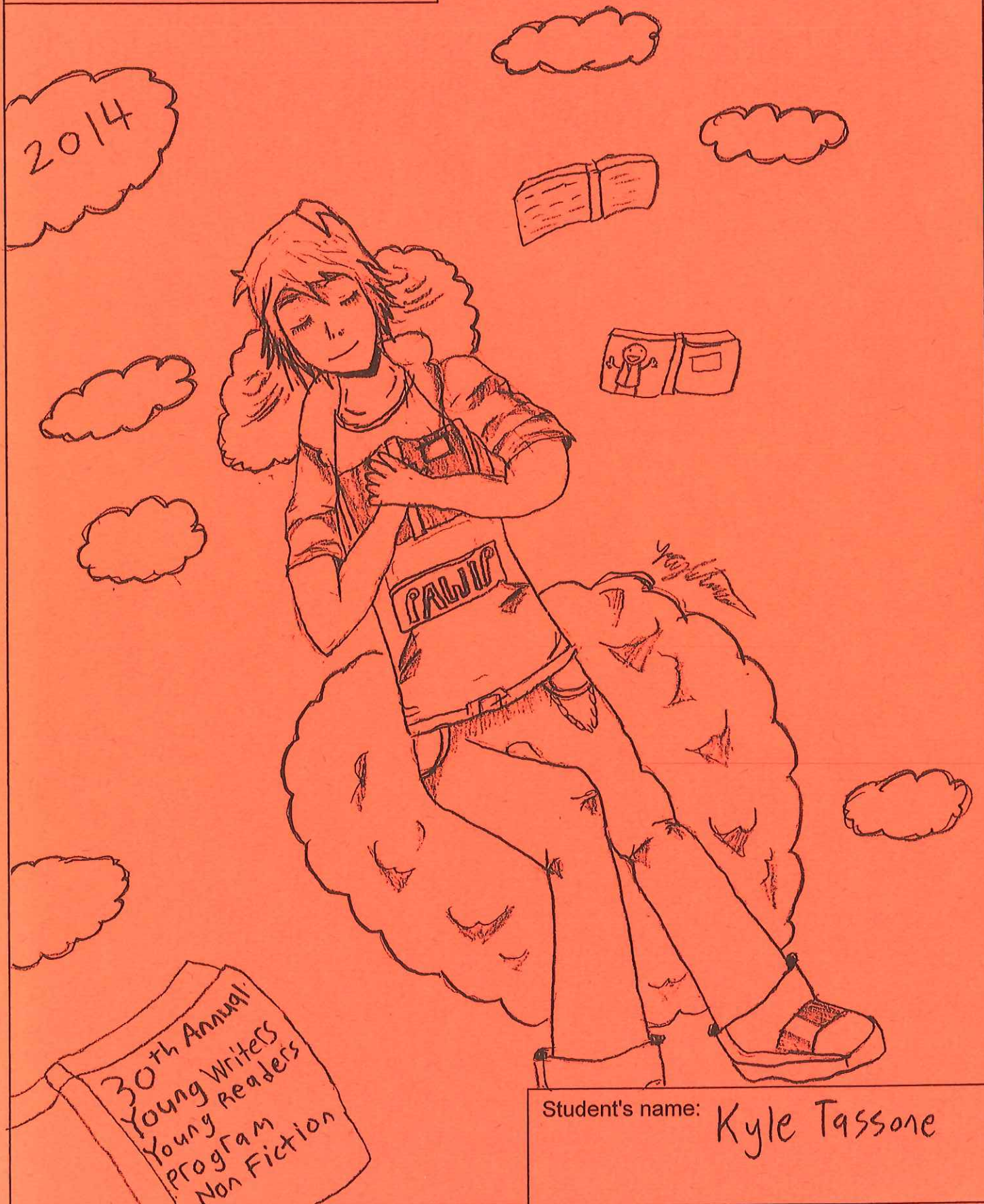


PA Writing and Literature Project  
Youth Programs





***Pennsylvania Writing and Literature Project***  
***Youth Writers/Young Readers***  
***Creative Writing for Teens and Nonfiction Reading & Writing for Teens***  
***Summer, 2014***

This summer, on the 30th anniversary of West Chester University's Young Writers/Young Readers program, two groups of students who have completed sixth through ninth grades assembled at Harriton High School as a community of writers. Not only did they experiment with different genres and styles of writing, but they also explored various literary techniques to enhance their own individual composition styles.

