

Portman

Time



Glendale High School, Glendale, CA

English and ELD, Grades 9 - 12

Ms. Kittelson

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The *Portmantimes*

Glendale, CA At Glendale High School in Glendale, CA, students in Ms. Kittelson's English classes, grades 9-12, have expressed themselves through prose, poetry and other forms.

On the pages that follow, you will experience narratives – both autobiographical and fictional, essays, songs and more. Please peruse the *Portmantimes* pleurably and with aplomb.

Apt Autobiographies

Students were each asked to write about a life-changing event in the form of a compelling narrative: set-up, rife with description; rising action; climax and denouement. Their responses were arguably riveting.

Released by Naomi Berrien

Have you ever felt like someone was strong, but not strong enough to release it? Well, I have, but it was released and somehow at the right time.

One scorching hot day, I woke up and carefully walked down the stairs, knowing that it was going to be the same old routine again. I saw my mom doing chores, just like the day before. She looked tired and stressed out. I then felt really depressed.

At the time, I was an only child. You would think it would be good times, then, and all, but it was not. My mom and my dad would always fight. There was *always* a problem, and instead of solving it respectfully like full-grown adults, there would always be conflict that made matters worse. Since they never got married, I wasn't really expecting a divorce to happen.

When my dad woke up, the mood of the whole house went mellow and sad because we expected him to start some kind of trouble. Any kind of trouble.

As he came towards me, I tried to smile at him, but he did not return it. So I said, "Hey, Dad." I must have said it too softly because he acted as if he heard nothing and just walked right past me. I felt as though I was a ghost. There was no point in trying to make things better.

With my spirits down, I decided to go back to my room. I slammed the door, but of course, no one heard it. I sat down, all still, curling myself up like a ball. Once again there was screaming coming down from downstairs, and I could not stop the madness and the chaos. I was very young at the time, about four years old, so I really didn't know what was going on, but I knew that I couldn't do much about it.

The following evening, even though it was cold and gloomy, I went out to ride my bike. There wasn't really anything else to do. My mom was there beside me, and I wanted so much to give her a big hug, but I couldn't. It was as if someone or something was stopping me. I said to myself: *Why I am not strong enough to hug my mother? Is it my dad or just my conscience?*

My mom went into the house. I watched her cook. Ah, the smell of pasta – but not just any pasta. She was making her famous one. I could smell the sauce and all the spices, and I thought to myself *Yummy!*

After eating our noodle meal, I went to take a shower, just to try to forget about things. Taking a bath was the one time when I could drown all my other thoughts and wash them away.

I came out to find my mom with a warm towel. My body was all wet, cold, and wrinkly. When she wrapped the towel around me, it was the first time in a long time that I had felt safe. It made me realize that my mom was strong inside but that she couldn't always show it because of some kind of fear.

I had a feeling that my dad was near. Rightfully so. He was there at the door when we were done. I could see that he was mad that my mom was talking to me.

I gave a fake smile and quietly ran off to bed. I could hear my mom and dad talking, but not loud enough to actually hear what they were saying.

I would often think, "Why don't they understand that fighting is wrong? Why isn't my mom brave enough to stand up for herself?"

I would think that all the time.

Well, I woke up early the next morning not wanting to go out of my room. I felt that my parents wouldn't even notice or care anyway. I heard sounds of boxes and noise nearly every second. Curiously, I went out of my room. I looked in every place in the house except for my mom and dad's room.

I knew my dad was at work, so I went into my parents' bedroom. I saw my mom. I was shocked to find her packing our things. I felt very confused. I thought to myself, *Is this a dream? No! It can't be!* I cautiously approached my mom, and gently asked her, "What are you doing, Mommy?"

"We are leaving. We are going as far away as possible" she said quietly. I knew she was scared, but I could feel that she was ready to do this.

We both frantically and hurriedly rounded up our things as time was ticking and every second was golden.

My mom and I pushed the stuff inside the car, and we made everything fit as much as we could. There were some items that we had to leave behind.

As we got into our vehicle and put on our seat belts, I looked up with surprise to see my dad right at the car window. I thought we were doomed. "Mom!" I shouted while tugging at her. She must have known it would happen; she didn't seem bothered when she saw him. My mom rolled down the car window and bellowed, "We are leaving!"

"And where do you think you're going?" my dad angrily snapped back... then added after trying to open the door, "You can't just walk out on me!"

I was very nervous. My heart was pounding heavily in my chest. My mom gave my dad a look like no other. I then felt relieved, like a ton of weight had been lifted off my shoulders. "I don't want to live like this anymore!" my mom replied as she looked straight into his eyes.

My mom closed the car window, and we drove off fast.

That was a most memorable time where I felt safe and secure. My mom finally had a hidden grin that showed that she was happy and that made me happy too.

My life is finally the way I want it to be. No more worries, and all the stress has vanished away into thin air. Every time I think of my dad, I get stronger and more sure that my mom did the best thing.

We went to live with my uncle at his house. I went to my bedroom, and seeing my mom in peace, I ran over to her and gave her a big warm hug. "I love you, Mommy" I said while wrapped in her arms.

"I love you too," my mom said back, and I knew it was going to be the beginning of a better life.

My mom is a strong woman. I always knew she was. It

was just all locked up inside, waiting to be released at just the right time.

Terry by Michelle Valladares

Birthday mornings are wonderful. Getting woken up at 6 AM to receive a phone call from a family member is just great.

Not. I hate it.

On my birthday I like to do things my way. My way includes sleeping in. Unfortunately my dad has never seemed to understand how much I really dislike being woken up for things that could be put off.

Ever since I was about six, he thought it was appropriate to wake me the sweet sound of "Happy Birthday" sung by the family in El Salvador. I love them to death, yes, it's just that I thought by now they would know the time difference.

Amazingly, after nine years, they still don't get that I don't like to be woken up. I love getting the birthday wishes and feeling important on my birthday, but what I don't like is how early they decide to call. And I had a long day ahead of me.

I took the phone call, and after saying thank you to what felt like a million people, I got off the phone to get ready to look decent to go out into the living room for breakfast.

I heard my mom and aunt laughing, along with the clinking of forks being put down. It smelled like pancakes and coffee. Of course, what else would it smell like on a Saturday morning?

I walked into the living room to be greeted by two monotonous "Good morning, happy birthday's" followed by a big "HELLO!" from my dad.

"Sweetie, good morning! Happy birthday! I love you!"

"Thanks, Daddy!" I said sweetly.

I sat at my place at the table where there was a little cake just a bit bigger than a cupcake. It said "Happy Birthday, Michelle." I love cupcakes but not frosting. Everyone in my family knows that. That's why the writing was on a piece of dark chocolate.

"Is this for me?" I asked.

"It has your name on it, right? It is your birthday, right?" My aunt said in the sarcastic fashion she often proudly displays.

"Thanks, you guys!" I wasn't going to let her attitude ruin another one of my days – especially *my* day.

I proceeded to eat the cake contentedly then realized I had to go check my phone. God knew how many text messages or voicemails or phone calls were there! So I excused myself from the table and went to my room to check my phone.

I had lots of responses to text back, including a lot of "Thanks, but sorry, I can't go out today; maybe tomorrow."

My favorite messages were the ones I got right at midnight. A particular one that I locked into my cell phone was so cute:

"Happy birthday, Michelle. If it weren't for today I would not be the happiest guy on the the Earth. I thank God for fourteen years ago on this day. I love you with all my heart forever and beyond. – Michael."

I was so happy to get that message. I was also happy that I had a computer. I had to go check something really important.

I walked into the room where the computer was and went straight to the animal care and control website. I went to page 27 to see if it was still available. It was a cute little Bichon Frise. I called my dad over and showed him the picture.

"See, Daddy, that's him. That's the puppy." I cried in an overly excited, yet still sincere voice. "We are going today, right?" I asked very anxiously.

"I keep my promises, don't I? We'll go right after we go to the warehouse to get those tiles."

"Eeep! I'm so excited! Puppies!" I said like a little kid.

My dad just laughed and walked out of the room. I knew he was happy about the puppy too. We are going to have to keep things on the down-low for now, though. My mom does *not* like dogs – or animals in general, to be honest.

So, as planned we went to the tile store to get the supplies my dad needed for a job he had the next week. While I was there waiting, I was talking on the phone with Michael. He apologized over and over for not being able to spend time with me on my birthday, but promised me a birthday dinner. Hearing the dinner invitation spiked my mood from 100 to 1000.

Then my dad urged, "Michelle lets go," which thrilled me.

When we got into the car I turned on the TomTom. That's our GPS device. I typed in the address to the shelter and the GPS said, "Approximate time, 30 minutes." I never took my eyes off that timer.

When we finally pulled into the shelter, I went to go ask the desk clerk where the specific dog was. She just pointed to a general area with dozens of dogs, and I said, "Yay, an adventure." (I'm sarcastic like my aunt.) Not surprisingly the desk clerk said, "Yep, have fun with that." I walked out and toward the dogs that seemed the friendliest.

When I finally got to the puppy – my puppy – I realized that it was not a puppy. It was huge. It was colossal. When he stood on his two hind legs its front paws were almost at my hips. Yes, it was that big. I asked my dad if we could just keep looking around to see if there were any other dogs. He simply nodded in amazement. We walked back and forth for about half an hour.

Then, I saw what must have been the cutest, most adorable puppy I had seen in all my life. He seemed to be sleeping. His eyes were half closed and his head lay between his paws. I didn't say anything, but I think he must have felt me there because his eyes shot open, and his head popped up. He stood there stretching and shook himself off. Then he just stared at me.

I called him over. I put about three fingers through the fence. His tail wagged, and he licked my fingers.

I asked one of the workers if she could take him out of the cage so I could play with him to see if he was a good dog. (Because that's what you do if you are interested in getting a puppy.) She told me that he was not available and that all I could do is go to the front desk, give them his serial number and have me added to an interested party list.

I took the paper with the puppy's information on it and marched right over to the front desk. I had to take a number from one of those red dispensers. While I was waiting on one of the stiff chairs I realized that I had a fat cat sitting right next to me. It was a soft cat. I gathered that it lived in the office because it was so calm. I was in the middle of petting the cat when I heard "Last call! Number 43!" I realized that was my number, so I jumped up.

"How can I help you today?" remarked the cheerful clerk.

"I would like to adopt a puppy. Here's the paper with the information." I watched her type in all kinds of things before she told me what I had already heard – that the puppy wasn't available and did I want to be added into the interested party list. Obviously, I agreed. I wanted that puppy more than I've wanted anything in life. I probably sounded like a child, but it was the truth, and honesty is the best policy.

"Okay, we'll call you in about four days to tell you if you got the puppy. By the way, there is a person ahead of you on the list."

When I heard there was someone else, I was going to curse out loud, but I remembered that there were little kids and my dad around.

"Okay, I will just wait – anxiously. Thank you," I said almost mechanically. I walked out of there with a worried look on my face – a face that meant *I need that dog*.

A wonderful event was coming up: Freshmen orientation. That had me pumped. So I sort of forgot about the puppy for a few hours. To be honest, I tried to forget about the dog. It had me too nerve-wrecked. So I just relaxed and went to sleep, and for the first time in a long time, I set the alarm on my phone.

The music on my phone shot me into the air. I got dressed and ready for orientation. I ate breakfast super fast and got ready to go.

While my friends and I waited in line to go into orientation, my phone rang. It was a four digit number. I showed my friends, and they looked at me with that ANSWER IT face. So, I did just that.

"Hello?" I said with a voice that was a little more confused-sounding than normal.

"Yes, hello, my name is Sarah, I'm calling with the animal care and control center. I was wondering if you were still interested in adopting the puppy.

"Most definitely! When may I get him? Today?"

"Yes, just bring a leash, a collar and his ID number."

"I will be there!" I said enthusiastically. "Thank you so much!" Then I heard her hang up.

I told everyone around me the news. During orientation, I was so energetic. Just really happy and delighted. I sent a

text message to my dad telling him the news. He said we could go get the collar and leash after we broke the news to my mom. Orientation passed pretty quickly, and then I remembered that Michael was going to come see me. I stayed a while with him and then my dad came to pick me up.

When my dad came, I told him how excited I was, and then my mom called. My excitement died a little when my dad begged me not to say anything over the phone. So I told my mom that we were a block away and we would be home soon. When we got onto my street, I saw my best friend sitting in front of my apartment building.

"Shelby, hi! What are you doing here?" I asked.

"I wanted to go with you to the shelter, if that's okay."

"That's perfectly fine with me, Dad can she go?"

"Yes. Now let's go talk to your mom."

"Great." I said, sincerely about Shelby coming and sarcastically about talking to my mom.

Once we got to my house, we decided to just go and say it straight out. No loopholes, no side-tracks, just straight to the point.

"Hey, Mom." I said smiling.

"What's with the grin on your face?"

"Well, you know how my whole life I have wanted a puppy? Well, I got my chance. On my birthday we went to the animal shelter and found a small puppy. He won't grow to be big, and he seems really mellow."

"What does that have to do with anything?" She asked.

My dad then chimed in, "Well, we are adopting the puppy. We are going to go pick him up in about 15 minutes."

"WHAT?! NO! I WILL NOT LIVE WITH AN ANIMAL!!! I REFUSE!" She insisted, as usual.

I argued back, "Well, I think that I'm pretty capable of taking care of a little animal. You won't have to do anything. I will feed him, clean up his accidents, take him for walks and all that."

"Well I'm not participating in a stupid dog. Go adopt him if you want, but I'm not giving an okay."

I was really shocked with my dad's reaction to what my mom said. He grabbed the car keys off the dresser and headed for the door. "We are going to get the dog. Let's go, Michelle."

I followed behind him, silently. When we went into the living room, I pointed Shelby towards the door without saying a word.

Once we were in the car, my dad started in saying that it was his house and mine as well. That Mom was just going to have to adjust to the dog. I think he wanted the dog just as much as I did.

To lighten the topic in the car, I started asking what to name the dog. Shelby wanted me to name him Spocket because of one of our inside jokes. My dad didn't like the name. He said he wanted to name him Terry after his childhood dog. That was his final answer. I couldn't do anything to give the poor puppy a more creative name, which got me down because I like original names. Oh well.

When we got to the shelter I was bursting with excitement. We went into the main office, and I saw the fat cat again. I decided not to get distracted with it this time. I was going to have my own little furry friend to pet in a very little bit. I gave the clerk Terry's number. No words were exchanged. She called someone on her radio who walked in and pointed toward the door, which lead me to a little house. In the little house were cages where they kept the dogs that were going to be adopted and taken home. The worker unlocked the cage and handed me the puppy.

I don't know if they were usually bitter when they gave away puppies, or if these people were just having a bad day, but I was smiling. I wasn't going to let some grouchy employees ruin a really happy moment. I took the puppy and he licked my face and looked genuinely happy. I was thrilled.

"Welcome to the family, Terry." I said warmly.

