



## **FRESH PERSPECTIVES**

**State University of New York at New Paltz**

Fall 2010

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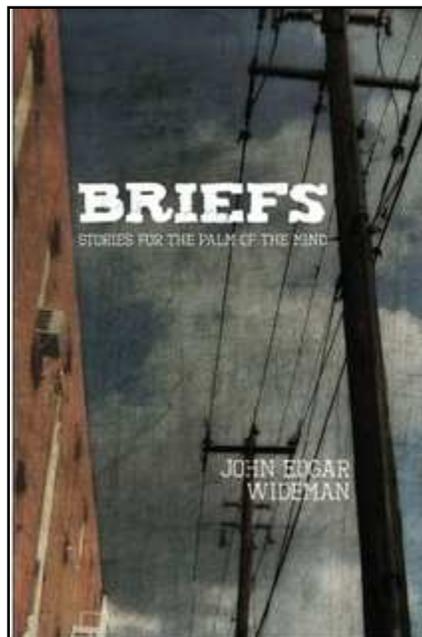
Fall 2010





### John Edgar Wideman's Visit and *Fresh Perspectives* Fall 2010

This semester, acclaimed author John Edgar Wideman spoke at SUNY New Paltz as part of the campus' Distinguished Speakers Series. In preparation for his visit, student read selections from his newest work, *Briefs*, which is a collection of microfiction. Microfiction—also known as flash fiction—has no set word limit although most critics agree it must be less than 1,000 words (the outer parameters of the genre). Inspired by Dr. Wideman's foray into this newly-charted literary territory, students in Composition I tried their hands at microfiction. Their varying experiments with the genre are featured on the next few pages.





*Briefs: Selected Reviews*

Teniola Faloye

“Divorce”

In John Edgar Wideman’s book *Briefs* there is a brief (piece of microfiction) entitled “Divorce.” From the ongoing actions in “Divorce,” it is no secret that the main character of the story is a divorced male. This man is preparing to see his daughter since he has not seen her since he and her mother became divorced. It is evident in the way that they react to each other that a lot of tension has built up between the two of them over the years. This is excellently expressed when Wideman writes, “The waiter setting down a cup of coffee that rattles in its saucer, spotting the white blaze of tablecloth before they can even begin,” allowing the reader to believe that the silence was so loud that it was easily disrupted by a cup of coffee being placed down. This brief is a compelling illustration of the emotional impact of divorce.

“Giblets”

In Wideman’s brief titled “Giblets,” the speaker tells the story of a mature female named Clara who was raised in the church. In this short piece, Clara speaks of the tribulations she faced growing up in order to please her Christian mom’s expectations, especially on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday when they attended church services. These intensive tribulations caused her to stray away from her Christian roots. Wideman states, “So as soon as Clara got out on her own she amputated the merciless days.” Obviously, as soon as Clara became independent, she eradicated the church lifestyle out of her life. This article is compelling because it descriptively portrays a young lady who was conformed to the Christian life style and broke away from it.

“Shadow”

In “Shadow,” written by John Edgar Wideman, is about how a man becomes aware of himself and his responsibilities to himself. Wideman uses interesting word choice when he writes, “He notices a shadow dragged rippling behind him over the grass, one more silent, black presence for which he’s responsible.” The beginning of this sentence (with the use of “he”), gives the reader the impression that Wideman is referring to someone else, but in the end, we are able to see that the face behind the black shadow belongs to speaker. This brief is compelling because it reminds people of the responsibility that they have to themselves.



## STUDENT BRIEFS

The following examples of short prose were inspired by John Edgar Wideman's collection of microfiction entitled *Briefs*.

\* \* \* \*

Quiet Love  
Ashley Sanchez

We do not have conversations. She just nods her head as usual. She doesn't say much. When I try to talk to her about college, it goes in one ear and out the other. I'd like some acknowledgement and appreciation. I would like a response when I speak to her. I want her to tell me that she is proud of my accomplishments and that even if she doesn't have all the answers, she will still listen. Her mother did not have conversations with her either. She didn't say she loved her much or show any signs of emotion or affection. So I'm the one that has to suffer the consequences. I love her, but at times I wish it was different. Being a single mother is hard, I can only imagine. I just hope one day it gets better and we can forget and move on and be happy. I want to make her proud, and I want her to see me graduate from college with a smile. She has a weird way of showing she loves me but it's okay with me sometimes. I'm her one and only. "I love you ma," I tell her when I hang up the phone or leave the house. I will love her forever and always, she is my inspiration, my higher being.

\* \* \* \*

Misunderstood  
Paul Fischer

Walking alone, wondering what went wrong. He questions himself: How could something that seemed so right, be taken as wrong? In one night he destroyed the relationship with his closest friend. Destroyed the lives of others. In that one night he destroyed his own life. Now walking alone thinking how people are taking this. Pondering ways to get back in, as if there was a solution to this problem. Has anyone else felt this pain? Ripping his hair out, just recreating the situation. Where did he go wrong? Nobody's fault but our own, we are responsible for our own actions. We face the consequences. We are the problem. But we are also the solution. Now sleepless from his action, guilt has overcome him. Guilt drives his rage of tears and anger. Regretting his decision as time passes. He tells his side of the story. Some understand. Some do not. Now alone, trying to look at it from other sides, he still sees nothing wrong. Blind to the truth that maybe nothing is wrong at all, but maybe misunderstood.



Goodbye  
Gissel Aquije

Standing there before the door with my family; my brother and me, side-by-side with a suitcase in each of our hands and a backpack on our backs. We face my uncles, aunts, grandmas and cousins. We know what we must do, whether we want to or not. I turn my head to look at the door, then at my brother and my family. I look down. It's too soon. Can we stay just a little bit longer? Good-byes are never easy, but are they truly good-byes if you might see them again...someday? The time has come, after spending exactly a month in Peru, time to go back home. It's a bitter-sweet moment. I am happy to go back home, yet I am sad to leave all my relatives that I have just met.

I approach each and everyone one of them for a big hug and kiss good-bye. I smile. I know somewhere deep inside of me that I'll see them again one day. They wish me good luck on my flight back and good luck in college. I feel warmth with each and every hug through my sweater that I have on. My grandma is the next one I go to say good-bye to. Her eyes look into mine with sadness. I look into hers. Feelings overwhelm me. Be strong. Be strong I tell myself. Being strong is all I have left. After my grandma says good-bye, my uncle says goodbye. Tears start to stream down my face. I hold on tightly, not wanting to let go. He too starts tearing. Where did the being strong part go? I find it again. I get strong and said goodbye.

\* \* \* \*

The Game  
Brian O'Connor

It is the last inning. We are up by two. I've allowed no runs, no hits, and no errors. Taking the mound for the ninth time this game, I get closer as the thunderous sound of fans gradually gets louder. One more inning to go. Three more outs. My foot digs into the dirt. Fastball. He rips the ball towards third. It skips off the grass, into his glove. One out. Two more batters stand in the way to my perfect game. He digs in, the catcher gives me the signal, I nod my head. I let the ball fly. "Ball one!" the umpire yells. No, it couldn't have been. I need to calm down. Relax. Take a deep breath. Curveball. It drops in for a strike. The crowd is getting frenzied. Wild. Loud. Roaring camera flashes flashing. Concentrate. I need to focus. Fastball again. Strike two. My palms are sweating now. The ball that much harder to grip. Change up. He swings right through it. I can feel the breeze. Two down, one to go. The crowd rises to its feet.



My Emotional Hurricane  
Jennifer May Federico

Sometimes it is so funny how love makes you so weak. During your life, you strive to be better, to arrive at your goals, and a person arrives in your life and everything changes. Your body starts to tremble, your mind to ruminate, your soul to travel, and your heart to be scared. A pair of eyes can mirror paradise or represent the end of the world. All your certainties can fall with a wrong word, and in a minute, your feelings can change. Love is a hurricane, the most unconscious jump into the unknown.

I fell in love last year, and my rational life left me in the same moment when I saw his eyes for the first time. It was a night like many others but that night he stole into my heart and came into my life like a storm. The strong woman I thought I was let herself go in the madness and in the emotional swings that were waiting for her.

