

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

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

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

Send submissions to: Shelly McNerney
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The Writers' Slate
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Overland Park, KS 66204

OR submit electronically: shellymcnerney@writingconference.com

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

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

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

Shelly McNerney
Editor

Letter From the Director

It is, indeed, a pleasure to present this special issue of *The Writers' Slate* because it contains the winning entries of those young people who entered the 2006-2007 writing contest. This is one way that teachers can support writing in the schools by encouraging students to enter contests. We at The Writing Conference, Inc., hope that we can contribute to that effort by publishing the winning entries.

These winners were chosen from a total of 191 entries -- 55 elementary school students, 85 junior high/middle school students, and 51 high school. The elementary school entries included the following categories: 20 poetry, 23 narration, and 12 exposition; at the middle level we had 34 in poetry, 29 in narration and 22 in exposition; at the high school level we had 28 in poetry, 12 in narration, and 11 in exposition. We had entries from across the United States.

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

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

We also want to thank the judges who gave of their time and talent to assess these entries: Judy Bakalar, Mission Valley Middle School, Shawnee Mission, Kansas; Amanda Witty, Blue Valley North High School, Overland Park, Kansas; Shelly Todd, Olathe, Kansas; Heather Reilly, Ruskin High School, Kansas City, Missouri; Jennifer Gooding, Mill Creek Elementary, Belton, Missouri; Megan Gearhart, Overland Park, Kansas; Becky Hart, Tomahawk Elementary, Shawnee Mission, Kansas; Shelly McNerney, Olathe Schools, Olathe, Kansas; and Charlie Huetten, BlueValley North High School; Erin Hayes, DeSoto High School; Ben Huebsch, Lexington Trail Middle School, DeSoto; and Amy Brown, Overland Park, Kansas.

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John H Bushman



Writing Contest Winners 2006 - 2007

Elementary School Division	Jr. High/Middle School Division	Senior High School Division
Poetry		
First Place	First Place	First Place
Yancy Nunez McKinley Elementary Bridgeport, Conn.	Becca Rees McAuliffe Regional CPS Framingham, Mass.	Elsbeth Leman Young Chicago Authors Chicago, Ill.
Second Place	Second Place	Second Place
Maya Ellington Helen Morgan Elem. Sparta, New Jersey	Julia Hollreiser Elwood Middle School Elwood, New York	Amy Huang Stuyvesant High School Brooklyn, New York
Third Place	Third Place	Third Place
Daniel Gibson Trinity Lutheran Elem. Marysville, Ohio	Peter de'Gravisi American Heritage School Plantation, Florida	Drew Keneally Manhasset High School Manhasset, New York
Narration		
First Place	First Place	First Place
No Winner	Elyse Hornstein Marshall School Duluth, Minnesota	Mark Chen Campbell Hall School North Hollywood, CA
Second Place	Second Place	Second Place

Rae'Quan Brown McKinley Elementary Bridgeport, Conn.	Anne Kelley Guy B. Phillips M.S. Chapel Hill, North Carolina	Sam Lawlor Olathe North H.S. Olathe, Kansas
Third Place	Third Place	Third Place
Rebecca Senatore Sparta Alpine Elem Sparta, New Jersey	Maggie Meshnick Guy B. Phillips M.S. Chapel Hill, North Carolina	Caitlin Schaefer Merion Mercy Academy Lower Merion, Penn.
Exposition		
First Place	First Place	First Place
Emilio Negron McKinley Elementary Bridgeport, Conn.	No Winner	John Culligan Bergen County Academy Hackensack, NJ
Second Place	Second Place	Second Place
Jacob McPherson Springdale Elementary Springdale, Wash.	Carah Austin Clark Pleasant M.S. Whiteland, Indiana	No Winner
Third Place	Third Place	Third Place
Latasha Williams McKinley Elementary Bridgeport, Conn.	Eunice Chon Marie Curie M.S. Bayside, New York	Jungha Park New Trier School East Wilmette, IL.

Elementary Poetry
First Place

Can You Change?

Change

Because of the senseless killing and murdering.

Change

Your life for a much happier one.

Change

Beacuse you have to be courteous and show kindness.

Change

Your old car and get a new one with better gas mileage.

Change

Your shoes or sneakers and get durable ones.

Change

Your house and fix it and make it more efficient.

There are all kinds of changes in your life.

Like me I changed a whole bunch.

I moved from the Bronx, New York to Connecticut.

Change

Now it is your turn to change.

Yancy Nunez

5th Grade

Bridgeport, CT

Elementary Poetry
Second Place

Change is something you can't run away from.
It follows you out the door and sticks to you like a shadow.
Change is your friend
Change is what makes your life happen
And even sometimes change is too slow
With out change life would have no reason
Sometimes you may think change is bad
But every once in a while it's good to let your life ride on a roller coaster
And even when you are on that roller coaster
Remember, rides have breaks
And once you take a break from that ride
You always get back on

Maya Ellington
4th Grade
Sparta, New Jersey

Elementary Poetry
Third Place

Change

When people think about change,
what do you think they see?
A great big monstrosity
that terrifies you and me?
Some people think that change is bad
because it changes what they look like.
But they have to accept that
change is just a way of life.
As we bridge over to this new year,
and I write this poem while I sit here.
I know the reason for change,
and it is because
it is without a doubt
just a way that God has made us.

Daniel Gibson
6th Grade
Marysville, Ohio

Elementary Narrative
Second Place

A Memory of Change in my Life

A change that I had in my life was when I received bad grades and then I started getting good grades. I was getting C's and D's but then I began to get A's and B's. I was a fourth grade student at Barnum School. One day the teacher was handing out the Student of the Month and Most Improved awards. I did not feel confident that I was going to get the Student of the Month award. She said, "The Student of the Month award goes to Rae'Quan." I thought in my mind this can't be happening, but it was. I pinched myself just to make sure I wasn't dreaming. She said, "Come get your award." I jetted to hold that prize in my hand. I had my picture taken with my award. I felt a sense of pride flow through my bones. When I got home all I did was tease my little brother. That night I stayed up all night, I was too excited to sleep. When I finally crashed out, I snoozed with a smile on my face and a treasure in my hand. I woke up with the award still in my hand and carried it everywhere I went.

Rae'Quan Brown
5th Grade
Bridgeport, Connecticut

Elementary Narration
Third Place

Jon's Adventure

"Mom, I can't find my homework!" Jon Huller, a 12-year-old boy, shouted to his tired mother.

"Where is it?" Jon's mom screamed back up to him.

"On the kitchen table, next to the vase." Jon began to feel worried.

"That was your homework? Oh, I threw that out. I thought it was garbage. Sorry, honey!" Jon screamed so loud that the windows broke. Then, all of a sudden, VROOM! The garbage truck drove away with Jon's homework in it!

"Sweetie, are you ready? You don't want to miss the bus!" Mrs. Huller called to Jon.

"Oh, yes I do!" Jon mumbled to himself as he picked up his backpack and went to the bus stop. When Jon arrived at the bus stop, something caught his eye. It was something shiny. Something small and round. Jon leaned over to pick it up. Then, there, under years and years of dirt and soiled, stuck out a **little gold coin!**

"Well, well, well! What do we have here?" said Jon as he picked up the gold coin.

"I wish," Jon began. "I wish everything would change." Jon put the old, dirty, gold coin in his patched pocket. Then, he realized that he forgot something else! He forgot his **lunchbox!** Jon ran inside and grabbed his lunchbox.

"Got it!" Jon sighed with relief. Then, he heard the bus. He was going to miss the bus! Jon ran outside to find the bus waiting for him.

"The bus never waits for me! NEVER!" Jon murmured to himself. When Jon got on the bus, everyone was offering him seats.

"Wow no one's ever been so nice to me before!" Jon was excited for what the rest of his day would be like. When Jon got to school, he didn't finish his morning assignments. The teacher, Mrs. Lane, didn't care that he didn't finish, nor did she care that he didn't hand in his homework. Then at recess everyone wanted to play with him.

"This is the life!" Jon sighed. When Jon got home, there wasn't any snack sitting on the table waiting for him. His mom always put a snack on the table for when Jon got home.

"Mom, where's my snack?" Jon asked Mrs. Huller.

"Oh, I thought since you're not a baby anymore you could make your own." Mrs. Huller answered. Jon sighed. He walked over to the refrigerator and opened it. Jon couldn't find anything he wanted to eat. Jon didn't have an after school snack that day. Jon didn't like the dinner that night even though he usually liked the dinner that his mom makes. When Mr. Huller came home, he didn't play with him like he usually did. Instead, he went to work in his office.

"Time for bed, kiddo. Night." said Mr. Huller. Usually, he went upstairs and said goodnight. The next day, the bus waited, the teacher didn't mind, and everyone was asking to play with him. Everyone asking annoyed Jon. When Jon was dropped off at the bus stop, he reached into his pocket and took the coin. The only problem was that it was a quarter! Jon had forgotten to take out the gold coin before he got changed that morning!

"Oh, no!" Jon would be stuck with kids asking him to play everyday and making his own snacks forever! When he got home, he went straight to the first clothesbasket and took out the pair of jeans from yesterday. He search the pocket, and found the gold coin.

"Good thing everything's different or else I never would have found this coin!" Jon said with a sigh and a tone of relief. Then, he ran outside and threw the coin on the ground. When Jon got inside there was a snack on the table just for Jon!

"Everything's back to normal!" Jon sat down and began to eat.

"What do you mean, 'back to normal'?" his mom asked with a suspicious face.

"Oh nothing!" Jon said. *Well, I guess change isn't always good, Jon thought. But without change, there would be no zest in life! Plus, I would be stuck making my own snacks!*

Rebecca Senatore
3rd Grade
Newton, New Jersey

Elementary Exposition
First Place

The Frog

Frogs start as little eggs. The egg lives in a pond attached to a plant. The eggs are round and black and look like round, fat raindrops.

The egg hatches into a tadpole. They look slimy like jellyfish. Tadpoles have long, skinny tails that help them swim. Tadpoles need to swim fast so fish can't make them their dinner. They grow strong legs and get bigger.

The frog loses its tail and now has a round body. Its eyes sit on the top of their flattened head. Now it can jump really high because of its powerful legs. It eats flies with his long, sticky tongue. The frog has now changed from a tiny, unmoving egg to a big, long, hopping animal.

