



The
Cross Creek
Chronicle

Spring 2018

Featuring Writing
from
Pinellas County
Schools

Cover Art by Ava Stykowski

The Cross Creek Chronicle



*Featuring Writing from Pinellas County
Elementary Schools' Students and
Teachers*

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computer generated.

Editors' Note: We are honored to present
the nineteenth edition of *The Cross Creek
Chronicle* featuring a fine collection of
writing from our students and teachers.
Thanks to all of you who submitted writing.
We appreciate your continued support of
this publication.

Become a Sponsor of the

Janie Guilbault
Publishing Center

Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Elementary School - Pinellas Park, FL



The focus for Rawlings has been and will always be to foster children's love of writing and assist them in sharpening their skills and polishing their craft as writers. From the earliest discussions of what would transpire at Rawlings, a publishing center was envisioned. This center would produce a literary magazine that would highlight the very best students' and teachers' writing from Pinellas County elementary schools.

The Janie Guilbault Publishing Center, named in honor of Janie who touched so many teachers' and children's lives through her gift for and love of teaching writing, opened in the spring of 2000 and published the first edition of *The Cross Creek Chronicle* in May of that same year.

However, we need your help in order to keep the publishing center running so that we may continue publishing the work of students and teachers from throughout the district in *The Cross Creek Chronicle*. Both the publishing center and this magazine exist in large part because of donations from people like you. Won't you help?

When you become a Janie Guilbault Publishing Center Sponsor, you will help assure the continuation of this publication and others like it in the future.

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Florida Writers Foundation, Inc.
 extends a hearty
Congratulations!



**to all students who wrote for the
 Cross Creek Chronicle project.
 Each of you has amazing talent!**



Florida Writers Foundation is proud to be a sponsor and integral part of the *Cross Creek Chronicle* project this year, and in the future. Our mission is to promote literacy and enhance writing skills, which we do by partnering with existing programs and initiatives.

Past recipients of grants from Florida Writers Foundation include the Sunshine City Kiwanis, Rolling Readers Program, and a writing contest for third graders at Belleview-Santos Elementary School. We are also proud supporters of a new reading program "Sit. Stay. Write." This plan uses Sally, a trained therapy dog, and her owner, Dianne Ochiltree (an award-winning children's author) to visit schools and encourage writing by children.



We invite you to join our growing list of contributors by making an online donation at:

www.FloridaWritersFoundation.org

or by mailing a check to our vice president:

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Florida Writers Foundation, Inc.



Florida Writers Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation established to promote literacy and enhance writing skills of children, youth, and adults.
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Dedicated to the Memory of Janie Guilbault 1945-1999



Janie Guilbault was born November 19, 1945. She passed away on October 3, 1999. Janie's childhood was spent in the small town of East Seatauket on Long Island, New York. After graduating from the State University of New York at New Paltz, Janie began her teaching career in Lakeland, New York. A few years later, Janie moved to Pinellas County. Her twenty-seven year career began at Ozona Elementary. In 1995, while teaching at Ozona, Janie was named Pinellas County's Teacher of the Year. Later, Janie went on to teach at Sutherland, Eisenhower, and Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Elementary schools. As Director of the Poynter Institute's summer Writers Camp and Coordinator of the Pinellas Writing project Janie created new programs, curriculum, and teacher workshops that positively influenced students and teachers in Pinellas County, South Africa, and districts around the entire nation.

Janie was more than a colleague of mine, she was my best friend. Together we shared our lives and most importantly our passion for teaching writing. I think of her often. Sometimes she is my muse when I sit down to write and the words just won't come. Other times she my strength when I enter a new classroom to guide a teacher or inspire a room full of young writers. Because of Janie and her dedication to writing, this magazine exists. She is with us now as we take yet another publication of *The Chronicle* to print in Janie's name. - Mary Osborne

Contents



6	Meet Cover Artists: Ava Stykowski
7	Meet Guest Writer: Eric Deggans
10	Welcome Back Writer: Chrissy Jackson
11	My Memory Box: Mary Osborne
13	Kindergarten Writing
19	First Grade Writing
35	Second Grade Writing
45	Third Grade Writing
59	Fourth Grade Writing
87	Fifth Grade Writing
129	Adult Writing
135	Autographs
136	Pinellas County School Board



Meet the Cover Artist Ava Stykowski

Ava is our 2018, *Cross Creek Chronicle* cover artist! As a fifth grade student at Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Elementary School, Ava's favorite subjects are Math and Art. She is a member of her school's STEM Club. Outside of school, Ava likes to be creative by making artwork and designing things like clothing. She also enjoys going to the beach with her family and hanging out with her friends.

Ava's original artwork for this year's cover includes an idyllic landscape of a barn and its surroundings. The scene was inspired by the location of the marriage ceremony of her aunt and uncle, which was held in a rustic barn setting.

Ava hopes to be an interior designer when she grows up. Her art teacher, Mrs. Anderson, is very proud of Ava's artwork: "I've known Ava since she was a kindergartener, and she has always shown great skill and excellent craftsmanship, but what really stands out is her work ethic and intelligence. She'll be successful in whatever she decides to do."

Congratulations to Ava for being chosen as this year's Cross Creek Chronicle cover artist!



And a very special *thank you* to her art teacher at Rawlings,
Mary Anderson!



Meet Guest Writer: Eric Deggans

My Journalism Life: Telling Stories Which Move People By Eric Deggans

I can't really remember a time when I didn't want to tell stories that moved people.

The earliest memory I have of putting that impulse into practice was when I was 9 or 10 years old. My mom had given me a cassette player with a microphone for Christmas, which allowed me to record my own voice. I spent long hours that winter break

pretending to be a DJ and a news anchor, entertaining an invisible audience with the hippest sounds and the hottest reports.

As the years went by and I hit 6th grade, I wanted to write so bad, I translated a series of comic books outlining the first *Star Wars* movie – remember, this was well before the days of home video, when you could watch a movie you loved in your own home – into a script for a stage play.

Rounding up a group of similarly space-struck sci fi nerds, we actually performed that play as part of a school assembly (guess who got to be Darth Vader? One of the coolest things about being a playwright is that you can always give yourself the best parts!)

Writing didn't seem that farfetched a profession, likely because of my father. Charles Milton Deggans had a regular column in the *Post-Tribune* newspaper, which was the largest local publication in Gary, Indiana, my hometown. But his column, titled "Deggans Den," wasn't a space where municipal corruption was exposed or the city's budget priorities were dissected.

Instead, his column was an attempt to capture the nightlife and social scene among black people in Gary at that time. It was filled with photos of cool people partying at local nightclubs, attending fundraisers, cheering on local sports teams – complete with shoutouts to everyone who was anyone in our little town. It was, quite simply, a space to learn where the city's coolest people were doing the coolest things, complete with a logo – drawn by my dad himself – featuring him in a cool pose.

It was also a column everybody seemed to know. I still remember a moment, many years later, when I was reporting on the syndicated science fiction series *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, visiting the show's set in Los Angeles for the *Tampa Bay Times*. The show's star, Avery Brooks, was notoriously cranky and difficult with reporters. But he also grew up in Gary, Indiana -- a fact I used to convince him to grant me an interview. When I stopped by his trailer to say hi, his first question – asked from behind a barely-cracked open door – was blunt.

"Your daddy write 'Deggans Den?'" he asked. When I said, "Yes, sir!" he smiled, opened up the door, and the interview began.

So with that example in my life, the world of newspaper writing seemed like a practical way to marry my love for putting words together with a passion for music and telling stories that might

move people. I had been learning to play drums since my freshman year in high school, so the decision made perfect sense: I would become a nationally-known music critic.

Part of meeting that mission, was to get used to writing on demand. Back then, I used to watch a TV show called *Lou Grant*, about an editor at a big city newspaper similar to the *Los Angeles Times*. Just a few years earlier, real-life journalists had exposed wrongdoing by President Richard Nixon in the Watergate scandal and forced him to resign, so crusading journalists were all the rage in film and TV.

But what knocked me out about that TV show, was the idea that someone could witness a fire or a news conference, take a few notes and then crank out a story about what had happened within an hour or so. (At this point, it took me hours just to figure out where and how to begin any story I was writing.)

Then a story came along in high school which really confirmed everything I was thinking. I was one of several students from across the area who wrote a monthly column for a small newspaper aimed at the city's black community called *Gary INFO*; my dad also wrote for them. But instead of doing the same old pieces on football rivalries and sock hops that every other student was writing, I wanted to try something different. I wanted to tell stories that moved people.

I found two guys in my classes who were the unlikeliest of friends. One was a tall, muscular African American football player from my hometown. The other was a pudgy, pale Caucasian kid who played in the marching band and lived on a farm on the outskirts of town. When the farm kid's father had a heart attack and ended up in the hospital, the football star spent every afternoon helping his friend finish chores around the property – taking two buses to get there and back.

There was a lot of tension between black and white people in my hometown back then. The city had elected its first black man as mayor years earlier, and some white people had decided to move away from Gary to nearby communities in response; they were unwilling to accept a black person as the city's most important official.

So this football player was taking a risk by helping his friend. And it was just the story that people needed to see, to help ease the tensions that were building around town. So I wrote about their partnership in my column, and got loads of compliments from adults who said they couldn't wait to read whatever it was I might write about next.

I was hooked. To this day, nothing moves me like knowing that perfect strangers have learned something, felt something or done something because they read or heard my writing.

My dream has changed a bit. I cover television and media now, because the world of pop music feels like it's focused on much younger fans. And I create audio stories for a national radio network instead of writing for a newspaper or magazine – filling a job they never had at National Public Radio until I got there: TV critic.

But my mission is the same: To expose wrongdoing, cut through hype and challenge the biggest institutions in the business to live up to their greatest ideals. And I do that, by remembering the mission I set out for myself back when I first fired up that handheld tape recorder in my bedroom 45 years ago.

To tell stories that move people. And, in the process, maybe inspire people to change things for the better in their own corner of the world.



*Eric Deggans - TV Critic
Biography*

Eric Deggans is NPR's first full-time TV critic, crafting stories and commentaries for the network's shows, including *Morning Edition*, *Here & Now* and *All Things Considered*, along with writing material for NPR.org and the website's blogs such as Code Switch, Monkey See and The Two Way. He also serves as a media analyst and contributor for MSNBC and NBC News. Eric came to NPR in September 2013 from the *Tampa Bay Times* newspaper in Florida, where he served as TV/Media Critic and in other roles for nearly 20 years. He is also author of *Race-Baiter: How the Media Wields Dangerous Words to Divide a Nation*, a look at how prejudice, racism and sexism fuels modern media, published in October 2012 by Palgrave Macmillan.

He guest hosted CNN's media analysis show *Reliable Sources* several times in 2013. That year, he also earned the Florida Press Club's first-ever Diversity award, honoring his coverage of issues involving race and media. He has received the Distinguished Alumni Award from The Media School at Indiana University and received Legacy awards from both the Tampa Bay Association of Black Journalists and the National Association of Black Journalists' A&E Task Force. Eric also serves on the board of educators, journalists and media experts who select the George Foster Peabody Awards for excellence in electronic media.

Eric joined a prestigious group of contributors to the first ethics book created in a partnership between Craigslist founder Craig Newmark and the Poynter Institute for Media Studies. Developed as Poynter's first ethics book for the digital age, *The New Ethics of Journalism* was published in August 2013 by Sage/CQ Press.

Born in Washington D.C. but raised in Gary, Ind., Eric has contributed as a pundit, freelance writer or essayist to many media outlets. The list includes: *The New York Times* online; POLITICO; AM Joy and The Point (MSNBC); *CBS This Morning*; *The Insider* (syndicated); *CNN Tonight*, *Reliable Sources* (CNN); *The NewsHour* (PBS); ESPN's black-focused website *The Undefeated*; TV One's *Unsung*; *The Tom Joyner Morning Show* (syndicated radio); *Washington Watch with Roland Martin* (TV One); *Showbiz Tonight* (HLN); *Hannity and Colmes* and *Fox and Friends* (Fox News Channel); and a host of public radio platforms, including KPCC, WNPR, WBEZ, and many more.

In 2017, he was named one of the 15 Most Influential Media Reporters by the website Mediaite and in 2009, he was cited as one of *Ebony* magazine's "Power 150" – a list of influential black Americans which also included Oprah Winfrey and PBS host Gwen Ifill.

He lectured at Harvard's COOP bookstore in 2017 and was named a distinguished alumnus of Indiana University's Media School of journalism and communications in 2016. He has also lectured or taught as an adjunct professor at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, Indiana University, University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communications, DePaul University, Loyola University, George Washington University, California State University, the University of Tampa and many other colleges.

Contact -- (202) 513-2755 (w); e-mail: edeggans@npr.org. Twitter: @Deggans.





Welcome Back Writer: Chrissy Jackson

At the age of three, Chrissy received a little red plastic-covered rocker and two books for Christmas. That was the beginning of her love affair with words. She can't remember when she learned to read, she never remembers a time when she didn't have a book in her hand. She joined Florida Writers Association in 2004 when she retired, was elected vice president in 2005, and became president in 2009. In 2007, she co-founded Florida Writers Foundation, a 501[c]3 charitable organization created to fight illiteracy across the state. Thanks to Chrissy, the Florida Writers Foundation has become a valued partner and sponsor of the *Cross Creek Chronicle*. Our heartfelt thanks go out to her and her organization.

The Youth of Today and the World of Tomorrow

By Chrissy Jackson

Youth of today emerge as the leaders of tomorrow. That historical cycle repeats itself over and over, yet it may never have been as important as it is today. Work as we know it is going away, leaving a question of what to do in the empty hole. How will people have a sense of themselves, have a feeling of self-worth, or understand their place in the greater society if they have no job by which they are defined?

Money and monetary policy are increasingly causing problems around the world. Enter digital money – the bitcoin supported by block chain. Most of us cannot get our heads wrapped around this “new” monetary system whose value on the stock exchange has skeetered wildly from below \$10,000 to \$20,000.

Our country continues to operate with a wildly unbalanced budget, plunging our heirs and the youth of today into a quagmire of debt which will consume them and their progeny for generations to come. The concept of cutting spending, curbing expenses, and increasing income seems not to be seen anywhere in offices of policymakers – as witnessed by a recent round of tax cuts.

Immigration is another issue which the youth of today must deal with in their lifetime. War-torn countries are bleeding damaged individuals looking for a new home. These are not, for the most part, people who are healthy and ready to work. These are people who normally do not speak the language of the country to which they immigrate, sometimes are malnourished and have other moderate to severe health problems, and bring a culture unknown to their new country.

Europe is home to an aging population, so welcomes younger immigrants, but helping these new folks feel at home is a challenge. The United States limits the inflow. Religious groups try to sponsor and help displaced peoples, but resources are slim.

In the past, the United States has been referred to as a ‘melting pot’ which welcomes immigrants and the diversity they represent. Lately, there has been a cherry-picking process applied to those wanting to move to America, where only the brightest who appear to have something of value that we want are admitted.

Racism, which never truly went away in our country – despite federal, state, and municipal laws to the contrary – is rearing its ugly head again and disrupting civil life. People are tormented, bullied, and physically assaulted, simply due to their skin color.

No longer will it be acceptable for youth to simply grow up and work for minimum wages simply to exist in life. Their life goals must align with global issues that will define their life. How are we preparing these young people for their future? Each of us needs to take responsibility for ensuring a global view of life is present in our homes, in our conversations, and that critical thinking skills honed with people of all ethnicities are part of life. Our future is in our youth, and their future cannot even be defined as it continues to morph.

My Memory Box
By Mary Osborne
Instructional Staff Developer



My cousin Flo keeps five decorative boxes on a shelf in her guest room. Each holds a variety of objects that one day will evoke memories for each of her five grandchildren. What a gift.

I have file cabinets, loose leaf notebooks, worn cardboard boxes, bookshelves and portable file boxes among other storage devices that hold letters, lesson ideas, cards, news articles, photographs, and assorted trinkets that only a teacher's cabinet would contain. Each tells a story; some more significant than others. Many of these items have the potential to become a written story. Every one of them guarantees it will evoke some kind of a memory-written or not. And for me, my file cabinets and loose leaf notebooks and worn cardboard boxes and bookshelves and portable file boxes hold memories I've collected over the past forty-years of my teaching career here in Pinellas County which by the end of this coming May, will be over.

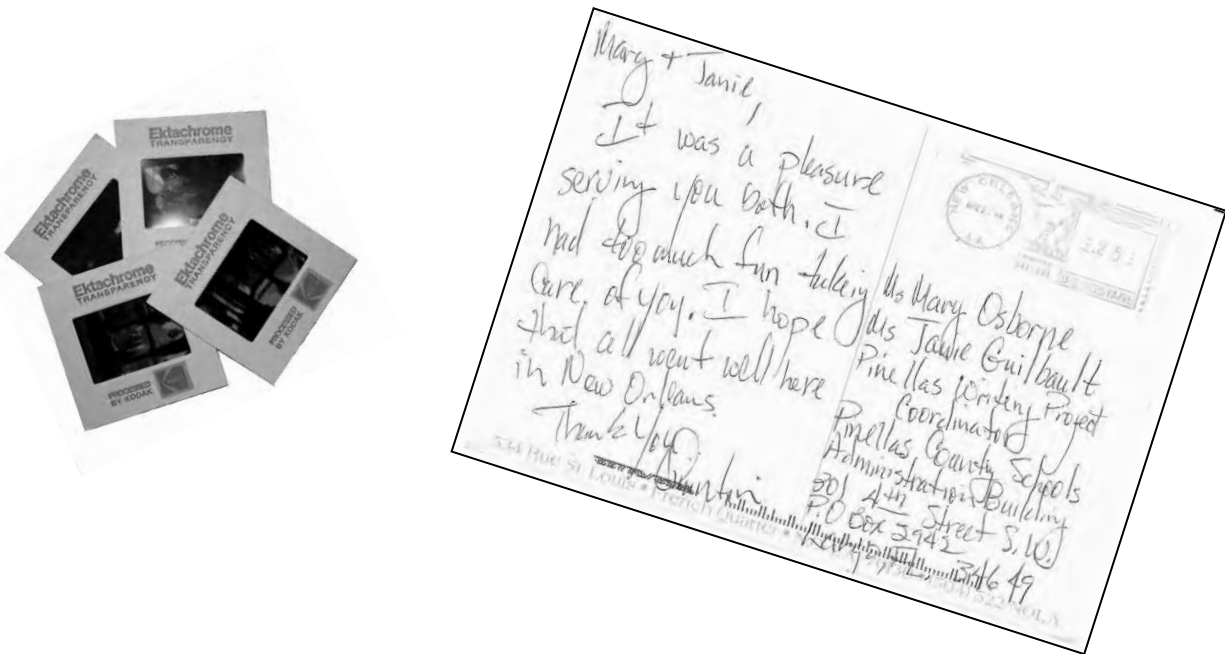
So if I placed the most meaningful of those objects into my own decorative memory box, especially the ones that remind me of Janie, I might begin with a pack of vintage slides, the kind that were slipped into a carousel ready to be projected onto a free-standing screen. The slides are of Writers Camp, the summer program I attended for the first time in 1983, my sixth year of teaching.

Janie and I sat in a small conference room at the Quality Inn on Fowler Avenue in Tampa. We were waiting for our mentor and friend Dr. Roy Peter Clark from the Poynter Institute, the leader of Writers Camp. In those early days we might have been considered "writing groupies" since we showed up anywhere Roy was speaking. So there we were waiting and waiting and waiting until we realized Roy wasn't coming. Panic struck us both. But we had both attended Writers Camp so we simply needed to tell the story of our experiences there. And so we did. As we neared our closing statements, in walked a tall, thin man wearing large tortoise shell glasses. Roy himself. "Does anybody want to see my slides," he joked. To this day he swears his forgetfulness forged our writing futures.

A photo sits on the top shelf of a bookcase in my cubby. It was taken in the mid 80's on a bench outside the convention center in downtown Baltimore, Maryland. Janie and I are smiling as we lean into one another in our thick woolen coats. This is the first convention I have ever attended. Janie was the catalyst insisting conventions such as NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English) were necessary in order for us to continually improve our practice as writing experts in the county. To this day, I can't tell you which sessions we attended or what brilliant speakers we listened to. I'm not sure that conference made us any more brilliant writing teachers either, but I do know it was the beginning of many mini-adventures the two of us took over the next fifteen years or so. Adventures that shaped our friendship. Adventures I never want to forget. So this relic would have to be placed right next to the pack of slides in my memory box.

On April 24, 1998, a postcard arrived at our office addressed to both Janie and me. It was from Quintin, our server at NOLA, an upscale restaurant we treated ourselves to the previous week while at a training in New Orleans. It was the only time either of us ever received a note in the mail from a waiter. He wanted to let us know what a pleasure it had been for him to be our server. He closed with a "Thank you." That thankful feeling was mutual because a little more than a year later, Janie was gone. So this postcard from Quintin, the server who brought us so many laughs during that dinner, would earn a special place on the other side of that photograph deep inside my memory box.

Years ago I read about Don and Audrey Wood, writers and illustrators of numerous children's books, and the ways they come up with many of their writing ideas. "Writing ideas come in a cardboard box," they said. And now, just like my cousin Flo has done for each of her grandchildren, I will gift myself by filling my own memory box with slides, photos, postcards and so much more I've gathered over the past forty years because like writing ideas, memories also reside inside a cardboard box.



Kindergarten Writing



14 Caiden Flounory

15 Josephine Boyd

16 Christian Gerard



17 Alexandra Arab

18 Sophia Raba

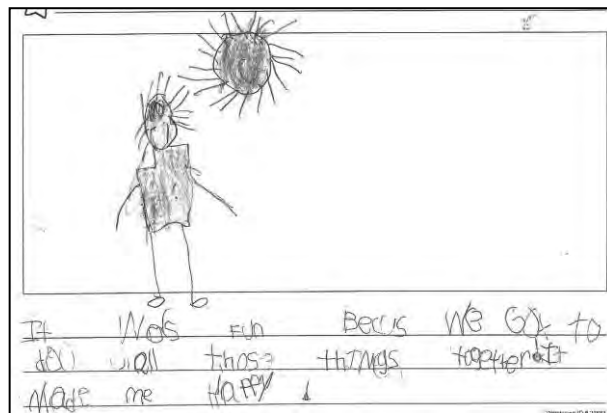
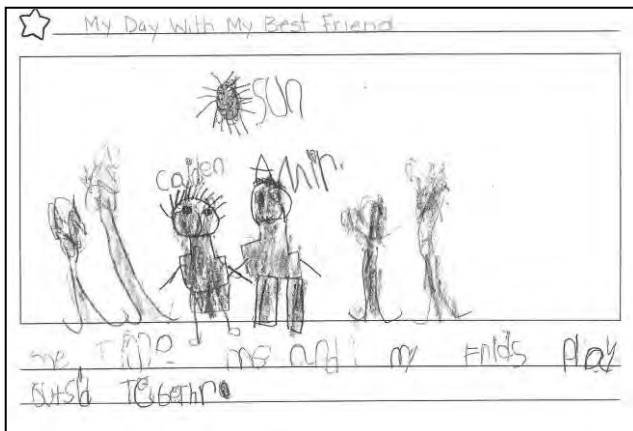


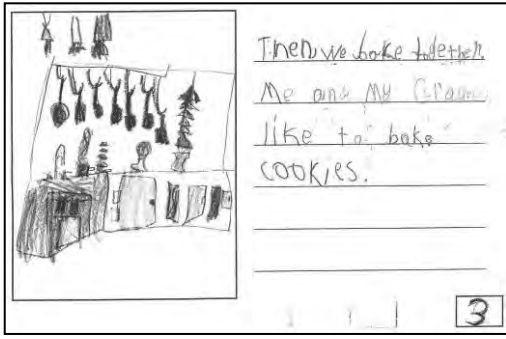
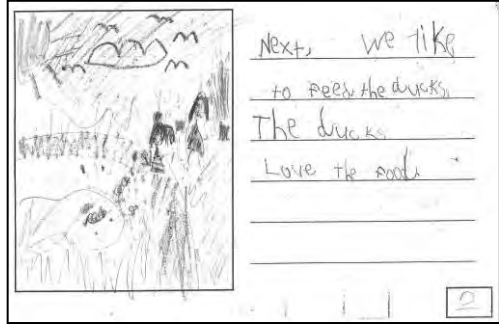
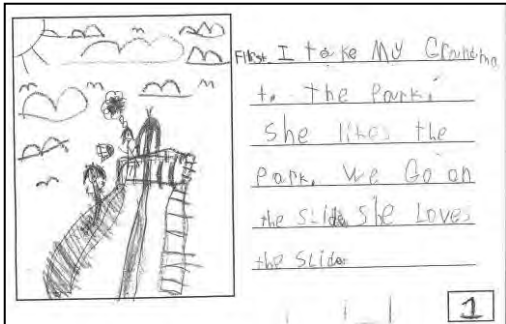


A Day With My Best Friend

By Caiden Flounory
 Kindergarten, Ms. Rhodes
 Maximo Elementary

One time me and my friends played outside together. First, we played football. Next, we played who can throw the farthest? Last, we played hide-and-seek! It was fun because we got to do all those things together. It made me happy!





Babysitting Grandma
 By Josephine Boyd
 Kindergarten, Ms. Walker
 Maximo Elementary

First, I take my grandma to the park. She likes the park. We go on the slide. She loves the slide.

Next, we like to feed the ducks. The ducks love the food.

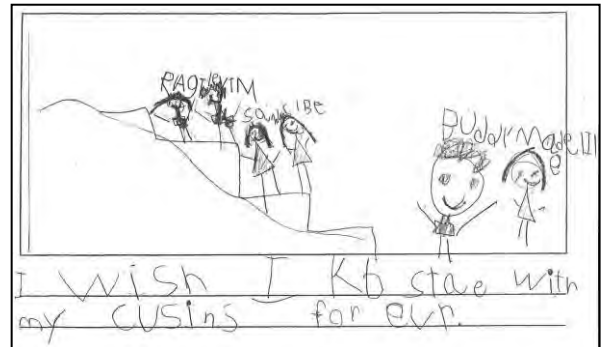
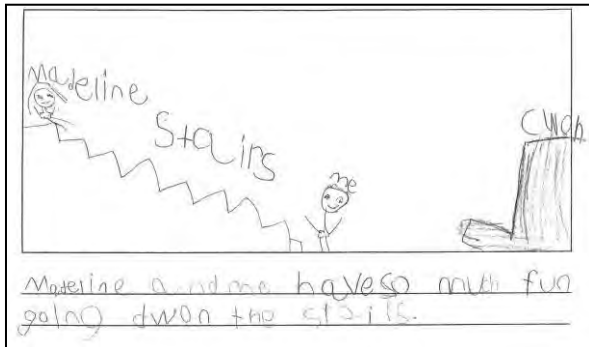
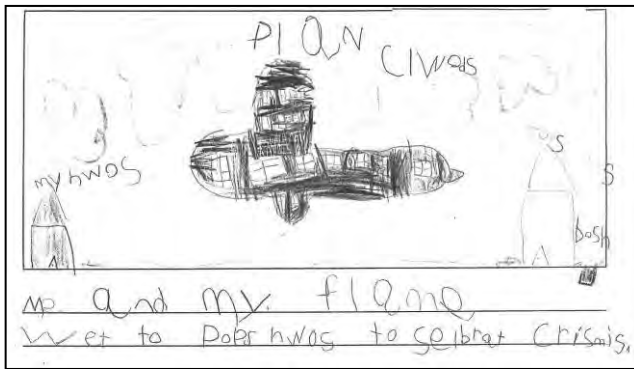
Then, we bake together. Me and my grandma like to bake cookies.

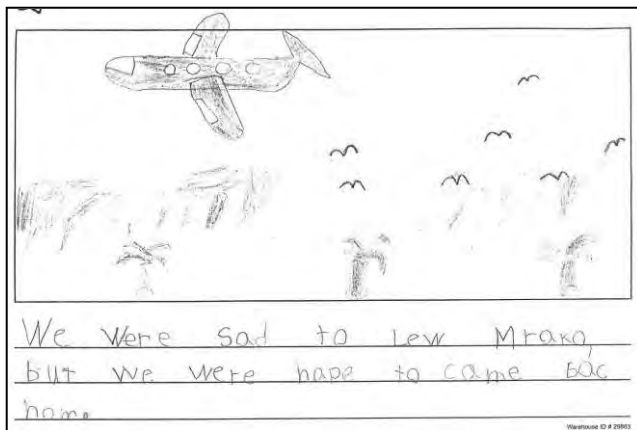
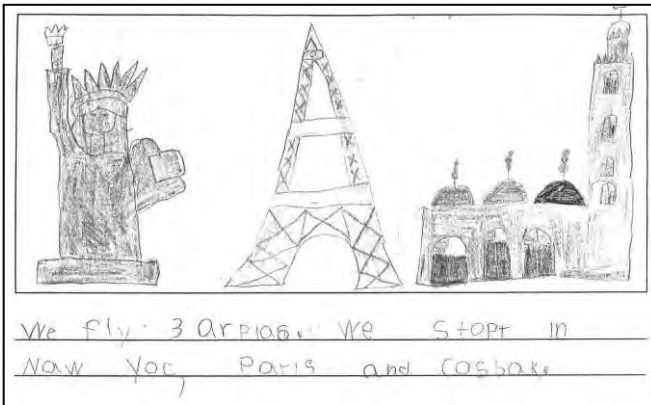
Last, we go to sleep. We sleep in a big bed.



Going to Papa's House
 By Christian Gerard
 Kindergarten, Mrs. Robinson
 Pasadena Fundamental

Me and my family went to Papa's house to celebrate Christmas. My whole family met there. My whole family had fun. Madeline and me have so much fun going down the stairs. I wish I could stay with my cousins forever.





Going to Morocco
By Alexandra Arab
Kindergarten, Mrs. Robinson
Pasadena Fundamental

In the winter me, my mom, my dad,
and my sister went to Morocco on
the airplane.

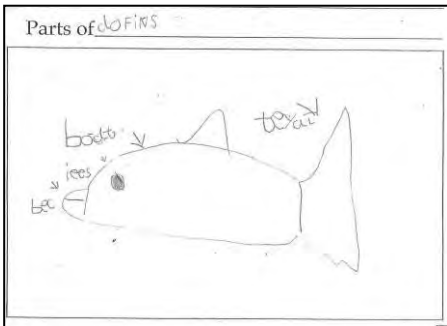
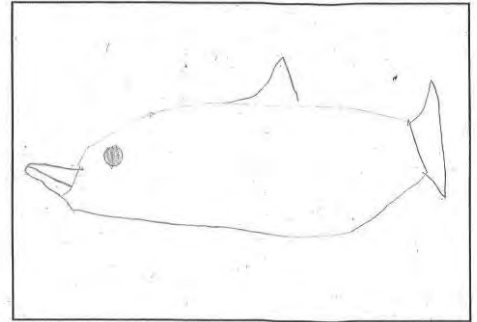
We flew on 3 airplanes. We
stopped in New York, Paris, and
Casbah.

We were sad to leave Morocco, but
we were happy to come back home.

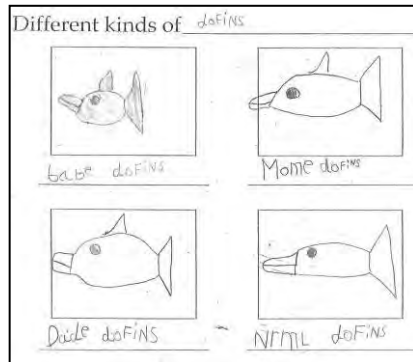


All About Dolphins
By Sophia Raba
Kindergarten, Ms. Horton
Seminole Elementary

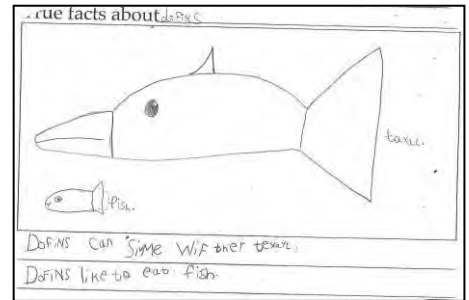
All About dolphins.



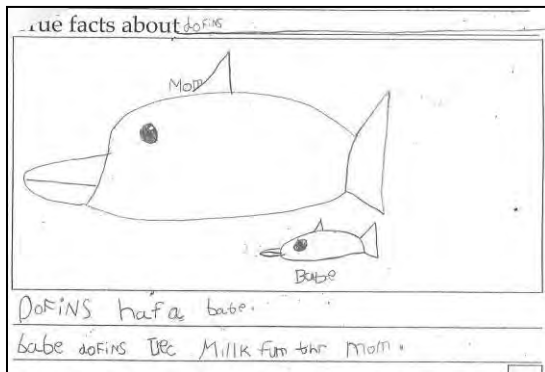
Parts of Dolphins



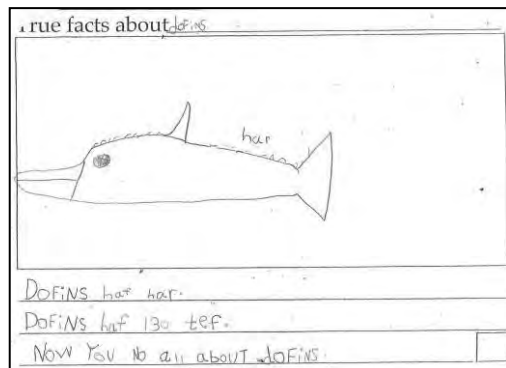
Different Kinds of Dolphins
Baby dolphins Mommy dolphins
Daddy dolphins Normal dolphins



True Facts About Dolphins
Dolphins can swim with their tails. Dolphins like to eat fish.



True Facts About Dolphins
Dolphins have a baby. Baby dolphins drink milk from their mom.



True Facts About Dolphins
Dolphins have hair. Dolphins have 130 teeth. Now you know all about dolphins.

First Grade Writing



- 20 Madalee Owens
- 21 Preston Nelson
- 22 Isabel Victoria Brvenik
Gabriel Lloyd
- 23 Kaimyah Spencer
Charley Eyde
- 24 Savannah Nelson
- 25 Rohan Rudraraju
- 26 Angelique Dixon
Mackenzie Rood
- 27 Melina Carney
- 28 Azriela Talisaysay
Davinci Parithammang
- 29 Jourdan Diaz
A'marriah Davis
- 30 Greg Tribiano
Ahmed Elsammak
- 31 Tessa Tiedemann
- 32 Avery Shaver
- 33 Emily Ramsdell
- 34 Finn Hehenberger



Table of Contents

all about Giraffes

1. What they look like?	1
2. What they eat?	2
3. Where they live?	3
4. Amazing Facts!	4
5. _____	_____

★ What they look like?

Today I'm going to teach you all about giraffes! Giraffes have big legs and giraffes have long neck too! Some giraffes have white and brown on their body.

★ What they eat?

Giraffes eat fresh leaves that grow on trees. The giraffe's long black tongue helps it pull leaves off tree branches.

★ Where they live?

Giraffes live in places where it is hot like the savannas of Africa. They need trees for food to eat to live. They also need to live in places where there is water.

★ Amazing Facts!

Giraffes are the tallest animal on land. Giraffes neck are really long and there legs are also long too! Now you know all about giraffes!

All About Giraffes
By Madalee Owens
Grade 1, Mrs. Dave
Gulf Beaches Elementary

What They Look Like?

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Amazing Facts!


Giraffes are the tallest animals on land. Giraffes' necks are really long and their legs are really long too! Now you know all about giraffes.

Read a Book or Write a story?



BOB

Read a book or write a story which one will I choose? In my opinion writing a story is the best choice for me. First, because I like to write. I can make up my own stories. It could be happy, sad or even scary. Second, because I would create

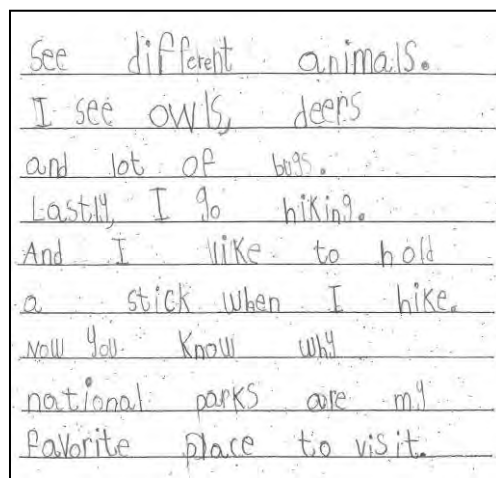
SALLY

my own characters like Bob the person and Sally the news anchor! My last and final reason is because you can make your own setting like outside or inside, beach or school and at home or the park. Read a book or write a story which one will you choose?

Read a Book or Write a Story?

By Preston Nelson
Grade 1, Mrs. Simon
Maximo Elementary

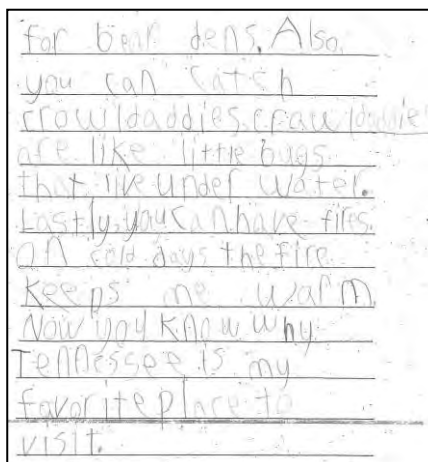
Read a book or write a story-which one will I choose? In my opinion writing a story is the best choice for me. First, because I like to write. I can make up my own stories. It could be happy, sad, or even scary. Second, because I would create my own characters like Bob the person and Sally the news anchor! My last and final reason is because you can make your own setting like outside or inside, beach or school and at home or the park. Read a book or write a story-which one will you choose?



National Parks

By Isabel Victoria Brvenik
Grade 1, Mrs. Bodolay
Tarpon Springs Fundamental

In my opinion the best place to visit is a national park. One reason is I like to see nature. It is beautiful. Also I see different animals. I see owls, deer, and a lot of bugs. Lastly, I go hiking. And I like to hold a stick when I hike. Now you know why national parks are my favorite place to visit.



