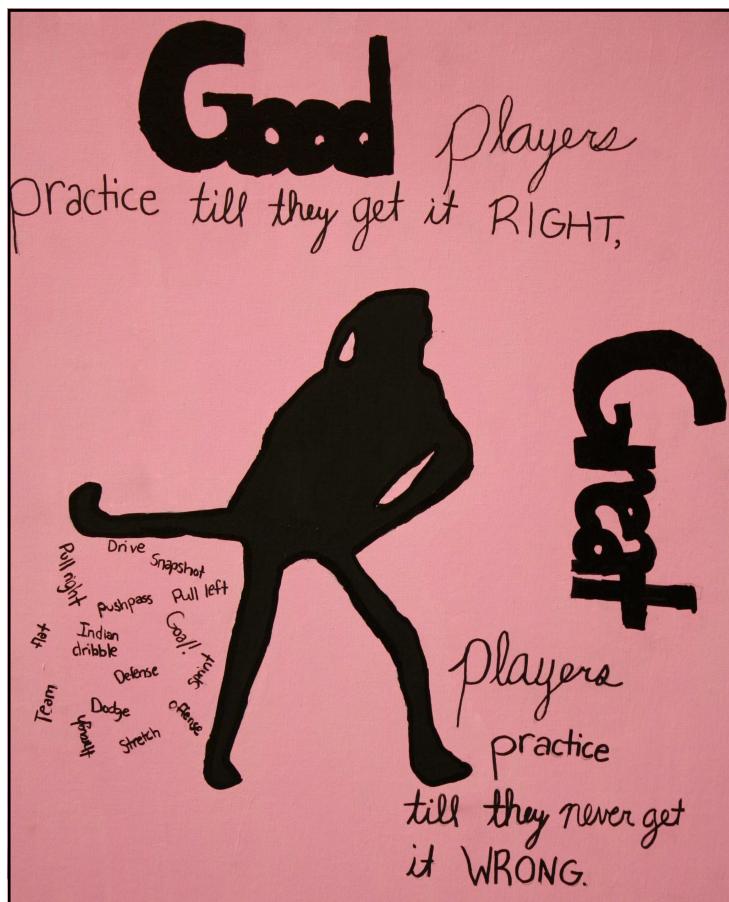


HOMMOCKS

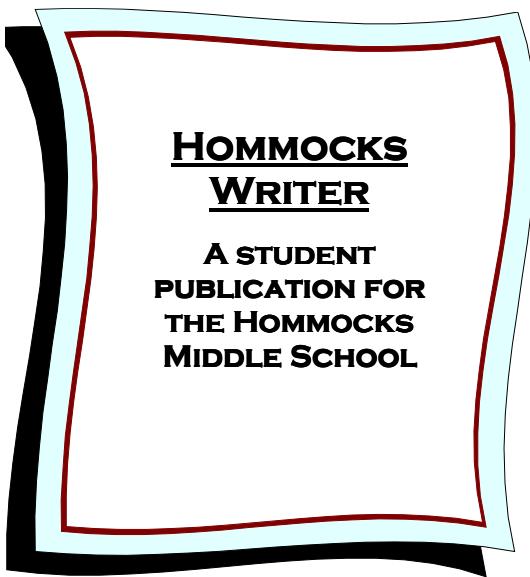


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Summer, 2013

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Seasick
Chloe Malushaga

My eyes smile above my rosy cheeks and bronzed skin. Bleached in salty sun-dried strands, my hair blows back behind me. A wet swimsuit under a small t-shirt and an old pair of shorts dampens the seat of my bike. Peddling at my own rhythm gives me a sense of where I am – more than walking ever did. I have spent every summer afternoon at Manor Beach for my whole life. In the middle of the long, cold, winter, I become seasick. Sick for the sea. I yearn to be home where the waves lull me into a coma of sun and salt. I long for the sea -green tea-like water, except instead of sweet it has a salty savor. Sometimes in August, when the heat blisters, the salt in the water becomes so concentrated and so salty that it tastes like butter. Floating weightless I feel like a cucumber soaking in brine.

I love the way the sand turns to mud at low tide.

I love the way the mud squishes between my toes and gets under my toenails. I love how it smells so earthy and so tangy. I love the way the mud dries on my making my skin tight before it cracks and peels off like chunks of chocolate.

I can smell the memory of those summer days.

