

EPIC



*EPIC New Voices 2006*

*Anthology of Winning Entries*

*in the*

*EPIC New Voices Writing Competition*

*for Middle School and High School Students*

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EPIC, The Electronically Published Internet Connection  
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The Voice of E-Publishing

EPIC, the Electronically Published Internet Connection, is a professional organization for published and contracted e-book and print authors. It was established to provide a strong voice for electronic publishing.

## **EPIC New Voices**

### **Writing Competition for Middle School and High School Students**

In celebration of the new century and a new tradition in publishing, EPIC established a competition to encourage reading and writing among middle school and high school students and to promote e-book literacy in public and private schools. The anthology *EPIC New Voices 2006* is the result of the first annual competition.

This anthology includes all prize-winning entries as selected by the judges. First place winners received eBookwise-1150 e-book reading devices. Second and third place winners received gift certificates for e-books, \$50 and \$25 respectively. Certificates were awarded to honorable mention and judges' award winners. The grand prize winner, selected from among the first place entries in all categories, won \$100 cash.

# Grand Prize

## Jennifer Strom

Kellogg MS, Rochester, MN

### Biography:

Jennifer Strom is a 7<sup>th</sup> grader at Kellogg Middle School in Rochester, Minnesota. She has been creating stories and poems since she could talk. She started out dictating them to her mother, moved to pencil and paper when she learned how to write, and now types them on her computer. She enjoys all of her subjects in school in addition to participating in many sports. She lives with her two brothers and her parents.

### About E-Books:

E-books are a growing alternative to traditional books. With e-books on a reader I could carry many more books in more places. My use of electronic books and information is growing. I use a dictionary, thesaurus, and encyclopedia solely on computer. Many of my school textbooks are available via the internet so I do not have to carry the heavy books back and forth to school. A great next step would be to have them available via a reader. Although I do not read e-books on readers at this time, I believe that will be the next step for me.

## Grand Prize and First Place — Middle School Poetry

### A Picture

I don't understand why people stare at me  
I'm always in the same old place  
Sitting on the same old shelf  
Where I'm supposed to be

Nothing happens from day to night  
Except when my friends drop by here  
They make it hard to see  
But I don't shed a tear

But inside every day  
There is a special moment  
When people look at me  
With watery eyes or laughing sighs

Yet there is something about me  
I can't even explain  
Through my rough edges and faded image  
They say I hold a memory

# Middle School Poetry

## Trystan Brown

Homeschooled, Watertown, WI

### Biography:

Trystan Brown is a 13-year-old boy who lives in the town of Watertown, Wisconsin. He likes reading horror, fantasy, and science fiction. Trystan entered this contest originally to send a short story, but because Halloween was near, he decided to write a spooky poem instead. He hopes it is enjoyed and read often.

### About E-Books:

I have no experience with e-books. I did not know there were e-books until this contest.

## Second Place — Middle School Poetry

### The Deep

Who knows what lives  
in the big, blue deep,  
the massive black maw of the abyss?  
What sort of unknown treasures await,  
and what sort of beasts lie undiscovered with a hunger for flesh,  
and a craving for bone?  
But, for fish or for human, it does not care.  
So, one should be wary,  
before venturing down there,  
in the big blue deep,  
in the massive black maw of the abyss.



## Ashley Arhart

Ellis Middle School, Austin, MN

### Biography:

Ashley Arhart is twelve years old. She is in the seventh grade. Ashley likes to play hockey, volley ball, golf, and many other sports in her spare time. She loves to write and draw. When she is older, she wants to be a teacher, author, interior designer, or a hair and make-up artist. She has a sister, brother, mom, dad, and three pets.

### About E-Books:

E-books are really electronic books. They run from a piece of hardware that looks like a computer screen about the size of a piece of paper. People think that it will take the place of paper books that can't be made fast enough. I also think that they will help the environment. E-books are really great to have around because we are growing in knowledge and saving the environment at the same time.

## Third Place — Middle School Poetry

### The Friendship Tear

You cried your heart out,  
Every night.  
Because your best friend left you,  
And you got in a fight.

But the one tear that slid  
Down her face that night,  
Was the tear of friendship,  
That brightened her life.

Her mistakes she knew,  
She hated them all.  
But you know, we're human,  
We have to fall.

So she asked for forgiveness,  
She asked for her sake,  
Can I have my best friend back?  
Can I fix her heart break?

Her friend looked at that tear,  
The way she had cried,  
She said, friend I will love you  
Until the day I die.

# Middle School Short Story

## Jacy Eggum

Ellis Middle School, Austin, MN

### Biography:

In southern Minnesota you will find a girl by the name of Jacy. She enjoys hunting, four wheeling, and almost anything outdoors. She has two brothers, one older and one younger. She has a dog, a cat, and other animals. Her favorite colors are lime green, hot pink, dark brown, and blaze orange. She enjoys most subjects in school and likes to read and write.

### About E-Books:

I personally have never heard of e-books. My teacher introduced the contest to us and looked up e-books online. I found your website and started reading about them. E-books look very beneficial. I am surprised I have never heard of them before. I am excited to start getting them. I hope to soon have an experience with e-books. They look fun.

## First Place — Middle School Short Story

### The Coma Halloween Night, 1900

Patric was a smart boy around the age of fifteen. He was sitting in his room doing homework. There was a loud knock knock knock on the door. Patric was home alone that night and his parents told him not to answer the door but he was expecting some friends so he did. There at the door stood a tall, bone-skinny man with pale white hair.

“Hello Patric” the awkward man said in a mysterious voice.

“Who are you?” asked Patric feeling a little scared.

“Come with me Patric.” the man said in the same voice as before, the kind that made your hair stand on end.

“Who are you?” Patric asked again, this time much louder and more scared.

“If you need to know, I am Charles J. Linburg the eighth, now COME with ME!!” Charles demanded, this time being more assertive and less inviting.

“I don’t know you; you must have the wrong person!” cried Patric.

“Your name is Patric, isn’t it?” Charles asked.

“Yes but I don’t know you; leave me alone; you have the wrong Patric!!!” he said desperately.

Charles could sense the fear and panic in his voice. Patric slammed the door shut and ran to the phone. He dialed the operator but there was just a computer voice that stated “Your call cannot be completed, please hang up and try again.” He tried over and over again but got the same reply. He heard a crash in the living room and ran out to investigate it.

There in the entryway stood Charles holding Patric’s broken door. “I said COME WITH ME!!!!” yelled Charles as he grabbed Patric and dragged him into a car.

Patric screamed and screamed as loud as he could but the world seemed to see right through him as if he was invisible. Charles drove away with Patric in the backseat. They stopped on a gravel road by a graveyard. Charles grabbed a bag that looked similar to a potato sack. Patric felt himself being thrown into the bag and carried in the direction of the graveyard.

The graveyard was big and old with tall headstones. It was right on the border of a lake. It was foggy that night, with a full moon gleaming over the half frozen lake. Patric was dumped violently out of the bag on a patch of ice in the center of the lake. He watched Charles break a patch of ice with his boot. Patric felt his body being lowered into the ice cold water. He tried calling for help, wiggling out of Charles’s grip, and even kicking and punching Charles, but they all did no good. Patric was horrified.

This could not be happening! What’s happening? Why me? All these thoughts were running through his

head. He didn’t understand why this bizarre man was after him. Patric was completely under water now. Charles pushed Patric away from the entrance out of the water. Patric had no air. He was gasping for breath but that only filled his lungs even more with water. Everything went black.

Patric woke up with a start. He opened his eyes, but everything was still black. He tried to sit up but hit his head on some kind of board. He frantically felt around. He was in a long, skinny box. No, not a box, a coffin. He had had a coma and everyone had thought he was dead because they didn’t have the right technology. He was buried alive. He eventually died, but now his spirit will haunt every graveyard, every Halloween, hunting for Charles, a figment of his imagination. He was also hunting for the doctor who proclaimed him dead and arranged the funeral, but he was found and killed. Patric will haunt us every Halloween, for he will never find Charles — he never existed, or did he?