Emilio Negrow
5th Grade
Bridgeport, Connecticut

Elementary Exposition
Second Place

How Trees Change

First the trees are dark green in the summer time. Then they start changing into lighter colors in the fall when the weather starts to get colder. After that the trees are beautiful because of all the colors of the leaves. The colors are green, yellow, red, and brown. Then the leaves fall until there aren't any more leaves on the trees. When the tree is bare it starts to droop. That means it is dying.

During the wintertime, when it starts to snow, the tree's branches start to get heavier and heavier and then the branches snap. This leaves the tree looking bare and branchless.

When the snow starts to melt and it turns into spring the new trees begin to grow because of all the pinecones that have dropped onto the ground from the trees up above. The new trees grow until they are higher than twenty feet tall. The old trees begin to grow again and get new branches and dark green leaves.

Trees go through the same thing every year. The trees get colorful. Then the leaves fall. And it snows. Then the branches snap. And the trees grow again.

Jacob McPherson
4th Grade
Springdale, Washington

Elementary Exposition
Third Place

A Butterfly's Story

A butterfly starts as a little egg. The egg is round and white. It lives on a branch. Then, it grows and grows until it is ready to hatch.

When it hatches, it is a caterpillar. It crawls around on a tree. It also eats plants to help it grow. It hangs from a branch and folds up into a little ball called a chrysalis.

A chrysalis is an inch long. It turns from green to black and brown. In ten days it cracks open and then it is a butterfly.

A butterfly has changed a lot since it began as an egg. Now it has six legs and wings. The white spots on the tops of the black and brown wings make a beautiful design.

Now a butterfly and fly around with a lot of its friends. This makes the butterfly happy. At first, it was very tiny. It would sleep all day wrapped tightly in a ball around a tree branch. Nobody could even see it. Once it finally changed, the butterfly woke up to be free at last!

Latasha Williams
5th Grade
Bridgeport, Connecticut

Middle School Poetry
First Place

My backyard now
glistens
with the sun's rays
reflecting off
of the clear, blue water.
But that's now--

Before my yard was flat
with a row of trees
over to the left;
a tired tree that held
my tears
and caught me when I fell.
A swing set
with loose limbs that creaked
so violently
that I became
scared to take
a ride.
But then a pool
came,
and my original backyard
became a forgotten
memory.

Now I do love to
laugh and play in the pool.
I love to splash
around and hang with my friends.
I love staying
cool when the
summer gets hot.

But,
I miss watching
my dogs hopping in
and out of the
billowy snow that
would blanket the ground.
I miss the creaking
swing set that I thought
would collapse
at any given moment.

And most of all,
I miss my
tree...
the place that I found
a nest of eggs.
Where I would go
to reflect;
Where I would go to
cry my eyes out
when something
went wrong.
This was the place that held
my heart
and now it's gone.

Do I regret
this change?
No.
I just remember the
forgotten.

Becca Rees
7th Grade
Framingham, Massachusetts

Middle School Poetry
Second Place

All We Need is Change

Each day I walk down school halls,
Waving to the same people.
Teachers repeat themselves
Day in and day out.
All we want is change.

Each week we enjoy a vacation,
And relax without work only play.
We play soccer every Saturday,
And attend church each Sunday.
All we want is change.

Each month I flip my calendar,
To the month that we'll soon be in.
I stare at the boxes
Filled with the same numbers each month.
All we want is change.

Each year we celebrate,
On the day we were born.
We sing a short song,
And open gifts.
All we want is change.

As I look back on these things,
I realize what is going on.
Our entire life is deja vu,
All we need is change.

Julia Hollreiser
8th Grade
Elmwood, New York

Middle School Poetry
Third Place

Friends Change

We were drawn to become friends
Same likes, similar ends
Little boys who lived to play
Growing together day by day

Together in class and on the ice
Never a quarrel at any price
We were strong and faced the world
And now this friendship has unfurled

Friends forever or so we thought
We drifted apart, we never fought
Did we go wrong or just keep growing
In different directions not knowing

That not being friends seems very strange
But growing up means having to change
Some things break and cannot mend
I thought I'd always be your friend

Peter de' Gravisi
8th Grade
Plantation, Florida

Middle School Narration
First Place

Monday. Collectively called the worst day of the week. But Amy Dawson didn't fall into that category. She was, by anybody's terms, a prep. She lived for school. Unlike any other sane college student, she got up and went to class (cheerfully) and did her work, then went home (sadly) and did her homework. For her there were no late night parties or spontaneous flings. She had no "Girls" to hit the town with, and a nonexistent love life. She literally lived for school.

She was a medium height, not the tall enough to look down on everyone, but enough to be able to call the shorter people short. She was in good shape despite her very mellow lifestyle. She had a small mouth and a button nose, dusted with a few freckles. Her eyes, a deep turquoise color, were her best feature but she hid them behind dark-framed glasses. Her shoulder-length hair was a pale golden-orange that fell in straight locks, but was always pulled up out of her face, into a strict ponytail.

She dressed in pants and simple shirts, only showing as much skin as necessary. She stayed away from bright flashy colors, and stuck to more neutral, hide-in-the-corner tones. She never wore the strappy, pointy-toe high-heels in the back of her closet, but stuck to the plainest (and flattest) shoes she could find.

She sat down to her first class, her favorite; a simple psychology class, taught by their very easily distracted teacher Mr. Thomas.

She dropped her books onto her desk, and opened them, a system she had long perfected. Book open on left hand corner, notebook on top of it, planner and pencils in right hand corner, homework in middle ready to be turned in and backpack on the floor at right hand side.

She had finished setting up her desk, when she noticed a new student. This was odd. Unlike most other classes, this was a small group, only accepting the top students, even though it wasn't a major. Very few applied anyways, mostly because either they majored in psychology and were required to take other classes, or they could take an easier class and still get as many credits. But Amy was never one for taking the easy route, not when it came to school.

The new kid was tall, with dark hair. He had a nice tan and honey brown eyes. He was very talkative, and had already learned the names of the students in the class, and which girls were available or not. He was the type that got along with everyone becoming not a social star, but someone who was invited to parties but never threw them.

He sauntered right up to Amy. There was something familiar in his walk but try as she might she couldn't place it. He sat right next to her, grinning, like he had known her all his life.

"Hey," He said, smirking. Amy, usually cheerful and happy in the morning, wanted to swat that grin right off his face.

"Hello." she replied, trying to end the conversation before it started by turning to her books.

"You don't remember me, do you?" he muttered, still smirking.

"What?" she asked, looking at him. She had no clue what he was talking about.

"I thought so. You didn't look like you could hold more than a drink or two. I'm Parker? From the bar last night? We met, had a few drinks?" he ventured, trying to perk up some memory. He still had that stupid grin on his face, like he knew something about her that she didn't know.

She remained poised, and replied, so politely that it sounded rude, "I think you must be mistaking me for someone else. I wasn't at a bar last night. I didn't even leave my apartment." She had gone to bed early, because her head felt like someone was splitting it in two with a dull axe, another one of her constant migraines.

"No I remember. Amy? Amy... Dawson? You had that white tank top and some silver necklace with a turquoise stone? I don't remember the glasses though, but I remember the eyes."

She looked at him, taken aback. She hadn't been at a club, she was sure of it, but he knew her name, and she was wearing the necklace he had described, or something very near to it.

She was about to reply that she wasn't the person he was looking for, when Mr. Tomas stepped up to his podium. He began a discussion on lying, one of his more favorite topics.

Parker, not at all phased by the discussion, whispered to her, "Do you have like a twin, or a sister or something?" She looked at him, raising her eyebrows, and shook her head.

He shrugged, as if to say, well it was a theory.

Amy ignored him for the rest of the class, throwing away his notes, and pretending not to feel him tapping her arm.

After class she tried to disappear, but he found her in the hall.

"Look," she said, glaring at him, "I wasn't at any club last night, and I sure don't remember you." He was getting on her nerves and she could feel a headache coming on.

"Just wait a second." he said, as he dug around in his backpack, "when you left, you forgot..." he paused for a second as he fished something out, "...this." He held up a ring, a silver pinky ring, with a black opal stone set into the swirled carvings. This stopped her dead. She recognized that ring. It was her ring. The one her grandfather had given her, when she was barely five, when it was too big to fit on her thumb, but the one she hadn't taken off since she was five, the one that she had freaked out over this morning because she couldn't find, the one she had torn up her whole apartment apart searching for.

Sammy and Ben, her two closest friends chose this moment to walk up. They had been worried when they didn't see her that morning, and Ben didn't like the way Parker was pestering her. He was overly protective of her and Sam, ever since freshman year, when Sam and her (roommates at the time) had made friends with him as they helped him get a high enough G.P.A. to play basketball (it turned out they got him a much higher one).

"Hey Amy," Ben said, putting hand on her shoulder, "What's up? I didn't see you this morning."

He was tall, hence the basketball, and broad shouldered. He had a heavier build, and dark brown hair, almost ebony colored. His eyes were a very washed-out blue, with just a hint of grey, making his skin seem even paler.

Amy was still too transfixed to reply, but Sammy cut in before the silence became awkward, "Who's this?"

Sammy was a little shorter than Amy, but made up for it with very tall heels. She was slim with long arms and legs. She had a pointed face and deep puppy-brown eyes, matching her frizzy hair. Her skin was the exact color of chocolate milk, studded with a few dark freckles here and there.

Before he could answer Amy asked, ice in her voice, "Where did you get that?"

The grin finally faded off Parker's face. "You really don't know what I'm talking about?"

"Where did you get that?" she repeated.

"At the club last night. You left it at the bar, and I grabbed it for you." he replied. "Do you remember anything about last night?"

"I remember going to bed early because my head hurt. I don't remember going to any club." her voice had left its usual sweet-littleangel sound, and become icy and cold, fury and fear pulsing through it.

"I swear it was you. Look..." he began, pulling out his cell phone and handing her the ring, which she gripped so tightly it left an imprint on her hand. He fiddled with the buttons on his phone for a moment, and then showed her a picture. "...I took this at the club. If that's not you, then I don't know who it is."

All of them fell into a silent shock. Parker was there, looking a little tipsy, and there, sitting right next to him, holding a martini in her hand, was her. But it wasn't her in a different sense. Her hair was down around her shoulders, and she was wearing a tank top and jeans, and high heels. She recognized the clothes, the ones she never wore, the ones that hung in her never-used closets, the ones that she refused to touch, but somehow they moved themselves around, and got torn or ripped, or new ones appeared.

"Who is that?" Ben asked, staring at the picture. "Me."

Amy breathed her voice almost dead silent.