A year passed, and I could reminisce on lots of memories worthy to be written in a nineteenth century romance, and I'm still in love; I'm still in this incredible hurricane of sensation, in this storm of feelings. I'm still jumping every day in the darkness, and I'm still in those swings that let me change my thinking every five minutes. His eyes are chaos.

Who said that love is peace?  
Surely it is not true for me.

\* \* \* \*

The "B" word  
Kimberly Difo

Why would you leave me after all these years? After all we have we have been through together? Why would you leave now, at the moment that I need you the most? Why? I feel as if the world has come to an end, with neither anyone to talk to nor anyone or anything to look at, just the sky, the moon, and the stars. She left me when I needed her the most, without realizing how highly I valued her friendship. Beware. Friends always don't stay forever; they come and go like seasons. She's a Backstabber. People like her can brighten a light in your life, but can shut that light off just as quickly. Bye. This is the word she forgot to say when she went away. She refused to remember the precious times and memories we shared with each other that allowed us to become the young women we are today. Jessica was her name. I'll always remember the person, the friend that she was, especially because the person I consider my best friend now shares that same name.



Friends and College  
Kevin Rodriguez

Anyone can tell you that friendship is an important aspect of living in college. How can I ever survive all alone in a place so populated with people everywhere? My roommate, my classmates, people living in my hall. There is someone everywhere you look, someone to converse with, another story to hear, and new life to hear about. But what is the true reason we are here in college? To study? To socialize? To have new experiences? “I am here to get work done,” I say to myself, but how can this be done when across my room all I can here is laughter and fun. Essays, reading, books . . . A college degree is the main purpose of my being here. But life is short, always enjoy the little things, don’t let life get boring! Which one is right?

My mind wants to be enlightened with vast amounts of knowledge; I want to learn something new every day. I want to be the brightest, the smartest, I want to read every book in the library. I want to have the smartest conversation with the smartest people. I want to be recognized for my knowledge. I want to succeed. I want to pass class with “flying colors.” I want people to talk about me twenty, thirty, forty years from now. I want to finish my essay.

I want to be friends with everyone. I want to hang out with my friends and laugh every second of every day. I want to walk around and say hello to everyone, start conversations with everyone. I want to just sit back and watch the sun set with friends, then later that night I want to just talk about anything with them; talk about the little things, big issues, politics, religion, the funniest joke, make fun of the guy outside my window, talk about the most absurd things. I just want to have fun, I just want to look back twenty, thirty, forty, years from now and laugh at what I said to Pierce about a “social solar system.” I want to smile at so much. I want to walk across next door and just hang out.

\* \* \* \*

Brief  
Lorenzo Brown

Sometimes I feel sad because I am away from home. I miss my family and friends, but I know they will be there when I return. If I had stayed home and gone to school, I would have been easily distracted. As everyone knows, the city never sleeps and neither would I. My home away from home, New Paltz, provides me a quiet atmosphere sans distraction. From New Paltz to Brooklyn, my hometown, is a two hour drive. When I want to go home, I think about the future; one day it will all pay off. I must go through temporary discomfort for a lifetime of happiness.

The work of school is stressful and tiring, but I know that if I persevere, I will be successful. If all goes well, I will be the first male grandchild in my family to graduate from college. I use this as motivation; I don’t want to disappoint anyone. 90 credits away from a degree seems so far away, but if I stay focused on my goal, I will make it. Preparation is the key to life. I believe that I am well prepared. All the time I invested would be a waste if I were to fail; I’ve come too far to stop now.



[Editor's note: As with all the other student briefs, this is a work of fiction. The narrator is just that— a fictional narrator and not the autobiographical voice of the student author.]

A Letter  
Joevenelly Peralta

This is EVERYTHING I've EVER wanted to tell you – here it is; all in one letter . . .

Lights off. “NENA” music on replay. Box of Kleenex within hand's reach . . . There's something in me that still can't believe it. As I sit here and think about everything, to me it seems like yesterday when you sat there in your back yard and read that very embarrassing letter out loud—calling my name, asking me to stop crying and hiding my face of shame. Yes I sent you the letter a couple days before that, but it wasn't until then that I realized I had fallen in love, FORREAL. Within our relationship, I dealt with stuff I wasn't supposed to. October—finding out that I came second to someone you have been dating for almost a year. November—reading that text message you sent me that night, telling me that you didn't mean to hurt me again, but that she was pregnant. February—spending that awkward night before Valentine's Day with you because you had business to handle the next day. And we can't forget all your minor mess ups after that. Despite it all I stood by you, brushing it off my shoulders because I was in love with you.

I was always on CLOUD 9 – so f\*\*king high off our fabulous vibe. Something as simple as hearing your name put me in a place I couldn't even explain. At one point it WAS just you and me, but you're human and I'm human. People make mistakes and that's simply the way LIFE goes. Time after time you'd hurt me and I'd simply forgive you. I never understood why, but now I do. My love for you was so REAL—it blinded me. I just wish I could have the power to change it all but I can't.

We ended in an awkward way. Your lack of actions said it all. You acted like I never mattered to you—like I had not just spend a little over a year sticking by you through whatever stupidity you did. You never made it clear if you still wanted me in your life or not. It was evident that we weren't together. However, every time we'd talk, it seemed so regular. I'll admit it—yes; at one point I was scared to stop talking to you. I refused to let go, but it's about time. Though I love you deeply and I care about you tremendously, I just can't do this anymore. Back then I wasn't sure but now it's quite simple. No matter what I do or what I say, there's nothing that can be done to fix this—to fix US. What I'm trying to say is that it's time for me to be a woman about it, accept it as it IS and move on. I'm soon about to embark on an exciting journey that I plan to enjoy. I'm simply letting you live this hectic life of yours. You have so many things going on. Football. ASA. Cross County Multiplex Cinemas. Aniyah Marie Hewitt . . . Good luck. I wish you the best and I mean it. Te amo. ♥

PS – You're not obligated to respond.



Scar  
Pearl Philantrope

Was it that important for you leave a scar forever?

It was Thanksgiving a day when you shared your love with family, telling stories, and eating good food that was homemade. Drinking to a certain level, but no, that wasn't what you had in mind. It went further than what we wanted that night.

"I know you're hiding it from me," he kept saying. As we laughed and turned it into a joke, you didn't. You started getting angry and started making us your victims, your own family. What were you thinking? That because you were not yourself you could do whatever?

Well no, it wasn't okay to let yourself act the way you did. It created a memory that I will now never forget because it involved my family. Don't you realize it's your family too? I understand that when you have a few drinks you're not in control of yourself but that's no excuse. Whatever was going on in your life shouldn't have been taken out on us. Your hidden anger towards what was done to your father was now reflected. You opened the door and let your anger out at the wrong moment and at the wrong people. Was it because you were always abusive with your words? In my eyes your hands will always be covered in sin, because you never use them for good.

I also realize, because of all the life experiences that I've been through, that holding on to something for so long affects you will and eventually over power you. So I will now move on, but that scar will always be there.

\* \* \* \*

Breathing  
Sam Smith

I've never been one to care too much about breathing. Something you don't think about, it just happens. Unconsciously deciding when to breathe in, when to breathe out, how long to hold air in your lungs, how far your lungs expand, it's boggling how many things go on without you even deciding whether they go on. I'm sick of not being in control, I'm sick of someone else making these decisions for me. Starting this moment, I call the shots. I decide when I breathe in, when I breathe out, and I'm going to make the conscious decision to stop altogether.



## Griddle Inn: A Review

Carlos Aldana

Anyone who is an art fan should defiantly visit the Samuel Dorsky Museum. In this museum you will find amazing pieces of art. These pieces vary from sculptures to abstract paintings. One of the pictures that I found most interesting was Griddle Inn. Ralph Goings painted Griddle Inn in 1978. The medium he chose for this piece of art was screen-print.

As soon as you take a glance at the picture, you get the sense that there is a story behind it. Who are



**GRIDDLE INN BY RALPH GOINGS**

[HTTP://WWW.TERMINARTORS.COM/ARTWORKPROFILE/](http://www.terminartors.com/artworkprofile/)

the three men in the painting? That was the question that first came to mind. After analyzing the picture for a while, I came to a conclusion that these must be three old friends who have been coming to this diner for years. Looking at it from an artistic point of view, there are many things that stick out. The first thing that stands out is that the focal point of the picture is the three men on the left side. This is abnormal because the whole right side of the picture is mostly empty, so it is as if something is missing. Perhaps Goings wants the viewer to think that the men had two other friends who are not there, who most likely passed

away. The color of the picture is dull and the all three of the men are wear black so this also suggests a sense of loss or mourning. Another thing that really stood out is the use of repetition; there are five identical stools in the picture.