The End

## Gabriel Franta

Ellis Middle School, Austin, MN

### Biography:

Gabe Franta attends Ellis Middle School in Austin, MN. In his English class, Gabe was assigned a short story and recommended to enter it into the EPIC Book Contest. He likes to hang out with his friends, talk on the computer, to be on the track team, and the basketball team. He has brown hair, green eyes, and his heritage is from seven different countries. He likes to get good grades and likes to work hard...sometimes.

### About E-Books:

E-books (or ebook) are short for electronic book. They are an electronic version of a book or an electronic reading helper; hardware that runs software needed for reading the books in formats like Microsoft Word. To avoid misunderstanding, we refer to the hardware as an e-book application or e-book reading tool, a book that is available in a file. The program used to read an e-book title on an e-book reading application is referred as an e-book reader.

## Second Place — Middle School Short Story

### Rolf's Story

“As I look back with regret, I realize that it was not my fault completely. Given the choice, I would've acted differently. But I brought this upon myself and I cannot change it. My name is Rolf, and my story started over sixty years ago...” He paused, deep in thought.

“I was a normal boy back then, at eleven, but troublesome. My parents had me go to a new boarding school described simply as 'strict.' My parents bounded at probably the worst possible decision at the time. I remember the fateful train ride, waving to my parents. I wondered if I'd ever see them, for a brief second. I'll also let you wonder. My younger sister's name is Greta, and I would give her a hard time of being over reactive and hyper. She started running after our train and just before we rounded the corner, I saw my parents trying to restrain her.”

The man paused, took a drink from his glass of ice water, and stared out the window for a couple of minutes. His younger audience was getting restless and impatient. Finally he looked at them, his eyes so solemn I'm sure the reporters will never forget the cold stare.

“I remember the kid I sat by...He had red hair, bright green eyes and was so excited to become independent and go to a boarding school for a whole year. He was outgoing; so was I. We made a great friendship. We had many things in common.

When we arrived, the first thing we saw was a large X like symbol, which we grew to fear and recognize as the swastika. Something that we eventually today recognize as failure. Blind happiness and a small mad smile crossed the lips of an angry person.

“We left the train, wobbly legged and all, when our sergeant ‘greeted’ us. ‘I am your sergeant for all year. Respect and please me, and you will have a fine yet still hard year. Disobey me and you will be punished, your year barely bearable. For some, it won’t be bearable to live.’ said this man. He led us to our bunks. ‘I personally yearly ask for my squad to have the firmest mattresses. This year is no exception’.” Rolf was a master storyteller, easily mimicking his old sergeant’s voice.

“I thought we wouldn’t sleep as I patted the rock called our bunk. Wrong. We started immediately working. Days wore on, waking up early, pro-Hitler government discussions, classes, and work made us sleep before we hit the pillow each night. Also, executions took place for anyone who they felt was disobedient, or, more commonly, those suspected of ‘treason’, or whoever they felt needed to be made an example of. We were in a camp, for German boys, training to be soldiers! Days, weeks, even years passed. I grew to know people, and eventually was accepted into a club that was spies from France but had German heritage. That was why the Nazis were paranoid all along.”

He hesitated once again, and looked out the window. Tears streaming out he said, “Carl and I were great friends. He became a leader in the group commissioned by the French Resistance. Eventually we invited new recruits into our group. Unfortunately, they were loyal to Hitler. The only possible good part about it was that he

only learned half of our group of about 20 students. Ten were executed the following day. People I grew to know and respect. People like Carl.

“I know my time is short, so I will hurry.” But everyone in the audience was now in intent on listening. “We formed an escape. Most died, but acted as decoys (not planned) for a few. This was the year I turned twenty-six. I had spent twelve years in the pit of a camp. Our resistance had also stolen information of where our relatives were. My sister and parents were suspected to be part of the French Resistance, after disappearing in Germany.

“I took a year, but I found a Resistance member and joined. It was hard because I was German. My father I learned had died. My mother was dying of lung cancer. I had lost almost everyone.

“A young man, I wanted revenge. I got it. For years, I worked with the French Resistance until the French surrendered. I married, moved to America and grew old.” With a twinkle in his eye, he said, “And now I’m here.”

## Andrea Saavedra

Pearsall Jr. High, Pearsall, TX

### Biography:

Andrea Saavedra is 13 and was born to Victoria Rendon and Ramon Saavedra. She has two sisters, Rachel and Angela, and one older brother, Jesse. Angela is her fraternal twin sister and is older than Andrea by 26 minutes. Andrea loves to express her feelings or thoughts by writing poems. She loves eating cheese nips and sleeping.

### About E-Books:

I have used e-books in my ELA class and in my extended learning class. We recently read *The Scarlet Letter*. We used the electronic form of the novel in the computer lab and at home.

## Third Place — Middle School Short Story

### All He Regrets

I look at the gravestone where my lover lay at rest. Adam Rodriguez 1989-2005 it had engraved on it. A tear ran down my cheek and landed on the rose covering his photograph; no longer will I look at this picture again. I remember everything, from every last bottle he drank, to when we first met. I knew when he had asked me to be his girlfriend, he drank. He told me, actually he promised me, that he wouldn't drink anymore, but yet he lied. He lied about everything. He told me that he wasn't drinking that night, and yet I believed him. That was a lesson that I will never in my life forget. When that horrible accident happened.

“Hey mom, Adam's here. I'll see you later, OK?”

“OK, bye honey; have a nice time at Christina's party.”

SHUT the door went. As we were listening to Nine Inch Nails on the radio, not a word he said. I knew he was sober then. Driving in his car with the eerie wind blowing my hair on a Halloween night, it felt awkward the whole time. Then I saw Christina's house and there he stopped the car. The night was young and the smell of beer was strong coming from the door of Christina's house. I hardly recognized Christina in her costume. I remembered I was so lucky that night, she and I were the only ones sober that night. A chill ran down my spine.

Christina had gotten some weird music that they play at haunted houses which made that night scarier than it already was. Adam came up to me and he wanted to dance with me, so we were there on the floor. He spotted something on my left but kept me from looking at it. I knew it was a can of beer. Christina called me and I left. I still felt awkward around him like I knew he was going to do something stupid that he was going to regret. I just wanted to get away from there. I walked outside and I saw a couple arguing. Just by what she was saying she was mad cause her boyfriend was drunk and wouldn't pay attention to her so she slapped him and walked away. I said to myself, "God, I hope Adam doesn't treat me this way."

A kitten came by me and I sat down on the chair beside me, and I started petting it. It started to rain, and then I heard a door slam open, like a crash of fireworks. The kitten ran away, like a monster scared it away. It was Adam; he was drunk like he just won the lottery.

He came up to me and started yelling at me, "Why'd you leave?" His voice so sly; I turned my head. "ANSWER ME WHEN I'M TALKING TO YOU," he yelled.

"Try to be sober for once and maybe then I won't leave you," I cried.

He yelled at me, "I've had it with you. You and me, it's over," and he left.

I fell to my knees and cried. I knew that it was raining but I didn't care. All because of drugs and beer, I lost the only person that I ever loved.

Later that night, after I left Christina's house, she

called me; she sounded so disturbed, so depressed. She said "Amy..., Adam... in crash..., ... dead".

Buzz tone came on. It was still raining and the line went dead. I didn't understand a word she said. It didn't occur to me what she told me until she came bursting into my house soaking wet. She ran up to me, hugged me, and asked me if I was OK. I stood there, like my life flashed before my eyes.

I've gone to therapy, ever since the accident. All because he was drunk. He lost the only thing that ever mattered to him, his love, his life, his everything. What alcohol and drugs do to you and the people you love hurts more than everything.

I stand by his gravestone exactly one week after the accident, I lay a single rose on his picture. I've laid one ever since the day he died. I found out he was driving home that night drunk, and in the rain, he lost control and drove into a lake. They recovered his body that very day. Never was I the same again.



