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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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Over many years of reading *Skipping Stones*, I've noticed a pattern in the articles, stories, poems and drawings that kids (old and young) send in. Sometimes we live in the world of YES, and say HOW WONDERFUL our world is (which is true!). Sometimes we live in the world of NO, and say HOW UNFAIR our world is (which is also true!). And sometimes we find ourselves in the higher world of AND, and simply love our world for WHAT IT IS. This is the genius of Spirit at work.

Here is a parable that helps me understand these three worlds of YES, NO, and AND, and the workings of Spirit.

Once there was a prince (or, was it a princess?) who loved to explore his father's beautiful mountain kingdom. But each time he returned to the palace, his feet would be cut, blistered and full of thorns.

"How unfair," thought the prince, "that my father's kingdom attracts me so, and yet inflicts such pain on my poor miserable feet." And so one day, he approached his father, bowed deeply, and requested that he cover his mountains and valleys in carpet, and thus end his suffering. The king looked at him with kindness and asked, "Would you ever go exploring in my kingdom again if it were covered in carpet? The rocks and roughness and thorny vines are all part of the wild beauty that attracts you!"

And so the king gave his son a piece of tough, well-cured shoe leather and said, "Go and make yourself a fine, sturdy pair of shoes. Then you'll have the freedom to walk anywhere you want in my wild, beautiful kingdom."

"Would you ever go exploring in my kingdom again if it were covered in carpet? The rocks and roughness and thorny vines are all part of the wild beauty that attracts you!"

And so the king gave his son a piece of tough, well-cured shoe leather and said, "Go and make yourself a fine, sturdy pair of shoes. Then you'll have the freedom to walk anywhere you want in my wild, beautiful kingdom."

Notice how the prince starts out in YES. "This world is so incredibly beautiful, here I go!" Yet he ends up in NO. "My feet hurt so much!"

Perhaps he experiences YES, then NO, many, many times before finally approaching the King: "Please, oh please, make my world always be YES!" The King's unexpected answer comes in the form of shoe leather.

When we pray about a problem we're having, have you noticed that the help we receive usually makes us part of the answer? The King didn't give the prince a pair of shoes ready made. He gave him shoe leather, so he could struggle again, but at a higher level—not with hurting feet, but with the difficulty of making himself a pair of shoes! He prayed for something he thought he wanted—carpeting, and received what he actually needed—shoe leather to make shoes. This is the way prayer works. Always!

*Sacrifice, struggle and help* lift us from our ordinary worlds of YES or NO, into a higher world of yes AND no. Something changes on the inside. When frustration, confusion and blame no longer spill out of us, our world changes on the outside. In the short run, everything looks different. "Behold, all things have become new." Over the long run, fewer thorn bushes actually grow in the kingdom. As we become more kind and peaceful, others follow suit. We see things from the higher unity of AND.

So what is this shoe leather, anyway? What spiritual qualities allow us to walk across rough, difficult ground without hurting our sensitive feet? And what are shoes? How do we go about making them? Keep these questions in mind as you read through this issue of *Skipping Stones*.

Have you experienced seeing a situation from the YES/NO perspective, and then come to see it as AND? We'd love to hear about it!

If the Spirit moves you to respond, please do! We want to understand the world from your point of view. When we share our perspectives, we help each other grasp more about life.

—Ron Marson is a returned Peace Corps volunteer who lives in Canby, Oregon. He walks a Quaker path with inspiration from Sufi and Buddhist traditions. His non-profit TOPS Learning Systems (topscience.org) publishes books in science and math that encourage hands-on inquiry with simple things.
Gender Discrimination

Caitlin Conflenti would be a great ice-hockey player. She has great endurance, is good on skates, and can play fast enough to make or save a play. But, she’s not on the eighth-grade ice-hockey team. Why not? For the simple reason that she is not even permitted to even try out, because she doesn’t carry a Y chromosome.

Gender discrimination has been fought for years, and has, in most cases, been stamped out. Yet, the issue of school sports teams has been overlooked. Many schools do not provide teams for both genders, but also do not allow both genders to try out for or play on the team. This is unfair because many students might want to be on a team but would not be allowed because of gender. The idea that girls can’t play certain sports is antiquated and incorrect; our rules concerning school sports should reflect that. I hope you feel the same as I do.

—Amelia Mango, 14, Gibsonia, PA.

Pen Pal Requests

A Second-Grade Class of 24 is looking for pen pals of different countries. Please send your letters c/o Mrs. Santiago, teacher Enterprise Elementary School 211 Main Street, Enterprise, FLORIDA 32725 USA e-mail: KASANTIA@mail.volusia.k12.fl.us

Nadya Tyvonik, girl, 15 yrs. Narodnaya Street 10, kv. 4 RU-142105 Podolsk RUSSIA hobbies: basketball, music, computer, etc. Seeks penpals worldwide (English or Russian)

Photo Credit: Thanks to Cynthia Lewis-Berry of Eugene, Oregon, for two photos in Vol. 16, no. 1; of Ekate Umoh (p. 22) and Elsa M. Castillo (p. 31).

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, grade 4, Carrollton School of the Sacred Heart, Miami, Florida.

ALERT!! YOUR TOILET COULD BE LEAKING!!!

Did you know that you could be throwing away about 10,000 gallons of water, each year, just because you toilet is leaking? That’s a lot of water wasted. To test if your toilet leaks, just follow the instructions below.

Warning: Be sure you have an adult present in case you need help.
1. Remove the top of the toilet tank to reveal the flushing device.
2. Put three drops of blue, green, or red food coloring in the water. Don’t use yellow; it is harder to see in the water.
3. Put the lid back on the tank and wait ten minutes. Do NOT flush the toilet.
4. After waiting ten minutes, check the toilet by lifting the lid of the toilet seat. What do you see? If the water there is colored, you own a leaking toilet. If it’s not colored, your toilet doesn’t leak. To get rid of the dye, just flush.

—Hillary Oneslager, 11, Englewood, Colorado.

• Fresh water is a valuable resource. We must use it sparingly; not waste it needlessly.

Everyone Is a Seedling

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

—Cristina Beecham, 9, Miami, Florida.

“In my eyes, everyone is a seedling, waiting for the right chance to make a difference in the world.”
**What's On Your Mind?**

**Is BIGGER Better?**

For every gallon of gasoline that any vehicle burns, 20 pounds of carbon dioxide are released into the air. Carbon dioxide, along with other greenhouse gasses, raises the earth's temperature and changes the climate.

A vehicle that gets 25 miles per gallon will release ten tons less carbon dioxide than a vehicle that gets 20 miles per gallon throughout the lifetime of a car. Ten tons less carbon dioxide may be what we need to prevent serious consequences. If the climate continues to warm, evaporation will increase, which will increase average global precipitation. Intense storms will be more frequent and the sea level will likely rise two feet along the eastern seaboard.

SUVs are strong contributors to our dependence on imported oil. The more gasoline we use, the more we have to import from other countries.

On average, SUVs spew 30% more carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxides than passenger cars. These toxic pollutants commonly cause eye and throat irritation, coughing, nausea, dizziness, fatigue, confusion and headaches. Because of these toxins, more areas in America have poor air quality. In 1999, according to the American Lung Association, 141 million Americans lived in areas with poor air quality and the number has been increasing.

For some reason, we adhere to the old adage that “bigger is better.” But is a bigger hole in the ozone layer better? Is more pollution desirable?

—Lauren Bindler, 13, Mamaroneck, NY.

*What environmental issues are on your mind the most? Wildlife protection, energy efficiency, resource conservation, pollution, biodiversity... We invite you to share your thoughts!*

**Making the World a Better Place, One Battery at a Time**

My pet peeve is people who throw away their batteries. Everyone knows they’re not supposed to do it, yet many batteries end up in the trash anyway. Every year, billions of batteries are bought, used and thrown out. Why?

Batteries need to be disposed of properly, but Americans throw out approximately 179,000 tons of batteries each year. Fourteen thousand tons are rechargeable ones which don’t even need to be thrown away.

Some batteries contain lead, cadmium and even mercury. Cadmium is a highly toxic chemical which causes effects similar to mercury poisoning. These are chemicals that should not be released into the environment.

When they get thrown away, the batteries end up in landfills and trash dumps across the nation. They then leak their chemicals into our environment. These chemicals end up in our ground, our crops and our drinking water. What goes around, comes around. Someday, we may be drinking the chemicals from the very batteries we threw away.

However, there are several options. First of all, we can buy things that do not require batteries. When available, solar-powered devices would be good.

Also, we can choose to buy things that come with rechargeable batteries. These batteries can be used over and over again before they need to be disposed of. However, there is a downside to this: rechargeable batteries contain more toxic chemicals than regular batteries, so it is extremely important to recycle them.

Recycling batteries is another option. Instead of throwing away a used battery, we could recycle it. Most towns have a battery collection center. Batteries can release toxic chemicals that are hazardous to the environment and our health. We can stop this. I challenge you to do your part by not throwing away any more batteries in the trash. This is an environmental problem that can be prevented by citizens like us.

—Abigail Hutchins, 15, Tulsa, Oklahoma.
I spent the night with a friend. No one in that house raised their voice. There was no yelling or threats of punishment. Instead, there were only kind and helpful comments. Will my friend be spoiled when she grows up? —Sue

Dear Sue: Family or school life is often based on authority, punishment or consequences. There is, however, another approach in which interaction is based on close, warm supportive relationships. Let me share one incident which portrays the latter style.

A group of high school boys always went to a store nearby their school to buy lunch. One day, a teacher noticed that a particular boy, we’ll call him Dave, returned to school after lunch having smoked pot. Dave was warned, and sent home from school for the afternoon, but a few weeks later, he again returned from lunch high.

The headmaster knew that the rule book that had been used before his arrival at the school stated that the consequence of smoking pot a second time was suspension until the end of the semester.

In his heart, the headmaster was severely burdened. He thought: “The worst result for Dave would be suspension, to have to stay home alone day after day, deprived of his friends. Dave has a very gentle spirit and a kind heart. He needs to let those qualities determine his actions. How can we help him stop smoking pot?”

The headmaster scheduled a meeting with Dave, his parents, all his teachers and some members of the Board for the following day after school. Each person present reassured Dave that the purpose of the meeting was not to punish, but to help him grasp what drove him to use pot and how he could conquer that need.

Gradually it became clear to Dave that everyone in the room was really there to help and support him. Dave realized that it was up to him to figure out why he sometimes resorted to pot. In a strong voice, Dave was heard saying: “I don’t like to do it, but if the other guys smoke, I can’t go against them.”

