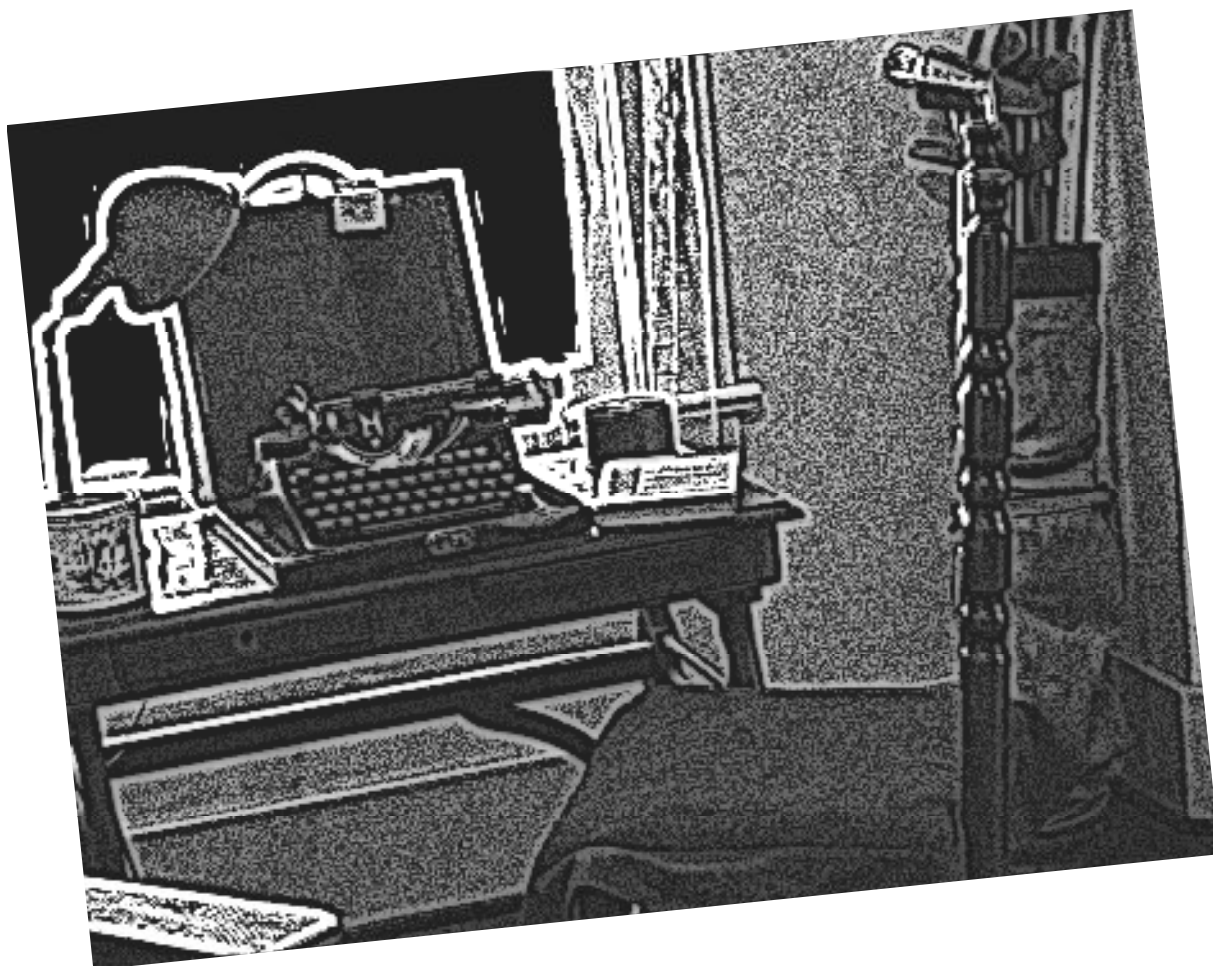


Florida
Council of Teachers of English



Gulfstream*
A Journal of
Award-Winning Student Writing

2006

**For Submission Guidelines see the inside back cover of the magazine.
To volunteer to be a Writing Judge, see page 12**

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Untitled

Crystal Wilson

An Italian girl ran down the street, her dark brown, almost black hair draped past her shoulders. Her eyes were of the same color. Her name was Domenica Di Fruscia, she was 12 years old. Behind her ran a six year old boy named Angelo Di Fruscia, he was her brother, and as such, they looked very much alike, only his hair was cut short, probably by a knife. At their heels ran a mongrel of a dog named Angelina. Her fur was mostly black. Her eyes, nose, and ears were chocolate brown.

As they ran, Angelo would catch up to Domenica, tag her, run ahead, and Domenica would do the same to him. However, since Domenica was 12 and Angelo was 6, he only caught her when she allowed it. Angelina jumped and barked, eager to get in on the fun. The two children and their canine companion ran through the streets of this small Italian town in the year of 1509. They remained temporarily unaware of the events going on. While the children ran, Domenica stopped to speak to her brother. “Angelo, shouldn’t we stop and see if father needs any help?”

“Isn’t that always what we do?” Angelo replied, as though the question didn’t need to be asked. Without a word more of it, the two turned around and walked back the way they had come from. All the while, Angelina followed merrily and loyally at their heels.

When they finally arrived, their father, Mr. Di Fruscia was talking to a man who Domenica and Angelo had never seen before. Domenica walked over to her father and politely asked “Father, who is he?”

Mr. Di Fruscia spoke under his breath to his daughter, “He is Leonardo Da Vinci.”

Domenica could hardly believe her ears, but she did respect her father, so she took his word for it. She noticed that Leonardo had purchased birds and was setting them free, one by one. Angelina walked up to him and curiously sniffed him. He looked at her and patted her on the head.

Later that night, the Di Fruscia family sat down for dinner. As always, they spoke to each other in between each mouth full of food. Basic things passed between them, for example, how the day was, if Angelo got in trouble, if Angelina dug up any gardens, how many birds Mr. Di Fruscia sold, had Domenica kept track of Angelo?

Finally, Mr. Di Fruscia said something that caught all their interests. “I spoke with Leonardo Da Vinci earlier. He said he was going to make a painting in honor of all the birds he’s released.”

“Really?” Mrs. Di Fruscia inquired.

“Yes, dear.” Mr. Di Fruscia replied.

Domenica found this more interesting than her mother, as did her brother. The conversation went on, all about the painting, despite the rarity of paintings, in all honesty. This only seemed to make it of more interest to the Di Fruscias.

The next couple of weeks seemed to pass by as slowly as decades. All the Di Fruscias had been promised that they would be the first people to see the finished painting. Bit by bit, Mr. Di Fruscia got more information. What he learned, he told his family. They learned that the painting was to be of a blue jay. The more they learned, the more impatient they grew.

While the Di Fruscias waited, Leonardo toiled over the painting, trying to make it look as if it would come alive any second. After the many weeks had passed, Leonardo Da Vinci met the Di Fruscias at Mr. Di Fruscia's shop. Domenica and Angelo stayed put, as did their parents, but Angelina paced back and forth. Leonardo held up the small, but still very good painting for the Di Fruscias to see. Domenica stared at it as if it put the world's greatest talents to shame. It may very well have been, at that time. A close up showed the torso and head of a blue jay, mixes of blue colored the main of its feathers. A pearly white color made up its stomach. There were no black outlines to make the painting look childish or tasteless, just the neat form of the colors fit to create the bird. Its eyes and beak were ebony, or black, colored. Behind the blue jay was the form of a sun set. The golden-yellow sun was partially visible, outlined with red and only a hint of a pale purple, though not exactly lavender. After the pale purple and red was a streak of emerald green color that faded off into the dark blue, nearly black, of night. Some clouds showed in the picture, with red color tinting their lower side, giving them a reddish color of their own, while the upper sides were barely visible in the dark colors of the upper sky light. Though they could be seen by a keen eye, for night time's light is that of stars and then the pale silver light of the moon, Leonardo Da Vinci had realistically caught this detail in his painting. The silence and staring was broken by Leonardo's words of "I just have nowhere to put it."

Through much conversation, it was decided that the Di Fruscias would hold on to the painting. They wouldn't let Angelina near it, afraid she would ruin it. After those uneventful weeks, there came a day when the family left the house. During the time they were gone, the house caught on fire. Embers scattered, setting a few neighboring buildings ablaze. The flames roared, stretching high towards the sky, and the smoke went up to the clouds, giving people for miles fair warning of the trouble. The flames brought the home to the ground, leaving only ashes and rubble. When they returned, they were devastated. Not only had they lost every item they cared for, but what may have been the world's greatest painting was nothing but ash.