In the late afternoon I climb onto the fence separating winter from summer. Inside the bathhouse I fumble in the almost dark with icy fingertips using the light that seeps in through the ceiling to guide me. I stub my toe on warped wood. My nail begins to bleed. The blue paint, once shiny and smooth, peels in layers, exposing the splintery unpolished wood beneath. Underneath the uneven floorboards, water crashes on the rocks below, spraying chilled brackish mist through the floor. I make my way down to the beach. Barefoot on the cold sand, I can feel each individual grain beneath my feet; each is different in some way, one rougher or smoother than the other.

Chills run up and down my spine. This is different. I am on the beach but nothing is the same. It is not just the wintry cold seashore in the waning light of February days. It is me. I am changed. I am no longer carefree. I am no longer twelve.

I gaze at the horizon with teenage eyes, kissing those carefree days goodbye. How different, how different, how self-conscious, will my teenage summers be? I try to imagine the future. Bikinis, boys, bronzer, I am seasick one again.

Dawn to Dusk

do not fight the
glorious rise of the
Sun.
embrace the sudden
warmth on your back
gently scaring away
The Bitter and The Cold.

do not oppose the
shining beams of noon.
Simply let the
white light touch you.

do not ignore the
Sunset of the
Evening.
accept the dancing colors,
each falling with
the gleaming
sphere of golden memories.

the sun has collapsed
and the chilled
night has risen,
dominating the Western sky.

sterling shimmers
line the night
as the crisp, cool
Air bites through
your skin.

a dim, lustrous light
hits your face
while the calming
hum of the breeze
prevents your awakening.

mist covers the empty meadow
as a rising Sun
is suddenly embraced.

Katie Fitzgerald

Inspired by Poet Laureate Robert Frost's "Nothing Gold Can Stay"

What Used to Be

The swish of trees whispered in my ear
Soon they are scrawled on, on a desk, for no one else to hear
I swam and played, as the waves danced around my feet
Years pass, the waves are thick with muck and cans, the waves are
no longer complete
Snow often swirled about, in unique and gorgeous shapes
The sun now swirls around the world, begging to escape
The white beasts of the arctic pranced along the ice without depression
Those creatures are now joining dinosaurs up above in heaven
Fresh air tickled my tongue as I rode along on my bike
Now, smoking cars and motorcycles take the place of a hike

Samantha Dorf

Telling the Truth

Telling the truth is essential we're told,
Starting from when we were four years old.
"Who finished the cookie jar?" our parents said,
If we did not tell the truth, early to bed!
When we were seven it was, "Did you do
your homework?"
If we lied about it, there would be no fun perk.
Through our teen years we agreed to:
"Don't stay out past ten."
If we broke this rule, "No staying out late ever again!"
You must not cheat on tests, especially in college,
If you do so, you are at risk of not gaining
the right knowledge.
Arriving on time at work is a promise you made
The consequence to this is not getting paid.
When you get married you must not lie to your spouse,
Living a non-honest life can get you
kicked out of the house.
So why is it important to be truthful
someone might ask?
Because it is simply part of our task?
More than that it is our society's
principle foundation,
And should be carried through every generation.
A truthful life is a life well served
This is something everyone deserves.

Beatrice Karp

Rotary Contest Winners!

Truthfulness

Sometimes the truth,
We are tempted to hide.
Due to our guilt,
Or just simply for pride.

An exaggeration of the truth,
May lead to a lie.
Those who are affected,
Might break down and cry.

When honesty
We try to avoid.
Relationships
Are often destroyed.

We try our best every day,
But sometimes a lie
Just slips away.

Dganit Alma

Go Long, Jackson!

Thomas Howse

Today is the first day I meet my future best friend, Jackson Morgan. We are both three years old and he comes over for a play date. We met in preschool, but we couldn't be more different. I am the tallest in the class; he is the smallest. I don't have much control of my body and so I am loud; he is meek. If we were dogs, I would be a Golden Retriever and he would be a Teacup Yorkie. We didn't immediately become best friends because we couldn't agree on something to do. I remember it clear as day:

"Hey Jackson, wanna go play soccer?"

"No."

"What about baseball?"

"No."

"Fine then. How about basketball?"

"No."

"I give up!" That is really annoying. We play for a bit together, and then he and I get in our strollers and go for a walk around Central Park. Since we are both young, we smell all the flowers, touch everything and then have a small amount of ice cream from a street vendor, and I realize that he isn't such a bad kid after all.

When we go back home, though, I learn he becomes fixated on one thing and only that thing very easily. He says to me, "Let's play circus!"

