

Wordplay

Explore



Independent Writing Fall 2016

English '57 Series

“Writing is an exploration.
You start from nothing and learn as you go.”
E.L. Doctorow

Introduction

When an individual embarks on an exploration, they are bound to discover something new about their world, and an exploration is precisely what the '57 courses offer. The learners, along with their consultants, collaborate to create a space where all individuals become more familiar with the components of writing, while simultaneously learning about what moves and intrigues them. Both parties offer a fresh perspective as each sees the world through their own lens. An individual's lens is a diverse collection of experiences, emotions, abilities, and visions. These elements working together form the living, breathing pieces that make up this publication.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to all of the '57 learners and the consultants who contributed to this publication. Without your collaborative efforts and willingness to share your work with this community, we would not have a publication. Thank you to all the individuals who have helped make the Writing Lab a safe and exciting place where learning about writing and about who we are as individuals is possible. Thank you to Cheryl Solinger for your abounding kindness and for keeping all of us organized and on track. Thank you to all the people in our lives who inspire us to reach our potential and practice bravery as we share who we are with the world. Thank you to all of the professors who have challenged us to think critically and creatively, and who have encouraged us to keep trying. Thank you to Emily Wisinski, the guiding force in the Writing Lab. We are grateful for your positive energy and passion for this community.

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Table of Contents

Alexander-Haywood, Nakeysha

Bailey, MacKenzie

Bell, Cameron

Boehm, Mitch

Braatz, Casie

Byrd, Jacob

Congdon, Nicole

Cousins, Cheyenne

Dassow, Ian

Du, Hongang

Gotz, Laurel

Jakusz, Natalie

Kubley, Nicholas

Loepfe, Travis

Lu, Jiawei

Mabbett, Tyler

McMannes, Claire

Mullen, Casandra

Perfors, Lacey

Pruhs, Sebastian

Reath, Robin

Summers, Elizabeth

Wilcox, Taylor

Wygle, Cassandra

Yang, Sunshine

Alexander-Haywood, Nakeysha

Nakeysha was one of the first '57 learners I had the pleasure of working with during my first semester as a Writing Lab consultant. Like all new relationships, we were both a bit hesitant during our first sessions. She was a bit reluctant to share her poetry, and I was far too timid to criticize it. Thankfully, as the semester went on, these limitations melted away as we grew closer and more confident in our abilities. Nakeysha's poetry has evolved a great deal during our time working together, and I'm proud to say that this is purely the result of her own tremendous effort. I will be the first to say that her success came very little from my advice. The work Nakeysha put in each and every week to truly force me to think and discover the meaning in her poetry is something I will always be grateful for. The poetry she has submitted draws from the pain of memory and the promise of hope that the future can hold, if it can ever be found. Ever-inspiring, Nakeysha's writing has been a highlight of each week during our time together. I hope her poems prove enjoyable, and I can't wait to see what else Nakeysha has in store for us!

Nick Donisch

Life

I learn as the years roll by
And I leave the past behind.
That much I had counted sorrow
But proves that love is kind.

That many flower that I longed for
had hidden thorn of pain,
And many rugged by-path led to fields of ripened grain.

The clouds that cover the sunshine
they cannot banish the sun, And
the earth shines out the brighter when the weary rain is done.

We must stand in the deepest shadow to see the clearest light
And often through wrongs own darkness,
comes the strength of life.

Little

When we were little everything was so simple
We thought our lives were going to be great
but...

Little did we know we were gonna go through heartbreak,
little did we know we were going to lose people we cared about.

Our minds were so innocent, so were our actions.
When we were little,
We wouldn't of even thought of kissing or even sex.

Our minds were pure,
We were pure, and innocent.
Funny how things change.

Pain

The first time this happened I cried for weeks
asking my self why now why me ?
Now I know what you're thinking did somebody die?
the answer is yes, but just my soul inside...

I watch Tv and listen to music to keep from crying...
Sometimes I ask myself why am I still trying?
I thought maybe after the first time things would change...
and they did now nothing is the same.

I smile to not let it get to me,
not realizing "us" is history.
Not U.S as in United States but,
As in me and you, Still wondering till this day
What did I do...

Bailey, MacKenzie

I have thoroughly enjoyed working with MacKenzie this past semester. She is a talented young author who has a passion for writing. What always amazed me about MacKenzie was her perseverance – even when she felt unsure of what to write next, she never gave up! All of the writings that she completed this past semester were filled with emotion and drama. MacKenzie has grown a lot as a writer during these past few months, and I am honored to have had the opportunity to support her on this journey. I am amazed by how much MacKenzie has stepped out of her comfort zone when writing this short story. She has worked very hard on this piece, and I am excited for everyone to be able to read it.

Aubrey Nycz

Axes

Swoosh. That's the sound that I wake up to every morning at three o'clock. The Swing and then the chop. I swear that the sound never ends. The familiar swing of the axe is something that I could never unhear. To this family and this life, it is like the familiar calming sound of birds chirping. Only here, all the birds are gone for the season.

With winter fast approaching, the temperatures already dropping, and not to mention hunting season has just finished, you're lucky if you catch sight of a little sparrow, one who you know if he stays much longer he will freeze to death this winter.

I sit up drowsy from having just woken up. I swing my feet over the side of the bed and place my feet in my fuzzy pink slippers. I walk over to my little bedroom mirror and grab a brush, fixing my hair. It is all tangled in a knot at the back of my head from my restless sleep. After finally getting the giant knot out of my hair I walk to my dresser and grab out my pink dress. I put it on and then grab the bracelet that my mother gave me and slide it onto my right wrist. I then grab my black boots and place them on my feet.

I close my dresser drawer and walk across my room to my chest, I look to make sure that nobody is coming. I unlock it with the secret key; the pendant on my mother's bracelet. Nobody knows about the key; they believe that it was lost when my mother died. I throw open the heavy lid to the chest and I reach inside. I grab out an item that is wrapped in a blanket. I unfold the blanket and take out a blank white face mask. I set the mask on the ground next to me placing the blanket back into the left side of the

chest. I then reach into the bottom right side of the chest and I pull out a hefty case and carefully set it on the floor of my bedroom. I undo the latches and pull out an axe. A beautiful wooden axe with smooth black grips. The blade is a beautiful silver color and I smile at the sight of it. I set the axe on the floor right next to my mask. I close the case I grabbed my axe from and place it back in my chest closing the lid tightly.

I grab the mask and place it on my face. I walk back over to my mirror and fix my long auburn hair around the mask. I smile. The mask covers my mouth so you can only see my eyes, just the way it always has been. I walk back over and grab my axe. I pick it up in my right hand and then walk over to my window, I undo the latch and pull it open. I climb out onto the roof of our home shutting the window behind me. I walk across the roof to the corner. I sit and slide down to the ground.

Dad and the workers are on the other side of the house; they never even notice that I am gone. I walk towards the woods at the back of our property swinging my axe. The familiar soft swing calms me.

Finally, after about a minute I reach the woods I walk a little farther before I grab my axe in one hand and swing at a tree. I take a breath and pull the axe out with ease as I continue to walk. I swing at another tree; chunks of wood fly out of the tree as the bark is shattered from my axe. Once again I pull my axe out of the tree with ease, no need to stop walking. I take the axe and throw it in the air. catching it by the handle without a problem.

This is my freedom. I walk continuing this pattern. Slashing at trees throwing my axe around. I walk enjoying myself. Spinning around waiting for the right time, the time when I strike. After a few hours, I find what I am looking for. A small town off the radar. The sun is low the storm I had been waiting for is coming. All I must do is sit and wait.

"I must confess I'm addicted to this." I whisper with a smile. Just like my mother she taught me well.

Suddenly the first roll of thunder shocks the town and a bolt of lightning lights up the horizon. Towns people begin running trying to prepare even faster for the storm, they know it's coming and they want to be sheltered inside. Especially if they're scared that I might show up. Suddenly the rain starts falling. Within a minute my hair is soaked and water is dripping from my bright pink dress. I smile.

I hum loud enough for the townspeople to hear. A few catch on and stop in their tracks. I hear a little girl scream and she runs. My smile grows louder. I stop humming, allowing the quiet to sink in. The adults grow weary and move quickly. They do not realize it's too late, I am already here and I know what I want. I hum again louder this time. The adults pause for a second. I swing my axe over my shoulder and walk towards the clearing the town lies in.

As soon as I know I'm just visible to the townspeople I stand still and cock my head to the side and stare at them. They all drop what they are doing and run away.

"Come a little bit closer before we begin let me tell you how I want it and exactly what I need." The lyrics ring from my voice and come out just the way I want to. Everybody fears the song. In this moment. It pours through my lungs and it rolls off my tongue. I smile the entire time walking out of the woods. I hear doors slamming. I look at my axe. We make the perfect partnership. My baby, the only partner I will ever need. Forget what mother said about a male partner. I don't need to be partners with whom she picked for me. Jordan would only slow me down. I'm a solo act; just my axe and me.

"I must confess I'm addicted to this!" I ring out as I walk past their houses swinging my axe into the walls. A girl should have a little fun before getting down and dirty, right?

"I can't deny, I'd die without this!"

I take a hard swing with both hands at one house and break through the wall. Inside I hear a woman scream. I smile. I take another good smack at the house, I keep swinging until there's a hole large enough for me to climb through.

"Adrenalize me. Come a little bit closer, before we begin. Let me tell you how I want it, and exactly what I need,"

The woman screams loudly. "Leave us alone! Please! There are children!"

"Make me feel like a god!"

I raise my axe. the woman screams and runs for a door. I walk casually following her. We end up outside. I'm not afraid of losing her. I can just throw the axe and kill her instantly.

"Haley stop it now!"

I lower my axe and look behind me. It's Jordan.

"I'm a solo girl Jordan. I don't need you."

I turn back and look at the woman. I raise my axe to throw but before I can I'm struck in the back and I scream falling to the ground. Quickly everything begins to fade but not before I hear the axe fly past me striking the lone woman in the back. I die hearing the final scream.

Bell, Cameron

What is the real job of an author? This question came up again and again during the hours of conversation that Cameron and I had in the booth over the course of the semester. Although we never reached a definitive answer,

Cameron and I agreed that the job of every author is as unique as the author themselves. Everyone brings to this world a precise combination of perspectives and experiences that no other individual has or ever will

have again. As authors, we have the power to share this with others, something that cannot be accomplished any other way. Cameron's writing is a unique mixture of prose and poetry, blended together to mimic real life.

As a writer, Cameron tries to express the truths of his existence through his work, giving particular attention to things as they are rather than how others say they should be. It has been an absolute joy to get to know Cameron, both as a writer and as an individual, over the course of the past four months. Good luck and never stop writing!

Angela Iwanski

I hate titles so this will be about my feelings about music.

(sighs)

At the beginning of every class, every meeting, or whenever I'm somewhere I can't listen to music, I sigh and take out my headphones. It became a ritual of mine. I don't mean to do it though. It just happens. Sort of a... subconscious ritual if you will. I sigh because I hate realizing that it's time to return to reality. Music is my escape so when I take my headphones out, it's a reminder that I have to come back to the real world. Ugh.

Once I pop my headphones in, that's it. I completely cut myself off from the rest of the world and I can honestly say that I feel pure happiness. I can't hear anything but the music pumping through my ear drums and I become completely at peace. It's hard to explain the feeling that some music can give me. It's a feeling of pure bliss and happiness honestly. I can't think of a more simpler way to put it. I just feel happy. If I could, I would have some kind of music playing at all times.

☺ **I take my music pretty serious. Because it's an escape, I need it to be worth it. Music to me isn't always about the lyrics. Most of the time, it's about the overall feeling that a song gives me or just how the song sounds.** ☺

I love how music can take anyone's ideas, emotions, or opinions and just put them in a form that anyone can enjoy. I love music because there's so many different kinds. There isn't one form of music that is better than another. All

music is beautiful in it's own way. Whether it's my kind of music or not, I appreciate every artist, band member, songwriter, and producer for putting their work out in the world for people to enjoy. Music is a language that any and everyone can understand and enjoy and I think that's powerful.

☺ **music: vocal or instrumental sounds (or both) combined in such a way as to produce beauty of form, harmony, and expression of emotion.** ☺

***definition taken straight from the google search engine (lol)**

Music is one of my best friends. It's a huge part of my life and an even bigger part of who I am as a person. Without it, I wouldn't be me. It has helped me through some rough patches in my life. From breakups, depressed nights, to huge moves across the country, music has been here for me through it all. (It's been there for the good times too) You might not have thought that something so simple as music could have such a huge impact on a person but I'm here to tell you that it can.

Boehm, Mitch

Mitch was one of the first '57 learners I had the pleasure of working with during my first semester as a Writing Lab consultant. It didn't take us very long to get to know each other, and it was shortly after getting to know each other that I found out how insightful and downright hilarious he was. It took a couple of weeks for us to become truly productive in our sessions, as I had only just begun as a consultant and he was still deciding what he truly wanted to write about. Mitch began to truly flourish when he began writing about topics that truly interested him, and his writing started to evolve because of this. In a final shift towards the end of the semester, Mitch moved his focus towards incorporating more humor into his writing; a decision that had many delightful results. In his satirical piece "Sweatpants vs. Jeans: A Life Perspective," Mitch has made a few startling and vital comparisons between those who wear jeans and those who wear sweatpants. In discussing the merits of these "leg protectors," Mitch sheds light on the truly severe implications that surround them. It has been a great pleasure to work with Mitch this year, and I hope he provide us with even more laughter in the years to come.