*Teacher: Linda Bishop
Mayport Middle School, Atlantic Beach*

The Story of My Name

Annie Page

Annie – Hebrew, Irish – gracious

I like my name: Annie Caroline Page. I was named for my great-grandmothers. On my Mom's side was Annie John Pruitt and on my Dad's side Annie Laura Satterfield. My sister Laura is also named after her.

Caroline – German – petite woman

My middle name is Caroline. I was named Caroline for two reasons: first because I was born in Smithfield, North Carolina, and second because our family really admires John F. Kennedy, so I was named for his daughter Caroline.

Page – French – sharp, eager

My last name is Page. This is, of course, my dad's last name, which can be traced all the way back to our ancestors who came to America on the *Mayflower*. Crazy, huh? My Dad became really interested in our family history last year, so he spent a lot of time researching our family tree. He discovered we have ancestors who lived in Virginia. We were all amazed that he could track these things down so easily.

Annie Caroline Page

For a time I didn't really like my name, but I have become more and more used to it and have now accepted it. When I was about six, I used to say that I was Lindsay, that I was 18, and that I had pierced ears and braces. Everyone thought my fantasy was so cute, but I really *did* want to be named Lindsay and all those other things. Today at 11, I understand all the parts and pieces of my name. It's a combination of our family history and our family's role models. My parents chose my name with care. My name is Annie Caroline Page, and I wouldn't change it for the world!

*Teacher: Ginny White
Fernandina Beach Middle School, Fernandina Beach*

Hispanic Heritage

Victoria Giammatteri

I am from freshly made pupusas,
Made by the hard-working women of the city.

I am from towering, roaring, mountainous volcanoes rising
High into the mist, peaceful but active, ready to pounce.

I am from elegant European influenced churches,
And exquisite hand-painted artwork.

I am from the wide, open beach,
Whose gentle arms softly cradle her baby, the land.

I am from strong people who earn their pay on the vast open
Farms, picking fruits and vegetables in the sizzling hot yellow sun,
And from goods being sold to anyone on the street that passes.

I am from ancient Mayan temples,
Where the people are long gone but history still creeps its way around.

I am from El Salvador,
Where Spanish spoken words flow smoothly through the air,
Like beautiful white doves gliding gently on the wind.

*Teacher: Virginia Pake
Academy at the Lakes, Land O' Lakes*

Classroom Expectations

Molly King

A Poem for Two Voices
(modeled after Paul Fleischman's *Joyful Noise*)

That teacher
 As she

talks endlessly
about the French Revolution

as if we're ever gonna
be in France.

When she

realizes how stupid she sounds
we move on to math.

Adding,
subtracting,
and multiplying --
yuk!

We stop at lunch time
and then go to recess.

I'm sure she had wanted to
get in some science
but luckily
 the bell rang.

Those dear children
 As I
 seize every opportunity I find to
 tell all I know
 about the French Revolution
 thinking maybe some day
 they will

 be in France.

When I decide I have given them
as much information as I
think they can handle in one day,

we move on to math.

Adding, subtracting,

and multiplying –
wonderful!

We stop at lunch time
and then go to recess.

I had hoped to
get in some science
but unfortunately
 the bell rang.

*Teacher: Ginny White
Fernandina Beach Middle School, Fernandina Beach*

The Creation of My Space

Talissa Cruce and Leah George

The almighty Zeus, ruler of all gods, was sitting upon his throne on top of Mt. Olympus. His face was as stern as could be as he looked into a magical screen that displayed the events happening in the heavens, the earth, and the underworld. He saw precious Persephone, all alone and suffering in the underworld for a mistake she made out of clumsiness. He saw Hermes delivering a message to Hera. Among other gods and goddesses he saw Demeter, Poseidon, and even Daedalus mourning over his son. A terrible image popped onto the screen. The mortals of earth were out of control. Dreadful acts of death, lies, and drugs were all that were seen. The young teens were worse; out on the streets making horrendous decisions and acting irresponsibly. Their parents tried to get their children back and raise them with values and morals. When asked, most of the children would say that the cause of their bad behavior was boredom. They had absolutely nothing to do. All their friends were too far away or other circumstances prevented them from communicating with each other. Zeus observed this behavior for awhile, noticing that it only worsened as each day passed. He scratched his chin and placed his hand on his head and pondered for a long time to try and solve this issue of preposterous behavior by the human race.

A young man by the name of Tom was walking down a deserted path. He was in his early twenties with brown hair and brown eyes. He walked with his hands in his pockets and kicked a rock down the shattered road. He was thinking about something. Everyone knew Tom, and they knew he was always up to something. He was known for inventing new activities for teens. He spent hours trying to make life interesting and fun. As he slowly walked down the narrow road, he noticed something silver and glistening in the road. He had no idea what it was, so he reached down and picked up the mysterious object. To his amazement, it had a name etched into the flat surface of the treasure. The name was Olympus. He had heard the name before but had no idea what it meant. He quickly glanced around to assure himself that no one was spying. He slipped the coin into the pocket of his toga and acted like nothing had happened. He continued to walk down the path pondering the meaning of the coin.

An idea popped into his mind and he knew what he had to do. His pace got faster and faster until it was almost a sprint. The clouds darkened and began to rain. Cold drops fell on top of his head as he ran through the storm. After about ten minutes of sprinting through town, he came to a concrete platform. Before him was a large temple-shaped building made completely of marble. Large columns were an added touch to the beauty and architecture of the palace. He walked through the doorway and was in a room with a large concrete throne. There were statues surrounding him. Every god or goddess you could imagine had its own special place in this sanctuary. The huge throne he stood before was none other than the throne of the almighty master of gods, Zeus. A large, stern face, with curly hair and suspicious eyes were the features of this life-like tribute. Tom was amazed by the palace, for he had never actually entered it; he had passed by occasionally to pray to the gods for a special gift. Although

he didn't know what he wanted, he still had a funny feeling in his stomach that maybe the gods would use him for something that would change the world. Tom had never talked to the statues and even though he felt weird, he prayed to the gods in Mount Olympus.

"Zeus, hear my plea. I have a coin here that I think might belong to you. It was on the road where you might have dropped it accidentally."

Suddenly, a huge lightning bolt came down from the heavens and struck the giant statue. The room illuminated in light and a large flash struck the palace. Tom used his arms to shield his eyes from the bright glare. After the shock was over, Tom's eyes were dead locked on Zeus. Zeus's large stone hand reached out and scooped up Tom.

"My boy, I can't thank you enough." Zeus's voice was raspy and rough. "The coin belongs to Hermes, my personal messenger. That coin is what brings him back to my palace. Without it, he would remain on earth for the rest of his life. Thank you for being responsible and returning it to its proper home. Because of your good deed, I will reward you with any gift you want." Tom pondered the idea for a moment and then it came to him.

"I want to invent something to save the world," Tom proclaimed his petite mortal voice.

"Than it is done," Zeus commanded. He nodded his head and placed Tom on the ground and let him proceed on his way. A bright flash struck again and Tom walked out silently.

Confused and bewildered, Tom didn't know what to think. What will I invent? How will I invent it? Dozens and dozens of questions swirled around in his mind. As he walked, he glanced around and saw crime after crime being committed by his peers.

He continued to ponder the possibilities and suddenly, he knew what he wanted to do. He ran through the door to his room and quickly shut it, plopped down on his ancient Greek computer chair (even the ancient Greeks had computers), and his fingers went to work. His eyes gazed at the machine as his fingers worked a mile a minute. A smile came across his face as he worked continuously for days and days. He used codes and funny words and all of these strange symbols. He didn't quite understand the whole idea himself, but he trusted that the gods had a plan. He never stopped until his creation was complete. He smiled a bright smile and gasped a sigh of relief. He knew his work was done, and sooner or later, the world would change. He pressed the enter key on the computer and watched in amazement of how his master plan would come into place.