Then a teacher suggested: “Dave, you are a good cook. We have a kitchen. Why don’t you cook lunch for your group of friends here. They’ll love it. Listen to your inner voice. You are strong enough inside to decide what’s good for you.”

“That will work,” Dave joyfully responded. Before long, Dave came to the inner awareness that he could trust his own decisions and no longer needed to follow the crowd.

More than a year later, at graduation, Dave’s mother told the teacher who proposed the positive suggestion: “That meeting turned Dave around. He felt so deeply trusted by everyone in the room that he trusted himself and has never gotten into trouble since.”

Sue, In my opinion kindness and support certainly do not ruin youngsters. On the contrary, I am persuaded that family and school life needs to be based on these qualities for a healthy society.
Emotions. We’ve all got ‘em. In fact, sometimes we have so many of them that we start wondering who’s running the show—us or them? Here, three teens share their own creative ways of handling the toughies—tension, frustration, and anger—without giving in or giving up.

**Regaining Strength**

When the tension wells inside of me,
The day’s pain unresolved,
The pit of all my problems giving source
To bothersome thoughts,
I find my place, my special place,
Waiting for me to open up
To the world of peace and warmth.
It’s just the woods behind my yard,
A bunch of trees, and leaves,
But it represents my freedom,
My desire for better days.
Every movement from the wind,
Every fallen branch,
Symbolizes the hopes,
The dreams, the failures
Of every creature’s past.
I see a baby oak, branches held high,
Reaching for the sky
Behind the elders’ shadows.
It wants its own spotlight,
A chance to find a new path.
But there is pressure from the others
To accept its place as last.
“Release yourself,” I scream.
And as if the wood has heard me,
A tiny gap appears
Waiting, hoping for the little one
To find the space, to hold its branches high,
To cast itself from the shadows,
To be independent of life not chosen.
I approach the oak to clear some leaves
To let it start afresh.
But it is not I who has helped the tree,
For the tree has helped
Me.

—Caitlin Conflenti, 13, Gibsonia, PA.

**My Alone-Time**

When I need “alone-time” I go to my room
While I’m in there I let my thoughts drift off and
I think about all the things I could have said
and shouldn’t have said.
I also think about what I could do
to make myself feel better.
I usually turn on my radio and
put on a song that relates
To how I’m feeling,
I also go through old diaries
and look at what my problems were and
how I solved them.
Right before I leave,
I try to put my life into perspective and
I realize that a week from now
I’ll have another problem to deal with.
But that’s ok,
because I’ll be ready!

—Alicia Simpson, 15 (written at age 13), Wexford, PA.

**Anger**

You came upon me like
A big red blanket
Suffocating and confining
Never letting go
I lose control
Now you control me
And my actions are not mine
Never easing up
Somebody please help
This solitary confinement
With only one visitor
Is too much

—Maura FitzGerald, 15, Dover, Massachusetts.
"This poem was written between classes during school. I was having a bad day, actually, a bad month. I was able to release all my anger through this poem.”

**Flow**

*How do you deal with tough feelings like anger, disappointment, and frustration? Share with us!*

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In Bulgarian culture, the month of March is symbolized by an old, sometimes furious and always unpredictable old lady. On the first day of March, for many centuries, Bulgarians have worn a small pin with red and white threads woven together. They greet each other with, "Happy Grandma March!"

Since Bulgarians are the only ones in the Balkan region to celebrate March, some believe that the tradition emerged in the time of the "old Bulgarians." The founders of Bulgaria came from Middle Asia and mixed with the local Slavic population, forming Bulgaria way back in 681 AD.

Now, we do not depend on the weather as much as our ancestors did. We can easily ignore the seasons’ changing. But back then, it was a struggle to survive every winter—people couldn’t wait to see the first signs of spring. It was difficult to go through those first few weeks of early spring, when food was almost gone and the ground was still covered in snow. Somehow, people had to express their hopes and fears for the lives of the newborn babies, livestock and ill adults. So, the little white and red ornament we now call a Martenitza was created.

The white was always a symbol of purity and the red was the color our ancestors used as a spell against evil. "God, help the innocent, the helpless, and all of us survive until the first harvest!" and "Thank you, God, for the first signs of spring!" are the common meanings behind the small red and white threads.

Even today, Bulgarians still honor these most precious and tender hopes: the survival of children, newborn livestock and young saplings.

However, nowadays, the Martenitzas have many different looks: hair accessories, bracelets, and pins. One of the most common Martenitzas has white thread formed as a girl and red thread formed as a boy. The girl and boy even have names: Penda and Pijzo.

Some of the Martenitzas are real pieces of art; others may have real gold coins attached. Today, kids prefer to wear plastic pins with cartoon characters. Still, every pin must have the red and white thread to be considered a Martenitza.

In Bulgaria now, winter is still a difficult season. Because of the poor economy, many cannot afford enough heat or healthy food. But Bulgarians keep their hopes up, no matter how difficult their lives are. Every year, when the first cold, but spring-fresh March wind comes, Bulgarians wear their Martenitzas and greet each other "Happy Grandma March!" just as their ancestors have done for centuries.

—Tanya Babalievsky, Verona, New Jersey.
"Mi-i-lik! Fresh mi-i-lik!" The voice from the milk lady in the courtyard drifts into Maoluda’s third-story apartment window as she emerges slowly from sleep. Her mother is shaking her.

"Get up Maoluda! Go get us some milk for shir birinj. Hurry!"

Twelve-year-old Maoluda is suddenly wide awake. It’s Nav Ruz (New Day)—the Persian New Year—and her mother is going to make shir birinj, rice pudding, out of rice and milk for breakfast. She dresses quickly, finds a jar and some somoni (Tajik money), and hurries downstairs to buy milk. When she returns, she helps dress her five-year-old sister and the one-year-old twins while her mother makes breakfast.

Nav Ruz is celebrated in Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and much of Central Asia at the Spring Equinox. It is a day for visiting the graves of relatives, eating special foods, and going on picnics. Many people, especially men and boys, play and watch buz kashi, an exciting game in which teams on horseback try to carry the skin of a goat across their goal line. Nav Ruz foods at the buz kashi field:

Sposted wheat, sumanak bread, kulchas (biscuits), sweet nan (bread), sambusas, green tea.

Maoluda and her mother stayed up late the night before, cooking sambusas, meat pies, and ragalik (rolled cookies coated with powdered sugar). But Maoluda is too excited now to be sleepy. After breakfast, she puts on the new dress her mother has made her from traditional atlas material—brightly colored silk. When Maoluda, her parents, and her brothers and sisters are all finally ready to go, they gather up their holiday food and pile into a marshrutka (a public minivan) to go to her grandmother’s house.

When they arrive, Grandmother greets them with “Navruzaton Muborak! Happy New Year!” Maoluda likes her grandmother’s house. Grandmother lives with Grandfather and lots of extended family in a house with a big courtyard. They have a garden and three cows, which means Maoluda can eat lots of fresh milk, cream, and yogurt there. Grandmother has an outdoor oven for cooking naan, the traditional flat, round bread that Tajiks eat with every meal. Everyone says Grandmother’s naan is the best!

Even better, there are lots of cousins to play with at Grandmother’s house. Maoluda and her brother and sister join their cousins, who are playing with neighbors in the street. Inside, the grownups sit around a das-tarkhan, a cloth spread on the floor with a beautiful display of nuts, dried fruit, candy, tea and special foods. The relatives and neighbors who drop in all say, “Navruzaton Muborak!” After sitting for a while, nibbling on the treats, they leave, saying, “Khair! Khuda hafez! Goodbye!”

When Maoluda comes in from the street, her aunts are cooking samanak in the courtyard. This special food is cooked just for Nav Ruz. A week or so ago, Grandmother put wheat kernels on a plate and kept them wet. After a couple of days, the wheat kernels started to send up little green shoots, and by Nav Ruz the sprouts were an inch or so long. Then Grandmother put the wheat kernels through a grinder and separated out the juice. To make samanak, the juice has to cook for twenty-four hours. Because someone has to stir it all the time, making samanak is like a party; Maoluda’s aunts have been up all night, talking and cooking and stirring the samanak.

Maoluda takes a turn stirring and listens to the
women discussing the best way to make samanak and telling stories about the new bride in the family and the neighbor’s new baby. When the samanak is finished, Grandmother will give it away to friends, neighbors and family so God will bless them in the coming year.

After lunch, Maoluda’s father takes the children to the park where they go on carnival rides. Maoluda likes the swings. When they see the ice cream man, all the kids yell, “Daddy! Daddy! Uncle! Can we have some ice cream?” Maoluda’s father carefully counts out some somoni and buys popsicles for everyone. What a treat!

When they return, Grandmother is gathering up samanak and leftover treats from the dastarkhan to send home with Maoluda’s family. “Khair! Khair! Stay well!” They wave as they walk away down the narrow street. On the main road they catch a marshrutka. Home by nightfall, Maoluda and her family spend the evening watching television. They watch Nav Ruz concerts at the opera house and school programs of children singing and reciting Nav Ruz poems.

Maoluda’s mother lets her stay up late. When she finally lies down on her sleeping mat, Maoluda sighs happily. Some people say that whatever you do on Nav Ruz you will do all year long. Maoluda hopes it is true, because she has had so much fun!

—Amanda Bird, who has recently returned from working in Tajikistan, Central Asia, now lives in Eugene, Oregon.

Weeds
The weed is alone
In a garden of flowers
Until I pick it.

Clovers
The single clover
Holding the dew like a cup
Spills when it’s disturbed.

—Donna Kaltenbaugh, 13, Gibsonia, PA.

Spring, the Time of Life
Scattered by the wind,
Painted by the spring rainbow
Shooting to the sun.

—Hillary Oneslager, 11, Englewood, Colorado.

*** World Search ***

Fresh nan (flat bread) coming out of the oven.

Find the ingredients for a successful international community: love, hope, conservation, ecology, unity, cooperation, tolerance, peace, brotherhood, harmony, integrity, honesty, kindness, freedom.

—Shiloh Wenger, 18, Paragould, Arkansas.
Kalina’s Great Gift

Kalina, the oldest of three children, worked from early spring through summer and fall helping her peasant parents in the fields of their small Polish farm—planting, weeding, and harvesting vegetables. Since she could only attend school a few months in the winter, she lagged behind in her studies and classmates often teased her.

Poland’s long, dark winters meant that families rested from hard chores, making crafts to decorate their homes. Kalina loved these activities: making **wycinaki**, intricate multi-colored paper cuts using sheep shears, and **pajaki**, geometric straw figures tied together and hung like small chandeliers. Most loved were the magnificent **pisanki** eggs with religious and Easter symbols applied with wax, using a **kistka**, then dyed.