## Tara Wytaske

Ellis Middle School, Austin, MN

### Biography:

Tara Wytaske is 13 years old. She has one brother. She loves to dance. Her favorite subjects are math and English. She also likes to watch her dad race. When she grows up her goals are to become an interior designer or a lawyer. She loves to design things, but she also likes law. Tara loves school. She thinks school is awesome. Her goal is to get a scholarship for college. She has a lot of wishes and goals that she wishes to achieve in her life and hopefully she will.

### About E-Books:

E-books are all different types of the books that you can buy on the Internet. It has all of the categories. It even has a section of top 15 best sellers and most popular subjects. I think this web site is really cool. There are really good books. I think people who love reading would just go crazy over this web site. It is awesome. There are also books about archaeology, art, business and a lot more. I would say around 55 categories. There are Fiction and Non-Fiction books. All I can say is go to this web site; you would love it.

## Honorable Mention — Middle School Short Story

### Captured By Evil

I was shattered by the guy's voice as he drug me in towards the old station wagon. I knew this wasn't good. He struggled, but he got me in there. As he drove away I was sitting there stunned. I thought that if I did anything that he would kill me. But I thought, why me?

It was still shocking as he threw me in the solid bedroom. There were no windows, no food, nothing. It's weird how all of your life is ruined by one thing. That everything is turned around in a split second. I was thinking about what would ever happen if I didn't get to see my family again.

I could see the guy had no idea what to do. If only he knew how much it hurt people. I knew he was frustrated. He was sitting on the couch rubbing his face like people do when they don't know what to do. It hurt me to even think about what he was going to do to me next.

After about three hours I saw him coming in with the phone. I shriveled back in the corner of the bed. I didn't know what he was going to do.

In a screeching voice he yelled, "Call your parents and tell them that they have until 3:00 tomorrow to deliver \$100,000. They have to meet me at the railroad tracks so nobody can see us. If they bring anybody with

them something bad will happen. Now hurry; you got twenty seconds.”

That night I was so scared about what he was going to do to me. I could not sleep at all. I kept thinking on and on about what I should do tomorrow. It was a frustrating night for me. My mind was just rolling with bad thoughts. It was like meteors just falling right on me.

It was now time. He grabbed me and duct taped me to the seat so I couldn't get out. I was so nervous. It was like I could hear my heart thumping as we got closer and closer. As we arrived and I saw my parents I could feel their pain. When he got out he told my parents to get in. So they listened to what he said because they didn't know what he would have done if they didn't listen to him.

My mind was just blown with what he had done. I was so confused. When we got back it was kind of weird. It was like he wanted us to be together because he put us all in the solid bedroom. I could not stop looking at them. I missed them so much. Even though it wasn't over I was still very happy.

I kept on flashing back to that day that I got kidnapped to see if anything unusual had happened. Then I remembered that I had seen him in several different places. But not places that I went to, places that my parents went to. Then I thought. He isn't after me; he is after my parents.

That night my parents and I were thinking of a plan to get out of here. It was kind of weird because I thought that I was not going to get to see my parents again. We thought long and hard about what we were going to do. We all prayed for a whole straight hour. We

wanted to get out of here so bad. Then all of a sudden out of nowhere we heard a knock.

The guy went to go answer it. It was the police. He had got a call from the neighbor saying that they saw him duct taping a girl to the seat of his car. The cop wanted to check the house. But the guy refused and slammed the door and locked it. Then he went around and locked everything.

A few minutes later there was an army of cops just surrounding his house. It was total chaos around here. I wanted to get out so bad. I was so happy that it was almost over. I just kept telling myself that over and over again.

Finally the police just busted in here. We just sat there all balled up in the corner as they struggled to arrest him. I was thinking in my head that it was true fate that the policeman had come. God only knows what he had planned for us.

## Mary Alice Tarango

Pearsall Jr. High, Pearsall, TX

### Biography:

Mary Alice Tarango was born on October 23, 1991, in San Antonio, Texas. She is now fourteen years of age and is an eighth grader at Pearsall Junior High. Her parents are Rita Ramos and Eberardo Tarango. She has three sisters: Melissa, Rosie, and Melinda. She also has three nieces and two nephews. Mary Alice loves to swim. Her favorite food is pizza. She loves to hang out with her friends.

### About E-Books:

She has never used e-books.

## Honorable Mention — Middle School Short Story

### Being Drug-Free!

It was Wednesday October 5<sup>th</sup>, and 13 year old Michelle Vargas was walking home from school when a couple of guys that were up to no good came to her and asked, “Want a hit?”

Michelle panicked, threw her stuff on the floor, and said, “No, I’m not a drug addict. I don’t do drugs, and you shouldn’t either; you’re just throwing you’re life away!”

Later, while walking down the street to the meat market, Michelle heard the same guys ask a girl two to three years younger than her, “Want a hit?”

Staring back at them, the younger child said, “No, I’m not dumb I don’t want to die at a young age.” Then she walked away.

“Hey, hold up!” Michelle yelled from behind.

The child slowly turned around and asked, “Do I know you?”

“No” answered Michelle. “My name is Michelle Vargas, what is yours?”

“Well, my name is Nevaeh Knows.”

“Can we sit here at the park and talk?”

“Why?” responded Nevaeh.

“I saw and heard everything that just happened.”

“I said no.”

“Yes, I know. I heard.”

“Well then? What do we need to talk about?” replied Nevaeh.

“I want to tell you even though I don’t know you that well because I just met you, I’m very proud of the way you just handled this situation! Other people would have just taken it and hit it. But you, you are something else.”

“Why thank you. My mother talked to me about how drugs are bad and how bad they will hurt you. And not just you, but other people who care very much about you! You know, you could lose friends, family, and especially those who care a lot about you.”

“Yes, I know.” Michelle replied. “And that’s why I don’t and never will do drugs!”

“That’s good. At least you will be someone who succeeds in the future!” Nevaeh said.

“Yes, my mother and I had that exact same talk when I was younger. It kills all your brain cells. It may even make you drop out of school! And that’s not the future I am planned for.”

“Yeah, me too. I want to grow up to be a very successful person, like a doctor for instance!” Nevaeh replied!

“I don’t want to do drugs either. I’d rather grow up, go to college and teach kids who can’t afford to go to school! At least I would be doing a good deed, by helping people out!” Michelle said.

“Well, I have to go. My mother is waiting for me to go and get meat!” Michelle told Nevaeh.

“Bye! It was nice meeting you. Maybe we will run into each other some day.”

“Maybe, but remember always say no when they ask you to do drugs! And when you see someone in that position, you tell them what your mom and I taught you: **Always say no to drugs!**”

**Judges' Award — Middle School Short Story****Christopher Viesca**

Pearsall Jr. High, Pearsall, TX

**Biography:**

Christopher Viesca was born November 21, 1991 in Lake Jackson, Texas. His parents are Mario Viesca and Yvette Viesca. He goes to Pearsall Junior High and is 14 years old and in 8th grade. His interests are music, any kind of rock, playing guitar, and working at the local guitar shop. He is Christian, and he is in a punk band. He is part of the National Junior Honor Society. He was included in General Math, Number Sense, and Spelling UIL.

**About E-Books:**

I have used e-books in my ELA class and in my extended learning class. We recently read *Animal Farm*. We used the electronic form of the novel in the computer lab.

**Why I Will Say No To Alcohol & Drugs**

As I walk the streets, I see people hunched over throwing up with a beer in one hand and a cigarette in another. They take another sip as if nothing happened. I wonder, what kind of loser would go on living this way, homeless and on the street; for all I know they're already dead.

These people are corrupt; they have no self respect; they are possibly filled with cancer in their lungs, liver, kidneys, heart, brain, and probably don't even care. I walk into the public bathroom and see a guy in the corner talking to him. Right next to him is a bottle of pills and a needle; no doubt he has STD's or AIDS. I leave with disgust. How could people do this to themselves? After walking for two blocks, I see a pregnant lady with a cigarette in her mouth waiting for a taxi. I almost start crying, not for her but for her baby who might have birth defects or not even live to see its first birthday.