An hour later, they were back at her apartment, (they had a morning break) Sammy looking through her closet, Ben digging through her desk, and Parker sitting in her desk chair. They talked as they worked, trying to figure this one out.

Amy paced back and forth muttering, "So I was at some club last night, and I don't remember anything about it."

"And you have a bunch of things you don't remember buying, or wearing, or washing or..." Sammy added, "Honey I want to know who bought these and where I can get their credit card number, there's a lot of designer stuff in here."

"And you have money you don't remember earning." Ben added, fiddling with a desk drawer.

"So run this through me again," Sammy asked, "You have things you didn't buy, money you didn't earn, pictures of you that you don't remember taking, you loose track of time, and people know you that you've never seen in your life?"

"Yup," Amy replied, "But that's how I've always been. I never thought it wasn't normal, I just assumed I had a horrible memory."

"Are you sure you don't got a twin?" Parker suggested, "I know you told me you don't, but maybe you just don't know about her?"

Amy was about to reply that she didn't have a twin when Sam cut in, "You don't have a twin, but maybe there are more than one of you?"

"What do you mean? " Ben asked, "Like a clone or something?"

"No, more like another personality." Sammy replied. Amy saw what she was saying. She didn't like the road she was going down.

"You mean like Multiple Personalities?" Parker inquired.

"Yeah, but it's called Dissociative Identity Disorder now." She rounded on Amy, "Do you loose track of time, like a weekend flies by but you can't remember what you did over it?" Amy nodded. "Do you ever find yourself places and you have no clue how you got here?" Another nod. "Do you ever find you lost something, or bought something but have no recollection of it, or any clue where you got the money?" Yes. "Do you have huge gaps in you memory, like you can't remember what happened for most of the week during the summer?"

"Yes." was her reply. "During my sophomore summer my teachers claim they saw me painting this huge mural all over the school walls. I got in huge trouble although I swear I didn't." Suddenly she realized what she was saying and hurriedly added, "But Sam, that's crazy. If I had MPD, or DID, or whatever it is, I would know right? It couldn't have lasted all my life without someone finding out!"

"Someone probably did, but they told a different personality, and she's trying to fix it through you." Sammy retorted.

They began to debate what really was happening, digging through her room, pulling out pictures, drawings, clothes; anything she didn't remember.

Amy doubted that she had multiple personalities, but as they dug through her home she found more and more stuff that shouldn't be there. Letters from some mysterious pen pal. A little black book with a bunch of names and numbers, none of which she knew. Pictures, entire photo albums of her doing things she had never seen. She spent so little time in her apartment, so little time anywhere but campus and work, that she had never really seen all the things that weren't hers. If she was ever home she was doing homework, sleeping or coking. She rarely went into her living room. She almost never looked on her bookshelf.

Now she did, and really looked. Thoughts grew in her head, telling her that there was something wrong. There were dents, scratches, even broken parts on the furniture she never sat on.

But the final bit she found, the one that really convinced her, was the cube she found under her desk. It looked like a very large, maybe ten by ten inches, six-sided die, but it wasn't exactly a die. Each side had carvings on it, embellished with paint, with a name in the center. She turned it over in her hands, taking in each name, and stopping when she saw the side labeled Amy. It had books, and desks, and pencils and essays on it. It was her summed up into a picture.

She looked at the other names, Taylor, Danielle, Alexis, Sarah, and Anna. She whispered them to herself, tasting names that felt almost familiar.

She crumpled onto her bed, deep in thought, trying to figure this out. Her mind was going a mile a minute, a hailstorm in her head, running her in circles as she tried to fit it around this idea. There were more than one of her. There were maybe even six of her. It explained everything, all the blank spots, all the missing links, all the weird occurrences, but it still didn't want to fit. She didn't want it to be true. Because if it was true, then she didn't know what would happen. She might have to give up her career. She might have to quit school. She would need therapy, something she despised.

"Amy?" Sammy asked, putting a hand on her shoulder.

There was a pause in which they stared at her, trying to see her response.

"Let's find out who I am." she decided, looking up at them.

They figured out their plan, spending the better part of two hours on it. They would use the break, (the next two weeks) to dig around, using any clues they could find to try and track her down. They would identify each person, find out who she was, and if they could, confront the other ones of her, and see if, just by chance, any of the others knew about her.

Although this was serious they, they all agreed to keep this a secret. They wouldn't tell a soul, not until they were sure. Amy offered Parker out, but he refused, saying that he had gotten her into this, and that he would help her out.

The next two days flew by, in which Amy spent every spare moment digging through her life, her home, for anything. She was using the cube she had found as a base. They would try to find Taylor first if they could.

Sammy and Ben were treating this like a project. Like a science fair project. They had schedules for observing her, mainly consisting of Sammy crashing at her place all break, specific ways to record the data, and a plan for every step.

But she took this differently. For her this was an adventure of sorts, a chance to break out into the world, and see things, do things, she had never done before. She was going on a type of soul quest, if she could call it that, and it became something she knew she must do, and had needed to do for a long time.

Parker was what puzzled her about this. At first she thought he wanted to tag along just to see the freak show, just to see how weird it got, but the more he helped the more she saw, this was personal. He needed this as much as she did, but in a different way. He needed this to prove he could, prove that he can fix this: that he can help.

It was amazing how you could plan and plan every step, and yet you couldn't start. They searched and they searched but they had no clue how to find Taylor. They had pictures, and more pictures. Her with dogs and cats, and people, but how could they find someone without their name? Parker figured it out. He had a brilliant idea and tried using the internet. He typed in her name and the group P.A.W (Protect Animal welfare- they had found a tee shirt with the logo on it) and found a website with her on it. They tracked her down to a shelter in Manhattan. It was about half an hour away from her apartment, so they left right away. Parker and Ben and Sam went in, leaving her to wait outside, standing on a corner examining her surrounding. Everything looked familiar, but just the kind of familiar where you vaguely recognize it from a car ride or something.

Her breath steamed the air as she thought about the people inside. She didn't just want to walk in, to find people who knew her, and all of a sudden say, "Hey! I'm not Taylor; she's just an alternate personality of mine!"

That was what made this different for her than the others. For her, her alternate personalities were part of her, and their pain was her pain, and their hurt was her hurt. When they were scared, or embarrassed, or angry she felt that anger, that fear. She didn't want to hurt them, because they were her, just in a different sense.

Sammy walked up to the woman at the reception desk and asked, "Hello, I'm looking for a Scott Anderson? I need to talk to him about Taylor." On the website there had been a picture of her and Scott washing

a puppy. It had said he was the manager of the shelter.

The woman looked at her for a moment, sizing her up and asked, "You're a friend of Taylor's?" Sammy nodded, and after a bit of sweet talking she managed to get a hold of Scott.

They went into an office and talked for over an hour, in which they filled him in on the situation, bringing her in, and finding out who Taylor was. He explained what she did for them, how she went to almost every protest, and spent hours taking care of homeless animals. Taylor was pieced together quickly. It was almost like ripping letters from a magazine to make a word, except she didn't know what word that would be. Each piece made her go in a different direction as her illusions of Taylor crashed down and were replaced by something better. When they finally fitted together (except for the few scrappy edges) they made a sweet, silly and bold girl. She was a fighter, but she knew where the line was, she knew where to stop and where to start.

He brought in Casey, and had her really fill in the picture of who Taylor was, smoothing down all the edges. And after all that, Amy couldn't help but feel better knowing that she had worked so hard for something, and done so much good, even without her knowing. She made a silent resolution to visit the shelter again, and help out more.

They were sure now that she had MPD. It gave them a boost to have figured at least one of her and figure out that at least one of her knew about the others. They used the cube again, and rolled it, landing upon Alexis. She became their next hurdle. They used the internet again, and found a website, for a volleyball tournament. The name Alexis Dawson was entered on one of the rosters. After several hours of hacking they had found her team, and where they practiced.

They showed up at a practice, and tracked down her best friend/fellow captain Laura. After they broke the news to her, and introduced her to Amy, they spent hours talking, and discovering just who Alexis was.

She was somewhat like Taylor, in the fact that she was dedicated. She was a sportoholic, and very focused. If she had a goal, she fought until she got there, no matter what it took, what rules she had to break, what boundaries she had to cross. She fixated on things and made them happen.

Alexis did have one huge flaw. She didn't know where to stop. Laura painted pictures in detail of the times she had crashed herself into a wall. Once she had been so fixated on winning a tournament she got herself overworked and really sick. She had passed out in the middle of the court.

Along with Alexis came the knowledge of how she broke her arm. She had thought she had just fallen out of bed, but she had really slammed into a wall, going after a bad pass.

The night after she met Alexis she sat up late, staring at the ceiling, as she listened to Sammy snore. All of this swirled around in her mind, like she was trying to read a magazine cover too fast. It all seemed to her like it was too simple. She knew who these girls were, but she wasn't inside their heads, where she wanted to be. She wanted to know if they thought this was a bad idea, or if they knew things she didn't. Getting up she found herself sitting in the living room holding the phone. In her hand was the cube, her hand running over its sides. She wanted to talk but to who? Sammy? No, she didn't sleep well and once she was up she couldn't fall back asleep. Ben? No, he took hours to get going in

the morning. Her fingers dialed a number she wasn't even sure who's until she heard a sleepy, "Hello?" on the other end.

"Hey, Parker, it's Amy." she replied, her voice a half whisper.

"Hey," he replied, his voice suddenly much more awake, "What's up?"

"Nothing really, it's just..." she began.

"What?" It was surprising how soft his voice was. Parker had a strong voice, one that was heard over the sound of a room. This was his voice just different. And to her, vaguely familiar.

It relaxed her and she found herself unloading all of the thoughts she couldn't put words to onto him, telling him what went on in her head.

They talked for hours, Parker helping her sort out all the unrest, and fear she felt. He gave her a more excited look at this, telling her it was a way to fix her life, to be able to account for everything in her life, and a way to be able to be whole.

She was feeling tired and was about to say goodbye when Parker suddenly asked, "Amy?"

"Yeah?"

"You know the causes for MPD, right?"

"Yeah."

"What caused yours?"

She considered lying for a moment, telling him something to get him off the topic that she had shoved to the back of her head and refused to think about. She took a breath, ready to lie, then changed her mind.

"I don't know. I don't remember anything before I was five."

"What do you think happened?"

"I don't know. Right now all I want to do is find out who I am. I just want to get this under control then I'll face it."

"You're gonna have to face it some day."

"I know."

They talked for a little while longer before she said goodbye and hung up. Exhausted she crawled into bed and let all her thoughts go.