When Lent came at the end of winter, though, Kalina was sad, knowing that many children would receive treats for Easter: fruit, nuts, candy, shoes, clothes. Her poor family had none of these things. She wanted to do something about this, but how could she, only a ten-year-old?

As Kalina carefully waxed her **pisanki** eggs, and dipped them into the colored dye, she thought of a plan! In nearby Miastkowo lived the kindly organist and his wife, Pan and Pani Kozlowski. Although she didn’t know them personally, she hoped they might help.

On Saturday, a week before Easter, Kalina accompanied her father to town, where he sold vegetables from the family’s root cellar: carrots, potatoes and turnips. Kalina had secretly made an extra **pisanki** egg, which she gently placed in carded wool and tied in a **chustka** (handkerchief). Then she fastened it beneath her apron.

Their bony old horse bumped them along in the rickety wagon. When they arrived at the village square, Kalina asked to go play with a friend. Father agreed. He unloaded vegetables while Kalina walked to the organist’s home, her cheeks red with hope and fear. Pani answered her knock and Kalina stammered out her story of hoping to buy her family treats by selling **pisanki** eggs.

The kindly woman thought of her grandchildren who would have nuts, dried fruit and even candy and shoes for Easter. When she saw Kalina’s egg, its beauty and details stunned her: dots for Mary’s tears and forty triangles, for the forty days of Lent, each representing the trinity, and wheat stalks, for a good harvest. Pani asked to keep the egg, promising to try to find two or three buyers by the day before Easter.

Kalina worked every spare moment the next week, rising while her family still slept to create two more beautiful eggs by the candle’s light.

Saturday, she joined her father again for marketing in the village, and once more asked to go play. Father agreed, never realizing Kalina had no friends in the village. Pan Kozlowski welcomed her warmly, and Pani excitedly took Kalina to the dining table. There, Kalina laid down the **chustka**, and gently untied it. The Kozlowskis marveled at the eggs’ beauty. And, it turned out that Pani had been successful! The mayor’s wife always used **pisanki** eggs and so she wanted to buy two, for five **złoty** (Polish money) each. The priest and nun loved **pisanki** too, but had only three **złoty**, so they asked to share a plain one.

“No!” exclaimed Kalina. “They try to live close to God. They must have the finest.”
Pani counted out thirteen zloty. Kalina hugged and thanked her, then ran to the market. She shopped in the stalls farthest from her father, carefully choosing nuts, dried fruit, and four apples. That night, Easter eve, once everyone slept soundly, Kalina rose from her mat, placing the treats, with name tags, on the table for her family.

Kalina pretended to sleep next morning as her family rose to discover their gifts. She secretly loved hearing their excitement and joy. Then, while mother helped the giggling children dress for church, father went to gather eggs. Opening the front door, he almost tripped over a small basket holding a thick chunk of chocolate, enough for everyone. It rested on multi-colored ribbons, which had Kalina’s name attached to them. Kalina gasped at the lovely, silky colors! Mother tied them into Kalina’s long brown hair.

The family joined the village parade to the church. On a table in front was Kalina’s loveliest egg. As church ended, the priest and nun hugged Kalina thanking her for the splendid work of art. Thus, Kalina’s family and everyone else learned who created the amazing egg all had noticed. Her family then understood how Kalina had provided their gifts.

After that, Kalina’s village grew to appreciate and respect her love of family and joy in giving. Schoolmates’ teasing stopped and new friendships began.

—Ruth Koenig, educator, Eugene, OR. Ruth has travelled widely in Europe, So. Africa and Nicaragua; this story came from her folk art studies in Poland, and also from the place of creativity and longing within herself. Her mother lived in Poland as a child.

Art: Barbara Gleason, illustrator, Eugene.

Pysanky: The Written Egg

In the Ukraine, a country located just southeast of Poland, people write on their Easter eggs. In fact, the word pysanky, or “decorated egg” stems from the Ukrainian word that means “to write.” Ukrainian people have spent centuries writing on their Easter eggs—this tradition has its own special page in Ukrainian history.

Ukrainian people started writing on eggs long before they knew about Easter or Christianity. Back in ancient times, nature ruled people’s lives. Each day they offered gifts to pagan gods of various natural forces, such as rain, wind and fire, hoping these deities would bear them good fortune. Out of all of these gods, they regarded the sun god as the most important because without the sun, no crops would grow. Without crops to eat, people would not survive!

Each morning, the sun rose to the rooster’s call, and because of this, many believed this bird alone had the power to summon it. As time went on, people grew to cherish the eggs from which these roosters hatched.

Holding eggs in such high regard, people began decorating them with beeswax and dye and giving them as gifts to those they loved, believing it would bless the recipient with good fortune. Anne Hlinka, a longtime creator of pysanky, noted, “These decorated eggs were also a way to make their environment beautiful.”

Elderly people often received eggs of deep colors and intricate designs, symbolizing the full lives they’d already led. Likewise, gift-givers customarily gave white or more simply decorated eggs to children, as they had their entire lives on which to write. Teenage girls often gave eggs to their boyfriends for good luck. They made certain that they carefully decorated these eggs on both tips, though. Giving a bald egg to a man signified that he would soon lose his hair.

Christianity reached the Ukraine in 988 AD. As people adjusted to their new religion, they assigned Christian meanings to the old traditions.
As Christianity continued to spread throughout the world, so did the tradition of making *pysanky* Easter eggs, as generation after generation passed down this special ritual. Anne fondly remembers making these eggs as a little girl with her mother and two brothers. "We would put our fanciest eggs into a basket to be blessed at Easter," she recalled. "These baskets would have a cloth over them, and most times, the women in the home would embroider the same pattern on the edges of the cloth as were painted on the eggs."

Like many other *pysanky* creators, Anne and her family favor the color red in their designs. Red symbolizes not only beauty, but also the sun, happiness, hope and passion.

To make your own *pysanky*, Anne offers this advice, "Start simply. Choose one pattern. Use one color, a lovely color like red, and see what you get. Divide the outside of the egg into eighths—make small marks, almost like chicken scratches."

If you want to make a fancier egg, one should add a simple pattern at the end, like dots or a fish.

For centuries, the Ukrainian people have written on their eggs, adding to their heritage. Perhaps by creating your own decorated eggs, you will be able to write a little history of your own.

—*Maria E. Giffen, Dumont, New Jersey.*

**Things Eternal**

Before our Earth, before our time,
Before the birth of hate and crime,
Like the stars, the sky, the air,
Things Eternal were always there.

The world is spinning, turning, tilting.
All is blurring, sinking, melting.
Beyond the darkness and clamorous fuss,
Things Eternal are there for us.

If great things fall into the dust,
If flames and ashes fill the sky,
If ice grips the earth in a frigid crust,
Things Eternal still won’t die.

—*Alice Yu, 13, Gibsonia, Pennsylvania.*

**May Day in Hawai’i**

May 1 is a special day in the islands of Hawai’i. Known as *Lei Day*, it’s a day for gathering flowers and stringing them into a lei to express *aloha* to love ones. It’s a celebration that brings the people of the *āina* (land) together in music, lei-making contests, school pageants and competitions in both ancient and modern hula.

A May Day *mōʼi wahine* (queen) and *mōʼiʻkane* (king) are crowned to represent the beauty and goodness.

In the year 1779, a member of Captain Cook’s crew recorded Hawaiians wearing flower garlands. However, it was not until 1928 that Don Blanding suggested that on May 1, everyone wear flowers as their ancestors did.

The first May Day was so successful that it has grown in popularity. Although not an official holiday, many islanders come together on *Lei Day* as a community in celebration and remembrance of Hawaiian culture and heritage.

—*Text and art by Maureen Quemada, artist, Ruidoso, New Mexico. She has also lived in Hawai’i.*
I spend every summer in Belovka with my granny. The whole year I look forward to the time when I get close to nature. Every morning, I can hear the songs of a rooster and the voices of the hens. I gave them all names and I never forget them. I observe the hens in my spare time. When it’s hot, they all run to me in the shade and lie around me, even on my legs, and close their small, popping eyes.

I also like the village because of the fresh air. Cars pass by very seldom, so neither smoke nor gas appears here. It’s easy to breathe and get exercise outdoors. My friend Sveta and I run, jump, skip rope or ride bikes near the railroad tracks, trying to follow a faraway train.

In the middle of July, Sveta, her older sister Valya and I go to the river Sakmara. We need to go through the forest to get to the river. The forest is huge and clean, with big trees and bushes. Birds, woodpeckers, and cricket songs are heard, too. Walking through the forest, we usually catch grasshoppers, which we set free at once. We also pick brightly colored red berries or mushrooms.

The quiet murmuring of the river is close by. White sand sparkles in the sun. People lie on towels getting tan. We pull off our clothes quickly and run into the cool water of Sakmara. The water is very clear, so we can see our feet and small stones on the bottom. A dark log floats near us; children push each other into the water. We are not afraid of the river because it’s narrow and not very deep. Adults can easily cross it. We spend the whole day by the river and come home in the evening.

In June, a lot of strawberries, raspberries, and cherries ripen in our garden. Every morning before breakfast, I run impatiently with a plate in my hands to pick them. When the cherries are ripe, I climb on the roof of a shed to reach them. They’re very tasty, so I eat them ’till my stomach gets full. Sometimes, I throw a berry to the hens and they roll it around the yard, trying to take it from each other.

In the evenings, I drive the cow up to the house. I find it very romantic because I need to jump on stones and run in the wormwoods, trying to bring her home. When I return from the meadow, I’m all hung with burrs.

The nights in Belovka are warm and dark. The sky is covered with stars, like tiny grains are being thrown on a black ground. The moon is like a small piece of cheese. When it’s not too late, I lie on a camp-bed and admire the stars. My pet dog Sharik is sniffing next to me. It’s great to imagine different star pictures, especially when my best friend is very near.

I love my village with all my heart and wish it could exist forever. Its nature is only a small part of the nature on Earth, but we all know that the small makes the great. We all have to take care of places like Belovka.

—Natasha Abramova, 11, Gymnasia #77, Togliatti, Samara, Russia. See back cover art from Samara.