We got into the car. Terry sat in the back with Shelby and me. He was so happy to be loved. That's how I read his excitement, anyway. We showered him with sweet calls and all the little pampering a tiny puppy deserves. I was really, for once, completely happy.

When we got to Glendale we decided to first take him to Verdugo Park. There he barked loudly for the very first time. I thought he was going to be a quiet little puppy, but I guess I was wrong. He barked at a dog that was growling at him. OK. My dog might be loud, but at least he's not a coward. We walked him around for a while, and he was a happy camper.

After the park we went to Petco and got him all his things he would need. There was a bed, food and bowls. Plus the very important, puppy pads.

When we went up to pay, I signed up for a Petco Pals discount card to use for Terry's whole life.

When I got home, my mom didn't seem too thrilled to see the four legged fur ball, especially when it pooped on her nice, well-taken-care-of-hardwood flooring. Not such a great start.

Weeks passed and I got increasingly attached to Terry. So did my dad. And Terry returned the sentiment. Whenever I would get home from school I would enter and have this little creature run to me all excited. Jumping at my legs all happy that I arrived. Terry made me feel special, important, loved. I hope I made him feel the same way. It was just an amazing experience to be with this dog. To take care of a life. My mom kept being annoyed by him, and my dad kept on loving him more and more. But being a man of temper, which he really is, my mom's constant nagging got to him. It got into his head, and she kept persisting about giving him away.

One day I was sitting on the couch watching TV with Terry sleeping on my lap. My mom was talking on the phone with my aunt who lives in Canada

"Yeah it's still here. On Michelle's lap. She won't let the thing out of her sight. No I don't think I will ever like that thing. But what's good is Manuel finally agreed with me, and we are giving it away next week."

"WHAT?! NO!" I cried as tears started to form in my

eyes. "I WONT LET YOU!! I LOVE THIS DOG!"

At this point, Terry was completely awake. Seeing my cry only made him whine. I don't think it did any good for the situation. I put him in my arms and ran to my parents' room where my dad was watching TV.

"YOU'RE GIVING AWAY TERRY?! HOW COULD YOU?! I THOUGHT YOU LOVED HIM TOO!!" I shrieked.

"I know, Michelle, but you have to understand. He is getting a lot more hyper and mischievous. Letting him stay here won't do any good – not for my health or sanity. Your mother has me at wit's end about Terry. There's always some kind of complaint."

"It doesn't matter what I want, does it? It never has, and it never will." I barked in a hissing tone.

I went out into the living room, checked to see if my phone was in my pocket, grabbed my keys and Terry's leash and went for a walk. I just walked and walked. And when Terry looked tired, I picked him up and just kept walking. I walked for about five hours, just walking with no aim in mind. Luckily, I ended up getting somewhere familiar. I entered the living room in silence and went straight to my room. I fell asleep as soon as my head hit the pillow. Terry fell asleep even before we got home. I fell asleep with tears in my eyes, just watching him lie there.

The next day, my dad and I discussed where Terry would go. We had a week to get rid of him. It hurt me so much. I ended up choosing someone I trusted. I chose Michael. I knew he would help me out. I talked to him and made the decision to have him keep Terry until we found him a more permanent home.

When I got to school the next day, I asked a bunch of friends who might be allowed to have a dog at their home for good. Jenna said her parents would probably agree. She went home and asked and the next day she said yes.

The week passed, and I felt more sad with every passing day. The last night was the worst of all. When I came home from Terry's last walk, I was all-out crying. Once I got into my room, I sobbed. I sobbed loud and heavy. Terry slept on my bed that last night, and unlike any other night, he didn't wake up or make any noise; he slept through the night. He must have known, as well as I, that it was our last night. I didn't want to lose him just as much as I had wanted him.

Giving him to Michael was one of the hardest things ever. I visited Terry every day at Michael's, all while Jenna finished moving into her new house.

I couldn't bear to give Terry away to Jenna. So Michael did it. I know I am going to keep visiting my puppy. No matter who the owner is, Terry will always be *my* puppy. He changed my life in a way that is somehow a lingering memory, but lasting. His coming and then his leaving has left a crater in my heart.

The Specialness of Every Day by Yessica Delgado

On a Saturday morning I woke up to the sound of the bathroom shower and the voice of my mom on the phone talking and talking to one of her friends. It was a beautiful morning. I felt the sun shine through my window, hitting my face with brightness.

My bed was so comfortable I did not want to get up for anything. I heard my mom call my name downstairs, but I still didn't want to get up. My body was so lazy.

When I got up, the first thing I did was bow on my knees, put my hands together, and give thanks to God because I was alive and healthy when I woke up. After that, I went downstairs and brushed my teeth. I was so hungry ever since I started to smell an omelet that my mom was making.

After I brushed my teeth, I went straight to the kitchen and saw my mom cooking that delicious omelet, adding my favorite ingredients which are onions, green peppers, a whole mess of tomatoes and a hint of salt.

My mom asked if I was hungry, and of course I said yes. She gave me the food, which I ate very fast. I was that hungry. After I ate, I went upstairs and got dressed. I was going to wait for my friends to pick me up so we could go to the Glendale mall.

I got dressed, put on my noisy earrings, and went downstairs to wait for their call. One hour and a half later, they finally called me telling me to go outside because they were in front of my house. I gave my mom a kiss on the cheek and left, accidentally stomping on the hard floorboards my dad just put on the stairs, which created a noisy echo.

That Saturday afternoon, for some reason, when I stepped outside, I could hear every bird singing in the trees. And I could smell the fresh air and sense innocent children playing in the apartment building. I could hear their little laughter from what felt like a mile away. I heard the leaves of the trees whistling as the wind blew them harder and harder.

Then I heard the shouting of my name.

I looked around but didn't see anyone at first. Then I looked in front of my gate and saw my friends waving at me. I stepped down the stairs very carefully, trying not to cause so much noise for the neighbors cause they'll just come out and yell at me saying that I cause way too much noise like they always do. As I reached the car I suddenly smelled banana nut muffins in the air. I guess it was my neighbor baking her famous banana nut muffins. She usually baked them in the morning, but since it was the weekend she made them in the afternoon.

On the weekdays, she would start baking them at seven o'clock and end before eight. Every day, before school she would give me one so that I wouldn't go to school hungry and so my stomach wouldn't growl throughout my school day. When I took a bite of that muffin, I could feel the softness of the chewy banana and the crunchiness of the smooth nuts. I wanted to get one so bad on this Saturday, but my friends were in a hurry to get to the mall. So I just got in and we

drove off.

As we drove, the music blasted. My friends were listening to their new C.D. When the street light turned red, of course we stopped. I looked out my window, and I could see a homeless man begging for money. People just walked by the poor man without even taking a look at him as if they didn't have a care in the world. Sometimes I ask myself *why is this world so cruel and uncaring all the time? Why can't politicians put themselves in poor people's shoes? How would they feel?*

I would ask people that, but I'm pretty sure that they would just laugh at me and think that I'm some kind of stupid kid.

The light turned green, and my friend's mom was in a hurry to drop us off. After about twenty minutes we arrived at Glendale Galleria. My friends and I were very excited to go shopping and see what was new and on sale for the weekend.

When we entered those two clear doors, I could hear the stomping of the feet all around me. I could also hear the voices of a whole bunch of teenagers, laughing and giggling, saying bad words in every sentence that they use. White girls talking about when they were going to do their hair and gossiping about celebrities and shouting actors' names and that they are so hot. Latin girls talking about the white girls in Spanish. Black girls just laughing away and listening to their iPods. I could also see Armenian girls talking on their decorated cell phones, which I like very much. I was completely in La La land when I entered that mall.

Something waved across my face. When I came back to reality, I saw that it was the hand of one of my friends. She asked if I was okay. Of course I said yes.

Held by Vivian Zalmya

I had just ended a dream. Soldiers came into the center of our apartment and held my parents as hostages and were shooting at us as my sister and I escaped. But wait. What sister?

I woke up feeling perturbed. I heard my mom call for breakfast. I ran out of breath for a moment because her voice seemed so much louder than usual.

I lay there, still, for about a minute, then I opened my eyes. I was perplexed. I saw the ceiling as a total blur and my eyes were watering but I wasn't crying. I thought my vision was weakening, so I compressed my eyelids. My vision became clear once more. For a moment there, I thought I was still dreaming.

It was about 10:30 in the morning, with the sun high up above the horizon, birds around the window corner cooing, my dad getting up in the morning and going to work. I smelled scrambled eggs in a pan and my grandma was cleaning up the beds.

I was a quiet child, mostly. I didn't have a lot to say. I just went along with the day.

I got out my little toy; it was about nine to ten inches wide. You would press a button and an animal would pop up

– a cow, horse or pig. When I got bored, I would choose another toy – at toy that was purple and had green bumps and when you would turn on the switch it would make a rumbling sensation. That was one of my favorites.

When I was done fiddling with my toys, my mother took me into the kitchen and gave me my daily vitamins. Flintstones vitamins with a zingy taste.

After I got my vitamins, my mom let me go outside and speak with a girl that was about my age. She attended the same school as me.

Even though I was a quiet child, I would notice changes like the way the bed was in a different place or how my mom was getting bigger every day. I was very skeptical of what was going on. I was pretty questioning.

The next day, I wanted to get my green box of toys, but it was put in a high place so I couldn't reach it. My mom said she would get it down for me. She never had a problem getting down the box.

Before my mom could get it down, my grandma stopped her and said, "It is not necessary for you to carry the box, I will carry it." I wondered why my mom couldn't carry the box. I achieved getting my box of toys, but then I was worried about my mom.

That night my mother and grandmother made dinner before my dad came home from work. About an hour passed, before my dad came home. I wasn't hungry, so I just went into my room and fell asleep. I slept for about an hour and then woke up. I woke up but didn't open my eyes. I squished my eyelids together and then slowly, very slowly, opened them. There was no noise whatsoever, just the faint gurgle of the TV.

I arrived in the living room to see that only my grandma was home. I asked her where my mom and dad were. She told me they'd be back. An hour later my dad came home and said to get a robe and slippers. We headed out the door and into my dad's car. I quietly looked out while my dad drove along the crowded streets. It was night, and pathways were well lit up.

We drove for about five minutes before coming to this big white building. I realized we were headed for the hospital where I was born. I was quite curious about why we were going to the hospital. We went into the waiting room, then through the hallways, and eventually we arrived at a room and went inside.

All the hospital rooms had that distinct disinfectant smell that dentist offices have. I have never liked that smell. It always makes me feel nervous.

In the hospital room I saw my mom lying down.

I looked to her right and saw a tiny baby. It was a girl. Her face was red and looked scrunched up. She looked chubbier than I was when I was born. For some reason I was still confused. My dad then turned to me and said that she was my sister.

So this meant that there was a new person in the family. What a change! We would have to change our daily routines,

and all of life would be somewhat different than the past four years.

My dad and I took my mom and sister home. When my grandma saw my sister, she was so delighted. I was both excited and nervous at the same time. I felt pressure too. I had a sibling to take care of.

We had bought a crib for my sister to sleep in. It would rock back and forth if you pushed it. Night came and so she slept in her bed for the first time. She fell asleep pretty fast. After she fell asleep, we went to our sleeping places and drifted off to sleep in the quiet, silent night. Morning arrived and we all woke up and fixed our beds. I woke up a little late and overslept. But I managed to rise and get dressed.

My mother arrived and carried my sister out into the living room. She took out a bottle. I used to use those. She is going to start eating one day too. I could already tell she was going to be a bigger eater than I ever was.

As we have a new member to our family, there is more attention in the home. Everyone is alert and watching out for my sister and taking care of her, but also, at the same time, caring for me.

A year has past since my sister was born, and already I can see some differences between her and me. She is not a quiet child. She has a bit more potential than I. She has started to get a hold of toys, which means I have to learn how to share. She has started to say her first few words. She learned the words *mom*, *dad* and *grandma*. She is still trying to get used to my name, but she will learn it over time. My sister and I have different personalities, but in the future we will bond by learning and figuring out each other's differences.

Since the birth of my sister, we have all rearranged our lives. I have started kindergarten. This puts some pressure on me because I am going to a place with many kids and new rules, and at the same time I have to look after my sister since she is just a baby.

Although I feel pressure, and was puzzled when I found out that the tiny baby was my sister, I knew that I would have to help my mom take care of her. If the baby bothered me or if I was enraged at her, I would have to turn the other cheek because she's just an infant.

I know that things will be different from now on, and I will have to adjust. From waking up in the morning with blurred eyes to figuring out that the small baby next to my mom was my sister – and then now, holding my sister in my arms – it has all been overwhelming to me. I won't forget. It will be in my memory as I grow. And it will be in hers.

Brother Change by Christian Osorio

It was a bright and scorching day, winter had already ended and it was in the middle of spring. School was over, and as usual my math teacher drowned me in math homework.

I was talking with my friends when I received a call from my mom saying that I had to get home because she needed to drop me off at my dad's house. She said my dad had some

important news for me. So I said good-bye to my friends and I began my walk home.

The sun was hot and blaring, however I paid little attention to it. I was wondering what this news could be. Maybe my dad was moving away or maybe he booked us a trip to Hawaii for summer vacation. My curiosity was driving me crazy; it felt like I was getting tortured. What could it be? I tried to forget all about it and think of something else; however, that didn't work. It made me want the answer even more.

I finally reached my apartment complex. I was running up the stairs like a mad man. As soon as I saw my mom, I charged her like a bull and started asking a barrage of questions. I ended with, "Mother, what did my dad say to you about the surprise?" She looked at me as if I was insane, and she said, "All he said was that in a couple of months, Christian is going to have to be a little more responsible."

Unsatisfied with that answer I trotted off to my room. I managed to look at myself in the mirror. I was so mad, my face was red like an overripe tomato. I can't stand surprises! However, I began to relax a little. I told myself that I would find out sooner or later because my dad would surely tell me.

I got my stuff ready to go to my dad's. On the way home, my mom looked at me in a concerned way. Then she said, "Christian, are you okay?" I said, "Yeah I'm fine. It's just that this surprise is driving me crazy. It feels like a nail being driven into my brain. But I'm starting to forget about it now," which was a lie because that's all I was thinking about.

We finally reached my dad's house.

I got out of the car and walked up to the door. My palms were sweating. I felt like I was going to burst into pieces. I got a grip of the handle, pushed the door and walked in. Anticipating some type of surprise, I found my dad lying on the sofa watching a soccer game. I was disappointed. I wanted to know what the big news was.

In the blink of an eye, I was right next to my dad. I was so excited to find out the news. I was shaking. Then I looked at my dad. "Dad, so what's the big news?"

He replied, "Well Christian let me give you a hint: pretty soon we'll all be having trouble sleeping." I looked at him confused and said, "Just tell me already. Seriously."

He looked at me as if he was just about to blow my mind. He said, "Okay then, Susan, your step mom, is pregnant and you will have a brother or sister."

