajamas, she jumped onto the fluffy bed and drifted off to sleep. She shot up in her bed the second time when she heard the door opening oh-so-slowly. Who could it be?

Her grandma, of course! She jumped out of bed, screamed in delight, and threw herself into her grandma's arms. Her grandma was pretty tall for her age and had hair as white as snow without even dyeing it.

"Sweet child!" her grandmother gasped. Out of nowhere, her brother appeared behind her grandmother carrying two large bags. Ever so suddenly, Benjamin dropped the bags on the floor and wiped a pile of sweat from his forehead. This must have been the first time he sweat in years!

Chapter One
So Untrue

That night, the grandmother called both children to her side on her hotel room balcony.

"I think now is the time to tell you about the old legend my father told me, and his father told him, and his mother told him, and so on and so on. Once, there was a bird. He was very, very plain, all gray, black, and white. Not even an interesting color on his beak. But he was a very nice fellow. Unfortunately, everyone, of course, judged him by his looks. So one day, the gods way up high blessed him and made him colorful, shining, glittering, and glowing, almost see-through, so iridescent."

"Come on! That's soooo untrue," Benjamin interrupted.

Unexpectedly, Bridget burst out with a screen, uncontrollably saying, "Listen to the rest of the story, you idiot!" After that, she covered her mouth. And, in her eyes, you could see a little spark of embarrassment and remorse.

Benjamin piped up and said, "Well, that to you too!"

"Simmer down, children, simmer down!" grandma said, irritated. When they finally stopped fighting, she seemed to be very happy with herself. "And now, let us continue with the story. Well, that old bird flew away to a cave and asked the gods if he

could explore the human skies. They said yes and agreed to let him. They said, 'We will let you take a girl as your partner.' And she recommended a girl to him. 'Her name is Reyna Bow.' they said. So he went straight away to explore the human skies, and soon found the named Reyna Bow and asked her to come with him. She said, 'Yes, right away,' and he put a magic spell on her to be all iridescent and glittering and glowing, fluttering and flowy, just like him. But he didn't turn her exactly into a bird. Well, that's the end of my story, children, and maybe one day you'll meet the bird and the girl."

"I'm not interested in girls," said Benjamin.

"Well, I am," said Bridget, "because I am one!"

Chapter Two

Strange Happenings

First thing in the morning, Bridget got up and smelled the moist air of the morning dew on the plants, and heard the little birds chirping. This morning, it was cool, not too cool, but just right. Probably about, I don't know, maybe 90 degrees. Or not. But it was nice. A perfect day for the water park, thought Bridget. And the good thing about it was, maybe she'd meet a friend.

On the way to the water park, she found a glittering, glowing, iridescent, and kind of fluffy pebble on the stone path. She picked it up, looked at it for quite a while, and put it in her pocket. Soon, she heard footsteps behind her. She froze. She felt a strong hand grasp her arm so hard the pain shown down her arm to her fingers. She screamed and turned around.

Oh, no. It was her brother. She hoped this wouldn't happen.

"Race you there!" he said, and took off down the path.

Silly brother, he's acting like the hare from "The Tortoise and the Hare," she thought. "Wait for me!" demanded Bridget.

By the time they got to the water park, the door stood way open like a gaping mouth just waiting to get them inside its throat. When they peeked inside, the water seemed to be flowing like a flood. From inside, a voice screamed, "Help me! I'm almost drowning. My clothes are all wet!"

Bridget and Benjamin dashed inside and saw a heap of deep, deep, DEEP red hair that looked like it was knitted by a seamstress whose knitting was not her forte. Benjamin was the first to get over to the heap of hair. He tugged on the hair once, twice, and then a head came out of the water. Coughing and sputtering, it was the face of a girl. She had the perfect size nose, beautiful blue eyes, and skin that was milky white (sorry, I just love using the word milky).

Bridget dashed over and tugged on the girl's face, pulling it upward, then displaying the beauty of a girl with all the colors of the rainbow on her, including indigo. They took her to the towel bank and she dried herself off. When she was completely dry, she looked completely iridescent and glittering, almost like a star or the bird in

grandmother's story. Bridget looked over to Benjamin and noticed he was looking at her with a confused face. Bridget giggled, "I didn't know that you were interested in girls."

"I'm not!" Benjamin grumbled.

The girl looked at them as if they were two enemies fighting their lives out. She said, "I'm sorry, we haven't been properly introduced. My name is Reyna. Reyna Bow."

Bridget felt like lightning was being struck through her body and jumped back. She knew that name from somewhere. But where?

Benjamin was the first to introduce himself. "My name is Benjamin Oxetile."

"And my name is Bridget, Oxetile, of course," she laughed. Reyna laughed along with her. And Benjamin just stared at the two girls as if they were under a laughing curse.

"Ok," Benjamin interrupted the little giggle session. "Me and Bridget gotta get back to our place."

"Hotel room," Bridget corrected.

"But you just got here. How about we go to the water park?" Reyna asked.

"Benjamin said, "How dumb of me," and hit his head three times. HARD.

"Wait," said Reyna, "Can you please take my flip-flops?"

Bridget thought, "This girl thinks we're her servants." And, as if Reyna read Bridget's mind, she said, "You have two hands, and you didn't almost get drowned today. And you're barefoot."

Benjamin and Bridget both rolled their eyes. But she did have a good point.

Chapter Three

It Must Be a Dream

Later on, they finally had to say good-bye to Reyna. As they headed down the stone path back to their hotel room for breakfast, Benjamin has a baffled expression on his face.

Bridget asked, "What are you thinking? It looks like you think Reyna is money." (As we know from the beginning of the story, Benjamin LOVES money.)

"Of course not," Benjamin said, rolling his eyes.

"Wait!" A voice came out from the distance, and a girl appeared from the fog. Of course, it was Reyna. Who else could it be? "By the way, in case you need anything, my room is 777, OK?"

"OK!" said Bridget.

"You know, you didn't need to walk this far," laughed Benjamin. "There's a shortcut right there," he said pointing to the ri—I mean left.

"We'd better get off to breakfast," said Bridget.

"Bye!" said Reyna, excitedly.

Later on, the siblings met their mom, dad, and grandma in the dining room. As soon as Bridget sat down, she felt something heavy in her pocket. Something heavy and round that felt like it was about to burst into flames (that means it was hot). She looked

down at her pocket and saw a glowing light coming from the center. She pulled the round thing from in, and oh no! It was Reyna's flip-flops. "I'd better return them," she thought.

She asked her mother permission if she could go and give the friend she met back her flip-flops. Her mother, after a while of convincing, finally said yes. As soon as Bridget arrived at the building Reyna said she was in, she asked the guard for the key to room 777.

"I'm sorry," said the guard. "There's no such room. Go home and get some breakfast. It's early!"

"Oh," Bridget said in disappointment. She slowly walked away with her head drooping and her mind racing.

Chapter Four

Ouch!!

That evening, Bridget stared out into the terrace and looked into the beautiful sunset. It was like sheets overlapping and overlapping. First there was pink, then purple, then blue, then white, then all the colors you could ever imagine. But something caught her eye. Something glittering, glowing, iridescent, shiny. Like Reyna's flip-flops.

"THAT'S where I know that name from! Grandmother's story! Oh, it must be a coincidence. But it can't be!" she thought.

