

Oklahoma Young Writers Anthology  
Spring 2022

# YWWA



GRADES  
6-8

CELEBRATING  
OKLAHOMA'S  
WRITERS

The logo for the Oklahoma Council of Teachers of English (OKCTE). It features the letters 'OKCTE' in a bold, sans-serif font. The 'O' is white with a grey outline, while the 'K', 'C', 'T', 'E', and the second 'O' are solid black. Above the letters are several colorful triangles in shades of yellow, orange, pink, and blue.

Oklahoma Council of Teachers of English





Oklahoma Council of Teachers of English

**2022**

**Young Writers Anthology  
Grades 6-8**

**By Students of Oklahoma**



Oklahoma Council of Teachers of English

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## **About the Anthology**

This anthology contains the winning works submitted for the annual Oklahoma Young Writers Contest, sponsored by the Oklahoma Council of Teachers of English, the state affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English.

We received nearly 500 entries with the support of nearly 60 educators across the state of Oklahoma.

The winners, ranging from grades 6-8, submitted works for short story, personal narrative, comic, poetry, descriptive paragraph, and expository essay. To the writers included in this year's anthology, *Congratulations on this prestigious achievement!*

## **Submission Policy & Review Process**

The Young Writers Anthology welcomes submissions from any student grades 6-8 in Oklahoma between November and January via online submission form. Teachers submit work on behalf of the students verifying they have read the work, have parent permission to enter the work for publication, and that the work is original. What is submitted must be a "final" copy as we will not make requests for revisions. From January to March, the review board judges each entry using the same rubric developed by the Oklahoma Council of Teachers of English. Each piece is reviewed by multiple members of the review boards. During March, the editorial and layout teamwork to copy edit and create the anthology. All writers are notified in late March through teacher contact as to the status of their entry. Anthology writers will receive a certificate of congratulations at the OKCTE April gathering.

## **Editorial Policy**

The Young Writers Anthology editorial staff reserves the right to edit minor errors such as grammatical and spelling issues.

**Special "Thank You" to YWC Coordinator:** Sarah J. Donovan

OKCTE 6

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# DESCRIPTIVE PARAGRAPH

YOUNG WRITERS ANTHOLOGY

JAKE NABORS / OKLAHOMA SUNSET





**El Mercado**

Emily Ortega

The instant fragrance of vibrant fruits sit soldierlike on stands. The irresistible aroma of tamales, quesadillas, and tortas fill the air. I look up and see pinatas hanging from the ceiling, just glimmering and all the vivid colors coming down from them. Everywhere I look, there are people saying, “vengan y compren, ropa a un dollar, perfume para hombres y mujeres, juguetes para sus ninos.” At one little vendor, these ladies are selling these handmade and delicate bracelets with images of La Virgen De Guadalupe, having little jewels surrounding them. This mercado is so big, that it just seems like a never-ending maze. Everyone that comes by, needs to stop and have a refreshing snack. I get a sour taste in my mouth, from some freshly cut watermelon and cucumbers glazed with lime, and chile powder. All that I can hear are people and families talking in Spanish, and kids whining or complaining that they want their parents to buy them a toy from a small seller. This mercado is like a mall, overloaded and crowded with so many people, but instead of white people, it’s Mexicans. Not only that, but instead of someone selling luxurious items that you would buy at a mall, people sell an item connected to their culture, or what God gave them the gift to make with their own hardworking hands. Just like there is this old lady saying, “vengan y compren unas pulseras,” so I go and feel the texture from the yarn and string of her handmade purses. Slowly and gently I am tracing the beautiful flower pattern sewed into them. Nothing can compare to the authentic and exquisite desserts that people sell, conchas, campechanas, and churros, it makes my mouth just water. Every time I am here, this elderly lady is always selling these necklaces that just scream my name. The butterflies on the necklace fly to me and make me fall in love, so I have to buy it. If any Mexican sees a white person or Americans here, it would be like finding a two-dollar bill, it’s rare to see them. “Como la flor,” by Selena Quintanilla is blasting on these huge speakers, where it’s hard to speak to my parents right beside me, it’s as loud as a thunderstorm. My childhood nostalgia gives me a hug, when I picked up these Tinkerbelle party bags from this store, it was like my childhood

saying “Hi,” once again. At the end of the day, just being surrounded by people like me, with the same culture, traditions, speaking the first-ever language I ever knew, just makes my heart light up inside.

### **Gloom**

Brianna Fleming

She is just standing there. The whole world seems to come to a halt. The gray sky seems to turn darker while the wind blows. Everything she hears slows down. The yells and shouts from the other students outside echo in her ears. Her breathing slows down. She can't think or focus. Everything becomes so blurry it makes her head ache with a pounding. There are people surrounding them. She doesn't process what's happening and what is being said. Through a blurry vision, she sees what used to be her friend screaming and yelling at her. Then she just quickly walks away crying with a...“friend” comforting her but first giving a nasty glare. Then she stands there all alone. Staring off into the distance then turns away, with every step she tries harder and harder but can't stop. Streams of warm liquid fall down her face. Faster and faster. Muffled sobs fill her ears. Her friends find her but she can't stop. Digging her nails further into her thighs and biting her tongue but it doesn't help. Her friends listening to her quiet shaky voice explain what happened. It all happened so quickly but felt like an eternity. Her emotions and soul go bitter with pain. The wind blows her hair in the wind as she is trapped inside her thoughts and can't escape. Further and further she goes until she is lost and can not be saved. Her whole life just changed with one simple moment.

### **Soldier**

Arianna Loftus

Drops are slapping me across my face as my feet cut through the murky water, disturbing the rhythm. I hear the screams and cries of my fellow allies, but I don't dare look back, this is my mission, my commission. There is a growing boom of thunder, it seems to be rolling off of the sky into my ears, sending off a message of regret ringing in my ears, it is



making me question my sanity and choices. The lightning is flashing so bright it makes the sun look dull, with every streak across the sky my eyes light up, and every time the dark disappears again, it gives me the chills of my last firework show and it makes me compare the flare guns, cannons, and lit torches to fireworks, cigarettes, lighters, in other words, my old life. The rain is hitting the ground so hard it shakes me in my slumber making me believe there is an earthquake, the rain and lightning has never been out-numbered, not even with all the soldiers and all of my allies laying next to me in the other uncomfortably hard cots. CRASH!! I wake with a start to find that my quarters has part. I am yelling and screaming for the others to wake up, put on the heavy dirty boots, grab jackets, hats, everything, but they don't hear me over the crashing, and BOOM!! Everyone is up and dazed, I seem to be the only one who has any sense of what is happening. I am running now, I don't know what has happened to my friends and peers, some may have gotten out and others, well, captured or dead. Possibly they escaped and got their act together, who can blame anyone for being dazed when they have to wake up to crashes and booms. All I know is that I can't go back since that base has been tracked. I am still running now. Faster, Faster, Faster the tress yell at me intensely. I listen closely as I run, I can hear the cannons firing, aiming at me they seem. I crash into the murky water of the cove. All I can think is swim, swim, swim, far into the deep. Then, and only then, I begin to weep and come to my senses of what just happened. As I am laying in the murky water, I think to myself, no one ever tells you how much we have done, they take us for granted 'till our time is done. They can never imagine all the pain and suffering, it makes you go insane, but they believe they help in some way. I just lay here, in the deep murky water, and I wait for the coldness to sweep me under, the dirt from the water is invading my eyes and I continue to wait. And here it comes, it sweeps me under and I feel my soul leave my body forever.

## **The Court**

Addison Schmidt

Boom! Boom! The ball hits the hardwood, sending a wave of electrifying energy through the stands. Nervousness floods through my veins turning my stomach queasy. My teammates zig zag in and out trying to get free from the herd of girls. Left, right, and all around I hear voices instructing me, but all I absorb is a spiral of confusion. The pressure of my teammates rests on my shoulders, one mistake could cause a domino effect. My lungs burn with anger from my miscalculation as I race back to play defense. My mom yells from the stands for me to be strong and keep fighting. I push through the overwhelming sense to cry and focus on the job at hand. The taste of blood fills my mouth, distracting me for a millisecond, allowing the other team to get a shot off. The ball drifts around the rim ultimately falling into my hands after the made basket. Ice shaking in the water bottles begging me to take a break. I can't! The clock ticks down like a bomb. 20, 19..... 4 points away from winning the championship, and no one can escape the defense from the opposing team. I argue with myself over my next step, knowing it would mean failure or victory. "Time Out". The ref calls for the ball and both teams jog towards the sideline. My mind races through all of the possibilities for us to win in just 16 sec. After my coach lays out a plan, the buzzer goes off and we hustle on the court. Emily is throwing it in with Mykayla standing worriedly in front of her. I wait patiently and nervously at the block on the opposite side of the court as Emily makes a sharp pass to Mykayla. Mykayla dribbles up the court preparing to launch the ball to me. We have just 10 seconds to go when she hurls the ball. I stop the solid pass and shoot it in the net. 25-23! With just seconds to go, it's the other team's ball. Adrenaline pumps through our bodies as we get into defense mode. Everyone is focused on the same thing.... Getting the ball. The other team makes a bounce pass to a teammate, but it gets intercepted by Emily. She takes one dribble and goes up for a left-handed layup. With everyone holding their breath, the ball sits on the rim before slowly leaning away from the basket falling into the other team's hands. "Foul! Foul!" our coach bellows. I grab a girl. The whistle screams and the clock stops with 3 seconds left. Their ball. Our

defense is strong, we stick to them like glue. “4,5!” Whistle screeches. Our ball. Emily passes to Mykayla. She turns around and heaves the ball. The buzzer goes off! Time freezes as the ball hits the rim bouncing upwards before making a swish into the net. 25-26! We win!