Our general program goals include inspiring young writers to enjoy quality reading and writing, introducing them to essential tools that will render them better writers, gathering writing ideas and inspirations inside writers' notebooks, and expanding their abilities in writing.

Students developed skills necessary for pursuing the writing process by focusing on various prewriting activities, editing skills, and revision approaches. They shared their ideas and their writing in groups and paired, and they opened themselves to suggestions from peers and their teacher. They took intellectual risks that further inspired new writing ideas.

Hearty thanks go to the following individuals: Mary Buckelew, Ph. D., Director of the Pennsylvania Writing and Literature Project and Summer Administrator Karen Pawlewicz for their support and encouragement in all aspects of sustaining and supporting the Lower Merion site. Thanks also to Barbara Giorgio, Secondary Director of Humanities, Lorraine De Rosa, Ed. D., Lower Merion Supervisor of Literacy, and Lauren Marcuson, Summer School Principal at Harriton High School, for supporting literacy enrichment in our community. We offer special thanks to Harriton's fantastic secretaries: Mary Anne, Janet, Kim, Lynne, plus fabulous librarian Pam McGlone and custodians Rick, Brian, Chester, Henry, and Frank.

A very special thank you to all parents and guardians of the students enrolled in the program, for their support and encouragement. We appreciate your interest in your children's literacy development, and we encourage you and your children to remain lifelong readers and writers.

Kathleen S. Hall Scanlon, *Lower Merion Secondary Site Coordinator and Teacher*  
Liz Pavone, *Lower Merion Site Teacher*



## **Reading and Writing Nonfiction: Teen Authors**

**Hatton, Amritpal, entering 8<sup>th</sup> grade, Friends School  
Haverford**

**Lautenbach, John, entering 10<sup>th</sup> grade, Harriton High  
School, Lower Merion School District**

**Poluka, Samantha, entering 10<sup>th</sup> grade, Harriton High  
School, Lower Merion School District**

**Ryan, Garrett, entering 8<sup>th</sup> grade, Bala Cynwyd Middle  
School, Lower Merion School District**

**Ryan, Sean, entering 10<sup>th</sup> grade, Lower Merion High  
School, Lower Merion School District**

**Tassone, Kyle, entering 8<sup>th</sup> grade, Welsh Valley Middle  
School, Lower Merion school District**



## **Silver Spoon**

The silver spoon being passed around the classroom looks as if it is plastic. It appears large for an ordinary spoon (from my viewpoint about two feet away). If I had a closer look, it might be smaller. The spoon had a similar design to other spoons you might find wrapped in plastic at a grocery store. After seeing the spoon, I'd like to hold it. That would solve the previous mentioned questions. It is an interesting spoon that intrigues me. I want to know more.

## **A Giraffe in Copenhagen**

Setting: The Copenhagen Zoo shot a giraffe in the head and feed his remains to lions. Many American zoos are in outrage over this event. But many European zoos are standing up for Copenhagen's decision.

I support the zoo's decision to kill the giraffe. They put the animals down humanely. Then using his remains for seems smart. Being able to solve problems and save money seems like a win. At least the giraffe wasn't brutally beaten and murdered.

## **Ode to Cereal**

Cereal,  
You are a help  
Soggy, minimalist, Cold  
Just the right way to kick off a morning.  
Thank you.

## ***About the author***

Amritpal Hatton enjoys wintertime. He plays video games and the trading card game *Magic The Gathering*. This has been his third Pawlp course and He's has enjoyed them very much.