In the distance there is a robbery in progress, a whole gang of drug dealers wanting more money. Almost instantly the cops come and cuff them. I can tell they're uneducated, guessing that they dropped out of high school because they were addicted to drugs and still wanted more. I'm beginning to dislike this place and dislike drugs even more. I turn around to head home, but I freeze right where I'm standing... there is a car heading straight for me. I try to avoid it; so I jump... it's too late. I'm in the air; I can feel the car slam into me, and the pain is unbelievable... I black out.

I'm in the hospital; my legs are broken, but the doctors say I should be all right. I start praying for all those people, all their lives wasted by drugs. A drunk driver, who's also in the hospital, hit me. After he recovers, I believe that he's going to jail. I also believe that I will do whatever it takes to prevent my kids from using drugs or drinking alcohol; I might even take them down that same street.

**Judges' Award — Middle School Short Story****Selena Waldrum**

Pearsall Jr. High, Pearsall, TX

**Biography:**

Selena Waldraun is 13 years old and was born to Mary Waldrum and John Waldrum. She has two older sisters, Jackie (15) and Kathleen (17). Selena loves pizza and macaroni.

**About E-Books:**

I have used e-books in my ELA class and in my extended learning class as well as at home. We recently read *The Scarlet Letter*. We used the electronic form of the novel when we were in the computer lab. I also used it at home.

**Just Say No!**

EERR! “Deborah control the car!” her friends said. “What are you – Deborah, watch out!”

Hearing sirens coming in the distance, Deborah gently got up, trying not to touch the glass surrounding her. The paramedics were coming to help everyone who was in need of desperate help. In one car were three passengers, one survivor. In the other was a family of five, none alive. The only person who survived was the driver that caused the accident with just a couple of scratches and bruises on her body.

On the way to the hospital, Deborah laid on the stretcher thinking of everything that had just happened. Asking so many questions to herself like, “How could this happen to me? and What have I just done?” made her think twice about doing drugs and alcohol.

In the hospital room, Deborah watched as the news reporter on television was talking about the accident. The reporter said, “In this very tragic accident so many lives were lost. A family of five was killed. The other car had three passengers with the names of Eryn, Selena, and Deborah, all sixteen years old. They were all underage drinkers and one of them was an underage drunk driver who caused the accident.”

Deborah turned off the television because it was too much for her; she started crying. She was thinking to herself that she was a murderer for killing her two best friends whom she loved so much. Lying there in sorrow, Deborah didn't know what to do with her life when she got out of the hospital. She was thinking of going into rehab to get rid of her addiction to drugs.

Four days later, Deborah was out of the hospital and going to school for the first time since the accident had happened. As she walked into her classroom late, everyone stared. She sat down looking sad and scared.

A couple of weeks later while walking home, some kids came over to her asking if she wanted some weed. Her reply was no. She kept on walking as they kept on following. She started running away when all of a sudden they pushed her down on the floor.

They said, "Come on have some; it's good."

Again her reply was "no."

They said, "Okay," and started beating her up. One of the kids grabbed his pocketknife and stabbed her two times in the stomach. Then they all left running.

Deborah lay there bleeding. Finally someone saw and called 9-1-1. The cops came and so did the paramedics. As Deborah lay there dying, everyone trying to keep her alive, but her heartbeat kept dropping faster and faster till you

knew it was at zero. Everyone, hearing the ambulance sirens in the distance, walked away sad. It was a dreadful day that everyone will remember.

Do you ever wonder about your life? If you don't, then you need to. Think about this story and put yourself in it, and see how you would feel if you were Deborah. Do you know how many people you are hurting around you when you die from something so stupid? Think before you ever say yes!

## Jeff Bos

Ellis Middle School, Austin, MN

### Biography:

Jeff Bos is 12 years old, and he has a sister Shelby and mom Michelle and dad Jeff; he is a junior. Jeff's hobbies are reading, writing, skateboarding and working on cars with his dad. Jeff goes to Ellis Middle School; it is a great school. Some of his favorite books are *Harry Potter* and *The Series of Unfortunate Events*; they are some of the best books. His life is great.

### About E-Books:

My knowledge of e-books: they are online books that you can download onto your computer and read. They sound pretty cool. I do not have a computer so it no good for me. You can publish your book onto the internet onto e-books, then people can buy then and download then onto their computer. They have children's books, adult books, and poems, sc-fi, and novels. There are a lot of different books than a regular hard cover and paperback. It looks very interesting.

## Judges' Award — Middle School Short Story

### The Cat Who Lost His Whiskers

Once upon a time there was cat named Freddy. He was a now fun cat. He would just sit around and eat and maybe talk to his friend Larry. He did not like his friend Larry because he was too crazy for him. He was going to do his normal stuff like lay around, sleep and eat but, he felt more energetic so he was going to find his friend Larry. Freddy was still looking for Larry and out of nowhere came a car and Freddy jumped and leaped on the car.

Larry came over to him and goes, "I do not remember you being that crazy, Freddy. What happened to your whiskers?"

"I do not know. Do you want to go do something crazy?"

"Sure," said Larry.

They found a dog; it started chasing them.

Freddy said, "I will fight him."

"No way," said Larry. "That dog will tear you apart."

"Wanna bet?"



So he turned around and went face to face with that big dog.

“You’re one crazy looking cat with no whiskers.”

“Oh yeah?” said Freddy. “You’re one stupid road kill smelling dog.”

“Well, since you do not have any whiskers, you will not have a tail either.”

So they fought; they fought left hook, right hook, Larry yelling, “Boooooooooom!!!”

The dog went flying.

Larry yelled over to Freddy and goes, “Are you all right?”

“Yeah, just fine. That was the most craziest thing I have ever seen in my life. Let’s go grab something to eat.”

So they went to the Catty Café and got some grub.

“I’m starting to feel homesick. I miss my old lazy life.”

Larry goes, “I know somebody that will give your whiskers back.”

So at the almighty cat’s house they knocked at the big gold door.

“Come in,” said a very powerful voice.

Freddy and Larry went into the big house. There was a heavenly guarded cat that looked very powerful. His name was Billy, and he told Freddy to go to drink out of the golden milk bowl.

He did, and his whiskers came back,

He told Billy he was very very thankful.

And guess what Freddy did? He fell asleep.

And that’s the end of my story.

## Eryn Freitas

Pearsall Jr. High, Pearsall, TX

### Biography:

Eryn Freitas was born November 14, 1991, and is 14 years old. Her parents are Ray and Bobbie Freitas. She has one younger brother, A.J. Eryn loves to play softball and basketball, and she adores Skittles and pizza.

### About E-Books:

I have used e-books in my ELA class and in my extended learning class, as well as at home. We recently read *The Scarlet Letter*. We used the electronic form of the novel when we were in the computer lab.

## Judges' Award — Middle School Short Story

### Drugs

“Nooooo! What do you think you’re doing?” I was trying to stop one of my best friends, Selena, from taking drugs from a drug dealer.

She walked over to me and said, “You really thought I was going to take that junk?”

“Well, yeah.” I was worried about her so I was going to do anything I could to stop her. That’s when I turned to my other friend, Deborah, about the situation on our hands. “Deborah, I’m concerned about Selena.”

“I know what you mean,” stated Deborah. “I have been observing her abnormal behavior.”

Deborah and I were determined to stop Selena’s addiction to drugs before it got out of hand. I went to a counselor’s office and got a list of videos off a brochure. Deborah and I plopped Selena down and made her watch one of the movies.

At the end of the movie, she commented, “Well, I don’t see why I had to watch that.”

The next morning the three of us were invited to a party that night. I really didn’t want to

go, but Deborah said, "It would be best, so we can keep an eye on Selena."