Alexis and Taylor were classified as the easy ones. Next came the harder hits, the harder blows. As she became used to feeling a surge of powerful emotion over a homeless dog or a reckless impulse now and then, she began to search for their next target Danielle. She found a new focus when she searched, one Taylor and Alexis had, one that made her recklessly dedicated to finding out just who she was.

They spent two days searching for her, and had all but given up when Amy found in her mail a very large, fat paycheck, addressed to one Danielle Dawson.

An impulse took her and she went straight to the return address, forgetting to stop and call the others. She entered the gym and realized that she was totally unprepared for what could happen. Danielle could have a boyfriend, or a best friend, or an enemy, or anything. Thoughts like this had haunted her, and with two lucky chances, she wasn't about to go for another one. She realized also that if she worked at a gym she probably wouldn't show up wearing a mini skirt and a tank top (she had bravely ventured into the back of her closets) with a coat haphazardly thrown on over it.

She entered, trying to keep to the shadows, when a sharp wolfwhistle sounded from one of the rings, (the gym specialized in boxing).

It was like a spotlight had been turned on her and almost every head turned to look.

She looked towards the ring where it had issued from and she saw a guy. He was tall with chocolate skin and shaved bald, but in the good way. He was muscled and good looking, but had this air to him that seemed very arrogant.

"Well lookee here! Danny in a skirt!" he sneered, "I'd a never thought I'd see that girl in anything but sweats and boxing gloves." Calvin, a voice in her head muttered, throwing information at her, like a wave. She knew he was arrogant. She knew he was rude, she knew he was overconfident. She knew he was a power hitter, but slow, with very little endurance. She knew she could outbox him even though they had never fought, and most of all she knew he liked her.

"Well, if it ain't Calvin? Where's Hobbes? On vacation? Or did he just get bored with you and move on?" she shot back. She knew she had struck a nerve when he turned bright red.

"You say that in here!" he dared her, venom in his voice.

"Fine then." She replied. She didn't bother to change. She shed her coat and donned the mitts that someone handed her. Her hair was already pulled back into a half-up half-down ponytail, so she didn't bother to play with it, mainly because he would've made fun about her being a girl if she did. She passed up on the mouth guard someone offered her, knowing she didn't like them.

The minute she was in the ring Danny took over. She boxed for her, moving quickly, and pounding with more force than she thought she could. The match was horrible, Calvin ending up knocked out, with several bruises, and a split lip. She had sprung up on him with her surprise left hand. She used it little during the match, really pounding with her right, but hitting the final blow with her left.

Danny told her to find Henry, and she did. He was sweet, close to her, although he never would be a boxer. He was too wiry. She talked to him, explaining everything to him, telling him about her, and the other versions of her she had met. He took it well and offered to help her find the others, but she passed it up, saying she had more than enough help. He pieced together Danny for her. She was a tomboy, and very rugged. She had been hurt, and he had tried to coax it out of her but she wouldn't tell. She had just showed up here about three years ago (when she started college) and worked so hard that she was now a top boxer, and although she didn't compete, she coached, and had lead someone to state last year.

Danny reacted differently than the rest. She opened up to her, letting Amy into her head, sending a rush of information to her. It didn't flood her like she thought it would, but it sunk in, back to its proper place. She knew this information already so it was like remembering something she had forgotten. It took a second to sink in but it stuck.

Danny sunk into her, like stones in a pond. She sifted through her memories, searching for the hurt Henry had said something about. She found it just as she came to the city. Danny used to be like Alexis, silly, carefree, but flakey. One night walking in the city had changed that. Some guy had attacked her in an alley, and she didn't know what would've happened if someone passing by hadn't heard her scream. She had gotten away with a few bruises but she had realized that she was weak. He had easily overpowered her within seconds, and she was helpless. That sent Danny to the gym. There she dedicated herself to boxing.

She spent the rest of the day replaying this in her head, trying to figure out how this could've happened and Amy didn't know about it. She talked to Parker about it, trying to make sense of it. All he could say on the subject was, "Does she remember when you were little?" Amy didn't have a reply to this.

After she took down Danny she had a feel for this. Alexis and Taylor opened up to her, and she dug into them. She found out about them from them. She looked into their souls as she thought of it.

Neither of them had an experience like Danny. Taylor had her fights and scuffles, but no real hurts. Compared to the other two Alexis was a joke. She was dedicated and strong but centered. She knew only her world and no other. She lived in a fairyland compared to the other two's fights.

Sarah was her next fight. She was going to be a hard battle. She had a diary, and it was filled with arrogant, self absorbed stuff, that scared her. After reading it Amy didn't want to know her but knew she had to find out. Parker forced her to find out.

It took her a while to get anything. Finally she called up Matt and had him come over. Matt had been mentioned in the diaries several times, as a best friend who had been a boyfriend several times as well. It seemed almost every entry had the words, "I hate Matt, I love Matt, I've forgiven Matt, or I think I'm falling for Matt, again."

This time she got Parker, and Sammy and Ben to help her. They had been shocked, and a little angry, at her rushing off to find Danny, but were glad she had gained access to her other minds.

Matt brought sadness to her. She plunged into Sarah and found a Barbie doll. Sarah was a self-absorbed first class witch (she would've used other words). She was spiteful, merciless, and malicious. She made people like her by ordering them to. She was only nice to those she liked, and thought everyone loved her.

He introduced her to her "girls" who he claimed were her best friends. To all of the others they were two prissy little rich girls who were hunting for rich husbands. She didn't even try to be nice to them. She used Sarah's skills to cut them off and leave them behind her. After she found out about Sarah, Amy tried to open up to her, but the moment she did it was havoc. She had to lock her away, get rid of how mean she was.

Sarah liked to act the little voice in her head, always aware of her looks. People had to view her in just the right way: perfect. Sarah liked to mutter about clothing, whisper mean things to say and ways to get revenge. All she cared about was looks, and nothing about character.

As she battled with Sarah, Amy turned to her last fight: Anna. She was almost afraid to go after her, afraid that she would be like Sarah but forced herself to find out.

Although she wouldn't admit it another fear loomed in her heart. None of the others remembered anything about her childhood. Anna was the oldest, and by and outsider's view, the first of them. Amy was the main, but Anna was the first.

She had decided Anna had made the cube. None of the others were artsy; none of the others remembered making it. As she had let the others in she had began to fill in the gaps in her memory, finding out more about her past than ever before. She was beginning to feel whole.

The little black book was how they tracked her down. They called the most recent number, and interrogated the guy until he told her that they had met at a bar. It was the same one she had met Parker in. They went and found a bartender, whom she

recognized. His name was JT and he was close to her, the closest person to Anna. She had told him everything. He knew her the instant he saw her and knew about the other versions of her.

It took a few minutes to get them all sitting in a back room, and talking. They filled him in on Amy's journey, and he returned the favor.

Anna was a party girl, and she loved the club. She had found out about the others when someone who was angry at Sarah blew up on her. He explained how Anna had done the same as Amy, finding out about the other ones, and she had decided to use Amy to get help. She knew Amy was the dominant personality, and knew she was the one who could do something about it.

They pieced together Anna and she opened up like a Jack-in-the-Box. Anna soaked up into her, and helped her.

She delved into her memory, and found the youngest years. She remembered little but what she did was ugly. She tried to keep it bottled up but Parker cornered her on it.

They were back in her apartment, sitting around and talking. Sammy and Ben were out at a concert that she didn't feel like going to. They were just talking when he suddenly asked.

"What did she remember?"

"Nothing."

"Don't lie."

"Everything."

"What happened?"

"Classical scenario. I was born into a bad family. Drugs, alcohol, the whole works. I was taken away and scuffled around like a rag doll. I kept being pushed from home to home, like a puppy that chews up the slippers. They didn't like how quiet and scared of the world I was. And how odd. I would act okay one minute then I was a whole other person the next. Guess they could've caught this if they had cared to look."

"Amy. They didn't know. It took you years to figure it out. How are they supposed to know? They may've just thought you were trying to be funny. You can't blame anyone other than those who hurt you."

"I know. At least I got adopted. When I was just about seven. Those parents kept me. I've always know I was adopted I just never thought about it. I remember spending a little while with a grandfather, but it's very vague. I remember a funeral too. I think that was before my parents now."

"Good thing they kept you. I don't even want to know what would've happened if there were more of you. Are there more of you?"

"No. Or at least Anna doesn't think so. There may've been but they haven't shown up in a while. I think I've been getting better since Anna found out."

For weeks afterwards she went to therapy, and struggled to turn all of her personalities into one. She dug through her life, and began to pull them together. She went to the tournaments, she kept on boxing. She protested animal testing; she also began to really enjoy shopping. They came together slowly at first, but then they gained speed. Her life, so drab and dull before became a new life and she had millions of friends, hundreds of things to do. Anna acted and taught an art class. Danny had boxing, Alexis had games and tournaments, and even Amy, who now seemed so far away, had a life. She began to live for everything but school. She wasn't Amy anymore (although she was still

serious about her studies) she was all of them. It was Anna, Anna Dawson that she choose as a name, and it was Anna who fought, and sewed her six parts into one whole person.

Elyse Hornstein
8th Grade
Duluth, Minnesota

Middle School Narration
Second Place

Lives Change in Seconds

It was 8:23 on Saturday morning when my Mom waltzed into my room. "Wake up Sleeping Beauty," announced my mom. "We need help getting the cookies in the car," she reminded me. It all came rushing back. I was supposed to help my sister's Girl Scout troop sell Girl Scout cookies at Food Lion. I stumbled out of bed and into my big closet. I flipped the light switch and waited, nothing happened. I sighed as finally the light flashed on. I pulled down my Junior Girl Scout shirt and matching blue stretch pants. I hurriedly put them on and rushed to the bathroom. As I brushed my teeth my sister approached me.

"You might want to wear something warmer; it's going to snow," she reminded me. I hurried back into my room and grabbed a wooly purple sweater and pulled it on.

"Come on Anne, hurry up!" my Mom called. I shot out the door and jumped down the stairs. I put on my favorite blue and green high-tops and my fuzzy purple coat. If I had known I wouldn't be home for a week I might have said goodbye; but I didn't know so I rushed out the door.

My mom and sister were already done loading the cookies so I hopped in the car. My mom put the car in gear and we were off. We were going to a Food Lion in Carrboro. Sarah, my sister's friend, and her mom were going to meet us there. When we piled out of the car we looked up to see there was already a troop there. As we got closer I recognized Kylie, a girl from school, was also there. My mom went up to their troop leader and told her the cookie booth was ours. We also showed her a piece of paper that said so. They called their cookie manager to see if they were in the right place. They talked for ages and finally hung up.

