

The Origin Project



BOOK FIVE | 2019

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We offer sincere gratitude to Linda Woodward for all she has done
to make *The Origin Project Book Five* possible.

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*Every people has to have its own stories . . .
If we don't have our own stories then we don't have our own soul:
we don't have our own deepest possession, which is ourselves and our own unfolding . . .
Unless we cherish and savour our own [stories],
then we're not going to know who we are and . . . we'll become strangers to ourselves . . .
We've got to hold up a mirror to ourselves and create our own stories.*

— Leonard N Cohen

Writing is a valuable, sometimes vital, tool in human endeavour.

Story writing is a particular talent: the memorialisation of personal experiences, tales, and narratives bequeathed by family or friends or teachers or mentors.

The Origin Project is an in-school writing program sprouted six years ago from the idea that Appalachia's stories are national treasures and its children should celebrate their roots. Our program inspires young people to discover and liberate their inner voices through the craft of writing about their unique origins; it celebrates diversity and inclusion. The Origin Project has evolved into a melting pot, capitalising on the rare chance to expose young people to each other's individualities and galvanise their curiosity about, and respect for, each other.

The Origin Project has grown organically from 40 students in Big Stone Gap to more than 1,500 students in 17 schools. We regularly import renowned authors—so far, David Baldacci, Meg Wolitzer, Margot Lee Shetterly, Mary Hogan, and Laurie Eustis—to meet with the students and share their personal writing experiences.

Each fall, our students are given a personal journal and thereafter work on multiple projects or stories that speak of and to their heritage. Their work is professionally published year-end in *this* anthology, presented to each student and made available in school and public libraries. The Origin Project is integrated with the Virginia Standards of Learning curriculum and collaborates with each student at her/his skill level to conceive, develop, and hone ideas into short stories, poems, plays, interviews, or other art.

The students present their work aloud to their peers, parents, teachers, and guests, often at forums such as the Barter Theatre or Mountain Empire Community College. In past years' anthology unveilings, our student-artists have been congratulated live or by video by Governor Terry McAuliffe, Senator Mark Warner, and Senator Tim Kaine. The First Lady of Virginia Pamela Northam joined us for a recent Kick-off Celebration.

We synergise community and schools to offer heritage-related presentations and incorporate libraries and museums to convey the rôle of history in the present and develop the skill of research. This year, we visited the Civil Rights exhibit at The Birthplace of Country Music Museum and an exposition on immigration at the Library of Virginia.

It is a joyful surprise to read our students' work, witness their growth, and observe the budding of their self-esteem. Through their creative writing with The Origin Project, our students "hold up a mirror" to themselves and thereby reclaim their "own deepest possession": themselves and their "own unfolding."

Kathy Balmer Fisher

Ariana Trigiani

TABLE OF CONTENTS



Unveiling Celebrations of The Origin Project Book Four	I
Kicking Off the Year	7
Mentor Texts	13
Eastside High School	23
Flatwoods Elementary School	35
Greendale Elementary School	59
The Henderson School of Appalachian Arts	67
John I. Burton High School	75
Jonesville Middle School	87
Lee High School	113
Mo'MAGIC Summer Reading Program	175
Morrison School	183
Norton Elementary School	207
Peter Paul Development Center	229
St. Charles Elementary School	245
St. Paul Elementary School	255
Stonewall Jackson High School	267
Woodbridge Senior High School	293
Union Middle School	345
Virginia High School	401
Logo Art	412
Art & Music	421
Competitions, Festivals, & Achievements	445

Barter Theatre	453
Birthplace of Country Music Museum	459
Library of Virginia	469
Before & After: Why The Origin Project Matters	477
Thank You	491
<i>Index</i>	493

UNVEILING CELEBRATIONS OF
THE ORIGIN PROJECT BOOK FOUR



Book Four Unveiling Celebration



At the end of each school year, The Origin Project invites its participating students and guests to the unveiling of an anthology that showcases the young authors' artistic contributions and celebrates their tenacity and creativity. Last year, we hosted three different unveilings of *The Origin Project Book Four*. Margi Vanderhye, Executive Director of the Virginia Commission for the Arts, joined us in person, Senator Mark Warner and Poet Laurie Eustis surprised the audience with congratulatory videos, and Senator Tim Kaine Skyped from the US Capitol.

At these events, students hone their public speaking skills by presenting their stories to an audience of teachers, administrators, parents, and grandparents. Each student leaves with a copy of the book that forever preserves her or his family's tales. We like to think of our unveilings as literary launching pads for students' dreams, higher education, and future endeavours.

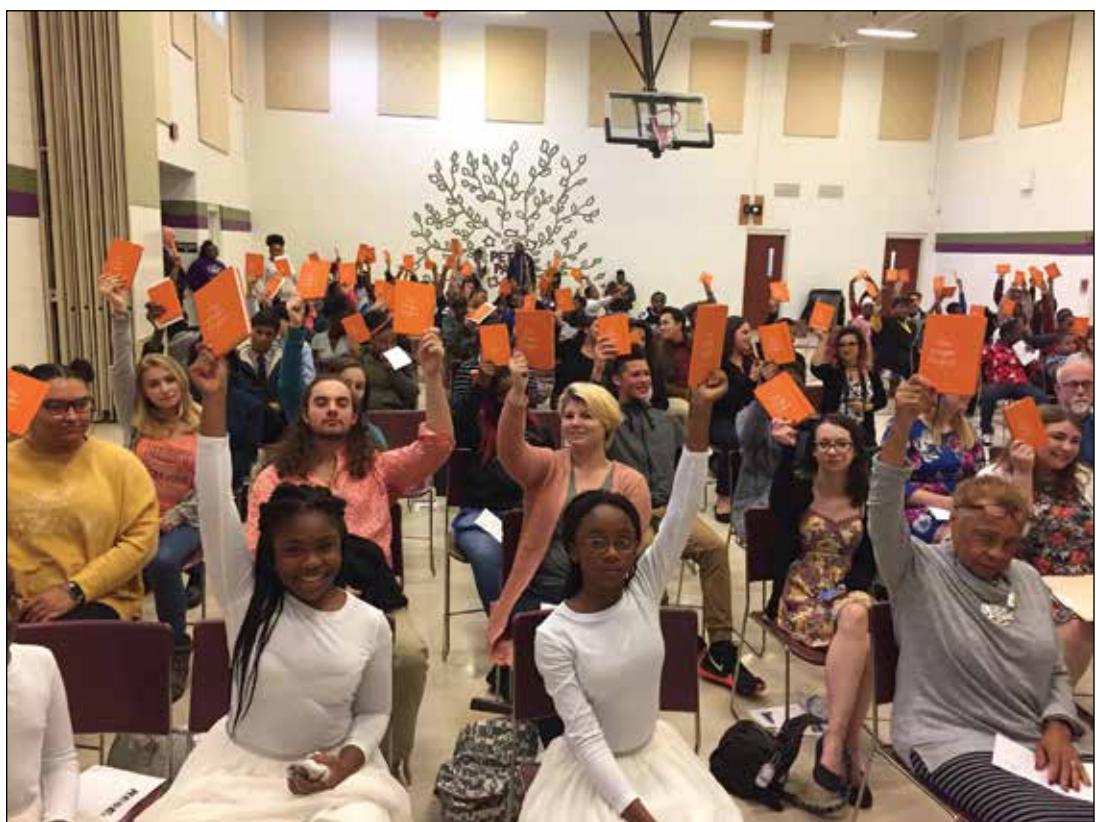








KICKING OFF THE YEAR

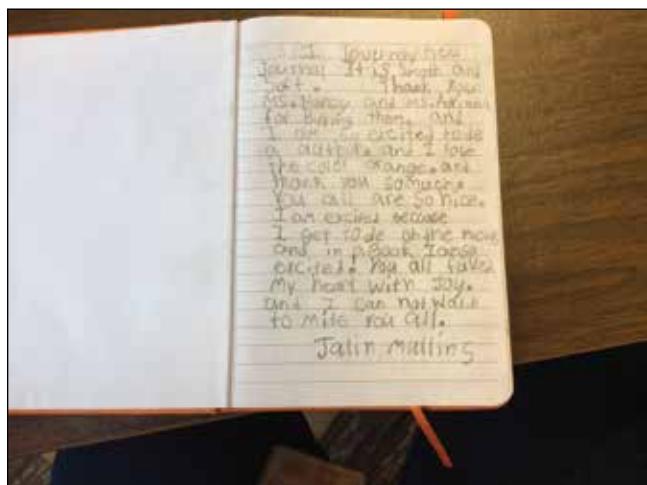




My New TOP Journal

I was so excited to have my journal! I am going to be an author in a book. I am so proud. The book is orange, little, and pretty. I know why they made the book orange! It is about an origin! Get it? My brother was in The Origin Project. I cannot wait for the book to be published. It can almost be full. I can't wait to meet people like Ms. Nancy and Ms. Adriana!

JAYDEN ELY, GRADE 4



cousins Chandler and Sierra who were also published authors in The Origin Project, too. I can't wait until May so I can show my family and friends the book they will give us.

KAYLEE LAWSON, GRADE 4

Orange Journal

I was so happy to see the journal. I am so excited to be an author! When I saw the journal, I thought they were beautiful. Oh, and I know why it is orange, because the "origin" project and "orange." You see what I did there? I might be in the news! Oh, my gosh! Thank you so much Ms. Nancy and Ms. Adriana!

KYNLEE JOHNSON, GRADE 4



You Filled My Heart with Joy!

I love my new journal. It is smooth and soft. I love the color orange. Thank you Ms. Nancy and Ms. Adriana for buying them. I am so excited to be an author! Thank you so much! You all are so nice. I am excited because I may get to be on the news and in a book. You all filled my heart with joy, and I cannot wait to meet you!

JALIN MULLINS, GRADE 4



Excited to Be an Author!

I am excited to be an author! I love the color of my journal and how it looks. When I was little, I would look at my sister's journal and always want to write in it. Now it's my turn to be in The Origin Project!

MADDOX PENNINGTON,
GRADE 4



Glad to Be in The Origin Project

Hi, my name is Avery! I'm 10 years old. I live in the United States in Virginia, and I am in 4th grade. I have been looking up to doing The Origin Project! Guess what! Today we got our journals! I am so excited to be a published author. Back to the journal part, it's orange and the texture is amazing. It's smooth and my friend Kynlee made a joke about the journal. It went like this, "I know why the book color is orange for origin!" I'm glad to be in The Origin Project program!

AVERY WESTON, GRADE 4





Special Made Journals

I got my journal today. I'm glad that Ms. Nancy got these for us. I love the orange color. We are going to write a lot in these. I am so glad that my paragraphs are going to be published. They are very beautiful and special made. I am glad that it is free. I am going to take very good care of it. My sister was in The Origin Project and my cousin Katelyn was in it too!

KASEY WOLIVER, GRADE 4

*With Appreciation
For Supporting and Guiding The Origin Project Students*

Eastside High School

Bryan Crutchfield
Hope Cloud
Katie Jessee

Flatwoods Elementary School

Michelle Warner
Gigi Long
Gretta Carroll
Kim Goforth
Paula Kenney
Sherry Moore
Lisa Barnett
Angela Ellis
Andrea Hines
Alyssa Meade

Greendale Elementary School

Allyson Willis
Brenda Sprinkle
Amanda Bailey

The Henderson School of Appalachian Arts

Catherine Schrenker
Deborah Tilson Clark
Patrick Ford

John I. Burton High School

Mike Goforth
Stephanie Cassell

Jonesville Middle School

Stacey Belcher

Briana Austin

Sheila Shuler
Charlcia Jones

Lee High School

Renia Clark
Alex Long
Sindy Fields
Jillian Skidmore

Magic Zone

Devi Zinzuvadia
Brittany Ford
Rika Chambers

Morrison School

Jami Verderosa
Carla Sisk
Karla Rasnake
Julie Yrigollen
Matthew Suiter
Brooke Norman
Jason Graybeal

Norton Elementary School

Scott Addison
Cheryl Duncan
Lisa Bolling
Kara Qualls

Peter Paul Development Center

Damon Jiggetts
Stephanie Bassett

Sarah Young
Ebony Stewart-Monroe
Mariana Johnson
Jean Davis
Angelyn Poe
Violet Duncan
Monica Reid
Betty Hagan

St. Charles Elementary School

Kellie Leonard
Roberta Gibbons
Laura Barnett
Andrea Hines

St. Paul Elementary School

Karen Dickenson
Melissa Galliher
Dorinda Holmes

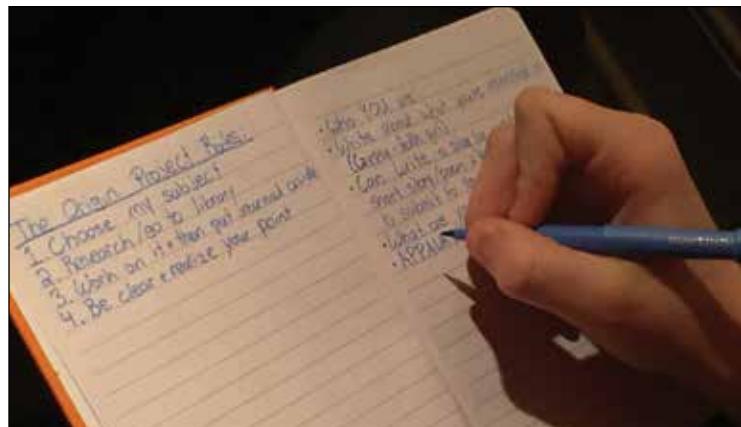
Katie Jessee
Gina Almarode
Amanda Harmon

Stonewall Jackson High School

Rhonda Carper
Chad Cavender
Lori Sellers Sterne
Teresa Duke
Walter Williams
Sarah Duvall
Mark McElwee
Megan Link

**Woodbridge Senior
High School**

Heather Abney
Catherine Hailey
Maria Centini



Anita Sweeney

Casey Krall

Kyll Trott

Union Middle School

Paul Clendenon

Debra St. John-Ramsey

Redena Barton

Brandi Bostic

Amy Slagle

Karen Watkins

Virginia High School

Ronnie Collins

Brad Hutchinson

Crystal Hurd

MENTOR TEXTS



"Every people has to have its own stories . . . If we don't have our own stories then we don't have our own *soul*: we don't have our own deepest possession, which is ourselves and our own unfolding . . . Unless we cherish and savour our own [stories], then we're not going to know who we are and . . . we'll become strangers to ourselves . . . We've got to hold up a mirror to *ourselves* and create our own stories."

—Late poet and songwriter Leonard N Cohen

Mentor Inspiration



Exposing our students to literature, and to the renowned professionals who have created it, focuses their own imaginations and helps them find their own voices. Last year, before poet Laurie Eustis shared her inspirational wisdom, we showcased Lin Manuel Miranda's poignant rap from his Broadway play *Hamilton*: "I wrote my way out. When the world turned its back on me . . . I picked up a pen [a]nd wrote my way out." The Origin Project strives to guide students, like Alexander Hamilton, to seek their dreams through writing about their pasts and to forge a path for their futures.

We kicked off this past academic year with similar inspiration from the late poet and songwriter Leonard Cohen, while his famous song *Hallelujah* echoed through the Barter Theatre and the Peter Paul Development Center. Cohen spent his years writing poetry and songs about his Jewish Canadian roots. His words, delivered as motivation for Canadian short story writers, capture the zeitgeist of The Origin Project: "If we don't have our own stories then we don't have our own soul: . . . Unless we cherish and savour our own [stories], then we're not going to know who we are and . . . we'll become strangers to ourselves."

When I Was Young in the Mountains

written by Cynthia Rylant and illustrated by Diane Goode

As I prepare students to be an integral part of The Origin Project, I strive to make them aware of the Appalachian culture and way of life. One of the activities I use to accomplish this goal is the use of *When I Was Young in the Mountains* by Cynthia Rylant and illustrated by Diane Goode as a mentor text. I read the story aloud to the students. As the story was read, I asked students to contribute ideas of how they relate to

the story and illustrations. Students then created a lapbook which we renamed "While I Am Young in the Mountains". I asked the students to write about activities they can do simply because of the area in which they live. Once ideas were created, we found pictures to correlate with the sentences and glue them to the lap book. I was amazed at the different ideas the students used in their lap book. Some of my favorites are having outdoor church dinners, play outside, eating fresh vegetables out of a garden and enjoy the scenery. When students completed the lap books, they shared them with classmates. I enjoyed doing this activity with my students as it allowed them to think about and appreciate the Appalachian area.



GRETTA CARROLL, GRADE 4 TEACHER
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

When I was Young in the Mountains

As a librarian, I love to use the book, *When I Was Young in the Mountains*, by Cynthia Rylant, to inspire our students to write about their family ancestry and how it has influenced their lives. Growing up in the heart of the Appalachian Mountains has often had the stigma of poor and uneducated associated with many of its residents. However, when people visit our area they often are amazed at the beauty of our landscape, not to mention the warm hospitality and gifted artisans that this area encompasses.

Rylant's unique style of storytelling allows the reader to visualize the simple pleasures and adventures that many children from a rural, mountain area experienced back in the day. Our students have heard similar stories from their grandparents and parents when they were growing up. We have the students write a reflection about their families, and it provides a wonderful ignition to inspire our students to write and often appreciate those special memories of a bygone era. I remember one student writing that her mother learned how to make biscuits with sorghum (molasses) smothered inside just like her mother. One young boy recalls his uncle teaching him the basics of picking a ballad tune on his guitar.

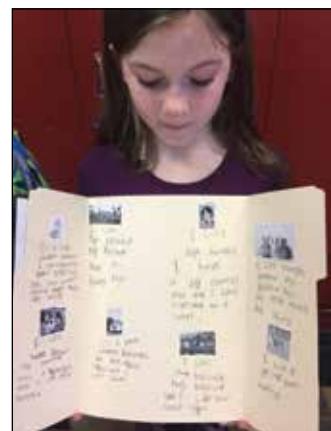
Connecting our students to their heritage is essential. Mentor texts provide lessons that can be learned but are necessary if our future generations are to grow. They can connect their past with others who have written about their lives and hopefully appreciate the sacrifices made as well as ambition to succeed.

GIGI LONG, LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALIST
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

My Experience in the Mountains

While I am young in the mountains, I experience lots of things. Every time I come to school, I always see lots of cows. I have been seeing them ever since first grade. My nannie goes to a church that sits on a little hill with a forest behind it. My church is called Christian Life Fellowship and it is in a valley between the mountains and you can't even get any internet or cell service because the mountains block it.

Every deer season, I go hunting with my papaw and my dad in the mountains. I have killed three deer, one doe, and two bucks. Next deer season we're going to hunt back on land at my papaw's place. My great uncle got bit by a copperhead snake when he put his hand in a box to get his son's toys. We probably have a lot of snakes because of the mountains and woods around here.

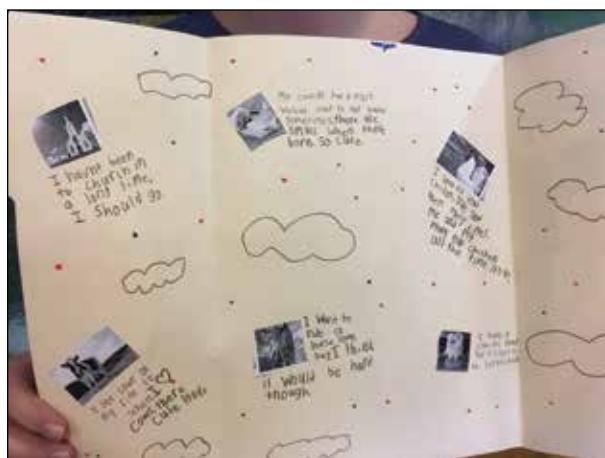


My papaw has a raccoon in his backyard that comes down out of the mountains. He can't get rid of it! I go fishing with my dad at the pond. When we go he always gets more fish than me. I really like living in the mountains!

KARDER PENDERGRAPH, GRADE 4
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

While I Am Young in the Mountains

While I am young in the mountains, I like to go to my papaw's and play with all of his animals. My papaw has 12 baby pigs and about 70 bunnies. I like chickens because of helping my papaw collect eggs. I help him comfort the chickens when they are born. He has ducks and I like them because they look cute. I help collect the duck eggs. Chickens eggs are little and duck eggs are kind of big.



I like to go hunting in the mountains for deer with my dad and sometimes with my papaw. My mamaw lives near the mountains too and she has 4 Husky pups. I really like training them. I like living in the mountains and playing with the animals. In the city, we couldn't have all these animals.

On Sundays, my family and I go to church. I love church because we talk about Jesus and I like that. We go on curvy roads to get there. You can see the mountains when we are going to church and it looks beautiful to me.

PRESLEY HAMMONDS, GRADE 4
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

While I Am Young in the Mountains

I always have loved the mountains because I love camping. It's so much fun! During the summer is the perfect time for swimming in cold springs that we have here because it's mild weather in the mountains. I love hiking with my mom up the side of the big stone face rock near St. Charles. The mountains are so much fun because of the activities you can do.

MADDOX PENNINGTON, GRADE 4
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

I'm a Kid in the Mountains

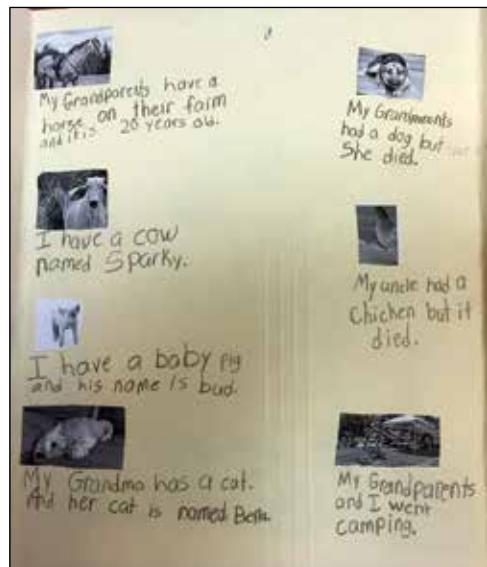
While I'm young in the mountains I get to do great things. I get to pick berries and eat them. Yummy! I also get to go fishing, go up in the woods, and lots more. It's fun to be a kid in the mountains. You get to do fun stuff like me!

AUSTIN WOLIVER, GRADE 4
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

My Friends and I in the Mountains

While I am young in the mountains I like to play with my friends! We like to go swimming and ride our bikes at the park on pretty days. Cumberland Bowl Park is in a bowl because of the hills and mountains all around it. The part where we ride is around the bowl and is shady because of the big trees. We see birds and squirrels while we ride. We swim at my nana's and we can see the mountains and we can hear birds chirping. My friends and I like to play with American Girl dolls. One of the dolls that I play with like to go on adventures in the books about her. Maybe she is on an adventure now living with me in the mountains! My friends and I get to do lots of fun stuff because we live in the mountains.

ALEXANDRA HINES, GRADE 4
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



Fun Things I Do in the Mountains

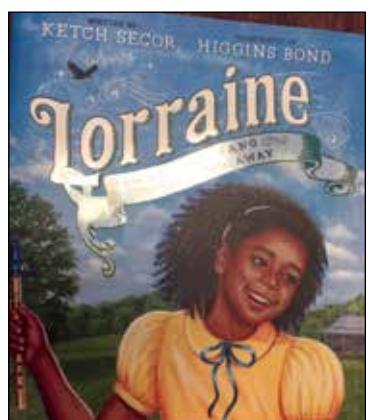
While I am young in the mountains, I do a lot of great things. I like to go hiking with my family and we see all kinds of things. I see birds flying and bugs crawling on the grass. When I hike on my farm, I see some cows and a river. The cows are usually eating grass in the spring and summer or hay in the winter. My dad drives a tractor out in the field to give the cows hay that's in big rolls. Sometimes he gives them silage. The cows drink water out of big tubs. Below our farm we can see the Powell River. I also play on the farm. My sister and I pick up stuff and start playing! Sometimes we just pick up sticks and mud and water and make pretend food! I'm glad that I live in the mountains.

KASEY WOLIVER, GRADE 4
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Lorraine
written by Ketch Secor and illustrated by Higgins Bond

Lorraine

When a book is written in such a way that it captures the reader's attention from the very beginning and is illustrated so beautifully that any reader, adult or child, is completely drawn into the story, then the author and illustrator have accomplished their goal. This was the experience of students at Jonesville Middle when Mrs. Nancy Fisher visited us and read *Lorraine: The Girl Who Sang the Storm Away* to our fifth graders. Students and teachers alike enjoyed the story of how a young girl dealt with her fear and were amazed by the picturesque illustrations which depicted the landscape we enjoy daily in this area. From the cornfield nestled at the foot of





the mountain, the crow in the field near the chinkypin tree, and the frightening storm tearing across the land to Lorraine enjoying the company of and being comforted by her grandfather, the illustrations captured the attention of all. Many students connected immediately with the story. Nancy talked with the students about Lorraine's fear and allowed students to share fears they have and how they deal with those fears. Through this discussion, other students felt that connection as well. Not only were our students inspired by this story, but also by the love Nancy wholeheartedly displays for The Origin Project, our county, and most of all, our students.

SHEILA SHULER, TEACHER
JONESVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL



The Wild Eagle is so Fun

After reading the book Lorraine, It made me remember that one time when I was little I was scared of the Wild Eagle ride. I was scared because it did flips. My mom told me not to be scared because she was there with me and would not let anything happen to me. She said that it was not scary, that it was fun to do the flips, and she said that the prettiest time to ride the Wild Eagle was at night because the track lights up. Now I am not scared of it anymore. It is the most fun ride down at Dollywood, I love it. I think that it is really fun, but that is my opinion. When I finally did ride it, my mom was so proud of me and that is why the book Lorraine reminds me of my story and they both are so good!

TAYLOR BISHOP, GRADE 5
JONESVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL

My Sister's Fear

After reading the book Lorraine, I remember one time when I helped my little sister Chloe with her fear of dogs. Our neighbor has several dogs my sister used to be afraid of because they would bark at her. We have to walk through their yard to get to my papaw's house. During the summer we walk to papaw's house about everyday. My little sister always wanted to see papaw but she was afraid of the dogs and this one mean rooster. The rooster would chase us all the way to papaw's house one time I threw a big rock at it. But how I got my sister over her fear of dogs is I took her to the dog and let her pet it so she would see it would not hurt her. She never got over her fear of roosters.

JOHNNA BLEEDSOE, GRADE 5
JONESVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL

A Way Myself and Lorraine Are Alike

After reading the book Lorraine, I remember of myself having anxiety of getting on elevators. Elevators give me anxiety because when I get on one and it starts going up or down I think it is going to get stuck. Another reason is that if a elevator is very hot and has no air conditioner I feel like I cannot breathe and I am going to die. When I am about to get off the elevator and the door does not open I get really scared that they are not going to open and I will just be stuck there forever. 10 seconds later they would open. If we are on vacation and we are on a high floor close to the top I would take the stairs anyday. When we get on elevators my mom told me to hold on to the handlebars that some elevators have and close eyes and that will help. One time my family and I were staying in Florida and scared me to death. We were staying on floor 3 and we were about to go get something to eat. I took the stairs as always and my sister and my parents took the elevator. I was waiting at the car while my parents took the elevator. After 5 minutes they were still not off the elevator. I got a little worried and I went over to the elevators door to check and see if they were there. They were not and that was when I got really worried. Thankfully they came down about a minute later. Turns out they went to the top floor and waited to see if I noticed why they were taking so long.

BRYCEN COOMER, GRADE 5
JONESVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL

A Time I Was Scared Of A Cruise

After reading the book Lorraine, I remember the time I was scared of a cruise. I was scared of a cruise because there was 53 mph winds and the water was going crazy. It felt like you was surfing and then I went with my dad to see it and the wind was so strong I struggled to stand up. Everyone who me and my family went with was sick. Later the wind calmed down just enough that we could go eat up at the lido deck and then the wind came back. My parents said it's just wind and it will be over by tomorrow and we still have Christmas. When we get off it will be ok and I forgot about it and I thought about what I would get for Christmas then we went asleep and it was all over. The next day and we enjoyed our vacation.

ZACH LANE, GRADE 5
JONESVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Helping Out My Cousin

After reading the book Lorraine, I remember I helped my little cousin when a thunderstorm happened. It was a nice warm day after school no clouds in the sky, no sign of rain, and just a perfect day. Well it was not so perfect after all. All of the sudden we hear a big roaring sound. It was thunder. The day was now wet and was not a pleased sight. My cousins would always go to their house if their parents were home, but they were not home. My little cousin was always afraid of storms, so we had them stay at are house until their parents got home. The storm ended up really bad. The winds were strong as a hurricane was about to happen. My little cousin shedded tears, but I told her that it will be alright. My mom fixed her a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. She loves peanut butter sandwiches. My older cousin was always on her phone, so I doubt she even knew there was a bad storm that happened. This experience for my cousin scared her. My cousin does not like to stay home when there is a storm. After the storm was over my cousin went home and was happy that she was alive. I realize how my little cousin and Lorraine have

a relationship with being afraid of a storm. They both do not worry about the storm because they get distracted from the storm with fun actives.

RIYA LEWIS, GRADE 5
JONESVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL

What I Use To Be Scared Of

After reading the book Lorraine, I remembered I use to be scared of storms when I was little but my mom helped me get over it. I had my own room when I was in kindergarten but when it came to storms I never slept in it at all. Every storm night I would wake my mom up and we would watch a movie and eat a snack and it was basically all over because I went to sleep half way through the movie. My mom helped me get over my fears by showing me there was nothing to be afraid of. I woke up crying every stormy night and everything was always alright because she was there for me all the time and I will never forget her helping me through everything.

JUSTINA LOWDER, GRADE 5
JONESVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Elevators

After reading the book Lorraine, I remembered being afraid of elevators. I have been scared of elevators forever. I am still scared of them, but I am getting better about it. I don't like being in small places for a long time. I have never been trapped in an elevator before, but I hope it never happens. I always ask to take the stairs, but my mom won't let me. In the book Lorraine, she was afraid of storms. But she got over it by singing.

GLOCKLYN MORRIS, GRADE 5
JONESVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Scary Doll

After reading the book Lorraine, I remember having a nightmare about a doll. Her name is Anna bell. I was so scared. In my nightmare, I went to my dad he said she is not a real thing. Then she came running out the bedroom door and grabbed me. She said, I want your soul! I screamed out of my lungs help help help! Then I woke up. It was just a nightmare. The end.

CHLOEY PARKS, GRADE 5
JONESVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL



My Frights

After reading the book Lorraine, I thought about how I am afraid of elevators. I used to love elevators but now I am afraid of them. My sister is also afraid of elevators. When me or my sister are in an elevator our mother has to comfort us. I was also afraid of roller coasters but when my sister took me on one I realized they were actually fun. Reading Lorraine also made me think about how in thunderstorms my father would go outside and when I needed to tell him something I would be scared to go outside. Now I am okay with going outside in a thunderstorm.

TAYLOR SHUPE, GRADE 5
JONESVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Lorraine and My Family All Sing the Storm Away

My family had just eaten a holiday dinner when it started raining hard and started being windy. The trees started shaking and you could hear it inside the house. It was very scary! Papaw Wolkinson said for us to start singing a song to make the storm go away. He started tapping his cane on the old, hard wooden floor and me and my brother started tapping the spoons on the table. My parents were singing a worship tune that started with, "I'm a child of God." My sister was tapping her long nails on the table to the beat of the song. All of us were singing to make the storm go away just like in *Lorraine*. Sometimes we have to sing to keep from being scared. When my mom and dad go to the store and stay too long, we sing to keep from being scared. When I lived in Ohio, we had a few tornadoes and so we would sing "We Will Rock You" over and over while my brother played his toy drums so we wouldn't get scared. My family does just like they did in the *Lorraine* book. We read when the grandpa helped his granddaughter to sing when there was a storm.

AARON ARNOLD, GRADE 4

Lorraine and My Papaw

This story reminded me of my papaw. He would play the piano. It made me go to sleep. It was just so relaxing. I like to hear music. Even when it was not bedtime he would still play it and I would sing along.

KAYLENA FOSTER, GRADE 4

Ms. Nancy and the Story Lorraine

Ms. Nancy read the story *Lorraine* to all fourth grade students. *Lorraine* lives on a Tennessee farm. She lives in Tennessee with her papaw. *Lorraine* wasn't scared of snakes or spiders. *Lorraine* would always play with her whistle. One day they played under the chinkapin tree. There was a crow that landed right at their feet. They thought the crow was a true friend to her, but her whistle disappeared! The next day the dinner bell was gone. So *Lorraine* and her papaw went to their favorite tree and all their stuff was in the tree! The story was very, very interesting.

SAMANTHA GALE, GRADE 4

A Story Called Lorraine

Hi, my name is Kynlee, and I read a story called *Lorraine*. It was about a girl who loved music. One day a big storm came and she and her papaw had music instruments. The storm blew the instruments. The storm blew them away and they could not find the instruments. They were scared so they sang a song. They were not scared anymore because the storm went away and everything was back to the way it was. So yea that was the story I read, and I really loved it because it is like my life when something happens like that when it's a bad day, my mom hugs me when I am feeling sad to make me feel better. The hug is the biggest thing!

KYNLEE JOHNSON, GRADE 4

Lorraine and Lacy

Ms. Nancy came from San Francisco to go different schools to read a book called *Lorraine*. It's a book about a girl who sang a song that she and her grandfather made up. It was called "Storm Away." The girl's name was *Lorraine*. It means with a cart load of courage. She had a penny whistle and her grandfather had a harmonica. At bad times or when a storm came, they would play a tune.

One day a tornado came and Lorraine lost her penny whistle. Her grandfather lost his harmonica, so her grandfather told her, "We can sing!" So they sang the storm away. A little while later after the storm they looked out the window. They saw that the chinkapin tree had fallen! They saw something shining bright. "Hey! There is all of our shiny stuff!" Lorraine found her penny whistle, Pappaw found his harmonica! Then they started to play them both! Suddenly, they heard a "caw, caw, caw" and knew it was the crow who did it all!

Now I'm going to talk about me. My name is Lacy and I have two little sisters. Their names are Emma and Ericka. I love to sing to my little sisters and they try too. It's so cute when they try. When a storm comes we always sing "Rain, rain go away. Come again another day" and that keeps them from being scared. After that, if they are still scared, I will give them a big hug! When Ms. Nancy read the book *Lorraine*, I thought that book is kinda like me. You should write a book about yourself sometime.

LACY MILES, GRADE 4

Lorraine and Mrs. Nancy

Ms. Nancy came one day and read us a story titled *Lorraine* by an author named Ketch Secor and an illustrator named Higgins Bond. She is very nice for coming all the way down here from San Francisco, California to do that. I loved that she brought chocolate for us. The chocolate was so good. Ms. Nancy is a very good reader. I had an awesome time and I loved it.

KARDER PENDERGRAFT, GRADE 4

Lorraine and Grandpa Make Music

Lorraine and her grandpa make music when a big storm comes. Lorraine was not scared of spiders or snakes, but one day she was scared because there was a big storm. Grandpa said, "Let's play music." Flash! A bolt of lightning flashed as grandpa was talking. Lorraine jumped! "Go and get your flute," grandpa said. "Ok," Lorraine said. "Grandpa I can not find it." "Then I will just play the guitar and you'll sing." Soon the storm stopped. They went outside to see if any trees fell. One did. It was very old, anyways," Grandpa said.

NAVAEH STUTLER, GRADE 4

EASTSIDE HIGH SCHOOL



Grandad's Chair

Family heirlooms are supposed jewels or cars or something interesting at least.

-not a dark brown recliner.

I used to hate that uncomfortable chair.

I used to think it was the ugliest piece of furniture I had ever laid my eyes on.

-you loved it though.

It held your strong body.

And cradled your weak one.

Through Nascar and college football and talks about your favorite subject.

-politics.

I used to hate that chair ...

-until it was the closest thing I had to sitting on your lap again.

I used to hate that chair ...

-until I was forced to replace your arms with the chair's.

I used to hate that chair ...

-really I did.

It made the whole room look bad.

I love that chair

-it's my only piece left of you, Grandad.

KATELYNN ELLIOTT, GRADE 12

Where I'm From

I am from paper

From books and pens

I am from the one-parent household

(Small, unique, the house that didn't run out of love).

I am from the willow tree,

its long branches becoming the swings of my childhood.



I'm from yard sales and
brown hair
From Betty and Crystal
I'm from the movies and
ice cream
From "Do your homework"
and "Clean your room"
I'm from Christmas dinners
and Easter egg hunts.
I'm from Coeburn and the
Lauterbacks.

Lemon cookies and Doritos.

From the day I watched my grandma swing a sledgehammer at an old house
to the late night drives down the backroads with my parents.

On a high shelf in my mom's closet is a stack of photo albums, holding the memories I
can't remember, but the stories I wish to have.

CASSIDY FARMER, GRADE 12

I Am From

Where I'm from can depend
One moment I'm from noise like cheers for a fight or football game.
Another still and quiet like a stone, deep in thought
I am from light
I am from dark
I am from my father
I am from my mother
I am from Dante
I am from Castlewood
I am from my great grandfather as he whistles in his chair
I am from my great grandmother playing hide and seek in afternoon air
I am me
From my family
From their hearts and from their love
No matter where or when, it is always there

ETHAN A. FIELDS, GRADE 12

Grandmother Margaret's Kitchen

Grandmother Margaret had a long, brown table that was made of countertop right in
the middle of her only slightly longer kitchen.

An outsider might have been confused, but it made perfect sense to us.
Everyone knew that the table was meant to be there, just like everyone
around it.

This table has heard many prayers and blessings-of-the-food.

This table felt hot wax from the many birthday candles.

This table saw when Grandmother Margaret willingly opened
her house to people and invited them over for dinner.

This table saw only kindness and openness, never
judgement.

This table saw Grandmother Margaret's 9 kids,
17 grandkids,
23 great-grandkids
grow older and older.

You always knew you had a place at Grandmother Margaret's
long, brown countertop table.

EMMA FLEMING, GRADE 12



The Red Couch

Here you made a house a *Home*
I could always imagine myself buried deep within your
enormous cushions
Covered in a gentle but rough fabric whose deep red color
resembled that of blood.

They provided me with all the comfort I needed and the perfect place for any adventure
I could dream of

In the beginning we started out traveling across the ocean: me a captain and you the
ship that I was to sail.

Gradually over time, I matured and so did our adventures.

Our ship turned into a car that I was impatiently awaiting to drive all my friends around in.

One day I wished to be anywhere but sitting on your cushions

That day was the day my grandmother told me she had cancer

Now our adventures were put to an end as you provided a place for my

grandmother to lay that was close enough to the both the kitchen and the
bathroom

For six months, you were the place poison ran through veins

Where radiation beams left a chest pink and itchy

Two years of adventures that only brought pain and sadness

and a small beam of hope for the future.

Eventually all the challenges had been surpassed and that small beam of hope turned
in a reality as my grandmother was cancer free.

Finally our adventures could begin again

KIARRA GIBSON, GRADE 12

An Escape

A little girl with brown hair and brown eyes

She was adventurous and creative

She wanted to escape the world

She wanted to have fun without the troubles around her.

In the tops of the trees, in her backyard, stood a beautiful tree house.

She would climb into the tree house and play for hours at a time.

She would imagine being in the Amazon jungle, in space, or under the sea.

She spent some of the best days of her life in that tree house, dawn till dusk

Her special place was that tree house

That little girl is no longer "little" so that tree house no longer has the magic it once did.

AMANDA GREEAR, GRADE 12

Camping and Chicken Noodle Soup

Many a day spent on that gray, leather couch
in your living room, flooded with light.

My days were so happy, and I was mostly unaware
that you suffered quietly, the loneliest blight.

Because you were never sad
at least, not around me.

My days were filled with warmth
with you, and me, under that turquoise canopy.
We ate our Oreos

and our chicken noodle soup
in that old, ragged, pop-up tent
and most days, formed our own troupe.

But then, one day you left
and I was so confused.

I expected you to come back.
What I didn't expect was to lose you.

I had lost my best friend.

I was left in the dark, just blue.
But I'm here today, because of love.

The love that came and still comes from my time spent
with you.

LOGAN PATRICK GREEAR,

GRADE 12

Mimi's Fresh Apple Cake

I remember mother telling us stories of Mimi's famous Fresh Apple Cake. To this day when the name is mentioned, anyone who ever tasted it, gets a certain look on their face, as though they are reminiscing of the last time they bit into the sweet, spongey, savory cake. She learned the recipe while her, my mother, uncle, and grandfather were living in California. The delicious dessert made a fabulous first impression and, despite the time it took to make, stuck around for every family event to follow. It has been several years since our family has tasted the Fresh Apple Cake. I guess we are all unsure if we would be able to fix it just right, the way Mimi used to.



KATELYN HALL, GRADE 12

Letter Opener

It sits in the window seal
waiting to be used for its only purpose

The letter opener that is used to open letters addressed to the little brick house on the hill.

Through the years, it has been used to open the sweetest words
but also the words that are left better unsaid.

It holds my first and only memory of a loved one
telling me there's no other way to open things sealed

It holds the words of children arguing over whose turn it was to open junk mail
because sometimes junk can bring the most joy

But most of all, that little letter opener holds the memory that sometimes we need help,
even if it's as simple as opening a letter.

ELIZA JOHNSON, GRADE 12

Two-Voice Poem

Mom

I'm pretty sure you had to be there earlier than me

Or did we go together?

Both of our families went.

By this day.

Do you remember if it was the first day
of reporting?

What day was it?

Are you sure about that? I thought it was the 11th.

By the day that he left, I had to be strong and not
show emotions.

I think that's when you were coming back.

I didn't expect a full-blown deployment
I was blindsided.
You realized more than I did.

I figured you would after 9/11
Remember what fell out of the trucks as you
pulled out?

It was toilet paper.
I remember the whole town that came out

There was a website for his transportation
unit. I found an amazing picture of us
holding hands

Dad

Probably not.

February 10.

I don't remember it

Didn't the kids have a little sign
that they were holding up?

It was just a sad day because we
didn't know if we were going to
see our family again.

I figured you would after 9/11.

It was toilet paper.
I remember the whole town
coming out. It was a great
showing of patriotism by the
community

I remember when we got to
Kuwait and snuck into the British
computer room and tried to send
emails. I remember not knowing
how to send an email

ERIK JONES, GRADE 12

My Special Object

Cocoa
Beans, plants, butter, and a beach
Many definitions, but not the meaning to me
The name of my small, black dog
Not real in life, but real in my heart
The stuffed animal that meant the most to me
I brought him everywhere
And he brought me happiness
I broke my arm early on
I put a blue piece of paper on his arm so he could have a blue cast, too
We did everything together
He was my best friend
As I got older, he grew distant
I needed something new to help me through the years
A small, black Yorkie poo
Looks just like Cocoa, but named Cosby
My new best friend, but Cocoa will always be my first



JOHN ROBERT KILGORE, GRADE 12

Where I Found True Love

Bricks of different colors point to where the car flew into the holy building
A sinkhole in the parking lot, continuously appearing
Remaining the center of many children's tall tales
Rooms painted in colors as bright as the children that filled them
Playful art covered the walls
Designs I thought could only be drawn by the best artist in the world, my dad (and were!)
Deep purple, carpeted stairs thundering as teenagers bounded up them every Sunday
Leading to what I once thought was a "forbidden room"
Banisters that my small hands clinged to while I sang louder than I should in the choir
My poor posture and lack of respect giving my mother gray hair
An oversized bathtub, washing away sins and the past using three words:
The Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit
Pews where God saved my mom, dad, sister, and me
New chapters for my family
No longer clinging to empty promises of the world
Worn out wood on the sign outside
New wood where the pastor's name sits
A place of many memories and open hearts

The church I will forever be grateful to
For now, I am with God
For forever, I am truly loved

KAILEY KYLE, GRADE 12

Deborah Diane Greene

My Mamaw Greene is one of the strongest individuals I have ever known. She has been through the wringer. She's gone through divorce and became a single mom; she lived through poverty, barely being able to feed her kids; she lost her second husband, mother, and grandson to cancer, and her father to old age all in a span of five years. But she has still conquered. These are just a few stories and pieces of advice she gave me when interviewing her for this project.

"I've always tried to be kind to people and do the right thing. I think I've been good to people. Now I made mistakes with them (my mom and uncle), I did. But I made sure nobody was mean to 'em. I think raising your mommy and David, just us three, created a bond that I don't think they would've had if he (my grandfather who she divorced) stayed. It was rough raisin' them. I had no money, barely enough to feed 'em. I would go to bed crying because I had nothing to give 'em. Little did I know, the things I did were remembered by them and even their friends. I used to do things with 'em that didn't cost no money. We would have picnics when it was sunny, and when it snowed we would go out and build us a snowman and build us a fire and go sled ridin'. When we went in, I told 'em to put their wet clothes in the tub and I made 'em hot chocolate and toast. I couldn't afford potato chips, so I made 'em homemade. Their friends at school would always ask 'em if they could have some tater chips. I'd go through hell and high waters for you. You all (my brother and me) are my babies too. You are very precious to me, and I am extremely proud of you. You all are worth the hurt. I don't think I would go back and change anything because what I have now is too precious."

ELIZABETH MANN, GRADE 12

Learning to Live

Awaiting a prize
Before earning it
Claiming it without
Deserving it but always
Expecting it
Forgetting the
Good deeds like
Helping those
In need,
Jumping up first
Knowing my
Life may end.
My mistakes will haunt me
No one can save me
Only I can change me, yet
People have helped me
Quit the bad and
Resurrect the me I
So want to be.

They now trust me and
Understand me in this
Vast and wonderful world
Where I am myself,
eXciting, fun and
Young, living the
Zenith of my life.