# MY ANTHOLOGY

By John Lautenbach

## My Dog Lucy

Lucy's fur is snow white with streaks of dazzling gold running along the middle. Her eyes are a soft brown, surveying everything around her slowly and carefully. She was a stray dog; we got her from a shelter. It's hard to believe that any parents would give her up. When we first got her, she was very energetic. She would run all over the house, knocking over lamps and anything in the line of her constantly wagging tail. With the years, Lucy has become more and more lazy and tired; she falls into a deep sleep after a short walk. However, I prefer this constant tired to a constant energetic. Too many times have I gone over to a friend's house with his or her puppy jumping all over me and barking at me until I pet it. Lucy's bark is loud commanding but this is the opposite of her personality. Lucy is quiet and sweet, except when an uninvited guest comes to our front door. If there's one thing I'm not a big fan of concerning dogs, it's the wet dog smell. Thankfully, Lucy does not enjoy swimming so I don't have to smell that.

## Wynnewood

Wynnewood is a home to anyone who wants it to be. Once you settle here, you don't want to leave. It is a quiet little community, which is why the residents love it. There are luscious green lawns, inhabited by growling dogs. Go outside and you might stumble upon the occasional jogger, or Dave from the house on the corner, beginning his



half hour venture to work. Walk just down the road and you will find the Wynnewood train station, always running behind schedule. If you sit on your front porch you will notice a number of things throughout a typical day. You will witness school buses taking first pre-schoolers, then up through high-schoolers on their daily commute to school. You will see Charlie the mail man, punctual as always, bringing the mail along with a delicious treat for your pet. Unlike other areas in Lower Merion, Wynnewood's spacious streets are lined with sidewalks. This gives you incentive to finally start training for that marathon you always wanted to run, or simply provides a safer route for walking to a friend's house. If you would like to find me, I'll be right down the road. I'll be with my friends at Arnold field, home of the LM Aces, sitting in a rusty chair that was probably there before even the High School was, sitting behind the net while refereeing a World Cup match between my friends.

### **About the Author**

John Lautenbach enjoys writing. He also enjoys playing baseball, basketball, and soccer as well as hanging out with his friends and family.

His favorite food is banana bread. He has a dog named Lucy and has younger twin brothers and a younger sister.

Dancing always has been a part of my life. Whenever I am on stage smiling, wearing make up, and with the lights shining on me, I know that is the place I want to be. I never was scared of being on stage. I've been dancing since I was five years old, starting with tap and ballet. I didn't like tap, nor was I any good at it. I stopped taking ballet two years after tap. It wasn't fun anymore. Ballet is all about discipline and perfection. I knew being on point was not in my future.

Next, I moved onto jazz. I loved it! It was fast and allowed more freedom. Jazz made me happy. It was the perfect fit for me, until I took a summer hip-hop class. Locking, popping, gyrating, you use 100% of your body. I found my passion. My fifth year of hip-hop lessons starts in the Fall. The recital is the highlight after months of learning new moves and continuous practice. Costume, make up, smiling, lights, step on stage; total euphoria. I will always dance.

## **PURPLE**

*Magenta plus blue*

*My favorite color*

*Means royalty*

*Many different shades*

*Lavender, lilac, violet*

*Light and dark*

*Means a lot to me*

*Purple pen*

*Purple shirt*

*Purple shoes*

*I got it all*

*Always has been my favorite*

*No one can take this away from me*

*I'm still going to buy purple*

*I'm still going to love purple*

*I'm still going to wear purple*

*I'm still going to be me*

*A lover of purple*

*And purple isn't just a color, it's*

## **PURPLE**

### **About The Author**

*Samantha Polukka is 15 years old and lives with her parents, brother, and dog Smudge. She enjoys singing and dancing. She also loves listening to music like One Direction and 5 Seconds Of Summer.*

## **Whistler Blackcomb**

*By: Garrett Ryan*

Simply exiting the ski lift on Whistler Mountain is an amazing experience, in and of itself. A blast of brisk alpine air whips across your face and your breath steams before it even leaves your mouth. You take in the beauty of the mountain and look off, and see Whistler's twin, Blackcomb. The sun shines down and reflects off of the sleek, shiny, snow covering Blackcomb's sharp peak. You keep admiring the view, and see the over four kilometer long gondola spanning the forested valley between the two mountains. Your observation shifts to the ever-present hum of the giant machinery powering the lift, and the constant scrape of people pushing off down the slope. You breathe in the cold fresh air that you could never smell in any city. Whistler Mountain is not just a place to go skiing, but is also a reminder of how amazing the simple aspects of skiing can be.