When I heard that, I didn't know how to respond. It seemed as if the world froze for just a second.

I managed to get up from the couch and walk to my room so I could try and gather myself. I already have two sisters, and I feared I might have a third.

Then I couldn't move. I felt like rock.

For awhile, I just lay on my bed and stared at the ceiling. I tried to think of what life would be like with another sibling. I imagined it being really annoying with another rug-rat running around.

The weekend flew by, and before I knew it I was back at

my mom's house. It felt weird knowing that I was going to have another brother or sister. I eventually accepted it, and I ended up being really excited to see my brother or sister.

Then time went by, and my step mom Susan was having an ultra sound to find out if it was a boy or a girl. I was so curious. I would put my ear against my step mom's stomach. She would say, "If the baby kicks twice it was a boy. If it kicks once it was a girl."

However it didn't kick at all. So, I had no idea if it was a boy or girl.

While we were at the doctor's getting the ultra sound, I was praying for a boy, and I told my dad that if it was a girl I was going to run away. I was so nervous. I managed to take a quick glance at the mirror, and I was covered in sweat. Then the doctor looked at me, because she knew I was the most curious and she said, "It is a boy." I was so happy that I was about to do back flips right there in front of everyone. I will never forget the day he was born: October 18, 2008. His name is Isaac Geraldo Osorio.

Cut Me Like Scissors by Natella Petrosyan

I was home in my garage running on the treadmill. My mom was lifting weights. My sister was stretching on a yoga pad. I had already burning up to two hundred calories, and my cheeks were all red. After exercise, I was planning on cooling down in the cold, icy pool. After that, maybe go in the wooden spa to heat back up.

I was almost done from the treadmill. I had seven minutes left, when I heard through the garage door a loud scream coming from the living room. I knew it was my grandparents, since they were the only ones there. I opened the heavy door to hear what it was about but still had no clue. I just waited to see and hear what would happen next.

My grandma grabbed her keys and left the house. She slammed her car door with anger and drove away as fast as a cheetah.

Within the next half hour I didn't do anything I planned to do. I just sat there at the kitchen table waiting and trying to figure out what was going on.

Then my mom broke it.

My heart dropped to my stomach, and tears were bursting from my eyes faster and faster. I couldn't concentrate or think at all. My mind was completely blank. The thought that the bond was going to be gone left me despondent. I had no hope. Whatever I did wasn't going to change anything. If I begged and cried and screamed, nothing would change. My grandpa's mind was set. I felt like leaving my house so I would distract myself from what was going to happen. How could this be possible?!

I watched my grandpa load the truck with the dog's house and his belongings. His metal cage, his two bowls for food and water. I couldn't believe it! Now, I was crying even harder. And then when I looked in his golden, green eyes! His ignorance was bliss. His ignorance was beautiful. He was beautiful. He had light brown and cloudy-white short fur. He

was the most amazing dog I've seen in my life.

And now he was gone.

My whole family was swept into a river of tears. A loud, beautiful, tough, protective, brave dog was gone. My backyard was empty. I was furious.

I had to get revenge on my grandpa. and I had the best plan. I didn't think I could sleep if I didn't try to get him back.

I grabbed the knife and scissors – and my brother, and I ran to the front porch where displayed were Grandpa's beautiful roses and palm trees.

I got the scissors and started chopping each flower stem. I cut the palm trees to make them look bald. On the other side, my brother was squeezing ketchup and spraying windex on the flowers. The attack was calming me down. Grandpa's garden was destroyed, which is what I wanted. I couldn't wait for him to come back and see the surprise we left for him.

He came back home. He saw the garden. He didn't scream because he had guests over. If he had screamed he would have made a fool out of himself. I was very happy because his garden meant the world to him, and it was gone and destroyed.

His garden was as empty as my back yard.

During the next two days, I tried my best to distract myself – to keep from thinking about it.

By the next month, my life had changed drastically. I had nobody to go hiking with. Nobody to have bang the garage door in the middle of the night, which made me really mad and annoyed, but somehow now I can't sleep without it.

Now that I've experienced the loss of a special pet, I can relate to and understand others who have had the same loss. It feels very different and lonely. When I was ever in a bad mood, my dog would always comfort me and make me feel better. He would cuddle with me and protect me from anything.

Now, when I look into my backyard, there is nothing there. All I can see is a big, blue pool and silence.

Back to Normal by Ani Terzian

My mother had always told me to stand up straight. I, in return, tried my best to do so but at times didn't care much of it. It's quite remarkable, the spine's function. It is literally and figuratively the "backbone" of the body's movements. All the nerves and bones' actions are committed to the spine. Now if the spine is misaligned, one can experience a troublesome bother over time. So it is clear that my mother's intentions were for my well-being.

As the days grew old, my mom became more and more concerned about my posture. She suggested that my doctor take a gander at my back and determine if anything was truly wrong. I still thought she was overreacting. I seemed, clearly, just about as healthy as a horse. None of the kids at my school walked fully upright, and their feet weren't turned out like they should be either. To this, especially, my mom would become rather frustrated. Apparently I was supposed to walk like Charlie Chaplin. I never truly worried about how I

walked or sat. If all the other kids weren't walking "correctly" then why should I? They were fine.

Well, that was an illogical way of thinking.

As a child at the wee age of twelve, I was settled in the comfortable chair in the miniscule and icy waiting room of the doctor's office. Usually, I became nervous about visits to the doctor. This was, however, one trip I didn't fear much. My expectations of any sort of new discovery were at a zero. Since I had never been physically active, I have *always* felt sore. It hadn't crossed my mind that this could be the result of something that I wasn't familiar with. My muscles had never been in condition and I was always stiff; that was all.

Finally, after a near-endless wait, a nurse burst through the door, fixed upon her clipboard, and called my name. As I stepped through the door, my heart began to race. *What if something really is wrong with my back?* Following my height and weight check, my mom and I were escorted to the tiny room where we were to wait for the doctor's arrival. My mother couldn't help but give me endless speeches about each poster on the wall of the office. She would tell me, "You see how important it is to eat right and stay healthy?" and so forth.

Soon the doctor entered the room where we resided. He began to look over my files and started asking me the basic questions: "How are you doing?" and "What seems to be the trouble?"

As I began to explain, my mother nudged my arm as a sign that I should speak louder. She said that I should speak at the top of my lungs, as my doctor is quite an elderly fellow. So I spoke even louder. But my mom, unsatisfied, took over with her high-volume voice. She explained and complained on my behalf then finished with, "Explain to the doctor what kind of difficulties you have throughout the day."

I described to the doctor how I have never been successful in P.E. How I am always aching and feel like a grandmother. My doctor responded by asking me lean over and touch my toes. I was perfectly aware that I could not do so. He then examined my back and ran his fingers down my spine. He examined my spine some more. "It may be scoliosis," he eventually said, "but mild."

Scoliosis? What was that?

"And, as you said," he told my mom, "Her shoulder blades do tend to stick outwards a tad."

A tad, was it?

So then this scoliosis might not be so bad. After all, he did say "mild."

My doctor then jotted something illegible onto his notepad and handed it to my mother. It was a referral for a physical therapy center. This was so that following my x-ray excursion, I could go for a consultation.

Which is just what I did.

I got a few x-rays of my back to determine the condition of my spine's misalignment. I began to understand more thoroughly what scoliosis was and what had happened to me. Scoliosis is the curvature of the spine. And in my case, the bottommost part of my back, just above the tailbone, is

crooked. I remembered, then, back to the fifth grade, when our class was learning about the functions of the human body. It was stressed that the spine is vital for movement and that it should be very aligned. I asked my teacher if it was possible for the spine to be curved. She notified me that there are some cases where that may occur. From what I understood, though, it was nothing that I should worry about.

Now that it was affirmative that I had such a disorder, I began to fret. An abnormality with such a big part of the body did not seem proper at all. I wanted to do whatever possible to fix this. I soon began attending treatment. Twice a week I would do various exercises and stretches to strengthen my muscles, especially those of my back. All my life I hadn't been active, and now, it seemed as though my body was taking an agonizing revenge against me. It was now that I had to gain back all those years of slothfulness. The exercises I was performing at my therapy were of the most basic kind, and I had quite a lot of trouble doing them. Once when I was to stretch my leg muscles, I asked my therapist what the two, long, thin bones under my knees were. She laughed explaining to me that these peculiar things were actually my hamstring muscles. They were so stiff that they felt as hard as taut guitar strings! I understood that it was time to change to a healthier me that would bring me great benefit. If I exercised regularly, I wouldn't feel so uncomfortably sore any longer. I just had to exercise.

Eventually I discontinued my trips to physical therapy. I was to do the exercises on my own. At first, I did a few of the things required of me. I became uncommitted to my exercises and to wellness.

About two years have passed since I was diagnosed with scoliosis. I have come to my senses and have gotten back on track and am exercising again as I should, daily. I began to realize how important it is that I bring my muscles to a healthy shape after I assisted my mom with research for an essay she had to write for college. She chose to compose her paper about scoliosis. With this I understood more about the background of what it truly is that I am experiencing day to day. I learned that if scoliosis is not treated, it could lead to horrifying conditions and surgical requirements. It became clear to me that if I didn't start acting right now, it would be too late, later on.

Since scoliosis is something that I cannot be relieved of, I must do whatever possible to stop it from worsening. My mom always told me to never carry heavy things and to wear my backpack correctly on both shoulders. These things are more and more stressed so that I fight this monstrous ailment. I gladly do so, so that I might live a happier and healthier life. As for the future, I have my first appointment with an orthopedist, which should help me tremendously.

In the seventh grade, our school had a scoliosis check to determine whether anyone was in danger. I was already pre-diagnosed with it then and discovered that some of my peers were also experiencing what I was. I later found out that some acquaintances of mine as well as a really close friend had

scoliosis. Naturally, learning that a friend has a horrid disorder is not a pleasant event. I have, however, learned something exceptional: I am not alone.

Click of the Light by Rachel Oiwake

Click.

My grandmother's face vaguely appeared in the incandescent light of the lamp that I had just turned on. The dim illumination slightly erased the soft moonlight coming in through a window in the otherwise dark room.

"Thank you dear," my grandmother said in the gentle voice she had. Then, she motioned for me to sit in the chair beside the head of the bed, right next to the lamp.

Before going to bed at night, I would occasionally have a little talk with my grandmother, as I did on this day, to keep her company until it was time for everyone to sleep.

When I did, she would give me a piece of mint candy in the shape of a seashell.

As I had expected, she opened her little white pouch. She took one out and placed it in my hands. I tore off the wrapper and popped it into my mouth. The familiar sweet mint instantly filled my throat, and the candy was cold on my tongue.

I felt so safe and secure within the mint taste and the smell of my grandmother's favorite incense – not too strong, like the fleeting fragrance of autumn leaves and herbs slightly brushed away by a breeze.

I melted into the moment, dazing off. I almost forgot where I was until my grandmother spoke.

"I think it's time I explained to you what my illness is and how it's affecting me."

I knew what her illness was, though not exactly, I admit. I knew it was severe, but I didn't know how severe. I recall my grandfather and mother talking about it in the dining room when they thought us kids were asleep. However, I could not remember their exact words.

"It's called cancer."

When my grandmother spoke those words, I felt a chill, as if a frigid blade were sliding up my back.

Cancer.

As a kid not knowing exactly what cancer was, I figured it was the sound of it that perhaps made me feel so strangely uncomfortable.

My grandmother continued to speak.

"The doctor said he found something in my body that was dangerous. It's called a tumor, Rachel. It's something that doesn't belong in the body, and you need to take it out while it's still small. Otherwise, it just keeps growing and growing until you can't do much about it anymore."

I listened to my grandmother explain what the cancer did to her body, why it was serious, and what the cause of it was. I tried to listen attentively, but succeeded in comprehending only half of what she said.

"It's in my blood..."

"There are different types..."

"You do surgery so many times..."

Words and phrases went in and out of my head as I was nodding off to sleep. I almost fell into a state, when suddenly I woke up to this one sentence: "Most people who have cancer usually don't make it; they die."

I was shocked to hear her say it, but calmed myself, thinking it wasn't going to happen to *her*. I knew I didn't really listen to my grandmother's explanation, but I somehow believed that once you discover you have cancer, you instantly die. If you don't die right then, you won't die until you die of old age. It was a childish notion, but it worked for me. So I smiled at her and whispered,

"I'm glad you didn't die."

I did not intend anything when I said it. I did not even know why I said it.

My grandmother smiled her famous benevolent smile, but I noticed the sadness that was hidden behind it – and perhaps a little pity for me, considering how young I was. I was only seven and didn't have the knowledge to completely understand.

"Yes, I'm very glad too," she said.

There was nothing more to say.

There was nothing that could be done about the fact that my grandmother had cancer, and most of the people who have her type of cancer usually die.

My mother interrupted the silence just in time by telling me that it was time for bed.

"Don't forget to say goodnight to Grandma," she said, poking her head out from behind the door.

I nodded as I placed my hands inside my grandmother's. Her fragile hands felt warm and delicate, and the intricate lines of her vines that spread across her skin caressed my own smooth hands. I felt her so close to me. Warm, yet slightly cool at the tips of her fingers.

I leaned forward to kiss her on her cheek goodnight. As I left the room and started walking up the stairs to my bedroom, I heard my father walk into the small room where my grandma lay in her bed half asleep. In distant voices I caught their words. In their voices, I could feel their smiles as they spoke.

"Goodnight, Mom."

"Goodnight, Kenji..."

It was supposed to be like any other night.

I woke early the next morning to the sound of a siren blaring just outside the window of my room. It sounded excessively close, but I didn't bother looking out the window, for it was too cold and early to get out of bed. I convinced myself that it was just another ambulance passing by and snuggled back into my covers, avoiding the crisp winter air that had somehow snuck into the house at night.

The instant I fell back to sleep, I heard the siren stop right at our house.

I froze, and the chilly air suddenly felt colder on my face. The cold slowly crept down my spine and through my entire body as I started to have the feeling that something was

terribly wrong. At that moment, my eldest sister, Michelle, called my other sister and me, imploring us to wake up.

"Christine! Rachel! Wake up! Something's wrong..."

As if she had never been so bewildered, Michelle walked about the room nervously and then ran downstairs. Christine and I glanced at each other, realizing that this wasn't some ordinary day, and we had to do something.

We jumped out of bed and looked out the window. Below we could see people going in and out of the house carrying hospital equipment and bundles of clothes. My mother and grandfather were standing like statues beside the ambulance as if they were in some kind of trance. Christine and I could do nothing but stare, until Michelle returned to our room in exhaustion. We waited for an explanation as she took her time catching her breath. At last she spoke.

"Grandma's heart stopped beating when she was sleeping," she exhaled.

Christine and I flash froze. This did not mean that she died. Death did not even enter our minds. With all our hearts we believed that she would be okay.