I was already under the impression that she was doing drugs. That night Selena drove to the party, and Deborah and I drove together.

I thought this party was going to be a little under control. When people started bringing beer in and started smoking, I was ready to leave. I began looking for Selena to tell her I was leaving, but she was talking to someone. I rounded up Deborah and we were on our way home...

"Errrererrrrr!," went the sirens. Selena fainted as she heard all the noise around her.

When she awoke, she asked the nurse if she could talk to Deborah and me so she could say she was sorry.

The nurse said, "Sure, let me call them." When the nurse returned she reported, "I'm sorry to say, but your friends were in the other car of that crash."

"Oh my God! I'm such an idiot... I can't believe I killed my own friends. I just can't. They tried to stop me, but I didn't listen. Why?!"

Selena cried herself to sleep that night. The next day she was released from the hospital. She immediately went to a counselor to quit drugs and alcohol. She later graduated from college and became a drug awareness counselor.

This story is a fine example of what drugs and alcohol can do to your friends and family, for that matter. Drugs can make you do crazy, even stupid, things whether you like it or not. So listen to your friends and family; they know what they are doing and talking about. Do what you think is best for you and your peers.

## **Stephanie D. Jimenez**

Pearsall Jr. High, Pearsall, TX

### **Biography:**

Stephanie Jimenez is 13 years old. Her parents are Mr. and Mrs. Reynaldo Jimenez. She has one brother and one sister. Her interests are watching television and listening to music.

### **About E-Books:**

She has never used e-books.

## **Judges' Award — Middle School Short Story**

### **Why I Will Say No to Drugs**

While a boy, Cordroy, was walking home, someone asked him if he wanted some drugs. He said, "Okay."

He got out of control so his parents had to go pick him up. No one could help him because he was aggressive and using very bad language.

Cordroy was so aggressive; the drug dealers got him in big trouble. His parents were in grave danger because the drug dealers wanted them to pay for his drugs. They refused to pay for the drugs. The drug dealers beat up his friends and parents.

Then Cordroy stole \$200 dollars from his parents for his drug habit. The cops took him to jail. He was sentenced to five years for stealing and doing drugs. His parents went to the hospital and were taken care of. When his parents got out of the hospital, they were sad to learn that their son was going to jail for five years.

After five years, Cordroy got out, but it seemed like he hadn't changed. One day Cordroy put an ATD, which is a shot needle, into his arm. Cordroy didn't know what he what he was doing. They found him slumped on the floor and rushed him to the hospital. He had a STD, which is a

disease. They also found that he had cancer of the lung and liver, and that he had kidney problems. The doctor told his parents that if he was lucky he would live for two or three years.

His parents were sad and disappointed in their son for not paying attention to his life, but they thought it was his fault for trying drugs. Cordroy was very disappointed in himself for not listening to his parents and friends.

The days, for Cordroy, were going by fast. One day Cordroy decided to go look for a job. He didn't find a job. Cordroy didn't graduate from school because of the drugs. He was so upset that he couldn't get a job.

He decided to go to a party. Cordroy was at a drug party where he was caught with a knife; he didn't know what he was doing. He held the knife up. So Cordroy was walking when he tripped over a big rock. He stabbed himself in the heart.

They rushed him to the hospital. When the doctors were attending him, he bled to death. He didn't make it because of the drugs. His parents weren't the same without their son. Cordroy died in the year 2005.

You shouldn't do drugs and be with people who have drugs. Drugs can kill you very easily like they did Cordroy.

You put other people and yourself in danger when you take drugs and alcohol. I hope my story helps you not to do drugs and to be very careful of the things you do. You don't want to end up in jail

or dying, do you? Please don't do drugs because you are going to wish you didn't do them.

Pay attention to what your parents and friends tell you. Don't think they tell you because they want to be bothering you; they tell you for your own good. Be educated and smart. **BE DRUG FREE!**

# High School Essay

## **Hnin Haemar Kin**

Townsend Harris High School, Bayside, NY

### **Biography:**

(Hnin) Haemar Kin was born on April 6, 1990 in Kingston, Jamaica. She moved to New York when she was around four years old. From then, she lived in New York all her life. She is currently attending Townsend Harris High School at Queens College. Haemar's hobbies are reading, writing, singing, and traveling. Her goal in life is to go into medical studies in college and afterwards, work in the medical field.

### **About E-Books:**

E-books are electronic books, or books that are published electronically. Although I am aware of what e-books are and what they do, I have never been involved with them until recently when I started to submit and read works dealing with e-books.

## **First Place — High School Essay**

### **Happy New Year!**

3...2...1... Happy New Year! What comes to people's minds when they think of New Year's? They probably might think about the New Year's celebration at Times Square, New York, or celebrating New Year's Eve with family and friends. People might also think about the count down too. But, things are a little different in Burma, also known as Myanmar.

New Year's in Burma takes place during the first week of April which happens to coincide with the summer holiday and also the hottest month of the year. In Burma, the people celebrate New Year for four consecutive days. It is famously known for people pouring water on each other in a celebration known as "Water Festival" starting three days before the actual New Year's Day.

The Water Festival is a very special annual event that allows both adults and children to have fun. It is a spiritual festival where people pour water on each other with either small pails containing scented water or with big hoses. Some who prefer to stay at home also celebrate by pouring water among family members. It is believed that when you are touched by the water, you leave all the bad things from last year behind and start fresh for the upcoming year. While the Water Festival is taking place during the day, there is also music playing and people performing traditional dances on stages all over the country. During night time people would go around various places where there are free performances such as traditional dances, modern dances, stage shows or live performances by popular singers and movie stars.

New Year's Day is also a religious event. While some people would stay at home and keep a Sabbath, others would go to monastery, temples and pray. Children also pay respect to their elders. For example, children would gather up and offer the elder people to wash their hair. They would also offer gifts such as food and pray for them as well. Many families would cook an abundance of food and share with friends, neighbors, and everyone else. During these four days, everyone is welcome to everyone's houses. One famous food is called "moat lone yay baw" which is small flour balls with a brown sugar cane filling inside. Many people and places make this food and offer to whomever visits their place.

In Burma, New Year's Day is the most important day to start the year with good health, happiness, and doing good deeds. By doing so, the rest of year would bring them good luck and success. New Year's Day is a time of togetherness. It is as if everyone is part of one big family whose job is to spread the cheer.



## Alan Zhu

International School, Bellevue, WA

### Biography:

Born in China in 1990, Alan Zhu moved around the globe at a young age and thus never truly established a place to call home in his constant travels. Despite developing a shy nature from it, the foundation of writing was picked up at seven and he could never cease the habit of it. Effortless in writing precision, he even published a poem at eight in the poetry compilation book “Windows of Perception.”

### About E-Books:

Though Alan Zhu has not yet published any work into the specific e-book entries, he is familiar with posting some of his writings on redeemed sites in order to get feedback and look for improvement. Thus, he knows the experience of such a process and will know how to handle things under such circumstances.

## Second Place — High School Essay

### Stereotype Me

Regardless of your location in life, you will always be slapped with a label that leaves a mark on your face when people see you, the same smear that categorizes you in their minds as whatever typecast that the mass believes in of recent times. Depending on whatever trend is supported widely in the current by the lukewarm reception, there are always specific ethnic groups that will be in honor for what they are proclaimed to symbolize, and the rest to be ridiculed and excluded for false beliefs.

Arriving to America as an immigrant from China, I soon grew to bear witness to race’s heavy position that outweighed any other factor in one’s personal judgment. Though I was too young to comprehend the blatant discrimination that surrounded me in early adolescence, the same pessimistic aura people set off would come back to me years later as I grew into my teen years. Whenever I was mentioned, I would not be referred to as just Alan, but rather “the Chinese kid,” “the Asian guy,” or in worse circumstances, “that chink.” Because minorities from Asia are scorned on much more than they are extolled in the majority’s views, I was met with the choice to either ignore any comments of bigotry and live instinctively as a hardworking student with studying as my main priority, or simply rebel against it with all my power and redirect their thinking by any means necessary. Alas, for my first decision on this standpoint, I selected the latter.

