

THE WRITE CHALLENGE

Anthology

Spring 2016

REALITY



REALITY

This year's Lakota LEADS Write Challenge theme is REALITY:

Dreams become it. Fantasy seems so far removed from it. People get out of touch with it. Movies and TV pull you into what seems like it. Sometimes you try to escape from it.

Thank you to all of this year's entrants. Here are the top three students in every category and their wonderful literary works...all interpreting this year's theme of REALITY!

Hosted by



Lakota★LEADS

Lakota's Enrichment and Academic
Development of Students

Contents

K-2 Poetry

- 6..... First Day of School, Aubrey Yeazell
- 7..... Jesse Owens Run, Bonny Kirkmeyer
- 8..... Summer, Madison Springmyer

K-2 Narrative

- 9..... Silly, Silly Kittens, Madeline Kirkmeyer
- 12..... Fairy City, Laney Coughlin

K-2 Essay

- 13..... My Dream to Be a Flower Girl, Sophie Hard
- 14..... Mom and I Have Adventures, Bonny Kirkmeyer

3-4 Poetry

- 16..... A Messy Reality, Sushanth Koppula
- 17..... Oh, I Wish Reality Was, Kais Alwawi
- 18..... Flying Cars, Brendan Grimm

3-4 Narrative

- 19..... "Reality," Anna Axelson
- 24..... My Reality Change, Calleigh Ethier

3-4 Essay

- 25..... The Reality in Life, Samantha Sjoquist
- 27..... What Is Reality?, Sunitvir Taunque
- 28..... Challenger, Kenta Mignot

5-6 Poetry

29..... Fancy Fire, Sarah Opoku

31..... All in a Day, Kyle Hacker

32..... Reality, Will Rueter

5-6 Narrative

33..... Fear of Death, William Price

36..... The Injury, Briana Shamim

38..... Reality, Philip Lukovic

5-6 Essay

40..... Reality, Haley Allman

42..... My Dream in Reality, Kaitlyn Wilhelm

44..... Choosing Your Reality, Gabrielle Mathis

7-8 Poetry

46..... I Am Reality, Anitvir Taunque

47..... The Audition, Caroline Batt

48..... Reality, Adetya Mahendra

7-8 Narrative

49..... Wake Up, Jenna Grammer

51..... Reality Hits, Abby Sturgeon

53..... An Escape to Reality, Vaishali Gupta

7-8 Essay

- 56..... Tragedy, Beauty and the Small Dot In-between,
Jenna Grammer
- 58..... The Reality of Inequality, Allison Reed
- 60..... Reality: The Life of a Foster Kid,
Rachel Anderson

9-12 Poetry

- 62..... Walk, Jennave Traore
- 64..... 3:49 A.M., Grace Chaney
- 65..... Grey Lines, AJ Hanmer

9-12 Narrative

- 66.....Caged Bird, Erinn Aulfinger
- 69..... Within Reality, Tyson Jung
- 62..... The Land of the Lost, Katherine Picray

9-12 Essay

- 73..... Ghost Boy, Tyson Jung
- 75..... Reality, Lincoln Addington
- 76..... The Reality of Being a Writer, Dakesian Woods

POETRY K-2: 1st PLACE

First Day of School

By Aubrey Yeazell

I woke up.
I put on my dress.
It was the first day of school!
I am excited this is going to be cool!

I walk to the corner to take my first bus ride.
My mom took a picture and I stepped inside.
I found my seat.
There are new friends to meet!

At school I meet my teacher.
I also meet new friends.
My teacher tells me the rules.
So we do not look like fools.

After a long day we pack up.
It was a great day!
Now back on the bus.
This day was an A plus!

POETRY K-2: 2nd PLACE

Jesse Owens Run

By: Bonny Kirkmeyer

Come on Jesse, you can do it!
You can win the race!
You won the Olympics,
so run around the park!
Fly, fly away! Run, run away!
You are from Ohio, I am from Ohio!
You can, you can, I promise you!
Oh! Jesse you got it, Jesse you got it!
Jesse Cleveland Owens just
runnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnn!
Jesse Owens Run!
Just run, run for yourself!
You are fast and Awesome!
Jesse, oh Jesse...
Jesse Owens run!

POETRY K-2: 3^d PLACE

Summer

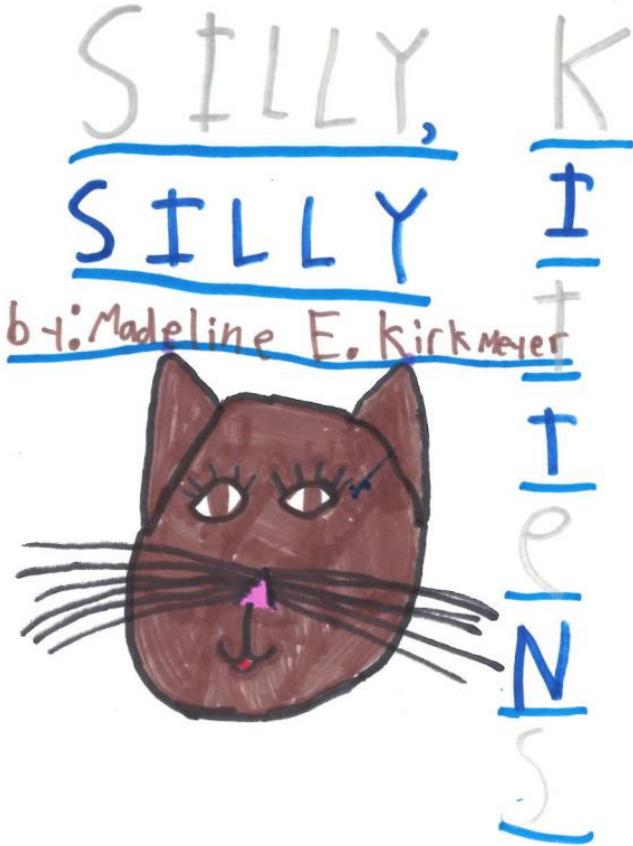
By: Madison Springmyer

I like to go to the lake and ski in the summer.
I like to wear flip-flops, a T-shirt, and shorts in summer.
I like to slide down the slide and swing on the swings.
BUT the REAL thing about summer is having FUN.
It's not about the flowers.
It's not about the sun.
It's all about having FUN.
Because you should have fun with your friends.
You should have fun in the hot hot sun.
When I am at the pool I like to tan.
In summer I like to eat cold things on hot days like ice cream,
watermelon, and popsicles.
In summer at night I like to watch fireworks.
I like to drink lemonade in summer.
Sometimes I make s'mores during summer.
I like summer.

NARRATIVE K-2: 1st PLACE

Silly, Silly Kittens

By: Madeline Kirkmeyer



Chapter 1: Introduction

Cats can be very silly sometimes. How do I know this? I have a cat named Jungle. She is silly sometimes. Read this book to find out how silly cats can sometimes be.



Chapter 2:

One-One Hundred

If you have a cat, how would you rate its silliness? One is not silly at all. One hundred is EXTREMELY super silly. For my cat, I'd rate it 50. Even if you don't have a cat, how would you rate it? Maximum or Minimum? I'd rate my cat 50 because she is sometimes silly and sometimes not silly.

Chapter 3: How Cats Act Silly

Cats act silly in different ways. Like when they play with toys. They will jump and stand on their hind legs, just for a treat. They'll sometimes want to play. Not always. Cats take their silly ways very seriously. You can never tell when they're going to be silly. Maybe now. Maybe later. Do you know when your cat gets silly? I know I do.

Chapter 4: Silly Cats Sleep

Another ways silly cats are silly is sleep. Cats can sleep in silly ways. My cat does. Cats can sleep on their backs, bellies or sides. They may even curl into a ball. Cats aren't very funny when they sleep. I'm just saying.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Now you know about cats and their silly ways. Thanks for learning. The End.



NARRATIVE K-2: 2nd PLACE

Fairy City

By: Laney Coughlin

Once there was a village called Fairy City. In the village there were lots of shops, including Lil's Shoes. A leprechaun named Lil ran the shop. He ran the shop because of two things: one, leprechauns make shoes for fairies; two, the fairies pay for them in gold in case a human wants gold.

One afternoon Lil ran out of supplies. He was worried if a human wanted some gold. That night a human did come, but the human did not want gold-- they wanted a bean. So the leprechaun gave the human 10 bags of beans.

The next morning the leprechaun bought some supplies. That day the leprechaun made more shoes than he ever made before and Lil made enough gold to have a trip to Ireland. So Lil went on the plane and had a visit at Ireland. When he got back someone called on the phone and said, Lil you're hired to work at Jump and dresses. Lil was thrilled because he saw it on his trip. So he went to Ireland again and worked there for 80 years.

ESSAY K-2: 1st PLACE

My Dream to Be a Flower Girl

By Sophie Hard

My name is Sophie T. Hard. I've always wanted to be a flower girl. I want to be a flower girl because I get to walk down the aisle with the bride. I also like the pretty dresses that I wish I could wear. I wonder what flower petals I would drop? Maybe I would get to pick them out myself!