### **Fnaf Security Breach**

Preston Addington

The soundless room with endless darkness at the end of the hall to the front. A vent on each side and standing there a computer desk with a music box and a light switch. Reaching to flick the light switch on and off, on-off, a horrifying figure appears in the light in the front hallway. Then you hear another daunting figure approach you from the horrifying vent you reach for the music box on the desk. You held your finger down on the music box to see if the daunting figure will walk away and it does. As you're flicking the light switches off and another ominous figure appears before you, but instead this horrifying figure is not like the others; this figure is dark and has red eyes. With a thick robotic body with a black top hat. You keep flipping the light switches on-off, but he keeps inching closer and closer every time you press the switch, then. . .BAM! You can't see anything but darkness.



# PERSONAL NARRATIVE

YOUNG WRITERS ANTHOLOGY

SOPHIA RULE / A DARK PEACEFUL NIGHT



## **Bull-Headed**

Addyson Harmon

New Year's Eve is most often remembered as a celebration of a year passed and one to come. I spent many of my childhood celebrations of the holiday at different places: houses of friends, family parties, and sometimes in my own home. Had I known one specific New Year what would come crashing down, I may have taken a rain check.

This particular night, my parents felt inclined to spend time with friends as they played a game of cards and listened to the fickle flames in the fireplace pop. The youngest group of children spent the evening laughing as the television switched channels with the frequency of the fire's flighty crackles. They snickered, eating bits of cookies, leaving most of the dessert to crumb up in their laps.

I, however, found myself with a much rowdier and more reckless clan. Rather than wisely biding time drinking juice as violet as the eleven o'clock sky, I found myself with two red headed brothers, who had become fast friends of mine. The boys and I took to entertaining ourselves in the basement of this house. The home was quick to welcome us with an eerie draw, yet little did I know the fall that was to come.

The room itself was fallaciously calm, walls whitewashed almost as if to hide something. The children we were, we set out to play with the toys we had spotted, like a yoga ball. Understand this was no ordinary yoga ball. This was a ball crafted of fine rubber, built sturdy for bouncing. The rubber, as if to contrast the walls, was a brown comparable to chocolate. As if the ball was not enough trouble in itself, the most dangerous feature rested on the top. This yoga ball was a literal bull-headed bouncy ball.

Being children, our response was guessable. We wanted to play with it! The boys and I engaged in a battle for the bull and to be the best bull rider. One of the two was a quite efficient contestant. The other and I, however, were not so skilled. Our laughs radiated through the room, which I would imagine was the first hint of pure brightness the room had experienced when suddenly, an idea hatched in my head.

At the time, one could not have convinced me that I was not the best bull-headed yoga ball rider in the world. My eyes caught on a staircase from the main floor down to our level. Without explaining to the easily distracted two, I laced my hands around the plastic horns, and climbed the steps clad by carpet that kept hold of my socks. I fought to reach the top. It was quite a sufficient effort. I count it to be the most intelligent part of my plan.

I readied myself atop the bull. My imagination ran on a rampage. I was no longer a snot-nosed, glasses-wearing little girl, I was Addy Jill, the wildest, most loved stunt rider. My fans adored me. People watched on their televisions as I tried for the biggest challenge yet: bouncing down the stairs one by one. I was a star.

I made a lethal mistake. I did it. I bounced down those stairs as unquestionably the most bull-headed yoga ball rider ever.

Sudden euphoria overwhelmed me. It was working, and I would be lionized in the eyes of my comrades. I could fly for a split second. Nothing could hold me back. I was everything and more. In my thoughts, it made sense. “Forget bouncing, I can fly!” I thought.

The fates laughed in my face.

The most terrifying part of the grueling experience was that moment that I knew. Euphoria melted away, leaving nothing but an agonizing realization of “Oh crud”.

Flying is exciting. The falling, however, is enlightening. As I tumbled, time seemed to slow. Time wanted me to savor this moment, this painful moment. The back of my head pummeled into one of the stairs. My momentum would have rather gone on without my brain than to wait for it to catch up. Yellow specks dipped into my vision. I do not remember if I cried out or took the growing ache with a grain of salt. I tumbled on and on. The bull landed on top of my heaping body. Only when my head rang like church bells and my arms twitched did I finally stop. You have heard of a fall from grace? This was mine.

I laid flat on the ground a much lengthier amount of time than I care to admit. I waited until the last fleck left my vision before I considered the pain. A hurt of which flooded my body with vast speed, yet not as quick as the second wave of regret towards my poor judgment.

I chuckle now in remembrance of this cringeworthy moment of idiocy. I was obviously not a born critical thinker. Perhaps impressing friends was not everything a person could want. The embarrassment overtook me then, yet if I were to ask one of the red heads I was with if they remembered that night, neither would remember my undignified moments. At least, they would not admit it. That is what friends are for.

I recall the story each New Year. While others make resolutions about eating right and working out, my resolution stays the same each year: Try not to be as bull-headed as that yoga ball.

### **My Shadow of Perfection**

Alexa Combs

Why was she here? She had seen me walk in and she had decided to follow me. I just wanted her to leave me alone. She was giving me the major creeps. I had been taught that as a 14-year-old girl, the world can be a very dangerous place, and the fact that she was following me everywhere I went definitely brought that lesson to mind. The worst part is, nobody would believe me. They would ask, “What woman?” and look around for any hint of her.

I ran out the door into the cold, wet climate. It smelled of fresh earth, and the air was freezing as it kissed my face. I saw through the glass window of the restaurant that she began pushing in her chair, hinting that she was about to leave as well. I needed to get home as soon as possible if I wanted to live to see tomorrow. I didn’t know what she wanted, but I was not interested in finding out.

I picked up my feet and ran through the soaking wet grass getting my socks drenched in a mixture of water and mud along the way. There were people everywhere but none of them seemed to notice me running in panic. I couldn’t take it. I had to stop in order to breathe. I could not help but look back, and there she was running after me.

Pinching my side to relieve my side stitch, I began to run to the bus stop. She was catching up, and I thought she would get me until the bus pulled up. I ran as fast as I ever had and stumbled onto the bus. I made my way to the back of the bus and looked out the window. She was



walking in the opposite direction of the bus towards her car. *Phew*, I lost her...at least for now.

I began to take off my boots one at a time, took my socks off along with my boots, and started wringing out my soaking wet socks. They were freezing cold and made my hands damp. I put my socks and boots back on just as the bus pulled up to my stop. I looked out the window for her or maybe her car. Or even that terrifying face she makes when she sees me trying to act superior to her.

I got up and started going down the steps to get off the bus. I turned around and waved the bus driver goodbye, then started heading home.

When I got to my house I immediately locked the front door and the back door. I could not do much about the windows, but that was fine because I would hear the glass break if she so much as tried to enter. That is when I felt relaxed for the first time in a while.

Entering the kitchen, I whipped up a snack. As I began to watch a movie, I soon felt myself slowly drifting off to sleep.

It was not until the glass shattered that I jerked myself awake. She was here. I knew it. I'm home alone, and she chooses now to break in. I thought about calling mother and father, but then I realized they probably don't get much phone service in the Sahara Desert.

I grabbed my phone and ran into the bathroom. I hid underneath the sink in a little crawlspace. I knew now that dialing the police would be too loud. If I got caught, my life could be on the line. I needed to try as hard as I could to stay here on this earth, for mother and father. I could not imagine losing them, or them losing me. This was the moment when a tidal wave of emotions hit me.

I heard footsteps leading upstairs just as she walked past the bathroom door into the master bedroom. After about a fifteen minute search, she headed to the bathroom. This was it. I was doomed. I closed my eyes and wished for her to be gone. I made a promise to my mother and father even though they were not here that if I survived this, I would be their little girl like I once had, instead of distancing myself from them as I had been doing for a while now.

I felt myself begin to cry. My cheeks got hot, and the tears dripped down to my shirt making drops of moisture. When I opened my eyes, she was gone.

I was very confused that she had just vanished out of thin air. That's when I saw the letter hanging up on the mirror. I quickly exited my hiding spot and made my way to the letter.

I read the letter aloud. "Dear Alexa, you are probably wondering who it is writing to you right now. I was all in your head. Nothing that happened was real. I was there to make you realize that you always try to be perfect for everyone else when sometimes, all you need to be is yourself. I think you are finally starting to realize that on your own. It turns out that trying to be perfect can lead to an unhappy life, mental illness, and can even affect your life qualities. Please just remember that you do have to be perfect in order to be human."

I was running from myself this whole time. Though I still had a long way to go, I finally realized I could be myself because I was good enough.

### **Becoming a Better Version of Myself**

Aryan Smith

School was never an enjoyable experience while I was in elementary school. I attended a large public elementary school with around 3,500 kids in the district, 535 kids in my elementary school alone, and multiple classes occupied by 25+ students. When I stepped through the threshold of the big metal doors I instantly felt overwhelmed by the rambunctious, full crowd. Although, school wasn't always so intense for me.