In an age where being the “hardest” rewards you with respect and admiration, those that tend to follow

their own rules and thus break society's in the process are showered with adoration, with only officials showing up to rain on their parade. The theory was made clear that anyone can behave and act like a proper individual, but it took guts and a sense of distinctiveness to be bad, whether in terms of morality or criminal activities. Growing up, I used to hate those that placed Asians under the image of being nerdy and only book-smart. They say knowledge is power, but it seemed being smart only made us weak targets in the schools, the workplace, or just in regular society. Racism is said to have faded, but listening closely to any selective piece that revolts against it only mentions the unity of blacks and whites. But where do we fit in as the yellow-skinned, hard-working residents taught on modesty, the value of wisdom, and decorum? Are we THAT insignificant to even bother being cited, or are we just a background setting people can push around and adjust to their liking?

Because of the issue of prejudice hanging over my head, I would use to do anything I could to not assimilate myself with anything Asian-stereotypical and would actually do the opposite. In time, I was in the acts of disobeying my parents, intentionally letting my grades slip, and planning to drop out of school just to avert myself from being anything that the majority expected of me. But as time ticked away, I found myself asking...Just how does this benefit me?

I tried to escape natural characteristics of discipline and intelligence because of my own doubt of any gain from this in America, but the new question that formed was simply, *why*? Just so I could be like the norm and interweave with the average? Just so my fear of immature derision could lessen if I avoided any of my culture's attributes and customs? Forget that! How can anyone

make life worth the joyride when their whole focus is waiting on others' views to drive them into bliss or the road to melancholy?

At the ripe but theoretical age of 15, it is no longer my precedence to ever care what anyone else thinks, because at the end of the day, this ridiculous intolerance that is portrayed so negatively around me and my people could flip around to be the opposite the next day at any given time. Just imagine, in amidst of this propaganda, what if homosexuality became the new craze? Would that not mean the lion's share of people would come out the closet as an attempt to match the contemporary poise? That's not me...and neither is any fad that happens to become vogue in society. Things come and go, but culture remains. Thus, for anyone opposing or attempting to make my heritage a mockery, the only response I really need to counter their ignorance is simply the quotable phrase: "Yeah, I'm Chinese...and what?"

# High School Poetry

## **Roby Behrens**

Santa Monica High School, Venice Beach, CA

### **Biography:**

Roby Behrens is a sixteen year old from Venice Beach, California. He has been writing poetry and plays since fourth grade and is now a junior in high school. His passions include writing, playing guitar, and making movies. He hopes to attend a liberal arts college and then go to graduate school for film.

### **About E-Books:**

Roby has always thought highly about the idea of e-books. He believes that it is a great way to exploit digital technology and hopefully help save paper and trees in the long run. He also finds it a convenient way to acquire literature.

## **First Place — High School Poetry**

### **The City of Dreams**

A sunset of fiery gold leaks through the darkness

A window of light whispering to the moon

Dreams deferred and abandoned take to the sky and  
Glide softly toward the fog of the city

Thousands of stagnant fireflies providing light for the work unfinished

Dusk is soon smothered  
By stars pushing their way through  
The shadowy haze of space

## Tara Moldovan

Apex High School, Apex, NC

### Biography:

Tara Moldovan was born in Naples, Italy but has lived in North Carolina since the age of 2. She is an artist to her soul. She loves to write poetry, songs, and short stories mostly about people's emotions. She draws, paints and photographs, mostly people because she sees life in them. Finally she loves to act. Her parents and friends are supportive of her passions and have been her willing subjects and audience for years.

### About E-Books:

I am aware of e-books as an alternate publishing method. In fact, in some ways I believe it's a better method. It costs no trees and gives less well-known authors an avenue to publish. E-books are not restricted to unknown authors — Stephen King has published an e-book. On a personal level, my aunt, Beth Williamson, has published three e-books through Liquid Silver Books. I have read two of her books and am ready to start the third. I am comfortable with the e-book format and wish the public schools would start using them instead of having us lug around textbooks.

## Second Place — High School Poetry

### Unseen Teardrops

You can tell that she's been crying  
 Since her eyes are puffy and red  
 You can tell that she is dying  
 She can barely lift her head  
 Her family always leaves her  
 Not knowing she's in pain  
 This little girl has lost everything  
 Even the ability to gain

You can tell that she's been yearning  
 For a completely different life  
 You can tell she wants to move away  
 Make a family, be a wife  
 You can tell that she is leaving  
 Her things are already packed  
 You can tell that once she's gone  
 She's not coming back

You can tell that she been hurting  
 Whose fault? Who's to blame?  
 The world can always point a finger  
 Making everyone ashamed  
 You can tell that she is leaving  
 Probably for the greater good  
 She's starting her life over  
 It's about time she should...

## **Sign Ojulu**

Austin High School, Austin, MN

### **Biography:**

Sign Ojulu is 14 years old and goes to Austin High School. She is a freshman this year and loving it. When she writes, it is usually when she is emotional about something. Writing is a huge part of her life, and she enjoys making up stories.

### **About E-Books:**

I am sorry to say that I have never heard of e-books. I would love to learn more about it.

## **Third Place — High School Poetry**

### **My small little room**

I walk in and crash on my bed  
I think of the day completely exhausted  
my own little bubble  
with no one but me  
when I am alone  
I feel so free  
the window is cracked  
a breeze brushes my hair  
I smell the leaves  
in the cool crisp air  
I'm getting cold  
I should probably get up  
all over my body  
there are goose bumps  
I pull over the covers  
I will fall asleep soon  
I feel so safe  
in my small little room

## Natalie Backhaus

Home School, Lusby, MD

### Biography:

Natalie Backhaus is a 15-year-old home schooled student. She has four sisters, one of whom is her identical twin. Her hobbies are reading, painting, fencing and biking. Since being published at the age of 14, writing has played an important role in her life. Natalie plays the piano and the ocarina. Although sometimes shy, she appreciates friendships with all ages and especially enjoys baby sitting and interacting with young children.

### About E-Books:

E-books are pretty new to me but just recently I've discovered how much variety there is! Reading is a big part of my life, so anything that gives me so many great options, is well worth it. I love the fact that, not only do you learn about new books, but you also get a chance to learn about the Author who wrote it. I look forward to broadening my knowledge and experience of/with E-books.

## Honorable Mention — High School Poetry

### The Storm

The strong winds are shoving  
 All in its great path.  
 The storm is not loving,  
 But hateful with wrath.

His voice yells with anger,  
 As the rain falls down.  
 His eyes seek a stranger  
 As they flash around.

The sky, black with fury,  
 The wind building up;  
 All filled with worry  
 As all things erupt.

His wet, slimy fingers  
 Soak all of the ground,  
 As he stops to linger  
 At what he has found.

The lightning and thunder,  
 Both drumming a song;  
 The rain drips with wonder,  
 The storm rages on.

## Alan Zhu

International School, Bellevue, WA

### Biography:

Born in China in 1990, Alan Zhu moved around the globe at a young age and thus never truly established a place to call home in his constant travels. Despite developing a shy nature from it, the foundation of writing was picked up at seven and he could never cease the habit of it. Effortless in writing precision, he even published a poem at eight in the poetry compilation book “Windows of Perception.”

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Though Alan Zhu has not yet published any work into the specific e-book entries, he is familiar with posting some of his writings on redeemed sites in order to get feedback and look for improvement. Thus, he knows the experience of such a process and will know how to handle things under such circumstances.