Trip to Tennessee

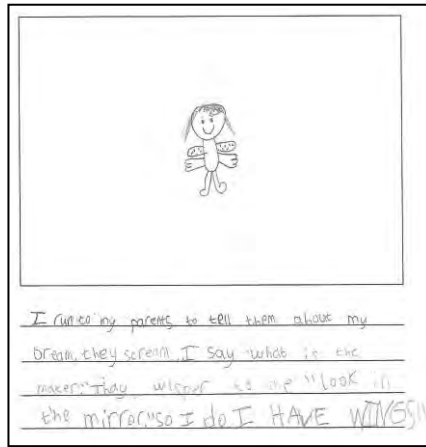
By Gabriel Lloyd
Grade 1, Teresa Bodolay
Tarpon Springs Fundamental

In my opinion, Tennessee is the best place to visit. One reason is you can go hiking, it is really fun to look for bear dens. Also, you can catch crowdaddies. Crowdaddies are like little bugs that live under the water. Lastly, you can have fires. On cold days the fire keeps me warm. Now you know why Tennessee is my favorite place to visit.



My Favorite Hero
 By Kaimyah Spencer
 Grade 1, Miss Logsdon
 Rawlings Elementary

My favorite hero in the world is my dog Frosty. He is a very brave dog-my favorite dog in the world. A big dog bit him. Next he ran to safety. He went to the vet and she fixed him. Last, he is all better now. I like taking him for walks. I love my dog!



Wings
 By Charley Eyde
 Grade 1, Ms. Parsons/Ms. Cate
 Douglas L. Jamerson Elementary

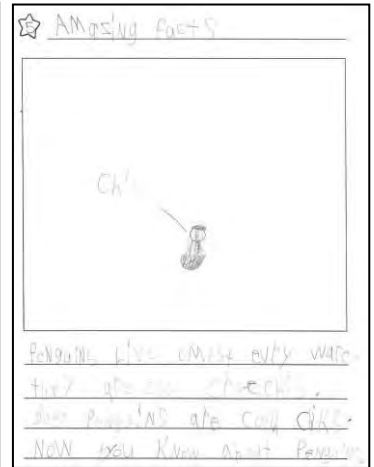
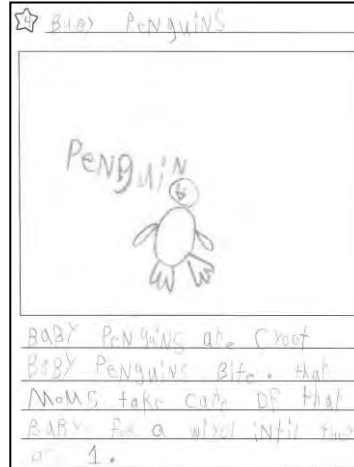
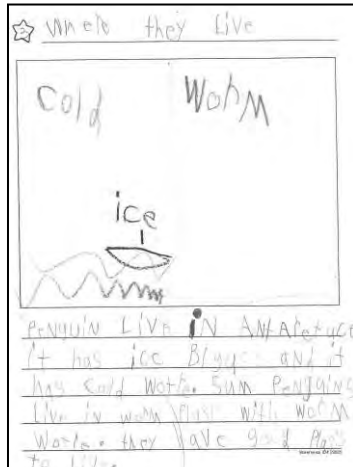
I grew wings. My wings were blue and sparkly. I like my wings. My parents say I am a fairy. It is very hard to sleep with wings because they are so delicate. I do not have friends. They make fun of me and my wings. Finally, I wake up. I say, "That was the best dream ever!" I run to my parents to tell them about my dream. They scream. I say, "What is the matter?" They whisper to me, "Look in the mirror." So, I do. I HAVE WINGS!!!!



Table of Contents

All About Penguin

1. What they look like	1
2. What they eat	2
3. Where they live	3
4. Baby Penguin	4
5. Amazing Facts	5



All About Penguins
 By Savannah Nelson
 Grade 1, Mrs. Dave
 Gulf Beaches Elementary

What penguins look like...

Did you know that penguins have an oval belly? They have webbed feet. The webbed feet help them step.

What they eat...

Penguins have wings but they can't fly. Penguins eat fish and seals eat penguins. Seals are the worst enemies to penguins. Penguins also eat squid. Penguins have beaks to chew.

Where they live...

Penguins live in Antarctica. It has icebergs and it has cold water. Some penguins live in warm places with warm water. They have good places to live.

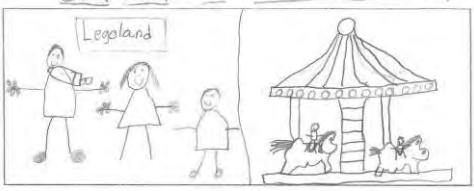
Baby Penguins...

Baby penguins are cute. Baby penguins bite. Their moms take care of their babies for a while until they are 1.

Amazing facts...

Penguins live almost everywhere. They are cool creatures. Baby penguins are called chicks. Now you know about penguins.

OUR TRIP TO LEGOLAND!!!



My mom, dad, and me went to Legoland. We took pictures with Lego structures like dinosaurs, pumpkins, jack-o-lanterns, and Emmet and Wyldstyle. I went on a carousel ride. Next, we saw a really cool city completely made of Legos. There were cars, boats, people, houses, and the Statue of Liberty made of Legos.



OUR TRIP TO LEGOLAND!!!

By Rohan Rudraraju
Grade 1, Ms. Carmela Fowler
Ridgecrest Elementary

My mom, dad, and I went to LEGOLAND. We took pictures with Lego structures like dinosaurs, pumpkins, jack-o-lanterns, and Emmet and Wyldstyle. I went on a carousel ride. Next, we saw a really cool city completely made of Legos. There were cars, boats, people, houses, and the Statue of Liberty made of Legos. Then we ate pizza and pasta at a restaurant. After that, we went to a water park at LEGOLAND. We went into a swimming pool that had waves. I had a lot of fun at LEGOLAND.

Restaurant

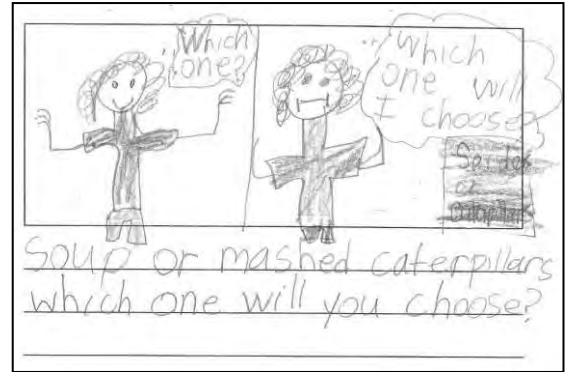


Then we ate pizza and pasta at a restaurant. After that, we went to a water park in Legoland. We went into a swimming pool that had waves. I had a lot of fun at Legoland.





Spider Soup or Mashed Caterpillars?
 Mashed potatoes = 3 Mashed Caterpillars
 Would you rather... eat spider soup or mashed caterpillars GROSS! If I had to choose I'd choose to eat the mashed caterpillars. I wouldn't eat spider soup because spiders bite. A spider could bite your tongue. Maybe mashed caterpillars would be smooth like mashed potatoes. Spider

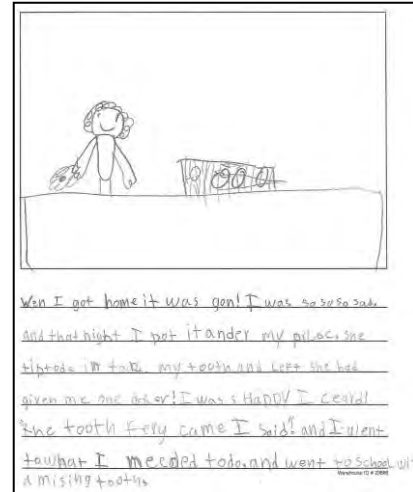


Spider Soup or Mashed Caterpillars?
 By Angelique Dixon
 Grade 1, Mrs. Simon
 Maximo Elementary

Would you rather...eat spider soup or mashed caterpillars-GROSS! If I had to choose I'd choose to eat the mashed caterpillars. I wouldn't eat spider soup because spiders bite. A spider could bite your tongue. Maybe mashed caterpillars would be smooth like mashed potatoes. Spider soup or mashed caterpillars-which one will you choose?



The Wiggly Tooth
 Once I was sleeping and in the morning my tooth was dangling from the root and my mom was freaking out about it! She said, "Pull it out! I just can't stand it anymore!" So, I did! "I lost my tooth," I said. I set it on the messy countertop. When my dad came home, he accidentally threw it away! When I got home, it was gone! I was so, so, so sad. And that night, I put it under my pillow. She tiptoed in, took my tooth and left. She had given me a dollar! I was so happy, I cried! "The Tooth Fairy came," I said, and I went to do what I needed to do and went to school with a missing tooth.



The Wiggly Tooth
 By Mackenzie Rood
 Grade 1, Ms. Wilson/Ms. Cate
 Douglas L. Jamerson Elementary

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ALL ABOUT BATS

By: Melina Carney

Table of Contents
All About Bats

1. What Bats Look like? 1
2. Where Bats Live? 2
3. What Bats Eat? 3
4. _____

What Bats look like?

Did you know that bats can be big or small? Bats have webbed fingers and long fingers too! They have wings that help them fly.

What Bats Eat?

Bats have big ears to hear tiny sounds. They can only see at day time but not at night time.

Where Bats Live?

Bats live in dark places like cave and walls of houses. Bats live in groups called roosts.

What Bats Eat?

Bats eat some fruit. But some bats do not eat fruit. They eat insects like flies, mosquitoes, and grasshoppers. Bats can eat

All About Bats
By Melina Carney
Grade 1, Mrs. Dave
Gulf Beaches Elementary

What Bats Look Like
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Bats eat some fruits but some bats do not eat fruits. They eat insects like flies, mosquitoes, and grasshoppers. Bats can eat 1000 insects in one hour. Now you know all about bats.

eat insects in one hour! Now you know all about Bats.





My First Cruise Ever
 By Azriela Talisaysay
 Grade 1, Mrs. Fowler
 Ridgcrest Elementary

Hi, I'm Azriela. I am going to tell you my trip to the cruise. We woke up really early. My mom and dad tricked us into dropping our uncle to the airport. We actually took a flight ourselves. It was a surprise!! We went to Miami and I asked Daddy where are we going? It's a surprise!!! Daddy said. Finally we arrived and took a bus to a pier then we went to the boat. Before we go on it, we took a picture with a boat. That's when I knew we are going on the cruise ship. We unpacked our stuff and watched TV. The next day we swam in the pool, I did like it cause it was salt water. I met a new friend Riley. We became good friends. We even ate ice cream together!

We visited 2 islands. The first one is Jamaica, then Grand Cayman. I even got a chance to swim with the stingrays and hold a turtle. At Jamaica, my brother got a ukulele and I got a flute. When we got on board, we took a shower and went to day camp. Then we played BINGO but we didn't win. We celebrated my brother's birthday and got a chance to eat with Cat in the Hat, Sam I Am and Thing 1 & Thing 2.

After a day, we packed up, left the ship and took a taxi to the train station. We were tired and arrived to Tampa. Our cousin and his dad picked us up. We got home, unpacked our stuff, played, then went to sleep.

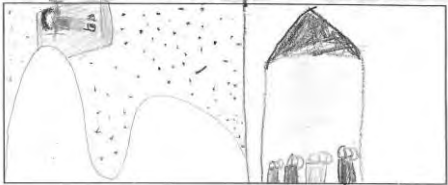
Martin Luther King
 By Davinci Parithammang
 Grade 1, Mrs. Powers
 High Point Elementary



Martin was very kind. He was a good person. He went to prison for holding up signs. He did not use weapons he used words. He told people to be nice. He had a dream people will be treated the same. He got shot in 1968 and he died. Now we celebrate him.



Winter is the Best Season



Let me tell you about which season is the best. The best season is winter. It is the best because you can throw snowballs at each other and you can bring a sled in the snow. You can do a lot of fun things in the snow. The last reason why winter is the best is because I like Christmas. On Christmas morning I get to open up presents. Now you know why winter is the best.




Winter is the Best Season

By Jourdan Diaz
Grade 1, Ms. Simon
Maximo Elementary


Let me tell you about which season is the best. The best season is winter. It is the best because you can throw snowballs at each other and you can bring a sled in the snow. You can do a lot of fun things in the snow. The last reason why winter is the best is because I like Christmas. On Christmas morning I get to open up presents. Now you know why winter is the best.



The Best Season is Spring



Today I can tell you about my favorite season. I think the best season is spring because leaves turn green and flowers start to grow yellow. My next reason for spring being the best season is it rains. You can jump in muddy puddles. My last reason is when you get to play out in the sun. Out in the sun you get to have a picnic and also animals have babies. Now you know all about my best season.

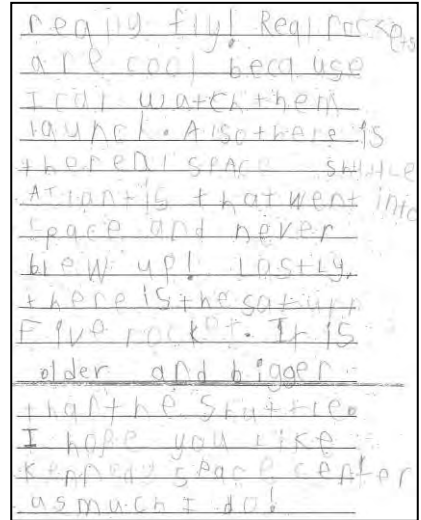


Now you know all about my best season.

The Best Season is Spring

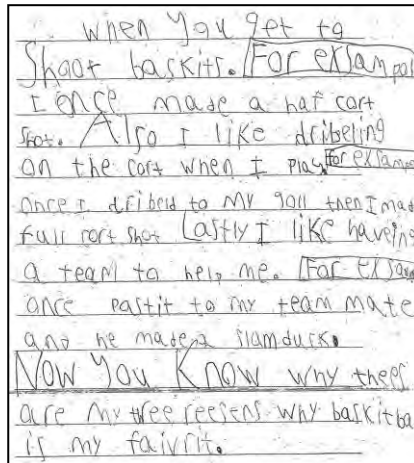
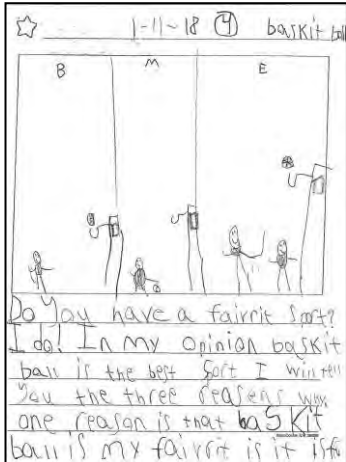
By A'marriah Davis
Grade 1, Ms. Simon
Maximo Elementary

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Kennedy Space Center
 By Greg Tribiano
 Grade 1, Mrs. Bodolay
 Tarpon Springs Fundamental

In my opinion, the best place to visit is Kennedy Space Center. One reason is it has real rockets that really fly! Real rockets are cool because I can watch them launch. Also, there is the real space shuttle Atlantis that went into space and never blew up! Lastly, there is the Saturn V rocket. It is older and bigger than the shuttle. I hope you like Kennedy Space Center as much as I do!



Basketball
 By Ahmed Elsamak
 Grade 1, Ms. McConville
 Tarpon Springs Fundamental

Do you have a favorite sport? I do! In my opinion basketball is the best sport I will tell you the three reasons why. One reason why basketball is my favorite is it is fun when you get to shoot baskets. For example, I once made a half-court shot. Also I like dribbling on the court when I play. For example, once I dribbled to my goal then I made a full-court shot. Lastly, I like having a team to help me. For example, once I passed it to my teammate and he made a slam dunk. Now you know why these are my three reasons why basketball is my favorite.

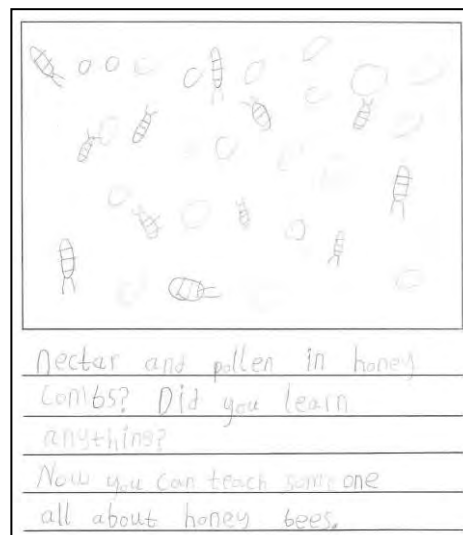
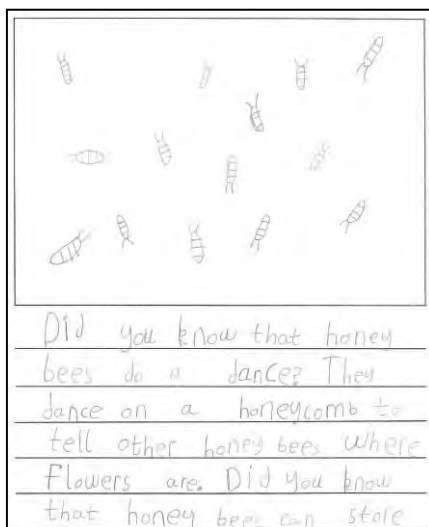
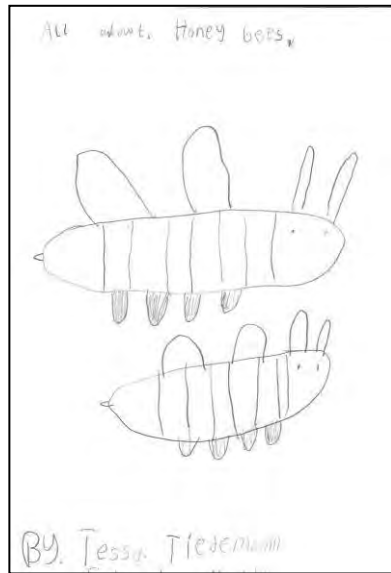


All About Honey Bees
By Tessa Tiedemann
Grade 1, Mrs. Vicki Williams
Pinellas Central Elementary



Hey you! Yeah you! Do you want to know all about Honey Bees? Look in my book and you will see. Did you know that Honey Bees do a dance? They dance on a honeycomb to tell other Honey Bees where flowers are.


Did you know that Honey Bees can store nectar and pollen in honey combs? Did you learn anything? Now you can teach someone all about Honey Bees.





The most BEST Party
EVER!

one day I went to Alesa's 7th
with her party. I was happy and
Smiling. My mom and dad brought
to the bowling alley.

Next I had a drink. My drink
was Pink lemonade. and my friend
Amelia got Party hats. and
I had an Oreos. it was fun.
it was fun because me and
Amelia got to use a candy
vending machine and we got
lots of candy.



then me and Amelia went Bowling.
it was really fun. and I won
Amelia. for my prize I was
to go to candy machine
I got lots of candy too. I ate
it all up. first I had Sour Patch
Kids. then I had Starburst.



Finally we had cake. the cake
had sprinkles. It was so good
and I had a great time
there. it was the most
BEST PARTY EVER.

THE BEST PARTY EVER

By Avery Shaver
Grade 1, Mrs. Allison Carmen
Lake St. George Elementary

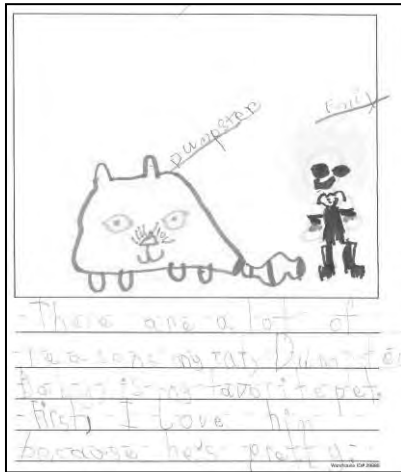
One day I went to Alesa's 7th birthday party. I was happy and smiling. My mom and dad brought me to the bowling alley.

First, I put down the present that was wrapped in pink wrapping paper. In the present was a car and a pack of Oreos. There was a table covered with a table cloth with cake and drinks on it. There were a lot of gifts and there were a lot of desserts. There were macarons and Oreos. There was a disco ball hanging from the ceiling. It was very shiny.

Next, I had a drink. My drink was pink lemonade. My sister, Amelia and I got party hats. It was fun. It was fun because Amelia and I got to use a candy vending machine and we got lots of candy.

Then, Amelia and I went bowling. It was really fun. And I won against Amelia. For my prize it was to go to the candy machine a second time. I got lots of candy too. I ate it all up. First I had Sour Patch Kids. Then I had Starburst.

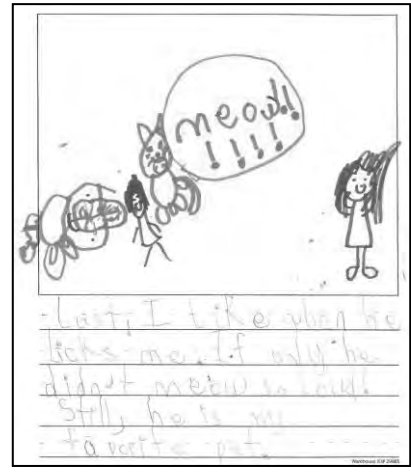
Finally, we had cake. The cake was covered with rainbow sprinkles. It was so good and I had a great time there. It was the BEST PARTY EVER!



There are a lot of reasons my cat Dumpster is my favorite pet. First, I love him because he's pretty.



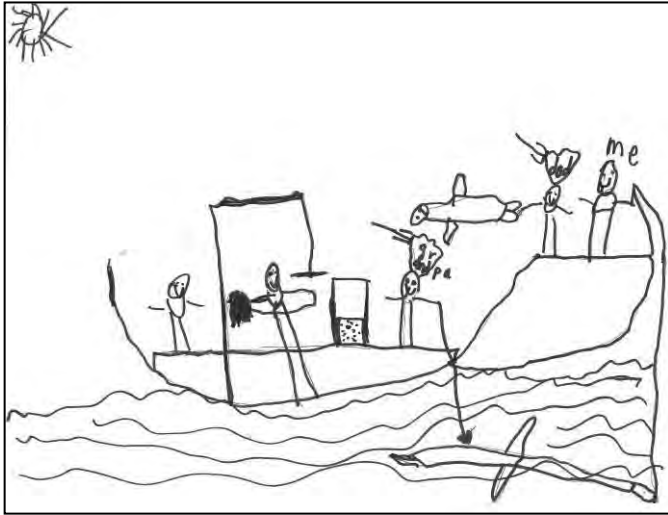
Next, I like to cuddle him. I try to pick him up, but he is so heavy! I'm not an astronaut!



Last, I like when he licks me. If only he didn't meow so loud! Still, he is my favorite pet!

My Favorite Pet
 By Emily Ramsdell
 Grade 1, Miss Logsdon
 Rawlings Elementary

There are a lot of reasons my cat, Dumpster Baby is my favorite pet. First, I love him because he's pretty. Next I like to cuddle him. Then I pick him up. He is so heavy! Last, I like it when he licks me. If only he didn't "Meow" so loud! Still, he is my favorite pet!



The Big Fishing Trip

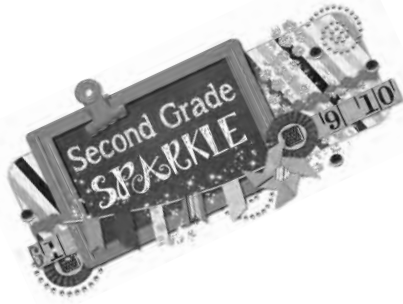
By Finn Hehenberger
Grade 1, Ms. Teixeira
Ridgecrest Elementary

My dad, grandpa, uncle, brother and I went on a fishing trip. It was a cold, windy day. It was so cold that I could not feel my legs. Pelicans were diving in the water to catch baby mackerel. There were big, big waves. The boat was rocking side to side.

The fish were very hungry, and I caught six mackerel and four kingfish. The biggest kingfish was almost as tall as me. It was the hardest fish to catch and was trying to pull me into the water. My dad said, "When the rod is going down, you have to reel really fast and hard to get the fish to the boat." My arms and hands were shaking. When we pulled the giant fish into the boat, I was smiling. The fish was not happy. It was wiggling, and there was blood everywhere. I asked if we could eat it. My dad said, "Kingfish tastes salty. Maybe grandpa will make fish spread."

Later that night, my whole family went to my grandpa and grandma's house, and we ate my grandpa's famous fish spread. It was made with the fish I worked so hard to catch.

Second Grade Writing



- 36 Josephine Scalia
- 37 Harshita Bhagchandani
Olivia Kelly
- 38 Davis Iten
Parker Sinclair
- 39 Ayanna Brown
Jaedylynne Babiera
- 40 Cobe Hehenberger
James Halios III
- 41 Sienna Bonnell
- 42 Ruqaiyah Pandharpurwala
Riley Calahan
- 43 Eleanor Koh
Sonum Shah
- 44 Grace Harrison



The Amazing Bike and the Magical Helmet

By Josephine Scalia
 Grade 2, Mrs. Vicki Jetton
 Curlew Creek Elementary

One year on Christmas morning, I ran down my stairs and saw it. An amazing bike was sitting by the tree. I was so surprised. This bike was so much bigger than my old bike and it was PURPLE! There are silver streamers on the handlebars. "A bike!" I yelled. Rip, rip, rip goes my wrapping paper--when I was done opening ALL of my presents I wanted to ride my new bike and then I thought to myself, "I don't have a helmet!" Then I turned around and saw a....."HELMET!" I yelled. It was also purple just like my bike. My helmet magically appeared on my couch (and it proves Santa that Santa is real!) "Let's go ride MY BIKE!" I yelled.

I ran down stairs and got on my bike and it started off wobbly and I fell over a few times. Then we realized the training wheels weren't very good because the elves were in a hurry. We got new training wheels that worked great! It feels so nice to ride my bike because I have not ridden a bike in so long. Now when my Mom says, "Let's go for a bike ride", I say "YES!" I love my new purple bike!

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it started off wobbly, just fell over a few times. Then we realized the training wheels weren't very good because the elves were in a hurry. We got new training wheels that worked great! It feels nice to ride my bike because I have not ridden a bike in so long. Now when my Mom says "Let's go for a bike ride", I say "YES!" I love my new purple bike!

My Birthday

By Harshita Bhagchandani
Grade 2, Ms. Chandra Holmes
Ridgecrest Elementary



It’s Friday, September 15th 2017, I am super excited for my birthday party at my house. Balloons, streamers, games, beautiful dress, cake, and lots of gifts is all about what I can’t wait for! Finally, I hear Ding Dong. “My friends are here,” I shouted. I opened the door and welcomed all!

First of all, we played the game Candy Land, a board game which my mom and I actually made on the floor of our drawing room using ribbons, balloons, and some pictures of tasks in-between the blocks! This game was so much fun as we ourselves played as actual players and had to move from Start all the way up at the Castle to win. Everyone rolled the dice, one by one and moved ahead. The most fun part was when we got to do some tasks between moves like miss a turn, start all over, dance on a poem, get candy, and take someone else’s place!

“Hoorah!” said Olivia, who won 1st Place.

“It was indeed an amazing idea to play a floor board game,” said my friends laughing!

Next, we played Flying Carpet. Each child stood on a piece of paper, a flying carpet. But the problem was, it was upside down! Everybody had to turn the flying carpet over without ripping or stepping off it. Woah.... It was very challenging for all of us but so much fun too.

Then, we played Sock War. We were 2 teams, Team A and Team B. Each team had to throw sock balls to the side of the other team. It was fun playing 1st round, but then Sara and Alley got hit by the balls in their eyes during the 2nd round. So we had to stop that game. Luckily, they were all right.

Then, we played Puzzle Hunt. We had two different teams this time, Yellow and Pink. We had a puzzle piece and a clue to start. We followed each clue to a new clue and found all the puzzle pieces one by one. Then, we put them together and fixed the whole picture. “Woo-hoo....we won! We won!” I screamed excitedly.

At last, we played Freeze Dance. After a while, we had cake cutting. My cake was vanilla with blue, yellow, and purple frosting.

“Happy Birthday to you, Happy Birthday to you, Happy Birthday dear Harshita, Happy Birthday to you!” sang everyone cheerfully. That was an amazing birthday party!

Mr. Pagow’s Love

By Olivia Kelly
Grade 2, Mrs. Brooke Frahn
Eisenhower Elementary



Once upon a time Mr. Pagow the penguin went to Miss Lovely’s home, who was also a penguin. He knew his friend Miss Lovely would be happy to see him, and would let him in. But Miss Lovely had a trick she was hoping Mr. Pagow would fall for. And sure enough he did. You see, Miss Lovely was hiding. She got Mr. Pagow to drink her love potion by leaving it in a glass on the table. But, she thought nothing happened. Miss Lovely got so mad that she snuck out of her house to go to the gym and get strong. But, once she came back to the house, she realized the love potion had worked. Mr. Pagow was staring at her with love in his eyes. With time, Mr. Pagow and Miss Lovely got married and lived happily ever after.

The Flag

By Davis Iten
Grade 2, Ms. Amy Bowles
Ridgecrest Elementary

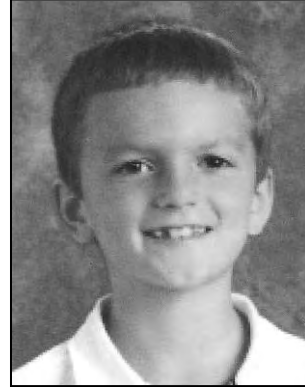


The flag
is waving
like a hand
way up
in the night
sky.
Waving
Among the
Stars,
Thinking,
"Count on me.
Count on me
Count on Me.
I'm the one
who flew
above
Fort McHenry
In the
Revolutionary War.
Count on me."



The Growing Marshmallow

By Parker Sinclair
Grade 2, Ms. Walsh /Ms. Cate
Douglas L. Jamerson Elementary



It was a cold, fall night when my family was getting ready to roast marshmallows. I grabbed a marshmallow from the bag. It slipped out of my hand and fell on the ground. I didn't realize it had fallen, so I went and helped to clean up the fire pit. The marshmallow was still lying in the spot I dropped it in.

Overnight, it rained. Thunder roared loudly and I could barely fall asleep. Rarr!!! Boom!!! Crash!!! The marshmallow got soggy and a root started to grow out of it. Overnight, it grew more and more and more until it reached the surface of the ground and became a marshmallow tree.

The next day when we went out to play, a marshmallow tree was there. I said, "Mom! Dad! Come and see this."

"Ok," Mom said. We ate the marshmallows and they grew back. Some fell off and those grew into marshmallow trees. We ate and ate and ate!!! We got so fat that we exploded!!!



The Unicorn

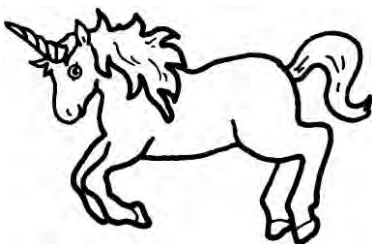
By Ayanna Brown
Grade 2, Ms. Naomi Fields
Maximo Elementary



Once upon a time, there lived a happy unicorn. Her name was Naomi. Naomi was a happy unicorn until the unicorn nightmare began. Everyone ran, but everyone was captured except Maomi. The others all SCREAMED HELP! Naomi could not scream as she was too weak. She tried, but could not make a sound.

Naomi traveled far thinking of her family. She wanted to save them but was not sure how. Then Naomi was thinking oh my goodness as she saw a hurt unicorn. She ran over and saw that the unicorn was bleeding. Naomi asked, "Are you hurt?" The unicorn answered in a weak voice saying just a little. Naomi helped the unicorn up. The unicorn thanked her.

The unicorn offered her powers to Naomi but she said that would not be nice. Naomi told the other unicorn what happened to her family. Together, the unicorn and Naomi were able to rescue her family and the land. They made sure that the nightmare was gone forever!



Toddler Time

By Jaedylynn Babiera
Grade 2, Mrs. Laura Ristoff
Pinellas Central Elementary



My brother is the best out of the whole family. He is kind, cute, hugging, and always sharing. Let me tell you about him!

First, my brother is my favorite because he is kind. When I cry he taps my head. Cute, right? He is always nice even when I get mad at him! He still loves me because he knows I won't hurt him. For example, when he sees my expression and he sees my face he knows what to do. When I have a frown face with my teeth showing and tears, he knows I won't hurt him. I will just run to my room, and sometimes he reads a book to me so I can feel better.

Second, my brother always shares. When I have a little bit of ice cream, he shares his. He is nice. I share mine too. For example, when I say I have a little, he gives me some. I love him. I share my cookies with him. He is my favorite brother in the world!

Third, he is always hugging me. I ride train rides for him and he is always happy. He deserves it because he makes me happy. For example, when we went to Lego Land I saw a train ride for Jaden. He likes cars and trains.

That's why I think my brother is awesome.



The Last Day of Camp

By Cobe Hehenberger
Grade 2, Ms. Holmes
Ridgecrest Elementary



It was our last day of camp, and we were excited to go on our big hike. Mr. George, our teacher, said, "It's time to go!" We hiked into the dark woods. Some kids were whispering about how long our hike would take, but most of us were as quiet as mice. We jumped over a small stream and went into some tall grass next to a big lake. Then, Mr. George said, "We're walking into rattlesnake territory. Be quiet and stay on the trail."

All of the sudden we heard a snake say, "Sssss ssssss." We all stopped. I got very nervous, and my eyes started to water. My heart was beating as fast as a cheetah. Everybody looked around for the rattlesnake but nobody saw it. Mr. George said, "Stay in the middle of the trail, and you'll be fine." We started walking again in a single file line. All we could hear was our footsteps crunching on the leaves. Then, we heard the sound again. "Sssss ssssss," the snake said, but we still could not see it. I thought I was going to die.

We walked very carefully for the rest of the hike and past an old house that some kids said was haunted, but there were no signs of the rattlesnake. When we got back to our classroom, I was still nervous about the snake, but my friend reminded me that if I didn't bother it, it wouldn't bother me. Even though it was a pretty crazy day, I'm glad I survived my last day of camp.

A Very Special Family Member

By James Halios III
Grade 2, Mrs. Vicki Jetton
Curlew Creek Elementary



Have you ever lost a family member? I have experienced it. My pappous sadly passed away when I was 4 years old. My pappous is Greek. Pappous is grandpa in Greek. It was a hard time and I cried a lot. Whimper, whimper, whimper. I have been visiting his tombstone for three years now. Once every year in Boston.

Last year in the winter, I made him a snowman and the year before that I planted a seed in the fall. When my family and I visit the tombstone we always clean off the mold and stuff like that. Every year we put rocks on his tombstone to decorate it and to thank him for things he has done in our lives.

He was a loving family member and I loved him so much. I miss him so much. It is nice to remember my pappous and talk to him. I will bring my pappous a special rock the next time I visit him. This rock he gave to me when I was once sick. I love my pappous very much.





Japanese Shiba Inus
 By Sienna Bonnell
 Grade 2, Mrs. Vicki Jetton
 Curlew Creek Elementary

Table of Contents

Pg 1 Introduction
 Pg 2 Adopting Shiba Inus
 Pg 3 Supplies
 Pg 4 Walks
 Pg 5 Ending and Funny Shiba Inu getting pulled by a rope leash

Shiba Inus

Do you know how many colors there are on shiba inus? There can be up to 5 colors on shiba inus: black, tan, gray, white, and red. Shiba inus are a breed of dog. They can be medium or large in size. This is how you say it (she-buh-ee-noo) Are you ready to see surprise cuteness? Are you ready to learn about Shiba Inus!? Then let's get started!! The eyes! THE EYES! They are pools of black ink on a cold winter day. Take one look and you will fall in love.

The eyes THE EYES!! They are pools of black ink on a cold winter day. Take one look and you will fall in love.

Walking

A long time ago shiba inus were used for catching food for humans. They are in Japan. A shiba inu is a national treasure in Japan. Shiba inu bones were found from between eight and ten thousand years ago. That means shiba inus are really old.

Adopting

When you are getting a shiba inu look for a good one. Look at how each one is acting. The one that is acting the way you want—get it! That shiba inu is the one you got! So make sure you got the right one or else... it might be crazy for you.

Supplies

You will need all these simple things. The pillow you might not need. Shiba inus like pillows but they don't need one. The treats are for training them or when they are good. There are two kinds of leashes—retractable or rope. You might need a harness! Some people get beds for crates and some get separate beds or a pillow.

Walks

During a walk you can use a rope leash or a retractable leash and harness. Both have different ways to handle. When you handle a rope you need to tug to turn around your shiba. When you handle a retractable you push a button to turn around your shiba. It may get tough when your shiba wants to stay. Turn the page to see one!

#halalicious

Now you know all about shiba inus and that they are that stubborn! I hope that now you like fuzzy, wuzzy, cuddly, wuddly cute shiba inus!



Introduction Do you know how many colors there are on Shiba Inus? There can be up to 5 colors on Shiba Inus: black, tan, gray, white, and red. Shiba Inus are a breed of dog. They can be medium or large in size. This is how you say it (she-buh-ee-noo) Are you ready to see surprise cuteness? Are you ready to learn about Shiba Inus!? Then let's get started!! The eyes! THE EYES! They are pools of black ink on a cold winter day. Take one look and you will fall in love.

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Ending and Funny Shiba Inu Getting Pulled by a Rope Leash Now you know all about Shiba Inus and that they are that stubborn! I hope that now you like fuzzy, wuzzy, cuddly, wuddly cute Shiba Inus!

Journey to India

By Ruqaiyah Pandharpurwala
 Grade 2, Ms. Chandra Holmes
 Ridgecrest Elementary Center for Gifted
 Studies



I want to share my experience about my trip to India in May 2017. My mother and father are from India; therefore we go to visit my grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins every year. I also have many friends in India. And it was my brother’s first trip to India. Therefore, this essay is about my long journey to India.

Firstly, my dad booked our tickets to go to India. A few days before our trip, my mother packed our bags. She even packed some gifts for our family. I was waiting for the day to leave for India. The day finally came to leave for the airport. My father loaded our luggage in the car. We had many bags. I said goodbye to my friends, house, and toys. Then everyone got in the car and left for the airport.