I think flower girls are cool because they are the sign that the bride is coming down the aisle. The spotlight is on the flower girl right before the bride so it is important for the flower girls to throw their petals and give a big smile! I've been waiting and waiting and waiting and waiting is the WORST!

But, I have good news. My wait is over! My aunt is getting married and she asked me to be a flower girl! I couldn't believe my mind! Soon I'll be a flower girl. June 25, 2016. Boy that news is exciting! Soon the spotlight will be on me, and I like that. My dream to be a flower girl is a reality!

ESSAY K-2: 2nd PLACE

Mom and I Have Adventures

By Bonny Kirkmeyer



Dedicated to Mommy

Chapter 1

Hi! My name is Bonny, here's a story about one of my favorite family members: Mom! She's really nice like Dad but this is about Mom! Our adventure started on the date October 5, 2007, when Mom gave birth to me and Madeline. I'm one minute older than Madeline but this is about Mom, not Madeline or Dad. The farthest back I can remember is when Mom was changing my diaper. Ew is right! We were having an adventure right at home! Our second adventure was when Mom went to a restaurant with slippers on! It was a crazy adventure! Another adventure we've had for many years is going to the grocery store. We love going together! But here's a current adventure, going to Kings Island! Mom, Dad, Madeline and I all LOVE the 'Banshee"! Mom is the BEST adventurer I have EVER lived with!

Chapter 2

Some bad adventures are... when Mom yells at me for playing on my iPad without asking. ☹️ One other time is when we got stuck on a roller coaster at Kings Island. There are some good times and some bad times, but Mom is still the best Mom ever! I love Mom! She's the best! Love Bonny

The End



POETRY 3-4: 1st PLACE

A Messy Reality

By: Sushanth Koppula

There's so much trash
Feels like a dream
It's piling up
Just want to scream
This isn't right
But this is real
I never knew
This was such a big deal
Our reality
Has so much trash
The ecosystem
Will eventually crash.





POETRY 3-4: 2nd PLACE

Oh, I Wish Reality Was...

By: Kais Alwawi

Oh, I wish reality was just a dream, unlike people who wish dreams to be reality!

Oh, I wish World War I and II were just bad dreams, and that Middle East lived happily.

Oh, I wish the great depression never happened, and the world sadness was not reality.

Oh, I wish that one day countries will say that their suffering was long ago reality!

POETRY 3-4: 3rd PLACE

Flying Cars

By: Brendan Grimm

I wish I could fly my car, over the Earth
The jet engines high and loud.
In my flying car I would have an enormous view
Looking into in the ballpark,
towering the tallest skyscraper,
and sailing over the reflective water.

But then I see cars on all fours
That's when reality hits.

The drive in the car is very boring
So long the journey from state to state.
The world seems so small.
The little window that I look through
Is just so sad as all I see are
Other cars whizzing by.



NARRATIVE 3-4: 1st PLACE

“Reality”

By: Anna Axelson

Listen! I am not making this up! I swear! It may seem a little farfetched that there are such things as magic users like me, but it's true! You have to believe me! And let me get this straight before you ask. I am sorry to disappoint you but no, I am not a witch. Remember, witches ride brooms and cackle! I may use a black pot and make potions, but I am not a witch! So now that the subject is cleared up, on with the story. By the way, my name is Natalia, I'm 14. Just thought it would be important to mention. This is how it all began, this is my reality.

I was walking out of Bufford high with my best friend Layla, when out of the blue; BOOM!!! A car went up in flames three feet in front of me! Three feet! I am not kidding! So, I did what any normal 14-year-old would do, I screamed like a little girl and ran home. As I ran, cars exploded all around me like fireworks. Scary, dangerous, fireworks. Eventually, I stumbled into my house. Fumbling with the keys. Weakley snatching a 'Harry Potter' book, I feebly crawled onto the couch. So this is how it ends. I'm probably being followed by a terrorist. And yes, there is a reason why I am clutching on to this book for dear life. My parents own no weapons at all. No guns, not even sharp knives. All butter knives. My only weapon is a thick book.

After hours, I heard a faint 'ding'. This is it. I stalked toward the door grasping the gigantic book. Swinging the door open, I let loose an ear splitting battle cry. "RAAAAAA....." my roar

faded into bewilderment, and then to pure joy. Layla stood in my doorway. She rolled her eyes as if this happened every day and strutted into my home right past me. "LAYLAAA!!!" I shrieked at the top of my lungs. Running at her, I tackled her in a bear hug. After nearly squeezing the life out of her, we managed to stumble to our feet. "Oh Layla! I'm so happy you're okay! There's a terrorist out there! The terrorist is blowing up things! They're out to get us! What will we do?!?!" I rambled on and on.

"Well, if that is the case, that there is a terrorist out there, then you should close the door before they waltz in here and shoot us." Layla ordered calmly with a small smirk written on her face. You know, that's what I hate. In dangerous situations, she is calm and collected. Whereas I'm freaking out in panic. You see? We're exact opposites. Layla wore a knee high red coat tied with a simple silver strip of cloth, with brown high tops, blue faded jeans, and matching silky scarf and hat. She always wore a hat or headband to try and keep back her unruly frizzy brown hair. Wearing an oversized black sweater with a belt in the middle to make it look like a dress, I walked over to the door and slammed it and locked it. I also sported black calf high tights with red slippers and a green amulet. I had my hair up in a high messy pony tail. Whenever I moved, my hair bounced with a few stray curls in my naturally straight hair. Layla looked nervous, and if she was nervous, then I definitely had a reason to be nervous.

"Layla? What's wrong?" I questioned. "Natalia, I'm a mager." "Do you mean major?" "No!" Layla scoffed. "Mager means magic user." There are three immortal magic users who take magic from Alaska and personally bless people they think are worthy to be magic users. Alaska is the birth place of magic. There are light magers and dark magers. Long ago

there used to be equal amounts of light and dark, there was a war between us. Light won, now there're hardly any dark magers left. The dark magers are recruiting light magers so they can eliminate light magers--"

"Ya right! It's not even April! A little late on your prank, do you really expect me to believe this?" I interrupted. "Does this answer your question?" Layla asked. I crossed my arms. Layla clasped her hands together and lifted the hand on top upwards. A flower bloomed out of the bottom hand, purple fumes danced around the plant. "Oh. My. God....." I stared at her hands. "Ok, say for a minute, that I believe this, what does this have to do with me?"

"Natalia, you are a light mager because your parents where light magers, ""Why did you use past tense?" "Miranda is a dark mager, in the war; your parents killed her parents." Layla continued "LAYLA??!?" "Miranda is seeking revenge-""Layla, what is wrong with my parents?" I asked, getting worried. "Natalia, Miranda killed your parents, and now she wants to kill you." Layla confessed. My parents are dead?

"NATALIA? DON'T BE SCARED! JUST LET ME IN!" said a fake sweet voice. "That's Miranda! We've got to go!" Layla screeched. We ran out to the back door, Layla yanked the door open. My best friend came face to face with a hulking, golden figure. The stench of the figure was unbearable. Black chipped chains dragged behind it. It resembled a giant with 13 pounds added on. In other words, it needed a diet plan really bad! It was the champion of my nightmares; the monster opened its mouth. I was hit by fumes that I could almost swear it came from the prehistoric times! "Wha.....what is.....?" I tried to form words but sadly failed.

“The silent beast!” Layla whispered. “It can’t see, or make any noises whatsoever.”

We side stepped into the kitchen and silently closed the door. “Let’s go out the back window.” I suggested “Exactly how?” Layla asked. I tiptoed into the living room and grabbed ‘Harry Potter’. Making my way back into the kitchen I wielded the book and slammed it on the glass window, shattering it in the process. “Climb out.” I gestured to the window. I made a foothold with my hands and Layla placed a foot in it. Heaving her up with almost all my strength, I managed to get her out. Hearing the door bust open, I jumped out of the shelter of my house.

“Natalia? I know you’re in there!” Miranda yelled in a hollow voice. “Run!” Layla and I sprinted to the park where a company did fireworks every 4th of July. We both stood there, eyeing our surroundings. All of a sudden, the lamp posts mysteriously went out. In the blink of an eye they switched back on, and by the swings, stood Miranda. She had long, billowing hair and a clock covering her body. Oh and her eyes, they were like kaleidoscopes. They hypnotized you so much you started to sway.

“Natalia, you have to fight her!” Layla warned, “With what?” I sizzled in my dumbness for a while. “Ohh.....” I realized. I’m supposed to use my powers, but how? “Visualize what you want to happen and then say the key word of the thought!” Layla explained, reading my mind. Ok. Here goes nothing. “EXPLODE!!!!!!!!!!!!” I waved my hands around, imagining Miranda being engulfed by flame. I opened my eyes, nothing had happened. Wow. “HA! YOU FOOL! YOU CAN’T EVEN PERFORM MAGIC! GOODBYE!” Miranda shrieked at me. She raised her palms at me, “Kill” she muttered. A beam of light shot from her hands, just

before it made contact with me. The beam of light turned into an innocent daisy and floated to the ground.

I had transformed her killing machine into a flower.

“Killing a 3-year-old was harder than this” Miranda bragged.