Little did I know that "circus" is all he would want to play for a whole year.

He is four now, and he is obsessed with Spiderman.

Now we are five and he adores Harry Potter. I wonder what will be next?

Thankfully, though, it is something I can handle, which is James Bond. I don't think I will ever get tired of him, even with all his obsessions and quirky traits, and I feel like he could become a great friend.

I am nine now and I just got invited to his birthday party. At the party, memories come flooding back like water into a basement during Hurricane Sandy. I find Jackson and say, "Hey Jackson, how have you been?" and he is really glad that I could make it to his birthday party.

He introduces me to his friends ("Thomas, this is Jack; this is Bennet and this is Gabriel.") from New York City, and I immediately become friends with them as well. We play on his Xbox, and then we are off to play some football in the dark.

"Hey Jack! Go Long!"

"Bennet! Cover Jack!"

"Hey Gabriel! That was a total foul, man!"

It turns out that some of his friends are great football players, and I faceplant a couple of times. Everyone laughs when I do, but in a good way. For example, if you

are really good friends with someone, then if they fall, you start laughing really hard after making sure they are OK. Finally, we come back and have cake and ice cream. I don't care very much for the flavor of the cake because it is strawberry shortcake with butter cream icing. The shortcake tasted like leftover strawberries from the last batch of the season, and the icing was a slug going down my throat. Thankfully, he also had vanilla ice cream, so I had that instead.

Now it is my tenth birthday, and he comes up to visit us. I am throwing a huge party at Buffalo Wild Wings. Over thirty kids are there, and Jackson doesn't know anyone there except for my family.

Even worse, he felt sick in the car ride up, and he is as pale as a marshmallow when he walks in. He still makes the effort to come, which shows how far we have come in our friendship. As we would say in soccer, our friendship is prepared to go the full ninety minutes.

This friendship has turned into something you read about in books, like Artemis Fowl where the main character, Artemis, kidnapped his soon-to-be best friend Holly. They dislike each other at first, but grow to become best friends. That is just like Jackson and me. We didn't like each other at first, but now we are best friends.

Diary of a Pie

We get made
We get a name
I was named
My name was Bob
We get a filling
I got apple filling
I was happy
Until I found out what the humans do to us
I was sad
Then I called the bakery
Apparently all the other pies knew about this?
I was even sadder
So I ran away into the forest
A very nice fox
Offered to give me a ride
Across the river
(Does this sound like a different story
to you by any chance?)
Anyway, then a couple of minutes later,
I was dead

Sam Nesser

Impending Doom

I hoped it wouldn't happen
I hoped it wouldn't take too long
But its crimes were hideous
Punishment comes along
The order has been spoken
An execution at high
I can't protest
I can't lie
I set my course
For my doom
The iceberg is awaiting
Hating
I walk in
A burnt smell lingers
The barber lifts his hands, his fingers
I close my eyes and listen up
The first long, enduring snip

Anonymous

<p>Do you ever imagine?</p> <p>Do you ever imagine a baby, wailing its arms back and forth?</p> <p>Do you ever imagine when you're off to the store, that you're missing someone?</p> <p>Do you ever imagine? This is my dog.</p> <p>And I don't want to let him go, Like a raincloud, Trying to hold in the water, Not resisting to let it go.</p> <p>Do you ever imagine that you are letting someone go? That belongs to you.</p> <p>Do you ever imagine? Your dog Trusts in you Believes in you And loves you Deep inside their heart. And whenever you leave them, It's enough to just say goodbye. You should love your companion,</p>	<p>The way you're companion loves you. And people do that Just not when that persons away. As a dog, you feel a power of loss, And you always think to yourself... Are you ever going to come back? As a dog, Your eyelids droop down, And your tail starts to drag. And you feel alone. Lost in the wilderness with no one around you. Just twigs and bark falling from the trees. It feels like an eternity, Locked up In a gated fence Wanting to be free. As a person, You don't think about anything when you're out and about, But somebody, Close to the palm of your hand Is waiting for you.</p>
--	---

Erin Meador



Anonymous

An Excerpt from *The Hike*
Emily Morris

It was a perfect day for camping. My friends; Rena, Emma, Scarlett hiked by my side. We had been planning for this trip for weeks. We decided to go on a two day trip and a six mile hike. Stretched out around us was the green woodland.

We had hiked now for two grueling hours and we were starved.

“Can we eat now?” Rena groaned.

“No. If we stop now ,we won’t make it to the cabin before dark.