JJ MARSHALL, GRADE 12

My Special Object

My special object may not seem too special, but yet it has a deeper meaning than others may see from looking at it. My special object is a Pura Vida bracelet made of nine maroon strings with two white ones twisted together that pull to close. Pura Vida makes this bracelet in partnership with the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network to donate 10% of net profits to advance research, support patients, and create hope for those affected by pancreatic cancer. I purchased mine after a very close family friend, who was more like a grandfather to me, passed away from pancreatic cancer in July 2017.

James Wallace Yates, better known as "Jim", "Wally", or "Poppy", was an incredible person, as well as someone you could *always* have a conversation with. Poppy loved to hunt, fish, and do anything outdoors. He lived by the motto, "Hold'er wide open". He loved spending time with family and friends and had a Saturday night cookout almost every weekend he wasn't out of town. Poppy was always the life of the party. No person was ever a stranger to him. He loved to tell stories of all the crazy things he had done in his life, and we all wanted to hear another when he stopped telling that one. He always knew how to make you smile, and any room he was in was never silent. He always lived life to the fullest and traveled within and out of the country.

The news of him having cancer hit everyone very hard. We still had as many cookouts as possible and visited every chance we had. Poppy passed away on July 30, 2017 at the young age of 60. Poppy had accomplished many things and seen many heights that most people don't get to experience in their lifetime. He was taken away too early, but we all know he is celebrating his life in Heaven. I wear my bracelet every day, as it gives me a reminder when I look down to always push myself and go after every dream I have. I hope Poppy is looking down from Heaven smiling knowing what a huge impact he made on not only my life, but the lives of so many others around him.

MADILYN POWERS, GRADE 12

Where I'm From

I am from handmade quilts
From Peter Pan peanut butter and Mayfield milk
I am from the red brick house on High Point
Simple, Inviting, Home is where the heart is
I am from the apple trees in my Papps' backyard
Green and juicy; I never liked them.
I am from church on Sunday, and blue eyes
From Ricky and Denise
I am from the yearly beach trips, and summer days at my grandparents' pool
From "water makes you pretty" and "you'll always be my girl"
I'm from the golf cart at my Mammy and Pappa's house; counting down the days until I
was 10 so I could drive it

I'm from SWVA
Fudge and chicken n' dumplings
From my grandfather's gold teeth my Mammy threw away
The countless trips to Hungry Mother state park
I am from the memories that lie in the pie safe in our living room; without them I'd be lost.

SELENA MICHELLE POWERS, GRADE 12

The Chair

On Christmas day, my mom, sister, and I visited my grandparents to give them their gifts. While we were there, my grandmother sat in the brown, leather recliner and dangled her short legs and tiny feet over the arms of the chair. She has always had gray hair and a short stature, as long as I can remember, which was always followed with an overjoyous smile. I have never been taller than my grandmother, but she has gotten shorter in these previous years. In past years, she has suffered from Alzheimers so she has worn a puzzled look on her face because she doesn't remember many things, including me. That day was just like any other holiday; going to see my family, grandparents, exchanging gifts, and then enjoying dinner. Except it was anything but the usual. On Christmas day, she devoted her entire attention to the movie that was on the television and did not listen to what was going on. In the midst of talking about the news and how everyone was, my grandmother called out my name. She knew who I was *and* my name. After I replied, her face had the biggest smile and she had an expression of familiarity. To me, this Christmas was not about the presents I had received, but the way my grandmother knew me. I realized that small things are what make life meaningful. That is the greatest gift of all.

NATALIE RHODES, GRADE 12

Making the Cut

When I was a baby, I entertained myself by looking through any sort of drawer or cabinet in my grandparents' house. Between toxic chemicals and dangerous objects, there were many ways this could go horribly wrong. In an effort to restrict my access to these hazards, my grandmother invested in childproof locks for the drawers and cabinets. She didn't want to suppress my curiosity and she believed that I could now explore without being a danger to myself or others. Naturally, she was horrified when she discovered that I had gotten my hands on a large kitchen knife. She quickly took the knife away and my grandfather put it on top of the highest cabinet. She didn't tell my mother about the ordeal until several years later.

This event only served as foreshadowing for what would happen later. When I was a few years older, my grandmother decided to give me a small pair of scissors to add to my art and craft supplies. They immediately became my new favorite toy. At first, I only used them the way they were intended to be used. I used them

to cut paper and other things I needed to cut to make my crafts. I eventually became bored of this, however, and began looking for other things to cut. At some point, I learned I could use them to carve pictures into a piece of wood and other surfaces. One day, inspiration struck and I proceeded to create my newest masterpiece by carving a crude drawing of a train



into a wooden table in her bedroom. Unfortunately, neither my grandmother nor my parents was impressed. In fact, they were so disgusted with my work, that they told me I was not allowed to play with my scissors unless I asked to use them and told my grandmother what I was going to use them for.

Eventually, Christmas came, and we celebrated Christmas Eve at my grandmother's house. When I opened my present from her, I was disappointed that I didn't get the machete I had been asking for. I did, however, get the next best thing: a magic set. It was only fitting that after learning how to perform the tricks, I return to her house and give her a show. When I was ready to begin, I insisted that I needed my scissors to perform a trick. My grandmother reluctantly gave them to me and, before she realized what was happening, I was cutting a blanket from her bed in half in an effort to replicate a trick performed by the Great Houdini. I realized, to my dismay, that the blanket wouldn't be the only thing cut short that night. My parents put an abrupt end to my show and confiscated my scissors. I knew I had messed up and that I would never be allowed to touch a pair of scissors again. I was forced to watch as my scissors were abandoned on top of my grandmother's refrigerator where I couldn't reach them.

After the night of my magic show, I began coming up with a plan on how to retrieve my scissors. The next time I went to my grandmother's house, I waited until she stepped out of the room, and ran to the kitchen where I stood on a chair and just managed to reach my scissors. My grandmother heard what I was doing and came to confront me, but I ran and hid in the bathroom where she couldn't take my scissors. I waited in the bathroom trying to think of a way to convince her to let me keep them. I stared at myself in the mirror and tried to come up with a plan to show that I was responsible enough to keep them. My parents were furious when they arrived and learned that I had gotten my scissors back. They were prepared to take the door off of its hinges if I didn't come out and surrender my scissors. This wasn't necessary, though, as I was eager to come out of the bathroom and show off my new haircut! My parents were so impressed that they forgot about the scissors and were left speechless. They didn't want other kids to become jealous, of course, and the next day, they took me to get my haircut back to normal before anyone else could see it.

Because I was responsible after that day, I never used my scissors in an irresponsible way again. A few years ago, I was at my grandmother's house helping her clean her kitchen. I was on a stepladder cleaning the top of the highest cabinet when, to my surprise, I found a large knife. I descended the ladder with the knife. I couldn't wait to put it to good use . . .

DANIEL ROSE, GRADE 12

The Drawer

This drawer

Holds the memories of my childhood.

The different sizes of clothes that have been outgrown over the years.

The different sports that have helped me build confidence.

The crack me and my brother put there there

Of course I won.

This drawer has seen eighteen years of my life.

This draw holds the key to my past, present, and future.

This drawer in the house

The house that has raised a family and is now onto the next.

The house that has stood the test of time.

The place where I met my grandparents.

The place where I learned about respect.

I have learned so many different life lessons in this place.

This is not just a house

This is the place I call my second home.

TYLER SANDERS, GRADE 12

*Money to Burn
A Two-Voice Poem*

Kim

We had gone to Disney

I took Victoria and Polly,
and Mike had you.

We had a great day,
I don't know about your dad though.

We left and as we were on the tram it
Started to rain

He kept telling me, "I told you! I told you!"
As soon as he said that though a gush
Of water came off the top of the tram and into
Mike's pants pocket.

His whole wallet was drenched!

Mike asked me if it was okay to put his wallet
In the microwave to dry it out
I thought he just meant the wallet.

It caught on fire!!!
After that, we always say that Mike has
Money to burn.

Mike

You were only three, I had to carry you,
EVERYWHERE!

You were awful, having to carry you
around in that place crowded full of
people.

Finally, we got out of the dreadful place.
I tried to tell Kim that it was about to
rain.

I looked at Kim and said I TOLD YOU!

I thought that I had lost every single bit
of cash that I had.

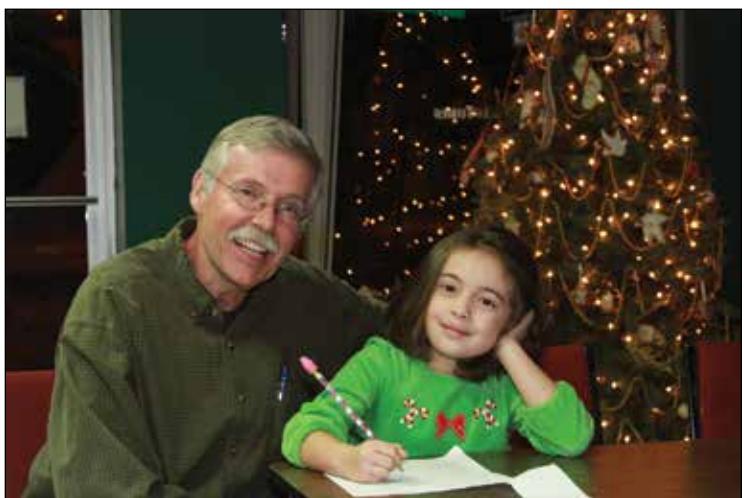
We got back to the hotel and I started
Stripping.
I had to dry off.

I put all of my wallet in the microwave to
dry it out.

It caught on fire!!!

AMEILA WRIGHT, GRADE 12

FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



My Christmas Memories

This Christmas I played in the backyard at my Mamaw's house. We ate pancakes with chocolate syrup. We played football in the daylight for a long time.

BRAYTON ADAMS, 2ND GRADE

If I were an Explorer

If I were an explorer I would go in the woods to see if I could find a unicorn. I would look for a trail of glitter to lead me to the unicorn. When I find the unicorn I will name her Sparkles. I will play with Sparkles every day and keep her a secret so no one else could find her. I would love to be an explorer!

CELSIE AIKENS, 2ND GRADE

My Favorite Things in Second Grade

One of my favorite things in 2nd Grade is getting to use the Chromebooks. I like to play Prodigy during Math class. Another thing I love about 2nd grade is snack and movie time. I also love playing games in PE. Freeze Tag is my favorite game we play. I love 2nd Grade!

VINCENT ASHLEY, 2ND GRADE

My Favorite Holiday

My favorite holiday is Christmas. I love Christmas because I get presents and get to go with my whole family. Our family tradition is going out to eat at a Chinese restaurant on Christmas. We stay at our family's house in Ohio and play a lot of games. I love visiting family and spending Christmas with them.

CADYN BELL, 2ND GRADE

My Christmas Memories

This Christmas I went ice skating with my mommy. I stayed at my friend's house and she read a story to me. I loved this Christmas!

CECELIA BARNETTE, 2ND GRADE

My Christmas Memories

This Christmas was so awesome. I ate rolls and corn. It was the best day ever.

GABRIEL BAUMGARDNER, 2ND GRADE

Making Gingerbread Cookies and Houses

Gary L. Russell was born in 1957 in Pennington Gap, Virginia. He can remember making memories with his sister. His family by making gingerbread cookies. His favorite memory is making them with his grandmother. He didn't make gingerbread houses with his family. I hope someday I can make gingerbread memories with my family.

BRAYDEN BELLAMY, 2ND GRADE

Me

Raymond Bledsoe likes to play games on the X-Box
Always, we watch the ball drop on New Years
You know I was born in Virginia
My parents are Sam and John
One book I like is Lego World
Nuggets from chicken and apples are healthy food
Do you know I am happy

RAYMOND BLEDSOE, 2ND GRADE



My Favorite Things in Second Grade

Collyn Chasteen

My favorite part of 2nd Grade is getting Chromebooks. I love playing Prodigy on them. Another thing I love is recess. The swings and slide are my favorite. Math is my favorite subject because I like adding with regrouping. Second Grade is so much fun!

CAMERON BOGGS, 2ND GRADE

My Favorite Sport

My favorite sport is softball. I play for Lady Ice. I would really like to be a pitcher. I want to be the pitcher because they get the ball and lot and are really good. I love batting the most. I hit an in park homerun my first year of softball. I was really excited! I hope I can play college softball someday!

GRACIE CAUGHRON, 2ND GRADE

Always Remember

My mimi, Shelia D. Mann was born in 1965 in a small town in Virginia called Pennington Gap. She can remember making memories with her family at Christmas. One thing she wants me to always remember about Christmas is, Christmas is not about presents it's about Jesus' gift to us. I love this one thing my Mimi wants me to remember.

CARDER CHASTEEN, 2ND GRADE

Making Gingerbread Cookies

My mimi, Shelia D. Mann was born in 1965 in Pennington Gap, Virginia. She can remember making memories with her family by making gingerbread cookies. Her favorite memory is helping mix batter and cutting them out. After the cookies baked her family would decorate them. I hope someday I can make memories of making gingerbread cookies.

COLLYN CHASTEEN, 2ND GRADE *Carder Chasteen*



Zach's Poem

Z: I love living in Zany Lee County.
A: I live in the Appalachian Mountains.
C: This is coal country.
H: Home is where I am happiest, Lee County, Virginia.

ZACHARY CODY, 2ND GRADE

Vacation at the Beach

My favorite vacation is going to the beach. I like to build sand castles and look for jellyfish. I also like fishing with my dad while I am there. We always play volleyball and ride jet skis too. I always go to the beach during the summer while I am at my dad's in Texas. I love the beach!

HUNTER COWAN, 2ND GRADE

My Poem

Audrian Lena Clifton is my name.
Until this year, when I saw *Miss Nelson is Missing*, I had never seen a play
Do you know I like crawfish pizza
Reading Cat in the Hat is fun
I was born in Norton
At Christmas I go to "Lights in the Park"
Norton is in Virginia
At Christmas I go on a hayride

AUDRIANA CLIFTON, 2ND GRADE

I Am

Chris is short for Christopher
Has lots of family
Rockhouse Baptist Church is where I go on Sunday
I was born on January 14
Sandwiches made with bologna are my favorite

CHRIS COLLINS, 2ND GRADE

Evan Explores a Cave

I explored a cave with bats. The bats swooped down and tried to get me. When I ran from the bats, I found a bag of diamonds. When I picked up the bag, the bats came after me and I ran out of the cave! I slipped and fell in a hole of water. Down in the hole I found three more caves. They were all full of diamonds! I mined all the diamonds and took them home with me!

EVAN COLLINS, 2ND GRADE



Karsyn Coomer

Christmas Memories

My grandfather, Kenneth D. Collins was born in 1954 in Lee County, Virginia. He can remember making memories with his four sisters and three brothers. His favorite memory about Christmas is sitting on Santa's lap and taking pictures. I hope someday I can make memories like this with my family.

JAYDEN COLLINS, 2ND GRADE

Christmas Memories

My grandmother, Nancy M. Garrett was born in 1956 in Dayton, Ohio. She can remember making memories with one brother and one sister. Her favorite thing for me to remember about Christmas is that Christmas is about celebrating Jesus' birth. I'm already making memories with my family and I hope someday I can make more.

KARSHY COOMER, 2ND GRADE

My Christmas Memories

This Christmas I woke up at 2:00. I woke up my mom and we ate. I went to my dad's where we did a scavenger hunt. We played games, and finally we opened presents. We opened our presents with oven mitts on. I got a unicorn themed stocking. I went to my Nan's. She gave me 11 dollars, that made me 13 dollars. I also got 4 dollars, 1 dollar, and 10 cents. I had a lot of fun at Christmas this year.

JASMINE COWDEN, 2ND GRADE

Summertime

In the summertime I like to go swimming. My friends always take me to Thomas Walker Pool. Sometimes I get to go play at the park. I like to play with the other kids who are there. The swings are my favorite. Summertime is my favorite!

ARIANNA FLORES, 2ND GRADE

My Christmas Memories

This Christmas I played my Xbox One. I ate pizza, played in the snow and ziplined. We ate pizza at Pizza Plus. It was a good day.

AIDYN GARRETT, 2ND GRADE

Making Cookies

My great grandmother, Jean H. Slemp was born in 1925 in Jonesville, Virginia. She can remember making memories with her family by making cookies. Her favorite memory is making plain sugar cookies. They were



Emmy Garrett

nothing fancy, but she would share with her sister. It was a treat to make cookies. I hope someday I can make this memory with my family.

EMMY GARRETT, 2ND GRADE

My Favorite Sport

My favorite sport is volleyball. I like to play volleyball in my yard with my brother. I try to teach him how to play. My brother always hits the ball over the net. I love playing volleyball with my brother.

ZOE GIBSON, 2ND GRADE

Snow Days

I love when it snows and we don't have to go to school. I get to play outside and have fun in the snow. I play with my brother and sister. We always go sledding down big hills. We love to eat snow cream. Playing in the snow is one of our favorite things!

SHARPEI HELBERT, 2ND GRADE



Bentlie Jaynes

My Christmas Memories

This Christmas I played on my phone at my mom's. I ate pizza.

AIDEN HINES, 2ND GRADE

Christmas Memories

My mamaw, Missy G. Jaynes was born in 1947 in Pennington Gap, Virginia. She can remember making memories with her family. Her favorite thing for me to remember about Christmas is being thankful. I hope I can continue to make lots of memories with my family.

BENTLIE JAYNES, 2ND GRADE

My Christmas Memories

This Christmas I ate at my mom's house. I played with Offie and we played Nerf guns.

ASHTON JOHNSON, 2ND GRADE

My Favorite Holiday

Christmas is my favorite holiday because it is Jesus's birthday. I like to pick out presents to get for my family. I like opening presents too. I love Christmas!

KAIRI JOHNSON, 2ND GRADE

My Favorite Things about 2nd Grade

My favorite part of 2nd Grade is learning! Recess is so much fun. The swings are my favorite. I like to play with Kairi. I also love PE. Freeze Dance is my favorite game we play. I wish I could stay in 2nd Grade forever!

LACOLE LAWSON, 2ND GRADE

My Christmas Memories

This Christmas I went to my step-daddy's Nanny's house. We opened presents. We then ate chicken and dumplings, green beans, mashed potatoes, deviled eggs, and black-eye peas. On Christmas Eve, I went to my mimi's house. We opened presents, then we ate robbin rolls, punch, and eggnog.

BRAELYN LEWIS, 2ND GRADE

My Christmas Memories

This Christmas I spent time with my family. I went to my dad's house, my mom's house, and my mamaw's house. I played games, watched tv, and listened to music. I had fun with my family and my baby brother too.

BRYCE MARCUM, 2ND GRADE

My Christmas Memories

This Christmas I played with my new toys. I got a Five Nights at Freddy's action figure and a Hulk action figure. My family and I watched a movie.

KADANCE MARCUM, 2ND GRADE

If I were an Explorer

If I were an explorer I would go to a safari. While I am on the safari I will try to pet the animals. My favorite is giraffes. They are my favorite because they are tall and pretty. I hope I really get to explore because I would love to see giraffes in the wild.

ABIGAIL MARSHALL, 2ND GRADE

My Christmas Memories

This Christmas I got a four wheeler. I rode it at my mamaw's house. After I rode it, I went to Lights in the Park. I roasted marshmallows at the park.

LILLY MARTIN, 2ND GRADE

Aaron's Acrostic

Aaron Maugh is my name
And all Super Hero books are my favorite
Reading Magic Treehouse books is fun
October 7, 2010 is my birthday
Nighttime is fun for playing on my tablet and with legos
My grandparents are Annita and Phil

AARON MAUGH, 2ND GRADE

My Christmas Memories

This Christmas I went to my Uncle Jacky's. We had a dinner. We opened presents. My favorite thing was a worm farm. From Santa I got a fishing rod. I loved it. It was a cat fishing rod. I got a zipline too.

JACKSON MUNCY, 2ND GRADE



Hudson Neff

My aunt, Gayle Neff was born in 1945 in Lee County, Virginia. She can remember making Christmas memories by making gingerbread cookies. Her favorite memory is going to her grandma's and I made gingerbread cookies. I want to someday make Christmas memories of my cookies with my family.

HUDSON NEFF, 2ND GRADE

My Favorite Things in Second Grade

I love going to school every day. I like to work and see Ms. Ellis. Math is my favorite subject. Popcorn chicken is my favorite lunch because it is delicious. I really like 2nd Grade.

KIANNA NIMETY, 2ND GRADE

My Christmas Memories

This Christmas I went to my dad's house. We had fun. We went bowling and he came to our house. He brought his dog. Her name is Roxy. She is a pitbull. She has blue eyes, like me. She has floppy ears. I got a hoverboard and a phone. It was the best Christmas ever.

CONNOR PEARCE, 2ND GRADE



Hadlea Price

Christmas Memories

My mamaw, Janie Evans was born in 1961 in Ben Hur, Virginia. She can remember making memories with her family. Her favorite thing for me to remember about Christmas is that the real reason for Christmas is the birth of Jesus. I hope someday I can share this reason with my family.

COLTYN NEFF, 2ND GRADE

Making Gingerbread Cookies

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Christmas memories by making gingerbread cookies. Her favorite memory is going to her grandma's and I made gingerbread cookies. I want to someday make Christmas memories of my cookies with my family.

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CONNOR PEARCE, 2ND GRADE

My Favorite Things in Second Grade

My favorite thing in 2nd Grade is PE. I love when we play Freeze Dance. Exercising and running is fun too. My favorite lunch is popcorn chicken. It is so good. Math is my favorite subject because we get answer questions. I love 2nd Grade

JESSEE PENNINGTON, 2ND GRADE

One Thing About Christmas

My uncle, Allan A. Wilder was born in 1967 in Pennington Gap, Virginia. He can remember celebrating Christmas with one sister. His favorite thing for me to remember about Christmas is what the true meaning of Christmas really is. I hope someday I can make more memories with my family.

HADLEA PRICE, 2ND GRADE

Sweet Summertime

I love summertime because I get to swim. Taylor and I always dive off the deck into the pool. We always go to Bullitt Park to play at the splash pad. The water that dumps from the bucket is so cold. After the splash pad we always go to McDonalds to get Happy Meals. I love summertime with Taylor!

CAROLINE ROBBINS, 2ND GRADE

All About Me Acrostic

Walker Emmanuel Robbins
Ashley Robbins is my mom
Loves playing with trains
Keeps eating macaroni and cheese
Eats as a family
Raised in Jonesville, Virginia

WALKER ROBBINS, 2ND GRADE

I Am

Cloie Ann Rogers
Looking at and reading Costume Trunk is fun
One of four children
Interested in crafting and drawing

CLOI ROGERS, 2ND GRADE

My Favorite Parts of Second Grade

My favorite part of the day in 2nd Grade is Math class. I like it because it is fun. I love to run at PE. My favorite game during PE is Freeze Tag. I love 2nd Grade!

GABRIEL SANTOS, 2ND GRADE

My Christmas Memories

This Christmas I ate turkey, watermelon, and corn. We drank apple juice and milk. We played outside, and after that we played on the Xbox.

ARIANA SHELTON, 2ND GRADE

One Thing About Christmas

My grandfather, Rick Watson was born in 1958 in Richlands, Virginia. He can remember making memories with two sisters and one brother. His favorite thing for me to remember about Christmas is that the greatest gift came at Christmas in a manager. I hope to share this favorite thing about Christmas and make memories with my family.

SAXON SKIDMORE, 2ND GRADE

Christmas Memories

My papaw, Stuart C. Gibson was born in 1956 in Bell County, Kentucky. He can remember making memories with his one sister. His favorite thing for me to remember about Christmas is enjoy time with your family. I hope someday I can tell others about my memories with my family.

DOROTHY SMITH, 2ND GRADE

My Christmas Memories

This Christmas my Mom and I played. We ate goodies and played and had fun. I got some pencils, a notebook, and a four wheeler for Christmas.

CADEN SPURLOCK, 2ND GRADE

My Christmas Memories

This Christmas I went to my aunt's house and ate. I opened presents and played with my cousin. My mom and dad got a Monopoly game for me. My aunt got a baby doll for me. I also got 3 pounds of slime from my sissy and my brother. My sissy and my cousin were in Kentucky. They came after Christmas was



over. I went to my sissy Toshia's and I opened presents and stayed all night.

SIERRA TURNER, 2ND GRADE

My Favorite Holiday

Easter is my favorite holiday. I like it because it is close to my birthday. I always get a lot of candy and get to hunt Easter eggs. I enjoy spending time with all of my family at Easter. Every year I can't wait for Easter time to come!

EVA ZAMORA, 2ND GRADE

Flatwoods Elementary School Fourth Grade

Carly's Poem

C: I am learning about my new county, Lee County.

A: I can see the Appalachian Mountains from my house.

R: I have seen the Powell River.

L: I am excited to Live in Lee County, Virginia.

Y: I look forward to many years living here.

CARLY AIKENS, GRADE 4

The Shadow

Once upon a time there was a red and gold rose. As soon as I picked the rose out of the large bush, there was a big hole in the bush. It was clear day and the air was still, when suddenly a cool breeze moved my hair in the wind. Then I saw a tall, dark, and grayish black SHADOW go by quickly, but not quickly enough for me to hear the breeze fly past the trees. Then I smelled a rich sweet smell, and the air felt soft and warm as if it was trying to lure me into its trap. I knew better. I finally got home, and I locked all the doors, windows, and everything. I called my friends and they came over. I told them what had happened. That's when things got worse. My friend had the same dream, well she thought she was dreaming. I had thought it was a dream, and I was right. I woke up that morning bawling my eyes out. That's when I knew it was all over. It was all a dream.

KAMRIN ALLEN, GRADE 4

Scots Irish

Alex Long was wearing a Scottish kilt when he came to our school to tell us about the Scots-Irish. The kilt was green, red, and blue. He talked about castles in Loch Lamond. He talked about the highlands and about highland sheep and highland cows. There are no snakes. He said that in Scotland there was a Loch Ness monster, but he never saw one. I thought the presentation was fantastic!

AARON ARNOLD, GRADE 4

Candle Making

We made candles last Tuesday. We waxed them and got to dip them in ice. Mrs. Sexton, Mrs. Goforth, and students helped us. In the old days, they did not have light so they made candles for light. They did not have to go to the store. Some students got to help others and it was very fun.

AIDEN BATES, GRADE 4



Candle Making

I made a candle like back then. This is how we did it. We melted the wax at a very hot temperature. It was messy. You have to be careful or you might get burned. Be very careful. Making candles was fun to do with my classmates.

AUSTIN BLANKEN, GRADE 4

My Favorite Place

My favorite place to be is Florida. I like to look at the beautiful view of the beach. The ocean water is beautiful in Florida. I like to be on a boat to go fishing. Being in Florida makes me feel wonderful!

KYRIE BLOOMER, GRADE 4

Old Time School Rules and Penmanship

Back in the 1800s, rules were very strict. If you cursed you get expelled. Obviously, I wouldn't want that to happen to me. Anyway, in the 1700's rules were just plain awful. Unlike today if you lied you get in trouble but back then you get expelled.

In the library, Mrs. Long taught us some rules that were in the 1700's. She even dressed up like a school teacher from the 1700's! We had to write down the rules and bible lessons use a quill feather dipped in ink as our pen!

Those rules were:

Spilling the ink, you get in trouble
Getting out of line, you get in trouble
Not getting your homework done, in trouble and even more!
Nowadays these rules aren't as bad.

Back then, you didn't have pencils or pens to write with, you had quills! What are quills you ask? They are old time pens and, they had ink in them. There were feathers with a tip on the end. They had inkwells to hold ink. Nowadays, we have pens and pencils.

AIDEN BROWN, GRADE 4

The Mermaids and the Wizard

Once upon of time in the Kingdom of Mermaid Land there were four sparkly mermaids who were very artistic. Their names were Kamrin, Kenlee, Briana, and Kaylin. Kamrin, Briana, and Kenlee loved to draw and paint. Kaylin loved to draw and paint too, but she was jealous because she thought the other mermaids had really beautiful paintings. She had pretty drawings too, but she didn't think so.

One day Mermaid Kaylin swam to visit the wizard of Mermaid Land and asked the wizard to put a spell on her to make her a good artist. She swam to back to her bedroom in the kingdom and started painting on every piece of paper she found. The spell worked! Her sisters were mad at her for letting the wizard put a spell on her, because they know he is evil. They all went back to the wizard and ask him to reverse the spell on Kaylin. He didn't reverse the spell since he was evil, so Kaylin stayed the best artist for the rest of her life and the other mermaids were good artists, too.

BRIANA BURCH, GRADE 4



Appalachia Acrostic

Appalachia
Plateau high and flat
People work, sing and dance
Apples red, green and yellow
In beautiful houses
As beautiful as ever
Coal for heat, light
Horses are fun to ride
Ice cubes in hot summer
Apple juice sweet and good

DAKOTA BURGAN, GRADE 4

Once Upon a Time

Once upon a time there was a girl in a pink dress with an oval diamond in the center of the waist. She was a tiny girl and was popping popcorn for her mother. They were going to take the popcorn to a movie. The popcorn was sweet, fresh, very soft, and very hot. It was so hot that she could not taste it. She had to

wait. They took the popcorn with them in a basket. Finally, by the time they got to the movie, they could eat it. She and her mom loved the popcorn so much that they ate it all. They were so sad that they could not eat any more because it was gone.

The girl happen to rub the oval diamond on her pink dress and suddenly the popcorn started popping in the basket and it filled the basket with sweet, soft, very fresh, and hot popcorn again! So every time she wanted popcorn all she had to do was rub that diamond on her waist!

EMILY CARTER, GRADE 4

The Dragon

Once upon a time a tall dragon was towering above the village. All of the villagers were screaming at the dragon! The dragon had razor sharp teeth, and he could tear meat. He could disintegrate a whole crowd in seconds with its fiery breath! The fire was so hot it could destroy everything in its path. He wanted food, so he did not leave because he wanted more. The villagers said, "No, we will not give you more food!" Then the dragon got so aggravated that he attacked with his fiery breath, he destroyed half of the village, and then he stormed off. The villagers were so relieved when he left.

DAKOTA COLLINS, GRADE 4

Scots Irish Presentation

My class and I went to a Scots Irish presentation with Mr. Alex Long who is an English teacher at Lee High School. I learned that the Scots Irish have a very different life style. They have very different clothing. Ever since he went to Scotland and Ireland he has been getting some clothing from there. When he came to school, Mr. Long was wearing a kilt. It looked like a skirt, but he said it was different. He also had a pair of bagpipes.

Ireland doesn't have air condition. That's crazy! I didn't know there are no bugs in Ireland! It's crazy that there's no reptiles in Ireland! Ireland has a lot of rocks. They have different language too.

I also learned that Ireland has castles. I also didn't know that there is a statue of the Loch Ness monster in what they call Loch Ness lake. I learned a lot at the Scots Irish presentation with Mr. Long.

KYLE COLLINS, GRADE 4

Old-Timey School Rules

One day we were learning about old-timey school rules. We were in Mrs. Long's library and she had on an old-timey school marm brown and white dress that was very long. She was wearing a white cap with ruffles on her head. The girls back then would not be wearing the clothes like girls wear now-a-days, since they had to wear dresses all the time. They would often wear a black and white dress.

She told us how to come into the old-timey school house. Girls had to come inside the schoolhouse first. Also, the boys had to come into schoolhouse after the girls and take off their hats, if necessary. If not, they would be punished. Both boys and girls would be punished by being hit with something that looked like a switch. It sounded like a really hard time back then. Also, I'm glad that we don't have to wear that kind of clothes any more.

HALEE COX, GRADE 4

Candle Making

All the 4th grade kids at my school learned how to make candles like they had back in the Colonial days. You need a wick, clothespin, and candle wax. First, you clip the clothespin to the wick. You dip the wick in the water and then in the wax. You keep dipping until the candle looks like you want it to. You have two candles

hanging from one string. I took mine home and cut the string apart. I put one down in a candle jar that I used to have a candle in. My mom lit the wick. I turned the lights off and then watched it for a few minutes until it burned down too low, then I used my other candle. It was fun to watch.

CLARK CRETORS, GRADE 4

My Favorite Place

My favorite place to be is Charlie's house. We swam in his pool. We played with his cat "Tiger". We played games and laughed! I also got to spend a night there. It was the best day ever!

When I was in the pool I learned how to swim and then I learned that if I relax then I would float in the pool. Charlie's father Wes taught me how to swim.

We swung on the great vines near the creek and whoever fell in the creek had to go without dinner and that was fun! It was a tie and that reminded me about a story my mom told me. When she also swung on great vines over a cliff and her brother Junior cut the vine. Mom fell into the water. Her brother said, "If you don't swim to me you will go without dinner."

I went back home, but when I got back my bunny was dead. I was so sad I cried for an hour, but then soon I realized that life was fleeting and you got to make the most of it.

HUNTER DAVIS, GRADE 4

The Tiny Cricket

Once upon a time there was a tiny cricket. It was the happiest cricket in the world. He was eating a cracker and met a huge human in a purple dress. The cricket started hopping so fast away from the human because he was afraid. The human was a little bit slower than the cricket, so he got away. When the cricket got home he finish eating his cracker.

ISABELLA DRUMMOND, GRADE 4

The Bad Witch

Once upon a time a witch ate something sweet. She hates sweet stuff, so she hated this, too! One day she saw a gold piece of candy on the ground. As soon as she touched it, she disappeared and went into another world. It was scary because she could not get out.

So while she was in the other world, she was never seen or heard from back home. Then one day, she saw that same gold piece of candy on the ground again. She touched the candy and suddenly, she came back to her world! She was sure she never was going to touch any gold piece of candy again!

One day the gold candy came back in her house, so she got scared. She didn't touch it though. Suddenly the candy turned into a golden colored dog! So then the witch made it her pet and named her Dumpling because she loved dumplings. They had a good life with each other, and never had problems again. They never ever ate any gold candy!

TAYLOR EDWARDS, GRADE 4

My Favorite Thing to Do

My favorite thing to do at home is play with Legos or practice playing my guitar. I play my Xbox One s. On my Xbox, I play rainbow Six Siege and Fortnite Battle Royal. In Fortnite I have over thirty skins and I have only two wins. I also play Mudrunners and it's so much fun because you can go logging and all kinds of stuff. Another one of my favorite things to do is ride my dirt bike and shoot my B B guns at targets.

When it snows, I like to ride my snowboard. I play with Nerf guns with my brother, play in my sandbox, play outside, or I go to Mason's and play with Tucker. When I go to Simon's house there are many things to do. The big thing that is my favorite is fishing. I have a ton of lures. My nana takes me to the river and I get to fish awhile. I love fishing!

COLBY ELDRIDGE, GRADE 4

Candlemaking

My class did candle making on Tuesday. We had to use wax, water, and string. What we did was pretty easy but sometimes hard. First, get some string. Next, put in the water. Then, put in wax. The candles were skinny and the string (wick) was connected, so we put a clip on the wick and held it when we dipped the candle in the hot water and then in the wax. We did that over and over again for about 15 minutes. Last, we rolled it until it was smooth. I really, really loved making candles.

JAYDEN ELY, GRADE 4

My Friend Kylee

My friend Kylee has been in my classes for three years. Her bubbly personality and the fact that she is really friendly is what makes me like her so much.

Kylee is very tall and has long dark brown hair. It has gold strands of hair all over that are kind of shimmering. She has big chocolaty brown eyes that make me feel happy when she looks at me.

Fresh lavender used to be her favorite smell, but now it is strawberry. Her favorite candy is hollow chocolate bunnies. I love that candy as well. Her favorite color is clear, that's why she likes the hollow bunnies. There's no color inside them, because they're empty and it feels weird because there's nothing inside when you bite into it! Kylee is a really good friend. When I need her, she's always there for me, and I will do the same for her.

KAYLENA FOSTER, GRADE 4

Old Time Clothing

Mrs. Riggs taught us about old time clothing from the Revolutionary War days. The old time people wore lots of layers of clothing to keep warm. The women wore an undershirt and two underskirts under their dress. On the top of their underskirts they wore a long dress that was puffed out. They wore white bonnets with lace on their heads. They wore two jackets. One jacket looked like Red Riding hood's jacket. I thought the clothes were very pretty. The men had pants and a tie with a shirt that had stripes. They wore an undershirt. Their undershirt was their pajamas. They wore a jacket over their shirt. Mrs. Riggs presentation was very interesting.

SAMANTHA GALE, GRADE 4

Shiny Gold Coin

Once upon a time there was a shiny gold coin that was worth \$200. It was short and wide. It flew into space and landed on the moon.

Shortly after it landed on the moon, astronauts found it and kept it. They took it to their ship and put it in a drawer. The shiny gold coin suddenly started sizzling very loudly! Then it broke! The astronauts threw it in the trash. Somehow the coin stuck together again.

Some man found it on the ground when the spaceship came back to earth. They kept it too. 35 years later, he still has it.

IAN GRACE, GRADE 4

My Mamaw's and Papaw's House

My favorite place to be is Mamaw's and Papaw's house. I like helping my papaw feed all the animals in the barn down below his house. I like helping Mamaw cook and fold clothes. Sometimes we cook deer meat in a little silver pot on her stove. Mamaw has two clotheslines in her backyard and we hang the clothes up with clothespins. We wait until they dry, then we take them off the line and put them in a white basket. Then we take the clothes in and fold the clothes and place them on her brown couch. I like going to my mamaw's and papaw's house because I love them. They make me happy.

PRESLEY HAMMONDS, GRADE 4

Scots-Irish and How They Lived in Castles

It is very interesting to learn a lot about the Scot-Irish and how they lived in castles. Not everybody got to live in a castle. They have a lot of kings. They built the roads to flow with the land. They do not have mosquitoes. They do not have many trees. Some buildings are over 100 years old and they are built in layers. They have small alleys between the buildings. They have very few things made of wood. I would really like to learn more about Scotland. I loved it.

KRISTEN HARVEY, GRADE 4

One, Two, Three, Slime!

Once upon a time I loved to make slime! So one day, I decided to start teaching a class on how to make it! I had five people in it. Their names were Molly, Bailey, Izzy, Karley, and Lynn. Each week, every one made a different kind of slime. Here are the types of slime they made the first week.

Molly made fluffy slime, Bailey made teal colored slime, Izzy made pink strawberry scented slime, Karley made clear slime, and Lynn made glitter slime! The class was one day a week for two months!

Here are the steps to make each different kind of slime! Molly made her slime with one cup of white Elmer's glue, pink food coloring, shaving cream, and Elmer's magic liquid! Bailey's slime was different because she made it with one cup of Elmer's glue, teal food coloring, and Elmer's magic liquid. Izzy made strawberry scented slime with one cup of Elmer's glue, strawberry scent, and Elmer's magic liquid! Karley made her slime with one cup of clear Elmer's glue and Elmer's magic liquid! Lynn made her slime with one cup of Elmer's glue, a half cup of glitter, and Elmer's magic liquid!

On the last day of class they mixed all of the slime together from the first day of class. It suddenly turned a bright metallic gold! I wonder if it will have some magical powers! It made the best slime I had ever seen!

ALEXANDRA HINES, GRADE 4

Old Time School Rules

A long time ago you had to come into school in a specific way. You wrote with feathers with ink. If you disobey a rule you would get wacked with a stick, get sent somewhere, get suspended, you have to stay an hour after school, or go to the coldest part of the classroom. You had to write in cursive and write your name in a specific way.

JAYDEN INGLE, GRADE 4

Colonial Era Clothing

People in colonial times dressed differently than we do today. People in colonial times did not have buttons or elastic. They used pins! They had detachable sleeves. They had to wear shift gowns to bed. They had

to make their own soap. Boiling water was used to wash their outfits. I can't believe they had hats, plus they had aprons that can fold up and down. If they had a dirty apron, they could just fold up the dirty part! I liked learning about colonial clothing.

HARLEY ISLEY, GRADE 4

The Funny Yellow Dog

Once upon a dog time, a spicy taco was eaten by a rich yellow dog. The dog had small pink ears with a glossy fat yellow body. He was an English bulldog and his name was Booker. He was so fun to play with. He loved ham and spicy tacos. He loved to take naps. He had so many toys and he loved food so much he would die for food. He loved to play in mud and water so much, and was so funny.

This is really my dog, and I still have him. He is really brown and white. I just made the first part of the story up! I love to say, "Booker come get cheese!" He really loves cheese. I love to see him to run and play. He loves me so much and I love him too. I think he is so sweet. DID I TELL YOU HE LOVES FOOD!!!! Guess what, I LOVE FOOD TOO!!!! His sister, well that's me, has to feed him every day. I give him 2 1/2 cups of food, but he his should only get 2 cups. I love him and he loves me, too.

KYNLEE JOHNSON, GRADE 4

Sticky, Yummy Molasses

On November 20th we made molasses in Mrs. Carroll's class. She said you can use any kind of sugar cane to make molasses but Mrs. Carroll uses honey drip cane to make it. You make it like this: first you put the cane in the mill. Mrs. Carroll's daddy uses a tractor to power the mill. In colonial days they used horses to power the mill. I think eating yummy molasses is extremely fun.

ALLIE KETRON, GRADE 4

Making Butter

Our class used whipping cream to make butter. First we put it in little jars. Next we shook it. It took about five minutes to make. It was cool making butter. Our class ate popcorn with butter. Molasses with popcorn was very good, too.

KELLY KETRON, GRADE 4

Molasses

The molasses is very good to eat and is tasty. It is funny to my mouth and it smells like hot sauce. The people who make it for us work very hard to make the molasses. I think it is easy to make it. It does look easy to me.

SHANE KING, GRADE 4

The Spicy Hot Pepper

A man ate a spicy hot pepper. It was so hot that he turned colorless, and then he heard a crackle! He said, "What was that?"

Suddenly, he saw something on the table across the room. His vision was still blurry because of the pepper he just ate, so he really couldn't tell what it was. Then, he smelled something sour. His vision started to clear up. The thing on the table was a massive, tall, sizzling hot, delicious looking, round, golden, and fresh hot dog!

"No way," he said. "That is awesome! I need a drink of water!" he said. Finally his color started coming back and he didn't want to eat spicy hot peppers nor sour hot dogs again!

HUNTER LAMBERT, GRADE 4

Butter

I would like to make homemade butter with my family like Mrs. Carroll let us do at school. It was so good! At my house one day, I will ask my mom to make butter. We have to put whipping cream in a baby food jar. We will have to shake and shake until there is no more liquid in the jar. Then we can eat butter on my mom's cornbread, biscuit, and toast! So yummy!

EMILY LANGLEY, GRADE 4

Smart Dogs



Alex Long

My favorite animals are dogs. Dogs are smart and they have very clean mouths. They are very cuddly, sweet, and very cute. Dogs can be trained, but some dogs are very, very smart.

One time my step uncle Jason Woodard came over with his dog to get hay. He left the dog in the car with the keys in the car and the windows up. My uncles hopped in the white farm truck and drove to the old blue barn and got the hay. That old blue barn was the one that got torn apart in a tornado long ago.

Five minutes later they got back to the house to get a drink of water. Jason tried to get back in the car, but the doors were locked! The dog had locked the doors with his paws! Jason asked my cousin Chandler Woodard to get a crowbar and they pried the door open. The dog was fake sleeping so they wouldn't yell at him (but he got yelled at anyway). Jason drove home to his kids Kennedy, Cassidy, Emily, Jonathan, and Addie and told the whole funny story.

KAYLEE LAWSON, GRADE 4

In Touch With Scots-Irish Ancestry

Discovering a family's history and heritage is an exciting experience. Each person is unique in their own special way. However, few are fortunate enough to have a hands-on experience with their origins. Flatwoods Elementary students got to experience just that November 2018. Alex Long, an English teacher at nearby Lee High, provided to the students an engaging presentation with a mixture of artifacts and heirlooms, and also samples of food and beverages from Scotland. In the Southern Appalachian Mountains area of Southwest Virginia/Northeast Tennessee/Southeast Kentucky, most settlers were Scots-Irish or Ulster-Irish, meaning, contrary to popular belief, that the families were pure Scots from Scotland who had lived in Northern Ireland for a generation—very few being actually Irish. These people were forced off their lands by King James I of Britain in a wave of the "Highland Clearances" in an attempt to end the Scots' constant skirmishes with England.

After immigrating to America, they brought with them their stories and folkways of doing farm work and cooking. Mr. Long came to the school fully clad in his family clan's hunting tartan, complete with the MacFarlane kilt, sporran, and fly plaid over his left shoulder; denoting he was the leader of the clan in the area. The students were enthralled at the experience and were even more excited when Mr. Long shared his Celtic musical heritage by playing the sheep-skin bodhran and cipín.

While discussing the Scots' experiences in Appalachia, Long passed around wool tartans and his great-grandmother's "tick" quilt to allow students to personally feel the importance of the wool and mercantile trade

which also prompted the great emigration from the Highlands and Lowlands of Scotland. The experience was completed with the history of some of our “country” terms like “hillbilly” and “redneck,” which are not as rude and insulting as everyone thinks. Instead, they were badges of honor indicating that you were a supporter of the rightful king of Scotland, King William or “Billy,” and that you were one of the “hill folk” of Scotland and wore a red kerchief in support. Long then poured genuine Scottish breakfast tea for students and passed around stem-ginger shortbread cookies he brought back from Edinburgh, Scotland for students to enjoy while they asked research questions for their own origin histories and stories.

GIGI LONG, LIBRARIAN

Scots-Irish Fairies in Ireland

When we went to the Scots-Irish presentation with Mr. Long. He talked to us about the Scots-Irish, and he said that there were fairies in Ireland. When I saw the pictures of Ireland I had a feeling it made me want to go there. Mr. Long said that the Scots-Irish people used to play an instrument that was called the Bagpipe. They used to play all the time. They even had Loch Ness monsters in their lakes!

