

SONAR

SFDS Literary Magazine
2015



Each spring, upper school students are invited to submit a piece of writing to be considered for publication in *SONAR*, the SFDS literary magazine. Poems, stories, and short and long personal essays written in and out of school are all acceptable submissions.

Ms. Elliston, Ms. Landis, and Ms. Piersol, our upper school English teachers, read through each piece. They select four exemplary writings from each grade for publication. Congratulations to this year's *SONAR* winners.

Read the *SONAR 2014* issue online: www.sfds.net/SONAR.

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6th Grade

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5TH GRADE

My Life As A Little Person

by Charlotte Boyle

“Look at that one!” the young child blurted out, pointing at me on the field trip. He did that as if I was a rare object or animal, which I’m not. I’m a human being. All his friends turned to stare. I knew why he decided to do that. It was because I’m a little person and look different. I wished those kids weren’t going to the same park as we were.

Being a little person sometimes causes annoying or difficult things, particularly when it involves younger kids. When I’m walking in public, or in the school hallway, they’ll often stare. Or sometimes, they point, yell, or whisper to their friends when I’m right next to them and can obviously hear it. I imagine a life with a simple, easy way to make them understand dwarfism, and that I’m just a regular person like them. It makes me feel annoyed and angry. It also makes me wish I had a right to yell at them and say, “You know I can hear that!” Hitting them in the face would feel so good, even though I never would do that.

Another thing that’s hard about being a little person is when I go to Kansas every summer. I have one cousin there named Ainsley who understands dwarfism, and I am good friends with her. However, another one of my younger cousins named Amelia doesn’t really understand. Having to explain it to her every single year makes me feel frustrated. She’ll usually ask me annoying questions like, “How can you be older than your sister?” When I try to explain, she interrupts me with things like “I’m tall for my age” as if I should be too. Ainsley and I like to perform plays after dinner that we make up. Last year when we were getting ready, Amelia asked me, “Do you even know what a play is?” as if I were too young to know. A few years ago she even thought I was too little to go on a swing. I think she thinks she’s older than me. But other than my cousin Remy, I’m actually the oldest cousin in Kansas. All this adds up and makes me wish her parents would talk to her about it more often. It would really be great if I didn’t have to see her every year. I just can’t wait for the day she’s older and can understand. This may be a long time from now, since she’s only about six years old and Ainsley only began to understand when she was nine. Now, Ainsley doesn’t really seem to notice. There is also an annoying kindergarten girl.

“Are you sad that you’re a little person?” she asks.

This makes me feel like she might think that being a little person is just miserable, which is not true. I just can’t teach her about it. She also kind of brags that she’s not a little person. It makes me feel angry. Whenever I see her, I try to do athletic things that show that being a little person doesn’t affect all of my skills, and that I’m really not too disappointed about it. I only have a few struggles here and there. Another challenge at school is March Madness. March Madness is a basketball game where we pass the ball to the person next to us, until it gets to the end of the line. Then whoever has the ball tries to shoot it into the hoop. Then we rotate, and we try to get more hoops than the other team before the timer goes off. It gets difficult when it’s my turn to shoot the ball into the hoop. But I decided to do March Madness, even though I knew it would probably be really hard. I made this decision because I still love sports, and basketball is my favorite. It’s fun passing and dribbling, and I’m really good at that part. I just need someone else to throw the ball into the hoop during games. But playing is still really fun.

One more challenge is when people think I still need a car seat. They must not notice that it's only my arms and legs that are shorter. And other parents at playdates aren't the only ones. Lots of people have asked if I need a car seat. It has gotten so annoying that now if I hear someone even mention a car seat, it's worse than having a brick fall on my head. A lot of people want to help me, and they're mainly my best friends, but I just wish they could see that little people can do plenty of things alone, without help.

On the other hand, there are some things that make having dwarfism not so bad. With help, I can do anything. At home I have a special stick that helps me turn on the lights and pull down clothes from the closet. Also, my friends often bend down for me. They do this during things like conversations and hand games. At school I get to use the elevator. Because of this, I get to spend time with my friends when they come along, and I don't have to carry heavy stuff on the stairs. At home and school, we have stools in the bathrooms and kitchen, which makes a big difference.

In sports, I might have someone help me with a specific step so that I can still participate. When serving in tennis someone from my team will hold the ball over my racket, say "1 2 3 go," and drop it. Then I'll hit it over the net.

It's especially important that I advocate for myself. I ask for things to be lowered, like asking Ms. Stoler to lower the bathroom sign-out. I ask people to help me reach things and to help me move things, like my chair. If I didn't ask for help, my life would just be full of challenges and struggles. Asking for help is just something I automatically do. It's not very hard to do this when I need help, and I have been doing it for a pretty long time.

I can also do some things better than other people because of my dwarfism. For example, before the play structure changed in the lower school yard, there was a chain ladder that I could balance on without needing to grab it. It was cool because no one else could do that. I got to see my friends try too, but they just couldn't keep their balance. I can also fit into smaller spaces.

One more fun thing is having the LPA (Little People of America) community by my side. We have awesome holiday parties that are only for little people. On Easter, we have an egg hunt. The eggs are always filled with candy, and my family often gets to fill them. It's fun getting to choose the treats. My friend Abby and I like to sit and talk while eating after the hunt. Sometimes she and I make up games together, like balancing two pieces of broken chalk. At the Christmas parties, Santa always comes. The best thing about being part of this community is that we have fun conferences every summer. LPA conferences include a week at a large, fancy hotel, an awesome talent show, late-at-night dance parties, shows during dinner, eating with friends every day, staying up late, and a swimming pool. Every year they change location. In all the parties and holiday times together, I get to see and play with my best friends who are also little people, which is the best part. Joslyn, Iris, Abby, and Talia are my best friends in the community. Whenever we see each other, we're pulled together like we have magnets inside us. I get to see Joslyn and Talia pretty often, but Abby and Iris rarely. I feel happy being with them, and we have play dates often. Even though I relate to my other friends and classmates, it's also nice to relate to people about being a little person.

These events make me feel more comfortable because everyone around me understands. They either are little people, or have LP family members. I never have people following me around, asking me annoying questions here. I wish we had these conventions more often than just three to four times a year. I always think about my LP friends at school, even though I also have very good friends here.