## Judges' Award — High School Poetry

### To My One and Only Dad

(Written On Father's Day)

I know at times, you may think I don't respect you enough  
 Like I'm too focused on how to make records and such  
 But I hope you do comprehend beyond our shouting sessions  
 That deep down, I have the biggest esteem for your presence  
 Though you may be sad we moved to a different continent  
 I'm always proud of your intelligence and accomplishments  
 Discard any negative feedback you may have to endure to take  
 You have a heart of gold that currency will never replace  
 Believe it or not, I'm thankful you tolerate being in America  
 I've watched you struggle to stay in divergent U.S. areas  
 I recognize your every achievement, and that's no lie  
 Forget a Nobel Peace, because in our family, you're most prized  
 I'm sad you stayed; missing out on reverence you had in China  
 So many opportunities, and you chose to put them behind ya  
 All because of me, losing your love of being a professor  
 And instead, you're left with only a defiant son to lecture  
 Just remember you're still my inspiring hero without a doubt  
 And no matter what it takes, I ensure you I'll make you proud



## Haley Crenwelge

Faith Academy Home School, Tomball, TX

### Biography:

Haley Crenwelge was born in the greater Houston area. Her love for writing was discovered at 14, and she has continued to try and cultivate her God-given talent. She lives today in Houston, Texas, with her parents, 6 brothers, and 3 sisters.

### About E-Books:

Haley has not had any experience whatsoever in the e-book business. She learned about it through an e-mail group and continues to look further into it.

## Judges' Award — High School Poetry

### When God Seems Far Away

When it seems God is far away,  
And the path of life is crumbling,  
Then it's time to pray.

When Hope gives way to dismay,  
And our world is steady trembling,  
It seems God is far away.

As our feet cross into murky clay,  
And our soul is tired of traveling,  
It is time to pray.

When our world is in disarray,  
And our eyes are weary of crying,  
It seems God is far away.

When the skies are nothing but gray,  
And our heart is tired of breaking,  
It is time to pray.

When we wish for just one ray,  
Of heavenly sun brightly shining,  
But it seems God is far away,  
Then it is time to pray.

# High School Short Story

## First Place — High School Short Story

### A Change of Heart

#### Natalie Backhaus

Home School, Lusby, MD

#### Biography:

Natalie Backhaus is a 15-year-old home schooled student. She has four sisters, one of whom is her identical twin. Her hobbies are reading, painting, fencing and biking. Since being published at the age of 14, writing has played an important role in her life. Natalie plays the piano and the ocarina. Although sometimes shy, she appreciates friendships with all ages and especially enjoys baby sitting and interacting with young children.

#### About E-Books:

E-books are pretty new to me but just recently I've discovered how much variety there is! Reading is a big part of my life, so anything that gives me so many great options, is well worth it. I love the fact that, not only do you learn about new books, but you also get a chance to learn about the Author who wrote it. I look forward to broadening my knowledge and experience of/with E-books.

Nathan looked up as his sister, Grace, came up behind him. "I figured I'd find you out here," she said. She took a seat beside him on the fresh green grass that overlooked their five acres of farmland. "What are you doing?"

"Just th–think'n," Nathan muttered, turning his head away.

"'Bout what?"

"The b-baby." As he wiped a sleeve across his tear stained face, he noticed Grace staring at him. "W-what?" he asked, annoyed.

"Were you crying about the baby?" she asked.

"N-no!"

"It looks like you were," she stated. The expression on her face softened. "I know you're worried that the baby will change everything, but it *won't* Nathan. It won't! You *have* to understand that, you just *have* to!" As she spoke, she had moved closer to him. Nathan felt her hand rest gently on his shoulder, and he shoved it away immediately.

"I d-do understand!"

"Then what's your problem!?"

"How do *y-you* know that things won't change? How do *y-you* know that Mama and Papa won't spend all their time with the-the new baby, huh?" Nathan choked angrily at the tears that were forming in his throat. His brown eyes pierced through Grace as he scooted stubbornly away from her.

"Nathan, Mama and Papa will always love us, even *with* the new baby! You're *foolish* to think that things will change!"

Nathan glared once more at his sister, and then lifted himself up off the ground and ran down the hill.

By sunrise the next morning, Nathan was up, diligently going about his morning chores. As he worked, he wondered if life would really be the same once the baby was born. How could it be? Neighbors from all over would crowd to see it. The peaceful quiet of the night would be interrupted by its cries, and Grace would always

be helping Mama, too tired to play. No, the new baby would change everything.

The sound of footsteps coming from the house interrupted his thoughts, and he turned his head to see whose they were. His father walked quietly out and greeted Nathan.

“You’re up early,” he said in his deep voice.

Nathan nodded, spreading the rest of the chicken feed on the ground.

“I think that Mother will have her baby today,” Father said, looking out over the fields. “I do believe that I am ready to have a baby around the house again. How about you? Are you ready?”

Nathan looked at his father. He wasn’t quite sure what to say. *He* knew he wasn’t ready and *Grace* knew, but did he really want to tell his father how he felt?

“I don’t know,” he finally answered. “Nothing will be the same anymore. I’m just afraid that-that...” Nathan could feel the tears working their way up his throat, and he swallowed hard to keep them down.

“Nathan, look at me,” Father ordered in a soft voice. Nathan lifted his head and looked into his father’s face. “God gave us this baby for a reason; do you think that He would do that if he didn’t have a plan for our lives?”

“N-no, Sir.”

“Then wouldn’t you say it’s safe to trust Him?”

Nathan thought about what Father had said. Could it really be that easy? Before he had time to think further, Grace came bursting out of the house.

“Father, come quick!” she yelled, “I think Mother’s going to have her baby!”

Nathan and Grace sat in the barn for what seemed like hours. Nathan wished Grace would sit still. He didn’t think there was anything to get excited about.

“Nathan, what is *wrong* with you?” Grace asked.

“Nothing.”

“Ever since I came out of the house with the news, you haven’t said a word. You could at least seem a *little* excited.”

“Well, I’m not.”

“Nathan, if you’re still worried that things will change, then you better get over it quick ‘cause we’re getting a baby whether you like it or not!”

Father appeared in the barn door shortly after and asked if they would like to come see their new baby brother.

Grace ran inside without a word. Nathan followed not far behind. He hesitated before opening the front door. He didn’t really want to go in, but he couldn’t help but wonder what the baby looked like. He took a big breath and then opened the door. Grace was standing next to Mother, who was lying on a cot with a white bundle of cloth in her arms. Grace was already asking to hold the baby, and looked disappointed when Father stopped her.

“I think Nathan should be the first to hold him,” Father said, taking the bundle into his arms and motioning Nathan over with his head.

“You want *me* to-to hold *him*?” Nathan asked, pointing to the baby.

“Why not? You’ll do fine.”

Nathan reached out and took the baby into his arms. As he brought the infant closer to his chest, he noticed a weird feeling in his stomach. He looked cautiously over the blanket and peered into the baby’s face. What he saw made him smile. Its tiny, innocent face was shining with bright blue eyes. His head, though small, held dark, puffy balls of hair. Nathan felt Grace’s hand rest on his shoulder as she too, looked at the baby’s face.

“He’s so adorable,” Grace sighed.

“His name is Jeremiah,” Father said quietly.

“Jeremiah,” Nathan whispered. “That’s a good name.” He looked up at his father with a smile on his face. Maybe it *would* be alright. After all, how could something this small and precious change their life for the worst? Nathan, for the first in a long time, felt at peace with himself. He soon forgot all about the trouble he had imagined this baby was going to give him. He quietly thanked the Lord for his new baby brother, and gazed happily into his brother’s face.

**Second Place — High School Short Story****Alan Zhu**

International School, Bellevue, WA

**Biography:**

Born in China in 1990, Alan Zhu moved around the globe at a young age and thus never truly established a place to call home in his constant travels. Despite developing a shy nature from it, the foundation of writing was picked up at seven and he could never cease the habit of it. Effortless in writing precision, he even published a poem at eight in the poetry compilation book “Windows of Perception.”

**About E-Books:**

Though Alan Zhu has not yet published any work into the specific e-book entries, he is familiar with posting some of his writings on redeemed sites in order to get feedback and look for improvement. Thus, he knows the experience of such a process and will know how to handle things under such circumstances.