EDLYNN MACEDO, GRADE 4

My Favorite Place

My favorite place is church. I like listening to the beautiful songs that God made. Listening to the preacher and others who worship God make me feel great. Listening to God’s word out of the Bible and reading them is the best thing that makes me want to be baptized. I love learning the Bible verses. I hope I can learn more about God so I can be a better person.

ABBIEGAIL MILAM, GRADE 4

The Princess Who Saw a Monster

Once upon a time there was a beautiful pretty pink princess who was very tall and very freckled. One night she heard some crunchy noise in her castle bedroom and it smelled delicious in there. So she went downstairs and saw a spotted monster eating a giant doughnut! However the monster was wet all over! When he saw her, he ran away, but he left the doughnut. Meanwhile the princess went back to the castle and told her mom that she saw a monster, so her mom went downstairs to check. She looked around and there was no monster there, so she told her daughter to go back to bed. Before long the princess heard it again and she said, “I’m just dreaming.” She really was dreaming!

LACY MILES, GRADE 4

Molasses is a Sticky Sweet Treat

Molasses is a sticky sweet treat. It takes a lot of work to make. When the cane plant is growing, it is green. The farmers cut it in the field with a knife or big scissors, then they take it and put it in a round bin. They clean the cane off and put it in a big pot over fire to help it cook. They have to take turns stirring. At first, the cane is green, but when you work it a lot, it turns dark black.

To me the molasses was so good. I already knew what it tastes like. I grew up with it. It gets really tall. It gets taller than Mrs. Carroll’s dad and he is 6 feet 4 inches tall. It takes months of work. Not a lot of people liked the molasses. I did. We ate it with popcorn and for some reason it was really sweet with popcorn, too sweet for my teeth! But it was still good and I liked it a lot!!!

JALIN MULLINS, GRADE 4

Appalachia Poem

A fun place
Pretty views
Project for writing
A place to learn
Land everywhere
Air smells great
Cool land in the area
Having fun in Flatwoods
Indians lived here
A great place to be

CAIDENCE NEWTON, GRADE 4

The Butterfly

Once upon a time there was a long purple butterfly fluttering all around the porch on the front of my house. It flew under the chairs and through the flowers that were in pots on the front of the porch. Its glossy wings were curved by the way. The sun reflected off of the wings because of the glossiness!

I was sitting on the porch reading a book about butterflies when I noticed the butterfly out of the corner of my eye. It just flew right over the tip of my book! To my surprise, it came over and landed on the edge of my shoulder! I got the most excited that I have ever been, so I gave it a massive smile! Then suddenly the pretty butterfly went off into the distance and flew away.

KYLEE OWENS, GRADE 4

The Monster

Once upon a time there was a monster who was red, blue, orange, yellow, and gold. It was round, flat, large, and wide. The monster likes to taste things like oil, sweet things, spicy things, fresh things, and sour things. He was outside in the woods trying something to eat, when he suddenly heard cracking footsteps from a man nearby by going through the woods to his car. He could hear them very well. The man ran very fast through the woods and hopped in the man's car. The monster could barely fit because he was so big. After that the man just got in the car. He said, "What is that sound?" The monster popped up! The man grabbed a baseball bat. The man hit the monster and after that the monster got very mad. It got out of the car and flipped the car over with the man in it. The man had to go to the hospital. The monster went home and never came back again.

DALTON PARKS, GRADE 4

The Old Man

Once upon a time there was an old man. He was really tall, but very old. He was walking down the road, then started dancing. I wondered how he could do that! Then he quit dancing and said, "Ow my back hurts!" I went to help him and he said, "I'm fine."

Then the next day, I saw him again, so I took him to my house and gave him some fresh clothes. I told him he could stay there for a while and warm up. I poured him some hot cocoa and he said, "That's so good!" He had never had anything good like that before. We went shopping to get him some more clothes because he only had one pair. So we became friends for the rest of our lives.

KARDER PENDERGRAFT, GRADE 4

The First Time I Heard a Scots-Irish Person Speak

I really like how the Scots-Irish culture is. I really like how they speak. I've always wanted to speak a different language so I can speak to different kinds of people. When we went to Disney World somebody standing near me, kept talking in what I thought was Scottish. They came to me and started talking for about five minutes and then after they were done, all I said was, "What?" I would really like to learn the dialect that Scots-Irish people speak, then go to Scotland to learn more about their culture.

MADDOX PENNINGTON, GRADE 4

Scots-Irish

Scots Irish people loved the lands of Appalachia because it looked so much like their homeland, which was a land of castles. Scots people live on a island up north. Scotland is north east from America. They had almost no trees, so they had no wood, but they had stone to build with. They build every house in Scotland with stone. The city buildings were stacked, and they always built staircases to the left. The heat is normal too, so it is not hot or cold. A monster is in the lake!

They were known for bagpipes, gave us cabins and hollers, "old times" music & tradition, and mountain food like cornbread and sausage. They drink black hot tea and they eat biscuits. I learned my last name is English and my middle name is Scots. My last name is Perkins and my middle name is Skyler.

ETHAN PERKINS, GRADE 4

The Tale of the Unicorn

Once upon a time, in a faraway candy land lived a pink fluffy unicorn named Fluffy. She was lonely and had no friends, because they thought she was the only unicorn. As the days passed, Fluffy got more and more lonely, but one day she met another unicorn. Her name was Pinkie. Pinkie and Fluffy became best friends forever! They played together every day. They visited each other when they felt sad, and they would make each other happy. Their favorite food was candy, because they lived in a candy land. Pinkie's favorite candy was M&M's and Fluffy's was Hershey kisses. They lived happily ever after being best friends and eating candy!

KAYLIN RASH, GRADE 4

Once Upon a Time

Once upon a time there was a princess who had blond hair. Every day the princess picked ripe apples. One day she heard a crunchy noise down the long narrow path. She went down the path and saw a pink and golden castle! She went inside the castle. She felt a cool breeze. She found a bedroom and she put on a silky blue dress. She did not know she was a princess until she found a tiara with her name on it. She went on the porch and she saw a wave from the beach, but then she remembered something.

Suddenly she hear a crash! It was the apple trees. Someone was cutting them down. The princess went to stop them, but she got lost in the woods. A prince showed up! A dragon came out from the other side of the woods. The prince and the princess fought the dragon. The dragon gave up and flew away. The prince asked the princess what her name was. The princess thought back to the tiara with her name on it and the castle, so she ran away.

The prince tried to find her, but he could not. Meanwhile the princess ran into the dragon again. She fought the dragon until he gave up. The prince finally found her in the woods. But then the dragon came back and chased them to the castle and flew away again. The princess thought it would be the same as the other two times she went in the castle, but it was not. There was a king and queen inside. The princess felt like she

had seen them before. They told her they were her parents! When she was three, she got lost in the woods. They were happy to find her. They all lived happily ever after!

SAVANNAH RIGGS, GRADE 4

Garfield the Scottish Cat

Once upon a time a cat named Garfield went to Scotland. He, Odie, and Jon decided to go see the Loch Ness monster. While they were walking around Scotland trying to find the Loch Ness monster, they all saw this man playing bagpipes, so Jon took the opportunity to play. Garfield didn't really like Jon playing bagpipes because of the loud noises it made.

They also went to the Glamas Castle which had a giant dining hall, tons of bedrooms, and a watch tower where they could watch for attackers. Garfield wore a crown and of course ate lasagna Garfield in the giant dining hall.

They asked the bagpipe man where the lake called Loch Ness was. Odie was so surprised that he started to act like the Loch Ness monster. He also fell off the boat. Odie did, not Garfield. Anyway Garfield remembered Jon went to the kilt shop and got everyone a kilt and Garfield ate lasagna.

The next day Garfield, Odie, and Jon got on a plane as Garfield ate lasagna. When they got home Garfield ate lasagna and watched tv as Jon went to Liz's and Odie chased his tail. Garfield kept eating lasagna.

ELIJAH SHARRETT, GRADE 4



Banjos and Old Time Dancing

Mary Lou Carter came to our school to talk to us about banjos and old time dancing. Steven Stompers are shoes that she wears that make jingle sounds. Old time dancers didn't dance on carpet. They danced on wood. They used cat and different animal skins to make banjo strings. Our ancestors wrote songs about almost everything in their lives. I enjoyed learning about banjos and old time dancing a lot.

TUCKER SIZEMORE, GRADE 4

Banjos

Mary Lou Carter showed us how to dance and about banjos. The students got to get up and do Flatfoot dancing and Clogging. They looked like they were having fun, but I didn't do it. I just liked watching! The banjos were made out of wood and gourds. The banjo was called the devil's instrument because they thought it was too loud. They danced to the banjos music. The bottom of the banjo is called the tail piece. Banjos have a metal ring called a resonator which makes more sound. I learned a lot from the presentation.

BRUCE SPIVEY, GRADE 4

The Dog With Ruby Red Eyes

Once upon a time I saw a puppy with ruby red eyes and wavy fur laying behind two trees by the driveway. She was the cutest puppy I have ever seen. I was petting her and she whined when I noticed she had a hurt leg. So I picked her up and ran to Mom. She almost screamed when she saw the puppy! "Where did you

find her?" asked Mom. "By the driveway," I said, "We need to take her to the vet." So we did. The vet was so amazed that we found that type of dog with such unusual eyes. The vet said, "You have found the rarest dog in the world!" So we went home and we kept her, and I named her Ruby.

NEVAEH STUTLER, GRADE 4

My Favorite Place to Be

My favorite place to be is at school. I like to play with my friends. I like to read with my friends. I like school because school it feels like home. Mrs. Sexton is my best friend and so is Mrs. Goforth. I like Ms. Carroll and Ms. Riggs. My friends are Kyrie, Kaylena, Ms. Davis, Lacy, Kylee, Presley, Hunter, and Savannah.

ALYSA TAYLOR, GRADE 4

The First Day of School

Once upon a time there was a little boy named Jeremiah. He was going to be in the fourth grade. Jeremiah wanted to make lots of new friends, but he was afraid that whoever he asked was going to laugh at him. So after school he went home and played with his little sister until his mom said, "OK, it's bedtime let's go bed."

Jeremiah said, "OK Mom." So he got his pajamas on and went to bed. The next morning, Jeremiah got up out of bed, got clothes on, went downstairs, ate breakfast, and got his backpack. When he was on his way out, he said it was time to make friends. By lunch he already made a good friend. Her name was Mary. She was nice and kind. They were such good friends in a month that he could visit her house and she could visit his house. When they grew up they were still friends. They would think back into the past and just couldn't believe how long they had been friends.

KEEGAN TAYLOR, GRADE 4

Ireland is Unbelievable

I think it would be fun to live in Ireland. I thought it was odd that the Irish thought the roads had to be straight or else it would upset the fairies. Did you know there were fairies in Ireland? I didn't know they made the walls out of some sea creature. Unbelievable! I think the Irish had beautiful buildings. I truly, genuinely think Ireland is awesome!!!

AVERY WESTON, GRADE 4

A Banjo and Some Cool Shoes



Mrs. Carter came and showed my class how to play a banjo and some cool shoes that she wears to dance with. She brought in two new banjos that belonged to her and she let some people in the class try to play the banjo. I got to try it! It felt just like playing the guitar, but it was a different shape and sound. I tried to play it with my fingers just like she did. The banjo is rounded. She told us that the banjo could be made out wood or metal. Her banjos were made of wood with something stretched over them that looks like animal skin with no fur. Mrs. Carter sang old songs and let us sing along. We sang *We Went Down to the Crawdad Hole*. She played the banjo at the same time and the class enjoyed singing along! I can still kinda hear it in my head!

Then, she showed us an exciting dance called Flat footing. First, she had to put on her special dancing shoes that were white and had clappers on the bottoms. She danced on a large wooden platform on the floor

because it was hollow inside and it would make more sound. It made a clapping sound when she danced. I tried dancing on that platform, but I couldn't really do the steps for it because I didn't have those cool shoes! It was very nice of Mrs. Carter to come all this way to our school. I enjoyed her coming here and showing us how to dance and play a banjo.

CHARLES WILSON, GRADE 4

The Dog Named "A"

Once upon a time there was a dog that was striped with a curved tail. His name was "A" as in apple. He liked the name a lot, unlike other people. His belly was massive! I can't believe he can walk. I think he's awesome, furthermore he's a dog. He is "A"!!!

AUSTIN WOLIVER, GRADE 4

The Chocolate Castle

Once upon a time, I saw a gold blue bright castle. I thought it would smell fruity because it had fruit trees outside. I walked inside and it smelled rich because it was made of chocolate.



I was walking around in the castle kitchen when I heard something sizzling. I walked around the corner. There was a big pot of chocolate on a long narrow table. I ran over there and tasted it. Suddenly, I was in a daze! Boy, did it taste good!

Then I saw something. There was a big pink pig who slowly came around the corner. I said, "Hey!" Guess what it said? "Get out of here!" I ran! Mrs. Woodward walked up and said, "Why are you running?" I said, "There is a big pig in there and it was very wrinkled!"

"It is okay," said Mrs. Woodward. "Just say, can I please have some chocolate?" I said, "Okay thanks." She walked in and never came back again. Knowing her, I think she went to the kitchen to get some chocolate. I hope she left some chocolate for that big pig!

KASEY WOLIVER, GRADE 4

Molasses and Butter

I learned how to make butter today. It was fun! We put cream in a jar and we shook it for five minutes. It tasted very good with molasses and popcorn.

Next, we learned how to make molasses. Making molasses takes a long time. Cane is very tall. It takes from spring to fall. Molasses are good with popcorn and butter. Mrs. Carroll showed us pictures of molasses and how to make molasses.

JORDAN WYATT, GRADE 4

GREENDALE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL





Greendale Creative Writing Library Club

Greendale Elementary has had the opportunity to collaborate with Washington County Public Library this year on our TOPs project. Last year was the first year Greendale participated by creating a writing club which was sponsored by school librarian, Brenda Sprinkle, to allow students to work on a piece to be published in The Origin Project. This year we added to the library component by bringing in public librarian, Amanda Bailey. Washington County schools are fortunate to have a wonderful working relationship with our public library system and this collaboration is just further evidence of that working relationship to benefit all of the student of Washington County.

BRENDA SPRINKLE, LIBRARIAN/MEDIA SPECIALIST

Where I'm From Poem

I'm from Hewitt and Abel
I'm from Bam, Angel, Pinny and Jewell
I'm from Abingdon and children playing
I'm from dogs and cats
I'm from M&Ms and French fries
I'm from Vampire Diaries and A Dog's Purpose
I'm from tree up until Valentine's Day
I'm from math and history
I'm from Madison, Alyssa A, Alyssa R., Karly and Chanci
I'm from writing and drawing
I'm from "You look like your mom" and "Get on your computer"
I'm from a pretty smile and sweet giggle.

JAYLA ABEL, GRADE 4

Where I'm From Poem

I'm from Brooke and Brandon
I'm from Dog and Rain
I'm from mountains and woods
I'm from deer and turkey
I'm from pizza and ice cream
I'm from Charmed and Brave
I'm from hunting together and playing games
I'm from writing and math
I'm from Katie and Mariah
I'm from going to the beach and hunting with Poppy
I'm from "You are funny" and "I love you"
I'm from smart and friendly.

CHEYANN DAVENPORT, GRADE 3

My Country Poem

My Country is free
And being watched
By Lady Liberty
For being strong and compassionate

My Country has
Big and small, short and tall
All stand and honor as
The American Flag rises

My Country has no
Discrimination but
Being together has
Just begun without
Fighting anyone

My Country's founding
Fathers fought for us
To be away from the king
With service and love
For America!

HANNAH LEE, GRADE 5

On Top of a Mountain

I live somewhere
Wild and free
On top of a mountain
With sights to see.

On top of a mountain
It goes from dawn to dusk
The sun rises and sets
Behind the tree trunks.

On top of a mountain
Wild life is not a bore
There is always an animal around
There to explore.

On top of a mountain
The birds will be singing
No matter what kind
The sound will always be ringing.



On top of a mountain
Life will not cease
The seasons are coming
And life is at ease.

CASSIDY HEATH, GRADE 5

Where I'm From Poem



I'm from Hess and Gerischer
I'm from Eli and Beanson
I'm from Lebanon and grass
I'm from Eli and Smokey
I'm from noodles and tomato soup
I'm from Series of Unfortunate Events and Alexa and Katie
I'm from eating and sleeping
I'm from history and reading
I'm from Arabella and Jayla
I'm from Alyssa A and Alyssa R
I'm from "Haley, what did you do"
I'm from nothing and creative

HALEY HESS, GRADE 4

Where I'm From Poem

I'm from Grant and Donna
I'm from two labs and Sandy
I'm from Abingdon and trees
I'm from deer and cows
I'm from pizza and steak
I'm from Loud House and Escape Room
I'm from Christmas and Thanksgiving
I'm from After School and gym
I'm from Alex and Caden
I'm from playing games and petting my dog
I'm from "Do better" and "Good job"
I'm from games and eating.

HUNTER HUBBARD, GRADE 4

Where I'm From Poem

I'm from Little and Sorah
I'm from Cash and Bluey
I'm from Abingdon and the farm field
I'm from stray dogs and deer
I'm from hot dogs and ice cream
I'm from The Flash and Letters to God
I'm from Christmas and the Super Bowl

I'm from reading and recess
I'm from Wilson and Mason
I'm from eat and play
I'm from "Hi, how are you" and "I love you"
I'm from interesting and nice.

PEYTON LITTLE, GRADE 5

Where I'm From Poem

I'm from Mom, Kaelyn and Dad
I'm from Goldie and Princess
I'm from Bristol and Ferns
I'm from dog and cat
I'm from cracker chicken and school pizza
I'm from Thundermans and Aquaman
I'm from Thanksgiving and Christmas
I'm from math and writing
I'm from Elizabeth and Lakin
I'm from dancing and writing
I'm from "You are crazy" and "You are a really good dancer"
I'm from honesty and kindness.



KHLOE MCCOY, GRADE 3

Where I'm From Poem

I'm from Rose and Campbell
I'm from dogs and guinea pigs
I'm from Abingdon and laughing children
I'm from deer and rocks
I'm from Mickey Mouse and Harry Potter
I'm from eat, sleep and breath
I'm from Virginia studies and history
I'm from Haley and Karly
I'm from playing guitar and playing video games
I'm from "Hi!" and "Alyssa!"
I'm from my face and my fingers.

ALYSSA ROSE, GRADE 4

Where I'm From Poem

I'm from Simcox and Singleton
I'm from Cat and Sophie Gracen
I'm from Washington D.C. and trees
I'm from black cats and dogs
I'm from shrimp and Outback bread
I'm from Blue Oceans and Transformed
I'm from Christmas and Thanksgiving



I'm from math and art
I'm from Aiden and Kadin
I'm from playing Roblox and watching YouTube
I'm from "Hi" and "Good job"
I'm from my curly hair and my blue eyes.

CADEN SINGLETON, GRADE 4

Where I'm From Poem

I'm from Carter and Turner
I'm from Midnight and Maggie
I'm from Abingdon and farms
I'm from deer and cows
I'm from squash and pumpkins
I'm from Muppets and Star Wars
I'm from ringing dinner bell and New Year's Resolutions
I'm from math and art
I'm from Ava and Alice
I'm from soccer and coloring
I'm from "How do you do" and "Good night"
I'm from dreaming and believing.

LARKIN TURNER, GRADE 3



I'm from White and Vannoy
I'm from Moco and chocolate lab
I'm from farm and goat

I'm from goats and horses
I'm from steak and potato soup
I'm from Troll Hunters and The Grinch
I'm from Thanksgiving and Christmas
I'm from art and reading
I'm from Haley and Alyssa
I'm from drawing and painting
I'm from "You look like your mom" and "I love you"
I'm from shyness and funniness.

ARABELLA VANNOY, GRADE 4

Where I'm From Poem

I'm from Wise and Smith
I'm from Boots and Charlie
I'm from Abingdon and woods
I'm from deer and coyotes
I'm from tater tots and bacon burgers
I'm from Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives and The Princess and the Frog

I'm from Secret Santa and going to the beach
I'm from science and gym
I'm from Emily and Emerson
I'm from drawing and sketching
I'm from calm down and pick up your mess
I'm from smart and kind.

GRACIE WISE, GRADE 5

THE HENDERSON SCHOOL OF APPALACHIAN ARTS



Gracie Reynolds interviews Master Luthier, Wayne C. Henderson (the school's namesake)



Savannah Rose talks with Master Woodturner Terry Clark of Troutdale, Virginia about his craft

The Henderson Pilot Project

The Wayne C. Henderson School of Appalachian Arts has a mission to preserve, promote and provide a learning experience that has its roots in the culture and heritage of our Southern Appalachian Mountains. Our objective with the Henderson pilot program was to expand on our existing after school programs and work with The Origin Project to provide experiences for Smyth County middle school students in an after school setting that would promote dialogue and an impetus for story collecting.

Through the amazing support of Dr. Dennis Carter, Superintendent of Smyth County Schools, Mr. Phillip Griffin, Director of Auxiliary Services for Smyth County Schools, and Dr. Kimberly Williams, principal of Marion Middle School we were able to model our Junior Appalachian Artisan program after our existing Junior Appalachian Musician program. Our team consisted of Deborah

Tilson Clark retired English teacher, author and artisan from Troutdale, Virginia; Patrick Ford, Director of The Settler's Museum and native of Marion, Virginia; and myself, Catherine Schrenker, Executive Director of The Henderson.

To accomplish these goals, our students were presented with traditional Appalachian craft and music, introduced to the artisans and musicians behind the craft and access to the stories they provide. Students then were asked to use their developing writing skills in various responses to those experiences.

Some of the subjects included were: "The Writing W's: Inspirations for Writers Like Us!" "Beekeeping: Understanding Community," "The Heritage Project: Understanding Tradition," "The Letterpress Project: Understanding the Power of Print," and "Made and Played: The Luthiers of Appalachia."

Through arrangements with Smyth County Schools, participating students were dropped off at The Henderson. Weekly sessions began with a snack and drink, and then a presentation of craft, art, or special activity, usually from a guest presenter(s). This was followed up with connecting activities that engaged the students in active recollection, reflection, and personalization of the activity. Finally, the students were guided in art/craft activities that included writing. As an example, following an apiary lesson by a master beekeeper, students were led in discussion of community, one-two-three action (plot), social classes, and action/reaction. Then they applied these concepts to story-writing and illustration, in the form of a hand-crafted booklet.

Every class meeting concluded with time for journal-writing, when students were encouraged to think about what they'd been doing in the class and to make note of how they felt it applied – or did not apply – to their own lives. Students were encouraged to have their journals with them, particularly at home where they can incite dialogue with friends and family members that may lead to interesting stories.

We are proud to provide a sampling of the creativity that was generated through this partnership. Having classes at The Henderson has allowed these students wide-open access to the tools, materials, and studio space of creative work, and most importantly of all, to the working craftsmen and artisans who gather here. We have come to realize that while the goals of promoting our children's cultural awareness and connection through writing is extremely worthwhile, another avenue is equally important: an avenue channeled through the guided work of hands, supported by the knowledge of an older generation, and made available with the thoughtful

instruction of caring mentors. We believe that the The Henderson is vitally important to these goals and mission of Smyth County Schools and to the society of which they serve. We are grateful for the support we have received from author Adriana Trigiani and Executive Director Nancy Bolmeier Fisher, and the compassion, effort and patience of Linda Woodward.

The Letterpress Project: Understanding the Power of Print

One cannot explore the power of the *written* word without exploring the power of the *printed* word. Searching for the perfect sentence is challenging, taking those thoughts and paring them down to one word that encapsulates an idea is daunting, merging meaning and emotion to create a visual symbol (“logotype”) is just fun!

The exercise started with simple dialogue, students telling each other about their day. They were prompted to come up with a single word that best described what they were experiencing/feeling. Through this dialogue, they were asked to interpret what they heard and write words down on paper that would be “descriptive” -in this case- easily sketched on paper, like one does when they play the game “Pictionary”.

The next step was to discuss associations between the letterforms that make up the word and how to use a letter as symbol (tying in their use of “emoji’s and realizing that these are not new!). This creative thinking process culminated into the introduction to our Burke Print Shop and the history about the power of the printed word and the role of Letterpress printing in Southwest Virginia. They also learned about the influence of Sherwood Anderson and his life in the Town of Marion during the 1930’s.

There are many individuals in our community that have elderly relatives that worked for Sherwood Anderson. As we move forward with our program, we look forward to discovering the stories our students can collect that involve Sherwood Anderson’s life in Smyth County, Virginia.

Made and Played: The Luthiers of Appalachia

During the month of November, Wayne C. Henderson, Gerald Anderson, Spencer Strickland and Josh Reese gathered to teach a guitar building workshop at The Henderson. Wayne is internationally acclaimed Luthier and guitar picker. He grew up in Rugby, Virginia and still lives there today. “The Henderson” is named after Wayne in honor of his contribution to the craft of Lutherie.

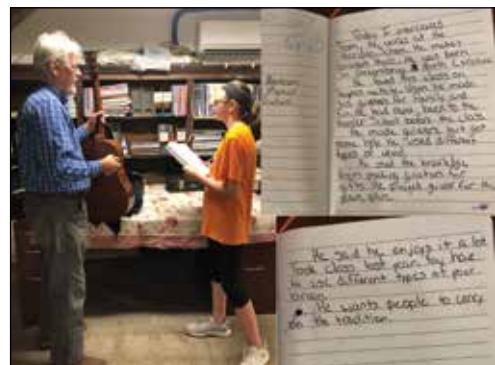
This guitar building workshop is unique; four generations of Luthiers participate and it is taught through mentoring and passing down stories along with teaching the craft. Students were presented with interview techniques, questions, guidelines, basically “how to collect stories”. We practiced techniques in the classroom with each other and then they went to the Lutherie to observe



Britni Tunnell and Savannah Rose learn how to print in The Burke Letterpress Workshop



Bailey Russell created a book after Mickey Cunningham presented a program about beekeeping



Bailey Reynolds interviews Tom Townsend about his experience of learning to make a guitar with Master Luthier Wayne Henderson

the craft and then met with a Luthier. Wayne, Gerald, Spencer and Tom Townsend were interviewed by a student and after the interviews, the students got together and discussed their information.

CATHERINE SCHRENKER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
THE WAYNE C. HENDERSON SCHOOL OF APPALACHIAN ARTS

Keeping Community

One of the things I remember most clearly from this class is the beekeeping session. He said that in a hive there are different kinds of bees, and that each kind has a job to do. He talked about how important it is that each group did its job and if any one of the groups failed, the whole hive would die.

That applies to people, too. A lot of people have really important kinds of jobs and some people's jobs are very important, and if they didn't do those jobs we'd live in a very different kind of place.

This is true of everybody, even people like my mother. She is a professor at Southwest Community College, teaching Early Childhood Education, but she often works at home. She is also on The Planning Commission for The Town of Marion. I have one brother and two sisters, and she spends a lot of time taking care of us and helping us do all the things we want to do. She's a great cook — my favorite foods she makes are things made with pasta — and she keeps our house in good running order. If she wasn't there, our house would not be very clean, and everything would be weird.

It's like with the bees: if even one person doesn't do his job, the whole thing falls apart.

And it's not just the high-up people. I feel like people are just as important who have smaller jobs, who may not be seen as important, as the people who are supposed to be the bosses, or the leaders.

The lesson about bees helped me understand this. It make me think that our house is kind of like a bee hive. And writing that story helped me put that into clear images, and in a good order.

MADELYN AUSTIN, GRADE 8

What I Learned at the Henderson

Being in this after-school program has made me think about my family and our traditions more than I ever have before, and in a different way.

When I started this program, I knew that on my dad's side of the family, there was a long tradition of music. On my mom's side, I didn't know much. My father grew up here, in the community called Riverside. My mother grew up in Sugar Grove, so my roots here are very deep. But I'd never really thought about the fact that most kids don't live in the middle of where their parents grew up, where they were kids, where there are cousins and kin folks all around, and where almost everybody knows your family.

My Papaw was a house carpenter and he knew a lot of people because of his work. My father was in a band and traveled all over the area with that and got to know a lot of people that way, and so there are all these connections to a lot of places and people.

Another thing that was interesting was asking people in the family about our traditions. It made me think more about that, about why we do things the way we do. I hadn't thought about what traditions we have

that are different from or like other peoples', or about why we came to have certain traditions.

For example, we leave out snacks for Santa on Christmas Eve, and I know a lot of people do that, but we leave kind of strange foods, like a Coke. I asked my mother why we do that, and she said it is because when my little sister was small, she had this idea that Santa got the same thing at every house – cookies and milk – and she said he wanted a break. So, we try to do that.

The projects have been a lot of fun. I wish I could have been here for the printing activity. I love poetry and that would have been such fun, to use letters to write words that might become poems or parts of poems.

I loved doing the acrostic. It was also about traditions that we do at Christmas. I wanted it to have two lines, because my parents are divorced and live apart. So this was a way I could include both homes and the ways they are alike or different.

One thing that is on there is the snacks, and also what we wear at each house, because at my dad's house we wear our pajamas, and we have a huge breakfast that involves everyone on my dad's side of the family. On the other side, we go to my Nana's on Christmas Eve and I get to see all my cousins. This acrostic was a fun way to show the connections and the differences, too.

Over the past months that I've been in this program, I've learned more about this region. I used to think that this was a place where people were just hicks and didn't do a lot of cultural things. Since I've been coming to the Henderson – to this program and to the JAM – I've discovered that this is a place where many cultural activities got started and where all people can be involved, and where music and art are going on all the time. I think that's an important part of my heritage.



ABBIE CREGGER, GRADE 8

ROAR!

What I remember most clearly about these sessions is when we got the papers and divided them in half and drew pictures to show the differences between culture and heritage.

To show culture, I drew things from Ancient Egypt, like the pyramids and a sarcophagus, because these show things the whole society believed in and did, like that they believed in an afterlife and that they had to bury them in certain ways to make sure they had a good afterlife. When a whole society does something, that makes it part of their culture.

To show heritage, I drew a moonshine still, because my dad's from Tennessee and he was taught about making moonshine from his father and grandfather. When something gets handed down like that, it can be part of your traditions.

Another fun thing we did was go to the letterpress place and made posters. We had been taught about the ways wooden and lead types worked, and we had to think of a word that described us. Then I thought of the word "roar" because in my family, we're all very loud. You don't want to be in our house at Thanksgiving!

I watched Britne do hers first, so I could get an idea of how it was done. First, there were drawers full of letters. There were big letters, tiny letters, upper case and lower case letters, and numbers. So you chose the letters that went best with your word. I just had to have upper case letters, and an exclamation point, to make it stand out and because they are very full of energy! Then you figure out how you want the letters arranged, and we had to position them just right on contact paper. Then you choose ink colors, and you can mix them if you want to. You put the ink on the surfaces of the letters with a roller, like a baby paint roller, and smooth it out. Then you press the paper on top of that.

This whole program was such fun. It kept us active and we weren't sitting all the time, and it got us to think about stuff in ways that we really hadn't, before. It is funny how we would start out talking about one thing, and maybe do something with that idea, and then we would move to a whole new thing. It showed me connections that I'd never thought about before.

SAVANNAH ROSE, GRADE 7

Handing Down Traditions

I knew about the Henderson because I took a painting class with the Girl Scouts. We painted gourds, and I painted a snowman on my gourd. My mom always puts it up for Christmas decoration. I was excited to take another class here.

Some of the things that really stand out for me were the interviews, and the culture and heritage session, and when we got to watch that man [woodturner Terry Clark] make a Christmas ornament.

For the interviews, they showed up how to be ready. Like, we had to figure out good questions to ask, and have the questions written out. And then, after we did the interviews, we put the information on index cards and figured out the order we wanted the stuff to be in our essays.

I got talk to Tom Townsend.

When I interviewed Mr. Townsend, I learned a lot about guitars. He was born in Greensboro, North Carolina and now lives in Danville, Virginia. What really stuck in my mind was when he said that being with Wayne Henderson was like getting to play basketball with LeBron James. that made me understand it a lot more, because I love basketball.



When we talked about tradition and heritage, I drew a poster that showed columns on the front of a building, because I knew that the designs for these kinds of columns had come to us from the Ancient Greeks. And they're still being used today. So that's an example of how things get handed down. And it's just like things that get handed down in a family, too, like in my family we have the tradition of

having Christmas dinner at my grandmother's, and we have the heritage of this really famous homemade chocolate cake that my grandmother makes. My mom knows how to make that cake, and she's been trying to teach me how to make it too.

So I can see how for some people, learning to make and play guitars is like me learning to make the special chocolate cake like my grandmother. I'd never really thought about it before,

BAILEY RUSSELL, GRADE 6

Tom Townsend sent this email afterwards in regard to Bailey's interview:

"Enjoyed the visit yesterday – and the JAM "journalist" students! (I believe I was interviewed by Bailey.)

A good question they asked in closing was there anything I learned from the class that I could apply in other areas. After thinking about that more, I would say I learned from Wayne to pay attention to all details – even the ones that seem less important such as keeping the inside of a guitar neat and clean – even if no one could see it! If you do the "little" things with keen attention, the bigger project will reflect that and be your best effort – a good life lesson. If you always do it right, you'll never do it wrong – hmm, sounds like a song in there somewhere..."

Catherine Schrenker response:

"Tom, Your interview was shared with the others and made such an impact, your analogy of Wayne and LeBron James put the workshop in perspective for all of us, not just our young authors.

It was so wonderful to see you and thank you for all your help and patience with our writers! I will share this with Bailey and the class.

The Wayne C. Henderson School of Appalachian Art

I had never thought about the idea that I live in a community. I really hadn't thought about how a community is a bunch of people working together, or who live in the same neighborhood, or who are tied together in some way. When we talked about tradition, I realized our community has a lot of different traditions in it, that we have a lot of different cultures.

One of my favorite things we did in these classes was the time the beekeeper came and told us all about bees. I've always liked bees, and when he talked about them I realized that bees live in communities too.

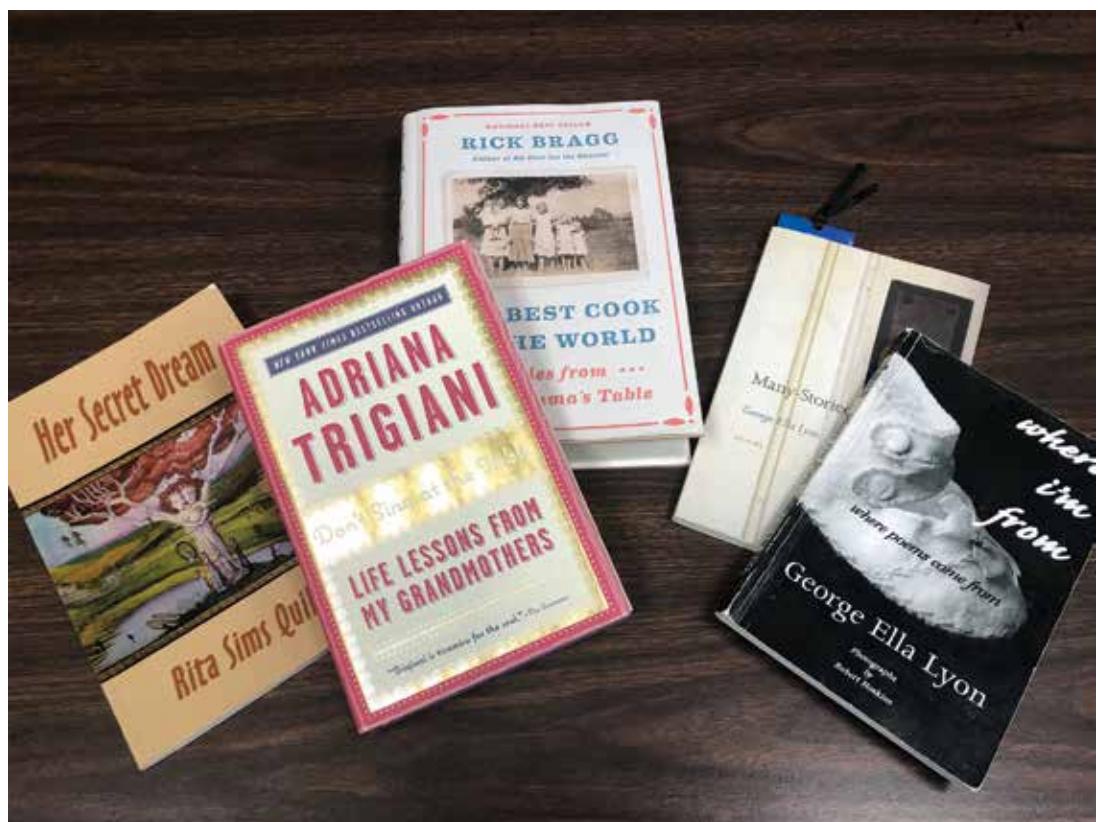


He talked about how they mate and about how, when he works around the hives he talks to them and they stay calm and he doesn't get stung very much. He said there are different types of bees, like in every hive there's one queen, and workers and drones, and it takes all of them working together to keep the hive going. He said talking to bees is a traditional way to keep them calm.

Traditions are so important. We used to have the tradition of going to my mother's family in West Virginia for holidays, and we'd see relatives and eat big meals. My grandmother was the tradition-keeper of the family, and after she died, all of those kinds of things disappeared. We don't go there anymore and my family hardly even talks to each other now and so it's easy to see how important it is to have traditions, and have people who keep them going. So I've learned about heritage and traditions and how communities work together, and how it all is in my life right now.

BRITNI TUNNELL, GRADE 7

JOHN I. BURTON HIGH SCHOOL



Where I'm From



I am from movies on a quiet night,
From Spider-Man and Finding Nemo.
I am from the tiny, white house in

the holler with the rickety stairs,
From the flickering porch light,
and the inside that smells of
maple syrup.

I am from the large oak tree,
the one with the wide trunk and
the numerous branches.

I'm from Alabama football and
many family photos,
From Barnette and Cardon.

I'm from the football arguments and the basketball debates,
From be yourself and stay committed.
I'm from the Pentecostal church on the river that I no longer attend.
I'm from Appalachian Mountains and southwestern desert,
From perfectly grilled ribeyes, or a pepperoni pizza.
I'm from the gentle, dim sun on a fall day,
From the beautiful and pink sunset on a summer evening.
I'm from the unconditional love that binds a family together.

CALEB BARNETTE, GRADE II

Three Simple Words

A love so pure and kind,
Two people holding each other so tight they don't want to let go
My mamaw was washing dishes in the kitchen



Singing a hymn that is stuck in her head
From that morning's church service,
Her hair tied in a perfect bun
And wearing her Sunday school dress
That goes below her knees.
As my papaw walks in the kitchen
He sees his wife,
The woman he puts before anyone.
He sneaks up behind her
And pulls her into his embrace.
As her nose fills with the smell of Old Spice,
He whispers the words "I love you."
Instead of saying the same three words, she says
"Rob, why are you bothering me?"
She turns around, looking into his
Chocolate brown eyes that she falls

Three Simple Words by Sarah Bevins

More and more in love with
Every time she looks into them.
So much has come from three simple words:
Five kids, nine grandkids, and four great
grandkids.
Such a simple phrase,
But it can mean so much
To two people in love.

SARAH BEVINS, GRADE II



My Little House

There is one house that is significant to everyone – your own, or possibly a family member's. One house that has always been special to me is my grandmother's. My grandma's house has always played a big part in our family. Every Thanksgiving and Christmas my family goes to my grandmother's to eat and spend time together. Because I grew up in that house, I have lots of memories in that house, good and bad. The house represents love to me because everyone in the family is enjoying being there and spending time with each other.

LYDIA BLAIR-JAMES, GRADE II

High School Sweethearts

Nothing but a smile upon their faces.
Genie in a Bottle and *I Want it That Way*
Plays in the background.
My mother's shiny cheeks match the glow of the lights.
My father's boutonniere matches her bouquet perfectly,
Her tan skin against the bright white tux.
Her dark eyes and red lips give the camera a whirlwind of awe.
His bowtie, exactly diagonal to her angelic collar bones,
Smiling at the camera.
A few years later, they welcomed a black haired, brown-eyed
little girl,
Her skin like the pale pink ribbon tied on her mother's
bouquet.
My father's hands hold her gently, just as gently as he held my
mother's waist.
Her eyes stare up at her father like the way they
Looked into the camera.



High School Sweethearts by Madison
Bohnert

MADISON BOHNERT, GRADE II

Where I'm From

I am from the backroads of Guest River,
From hot summer days and cold winter nights.
I am from the big white house with a large yard,
Soft, serene, and warming.
I am from the forest that never ends,



Surrounding trees in every direction.
I am from Chinese Christmas and a large family,
From Roland and Cherie.
I'm from the big family dinners and movie nights,
From "Do your parents let you do that?" and "Sit down and be
quiet."
I'm from sleeping in on Sundays,
Enjoying a day off with TV and a warm blanket.
I'm from a family that sticks together,
From gravy and biscuits and barbeque chicken.
I'm from Guest River, the place I call home.

JONAH COCHRANE, GRADE II

Where I'm From

I am from scratchy, pink blankets
From chipped coffee tables and red rocking chairs
I am from the shabby white house
Rusting nails, squeaking floors, and vanilla scented candles
I am from wild blackberries,
Dark blue and sweet-tasting with sugar.
I'm from switching ornaments and carving pumpkins
From Sarah and Rethia
I'm from children's books in rocking chairs and plush toys on birthdays
From "Be careful!" and "You're gonna get hurt!"
I'm from Daryl preaching, raising our hands to God
I'm from Duncan Gap and Big Stone
Chicken and dumplings, cornbread,
From the baby pictures in dollar store photo albums.

CAITLYN COLLINS, GRADE IO

An Ocean Between Two Families

This picture takes place in the Philippines,
My grandmother sitting and smiling
in the middle of her husband's siblings and their children.
The youngest of eighteen, the baby of the family, is behind the camera,
smiling back at his young wife and family – that's my grandfather.



An Ocean Between Two Families by Chloe Gonzalez-Prince

Uncle Armando is seated to
my grandmother's left; he was
the other Doctor Gonzalez.
My grandfather was the Doctor
Gonzalez, the one that
everyone remembers in
Norton, a kind and generous
man.

Next to Armando is Aunty Nina, which
translates to Aunty Aunty,
The only siblings of my grandfather I ever
had the pleasure to meet.

This picture was taken on my Lolo's
birthday,
The first day he met his grandchildren who
were born and raised in America.
Teodore Gonzalez, the man who has been
written into history books
Being a part of the Philippine Supreme Council; he was known as the Bathala,
A leader of the Katipunan, which means "of the sons of the people,"
The man who taught my grandfather to be strong and to be proud of his name.



I love this photo because of the memories attached to it,
The way the ceiling arches reminds my grandmother of another visit to the Philippines.
The dress my lola is wearing reminds my mother of her own first Communion dress,
The white silk and floral print traditional for the event.
The face of the young boy in the foreground mirrors my older cousins almost identically.
This photo contains memories that are unseen to everyone but my family,
and I love that.

CHLOE GONZALEZ-PRINCE, GRADE II

Where I'm From

I'm from oversized families and full dinner tables
From frozen pizzas and grilled hamburgers
I am from my grandparents' spare bedroom
when we had nowhere else to go
From our fifth home in ten years
I am from a house full of pets
Large dogs, small dogs, little dogs, big dogs
I'm from a home of music, where the
piano is always playing
From police officers and nurses
Medics and teachers
The selfless and the underpaid
The overworked and the ill
appreciated
From "I'm working tonight" and
"Sorry Bud, maybe next time's
I'm from summer Bible schools and
church Christmas plays
From snow days with power outages
and S'mores cooked over our
fireplace



I'm from the Appalachian mountains and the New River Valley
From aunts and uncles that live all around
Cousins in Roanoke, Atlanta, and Radford
From Facebook photo archives to scrapbooks with old family photos.
I'm from
Here, there, and everywhere.

JOEY HAYES, GRADE II

Strawberry Pretzel Dessert

When I was younger – around five or six years old – my grandmother wanted to try and fix a new and delicious dessert called Strawberry Pretzel Salad, which has now become a family favorite. Strawberry Pretzel Salad is a dessert like no other because it's not too sweet and not too salty.

My grandmother is not the type of person to follow directions; instead, she always measures out in her head and can still make everything taste perfect. First, she preheats the oven to about 425 degrees F., and while she waits for the oven to heat up, she gets all the ingredients she needs and lays them out on top of the counter.

After that, my grandmother crushes all the pretzels up and mixes them with melted butter and brown sugar to get ready to lay them in a big baking dish so that the pretzels can harden for eight to ten minutes. While the pretzels cool, she gets a large mixing bowl to mix the rest of the ingredients such as the cream cheese, Cool Whip, and the eggs.

Once the pretzels have cooled down, she pours the mix of Cool Whip and cream cheese on top of the pretzels, then gets the frozen strawberries with Jello and spreads it out on top to be laid in the refrigerator to chill until set.

The moment that the Strawberry Pretzel Salad is ready and set, my family and I are all excited to dig in. My grandmother has now made it a tradition to fix it at least three times a month. My family loves to bake and cook desserts every weekend, but this dessert has really been our favorite by far, and I don't know what we would do without it.

