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The 2003 Youth Honor Awards

September 11th:
An International Day of Dialogue
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Skipping Stones is a nonprofit children’s magazine that encourages cooperation, creativity and celebration of cultural and linguistic diversity. We explore stewardship of the ecological and social webs that nurture us. We offer a unique forum for communication among children from different lands and backgrounds. Skipping Stones expands horizons in a playful, creative way. We seek suggestions, submissions, subscriptions and support.

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From the Editor

"As we are liberated from our own fear our presence automatically liberates others."

—President Nelson Mandela of South Africa

Come, let us begin a dialogue to overcome:
Prejudice with Understanding
Hatred with Love
Injury with Forgiveness
Suffering with Compassion
Terror with Peacefulness

Skipping Stones is calling for September 11th to be observed as the Annual International Day of Dialogue. We invite all civic, social and educational organizations to recognize the importance of Sept. 11, 2001 in building a multicultural and sustainable world.

Out of tragedy rise opportunities for multicultural, interfaith, and global understanding of the many levels of diversity—faiths and traditions, cultures and customs, tongues and thoughts, expressions and experiences, and ecosystems that enrich our planet.

We believe that, like the annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day in the United States, this positive way of remembering Sept. 11th will prove to be an essential first step toward a more just and peaceful society. Becoming active peacemakers means initiating dialogue with friends and strangers alike. When we listen to others, and when we know their stories, they no longer remain strangers to us. Through dialogue we can develop understanding and cooperation between diverse segments of our society.

There are many ways to initiate and continue a dialogue across the spectrum of faiths, cultures, languages, and nationalities. Human history has many examples of interfaith and intercultural dialogue and cooperation. Many faith-based organizations and citizen’s groups have set up educational programs, cultural presentations, interfaith services, and even one-on-one discussions, to promote harmony.

Sept. 11th: An International Day of Dialogue

This July our 8-year-old attended a week-long “Peace Village” summer camp where youth, 7 to 17, spent seven hours each day learning yoga, meditation, non-violent conflict resolution and peace-making skills. They hiked a nature area, visited an organic farm and, of course, played together in a multi-faith setting at a congregational church. As I went to share what little I knew about meditation, I saw that the sanctuary was named “Thich Nhat Hanh Meditation Room.” Naturally, we also practiced the Buddhist walking meditation technique he often uses.

In many cities, interfaith dialogue has already taken a stronghold. Using Sept. 11 as a focus can increase the effectiveness of existing efforts and encourage creation of new ways to learn about diversity. A better understanding of each other at deeper levels will reduce violent encounters in the future. Our powerful technological systems would then not be used for destructive purposes, rather they would remain as tools that bring about human comfort and prosperity.

Time is ripe for observing a Day of Dialogue. We believe the United Nations, World Parliament of Religions, and many other non-governmental groups might be willing to sponsor such an International Day of Dialogue. The National Association for Multicultural Education has already adopted a resolution to this effect.

I invite you to organize events—peace songs from many traditions, tying friendship bracelets on classmates, a potluck with neighbors you don’t know, etc.—on Sept. 11th. Celebrate the Day of Dialogue in your school or community. Let us shape our global future by helping, healing, engaging in dialogue and understanding.
We are all a small part of nature, we all love nature. We must be eternally indebted to it. Yet, we continue to pollute water, air and soil, to kill animals for fur, ivory, and for other reasons. As a result, many species of animals are extinct.

I hope it is not too late to save our planet. The protection of the environment requires the cooperation of all nations. If we take active action now, there will be some hope for the future. If we do nothing, we are heading for disaster.

I believe we should all strive to work for the protection of the environment. Let's start by changing people's attitude toward the environment. As for myself, I want to be an environmentalist, because I want to make our future happy!

—Olga Mikhailova, Svetlogorsk, the Gomel, Belarus.

International Pen Pals Wanted!

Students at the Marietta Sixth Grade Academy are interested in writing to international pen pals/friends (ages, 11-12 years). Please send all letters to: Ms. Cynthia L. Rice, teacher

340 Aviation Road
Marietta, Georgia 30060 USA

Chetan Deorao Khandalkar, boy, 15
115, Siddheshwar Nagar, Chausala Road
Yavatmal 445 001 (MSS) India
Into: reading, music, pen pals, travelling

Gabija Deksnyte, girl, 12
Jaunystes 17-40
Rokiskis, Lithuania
Into: music, sports, animals

“I am in the seventh heaven of happiness to pen you this alphabetical construction of words. How are you? I presume that by the grace of Almighty God you are kicking as I am feeling off here. The motive of the letter is to become acquainted with you. I would be very elated to have a positive response from you...My hobbies are soccer, reading and exchange of currencies and pictures. Yours Faithfully,”

—Samed Mohammed, boy, age 15,

P. O. Box 194, Techiman, B/A, Ghana, West Africa.

Who Is Venezuela?

Venezuela, my cradle, the one who held me when I was a baby and now takes my hand while I grow up to be a woman. The one who showed me the pleasant and unpleasant faces of life. The one who continuously gives me a reason to be someone. She taught me that, yes, we'll always have problems, but it doesn't mean we're going to back up and just wait for somebody to come fight our struggles. We have to open our eyes and confront all the stones in our path, because those stones will make us better people, those stones will give us strength. Venezuela has demonstrated to me how to be strong and that you can't underestimate the power of hard work.

Venezuela, the mother of the heroes of April, taught me there will always be a struggle—and a villain. At these moments we have to wake up and unlock our emotions, our eagerness for our liberty and a better life for our people, our home. Venezuela has the right to express its thoughts and new ideas for a new life. Venezuela has the right to breathe fresh air. Venezuelans will always remain true to the 'woman' who gave them life and space in the world.

My life has changed. Today, I realize how important it is to stop those who want to withhold your dreams. First, I learned to be sure of what I want, and why. Today, more than ever, I pronounce to the world that I can't wait to become a professional journalist, and I warn whoever wants to take my freedom away that Venezuela won't tolerate oppression any longer, and we will express whatever our people want. It's the people who can make Venezuela a greater country, a better place, a better home for those who have the ability to bring out the special things our country holds. Venezuela is a mix of hope and reality. Let's work toward a new reality, fight for our hopes and make them part of it and construct a golden world of our own.

Today, I am grateful to be Venezuelan. I am thankful to all those heroes that went out and made people like me think, “Yes! There's a way.” Venezuela is alive and won't take a step back.

—Estefanía Zabala, grade 11, Anzoategui American School, Venezuela.
Morals and Standards

Living in our world today, I think that having morals and standards for yourself is extremely important. If you do not know yourself, and do what you believe in, the world, and the people living in it, will tear you apart. People can be easily persuaded if they are not set in their ways. If you do things because you want to be accepted by others, ultimately you will not lead a happy life. We need to focus on being individuals, not how much we can fit in.

For the future, I hope that there will be no more fighting or wars. People need to learn to get along with all different types of cultures. We need to talk things out and come to a peaceable resolution than to think of war. America should not be as conceited. We are not as “All Powerful” as we think we are. We, as a nation, need to become more humble and accepting of other ways.

—Breanna Coletta, 15, North East, Pennsylvania.

I Understand

Sometimes these eyes see naught beyond our noses.
Sometimes our minds think no farther than mechanical reasoning.
Sometimes people are hated for what they are doing yet we never stop to wonder why.

An Iraqi soldier stands on the front lines of a last regime stronghold. He fires bullets and the U.S. soldiers return the same. Agreeably in times of war one does not consider the reasons behind fire. Indeed politics fly out the window and instinct takes over. But if looked at more intricately we’ll see a reason, a motive, a raison d’être.

On the surface we see an Iraqi soldier disturbing democracy. But deeper into the story, as more and more unravels, we see more. A desperate man in fear of his own life, and worse yet, his family’s, he fights a war that cannot be won. The only victory is the knowledge that in following orders his family might live.

The cold steel hand of a tyrant forces his people onward. This man has a reason to fight, and I understand.

—Justin Jones, North East, PA. He adds, “I’m a typical American born, bred, and raised true and true patriot... I feel it necessary for Americans to regulate tyranny in all aspects... but sometime we forget why the other man is fighting.”

Money

I see the greenish valuable money people love so much.
I hear the laughter of money as it turns evil.
I smell the scent of the precious fragrance of money that is so valuable.
I fear money will take over the world.
I am amazed how a thin piece of paper can be so valuable, but if you set it on fire, it’s nothing but ashes.
I am saddened by the fact money can make you turn against the ones you love because of greediness.
I am puzzled how people can take away a life because of money.
I am angered by how money makes people think differently.
I know money is not more important than people are.
But to some people money is more important than people are.

—Grace Kwon, Asian American, Goodyear, Arizona.

Feels Like

A Revolution

Time comes to the space
Like a sudden fire
Our fates break into pieces
We live, we die.
Who gives us the start?
Who leads us to the end?
That’s the power of destiny
We live, we die.
But when the sun rises again
Well, that’s the eternity
When the sky turns blue
Well, we can live on forever
It’s not a dream
But how can it be?
Because it comes from the heaven
Feels like a revolution!

—Sun Meicen, 14, Xiamen, People’s Republic of China.
Home is the place where everyone feels warm, comfortable, relaxed and secure! Even though sometimes people don’t really notice its value, home has indeed a very important role in everyone’s life. I strongly believe that every single person has felt the relief of coming home after a long tiring day. Yet everyone has different understanding, a different description of home, for home is not always necessarily where you live. To me, home is where my familial connections are, and where I feel I belong. When I say this, my home looks like my home country.

When I first moved to Warsaw from Istanbul, for a while I felt like it was a temporary home. Probably because the rest of my family, a big part of it, was left in Istanbul. I live with my parents and sister in Warsaw. For me, my home is the best place I have in Warsaw. However, the home I have in Turkey is the one where I feel more at home.

It’s sort of weird having two places that you call ‘home’. When I’m here, in Warsaw, I miss the rest of my family and my friends in Turkey. Many little things bring back memories. When I go back to Turkey, I miss my friends in Warsaw. It’s not too hard combining two different lives you have, but it takes time to get used to it. Still, there are times when my mind gets confused.

I still think that I feel at home in Istanbul, as I have lived in Turkey for my whole life, and this is the first time I’m living abroad. As a big family, maybe, we were close to each other, so it was hard to get separated with such long distances.

Yet, as people get used to everything, I too have started to feel at home in Warsaw. My close friends, the similar tempo of my daily life and the fun, schoolwork and family atmosphere give me nothing less than what my life offered me in Istanbul. I guess the missing home mood is also somewhat exaggerated in our minds. As we keep in touch with the rest of our family and our close friends, nothing is that much different. As long as you live with the people you love, you can feel at home anywhere and anytime.

—Feyza Yuksel, gr. 8, American School of Warsaw.

Since I was two years old, I’ve lived in Warsaw. It feels like I’m more Polish, even though my real nationality is Chinese. I know the language, the customs, and the history. I’ve gone to a Polish school and kindergarten, found Polish friends, and if I had to choose a place to stay in it’s definitely going to be Poland.