School was less harsh when I was in lower grades, my teachers were caring and enthusiastic, they greeted the day with jubilant, almost unrealistic smiles on their faces. I was always eager to get ready for school. Frantically picking out my outfit everyday and inevitably picking the same style, a colorful flared skirt with shorts built into them, a contrasting shirt, and my beloved zebra print rain boots or my black and blinding, pink, nike tennis shoes. Before I loaded the bus I would strategically pack my bag with spiral notebooks, pastel gel pens, and my

favorite stuffed animal. When I got on the bus I would immediately start talking to my friends. As I entered the school building it was the same cycle of going straight to my group of friends

Going into 3rd grade I felt very abnormal, I realized that all the people around me weren't my actual friends, I knew that I was getting bullied but I never understood why. I was often unhappy and tried to avoid my peers, I only had three friends that I cared about. I would only talk to that trio, I would spend my entire day with them. I began to only rely on them. School started to worsen from then on, some people would tell me that I was weird because I liked to draw, claim that I was ugly, and that I would never make more friends because of that. This took a toll on my mental health, I started to believe what these people were telling me. Sometimes I would sit in class and contemplate how to avoid these snarky comments. I felt so alone and constantly overwhelmed with disturbing the comments regarding my personality, my actions, and most of all my appearance. Unfortunately I let these comments completely surround me and I was stuffed in an enormous black hole of drama and hate not just from other people but from myself as well, this is when I started to self-harm.

Beginning 4th grade I was still getting bullied but I finally realized that I didn't just have to sit there and endure what they were saying about me, whenever I heard that someone was talking down on me I would send an even worse comment back. I got in a lot of trouble for it too, I went to the principal's office multiple times for "bullying", the principal would never believe that I was only sticking up for myself either. Once a girl commented on how I never wore shorts, so the next day I came to school with my floral jean shorts that I adored. The girl laughed in my face and then told me that I should have ignored her suggestion and that my legs looked hideous, like me.

In 5th grade I started seeing a therapist, we would talk about how life at school was, how it was living with my grandparents, and how I was handling the bullying that was constantly being shoved down my throat. I never told her about how I really felt, I would get to the climax and completely drop the subject without any explanation and she would often

get frustrated. I finally moved and changed schools. I had a complete change in mindset, and had new goals for myself.

Going to this school has made me realize my worth and that I never deserved the bullying that I endured. I began to work myself up and feel confident in not only my looks but my actions and how I talked to people. Looking back on myself from 5th grade is still painful, I wish I could tell myself that I didn't have to always feel miserable and push people away. Continuing to be miserable and not working towards fixing your own attitude will allow people to walk all over you. Now I try to be the best version of myself, I never want to return to how I was in 5th grade.

### **The Painful Way to America**

Antwann Semenow

Coming to America was a huge struggle for a Mexican like me and my parents. I am a full Mexican from Aguascalientes, Mexico and my full name is Rodolfo Antwann Semenow Reyes. The way I came to America was that my parents paid for an American lady that was on vacation to bring me with her. She recently had a baby that she left in America, she pretended I was that child. So, a 2-month-old baby rode in a car with a complete stranger. She could have killed, kidnapped, or kept me for herself, but luckily she didn't. When I arrived in America, the lady took me to my aunt's house in Texas. I didn't see my parents for 4 months.

My parents on the other hand didn't have it so easy. They had to travel on foot to America. They first drove to Coahuila, left their car, and started their journey. My parents told me it was a torturous week until they were finally reunited with me.

We lived with my aunt in Texas who happened to have an extra room. My parents quickly looked for jobs, but it was really hard for them since they spoke no English. My mom got a job as a hotel housekeeper, and I don't remember my dad's job. Soon my parents were able to afford a little house. When my parents were working, I was either with my aunt or at daycare. It was scary not being with my parents; I had no idea how to speak English, but soon things went downhill fast.

My parents were having a hard time keeping up with all the bills and food. Then the house was taken away! My parents had no option but to go to my grandparents and live there until they got situated, so we took a bus to Oklahoma and arrived at this small town called Chickasha. Moving there changed my parent's and my whole life. My dad finally got a good-paying job with my grandpa working as a construction worker, and my mom working as a waitress. My parents were taking my education seriously so they enrolled me in school. I slowly learned English because of a friend that was also a Mexican. He helped me out a lot. Soon my grandparents moved to this big house not far away from their old house and my parents bought their old house from them. Finally, my life looked like it was turning around.

It was perfect until my dad started drinking and getting drunk. When this happened my mom would come home all mad because he didn't answer her calls. This kept happening for about a year. My mom was finally tired of it. She grabbed a big glass of alcohol and threw it at my dad! My dad got out of his chair angry and pushed her which made her fall. He then put his leg on my mom's chest and started to crush her chest. The sad thing is that I was watching the whole thing, and I felt helpless. I couldn't do anything! I finally had the courage to step out from behind the couch and yelled, "Stop hurting my mom!"

He told me that when he heard those words he froze and felt disappointed. He realized what he was doing was wrong and left. My mom called the police, and they found him sitting behind the house. I didn't know where my dad was, and I was finally able to talk to him through the phone. I could hear him crying and told me, "I'm so sorry for what I have done." Then, he explained how we weren't going to be able to see each other for a very long time. I didn't understand why at the time I was only 6.

Things didn't get any better by the time I was 7 my mom was addicted to smoking and alcohol. She was caught speeding while drunk and was taken to jail. She was terrified and was there for 20 days! So, I was alone, scared, and confused, but I was lucky to have loving grandparents that took care of my mom and me.

Ever since that accident, my mom has started working on herself. 3 years later my mom found a man that treats her well and genuinely cares about us. That is my stepdad. I finally feel like my life is perfect.

## **Old Days in China**

Daniel Liu

I remember the old days when I used to live in China. I remember when I got back to my grandparent's home after school it was the best feeling ever because you could just relax and do whatever the smell of our little home was just so cozy. I also remember as a kid I loved going to my friend's house. They had a much bigger home than ours and they had a lot of things I could play with. I mostly didn't know what I was doing so I ended up playing with fruit but I still had a blast. We also did this really weird thing where we burnt super thin paper in a steel cauldron as a kid I didn't know what this thing was for and I still don't know what its exact purpose was but my grandparents told me it was to remember something, also the smell that came from the burning was awful, the feel of the thin paper was almost like skin, it was gross.

Me and my grandparents lived in a not-so-big house connected to our neighbors, it was a lot different than America. You also needed to go through this 2-foot gap to even access our home. It was annoying to go through for basic groceries and just being able to talk to people. My grandpa also took me to the park a lot because he didn't want me to be cooped up in the house all day and play on my tablet, I didn't understand at the time so I fought him, after my little temper tantrum he would ask again and I normally said "Fine, I'll go" and we would have a good time and my grandpa was a nice guy so he pretty much was friends with everyone in that little area they all spoke Chinese but a different dialect that I didn't understand so I just tuned out most of the time. My grandpa also owned a small farm that me and him would go to every morning to get vegetables and fruits most of the time I just couldn't get up because we need to wake up so early so I would just stay in bed but the times I do wake up was so worth it because there were little food stalls that we could go to that open every night and every morning.

Also, the schools in China were extremely strict and gave out a ton of work. If I stayed in China I would have over quadrupled the work in America, and that's not fun although the food there wasn't half bad. From pre-k to first grade you would get a specific time where you could nap so if you didn't sleep well then there's your time to sleep. Also the school's atmosphere was like a horror movie's atmosphere and I felt like I was gonna get jumped by a creepy alien. I vividly remember the teacher walking over to our desk "Alright kids it's time to go to sleep" and my heart was pounding, it felt like at that exact moment mist filled the room, the halls, the entire school. I didn't want to sleep but what could I do? You were forced to go to sleep so I pulled the covers over my face and tried to forget about everything but every time I fall asleep my dreams tell me to wake up so I woke up and I look around just hoping that something pops out so I don't look like a scared cat that was hit by a jet of water but there was nothing, the only difference now was that I couldn't go back to sleep. Luckily school was finally over and I could go back to the safety of my grandparent's home.

After school, I would ask my grandparents to take me to the little ice cream shop next to the school. My grandparents also occasionally took me to this amazing place where we could have a feast. We would do that normally on holidays or birthdays or just when they feel like it and on New Year's Day we would have an even bigger feast. We would have a small firework show. I remember the smell of smoke filling the empty night sky. I miss that and my grandparents.





# POETRY

YOUNG WRITERS ANTHOLOGY  
DEACON DEVARENNE



## **Liquor Flames**

Elisabeth Maniatakes

I tore my heart open and let you in  
Then you remind me of my weakness  
That I care too much  
Off you go again  
Jim Beam on your breath  
Stumbling over the couch  
Slurring all your words, making no sense  
I put you to bed  
To try and end your drunken stupor  
As you sleep, I empty every bottle we own  
Pouring it all down the sink  
I think that it was fun and games in the beginning  
But now it's your favorite hobby  
You stumble out while I brush past you  
I go for a drive, bad decision on my part  
Leaving you alone at home  
As I drive, I get lost in my mind  
I think of all the interventions, the AA meetings  
You swore you would change  
But clearly I was wrong to believe you  
You smoke a cigarette in the living room while I'm gone  
Your hands shake from your impaired state  
As you go to put it out, embers fall to the carpet  
You stumble out of the house  
On the way to a friend's  
Unknowingly setting our house aflame  
I arrive back in the morning  
Seeing the charred remains of the place we used to call home  
This is my wake up call  
As you approach me with teary eyes, begging for another chance  
I turn around and say to you  
"I can't help you fix yourself."