Nick Donisch

Sweatpants versus Jeans: A Life Perspective

A debatable topic that doesn't seem to get much attention is sweatpants versus jeans. Which is preferable to people is obviously subjective, but let's look at the pros and cons of both leg protectors. Sweatpants are often regarded as the more comfortable of the two, but have a stigma around them involving laziness (outside of athletics). Sweatpants do require slightly less effort to throw on than jeans in the vast majority of cases, but that wouldn't presume laziness for a person. Perhaps the sweats' comfortability relaxes its wearer a bit too much, to where the person feels lazier. If you're comfortable and content, your incentive to try hard is less than if you're uncomfortable. This is not saying jeans are uncomfortable, but perhaps provide a different comfortability.

Jeans are regarded as the more aesthetically-pleasing, professional set of pants between the two, in most cases. This likely plays a role in the wearer's mind, to where they feel like they should be acting more professional. Maybe they feel like less of a bum in their mind, so they automatically have an inclination to be more productive. Jeans don't have any stigmas around them, other than skinny jeans. Skinny jeans are unappealing to a lot of people, but considered fashionable to many others. Outside of skinny jeans, your generic jeans, are often not criticized. Comfortability-wise, jeans are likely to be felt as less comfortable than

sweatpants (based on no data whatsoever), but are perceived more favorably in terms of societal acceptance (again no data at all).

Pockets are on both jeans and sweatpants. Jeans offer more pockets, and their pockets are often more secure than sweatpants pockets. How many times has your phone slipped out of your jeans' pocket? How many times your sweatpants pocket? As far as which pocket is more comfy to sink your hand into, that's pretty even. The entry phase (tips of fingers going into pocket) is often smoother when dealing with sweats. Many times you have to push aside the jeans' upper part of the pocket in order to get your hand into it. However, once the hand enters the jeans pocket, it is tightly covered and surrounded by a usually soft fabric. The sweatpants pocket is looser generally and has a bit more breathing room for the hand. However, with the sweats' insecurity and lack of pockets, jeans prevail in this scenario.

An area where sweatpants thrive is accessibility. They're very easy to take off and to put on, and they're more accommodating to different waist sizes. Sweats are also more accommodating to life's daily routines. In a scenario like going to the bathroom, sweats requires very few steps compared to jeans to allow you to go. With jeans, you often have a belt, button and zipper that all have to be undone before you can release your waste. That alone is enough to make you wonder if going to the bathroom is worth the effort. Sweats sometimes have strings to be untied, but that's about it. Going to the bathroom is just one scenario in which sweats have the upper hand. There are more, probably, but honestly I can't be bothered to think of any at the moment.

Now, you may be thinking to yourself, "what a stupid article" and to that I'd agree. However, our culture is ever-demanding of professionalism and jeans may be the enabler. This is neither good nor bad, but if we see a shift from jeans to sweats, our country may just be making a statement: chill out. The pants a person chooses to wear is representative of that person's current character. Therefore when the majority of a country's people decide to wear sweats, the character of that country as a whole is decided. Personally, a change to a sweatpants culture sounds cool as hell. However, you jean wearers will have to decide when you're ready to suck up your pride and make the change.

Braatz, Casie

Casie is a '57 learner who is a talented and creative writer who likes to write poetry. She likes to write children's books. She is gentle, fun, and enjoyable to work with. It has been my honor to work with and get to know her this semester as we worked with her poems. She taught me that poetry is not scary but rather a personal and creative way to share one's emotions and feelings with others. It has been amazing working with her and watching her countenance light up when we have found new and exciting ways to approach writing and organizing poetry. My favorite part of working with Casie this semester has been when we rearranged either her stanzas or broken up long lines in a given poem and watched something new and beautiful unfold. It's been a fun semester in the booth as we have both found new ways to working with poetry. I hope you will enjoy reading her poem as much as I have!

Mary Connolly

Unseen Emotion

When I look in to your eye
I can see your deepest thoughts
Without even speaking.
When I hold your hand,
I can feel your emotions
Run across our entwined fingers.
When I walk alongside you,
I can feel as if we are both connected.
When I am with you,
Everything around me disappears.

When someone else looks in to your eyes,
They see emptiness.
When someone else hold your hand,
They are cold and hard.
When someone else walks alongside you,
There is no connection.
Emotion is strong,
It is a power that can be given to a person
And destroyed in the blink of an eye.

Somedays I feel as if I give everything to you
And get nothing in return.

You don't look in to my eyes to see what I can't speak.
You don't hold my hand to feel what I am feeling.
You don't walk alongside me and miss out on a connection.
To have everything disappear around me
Hurts when you disappear with it.

Byrd, Jacob

1

There's a fire that grows beneath these bones.
It hisses, pops, and cracks.
As I remember the things I love most in my life, the fire spreads, igniting
beneath this skin.
Most of the time it feels like the fire of that in Hell.
Inextinguishable.
But, moments that diminish that flame slowly crawl back to me.
Find me.
Corner me.
As the light gets darker, my bones and muscles ache for energy.
Ache for something to keep me moving forward.
It's hard to find something that keeps these bones together.
But these bones we own
and move, and twist;
they need something to push them.
Bend them almost to snapping.
But,
not quite.
It is the heat of the fire from the things that we love, that keep these bones
whole.

This fire we own, and harvest, mustn't be diminished.

It can't.

2

The couches were scratchy and the rooms were bare.
She didn't know why she was there.
The doctors were all dressed up, tired in scrubs,
her room overlooked the dying shrubs.
The medicine she took was pale and thin,
none of the doctors could ever win.
People often sad, crying with moans,

afraid they were going to die alone.
She stopped believing in all over her cares,
she didn't know why she was there.

I would take the bus down the river,
afraid of what today has given her.
I'd come inside, and see the familiar space,
all while the workers neutral in their face,
I'd sit down in the chair, awkward and silent,
these pauses and spaces always seemed violent.
During my visits, I had nothing to say,
I reintroduced myself to mother today.

3

It follows me at night.

When the wind is chilly and I hold myself in my jacket, I can hear its clawed feet click shortly behind me. Sometimes it's nails dragging on the cement, like fingers on a chalkboard.

I can hear it. I can tell it's behind me. There's a faint laugh beneath its broken ribs. But, I don't look at it. I've seen it a couple times from time to time with family, but no more than that.

It's skeletal body is rotted, it's skin and limbs broken open, cracked, and peeling off. It's chest is covered in flaky bones, barely hanging on to it's frame. It's arms are long and thin, but strong. Ready to grab you. I haven't looked at it's face, for I've been too afraid to.

But there it is. Following me again.

Sometimes I can get ahead and won't see it for days, but then nights like tonight, I'll hear the familiar rap of its broken bones hitting the pavement.

Ever since I was little, I've noticed it. A family member pointed it out to me, and told me how I should avoid it. Growing up with it's constant stalking and grotesque presence, I've taught myself how to be ready to hide from it.

It's everywhere.
Don't let it ruin you.
Avoid it at all times.
Eventually, you'll hear it again.

But, I can't help but remember, through the chills and breezes of the night,
that one day, it'll get me. Like it got the others.

On that day, I'll turn around, look into the unknown, dark abyss that is it's
face, and accept my fate.

One day, I will be ready for it.

That long-awaited death.

4

We all like to think we're good people.
That our actions speak miles, when we only give a foot.
When we donate a dollar to an organization here and there, we think it
justifies our delusion of the good inside of us.
Like it or not, doing small things does not make you a good person.
We've taken this idea, this raw idea of what makes a person good, and
consciously distorted it with trivialities like greed, arrogance, cowardice, and
hate.
I don't know how we've got to this point as a race.
Is it fear?
Ignorance?
When did we decide that this was the best decision as a species?
We shut ourselves in our homes, doors locked tight, and selfishly ignore
what really matters.
Being good to each other.
In today's world, it is so easy to forget how to be good.
With all the abuse coming from differences, down to the words of hate we
spit, we forget how to be human.
Through all the neglect and absence of guidance we would normally create
with being good, we forget a lot about who we are.
We're all just beings trying to connect, trying to understand each other.

To be human, is to love. To cry. To listen. To sympathize. To fight for what matters. But most of all, to be human is to be good.

Before you dismiss your actions of "being good" to improve only yourself, take a minute to think.

Think about what you're doing for the world around you, and the people who inhabit this world with you.

Think about the creatures that share the space with us.

The stories we tell.

The laws we've created.

The nature blooming around us.

When we begin to act selflessly to be good and think of others, someday we may finally understand what it takes to make a difference in our constructed and distorted world of false goods and people.

Someday we'll learn to be human.

Congdon, Nicole

Getting to know Nicole and her writing has been a great pleasure for me. Nicole's creativity and ability to think critically made working with her extremely enjoyable. Throughout the semester, she never ceased to impress me with her work. It is obvious how much Nicole loves writing. Her talent and dedication shine through in her novel. It is a story with many complex characters that you can relate to and sincerely care about. I am confident that Nicole will go on to become an exceptional writer during her years of studying at the UW Stevens Point, as well as her future career. It has been a privilege working with her as one of my '57 learners.

Katie Shonia

They came in the night.

The crash of the door woke me up with a start. I had just started drifting off to sleep when a loud noise erupted down the hall. A moment later, blinding white lights flooded into my bedroom, coloring my quilt that kept me warm during the coldest of nights. Footsteps stomped around, probably dragging in dirt. Mom would be upset, considering she just cleaned her carpets. A child screamed from the loud noise. More movement happened closer to me, which made me sigh with relief for a moment.

I gripped the quilt in fear, waiting for Dad to storm down the stairs and demand why they were intruding into our apartment and being awoken at this ungodly hour. The child became louder, her screams transforming into sobs. If I had courage, I would have slid out of my warm bed, scurried to the child and protected it, but I was frozen to the spot.

Dad's voice wavered down the hallway, probably talking to Mom, telling her what to do. Footsteps ran past my bedroom door, which was just occupied by me. Then there was talking. It wasn't loud, but they were loud enough that I could tell that Dad was speaking with someone. I released my quilt and swung my feet over the side, heart pounding like a wild storm that rages outside from time to time since we live so close to the ocean.

Slowly, I tiptoed to the door. My heart pumped harder with each step I took. Surely, whoever was in our living room wouldn't harm any of us. There had been no gun shots thankfully, but who could be at our house at such a late hour?

Right before I twisted the doorknob on the door, there was a soft rasp on it, frightening me. A small gasp left my lips as I jumped backwards. It came again, but this time, it had a voice. "Lea, you in there?" I recognized the voice immediately: Noah- my older brother.

I pulled the door open quickly and fell into his arms. He wore pajama pants and a white tank top. His arms enveloped around me, making me feel secure, safe. He had a small trace of soap from when he took a shower after work, but he smelled familiar. I buried my face into his chest as he gently pushed his way into my room. He guided me to the bed and together, we sat down.

"Who's at the door?" I whispered deep into his chest.

"I'm not sure," Noah admitted quietly. I straightened up so I was eyelevel with him. His blond hair was matted. He must have been asleep, but that seemed unusual for him since he loved staying up in the early morning hours sketching.

"How can you not be sure?" My voice replied sharply.

"Dad told us to stay back here. He said he would take care of it." There was shuffling outside my bedroom. Mom popped her head inside with Daisy in her arms. Mom had come to the rescue. Daisy's face was still wet with tears, but she seemed to be quiet now.

"Where's Will?" Mom asked frantically. Noah stood up, not saying a word and left the room. I stared at Mom and she stared right back, occasionally stroking Daisy's hair and cheeks. Noah returned with Will stumbling behind him. Mom, with relief on her face, corralled the boys into my room and handed Daisy to me. "You four stay here." She ordered. "I'm going to check on Dad." Before any of us could ask questions, she whisked out of the room, closing the door behind her.

"Were you asleep Will?" I asked who was rubbing his eyes.

"He was asleep on the desk when I found him." Noah smirked and ruffled Will's hair, which was also blond, "Weren't you?"

Will shrugged as he tried to swat Noah's hand away. Watching the two of them put a small smile on my face. Daisy rested her head on my chest and closed her eyes, exhausted by the events that were happening in the house.

Will stood up, spying something in my room. I watched him with curiosity. He nabbed a small picture frame off my rickety desk and asked "Was this when you arrived?" Noah hadn't been paying attention until now.

He perked up when I answered, "Yes." He brought the picture to me and I stared at it again, remembering that day. In the picture, Mom and Dad were standing in front of the stairs leading into the apartment building. Noah, who was 10 in the picture was standing in front of Dad. I stood next to Noah in the middle and William who was only 5, stood next to me with a

wild grin on his face. He must have been excited that he was getting a big sister. My brothers and I are opposites. While they sport the blond hair that Dad gave them and the chocolate eyes my mother contributed, I have long, shiny black hair that never stops growing and a grayer blue eye. My skin is darker than theirs, more olive color than white.

I never understood why my real parents didn't want me. My first true memories were in an adoption center in The Central district. One day I was sent to The East district adoption center where my current family took me home. I have never known my true parents, who they are, where they're from and what they're like. Whenever I ask where they went, mom always says that they died in house fire and then changes the subject quickly. I gave up months ago on trying to extract any more information.

Daisy on the other hand had a different story than I. Her mother (who was my adopted mother's sister) died during childbirth, so my mother got custody of Daisy. That was three years ago. We have all become her new family. It was as if she was born to my mom and dad.

Sounds of yelling broke the silence. I tensed up while Noah stood up, stepping forward to protect us. Will scooted closer to me, linking his arm into mine. We stayed silent, waiting anxiously for something to happen.

"I'll be right back," Noah whispered. "I'm going to go check it out."

"Noah!" I pleaded. "Please, just stay here."

"It'll only be a moment," He smiled weakly and then rushed out of the room, leaving the door open. His footsteps echoed quietly away. The yelling continued and this time, I could pinpoint Dad's voice, but couldn't tell why he was yelling. Will's grip tightened on my arm. I smoothed his hair down and then gently rubbed his back, trying to relax him.

At last, Noah returned. His face was grim and his fists were clenched. "Dad wants you in the living room. There's someone here to see you." I blinked at him in confusion. Why was someone here to see me at this hour? I passed Daisy to Noah, forced Will to let go and then stiffly walked down the hallway in our apartment to the small, furnished living room.