He printed out flyers that informed everyone of his plan. He jogged around posting these flyers everywhere. Teens were too curious to go about their business, so they listened as Tom explained his program. The mortals were awed and amazed at the workings of this young man and gave it a try. They rushed to their homes, leaped onto their computers, opened the program, and turned to a specific website. They typed in information about themselves and clicked enter. The fun began—colors, layouts, picture, icons, and comments were posted all over the place. All the computers in the mortal world were connected to Myspace. Teens were able to make new friends and communicate with old ones. Pictures were posted to allow their peers to admire them. Icons were posted for decoration and comments were posted to tell a friend "Hello!" And all of the mortals had the freedom to be themselves and represent their unique personalities.

Before long, the entire globe was encircled in the activity which was highly admired by teens. The crime rate reduced and parents were overjoyed to have their adolescents out of trouble-making friends. The world was at peace again.

Meanwhile, back on Mount Olympus, Zeus was sitting at his Dell reading his comments. Athena laughed at a joke Hermes sent. Poseidon bragged about how many friend he met, and Hera was explaining all the members of her top eight. Demeter was posting pictures from the recent Titans duel while Persephone was letting everyone know the ups and downs of the underworld. Daedalus was even able to post instructions for his wings. Not only did this miracle idea save the earth, it added a

dash of personality and up-to-dateness for the gods and goddesses. Hey, whoever said Myspace was just for kids?

*Teacher: Susan Harris
Cobb Middle School, Tallahassee*

Serving as an FCTE Student Writing Award Judge

The Student Writing Awards could not exist without the generous assistance of the Judges. Each summer a small bundle of student writing is sent to English Language Arts teachers who have volunteered to support the Student Writing Awards process. These teachers use their experience and expertise to evaluate the quality of student submissions. All identifying information is removed from each entry (see submission guidelines on the back cover), and each student paper is read by multiple judges who use their experience in the classroom and their expertise on writing to make decisions about the quality of student work. We are eager to include multiple voices and perspectives and we welcome “new” judges to the process.

If you are interested in serving as a judge of the FCTE Student Writing Awards, contact Dr. Wood at wood@coe.fsu.edu.

An Illusion of Innocence

Theresa Wymer

A child's innocence may only be an illusion, as William Golding illustrates in his novel *Lord of the Flies*. In this novel, a group of young British boys, during World War II, become stranded on an island without any adults. At first they are innocent, but shortly after arriving on the island, all the boys, even the "littluns," become what the boys call "savages." One might expect the littluns to keep their innocence, but Golding reveals them to be as fundamentally corrupt as adults: the littluns play vicious games, forget their connection to civilized life, and feign innocence around adults. Through the littluns' corruption, Golding shows that innocence is no more real than a mirage.

The littluns play vicious games with each other and the island's animals. Their actions prove that they enjoy controlling others just as much as any of the older children do, or even adults. While some of the littluns were playing on the beach, one littlun, Henry, was drawn to the tiny creatures being washed up on the sand:

He poked about with a bit of stick, that itself was wave-worn and whitened and a vagrant, and tried to control the motions of the scavengers. He made little runnels that the tide filled and tried to crowd them with creatures. He became absorbed beyond mere happiness as he felt himself exercising control over living things. He talked to them, urging them, ordering them. Driven back by the tide, his footprints became bays in which they were trapped and gave him the illusion of mastery. (61)

The littluns prove themselves to be power hungry and not as innocent as some may like to believe. Using such vicious verbs as "poked," "to crowd," "urging," "ordering," and "trapped," Golding shows how Henry likes controlling these small creatures in a violent manner, which is "savage." With, "He became absorbed beyond mere happiness," Golding shows how much Henry enjoys his power and control. Golding also illustrates Henry's happiness by stating, "His footprints... gave him the illusion of mastery." Henry believes that he is able to control and master these small creatures and takes pleasure in it. It may be surprising to see very young children enjoying control over others, but this illustrates that they are not so different from some adults in their ability to be malevolent. Even their games show insight into their somewhat dark nature. As they become more and more "savage," they hunt more often and develop a rather sadistic game. One boy pretends to be the prey, a pig, and the other boys pretend to attack him, like they would in a real hunt. Unfortunately, in one of the games, the "prey" does not volunteer to play. The boys are excited and see the boy, whom they call "the beast," emerge from the bushes and start to play their "game." Golding narrates, "The beast struggled forward, broke the ring and fell over the steep edge of the rock to the sand by the water. At once the crowd surged after it, poured down the rock, leapt on to the beast, screamed, struck, bit, tore. There were no words, and no movements but the tearing of teeth and claws (153)."

This brutal “game” reveals the basest nature of these boys, their desire to kill and control. Golding’s use of the verbs “poured,” “leapt,” “screamed,” “struck,” “bit,” and “tore” shows how animalistic the boys have become. In addition, Golding refers to the beast, a boy, as “it,” changing him from a person to an animal. Golding illustrates the boys’ animalistic nature even more by using “tearing of the teeth” and “claws.”

The littluns hastily embrace the idea of being uncivilized and quickly forget all aspects of their once civilized life. Towards the beginning of the novel, Percival, one of the littluns, remembers his full name and even his address. After two older boys ask him his name, he responds, “Percival Wemys Madison. The Vicarage, Harcourt St. Anthony, Hants, telephone, telephone, tele-” (86). Percival completely remembers his name and address and thus remembers civilization, but, unfortunately, he later wholly forgets his connection to civilization. In the novel’s final scene, an adult comes to rescue the boys. Percival tries to tell the adult his name, but, as Golding reveals, he can no longer remember: “Percival Wemys Madison sought in his head for an incantation that had faded clean away” (201). The “incantation” he forgot is the most basic information that a person could know, his or her name. His memory of his name may be his last connection to civilization. Once this link is severed, Percival loses his innocence, becoming “savage.”

Because the children feign innocence around the officer at the end of the novel, they demonstrate that innocence may be only an illusion. All the boys (perhaps with the exception of Ralph) have either become “savage” or have died by the novel’s end. The boys have attacked and killed each other and have played cruel games. Ironically, in the presence of an adult they seem to be completely innocent again: “A semicircle of little boys, their bodies streaked with colored clay, sharp sticks in their hands, were standing on the beach making no noise at all” (200). Golding shows how innocent they become by referring to them as “little boys” rather than “savages,” as they are called earlier. It is almost comical how quickly they turn from “savages” to “little boys,” just by spotting an adult. They obviously only feign innocence around the officer because it is impossible to lose one’s innocence and then gain it back that quickly. The boys do not display their basest nature around this adult, suggesting that innocence is only a mirage.

Innocence is not as real as people like to believe. The littluns, the youngest children in the whole group of boys, enjoy controlling small creatures by force and other humans by playing vicious games, quickly forget their connection to civilization, and feign innocence around adults. Through their actions, Golding proves the littluns’ corruptness. If little children are not innocent, are there truly any innocent people? It is possible that innocence is only a mirage or only exists in a select few people. Throughout the novel, Golding’s character Simon is probably the only innocent boy. Golding’s point may be that innocence is fading in our society, and that we need to protect innocence before it disappears completely. If it does disappear, we may share the same fate as these boys, a grim future of constant fighting and eventually falling into complete anarchy.

*Teacher: Jane Edwards
Oak Hall School, Gainesville*

I Always Smell Like Chlorine

Katie Taibl

My arms were pulling, hands scooping more and more water; my legs pumping; my stomach just barely burning - and I swam harder and faster through the translucent water, passing everyone in my lane. Yesterday was my first day back at swimming in a month, and I came home laughing and happy and retelling stories to my family. The day before I was confused and depressed for no reason at all. Finally swimming, after I thought I was going to quit forever, did something to me to make me feel more alive than ever.

Mrs. Ahrens reminded me of Justin Slade-just a little bit. She wasn't a guy, or as buff as Justin, and gave us barely what you'd call a warm-up for the whole practice. But she was loud, let us laugh sometimes, and hassled the swimmers-just like Justin. Justin was my first swim coach, and never put up with any slack from any of us. He seemed bipolar almost 24/7-you'd never know what days he'd let us mess around and laugh, and what days he'd be freakishly uptight and slam us with intense workouts. That was the kind of swimming where after only a few laps, your arms and legs would turn to lead and your stomach would be screaming because it burned so bad. You couldn't slow down or stop, unless you wanted to mess with Justin's merciless wrath. Maybe I'm exaggerating (a little), but once he really kicked a kid off the team because the kid allegedly messed up counting the reps for a set! But then, no matter how much it hurt, even without the threat of Justin, I couldn't stop-I just had to keep going and get through it, because I felt too good when I finished to quit.