**Crayons**

Izzy Cuellar

Life is a coloring book.  
It is blank pages  
with set lines,  
and the ultimate freedom  
to chose  
if you stay within,  
or cross  
those lines of fate.  
Eventually,  
all of the pages to your book  
will be colored.  
So you must cherish the days that look like masterpieces,  
instead of hating the days  
that look like scribbles.

**The Sunset Sky**

Kenyon Williams

A fading drop  
of honey light  
Slips every still  
Into the night  
What picture can  
Capture this frame  
With every feeling  
Just The same  
As the sun pulls down  
Every hint of bright  
The stars come out  
Into the night  
And the moon swells  
as stars fell  
They covered all of the  
Sky  
The wind sweeps it away  
As night turns to day  
The dawn breaks.

**You Are My Love, Don't Leave Me Yet**

Emily Kiker

She is beautiful, Oh so beautiful.  
All the way down to the floor  
You would look away and want more.  
Her hair flowing around her shoulders  
Dark blonde locks, but her attitude speaks colder,  
Her words can hit you harder than a thwack  
She would leave you dead and not turn back.  
Her fingers were slim, covered in rings,  
Blue, purple, orange, and green  
All her fingers were a diamond stream.  
Her body skinny, her stride strong  
She moved liked she belonged  
Her lashes, so lush and swift,  
Her golden brown eyes show when they lift.  
Her body was art, black lines stained her skin,  
Plants, stars, the moon, too much to begin  
Piercings ran through her nose and ears,  
I loved her more and more with the passing years.  
My beauty, my sight for sore eyes  
You are the reason I wake up every sunrise.

## Stars

Mykayla Shearer

They are exposed in the obsidian blanket of darkness  
The rays of sun that welcome the day are nothing but a distant memory in the back of my mind  
Little remains, but peering through the cracks are glimmering beacons of light  
Stars, they are lights in the night sky that mesmerize us into depths of wonder  
As you lie in bed and dream of adventure, stars flicker in the heavens above  
They seem to know you and speak to you, telling you there is hope for tomorrow  
They align themselves to create alluring images in the midnight sky  
A magnificent bear dances in the blackness among the planets and moon  
Surrounding are other beings in the midst of mystery that also sway to the sound of utter silence  
The creatures bring calm, quiet, and peace, yet they are bold and threatening  
Stars can lead a wandering, adrift mariner home after sailing in the vastness of the ocean  
They are a map made of gems of the sky that will never point you astray  
Stars seem so untouchable, so far away nothing can compare in distance, beauty, or mystery  
Yet, when you reach to the sky, it's like you can cradle them in your palm and feel their warmth  
Stars inspire, giving you hope that sun will return, stars are surrounded by formidable blackness  
Stars seem to be unreachable, yet they speak to you like whispers in your ear  
Stars illuminate the murky dead of night, as my eyelids get heavier and my dreams closer  
I hold the promise of the morning sun close to my heart

**Cackling, and Roaring**

Lydia Steely

The smoke,  
Smoke filling the room,  
Smoke filling the depths of my eyes.  
The fire,  
Fire burning through the floor,  
Fire dancing just for me.  
The crackle,  
Crackle emitting from the burning wood,  
Crackle cackling from the hungry fire.  
The furniture,  
Furniture pressuring the fire to continue,  
Furniture risking being burned.  
The screams,  
Screams from the people outside,  
People hoping to save us,  
Save our house, and our memories.  
Memories meant to be forgotten.

## Shadow Creature

Cade Boevers

When the sun falls into its slumber,  
Raindrops begin falling and increasing in power.  
Dddddd.... Pounding on my windows.  
No feeling, no light,  
Echoes of help consume my mind, but no one is ever in sight.  
Only darkness and the cold, hard ground, with no spirit, to fight.  
When I look down, my dark shadowy figure is still lurking around.  
My dark shadowy figure follows me like an addicted puppy.  
When I am asleep, he doesn't creep, at least that's what I imagine?  
But when I am outside, it is a whole other side.  
All I have said to myself is," I have to run and stay away," but all I really have to do is awaken.  
When I wake up I am frightened, but I am now inside, there is no reason to hide.  
I see it everywhere and I want it to go away, yes, that is what I feel like every single aching day.  
I know what I have to do, I just think I am awake and I do not hear a peep.  
I wake up and feel the frigid air, and goosebumps cover me.  
I look down and all around, and luckily, there is not even a sound, but my breath.  
Now, I don't see darkness everywhere.  
All I had to do was wake up from this Shadowy nightmare.



**Life is Tricky**

Aaron Lockwood

Sorrow fades, from our eyes,  
As time erodes, to the skies,  
Feel your destiny near.  
Stand your ground, keep on fighting,  
Live your life to its fullest.  
'Cause if you're modest,  
You'll never experience true life.  
Oh life, it's a complicated mess of living,  
Inside of a controlled economy.  
So don't let your conflicts, pressures, struggles,  
Take over your life, your show.  
Even if destiny throws you for a ride,  
Changes your life, edits your fate,  
It lets you realize that there is more to life.  
So don't let it go to waste,  
If you want, stick to it like paste.  
But even though, life is tricky,  
And your destiny may be scary,  
Life is always changing,  
And you will change with it.

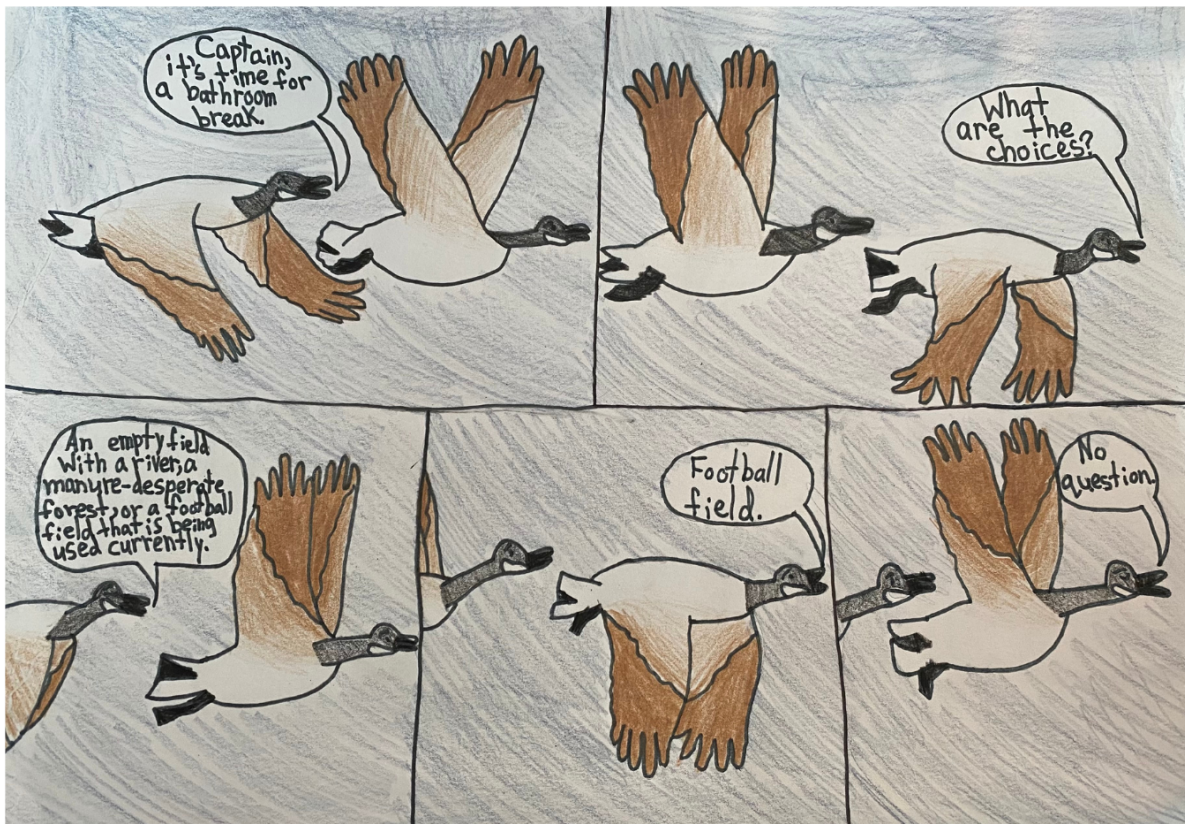


# SHORT STORY



Oklahoma Council of Teachers of English

YOUNG WRITERS ANTHOLOGY  
JESSICA BROOM ` MIGRATION



## **Legend of Redwood Pt. 1**

Kylea Bostick

Legend has it that deep in the haunted Redwood Forest, a murderous monster lies waiting to attack... They were warned, they were told, but will they listen?

On an eerie, fall afternoon, three unsuspecting campers make their way to the heart of the Redwood Forest. According to legend, lying ahead remained a mystery many had uncovered but had not yet lived to tell. Luke, Tyler, and Kai were walking through the forest as the wind howled through the trees, ignoring everything they were told about the legend. They decided to split up.

The sun was setting and the temperature was dropping. Luke was starting to regret the decision of splitting up. Just as he pulled out his map, he heard a cruel mischievous laugh. Luke started to run when a tall figure jumped in front of him...