My family and I were sitting in the waiting area. While we were waiting, my dad brought us some coffee from my favorite coffee shop, STARBUCKS. My brother and I were playing in the play area. I was too big for most of the equipment, but I still had lots of fun. Finally, it was time to board the airplane.

As soon as we got on the plane, we sat down in our seats. I sat in-between my mother and my brother. While I was waiting for take-off, I was checking the plane TV. I was excited to have my own TV. The plane took off and I got a little hungry. So I waited and waited for the air hostess to give some snacks. Finally, the air hostess came with snacks and drinks. I enjoyed my pretzels and apple juice. I watched the movie ‘Boss Baby’. It was a very funny movie. Later, I ate my lunch and fell asleep. When I woke up, we were in Germany and then we had to take another plane to India. I was very happy to soon be landing in Mumbai, India. I started making

plans about what to do with my friends and family.

The pilot announced that the plane is landing soon. *Boom!* The tires touched the ground and I knew the plane had landed. We exited the plane and got our bags. The airport was so beautiful with many nice stores and places to eat. But I was too excited to see my grandmother. I just wanted to leave the airport soon so I could meet her, my uncle, and cousins.

Finally, there they were waiting for us. I gave my grandmother a big hug and stayed with her until my father loaded the car. Then we sat in the car and drove to my grandmother’s house. She had prepared my favorite Indian food for dinner. I told her about my plane ride. I was finally in India with my family. I was so happy to meet my family and friends and spend time exploring new places. But before that, I needed some good-night sleep. **Hello India!**

The Night of the Gargoyles

By Riley Calahan
 Grade 2, Ms. Robinson/Ms. Cate
 Douglas L. Jamerson Elementary

sitting
 silent their
 empty eyes
 unblinking til
 night comes
 creeping down
 from perilous
 chambers
 slowly leaping
 they take the
 form of shadows
 shadows creeping
 children sleeping
 all done feasting
 the sun is creeping up
 gargoyles return to
 their earthly beds
 on their ledge their
 empty eyes unblinking
 til tonight...



My Winning Twenty Dollars

By Eleanor Koh
Grade 2, Ms. Jennifer Pile
Ridgecrest Elementary School



I had been eyeing for a sewing machine for the longest time. Every time I asked my mom to let me use her sewing machine, she always said the same thing, “No, Ellie, it’s too troublesome to take it out.” Therefore, I decided that I should buy my own sewing machine.

The sewing machine that I wanted, cost twenty dollars. I worked out a deal with my Dad. He said, “If you wash my car, I will give you \$10.00.” “Deal!” I replied hurriedly, before he could change his mind. I knew it would be hard work, but I would be closer on getting my sewing machine. So after lunch, I went ahead to wash Dad’s car. I was happily putting soap on, and when I was spraying the soap off the car, I accidentally sprayed water onto my neighbor, Mrs. Kathy’s car. I uttered, “Uh-Oh!” I ended up having to wash two cars that afternoon. When Mrs. Kathy came out, instead of yelling at me, she told me how wonderful a job I did on her car. She was so delighted that she awarded me ten dollars.

This was indeed a victory day for me with a winning of twenty dollars. The next day, Mom took me to the store and I bought my SEWING MACHINE!!!

The Day We Danced

By Sonum Shah
Grade 2, Ms.
Chandra Holmes
Ridgecrest
Elementary



Have you ever danced in front of hundreds of people? I have. It was one of the happiest days of my life.

“Hurry up!!!” shouted my friend Priya. They had called out our names. Our moms were just done dressing us and putting on bright make up on our faces. Fully dressed in the long, colorful *Ghaghara* skirts with tiny mirrors sewn on them and *Duppata* scarves we all looked very different from our usual selves.

The occasion was India Fest 2017, a huge Indian cultural celebration with diverse dance performances. Fourteen girls, about my age, were in my dance group. We all lined up to get on the stage. We all had worked hard for this day, having practiced the dance for the last few months. Everyone was feeling the enthusiasm.

Once on stage, we got into our assigned spots. The curtains opened and I could see hundreds of faces staring up at us. Soon upbeat folk music started to play. At that moment, the crowd seemed to fade and my excitement soared. We danced *Ghumar*, a swirling Indian folk dance, in our graceful, shimmering skirts twirling together.

The music stopped and the crowd applauded. “Yeah!” yelled one of the moms. We bowed graciously and walked off the stage.

All the dancing had made us really hungry, not to mention the relief of successfully completing the event that we had been preparing for months. They had brought pizza for us and we ate several slices.

That is when we found out that our performance was awarded first prize! My friends and I were so happy! I squeezed Priya’s hand and asked, “When is the next India Fest?”

The Fight of the Puppies and the Kittens

By Grace Harrison
Grade 2, Ms. Brito
Ridgecrest Elementary



Once upon a paw, there were two puppies and three kittens. The puppies were led by the King of puppies, Dog. King Dog was a Great Dane with a red cape and a gold crown. The kittens were led by Queen Cat, a Mane Coon with a purple robe and a crown made of emeralds. They lived happily together in Friendship Forest, playing freeze tag and hide and seek. Until one day, the King Dog, bragged about how much stronger puppies are than kittens.

He is right, thought Queen Cat.

Then Cat boasted about how there are more kittens than puppies.

She is right, thought King Dog.

Dog didn't like having less subjects. He decided not to be friends.

"But we have to be friends!" screamed Cat.

"We live in the same neighborhood!"

"Then I shall go!" snapped Dog, and he started packing. Poor Cat! She only wanted to be friends.

The day before the puppies left, Cat gave dog a goodbye present hoping he would change his mind. "Here," said Cat, giving him his present.

"Oh, Uh, thank you," he said back.

"Open it!" squealed cat. So, he did. The gift was a new golden collar. It had a golden bone with silver writing. The writing said, *Dear Dog, I'll miss you.* Dog stared at the collar. "Well, uh, I...", his voice trailed off.

"I know you have to keep packing. I'm sorry," Cat said with a tear running down her cheek. Dog held Cat's head high and

wiped away her tear. As he started to walk away, Dog looked back for a moment. Cat was smiling so brightly, you would have thought she was a candle.

The day the puppies left, Cat waved and blew kisses. She was sad, but thought he might change his mind. Dog, on the other hand, ignored her. He was still angry. Dog didn't change his mind.

It had been a week since the puppies left and Cat couldn't stand it! She missed him badly. She decided to look for King Dog and the puppies. Cat traveled through Neighborhoods, where she fought bears and racoons on her way to Enemy Trees, hoping Dog was there. When Cat finally arrived, she found Dog. Dog was surprised when he saw Cat.

"Dog, please!" begged Cat. "Please come home!" Dog turned around, lowered his head and closed his eyes. Cat continued, "I know I shouldn't be asking anything from you, but I'm begging for you to come home." Dog looked at her through the corner of his eye. "You don't have a choice! Just do it!" yelled Cat.

"N...", Dog didn't get to finish his sentence.

"If not for me, for our subjects!" Cat said.

Dog opened his eyes, lifted his head, and turned around. "They're happy together," Cat said.

After what felt like an hour of waiting, Dog stood up, and refusing to meet Cat's eyes he said, "We'll go home." And with that, everyone cheered. After that, everything went back to normal and the puppies and kittens never had a fight again. For now...

ARF! ARF! ARF!

MEOW!



Third Grade Writing



- 46 Antone Buell
Jovian Barrs
- 47 Meenakshi Sridhar
Nicolas Tezza
- 48 Maggie Westerfield
Ethan Akins
- 49 Trinity Peters
- 50 Kaleiah Dave
Lorien Durst
- 51 Aditi Pai
Andrew Baugher
- 52 Cal Salcedo
- 53 Akash Pai
Mica Oler
- 54 Saranda Neziri
Isabella Horwitz
- 55 Ava Rodriguez
- 56 Mya Rodriguez-Vargas
- 57 Aitana Perez
- 58 Valery Andrea Barahona

Hurricane Irma

By Antone Buell
Grade 3, Mrs. Samon
Bauder Elementary



It was just another beautiful sunny day in Seminole. Children played in the sweltering heat. Adults kept their water bottles close in hand and cherished every bit of cloud coverage they could get. Little did we realize we were in for the storm of the century.

That night, the tenth, the wind thrashed wildly, also making the trees dance like crazy, whipping, slamming and roaring with the windows shaking, making the wind and pouring rain sound like ferocious lions waiting to be fed. Trees crashed down, littering our yard with huge sticks and leaves of all shapes, sizes and colors.

When I woke up the next morning I was startled that the lights were already back on in the house. When I looked outside I saw my dad working on the generator. Then I wondered what was flattened so I took a walk. After the storm passed it was just another beautiful sunny day in Seminole.



Skate: My First Big Ramp

By Jovian Barrs
Grade 3
Mrs. Neubauer
Curtis Fundamental



As I slowly walk up the ramp with my green and white fish skateboard tucked under my arm, I realize...I'm only 4 feet above the gray, smooth, concrete ground. I start to drop in but I decide I'm going at it fast!

I get a running start and get on the board. Quickly, I bend my knees and lean forward. Down the ramp I go and up another one. "Backwards, oh no," I think. Down I go. Up I go. Down and stop.

As I slowly walk down the ramp, I realize...I'm on the gray, smooth, concrete ground with my green and white fish skateboard tucked under my arm.





Rediscovering My Roots

By Meenakshi Sridhar
Grade 3
Mrs. Roseann Sacino
Gulf Beaches
Elementary Magnet

I love travelling! Last summer, I went to a very popular country in Asia.

Need a hint? This is the only country in the world that has an ocean named after it. It's India!!! My roots are from Southern India. There are nearly 30 different states in India. Almost each state in India has its own language and culture. My father is from a state in India called Tamilnadu where they speak the language Tamil. My mother is from a state called Kerala where they speak a language called Malayalam. Their cultures are very similar since the two states were together in the past and were known as "The Madras Presidency".

In the "Land of Spices", I ate fresh, aromatic, spicy food every day. It was full of flavors! For lunch, we always eat rice with a curry or masala. Did you know that the word curry is actually a Tamil word? We never used silver utensils and ate with our bare hands. We also always sat down on the ground and ate on a banana leaf.

I went to both Kerala and Tamilnadu to see my grandparents. While in Kerala, I went to a facility with more than 85 elephants where we could pet them. One of the elephants even put its trunk on my head. I also had the opportunity to visit Asia's largest Zoo while in Tamilnadu. I went to a shed with my cousins where some grandmas were making ropes out of coconut fiber. I also visited a factory to see the processing of cashew nuts.

I am so fortunate to have my roots in India. I sincerely hope you get an opportunity to travel to this incredible country one day. My memorable trip to India means the world to me.

GREECE, THE BEST COUNTRY IN EUROPE

By Nicolas Tezza
Grade 3
Mrs. Kim Moran
Tarpon Springs Fundamental



What country has amazing beaches or fun activities and a beautiful scenery. If you guessed Greece, you were right. In my opinion I think the island of Kalymnos in Greece, is the best place in Europe.

Kalymnos, Greece has the best beaches that I have ever seen. At some beaches there are no waves so you can float or go snorkeling. At other beaches you can ride the huge waves as they pass by. If you don't like water then you can lie down in the sand and relax or you can play in the sand. While you are snorkeling in the calm water you can find diverse schools of fish, sea urchins and if you go deep enough you can find octopus or squid. Some beaches have rocks instead of sand, so you cannot play with sand. All the beaches are very large in Kalymnos, Greece so you can make a huge sand castle.

Kalymnos, Greece has a beautiful view to look at. If you don't like going to the beach then you can look at the views at all times of day. In the morning or early afternoon you can watch the sun reflect off of the blue, glimmering ocean. In the sunset you can watch the sun go down and create the beautiful sunset colors in the sky which makes the mountains look amazing. Underneath, the water looks outstanding with all the wildlife, rocks, plants and the waves above the water makes it look outstanding.

Kalymnos, Greece has many fun activities. You can play outside with toys or a game like hide and seek or you can use your imagination to do fun things. You can play at the beach in the water, or in the sand. You can also play with friends. It is also fun if you climb the mountains or look at Kalymnos's history. Kalymnos also has a large ocean which makes it a great idea to take a boat ride.

Now, I hope that you think Kalymnos Greece is the best place in Europe because of the amazing beaches, fun activities and the beautiful sights.

Why Puppies Are Better Than Kittens

By Maggie Westerfield
Grade 3, Mrs. Samon
Bauder Elementary



One normal sunny day, I was with my dad. We were on our way to my Grammy's house. After what felt like centuries, we got there and "BAM! Bye! Bye! Fresh Air." Oh, the dreaded litter box smell. It filled our noses. I scrunched up my nose so much I sneezed.

Gypsie, A fluffy black dog with white color points (which is when a dog's nose, ears, paws, and tummy are a different color than rest of the dog's body), started showering me with kisses as if to say "Where have you been? I haven't seen you in so long." Pearl, the black cat my Grammy owned fluffed up her tail, gave me a sour "Whatever" look, and walked away. Meanwhile, Gypsie was still giving me kisses! Eventually, I started itching. Then I stopped and sneezed. I almost forgot I am allergic to "CATS!" Puppies are definitely better than kittens, especially when you are allergic to cats.

I'm relieved Pearl didn't lick me. First, she has stinky tuna breath and I will bet you one million dollars other cats do too. And I know why. Have you tried to stick a toothbrush in a cats' mouth? If you have, I strongly believe you got scratched by the "CLAWS!" A trained puppy would let you stick a toothbrush in its mouth, but they don't need it. Who would want to get rid of sweet warm puppy breath? Their breath is tuna fish FREE! Furthermore, a cat's tongue feels as hard as a rock and as rough as sandpaper – "ouch". A puppy's tongue feels like heaven! It's warm, soft, loving, and sweet!

In addition, out of the five cats my Grammy owns (more like five million) only two will lay down with you for more than a second (or half a millisecond). A puppy will sneak under the covers to snuggle with you

and keep you warm. A cat will sit on your lap, "allow" you to pet it, then scratch you and dash away like nothing ever happened.

Finally, never wear black or white in my Grammy's house. I REPEAT! Do not wear black or white in my Grammy's house. Pearl the black cat and Hobbes the grey cat will get their fur all over you. Another cat named Casper and all other white cats will shed their White fur all over your brand new Black dress. Oh, how cats shed. Their fur just falls off like it's not even attached to their body! Who says dogs shed more than cats?

For each of these reasons and more, puppies are better than kittens. In fact, you should go and get A puppy or A Million puppies right now. If you did, your puppy or puppies would be showering you with kisses. Ever since I had a dog, I knew their secret language is when they give you kisses! If I was a dog, I would be licking you right now to say bye-bye! "Hope you learned a lot about how puppies are better than kittens."

Mercury Like Me

By Ethan Akins
Grade 3
Mrs. Brooke Frahn
Eisenhower Elementary



I am most like planet Mercury for the following reasons. First, Mercury moves fast around the sun and I move fast at gymnastics. I have been in gymnastics for over a year and my favorite part is tumbling. Second, Mercury is small and I am the smallest in my family. Third, Mercury is the first planet from the sun and I am first place in videogames like Mario Party. Fourth, Mercury is hot and I get hot every day. Fifth, Mercury has a lot of craters on its surface and I have a lot of freckles on my face. These are the ways Mercury and I are alike.

Cracker Country

By Trinity Peters
Grade 3

Mrs. Roseann Sacino
Gulf Beaches Elementary Magnet



Yesterday was awesome! I went to Cracker Country! I loved making candles, going to the train station, and visiting the school house. Finally, my brother won't be the only one who went to Cracker Country now. That hour, long bus ride was worth it!

When we arrived, my face lit up! We were at the candle making station. Our guide lady counted us in, "one, two, three four." Go on in!" When she counted me, Karly, Ronnie and Noah in, I was so eager. We dipped the candle in the bees wax three times for three seconds. We had to be extra careful because the bees wax was as hot as magma inside a volcano! I can't believe we went home with our own homemade candles!

To me it just looked like an old building when we arrived. The lady told me it was the train station. Inside the train station was a model of the town and where the train went on the train tracks. The engineer turned on the model and the trains started to move! In the next room, there was a coal stove. You put coal inside and light the coal and it would heat up the room or you would

cook on it. There was a back room where someone would be giving you tickets for the train. There were also some lamps and a rope with a loop. The rope with a loop would be used to give notes to the train driver while the train was moving. A typewriter wrote the notes. Additionally, there were some other items.

Although I loved the train station, my most favorite place was the school house. When we got there, the man said, "In the 1900's, we would separate the girls and the boys. Girls on the left, boys on the right." So, the girls lined up on the left and the boys lined up on the right. First the girls entered the school house, then the boys. Inside was a hat that said "DUNCE". You had to sit down and wear that hat when you got in trouble. Also, there was an abacus. An abacus has beads on it that you would move side to side to do math. That was their calculator. They used chalk boards and chalk to write because paper and pencils were too expensive. They only had school for six months so they could do work on their parent's farms. I can't believe they only have six months of school. We have nine months of school now!

You have to visit Cracker Country because of all the cool, thrilling, awesome things you can do. You can make candles, go to the train station and go to the school house. That's it! You can do laundry, make sugar cane, make a rope, play on the playground, go in the Carlton's house, see a guy crack a whip, make butter, taste the sugar cane and butter, but most of all...have FUN! If you ever go, you will enjoy your trip





My Field Trip to Cracker Country

By Kaleiah Dave
Grade 3
Mrs. Roseann Sacino
Gulf Beaches
Elementary Magnet

It was Monday morning and our class went on a field trip to Cracker Country in Tampa, Florida. It was an old-time village. I was so excited to go to Cracker Country on the bus! VROOM! VROOM! The bus bolted. “It was a long drive!” I told my friend. Do you know how long the drive was? Forty-five minutes! We finely arrived! My favorite things I did or make were making candles, washing clothes, and making fresh corn syrup from a humongous sugar cane.

First, I’m going to tell you about candle making. When we got to candle making, there were three people sitting by three big vats. They kind of look like cauldrons filled with hot steaming wax. Now I’m going to tell you the steps on making a candle.

Step 1: Tie a piece of string to a wooden club.

Step 2: Put the string in the wax for three seconds and repeat it three times.

Step 3: Take the candle off the club and place it in cold water for three seconds.

Step 4: Then you can take it home!

☺

Next, I’m going to tell you about washing clothes. When we got to washing clothes, there was a woman who had a swishing tool and a washboard. The swishing tool is for getting all of the dirt and stains out. The washboard is for getting all of the extra dirt out.

Last, I’m going to tell you about making fresh corn syrup. When we got to making corn syrup there was a batch of horses and a man. When the man told the horses to “giddy-up”, the horses started to move. But then, when the man told the horses “Whoa!” the horses stopped. When

the horses were moving the big sugar cane got squeezed in the large juicer and we each got to taste the fresh corn syrup. There weren’t actual horses. The students played the role of the horses. Whinney, whinney!

I had a fun time at Cracker Country. Washing clothes, candle making, and making fresh corn syrup were among my favorite things to do. I would love to live in those days!

Pergola Campfire

By Lorien Durst
Grade 3
Mrs. DeWese,
Curtis Fundamental



The fire sizzled in the fire pit. Smoke rose into the air. The hammock rocked back and forth. Back and forth. Back and forth. I took the last bite out of my hamburger and chewed it thoughtfully before swallowing it with great satisfaction.

“Who wants s’mores?” called Mom.

“Oooooohhh. There’s cookies!”

announced Emily, my cousin.

“Only eat four,” reminded Mom.

I plucked out a fresh marshmallow from the bag and popped it into my mouth. I then took another marshmallow and pushed it onto the tip a stick. I rested the stick on the edge of the fire pit so that the marshmallow could roast. I slowly twisted the stick so the heat from the fire could reach all of the marshmallow. When it was done, I placed it on top of a chocolate-drizzle cookie. I bit down, and my first bite landed only on the cookie. I took another bite. This time, I bit into both the marshmallow and the cookie. I chewed while the chocolate melted into the gooey marshmallow.

When I was done eating all my s’mores, I hopped onto the tire swing and my cousin Jordan and my sister Allegra pushed me with my younger cousin Emily. This was an enjoyable night.





Let it Snow!
 By Aditi Pai
 Grade 3, Mrs. Dirks
 Ridgecrest Elementary

I looked out of the window and shrieked! What just happened? Where am I? As far as I could see, everything was white. The palm

trees in my backyard were covered in a blanket of smooth whiteness. The pond behind the trees was frozen solid. The bushes looked like little hills of sugar. I couldn't believe my eyes, it was SNOWING!

I jumped out of bed and threw on a blue long-sleeved shirt and black snow pants. I rushed downstairs and gobbled down my breakfast. Then I threw on a thick, furry, orange jacket, red mittens and a pink hat, and ran outside. This was going to be the best day ever! The crisp winter air brushed my face as my boots sank into fluffy white clouds of snow. I bent down and picked some of it up. As I rolled it up into a soft, round ball, it felt squishy and cold.

Just then my both my brothers came running outside. I threw the snowball at Ayush. "Oww!", he said. "Gotcha", I laughed. We all rolled up a bunch of snowballs and stacked them on top of each other. Then we got a carrot and some buttons from inside, and some sticks from the backyard. We used it all to build our own snowman. I stepped back and looked at him. He was amazing! I skipped around and caught some snowflakes on my tongue. "BEST DAY EVER!" I shouted. I plopped myself on the snow, spread my arms and legs, and rubbed them back and forth. Then I got up to look at my . . . Brrring, Brrring, Brrring.

I sleepily lifted my head up from my . . . pillow? What? Nooo! It was all a dream? I looked outside and saw beautiful sunny weather. Then I realized that I live in Florida, and it doesn't snow here. Not fair! I am so upset.

It's not like we haven't tried. When I was 6, my parents took us to Boston to visit our uncle's family. It was Christmas. It had been snowing right up until we got there. We were there for a whole week. It was freezing cold, but did not snow all week long. The day after we left, Boston was once again covered with snow. We missed it! Last December, we went to the Stone Mountain Park in Atlanta. The park did have a snow zone, and I got to do tumbling and play in the ice. But, it was not real snow after all.

So, this Florida girl's quest to experience the wonders of a snowfall continues. I guess, like all good things, it is worth waiting for after all. And whenever that happens, I'm sure it will be nothing short of a dream come true.

SPLASH!

By Andrew Baugher
 Grade 3
 Mrs. DeWese
 Curtis Fundamental



On Saturday the 30th of September, I went to Adventure Island with my sister and my dad. My favorite ride was Colossal Curl.

I was staring at the very tall stairs ahead

of us. I thought to myself, *how could I do this?* We went up two flights of stairs before we got to the line. We waited 5 minutes before it was our turn. *Finally!* I thought. We boarded the fidget spinner-shaped float. The lady pushed us off. I was a little bit scared... my teeth were chattering.

SPLASH!!! Water dripped down our faces. The next thing that I knew I was turning in a U-turn. We went up, then came down. Turing in a U-turn again, down, down, down we went. We all screamed... "AAAHHHH!!!!" We shot up on this thing that was big and was a half circle. Then we came down and then...SPLASH!!! Into a pool we went. At the end I was ready to do it again because I had so much fun!

My Favorite Animal, the Komodo Dragon

By Cal Salcedo

Grade 3

Mrs. Roseann Sacino

Gulf Beaches Elementary Magnet



Do you know what my favorite animal is? It is the fascinating Komodo Dragon! I am going to tell you what these incredible creatures of death look like, what they eat, what prey they hunt, and how these beasts survive in the wild. I like the Komodo Dragon because there is a lot of cool facts. I am going to tell you about these menacing beasts.

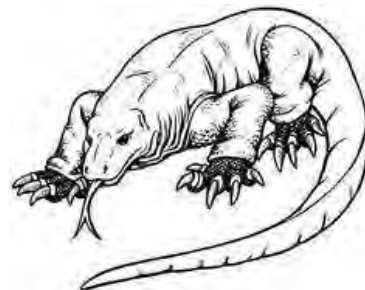
First, let me tell you what the Komodo Dragon looks like. The Komodo Dragon's belly looks black and brown. Its legs are a deep dark brown. Their sharp menacing claws are a deadly gray. The tongue is venomous pink just like the deadly islands that they live on. Their tails have a pattern of black and brown and their eyes have a deadly black stare. Komodos are ten feet long and weigh three hundred pounds. You have to be happy, learning about the Komodo Dragons.

Next, let me tell you what these drastic beasts of the islands eat and what they hunt! Komodo Dragons eat small Komodos, their eggs, small children, deer, and small and huge bulls.

Komodos use their pink deadly tongue to smell prey to hunt. Just try to think of what they hunted millions of years ago. When Komodo Dragons find their prey, they bite them with their powerful jaws. Their venom injects in their prey, but their venom takes 24 hours to kill its prey. The Komodo Dragon waits for it to die and then feed on its' fresh fleshy meat. Female dragons make eggs that are mostly males. The female Komodo protects its' eggs by killing everything in its wake! Even different Komodo Dragons! She does this for the safety of her eggs because they hunt animals like bulls. They only have to eat once a month. Next you'll learn about how the Komodo Dragon survives.

Last, let me tell you Komodo Dragon lovers, how these menacing reptiles of the dead survive. The Komodo Dragon is "not warm-blooded". They are cold blooded and get their body temperature from their deadly habitat which is the most venomous place on earth. They dig burrows to get cool from their fearsome island that is heated by a volcano. This may not seem true, but it is. Komodo Dragons can camouflage themselves. They use this ability to sneak and hide from prey. Komodos fight for their land to make the species grow and evolve. Komodos swim to other islands to find prey easier and faster.

I hope you enjoyed this story about Komodo Dragons. I loved learning about what they look like, what they eat, hunt, and how they survive. I hope you learned some new facts about Komodo Dragons. "Bye" from Death Island.





A Popcorn Lesson
 Akash Pai
 Grade 3, Mrs. Dirks
 Ridgecrest Elementary

The table was set. Boxes of different varieties of popcorn were neatly stacked up and on display - unbelievable butter, salted caramel, kettle

corn. There was a huge banner across the table that proudly read 'PACK 475'. There I was, dressed up in my class A uniform, standing outside our local grocery store on a warm Sunday morning. Before I started, I was shaking nervously. You see, when it comes to talking to people that I don't know, I am a little shy. My mom stood next to me and encouraged me to speak up. As a cub scout, I sell popcorn to help our pack. We use this money to support many of our pack activities, such as community service projects, camping and the annual pinewood derby. I enjoy doing all these fun things with my pack, so I wanted to do my best to support our annual fundraiser.

Then I remembered the scout law. A scout has many traits, among which are friendly, cheerful and brave. I decided to put those 3 traits to use, as I approached the first person that walked by my table. "Hello sir! Would you like to buy some popcorn to support our pack?". "Sure, tell me more about your pack", he responded with a warm smile. As the day went by, I talked to more people. I started feeling more confident in myself and more comfortable in selling.

A lot of people wanted to support our pack. Some people shared their experience about being a boy scout when they were growing up. Others donated money to our pack, even though they did not buy any popcorn. Many spent a lot of money purchasing popcorn from us to show their support, even when they could have bought it elsewhere for less money. I was amazed to see the generosity and compassion in people.

Selling popcorn for my pack taught me how to interact with people. It also taught me

how to market and sell something. I learned how to be thankful and express gratitude to the people who supported our pack. One of the main things I learned was to be respectful and polite, even when someone did not want to buy anything from me.

When it was all over, I said, "That was so fun! I want to do it again!" It was an awesome learning experience as well as a great eye opener. I am not as shy anymore, and I will have lots of fun doing activities with my pack.

The Best Candy Ever
 By Mica Oler
 Grade 3, Mrs. Samon
 Bauder Elementary



One extraordinary day at 11:03, while I was writing this terrific story at school, my teacher was handing out **mouth watering Sour Patch Kids**.

I bit off a teeny tiny piece and "dunadunadun!" there was a party in my mouth! (Disco everyone!) I ate the whole entire pack, and yet I still wanted more yumminess! Sour Patch Kids are the **BEST** candy in the universe, and here are some reasons why.

The first reason I think Sour Patch Kids are the best candy in the universe is the way they look. They look like real kids, but covered in snow, they are all different colors, and if you lay them in an arch they look like a rainbow! The first time I had a Sour Patch Kid I was scared because I did not know what it would taste like, but once I smelled that sour sweetness I knew it would be great!

Another reason why I think Sour Patch Kids are the best candy in the universe is the way they taste. Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh man, boy do I love the taste! I can barely even describe it! The taste is like, like, like . . . the most tasty sour sensation you've ever had! Stupendous!!! I would pay a trillion dollars just for one Sour Patch Kid!

Now I hope you know that Sour Patch Kids are the best candy in the universe! I can't wait for the school Halloween party! Oh, sorry! Gotta go! My mom and I are going to buy 10,000 bags of Sour Patch Kids. Ba-bye! Oh, and Sour Patch Kids = yummy, if you somehow didn't know.



The Magical Cannonball

By Saranda Neziri
Grade 3
Mrs. Brooke Frahn
Eisenhower Elementary

It was a calm, quiet day in the deep blue sea and the happy dolphins were doing flips, the friendly fish were playing catch, and the beautiful mermaids were hanging out with the crabs, the fish, and the jellyfish. But suddenly the sky turned gray and the sea began twisting and turning. “THE PIRATES HAVE COME!” yelled the terrified ocean creatures. All the animals and mermaids rushed to hide, but one mermaid named Sara was playing in the water and accidentally caught her tail in between two rocks and couldn’t escape. The pirates saw her! When they did, they launched a cannonball towards her. But that cannonball was not an ordinary cannonball- it had wings, a face, arms, and legs. When Sara got free, she saw the cannonball coming towards her and she quickly dodged it. But, when she saw its face, she quickly grabbed it as it began to drop through the water and took it to the water’s surface. As she took it to the top of the water, the mermaid Sara asked, “What’s your name?” “My name is Lilly.” the young cannonball replied. “I don’t want to go live with the pirates. I want to have friends.” Lilly continued. “Well,” Sara said “You can live with me and be my friend if you like.” “YAY!” Lilly cheered. From that day forward, Lilly the magical cannonball and Sara the mermaid played together under the sea and lived together as best friends forever.



One Helpful Morning

By Isabella Horwitz
Grade 3, Mrs. Shontz
Tarpon Springs
Fundamental



I was watching TV in our house when I had to let my dog Ollie outside. A few minutes later, Ollie would NOT stop barking. I ran outside to see what happened and Ollie was trying to grab something moving in the bushes. All of the sudden, he caught it and started running, so I decided to run after him.

Finally, he stopped, and I looked at his mouth.

I stood there in silence.

I realized the small, scared moving object was a hurt bird. I ran inside to tell my Mom and my brother what had happened before Ollie had a chance to hurt it even more. “What??” my mom exclaimed. She grabbed a small basket and towel and ran outside. My Mom got the bird out of Ollie’s mouth, put it in the basket and covered it with the towel.

We drove to the nearest bird hospital. The cute baby bird stayed in the basket right next to Mom. I carried the bird into the hospital and a nice woman in a white coat and gloves took the basket from me and brought the bird into a room to examine and save him.

Rowan and I were a bit late for school that morning, but saving animals and people’s lives are way more important.

What a morning!



The Best Christmas Present Ever!

By Ava Rodriguez
Grade 3, Mrs. Shontz
Tarpon Springs Fundamental



I remember it like it was yesterday! My mother came into my bedroom and shook me softly. She said, "Wake up Ava! Hurry! I need you and your sisters to meet Daddy and me in the family room!" I felt like a zombie, trying to open my eyes and adjust them to the light. I glanced at the clock on the microwave, 5:30AM, as I slowly made my way to the couch. I remember thinking to myself, "What in the world could be so important that they would need to wake us up this early?"

Grace and Vivienne were already on the couch so I went and sat with them. We were all looking at each other wondering what was going on and where Daddy had gone. Mommy just sat there smiling at us. She said, "He's coming, give him a minute." A few minutes later, Daddy came

walking into the room holding a big Christmas box with a huge red bow! He set the box on the floor in front of the twinkling Christmas tree. All of a sudden, the corner of the box slowly opened and then quickly shut again. I thought I was dreaming and didn't know what to think. It actually scared me! Then, two tiny white paws and a nose popped out of the box, with a small head and big black, fluffy ears! I was so excited and could not believe my eyes! It was the cutest and fluffiest puppy I had ever seen! She jumped out of the box and ran over to me. I jumped on the floor and could not stop petting and hugging her. I remember asking my mother, "Am I dreaming?" She just laughed and said, "No, you are not."

All my prayers had been answered. My first dog, Snickers, went to doggy heaven when I was six years old. Every year since then, I asked my parents and Santa for a new puppy for Christmas. This year, my wish finally came true! She was the best Christmas present ever! I love my new puppy and named her Bella Boo!!



The New Baby

By Mya Rodriguez-Vargas
Grade 3

Ms. Salazar and Mr. Nibert
Ridgecrest Elementary



Nine months ago, my brother's wife told my family and I that she was pregnant. We were all very excited because there was a new baby coming. I was the most excited because there was a chance that it would be a girl. It could be like the younger sister I never had. I could share all my toys, show her how to read, play my favorite games, sing, and dance. A few months later, her belly grew, and we started to bet the gender. My whole family said a girl and my brother's family said a boy because they already had two boys and "were easy to handle". Also, they already had the clothes, stroller, crib, and toys from their two other boys in case.

Weeks later, they told my sister Nicole and I that they wanted to do something different for their third child like a gender surprise. My brother wanted to do dinner to share the gender of the baby and buy a cake to reveal it. The inside of the cake would be blue for

a boy or pink for a girl. I was exhilarated to finally know the gender. We tried eating dinner fast, so we could cut the cake. Finally, it was the answer I wanted to hear. It was pink!!! I was so overjoyed that I screamed at the top of my lungs. We were excited, but they realized they needed new clothes, dippers, a crib, stroller, and more.

After the gender bet, we started to guess the day the baby would be born. Her due date was November 22nd. I said she would be born on the 21st, my sister the 23rd, my mom 24th, and my dad the 25th but everybody lost the money that we bet. The days passed but she still didn't want to come out. We were joking around saying "Could she possibly be born on 28th? I hope not because that is the same day my sister is born and my aunt." I thought.

The 27th was stressful for them; because she started to feel the pain of the baby kicking and they worried about who was going to take care of their other boys. We found a solution, we'd take care of the boys. The 28th was when my brother's wife was in the hospital. We were all witnesses of the beauty of nature. The new baby arrived. We went to see the wonderful baby girl. Her name was Anila. I got to hold her, which was a very big deal. She was as small as a raisin or a bean. She even had to wear doll clothes, not literally, but very small clothes. I hope her brothers will take care for her and watch out for her I thought. I wish her luck on her journey of life. I will be the BEST aunt ever!!!!

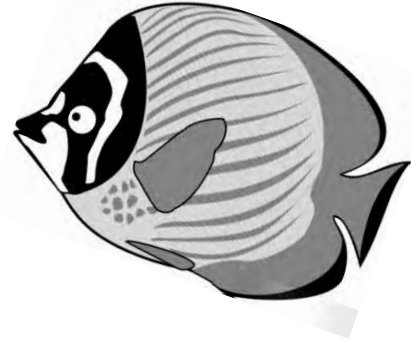
A Colorful Underwater Adventure

By Aitana Perez

Grade 3

Mrs. DeWese

Curtis Fundamental



Cold. Itchy. Uncomfortable. These are 3 things I felt when I was in the water. Who knew you had to suffer so much just to see a bunch of butterfly fish?

My family and I were in Cancun, Mexico in the Gulf swimming, as you already know from the title, in freezing water to a certain point in the ocean where there is a huge reef. My mom had heard about this reef on an ad and apparently, we “had” to go. We swam and swam. All I could hear was the splish splash of my feet and legs smacking against the water. Finally, my dad made a signal to go to the surface. “We are here, Welcome to the coral reef,” he said.

We dove under the water again and saw the sight of a million colorful coral: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, and more. I felt the joy go into my eyes and through my body. *OMG!* I thought to myself. *What a sight!* My mom was a picture-taking machine and my brother of course was swimming after butterfly fish.

With my family happy and discovering the underwater world, I felt pretty satisfied and amazed by what I saw. I swam around the coral, around the fish, and thought to myself... I really had no idea that all that suffering I went through in the beginning would be worth it, and that it would all fade away.

Publisher's Note: We are delighted to publish our first piece of writing written in Spanish, the writer's native language. In addition, we've included a short summary of the story since translating it into English would compromise its meaning.

We hope you enjoy Valery's piece titled La bailarina del campo (The Field Ballerina).



La bailarina del campo

By Valery Andrea Barahona
Grade 3
Mrs. Loveland
Skycrest Elementary

Erase una vez una bailarina que vivía en

una hermosa casa al lado de una quebrada. Un día la mamá la mando a recoger los frutos de los árboles para hacer una ensalada, ese día estaba haciendo mucho calor así que tomo agua de la quebrada, le doy sueño empezó a bostezar, cuando termino de recoger todos los frutos regreso a casa para seguir ayudando a su mamá.

Después de cenar como era costumbre empezaron a bailar, de esta manera practicaba junto a su madre, ya que pronto iba a ser la competencia mas importante del año.

Pronto fue hora de dormir así que su madre la llevo a la cama y se despidió diciendo ¡todo lo que te propongas lo puedes lograr! Ella se quedo profunda. Al otro día cuando despertó movió su mano y se dio cuenta que salían una especie de chispas, pensó que era magia, pero no solo estaba muy dormida. Solo faltaban tres días para la competencia así que tenia que ayudar a su madre para dejar todo listo ya que tenían que viajar a la ciudad y el camino era muy largo desde la montaña.

Pronto tomaron el camino hacia el lugar donde podían tomar un autobús a la ciudad, era un viaje de 8 horas, así que llevaron consigo algo de comer . Cuando llegaron a la ciudad la bailarina se sorprendió mucho ya que nunca había visto tantos carros y edificios. Al llegar a el lugar donde era la competencia todo el mundo se quedó mirándola ya que no llevaba un traje de valet para presentarse ante los jueces, lo que la puso triste, pensaba que no podría presentarse, pero uno de los jueces le dijo que no se preocupara, que mostrara su talento sin importar que llevara puesto.