Here's the thing I always remember: Being a little person isn't so bad. I just need to advocate for myself, and I will be all right.

The Snake

by Henry Cooper

My name is Henry Cooper and I am interested in animals. I like big ones, small ones, fat ones, skinny ones. It does not matter. I read things about them and I watch things about them. I also like to catch them. But the event that you are about to read about I had never prepared myself for.

I was with my sister's friend's brother, Marcus. We were at his house in Sonoma. It had been hot. It felt as if you could put pancakes and eggs on the floor and they would burn and crisp. Even though it was so hot Sonoma's awesome because there were reptiles and amphibians everywhere, just waiting to be caught. Marcus and I were looking for lizards by the tennis court to the side of his house. We scanned the area for lizards.

"There!" I said. The lizard was mocking us as he was running in and out of the tennis court like a shadow saying, "Stupid humans!"

As it was weaving through the tennis court we made a plan. "Marcus, go in the tennis court and I will stay out here, so if he goes in you can catch it and if it goes out I will!" I said. We put our plan into action and the lizard noticed his situation was getting tough so he made a dash for the rocks.

While I chased him, Marcus said, "Be careful, there are rattlesnakes." I ignored his comment and kept going. I was locked on to this lizard like a fox chasing a rabbit.

I was almost to the place where the lizard ran to but I suddenly felt a burning sensation in my ankle. I dropped to the ground. I took one look at my ankle and it felt like blood went up my veins to my head. I felt stunned because I knew how rare and unthinkable it was. I sat there for a minute. It seemed the whole world froze. I felt the wind on my face, birds chirping, and lizards scattering.

Once I woke up out of the trance I scrambled back to my mom and said, "I was bit by a rattlesnake." My mom countered and said, "There is no way on earth, it's just two bee stings." At that point I felt like I was a pot of water about to boil over with anger because my mom did not believe me.

Then Marcus's mom said, "It probably is a rattlesnake bite. We have them on the property."

I was not very nervous. I might have been stunned. But I was surprisingly not worried, unlike my mom. Marcus's mom got a paper towel and encased it around my leg. She then put a rubber band over it so the venom couldn't spread farther into my body, and we went to the hospital.

When we got there, I was carried to urgent care. The first thing the nurse said was, "You are a lucky boy. Most people would be in worse condition than you are." I was thinking, "Great. Now can you fix me?" I hated the smell of hospitals. When you walk in, all you feel and smell is death, that isn't what you want to smell when you are at the hospital. When we got to the room the doctor said, "You can't walk. It could cause the venom to spread faster." The first thing they did was put me in a bed and did a blood test. Drop, drop, drop was the sound of the blood going out of me into this jar. It seemed as if it would never stop.

Finally, the room was silent. It was done. This was really painful as they took around 10 vials of blood. Then they did x-rays to see if the fang was still in my leg. This startled me a little. Well, maybe a lot. I thought, the fang better not still be in me! What if I had to get surgery? Luckily, the fang was still on the rattlesnake.

I went to a new room and they left me with this weird thing on my arm for a long time to watch my condition. All this commotion made me hungry, so my dad got me food to eat. He told me, "You can get whatever you want, what do you want?" He went all the way to San Francisco to get me food and that felt good because I had a pretty bad day.

I was there for so long just waiting, waiting, waiting. After nine hours the hospital people said, "You can go, just remember no walking and if it gets worse come back." How could it possibly get worse? Getting bit by a rattlesnake is pretty bad.

In the car ride home after a very insane day, I said to myself, "I will always be more careful in nature." I learned to respect my surroundings because I am not the only thing on the planet.

I never saw the rattlesnake because he had the speed of lightning but I still feel bad. I stepped on his home. Even though I should not have cared. Still, how would you like it if someone were to step on your home? What would you do? How would you feel?

Will I ever see that snake again? Probably not. Will I ever see another rattlesnake in the wild? Yes, I will. Will I get bit again? Maybe.

Why?

by Teddy Means

Why must

I

Be the lowest?

Why does the king

Take away my freedom every

Morning when I wake?

How do I differ from him

Who unleashes armies

Forces virtues

Like a madman?

Why am I offered protection

And only spend my life

In my torn clothes?

To trouble a deaf Heaven

With my bootless cries

With this man's life and that man's voice

Standing alone waiting

Hearing a repetitive sin

Die every night

Fight every morning

(Based on the poetry of ancient China)

A Short Memoir

by Sophia Mendoza

My big problem is my smallness. I am a foot smaller than the tall kids and 4-8 inches shorter than the average sized kids. This didn't used to be a problem. I loved it because everyone paid attention to me. When I was five, I was okay with people thinking I was three or four because I paid no attention. But when I was six or seven, people thinking I was five annoyed me. I didn't care about the perks like free meals or nice comments, I only cared that my classmates were so much taller than me! It felt like I was a puppy next to a wolf. It really started to hurt my feelings and I didn't feel good about myself. I felt I wasn't normal. Like I was from Pluto. People mistake my age ALL the time. And frankly, it's quite annoying.

When I was eight, my dad, cousin, and I went to the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, I was very excited because I hadn't gone in a very long time. We were there on a Wednesday, and I stepped into a line. The Giant Dipper. It looked cool. But as it got closer, I could see the sign. 48 inches. I was 44. I couldn't even ride it with my cousin. I could feel anger building up inside. "This shouldn't matter," I thought, "You're being silly." But it did matter!

It felt like the amusement park had shut down on me. The shrieks of the Cave Train and Riptide had been drowned by melancholy and everything was moving at a turtle's pace. People slowly dropped from the tower and everyone around me was in focus as they strode deliberately. The waves by the beach crashed and I could see the water slowly fly up then hit the sand. A windsurfer descended and flailed. A seagull glided up at an inchworm's pace and the girls on the beach leapt so painstakingly I could see their every error. Even the Sea Swings seem to freeze in midair. The greasy nacho smell was intense, and I felt like a deflated balloon. The only roller coaster I could go on was the stupid dragon one, with three year olds. As The Sea Swings rose high above my head it seemed like time was going at a regular pace now, I thought about one thing that had troubled me: tall people only.