Even though I am Chinese, I feel more Polish in a way. It’s just like Warsaw is my first, and sometimes, my only home. Here is where all my friends are, my favorite parks, my school, and my house. When I come back to Poland from a vacation, I feel safe, I feel at home. With the warm wind blowing softly through my hair, I’m glad to be walking down the streets of Warsaw again.

Every two years, we go back to visit China. But the minute off the plane I already miss Warsaw. Everywhere I look, there are strangers walking around, and it doesn’t seem as peaceful as in Poland. I also have this lost feeling in Warsaw, yet I always know where to go find comfort. I could call a taxi or even get home using the public bus. In China, however, I don’t know how to get from one place to the other.

But China is still one of the places I admire the most. There are plenty of fascinating activities to entertain myself, a lot more than you could imagine, and many more than you could have in Poland. In China, they produce the most delicious ice cream ever, and sell the best clothes. But that’s just the small part of what I like about my nationality. Knowing that this is where I was born, and this is where my family lives means a lot to me. When I look back on the pictures I took in China, I can recall all the fun I’ve had.

I’m proud of both China and Poland, and care for them both. They’re two very different places with their own beauty, yet they both mean the same to me. China is my native country, where I was born, and where I meet my relatives after long years of being apart. On the other hand, Poland is the place where I grew up, where I learned all about the facts in life, and most importantly, this is where I found true friendship.

China and Poland are both my homes!

—Alice Cai, gr. 8, Amer. School of Warsaw, Poland.
Dear Hanna:

“I dread having to adjust to a new classroom each school year. That’s the worst part about school!” —Tania

Dear Tania: My best possible answer begins with the story “Crow Boy” by Taro Yashima. Way, far away, in the isolated, hilly countryside of Japan, there was a tiny village. In the middle of the village stood a small schoolhouse. All the children of the village walked, mostly barefoot, to school. After attending school for six years, the children graduated.

One year a very strange, shy boy arrived the first day of school. He was afraid of the teacher and of all the children. He hid under the schoolhouse and under the desk. Everyone made fun of him. They nicknamed him Chibi, meaning ‘tiny boy.’ The children left him alone at study and play time, at lunch, all the time. Chibi taught himself to make his eyes cross-eyed so he would not see how the children made fun of him. He kept himself busy observing: the grains of the wood in the desk, details about insects, or the design of patches in the shirt of the boy who sat in front of him.

Mr. Isobe was the teacher in 6th grade. He would find Chibi when no one was around. They talked. Mr. Isobe discovered that Chibi knew more than any other student about wild vegetables, animals, flowers and fruit.

Mr. Isobe arranged for a talent show the night before graduation. Adults and children were amazed that the first performance was entitled: ‘A Conversation among Crows,’ delivered by Chibi. He imitated newly hatched crows, the protective mother, the defending father, crows filled with happiness in their hearts, an old crow loyal to an old tree. When Chibi concluded, the whole audience rose, clapping, crying, touched by Chibi’s performance, regretting how unkind they had been to him. And at graduation, Chibi was the only student honored for perfect attendance all those six years.

After graduation, Chibi came to the village from time to time, all the way from his mountain home to sell the charcoal he and his family made. But nobody called him Chibi any more. Everyone greeted him with a friendly, “Hi, Crow Boy!” and he answered with the happy crow sound.

Tania, switch your focus away from worry over your inadequacy. Instead, focus on all the other students in your class. Be helpful, see the potential of every other student. Discover and appreciate whatever each person has to offer. Feel friendship in your heart and they may very likely return warm feelings to you.

In Peace,

Hanna

by Pamela Sastra, art student from Indonesia.

Send your questions or comments to:
Dear Hanna c/o Skipping Stones
P. O. Box 3939, Eugene, OR 97403
The 2003 Skipping Stones Youth Honor Awards

The following ten students and student groups are being honored for their creative works that promote an understanding of cultural diversity and ecological sensitivity. Each winner of the tenth annual awards will receive an honor certificate, five multicultural and/or nature books, and a subscription to *Skipping Stones*. Winners are also invited to become a member of our Student Review Board.

Hearty Congratulations to:

- **First Graders**, Circle of Life School, White Earth, Minnesota.
- Kyle Bolton, 11, Vienna, Virginia.
- Allison Tesch, 11, Seattle, Washington.
- Abbey Forbes, 12, Port Deposit, Maryland.
- Andrea Powell, 13, Eugene, Oregon.
- Mariel Martinez, 14, Hewlett, New York.
- Ann Pedtke, 15, Laingsburg, Michigan.
- Alice Baumgartner, 15, Chicago, Illinois.
- Katarina Punovuori, gr. 8, Warsaw, Poland.
- FreshStart, a freshman mentoring program, Westover High School, Fayetteville, N. Carolina.

**Pow Wow**

First graders at the Circle of Life School in White Earth, Minnesota, describe Pow Wow, the traditional Native American celebration. Photo: Anishinaabeg Today, MN.

When I hear the drums, I start dancing.
My feet start moving, I feel my heart beating.
—Dakota Lindstrom, 7.

When I hear the drums, Eagles fly.
—J. R. Libby, 7.

When I hear the drums, I start dancing.
I hear jingles, I feel good.
I see fry bread, It tastes yummy.
The people are dancing and having fun.
—Margaret May Gasco, 7.

When I hear the drums, I start dancing.
It feels like it makes me dance, Because I’m always spinning all around, all the time.
—Alan Jackson Brown, 7.

When I hear the drums, I feel happy.
I see drumming people, I start to see people dancing.
They sing along, too.
Their feet have slippers on.
I see colors on people.
I see feathers on people.
I see the blue sky with eagle all around.
—Autumn Warren, 7.

Some Rocks are Gneiss

Rocks are all around us
But no one seems to care.
We drop them in the water
And we toss them in the air.

Rocks come in many sizes
And one can be a gem.
But most of us ignore rocks,
Or walk all over them.

So, look closer at the world around.
I’d make you if I ran it.
And don’t forget to look at rocks,
And not take them for granite!

—Kyle Bolton, 11, Vienna, Virginia.
He adds, “I chose to write about rocks because we are surrounded by them but nobody seems to care about them.”
Environmental Sensitivity

As I walked along the side of the road, I remembered the crumpled candy wrappers in my hand. Crumbs of chocolate sticking to the inside of the wrappers had melted all over my hand since I had eaten those chocolate bars. My hand was hot and sticky.

I tossed the candy wrappers into the street and started to whistle a tune as I walked to the front steps to my house.

“Anybody home?” I called as I opened the door. My voice echoed through the empty house.

“Dad must be gone,” I thought as I strolled into the kitchen. I opened the refrigerator door and grabbed a boysenberry-lime yogurt, my favorite.

I left the door open, as I knew I would be wanting one of the bottles of root beer in it later.

As I found a spoon, I recalled my messy hands. There were chocolate smears all over the handle of the refrigerator. The thought of root beer slipping my mind, I went to wash my hands. The cool water that poured over my hands felt so refreshing. I splashed some onto my face.

I heard my dad’s voice call to me. “Natalie?”

“Just washing my hands,” I replied.

I ran to meet him, forgetting about the water I left running in the bathroom.

“Hi, Dad!” I said.

“Hi Honey,” he said, “all packed for the trip?”

“Uh... not quite,” I said.

“Well you’d better get moving; we’re leaving soon.”

“Okay, Dad.”

“Oh, and Natalie, close the refrigerator door, and don’t leave the faucet on.”

I went to my room and yanked my suitcase out of the closet. I shoved a few t-shirts and shorts into it. I hastily added my toiletries bag, my cell phone, and a pair of PJs. I couldn’t think of anything else I would need for a three night camping trip, so I put the suitcase at the foot of my bed and went to the kitchen to finish my snack.

Time flew by as the day of the camping trip arrived. Before I knew it, my dad and I were in the old, red, rusted pickup truck and off to Yellowstone National Park.

We stopped to eat in a big city about halfway to Yellowstone. The air was thick and cloudy. A layer of grime coated most surfaces. I stepped into something black and greasy. “What the...,” I began.

“Used oil,” my dad said.

The restaurant was located by a toxic waste dump. I made a disgusted face and plugged my nose to block out the foul smell. In the distance, I saw many towers of smoke billowing upwards, then disappearing in to the air.

“Dad!” I cried, “It’s a forest fire!”

“First of all,” my dad said, “there are no forests anywhere near here. Secondly, that’s not smoke from a fire. That smoke is from a factory.”

“Oh,” I said. “But why is this city...the way it is?”

“It’s all the pollution—people not being concerned about the environment.”

I was shocked. “Like leaving refrigerators open and littering?”

“Yep, even small things like that contribute to the problem.”

“How can we stop this from happening?”

“Well, there are organizations and such. But it’s also important for us not to pollute or waste.”

I was silent for a moment, then I said, “Dad, we need to turn around. I have to go home.”

That was the day I started conserving resources and stopped littering. I joined an organization to save the environment and promoted environmental sensitivity wherever I went.

One day, I caught my dad just after he had washed his face.

“Dad?” I asked.

“Yes?”

“Don’t leave the faucet on!”

—Allison Tesch, 11, Seattle, Washington. She writes, “I was born in Los Angeles, California, and I know what it’s like being in a polluted city.”
I happened to be watching a show on World Link TV. It was about people in other countries and how they work very hard for big corporations. People work from 6:00 am to 10:00 pm at night, and only get about $15 dollars a month. Some of the children even lie to get a job, saying they are 18, but they are only 11, 12 and 13. The families are poor so the kids have to work. Even when the kids lie, the employers don’t check to make sure they are 18. I don’t think they really care if they are young or that they work so hard for so little money. Some of the children don’t see their parents for months.

On a little island called Saipan, Chinese people work there. In China, corporation agents told the Chinese people they would be coming to the USA, but they weren’t. They were coming to a little island, called Saipan, owned by the USA. The people worked hard, day and night, for very little money. The corporations did trickery; they put “Made in the USA” on the clothes because they were made on this island.

It makes you think of all the little plastic toys and stuffed animals that are made in poor countries. We just play with them and throw them away. All that work for nothing!

What inspired me the most to do this project was the way the people in Saipan were treated. Also, the cost of my jean jacket, which may have been made there, was equal to two months pay for one person. It just didn’t seem right.

So I sent this letter out to give awareness to what is going on. I sent copies of the letter to big corporations. Wal-Mart and Mattel responded and sent me a letter back.
The Night Josie Sang

Josie sang. Josie sang loud and clear. That night she wanted everybody to know she could sing. After being rejected for the school musical, Josie was afraid people would think that she couldn’t sing, but Josie knew she could. She was in the church and school choirs. She sang in the shower and at home. She didn’t know why they hadn’t cast her in the musical, but she knew tonight she would sing the best she could.

Josie Faborila was at a school potluck and fundraiser. Anyone who had wanted to be in the talent contest could. Josie had signed up only a couple days before, after her friend Helen had encouraged her to. That didn’t leave her much time to practice. Whoever won first place in the talent contest would get to perform at a place for kids with disabilities. Josie wanted to win. Not to do the other performance, but to show people she did know how to sing.