Ingredients Needed:

- 1 (8 oz.) cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup of brown sugar
- 1 (8 oz.) thawed Cool Whip
- 2 (3 oz.) strawberry Jello
- 2 cups boiling water
- 2 (10 oz.) packages frozen strawberries

AKYSSA HOLLINGER, GRADE II

The Ranger and the War

My dad, Darrell Collins, was born and raised in Alexandria, Virginia. He graduated from Episcopal High School. Throughout school, he played football, baseball, and basketball. He had a hard time playing basketball because he didn't enjoy it as much as baseball. He said he always wanted to play in the MLB. As high school came to an end, he realized that he may be drafted into the Army to fight in the Vietnam War. His dreams of playing baseball for the New York Mets soon would disappear into the reality of the real world. This, in a way, helped him focus on the draft. Once he graduated, the day came: draft day.

Darrell was drafted into the Army on October 21, 1962. He graduated basic and went to Ranger School where he graduated at the top of his class. As a part of the F company, 7th Ranger regiment, my dad

participated on multiple ‘DNR’ missions, which he said he and his men weren’t supposed to return from. On January 15th, 1963, he was deployed into an area he ‘can’t speak of.’ He told me that while there, he was assigned to reconnaissance missions deep behind enemy lines. One of these operations included crawling three miles through mud and cow feces to take out an “HVT”, which stands for a high value target. This would turn out to be one of his worst memories of the war.

My dad told me that once they reached the vantage point, they were quickly ambushed by more than 25 Viet Cong. Almost 75 percent of his men were lost in a matter of minutes. A Vietnam soldier ended up breaking my dad’s nose with the stock of his rifle. Dad described the sound after as pure silence and said he would never forget the sound. After realizing the operation was failed, he grabbed a buddy who was shot in the stomach and carried him the three miles back to his post, where he and my father received medical treatment.

After serving ten years as a Ranger in the United States Army, he was honorably discharged and returned to Virginia. He moved from Alexandria to Norton, where he still lives today. After the Army he became a firearms instructor and looked into doing private security. He is now retired and volunteers for Norton Little League and helps coach youth baseball. He says he enjoys retirement, but there was nothing more exciting and eventful than the war.

HOLDEN HUNNICUTT, GRADE II

The Ghost Inside Me

When I was young I had the biggest bond with my papaw. He would tickle me and make me laugh. I would even see his Chevy van go down the side of the road outside, saying, “There goes my papaw!” He was always there for me. This might not sound that unusual, but my papaw died before I was born.

My papaw died in May when my mom was eight months pregnant with me; I was born about a month later. Nothing strange happened that we know of until I was old enough to have some motor skills like laughing and recognizing people; however, I think he was there with me since the day I was born, maybe even before.

My mom and family had their own thoughts about it, too. I would wake up and laugh like someone was tickling me when I was still in a baby carrier. He had sold his van a few years before he died, and there are no pictures of it, so there was no way of me knowing he had a van. But I did.

Even though I have no stories about us together, I would say I liked him because I recognized him as a friend before I even knew what a friend was. I never had any other father figure until I was two years old, so I think that’s why he was there.

As time grew older, he started to not show up that much, but I can still feel my papaw sometimes. Now, the only time I really see him is late at night, mostly when I have sleep terrors or sleep paralysis.

I’m not the only person in my family who has a ghost that follows me around. My family has lived in haunted houses that belonged to old family members for decades; some of the houses date back to the 1800s. My family has always been followed by the ghosts of our ancestors and protected by them.

KEATON INGLE, GRADE I2





The Blue Bike

My mom, on her birthday
Sitting on her new, shiny, teal-blue bike
With a white woven basket sitting firmly between the handles
Begging to be filled with five-cent candy and toys from
down the street

As she sits and smiles, with her rolled up, hand-me-down jeans
And tangled hair that dangles loosely from her ponytail
As yellow as the banana taffy she loved as a child
She bounces, impatiently waiting with her tomboy attitude
To take it outside and ride in endless circles and gloat to
her brothers.

The Blue Bike by Regan Phipps

Behind the camera, my grandmother smiles as she takes the photo
Watching her daughter gleam with happiness
As she begs to join her brothers outside
“Without your shoes?” she says, and just like that
She grabs the closest shoes in sight and quickly shoves them on
Ignoring the *Be Safe!* and *Don’t go too fast!* and *Listen to your brothers!* calls
She barrels through the door, the wooden frame creaking slowly behind her
And she doesn’t look back at the house sitting on the hill.

REGAN PHIPPS, GRADE II

My Hero

My grandfather’s name was Burchel Cowden. He was born at Rose Hill, Lee County, Virginia, on December 22, 1922. He was from a very poor family. It was not a big house and they were very packed since he had three sisters, four brothers and a half-brother. Because they were always spending time together, they grew a very strong bond as a family.

When he was 18, he knew he was going to be drafted as it was during World War II. He decided to go ahead and enlist into the U.S. Army on May 22, 1942, having a sixth grade education and not being able to read or write. He served as a private as a part of the 131st Artillery Division. He prayed every night that he would make it back home from the war.

One night in 1945, he was scheduled for guard duty. It was very dark with only the distant lights of the military base shining through the fence. He was walking to relieve the other guard and there was some miscommunication. The fellow guard shot him through the belly button and out through his back. He was flown to an Army hospital in Paris where he received medical treatment. He later received the Purple Heart for his actions.

After the war, my grandfather came back from the military and started preaching in Ramsey. He passed away on April 13, 2002, in Norton, VA. I never got to get to know my grandfather, but from what I have heard, he was a very good man and he loved his family.

JADEN PRITCHARD, GRADE II

The Meaning of the American Flag

When I think of an object that is special to my family, it would have to be the American flag that flies day and night in front of my house. It is special to me because it represents the freedom that our soldiers have given us overseas. I'm the grandson of a U.S. military veteran, and my family thinks very highly of the flag and the soldiers who have fought and lost their lives to protect our flag. Our flag flies day and night spring through fall. We take the flag down in the winter to protect the flag from the harsh weather.

When people pull in my driveway, they are met by the flag "waving" at them. The flag sits atop a flagpole and has only been replaced once in many years. The view of the flag on late summer nights is breathtaking with the red, white, and blue of the flag complementing the orange and pink sky. The flag is the first thing I see in the morning when I go out of the house and the last thing I see when I go in the house at night.

My family supports the flag, what it stands for, and all that the troops and veterans have done to protect our freedom. We have this support because we have had family members to serve overseas; my grandfather and two of my great uncles have all served in the United States military. They served in the Army, National Guard, Navy, and Air Force branches. In my family we always stand behind the troops and the flag because of all the meaning and significance it holds for us.

HUNTER ROSE, GRADE 12

Where I'm From

I am from sewing needles
From cold Mountain Dew and hot summer days
I am from an old blue house by the creek
That was built by my grandfather
(cold, clear, and soothing).

I am from red and white roses
The strong, tall pine tree
Whose needles never changed no matter the season
I am from blue eyes and Christmas dinners
From Renee and Jay.

I'm from camping and "snipe hunting"
From "Hey! Quiet down!" and "Y'all behave now"
I'm from Sunday morning church and John 3:16
From Dungannon and down in the holler
Fried chicken and cornbread.

From the heart-shaped necklace my grandfather gave me
The long black hair of my grandmother
Pictures scattered between family from house to house
Photo albums, boxes, and frames that hold my family close.
I am from these memories, forever cherished,
Happiness, laughter, and love.

MARISA SHUPE, GRADE II

Heavenly Bread

The sound of a running kitchen sink on a hot, sunny August day. Walking in to find my granny making her famous cornbread. She barks commands no sooner than I get there, *Get me some cornmeal!* she'll say. I watch as she pours in an uncertain amount of water, cornmeal and milk. Mixing it, stirring it, weighing each ingredient with her bare hands. Being able to tell if it's right or not just by mixing it – that's always been something I've wanted to be able to do. She pours the mix into a pan. Realizing that she has extra batter, she pours it into a cast iron skillet, places it in the oven, and waits. When it's time to retrieve it from the oven, it comes out a golden brown pan of deliciousness. The steam rising, the perfectly shaped triangle on the plate next to a big bowl of potato soup, revealing yet another perfect meal.

Ingredients:

1 cup flour
1 cup yellow cornmeal
2/3 cup granulated sugar
1 teaspoon salt
3 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1/3 cup neutral oil or melted butter
1 large egg
1 cup milk

Instructions:

- Grease a 9-inch round cake pan or cast iron skillet well and set aside. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.
- In a medium mixing bowl, add the flour, cornmeal, sugar, salt, and baking powder. Whisk to combine well.
- Make a well in the center of your dry ingredients and add your oil or butter, milk, and egg. Stir just until the mixture comes together and there are only a few lumps remaining.
- Pour the batter into the prepared pan and bake for 20-25 minutes until the top is a deep golden brown and a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean.

(Recipe Credit: blessthismessplease.com)

DASANYE SMITH, GRADE II

Dark Lipstick and a Diet Coke

An old black and white picture
in a tattered photo album
shows my great grandmother,
Goldie Mae Burton.
She's much younger, with
dark lipstick, a crisp white dress,
pitch black hair in ringlet curls,
and a Diet Coke in hand.
She resembles a movie star;
The wind gracefully blowing her hair and dress,
She looks perfect.

Although she looks so beautiful in the photo,
she had recently dealt with great tragedy.
Just days before, she had lost her child to a miscarriage.
Even through the pain,
she stayed strong and held her head high
for her husband and children.
This picture does not only show a gorgeous woman;
it shows a woman of strength.

MARY TOOTILL, GRADE 10

My Hero

As my grandfather stands there in the heart of Vietnam,
Dressed in his olive green war-torn uniform,
An old white undershirt peeking out from underneath,
A tattered green cap keeping the sun off his freshly shaved head,
Colorful medals and awards on his chest,
His sleeves rolled up to keep them out of the way,
He thinks about the people he had to leave at home,
My grandmother writing letters and hoping he is safe,
His family and friends worrying about him.
Some people might not like the war he fought in,
With violence and protests against the war,
But I think of him as a hero, my hero.



My Hero by Caleb Williams

CALEB WILLIAMS, GRADE II

JONESVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL



Our Beautiful Traditions

In this area of the United States, holiday traditions are very important. The holidays bring about nostalgia and memories from a time that were simpler yet more filling. This year, in thinking about a topic for my students to write about I wanted to explore our family traditions in Lee County. Most students interviewed their relatives about their Christmas traditions growing up. While others wanted to honor our veterans with a poem. I was thrilled to read all of my students' family interviews and poems. I learned many family traditions that I had not heard of before. For example, several of my students wrote about taking sycamore balls off of a sycamore tree and using them for decorations. Reading the interviews also brought beautiful memories back to my mind. Countless interviews spoke about getting the paper bag full of nuts, apples, oranges, and peppermint. I, too remember receiving them as a child at church, and I am glad my church continues this tradition. Most of all, through this writing project I feel my students learned valuable lessons of giving, honoring, and being grateful for our community and families.

BRIANA AUSTIN, TEACHER
JONESVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Memories of Family and Home

Being able to call beautiful Lee County, Virginia home becomes more precious to me with each passing year. Not only are we blessed with breathtaking scenery such as beautiful sunsets over distant mountain ranges, wildlife roaming the lush rolling hills, and vibrant autumn colors that blanket the ridges, but we also possess a heritage rich in history and traditions. The Origin Project has inspired our students to dig deeper into the past and has enabled them to discover lost family stories and learn of treasured traditions. For me, one of the most precious aspects is that, through the stories written by our students, long forgotten memories have been restored to these families and to me as well. My hope is that the work done with The Origin Project has enabled these students to gain an appreciation for their heritage and has inspired them to carry on some of these beloved traditions and possibly begin some of their own.

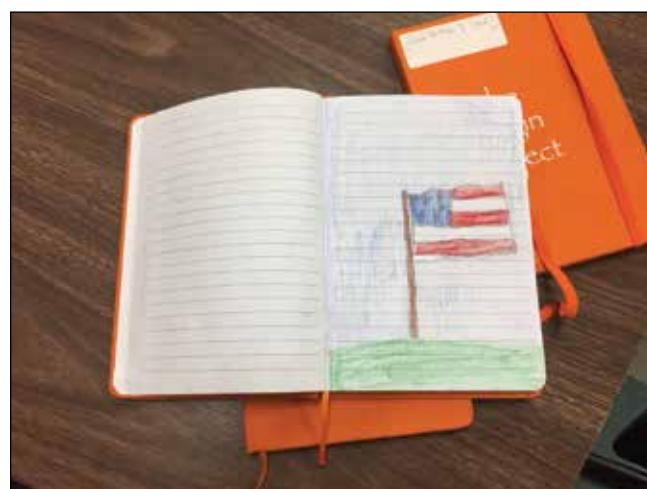
SHEILA SHULER, TEACHER
JONESVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL

My Dad's Childhood

Don Rogers is my dad. He was born in 1970. I'm talking about my dad and how he celebrated Christmas when he was a kid.

When he was growing up my dad celebrated Christmas in ways similar to how we do it now. On Christmas Eve, he stayed home with his family. Then on Christmas day, he and his family would go to Indiana to spend time with his grandparents.

He also told me about a special memory that he has is seeing his grandparents.



Acrostic Flag

He told me how the holidays were different. He said the joy of seeing kids opening presents has changed. My dad said that being with family and giving are the best gifts of all.

MATTIE AMEY, GRADE 5

My Papa's Christmas

My Papa Smitty Baker was born in 1949. He had a good Christmas growing up. He would always go in the field, behind Aunt Edith's House, to cut a christmas tree. His mom and him would decorate it. While he was waiting to open presents on Christmas Eve, my papaw and his friend would shoot off fireworks off the front porch. Santa would always leave presents for him Christmas morning.

One of my papa's special memories was when he got a bicycle. He rode it into his parent's bedroom and woke them up to show them.

The holidays are different now from when my papa was growing up. The Christmas tree comes out from a box now.

The one thing papa said that I should learn is that it's a great time of the year, we should spend time with family, and make good memories.

WALKER BAKER, GRADE 5

My Papaw's Christmas

My papaw Jim Delph was born in 1945. He celebrated the holiday by eating popcorn and putting up a tree. He had a real tree not a fake one. He would decorate the tree with glass ornaments and put up stockings. My Papaw said for Christmas he would get a toy and a shirt. He said it was the best Christmas he ever had. He would get a piece of wood and widdle it on the front porch.

He had a good memory about Christmas. He said there was no snow one year but it was 75 degrees. He had a really good memory about Christmas.

My grandfather talks about the holidays and how they are different from when he was growing up. When he was growing up he would get a shirt and a toy for Christmas. Now, I get a lot of gifts for Christmas. We get stockings and hang them in the living room on a deer that is on a wall. I can't wait to see what I got this Christmas. Only my parents know.

My papaw and I have memories together too. Our traditions are that we open gifts. After that, if it isn't too cold outside, we sit on the porch and tell funny jokes. We laugh a lot over them. My Papaw and I had a lot of traditions that are fun.

He would like for me to learn that Christmas is not all about gifts. It is about spending time with your family and having fun.

NICK BARBER, GRADE 5

A Very Sweet Christmas

My mom Kristy Bishop was born in 1984. On Christmas, they would load up and go out looking for lights and decorations. My mom said that they would ride around looking at lights and singing Christmas carols.

They also would go back home and put up a tree, and they would put decorations on the tree that they had hand made over the years.

One of my mom's favorite memories is when my mamaw would cook dinner and the entire family would come over. They had all of their cousins,aunts,uncles,siblings and grandparents together under one roof.

My mom said that so much has changed over time. She said that families do not get together anymore like they used to and kids get so much more than they did as kids. Everything they received when they were kids they were thankful for it.

My mom said that Christmas is a time to celebrate Jesus. It is also a time to spend with family and friends, to eat, and make memories that will last a lifetime. She wants me to always remember it's better to give than receive.

TAYLOR BISHOP, GRADE 5

My Dad's Christmas as a Child

My dad, John W. Bledsoe, was born in 1971. His mother and grandmother started making candy a week prior to Christmas. The smells and activities are still fresh in his mind. "The celebrations were more important then and most went out in the woods and cut a fresh tree each year," he said. He also said, "The churches assembled for the elderly and sick. Kids enjoyed taking them out to these people."

My dad has special memories about Christmas. He said, "That his mother assembled everyone at his house for a Christmas eve celebration. Gifts were exchanged and a cornucopia of sandwiches, chips, candies, cookies, cakes, and so on were available." "His grandparents were alive then too so Christmas was extraordinary gifts were a big part." My dad said, "Yes, but more fellowship, church, community activities as well."

He also told me how holidays are different now than back then. Dad said, "There were plenty of gifts, but it was much more about family, fellowship, church, community celebrations than it is now. The holiday is far more about gifts than it was then."

My dad would like me to learn that all families are losing their focus of fellowship, togetherness, and the true meanings of Christmas, as well as church and community events.

JOHNNA BLEDSOE, GRADE 5

My Grandma's Christmas

My Grandma Samantha Briggs celebrated Christmas in a great way! My Grandma said she started to decorate for Christmas the day after Thanksgiving. Grandma said she decorated inside, outside, and there was not a bare spot on the tree.

My grandma remembers that every Christmas she got one toy and a new outfit. My grandma looked forward to her brown bag full of fruit and candy from the church after her Christmas play.

My grandma's special memory about Christmas was when she woke up and smelled the food her mother was preparing. She knew her whole family would be over to celebrate Christmas.

My grandma says Christmas is different now because she is the person who decorates and cooks for the family. My grandma thinks another reason Christmas is different is that all of her brothers and sisters have come up with their own family traditions through the years.

My grandma says she wants me to remember nothing is more important than being thankful for God giving us his son to die on the cross to save us from sin. My grandma had a amazing Christmas!

JULIA BRITTON, GRADE 5

Carole Cantor's Traditions

Carole Cantor is my mamaw and she was born in 1958. She had an awesome Christmas! My mamaw's family would cut down a cedar tree and they would decorate it with ornaments and tinsel. They would get an apple, orange, and candy instead of gifts. After eating breakfast on Christmas morning, they would go to her grandmother's house and eat with her. Her grandmother would always make an applesauce cake and give them fruit, candy, and a one dollar bill in a brown bag. After leaving her grandmother's house, they would come home, talk, and then go to bed.

My mamaws special memory was going to her grandmother's house. She said it was the most fun of the whole season.

Holidays were different when my mamaw was growing up because she had seven brothers and sisters. So it was really hard to get the money to buy gifts. When they did get stuff, they cared for it and appreciated it. She said that back then it was more about Jesus Christ and his birth. These days it is all about gifts, decorations, and Santa. People forget the true meaning of Christmas.

My mamaw wants me to learn to put the real meaning of Christmas. First, the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and to not commercialize gifts so much.

MOLLIE CANTOR, GRADE 5

My Mamaw's Traditions

My mamaw Barb Johnson was born in 1953. When she was little she went caroling and singing with the church at Christmas. She made her own ornaments. She strung popcorn to put around the tree and she hung all of the Christmas cards on the tree and during the night the fire would reflect off of them. Every year she made cookies for Santa.

One year her dad walked down the road and called a store and told them what to bring as a Christmas present. They ended up bringing it even in the snow. She did not think they would but they did. It is so nice to think that people would help that much. My mamaw said the holidays haven't changed much. Other than the number of presents and electric lights. She got one present and a pair of shoes and her brother got one and a pair of shoes. She remembers going into the living room and unwrapping her presents.

She wanted me to learn to appreciate what you have and to be nice to people who are not as well off as you. Christmas is Jesus's birthday. Gifts is not what Christmas is all about. I will try to remember all of this.

RYAN CARMONY, GRADE 5

My Mom's Christmas

My mom Damie Carter was born in 1969. She loved her Christmas back then. She made her own ornaments and hung them on the tree. She made homemade cookies and visited her grandmother in Kings Mountain, North Carolina.

My mom had a special memory about Christmas. Each Christmas Eve she put out a sock as a stocking and wrote a note. She put it on a chair so Santa would know where to put her presents.

The holidays were different back then. Santa filled their stockings with an orange, an apple, and some nuts. Today, stockings are filled with lots of toys and candy.

My mom wanted me to learn that she got less than what kids get today, but she was so very happy!

JOHN CARTER, GRADE 5

My Mamaw's Christmas

My mamaw, Kaye Stables, celebrated Christmas in a way I want to. She was born in 1955. For her Christmas tree, she and her family went and cut a live tree. They took it home and decorated it while drinking hot cocoa. They also strung popcorn for the tree. The next day they made cookies, pies, and candy.

Mamaw said one Christmas it had snowed a lot. After opening gifts and eating breakfast they went sledding. While they were sledding her mom and oldest sister cooked Christmas dinner.

Today, Christmas is more commercialized than it was when she was little. Lots of gifts now are store bought but back then they were handmade. They meant more. When mamaw was little she made decorations, but now we go and get them from the store.

Mamaw wants me to learn Christmas is not all about gifts under the tree. It is about the birth of our Savior. It is also about spending time with family.

My traditions are very different than my mamaw's were in the past. We have an artificial tree instead of a live tree. We buy decorations instead of making them. I wish my Christmas was like my mamaws.

SAMANTHA CAVIN, GRADE 5

Enrique's Christmas

I interviewed my sister's friend, Enrique Lopez. Enrique was born in 1994. For Christmas his family would take him to go cut down a tree and Enrique would help his family bake cookies.

Enrique said he had memories of Christmas. One of the memories was of him and his family going to the lights in the park on Christmas. He said it was really fun for him and his family.

Now Christmas is different than it is now. One reason why Christmas is different now is because his family used to cook the holiday meals and now he cooks the meals.

Enrique told me I should start baking cookies with my mamaw and make memories with my sister while I still can.

ASHLEE CLASBY, GRADE 5

My Grandma's Wonderful Christmas

My Grandma Nancy Garrett was born in 1956 and she celebrated Christmas way different than I do now. My grandma and her mother would make chocolate and peanut-butter fudge. My grandma's dad would cut down

a cedar tree for their Christmas tree. Her dad would cut down the cedar tree on their farm. My grandma and her mother also made peanut-butter candy. At my grandma's church they would have a Christmas play and would go caroling in the neighborhood. On their Christmas tree they would decorate with bubble lights and icicles. At the top of the tree they would put a star that was made out of cardboard and covered with foil. Her mother would cut a small hole in the cardboard and would put a bulb in the star so it would light up. Christmas cards that they got from the mail from family and friend were taped up on the door trim for decoration.

5th Grade Listening to Lorraine

On Christmas day my grandma and her family would go to their grandmother's house for Christmas dinner. Her grandmother would fix turkey, dressing, and all of the trimmings. My Grandma's favorite dessert was apple stack cake and apple dumplings.

There would always be at least forty people there to celebrate. Her family would draw names and whoever they picked they would have to buy that person a present for Christmas.

For Christmas my grandma got two presents: a toy and some clothes. Her granddad gave her a apple, a orange, peppermint stick candy, and walnuts. Today, we get a lot more presents than my grandma got in the past.

My grandma said to be grateful and appreciate all that we are blessed with. She also said to show love to others by helping ones in need.

BRYCEN COOMER, GRADE 5

How Did You Celebrate The Holidays?

My grandma Lisa Cowan was born in 1966. They celebrated the holidays different than we celebrate it now. When my mamaw celebrated the holidays she would cut down a tree and decorate it with ornaments and my mamaw would only get a few gifts under the tree.

My mamaw celebrated the holidays by opening gifts, she ate Christmas dinner and made desserts like Christmas cookies, candy, and made homemade hot chocolate. At night she went to houses singing Christmas carols.

My mamaw had a special memory about the holidays. One Christmas, she went to Virginia to spend Christmas with her mamaw and papaw because she didn't spend it with them all the time. My mamaw said the holidays are different from when she was growing up. For example, she has her own family, she decorates different now, and she uses fake trees.

My mamaw would like me to learn what Christmas is really about. Christmas is about Jesus' birthday because it's important for us to celebrate Jesus' birthday. She wants me to know how important family is.

HANNAH COWAN, GRADE 5

Christmas from My Great, Great Aunt

My great, great Aunt Annette Tomlinson was born in 1956. Every year when she was a child, she went with her family to cut down a Christmas tree. All of their decorations and ornaments were homemade. Her family always had a large family get together. It was always special to her when the whole family got together because she was the youngest out of all of her siblings. She hardly ever got to see her siblings, so when they came home it meant a lot to her.

My great, great aunt had special memories about the holidays. One of them was watching Christmas plays at church. She liked it because she enjoyed hearing the kids and adults sing. Another special memory was when her older siblings were home for the holidays.

The holidays are different now from how they were when she was a kid. Now, everybody buys artificial trees from the store. When she was a kid, most families went to a tree farm to cut their own trees. Another thing that is different is that now most people give people money for a Christmas present, but when she was a kid people took time and thought about what people wanted.

My great, great aunt wants me to learn that Christmas is a time for family to get together to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Christmas is not all about the presents.

CLAIRA COX, GRADE 5

My Granny's Holiday

My grandmother Michelle McIntosh was born in 1964. She grew up in a foster home until she was 13 years old. Her mother and father were in a vehicle accident and they both were killed. She had a teacher who was like a mother to her. She said she is now 54 years old. She went to her house last summer because she never got to know her real mother.

She has a lot of blessings called grandchildren. She is glad that Isaiah is alright after being hit by a truck two years ago. She enjoys spending time with family and friends and remembering the real meaning of Christmas.

What my grandmother would like for me to learn about the holiday is how God can bring you through any valley or storm that life throws at you. He is Lord and Saviour, and the reason for the season.

TREY CRETORS, GRADE 5

My Uncle's Christmas Memories

I interviewed my Uncle Jamie Deirth. He was born in 1985. He celebrated Christmas by cutting down a tree. Then they would decorate the tree with my mom, mamaw, and my other Uncle, Patrick Deirth.

They always received three toys and some clothes. Now we get stuff like games, clothes, and more. They also prayed on Christmas.

Christmas has changed since then. He remembers one Christmas when he was 20 he received a camera. He went to his friends house and broke the camera after he had taken a bunch of pictures. He got so mad and so did his mom.

My favorite Christmas was this year when I went to Bermuda. I got gauges, clothes, games and more. That is my favorite Christmas. I think the true meaning of Christmas is spending time with family and friends.

LANDON DEIRTH, GRADE 5

My Mom's Christmas Memory

During Christmas, my mom and I would bring very pretty flowers for decoration. My family goes to the park with food and celebrates each other every year. When I was five years old at the time all the kids went to play. The adults enjoyed each other. It was funny when my brother was scared by a puppy. Three hours later everyone cleaned up the mess and left. My mom and I walked around the park. Mom sometimes would give my brother and I candy. We have fun every year!

SUBRINA ELDRIDGE, GRADE 5

Johnny's Good Christmas

My friend Johnny Muncy was born in 1955. He and his dad always celebrated together as a family. At Christmas they would gather together and sing Christmas songs as a family.

Johnny had a special memory about the holidays. When he was ten years old there was a store in the town of Jonesville. The name of it was Joyle Hardware. They had a beautiful bicycle that he wished he could get it for Christmas. He did not think it was possible to get this but to his surprise he got it. That is the best gift he remembers ever receiving!

Johnny told me how the holidays are different from now. Back when he was young, Christmas seemed like it was slower. He thinks everybody is so busy now that we do not take time to do things as a family as we should.

Johnny told me family time is very special. We need to slow down and spend more time together and love each other more.

TRAVIS ELDRIDGE, GRADE 5

Christmas in the Past

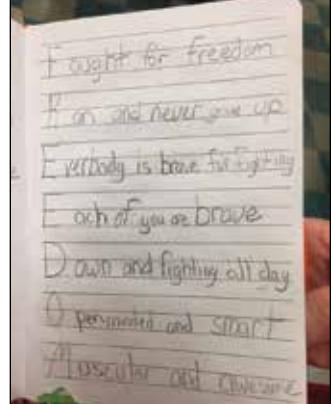
My grandfather Dane Poe was born in 1954. He had a wonderful Christmas. He celebrated on Christmas Eve. Dane and his family would go to his Grandma Sharp's house. She would have food and a lot of sweets like peanut butter rolls and purple punch with apples and bananas. Then, he would go to his Grandma Poe's house. He would put \$1 a month in a Christmas club account and had \$12 to spend on whatever he wanted. He opened gifts at his house. He had about two gifts. On Christmas day, he had a lunch with a lot of his family.

Dane had a very special memory about the holidays. He got a wagon when he was six. It was a big surprise! Also, when he was thirteen he got his own 13" black and white TV.

Dane believes the holidays are different now from when he was growing up. There are no Black Fridays or big sales around any of the holidays. They didn't focus on shopping. All churches had Christmas plays. There were less people at Christmas plays than today. There wasn't as many gifts then either.

My grandfather would like me to learn that Christmas is not just about the presents. It's a good time to give the presents but, we need to remember why we give presents. Also, spend time with your family because it goes away quickly.

Veteran's Day Acrostic



TAYLOR EPPERLY, GRADE 5

My Mom's Christmas Country Life

My mom Terina Spivey was born in 1981. She had a good Christmas! Back then her family danced and sang Christmas songs while decorating the tree. They made cookies with their mom and they loved to string the tree with popcorn out of what they didn't eat. Her dad and brother would go get a tree. My mom said they always had a real tree.

My mom had very special memories about Christmas. Her special memory was going to her mamaws on Christmas Eve to spend time with all her family under one roof. They would sing, open gifts, and tell old stories. My mom loved to listen to her dad, mamaw, and uncle play guitar, banjo, and sing songs.

My mom said that Christmas is a lot different now. It's not the same since loved ones have passed. Her family still gets together at the same house but not as many now. They still tell stories and share laughter.

My mom wants me to always cherish my family especially on holidays. You never know when it's your last time with them. She said to always cherish those past ones and look forward to the ones in the future.

SAVANNAH EVANS, GRADE 5

What Christmas Used to Be

My mom's name is Betinna Fleenor and she was born in 1977. This is how she celebrated Christmas. She decorated her Christmas tree, hung up lights outside, helped her mom make jam cake, wrapped gifts, and she would take part in the church Christmas play.

My mom had a special memory of her Christmas. One night while her family was driving around looking at Christmas lights, she saw Santa knocking on a neighbor's door.

My mom said Christmas is different from when she was growing up. My mom had different holidays than I do. Today holidays are more commercialized. She has tried to keep her family traditions for her children.

My mom taught me the true meaning of Christmas. The true meaning of Christmas is to celebrate the birth of Christ our Lord and Savior.

MEGAN FLEENOR, GRADE 5

Christmas in 1942

My grandfather Art Miller was born in 1942. He celebrated the holidays by going to cut down their own tree. He also made his own ornaments.

He had a special memory about the holidays. His father made their gifts out of wood. His father was a good woodworker so the gifts were really nice.

My grandfather said the holidays are different from now. Most trees and toys come from a store. He still has one of the toys from his dad and it makes him think of his dad often.

My grandfather said that you don't need the best Christmas but you need your family. He told me that you don't need the perfect Christmas, but you need family during Christmas.

JUSTIN FRANKLIN, GRADE 5

Christmas Back in the Day

My mother Chasity Parks was born in 1978 and she is 40 years old. Every Christmas Eve my mom would go to mamaw's house. They would bake cookies and delicious peppermint bark.

My mom told me her favorite memory as a kid was on one Christmas morning she went outside. She just so happened to see her mamaw dressed up like Santa carrying a sack of presents.

My mom always says Christmas is different now. She said now all kids care about is presents. That is not what Christmas is about. Christmas is about celebrating baby Jesus's birth, seeing family, and having a good time.

My mom said she wanted me to learn not to be greedy but to be thankful for what I have, especially during Christmas. Some people can't afford one present yet I get so many.

LAILA FRITTS, GRADE 5

A Fun Christmas

I interviewed my mom about what Christmas was like when she was little. She was born in 1975 here in Lee County, Virginia.

My mom would decorate trees with homemade ornaments. My mom made them with her mom and dad. She would go with her church to sing carols. She said that she would go every year.

She said that she had more family time. She had more family time because she played board games with her family. She kept some of her games and we still play them as a family. They're fun! One of them is really old and it's called Checkers. It is so old and used it's about to rip. It's fun.

Mom wanted me to remember that all generations of family are different and they have different traditions.

NICK GAILEY, GRADE 5

A Good Christmas

My Gramee Nell Newman was born in 1957. She celebrated Christmas every year. Her family cut down a cedar tree every year and always two days before Christmas because it would burn the house if they didn't.

One thing my gramee did was they went to church on Christmas day. When they came back Santa Claus would come. Before she went to bed she opened her gift.

The difference now from when she was little was that she has has to buy the gifts and make the food. When she was little she had no family meals and now she has to make the family meals.

One thing my gramee wants me to learn is that their Christmas was simple because they got one toy every year but we get too many gifts. We also need to realize that Christmas has a meaning. God is the real reason that you have Christmas.

GRACIE GARRETT, GRADE 5



Nancy reading mentor text

A Christmas Story

My mammow Angel Head was born in 1963. My mammow celebrated Christmas in a special way. She made her own ornaments for the tree. Her dad would cut a tree on Christmas eve. She would string popcorn on the tree. Each of them would make a hand made present for everyone in the family. Her mother would bake cookies and make the Christmas dinner and they would go to sleep and wait for Santa to come.

My mammow had a special memory about Christmas. It was when her children were small and watching the excitement on their faces as christmas drew near. She loved their happy faces when they awoke to the gift's under the tree. She remembers her son believing Santa did not bring his gift. He found it hanging on the gun rack. He cried and hugged her and said I love you!

My mammow said now people have no Christmas spirit. No Christmas Spirit! People have forgotten that it is about Jesus and not the presents under the tree. People now get offended by everything and try to change traditions. Christmas starts way too early and there are no events to attend in December.

My mammow said I need to learn more about the holiday season. She said Jesus is the reason for the season and the love of family.

HIRAM HEAD, GRADE 5

How Did You Celebrate Christmas?

Mary Todd was born in 1976. She is my Mammaw's friend. She would make homemade cookies and fudge. When Santa came on Christmas eve night she woke up and opened gifts.

She remembered that one year her mother had Santa build her a doll house made all of wood. She would play with it all day every day.

Her family has passed on and even though they have children Christmas is not the same. Everything is commercialized. Nothing is homemade anymore. She said that family is the most important and please continue to have your family traditions.

JAYDEN HEAD, GRADE 5

Cecelia's Special Christmas

My friend Cecelia Haynes was born in 1949. When she was younger she celebrated the holidays. She decorated,baked cookies, sung carols, and entertained family. She would go out and play in the snow if it did snow.

Cecelia celebrated her memories by enjoying spending time with family and friends, getting out from school, and going to sleep late. She loved having old family members and friends over.

Cecelia grew up celebrating the holidays different because now everyone is busy and worried about what their kids want for Christmas. Now, we have big meals each year and we get more decorations to put on the Christmas tree.

Cecelia wanted me to learn that the real reason for Christmas is celebrating with family, friends, and others. Always, remember what Christmas is about.

CHEYENNE HELBERT, GRADE 5

Old Time Christmas

My mom was born in 1969. When my mom was my age on Christmas she would decorate a Christmas tree with her dad. They would hang up lights which were fireflies in a small glass bottle. They would also hang up pinecones and some popcorn on string. When they were done decorating, they would make dinner. They would kill a pig for some ham and go to the garden to get potatoes for mash potatoes, corn and peas. My mom and her dad would bake cookies too.

My mom once told me the story about her Christmas when she was 10. It was great. My mom said that nothing is different at all about her Christmas. We open presents, make food, bake cookies, decorate the Christmas tree, and listen to Christmas songs on our computer.

My mom wants to know on Christmas to spend as much family time as possible.

JOSEPH HORNER, GRADE 5

My Dad's Christmas

My dad Mike Lane was born in 1971. He had a great Christmas. He decorated the house with his mom and always had a very good breakfast on Christmas morning.

His special memory was the first Christmas his son got to spend with his dad's mother. My dad says Christmas is different now because he says kids are always on their phones or games.

My dad says he wants me to learn to not go into debt trying to impress people by spending too much money. The reason I interviewed my step dad is because I have never interviewed him before and I have enjoyed learning more about him.

GRANT HOWELL, GRADE 5

Back When the Holidays Were Different

My nanna, Carol Woodard, was born in 1948. My Nanna celebrated the holidays different in the past than now. She would get together with family. Her and her papaw would go cut down a Christmas tree behind their house when it was freezing cold. She would also go caroling with her church group. My nanna had different traditions back then than now.

One of my nanna's special memories was when her and her papaw would go cut down a Christmas tree behind his house. The field was covered in snow and pine trees. All the trees were covered in snow while it was snowing. She loved it because it was so beautiful. It was the biggest snow she could remember.

The holidays are very different now from back when my Nanna was little. She didn't decorate as much then. Families had a tree and that was about it. She didn't have hardly as much presents as now. She would only get a couple when everyone now usually gets a bunch of presents. There were more relatives and cousins there. This is how my Nanna Carol celebrated the holidays.

My Nanna wanted me to learn, that when people back then got things they appreciated every little thing because they wouldn't get as much as now. It snowed a lot more back then. It snowed so much they would be out of school for days. I enjoyed learning about my Nanna's past.

Now we decorate a tree. We have a fake tree. It doesn't snow nearly as much as back then. Now my Nanna decorates her entire house. Christmas is a lot different now.

BAILIE HUGHES, GRADE 5

America

America is cool! Thanks for everything.
Mason fought in World War 2.
Every day I will believe in hope.
Right is what America is.
I will hope.
Christopher likes America.
American flag.

CHRISTOPHER HURD, GRADE 5

My Family's Christmas

My dad Larry Lee Keene celebrated Christmas by going to his grandma's house. He decorated the tree at his grandma's house and she baked cookies. One Christmas my dad went on a horse drawn sled ride. They rode through the woods and drank hot chocolate, ate sugar cookies, and cut a tree. They had homemade decorations and food. My dad wants me to know that Christmas is about family not gifts.

Today, I celebrate Christmas by decorating a tree and buying gifts. On Christmas Eve we go to my aunt's house and have a big dinner. At the end of the dinner she gives gifts to everybody. When I go back to my house I open one gift on Christmas Eve. On Christmas, we wait for our family to come to our house to open gifts and after we open them we play the rest of the day.

My dad wants me to learn that Christmas is about family and Jesus, not gifts. I know that it is about family and Jesus but I still want gifts too. Now, that I'm getting older I get fewer gifts. One day I won't get any gifts because I will buy gifts for someone else.

JACE KEENE, GRADE 5

My Papaw's Christmas Memories

My papaw Fred Woliver was born in 1940 and he celebrated Christmas very differently than we do now. When he was young, he went down to a sycamore tree and got the balls off of the limbs and dipped them in dye. Then he hung them on the tree that they got off the farm. His family got mistletoe off of black gum trees.

My papaw has a special memory about Christmas. He did not get many toys instead he got fruit, clothing, and shoes. He always had a big Christmas breakfast and a big Christmas dinner.

My papaw said that Christmas is different now than in the past. The tree decorations and gifts are all store bought. They raised their own food themselves. My pappaw said that if you don't have the money to get your own ornaments make your own gifts. He said most of all the real meaning of Christmas is Jesus' birthday.

BRYSON KELLY, GRADE 5



Mrs. Jones and Nancy

My Grandmother's Great Christmas

My grandmother Delores Wolford was born in 1945 and she celebrated Christmas in a great way.

First, she used men's work socks for stockings and laid them under the tree. Each child received one gift. Their stockings were normally filled with an orange, apple, nut, and candy cane. They would go through the woods for the perfect tree. Then their dad would chop it down and help them take it home. They would string popcorn and make ornaments out of newspapers. Their favorite part was doing it with the family. People decorate different now.

Now Christmas is more about presents and less about time with family. She wants me to learn that it's more about Jesus' birthday than receiving presents.

ZACH LANE, GRADE 5

Christmas Memories

My mom Laura Allen was born in 1987 and she celebrated Christmas differently than I do. She and her family baked candy and worked on puzzles every snow day. They decorated a tree together.

One Christmas she and her extended family got snowed in. They played board games and played in the snow for days. My mom said that things are different now than in the past. There are a lot more things to give, and there are more expensive gifts. There are new lights.

My mom said I need to be thankful for things I get for Christmas. The reason for the season is Jesus and all holidays are better with family.

LOGAN LESTER, GRADE 5

Celebrating Christmas

My nanny, Sheila Anderson, was born in 1957. She celebrated Christmas in a different way, a long time ago. My nanny's dad would help cut down a Christmas tree on their land. My nanny loved to decorate the tree with lights, garland, and ornaments. My nanny's favorite part of the tree was the lighted up small star on the top of the tree.

My nanny has a special memory. She would have a big dinner. Their family would always have this dinner. It was a tradition! My nanny's mom would be in the kitchen cooking up a storm! She would fix ham, homemade biscuits, and other goodies! When her family was ready they would sing Christmas carols.

Now, my nanny spends Christmas with her daughters, her son, and grandchildren. Her mom and dad are passed away, so she celebrates Christmas with us. Long ago she celebrated the holidays with her mom, dad, sisters, and brothers. She will always be grateful for her family and friends.

My nanny always wants me to know the true meaning of Christmas. My nanny says, "That the true meaning of Christmas is to spend time with your family and it's not about the gifts." I agree with my nanny. Christmas is not about the gifts, it's about spending time with your family. Christmas is different now than what it was.

RIYA LEWIS, GRADE 5

Mamaw's Christmas

My mamaw, Johnnie Ann Combs, was born in 1947 and she celebrated Christmas wonderfully.

She and her brothers went outside and cut a cedar tree before Christmas. They used the old ribbon from the year before. They practiced caroling for church the next day. They all loved it and afterwards got treats. Now, we have artificial trees, and we buy presents. I think that the most valuable time is the time spent with family and friends.

She didn't have many store bought things. It was mostly homemade. She got a present from Santa. She stayed up as long as she could trying to see Santa putting a gift under the tree, but she couldn't stay awake long enough.

My mamaw told me about how the holidays are different from now and how the lesson is it's not about what you get but what you give. Christmas isn't about presents. It's about spending time together.

PIPER LINTON, GRADE 5

My Grandpa's Christmas

My grandpa Paul Stanley Litton. He was born in 1956. Every year he would go out and cut a tree. He did it because nobody was strong like him. His dad died before he was born. That made him sad without a dad. One of the memories my grandpa had was funny. One year when my grandpa got done decorating, he opened the door. A wild cat ran up the tree. It took him forever to get it out.

My grandpa remembers Christmas being different from now. He said back then you only got food for Christmas. Now you can buy presents for your loved ones.

My grandpa would like me to learn the true meaning of Christmas. He wants me to know its not about presents. Christmas is about Jesus's birthday.

I celebrate Christmas with my grandpa. First we go shopping. Then we go home, watch westerns, and drink hot chocolate. On Christmas morning we go to the living room. I tear open presents. My grandpa whispers in my ear I'm happy to be your grandpa.

RANDY LITTON, GRADE 5

What My Grandma Donna Carroll's Christmas

I interviewed Donna Carroll. She was born in 1956. My grandma Donna Carroll celebrated the holidays growing up in a great way! Her dad would cut down a Christmas tree. They took it back to their house and decorated it with lights and ornaments. They would bake gingerbread men and decorate them.

My grandma's special memory about Christmas is when her family, animals, and friends got together to exchange gifts and ate dinner. She always remembered Christmas is about Jesus being born.

My grandma said that Christmas is different now because people now use artificial Christmas trees. Decorations are more colorful and bright. Meals are rushed more now. Gifts are more expensive now.

My grandma would like me to learn that being with family, animals, and friends is more important than expensive gifts.

JAYME LIVESAY, GRADE 5

Christmas for My Dad

I interviewed Terry Britton, my dad who was born in 1957. He told me he put lights on the front porch every year in Chicago, rode a snowmobile, and watched church plays every year for Christmas celebration.

He said his special memories of growing up was his uncle Arnold dressed up as Santa Claus for Christmas, and playing Ice Hockey on the lake during Christmas break.

The holidays are different from what they used to be. These are some reasons my dad thinks so. In Chicago, they did not have Christmas parades, people had to make gifts or go to the store to buy gifts, there was no online shopping, and it is way more busy than what it use to be. That is some reasons my dad thinks the holidays are different. I agree people used to be happy with a pair a shoes as a gift, but now we throw fits if we don't get the stuff we want. I never knew why my dad said he did not want any gifts until I interviewed him. Now, I understand the meaning of Christmas.

My dad wanted me to know that Christmas has always and will always be about Jesus.

JUSTINA LOWDER, GRADE 5

Christmas In Nebraska

My papa Bill Humstom was born in 1965. His family would go cut down a Christmas tree, make cookies, decorate the cookies, and go with the Boy Scouts to sing carols.

My papa has a special memory. It was about his oldest grandson's first Christmas. My papa was so happy that he had a grandson!

My papa says Christmas is more commercialized now than when he was a kid.

They would cut down a tree for Christmas.

My papa told me to learn to have love all year long, joy, and the spirit of giving.

AUBREY MALLE, GRADE 5

My Grandmother's Christmas Memories

My grandmother Teresa Bray was born in 1958 and she had an awesome way of celebrating Christmas. She celebrated by cutting down cedar trees and using them as Christmas trees. She would cut down holly bushes and nail them against her door and windows.

She would always watch Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer with her parents. I mean she would never miss it. Some families still watch it today. My family still watches it. Does yours?

When she had Christmas she didn't tell her parents what she wanted. She got surprised. Now, most kids tell their parents what they want for Christmas.

My grandma wanted me to learn that Christmas is about spending time with family and the birth of Jesus Christ.

TAYLOR MCKNIGHT, GRADE 5

How My Dad Celebrated Christmas

My dad Rick Mitchell was born in 1974. He celebrated Christmas much different than I do now. My dad's family celebrated Christmas by giving gifts and having Christmas dinner. At the beginning of December my dad, his brothers, and his sisters would go out to cut a tree.