Ella hizo su baile tal como lo había practicado en su casa, los jueces se sorprendieron de su talento y la nombraron ganadora, uno de sus premios fue su traje de valet, lo que la hizo muy feliz.

Pero lo mas importante es mostrar lo que eres, lo que sabes y perseguir tus sueños con esfuerzo y constancia.



The Field Ballerina

(a summary)

By Valery Andrea Barahona

This story is about a ballerina who lives on a farm with her family. She signed up for a dancing competition in the big city. The day of the competition, the ballerina and her mom traveled eight hours to get to the place where the competition was going to take place. She was excited and worried at the same time since she didn't have a ballet costume to do her presentation. She felt inadequate when she arrived at the competition, but the judges encouraged her to do her performance. The judges were thrilled when they saw how talented she was. She won the competition and a ballet costume.

“The most important thing is to show what you are, what you know, and pursue your dreams with effort and perseverance.”

Fourth Grade Writing



- | | | | |
|----|--|----|--|
| 60 | Ja'lysseia Turner
Sarah Rider | 75 | Layla Brijbag |
| 61 | Naveen Yengera
Kai Lopez
Sunny Lanier
Ainsley Horvath | 76 | Megan Lawler
Latravia Rainey |
| 62 | Samantha Bates
Stephanie Kerbaj | 77 | Victoria Teixeira |
| 63 | Elaina Esposito
Rocco LoCascio | 79 | Skyler Connors-
Lewis
Carli Thornton |
| 64 | Yazmin Gathe-
Lozano
Jenevieve Bedgood | 80 | Aakash Pondugula |
| 65 | Indira Yengera
Abigail Stevens | 81 | Hope Isbitts |
| 66 | Joy Santiago | 82 | Karsen Kubik |
| 67 | Vanessa Koufogazos | 83 | Jai Akshar Popuri |
| 68 | Mark Do
Chase Eyde | 84 | Aelyn Peirson |
| 69 | Konrad Grzadziel | 85 | Karina Jahrling |
| 70 | Sololiya Ebba | 86 | Amelia McNeill |
| 71 | Avery Erickson
India Graham | | |
| 72 | Thomas Magro
Justyna Kukula | | |
| 73 | Alana Samson | | |



Sundays at IHOP
 By Ja'lysseia Turner
 Grade 4, Ms. Nichols
 Pinellas Central
 Elementary

Routines are something you can always count on. Every Sunday morning my dad calls me and asks if I want to go to IHOP, and every

Sunday morning my answer is the same...yes. Before he hangs up I ask my dad if I can bring my cousin Mira and he says yes and tells me he will be there at 10:30. Mira and I get ready. She puts on a long black dress and I put on a long pink dress to make sure we look good for my dad. My dad calls me and says he's outside, I run outside and I see my dad. I run up to him and give him a big hug.

In the car I think to myself about what I will get when we get to IHOP. I'm thinking I will get a cupcake pancake or a Silver 5 which is bacon, eggs, and pancakes. When we get to IHOP Mira gets the Silver 5. She gets it because she knows I was going to get that, so I decide on cupcake pancakes. The sprinkles and ice cream on top make my decision easy. Somehow my twin sisters, Damesha and Daneshe, always show up too. I guess they know the routine also. Danesha gets a cheeseburger and Damesha gets waffles and chicken.

When it's time to go my dad never leaves me empty handed. He fills my hand with 15 dollars and says he will pick me up next Sunday. I say "I love you Daddy, see you next Sunday." All week long I think about what I will order the next Sunday at IHOP with Dad.

The Day We Found the House

By Sarah Rider
 Grade 4
 Mrs. Amy Ward
 Garrison-Jones
 Elementary



We were on our way back from our vacation when my dad spotted something.

My dad had told my mom, sister and I about the house his grandparents lived in.

One day we were on our way back from out of state vacation and my dad spotted it. We pulled over and took a look. It looked like the termites got there before us. Way before us! When we went inside we walked right into a screened in room. It looked like a porch but it was the same level as the house.

Next we walked into something that looked like the living room. We started looking around.

"What are these?" I asked.

"Those are my old marbles," said my dad.

Then he showed us all the other dirty rooms. We walked out and started looking around the yard. I started to complain because the grass was tall and itchy.

Last, we left and when we got home I put the marbles somewhere safe. I still have them to this day.





I Am Unique
By Naveen Yengera
Grade 4
Ms. Amy Shuttleworth
Ridgecrest Elementary



I live in a faraway galaxy.
I rest on top of a purple plum tree.
I look through bunches of purple
shrubbery.
I have purple friends who play with me.
I feel radiant purple sun rays shining on
me.
I feel that I'm someone no one will eat,
for
I feel that I am someone unique.
I am a blue plum.



The Cave
By Kai Lopez
Grade 4
Ms. Rayfield/
Ms. Cate
Douglas L. Jamerson
Elementary

Cold, wet air.
Murky, deep water.
Muddy, gleamy crystals.
Smooth, soggy footprints.
Loud, echoing voices.
Bright, orange stripes.
Hanging stalactites.
Jutting stalagmites.
Exploring a cave.

The Weeping Willow
By Sunny Lanier
Grade 4
Mrs. Whitehouse
Bauder Elementary



Why does the weeping
willow weep?
Is it because poor
willow can't sleep?
It's my favorite tree.
It's very beautiful, you see.
The leaves get larger and longer as it
grows.
In the breeze, it flows.
The minty green and dark pink leaves
drift.
Yet the vine like leaves never lift.
Always hanging down,
Sadder than a frown.
I find great shelter in your shade,
But your sadness will never fade.
Weeping willow stop your tears.
Is there something to calm your fears?
You're different from all trees around.
Nobody knows why your leaves and
branches touch the ground.

The Sunshine State
A poem by
Ainsley Louise Horvath
Grade 4, Mrs. Carly Jones
Tarpon Springs Fundamental



Florida beaches
Salty air and rolling waves
I play in the surf

Florida swamplands
Gators lurk in still waters
Eagles nest above

Florida cities
Cars honking packed with people
Always lots of noise



The Day I Met a Unicorn

By Samantha Bates
Grade 4
Mr. Francis Blacklin
Curtis Fundamental

About six weeks ago, I had a photo shoot with a unicorn. This was a special present that my mom and dad got me for being so brave all the time. A few weeks before, we went shopping to get the perfect dress. We picked one that had pink on bottom and cream on the top. There were sparkles everywhere with a lace overlay. My mom said it, “fit me like a glove.” The day of the shoot my mom curled my hair with a curling iron for what seemed like hours. Then she did my make-up as together we talked about which colors would look the best. Once I put my dress on, the final touch was a beautiful head band with pale pink roses on it. When I looked in the mirror, I couldn’t believe my eyes! I looked like a princess. Once we got to the farm, I saw a pony who had a horn and his bridle was decorated with flowers that matched my dress exactly. I learned the unicorn’s names was Macaroni. When it was time to begin, I took off my jacket and it was freezing! At first I was nervous but my mom, dad and sister Alex were there telling me to relax and have fun. Gently, I reached out to touch Macaroni with hesitation. I was surprised by how soft and fuzzy he was. Even though it was cold Macaroni’s velvety, thick fur kept me warm. After a few minutes of getting to know one another, the unicorn and I became good friends. When he didn’t pay attention the photographer

gave me “unicorn food” to feed him so that he would stay still for the picture. We did a lot of poses. For one, I got down on my knees and put my face right up against his. We were practically nose to nose! The funniest picture was when we used my stuffed animal unicorn that I had brought with me. The photographer thought it would be interesting to see how Macaroni would react. He seemed to like it and kept his head still when I brought it to him. I did not want this experience to be over. But when it was, I gave Macaroni one last hug and waved goodbye. This was a time that I will never forget. I mean how many people can say that they have met a unicorn? It was magical!

Self-Power

By Stephanie Kerbaj
Grade 4, Mr. Blacklin
Curtis Fundamental Elementary



I won’t be told I can’t
I’ll rise above and prove I can
I won’t be told to give up
I’ll find a way to fight and make it up
I won’t be told I fight like a girl
Or be told to fight more like a boy
I will be an equal
I will be seen by my sequel
My confidence will define me
So, I will fight like me and no one can
stop me
And that is what I like to call Self-Power
to its finest



The Tortoise and the Hare

By Elaina Esposito
Grade 4, Mrs. Carney
Gulf Beaches
Elementary

Ring Ring Ring!
Oh, sorry that was my
alarm. Oh hi! I am Hare
and I have a very big

race with a tortoise. Hahaha yeah of course I am going to win. I am a very fast animal and he is so slow. So, I got on my racing gear and I saw tortoise on the way and I said, "hi, ready to race?" He was in his pjs! I said, "You're racing in your pjs?" He said "oh oops!" I laughed. Ok, ok I know I sound like the bad guy but who wears there pjs to a race. I'm sorry I have to be nicer. Anyway, we went to the starting line and he was changed out of his pjs. So, Luis and Jace said, "On your marks, get set, Go!!" I was about fifty feet ahead of him so I decided to take a nap. All of a sudden, I heard footsteps. I peeked out of my eye and the next thing I knew, I saw him go under the DO NOT CROSS line!!! I did not want to cause a problem, but I remember Luis and Jace saying not to go under the *do not cross line* because it was a shortcut. So, he Is a cheater!!!! But I was not going to be a cheater with him so I went to the right path and I ran as fast as I could, but by the time I got there he was done holding the trophy and everything. I tried to tell the Luis and Jace, but they did not believe me. So that's the real story. Now you know the truth.



Dreaming

By Rocco LoCascio
Grade 4
Mrs. Summer Torres
Tarpon Springs
Fundamental



Close your eyes,
And go to sleep.
If you have trouble,
Just count some sheep.

Close your eyes,
It's what you do.
The dreams you make,
Are made by you.

Close your eyes,
And dream a dream.
It is much easier
Than it may seem.

Close your eyes,
Imagine something green.
Dream you are eating
A big bowl of beans.

Close your eyes,
Imagine something black.
Dream you are driving
Down a long racetrack.

Close your eyes,
Now it's midnight.
The nightmares you have
Are full of fright.

Close your eyes,
Why won't you sleep?
Oh no! It's your alarm.
It's ringing, "Beep beep!"





The Flamingo Story

By Yazmin Gathe-Lozano
Grade 4
Mrs. Brooke Frahn
Eisenhower Elementary

It was a beautiful sunny day and three flamingoes were getting their food- delicious underground worms. But, later that week as they were once again searching for food, they could not find any and soon they ran out of fresh food to eat. They moved to the pond in the hopes of finding new food. When the flamingoes put their bright pink beaks under the water to check, all the fish swam away. The fish were scared of the flamingoes because they were so big compared to them. In the flamingo’s mind, the fish looked so delicious that they wanted to eat them. After all, the flamingoes were starving to death because they had not eaten any worms for days and that was their favorite thing to eat. The flamingoes tried to catch the shimmery fish but they swam away too fast. But, one brave little fish started to talk to the flamingoes. The fish said, “Hi! Why do you keep coming into our pond?” One flamingo replied, “We are trying to find food because we ran out of our usual food.” The little fish said, “What are you going to eat now?” “Uhhh” said the flamingo nervously. The fish eyed the flamingo carefully and said, “Why are you acting so nervous?” The flamingo broke down and decided he had to tell the little fish the truth. The flamingo was scared. The flamingo did not know how to say it. But the flamingo just yelled it out and said, “I WANT TO TRY FISH!” She also added that they looked delicious. The fish got both sad and scared and told her “I better go”. The flamingo thought to herself “Why did I say that?” The flamingo felt bad because of what happened with the little fish. An hour later, the friendly fish the flamingo had been talking to came back with a few dead fish. The flamingo said, “Where did you get all the dead fish?” The fish replied, “A shark was selling them, so I bought them for

you.” The flamingo smiled and said, “Thank you!” This is why flamingoes eat fish...except for their best fishy friends of course.

Puerto Rico

By Jenevieve Bedgood
Grade 4, Mrs. Whitehouse
Bauder Elementary



Oh Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico,
We know when Hurricane Irma and
Maria hit you had to go,
Now we know,
We know that when you left,
The Hurricanes destroyed your homes,
All that was left,
Were houses of domes,
Oh Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico,
We hope you are ok,
But some people don’t have anywhere to
go,
So they have to stay anyway,
Oh Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico,
We hope that you get healthy again,
So that people can stay and enjoy the
view as long as they can.





Let's Make Fudge

Indira Yengera
Grade 4, Ms. Shuttleworth
Ridgecrest Elementary

“Mmmm, this is yummy,” I said. I was eating ravioli for dinner on a quiet December night, listening to piano music. “Who wants to make fudge?!” my mom

asked with enthusiasm. I suddenly stopped eating. I was filled with excitement. We were finally going to make the New Year’s Eve fudge. I am a girl who loves cooking and baking. However, I have never made fudge before, so I was doubly excited. Though I had not finished my ravioli, I told my mom that I was ready to begin making what she calls her favorite holiday dessert tradition from her mom (my Grandma Johnston). Grandma Johnston passed away over seven years ago. I remember her so well, and the thought of making her fudge recipe made me a little sad but mostly happy at the same time.

My mom told me to put two cups of Nestle semi-sweet chocolate morsels into the measuring cup. After I measured the dreamy chocolate chips, I put them in the pot so they could melt. My mom had a can of opened condensed milk in her hand and gave it to me. She told me to put it in the pot. I love condensed milk. I put it in the pot. Vanilla extract and butter were added, too. I mixed the ingredients for a little while and then finished my dinner. I had visions of how the fudge would look. My mom finished mixing it and put it in a pan.

“We need to keep it in the fridge for two hours,” mom explained. Two hours seemed like a long time. When it was finally done, I could smell the aroma of the chocolate concoction. It was the best smell! I was so thrilled! I helped my mom cut it into squares. It tasted 100% awesome! The whole family ate a few pieces that night, and we saved the rest for New Year’s Eve.



Butterfly Garden

By Abigail Stevens
Grade 4, Mrs. Crose
Seminole Elementary School



The butterfly garden was peaceful and quiet.

There I stood watching the leaf like creatures flutter like beautiful orange flowers on a tree.

I was alone but suddenly felt crowded.

The butterfly garden is a perfect place for thought. How I wish to hear those soft wing beats that are like tiny whispers among the clouds again.





The Flood in the Philippines

By Joy Santiago
Grade 4

Ms. Blaeser/Ms. Cate
Jamerson Elementary

When I was 4 years old, there was a flood in Manila, Philippines, where I was born. I still remember the terrifying experience of being inside rushing waves, crashing down on me. I still feel the chills the flood gave to me today. I had no idea what I was getting into when I was only 4. It was a horrible experience.

It all began when I was at my house with my grandma and grandpa while my parents and sister were at a birthday party. I heard rain pouring down like hail on the roof. Shortly after I heard the rain, thunder boomed and lightning crashed through the wet, heavy, gray clouds. Tears started flowing down my face as it all just got louder. I was afraid of the lightning and thunder.

My grandma and grandpa assured me that everything was perfectly fine, but I knew there was something wrong...incredibly wrong. I still didn't understand what the problem was. All I knew was that there was danger. The TV was on and I heard that people were trying to leave the area. I stayed cautious.

Throughout the morning, the loud splashes just kept on getting worse! I said to myself, "This isn't good!" After 3 whole hours of being terrified in the corner of the living room, I saw my Grandma hang up the telephone. My Grandma finally said the words I was wanting to hear.

"Your mommy and daddy are coming!" she said. I was overjoyed until I heard more lightning and thunder. Then, instead of feeling happy, I felt bad for them because they had to come home though this pouring rain.

I went to the front door waiting and waiting patiently for my parents to come. It felt like I had to wait forever. In reality, it only took roughly 30 minutes, but it felt like hours! I was so bored of waiting I just fell asleep. I finally felt peaceful, though that was the only few minutes I was happy.

When I woke up, my Grandma told me something that made me smile. She said that my mommy and daddy were outside the door. Grandma opened the door and my smile turned into a frown. I quickly remembered the scary rain, thunder and lightning. I took one look at my soaking wet parents and was scared all over again.

I was brave enough to peek outside the door. My eyes widened. My heart sank. The streets were completely flooded. Water was up to the door of everyone's houses. That explained everything. No wonder my parents had such a hard time getting home.

We needed to think of a plan to get away without getting injured. No one had any ideas and we lost all hope, but then my mom never gave up and thought of an idea! It was insane but that was the only plan we had, so we tried and it worked! Her crazy plan was to use the car as a makeshift raft. We were all helping including me! The water had already risen high enough to put my mom's idea into action.

We all piled into the car and started to drift away. We thought it might be safer to be on the roof, so I climbed onto the roof of the car. All of the sudden, a wave came in that made me fall off. I was holding on to the car mirror for dear life and screamed as loud as possible. In the nick of time, my dad was able to grab me by the arm and pull me back onto the roof.

I don't remember how we got out of this situation, but once we were all safe, my mom thought of another plan. It was to go to the airport and go somewhere far away. My dad suggested America. It was only a day away. So, we all got our tickets and went to America.

When we got there, I smiled for the first time in forever. That is how I came to America.



Singing for Hope

By Vanessa Koufogazos
Grade 4
Mrs. Tracy Smith
Cypress Woods
Elementary

What makes your
Christmas each year?
Presents? Cookies?

Well, not mine. During the Christmas season, I get to go to different Greek societies and restaurants and sing Greek traditional carols with my Greek School classmates. My favorite caroling visit is to Post Corner Pizza each year. It is my favorite, not because they have the best pizza, but because of the magic of Christmas. Each year, the children from Hope Children's Home are invited for a Christmas dinner to Post Corner and my Greek school friends and I bring them Christmas gifts and sing Greek Christmas carols with them. Hope house is a place where kids that have no parents are cared for.

As my friends and I were getting ready outside with our red scarves, carol books and instruments, we looked through the window and noticed the top floor of the pizzeria was bustling with kids.

My friend Tatianna and I locked eyes with tears welling up, and she said, "I know." We knew there were about 100 children and that we were there to bring them a moment of joy.

The children from Hope House were full of smiles and attention as we entered the restaurant and walked up the staircase. We lined up on the stairs 3 kids deep ready to sing. This is the 4th year that our Greek School has sung to these children. The kids were all sweet and their lives are so hard but we make a part of their Christmas special each year.

We started to get prepared to sing to the kids. We introduced ourselves and by the time we were ready, it was time to bring joy to the kids' faces. We gave each child a phonetic page of the Greek carols and then

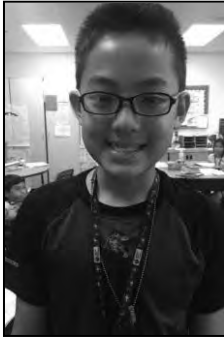
we all began singing together. Even though the kids were not Greek, they sang along and got the words out of their mouths. Cool, right? We sang songs like Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer and Silent Night all in Greek. Then, we sang the carols in English and it felt like the restaurant was shaking from all the voices of joy.

Just watching the kids following along with the phonetic Greek carols was so heartwarming because they haven't ever even heard these words before, which was amazing! As the singing came to an end, the principal of my Greek school told all the children from Hope House that they were now "honorary Greeks". They laughed and felt proud.

But the fun didn't end there. For the past 3 months, all the kids and parents of the Greek school donated money and toys for the Hope House kids. All of a sudden, some of the Greek school dads came up the stairs with six bike bags filled with toys and a special card with \$400. Seeing the kids' faces light up like a light bulb (like Rudolph), was the best part of the night. As the bags were placed in front of the food tables, we went and met the kids individually. I went to talk to them and I learned a lot of new names. They were the sweetest kids ever and their caretakers were super nice too! We wished them Merry Christmas and told them that we would see them again next year.

My Christmas was made more special by the kids of Hope House. Their happy faces, even with all their struggles, made me see that these kids are pretty special. This experience has helped me see all the good in the world too.





Mountain Fall
 By Mark Do
 Grade 4, Ms. Smith
 Skyview Elementary

It all started with the climb. We were climbing a mountain in Vietnam. The mountain was extremely steep. It was over two thousand feet up. We kept

climbing the steep mountain and it was almost straight up. There was sweat rolling down my forehead because of how high we were. We were already five hundred feet up or so, I think.

We kept climbing and there were many animals like bugs, bunnies and squirrels. I thought I was going to fall and break a bone. We were so high up, Anna, Cathy, Miah, mom and dad started to shiver if they looked down. I think we were about eight hundred feet up now.

I was shivering even though I was not looking down. It was sunny up there. I was so scared I wanted to go home. Green trees covered the mountain and a flock of ducks flew over us. Green and yellow grass grew everywhere around the muddy mountain. We were so very high up. We were one thousand five hundred feet up. We rested on a higher cliff. The rocks on this cliff was full of ants. We kept being bit one by one. I was full of ant bites. My stomach was growling. I had sweat coming down my forehead.

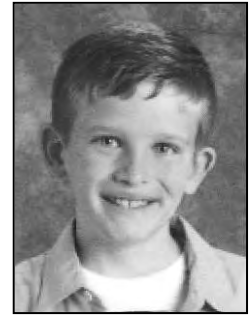
I tried to make myself comfortable, but it didn't work. Everyone was tired so we kept resting. A few of us fell asleep. I looked down the edge of the peak. Then I approached the edge. When I got to the edge I stumbled. I broke my left arm and my family hurried me to the hospital. I was lucky I landed on a pile of leaves or else I could have died.

Once we arrived at the hospital they started treating me. They carried me away to X-ray. My arm was completely snapped in half. They put a cast on me and gave us a wheelchair. Once we got home, I went right to bed to rest. One year later...my arm had healed. My arm could write now and I could even swim again. I could do anything! I learned my lesson. Do not do what I did. Do not go to the highest part of the mountain. If you do, then please be careful and do not fall off!



Blaze Blend
 By Chase Eyde
 Grade 4

Ms. Blaeser/Ms. Cate
 Douglas L. Jamerson
 Elementary



Swish! Swish! A lizard fell into the pool. Water sloshed into his eyes. "Ohhhh! Poor lizard!" my sister Charley said. Charley picked the lizard up.

He zipped away. "We should have called him Blaze!" I said. We went searching for him and finally found him on porch screen. We noticed he really blended in with the screen. "We should name him Blaze Blend!!!" both Charley and I shouted at the same time.

We left him on the screen, but decided to play with him for a while. We talked to Blaze Blend, petted, and played with him. When my sister threw dirt on little Blaze, I yelled, "STOP!" But by a look in his tiny eye, he didn't seem to mind. Surprisingly, he stayed put. I ran inside to get a camera. Suddenly, Charley scurried inside and said, "HE IS MOVING!" I raced about the house. I checked the closets, drawers and under the beds. I finally got the camera. I took some really cool videos and pictures.

After the photo shoot, we thought Blaze Blend wanted to leave. We put a long stick under his leg so he could climb down. His little leg snatched up the stick and balanced it on the ground, so his leg and the stick both were out further on the ground, making him look like an old man holding a cane.

While he fiddled with the stick, I took more videos and pet him. We also fed him. Well, we couldn't catch flies. Or ants. Or gnats. He just started eating DIRT. As he played and showered and ate, he drifted off to sleep. Charley's soft singing voice probably did it. While we all rested, I realized Charley was the one who found this little lizard. I gave her a hug. I was so happy that she had found Blaze Blend.

Since we did not want him to go into the pool again, we put him on a big, yellow rubber duck. Of course, the duck was NOT in the pool. Blaze Blend raced to the top of the duck. He nipped at the bright blue party hat. He cuddled with the hat for a long, boring, time. Then I put him on a blue book. He loved that, too.

We knew that he would die if we didn't release him. So eventually, we let him go, to discover rest of the world. You know? We still think he is around somewhere...eating dirt.

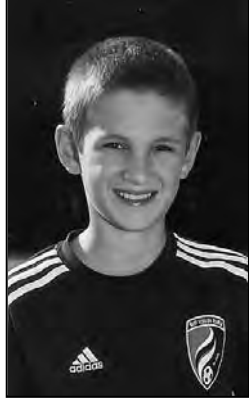
Hurricane Irma

By Konrad Grzadziel

Grade 4

Mrs. Patricia Choi (Sing Ling)

Ridgecrest Elementary



Have you ever witnessed a hurricane? No really like outside? Well now you will know a story of me (the airplane) witnessing the hurricane. I am a small charter plane with not so powerful engines like big passenger jet. I am made from metal and plastic and I am not able to face strong wind speeds. A family of four, parents with two kids, came to me at an airport. They were trying to evacuate from Puerto Rico to Georgia. They came the very last minute and my pilot (and owner) told them to enter onboard. I was thinking, are they taking a trip with me during the HURRICANE. I was freaking out and I was thinking if I would survive; would I get broken and my pilot and passengers die. "Let's go" pilot said and all started preparing for takeoff.

The flight started. After one hour, the news announced on a radio that Irma changes the track, but the pilot was not aware of that. Why did they take me? Am I an unwanted plane? I thought, as more thoughts zoomed through my steel head. I could not tell the pilot to get out of the enormous hurricane, but it would be impossible for me to do that. The pilot found out about the hurricane eventually and announced that Irma is coming towards us. The kids onboard were laughing and playing on their iPads, they didn't even hear the news. Mother said, "Kids stop laughing, we are in danger, we are going to go through

hurricane Irma." The kids grumbled "okay" and then it started... the hurricane slashed me with its extraordinary wind speeds. I realized that I was getting scared to death, wait... I am a plane, I do not have feelings. We started going up and up but we could not get over the hurricane. Suddenly wood chunks started flying around and hitting me: BAM, BAM, CRASH, BOOM. More objects started soaring over and under me and made contacts with my airplane body. This was my worst nightmare coming true, it was terrifying and completely unreal to my eyes. Luckily the hurricane weakened from a category five to a category one. It looked like Irma was moving a little to the opposite of where we are going. One minute later we went to the eye of the hurricane. It was so peaceful; the sky was platinum blue with little clouds in sight. My metal body was shining like a huge, yellow sun. I thought it is over, but it was not! In a few minutes, I slowed down because the darkness appeared in front of us. The sky was packed with midnight black clouds. It looked like we are about to crash the wall. It was a rough ride through the wall of the eye again but then farther, surprisingly, it was a normal thunder storm. Now it looked like the pilot was trying to get out of the hurricane. Then a miracle happened the hurricane changed track again and left us in the ruins. The family slowly started to look out the window. The hurricane was gone in its tracks. The pilot lowered the speed and then brought the family food, they all ate. Everybody was happy that the hurricane is gone.

"We are safe!" the pilot happily announced on the microphone. "Kids we are now safe," father said. I could not believe we made it. All I got was a couple of scratches and dents. Everybody was relieved and happy that we are safe. Trust me, do not try to go outside during a hurricane, you are going to regret that. I will always remember this terrifying experience in the hurricane Irma.





Over the Rainbow

By Sololiya Ebba

Grade 4

Ms. Schroeder

Curtis Fundamental

This winter break, my family and I went on a big trip to Ethiopia. We went to see my family. We stayed at my aunt's house.

My cousin, Mary, truly showed us what (or who) was Over the Rainbow.

It all started on a warm, sunny afternoon in Addis Ababa (the capital city of Ethiopia.) My brother Kebor and I were playing a soccer match while we were waiting to play with our cousin Mary. Once we finished playing, we went inside to get a drink and as I went to put my glass in the sink I saw a little shack over the fence. "Hey Mary, can I ask you a question?" I inquire.

"What's up?" Mary asks.

"Who lives in that little shack over there?"

"Oh," Mary's facial expression turns from confused to understanding.

"Hey Kebor!" Mary calls. "I've got something to show you and your sister here."

"What?! What is it? What is it? Tell me!" my brother tugs on Mary's shirt.

"Typical Kebor!" Mary and I say in unison.

"Let's just go. I think you guys are going to get a new friend that you are never going to forget," Mary says.

2 minutes later...

"Guys, this is Yabsera's house," Mary explains to us.

"Can we go inside?" My brother asks. Mary takes a deep breath and says, "Yes."

Once we go in from the outside gate, we see no door to the kitchen. The room is connected to a room with a single bed, a portable TV, and a sunken in ceiling. On the bed were two children. A boy, who was probably Yabsera, and a baby girl, who I guessed was his sister. We stood there for a while. Then I stood up and asked the boy, "What is your name?" The boy just looked at me.

"Uh, Mary. What is he doing?" I inquire. "Oh, yeah. Yabsera only speaks Amharic," (Ethiopian language) Mary says. "Ok. Manew Simeh?" I asked. (That is 'what's your name?' in Amharic) "Yabsera, Anches?" he says. (That is 'what's yours?' in Amharic.) "Sololiya," I say. He talks to Mary some more and Mary tells us that he will be right over.

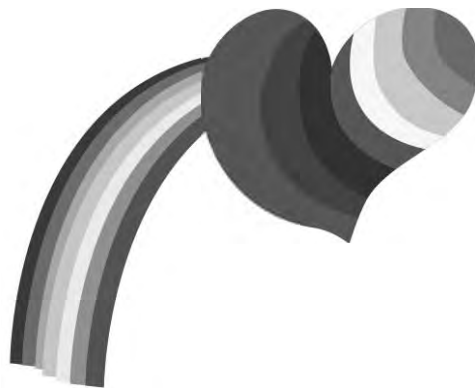
As we were walking home, Mary asks us what we thought of the house. "It's very small," my brother states.

"You guys!" Mary stops walking so she can make sure that we are paying attention and listening. "When you look at that house, aren't you grateful for what you have? Aren't you happy you don't have to worry about money? Aren't you joyful that you come home every day to a roof over your head? Be very grateful of what you have."

"Okay!" we say.

My brother and I played with Yabsera everyday and had so much fun together. And to this day, my brother and I remember Yabsera as a friend and will never forget him. He taught me a lesson that I will treasure forever. He showed me that no matter what kind of house you live in, no matter what condition you live in, you are who you are and you should be proud of what you have and you should never look down at yourself. He taught me happiness does not come from the things we own, but happiness is Love.

So I wish to be just like him and enjoy my family and friends and not take anything for granted. Yabsera will always be my friend, because this kid is truly Over the Rainbow.





Gaga Ball

By Avery Erickson
Ms. Rayfield/Ms. Cate
Douglas Jamerson
Elementary

(Gaga Ball is a game with a ball. You stand in an octagonal pit. There can be as many people playing as you want. You can have 2 hits, then you have to hit the ball on the wall, if it hasn't already. You try to hit the ball at people's knees and below, and if you get hit, you're out. Also, if you hit it out of the pit, you're out.)

Gaga Ball, I thought to myself. How hard can it be? So, I trotted into the pit. Oh! I had no idea it would be so fun! I had to jump, swerve and pound my fist on the ball. I wasn't the best, but by looking back at the game and thinking about how I played, I was able to learn some invaluable techniques.

After taking a break from Gaga Ball, I did some other things like swimming, archery, and riflery. Then I tried again Gaga Ball again. I put what I learned into practice. I ran, curved, jumped, and swerved. I was what some people might call a Gaga Ball Master. I was knocking out people one after the other... 1,2,3,4,5,6,7 people, and so on. I had knocked out as many people as I could, except for one person-- Carson. Now, it was me vs. Carson.

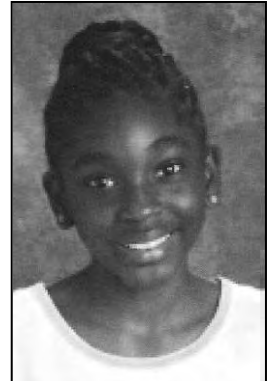
He was the best player. I had heard rumors that he had gotten bloody knuckles from playing. I never thought I'd come head to head with h-h-him. "G-G-Get me if you can!" I stuttered. Then, I started running around the perimeter. He took his shot and missed. I got the ball and I hit him on the leg. I won! I couldn't believe it!

I took one look at Carson and knew that he was mad. I was, well,

overjoyed. I was happy and over excited. I felt like I was jumping through clouds. This was one of the happiest days of my life!

Giving Is Better Than Receiving

By India Graham
Grade 4
Ms. Anderson/Ms. Cate
Douglas L. Jamerson



It was December 25th and there were presents scattered all over the living room floor. I was amazed! "Oh my gosh! Look at all of these presents"! I dug through the piles searching for my biggest present.

My mom said, "Stop digging. Your biggest present is not in the pile. It is behind you." I looked back and behind me was a big, blue bike. I was so excited that I hugged the bike hard enough to have pressure marks on both cheeks.

But, that wasn't the only present for me. On the other side of me was a pile of presents with my name on them. "Yay," I screeched. I opened the gifts one after another, but in the back of my mind I was still waiting for the one gift I had always wanted. Deep down, I realized that my greatest hope wasn't in the pile of presents. A tiny, white puppy wouldn't be in a box. I knew I was never going to get a puppy; my mom doesn't like animals in the house. I felt melancholy inside. But I didn't show it.

Instead, I was thankful for what I got because a lot of people don't have things to give or to keep. I knew what was more important--giving. Then I remembered, I still had presents to give to my family.

"Thank you!" Everyone shouted as I gave my family their gifts. The lesson I learned that Christmas was *it's better to give than receive*.





Zoom! Zoom!
 By Thomas Magro
 Grade 4
 Mrs. Quinn
 Tarpon Springs Fundamental

What if you are thirsty while you are watching your favorite TV show? If you have the power of super speed you can just speed to the fridge and speed back without missing a minute. Super speed is the best super power to have.

First of all, time is limited and you have to use it wisely. Having the ability of super speed will allow me to get places faster. For example, I could get places super-fast if I was going to be late. Also, if I wanted to be first to Target to get a toy or something. Think how easy that would be. I could zoom in and zoom out. In addition, if there was a traffic jam I could just speed out of it. What if you were going to a party and you got the wrong time? You could just race there. Super speed would save a lot of time.

Second of all, having the ability of super speed can help you get out of harm's way. One example, is if there was something big falling you could dash far away. In addition, if there was a tsunami you could just run super far away. What if you were stuck in a burning forest with no type of communication? You could just bolt out and tell the fire department in less than a minute. Also, if you lived near a jail where there was a prison break and the prisoner was a murderer coming after you, you could dart super far away and he could never catch you. Super speed could save you from a lot of things.

Super speed is the best super power to have. With the power of super speed you can get places faster. Also, with the power of super speed you can get out of harm's way. Consider asking for the power for Christmas. Wink! Wink!



The Big Fair
 By Justyna Anna Kukula
 Grade 4
 Mrs. Kenngott
 Plumb Elementary



I woke up in the morning feeling refreshed. A good night's sleep and wonderful breakfast smells filled up my nose. As I walked to the kitchen, I could see Dad packing bags because today was the day Dad was taking us to the Florida State Fair.

The car ride wasn't long. We were there in thirteen minutes. We parked by a tree, then Dad took out his backpack, and we walked to the line. In school we got free tickets so only Dad had to pay for his ticket.

Once inside there was a big building and inside there were many little stores selling souvenirs, but some were selling weird things like bathtubs. Then outside we went to buy ride bands. Later we searched for food. My brothers, Patryk and Matthew, and Dad got gator while I stuck with chicken on a stick.

Next, we decided to go on a couple of mazes. Afterwards, we took turns picking out rides. Later, we took the skyline to the other side of the fair. Next, we played on bouncy houses for a long time. Now I needed something to drink! Soon Patryk went on a very high merry-go-round and a roller coaster.

Exhausted, we drove home. I had so much fun at the fair that I fell asleep immediately once we got home.





How I Met My Family

By Alana Samson
Grade 4, Mrs. Anderson
Ridgecrest Elementary

This is the story of how I met my family. I was the smallest of six puppies. When it was feeding time, my brothers and sisters were always faster than me, so I never got enough milk to drink. One afternoon, my mom, dad, siblings, and I went for a walk in the woods. I had to work hard to keep up with my siblings. We were in the middle of the woods when all of a sudden, a scary raccoon came out and we all scattered. I ran to the safety of a tree hollow and called for my mom. When she never answered, I set off to find her and got lost in a strange town. My tummy had grumbled loudly, so I went from door to door, scratching on the doors and begging for food. I went through about five houses and got nothing. Then, I smelled food in big green things. I had to ram into the green things to make them tip over. Out spilled apple cores, bits of vegetables and some salty, mouthwatering meat. I hastily gobbled down the yummy food. After that, my stomach was full and I was sleepy and content. Night was falling, so I settled in some leaves and fell asleep.

The next day, I was awakened by the sun. I remember rummaging through the overturned green bins again. Then I got an idea to look adorable. I went in the nearby lake to wash off. I walked back up to the town and went from door to door, begging for food. I didn't know how cute I looked when I was wet, but my idea to look like a sad puppy must have worked and I got a few table scraps to eat from some houses. It wasn't enough to fill my puppy belly then, and it wouldn't have filled it now either, but it was at least something. Then I saw two delicious-looking squirrels playing tag in a tree. I almost caught one when it ran down the tree, but I stumbled on a rock and the squirrel got away. Luckily, it was only a smooth rock and I didn't get hurt. After all that exercise, I got thirsty. I remember I trotted to the nearby lake to get a drink. As I was drinking, I saw a shine in the water. It turned out to be a fish. I dove in after it, but missed and came out dripping wet. Then, I smelled something interesting in the town that I tried to find, but I was so exhausted I curled up on the hard sidewalk in the town and fell into a deep sleep.

When I woke up again, the sun had already risen. I spread out on the concrete so I could soak up the heat. I remember all the racket of yelling kids hurt my ears. The quietest spot I found was behind someone's house. The person saw me there and shooed me away. I went from door to door begging for food and a home. They said, "Aww, look at the little puppy! I'm sorry I can't take you in and care for you. It's just my cat would not like you," and "Where's your owner?" They also said, "I'm sorry I can't take you in. My husband is allergic to dogs." And they said, "Go away!" I tried every house in the town except the one with the huge yard with a white picket fence. It was a yellow house with a grey roof. The gate was closed, so I couldn't get in. I hoped that one of the people I went to would change their mind, but they didn't. I was a sad puppy that night.