Suddenly, her eyes, uncontrollably, focused on the bird again. Oh, how beautiful that bird was. If only she could jump out and catch it. It was so close, and only if it was strong enough to carry me, she thought again. Suddenly, she felt the urge to jump out and grab it, even though she knew it was not safe. She reached out and jumped off. As she was falling (this didn't last for a very long time since she was on the fourth floor), air rushed past her face and her eyes got all stinging and blurry. She hit the ground with a big thud on her elbow. Ouch, this hurts! She looked at it. It looked twisted in a way.

Oh no. It was broken. Suddenly she heard voices from above, and screaming. Her mom, her dad, her grandma, and her brother came rushing down the stairs to see the horrible sight. Her mother was so upset she started crying on her dad's shoulder. Her grandma went up to her and said, "Darling, what happened?"

"I'm sorry, I was leaning out on your terrace and I leaned too far while looking at the sunset and I fell."

"OK, we better get her to the first aid," said grandma calmly.

Chapter Five

Explanation

The next day, Bridget thought she should go to the girl and tell her what happened, and ask her if she was really Reyna Bow. But when she got to the water park, it seemed like a desert. Everything was very stale, and there was no water. And she looked around the room and found not even a trace of red, clumpy hair. She cried and

ran all the way home, because she thought Reyna had disappeared and she really liked her. But she thought she had disappeared either with the bird or because she had told a lie and she was really another girl.

When she got home, her grandmother said, “Dear child, come here. Why are you crying?”

“You know when I broke my arm, I really didn’t look for the sunset. I saw the bird you said in your story. He was flying across the sky, but I don’t know why, but I had the sudden urge to catch it. I didn’t want to, but I did.”

Grandma has a smile on her face after that information. She said, “You must be very lucky. If you get visited by that bird, luck will be in your path. But if you visit only the girl, luck will only be there for two months. But if you see both the girl and the bird, you’ll get luck for the rest of your life.”

After hearing this, Bridget was so excited she could hardly contain herself from jumping out of her seat and doing the cheerleader exercise she had learned at her school.

Chapter Six

Bye, Bye Bahamas

The next morning, the sunlight seemed to reach through her room like a big hand and rustle her quietly, saying, “Wake up, Bridget, wake up!”

Today was definitely one of the saddest days of her life. She couldn’t, she couldn’t, she didn’t want to leave the Bahamas. Early in the morning, she started to pack up her bag, but when she was done, they seemed so empty, but so full. Full of sorrow.

They got in their red car again. It was hot, hot, HOT. As always. And her brother, of course, was cold. But he seemed happy to go.

Bridget asked him, “Why are you so happy? It’s been such a great trip, don’t you want to relive it?”

Benjamin didn’t answer. Bridget sighed.

Once they got on the plane, they loaded all their stuff in to place and settled down. This was much more uncomfortable than her bed in the Bahamas. That made her even more sad. But soon enough, she managed to drift off to sleep.

As darkness surrounded her, something lit up. A form of a girl cam into place. It looked like Reyna Bow. It was! And it had the iridescent bird on her shoulder! Reyna reached out her hand and said, “We will always be with you when times get rough.” The bird nodded its head in agreement and seemed to smile at her.

She woke up with a start and looked out the window. She thought she could see the slender form of a girl, but under her was a bird. And they seemed to glow colors.

When she got back home, she couldn’t wipe the smile off her face. She thought it would stay there until the end of the year.

Masquerade

By Emily Walter

I stroll, treading softly in my lightly-worn shoes. I look down at the sun-bleached asphalt and smell its distinct odor. It makes my nose wrinkle. I feel an unseasonably cool breeze brush against my newly-shaven face and I pull my jacket tighter around my body. In doing so, I find solace in the light sound of small objects being stirred in my pocket; tiny ovals jumping about their transparent orange encasement have become a necessary part of me, an extra appendage. I often find myself touching the orange bottle, simply feeling its existence, as I am now. It is still there, so I am still here; I reward the orange bottle's existence by drawing an oval from it, placing the oval tenderly on my tongue, and feeling it enchanting powers lace my body. When I finally draw my eyes from the well-trodden path, see the bench. My bench. No one else dares sit on my bench, at least, that is how it seems. But nothing is as it seems. I straighten my satin tie and walk with conviction to my bench.

I sit.

I watch.

I see.

A thick, scruffy mustache. Long, tangled hair with streaks of gray scattered throughout. The man's eyes are red, with dark circles beneath. His shirt, embossed with the words "Sam's Used Auto Parts. You Want It, We Got It!" was probably white at one time; however, now it is a dull shade of beige with sweat stains around the collar and underarms. His blue denim Levis are faded at the knees and shredded at the bottom where his tattered brown Keds constantly step on them.

This man, I'll call him Sam since it is the name on his shirt, looks tired-even exhausted- perhaps due to the hours of working in an auto garage; at least, that is how it seems. But I make it a point to look at Sam as more than a carelessly unobservant stranger in the park. I'm a watchful bystander, a silent observer. Sam is tired, but not because of long hours at work. No. The shirt is probably from the Salvation Army, since the name printed on the chest of it has been crudely scratched out with permanent marker. He does not work at Sam's Auto Parts; whomever the name belongs to did, and then nobly donated this shirt to charity. Sam is not tired. His eyes are red and swollen, yes, but he is not tired. Instead of spending long hours at the auto garage, he spends longer hours on the secondhand couch in his friend's basement, expanding his mind with the help of a gram and thin rolling paper. Instead of saving what little money he has from his part-time job to buy a better shirt or a nicer couch, I am watching Sam exchange it for a knowing handshake with a skinny man in a leather jacket who keeps hurriedly shifting his eyes, hoping nobody sees. But I see.

Sam notices two people walking toward him, a woman and a man, and he impulsively conceals his hand and its contents in his pocket. I quickly find myself taking an interest in the two people so, again, I watch. The couple is strolling on the paved trail

through the park, the woman's arm looped through that of the much taller man. They are both no older than their mid-twenties, he with a slim, muscular build that complements her petite frame. I will call them Dick and Jane because of their concealing superficiality. To most, Dick and Jane young and deeply in love, and it's as simple as that. Dick is talking about something that is obviously of great humor and importance, gesticulating with every phrase. He occasionally laughs after each new punch line, as if a funnier story has never escaped his lips. Jane, however, is simply watching ahead at nothing in particular, only breaking her vacant gaze to glance at the man and give him a half-smile. Of course, Dick thinks Jane is engrossed in the conversation, so her mild reassurance that she is still listening is enough to make him even more animated. Jane is not engrossed in the conversation at all; in fact, she does not even seem vaguely amused. Behind her light blue eyes is an endless sense of despair and inadequacy.

Despair: Jane is not happy; she is never happy. Her lips that form a thin, pale pink line probably not revealed a genuine smile for months. She is trapped. Despite the beautiful wedding band on her left ring finger, complete with a vibrant diamond, the woman wishes her life was different. She wants nothing more than to be able to take the wedding band off, along with that which it represents. But she can't. If she does, she risks breaking her husband's heart and living with a heavy conscience for years to come. So instead removing her ring, she puts it on every morning and accepts this life as her own. Every morning, she wakes up almost hoping yesterday were a dream. See Jane cry.