## **The Silmarillion**

A book that intrigued me was the Silmarillion. It is a book by JRR Tolkien, which takes place thousands of years before Lord of the Rings happened. It is full of complicated elvish names and languages only Tolkien could devise, and chapters that seem like individual stories. After reading the Lord of the Rings and the Hobbit, I decided I would try to read the Silmarillion. I had no idea how complicated it would be at the time, but after about 10 pages I was thoroughly befuddled. But a few years later I wanted to give it another try. That time I read the book all the way through, and I could finally discern a central story line. It explained years of background for the Lord of the Rings, and I couldn't have been happier when I finally finished the extensive detail of his novel.

## **About the Author**

Garrett Ryan is a 13 year old at Bala Cynwyd Middle School. In his free time, he enjoys watching TV, reading, and playing sports. He plays baseball and basketball, and was on his seventh grade school team for both of those sports. He also snowboards and plays the drums.

**6:30**

I see the number 630 nearly every morning. It is the time I wake up on school days. The red block letters on the display of my alarm clock are accompanied by a loud series of beeps. These beeps blast from the other side of my room where the alarm clock sits well out of reach from bed. When I hear the irritating sound I jump out of my bed and click “buzzer off”. The number 630 wakes me up and starts my day.

## **The Costa Rican Rainforest**

As soon as you step off the boat a wave of heat, humidity, and bugs immediately surrounds you. The air feels sticky and it smells like rotting wood mixed with mulch. The Rainforest is bursting with life; every square inch is covered with vegetation. There are countless types of plants twisting and weaving through each other, all competing for sunlight. Alligators lurk by the river, sloths hang from trees, and toucans soar through the air. The Rainforest is timeless, looking unchanged through centuries of human development. Instead of dodging cars and pedestrians, a visitor in the Rainforest should watch for sneaky spiders, large ant colonies, and falling coconuts. Night is a time for relaxation in the Rainforest. A warm shower washes away the mixture of sweat, sunscreen, and bug spray that accumulates on your skin over the course of a day. The suffocating heat of the afternoon is replaced by comfortable night time temperatures. The cool breeze and rhythmic chorus of animals make you forget that screen doors and windows separate you from the wild.

**About the author:** Sean is 15 years old and attends Lower Merion High School. He enjoys sports, watching movies, and traveling with his family. His favorite food is popcorn and his favorite band is the Beatles.

## *When Right Is Not So*

It was a quiet and ghostly night in New York and 18 year old Sacheverrell had been one of three selected by the by the British General, William Howe, to take part in a crucial scouting mission to Philadelphia. The mission was of utmost importance in which intelligence would be gathered on the topic of the American Colonist's plans regarding the already heated and brutal Revolutionary War. The war had escalated quickly post the battles of Lexington and Concord two years earlier.

"Men", General Howe stated with authority, "you will be successful with this mission or you might as well not come back. Don't make the training we have given you in Great Britain's Military a waste of time from your standpoint and ours. A carriage and common colonist's clothing for your disguise is waiting for you out back. GET moving!"

At once, Sacheverrell along with his longtime and loyal childhood friend Sheppard, who was also chosen for this mission, hustled toward the back with the third man, a brut looking soldier named Heath. Heath, the one possessing the most strength out of the three recruits was also well known among the British Troops as a good and obedient soldier and not easily persuaded. Sheppard on the other hand is very aware and friendly and has always looked up to Sacheverrell. He is also very clever as he comes from a long line of inventors in his family.