At first glance you may consider Griddle Inn to be a simple picture. But after some close examination, you come to realize all the symbolic aspects of the picture. If my review of this painting interests you, then then the Samuel Dorsky museum is where you want to be. Here you will find a variety of paintings similar to this one, but also many other forms of art.



## A Place Different From Home

Sandra Arellano

August 20, 2000—the day everything changed. Ecuador was the country that welcomed me with open arms. Ambato was the city that saw my mom struggle to bring me into this world and of which I'm proud to be part. Ambato is considered to be the city of flowers and fruits and the home of the most beautiful girls. I grew up close to all of my family and friends. My siblings were older than me and already had their minds set in graduating high school and following their dreams. Suddenly, every dream shattered once we found out my father had another daughter. My mom knew about it, but wanted to find the perfect time to introduce us to her. However, everything came out a different way; my aunt brought her to my grandfather's funeral and said, "This is your half sister." My brother and sisters looked at each other; their facial expressions demonstrated the anger and sadness that they felt. I was too little to understand what had happened. I just saw my mother's eyes starting to tear up, desperate to get out of that room.

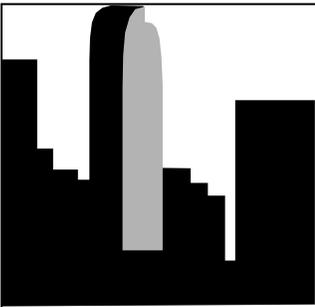
While going home, everybody was silent; the only thing you could hear was the sobbing of my mother and siblings. Once we got home, my mom went inside her room to tell my father that she would never be able to forgive his family. She cried for days, and I knew that was the biggest turmoil that was going to affect my family very much.

Three months after, my father came in and told us that we were moving to New York. We disagreed with him because in Ecuador we had luxuries; we owned a three-story house, a new car, went to Catholic schools and had maids to serve us at any time. But, most importantly, we had our friends and family to grow up next to. My parents didn't care. They wanted something different for their children.

My grandmother was devastated to hear the news because we were her favorite grandchildren, and my father was her life. Coming to New York was a challenge; we were lost foreigners who knew we didn't belong. I felt alone and was embarrassed because I was not able to communicate in English. My oldest

brother and sister at the age of 17 went to work in a factory along with my mom. I saw them come home tired and overwhelmed because they had never worked. Everything was different; the lifestyle in New York goes at a fast rhythm. We barely had time to sit down and eat as a family. That was one of the biggest challenges for us because everybody had taken different paths and family became second in our lives.

However, despite all of the obstacles that we faced, we are now thankful for my parents' sacrifice because we got to learn a new language and enjoy the opportunities that this country has offered us.





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## When I Found the Pond

Rachael Rohr

Is it morning? I feel rays of light pierce through the blinds as I fight back with a dark throw pillow. I don't want to get up today. The bells and whistles of my alarm have not yet begun, so I must have more time. But just as my lids begin to get heavy again... the chiming commences. And so I rise. It is morning.

The day is like any other day, but I am not quite as alive. In the car, the radio is as unsatisfying as a shot of cement, so I turn it off. Now I have arrived, but my feet are cinder blocks, far too heavy to drag to class. But somehow I seem to muscle open the door, and the cool breeze against my cheeks revitalizes me enough to begin my dreaded journey. [ . . . ]

I must be lucky today because on this morning when I needed it the most, I have found a place of solace. Now it is not the cars that I hear nor the conversations of other cinder-block laborers nor even my own thoughts. I hear the wind, the animals, and the sound of the fountain trickling into the water. An isolated bench sits not far away, and before I have time to argue with the clock, I find myself seated on it, transfixed by what surrounds me. The water looks lovely as it reflects the sunlight. The ripples from the fountain hypnotize and seduce my eyes, and when the drops hit the water, the circular figure it creates seems to carry to the edges. There is a cluster of green to the right, where a willow weeps and blows in the wind. I feel like that willow, but unlike her, my time here is temporary.

Just as I am about to fall back into my thoughts, I am scolded. Slowly I turn to look behind me hoping to get a glimpse of the culprit, and a smile comes to my face. It's that duck again, the one who coaxed me here in the first place, but now he has two friends. I want to reach out and touch them, but the idea of startling my new companions stops me. And so I sit while the stand, and we relish each other. I taste a deep breath, and it is delicious; I am content.

I peek at the time, feeling fortunate that I can stay a little longer. [ . . . ] But before I can ponder [ . . . ] a family of duck floats through. Each one looks different and I enjoy the diversity: green, brown, black, gray, all with happy orange feet. I wish I could join them but I can't. My companions, on the other hand, are on the move. While they walk, excuse me, waddle away, they are in perfect step. And one after another they leap into the water. There is no splash though, and their buoyant figures float away to join the clan. Lucky ducks... I want to come along too. But, now, more laborers are dragging their blocks, and I know it is time to go.



## The Big Green Rectangular Field

Theresa Park

Everyone has an important place that brings comfort to his or her heart. For some people it could be their bedroom, the park, church, or any place that would bring comfort. However, for me it came in the form of a black and white ball. That black and white ball was kicked around on a green field in autumn. Sweat would drip down my face and my muscles would clench as my eyes would follow that black and white ball. Not only did the soccer field hold a special place in my mind and heart, but it also allowed me to focus, giving me specific goals, and creating an atmosphere where I felt accepted.

Historically soccer began in Tavern, London but, for me, it started in East Meadow, Long Island. She had short brown hair, five foot five, and firm muscles. Her name was Mia Hamm and she always wore the number nine glued onto her back. Her success started at a young age, for she “youngest person ever to play for the U.S. National Team when she debuted for the USA in 1987 at the age of 15” (“Hamm, Mia”). I started soccer at the age of five and I was nowhere near her potential. Not only did I not look like a soccer player, I looked like a ballerina prancing up and down the soccer field. As time passed on, I felt a passion growing in my heart. [ . . . ]

As my passion grew, I became more interested in the techniques of soccer. I wanted to progress in something that I felt was special to me. [ . . . ] As I laid my eyes across the green rectangular field, I saw the beautiful net sitting on the big thick white line. Even though the field was empty, I visualized myself playing one day for the New York State team.

Soccer was not only a sport for me to enjoy, but also helped me to create goals. I would go outside in my backyard under the blazing sun and practice my techniques until my footwork was perfect. I felt that I was ready to try out for the New York State team. After tryouts, I sat in my house for days waiting for the mail. Four days passed, and I was anxious. I would check the mail every day. When the mail came in, my stomach started to fill with butterflies. My hands started to tremble. I opened the mail and read the paper. I jumped in joy with the biggest smile on my face. My focus level helped me to achieve my goal. With all the hard work and effort I put in, I eventually made the New York State team. I felt proud of myself. My hard work paid off. [ . . . ]

My focus on soccer from middle school transitioned to high school. As an eighth grader, I played with the high school Varsity Soccer Team and became more advanced. My skills sharpened and my speed became faster. My view of soccer widened as I learned more knowledge of the sport. All the over nights and traveling one side of the US to the other side became too much to handle. The future brought harder times where soccer could not be my number one priority. Eventually, I had to let go of the sport but it remains as something I love to do. Today, I run for New Paltz cross country. However, every time I see the soccer field my emotions rush back. Sweat would drip down my face and my muscles would clench as my eyes would follow that black and white ball...as I reminisced of the days running on the field.

Some people have an important and personal place that brings comfort to their heart. Mine is the green rectangle field which is a big part of my past. It is the place where I love to be whenever times are rough. Whenever I have free time as a college student, I would dribble up and down the thick white lines after cross country practice or class. It brings back good memory. Not only did this place allowed me to focus and create specific goals, but the soccer field helped me to be where I am today.

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## Dear Ms. Freel...

Each year, Professor Freel regularly asks her students to address letters to her on a variety of themes. What follows are a sampling of the “Dear Ms. Freel” letters from the Fall 2010 semester.