After everybody had performed, the judges announced the first, second, and third winners. “And in first place,” said the judge, “Josie Faborila.” Josie was so excited she hugged all of her friends. The thirteen-year-old jumped up and down with joy. She had won, she had won!! Josie was so excited. But then she realized she would have to sing to those kids. What if they didn’t like her? What if they laughed at her. She knew disabilities didn’t always stop someone from being mean. Her neighbor was in a wheelchair and yelled at her all the time. But, oh well. There were worst things that could happen. what if one of the kids was sick in the head and threw something at her on accident? The thoughts were endless. What if...what if...what if...

“Josie, go on stage!” Josie’s mother was pointing to the stage where the judge was motioning for her to come up.

“What? Oh!” Josie walked to the stage. Everybody was clapping and cheering. The judge told her about her prize and people clapped more.

A week later Josie was getting into her car to go to the local home for kids who needed special care. She was nervous, but ready. When she got there, she was going to perform and then talk to the other kids. She thought that was going to be the hard part, but she was wrong.

When Josie finished, everybody clapped and she bowed. The workers handed out punch and cookies and Josie went to talk to the other kids. They were nice and told her how they enjoyed her singing. Josie noticed a girl in the back who was in a wheelchair. Josie walked over and sat by her.

“Did you like my singing?” Josie asked. The girl nodded her head. She didn’t smile; she didn’t even look up.

“Oh don’t mind her,” said Amy, a girl with Down Syndrome who Josie had talked to earlier. “Evelyn doesn’t talk to anybody.”

“Your name’s Evelyn?” asked Josie, continuing with the ‘conversation’. “How pretty! Mine is Josie, Josie Faborila.”

“Oh,” said Evelyn in a very soft voice.

“Well, it’s time for me to go now. Bye,” said Josie, waving good-bye to the quiet girl.

Eight days later, on a windy day after school, Josie went back to the kids’ home. She wanted to visit Evelyn again. When she went up to the front desk, she told the lady she would like to see Evelyn please, in a very grown-up voice. The lady gave her a strange look, but let her in. Josie went in to the room divided by a blue curtain. Evelyn was sitting in her chair by the window. Everything in the room was very neat and clean.

“Hi, Evelyn. I came to visit you again. It’s me Josie, remember from Saturday?” For the next hour Josie sat there, doing all the talking, telling Evelyn about school and stuff.

Evelyn just sat and listened, but when Josie got up to leave, Evelyn softly said, “Come back soon.”

So Josie kept coming back to visit Evelyn, bringing her things like books or pieces of candy. She learned Evelyn had been in a car crash six years ago that killed her family and left her unable to walk. Josie kept visiting her each week, and soon learned that sometimes, better things come out of winning a contest than just winning.

—Andrea Powell, 13, Eugene, Oregon.
Dear Ocean,

You are all that is special to me.
My life, my home, my brother, and my friend.
I ride your waves and play 'till you bring me to shore.
Your storm docks on these rainy days
When I cannot come out and play.
You dry my tear-streaked cheeks with your ocean breeze.
Your cool waters are a relief against the burning rays.
And for every birthday, you give me a gift
From your treasure chest that is stored beneath your waters,
Like a star that falls from the sky,
Or a lifeless seahorse the color of a sapphire stone.
You soften the sands nearest you so I can be comfortable.
Just watching you gleam
Like a crystal in the early hours of the day makes me smile.
You even brought your fellow sea friends to play alongside me.
Like a seahorse chillin' in your garden of seaweed
Or the curious dolphin that
Danced on your surface with delight.
But it saddens me to hear
That you will no longer be my home.
For I shall be whisked away
With the wind to another place.
A world without the friend
Who sparkles like yesterday's gold and shares the secrets that live on the deepest parts of the ocean floor
A life without you my, friend
The Ocean.

—Mariel Martinez, 14, Mexican American, Hewlett, NY. She writes, "My most favorite hobby, besides soccer, is swimming and that's what my poem is about, the ocean. I don't necessarily live near the ocean but consider it my second home during summer months and hate leaving it when summer turns into fall. I feel like it is my older brother. A calm feeling washes over me when I'm in the water. The waves crash over me, sweeping my troubles, taking them back to the sea."

A Tree that Blooms in the Winter

I am a tree that blooms in the winter.
If you see me during the early summer months, bare and lifeless
beside the fragile radiance of others,
you will only call me an oddity.
I know that you won't stop to run your fingers across the unique rivulets of my bark,
to feel my sap rising, warm and green and alive,
through every branch and twig.
But it will not matter.
One day,
Long after the leaves of the cherries, plums, and dogwoods have been shredded through the grass by an autumn wind,
you will walk in the woods again.
Through a network of brittle branches,
you will see me blooming,
my blossoms bright as the summer sun, and brighter, for only I can bloom against the snow.
You will shake your head and stare,
maveling at this enigma, and perhaps wonder how many of the trees you failed to see when you first walked through the forest on an early summer day.
But you should not be so surprised.
There in the frozen wood, I will merely be rejoicing—
because I am an oddity,
I am an enigma,
I am a tree that blooms in the winter.

—Ann Pedtke, 15, Laingsburg, Michigan. Ann writes, "I have been homeschooled all my life... I plan to be a professional writer one day."
Illustration by Nina Forsberg.
My Multilingual Life

My early childhood was like that of any other child except for one slightly different thing; I could speak fluently in two different languages already at the age of three. I was taught Polish by my mother, and learned Finnish from my father just like any youngster would learn his/her native language. I started attending an English-speaking preschool called “Honey Monsters” at the age of six and there I learned how to communicate in the most influential European language. All the other things in my childhood were totally normal, not counting the fact that I could speak fluently in three languages before even starting first grade.

When I was still in the lower grades of primary school, I realized that I had a privilege over other people when it came to languages. I could communicate with the members of my family in languages that the other people around us didn’t always understand. My sister and I would often talk to each other in a ‘secret dialect’ so that the other people present wouldn’t know what we were talking about. This made some people furious, while others would gaze in admiration. Now when I think back about it, I’m not surprised about their reactions for we were still only kids who hadn’t celebrated their tenth birthdays!

I had been able to speak in Finnish, Polish and English without any problems, but when I moved on up to higher grades in school, learning and keeping up with the grammar and spelling became extremely hard. I never really had any problems with Finnish, which I studied for the first four years of elementary school. English didn’t cause greater worries either, since I attended an English speaking class and was in contact with the language all the time. The hardest nut to crack was Polish, which I didn’t study in school until fifth grade when our family moved to Poland, and which is still my Achilles tendon.

I was constantly asked about how it feels to be multilingual, but it was my Great Aunt Domicela who really made me think about my multicultural background. She asked, “Katarina, tell us, in which language do you think, since you speak fluently in three?” I didn’t answer right away since I was thinking hard about the context and meaning of the question. Assuming that I hadn’t understood what she was talking about, my great aunt asked me another question, trying to make answering both of them simpler. “Well, in what language do you dream, then?” she asked.

Although it was a harder question than the first one, I quickly started speaking before she could ask me yet another one. “Well, Aunty, I’m thinking about how to answer your question, but it is quite hard since I don’t really know the answer myself. I think that the language in which I think depends on the action that I am doing or on the idea that I am thinking about. I connect most of my ideas to a language in my head, and think about them in that language.” I paused for a moment, but seeing that she looked somewhat confused I continued explaining. “Well, if I am thinking about my friends at school, I usually think in English because that is the language with which they are most closely associated in my mind. If I think about my mother or the relatives from her side, I think about them in Polish. When I think about a summer spent in a cottage by a lake, I think about it in Finnish because that is the language that the idea itself is related to.” I guess she was shocked by my answer, expecting something far simpler. For a while she just sat there looking quite amazed and confused.

I am thankful that I can communicate fluently in three languages and happy that my parents made the effort to teach them to my sister and me. It took the whole family a lot of time and effort to do this, but I think that we will benefit from it in the future. I think that languages and communication are extremely important in today’s world. We should do our best to communicate with others. This would bring forth more tolerance, peace and would make the world a better place to live in.

—Katarina Punovuori, grade 8, Warsaw, Poland.
A Fresh Start with the Birmingham Pledge

During the 1960s, the civil rights struggle was at its peak and Birmingham, Alabama, was in the spotlight. After the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, civil rights activists came up with a new idea, the Birmingham Pledge, to help stop violence and racism. People from all around the world have joined together to help make this possible. Some famous people who have signed the pledge are presidents Clinton and Bush, Oprah Winfrey, and the Pope. A copy even hangs in the Taj Mahal, India. So, when we first thought of the idea at Westover High School, it seemed like a great way to add to the National Youth Violence Prevention Week activities.

Westover High is a highly diverse school with a 65% African American student population in Fayetteville, North Carolina. As it is also near Fort Bragg, some 25% of the students come from military-related families.

FreshStart™ is a freshman mentoring program started in 2001 by students Amelia Hummel and Brandon Robinson. It has an executive board of about 10 juniors and seniors each year. Membership in FreshStart usually exceeds 100 members. Everyone logs in at least 30 hours of mentoring. Some members are also Homeroom Representatives, and these “reps” go to Freshmen homerooms twice monthly to give information and act as mentors to new ninth grade students at Westover High.

Natasha Dorris was elected to the FreshStart executive board in September of 2002. Each board member is encouraged to seek out other worthwhile projects and is given opportunities to promote leadership and diversity at Westover High. Natasha, on recommendation of her guidance counselor, Dawn Holt, researched and presented the pledge.

With the help of her fellow FreshStart members, Natasha coordinated with the faculty and staff to have Reps in each classroom to explain and elicit signatures. On April 9, over 1000 students and faculty members learned about the Birmingham Pledge and signed it to “discourage racial prejudice by others at every opportunity, and to treat all people with dignity and respect.”

The Birmingham Pledge

- I believe that every person has worth as an individual.
- I believe that every person is entitled to dignity and respect, regardless of race or color.
- I believe that every thought and every act of racial prejudice is harmful; if it is my thought or act, then it is harmful to me as well as to others. Therefore, from this day forward I will strive daily to eliminate racial prejudice from my thoughts and actions.
- I will discourage racial prejudice by others at every opportunity.
- I will treat all people with dignity and respect; and I will strive daily to honor this pledge, knowing that the world will be a better place because of my effort.

Natasha explains, “FreshStart members met in the school cafeteria on a Monday afternoon to decide how to get the whole school involved in The Pledge. With a total of 52 homerooms, many different people and clubs came together. Each student was assigned a homeroom and given copies of the pledge and background information to read to all the students. On Wednesday, April 9th, everyone in the school was informed about the Pledge. Students, staff and faculty each took a moment to sign it. This marked the time when everyone at Westover united and became one. With over a thousand signatures it shows that our school is not going to let racism occur. Next year, we plan to get everyone in the community involved. We greatly encourage everyone to get involved.”