I knew I could still ride other rides like The Log Ride and Free Fall. But those just weren't the same! I shook it off, and tried to enjoy the rest of the day at the boardwalk, shuffling off to join my cousin for cotton candy.

My height is not only a problem at school, it's also a challenge at camp. (If I arrive at camp and I don't have any friends, why bother making them? I feel this way because at camp if people know me, they'll ask my age and then tease me on how short I am! I only stay at the really small camps as a result of this issue!)

My mom dropped me off at Edmo (the most torturing five hours of my life due to disgusting foods, sing-alongs, and idiotic counselors.) I walked in, feeling small, and not because of my height. My hands shook. I looked around and tried to make friends, but everybody was in my age group and a lot taller than me. It didn't seem like anybody wanted to make friends with me because I was so short. A few people teased me. I eventually made friends (with a first grader.) And now I don't exactly socialize at camp all because of my size when I was a third grader. Yes, the thing did go by quickly, like I pressed the fast forward button on a video. But at the same time it was a little painful. Like fast just wasn't enough.

I honestly hate when kids judge my age by my height, even at school, but it really bugs me when grownups judge me. When I was younger, I thought my life was paradise. I would get free gifts because people thought I was three and everybody loved me. To me, the world revolved around me! (Not the sun.) But not anymore!

Many times, I'm at a store and trying to find something. If I like one thing, I'll ask the salesperson, and my conversations usually will go like this:

"Hi, how are you?"

"Umm, I'm good." I respond.

"Do you see anything you would like? I saw some wonderful things over there."

"Well I like these sandals, the blue ones."

"Hmm...Are you sure? I mean look over there!" the salesperson points.

"No thank you ma'am. I'm not really into pink unicorns."

"Well what about the princesses? Every little girl loves princesses! Like Ariel and Belle..."

Oblivious grownups like these people seriously don't understand. They just go to the fact that since I'm short, I'm young! That's a humongous stereotype.

"Well, actually I'm ten, not five."

"Oh! Wow. Really?" they would exclaim. They wouldn't be so surprised if they didn't assume. It made me feel bad because I was thinking I should be taller, shouldn't I?

I felt like the weight of the world was on me, taunting me because of my size and laughing at me.

One day I was at practice with my friends, Maya and Bri. My coach announced something I couldn't really hear but after she did a small girl came walking onto the floor.

"This is Ailee." She motions over to the girl. "She will be joining us today."

I remember her. She was from my state competition. I walked over to meet her.

"Hi! I'm Sophia. I was actually at your old gym, American Gymnastics. I'm ten and you were at my state meet! How old are you?"

"Umm... Yeah I saw you there! I'm also ten," she responded.

"Really?" I thought. I had finally met someone who was smaller than I was, it felt really exceptional. She was super nice and she didn't care about her height at all. She made me feel like I shouldn't care about my height either. All this time I spent frowning, I knew I really shouldn't be like this. I was only making myself feel bad and now I know that's unimportant. My school has a lot of tall people in it. And Ailee's probably short in her school so even though it does hurt sometimes, I like knowing I'm not the only one who is very short. It felt like a weight had been lifted off my shoulders. The vacancy inside me was filled. No more staggering and suffering. Accepting who you are is significant. Be special, be bold, be small with a big voice!

Overall if you think it's weird or not okay to be different, like being short, please get over yourself. I know the real mature people are the ones who don't care. I don't care if you don't like me for being short, you just don't have to tell me, I have plenty of friends ready to defend me. Just know, it does hurt for you to tell me if you think this way or assume I'm younger than I really am. Is it really necessary to make fun of me? I don't think so. I would be a millionaire if I could bottle all this uniqueness, so just think before you talk. And know that it's okay to be different, normal is boring. This helps me feel good knowing not everybody has to be the same.

6TH GRADE

Lost Chapter of The Odyssey

by Nicolas Galleno

Ulysses was a happy man. He was back home after 20 years, he had all the food and drink that he could ever want, and he didn't have to worry about anything. He felt more grateful than he had ever felt before, and everything felt perfect. Food felt better, drink felt colder, friends happier, and jokes funnier. He was a humbled man. He was respectful to everything, even the peskiest fly. This was all good, until he got drunk. You see, if a man has too much wine he is turned into something like a devil.

At first, Ulysses thought that he would just have a swig of wine, for he had realized its powerful effects at Polyphemus' cave, but wine is a trickster, and one sip can lead to many more.

Ulysses was enjoying his party. He had everything he wanted: food, drink, and his beloved family. This party was going well, until the wine was brought out. Ulysses thought that he would just have a sip, but the wine tasted so good after ten years at sea. It tasted like his home, his family, his old life. And once you give a thirsty man wine, there is nothing stopping him from getting drunk. And this is exactly what Ulysses does; he gets drunk. One keg after another, until he was at a point where his mind was almost as thin and useless as the spirits he met in the Underworld. Then, he did something that would land him in Tartus. He leaped over the drink table, hurtled over a decorative keg, and leaped over his grandmother onto the table and screamed: "I defeated Poseidon, I can destroy anyone! Come on Poseidon, do something!"

Poseidon awoke to the sounds of the ungrateful soldier challenging him and happily obliged. He boomed out his low, powerful voice yelling to Ulysses, "You may have as you wish," in a menacing tone. Then, a sound so large and powerful came sweeping into Ithaca, driving the spirits out of Ulysses' head. The sound was laughing, jeering, and almost daring Ulysses to come outside. Ulysses could not see anything for the fog was so dense that it seemed that all the spirits of the Underworld had come up to haunt him. In the fog he could see Poseidon's face. It was a unreal haze of shadows, yet the scraggly, weathered beard and the cruel, menacing face was unmistakable. Then, in a huge torrent of sound, all the fog closed around him, trapping him inside its iron grip. Majestically, the fog cleared, and then swirled around him like a hurricane, creating a bubble-like material that closed around him. Yet the view was hardly on his mind for he could barely breathe and he could see a huge wave rushing towards him and his family. It just kept coming closer and closer. People started to scream and run, never seeing a wave so mighty and powerful. Then it hit the beach, snaking its way to his horrified family. In a flash, the wave sucked everything away, and nothing was left on the island except the debris of a once magnificent palace, Ulysses' palace. The bubble popped, and he dropped roughly to the ground.