When I woke up again, the sun was just over the horizon. A cool wind whispered past me. It was such a beautiful day! A squirrel was the one who disturbed the silence. It started chattering at me as it ran past my paw. I realized that it was teasing me so I ran after it. I chased it for about 5 minutes, until it ran up a tree. The squirrel only got a small scratch. All I got was a mouth full of dirt and grass! I remember as I stood panting that the squirrel threw insults at me. It also hurled acorns. I easily dodged them. I really had hoped something good would happen to me that day. I remember I thought, "Why did this happen to me? What would I be doing right now if I was with a family? Will I ever see my real family again?" When I broke out of that thought, everybody in the town was awake. This was bad because it would be hard to sneak food out of the green bins, which people call trash cans, with everyone awake. As I walked past a house, I realized that there were trash cans in the backs of the houses too! I knocked one over, ate all there was and finished with a bulging stomach. I also ended up running because the house owner was grouchy and kicked me out of their yard.

I didn't know how to spend the remainder of the day. I wanted to explore the rest of the area around the town, but I was a little afraid of mean dogs. I remember it was like there was five pounds of meat and somebody told me not to eat it. However, I decided to explore because I didn't know what else to do. I started exploring the west side of the town. In a grassy field I saw birds. Lots of birds. Like a ton of birds. It was impossible to keep myself from running after them. I chased them and they flew off into the afternoon sky. Then, I noticed a bumble bee in a patch of flowers.

I was curious, so I followed it and it led me to the big yellow house. I was hungry, so I pawed at the door and it opened. Behind the door was a girl with light brown hair (close to my fur color). She also had brown eyes that were the same color as mine. The girl called to her mom, who came over. She looked the same except her eyes were green. I was waiting for a response like, "Go away!" But instead, the mom's response was, "Let's take the poor little puppy in." I was so happy! My tail was wagging so hard that my behind went with it! When they let me inside, I saw how big the house was! It was even two stories! I followed them into the kitchen where they gave me some of last night's hamburger. They gave me so much deliciousness that I couldn't eat it all! Afterwards, the girl took one of her tennis balls and played fetch with me. It was old and partially flat, so whenever I bit it hard, it squished. I loved playing with the kind girl. After a little while, I was pooped from all the attention. I curled up on the soft carpet and fell into a deep sleep with the girl petting me. I was very happy that I now had a real family.





EVIDENCE LOCKER

By Layla Brijbag

Grade 4

Mrs. Brooke Frahn

Eisenhower Elementary

One day a 9 year old girl vanished. She just disappeared. She contacted her family and told them she had gone into hiding and not to look for her because they would not find her. No one knew what happened or why....until now. The following are entries from the young girl's diary.

Perhaps this will shed some light on her abrupt departure and her continued hiding.

Dear Diary,

This morning my brother decided to wake me up by bouncing on my bed...repeatedly, while singing finger family. Do you know what it's like to listen to "sissy finger, sissy finger, where are you?" on loop? All of this he does on a Saturday morning at ten o'clock. I fear I will never sleep in again. I will write again soon, if I survive.

Dear Diary,

Today my brother dominated the 55 inch LED TV. I was forced to watch the 55 inch Plasma TV (how stone age). If my parents let this continue I am afraid that I will never again experience Beat Bobby Flay in all of its LED glory. I feel that I have been left behind in the past while my family moves toward the future. I am utterly alone.

Dear Diary,

Why does my brother torture me so? Today at school in front of all my friends he decided to embarrass me by giving me a hug and telling me he loved me. (I know right?!) All of my friends pretended to think that it was totally adorable but I knew behind their smiles and aww's they were mocking me. He is destroying my social life.

Dear Diary,

Today my brother colored all day. When mom made me join him because it would be "good for me" I decided I would try once more to give him a chance to act human. As I settled in to draw a beautiful ocean view, I realized the blue marker was dry. When I got mad at him he started to cry. Serves him right. The picture of Dory that he painstakingly colored in the lines for me is of no help in my mourning of my blue marker. Life is no longer fair.

Dear Diary,

Today my Mother spent hours helping my brother do his homework. What was I doing during all this? Taking an undisturbed nap cuddled up with my cat. The nerve of her to let me sleep while she sits with my brother and makes him write his letters over and over and over. This is the last straw. I will leave tonight. To greener pastures I will go.....farewell.

Update: A forwarding address was found in the back of the diary and the young girl is now safely home with her parents. She was found holed up in the guest room at Nana's house eating a grilled cheese and reading Nancy Drew. Thank you to all of you for reading and helping us solve this mystery.

AHH, I'M LOST!

By Megan Lawler
Grade 4
Mrs. Amy Ward
Garrison-Jones
Elementary



One time I got lost on a cruise ship. One morning I went to go eat breakfast with my sister and my grandma. After we got out of the elevator we went and found a seat and we sat down. Then we talked for a little until we got a little hungry.

Then my sister and I waited for our grandma to come back from getting her food. At that time I was like 4, 5, or 6 years old. My sister and I went to go get our breakfast and I told her to wait for me and then I said never mind so my sister went back to the seat with my grandma. Then I was done getting my food and I forgot where the seat was so I set my plate down and I looked around and I didn't see them. I started crying and I ran to the closest police and they helped me find them. We went around the area that I thought they were in and we went to every table in that area and they weren't there. Then we went to a different area and we went to every table and we looked and we still didn't find them. So then we went to a different area and I was crying so much I passed them and I noticed that I passed them when my grandma yelled my name. So then I sat down, said thanks to the police and my grandma took me to go get breakfast. After that we went and sat down and I ate and then we went up to our room. Then I told my family the whole story.

Then my mom made me feel better by using walkie-talkies for the rest of the cruise time. Then we went and got ice-

cream. After that we got our bathing suits on and went swimming and went on the waterslides. After a couple hours later it was getting dark so we got out of the pool and we went back up to the room and played board games then went to bed and sadly that was the last day. And that is the story of how I got lost.

That 5 Dollars

By Latravia Rainey
Grade 4, Ms. Nichols
Pinellas Central
Elementary



It had been a long day.
The sun was shining
bright.

I had just gotten my hair done and was in the car with my mom at a red light. I looked out the window and saw a man holding a sign.

He was poor.

He was sitting on the sidewalk.

His shoes were ripped, his face was miserable, he looked awful.

I felt very sorry for him.

I wondered...would 5 dollars help him?

I asked my mom is it ok to share my money with him.

She said yes, so I opened the door, walked over, and handed it to him.

Butterflies were in my belly.

The man was in shock as he looked at the 5-dollar bill feeling grateful.

He said "Thank you. God bless you.

"I replied "God bless you too. You're welcome."

I looked back and my mom's proud smile.

Then I ran back to the car because the light was green.

I will always remember that 5 dollars.



My First Gymnastics Meet

By Victoria Teixeira
Grade 4, Ms. Anderson
Ridgecrest Elementary

My stomach was in a knot. Butterflies were flying faster than ever. It was my first gymnastics meet!!! My hair was in a French braid, and my leotard was pink and turned into purple as it got down to the bottom. Then the announcer spoke, "All gymnasts come out to the floor to stretch."

My team and I went onto the floor to stretch. Our team was doing a different stretch than everyone else. First, we stretched our splits. Then we stretched our pikes. Next, we stretched our backs and our arms. After we stretched, we had more time left, so we did back walkovers and handstands.

After 10 minutes or so, we rotated to our first event. The first event we went on was vault. When we got there, we did a couple of warm-ups. A warm-up is when you do exercises and practice on the equipment to get a feel for it. After that, we sat down while another team also warmed up. There were a lot of teams and a couple of different groups.

Next, it was competition time. One girl from the other team was up first. She stood next to the runway to jump on the springboard. The judges saluted the girl, (the judge puts up one arm and says the person's name who will be going next). The girl stepped on the runway and started running. Then she jumped on the spring board and did a handstand and fell on her back. Finally, the judge gave her a score.

Then it was my turn... "Victoria" the judge said as she put up her hand. I put my hand up back at her, so the judge knew I was ready. I stepped on the run way and started running until I hit the spring board. I did a hand stand and fell on my back. Then I start walking back to my coach to see my score. After the judges decided on my score they posted it to a screen... 8.9!!! I was so happy and so excited. Although 10 is the highest, I felt so proud of myself.

The next event was bars. I started warming up my hips and my front hip circles. After that, I got back in line so I could get another turn. For my next turn, I warmed up my entire routine. Then I sat down and waited for everyone else. After everyone warmed up, it was competition time. I was up first. The judge saluted me, and I saluted back. Then I stepped on the spring board and bounced off to catch the bar. I did my routine and the dismount. I landed and saluted with both hands to let the judge know I was done. Then the judge gave my score. 9.2! That felt like the best routine in the world!!!

The next event was beam. I was not excited because I hate it, and it's my worst event! But I had to do it. I got in line and waited my turn. When I got on the beam to warm up, I practiced a few skills and then got off. I got one more turn after that because my coach told me to.

"Are you ready to rock it, shorty?" my coach said to me. "Yep." I replied in a sarcastic way.

I was last, so I watched all the girls go and do their routines. Then it was finally my turn... "Victoria," the judge said while saluting. I saluted back and mounted on the beam. Next, I did a few skills and dismounted. Then I saluted the judge again to let her know I was done. After that, I ran to my coach and hugged him so tightly. That was the best routine in the entire competition, I thought.

When the judge got my score, she sent it to the big board. 8.325. That was really good considering it was my worst event. Since I was the last one, we rotated to our next and last event. Floor! This was my most favorite and second-best event. My first best is bars.

So, I got in line and waited my turn. I went about 5 times and then worked on little skills. Then we started competing on floor. I was second to last so it still took a while. But when it was finally my turn the judge said while saluting, "Victoria."

I saluted and stepped on the floor. My music started and I did my routine. I did a little dance, some small skills, then a tumbling pass, and I finished. I saluted again to let the judge know I was done. My last score of the day was a... 8.92! After that, we went to the rewards ceremony. My group was first. "On vault 1st place is blablabla. In 2nd place is blablabla. In 3rd place is blablabla. And in 4th place with 8.9 is Victoria from Gold Medal Gymnastics." Said the announcer, but he didn't say blablabla. I went up on the stand and a girl gave me a 4th place ribbon.

Next it was bars. "In first place with a 9.2 is Victoria from Gold Medal Gymnastics." I was so happy to be 1st. It meant hard work paid off! The announcer guy called out the other places, but I wasn't listening. The only time I was listening was when my teammates placed.

Next, was beam. I thought I wasn't going to place, but then I heard the announcer say..."In 1st place with an 8.325, Victoria, from Gold Medal Gymnastics". I was in shock... I didn't even know what to say. The only thing I knew to do was smile. Then my teammates placed, and the whole team was on the podium. The last event was floor. I waited patiently until the announcer called the places.

"In 1st place with an 8.9 is Victoria from Gold Medal Gymnastics." My smile was bigger than ever! I won 3, 1st place ribbons! I was in total shock; I couldn't stop smiling at my mom. There was one more ribbon I could earn. .. It's the All Around round and I think it goes up to 12th place. In order to calculate the scores for this round, you add up all the scores together and divide by 4, because that's how many events there were.

" For All Around 1st place, with a 35.345, is Victoria from Gold Medal Gymnastics"!!! Yaaaayyyyyyyyyy!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I felt like the happiest person alive. Since it was All Around, whoever placed got a medal! That was probably the best day of my life... so far.





Little Sissy

By Skyler Connors-
Lewis
Grade 4, Ms. Stacy
Taylor
Seminole Elementary

Brianna swung, turned, and smiled. It was so cute how she talked to her dolls. I could not look away. I watched, I laughed and I waited. I was surprised she has not asked yet. Later that day she ran over to me and I knew what she was going to say. "Can you play with me?" she said in a cute, soft, little voice. I could not say no. I started to play. She started to dance and sing. It was so cute and funny. I laughed and she shouted at me for laughing. I had to hold it in for the rest of the time. As soon as she stopped, I took a big breath and giggled. We played and played. We had a pillow fight and hugged. We were having so much fun. I still had my eye on her swinging arms, dancing feet and her cute little face with a big smile. But then Brianna stopped and walked over to me again but this time I did not know what she was going to say. "You will be my baby and I will be your mommy!" she said in a loud and clear voice. "Ummmmmm...sure," I said slowly. We ran to the other side of the room holding hands. When we got to the other side we sat not legging go. As soon as she pulled her hand away she grabbed some toys and we started to play.

She put back the toys and brought me to time out for being a bad baby. When I started to be a good baby she took me out of time out and gave me a hug and said, "I love you," in the same voice she had talked to her dolls. I smiled as she squeezed me. She started to get tired and so was I, but we did not stop, we kept running, jumping, and laughing, again and again. We were having a blast and even though I was playing too I still did not take my eye off of her. My stomach growled as we raced into the kitchen to get a snack. When we were done eating we zoomed back into the living room and started jumping, skipping, and running

all over the place for hours and hours until we were in pain. We could not take it anymore. We had to lay down. I told Brianna to come help me clean up so she hopped off the couch and we ran together. We started to clean the big mess we made but after she took three toys she ran with them to bed leaving me with the mess but I ran in after her. "I'll clean up tomorrow," I thought. I hopped into bed thinking of her jumping, skipping and running around the place. It was hard to go to bed because all that was in my mind was her.

Licks of Love

By Carli Thornton
Grade 4
Mr. Blacklin
Curtis Fundamental



He licks me on the cheek,
His bites are full of love,
He'll fall asleep and wakes up
playful.

He will not stop until he wants to,
sometimes stubborn,
But when you hear the noise, and
you see his face,
you will forgive him.

And in return he'll give licks of
love.
My sweet dog.





My Trip to México
 By Aakash Pondugula
 Grade 4
 Mrs. Choi
 Ridgcrest Elementary

I woke up early because we were going on a surprise trip my parents planned. So, I got ready at lightning speed. The car ride to the airport and going through

the airport security seemed like it took forever. I thought about what I would do on the plane. Finally, when we were on the plane I kept on trying to guess where we were going? "Is it California, India, or Washington DC?" I was not sure until we landed then I realized we were in Mexico!!!! I was so excited that I danced. Then got our baggage and headed to this awesome resort. I was amazed by all the cool activities at the resort such as the huge pool and an epic resort. At the resort, we raced all around the pool until we were knocked out. The pool had cool jacuzzi jets in the rock which was very relaxing. I exclaimed "YAY!" Then we slide down the overwhelming slides in the kiddy pool.

The next day we went on this amazing snorkeling adventure in this beautiful lagoon. I was amazed at the slippery teal turquoise waters surrounded by lush green mangroves. The instructor demonstrated how to put on the gear, so it fits. We had to tighten the strap so water wouldn't leak around the mask. Also, he demonstrated how to use the flippers, the goggles and the snorkel. Words are not enough to describe what I saw next! The variety of fish I saw, was just unbelievable. I never realized fish can be in so many colors and so many patterns. Then I heard people talking loudly about something and pointing to the bottom of the lagoon. I wondered what they were looking at and I swam there super-fast. There I saw a big jelly fish, it was so cool! I was so captivated by the natural beauty of the sea creatures, before I knew I got

separated from the group. I was so scared and panicked. It felt like I was never going to see my family again. But I was determined to get back to my family. I looked around for any clues that will help me find the way back. So, then an idea popped in my head, what if I traced the landmarks that I passed by? Then I started swimming looking for the landmarks that might help me find my way. Suddenly I hit a huge rock and I hollered "OUCH!" It really hurt my knee, when I looked down the water it turned red, but I persevered through the pain and continued swimming. A fleeting time later I found a floating log that looked familiar. I had some encouragement to find my parents. Then I found the mangroves that had a plastic bag on one of the branches which I recalled seeing earlier. My head was pounding with anxiety. I kept on swimming. Then I found a coral reef that looked familiar, it was the place where I started wandering. Suddenly I was filled with excitement because I was close to finding my parents. Finally, I found the shed where my family was eagerly awaiting me. I swam as fast I could to reach that place to rejoin my family. I exclaimed, "HOORAY!" Thus, my adventurous snorkeling trip ended.

The rest of the trip was uneventful but filled with excitement of seeing places and having lots of fun. Such as when I did snorkeling in the underwater caverns. I thought that it was as cold as an igloo. I went, "Brrr!" We wrapped up our trip with wonderful memories. Then we arrived at the airport, boarded our flight and took off. When we arrived at Florida, we got our baggage, headed home. I was so happy I exclaimed with joy, "Home Sweet Home!"





Hurricane Irma from a Cat's-Eye Point of View

By Hope Isbits
Grade 4

Mrs. Patricia Choi
Ridgecrest Elementary

I could barely open my eyes. I was drenched from the tips of my whiskers to the pads on

my paws. The rain was pounding, wind was whipping, tree branch after tree branch was cracking!

Still soggy from earlier escapades outside, I was drowsily dreaming on the bed, half aware as the television blared ominous warnings: ****HURRICANE IRMA: TAKE COVER... NOW****. "Oh no," my owners gasped. "She's headed our way!"

Though these alerts sounded harsh, I didn't take much notice. I just lay down, ignorant to the reports. Although I did wonder, "What is 'Hurricane Irma'?"

Later that day, after my luxurious nap, I was ready once again to go outside and hunt. To my surprise, I was halted. Why won't they let me go outside? Why did my family board up the doors?

My owners quickly yet sincerely said: "Sorry, Tiger, you can't go outside. It'll get too dangerous." I furiously settled back on the bed, confused over what to do next...

I meowed, ambushed, and pleaded to go outside, but my owners ignored my cries. Trapped in the sweltering, overcrowded house, I was getting claustrophobic and began to devise a getaway plan. I just needed to wait for the right moment to escape. Sure, I was refusing my owners' orders, but my freedom and privilege to be outside were more important to me than a little wind and rain. Besides, *how bad could it be?* I was waiting, waiting, waiting, starting to lose hope, thinking the time would never come, when suddenly, my break came... My owners opened the door just a smidgen to make sure everything was in place. My heart felt like it was about to pound its way out of my chest. What should I do? I was running out of time. I heard my angel conscious saying, "Don't do it, you'll

feel ashamed about disobeying your owners." But the devil conscious was saying, "What about your freedom and your yearning to go outside?" I knew I could only listen to one, so I took my chances and darted out the front door. The only thing I could think about was the last thing I heard... a distant cry: "Tiger! Come back!"

The rain and wind were whistling, howling, and hammering down on my small, furry body. I was getting soggy by the second! After running for what felt like miles, I settled under a grassy green, bulky bush. "Where was I? Why did I leave? When will this storm be over?" Those were the questions that ran through my feline mind. And the most painful one of them all: "*Will I survive this treacherous natural disaster?*"

Some dreadful hours later, I woke up to the still pelting storm, wondering if it was ever going to lighten up. I couldn't believe I it, but I wanted to go back to the hot, crowded dwelling that was my home.

The next morning, I was relieved to see that I safely rode out the storm. I moved from one bush to another, carefully avoiding the fallen debris. Something caught in my paw. The pain lingered, yet I proceeded onward. After the rain came to an end, I could finally make out my surroundings. I hoped that my owners would come through and find me, even after the unforgivable thing I did. I figured I should stay in the bush and wait for a guardian angel to come. (There IS a patron saint of cats, you know!)

A while later, I heard the sweet voice of my female owner calling, "Tiger, Tiger!" My heart skipped a beat. I came out of the bush and pranced into her arms. She cried despite her happiness. My lady human carried me back to the house, and announced in an excited tone, "Look who I found!" Everyone came outside to love me and dry me off, and I'll admit, I enjoyed it. "Tiger is alive!" they chanted and cheered.

As I now lounge in the comfort of my bed, I hear my humans talking about someone named "Maria." If she is to come, I will stay inside... From a cat's-eye view of storms, I have certainly learned my lesson.



Soccer Forever

By Karsen Kubik
Grade 4

Ms. Amy Shuttleworth
Ridgecrest Elementary

Hi, my name is Karsen Kubik, and I've played soccer since I was 3 years old. I play soccer in my backyard, soccer at school, recreational

soccer for the Celtic Club and then tried out for and made the competitive soccer team for Celtic. I LOVE soccer, and I play soccer whenever I get the chance to do it.

One day when I was in the backyard playing soccer, my mom told me that she signed me up for basketball and that I would be going to play it in two days!!

“BASKETBALL?! WHAT?! I'VE NEVER PLAYED BASKETBALL IN MY WHOLE LIFE!! WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?!” I screamed. I thought of ways I could get out of this situation - I could limp so my Mom thinks I broke my leg; I could paint colored spots on my body so she thinks I have a mysterious disease or tell her my arms don't work so I can't possibly play basketball. #TheStruggleIsReal!

Two days later, my Mom was dragging me out of the car to my first practice. I was so nervous my stomach was doing flip flops. I felt like I was going to throw up right there at the gym. I slowly walked on to the bright, hard basketball court, and I looked around. I realized I didn't know anybody on my team. I was really scared and thought about dashing off the court and out the door. But there was my mom, at the door like a guard dog - #ugh!! So, I slowly turned around and started walking over to my team. The coach must have noticed my knees shaking and the sweat jumping off my forehead because he came over to me. Somehow, he calmed me down. After we did the first drill and I made a few hoops, my nervousness flew out the door! Turns out I was a fast player because

of my soccer skills and I learned how to dribble the ball AND run fast. I was loving this new sport!!

After 10 good practices, we played our first game. It was crazy fun, and we even managed to win 48-34! We went on to win every game after that because of how hard we practiced. There was still one more game to go against the best team in the league.

The score was 44-45; we were losing our last game by 1 point with 15 seconds left. My teammate passed me the ball. I fake out 3 defenders with 4 seconds left, and I took the shot. The ball sailed through the air, rolled around the rim, and dropped in with 0.3 seconds left! I made the winning goal that made us win 46-45! The people in the bleachers were cheering and my teammates were jumping up and down. My parents were so happy and gave me so many hugs. My coach was so proud of me, and so were all the players' parents.

It was a special day I'll never forget. On the way home, my dad got me a special frosted lemonade at Chick-Fil-A. When we got home, my dad told me to save my homework until tomorrow...”and let's all go to the Treasure Island Fun Center!!” he said. This day was clearly the best day of my life... so far!

Now I know I'm Karsen Kubik, soccer expert AND basketball champion! Turns out basketball was the right choice for me...hmmm - I'm thinking about skydiving...and now my Mom says she's feeling sick!!





Life in a Hurricane

By Jai Akshar Popuri

Grade 4

Ms. Choi

Ridgecrest Elementary

It is cold and rain rushes down my gloomy leaves, strong winds wrestle through my branches. Not a child is in sight, squirrels are hiding in fright, there is no sun to brighten my day. The playground is a gloomy little place and, I am lonely and scared. I need a light to guide my way, I'm helpless you see, as I have no one to support me. I'm a little tree you see and I am scared. Also I have barely any roots. Because I have small and thin branches. I feel fragile amongst bigger trees. I am like a dwarf among giants. My trunk is small and it is thin too. "I'm scared and afraid. I'm only a kid and I have no mom to protect me," I say. The heavy gusts of wind bend my branches.

Whoosh! Whoosh! My leaves and my branches are coming down and I have no support in this wretched hurricane. Water from a nearby by lake rises and it hits my trunk. "OW!" I squeal. I don't know how to survive in this world, how can I possibly survive this hurdle? Fearing I can't and I won't, I'll just sit here and wait to die. The wind blows a big tree down near me and breaks half of my branches. Wind blows even harder so I try to grip myself but I can't. My roots start to break loose and I'm tilting. I am doing everything I can to grip myself to stay steady, but it is of no use. I will die. Animals start to hide under me. I try to shelter them, but it is no use. My leaves have blown away. The animals start to stampede away and once again I'm lonely. One strong push of a gust rips most of my roots.

"HELP! HELP!" I scream. My roots are straining, and everything starts to go out of

my control. I think I will be dead. I'm frightened and desperate. My roots feel dried up, I am hoping and praying for some miracle to happen. A giant tree beside me tries to be my moral support and assures me that I will be fine. It gives me a little hope, but it doesn't last long. A huge gust of wind almost blacks me out. All I can see is rainbow shades of fog all around my surroundings.

A sudden glimpse of light wakes me. I see a spark of hope." Did I survive?" I ask myself. The playground swings sway gently under a spongy gray sky. A gentle breeze rustles through my leaves. I have survived the harsh hurricane. It did a lot of damage; trees fell, cars broke and the playground is destroyed. I'm awfully glad I didn't die. I'm still tilted but I feel I'm going to survive. I am hopeful that the sun shines brightly soon. Hopefully I should be back to my life soon.

In the warm weather my roots grow back and my leaves too. I come back to as good a life as a tree can hope for. I am a beautiful tree again under a rainbow in a ocean blue sky my leaves sway and sun shines brightly through my lime green leaves. Sounds of kids playing and birds chirping are beautiful after what I have been through. My life is one big adventure, and I won the battle.

I realize that I am much stronger than what I thought and will be much more confident and stronger to handle any more hurdles that might come my way. This is a story in my life that inspired me to be a fighter in the world of many obstacles.





The Fence

By Aelyn Peirson
Grade 4, Mrs. Choi
Ridgecrest Elementary

On a warm Saturday evening, I, the backyard fence, “accidentally eavesdropped” on my owner’s conversation.

All I heard from the long conversation was “Can you believe we have to leave the dogs during the hurricane?” At that moment, I started feeling a bit unsteady. I wanted to leave with them and take the dogs with me. But, then I sadly realized, I cannot move. I would’ve said to my furry, friendly friends, “That we are miserably stuck here together” but, I realized I cannot talk either.

A few minutes later, it hit me. I cannot interact with the world around me besides being a mere bundle of fence posts. I would’ve made a toast with the dogs but, that would have been a bit hard, considering I have not arms, nor a mouth. Then, I heard the door slam shut. “Sighs!”

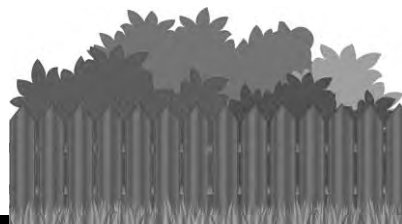
I heard thunder and storming in the distance the next day. I knew from experience that this was the start of a hurricane. I wanted to brace myself, but once again, I have no arms. So, I stood there in silence during the beginning of the hurricane. I was doing nothing to help my furry friends, nor myself. I was a bit jealous that the dogs got to stay inside within the safest part of the house. Meanwhile, I was stuck outside. It was now raining very harshly. Trees and sticks were blowing around because of the intense winds. And, it was hitting me smack dab in the face (if I had a face). Well, if you don’t consider the childish drawing of a face the kids had drawn on the back of one of my posts. The markers were running. I imagined this is what crying was like because I don’t have eyes, let alone, tear ducts. This lasted several hours with the sticks poking and piercing into my so-called

back and eyes. These branches pried apart my posts. This is what I imagine bone-breaking to be like. I would have been in terrible pain (if I had nerve receptors). Then, a treacherous thing happened, I got blown over. “OW!” I would have screamed if I had a mouth. I landed flat on the ground. “SPLAT!” The wind kept trying to pick me up. But, those winds weren’t strong enough for me. “For I am the mighty fence of the Peirson backyard!” Then, I heard scratching. I heard a rip from the back-room door. I saw that the dogs had trampled over me.....They had escaped!

The next day my family of owners returned. They noticed their puppies were gone. Then, they realized I was completely knocked over and flat on the ground. They walked over me without a care in the world. They had noticed the puppies barking in the parking lot behind me.

As a temporary fix, before they could get a new fence, they put a giant bush in front of me to hold me up. I was severely heartbroken because they were getting a new fence. After all, I was the “mighty fence of the Peirson backyard” before the winds hit. More importantly, I had memories and my owners were going to just throw me into the dumpster as if I were trash. Or, so I thought, this is what was going to happen.

The next day, I saw a giant box and not a dumpster as I had thought. They pried apart my fence posts, which I imagine would have hurt terribly if I had nerves. They packed me up in the box and shipped me to a company that refinishes wood so that I could become a sturdy house for the poor. I was ecstatic about this as I now had a use that both people and I could be grateful for and I was not just a knocked-over fence.





Reaching for My Star

By Karina Jahrling
Grade 4
Mrs. Smith
Cypress Woods

I'm such a dork! You're never going to believe why. It's a long story but I'll begin four weeks ago. Ever since I moved to Starlington, I've been

oblivious to everything! Since I love gymnastics, I was attending advance classes in my old school, Merlings Middle. I was consider in the eighth grade even though I was only in sixth grade. My coach said I couldn't go any higher in level for unfair reasons.

So, here in Starlington Middle school, which, by the way, is right beside Starlington High School, I was determined to try out for the ninth grade level gymnastics. They said I can advance to the next level when I enter my Seventh grade. Well, the day has arrived!

Today is tryouts so the Assistant Principal said I could skip class and just go straight to the gym. Since I was a late incomer, I was the only one auditioning for the team. I walked into the gym and...Wow! It was amazing! The huge room had big bulky bleachers and some soft blue material and some purple material in the middle of the floor shape of a star. Standing on top of the star was the coach. The coach smiled a little but stared at my crutches.

"I don't need them. My mom just wanted to make sure I was safe. I have a disorder where I lose strength in my leg muscle but my PT is keeping me strong." I blurted out before she said anything.

"Well, I am coach Kim and I guess you answered all my questions, Tracy." You can start whenever you want." Coach Kim exclaimed with a surprised look on her face. I took the floor, told her my song and did my routine. When I ended, the coach said to me, "I see no problem putting you on the team." My smile was ear to ear. This is it. My dream come true. A split second later, girls filled the gymnasium. Coach Kim called all the girls to make a group.

"I know we are all excited to perform at the Fall Festival in four weeks but I think we did so well that we'll run through it one more time and that's all!" She bellowed. She added "I believe The Stars (that's the name of our team) are ready to perform before the whole town."

We did the routine and that was one of the hardest routine I have ever done. And I did a cartwheel, a jump and a back flip landing on a handstand then ending with a split. This routine I can proudly say I did before in a pool.

So since I was a newbie, I had no homework so I decide to work on the routine every day for a week. I didn't talk about it to anyone because everybody was in High School while I was only in Middle School.

I was trying my best to impress my team because age was working against me. They're all older than me but I wanted so badly to fit in. I really wanted to be accepted as part of the team.

On our last practice before the show, during one of our breaks, some of the girls sat on the floor and started talking about her plans for the weekend. The others added to that conversation and I told them my family and I was going to the zoo because it was my younger brother's birthday. Everyone was quiet and I felt my face go hot and red. I'm sure I looked like a tomato. Did I say I was such a dork? This was harder than I thought.

One of the girls who sat close to me said "I haven't gone to a zoo since I was seven years old. I miss that place!" She smiled at me and she really made me feel better. Her name is Hannah. Hannah's friend Gina added, "I think I'll tell my mom to plan a trip there one day. My sister would surely enjoy that too." The air felt better and the girls stared talking about their experiences when they went to the zoo when they were younger.

Practice started again and I felt so much better. I did my routine perfectly and after the practice, Coach Kim shouted, "That was awesome ladies!" We are going to 'Wow' the town!" Finally she said, "Go home and rest so tomorrow will be your night to shine!"

Everyone clapped and was so excited while getting their bags. One by one, the girls tapped me on the shoulder and said, "You did good Tracy" or "that was great, Tracy!" The team finally saw me as an equal and I was so proud and happy.

The big day came and went. After the show, I really felt so proud not only for myself but for the whole team as well. We really work together and perfected our moves. I went home that night and opened up my computer so I could email my best friend, Samantha, about my day. I started with...I'm such a dork! You're never going to believe why!

Almost There
By Amelia McNeill
Grade 4
Ms. Donna Quinn
Tarpon Springs Fundamental



Push! Pull! Ouch! Ugh! This is me every Monday night from 5:00 PM to 6:00 PM. Where am I? Oh, I'm in ballet class. I've been taking ballet classes since I was 2 years old, and lately, I've been working very hard on my split. I just can't seem to get it. Every time my dance teacher tells the class "Okay everybody, it's time to work on our splits," I feel like I am the only one that is not all the way down in a perfect split. Of course, I'm not the only one, but it sure feels like it. My teacher is very helpful and encouraging.

It's the following week. When my dance teacher says the usual, "Okay everybody, it's time to work on our splits," I start to get into position. "I think I can, I think I can, I think I can" I say to myself. Then I slowly start going down. It feels easier this week and not so much of a struggle. Next thing, I'm telling myself, "I know I can, I know I can, I know I can."

"Wow Amelia!" exclaims my dance teacher. "You are closer than you were last week." I look down, and my teacher is right. I think to myself, "I really am closer." In fact, I am almost there. Even though I wasn't all the way down, I was definitely closer. The hard work and practice are working. I then realized that I'll get closer and closer every week as long as I believe.

Fifth Grade Writing



- 88 Gavin Virelli
Karsyn Darst
Jordan Truong
- 89 Tamara Sanders
Olivia Lange
- 90 Tiffany Ly Siev
Jayda Miller
Ella Cuddy
- 91 Brenna Kasprzyk
Sheyenne McCree
- 92 Skyler VanMetre
- 93 Anna Ling
Jadyn Dowdell
Ja'Shon Welch
- 94 Aaron Clancy
Luke Neubauer
- 95 Giovanni D'Amico
Melina Palumbo
- 96 Silvia Penn
- 97 Eric Breuer
Jakob Majewski

- 98 Keegan Paez
Sram Muhqueed
- 99 Alana Smith
Ava Frechette
- 100 Ryane Yakubovsky
Zoe Foglio
- 101 Diana Phan
Kamaria Johnson
- 102 Luke MacNeill
Jaomano Burden, Jr.
- 103 Miguel Ochoa
Kyle Rose
- 104 Sarnai Chimidkhorloo
Layne Rickenback-Goulet
- 105 Rachel Boswell
Lexie Chaseng
- 106 Anna Shabunina
- 107 Isabel Slater
Iza'bella D'elia
- 108 Caleigh Dillon
Jack Taylor
- 109 Annabelle Hagen
Ethan Daly
- 110 Madelyn McRitchie
- 111 Lenna Herzfeld
- 112 Payton Thompson

- 113 Joni Ellis
- 114 Grace Lyerly
Nicolette Handza
- 115 Peter Wendol
- 116 Sophia de Koter
- 117 Parker Menne
- 118 Reese Cooper
Clarabella Le
- 119 Cheldimar Legrand
- 120 Addison Wadsworth
Katie Currence
- 121 Olivia Warticki
Isabelle Cullen
- 122 Huy-Hieu Le
- 123 Juliana Palmer
- 124 Katelynn Phanamath
- 125 Mia Melton
- 126 Ava Ramsberger
- 128 Samantha Hall





Go Faster, Mr. Clock!

By Gavin Virelli
Grade 5
Ms. Ruso/Ms. Cate
Douglas L. Jamerson
Elementary

So, have you ever noticed how time gets away from you? Sometimes it moves so fast you don't even see

it is gone, but other times it does not seem to move at all! Here are some times it happened to me.

They say time flies when you are having fun, and I agree because I have experienced it firsthand. After school, when I am doing something in my room, my mom comes in after what seems like twenty minutes and says, "Time for dinner." That makes no sense because it feels like I haven't been in my room for much time at all. Another example is when I am drawing at home. Time gets away from me and I end up drawing for about 4 hours! Time really does fly when you are having fun.

On other occasions though, time stands still. When I am at school, I always finish tests very fast. The problem with that is when you take the FSA, you aren't allowed to READ WHEN YOU ARE DONE! I know it is just 45 minutes, but it feels like an eternity. Sometimes, time slows when I am not bored. Christmas would be a perfect example. Every Christmas Eve, I try to go to sleep, but it does not work. I am so excited about getting presents that I can't go to sleep. I swear every Christmas Eve feels like the whole month of December again!! I want those presents so badly that I am on the edge of my seat... and time stops.

Depending on what we are doing, time goes fast or slow. I find it funny how time has more of a grasp on us than we do of it!



Doing the Flip
By Karsyn Darst
Grade 5
Mrs. Tsalickis
Sunset Hills Elementary



I am a gymnast/parkour artist,
Pondering the feats I will accomplish
today.

Coach calls out instructions,
Example flips and twists fill the room.
I ready myself.

Pretending I'm on a precarious ledge,
Confidence swells within.

I squat, jump, and flip,
Hitting the spring floor,
Working to maintain balance,
Trying always to stick the landing,
Wanting to learn more and more,
I am a gymnast/parkour artist.



Fall

By Jordan Truong
Grade 5, Mrs. Brooke Frahn
Eisenhower Elementary School



Leaves fall to the ground
They crumble under my feet
So many colors



**Natural Disasters-
Devastated Lives**
By Tamara Sanders
Grade 5, Ms. Stull
High Point Elementary

Boom! Crash! Hey, did you just hear that? That was just an earthquake. These things are dangerously bad, like a lion that hasn't eaten in three days. This is how you know earthquakes can cause

damage to things. They can injure thousands and kill just as much or even more. Earthquakes are so strong they can cause tsunamis. Tsunamis are so similar, but they are also different. These natural disasters can have damaging effects on people's lives. Even though they can cause huge travesties, people always find a way to repair and rebuild what has been destroyed.

Earthquakes have serious effects on people's well beings in a variety of ways. For instance, earthquakes and tsunamis make so much damage kids sometimes can't go to school. Isn't that insane? If kids can't go to school, that must mean buildings and roads are covered with debris and falling apart. Therefore, it is unsafe for anyone to be around those structures. This isn't all. These deadly storms also take electricity away from homes. With no electricity, your refrigerator won't work. If your refrigerator won't work, you'll have nasty cold food. Cold food turns into thawed food. Thawed food then cannot be eaten or you'll get sick. Furthermore, your air conditioner won't work. Imagine if you lived in a topical climate where it's really hot and humid all the time. You would feel like dying of heat. While earthquakes and tsunamis are doing their thing, they leave people hungry and hotter than the sun! Obviously, these terrible events caused by Mother Nature have devastating effects on people's lives.

So then what? These disasters are all over. Buildings are knocked down, homes flipped upside down, and thousands of innocent civilians are killed or injured. Where do you go from here? You repair, rebuild, and help one another – because that's all you can do. In fact, people all around the world rush to help those affected by earthquakes and tsunamis. This is such a kind thing to do. You may be wondering, how do other people know you need help? The internet, the news, and radio. Firefighters go out of their way to dig through smashed buildings to

clean up or maybe even to look for any survivors. These heroic volunteers never give up. Everyone else pitches in to help clean up the town as well. This is truly a time when you see perhaps complete strangers coming together for the greater good.