The sun had completely disappeared and Tyler was left alone with only the light from his lantern. He was just coming to the campsite, nobody was there so he thought he must be the first to arrive. Just as Tyler started the fire, Kai walked out of the blackened forest, eyes wide. Shivering, Kai stood for a moment staring at the fire in front of Tyler. He then walked over to Tyler and sat by the fire silently.

Looking around desperately trying to find a way to escape, Luke took off running in the opposite direction. The ground swept past him. He dove around trees desperate to escape but tripped on a fallen branch. A hand reached out to grab Luke's arm, he couldn't escape. His last breath was an agonizing scream.

Kai whipped around, eyes wide when he heard the scream. He had begun wondering if it was Luke, so he stood up and walked towards a tall, dark oak tree. Tyler flew past Kai and disappeared into the forest.

With nothing but the ground beneath his feet and the little moonlight that peeked through the trees, Tyler zoomed through the forest. He wasn't sure where he was going but he was going to find Luke.

Kai was left standing there, all alone. He debated on whether to run after Tyler or stay back in case Luke showed up. Kai didn't want to believe that the faint scream could have belonged to Luke, so he stayed back. After a while, Tyler came walking back. Grabbing lanterns and a weapon, they decided to go find Luke together.

They had been walking through the forest for hours before they came up to a body. Kai walked over and fell to his knees, head in his hands. Tyler looks around frantically, searching for whatever is out there. Luke's body had been mangled. His skin was pale and his dark brown hair was stiff from dried blood. Kai's gray eyes drowned in tears. Tyler walked away while Kai followed.

They had been walking for a while, but Tyler didn't want to stop. The cold, thick fog appears beneath their feet. The wind grew stronger with a biting chill and the trees seemed to turn a dark smoky gray. Thinking back to when they first met, Tyler had finally realized how much Luke had meant to him. Now he was gone and there was nothing he could do. Kai and Tyler had only recently become friends because of Luke, he was like the glue of the group, he had brought them together and had held them together. Tyler had been pulled out of his thoughts by a gruesome, mischievous laugh. Tyler and Kai took off running, the one mistake anyone could make. In front of them, appeared a tall figure. Just as quick as it appeared, it disappeared...

All Kai remembered was Tyler yelling at him to run. He didn't want to leave but he had no other choice. He ran and didn't stop. The fog disappeared and the trees seemed to have gained life again. The forest smelled like pinewood, and he could hear the soft rushing sound of water, something he never noticed before. He came up to a tall, gray, stone entrance, with green vines acting as a curtain. The stench of blood hit him as he stepped in, blood had painted the floor and been splattered on the walls....

It reappeared, managing to grab Tyler by the shirt. Tyler yelled at Kai to run. Kai stood for a second wondering whether to help Tyler or listen, he had chosen to listen. Kai took off running. As he was running he heard an excruciating scream and knew it was Tyler's.

Kai walked around looking at the shelves carved in the walls when a dark, blood-red object caught his eye. He walked over to the object and picked it up, it was a knife. The knife had a jet-black handle and a sharp blade encased in blood. Kai heard a loud, thundering sound outside the cave. He looked around desperately trying to find a place to hide, just then he spotted a perfect place. There was a wall of flowstones he could hide behind.

Kai watched as a tall figure walked in, its knife-like nails dripping blood. The figure was a clown with blood-red hair, evil red eyes, yellow sharp teeth, and knife-like nails. The clown walked over to a ledge on the other side of the cave. Kai wanted a picture of the clown just in case he escaped. So, without thinking he snapped a photo. At the sound of the click, the clown spun around stomping in the direction of Kai. Kai jumped up, grabbed the knife off the shelf, and ran towards the clown...

## **Reflection**

Addi Aga

I never was certain if the moving figure was a solid shape, a shadow, or simply the product of my own imagination. Autumn has finally filled New York with a golden ambiance over my apartment bringing dried-up colorful leaves and a cool breeze hanging overhead. I live alone near my university and each night I walk through the cold evening towards home. I always watch as the sunset brings bright purples and oranges into the sky, but I see a tall, human-like shape standing in the middle of a nearby field.

He is always there, only at sunset staring directly at me. His dead-looking gaze sends chills down my spine and uneasy feelings as he stares, and I look back to see he is well dressed and looks to be successful.

He seems to rush away in a hurry like he has to be somewhere to be when night falls every time I see him, and he keeps appearing. Over the days he is inching closer to where the field ends, and onto the road, I walk on.

“It’s okay, he’s always been there”, I say to myself as I decide to ignore him like usual and continue on my walk home while speeding up my pace. After reaching my apartment, I searched for my key in a mess of at least ten hanging on a chain and opened the door to a brand new empty, and cold apartment. I start to feel paranoid, so I reach for a pocket knife that I carry into my room with me. Once I reach my room, I get in bed and flop onto my fluffed-up pillow, and place my knife under it. The night is peaceful and quiet so I fall asleep, thinking of what lies ahead.

My room lights up with sunshine while the world wakes up, and my alarm clock blares at me from across the room. I get out of bed, brush my teeth, eat breakfast, and head out the door. I start my day and walk back to my school. When I pass the field, my body tenses up and goes cold, even when he isn’t there.

At school, my day is going fine and I walk into the bathroom. While washing my hands I look up in the mirror to examine my appearance, but I swear to see sharp, gray eyes staring back at me. The rest of the day flashes by, and I eventually am on my way home again. As I trudge through the rocky roads I know the sun is setting, and I know the man will be inches away from where I walk every day, but as I come across the open field, he is not there. Nerves fill my insides and I start to run the rest of the way home expecting him to jump out and follow me at any minute. I’m sprinting as fast as my legs can carry me and I turn the corner to my apartment. I quickly scramble to find the right key, open my door, and lock it immediately after I am inside. I jump in bed and pull the covers over my head letting darkness surround me. When I finally started to fall asleep it was late, and tiredness swallowed my fear. As the night goes on, I wake up to hear knocking on glass. At first, I thought it’s coming from my window, so I got out of bed and looked out the window, to see the pitch-black night, and trees swaying in the wind. My room’s only light source is the moon, so I see little to nothing. I hear the knocking once

more and look back, realizing it's coming from behind me, the mirror. I can feel my body go cold again and start to hear painful, muffled screams.

“Come to me,” I hear a man say. Instead, I bolted directly towards my bed and found the pocket knife I previously-stored under my pillow. I find it in a mess of covers and start to creep towards the voice.

I turn the corner into my bathroom and shut my eyes as tight as I can. I hear his breathing. I push up against the wall and try to stay as far away from the mirror as I can, while still being able to hear the source. Everything goes silent, and suddenly a clammy hand reaches out of my mirror and grips onto my arm. I feel him pulling me towards him into the mirror. I scream and try to tear away from the man's grip, but I know it is too late. I'm forced into the mirror with him, where the man is no longer there, and I seem to be alone. I look around the empty space and walk towards where my mirror once was.

The silence is all I can hear until the faint sound of breathing returns behind my back. I swing around in one swift movement with my knife in hand and watch as the man falls onto two knees, then topples onto the ground, dead. I run as far away as I can until I eventually find my way back out of the darkness through my mirror. I step back into my bathroom feeling an almost cold breeze hit my cheeks and my pain seems to have been lifted. I let myself fall onto my bed into a deep sleep, not knowing who this man ever was and if I would ever see him again.

## **Starlings**

Claire Buchanan

Mom and I always loved starlings. They would fly around our backyard all the time, so we would lay out a blanket to sit and watch them for as long as we wanted. I would dream all night about the wonders of the dancing birds and all day I would watch them.

One rainy morning I went outside to play. Mom always told me not to cross the stream after a rainy night because the rocks were wet and I



could fall. That early, wet morning it smelled like dew and I remember hearing birds chirping and tweeting. I knew better, I knew not to cross the stream that day, but I was less mature than and easily hurt so I jumped onto the first rock, then the next and again, and one more rock before I landed on the soft early morning dew. I wasn't supposed to cross. I made it across, so how bad could it be? I played and played that morning until Mom came out to tell me that breakfast was ready so I ran over to the stream. I hopped on one rock, then another, and another, then *splash*.

I remember the freezing water on my skin and my desperate screams for Mom to save me. I remember the way the water hit me and pulled me under, over and over again. I remember the feeling of my heart beating so hard in my chest I thought it might fall out. I remember the hands reaching down for me and I remember slowly falling asleep.

I woke up and I was surrounded by people dressed in blue shirts with bright yellow vests. They were pounding on me, hard, but I couldn't feel it. They were screaming but I couldn't hear them. I tried to tell them to stop but they wouldn't listen. Mom was crying and the people stopped after a very long time. I tried to tell Mom that I was ok but she would listen to me. I didn't understand why no one would listen and why, even though I saw Mom screaming, I could hear her, I could only watch as *I* was carried away and put into a big truck, only I was still here.

I waited for what felt like forever until finally, I heard something, the soft voice of Mom, she was talking to me. She said, "Sweet Oli, My boy, Why?" Why what? I'm still here! *Why can't you hear me?* It was shortly after that I realized that She couldn't see me either. I did everything I could but she never saw anything. I even tried to write my thoughts down but I just couldn't move the pencil, my arms felt heavy and when I focused hard I could only get it to shake. I didn't understand what happened, I didn't sleep or feel hungry. I only felt lonely.

Everyday I saw people come over, they would bring Mom food and gifts, they would even stay the night sometimes. Something else new I noticed was the starlings that would follow me every day, even inside, but no one seemed to notice them. They would spin around me in beautiful

shapes, dancing. Sometimes I danced with them. Every now and then they would try to lead toward the outside but I always stayed right next to Mom. Mom started talking to me more and more. One day I decided to respond.