Counselor Dawn Holt writes, “Natasha wants to add a Study Circles program to the curriculum. Due to the success of this project, we hope to make this an annual event. We will strive daily to honor this pledge, knowing that the world will be a better place because of our efforts.”

Visit birminghampledge.org to sign your own pledge.

Getting Signatures.
my History in relation to everything

We are Pale
(cold weather people
our color is thought unnatural:
malnourishment?)
like Mexicans and Indians
Who lay their blood
In the earth:
Profit is made from its spilling

We too
are not touched by warm currents
Our light cut
By icy sheen
We too cherish
Our past:
Our history is not
in police records of
drug cartels and
Killing sprees:
Though we too suffer.

We may be
Confined only to cloud shields and ozone holes
But our race is mixed from war wounds
And our children weep at bombings
As we did once.

—Alice Baumgartner, 15, Chicago.

The Weaver Birds

A long time ago when people fought amongst themselves because of their skin tone, there were weaver birds. This bird was not like any other bird. This bird was special. The weaver birds all built their nests in one tree. Their nests were the shapes of baseballs. These birds worked together building homes not just for themselves, but for each other. The most special thing about the weaver birds was that they were different colors!

Just think, if we were like the weaver birds back then, this world would not have lots of problems any more. We would probably still have a few, but not as many. I know that if we work together then we could accomplish more than what a weaver bird can.

—Emily Beckett, 12, Eugene, Oregon.

Memorabilia

We are different
them and us

Distinction made by women on three-tiered stools;
One placed in the land of the Free, home of the white picket fence, yard, self-contained bubble etc. speaking) brave the other (same or different place) lynched and hung swinging from a tree, battered and chained to a fence, a twelve year old with a bag over his face waiting for the Chair
the blood dried on their faces bear testament
the rivulets where the tears flowed, the
Flood that broke the weave of fibrinogen and plasma clotting
let our faces bear Noah’s same standard;
we are guilty for believing our world is balanced on the shoulders of giants.

—Alice Baumgartner, 15, German Irish American, Chicago, Illinois. Alice wrote ‘my History’ in reaction to the bombings in Northern Ireland and elsewhere, and ‘Memorabilia’ in response to the atrocities committed in Rwanda in 1994.

Some Noteworthy entries received for the awards—

When You Hope, Wish, and Trust

There was something that kept me on a path, like a strong steady rope, but what really kept me there, was nothing more than hope.

You cannot let yourself fail, when you hope, wish and trust, when you give up your dream, it’s like letting your wish rust.

Like Martin Luther King Jr., he made his dream come true, so I know if you don’t give up, your dream will come to you.

Sometimes the words we speak, became real and near, so when we hope, wish and trust, our dreams will really appear.

—Ek Ongkar K. Khalsa, 10, Sikh American, Eugene, Oregon.
We thought these entries were also noteworthy! We invite your submissions all year long!

Haiku

Just a small seedling
Can make a big difference
Could you be that seed?

—Cristina Beecham, 9, Miami, Florida.

Prayer for the World

May our plants grow tall and beautiful.
May our sun shine brightly in the sky.
May our sunset’s rainbow colors fill us with joy.
May the tranquility of the moon and stars bring us peace.

—Fabiola Urdaneta, 8, Miami, Florida.

We Are All the Same

Our eyes may be hazel, brown, or blue.
Our skin may be tan, chocolate, or pink.
We could be tall or short, fat or thin;
speak Spanish, English or French.

But, our tears are all clear.
Our blood is all red.
We laugh when we are happy.
We cry when we are sad.
We all need love
deep inside.
We are all the same.

—Kalynn Crist, 10, Harrisburg, PA.

Lost

The summer day,
Enveloped in burning heat
Suffocating, straining for each breath of humid air
Scorching unshakable heat, bearing into unprotected flesh
Bodies crying with sweat.
Dry harsh winds,
Circling like birds before rainfall.
But the sky brings no relief
Backlit in eerie reds
Even the prayers for rain have been lost.

—Juliana Mandell, 15, Beverly Hills, California.

Dreams

Dreams are quite miraculous things,
but some people don’t know that.
They say dreams are dreams
and they can’t come true.
Is that really true?
No!
Some people don’t let in any time for dreaming
because they think they know what they want,
and they don’t want anything else.
But me, I don’t know what life will bring.

—Ariana Parra, 12, of German-Jewish-Scotch-Irish-Hispanic-Aztec-English heritage, Mesa, Arizona.

My Love for the Sea

The sea, the sea, it teaches if you listen, so listen.
Listen to the waves as they roll,
in and out, in and out.
The sea not only teaches,
but it gives speeches too.
So listen. The sea can fulfill your dreams.
The sea is a living thing.
It throbs and jumps with life.
Its children are the whales and dolphins
the barnacles and sea snails
and all that’s in between....

—Kory Bowlin, 9, Eugene, Oregon.
The Red Crosses

On both sides of F Street, there stood two lines of old trees leading to the site of an ancient city. Every day, as people passed the trees and the ancient city’s dilapidated walls, the secret history of this modern city would cover their minds like a huge bronze mist, washing away all the tiredness and troubles. “What lovely stones, and those trees as well,” said people.

In spite of this, the mayor did not enjoy the trees at all. He even refused to post ‘No Cutting’ notices on them. It seemed that no one would cut them down.

The mayor’s decision on F Street was to be announced in a few days. F Street was located right behind the government hall. If the new streets he planned were built here, then F Street would exist no more, and would soon be replaced by streets like in Tokyo. The mayor disliked the way the ancient city suddenly appeared next to the modern street (in his words, it was a “frightening, gloomy and damp ancient city”). Therefore, the mayor intended to knock away all the trees as well as the ancient city. This mayor did not ask the public for suggestion. Instead, the day before the felling of the trees, he held a ‘last-minute’ conference with all his officials and lumbermen. The conference was just to encourage these lumbermen to give up their sympathies for the trees. As you already know, many people, including the lumbermen, still loved the trees deeply.

The officials did not say a word, so the mayor took the silence as a kind of agreement. He produced a red pencil and a map of the city then drew a red cross on each of the trees on F Street.

The news that the trees would be felled jumped to the front page of the paper at once. By afternoon, the government hall was already filled with protesters. But this was not taken seriously by the mayor for he knew that the hall was built by the best construction brigade and could be no stronger.

A boy left school, found the protesters, and asked them if he could join. Immediately he went toward the government hall with everybody, waving a placard with the word NO consisting of many red crosses.

The boy used to live on F Street some time ago, and had an old tree just in front of his house. For some unknown reason he loved the tree so much that the love seemed to remain forever in his heart. On some summer nights, he came to the tree and listened to the sound of its branches dancing in the wind. He looked up at the tree high above and suddenly it had become an everlasting bronze mist streaming into his mind. He stretched out his arms, touching its rough bark with his fingertips, wanting to embrace it.

Now he knew that all the trees would be cut down the next day, but told himself to have faith.

The lumbermen were drawing red crosses on the white parts of the tree trunks. Eventually there was a red cross on every one of the trees. The boy began to run—there was only half a day until dawn, when the trees would be cut.

The boy’s neighbor was whitewashing his walls and left the paint pail by his gate. Suddenly, the boy was in a good mood. Only he knew why. The plan he made up was difficult, but he’d love to work it out.

He looked at his watch when he left home: 11:30 P.M. He would not come back until the next day, so he...

The lumbermen were resting in tents nearby. The red crosses on the trees were standing in a line and looked like a fire dragon. The boy took out the whitewashing brush and began to paint over the crosses.

Things had gotten so bad that the mayor began to worry about the demonstrators. The police had told him that the situation had gone out of control.

The mayor took out the map once more and stared at the red crosses. Now, they were as annoying as bugs! He produced a black pen and was about to cross them out, but wasn’t that a little humiliating? No! He could not do that!

Just then, the doorbell rang.

“My God!” The vice mayor said, rushing into the office, “It’s now known that the red crosses have disappeared! All of them! The lumbermen refused to fell the trees! Damn!”

The black pen suddenly fell from the mayor’s hand. The mayor gave the vice mayor a strong hug, thankful. Running to his desk, he produced a big color pen and deleted all the red crosses.

—Sun Meicen (Adele), 15, Xiamen, China. She wrote this bilingually, and adds, “The idea of the story came from my real life experience.”
Emma lived in a small Bavarian village, near the foot of the Alps. She was excited. Tomorrow was the day of the **Viehscheid** (fee-shide) festival. It was the most wonderful time of the year. Even more wonderful than Christmas, Emma thought.

The Viehscheid Festival was held at the end of every summer, when the cows came home. The herders take the cows up the mountains when the winter snow melts. They spend the whole summer there, herding the cows, making cheese and butter there. They sleep and eat in small cabins.

Herding cows can be very lonely. For several months the herders are away from their families and friends. Often they are not even near the other herders because they must each move their cows to spots where the grass is green. Some meadows are miles apart.

Emma's father and brother, Karl, were cow herders. Karl had been herding cows with his father for three years. When his father was no longer able to climb the mountains, Karl would take the cows up alone.

Emma could hardly wait to see her father and brother. In a few weeks it would be snowing in the Alps. It was time for the herds to come down.

Many prizes are given to the herders when they return. There is a prize for the best decorated cow, for the herder with the longest beard, for the best-sounding cow bell, and for the best cheese.

Early the next morning, Emma woke up to the sound of distant bells. She dressed as fast as she could. By the time she and her mother reached the festival area, it was so noisy that everyone had to shout to be heard. There were lots of food booths. There was music playing. Emma and her mother stopped at Frau Schmidt's booth and had hot sausage. At another booth they had **schottenplatteln** (oatcakes).

Suddenly, over the sound of the music and the bells, the crowd began to cheer. The first herd of cows was coming down the trail. What a sight! There were garlands of flowers around their necks. Ribbons were tied to their horns. The cowherder's beard was long and bushy.

Someone in the crowd yelled, "It's Albert Fischer. He's had a good year. See how decorated his cows are."

Emma had known Albert all her life. He was a good friend of her father's. In the small town where Emma lived all the people knew each other quite well.
Next down the mountain came a large herd whose herder was carrying a small calf in his arms. The calf had a tiny bell around its neck. It was wearing the herder’s hat. The herder danced around in circles while the calf bawled. The crowd roared with laughter.

“That’s Herr Hoffman,” laughed Emma’s mother, “he’s such a clown!”

Emma liked Herr Hoffman’s family; she went to school with his daughter, Bridgit.

The lead cow in the next herd had no flowers around her neck. Instead, she wore a black cape. A hush fell over the crowd. The black cape meant the herder had died.

“Such a pity,” someone said. “Franz was too old to herd anymore, and his heart was bad.”

Sometimes there were accidents on the mountains. Last year a herder had fallen into a ravine and been killed. Herding on the steep mountains is a dangerous job.

At last Emma’s father and brother came into sight, walking beside their herd.

“It’s Dad and Karl!” cried Emma. “Oh, look at Dad’s beard.”

It was the longest, thickest beard of all. And such decorations on the cows. Emma’s own cow, Mitzi, had a blanket of Alpine roses on her back.