*Do you visit a special place in nature, like Natasha? Tell us about it!*
The Quilt of Our Nations

The world is a quilt and each patch is a nation
Bound by a thread since the days of creation
Adorned with great color and radiant splendor
Though divided by race and religion and gender
In some eyes it is handsome, in others contorted
The patches are different, unmatched and unsorted
Incongruous in pattern, in shape and in color
Not one is too similar to any other
So some try to imagine one great design,
But in truth our uniqueness is really just fine
Nations and patches of all kinds and all sorts
Customs, religions, languages, sports
This is okay if each patch has its space
And on the quilt of the world, each nation its place
But the stitches that bind us are easily shed
By the wars that are fought and the words that are said
We must realize the appearance of no patch is inferior
And the ways of no nation can make it superior
Divided by oceans, united by a dream
The world is a quilt and our love is its seam

－Michelle Zellers, 16, Sterling Heights, Michigan.

Horąymmetricło svemir i zvezde nad nama,
Vseselennaja nasha, gde vse nashal'sčo...
I mir nashe, rozhdennyj sredi smeha angelov,
Tonef teper' v okeanе ih slez...
Prekrasna byla golubaja planetă
Stol'et'ja nasled ... vremja bystro letit
I tam, gde lesa shel'esty kogda-to,
Na grunte bezhiznennom gorod stoit.
Ubitya damym priroda zemnaya
Tepерь лишь мечтой в наших мыслях живет,
Как пленник невинный, и все это знают,
No toлько признаться не хочет никто...
Так будем же вместе бороться с судьбою!
Dругим поколеньям наш мир сохраним!
Podarim vtoroe rozhdenye prirode,
Napolnim ej sladkoj radost'yu zhizni!
Horąeče solńce i zvезды milliony,
Vsesелennoj soprotvry ... i net im konca...
A s neba na greshnyj mir angyely sмотрят,
Ronyat' v o'ebra sol'nye sel'zy
I sud'it kapirazy ljudей svysoka...

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Welcome, bird fans, to the annual arrival of the Pacific Golden Plover to our beautiful Hawaiian islands. Nene, the Hawaiian Goose, our state bird, will be interviewing Mr. P. G. Plover.

It looks like Mr. Plover is coming in for a landing now. There are his gold and yellow speckled feathers. See the white stripes down his side and his black belly? What a grand looking bird. Uh, he does seem to be looking scrawny at the moment, though.

"Aloha, Mr. Plover," Nene yelled. "Welcome back to Hawaii."

"Food, I need some food," said Mr. Plover. "Mr. Plover, we’ve been waiting hours," said Nene. "You promised to give me an interview."

"Of course," said Mr. Plover, "but I can’t fly three thousand miles from Alaska non-stop, without needing some snacks when I land."

"You’re right. There’s a small pond behind that palm tree and tasty spiders live in the hibiscus shrubs next to the pond," Nene said.

You heard Mr. Plover correctly. He flew almost three thousand miles non-stop from Alaska to Hawaii, using his own wings. No jet airline for our Mr. Plover! He completed this journey in about fifty hours, without stopping for food or rest. No wonder the poor fellow needs some nourishment.

"Nene, I’m ready to begin," said Mr. Plover.

"Thank you for joining us," replied Nene. "First of all, why leave Alaska? Especially since it’s such a long flight."

Mr. Plover replied, "Obviously you’ve never spent the winter in snow, ice and wind. We have little shelter on the tundra in Alaska, and our food supply is non-existent during the winter. It’s paradise in Hawaii! It’s warm and there are lots of bugs, worms, cockroaches and spiders to eat. Speaking of which, you wouldn’t happen to have some cockroaches to nibble on, would you?"

“I’m sorry, Mr. Plover, I didn’t think of food. Can you continue the interview without snacks?"

Sighing, Mr. Plover said, “If I must, but please hurry up. I’m so hungry.”

“So, why don’t you stay in Hawaii year-round?”

“Instinct pulls us back to Alaska each spring to find mates, lay eggs and hatch our chicks,” answered Mr. Plover. “Then, as fall approaches, we realize that to survive, we must fly back to Hawaii. Is that a caterpillar on your wing for me to munch on?"

“Are you dreaming? I don’t see anything. Can we please continue?” Nene said, annoyed. "I know so little about Alaska—describe your home for us."

“We live on the tundra, which are wide-open plains. Our nests are dug in the ground and lined with lichen, grass and moss. Our females lay four speckled eggs, and we take turns sitting on the nest to keep the eggs warm. We also take turns foraging for food, which is limited to seeds, berries and leaves. We don’t have the luxury of crab and worms there. Are you sure you can’t find some worms for me?”

“Mr. Plover, do try to concentrate!” said Nene. “Sorry, where was I?” Mr. Plover apologized.

“Alaska, hatching chicks, can you continue?”

“Our chicks hatch within thirty days and as soon as they dry out, they start finding their own food, which would be berries and seeds. No tasty crickets for us in Alaska. Oh, I think I see one now just begging to be eaten,” said Mr. Plover.

“Please control yourself, Mr. Plover, and leave the audience alone!” exclaimed Nene.

“Alright. The chick’s parents are there for protection and warmth until the end of summer, when we adults take off for Hawaii.”

“You don’t leave your chicks in Alaska during the winter?” gasped Nene.
"No, they come to Hawaii."
"So, the chicks fly with you?" questioned Nene.
"No, they find their own way. We all had to go through it, and we turned out fine. Makes them strong finding their own way. Of course, I've heard some groups get confused and end up in New Zealand."

"That's about 8,000 miles away from Alaska!" exclaimed Nene. "They fly that every year?"
"Yes, but I don't understand why, when Hawaiian dragonflies are so close," replied Mr. Plover.
"Mr. Plover, I can see you really are in need of food after such a long flight. Thank you for answering our questions and Aloha," said Nene.

—Kimberly Davis, Huntington Beach, California.

The Jizo Garden

Last year, on a trip to Japan, I visited an unusual garden. This garden had no plants or trees. It held only a group of statues. The garden is a part of the Kitain Temple in Kawagoe, Japan. It is only a small corner of the temple grounds, but it was one of my favorite destinations.

Inside this garden, you will find 540 stone jizos. They represent the disciples of Buddha. These small limestone statues were carved between 1782 and 1825, and no two are alike. Each one holds a symbol of its unique personality in its hands.

There is a story about the garden that is very surprising. It is said that if you visit the garden in the middle of the night and walk around, touching each statue, you will touch one that is warm. When you feel the warm statue, you take a piece of chalk or a coin and mark the statue. In the morning, you return and the statue that you marked will be the one with the personality that is most like your own.

The garden is just an isolated corner of the temple grounds, surrounded by a bamboo fence, but it is quiet and deeply touching. Once you visit this garden, you will never forget it.

—Text and photos by Maralee Gerke, Madras, OR.

Pagoda at Kitain Temple, Kawagoe, Japan.

Plover Facts

- Each fall, Plovers fly non-stop, approximately 3,000 miles from Alaska to Hawaii, and return to Alaska each spring.
- Some groups migrate to New Zealand and Australia, flying approximately 7,800 miles.
- Young chicks have to find their own way to their winter feeding-ground.
- Their favorite foods in Hawaii are worms, cockroaches, caterpillars, spiders and various insects.
- Plovers also eat crabs, oysters and mollusks.
- The plover's speckled coloring is perfect camouflage to protect it from predators, such as foxes and owls, in Alaska.
In the summer of 2003, lightning struck Glacier National Park and under the stormy sky, the forest began to burn. Flames licked the towering trees and devoured the groundcover. Grasses flared into curls of ash and weakened trees fell while the hot flames rushed onwards through the valleys, flickering hungrily in the night. The inferno raged for over a month, until now. In its aftermath, more than 40,000 acres lie bare to the smoky sky. Raw earth has replaced the vibrant, green juvenile trees, bushes, moss, grass and other annual plants. Charred and broken, the surviving older trees stand naked, without their thick evergreen canopy or undergrowth.

I stand amidst the acres of burn and think to myself: This is a beautiful scene, if you're a Ponderosa pine.

Forest fires have existed for as long as the forests. They're a natural part of the ebb and flow of life and species diversity. As a new forest rises up over the hillside, combustible material continuously accumulates. Given this fuel supply, all that's needed is a spark from natural or human sources (lighting, escaped campfires, arson, etc.) and the whole landscape ignites.

But for many forest species, the ensuing blaze isn't necessarily a bad thing. Life is resilient and adaptable—think of the persistent dandelions that grow in sidewalk cracks. The blackened ground of a recent fire is good news for Ponderosa and Jack pines because without it, they can't reproduce effectively. Their seed cones are covered by a waxy outer layer that can melt to free their seeds only in the heat of fire. By saving their seeds until after a fire, these pines are guaranteed that their offspring will land on sunny, open ground that may previously have been shaded by understory.

The Giant Sequoia, a member of the redwood family, is another species that has adapted to take advantage of the destruction of fire. With flame-resistant bark up to two-feet thick, established sequoias withstand all but the most intense fires. While the sequoia saplings can grow in moderate shade, they thrive and out-compete those of other species when in full sun. Thus, after a fire roars through a redwood grove, most of the older redwoods survive while other trees species of similar age don't.

With the post-fire increase in sunlight exposure, new redwoods grow faster and taller than their competitors—up to seven feet in a season! Speedy growth is important for the young trees as taller trees get more sunlight and thus produce more energy via photosynthesis than those below.

But there are catastrophic fires that burn too hot for even these flame-loving plants. The most destructive fires to a forest ecosystem are those that burn so intensely that they actually sterilize the soil. Healthy soil contains a fertile mixture of organic parts, like decomposing leaves, wood, berries or animal carcasses. When a fire burns all
the soil’s organic material, the seeds of the new plants have far fewer nutrients to grow on. Also, without a stabilizing mesh of plant roots, the burned soil is more prone to erosion and landslides, which leaves hillside plants with even less usable topsoil.

When I walked through the burned areas of Glacier National Park this summer, the charred trees reminded me of another forest in Oregon’s Illinois River valley. Backpacking there with a friend in 2001, I saw the forest several decades after its last major burn and one year before its next one. The ridges our trail switchbacked up were surrounded by tall, large-diameter trees that dwarfed the blooming rhododendrons and purple lupines. Nearly all of these larger trees bore charcoal scars of previous fire.

The Biscuit Fire that ravaged southern Oregon the summer after our hike was truly violent. But it is only one fire in a long list of fires that the forests of the Illinois River valley and Glacier National Park have managed to withstand over the centuries. Fire is a cyclical event; tree ring data show that Ponderosa forests have a history of burns every 20 years.