One practice, Justin assigned us "Green 75's". The point of these was to go as fast as you possibly could, 120% effort, for 20 or so 75's so you'd eventually puke your guts up. That never actually happened to me, to Justin's dismay, but I was usually on his good side so he never harassed me too much (fortunately). That particular practice, stupid Olivia Maefski was cheating -**again** I didn't understand how that girl could slack off so badly while we were gasping for air every time we got a 10 second break. I would cuss her out in my head, "Stupid bitch..., god she thinks she's gonna **pass** me sitting on the wall for five minutes. No Way! I'm gonna kick her ass..." The ironic thing is, Olivia and I became best friends! And even though my other coach, Ed, made me grab Rosa's feet at the beginning while we were swimming to make her go faster, we became inseparable almost instantly.

Then I met Kristin, and Sydney, Jen, Arielle, Kate, Megan, and everyone else. It felt like every time I came to practice, it was like I could be anything and not care and just swim and laugh and tell my friends there everything. If my parents were hating me that day, or I had an awful day at school or something, jumping into the pool really did solve everything. We swam almost every day, and the insides of my nose always smelled of chlorine - which I loved. I don't know why I loved that smell so much...it just reminds me of the hard practices and the feel of accomplishing something being in the pool.

Jumping off the blocks yesterday, and diving into the pool sprinting faster-faster-faster; trying to beat everyone - I remembered Mission Viejo. That was one of the best times I've had in my life. When

the buzzer began the race, I sprinted off the dive and pushed myself to the limit. Our entire team stayed at one hotel, and there were about 70 of us on Sun Devil Aquatics, so it was crazy! I remember how everyone was all, "I slept with so-and-so last night!" because we had to share these little beds in our hotel rooms. Everyone was screaming and laughing so much at the meet, and then at the hotel it was even more insane! I miss that more than anything...we were really a team, even though the ages ranged from hyper-cutie seven year olds to hottie-too-cool-for-swimming-but-on-the-team-anyways eighteen year olds.

Kicking harder now so I could pass the girl struggling ahead of me, I glide through the water with ease. I'm surprised that I can actually swim after not really swimming for so long. I was never an exceptional swimmer at all - I just liked to swim. For nearly a month, I had none of the discipline, responsibility, or pressure of being a competitive swimmer. Even though Edgewood's a lot less intense than my old team, it's still the same, because swimming is swimming. There's still a pool, there's still water, there's still people and my bathing suit and goggles and lane lines. And there's always that smell of chlorine that I love so much to remind me that I'm really a swimmer, good or bad.

*Teacher: J. Farnsworth
Edgewood Junior Senior High School, Merritt Island*

Minutes 'Till Show

Nikki Roberti

Stage Manager: 10 minutes to show, Boys. 10 minutes to show.

James: (*sarcastically*) No really? I wouldn't have guessed considering you were just in here a minute ago shouting, "11 minutes to show, Boys. 11 minutes to show."

Roy: Yah, Elise. You don't have to harass us every ten seconds.

James: Let more time elapse, Babe.

Stage Manager: (*Already ticked off/stressed*) Okay, listen here you ignorant sub-human life forms. First off, James if you ever call me 'Babe' again I'll castrate you-

James: Does that mean I can relocate to the girls' dressing room!

Boys grunt approvingly

Stage Manager: (*ignoring him*) Secondly, perhaps if certain actors were able to get ready for their theatrical debuts on time, then maybe I wouldn't have to worry. But seeing as I'm stage manager and seeing that I'm in charge, I see that you are INDEED not ready and INDEED need reminding.

Kyle: Dude, look at that vein.

Roy: Where?

James: In her forehead. See it?

Roy: Dude! It's throbbing.

Kyle: Take cover! She's gonna blow!

Boys duck under tables, mocking STAGE MANAGER. She walks over to the table and grabs JAMES by the collar, bringing him to his feet inches away from her face.

Stage Manager: Why I oughtta---- wait. (*touches his face*) Why aren't you wearing any make-up??

James: Uh, I dunno.

Stage Manager: What do you mean you don't know? Roy, stand. Come. (*Roy immediately stands and runs over to Elise like a dog*) You neither? What is the world coming to?

Kyle: (*Sarcastically*) Yah, you know the world is ending when men refuse to wear make-up.

Stage Manager: Has the make-up artist been here yet?

Roy: Nope.

Stage Manager: Well, where the heck is she?

James: She???

Boys are suddenly interested in Elise.

Stage Manager: You're surprised?

Roy: Well, you never know these days.

James: Is she hot?

Stage Manager: JAMES!

James: Just wondering...

Stage Manager: What difference does it make? Remember rule number one?

Boys: (*monotone/aggravated*) No flirting with the girls...

Stage Manager: Remember that.

Enter Make-up artist.

Make-up Artist: Okay, fellas. Sorry I'm late. I had to finish up the rest of the girls' make-up.

Stage Manager: What happened to Anna?

Make-up Artist: Couldn't come. We're a make-up person down. No worries though.

Stage Manager: No worries?! No worries? How can you say that?

Make-up Artist: (*sarcastically*) Easy. I move my lips like this and the words just come out. (*pause*) I'd check on the techies if I were you.

Exit Stage Manager.

James: What's wrong with the techies?

Make-up Artist: *(Nonchalantly)* Nothing. I just wanted her to leave. *(reaches into cosmetic bag and pulls out eyeliner)* So who's first? *(no answer)* Oh come on my menly men. You can't be afraid of a little make-up.

Roy: That thing ain't going near my eyes.

Make-up Artist: Not until you get your foundation on at least. *(tosses sponge to Roy)*. Start applying, hun. Okay, James. Sit in my chair and open wide.

James: *(opens mouth)* AHHHHH!

Make-up Artist: You eyes, hun.

James: *(horrified)* NO! Not the eyeliner! NO!!

Make-up Artist: You big baby.

James: *(defensive)* I'm not a baby.

Make-up artist starts applying eyeliner and James starts to wimper.

Make-up Artist: Aw, don't cry. Kyle, get him a tissue.

Kyle: *(Mockingly)* Wittle Jamesie Cwying?

Make-up Artist: Did I mention that you're next.

Kyle runs away.

Make-up Artist: Oh come back here. Put this on.

Kyle: What is it?

Make-up Artist: Mascara.

Kyle: *(opens tube and pulls out brush)* It looks like a freaking butterfly antenna.

Make-up Artist: Just put it on already so that the people in the back row don't think you got all your lashes burned off in a freak accident. *(starts putting eyeliner on James again and talks to him like he's a little kid)* There you go, James. You're such a trooper. I'm so proud of you!

Enter Stage Manager

Stage Manager: 7 minutes till show.

Boom heard offstage. Everyone in the room reacts in horror.

Roy: What the heck?

James: Dude! You nearly gouged out my eye!

Make-up Artist: Excuse me? I'm the one with the steady hand. You practically jumped into my pencil.

Kyle: *(turns around revealing his eye lids and cheeks covered in black mascara)* Is it supposed to look like this?

Stage Manager: Panic! No Panic! Noooooobody panic.

Kyle: *(sarcastically)* Look who's talking.

Girls start filing into boys' dressing room half costumed and hair in curlers.

James: Chicks!

Roy: Dude!

Stage Manager: No! Don't get any ideas! This is a direct violation of... *(to the girls)* What the heck happened?

Laura: Aerosol can. Hair dryer. Bottle of water.

Sam: Mixed together equals one big boom.

Karen: What doom?

Laura: She was a little too close to the can.

Karen: I don't have a tan?

Sam: Yah, she can't hear a thing.

Karen: You'll have to speak up! I can't hear a thing!

Stage Manager: Great... just great. Now we have a deaf actress.

Sam: Well at least she's not the lead.

Laura: Leading lady quite fine right here.

Stage Manager: Good, Laura. Let's keep it that way.

Sam: *(Sarcastically)* What would we do without you?

Laura: *(snooty but dead serious)* Oh I don't know. Probably get laughed off the stage.

Actors glare at each other.

Stage Manager: *(looks around room)* Why aren't you guys ready yet either? Doesn't anybody understand what 7 minutes to show means!

Make-up Artist: 6 minutes.

Stage Manager: *(Freaking out)* SIX-SIX MINUTES TO SHOW!

Roy: I see it! I see the vein!

Stage Manager: *(grabs and puts arm around Emma)* See here! This is a good cast member. All costumed. All made-up and ready. Script in hand. What would we do without....wait? Who the heck are you?