**Inherent Devotion**

For the majority of teenagers on the road to adulthood, their beliefs on which routes to take in life may not necessarily appease the two that put a roof over their heads, their loving parents. Thus, that stubborn disposition naturally inherited through adolescence causes the rebellious scenes that follows a household with a teen until the day their kid steps out of the house. Kenn Sung, a Chinese youngster adapted to American life, was this perfect example as he and his father flew back to their homeland on account of a business trip.

Every living tidbit of his did not include any from his own culture; it was almost as if he was ashamed to come from the most populated location on Earth. During the flight via China, Kenn would grit his teeth in frustration and shaking his head in disbelief, reluctant to travel so far away from the “land of the free.” Despite his father’s attempts to make him remember that it was not a burden to visit his roots but a stroke of luck their providence helped them capture, Kenn only halfheartedly took in the food for thought he was bestowed with. “Right,” he said apathetically. “I should be thankful to return to a place that I have no memory of, let alone any interest in.” Of course, Mr. Sung was extremely hurt at his own son’s boorish conviction lodged deeply inside his mind of ignorance. As for Kenn, the kid could have cared less what his dad thought. After all, if he did not respect his parents or any of their notions in America, why should he have a huge change of heart now that they were leaving the area?

As they arrived at their destination in Beijing, Mr. Sung claimed his baggage and called for a taxi to the location of their assigned hotel, a block away from where his business meeting

would take place. Kenn grudgingly followed behind wherever his father went after they dropped their things off at the inn, reluctant to adjust to any of the changes, such as the distinct lifestyles and the overcrowded city streets. After a day of sightseeing (at least for Kenn) and various encounters with former associates of Mr. Sung, it was finally time to experience the finer points of China that even Kenn would admit to be an absolute delight: Chinese food. Unfortunately for the father and son, the phase of night already sunk in to 10:00 PM and from all the wandering, restaurants were scarcely in sight to feast on. Just when he was wishing to locate somewhere to eat as quickly as possible to get ready for his meeting tomorrow at eight in the morning, Mr. Sung spotted a mediocre-looking seafood place. As they sat in one of the many vacant seats, his father ordered their meal abruptly.

Everything occurred normally as expected until they headed back to their hotel. Kenn's stomach felt uneasy. Gradually like a snail, the growing pains crept till his whole body was sluggish. With the energy he still possessed, he obscurely stumbled across the bathroom and vomited excruciatingly in the toilet. The seafood apparently got the best of him, as his stomach could not adjust to its nature.

At around this time, his dad awoke to reality and out of his pensive introspection to catch Kenn vomiting, crouching on his knees and bowing his head down, almost as if in realization of his past faults and begging for forgiveness. Mr. Sung hurried to comfort his son as soon as he got on his feet. Kenn, clutching his stomach and trying to conceal his pain, tried to retort with "I'm fine," but stretching his vocal chords only caused him to make more bathroom trips...again and again. He stayed up the entire night, shivering and puking his guts out. During that extensive time, Mr. Sung took numerous cab rides into the city to find the suitable medication to cure Kenn's severe food poisoning. By the time he found the right one to soothe his son's rigorous nausea, the clock already ticked its way to 8:00

AM. Just to scrutinize Kenn's progressive status, Mr. Sung stayed an extra hour to observe his health improvement. Before Mr. Sung could take care of him further, he read the clock: 9:00. Hurriedly, he dashed out.

He walked out of the room slowly to make sure he did not upset his stomach once again, key in hand and motive in mind to find why his father would seemingly abandon him, especially in an unfamiliar place. He was right in the middle of a long train of thought when he spotted his father being declined to speak in front of a large crowd of individuals in business suits. Oh yeah, Kenn thought to himself. The business meeting...that is why we're here in the first place. He watched sullenly as he watched his father nod in sadness while he was being condemned for his late appearance. Apparently, his time to present his project in front of this esteemed group was an hour ago. "I'm sorry, Mr. Sung," the host of the conference declared. "But there is no excuse for your actions. It was your presentation; we at this assembly have no responsibility for your slipup. I apologize once again, and will ask you again to step off the stage."

Finally, Kenn understood his father's intentions only existed for his benefit. He was foolish in the past to neglect their wishes without care. His dad ran all over Beijing just to find anything to ease his pain. The truth must hurt, because although Kenn's parents were brutally honest, the realness of their love will always remain. Such a sacrifice was shown clearly at his father's time slipup.

They say necessity is the mother of invention; it took that need for assistance in Kenn to engender an advanced mind state, one that brought realization and family devotion back into his heart.

## Sign Ojulu

Austin High School, Austin, MN

### Biography:

Sign Ojulu is 14 years old and goes to Austin High School. She is a freshman this year and loving it. When she writes, it is usually when she is emotional about something. Part of this story she wrote when she was angry. She has four brothers so being irritated is very easy with them. Writing is a huge part of her life, and she enjoys making up stories. It was very hard to write this story with just 1000 words, but she had fun. She hopes you enjoyed her story!

### About E-Books:

I am sorry to say that I have never heard of e-books. I would love to learn more about it.

## Third Place — High School Short Story

### Addie

She dare not look at her mother. She couldn't bear. Wishing that she was dead but knowing that she would be in mere moments. Her heart racing. Her breath gone. Thinking of words she could say in her defense. She bites her lip. Digging deeper and deeper. She grows more weary every waking moment. Her lips are left blue. She looks up at her sobbing mother. Her eyes black as coal from her mascara. Her mother with so many different expressions. Anger, sadness, passion, regret. She can't bear It any longer.

"It wasn't my fault," she screams out.

"Not another word," her mother snaps so quickly that she jumps. "I am going upstairs to bed. You are to be in your room in half an hour."

"But Mom, there's blood on me!" she whimpers.

"Now whose fault is that?" says her mom.

Up the stairs she went, leaving her daughter breathless. The world stops. No more cops. No more guns. Nothing. She falls asleep on the couch with blood stains on her jacket, ripped

out hair, and bruises in so many places that it feels as if she may never, ever wake up.

The next day was a Sunday morning and Addison woke up in pain. She couldn't feel a thing. She walked upstairs to get cleaned up. After feeling a little bit better, she went back downstairs only to smell an invigorating fragrance. Pancakes and sausage, the aroma draws her closer. She sits on the stairs and foresees her conversation with her mom. Screaming and cursing and crying.

It doesn't matter. There is nothing in her stomach, and it needs to be filled. She walked downstairs, relieved to see that her mother is nowhere in sight. Addison grabbed a plate and took a handful of sausages and three pancakes. This was funny because Addie only weighed 102 pounds and she was fifteen. She devoured her food like a ravenous creature.

After the meal, she got up to exit the kitchen. Two steps, and there was her mom. Startled, she jumped back and rammed her back against the counter. It hurt her so much that she wanted to cry. But not now. She couldn't. She had to be brave.

The look from her mom said everything. "Sit down. We need to talk."

Addison knew. So she did as she was told. They sat down on the counter. There was a very uncomfortable pause for the both of them.

Then her mom spoke. "What happened to

you? Your bright blue eyes have turned cold and lifeless."

Indeed her mother was right. Addie used to be gorgeous. Sandy brown hair and blue eyes with cheeks that Santa Claus envied.

"Please tell me the truth," her mom pleaded.

This was the moment. Addie knew it was coming, but she didn't think that it would come this early. She had rehearsed many times what she would say this very moment, but in that moment, she forgot.

Another moment passed and this "conversation" that was supposed to be occurring, turned into a staring contest. After only two and a half minutes, Addie gave up and blinked for the last time.

"I hate you. I'll never tell you! Never!"

Addie dashed out of the door and not even looking, she ran across the street just as a car was speeding past the stop light.

No one ever found out what happened to Addison Striker. But you can be sure that Addison's mom paid more attention to her family and told them that she loved them every day. The death of her daughter made her more aware of all the pain and suffering that teenagers go through. May we all remember Addison Striker.