I moved a picture of us that was sitting on the mantle right over to her. Mom looked surprised and she screamed, "You're here, My baby, You're here!" She was excited and that made me excited. We danced around the room and Mom called and told all her friends and all her friends seemed to act differently. They told her to get rest and eat more. They would just hug her and rub her back every time she talked about it, but Mom didn't stop talking to me.

We would talk every day from then, until my birthday. I would finally be seven! Mom wasn't as happy as me though. She just stayed in her room and talked to me, I would try to get her excited but it didn't work, that was until she said something surprising. She said, "It's ok, you can go, you can go Oli." I was confused by this, go where? I spent the rest of the day trying to figure out where Mom wanted me to go.

I had forgotten about it until the summer ended and it would be time to go to school, that's when I realized that she wanted me to go where everyone else went when this happened to them. Somehow I knew that the way to get there was the birds. One day I went up to Mom and gave her a big hug, I kissed her goodbye and she said, "Goodbye, Oli." That was when I knew it was okay to leave. I followed the Starling and they took me high up into the sky and we danced. We flew so high I could touch the clouds. It was beautiful and wonderful. We flew up to a place past the sky and past the stars. We swirled by the moon and through the sun. We jumped on Saturn's rings and swam in Jupiter's oceans. I am one with the stars now and I love it. I can't wait for Mom to come shine with me and I can't wait for everyone to dance in the sky with me. Don't be afraid, just follow the Starlings. They will lead you.

## Ashes to Ashes

Stella Lawson

I see her wake at exactly 3:48. I know she smells the burning grass...“like heaven is burning”.  
 She runs outside to see me mirroring her horrified expression, engulfed in sparkling flames.  
 The flames rain down, down, down, down. My heart becomes as heavy as a rock. The girl with the dreadful face stares at me in shock.  
 Perhaps I have gone insane...Or maybe just vain.  
 I see the girl running closer, closer, ever closer. As she nears, her expression becomes grosser.  
 When I turn around to look her in the eye, she glances up to the smoky sky.  
 As tears leak down her chin, I feel myself grin.  
 I was greeted with overwhelming surprise when she ran outside.  
 I didn't think today would be the day when I finally got my prize.  
 You'd think it to be unwise, a choice you would certainly despise...  
 I light another match and throw it to the ground.  
 A bush, a tree, a vine, a briar, lit aflame by the majestic glory of the neon fire.  
 The rotten, sickeningly sweet smell of the burning ground is suffocating, but I just want to watch her suffer. My wish is granted as her breathing grows rougher. The flames tower above us like burning stars, bathing us in a shower of flickering yellow and red, evaporating the tears that were earlier shed. The fire creeps from behind, threatening us with its neon heat. Suddenly, I hear her loud heartbeat. She scrambles up and away in a desperate effort to escape the growing flames.  
 She runs to a nearby lake, but would she really rather drown?  
 I do foresee, and I think you will agree (at least to some degree), she thinks this game should have a referee.  
 Her eyes fly over the field and back down to the ground. She wraps her unburned hand into a fist, an angry mound. Her hair falls down to hang over her face, blocking her view. Her eyes stayed open wide, what happened to her pride? Her breathing becomes ragged and quick, her tears have still not dried.  
 But no, she can't fight back, not any longer, not anymore!  
 The flames overwhelm her, they work to consume.  
 The end is now nearing, the battle is fought with my cheering.  
 I didn't think it would end like this, all I feel is pure bliss. I bend down to her head, and on it, I plant a kiss.  
 Her soul has moved to the deep dark abyss.  
 However, I feel no guilt, no sadness that blankets me like a quilt. For she had wronged me, time and time again.  
 I don't like her, I never did.  
 And God forbid...  
 God forbid I ever see her again.

## **The Hike**

Brinlee Dungy

I have to have a great day tomorrow. Summer is almost over and I need to have a lot of fun, so my fears can't get the best of me. Hiking isn't hard and nature doesn't scare me so why does the thought of putting the two together scare me? I know that my mom would want me to do it because she loved to hike. She wanted to teach me how, but now I don't want to hike because I wanted to do it with her. I try not to talk about it because it makes my dad cry but I just want to be like her. Because I love her.

My best friend Lilly believes in me, but she is also scared. She had only gone hiking once when she was six. She said she wouldn't push me to go hiking if I didn't want to, but she knows that I will do anything to make my mom proud and that my dad just wants to help me be able to hike. Two years ago, three days after my birthday, a car rammed into my mom's car going over 80 miles an hour. My mom was thrown through the windshield and was alive for two days after but died the next. A Lot of crying happened, especially from my dad. He doesn't like to talk about it and neither do I.

I let my mom down, I know I shouldn't feel this way but, I do. I know she's proud of me but I forget, I'm disappointed in myself that I can't do this one thing for my mom. "You know what, I'll go hiking," I told my dad, he and Lilly were overjoyed. We'll leave in the morning. "Pack enough clothes for 5 days," dad said, "I'll handle everything else."

I'm scared but I can't back out now. Lilly got to my house at 8:00 and dad left to get hiking and camping gear. We left quickly after he got back. Thirty minutes into the drive I could already hear the birds chirping, and the trees swaying in the wind. When we got there we jumped out of the car and unloaded everything. While my dad was setting everything up, Lilly and I went on a walk. Once we got back dad was taking a nap so we sat and talked in our tent and fell asleep.

Lilly and I woke up to an amazing smell three hours later, my dad was grilling meat. Dinner was amazing and after we finished, we went straight to bed. We woke up to the sound of dad screaming, "It's time to WAKE UP!!! "We ate breakfast, got on our gear and we were off. Lilly and I were racing each other and pointing out all the beautiful things that we could see and hear. Then all we could hear was hisssssssss. I jumped at the sight of a snake and felt myself falling and then everything went black. Luckily, I fell on a ledge seven feet down.

It felt like ten minutes, but then I became very confused because it looked like I was in a hospital. A doctor came in and told me that I was lucky to be alive and that I had been at the hospital for two days. "Your dad is going to be so happy you're awake," she said and went to get dad and Lilly. While the doctor was gone, I scanned the room. There was a TV, a lot of machines that were beeping, a hospital couch, and the bed I was laying on. I was discouraged - the one time that I get to prove to myself that I can do something for mom, I fall off a stupid mountain, and almost DIE!!! A nurse came into the room, insisted I call her Grace and said to push a blue button by my bed if I needed anything. "I have a surprise for you," she said.

Grace was gone for a while and I drifted off to sleep. I woke up a couple of hours later to something licking my face. A white snow German Shepherd puppy quickly came into focus, It tickled so much! Grace said the dog was mine to keep, and I named her Angel. Grace said that Lilly and my dad were on their way. She asked me what food I wanted, but I couldn't answer because I was in awe of Angel.

Grace came back later with a protein shake, salad, and food for Angel. A couple of minutes later Lilly and my dad came in and they were both crying. They said in unison that they were so happy to see that I was awake. Lilly came over to my bed, hugged me, petted the puppy for a second, then backed away so my dad could hug me. He was still in tears because I looked like a mess, my left hand was wrapped up and my other hand was in a brace, my left leg was in a wrap as well. My dad said will she

get casts put on? Grace said yes and maybe scans and surgeries. “She may be here a while,” she said.

Four days later I had already gotten two casts, and my right hand was in a brace until further notice. Grace made me feel like she’s my very own nurse. Even though she was always there, it was good to know that I had Angel. That very next day Grace had told me some bad news, I fractured my spine. No wonder I couldn’t move my back. I heard Grace telling my dad I would be in a wheelchair for a long time, I could see the tears rolling down his face. Dad gave me a hug and said it was going to be okay and everyone left the room except for me and Angel. I know my mom would be proud of how far I’ve come.

### **Be Careful What You Wish For**

Ella Edwards

When was the last time you wished upon a star? Mine was seven hours ago, on November sixteenth. I know it sounds childish to wish upon a star, but I made a mistake. I want nothing more than to take it back. So, I walked out the front door into the chilly night air and sat down on my freshly mowed front lawn. The wind was blowing my shoulder length dirty blonde hair into my hazel eyes. I wrap my black jacket tighter around my body, hugging my knees. I look up and I spot it, the first star of the night. I close my eyes and whisper, “I wish I could go back and fix what I did to Devin.” I opened my eyes a bit but immediately put my head on my knees. I wish I didn’t blow up in his face like that. Maybe if I went to sleep, I could clear my head. I head back into the house and straight to my room. I’d apologize to him at school tomorrow. I close my eyes, willing, begging the darkness to take me tonight and release me from this guilt. I pull the soft, gray blanket closer to my body and sigh.