"I have a very unsettling and uneasy feeling about Heath," explains Sacheverrell to Sheppard.

"As do I," Sheppard softly agrees. The two look over and marvel at the six foot five giant. With his bulging crossed forearms and stern facial expressions, the two friends quickly become quite concerned and slightly intimidated by his massive presence.

As the mission started, the three spies were dropped off in Philadelphia right outside of the town hall where a group of influential Colonists were holding a secret evening meeting.

"I am so exited, I can't believe we are having our first mission," Sheppard explained to Sacheverrell.

"So am I, despite being a little bit nervous," Sacheverrell replied.

"Here is the plan, stated Heath in a harsh yet quiet whisper as nighttime began to fall, "Sacheverrell and Sheppard, you two will quickly and silently move around to the back of the building and gather as much information on any plans as possible and the details of their conversations. Once completed, report back to me immediately. I will be stationed at the opposing side of the building keeping a look out and gathering any information from people who may be talking entering the building and preventing anyone from coming back your way."

"But what will Sacheverrell and I do if we get done before you?" Sheppard asked curiously.

"Nothing," Heath replied sternly, "because you won't." After and as instructed, Sacheverrell and Sheppard stalked to the back of the building. They stopped and listened as the Colonists talked through the peep less night. "The King is a nuisance", a short, round man stated. "He has done nothing good to us except during the French and Indian War when they only were protecting us for our land and wealth."

Another man then added on, "There are many wrongs the King has done and I do not think he should rule the *not* so Great Britain, let alone us. We for sure have to win this war." With that powerfully worded statement, the other men applauded.

"How dare they mock our homeland!" Sheppard exclaimed with fury. "I refuse to listen to this rubbish," he also added and then snuck back to Heath's position. Sacheverrell however, stayed stationary and listened further to the men.

"All we desired was representation from parliament," someone added. Although they already declared their independence, when they got together for meetings they would many times passionately reiterate their reasons for independence to help strengthen their will during these uncertain and challenging times of war. An older, stately looking gentleman went on about how taxation without representation was unfair and unjust and explained it so eloquently and with such detail, they might as well have known Sacheverrell had been eavesdropping on their conversations.

Once Sacheverrell had overheard the men, he thought to himself and realized that the Colonist he had been led to hate and despise weren't as bad as he thought them to be. They just wanted representation in Parliament if they were to be taxed. They wanted to be treated fairly. The thought also occurred to him, what if the King he worshipped and looked up to so much, wasn't as good as he assumed him to be based on his public appearances? What if it was just an act... a lie to control us for his power and purposes perhaps? A new dilemma begins to brew inside of Sacheverrell. Should he battle the colonists or become a supporter of the colonists and risk being killed by the very King's army that he has sworn to protect?

Sacheverrell then begins to trek back to Heath's position and the place where Sheppard went. He was almost at the front side of the building when the front door swung open and the men started to file out one by one. Sacheverrell stopped immediately and frighteningly lingered until the last man had passed him and left. Sacheverrell continued to walk when Heath and Sheppard came running down the main pathway. "What happened?" Sacheverrell asked urgently.

"Just as I saw Sheppard coming around the corner of the building, I heard what sounded like the meeting inside coming to an end. To avoid the potential of being caught and questioned, I tackled Sheppard into the bushes and we slipped our way back down the path" Heath stated.

After the three spies reunited following their intelligence gathering, they retired to an abandoned shelter they had found in the nearby woods.

Later that night, Sacheverrell lay in a failed attempt to fall asleep and drift into the much-needed slumber he aspired to encounter after such an intense evening. He then debated and wondered if he should tell Sheppard about his mixed feelings about the Colonists and their innocence. He also wondered what would Sheppard think if he were to tell him? Would he be putting both himself and his best friend in danger for perhaps anyone else found out? Finally, Sacheverrell concluded that he would indeed tell Sheppard about his feelings, for the guilt of not being true to himself and for not trusting his friendship with Sheppard would most likely consume him if he did not. After coming to a mental agreement, Sacheverrell was very pleased when he was finally able to drift into a deep, deep, sleep. Early next morning, Sacheverrell led Sheppard to a river near their shelter with the plan to tell him about what he heard during the rest of the Colonists' meeting after Sheppard had left and of his dilemma because of it.