As you can see there are different ways earthquakes and tsunamis have effects on people's lives. If there is one silver lining to take away from these horrible disasters, it's that people come together to show their love and support for one another in a time of need to help repair what was lost.

**The Terrible Teeth
Surprise**

By Olivia Lange
Grade 5, Mrs. McElveen
Curtis Fundamental



One lovely day...well, what I thought was going to be lovely, I was going to the dentist to get my sharks' teeth 'checked'. Sharks' teeth happens when there are adult teeth behind the baby teeth. Mine were behind my two front bottom baby teeth!

At the dentist, it was just my mom and me. I was super nervous. But it was only supposed to be a checkup. At least that's what my mom kept saying. My checkup went so well that the dentist said, "We could just pull them out today."

I was shaking my head from side to side so fast I started to get dizzy. Then all of a sudden, my mom said, "Why not just get it over with?" I decided that I should do it because there was a milkshake involved.

The dental assistant took me into a room and shut the door. Then she even strapped me up super tight so I couldn't move and put a mask over my nose. Then the dentist made my mouth super numb. I wanted to cry so bad, but I could only get one tear out. I couldn't feel much except for a little tug and then it was over.

My mouth was still very numb after, so I had to look in the mirror constantly. I felt like my chin was not there! Thankfully, it was.

My mom and I were off to go get my milkshake and go home to rest. When I woke up from a nap there was money under my pillow. It wasn't a bad day after all, even with the terrible teeth surprise.



Monkey Bars
 Tiffany Ly Siev
 Grade 5, Ms. Sturz &
 Mrs. Hallenbeck
 Pinellas Central Elementary

Heading to the park to have some fun,
 When I get there kids are screaming,
 crying and laughing while I run,
 Fast, fast, fast I go,
 I will not run away from my shadow,
 though.

I stumble in front of this contraption,
 I try to complete this challenge,
 I've fallen on the floor,
 No more, no more... I think "maybe one
 more."

I try again but instead of falling,
 I hang onto the slippery bars,
 I yell for help like I can't help myself.

My cheeks are bright red from crying,
 I need to learn so I won't sound like a
 baby bird.

Fast forward 2 years later,
 I'm a brand-new girl,
 I shoot hoops,
 I tie my shoes with loop-da-loops.

In front of me is the contraption,
 I've been ignoring for years,
 I fall down but I don't make a sound
 I try again, this time I fly through like a
 bird,
 It was like pronouncing a hard word.

Look at me now,
 I faced this contraption,
 I am here laughing,
 I'm so good,
 My next challenge is to do it backwards.

Snow Haiku Collection
 By Jayda Miller
 Grade 5, Mr. Shelton/Ms.
 Cate
 Douglas L. Jamerson



Haiku 1. The shimmering snow
 Covering the ground with white
 I am in a dream

Haiku 2. Snowing all around
 I cannot stop daydreaming
 It is breathtaking

Haiku 3. Snow is bringing cold
 And giving me a bad chill
 I am so annoyed

Cats and Kittens
 By Ella Cuddy
 Grade 5, Cynthia Durant
 Lakeview Fundamental



"Meow, purrrrrr, and meow." Ella
 Cuddy reporting to share some exciting
 information about cats and kittens!
 Let's start with BIG cats! Then we will
 move to adorable kittens. Finally we will
 finish off with full grown house cats.

Roar! Big cats have lots of cool traits. I'm
 talking about ones you would never think of.
 Did you know if you remove all the fur on a tiger
 you can see its stripes on its skin? Also the
 darker the mane is on a male lion tells you how
 old it is. If you want to tell how old a tiger is,
 count their stripes. Those are a couple of facts
 about big cats.

Meow! I have two kittens named Tango and
 Cash. Cats have many human-like
 characteristics. They have feelings, can exhibit
 some of the same actions as humans, and can
 become your best buddy. Some signs of affection
 are, purring, kneading, and rubbing against your
 leg. These are all signs that they care for you.

Finally, full grown house cats. I have one, her
 name is Tora. Are you aware that you can begin
 feeding kittens adult food at the age of one year
 old? Cats have many of the same traits as kittens.
 The oddest trait might be that a cat can probably
 live 15 human years. In conclusion, no matter
 the size, cats and kittens are one of the coolest
 animals!



Going Solo

By Brenna Kasprzyk
Grade 5, Ms. Langes
Oakhurst Elementary

“Brenna ... Brenna ... wake up!” My mom tickled me to get up.

“Alright, alright!” I yelped between giggles.

When my mom left the room I was walking to my closet when I remembered something. It was chorus concert day, with my solo performance. Quickly I scrambled for my lime green dress. I threw it over my head and slipped on my sandals. I popped in some toast. Then I ran over and brushed my teeth and hair. I grabbed the toast, ate it and grabbed my backpack and lunchbox. We hopped into the car.

We arrived at Oakhurst (my school) at around 7:15. I leaped into the library doors and found a good book and a cozy spot. I curled up in my little nook and I could hardly understand what I was reading, which was rare for me. I finally calmed down. The bell took forever to ring. So I wandered around the building thinking about chorus. I started thinking: what if I’m horrible? What if I fall? Or make a fool of myself? I tried to shake the ideas out of my head but I couldn’t. I was starting to worry when the bell finally rang. I grabbed my things and dived for the door.

As I walked into class, I unpacked and started dancing and saying “Eeee, Eeeee.”

“I have never seen you this happy!” the person next to me said. Suddenly it hit me again. The nervous sensation. I didn’t have much time to worry when we all dashed to chorus.

As we entered the cafeteria (where the performance would be) we all heard singing, conversations, and the occasional nervous “yelp!” I greeted my fellow chorus friends. We started to practice. Mrs. McKelvey fixed the microphone. It was the big concert! This time my class would come. Finally our teacher gave us the five minute warning. I shook my hands to let all my nervousness out. Then the curtains opened.

We sang better than ever. Everybody heard us. The trios did great. Finally it was time for my solo! Suddenly, my little jello-like legs stood still. I walked up and all fear melted away. I sang better than ever. I felt like I owned the stage. We sang our last song and I was so happy and excited. I complimented my friends as they did me.

We had 5 minutes left to get back to class. Everyone ran (except us girls in sandals). “I didn’t know you could do that” was what most people said to me. “Wow” said my friend. I had so much fun and for weeks I got compliments. I will never forget it. I felt like I was the happiest person and on top of the world!

Martin Luther King Jr.

Sheyenne McCree
Mrs. Bieber
Grade 5, Lakewood
Elementary



How often do you take time out of your day to say “thank you” to one of the most famous peacemakers Martin Luther King Jr.? Martin Luther King Jr. was born August 15, 1929 and died April 4, 1968. He dedicated his life to try and create equality through nonviolent protest.

Martin Luther King Jr. did not believe that one should be treated differently only because of the color of their skin. He also had a strong belief of ending racism. His beliefs were so strong that he started the “March on Washington” on August 28, 1963. Incredibly, more than 200,000 demonstrators joined this march for freedom and equal civil rights for all Americans. On that day, he gave his most famous and memorable speech, “I Have a Dream.”

On October 14, 1964, Dr. King was given the Nobel Peace Prize for combatting inequality through nonviolent resistance. Tragically, his life was cut short. On April 4, 1968 he was shot and killed. Today, he is recognized as one of the most famous civil rights leaders. His accomplishments will forever live on.



World War I

By Skyler VanMetre
Grade 5

Mrs. Denise Dawson
Pasadena Fundamental
Elementary

It was November 11,
1918, 10:30...and my troop
was ready for

anything...except what was going to happen in half an hour. We won the war! Germany surrendered and we can go back to America. A lot of my pals were there but that didn't matter as much as Laurence, my brother. I had been looking all around for him then all of a sudden I hear "SAMUEL! SAMUEL! It's Laurence!"

"Thank god you're alive," I say to Laurence.

"Are you excited to go home?!" asks Laurence.

"Most definitely!" I say eagerly.

It was November 14, 1918, 9:15...I saw America! We saw everyone waiting and cheering, we were overjoyed. We got off and went to the sickness checkup and got treated so that we could go into America without spreading a disease. While we were there they dropped a pan and I had flash backs of my teammates being shot and the bullets flying past me, so I jumped and hid behind the counter that was next to me. The doctor was very confused at my actions, then came to a realization "Everything is okay Mr. Garrison, it was only a pan. The war is over now, nothing will hurt you."

"Yes, yes, I know just as well as everyone else in the building. I... I just had a flash back and it hit me and I felt like I was there." I explain to Dr. Tress.

"Trust me, we understand that," she said as gesturing to the other veterans who

fought with me. They looked scared, worried, confused.

November 17, 1918, 12:34...Everybody from all our families were gathered here except Pop...he fought in World War I and before we could get onto the battlefield we were told that he was fatally shot. Everyone was asking questions and asking if we were okay but the one question that hit me hard was from my little sister. She asked "How many people did you see get killed?" I immediately had a flash back... those poor people, so many innocent lives taken away. I fell down and started to yell and roll around trying to "dodge bullets."

Laurence came over and started to shake me. "Samuel! Samuel! It is okay!" trying to snap me out of it. I got off the floor and looked around hesitantly and saw my sisters, wife, and mama all standing in the back of the room scared. "It's ok. He just had a flash back. He will be fine. He won't hurt you." Laurence explained to them.

"Madison, Aroura, Zoey, Alice, and Mama, I'm sincerely sorry, please forgive me," I said nervously.

It is November 25, 6:00 am... My brother and I are the only ones awake because this was the schedule we had in war. So we waited until they awakened. Then finally 3 hours later Laurence and I were sitting at the dining table reading the newspaper and we heard the joyful voices of Mama, Madison, Aroura, Zoey, and Alice. We greeted them by making breakfast. We all talked and laughed just like we used to do before the dreadful war, knowing that everything was going to be okay.

Fighting with Fury

By Anna Ling
Grade 5, Mrs. Lloyd
Tarpon Springs
Fundamental

The anger
Pours out
Gushing like
Tears spilling
Onto the floor

And Mother
Holds out
Her hands
And catches
My hurtful
Words

They melt
In her hands,
Become good

And when her
Fury
Spills out
I reach
My hands
Toward
Her;
Catch her tears
Like she to me

But they
Only
Turn worse

In my hands
Fighting
With fury.



The Light Inside Me

Jacy Dowdell
Grade 5
Cynthia Durant
Lakeview
Fundamental

The light inside me
is who I was meant to be.

I was meant to be a kind, friendly
and nice person at school.

But that didn't happen,
Darkness took over me.
I was cruel and mean.

Until a girl came up to me and said these
words,

“Be who you were meant to be.”
My heart was filled with happiness.

I became the nicest person at school.
Now the light inside me will
shine forever.

The Dust Particle
By Ja'Shon Welch
Grade 5, Cynthia Durant
Lakeview Fundamental

Poetry hides in dust,
waiting in an attic to be cleaned out.
Not knowing where it wants to go,
but it can't wait to get there.

Then swoosh it's gone.
Hoping to go to somewhere it's never
gone before.
After a while the wind stops blowing,
“BOOM” it landed in the ocean.
Never to be seen again.





Phases of Me
 By Aaron Clancy
 Grade 5, Cynthia Durant
 Lakeview Fundamental

I am the owner of a cat.
 The cat I own is named Baxter.
 I feed the cat, I pet the cat, and I sit
 down and watch TV with my cat.
 Baxter is the best cat!

I am good when it comes to sports.
 Baseball is my favorite.
 I remember my first double in single A.
 After that, I scored! I love baseball!

I am a kid.
 I love running around my yard as fast as
 I can.
 I have a whole lot of energy.
 I could probably turn on a TV because
 I've got so much energy.

I am kind.
 I play with all my friends all the time.
 I be nice to both of my sisters.
 I'm fair and don't argue.

I am humorous.
 I love telling funny jokes to people.
 It feels good to tell jokes to people that
 makes them laugh.
 Making people laugh is my thing.



First Time Roller Skating
 By Luke Neubauer
 Grade 5, Mrs. McElveen
 Curtis Fundamental

"I can't do this," I
 told my mom as we were
 in line renting roller skates.
 At the time I was in
 Panama City Beach at
 Rocket Lanes, (a bowling alley, arcade, and
 roller skating rink). My best friend in the
 world, Ian, advised me to hold onto the sides
 to help me start. Being new at this, I
 planned on taking his advice.

When I got my orange wheeled
 skates on, my mom guided me to the rink. I
 put one skate out and...I began to tilt back!
 Luckily my mom was there to catch me. My
 heart was racing as fast as light speed. I
 clinched my hands to the black bars. I was
 wiggling all over the place like Jell-O. One
 leg was all the way in front and the other
 was back. You can say I sort of looked like
 Buddy the Elf when he was going up the
 escalator. This was some sight to see. I
 wondered if I would make it out in one
 piece.

As I 'skated' on, the bar ended! So
 now I really had to skate. I bent my knees a
 bit, put one foot out, then the other. Before
 you knew it, I WAS SKATING!

"You're doing it, Luke!" said Ian's
 younger brother, Evan. He had been
 mentoring me the whole time. I began to
 skate and skate, joining Ian who is an expert
 in skating. I felt so accomplished. A smile
 ear to ear grew across my face.

After 30 minutes, I began to get
 faster and gain more control. I could skate
 around the rink in 24 seconds! This sure
 was an improvement from barely being able
 to get on the rink to skating swiftly. It
 wasn't all smooth skating though. I had a
 few spills across the wooden floor. I got
 back up and skated on.

Skating was so much fun, especially
 hanging out with my friends and being able
 to skate with them. One thing I did not
 appreciate were all the bumps and bruises on
 my legs.



About Me

By Giovanni D'Amico
Grade 5, Cynthia Durant
Lakeview Fundamental

I am funny, caring, loving,
athletic, sister of one.

Lover of tennis, because it
calms me down when I am
angry and it is fun to play.

Math, because it is fun to test yourself with
tricky math problems.

The board game SORRY, because it is
exciting to play it with my Mom and Dad.

Who feels stressed out when tests come up, I
get a funny feeling in my stomach.

Happy when I get DOLPHIN OF THE
WEEK, I feel happy and I feel
accomplished.

Sad when it rains, because I'm stuck inside
for a long time.

Who needs their family, because I love them
and they provide for me.

Their pet every day, because I love my dog.
Their phone every day, because it is fun to
play games on.

Who gives their old clothes to charity, like
GOODWILL

Their dog, food every day, especially doggie
treats.

Their old toys to younger kids in the family
for them to enjoy.

Who fears cockroaches, I especially do.
Fire, because every time my Dad goes to
work as a fireman, he risks dying in a fire.
Mosquitos, because they bite and might
carry disease.

Who would like to see the Statue of Liberty,
The Washington Monument and
Paris, France.

St. Petersburg, Florida,

D'Amico

**Poetry Hides in
Feelings**

By Melina Palumbo
Grade 5
Mrs. Redington
Pinellas Central
Elementary



When you're mad,
your fists want to hit.
Your stomach fills with rage.
You start to get mad at the little things.
You stay mad.
Poetry hides in anger.

When you're happy, nothing makes you
upset.
willing to do anything no matter what it
is.
You're looking your best like an angel in
the morning.
you wake up early like you had a great
sleep.
you stay happy and don't get angry.
Poetry hides in happiness.

When you're nervous,
your stomach fills with butterflies,
like it's their home.
Your face turns red
like a bright red tomato.
You start to hesitate.
You stumble over words,
like you're tripping
over a rock.
Poetry hides in nervousness.

When you're scared, you want to hide
under anything you can.
You want to run as far as possible.
You can't think about anything
except what you're scared of.
Poetry hides in fear.

Poetry hides in feelings

5 Paintings

By Silvia Penn

Grade 5

Mrs. Munson

Oldsmar Elementary



Eleven-year old Fawn always wanted to be a famous artist. She loved art more than she did chocolate cake! She would paint all sorts of magnificent, majestic paintings of daisies and sailboats on the ocean. But her favorite thing to paint of all time was her snug home, sitting on a large field, away from the loud, crowded city of New York. She would paint as much as she could. Her parents thought that this “hobby of hers” was getting out of hand, especially after Fawn ended up having to sell her mom’s sewing kit to get money for art supplies. Not to mention, Fawn got terrible grades in school, except for art class. It wasn’t until one day when poor Fawn came home, excited to paint a cool blue and black beetle she saw, that she found that all her paint, paint brushes, canvases, cardstock, ink, oil pastels, and ink rollers were all missing. “What happened to all of my art supplies?” She would cry. She didn’t know what had happened to them. Have they been misplaced, hidden, stolen? As she was starting to wonder what happened even more, her parents came in. “You are banned from any art in this house, until your conduct and grades have gone up! Her dad scolded! At this, Fawn started to cry. This was bad, how could she ever become an artist if she didn’t have supplies to use? She cried herself to sleep that night. It wasn’t until the next day in art class, where Fawn’s hope might become bigger. “This week in class, you’ll be submitting an art piece and it will be entered in a competition, to be displayed in The Metropolitan Museum of Art.” Now this was great news, she knew what she was going to paint. A snug home, sitting on a large field, away from the bustling, loud city. Her home of course. By the end of art class, she felt amazing. A few

weeks later, the five paintings were chosen and announced. Fawn’s art teacher announced four names, and then the fifth., Fawn Orta. That day she ran home and started shouting, “I ENTERED AN ART PIECE TO THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART AND IT GOT EXCEPTED!!!” Fawn was beaming with joy. “Oh my goodness, that’s amazing sweetie!” Fawn’s mother exclaimed, “When will it be on display so we can see it?” Fawn’s dad couldn’t say anything, he was so starstruck! “Tomorrow!” Fawn answered. “Good, we’ll have to see it then.” Fawn’s dad finally forced out of his mouth, “I can’t wait!” That night Fawn couldn’t go to sleep. Not because she was sad but because she was excited and proud. When tomorrow came, Fawn hopped out of bed, put on her best sundress, braided her hair, and ate her pancakes and bacon as fast as her mouth could chew. “Hey, hey, hey, slow down there, I don’t want you to choke!” Mom warned. “Well if I do choke, tell the doctors it was because of excitement! Fawn said. “Hey watch your mouth, little artist, you know you still haven’t got to the museum yet!” With that Fawn shut her mouth. Finally they arrived at the museum. Her painting was in the main hall. Critics, reporters, tourists, parents, on goers, teachers, kids, and so on were crowded around the kids paintings. Except they weren’t around the one with the white owl, or the sunset. They were around Fawn’s snug, peaceful, home. “Is that your painting?” A critic asked, as he noticed Fawn was staring at her crowd and painting in awe. “Why yes it is!” Fawn replied. “Well, I’m an art critic, and I can tell you from that painting, that when you’re older, you WILL become a truly respected and amazing artist.” Before Fawn could say thank you, the critic walked away. Fawn realized that, despite her quirky beings, she will accomplish and carry on her one, and only passion, art.



Christmas Poem

By Eric Breuer
Grade 5, Mrs. McKinley
Brooker Creek Elementary



Christmas is fun
For everyone
Soft shimmering snow
You can throw
The snow is as cold as ice
And the snowy frost is a dream
Santa soaring through the starry night
Gifts on the sleigh are piled up high
He cautiously tiptoes like a mouse
Down the chimney and into the house
The pile of presents is a mountain of joy
A train set, dolls and a cuddly toy
The children’s faces are full of joy
As they open their presents by the tree
The dinner is a banquet fit for king and
queen
It’s the most wonderful Christmas I’ve
ever seen



My New Pup Tater

By Jakob Majewski
Grade 5
Mrs. Sherman
Skyview Elementary



It was midday as we
arrived at the SPCA.

I said, ‘Mom why are we here?’

Mom replied, ‘Well Jakey, this is an
animal shelter so what do you think?’

We walked through the lobby and straight
into puppy plaza. The room smelled like
dog, but at the same time it smelled like the
warm smell right after you wash something
like strawberry detergent. The walls were
yellow so when the light bounced off of the
walls it left an orange glow.

As soon as we got into puppy plaza we
saw three pups. Two dark fudge colored
female pups and a male with a tan colored
body black tail, and snout. Mom pointed to
the male and said we would take him. The
employee took the male and one of his
sisters and led us out to a patch of fenced in
fake grass. The employee put both pups
down then I noticed there was a couple who
started playing with the female pup. The
male pup started running in a circle then
jumped into my arms, sending me into the
fence. My mom and I both chuckled and
announced, ‘We’ll take him!’ The
employee replied ‘Ok,’ then took the male
pup and us back inside and gave mom the
paperwork to fill out.

Mom said, ‘Stay with the puppy, I’ll be
back’.

After she left, I stuck my hand in the cage
and he came over to my hand, then lay his
head on my hand and dozed off. At that
moment I knew he would be perfect for my
family and me. All of a sudden the
employee came back, picked up the male
pup and walked to the main office. I
followed. When we got to the main office,
Mom came over and whispered happily
‘He’s ours!’ She walked over to him, put a
black leash and collar on him, then
whispered to him ‘Let’s go home.’



The Gates

By Keegan Paez
Grade 5, Mrs. Lloyd
Tarpon Springs
Fundamental Elementary

So imagine this, the second night of a show and you're playing the lead role (Willy Wonka in this case) and everything is going fine

until one moment...

It all started one normal Wednesday afternoon. It was our second night in the show "Willy Wonka Jr." Everyone was used to the stage and performing. We were getting into costumes, doing good luck rituals, practicing lines, and some kids were on stage with the director practicing numbers. Meanwhile, my witty fourth grade mind is thinking of lines and saying in a cool space voice "T-minus 30 minutes" I was interrupted by a fifth grader, Gio. Unknowingly he says "I hope everything goes well." I also got a couple of more 5th graders like Stavros to wish me well. Little did they know what was about to happen.

It is five minutes before the show and some of the mains are having a prayer circle, complimenting everyone on how well they've been, and how we hope everything goes well. I swear we jinxed ourselves. Suddenly, it was show time. The show was moving along swiftly but then it was intermission. This is when it started to go downhill. Well not fully, but downhill.

When we got to the scene when all the characters are supposed to enter Willy Wonka's chocolate factory, the big, black, metal gates are supposed to open but they aren't for some reason. In addition to that, the music isn't playing.

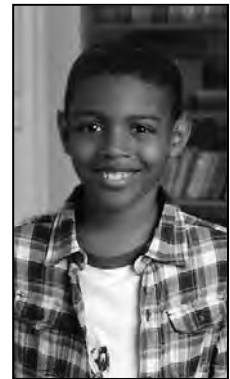
I'm thinking "What's going on? Did everybody just drop? Are they secretly just robots out of charge?" So, onstage we just wait a good five to ten seconds, which seems like an eternity on stage. But still they aren't opening. So, I think "Hey I'll just do some improv." So, I say "Well we would go in but my automatic gates don't seem to

be working so, we will just wait!" At this point, the crowd starts to laugh and applaud. For an instant, I'm thinking "Wait, are they clapping for me?" And they were! Moments later, the gates open and the show goes on just fine. Turns out that backstage the sound guy hit the disc eject button instead of the play button for the music!

Even after everything that happened during that performance, I was amazed with the outcome of the play. That day I learned to expect the unexpected because in theatre, you never know what may happen.

The Hot Dog Adventures

By Sram Muhqueed
Grade 5
Mrs. Brooke Frahn
Eisenhower Elementary



On a very strange day a hotdog grew arms and legs after a nuclear accident in New Bore Park. Scientists say the accident was not an accident, that someone did that on purpose. Soon after, the hotdog was hiding in the shadows, but then he saw his fellow hot dogs being cooked by humans. That hotdog saw hotdogs being eaten. That hot dog was furious! He wanted to destroy the humans, but how? A hot dog rolled on to the ground, and the hotdog with arms and legs (Whose name was Reed) touched that hot dog. Immediately, the hot dog from the ground grew arms and legs too! The hotdogs started a war of humans and hotdogs. Reed touched every single hot dog he could find. The hot dogs created a huge army. Once they came together, they were 3 times as big as a human. They were demolishing the humans! But then, "Boom!...they were all wiped out. All except for Reed, he was indestructible. But, he couldn't live in a world without his brothers, sisters, and cousins. So, he let a human eat him. That human lasted only a day before he passed away. He shouldn't have eaten Reed. After all, you probably should not eat mutated food. That was the last hotdog a human ever saw.

The New Family Member

By Alana Smith
Grade 5
Ms. Ruso/Ms. Cate
Douglas L. Jamerson



When I was very young, my family was driving home from a trip. We were looking for fun things to do when we came across an old pet store. I was eager to see what creatures lived behind those doors. There I stood in the entrance of a jungle of animals-- huge alligators, turtles, crabs, and parrots. I was begging and pleading for an alligator, but my parents quickly shut down that idea and told me I had to settle for a turtle or a hermit crab. The owner of the shop told us a lot of rules for properly keeping a turtle, so I picked a hermit crab, instead.

The younger me was not very imaginative at naming pets, so the hermit crab was named Hermy. We drove Hermy home in a tiny plastic box for animals. When got we got home, we made a bigger cage in my parent's room. We choose to decorate it with rainbow pebbles and a Velcro ladder. I was filled with joy.

Hermy and I had many good experiences, but all animals' lives have to end sometime. Sadly, after 10 months, it was his turn. One morning when I went to Hermy's cage, he was motionless. My mom and I got toothpicks and tried to see if he would move, but he didn't. So, my dad put Hermy in a box and buried him.

Oddly, my little brother was not sad. We all wondered why he wasn't crying. It was so weird.

The next day my brother asked, "Can we get Hermy back not?" All of the sudden, we understood why my brother hadn't been sad. He didn't understand what was going on. We told him that Hermy was not coming back and he cried and cried. We lost a family member and we were all sad.

In the years since, I have thought about getting another pet. Sometimes I wonder if that alligator is still available.

The Property

By Ava Frechette
Grade 5, Ms. Langes
Oakhurst Elementary



It was December 2014, in Greenville Florida. Only a few days after Christmas and a big group of friends and family were camping at a very large piece of land we call "the property." My grandparents own it and it is an amazing place. Everybody loves going on four-wheeler rides, even the parents. Today was different than other days because not many people wanted to go for a ride. Only a few people wanted to go. Adam, one of the dads, went around calling for any kids wishing to come with him. I ended up going with Rhett, my cousin, and Nate, Aden, and Ty, some of our friends. Racing to get to our four wheelers, I found mine first. I threw on my chest plate, buckled my helmet, and shoved the key in the keyhole.

One after another we went. All of us kids had no idea where we were going but of course Adam (the adult who played like a kid) knew where to go. By the end of a trail called "Crooked Lane," Adam came to a halt in front of very large pipes. Next to it was a ditch in the ground. He was implying that we would ride through. It seemed as if we had been riding for hours but it was probably only twenty minutes, but we felt we knew the location well.

Finally, my dad and twin sister arrived. She went through the ditch one to two times and then asked me "Ava, do a swerve and then drive down the ditch." I of course replied "yes" and waited until the path was clear and then hit the gas. It's as if everything became in slow motion. Almost as if I were a bowling pin hit but just teetering until, BAM, I fell. And the next thing I knew I was sprawled on the ground, clueless of what happened. A single tear rolled down my face as I slowly got up. Everything happened so fast.

My dad ran over to me asking if I was ok and I was a bit sore, but fine. It was as if it were a miracle and all I ended up with was barely a bruise. The next day I was back on my four wheeler, riding the trails.

It seemed like nothing bad ever happened. I went on multiple rides a day with mud splotches on my boots. It was a trip to "the property" I would never forget.



**Turkey or Eagle...
Which is Better?**

By Ryane Yakubovsky
Grade 5, Allison Stull
High Point Elementary

Do you ever wonder why the bald eagle is the American national bird? According to myth,

Benjamin Franklin wanted the turkey to be the national bird. Well I'll tell you this, the bald eagle is the better choice! Read on to find out why.

One reason the bald eagle would make the best national bird is it is a strong powerful bird, and the turkey, well it is a fat lump that sits in a barnyard and eats waiting to go to the slaughter house. You don't use bald eagle feathers in coats and you definitely don't see them on the table at thanksgiving dinner. Sure the turkey can confront any threat but the bald eagle has excellent hunting skills. The bald eagle has sharp talons for gripping prey, a pointed beak for tearing meat, and superior eyesight so they can see straight and to the side at the same time. Also the turkey is really only used for food. The Aztecs and some Indian tribes used it as a major food source. The bald eagle is even a protected species. The turkey might fly faster at speeds of fifty five mph and run at speeds of twenty five mph but, the bald eagle can fly as high as ten thousand feet and soar for hours.

Another reason the bald eagle makes and will always make the best national bird is that it represents us. The bald eagle shows we are a strong, powerful, independent country. If we had the turkey, people might think we are a poor lazy country and try to attack us. Having the turkey as the national bird is like having glue on a birthday cake instead of the frosting! The bald eagle even lives longer! The bald eagle lives for up to twenty years and the turkey, well it only lives for up to ten. The bald eagle also has a longer wingspan. The bald eagle's wingspan can grow up to seven feet and the turkeys can

grow to four point five feet. It's hard to believe that with the turkey's stubby little wings it can fly faster than the bald eagle!

So next Thanksgiving be thankful for the fact that you don't have a lunchmeat for a national bird. Be thankful that you have the bald eagle!



The Ending of a Perfect Game

By Zoe Foglio
Grade 5

Mrs. Sherman
Skyview Elementary

Imagine just having five minutes in a softball game and it's your turn to bat

and it's also up to you to win the game. Well that's exactly what happened to me during my first softball game.

It was a tie. The score was 7 to 7 and it was up to me to win the game. I walked up to home base and got ready to bat. My hands were SO sweaty and I was shaking a little bit because of how nervous I was. I could hear my team cheering in the dugout yelling, "Let's go, Zoe, let's go!" Then they would all clap twice.

My coach said, "Ready?" and I nodded my head. He tossed the ball in the air. I swung my bat and I missed the ball. The ref yelled, "Strike one!" I heard my two friends Kayley and Nataly yell, "Come on, Zoe, you can do it!"

I nodded my head at my coach and he tossed the ball into the air. I swung my bat and, WHAM! I hit that ball all the way to the outfield. I ran as fast as I could to first, second, then third base. As I was running to home plate I saw the ball coming right at me. I ducked down and slid right into home plate. Then all of a sudden it got quiet and all you heard was the ref yell, "SAFE!"

We won! We won the game! Kayley and Nataly gave me one big hug. We heard the other team start to pout about not winning the game. My coach came up to me and said, "Good job, Kiddo!"

I smiled at him, then he yelled, "Who wants pizza?"

The whole team yelled, "ME!" at the same time.

I have never been in a situation where I have saved the day. To me this was the best day and the most perfect game ever!

Traveling to Paris

By Diana Phan
Grade 4
Mrs. Mandy Harmon
Pinellas Central
Elementary



Someday...
I will travel to Paris
On a nice breezy day
I will see the beautiful
Eiffel tower
And take pictures
I am going to eat colorful macrons
And other delicious snacks
I will read books
To learn French
I will bake cake
Flavors I have never seen before
And I will smile big.

Today...
I am in Florida
In the hot and horrible weather
A cloudy, dark, rainy, horrible day
I'm eating my everyday food
Also reading normal books
Having a pretty normal day.



Being a Figure

Kamaria Johnson
Grade 5, Cynthia Durant
Lakeview Fundamental



Being a figure is like
being a stone.
You'll never know who
or what will come to you.
It's like standing in a
room...alone.
A place where no one will find or see you.
What's wrong with her shoes; she has ugly
hair.
I am a figure, everyone is.
If someone has something going on in their
life?
In your mind you want to say something, but
nothing comes out.
Just the breath of the air breathing in and
out.
I believe in being a figure, because there is
so much life around me to feel.
Is there a black hole in the middle of you
that won't go away?
Being a figure doesn't allow you to always
be alone.
It's about finding yourself. Taking roads
you've never seen before, taking chances.
It's about having fun.
Being a figure is filling in that black hole.
To feel the joy, the heartbreak of life.
Pulling you closer and closer to who you
are.
I'm a figure, I believe in being one, because
this helped me to find my best friend.
A friend who supports me in all ways!
I believe in being a figure, because I found
out who I was.
There are other figures out there that can be
helped.
Helping them means they won't feel as
much pain as you did.
You and I are figures and it is our job to
overcome it.
And as we overcome it we find out who we
really are.



Irma Incident

By Luke MacNeill
Grade 5, Mrs. Tsalickis
Sunset Hills Elementary

Today the big, fat Hurricane Irma was going to deplete my entire beach day. I had planned to play volleyball, make sand castles, and ride the waves with my friends at Sunset Beach, but that dream was dashed as the weather forecasters informed us that the hurricane was barreling toward us. I was watching the weather channel when all of a sudden my mom came bursting through the door, yelling at my brothers and me like a military general to get our stuff, the dog, and Clarence the fish to our neighbor's house. We are close friends, so they allowed us to stay at their double roofed, brick and boarded windowed house. We burst inside, and situated ourselves and our belongings, including the dog and Clarence the fish. Because the hurricane would be dangerous, there was no school, and therefore no homework. The only sad part of the whole scenario was that my beach day was ruined. I would have moped all night if we hadn't played Monopoly, which took my mind off of my demolished, washed out, and wrecked beach day. We then watched seven minute weird but entertaining videos on how to fight sharks which finally put us into a dream world of slumber.

The next day, we were without air-conditioning, and death burned through our skulls as the sun tried to collect another victim in its hot rays. My family and I walked through the yard and lugged around sticks blown down from trees and palm fronds. We spent the night at my Mom's friend's house, and after an eternity, the power was on. The beautiful, wonderful power to power our well-being and our air-conditioning.



Hurricane Irma

By Jaomano Burden, Jr.
Grade 5
Cynthia Durant
Lakeview Fundamental

Hurricane Irma hit. I have to admit I was terrified. The storm hit us really hard at one a.m. in the morning. Before it struck us my family and I did lots of work cleaning the front and backyard and securing all windows.

First, I was so excited because it was my first hurricane. Then I was terrified because it could be my last day on Earth. Finally, I went outside when the hurricane was barely starting and felt the cool breeze.

Then I realized it wasn't so bad. An hour later I was back to being terrified. You could hear wind howling, our American flag flapping violently while the wind was pushing it, and trees falling down. When it was all over we went around the neighborhood and saw the damage that Irma had caused.

There were sticks scattered throughout our neighbors' yards from broken tree limbs. There was even a person's palm tree pulled out of the ground. Irma will be something I will always remember.





Shark Attack

By Miguel Ochoa
Grade 5, Ms. Stull
High Point Elementary

Splash! What is that noise?
Could it be a shark!? Crunch
crunch! The water turns red
all around you. The most

terrifying word a human being can scream while you are at the beach in the water...is SHHHAAARRRKKK! This is what happened to Bethany Hamilton and her life was affected many ways.

While doing what she loved, surfing the crashing waves, Bethany Hamilton was attacked by a curious and hungry tiger shark. The shark chomped down on her left arm. Bethany was pulled to safety out of the water, but she was seriously bleeding from her left arm. After being rushed to the hospital and many surgeries, Bethany worked hard to get her life back together. Many supportive fans helped with her recovery both physically and mentally.

One way Bethany was affected by a shark was she had to learn to surf again. Bethany struggled to stand on her surf board because her missing arm left her off balance. She also had to learn to kick a lot harder to make up for her missing arm. She had to practice every single day and re-learn her many surfing skills. Bethany's courage and her perseverance to learn to surf again was amazing to others.

Another affect was that Bethany's comeback inspired people around the world. Imagine going to your house to find thousands of letters and mail from fans. She read one letter from an 8th grader saying she lost her arm in an accident. She didn't give up because Bethany didn't give up. Now that girl was signing to play soccer for a college. This made Bethany feel proud. Everywhere she went people were asking for her autograph.

Without a doubt, Bethany getting attacked by a shark affected her life many ways. Although it was the scariest time in her life, many positive things came from the attack.

Space is My Place

By Kyle Rose
Grade 5, Cynthia Durant
Lakeview Fundamental



Space.

A place that can fully be in my
imagination.

A place that I think about all the time.

A place where I want to be.

How big is the universe?

Will the new telescope replacing the
Hubble be able to see the beginning of
time?

(considering that light doesn't travel
instantly)

Can I go to Mars?

Is space controlled by the matrix?

As all of these questions go through my
head, my imagination grows,
and I can think of even more questions.
But then I think of how far away space
is.

How could I possibly get to it?

Ever since I was really young, I wanted
to go to space.

When I was sad, I would close my eyes
and feel like I'm floating in space.

I would see Earth, Mars, and Pluto.

I would go through wormholes to the
other side of the universe.

I would see the matrix, and all that I
imagined was in space.

I wanted it to be real.

But then I realized that space is here in
my imagination.

Space is everywhere.

Space is my place.



Swim Meet

By Sarnai Chimidkhorloo
Grade 5, Mrs. Smith /
Mrs. Acerra
Forest Lakes Elementary

On a warm, sunny day I was relaxing on my couch watching TV and my mom came in and said,

“Sarnai guess what? You’re going to the Florida Age Group Swimming Championships.” I was very surprised, but very happy that I qualified for three events.

It was a fun road trip the day we went to the championships in Sarasota. We checked out the pool. “It’s a giant pool! No wonder, it’s a fifty meter pool,” I said while smiling.

“You get to swim here,” said my dad. I was very excited. But it was so crowded. It seemed like there were a billion people there. I kept looking for my team, but they weren’t anywhere to be seen. We were lost.

“Where is the Team?” I questioned. A half an hour later we finally found them.

It was almost time for my first event to start. I was worried, but mostly excited. Officials called my name and I got up on the diving block. Once my name was called I was very nervous. My heart was pounding, but I knew soon I’d be finished. My legs were numb and my whole body was shaking. I was even sweating. It was time. Once they said “Go!” I took off and swam as hard as I could.

I pumped my legs and scooped my arms as fast as I could. My arms ached from pushing the water. My body was hurting! When I touched the wall I was panting so hard. The wall was high so I had to push with all my might to get out of the water. Now I had a long, boring wait until the second event.