Emma: *(shy whisper)* Emma.

Laura: She's my understudy. Don't mind her.

Make-up Artist: Understudy of the lead? Wow. Kudos to you, Emma.

Laura: *(snobby)* Oh don't fill her head with senseless dreams. We wouldn't want her ego to get too big.

Make-up Artist: You mean like your own?

Laura: You're just jealous.

Make-up Artist: *(amused)* Me? Jealous of you?

Laura: Well naturally. I get to shine in the spot light while you just wallow here behind the scenes with your unimportant, little dress-up bag.

Make-up Artist: Oh you just think that, hun. Let's see how jealous I am of you once I do *your* make-up.

Laura makes an angry face as she realizes that the Make-up Artist is threatening to make her ugly.

Enter Techie

Stage Manager: And thank you for another episode of our favorite soap opera, "Let's give Elise a Coronary." And just a friendly reminder... THERE ARE FOUR MINUTES TILL SHOW! Oh gosh, and everything's a mess. The director can't see you all in the same dressing room. He'll flip!

Techie: Don't worry. He already knows.

Stage Manager: HE?! The director? He already knows! *(Throws clipboard in air)* There goes my job...

Techie: He understands that things happen....what happened anyway?

Sam: Aerosol can. Hair dryer. Bottle of water. Boom.

Karen: Yes this is a very nice room.

Techie: Okay..? Oh, and Elise. He wanted me to let you know that he's going to drop in any moment.

Stage Manager: Oh goodness! Oh goodness. Places people! Get ready!

Actors arrange frantically in totally fake-happy freeze frame positions. Footprints heard coming closer.

Stage Manager: *(in a bewildered whisper)* It's too late....

The silhouette of man is seen through the tinted window of the center stage door.

Director: Two minutes till show. Break a leg, people.

Footsteps disappear in the distance.

Roy: That was it? The almighty director?

Stage Manager: Well you heard the man! Chop chop! You guys have only a few seconds to get this show on the road.

James: Wait! We have to do our pre-show tradition!

Stage Manager: You've got to be kidding me. We are about to perform a show, barely ready, and most likely going to be dodging flying tomatoes all night long, and you want to waste our last 60 seconds in a dumb pre-show ceremony.

Roy: *(Overdramatically)* We're doomed! She has angered the Thespian gods.

Sam: *(gasps)*

Kyle: *(to Elise)* It's not too late to redeem yourself.

Stage Manager: *(gives up)* Fine fine. Tradition us away.

James: *(overdramatically)* Oh Almighty Thespian gods....we come before you now in a desperate plea for you to have mercy on our poorly managed stage-

Stage Manager: Hey!

Roy: Shh! Don't interrupt! You'll only anger them more.

James: And we offer up one of our legs as a broken sacrifice to you.

Everyone (*except Emma*): May we break a leg.

James: All hail the Thespian gods.

Everyone (*except Emma*): Hail thee! Hail!

Emma: Um...I think this is against my religion... or morals or something.

Kyle: Wow... a drama kid with morals? I never thought I'd see the day.

Laura: (*snooty*) Ha! She's not a drama kid. Just a wannabe who just happened to get lucky.

James: (*fed up*) Oh put a sock in it Laura. It's time for the ritual dance.

Karen: Yes, I am wearing pants.

Drama kids engage in a wild interpretive dance.

Stage Manager: Someone give that girl a hearing aid. We have a show in 30 seconds!

Everyone continues to dance.

Stage Manager: STOP IT!!! On stage now!

Exit James, Laura, Karen, and Roy. As they leave they speak on top of each other with various things like wishing everyone to break a leg.

Stage Manager: It's going to be a long night.

Exit Stage Manager.

Make-up Artist: Okay, let's see now. Ah, right. You're on in scene three, aren't you Kyle? Sit in my chair so I can fix whatever you did to yourself and do your hair.

Kyle: (*Sarcastically*) Great. My favorite thing to do.

Sam: Man, I hate sitting here backstage. Being forced to stay here like a caged up animal for over two hours is so not worth only appearing in Act Two scene five and dieing after five lines.

Make-up Artist: No one said being in drama was glamorous, dear. You just gotta do it for the love.

Kyle: Exactly. You know I started out as an usher? They wouldn't even let me tech.

Sam: Well, that's because you're a klutz.

Kyle: But now, here I am. I appear in Act One scene three and I die after- get this- 10 lines!

Sam: Lucky!

Make-up Artist: What about you, Emma.

Emma: *(raises head from book startled. Very shy)* What?

Make-up Artist: How did you end up in this here play?

Emma: *(nervously looking at the three people. Stutters and then spits out words really fast)* I-I-I thought it looked like fun. *(immediately continues to read. Looks like she's almost hiding behind the book).*

Make-up Artist: *(loudly to self)* Okay, so much for small talk.

Kyle: Here, let me try. After all, I do have that manly charm.

Sam: *(sarcastically)* Yes, that mascara blob is so sexy, Kyle.

Kyle: *(To Emma)* What's shaking, eggs and bacon?

Emma: *(shy)* I'm sorry. I'm a vegetarian.

Kyle walks back to where Sam and the Make-up Artist are, in shock that his charm didn't work.

Sam: Ouch! Shot down like turkey in November.

Enter James.

Make-up Artist: Scene one already done?

James: Yup, and it sure is a tough crowd tonight. What are you all up to?

Kyle: Trying to make the new girl talk.

James: *(Sarcastically)* Wow. Well that sounds completely uninteresting.

Sam: Believe us. It's harder than it looks.

James: Just watch the master. *(walks over to Emma)* So, Emma. What are you up to?

Emma: *(shy)* Who me? Well, I um...I'm just doing homework.

James: Oh really? What's your homework on?

Emma: Oh nothing really. Just Macbeth.

Everyone except Emma freaks out in a mass hysteria. All are screaming different things in the horror of hearing Emma say "Macbeth." Emma just sits there confused.

Enter Stage Manager

Stage Manager: Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!

Sam: But-

Stage Manager: *(shushing with her hand)* Ah-

Kyle: She-

Stage Manager: *(shushing with her hand)* Ah ah-

James: The horror!

Stage Manager: How many times do I have to tell you guys that sound carries and right now your screaming is being carried right into the audience. This play is turning out like a horror rather than a romance. For goodness sakes! It sounds like someone just died backstage.

Kyle: Well, I am getting killed off in two scenes.

James: Dude, that's the least of your worries. We're all doomed, I tell you!

Stage Manager: Doomed, why?

Sam: She said...she said...oh I can't say it!

Stage Manager: *(To Emma, very angry)* What did you say?

Emma: I-I-I- well....um....Macbeth?

Stage Manager: NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!

James: We're doomed!

Emma: What did I do?

Make-up Artist: Hun, in the world of theater, that is just one word you never say.

Emma: But, why?

Make-up Artist: *(deep in thought)* Actually...I don't know.

Stage Manager: *(hysterical)* It's bad luck, that's why!

Kyle: Oh something bad is going to happen. I feel it I-

Enter Laura limping with the help of Techie.

Laura: Owwww!

Stage Manager: What happened now?!

Techie: She fell down the stairs.

Kyle: I so called it!

Laura: Oh shut up!

Techie: I think she broke her leg.

Emma: *(To self)* I knew there was something wrong with that pre-show ceremony.

James: *(To Emma)* You think the Thespian gods had something to do with this? Girl, I'll tell you something. This ain't their fault.

Kyle: Nope.

James: It's all on your head.

Emma: Mine? But I-

Sam: Said the taboo word!

Laura: *(In a horrified disbelief)* She didn't.

James: She did.

Laura: *(raged)* YOU!

Emma: *(confused/sweet)* I'm sorry?

Make-up Artist: Back off guys. Those superstitions aren't real and there are no such things as "Thespian Gods"

Everyone (except Emma and Make-up Artist): *(Gasp)*

Stage Manager: But wait! What about the audience?

Techie: I called for a ten minute intermission.

Stage Manager: A Ten minute intermission two scenes into the play?!

Techie: Actually, three. I told the rest of the actors to continue on until they finished scene three.

Kyle: Crap. I can't miss my death scene!

Exit Kyle.

Stage Manager: *(to self)* I think I'm in the middle of mine right now.

Laura: *(To Emma)* You did this on purpose!

Emma: *(horrified/sweet)* Me? No! I didn't mean to- I didn't know.