"So Sheppard," Sacheverrell said to Sheppard awkwardly, "I really wish you hadn't left when you did when we were gathering information about the colonists, because they said many things that made me realize that they are not as bad as we assume them to be. In a way, we were almost being fed lies by the king!"

## *When Right Is Not So*

"Oh Sacheverrell, the colonist's words must have done something terrible to your head! I have no idea what to do." The more that Sacheverrell explained to Sheppard, the more that Sheppard began to see the logic and truth in Sacheverrell's thoughts. But as Sacheverrell's little speech comes to a close, Sheppard knows that he will have to make a tough decision. What they didn't know however was that Heath was hidden behind a dense shrub just a few feet from Sacheverrell and Shepard's location.

"Hey! What is going on here?" Heath said furiously as he rose with god-speed out of the bushes. Sacheverrell and Sheppard both had little to no time to react for Heath came lunging at Sacheverrell with massive force as he roared, "You Traitors!!!"

Heath quickly made contact with Sacheverrell by knocking him down onto the cold earth. Next, Sheppard tried to intervene but was forcefully shoved into a tree and an unexplainable feeling blew across him as he fell to the ground. It was almost as if his breath was whisked away from him for a quick and ambiguous moment and he was unable to get up for his right arm was in desperate and mortifying pain. By the intensity of its condition, Sheppard was safe to assume that his arm had been broken. He then looked up to see Sacheverrell fighting back against Heath swinging punches left and right. Despite his large effort, Sacheverrell was unable to do even the slightest physical damage to his massive foe. Heath quickly put Sacheverrell in a chain-tight headlock and refused to let go.

At that moment, Sheppard stood up and had a life changing decision to make. Would he stand up for the one and only person and friend he looked up to and admired with his one good arm? Or would he do what was right for his homeland and turn his traitor of a best friend in to the British military and save himself from getting pounded by Heath? He looked up once more and saw the terrified and uneasy look in Sacheverrell's pupil dilated, blue eyes. Sheppard stood up and pulled out a flintlock pistol and with his opposite and non-dominate arm, and pointed it right at Sacheverrell's head. "Sacheverrell, Sheppard said in a shaky voice. What I'm about to do is for the good of the Country, and I want you to know that." He then moved the gun to the side and screamed, "For the American Country!!!!" as the pistol was now pointed at Heath.

"What are you doing Sheppard?" Heath said in a fearful squeaky tone.

"What I should have done along time ago," Sheppard replied with overwhelming confidence. "Believed and agreed with Sacheverrell!" Just then, Sheppard fired the gun, for one, the flintlock pistol is a very inaccurate gun unlike the rifle, and for two, Sheppard's right-handed and because of his injury he had to resort to using his left hand. Both of those factors resulted in the bullet Sheppard's gun fired only impaling Heath in the left knee. Therefore, only immobilizing him as blood trickled over his now pearly, pale white skin. By the time Heath could pull his gun, Sheppard had already reloaded his own gun and was ready to shoot to kill. But Heath quickly caught up and was ready to shoot now too. It was a stand off. The two knew what was going to happen and simultaneously fired their guns at the same time. There, in the crack of dawn, two shiny bullets whizzed by passing each other as if they were saying "hello, how do you do?"... and on the horizon where scintillating breaks of daylight crackled and sizzled through the clandestine sky, the bullets said, "goodbye".

Silence then filled the tenebrous air and was finally fragmented by an indistinctive chirp of a bird far away, as two bodies hit the ground at the same time.

Sacheverrell stood there, as the smoke of the guns cleared and to his utmost shock and trepidation of Heath's motionless and lifeless figure bloodstained and immersed in the thick dew covered grass. Sacheverrell looked over and saw that Sheppard was barely alive with a bullet cleaved deep in his chest.