Inadequacy: in Jane's mind, keeping her husband's naive smile constant with a life of subtle deceit is better than breaking his heart and sacrificing her well-being. Jane knows she has a problem, but she is far too weak to peel away the mask she has so strategically crafted. See Jane lie. She may never be as happy as Dick thinks she is, but as long as she gives him her blank smile, he will continue to talk and laugh, utterly unaware. Unaware of his wife's ongoing omission. Unaware of me watching him, pitying him.

Unaware when I am seduced by another tiny oval, succumbing to its temptation. No one is aware; no one is ever aware. People can be immensely ignorant sometimes, but I prefer it that way. I prefer the intricacy of the mask that I wear, for I know no one can see through its layers. Unlike most people, I blend my mask with my being. I look put-together, therefore I am put-together. It is truly a wonder what a satin tie and a pin-striped suit can accomplish. It is equally endearing how thirty perfectly-shaped ovals in an orange encasement can tell so little. They are but silent enchantresses, invading my life while enticing my mind. "It's just year-round allergies," I say to those few who ask. And that's it. That blatant disregard for the truth is acceptable, for I seem so well-kept. Ignorance is bliss. Ignorance is medicinal. Ignorance is addictive.

I continue watching as Jane continues to blankly stroll on the path, brushing shoulders with another man who is hurriedly walking in the opposite direction. I will refer to him as Champ, because he has never lost at a hand of poker, never been denied access to the city's finest wine-cellars, and he has never had a labyrinth of lies untangle

behind him until now. Champ is taking wide strides and does not seem to notice as he nearly barrels over an elderly woman walking her tiny, inevitably annoying Shih Tzu dog. I follow him with my eyes as he makes a beeline to a younger, more attractive woman with cocoa hair and olive skin. I will call this woman Koren, because she changed it when she decided the name Esther simply did not correlate with her reputation and her social status. When Koren sees Champ coming toward her, she smiles and puts her cellular phone into an unnecessarily jumbo-sized handbag that is sitting next to her on the bench across from me, on the other side of the path. She moves her handbag and Champ takes its place. Before she has the chance to say hello, he cradles her face in his rough, middle-aged hands and kisses her on the cheek, and then on her carefully glossed lips. Despite the fact that Champ is about ten years Koren's senior, they make an enviably adorable pair.

Koren shifts her weight so she is facing Champ and begins talking with an artificially luminous smile on her face the entire time; he nods slightly and, while looking at her face as she speaks, he discreetly slips off the wedding band from his left hand and slides it into his pocket. Koren does not seem to notice or she simply does not care that Champ prefers tenderly grasping her bare hand over the more age-appropriate hand that fixes his supper and lovingly strokes his chest at night. That woman is completely oblivious on the nights when he is working overnight at the office on a "very, very important project, honey." I watch as Champ whispers sweet nothings into this Koren's practically juvenile ear, making her giggle like a school girl and making himself forget his life beneath his mask. He likes that Koren reminds him of his youth, and his wife finds relief simply when he comes home smiling, with the glimmering diamond ring on his hand, no matter how cold his dinner has become. If only she knew the face that is the last he thinks about before he sleeps and the first he imagines when he wakes up. But I know.

Left and right, all I see is a masquerade of fallacies; pretty faces, witty remarks, and endless deceit. I am not a pessimist; I wouldn't even say I am a realist. I simply see in people what most others do not. I am not a super human and I do not read minds. The fatal flaw in one's personality is a painted mask and I make it a point to peel away the paint before even meeting the person. The mistake that most people tend to make is naively believing that nobody else in this masquerade can see their face. But I can. People's deceit, like a well-aged scotch, incapacitates their judgment and makes them vulnerable to people like me -- people who attend the masquerade but maintain their sobriety. It highlights simple but telling actions such as a discreet handshake, a melancholy gaze, and a swift removal of one's diamond ring. It is all around me, just waiting for me to pay attention to it. So as hundreds of people cross paths with me, they do not expect me to know, for I am just like them; I, too, am hiding my own fatal flaw. At this very moment, though, all I can do is sit on a park bench and be intrigued by people and their inadequate concealment and mourn our subtle disintegration.

Thief

By Melana Hagstromh

There was a silence, and then a scream. It carried on for several seconds, stretched with surprise and horror. Its owner, a curly-haired woman with massive pink lips and hastily blushed cheeks which did nothing to compliment her wide complexion, stood in her acid-green high heels, staring at the carnivorous sight. Her eyes bulged as her cry died and was buried in silence. From beside her, two rather ill-dressed children, a boy and a girl, were dwarfed in her shadow. Despite being half-hidden behind their mother's bulk, there was no mistaking their expressions.

It was gone, all gone! The only evidence that supper's chicken had ever even existed were scattered bones and fragments of pink flesh strewn across the oddly colored floor. The fine saucer inherited from a long-dead rich ancestor lay smashed on the ground, the white chips contrasting rather badly with the black and red time below it. Nothing of the familiar, delightful pattern that had bordered the treasured dish remained. The three of them stared at it, the mother giving a whimper of distress. This was nothing short of criminal, criminal!

Before anyone could move, or even speak except for wails full on unrecognizable speech, a dark figure strode into the room. His dark mustache gleamed in the flickering beams cast from a bulb nearing the end of its days.

"Bills!" he exclaimed, his beady eyes rolling over the documents and unopened letters held in his overly vexed grasp. "Why do they always send them all at once? Some collaboration, no doubt, trying to make us feel vulnerable by wheedling every little cent—" "Benson."

At the tone of his wife's voice, the man looked up, and his shallow mouth dropped open, stretching the skin taught over his cheek bones. "What—" he sputtered, the mountain of words he wished to say clogging up his throat. Slowly, tiptoeing as though in the presence of a deceased loved one, he plodded across the room, standing high over the family heirloom upon which every Sunday-night family meal had been served for years uncounted. The children bowed their blonde heads in silent remorse.

At some invisible signal, the parents' eyes met, an expected yet dreaded prospect flowing through their gaze like an electrical current. Without further ado, Benson marched towards the family room, not even waiting for the rest of the family to join him. There was only one culprit who could have committed such a heinous crime.—one single criminal, who would meet a very unpleasant fate, if the shoe fit.

Turning down the floral pink hallway, tripping over a stray laundry hamper in his haste, the mad strode into the mint-green room. Wiry body held in a pose which betrayed his impatience and anger, his gazed rolled around the scene, darting off the white molding and over the dove-white arm chairs, until his eyes finally rested upon their target. It was just what he had expected to find, but that did not stop his mustache from bristling with suppressed emotions.

In the middle of the dull crimson rug, surrounded by shreds of uncooked meat, was the dog. Benson's brow narrowed, his bushy eyebrows knitted together form one long, continuous line of anger. There, between the canine's ginger paws, was a very large chicken bone, half eaten away. With a loud snort, he rolled over, still hugging the bone to his chest, and slumbered on, his glossy yellow coat rippling with every breath. Influenced by some event in dreamland, his tongue poked out and licked his black lips several time before retreating, and his large feet twitched spasmodically. Such a peaceful slumber. But that slumber was about to end.