There was a simple couch, with a coffee table in front of it. The TV was black, sitting across from the couch. The nice rugs that Mom has had since she was a child colored the floor. Pictures of our family littered the walls, reminding me of memories that had happened long ago. Mom was wrapped in a robe, sitting on the edge of the couch. She looked up, seeing that I had arrived, but then averted her gaze. She knew something.

Dad was bristling, his fists were balled up and his face was beet red. He wore pajama pants and a sweatshirt that had the sleeves rolled up. His graying, blond hair was ruffled and long. He was in need of a haircut. The man that Dad was talking to was someone I didn't recognize. My stomach sank from nerves.

He wore a nice pair of dress pants and a crisp, white polo with the Union of America logo on the left breast- a circle with 3 men inside, each linking arms with each other to symbolize unity. Behind the three men were three stripes of color to signify the three districts: Sunset Orange for The West district, grass green for The Central district and sea blue for my district, The East. His hair was slicked back and his glasses were pushed up onto the bridge of his nose. He held a clipboard in his right hand. He was not a young man, more middle aged with wrinkles at the corner of his eyes. He glared at Dad, his eyebrows knitted together in frustration. Behind him were two soldiers from The Palace, which confused me even more.

"You have no right to take her away!" Dad yelled furiously.

"I'm sorry Mr. Palmer, but this has been decided. You would be going against the law and The Palace if Ms. Palmer did not come with us tonight."

"Dad," I called. Dad and the man looked at me, finally noticing my presence. "What's going on?"

"Lea!" Dad quickly moved in front of me, grabbing my arms. "Get *back* in your room! Who told you to come out?"

"I told Noah to send her out." Mom whispered. Dad stared at her wildly. Mom stood up, wrapping her arms around her waist. "Greg, stop fighting it. They're going to take her away regardless of what you say or try to do. You're just making it worse." I looked at Mom, more confused than ever.

"Mom!" I called to her. "What is going on?"

"Let me explain," The man stepped forward, facing me. "I am the ambassador for The Palace, Ying Sarrow." He bowed greatly in front of me. I was stunned. *The Ying Sarrow* was in my living room. Staring at his face now, it looked quite familiar. He was all over the TV, doing the evening reports for all the districts. He served as a bridge between the three districts to keep unity within the country and a messenger for The Overseers.

Ying smiled as he saw the confusion on my face grow even more. "You look quite confused my child. Why is Ying Sarrow standing in your living room at 11 at night?"

"You read my mind sir," I blushed with embarrassment.

Ying laughed heartily, "Surely you watch the weekly reports?" Nobody in the room spoke. Ying sighed quietly, and continued. "The third son of the Emperor has turned 18." I blinked and Mom stood up, her lips pressed together.

"That still doesn't explain the fact you are standing in my living room." Dad snarled. "I don't care if you were the Emperor himself, you have no right to barge in here and disrupt my family!"

"Greg." Mom snapped back like a leather whip. "She has been chosen by one of the sons." Ying smiled as the purpose of his arrival was finally out in the air. Dad looked like he had seen a ghost after that. His face became pale. He stumbled into a chair, clutching his mouth. My eyes widened with fear, astonishment, panic. My hands began to shake. I was *chosen*? Mom saw my panic. She turned to me, her eyes urgent and stern, "Remember when we had to register you on your 17th birthday? That's how you got in the pool of girls." Mom clutched my arms. In a lower voice, she breathed, "You are *very* lucky. And you are beautiful."

"Ms. Palmer will be accompanying me to The Palace along with four other girls from your district and you will be in the running for one of the son's hand in marriage." Ying's smile grew with joy. "We must leave now, since we are behind schedule."

"No," Dad regained his confidence. "You can't take my eldest daughter away from me!"

"Mr. Palmer, you would be committing treason to The Palace if you do not let your daughter accompany us."

"She will be going with you." Mom replied before Dad could.

"A wise decision Mrs. Palmer." Ying's eyes gave away the annoyance towards my father. "Ms. Palmer, if you would follow me please."

"But what about my possessions? Won't I need clothes?" I asked as one of the guards had taken a step forward and was trying to escort me out of my living room. "What about saying goodbye to my siblings?"

"You won't need to provide clothes and your parents and siblings will be able to say their goodbyes in the morning, before we depart." Ying dug a letter out of his pocket and handed it to Mom. "You may open it as soon as we leave. It gives instructions for tomorrow and for the next two weeks, if not longer."

"Two weeks?" I yelled in astonishment. The guards were escorting me towards the doorway. Dad was fuming but Mom was shielding him from Ying. Once at the doorframe, the first guard walked in front while the other

one waited until I started walking. I waited as Ying said his final regards and then pushed past the guard.

“Come along Ms. Palmer, time is wasting away.” Then he pushed past me and walked outside, his shoes crunching on the gravel. I took one more glance inside our apartment. Dad’s angry facade had fallen, replaced by a sad look in his eyes. Mom clutched the letter, but didn’t show any emotion. Noah was walking out from my bedroom, but it was too dark in the hallway to see his face. The guard must have gotten tired of me staring inside for he closed the door hastily. I faced forward and walked. The gravel bit into my shoeless feet. I was in bed when these people from The Palace had interrupted my peaceful, June night.

Trees peppered the land, but it was mostly grass. I heard waves in the distance, crashing into the sandy beaches. I loved the beach so much, and now I would have to leave it for The Palace. There was a large truck sitting outside the apartment building, parked in the back of the parking lot. Next to the truck was a small car, with a guard sitting in the driver’s seat. Ying stopped in front of the truck, waiting for me to catch up.

“This truck will take you to the airport, where you’ll be staying at tonight. Your family, if they decide to or not, will meet us there in the morning before we take off for The Palace.” I nodded silently. I stepped into the truck and the door slammed behind me. The soldiers did not follow me into it. Instead, they climbed into the small car with Ying Sarrow. The car drove off quickly into the inky, black night. The truck jerked to life and pattered along after it.

I leaned my head against the cool window as the truck gained speed, letting the vibration and the sway of the truck lull me back into sleep.

Cousins, Cheyenne

Cheyenne and I first crossed paths when she had a “make up” session with me. I looked into her folder and saw a stack of writing already accumulating and immediately knew I was dealing with great talent. Our first session together went remarkably well. Cheyenne knows what she wants to say and finds new, innovative ways to convey her messages. I was delighted when I found out I’d be her tutor for the rest of the semester. Together we’ve taken this class and turned it into a fun and expressive way for Cheyenne to find her inner artistry. We explored, experimented with, and discovered new ways to write creatively. Cheyenne has the ability to take her own every day experiences and turn them into something we all can experience through her writing. She has a sweet, charming little style of her own and I’m so happy she’s sharing it with us!

Emmy Stirn

My Love for Writing

I have always loved my English classes as long as I can remember. Okay, well to be honest I have loved every English class besides my high school sophomore literature class with Ms. Kinniple. Other than that, English class has been my energizing moment to any school day; yes, even more energizing than lunch. Here’s my analysis as to why I have always had such a love for writing, starting with my expressive antagonistic.

Since I was little I have always had a love for art. Field trips to First Stage (a children’s theater in Milwaukee), symphonies, art museums, and orchestra’s were always my favorite field trips. I even asked my mom to take me to plays out side of school, and the Children’s Museum (or any museum at that) was my idea of a fun time. Now with my great appreciation, I have never really been good at art. I can’t draw, I can’t paint, clay work isn’t for me, and the “D” I took in photography pretty much told me I should stop. As an aside, I have a theory: we are all individuals, which means each one of our brains is programmed a little differently. It just so happened that my brain was programed to express itself artistically in writing, and that’s all right. Writing for me has always been my creative outlet. It is the best way for me to communicate my creativity with the world. It is my personal opinion that everyone, every child needs to find his or her channel. Finding that channel lights not only our mind, it also lights our soul. For me writing was that light; it still is that light.

My love for writing has lead into my love for reading. I am thankful for that because reading in return has made me a better writer. Reading

also gave way my number one consumed beverage. I have a deeply rooted love for tea. Well, multiple cups a day may be more of an addiction. Personally I think that sounds way too strong, I'll just consider myself a tea *connoisseur*.

I had an idea freshman year in high school to write my own book, and it's still on my heart today. It is my dream to have a nice cozy spot in my home with tea, tons of books, and a place that relaxes my mind, a place where I can write.

The Flowers of My Heart

There are flowers in the garden of my heart;
Beautiful roses, tulips, and gardenias.

The fragrance of the roses bring me joy,
I love their precious scent
They make my world glow.

How happy I am to have tulips,
Their colorful sight to behold
They light my heart, they light my soul.

Bring me my gardenias
They are the cornerstone to any heart of gold.
They bring much peace and compassion
This I certainly know.

I shall water and nurture the flowers in my heart,
And in return they will help me grow.

A Call for Peace

Peace is needed in the world today.
Love is the cure to take the hate away.
We need someone to come teach us humans a lesson.
We don't need fear, we need progression.
We need understanding and respect for each other.
For our sisters and for our brothers.
Is peace possible? One may ask.

Of course! Anything is possible
We just need enough people up for the task.
The world needs modern day Mother Teresa's.
We need great educators to teach the next generation
A call for peace must be our new expectation.
We need to stop this divisive behavior,
So they can make this world more beautiful.

So, How about those Panthers?

Hahahahaha! There is something very comical about this story I am about to tell you. Let's start with this; I am not a football fan. I have nothing against the sport, it just never really was my thing nor did it hold my attention as a form of entertainment. Now, as a contrast to my life story, my boyfriend loves (I mean capital L-O-V-E-S) football, second to only one sport; wrestling. I mean if you would even consider that god-awful, brain-cell killing, horrendous activity a sport. Please people! During summer all I heard from my boyfriend was, "The Panthers are the best team in the NFL," "The Panthers are going to win the super bowl this year," "The Panthers have the NFL's most valuable player," and so on, and so on.

This is a man who's favorite color is blue, not regular blue, Panther's blue. He has loved this team his whole life.

If that's not enough, get this, his friends would tell me, "You better say goodbye to your boyfriend until February, because he is going to be busy watching football, playing madden, and keeping up with fantasies football." You know all the stuff you had no clue existed in the world because you had all sisters growing up. Well, anywho, they were wrong! I hardly noticed when he slipped away to play in his Madden League and so forth. So lately I have noticed he hasn't been very enthusiastic about this favorite team.

"So, Chris, how about those Panther's?"

Now not so happily he replied, "Hump, you know how they say you get what you pay for? Well, the Panthers let one of their good players go and picked up three rookies. They have to do better!"

So of course, I did what any good girlfriend would do in her boyfriend's saddest moment in life. I hugged him tight, start laughing, and said "that's okay babe, maybe they will make it to the playoffs next year."

Hahaha.

Goodnight.

Dassow, Ian

Ian has been a joy '57 learner to work with! He brings creativity to his stories and writes with a lot of dedication and honesty. He is a freshman here at UWSP, and during our time together we were able to get to know each other by talking about different areas and events on campus. Our first appointment we struggled to find something that Ian enjoyed writing about and actually found interesting. During one appointment we were able to go over some different types of writing, in which Ian selected to creatively write about the horror genre. He just took off with this idea and really came up with a great concept/plot for his short story. It was great to see him really be able to develop a piece of writing that he was passionate and truly excited about. He is my first '57 learner that has submitted his work to Wordplay, so I am very impressed, and hope he continues to amaze others with his writing.

Megan Fritsch

Axed

A Husband and Wife, with a son and daughter ages 6 and 7, are out on the open road at night. The Johnson's are on a family trip across the country and for them to cut down on the number of stops, they drive at night. As the car slows down and pulls over on the side of the road, the Wife asked "Is something wrong?" The Husband looks over at her and replied "Well honey, you were right. We should have stopped for gas before we left," pulling out the keys from the ignition. The Wife sighs and starts rifling through her purse saying, "Here, I'll call for a tow so we..." turning on her phone, it flashed signal lost "shit," she mumbled in anger. The Husband sighed and looked back at the kids, still sound asleep with their heads resting against the car door. Turning back to his Wife, he handed her the keys and said, "Okay, I know there's a gas station a few miles down the road a ways," opening the driver's side door he stepped out while awaking the oldest child he finished saying, "if I'm not back in 30 minutes, come get me, alright?" The Wife grabbed him by the arm and protested, "Are you sure? There's coyotes out in these woods, what if something happens?" She trembled at the thought of what might happen to him, knowing what he was doing was stupid and dangerous to be out alone at night. The Husband kissed her on the cheek and calmly said, "Thirty minutes hon, then come and get me. Trust me, I'll be fine." He shut the door behind him, causing the other child to wake, he began to walk down the road into the heavy mist.

The Youngest still trying to wake up asked, "Where is daddy going?" Before the Wife had a chance to respond, the Oldest asked "Are we lost? Is daddy going to die out there?" This was making the Wife's stomach turn just thinking about that actually being a possibility. "Could daddy die out there? Is that last ill ever see out of him?..." the Wife thought as her head began to spin and feared what will happen if that was true. She took a deep breath, letting herself clear her mind and come back to reality, she informed them "Your father went out to go find some gas for the car, he'll be back in a few minutes okay?" But the kids saw the beads of sweat forming on the top of her forehead and concern growing in her eyes, they knew something else was wrong. They nodded and put their heads back to rest as they waited for their father to return.

*** 20 Minutes Later ***

Both kids were back in a deep slumber, but the Wife had been progressively getting more paranoid about it all. Constantly pivoting her head back and forth looking around the outside of the car. The Wife was checking down the road seeing if her husband was heading back, and up the road to see if there was any cars coming that might help them. The more time she waited, the more she thought what their family would be like without a father. Breathing very heavy and rapid, she snapped waking up the kids hysterically saying, "Stay here! Keep the car locked, and your heads down. I'm going to go get dad," she contemplated quietly, "Its fine, its fine, its fine," then finished with "I'll be right be back." Slamming the door behind her she began jogging down the road in search for her husband.