"Why didn't you turn me in Sheppard, and save your own life?" Sacheverrell asked Sheppard as tears swelled up his eyes like rainclouds.

"Because, I..., I knew it would make yours worse," Sheppard said with short, decelerating breaths. "I will be watching you from above... I will always be with you... here." Sheppard said briefly as he touched Sacheverrell's uniform with his blood stained fingers on the area where Sacheverrell's fast beating heart was located.

With that, Sacheverrell witnessed with a crestfallen soul, the death of his best friend, as Sheppard's round lips, turned blue. And at that moment, he knew, Sheppard's presence and spirit had gone elsewhere

## **Literary censorship**

**Certain books should not be censored or banned because based on the Constitution; we have the absolute and utmost right to the press.**

**Even if books contain explicit or questionable content, they should not be banned and taken off the shelves. They should just be recommended for certain age appropriated groups and have a rating similar to those of videogames and movies.**

## **About The Author**

**Kyle Tassone is a student at Welsh Valley Middle School and is 14 years old. He enjoys Writing, reading, drawing, and Parkour along with many other sports. Including him, Kyle has 14 family members. 10 of them are fish.**



## 50 Years After Brown v Board of Education

*On May 17, 1954, the liberal Warren Court overturned state-sponsored segregation in public schools present since 1896.*

Although the Space Race and President Kennedy's assassination remain two of my earliest school memories, a third ultimately shaped my own teaching career. The Philadelphia School District's mandated busing program, enacted during 1966-1967 – my sixth grade year – directly affected my family and me.

Northwest neighborhood students would join our Northeast community at Benjamin Franklin Elementary. Just before our school's integration, we read *Mary Jane* by Dorothy Sterling (pub.1959) about an African American child enrolling at an all-white school. The award-winning children's classic endured boycotts across the USA as my innovative fifth grade teacher read to us aloud, so we could envision Mary Jane's apprehensions and hopes. I will never forget the protagonist's intense universality and humanity.

The following September, as a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade playtime leader at lunch, many of my girls were African American students who contributed smiling faces, boundless energy, and new games from their neighborhood – including Double Dutch jump rope. I briefly considered teaching third grade as a result.

My first African American taught my eighth grade personal hygiene class. Nothing embarrassed Mrs. C—! Her warmth engaged girls initially embarrassed to consider their own physiology.

Right after my 11<sup>th</sup> grade history teacher distinguished *Plessy vs. Ferguson* from the *Brown vs. the Board of Education* landmark decision, 12<sup>th</sup> grade's Mrs. M— became my first African American English teacher, who dazzled our mostly female class with the British Romantic poets. Years later at a chance book presentation encounter, she beamed as I told her I, too, had become an English teacher.

Thurgood Marshall, Daniel Hale Williams, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Benjamin Banneker spanned my *Lives of Great People* course for juniors who thrived on inspiring nonfiction stories. We read poetry by Countee Cullen, Paul Laurence Dunbar, and Rita Dove as we enumerated the contributions of Black Revolutionary War soldiers. African American singer Billy Eckstine joined Aristotle as we philosophized over the apology. I plastered English and gifted classroom walls with multicultural writers and philosopher, and my classes became equally diverse. *Brown vs. the Board of Education* undoubtedly enriched my teaching ... and my life.

### Stearly Street Serenade

Patriotic block  
Row home folk watch fireworks  
Lighting dreams to come

**Kathleen Hall Scanlon,**  
reader, writer, animal lover,  
history buff, explorer, teacher,  
& learner applauds her  
*delightful* nonfiction students  
who tackled *formidable*  
literature and sampled  
*countless pens* to craft original  
works *well worth reading!*

### Feline Most Foul [excerpt]

Ah, March: Mardi Gras, Ash Wednesday, St. Patrick's Day, and Purim – this year. Ultimately, at last, spring, from Lion to Lamb. The gateway to rapturous warmer weather and life's renewal also heralds my own early April birthday. I love March almost as much as I love cats, its unpredictability, with cruel frigid winds, or perhaps its provocation of mad sartorial confusion. I swear Aeolis hosts March antics, from freakish ice storms to thunder snow. One March 17<sup>th</sup> afternoon several years ago, my enthusiasm for procuring all things Irish evaporated. An incident occurred at my local florist's involving a treacherous feline who abused my kindhearted affection....