\* \* \* \*

Dear Ms. Freel,

I was born in an average family; my parents, and my brother and I are content to stay in the range of the middle class. I am used to being average. I thought that our family line would keep having ordinary people emerge without any surprises. After I thought about this, my passion for being on top disappeared; I blocked my potential from developing. When I think back, I regret it, and I should have worked harder at not being average.

In my earliest memory, I was comfortable with my living standard as a family and as an individual. As far as I remember, our family did not struggle economically; we always had a decent amount of leftovers. We do not have a big house with several floors and tons of bedrooms, but we like to be together in one bedroom at night. We do not have an elegant dining table, but we share our news at the table every night; either the news from our schools or the news from our work. I always came home with 90's; I rarely got 100 on my tests. Maybe I did not want to get 100, because once I got a 100, I would have had to pressure myself to get another 100 the next time. I was content with both my academic standard and my family's standard.

The thought did not last long; I questioned myself once I got into high school. I needed to determine either that I was to strive for the top or just waste my time. I was lost, so I talked to my dad. I said, “Dad, I feel like our family will stay average for the rest of our generations.” My dad replied: “The change is up to you; do not assume what we are.” My dad always gives vague answers like this, which requires me to think and dig for the meanings myself. I looked back at my exam papers; I was always content with all the 90's in red marks; in a sense, I had always accepted the “X” marks on my answers. However, this time, I felt something was different. I felt regret for the wrong answers due to carelessness; I had not done my best. I did not recognize the fact until I looked at my test papers again. I was not satisfied. I needed to study harder; I needed to struggle in order to not have any regrets in my life.

Being average is not bad, but it is bad if people get used to being average. Once people get used to the standard of being average, they may lose the motivation to improve.. Their potential abilities become hidden. After people put in effort, even if they still earn an average result, they may accept it with no regret.

Sincerely,  
Zhe Zhu



## Dear Ms. Freel...

Depending on people, the meaning of “average” can be different; “average” can refer to grades, numbers, and personalities. For me, average means people who live a usual or an ordinary life. So I think that I am average, but I do not want to be average because if I am average, there will be no improvements in my life and my life might become boring. Also, when I get older, I will regret that I did not achieve something special.

A person who wants to be average does not want to take a risk or take responsibility. Also, he just satisfies his present life and does not want to take any challenge. However, I do not want to be average because I do not like a monotonous life; every day the same as yesterday. There would be no improvements or developments in my life. If I receive the same grades for four years of college, then when people look at my transcript, they may say that I have a strong determination to keep up with my work. However, they may also think that there is no progress in terms of my grades. If I do not see the improvements in myself, I feel like a loser. Someone once said, “Today, we have to do better than yesterday.” That is what life is all about: to keep making enhancements and keep proving to ourselves that we are better than average. It is in our hands.

When I was little, my mom usually said, “You better try to do something rather than do nothing.” It means that even if you do not achieve your goals, you can still learn something from your mistakes or experiences. When I was little, I did not understand what my mom was trying to say. However, as I grew up, I started to understand. When I was in junior high school, I took a Chinese class, and my friends and I just wanted to pass the class and get credits. At that time, I wanted an easy life, and I did not want to have any challenges. However, one day I saw a TV program about geniuses. On the show, I saw a student who was the same age as me, and he spoke Chinese really well. After I watched the show, I felt ashamed of myself and felt like I was loser, because even though we were the same age, our speaking skill was totally different. I wanted to speak Chinese like him; therefore, I studied hard. This was the first time that I accepted a challenge and tried to rise above being average.

There are many different types of people in the world. Some people just satisfy their present life and hate to take a risk. On the other hand, some people do not want stay the same and want to be special. While being average is not bad, it is bad if people get used to being average. I think that we cannot be above average at everything, but we can be above average at some things. It means we have different personalities, skills and individual minds; therefore, when we desire hard work and do best in our field, I think most have an ability to rise above being average.

Sincerely,  
Hee Soo Kim



## Dear Ms. Freel...

I went to a wake. It was my first wake.  
The stiff was set out in its box so loved ones could say their byes one last time.  
How odd for the dead to be set out in the clear I thought. How strange.  
Why not hide it?  
On top of noise, my thoughts drip on.  
Did no one grasp that there was a dead man in the room?  
Still the roar went on.  
It was all so black. Boys stood cramped in their suits, girls on heels.  
The kind grins on each face turned grim.  
The smell of the blooms that lined the wall proved fair but this bleak draft hung in the air.  
Most stood in the room to wait for the time to part;  
The rest tried to ease their hearts through a bout of good chat.  
“Shoot me ere I get old,” I told my ma, “just shoot me.”  
I do not want the dread of old age.  
I fear the back and forth cross,  
Death or life.  
May I at no time be caught on the streets with my brain full of holes, with a lip of more skewed words than the works of Gric.  
No, kill me ere I reach the point of craze.  
Life is the seed of a bud.  
It is one’s time from this life to the next,  
So one should not fear death but bless those that cross on.  
This thought is hard to do;  
Death is a break in the heart,  
For the ones you love are those you do not want to lose.

Sincerely,  
Emily Scates



## Dear Ms. Freel...

Often, people struggle for luxuries for a better life. However, while they are working hard to reach their goals, they lose their purpose for living. The real purpose of life is to live, but they have altered life into a competition; they want fame, and they want the privilege of power. If we all live like a weasel, an animal without any other thoughts except to live, and if we are calm about death, our lives will be carefree, and we will be able to accept whatever comes.

The main difference between humans and animals is that we think too much. In other words, we are too competitive in having the most updated technology. We see our friends with the newest cell-phones, computers, laptops; we want to catch up with fashion by having one of those cool things. Humans work hard to achieve lives that are filled with these unnecessary products.

Once all the material luxuries are obtained, humans tend to pay attention to their wasted physical bodies. After working hard to achieve a better quality of life, they are left with exhaustion—both physical and spiritual. Even though many have a big room full of technological equipment, they may still be afraid of death because they cannot be buried with their property. When people are born, there are black dots in front of them/ Through their life experience, they chase after the dots and compete with each other. Although they may reach all the dots, they will die eventually. Everything that they blindly worked for becomes meaningless. The fear of death makes all humans suffer.

If we live like a weasel, which lives on his basic needs, how much difference will we have? The weasel seeks his food and concentrates on that one item of food. He kills the rabbit by biting its neck; as the blood flows down, he sees the victory of the fight. We, on the other hand, focus on how fresh the rabbit is. We try to live our lives by making choices; we struggle, we suffer, we have fear. If we live like the weasel, and we think like the weasel, we do not need to worry about where our beginnings are and where we end.

Sincerely,  
Zhe Zhu



## My Place: MoMA Korinn Clark

The first year I ever visited the Museum of Modern Art was in 1999. I was only seven years old but that place took me by surprise. Many little seven-year-olds love going to the zoo or to the aquarium, but my place was MoMA. What was it about the Museum of Modern Art that drew me to it? It is not just that it is a museum. For me it was how the museum became a place for me to feel and see artists like Van Gogh and many more from a different perspective. At MoMA it is not just a glance anymore; the Museum of Modern Art encourages the viewer to want to see and know more. And I, as the viewer, wanted to see more.

Why would a person want to go to an art museum? The real question is why would they not want to go? Art may not be interesting to some people because they may find it boring or pointless. Art is not just taking a paintbrush with a paper or sculpting clay; for some artists art is a way of conveying themselves. Just the way singers express themselves in songs and just the way actors express their talents through movies, for them it is the same thing. But there is beauty in it all, having a way to express oneself with something one is good at and MoMA helps show that. [ . . . ]

MoMA has many exhibitions that keep up with the world around it, such as many artworks dealing with technology for the new era. What I love about this place is the feeling I get when I see a piece of art that I really like. This feeling is no longer just a breath-taker, like how a person gets when they see a nice Jaguar or a new BMW. At that moment, when I see a piece of art I like, I want to be there as the artist paints his/her picture. Certain artwork makes me imagine what inspired the artists when they were drawing their masterpiece, and I enjoy that MoMA allows me to feel that.