From the white-trimmed doorway, the man's wife and children, hiding once again in their mother's shadow, their bony faces saturated with fright, watched fearfully for the inevitable. Still, the sudden yelling made all of them jump, watching their dog wake up and groggily stare up at his master, fluffy tail wagging in excitement at first, but then dropping between his legs at the harsh admonishment. This was the culprit, they all knew. His expression betrayed him, with the guilty, droopy brown eyes rimmed with white, and the neatly closed jaw which almost seemed to form a sorrowful frown. Surrendering his bone, he huddled in a corner while his master made clear his displeasure in unforgiving tones.

"Mommy..." the little girl tugged at her mother's dress timidly, hoping she had been heard over the rabid shouting.

"Hush, child," her words weren't harsh, but they made clear that there was nothing to discuss, and pulled her children back from the doorway. The little boy was crying, and shook his head with remorse,

"Is daddy going to kill Bear?" he whimpered, staring up at his mother with hope of the contrary, his eyes bloodshot.

"Of course not," her response was kind, if not a little brusque, and she took his hand gently. "Daddy is just making sure he doesn't steal anymore chicken."

"I don't like chicken anyway," the girl muttered darkly, but not so loudly that her mother could hear.

For a few moments, they listened silently to the shouting from down the corridor. When streams of colorful language began leaking from the room, their mother ushered the children into the bathroom, instructing them to wash up while she threw together a make-shift supper.

With more speed than the average bystander would truthfully guess she possessed, the mother made her way to the kitchen, opening up all the cupboards in search for an easy, yet decent meal. Microwave-able vegetables were torn from their red-cabinet homes and unceremoniously tossed onto the light marble counter. She was in the process of pulling down wheat rolls from the top shelf when she stopped. Wheeling around, she gasped.

There was a dark shape right next to the open window, shyly making its way towards her. With a shriek, she backed away. One blink later and it was gone, the only

evidence of its departure being the rapidly beating heart inside the frightened woman's chest. She drew a hand over her face, taking steady breaths. It had just been her imagination. Just her imagination.

Delicious! The cat, perched atop the brick wall between the white houses, licked its front paw delicately, savoring the last hint of chicken. His brilliant scheme had worked even better than he had hoped. What a sly, feline grin, he arched his back, stretching his paws before him as though bowing to some invisible king. He was a master criminal, leaving without a trace, mysteriously vanishing from the scene of the crime, and pushing the blame on somebody else. Truly a work of art. His chest puffed up with pride as he sat, staring through the still open window to the bustle inside. Master criminal, the cat hummed to himself in a satisfied way. He liked that title.

However, now was not a time for boasting, it was a time to disappear. With a low purr, he dismounted from the wall, giving one last swish of his black tail as he prowled through the lush grass like some civilized lion. He licked his lips, and breathed in the last wisps of the chicken's aroma. The meal had been quite delicious. He would most certainly make a return visit in the near future. Yes, most certainly he would.

Giving a contented yawn, he was just about to sneak into the shelter of the nearby ill-stacked woodpile, when something caught his attention. Hungrily, he sniffed the air again, and this time, he identified the scent. Turkey.

Glancing behind him at his bulging stomach, he contemplated for a moment. He was full to the bursting point, indeed, but...he pinpointed the source of the delectable smell, and found himself staring up at the open window of the house adjoining the one belonging to his most recent victims. His lip curled. Maybe just one little bit.

Everlasting: Continuation Adaptation of Natalie Babbitt's *Tuck Everlasting*

By Zoe C. Huey and Isabel D. Cristo

Wisps of silvery moonlight streamed in through her open bedroom window. Her body ached with restlessness. The white linen sheets stuck to her body as she turned and tossed, waiting for sleep to overcome her. She kicked off the thin layer of covers, and lay sprawled on her bed, her breath coming in long sighs. The air hung heavy in the confines of her bedroom, so she crossed to her window and stood, her eyes scanning the wide lawns that surrounded her house. No wind brushed the tops of the tall sturdy trees, which stood, like leafy soldiers in the August night.

The silence pressed on her ears, giving her a feeling of uneasiness. Suddenly, a surge of yearning for her mother's arms, soft and comforting, overcame her. She needed to hear the hum of the lullaby she knew so well, the one that her mother had sung to her every night when she was little. She made her way over to the thick wooden door and, pushing it open, stepped out on the the landing. The steep staircase felt cold against her bare feet as she took the familiar rout to her mother's bedroom.

The worn floorboards creaked and groaned under her weight as she reached her mother's room. The tall door, which usually emitted a sense of welcoming and warm invitation, now seemed imposing. Tentatively, she pushed open the door a crack. Through the thin sliver of light, she could make out the clear silhouette of her mother, kneeling on the ground, bent over a small wooden box. Peering closer, she observed as her mother rifled through its contents, which was strewn across the floor. From what Emma could make out, it seemed as though there were letters, tucked neatly away in cream-colored envelopes. As Emma pushed the door open further, it gave a loud, irritation creak. Her mother's head turned sharply, her eyes fixed on Emma's round face. She hastily stuffed the letters back into the box.

"Emma, what-", but Emma had already slammed the door shut tight and ran back to her room, her heart beating fast and her mind racing. Why would her mother keep secrets, like that box, away from her?

Safe in her bedroom, Emma climbed into bed and pulled the covers up to her chin. It was only then that her heart slowed down and she began to contemplate the situation. She had undoubtedly overreacted. It was probably no secret, just bills her mother had kept away. Content with this thought, Emma fell asleep.

The next morning at breakfast, her mother's eyes gave it away. They were puffy from tiredness, and her face was etched with worry. A dull silence hung over the table, broken only by her younger brother, Jesse, muttering as he looked over the large pages of a picture book, the images bold and bright with color. Emma glanced over at her mother, who was now looking down at the silver band of a ring on her right hand. It was the only

reminder of Emma's father and Winnie Foster's husband, who had perished years ago from an epidemic of a fatal disease, which had claimed his body.

"Mother, last night, I-", but Winnie turned away pointedly, to help Jesse with his breakfast.

"It is of no importance Emma; I don't want to discuss it any further."

She finished her breakfast and slowly began to make her way up the stairs leading to her bedroom. Emma sat down on her bed, unable to push the thoughts from her mind. Her mother's attitude had told her quite plainly that the letters held much more significance than just a pile of bills. Emma made her mind up; tonight, she would investigate. Every Monday night, Winnie hosted a dinner for her book club. On these nights, Emma was usually told to go to bed early, but Winnie's occupation with the dinner guests would provide a perfect opportunity for Emma to examine the letters, uninterrupted.

The long hours until that night seemed to drag on forever, and each time she encountered her mother throughout the day, her paranoia that she suspected Emma's plan increased. Emma herself spent much of that day formulating a plan. Finally, after what seemed an endless day, night came. The sunset stained the sky a deep red as darkness began to envelop the village of Treegap. In the place of the sun, the moon hung heavy, and ghostlike in the great expanse of the dark night sky.

From up in her bedroom, Emma could hear the chatter of excited voices, laughter, and the clang and clatter of silverware, echoing throughout the large, grand house. From her bedside table, she pulled a candle and a matchbook containing only one solitary match. She opened the door and peered out onto the landing. Stealthily, she tiptoed down the flight of stairs and into the darkened interior of her mother's room. Emma pulled the last remaining match out of the book, and silently lit the candle. It flickered in the dark room, the golden light glowing with such intensity, it made her blink as it cast shadows on her face and all amongst the smooth walls.