“I’m hungry too,” said Emma.

“Fine,” I conceded. “We can stop and eat but only for 45 minutes!”

“Yes” exclaimed Scarlett. “I thought we never would stop.”

I opened my green hiking bag and pulled out my knife, a hat, and my flashlight until I found my lunch squished at the bottom.

As the sun dipped behind the tree line we realized that 45 minutes had gone into hours as we laughed and talked. We packed up as quickly as we could and got moving into the darkening woods.

The darkness swallowed us whole. My worst fear , being lost in the woods in the dark, was becoming our grim reality. To make matters worse a persistent misty rain had begun to fall. In the darkness, a shower of nothing was marking our track over unsure footing. All of which is the most dangerous.

Cold and wet, Scarlett begged,

“Can we please stop and set up a tent so we can at least get out of this miserable rain?”

“Yes,” I agreed.

I dug through my bag once again to find my tent and flashlight. It took us a good hour to set up the tent, the rain lightly tapping on it as we put the last stakes into the ground. It was Emma’s first time camping and she was petrified, sitting in the corner of the tent shivering and wet. We were all exhausted and glad to be out of the wetness. My eyes grew heavy and soon I fell into a deep sleep.

I was awakened to a scream. I turned to see that Scarlett was gone. “Rena, Emma, wake up!” I yelled.

“What?” growled Emma, still half asleep.

“Scarlett is gone!” I shouted. Together we shouted, “ Rena, wake up, Scarlett is missing!” We all stumbled out of the tent and into the inky darkness.

“Scarlett!” we all shouted.

There was no answer, just the loud chirping of crickets and dripping leaves. The rain had stopped but the ground was wet and the air thick with humidity. We grabbed our flashlights and set out to find Scarlett.

Rena was the first to find a clue. She came across Scarlett’s cell phone glowing on the ground, wet and cold with its cover broken. Emma started to cry. “We

will never find her" she said.

"Yes we will!" I snapped at Emma.
"We are not giving up!"

"Crack."

"What was that?" questioned Rena. About twenty feet in front of us stood a dark figure. In the feint bit of moonlight I could make out what the person looked like - a man in a dark hoody sweatshirt standing motionless beside a large tree.

"Hey!" I shouted. "Who are you?"
"What have you done with our friend?"

With that the figure started to run away from us into the darkness. Instinctively we all started to chase after it, the direction of the sound of snapping branches as the figure disappeared from view. "Come back!" we yelled. The trees were a blur of green and brown slapping us with their wet branches as we made our way deeper into the dark. As I fell onto the ground I could still hear the voices of Emma and Rena shouting Scarlett's name, the weight of

heavy rain fell upon me, my chest was wet, my friend gone with the rain. Suddenly then the world went black.

As I woke, a heavy fog covered my pounding head from the fall that knocked me cold. As the sun slowly awoke to warm me I staggered to my feet. Emma was just a few feet from me covered in mud, but Rena was nowhere in sight. I looked toward Emma. She was badly cut on her left leg. I fell to my knees next to her.

"Emma, are you all right?" I asked. There was no answer. Something moved in the brush next to us. The heavy pound in my chest skipped a beat when suddenly a raccoon emerged from the bushes and was dragging my backpack in its small hands. "Hey!" I shouted, as it disappeared back into the brush with my bag in tow. Lucky for me I still had some provisions and my knife.

Emma slowly shifted to the right; a moan of pain came from her mouth...

A New World

I wait.....

And wait....

And wait...

Until I finally figure out that I am in a new world.

I open the doors and see a vast, open field of smooth, green grass.

I am amazed.

Light is ahead of me.

I suddenly jump in the midst of what I have encountered.

My eyes stare at something ahead of me... but I don't know what it is.

I squint my eyes; I curl my toes and clench my fists.

It is coming closer. And I suddenly figure out... what that "thing" was.

Erin Meador



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The Will of a Young Immigrant
Inspired by Poet Laureate Langston Hughes

I, too, will be an American.
The day will come
When I ,too, will run out to the streets
And declare to the world: "I'm an American"
I have pledged my allegiance to the flag
To the sound of rising feet
And I have sung of the spangled banner
That proudly waved in the rocket's red glare
To the watching looks of the eyes of parents and teachers
I, too, will be an American
And make sure that the whole world knows it
And see how strong I am, how proud I am, and how glad I am
To be carrying the star spangled banner across my shoulders
In my God-blessed country.