He fell to the sobby ground, crying. All his family was gone, and he was left all alone, with nothing to eat, or to make a boat to sail away. He was shocked, he had just had everything, and now it was all gone. He had just traveled the Mediterranean Sea to find his home, and just when he got back he lost it all. He had nothing to do but just sit there and die. No sword, no bow, nothing. The once mighty hero had been subdued to a mere begger. He mustered all his strength to crawl to a cave, and then he curled up into a tight ball and fell asleep.

Lost Chapter of The Odyssey, continued >

He woke up refreshed and with a plan in his head. He knew that there had to be some debris somewhere to make a boat, but first he needed food. He decided to go towards the beach because fish and crabs were the most likely food to survive. When he got to the beach, he searched and searched for a morsel of food but he couldn't find any. After many hours of hard searching, the sand seemed very comfortable to lay down on, and the sun was hot, almost like his bed. He thought he could just take a quick break, but when he laid down, his eyes started to droop as if he had eaten a lotus flower, and he fell into a deep sleep.

Unlike in lotus land, Morpheus played with his dreams. He painted blue skies, green grass, and a soft summer breeze. His son, his wife, and his castle. Tables laden with food and drink, with no gods out for his neck. It was a peaceful life with no cares and no worries. All of a sudden, Morpheus tripped and spilled a puddle of the dreadful black paint on his dreams, and Polyphemus came and devoured his family. He wrecked his palace, destroyed his livestock. Then, Charybdis came and swallowed all the water, noisily, killing all the fish. In a matter of seconds she spit it all out again, destroying everything. Nothing was left. Nothing was left, was all that was playing in his head, his mind playing over and over again. Nothing was left.

Ulysses awoke in a puddle of sweat, trying to breathe, but all that came out was a rasping noise. He was in a spasm of terror, he just thought that he had lost everything, except that it was for the first time. His heart seemed to have ripped in two, everything had just been torn away. Everything killed in his face, his family's screams still lingering in his ears like bees buzzing. They never stopped, just kept wailing like the Sirens, yet this song was not beautiful, it was horrendous. But then he remembered that it had happened already, that his last hallucination was just a dream. He needed to get off this island, find help, and see if his family had survived. But first he felt so tired. He had not slept well in twenty years, why not sleep another five minutes here. With that, he fell back asleep in a puddle of sweat.

He awoke for the second time and he couldn't see anything. It was pitch black and he thought he was in the Underworld. The tide must have come in, and I drowned in it, he thought. But then he saw the North Star, so bright and illuminating hope. He realized that he was alive, and that he needed food. He looked out into the sea, hoping he would see a fish, but what he saw was puzzling. It was as tall as a tree, yet it seemed to be coming closer and getting bigger with every surge forward. Yet there were no branches, just a bunch of scraggly moss, or hair, Ulysses thought. "If there is hair, it must be living," Ulysses said aloud. Then he saw the big black spot on its head, and realized who it was. Polyphemus had come back.

Prologue to The Giver

by Samantha Glickman

Once there was a city with rolling hills and rivers, snow and sleds. A community where people chose their jobs and spouses, a place where women gave birth to their own children and named their own babies. Where the grass was green and the sky was blue, the flowers had color and the bees always buzzed. This was a city where people were different, where sameness was not a thing. This was the city of Hillwood.

In Hillwood, everything and everyone was busy. Everyone had places to go and people to see. There were two schools for the kids and many factories and buildings where the adults worked. On one side of town there were residential streets where every house was located. One street was called Everton Avenue. Everton was one of the most quiet streets in the city of Hillwood. It had beautiful homes with gorgeous landscaping. Everyone was friendly and kind. Many families lived on Everton Ave. All the families would help out the others and all the kids got along. On holidays the street would be lit up with bright lights and the children would play outside with one another. Everything was perfect on the street of Everton Avenue.

One cold and rainy day, a child was born. He was born at 3:21 on an early Tuesday morning. This was rare in the city of Hillwood, for children were most commonly born in the afternoon. He was tiny and cute like most babies and he had a small and pretty smile. There was one thing that stood out about this baby, though: he had soft blue eyes. Most children were born with dark brown eyes; light colored eyes were uncommon. This was Byron Johnson, a new addition to the Johnson family that lived on Everton Ave. The Johnson family, like any other, loved their new child. They loved his smile and the way he slept with such cuteness, and the way he rattled his toys. But as a few days passed the family started to dislike the child's eyes more and more. After five days of having Bryon as part of the family they couldn't stand how he had blue eyes and the rest of the family had brown eyes. Although being unordinary was considered special in Hillwood, the Johnsons decided to do something about his little blue eyes. Two days later, the Johnsons met with the head of child releasement. "We honestly love our child, but we just can't accept that he has blue eyes, because all three of our previous children had brown eyes, we have brown eyes and the rest of our family does," Lauren, Byron's mother, said.

"Well, there are several things that a family can do about this. First, would you be willing to give him another chance as being part of your family?" the head of child releasement said. "Yes, we have tried these past few days, but are there any other options to consider?" Jackson replied, Byron's father.

"Well let's see, we could see if any other families are interested in adoption, but you do know how rare it is for a family to take in another family's child. But one more option you have is releasing your child completely and giving him to the community next door. Now this is rare that they will accept him, because they have only accepted one other child from us ten years back, but still there is a chance," he said.

"Thank you for your time, and we will get back to you as soon as we make our decision."

One week later, Byron was accepted into the community next door, after the family had made their decision that previous night. When the family arrived at the river's bridge that divided the two communities, the family said their goodbyes and their prayers and handed Byron to the community's head. This was a day that both communities would remember for years.

Now it was early fall and the community only had a few months to prepare this newborn for December when he would be placed in a family. The newborn was assigned a nurturer and a name. When December came, the child was assigned a family, they were very excited to be given their first child. This was a moment that both the community would remember because of the background of this child, and that the family would remember. This is the story of Jonas, and how he was put on Mother Earth. A child that will do amazing things, and reach incredible places.