Laura: *(bitter)* You just wanted to take away all the glory I had of being the lead.

Emma: I would never...I mean...I'm not even that good. I've never even been on stage before.

Stage Manager: *(Frantic)* Great! Just great! Our play is in the hands of a noob.

Make-up Artist: *(to Emma)* Do you think you can do it?

Emma: Um, well I-

Make-up Artist: Here's some blush. There you go, darling. Break a—

EVERYONE (Except Emma and Make-up Artist): NO!

Make-up Artist: *(Nervously)* Break off a piece of that Kit-Kat Bar?

Emma: *(Nervous)* I can't do this!

Laura: *(limping in front of the door)* No! You can't. You're not going to make it. You're just going to fall flat on your face and-

Make-up Artist: Look who's jealous now.

Laura: Me? Her? Never.

Stage Manager: 5 minutes till intermission is over. Where are the rest of our actors?

Enter Roy, Karen, Kyle.

Roy: Well that was hell.

Karen: No..no..I didn't hear the orchestra's bell.

Roy: For the last time there isn't an orchestra! This isn't even a musical!

Karen: Why thank you. I did do very well in school.

Roy: I give up. I can't work like this.

Kyle: Well at least my death scene rocked.

Roy: Big whoop. 9 lines and you kick the bucket in scene three. There's something to brag about.

Kyle: It was 10!

Karen: The end? Already? It will be so nice to go home early...

Stage Manager: (*Exasperated*) Shut up! Shut up! Shut up! No one is going home early. No one is going home late. We're all going to rot here in this theater until we produce a show that isn't a laughing stock. Hello? Show must go on? Ring a bell? And no... (*To Karen mockingly*) it's NOT FROM THE ORCHESTRA! We're going to get through this night even if it kills us. Got it? Got it. Good. Now Emma, get your bad luck speaking mouth onstage pronto.

Emma: Yes ma'-

Stage Manager: Did I say you could speak? NO!

Emma starts to leave.

Laura: (*Coldly*) Hey, Emma. Good luck.

Silence among actors. Emma looks around, but forces a meek smile despite the fact that she knows she has just been condemned by Laura.

Exit Emma with Techie.

James: (*To Laura*) Well, that was just cold.

Roy: (*looking towards door*) Break a leg. Break a leg. Break a leg. (*to Laura*) How could you jinx her by wishing her the taboo phrase.

Stage Manager: Great, now she's going to be too nervous to do it at all.

Make-up Artist: Taboo word. Taboo phrase. Taboo everything. Maybe its time for us drama kids to get a life.

Laura: Let her be jinxed. She deserves it.

James: Isn't your leg supposed to be broken?

Roy: Yah, how can you be so cynical and mean when you're supposed to be writhing in pain?

Sam: *(sarcastically)* I guess its called acting. She says she's sooo good at it.

James: Ah-ha! So she's just pretending to be mean. I get it!

Laura: I'm not mean and I'm not pretending. Elise, get me some ice or an ambulance or-

Roy: A sedative?

Stage Manager: Not a bad idea. Now everyone shut up. Get on stage and let's do this baby!

Elise turns to walk out the door but the Techie returns pulling Emma into the room.

Stage Manager: What are you doing?! She's supposed to be onstage.

Techie: Was onstage.

Stage Manager: Was?

Techie: Was.

Sam: *(looking at Emma)* She doesn't look too good.

Karen: Yes, we should welcome Emma to the neighborhood.

Stage Manager: Well if she was onstage, why is she back here now?

Sam: Why isn't she moving?

Techie: Funny story, actually.

Stage Manager: *(not amused)* I'm sure I'll be laughing hysterics. Out with it now.

Techie: Well she gets to the top of the stairs. Lights on her. Ready to say her lines. And all of a sudden....nothing. Pure frozenness. I could have sworn I heard crickets. She looked like a little porcelain doll up there, too petrified to move. Poor thing though. Fred panicked and didn't know how to get her down from the platform without freaking out the audience so he pulled the trap door from under her. I think she hit her head on the way down.

Stage Manager: Great. I have a deaf actress, a broken legged leading lady, and a catatonic understudy. What's next?

Techie: *(looking towards door)* How about the director walking in just now?

Stage Manager: *(to self)* You're right. That would be horrible.

Techie: No, I mean he's walking in just now.

Footsteps are heard coming closer.

Stage Manager: Oh...goodness. I'm gonna die.

Actors arrange frantically in totally fake-happy freeze frame positions around Stage Manager who isn't moving to her normal position and looks miserable.

The silhouette of a man is seen through the window of the door.

Director: I'm just going to say one thing- I don't even want to know.

Footsteps are heard going away.

Make-up Artist: Well, that wasn't as bad as you thought it was going to be.

Stage Manager: No, he's just waiting for me to mess up.

Stage Manger pulls out brown paper bag and starts hyperventilating.

Kyle: *(to Elise)* You're paranoid.

Stage Manager: I AM NOT PARANOID.

Techie: Seven minutes till intermission is over.

Stage Manager: Hey, that's my line.

Techie: Well, you were having a panic session so I thought you forgot.

Stage Manager: I NEVER FORGET.

Techie: Geesh. Okay okay.

James: *(To Elise)* So, Almighty Captain, what's the game plan.

Karen: I told you already. I do not have a tan.

Stage Manager: Oh somebody shut her up already.

Laura: Well, I would, but I'm here with a broken leg, no ice and no ambulance.

Stage Manager: Her too. Shut them all up.

Sam: But we can't just sit here. We need to think of something or our show is going to die.

James: We're going to die.

Stage Manager: I'm gonna die.

Make-up Artist: Five Minutes till intermission is over.

Stage Manager: Enough with the updates already.

Techie: I have an idea.

Stage Manager: What are we going to do?

Kyle: You're the stage manager. Shouldn't you know?

Roy: Yah, manage the stage already.

Stage Manger: I AM MANAGING THE STAGE.

Techie: I could-

Sam: What if we ended the play early?

Stage Manager: And how would we do that?

Sam: I dunno. Just kill everyone off in Scene 4 rather than dragging it out.

Karen: Well that's dumb.

Everyone looks at Karen in shock, waiting for her to say something totally irrelevant.

Karen: What? Killing everyone off in scene four is ridiculous.

Stage Manager: You can hear?

Karen: Um, yes? Why do you ask?

Stage Manger: Nevermind.

Techie: I have an idea.

Kyle: I know! We could pretend to burn down the theater.

Roy: That way we have an excuse for not finishing and we get insurance money.

Kyle: Exactly.

Stage Manager: And then I could get arrested for fraud.

Kyle: Exactly. Wait...

Stage Manager: We've got two minutes. I think I'll just tell everyone we'll give them a rain check.

Techie: I've got an idea.

James: *(to Elise)* Yah, that sounds like the only thing there is to do.

Techie: But I-

Sam: Such a shame.

Techie: Just listen for a sec-

Stage Manager: Well, it was nice working with you all...

Techie: *(loudly)* Shut up!!!

Everyone looks startled at Techie.

Techie: I'll do the lead.

Laura: What?!

Stage Manager: Yah, what?

Techie: I've been to every practice. I've read the script enough times. Come on. I know the part. I can play the role for tonight.

Laura: Ha! You could never replace me.

Stage Manager: She just did. Get on stage.

Laura: WHAT?!

Stage Manager: Forget the make-up. Forget the costume. We don't have time. Just make it work.

Techie: But-

Stage Manager: Just make it work.

Techie: I'll make it work.

Stage Manager: NOW GO!

Exit Techie.

Stage Manager: Don't just stand there, people. Places! 1 minute till show.

Everyone exits dressing room except Stage Manger, Make-up Artist, Emma, and Laura.

Make-up Artist: *(to Stage Manger)* So do you think she can pull it off?

Laura: Of course not. No one can fill my shoes.

Make-up Artist: Well right now you can't even wear shoes, hun, cuz your feet are so swollen.

Stage Manager: It'll have to work. She'll have to make it work.

Laura: *(to Stage Manager)* We're all gonna fall flat on our faces. Except me of course. I'm going to sue your sorry butt for negligence. I've been sitting here in pain for how long?

Make-up Artist: If you were in pain, you'd be screaming or something.

Laura: You want me to scream? Huh?! Huh? Then I'll—

Stage Manager runs over and puts hand over Laura's face violently.