Jason Yonadan Lee



Poetry Live! Winners

Inspired by Poet Laureate Robert Frost's "The Lockless Door" (and a *New York Times* article about the Yosemite firefalls)

Firefall

It has been many years
Finally a spark of hope
A fleeting moment is all there is
To see past the puff of smoke

A wispy ribbon of water
Falling down a granite cliff
At such an angle that it glows
Appearing to be stiff

Lava flowing on a black canvas
Surrounded by paparazzi
For the window is only a week
That the firefall can be

People come from far and wide
Prepared to take the risk
Amateurs and professionals
But all optimists

It's happening! A woman gasps
Cameras click throughout the park
Water turns from red to gold
And then the sky goes dark

Carly Levin Santalone

Inspired by Poet Laureate Billy Collins -
"Introduction to Poetry" and "Forgetfulness"

Horror Dreams

I wonder what I will dream of tonight
battling ninjas in the night
Being a celebrity
Or a scientist doing chemistry
Or maybe I'll be a billionaire
Or a pilot in the air
And I might dream of flying fish
coming out of my dinner dish
or one big giant purple turtle
In the ocean with some snorkels
But what if I don't dream tonight
and just have one big fright
maybe a monster is in my closet
talking about the school gossip
as crazy as these dreams can be
I plea and plea that I won't see
A humongous spider
drinking apple cider
Or a blob
eating my neighbor Bob
And as I've said before
and I will say it more and more
As crazy as these dreams can be
They may become a reality

Xavier Wetterhahn

The Fresh Young Coat

I was a fresh young coat
Sewn from a hairy goat
Belonging to a man named Mr. T.
 He gave me a smile
 Put me on a pile
 And quickly did away with me.
 I was lain down at the square
 People here and over there
 And stared at blank faces for a week.
 But at last,
 To my glee,
 A young man came upon me.
 He gave the counter a bill
 And to my terror and thrill
 Picked me up
 Quite gracefully.
 We travelled side by side,
 Ventured far and wide,
 The wondrous coat
 And Mr. Snide.
 But much as I tried
 He ran away to hide
 And left me in the park on a cold winter
 day.
 And like a flower blooming anew,
 She picked me up
 That girl named Sue.
 That face, that grin!
 With me on
 She would win
 Every single contest
 With her sweet violin.
 She made the front page
 And there I was, on stage! But she sold me
 out,

 And I left with a pout,
 To join a man named Mr. Mage.
 He hung me on a coat hook
 Around his house I took a look
 And every corner was crammed with
 books
 And so I read quite a bit those days.
 But his life was on a wire
 His money became quite dire
 And soon he had to sell me away. I was
 taken by a traveler
 Named Mr. Cadaver
 Who stopped by his house
 In Maine.
 We went to England,
 And the Louvre in France.
 We hopped past Ireland,
 And to China with a dance.
 He shoved me in his case,
 And we set off to Italy,
 But he ran out of funds
 Quite soon and quite pitifully.
 So he gave me to a friend
 On the open frontier
 Who held me quite dear.
 And this particular fellow,
 His personality quite mellow,
 Was a man by the name of Mr. T.
 I recognized him,
 But he did not me.
 Perhaps it is better like this.
 There is no place I would permanently
 miss.
 The smell of fresh air is never in vain.
 Maybe next I will end up in Spain.

Sam Hodman

Who I Am

Anonymous

I breathe in. The cool, crisp air invades my lungs. A calm breeze leaves the water up towards me. The aroma of moist sweet cedar trees surrounds me. I pace down to the swaying dock. As I get to the end, I leap. Crashing in, the cool, sensational newly melted snow. Is it really newly melted? I would just say water covers me from head to toe. I hear my sister's disappearing giggle as she plunges under the water beside me. We repeat this ritual over and over again until our lips turn blue. We cloak ourselves in warm towels, shivering, and let the dock rock us from side to side.

After we dry off, Genevieve and I decide to go canoeing to Turtle Rock. She puts on her old blemished hat and we strap on our life jackets. As we gingerly get into the rust-red canoe, it slowly starts to tip. Luckily my sister saves the day and grabs it before it capsizes. Finally, we start to paddle; with each stroke my paddle creates a small tornado in the water. The minute we are in the middle of the lake, I turn around and see that Genevieve is struggling. She seems tired, her sun kissed cheeks more red than usual. To be honest, my arms are aching as well. But we must keep paddling toward the mighty rock. I pull with all of my strength, stroke by stroke. With each paddle we come closer.