Final Chapter of The Giver

by Misha Tabatabai

I kept going toward the house, sensing its warmth and the love within. As I got to the door and reached my hand out to grab it, it disappeared to nothingness. It was all just my imagination. I felt cold and could hear Gabriel whimpering in my arms, and all I thought of was shelter. I looked around me and saw a dot in the distance. I kept my eyes on it as I pulled myself to my feet and started to limp towards it. As I got closer I saw that it was a tree, a tree with a hollow hole in it. I pulled myself towards it and plopped down inside. I turned and then instantly fell into a deep slumber.

I awoke by Gabriel's cries for food. I decided to go outside to see what I could find for him to eat. I got up but fell down again, not able to move my foot. It was freezing cold and numb. I had felt this before in one of my lessons with the giver: it was hypothermia. I wasn't sure what to do; this had never happened to me in real life before. I dragged myself outside of the trunk and looked around. The ground was covered in a white blanket of snow as far as I could see. I needed to fix my injured legs and get Gabriel to safety.

I grabbed one of the branches and hauled myself up. The tree had very soft bark. I peeled big chunks off and then put them on the ground. After that I broke some sharp branches off and put them near the bark. I put multiple pieces of bark on top of each other and nailed them together with the sharp branches; I had made myself a sled. I sat on the sled and put Gabriel on top of my lap while I started to push off. I felt the wind whip past my face and it even cheered me up a little until I noticed a hole in the ground right in front of us.

"Help!" I yelled not knowing if anything would happen, "Help."

As we got closer to the hole, I gave up yelling and decided that Gabriel and I should get off the speeding sled and try to save ourselves. I hugged him to my chest and rolled off crashing into the snow head first. I heard footsteps and people yelling, I tried to say something but then everything turned black.

I woke up in a small straw bed and looked around guessing I was dead, and then smelled something very good and thought I was in heaven. Just then a husky, strong looking guy walked in and said, "Finally awake, aren't ya?"

"Yes sir," I said remembering my manners.

"Well then come, it's dinner time," he said a little impatiently.

I obediently followed, not wanting to get him angry. It was a small house but full of joy. The man led me to the dining room where I saw three children, someone I assumed was a mom and an elderly man that I guessed was the grandfather. As I looked around I spotted Gabriel playing with the kids and relief flooded through my body; he was safe.

"Hello," said one of the kids, she looked like the oldest. "My name is Sara."

"He," she said pointing at one of the kids, "is my brother John, and she is my sister Olivia."

“Nice to meet you,” I said.

“Dinner time,” I heard a lady call.

I went to the table and we started to eat dinner. It was great; there was beef stew, mashed potatoes, and many different vegetables. I was so hungry it didn't matter what I had, anything tasted great to me. I could see color coming back to Gabriel's face and I started to feel really good, until I heard the chopping of wings and the sound of someone shouting.

“Oh no,” I muttered, “not again.”

Before I could say anything the lady said to Gabriel and me, “Hide, I'll distract them.”

“Open up,” said a gruff voice, “or I'll break the door down.”

The lady quickly opened the door as I got behind the couch.

“Yes?” she said.

“We're looking for a boy around the age of 13.”

“Haven't seen him.”

“I'm still going to have a look around he said.”

“No!”

“I have to.”

He pushed her back and started going around the house, flipping pillows and upturning chairs. As he got closer to me I started to worry, he was going to find me and I knew it. He came towards the couch and moved it aside.

“There he is,” he said “I knew he was here.”

He grabbed me by my wrists and yanked me to my feet. Everyone tried to help me but the man just moved them aside and dragged me with him. He threw me into the helicopter and then jumped in himself. The propellers started to spin, faster and faster until they were a blur. We started going up and up and the house grew smaller and smaller.

I wouldn't let them bring me back, I would rather die. I thought a while and looked out the window. I waited and then when he wasn't looking, I opened the door and jumped out. The wind whipped past my face as I sped up and the ground came closer to me. I watched it grow until, bam. I hit the floor with such force my body felt like it had been squashed like a bug. I knew I was going to die but then I remembered that Gabriel was safe and then I felt better, at least he was still alive.

“I love you Gabe.” I whispered, then my eyes started to fuzz up and I waited for death to come pick me off the ground and bring me where I belonged.

My Name

by Molly Tucker

Molly is an Irish name. It is a common name. It's a name that's often misspelled, but that's not what it means to me. It means walking along the soggy sand looking for seashells at Half Moon Bay. It is Muggsy, my dog, being unleashed on a hike with the sunlight shining on her black, wavy fur, her ears perked, listening to the chatter of birds, and her little cropped tail waving frantically, looking as if she would actually jump for joy. My name reminds me of a circle; it looks simple and people assume they know how to make it, but no person can. It seems simple, almost plain, so people think it's bland, but every Molly is different. It doesn't bother me because my name might be plain, but it's me. Molly: smooth, clean, and quick on the tongue. It makes me think of blue, sky blue because my name is soft like the clouds in the sky. Though my name also reminds me of green, lime green, as in the color of a gecko basking in the sun. It is a bold, bright color that stands out. My name is as bland as a white wall and as thundering as a foghorn. Molly Anne, Anne is my middle name and my mom's middle name too. My initials spell mat. Yes, as in the rug. My name is a shy jack rabbit startled by a car and can become a mouse scampering across the room to get to his hole while the cat is patiently watching. Molly Anne Tucker is my name and that is me.

7TH GRADE

And Then They Vanished

by Henry Britton

As Jeff walked to lunch with Randolph he asked, “What do you think about school?” He just walked silently and smiled goofily. As soon as Jeff hungrily plopped his tray down onto the table next to Randolph, he knew that this lunch was about settling hunger, rather than eating good food. When Kanoffski sat down at their table, it was clear that he needed cheering up. It took some work, but soon Kanoffski’s bad mood couldn’t stand against Jeff’s arsenal of corny jokes. Jeff loved being around his friends, and even when he wasn’t feeling great, just being around his friends cheered him up. It was after school got out when everything went wrong.