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I wake up to the annoying, blaring alarm. I turn it off as I look at the time displayed in red, glowing numbers on the front of the annoying box. But something was blocking it. A piece of paper. I grabbed it. I don't remember it being there. In blue pen it wrote:

*Dear Cora Nelson,*

*Hello Ms. Nelson, so you wished upon the star, did you not? Well, congratulations, you get as you wish. You get to fix your mistake, along with the countless others you made yesterday. You may now go back to the future until you fix all mistakes. I shall not tell you what you have done. All that I may tell you is that you have made seven mistakes, you shall keep waking up on November 16th until you find the seven mistakes.*

*And Ms. Cora, I advise you to be wise with your decisions, only fix the mistakes made, we don't want the butterfly effect, now do we? I also must advise you to do as I say or you'll be stuck in this loop forever.*

*With my deepest wishes of luck,  
The Blue Fairy*

What could this mean? I'm in a time loop? Seven mistakes. Well I know what one of them is, Devin. Wait, if I'm back to November sixteenth then I'm going to be late for school. I swivel my head to the left, where I had picked up said piece of paper. Seven forty five was the time, displayed on the black box in glowing red numbers made of tiny lines. I jumped up out of bed, knocking the blanket to the floor as I did. I run to my wardrobe and grab the same outfit as yesterday, a black and white plaid button up, black jeans, and a plain black belt.

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I made it to school. On time, I smiled to myself. I was late the first time it was November sixteenth. I sigh, then out of nowhere a paper falls to the ground in front of me. I bend down and pick it up. I unfold it, the same blue pen. And it had one number and three words on it.

1/7

*-The Blue Fairy*

Did I fix a mistake, is that why she sent that? I didn't question it. I just walked into the school, everything was fine and normal. That's what I was telling myself. I see the girl from yesterday who bumped into a kid and dropped all of her stuff. I picked up a book and gave it to her. Another paper dropped. I picked it up and continued to walk. That's when I remember a kid came running down the hallway yesterday and I ran into him accidentally, not this time. That had to be one of the mistakes. I back up against the wall. And sure enough, there he is. Another kid was chasing after him. There it was, another piece of paper. I picked it up and went to class.

-----

Three out of seven mistakes, fixed. This is going to be a while. I opened the third piece of paper I received. It had something different.

*My dearest apologies. I forgot to tell you that you have only 3 tries in this loop to fix all seven otherwise you will be here forever. To the best of luck*  
3/7

*-The Blue Fairy*

Three tries? So it's a race against the clock. I need to hurry up. Maybe if I left the school before the fight with Devin happens, I could stop it in total. I take a deep breath, trying to rack my brain to find any mistakes. The cafeteria! The kid that fell at lunch... I felt bad, but didn't help him up. I should fix that.

-----



Now, I've fixed five of the seven mistakes, being on time to school, picked up the kid's stuff in the hall, the kid in the cafeteria, my Algebra teacher when she dropped all of her notes, and telling off a bully. Before, I ignored it, but I helped her now. So, two more mistakes. The bell just rang, so I ran out of the building to completely ignore the fight. I go straight home. As soon as I got to the doorstep, the paper appeared.

6/7

*-The Blue Fairy*

One more mistake, what is it? I question and question. I decided to rest. As I did the next day, my second try, I found nothing. Next day nothing. I ran out of tries. When I woke up the fourth time there was a note:

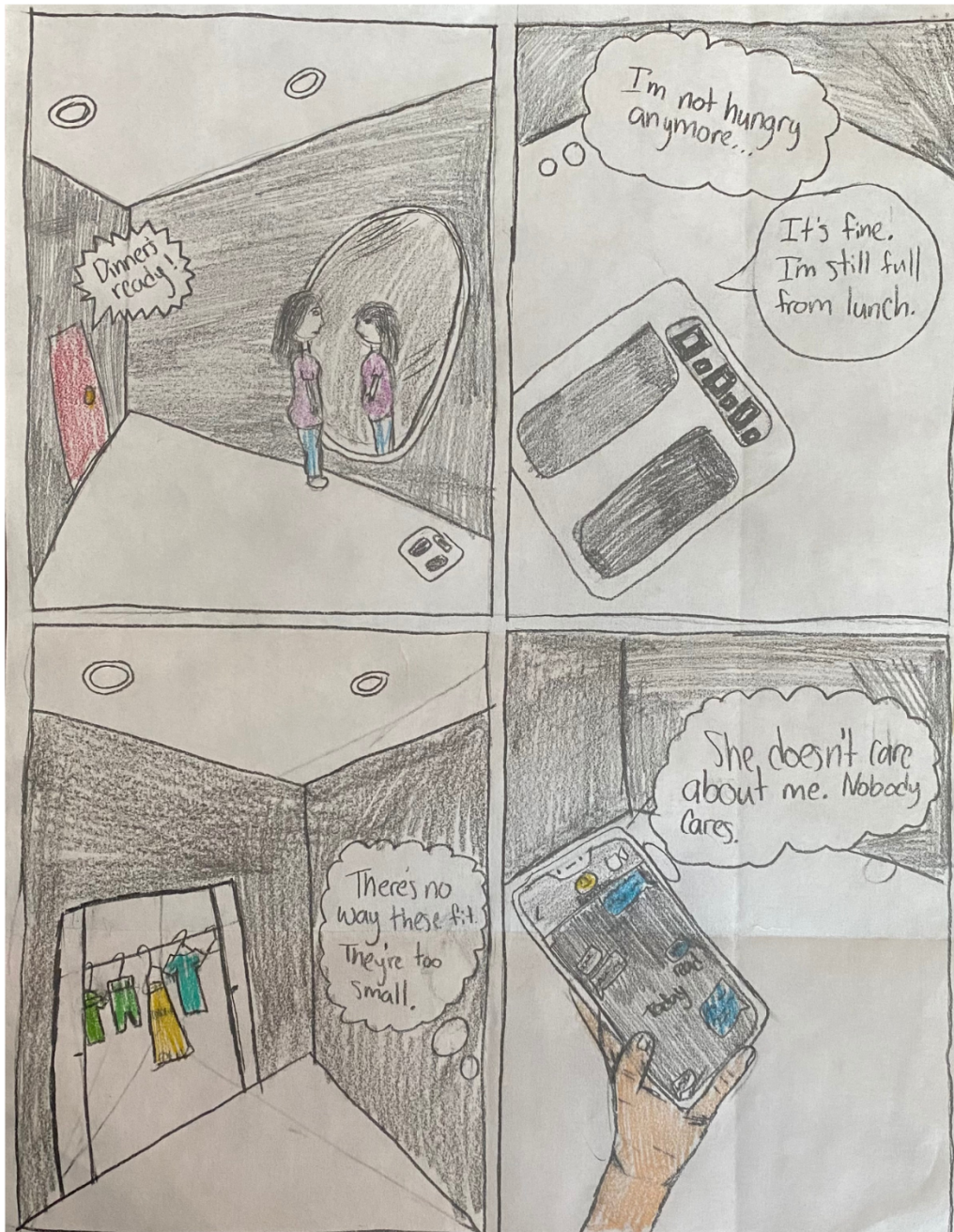
*Be careful of what you wish for.*

*-The Blue Fairy*



# EXPOSITORY

YOUNG WRITERS ANTHOLOGY  
CARLY GRAVES ` THE DAILY STRUGGLE



## **Acts of Kindness Can Make a Big Difference**

Sebastian Escobar

Random acts of kindness bring joy to the world. Many things hold us down, but kindness is one of the things that lift us up. Anyone who practices kindness can light someone's day, influence others to spread kindness, and create a more positive environment; all of this can introduce unity to the world.

Kindness can light up somebody's day. Whenever someone performs an act of kindness toward you, it will boost your self-confidence. Goodwill also increases our happiness. That's not all that kindness does for us; it will also increase our empathy. Finally, the more we receive kindness, the more it increases our compassion. Imagine a day that isn't good, then someone else notices. That person has two options, ignore you or be kind and make your day better. It takes one person to spread kindness and light up your day. In my own life, this happened to me and someone chose to be kind. Anyone can be kind, it is just up to them whether they want to or not. Therefore, these are all reasons how when we get kindness it makes us feel good, and it lights someone's day up.

In addition, anyone or anything can influence others to spread kindness. Jill Suttie from Berkeley University wrote an article that discusses the healthy impact of acts of generosity in the community. Many things can influence people to spread kindness. For example, I was getting coffee with my sister one day, and then we pulled up to the drive-thru. The person in front of us paid for us, so we were kind enough and paid for the person behind us. Another thing was I saw people opening the door, so I helped with the other door. The little things can go a long way.

Furthermore, kindness constructs a more positive habitat. Kindness helps you make new friendships and unite yourself with others. That could make you feel more welcome in the group. Feeling welcome removes stress and negative energy. For example, I play baseball, and I went to a hitting camp. When I got there not many people were talking to

each other since we didn't know each other. Then some kids started talking to me, and it removed the negative energy. From that day on, I realized it's better to start talking to people earlier so you can make more friendships.

In conclusion, it should be clear that any acts of kindness bring happiness everywhere in the world. Kindness can do many things such as lift up anyone's day, impact others to spread kindness, and construct a more productive habitat. People have so much to gain from kindness like new friendships, self-esteem, or empathy. Now you can go out in the world and make an impact in the world.

### **Imagine a World Where Everyone was Kind**

Teagan Peterson

Imagine a world where everyone was kind. In contrast, imagine a world depleted of all goodwill. A world with kindness is full of love and friendship, while a world diminished of kindness is full of hatred and betrayal. If everyone was kind, families would not fracture, bullying would vanish, and states would be unified.

Kindness can help prevent families from fracturing. When kindness is expressed in relationships, couples feel more care, consideration, love, and understanding. Without kindness, people are spiteful to each other. With the absence of kindness, families can be hurt both physically and mentally. In the United States, about fifty percent of families are fractured. As an example, many of my friends' parents are divorced, and some of my friends relayed the experience of their parents' divorce to me with stories about the fighting, bickering, and mental and physical anguish. Whereas, in my family, my parents and both grandparents are committed to each other. My mom's parents have been together for sixty-nine years. In contrast to my friends' stories, the relationship of my parents is different in that they work things out, they do not blame each other, there is no fighting, and they show forgiveness towards each other.