When we arrive, I am glad that we are on solid ground. It is so rewarding to

finally reach our destination. Looking back, it wasn't that far to get across the lake, but it seemed like an ocean. I step out of the canoe and clutch the side of the rock with my fingertips. We scramble to the top and reward ourselves with a delicious lunch we packed.

We gaze out at the flawless water and a small nose peeks out. It was a beaver. I have never seen a real beaver before, only in cartoons. The beaver soon dives back into the water, leaving ripples where it went back under. Sipping at our lemonades we let the sun warm us up and watch the sky turn pink and the lake darken. Genevieve decides to play hide and seek. Of course she wants to hide as usual.

"1..2..3..4..5..6..7..8..9..10.. Ready or not, here I come," I yell.

Once I find my sister, I realize that I am who I am right now, a child. I am playing games and acting childishly; back home I would never do something like this. I can be who I want and not try to impress anyone other than myself. Here, at Horne Lake, I am childish and immature. Spending hours and hours playing in the sun, splashing in the water and going water skiing. These are the things I love to do.

After a couple more minutes of pretending not to see her to make it seem like she won, I bellow, "I found you

Stitch!"

It is getting late and we have to go home. We haul ourselves back into the canoe and head back. We start to paddle as fast as we can because darkness begins to chase us like prey. Fortunately we make it back just in time before it catches us.

My dad starts to put together a fire. We all sit around in our camp chairs and watch the flames rise. The amber color turns to a deep red. It is now perfect time to roast marshmallows. We stick our plump marshmallows onto roasting sticks. As I slowly rotate mine, my sister is im-

tient and hers catches on fire. It burns to a crisp. Mine it perfectly golden. I slowly peel it off. The gooey goodness sticks to my fingers.

Soon we go up to bed. It takes at least half an hour to scrub the marshmallow out of my hair and off my face and hands. We are finally clean and ready for bed. I bundle under my covers, still smelling like camp fire, and look out my window and see the sky. It is covered with beautiful stars, sprinkled like sugar over the dark night.

Poetry Live! Winner

The Poetree is Growing

When poetry started it was a seed

The beginning of life for every tree

Then the seed became a sprout

So you would know what poetry is about

The authors of poetry are the roots in the ground
Making poetry grow right out of the mound

The sprout became a miniature tree
And spread the beginning of poetry

The tree started growing...growing...growing...
And poetry is showing...showing...showing...

The tree is taller than any skyscraper
And it grows green poetry paper

The branches have styles of poetry
Hyperbole, Prose, and Simile

The authors' roots spread all around the Earth
And everyone would know poetry's worth

Now it's known to one and all
That the Poetree will grow to be known and tall.

Davion Sean Johnson



James Chmelecki

Lucky

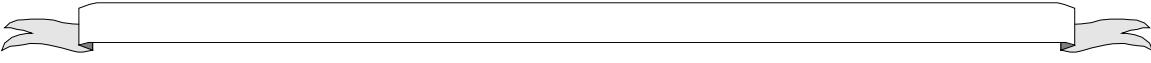
My dog is my world
Each time I flash my teeth into a smile,
it looks like he's smiling a foot-long grin back.
He barks,
He growls,
With a menacing look to his stare
As every car that passes by,
At every person who walks on our property,
But we know he is trying to protect us
He stands near the door, proudly guarding us from danger
Each time we leave,
And pull our car out of the driveway,
He always looks at us, his eyes starting to water
And I know he is thinking that we will possibly never come back
But we always do
No matter
How long
How far
We always come back
And each and every time,
He greets us by wagging his tail
And rubs his wet nose against our legs
He is overjoyed when we're with him again
I love my owner.

The first day I came home, she let me sleep on her bed right near her pillow.

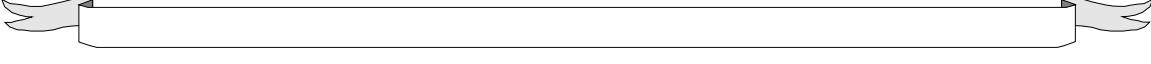
I did miss my friends, but I felt like I was at home from the start.

*I know they protect me,
So I make sure I protect them as well
I look at the window every once in a while
To make sure everything's okay.
Every time my owner leaves
I know there is a chance
That they may never return.
But they always do.
And they always will.*

Grace Meador



Rotary Winner
Truth Brings Happiness
Teddy Knowles



No matter who you are and how hard you try,
You can never deceive yourself by trying to lie.
Honesty refreshes the heart and mind,
In your soul it is difficult to find.