The three of us raced down the stairs and into the dining room where my father was standing beside the table staring off into space wearing wrinkled jeans and a jacket. When he noticed us in the room he told us in a calm voice that he would be taking us to the hospital after a while.

We were the last ones to head off to the hospital. A blanket of dark clouds covered the sky. By the time we got into the car, it had started to rain as if the sky were trying to tell us something.

My father drove, and my sisters and I sat in the back seat. No one spoke. I was sure we all were thinking about what was going to happen, but trying not to at the same time.

After what seemed like an eternity of silence, my father's phone rang and broke the dead air. He answered it and started nodding his head as if the person at the other end could see him. My sisters and I did not move a muscle or even dare to look at him. We were all so anxious but too afraid to want to know what they were saying. There was tension in the air and it seemed like nothing but this conversation mattered. I felt time move so slowly that my head ached with pressure. It was heavy with gravity. My senses could capture nothing but the rumbling of the engine and an annoying buzz inside my own brain. Through the corner of my eye I saw my father stop nodding.

"...I thought so," he said.

At that moment, the world spun around me. I felt my heart shatter into a million pieces. He said nothing about my grandmother dying or that there was no hope, but somehow I knew. I knew that she did not make it. I literally could not believe it, which made it all seem so fake and untrue. My feelings could not take in the fact, and, therefore, I couldn't feel the sadness. *It just isn't true* is all that I could tell myself.

We reached the hospital no later than five minutes after the call. We stepped into the building, somewhat wet from the rain. A distinctive scent of the hospital penetrated my

nose. I walked through the halls and waiting areas, dizzied by the whiteness of the walls and the reality that I could not grasp. The more I got closer to the emergency room, the more I could feel my feet wanting to run, but my mind knew better. Perhaps my mind was afraid of facing the physical proof, and I would have to believe no matter what.

The automatic doors to the emergency room slid open before us. The stark walls disappeared, and my father, sisters, and I found ourselves in a room with a counter and two nurses behind it. At the left, our relatives were either sitting on a couch or standing around. They looked up and noticed us. They led us into another room. We followed them in an absence of words, knowing that there was nothing to say.

Of all the hospital beds lined up against the right wall of the room, she was in the one at the end. My feet instinctively came to a stop as I gazed down at my grandmother who lay there in the bed as if she were only asleep. I felt my throat and nose stuff up. Although I saw with all my senses what was in front of me, it didn't seem real. At least not yet.

I slowly stretched my hand to allow my fingertips to gently touch her cheek as if to make sure it wasn't just a dream – and at the same time trying to let her know that I was here with her. During that second, a sudden wave of a feeling so strong and indescribable came over me. My eyes welled up with tears and my nose prickled. I gasped for air, feeling like my lungs were being crushed by the weight of sadness and pain I had never felt in my life. My grandmother's face blurred in front of me until I could no longer make out the figures. I stepped back and spun around to face my mother who was right behind me, hugging her waist. I buried my face in her stomach crying like I never imagined I would. It all came to me: the reality, the situation, and the fact that my grandmother was no longer here to smile her famous smile at me. She was no longer here to place the mint candy in my hands, no longer here to whisper in her gentle voice, and no longer here for me to kiss on the cheek.

I recalled the conversation that we had the night before, wishing that I had said certain things that I of course didn't say, and regretting saying the things that I had said. I couldn't breathe.

It was then when I heard my mother's shaky voice calling my name.

"Rachel, there's no need to cry. She's in a better place where she doesn't have to suffer and where she can walk just like she used to. The doctors told us that if she stayed alive any longer, she would have been in more pain. It is better this way."

I listened as my mother spoke with what seemed like all the strength she had left in her.

Then, I looked down at my hands and smiled as the last tear rolled down my cheek.

She was okay, and I knew that she wanted us to be okay. I knew that everything was going to be fine.

Driving Testament by Tony Ramos

On a beautiful Saturday morning the sunlight came through the window and hit me on the face putting my slumber to an end. The clock read 11:09. I could smell the fresh scent of coffee from my room.

I rose to my feet and walked down the hall towards the kitchen. I saw my mom cooking a delicious breakfast of eggs, bacon, and pancakes. When she saw me she greeted me good morning then asked me to help her with the pancakes. After the pancakes were done we sat down at the kitchen table to enjoy our delicious meal. In front of the table there was a window where a bird had stopped by. He looked through the window as if wanted some eggs for himself.

After I finished breakfast, I took a shower, and I have to say that the water never felt better. It was at the perfect temperature. When I came out, I felt ready to run a marathon.

In my room I picked out the clothes that I was going to wear because I was going to the mall with my mom. She always took me somewhere on the weekends. I picked out a fresh white t-shirt and my Kobe Bryant jersey. The Lakers were going to play the Phoenix Suns later on that night. All my life I've been a Lakers fan.

Once I was done dressing I had to wait for my mom, so I took out my iPod and listened to some music. I lay on the couch moving to the tunes.

Thirty minutes later my mom came out of her room, handed me the keys and told me to open the car.

As I walked out, I felt as if I had just landed on the sun. It was scorching, and as I opened the car door it only became worse. I quickly turned on the car and the air conditioner and got right back out. My mom and I waited about five minutes for the car to cool off.

Soon we were on our way to the Montebello shopping center. Right as we got on the freeway we slowed down completely. It turns out there had been a huge accident involving a teen driver.

My mom, having little patience, got off the freeway as soon as was possible. We headed to her friend Luis's house in Santa Fe Springs. I liked Luis very much. We shared many of the same interests, like sports and cars. He worked as a truck driver, but he was always off on Saturday and Sunday.

We arrived at his house, and my mom not wanting to get out of the air conditioned car, called Luis, telling him we were outside.

With Luis aboard my mom tried the freeway one more time. It was now moving at a good rate. Luis was telling my mom about the accident we had seen earlier – how he had heard about it on the news. Both cars were completely wrecked, one of the drivers was dead, and the other was severely injured.

I thought about how sad it was and then I went on to think about something else.

When I finally saw the big sign at the entrance that read

"Welcome to the Montebello Shopping Center" I was very pleased.

We had a terrible time trying to find parking. We probably spent ten minutes driving around that parking lot. Luis saw some shoppers headed to their car, so we followed them and got a parking spot.

The great air conditioning of the mall welcomed us as we eased through the doors. My mom spent her time looking for clothes while Luis and I went to the various electronic and sports memorabilia stores. We did about an hour and a half of window-shopping. My mom must have gone to twelve different stores to buy one lone blouse.

Now we were hungry, so we made our way to the food court which had several fast food restaurants. I chose to get a sandwich from Subway, and my mom and Luis both got Panda Express.

After a great meal and seeing many things that I wanted to buy but did not, it was time to go. The clock on the car stereo said 6:23 but it felt like it was much earlier.

As soon as we pulled away from our spot, someone came and parked. I guess many people wanted to shop that day.

On the freeway, we were cruising right along when all of a sudden a van cut right in front and stopped. We crashed. My mom hit her head on the windshield and was unconscious. Luis hit his head, as well, but on the door window which broke with the impact. He was bleeding, but he was conscious. As for myself, I hit my head on the headrest in front of me, and the only thing that it did was give me massive whiplash. I was worried for my mom because Luis and I were fine with minor injuries.

An ambulance arrived, and they took all of us, but my mom was still unconscious, so they took her on the little cart. I was crying, I didn't know whether or not my mom would be okay, and at the same time I was mad at the driver of the van for stopping completely right in front of us.

After ten minutes in the hospital, my mom woke up. I was very relieved when I saw her eyes open. The doctor ran some tests on all three of us. My mom had gotten a concussion from how hard she hit the windshield. Luis had a flesh wound that the doctors stitched up. I was completely fine with only neck pain.

Thank God for insurance, my mom's car had been completely wrecked so the insurance company bought her a new car. At least one good thing came out of this accident.

After that day, my mom drives much more slowly and constantly checks her mirrors. Every now and then she takes me to drive so I can learn to be a safe driver and get my permit when I'm sixteen. Now I'm always subconsciously scared when I see a car speeding past us. The worst thing of all is every time there's a car accident on the news it reminds me of this terrible day. I don't know what I would've done without my mom. I don't even want to think of that possibility.

That day really changed my way of thinking about driving. I used to think it was all easy. But that day I realized that you

can't only worry about yourself. You have to be careful of the drivers around you, as well, because they may not be as safe a driver as you. Many things can change people's lives. They can either hurt or help you. And at some point you have look past it all and move on. When I finally get my driver's license, I'm going to do whatever is in my power to make sure I keep myself and the people around me safe. Driving is a task that requires much responsibility, and I don't want to be one of those people who gets a license but doesn't really deserve it.

Acceptance by Tiffany Gonzales

Waking up to a cold room feeling uncomfortable, I decide to switch my position toward the window. I can feel the sun rays against my skin, and I have a good vibe about the day.

Since my room looks like a house within a house, I sometimes leave the window open, like I am doing today. I find it impossible to go back to sleep due to the thumping sound of my dad's feet pacing back and forth and the echoing sound of "wowowee" on the Filipino channel. I can specifically hear the voice of the host, Mr. Willy.

I tightly grip my teddy bear. I hear a crackling sound. I take a deep breath. I smell garlic frying. I know instantly that my dad is cooking shrimp fried rice. Even though I feel sleepy and tired, I still manage to get up and give him a good morning kiss.

I help him prepare breakfast. As we both begin eating, my brother joins us, and we have our morning conversation. We all love bonding together, sharing secrets and thoughts and even laughter here and there. Our discussions consist of the most random topics that you could ever imagine.

Later, I ask my dad for permission to go out with some friends and then later sleep over at Effieana's house.

"Of course, just be careful." He says without hesitation.

He hands me a crisp twenty-dollar bill and says, "Have fun."

I take my time packing my clothes and necessities. Afterward, I leave with my friends and come home later on that night. He drops me off at Effieana's house, and I feel as though he really trusts me. His trust makes me feel good inside because I want him to trust me instead of thinking that I am lying.

I come home sometime in the afternoon. As I sit on the couch watching the Disney Channel I hear a knock on the door. I open the door and right in front me I pause to a woman's face that looks unfamiliar.

"Yes?" I ask sounding confused.

"Hi, I live next door. Is your dad home?" She says.

"What is your name?" I ask.

"Len" she responds.

"He's not available at the moment because he's at work." I tell her.

"Well, can you please inform him that Vicky's asking if he can fix the cable next door."

"Of course," I reply willingly.

"Thank you, Sweetheart" she says.

"You're welcome. Bye."

I close the door.

Later in the afternoon I hear the sound of a loud engine that catches my attention. I know immediately it's my dad. As he walks through the door, and with each step he takes toward me, I am reminded of what Len had said and I tell him.

"Okay, I'll go tomorrow."

I wake up to an unusual silence. I am thinking that my dad has already cooked breakfast, but I'm not sure. I look out the window. To my surprise I see my dad next door with Len. I realize that I am eavesdropping. I can't interpret what they are talking about because I'm not fluent in Tagalog.

Moments later I hear my dad open the front door. I quickly rush myself into the living room where he tells me that Lin is going to take me shopping and take me out to eat on Friday. He lets me know that he has had asked Lin for help because he can't do it himself since he's a guy and it's better to a woman's opinion.

From that moment on, I know things are going to be different.

Len's first attempt of trying to get along with me is by taking me out to eat at the Cheesecake Factory in the Americana and taking me shopping at the Glendale Galleria. She wants to get to know me better. She figures out my likes and dislikes and my strengths and weaknesses. She's nice to me and careful about what she does around me because she doesn't want to leave a bad impression. She easily agrees with me and doesn't argue and always tries to get on my good side. Once she takes me to Ichiban for sushi knowing that it is my favorite restaurant and my favorite food. After ordering we sit there with an awkward silence between us. When our orders arrive we both began eating, yet still remain silent. When I look up to at her, I see that the expression on her face is hesitant. I have a feeling that the outcome isn't going to be pleasant. Then she looks me in the eyes and begins to speak.

"How would you feel if your dad and I got into a relationship?"

As soon as those words come out of her mouth, I feel as if my world is crashing down beneath and around me. It's as if everything is on pause. A tension-filled pause. The thought of Len and my dad together keeps replaying over and over again in my mind like a cracked record. No words can express how I feel at that exact moment. I didn't think anyone would understand.

"Well ..." I say.

"Well?" she interrupts.

"Well...I wouldn't be too happy. Neither would I be comfortable with it. I'm just not ready for a mother figure in my life." I explain.

"I respect your decision. I will always be your friend."

She says this happily, thought the expression on her face suggests she is feeling otherwise.

She later takes me home and we say our good-byes. The day ends with me thinking that everything will stay the same.

But I am being too positive. She is determined to be with my dad no matter the circumstance.

I try and distract myself with summer.

As the week passes, I notice that Len and my dad grow closer. I become suspicious, so I do what feels natural. I go to him. I say that I have a feeling that there is something between them. He tells me is what I didn't expect, and a tear runs down my cheek.

I am not strong enough to handle the truth, so I decide to escape reality and stay with my mother in San Francisco for the summer. While I am gone my brother notifies me that Len has moved into the house – without my permission. It hasn't occurred to my father how I would feel or how I might react to this irrational decision. It seems that he doesn't think that my opinion matters.

From the day I come back, she knows I dislike her. And the way that she treats me is so different from before. Her true colors are showing, and she is no longer nice. She has basically used me to get to my dad.

Since coming home I have felt so disappointed with myself. I should have seen this coming. Since coming home, we have not spoken to each other. No dinners. No movies. No shopping.

As the months have turned to years my dislike for her lingers. My happiness has decreased and I take on more responsibilities around the house than ever before. The things I do around the house are not appreciated because of her high expectations. She makes my dad think differently of me. He thinks I lie and that I'm irresponsible. He questions my knowledge and abilities to do certain things. He lacks trust in me and doesn't look at me the same way anymore. My freedom has been stripped away from me – all because of her.

I soon realize that the tears I have been shedding were never really worth it. I have been childish. I haven't wanted to accept her. I must put aside my pride and accept her because of my dad. I don't want to give my dad any problems because he seems happy with her. I haven't seen my dad light up with joy this much since July 29, 1994, the day that I was born.

Creative Myth

Historically, humans have crafted and passed along myths that explain various natural phenomena. Humans have done this, perhaps, to more fully explain the world and maybe also to lend to the human experience mystique and hope.

Students in grades nine and ten were asked to create their own myths – each explaining the genesis of a particular natural phenomenon. Following is one.

The Unique Result of Anger by Alex Tadevosyan

Before the Earth, sun or stars there was nothing but magnificent asteroids in space. It was all a complete wasteland. Asteroids were the only occupying things.

This wasteland (or near wasteland) was also the playground for three friends Bob, Tim, and John, who had been living in space for countless years.

They all had the shape of what we now know here as bears.