About 5 minutes later, a bright light shined through the rear window of the car. The kids ducked down keeping their heads out of sight, just as their mother instructed them. Then the light turned from just a creamy, white color to flickering red and blue colors. "It's the police!" the Oldest said with excitement explaining to her brother, "They can help us find ma and pa!" Poking her head out to getting a better view of the cop car. The Officer emerged from his car and took out his flashlight to get a better look inside the car. Only spotting the kids and no one else in the car, he paused and swiveled his head up and down the road to see if the parents were near by. No one in sight, the officer walked over to the abandoned kids. Approaching the back seat window where the kids were, the Officer rolled his hand in a

circular motion pointing at kids to roll down the window. The Oldest understood and pushed the button to make the window roll down. Before the Officer could even get a sound out of his mouth, the kids started screaming, "HELP US! Our parents are gone, please find them!" He put up his hand telling them to stop yelling and calm down, which did work except for the Youngest who was quietly crying, wiping away the tears from his face. The Officer asked them, "So, do you know where your parents have gone off to?" The Oldest pointed up the road and said, "G-g-gas station." Confused, the Officer looked up the road and mumbled, "But there is no..." he hesitated, then looked back the kids and said, "Come on out and get in my car, lets go find them shall we?"

*** 2 Minutes Later ***

With both kids in the back seat and Officer driving, they approached the gas station. No cars, no lights, and boarded up windows. The place was definitely abandoned, and looked like it has been for quite sometime. The gas station had to be from the 1950s, with a very retro display, red and white, cloaked in rust. Some of the hoses from the gas pumps had been ripped off and thrown in a pile next to the door of the gas station. It was hardly a door, more a door frame since the glass of the door had been shattered and replaced with 2x4 planks of wood. The only thing that the kid could see was a dim lit lantern sitting in one of the windowsills of the store.

Sitting on the other side of the street was the kids and Officer in the stalled car. Shutting off the car, the Officer looks back at the kids still staring out at the chilling gas station. Sad, afraid, stiff... the expressions that the Officer saw in their faces as they sat, hypnotized, in a 'thousand yard stare' out the window. Turning back to his seat, the Officer looks out the window and noticed a shadow lurking within the gas station. Pulling out his flashlight he said, "Don't move, I'm going to go check it out." As the Officer exits the car, the kids started shivering with fear while the Youngest began to tear up. The Officer takes his first steps toward the gas station. As the door slowly creaked open, someone came staggering out like a drunk on rollerblades. "Freeze!" The Officer shouts at the person as he beams his flashlight at their face. The Officer looked back at the kids crying and shaking their heads from the horror that stood before him. At that moment he knew that the figure in the light was their father. Blood dripping down the sides of his face, as well

as a cut going across his nose to the right cheek very close to his eye. "Sir! Are you alright?! Stand right where you are, don't move," said the Officer to the Husband. With his left hand holding flashlight up and his right hand on the holster of the gun, the Officer took a few steps closer. The Husband dropped to his knees, extended his arm out, and tried to speak but nothing came out. He took one large breath and expels the last of his energy to a soft scream of, "RUN!" As that breath left him, so did he collapsing to the ground with his body slamming on the pavement.

A muffled sound of crying and glass tapping from the heartbroken kids in the car, was the only thing that the Officer could hear. He shuffled toward the deceased Husband and used to used his flashlight to further inspect the body. Once close enough, the Officer was startled by the huge gash in the back of the husband's head. He covered his mouth in discuss and turned away to hold himself back from throwing up. Staring at the ground he contemplates, "I'll call for back up and let them handle it, but I can't leave these kids out here. God let's just get the hell out of here." The kids watch as the Officer walks back the car. The Officer puts his face close to the window of the back seat, to check if the kids are okay. SMASH! The kids cover their heads as something came crashing into the window. Blood started covering up the bottom half of the window where the object struck. The Oldest looks up to see the Officer's body slide down the car door, but his head was still stuck to the window evaluating above the blood stain on the window. A loud ping was produced when the object was ripped out from the window and head flies out from under it. The Oldest's eyes widen when she saw a silhouette of an axe being pulled out of the window. Before the Oldest even knew it, the Youngest opened the door on the other side of car and tried to make a run for it. But as soon as he stepped out, the Killer was already there to grab him. The Oldest goes out the same door to find her brother repeatedly being chopped over and over again. The Killer stopped in mid-swing, he noticed that the Oldest is out too.

The Oldest quickly hopped over the guardrail, not knowing that there was a steep drop off, tumbles down rocky hill. Every roll she made, she heard the sound of bones cracking and snapping in her body. Once the hill became flat ground and the Oldest violent fall came to an end, she knew that her right leg and one of her right ribs had been broken. She looked around and saw a body lying stiff a few feet from her. Pulling herself with

her left arm, crawled over to the body and saw that it was her mother. The Oldest went up to her mother and held her hand, knowing this will be the last time she will ever feel her mother's touch. Cold and lifeless, the Oldest gripped the Wife's hand tight as she heard the crunching of footsteps behind her. She looked back to see the Killer standing right over her. The Killer noticed the tight grip the Oldest had on the Wife's hand, he chuckles as he tightens his grip on the axe.

"Like mother..." the Killer said's as he raises the axe above is head.

"Like daughter..."

Du, Hongang

Hongang has been wonderful to work with! He is one of the first '57 learners I was able to collaborate with, so we helped each other grow throughout the semester. Hongang has done a great job of stepping outside of his comfort zone of academic-based writing into more creative writing.

For this particular piece, I asked Hongang to pick a topic from our writing prompt box here in the writing lab. He did a wonderful job transforming the prompt "There Were Three of Them" into a creative short story. He has also made major improvements in using descriptive language and imagery to set the scene for his creative pieces. Hongang always shows enthusiasm and motivation in each session he comes to, and I am confident he will continue to do so throughout his academic career.

Breann Premeau

A Powerful Team

There were three of them who could make each other stronger. They were Bill, David and John living in a dorm. Bill was intelligent, but he was often lazy. His bedroom and living room is so messy that nobody wanted to visit his house. David is an energetic boy and he liked to focus on his interests. He never gave up if he didn't reach his goal. However, he didn't like to talk with each other. John is talkative and accommodating, but he didn't like to study and he played all the time. Although they had very different personality, they were best friends and they were one of the most power team in their school.

One day, their university launched a campaign about the environment called One Earth to appeal everyone to protect it. There were two parts of this campaign, knowledge contest and speech. David saw this campaign in campus poster and he really wanted to be competed in because he was a member of Clime Cool and he really wanted to contribute for our environment. He rushed back to his dorm and talked it to his good friends Bill and John. When David went back to his dorm room, Bill was building his city on his Ipad and John was making a video call with his girlfriend. However, when David said he had good news, they two stopped immediately. Although building city is interesting for Bill and talking with girl friend is important for John, they are best friends like three bears in We Bare Bears. The brown bear is wild and outgoing, the panda is rich and a king of silly, and the polar bear is a prince charming because he can do everything and he never complain. They are different, but they stay together all the time. Bill, David and John were similar to these three bears and they thought best friends are the most important in their minds. Bill and John

didn't decide to be competed in this campaign because they weren't interested in, but they tried their best to support David. David appreciated. Because he was a member of Climate Cool, he knew some knowledge about environment, but he was not skillful. Then, David requested Bill to think about ideas in speech because Bill was super intelligent and he always had good ideas. David asked John to lend some books from the library and ask some questions from professors since talking is the advantage of John. The next two days, David saw John had already lent books and given answers about his questions, but Bill was still doing their own things. He built his city and played guitar all the free time. David worried a lot because his campaign was coming and he only had five days left, so he asked Bill "Hi, Bill, have you already have some ideas? My speech is coming." "I know, there are some ideas in my mind. Please take out of a paper." "You are genius! How did you get this! I didn't see you think." Then, David had materials and ideas, so he began to focus on his knowledge and speech. During this week, Bill helped David any questions that David didn't understand. John brought food for David. As you know, David liked to focus his interest too much that he always forgot everything except his interests. Time passed quickly, David were well prepared and he went to campaign confidently. Knowledge contest was not a problem for David because environment was one of his interests and he prepared sufficiently. He felt very well after contest. The problem was his speech and this was only one concern from Bill and John because David don't like to talk and he was shy. However, nobody knows David looked for psychology professor to consult how to overcome fear in speech. It showed how much David care about this speech. The professor gave him some psychological guidance and some advices to avoid nervous. Before David went on the stage, his two best friends gave him "good" gestures to give him more confidence. He talked frequently and excellently, and people really enjoyed his speech. Bill and John felt amazing because they had never seen David's speech was so amazing. At the end, David was the champion. Actually, the champion was not himself. The champion was his team.

Gotz, Laurel

Laurel's main focus this semester was mainly on poetry, but also started writing a story towards the end of the semester. Her positive and peppy attitude made every session exciting this semester and there was never a dull moment upon us in the booth. I could tell she had passion for what she was writing and really put forth effort into it. She was constantly asking questions throughout the sessions and was always trying to improve her work. Each week, Laurel would bring in a new poem, along with a revised version of the previous weeks poem. We would talk about the current poem, and then jump right into talking about the changes she made to the one from the previous week. When she first wrote this poem, she knew right away that she wanted to submit it to Wordplay. This poem showed up at our sessions multiple more times throughout the semester, each time getting better, and the final product is great.

Michel Baumann

Fear

Looking down onto that calm
Sleek surface.
It doesn't look scary at all
To some people.
But whatever is underneath
Is what's most terrifying to me.

Slimy creatures lurk under the surface.
Squids, fish, leeches, carp,
And large muskies.
Anything could be under.
Waiting.
Lurking.
To drag me under.
And I would disappear forever.

When I was younger I used to love the mystery
Of what was underneath.
Splash and play.
Little fish swimming around my ankles.
I always had fun then.

That one day I played forever in that water.

But I felt a tug near dusk hour.
My legs were getting dragged under.
My face goes under.
Soon I will not be able to breathe if I
Don't get away.
I thrash and I scream underwater.
I feel a tug on my entire body and
I get thrown out of the water.
My mouth sputters out.
I'm lying on the sand for life.

I escaped.
I will never go back.
So I sit from afar.
Watching the other children.
Splash and laugh.
But I don't care.
I know that I am safe.
Away from the water.

Jakusz, Natalie

Natalie has a beautifully creative mind. Although writing isn't always her first choice of expression (she's also an artist), this semester has allowed her to channel some of her creative energy into words. "Oncoming Storm" is an elusive piece Natalie wrote towards the beginning of the semester. This intense poem is just one unveiling example of Natalie's immense talent. She provides just enough detail to stir imagination, like a storm stirs the wind, but leaves plenty of room for her words to affect each person individually.

Emmy Stirn

Oncoming Storm

You can feel it before you see it coming
The air changes, becoming more crisp and fresh
The wind starts to pick up
The trees seem greener and more alive

Then you see it, the dark developing clouds
The storm is coming
The wind stirs even more and the atmosphere darkens
Little drops of water start to fall

It's here
The sky is almost black with ominous dark rolling clouds
The rain comes down as if there will be no end
You see no creature, only the brilliant lightning filling up the sky
You hear nothing but the pounding rain and deafening thunder
The storm is here

The once light patter of rain is no more
Only drumming rain with unintended rhythm comes down
The rain is constant, giving its captive no mercy at all
Wave after wave of rhythmless beating rain

Cracks of lightning paint the sky in brilliant white
Low challenging rumbles of thunder respond as if there was a fight
Moments later the lightning is announced with its flashy anthem
Only to receive the answer of angry loud thunder, deafening all

It's Here

In all of the its terrible beauty, the storm is here

Commanding to be seen and heard by all, the storm is here

Silencing all other creatures, the storm is here

Stopping all time for its tremendous show, the storm is here

Ask for its mercy

Kubley, Nicholas

Working with Nick this semester has a been a pleasure! Nick has opened my eyes to new concepts and genres that I have never read before. One common genre Nick enjoys writing is science fiction, which is new to me, and I found myself enjoying his pieces immensely! A few of Nick's signature elements includes suspense, mystery, and plot twists that he incorporates into many of his pieces, leaving the reader wanting to know more. Also, Nick leaves many of his pieces up for interpretation by the reader and purposely writes so it could be interpreted in many different ways. Nick has definitely opened my eyes to literature I have never read before and I have learned so much while collaborating with him. I know Nick is going far with his writing and I look forward to reading more! I know readers will enjoy his pieces just as much as I have!

Abigail Wallace

Drama

I like drama of some forms
The dynamics of perspective
The thoughts about what each knows
And each plans
And each wants
And each does
It excites

I don't like drama of other forms
The strain of emotion
The thoughts about what each does
And each word of spite
And each word of criticism
And each physical attack
And each troubling implication
It pains

The story fascinates
The perspectives enlighten

The words scar
The cuts deep

Even when I am just an observer
The difference seems to be

Expectations of better people

Friends and family
Why can't you do better?

An organization
Seems expected

Politics goes both ways

Each with their privileges

And each with their mud

Each with their insight

And each with their digs

A story's drama can excite me

A life's trauma can torment me

And each has

In different times

And still does all the time

In excitement

I ask who does care enough to say

We must do what is right!

In sorrow

I ask does anyone care enough

To say *Please*

Can we stop this fight?

Cognitive dissonance exists somewhere

Between a desire to understand

And the desire to have someone

I can really call a friend

End Time

The lights are dim. A calm whir continues. I stare at the counting-down clock. It notes that less than a minute remains.

I hear my mother, "When that reaches zero, it will be finished."