There was an instant that occurred quite recently,
I was going to tell the truth, but I just didn't have the decency.
I went on and on and the lies just started to spill,
Knowing the story would just go downhill.

I walked into the front door returning from school,
And then and there I began to lie like a fool.
My mother asked me if my English teacher returned my paper,
And I continued on and on knowing that she would catch me later.

The words slipped out so quick and fast,
But I knew the lie was not going to last.
My mom believed what I had to say,
But I knew she would find out later that day.

I hoped that maybe she would believe me this time,
And that this whole situation would turn out fine.
But the lies just continued on to spew,
And finally my mom uncovered the clues.

I was wrong and she had caught for the second time that week,
And I knew my punishment would not be very meek.
The only difference was this time I actually learned my lesson,
And that lying would no longer be one of my perfections.

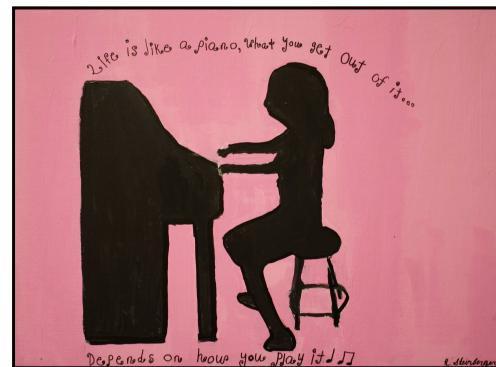
Rotary Winner
Truthfulness
Max Margiotta

Once upon a time there was a young boy named Joey. Joey grew up on a farm; he lived with his mom, dad, and his older sister. Every weekend they would go out on the farm and do their chores. Joey would feed all the animals and cut the grass. One day while Joey was doing his chores, Joey got done early and decided to go play with his BB gun. So he ran up to his room and got his gun. He ran back outside and set up some empty cans on the tree stump. One by one, he would knock them down, and then set them back up. After he got bored, he stopped and looked up at the sky. Then an idea struck Joey; he threw his cowboy hat on and jumped on his horse. He rode for about a mile and then he reached the stable where he pretended he was a western saloon. He kicked open the front doors and started shooting. He heard a loud shattering sound and looked over at the window. He had shot it a couple of times. He knew if his dad had seen this, he would get in lots of trouble.

So he ran back and told his dad that a few boys had thrown a rock at the window. His dad said, "Oh no!" His dad ran outside with his shotgun and ran to the road. A few boys from Joey's school were walking down the local candy shop when

Joey's dad saw them, and yelled, "You rotten kids! You think you can just smash my window and get away with it!"

The boys looked at him with much confusion. One of the boys replied, "I don't know what you're talking about, sir." The dad scowled and said, "That is the biggest damn lie I have ever heard!" said Joey's dad, while cocking his shot gun, and pointed it at the boys. The three boys backed up and then Joey jumped in. "Dad, it was me who broke the window, not them." Later that night, Joey was punished and punished, doubled for lying and breaking the window. But at least no one got hurt.



Rachel Steinberger

The Misadventures of Procax

Emily Shen

The open-air market was bustling with merchants jabbering to customers, each other, and to their cell phones in many languages and the smell of sugar and syrup, all attempting to sell to the swarms of consumers fighting their way through the crowd, mostly avoiding the merchants but sometimes being drawn in by a particularly fierce merchant or something they actually were interested in. The market stalls themselves were a riot of color and the sweet scent of melted sugar. Piled high were neon-green bags of long, thin snakes of licorice, red bags of tiny fruit-flavored pellets, and purple and pink boxes of sugar crystals that made a loud rattling sound when you shook them. Shockingly yellow bags of spun sugar occupied one stall with a heavily mustached American man speaking into a cell phone manned it, keeping a wary eye on the milling onlookers.

Suddenly, a teenage boy darted out from the

crowd and snatched a bag of the cotton candy. The hirsute man shouted, "Hey! Get back here, you thief!" but the teen had almost disappeared. The shopkeeper snatched at the thief's arm and yanked hard. The young lad kicked and wriggled madly, but the man was strong and kept an iron grip on the thin stick of an arm he held in his meaty hand.