"We're in the right place, too," they informed us.

"Oh well," my mom said. "Let's go somewhere else," she suggested.

"How about Harris Teeter?" I asked.

"Okay," my mom answered me. "Let's go". We hopped into the car and headed to University mall's Harris Teeter.

We didn't know if someone else's troop would already be there, but we figured it was worth the try. As we pulled into the parking lot we crossed our fingers and were overjoyed that no one was there. My mom and I rushed inside and asked the manager if we could set up. He said yes so I skipped out to the sidewalk and pulled boxes of Do-si-dos, Tagalongs and Thin Mints out of the car. We pulled our table up against the wall and stood by the door so we could ask people if they wanted to buy Girl Scout cookies. After a while the manager stomped out and told us we couldn't be any closer than twenty feet away from the door. Twenty feet would have put us directly behind a pillar so we decided to move twenty-one feet out so we could be seen. This in all honesty was probably the biggest mistake we ever made. Had we stayed behind the pillar we would have had more protection.

We called out as our sales grew, "Wanna buy some cookies?" we asked. Twenty boxes, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, sixty-five we had sold a total of sixty five boxes of cookies! A loud whirling noise, almost like an engine revving, caught my attention. "Get

out of the way-RUN!" my mom screamed. I ran and turned my head back. I was sure - almost positive we had cleared her car when the table our cookies were on exploded into a million pieces. A loud crashing noise followed. I can still hear that awful noise sometimes. I can see and hear her coming but there is still nothing I can do, no where I can run. What happened that day changed my life forever and there is nothing I can do to change it.. Even today when I am in a parking lot and a car starts I jump. People think I am crazy because I am always worried about how people are driving. I will say things like, "Be careful, he is not paying attention."

I did not know what had happened until later. A seventy-seven year old lady was backing out of her parking spot when her foot slipped of the brake and on to the accelerator. She had gone across two lanes of traffic and over the curb and up on the sidewalk. She did all this so fast she didn't even bump up on to the sidewalk instead she went up it like it was a ramp. Right away `what ifs...' went through my head. What if she had not gone shopping? What if we had stayed behind the pillar? What if another car had gone by and she had hit them? What if we weren't selling cookies there? What if we had run faster? There are so many `what ifs...' I can't even say them all.

The next thing I remember was lying on the cold cement; my head was resting in my sister's friend's mom's lap. Kneeling next to me was my Girl Scout leader, Mrs. Kay. My first thought was why is she here? We are selling for my sister's troop, not mine! Am I going crazy? As it turned out none of these things were true. She had just happened to have gone shopping at the right time.

I don't know what happened directly following the accident. As I later found out, when I ran I must have tripped because I ended up under the car's trunk between the wall and her tires. My mom had been thrown and lay twenty-five feet away from me. My sister had started to scream, "My sister! Where is Anne?" So they began to look for me. Nancy, my sister's friend's mom found me and pulled me out. As I lay on the cement strangely I didn't feel pain. Really I didn't feel anything, not the cold, not pain, not anything! A 9-1-1 call had been placed a long time ago. A fire truck had arrived but no ambulance. It seemed like hours but it was only minutes until the ambulance arrived.

As they jumped out of the ambulance they grabbed a yellow and white stretcher. When they got near me, they put a collar around my neck so if I had spinal cord damage I would not become paralyzed. To get me on the stretcher they rolled me on my side and for the first time I felt pain. As they were about to put me in the ambulance my father arrived. He jumped out of the car and came running over. "Take them to Duke! Take them to Duke!"my dad cried. My dad works at Duke so that was where our health insurance was.

"No," the driver called back, "We are closer to UNC and we need to get them there and fast,"he declared.

As soon as they got me inside the ambulance they began to cut of everything I was wearing. Strangely I don't remember hearing sirens while this was going on.

"This is one thick coat," the lady hovering above me commented.

"Outside it is one cold day,"I replied. All over me were little crystals because as they had begun to load me it at last started to flurry.

"Mom? Mom?"I called.

"I'm right here," she called back. I sighed, at least we were together.

"This shouldn't hurt a bit," a lady said as she jabbed me with an IV.

"AHHHH," I yelled, "Mom if they tell you it won't hurt don't believe them," I said and everyone chuckled.

When we arrived at LTNC the doors opened with a loud clang. A man reached inside and pulled my stretcher out. As soon as we got inside they began to examine me. At first I was told I would have a cast on my left leg but pretty soon we discovered I would need surgery. My upper leg had buckled and overlapped making it shorter than my other leg. To get my leg ready for surgery they put it in traction to line it up. The worst part was the CAT scan. A CAT scan checks your internal organs to make sure they are okay. The table I had to lie on for the CAT scan was so hard and it hurt so much. They gave me pain medications and I drifted off to sleep.

Early the next morning they pushed me down to surgery. The weight on my traction was swinging back and forth so my leg really hurt. "AHHH," I yelled.

"I bet you'll never play in the street again'," the man pushing me down to surgery remarked.

"I wasn't - I wasn't in the street," I replied.

When I got down to surgery they put me on the phone with my mom. "Hi mom," I said.

"Hi Anne. How are you?" my mom asked.

"I'm okay. I'm scared to go to surgery," I replied. "It'll be okay," she reassured me. After we talked for a while we had to say good bye.

"I love you Anne," my mom told me. "I love you, too" I answered her. Then they put a warm blanket over me and gave me some medicine to put me to sleep.

When I woke up my dad was by my side. As he pushed me down to my room we stopped and my dad talked to my mom. This would be the last time in a long time that anyone would talk to her. That afternoon my mom went in to a coma.

The one thing that kept me going while I was in the hospital was my friends. Everyday after school one or more of my friends would come. They would bring my homework, cards from the other kids, presents and most importantly themselves. Almost everyone I knew came and people who couldn't come sent cards. It meant so much to me to know how many people cared about me.

Another person I really liked was my chaplain, Danny. Danny would come and talk to me. He also had spent time in a hospital bed of his own. He brought me a little twenty questions game I could play by myself. Danny had a way of making me feel like I could do it all; all I had to do was try.

While I was in the hospital Mrs. Kay who had been with me at the accident came. Mrs. Kay is really funny. When she came she brought me a lollipop. Mrs. Kay NEVER gives ANYONE candy because she is a dental hygienist. Another funny thing occurred on the same visit. While selling cookies we had had a one pound bag of M&M's with us in case we got hungry. I asked Mrs. Kay if anyone had found them. She replied, "There were M&M's? Girl ...if you had told me there were M&M's I would have gone and found them."

I slowly got better but my mom remained in a coma. I went from using a wheelchair all the time to only using it in public. The rest of the time I used a walker. One day in the car I asked not my dad when my mom was going to get better. "I don't know Anne, maybe tomorrow, maybe in a year,.....maybe never.....," my dad replied. At

last it dawned on me, this was not a joke or a minor injury. It was real and serious. I might lose my mom ...or my mom as I knew her. After about three weeks my mom began to respond. If you talked to her she would look in your direction and if you touched her she would look at you and smile.

As she got better we moved her to DRH, Durham Regional Hospital, but she still was not the mom I remembered. One day she was pulling little stickers off her arm and my sister told my dad. My mom rolled over and called my sister a tattletale. My mom had never called any of us anything ever before. My mom was in rehab so she had occupational therapy and physical therapy twice a day. While she was in the hospital my aunts and cousins flew in to help us. After about two months she came home. The exact day was Good Friday. I remember this because one of the nurses commented, "I guess for you it really is Good Friday."

All the time my mom had been in the hospital I had been moving on but people asked me some weird and strange questions. Some of my favorites were "Did it hurt to get hit by a car?" to which I replied "No; why don't you go try it?". Another frequent question was "Can I buy some Girl Scout Cookies?" my answer always was, "Sorry, I'm out - crushed cookies were a big hit!". Another really annoying question I got asked a lot was "Is it fun to have a wheelchair?" my answer to this was, "Do I LOOK like I'm having fun?". The reason for all my funny and sarcastic answers is that I learned that pain does not hurt as much if you can laugh about it. You just have to learn to laugh about life. My all time favorite question was, "Is it fun to be in the hospital?" to which I would reply, "No, room service cost too much!" The only serious question I got asked a lot was, "Are you still a Girl Scout? Do you blame them?" my answer always is "Yes, I am still a Girl Scout, but no, I don't blame the Girl Scouts it wasn't their fault. It was a freak accident." At first a lot of attention is fun but after a while you just wish people would leave you alone.

At the end of the school year my school had an award ceremony. I got an award for perfect attendance. This didn't surprise me. Although I had been in the hospital I really hadn't missed any school. The hospital has a school teacher who came to me every day to bring me my school assignments.

Although there were a lot of things I could do there were some things I couldn't do. While my class was at gym I did math and as they had fun planting a potato garden I had to watch. When I got out of a wheelchair the hardest thing was that I couldn't run, skip or jump. In August when I got my rods taken out I couldn't go swimming so when my friends invited me I had to say no.

While my mom was in the hospital I gained a lot of responsibility and when she came home I kept some of it. Before she had woken me up every morning, packed my lunch and then made my bed. When she was in the hospital I woke up and then got all my siblings up. I made my bed and then both my dad my brother's lunches. You don't realize how much someone does for you until they are gone.

One of my most memorable memories of being in the hospital was the girl in the room next to me. I had so many flowers in my room that it smelled like a florist shop but she didn't have any flowers. I asked the nurses and they said that she was in the hospital a lot and her parents lived far away. I felt so sorry for her. I wanted to do something for her. I had received two pairs of socks with fancy stitching. I thought she might like them so along with a vase of flowers I left them in her room. When she came back and saw

them you should have seen the look on her face! I told the nurses not to tell her that I gave them to her. It was enough for me just to see how happy I made her.

When I went home I couldn't forget all the other kids in the hospital just like her. I talked to my Girl Scout troop. We decided for our Bronze Award that we would collect toys, games, puzzles, books and all other kinds of stuff for the kid's hospital. We also made cards for the kids who don't get visitors. In the end we collected two whole cars full of toys! This all goes to show everything has a good side and a bad one; you just have to find the right way to look at it.