Fire ecology is the scientific study of fire’s role in a healthy ecosystem, to better understand its cyclical nature and interplay with plants and animals. This knowledge will allow us to make better informed choices as stewards of the Earth. Already, because of new information learned about burn cycles, the U.S. Forest Service has begun prescribed burns in various areas to allow fire-dependent plant species to reproduce and combustible material to be reduced, in the hope of preventing hotter, more catastrophic fires.

This information has also raised new questions though, such as how much should we fight to control natural wildland fires? Obviously when human lives or property are at risk by wildland fires as in San Diego, CA, in 2003, all available resources should be used to contain the blaze. But what about forest fires that don’t pose such risks to humans? Should these be left to burn as they did before we had the technology to attempt to stop them? Is letting a forest burn a waste of valuable resources or a destructive yet necessary part of a healthy ecosystem? The Forest Service received over 23,000 comments from citizens if they should allow harvesting of the Biscuit Fire timber in Southern Oregon.

What about increased human habitation outside of city centers on the fringes of forest lands? These houses are closer to potential forest fires and farther from urban fire fighting resources. Should such housing developments be limited or even banned? Should they change the way fires are fought in the surrounding wildlands?

All these thoughts ran through my mind as I stared at the smoldering remnants of one of Glacier’s famously forested valleys. But remembering the lushness of the Illinois Valley years after its last burn, the Glacier vista didn’t seem as final, depressing or like such a waste of timber and beauty. It only felt inevitable. Cyclical. Natural. As my hands explored the char on a broken branch, I realized that saplings are the forest’s Phoenix rising.

—Amanda Marusich is now exploring the forests of New Zealand.

To learn more about wildland fires, their impact on plants and fire control policies, visit: www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/fire/

Mighty Trees

Bursting through the ground,
Green leaves, waving in the sun,
Standing in the earth.

—Hillary Oneslager, 11, Englewood, CO.
Imagine that your father has been a lobsterman for twenty years. Each morning he motors into Long Island Sound, off Connecticut, and hauls up hundreds of lobsters. Back on shore, he sells them to wholesalers.

On weekends and school holidays, you can’t wait to hop aboard and pull squirming, flapping lobsters from the traps.

Then, one fall day in 1999, your father returns to the dock with only forty lobsters. The next day, he brings twenty-five, the next, twenty. Some of his traps are filled with dead lobsters.

“I can’t even pay for gas, the crew’s wages, or bait with what these few lobsters bring” he says. He goes out every day for a month but returns with fewer and fewer lobsters.

When other lobsters report small catches and more and more dead lobsters, they realize that something mysterious is happening and that their livelihood is being destroyed.

The Suspects

What killed the lobsters? Many suspects are under investigation. Congress allocated over six million dollars to New York and Connecticut Sea Grant researchers to find the killer.

Most lobstermen blame pesticides used to kill mosquitoes carrying West Nile Virus in 1999. Lobstermen reported the lobster die-off soon after the pesticides were sprayed near the Sound.

Researchers say that lobsters are arthropods, similar to insects, and that lobsters are extremely susceptible to pesticides designed to kill insects.

Gladstone Jones, a lawyer representing Long Island Sound lobstermen in a suit against insecticide companies said, “Mosquitoes are little bitty lobsters, and spraying one could harm the other.”

According to biologist, Mike Loughlin, who examined dead Connecticut lobsters, “These pesticides kill lobsters better than they kill mosquitoes.”

Two other culprits being investigated as the possible killer are the Sound bottom, where lobsters live, and water temperature.

Marine biologists cannot reproduce exact water conditions of the 1999 die-off, but they take water samples regularly and test lobsters in different water conditions to help solve the mystery.

Water and sediment taken from the worst hit waters showed a dangerous condition for lobsters—low levels of dissolved oxygen, causing “hypoxia.” Hypoxia occurs when most of the oxygen, needed by lobsters and other sea life, is used up in breaking down pollutants in the waters. Pesticides, sewage from water treatment plants, fertilizer run-off, bait, and anything containing carbon require more oxygen to break down. Reduced oxygen means dead lobsters.

The next culprit is water temperature. For the past hundred years, the Long Island Sound waters have been progressively getting warmer, which is bad for lobsters. In 1998 and 1999, when the die-off occurred, water temperatures were even higher than the trend, while dissolved oxygen was also abnormally low.

Other marine detectives blame the parasite, Paramoeba. Researchers examining dead lobsters report that they suffered from a Paramoeba infection attacking their nervous systems. Nerve tissue was destroyed, causing fatalities. Many lobstermen say the Paramoeba has always been in the waters but never before caused so many deaths. What was different now?

No one is naming the culprit yet, but most researchers think that the unique combination of warm water temperatures, hypoxia and pesticides weakened lobsters’ defense systems so much that they could not battle the Paramoeba.

What We Can Do?

Researchers require another year to complete testing. Even if the problem is eliminated, it will take at least seven years for lobsters to thrive. It takes that long for lobsters to grow to trapping size—about a pound. In the 1999 die-off, most mature egg-bearing females were killed, so it could take two generations, more than a decade, for lobsters to fully recover, but only if conditions improve.
Warming trends can’t be controlled. But we can improve water quality by reducing hypoxia. Local population has greatly increased over the recent decades, causing more organic matter and pollutants to enter the waters, creating conditions lobsters cannot tolerate.

Everyone can do his part to clean up. Scrap paper and waste casually discarded eventually ends up in the water. These and other pollutants use up vital oxygen as they decompose.

One conclusion is certain. The activities of humans have played a major role in the die-off. Lobsters are highly sensitive, and their well-being is a good gauge of the overall health of oceans—our great natural resource.

—Arlene Mark, Greenwich, Connecticut.

Need more ideas for action?

• Teachers can ask marine biologists to visit, talk about water conditions, and tell students and parents how to help keep waters clean.
• You might contact your representative in the Congress and tell of your concerns.
• Visit www.seagrant.sunysb.edu/LILobsters and www.lobsters.org for lobster health and water quality news.

Smart Stuff with Twig Walkingstick

Dear Twig: I went fishing and caught a small bass. My mom unhooked it and let it go. But before she did she dipped her hands in the pond. She said it would help the fish. Fill me in, Oh Wise One.

Anglers—people who go fishing—often release the fish they catch. Sometimes a fish is too small to keep. Sometimes it’s illegal to keep that type of fish. And sometimes, the angler is fishing for fun and doesn’t want to eat what’s caught.

Whatever the reason, it’s important to handle the fish carefully if you’re going to let them go. And the first thing you can do is what your mom did; wet your hands. Just splash them, if you can, into the lake or river: Even a bucket of water will do.

Why? Because fish have a coating of slime on their skin, which protects against fungi and bacteria. If your hands are dry when you hold a fish, some of this slime is scraped away. The fish has less infection protection. It might get sick and die, which defeats the purpose of letting go! Wet hands remove a lot less slime thereby helping fish survive.

SOS (Save Our Slime),

Twig

—Kurt Knebusch, Ohio State Univ.

’Till We Meet Again

I see the silvery beast lurking in the shallows. It was the largest I have ever seen. Peacefully maintaining speed to match the current, I present my fly, and it rejects. I try again and again, but it remains stubborn. I refuse to give up hope. Finally, it takes the fly with an explosive splash. I thought that was the hard part, but I was wrong. It fought like no other. That massive fish refused to capture. I thought it could evade me. It was wrong. The struggle went on for an hour, Until I emerged the victor! And as any sportsman would, I released the silent giant to swim free again. As it cautiously fluttered back into the depths, It gave me a special feeling knowing that at a later date, we might meet again.

—Zac Parkhill, 15, Allison Park, PA.
**Odes to Nature!**

**Life Through a Bird’s Eye**

White clouds  
Blue skies  
Wind flows  
I fly  
As I fly I see rows of roses  
trees with moss  
moss that glows  
I land in a tree  
that reaches the sky;  
that touches the heavens  
that is ever so high  
I fly with my friends  
as we sing gentle music  
but soon our fun ends,  
when Bluejays goes kruzzic!  
And as I fly home  
to my pillowish cloud,  
the sunset rejoices,  
and sets to the ground.  
—Stephanie Fox-Dixon, 12,  
St. Olaf, Idaho.

**Insects**

Insects have antennae  
They have six legs, too.  
Some have strong jaws  
And they can all chew.  
They each have three body parts  
And they each have wings.  
Most of them eat other bugs  
And some of them sing.  
Some of them poke you  
Others gross you out  
Others bite you  
And well, that’s what it’s all about!  
—Jacob Lambert, 8, Morehead  
Primary School, Morehead, NC.

**In the Sky**

Rain, wish for a rainbow,  
for I want to see one in the sky.  
O, Rain, wish for a rainbow.  
Stars, sing to the moon,  
for the love of God lives in the sky.  
O, Stars, sing to the moon.  
God, hear your children’s prayers,  
for the devil might get us!  
O, God, listen to your children’s prayers.  
—Zenues-Jay T. Vaimanino, 7,  
Samoan, Honolulu, HI.

**The Stars Keep the Time**

The hands of the clock tick in the night  
My sleep is staggered as I stare at the twinkling stars  
They shimmer and glimmer so innocent and bright  
I would love to catch them and put them in a jar  
The rock flames could lead me to a heavenly place  
Where I could get away from all my troubles  
That would surely be a gift of God’s grace  
The admiration and thrills are put into bundles  
The time keeps slipping away with the night turning to day  
As I sit and daydream about the night sky  
I can barely see them now, they’re running away  
The little dots of light seem to be waving good-bye  
But as long as the day goes fast  
I know the stars will surely pass again.  
A Walk up the Mountain

I began my journey early in the morning.
As I stopped and looked
At the sun stretch out over the evergreen trees;
It was a beautiful sight as the leaves danced across the ground.
And touched
The prickly pine needles as I brushed past a pine tree.
A cool breeze stroked my face.
And smelled
Autumn in the air, fallen leaves crunching underfoot
A camp fire from a hiker down below.
And listened
To the howls of owls and coyotes as darkness takes the night,
And the sound of twigs crackling beneath my feet.
And tasted
The dark chocolate I had been saving since the morning.
Melting now from the open fire.
Today had been a chance to gather my thoughts
And experience incandescent nature.

—Dustin Strayer, 13, Gibsonia, PA.

Wild Horse Wisdom

I feel the wind blowing through my mane,
The freshness of the light rain,
In the place I call my own,
This untamed spot that is my home.
The grasses of time will grow on and on,
Because we’re all part of nature’s great song,
But as the grasses grow longer, our time here gets smaller,
And soon I will see that world of golden color.

—Natalie Bobek, grade 9, Wexford, PA.