When I visit MoMA, I see the combination of expressionistic art and abstract art. I imagine myself seeing art differently from everybody else. The way that MoMA portrays the artists is very moving and surreal. The Museum of Modern Arts combines different artists' exhibits together as if they go together like peanut butter and jelly. MoMA features artists from all around the world and I love that. They have artists like Pablo Picasso, Vincent Van Gogh, Andy Warhol, Vladimir Burliuk, and many more. Some of the artists that are displayed I am sometimes not familiar with, but MoMA features them with artists that I do know. With all the spectacular art in that one building, MoMA attracts all different types of people from different backgrounds, all different ages, and income levels.

All those people come together to appreciate modern art. My two favorite artists are Vincent Van Gogh and Andy Warhol. Their art just draws me in because of their different strokes, styles, and techniques. They have the type of technique that when I see it I can not just take one glance at it. I just want to hear the story behind the masterpiece, and Van Gogh and Andy Warhol's paintings have me imagining my own story for the places I have been and my experiences. [ . . . ]

MoMA has so many great things to offer visitors, and it is not only their gift store. There are always rotating exhibitions, new artists and new displays. So when I visit there is always something new for me to see. [ . . . ]

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## A Portal to the World's History

Jennifer Cuffari

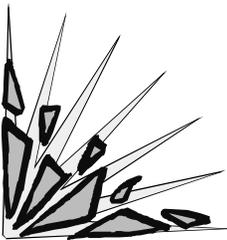
The world is filled with so many places that become a part of one's life. It can be any area with a value; a feeling no one else can feel besides the one in that certain place. Having an eye for art, I find myself visiting the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It was "founded on April 13<sup>th</sup>, 1870 by a group of American citizens-businessmen and financiers as well as leading artist and thinkers of the day..." ("Brief History of the Museum"). The Metropolitan Museum of Art is important to me because of the way art makes me feel; the feeling of becoming part of a different lifetime, and a feeling of being in a sanctuary full of the past.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art is located in New York City's Central Park along Fifth Avenue. In Thomas Hoving's book *Making Mummies Dance*, he describes the Met as a "stupendous ten acres of buildings, stretching from 80<sup>th</sup> street ... with art" (129). [ . . . ]

The interior of the museum surrounds me with beautiful designs of abstract patterns from every view when I turn my head around making myself dizzy. I begin my journey through the Egyptian exhibit. I make a right; enter a pyramid and then an entrance to a tomb filled with hieroglyphics and drawings. I make another turn to come across a sphinx surrounded by water. I am uncovering the treasures in front of my eyes that I only thought I would only see in pictures and movies, such as *The Mummy*. With each turn I make, it is a new travel into a new country.

I travel from the Middle East to Asia. Next, it is a screen with drawings of bamboo trees, plants, flowers, by a river, and birds. The sounds of a water fall echo, I follow where it is coming from and just from its appearance, I imagine it being the fountain of youth. I want to stay young forever and to always remember my childhood and continue my imaginations of being in different places. The Asian life continues with the art of calligraphy and elegant floral designs on materials. I am part of the picture, drawn as *Jennifer*. As I make my way deeper into another area, I am brought into an actual view of a home where there is a little pathway from the temple into the front yard with bamboo trees and a pond. I picture myself in the scene of *Mulan*, where Mulan is singing and praying to the gods to fulfill her wish of a better life. I also see myself become an Emperor's or a warrior's daughter living in a palace.

Next, I walk into Versailles. The rooms are filled with crystal-glass chandeliers, wooden swirl design on chairs, glistening table tops that reflect everything in the room like a mirror, numerous and wonderful radiance accommodating dark shades of colors, and soft fabrics designed in sparkling gold. I step into to each room and I feel like Queen of the country. Every object in each room has its own virtual and three dimensional views on apple computers. With one touch on the screen, everything appears, clicking here and clicking there, to get a better understanding of the whole exhibit through the computer. [ . . . ]



Everything is telling a story about who painted it, how it was created, when it was made; whatever questions I have, I can find the answers to. It feels as if the art "come[s] alive in a rush ... a work of art transformed from mere paint into what I can only describe as an overpowering slice of nature" ("Making Mummies Dance" 137). At every turn, in every corner, a glass window is displaying so many pieces of art from portraits, to statues, to furniture. While I go through each section, each piece of art pulls me in, and, one by one I become the story. [ . . . ]

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## A Place to Remember

Terrese Young

When any individual visits a place, she may gain new memories and new experiences. My favorite memory would have to be the weekend I spent at the Hilton hotel in New Orleans, Louisiana. My trip had to be the experience of a lifetime and I wish I could go back every time I think about it. Any person who would visit this city would gain memories that are unforgettable and that will last an eternity. [ . . . ]

In my high school, A. Philip Randolph Campus High School, I was a part of a program entitled The Gateway Program for students focusing on pre-medical careers. In such a program students are given the opportunity to become exposed to various medical fields to widen their horizons of medical interests. A fellow student and I were lucky enough to be the only ones chosen out of the gateway class to attend a symposium in New Orleans about medical professions. [ . . . ]

As many may know, New Orleans was one of the many cities in Louisiana to come in contact with Hurricane Katrina, so of course many wonder if New Orleans was still as beautiful as it once was. When my flight landed in Louisiana, the city looked as if nothing had touched it at all. I knew, however, that the after effects were tremendous, for “The Industrial wastes, oil spills, household sewage, toxic chemicals and other hazardous pollutants had swept to directly hit areas as well as neighboring regions”(Sandhyarani). A number of small mini-vans came to the airport to retrieve the group of students and chaperones and drove us to the Hilton. During the ride, I look out the window and saw the city streets were lit for a night of fine dining, trees as tall as houses, and happy people all over; I was completely amazed. [ . . . ]

New Orleans is a tourist’s dream vacation location, and it “is the state’s largest city and one of the busiest ports in the world”(Patton and Sherwin 507), but I was not there to tour. The reason behind this symposium was to introduce young minority students with hopes of pursuing a medical profession to doctors’, scientists’, or technicians’ lifestyle. Each student had a color group to which they were assigned based upon the career goals or interests. Throughout the day different speakers would come to the rooms of the various groups and speak about their professions, answer any questions that were asked, hand out business cards, and then rotate to the next group of students. But the learning did not stop there; at each meal there were motivational speakers ranging from Jayson Williams an ex-basketball player to Stedman Graham. Every speaker had a story to tell about a life changing moment that opened the eyes of every student there and made it clear to them who they were and what their dreams were. With every message, there was a spark in me that let me know that no matter what, I had to become a medical professional.

Looking back at my experience, any one person can visit or even grow up in a certain area and have amazing memories gained from that place, but one can only say it was a true experience once she has told or shared it with another individual. A memory happens every minute but it is one’s choice whether or not to hold on to it for sharing or to discard of it. Only a person can tell the story of a great memory she has. My time spent in New Orleans was undoubtedly one of the most amazing experiences of my life. [ . . . ]

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## A Wonderful Place

Sônia Lisboa

Once a friend told me how important it is to live in a place you really like; a place that fits you and that makes you proud of living in. Somewhere that will let you be yourself, and where you do not have to change in order to be part of it. Actually I had never thought about it before, but while we were talking about it, I told my friend, “I live in a spectacular place, a perfect place.” There I can feel myself; there I can be in touch with the nature, even living in a big city around many people.

I live in Rio de Janeiro, a big city with over six million cheerful inhabitants (Alves). It is surrounded by many beaches, mountains, waterfalls and forests. Known as “The Wonderful City,” it is the most visited city in Brazil. To discover the “real” beauty of Rio, I would tell visitors to see the touristic attractions later and “live” the culture first. [. . . ]

Besides the beauty of the place itself, Rio has the kindest and friendliest people in the world. The tourists are never treated as strange people as many countries see them. They are always considered part of the community as if they were in their home country. In this way, some of them do not want to leave when they get there. As it is stated in the article of *Lonely Planet*, “Be warned: Rio’s powers of seduction can leave you with a bad case of *saudade* (indescribable longing) when you leave.” [. . . ]

The most amazing thing about living in Rio is finding so many special places, and it is hard to choose only one. Still, everybody has a special place. I have one. It is very close to my house, which makes me even happier because I can go there every time I want to. It is hard to describe this place, but it is truly easy to feel it. I like things that do not need to be described, things that speak for themselves, that really touch you deeply, so profoundly that words cannot reach. When I was a teenager, I used to have the same dream almost every month. I dreamed that I was walking through a tunnel made by trees and flowers. It was a peaceful place that made me really happy. Some years later, I went to Jardim Botânico (the Botanical Gardens), located in the south zone of Rio. I went there by myself, and while I was walking there, taking pictures and feeling the wonderful weather of that day, I saw my place; the one that was in my dreams before. It was a little bit different because the flowers were colored blue, instead of red, which made it even more beautiful, but it was still my place. I was astonished to see it, even more to feel it; I could not think of anything else. I could only listen to my heart. My eyes were as surprised as I was. I could feel I had been there before. It was almost if that place belonged to me. Actually, after that day, I have been there so many times that I can say it belongs to me; at least, it belongs to my heart and my memories. Some people choose their favorite places. My place chose me. Lately, my mom told me we had been there before, when I was a child. Probably my dream was just a really good memory of the past, which does not make it less special.