I watch the clock with some fear. I don't know what is going to happen. As the clock goes down, it reaches the point where a few seconds are left.

Three. Two. One.

A beeping sound. The lights go off. It is dark. What is going to happen now?

I look towards the clock. It says one scary word: "end."

My mother reaches towards the clock. What is she doing?

I am about to ask, but then there is a click which interrupts me.

I look. My mother is pushing a button of sorts below the clock. Now, I smell something pleasant yet burning. My mother screams to the nearby room, "The popcorn is done!"

Troubled Tacticians

Since their youth

The two were friends over games of tactics

A difference of nation was an unseen distinction

Their friendship was built by the game

And borders made within

Not broken by borders made up before them

As the two became older

They could not see each other as often

But their inspiration did not end

They each sought to continue learning through similar games

In different schools

And ranks rose for both

In the larger operations

And when time came

They would meet for lunch

And laugh and play

As they used to

And would continue to do

Until one problematic day

The two had become military generals

Of their nations

But their nations wanted war
From ringing pain from that declaration
No amount of tactical training could prepare them
To fight each other
They each would wonder
Were they friends first?
To face each other eye to eye
Now to do so would be treason
But neither wanted either to die

.....
With a game piece held in sentiment
The two would seek a peaceful settlement

Loepfe, Travis

Travis has been fantastic to work with all semester. The first session we had I realized how strong of a writer and storyteller Travis really is. He has a unique way of putting a clear image into the reader's image. Something else that Travis does really well is leave the interpretation of a poem completely up to the reader! There is normally more than one way to interpret his poems which is always really fun to try and figure out! Besides his writing, Travis has been great to get to know throughout the semester. He always arrived at our sessions with an enthusiasm to go over his new writing. It's sad how quickly the semester went, but I have confidence that Travis will continue to write at a very high level in his future pieces!

Izzy Haugen

Scammin' Sam

Dust clouded the unkempt walkway of the city as motorist's vehicles sputtered to and fro. The chattering crowds on the street ignore the dusty discomfort, whilst trifling through shopkeeper's wares for modest discounts. Children clamber around shelves, scouting for toys to present as rewards for not throwing unnecessary tantrums. To the shopkeeper's dismay, the children's requests for his merchandise were to no avail. Each child was left a blubbering mess, revealing the frenzy suppressed since their arrival.

The old brass bell above the doorway clanked a sickly chime as the feeble arm of a man pressed the shop door open. The man wore a slate grey suit, tattered from years of panhandling and brawling in local pubs. He was slender, sporting a few thin grey hairs, which he slicked back with what seemed like his own natural grease. The man slinked through the aisles, uninterested in the products on the shelves. He scanned the floor, eyes shifting rapidly side to side. Parents ushered their children to their sides, giving the man aggressive glares. The shopkeeper's mood turned sour upon learning of the man's presence.

The shopkeeper balled up his apron, tossing it aggressively on the counter. "Not that goddamn Sam, not in my store!" He was always known for his cheery disposition and curled mustache; now he exhibited tomato like qualities. Like a bloodhound on a criminal's trail, he stormed through the aisles in search of the man.

The man overheard the outburst, hastening his search, until he found the perfect item. On the floor of an isle riddled with children's toys sat a fire truck, misplaced by a child who was stripped away suddenly. He saw his chance, heaving his long leg towards the toy. Letting the truck bear his

weight, the man began to fall, just as the shopkeeper rounded the corner to witness his slender body plummet to the hardwood floor. The shopkeeper looked on in horror as the man laid sprawled across the floor wincing in pain. He knelt down beside the man, tending to his wounds. The man collected himself and gripped his arm, spouting his intent to sue the store for its negligence. The storekeeper grumbled, he pictured for a moment the man was in a back alley and he was trading blows, but alas he knew he was beat.

The shopkeeper reluctantly dug into his pocket, pulling out a worn leather wallet. He tugged apart the leather flaps to reveal a small wad of pale green bills, thumbing out a few. "Third time this month, getting kinda greedy huh?" He grumbled, "Will this cover it?"

The man's brow furrowed at the thought before he grinned, pulling the cash out of the shopkeeper's hand. "Whiskey too, oh...and a bar of that Sunlight Soap," he pressed his nose to his grey jacket, "I am smelling something fierce." The shopkeeper nodded, walked over to the counter to jam the requested items in a small bag.

The shopkeeper thrust the bag out, "When are you going to leave my business alone Sam? I can't afford this shit anymore."

The man took the bag gingerly. Stepping backward he bowed in a false manner, pressing his way through the crowd of onlookers, whose faces showed a peculiar sign of disgust. Once again the sickly chime of the bell rang as the man stepped out onto the walkway. He rifled through his bounty, flexing his arm as though he could have been injured from the fall. Pleased with himself, he wandered back to the hotel he was staying, fingering through the fresh bills in his hand, counting for fun.

He was known as Scammin' Sam, the notorious con man of Bristle Falls; a tight-knit community of miners and shopkeepers, selling wares in old wooden duplexes riddled with chipped paint and crooked boards. Times were rough in Bristle Falls, most of its inhabitants regarded Sam as foul, with no regard for human decency. Often on his strolls, Sam had missiles of spit pelt him rather aggressively. Unaffected by the expectoration placed so callously upon him, Sam continued on his merry way. Even the hotel he was staying at had to oblige his request to unlimited nights from an incident involving some rats and a food tray.

Word broke out among the townsfolk that a dentist from the west was setting up shop. To think a man prestigious as he, would grace the presence of this little dot on the map. Bristle Fall's townsfolk had to travel to the next county to get their teeth examined, since the old dentist Mr. Robinson died

of complications related to oral health. Every conversation on the street murmured the famed dentist, gossiping about his origin, his name, and even the little intricacies about his stature. Women wooed over his false appearance, while the men mocked his perceived manliness, expecting this dentist to be a 'real fruit.' Children feared the rough battering often presented by Mr. Robinson in his dank dental shop. It was hard to find a child who would step willingly feet in front of the door, let alone an inch inside. They feared the same treatment would occur with the new dentist as well.

Sam overheard the commotion from his perch above a trash heap in a rank alleyway behind his place of residence. From the mound of rubble Sam was a king, slunk on an old wicker chair, with half of the intricate weaving degraded and torn. He ran his bony fingers over the coarse stubble protruding from his sharp-edged-jawline, smiling a pale yellow grin, which looked more like Swiss cheese than sets of teeth. He was ready to give this dentist a proper welcoming.

Days flew by and the excitement of the new dentist faded to a few short rumblings here and there. To the Bristle Falls townsfolk, it seemed almost like the dentist was a false story or myth. Anyone courageous enough to speak of it was met with hearty laughter and teasing.

On a particularly warm afternoon, atop the small hill entering town was a shiny red Cadillac. The sleek trim and the candy apple coating was foreign to this area. Most families sported old pick-ups or something that would be best left to the mercy of the elements. Purring like a well handled kitten, the vehicle approached the town, only a light trail of dust dissipating from behind. A crowd gathered around the parked Cadillac, shopkeepers leaned out their windows to catch a look at the commotion outside. Young bachelorettes rushed to find a reflective surface to check their appearance; some pulling vigorously at unwanted hairs or smearing on copious amounts of lipstick and cover-up. The young bachelors stood cross-armed with pumped out chests like combative turkeys. A man in a navy blue suit coat and beige trousers, each lint free and spotless, stepped out of the car. His hair was a maple brown, smoothed back with what one could assume, expensive oil; and he smelled of aftershave and cologne.

He cleared his throat, "I assume you all know who I am?" Reaching into his pocket, he tugged a gold chain with a shimmering pocket watch attached to it, "I apologize for being late, the roads here are awfully unsafe," pocketing his watch, he rubbed his palms together, "Anyhow, where can I

get some food around here? I could use a nice warm meal for a change," his southern drawl passed through the crowd like honey; women fanned themselves not only to combat the heat, but to display their fondness. An older woman with ashy hair and a bosom the size of a barrel took the hand of the dentist and ushered him to her restaurant.

"I'm Gerdie," the woman cooed. "I can whip up a meal so good you'll come back to put a ring on my finger." The dentist laughed nervously but followed the woman into the dimly lit building across the street. The old woman, shooed away the customers already sitting and sat the young dentist at the coffee stained counter. The dentist noticed he held the one spot that didn't creak or have any weird substances caked near its vicinity, he thought about how odd this was; perhaps it was cleaned for a special reason. He ordered a hearty meal, eating as delicately as one would expect from a new guest in an unfamiliar place.

Sam crept his way into the diner, slid himself into the seat next to the dentist. Sam waited for the old woman to tend to other customers before turning to the dentist beside him. He cleared his throat in a most annoying matter. The dentist turned to face Sam, taken back by his outward appearance, he reached his hand out to formally introduce himself.

"I don't believe we've met, I'm Dr. Conover, the new..."

"I know who you are, frankly I don't know anyone who doesn't," interrupted Sam.

"Oh well then my reputation precedes me," boasted the dentist, wiping his face with his tissue.

Sam began to fiddle his hands, giving the illusion of nervousness, "Listen Doc, as you can see I got some real bad teeth," he wrenched his lips apart, showing his gnarly teeth and gums. "Do you think you can fix this?"

"Hmmm... your incisors are especially rotten, they are almost as yellow as all that gold covering the others," he returned to his sitting position. "I should be able to reverse some the damage, come on over tomorrow after I've set up and we can check you out." The dentist smiled and stood up, tossing his suit coat over his shoulder, exiting the diner. Sam slinked out of the diner shortly after, returning to his rubbish wonderland amongst the rats and insects of the alleyway. Drinking himself to a blubbering mess, Sam wasted away the day, awaiting his trip to Dr. Conover.

The church bells chimed their usual hourly song striking four distinct chimes as Sam entered the dentist's building. The office was tidy, it smelt of chemical fumes and the hum of a Sinatra record filled the silence. The

dentist was hunched over a cardboard box, fiddling with its contents, occasionally cranking his body out to set the contents on the adjacent table. Sam watched with a certain look of pity for the dentist as he hung his jacket on the polished brass coat rack. Sam wondered if the dentist had any sort of inkling of his intentions, but now was not the time for a conscience to emerge. Sam had a plan, one that involved careful timing and risk, but high reward. His goal was to score the red Cadillac and maybe a few hundred dollars just for fun. The plan involved outwitting the dentist to “accidentally” dose himself with chloroform rather than Sam. Once he had the dentist apprehended, a frenzy of theft would begin.

The dentist finished his prep work in the office and ushered Sam to his work station. Patting the faded green leather chair, Sam lowered himself into the seat.

The dentist took a quick glance at Sam’s mouth, cranking his head to get a better view. “You’re gonna need this tooth removed.” The dentist began to bind Sam’s slender wrists to the arm rests, securing them with taut leather bindings. Sam began to question this.

As Sam sat bound in the chair, he began to perspire through his nervousness, “Are you sure this is truly necessary Doc?”

“Oh most certainly,” chuckled the dentist. “I can’t have you messing up my hard work now can I?”

“I had no intention to do that Doc,” Sam whimpered. “Now just let my arms free,” his lanky arms became swollen as he jerked his arms violently, causing his chair to shudder.

The dentist laughed heartily at the state Sam was in. “See here Sam, I was told of your terrible ways, well before I even arrived,” he dentist said as he tipped a brown bottle onto a stained yellow cloth. “The Shopkeeper paid me a handsome price too, you’ve become a real nuisance to the people of Bristle Falls.”

Sam’s eye widened, his pulse began to race, “You can’t do this to me!” Sam squealed.

Leaning towards Sam under the intense light of the chair he muttered, “Oh but I can Sam,” playing with the rag he looked away for a moment. “I always wanted to be a dentist, so I guess for now we will just have to play pretend.” Pressing the cloth against Sam’s face, he cackled an ugly laugh as Sam fluttered out of consciousness.

Lu, Jiawei

I have thoroughly enjoyed my sessions with Jiawei. From comparing cultures, to making linguistic associations, to discussing the irregularities of the English language—it has truly been a pleasure. I have seen him grow as a writer, and it is his commitment and motivation to his learning that has brought to fruition this academic research paper. As a first-year student and an English as a Second Language learner, Jiawei continues to surpass my expectations by his work. It is through passionate learners like him that the TLC continues to have the learning environment that it does.

Apoorva Sarmal

Racial Discrimination

This paper discusses aspects of social inequity by using information from an interview and academic research. The interviewee is an international student which is crucial as she experiences different circumstances being away from home.

I asked her, “did you ever experience some form of social inequity?”, and she said she had negative experiences to share. Her professor made several groups to study in class, and then one of her classmates told the professor that he did not want to stay in the group with her because she is from China. He said that he would rather work by himself. When asked how she felt about his rude behavior and inconsiderate remarks, she said that she felt upset and angry. I further asked her if she knew the reason why he did not want to be in her group. She took several minutes to consider my question, and went on to tell me that her English is not good enough; hence, sometimes she acts confused about some information relating to teamwork, and in her past group experience it was difficult to express what she meant clearly, so the group’s score was low. I asked how she would label this socially unacceptable behavior; her answer was definite— racial discrimination. She told me that she is an international student from China and her goal is studying in a different culture and gaining knowledge, she further said that she did not come to this country with any political biases, but the student who did not want to be in her group and does not want to be friends with her because of her race is clearly biased.

The academic article “Accent, perpetual foreigner stereotype, and perceived discrimination as indirect links between English proficiency and depressive symptoms in Chinese-Americans adolescents” expresses that some Chinese-Americans are easily discriminated against because of their

distinctive accent, and this discrimination can make Chinese-Americans more susceptible to depressive symptoms. This research is similar to what my friend experienced. When the Chinese people speak English, we have a distinct accent, so sometimes Americans are unable to understand what is being said, which may be why we are discriminated against. On the other hand, the article states that now the discrimination can influence Chinese-Americans' economic, social, and psychological environments and their development. Also, the discrimination is influenced by Chinese-Americans' race, social class, ethnicity, and gender. (Kim, Su Yeong P289).