Contrary to what many would believe, they thought their home – space – was very clean and beautiful, and the unusual thing is that they had the power to create anything they wanted, but they didn't want to create anything because they loved their home the way it was. They loved the asteroids that occupied their surroundings.

So, what do such "bland" sounding bears have to do with the creation of the Earth?

All these bears were distinct, each in his own way. For example, Bob loved inviting others to his house and helping his friends out when they were in critical times. He had a great, caring, and loving heart and he would always do well by helping his out his friends. At some point in his life he noticed the value of being good and caring. But Tim, on the contrary, was ferocious and short tempered and he despised compromising. He always wanted things to absolutely go his way. Not once in his countless years of living had he talked tacitly to anyone, nor had he been thoughtful. This the case when he was thrown off his temper, which was easy to accomplish. John, on another hand, was just there. He simply existed between the two usually never getting into a heated argument with anyone. Sometimes his incomprehensiveness and preposterousness would make his friends angry. He would easily compromise between them and agree, but he would also be needy from time to time. But he would never be unbearable. These three all resided together in a magnificent and elephantine mansion.

One moment in space, the three rose up from their sleep, dazed and exhausted. They got up and made breakfast for themselves. Their breakfast was rocks because they were fond of rocks, and they just didn't care to make anything else for themselves. Their mind was put on the crunchy texture of the stones and the bitter taste. Occasionally, they ate dark matter, but usually as a snack.

After they ate their breakfast, they let it settle and then enjoyed fun and games for the rest of the day. This was their routine for era after era. They would awaken from sleep, make breakfast, let it settle, and then have some fun.

Bob, Tim, and John ate plentiful food. All ate enough rocks, sufficient for several hours. Bob washed all the "dishes" and helped to wipe the table and made the house fantastic and clean.

"You better stop cleaning the house, Bob. You're becoming really annoying", said Tim.

"So cleaning the house is a bad thing now?" replied Bob.

"When you hide all my stuff from me, yes, its bad", said Tim, dementedly.

"Ok, I'm sorry. Here it all is." He handed the items Tim was seeking.

Like always, John acted humble and worked to stop or

avoid arguments. While this whole occasion was happening, John was neutrally watching asteroids collide outside the window with no comments or remarks.

A while later, Tim decided they should all go out and exercise. Their exercise usually included sports like baseball.

There wasn't much else to do in a dark field filled with asteroids!

"So what do you guys want to play?" asked Bob.

"Whatever you guys want, I'm okay with," followed John.

"We play what I want to play and we play by my rules!" shrieked Tim. The two others stayed silent. Tim grabbed the baseball bat and went to home base. It seemed like Tim wanted to be alone rather than compete with the two. Bob and John inferred that and went to their bases. John took first base, and Bob took pitching.

It was quiet; no one was talking. It seemed that everybody was still in shock from the screaming of Tom. The ambient sound of colliding rocks was the only noise.

Bob took the lead in initiating the game of baseball. He pitched the ball at Tim. He missed. Without any babble or speech, Tim tossed the ball back at Bob to continue the game. Bob pitched the ball again, Tim missed again. He missed continually. He grew hot with anger because he hated playing badly in a game. In an instant, because he was furious, he threw the bat at John.

Time was on a rampage!

He ran at John and punched him in the face although he had no apparent reason for doing that, except that his temper was cracked.

Bob was on the floor unconscious.

Tim blazingly annihilated asteroids and created random elements and textures and smashed them with the asteroids and created ice and other random unknown things during his rampage. He was seemingly destroying everything, smashing asteroids to pieces, adding newly made forces in new and random places and throwing items in random places and creating "bright," "dim," "invisible" and other concepts and substances and throwing them every which where.

Out of Tim's fury and random creations, he made one accident. It was a matter-collapsing force called a black hole which destroyed him. It smashed and crumpled his body into tiny bits of matter. His whole body got compressed, and his life was instantly sucked out of him.

A few hours after Tim's rampage and death, Bob and John woke up from an unconscious state. They looked at their surroundings. It was awe-inspiring. There was a blissful environment of bright objects and marvelous colors and textures, all kinds of shapes and dimensions. There were flares and reflections, translucent designs and invisible physiques.

There were unequal forces that balanced out the extraordinary rotation of the circular globes and burning spheres.

If they let their imaginations run wild, they could see

images in the sky formed by beautiful white circular objects.

It was truly grand.

There was one object that truly stood out. It was mostly blue from the water with lots of multicolored land.

John didn't want Tim's rampaged life to end for nothing, even though Tim despised John, John didn't want to harbor contempt for his buddy.

He used his friends "destruction" for good and created, with his own unused powers, living beings to enjoy the beautiful and sustainable planet. He called them Earthlings" and he called the planet "Earth." John beheld his friend's rampage-fueled destruction as a beautiful creation, and didn't let his friend's death be meaningless.

Novel Narrative

So that students might empathize with the very authors they have criticized, students in AP English Lit were given the task of writing the first 5,000 words of an original novel in the style and voice of an author from this year's syllabus.

Additionally, students had to focus the novel on a currently controversial topic, such as gay marriage, global warming, economic justice, Intelligent Design, abortion, religion, etc.

Of the 5,000 that were assigned, here is one student's first 3,500 words. Can you guess the author he is striving to emulate and the theme he is aiming to convey?

The Sirens by Kier Groulx

Chapter 1 – Alpha.

Call me Cain. Some time ago, I ventured, as many honest men do, to depart from physical land, to cast off my natural ball and chain and thrust my soul headfirst into the boundless blue void. I was hoping for some sense of self-realization or spiritual transcendence which would normally be out of reach, if not for ships and sails and dreams which allow man to rise above animal and become something more. At some point, every honest man wishes to be swallowed whole by this monstrous ideal, to either crucify their own ego and join the world as one or face the world, unabashed, and declare his own existential worth to the nothingness which lies before him. The truth, however, is that I am not an honest man. An honest man does not reject God as one would reject a forlorn lover, and he certainly does not allow the brain, with its alterable humors and chemicals, to run unchecked for longer than is necessary. An honest man would never lie, cheat, or steal, and I'm fairly certain that an honest man would never kill another in cold blood either. It is not that murder is a dishonest action within itself (withholding any personal covenant created between a man and his God); rather, an act such as murder destroys not only a life but also the conscience of the murderer. The sheer act of playing God causes the mind to decay like a festering wound until the malignance forces all but the coldest-hearted to turn themselves in to the

law or repent on their knees before the arbitrary barrel of a gun. It is this universal need for balance that led my logical mind to seek refuge in the endless ocean, far from the grasps of any law, and where I came to better know Richard Shinoda.

Shinoda was the kind of man who would disregard the smartest or safest course of action in a heartbeat when the more entertaining option was provided in his stead. He was a compulsive liar, far more so than I, to the point where I had no reason to trust that Shinoda was anything more than the most appealing word in his mind at the very moment I asked him for a name. When he heard that I was to leave on a ship for several months, he took it as a stark new voyage into the unfamiliar and unknown and, without hesitation, chose to accompany me. I did not particularly desire his companionship; besides knowing him as no more than an acquaintance, I had no use for any friendly faces in my ego crucifixion, much less any friendly faces that I also happened to harbor no trust in whatsoever. The only reason why I did not vigorously insist on his desistance was due to the fact that he himself claimed to have had prior experience sailing abroad, and I deemed that any such asset would be beneficial, as I had no idea whatsoever of what perils or discomforts I would encounter at sea. The myths and tales of sailors had blended in with the facts, until I did not know who to trust, and even if I was the confidante of a liar, it was reassuring to not enter the void completely alone.

I sensed a kindred spirit in Shinoda as well. For he was the only other man I had met who outwardly voiced his rejection of God, though his motives may have been fickle or corrupt. What need does a man have of God if he wishes to only lead a life of hedonism, journeying from one pleasure to the next in search of stimulation, not fulfillment? Does not God teach against this way of life? In this sense, I felt that perhaps Shinoda was seeking to run as much as I was: away from persecution, away from a life of continual lying. It is only in hindsight that I see my folly.

The ship which we boarded, the Liberty, was a rather grim-looking craft. The crew was quiet and preferred to be left to their own devices, which suited my tastes just fine. I questioned them sparsely, and when curiosity of their state of mind after months at sea finally got the better of me, they responded with rather bleak outlooks on life, commenting bitterly on the nuisances of hunger and the necessity of staying aboard the craft as a means of surviving their remaining days. The lot reminded me of abused children. God-fearing men, to be certain, but ones who would lament their situation with gusto rather than curse their Creator, with a certain passive-aggressive tone unique to their plight. Despite their insistence to the contrary, however, they looked more at home on board the ship rigging the mast than on land conversing with the locals or purchasing supplies. Perhaps this was just a gradual adjustment to their way of life built up through repetition, a method of making their work bearable, or a closeted love of the sea thinly veiled behind feigned bitterness. Whatever the case, why would they waste away their lives as slaves to their

own grievances? Was their fear of God great enough to discourage all other motives but that which would serve useful to society, or was there simply nothing else that they could do with as punctual execution?

I soon discovered the source of their dismal outlook residing within the captain's quarters. Captain Abaddon, a brooding man who looked as weathered as the steepest cliff-faces, rarely emerged from his residence except to bark orders at his crew or focus on looking upon the depths of the ocean, as if he could potentially gain some sense of humanity by staring down that which has no end. What horrors he saw reflected into his mind by the choppy waters I shall never know or wish to know, but it is true that he never once displayed any sort of mirth or joy, and he could not speak without his voice betraying a note of sarcasm to the avid listener. His very presence seemed to infect the very atmosphere which the ship occupied with a sense of melancholic despair, and had my impatience not gotten the best of me, I should have sought out another craft based solely on avoiding the presence of this man. However, the restlessness of my mind tinged with the salty ocean air inspired a frantic desire within me to leave the mainland as soon as physically possible, and the Liberty was the first ship to depart for some time. Captain Abaddon, sensing my desire to depart as soon as possible, justified charging me three times the usual pay for boarding, but as I had no specific need for money in the foreseeable future other than base survival, I did not think much of the price that expedience cost me. I was content with sharing my thoughts solely with myself and the sea, with only the occasional fantastical story from Shinoda interrupting my musings.

After a few more days of restocking supplies aboard the ship, we left the harbor and set sail for Europe. I distinctly remember the captain mentioning Britain as our destination, but I was too lost in thought to sufficiently listen or care. I felt a resounding sense of apathy in leaving, even when filtered through my desire to cast off the mainland with all due haste. Looking back upon the horizon, shrinking smaller and smaller with every second, I absent-mindedly saw the white sea-foam breaking away from the ship and leaving turbulence in its wake; a cut umbilical cord, severing my ties with Gaia and leaving me cold and alone in this land of impermanence. Presently I gripped my coat closer to drive off this physical chill, and while it did nothing for the chill on my soul, I retired to my empty quarters and began to think of all the crimes I had committed until the vast blackness accepted my apologies and granted me silence for hours to come.

Chapter 2 – The Tempest.

Many days and many nights passed by in a dense haze. Not only did the drudgery of the days and nights begin to blend into one another until I gave up counting the number of days that had passed since we left shore, but a tangible fog had settled just upon the ocean's rippling surface, so that one had no use to go outside except to observe whether the

atmosphere was bright or dark, and then judge for oneself whether to sleep or eat or muse the day away. I believed the introspection I had promised myself to indulge in to be temporarily unavailable, as it was more comforting to believe that there was no way to look within the fog and discover that my own mind was as murky and mysterious as this cloud, guarded from the outside world with no explanation or reason to be guarded. Or, perhaps this was the intent of the fog. Perhaps I was guarded from the world, with its religious fanaticism and rampant prejudices and unforgiving hardships, and I was waiting for a better time for my mental silos to release my ideas and dreams into plain view.

Shinoda was faring worse than me. Promised with a search into the unknown and expecting fantastical wonders or breathtaking sights, he was instead faced again with the cold impenetrable face of the abyss in all of its dark glory. But rather than having the abyss contained to the depths beneath him as the id is confined beneath our conscience, this nothingness was all around him, enveloping him in all of its suffocating majesty. As one would expect, this caused him to develop a sort of cabin fever, wherein he grew restless and would occasionally burst into acts of rash anger, which never lasted long but quickly taught me to not approach him when he started pacing around the ship, eager to initiate a fight or something of equal interest to satiate his thirst for thrills. His energetic buildup would sometimes discover positive outlets, such as when he taught himself how to juggle using hunks of bread he had saved from lunch, but these lapses grew less and less frequent with time.

One would think that the crew themselves would be at least slightly affected by the local craze running through the ship's atmosphere, but the crew were already acclimated enough to the general feel that they took no notice of us. Their macabre attitude did not seem to run any darker than before, but whether it was due to a lack of perception or an inability to distinguish midnight from black I do not know. Surely one could not expect their attitude to change; a sudden outburst of song and dance by the lot would surely frighten me more than alleviate the general feeling on board. No, I was more intrigued by their stoic attitudes, their grim resolve of getting the job done and nothing more, where they were never on deck more than was absolutely needed of them and vanished like ghosts when they were of no more use at the time. In a sense, they seemed not to exist at all, other than to keep the ship running, as if we were on a ghost ship set in a dense fog, within the macrocosm of Purgatory encapsulating us all, and I began to think of us as the Dead rather than the Discovered.

The event that broke us out of this forced melancholia happened to be the onset of the worst storm I have ever witnessed. What appeared to be a general darkening of the fog, easily mistakable for the sun's departure as had been happening for so many nights previously, was immediately followed by gently pouring rainfall. The breeze, which had been so slight as to fall unnoticed unless one strove valiantly to

feel for it, quickly whipped up into winds with the force of a gale. The rain, too, began to crash harder and harder into the deck, until it seemed that we were under assault from as many bullets which would easily tear us to pieces if we were exposed for too long. While I attempted to run inside for a chance at refuge, Shinoda was too captivated by the experience to remain still, and so ran outside to feel the weather despite my warnings. One may believe it is better to feel pain than the alternative of nothing, and while this is not my view, it certainly may have been his. Nevertheless, he made sure to stay out of the way of the crew, who had been whipped up into such a frenzy that they were all actively running about deck, tending to a sail here and knot there and never standing in one place for long, as if the ship was abuzz with life for the first time. This was not a stirring of joy, though; rather, an air of panic seemed to be prevalent around the ship, and I began to question how prepared we were to weather a storm of this magnitude.

A mighty rip and a dismayed shout from one of the crew members urged me to look at the main sail. Or, to be more specific, where the main sail used to be. It now flew tattered in the breeze, with a giant gash splitting it into pieces as the useless parts flew like so many flags of surrender in the breeze. Two crew members were immediately on their way to cut it loose, so as to avoid having the gusts of wind tear off the main mast itself, when a deafening crack was heard and the rest of the crew, as well as I, were thrown onto the deck.