Her eyes searched for the box, containing such importance as secrecy. The floor creaked as she fingered through all of her mother's belongings, opening drawers and rummaging through shelves. As she stepped among the cluttered room, her feet found a loose and wobbly floorboard, which echoed with a promising hollowness. Excitement flooded Emma's body as she knelt down to investigate. She slipped her slim fingers through the crack and pried the floorboard loose. It came off easily and Emma quickly pulled out the worn and tattered box. Her heart was beating so loud and fiercely she could hear it pounding in her ears. Brushing aside a thin layer of dust, she slowly lifted the top open. Reaching inside, her fingers found all the letters her mother had hidden from her the night before. Each was addressed to Winifred Foster, and although the same hand had written each one, no two return addresses were alike. Picking up what looked like the most recent one, she examined it closely. The return address stated that it was sent from a Jesse Tuck, in Paris, France, eight months to the day. Slipping her fingers into the envelope, she drew out the letter. Her eyes flew across the yellowed page:

Dearest Winnie,

It has been the longest time without you, and I am still not content without knowing you will someday come and find me, and we will live together forever. The magical spring in the forest is still standing, but I am dreading the day it disappears. It has been nineteen years since we broke my mother out of jail. Do you remember the dread and fear we felt that night? Pa says you will never drink from the bottle of magical spring water I gave you, but I know better. You will come and find me. We can get married after you've drunk from the spring, and see the whole world, for we will have more than a lifetime to be together. I am living in Paris at the moment. Please, please come find me.

Eternal Love,

Jesse Tuck

She rifled desperately through the rest of the letters, and soon found that all bore the same message. The only difference was “Jesse's” address, which changed throughout the years. Suddenly, her fingers found something harder and smoother than the letter, and she pulled out an old glass bottle, its cork ravaged with time. It was filled to the brim with a clear, pure liquid that seemed to glow in the candlelight. The excitement drained from Emma's body, to be replaced with anger and confusion. Why had her mother kept this from her? Who was Jesse? And what did he mean by eternal life? Emma was now so frustrated she couldn't bare the suspense any longer. She would find the Tucks, and figure out all this information, which had been kept from her all of her life. Without thinking, she bundled all the letters together and stuffed them unceremoniously back into the box. Clutching the box and the empty bottle furiously, she ran back to her room.

Emma yanked an old suitcase from beneath her bed and began throwing the contents of her closet onto the floor. She chose only two dresses to take with her, and socks, and a map of Paris from her French book. She also grabbed a photograph of her family, including her deceased father. After also placing the box of letters and the bottle of spring water into her now full bag, she laced up her boots and slipped on her jacket. With a last look at her room, she closed the door behind her.

Leaving the house was surprisingly easy, for her mother was entertaining her guest in the dining room and the cook was snoring noisily in the pantry, a bottle of whiskey clutched tightly in her hand. Emma only made one stop in her mother's room to grab her pocketbook, heavy with thin paper notes, then into the kitchen, pausing only to steal a small loaf of bread for the journey. Without a second thought, she stole out the back door and into the night.

Her plan was to board a train leaving for London, and then onto Paris. The money she had stolen from her mother's pocketbook would cover the journey sufficiently, as well as a return journey, and food. Entering the village of Treegap, Emma made her way to the train station and anxiously awaited the next train. As it rounded the corner, it eventually came to a halting stop, steam billowing from its smoke stacks. Emma settled

comfortably into a seat and, as the train began to move, landscapes flying past her window, her heavy eyelids closed and she fell fast asleep.

When she awoke, the landscapes outside the thick pane of glass had changed from rolling hills and dense forests to the loud, bustling, and unfamiliar city of Paris. Climbing out of the train, Emma looked around. Tall, impressive buildings climbed to the sky, and the cobblestone paths below were swarming with people, automobiles, and vendors, who shouted out various items. Emma was amazed at the city, for the moment, she forgot the reason she had come. She pulled out the envelope from Jesse with the Paris address, and looked around at the street names.

Three hours later, Emma, following the directions of her map, had found the Tucks' address. A small, brick building, nestled between two much larger ones, its red paint peeling, and several windowpanes cracked. Upon knocking, the door flew open to reveal a tall woman with full breasts and a smudged apron, her hair loose at her shoulders.

“Um...hello, I am looking for the Tucks, do they live here?” Emma asked tentatively.

“I'm the landlady of the house,” the woman said with a thick French accent. “The Tucks moved out of this building two months ago.” She sounded bored, as though Emma's dilemma was of no importance to her.

“Do you know where I could find them?” Emma asked. The woman shouted something in French over her shoulder before turning back to Emma.

“So far as I know, they moved out on some river boat on the Seine, only thing they could probably afford.” With that, the woman closed the door, leaving Emma with a sunken heart and the worries of complete failure.

She turned slowly, and sank onto the doorstep. Pulling out the map from her pocket, she examined it, looking for the winding shape of the river. After locating it, she stood up and glanced around. It was nearly midday, and the sun was climbing high into the bright blue-green water. Emma's breath came in short gasps, and she slid in exhaustion down to the sidewalk. Her feet were raw and aching, and, removing her boots, she saw with a groan that her feet were covered in blisters. Suddenly, a bicyclist approached her at an extremely rapid pace. Panicking, Emma began to stand up. As the bicycle whizzed past, she lost her balance and went tumbling towards the fast flowing currents. She hit the river with a smack and was soon enveloped with icy cold water. Desperately, she flailed her arms and kicked her legs, trying to break to the surface. The pull of the river was swiftly sweeping her downstream just as her arms grasped onto a solid surface. Her fingers despairingly attempted to latch onto the thick planks of wood. With weak arms, her lungs screaming for oxygen, she pulled herself out of the river and

onto the riverboat. Shivering and gasping for air, she looked around at the small structure of the riverboat.

Just then, Emma heard voices and footsteps approaching. She pulled herself to standing. Two figures then came into view. One was a plump woman with brown hair piled up on top of her head in a messy bun. The other was a gruff looking man with an unshaven beard, long grizzled hair, and an old, weathered face.

The couple looked at Emma, her body and bag drenched and her eyes glassy with tiredness. And then the old man spoke, his voice hoarse, yet kind.

“Who in the world are you, child? What happened to you?”

“You must be cold as morning,” the woman exclaimed, “come inside and explain yourself.” Her eyes were kind and motherly as she gestured for Emma to follow her into the houseboat.

Once inside, Emma at once collapsed on a soft, wooden chair.

“And what's your name?” the woman asked kindly, as she helped Emma unbutton her sodden jacket.

When Emma spoke, her voice trembled. “I'm Emma. Emma Foster.” At once the woman turned, her eyes alive with excitement and curiosity.

“Foster, did you say?” the woman whispered, kneeling beside Emma. “You're a Foster?”

Emma nodded. “Yes, why? I came looking for a Jesse Tuck, do you know him?” The woman and man turned to face each other, the man shooting a meaningful glance.

“Why were you looking for him?” the man asked, suspicion lingering in his face, as he stared intently into Emma's eyes. Emma hesitated, contemplating whether or not she should tell them, but they seemed like nice people, and perhaps they could help her.

Emma reached into her bag and pulled out the box of letters and the bottle of spring water.

“I found these in my mother's room. They are signed Jesse Tuck. My mother is Winifred Foster.”