“YOU MONSTER!!!!!!!!!!” I screamed with all the rage in my

life. Red and orange energy surrounded the park. I had

destroyed Miranda. YES! “Natalia, Miranda was the leader of the dark magers! So without their leader, they will scatter

everywhere! You’ve saved light magers Natalia!”

YES!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I can finally rest! I’ve had enough of this ‘magic user’ stuff for a life time!

Peace out!

THE END

NARRATIVE 3-4: 2nd PLACE

My Reality Change

By Calleigh Ethier

One day in Cookie-ville there was a little girl named Lily, that's me. I have the craziest story to tell. Anyways one day when I went to bed something crazy happened, when I woke up by the smell of my room I could already tell something was going on. The list of things that I like that was hanging on my wall was totally switched around. Instead of pink my favorite color was red, instead of shrimp my favorite food was Brussel sprouts, ew. I looked in the mirror and I was wearing an Ohio State jersey. Number 1: boo buckeyes, and number 2: why did I wear a jersey to bed? I went downstairs to get some breakfast and I found a note, it said: *Dear Lily, off to work and make sure you do your chores, love you MOM & DAD.* Okay mom and dad always work from home, something was up. O.M.G. I just realized my entire reality is changing...

To be continued

P.S.

Look, my reality is totally normal now, but you'll have to read the next story to find out what happens next.

ESSAY 3-4: 1st PLACE

The Reality in Life

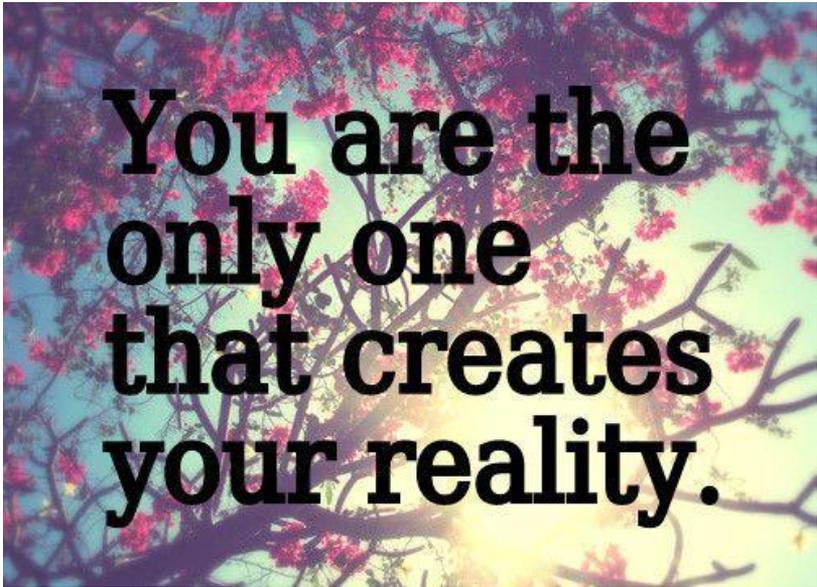
By: Samantha Sjoquist

Reality is something that will never go away. Sometimes it makes you say stupid things or do stupid things. Reality can cause certain emotions. Reality can show up in many emotions like happiness, sadness, enthusiasm, anger, or maybe even fear. These emotions can make you think why did this happen or what am I going to do now? Emotions can cause reactions like screaming, crying, dancing, throwing things, or maybe hiding.

Reality has its ups and downs. Some of the ups might be getting A+ on your test because you studied hard, getting asked to prom by your crush because he liked you, or when you came in 1st place in a 5K run because you tried your hardest. The down sides might be when your group or team loses in a competition because your team didn't give 100% effort, when you lose a loved one, or when you break your leg and can't play a sport or play with your friends. People try to escape reality by playing video games or just plain ignoring it. The truth is though there is no way to escape reality because reality is with us at all times and it's everywhere.

Everyone has a different perspective of reality. It's important to recognize that each of us can see reality differently. This

helps us to understand each other better and communicate with each other better. In conclusion, reality is with us for better or worse. Sometimes it makes you do things without thinking. Whether you know it or not.



ESSAY 3-4: 2nd PLACE

What Is Reality?

By: Sunitvir Taunque

What is reality? Reality is the state of things that actually exist. Reality is everything that existed, exists, and will exist. But, is this the true meaning of reality?

In life science, scientists have a theory that existence is not reality, not the truth, but yet another illusion. So, does that mean that a dream is a reality too? It is not reality. But, you can make it reality by hard work, discipline, and determination. For example, the Wright brothers. Their dream all started when their dad got them a toy that could glide in the air. That inspired them to make their own invention that could fly. With their hard work and determination, they were able to fulfill their dream of flying in the air. They were able to experience life by making their dream a reality, just like this quote by Soren Kierkegaard says, "Life is not a problem to be solved, but a reality to be experienced."

Another way of understanding reality is by contrasting non-fiction and fiction. Reality is like non-fiction. It is based on true facts. It is the truth. It is real, unlike fiction which is false, imaginary, or created. The earth, sky, oceans, the solar system, these things are all reality, unlike Greek mythology, which is imaginary and created.

So then, what is reality in the end? Is it just another illusion like a dream, or is it the truth like non-fiction?

ESSAY 3-4: 3^d PLACE

Challenger

By: Kenta Mignot

I can not speak because I have autism. But I have learned to spell and can communicate with others. It is very difficult to move my hand to point to letters when I spell. It is like you are juggling balls in front of a large audience. My hand gets stiff and I start sweating.

I often spell "LOL". Because I also want to laugh out loud like you do all the time. But my brain does not send a signal to make me laugh physically. LOL. I tell you, I wish I could speak. Sad. LOL.

I know it is going to be another long and patient process, but I am trying to practice speaking. Because one day I want to call my friends by their names. I also want to say to my parents "I love you." in my own voice. Just imagining that day makes me keep going.

This is the reality I face. I may not be one of the most popular kids, but that is okay. I must fight with the reality so that I can continue to be a challenger, who I really want to be.

POETRY 5-6: 1st PLACE

Fancy Fire

By: Sarah Opoku

I close my eyes to see a place of fancy clothes from head to toe.

Kings, princes, princesses and Queens. And they use gold as currency.

Amazing entries from dragons, chariots, unicorns, carriages, and great fancy wagons.

Drink from a cup with your pinky up.

Trays were carried by butlers and maids.

Then, a delicious entrée was let laid.

No “beeps” or “bings” to distract us from important things.

I hear no tweets while I ate delicious treats.

The violinists’ beat had an old time-e beat.

I saw a fairy on the corner.

That baby dragon almost burnt her!

This magical kingdom is a place I never want to leave.

Then I open my eyes and this time I see a fiery world of depression.

Houses were flipped over in which I questioned.

People screaming and shouting things I didn’t understand.

The people were marching with large signs in their hands.

Oh, the “beeps” and “bings” were back!

I wished that their screens would just crack!

It’s that moment when I realize that only this type of world could only exist in reality.

Where you never really know who's good and who's bad.
You just got to keep fighting and not be sad.
The beginning might be a scare, and it might not be fair.
But in the end, you get the effect of a shocking bend.
So I guess it's not all that depressed as it wants you to
express.
But sometimes I still wonder if I'll ever know that place of
fancy clothes from head to toe.



POETRY 5-6: 2nd PLACE

All in a Day

By: Kyle Hacker

I wake up to the smell of coffee, birds tweeting, and the background noise of the television news.

Half asleep I trod down the stairs to a mouthful of crispy waffles, crunch, crunch, crunch, against my newly brushed teeth.

Alarm goes off, beep, beep, beep, it's time for the bus, Bye Mom! The door slams, my day beings.

A whole day of classes, I put down my pencil, "all students are now dismissed," the bus doors creek open, I take my seat as it roars to life onward home.

I go to sleep to the aroma of soap from my nightly shower, crickets chirping and the background noise of the bustling wind.

Rewind; Repeat; Resume

POETRY 5-6: 3^d PLACE

Reality

By: Will Rueter

Reality cannot be taught
Nor can it be given
Reality must be obtained
Through life's challenges
And rewards
Reality is highly sought after
Yet often is avoided
We shy away from the truth
And embrace the lies that comfort us
Not willing to face our fears
Reality seems terrifying
Mortality and injury
Our greatest fears
Yet accepting reality
Will only make us wiser
Reality is dismissed
As a harmful notion
That only destroys joy
But reality makes us better
And lets us recognize our true nature
Reality is love
Reality is hate
Reality is light
Reality is dark
Reality is all

NARRATIVE 5-6: 1st PLACE

Fear of Death

By: William C. Price

Every night I dreamt of death. I had cancer and was always worried I wouldn't make it through another day. But somehow, I always did. Thinking it would do some good for me, my parents enrolled me into school. What they didn't know though was that every day I was teased for always wearing a hat. I had good reasons to wear it though.

• • •

I was dragging myself towards English class when this happened. I was stopped by three kids around my age. Two girls and a boy.

"Hello," they said in perfect unison. "Where are you going?"

"Um, I'm off to English." I was horrible at making friends.

"Really? We are too!" A girl said. On our way to English I learned their names were Sylvia, Naomi, and Luke. Naomi was African American while Luke and Sylvia were white. I was Hispanic.