My dad said that he has one very special memory. It was the Christmas when he got his first bike. He said when he saw it he jumped on it and began to ride it. He was only 6 years old when he got his bike.

My dad said that the holidays are much different now because there are a lot more family members and he is able to give more gifts than he used to give. My dad said he would like me to be thankful for what I get because when my dad was my age he did not get much then.

My family celebrates Christmas much different now than my dad did when he was my age. I go to my mom's family and my dad's family. I get a lot of gifts. Some of my gifts are expensive. My dad lets me pick out one big thing and so does my mom. I'm just thankful for what I get because when my dad was my age he didn't get many presents. They couldn't afford it. That is how my family and I celebrate Christmas.

OLIVIA MITCHELL, GRADE 5

Christmas in the 1960s

My nana Patricia Moore was born in 1960. She celebrated the holidays by cutting down a cedar tree. She would decorate the tree with popcorn and homemade ornaments every year. Her mom would always make fudge cake. My nana's grandparents didn't have a lot of money so they gave her a treat bag for Christmas every year.

One of my nana's special memories is when she got to be in a Christmas play. It was about the birth of Jesus. My nana always went to church on Sundays and on Christmas. My nana and her family were kind people.

When my nana was a kid she got one present. She got a doll that walked with her. It was not much but she loved it. Now days, kids get all kinds of presents. Some kids have multiple Christmas presents. I have a lot of family so I get a lot of Christmas presents.

My nana wants me to learn to be thankful for what I get. She wants me to remember that Christmas is not about presents. It is about the birth of Jesus. My nana also told me that Christmas is also about spending time with your family.

ADRIANE MOORE, GRADE 5

Christmas in the Country

My papaw Paul Peters was born in 1949 and he told me how he celebrated Christmas when he was my age. My papaw said growing up that they would grow their own popcorn, eat it, and make strings out of it to decorate their Christmas tree. For Christmas my Papaw would get one toy and one pair of shoes. He said that he was happy with that. Papaw said that his dad would bring boxes of fruit for Christmas like apples, oranges, and grapes. They raised hogs and would kill one to make bacon and ham. Papaw remembers that he had good things to eat.

Now there are a lot of presents under our Christmas tree. Now we go out and buy decorations for our Christmas trees. They killed hogs and ate them for meals. Now, we just go out and buy bacon and ham.

Papaw said that he was happy with just getting one present. Now we get too much. We need to stop with all the presents and get back with spending time with family.

Now, my family has our own memories. On Christmas Eve we go to my mammaw's house and celebrate Christmas. We have good things to eat. My aunt Lisa and my uncle Bobby come too. That is how we celebrate Christmas on my dad's side.

One day after Christmas we go to my granny's house and celebrate Christmas. When I was very small, my papaw made me a crib for my dolls and granny made the quilt, pillow, and the decorations. I still have that bed and it brings back memories.

Mammaw always would let my brother and I decorate the Christmas tree, and sometimes bake cookies. This is how my family celebrates Christmas and it brings back memories.

CHARISA MOORE, GRADE 5

My Dad's Christmas Memories

My dad Dusty Glass was born in 1987. During his childhood, he opened presents first and then went to his grandparents's house. While there, they decorated the Christmas tree and baked cookies.

My dad had a special memory about Christmas. He went to Florida a lot on Christmas. He would get to open presents there. He has family everywhere. He saw his uncle's kids too.

Christmas is different now. Now, families buy decorations for their trees at the store. Instead of getting one present we get lots of gifts. Every year, we buy popcorn at stores. We buy everything at stores now. Little children leave cookies for Santa and family makes food.

My dad wants me to learn that Christmas is a time of year for joy, happiness, and giving.

GLOCKLYN MORRIS, GRADE 5

My Nana's Christmas Growing Up

My nana Barbara Delph was born in 1952. She celebrated Christmas with her dad, brothers, and sisters. Her family would go into the woods and find a beautiful shaped tree. After the tree was put up, they all decorated the tree with traditional ornaments and some homemade ones.

She said her favorite memory was going caroling with her youth church group. She enjoyed seeing all the sweet faces at each home. She loved Christmas Eve and Christmas day with her family. She said her mom made the best dressing for Christmas and my nana still makes it for a tradition. She hates to see traditions lost.

She received 3 gifts for Christmas and she was so thankful. She says that Christmas should not be so much about gifts but for Jesus' birthday. She says that all families just don't get together like they use to. She says that gifts come and gifts go but to always remember that family's love is forever. Jesus should be remembered and celebrated as the true meaning of Christmas.

CAMERON MOSLEY, GRADE 5

My Mamaw's Christmas

My mamaw Janie Evans was born in 1961 and this is how she celebrated Christmas. Every year they would cut down a cedar tree and decorate it with paper chains, popcorn chains, canning lids, and aluminum foil ornaments. She also hung candy canes on the tree which she got to eat after Christmas.

My mamaw had some special memories. One special memory was my mamaw would go to bed early anticipating Santa Claus coming. She would just lay there unable to go to sleep listening for sounds of Santa on the roof. If she heard something she would close her eyes so he would come.

My mamaw says holidays where different from now. Growing up, they did not get 6 to 8 gifts they got 2 to 3 gifts and they were needs like clothes and shoes. She would get a new baby doll. Today gifts are usually wants and they should be needs.

My mamaw wants me to learn the real meaning of Christmas is the birth of Jesus.

COLLYN NEFF, GRADE 5

My Mom's Christmas Story

My mom Samantha Phillips was born in 1989 and this how she celebrated Christmas. She helped her mamaw with cooking and baking chocolate pies and peanut butter rolls. She would let her wrap presents and then they would decorate the tree. She would leave out milk and cookies for Santa, and the entire family would come celebrate together Christmas Eve

She had a memory about having so many people in our family all celebrating together. They had fun and just enjoyed each other's company while eating the best meals together.

My mom said Christmas is different now since her mamaw passed. They all do their own things with their immediate family. At home, Chinese Christmas is a new way they all do gift exchanges. They play games like charades too.

My mom would like me to know that Christmas is a chance to spend quality time with the people you love not a chore or about what you buy.

GUNNER NELMS, GRADE 5

Christmas

My grandma Glorian Nimety was born in 1962. Growing up she would decorate a Christmas tree and bake cookies. She would decorate the tree with homemade ornaments with her family.

My grandma remembers waking up with her family and opening presents and stockings. My grandma says that her Christmas was different in the past. She got toys made of wood and the presents were different.

My grandma says that Christmas isn't about presents it's about family.

BRECKEN NIMETY, GRADE 5

Mamaw's Christmas

My Mamaw Cathy Langley was born in 1965. She celebrated Christmas by putting decorations on the Christmas tree and being out of school. She remembers getting a new bike each year until she got older.

Christmas is different now because she celebrates the time with family like she did as a child and decorating the tree. The gifts were different because she got less than we do now.

She says Christmas is really about baby Jesus and helping others more than receiving.

CHLOEY PARKS, GRADE 5

Mom's Christmas Memories

My mom Rebecca Parks was born in 1979. This is how they celebrated Christmas. She said the day after Thanksgiving was always the day mom's family would decorate for Christmas.

She also said she had a special memory. While decorating their tree, my mom's dad Ricky Pennington would always play an old record of Charlie Pride's Christmas album. She says that's a special memory of her childhood holidays.

She says the holidays are different now then when she was growing up. She said we still decorate our tree together and make special memories. Our family meals have gone from being with extended family to just immediate family. Gifts were much more simple back then versus the expensive ones kids ask for these days.

I asked mom if she wanted me to learn something about the holidays. She said always cherish all the time you have with your family. Make the memories count, because one day a memory is all you'll have left.

JAYCEE PARKS, GRADE 5

My Great Aunt's Christmas

My great aunt Charlcia Jones was born in 1950. This is her Christmas experience. She celebrated by doing a Christmas play at church. Also, at church they got gift bags with fruit, candy, and gum, they drew names for presents, and got gifts from santa. She spent most of Christmas at church, but family came over too.

My aunt had a special memory about Christmas. When she was eight it was almost Christmas. She was going to her bedroom when she saw something in the closet. She opened the closet door and saw a bike. The bike had a tag that said To: Charlcia From: Santa. That was the year she stopped believing in Santa!

My aunt also said that Christmas isn't the same. She said, "Back then it was centered around church." She also said, "It's more about gifts now then the real meaning. You should spend time with your family and go to church."

My aunt wants me to learn that Christmas is a joyful time, and to not let anything take that away. I've had so much fun doing this interview. I want to do it again. I loved learning about my heritage!

KYLAH PARSONS, GRADE 5

A Different Christmas

My mom Jill Pearce was born in 1989. My mom celebrated Christmas a little different than some of us. For Christmas, my mom would always spend it with her mom Nickie. My mom's family would always eat breakfast on Christmas morning. They would also bake cookies to go with it. When it was time to decorate the tree my mom would get to do whatever she wanted to the tree. After she finished, her sister would put the star on.

When my mom was younger, her Aunt Jackie would take her shopping and get her one Christmas present. My mom would always choose shoes. Her Aunt Jackie would have to approve her shoes to make sure her she liked them to.

The gifts my mom got back then were less expensive. She also got less gifts than all of us do. The only people there for her Christmas was her, her sister Amy, and her mom Nickie. Then after that my mom would have dinner with her family on Christmas.

My mom wants me to know that Christmas is not all about the gifts. It is about spending time and having fun with your family.

CHASE PEARCE, GRADE 5

My Grandma's Christmas

My grandma Sherrie Williams was born in 1959. She celebrated the holidays in a great way! They decorated the tree and the house. They visited family and friends. They made Christmas candy. They also cut their own tree.

Her special memory about the holidays is being with family. She made presents for her siblings and they made presents for her. They grew their own food and did not buy it at the store. They received presents that they needed and not wanted.

My grandma wants me to learn that the holidays are about being with family and not about getting presents. Simple things are better and to be grateful.

BRAYLEN PENDERGRAFT, GRADE 5

My Mom's Christmas When She was a Child

My mom Rosemary Scott was born in 1984. She has wonderful Christmas memories. Every year, my mom and her mom would bake special treats. My mom enjoyed giving the treats away. Everyone always wanted the treats.

As a little girl, she would have a candlelight service and sing Christmas songs before her church started. All the youth at the church would go Christmas caroling. She would always get a new dress.

My mom said that Christmas is a lot different now. Families do not get together and visit like they used to. Everyone thinks about gifts instead of the real meaning of Christmas, Jesus Christ.

My mom would like me to learn to spend more time with family and the real meaning of Christmas, which is the birth of Jesus.

WESLEY SCOTT, GRADE 5

A Very Special Christmas

My Aunt Kristin Dean was born in 1989. This is how she celebrated Christmas. They helped decorate the Christmas tree every year at their grandmother's house. All of the grandkids, probably around 18 in total, would take turns placing ornaments on the Christmas tree. The older girls would help their grandmother wrap the younger children's presents.

My Aunt Kristin had a very special memory. She remembered one Christmas when she was around nine years old her grandmother would let her make her very own Christmas present. She owned her own business where she made curtains and covers. She got to pick her own fabric and make her own blanket with her grandmother. She still has that green watermelon blanket to this day!

She says Christmas is different now because she gets a lot more socks and underwear as she has gotten older. She is very appreciative of that! Another big difference is the amount of joy she gets watching her nieces and nephews opening their presents.

My Aunt Kristin would like me to learn that Christmas is not just about presents. It is about spending time with your family.

NATHAN SHELBYNE, GRADE 5

My Grandmother's Christmas

My grandmother, Carolyn, was born in 1954. I chose her to interview because she is really special to me. My grandmother's traditions are way different from mine. Instead of buying ornaments she made her own by stringing popcorn and making paper cut-outs.

My grandmother had a special memory of Christmas. She told me that one year her brother came home for the holidays from the Army. I thought that was amazing because she could spend Christmas with her brother.

She also said that Christmas isn't how it was before, and she was right. Gifts are more elaborate and Christmas is more commercialized. My grandmother and I think people are losing the true meaning of Christmas.

My grandmother told me that you should appreciate your family and what you have. She also said Christmas is about more than just gifts and I think that is true because people always bring up presents around Christmas. I am very glad that I got to interview my grandmother and learn more about her.

TAYLOR SHUPE, GRADE 5

My Papaw's Christmas

My papaw Jackie Skaggs was born in 1958. When he was just a little kid he and his brothers, aunts, uncles, mom and dad would eat finger foods. They would also drink punch and sing carols.

My papaw had a special memory of Christmas. After they got home, Santa had already stopped by and he got a steel basketball goal.

My papaw told me that Christmas is different now than in the past. Now family does not gather together like they used to in the past.

My papaw wanted me to remember about that Jesus died for our sins. That's the true meaning of Christmas.

CHANDLER SKAGGS, GRADE 5

Christmas with Mamaw

My mamaw, Drucellia Hunley was born in 1944. She told me that they would cut down a sycamore tree each year on Christmas. They took sycamore balls off the tree and wetted them with water and flour. Then they would put them on their Christmas tree as snow balls. They also hung popcorn on their tree.

Once she had a rubber doll that she received on Christmas. She was laying in the bed one night and her rubber doll fell. She didn't want to get it so she made her sister Loretta get it for her because she was scared that Santa would see.

My grandmother remembers holidays were different from now. Only one big present for the kids. One year my mamaw got a pet pig and its name was Blossom. They killed it and ate it. Now days, if you get a pet pig for Christmas you would let it live a full life.

My grandmother wanted me to know that Christmas is not about presents. Christmas is about the birth of Jesus.

JACOB SNODGRASS, GRADE 5

My Mamaw's Christmas

My mamaw Patricia Hendricks was born in 1959 and celebrated Christmas in a very special way. My mamaw and her family celebrated the holidays by cutting down a Christmas tree. She sang Christmas carols with her sisters, brothers, and mother. My mamaw and her family made homemade ornaments to put on the Christmas tree they cut down. This is how my mamaw celebrated Christmas as a child.

My mamaw's special favorite memory is that one year they were so poor they had to put a green blanket over a plunger. I think it is creative putting a green blanket over a plunger at the same time I think it is really funny. This is my mamaw's favorite Christmas memory as a child.

The ways the holidays are different then from now is that her whole family would not come over just the people that lived with her. Now all of the family visits for the holidays. This is one way Christmas is different from when she was a child.

One lesson she wants me to learn is that Christmas is not all about the presents. Christmas is about spending time with family.

ELIJAH STAFFORD, GRADE 5

My Nana's Christmas Growing Up

My nana's name is Betty Miles. She was born in 1954. She told me about her Christmas growing up. She celebrated like this. Her brothers would go cut down a cedar tree. They decorated the tree. Her mom had lights that bubbled up. They also strung the tree with popcorn and put sycamore tree balls on it. For all 11 children her parents couldn't buy them presents. So, her mom went shopping to get them all a box of candy, gum, nuts, and cracker jacks. Her mom put them all in a big bag with their name on them until her mom went to be with the Lord. She also said that her dad loved his nuts and chocolate around Christmas time.

She has a special memory about the holidays and it is being with all 10 brothers and sisters because she loved to be with family. Her mom had 11 children. Her sisters would bring her special things because they lived out of town. Also, her brothers ate the popcorn off the tree.

She said that the holidays are different now. A lot different! It is different from the gifts, lights, holiday trimmings, and she also has grandchildren now. There were no cell phones and no one sat at the table with a phone.

She wanted me to learn something from this interview. She wanted me to learn it is all about Jesus. We do this to celebrate Jesus's birthday. She loves for her grandchildren to come over and help put up a tree and help decorate.

MILEY STAPLETON, GRADE 5

The Soldiers Give Us Freedom

Freedom
Respect our country
Everyone loves freedom
Every soldiers fights for us
Don't give up
Our freedom is because of you
Many soldiers died for us

JACOB SUTPHIN, GRADE 5

Freedom

Fought for our freedom
Respect you
Everyone loves you
Everyone thanks you
Died for our freedom
Outstanding
Men don't give up

JOSEPH SUTPHIN, GRADE 5

My Dad's Christmas

My dad, Danny Taylor, was born August 15, 1977. Christmas is his favorite holiday. I was surprised to learn that when my dad was growing up, he didn't celebrate Christmas like we do today.

My family loves to decorate our Christmas tree with ornaments. This is something we always do. My dad's Christmas tree is so beautiful. My dad said when he was young his family always went into the woods and cut a real tree for Christmas. I don't think they had as many ornaments and lights as we do today.

Baking cookies is one of my family's most favorite things to do for christmas. We bake for different kinds of cookies. We love to eat them! We also love singing Christmas songs. We spend a lot of time together getting ready for Christmas. My dad told me that him and his dad spent a lot of their time at Christmas working. They worked very hard cutting firewood. This was hard work but special time to share.

Me and my sister love getting present for Christmas. We get a lot of presents! My dad said he didn't get as many presents as we do. But we know Christmas is not all about presents, cookies, tree, or singing. It is all about family and when Jesus was born and we are blessed for that.

KATELYNN TAYLOR, GRADE 5

Christmas in the Country

My Dad Mike Thomas was born in 1971. My dad said when he was my age he would help cut down a cedar tree and decorate it with ornaments. On Christmas day, his family would have Christmas dinner and

on Christmas night he would set outside and listen to the frogs croak. The trees would sway. On Christmas morning him and his brothers would get 1 or 2 gifts. After that they would take a 22 and shoot down mistletoe.

MATTHEW THOMAS, GRADE 5

Christmas in the 1900's

My grandfather, Ronnie Toney, celebrated Christmas different than we do now. He would go to church and sing songs. His dad would cut down a tree from behind the house. His mom would make cookies and make ornaments out of paper and streamers out of popcorn and cranberries.

My grandfather had a special memory about Christmas. His twin brother and him would play in the snow. On Christmas Eve a puppy jumped on him and his dad said it was his to keep.

My grandfather said Christmas is different now than when he was young. He said he did not get as many gifts. He shared stories with his family. Instead of electric lights, he used candles around the house.

My grandfather wanted me to learn that Christmas is not about gifts. It's about spending time with family while you still can.

TAWNI TONEY, GRADE 5

My Mom's Christmas

My mom Amanda Troutman was born in 1981. The way my mom celebrated christmas was cool. First of all, she decorated the Christmas tree. Then they would set up a village. Finally, after they got it up they would sit down and enjoy some hot chocolate and watch a Christmas movie.

My mom Amanda Troutman had special memories. Her special memory was getting to hang out with cousins and getting to see all of her extended family.

The way that the holidays were different from now is that her grandparents had passed away. My mom said of course it's different because your missing your family. It was hard. Now she's has us, Aiden and Cade Troutman. She says it's better now and it isn't as hard on her.

My mom said that what she has learned over the years of holidays is to always share Christmas with family. It has taught me to share.

CADE TROUTMAN, GRADE 5

My Grandma's Holidays

My grandma Jean Beard was born in 1985 and she celebrated the holidays very special growing up. Her and her sons including my dad use to decorate the tree and after they were done they would bake sugar cookies.

Her special memory about Christmas was one time when her sons ate the cookies and milk when it was really for Santa. She says the holidays are different because back then people didn't have phones. Back then, everyone could get closer together and not be on there electronics.

My grandma would like me to learn that it is not all about phones and taking pictures. Christmas is about spending time with family.

MCKENDRA WALLACE, GRADE 5

A Very Good Christmas

My mom Heather Washam was born in 1986. When, she was a little girl, she celebrated Christmas. She always put up her tree the first day of December. Her family would always open one gift on Christmas eve. Then on Christmas morning they would eat breakfast, open gifts, and go to her mamaws.

My mom special's memory of Christmas is at her mamaw's house. Every year her mamaw would save pennies all year. On Christmas, she would divide them between my mom and her brothers.

Now that she has grown up, she puts up her tree day after Thanksgiving and now we take turns with making Christmas dinner.

What to learn about Christmas is that the holidays are not about the gifts and things, it's about being with family and making memories.

NEVAEH WASHAM, GRADE 5

My Mamaw's Christmas Memories

My Mamaw Patricia Stapleton was born on July 9, 1956. My mamaw told me how they celebrated Christmas when she was my age. She said that they would cut down their own tree. When they got home they would pop popcorn, take a piece of string, and put the popcorn on the string. They would wrap it around the tree and they also made their own ornaments.

My mamaw told me about her special memory. She said that she put fruits, nuts, and candy in bags. She put them under the tree for Christmas morning. When they put the bags under the tree, they sang Christmas songs with her family. When they ate, they would have turkey, ham, deviled eggs, stuffing, and all sorts of food. When they got done eating, they would go to bed. The next morning they saw presents.

My mamaw said when she was growing up that Christmas was different every year. Each year, Christmas was different, some years they would celebrate Christmas and some years they did not celebrate. Since I was born, we have celebrated Christmas every year.

My mamaw told me that Christmas wasn't about the presents. It was about celebrating with your family.

BRANDON WEST, GRADE 5

The Good Ole Christmas Days

My mamaw, Mary Bourne told me about her Christmas days when she was a child. In Mary Bourne's Christmas days, she and her family would start off December first by going to the park and singing carols. They would go to church and learn about the birth of Jesus. They would bake fruit cake and cookies with family. Her job was mixing the fruit cake. On Christmas day, they would go to their grandmother's house for a gift exchange and a feast.

Mary Bourne's special memory was going to her grandmother's house, talking and playing with cousins and family, doing the gift exchange, and the feast.

Sadly, now in her age, TV tells you to buy stuff for Christmas and it's commercialized. She liked it better in the old days. My mamaw, Mary Bourne wants me to learn that Christmas is not all about gifts. It is about family, God, and the birth of Jesus.

CHASE WESTON, GRADE 5

Celebrate Christmas

My dad Adam Smith was born in 1986. He would decorate the house. He also decorated the outside of the house. He put up garland and Christmas balls. They had a big dinner. He had ham, mac-and-cheese, rolls, and more. His family came and we exchanged presents.

My dad has a special memory about Christmas. He remembers going to his mammaw's house and most of his cousins had made a surprise visit. They had so much fun.

When he was growing up Christmas was more about being with family. Now it is more about gifts. My dad wants me to know that families should start spending more time together. Christmas is not about the gifts.

MARKUS WHEET, GRADE 5

How my Mamaw Celebrated the Holidays

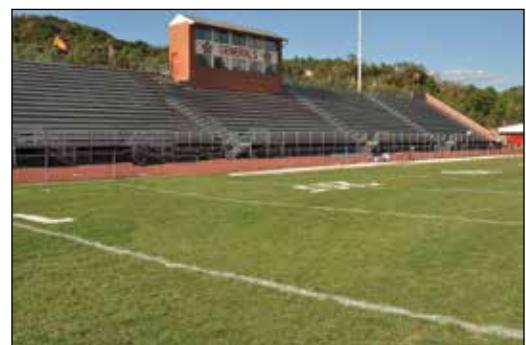
I interviewed my Mamaw Janet Bledsoe. She celebrated the holidays by decorating outside and cutting down a tree. Then she would bake cookies and sing Christmas carols.

My Mamaw's special memory about Christmas was spending time with her family. She loved being with her family and having relatives to visit.

Holidays have changed for my mamaw from then to now. Gifts have become more expensive today and it is harder for family to get together. My Mamaw wanted me to learn to be more thankful for time with my family. Don't worry about presents and celebrate Jesus's birthday.

MATTHEW WILLIS, GRADE 5

LEE HIGH SCHOOL



Heritage

Heritage is a word that compiles many different definitions according to the family it is coming from. Having a background makes you the person you are today. Furthermore, it describes you in many ways others may not comprehend. Family plays a big role in my life and where I come from. My family was all raised on the creek, Ely's Creek, what we used to call Pucketts Creek. My great-grandmother has lived there for all my life and most of hers.



Nancy and Sindy Fields

I come from a large family. Mamaw Ann, my great-grandmother, had 6 children. Back then large families were not uncommon; in fact, having a large family was desired by many because they were all used to work. I knew a lot about the family history, but Mamaw informed me it wasn't as much as I thought. After talking with Mamaw a few days ago, I gathered some useful information. Having six children wasn't easy but they were her life. Unfortunately, she only has 4 now. Back at that time, around 70 years, having a baby at the age of 16 was traditional. She had her oldest child at the age of 16,

my aunt Jean. Jean was born at her great grandmother's house, Mamaw Ann's mom. Her second child, my Mamaw Beverly, was born at home, which at the time was located in 'Gobbler's Knob', a little place over the hillside. The doctor who delivered Beverly was Doc O'Dell, and as he stated, "It was a quick 50 dollars." Mamaw upgraded by having her third child at the hospital and finally it was a boy. Uncle Barry was delivered by Dr. Tiddle along with his brother Greg, Mamaw's second baby boy. Now at this time, I think Mamaw Ann was getting tired because of the response she gave me. When asking where Susie and Cleta were born, her last two girls, she told me they were hatched. It was funny to come from Mamaw but in reality, they had a midwife, a person (typically a woman) trained to assist women in childbirth, Ms. Turner, later named "Old Mom Turner" brought them into Pucketts Creek.

History is everything and this is why you should never hesitate to learn more about your own when given the opportunity. Many things I didn't know about my family is now embedded in the back of my head. With having so many great-aunts and great-uncles comes aunts, uncles, and cousins. All of my family is super close to one another, especially during the holidays. This is just a little insight into my great grandmother's motherhood.

HALEY ANDERSON, GRADE 12

Silas Mitchell

Silas Mitchell, my grandfather, was a very strong individual from what he had gone through in his life. Silas was born on March 11, 1914 and raised in Cawood, Kentucky. His parents were Ben and Addie Mitchell. He had four sisters named Julie, Mary, Lizzie, and Hazel. Silas then started working outside of the coal mines when he was 12 years old because his father became ill. Ben had a genetic disease called Huntington's disease and died shortly after he became diagnosed. Silas worked in the coal mines to support his family after his father passed. The coal mines went on strike and left Silas out of work, so he then started working at the local schoolhouse as a janitor. Besides working at the school house, Silas' favorite thing to do was to hunt and fish. He loved fishing with Ben's best friend, which was my grandmother's father. Silas fished with him many times on his farm where he soon met my grandmother, Wanda Glass, and her daughter Mary Ann.

Wanda's father asked Silas to take care of Wanda and Mary Ann because he became ill. Silas and Wanda went to the courthouse in Jonesville on May 25, 1959 and received their marriage license. They lived in Silas' house in Cawood, Kentucky and had 5 more children including my mother. My mother states that when she was a young girl she remembers he was a very happy and positive man. He was a Sunday school teacher at a Methodist church a couple houses down from his house. Silas taught Sunday school until he fell ill with Huntington's disease that was passed down to him from his father. My mother states that his behavior transitioned from calm and joyful to compulsive and full of anger. Mood swings is one of the biggest symptoms to diagnosing Huntington's disease. He became abusive and my mother explains that it wasn't like him, that the disease made him that way. Wanda became afraid that he would hurt one of the kids, so they were forced to flee back to Wanda's hometown. Silas died when he was 70 years old on March 14, 1984. My mother states that Silas nor Ben was never diagnosed with this disease that they thought they had just a type of palsy. After Silas' death, his son Carl was diagnosed with Huntington's disease and the doctors then discovered that Ben and some of his relatives had the genetic disease instead of a type of palsy. Silas Mitchell was a strong individual to live to the age 70 with a horrible, fatal disorder. Even though I never met my grandfather, his work ethic at the age 12 and the willpower with his disease is what I strive to be like.

DEWAYNE GARRETT, GRADE 12

My Dysfunctional Family

My family is, for lack of a better word, unique. However, we definitely put the 'fun' in dysfunctional. We don't have what you would consider a 'traditional' family. If there is a gathering, someone is bound to be late and it never fails. When my sister leaves my house, she always somehow manages to lose her keys when they are usually sitting on the table right in front of her. People don't have a clue how one-of-a-kind my family truly is.

I never knew my dad and my mother is adopted so I actually don't know anything about the generations before me. Her adopted mother, whom I consider to be my grandmother, was a foster parent and fostered many children throughout her life. My grandmother doesn't even have to be notified that someone is coming over, and she always manages to have the best food laid out on the table.

Noah, my little brother, has a syndrome called CHARGE syndrome. Noah has had hundreds of surgeries in his fourteen years of living. When he was born on January fifteenth, he had to stay in the hospital for one hundred and eight days. He was given a feeding tube in his stomach because when he would try to eat, he would aspirate it and food would go straight to his lungs. He had an esophageal fistula which is basically just a tube that goes down his throat so that he can breathe a little easier. Our mom has told me for years that I was always his best therapist because I always made sure he would say words correctly and walk as often as possible. He may be my biggest pest, but he is also my biggest hero.

My dogs and my cat are my babies. I think very highly of my cat, Kenda. He always snuggles and sleeps by my side every single night. One day, I kissed his little nose and he put his nose on mine and it was absolutely precious! Kenda is not really a fan of anything that isn't me, especially my dogs. Oliver really enjoys playing with Kenda even though he ends up getting scratched in the face because Kenda really does not like to play. Reese is my beautiful three-legged dog. My mom forgot to put him in his dog lot one day and he decided to wander into the road to look a mate and a car came by and hit him. It was devastating when we found out he didn't have anymore usage out of his right leg.

To conclude, I wouldn't trade my family for the world. We may have our ups and downs, but at the end of the day, we still love each other. We have no other choice. I am beyond grateful and thankful for each and every member. Like I mentioned before, we are a unique bunch of crazy people, but I couldn't have asked for a better possey.

ALYSSA GOODMAN, GRADE 12

Grann

My grandma, also known as Grann, was born in Castlewood Virginia and moved to Lee County with her parents when she was a teenager. Growing up she didn't have much. She came from a poor family. Grann married my papaw Ken in 1973. One of my favorite stories she's told me about her and my papaw is the day they got married. They went to the home of a minister and elope; she said, "The ceremony was going great until they got to the part about having a witness, so we had to wait until the minister's neighbor could come over." They have two daughters, Alisha and Amanda. She retired from nursing when my papaw was diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease. Seeing what the two of them went through through the whole process was heartbreaking. She spent day after day taking care of him until he took his last breath. The strength she had through her faith through the death of my papaw spoke volumes to me. I had never seen someone go through so much yet stay so strong through the whole thing.

Anyone who knows Grann knows that she is definitely not your typical grandma. My grandma has been on some crazy trips for people her age. She has zip-lined in the Bahamas, cruised to the islands of Hawaii, and even drove across the country, starting in Virginia going all the way to California and back with her sister. She loves cheering my cousin Canaan on at the baseball games and my sister at her basketball games. My grandma is someone I truly admire and look up to. Grann and I have a very close relationship. Throughout the years, Grann and I have made some pretty amazing memories, from taking week long beach vacations, to driving two hours to a baseball game just to watch my boyfriend play, to her shooting groundhogs out her kitchen window. There is never a dull moment with her. She has taught me many life lessons and things she's learned from personal experience. Through her I've learned the valuable lesson of cherishing what you have and not taking anything for granted. Grann has impacted my life drastically, especially my faith in The Lord. She has taught me what it means to stand firm in my faith. I wouldn't be the person I am today without the love and guidance Grann has given me.

GRACE HALL, GRADE 12

Heritage

The passing down of memorabilia from generation to generation allows for memories of those in your family before you to live on in a physical form. Often in many families there are heirlooms that are prized and kept in solitude behind protective barriers to allow the object to survive for generations to come, for the memories of the past to be transferred to future generations. I myself am not particularly a sentimental individual, but my family on both sides hold and treasure many different relics of the past, and the stories behind some of them are particularly interesting and odd, and in some cases the objects themselves are even more odd. On both my mother's and father's sides of the family, there are many relics that they hold dear, and I'll detail a few of the more interesting ones here.

Perhaps one of the most interesting bits of memorabilia currently in my bloodline is a rifle, not some antique that was carefully curated from the past, not some multi-hundred dollar expertly crafted firearm, but an old, beaten-up battle-torn gun. To make it even more interesting, the rifle in question is a Mannlicher M1888, a rifle that was not manufactured in the U.S., but rather in the now defunct Austria-Hungary. The story behind this piece was that it was traded for food at my great-great grandmother's diner, as the patron had no money on his person, and apparently happened to be carrying around a rifle in his pocket. The rifle itself is practically worthless due to excess wear, and it has sat in the closet of my grandfather's house for years upon years, but it serves as a reminder to my family of their late relatives.

As for my father's side, my great-grandmother is extremely sentimental, hoarding family relics and storing them away for the future. One of the more interesting sets of memorabilia that she possesses is a full porcelain china set that bears the family coat of arms on every piece. It is in near-mint condition, and is displayed in a glass cabinet for all to see in her house. On another note, their family has historically been farmers, and as far back

as has been traced, every generation has in some way been involved in farming. These generations of farmers have left behind some antique farming equipment, and in my great-grandmother's front yard, there are multiple pieces of horse-drawn farming equipment, as well as other rustic tools. The tools themselves are old and rusted, and more than likely are unable to perform any minor sort of work, but as with many pieces of memorabilia, they do not serve a purpose in the house, but they serve as a reminder of the past and my ancestors before me.

ZACHARY HAMMONDS, GRADE 12

The Garden

Every year, my mamaw puts out a large garden. For as long as I have been alive, she and Papaw have kept many vegetables in the bottom of her yard. The abundance of crops has fed our family for a pretty long time. They plant crops that vary from corn to potatoes to onions and all sorts of other plants. Zucchini is one of the plants that comes by surprise; we don't plant it but it comes around anyway; pumpkins love to do the same. We generally have around 3-4 long rows of corn growing on the hill and let me tell you, I love it. My mamaw has always referred to me as the hardest worker of the grandchildren. My sister will not help with corn; instead, she sits in fear that she will find a bug hidden in the shuck. My cousin Katie helps for a decent while, until she gets tired of it and goes inside. My cousin Keaton helps some. My youngest cousin Callie has never been big enough to help. So while they are inside hiding away from the heat, I'm in the midst of it all, and I'm enjoying every moment of it. When we plant corn, Papaw tills the land and my aunt Melissa, uncle Doug, Mamaw, Mom, Katie, Keaton, and I put 2-3 seeds in the ground moving along the line until we are finished. Then Papaw comes along with his hoe and pushes the dirt over top of the seeds. It is a long and tedious task to do, but it's a fun one. When it is time to harvest the corn, Papaw brings his tractor down to the bottom of the hill and we pick corn and toss it in a bucket. We then stand in a circle shucking all of the corn and throwing the freshly shucked corn over to Papaw's tractor. Believe it or not, you can actually cut yourself with the shuck. My finger learned that the hard way. So after we shuck all of the corn, we go to the top of the hill to Mamaw's porch. There we have bowls of water, a brush to get the silk off of the corn, and knives to cut the corn. Now I don't like silking corn; it is boring and takes too long. I take up the task of cutting the corn off of the cob. Once we've got a good system going, I usually go inside with Mamaw and help her cook all of it. After that, we sit the corn out to dry. Later, we bag the corn to be frozen; it's either on the cob or off of the cob. To know how much we have done, Keaton and I go outside with buckets of cobs and we sling them over the hill. So we don't lose count, Keaton counts the odds and I count the evens or vice versa. To end the day, Mamaw fixes supper with some of the fresh corn, and I finally get to sit down to a good swig of coke.

SYDNIE HINES, GRADE 12

Secret Family Recipe

My great-grandmother Nancy Light was an outstanding cook. It was a tradition that every Sunday all of my family would go to her house after church for a meal. Sundays, however, weren't the only time her house was filled with people looking for a good ole home cooked supper. She was known throughout the town for her cooking and could never turn down a hungry mouth. I cannot remember a visit to her house that she was not at the stove at one point or another. There was a constant flow of people stopping by her house to see what she was fixing that day. I do not think I can recall a time that there was not somebody stopping by for dinner and a quick chat. I never heard of anybody disliking her cooking; she made delicious meals. However, her desserts were like unlike any other. The cake granny made that everyone always requested was her made from scratch white cake. Throughout my lifetime, I've had this cake many times and with many icings, but everyone's favorite pairing has always been my granny's coconut icing. This cake recipe had been passed down through my family for generations; my grandmother, my cousin and I still make it every year for Christmas

dinner. Although my granny and her family had made many contributions to cookbooks, the white cake recipe was never published. It was our family's secret recipe. My great-aunt moved away from southwest Virginia and carried the delicious recipes with her. Like my granny, she could never turn down sharing her cooking with anybody. She quickly gained popularity in the town where she moved due to her cooking skills. It was no shock when she was approached about a catering job by a local businessman who was a friend of hers. At the catering job she fed many mouths, but when a representative from the company *Little Debbie* took a bite of her white cake, he knew he had to get the recipe. She was humbled when *Little Debbie* contacted her about buying the recipe, and she was reluctant at first. However, after talking to my granny and a couple other family members, they decided that it would be an honor for a company to use their recipe and spread it around the world. *Little Debbie* soon after started using my family's recipe for all of their products containing white cake. To this day as far as my family knows, *Little Debbie* cakes are still using the recipe. So chances are if you have had a *Little Debbie* goodie, you have had a taste of my granny's cooking. However, I must say, it will never be quite the same as her home cooked white cake with her coconut icing.

ASHLYN LEE, GRADE 12

Dirt Cake

My grandma makes a dessert that is very special to me. I have enjoyed her dirt cake many times and made many memories while doing so. From helping her make it, to enjoying it with her, I always think of the good times we've shared whenever I eat it.

Ingredients:

- 1 lg. package Oreo cookies
- 8 oz. cream cheese
- 1 c. powdered sugar
- 8 oz. Cool Whip
- 1 lg. package instant vanilla pudding mix
- 2 ½ c. milk
- 1 tsp. Vanilla
- ½ stick butter

Crumble $\frac{3}{4}$ package of cookies in bottom of 9x13-inch pan. Mix remaining ingredients and pour over cookies. Crumble remaining cookies on top. Chill until ready to serve.

KIMBERLY MUNCY, GRADE 12

Devil's Bathtub

If you live in the Appalachian region, you have probably heard of the Devil's Bathtub. The beautiful scenery that leads you straight to a large bathtub-like natural pool that is crystal clear is definitely worth the four mile hike. But do you ever stop to ask yourself how it got its name? I'm sure at one point or another a story of Indian tribes naming it has floated through your ears. However, a much different story, the true story, is told in my family.

When my great grandfather, Jesse Beagley, was young, he and his twenty three siblings lived in a small cabin right beside one of the creeks that runs into the Devil's Bathtub. With no video games, cells phones, or movies, he and his brothers would go out daily and explore. After all, the Beagley family owned a large part of the ridge at the time. One day, my Papaw Jesse and a few of his older brothers followed the creek down and discovered The Devil's Bathtub which, at the time, was just a new place that they could jump into cool water in the summertime. Sometime in those years following their discovery, one of his older brothers

gave it the name that is so popular now, The Devil's Bathtub. The name spread across High Knob through the families and hunters who told sons and daughters of the Bathtub as a landmark. In 1936, the National Forestry bought most of the land from the Beagleys and a few other families on High Knob and established the Jefferson National Forest. This didn't mark when the Bathtub became popular. It was known of by many people but was not seen in the public eye yet. The Devil's Bathtub remained a hidden gem for many years. Though I never visited it before the path was made, my great grandfather took my father through the land he still knew so well to see The Devil's Bathtub. There were no markers on trees, no rock piles to mark where to cross the creek, and no sign of a path. This all changed very quickly when the Bathtub was discovered and made into a tourist attraction. It has long been forgotten who was there and how the name came to be before large groups hiked miles to gaze at the Bathtub and jump into its cool waters, but I will always remember the stories told and my family's roots will always be there.

SARAH SHULER, GRADE 12

Stuffed Bear

Whenever my grandfather, Don, or as most knew him, Coach, passed away from prostate cancer, I lost one of the bravest men that I have ever known. Shortly after he had passed, my father had my siblings and I pick out a shirt of his to have a blanket made out of. All three of us picked out a shirt that he had worn that meant something important to us. I picked one of his coaching shirts from soccer. He was my coach one year during soccer; he coached my team, the "Neons." We wore bright neon green shirts and I had the number 11. The shirt I chose is significant to me because he is the entire reason Lee County even has a soccer association.

When I was very young, whenever someone asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up, I always said I wanted to be a soccer player. My family was very confused by this because they were not sure how I knew about soccer because we did not have it around here. When I finally reached the ripe age of four, I was allowed to join the soccer league in Big Stone Gap, Virginia. Every time I had a game, my entire family would travel all the way to Big Stone to support a four-year-old rookie. By my third game, Papaw had decided to start up a soccer program in Lee County. He said it looked simple enough to start up, so with the approval of the town, he got to work. He found coaches and people who knew the sport well to join the Lee County Soccer Association or LCSA.

October 9, 2018, marked one year since the death of my grandfather. My father came in and told my brother and I that he had a gift for us, and neither one of had any clue as to what this gift could be. He goes on to say that he lied to my brother and me, but he did it for a good reason. By this time we were extremely nervous as to what he could possibly have for us. He pulled out two stuffed bears, made from Papaw's shirts we picked out. I was in tears at this point, and then I turned the bear over and saw that it had words on the back. It read: "This is a shirt I used to wear, whenever you hug it know I am there. Love Papaw Coach." Having this bear is like having a piece of him with me, even though he may not be anymore. My brother, Aaron, and sister, Adessa, had picked out red and grey soccer shirts, too. For years papaw had begged my sister to play soccer, and when she finally did, she loved it. My brother has played soccer since he was three. Soccer was a big part of our lives that Papaw loved and used as a way to connect with us.

ANDREW WILLIAMS, GRADE 12

How My Family Made It To America

In the early 1940's when World War II started, Clyde J Woliver was enlisted in the U.S. Army. He underwent basic training in Biloxi, Mississippi. After the passing of his mother, Clyde enlisted in the army. His father was saddened by the news. Upon completion of the US training, he was sent to New York for his further assignment. When he arrived in New York, they tested him to make sure he was capable of being enlisted. When he was younger, he had a tree fall on his head, causing a metal plate to be put in his skull. During his

test, they found that plate and told him to return to his home. However, Clyde wanted to serve. They then agreed to let him join the U.S. Army Air Cor. He was stationed in Norwich, England at Attlebridge Air Force Base. Unbeknownst to Clyde, the Red Cross had a station at the air force base. It was through this service that he had met a young girl named Peggy Blyth. They began a secret relationship shortly after meeting. He would ride his bike to her house daily to give her love letters. The relationship continued, despite the ten year age difference. In 1944 Peggy and Clyde got married in Norwich, England. They had a great first year of marriage and many memories to follow. In 1945 as the war was ending, Peggy and Clyde received the news that they were expecting. Vivian Ann Woliver was born in April of 1945. When Vivian was a year old, she and Peggy came to the U.S. via ship. A nine-day journey for a young girl and a year old baby was a huge challenge leaving her home and family. Upon arrival at Ellis Island in New York, Peggy and Vivian were greeted by the Statue of Liberty. They then boarded a train headed to Norton, Virginia. It was during this trip that Peggy had encountered her first person of color. The person could tell Peggy was tired and worn out. They asked if they could hold the baby while she rested. Peggy was beyond grateful towards that person. They were met in Norton, Virginia by Clyde's father, Arch Woliver. He brought them to his home in Lee County, Virginia. During this time Clyde was still on active duty with the air cor. It was nearly one year later before he was able to board the Queen Mary to come home to Lee County, Virginia. Before leaving England, Clyde took his army issued rifle and hung it in a tree in Peggy's mom's backyard. He engraved "I'm done with the war." The family began to grow more and more as the years went by. Wanda Woliver was born in 1948. Beverly Woliver was born in 1952. Pamela Woliver was born in 1960. Relentless for his desire for a son, Clyde persuaded Peggy to enlarge the family one last time. In 1965 that dream turned into a reality with the birth of Edward Arch Woliver.

MORGAN WOLIVER, GRADE 12

My Lovely Grandparents

My grandpa on my dad's side's name is Ren Guang Zhang and my grandma's name is Jin Zhu Zhang. My grandparents are in China where they have lived there their whole entire life. My grandpa is 72 years old and my grandma is 67 years old. My grandpa loves to plant vegetables and flowers, while my grandma, on the other hand, loves to cook. To me, my grandma is an amazing cook just like my father. My grandpa and grandma met each other by arranged marriage. A lot of people at that time had a lot of children; however, my grandparents only had two children. They only had a boy and a girl, my dad being the oldest. My grandpa has hearing problems because when he was in the Vietnam War a cannon exploded right beside of him making him lose his hearing. So every time my grandma talks to him, she has to scream in order for him to hear what she is saying. At the apartment back home, they each have their own responsibilities. My grandma is in charge of cooking, cleaning the house, washing clothes, and washing the dishes after every meal. She is also in charge of doing the grocery shopping. In China, most people go grocery shopping every day, usually they go very early in the morning at around five o'clock. They go grocery shopping first thing in the morning because everything is fresh in the market. My grandpa, on the other hand, is in charge of watering plants, fixing the things that are broken, and sometimes he helps my grandma cook. After every meal, they always go out to take a walk. They walk for about twenty minutes before they head back to the apartment.

My grandparents helped take care of me, my sister, and my brother when we were very young. They took care of us until we came to America. Both of my grandparents loved to take care of us when we were very young. After we all went to America, they had to take care of their other grandson. They told me that they had an amazing time taking care of us. Every time I talk on the phone with them, they always ask me if everything is going okay and say that they want us to visit them in the summer if we can. I have been to China three times to visit my grandparents. Every time I had a wonderful time just spending time with my grandparents and exploring. My favorite vacation is spending time with my grandparents because I do not get to see them very often.

ANGEL ZHANG, GRADE 12

Jill Skidmore, Grade 8 Students

A New Path

Mrs. Skidmore's submissions for the Origin Project came out of change and a new opportunity. As a teacher, I have always taught high school English, and after many years, I am very comfortable with my place in public schools. There is something comforting about knowing your position and place.