Emma’s father won the prize for the longest beard. Karl won the prize for the best cheese. After the prizes were given out, many cows were driven into pens for the cattle sale. People came from far away to buy the well-fed animals. People also came to buy the cheese that the Bavarian villagers are known for.

That night there was dancing and singing until very late.

“Aufwiedersehen,” said everyone, as they walked home. Next year they would meet again to celebrate, when the cows came home.

—Bonnie Taylor, Swiss American, Lebanon, Oregon. Her cousin attended the festival last year. Photos: Shraddha Fischer, Alp Stierva, Switzerland.
Down By The Riverside

The Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashanna, typically falls in Autumn. This year, it begins on Sept. 26. During this two-day holiday, Jewish people spend a lot of time in Temple, and with family and friends. The ceremony of Tashlich, described in this essay, is traditionally conducted on the afternoon of the first day of the holiday (unless that falls on a Saturday, in which case Tashlich is performed on the second day). Since the New Year is a time of renewal and purification in preparation for a new beginning, this ceremony involves throwing bread crumbs, which symbolize the sins committed in the previous year, into a moving body of water.

The sun shines through the leaves, enveloping the ground and water in a golden green blanket. The air has begun to resume its autumn chill, but water bugs still flit silently across the surface of the creek, their tiny shapes casting shadows on the mud about a foot below them. The water gently flows through the woods behind the house, babbling peacefully around the tree roots and moss-covered rocks. Suddenly, as if out of nowhere, come the people. Walking stiffly in their best clothes, they move down the sloping ground past the neatly groomed lawn and into the mud, their patent leather shoes squelching in the moist ground. The children, finally freed from the constraints of two days in synagogue, whoop and yell as they run away from their elders, past the trees and almost straight into the water. The annual ritual of Tashlich has begun. Everyone is about to realize what matters to him/her and, for a few brief moments, discard everything else.

One man carries a small prayer book. Its yellowed pages smell of poorly-lit, tiny libraries with rows and rows of time-worn books, yet it seems to fit very well among the trees and birds. Someone else holds a long spiraling ram’s horn, the ancient instrument reminiscent of strong pillars of cold brown stone. Yet another person carries a large, stale loaf of bread. “Are we all ready?” comes a call. It is answered with a strong “Yes!” and the group assembles on a grassy bank near the water. The neighbors look on with interest as the solemn ritual begins.

A long, nearly incomprehensible prayer is read in Hebrew and briefly summarized into English, begging God to nullify everyone’s sins. Then the ram’s horn is blown—a long eerie sound mournful enough to make everyone’s spines tingle, and yet indescribably powerful, as if its sound were giving Atlas a rest and was solely responsible for holding up the sky. Then the ceremony truly begins, with people breaking off pieces of bread from the loaf and throwing them into the water. The children feed them to the ducks and then run off to change their clothes and begin a basketball game. The adults continue throwing breadcrumbs one by one into the creek. Each crumb represents a sin to be swallowed up by the rushing water and never seen again. Of course it’s only symbolic, but standing by the water, everyone feels as if he/she were truly free of all guilt and about to embark on a new, better life. Thinking of peace, of helping others, and of settling disagreements, everyone realizes the things which are truly most important to them and, for a few minutes, imagines and prays for the opportunity to accomplish those things someday.

The children’s screams soon permeate the solemn feelings. Everyone realizes that he is covered in mud and goes home to change and talk or join the basketball game already in progress. Normal life is beginning again. However, a feeling remains that there is something more that can be done to help the world, something better than what has been done. The people all realize that if they try hard enough, they can accomplish more good than they had ever believed was possible. That recognition, truly, is what matters most in this world. If a handful of people realize what they can do every year, the world may improve so much, and countless people will be far happier than they were before.

—Lauren Steinberg, 15, New City, New York.
New Day

Pale above a dark horizon line,
Shadowy purple in the early morning haze,
Above the canvas of brilliant colors,
Sprinkled like dust.
Like a million sparkling stars,
Pinpricks through the ancient
Canvas of the heavens.
Warmth shines down in distant lands,
On white sand beaches and tropical palms,
The lands where roads,
Like ribbons of smoke,
Chase over the distant hilltops,
And fragrant spices
Simmer in the warmth of the sun.

Soon all these pleasures,
Pleasures that without
A new day are nothing.
Soon all the joys
A new day will be ours.

—Sarah Miller, 14, Camden, Maine

Dandelion

Small, single, dandelion
Standing in a field of pink,
Looking out on to the wide, wide world,
Looking for some kind of link.
Watching the mountains rise and fall
Wondering why he is so small
Seeing the towering lupine
On their tall rosy, purple, white vines.

—Sophia Bouwsma, 10, Taiyuan, P. R. China

Black Sea

Navy blue describes your essence.
Unbearable describes your depth.
Silence describes your voice.
Your winter fog emits your name.
Your arms are open doors.
Welcoming the presence of surrounding rivers.
Your massive body creates a shadow of its own.
And even though you are dark as night,
Your friendly waves wish me a good night.

—Briana Carter, 11th grade, Tampa, Florida.
“Mmmm,” I said as peach juice ran down my chin. I loved the orchard; it was my favorite place in the world. We had a small peach tree that grew the best peaches, small but juicy and delicious. They would “refresh the heart and soul” as my mom said. We also had a small pear tree that didn’t have such large pears. I kept asking my dad, “When will they get bigger?”

He’d always say, “It takes time. We need to be patient.”

I liked to climb in the apple trees. My favorite one to climb was the apple tree right next to the house. It had really thick branches, just far enough apart to be easily reached as I climbed. One day, I wanted to help my dad prune the apple trees. “I can do it! I’m big. Can I try? Please?”

I kept after him until finally he said “Okay, Graham, you can do it. I’ll cut the big dead branches with my big saw, and you can cut the little branches off with your little saw so they’ll fit neatly in the brush pile.”

Everything was going along fine. I had cut all the little branches off of four limbs when, “Aahhhh!” I cried.

Dad came running. “What’s the matter?” he asked. I was crying too hard to respond, so I just held up my hand to show him the quarter inch slice my little saw had cut in the web of skin between my pointer finger and thumb. He took me to the kitchen, washed my hand and put a bandage over it. I told him that I was too little for a saw, and I was sorry. He told me that I wasn’t little; I was big because I had tried something new.

There were juicy blueberries on bushes almost as long as our property. Sometimes when I was bored, I’d sneak out of the house, crawl under the net that protected the blueberries from crows and eat blueberries by the bushel. There was an owl statue in the blueberries to keep the crows away. The first time I saw it, I thought it was real! I chucked a rock at it. Thunk! I ran to my mom. “There’s a hollow owl sitting in our blueberry patch, Mom!” It must have done a good job because I never saw any crows in our blueberry bushes.

We had a stream on the edge of our lawn. Mom and I would put wooden planks across it and pretend that we were pirates walking the plank. Sometimes we’d jump off and get all wet and muddy, or we would walk all the way across and hike through the woods. When we came back from our hiking trips, we’d be covered in briar.

In the winter we would take cookie sheets and go sledding on the hill. It was about 50 feet long, but somewhat steep; just the right size for a four-year-old. In spring we would bike to the top of the hill where we could see the football field. We watched the high school students practice for their games. I used to think it was cool to watch them throw the ball so far and kick so high. I didn’t know any of the rules, but it was still cool.

I loved living in Pennsylvania. The town was small, the yards were big, and my grandparents and aunt lived there. I haven’t been there for four years. The house by the stream was sold. I don’t know if the orchards are still there. The new people may have torn them down to build more houses. I don’t like to think of that. But I can always go back and visit the apple tree, gorge myself on blueberries and zoom down a snow-covered hill in my memories.

Illustration by Pamela Sastra, from Indonesia.
North Side Light of Life Soup Kitchen

Did you ever wonder what it would feel like to be so hungry that you could only concentrate on food? No matter what you tried to do, all you could think about was eating. I had an experience several months ago that opened my eyes to hunger in Pittsburgh. The church that I attend planned a trip to the North Side Light of Life Soup Kitchen one Sunday afternoon. My mom was going and invited me along. I really did not want to go, but figured I might get a trip to the mall on the way home.

My mom and I prepared food at home that was part of the menu for the soup kitchen. We arrived at the church so all participating could car-pool together. Upon arrival at the soup kitchen, I could not believe my eyes. There were lines of people waiting for our church group to carry in the food so they could eat. Each homeless person was given a number. Once the numbers ran out, people were turned away, even if they had not had any dinner that day. I saw men, women and children. I really was so surprised by how many homeless people were waiting in line.

Once we were set-up, the host for the dinner began letting people in the door. There were two dining rooms. One dining room housed men and the other dining room seated women and children. The whole process of feeding approximately 175 people took less than two hours. All of the people served were very appreciative that my church had cooked them dinner. They commented on how good the food was and asked if we would be coming back next week.

I really was so touched with their kindness. I hated to see so many people hungry and homeless. I just kept looking at the children and felt so sorry for them. I wondered where they would sleep that night. I wondered if they had a mom or dad to tuck them into their beds. I felt sorry for the men, they looked so sad and weary. I wondered if they ever saw their families. Some of the men and women commented that they had not eaten in three days. I was shocked.

Needless to say, on the drive home from the Light of Life Soup Kitchen, I never even mentioned stopping at the mall. What I did ask my mom was to go to the homeless shelter again in the near future. Our church began planning monthly trips to the homeless shelter and my mom and I always attend. I really feel good about myself during the time I spend helping those who are less fortunate. I have even organized clothing and toy and drives in my neighborhood, so that often when I arrive at the shelter I have clothes and toys to pass out after dinner. Everyone is always appreciative and never forgets to say thank you.

—Katelyn Gill, 14, Gibsonia, Pennsylvania.

As the cooler weather sets in, the need for warm food, warm clothing, and the warmth in our hearts toward people in need increases. Check out if there are groups in your community that would welcome your help and support of their humanitarian work: soup kitchens, shelters, food bags, holiday gift drives, etc.

—Editors

You Aren't Immune

Walking down the street
Staring where I lie
An endless flow of people
With judgement in their eye
Do you think that I don’t notice
Our eyes never meet
Or that it doesn’t hurt
As you point and laugh
Being none too discreet
There once was a time
When I had dreams
To make a difference in this world
How long ago that seems
Now walk away
 Pretend you didn’t see
But keep in your heart
The fact that one of you
Could someday be me.

—Lynn Ann Lemcke, 14, Wexford, Penn.
Jennie’s Life Blood

My friend Jennie Crossen is by no means average, but she does not view herself as extraordinary either. Jennie sees herself as a normal college student, but on May 8th she donated a part of her life to try and save another’s. She gave her bone marrow to a 51 year-old woman with leukemia, a woman she has never met.

“We had a blood drive in high school,” Jennie said. “Once you are 18 you can check a box agreeing to be contacted if you end up being a potential match for somebody.”

Almost three years later in February 2002, Jennie received a call from the American Red Cross telling her that she was a potential match for someone. The Red Cross wanted to know if she was still willing to participate in more tests to find the most compatible person. She was told there were about 10 people in the nation that were potential matches.