He was waiting for his mom when the quaking started. It started as a minor tremor but soon the ground rumbled so much, fissures spread across the ground. Metal groaned as it split apart. As Jeff watched, he knew he would never forget this moment. Chunks of building fell down on people and they screamed in terror. Kanoffski and Jeff stood still, as if paralyzed. Then Randolph pushed Kanoffski and him aside as a crack threatened to open under their feet. The quaking then stopped, and that was almost more terrifying than the shaking. All the adults had vanished in that one moment. Jeff had never felt so afraid, running throughout the streets to survey the carnage. As he ran, he realized he had nothing, except for the clothes he was wearing.

Jeff ran to his house to find it empty, and his friends reported likewise at their houses. Completely devoid of life. They scrounged some food from the destroyed pantry. They made their way to the grocery store and found the door broken. They walked in and put as much of the food as they could into their backpacks. The building that was still standing was the town hall. As they settled into some of the offices, they turned them into living spaces. Soon, Jeff began to take what he could from the deserted houses everywhere. He took the clothes from the houses along with furniture and first-aid supplies.

As time progressed, the group began to realize that they needed a leader to make the final say in decisions. They chose Jeffery, and at first he protested, but then he realized that he was the best option. He was likable and good at settling arguments. His first decision was to divide the labor. As other refugees joined, they helped to try to make the town hall more livable. Only when the adults were gone did they realize how much they relied on them. After one week the kids had grown up; they were completely indistinguishable from adults.

Shoes and Belts

by Dillon Case

They make us strip,
but I'm not naked,
vulnerability and trepidation cover me,
darkness and solitude make up my socks,
inattention is my ride,
bringing me from one place to the next,
agony makes up my shoes,
with every step, misery inflicted on me,
humiliation adorns me,
the pride trickles out of me like a waterfall,
I begin to question who I am,
and why I'm here.

(Inspired by Night by Elie Wiesel)

Bombs

by Ben Tripp

Bombs

When else in history
Have bombs been a wondrous sight

To save one's self
From the black flame's might

And when else would
A bomb create

Hope

For a better fate?

(Inspired by Night by Elie Wiesel)

Eyes

by Lucy Stoll

My eyes are open and the crows are back. They have two new babies, I saw them learning to fly. First thing in the morning, I heard my dad moving around, and I knew it was time to wake up. I lay there for a while, dreading getting out of my cozy nest into the freezing winter morning. I finally coaxed myself into getting up, tore myself out of my blankets, and trudged to the bathroom. I didn't sleep much last night. My eyes haven't adjusted to the bleak light of the cold, gray morning, and my eyes burned. I hissed as my bare feet touched the freezing cold tile of the bathroom floor, breaking the otherworldly silence of the winter morning. I could see my breath in a little cloud of warm air. I looked at myself in the mirror. I couldn't see anything but my eyes, clouded but bright, excited yet dull. Bright green, the color of deep water. The rest of the mirror was clouded, and my eyes stood out shiny and sad and lost. That cold, gray morning was the morning when the crows first came. I heard it at exactly 6:17 a.m. A slam into the bathroom window, making my heart jump at the sudden noise, a small thud, and then back to the deafening silence. I stood for a moment, heart still beating fast. I turned and walked down the hallway. I went into the kitchen, where my dad was sitting and drinking coffee, steam crawling and curling out of the mug. He looked in my direction, his eyes cloudy and dull and gray, and stared through me. He blinked once, water coming in a small droplet out of his right eye, and turned back around. I opened the side door and slowly walked down the stairs, and found myself underneath the bathroom window. Around me, the world was dark and bleak and gray, mirroring the days that seemed to repeat themselves. I looked down and a small, stark black crow was lying on the ground. I took a sharp breath inward, startled at what I found, and I carefully knelt down beside the bird. For the first time, I noticed the cold of the outdoors, and I saw goosebumps on my arms, the hair standing on end. I looked back down to the crow. Its eyes were closed, breathing slow. I scooped it up into my slowly numbing hands, and it didn't move. I tucked it into my arms and ignored the cold to examine the creature in my arms. Its feathers were like pieces of the midnight sky that fell and attached to its small, cold body. I stroked the bird gently, seeing if it would open its eyes. It did, and in them I saw forgiveness. They were like small black beads, deepening with every breath the bird took. It looked me directly in the eye, rich black met bright green, and it flew off, leaving me feeling hopeful. I walked back inside, the cold catching up to me. I shivered and touched my nose. It felt like ice. Three days later, I was huddled in blankets in my bed when I heard tapping. I whipped my head around and looked at the window. A crow was knocking on my window, almost as if it was trying to break through the glass. It was holding something in its mouth that shimmered in the weak sunlight. I approached the window, and for some reason, I decided to open it. The crow was holding a ring in its beak, and dropped it onto the hardwood floor, making a cracking sound. The noise broke the heavy, eerie silence. I picked it up as the crow rested itself on the windowsill, cocking its head and looking at me. I was curious, but somehow I understood that this crow wanted me to have the ring. I placed it on my bed and whispered a quiet "thank you" to the bird perched on my windowsill. It took a long look at me and flew off, making a lonely, empty crowing noise into the cold air. I sat down on my bed and examined the object. It seemed like a bit of hope, a bit of change. Ever since that day, I would see a few crows now and then outside my windows, sometimes bringing me objects and sometimes just looking at me. The days stayed weak and cold and gray, but a warm piece of life began to build inside of me. The crows watched over me, protected me from what I did not know. The things they brought me reminded me of hope, of life, and of warmth and protection. When my dad began to see the birds, his eyes slowly turned less and less like the color of the gray sky, and more like the color of the summer skies somewhere else. One day, when I was carrying a small metal object that had been given to me inside the house, my dad saw. He looked at it, blinked, and the clouds in his eyes seemed to lift and he seemed to know something that I did not. He seemed to feel the same bud of change that I had. My eyes met his and for a second, it was like the moment when I was holding the crow in my arms, looking into its eyes. Deep and dark and bright and lost. Eyes can say a lot about a person. You just have to look.

8TH GRADE

8th Grade Speech

by Emmett Bouchard

Beyoncé. A word that not only comes up in the Google search bar after typing the letter “B,” but also an iconic singer who will go down in history forever. She is a person that has changed the world, and is one of the greatest role models today. If you don’t believe me, just ask anyone around you, and they will literally throw a tantrum about how amazing she is. Although one might say her music and dancing is a little bit “severe,” she can relate to our community and school by embodying all of the eight habits of mind Dr. Jackson wants us to embrace in all we do.