I went up to the block and got ready. I was more excited this time. I was up and off. Again I was tired, cold and a little happy. I touched the wall and was very exhausted. I did a good job so we went to Sweet Tomatoes that night. It was very,

very yummy. The next day I had one more event.

When it was time to go I jumped into the pool. I couldn’t see that well so I tried to fix my goggles and they weren’t there!! They fell off. I tried to put them back on, but my plan failed. Water got into my eyes and they hurt. Through the whole race I was tired, sad, and I felt so embarrassed. When I finally hit the wall I was devastated. I’ve never experienced the feeling before and I was very sad. I just wanted to go home. My parents wanted to cheer me up so they bought me a Slushy. It didn’t work though.

During the 2 hour ride home I realized something. I’ve competed in many swim meets and learned something at each one. The best lesson I learned was to always tighten my goggles before the race. In the end I was proud of myself. I even imagined representing America in the Olympics one day.

Dust, a Dirty but Remarkable Thing

Layne Rickenback-Goulet
Grade 5, Cynthia Durant
Lakeview Fundamental



Poetry hides in Dust,
Dust is everywhere,
Even sitting next to Neil
Armstrong,

In his space ship that’s going to the moon.

When it floats back,
Down from its adventure,
It starts a new one.

We kick Dust out of our house,
Where it gets stuck,
In the cold snow.

Then the snow melts and,
There’s a gust of wind,
That takes it over the
Snow covered mountains.

It looks down and wonders,
What other adventures can I go on?
That’s just one speckle of Dust,
Out of one million.



My First Time on Space Mountain

By Rachel Boswell
Grade 5, Susan McElveen
Curtis Fundamental

A feeling of relief washed over me as I stepped off the crazy-fun rollercoaster.

It...WAIT!!! I really don't want to spoil the ending so let's start at the beginning...

The sun shone brightly, and there were no clouds to be seen. A slight breeze would occasionally ripple my long brown hair. But it wasn't all this beautiful to me. Today, I was going on the (so called) best rollercoaster in Magic Kingdom, and it was my first time! The ride was called Space Mountain and it was space themed.

My family and I were in the halfway part of the line. The air conditioning was freezing and unwelcoming. My heart was thumping like a drum at a heavy metal concert. I was breathing like I had run to Mars and back without stopping. And my stomach? Let's just say it was doing a bar routine! I was scared... no, terrified... no, absolutely petrified! I wanted to run out of the line as fast as I could, yet the line was so long I couldn't.

"Be strong!" I told myself, but my legs felt shaky. "Stay calm," but my hands were clammy. "It's supposed to be fun!" Yet, my hands were fidgeting non-stop. "C'mon Rachel! You got this!" I encouraged myself.

I gathered up my courage and stepped into the cart. My twin and I pulled our lap bars down at the exact same time. Usually I would smile, but instead I gave her the look as if mentally saying, "I am so scared!" My hands were literally shaking. The cart people gave the person who controlled the ride a thumbs up. At this point I was dying to leave, but a little voice inside my head said, "No getting off now..."

We zipped and zoomed at full speed. I closed my eyes and held my breath, then opened them as we zipped through a neon light tunnel. Bright red, green, yellow, pink, and turquoise colors greeted me. Then

we stopped. Or at least I thought we did until I realized we were actually going very slowly uphill. Click! Click! Click! went the cart on the track. Just as I thought, I was going to die of fear.

I didn't get to because we awesomely swerved in a hundred circles and swooped and twisted and turned and dipped and jerked left, then right and twisted; zipped, looped, and dipped a big one all in the dark! Then, we dipped into an opening and...it was over.

My eyes had watered like crazy, so it was hard to see. I wiped my eyes and hoped no one thought I was crying. I stepped off the cart with jelly-noodle like legs. I grinned. I immediately knew that this would be one of my favorite rides in all Disney. This ride was truly irreplaceable!

My Great Grandmother

By Lexie Chaseng
Grade 5, Mrs. Redington
Pinellas Central
Elementary



My great grandmother is who we're visiting today.

The weather is warm like her hugs. And makes me remember the happy moments.

But the ones right now aren't happy or joy, It's sad and depression.

Oh, you still look pretty in the wheelchair.

But I can't always say that because you're mostly in a nursing home, which is so far away.

I can't stop missing and thinking about you.

Because my mother once told me "One day she would go away like water on the beach"

My great grandmother is who we visited today.



A Dragon's Life
By Anna Shabunina
Grade 5, Mrs. Karlesky
Cypress Woods Elementary

It was a calm night. We were all safe from the enemy clan. Oh wait, I forgot to introduce myself! I am Iceclaw, an ice dragon. My clan, Star Clan, is the most peaceful clan of them

all. Thunder Clan, on the other hand, is the fiercest clan. They're constantly trying to declare war on the other clans, especially ours since it's very peaceful. Other dragons often underestimate our clan since we always decline war offers. War offers are a general rule among all dragons. To fight with a clan, the enemy clan has to agree. Thunder Clan attacks anyway, no matter how many times other clans tell them that it's against the dragons' rule.

Anyway, it was a calm night. The dragons in my clan were sleeping happily. It had been days since Thunder Clan had attacked. We all thought they wouldn't attack anymore. Diamondpaw, the crystal dragon, was slumped against a wall with no movement except for dream twitches. The others were among the rocks in our cave, snoring gently. I was the only one awake. Before we went to sleep, my sister, Moonstar, told me that the enemy clan was coming. "Thunderclaw is coming with Thunder Clan," she told me in a warning tone. Moonstar is a future telling dragon. I told her that I would stop them. "NO!" she cried. "Don't try to come and stop them!" I knew it was a bad idea to leave but I was out of good ones. As I reached the mouth of the cave, I looked back. I was leaving my family and friends for a dangerous journey. I knew I might not come back, but I was doing this for my clan. I spread my wings and took off into the dark night.

For days and nights I traveled, encountering bad weather and ferocious animals. I scolded myself for not bringing a compass with me because I kept on getting lost. The path to Thunder Clan was supposed to be easy (just follow the clouds), but sometimes there were no clouds. I knew I was there when I saw a giant mountain surrounded by fog and clouds. Dragons flew around guarding and trading with others. It took me a bit of time to find Thunderclaw sitting on his throne. Guards were on all sides of him making sure nobody could get near him. There was no way to get close to him. I was about to give up when he stood up and started flying around, making sure everything was fine.

I ducked behind a rock. I didn't need to catch his attention. I crawled out from behind the rock and quickly found out that I made a mistake. I was face to face with Thunderclaw. For a moment, I didn't do anything. Then I declared, "Leave my clan alone and we'll leave yours alone. If you want to fight, the winner's clan will be left alone." I spoke with a confidence that I didn't feel. Thunderclaw smirked.

"Okay," he said, "show me your best."

At first, I thought he wouldn't do anything, but then he called out to his fellow dragons. "Come fight to get rid of this rat!" Immediately, all the dragons stopped what they were doing and came over. They started firing fire, ice, and other objects that they could attack me with. I chickened out and flew home with my tail between my legs. Their cheering grew fainter as I flew away.

The moment I touched the cave I was pulled in by my mom. "Where were you?" she said softly. "I thought you were gone forever!" After I explained the situation I told her that we needed to defeat Thunder Clan now. "Okay, let's go chase these dragons out of our land! Get everyone ready!" she said. When we got out of the cave, I felt confidence that I hadn't felt in a long time. We had to win.

When Thunderclaw saw us, a strange look came across his face. It was a mixture of surprise and a little fear. Then, the fight began. I breathed some ice on a fire dragon and an ice cube formed around him. I almost laughed. His face was frozen, angry, and surprised. Thunderclaw growled and threw an arrow at me. I ducked and the arrow whizzed by harmlessly. I fired ice while Diamondpaw touched the enemy dragons, turning them into stone. The others in our clan were making attacks of their own. Everything was successful until a blast of fire hit me in the face. Being an ice dragon, I was affected by fire. I got very dizzy and couldn't fly which made me an easy target. Our healer dragon sprang out of nowhere and covered me in a cold towel. The fire stopped doing its thing and became cold. By the time I was allowed back in the fight, Thunder Clan had surrendered. They all raced back to their den and didn't come out. I couldn't believe it! We won a fight! Clearly, everyone else felt excited, too. We flew home in victory and had a big feast to celebrate our win. Our leader, Starfire, said that he couldn't say how thankful he was that we did this. If we hadn't, our clan would've been nothing. Star Clan lived in peace; happily ever after. Nobody would forget the day that I saved our clan from Thunder Clan.



My Nana, My Dove
 By Isabel Slater
 Grade 5, Mrs. Lloyd
 Tarpon Springs Fundamental

Grandmas. They are one of the best things in the world a family could have. They make you laugh, and fill your heart with joy. My grandma, Nani I always called her, was more than that.

She was all the happy feelings you could ever imagine. Until the phone rang. It was my grandpa, Papi I always called him. She was very sick. And when I saw my mom's eyes start to leak, I knew now everything would change forever. And that's why I call her my dove, because now she rests in peace.

Now how about some happy thoughts and over with the sadness. Well, her real name was Allene. She was born in Cobleskill, New York, April 15th, 1947. Her maiden name was Allene Roth. I obviously was her first grandchild. Nani was the best grandma ever. When I got older, we did more and more stuff together. It was the best time ever. We watched T.V. together, even though sometimes she thought my shows were annoying which was really funny. It was perfect between the both of us.

Then my baby brother came along. Now that he came, it was much more fun because well, he's my brother. We always played blocks with him. And even though it was not our type of game to play, we still had fun. All of us, including Papi were a big heart of love.

Now let's rewind to when I was about 2 years old. They both taught me how to climb on to the couch and run. It was so much fun. I always tried to teach her Spanish even though I didn't know any Spanish. I just tried to imitate my other Grandma who is Spanish. I always called right "Righta" and left "Lefta". I'm sure anyone who is Spanish will know that that's not how you say right and left in Spanish. Well, don't blame me, I was only 4 years old.

Something else we always used to do was sit in our inflatable pool and look for love bugs and set them free from drowning. I even pretended I was a mermaid. I always lay on my stomach and swam around and pretended I was the most elegant mermaid ever. Then about 2 years later, we threw away the inflatable pool and went to my community pool by my house instead. I loved how I swam through her legs still

pretending I was a mermaid. The olden days were so much fun.

Nani always got me the best stuff for Christmas and my birthday. I always went to their house first before I went Trick-Or-Treating with my best friend Morgan. Then about 4 years later, my baby brother came. His full name was Alexander Christian Slater. Well here's an adult joke. Look at his initials. If any adults watched *Saved by the Bell*, you would know that my brother's initials are A.C. Slater. Just an adult joke. Moving right along, Nani and I had so much fun hanging and chilling out together.

Now that I already told you that Nani passed away, my brother didn't get to see how great Nani really is, but she is always going to be in our heart and guide us the rest of the way in life. She is.... My dove.

If I Were a Bat
 By Iza'bella D'elia
 Grade 5
 Mrs. Mandy Harmon
 Pinellas Central
 Elementary



If I were a bat, I'd fly
 around in the night sky
 and soar the glimmering stars.

What a night!

As the sun goes down, I'D fly into the sky
 and off to the sunset I go.

The light burns my eyes.

And when the sky goes to bed, I'd be wide
 awake all animals sleeping till the day--

Quietly and peacefully.

In the middle of the night, me and family
 would hang upside down from the trees and
 count all of the fireflies.

If only it were as pretty as the day.

As the sun rises and the light of day is
 shining in my eyes, I'd go back home and
 sleep the day,

Hearing all of the kids outside play,

Waiting for the night I am.

What would you do if you were a bat?.....I'd
 fly away!



My Cast
 By Caleigh Dillon
 Grade 5, Mrs. McElveen
 Curtis Fundamental

With every bump in the road came an unwelcomed pain in my wrist. Bump...ow. Bump...OW. BUMP...OWW! I swiveled around in my seat to glare at the massive speed bumps.

The majority of people would say that a speed bump is a good thing, and I agree. But today, it was a warning, a terrible warning. I was so scared the palms of my hands felt like I had just gotten out of the pool. I didn't have to look up to know where we were because I didn't even want to be here.

"We're here!" my dad sang like it was a good thing, even though it wasn't. I pretended not to hear, trying to stall as much as possible. Apparently, it worked because I nearly jumped when my mom took the book I was reading right out of my hands.

"Hey!" I said as I tried to get it back. That's when she gave me 'the look.' I always got that look. The look said, "Pay attention, we're here." I smiled and got out of the car. I didn't want to look at the huge white building looming above me. But temptation and curiosity got the best of me. I stared up at it, stopped dead in my tracks, and turned right back around. *Nope... nope...nope... nope... NOPE!* I thought.

I desperately didn't want to go into the giant, white building that was at least three stories high. I felt my mom's hand pressing down lightly on my back to make me keep walking.

"Come on; keep walking. You don't want to be late," she said. I knew that if I didn't listen I would be late for my appointment, which would really make my parents upset. I didn't want them to get upset. I started walking again, but I was still slightly scared. The orthopedic doctor was on the third floor, so we took the elevator up.

After signing papers, we sat in the waiting room waiting for the nurse to call my name. After I was called, we then had to wait for the doctor to come in and look at my wrist. Finally, the door opened, and my orthopedic doctor came in. Behind him was a woman pushing some sort of portable machine. Now I

was so scared, you could see the sweat on my forehead.

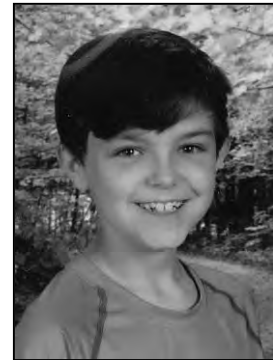
My dad explained the entire story of how I tripped over a traffic cone. When he finished, the doctor started pressing on my wrist until I tensed when he reached the spot that hurt with the most pressure on it. He sent me to another room to have x-rays which showed I had fractured the growth plate in my wrist. Time to get my first cast!

There were so many colors to choose from! My mom threatened pink, so I instantly said, "Blue." He put weird foam on my forearm. Then he took the cast wrap, dipped it in water, wrapped it on top of the foam, and I had myself a cast. My very first cast.

Florida
 By Jack Taylor
 Grade 5, Mrs. Miller
 Brooker Creek
 Elementary

Florida has a formula,
 beaches, heat, and sun.

We have so many things to do,
 and all of them are fun!
 We have tourists, boating, and theme parks,
 sports and so much more.
 You'll never run out of things to do,
 we have activities galore.
 From Key West to Pensacola,
 sightseeing options are endless.
 The Everglades, St. Augustine,
 and sunsets leave you breathless.
 The water options are everywhere,
 lakes, streams, springs, and the bay.
 You can swim, canoe, snorkel, or fish,
 from sunrise till the end of the day.
 The ocean surrounds most of our state,
 so, learning to swim is a 'must'.
 Once you come south to get out of the cold,
 I'm sure you'll want to stay and adjust.



Goodbye...Hazel

By Annabelle Hagen
Grade 5
Mrs. Redington
Pinellas Central
Elementary



I woke up one Sunday morning and thought that day was going to be a normal day at my house. Little did I know that day someone would be leaving us... forever.

I flipped up the covers and leaped out of bed. I got dizzy for a few seconds and soon got to my feet again. I opened my door and left the upstairs, dark and alone. Once I got to the dining room I looked out at the living room like a sea captain searching for land, when I saw a blue and white cage. I thought to myself "Maybe we're getting a new dog? Eh, it doesn't matter now."

All day I was thinking about that cage until my mom put my cat Hazel into it. Hazel didn't mind it, she meowed a few times and took a nap, "Mom, why is Hazel in that cage?" Mom stayed quiet the rest of the car ride.

Soon enough we were with the cold and sick animals, the place people call the vet. My mom spoke with the woman at the front desk. I saw her eyes teared up and her hand went to her chest and turned to point to a room. My mom went to get me, my sister, and Hazel. We went to the room the woman pointed to. Soon another woman in a white coat with a syringe came in the room and started to calm down Hazel. Hazel started to lay down on the bed, the woman wiped her tears and tried to stay professional but just whispered to herself and said "I hate doing this..." Hazel stopped breathing and closed her eyes.

I felt like the world went silent and everything froze and the only thing I could hear was the ringing in my ears and me... breathing. I went dizzy again and I had to sit down. It seemed only for me the lights flickered and I was closing my eyes but I didn't feel my eyelids droop. A waterfall fell

from my eyes as my mom picked me up from the seat and carried me back to the car.

As we drove off, the cage Hazel should have been in, alive and safe from any harm, was mocking me. I looked out of the window and whispered to myself "Goodbye... Hazel."

Unknown Journey

By Ethan Daly
Grade 5, Mrs. Durant
Lakeview Fundamental



Poetry hides in dust.
Dust is sitting, waiting on
a tabletop for a new friend
to arrive.

It can be on your suitcase
ready to go to Paris, or maybe Tokyo.

Dust can be anywhere at any time.
Think of a place, dust is there.
If you're going to take a nice vacation
alone, you're not alone.
Dust is next to you at all times.

Some people think dust is just some dirt
that lays around, waiting to get cleaned.
But really it has more fun than you do!
It goes on roller coasters, goes to outer
space, and airplanes.
I can go on and on about where dust
goes...

Just think. Dust is able to go anywhere.
Would you want to be dust?
Doesn't it sound cool?

So now, what do you think of dust?
Traveling wherever it wants.
Dust is pretty awesome, don't you think?





The Accidental Roll

By Madelyn McRitchie
Grade 5, Ms. Langes
Oakhurst Elementary

I hear the engine start as I happily skip out of the garage and slide into the car. My mom drives me to dance every Saturday morning and today I was especially excited! It was my first time going back to dance since winter break. This morning I had two classes, acro (acrobatics) first and then production.

I walk into my classroom casually and immediately my friendly teacher Miss Robin greets me. "Hello Maddy! Good to see you again."

"Thanks, you too!" I reply. Then she waves me over to where the other girls are sitting.

"Start stretching girls!" she directs. I was a little stiff, only because I had not stretched for a while, but I was glad to be back.

"Now, let's do some cartwheels," she tells us. Then Miss Robin gives us different combinations. Once we finish those we go down to the mats. But if I knew what was about to happen, I probably would have been more cautious.

"Alright girls, please find your own space on the mat. Today, we are going to learn how to do something called a 'shoulder-roll.'" Oh how I just love learning something new! I thought to myself, roll backwards on your shoulders, piece of cake. Miss Robin informed us that when we would be doing this we needed to have our legs in a split position.

Now it was our turn to try it. I go for a shoulder roll and BAM! My big toe hits the wall. "Yikes!" I say to myself. After I realized I was hurt, Miss Robin had already said that was all for tonight. I couldn't move and just simply fell to the cold, hard dance floor. The throbbing pain in my toe felt like a million bees stinging in the same place. What did I do? What should I do next? Several thoughts crossed my mind. I became so overwhelmed with fear and pain that I began to tremble and shake.

I tried to stand up but luckily Miss Robin and my friends came over to help me up. All I could think about was whether or not my foot was broken. Miss Robin decided it was time to call my mom. When my mom came to pick me up and I explained the whole moment to her. She took me straight to get an x-ray. The doctor's announced that my toe was in fact broken. I was told to wrap it up in a splint every morning.

Then it hit me. I'd have to miss dance for a whole month. I was beyond disappointed but I knew it was for the best.

Weeks passed and it was finally time for me to dance again. I put on my shoes. I was a combination of nervous and excited all at the same time. I headed into my dance room and began to dance. I was so proud of myself for being patient. Dancing that night was hard but worth it. One thing is for sure, Miss Robin won't let me do any more shoulder rolls in class again!





Camp Dry Tortugas National Park

By Lenna Herzfeld

Grade 5, Mrs. Denise Dawson

Pasadena Fundamental Elementary

Dear Mom,

Today was my first day at the Dry Tortugas and man, that drive was long! I can't believe we had to drive all the way to Key West, Florida and I got car sick. Then get out of the car and get on a ferry to the first island of the seven islands in the Dry Tortugas, then get sea sick. It was horrible, but it was worth it. We saw a bunch of turtles! I heard that when Ponce De Leon first found this place he caught 100 turtles! I think that's why they named this place the Dry Tortugas. I know that Tortugas is Spanish for turtles, but I don't know why they added dry to the name. Oh, and if you're wondering why I'm not just calling you, there isn't any cell phone service here.

Love you,
Marie

Dear Marie,

I hope you are having a fun time at Camp Dry Tortugas. Since I've been there before, I think I know why they named this place Dry Tortugas, but I'll leave that for you to find out. I will tell you the history of The Dry Tortugas. The Dry Tortugas has the most interesting history ever!

In 1865 John Wilkes Booth shot and killed President Lincoln. So he went to Dr. Mudd, his doctor, for help. Dr. Mudd fixed his leg not knowing that his patient just shot the president.

During the Civil War, one of the seven islands was used as a fort. To be specific, Fort Jefferson was the name. If you go there today there are still some of the cannons standing.

Then after the war, the fort became a prison since it was out in the Gulf of Mexico and it had no use. Since Dr. Mudd helped John, and John committed a crime, Dr. Mudd went to that prison.

With lots of love,
Mom

Dear Mom,

Today we learned about Yellow Fever, a disease that killed a lot of people, because it was very contagious. I feel bad for all the people that died from it. Do you remember when you told me about Dr. Mudd? Well, apparently, Dr. Mudd saved a bunch of people because at the time he was the only one that knew the disease was contagious. What he did was he put everyone on one island that had the disease already, then left them there with all the stuff they needed like food, water, and medicine. This is the best part! Later they named that island, Hospital Island. Oh, and I almost forgot to tell you that I figured out why the Dry Tortugas is called the Dry Tortugas.

In the Dry Tortugas, fresh water is very hard to find and "dry" was later added to the name to warn people about the lack of fresh water. Basically, if you wanted to come then you had to bring your own fresh water.

Love You,
Marie

Dear Marie,

Sounds like camp is going well, but you know it will have to end on Friday! Great job on finding out why they added "Dry" to the name, I knew you could do it.

Can't wait to see you tomorrow,
Mom



Goldie Locks Junior and her Ride of a Lifetime

By Payton Thompson
Grade 5
Mrs. Denise Dawson
Pasadena Fundamental

Everyone has heard of Goldie Locks and the Three Bears but have you heard of Goldie Locks Junior? You didn't think Goldie Locks' life ended when the book was closed, did you?

The story continued 16 years later when Goldie Locks' daughter got her driver's license.

Goldie Locks Junior's fame all started when she was driving through the forest in her new Tesla. She obviously didn't care about the "NO TEXTING AND DRIVING" rule because she was absorbed in her phone.

Suddenly, after sending a few texts she found herself swerving down the road seeing things in a blur. The next thing she knew was a quick, CRASH! She was head first, planted into the steering wheel. Goldie's phone was doing an aerial maneuver. "OH NO!" Not because of the car, she had insurance for that, but because her phone had flown through a local cottage window. "MUST HAVE PHONE"!!! She screamed at the top of her lungs. There were no vehicles in the driveway of the cottage so she hiked up to the front door to get the device. She jumped through the broken window. "Who could live in such a small place?" she uttered even though it was pretty big. Suddenly, she smelled something

delicious. McDonald's, "YUM." As she began comparing the different sized meals; one was too small, one was too big, but the last one was just right. After practically inhaling the meal, she heard something "BEEP".

The beep sounded like a new phone. Goldie Locks Junior really needed one because after hers flew out the window, it got pretty beat up, so she went to investigate and found three phones. One was a waterproof Samsung Galaxy, "Gross." The next was a flip phone. She didn't even know what that was. The last phone was a Deluxe Apple iPhone X, just right. She seized the phone and rushed up stairs.

She then found herself in a room with three beds; one was way too soft, one was too hard, but the last was just perfect. So, she plopped herself on it and went scrolling through the owner's Instagram feed. CREAK. Oh no! The owners are home. There must have been a kid because she heard singing in high pitched harmony. A few seconds later footsteps were coming straight towards Goldie. About a minute later, everything was a blur. She found herself handcuffed in the wolf's arms from the Three Little Pigs.

She was so tired after a long day she went to sleep. The next morning, she woke up in her Tesla with her friend Blue Robin Hood. They were escaping. So, if you ever see a blue Tesla with two girls in it, call the Fairy Tale Hotline at 1-888-222-222 as soon as possible. Goldie Locks Junior still has Baby Bear's iPhone X and she needs to fix their window!



Penguins

By Joni Ellis
Grade 5, Mrs. Cottle
Madeira Beach
Fundamental



“Penguins, penguins, penguins”

You might have wondered, what is that black and white animal in Antarctica? Well, if you chose an adorable penguin then you are correct. Penguins use their adaptations to thrive in the wild, their diet consist of various sea creatures, and mainly live in sub- zero temperatures.

“Is that a tuxedo I see?”

Penguins rely on their physical characteristics to survive in their habitat. All adult penguins are countershaded, which means their dark on their back surface and white on their under surface. The dark backside blends in with the ocean depths when viewed from above. The white underside blends in with lighter side of the sea when viewed from below. The result is that predators or prey don’t see a contrast between the countershaded penguin and the environment. A penguin’s body is adapted to swimming. This makes me think of bathing suit because their fur is waterproof just like a bathing suit. A penguin has a large head, short neck, and an elongated body. When a penguin is countershaded, it reminds me of how a deer blends into its environment with its fur.

“Dinner time”

Penguins survive off of various sea creatures. They eat a lot of food such as krill, fish and squid. Various species of penguins have slightly different food preferences, which reduce competition among species. The smaller penguin species of Antarctica and the sub Antarctica primarily feed on krill and squid. In general, species found farther north tend to eat fish. Penguins have a special gland in their bodies that takes the salt out of the water they drink and pushes it out of their bill. This makes me imagine a handy in-house filtration system.

“Home sweet home”

Penguins rely on their habitat to survive. All 18 species of penguins live in the Southern Hemisphere. Penguins are found on every continent in the Southern Hemisphere. Penguins are adapted to live on or by the sea. Penguins generally live on islands. “Can you believe this”, some penguins spend MONTHS at a time at the sea! Penguins are usually found near nutrient-rich, cold water currents that provide an abundant supply of food.

“Wow”, that was fascinating! Penguins have so many great and amazing ways to survive in life. Next time I see a black and white animal in Antarctica, I will definitely know it’s an adorable penguin.





Pie...Apple Pie
 By Grace Lyerly
 Grade 5, Susan McElveen
 Curtis Fundamental

“A little pinch of sugar, a teaspoon of cinnamon, and three cups of apples.” Ingredient after ingredient, there was a

Mommy Ninja moving throughout our kitchen. She was opening the spice drawer, getting supplies from the pantry, and peeling and dicing apples.

It all started with a Thanksgiving menu that was not too long, but not too short. “How about smoked turkey, mashed potatoes, gravy, apple bacon, brussel sprouts, croissants, and...pecan pie? How does that sound?” asked my mom.

My mouth was watering from the second I heard *pie*. I did not care what kind, but it had to be good! Out in the distance I heard a whining voice say, “Why pecan pie? I don’t like pecans!” I knew who that was...my brother being a baby! Then he said, “What about apple pie?”

“Cameron, go ask your dad.” Those were the words my mom said that let me know that she approved. My dad agreed to the apple pie, but he was devastated that he could not have MaMaw’s pecan pie on Thanksgiving Day. I did not care what kind of pie; I just wanted pie, pie, pie, (I was doing my happy dance)!

We were not going to make a big pie; we wanted cute mini pies with little overlapping leaves on top. “A little pinch of sugar, a teaspoon of cinnamon, and three cups of apples.” My mom was pulling ingredients from the pantry, then dicing the apples. I was mixing the sugar, cinnamon, and apples to make the filling. My brother was cutting out the leaves for the topping. We were having a blast on this baking adventure!

Before we knew it, we had twelve mini apple pies ready to go in the oven. While the pies were baking, I was sitting by the oven with my mouth watering. The smell of sweetness filled the air in the entire

house. I could not wait one more minute. Ding...ding...ding! The oven timer finally went off.

When the pies came out, they were golden brown and looked so delicious. I was upset that I could not have one right then. Mommy was making us wait until after our Thanksgiving feast. Such a bummer!

Finally, the time had arrived; apple pie with a mountain of whipped cream! They were so good that I wanted more and more, but I had to wait until tomorrow.

Two-Faced

By Nicolette Handza
 Grade 5
 Mrs. April McKinley
 Brooker Creek Elementary



The wrathful sound on the windows,
 the banging at the door,
 as the wind comes running in,
 making the Earth quite SORE.

The crisp, autumn breeze,
 as gentle as the seas.
 The colors in the wind,
 that paint a picture of JOY.
 Mother Nature’s blow,
 as soft and delicate as snow.
 The gust in the night and
 the daybreak with the wind in sight.

When Mother Nature tries
 to bandage the skies,
 the rain seeps in and the covering dies.
 The thorns on your head that prick
 like a thread, as the skies are in DREAD.

The twinkle in the night
 that drizzles a wondrous sight.
 Mirrors like the presence of flight
 and fills my heart with awed DELIGHT.



Dream Day

By Peter Wendol
Grade 5, Mrs. Karlesky
Cypress Woods
Elementary

One Friday morning I woke up, but I did not get ready for school! It was going to be my first

unexcused absence! I was disappointed that I was going to ruin my perfect attendance, but what I was going to do today made it worth it! I was packing and getting ready to leave for the Gator Holiday Classic swim meet at the University of Florida! I had gone through lots of hard practices and qualified for this meet. Not many swimmers on my team qualified so this was very exciting! The day of the meet was finally here!

It was a long, nervous two-hour drive to Gainesville. I had so many questions in my head. How many swimmers would be there? How big is the pool? Will I swim my fastest? I have never swum in a college pool, or even seen one before! When we got there, I saw the beautiful University of Florida campus. There were palm trees swaying in the breeze and lots of brick buildings. I saw lots of people outside waiting to get into the meet. I wasn't nervous anymore. I was very excited to go inside and see the pool!

I walked in and smelled the strong chlorine right away. The pool looked humongous. I walked to where I needed to meet my team and the first thing I noticed were Olympic rings painted on the walls. I saw a list of names and realized it was University of Florida swimmers who had won Olympic medals! It was so cool to see! I immediately thought about whether I

would swim in a lane an Olympian had swum in and if I would get to see an Olympian.

I met up with my team and warmed up for my events. Being in the pool got me so motivated to swim in my events. I thought maybe I would swim my fastest because I was swimming at a University where Olympians swim. When it was time for my event and I was walking up to the starting blocks, I looked around again at all the Olympic rings. I knew I was going to swim my best and I did! I swam personal best times in both of my events. I was so happy!

My team packed up to leave and decided to walk out the back entrance where there was an outdoor pool. I quickly realized there was a swim team practicing outside. My team looked closely at the swimmer's caps and realized it was the University of Florida swim team. I couldn't believe it! Then I heard someone in the crowd whispering that Caleb Dressel, an Olympic gold medalist was in the pool! I was so surprised and amazed. The University coach took the team out of the pool to bring them inside to finish practice. I caught a glimpse of Caleb and that was so cool! The next thing I knew the coach pulled him out of line to sign autographs and take pictures with the swimmers who had gathered to watch practice! I got to meet him, have him to sign my cap and take a picture with him. I was speechless. It was one of the best days ever. I stood next to an Olympic swimmer!

I walked back to my car with dreams floating through my head. Maybe I could be him! How could I get there? What do I need to do? How hard do I need to practice? Do I need to practice every day? Could I swim at the Olympics?



My Trip Across the World

By Sophia de Koter
Grade 5, Mrs. Lloyd
Tarpon Springs
Fundamental

Now, based on the title of this story, you probably thought that I would be telling you

about my trip to Holland, and while I could tell you about that, I am going to choose not to. Instead I am going to tell you about what I learned from that experience.

The reason that I went to Holland in the first place was that my grandmother, (Oma) died. As soon as I heard this I was heartbroken, but my sorrow was nothing compared to my father's. After all, he had lost his mother. So, on the day of the funeral, we were all crying (as people typically do in funerals) as we listened to speeches and music.

After Oma was placed in her grave, it began to rain, which we really didn't need since the temperature was already frigid outside (it was very appropriate though). Anyway, after the burial, everyone went back inside where we enjoyed telling stories about her and Opa while sipping on tea and eating sandwiches and Queen Wilhelmina mints. I was sitting next to two of our close family friends, Annette and Jan-Paul. So, we were all sitting around talking and, as in all gatherings, the room slowly emptied as family and friends departed so as to continue on in their everyday lives.

For the rest of the day we walked through the streets of Holland with my family. Later that night as I was laying down in bed I began to really take in the fact that my Oma was gone. As I was thinking about this, I remembered how many stories I had been told about Oma in advance to going on this trip; about how she had always been traveling and exploring, and how right before she died she had just gotten home from a recent trip, and how right before her untimely death she had signed herself up for yet another adventure.

And then my mind drifted to heaven. I began to think of what the perfect afterlife would be. I believe that heaven is just like our Earth, except, more flawless. You can still go traveling to all the places you love and have dreamed of going to. You can see your loved ones and you can spend hours upon hours together. You can follow your dreams and reach for the stars. You can climb the highest mountain or swim to the bottom of the ocean. You can express yourself and protect what you believe in.

As I was pondering this, I felt a hand on my shoulder. I already knew that it wasn't one of my parents. It was her. It was my Oma. As I felt that hand, my entire body became warm from head to toe. I felt loved. There is no feeling like the feeling that I felt right then. Some might say that I was just hallucinating, or creating this mirage to comfort myself, but I am positive that it was real. When was the moment that you felt so positive that you were right, that you knew that there was absolutely no chance that you could be wrong? Well that's how I feel about this.

I believe that, in heaven, my Oma is still traveling the world, but now she also has Opa with her again. Maybe she is on the trip that she had signed up to go on right now. This made me want to follow in her footsteps. I mean, who wouldn't? After all, she lived a long, ninety-year life, she had a family that loved her, she traveled the world, she *lived*.

And so, in the end I'm happy that I was at that funeral. It may have been rather heart-wrenching, and many tears may have been shed, but I wouldn't have traded that experience for anything. I will always miss Oma, and I will always wish that I could have been with her before she passed and spoken with her in person instead of just on the phone, but at least I will always have this memory. And I will always have her watching over me, no matter where she travels.





Dogs Dream to the Moon

By Parker Menne
Grade 5, Mrs. Russo
Lakeview Fundamental

There once were two dogs who lived on Mars. They always believed they could be the first two dogs to reach the moon. Ozzy and Cooper were determined dogs; they never gave up!

One day Ozzy had an idea to reach to the moon. "Cooper! Cooper! Cooper! Maybe we can get our large food cans, climb in, and have someone throw us to the moon," said Ozzy. Cooper agreed. They ate to the bottom of their cans of food, cleaned out the can, and they were DONE! The two dogs were all set to go to the moon. "We're done!" they shouted. Next, Ozzy and Cooper went to get their space helmets and space collars.

All their friends, Rosco, Misty, Flash, Fawn, Brandi, Ryder, Mr. Wiggles, Pouncey, Panda, Paris, and Chloe gathered to watch the dogs take off. PLOP! They only got 15 feet away. "AH! That didn't work!" sighed Ozzy disappointedly. They thought they were doomed, but they never wanted to give up!

An hour later Cooper came up with a brilliant idea. "Ozzy! Ozzy! Ozzy! Maybe we could run as fast as we can and jump as high as we can to get to the moon!" said Cooper. Ozzy agreed. Ozzy and Cooper worked so hard-they, jumped up and down, ran laps, jumped on the trampoline, and ran on the treadmill all in training for their visit into space. Finally the time came and they were ready. All their friends gathered around, Ozzy and Cooper started to run. Their four legs running as fast as they could, they leaped in the air the ungracefully....."UH!" said Ozzy and Cooper. They had a very clumsy fall. The leap failed.

A new day began, "We need to focus, not give up, keep trying, we need an

amazing idea!" thought Cooper. They still had their space collars and helmets on ready to think about a great idea to launch them into space and to the moon. Ozzy said curiously, "We need something to catapult us to the moon." They thought very carefully. "I've got it! We need to build a catapult!" said Cooper. When these two dogs worked together they could do anything. They worked all morning and afternoon gathering supplies for the catapult and food for their trip. "Whalah, we finished" howled Ozzy.

All the dogs who lived on Mars came to see Ozzy and Cooper depart for the moon. "Wow, that looks awesome," the dogs said. The catapult launched Cooper and Ozzy into space at incredible speed. Cooper suddenly exclaimed, "Wow, look at the MOON!" The two brave dogs reached the moon, and landed next to Neil Armstrong's footprint. Ozzy and Cooper left the first two dog paw prints on the moon. After exploring the moon, the dog explorers went back to Mars to tell others of what they saw.

"We reached the Moon!" Ozzy reported when he landed back on Mars. All the dogs of Mars shouted, "Awesome! Cool! You two are legends!" Ozzy and Cooper were proud of themselves. But, they decided they wanted to have another adventure-to become the first two dogs to land on Saturn. They knew they would have to work hard to accomplish their new dream. Ozzy and Cooper's adventure inspired other dogs on Mars to try new things. All the dogs lived happily ever after.





Barbara and Norman

By Reese Cooper
Grade 5
Mrs. Denise Dawson
Pasadena Fundamental
Elementary

"Mom! Are we there yet?" I ask as we drove down the street. "We have about 10 more minutes," Mom yells back. I sigh. I start thinking about what we are about to

do, and how it will change our lives. My sister interrupts my thoughts.

"We are here!" She screams into my ear. I look out the window of the car, and see a small building with a sign that says, THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF TAMPA WELCOMES YOU! We park our car and start walking out towards the building.

When we get inside, Mom, Tessa and I sit in a waiting room. A lady comes over and asks us what we are looking for. "A kitten," I say. The lady motions us into a hallway filled with cages. The sounds of meowing and barking fill my ears. I see a room down the hall, which is filled with people playing with kittens, and dangling little jingly toys in their faces. I know I will be here for a long time, picking out which little fur-ball will come home with me. I walk into the room filled with cats, and a little, fluffy kitten walks over to me. I bend down to pet it when it hisses at me. I don't see any kittens that interest me, so I start looking in the cages.