Jennie had eight vials of blood drawn for further testing. The Red Cross told her they would send a letter if she wasn’t a match. Otherwise, she would hear from them in one to two months.

At the end of March, the Red Cross called back. She was the best match. Six different blood elements were tested; Jennie matched five completely and was about a 3/4 match of the sixth. “It is rare to be that close of a match without being a blood relative,” Jennie said.

In April, Jennie went for a complete physical exam by one of the doctors who would perform the surgery. The doctor had to make sure she would be able to sustain the surgery and that it would be no threat to her.

The doctor told her that the surgery would entail having two quarts of bone marrow extracted from her hip bones. Jennie would probably be released the same day the surgery took place and should expect to be sore for a couple of months.

Normally, after a procedure like this, the receiving patient gets the donation within 24 hours; however, in this case it took a little longer because the patient lives overseas. She did not know this at the time of the surgery.

“I didn’t think it was that big a deal until I realized I was a match,” Jennie said. “There wasn’t a question in my head. It didn’t seem like something that was going above and beyond.”

Jennie was left with two very small scars on her lower back from the surgery and was given medication to help dull the pain. She still felt a great deal of pressure on her lower back, but not the sharp pain she got without the medication.

“It’s weird. Being only 21, I feel like I am not old enough to significantly impact someone’s life,” Jennie said. “It seems odd to me that I could possibly save this woman’s life which was being cut short by cancer.”

The process hit close to home for Jennie as her uncle has been in the hospital since Christmas.

“He needs a heart transplant,” Jennie said, her brown eyes fixed on the floor. “He didn’t do anything wrong or unhealthy. It’s genetic. I hope there is a donor for him. People told me I have good karma, so I hope my good karma goes to him and he’ll get a heart.”

Jennie’s wish is that people realize the importance of donating blood.

“So many people say they’d only donate if it was for a family member or close friend,” she said. “This woman is someone’s family and someone’s friend. Obviously no one she knows is a match, and the fact that you’d be able to help a perfect stranger is great.”

Three weeks after the surgery, Jennie received a call from the Red Cross representative who told her the transplant was successful. As far as the doctors could tell, the woman’s body is not rejecting the bone marrow.

“After being in pain and pretty out of it for the past few weeks, it makes me really happy to hear that everything went well,” Jennie said. “I feel good, and I think it will actually work for her.”

—Heather Thompson, University of Oregon intern.
Sarah dashed in from school, “I saw a bunch of blue balloons blowing on Mrs. Kennedy’s porch. Did she have her baby already?”

“I’m afraid so,” Mom said sadly. “He’s seven weeks early, and he isn’t doing well at all.”

“He’s not going to die, is he?” Sarah gasped.

“Oh, I hope not, honey,” Mom said. Tears glistened in her eyes. “They’ve waited so long for a child, and they were so excited that he was finally on the way.”

Sarah had been excited about her neighbors’ baby, too, and she hadn’t pictured his arrival like this. She had never imagined that the birth of a baby could be a sad occasion and it made her feel terrible. She kept thinking about the day that she and Mom went to Lullabies, the baby store, with Mrs. Kennedy and picked out a crib, a car seat, and a swing.

“Did they name him yet?” Sarah asked, not sure of what else to say.

Mom wiped her tears. “Yes, they named him ‘Joshua David.’ Their priest went to the hospital and baptized him right away.”

“Oh,” Sarah was confused. “Do Catholics have their babies baptized in hospitals? My friend Amy’s parents went to church and then had a big party for her baby sister when she got baptized.”

“Yes. They usually do it in church, except in emergencies.” Mom’s last word made Sarah realize how sick Baby Joshua must be.

“Anyway, I love his name,” Sarah said. “It’s so Hebrew.”

Mom smiled. “Well, where do you think their Old Testament came from? Pray for all the Kennedys, okay, Sarah?”

“Sure, Mom.”

For the rest of the evening Sarah thought and wondered, and she did pray. It was just before she dozed off that an idea struck her. She ran in to the living room to tell her parents.

“I’m giving my tree to Joshua.”

Dad glanced up from his magazine. “You’re doing what?”

“Giving my tree to Joshua. The maple I planted for Tu Bishevat. I’ve been praying for him to get strong and healthy, just like my tree. Remember when it first came up? You said it was a pitiful little stick, and we thought it would never get a leaf. Well, look at it now. In another week, it can be planted outdoors, and then I’ll bet it’ll really start growing.” Sarah was out of breath when she finished.

“I don’t think the Kennedys understand Tu Bishevat, Sarah.” Dad hesitated. “They’re not our faith.”

Her lip quivered with disappointment. “I know that, Dad. But God is still God no matter what people are.”

Mom said, “It’s a lovely idea, Sarah. I can’t think of a better gift.”

Sarah took a deep breath. She went back to her room and slept more peacefully than she expected she would.

Two days later, Sarah saw the Kennedy’s car pull into the driveway. She grabbed her tree and carried it next door. Mrs. Kennedy looked pale and tired, but she hugged Sarah and said, “There’s our girl. How nice to see you!”

“Oh, Sarah,” said Mrs. Kennedy, hugging Sarah again. “What a beautiful and thoughtful gift! Thank you so very much.”

“You’re welcome,” said Sarah, happy that she had gone through with her plan.

As the days passed, Sarah kept hope in her heart and Joshua in her prayers. After dinner one evening, there was a soft knock at the kitchen door. “Come in,” called Mom as she and Sarah cleared the table.

It was Mrs. Kennedy, and by the expression on her face, Sarah could tell she had good news.

“He’s going to make it,” Mrs. Kennedy cried. She and Mom and Sarah shared a huge hug, then laughed and chatted over Mom’s crumbly, delicious apple cobbler.

Mrs. Kennedy has just finished digging a hole
I knew something was wrong when I woke up on April 7th, 1999. My mom was cooking eggs. She never cooked eggs on a school morning. I dragged myself out of bed to see what terrible thing had happened. “Nothing’s wrong; I just feel like cooking,” was the lie I was told.

I got on the bus just in time to realize that Melissa wasn’t there. Melissa was always there. She and I had been best friends for as long as I could remember. We even had matching bracelets that said, “Kayla and Melissa—friends forever.”

When I got to school and found out that Melissa still wasn’t there, I faked sick so I could go home and call her. When I called, I was surprised at how weak her voice sounded. Toward the end of the conversation, she went into a series of coughing fits and hung up the phone. Later that night I got the call that changed my life forever. Melissa had terminal cancer and was given a year to live. I thought it was a joke. No one is given time to live; they just live, but this was no joke.

Melissa started chemotherapy and soon lost her hair. Lots of kids made fun of her, but I stuck by her. Melissa’s cancer worsened. The doctors said she could go anytime. All of this was so hard for me to understand. She was then given one wish. Her wish was to go to the park with me. The doctors wouldn’t let us go alone, so her mother agreed to stay in her car down the street.

On April 3rd, 2000, we set off for the park, not running, skipping or joking like we normally did because Melissa could barely walk. We went on the swings first and I gently pushed her. After a few minutes, she laid her head down like she was sleeping. I slowed down the swing bracing myself to have to carry her twig-like figure home.

Then came a small voice barely above a whisper, “Kayla?” she said with great difficulty.

“Yeah?”

“You walked in when the rest of the world walked out...” She went into another series of coughing fits, but she managed to get these words out, “You’re my best friend and I love you.”

“I know, I know,” I said as I hugged her. As abruptly as the coughing started, it ended. Her breathing slowed until it faded, and she was gone.

I attended the funeral against my will. I still couldn’t believe that she was dead. That word, dead, was so final, so permanent. I was overwhelmed by the kind of pain that never goes away. I was sure it would hurt forever.

As I said goodbye to my dear friend for the final time, I repeated those words she had said to me, “I love you.” As I said those words, I knew that she felt the same way up in heaven. She would be looking down on me somehow knowing that would help me go on. Melissa would have wanted me to do that for both of us.

Now I realize that a real friend walks in when the rest of the world walks out.

—Megan Fasick, 13, Gibsonia, Pennsylvania.
Snakes for Snacks?

I was invited to teach English at a private school in Wuhan, China. Before leaving the United States, I purchased a few phrase books and dictionaries and diligently studied them from cover to cover (including listening to the cassette tape every day). I wasn’t sure how often I would use “Does this subway stop at the monastery?” or “The empress used to eat these?” but I wanted to be as prepared as I could for any type of language encounter.

Upon my arrival in Wuhan, the principal of the school, who spoke no English, greeted me. She had also brought along one of her teachers. I was soon to find out that this teacher spoke about as much English as I spoke Chinese.

The teacher’s first question to me was, “Are you hungry? Would you like some Chinese snakes?”

I must have looked confused. “Snakes, snakes, you see...” and she proceeded to pretend to stuff food in her mouth.

Now panic set in! Yes, I was hungry, but NO, I didn’t want any snakes! The teacher noticed my phrase book and motioned that she would like to look at it. Turning to the Chinese to English section, she quickly scanned the pages.

“Ah, here it is,” she remarked, showing me the page.

Yep, there it was right in front of my face, S-N-A-C-K-S!

I could not help but laugh out loud. The principal and the teacher both had a confused look. It was now my turn to explain. Taking the other phrase book I had, I found the English word for snake and sounded out the Chinese version (shé). Then I demonstrated a wiggling snake with my hands and pretended to eat it.

So with my first Chinese lesson and my first chance to teach English, we were off for our Chinese snack.

—David Bolzman is now back in Houston, Texas.
Art by one of David’s students in Wuhan, China.

Tea-Eggs

What brings us together is what we break.
My mother cracks eggshells
So the flavor can be soaked up.
At the dining room table
The smell of soy sauce and tea bags,
A Chinese aroma. Red lanterns for the New Year.

Twelve white eggs bobbing in a pungent brown soup.
Raindrop feet of my little sisters make a storm
Headed for the great East.
Their wide brown eyes
Reflect the dark soup.

Watching the eggs boil, the lid blow smoke.
All of us sit by the table staring,
Eyes concentrated on the metal pot.
Then as random as the sun out at night
Someone laughs and releases me from my hunger spell.
And we howl and jabber:
About how I believed I was a real tiger at 7,
The funny hair-do my mom gave my sister.
In ’94 or maybe ’95
The Chi-Pao my baby sister wore
for her Chinese school dance.
I have almost forgotten my mission in the kitchen
Perhaps invisible nose plugs
Had kept me from smelling those eggs being ladled out.

I rip open the shell
To the white core streaked with brown,
A spider’s web woven all across the egg.
The veins of culture absorbed.
But I chew and swallow too fast to notice.

—Ida Shiang, 11th grade, Congers, New York.
The Summer Night is Long

Hot heat
in the air
Everything is still.
Still and quiet as a baby sleeping.
There is only one sound
"Humm Ha Huua."
Quiet.
You can’t breathe,
It is hot. You could feel
the cover over you,
like the sun setting over a mountain.
You can’t sleep,
you pull off the sun and
get a glass of summer rain
but the heat is still there,
Pushing around you
with all its might.
You lay back down this time
No cover,
think of a cool winter day
You’re sound asleep.
Now all you can hear is
"doo da di!" the sleeping baby in
the moon cradle says
"good night!"