The woman sank into a chair, her fingers gripping its sides so tight her knuckles turned white.

The man glanced at the woman, who replied with a short nod.

“I am Angus Tuck, and this is my wife, Mae. We knew your mother when she was a little girl. 'Round the age of eleven I'd say. Jesse Tuck, he's our son. He's off with his brother right now. Jesse's always loved your mother. Ever since she was a little girl. Never got to see her grow up though. None of us did. And time passed, and soon it was too late, but Jesse, he never stopped hoping. We now know your mama didn't drink from that spring. No, she grew up; she always was a smart little girl, your mother.”

Emma's eyes widened. “What spring? What was he hoping for?”

Angus knelt down to Emma's eye level. With a deep, heavy sigh, he said, “We might as well start from the beginning.

Long ago, years and years ago ya might say, my family was passin' through Tregap woods. We was dead thirsty though, and there and then, we did spot a little spring, sproutin' from the roots of an Ash Tree. Every one of us, 'cept the cat drank from that spring, 'cludin' the horse. None of us knew the magic it held though. Years later, we never grew old, and my face ain't changed none since then. And Miles, he got himself a wife and two kids, but when they got old, he didn't. She left 'im. And then Jesse went and nearly got 'imself killed, fallin' out of a tree. Didn't hurt 'imself one bit.

Nineteen years ago to this day, your mama, being the adventurous little girl she was, went trampin' through her woods, and soon she met our Jesse. We took her home with us and explained the whole thing to her. Jesse soon proposed the idea that when she grew up, she'd marry him and drink from the spring, so they could run 'way and stay the same age forever, seventeen wasn't it?

Well anyway, then some interfering man can, and locked up our Mae, and your mother helped get her out of there, but we ain't seen her since. Jesse gave her a bottle of speing water, told her to drink when she was older so his plan could follow through. But it looks like she never did. Smart one your mother. Jesse got it into his head that she would drink from the water and when he comes home, oh, won't he be sad, and surprised you might even guess. Oh, how little your mama was then, wonder what she looks like now. If it weren't for her, our beloved Mae wouldn't be here with us right now, most likely hangin' from the gallows."

Just then, two boys burst through the door, laughing loudly.

"Ma, pa, we're home!" the younger one said. He stopped short when he rounded the corner.

"Ma, what?"

"Jesse, son, this is Emma Foster, child of our beloved Winifred. We told her everything."

Jesse's eyes filled with such intense emotion, Emma had to look away.

"Emma, Foster did you say?" For a second, Emma thought he would yell. But then to her surprise, he grasped her hand. "We're so glad you're here."

The days passed, and soon became a week. Emma grew to love the Tucks and treat them as though they were family. They clothed her, fed her, and treated her with such kindness, she wished she could stay forever.

However, one night, as the family was gathered around the parlor, finishing supper, Emma looked up. "I need to go home," she announced.

For the past days, Emma had dreamed of staying with the Tucks forever. Perhaps even she would drink from the spring, but as each day ended, and the night enveloped the small riverboat, she would lie in her bed and think of home and the worry her mother must be experiencing. She thought of her younger brother, and the homesickness overcame her.

“Not that I haven't loved and appreciated all you have done for me, but I need to see my family. I have learned her secret, and that's what I set out to do. I will always need you in my life though. Will you come visit us often?”

Angus and Mae shared a smile. “Of course” they replied. “We'll bring you back home as well. There is much explaining to be done, and we would love to see our little Winnie all grown up.”

The next day, Emma, Angus, Mae, Jesse, and Miles all boarded a train back to Treegap. On the plush, red seat, Emma rested her head against Mae's shoulder.

Finally, the train pulled into the Treegap station, and Emma hopped off, followed by the Tucks. She cast her eyes at the familiar scenery of her hometown. The lush, green rolling hills gave her a sense of warmth and comfort. Grabbing Jesse's hand, she pulled him across the road and on the well-worn path to her house. They laughed and talked the whole way, gravel crunching beneath their feet. Upon reaching the grand house, Emma could make out her mother, perched in a rocking chair on the front porch, eyes unseeing as she stared into space.

Before that one night, where Emma had caught her mother investigating the letters, she had always seen her as a fun, joyful, and happy person. But the woman in the rocking chair was anything but joyful. She was distraught, melancholy. The possible loss of another family member was too much for her to bear, and the only thing that gave her a good reason to live was her son, Jesse. He kept her going, and without his smiles and laughter, she would have no purpose in life.

When Winnie's eyes rested upon Emma, she stood up and crossed over to the front steps in a dreamlike state. Emma felt a surge of guilt for causing her mother to endure such pain, and, all at once, she couldn't bear it. She ran to her mother and embraced her in a strong, loving hug. Winnie's eyes glazed over with tears, and her mouth turned upward to form a smile. She was brought out of her dream and into reality as she gave a watery laugh and hugged Emma closer. After what seemed like hours, she caught sight of the Tucks, standing awkwardly at the gate, observing the happy reunion. Her grip on Emma loosened as she turned to face them. Emma, breaking away from her mother, went to stand with the little family.

“Mother” she said, a smile breaking on her tear-stained face, “May I reintroduce you to the Tucks.”

Winnie slowly made her way over to the gate, finally breaking into a run, and embraced Mae with more tears of happiness streaming from her eyes.

“There's no need for reintroduction. I've dreamt about you since the day we parted.”

Winnie then proceeded to hug Angus and Miles. Then her eyes rested upon Jesse.

“Jesse,” Winnie's voice sounded soft and muddled through her tears. “I am so-”, but Jesse held up a hand to silence her.

“I think I knew you were smarter than that from the beginning. I should be the one to apologize. I am sure this burden has caused you pain. I've missed you terribly, but that is just the wheel spinning, the wheel of life. Things change, that's what we're meant to do. You've grown up, and you've done the right thing. I'll always love you, but I've learned there's more to life, especially when you'll live forever.”

Epilogue

The wagon creaked as it made its way up the cobblestone path to the Foster's house. It was the start of summer, and the Tucks were taking their annual trip to the Fosters' to visit for the summer. As they rounded the bend, they could see the silhouette of a young girl sitting on the front porch, her eyes focused deep in concentration on a book. As she heard the wagon approaching, she slammed her book shut and jumped down the porch steps. She sprinted across the lawn to meet the oncoming visitors and kissed each one in turn. Angus swung her up on his strong shoulders and gave a mocking groan.

“Oh,” he grunted, “You've grown some.” Emma laughed.

“I'll be thirteen next month!”

Winnie then appeared in the doorway, her son in her arms. Her face lit as she made her way over to greet them.

“It's been too long,” she said as she, too, kissed each Tuck in turn, catching Jesse twice.

The happy group made its way into the grand house, laughing, skipping, so joyful it would make any bystander grin. For this moment was the happiest time of their lives.

Fifty years later, Mae and Angus returned to the village of Tregap, although Emma's family had long since moved out of the large house. Upon their arrival, Angus and Mae made for the cemetery. When reaching the alleyways of stone blocks, they regarded Winnie's grave in silence. Fifty years was a long time, but that's the wheel of life, always turning, always changing, yet not for the Tucks. The Tucks were everlasting.