And then came change in the form of the movement of 8th grade to the high school.

My principal informed me over the summer that I would have one class of eighth graders for the year. Middle school reputations proceed students, even with teachers. I had never had middle school students, but I had taught ninth graders for years and have seen the progression of immaturity to maturity in high school. Could eighth grade be that much different?

As I looked at my students on the first day of school, I could see the trepidation of moving to a much bigger school with a larger faculty and many more classmates. I wanted them to feel welcomed, and still enjoy class. So we took a field trip.

Behind our school is a one room schoolhouse that has been moved from the countryside. It sits tucked behind our school as a reminder of where our rural schools have come from. There are some other rustic buildings there as well, but the grass, weeds, and trees have slowly been recovering these buildings so that most kids don't even know it's out there. When the schoolhouse first was placed there, schools used to come and visit, but as time goes by, it tends to be forgotten in our bustle of tests, homework, and SOLs.

But not my eighth graders. I decided we need to walk, and enjoy a day out in the sunshine. We were working on descriptive writing and I devised we need to go out and see a lovely view. We left our building and walked up to the schoolhouse. I asked them to think about the natural world they see around them as they explored the schoolhouse and surrounding buildings. They climbed, laughed, fell, scattered dust, and wondered about these building that are so far from their own idea of what school is.

When we returned, they created these haikus and I asked them to illustrate their experience. We took an object that has deep history in these mountains, and gave it to a new generation of students. I made a new tradition with students who are the first eighth graders to come to our high school, and the want to keep going back to our little one room schoolhouse. I hope that you enjoy their work.

JILLIAN SKIDMORE, TEACHER
LEE HIGH SCHOOL

Nature
A cloud in the sky
Drifting along the sky now
A cloud in the sky

LATCHLON ALDRIDGE, GRADE 8

Fall
Yellow and brown leaves
Autumn has a chilly breeze
Fall is soon to come

MEGHAN CALTON, GRADE 8
HANNAH OSBORNE, GRADE 8

The old schoolhouse
Lee High has secrets



Rylee Cox Haiku

The Image
The wild berries
That we saw through the window
Shining in sunlight

ELIZABETH CLASBY, GRADE 8

BROOKS CHADWELL, GRADE 8

RYLEE COX, GRADE 8

JAELYN HALL, GRADE 8

The Old School House
Spider webs everywhere
Old house with old wood today
Smell of sawdust

DEVIN DAVIDSON, GRADE 8

Outside
The wood building creaked
The children eagerly learned
The day shall end soon

CADEN ELY, GRADE 8

HUNTER KELLY, GRADE 8

The school house
The one room schoolhouse
Dust surrounding it with care
The sunlight shines through

KAT ELY, GRADE 8

Old building
Old wood in protest
Untouched is the flowered piece
A broken past breathes

BRANDON GILLIAM, GRADE 8

A special place
The house on the hill

Hidden away by the trees
Spirits come to play
ABBIE HORNER, GRADE 8



Old building
Outside, in the cold breeze
Looking at the old building
Getting all the creepy vibes
CHASTIN HUFF, GRADE 8

Schoolhouse
The birds are singing
An old school house lies alone
Wild flowers scattered.
SARAH JOHNSON, GRADE 8

Sarah Johnson Haiku

Leaves
Orange, yellow, and brown leaves
Sunshine and chilly weather
Fall is coming soon

KARLEY SHOEMAKER, GRADE 8

Old building
Old wood in protest
Untouched is the flowered scene
A broken past breathes

KATLYN TOMLINSON, GRADE 8

Alex Long, English Grades 9 & 11

Reflection on Lee High Origins

Never could I be prouder of the hard work of my students for this year's publication of *the Origin Project*. Learning something new is always a challenge, but can be fun if approached the right way. My students discovered just that between investigations into family history and personal interviews with the self-same family members.

Each of us have a story to tell. As I tell students, don't fall into the danger of telling the single story. That is, don't allow outside misconceptions of this area and its people to define who you are. If you don't write your side of the story, the truth will never be heard. The diversity of the Southern Appalachian mountain region is rich in the lore of Western Europe and the Celtic Isles of Britain and Ireland. I shared my own family's heritage with students as a launching point of them to share their own. Through a presentation of my Scottish heritage, students became ignited to find their own family's heritage.

As you read these entries, I hope you enjoy the hard work and dedication of the students as they share just a little bit of their own origins.

MR. ALEXANDER LONG, ENGLISH



Katie Tomlinson Haiku

Cherry Cream Pie

I chose this recipe that my mamaw made. Her name is Brenda Lawson. This recipe for Cherry Cream Pie means a lot to me because she only makes it once every year for Christmas. No one else knows the recipe but her but, that doesn't stop everyone else from trying to make it. No matter how hard they try, they can never make it taste like my mamaw's Cherry Cream Pie. It only lasts about an hour because everyone runs after it to get the biggest piece.

- 1 can sweetened condensed milk
- $\frac{1}{3}$ c. lemon juice
- 1 tsp. Vanilla
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. Almond extract
- 1 (8 oz.) Cool Whip
- 1 baked pie shell
- 1 can cherry pie filling (can use other fruits, such as blueberry or raspberry, if desired)

Directions:

Mix sweetened condensed milk, lemon juice, and vanilla and almond extracts. Gently fold in whipped topping until combined. Pour into pre-baked pie shell. Top with pie filling. Cover with plastic wrap and chill for 2-3 hours before serving. Makes one 9-inch pie that serves 8-10.

TRENT BAKER, GRADE 9

Growing Tobacco

I live in Lee County Virginia, and one of the main sources of income here used to be growing burley tobacco. Growing tobacco in Lee County has changed over the years. With the development of new farming technology, it has become easier to grow tobacco. However, when my grandmother was growing up, such technology didn't exist, and it was a much more strenuous process. I interviewed my grandmother, Janice Bales, to find out more about how tobacco was grown when she was growing up.

My grandmother said that my great-great-grandfather and his family grew tobacco. In the early spring, they would burn their tobacco beds to get rid of any weeds in them. After the ash cooled, tobacco seeds would be sprinkled into the beds, and the ash was nutrients for the seeds. The tobacco beds were covered with white canvas to ensure the plants didn't freeze over. While the tobacco seeds were maturing, it was time to plow the tobacco field. My grandmother's family had two mules that they used to plow their field. First, they hooked their plow up to their mule and plowed the field. Then, two mules were hooked up to a big log and it was used to smooth down the freshly plowed field.

Once the tobacco seeds were matured, they had to be transferred to the tobacco field. The tobacco plants were pulled from the beds and taken to the fields. Then, it was pegged into the ground with a blunt stick. The tobacco had to be watered and fertilized to ensure it grew properly. As the crop develops, it buds, also known as suckers, have to be removed. Cutworms, moth larvae that eat the tobacco, had to be removed by hand.

By August, the tobacco was usually ready to be harvested. It was cut and speared on a tobacco stick in bunches of five or six. The plants were left overnight to wilt, which made them lighter and easier to carry. Next, the tobacco was taken to a barn and hung to cure and dry. This is because freshly cut tobacco is too wet to use. Tobacco takes a couple months to cure. Once it was well cured, it could be taken down and graded, but the tobacco had to be damp when taken down, or it could crumble. The tobacco was graded based on where the leaves were on the plant. The very bottom leaves were called "ground leaves" and usually the worst grade. The

top leaves were called the “tips” and the medium grade. The best grade tobacco came from the middle leaves. The plant was separated into different baskets based on grade and sold. The best grade was worth the most money.

Tobacco growing in Lee County has declined in recent years. This is mainly due to the Fair and Equitable Tobacco Reform Act of 2004. Tobacco farmers used to be given a quota of how much tobacco they could grow per year. Under this act, the government bought out the quotas of a lot of farmers in this region, and the farmers could no longer grow tobacco. They were paid over ten years according to their quotas. Even though not much tobacco is still grown in this county, it still remains a big part of my heritage.

RYAN BALES, GRADE II

His Journey

The gentle ocean breeze caressed his cheek.
Opportunity awaits him.
The waves crashed against his ship vigorously.
So long family.
So long friends.
There was no going back.
He could only imagine God's plan.

JADEN BARNETTE, GRADE 9

Lemon Brisk

- Large can of cream or 2.5 cups juice from 2 lemons
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup boiling sugar
- 1 package cherry jello
- 2 cups graham cracker crumbs

Mix water, sugar, and jello. Let it cool completely. Whip the cream until it is stiff. Put the cream on cool jello and mix it. Line a dish with the graham cracker crumbs, reserving 2 tablespoons. Pour the jello cream mixture over the top. Sprinkle it with the remaining graham crackers. Put it in the fridge or freezer to set.

This recipe is the most amazing thing I have ever ate. Every time my mom or mamaw make it, I get so excited. Unfortunately, the only time this delicious dish gets made is on special occasions, like Christmas or Thanksgiving. This recipe was passed down by my great great great grandmother. Something funny about this recipe is that she was just sitting there one evening and she decided to come up with her own recipe. So she went to the kitchen and attempted to do that. It took her weeks to finally get it right, and when she finally did, she was thrilled. Ever since then, not only has the recipe been passed down, but so has the story.

KAMRIN BISHOP, GRADE 9

My Papaw's Shotgun

One thing that has been passed down from generation to generation is my Papaw Johnny's Shotgun. It is a treasured object that holds a lot of sentimental value to our family. My Great Grandpa Bob bought the gun for my papaw Johnny when he was a small boy, when my dad got old enough my papaw Johnny handed it down to him. A couple of years ago my Dad handed it down to me. I'll never forget the day he gave it to me as long as I live. It was a cold morning when we loaded our rabbit beagles up and headed out for a hunt. My dad

said son I love you and want you to have something that means the world to me and he handed it over and said this is now yours, take care of it. I couldn't believe my dad gave me something that he cherishes so much. It's a Stevens 20 gauge single barrel shotgun with a wood stock. My papaw Johnny has told me tons of stories about his dad taking him rabbit hunting with this gun and him taking my dad. He said you couldn't fill the back of a full size pick up truck with the rabbits that have been killed over the years with this gun. There's no amount of money that could buy my gun, it holds a special place in my heart. My Great Grandpa Bob has passed away and that is where it all started. The memories and the stories that have been shared over the years makes it irreplaceable ... Someday if I become a father and have a son of my own, I to will pass it on to him.

KESTON BISHOP, GRADE 9

Homemade Rub for Smoked Pork

1 cup Brown Sugar
3Tb Paprika
2t Seasoned Salt
1t Kosher Salt
2t Garlic Powder
2t Black Pepper
1/2t Cayenne Pepper
2t Oregano
1t Thyme
1/2t Onion Powder
1Tb Chili Powder
1/2t Dry Mustard

Mix all the ingredients together for an amazing rub! This is a rub that my dad made to put on pork before putting it in the smoker. My family uses this recipe very often, especially for special family events. It is very delicious and if you choose to use this recipe, I hope you enjoy!

CASSIE BLEDSOE, GRADE II

The Man Himself, Anthony Fee

My papaw was born on March 16, 1958. He grew up in the Big Hill Community in Pennington Gap, Virginia. There on Big Hill my papaw has 7 brothers and 6 sisters. Also, on Big Hill my papaw and his siblings learnt how to play the banjo and guitar, and have wrote many songs about the Lord. My papaw and his family grew up rough, but they were always happy. My papaw has taught me many life lessons, but the two I cherish the most is, no matter what always be thankful and be happy with what you have, that way you can be a light to others. Also, to always shine your light for the Lord, no matter what the situation. To me, my papaw is one awesome and amazing man!

ALLY BOWEN, GRADE 9

Brewer

When thinking of an origin for me to submit, I wanted to investigate the meaning and history of my surname or last name. I was shocked to see all the different ways my last name has been used through the years. My last name, Brewer, is a occupational name for a brewer of beer or ale, from an ancient derivative of Old English breowan, 'to brew', giving the Middle English term "brewere." It is also a translation of Dutch

Brouwer, German Brauer or Breuer. Anglicized form of French Bruyere, habitational name for a place so called in Calvados, France.

It is of Norman origin, a Norman name de Berewa. The name comes from the Norman area of Brovera or Brueria, now Breviare, near Caen, in Normandy. The vast movement of people that followed the Norman Conquest of England of 1066 brought the Brewer family name to the British Isles.

The name is also an anglicized version of the native Gaelic O'Brugha Sept name. The last name Brewer, in Ireland is often an immigrant origin having been to the Province of Ulster by settlers who arrived from England, especially during the seventeenth century.

AUSTIN BREWER, GRADE 9

Oreo Dirt Pudding

This dessert is a heavenly layered chocolate pudding dessert that is an essential to our family Thanksgiving. It is a simple recipe that is made quick and gone even quicker. This tradition is the highlight of our family dinner because of how sweet and desirable it is.

Ingredients:

- One package of Double-Stuffed Oreo cookies
- Half a cup of melted butter
- Two packages of instant chocolate pudding
- A fourth of a cup of milk
- Two eight ounce cups of Cool Whip
- One block of cream cheese, softened
- One cup of powdered sugar

Instructions:

1. First, take a gallon Zip-Lock bag and fill it with your package of Double-Stuffed Oreos inside the bag and seal it. Then, crush up the cookies inside of the bag until they are in small pieces.
2. Secondly, pour half of the bag of cookie crumbs in a 9 by 11-inch glass baking pan. Pour your melted butter on top of the cookie crumble and mix thoroughly. Press your cookies to the pan to make a crust.
3. Next, whisk the two packets of pudding mix in a bowl with milk. Set the pudding in the fridge to set.
4. Blend the cream cheese until it has a smooth consistency. Add the powdered sugar into the cream cheese and add one container of Cool Whip. Spread your mixture on top of the cookie crust evenly. Take the pudding out of the fridge and add it on top of the last layer of pudding Oreo Dirt Pudding.
5. Finally, use your second Cool Whip to add on to the pudding, then sprinkle the rest of cookie crumble on top of the Cool Whip!

JASMINE BREWER, GRADE II

My Grandmother's Garden

A lot of people have certain connections that tie to a special place in their hearts. These connections can be through people, places, or just a plain object. I myself have one of these special connections; my mom's garden. It's special to me for a number of reasons. It serves as a reminder of my mom's mom, my grandmother, who has passed away. I hope to bring her memory to life by describing the many positive aspects of this very special garden.

To begin, there are many reasons this garden is special to me. First, it serves as a memoir to my grandmother, who planted the first seeds in the garden. Her influence has kept the garden around for at least a decade. My mom has kept the garden in good condition, and it makes me happy that my mom has such dedication to keep it going. Second, my mom is teaching me how to keep the garden in good shape. My mom is going by the farmer's almanac in her teaching along with various other factors.

Furthermore, there are many more reasons this garden is special to me. My grandmother and her 9 children had to live off of it for quite a long time because of monetary problems. Anything like steak or any kind of meat was a rarity, and it inspires me that, with so many people living in one house, they were all able to pull through. Lastly, the garden has been kept in a food-bearing state because of my mom and her siblings' willingness to preserve their mother's memory. It's truly inspiring to think about their dedication.

In conclusion, this garden holds a very special place in my heart. My family has done a fantastic job of keeping it in good shape, and it truly ties me to the area that I live in. To anyone else, it may just look like a plain and simple garden, but to me, it's the product of my grandmother's hard work.

LAINÉ BROOKS, GRADE 9

Apple Butter Recipe

My grandmother started making Apple Butter back in 1970 when she was 14 years old. She discovered it one day when she needed to put a taste on the biscuits she had made. When she made it, she wrote it down on a piece of paper, she still has the paper she wrote it down on. We usually put this delicious recipe on biscuits, toast, and some of the meat we have at the house. She has some of it stored in jars in the basement at her house. She started making it back then and still makes her delicious Apple Butter to this day!

The following is on her paper:

1. Place the apples, apple cider, brown sugar, cinnamon cloves, and salt in a pot.
2. Cook over medium to low heat
3. Make sure to leave the pot uncovered
4. Stir the pot for around every 15 minutes, until the apples become very soft and start to fall apart, this usually takes about 1 hour.
5. Then use a blender to mix it up so it can be pureed, (a preferred hand blender would be perfect for this, but you can still use a regular blender, food mill, or food processor.)
6. When the apple mixture is smooth, return it to the pot and continue to let it cook down.
You pretty much just want the liquid to evaporate. The longer you cook it, the thicker it will become. It will thicken up as it cools.
7. Once the apple butter reaches a dark brown color and has a thick spread, remove it from the heat and squeeze in some lemon juice to make the flavor better.

CLARKE CECIL, GRADE 9

Banana Pudding Recipe

Back in the 1960s when my grandmother was 12 years old her grandmother taught her how to make Banana Pudding. She has a whole cookbook full of different foods, but the Banana Pudding she makes has always been my favorite dessert. I have always been really close to my grandmother so I am the only one she has ever shared her recipes with. Her delicious Banana Pudding will always be my favorite of all time. She started making it when she was around my age and I am so happy that I get to help my grandmother make it the same way that she helped hers!

The following is written in her cookbook:

Instructions -

1. Preheat oven to 325° F.
2. Combine flour, sugar and salt in a large, heavy saucepan.
3. Lightly beat egg yolks and combine with milk in a large bowl or measuring cup. Pour the egg and milk mixture into dry ingredients in heavy saucepan. Cook over
4. low to medium heat, stirring constantly, until ingredients are thickened and smooth. Remove saucepan from heat and stir in vanilla.
5. To layer your banana pudding, begin by placing vanilla wafers on the bottom of a 13x9 baking dish, glass bowl, or another 3-quart container.
6. Slice bananas and place on top of wafers.
7. Pour one-third of custard over wafers and bananas.
8. Repeat layering process two more times until all wafers, bananas, and custard have been used. Ending with a final layer of wafers for decorative purposes.

For the Meringue -

1. Whip egg whites with an electric mixer set at high speed.
2. Allow egg whites to foam, add cream of tartar and then gradually add sugar one tablespoon at a time.
3. Continue whipping until sugar is well-dissolved.
4. Add vanilla once stiff peaks have formed and whip until well-combined.
5. Spread meringue over banana pudding, making sure to spread to the edges of the dish.
6. Bake for about 25 minutes until lightly the meringue is lightly browned.

ISABELLA CECIL, GRADE 9

A Broken Foot

Okay, I have decided to tell you a story about the time I broke my right foot. It was in the 5th grade and me and my cousin were out riding around on a "ride by side." So, we thought we were indestructible but we later found out that my foot wasn't. We were driving very recklessly through a field that hadn't been mowed yet and we couldn't see anything in front of us. We was probably going 50 MPH basically the fasted it would go. Suddenly, we took a sharp turn to the right and at the same time we hit a ground hog hole and flipped 2 times. While we were flipping my foot somehow got up under the roof of the vehicle and the roof smashed it. I still limp a little, but I don't miss wearing the cast in school!

PARKER CHANCE, GRADE 9

My Grandfather

Today I will be sharing things about my grandfather and how he has to work on the farm to get what he and my grandmother have today. Many of the people in this world today look as to farmers as being poor and having no life. Honestly, today if there wasn't any farmers we probably wouldn't be where we are. Farming is a big part of this culture that I live in. People right here in South West Virginia have to work hard to get what they have. We mostly get all of our stuff from farmers anyways, if you actually think about it. Farmers often raise cows, donkeys, goats, horses, and pigs. Then, you send off the skin or the animals in general to be processed. When, you get it back it's like the animals are used for a good purpose, if it's not food then its clothes that surly does keep you warm. Do you ever think about that?

My grandfather James Davidson grew up on a farm and now lives and works on his own. He always is working hard and pushing to make a living. My papaw always likes to tell me stories about when he was little and he went hunting for his food. James, tried to get me into the farming stage, when I was about 11 or 12. Where I would go gather hay, feed the animals, and drive around on the four-wheeler to make sure, everything is just right. While I would be checking on things, he often would take a break after being outside working for hours.

AUTUMN COLLINGSWORTH, GRADE 9

Fishing Day

Fishing is a sport that is renown all over the world. Many families and outdoorsmen use it as a way to catch food for their families, though, many others catch and release for sport. The activity can be traced back thousands of years. Ancient peoples used fishing as a way of life and survival. This is the tale of my earliest remembered fishing trip with my father.

To begin, I can remember back as far as I can the fishing trips my father and I took. My father loves to fish and I do to. He taught me much of what I know about fishing. My father and I love to fish a certain breed of Salmon that annually gets stocked in Virginia watersheds known as Trout. Many types of Trout get stocked in the rivers of Southwest Virginia. Our particularly favorite kind being Rainbow Trout, also known as Steelhead Trout. My father and I would travel to out secret fishing spots in places no one would know about and set up our fishing rods. We will bait our hooks with *Powerbait Trout Dough*. On other occasions we will use spinning lures. My father and I would sit by the river banks for hours on end reeling in Trout. Sometimes we would get other river inhabitants such as snapping turtles on accident. After we concluded our fishing day, we would pack up with our gear and return home. We always released our Trout unless we wanted the meat.

Our day would conclude with supper my mother would have prepared. My father and I would need showers and to clean up before we ate. Those are the good fishing days I remember with my father. Of course, trout aren't the only fish we sought after, but they are our favorite.

COLEE COTTRELL, GRADE 11

Danny Collins



Stanco Equipment

I'm Carolina Collins and I'm here to tell you about my father, Danny Collins. He was born October 18th, 1955 to Mae and Russell Collins who lived in the Dryden area. He was one of five children. He was born at home and delivered by Dr. Daniel Gabril and named after him. He mostly went to Dryden school. He mostly lived on farms with his mom and dad and sharecropped. He grew tobacco, hay, and moved a lot. As he got older, he did many jobs. He worked putting up telephone lines and he also

worked as a mechanic but always going back to the farm. In 1977, he met and married my mom, Susie Collins. Over the years, they had seven children. From 1977 to 1980, he worked several jobs. The one that caught hold and really stuck was when he was a brick layer. In 1990, he bought a farm and moved his whole family there where he grew tobacco, and raised cows, and he continued to lay brick. His work is scattered around Lee County and Kingsport, Tennessee and Boone Lake. Sadly, his journey ended on May 5, 2016 but he is laying brick up in heaven with his son, Russell Lee Collins who passed away June 6, 2006. He is sadly missed by his wife Susie, and his kids Glen, Collier, Flossie, Amanda, Haley, and Carolina Collins.

CAROLINA COLLINS, GRADE 9

My Aunt Debby's Special Pie

My aunt Debby used to make an apple pie that her Great grandmother used to make. She would make it for my mother and grandmother because her pies were always the best. She made her own crust with crushed graham crackers and melted butter, once she got her crust all mixed together she would mash it all in her pie pan with a mason jar until it is all flat in the pan. After she got her crust all lined out she would put it in the fridge and start to peel her apples. Once all the apples were peeled she would start to slice them up and fry them. Once she got the apples in her pan she would start to coat them in brown sugar and cinnamon. She would fry them for about thirty or forty-five minutes and once she had the apples good and fried in their brown sugar cinnamon mixture, she would take her pie crust out of the fridge and put the apples in the pan, once she got all the apples in the pan she would pick the pan up and tap it on the table. She would sit the pan back down on the table and turn her oven on four fifty bake, and she would wait for about thirty minutes for her oven to warm up and would walk back over to the table and grab her pan, and put it in the oven to bake. She would bake the pie for a good half an hour to an hour. On time while I was over at her house she told me "This apple pie has a very special meaning behind it, my great grandmother made this pie for her husband and had just perfected making it right before he died it, apple pie was always his favorite, anyways when I was a little girl my mother taught me how to make this pie as her mother taught her and now I am teaching you," she would always make the pie for us on Thanksgiving and Christmas it her thing she loved to make us her special pie.

ANNA COX, GRADE 9

My Family's Hunting Tradition

Every year me and my family all go deer hunting together. This is the time that we all get to bond. The opening morning, we all get up and eat a big breakfast, then we head to the woods. When driving to the place we are hunting we all will listen to music and sing. Once we arrive to the property. We usually sit in the truck and scout for deer that are already out and moving early in the morning. If there's a deer that is up and moving one of us will get out of the truck and slowly make our way to a spot to get a clear shoot. But if there is not a deer that is out we will take our time, put the rest of our camouflage on and we will start the miles and a half walk up the mountain. When walking up the mountain we will stop and look around to see if any deer has come out.

Once we have gotten to where we are sitting for the morning to watch for deer, we will lay our guns down and get all the things we need out of our backpacks incase a deer comes walking across in front of us. If we do see a deer that is walking on the ridge, me and my father will decide who gets the first shot. When we come up with our decision on who gets the first shot, the other person will watch the deer while and after you shoot. That way you will have a idea on where the creature ran after you shot it. After the first shot is fired, we will pack up our things and go to where the person shot the deer and we will begin to search for

blood. The reason we look for blood is because when you find a blood trail it is a whole lot easier to find the deer.

In conclusion, I always look forward to deer season so I can spend time with my family. When we get up early and eat breakfast together it is the best feeling ever. I love getting to spend one on one time with my father because if it wasn't for him taking me into the woods when I was younger and introducing me to hunting, I personally don't think I would have such a great passion for it.

BAYLEE COX, GRADE II

Plain Sugar Cookies

- ♦ 3 ½ c. sifted flour
- ♦ 2 ½ t. baking powder
- ♦ ½ t. salt
- ♦ ⅔ c. sugar
- ♦ 2 eggs
- ♦ 1 t. vanilla
- ♦ 1 t. almond
- ♦ 4 t. milk

Measure flour; add baking powder and salt and mix again. Cream margarine; add sugar gradually, creaming well. Add eggs, one at a time, beating. Thoroughly after each. Add vanilla. Add flour, alternately with milk, mixing well after each addition. Chill overnight. Roll ¼" thick. Cut into desired shape; place on greased baking sheet. Bake at 400 degrees for 9 minutes or until done. Yield: 6 dozen.

Even though sugar cookies are a simple thing that many people make, my family's recipe is a little unique. We add vanilla and almond and that seems to create the best sugar cookies ever. This recipe started with my great great grandmother. The rule to passing the recipe down is that if the grandmother of whom is being taught is still living, then it must be taught by her. If she is not, then it must be taught to the grandchildren by the mother. Every Easter and Christmas, me and all of my cousins go to my grandparents' house and make sugar cookies all day long. We decorate them with all colors of icing and many designs.

This recipe is something so simple that holds so much meaning to my family. We will never forget the many wonderful moments spent with each other learning how to make these incredible sugar cookies so the recipe can be pasted on.

TATUM COX, GRADE 9

The History of Stanco Equipment

Coal is a big industry in the Appalachian region and if we did not have coal I would not have this story to tell. I sat down with my grandfather, Bobby Kerns Stanley, intrigued about how he started the Stanco Equipment trucking company. He first started working for his dad, who owned three trucks, for about a year and a half. When his dad decided to sell the trucks in March 1972, Pa Kerns bought them at the age of 20 with the support of his wife Evon Stanley. He now owned three trucks, so he hired two men. He drove the other truck himself and done most of the mechanic work.

Around 1980, Pa Kerns built a truck shop. At the time, he had fourteen trucks and fifteen men working for him. Most of his workers was his kin. He had three sons that he taught how to work on and drive the trucks. In 1989, Clinchfield Coal Company shut down so Pa Kerns started hauling in Thornton, Kentucky.

In 2005, Stanco Equipment consisted of twelve coal trucks. Stanco Equipment now owns a total of thirty trucks and fifteen pieces of construction equipment. He works for Contura Energy, whom he has hauled coal for since 2004, and hauls from three deep mines and two strip jobs.

Pa Kerns is very proud that he was able to send three boys through college with all of his hard work. He stated, "There was no such thing as 8-hour work days, it was more like 12 to 14 hours." He later stated, "If it was easy everybody would be doing it." I admire my grandfather's hard work. He built up a company that now has thirty coal trucks and more than fifty employees. He is 67 years old and still actively involved with the business alongside Nannie Evon, who did the administrative work for the last several years. Pa Kerns said, "It takes a long time to build, but can be lost overnight." This man has proven that with hard work anything can be accomplished.

BETHANY DAVIS, GRADE II

Family History

Family history is very important to a person. Knowing where you come from, can give you better quality about life. Having a home, car, food, and clothes would be a personal goal to set to have for a family when one sees the sacrifices a family goes through. Working just to raise a big family, making ends meet to pay the bills or just to have food on the table, a family can experience the better things in life, which having the family you always wanted and showing the love to each other can bring you closer to self-discovery. As an example, my papaw and his family growing up are a great example of my family history because when my papaw was younger, his family did not have anything. They lived in a 3 room shack, just to have shelter. My great-grandmother was taking care of nineteen children at the time, and my great-grandfather was always working on the garden. My papaw and his siblings could not even go to school because their parents could not afford pencils, paper, and even clothes to provide for them. His family went through a rough time period. He said they had to eat wallpaper just to have food, or they ate the vegetables they had from their garden, which was very little for nineteen children. They did not know how to read, to write their name or anyone else's name.

My mamaw taught my papaw how to do basically everything, she taught him how to read, to write his own name, her name, and my mother's name. The only book he said he ever wanted to read was the bible. At the age of 40, my mamaw taught him how to read the bible, he read the whole bible, he went to church every Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night. He loved being a Christian, being able to have his own family, and being able to even have his own money. Every Sunday morning and evening after church we would always go to Hardee's because that was my papaw's favorite restaurant, and every Wednesday evening after church we would always go to Huddle House. Once, he had his own family he was alright because he had everything he could ever wish for a house, a car, a wife, one and only child, and grandchildren. I loved going to church with him every Sunday morning and evening, and every Wednesday. He went to church basically his whole entire life, he loved being a Christian, and being able to go to church was his favorite thing to do. If it wasn't Sunday or Wednesday he would still go to the pastor's house and talk to him, and he would check on everyone that went to church with him, and even to this day people talks about how good of a man he was. I was lucky to have him as a Grandfather. That is my family history.

SCOTTY DAVIS, GRADE 9

Christmas Candy

I am doing my project on a very old family recipe that is still a tradition to this day. It all starts back in the 1960s with my great grandfather. He had an idea to make a Christmas treat for the ten children that he had. After some thinking he came up with a great recipe for peanut butter candy. It became a family

treat for the children every Christmas. It soon became known all over the area, people from everywhere would come to get a piece of his candy. This great candy included the following ingredients: brown sugar, cream, peanut butter. After the ingredients were gathered, he would get a giant pressure cooker. He would combine 5 lbs of brown sugar, 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups of cream, after that he would slowly heat and constantly stir the ingredients. After it was hot and began to boil, he would use the soft ball stage check. To do that you need a cup of cold water, take one tablespoon of the mixture of ingredients and drop it in the cup. Then take your finger and move it around, if it forms into a ball, your mixture is ready to add the final ingredient. This final ingredient was 4 cups of JFG peanut butter. Then he would stir all the ingredients until they were well mixed and when it reached a thick density it was ready to pour into buttered glass dishes. After pouring he would let it cool until it became solid. And then when it was solid he would take a case knife, dip it in water, then cut it into many pieces. This recipe could feed up to 60 people. Now if you're not looking to feed that many there is also a recipe that results in much less candy. This recipe includes: 2 cups of brown sugar, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of cream, and $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of peanut butter. This recipe can feed up to 15 people. This is also the recipe that is used today in the family. This recipe was created by Jessie James Ball, my great grandfather that I was named after.

JAMES EDWARDS, GRADE 9

My Family's Old Fashioned Molasses Stack cake

I am going to share my family's recipe for our Old Fashioned Molasses Stack Cake. A long history of growing sorghum is in my family. They saved seed from each crop in order to grow the next years harvest. I would help my grandparents grow and harvest the sorghum. My grandparents used my great-grandparents horse drawn cane mill to grind the sorghum for the cane juice. We would take all day grinding cane to have a vat full of juice. Next, it was time to start the fire pit that the vat rested upon. It would take five to six hours to boil the cane juice down to molasses. We would start with around 100 gallons of juice and at the end we would end up with 20 gallons of pure sorghum molasses. After each harvest, we would make a Molasses Stack Cake to celebrate the harvest.

The recipe for the cake calls for the following list:

- 5 cups of all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup vegetable shortening
- 1 cup of granulated sugar
- 1 cup sorghum molasses
- 2 eggs lightly beaten
- 1 cup buttermilk

For the apple filling:

- 1 pound of cooked apples, peeled and chopped
- 1 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon freshly ground nutmeg
- 4 to 5 cups of water divided

Mix ingredients for the cake batter in a mixer bowl. Wrap and refrigerate the cake batter for a hour. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Divide the cake batter into six equal parts for six round cake pans. Roll out each section and place in pans and bake for about ten minutes. While the cake is baking, mix apple filling ingredients in mixer bowl. Once all the layers are baked and cooled, you are ready to assemble the stack cake. Combine three cups of apple filling with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup molasses. Spread $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the filling over the top of each layer, and stack them. Wrap the cake and refrigerate 24 to 48 hours. This makes the cake moist and tender.

JACOB ELDRIDGE, GRADE 9

The Origin of the last name Carter

The Carter last name has an origin from Irish, Scottish, and English as Cartere. The Carter family crest even has 3 tires on it that look like bicycle tires. Back in the old'n days, your last name was your occupation so the last name Carter is the transporter of goods. Actually, my great pappaw, Fred Carter, was one of the kids that took water and supplies to coal miners in the mines before he was old enough to work in there. He would use (4-5) mules and take the men their supplies. It works out so weird because my pappaw Aaron Grey Carter, he drove delivery and artillery trucks for the army while stationed in Germany.

The Carter family originated in the east coast of the United States of America. The Carter family name was found in the USA, UK, Canada, and in Scotland. In 1840 there where about 447 Carters living in Virginia. Virginia had the highest amount of the Carter family living there. To be exact 9,497 of 82,141 people living in Virginia where Carters. In 1920, numbers dropped because of new ways of transportation were invented so they moved to Texas, Georgia, and Indiana. In 2018, Virginia still has the most of the Carter family still living there today.

MATTHEW ELKINS, GRADE 9

Grape Salad

A recipe that originated from my ancestors is a very fruity one called Grape Salad. My great grandma gave this to my mom. It is wonderful if you love grapes. This recipe has been in my family for a long while. My mamaw makes the best because she was taught by her mom to make it this is one special thing.

- 2lb white seedless grapes
- 2lb red seedless grapes
- 8oz sour cream
- 8oz cream cheese
- 1 cup of sugar (white)
- 1 tbsp Vanilla
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 cup nuts (walnuts, pecans)

Combine sour cream, cream cheese, sugar, & vanilla. Beat with mixer until smooth. Pour over grapes & mix well. Combine brown sugar & nuts (or some grapes) refrigerate and mix. That is all you need to feed your hungry self!

BRENNON ELY, GRADE 9

Granny's Cake

I chose my granny's rum cake recipe to share because it is my favorite cake to eat. She got the recipe from her mother that said it had been passed down for many generations. My granny used to only make the rum cake on special occasions like Thanksgiving and Christmas. Ever since she passed away we had been looking for the recipe, we finally found it right before Christmas last year so my aunt decided to fix one. I must say it was good but I believe my granny's will always be better even if it is the same recipe. Some of the ingredients in it are pecans and walnuts, yellow cake mix, instant vanilla pudding, sugar, and special rum.

For the cake part: $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of chopped walnuts, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of chopped pecans, a box of yellow cake mix, a box of instant vanilla pudding, 4 eggs, $\frac{1}{2}$ cold water, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of cooking oil, and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the special rum.

For the glaze part: $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of melted butter, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of water, 1 cup of sugar, and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the special rum.

MADISON ELY, GRADE 9



Scotland in Appalachia: Mr. Long presenting about his Scottish heritage

Scotland at Lee High

Very few teachers dedicate themselves to making students aware of their personal histories like my English teacher, Mr. Long. In November 2018, he came to class totally dressed in the traditional hunting tartan of the MacFarlane clan. Mr. Long told us that despite his current last name; his family changed their name four generations ago to escape persecution Irish and Scottish immigrants were facing during the late nineteenth century.

From Loch Long, Scotland near Loch Lomond, Mr. Long's family tells that they got their name from here to mask their real name of MacFarlane. Reflecting his family's heritage, he wore a green kilt and blue wool jacket and vest with a deer-hide sporran and brogues. It kind of made me itch to see so much wool—I would think it would be very warm! I had never seen anything like it before! He also had a big piece of cloth in the kilt's pattern pinned over his left shoulder, symbolizing he was the leader of his clan in the area.

But what I learned most from Mr. Long's presentation was how passionate someone can be about their personal history. I learned that the reason so many Scottish settlers came to this region was because they were forced off their land by King James I of England because they fought so much. They settled this area because it looked so much like their original home. The wool that Mr. Long wore was the main industry these people had to live on. If it weren't for the endurance of these people, we wouldn't be living where we are today.

I want to thank Mr. Long here for what he does. Because of his presentation, I too, am interested in Scottish and Irish stories and history. It has made me want to go back and look at my own family's legacy and see what I can discover.

BRANDON EMERSON, GRADE 9

A New World

Living in the Appalachian Mountains is amazing. It's beautiful seeing the mountains every morning laying on the horizon. There is so much to learn just in this one area. The people and the scenery are more than enough to make a person smile every day.

Although I wasn't born in this area, but between day long drives into late night, I've had the chance of learning and seeing everything there is to see here. Every time I'm out, I get the opportunity to see new things. My family would tell me many of their stories from when they were younger and what it was like here.

My family would tell me about how cornbread and beans were the greatest foods ever. They'd talk about the whole family meeting up on Christmas or Thanksgiving to eat or open presents in the fashion it was meant to be. My grandmother had the best stories. She'd always talk about walking around the many woods in this area just to find frogs with her siblings.

Living here has also shown me how creative a person can be. Many people I've met in this area are artists in their own ways, whether it's with carving or quilting. All through the Appalachian region, you can find many shops that sell woodwork and handmade quilts. The care put into the work is beautiful.

The time I've been here I have seen nothing, but friendship and love. I've had the opportunity to learn and experience life here. I'm proud to say my origin story is here.

ADRIAN ESTRADA, GRADE II

Slow Cooker Buffalo Chicken Chili

Ingredients:

- 3 lbs boneless chicken breasts
- 2, 14.5 oz can Great Northern Beans (drained)
- 2, 14.5 oz can Rotel diced tomatoes with chives
- 2, 14.5 oz can chicken broth
- ½ cup Frank's Red Hot Sauce
- 2 envelopes of Hidden Valley Ranch mix
- 2, 14.5 oz cans sweet corn kernels, drained
- 1 tsp. Onion powder
- 1 tsp. Garlic powder
- 1 tsp. Celery salt
- 1 tsp. Dried cilantro
- ½ tsp. Salt
- 2, 8 oz container of cream cheese

Toppings:

- Tortilla chips
- Bleu cheese
- Additional hot sauce

Instructions:

In a 5 qt. Slow cooker combine all the ingredients except the cream cheese and toppings. Cook on high for four hours, or low for eight hours. Shred the chicken using two forks. Add cream cheese and stir until it is incorporated. Add toppings.

Serves up to 12:1 cups.

This recipe is easy to make for any occasion. It is always a fan favorite at my house when we have get togethers. My mother and I like to cook different dishes for our guests, however out of all the deserts, snacks, and meals we have made in the past, they seem to enjoy this particular dish the best. Instead of putting the

tortilla chips on the chili as a topping, I like to use them as a utensil to eat the chili as a dip. My mother tries to teach me how to cook different meals so that I can cook for my family one day. Spending time with my mother in the kitchen is a time I will cherish forever.

BRONWEN FISCHER, GRADE II

Granny Joy

This is a story about my great grandmother, Granny Joy. Her full name was Marilyn Joyce "Joy" Wilson, and she had three siblings, Walter, Sue, and Charles Wilson. She was born in September 28, 1932 at St. Charles, Virginia. St. Charles was known as a coalmine town during that time, but it was also known as a crime-ridden one. When Granny Joy was 3 years old, her father was shot and killed by a man named Red Ingle because her dad owed Red 25 cents, which was a lot during the 1930's, and he didn't have the money, this left her mom with 3 small children and one on the way. After that horrific event her mom decided to work as a maid, she helped clean stranger's houses and help clean her mean parents' home, I don't know why she would do so in the first place because her parents were abusive to her and the kids. Granny Joy and her siblings also had to get a job at an early age, she had to work at a movie theater after school at age 10. One fateful day, Granny Joy's house burnt down for an unknown reason, the only thing that survived was Granny Joy's tea set, and my grandparents still have the tea set to this day. During her senior year of high school, Granny Joy met the man who will be her future husband, his name is John Fleenor, it was love at first sight, and they married after graduation. Granny Joy gave birth to seven children, John, Jeff, Melinda, Mark, Sonja, Christopher, and my grandfather, Walter Fleenor. When all her children went to school, she went to collage to get a degree in respiratory therapy. Her husband owned dry cleaners called "Spic and Span," he then sold the company and then it shut down, It is now the Pennington Fire Department. Her husband died due to a heart problem, I don't know what day it was when it happened, but it was a sad day for her. A few days after Christmas in 2018, she died at her apartment at the age of 86. She lived a long and happy life. I miss her, I love her. Rest in peace, my great granny Joy.

LOGAN FLEENOR, GRADE 9

Special Dessert, Banana Pudding

- Vanilla flavored pudding mix
- 2 cups of milk per pack of pudding mix.
- Vanilla wafers
- Whip cream
- Bananas
- Nana's secret ingredient

Banana pudding has always been a favorite dessert throughout my family. It's been around for years actually. When I was younger, my nana taught me how to make her special banana pudding. It is very simple and easy to make. You start by adding the vanilla pudding mix, then add 2 cups milk for every vanilla pudding packet, then crush the vanilla wafers and add them to the mixture, then add the whip cream, then of course add the bananas. My nana has a *secret ingredient* for about everything she makes, but there is just something about her banana pudding. Her pudding is by far the best. Her is my favorite. My nana has never told anyone

her secret ingredient; she doesn't even have it written down. The secret recipe has been passed down for years but you have to be a certain age before you can know what the secret ingredient is. I would love to know what the secret ingredient is just as much as I love eating it. My time will come, but until then all I can do is just sit back and enjoy.

LEXIE FRITZ, GRADE 9

Conspiracy Theories

The origin of conspiracy theories technically has no written beginning; people have been suspicious about certain topics for decades. However, some people believe conspiracies originated first in the 1960s, but how could they not have appeared before the 1960s? Many people believe that conspiracy theories are completely false and made up, some believe in a few of them, and others call themselves conspiracy theorists, which would basically mean they believe in all of the conspiracy theories.

If you did not know, conspiracy theories is the belief of an event or situation that has been changed by a powerful covert group. There are hundreds of conspiracy theories that people believe the government tampered with. There are so many of them I couldn't possibly name them all, but a couple of my favorites that I actually believe in are, the moon landing being fake, the illuminati and the new world order, and the government watching people. Some of my favorite conspiracies have came from the famous youtuber, Shane Dawson, he has made multiple videos explaining in very intense details about hundreds of theories and why he thinks they are true.

The creepiest theory to me is the illuminati and the new world order one. This one has to do with a secretive and very powerful group. Some people think the government has hand picked people for this undercover group, others think it is some of the most famous people in the world, such as Beyoncé, Taylor Swift, Kim and Kanye West, and Jay Z. Many conspiracy theorists believe that this group is made to control the world's power in secret. Anyone that is rich and has a tremendous amount of power has been accused of being apart of the illuminati. The illuminati originated back in the 1700s but was supposedly shut down. Many believe the secret group never actually stopped but they kept all of their work underground. Technically there is no real proof that the illuminati exists but people have some pretty outstanding ways to sure make you want to believe it. Mostly today, though, people think the group is filled with celebrities and very end powerful people.

One of the newer conspiracy theories that is sparking social media is the "birds aren't real" theory. Now this one is kind of out there but is very interesting to read about. The US government has supposedly killed off all the birds in 2001. People believe that they made robot looking birds for the police and government to keep a closer look on all humanity. Since the government shut down of the end of 2018, beginning of 2019, people have been commenting that they have not seen any birds, which has made the theory get even more real and crazy to some people. Others just think its impossible and argue that birds hibernate in the winter months. However, some people of warmer states, where the birds hibernate to, also say they haven't seen any birds either. I personally think this conspiracy is almost a little too far fetched for even me to believe in.

Some conspiracy theories can really make you think about whether they are true or not, some make no sense at all. Everyone has believed in some conspiracies, even if you knew it or not, it is a basic form of human behavior. Whether you believe in the more crazy ones or the simple ones that tons of people believe in, I think almost all of the theories are interesting to read and learn about.

KAYLEE GLASCOE, GRADE II

Papaw's No Bake Cookies

- 2 cups of sugar
- 4 tbs. of cocoa
- ½ cups of peanut butter
- ½ cups of milk
- ½ cups of butter
- 1 tsp. of vanilla
- 3 cups of quick oats

Mix sugar, cocoa, milk, and butter in a pan. Bring to a boil; boil for one minute, stirring often. Remove from heat. Stir in oats, peanut butter, and then add vanilla. Drop by spoonfuls onto wax paper. Drop by spoonfuls onto wax paper. Let cool until hardened.

Every individual has a unique heritage, mine is no different than the others. Rituals, traditions, and foods are all aspects that make up our diverse lineage. One particular food that means a lot to me and my family is our No Bake Cookies. My papaw Duck first introduced me to these when I was just a little kid. My great mamaw Ruth first introduced it to him when he was little and it was one of his favorite desserts. Now that he has introduced it to me, it is one of my favorite desserts also. My mother and I love it so much that we make it almost every week. It is quick and easy to make and it is the best right after you get it off the stove because it's hot, melty, and gooey. It might not be much but it is my heritage. I'm so very glad that this is part of my heritage and that I could share it with other people.