Stage Manager: If you cause me any more trouble or get on my case, I'll make sure you never work in the theater biz again.

Laura: Yah right. Like you could do that.

Stage Manager: Try me.

Make-up Artist: Well while we're back here all cozey and such, let me take a look at your leg, hun.

Laura: Ow.

Make-up Artist: I didn't touch you yet.

Laura: I was practicing.

Make-up Artist rolls eyes and examines Laura's leg.

Make-up Artist: Girl, your leg isn't broken. It's just a sprain, that's all.

Laura: *(Bitter/overdramatically)* A sprain in vain always results in pain!

Make-up Artist: Down, my unfair lady. No reason to get vicious.

Stage Manager: Did Emma just move?

Make-up Artist: I didn't see anything.

Laura: Of course not, you idiot. You're too busy harassing my foot.

Make-up Artist slaps Laura's foot. She grabs it in pain

Make-up Artist: Okay, so you're saying Emma moved?

Stage Manager: Never mind. Must have been my imagination.

Emma: *(Overdramatically without warning)* And as I looked to the stars I knew that Papa was glancing down on me- his little girl, though now I'm not the little girl he would have remembered. Rest his soul. I feel so torn between what is expected of me by my uncle and my peers; but at times when I need reassurance, all I have to do is glance up at the stars on a clear night such as this and remember that all Papa would have wanted was for me to be happy.

Make-up Artist claps enthusiastically.

Laura: *(disgusted)* Oh please.

Emma: *(confused)* Wait a minute...what happened to?

Stage Manager: Long story. Basically our play is going down the tubes after two intermissions which occurred barely into scene three, acted out by actors who suffer from hearing loss, broken legs, paralysis, coupled with a bad case of big-head syndrome ala Laura-

Laura: Hey!

Stage Manager: *(blowing up)* Shut up! *(calmly)* As I was saying...*(aggravated)* We've been dodging airborne vegetables all night, you hit your head on a trap door, and because of some stinking hair dier boom-doom-gloom oh whatever Karen.... We're trapped backstage- in the boys' dressing room no less. Tonight has been hell- and NO! Not with an orchestra bell!

Make-up Artist: Um...Elise. Karen's not here.

Emma: I'm so confused.

Make-up Artist: Don't feel bad, hun. I think Elise just needs a moment. You're monologue was great though!

Stage Manager: *(to herself)* This was supposed to be my big break! This must be a dream...or a nightmare. Or maybe I'm not sleeping at all so really it can't be a dream of any sort because I'm lying in a hospital bed as a vegetable somewhere with no thoughts of my own!

Laura: A moment? Ha! I think she lost her mind.

Stage Manager: *(Pinches self)* Darnit. I am awake. OH! I know! This is one of those lame reality TV shows where producers can't afford to pay off a decent screen writer so they result to torturing poor innocent people with heinous tasks such as eating live bug larva.

Make-up Artist: For once I agree with Laura. Here, Elise. *(pulls out a chair)*

Emma: Why don't you sit down?

Stage Manager: *(in own world)* Okay, you dumb little TV show people, you. *(in playful tone)* Where are the cameras? Where are they? *(blowing up)* WHERE ARE THEY, DARNIT!

Enter Roy, Kyle, Sam, James, Techie, Karen.

Laura: *(unenthused)* And here comes the Calvary.

Stage Manager: *(coming back to reality)* Back? Back so soon?

Make-up Artist: Oh how did it go?

James: Amazing! You couldn't ask for a better show!

Stage Manger: *(All excited)* Really?!

Roy: No, but we made it work.

Kyle: All thanks to our leading lady.

Laura: *(full of her self)* Oh I know you love all me.

James: Not you, you snob. Her...our...um.... Techie.

Everyone (except Laura and Stage Manger): All Hail the Techie!

James: Sent from the Thespian gods.

Emma: *(to self)* Oh not this again.

Techie: *(Modestly)* Oh it was nothing.

Sam: Nothing? Nothing?! How can you even say that? You single handedly saved the show!

Laura: My show!

Everyone (except Techie): SHUT UP!

Karen: If it weren't for you...we, well....hmm... I don't really know what would have happened to us.

Stage Manger: *(nervous relief)* And let's leave it that way. No sense in thinking about what could have happened.

Make-up Artist: You all did a great job considering the circumstances. And nothing truly bad happened. Karen got her hearing back. Emma regained consciousness and mobility.

Laura: *(whiny)* Hey! Still in pain over here!

Make-up Artist: And Laura didn't actually break a bone! Everything turned out A.O.K

Stage Manager: Hopefully I'll still have a job after this.

Sam: *(peaking head through door)* Well, you'll find out soon enough. He's coming!

Stage Manger: The director?

Karen: Uh, huh.

Stage Manager: Places! Places!

Actors arrange frantically in totally fake-happy freeze frame positions

The sound of footsteps comes closer to the room. The silhouette of a man is seen through the door's tinted window.

Director: Good job. Next time, let's not have three leading ladies and two intermissions only 3 scenes into Act One. Other than that, we open again tomorrow at 8.

The sound of footsteps goes father away from the room.

Stage Manager: I DIDN'T LOSE MY JOB!

Everyone: Hip-hip hooray!

Stage Manager: What are y'all standing around for? You heard the man. Chop chop! Get home! Get some sleep! And get your lazy actor butts here tomorrow on time!

James: Yes ma'am!

Roy: Aye Aye, Captain.

Everyone talks randomly as they pack up and are heading towards the door.

Emma: *(Loudly/Sweetly)* Good luck to everyone tomorrow!

Everyone: NOOOOOOOOOO!!!!

Curtain

*Teacher: Beverly Best
Cocoa Beach Jr/Sr High School, Cocoa Beach*

On Love and Marriage
Michelle Reed

Story not published at author's request.

Story not published at author's request.

*Teacher: Marjorie Weiffenbach
Merritt Island High School, Merritt Island*

Escapade

Quynh-Le Nguyen

Growing up with two older brothers, I have adapted their boyish peculiarity to tackle new adventures. When we used to live by the banks of southern California, I would always crawl through the steps of bumpy rocks to cross to the local creek. My bare feet were always covered with calluses from walking down the rough pavement of Peacock Oak and around the corner, past the weeping willows. It was hard to see from the road, and as far as I could tell, nobody ever went there except for me, and sometimes my brothers. Large pines nearby stood tall and firm, casting their shadows upon ripples and currents that shoved each other about playfully, like children in the back seat of a car on a long drive. Gravels and pebbles columned along the shallow bottom and allowed the water to glide in creative patterns over their smooth, colorful surfaces. Larger, moss-covered rocks dotted the bank and provided an ideal spots for a child to sit and watch and wonder.

The creek often taught me things; it was my mentor. Once I discovered tadpoles in several of the many eddies and fishes in stagnant pools. A cleaned-out mustard jar usually aided me in clumsily scooping up some of the more slothful creatures. With muddy hands and knees, I set them on the kitchen counter, and watched them daily as they developed into tiny frogs and larger fishes. I was fascinated by what was taking place before my eyes, but new questions constantly perplexed me. My brothers were usually responsible for unraveling these curiosities. They told me about different kinds of metamorphosis and how other little tiny creatures lived in the water that I couldn't see without a fancy magnifying glass.

By the creek, my mind was free to wander. I remembered sitting silently on a mossy rock and watching the birds; I used to pretend I was one. As my body lay still, my imagination would take flight. High above, looking down on this stream from the puffy, white clouds; the wind whistled over my face and the sun warmed my body until I would have a tan line on my face. When my eyes flickered open, it was usually time to go home.

I was always up for a challenge. My brothers and I used to jump from rock to rock, in a kind of improvised hop-scotch obstacle course that tested our balance and agility against one another. They were three to six years older, and I had to practice every morning when they attended school in order to keep up. On the rare occasions that I surpassed one of them, I wore a silly grin for the rest of the day.

The creek was a frontier. The stream extended far into the depths of the woods. I thought that if I wandered too far into its darkness, I might be consumed by it and would never be heard from again. Gradually overcoming my fear, I embarked on expeditions and drafted extensive maps using my brothers' toys, a sheet of paper, and a few colored pencils. As my body grew in height and weight, my boundaries grew in extent and width.

After revisiting the creek in July, I've realized that what was once an expedition was now merely a pastime. Although I had left this stream behind, I found new questions and freedoms, new challenges and places to explore. However, this creek would remain foremost in my memory, whatever stream, river, or ocean I might wade in the future.