Countries and cultures throughout the world compared with each other by income, job opportunity, education, and health. Chinese-Americans' accents make it more difficult to find jobs than Americans. This article states that the accent is a sign of being a foreigner, and this label makes Chinese-Americans easy to be discriminated against (Kim, Su Yeong P290). Apparently, many companies do not want "foreigners" to become their staff members.

My interviewee was upset and angry because of one of her classmate's racial discrimination towards her. Her English has some problems, and she also considered a "foreigner" so her classmate did not want to be in a group with her. The study expresses that Chinese-Americans will be discriminated because of their accent; hence, this is one reason why the interviewee made the classmate feel uncomfortable. On the other hand, this discrimination highly influences Chinese-Americans' development. Learning from the research, discrimination can make Chinese-Americans have depressive symptoms, which is harmful for their education, job, and psychological development. My friend's story is just a small example that exists when it comes to racial discrimination, but it reflects that racial discrimination is a serious problem for many international students and immigrants. In conclusion, I believe strongly that racial discrimination is unnecessary for a healthy-functioning society because it does not respect different cultures and races and we should strongly discourage this detrimental behavior. I believe that the government needs to develop English education initiatives for international students because English happens to be a reason why international students are discriminated against. On the other hand, international students also need to investigate the reasons themselves as sometimes some American students feel uncomfortable with some international students because sometimes they act insensitively which may imply that they do not respect the American culture or that they are being

unfriendly to American students. We all need to openly communicate with one another and eradicate racial discrimination from our generation and society.

Works Cited

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Mabbett, Tyler

It has been a lot of fun getting to know Tyler throughout this semester! I always look forward to seeing what new poems and ideas he will bring to each session. He has managed to keep me on my toes each week because the poems he brings in are so diverse. They range from thoughtful insights to lighthearted commentaries, to thoughtful insights in the form of lighthearted commentaries! He has a knack for eloquence and style that make everything he writes feel effortless and original, and each week he continues to improve! My only advice for Tyler is to never stop writing!

Jenny Peterson

Night

I was born in an alley and
The night taught me all I know.
My parents worked to protect the city,
Crime took them from me.

Leaving me their money and shoes to fill;
Raised by the family butler who
Tells me to work for the good of the family name.
My business helps the city I love.

I force my fear on others and
A fox helps me with my suit and vehicle.
My bird is my best friend and helps me
A clown killed my bird.

I visit my birth place every year with flowers
Will I die a hero?
Or will I live to see myself become a villain?
All I know is that I am the night.

Who am I?

What is Liberty

We talk of liberty and justice, but for who?
The government talks equity for all
But still judges a man based on the color of their skin.

The constitution says all men are created equal
Yet they needed to fight for the right to vote.
In order to make this country free at last
They are Americans fighting and dying in the name of freedom;
Killed for fighting for equity;
Protesting the actions of trigger happy police;
Using their guns more than needed.
How can a country be the most powerful?
But still not treat every citizen with basic rights?
All they want is equity.
All they want is freedom.
All they want is justice.

The Tree

I lay here in the dirt near the end.
Before you search for a new home,
Listen to my story of the dark times, friend.
The reason why I lay here rotten from inside is that
I watched people die for the right to own another.
Men and boys alike died at my base
Praying to their God as the light left them.
Then one day the fighting stopped.
No more the taste of blood.
People did not visit me for years.
One day as I was asleep they visited
Dressed in white with the red flower.
The ones in white throw a rope around one of my arms.
They put the rope around the one not in white.
Two in the group pulled the man up,
I felt his weight in my arm and cried.
The man struggled but like years before the light left
The group laughed and left the man hanging there.
This happened to me for years with each time the pain eating my insides
Till one night the pain was too much.
They pulled the man up but this time my arm broke off.
That was the last time I was used to hurt another.
The bruises have long since disappeared but the pain was here eating me,

Go tell my story to your new home, my friend, just let me sleep in peace,
finally.

Chair

Get your fat ass off me!
Thousands of people have sat on me
With smelly butts, big butts, and no butts.

Many who have sat on me
Smelling like something died in their butt,
Always farting so I have to open the window.

Big butts hang over my sides.
It feels like I'm a car being crushed by a monster truck and
All I can do is squeak in pain.

People with no butts are
Always moving, causing earthquakes and
Talking to others about how I hurt them.
I cannot deal with your butts anymore!
Your butt pushes me to the breaking point.
So once again I ask you to get your fat ass off of me!

McMannes, Claire

Claire has been a lively learner to work with this semester. She's creative and very funny, and this energy carries over into her writing. Time and time again, I've seen her creative wit when it comes to writing poetry. She is able to combine satire, play with stylistic conventions in fun and new ways, and give attention to deep meanings all at once. A lot of her material reflects upon common happenings in life, but she is able to present them from a perspective that draws attention to the subtleties and leaves the reader thinking by paying attention to concrete images. At the same time, she intertwines humor to add layers to her work. Her poem "Coffee" is a perfect example of these elements, as she takes on the typical conventions of a courtly love poem, applying them to coffee rather than to a person. Claire is one of those learners that is really looking to challenge herself at every turn, and I'm very impressed with the poems she's put together throughout the semester. Her attention to language and style and her ability to self-reflect has carried, and will carry, her to great places as a writer. With the energy she has, I'm sure we can expect a lot more from her in the future!

Melanie Snyder

Ode to My Love

Bold and Strong

Bitter and sweet

You can sweep any girl off her feet

I never knew meeting you would change my life

That you would make so much feel right

You're there at the brick of light

And the long dark nights

You're always there when ever I might need you

At first I never thought I would thirst for you

And now I don't know what I would do

Out of any and all it's you I would choose

You're something I never want to loose

You make me jittery at your sight

Without you I might go mad

And there's few that can have had that affect on me

When, in the morning, you're all I want to see

I find that you're the only one
I want to grind
And I don't mind what time it is
Just to hear that sound
The one I have found most pleasing
Making me more keen on seizing the day

You're hot to the touch
But I never mind much
I will always clutch you with all the intensity
I have before

With so many types
So many wonderful brews
There is only you
What is a woman to say?
You're the best cup of coffee of the day

Phones

Sexting, texting
All that may be
Can you even see in front of you?

See that car?
it almost shot you faaaar out
That bike almost hit you
Did you not even hear that shout?

Can you even count?
You've been on that for an hour!
When was the last time you showered?

Also -
No, that's okay I'll wait
Oh one more text? Oh that's greaaaat

Hey look - !

Oh facebook has more to say?

Dude did you seriously not look both ways?

You want to take a picture?

Ah, just for your Instagram

You just slamed into a wall

Did you really not notice at all?

Oh, is my taking interupting your call?

Dude put down the Snapchat it's not that great
JUST the mall

You take that in the stall?

The same place you go crap? I REALLY didn't need to know that

Sore

Crack

The sound fills the air

The stench of old pop cans reaches my nose

It's a general know that things get left behind

But these, these will be here past your time

Covering the earth

Diminishing the worth you sought

So caught up in wanting more

You left the earth with a growing sore

Writers **BLOCK**

A writers block isnt quiet a shock
But is like a cock block with a pen
That sends you into an annoying

s
l **p**
a **i**
r

Leaving you to stare at that annoyingly blank page for

a
w
h
i
l
e

Leaving nothing but **c Nfu**
O Tio
N

But you have to at least give the Illution that you know where you are going
with it

So...

Maybe just try to find a creative style that will stick out?
At least make it something that will count

Throw in a **C**
u
r **v**
e

And a **S** **e** **v**
w **r** **e**

or two

At least act like you know what you're doing
Keep them guessing at what you'll do next

Also make sure the T-E-X-T sticks out

So they will read and wonder what it is about

When really

You don't even know yourself

You're just trying to beat the pen to the punch

Even if you don't end up saying too much

Mullen, Casandra

Working with Cassandra during our '57 sessions has been rewarding. She comes into every session with a positive attitude and the determination to leave each and every session with improved work. Throughout our last several sessions, we talked about how descriptive language can make a creative piece interesting and fun for her audience. Cassandra made an amazing effort to incorporate this suggestion into her work, and I have seen improvement in this aspect of her writing throughout the semester. Her love for music and performance shines through in her writing, making each piece personal to her.

Breann Premeau

A little Place called Home

Setting: A young adult named Sally living in New York 1980's period in a big city home. She has a family including mother Tiffany, and dad named Matt. Sally is a junior at New York City University studying music theatre. The family is currently in the living room.

Sally: Hello Mommy!

Tiffany: Hi sweetie, what's up?

Sally: I wanted to ask you something about my future career.

Tiffany: Okay, ask away.

Sally: I wish to perform in musicals professionally and tour with cast mates.

Tiffany: Really, that's a big dream. Make sure you plan for it and save up money.

Sally: Alright, I will do it.

Tiffany: Oh and honey, I will always support you. Remember that, okay Sally?

Sally: Yes Mom, you got it.

(Matt enters in the living room)

Matt: Hi honey and Sally, did I hear some GOOD news?

Tiffany: You sure did, Sally wants to perform and get paid for stage time after college.

Matt: That's wonderful, I am a proud father to know my daughter has dreams.

Tiffany: Best part is Sally has a desire to perform for other people, right?

Sally: Of course. Always been my THING that I am the BEST at since I was little.

Tiffany: Oh yeah, I know when I had to take you to rehearsals for the Wizard of Oz. You made a great Dorothy.

Sally: Thanks Mom. I practiced many months to be perfect at the role.

Matt: I believe it. We will always be there for you Sally.

Sally: Wow! That means a lot to me daddy, thank you very much.

Tiffany: If you have any problems just let us know.

Sally: Okay Mom and Dad. Thank you for supporting me.

Setting: Next Sally goes to her bedroom and talk about her dreams. She has a solo monologue describing what she has wanted to do with performing on stage.

Sally: There is something I love about music theatre. The applause and singing makes me very happy. Also, acting as another character on stage makes me unique and talented performing on stage. Sometimes I want to be perfect at my career. Getting experience as I grow up is very important to me and my goals for the future.

(Matt enters Sally's bedroom)

Matt: Hey Sally, want to talk?

Sally: Yeah, do you think I am talented?

Matt: You betcha the million bucks. Very TALENTED indeed. I am AMAZED by your voice sweetie.

Sally: That's so nice to say, thanks Dad.

Matt: No problem. What are you up to these days?

Sally: Working on my songs for musical auditions.

Matt: Good. Practice makes PERFECT!

Sally: Your correct. I do better when I practice singing many times each day.

Matt: Yep, I agree. I need to go now and work downstairs. Have fun in your bedroom.

Sally: Okay, thanks. Bye dad.

Matt: Bye Sally.

(Meanwhile dad is in the living room working on the computer when Sally enters the room).

Matt: Working is not as much fun than I thought it would be.

Sally: Hi daddy, can I talk to you?

Matt: Sure. What's up my love?

Sally: I love you too daddy. I wanted to ask if we can dance to some music from the television.

Matt: Yes sweetie, Let's dance!

(Dancing around the living room to some upbeat salsa music. Matt spins Sally around in circles and dancing to the beat.)

Sally: This is fun! I love to dance with you daddy.

Matt: I love dancing with you too Sally, your very good.

Sally: Thank you daddy.

Matt: Want to take a rest in your bedroom darling?

Sally: Yeah I will go up there now. Thanks for the dance, see you later.

Matt: Okay bye Sally.

(Sally is in her bedroom talking to herself waiting for her dad to come inside.

Sally: There is something special about performing I really enjoy. The audience cheering and applauding makes me happy to be a great performer on stage. I love how the crowd seems glad to see me up on stage having fun. Someday I know I can be a really great performer and sing in many musicals.

(Matt enters Sally's bedroom once again).

Matt: Hi darling, let's chat again about something important.

Sally: Of course. What's up?

Matt: I wanted to speak to you about your dreams after college. Where do you desire to live?

Sally: I want to live near Broadway and audition for the shows to perform on stage.

Matt: Sounds good. Got any plans elsewhere to work sweetie?

Sally: Yes I do actually. Planning on taking a side job working for a music business.

Matt: Great, well done darling! I am proud that you are finding another place to work to earn some money.

Sally: Thanks Dad, I love you so much.

Matt: I love you very much Sally, always know that.

Sally: Okay, this has been a long road living at home and taking classes in college. Thanks for making it a good experience.

Matt: Your welcome. Good luck Sally.

Sally: Thank you Dad. See you when I am famous.

THE END

Perfors, Lacey

Working with Lacey this semester, it immediately became apparent to me that she has an imaginative writing style uniquely her own. This especially holds true in her short piece "Exam Anxieties." A lot of people write about the dread of homework and exams. Only Lacey creates a manifestation of those fears by constructing the external terrors to complement the internal terrors. Her story is thrilling, inventive, and a reflection on why it's important to study!

Dylan Couch

Exam Anxieties

The clock ticked incessantly reminding me of the inevitability of the exam. I was unprepared. The night before had been a blur and filled with too many bad decisions. First the stout, then the bourbon, then the whiskey. It felt like a well-deserved reunion when many faces gathered at the old elbow room for a round or two or six, but now sitting in my seat with a mind numbing head ache it was taken for granted. The contents of the class are becoming a blur as well.

The hands of the clock struck their usual position. Everyone had made it to their usual spots around the room. As my professor grabbed the stack of exam booklets his eye caught mine then winked. He strolled to the nearest student and handed the stack to be passed. I took my share and felt my stomach drop to hell upon reading the first question.

"You have the entire class period to complete the exam, begin."

Pencils scratched papers. I froze like a deer in head lights with the ticking of the clock growing ever louder. The ground felt like it was rumbling and I couldn't believe the state of anxiety I was in when a drop of my coffee decided to make an appearance on my paper. The rumbings were not my own.