What I liked about them was they didn't notice my hat. Normally kids laughed at me. Some thought I didn't know how to take it off (I do by the way) while others thought I was too lazy to take it off.

After English we had Algebra II. In Algebra II we were assigned a group project. My absolute favorite because I had zero friends. This time was different though. I joined Sylvia, Naomi, and Luke's group. We finished first and got an A+.

We went to gym next where for some reason we are allowed to do whatever we want. I was chatting with Naomi when Micah came. Micah was the smallest person I've ever seen. Sadly, he was also the scariest.

"Will you ever learn how to take the hat off, Simon?" He snickered. "Is it glued to your head?"

"You guessed it. I dumped a whole tub of Elmer's glue on my head." I replied, wanting to get this done and over with. I got a response I was not expecting. One second I feel a small pain in my back, next I'm on the floor. "*Wonderful*", I think to myself over and over again.

"No one talks to me with sarcasm." Micah growled before yanking off my hat.

Revealing my head.

My bald head.

A couple of kids started giggling while I started having a nervous breakdown. I grabbed my hat with trembling hands and walked to the lunchroom right when the bell rang.

I intended to sit alone, but Sylvia, Naomi, and Luke sat down next to me. After explaining I had cancer, they began to sob. I won't lie, I was a little embarrassed. Naomi said her cousin had cancer and didn't make it.



The rest of the day I mainly just received snickers and glances that made a ball of fire rise in my chest. Then I would think of my new friends and it would evaporate. My friends

had brought me new hope. For the first time since my cancer was diagnosed, I didn't dream of death.



NARRATIVE 5-6: 2nd PLACE

The Injury

By: Briana Shamim

I took a gulp of morning air as I saw my mom's car speeding towards me. How could she be so late? As my mom's car drove over I quickly jumped in. As soon as I turned my head I was momentarily speechless. Tears were streaming down my mom's face. I only made out a few words, "what happened?" My mom replied, "he fainted in school today" My emotions shattered but both of us did not say a word all the way home.

The next day, we had to visit my brother at the hospital. I was especially tensed up when my parents told me what happened at the incident. He was actually at his desk, and when he fainted his eye hit the corner of his desk. He got a black eye in the process.

When my parents and I entered my brother's hospital room the first thing I noticed was how the room looked. The room was clean and shiny but somehow horrified me. My eyes settled on my somewhat scary-looking brother. His eye was as big as a softball. Believe it or not the first thing I said the whole trip to the hospital was, "Whoa." I even held up two fingers to his face and said, "Do you know what this number is?" He mumbled a little but I am pretty sure he said, "One."

He told me recently that he was mumbling probably because he was basically brought back from the dead with the strongest medicine. My brother actually has a history of fainting, and I remember on one of those times I was talking to him while he was half asleep. He was talking about *Legend of Zelda* or something.

Anyway, my brother healed nicely after the first visit. His doctor started looking into what was causing his fainting spree. They thought it was his heart. They did surgery on my brother, and put a chip right next to his heart. Why the chip was there is because the next time he fainted they would know what was causing his fainting. The surgery was pretty straightforward and it worked out for about a year. His doctors then took brain scans from my brother. They looked over the scans and realized that it was not his heart causing the fainting, but it was his brain.

Me and my brother were talking recently and he told me that when he fainted in school he basically experienced how it was like to die. That is because his brain literally shut down. Apparently, his brain was too active. In other words it was too powerful (the opposite of what I was expecting). Since his brain is so powerful it constantly demands for blood and oxygen. This is what made him faint so many time in the first place. I hope you understood all that. I am glad I got this story out of my system (exhale).

NARRATIVE 5-6: 3rd PLACE

Reality

By: Philip Lukovic

My teacher gave me a project in science class. The project that was assigned to me was to create an animal cell based off of the materials that I buy. I know it wouldn't be easy, but if I try, I know I will succeed.

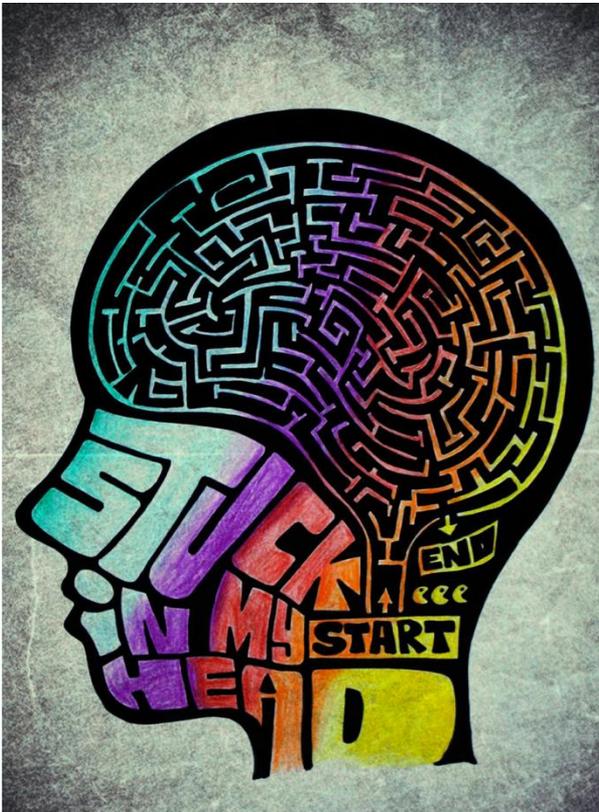
It first started in my head, just as an idea. I imagined what I needed to buy, and how I would use it. After a long time of just planning it all in my head, I thought I would be ready to start the process.

I needed to go to Michaels for about all of my supplies. I was there for a long time, because I needed to decide what would be the right materials. I bought a Styrofoam ball for the main cell, I bought playdough to shape and form all of the organelles. I bought beads as my last thing, and I already had acrylic paint for the rest. After that, I was ready to start building the project.

I took the Styrofoam ball, and started painting red since the ball was white, and I didn't like it that way. And after that, I took the playdough, and started to shape the actual organelles that were going to be a part of my cell. I had to do it quickly though, because the playdough dried quickly. I blended lots of playdough together to get the correct color, and I painted the rest. It was hard to make the playdough still without it falling over. I took tooth picks to stick in the organelles so they would be labeled, and I had to use a lot of them because there were so many different ones!

After that was done, I made some extra details as finishing touches. I made sure everything was just like I imagined it. I was very close to being finished, and it was exciting!

After lots of days of hard work, I was satisfied with my final result. I was happy with the final product, and what was once an imagination, just in my head, became reality.



ESSAY 5-6: 1st PLACE

Reality

By: Haley Allman

What is Reality? Reality is what happens to me, not matter what I do. It is not always fun, but it's not always bad either. Reality is going swimming on a hot summer day; it is also visiting my grandfather in the hospital after he hurt his head.

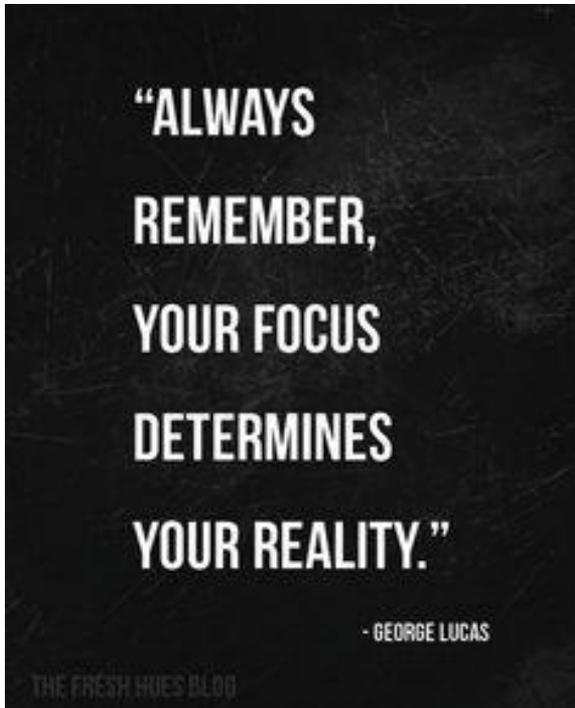
What is Fantasy? Fantasies are things that are not real. Sometimes I fantasize about what I want my reality to be. For example, I fantasize about being rich, about being famous, about being successful. I fantasize about having no bumps in the road of my life. Even of being a star on Broadway!

I have learned that reality leads me to success; fantasy can lead me to disappointment. I have learned that I can help control my reality, and that my fantasies can be real only if I make them real. I have learned that my actions, my choices, my thoughts and feelings, my ideas and even my cravings are real things that I can control. By learning these things, I have really learned that I can control some of my reality.

How to I control my choices and my feelings? Some ways I have learned to do that are (1) by talking them out with my friends, my family, and with people I trust. (2) By writing things down; instead of just getting worried or scared. I find that writing things out on paper can clear out my mind rather

than just saying things out loud. I may think it's a harsh thing to say out loud but if I write it down and read it, I can think about it more clearly and realize that it may not be as worrying or scary as I thought. (3) By thinking about the bad things that happened before I act or react. If I visualize something before I react to it, I can realize that a situation is not as worrying as I thought, and I can choose to say or do something better about that situation.