All We, Like Sheep, Have Gone Astray

By Sarah Schwab

I know little about art. I am unread about the different periods of art, and I only know the names of a few famous artists. I have been to a few art museums, and have seen quite a number of paintings and sculptures that I like, but I have never understood why certain displays are considered art. Many modern art pieces that I have seen just look like cons. At the Los Angeles County Art Museum, one of their art pieces is nothing more than a poem scrolling across the face of a ticker. Or, there is the very trashed desk with random pieces of wood nailed to it. Sometimes, such as in the case of the desk, you can choose to make allowances for artistic expression, and just think that the art world has gone insane. But, at other times, the “artwork” does not look like it belongs in a museum.

On the other hand, I have seen a variety of classic paintings in my history textbooks or in museums. These paintings, such as the *Mona Lisa*, are ones that everyone concedes as fitting into the definition of art. Why do we respond to art in this fashion? Do we regard an object as art primarily because it is displayed in an art museum or because someone was willing to pay thousands, if not millions of dollars for it? Or is it because we know that the artist intended it to be art? Is there some artistic instinct resident within us that determines how we view art? Or is it the combination of any of these elements? In this paper, I will attempt to define what criteria an untrained art observer uses when he makes judgments about whether something is or is not art.

About a year ago, I visited the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and looked at the numerous displays of modern art. At the museum, I saw the following piece of installation art by Damien Hirst entitled *Away From the Flock*:



This piece of artwork is a lamb preserved in a large box of formaldehyde. The lamb was not embellished, and there was nothing special about the box that the lamb was in. The only things notable about it were that it was a very well preserved lamb and it was in the middle of the floor of an art museum. When I first saw *Away from the Flock*, I was confused. Why would a preserved lamb be viewed as a piece of art worthy of an art museum? It didn't seem any more special than the preserved animals that you see at science museums or in science classrooms. In fact, if it was anywhere other than an art museum, then it would be seen merely as a preserved animal. This is an example of something that we do not instinctively regard as art. Usually, when we walk down a street and we see paintings or statues for sale, we think "art." We don't stand there trying to figure out why it is art, or whether it really truly is art. We just know it is art. However, if a preserved lamb was on the side of the street, we wouldn't think it was art. We would just assume that someone had lost their science experiment or something equally probable.

One of my favorite paintings that I discovered in my AP European History book is *Primavera* by Sandro Botticelli. It is pictured below.



Before I saw this painting, I had never heard of Botticelli. I did not see it in a museum, it was simply in my textbook. This was just something that I looked at and immediately concluded was art. If I had seen this painting in any other context – such as the background of a powerpoint presentation, a picture on a plate, or a poster on the wall, I would have immediately thought it was art. For some reason, despite its context and my

ignorance of its importance, I automatically and instinctively categorized this painting as art. But why is this piece perceived as art no matter what its context, while *Away From the Flock* can be art, a curiosity, or a science experiment, depending on where you view it? Is *Away From the Flock* really a piece of art, or have artists and art critics, in an attempt to produce new fresh pieces, become so abstract that they are no longer making true art?

There still are many people that consider *Away from the Flock* to be a piece of art. If everyone agreed that it was not art, then it would not be in an art museum. Why would people consider a lamb preserved in formaldehyde art? In order to determine why some would consider *Away From the Flock* to be art, I will analyze this using various theories of art and compare it with an analysis of *Primavera*.

One such theory is the formalism theory of art. This theory states that art must have a specific form. *Away from the Flock* definitely has a specific form, since it is an actual dead lamb in a glass box. *Primavera* also has a specific form since it is a painting. However, this is too broad a category. The car that is parked outside of a person's house also has a form, and yet we do not consider it art. So, the fact that *Away From the Flock* merely exists, does not necessitate that it be considered art.

Another theory of art is emotionalism. This theory states that for a something to be art, it must elicit an emotional response in the viewer. *Away From the Flock* certainly induces an emotional response. The first response that a person may have to it would be disgust. After all, what person wants to see a cute, furry little creature dead and preserved in a glass box? Another response that a person may have is a morbid sense of curiosity – the same sense of curiosity that makes us fascinated with car accidents on the side of the road. A third response could be to wonder what in the world a dead lamb is doing in an art museum. And that response could lead to two interpretations of *Away from the Flock*. One response would be to say that the lamb is not art and therefore does not belong in an art museum. The second response would be to justify that it belongs in an art museum by arguing that it conveys some sort of message, such as only the innocent die young or individualism –the act of separating yourself from others in society. *Primavera* causes an emotional response as well. When you look at it, you might marvel at the beauty of the three Graces dancing at the side, or the gentleness of the Venus pictured in the center. Its intricate detail is fascinating, and you end up with the impression that it represents all that is gentle and beautiful in the world. Some might focus on the figures to the right and say that the painting intends to communicate chaos in the midst of serenity, while others might focus on Mercury to the left and say that it represents the fact that nature can slow down even the busiest of people (Mercury was the messenger of the gods).

However, art alone does not cause people to have an emotional response. For example, many people after 9/11 have intense emotional responses to the following picture.



This photograph isn't the best picture of 9/11. Its image is blurry, and it doesn't show the critical point of the towers falling. In other words, this photo is not worthy of being considered artistic photography. However, it still causes people to have an emotional response. While causing emotional responses is an important part of art, it doesn't automatically mean that something that inspires a variety of emotions **is** art.

There is also the contextual theory, which states that art is whatever fills the context that society has set aside for it. This is probably the most promising theory for justifying the notion that *Away From the Flock* is art. The context that society has set aside for art today appears unusual and weird. If displaying a dead animal as art causes artistic heads to turn, then the dead animal *does* fit into the context of what society has set aside for art. Seemingly, the more unsettling and unusual a piece is, the more likely it is to fit into the current art context. It also explains why we automatically think of "art" when we see *Primavera*. When the painting was created, it fit into the context of art that the Renaissance society had created. It was about a feature of Greek society, it was beautifully detailed, it represented both the ideal man and the ideal woman, and its figures were very lifelike, in contrast to the disproportioned and oversized people of the medieval art world. Despite the fact that it might be disturbing to consider a dead lamb art, *Away From the Flock* still fits into the art context that our society has created, and therefore, is art.

However, there are problems even with this theory. The contextual theory gives any culture, or subculture, that is dominant in the artistic world at the time, dictatorial control over what is and is not art. Therefore, it is conceivable that the minority of people, who are the art critics, have complete control over what is and is not art. The dead lamb intrigued the art critics while, at the same time, disgusting other people. Ultimately, the art critics praised it until it was displayed in a museum. The rest of the

population, assuming that they do not know as much about art as the art critics, agreed that the dead lamb must be art. So, just because a dead lamb fits into a context that has been created for it, does not mean that the dead lamb is art. It just means that there is a select group of people who think that it *should* be art.

The same theories that justify *Primavera* as being art also justify *Away From the Flock*. However, these same theories also qualify many other things as being art, such as the old beat up car parked in front of somebody's house.

If all of these theories fail to definitively determine what exactly is art, then how can we tell whether *Away From the Flock* is art or not? And how can we tell whether a classic painting such as *Primavera* is art? I propose that there should be an additional theory of art that states that for something to be art, it must be art in all contexts.