Everyone in the class was looking up and around for the perpetrator, when suddenly the windows explode and chaos ensues. Large impossible creatures burst through the openings and tear all physical beings to shreds. I hit the floor as my desk flips over providing cover, but the stability is temporary. Screams from the back of the room pierce my ears as the ground starts crumbling and I see the dark gape encroaching on the edges of the room. I press against the wall with no escape. The floor eating itself away beneath my feet. Stomach dropping to hell.

"You have 5 minutes remaining."

My page stared at me. I stared back.
If my head wasn't so fuzzing I possibly could have passed that class.

Pruhs, Sebastian

Sebastian devoted his semester of English 157 to working on his short story "Last Night," of which he presents an excerpt here. In "Last Night,"

Sebastian provides us with an uncompromising look into one of those singular moments in the life of a young adult that sets the course for a radical existence. By artfully blending commentary with dialogue and narration, Sebastian depicts the subjective realities of a group of young people set on doing their own thing.

Cole Madden

An Excerpt from "Last Night"

Sometime later, I plopped down on a towel and watched Malcolm tend his newborn fire. Joey was playing frisbee with Will while Katie, Hailey, and Christina stood a ways down the sandbar smoking a bowl. I cracked open a Redd's Apple Ale, a drink I didn't come across too often because of the connotations it can have on one's masculinity, especially being from Milwaukee, the beer capital of America. Out here, though, those petty judgements could not mean less. As me and Malcolm talked about our plans for the coming years, people slowly assembled around the fire and we began to talk.

Christina surprised me quite a bit that night. Malcolm had always had a thing for her, so I knew there was something worthwhile about her besides her good looks, which is the reason I took her to prom, but I had never really gotten to know her too well. She impressed me.

"The way I see it," she said, "We've all got one question that our life kind of revolves around. Something that's the background of our existence even though you probably don't realize it most of the time". Holy shit, I thought. How the conversation ended up here, I have no idea. The pile of firewood was much smaller than it was when we started and the pattern of glowing coals held my gaze as I considered what she had said.

"Okay, so what's your question?" I asked.

"The common human disconnect. No matter how similar of an experience two people have, it's always gonna be impossible for one person to know what the other experienced because they're two different creatures with two different minds and two different pasts that made them the way they are. You'll never see anything in the perspective of anyone else, and it drives me crazy not knowing why."

I can't say this was a novel idea for me, but I had never talked about the concept of the human disconnect with anyone who actually put a serious amount of thought into it. I wish I had said something else, but I had nothing to say at the time, so instead I sipped my Redd's and stared into the fire as the rest of the group chatted in a circle around us.

After a minute, I wrangled Malcolm into our conversation.

"Hey Malcolm."

"What?"

"What's the one question your life focuses around?"

"Dude I've thought about this," he said staring off across the river. "I just can't understand why people are so willing to sacrifice beauty for convenience. Like the Glen Canyon Dam or that shit over there." He pointed across the Wisconsin to the lights of the Kwik Trip opposite bank. "Is it really worth destroying the habitats of thousands of animals and plants so we can have a gas station one mile away instead of two? What's to say a human life is worth any more than a mouse's life? It's bullshit. The only way humans, or the planet for that matter, will ever survive is unless we can live in harmony. It's bullshit! We're way too selfish and it's over for us."

By the end of his speech, the circle had fallen silent. Will was the first one to speak.

"So you're saying you have no hope for the future?"

Malcolm was starting to get worked up. "Not unless people understand how much we need this planet. Right now it's looking pretty bleak."

"Do you think there's enough people like you out there? Like, enough people to change the world while we still can?"

"I don't."

"Shit man. That's kinda depressing" Hailey chimed in.

Damn right it is Hailey. The way I see it, there's no way you can get the most out of your short time here if you don't believe tomorrow is gonna come. I think humans are in denial that we might not wake up every time we go to sleep. That's where religion fucking comes from I guess. But Malcolm isn't about that life.

"So what are you gonna do about it?" Will asked, clearly just picking Malcolm's brain for some more profound thoughts.

"I don't know, but my biggest fear is dying without making a difference."

"That's bullshit," Joey said emphatically. I laughed to myself. Only Joey had unspoken permission to call Malcolm's greatest fear 'bullshit.' "You can't die

knowing you weren't good enough because you don't know the effects your life and legacy could have after you're gone."

Joey could come through with some solid one liners every now and then. Thinking back on it, that night Joey reminded me of a movie I used to watch as a child, Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure. Just like Joey, Bill and Ted accidentally mastered Socratic ignorance, acknowledging that the only true wisdom lies in knowing that you know nothing.

As Joey and Malcolm began to bicker, I stood up and walked over to the river, wading in until the water reached my knees. I could hear the cars from the other bank as they drove by. I looked at the telephone wires to my right cutting across the skyline. Were there two sets of wires or four? Shit I don't know and I sure as hell don't care. I looked at the bottle of Redd's in my hand and began to get angry. Leaving my friends, I walked over to Joey's van and sat down on the hood and gazed at the stars. It's true, what Malcolm said, I thought to myself. I spiked my bottle, shattering it on the gravel lot.

"What is wrong with the world?" I said out loud, although nobody could hear me.

Breathing heavily, I walked up to the closest tree and started to punch it as hard as I could until I could feel the bones crack in my hands and blood was dripping down my knuckles. I waded back into the river, tears streaming down my face, and fell to my knees. The red lights of Kwik Trip reflected off the water as I fell asleep, splashing face first into the Wisconsin.

Reath, Robin

Working with Robin has made for a great semester! She is always so thoughtful in her writing and I love how she writes about true events that have happened in her life. Because her pieces are true, they are very relatable and I many times find myself remembering similar events in my past. Her piece, "Paradise," is both a memoir of her time on Sanibel Island and a tribute to the island itself. Readers can almost feel themselves on Sanibel Island while reading Robin's piece. I know readers will enjoy her writing just as much as I have!

Abigail Wallace

Paradise

Imagine a place where the sun is a little brighter, the sky is a little bluer, and the people are a lot happier. Where crystal blue water crashes on the shore of fluffy sand and flawless seashells. It seems almost fictional doesn't it? For me, this place is a reality, Sanibel Island, Florida.

I have been visiting Sanibel Island since I was a newborn. In fact, my parents lugged me onto a plane when I was only one month old to go. Most of my childhood memories take place on the island. We would go down there for months at a time. Every morning my mom would make a picnic basket full of delicious breakfast foods such as muffins and fresh fruit. She would then put it in a big tin and bury it somewhere in the sand. My brother, sister, and I would go down to the beach and search for it. Once we found the tin we would dig it up and have a picnic on the beach and watch the sunrise while searching for dolphins in the sea. At night, my dad would take us down to the beach with flashlights in search of ghost crabs to make their nightly appearance. We would spend the whole day on the beach, splashing in the water, scavenging for seashells, and making colossal sandcastles.

Every year, to this day, I attempt to crack open a coconut by myself. When a coconut comes right off the tree, it has a thick, brown outer shell around it. I hack at it for hours with various tools such as a saw or hammer, until I give up and have my dad finish it off. I still have yet to crack one open without help. It's always worth the work though, fresh coconut is unbelievably delicious.

My grandma always keeps track of the low tide schedule, which is when the water is at the lowest point on shore, exposing shells that are usually hidden by the crashing waves. Sometimes low tide is at 4am, other times it's a 1pm, or somewhere in between. Either way, we truck down to

the beach and look for shells. One time I remember finding the most breathtaking shell. We were walking along the shore when I spotted something big beneath the water. I picked it up and gasped in amazement; it was a flawless, vibrant orange conch shell the size of my head.

As I grew up, I could only come down for a week or two during spring break because of school. We still did the same stuff, we just had to make the most of our days because our time was cut short. This almost made the trip better because we could not take advantage of our time, so every day was a new, exciting adventure.

As the years went on, my sister and brother went to college so they had different spring breaks than me and we could no longer go as a family. The first year I went to Sanibel without my siblings, I did not enjoy it at all. It was just me and my mom. No one would swim or look for crabs with me, it was really lonely. I think my mom could tell I was not having as much fun without them so she told me I could invite a friend the next year.

Without hesitation, I invited my best friend Jade. This was so exciting because I never had a friend come on vacation with me. It was so fun being able to show her around the island-she instantly fell in love with it as well. This was also the year I had my license so we could drive the convertible around the island and explore. We found so many hidden gems I never knew about: hidden beaches, cute boutiques, coffee shops, and best of all a vegan cafe. I introduced Jade to all of our traditions such as the ghost crabs and cracking open a coconut. We also started some of our own traditions; we would sneak into the pool down the street late at night, have midnight picnics, and also discovered a local farmer's market. Every year since, Jade has come to Florida with me.

It is always the highlight of my year. As soon as I get back home from Sanibel, I look forward to going back. It is so nice to get away from school and stress and have no worries at all. I long to lay on the warm sand, listening to the seagulls chirp and the waves crash. If I ever feel overwhelmed or stressed, I close my eyes and imagine I'm back on the island.

Summers, Elizabeth

During each and every session this semester, Liz reminded me why working with '57 learners is the best part of my job. Her superb command of the written word allows her to convey with surpassing ability the pain and the beauty of love, loss, and human nature. We all experience these things at some point in our life, and it's writers like Liz that bring those experiences out of the shadows - allow us to reflect on them, to heal, and to move forward. In *Truth is I* - one of my favorite works of prose, and not just from the '57 series - you will see how Liz uses alliteration and flow and suck her readers in. Each line may be complex in meaning, but reading them is effortless; yet another testament to Liz's powerful command of prose. In fact, it often felt like Liz was inspiring me to be a better writer, rather than the other way around. I have no doubt that this amazing wordsmith will impress you as she has me.

Abby LaRonge

Truth is I

Truth is I'm a lonely insomniac,
borderline psychopath
intellectual bad at math.
Still can't figure out that 1+1
doesn't equal you & I.
Long talks all end with a sigh.
My stomach flutters when I stutter and my kneecaps get weak
behind these kneecaps lie the secrets that I choose to not speak;
sentences sentenced behind the bars of my teeth.

These days I haven't felt like me.
I've been having an affair with my dreams
and I think I love them more than consciousness
Cuz I can't tell if consciousness is really consciousness,
my conscience says be cautious.
It makes me nauseous to be too nostalgic,
But here I lie in these empty sheets
staring blankly in the distance
too cold to speak.

Too still to chief.
White clouds release lost souls while our souls are still inside of us
Unrequited love is cyanide lust.
In God we trust,
Mother Mary married Mother Nature

Is that nature or nurture
Everyone has their own torture
And everyone has sinned.

Wilcox, Taylor

Taylor has a knack for writing and this was clear to me the very first time we met in the booth. Over the course of this semester, she consistently brought to the table enthusiasm for discussion and a desire to inspect the intertwining elements of her story. The following excerpt exhibits many of the strengths that I admire about Taylor's writing; she demonstrates attention to detail, consideration for her characters, and a willingness to step outside of the box. Collaborating with Taylor was a joy and I am thrilled to invite you to read her work. Enjoy!

Morgan Brinkman

A Lost Cause

Red threads for passion and a hint of orange for romance. Fleur stuffed the color coded fabrics and papers into a leather bag which was stamped with a heart-shaped sigil for the Goddess Erzulie. Sunlight poured through the windows and danced against a rainbow of glass containers arranged atop a dusty bookcase. The heat turned the air into thick molasses and made sweat roll down the curves of Fleur's dark, freckled cheeks.

She brought the bag closer to her face, inspecting the ingredients she had already stuffed inside. It was near completion when the store's patio door flew open, silence permeated by the panicked clattering of the wooden wind chimes that hung outside the door. Theodore Bartlesby stormed inside, his wide shoulders heaving as he wheezed for air. His square jaw taugth and thick brown hair tousled.

His thick, tanned fingers dug inside of his pocket and pulled out a red jewel and held it in front of his face, creating a rather distorted reflection of himself. Mr. Could-Do-No-Harm looked ready to pull apart the entire shop, while a shadow of bamboozlement clung to his shadow.

"Deo, sweet'hart," Fleur chided, "You canno' keep coming back here just because some boys won't let'cha on `der football team."

"You know that ain't the reason I'm here, Fleur!"

"Oh? Could it be for `dat beautiful blonde I saw with you earlier? Oh yes, what was her name again, Dottie?" She leaned over the counter and reached out to place a finger on one of the white buttons of his dress shirt. Fleur met his radiant hazel eyes and slowly dragged her finger up his navel, but he was too busy glaring at her with the fury of a thousand suns. She played with death as a young child and has waltzed with the Devil- he was nothing more than a cumbersome bull in her china shop.

"My girlfriend!- You said this'd be it, Fleur!" He groaned and dropped the jewel before he slumped backwards like a hunk of butter melting away in the slick Louisiana heat. "Fuck, she wouldn't even lookit' me... You even said she'd be all over me! Jesus, she called me disgustin' when I tried touchin' her shoulder. Again and again, Fleur, I keep comin' back, but yer' nuthin' but trouble!"

"It ain't my fault, first it was making yeh' handsome, then it was makin' o'der men less attractive, hell, if ya' ask me, it ain't my fault 'dat she don't like ya'- she just don't like ya', plain n' simple."

She absentmindedly picked at one of his shirts buttons, then looked down at the red jewel on her counter. The rounded ruby should've been overflowing with mojo, more than enough to woo any lover so long as the directions were followed as written. Theodore had never looked so distraught and confused, but Dottie sounded as though she were a lost cause and all Fleur wanted was the pretty penny that would be sitting in her pocket afterwards.