Bad things are going to happen in my life, and when they do, I will feel worried, anxious, scared or sad. But I have learned that I can control my life, my reality, by how I feel and respond to them, through my real choices in life.



NARRATIVE 5-6: 2nd PLACE

My Dream in Reality

By: Kaitlyn Wilhelm

I believe your reality is what you make it. I am already working hard to make my dreams become reality.

Hi, I'm Katie. I have three pets; Hermie and Ocean, my hermit crabs and Meika, my Yo chow pup. I am a vegetarian because of my love for animals. I love all animals and don't have a favorite. I think all animals are cute and I'm not afraid of any. I know a lot about animals (mud skippers, aardvarks, bush babies, etc.) And I know what's happening in zoos, circuses, Sea world, (dairy) farms, pounds and more too. I know a lot about animal cruelty and I love writing stories. I mainly write about animals and how mean people can be to them. I really want to help them and make a difference in the world. There are so many great, kind people in the world, and others don't know that animals have feelings too. And I'm the kind of person that knows that. That loves them for who they are—not that they aren't as smart as us, which that's the biggest human lie, animals are way smarter than humans, we just don't know. So don't take advantage of them that they can't talk or do math. Love them for who they are.

My dream is to become a veterinarian. I am already learning as much as I can about all animals. I am too young to volunteer at an animal shelter or clinic, but excited for when I can! While I wait, I am teaching myself about animals by researching on the internet and reading books.

My dream goal is to graduate veterinarian school and open my own animal shelter/clinic. I want to be able to offer all kinds of different services in one location. My mom loves animals as much as I do and she is very good at business, so she will help me run it. We will be a no kill shelter and have animals for adoption. We will also offer veterinary services to keep animals healthy and help them when they are hurt. I will also offer boarding and grooming and even training for your pet. I want my shelter/clinic to be open to all animals, not just dogs and cats but also horses, cows, rabbits, turtles and lizards. No animal would be turned away. I love all animals and want to be able to help them all.

In my shelter, animals wouldn't just have what you see in them now, which is a blanket in a concrete cell. Those poor dogs look like they are in prison. I would treat each and every animal as if it were my own. They would have beds and a soft floor; it would be like a nice hotel for animals.

I think I would make a great vet. I think I could make my dream come true in reality if I work hard and study a lot.



NARRATIVE 5-6: 3rd PLACE

Choosing Your Reality

By: Gabrielle Mathis

According to the dictionary, “reality is the world or state of things as they actually exist, as opposed to an idealistic or notional idea of them.” I know reality is not absolute because we all have different experiences which affect our perception of reality. Each of us perceives the world through our own eyes which makes reality change from person to person, and so it becomes our version of what is real. Therefore, I believe reality is merely a reflection of perception. This essay documents my journey and how perception changed everything!

Being overweight is not a reality I ever planned to deal with, it seemed so far-fetched! Honestly, when I look back, I ate lots of junk foods and perhaps didn’t do enough physical activities. However, I never thought that my reality would look this way: “FAT.”

First of all, I don’t consider myself fat, although my BMI and society does. This is where perception overrules reality. I am not out of touch; reality is I’m a 12- year- old girl who is a whopping 180 pounds! When I look around at others my age, reality is they are smaller. The reality of what I see on the scale is 180 pounds. However, my perception is I am overweight, not fat, there is a big difference! I believe being

fat is a mindset, while being overweight is a condition that can be changed. Fat people spend time worrying about their weight and missing out on life. When you're overweight you may weigh the same as the person acting "fat" but instead of moping, you live life letting nothing hold you back which is how I live my life. Let's face it, if I were "fat" according to my definition, I definitely would not open up about this personal struggle for fear of being judged.

Regardless of my perception about my weight, reality is it makes me a target for bullies. Bullies see people like me as an easy target to pick on. Some people tend to think I'm a pompous kid, and sometimes it may appear that way but I'm very confident and proud. My confidence catches people off guard, because some overweight people are quiet, uninvolved and try not to be noticed. Regardless of what the scale says, I'm not a shy person, and reality is, no one gets to mistreat me.

If offered a million dollars to change, I would pass, because I love being me, and I try to avoid the trap of caring what others think. Sure, I want friends, but I'm not willing to change for a friendship. Society makes us feel we're not good enough, so we have to act, look and feel a certain way to be accepted. In reality, we are perfect just the way we are. In reality, I work out to stay active because I want to be healthy on the inside, not because I want to look a certain way on the outside!

POETRY 7-8: 1st PLACE

I Am Reality

By: Anitvir Taunque

I am reality
I am the truth
People have mixed feelings about me
They have no clue as to what I do
I am reality
I might make people happy
When their expectations are exceeded
They joyfully welcome me
I am reality
I may bring people grief
When they are hit with a tragedy
In their anger, they curse and push me away
I am reality
People question me
Whether they can face me
Or elude me
Or should they simply embrace me
I am reality
I am Beyond your control
But before I happen
I am in your control
It is your choice as to what you want
But after I happen, your choice is gone
I am the truth
You cannot avoid me
Once I happen
I am the Reality

POETRY 7-8: 2nd PLACE

The Audition

By: Caroline Batt

Enter the room and the music begins
Just another number in the realm of dance
Yet nerves take over my body
Inhale the music as you exhale your emotions
And allow your thoughts of
Am I good enough to stand out?
Knowing every second is certainty and this
Performance I must shine.
From one side to another
Performing what I've practiced
I am a dancer and this is my shot to impress
The spotlight shines and all eyes watch
So I proceed on and give it my all
I enter my state of mind
Inhale the music and exhale my feelings
Don't let this get the best of me.

The music ends and my performance
Was without flaws
My worries and nerves are no more
I've danced the performance of my life
Living with no regrets
I've connected to the music and stood out
Inhale relief and exhale as I focus
Or was it all just a dream?

POETRY 7-8: 3^d PLACE

Reality

By: Adetya Mahendra

Reality is this year's theme,
It's not as simple as a dream,
It's quite the opposite actually,
But what exactly is reality?
It's everything that has existed,
Like when racism was not so restricted,
It's everything that is existing,
Like the tectonic plates slowly shifting,
It's everything that will exist,
Like cars that drive without any assist.
Dreams come true with hard work and passion,
But that kind of stuff isn't really in fashion,
Dreams and reality should be intertwined,
The only thing preventing it is the state of mind.
Why are so many people trying to escape it?
It's really in your control,
All you need is a little grit,
Well ... "There must be more!"
There is a different side to this theme,
Power can take you to the extreme,
Intentions may be worse than they seem,
Don't let that greed destroy your dream.
Reality is in your control,
More so than ever before,
What will you do?
Will you give up control,
Make life just a road of potholes?
Or will you say, "no thanks,"
That's real money in your wisdom bank.
Facing reality is in your control.
Will you embrace it,
Or will you end up trying to escape it?

NARRATIVE 7-8: 1st PLACE

Wake Up

By: Jenna Grammer

I pushed through the grass, every step I took life grew. I was surrounded by beauty. Trees guarded me with their tough, crumbly skin. Their branches pointing toward my purpose, my final destination. The ground was covered in ivy, calmly curling around my feet and beckoning me down a safe path. As I went I greeted tree nymphs, satyrs and other nature spirits of the wild. They welcomed me with smiles, growing hope within me. Birds were singing of harmony and happiness, the sun beamed through the treetops and split the ground in half. My eyes lingered on a leaf slowly twirling through the still breeze. I felt like I was where I belonged-home. My chestnut hair matched the soil curling beneath my feet, my hazel eyes held the forest within them. The more I moved forward, the more I felt my heart expand and pump in anticipation.

I tiptoed around the sleeping shadows. I heard a soft roar whisper in my ear, my feet flew forward, now ignoring the ivy. I was so close. I tripped and stumbled as my feet thumped against the ground, screaming to accelerate. Finally, I escaped the forest. My feet wiggled in the sand. All I could see was endless amounts of turquoise blue rushing ahead of me, calling me. It ran over jagged rocks and crawled toward me, barely touching my toes. All I had to do was take one more step and I would be there. Spirits and animals alike

pushed me towards it, restless with anticipation. I raised my foot-

“Emma, Emma!” A voice screamed, “Get up! We have to see them before they go!” It was Joseph, he was only six and therefore very impatient. Meghan sat in the front seat, her eyes sympathizing with me. My eyes were bruised with insomnia. I dreaded this day.

I unbuckled my seatbelt and stepped out of the car, picking up Joseph and putting him on my hip. “We’ll make it buddy. I swear.” I whispered into his ear.

We walked towards the entrance of the hospital and picked up our name tags. We’d been here so often it was like we had the map marked on the palm of our hand. Room 203, that’s where we needed to be. We twisted around each hallway, nodding at familiar nurses as we walked. The hospital always reeked of hand sanitizer, but I was getting used to it.

The closer we walked to the room the more I could feel it. The dull ache in my brain, the anxiety shaking my fingers and the grief that I was sure was stained on my face. It all felt too real.

I slowed down as we made the next right. Room 203. “You ready buddy?” I asked Joseph. He nodded. I turned to look at Meghan and she gave me an encouraging smile. I rapped my hand against the door and pushed the door open, “Mom, Dad?”