Anne Kelley
6th Grade
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Middle School Narration
Third Place

Moving

A look of pride and delight was upon my face as I ran to greet my parents. My soccer jersey was stained with dirt, my knees bloody, but I did not care. We had just won our soccer game one to zero, and I had scored the only goal. "Mom, Dad! We WON!" I exclaimed, as if they had not been watching the entire game. I flung my arms around them in a dirty embrace, too overjoyed to realize that the hug they returned was less than half-hearted. I pulled out of the hug and gave my friend Piper a high-five, and then the two of us dashed over to where our coach was waiting. The best part of the Soccer game was yet to come.

I was six years old then, and so naturally the best part was the pizza and ice cream party that the team went to afterwards. It was fun on days that we had been unfortunate enough to lose, but on days where we had emerged victorious, the parties were heavenly. They gave me a feeling of such immense jubilation, as if securing the fact that absolutely nothing could go wrong. Perhaps it was this feeling that made me overlook the oddly glum behavior of my parents that day, as if they were preoccupied by some sort of terrible thought.

Well, at this party the pizza tasted better, the ice cream felt even more soothing in my throat, horse from cheering. The feeling of satisfaction was stronger than it had ever felt before, for I was the team's hero for the day. Never before had I felt quite so "Invincible" as now. And so as my parents approached, their faces heavy and their shoulders slumped almost apologetically, I automatically assumed that they were merely tired.

"Maggie, we have some bad news." My dad's voice was tired as he pulled up a chair and sat down before me, getting merely a confused mumble in response, for the generous bite of pizza I had just taken was hard to talk through. However, I was not overly worried, for it was probably something minor, like canceling our scheduled trip to Toronto. Ah well, I didn't like it there much anyways. So I just put on a brave smile, trying to look like I was worried. I think that it worked, for upon seeing the expression my mom gave my dad a pleading look as if to say 'Oh please, it would break her poor little heart.' I couldn't help but smile as my dad gave a grave nod in response, a smile that was soon replaced with a blank look, like a dog who had just bitten the odd protrusion sticking out of his rear, and was puzzled as to why his tail had suddenly begun hurting. Yes, for just then, my father uttered the words every six year old girl fears most; "We're moving."

It took a while for this to sink in, and as the dumbstruck look faded off of my features, I responded to the statement with a reaction that made my mom's eyebrows rise. I laughed, and I laughed loudly too. What a funny thought, my parents expected me to believe that we were going to move away from my native land. Where I had made countless friends, had so many great times, and gotten in trouble infinite times. Perhaps I would have fallen for it on any other day, but no, not then, for on that day I was invincible. I was a hero.

"It's not final yet, but Maggie, I'm not kidding. I got a great job offer at the University of North Carolina, and your mother and I have agreed that it's a good idea to

accept." A touch of annoyance had crept into his surprisingly earnest voice. But I just rolled my eyes and spoke with exasperation. "I *know* you're joking dad, it's not funny anymore!" But I laughed again anyways, and swaggered off. Who knows, perhaps I really knew that they were telling the truth and just didn't want to have to face the terrible thought of losing everything I had come to love. Perhaps I really was stubborn enough not to believe my parents. Either way, my parents did not bring the subject back up for another month, and thus I was contented. Or at least I pretended to be.

I did not say anything to my friends, and kept the ominous thoughts of moving as far from mind as I could. However, as the feeling of invincibility started to wear off, I began to develop an uncomfortable feeling in the pit of my stomach, for looking back on the behavior of my parents, I realized that my dad's face was too earnest for it to be another one of his pathetic attempts at humor. But losing all my friends... It was too horrible of a thought, so I forced myself not to dwell upon it.

Well, by the time the month had passed I had convinced myself that indeed my father had been telling the truth, but they had decided that moving was a bad idea. One day however, as I was reading in my bed, I heard the loud sound of a vehicle driving up our driveway. It was too screechy to be a car. My heart started thudding without my consent, and I reluctantly peered out the window.

"DAD!!!" My voice was shrill as I thumped up the stairs and into his office. He flinched when he saw the mixture of rage and desperation clouding my features. For, driving menacingly up the driveway, large enough to carry a good deal of a family of six's furniture, was a moving van. He just sighed, and tensed up to brace himself for my next verbal assault. My words were more hesitant, my voice meeker as I spoke out again.

"We're *not* moving, right? The movers just have the wrong address... RIGHT?!" I looked pleadingly at my father, wordlessly praying that he would agree. His response made me want to slap his face; instead I knocked a vase off the table with a shriek of rage.

"No Maggie, we tried to tell you, we're moving to Chapel Hill, North Carolina." As I stormed out of the room, my head pounded with the ominous words. North Carolina was oh so far from Michigan...

That week I was forced to go through the ominous process of telling each of my friends. Each time I said the words, they sounded even more real, and even more terrible. Kathleen started crying, Eliza's eyes widened with disbelief, Piper gave me a choking hug. None of these things made me feel even better, nor did anything my other pals did. By the time we got into the car, it was all I could do to hold back tears. Normally during this ride I would have been worrying about what was to come, but the last minute goodbyes with my friends had left me with too much already on my mind. I was pondering sadly upon what I was leaving behind.

But the car ride was long, and my despair was soon joined with an ominous feeling of nervousness. Starting a new school was a scary prospect, especially since I would know no one. What if I didn't make any friends? What if I got teased because I was from Michigan? The start of school was not far away and I got consistently more nervous as we drove along.

I shouldn't have worried. I made friends quickly, and was accepted easily into my first-grade class at Glenwood Elementary. By the second month of school I hardly missed

Michigan any more, and often found myself laughing at my reluctance to move. No, I had great friends in Michigan, but my friends here were just as good.

One year after we had moved into our new house, I was sitting around a restaurant table with my friends, an overjoyed expression on my face. We had just won a soccer game, and I was eating my pizza happily. I was surrounded by my best friends, and it seemed like nothing could go wrong. My dad's touch was light as he put his hand on my arm. I apologized to my pals, and let him lead me off to another table. As I looked into his face, I saw an expression I had seen once before. "I hate to say it Maggie, but we're moving again." Our house, though beautiful, was a bit too old, and so there was always the possibility of us moving nearby. I however, deemed this very unlikely. Of course I would not doubt him again, both of us knew that, and so I guess he expected me to start crying. The startled look on his face betrayed the fact that he was not ready for my response. I smiled, throwing my arms around him in a hug, and was glad to see that the one he returned was not half-hearted. Well, when he told me that we were staying in Chapel Hill but that I would still have to go to a new school, I smiled. I would lose great friends, but wherever I went, be it a mile away, or a hundred miles away, I knew that I could make new friends that were just as good.

Maggie Meshnick
6th Grade
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Middle School Exposition
Second Place

Change Is Not Always Sensible

Some changes seem to go along with the scheme of life while others cause life to be unpredictable and make no sense. The examination of my life is in three examples, starting from kindergarten, to middle school.

In kindergarten we were assigned a cubicle in which to place our coat, boots, backpack and other belongings. The size of this cubicle is immense, for that matter we could even stand in it, which at the age of five seemed rather fun. On the other hand in middle school our lockers are less than half the size of our old cubicle and now we must place a backpack, which weighs over fifty pounds, our sports and/or band instruments, a coat, and the rest of the books that won't fit into the already crammed backpack, all into a space the size of a sardine can. Does this change seem sensible?

Another change that takes place is the amount of time given to move from class to class. In elementary school 10 minutes were spent going from the classroom to let's say the music room four doors down. We were given a restroom break and time at the water fountain between each change in class. Now in middle school we have a mere three minutes to jettison ourselves from English class to the science lab on the other side of the building and also try to hit a necessary pit stop in the ladies/men's room before the cruelty of the bell sends us down the hall to the office to get a dreaded pink slip to be able to enter the hall of learning. How can this change be considered logical?

This is also bizarre, why is it when we were in kindergarten and there, a real tough day consisted of story time, singing a few songs, and finger painting, that we received a snack time and nap? Now enter middle school, we have seven hours of non stop brain activity and here we are lucky if we can get through the long lunch line to get fifteen minutes to shovel it in. This change does not seem sensible.

I think you are beginning to get the picture and must agree with me that somehow there must have been a reversal of the Earth's tilt on its axis to cause these unbalanced changes to occur. There needs to be a conversion to take place to put things back in a proper order such as, more space for all of that wonderful school gear, more time or a propulsion system to get from class to class, and my favorite, an addition of snack and naptimes to rejuvenate those tired brain cells.

Oh well, a person should be allowed to have their dreams for a better life and that is one thing I would never change. As the world turns accept the challenges that change may bring you and just think how bored you would probably be if there were no changes which add a little bit of excitement to our life.

Carah Austin
7th Grade
Whiteland, Indiana

Middle School Exposition
Third Place

"They always say time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself" -Andy Warhol, U.S Artist (1928-1987) *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*

There was an old idiom that states, "Time will tell." People often use this excuse when depending on time to change a situation they're not satisfied with. They're afraid of change and hope that, as time passes, the situation would improve by itself. Therefore, they do nothing and end up less than efficacious results. This is because relying on time is passive and, if it ever does prove effective, it often squanders too much time that may prove to be productive someday. Therefore, one shouldn't depend on time, but create the change himself or be "active". Whether he wishes to resume a lost position or to promote to a higher position, retaining an active role would allow him to gain more control over what happens. This is effective in many situations.

Upon falling, one is responsible for making her way back up again. She cannot wait in hopes for some sort of disillusionment. That would be too passive, and ultimately, put her into more desperation for a solution to her problem(s). A pertinent example would be the 2001 stock market crash; a time when it was possible for pompous billionaires to become humble mendicants over the course of an hour. Many of the businessmen and businesswomen, especially stock owners, waited for time to deal them a better hand. Sure enough, the circumstances became worse and CEOs and VPs result to performing outrageous tasks in order to survive. This was somewhat represented in the recent movie, Fun with Dick and Jane (2005). However, if the people affected by the stock market crash weren't so passive, they would've accepted the fact that life is unpredictable and gotten a new job (even if it was slightly below their normal standards). In addition they could've applied their skills and experiences to these occupations and soon promote themselves to their past occupational position.

Therefore, one needs to always be ready for change. Whether it's in class, a political campaign, or a company, the only person who can improve the current situation is oneself. Therefore, one needs to take an active role in changing the situation to change the circumstances. Doing a bit more than the given task, intentionally presenting neater work, or trying harder to relate to the public are all ways to create change that improves an unsatisfying position/reputation. This kind of change, the kind that operates from within oneself, is what truly affects the future of that person.