*Teacher: Conni Shelnut
Lakeland High School, Lakeland*

On the Writing of Fiction

Jared Cunio

Some are born to be authors, some are born to be writers, and some are just storytellers.

Recently, I was at an awards ceremony for writing a short story. The speaker asked everyone there who considered himself or herself an author to “give yourself a round of applause.” Needless to say, the room remained rather quiet. *I* didn’t clap. The way I see it, there are different kinds of people who write. The first group, the group being offered recognition by the speaker at that awards ceremony, is the one we all think off when we talk about literature. Steinbeck, Shakespeare, and Dickens, widely regarded as some of the greatest *authors* of all time, are some of the first names to come up when discussing this group. But what sets them apart from anyone who picks up a pen and sets it to paper? What unique traits set an author apart?

In my opinion, it isn’t quality that determines who is worthy of being called an author. Shakespeare wrote for the poorly-educated masses, yet his work is the most highly-regarded English literature ever written. Nor is it the style and flavor of the work. Dickens wrote grim stories full of realistic detail as well as the fanciful tale of Ebenezer Scrooge, in which four ghosts play a major role in reforming the old miser. No, the real test of whether or not someone can be called an author (or indeed, anything else) is to ask *why* they write. *Who* or *what* is the book or story written for? Answer that question, and one knows everything worth knowing about anyone who writes.

So why do authors write their books, their plays, and their short stories? What motivates an author to put words down on a page? I believe that the answer is this: the bottom line. Authors write for the money, the fame, the critical acclaim, and the approval of the crowd. Authors do not write for a higher calling, or because the story fights inside of them and must get out. They write for the real world and for their own egos. There is no inherent value to the world a true author creates, except as it mirrors the world the author and the audience live in.

Everything an author does is geared towards this bottom line. Shakespeare wanted to bring groundlings in to see his plays. They’re full of sensational action, with murder, sex, and comedy providing more appeal than the plot itself does. Steinbeck dramatized the plight of migrants fleeing the Dust Bowl, trying to sway the public towards his own political views. Perhaps the best example of an author’s motivation for writing is that of Sir Walter Scott. Allegedly, Beethoven once said of him, “Why, the fellow writes for money.” Indeed, authors write for money in one form or another—fame and admiration being slightly less-tangible forms of coinage.

In contrast, writers are motivated by what some might consider an even more selfish desire. Those who I consider writers put down a story because it pleases them to see it on paper. Writers are often criticized for putting out “escapist” novels, but that is part of the reason they are so successful. They have an inner desire to make reality from imagination, to bring into being something that everyone can enjoy. Writers do not care what the critics say. They don’t expect to be able to buy their daily bread from sales of their books. They are not commercialized, though what they write is often considered “commercial” by literary scholars. In many ways, writers are amateurs while authors are professionals.

That isn’t to say that writers aren’t well-represented in the canon of literature. Edgar Allan Poe was a writer. His work is a direct reflection of inner torment that has nothing to do with wanting to sell

books to critics or to an adoring public. Initially publishing “The Raven” in a newspaper virtually guaranteed Poe would lose the ability to profit from his work, or even to claim the rights to it. He was so driven to write that he didn’t care what the rest of the world thought of him, just as long as he could see his own words on paper.

While Poe represents an extreme example of a writer, he is by no means the only one to achieve literary fame. The Brontë sisters, for example, wrote in such a style that they were virtually guaranteed to be shunned by critics and readers alike. They must have kept at it for the sheer joy of writing, and not for any expectations of fame and fortune. Likewise, many writers today are motivated by the simple desire to take words out of their heads and place them where anyone can see them. Sadly, obscurity awaits the vast majority of those who choose this path.

There is, however, a third type of person who sometimes dabbles in pen and ink. Though their profession is older than the written word, storytellers still carry on the noble tradition that keeps alive traditions and legends of the past. There are only two things a good storyteller needs: a story and a voice to tell it. Some storytellers are great speakers and some are great singers, but those that lack the physical voice required to hold an audience captive long enough to give a story life must use the written word.

Storytellers who write their tales down on paper are not motivated by a desire to achieve any kind of fame. They don’t expect any money from their stories, but instead are content with the feeling of satisfaction that comes from telling a tale and telling it well. Storytellers will spend years on a single page to make it perfect, but, if prompted, must be able to recite the equivalent of an entire book without losing the thread of the story. The best storytellers write for the sake of the story. They don’t know where the tale will lead them, but they follow it from beginning to end just so it can be told. Once a story is done, the teller no longer has any hold upon it, but lets it grow as it sees fit.

Storytellers can be found everywhere, and have writings in libraries and schools all over the country. But the best stories are the ones that will never be published, for these are the purest. If authors are professionals and writers are amateurs, what are storytellers? They are the people who play pick-up games in the park. Writing in its most primitive form is characterized by the desire to tell a story, not to satisfy one’s self or one’s public, but because the story must be told.

So which are you? Author, writer, or storyteller?

*Teacher: Kathryn Chesler
Titusville High School, Titusville*

The Court Dancer

Elizabeth Young

She stands before a flock of tunics and turbans, untouched by the chaos,
With onyx eyes demurely lowered, masking the glitter of challenge.
Pounding of drums and wailing of flutes
Melt her wooden limbs into supple submission.
The dance has begun.

Her lithe figure leaps and spins, leaving clouds of fuchsia in its wake.
As the smooth planes of her stomach
Ripple and crash like waves upon the shores,
Her hands clap in driving rhythm,
Jangling from the bangles clasped about weightless arms.

Their eyes devour each movement, utterly mesmerized,
Powerless to resist her intoxicating spell.
Through the haze of shimmering heat and smoky incense,
She is no longer mere Woman, but Goddess.

Dusky skin flushed, she slowly ends her incantation of writhing limbs.
Throwing a triumphant glance across the crowd,
She knows she holds a captive audience.
Power courses through her veins in such moments.

Though the morrow will bring a cup filled with
Bitter humiliation, pain, and anger,
She chooses to feast instead on the nectar of
Dreams of the never-ending dance.

*Teacher: Conni Shelnuti
Lakeland High School/ Harrison School of the Arts, Lakeland*

Florida Council of Teachers of English 2006 Writing Awards

Instructions and Guidelines for Teachers and Student Writers

1. Any Florida teacher of English may sponsor a **MAXIMUM** of **FIVE** student nominees.
2. Any Florida student (grades 6 - 12) may submit up to three entries in up to three of the five categories: (1) Poetry; (2) Fiction (1500 word max.); (3) Drama; (4) Non-fiction/Personal Narrative (1500 word max); (5) Non-fiction/Other Essays (literary analysis, character sketch, etc—1500 word max).
3. A single selection (one poem, one piece of fiction, one work of drama, or one work of non-fiction) constitutes an entry.
4. The student's name, teacher's name, school, or district **MUST NOT** appear on any page of the entry. This information must be on the entry form **ONLY**. Title pages should **NOT** be submitted.
5. All entries must be submitted in electronic form and must be accompanied by an entry form.
6. Term paper/research papers will **NOT** be accepted. Critical analyses which reference published works are acceptable.
7. Students or teachers must keep copies of entries.

Teacher Checklist

An application must accompany each entry. Instructions for using the application form online are below. Before you submit the entry form and the student work, make sure you have

- included student, school, and teacher contact information,
- identified the student's grade level,
- chosen one category/genre for each entry,
- listed the title of the student's entry (if none exists, simply write "untitled"),
- verified the authenticity of student work

**If you have not completed these steps, the entry will be DISQUALIFIED.
NO EXCEPTIONS.**

*An entry form can be obtained from the FCTE website and can be opened in Word and filled in electronically. Once completed, the entry form and the student work should be attached as **TWO SEPARATE ATTACHMENTS** to one email addressed to wood@coe.ufl.edu. Understand that in submitting the work, you are verifying that it is the authentic, original work of the student. You will receive an acknowledgement via email once your entry has been logged.*

Submit entries via email to: wood@coe.fsu.edu
Dr. Susan Wood, Writing Awards Co-Chair,
209 MCH, Tallahassee, FL 32306-4490.

Entries not received by midnight May 1, 2007 will not be accepted.

Winners receive a certificate of merit, recognition at the FCTE Fall Conference, a \$100.00 cash award, and copies of the 2006 Student Writing Anthology.



<http://www.fcte.org>