I arose as fast as possible and looked with amazement at the main mast, which was by some miracle still intact. One sailor had been thrown out of the rigging and landed in the choppy waters below, but the other had clung desperately to the rigging and now climbed ever higher to cut loose the sails of the main mast, which had begun to splinter the wood that they held to. The crack, it appeared, had not originated from the mast, but rather from a bolt of lightening that had struck too close for comfort near the ship. The rest of the crew attempted to regain their bearings and set out to attend to more pressing issues about the ship, but of singular notice was the captain himself, who rose quickly to his feet and ran into his quarters. Before I could fully process what I considered an act of the utmost cowardice, especially for someone of his rank, I witnessed him run back out with a telescope in hand, eagerly surveying the horizon for some sign which I had not bore witness to. A number of thoughts rushed into my mind at the moment — land? This early into the journey? The only land we could be approaching was an island, which would be an excellent respite for the storm, but this notion was quickly dashed as I realized that I would have seen the land by now, and I doubted that our luck was that great to receive land on a whim. However, my worst fears were confirmed when I heard his anguished cry seconds later as he lowered the telescope from his eye.

“Whale!”

The singular cry immediately sent a shiver of impending doom down my spine. Shinoda must have felt it too, as I saw

his face turn white with horror as he desperately scanned the horizon, hoping to disprove the captain if possible. An uproar of shouts had risen from the crew as they all redoubled their efforts, attempting in vain to brace themselves from the natural evils all about them. The captain, meanwhile, had attempted to steer the ship away from the whale which, for now, existed only in his imagination, and I began to fleetingly hope that perhaps the whale was just a result of the prevailing cabin fever or paranoia of the day, and that no real danger was looming over us all.

I am no sailor, so of course, I did not know what to expect from the whale itself or what danger it immediately posed to our progress. Within seconds, however, I bore firsthand witness to its destructive potential. Its majestic white form appeared for a fraction of a second, breaching the water near the ship, before it rammed headfirst into the side of the vessel. Such a terrible lurching erupted from the ship that I immediately imagined that the end was nigh, and that the planks of wood were splintering into a thousand pieces and all of the pieces were jammed into me and I was descending into Hell, and at once I began to feel remorse, that this was my punishment, and oh God, how I had sinned, and never repented, and oh! this was the end, the unavoidable end which we were all doomed to for our minor transgressions from this vengeful God, and that there was no escape in the end.

What was fictional and what I actually experienced, I still today cannot differentiate in my mind. What I do know is that the ship was falling apart after the initial assault, and that I only had a few moments to make peace with whatever God I believed in, and that whatever prayers I made would be meaningless to such a vengeful entity. The sound of the whale's bellow filled my ears as he fully sank his weight into the vessel one last time, and with a thunderous heave, the ship cracked and descended slowly into the frigid waters. Through the fog, I witnessed a singular strand of white light, before my world went black.

Chapter 3 – Faith.

If one's goal is to understand the significance of my survival, one needs only turn to the oldest of morality tales.

The God perpetuated by the Holy Bible is not the God which we can all easily recognize. Rather, he is the fatherly voice of reason which guides us all, and we all function as his prodigal children, straying away from him in sin or disbelief, but eventually having our faith renewed and rushing back for an emotional reunion. But what of those who die as nonbelievers, you may ask? One can imagine that staring Death in the face is bound to turn even the most stoic pagan into an avid believer in Christ, as no man wishes to die in negative standing with the deity which has control over their fate. And what of those who adamant to keep their denial alive even as they burn out? Surely the afterlife would convince them of God's glory, and thusly, they would be reborn emotionally and lovingly embrace their Father in the end. The lessons taught in the Bible explicitly teach this

lesson. Of particular note is the story of Jonah.

Jonah represents the archetypical traitor, a man who shirks the simple responsibilities that God placed squarely on his shoulders in favor of attempting to outrun the Lord. God, instead of outright killing Jonah on the spot, plagued Jonah with bad luck as he sought to outrun Fate. Even when he stowed away on a ship, the entire ship was beset with misfortune until the sailors cast Jonah into the sea, where the storm barraging the ship abruptly ceased. Jonah was then swallowed by a whale, and only then in the utmost pain in his life did he calm the turbulence in his mind and submit back into God's will. The Lord, seeing his grief and repentance, then saved Jonah from death. What deity could be kinder than the one who teaches his sons a moral lesson as well as appreciation for life in lieu of death?

Only a fool would refuse the fatherly love of his own Creator. And a fool I was, believing that my soul was being saved from the depths of Hell as Jonah's was. It was only much later that I realized that I was not the one whom the Lord was attempting to save.

Rhetorical Morsels

Simply stated, rhetoric is the art of persuasion. It is the communication of a thesis and the employment of rhetorical devices in support of that thesis – devices such as ethos, logos and pathos, which in lay terms are an appeal to the author's credibility, an appeal to reason and an appeal to emotion.

Diana Grigoryan: Childhood is a wonderful and unique period of every human's life. It is a thing that you can never bring back. But childhood doesn't last forever, so you have to gain as much work experience as you can during your childhood years. It will never disturb you to have a job while studying, if you combine work and study in right way.

Is this mostly ethos, logos or pathos? _____

Mazhan Isaeian: When we came to the U.S., my father couldn't find a job because he was fifty years old and couldn't speak English. I said to my friends that if they knew of work for my father, they should call me. One of my friend's dad's is the manager of a warehouse, and they were hiring. My friend said to me, "If your father wants, he can go to the warehouse and fill out an application." My dad went there and filled out an application, and they said to come to an interview. My dad went to the interview but couldn't succeed. This is a big reason that I want to find an after school job.

Is this mostly ethos, logos or pathos? _____

Anonymous: As a cheerleader whose own GPA went from a 2.4 to a 3.5 ever since joining the team, I know first-hand how being involved in a group sport can affect your academics.

Is this mostly ethos, logos or pathos? _____

Destination: Explication

In addition to analyzing fictional narratives – naming the text's central theme and commenting on the author's use of literary devices in support of that theme, students explicate poetry. Sometimes such an explication takes on a form similar to that of a literary analysis essay; sometimes it takes on a slightly different one. Here are two explications:

Stopping by Beauty on a Long Journey

by Rachel Oiwake, Grade 10

"Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" by Robert Frost is a deep and meaningful piece of work that expresses Frost's thoughts on how people ought to see life. The theme of the poem is that one should stop for a moment to experience the beauty of life -- the great gift of nature and take a look at the little things that make life worth its hardships. Yet the reality that we must keep going stays with us at all times. Frost uses symbolism and imagery along with a calm tone to convey his message.

The poem is about a person, most likely a man, stopping by the snowy woods that belong to somebody else. He stops to feel the beauty of the woods while his horse urges him to keep on going. In the end, the speaker finally moves on to continue and fulfill his daily tasks.

Frost uses symbolism to help depict his ideas. In the poem, the woods represent life's beauty. The village and farmhouse represent the business of daily life. The line "His house is in the village though" tells how the owner of the woods is in the midst of an industrious life, forgetting about the woods and all the beauty he has. In the third stanza, the bells that ring wake the speaker from the daze of awe. The tangible elements that remind the speaker of life's value are the snow, the silence, the "easy wind" and the "downy flake."

In the two last lines of the final stanza the words "miles" and "sleep" are significant. The miles refer to the long, hard journey one must take before his sleep. Sleep means the end of life, or death.

In the first stanza, the line "His house is in the village though" represents a man (the owner of the woods) surrounded and preoccupied by the business of daily life, not realizing what he has. The speaker "stopping here" figuratively means that he is taking a moment to observe and appreciate the littlest sparkles that make life beautiful.

The second stanza contains the line "The darkest evening of the year," which tells the reader that the speaker is in a sad or austere period of life. Despite his distress or sorrow, he is still taking this dreamy moment to look at the magnificence of life. The speaker's horse shakes his harness bells as if to tell him to move on. This identifies the ring in one's mind shaking him out of his thoughtful moment and dreamy state. It is the wake-up bell telling one to keep moving forward. The first line of the fourth and last stanza, "The

woods are lovely, dark, and deep," refers to how life is full of ups and downs, but is altogether beautiful when you stop to look at it. Finally, the last two lines of the last stanza, "And miles to go before I sleep," denotes how the speaker has things to do and must go on with the long journey of his life.

Frost's usage of imagery and his distinct tone also play a significant role in portraying the theme. His tone creates a pensive and reflective mood, attributing the calm and deep feel of the snowy woods. It helps illustrate the speaker's faraway moment when he stops to feel life's exquisiteness. This tone and mood show how it could be a moment of an absent realization about what is important in life.

Robert Frost uses symbolism, imagery and a reflective tone to depict the central theme of the poem. Frost's interpretation of life is that it is a long journey of hardships. It is only that one brief moment of deep dreaminess, even at our most challenging times, that we remember the beauty of life. We notice the little things that make life worth the journey and wish that such a moment would last. However, as the speaker of the poem reminds us, the bell rings telling us to move forward and fulfill our goals in life before it ends.

Don't Go (without God) by Samuel Tezyan, Grade 9

The poem, or villanelle, "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" by Dylan Thomas can be interpreted in a variety of ways. I believe that the poem is about a child speaking to his dying father explaining his own will to live and encouraging his father to keep fighting. Throughout the poem, the speaker, who the author's diction suggests is a well educated man, lectures to his father on how life, although so great and wonderful, is also cruel and unjust. With the help of the author's repetition, diction, and tone, it seems clear that the central theme of this poem is that although death is a part of life's cycle, life is worth fighting for. There is also another possible theme to this poem – that perhaps the speaker is talking to God. He uses the word like *father*, *wise* and *pray*, which could be clues to show that he is indeed talking to God. If this is true than the theme of the poem could also be that life should be lived (and left) with God.

One way the author expresses the theme is with his use of repetition. Throughout the poem the author repeats the lines "Rage, rage against the dying of the light" and "Do not go gentle into that good night." In the first line, by saying, "dying of the light" I believe the speaker is suggesting the end of life. As for the "Rage, rage" this refers to the anger that is demonstrated by men when they know that the end of life is near. In regards to the second line, "that good night," it most likely refers to the end of life also. And the "Do not go gentle" portion is saying that one should do everything he can to stay alive. With the repetition of these lines, the theme is made very obvious and also happens to be the title "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night."

Along with the author's use of repetition, the author's diction helps to bring out the theme as well. Throughout the

poem the author uses words such as "good night," "close of day" and "dying of the light," all of which refer to death or the end of life. On the other hand, the author also uses phrases such as "do not go gentle," "grieved it on its way," and "rage against the dying of the light" all of which stand for the struggle to survive and the will to live. Using words and phrases such as these may be the most obvious clues to show that the theme is that life is beautiful and worthwhile, yet paradoxically spiteful and cruel.

In addition to the author's use of repetition and diction, the author's tone also expresses the theme of this poem. I believe that the tone of this poem could range from melancholic and pessimistic to even insightful and inspiring. The tone seems melancholic at times because the poem constantly refers to death. As for the pessimistic aspect of the tone, when the speaker is talking to his father, it appears as if his father will not live on through the night. On the other hand, the tone seems insightful because of all the talk about different types of men and how life is precious to every one of them. And the tone is inspiring because with that talk on how precious life is, the speaker is trying to inspire his father to fight and survive.

The villanelle "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" by Dylan Thomas is most probably about a son speaking to his father on his deathbed, trying to convince him to not give up on life and to fight until the end. Along the way, the speaker speaks of how precious life is and that although death is a part of life, life is worth living until the end. With the author's use of repetition, diction, and tone, it seems clear that the central message of this poem is that life is worth fighting for and, paradoxically, even worth dying for. Also the possibility that the speaker is talking to God looms around this poem. If this theory is true that the theme of this poem very well may be: don't go to death without God.

Fiction Analysis

In addition to explicating poems, students analyze and explain novels and plays. Because students are expected to be practiced at such analysis by grade 12, there is the need to begin much younger. Here are essays written by students in Grades 9 and 10.

Temp at Which They Burn by Feneйда Guerrero, Grade 9

Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* starts with an ordinary man, with a not-so-ordinary job. He's not the only one. Bradbury's word to send across to the readers is very simple: Everyone has a mind of their own for a reason. The people in the story are all controlled by the government and they should be able to make up their own minds and make their own decisions.

The story begins with Guy Montag, who is obviously an ordinary, every-day man, with a "unique" profession as a fireman. It may sound normal to us, but in his community, in his time, his profession is to start fires, instead of putting them

out. His occupation, specifically, is to burn books in the houses in which they're hiding or being kept.

Montag lives in a futuristic society where the government has banned all books and reading materials. Montag's job is to burn these books and to turn in those who illegally read, ignoring the laws put out by the government. Once Montag realizes that what he's been doing for the past ten years is wrong, it's too late. He can't save the books he's burned or the ones that are on their way to being burned. He is way too late.

There are a several different ways to decipher Ray Bradbury's message. One way is through the setting. The novel is set in the distant future of America. In Montag's America, it is outlawed to read or have any type of literature in your possession. Bradbury sets the story in this place because he wants to show that if people do only what they're told, they get used to it. When they do, they lose their ability to think for themselves. They're used to being controlled by someone else. In Montag's time, everyone is supposed to do what is expected of them, and no one has ever thought about going against what they're supposed to do. When Montag observes that people have minds of their own and can do whatever they please, it's way too belated. No one listens to him and no one joins him. Until he meets a group of men who think the same way he does.

Another way to view Bradbury's message is through the characters he produces. Guy Montag is obviously the protagonist in the novel. Throughout the story, he's struggling between what he believes is right and what everyone else thinks is ethical. He's married to a woman, Mildred Montag. Mildred is just a "typical" woman. She stays at home and takes care of everything. They are just a regular couple living together. One day, coming back home from work, Montag finds his wife passed out, next to an empty bottle of sleeping pills. Montag calls for help, and two operators come. They insert a snake-like tube into her body, pump out her old blood, and inject her with new blood. Now his wife is an altogether new person. She is different which isn't normal to Montag. Mildred doesn't remember a lot of events that have occurred, and Montag is upset with what's happened to her.

Then, when he meets Clarisse McClellan, his life changes a full 180 degrees. She is a very colorful person compared to everyone else. She is an oddball, a mysterious teen woman. Her family knows about the actual history of America. Clarisse informs Montag about everything she knows about firemen, dandelions, cars, and everything. "Strange. I heard once that a long time ago houses used to burn by accident and they needed firemen to stop the flames." (Bradbury 8). This quote is when Montag first meets Clarisse. She asks him what his job is and he tells her that he's a fireman. That's when she tells him what she heard from her family. These characters make up this story, because without them, there is no story. If there wasn't the unique character, this story would only be about the future of book burning. Clarisse is a foil for Montag.