NARRATIVE 7-8 2nd PLACE

Reality Hits

By: Abby Sturgeon

She awoke, laying flat in the grass. Her mind filled with questions. The two most prominent questions were first where was she and second where is Jenin. They hadn't been separated for at least a year. Now she was gone, Jenin wasn't with her. Panic set in.

Slowly she sat up and began going over what she knew. Her name was Mer, her twin, Jeni wasn't there, and she was alone. She began walking around and found a boy. Another teenager, but still not her sister. She woke him up and he began to panic.

"Calm down," Mer began, "I'm Mer."

"Ok. Where am I Mer? Do you even know? Why are we here? Can you answer my questions?" He fired questions at her like bullets.

"Stop" Mer said. "I have no idea on anything you asked me so just stop."

"Ok Mer. Just one more. Have you found anyone else?"

"No" she whispered. "No I haven't." she felt so close to tears, she looked at the ground and suddenly felt strong. "Come with me and help me find more people." *Like Jeni* she added in her mind.

"OK" he said softly. "Just an FYI, my name is Z."

They began walking and searching, but it seemed as though they were the only ones. They slowly made their way towards the end of their field. Once reaching where it ended, they found a building, a barn really, and inside they found two others. They just happened to be Jeni and a guy who looked like Z.

“Jeni!”

“Mer!”

Both girls squealed as they ran to each other, embracing in a hug.

Suddenly the four of them heard a strange whistling sound. They looked up and saw flying objects that looked similar to cars but they *flew*. They all began to run in the direction they saw the cars coming from. They ran up the hill and found a huge towering city.

They ran to the city and began walking around, looking for life. They walked into the first store they could find and found out the year. It was still 2016, but they weren't on Earth anymore. The planet they were on was called Li. This was reality for them. A new planet meant new lives for all of them. This was their new reality.

NARRATIVE 7-8 3rd PLACE

An Escape to Reality

By: Vaishali Gupta

“Hey guys, it’s the weirdo again!” I said to my friends, smirking. “Why are you so skinny, freak? And what’s with those ugly clothes?” I turned to my friends and said, “If you can call them clothes.”

Ellie blinked back tears.

The bell suddenly rang. “Oh, there’s the bell. See you later, loser.” I said snottily. When I turned around, my huge purse hit Ellie, who crashed into me, and I fell and hit my head on a rock.

“Wake up Becca!” A tiny ghost shook me awake.

“Wait, where am I?” I asked dizzily.

“Oh, I’m the Ghost of the Present. I’m here on an important mission to show you the truth about someone. Come with me.” It took my hand and we soared into a ratty apartment.

“Ew, I can’t go in there.” I complained.

The ghost said, “Don’t worry, we’ll watch from the window. This is Ellie’s apartment. Her family of 5 lives there, along with her aunt, uncle, and grandma.” The ghost informed me. “Here they are.”

“Mom, what’s for dinner today?” Ellie asked.

The woman in blue said, “Nothing today. Your father lost his job, and no one will hire me because I didn’t go to

college. Aunt Betty and Grandma are sick, and your Uncle is earning minimum wage.”

“But Mom, what about Suzie? She hasn’t eaten in 3 weeks, and she’s only 3 years old!”

Mrs. Smith put her hand on Ellie and said, “I’m afraid fate will do what it has to do to us.”

I gasped. “They’re going to let the little girl *die*?”

The ghost nodded grimly. “The Smiths can’t support themselves. They are in poverty, and no one is there to help them.”

“I feel so bad. I bully Ellie every day, but I didn’t realize what her life was like. Compared to her, I’m very lucky for everything I have.”

“Becca, you’ve been protected from everything. You have to realize that what we see right now is reality; there are people starving, begging, stealing, and dying out in the real world.” The ghost took my hand and said, “I hope you learned your lesson. It’s time to go.”

At school the next day, all my friends were worried about my head. I didn’t care at all; there were more important matters to attend to.

“Ellie! Wait up!” I called.

She sighed, and said, “I’m sorry I crashed into you, and you can call me whatever you want if that makes you feel better.”

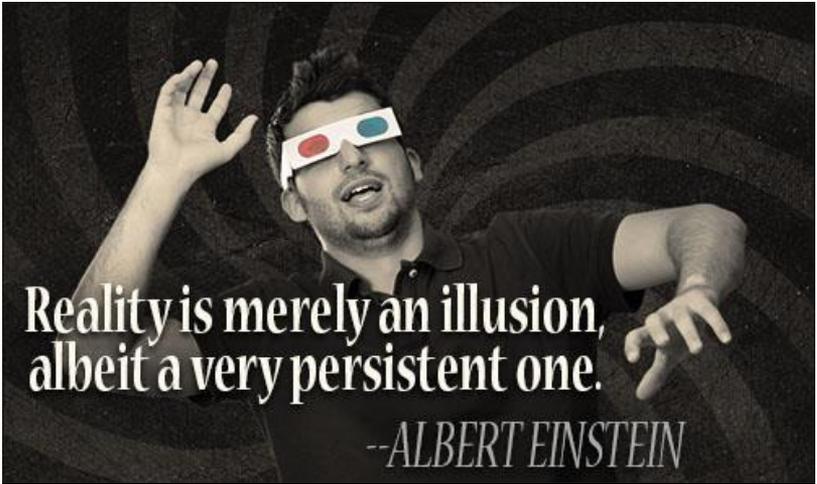
“No, it’s not that. I was wondering if we could call a truce.”

Ellie’s eyes widened. “Wait a minute, is this some sort of trick?”

“No, it’s not. I just realized how hard you have it, and I wasn’t helping. A little ghost showed me the real world. Even

though reality is something you want to escape from, I think it's good I saw how what I was missing out on."

Ellie laughed and said, "I'm glad you know what's going on."



ESSAY 7-8 1st PLACE

Tragedy, Beauty and the Small Dot In-between

By: Jenna Grammer

Reality is defined as the world or state of things as they actually exist, as opposed to an idealistic or notional idea of them. To be honest, I have always struggled with reality. Reality to me is a confusing mass of string that I just can't seem to untangle, every time I try to get one string free another one wiggles itself in. When I open my eyes I see this huge world I've never explored filled with magic, madness and a whole lot of problems to solve. Reality is tragedy, beauty and a small dot.

Reality is tragedy. Many people look around and see the pollution in the air, the crime filling the streets and the ground littered with our forgotten mementos. It all exists, and so do the tragedies that inevitably enter our lives. The emotional toil that makes it hard to get up in the morning, the grief that streams down our face as we turn toward the empty spot on the bed and our hand cold from the space where another hand belongs. To some people, reality is a black hole but to me reality contains more than our dark days, because tragedy makes me so much more determined to leave a footprint and live a life full of happiness.

Reality is beauty. After tragedy leaves our lives something else substitutes it: potential- potential to see the world in a different perspective. A broken sign on the side of the road can fill you with happiness, because it's a memory: I see a family gathered around the table with proud smiles

plastered on their faces, a new family business, a dream come true. This world is filled with beauty, sometimes you just need to search a little deeper to find it. Two years ago I was stuck in quicksand, but if I didn't have that challenge I would never be so determined to see the sun beam across every single surface of the Earth. If it wasn't for that tragedy I wouldn't see the beauty, or be the aspired writer and obsessive reader that I am today.

Reality is a small dot. We live on a huge planet compacted with seven billion people and we constantly orbit around a star that changes the atmosphere around us. While all of this occurs, time is ticking by, plants are sprouting and new things are entering our lives. People begin to fade but their stories live on and exist forever. It's the state of things as they actually exist. We live on a planet that orbits in this galaxy and outside that galaxy is an infinite universe. We are just a small dot on a blank page filled with billions and billions of stories. The possibilities are endless.

Reality is defined as the world or the state of things as they actually exist, as opposed to an idealistic or notional idea of them. My reality is tragedy, beauty and one small dot. What's your reality?



ESSAY 7-8 2nd PLACE

The Reality of Inequality

By: Allison Reed

Reality: the state or quality of being real. People around you say that reality is changing! That racial segregation is getting better every day. That you are free to say whatever you wish. Even that lesbian marriages and gay marriages are accepted. But why do I feel compelled to try to fit in? To be a society stereotyped “white girl.”

As same sex marriages have become legal in many states in the USA, they are not fully accepted. In fact, many people look down upon the idea. If you are a Christian, then you are then stereotyped with the Bible. Through social media ideas are shared that the Bible is against same sex marriages which then puts all Christians in the hate zone when many do not believe in such ideas. We need to learn how to make conscious efforts towards making a balance of voicing our ideas while listening to others.

Two hundred twenty-three years ago the constitution was written with 39 signatures declaring the freedom of speech. While that is still a right in the USA today the freedom of speech seems to come with a price when you speak your opinion on serious issues. For example, speaking about the upcoming election in November there is controversy over who should win. Just by saying who you think should win could get you bullied and shamed. Too many people have been killed or felt shame just by speaking up for

what they believe in or what they feel is right. This reality is sad and needs to be changed and everyone needs to help. That would be a reality I would want to see.