—Marbella Mendoza, 11, Latin American, Woodburn, Oregon.

Poetry

I paint the words
The spider-webs of life
Glistening
Gorgeous
An inquisitive hand
Reaches out to
Grasp the beauty
And is caught
Ensnared
Upon its tangles.
—Virginia Tice, 13, Oakland, California.

Geode

The geode is gnarled and unleveled.
Rugged
Coarse.
Murky.
Sluggish.
It has a tedious overspread.
It is as dim as an eye, which cannot see.
Within the geode,
it suffers with emotional pain.
Uneasy.
Self-absorbed.
The geode is a rusted vocal cord.
Within the geode is an abundant secret.
It is a plate full of blithesome mixed with rejoice.
Amazes the eye inside,
for the outside is upset.
In the morning the geode is a rough looking figure.
By night it is a dazzling, remarkable crystal.

—Charles Markman, Mason, Michigan.

Satan’s a Liar

She sung and snippets of her soul
attached themselves to her words
like bare back horse riders
galloping around the room
roaming people’s heads
like rickety old corrals.

The snippets unmounted
and harnesses the hearts of those who
listened redirecting blood
pulling the bits left and right by the reigns
slowly trotting towards the truth.

—Caleb Bellamy, 17, Salem, Oregon.

Burning Sensation

Submerged in grease
It is lifted
Gliding across the air
Increasing
With a constant change
It reaches for me
Like the sting of a bee
I am bitten
By the criss-crosses
Ouch
I release
Rubbing the burn
Left on my arm
A scar
That burns ferociously
Something cold
I desire
Wishing it was here
For something hot
That I’m near
Makes it worse
Only because of one bite
The bit
Of the fry basket.

—Jeremiah Lee, Poulsbo, WA, writes, “I’m a high school student who works in fast food, where nothing works, and it is a death trap with hundred-degree heat.”

—Jon Bush, Belmont, MA.

Skipping Stones

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Lights
On and off color,
flowing
through the air
Lighting up grey,
white, and
black towns.
Making the sun
to show it’s beautiful face
Dancing gracefully over
ceilings
and skies
Into heaven as it flies ... 
—Saul L. Boulanger, 7,
Corvallis, Oregon.

Humpty Dumpty, Age 17
What if they found a way
to piece him back together?
Would the cracks still show?
Would the light shine through?

Adolescence is those pieces,
the cracks.
We are all Humpty
have all fallen.

Our parents have all tried.
Maybe they shouldn’t have.
Crazy glue did no good;
the pieces didn’t quite fit.

But they try to fix us,
pamper us with goods,
or stuff us full of smile pills.
And then they still turn away.

So tell me Walt,
now what?
Shall I self-medicate,
or venture away with Alice
as I slip into my own wonderland?
—Justine Simonetti, 17, New City, NY.

Butterflies
The soul
Like a butterfly
Is beautiful yet fragile
Holding
The secrets of the heart
The existence of life.

The soul
Floating on thin wings
Gliding with the breeze
Soaking in the golden light
Living for the sunshine.

Harsh words
The sky turns dark
The world
Spinning out of control
Delicate wings crushed
The soul bleeding
Anguish.

A kind word
A heavenly smile
Darkness turns to light
Happiness flooding in
A butterfly
Soaring once again.

—Abigail Hutchins, 15,
Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Quiet
Quiet is when
The world
Stands still.

Quiet is when
Words unspoken
hang in the
Air.

Quiet is when
You stare at
The cracks
In the walls,
Looking for
The crevice
That will
Take you
Away
Forever.

And quiet
Is three o’clock
In the morning,
When you’re
Regretting
Everything
You said.

—Kelly Otterness, 10,
NYC, NY. “I wrote this
poem on a day that I
was feeling sort of
depressed. It was a
boring weekend, and I
had the flu. I put a lot
of feeling into this poem,
because I thought that
even though words have
a lot of meaning, silence
is even more powerful.
Usually when I write a
poem I don’t really plan
or think about what
I’m saying or why. The
words just come to me.”

Fall Leaves, Fall
I’m a leaf getting ready to fall.
I have changed color after all.
I thought it was a folly.
I thought it was a fake.
I think the next step is...
To be swept up by a rake!
—Andy Burns, 7, Nicholasville, KY.

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Page 29
Do you know which language is the official language of 21 countries in the world, spanning four continents? It’s Spanish (or Español), of course! Spanish is not only the official language of Spain and Mexico, but also of many countries in South and Central America. Which other countries can you name? Did you know that it’s also the official language of a country in Africa? Equatorial Guinea lies on the western coast of Africa and its two official languages are Spanish and French.

Not all Spanish sounds the same and not all Spanish words mean the same thing in each country.

Many Spanish words have been incorporated into the English language. Did you know that the word “burrito” actually means “little donkey?”

Have you ever heard of someone naming a car “won’t go?” Not many people would want to buy that car. That’s exactly why the Chevrolet Nova didn’t sell in Spain and Latin America. “No va” means “won’t go” in Spanish.

The United States territory Puerto Rico means “rich port.” The Central American country Costa Rica means “rich coast.” The state of Colorado’s name is actually from the Spanish word meaning “red.” Nevada means “snowy” or “snowed upon” in Spanish. Do you know what state’s name comes from an old Spanish term meaning “earthly paradise?” California. Can you think of any other common names that stem from the Spanish language?

Have you heard the saying “Mi casa es su casa?” It’s a sign of hospitality that means “my house is your house.” In English we might more commonly say “make yourself at home.” In some parts of India, a salary is called “pagar,” which in Spanish means “to pay.”

Many names are actually Spanish words as well. For example, a “bandera” is a flag so the actor Antonio Banderas’ name means “flags.” Geraldo Rivera’s last name means “riverbank” or “riverside” in Spanish, as does the name of the great Mexican artist Diego Rivera. “Rivera” looks like the word “river” in English but the word for “river” in Spanish is actually “röö!”

Spanish is all around us. What other words of Spanish origin can you find?

—Gwendolyn Gallace, Spanish teacher, Jefferson, Maine.

*Try to figure out what the Spanish poem, La Boda, says!*

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**La Boda**

Hoy en este amanecer,  
Suenan las campanas sin cesar,  
Los músicos tocan su música,  
Porque la boda ya va a empezar.

La gente se levanta,  
Al ver la novia entrar,  
Con su vestido blanco,  
Y con una alegría  
Que no puede dejar.

Atrás de ella,  
Los pajés tiran flores,  
Con sus caritas pequeñas,  
Y sus vestidos de muchos colores.

Al fin la novia para,  
Y atrás volta,  
Donde nerviosamente,  
Por su novio espera.

El novio ahora camina,  
Hacia su novia bella,  
Nervioso y feliz,  
Pero siempre pensando en ella.

Mientras la ceremonia sigue,  
Un ángel del cielo viene,  
Les da amor y felicidad,  
De la que él tiene.

El ángel les dice,  
Que vivan felices y llenos de alegría,  
Y que el amor siempre encuentren,  
Diá tras diá.

por Marian Urias, 11 años de edad,  
Mexicana, 6th grade, El Paso, Texas.
Intercultural & Interfaith Dialogue in Works

LIFE, an interfaith educational organization based in Eugene, offers free (donations welcome) evening classes and workshops that present multiple views and encourage dialogue and questioning in order to promote greater understanding and cooperation among many spiritual traditions and paths. A wide variety of topics discussed with multi-faith perspectives, often team-taught, include: Women of Courage; Life, Death and Faith; Healing; Sages and Saints; Finding Hope, Trust and Meaning in Spiritual Darkness...

Rites of Passage Summer Academy, a month-long, experiential, cross-cultural learning program, helps middle and high school students discover and explore the rich history, literature and traditions of our four cultures of color. The students choose one of the cultures as their focus.

Sowing Seeds of Peace: Did you know that there are many ways to learn active peacemaking skills and also have a great time? Peace camps held at various locations recently include the annual Seeds of Peace summer camp in coastal Maine (see Vol. 14, #4), where youth learn to befriend their counterparts from “enemy” countries or cultures. In Japan, the Ashinaga Foundation organized their fourth annual summer camp for children who have lost their parents to disaster and disease. Youth for Environmental Sanity’s YES Action Camps focus on nature and nature preservation in a multicultural setting. The Peace Village summer camps are held at various locations in the Northwest to bring kids together for week-long activities in a multi-faith setting.

- Get together with your friends and talk about organizing a Peace Camp or starting your own Club!

Global Warming Bakes Europe

Britain recorded the hottest temperature in the nation ever (over 100°F) this August! Heat and drought fueled many wild-fires in Italy, France, the Iberian Peninsula, and other arid parts of Europe. Glacial ice melting in the Alps endangered hikers in France and Italy.

- Go online to learn about various global climate changes occurring in the world. What part do we play in causing them? How can we reduce our impact?

Children’s Rights?

Tens of millions of children in many developing countries, especially in Southeast Asia and elsewhere must engage themselves as bonded labor in industries like carpet-making or mining. Worse yet, millions of boys and girls are forced into “sex-industry” against their will. Sometimes, they are kidnapped and sent away to far-away cities or countries, only to be enslaved or exploited in underground sex-industries. Furthermore, due to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, as well as a lack of adequate education, social services and health care facilities for low-income segments of the society, the problem has become very serious in many countries.

- Looking for a topic for your research/term paper this school year? Consider children's rights and conditions around the world. Also include in your report what we can do to improve their lot.

A Few Autumn Celebrations:

Sundown, Sept. 26 – Sundown, Sept. 28: Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year (see page 30).
Oct. 2: Mahatma Gandhi’s Birthday. He practiced nonviolence, intercultural and interfaith dialogue.
Sept. 25 – Oct. 4: Navrathri-Dashera, a ten-day Hindu festival honoring the Divine Mother.
Oct. 23 – Oct. 26: Diwali, the Indian Festival of Lights.
Oct. 27: Ramadan, Islamic month of fasting, begins; Id-al-Fitr, completion of Ramadan, is Nov. 26.
Nov. 8: Sant Guru Nanak’s Birthday. He is the founder of Sikhism.
"Since we cannot change reality, let us change the eyes which see reality." — Mikos Kazantzakis

Why do we try to control or change what happens in our lives, never quite accepting life for what it has to offer? Acceptance has been a hard lesson for me to learn. I expect it has been for others too! Imagine the time, effort and energy involved in constantly fighting your circumstances. Wishing things were different, thinking negative thoughts, worrying, controlling, manipulating, and becoming angry and bitter. These are all negative emotions that cause anxiety, fear, fatigue and illness. They just plain drain us! Instead of us controlling our circumstances, our circumstances end up controlling us. If you desire peace, serenity and well being, such behaviors and emotions won’t get you there. They will only attract more negativity.

I have faced many struggles, and each time I thought only if I worried or pushed enough, I could get it under control or out of my life. What I got in return were sleepless nights, medical problems, tears and frustration. Plus, my negativity attracted more of the same problems.