As I walk along the row of cages that seems to go on forever, I think in my head, nope, nope, nope, nope. "Honey!" I run towards the sound of Mom's voice. I turn a corner and there she is.

"I found the kitten I want, sissy!" Tessa says. She points to a cage full of orange kittens. I see one little brown kitten, with white and orange stripes. My mom asks me if I had found the kitten I want yet.

"Nope."

"Okay honey. Hurry up!"

I race back to where I was before. I start looking through again and see a cage with two tan kittens in it. No, I think. All of a sudden, I feel a little something hooked onto my shirt. I turn around, and see one of the little tan kitten's claws on my shirt. I see his little hazel eyes sparkling in the light. I lean over, and I can feel his little wet pink nose on my cheek. I call my mom, and I tell her I want this kitten. We tell

someone we know what we want, and we take the kittens home. Once we arrive home, we name them. We decide to call them Barbara and Norman. I know I will love them both ... forever.

My First Day at School

By Clarabella Le
Grade 5, Mrs. Strawmyer
Skyview Elementary



My dad was the one who drove me to school that day. Here I was at a new school called Skyview and I was afraid. As I entered the doors I felt a cold chill along my arms. I was only 5 years old. I wanted to make new friends at R'Club and at school but I was also afraid.

I remember after my dad signed me in he said, "Bye, honey!" I even remember he had on jeans that day and a light blue shirt with dark blue stripes. I started to cry and scream because I didn't want my dad to leave me at R'Club with no one that I knew. I held on to my dad's left leg as tight as I could. The R'Club staff pulled me off my dad's leg. I screamed, "Daddy, help me! Daddy, help me!"

The R'Club staffers said, "Your dad needs to go to work. Let go of your dad's leg and calm down and then go play."

After the R'Club staff pulled me off, my dad left and went to work. I was there crying like crazy. Finally I stopped crying and I started to play with the toys there. I was enjoying the time at R'Club so much that it looked like nothing had ever happened.

When it was time to go to class, I was excited. I was in Mrs. Blanco's class but in a few weeks I was transferred to Mrs. Sheehan's class. At my kindergarten classes I made new friends, boys and girls. My teachers read us stories, showed us how to line up, and took us on an around the school field trip. At the end of the day, I was happy (and I didn't cry throughout the day). When my dad picked me up, I was so happy to see him (because I thought he had left me there). My first day of school was not as scary as I thought it would be.





A Day at Adventure Island

By Cheldimar Legrand
Grade 5, Mrs. Strawmyer
Skyview Elementary

During the summer, I had one of the best days of my life with my best friend, Aryanna, at Adventure Island. We arrived at the water park, got our bags and ran to the line. The workers checked our bags, we scanned our cards, and we were in the water park. We set our things on the chairs by the kiddie pool and headed for the lazy river. We played tag, connected our floaties, and played hide and go seek. Once we were done, we headed for the biggest, the funnest, and the best water slide, Colossal Curl.

We got in line. It was so long, I am surprised we did not make it around the world. It had been 30 minutes, and we were barely on the 10th staircase. I thought that the line would be about an hour more because the sign said one hour and 30 minute wait, so I could make it. But Aryanna was trying to sit down on the staircase, her legs were hurting, and she was pretending to sleep. We were both tired, but it was too late to go back down.

I didn't understand why the line was taking so long. It had been one and a half hours and we were only about three quarters up.

"The line is taking forever! I'm tired!" said Aryanna, complaining.

"It will be worth it, trust me, I have been on it before," I said, trying to cheer her up.

It had now been 2 hours. I was about to lose my mind. But the good news was there were only 7 people in front of us. The 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, and then it was us! We hopped on the floatie. My heart was pounding and I could feel butterflies in my stomach. We were turning and sloshing around the tunnel. We got to this big tunnel and there was a lot of water in it, too. We moved our way through that and went through a narrow tunnel.

Then I saw it. I was on the top and ahead of me was the biggest drop I have ever seen. On top of that, just before we dropped, the floatie turned me backwards. All I felt was a big blast of air dropping down on me. I screamed so loud I bet China could hear me. Aryanna had her mouth wide open with her eyes wide open and screaming, too. Then we were on this huge curve. Then dropped. I just kept thinking of how awesome that was!

In just seconds, the ride was over. I could not stop thinking of how awesome that was. Aryanna and I kept laughing and talking about what had just happened. Waiting in a two hour line may not be the best, but in the end, Aryanna and I knew it was worth it.





The Cheetah Hunt

By Addison Wadsworth
Grade 5, Mrs. Pier
Bauder Elementary

“Zoom!” My Dad, my cousins, and I were waiting in line to ride the Cheetah Hunt at Busch Gardens. I was

going to ride with my Dad since it was my first time on this ride. “Dad, what is it going to be like?” I asked, scared to go on it. “First, you’ll get on, and then it will shoot you out. You will go around the park. You’ll even go upside down!” “Dad, I’m scared.” “It will be fun,” he said. That’s when we were next in line.

I watched with a terrified face as people were screaming as they were getting shot out into the open. “Alright Addison, time to get in,” my Dad said. I was shaking like never before. I got in, put the safety bar over myself, and buckled up. My heart was beating and it sounded like people playing the drums. I could feel it pounding in my chest. I could barely breathe as we crept forward.

“Dad, when are we going to shoot out?” I asked. “I don’t know, but that’s what makes it fun,” he said. The ride moved back a little and shot out faster than a cheetah running in the wild.

“Ahhhhhhhh!!!!” the entire coaster yelled, with me being one of the loudest. We turned sideways and went up and down. Then, we were starting to slow down a bit but came up to another launch and zoomed back up into the air. I felt like I was in space, looking at the world because we could see almost the entire park from the roller coaster. We twisted and turned, and twisted and turned.

“Ahhhhhhhhhh!!!!” the whole coaster roared. We went down. We went up. At one point, it felt almost as if we were going straight down. We turned one way over water, and then turned the other way over the water. I was having so much fun! We went over the sky ride and started to slow down again. We went up another hill and went back up into the air. This time, it wasn’t as high. Then,

we twisted some more. I screamed so loud, like a roaring lion when we turned fully upside down in a section called the heart line. I thought I was going to fall out and was so relieved when I didn’t. Finally, we came to a screeching halt.

I said to my Dad, “Oh my gosh, that was so much fun! I thought I was going to fall out when we went upside down! I can’t wait to go on it again!” Then we ran back in line to do it all over again.

Home Alone

By Katie Currence
Grade 5, Susan McElveen
Curtis Fundamental



It was a Wednesday afternoon, about 4:00 p.m.

My dad was at work and my mom had to take my sister to ballet. So she decided to let me stay home alone. I wasn’t nervous. The exact opposite, actually. It was a sort of freedom I’d never had before. So anyway, Mom would be gone for about an hour, and I settled in my room and started playing on my iPad.

Ten minutes later, my mom texted me, “Don’t come out of your room.” That was when I started to get nervous. I’m a “glass half-empty” person, so I expected the worst. I kept texting her why, but she didn’t answer, (she was still driving, but I didn’t know that at the time).

So, as any reasonable person would do, I locked my door, turned all the lights out, and muted my devices. My heart was beating so fast and so loud, I thought the neighbors would hear it. But then, something popped up on the screen of my iPad. It was from my mom. I pressed it as fast as I could.

Finally! She explained that when she set the alarm system for our house, she turned on the motion sensor by accident, and she didn’t want me to walk around and trigger it. I got so mad at her!

But it is funny when you think about it. I can be really paranoid sometimes. She got me scared for no reason at all. I honestly thought someone was going to break into the house.





Mysteries of the Forest
By Olivia Warticki
Grade 5, Mrs. Montie
Tarpon Springs Fundamental

A beautiful spring morning, a young girl takes her guitar, her dog, and a picnic basket to a small little grass-like island in the middle of a river. They hop anxiously on large river stones to the small island that is underneath the old weeping willow. In the east, she can hear a waterfall crash onto the rocks below. But in the west, she could hear only birds showing off their wonderful voices.

As the girl lays down her blanket, her dog excitedly chases a young salmon in the river making the slow gentle ripples turn into waves. As she calls him to dry him off and settle him down, deer slowly creep up close to her picnic basket, smelling the fruit inside. The kind girl opens the basket reaching in and pulling out some blackberries and raspberries. The deer take what they want then gracefully gallop away. The girl then starts to have a bite to eat. The dog begs desperately for part of her sandwich. Luckily, she brings another one (but much smaller, and for dogs). He then sits, and the girl gives it to him. As he gulps it down, she tunes her guitar and strums it softly.

A cool breeze comes through, then she lifts her head high which gives her a hint of a tune to play. It gets later in the day and the sun begins to go down. She and her dog go for a walk to the waterfall, the one that they heard earlier. They start to walk along the path, with a perimeter of gorgeous orange and pink flowers.

After about fifteen minutes of walking, they are there. She cups her hands and reaches toward the waterfall, and takes a sip. It's refreshing. The day is sadly coming towards an end and it begins to get dark.

On her way back, (a couple hours later.), the moon along with the stars smiled down on her. They packed up their things and went home. When they got home the stars were brighter than she has ever seen. She got into bed, and the dog got into his. She lay there wondering, how was this day so perfect? She lay there thinking about it, then falls asleep. But their adventure wasn't over yet.



Surviving Irma
By Isabelle Cullen
Grade 5
Mrs. Greenlees
Cypress Woods
Elementary



Crr-rr-rr that was the way the hurricane sounded as it passed over my house. Me, my mom, dad, and sisters: Ariana, Jackie, Jasmine, Abby, and Elizabeth, were sitting on the couch petrified by the noises that the hurricane produced. Irma was coming, but this was just the beginning.

We all were sitting on the couch eating what we knew was our last meal with power. We set up in the living room so everyone had a place to sleep. We had three air mattresses on the floor for me, Ariana, and Jackie. We also had a mattress behind the couch for Abby. We then one big couch for my mom and our four pets. My dad slept on the recliner. Jasmine slept in a bean bag and Elizabeth slept in a love seat. We all snuggled with our blankets as we told stories. We would use flashlights to read books, play card games, and play board games. When Jackie, Ariana, Abby, and Jasmine went to sleep, Elizabeth, my mom, and I tried to watch the storm. I don't remember going to sleep. I only remember waking up to the sound of birds. The storm was over, but we still had no power.

The next day, we ate peanut butter crackers for breakfast. Jasmine and I walked the dogs and looked at the damage. There were trees and branches all over the street followed by leaves and things that had fallen like mailboxes and debris. Once the sun came out a little bit my sisters and I rode our bikes to the park. We saw all the damage there and then after a few hours, decided to go home. Riding our bikes was basically the only thing we could do to pass time. Every day for three days we did the same thing. On the third day, we went for a car ride to see what was open. Basically, nothing was open. Our neighbor invited us to her pool, but because there was no power, the pool cleaner wouldn't be working so we didn't go. When we got home, we ate peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. When we had thrown our plates away, the power came back on. It was like magic. We ended the day with swimming, put our house back together, and relaxed with some cold lemonade from the fridge that now worked. Even though the days were not all cupcakes and rainbows, we still had family time and that is the most precious kind of time.

Anger

By Huy-Hieu Le
Grade 5
Mrs. Strawmyer
Skyview Elementary



“And then he...” I quickly covered my ears so I couldn’t hear any more of Jacob’s rubbish. Okay, let me start from the beginning.

I was walking to my school library as joyful as ever (I mean, who wouldn’t be happy when holding a Percy Jackson book they’re about to share with their friends?) with a pep in my step, the wind in my hair. It was a good walk. It was about 7 AM so the hot Florida sun was still rising. I pulled open the library door as a wave of cold air hit me right in the face. I shivered a little, walking in the beloved library. As I made my way to the studio, I saw some of my friends outside the small studio. Some of them were on computers, most of them standing around the diamond shaped table. I walked to the table and set my backpack down. Then I remembered that I had my Percy Jackson book, which I proudly walked with to the computer section. When I got to the computer section, I decided to see what games my friends were playing.

“Hey, Jacob,” I said to my creeper jacket friend. He was wearing his usual Minecraft creeper themed jacket.

“Hey,” he replied casually.

“Whatcha doooooing?” I asked.

He told me the game he was playing and how he was on level 20 even though I wasn’t really listening.

“I’ve got a Percy Jackson book!” I said.

Jacob whipped his head around to look at me so fast that I felt a bit of wind from his head.

“What book are you on?” Jacob asked.

“Actually I’m on the first book!” I replied eagerly, showing him my book.

“Oh! Are you at the part where Luke betrays Percy?”

Before I could react, much less respond, Jacob continued.

“Percy is ambushed by Luke and they started to try and convince Percy to join Kronos but Percy kept denying, and then he...”

I quickly covered my ears so I couldn’t hear any more of Jacob’s rubbish. Anger bubbled inside of me. How could Jacob do this to me? My very own friend...betrays me like this? I could’ve cried right then and there, but I didn’t. It was just a book.

I squeezed my eyes shut and told him I haven’t finished the book, my jolly mood demolished by none other than Jacob. I cautiously opened my eyes to see a laughing Jacob. My anger increased by 50 percent as I glared at Jacob with all of my might. Dang it, Jacob!

Even after that agonizing day I still somehow managed to finish “The Lightning Thief” without the anticipation of knowing the ending. The story was still enjoyable, but it wasn’t the same, no thanks to Jacob.



The Halloween Nightmare!

By Juliana Palmer
Grade 5, Camille Miller
Brooker Creek
Elementary



Have you ever had a nightmare? It's October 30th, and I never knew that tomorrow would be a Halloween nightmare!

"I can't wait for Halloween!" I told my friend, Sabrina. "Me either!" she screamed. The bell rang, and I hopped in my mom's car. Tomorrow was one of the best days of the year, Halloween! I had my costume picked out and my pumpkin bucket ready for all of those sweet, yummy treats! But one thing stood in my way; this horrible pain in my stomach! I assumed it was nothing while I was on the way home from school. I went to volleyball, ate dinner, and read, but it was still there! "Why is the pain still here?" I asked myself. The next day, my eyes opened slowly to the sound of my alarm. "It's Halloween", I said out loud, weakly. I still had that stomach pain! I looked at my phone. "It's 80 degrees outside, but why am I so cold?" Bundling myself up in all the blankets I could find, I walked to the kitchen to find my mom making breakfast.

"Good morning, Juliana, what's with all of the blankets?" she asked.

"I don't know, just really cold, that's all."

My mom came over and felt my head. "Do you feel alright?" she asked.

"No. I have this bad stomach pain and I am very cold," I admitted.

"Jules, I think you have a stomach flu. It has been going around lately and it feels like you have a fever. Go lay down and I will be up in a minute. No school for you today and definitely no trick or treating." It felt like the world stopped turning. No Halloween and no school? This would be the worst day ever! I laid back down and fell asleep. When I woke up, my phone was blowing up with text messages. "Where were you?" "Are you still going to trick or treat with us?" and "Juliana, are you okay?" I told my friends that I was sick and would not be able to trick or treat with them. A few minutes later, everybody was texting saying what they were going to be and what time they were going to meet to start trick or treating. I felt jealous and put my phone down. Next thing I know, the doorbell rings. A few minutes later my mom comes upstairs. "It was Sofia and her mom. They brought you a basket full of treats and toys". My day instantly felt better. Even though I could not participate in trick or treating this year, I felt happy that someone cared enough to do that for me. But really, that day was a nightmare! I never would want to go through that again!





My Trip to the Bahamas

By Katelynn Phanamath
Grade 5

Mrs. Sherman
Skyview Elementary

Imagine, feeling the soft and relaxing sand between both your hands and feet. Along with the nice, gentle breeze hitting against your face. Isn't this paradise?! Specifically, paradise in the Bahamas. This was my experience, at CocoCay Bahamas.

This adventure included my family. My mom, dad, brother, and I. We were all getting ready to get off the cruise, and officially step onto CocoCay Bahamas. Our first stop wouldn't be a surprise. The beach! The beach had an amazing view. With the vivid blue sky and the waves going in and out. But all my brother and I did, was run straight to the water. We were having so much fun playing lots of games and messing around with each other. It was as if we were exploring the deep ocean. Seeing so many different types of fish swim near our feet and tickle them. Just then, my mom called us in, having some exciting news. I asked my mom what she was so excited about.

"We are going snorkeling!" my mom said cheerfully.. I was jumping with excitement, imagining what random items we could find! Right after my thoughts, we went to get our snorkels. We all put them on and realized how foolish we all looked. But now we were ready and went towards the water. Right as I got to the edge of the water, I stopped. I was re-thinking my decision at the last second.

"What's wrong?" my dad hollered to me.

"Nothing. I'm fine." I lied.

The truth was, I was a bit scared to go in. You never know what could be in the ocean. My dad saw that I was not fine. He came over, and I told him how scared I was to go in. He then somehow talked me into going. Once I got into the water, it felt as if I was in another world. There were so many things to see. All types of animals, such as pufferfish, lion fish, or even starfish. But instead, I found fish like a striped parrotfish, bar jacks, a red hind, and the amazing coral. It was beautiful, and definitely a moment I could save and capture. It was fun when the fish came swimming beside me, like I was a part of their school of fish. But sadly, moments later, the snorkeling adventure had to come to an end. I wish I could have just swam all day. Then again, it was time to wrap it up and leave the Bahamas officially and go back to the cruise ship.

The Bahamas was definitely one of the most memorable trips and caused us to go to the Bahamas again! There were a lot of activities such as going to the beach, kayaking, snorkeling, and much more! These were moments I can cherish forever and never forget about. My trip to the Bahamas had made my summer the greatest summer ever.



BEST CHRISTMAS EVER

By Mia Melton
Grade 5, Mrs. Miller
Brooker Creek
Elementary



On December 25th, 2017, I lay in my warm and cozy bed when, suddenly, I remembered that it was Christmas morning! I looked at my clock perched on my metallic silver nightstand and it read 6:15 AM. I was about jump out of my bed and run to my parents' room when I remembered that their rule is: don't wake them up until 7:00 AM on Christmas morning. Something was telling me to go into their room right then! I was very anxious to open my presents so I slowly climbed out of bed and opened my bedroom door, trying to be quiet so I wouldn't wake my big brother, Trip.

I walked out of my room and looked over at the beautiful Christmas tree and saw it glimmering in the dark. I walked over to my stack of presents and Trip's stack right beside mine. My presents were wrapped in beautiful mint green wrapping paper with pictures of candy mints scattered on it. Trip's presents were wrapped in metallic red paper with writing that said "Hohoho" on it. The rest of my family was not awake and it wasn't 7:00 AM, yet something was telling me to go to my parents' room. I jolted to their bedroom and quietly opened their door to hear the sound of barking. I was confused because we did not have a dog. My mom whispered, "Turn on the lights," and as I did a puppy skittishly walked up to me. It wasn't just any puppy; it was a beautiful

golden-doodle as fluffy and precious as could be.

I said, "Is this really happening?"

Since I was still half asleep I thought I was still dreaming, but then I heard the two magical words: "Merry Christmas." I let out a soft squeal and plopped myself onto the floor to pet MY new puppy. My mom said her name is Evie and she is 9 months old. When she said that I remembered Trip! I sprinted to his room, jumped on his bed and said, "Trip, Trip! Wake up! Guess what?"

He said, "Calm down, calm down! What? What is it?"

I replied, "We got a DOG!!!" To make sure he believed me I said, "Come on Trip; come see her!"

He said, "Not now it's too early." (In case you haven't noticed Trip is not a morning person.) I then left his room to go open my red and white stocking that was resting on my stack of presents. I got lots of goodies in there and when Trip came out he opened his. Then we opened our presents. Later we walked Evie to the park to go see my two friends, Sienna and Baylie. Then we went to Sienna's house to hang out there for a while. Later I had to go home because Mom's family came over. We opened presents, ate, and hung out. **BEST CHRISTMAS EVER!!!!!!!!!!**

To this day, (a couple of weeks later) January 15th, 2018, Evie is now a loving part of the family! She loves to cuddle and play. At night, she sleeps in bed with me. She is the **BEST PUPPY EVER!!!!!!!!!!**





Going Zip Lining
 By Ava Ramsberger
 Grade 5, Mrs. Denise
 Dawson
 Pasadena
 Fundamental
 Elementary

I remember the first time I went zip lining like the back of my hand. I also remember how my stomach tightened as we pulled into the parking lot of the outside, almost gazebo-looking structure that was the zip lining center. "Mom, Dad, I'm scared," I muttered nervously.

"It'll be fun and I have a feeling you will love it" Dad says as we walked up to the building.

Then a young man walked over. "Hi! My name is Oliver and I will be your guide today", says the man.

"Hi Oliver" we all say, examining the young man who appeared to be in his twenties with long messy hair.

Oliver started talking for about 10 minutes giving a seemingly detailed explanation about how to put on some heavy gear then walked to the desk to sign us in. While Oliver came back and helped me put on my gear, I laid my eyes on the gear that was now being strapped to me. There were a million things running through my head right now. We went over the safety procedures with Oliver and did a 'meet and greet' circle with the others. Yes, there were others now. Four teenage girls, a young woman and her dad, they seemed really nice and really nervous, like me. Now we were walking up the old creaking wood stairs to the first line that was gently, ever so slightly swaying in the moderate breeze. I asked Oliver if it is supposed to do that and he says

casually "yeah". Even though I want to, I don't believe him.

Walking. More walking. As we get closer and closer to the line I looked out at the lush green trees surrounding us, trying to take my mind off the fact that the treetops were now below me and people on the ground were getting smaller and smaller. Behind me, I heard my parents talking to Oliver. "Wow, we are up so high, Oliver, how high are we?"

"Oh, only 80 feet, not that high." I didn't need to turn around to recognize that the last comment said was definitely from Oliver. Such bravery. Then, we finally reached the top.

Have you ever been in line for a really scary but equally fun attraction such as a roller coaster? You know you're going to have the ride of your life but you feel like you are going to fall into an endless black hole. That was how I felt right then. It was my turn. Oliver asked if I wanted him to push me because my feet barely reached the platform. I said "No thanks". My heart was pounding so hard in my chest I wouldn't be surprised if people in New Jersey could hear it. Then I decided to give it a go and lifted my legs up and closed my eyes.

The moderate breeze I felt earlier felt like the eye of a category five hurricane now. After the initial shock of zipping through the air, I started to smile. I also let out a few whoops of excitement. I have always wanted to go zip lining and here I was. The nature, the air blissfully whipping my hair in all directions, it all gave me a desire to do it every waking minute. I let my worries blow away with the wind. As the cool rustic wood of the platform hit my feet, a new thought came to my mind. *I was alone on the platform.* I whipped my

head around just in time to see the others zipping along the line behind me. Oliver got to the platform first. He started to untie us from the line. The others were in hot pursuit. First came the four teenagers, then the woman and her father. Finally, my mom came into my line of vision. Then my dad. The other lines passed by like leaves blowing in the wind that were rapidly gaining speed. Then came the bridge.

The bridge was a tall, looming structure that would give you goose bumps for a month. The line leading to the bridge was what looked like the second longest (the first longest was leading away from the bridge). I couldn't believe my eyes. I thought: *Oh no, this looks terrifying. They must not expect me to cross that. Do they? No, probably not.* I was wrong. As it had done very frequently for the past hour of which we had been zip lining, my heart was pounding hard in my chest. The moment I had dreaded since I first laid eyes on that bridge was about to happen. The platform was a few meters away. Then, what felt like 'in the blink of an eye', Oliver was unstrapping me from the line and onto the bridge. He explained to me and the others that we were safely strapped to the bridge and would not fall. I looked down and immediately regretted that.

Now I was standing there, on the platform of the line, watching the first people walk away on the now shaking bridge, and fear was puddling around me when I felt a strange sensation. The odd feeling around my ear was getting louder. It sounded like a faint buzz. *Maybe it's just the wind.* It took me a moment to finally compute what it could be. Then it hit me...it's a wasp! I really don't like wasps. It's not that I am squeamish or anything, I just really don't

like being around them. Ok, even I admit that was the understatement of the century. Anyhow, when I realized there were unwanted guests buzzing around my head, you can just imagine the look of terror on my face, as my brain went in panic mode.

My feet were running as fast as they could as the bridge wiggled and moved under me. The general make-up of the bridge was not the most stable looking thing and that was exactly what it felt like. The butterflies in my stomach were now overpowering. Water! That's what was below the bridge and lots of it. A pond in fact! I couldn't help it. I stopped moving. I felt as I was going to plummet to my death and into that water. That pond that was probably infested with alligators and animals of all sorts. I shuddered at the thought.

So I started back to running, after all, the platform was only 5 feet in front of me now. Then I felt the hard wood of the platform again touching my feet. Everybody was congratulating me and I said "thank you" but my mind was occupied on another thing. It's over. I did it. I can't believe actually I did it! From the very first moment when I saw all that gear until now I actually faced my fear of heights. And it felt so good. Like a flower of bliss blooming in my chest. Like Christmas morning. *Now, I said in my head, I am considering coming back, just to feel it all again, even the fear, for this feeling of utter happiness is worth it. Also, I will chant a victory chant of: "I did it, I did it, I did it" for the next hour on the drive home.* I ended up doing both.



Mangrove Trees
By Samantha Hall
Grade 5, Mrs. Montie
Tarpon Springs Fundamental



Imagine dodging branches ahead of you or using seaweed as walls. If you like the sound of this, I know where you should be: in the mangrove trees at Honeymoon Island. It's so amazing there. You will never want to leave.

First of all, there are no borders that you can't cross. You are free to explore, and if you don't have a swimsuit then the only border is the water. Very natural. When I go in the mangroves I make it an adventure because I don't have to stop exploring. It feels like a maze with unlimited ways. In addition, you can be as imaginative as you want. When I imagine, I see a mangrove house. I make seaweed walls and branch ceilings. Sometimes I have sand-ball fights with my family. Maybe you will pretend to be a monkey or make a mangrove café.

Last but not least, at the mangrove trees you can discover new remarkable things. For example, one time when I was there I found a giant shell, and when I lifted it up there were a bunch of tiny crab holes. Amazing, isn't it? Once my older brother found something very long that felt like coral. I wonder if it was? When you go to the mangrove trees I wonder what you will find. A pink shell? A new creature? From the patterns in the sand to hidden beach life, there is so much nature to discover.

As you can see, there is a lot to imagine, discover and do in the mangrove trees at Honeymoon Island. If you haven't gone, go as soon as you can and in the time that you have, do as much as you can because your time will run out before you will even know that you have to go.



Adults' Writing

130 Mary Hosford

132 Ashley Lloyd

133 Brooke Frahn
Bonnie Heller

134 Beckie Maphet





Bear Encounters

By Mary Hosford

A piercing cry broke through the silence of the Mansfield, New Jersey forest. It was unlike anything I had heard before; like a puppy being pulled away from its mother only far, far louder and more human-like. This was a sound reverberating through the woods that most certainly could be heard inside the farmhouse nestled 50 yards behind me. Had she been awake, its mother most surely would have attacked whatever or whoever was snatching her offspring from below her still sleepy body. Just ahead of me, the more experienced members of our group set their booted feet into motion and clambered down the snow covered path toward the sound. They knew it was time.

They knew, too, that this was no puppy, there was no predator snatching the small animal from its mother, and it most definitely was not happy to be pried from its warm winter refuge. This was a carefully strategized and choreographed event that takes place each spring in the woods, fields, and even below house porches of small town New Jersey. Unlike counting heads for a human census, on this day my nephew, Tony, and his crew of biologists were counting and tagging black bear cubs. Black bear management is their primary job. I was a fortunate bystander.

We met at 11 AM at a trout hatchery in Northwestern New Jersey where we joined a caravan of state trucks and drove to a wooded area a short distance away. Dense woods surrounded us, the bare ground covered with eight inches of snow, some of which had fallen that morning, the rest from a Nor'easter hitting the area a couple of days earlier. The only sign of civilization was a small farm situated on the edge of the state land and on which, in previous years black bears had dined on a goat or two. I'm certain the owners were not pleased that a bear den had been found within yards of their farm, let alone that there were likely cubs recently born that would no doubt grow up with a taste for goats after a long winter of hibernation.

We were told that our hike would be a hundred yards or so off the road lining the Pequest Wildlife Management Area. With a crew of about six members of the State of New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife, plus about ten of their family members, including my brother Mike, sister-in-law Susan and my son, Kris, we set off on foot along a pre-marked path to the den, which in this case was in a dense thicket under a fallen tree trunk. No one said that our walk would be an obstacle course complete with a small creek and larger stream running across our path to the den, along with an uphill trek at a 45 degree angle through the snow. After a minor mishap of Kris slipping and dunking his booted foot into the icy stream, and the hysterical laughing following three of us crossing the stream one by one on Tony's back, we reached the crest of a small hill where we gathered around our leaders with an admonition to lower our voices. We were within a short distance of the den and did not want to spook the mother bear (sow). The biologists would circle a perimeter around the bear den just in case, in their words, "The female bolts and runs in your direction."

One of the team was to get as close as he could and use a jab stick with a tranquilizer dart attached that he would jab into the sow, sedating her in order to access the cubs. At this point, they were not sure how many cubs there were. The rest of the team stood ready with tranquilizer

rifles less than fifty feet away from where we stood waiting. When they gave the signal, we would head down the hill and meet them at the den.

Standing still in the snow for what was now about 20 minutes was not comfortable. It had snowed that morning and was still cloudy and in the 30's. My feet were feeling it the most in spite of waterproof boots and two pairs of thick socks, and my mind flashed back to the many winters of my life spent here in the Northeast and the discomfort of standing for prolonged periods of time in snow. Still, I couldn't help but notice the beauty of the woods. Of branches bending low under the weight of fresh snow, and the silence that went along with it. I missed that tranquility.

A vibrating phone in my jacket pocket jolted me from my thoughts. Text message. It was 1:06. From Tony: *Just about to dart her... We're being careful not to move too quickly and spook her.* This was good. I didn't want a spooked black bear running toward me.

Then another text. It was 1:07. Tony: *Should be just 10 more minutes or so.*

At 1:25 I could no longer feel the big toe on my left foot. But then at 1:30, the wail of a bear cub echoed through the woods. Then another. Two. Everyone scrambled down the path in the direction of the den. We stopped on what I realized was a snow-covered stone wall and waited. Soon we would be handed a cub to hold while Tony and his team tended to the sow, estimating her weight (225 pounds, give or take a pound or two), measuring her, checking the tracking device on her neck, and analyzing her overall health. They would tag the cubs while the sow slept, check whether male or female, measure, and estimate their weight.

In another few minutes, it was my turn, and a small bundle of black fur, pink nose, and claws the likes of which I had never seen before was handed to me. She was about the size of a stuffed Teddy bear, a foot and a half long or so. "Tuck her into your jacket to keep her warm; just be careful of her claws," Tony advised, "She might try to climb up to your neck to get warm." She did and I pried her away from my sweater, the claws sticking like Velcro. I wrapped her low inside my jacket and stroked the fur behind her ears. Within seconds, she was sound asleep snuggled against my body. A black bear cub. Sleeping on me. Warm and alive. Every so often she would exhale a deep sigh in what I can only describe as contentment.

Mike, Sue, Kris, Tony, and I stood just beyond the stone wall, talking in hushed tones about the too cold for March weather, laughing at the vision of Sue and me crossing the stream on Tony's back, and listening to the cub breathing as she slept inside my jacket. A few feet away, her brother was passed between the rest of our group, but for now, she was mine and I was reluctant to give her up.

And then it was time to turn her over to Tony. Time to finish the job they came here to do. He gently pried her from the inside of my jacket, wrapping her into his own jacket and heading back to tag her, then tuck her and her brother back beneath their still sleeping mother. This was a scene played out every March in bear dens all over the state of New Jersey. And when it was over, two bear cubs slept in their own den, snug against their mother, warm and dry in a thicket in the snowy woods. Content.





Legendary

By Ashley Lloyd
Grade 5 Teacher

Tarpon Springs Fundamental Elementary

Coach Melvin is a legend
There is no denying that.
Always on the field
Just his natural habitat.
Each and every year
His field days were the best.
Tug of war, Hula Hoop, Jump Rope
They put each student to the test.
Who could forget “Coach’s Famous Cake Walk”?
Around and around they’d go
One lucky number was called,
A child would glow.
After thirty-six years in education,
You’ve still got a smile on your face!
How do you do it?
Not many can last that long in the workplace.
We want you to know
That we’ll never forget you.
You’ve inspired so many
By doing what you do.
It saddens us deeply as you go on your way.
But we’ll send you off with one last official “Hip Hip Hooray!”



Scholars

By Mrs. Brooke D. Frahn
Gifted Program Teacher K-5
Eisenhower Elementary School



Students at school striving to do their very best each and every day

Children demonstrating what they know in a variety of ways

Halls filled with curious kids wondering what they will learn about today

Others they come in contact with can see their thirst for knowledge

Long hours spent preparing their young minds for our future world

Always trying to grow their knowledge just a little bit more each day

Radiant smiles beam across the classroom as understanding rushes in

School may close for the day, but the scholar's mind is always open



Dry Things?

By Ms. Bonnie Heller
Grade 5 Teacher
Eisenhower Elementary



Morning eyes
rough Elbows and Knees
Chapped Lips
a Winters breeze
Sun-dried Tomatoes
an old River Bed
the Bark of a Tree, long dead
the Sahara Desert
Tough Steaks
Empty Lakes
Un-capped Markers
9th grade History Class
Mouths, after Crackers
Unforgiving eyes,
false Laughs
and
Humor, sometimes

the noise of the dark

By Beckie Maphet
Third Grade Teacher
Bardmoor Elementary



i can hear it,
murmuring my pain,
as i walk through
the halls.
shadows stretch
agree with the
despair.
deafening screams
as i cry on the floor.

can't ever- won't ever
be better.
can't ever- won't ever
stop hurting.

i hear you. (even now)
i hear you.
truly i do.
and i try
i try
i try to
hold on.

smile at you,
as fine as i am.
deep breath and i
stumble through the pain.

But
 the dark
 the dark
 the dark.
i know it more and
i hear it louder.

and the dark
of that chasm
opens wide to me-

and i am gone.

i listen
to the ache
as i hold your hand,
walking through the
halls of your days.
my arm supporting
through your pain.
stroking your hair
as you cry on the floor.

can ever- will ever
be better.
can ever- will ever
stop hurting.

and i try to call out
through the night of your soul.
and i try to call through
to tell you i'm here.
hold my hand.
hold my heart.
hold on.

and i think we are fine
and i think you are good
and i think we have
made it through the pain.

But

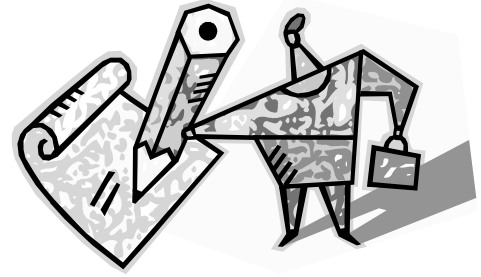
here i am
staring into the embers.

wondering where
i went wrong.

here i stand.

and you are gone.

Autographs





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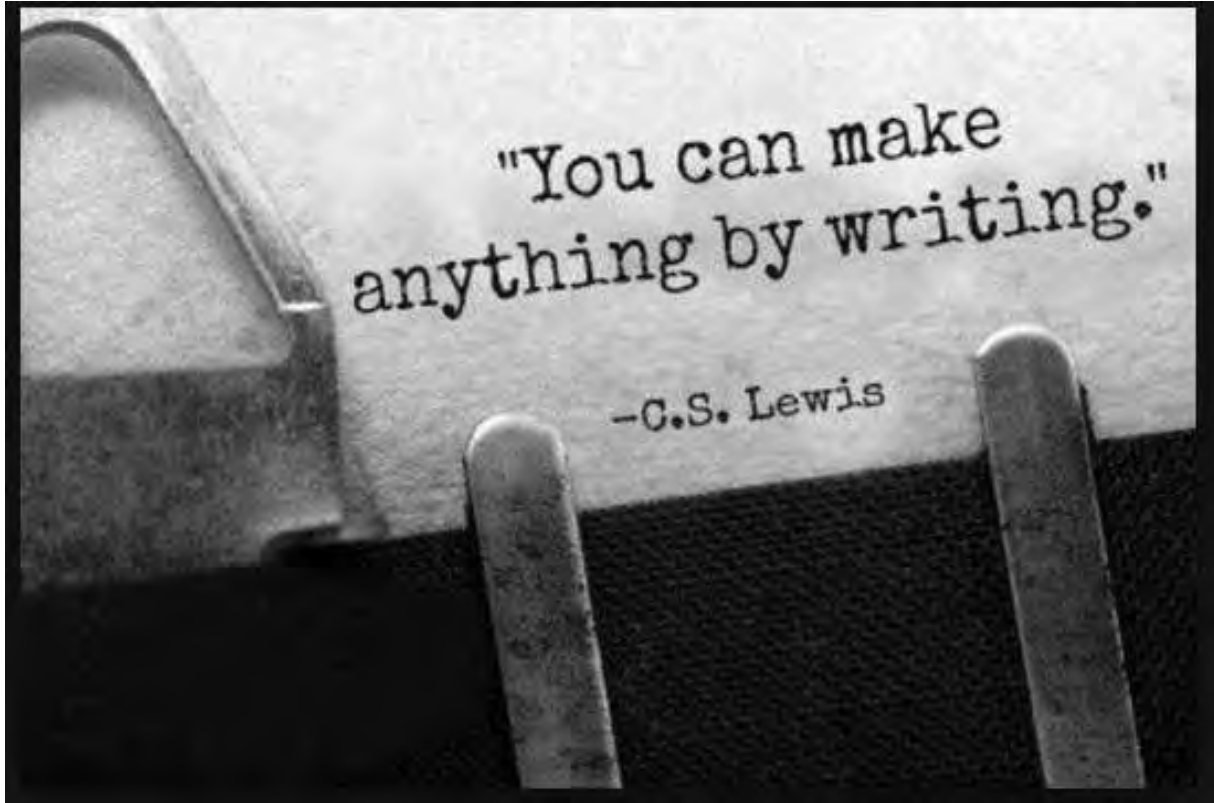
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Spring 2018

Volume 19

Pinellas County Schools

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Thank you to the 2018 *Cross Creek Chronicle* writers.
Your words will live on forever!