Racial segregation is said to have gotten better in the past decade. While we now have an African American president, in every day places such as school we are still very segregated. People have built up a wall through the years making it really hard for people to branch out to other skin colors. This goes both ways whether you are Hispanic, African, or white you rarely see groups mixing. Even in the dating world whites rarely date black and vice versa. Sad to say we are the cause for our own segregation. I have hope that we can break down the wall, but this wall has been up for so long we will need every person to branch out past their comfort zone to make it collapse.

Reality can be hard to face and look in the eye. But with a few brave actions and some loyal followers you make a huge change. The reality you live in today doesn't have to stay that way. Take your vision and make it your new reality. Change serotypes, break down boundaries, and be brave!

ESSAY 7-8 3^d PLACE

Reality: The Life of a Foster Kid

By: Rachel Anderson

What is foster care? Foster care is the system in which a child is placed when they are removed from their home because of abuse or neglect. They stay in the system until a family adopts them or until they can be reunited with their parents. The harsh reality for these kids is in complete contrast to the easy lives of typical children. Foster kids have trouble finishing school projects, enjoying special occasions, or remaining in a stable home. Painful memories can resurface with the most common daily tasks.

It is common at the beginning of the school year for teachers to assign a “get to know you” project. Sometimes they have the kids bring in baby pictures or talk about their family. The reality for foster kids is that they most likely do not have any baby pictures or fun stories about when they were younger. Foster kids are moved from home to home until they find a “forever” family. They could have moved multiple times before entering the first grade. Most kids are excited to bring in pictures to share but this can be devastating to a foster kid.

Teachers also assign books for kids to read that can trigger feelings of being different. Common books such as, “Where’s My Mother?” can spark numerous behavior issues. Getting in trouble is not fun for the child or the parents. Holidays are another difficult reality for these children. When most people think of holidays they think of celebrating with family and

participating in family traditions. However, that is not usually the case with foster kids. Holidays can trigger memories of traditions they used to do with their biological families. These special times can bring out the worst in them because they feel sad, lonely, and depressed. Instead of being happy, and carefree, they remember the trauma of abuse and neglect. The reality is when most kids are looking forward to Christmas and birthdays, foster kids are wishing they were home.

When foster kids are moved from one home to another, they are scared. They have no idea what to expect. Every family's rules and expectations are different. Usually when kids are moved to a new home they go through a "honeymoon phase" where they are well behaved for about 3-4 months. That is when they are observing a family and trying to get a feel of how things are run. Then the reality kicks in and they try to "you're your buttons," seeing if this new family will actually keep them this time. This includes being defiant, disrespectful, and sometimes, violent.

The reality of life for foster kids is tough especially compared to typical children. They have a difficult time finishing school projects, appreciating special occasions, and even staying in a stable home. Next time you think your reality is tough, remember what these kids have to go through every day.

POETRY 9-12: 1st PLACE

Walk

By: Jennave Traore

The inquiry sent shockwaves into my brain.

The question of why I was walking felt more like an accusation than applause for my non athletic perseverance.

As if I enjoyed waking up at an impossible hour just to venture out into the mourning darkness.

As if beating up my already pumped up kicks to arrive at the dreaded unknown, otherwise known as school, was my decision.

To the driver, I probably seemed lonely and desperate.

But to me I was none of those things.

I was strong, I was independent, and most of all I was brave.

So to answer the question I responded with the French saying, "Je ne sais pas."

But in reality, I knew the answer of why I walked.

I walked to remember but I also walked to forget.

It was the only time of day my psyche became one with the rhythm of my footsteps.

I was one with the rhythm of the music blaring from my white earphones too.

Walking to school with my oversized backpack was like dragging around a sac of hopes and dreams and only one shot to get it right.

But when you approach your "friends" at school and their feet don't turn around to greet you, just keep walking.

Just keep going because their faces say "yes" but their body language says "no you can't come join our circle."

The reality of it is that days begin to fade together when you watch them go by like storm clouds on a rainy morning.

When watching others have fun becomes a hobby snap out of it and keep walking.

You're falling out of touch with reality.

Did you forget?

You're capable of your own happiness.

Only there is no off switch for the loud thoughts and loaded words that crowd your brain at nighttime.

I know it can be hard sometimes when dark storm clouds follow you inside buildings and you can no longer hide from them.

When morbid becomes an everyday feeling just know that you're no longer living.

You're walking through life just to step inside another day only to realize you're no better there than who you were yesterday.

You're a ghost.

When you walk past them they don't greet you because they don't truly see you.

So don't worry about your direction.

You can't run into them when you're always down trying to pick up the scattered pieces of yourself.

Get it together.

You are leaving invisible traces of yourself on the floor that only you can see because it's all in your head.

Your head, the true root of many problems where your depression grows.

In reality, depression lies to you.

Don't give in because remember you're strong, you're independent, and most of all you're brave.

Give me your hand and we'll walk this battle together.

This journey of mine I call life.

POETRY 9-12: 2nd PLACE

3:49 A.M.

By: Grace Chaney

The Cul de sac is dark except for a bright light shining through
a narrow second story window.

Inside, a girl, wide awake, feels like the purple walls are
crashing down on her.

She stands barefoot in the middle of a trophy filled room,
holding an ice cold penny in hand.

Her scared knees tremble as she throws the copper coin in
the air and watches as it plummets to the floor.

Nervously she slowly starts to look down, she stares at
Lincoln's face for what seems like forever.

Surprising relief evident on her face her tensed body relaxes
for the first time in weeks.

As she walks around the room picking up the many shiny
trophies the purple walls lift.

One by one she places them in a box labeled storage.

The Cul de sac is dark except for a bright light shining through
a narrow second story window.

POETRY 9-12: 3rd PLACE

Grey Lines

By: AJ Hanmer

What is reality
But a dream
With brutality
That can seem
Like it drags
Pulling you
Like it stabs
Ripping you
Back to the ground
Where you shall stay
When you want to bound
To fly away
But even the dreamer
With infinite pride
Will reality murder
And burn, reside



NARRATIVE 9-12: 1st PLACE

Caged Bird

By: Erinn Aulfinger

(Based on a Real-Life experience)

Her bones rattled. Not from the cold that threatened to knock the wind from her sails, but from the pounding bird waiting to soar from her chest. Its wings ensnared in the cage of her ribs and swallowed by the lock in her throat.

Erinn didn't walk with footsteps, she bounded with zeal. People took notice, as they often do to those who seem to be walking with purpose to nowhere in particular. They took notice of the sureness of her stride and the horizons reflected in her eyes. They heard the muffled cries of the caged bird's song through the one cheek that threatened a smile.

"Don't you dare walk out on me, young lady. You'll be nothing without my coaching. Where are you going? Where do you think you're going?"

Tennis had been Erinn's passion for as long as she could remember. She reveled in the freedom of flight and the power in her wingspan. Coach had been the guiding hand that led her to success. His teaching was strict and she thrived in the structured setting. Erinn had always been successful at following the rules, which offered her the opportunity to bite her tongue and take the easy road of no questions and all results.

“Erinn what the heck, I told you! I told you! Listen to me. I won’t have any of this on my court. This is my house; you’re an unwelcomed guest.”

His spoken bullets ricocheted in the surrounding gym and Erinn only cowered into herself to avoid the brunt of the blows. She swallowed the words she was too afraid to taste. Their bitter truth ballooning inside her and escaping as only the smallest of sighs.

“I don’t want to hear that. Do it again.”

Erinn had no place for the freedom promised by flapping wings and muffled cries, so she continued to smother its form deeper into her chest. She dodged his words along with the balls that continuously threatened her safety. Their echo mimicked her erratic heartbeat.

“Wrong, wrong, wrong. How many times do I have to tell you to move your feet. It’s sad, really. You are terrible at tennis and will amount to nothing in life. Do you know who I am? Do you know what I’ve done? I’ve accomplished a national title. I ran seven miles a day when I was your age.”

“I’m smart. Tennis isn’t everything.”

She spoke hesitantly and swallowed her voice, as if the words dragged their nails into her throat, clawing their way back into her body just as soon as they were forced out of her chest.

“Oh really? You say you’re smart, but you can’t figure out a simple grip change. You say that but I’m not the one who is a failure. You are an embarrassment to the game. Get back on that court and do the play again.”

Erinn backed away, his words pushing her closer to the lines that enclosed the court. A cage of white lines. The white lines that threatened to silence the caged bird’s cry forever.

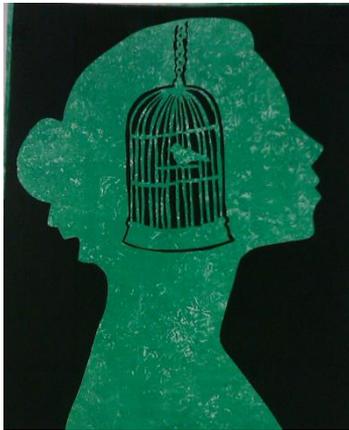
Her feet dragged, slowly making their way to the court until the tips of her sneakers touched the white lines that beckoned her name. They called for her surrender. They anticipated her defeat. Only the white lines stood between her and him.

But, Erinn couldn't step over the lines.

She walked past them. Past their beckoning call. Past the shocked onlookers. Past the voice of Coach who was spewing words of anger she could no longer understand.