The Glorious Night

Outside, the stars were glowing.
The coyote was howling and prowling in the wind.
The wolves were crying at the moon.
The bear was sleeping in its den.
The fox was hunting before going to bed.
There was a cool breeze racing through the night.
The peepers were singing through the sweet air.
The wind and the peepers went together like a song.
The women were kissing their children good night.
The smell of the crisp fresh leaves soothed my soul.
As this was happening,
I fell asleep dreaming about the night.

—Sara Vogel, grade 4, Fayette, Maine.
The Belize Sea:  
An Underwater World

Anyone who says that extraordinary things don’t exist has never understood the sea. Under the sparkly water of the Belize Sea lies the sandy bottom, a desert supporting a huge amount of ocean life.

The Belize Reef is the longest reef in the Western Hemisphere, and it is the fifth longest in the whole world.

Just outside the magnificent reef are four of the greatest atolls. An atoll is a coral island shaped like a ring that is surrounded by a lagoon. These small islands are extremely beautiful, but unfortunately cannot be accessed.

Just inside the reef are 200 cayes — small, thin islands. There are only three kinds of cayes. Wet cayes, which can only hold a mangrove, bare coral outcroppings, which are just as barren as wet cayes, and sandy islands, which are covered with plants and have their own kinds of animals.

The Belize Reef’s water is so clear that with a scuba mask, a whole new world of color is revealed. Coral is a special limestone that comes in all colors and shapes: pinks, reds, purples, blues, greens and many shades in between. Coral can be shaped like lace, trees, mushrooms and stovepipes.

The sea life in the Belize Sea is some of the greatest in the world. Angelfish, barracuda, grunt, parrot fish, and snapper are only some of the hundreds of breeds of fish that live in the Belize Reef. Angelfish are very shy and can only be approached by ignoring them as you swim up. Barracuda can be very unnerving to a new diver, but they will not attack you if you are careful. Actually, they will follow a diver around like a puppy, just for company. Grunt swim in schools and at night, so they are not often seen.

Many other animals live in the ocean, too. The bottle-nose dolphin is a very friendly mammal, and a single one will often swim up and let you touch it. Manatees are elephant-like creatures who are very gentle, but extremely nosy and slow, which often causes them to get injured by motorboats or hunters. Also, many people assume that rays are dangerous, but the manta rays are gentle and harmless. Still, it’s hard to tell them apart from the dangerous ones, so it is best to leave them alone.

Mangroves are thick, dense thickets at the edge of the water which protect people from wind and waves. Some of these mangroves grow to the height of thirty feet, while others boast of twice that. The signature of these enormous plants are their arching, twelve-inch prop roots that grow upright in the ground.

Further inland, at the mouth of the rivers and bays, are swampy areas called estuaries, which hold nutrients that are washed by the tide into the ocean to feed the plants. Many different kinds of fish, sea animals, and shellfish are frequent visitors to these estuaries.

Although the ocean may seem scary and strange, if you know what to look for and if you are considerate of the animals and fish, you will discover a world of beauty and wonder.

—Abigail Williams, 14, El Paso, TX.  
Art: Nina A. Forsberg, Eugene.
The ancient Mayan storyteller from Belize began her tale like this:

“Long ago, when the Bacabs, the gods who held up the cardinal points of the sky, looked down from the heavens...”

“Hey, wait a minute, what are the cardinal points?” asked one of our classmates.

“I’ll explain,” she continued, “we must go back into the history of my Mayan people.”

She took some colored markers and white paper and began to draw as she talked. “According to the ancient Mayans, the whole world was really three worlds. There was Ka’an, the upper world or the heavens; there was Lu’um, the world we live in, and Xibalbá, the underworld, where the Lords of Night and Death live.”

“But what’s that got to do with the cardinal points?” the same kid interrupted.

“There are four cardinal directions—north, south, east and west. But our Mayan ancients believed that there were really five. The fifth cardinal direction went right through the center of the earth.

And since we once thought the world was flat instead of round, we believed that there was one Bacab for each of the five of the cardinal points. The job of each Bacab was to hold up Ka’an so that it would not fall down into Lu’um, and so that Lu’um would not fall down into Xibalbá.”

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“Now, from up in the heavens, as the Bacabs watched the earth’s children laughing and singing at play, they suddenly became sad. They thought, someday these children will grow old, their skin will wrinkle, their teeth will fall out and their hair will turn gray. These lovely young girls will grow ugly and the boys’ throwing arms will fail.

“Each of the Bacabs grew sadder as he saw a different part of his world grow dim. The playful puppies would become blind, old dogs. Those wonderful flowers—the golden yellows, flaming reds, sky blues and dusky purples—would fade. The leaves, already having turned the brown color of the earth, would dry up and fall.

“As the Bacabs also watched the play of the sunlight and shadow on the ground and how the summer wind made the clouds as white as ground cornmeal, they decided together, that they must do something to gladden their hearts and also bring joy to the children.

“So they began to gather things they saw all around them. The Bacab of the center of the earth took a spot of sunlight and a handful of the azure-blue from the sky. The North Bacab took the whiteness of the snow that touched only the highest of the Maya Mountains and also took the gray shadows of children playing. The West Bacab took as his favorite color, the blackness of a beautiful girl’s hair. The South Bacab took the umber of the falling leaves, the yellow of mustard flowers, the red, purple and orange of wild flowers and the green of a newly sprouted corn field. The East Bacab reached down and plucked the brightest red from the rising sun.

“The Bacabs put all they had gathered into a little bag. As an afterthought, they also put in the song of the birds. Then, they came down from the heavens and sought out the grassy spot where the children were playing. They called out to them saying: ‘Children, this tiny gift is for you. Open it. Inside there’s a nice surprise.’

“The children opened the bag, and suddenly hundreds of colorful butterflies flew out. They danced around the children’s heads, settled in their hair, and fluttered up again to taste every nearby flower. They were enchanted, saying they had never seen anything so beautiful. As the butterflies began to sing, they listened, enraptured.

“When a song bird heard this, he settled on the shoulder of the East Bacab and said: ‘It is not right for you to give our songs to these pretty new things. When you made us, you told us each of us would have his own song, and now you
Our Mayan storyteller said that archeologists working in Belize have discovered many dark caves and tall, pyramid-like, stone temples, ball court fields and loads of hieroglyphic writings. And way before there were any countries, as we know them today, like more than 2,500 years ago, as many as 20,000 people once lived. Their kings with strange names like: Shield Jaguar, 13 Rabbit, and Yax K’uk Mo’ (or, Blue-Green Quetzal Macaw), once ruled over those huge city-states. Some epigraphers (written-language specialists) say there are as many as 33 different Mayan languages already discovered. More than a million Maya and their descendants live in the U.S. alone. Many can still speak one or more Mayan languages.

Our storyteller told us that her forefathers often painted the walls of their temples and caves with different colors. They used those colors to describe each of the five directional or cardinal points.

For example, in her Mayan language, Mopan, the word for North is Xman, and Sac for white. The people painted the North direction with Sac or white. East is Lakin and its color is red or Chaco. South is Nohol, with yellow or Kan as its color. West is Chikin. Its color is Ek (black). And the fifth cardinal point, the one that goes through the center of the earth, is the word Yax and its color is blue-green.

It was cool to learn all those new words. But I was glad our storyteller wrote all those Mayan words on paper so we didn’t have to memorize them.

—Don Kissil, Morristown, New Jersey.

A Peacock Feather

Like a small leaf, the peacock featherhead begins. Fringed in green, its center becomes a violet eye shadowed in blue. I shake it slightly, and am rewarded with the green of its moving colored patterns. It lets my eyes swoop down to its base from whence a thin, creamy stem appears, peeking in through the strands that reside on the side of the stem. I touch it lightly, letting my hand glide down the long, bold stem. Silky strands float, gently stirring faint whispers of lovers. I look down at the end of the stem where it comes to a thick point like a quill pen. I wish, deep in my soul, to dip it into an ink pot and write romantic poems in a candle-lit room with the moon pouring its light in through the window.

After lunch, Grandma bent the willow and fastened it with a bit of wire to make a circle. She covered it with yarn.

"Raffia is best for this next part," she said, "but we’ll use yarn and string. We can also use some of those feathers you gathered, and I have some beads."

All afternoon, Jon watched Grandma patiently fashion a web from the frame. Her fingers were thick with arthritis and pained her, but she made each knot in the web, measuring as she went along.

When she had completed the web, she had Jon help her decorate it with feathers and beads. It looked very festive, but was it powerful enough to keep the bad dreams from his room at night?

As Grandma hung the dream-catcher, she said, "Jon, I believe this will end your bad dreams."

That night, Jon crawled into bed anxiously. He hoped there would be no bad dreams, but he felt a little shiver of fear as he thought of the nights before.

"Please let it work," he thought.

As he started to drift off to sleep, Jon stared at the dream-catcher. It was really very pretty. Grandma had done a good job.

As he grew more and more drowsy, Jon could see the thick, patient fingers of his grandmother working the web. Even though they didn’t know each other very well, she seemed to really love him. He knew it was sometimes hard for her to do the extra things for him, but she never complained. The dream-catcher would keep the bad dreams away—Grandma said so, and her love was very strong, almost like magic.

Jon fell sound asleep and didn’t have any nightmares that night. The next morning, the first thing he saw was the dream-catcher swaying in the breeze.

Then he noticed Grandma by his bedside.

"Did you sleep well?" she asked.

"Did the dream-catcher work?"

Jon smiled back. It may have been the dream-catcher. It may have been Grandma’s love that kept the bad dreams away.

"Yes, it worked," he said, giving Grandma a hug. "Whatever it was, it worked."

—Marie Wood, Arnold, MD.
I Didn't Want to Go

“Mom, why do I have to go on the retreat? You can't make me!” I said. That was my attitude towards religious things. I hardly went to church and felt trapped at services. I tried to make a million excuses, so my mom wouldn’t force me to go. My mom has been very close to God since I can remember. She always goes to jails and talks to convicts about God and how they could change their lives. I never cared; I always thought, “I go to church once in a while. Besides, I’m not as bad as other people.”

But, forced to go by my mom, I got out of the car with my things. My brother, Henry, my little sister, Sara, and my mom were all going. My dad didn’t come because he hated church. The people in charge of the retreat separated us by age and gender. I couldn’t believe it! I was furious. How could they separate me from my family? I didn’t know anyone else. I sat there with my long, angry face. On the bus, I wanted to jump out the window. Who did they think they were?

Then, it got worse. Everyone started singing. Now what in the world was I going to do? Everyone on the bus looked so happy. It was annoying, so I grabbed my CD player, started listening to my own music and tried to ignore them. Still, I could hear lyrics leaking through: “Somos un pueblo de Dios. Somos un pueblo especial.” We are God’s people, we are special.