My adversity began with an abusive marriage at age 16, which led to no high school diploma, no work skills, and no driver license. Later, my problems escalated to include a divorce, single parenthood, and issues around finances, career, family, health and spirituality. I viewed them all as “problems” when in reality they were growth opportunities. I needed that growth but I was so busy feeling sorry for myself that I didn’t see the positives. I also didn’t see that I had many choices, and some of the things that were happening to me could have been avoided.

The more I focused on my issues the more of them I attracted. And, I became angry, bitter, and felt like a victim. I eventually realized that I needed to accept life and not fight it so hard. Life is made up of good times but also struggles and adversity. We are each responsible for our feelings, actions and choices. The world is not and should not be perfect. I found that by failing to accept life’s challenges, I was failing to accept life. By “accept” I don’t mean you must tolerate injustice or allow yourself to be taken advantage of. It’s important to voice your feelings, needs and values. Accepting life’s challenges means humbly letting go of ego, control and worry. It means admitting there are lessons to be learned and changes to be made. Allow the growth to take place. Focus on the positives and change your perspective. Once I learned this lesson, amazing things happened. My bitterness subsided and I was able to handle my anger in a more effective way. I made better choices. I tried to see adversity differently, not be intimidated by it and fear it. This took a lot of daily mental practice.

When faced with a problem I ask of myself: What would happen if I didn’t try to control, correct or stop this thing? Can I spend one whole day without thinking about it? What is the worst thing this problem can do to me? What if I just let it run its course and try to learn from it? Can I pass that knowledge on to someone else?

Acceptance begins with being grateful. Being aware of the things you are thankful for fosters positive thinking. Again, this takes a lot of daily practice. Some people use journals or go through a daily mental exercise reminding themselves of what they are thankful for. It can be done in the morning, at night, individually or as a family. It doesn’t matter how it’s done. Your perspective will soon change and you’ll dump that victim mentality.

Part of my own mission statement says, “I am thankful each day for the pleasure and the pain in my life.” Acceptance doesn’t make the pain go away but it does make the journey easier. Plus you get the benefits of less fatigue and stress, more energy and better health. You cannot change the events of your life, but by changing your perspective on those events they don’t seem so negative, and you can attract more positive things.

— Monique Rider is a writer, life coach and fitness trainer in Rockford, Michigan.
Searching For Common Ground

We are suffering a slow paralysis by polarization. Our society has split into parallel realities, living side by side in different worlds, unwilling to converge.

By rediscovering that the common interests of a nation's people always outnumber and outweigh the uncommon ones, we can begin to reverse the worsening paralysis. We do know our polarizing points such as the doctrine of pre-emptive war, the rights of the unborn, and the degree of separation desired between Church and State. Yet we must also recognize and celebrate our common interests: passion for our country, generosity for helping others, concern for the future of our children, and desire for peace in the world.

In some ways, our bounty is also our curse. In this land of plenty, we are not forced to work together out of necessity or thrift. Our ignorance of each other misleads us into assigning easy categorizations: liberal or conservative, radical or warmonger. We paint those who disagree with us into absurdly extreme corners in our mind and never allow them to come out and be heard. We are thus increasingly paying lip service to the ideals of true democracy.

Democracy invites and tolerates the clash of opinions, and understands its obligation to search for common ground. Indeed, true democracy knows its very survival depends upon that. A democracy recognizes that there are intelligent people supporting each side of every issue. There exists no issue facing us truly as simple as a choice between two absolutes: good versus evil, right versus wrong, for us or against us.

Finding common ground requires, first and foremost, releasing our anger; it does us no good. The clenched fist is the extension of the closed mind. Common ground is reached only through a willingness to listen with an open mind. By listening, we permit the possibility of being listened to. Discussions must be engaged with positive discourse, and an intention to reveal perspectives not previously seen. Perspectives must be offered in the manner that a teacher explains a new concept, not as a soldier defends a barricade. Facing an uncertain future, we must not confuse security with peace. Authentic peace is attainable only by searching for common ground and discovering our common interests. The time available is short; let's begin our journey today!

—Dr. Todd Huffman, Pediatrician, Eugene, Oregon.

Racial Integration in The United States

The Color Lines Conference, featuring cutting-edge new thinking and research on race issues is being held on Labor Day Weekend at Harvard University in Massachusetts. It is being organized by the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University (www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu) with sponsorship from many organizations. As the nation observes the 50th Anniversary of Brown vs. Board of Education, the Civil Rights Project will lead a vital national debate about the past, present and future of racial integration in the United States: What are the trends? What future do we want, and how do we shape it? What public policies and private practices are most promising? The need for fresh data and insight is particularly pressing in light of the growing complexity of our nation’s racial makeup; evidence of persisting, even increasing, racial inequalities and the simultaneous steady erosion of civil rights protections and guarantees in courts and legislatures.

The conference will explore the implications of these racial realities and multicultural challenges. Researchers, civic leaders, educators, business people, union activists, attorneys and religious leaders in attendance will help chart a course for the future.

The conference aims for racial and ethnic justice and features more than 50 panels and sessions on themes like Black-Brown Relations, Future of Race in the Law, How to Build a Racial Justice Movement, Geography of Latino Settlement, Racial Identity, Religion and Race in the country, Labor Movement into the 21st Century, Access to Health Care and Health Care Quality, Political Enfranchisement along the Color Line, and Mobilizing Racial Minorities.

The National Association for Multicultural Education, NAME, will hold its 13th annual conference in Seattle, Washington, on Nov. 5-9, 2003, with a focus on Student Achievement in Multicultural Societies. The international conference will feature nationally known speakers, workshops, panels, cultural performances, multicultural exhibits and an awards ceremony. High school and college students are especially encouraged to attend the Student Diversity Leadership Day set for Friday, Nov. 7th. For registration forms, visit NAME at www.nameorg.org, or e-mail: name@nameorg.org.

People Around the World by Antony Mason (Kingfisher). This book provides overview information and vivid photographs about lifestyles in many countries and cultures around the world. Middle grades. ISBN: 0-7534-5497-1.


Year of No Rain by Alice Mead (Farrar, Straus & Giroux). This touching story about a Sudanese boy’s flight shows us life in this civil war-torn country. Ages 12-15. ISBN: 0-374-37288-8.

We, the People of Earth and Elders, Volume II by Serle L. Chapman (Mountain Press). In this remarkable book on today's Native America, we learn about its leaders, artists and actors. With interviews, prose and photographs. Ages 12 to adults. ISBN: 0-9528607-5-9.

Idjil by Helen Bell (Cygnet). Touching story of an Australian Aboriginal boy, removed from his family by the state. Ages 9-13. #:1-876268-90-5.

Teaching Aids

New International Plays for Young Audiences edited by Roger Ellis (Meriwether Publishing). This unique anthology of 12 plays from 8 countries helps English-speaking students understand cultures, globalization and recent events through the powerful media of theatre. Upper grades. ISBN 1-56608-081-9.

The Abenaki of Vermont: A Living Culture by Gregory Sharrow and Michael Sacca. (www.vermontfolklicfecenter.org). This 28-minute video and teacher’s guide are based on a series of in-depth interviews with Abenaki people from many walks of life. Middle and upper grades.

Wake-Up Call: Saving the Songbirds by Claire Blotter. (The Video Project. 1-800-4-PLANET). This 14-minute video (and study guide) celebrates migratory birds and their songs. It also reveals why they are rapidly disappearing and offers ideas to implement in our own backyards to help save them from extinction. Grades 2 to 8.

Coming to Say Goodbye: Stories of AIDS in Africa (www.maryknoll.org). This 30-minute documentary introduces us to courageous people living with HIV/AIDS in Kenya and Tanzania. The stories lead us to reflect on various issues: poverty, lack of access to treatment, and the social costs. Middle and upper grades.


Growing A Global Village by Charles Harrison (holmesandmeier.com). Seabrook Farms in New Jersey was a unique global village with thousands of uprooted and displaced men, women and children from 25 nations. We meet some of the people who lived and worked together during 1910-1960, when multiculturalism wasn’t even a word. Upper grades. ISBN: 0-8419-1428-1.
Ask October: Appalachian Wisdom

The old woman stumbled slowly up the rough path with her eyes lowered.

She spoke to the path. “Path, how can you be made smoother?”

“Ask October,” the path answered.

Because she did not understand what the path meant, she trudged on, shivering against the autumn wind.

She spoke to the wind. “Wind, how can you be made warmer?”

“Ask October,” the wind whispered.

She shrugged her shoulders and kept climbing.

When she was half-way to the top, her heavy heart began to pound against her breast.

She spoke to her heart. “Heart, how can you be made lighter?”

“Ask October,” the heart replied.

Her knees, elbows, fingers and toes complained against the cold.

She spoke to them roughly, “Joints, how can your pain be eased?”

Her joints did not reply.

By then she had reached the top of the ridge, so she turned to go back down.

And there before her was October, clad in an ocean of burgundy, red, orange, yellow and green, her skirts billowing across every ridge and hollow as far as the eye could see.

“October!” the old woman exclaimed. “You surely must be the envy of all the other months. Why has God chosen you to wear the most brilliant garment of them all?”

“Winter is coming,” said October. “So drink my beauty with your eyes. Soak it into your skin. Breathe it into your soul.”

And the old woman did.

As she descended, the path felt smoother, the wind warmer, and her heart no longer ached. Even her joints refused to complain.

She called to the mountains, “Winter is coming, yes. How will we endure?”

And the wind replied, “Ask October.”

—Rebecca Somoskey, Jewell Ridge, Virginia.

The Nail in the Fence

Once upon a time, there was a little girl with a very bad temper. Her mother, hoping to break her daughter of this bad habit, gave her a bag of nails and told her that every time she lost her temper, she must hammer a nail into the fence.

The very first day, the girl drove 37 nails into the fence!

Over the next few weeks, as she learned to control her anger, the number of nails gradually dwindled down. She had discovered it was easier to hold her temper than to drive those nails in to that fence.

Finally, the day came when the girl did not lose her temper at all!

She told her mother about it and her mother suggested that the girl now pull out one nail for each day that she was able to hold her temper.

The days passed and the young girl was now able to tell her mother that all of the nails were gone.

The mother then took her daughter by the hand and led her to the fence.

“You have done well, my daughter,” she said, “But look at these holes in the fence. The fence will never be the same. When you say things in anger, they leave a scar just like the holes in the fence. You can say, ‘I’m sorry,’ many times but the wound is still there! A verbal wound is as bad as a physical one.”

—Mary Lord, Wilsonville, Oregon.
From Chihuahua to Los Mochis, Mexico, the Ferrocarril Chihuahua-Pacifico covers 400 miles (650 Kms). The 20 canyons carved out of the Sierra Tarahumara by six rivers form an area 4 times larger than the Grand Canyon. In the 14 hour train ride, you go over 39 bridges and 86 tunnels. These images offer glimpses of the Tarahumaras, the indigenous people of the Barranca del Cobre region.