Bradbury's use of repetition is another way to gander at his message. He repeats himself to show that people do the

same thing every day of their lives. They wake up, go to work, go home, go to sleep, and the cycle starts again. All of these people are doing what's told to them, and they don't have any authority over themselves. "The jet bombers going over, going over, going over, one two, one two, one two, six of them, nine of them, twelve of them, one and one and one and another and another and another, did all the screaming for him." (Bradbury 13-14). As you can see, Montag can't even "scream" for himself; the jet bombers do. This series would go on and on if the pilots were so ordered.

Since this story does take place in the future, the reader can't help but conjure up pictures and images of what Bradbury has given us. The future, as you know, will have places, buildings, toys, clothes, and technologies that we don't have today. At the beginning of the story, Bradbury explains that the people living in this time have to speed up. If they don't, they either get a ticket or arrested. When Bradbury describes the way the people see things, it makes the reader imagine it in their heads. "If you showed a driver a green blur, Oh yes! he'd say, that's grass! A pink blur! That's a rose garden! White blurs are houses. Brown blurs are cows. (Bradbury 9). None of these people take the time to enjoy the precious things in life and they aren't allowed to. If they do take their time, like Clarisse's uncle, you're put in jail.

Montag's house is another place the reader can imagine. At Montag's house, there's the parlor, which has three TV walls. Imagine three TV walls! There's also an automatic voice for the front door. Whenever there's a visitor, the voice tells either Montag or Mildred that there's someone outside. The reader just imagines himself in their situation and looks at the story through Bradbury's eyes.

Relating to this world, this novel shows what it would be like if the entire human population was to be under the direct influence of someone else. Today, most people follow the laws so that no one gets hurt and nothing is destroyed. But no one is completely in control of someone else. Parents don't control their children; they merely teach them right from wrong and give them rewards in return. Employers don't control their employees. Technically, no one can do what they don't want to do. If someone were to control someone else, they won't be able to. At least at first.

Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury is based on people in the future that aren't able to think for themselves. When reading this novel and using these literary devices- setting, characters, repetition, and imagery- you'll be able to distinguish his message.

The following is a timed-write essay written by a 12th grader in one 40 minute class session:

Earnest Struggle by Araks Ohanyan

The male and female genders are juxtaposed throughout *The Importance of Being Earnest*, and several contrasts are pointed out; however, parallels are also drawn as Oscar Wilde exposes in his play the flaws and trivialities that exist in both

genders.

Wilde begins by juxtaposing the qualities of the male and female characters. Algernon and Jack are described, at first, as deceivers. Although their intentions might be somewhat noble, neither of these men is above lying. Both are practiced Bunburyists who successfully live double lives. The women are painted in a different light. Gwendolyn is affectionate and honest. Lady Bracknell is a law unto herself. She is portrayed as a matriarch who dominates over those around her. Through this characterization, Wilde may be suggesting, at the start, that while men might think they have the upper hand, women are really running the show.

Later on in the play, however, the tables are turned. The men are portrayed as perseverant lovers who hold to their affections and do not give up. The women – especially Cecily and Gwendolyn – are shown as fickle lovers who allow something as simple as a name to get between them and their fiancées. Lady Bracknell is painted in a negative light as she refuses to give Jack her daughter's hand simply because of his family history. Wilde again toys with the idea of gender superiority – that one gender is better than the other. In this case, that the men are better than the women. Generally, during Wilde's time, men had more social and political power than women. Yet, through his ever-shifting characterizations, Wilde highlights the fact that ultimately neither men nor women ever have all the power. There is a continual struggle and perpetual imbalance between the genders.

In an almost contradictory manner, Wilde also states that in some ways, men and women are essentially equal. He does this by drawing parallels between the relationships of Jack and Algy and Gwendolyn and Cecily. Both pairs experience periods of friendship and periods of disagreement. Also, the people in both pairs are driven by similar desires. In the case of Jack and Algy, they each form designs on young ladies and employ deceit in order to snag their beans. In the case of Gwendolyn and Cecily, both ladies want to marry a man named Earnest and both are willing to do whatever it takes to prevent the other from stealing him. Also, both are quick to forgive their gentleman's faults. By comparing these two pairs, Wilde points out that men and women are really the same. They both are capable of love, hatred, fallacy, repentance and inconsistency.

While these two opposing views of gender – that they are different and yet the same – seem to contradict, Wilde might be using this seeming contradiction to portray a larger theme: that the gender struggle between men and women is futile because we have so much in common, yet it is necessary because it keeps life interesting. In the end, Wilde confirms that people are, and perhaps always will be, walking – and pairing – paradoxes.

Along the Way

Before a student puts thoughts into the form of an essay, he or she should answer a host of questions, have some unique insight and then practice articulating that insight in the form of commentary. Here is some commentary made along the way.

Kimberly Centeno: The author also uses an oxymoron. "Grave men, near death, who see blinding sight" is an example of an oxymoron. An oxymoron is a term or phrase that is seemingly contradictory. If you're blind, you have no sight because you're blind. That makes it an oxymoron.

Ani Terzian: The sophisticated diction Thomas uses is a contributing factor in the revealing of the theme of his poem. For example, in the first line of the fourth stanza, Thomas uses words and phrases such as "grave men" and "blinding sight." These serve as analogous ideas that suggest two different things at once. "Grave men" refers to the solemnity of people who have regrets about the arrival of death. While revealing the message of the poem, the words also highlight death itself. With the word "grave," the reader further comprehends the way death is suggested to be accepted. This is to accept death and live life to the fullest until its arrival. When "blinding sight" is stated, it refers to blind men who understand the way of life with full awareness and comprehension even though they cannot see.

Tony Ramos: Dylan Thomas with his diction, uses many words that refer to light, and in his poem light symbolizes life. Words such as *burn*, *lightning* and *bright* all have to do with light. For example, the fire creates light when you burn wood; a lightning streak in the sky creates a big flash; and bright refers to how much light there is. Light plays a big role in this poem... Thomas also compares different types of men. Words like *wise*, *good*, *wild*, and *grave* describe very different personalities. The author compares these men because he wants to show that anyone, no matter who you are or what personality you have, will face death. But no one should be scared; just continue living life to the best of your ability.

When analyzing a text, students are sometimes asked to make connections from that text to either the self, to another text or to the world.

Tahia Rivara: This poem connects to another poem I have read that was made into a song by the rap group, Atmosphere. In their rhyme, they use many of the same literary devices, and they also speak of a father's death. The affection shown in the poem is also shown in the song, and the speaker of the song explains death to be one of the things that he does not fear since he knows it is inevitable. It is as if in both texts the speakers realize that death is coming and they cannot stop it, even if one has so much more to give.

Lit through a Thinker's Lens

The analysis of literature may involve, at first, a personal response, next a more objective deconstruction, and then, in the advanced stages, a look at it through the eyes of either a social movement or a famous thinker.

Students in AP English Lit were assigned an analysis –either feminist, anti-feminist, Marxist, Sartrean or other, of a text from this year's reading list. Following is one student's Nietzschean analysis of *Wuthering Heights*.

Nietzsche, Too, is Dead by David Vartanyan

Nietzsche believed in the *Übermensch*, the Overman, as the ultimate goal of humanity – a superhuman evolution of mankind that sought no God and found its complete fulfillment on Earth. Nietzsche argued in favor of setting the individual – his flaws and strengths combined – as a standard to be overcome rather than setting God and godliness as an unreachable goal that mankind must strive for. In *Wuthering Heights*, Emily Bronte, following this 'creed,' structures the relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff as an allegory for man's pursuit of and progress towards the *Übermensch*.

Bronte, rather than deifying Catherine, anthropomorphizes God, making him in Catherine's image. Catherine is depicted as a Persephone figure, symbolic of God, brought down to the depths of the Earth and made more human than man. Nietzsche explores man through his proximity to the Earth, and consequently man is closest to the Earth when he is dead and buried underground. From this perspective, Catherine – a reflection of Persephone in hell – serves as an archetype of man. During the day she sleeps in her grave, and at night she returns from the spectral world to Earth. Her hell is the Grange: "In winter, nothing more dreary, in summer, nothing more divine" (Bronte 306). In her hell, "a sinking sun lies behind, and the mild glory of a rising moon in front; one fading, and the other brightening" (Bronte 307). Like Persephone, she is condemned for half her life to torment and the other half to wait as Heathcliff's life wanes – his death looming brighter in the horizon. Catherine's diurnal transition from her coffin during the day to an unearthly spectre at night, symbolizes her transition from buried human to resurrected god. By separating the cycle of death-and-rebirth from its traditional association with the gods, Bronte infuses Catherine with the world, literally and metaphorically,

to create, from Nietzsche's perspective, the model man free from the gods.

Catherine, when alive and when dead, has an earthly glow too proud to be humbled that allows her to evolve from man to superman. As an Earnshaw, in the prime of her body, she does not reject her body nor consider it as solely life-support for her soul. Rather, she revels in her beauty, her fair, healthy skin and lively eyes, proclaiming an obsession with earthly life and not heavenly delights. Paradoxically, only by denying all stigmas associated with worldly delights does she transcend her human self. Through her early death as a Linton she overcomes her humanity, a "bridge between beast and Overhuman, a discord and hybrid between plant and spectre" (Nietzsche 253). Following a progressive genealogical chain leading to the *Übermensch*, Catherine evolves from her plant-state at her burial – as her body acts as the earth's fertilizer – to a spectre at her resurrection. Without death there can be no resurrection; the death of Catherine reflects Nietzsche's death of God, as "only since he has lain in the grave have we been resurrected" (Nietzsche 11). With Catherine's death, both she and Heathcliff begin their reconciliation through purgatory. Catherine, as a tormented phantom and as Overman, undergoes a tribulation where she pays for only her and Heathcliff's sins, as opposed to the Judeo-Christian tradition of a Messiah bearing all humanity's sins. Heathcliff serves as a penitent, never permitted to see Catherine's ghost but always aware of it. He joins Catherine after self-starving, which is mimicry of an anti-Christian lent. His aim is not to save his soul but to submit to the eternal unrest with the soul of Catherine. The Overman thus comes to represent complete human awareness and the ensuing eternal misery, embodying an utter rejection of heavenly paradise in place of earthly torment.

Heathcliff, by extension, acts as a living foil to Catherine. While she evolves toward the *Übermensch*, he evolves away from the prophetic last man, defined by Nietzsche as the final human obstacle to the Overman. With humanity a bridge between beast and *Übermensch*, Heathcliff is the beast, in appearance and character. He is a "dark-skinned man" (Bronte 11) with knit brows, a prominent forehead and a permanent scowl on his face. Heathcliff is gruff in character, short-tempered, and violent. He, however, contains the vestigial trace of potential that is suggestive of the Overhuman. That trace is his imagination. He is not well educated but he is nonetheless bright, with intelligent eyes that are never satisfied. His love for Catherine is "a source of little visible delight, but necessary;" their fluctuating relationship and strong conflicting feelings bring out the beast within him. Heathcliff is not satisfied without Catherine, and so he leaves her on a self-imposed pilgrimage, creating a purgatory for himself on Earth. When he returns, as Catherine lies dying, he is not satisfied with simply having her physically in his arms. He has loved her too much to accept her for what she is when he could sense what she might become, and his psychological anguish when they last met reveals this internal emotional

turbulence. Similarly Catherine, after her death, haunts Heathcliff because she too is tormented psychologically with the understanding that man evolves through death. This understanding of the Overman, of human potential, is what leads Heathcliff, the beast, over the bridge called humanity ultimately into Catherine's – the *Übermensch's* – deathly embrace. They are side by side, for eternity. Catherine serves as the Overman, Heathcliff as her polar last man, and the two together metamorphose into the highest stage of Nietzschean evolution: the eternal recurrence of the same.

Catherine Earnshaw, Catherine Linton, and Catherine Heathcliff signify the past, present and future, a perpetual recurrence that paradoxically marks Catherine's transition from human to Overman to eternal recurrence of the same. While an Earnshaw, Catherine dreams that "Heaven did not seem to be my home; and I broke my heart with weeping to come back to earth" (Bronte 85). She wills eternal purgatory onto herself, and thus begins this final stage of her evolution. In order for man to be a bridge that humanity must cross to reach the Overman, Heathcliff and Catherine are willing to die – to go under – to ironically allow the *Übermensch* to cross above. They altruistically sacrifice themselves to selfishly become greater, and, in striving towards the *Übermensch*, they traverse "beyond good and evil" (Nietzsche 232).

The living world reflects the unending recurrence of the same. Eighteen years earlier Linton had married Catherine; then, Cathy married Linton. The end of purgatory, with Heathcliff rejoining Catherine, is similarly marked above with Hareton Earnshaw, a reflection of Heathcliff's personality, marrying Cathy. A spiritual marriage below Earth is balanced by a tangible one above, and the Linton-Catherine cycle is broken to eternally perpetuate the Heathcliff-Catherine cycle. Catherine had willed herself to Earth for eternity; and by replacing the afterlife – the crux of Christianity – with an eternity here on Earth, Nietzsche does away with the role of God as savior and shifts the domain of the gods and heaven, to the domain of man and Earth.

Catherine, however, exists only as a microcosmic incarnation of the *Übermensch*, which is macroscopically the evolution of all of mankind. Bronte funnels this generalization through Heathcliff's bitterness as he ages. He directs his anger from Catherine to Cathy, Linton, and Hareton, in each of whom he sees a trace of Catherine. By subjecting them to the psychological turmoil he has gone through without Catherine, he encourages their intimacy and is unexpectedly successful. Linton dies off sick, a hindrance to man's development, whereas Cathy and Linton survive the test by fire and, through their joyful marriage – a manifestation of earthly delight – they advance toward the *Übermensch*. Because Heathcliff rejects pity and love, he is able to wean mankind toward this greater goal, stimulating what Jung would call a collective consciousness, as Cathy and Linton become aware of their temporal progeny, the Overman, and progress toward it. However, in the hierarchy that stems from beast to man to *Übermensch* to eternal recurrence of the same, only

Heathcliff and Catherine –after their deaths – transcend to the last stage. Death, then, is the final barrier that allows man to transcend himself.

Ironically, Catherine as Overman is a paradox because Nietzsche relegated women to the “little people” (Nietzsche 13) which is antithetical to the creation of the *Übermensch*. Brontë’s characterization of Catherine may suggest the existence of a neuter gender hierarchically higher than man or woman, and that evolution then rises beyond gender differences. Catherine also connotes an inverted Gaia-figure; she pulls in two lives, Heathcliff’s and Lindley’s, but gives forth only one: Cathy. Catherine is unable to self-propagate, such propagation being what Nietzsche claimed was the woman’s role in perpetuating the coming of the *Übermensch*. Catherine does not self-balance nor does she self-correct the lives involved with hers, thus failing to fulfill the functions demanded of the Earth goddess. Thus she dethrones herself, through her early death, and subsequently the goddess Gaia, whom she had personified. By dethroning the last stronghold of religious thought, a pantheistic worship of Earth embodying God, Brontë proclaims that God in all forms is dead, and subsequently that man can progress and no longer need a god-like figure for resurrection.