Finally, we arrived. Each group went to its cabin. I felt left out. I didn’t know anyone. Finally, a really tall, skinny girl came up to me and told me she would room with me. “Just great,” I thought, “I’m going to spend the next two nights with a stranger.”

All I could think about was what time we would finally go to bed. That night, I listened to someone preach about Jesus. After he was done, I saw many people praying—some were even crying. I was so tired that I didn’t really care. Before coming, my mom had told me that I was going to feel God’s presence all over. Well, I didn’t feel anything at all.

Saturday, we went back inside the church again, but this time it was really weird. As soon as I walked in, I felt happiness and couldn’t stop smiling. That morning, a lady had talked to us about all the hardships and struggles we have in life, and how God is the one who gives us love, peace and happiness.

As she continued, I remembered the fights I had at home: Dad always yelling, my brother always making my sister scream, and my mom always crying. I thought of all the bad things I’m constantly doing, how I never cared about God. Tears started coming down my cheeks. As much as I wanted to stop, I couldn’t! All I could think was how sorry I felt. A lady asked if anyone wanted to come to the altar in front so she could pray for him or her. I went up.

She started to pray; that’s when I felt something delicate and peaceful going into me. I stopped crying. My legs felt shaky and tired. As I opened my eyes, I found myself on the floor.

I had so much love; I wanted to go and hug everyone. That’s when I realized that God does exist and that all those things that my mom told me were true. I felt as if God had held me in His arms and told me He loved me and had forgiven me—the best feeling in the whole wide world.

Saturday night just got better. I felt as if God was with me all the time. On Sunday, all I could think about was how I didn’t want to leave. When I got home, there was peace for the first time in awhile.

Now, my brother, little sister and I don’t fight anymore. It has been two months. I go to church as much as I can, and my mom is really happy about the change. My dad hasn’t changed much, but now when he yells, no one says anything back, so there are really no more fights.

People might think something is wrong with me—I tried talking to my friends about God, but they don’t want to hear, so I stopped. We are so used to our secular world that it seems weird to even think about God. But since the retreat, I feel that God is with me and things are so much better. Even when things go wrong, I know He’s always there! I’m a happier person now.

—Akiko Villegas, grade 11, New City, NY.
Dancer of the Wind

A long time ago, in an ancient land, there lived a man by himself in the desert. He was called Havawa. Havawa had seven sons, all killed in battle. He wished only for a daughter, who could not be taken away from him by the cruel fate of the sword. His wife was dead though, so it seemed impossible.

Havawa prayed every day for a miracle, for a little girl. One night, it was terribly windy, and Havawa sat inside his house. Suddenly, he heard the sound of a baby crying. He cautiously went and opened the door. The sound was coming from a bundle of blankets. Havawa ran out to fetch it. A baby girl! The gods had answered his prayers! He named her Biha (meaning wind) because of the way she had arrived.

Biha grew up like any other girl. Havawa loved her with all his heart. She loved to dance in the wind. She was the most beautiful dancer; she danced as if she was the wind herself!

One night, when Biha was around sixteen, a wounded man came and knocked on their door. Havawa took pity on him and let him in. Biha went to get milk for the visitor. As she was going outside, the wind called her to dance. She could not resist and took off into a wild, beautiful dance of the wind.

The visitor looked out the window and saw Biha dancing. He fell deeply in love with her. When his wounds had healed and it was time for him to leave, he asked Havawa if she could marry Biha. Havawa thought about it and said, “It is time for her to marry and you will be a good match for her. There is one condition though, that you live near me, for I cannot bear to part with my daughter.”

When Havawa told Biha of her newly arranged marriage, she burst into tears sobbing, “You cannot! You will not!”

“But it is our custom,” Havawa said in reply. “It is no custom of mine,” she yelled as she ran outside. Havawa ran after her, and when he got outside, he saw Biha with the wind swirling around her.

“No, Biha, don’t leave me!” he cried to her. “I must,” she replied, “You cannot cage the wind, and that is what I am. I am a gift from the gods and was never meant to stay forever. I fear that I have already stayed too long. The wind cannot be still forever, and neither can I. Farewell, Havawa. When you see the wind dance upon the sand, remember me.”

And with that, the wind lifted her up into the sky, as Havawa watched. Now, when Biha wants to dance, the wind hides her in swirling sand, so that you cannot see what you cannot have.

—Claire Alrich, 12, Chicago Waldorf School, Evanston, Illinois. She writes, “My story is about how you can’t expect things to stay the same. I love to dance and so does the character in my story.”

The Light of Your Fire

Bring forth the light of your fire
Created by your love for others
So as to share its light with mankind.
In turn, this will warm you in the bitter cold.

—Luke Ceuvorst, 13, Gibsonia, PA.

What Would You Do?

If you were stuck in a situation were your boyfriend and your best friend were fighting.

Whose side would you take?
If someone was asking you to do drugs,
Would you?
If one of your friends ran away and told you where she was going and said not to say anything,
Would you?
If your friend was drinking and driving,
Would you tell someone?
If you were a teenager and some popular kids came up to you and asked, “Do you want to smoke, to be in the cool crowd?”

What would you do?

Teens and kids are asked these questions every day. Friends, you know what the right thing is!

—Nicole Oleksa, 13, Gibsonia, PA.
To the average American, prayer five times a day may seem a bit eccentric, but the average Muslim would love to do even more. It hasn’t even been a year since I realized the importance of worship and became more in touch with my spiritual side. But oh, how I wish I started sooner.

I used to think that only extremely religious and pious people prayed the prescribed five times a day. I would look at my aunts, uncles and cousins and think, “They aren’t any different from me,” and, “I’m not worldly.” When someone would ask me what religion I followed, I answered with pride that I was a Muslim. When I saw women with their heads covered or heard the recitation of Holy Scriptures, I was filled with joy. All my dad’s friends would brag about how easy it is for American-born Muslims to become corrupt and how I was such a nice kid. Looking back, I realize how ignorant I really was.

On a usual lazy evening, as I sat in front of the computer looking for a way to pass the time, I decided to check my e-mail. My friend Nadia had sent me something. Two clicks and my life changed forever. I opened the mail and a screen full of wisdom appeared. Listed were the rewards of prayer and the consequences of defiance. My eyes filled with tears. At that moment, I made the decision to learn how to pray and make it a permanent part of my life.

That night, my mom and I had to take a little trip to my cousin’s house, and on the way there I told her about my revelation. She was shocked. All those years she was nagging at me to join her in prayer and to remember our heritage, without response. All it took was one serendipitous piece of counsel, and I was another person. My mother was very happy for me (and herself). Her baby girl was taking the righteous route, bowing down to her Lord at dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset, and evening. There was hope for this young American yet. Now, my mother wouldn’t have to change the subject when her children’s religious priorities came up in conversation. It was a victorious day for her.

Since then, praying has slowly become ingrained in me. I don’t ever see myself stopping or becoming lazy about it. I’m not a fanatic, but I do organize my schedule so that I don’t miss a single prayer. The few times that I do miss a prayer, I get disappointed in myself. I see it as a missed opportunity to do something good in this short life. As I do my homework, I keep checking the clock to see if it’s time yet. I want to do as much as possible so I won’t regret anything later.

This past year brought about many changes in me. In addition to praying, I try to incorporate the other four pillars of Islam into my life as well. A beautiful idea in Islam is that charity is any act of unselfishness, and counts as worship. I greet people with more warmth, I help my mom whenever possible, and I try to treat others with respect.

The hardest bad habit I am trying to kick is saying anything negative about someone behind his or her back. Not that I used to gossip about people or spread rumors or anything, but little things like, “What is she wearing?!” or, “What an attitude problem!” I’m still learning to say things without offending anyone. Refraining from doing bad deeds is like choosing to do good ones.

I look at others now and I hope that they will someday find what I have found. Rediscovering my religion has changed my life completely and made me a better person. Every day is a struggle to be the most pleasant, polite and friendly person possible. I have yet to overcome my slight shyness, but I have a feeling it’ll disappear over time. All I can do is pray.

—Aneela Asghar, 17, New City, New York.

Faith

Faith is something you need through life.
You try to keep it without strife.
Faith is what everyone needs. Faith in life leads.
Faith you never let go of. Faith could fly away
like a dove.

—Anna Jakubielsky, 9, Lowell, Michigan.
“Some of my favorite things to do are draw,
spell, play outside and listen to country music.”
Songs

Songs for the festival of Passover are accompanied by the turning of pages. I smell matzah ball soup and chant ancient words.

Sacramental wine or grape juice, glasses full to their brims, sweetness swallowed in a traditional four cups.

A bitter taste of maror eaten with charoset: sweet wine, apples, nuts. A prayer said for their mixture, my taste buds confused.

Kugels, matzah stuffings, and brisket warm as they slide down my throat. Fizzy black cherry soda washes it all down.

A prayer of thanks for the meal and the cold air from outside as we open the door for Eliyahu in hopes he will enter our home.

Our final song sung with vigor: Chad gadya chad gadya Dizvan aba bit' rei zuzei Chad gadya chad gadya Smiles reach across the table.

Haggadot—my father stands next to the brown wooden shelf. He places each book there carefully. Covers of blue, green and yellow. They slid back into place for next year.

—Jillian Schlanger, 16, New City, NY.

This year Passover begins on 5 April. The italicized words in this poem are Hebrew.

Art by Jon Bush, Belmont, MA.

Teasing Hurts

Once upon a time, there was a girl named April. April was a girl who felt very bad about herself because people made fun of her weaknesses. They did not see her strengths.

Every night, she came home and told her mom some of the things that happened during the day. Her mom made her feel good inside.

Then, at the bus stop the next day, April still felt good about herself...until she got off the bus at school. In her first period class, every time April talked, everyone laughed at her...and it really hurt her feelings.

When she went to gym, she always got called stupid because she was afraid of the ball; but they did not understand that April had a vision problem and a problem judging how far away the ball really was.

When April went to lunch, she got very upset because when she sat at the table, her friend just got up and left. That made April feel very unwanted.

In fifth period, she had two girls make fun of her; they did not know how hard it was not to tell on them. They made fun of her because she had a speech problem.

A kid named Billy in seventh period said that she was ugly and looked like a boy. He said that she could not get a boy to go out with her because she was ugly. April's eyes started to tear. Then he said, "Oh, look, she's going to cry now," in a mean voice.

A lot of times April would hit her lip during the day; she wanted to say something right back, but she was afraid that if she said something to the wrong person, she would be punished.