Ultimately, it is possible to see how special Rio de Janeiro is, not only for me who has lived my entire life there, but also for those who spent, or will spend, some time living there. Rio’s natural beauty and welcoming people can make anyone fall in love with the city. If you are looking for a place to be special, you can definitely find it there. It is a place that will be unique for you, that will give you not only *saudade*, but also remarkable memories that are going to stay in your mind and in your heart forever. This place will belong to you, as my place belongs to me.

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Untitled Poem  
Nicole Janine Rivera

I wish loving you would be so easy  
Like the old days when we were young  
Living life not worrying about any one else  
I wish we could go back to the sacred day  
When we first held hands and you told me everything be okay  
When you said I was cute and was scared to kiss me  
And hugging was our show of affection  
I wish we could go back to where our love was pure and not  
tainted

How did we get here to this point?  
Where we fight all the time and there is no trust  
How can we to a place of no return  
How can we get to the point where we question our love?  
Where did all I love go and most of all why are you  
questioning me the most?

If I didn't want you I wouldn't be crying for you  
Hands out screaming for you  
Tears running down my face drowning in them for you  
If I didn't love, my heart wouldn't hurt so bad  
And the beating of it wouldn't go so fast  
If I didn't need you, watching you leave wouldn't be so sad  
And I would be living life like everything is okay  
If my heart weren't broken, I wouldn't be hurting so much  
Feeling like a truck just hit me

Do you feel the same feeling I do?  
I'm all broken inside and out, can't you see me?  
And still you question all my feelings  
While I'm sitting here just remembering  
All the good times and avoiding the bad feelings  
You the one who was scared and walked away  
Instead of growing up you went astray  
And now I'm here all heart broken  
Wondering why you won't love me



## The Big Red Building

Vicki Quiñones

Though I was not born during any of the wars that occurred, I grew up across the street from something that was a part of them. There was a big red armory base across the street from where I lived that I always ignored. It was called the Fourteenth Regiment. Every time I asked my mother about it, she would tell me, “It’s a women’s homeless shelter,” and I would continue with what I was doing. I guess since it was always there it never occurred to me that the building was a huge part of history. What I saw almost every day was women walking everywhere causing trouble, yelling out windows, and robbing the corner stores. Trash was everywhere surrounding the armory base. There were empty bottles and cans of beer, needles, wrappers, and sometime it smelled like urine. This made it seem like the building was a place I certainly did not want to go inside or even be near. I lived across the street on the side of it, so I did not see as much going on as I would if I were near the entrance. The Armory base, also known as the 14th regiment on Eighth Avenue and Fourteenth Street in Park Slope, was simply a big red building, and I never took the time to understand its importance. I no longer live in this area, but now I am learning more about this place while gaining a better understanding of its importance in society long ago and now.

I was born in 1992, and the armory base was built in the 1860s (“DHS News”). Throughout the sixteen years that I lived on Fifteenth Street, I never knew the significance of the building across the street. This armory base was obviously old. I always noticed the fading red bricks along walls of the building. Then there were windows that were surrounded with stone and gates, which is not what anyone really sees today. I hardly ever saw the doors open because the one door that I could see, opened rarely; it was all darkness whenever it did open. [...]

The 70,000 square feet that was unoccupied now serves the community as a place where every one of all ages can go and have a good time (Kuntzman). This renovation cost \$16 million; therefore, the change was beneficial to the community in Park Slope because it was done to help out (Kuntzman) [...] This is definitely not how the situation always was. The building is over a hundred years old after all. Its history is actually something that I never imagined when I was a child. As I grew up, my perspective has changed as well as the community.

The reason for the armory base’s existence was war. The 14th Regiment Armory “housed troops of the civil war” (“DHS News”). There was the drill floor; which now serves as the recreation center, and there was the garrison; which is the homeless shelter (“DHS News”). The armory base “called for domestic peacekeeping during draft riots...it held fancy dress balls, and was socially active” (Morris). There was a lot going on in the immense building years before I was born. I could not even imagine any of it based solely on what I have seen ever since I grew up near it. Besides the Civil War, the 14th Regiment was also used during the Spanish American War, World War I & II (Morris). This all occurred long before the world became what it is today, and what it is becoming slowly.

The saying “you can’t judge a book by its cover” can relate to the armory base I grew up across the street from. On the outside, it seemed as though it were an abandoned building with a few women living inside because they had nowhere else to go. The streets were quiet a lot of the time because the building was empty on the side I could see from the view of my apartment building. The history that goes with the building is something you cannot really tell when you just take a glimpse at it. I actually lived across from this big historic place that was significant to so many people, especially men, more than a hundred years ago.

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## Making Something Out of Nothing

Novia Asquith

Having the craving for a certain type of dish happens to all of us, but the issue may be the limited amount of ingredients that we may have in order to follow our way of cooking. Cooking is a process; when we are hungry and do not have the product we need to make a finger licking meal, dinner can become pretty frustrating. This may lead us to take the little that we have and make something out of nothing. It may simply end up to be something that we will enjoy or a meal that a friend or relative will be thankful for. The ingredients may not seem as something tasteful, but when combined, they can make something that is very delicious, warm, and comforting.

Walking around the house searching and searching, but we cannot find anything that we need to make a pot of soup. How is this going to work out? Let us search the kitchen again. We anxiously open cupboards angrily moving every can, box, or bag one by one from side to side. Finally, we find a little can of mixed vegetables. Our frowning faces lighten up looking to find something else inside the cupboard, but eventually there is only that one can of Parade mix vegetables. Can we find any spice in the spice cabinet to use for our dish? We open the cabinet silently, our hands shifting and shaking every bottle in the cabinet, but the majority are empty so our faces begin to frown again. Before we search for more ingredients, all we see is salt, black pepper, and seasoned salt which typically has paprika, onion powder, garlic and other herbs.

Now it is time to find the little that is in the refrigerator or the freezer. We pull open the refrigerator door with such anger after the discovery of the small amount of spices. Looking through the refrigerator thoroughly from the shelves to the trays to the refrigerator door, the products that are there are not very pleasing. Inside the tray, there is one piece of celery stick, one little carrot, one Scotch Bonnet pepper, and thyme. Inside the freezer, we find one center chicken breast and a chicken wing in a Ziploc bag. Since there are not enough vegetables or meat, there is nothing to think about but to gather the little that we have to make something. All the ingredients are together, so it is time to begin the process of cooking this delicious meal.

We defrost and clean the meat and then place it inside a medium size pot filled with water half way and place it on the stove. While the chicken is on the stove, we add a little salt inside the pot. Once the chicken is cooking, we begin chopping the carrot and the celery into little pieces. We dice the vegetables so small and thin they feel like a charm inside a cereal box, Lucky Charms. Now that the chicken is cooked half way, it is time for us to drop the celery and the carrot inside. All the produce that we have gathered is inside the pot, hoping for the color to change so that the soup can look rich and healthy. When everything is together, the thyme and the scotch bonnet pepper is placed inside to complete the soup.