In the same way, kindness can help eliminate bullying. According to [stopbullying.gov](http://stopbullying.gov), when students performed three acts of kindness per week, they significantly increased their acceptance of peers compared to the kids who did not perform the acts of kindness. Another example of kindness in action against bullying is Joanne Miller and her class in Florida. She has a kindness squad made up of her students who spread good cheer and welcome to the students at the school. We can all learn from this evidence that kindness is contagious and spreads to everyone around. We need to spread kindness starting with those around us and let it spread throughout our community. Bullying will be reduced as this kindness spreads.

In the same manner, as the results of kindness are compounded and grow, the states of our nation will be unified. Over the past years, protesting and violence is prevalent because of the differences between us all. If this negative energy could be converted to kindness and respect, people could get past their differences, uniting the states. An example, we can observe incidents, where the nation has been unified, as in situations of natural disasters. When the Moore tornado hit, my family volunteered to receive supplies for those in need. People from multiple states showed kindness by bringing supplies to fill that need. The kindness of people overwhelms the negative energy, thus uniting the states.

In conclusion, it is clear that the act of kindness can spread and saturate your community, extending to your state and then to your nation. The results of kindness are families staying together, kindness spreading rather than fear from bullying, and a nation resolving its differences. Kindness is a choice; one can choose to be despicable or to be kind. Choosing to be self-centered leads to isolation, whereas choosing to be kind leads to a world of unity.

## How Can Kindness Bring Unity to Our World?

Emma Roberts

Every day there are thousands, if not millions of people who are impacted by kindness. Maybe someone complimented them or maybe someone comforted them while they were crying. When people do these things, it helps unite all of us. Kindness helps bring unity to our world through inspiring positivity, improving mental health, and stopping discrimination. This can be very helpful to people in pain or going through a hard time. Sometimes all we need is to be with each other.

“Things have a way of working themselves out if we just remain positive.” – Lou Holtz. Sometimes, all we need is a little bit of positivity to unite us, inspiring positivity can do lots of work in uniting our world. One way that inspiring positivity can help unite us is by making people closer together, positivity can cause people to make friends or create relationships, which slowly, but always unites us by making us all closer together. Another way it can help unite our world is with a kindness chain reaction. There is a theory that if one person displays kindness to another person, the other person will show another person kindness, and so on. Even a small amount of kindness can spread across people, which can unite us throughout informing us how to be kind and making people more understanding. Inspiring positivity helps unite us by making people closer together and the kindness chain reaction. Lots of things can cause unity, but inspiring positivity is a big part of it.

Life can be pretty bad sometimes, and hurt you, but kindness helps a lot of the time. Mental health has a big impact on whether you are happy or not, and if your mental health is better, it could drastically change your life. Kindness has been shown to increase self-esteem, empathy, and compassion, and improve mood, and overall help mental health. Some people just need a little kindness to improve their mental health even if only a little bit. As discussed by Mark Rowland in a Mental Health Foundation study, An act of kindness can boost feelings of confidence, being in control, happiness, and optimism. Kindness can also help deal with things such as depression or anxiety. Kindness impacts the

amygdala region of the brain which is associated with fear, anxiety, and trauma. In real life, kindness is a thing needed by most. Helping mental health unifies us by helping inspire us all to be better, and when you are kind to someone, they may share their experiences with you and you may relate to them, bringing you two closer together.

One of the world's biggest issues is right under our nose. Discrimination is arguably one of the worst problems we deal with. In the U.S 3 out of 5 people experience discrimination on a day-to-day basis. Being kind to people can cause their beliefs against a certain race or group of people to change. For example, I knew somebody that was incredibly homophobic and hated all members of the LGBTQ+ community because of a bias about how marriage was intended to be, but then people from the LGBTQ+ community kindly explained it to him, and then he started researching all of the information that he had gotten wrong he realized that he was wrong and apologized for it. Some people will strictly believe that their beliefs are the right beliefs but sometimes all it takes is informing someone and being kind to them. This will help unify us by teaching us to love no matter what race they are or who they love.

At this point, it should be clear that kindness can help unite our world. If we all empower each other with positivity, amend each other and your own mental stability, and putting a stop to discrimination. What's so hard about treating others with kindness?

## **Kindness**

Abigail Ankrom

"He who experiences the unity of life sees his own Self in all beings and looks on everything with an impartial eye," Buddha. When people learn that everyone is human and just as worthwhile as themselves, it will bring unity. This unity can bring courage to the world; courage doesn't mean that people have no fear, it just means that they can overcome the fears in their minds. If people can feel courage, then more people will be



able to help the world, not just themselves. Unity formed through kindness creates friendships, improves mindsets, and brings safety.

First, kindness creates friendships. When I was in seventh grade, I lost all my friends after having no classes with them, and covid hit really hard on my family. A new girl moved to Yukon at the beginning of the year, and we had the same name and even some of the same classes. We both were very timid people at first, but one day at lunch we sat across from each other, and I just started ranting to her like I'd known her forever. We both opened up to each other after a couple of weeks. We wanted to have a small but close friend group, but it took a while. Even after going through so many different friend groups in seventh grade and a few this year, we still stuck together by each other's side, not letting anything happen to our connection. People should learn from this example. So many students wouldn't be sitting by themselves at lunch if they just decided to take the first huge jump in starting friendships.

More importantly, kindness improves mindsets. The article, "The Case for Kindness" on [pihhealth.org](http://pihhealth.org), discusses kind actions. Many licensed clinical social workers at PIH Health's Psychiatry discussed that when someone is happy, dopamine is spread through the brain. If a person is happy, they spread more kindness. In the world many people take drugs with dopamine in them to make the person happy. People who don't want to take drugs, but still want to be happy, need kind people around. The kind acts done will bring happiness to the sad and respect to the disrespectful.

Bringing a sense of safety is another benefit of kindness. When people have no friends, it is bad for their health. People need someone to confide in and someone to bring security. When someone feels connected to others, they start to feel safe. Safety is a huge thing in the world today; when someone is walking alone, they think of one person they could call to feel secure. That one person makes a change in the scared person's life because he/she feels more secure and supported.

Finally, it should be clear that harmony launched through goodwill produces friendships, improves mindsets, and brings safety. When people

are kind to others, it can make bonds that last a lifetime, these bonds can even help one's mental health. A person's mental health actually affects the brain, and when someone is sorrowful they have less brain activity making them not be able to work as fast. Also, when these bonds are formed and people get to a good spot with their mental health, they will feel protected with the people they trust which also helps the world become a better place. When the next generations come, it seems they will have to live in a world of hate and a world of danger; however, we start these bonds and start taking action now, then maybe our children and our grandchildren will grow up in an amazing world where parents don't have to worry about how their kids get treated because every parent will raise children to learn that others matter also. Don't all of us want that for our world?

## **Kindness Plays a Key Part in Unifying the World**

Kage Tudor

Imagine someone's friends leave him to go play or do something else and he is sad, but then a stranger comes up to him, sits down, and starts a conversation with him to try and make him feel better. These scenarios happen every day and can make people happier than they were previously. This is an example of how kindness can bring unity to our bleak world. Kindness can bring unity to the world by creating and inspiring acceptance, creating very strong bonds, and improving our mental state.

Being accepted in our society is one of the most sought-after things in our world. Being accepted means that all of your peers accept you as their equal, regardless of your gender, sexual preference, and race. This is not always easy to come by these days. Every day we see people being bullied and criticized for things that are ridiculous to criticize people for. For example, students at schools use the word gay as an insult. Every day students hear people calling other students “gay” because they won't do something, or they did something that they didn't like or approve of. This word should not be an insult. Just because people have varied races, cultures, and viewpoints does not mean they are not equals. Just being kind to someone regardless of how similar or different they are from us can make the world a better place. Being kind can make people feel more accepted in our society.

Another way kindness brings unity is by creating strong bonds. Creating bonds is crucial because friends can help people through their problems. According to studies performed by Cedars Senai, kindness can release a chemical called oxytocin that makes you more open to creating bonds. Oxytocin regulates your emotions towards others. Bonds are important because they can make us feel more connected in our society. This can bring unity to our world because a friend who knows another friend outside of your society, and that friend may know somebody in another society, and they may all form new connections with one another, so then we will all be unified thanks to kindness.

Finally, improving mindsets is another way that kindness can bring unity to the world. By using kindness, people will be happier and want to show kindness to others. This effect is called the domino effect and can aid the cause of bringing unity via kindness. This will allow people to make new friends. For example, on the first day of 4th grade, this kid came and sat next to me. I was bored, so I looked at his phone because he was watching YouTube. He paused it, turned on captions, and asked me what my name was. That day I was nervous because I was at a new school, and it was my first time on the bus, but he made me feel at ease. Later that day when we got off the bus, we realized we were in the same class, and we have been really good friends ever since. This is important because by using acts of kindness, our world is more unified and connected.

In summary, it should be apparent that kindness can bring unity to the world in various ways. Those ways are encouraging acceptance, creating bonds, and improving mindsets. These all gear people's minds towards making kind acts towards others. If we all pitch in to make kindness a permanent piece of this planet, then we will all wonder how we ever lived without it.

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