## Number 4, Frankly

"Just don't get another one!"

My father always reminds me that he loves animals, but he and my mother are exceptionally allergic to felines. "My eyes fill up, and my chest starts wheezing." Then he details my *mother's* cat allergies.

It's always the same story: each time a beloved cat expires, my well-intended, protective parents beg me not to adopt another one. Warnings assault me because of my (mild) asthma and (controlled) allergies. My long history of enduring consistent allergy shots seems meaningless. My allergist's approval means nothing. I've never experienced delighted congratulations upon adopting a cat, like all family dog adoptions receive.

Incidentally, my paternal grandfather talked me into my first cat, fattest son of a promiscuous calico. "Once you have one you'll never want to be without one," he assured me. Thunder taught me that cats are brilliant and loyal, albeit with a different intellect from that of dogs.

I rescued Ahab came from the Human Society. "Couldn't you find a *real* cat?" joked my vet. "Captain" Ahab, who entered my home on Herman Melville's birthday, exhibited a broken tooth, an upper respiratory infection, and a missing rear paw, broken off just below the knee. He also saved me from succumbing to smoke inhalation one winter night.

Finally, Renard lobbied diligently to become my cat. He'd navigated a stormy relationship with his fellow cats and owners, during which he'd also lost his right rear paw. He worked me for years, escorting visitors to my door— until he showed up at our dog's burial, placing a paw on my knee as my husband lowered his friend Jake into the ground. Last month, we made the difficult, humane decision to euthanize Renard when he succumbed at sixteen to congestive heart failure following major reconstructive surgery and a long period of ingesting five daily medications.

I figured I'd just *visit* cats for a while, so I made the rounds: first, at a no-kill private shelter, where fifteen cats swarmed me on a sofa. Next, I stopped at a local pet store that fosters cats for two humane organizations. A kind-hearted acquaintance invited me to look at a terminally ill neighbor's pair of elder cats, who elicited my sympathy — but I imagined my parents' reaction to a *pair* of felines. I exchanged emails with the SPCA's coordinator for cat foster parents; I visited the SPCA cattery in person.

I felt anguish when shelter personnel told me how many hundreds of healthy cats and kittens are euthanized annually. Finally my husband and I dropped by the pet store's Kitty Palooza, where shelter animals are occasionally displayed for four hours at special adoption prices featuring gifts. Besides, I'd promised to visit two new adult cat friends.

We walked through the aisles of cats in cages amid squeals of human mirth over strategically placed kittens throughout the showroom. While I visited my cat pals Benjamin and Babs, one foster parent attempted to lure my husband into adopting a year-old tabby. We smiled politely and walked around the corner ... where a silver Siamese Snowshoe tabby with blue eyes melted my heart. His foster mother held him out to me as he instantly climbed onto my shoulder. I held him close like a baby; he cuddled me and burrowed into my armpit. As I sat down, he stretched into my lap, where he remained for an hour. People wondered if we knew each other in a previous life. One tear ran down my face — a sure sign of my deepest emotion, as I contemplated every reason not to adopt him. But the name was right: my father's name, my grandfather's name, and every male descendant for five generations.

Our new blue-eyed boy will probably keep his name. Tonight he'll listen as we play Sinatra and dance once or twice after dinner, because it's Kismet. He's held my hand with his paws and he kisses my hands like a dog. And as his namesake sings, "But if you let me love you, it's for sure I'm gonna love you, all the way ... all the way."

**Kathleen Hall Scanlon** loves cats and dogs, reading and writing, bird watching, travelling, watching films, and promoting literacy. Her Nonfiction students this summer have brought her much joy, great pride, and limitless inspiration. She appreciates the opportunity to teach and write among such a fine community of teen writers!