The smell of the soup rises all over the kitchen; now it is time to open the can of Parade mix vegetables. We open the can in such a delicate way so that it does not spill and go to waste. Now the pot looks full and almost ready to eat; it is time for us to add some seasoned salt and a little black pepper to flavor the pot for the best taste. We allow the pot to simmer for a few minutes; the smell travels around the house so our taste buds are awakened. After such long waiting and hard labor looking around for products to use, it is time to serve and enjoy. [ . . . ]

All of our hard work and determination has paid off in the end of the cooking process. After having two servings of the soup we feel stronger and happier. Sweat drips down our forehead like tears because the soup is so warm and spicy. It is so delicious and comforting that our hungry friend begins to lick her fingers after she is done. She is thankful for it even though it is not her favorite meal. She drinks the soup as if she had not eaten in days. We all rub our stomachs when our bowls are empty.

Making something out of nothing can be stressful, but the hard work satisfies us at the end of the wait. It brings joy and happiness to our soul when it is all over. It also brings laughter when looking back at all the troubles and the disappointment that we put ourselves through to gather the very little that was available and make good use of it. Times may be hard but something can surely be made out of nothing.



## Walnut Ship

Onur Cokar

Ever since I was a little boy I always liked to build new things. My favorite toy was Legos and I could play with them without stopping. [. . .] Unfortunately, I was growing and I had difficulty to find enough time and passion to play with my Legos. However, my passion to create something has never ended. One day while eating walnuts with my parents, I thought that I might make a Middle Age's ship with walnuts. Then I immediately took some walnuts and ran to my room to build a walnut ship. As I was building models every day, it was not difficult for me to find the materials that I need for the construction. After constructing some, I decided to divide the production in to several steps to have a better looking ship. Let me explain how to build a walnut ship and show how to have pleasure by making something out of nothing.

The first step is to clean the interior part of the walnuts. I think that this is the most enjoyable step because I adore walnuts and instead of eating one, which is enough for our construction, I eat lots of them. We will use this walnut as a body of our ship, and it is our choice to use both of the halves or to use only one half. If we want to have a beautiful ship, it would be better for us to use two halves of them because then we can add more details. After cleaning (eating) walnuts, we must cut one half of the walnut vertically with a utility knife and shape it like the afterdeck of our ship. We will glue this part with the other half to get a ship with two stages. After shaping it, it would be better for us to try the parts before to gluing because, if it is not completely aligned, our ship will be tilted.

The second step is the construction of the masts, sails and deck. In this step, there are no perfect dimensions because it can be flexible according the dimensions of the walnuts. So, it is our choice to cut the toothpicks. In my opinion, it is better to cut only the pointed parts. To construct the middle mast, we cut toothpicks, glue two of them like a cross, and cover the intersecting part with light rope to get a sail that is more powerful and better looking. We will do the same operation under the horizontal toothpick two more times. These toothpicks are going to be the middle mast of our ship. We will also add another mast for the afterdeck. However, the construction of this mast is different. We must cut two toothpicks and glue them at a forty five degree angle. The last mast is on the front side of the ship that we are going to build by cutting a toothpick at half.

After the construction of the masts, we can start the preparation of the sails. For this step, I usually prefer to use paper but sometimes I also use tissue. I prefer paper because it is easy to fix it in case our ship beomes broken. We must cut small pieces of paper, a little bit bigger than the distance between the horizontal parts of our mast. I cut them a little bit bigger because it shows us the animation of the wind. After cutting these papers, glue them at between horizontal parts of the front mast. For the afterdeck mast, we are going to cut a triangle which is going to fit at the afterdeck mast that has the forty five degree angle. Besides, we will cut another triangle for the front mast. We will roll these triangles to have the wind. After finishing the sails and masts, we will cut several toothpicks and fit them on the walnut until the hole of the walnut is covered. We will do the same operation for the afterdeck

The final step is the placement of the parts. Firstly, I glue two halves of the walnut together and then I fix the masts on the deck and put the sails on the mast. Now, the imagination begins to become true. As I like to pay attention to details, I construct some cannons, spools, stairs, and a rudder made out of wood to follow the reality. After the placement of these parts, I string the light rope between the masts and place the other sail on the light rope which is stand between the middle and front masts. The next and final step is to look at the walnut ship and get the pleasure of making something out of nothing. This pleasure is to building something totally new and increases the creativity which may be helpful during one's life.

Enjoy.



## My Island Paradise

Denecia Charles

Discovered over 500 years ago by Christopher Columbus, Trinidad was originally settled by Arawak and Carib Indians and later colonized with Spaniards. The country attracted people of French, Black, Indian, and non-Spanish settlers, but in 1797 came under the rule of the British. Five years later, Tobago became the sister country of Trinidad. Finally in 1976, both islands gained full independence and became a republic (“Background Note”). Throughout the years, Trinidad has developed into one of the most multi-cultural islands in the Caribbean. Ranging from East Indian to Chinese, the country has become my secondary home and will always be because of the connection that I have to it. Every year I go back “home” to spend time with people who are close to me and experience wonderful foods, places, and fun-filled events.

My parents were both born in Trinidad but on completely different sides of the country. My mother, who is of East-Indian descent, was born in the south; my father was born up north. They eventually met in the United States and were married. I was born one year later. Since my second birthday, I go “home” every year, sometimes even twice a year. Each trip is a new and exciting experience. In the southern part of Trinidad, there are people who share the same Indian culture like my mom. On vacation at “home” I am surrounded by an entirely different culture than what I experience here in America. Residents stay in touch with their traditions when it comes to food. My grandmother cooks me those oily fried doubles with curried channa (chick peas) and aloo (potatoes) for breakfast. The smell makes me hungry immediately. For special prayers she makes the sweet and sugary kurma. The crunchy treat makes me crave for more each time. Roti, aloo pies, and parasad are included in my menu following my first day there. In the northern side, mostly Spanish and African descents fill the area. My father’s sister makes me “bake and shark” almost every time I visit. At first the idea of shark did not sound appealing, but the taste of that golden fried dough with a side of fried shark was absolutely delicious. For dinner my uncle would gather everyone together and share his dish of rice, red beans, and chicken. When I want a little snack, I do not look in my cupboard; I ask my uncle to climb up the tree and pick some fresh mangos. My cousins and I would swing in our hammock, chop up the mangos, add salt, lime, garlic, a little bandanna (a seasoning), and some hot pepper. “Chow” was the end result of our sweet and spicy dish, and together we shared the memories that we had in the past. I gain more love for the country every time I get a blend of African and Indian delicacies.



Not only does food keep me connected with the beauties of Trinidad, but also the language, music, holidays, and attractions is the Krazy Glue for both me and the different cultures. For the many years I have gone to Trinidad, I never become tired of the unique words and phrases that my family and friends use. When I hear my cousin across the street yelling “Aye, leh we go an lime!” or “Necia, tonight is big fete!” I know that something fun is definitely coming up. When I was younger, when someone asked to lime with me, I thought we were going lime picking. I learned from my cousins that it meant to hang out. Other words such as “fete” means to party or “a festival” (“fete”). After liming and feting nearly every day there comes a time to relax. [ . . . ]

At “home” I have memories of all sorts to share when I come back here to New York. From spending time at the beach and eating foods of all flavors to diving in huge pools, sharing jokes with my cousins, and parading through the streets, the memories can never be forgotten. With all that I experience year after year, I look forward to each trip in hope of experiencing something new. With Trinidad’s combination of cultures, almost anyone can fall in love with the place I call “home”.

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My Important Place  
Sumire Tsutamune

Iwato town, where I spent seventeen years, is one of the small towns in Yokosuka City. According to Yokosuka City's information, the total population is "7,896 and houses number 2,917 in all" ("Information about Iwato Town"). There are just a supermarket, a kindergarten, an elementary school, a junior high school, and houses. Can you imagine how small this town is? When I was seventeen years old, I moved to Yokohama, the most popular and the biggest city in Kanagawa Prefecture. I really did not want to leave Iwato because Iwato was everything for me: my childhood experiences with my parents, my important friends and schools, and, the most important is my memory of my grandparents. I had lived with them for seventeen years. Since I loved them so much, I have been missing them and Iwato after I moved and still now. I sometimes remember and think about my friends and my grandparents more than my parents. Even though we have not talked for a long time, I feel their encouragement and love because we are mentally connected. My parents were not like a typical father and mother, so I felt uncomfortable with them. They were a part of my childhood, but they only disciplined me. Since my parents were working till ten p.m. every day, it was impossible for me to talk with them. That is the reason that I have a connection with my grandparents.