The first habit: Zest. An ambiguous word that can be defined as a flavorful spice, or great enthusiasm and energy. In this case, Beyoncé is embodying both. Through her choreographed routines that she performs live in front of thousands of people, her zest is displayed clearly and intensely. The great amounts of passion she carries on stage is definitely, as she once said, “***flawless and influences the world to want to be like her.

The second habit: Curiosity. This simple word can only be best described as the desire to know. As we all know, or all should know, because this is Beyoncé we’re talking about, Beyoncé’s career wasn’t always as hot as it is today. She had to have started somewhere, which were singing and dance competitions. The judges were blown away by her amazing talents in performing. Not only was it this feedback that caused her to push herself to become the star she is today, but it was also her curiosity in the music industry.

The third habit: Perseverance and resilience. Words describing one’s ability to push through hard times and not letting anything stop you. Where Beyoncé is today is an obvious visual displaying her ability to break down difficult walls in her path to becoming successful. She not only wrote her own music, but performed her songs with the confidence and strength in front of thousands of people.

The fourth habit: Having a growth mindset and taking risks. Before The Queen became a solo artist, she ran the girl group, Destiny’s Child. Most of you may know this group because of their hit song, “Say My Name.” Say my name. When no one is around you... Say baby I love you. Sorry, back on track. She took a risk by taking herself out of this group and becoming a solo artist. Following this step in her career, she created the album *Dangerously in Love*. Not only were people amazed by this album and the music that it possesses, but it sold over 11 million copies, earned five *Grammy Awards*, and featured the *Billboard Hot 100* number one singles, “Crazy in Love” and “Baby Boy.”

The fifth habit of mind: Craftsmanship, meaning a skill in a particular area. Do I even need to explain. She is a famous and incredible singer, and I’m pretty sure that qualifies her to have skills in music, and man, is it beautiful. Her natural gift and ability to write and perform her own music is fantastic and changes lives.

The sixth habit of mind; the quality of being thankful, or gratitude. I have not actually met Beyoncé in person, but I know I will someday, *knocks on wood*, but by watching her interviews and listening to one of her hit songs, “Daddy,” which expresses her thankfulness for her father, and I will repeat, for her father, I can tell she definitely has gratitude. In “Daddy,” she sings, “Words can’t express my boundless gratitude for you, I appreciate what you do.”

The seventh habit of mind; self understanding and control. These two words combined mean you understand what you are doing while being able to control yourself at the same time. Beyoncé has easily used self understanding to write her songs, since it is necessary to know yourself to write pieces showing your thoughts. Her selfcontrol enables her to stop herself from overly dramatizing things.

The eighth habit of mind, empathy. An action of which you share one's feelings, or put yourself in another's shoes. Beyoncé clearly demonstrates this ability when she rewrites her song "Halo" to incorporate the word Haiti. After suffering a massive earthquake in 2010, Beyoncé donated her talent and time to raise money for the Haitian people by giving them the proceeds from her performance at the Hope for Haiti Now concert. In the song she performed, "Halo," she is hoping that the spirit of Haiti will not be diminished by the earthquake. "Haiti I can feel your halo, pray it won't fade away." This empathetic gesture helped to raise 61 million dollars for the country of Haiti. Can I get a heck ya?

Ultimately, no matter where we go once we leave the halls of SFDS, the 8 habits of mind will provide a moral compass that will lead us to success, even when faced with extreme diversity. So what do I want you to take away from this? It's not that she's the most amazing singer in the world or that she's the best role model, it's that when her future was uncertain, she followed her moral compass and, well, look where she is now.

8th Grade Speech

by Madeline Stull

“A person’s actions will tell you everything you need to know.” If you would have told me that quote two years ago, I would have thought you were crazy. I used to think that if you wanted to say something, you had to actually say it. That actions could too easily be misinterpreted. I soon learned that this was not the case.

About a year ago, the mother of a good friend of mine passed away from pancreatic cancer. When my mom told me she had been diagnosed, I didn’t believe her; of course I knew she would never lie about something so horrible, but I don’t think I wanted to believe it, or rather I couldn’t believe it. She was very close friends with my mom, and I had known her for most of my life. My sadness only grew when I thought of what my friend was going through. Should I send her a message? But what would I say? I doubted that anything I could do or say would help her, no matter how much I wanted to. Maybe, I thought, I shouldn’t say something, for fear of saying the wrong thing. All I knew was that I wanted to be there for her, but we lived 2,000 miles away, which made me feel even more helpless.

This feeling only lasted for a few days. One day, when my mom had picked me up from school, she asked me if I wanted to go with her later that week to visit them in Ohio for a few days. Right away I said yes. But then I began to think: I know I want to be there for her, but, what do I say? What do I do? How will I be able to help her when she is going through such a traumatic time in her life? I thought I would never be able to. But I knew I had to try.

On the plane ride over I began to think of what I would say when I saw her. I knew what I wanted her to know. I wanted her to know that I was and always would be there for her, that there will always be people that care about her that she can go to if she ever needs anything. I thought that I should just say that, but there were so many more things I wanted to say, only I didn’t know how.

When we arrived in Cleveland, we went to our friends house where we were staying. The next day we visited the family. I got out of the car and saw my friend and her dad walking toward us. I gave her a hug, but decided not to say anything yet. The first thing she said was, “Wow it’s hot,” I smiled. “It sure is nicer than San Francisco weather. I love the city and all, but of course when we move to California, we end up in the one city where its actually cold all summer,” and she laughed. Later that day, we went to an arcade where we played games and mini golf. I was happy, because I knew she was having a ton of fun.

The entire time I was thinking about what I should say. I felt like I had to say something, because otherwise she would not know what I wanted her to. This was when I realized, I didn’t have to say anything. She knew what I wanted to say and how I felt. Looking back on it now, I don’t think she even wanted me to say anything. All she really wanted was to have a few days that felt normal. Where she could be a kid and take her mind off of everything for a few hours. A day when she could spend time with a friend and only focus on having fun. It was at that point when I realized that sometimes your actions are louder than words will ever be. She knew what I wanted her to know, without me even saying anything.