For example, I mentioned earlier that no matter where or in what context that I saw *Primavera*, I would consider it art. It is a painting, which makes it art by definition, and is a well executed painting, which separates it from the doodles of a monkey or the finger painting of a two year old. If the painting was hanging in a kindergarten class along with the scribbles of the students, and a person was asked to identify the piece of art on the wall, without hesitation, that person would point out *Primavera*. It fits all of the expectations of art that we have and have had for centuries.

However, if you took *Away From the Flock* outside of the context of a museum, then people would no longer view it as art. If you put it in somebody's home, then a visitor would probably just think that the owner was a scientist or had a disgusting sense of décor. If you put it in a Natural History Museum, the lamb would just be seen as an exhibit, such as the stuffed lions and tigers that might also be in the museum. If it was in a science classroom, it would just be a way to get students really interested in science. Because *Away From the Flock* is only art when it is put in an art museum, I therefore propose that then it is not truly art.

Many people would object to this idea. They would argue that many of the objects we consider art have some purpose, such as a Grecian urn. We display the urn in a museum, and call it art. However, the Greeks certainly did not make the urn and decorate it just so that they could set it unused on a pedestal and admire it. They made it as a jar to put water or oil in. Are these urns not art because their original purpose was to be functional?

The urns are definitely not art. Remove the embellishments from the urn, and it is just a normal, everyday pot. Instead, the paintings on the urn are the art, and are separate from the urn itself. When we buy a blank canvas, we do not think that we are buying a piece of art. Instead we are buying white fabric stretched over wooden beams. But when we apply paint to it, and make designs on it with a paintbrush, it becomes art. A canvas certainly has a purpose other than to be admired. Its purpose is to be covered with paint. Or, in times of extreme need, it can be pulled apart and used to mend a leaking roof or feed a dying fire. Marble can be used to make a floor or a flight of stairs. And we

certainly do not call a flight of marble stairs art. They instead are mediums from which art can grow. A canvas is a tool that is necessary to produce a certain type of painting. Marble is a tool used to produce a certain type of statue. The urns that the ancient Greeks used are mediums as well. The urns themselves are not the art. But the paintings that embellish them are. We cannot separate the images on the urn away from the clay that composes the urn any more than we can separate a painting from its canvas. Therefore, we display the urn. But we are not admiring the clay shape anymore than we would admire the square shape of the canvas. We are admiring its embellishments.

The reason why items such as *Away From the Flock* are not affected by these claims is because there is nothing embellished about the lamb or the box it is contained in. In *Away From the Flock*, the lamb is not just a medium, but it is the medium and the work of art. There is nothing original or special about it. The lamb isn't posed in any unusual way. It looks just like it is standing. It is not colored oddly, it looks like a normal, everyday lamb. The box isn't constructed in an unusual way. It is just a standard glass box. It doesn't show any special creativity. Anyone can learn how to preserve a lamb, just as anyone can learn how to make a ceramic pot. The reason why we admire art is because it requires something special that, despite years of training, we cannot reproduce. But *Away From the Flock* does not do this.

Another objection is the question of whether art is the same in different cultures. For a painting such as *Primavera* to be art, no matter what culture it was placed in, it would be art. So, imagine that I traveled to some remote African tribe that had never been exposed to Western culture. After finding this remote African tribe, I showed *Primavera* to the tribal people. Would they view the painting as art? The objection contends that the tribe would not view it as art. They may view it as something marvelous that the gods gave them to worship. Therefore, *Primavera* would not be art because it is not art in all contexts. Just because the culture I live in views something as art, doesn't mean that all cultures everywhere view it as art.

However, there are two problems with this objection. The first problem is that there is no way that we can determine how an isolated tribe would respond to a piece of art. If I was to find an isolated tribe, they may be too interested in our differences in appearance to pay attention to my questions about art. And by the time I was able to learn enough of their language to even ask my question, they would be tainted by exposure to Western civilization.

The second problem is that this objection is based on the idea that different cultures view art differently. What might be art to one culture may be seen as grotesque in another culture. However, this objection assumes that only certain civilizations have developed a form of art, such as painting. That is not necessarily the case. Various societies that are not large or highly developed have developed paintings of some form or another. Below are a few examples of art from "primitive" or tribal societies.



Eskimo
Art



African Art



Mongolian
Art



Cave Art

These different art forms existed before these cultures interacted with western civilizations. Though these paintings may not appear on a canvas such as a European painting would, they are art. They were created by different pigments being mixed together and applied to a surface to create some sort of picture. As far back as you can look in the history of man, art has always existed. Whenever we look at an ancient group of people, such as the Mongolians or African tribes, we find that they all have their own form of art that, except for the style of the execution, are similar to each other. Therefore, humans all over the earth have their own form of art that is familiar to the forms that we have in Western civilization. So, if I showed *Primavera* to an isolated African tribe, the tribal people would not necessarily reject it as art. It is conceivable that, because they have independently developed their own form of art they will be able to identify *Primavera* as art.

Some people may also argue that for something to be art, the person must have put a great deal of effort in creating the piece. For example, the creator of *Primavera* probably spent months creating the fine details of his painting before he decided that he had created a fine work of art. This would mean that something such as *Away From the Flock* would be art as well. The creator of the piece had to find a lamb, kill it without marring its appearance, build the glass container, pose the animal, and fill up the box with formaldehyde. All of those steps are not things that the average person would be able to do. So, because of the effort that was put into a certain piece's creation, that is what makes it art.

If this was true, everything manufactured would be art. A Hershey bar would be art because someone had to spend a lot of time creating chocolate, and someone else had to invent a way of mass producing the chocolate. Because of the effort that went into creating the chocolate bar, it should be considered art. The problem with this idea is that it confuses the primary definition of art with the secondary definition. The primary definition of art is "the conscious use of skill and creative imagination." However, the definition that this objection uses is a "skill acquired by experience, study, or observation" (www.merriam-webster.com). There is a difference between the two definitions of art. The art that we appreciate and put in museums requires "creative imagination." The art that making a candy bar requires is a skill. Art requires more than

just skill. It must involve a creative process that makes the piece of art somehow unusual and special.

A final objection is that people may argue that this theory of art greatly limits the creative scope of what an artist can do. *Away From the Flock* was a revolution in art, and should be respected, because it allowed artists to break away from traditional ideas and limitations on art. But this theory isn't that big of a limitation. You can still make a statue of a giant clothes pin and display it as art, or paint the bottom of your shoes and walk across a canvas and call it art. There are still an infinite number of things you can do with paint that can alter how we see art and what we think art to be. However, anyone can install a toilet in the middle of a museum floor, or preserve a lamb in a large box of formaldehyde. Doing things like that show no creative talent. It just shows a talent of convincing people that a very ordinary object is somehow extraordinary enough to be considered art. If anything, this theory will force artists to be more creative and create more artistic innovations.

Art has always been a very tricky thing to define. Ever since the first drawings in caves were made, there has been a debate about what is, and what is not art. However, displaying ordinary objects in art museums is not art. It takes no creativity to put a lamb in formaldehyde and put it in a museum. It just takes moxie to convince a critic that the lamb is art. Part of what makes art so wonderful is the effort that the artist puts into it. Finely detailed paintings are seen as classic pieces of art, not just because the paintings are beautiful, but because you can see how much thought and effort the artist put into making it. Art is more than just the finished project. It is all of the hard work and new ideas that were put into creating it.

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