Procax had thought he'd gotten away with stealing the cotton candy when the shopkeeper's hand suddenly squeezed through the crown and grabbed his arm in a grip like a vise. He felt himself being pulled roughly through the tangle of bodies by the unforgiving hook that was seemingly attached to his arm. Procax wasn't a particularly strong boy, and he was small and had average-looking features, so he wasn't normally picked for sports teams if the coaches could help it. He didn't have anything to do to get himself stronger than he was remotely inter-



Paige Danehy



James Murray

ested in. He found himself regretting not forcing himself to do something to develop his muscles. Suddenly, he was face-to-face with the American and promptly tried to kick the huge man in the gut. The man easily twisted away and spoke to the thin boy.

"Why'd you want that candy so badly that you've gotta steal it, huh?" he yelled angrily.

Procax glared back at him resentfully. "I just wanted something sweet," he shrugged.

"Can't you just walk up and buy it like a normal person?" the hair man screamed.

"I ain't got no money," said Procax insolently.

"Gods, the country's going to the dogs if that's how young people are these days!" the man spat disgustedly. "What's the matter with you? Don't you have a job?" The boy certainly looked old enough, for one – fifteen or sixteen, maybe. The shopkeeper shook his head. Youngsters knew how to steal, cheat, and lie, but yet they didn't know how to work or speak. The man shook Procax roughly, making the boy scowl and wrench free. "Oh no you don't," the man said and he

nabbed the boy again. "Now, you listen here. You'll work for me until you've paid off the cost of the bag. No breaks, no snacks, no pay." The bag had been trampled by the crowd swirling around the two.

Procax was shocked. Out of everything he expected to happen, this he hadn't even considered. Now he'd have to spend all of his last free day in Damascus standing in the hot sun selling cotton candy – and he wouldn't even get paid! He could think of so many other things he'd love to be doing.

The shopkeeper sat in a wicker chair with a creaking noise and lifted a jug of whiskey to his lips. Sighing, he watched the boy carefully while the gangly teen sat hunched over his table. He inhaled deeply. There were all the regular scents of the candy market: melting sugar, fruity tones, sweat and dirt. The floor of the market wasn't as clean as the storekeepers would have liked it to be, being as it was covered in packed dirt, but there wasn't much they could do about it. The American settled himself firmly into the chair and watched a Chinese seller blowing sugar sculptures work while keeping watch on the boy out of the corner of his

eye. The Chinese man was in the process of finishing a mouse when the teen made a run for it. The man sprang up like a jack -in-the-box and tried to grab him, but it was too late – the boy was gone.

Procax ran harder than he'd ever done in his life, farther and farther away from the cotton candy stall, passing many other confectionery stands along the way including wax bottles, chocolate, and the huge chocolate fountain in the middle of the market's relatively open square. Suddenly, he tripped over a loose stone and fell straight into the fountain, covering himself with chocolate and startling a bunch of kids who had been using cups to drink from the fountain. He staggered to his feet, dripping chocolate and ignoring the insults the shoppers and stall keepers flung at him.

“Rifraff!”

“Idiot!”

“Stupid boy! Kids these days!”

“Procax!”

Full of surprise at hearing his name, he automatically turned towards the speaker, a fat woman wearing an apron and brandishing a wooden spoon like a knife. “Procax!” she shouted again. “Get over here, you lazy lump!”

It was Procax’s mother, and she was obviously in a very bad mood. She’d been tending the maple sugar again – how could he have forgotten? “What, mom?” Procax muttered resentfully.

“You go straight home and clean yourself up! You’re a right mess! Just

look at your clothes!” she screeched. She wrapped her hand in an old rag and pushed the miserable boy towards the dusty road heading out of the market and trundling around the hills and towards their little cottage in the woods. He tramped along for a few minutes until their tiny, ramshackle house came in to view. He slammed the door as he went in, making the very door frame rattle and shake, the jars tremble and the cat hiss loudly and dart out of the still-banging door. He went upstairs, leaving slightly chocolate but mostly muddy tracks all over the pristine kitchen floor and turned on the hot water in the shower.

The man shrugged and went back to his stall, taking inventory and counting the money. The boy had sold just one package, but that was enough, anyways. He decided to close up shop for that day; it was almost closing time. The skies were beginning to darken, and candles were starting to be lit. He carefully packed away his merchandise and locked up his little stall.

After night had truly fallen and Procax was in bed and the American was at home, the market was silent except for the chirping of the crickets. It was completely empty except for the occasional kid streaking through, searching for a dropped coin, a lost marble, or perhaps a forgotten bag of candy. All was quiet again in the little town of Lapidum, Maryland.



Olivia Jarrett