"What do you want from me? Y'tink I can blow some of my Great Mawmaw's ashes in her face and curse her infidelity? It ain't my problem, 'Deo. I work with 'de spirits, with 'de shadows on 'de sidewalks, and if you want more strength behind any of my work, 'den you gotta' pay the price." Fleur pressed her hip into the counter and nodded towards the spice shelf that was no more than an arm's-length away from her regular. He groaned, but obliged and allowed his fingers to hover above each jar.

"Dat one. Ah' yes," Fleur ordered and Theodore plucked the jar that was stuffed with dried frog legs. Fleur greedily snatched it from his fingers and unscrewed it's lid to pull one of the limbs out. Theodore grimaced and leaned away from her lovely collection. "So, you wish 'dat you could be together forever? Wished 'dat she loved you as much as you love her? You'd give anything for 'dat?"

"I-" He shifted his weight from one foot to the other while his gaze fell to his boots, "Yes."

Fleur used a piece of red twine to tie the top of the gris gris bag shut, confident that it could come in handy. Then she crouched below the countertop and pulled out the second drawer from the bottom and saw what she was searching for; a tribunal blade that had carved from the tusk of a wild boar used specifically for life-binding curses and charms.

"Oh, but why spend time with dat' snake charmer?"

"Stop that. I just came here to return that defective charm. We're done, Fleur."

If he wanted to get back with that whore, then she would make it so. He could have her for as long as he wanted. Theodore had slammed the jewel onto the countertop and turned away, his fingertips still kissing the jewels surface.

"We ain't don', 'Dedore Bartlesby, we're done when 'de God's have had 'deir fill. You want dat' woman? You want to wake up to her after givin' her a nice fuck? Fine 'den, give me your hand and I'll give you everything your thick heart desires. Give 'dis shadow dealer one more chance."

Hesitation was never so sweet. Theodore held still, then lowered his head.

"Do we have a deal?" Fleur held out her hand, elbow bent as though she could pull it away in a moment. He turned with brows furrowed as he put his hand into hers. She let out a low, whooping chuckle as she yanked his hand close and flipped it over to reveal the pale skin of his palm.

"A final deal, Miss Shadow Dealer." His words were enough for Fleur and she grinned while snaking her hand around to snatch hold of his wrist. His muscles tightened under her fingers, pulled taut like a tightrope. Ignoring him, she took the tusk blade in her left hand and pressed it to his skin. Theodore jerked backwards and tensed, fear filling his eyes like a man poised beneath a guillotine. Fleur pressed the tip of the blade to the junction between his thumb and index finger until a bead of blood formed and rolled through the lines in his palm. Her twisted grin grew while she dragged the blade from the junction to the heel and watched in sick fascination. Droplets of blood slowly formed along the split skin, but they were quickly drowned in a gushing crimson that stained his palm red.

"FUCK!" Theodore's voice was threaded with agony, but Fleur simply grinned, "-YOU are fucking crazy! You hear me, Fleur?! Deal's off-"

"Oh hush now, 'Deo. Let's welcome 'dem to our lov'lie home!" Fleur placed the blade on the counter top and grabbed the gris gris bag. With a loud howl, she drove the bag into his palm, covering the bag in his blood.

There was a moment of silence, not even a fly stirred through the dimly lit shop. All of a sudden, the floor under their feet began to groan and shriek, the bookshelves of ingredients clattering together wildly as glass containers rattled off and burst into pieces against the wooden floorboards. Theodore's nails burrowed into the hand she held him with, trying desperately to pull away. The curtains were yanked down over the windows,

making the room burn blood red as light tried to slip through the red fabric. *Chink-slam-whomp!* The front door was pulled tight, locks turning without the guidance of any hand. Then all at once, silence. As though someone had sucked away the noise of life, leaving nothing but a numbing nothingness that could drive a person mad. It was a damn good thing that Fleur already was. Then a shadowy figure appeared behind Theodore. It was gigantic compared to the large fellow and it's outline was undefined, twitching and defying an physical body.

"It's heeerrreee." Fleur trilled.

Theodore's blood created a gorgeous splatter mark on the floor between them. It would stain without a doubt and certainly draw customers attention if it was the first thing they saw when entering her little shop. Of course, it was nothing that a twill rug couldn't hide, no, nothing to worry about at all. She stared at the man before her, admiring how the shadowed figure emerged from behind him, a gaping hole where it's mouth should've been. It's voice was thick and sounded like a boiling kettle of tea that had steam whistling past it's spout.

"Sssshadowww womannn..." It's tendrils reached out, wrapping around Theodore's wide chest and curling like snakes around his biceps. "Doooo yyyooou havve a deallll for meee?" *Shink!* One tendril snapped forward inches from burrowing into Fleur's throat, only to be stopped by the soaked gris gris bag.

Theodore twitched, his eyes jolting from side to side while beads of sweat slid down his jaw. The hulking man was trembling, physically shaking and it caused a low rumble of laughter to ease past Fleur's lips. "'Deo here got me helpin' him in seducin' a charmin' lass." Fleur wiggled the gris gris bag before the creature, slowly curling her lips into a grin, "We gonna' need your assistance, 'nd I swear 'dat 'de payment will be sweet."

"Fleur- what in the hell is happening?! What the fuck is-" Theodore was scared and rightly so.

"Sew 'dem flaps shut, 'Deo, 'dis is whatchu' asked for." Fleur carefully slid her gaze back to the loa and gave it a twisted nod, "You be gettin' some time in some flesh n' blood, and 'Deo here gets 'de girl. How does 'dat sound? Hm? How's 'dat sound o' Loa of Lust?" The shadows burst out and quickly recoiled. "And 'chu get control during 'de night and you're under contract to make 'dis boy a man by wit'in two months. O'derwise we all be goin' to 'da Underworld."

"I get the entire moon lit nights? Mmmm how charming. Allright woman, you have yourssself a deal." The creature slunk out from the darkness a bit more and hooked it's tendril around the bag. It's hollowed eyes seemed to dig deep holes into Fleur's skull, as if it was trying to figure out what she was thinking about. Why was she doing this? Did this white collar bimbo plan to get what he wanted then scrape himself out of her life like a wad of used bubble gum? Losing interest, Fleur offered the Loa a careless smile and released the bag with a slow chuckle.

"Dat's fine suga', jus' know `dat you ain't nuthin' more `dan a bridge fer' `dis boys problem. Get him beddin' wit' `dat lovely crush a his so he don't need to botha' me anymore."

"Wittthhh pleasssuure." The loa hissed as it's inky black hole of a mouth pulled back into a splitting grin. It's gaseous body began to swirl and rise, expanding throughout the entire shop. A smoky blackness pooled over every inch of the lobby, then it paused as if daring her to recall the bet she had placed on the table. Instead, she looked to Theodore and saw him stiffening, his pale green eyes begging her to stop whatever she was doing. His grizzled jaw was slick with sweat and his dark brows bunched together in the middle of his face, showing an anguished rage- trying to break out of the mess they had created together.

For a second, Fleur felt a pang of regret for his damned soul, but chased it out with a rush of adrenaline as the rolling shadows stilled throughout the shop. The black obsidian clouds, all at once, rushed back toward Theodore as if they were being sucked in by some great force. All Fleur could do was stand and watch as Theodore was consumed in darkness.

Pain- it felt as though someone was in the tortuous process of peeling his skin away in long strips. Theodore's arms and legs spasmed violently as the black shadows pushed in through his mouth. The taste of smoke made his throat raw, but was masked by the sounds of his panicked gagging.

Why the Hell did he agree to this? Who the fuck in their right minds would agree to this? Well, other than the woman that was running the entire fucking operation. He could hardly even make out Fleur's stout, curvy figure even though he was positive that she was standing only an arm's length away from him. He tried to concentrate on her, as if the new focusing point could distract the blinding pain that was tearing his body to shreds.

Glancing down, Theodore was shocked to find that there wasn't a single scratch on him, just some curling shadows. He jerked back to look at Fleur again, wanting to tackle her down and give her one solid punch to her thin jaw. There was something in his head, something breathing. Each deep inhale it took trembled, as if it was anxious and excited all at the same time. Then his vision began to shudder in and out.

Fwoomp- Everything was black. *Fwoomp*- the lobby flickered back into existence with Fleur standing a tad closer than she had been before, head tilted and dark eyes glittering in what he assumed was knowing curiosity. This action repeated several times and Theodore's stomach twisted as a wave of nausea consumed him. He groped around behind himself, hoping that his fingers would brush against a wall that he could lean on during the violent process. Alas, there was nothing and Theodore was too focused on the mind wrecking pain that consumed him to realize that he was swaying off balance. He collapsed to the floor like a sack of potatoes, feeling as though his limbs had been filled with lead as he tried to understand the black webs that were currently winding about in his brain.

He tried to think of Dottie, of her chin length bombshell curls pinned back with a diamond lily pin that glittered like starlight. He thought of her pert crimson lips and how they'd break into a slight smile whenever she'd hear one of his awful jokes. The way she'd call him a doof and real hoot. Suddenly, something began to speak to him, it's voice dragging along the inside of his skull like a sharpened fingernail. Something inhuman.

"Sssso kind of you to invite me in, big guy." It hissed and Theodore audibly gasped as he jolted awake and found that a blanket had been draped over him in a careless pile.

He sat upright only to instantly regret it. A sharp, excruciating pain filled his skull and he could've sworn that his head would split in half. What the fuck had just happened? And whose, or what's voice was that?

"Oh good lo-rd, you ain't dead are ye' `Deo?" Fleur was bent over the wooden counter, elbows resting on it's surface as she waved a limp wrist in his direction. He followed her wriggling hand and then looked past it to see her hooded eyes glittering in interest. It felt as if he was some kind of experiment for her personal gain and he did not like it one bit. He stayed still and held his tongue, not wanting to make the deafening throbbing in his cranium worse than it already was.

Fuck- y'got a glass of water `er somethin'?"

Wyggle, Cassandra

Working with Cassie this semester has been fun; she is a learner who deeply examines each word she puts on paper. Every word, sentence, and verse was artistically chosen and placed in its particular spot for a reason. This led for interesting discussion as I was always intrigued to discover the deeper, hidden meaning to each poem. This poem, "Determined Struggle," offers two conflicting views on the life of a science student. The unique setting up of this poem, and every poem, impresses me greatly. Cassie is a successful poet and scholar that has a bright future in both the science world and writing world.

Katie McEachen

Determined Struggle

Everything is cluttered

The walls, the classes, rooms and streets

The apartment floor

The science labs

Nothing is neat.

Its all awry

The walls, the classes, streets and rooms

The apartment floor

The science labs

The world is surging.

Looking around,

It's all static sound,

Visual noise.

Nothing is neat,

As if my mind unwound.

Perception high

Environments buzzing, thoughts emerging

Educational sound.

It's hard to focus,
Difficult to engage
When looking around
Everything is unbound.

No matter the repair,
The second you turn,
Another wall breaks,
More Damage Done.

Look around,
It looks neat and tidy.

Chaotic organization.
Minds unleashed, yet bound.

Unfocused concentration.
Engaging is simple
Learning – fun.
Scanning the campus,
Everyone's united
...
it's Organized Chaos

Each brick laid
A new obstacle slayed
The second you turn,
A new fear burned.
Experience, Learning
It's thriving!

In reality, its hard to focus;
My world is cluttered,
And no matter the repair,
I break down.

Anxiety's Eye.

Look around,
It looks like Chaos.
In reality, is simple to see;
My world is growing,
No matter the damage,
I conquer all.

Tranquility's Mind.

Yang, Sunshine

Working with Sunshine this semester has been so fun! Sunshine and I both share a love of fairy tales so I was very excited when she started writing two different fairy tales this semester. Her voice reflects a traditional fairy tale tone but also incorporates a modern vibe as well, which makes the story very captivating. This prologue of one of Sunshine's fairy tales incorporates both action and suspense and leaves the reader wanting more. The week after submitting her fairy tale prologue, Sunshine brought in a set of poems called "Forces of Nature." While reading them, I became extremely excited because of how amazing and interesting they were! I encouraged her to make another submission because I knew other readers would love her poems as well. Her poems incorporate the four elements; each poem is similar in style but takes the point of view of one element and compares it to the other three. I know readers will enjoy her writing just as much as I have!

Abigail Wallace

Prologue

"Stand firm! Protect the royal family!"

The clashing rings of swords echoed throughout the palace. Screams of terror, fright, and duty voiced themselves through the people.

Outside the palace windows the houses and streets burned with an eerie green glow. People ran away, protected their loved ones, and fought for their kingdom against the monstrous forms appearing through the shadows.

In the back gardens of the royal palace, four shadowy silhouettes ran towards the woods. Three of the forms were children, one a woman. The pitch black sky loomed above them, the fiery glows behind. Upon just reaching the edge of the woods, the roar of another Lost One stopped them in their tracks. Standing behind them, barely five meters

away, the Lost One stood there ready to attack. Not backing down, the woman stepped forward ready to protect the young ones.

“Go! Run for safety! Protect your sisters!” she yelled before she charged the creature.

The three remaining silhouettes stood frozen to the spot before turning and leaving the woman and the horror behind. Only looking back once at the nightmare behind her, the oldest forged forward determined to keep her and the younger ones alive. The bright flash of emerald colored light illuminated their path into the woods before the shadows of darkness enveloped them.

Forces of Nature

Do not underestimate
the power of water
For water is as strong
As the fire that
burns you,
the wind that
Lifts you off your feet,
and the earth that
swallows you whole.

Beware
the strength of fire
For fire is as powerful
As the wind that
cuts you to the bone,
The earth that
quakes beneath your feet,
and the water that
drags you down to its floor,

Fear
the force of wind
For wind is as overwhelming
As the earth that
rains from above,
The water that
crashes down on the world,
and the fire that
burns in hell.

Do not forget
the dangers of earth
For earth is as mysterious
As the water that
covers its stolen treasures,
The fire that
leaves nothing but ashes,
and the wind that
blows all that you desire
away.



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the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point
Fall 2016