"I have been enslaved by the four white lines you call a court for too long. I bit back my words. Swallowed my pride. You clipped my wings, Coach. You no longer have power over me."

Erinn walked with zeal, answering the caged bird's cry with one of her own. She only looked forward and was swept away as if the wind's only purpose was to hold her afloat. Horizons reflected in her eyes. One cheek threatening a smile. She unlocked the passion, drive, and opinions that were confined to the cage in her chest, and finally let herself soar.



NARRATIVE 9-12: 2nd PLACE

Within Reality

By: Tyson Jung

“Sometimes, I swear the sky looks fake,” I say, turning to her. As I speak, my breath turns to frost. We’re sitting on the roof of my house, as the salmon sunset unfurls itself across the icy sky. She meets my gaze, and we both smile.

“Sometimes, I swear you make no sense,” she replies, laughing. She scoots closer to me, and we both back as far away from the edge of the roof as we can. The wind slices right through our blankets and our coats. She shivers relentlessly; I give her the blanket wrapped around me, making me vulnerable to the snow and the breeze.

“You should feel pretty lucky, you know,” I say as I wrap it around her shoulders. “I don’t give just anyone my blanket.”

“I *do* feel lucky,” she says, taking my hand. “I’m with you.”

I laugh and I tilt my head back. My eyes focus on the snowflakes that fall, freckles upon the vast, oceanic sky.

“They’re like little parachute men, falling slowly,” I say, concentrating on a single, delicate flake. The wispy clouds above are silently floating past us, pearly-white sheep in a pasture of blue.

She tilts her head back with me, to watch as the wintry parachute men descend upon the world. "I wonder where all those snowflakes are going," she says softly.

"Wherever they want to," I reply.

"I wish I could do that."

"Me, too," I say.

I take a break from the sky-gazing and I brush off the snow from my body. She then asks, "When do we go inside?"

"When the sun sets."

We both direct our eyes to the indigo sunset directly in front of us. The fiery sun recedes behind the far-off horizon, almost disappeared. A pale moon plays hide-and-seek with the clouds.

Time with her could span for eternity. Reality seems far away, receding with the sun-- time with her could rival dreams.

"Well, the sun better hurry up, then," she says with a shiver. "I can't feel my toes."

"Do you have to leave soon?" I ask.

"Yep. Right when we get inside. I guess the sun decides when I go." I pray that the sun never sets.

I squeeze her even closer to me. With her head on my chest, my heartbeat fills her ears. I wonder what she thinks of it. I wonder if she lives in my picturesque dream, or if her heart beats within reality.

NARRATIVE 9-12: 3^d PLACE

The Land of the Lost

By: Katherine Picray

"Molly? Molly!" Her mother called from three aisles away. It was becoming more distant as Molly closed her eyes. Her stomach churned into knots. She was lost and she knew it. She had gotten so distracted when counting the studs on the belt, she had found herself alone when she finished and turned around. She began to panic.

She laid down on the cold floor and stared at the object that hung above her. She began to feel sleepy. Molly was too preoccupied about being lost forever, that she didn't feel to fight against her fatigue. She would never be found if she didn't stay awake.

Suddenly, she felt her body shift underneath her. The sound of the wave crashed against the warm sand. She opened her eyes to the blinding sun.

"It's your turn." Someone called out to her. She cocked her head to her left to see a young boy, approximately her age of six or seven, sitting with his legs crossed with a board game.

"Where am I?" She asked as she placed herself on the opposite side of him and began to play.

"I don't know. It's a place where things go when they're lost." He kept his eyes down as he clicked the red, plastic chip against the checker board.

"Who are you? How did you get here?"

"My name's Caleb; and I ran away from home."

Molly's chest seized up at the thought of choosing to be lost. She felt a strong yearning to find her mother just to say that she wasn't.

She squeezed her eyes shut. Concentrating hard, the laminated floor of the grocery store returned. She opened her eyes and crawled out from under the rack of winter coats.

"Molly!" It was her mother.

"Mommy!" She ran into her arms and declared to herself that she would never get lost again.



ESSAY 9-12: 1st PLACE

Ghost Boy

By: Tyson Jung

When I was little, I remember my dad always called me *ghost*. I used to sneak around, early in the morning when the whole house was dark and slumbering. I don't know why I did it. I might've just been a curious kid.

I remember getting out of bed, creeping along the hallway, arriving directly in front of my parent's room. The door stood open and shadowy. I could hear my dad groan as he stumbled to get dressed. He saw me, standing in the hallway completely still and completely silent. He walked over to me and I was so scared.

"What are you doing, ghost?" he asked me. I stared into his piercing eyes. My words did not come. He walked off, retreating into the secluded bedroom.

I slinked back to bed, pulling the blankets high and I pretended to sleep until everyone else awoke.

I remember I'd stay in bed to avoid becoming the infamous ghost of the morning. Sometimes, I would even wake my brothers up at five, so perhaps all of us were ghosts, slipping silently down the stairs.

But now I think of why my dad always called me that. I guess he didn't like that in the mornings, I was silent with my snooping and with my words. I had only staring. I stared at the sleeping house around me. I guess he didn't like that I

was the first one up, the first one to take a hot shower and the first one to eat breakfast.

Maybe he didn't like to see me, a seven-year-old ghost boy standing in his dinosaur pajamas staring and staring and staring. I took in the world with that stare.

Maybe he didn't want me to perceive the world he was living in. His reality was too dismal for a seven-year-old boy.

Now, I think about how he acts.

He is silent. I sit, first one up, a fifteen-year-old ghost boy drinking my coffee at a dark kitchen table, hair dripping from a hot morning shower. I see a silhouette come from the shadows as my dad descends the stairs. I do not hear his steps, and I do not hear his voice. But I see the world he may have been trying to hide from me. My words do not come, for it is out of place for ghosts to speak. I see him float along, passing through rooms, slipping silently down the stairs.

I see you, dad. You've seen me, with my lack of sleep, standing in the hallway, taking you in.

You, dad, with your ghost prejudice, are just a scared, silent, seven-year-old ghost boy yourself.

ESSAY 9-12: 2nd PLACE

Reality

By: Lincoln Addington

In the final hours before the death of Christ, he was brought before Pontius Pilate, to plead his case and be declared innocent or guilty. As he was questioned, Jesus stated that he had come into the world " to preach the truth. Anyone on the side of truth listens to (him)."

Pilate cynically replied, "What is truth?"

Pilate was wrong. Dead wrong. Truth is not fluid. Reality is non-negotiable. Our collective hopes and delusions can seem to become reality, but they are not, and the world only starts to fall apart when we forget that.

In George Orwell's "1984", Winston Smith, a dissident in a communist autocracy, is tortured in the basement of the Ministry of Love by an agent of the regime. This agent holds up four fingers and asks Winston how many there are. He then tells him Big Brother, the party's figurehead, says there are five, and again, asks him how many there are. Each time he answers four, he is tortured with an electric shock, until he is willing to compromise his reality and answer five.

Reality is hard facts and genuine moments. It is the mud under your feet, the dirt under your nails, the dust in your hair. It is not something that can be imposed on you by others, unless you let them. Never forget that.

ESSAY 9-12: 3^d PLACE

The Reality of Being a Writer

By: Dakesian Woods

In a world where all the smart kids are going to be doctors or engineers, there are not many applicants for the job these days. And when a kid declares “I want to write when I grow up!” it’s not uncommon for an adult to give a little chuckle and say “that’s great hon,” and then a little quieter “better keep your day job” accompanied by a slight eye roll. But being a writer is not like being a doctor. Physicians can’t (legally) prescribe medicines on the side, as a hobby. They don’t just get a feeling one morning and burst out their door to go perform some random heart surgery. Being a doctor is an occupation, while writing is an interest. It can be a hobby that passes the time or a method of stress relief or a feeling you get one morning or a full blown career, working side by side with editors and publishers.

Anyone and everyone can be a writer. There are only a few qualifications that need to be met to start. You must have a writing utensil, something to write on, a thought, and knowledge of at least one language to communicate your ideas through. From there tell your reader about how you see life, tell them your unfiltered truth. Write about your reality.

I’m also not going to try and cover up the truth; writers who do depend upon their products for a living often don’t make big bucks. What they do have is a passion for having fun while writing. So when a kid says they want to

write, they may not want to do it as a job. They may just want to have fun writing, and that's a reality to be encouraged.



Thank you...

This 2016 Write Challenge would not have been possible without the support of:

- Lakota's Gifted Services Department
- LEADS Board
- Lakota Students and Parents
- Lakota Classroom Teachers
- Lakota's Board and Administrators
- And an extra big thanks to LEADS Write Challenge Organizing Team and all of our Judges

About LEADS

Lakota's Enrichment and Academic Development of Students (LEADS) is primarily aimed at the parents of children identified as gifted, but welcome ALL families in the Lakota School District.

LEADS mission is to identify, provide and/or sponsor enriching academic and social opportunities for students of the District.

www.lakotaleads.org



Lakota★LEADS

Lakota's Enrichment and Academic
Development of Students

REALITY
LEAVES A LOT TO THE
IMAGINATION.

-John Lennon

LoveAndLogic.com