April became so sad that she just wanted to go to another school where she would not get made fun of and where everyone would fit in.

—April Williams, Berlin, New Jersey. April writes: "Please do not judge someone by looks, or weaknesses, but look inside and see that he or she is a very nice person. I dedicate this to all the kids that get made fun of and are afraid to speak to someone about it."

• Thousands of schools all across the nation will take part in the First Annual No Name-Calling Week, March 1 – 5, 2004. Art by Paula Gregovich.
Do you ever ponder over the contributions of African-American inventors, past and present? How much do you know about them? How much do you think their work has affected our everyday lives? You’d be surprised.

Modern life would be less appealing without their successes. For example, the first thing I do in the morning is turn on the radio. Did you know that an African-American named Otis Boykin was the one who improved on an electrical resistor that is in our radio as well as TV and probably our computer. Not only that, but the music that I listen to has most likely been influenced by Joseph Hunter Dickinson. He has various patented improvements on several musical instruments, including the piano. He developed a method of clarifying the notes, in other words, improving on the loudness or softness of the sound.

I shower and get dressed, putting on my athletic shoes. They’re so comfortable. If it weren’t for Ronald Demon, they wouldn’t be. He created the Smart-Shoe that adjusts to your feet. These soles are mostly used in athletic shoes. They work by using fluid cushions that contains a pressure sensor. That sensor measures the weight and pressure your foot applies to the adjustable sole. Then, it releases just the right amount of fluid for comfort.

Time to hit the road. I take the elevator down from my third-floor apartment. Did I mention that Alexander Miles invented the elevator? Where would we be now without it? How would we have offices in skyscrapers and help the handicapped avoid the stairs?

I arrive at my car, get in, put on my sunglasses and ride. Just my luck, a red light. You may not be too fond of them, but traffic lights are essential to commuters in all major cities. The traffic signal was a work of brilliance by African-American inventor Garrett Morgan. I make it to work.

Later on, at lunch time, I open my lunch box and find a yummy peanut butter sandwich. Thanks to George Washington Carver, there are about 300 delicious ways to consume my favorite nut, the peanut. Some of these include: peanut brittle, peanut oil, but-
Spring Celebrations

March: Women's History Month
Mar. 1-5: No Name-Calling Week
Mar. 6: Holi (Hindu), Purim (Jewish) begins
Mar. 8: International Women's Day
Mar. 10: Kwan Yin Day (Buddhist)
Mar. 20: Spring Equinox, Ostara (Wicca)
Mar 21: Nav Ruz, New Year (Zoroastrian, Baha'i)
Mar. 30: Lord Ram's Birthday (Hindu)
Apr. 3: Mahavir Jayanti (Jain), Apr. 11: Easter
Apr. 13, 14: New Year in SE Asia, Vaishakhi (Sikh)
Apr. 18: Yom HaShoah (Jewish)
Apr. 19-25: TV-Turnoff Week FMI (800) 939-6737
Apr. 22: Earth Day (United States)
May 1: Mawlid al-Nabiy (Islam); May (Lei) Day

• Turning Beauty Inside Out

The annual Turn Beauty Inside Out campaign strives to get girls and women involved in politics and aware of the opportunities available to them. The Grand Prize winner of this year's national Turn Beauty Inside Out Poster Contest, sponsored by the Mind on the Media, is Angelique de la Cruz, 13, of Makati City, Philippines. She says, "Become a Woman Whose Opinions Matter Most; Become a Woman in Politics." Congratulations also to Elizabeth Sabol-Jones, 12, of Chicago, Illinois, and Raeann Stines, 12, Denver, Colorado, the other two winners.

Each year New Moon (www.newmoon.org) magazine for girls, ages 8-14, celebrates girls who recognize their inner beauty. Angelique de la Cruz will join New Moon’s 25 “Beautiful Girls” Contest winners for 2004, along with the editors, in Washington DC on May 1-3, 2004, to promote positive media messages of women.

This leadership event is the fourth annual international celebration of media images that promote healthy behavior and attitudes for girls and boys. The activities will be centered on the theme of education and leadership, “Beauty not defined by the shape of their bodies, but by the content of their hearts and minds.”

• U.S. Women Outnumber Men in High-Paying Professions: For the first time, U.S. women outnumber men in higher paying, white collar, managerial and professional occupations. According to the latest labor data, women represent over 50.5% of the 48 million employees in management, professional and related occupations. In 1983, the first year the government began recording gender data for its occupational statistics, women accounted for 40.9% of managers and professionals. At the computer, women are just as productive as men. This alone has opened up a world of opportunity for women, according to one analyst.

• Brown V. Board of Education: May 17, 2004 marks the 50th anniversary of this historic Supreme Court decision that ended official segregation in U.S. schools. The latest issue of Teaching Tolerance shows educators how to teach about the case and its legacy (www.tolerance.org). An excellent educational video for highschoolers on this topic is Road to Brown (California Newsreel; www.newsreel.org).

• School Bus Diesel Emissions: Over 99% of our nation’s 600,000 school buses run on diesel fuel, placing millions of children at risk each day from the hazardous health effects of diesel emissions. These emissions have been directly linked to such serious health problems as asthma, bronchitis, pneumonia, retarded lung development and increased emergency room visits for respiratory illnesses. After long-term exposure, diesel exhaust can cause cancer.

In an era where there are cleaner and less toxic alternatives, states must act to protect children from exposure to these dangerous pollutants on their trips to and from school. Diesel legislation is being enacted in many states. A wide variety of approaches are being used: educating citizens, reducing heavy-duty diesel vehicle emissions and tax breaks for alternative fuels.

By next year, Oregon schools and public transport could be fueling up on cleaner-burning diesel in preparation for the more stringent federal fuel standards set to begin in 2006. As more states address the issue, our attention turns to states that are unwilling to place the safety of our school children first.

FMI: www.serconline.org/schoolbus/index.html. (Source: State Environmental Resource Center)


Yesterday I Had the Blues by Jeron Ashford Frame, illust. R. Gregory Christie (*Tricycle*). Written like a blues song, one family’s moods go from blues to pinks and more. But with love, the blues won’t stick around for long! Ages 4 - 8. *ISBN: 1-58246-084-1.*

HIGHS!: *Over 150 Ways to Feel REALLY Good Without Alcohol or Other Drugs* by Alex J. Packer (*Free Spirit*). Whether you’re looking for a way to energize or de-stress, the 150 playful, creative suggestions in this book will help you get there. Also includes little-known facts, quotes and survey results from teens. Ages 13 and up. *ISBN: 0-87614-143-2.*

Salmon Forest by David Suzuki and Sarah Ellis, illust. Sheena Lou (*Greystone Books*). Come for a walk in the woods with Kate and her dad and find out why the Pacific rainforest is called the salmon forest. Illustrations beautifully render the Pacific rainforest. Ages 5 - 9. *ISBN: 1-55054-937-5.*


Stories on Stone; Rock Art: *Images from the Ancient Ones* by Jennifer Owings Dewey (*University of New Mexico*). Introduces young readers to the rich history and mystery of rock art in the Southwest. Includes vivid recreation of the images painted and carved into rocks. Ages 8 – 12. *ISBN: 0-8263-3024-X.*

The First Feud: *Between the Mountain and the Sea* by Lynn Plourde, illust. Jim Sollers (*Down East*). An artfully illustrated tale of foolish one-upmanship between Mt. Katahdin and the Atlantic; teaches that beauty is not a treasure to be hoarded but a blessing to be shared. Ages 4 – 9. *ISBN: 0-89272-611-3.*
The Ability to Feel

Sometimes, although they claim to remember
What it was like to be a teen,
I have doubt.

They talk about the days when they were our age,
About how cheap it was to live,
Though life was tough.
And though they remember those experiences,
I often think they don’t remember
What they felt.

And they wonder why we slip away,
Calling bedroom sanctuary,
For there the tears can fall
And all is well.

Because we love, and we despise,
And we think about the world
More than most of the adults I’ve ever known.

As teens we’re at our most alive,
Our feelings most acute,
Our thoughts profound,
As we attempt to sort things out.
And our heartaches and our losses are as genuine
As any ever felt by a grownup heart.

I’m not asking the adults to merely humor us.
If you fake it, we will know it,
And nothing will be changed.
So I’m asking you to really think a moment.
I’m asking you, dear grownups, to think of us
As people, just like every one of you.

As people, just like every one of you.
And not only do we feel things as deeply as all,
(They’re amplified by hormones, I agree),
But the depth of the emotion is still present
And the rest is simply added to confuse.
Sometimes even we aren’t sure when what we’re
feeling is deep,
But sometimes we are.
We ask only that you talk to us
As other human beings
And give us credit
For the ability to feel.

—Hailey Heinz, 14, Eagle River, Alaska.

The Educator’s Book of Quotes by John Blaydes (Corwin). A book of wise and witty quotes educators can use to inspire themselves and their students. Organized according to themes such as change, excellence and the art of teaching. ISBN: 0-7619-3863-X.


Many Ways to See the World is a fascinating 30 min. video (www.odt.org) that brings home images and perceptions encouraged by the ways the world is commonly mapped out in our minds. It also describes how one person can change what is shown or not shown in the maps available in the world. Great resource for social studies, geography and international studies classes. Upper elem. to middle grades.

How to Negotiate with Kids...even when you think you shouldn’t: Seven essential skills to end conflict and bring more joy into your family by Scott Brown (Viking). Learn how to apply conflict-resolving techniques that will bring more harmony between parents and children. Covers how to manage emotions, listen, negotiate and discipline wisely. ISBN: 0-670-03182-8.

The Mystic Christ by Ethan Walker, III (www.devipress.com). A clear and concise book that brings out the essence of Christ’s teachings. The author also quotes heavily from many great masters of various spiritual paths to show that the message of love and compassion is timeless and across all great religions. Great for parents, religious educators and interfaith advocates. ISBN: 0-9729317-0-8.

Race: The Power of an Illusion (California Newsreel, www.newsreel.org). This three-part video series (56 min. each) challenges our most fundamental beliefs—that human beings come divided into a few distinct groups. Shows how what we believe to be normal or even scientific, is actually shaped by our history, and cultural beliefs. High school and up.
(clockwise) "Beauty is a reflection of love, kindness and peace" from Tatarian School, Yaktylyk • "We can make our world better" by Nastya Sboeva, Form 9 • "We live not for war" by Yana Zaripova, Form 10 • "Life comes in all colours of the rainbow" by Nastya Sboeva, Form 9, Gymnasium 77, Togliatti.