MADDIE GUNTER, GRADE 9

Pauline

Seven short years ago in a very humid July, my family moved into this simple ranch house in Jonesville, Virginia. It was a really nice neighborhood and I could see us having a good life here. When we were moving in, my neighbor had warned us that two years before, the lady who lived here passed away in our living room, and that no one had found her for a few days. She had also said that she had kept to herself the whole time she had lived there, and that it was rare to see her outside. We didn't think much of it at the time, thinking that she might be trying to scare us. Years have gone by, and no one in my family had thought about that story that my neighbor had told us... until recently when I started noticing strange things. I had often joked that the house was haunted, mostly due to that story that my neighbor had told me. Now, I can say that I'm not joking when I tell you that this house is haunted.

I had wondered what had happened to her, so I asked my neighbor for more information about her. She was a very quiet woman who had lived in this area through the Great Depression. She was always gloomy and no one ever understood why. Weird things started happening a few months back. One night, I was sleeping with my door open. The sound of footsteps were heard to walk in and stop right beside me, except no one was there. I also had noticed that the house started to pop a little more than normal. A few weeks later, the most frightening incident happened. It was unusually windy outside that night. I was laying in my bed about to drift off to sleep, when I felt someone sit down at the end of my bed. I reached over to turn my lamp on, and no one was there. I told my family about these scary encounters, and you guessed it... they laughed it off. I have yet to sleep with my door open since.

I often wonder if these alarming confrontations were the works of Pauline, why did she wait so long? Did something trigger her? Lastly, the most frightening, what are her plans for the future?

JORDAN HAMPTON, GRADE II

Mama's Oreo Pudding

I chose my Mama's Oreo Pudding, because it has a lot of meaning to me and my family. It has been passed down generation through generation. My mom only makes this on special occasions, because if you fixed it very often, it wouldn't be as good. She makes this for birthdays and holidays. I love when those times come around, because Oreo pudding is my favorite dessert. This recipe brings us together every time my mom makes it, because with it, comes our family history, and without it, I don't know what we'd be today.

Oreo Pudding:

Things you will need: whipped cream, mixer, and family size Oreos, and vanilla pudding

Step 1: Add all the ingredients to the mixer and mix.

Step 2: Let it sit overnight, so that the Oreo's are soft.

Step 3: Serve!

SHAWN HAMPTON, GRADE 9

Thomas, the Orange Tabby

Many people have pets that always mean something to them. Rather it be a cat or dog, bird or snake, or any other pet. For me it was a cat. A orange tabby to be precise. I have multiple stories about this cat, but I only have time for one. So why not explain his life.

When I was a child, around the age of six, we had a neighbor who I didn't know much about. All I knew was that he had three dogs outside his house which I thought were scary as any kid would. But one day his water was messed up at his house and my dad offered to help him. I didn't know what his name was, and to be frank, I've forgot it. I went to help my dad. My neighbors pipe had burst. After about twenty minutes or so I heard a kitten. I asked my neighbor about it. He said that he had gotten a few stray cats and one had kittens. He put the dogs up so they wouldn't hurt the kittens. One of them was a small orange kitten that didn't have its eyes open yet. This was the first time I seen the cat.

On and off for the next two years I would see the cat, rather it being in my yard or just seeing it out. Turns out my neighbor was basically an animal abuser. He would leave for months and not leave any food for the animals and nobody ever checked on them. He lived to far away from me for my family to notice. After a while the precautions were taken and we took the property and called animal control. Thankfully the cat, who he named Garfield, was perfectly fine. We would take care of the cat from that time on. The cat was only two at this point. My parents said I could rename him. I took it upon myself to name him Thomas, or Tom as we would usually call him. I had one reason why I named him this that in reality doesn't make much sense. I was a kid still and the only popular cats I knew were Garfield and Tom from Tom and Jerry. So I named him Tom.

Tom eventually had a kitten with another stray that came by. He was a small cat that was orange and white. I of course named him accordingly, Jerry. Tom and Jerry lived with us. They would get into fights a lot. In between this time my family had adopted two dogs. They were Jack Russell Terriers. Surprisingly, the dogs and the two cats got along very well. They never tried to hurt one another.

On one occasion Tom attacked one of my family. We were outside, we had a gathering with about 8 of our family members form way out of town, Fairfax to be exact. But mom was trying to pick up Tom and hold him. Around that time something hit the side of our tin shed. Which in turn made Tom very scared and he dug his claws into mom's shoulder. Thankfully he didn't hurt her that bad. Right around that time Tom disappeared.

We didn't see our favorite cat for a while. Three months to be exact. We thought he rather ran away or died. But his son was still with us. One day in the middle of summer I was in our living room and heard a sound of an animal that was in pain. I went outside to pour food into the cat's food bowl, thinking it was Jerry.

Jerry was nowhere in sight. So I looked around and seen Tom. I was so happy to see him. I was surprised my dogs didn't alert us to him being back. I was still a child at this point. I tried to pet Tom but his fur felt weird in a way I still can describe. Then I got a closer look at him. I noticed that his back left leg was what looked to be burnt and had blood all over it. Considering I was squeamish as a kid I yelled and ran back into the house. I found mom and dad and told them about Tom. Around the same time one of moms friends that she works with pulled into our driveway, which was rather bad timing. Mom explained to her friend they could talk much because our cat. Mom's friend was worried about the cat and tried to help. Upon further inspection, Toms leg had cuts in it. We later came to the conclusion that is was caught in a bear trap in the mountain. The black on his leg was from where the skin had rotted. I felt horrible considering that he had been gone for months and I wasn't able to help. We called our vet who lived very close to us to come down to our house. After a while it turns out we was right about the trap. Our vet put medicine on Toms leg and gave him a couple shots. He said that he was going to take Tom to the veterinarian office. He said it would be around two weeks or more before we could possible see Tom again. When we went to go see him two weeks later we all felt awful. Mom and dad already knew and didn't want to tell me. The vet had to remove Toms leg. It was so infected and blistered that could have spread and possible killed him. We all felt bad for the poor cat. It was hard for him to get around for the first few weeks. We had to keep him in our house for the first few days. After some time however, he began to live without four legs. He started to run again, play, hunt, all the stuff a cat does. Surprisingly he learned to run faster with one leg. A cat, especially one that's outside a lot, needs to hunt, it's just there nature. He began to kill more and more animals which we had to take care of because we didn't want our cats to eat random birds and mice they killed.

For the next few months to years, everything was relatively normal. My grandfather passed away in between this time. About a two years or so, Toms son, Jerry up and disappeared. To this day we still have no idea what happened to him. We think that someone came and took him. Tom adapted very well to having three legs. By this time we got another dog who we named Shiloh. Now, as you know by now all my pets have famous animal names from movies, so you'd assume that my dog named Shiloh would be a beagle. Well, he's actually a rat terrier. The reason I bring this up is because Shiloh became Tom's best friend. They would always play around with each other. They very seldom got into fights. They would always sit by each other outside. For the next while nothing really important happened. I got older, both my grandmothers passed away. My family build a new house where my neighbors used to be. We got another dog. This time it was a beagle. Throughout Toms entire life, none of my dogs tried to hurt him. Many times during the winter, Tom would get in the dog house with the other dogs. We kept the rat terrier in the house however. Often times tom would be around the dogs. It seemed as if it would kill him to be around us.

Tom was getting up there in age, he lived to be 13. Which is good for a cat with three legs. He died last year around the beginning of school. Months before his death we got another cat. A small, Maine Coon, who was black and white. We actually named him something normal, Jessie. There is a story behind it however. As you know I've had more dogs than cats. Well we didn't know how to determine the gender of a cat, I know kinda silly. We thought it best to pick a name that would work for both genders. Later we found out Jessie is a boy. Jessie, as a kitten, began to look up to Tom, or that's how it seemed. We kept Jessie inside the house. He was rather what you'd say sheltered. Often times he would look outside at Tom and mock how he acts. Tom didn't seem to be annoyed by another cat. Which is probably do to the fact Tom had been around other animals his entire life. Everybody in my family loved Tom. Especially my father. We often referred to Tom as "dads cat". Dad loved Tom so much. Dad had a shop that was by our house, which sold firearms. He had a chair outside. It seemed almost every time dad when outside to his shop Tom would be there. Dad always would pet him. Sometimes dad would go outside just to be around the cat, be dad denies it. Most of the time the people who came to purchase guns would always talk about Tom. They all seemed to love him.

Toms death is rather sad. He was asleep one day and my cousin that lived above us dogs had got out the night before. It was a German Shepard. It was gone all day and around six it came back. We could tell something was wrong with the dog, but we didn't think much of it because that same week our water messed up and we were too focused on it. Well, the dog jumped Tom and killed him. My family felt awful, especially my father, who loved the cat so much. After about an hour of insanity, dealing with my cousin, the dog, my family, we decided it was best if the dog was put down, because we had no clue if the dog had just killed Tom for no reason or if the dog was sick. Tom died in 2018 I miss him so much. I take extreme care of Jessie and all my dogs sense then. I love Jessie almost as much as Tom. Everybody loves the little orange tabby. Realistically if you think about it, I first met Tom because my neighbors water messed up, and Tom left us when our water messed up. Quite poetic is it not?

Everybody has a pet that they love, or in some cases loves more than others. Rather it be a cat or dog, bird or snake. For me it was a cat. A orange tabby named Tom.

TRAVIS HARLESS, GRADE II

Mayberry Life

We should all take pride in who we are and the history that we hold. I think there's something special to be said about the life stories that we each have. Each encounter we have throughout our lives shape us into who we are. It is such a gift to be able to share that with the world. This is a small story into the window of who I am and a place that I will forever treasure in my heart.

My first home was found in a place called Highland County, Virginia. With slightly over 2,000 people, it was very quaint and quiet. In an environment so small, the word "neighbor" became action and "stranger" was left without meaning. Friends became family and the community lived as if it were a true Mayberry.

My biological family (aside from my parents) lived five hours away so I was taken in as an orphan to many. I was kept throughout the day by a sweet lady (who I referred to as my Nana), her husband (I called Pawpaw), her daughter (who was an aunt-like figure to me), and her two grandchildren (who I considered my cousins). Throughout the years, I went on many adventures at Nana's house. From wading in the creek behind her home, watching bears in the yard (there were many), or fishing in a nearby pond, many of my greatest childhood memories are kept in Highland County with Nana.

Each year, Highland County would host a Maple Syrup Festival. It was massive. People would come from all over to engage in the timeless celebration of it all. There would be carnival rides, dances, animals, fireworks, games, and the annual unforgettable parade on top of it all. I started my Olympic twirling career here. The festival continues today and I cling to the hope that it brings as much joy to others' lives as it once did mine.

My mother worked at the Homestead Resort and my father was a police officer during our time spent in this Mayberry world. On numerous occasions, regular guests at the resort would bring gifts for me just out of the kindness of their hearts. As a baby, I was a common request at the courthouse. The judge wanted to hold me. So, that's where I would be found. My parents weren't naive to the bad that is found in the world, there just wasn't any living in Highland.

It has been almost fifteen years since I called Highland "home," but I've found myself back to visit since then. My Nana never misses a single birthday, Christmas, or holiday and she never ceases to remind me how much I am loved. My parents still keep in contact with some of their family friends, a few of which have found their way here. I will forever be grateful for the privilege of living amongst such an amazing community because in Highland, the worries are left behind and the love between friendships is raw and real. There is no need to question motives or character. Strangers are never found, only familiar faces and the kindest of hearts.

TATUM HARVEL, GRADE II

Bizarre Home Remedies

Use Garlic and Olive Oil for Athlete's Foot

Mince some garlic cloves, mix them with natural olive oil, and then use bit of cotton to rub this mixture onto the affected area between the toes.

Potato Slices for headaches

Cut a few slices from a raw potato, soak them in a very thin cloth, and apply them to your forehead or directly to the temples.

Get rid warts with duct tape

After cleaning a wart off, apply a strip of the tape to the affected area, and then keep it there for three days. Remove the tape, rub the wart area with a pumice stone, and then apply new tape. Continue this process every three days until the wart goes the way.

LANDON HILL, GRADE 9

My Family's Chicken Biscuits

This recipe is dear to my family because we all have memories that consist of us gathering around to indulge in some delicious chicken biscuit. My daddy said his grandmother made it for him regularly when he was a kid, so it has been in our family for at least four generations. This recipe is also a remedy for when you're feeling down and out, and it is good for eating on cool winter days when you are chilled to your bones.

Our Recipe for Chicken Biscuit

Ingredients:

- 1 whole chicken
- 1 large can of cream of chicken
- Salt
- Pepper
- Sliced Cheese
- Biscuits

Directions:

1. Boil a whole chicken, keep chicken broth from the chicken.
2. Once the chicken has cooled begin taking it off the bone and tearing it into small bits.
3. Place the bits of chicken in a nice layer on the bottom of a 9 by 13 pan.
4. Pour the cream of chicken and your chicken broth over the bits of chicken in pan.
5. Add salt and pepper to your likings.
6. Stir all of this together in your pan and add a layer of sliced cheese.
7. Add a layer of biscuits on top of the cheese.
8. Set oven to 350 degrees and let bake for about 45 minutes or until biscuit is done.

KYLIE HONEYCUTT, GRADE 9

Christmas Ornaments

Unlike other families around the world, my family doesn't have a giant list of traditions with each holiday but the ones we do have are very special to all of us. My personal favorite is our tradition of the Christmas tree

ornaments. This tradition was created by my mother starting with my two older brothers and continuing as I came along. Beginning from each of our first Christmas's as a small baby we received a special ornament with the year and our name. The ornaments varied from each child and adult. For example, one of us may have a teddy bear while another has a horse. In the early years of our tradition, all of the pieces were a golden metal and we had them engraved; therefore, the pieces were extremely beautiful and lasted longer as the years passed by. However, due to circumstances, we do not have any new golden ornaments but this has not stopped us. Instead, we have moved to different types of materials such as wood or even ordinary Christmas bulbs we drew on with a marker. Anyway, as each of us grew so did each of our personal collections of ornaments and the complete number of pieces we hung on the tree each season. However, our household of five people has not stopped here but instead, it has only continued to grow as more people join the family. As our family tree continues to expand its roots so does our Christmas tree with its ornaments. My oldest brother has expanded to a wife, close friend, and three children. Likewise, my second oldest brother is about to get married and has added a new name and ornament to our tree as well. I personally have also done similarly by adding my best friend and boyfriend, who are both basically apart of the family. Our tree is bursting with these ornaments filled with nothing but love and emotion as each Christmas comes and goes. This Christmas season I officially have a grand total of 16 ornaments and as the years continue to pass my collection will only continue to grow along with my family.



Handcrafted Christmas ornaments

MIRANDA HOWARD, GRADE II

Broccoli Casserole Recipe

My origin project is on one of my Nana's favorite recipes. The recipe is Broccoli Casserole. My Nana loved making this for different occasions and also for Thanksgiving dinner.

Ingredients:

- 2 boxes of frozen broccoli
- 1 can of cream of celery soup
- 1 cup of cheese whiz
- 1 cup of cooked instant rice
- ½ of a chopped onion
- 1 stalk of celery

Directions:

Cook broccoli. Sauté onion and celery. Mix all ingredients together and bake at 350 degrees for 35 minutes.

HUNTER HUFF, GRADE 9

Beef Jerky Marinara

I chose a recipe that my mom made. Her name is Jacqueline Minor, but everyone calls her Jackie. This recipe is special to me because every winter we hunt and when we kill a deer, we get so happy because my mom makes homemade deer jerky with the meat from that deer. She won't make it any other time of the year or with any other meat. That is why it is so special to me and the rest of my family. The deer jerky usually lasts about three days because when she makes it, everyone goes crazy for it.

- ♦ 1 ½ cups of soy sauce
- ♦ 1 ½ cups of water
- ♦ 2 tablespoons of A-1 sauce
- ♦ 2 tablespoons of Worcestershire sauce
- ♦ 1 tablespoon of liquid smoke
- ♦ 1 tablespoon of chili powder
- ♦ 1 tablespoon of black pepper

Directions: Soak the deer meat the marinara overnight and towel lightly before you put it in the dehydrator. Leave in the dehydrator for 4 to 5 hours.

JACQUELINE HURD, GRADE 9

Coconut Pie

This recipe has been in our family for several years. My grandma got it from her grandma. She made it specifically for big dinners. She taught my grandma the recipe when she was seven. Her grandma first learned the recipe in the 50's.

- ♦ 2 c sugar
- ♦ 1 c.milk
- ♦ 1 stick margarine
- ♦ 7 oz.pkg.coconut
- ♦ 3 eggs
- ♦ Unbaked pie shells

Combine all ingredients well. Put into two unbaked pie shells, bake at 375 degrees Fahrenheit for 1 hour.

JEFFREY HURD, GRADE 9

Chocolate Chip Cheesecake

- ♦ 1 ½ cups graham cracker crumbs
- ♦ 1 (4 ounce) can sweetened condensed milk
- ♦ ¼ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- ♦ ¼ cup white sugar
- ♦ ¼ cup butter, melted
- ♦ 3 eggs
- ♦ 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- ♦ 3 (8 ounce) packages cream cheese
- ♦ 1 cup mini semi-sweet chocolate chips
- ♦ 1 teaspoon all-purpose flour

1. Preheat oven to 300 degrees F(150 degrees C). Mix graham cracker crumbs, sugar, and cocoa. Press onto bottom and up the sides of a 9 inch springform pan. Set crust side.
2. Beat cream cheese until smooth. Gradually add sweetened condensed milk; beat well. Add vanilla and eggs, and beat on medium speed until smooth. Toss ¼ of the miniature chocolate

- chips with the 1 teaspoon flour to coat (this keeps them from sinking to the bottom of the cake). Mix into cheese mixture. Pour into prepared crust. Sprinkle top with remaining chocolate chips.
3. Bake at 300 degrees F(150 degrees C) for 1 hour. Turn off oven (do not open oven door) and leave the cake in the oven to cool in the oven for another hour. Remove from oven and cool completely. Refrigerate before removing sides of pans. Keep cake refrigerated until time to serve.

Tip: Aluminum foil can be used to keep food moist, cook it evenly, and make clean-up easier.

MADISON JESSEE, GRADE 9

Mammaw's Secret Soup

When I was younger my mammaw used to cook an amazing soup she liked to call secret soup, although it was a vegetable beef soup, but if she ever told us that, we would have never touched it. My mammaw made her secret soup 3 different ways, but this version is my favorite.

Ingredients:

1 lb of hamburger meat
1 29 oz can of veg-all
4 cups of water
2 16 oz cans of tomato sauce or juice
3 ½ cups of beef broth
2 tbsp of oil
2 tsp of garlic powder
onion powder
salt & pepper

Directions:

Throw the veg-all, water, tomato sauce, beef broth, oil, and seasonings into a large pot on high heat. Bring the pot to a boil and add the meat, then reduce the heat to a simmer for about an hour. Check to see if the meat is tender, then cook for 30 more minutes. Make sure everything is done and serve with some cornbread.

ARIANNA KENNEDY, GRADE 9

Dairy Farms

Growing up on a dairy farm times has changed a lot since my dad was younger. He and my papaw used to put up square hay bales by hand instead of round bales, because they didn't have the kind of technology we now have today. The tractors have even changed to. The tractors back then had no air conditioning and most of ours didn't have a roof. The tractors we have on our farm today has air conditioning and has roofs as well.

Back when we had dairy cows, my papaw and my dad had to milk the cows by hand until they got an electric milker. That is how times on our farm has changed over the years.

LANDON LASTER, GRADE 9

Tobacco

Growing up on a farm my papaw grew and cut tobacco. Things were different back then there is now like my papaw had to cut his own tobacco sticks and he had to make his own tobacco bailer boxes. In addition, my dad and papaw grew up on a dairy farm back then they had to milk by hand now there is electric milkers. That is some of the things that were different back then vs what it is now.

TANNER LASTER, GRADE 9

The Story of Bouncing Bertha



Bouncing Bertha—mysterious girl who was haunted by a ghost

If you ever had to think about interesting people in your family, few could probably match my great aunt Bertha Sybert. "Bouncing Bertha," as she soon became to be known was related to me on my mom's side of the family. What makes her particularly interesting is that her mother was one of the scariest witches alive and her "ghostly" shaking.

In Wallins Creek in Lee County, VA, Bertha is known for the fact that every bed or anything she sat or laid on would bounce and shake constantly and locals believed it was because of her mom. Whenever things began to shake, she would speak in her "ghost language" which were strange mumblings she would scream like "sake-sake big" before the bed began to shake. Her mother, which is my great grandma, was an all-time feared witch. Several people have even tried to stop the constant shaking and none could stop it. Four extremely strong coal miners came and tried to stop the shaking and bouncing and it was so strong that they couldn't even get it to stop shaking either! Her story went viral and made it to the news. They even wrote about it in newspapers and it is all over the internet and in folklore magazines to this day. They asked my mamaw if they could even make a

movie about it and she refused because of how scary and horrible it was. She never liked talking about it at all.

Bertha's mom's real name was Becky Jane Sybert. Bertha's mom, my great grandma, was into dark witchcraft. She also had a birthmark on the back of her neck and everyone called it the witches' birthmark. My dad and my brothers have the same birthmark on the back of their necks too! Are they witches too!? My dad has told me that as far as he knows, everyone who is related to her that were males have the birthmark. When she passed away, she was dressed in all black.

HALEY LEEDY, GRADE 9

No Bake Chocolate Oatmeal Cookies

Ingredients

- 2 cups sugar
- ½ cup cocoa
- 1 stick butter
- 3 heaping spoonfuls of peanut butter
- ½ spoon full of vanilla
- 3 cups oatmeal

Mix sugar and cocoa together dry until well blended, add 1 stick of butter and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup milk on medium heat let come to a rolling boil for 1 minute. Add vanilla and peanut butter. Take off heat and mix well. Then add oatmeal and stir

Have a non-stick pan ready to put cookies on to. Take 1 spoonful at a time and separate about $\frac{1}{2}$ apart. Then enjoy!

EMILY LEFEVERS, GRADE 9

Christmas Pizzas

It may not be the traditional thing to do, but it is my family's tradition. My mom and dad started the tradition twenty years ago, of making pizzas on Christmas Eve. This was back when my dad would be working at the hospital late, and it was a cheap and easy thing to make for dinner. Through all the hassle that the holiday season brings, this was an easy thing for my parents to do, and they continued doing this so it became something that my sister and I now take part in also.

Most families have a big Christmas meal, or a large family gathering, and we do this too, but not on Christmas Eve. This is the night that I spend with my mom and younger sister. We make pizzas, and then we open our presents from each other. This is our time to enjoy each other's company, and be thankful for all that we have. My father no longer lives with us, and my parents aren't married anymore, but the pizza tradition still lives on. A tradition is something that never dies, even though certain things in life can get in the way sometimes.

After we make our pizzas we open presents, and then set out cookies for Santa. The rule in my house is, if you don't believe in Santa, then you don't get presents. My dad and grandparents always come over to my house on Christmas morning and watch my sister and I open our Santa presents. My mom cooks breakfast, and we all eat together.

Traditions play a big role in everyone's lives. They make us who we are, and make us different from everyone else. I am thankful for my family, and the traditions that we share together. I would not be who I am without them. They give me more reasons to be more thankful for who I am.

LIBBEY LITTON, GRADE II

The Simple Cedar Chest

There has been a certain object that has been circulating through my family for years now. It contains our accomplishments, ups and downs, and cherished memories. It holds a special place in all of my family's heart. That object is just a simple cedar chest. Despite its rather plain, dated exterior, it is so much more than a simple cedar chest. It serves as a way to document our family history. It's filled to the brim with pictures, documents, knicknacks, souvenirs, recordings, and treasured memorabilia. It means a lot to my family, and I hope it will continue to do so in generations future.

In the beginning, it belonged to my great-grandmother. She bought it at a local furniture store for just fifteen dollars. She began to put special objects that meant very much to her in there, not knowing that it would become a cherished family heirloom. It was passed down eventually to my mother, who has managed to keep her simple cedar chest alive throughout the years. I hope I can continue to do so when I inherit it.

In addition to being a keeper of beloved memories, it also serves as a symbolic reminder of family and togetherness. No matter how many scratches or marks it has, it still holds so many objects dear to us in there. Beneath the stains of time, it still fills my family with pride. Pride that it has managed to store our treasured

memories. Pride that it still remains in our family, and most importantly, pride that it continues to keep my great-grandmother's idea and prized possession alive. It may have started out as a simple cedar chest, but it is and will continue to be so much more.

CJ MARCUM, GRADE 9

Depression Cakes

This recipe originates from the Great Depression in the United States. I got this recipe from my grandmother who was born soon after the Depression. I have never tried these cakes, however from what I have hear from people who have, they are great cakes. These Depression Cakes are also known as "War Cakes."

This is the example that my grandmother gave me.

Preheat oven to 350*. Grease a 13 by 9 in baking pan. In a large saucepan, combine 1 cup white sugar, 2 cups firmly packed brown sugar, 2 cups water, 1 cup shortening, 4 cups seedless raisins, 1 tsp cinnamon, 1 tsp nutmeg, 1/2 tsp cloves, and 2 tsp salt. Boil together for 3 minutes, then cool.

Sift together 4 cups flour, 2 1/2 tsp baking powder, 2 tsp baking soda. Add to saucepan, along with 2 cups chopped nuts (optional). Mix well and pour into baking pan. Bake for 45 minutes. Remove from oven. Let cool for 10 minutes, then turn onto a cake plate. When cooled, sprinkle with a little powdered sugar.

There are other ingredients that can be used to make a Depression Cake.

- white sugar,
- brown sugar,
- molasses,
- corn syrup,
- strong coffee, water, or apple juice,
- shortening,
- dark raisins or diced pitted prunes,
- apple,
- unsifted all-purpose flour,
- rye flour,
- salt,
- baking soda,,
- baking powder,
- cinnamon,
- allspice,
- clove,
- nutmeg,
- chopped walnuts, almonds, or pecans.
- pears were sometimes substituted for apples

Hard to believe that these cake was made without any eggs or butter; you don't even need a good mixer either since all of this was originally made by someone with just a spoon or whisk.

MICHAEL MARTIN, GRADE 9

Grandma's Chicken and Dumplings

My Grandmother makes these amazing chicken and dumplings. They can be made for any occasion. Birthdays, Christmas, Thanksgiving, or just on a regular day for dinner. Making them takes more ingredients than you think. Here are the steps and ingredients.

Ingredients:

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup all-purpose flour	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon freshly ground pepper	1 broiler/fryer chicken (about 3 pounds)
2 tablespoons canola oil	1 large onion, chopped
2 medium carrots, chopped	2 celery ribs, chopped
3 garlic cloves, minced	6 cups chicken stock
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup apple cider	2 teaspoons sugar
2 bay leaves	5 whole peppercorns

Dumplings:

1- $\frac{1}{2}$ cups all-purpose flour	2 teaspoons baking powder
$\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon salt	$\frac{2}{3}$ cup 2% milk
1 tablespoon butter, melted	

Soup:

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup heavy whipping cream	2 teaspoons minced fresh parsley
2 teaspoons minced fresh thyme	Additional salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

1. In a shallow bowl, mix $\frac{1}{2}$ cup flour, salt and pepper. Add chicken, one piece at a time, and toss to coat; shake off excess. In a 6-qt. Stockpot, heat oil over medium-high heat. Brown chicken in batches on all sides; remove from pan.
2. Add onion, carrots and celery to same pan; cook and stir 6-8 minutes or until onion is tender. Add garlic; cook and stir 1 minute longer. Stir in cider, sugar, bay leaves and peppercorns. Return chicken to pan; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, covered, 20-25 minutes or until chicken juices run clear.
3. For dumplings, in a bowl, whisk flour, baking powder and salt. In another bowl, whisk milk, and melted butter until blended. Add to flour mixture; stir just until moistened (do not overmix). Drop by rounded tablespoonfuls onto a parchment paper-lined baking sheet; set aside.
4. Remove chicken from stockpot; cool slightly. Discard bay leaves and skim fat from soup. Remove skin and bones from chicken and discard. Using two forks, coarsely shred meat into 1- $\frac{1}{2}$ inch pieces; return to soup. Cook, covered, on high until mixture reaches a simmer.
5. Drop dumplings on top of simmering soup, a few at a time. Reduce heat to low; cook, covered, 15-18 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in center of dumplings comes out clean (do not lift cover while simmering). Gently stir in cream, parsley and thyme. Season with additional salt and pepper to taste.

Try making these delectable dumplings for dinner one day. You will love them.

LEXI MCKNIGHT, GRADE 9

Baked Mac-n-Cheese

Most families have at least one type of food that is always at every holiday dinner. Which could be Christmas dinner, Thanksgiving dinner, Easter dinner, or just Sunday dinner. Usually the dish is always made using the same recipe or even the same person makes it every time. At my family dinners the traditional dish is baked Mac-n-Cheese. The only person that every makes this dish is my granny, because no one thinks it taste the same if someone else makes it. Do you have a traditional dish? If not, here is the recipe to try ours out!

Ingredients:

- 3 cups macaroni, uncooked
- 2 eggs
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup heavy cream
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups milk
- salt & pepper
- paprika (optional)
- 1 cup smoked cheddar cheese, shredded (a must)
- 6-8 oz. Velveeta, shredded (feel free to cut back on the Velveeta if you don't want it to be super creamy)
- 1 cup sharp cheddar (can use less if you don't like a sharp taste in your mac n cheese)
- 1 cup Colby & Monterey Jack, shredded (cheese blend)

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350
2. Cook macaroni until just al dente or a little under al dente. (Look on the back of the box to see how long you need to cook your pasta for it to reach al dente.) Be careful not to overcook.
3. Drain pasta and set aside.
4. In a large bowl, add milk, heavy cream & cheeses (except for the smoked cheddar).
5. Stir to combine.
6. Taste the milk mixture and add salt & pepper until it has a good taste. You can also add in other seasonings like onion, paprika, etc. Tasting will help avoid having a plain, bland bake macaroni & cheese. Yuck!
7. When you are content with the taste, add the eggs.
8. Stir well until combined.
9. Butter a 9 x 9-inch baking dish.
10. Add macaroni to the baking dish.
11. Pour cheese mixture over macaroni.
12. Make sure the cheese distributed well.
13. Top with smoked cheddar cheese. (I add a little more Colby jack as well.) Sprinkle with paprika and/or black pepper, if desired.
14. Bake for 35-45 minutes. Do not overbake. It may be a bit jiggly when you take it out of the oven. It will firm up as it cool.
15. Let cool for about 15-20 minutes or until fully set.

MIKENZIE MOONEYHAN, GRADE II

Feeling a Little Hungary

My origin project is going to be about how my family first originated from Hungary. My great great grandfather Steve Bolinsky and my great great grandmother Sophia Baulat. Steve was born in Russia but Sophia was born in Hungary. He and his family had moved back to Hungary after he was born. My great great grandfather grew up and had worked his way to Ellis Island, New York to live with his cousin who had moved to the United States when he was younger. He then went back to Hungary to visit his family. However, while he was home he met my great great grandmother Sophia. They then got married. Steve bought Sophia with a pig and if they do not tell you what love is I don't know what will. After being married for about 3 years they finally worked their way back to Ellis Island. They lived with my great great grandfather Steve's cousin for a while until he got everything under control and had enough money to live out on their own. After all the hard work and they made their way down to Dante, Virginia. After moving to Dante for while they had my great grandfather, Charles Joseph Bolinsky. When my great grandfather grew up he moved to Cadet in Big Stone Gap, Virginia he grew up and worked in the coal mines. He married my great grandmother and in 1938 they had my grandfather, Charles Joseph Bolinsky Sr. My grandfather was grew up and at the age of 14 he enlisted in the army. He fought in the Korean War. He was injured during combat and was sent back home to the United States. After he came home him and my grandmother, Linda Jones got married, she was only 15. After they got married my grandfather went to become a coal miner. Then in 1978 my mother was born. There is a lot I have learned from doing this origin project. Anyway, this is the story of how my family originated from Hungary and it all started with my great great grandfather Steve Bolinsky and my great great grandmother Sophia Baulat and a pig.

CAMERON MOORE, GRADE 9

No-Bake Cookie Recipe

Ingredients:

1/2 cup (115 grams) butter, cut into pieces
2 cups (400 grams) granulated sugar
1/2 cup (120ml) milk
1/4 cup (20 grams) unsweetened cocoa powder
1/2 cup (125 grams) creamy peanut butter
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
3 cups (300 grams) quick-cooking oats

Before getting started, make sure to gather all of your ingredients and measure everything out. Line two large baking sheets with parchment paper and set aside.

1. Place the butter, sugar, milk, and unsweetened cocoa powder in a saucepan and heat over medium heat, making sure to stir often until the butter is melted and everything is well combined. Bring the mixture to a rolling boil and allow to boil for 60 seconds (make sure to set a timer!) stirring occasionally.
2. Remove from the heat, and stir in the peanut butter and vanilla extract until fully combined. Stir in the oats and mix until all of the oats are coated with the mixture and everything is well combined.
3. Drop spoonfuls of the mixture onto the prepared baking sheets (I like to use a 2 tablespoon cookie scoop). Allow to cool for 20-30 minutes, serve, and enjoy!

4. Drop spoonfuls of the mixture onto the prepared baking sheets (I like to use a 2 tablespoon cookie scoop). Allow to cool for 20-30 minutes, serve, and enjoy!

This recipe is important to me because my family has been making it for generations. My grandma taught my mother how to make the cookies and my mother taught me. At every family event my family has these cookies. Everyone loves them and there is never any left. I really enjoy these cookies.

YAZMIN MUSE, GRADE II

Pumpkin Spice Latte Pie

Every Thanksgiving my family always goes to my grandma's house to eat dinner as a whole to catch up and enjoy the holiday season. My grandma always has such amazing food to eat for everyone, but her desserts always stand out to me and this one in particular. She always puts a new spin on such classics and that is why the Pumpkin Spice Latte Pie is my favorite dessert she makes.

Ingredients:

- One refrigerated pie crust
- One can of pumpkin
- One can of evaporated milk
- Three-fourths of a cup of brown sugar
- One tablespoon of instant espresso coffee powder
- One and one-half teaspoons of pumpkin spice (add more if you wish)
- Three eggs
- Two cups of whipped cream
- One-fourth of a cup of granulated sugar

Instructions:

1. Heat the oven to 400 degrees and use a pan that will fit the pie crust of your choice.
2. Use a bowl to mix the pumpkin with the espresso powder, brown sugar, the can of evaporated milk, pumpkin spice, and eggs. Mix the ingredients until they are all well combined.
3. Allow the pie to bake at 400 degrees for fifteen minutes. Then, Reduce the temperature of the pie to 350 degrees for twenty-five to thirty-five minutes. Allow the pie to completely cool down before doing the next step.
4. Beat the whipped cream in with the granulated sugar until the texture seems stiff. Spread your mixture onto your pie after it is fully done cooling!

BAILEY NASH, GRADE II

Glory Muffins

My name is Asia Parsons and I do not know much about my family origins considering my whole mother's side of the family is from Alaska. My mom, June Cheek, lived in Alaska until she was about 8 years old when she moved here, to Lee County Virginia, with her father. According to my mom, Alaska was beautiful. Contrary to popular belief, Alaska isn't always cold. I am not sure where exactly my mother lived but in her house, she obviously had a working stove, and it was pretty much like a normal house. In order to get groceries from the store, however, my grandmother would have to cross the river. She does not remember much

about her mother, but one thing that she does have in her memory is the recipe that brings her back to her childhood. My grandma still lives in Alaska and my mom has not gotten to talk to her in a very long time. She recently talked on the phone with my uncle who lives in Alaska as well; he informed my mom that my grandma never crosses the river anymore. I am not exactly sure what that means but we are happy to know that my grandmother is still living. This is the recipe for what we call "Glory Muffins". My grandmother used to make them for my mother when she was young, and my mom says the smell brings her back to her childhood. My mother still makes the muffins and she has carried the recipe down to me and I hope to carry it down to my children someday as well. Here is the recipe.

Ingredients:

- ¾ cup brown sugar
- 3 eggs
- ¼ cup vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 (8-ounce) can of blueberries, with juice
- 2 cups of flour
- 1 tbsp baking powder
- ½ tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- Pinch of salt

How to make it:

Heat oven to 375 degrees f.

Combine ingredients and mix well. Evenly divide the batter into 12 muffin cups.

Bake until toothpick comes out clean (20-25) minutes.

enjoy!!

ASIA PARSONS, GRADE 9

Papaw Jim

The most inspiring man I have ever known is my papaw Jimmy Rutherford. My Papaw was born January 10th, 1955 at Norton Community Hospital. His parents' names were Roy and Gladys Rutherford, at the time of his birth they had six other children. The family lived in a three room house, until 1961 when they relocated to a ten room house in Norton, Virginia. Then in 1966, him and his family moved to Keokee, Virginia, to be closer to his family.

By the time Jim was a teenager, his family grew into a family of fourteen. He had seven brothers and four sisters. When he was growing up, he enjoyed playing sport with his siblings. To make money, he would



Papaw

mow lawns and work for the NYC Program at his high school, where he made ninety cents an hour over the summer.

In June 1974, Jim moved to Robbins Chapel. He then got a job working for Cabal Mines in March. Later that year, on October 4th, he got married to his girlfriend of almost four years Hilda Barnette. On January 25th, 1976, his eldest daughter Valerie was born, and January 3rd, 1980, his youngest daughter Jamie was born. Jim and his family then moved back to Keokee in 1982, where he joined the local Volunteer Fire Department. He was later laid off from Cabal Mines.

Jim then worked as a contractor from 1985 to 1987. He then worked for West Born Mines until he was laid off in December 1994. He also became certified for the Rescue Squad in 1994. He also worked as a mechanic in coal mining plant until 1997, when he began working for Peak Oil Fields in Ameridge, Alaska. He worked on the North Slope near the Arctic Ocean. He would work three weeks on and three weeks off.

During the year 2000, he quit his job in Alaska and began remodeling houses again. In 2008 he worked at Pond Mountain Mines as a mechanic. Then in 2008 he worked for Alpha Resources until November 2012, when he retired. He worked a total of 28 years in local mines.

Today, Jim devotes his life to his family, community, and Christ. He is still a member of the Rescue Squad and Fire Department. He's a grandfather of five grandchildren and four great-grandchildren, and has been happily married for forty-four years. My Papaw wouldn't trade his life for anything, and thanks God for the life he has been given.

AVA PENNINGTON, GRADE 9

Traditional Family Recipe

As we came back from Thanksgiving break I was reminded of many family traditions. My family has a few Thanksgiving recipes that have stuck for years, ever since I can remember anyway. My family always makes too much food on Thanksgiving, but it gives us a chance to come together. Much of my family lives out of state, I am sad to say that over the last couple of years of moving, our Thanksgivings continue to decrease in people. Despite that few people came this year we still managed to repeat our annual activities. On Thanksgiving, the men go hunting while the women cook food, but it's fair because the next day they watch the kids while we go shopping. To me it would be hard to pick just recipe, there are so many.

If I had to pick a recipe to write about I'd go with one that has probably been around as long as I remember, three come to mind, most importantly pies. My great grandma Dorothy's mom taught her to make and here we are still making cream cheese pies in 2018. They're not elaborate or hard to make but they're special because our secret ingredient is love. This year my great grandma, grandma, my aunts, and I made pies together. I cherish moments like those because she is 93 years old.

If you want to learn how to make cherry cream cheese pies you'll need a few items such as two blocks of cream cheese, cool whip, sweetened condensed milk, lemon juice, vanilla, pie crusts, and pie filling of your choice. Here are steps to assemble your ingredients.

- In a mixing bowl, blend two cream cheese blocks until smooth, adding cool whip if needed.
- Add one can of sweetened condensed milk, blending well.
- (At this point you can continue for fruity pie filling toppings or add a box of jello or pudding mix and Chill overnight)
- Add about a tablespoon of lemon juice and vanilla until well blended. (to taste)
- Beat until a consistency of like sour cream, or until has no lumps
- Pour into bottom of pie crust.
- Add one can cherry filling on top of the pie.

- ♦ (You can also use blueberry, or strawberry pie filling.)
- ♦ Chill 3 hours, or until firm. (Preferably overnight.)

Happy pie making!

EMILIE PERDUE, GRADE II

Harlan County Picket Line

In the 1970s a war raged on, but it wasn't the Vietnam war. It was much closer to home. For many Appalachian residents, it took place in their hometown, on their land, and in their homes. This took place in Harlan County, Kentucky. Harlan County is located in the southeastern edge of Kentucky. It was raised on coal mining. Harlan was, and to this day still is, a small town which revolved around two concepts, mining and unity. The coal companies messed with these two things and it, quite literally, meant war. Mine workers and their families came from neighboring counties to join in on the action known as the Harlan County Picket Line.

The picket line emerged due to a disagreement about the union. The workers wanted to join a different union, but the owners of the mine would not sign off on it. In an act to persuade the coal company to allow the switch, 180 workers walked out of the mine to form a picket line. A picket line is a boundary formed by workers on strike. Its primary purpose is to prevent others from crossing it to reach the protested area. In the case of the Harlan County picket line, members would line up in various mine entrances and even on the roads leading to the mine. They attempted to keep new recruits from the mining company out of the mines. Eastover mining company urged the new recruits to push through the pickets no matter the cost. A method commonly used on the road was plowing over the protesters with vehicles. Those picketing at the entrances were mostly successful at their goal of keeping new miners out. The success was shortcome, however. A county judge, Judge Boggs, issued an injunction against miners stating that only 3 picketers could reside at each entrance at a time. Many believed that this was simply a bluff which led to the arrest of several men. They served up to three months in prison. As this was happening, mothers, daughters, sisters, wives, and other concerned women in the community started a group in support of the picket. They called it Brookside's Women's Club, BWC. they believed that the police would not be so quick to pull women away and imprison them, so they volunteered to lead the picket. Their mindset was in fact not true. Women were not put in prison for their actions against the injunction, but they were violently dragged and pulled from the sights. Most of the BWC were nonviolent protesters. This was not promised though as there were no requirements of peace to join. In one instance, a sheriff was stabbed by other members as he violently dragged a women from the picket line. This violence was very much so reciprocated by those on the mines side. A number of times houses were shot by those retaliating at protesters putting not only the protesters at risk but their children too.

As the protest carried on, the protested shifted into economics and the news. The shift also began to lower the violence level. United Mine Workers joined into the protest orchestrating much larger acts of rebellion. UMW urged that people "Dump Duke". Duke was the company which co owned the mines with Eastover. The "Dump Duke" campaign urged Duke and Eastover stockholders to sell them. Journalist Barbara Kopple is credited for lowering violence in the protest. She filmed a documentary of the picket, Harlan County, U.S.A. The presence of her and her video camera is said to have discouraged fighting. This documentary is famous today. Harlan County, USA. On August 24, 1974, the final straw was drawn leading to the end of the 13 month like strike on the mine company. A mine supervisor shot and killed a 23-year old striker. The death shook the community and was heard around the nation. This labeled the mining company at fault. Many believed it was a purposeful target as coal mining was so embedded into him and his families life. The death was a turning point in the strike. Duke offered the strikers a contract allowing them to return to work with United Mine Workers as their new union.

Numerous people in my family were involved in the Harlan County Picket Line. The two of which who participated the most were my grandfathers. The first is my papaw on my mother's side, Gary. He was actually in the documentary Harlan County, U.S.A at one minute and fifty seconds into the film. In addition, he was one of the men who were shot during the picket. The second is my papaw on my father's side. A group of men joined together with a plan. This plan was to blow up busses full of replacement workers. When they tried to detonate it, however, it didn't go off. Knowing that multiple close relatives were part of the fight on the picket line brings to light how everyday coal miners joined in to get what was rightfully theirs, the choice to unionize.

CALLIE PERKINS, GRADE II

My Aunt's Macaroni Salad

Thinking of what I could contribute to the Origin Project, one thing that comes to mind is my aunt's macaroni salad. It sounds simple, but no one can make it quite like her. She always makes it for my family when she comes to visit. It only has three main ingredients, but in my opinion, along with many other members of my family, it's the best.

Ingredients:

- 4 Cups of elbow macaroni (cooked)
- 1 Cup Hamburger Dill Pickles (chopped)
- 1 Cup Mayonnaise
- Salt and Pepper to taste

Directions:

Boil the macaroni until done, but do not overcook it. Mix the macaroni, dill pickles, mayonnaise, salt, and pepper until it is blended. It can be eaten immediately or stored in the refrigerator overnight.

KYLEE PHILLIPS, GRADE 9

Pumpkin Pie

Every year for Thanksgiving my mother and I bake pumpkin pie. It has been a tradition in my family for several years, and I hope it never ends. Everyone in my family looks forward to the pumpkin pie every year and it is always gone before I can even get some! To make the pumpkin pie you will need:

Ingredients:

- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
- 2 large eggs
- 1 can (15 oz.) canned Pumpkin
- 1 can (12 fl. oz.) Evaporated Milk, (Or substitute with equal amount Lactose-Free or Almond Cooking Milk)
- 1 unbaked 9-inch (4-cup volume) deep-dish pie shell
- Whipped cream (optional)

Instructions:

1. MIX sugar, cinnamon, salt, ginger and cloves in small bowl. Beat eggs in large bowl. Stir in pumpkin and sugar-spice mixture. Gradually stir in evaporated milk.
2. POUR into pie shell.
3. BAKE in preheated 425° F oven for 15 minutes. Reduce temperature to 350° F; bake for 40 to 50 minutes or until knife inserted near center comes out clean. Cool on wire rack for 2 hours. Serve immediately or refrigerate. Top with whipped cream before serving.