However, despite the obvious benefits for a person to be active in creating the change herself, there are times when waiting is inevitable. These times include waiting for the results of a test (from x-rays to the SATs) and for appointments and meetings. Although it may prove to be disadvantageous to be overly active in setting a particular appointment date and time, one can still utilize a less risky way in making the meeting as productive as possible. Whether it's at a doctor's office or a conference room, it would never hurt to prepare for the occasion. For example, writing down the questions would be effective in reminding what one might forget when present at the doctor's office. In addition, organizing and proofreading business presentations would get one's point across more clearly and effectively.

In conclusion, people need to depend on themselves to change a situation they aren't satisfied with. Depending on time to bring better fortune is usually ineffective and would bring the person back to where she started. In addition to the saying "time will

tell", time will only tell when it acts as a medium where people can do something that will "tell".

Eunice Chow
8th Grade
Bayside, New York

High School Poetry
First Place

Rio Grande

I know that my house was thrown away when we left.
The stained, scratchy couch
and the old air mattress on the cold linoleum floor
are probably tattered and ripped
and pissed on by three generations of cats by now,
but I want to see them.

I want to see where my mother rested when the weight
of her stomach pulled painfully at her back,
where my dad's long hair draped
across the back of the dark blue couch
when his 19 year old feet hurt
from the stress of working in the desert.

I want to see where my mother hung her overalls
when they were wet from floating
down the Rio Grande to escape the heat,
her tan stomach bobbing above the surface in the sun,
the rays graciously making her unborn child's hair
as red as fire.

I know the sculptures are gone,
the ones made by a struggling father
on the front lawn made of dirt.
"Tienen que ser locos."
The neighbors would say as they looked out at our home
behind it a backdrop of mountains that shook
with the heat of the sky,
us a sore spot on the horizon,
(a chicken rattled its cage on the neighbor's lawn).
The wooden objects outside the door
spun at night in the cold desert wind.
They made noises that kept my father sane.

Thin metal walls bend easily,
and cinder block foundations are only temporary.
Where do homes go to be recycled?
I wish I had a piece of the plastic tile
from the kitchen/living room/bedroom floor
to glue in this new empty house
where the beds don't end up on the floor by morning,
but the sun outside is not the same.

There are only cold, stale rooms,
so detached from the heat in which I was born,
in my house now.

I want to see what I can never truly remember;
I want to know that the past is warmer than the present.
I want to see the water in which my mother
washed my baby clothes dozens of times
before I was born,
the clear bright sun that dried them in minutes.
I want to see my origins.

Elspeth Leman
12th Grade
Chicago, Illinois

High School Poetry
Second Place

Metamorphosis

Water, fickle as a capricious cloud, withers away at stubborn rocks
to pale, tame pebbles in the sun;
Just as time cannot move backwards from steadfast clocks,
Change cannot be undone.

Twilight has dawned upon many, ending breath upon breath;
We cannot hear the maples sigh at their fate nor can we confess
that humankind creates life from another's death--
That upon a piece of paper, a maple sighs, and a poet writes down emptiness.

Change has bless'd humans with countless gifts, advancement among many;
As steel grey towers rise and fall, so do the trees
and all of mortality and virtue, if there were any,
will be wisped away by the unpredictable breeze.

From the gradual withering of stone to steel,
Radical ideology springs forth like a narcissus beside a dirty street;
Humans look to their traditions and old ideals
just to realize their sudden defeat.

People, fickle as capricious clouds, build upon the past
but may sometimes trample upon their olden days.
The future flies by quickly and fast
yet there are some things that are here to stay.

Amy Huang
12th Grade
Brooklyn, New York

High School Poetry
Third Place

The Clothes We Wear

I put on the clothes I'm supposed to wear,
The garments to which I have grown accustomed
They show our arrogance and superiority
I don't like the classification that I'm in

The garments to which I have grown accustomed
Provoking abhorrence among the others, not in my crowd
I don't like the classification that I am in
If only they could change, if only we could change

Provoking abhorrence among others, not in my crowd
We call names and they call back
If only they could change, if only we could change
Then I wouldn't have to hide behind my clothes

We call them names and they call back
If we didn't call ourselves popular and if they didn't agree
Then I wouldn't have to hide behind my clothes
But instead I make fun

If we didn't call ourselves popular and if they didn't agree
It would show our simplicity, our natural malice
But instead I make fun
And I put on the clothes that I'm supposed to wear.

Drew Keneally
11th Grade
Manhasset, New York

High School Narration
First Place

Joyriding

The smog is the Valley's horizon, its constant companion, dyeing its skies a drab toffee, filtering all light to the same vomit-like afterglow that hovers over the city at night, creating, depending on where you are, eternal twilight. Generally, the smog hangs high in the atmosphere, too far away to be tangible. But when it rains, the smog embraces the clouds and floods the Valley with brackish rubble-filled pools that smell of rotting eggs.

Airy drops of drizzle bounced off the windshield of the black Jaguar. The car had stopped at the red of the stoplight, and was waiting for the green light. Its window wipers arched right and left, succeeding only in splattering the tiny dewdrops into lines of droplets along the surface of the glass.

The boy sat cross-legged in the back seat of the car, his eyes closed. The radio was off and there was no conversation between the boy and his driver. But his foot tapped the floor of the car, and he counted in a whisper, "One, two, three." He opened his eyes and the light turned green. The car began to move and the boy's eyes closed again. He tapped and whispered, "Eleven, twelve, thirteen." He looked up and the billboard looked as it always had, a blank slate with deep gashes where the glaze had been torn. It beckoned for someone, anyone to break its accursed emptiness. But it remained empty for the last three years, and it didn't look as if it would be filled anytime soon, for the advertising agency that owned the billboard had filed for Chapter 11 long ago.

It took 130 more taps to get to school. A hundred steps to get to his first class, provided he got his books. Clockwork, really.

His first class was a gray room with barred windows, deterrents to baseballs and assorted UFOs everywhere, though it only succeeded in blocking the fading sunshine. The class tables were four square and they faced forward in a neat straight lines. The lecture was about to begin and the teacher, about to mark the boy late looked at the clock and said, "Guess I had too many martinis last night." 54th time. The same joke, the same chorus of laughter. The class blocks might flip around or switch like musical chairs, but it was the same dance, the same steps again and again and again. Do your homework, be polite, be normal. There was nothing to be afraid of, there was nothing to be excited about. It was, as everyone explained to him, the perfect life he would miss when he entered the real world.

The bell rang twice. School was over. He walked through the patioed halls until he reached the loading zone. The morning drizzle had turned to afternoon rain. He hadn't noticed and he really didn't care. All of his classes were inside one building. There was no need to leave his classroom. So why get out?

The drive was silent, punctuated only by the sound of raindrops hitting the roof of the car. As it moved into the cul-de-sac, the car compressed the flattened remains of road kill that had been lying on the road for weeks. The garage door opened.

The door opened in 5.4 seconds. Automated, it was constant. Careful to avoid the drenched sides of the vehicle, the boy stumbled towards the door. He climbed the

stairs to his room and deposited his books. He collapsed onto his chair and turned the light on. He spun around and around as he read his book and munched on potato chips. But the pounding of rain drove nails into his brain. He turned off the light and huddled under his blankets.

But he could not sleep, for the rain bothered him. He walked through the silent corridors of the house and picked up a worn book from his bookshelf. He sat on his bed, with the window open, the lights closed. The wind would have blown, but it was deadly still. He has been reading the first page for three years.

He turned the page and stood up. He cast the book to the floor and rushed into the garage. He opened the door and it closed with a slam. He viewed the car almost quizzically, and brushed his fingers along its sleek frame. Opening the door, the lights blinked in expectation and frightened by his boldness, the boy almost ran all the way back to his room.

"No more waiting," he shouts.

He thrusts the key into the ignition and the beast roars.

He presses a button and garage door opens. He backs out and is in the middle of the cul de-sac.

He stopped and put both hands on the steering wheel. His rested his head against clenched hands. He sat here for maybe ten minutes, after which he slams his fist into the horn. The horn blows for a second, but is eaten by the darkness. He slams his foot on the ignition and the car bursts into motion.

It is true that when the rain mixes with the smog the concrete turns into a devilish stew, but after the clouds have said their part, the sky is open and the night attains a type of sharpness. One can almost taste the clarity of the air and the streetlights that would have spread its gleam through the evening mist are almost useless faced with the pressing darkness. The full moon eclipses all the stars and every pool reflects her light.

The car breaks the tranquility of the moon's reflection as it speeds through the neighborhood. Roll.

The neon lights of the city beckon with its promise of sin, pleasure and lechery, but he passes it on, for they are the chains of the undecided. He doesn't know how to brake, but the roads are dark and empty.

He has come back. The road ends in a cul-de-sac that overlooks the surrounding valley. The boy steps on the ignition and the Jaguar, with a ferocious roar, jumps the curve. Ramming into the guardrails, the Jaguar drives, through the wire, through the road, through the air. The boy screams in delight as he flew through the air. He didn't think once about falling.

Mark Chen

11th Grade

North Hollywood, California

High School Narration
Second Place

The Tree Fort

It's the same as we left it seventeen years ago. A dry creek bed and a half-built tree fort. Change, it seems, takes its time in the cob-webbed corners of the world, devoid of drafts and overlooked by brooms. I could never understand the logic of entropy, the injustice and inconsistency. Mom always said that it's a reminder that God's work was better before we came around and tore it apart, that it's a reminder of human error. Philosophy never was *my* strong suit, though.

The only difference here is the neighborhood around it. All of the houses are restored or replaced. Agnes's abandoned and shoddy Victorian home is now a pristine suburban gem; Althea's pleasant ranch-style home has given way to a well-trimmed 3-acre lawn. They're casualties of the highway that went in a few blocks away about a decade ago, a highway that brought more than we had bargained for. If it weren't for my dad's stubbornness, my own childhood home would have had the same fate as the rest of the block, but he wouldn't move out. Instead, our new neighbors begrudgingly donated funds for home improvements to "clean up the area," which he took and, with perverse pleasure, decorated the interior. Sadly, his reign of terror ended abruptly only a few years after it had begun with a not-wholly-unexpected heart attack. My mother, though she kept the house, has since yielded to the neighbors' wishes much more willingly.

I haven't visited the creek since I moved away for college. In fact, I rarely make it back to this town at all. It isn't really my town anymore. If it weren't for Agnes's funeral, I wouldn't be here now, either. But deaths and social obligations always put me in the mood for adolescence, so I've taken a trip down the street.