I don’t think anyone knows exactly what to say to help someone who is going through what will probably be the hardest thing in her life. You may be worried about saying the wrong thing, not saying enough or saying too much. I eventually realized that the best thing to say is nothing at all. She knew what I wanted to say, and how I felt. Of course you can’t spend the whole time in silence. So, what do you say to your friend to try to help? How about, “Wanna play mini golf?”

Aunt Alexandra Monologue

by Ben Miller

Calpurnia, I have brought you here so I can apologize; in my old age I have realized many things about the way I have treated and viewed you. My intentions were good coming into Maycomb, I know that. You must have known that as well, all I wanted was for Scout and Jem to have a motherly role in their life, someone to help them become respectable adolescents. However what I didn't realize was that you were there all along. I was raised in the same family as Atticus, but often we don't act the same. I don't know where he walked away from the views and opinions we had been raised with. You see, Calpurnia, I refused to accept you as Scout and Jem's motherly figure because you were black, and my ignorant mind thought that a black woman shouldn't, couldn't raise white children to be proper ladies and gentlemen. I just want you to know that you were a better role model than I ever would have been to them. While I was trying to make Scout wear dresses and drink tea with me, you accepted her for who she was, and that's what counts. My actions were selfish, and I hope you can forgive me. It has been 25 years since my stay in Maycomb, I'm an old woman, and my views have changed a lot. I just want you to know that I appreciate everything you ever did for my brother and his children, and I respect you more than any woman I know.

The Snowman

by Jill Roberts

I sat there, watching the snow fall, like glistening crystals in the dark sky. I heard the voices of my cousins in another room, yelling at each other. Upstairs, I heard the banging of pots, and the laughter of the adults just finishing their dinner. The sounds of the house were everywhere, but the room I was in remained silent. My uncle sat near me on the couch. His breathing was quiet and slow, almost like he was sleeping. An observer would have just seen a normal scene of two people sitting near each other. However, there was more to it than just that. If you looked closely you could see the red dots on the man's face, and the tubes in his skin. Maybe then you would realize that the man is sick, with a fatal disease. My uncle had cancer. The snow pelted the windows, like tiny white bullets. I sat calmly on the couch, hands resting in my lap. However, inside my head a mixture of anger and sadness was threatening to spill out. I didn't let it.

The whispered voices of my cousins suddenly filled the room. "Come on Jill! We're going to build a snowman." I wasn't that excited about trekking through the freezing cold snow, but I agreed to help. My brothers and I pulled on our winter coats and boots and headed outside. Immediately, we were hit in the face with multiple snowballs. A peal of laughter erupted from my throat and I ran throughout the yard, ducking and dodging. Unbeknownst to us, the adults watched from the upstairs window, smiles on their faces. Soon enough I was freezing. Although the youngest ones demanded that we continue, we decided to start the snowman.

After thirty minutes of work, Bri and I took a break as the little kids started to make the head. At this point in time, I could barely feel my hands and my toes were numb. Brianna noticed my discomfort and smirked. She muttered something under her breath, it sounded suspiciously like "west coast kid." I glared at her and she let out a high pitched laugh. She playfully shoved me, and the two of us ended up falling to the ground, the snow making our landing soft. Suddenly, the smile faded from my face. I didn't deserve to be happy. I shouldn't be able to enjoy myself while Uncle Jerry sat inside, alone. I felt unbelievably guilty, it wasn't fair for me to enjoy my life. He deserved to be happier than me, he should be the one outside in the snow. I vowed to finish the snowman without laughing or playing with my cousins. Bri and I set out to work again, this time finishing our part. It took a few more minutes, but eventually everyone was done. It towered above us, and seemed majestic as it glistened in the light of the moon. Ryan and Eric ran inside to gather our parents, to show them the creature we had created. Pictures were taken and everyone played in the snow, except Uncle Jerry. I stood slightly apart from the crowd.

That night in bed I thought of the snowman. Even though it had seemed so strong, it would fall. As would my Uncle. In three days the snowman melted, in three months my uncle died.

At the funeral, I stood in the far corner, away from everyone else. Tears streamed down my face, but no sound came from my mouth. The room was full of hushed voices, and a few loud sobs. Everyone was united in the same pain, the same loss. I had never experienced the pain and suffering that came with death. The bright lights and beautiful decorations contrasted deeply with the melancholy mood throughout the room. The lights were almost mocking, it was as if they stood to remind us of the person who had shone with such brightness. Now he was gone and a light had been extinguished forever in my heart. I sat in my silent grief and awaited the start of the funeral service. After the service, I failed to hold back an onslaught of tears. I felt numb and empty as I struggled to say goodbye, even though he was already gone. I walked as fast as I could to the hallway, where I could be alone. Thoughts raced through my mind at the speed of light. How could he be dead? I'm going to die one day. Everyone I loved was going to die. At that point I realized what was happening within me. I was terrified of death. I didn't want to die, I didn't want my family to die, I didn't want anyone to die. What would happen if my parents died? Would I be all alone? I'd have to take care of my brothers, make sure they didn't starve.

Suddenly, I was lost within a nightmare of my parents' death, planning every single minuscule detail. My brothers and I crying as we bid our goodbyes, being shipped off to some foster parent who hated us. Running away, and trying to survive on scraps of food. It didn't occur to me that if both my parents died, I would go to my relatives. That I would be loved and safe. Instead, I spiraled into a dark place. I was snapped out of my stupor when I saw my Dad out of the corner of my eye. He pulled me into a hug, and we stood there for a while, just the two of us. His hand patted my back, warm and soft. Eventually we let go, and he held my hands.

"Jill," he said, "I'm sorry." I nodded, without saying anything, for the lump in my throat continued to grow larger. "He's in a better place now." My dad whispered. Was he? I think my father saw the doubt on my face, the questions inside my head. So he continued to speak, "No one knows what happens after death. If we feared death then no one would ever live a full life." Something about those two sentences struck me. I doubt my father ever knew what his words had done to me, how they had helped me. I think in this moment, I had come to terms with death.

I've taken my father's words to heart over the last year or two. I don't make decisions based on my fears, instead I make decisions that I want to make. After all, every great life isn't lived in constant fear of the end.