Brontë’s reverse logic of the good fading and the evil rising in power reflects Nietzsche’s perspective that “evil is the human’s best strength” (Nietzsche 231). The ultimate victory in the novel is death. Heathcliff’s tormented face when he dies acts as a last rejection of heavenly afterlife because Heathcliff’s miserable life, capped by a fitting death, is nonetheless fulfilled by a happy ending. He is reunited with Catherine, and his mood near the end of the story is relatively bright. He concludes his life, as Nietzsche concludes his words, “by remembering to laugh well too” (Nietzsche 259). Through Brontë’s unorthodox juxtaposition of conventional good and evil and in the interplay between life and death, Heathcliff and Catherine trump what Nietzsche would call “mere morality” to traverse toward and beyond the *Übermensch*, as testimony that, though God may be dead, man is very much alive.

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Teens Atwitter

One way to keep students engaged in the oft-arduous tasks of reading and writing is to marry literature to technology...and of course to ask students about themselves. Here, in **exactly 140 characters**, which is the limit on Twitter, are some answers to the question “**What is your destiny?**”

Leon Shahbazyan: My destiny is to become a UFC fighter and the lightweight champion - to win by triangle choke - to get the belt and money - the best feeling

Natella Petrosyan: There are two paths I can take: I can be a successful actress living on Jupiter or a burger flipper living (and dying) off burgers and soda.

Keyry Rivas: I’m going to be a famous boxer. Unstoppable. I’ll put someone in a Half Nelson and beat them with that one move. I’m going to be that good.

Darenn Chavez: I see myself in the Air Force. I don’t wanna make \$\$\$\$. I just wanna be wonderful. Then I’ll look back and say, whoa, I lived the good life ☺

Feneyda Guerrero: I don’t know what my destiny is. I don’t think I’ll ever know - maybe in the movies or maybe in the courts - could be here, there, or anywhere

Sahara Gallo: I want to be a famous writer and leave a mark on this world that everyone after me will remember. I aim to make a change no matter what <3:D

Michelle Valladares: @akittelson. My Destiny is my inevitable fate. My destiny is predetermined. Chosen by God is my path. Everything will go as He has planned

Robbie Racine: I will soar high above the world on a path filled with desire. My future is preset, not by a higher power, but by in the way I have already lived my life.

Kenya Munoz: Live life fully; grab the bull by its horns; never forget the world is a playground; don’t let schedules make life feel like a play-by-play.

Minas Titizyan: My destiny is going to be someplace where people will be applauding to the inspiring, symphonic music that will be created by the very best.

Janeth Saabedra : Ima be flyin, explorin the world. Not knowin whats waitin 4 me. Fallin in love. Bein able to look back& see I lived my life to the fullest<3

Kimberly Cen Basto: Win only WIN; staring at the winning goal; fans with jaw-dropping expressions; faces painted in red and black SCREAMING this is FIFA –GOAL!

Anahit Sargsyan: I’m going to be a famous architect. My future is associated with large buildings and bridges. I will share with people ideas for the future.

Hasmik Sayadyan: My challenge is to play better basketball and maybe someday be in the WNBA. Play as a shooting guard. I am going to be the next Lisa Leslie.

Zareh Minassian: I'm going to be a pro at video games. I'm going to be the next best player. Wait a minute; I already am the best player! I found my destiny!

Rosario Hernandez: Go traveling around the world...feel the warmth of different cultures...but I'm still somewhat ignorant of where my heart and life will lead to.

Anonymous: Discover the world and myself; truly find joy with more than only its superficial features. Live believing greatly in my self-determination.

Anonymous: Become mother, child, teacher with a loving man who will trust me hands down. I will find love and swing in joy together with my new family.

Armen Hovsepian: I would like to be a firefighter because when I was a little boy our home was saved by firefighters. I would love to save houses and people.

Mases Mnaskan: I want to finish high school with high grades and be a policeman or a doctor in the future and continue all while having a comfortable life.

Sameem Saeed: After I finish high school, I want to be a tennis player. Tennis is a beautiful sport, and it makes money. I hope I will proud of my future.

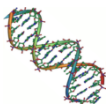
Meline Ghazaryan: My destiny is to become a famous doctor and help many people in the world. I will do everything to make them happy. That's all I want to do.

Frances Paramba: I want to be there for children. See their faces light up when they feel better after visiting me. I will be both their guidance and doctor.

Aldo Hernandez: I see destiny as an opportunity to have a chance to have a chance to live life...to find out who Aldo really is. ???Who (and where) is Aldo???

Alisher Baibussina: Dawg, ima become an all-time known graffiti legend 'cause you know that stuff is cool. And if I do, ima get loads of mad c\$sh in my pockets.

Selina Mestre: My destiny is to work in forensics. I'll take photographs of evidence and match them to finger prints. I'll collect hair samples and D.N.A.



Diana Grigoryan: I imagine that in my future I will be a good psychologist. I imagine helping people figure out their problems and giving them useful advice.

Lyolya Hovhannisyan: My future will be wherever my passions lead me as I unravel the world and who I am and uphold the promise to myself to be the best I can be.

Lynette Menjivar: Isn't that the million \$ question? I believe my destiny will have its own way of revealing itself. I'm not gna look for it; it's gna find me

Mazhan Isacian: When I was born, God gave me my destiny. When I became older, I found it playing basketball. I'll take a lay-up from a 7ft tall guy's hands.

Vivian Zalmyan: I will design and create a fighter aircraft with sonic booms incredibly loud, with passes so low at ground-level, it'll skim edges of grass.

Jessica Young: The world will melt around me as I fall in love with all my heart and then sing with the wind as I walk along the ever-winding path of life.

Ms. Kittelson: RT @ all.

For information on how to make the most of your 140 Twitter characters, visit:

<http://www.tutwow.com/tips/make-the-most-of-your-140-twitter-characters/>



Word Songs

Indeed, there are numerous ways to teach and learn vocabulary words. Earlier in the year students wrote plays wherein the title was a vocabulary word. Later in the year they wrote songs. Here are a small few:

Nemesis by David David

There is nemesis in my way
He never goes away
He's always in my dreams
I think of ways to get away

He always stays
He always stays

Through the streets
I walk with paranoia
Thinking he's in the way
I try to get away

He always stays
He always stays

My nemesis is gray
A shadow in the way
He never goes away

He always stays
He always stays

I think he'll always stay

So I must go away

Nemesis by Tony Ramos

Boy, you took a wrong turn down a one-way
There's no way you won't get hit; on the ground you will stay
The biggest mistake of your life's been made
Now my team and I are having a celebration parade

From the moment I step upon that turf
I'm a giant, and you're a smurf
Yes, I'm your worst nightmare and you won't wake up
Don't you wish you were in bed – all covered up?

You try and try, but might as well give up
Because you will never beat me
You will never beat me.

I apologize in advance to your mom

I don't mean to hurt her son
But this is a battle he'll have lost
And I will 'a won

What were you thinking going against me
You're trying to catch up to me
Because I'm what you want to be.

I've got a full career ahead of me

I'm young and great
Got you comparing me to Kobe when he was #8
I will never be overcome – from football to tennis
You won't win so go ahead and hate me
I'm your nemesis.

Go ahead and hate me
I'm your nemesis.

Go ahead and hate me
I'm your nemesis.

Irony by Rosario Hernandez

You were not supposed to happen.
You were so unexpected.
It's so stupid and weird
Like a fish owning a seafood market
That is when the interest comes
In all the texts I am reading
You make me feel so engaged
To keep on reading and reading

Are you always like this?
I bet you are
There is only one way to describe you
It's ironic

You are a surprising twist of events
Like the burning of a firefighter's house
After he rescues another's
Are you always this strange and awkward?

You just happen in a matter of seconds
And make me forget all the rest
I spend most of my time dwelling on
If something like you can really happen

Are you always like this?
I bet you are
There is only one way to describe you
It's ironic.

You are often in the worst situations
You are in most poems and songs (like this one) and stories
You make everything go wild. Just wild.
And everything's fun as well.

You make me take back what I thought would be impossible.
And see that it's all quite possible.

Are you always like this?
I bet you are
There is only one way to describe you
It's ironic.

You are a little sneaky
I don't see you coming at all

You are the number one reason
I don't hate reading at all
When I come upon you, in fact, I love it!

Are you always like this?
I bet you are
There is only one way to describe you
It's ironic.

I just can't seem to hate you.
Or can I?
Perhaps it is I who is ironic.

Irony by Christian Osorio

Cops are good and defend us from evil
But sometimes cops are the evil

They say they're cool
But we're not fools
Crooked cops love to pop innocent men

They say their pistols and night sticks are beacons of hope
Not beatings for dope
They'll arrest a man for stealing honey
Yet a cop might kill for a little money

I believe that most cops are good
But some are not up to that good
They'll take your bribe
If you've got a bad vibe

Robbers assign themselves evil tasks
But sometimes the cops are the ones behind the mask

Cops are good and defend us from evil
But sometimes cops are the evil

Portmanteau by Grigor Gukasyan

Hey, my name is Grigor
The last name is Gukasyan
Combined they spell Grigayan
And therefore rhyme with crayons

Da dum, da dum, dum, dum
Da dum, da dum, dum, dum

While running to class I stopped at the store
Bought a pack of crayons for my project
My teacher said it had to be red and purple
Therefore it had to be redurple

Da doo, da doo, doo, doo
Da doo, da doo, doo, doo

It was a relief to finish my project
And use some portmanteau
Get both crayons and a song
I guess that makes a crayong.

Ba bum, ba bum, bum, bum

Ba bum, ba bum, bum, bum

Cliché by Lynette Menjivar

This generation is not so called "new"
It hasn't started with someone like you
Songs on the radio are surely old
The world is starting to feel bitter cold

Our lives are boring, a little over-used
Over-used, over-used, over-used
Everything's like a broken record
That's hard to make stop
I want new ideas to pop

People like us take it to a level
Do crazy things just to fit in and be accepted
So much repetition
Kids with no ambition
Must use our intuition

Our lives are boring a little over-used
Over-used, over-used, over-used
Everything's like a broken record
That's hard to make stop
I want new ideas to pop

Friends and style and music come and go
It all keeps going with the flow
Let's imagine something new and creative
Or can we?
Can we?

Our lives are boring a little over-used
Over-used, over-used, over-used
Everything's like a broken record
That's hard to make stop
I want new ideas to pop

Everything's like a broken record...
Everything's like a broken record...
Everything's like a broken record...

New ideas to pop.



Coy Comic

Throughout the year, students have been asked to identify and employ such literary terms as *paradox*, *irony*, *hypocrisy*, *metaphor*, *bildungsroman*, *nemesis* and *doppelganger*. Here is a comic strip that illustrates one such term. Do you know which one?

by Noura Gorgees



Puzzles, Riddles and Games, Oh, Pi!

Physics and Statistics Quizzes by David Vartanyan

Question: You are on a rotating space station that creates artificial gravity. If you bounce a ball, will the ball land at your feet, behind you or in front of you?

Answer: The ball lands behind you. Before you drop it, both you and the ball are moving at the same speed. But, as the ball falls, its distance from the center of the space station increases. Its speed decreases, compared to you. Since the ball slows compared to you, it moves slower and lands behind you.

Question: If an ice cube melts, does it raise the water level?

Answer: No. An ice cube floats on water when it is partially submerged. As an ice cube melts, the increase in water level due to the area above the water melting is matched by a decrease in water level due to the ice being converted into water, which is less dense and has a smaller volume. So, ultimately, there is no net change in water level.

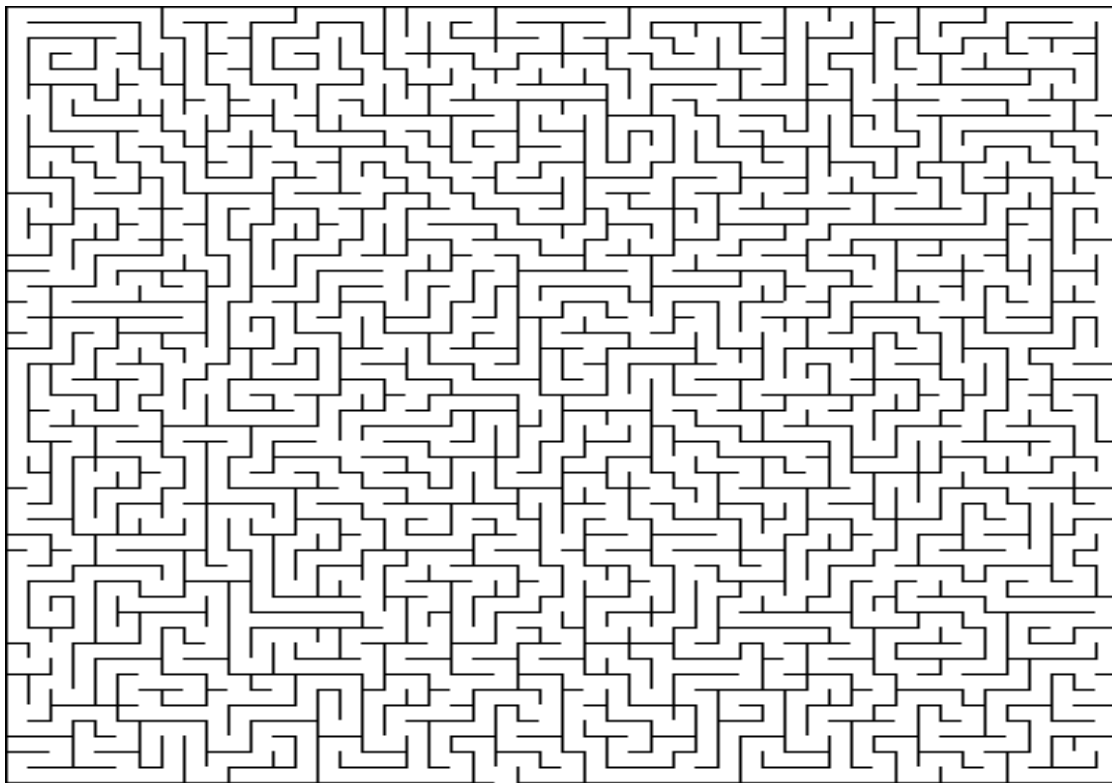
Question: Is a glacier virtually the same as an ice cube, and if so, will global warming raise the water level?

Answer: _____

Question: You are on a game show looking for the one door out of three that conceals a prize. You choose a door that may or may not conceal a prize. The host then opens one of the doors you did not choose (the host knows where the prize is) and there is no prize. He offers you a chance to change your choice. Should you?

Answer: _____

Labyrinth



<http://www.mazes.org.uk/difficult-maze-03.htm>

Thank you for enjoying this issue of the *Portmantimes*. An online version is available at www.webstacourse.com. Any comments or questions should be addressed to Ms. Kittelson at akittelson@gusd.net or ak@webstacourse.com.