This creek bed, for whatever reason, has proven the last bastion of life as it was—as a humble and uninspired part of a small town, for a people who worked hard to get by, a people precariously comfortable. It's funny—it always seemed to stretch on for miles, this creek, with the unkempt brambles and vines—like a ferocious African jungle—and I would often go exploring along the banks and, during droughts, across the chalky stones of the creek bottom. I would never make it through to the street, though; my imagination's sense of survival wouldn't allow it—it could have ruined my fun. In reality, it's only a few hundred yards over to the next block.

This was the meeting point for the few boys that were on our block. We would ride our hand-me-down bikes off of the sidewalk and down the slope and assemble under the concrete bridge. Mostly, I just tagged along after my older brother. I would intently listen to them talk about their 12-year-old matters, joining in, only seldomly, to suggest catching crawdads.

One day, they decided to build a tree fort, and over the next several weeks, I helped find scrap lumber, nails, and ropes. The stockpile we had amassed was heaped at the base of the tree, and when we felt we had enough, we began to build. The main deck was finished and hoisted within a few days. We were careful, though, to watch for spectators, since, as Charlie pointed out, we were technically building on public property. We stayed

the course, though, imagining ourselves rebels fighting for a cause; but as it turned out, we had no one to fight, and we finished the project without interruption.

We would clamber up the steep trunk to the deck to trade baseball cards and eat candy and lay in the sun. Occasionally, we would add on, building a loft or a pulley system, never quite satisfied that it was done. Mom would often anxiously ask if we were sure it was sturdy. "Yes," we would lie, "of course we're sure." Sometimes when I was up on the deck---I wasn't allowed in the loft it-- would sway so much I'd swear I was falling.

We used the fort almost daily for about a year. And then came junior high. When the older boys changed schools, the schools changed them. All of the sudden, they weren't interested in baseball cards or bubble gum or forts. And, gradually, I found myself changing, too. There was too much else to do. And so we left the creek to itself for these many years.

But now, I'm back again, and craving childhood. The fort stands as proudly as ever; the oak seems aged and astute, with its bare branching arms as ornate as autumn itself. How weak the urbane looks when pitted against such a stronghold. Perhaps our fort was stronger than we had thought. We must have poured into it just enough mischief and innocence to make it withstand the onslaught of adulteration. Sincerity is invincible, immune to mutation. Though change is powerful, it is no match for simple innocence. And that is something that no materialism or refinement---no highway---can touch.

Sam Lawlor
12th Grade
Olathe, Kansas

High School Narration
Third Place

My Thoughts of You

Hey, Andrew, Andrew, can you hear me up there? I miss you so much Andrew. Oh, I hope you can hear me. You know, this is my last night here. With you gone, I can't bare sitting in this chair, walking through this room, and sleeping in that bed without you. It's all so empty now. I love you so much, Andrew. How could all this have happened?! Four weeks ago we were sitting at a Broadway show together. Laughing, and smiling. Everything was right. We thought nothing could go wrong. It turns out we were wrong. We got in that cab to come home and none of us saw it coming. None of us saw that truck plowing down 5th Avenue.

We were at the peak of our lives, Andrew. Married for four years, both of us with extraordinary careers underway. We were living the high life. We had this perfect apartment in this perfect city. We couldn't ask for anything more.

Now, I'm moving back home; moving back to Jersey. Back to everything I knew before I met you. I love you so much. It's too hard for me to live everyday of my life here. Because here, you are too close, but so far away.

I'll never forget moving into this apartment. We moved here because of this window. From this window, we could see the spot we met. That spot that you ran into me when I was on my way home from work and you we running late for a date. You never made that date, did you? Do you remember that? I remember it like it was yesterday. You were running to meet a woman, but you left work late, so you didn't have the chance to get changed. You were wearing the charcoal suit with that silver tie and your long, black overcoat. You hit me, which in turn knocked me to the ground and my purse landed in that puddle. You stopped instantly. You turned around and said with the most apologetic voice, "Oh my goodness! Are you okay? I am so, so sorry." And then you looked at me. You looked at my eyes first. You looked into my eyes and you never looked away. You helped me up and asked me out to coffee. Did I make a better date then that other woman? We married one year later and moved here. Every night, from our first night here, we sat in this chair together. We sat here, and we watched. We sat here for night after night together. It wasn't long enough.

Andrew, there is something I never had the chance to tell you. I wanted to wait until we got home that night. Now, I sit here wondering why. Why did I wait? Why would anyone ever wait to tell their loved one this? You would have been so happy. It's what you always wanted. I was the one who wanted to wait. I wanted to wait until we were settled in. I guess I waited too long. Maybe we were too settled. Now our child will never have a father.

Caitlin Schaefer
12th Grade
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

High School Exposition
First Place

Just the other day my grandfather was peering over my shoulder as I, absorbed in my on-line conversations, cryptically typed, "lol, that's gr8." With his bifocals hanging off the tip of his nose, he whispered to me in Spanish, "Mi hijo, que haces?" ("My son, what are you doing?"). "IM-ing," I answered, surprised by his presence and curiosity. He stood mesmerized by the windows rapidly popping open on my screen as I typed feverishly to my friends. He looked confused and overwhelmed by the speed with which we were "speaking" to each other. Finally, he said, "Who are these people and why do they have names such as allyhoop and freakinrican?" I typed "h/o 4 a sec" ("Hold on for a second") into each window and spun my chair around to answer his questions. There we were, face to face: a typical American 16-year-old boy adept at utilizing modern technology; and a 79-year-old Cuban immigrant with no idea how to use a computer, let alone the internet or instant messaging.

The conventional wisdom is that change can be found everywhere, but can it really? When it happens as fast as it has in the world of communication, many would argue that the alterations are not changes, but a part of a new lifestyle. Who would ever have thought three years ago that today you could download last night's television program and view it on your cell phone, iPod, or Blackberry? For many, these new discoveries are an essential part of life and not viewed as a change, but as an enhancement.

However, older generations, such as my grandfather's, forgo this new fast-moving lifestyle. Therefore, a dichotomy in lifestyle exists and change is relative to one's view of the world.

As I attempted to explain my world, I became aware that he was overwhelmed trying to understand this technology. I soon realized that while we live at the same point in time, we interact with the world in very different ways. While I cannot imagine my life without my gadgets, my grandfather cannot imagine complicating his life with them. He enjoys his life without incorporating all these changes into his daily regimen. He thinks and speaks in Spanish while I, much to his dismay, do so in English. He relies on his land-line telephone while I always have my cell phone handy to chat by text. He looks up words in the dictionary; I use the word "google" as a verb. My Papi, as I affectionately call him, is happy in his world, and I, who move at a much faster pace, am happy in mine.

Despite the changes occurring all around him, he lives happily adhering to more traditional methods, blissfully ignoring the technological whirlwind surrounding him. I, on the other hand, fearlessly embrace the latest devices with youthful curiosity and am quick to abandon old ideas. At times my grandfather's tales of a slower-paced life sound mysteriously appealing, but more often than not, his lifestyle seems incomprehensible, chaotic, and inconvenient. He lived through the depression, escaped from Cuba, and experienced the threat of nuclear war during the Cold War years. My grandfather has lived through dramatic events that have changed the world as he knew it. He often enjoys leisurely recounting stories with vivid details. I, on the other hand, am seemingly always in a rush. I live in a fast moving world where news events are captured and analyzed in real time, multitasking is routine, and information overload is common. In many ways, I imagine this world superior to the one that existed before me.

Perhaps this is because it's the only way of life I know. Am I just brimming with hubris or lacking the wisdom that comes with a lifetime of living?

Whatever the reason, my grandfather cannot believe how quickly everything is moving around him. The major changes he saw were dramatic once-in-a-lifetime events that altered the course of history and were several years in the making. He had time to react and adjust to what was happening. Today we are programmed to move along at a fast pace and make split second assessments of the events around us. It is a lifestyle that excites me, but bewilders my grandfather. Change is therefore relative; it truly depends on the eyes through which it is viewed.

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Change Once for All

To accommodate increased pollution and a shortage of resources such as fuel and food, the Chinese government took extreme measures and introduced the Only Child Policy. Under this policy, couples in mainland China were prevented from having more than one child. When the policy first introduced in 1979, however, the Chinese government did not comprehend the possible shape of the nation. Now after twenty-seven years, people are beginning to see how the policy with simple means to strengthen the economy by reducing the size of population has impacted the social structure of China in a way that no one has ever anticipated. Other than just population control, China's Only Child Policy resulted in moral misconducts, askew male to female ratio, generation gap, and career-oriented generation.

Historically, China's culture is deeply rooted in Confucianism that values loyalty to the family and ancestors. A family in China often meant three generations of grandparents, parents, and many children living under one roof. This big structure, meaning abundant labor force, was favorable in China's agriculture society. . Also, the head of the family, the father, was obligated to watch over his family and received absolute supremacy in return. When his eldest son became a man, the father would renounce his authority and the expectation of maintaining the reputation of the family would fall on the shoulders of the son. . This centuries-long patriarchal foundation became the concrete groundwork which a building would be directly fixed. When an earthquake, the Only Child Policy, struck, the otherwise stable social structure of China would collapse with nothing to absorb the shakes.

The patriarchal society structure put more value on sons than daughters, so once the Only Child Policy was passed, many Chinese women abused fertility drugs to increase their chance of having a male child. In the year of 1964, 535,173 fewer females were born than male infants. This number cannot be all that bad. The actual difference is much lower because the number of female newborns was underrepresented through countless female infanticides. These undocumented female infanticides have not only violated human rights, but they have also skewed the male to female ratio. Up until this point, the Only Child Policy seems to be very successful in terms of the populations control- it reduced the number of newborns. However, the Only Child Policy and the tradition have caused more problems than they have solved through moral misconducts.

The first generation born under the Only Child Policy has now reached the age to marry. However, the number of grooms is much higher than the number of brides. Imagine this: without girls to marry, the only sons raised by Chinese parents who still had the traditional values rooted deeply suffered from generation gap. As a result, the men found a different way to value themselves: career. Instead of conforming to the rigid foundation of China's family orientation, the males became more career-oriented to compensate the self-disappointment cause by the unsuccessful obligation.

The policy meant to bring economic changes has also stimulated the modification of social structure. Was this change an unsolicited step towards westernization? Most likely not. Perhaps this was an inevitable conformation to the modernizing global. Since

the conventional concept of family has weakened, the post-policy generations will confront the world with new manner, new goals, and new ideas. Perhaps this newly constructed building with isolators underneath its columns would be actually safer.

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