Childhood is the most important period of our life because everything we possessed, learned, and thought create a basis for our personality and becomes a trigger for our actions when we grow up. According to an article about childhood, "what my parents and grandparents did for me or experienced during childhood influenced the way I live in my future" ("Learn How Your Childhood"). My parents were very strict about everything I did when I was little. For example, my sister and I needed to see many older persons because of my father's job. Therefore, my mother taught us manners how to greet older people, how to sit beautifully, and how to eat dinner politely and beautifully. Now, owing to the strict disciplines, my social manners help me in a lot of social situations. Consequently, my childhood memories in Iwato are not only playing with my friends, but also having a strict discipline of social manners. Actually, I have some memories with my mother, but I do not have any wonderful memories with my father. He is a professor at a Japanese University, so he did not have time to be with me and my sister even on weekends. When I was an elementary school student, I had missed my father. However, a few months later, I did not miss him since my grandfather took care of me instead of my father.

My grandfather and grandmother lived in Iwato since I was born. For me, when I remember Iwato, I remember also my grandparents. They took care of my sister and me instead of my parents. Since both of my parents had a job, they could not spend time with us. They were not home when I got home from a school every day, so my grandmother hugged me and gave me some snacks. She also cooked my breakfast and dinner. My grandfather taught me common sense, how to make friends, and he also checked my homework. He was like my father. He knew everything because he was a top policeman of Kanagawa province. He was decorated by the Japanese Emperor. I still really respect him. The place in which my most precious people live is Iwato. Now, Yokohama is my second home town. The city is the biggest in Kanagawa province. Actually, Yokohama is very convenient and there is a lot of fun around my house. When I started to live in Yokohama, everything seemed gorgeous and fun. However, I do not have any wonderful memories and emotional attachments because I did not have important people there, even my friends. For me, Iwato is not only my hometown, but also a place in which my precious people live. [ . . . ]

My heart, my thinking, my feeling, and my reactions were influenced by my life in Iwato. [ . . . ]

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## Insider's Guide to Living on Campus at SUNY New Paltz

Kelly Krockel

You've been accepted by SUNY New Paltz. Are you wondering about what it's like to live on campus? The thirteen residence halls on the SUNY New Paltz campus give students a range of living options. You can either live in a corridor-style building or a suite-style one. All of the halls are coed; and each includes a laundry room, computer terminals, a main meeting lounge (which includes a television), a study lounge, and also a kitchen area that includes a sink, stove and microwave ("Residence Life"). I can provide an inside look at one of the residence halls, Bouton Hall. Bouton is a great hall because there is enough space to feel comfortable in the rooms; there are many social opportunities because of its size; and it is centrally located on campus.

As a current resident of Bouton, I am happy with the size of the rooms. Bouton Hall offers its residents typical, corridor-style rooms which are shared with a roommate; you each get your own bed, dresser, closet desk and chair. I like the size of Bouton's rooms as they are larger than rooms in other dorms such as College Hall. I've never felt crowded, and the closets are especially spacious providing enough room to store all my personal belongings. In addition, you also have a lot of storage room underneath your bed. Many people like to decorate their rooms with posters, pictures, rugs, curtains, and, although Bouton does have safety rules and limits such as how many posters you can have or how long the curtains can be, I have been able to make my room comfortable and homelike.

In addition to having large rooms, Bouton has clean and well-equipped common areas. Residents share the bathrooms, which are cleaned every day, with the other people in their hall. They are well equipped with enough sinks, showers and bathroom stalls, so that residents never have to wait in line, making it easier to be on time for class. You do have to know the good shower stalls to go in to though; if you chose the wrong one, you will be waiting for hot water for a while. The lounges in Bouton offer different features such as a television and kitchen areas and computers. Wi-Fi internet is available throughout the dorm, which is convenient for the residents. Another positive about living in Bouton is the laundry room, which is large and contains enough washing machines and dryers, so that I've never had to wait to use a machine. The tables and chairs make it convenient to do work while waiting for laundry to be done.

Because Bouton is large, its size gives residents a greater opportunity to meet new people. Since Bouton has so many common areas open to all its residents, students have the opportunity to introduce themselves and meet people that way. Another way to be social is to attend the meetings or activities planned by Bouton's Residence Assistants. In the beginning of the year I attended an activity to get to know the people in my hall. I enjoyed it because we met new people and also had chocolate fondue. You can even help to plan these activities, by joining Bouton's Hall government.

Although Bouton is one of the older dorms, it does have an important advantage over some of the newer residence halls. Bouton is centrally located on campus. It only takes about five minutes to walk to the academic buildings where your classes will be held. Bouton is also next to the Student Union and near the library. Most students eat at Hasbrouck Dining Hall which is only a five to ten minute walk from Bouton. This is good especially when it's extremely cold, because you don't want to be outside for a long time. SUNY New Paltz also has a great town that a lot of students like to go into, and it's only about a ten minute walk from the dorm.

There are many different residence halls on the SUNY New Paltz campus. Most corridor-style halls are similar to Bouton, but each residence hall does have its own advantages. I have lived in Bouton for two months and have been content with living here. [ . . . ] It's your choice when you pick where you want to live, and SUNY New Paltz has a great variety of options.



## Kingston High School: The Inside Scoop

Isabella Davis

The home of the Tigers, Kingston High School (KHS) is located in the heart of Kingston, NY. With its nicely trimmed bushes that spell out the initials of the school, it is very appealing from the outside. One might be led to imagine that things would be equally good on the inside, but they are not, and I wish that there had been an insider's review of this school available before I decided to attend. It is important for eighth graders to be informed about the setting they are about to find themselves in. I am going to provide entering freshman with information about the security, food, faculty, and sports at KHS.

I will begin by discussing the negative aspects of the school. From the moment you step into KHS, you're instantly hit with crowds of students running up and down the hallways. On my first day, I was super-excited as I stepped through those two tall wooden doors to see the amount of teenagers my age, and never would I imagined that I would become so dissatisfied with the school's security, school rules, and the food.

Approximately 2,400 students attend KHS, and about as many security officers as well ("Kingston"). No cell phones, no stopping in the halls for short conversation between your friends, no, no, no, is all you hear. The security officers placed in this school, who are actual police officers from the City of Kingston, are entirely unnecessary. They are planted at every entrance possible, making it impossible to ever escape. As if it isn't enough for them to be at every door, and in every hall, there are also about seven of them who are posted in the school cafeteria. I would say this school is way too over protective.

Speaking of the cafeteria, the school's selections of entrees are far from appealing. Hot ham and cheese, and soggy cheeseburgers are typical. The cafeteria staff gives students two selections each day, and on most days, I declined. The school is surrounded by fast food places and corner stores, but don't get your hopes up. Students rarely get to visit those tempting food spots, mainly because only those with 100 averages can go off campus to eat lunch. So if you choose KHS, you will be spending a lot of time hushing your empty stomach during your afternoon classes.

However, not everything about the school is negative. An important strength of KHS would have to be the faculty and staff. My former teachers were all amazing. Truly dedicated to their work, they made classes entertaining. I connected to many of my teachers, and I have returned to update them on how I am doing in college. Mrs. Nacaratto was my favorite teacher at KHS. Because she lives in Kingston, I run into her a lot when I go back home, and we talk about what's new with the both of us. If you choose KHS, you will soon agree that it is great to have teachers who are passionate about their jobs. The teachers at KHS have my vote, no doubts about that.

Another positive aspect of KHS is their sports, mainly their varsity teams. KHS has a high level of school spirit. The games are exciting to attend, and both students and faculty support the KHS teams. KHS always makes it to the final fours in basketball, male and female, and we dominate in field hockey and even cheerleading competitions. Homecoming is another big event at KHS. We have a homecoming parade and a dance that everyone attends. I think our sports events are better attended than our proms and winter dances.

As you can see, KHS has pros and cons. For those students who don't mind tight security and nasty lunch food, you may actually really enjoy attending KHS because the staff is truly a plus. In fact, although I might have decided to attend another school if I had known about the food and the annoying security, I would have been wrong because I wound up making so many friends and creating irreplaceable memories. Now that you have the inside scoop, you can be prepared for what is to come. KHS may not be what it seems from the outside, but, if you can get past the security and food, you may, like me, find KHS to be a great choice.

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