MADISON PHIPPS, GRADE II

Aunt Ina's Potato Salad

I had an Aunt named Ina, who made great potato salad, or so I've heard at least, as I don't eat it. However, everybody else loves it, and I loved Aunt Ina. She is a big part of who I am today, because she always advised everybody to be who they truly were, no matter who it made happy or unhappy.

Ingredients:

- 10 potatoes
- 4 eggs
- 1 cup of mayonnaise
- ¼ cup of mustard
- ⅓ cup of dill relish

Step 1: Peel and dice potatoes.

Step 2: Boil potatoes until they are soft.

Step 3: Boil and dice eggs.

Step 4: Mix the ingredients together, and then serve.

BRITTINI POTTER, GRADE 9

The Coal Mines

Throughout my whole life, someone I know has been involved with the coal mining production. This involves family members that go back several generations. This involves my great great grandfathers all the way down to my father, and uncles. They all worked in different states, and some in the same state, some were even in the same mines. However, the regulations for the mines has changed extremely over the generation.

Starting with my great great grandfather on my mother's side who was killed while working in the mines. My mother says "My great grandfather was killed in the mines, and his body was never recovered. He had went back in the mines early after taking a lunch break to check on a mule that had went in alone. While he was in there the mines collapsed his body never recovered". Then, my great grandfather co-owned a mines in Kentucky. My grandfather also worked in that mines as a scoop driver. Finally, my uncles worked a repair men, and a scoop drivers.

On my father's side my great grandfather worked in the mines in Neon Kentucky. However, my father was in the coal mining industry for seventeen years. He worked everywhere from Pound Virginia, Appalachia Virginia, and Harlan Kentucky. My father worked as a repairman, and he also drove a shuttle car on occasions. He was also injured in the mines by the top and the sides of the mines falling. My father retired from the mines because of this incident.

Regulations in the mines has changed for the better throughout the years. Such as when great great grandfathers worked underground. When they worked in the mining industry one of the main changes from now to then has been less accidents, less deaths, better ventilation, adequate safety training, and mandatory retraining courses every year switch makes the mines safer for the workers. For example, when mines first started they used mules, buggeys, and carts to move coal from inside the mines to outside the mines. Now, they use belt conveyor system, scoops,miners, and shuttle cars. Which these are the jobs my uncles had. Nos, when these pieces of machinery broke down this is the job my father did.

Finally, coal mining makes up a lot of my history. In Lee County almost everyone knows someone that was in the coal mines, and almost everyone will tell that their families have mined for years, and for generations to come. This is my origin.

KANDACE QUILEN, GRADE II

Reasor Family Cowboy Beans

My family has a few recipes that they hold very close to their chests. This recipe for my mother's Cowboy Beans is one of them. It was actually very hard getting her to let me know the recipe, but I felt the world should enjoy them as much as we do.

Ingredients

- 1 lb of Hamburger meat
- 1 onion
- green pepper
- 14 oz can pinto beans
- 14 morning can pork n beans
- 14 oz can of white northern beans
- 14oz can of dark kidney beans
- 1 bottle of Hunts Brown Sugar BBQ sauce

Directions:

1. Brown the hamburger meat in a skillet
2. Dice the onion and green pepper and put in with the meat
3. Put all beans in a crockpot. Pour prepared meat on top of beans. Pour the whole bottle of BBQ sauce on top of meat. Let cook for at least 1 to 3 hours depending on which level the crockpot is set on.

HANNAH REASOR, GRADE II

Self-Sufficiency

My great-grandparents on my mother's side of the family had interesting ways that they were self-sufficient. They lived during a time where technology was not as advanced as it is today. Because of the lack of technology, families had to live differently and do more manual labor when compared to the way families act today. My great-grandparents had multiple ways that they made up for this lack of technology. My great-grandfather and the men on my mother's side of the family raised bees and hogs, while my great-grandmother and the women on my mother's side of the family crocheted clothing.

My great-grandfather raised his own bees to provide his family with honey. At the time, my family lived a far enough distance from the closest town that trips to the town only happened on rare occasions. Because of

the rarity of trips to town, to have a regular supply of commodities like honey you would either have to buy a large amount of honey at a time which would have been hard to transport, or you would have to make your own. My great-grandfather chose the latter of the two options and became a beekeeper to provide honey for his family. Some of my cousins continue to raise bees in their great-grandfather's memory.

My great-grandfather also raised his own hogs. Because of where my family lived, transporting meat would have been an issue. To keep a constant supply of meat a person would have to travel to town regularly to buy meat, hunt for meat, or raise their own animals. My great-grandfather weighed the different options and settled on raising his own animals. One of the main animals he chose to raise were hogs. Raising hogs meant that the family could have a constant supply of meat without having to make regular trips to town. Raising hogs was also continued by my cousins in memory of their great-grandfather.

My great-grandmother contributed in a different way to the self-sufficiency of their family. She had a collection of dolls that she would crochet clothes and outfits for. She would then either sell these dolls on one of the rare trips to the town, or she would give the dolls to children in the family as presents. She also made crocheted clothing for some of the younger children that were small enough that making clothing for them would not have took a lot of time.

CURTIS REECE, GRADE II

Family Tradition

Many people have different things they choose to do on Thanksgiving, there are many things people do every year over and over again. Me and my family always get together at my grandparents' house we always have for as long as I can remember us going. We always it seems like go through the same routine every year as well.

Every year when we go to my grandparents we generally eat about the same traditional foods which is a huge variety. When the youngest one who its the age of fourteen always says the blessing until the next young boy comes along. Also, we eat and the oldest always go first to the youngest and all the older family members sit at the dining table to eat and the younger ones go and watch football while they eat. The same family at Thanksgiving also get together on Christmas so we always draw names for Christmas on the same day and the kids write Christmas list for everyone. We also arrange what everyone will make and bring for Christmas dinner.

This is what we do for Thanksgiving this is my origin what is yours? This is the same Thanksgiving family tradition we do every year were so many memories are made. Thank you for taking the time to hear about my family tradition!

KOLBY REED, GRADE II

Good vs. Bad

If children were always reading stories of goodness and where nothing bad happens, wouldn't that present to children a false sense of reality? In reading stories about good versus evil and stories where bad comes to those who are otherwise good, we build a sense of reality for children. We create a real world environment and show children that we do not live in a perfect world. In classic fairytales, consequences do not only fall upon those who are evil, but consequences and evil also falls upon those who are good. In a story, a girl named Lilla was playing a game with the other girls her age in the garden trying to jump over a rose without touching it. All the girls failed except Lilla, although one leaf did fall off but Lilla ate the leaf before any of the girls noticed it had fallen off. Lilla became pregnant after eating the rose-leaf in dishonesty. This is an example of evil falling upon those who are generally good. Lilla kept the pregnancy a secret and after giving birth to the child- who Lilla named Lisa- she sent Lisa to live with the fairies. One of the fairies cast a curse upon the child, that when the child was seven years old she would die from a comb stuck in her head. The child had just been born and had not done any evil to anyone. This is another example of evil falling upon

those who are good. When Lisa was seven years old the curse actually transpired, her mother "encased the body in seven caskets of crystal, one within the other, and placed her in a distant room of the palace, keeping the key in her pocket.

XAVIER REGAN, GRADE 9

The Trailer

We lived in a small 3-bedroom trailer, where there had been rumors about a murder there. Rumor has it, a woman, a mother, had gone crazy and killed her 4 daughters. The girls were 8, 6, and 2. Supposedly, she drowned the 2 year old, suffocated the 6-year-old twins, stabbed the 8 year old, and then killed herself.

My older sister had the smallest room, the nursery. She would wake up at exactly 4:37A.M. Every Tuesday morning, to the sound of a crying baby. I had the biggest room, the older girls' room. I had never experienced anything odd or creepy, until one morning.

I got really sick one night and i woke up a little before 4:00A.M ... I sat in the kitchen with all the light off except the one in the hallway. I glanced up and the light flickered. At first i didn't really notice it, not until it happened several more times. Once i realized something odd was going on, I looked up and saw a figure of a little girl run across my room. After that, nothing odd had happened for awhile, until something did.

The lights in my room stated flickering, but only in my room. After the first night, every morning, from 3:30A.M. to 4:00A.M., the lights flickered. They flickered, and flickered, and flickered, every night. The really odd thing is, after i switched rooms to what was the mother's room, everything stopped, went back to normal. Then we moved out, and still to this day no one knows why it all happened.

TAYLER RICKER, GRADE 9

The Family Chocolate Cake Recipe

Overtime, a "famous" chocolate cake recipe has been passed down throughout my step-dad's family. It originated with his great great grandmother. This specific cake has been a family favorite ever since she started making it. As the recipe got passed down, only few could perfect it. It got passed down from her, to her daughter, then to my stepdad's grandma. "Old Mamaw", as they would call her, made sure to keep the recipe a secret until her daughter, Trena, was able to make it.

Since Trena's was the only one that I have been able to try, I will compare everyone else's cakes to hers. For instance, my stepdad attempts to make it, but it isn't quite there yet because his aunt, Cindie, is the recipe holder for now. Before Trena passed, Cindie could not make the cake the right way. This proves the idea that only one person can hold the recipe at a time.

The recipe is so secret, that I only know few of the ingredients that go in it. Cocoa, sugar, milk, eggs, flour, and butter are the only things that I know for a fact are in it. I do not know the correct amounts because they always said things like "a dash", "a pinch", and "heapin' scoops". This is why it is so hard to get right.

Our family makes a joke that only one person can make the cake to perfection at one time. After one cake holder passes, the next can finally make the cake the right way. We always feel that the real recipe is withheld from the family until they feel like they have found the next best to make it.

DALTON RIVERS, GRADE II

Granny's Homemade Chocolate Pie!

My granny's homemade chocolate pie is a tradition that my family has done for several years. We have her famous pie every holiday! She won't tell me the recipe until I am older because it is a secret family recipe. This tradition began long ago. My great great great grandmother made this pie for her children every holiday and

because everyone liked it she passed it down to her daughter and then she passed it down to her daughter and so on. My granny has passed it down to her daughter and she passed it down to all three of her daughters. They say we can't have the recipe until we are adults. This chocolate pie has been with my family for centuries and hopefully more to come! My great great great grandmother was big on baking, so I hear, and she liked to cook and throw stuff together all the time. My granny said that it took my great great great grandma two days to figure out the perfect recipe for chocolate pie. My granny makes two chocolate pies every holiday for our family. She has to make two because it's so good, her pie is probably the greatest dessert of all desserts. I, honestly, have never had anything that is as good as my granny's chocolate pie! I have heard stories about how my great grandma wanted to know the recipe so bad that she would sneak into the recipe box and try to find it, but it is not written down on a single piece of paper. My family thinks that if it gets wrote down then someone can find it and it won't be a secret family recipe so they just teach us how instead of giving it to us on a piece of paper. This recipe has lasted for centuries and has never once been written down on a piece of paper. I won't write it down and I hope the rest of my family doesn't either. I hope this recipe will forever be in my family and nobody tries to quit the tradition. This pie is way too good to throw away its tradition!

SIERRA SEIBER, GRADE 9

My Family

My origin project is about me and my family. When I was growing up, my family moved a lot because of things that happened around the places that we lived so we decided to move when I was 13. We moved to Tennessee and lived there 2 years. Then, my mom got really sick and passed away when I was 15. I was really sad, but I knew I still had some family to live with. I started living with my mamaw until I got adopted by my step-dad. Then, we finally moved to Virginia and have been here since then.

I know it is not much to tell, but I enjoy staying here in Virginia with my new friends who I hang out with a lot.

EVAN SHULER, GRADE 9

My Home

For the first seven years of my life, I lived in a small town by the name of Jonesborough, Tennessee. It happens to be the oldest town in the state of Tennessee and I only attended school here until the second grade. Following that, I moved to a even smaller town in another state, Dryden, Virginia. I have lived in three different houses but all in the same area and county. Little did I know I would make some of the best memories of my life in the next ten years spent in that little county where Virginia begins.

Lee County tends to be talked down on more than it should and there are a lot of assumptions made as to how people act in South-West Virginia. It's not like we're cowboys from the 1900's, we're just your modern day people living by the countryside. Yes, we do have a "poor" economy in our region, but we make do. To us, it is more about character and becoming successful in life and what we can do to make it better than just money, money, money. So although we have a poor economy, does not mean we aren't happy with our lives. Even if we don't have much we still are very thankful for what we do have. The majority of people here are dressed well and have a good personal hygiene. Typically people here like to get out of the house spending quality time with friends and family or go to the schools games, to see a movie, bowling or go out to eat, etc. Another thing I've heard out of state rumored about our county is that many think we are all about guns, but simply that isn't it, however hunting is seasonally popular. And that isn't particularly a bad thing, because without regions like such there wouldn't be as much meat in grocery stores (beef, chicken, fish, etc). Coal mining was also a big deal in our county for many years. Now that it isn't really around anymore it has resulted in a major increase in the unemployment rate, which is gradually getting better. Another common

thing was growing and selling tobacco and also farming because of how much open land there was to use. As far as looks go, the area is quite beautiful and peaceful. I would highly recommend someone to visit if they wanted to see the countryside. There are various breathtaking overlooks and just naturally beautiful things in Lee County. Overall I am proud to have had the opportunity to have grown up here for the majority of my life. I have learned numerous life lessons such as being thankful for what I do have, and the people around me, realizing how beautiful nature is and how you can come from something small then one day be so much more than what may have been expected for an individual from a simply small town.

LACEY SILVERS, GRADE II

Papaw Dennis

My papaw, Dennis Smith, started working as a coal miner in 1971. He started off on loading the coal into the train cars, by hand. He worked five days a week, for eight hours every day in the beginning, but later on he started to work six days a week. He worked in Saint Charles, Virginia his entire time working as a coal miner. However, before he began officially working, he had to go through a few different types of training.

He went through miners training, where he learned all the safety procedures for being a coal miner, which was very important. He also went through training to become an EMT, Emergency Medical Technician, which I think was pretty cool. He also learned to help prepare the land for finding more coal. They would put dynamite charges in the ground and explode the land to uncover more coal. It was a very dangerous job, for sure.

When my papaw worked on loading the train cars, he would sometimes run into a lot of dangerous moments. The breaks of the train cars would no hold so then the train cars would just start rolling quickly, without control. My papaw and the other workers would have to jump off of the train car as it would be on its way to crash. After all the hard work they just put into putting the coal into the tipple, they would have to do it all over again.

After about twelve years of working above ground and being the boss for a while, my papaw ultimately started working underground. He helped to put up plates on the roof to keep the mines from falling. The coal was stacked really high. He had to crawl on his stomach for everything, even eating his lunch. The first mine he worked in was only twenty-nine inches high and later he moved to a mine with more room.

Coal mining is a very dangerous job. It is also a very hard working job. A few people in my family have been coal miners. They were all hard workers.

EMILY SMITH, GRADE 9

Family Traditions

My family has had several interesting traditions over the years, some of them are new and some of them are old. We keep these traditions strong by including more family every year. There has always been a get together around Christmas time that our family does. Family flies in from down south and some from up north and we get each other gifts and people dress up as Santa Clause for the younger kids that come. We have held this tradition strong for over forty-two years. It is used as a form of getaway for our family and keeps everyone close. Without this party many family members would drift away and not visit and could in a way tear the whole family apart.

Several people in my family fly in from almost everywhere around the United States and brings gifts for everyone. They come and stay for about a week before heading back home. They always make a large amount of food for everyone there and everything there is often homemade. It makes everyone there very happy to see one another after so long. Our family gets along very well but the last few years had been a bit rough. The host of the party isn't feeling as well as she used to so there need to be an extra hand around to help her.

However, this doesn't stop her from having fun with the rest of the people there. It's one of the only times she has this many visitors. Hopefully we can keep this a strong tradition for a long time.

The owner of the house had bought the house early in her life and the house was way too big for her so she decided she needed to do something in order to get the use out of her house. She organized the first Christmas party forty-two years ago and it has followed every year and was never interrupted by anything. During this party we have some of the adults there dress up for the kids and he hands out the presents to the kids as they come up to him. It always makes the kids happy and excited to come back next year. It shows a lot of spirit and provides a lot of joy. However, it isn't always just presents and food. We also use this time as a way to just relax and get closer to some of the relatives that live farther away from us. These parties are a very important part of the year and keeps the whole family together.

Tradition is a very important part of every family. It isn't always the same and can be very unique sometimes. Even though ours isn't very unique it is special to everyone in the family and has a very large role in keeping everybody close and happy. Many people use this party to get away from work and to just enjoy the holidays with the family they rarely see. It also makes the kids feel extra special and just makes them happier in general. Without this tradition it would be very difficult to keep in touch with everybody. This is a very long ongoing tradition that our family has had for decades and we hope it can go on for even longer.

SHEA SNODGRASS, GRADE II

Famous Chicken Noodle Soup With Grilled Cheese

Whenever anyone felt sick or sad in my family, they were fed a family classic, Grandma's chicken noodle soup with grilled cheese. The soup my grandma would make would fill the entire house with the aroma of freshly made pasta and bread. The difference between my Grandma's chicken noodle soup with grilled cheese and anyone else's is that my grandma makes everything but the cheese at the house while she prepared it. She would use the following ingredients: pasta, carrots, chicken, chicken broth, celery, bread, butter, cheese, and seasonings. My grandma would make it with so much love that when you would take the first bite, you would automatically feel better and you would end up wanting more.

First, my grandma would make the egg noodles. She would us eggs, flour, milk, salt, and butter. She would start by mixing salt and flour together then would proceed to add in the eggs, milk, and butter. She would mix it together with a fork until it becomes a sticky dough. She would place the dough on a floured surface and would start kneading it, adding flour when needed, until it was a smoother dough. She would let it rest for thirty minutes before rolling it out with a rolling utensil and proceed to roll the dough to about a fourth or an eighth of an inch and then she would cut them into strips and cover them so she could let them rest for no longer than an hour because if they rest for any longer they will not cook properly. During the hour of resting period for the noodles, she would soften up the celery and carrots. She would add the celery and carrots after she cut them into a pot with water and then she would bring the pot to a boil and then a simmer and would cover the pot with a lid. She would then let them cook for fifteen minutes or until they were soft enough for her. After that, she would pour the contents into a colander and strain the water out and then set that aside while she would cook the noodles. She would always roll them one more time because she would say, "they like to expand while you cook them so you always can make them flatter." She would cook them in a large pot of boiling water and proceed to cook them for about three minutes but, she would say that "store bought noodles take longer because there is no love in them." When they were cooked she would strain them and prepare the chicken and the broth. She would walk over to our neighbors and ask for some fresh chicken meat because they raised chickens. She would take the water she softened the celery and carrots in and put the chicken in and cook it in that because this will become the broth for the soup. She would season the chicken with thyme, onion powder, lemon juice, salt, pepper, and basil. She would then let it cook for thirty minutes trimming fat off if she needed to. After it was thoroughly cooked, she would strain the chicken with

the broth going into another pot for later. Once she would do that, she would start boiling hot water and proceed to fully cook the remaining noodles if she had too many noodles, to fully cook them. While this is going on she would put the pot of chicken broth on the stove and would bring it to a simmer. Then, she would begin to add all of the ingredients into the broth one by one. She would add them in this order: the celery and carrots would go in first because they need to warm up longer, then she would add in the chicken after a few minutes and she would begin to stir for around ten minutes to let the celery, carrots, and chicken get to know each other and so they can get marinated. After all of this, she finally adds in the noodles last because they are still warm. She stirs all of this for another ten minutes and then she would turn the stove on low while he prepares the next dish.

She would begin making the grilled cheese by making the bread. She would use the following ingredients to make it: sugar, warm water, salt, vegetable oil, yeast, and bread flour. She would begin by adding the sugar and warm water in a large bowl until the sugar is fully dissolved. After that, she would stir in the yeast. She would mix the salt and oil into the yeast and adding flour one cup at a time and kneading it until smooth. Then, she would put it in an oiled bowl and would cover it and allow it to rise for an hour. She would then knead it some more and divide it and shape it into a loaf and put it in a loaf pan and would allow it to rise for thirty minutes before baking it at three hundred and fifty degrees for thirty minutes. After the bread is finished, she would cut it into slices so she could butter it. Once she buttered one slice she would lay it down on a preheated pan butter side down and put a slice of cheese on it. She would then butter another slice and place it on with the butter side on top. She would then proceed to cook until golden brown on each side. Once the grilled cheese was cooked she would fill a bowl with soup and give it to you with the grilled cheese on the side.

JAYDEN SPAIN, GRADE II

Cheddar Baked Chicken (Rice Crispy Chicken)

What you need:

- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of butter; melted
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 1 teaspoon of ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 egg
- 1 tablespoon of milk
- 1 cup of shredded Cheddar cheese
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of Italian seasoned bread crumbs
- 1 cup of Rice Crispy cereal (or any off brand cereal like it)
- skinless, boneless chicken breast halves- cut in half
- 2 tablespoons of butter; melted

What you need to do is

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. Coat a medium dish $\frac{1}{4}$ cup with melted butter.
3. In a bowl, mix the flour, salt, pepper, and garlic powder.
4. In a separate bowl, beat together the egg and the milk.
5. In a third bowl, mix the cheese, bread crumbs, and cereal together.

6. Dredge (sprinkle (food) with a powdered substance) chicken pieces in the flour mixture, dip in the egg mixture, then press in the breadcrumb mixture to coat.
7. Arrange in the prepared baking dish.
8. Drizzle the two tablespoons of butter evenly over the chicken.
9. Baking 15 minutes or until coating in golden brown and chicken juices run clear.

This is a recipe my family always makes on like special occasions such as birthdays, the super-bowl, etc. I have not met one person who has a clue what I am talking about when I say rice crispy chicken, you just kind of gotta go with it and tell them how great it is. Usually me and my aunt make this together because it takes a lot of time (trust me it is totally worth it). It may get a little messy, but nothing compares to the chicken itself. I suggest you and your family or whoever, should make this.

SAMANTHA STAPLETON, GRADE II

Spiced Pineapple Upside-Down Cake!

This recipe is of a favorite cake my granny makes. It is hard for some to let go of recipes—family likes to keep their favorite things close to their hearts. However, I hope you enjoy this as much as I do.

- 1-1/3 cups butter, softened, divided
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- 1 can (20 ounces) pineapple slices, drained
- 10 to 12 maraschino cherries
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans
- 1-1/2 cups sugar
- 2 large eggs, room temperature
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1 cup buttermilk

1. In a saucepan, melt 2/3 cup butter; stir in brown sugar. Spread in the bottom of an ungreased heavy 12-in. ovenproof skillet or a 13x9-in. baking pan. Arrange pineapple in a single layer over sugar mixture; place a cherry in the center of each slice. Sprinkle with pecans and set aside.
2. In a large bowl, cream sugar and remaining butter until light and fluffy. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in vanilla. Combine the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon and nutmeg; add alternately to batter with buttermilk, beating well after each addition.
3. Carefully pour over the pineapple. Bake at 350° until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean, about 40 minutes for skillet, 50-60 minutes for baking pan. Immediately invert onto a serving platter. Keep warm.

AMBER SWEENEY, GRADE 9

The Old Deep Springs School

There was an old school called Deep Springs School my papaw attended, his name was Joseph Thomas Ely A.K.A. Tommy. He was five years old when he started school. The school was very small, it was only one room, but they divided it to where it was two rooms. There were thirty to fifty students that attended there. If you ask me, that is very little space for that amount of students. They used the bathroom in outhouses located about twenty or thirty yards from the school. They only had a little source of heat, two pot belly stoves burning all day—they still couldn't keep everyone warm in the cold winter. Lunch was very little, only serving soup beans and sometimes sandwiches. There were only two teachers that taught at the school—only two teachers for about fifty students, I say it was hard to keep up with all the kids. "Tommy" was not the only one out of the five siblings to attend Deep Springs School. His brothers Dennis, Paris, Dexter, and sister Brenda also attended. At this time, you only went there until the fourth grade. After that you went to Dryden High school. However, the school closed in 1963 and he was forced to go to another school in Dryden. He has many fond memories of going to school there. He told me a little story about when he first went to Dryden.

He didn't know what a gymnasium was and got in trouble for walking on it with his shoes. When he graduated from the school in 1969, he was seventeen years old. Although, after high school, he went straight to the mines where he worked to help support his family. I then asked him what his favorite memory was when he attended Deep Springs School. He said it would probably be playing marbles with all of his friends. He also told me that he would usually get paddled. So when they paddled him, the paddle had holes in it and when they would hit him and it would leave a bruise where the holes were on the paddle.

MASON TAYLOR, GRADE 9

Mamaw's Pickled Spinach

2 cups of raw spinach
¼ cups of cooked bacon, crumbled
¼ cup of chopped onion
¼ cup of chopped tomato
¼ cup of chopped green pepper
½ cup of oil
¼ cup of vinegar
¼ cup of sugar
Add salt and pepper for extra taste

Place vinegar, salt and spinach in a large bowl and let sit 1 hour, tossing frequently, until spinach wilts. In a large skillet, heat oil over medium heat. Add onion; cook 6 minutes or until tender and golden, stirring occasionally. Add bacon and tomatoes; cook 2 minutes, stirring constantly. Stir in spinach and vinegar mixture; continue cooking 5 to 7 minutes longer or until bacon is cooked through, stirring to release browned bits from the pan.

DILLON TIGNOR, GRADE 9

Old-Fashioned Root Beer Float

What You'll Need

2 scoops vanilla ice cream
1 cup chilled root beer soda

What to Do

Place 1 ice cream scoop in a tall glass. Pour in half the soda, and then add the remaining ice cream and remaining soda.

Serve immediately.

MCKENIZE TYREE, GRADE 9

My Family from Both Sides of North America

Eighteen years ago my dad, Sergio Contreras, immigrated from Vera Cruz, Mexico. He immigrated from Mexico to the United States of America for a better life and a place to raise his kids. He came to Virginia and met my mom, Brittany Vermillion. Then they had me in 2003, October the sixth. The reason why I have my mom's last name, Vermillion, instead of my dad's name, Contreras, is because they were not married when they had me. A few years after I was born, my parents had my sister, Abigail Contreras. Then had my brother, Adrian Contreras. My sister is twelve years old and my brother is four and I'm fifteen years old. My dad visits my grandparents every year and this year, my mom, my sister, my brother, and I will meet my grandparents for the first time. My uncle came to America and stayed with us for about eight months then left America to go back to Mexico. My family is a hard working family and very humble for everything we have. My dad is a great representation of a hard working immigrant. He went from having nothing to now having a lot. I'm very proud to be part of my family and I'm proud where my dad came from and proud of my mom, too for supporting him and her children.

ISAIAH VERMILLION, GRADE 9

Him

It all traces back to with Him:

It was Him that saved me.

It was Him that showed me that there was another way.

In times of darkness, it was Him that kept me going.

He was my new reason for living.

When no one else believed in me, it was Him that stood by my side

He has given me so much that I can never repay what I would owe.

It was Him that has given me my family and friends that I cherish so much.

All this love and kindness traces back to Him.

It was Him

And because of Him, I have been changed for good.

I live my life now because of Him,

And I can keep on living because it was Him that set me free.

KAYLA WESTON, GRADE II

Building Barns in Kentucky During the 1980s

My dad, Bige Whitaker, grew up on a eighty-eight acre farm, in Manchester, Ky. He lived there with his Mom, Ada Whitaker, and Dad, Elijah Glen Whitaker. There was also his two brothers, Jerry Whitaker and George "Peanut" Whitaker. He also had a sister named Mary Joe Whitaker.

My Grandpa was a drill instructor for the United States Army for many years, and he also farmed tobacco for extra income. Well as you may know, tobacco is a very labor intensive crop, and requires a place for it to

be hung to dry. The place they hung it were two barns, one was a five-tier barn, and the other was a four-tier barn.

Well, after my dad's older brother Jerry went off to college, it was just him and my grandpa left to grow and hang the tobacco. So one day after riding the bus home from school in February of 1980, my dad noticed he could see the sun from an angle he could never see it before. He went into the back a yard and noticed that two of the three barns had fallen over due to a tornado that passed through. This left them with only one barn remaining, but it was a one-hundred year old barn, that was used for mules that they didn't have anymore.

So my grandpa and my dad planned on tearing down and salvaging what they could from the three barns, and build new ones. So they could start the process faster, they hired someone with a bulldozer to come tear it down for them. He paid the man for his work with a little cash, and the rest of the bill was taken care of with moonshine that my grandpa and his brother made in the hills of Kentucky. So after they tore down the barns, they spend the next month or so clearing off the area so they could start construction on the new barns. Their plans were, to build two barns, that were just like the last two.

When they started construction, my dad was 16 and my grandpa was 42. To begin the process, they needed large amounts of lumber. For the base beams of the barn, they took a chainsaw and a tractor, and cut down Pine and Cedar trees. But before they could use the wood in construction, they had to remove the bark off of the trees. This process was called hueing, and required a hueing bar. A hueing bar is a circular blade with two handles that you would slide down the tree to remove the bark and make the tree ready for use.

To transport the trees from the woods to the construction site, they used my great uncle E.B.'s tractor. They used his tractor and several family members to place the large support beams. They also used some of the larger trees as tier beams that separate the different floors of the barn. These beams ran parallel with the ground, and were used as places to walk while hanging tobacco leaves.

After they built the foundation and support beams, they started on the outside of the barn. They started with building the wall, with the rough wood they bought from a local lumber yard. Some of the measurements of the wood they bought were two by fours, and eight by eights. They used eight by eights as beams that went along the wall, and the 2 by fours as the things that held up the beams.

The next thing after the exterior of the barn was the roof. They spent around seven thousand dollars on the whole construction of the barn, and the most of that was on the tin used to construct the roof. Hanging the tin was a difficult task due to the height of the five tier barns. It would take a lot convincing from my grandpa for my dad to climb up to the top and help hang the tin.

Then after they finished the roof, it was on to the inside of the barn. This included animal stalls, areas for drying corn, and horse stalls.

After they completed the first barn, they started the whole process again on the second barn. But the second barn was a little easier, because it was only four tiers.

The whole construction process took from February of 1980, to August of the same year. Almost all of this was done by my dad and my grandpa, along with the help of my great uncle and his tractor.

After the barn were built, my dad was only around for one more growing season of tobacco, before he went off to college. This left my grandpa alone to do the farming. He continued to run the farm for about ten years, before he passed away at the age of fifty-two due to health complications in relation to alcohol abuse.

The two barns that dad built, are still standing and in great shape today. However we do not own the land that they are on anymore because my grandma grew old and sold them so she could move into an apartment that was easier for her to manage.

It is very sad that they only got to use the new barns for such a small period of time. They had planned on raising animals, but never had the chance.

Like I said, my grandmother sold the land in September of 2011 and that ended the ownership of the barns my dad built.

JACOB WHITAKER, GRADE II

The Burning of Blackwater

Deep in the heart of Lee County, there is a small community called Blackwater. In Lee County, Blackwater has earned a reputation for being continuously on fire for some reason or another. This, of course, is an exaggeration, but I know the truth of this quite well as my family has lived there for over forty years. My grandmother and grandfather found themselves a nice house to live in out of the spotlight of urban civilization. This house is the one they raised my mother and her siblings in, and it is also the home I have always known. The eternal burning of Blackwater is more a joke than it is fact, yet I can testify that there are times when intense flames swallow our land whole. Before I describe the instances where fire consumes us, I must first describe the devilish reason why the fires of hades spring to life.

On my family's few acres of land, there is a certain kind of grass that grows. My family does not know the specific name of it, but we call it "pampas grass" as it resembles actual pampas grass in both color and growth. To word it frankly, this plant is the devil incarnate. This grass's life begins as normal grass would; however, this grass matures quickly to become the most painful inconvenience in existence. It grows tall and thick in tufts typically around clusters of rock. The problem arises when the grass spreads: it never stops. It reproduces and reproduces until it covers an entire acre, then two acres, then four, then everywhere in Blackwater. I doubt there is anywhere the grass cannot thrive. It covers nearly all of my land and even some of my yard.

Typically, one would only cut the grass back and worry no more about its nefarious plots, but this grass is smart. The tufts it grows in are too thick to mow over or trim. If that was not evil enough, the grass dries out as it ages leaving a bright yellow stalk. When this matured grass is cut, the stems become sharp where it is cut. It has the audacity to even shrivel into a brown husk when it dies, so it litters the land even after death. If I want to waste a roll of twine for my trimmer, I can neatly slice through a tuft in a few minutes, but the force of cutting the stout stalks heats the twine and the grass to create the most unpleasant, foul burning odor. Simply put, this grass is unstoppable. Well, I say unstoppable, but my family's mortal enemy has one fatal weakness: fire.

Fire may not be the safest alternative to combat the insufferable plant that plagues us, but it is a blessing from God when it eliminates the ugly yellow from my land. My neighbors own livestock that are in danger anytime the ridge gets set ablaze, but they are kept safe by our volunteer fire department. I do not know why it gets set ablaze, but it inevitably does. The grass succumbs to the flames and is consumed along with the year's other brush. Embers drift through the air, and ash coats the ground. These embers sometimes make the leap from one big patch of grass to another, and large-scale fires break out. Some people take this opportunity to set their patches on fire without guilt. Flames can sometimes line the roads depending on how far and how much the grass has grown, and the skies are tinted red from the smoke.

Much of the burning does not happen all at once but rather over a series of days in the spring. When someone deliberately starts a fire, they tend to do it shortly before it rains to prevent any major damage. The volunteer fire department also starts their own fires to combat the ones raging in the wild. Controlled burning has been used countless times on my land to prevent the fire from getting too close to my house. If the grass is already burned, there is nothing left to fuel the inferno. The fires are quite beautiful at night; the smell of smoke and the glowing orange light provide a sense of terrifying peace.

After the fire has worked its magic, the ground is barren and littered with the remains of the grass, trees, and anything else unlucky enough to be caught in the blaze. However, the devil lives to burn, and the grass

does as well. The fires eliminate the remains of their dead and give rise to a new generation of irritation. This grass will grow for another year or two until it dries up and dies like its ancestors. The fuel for the fire is renewed, and the cycle of the burning of Blackwater continues.

JOSHUA WINEGAR, GRADE II

Turning the Page

I feel like my life is a book.
I'm stuck on the part with stories of me and you.
I know it's time for me to turn the page and read on.
But, so far, this is my favorite part.
Please be in every chapter
On every page
And through every paragraph
All the way until I come to
The End.

DARRIEN YEARY, GRADE II

Lee County and Southwest Virginia

In Southwest Virginia, we've got our own little world for say. We're pretty famous for our music, moonshine, farms, and the Appalachian Mountains. To me, life down here is wonderful and when I walk through the lush fields of hay, I feel free from the world. I wouldn't trade life down here for anything. Lee County and the rest of Southwest Virginia have a pretty unique history and I'm glad to be the one to inform you all about it and my family history here too.

Southwest Virginia is made up of many counties including, Alleghany County, Bedford County, Bland County, Botetourt County, Buchanan County, Carroll County, Craig County, Dickenson County, Floyd County, Franklin County, Giles County, Grayson County, Henry County, Lee County, Montgomery County, Patrick County, Pulaski County, Roanoke County, Rockbridge County, Russell County, Scott County, Smyth County, Tazewell County, Washington County, Wise County, and Wythe County. As you can see, we're a fairly large place. Despite being thought of as rednecks and farms, we have some bigger cities like Bristol, Roanoke, and Radford. Where I live, however, there are many farms and not many people but life is still pretty modern.

Lee County is where I was born and raised and I'm happy to call it home. We had a population of 24,742 during our last census in 2015. We're on the border of Tennessee and Kentucky. We're actually quite forgotten but still very important. We held a Civil War battle in the town seat, and my home town Jonesville. The first explores here were from Spain in 1504 in search for gold. We actually used to be part of Russell County until we became our own county in 1793. We got our name from Robert E. Lee's father Light Horse Harry Lee. He was a light cavalry leader and then governor. We also had Joseph Martin, another Revolutionary War officer who lived in Rosehill, just west of Jonesville. Our economy was based on tobacco and coal but in recent years, the demand for these resources have diminished along with our money. That has helped put us on the top 10 poorest county in Virginia.

My family has lived here for several generations. My great great grandmother was a full blooded Cherokee Indian. She passed down a traditional tomahawk from her father to her daughter, my Mammaw Cole. My pappaw, who is her eldest child, has it to this day. Pappaw has a gargantuan farm that his pappaw had passed down through the family. When I used to stay with him, we'd go the the co-op around nine and get feed for his five hundred or so cows. It's a lot to maintain but it's fun doing it. I'd help him roll hay and throw out the

salt blocks for the cows. My favorite part of the year would be when we'd round up into a big corral and tag them and band the young bulls. It's dangerous but who doesn't have fun in the face of death.

In conclusion, Lee county and Southwest Virginia are a very fun and homely place to stay. I wouldn't recommend it for the faint hearted. If you don't want to work, you won't make it around here. I love it here and I love the farm life. Our area is a one of a kind place. I guarantee that some other people you could ask would agree with me. It's truly remarkable and a beautiful place. I would recommend everyone to visit.

TYLER YEARY, GRADE II

MO'MAGIC SUMMER READING PROGRAM



Mo'MAGIC

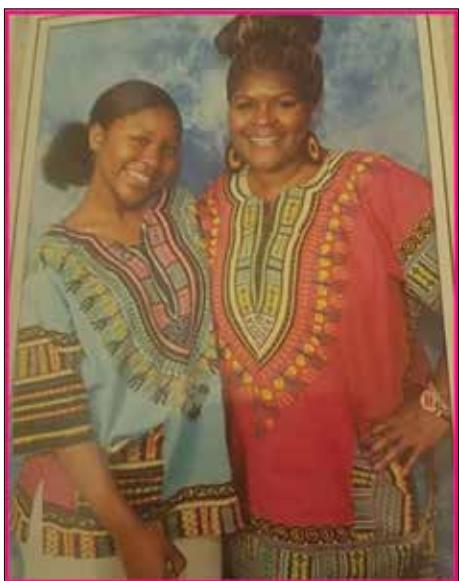


This year's editorial staff included grade 7 & 8 students from the Magic Zone and Booker T. Washington Center programs.

people from a San Francisco district called the Western Addition. Last summer, with guidance from a public service organization called Collective Impact (whose mission is to "drive meaningful, equitable change in marginalized communities by equipping children, youth, and young adults with the tools they need to succeed"), TOP expanded its platform to embrace these young people. They also have unique stories to tell about their origins and perspectives on life. We are thrilled to add their artistic creations as variegated threads in the tapestry of *The Origin Project Book Five*.

NANCY BOLMEIER FISHER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THE ORIGIN PROJECT
BOARD CHAIR, COLLECTIVE IMPACT

A Note of Appreciation, Admiration & Love



Those of us who work with the remarkable young people in the afterschool and summer programs in San Francisco's Western Addition neighborhood can count ourselves lucky: we are privy to some of the best and brightest minds around. Our students are incredible storytellers, each in their own way, and deserve to be seen, heard, and known. I could not be more proud of all the amazing writers who contributed to our summer magazine, and am thrilled for those who have adapted their essays for inclusion in *The Origin Project*. These young wordsmiths have pushed themselves (and each other) to try new things and tell their own stories, bravely and generously. Our writers are bright, bold, creative, funny, and determined, with compelling words and ideas to share. We hope they keep working (and keep writing) all through the school year, and well beyond; each of these young people has a lot to share, and we should all take note! So glad you've had a chance to enjoy their work in this volume of *The Origin Project*; we loved helping them achieve it during

summer 2018. To our friends from Virginia and all around the country who are also contributing to *TOP*, we are so excited to be connected; you are welcome to visit with us in San Francisco anytime!

DEVI ZINZUVADIA, SUMMER MAGAZINE
FACULTY MODERATOR
MO'MAGIC SUMMER READING PROGRAM

A Word from our Managing Editor

Hi everybody, my name is Lorenzo Adamson, and I'm from the Bayview. I would like to introduce everyone to Booker T. and Magic Zone middle school writers. We really worked hard this summer to create this magazine. I hope you all enjoy learning about all of us and our lives.



LORENZO ADAMSON, GRADE 8

We Can Create Change by Speaking What's Right

I got my name from my dad and my grandfather. Both of their names are Lorenzo Adamson. I am Lorenzo the third. My name is *an Italian and Spanish name of Latin origin*.

My favorite neighborhood in San Francisco is Bayview because there is a lot of people there I know and am friends with. Everyone in my family calls me Lorenzo because that is my name. My friends like to call me Lorenzo and Renzo Bandss because I am a third. My favorite sports team is the Warriors and my favorite color is red, and people can tell, because I am always wearing that. My most perfect day would be me going to school and having a good day. My parents are the most important things to me at my house. One thing I would like the world to know about me is that I'm funny, and people care about me.

The problem about my community is that there is a lot of gang violence. There is a lot of shooting and gangbanging. Gangbanging is when people are outside shooting dice and fighting over silly things. I want to see a change. I want to be able to go outside and smell fresh air. I want to be able to have freedom. If I go outside, I want to see everyone getting along and having fun. We can create change by speaking what's right.

LORENZO ADAMSON, GRADE 8

A Very Loving & Funny Person

My name was supposed to be *Shai* but my dad kept saying Shylah. My favorite neighborhood in San Francisco is the Fillmore, the Castro, and the Haight, because that's where I'm from. Everyone in my family calls me Shy, or Mucky, or Pie, because Shylah is my real name, and Shy is short. My friends like to call me ShyShy-BaeBae and Shela, because I am funny, so I don't care when people make fun of me. My favorite sports team is the Warriors and my favorite colors are purple and black, and people can tell because I always wear purple and black. My most perfect day would be me shopping and eating all day, then going to the





movies without spending money. My house is the most important thing to me at my house. One thing I would like the world to know about me is that I have to be famous, and I'm a very loving and funny person.

SHYLAH BAILEY, GRADE 8

I Am a Miracle

My favorite neighborhood in San Francisco is the 'Mo, AKA Fillmore, because I know almost everybody in the neighborhood. Everyone in my family calls me NuNu because my mom made up the name for me when I was a baby. My friends like to call me Myracles and Myrk because, that's what they call me! My favorite sports team is the 49ers and my favorite color is pink, and people can tell, because I always have something pink on me. My most perfect day would be me and my family having fun all day, chilling and being ourselves. My pool is the most important thing to me at my house. One thing I would like the world to know about me, is that I am a miracle, because my mom was not having no kids, and then she had me.

MYRACLE CULCLAGER, GRADE 8

Everyone in My Family

My favorite neighborhood in San Francisco is the Mission. Everyone in my family calls me Adam. My friends like to call me Adam. My favorite sports team is the Warriors, and my favorite color is black, and people can tell, because I always wear black. I go to school at Presidio Middle School. My most perfect day would be me staying home and sleeping. My phone is the most important thing to me at my house.

My family gave me the name Adam because my family likes 4-letter names. Everyone in my family has a 4-letter name. Some examples are my brother Kyle and my dad Andy. The name Adam is Hebrew and means *ground and earth*.

ADAM GIANG, GRADE 7

More Than Your Share

So I think my name Mwanee comes out of a book, because my Aunty named me and said it came from an African book. Mwanee means *more than your share*. My favorite neighborhood in San Francisco is Fillmore because it is a very fun place to be. The Fillmore has a lot of places where I can play basketball and also places like Hamilton Park where I can chill with my friends. Everyone in my family calls me Moonie because, I don't know, when I was born my face looked like a moon. My friends like to call me Woni. My favorite sports team is the San Francisco 49ers and my favorite colors are red and gold, and people can tell because I always say I love the 49ers. My most perfect day would be me meeting all of the 49ers again and playing flag football. My Xbox is the most important thing to me at my house, because Fortnite is fun. One thing I would like the world to know about me is that I love my family, and I love Fortnite.

MWANEE HAMILTON, GRADE 7

My Most Perfect Day

I got my name because my mom liked it and because my dad's name is Eric.

My favorite neighborhood in San Francisco is the Bayview, because I live there. Everyone in my family calls me E, because my name is Evan. My friends call me Evan. My favorite sports team is the Lakers, and

my favorite color is red. My most perfect day would be me going to sleep. My Fortnite is the most important thing to me at my house.

EVAN KELLY, GRADE 8

Some Issues & Problems

Some issues and problems in my community is like there's people that are just rude and are stereotyping other people. For example, one time my dad had picked up me and my brother from school. There was this white lady who when we walked by her, she held her bag closer to her, thinking we were going to take something from her. I think that people just need to calm down; like, not every brown person is bad. Maybe also have more events with mixed cultures and colors put together to show that it's okay, like, relax.

I grew up and am still currently living in the Ingleside District of San Francisco. I grew up going to school in the Excelsior and Mission. I have one sibling, but he's sooo annoying. My family calls me Mauri, and my friends at school call me Elmo or Huffle-Duffle-Puff. My hair is red, so they call me Elmo, but I don't know how I got called Huffle-Duffle-Puff. My favorite sports team is the Warriors. It's so exciting and fun to watch with my family. My perfect day would be going somewhere like the movies or Dave & Busters with my cousins Maya and Naima and my friend Imogen. We would go get Philly cheesesteaks and eat ice cream. My favorite neighborhoods in San Francisco are Ingleside, Mission, and the Excelsior, because that's where I grew up and where I love to be. My favorite sports team is the Warriors and my favorite color is mint green, and people can tell because I always have something mint green on me. My dog is the most important thing to me at my house (but I don't know, because she's old and gonna die). One thing I would like the world to know about me is that the future is female, and I am going to accomplish big things.

My name is Mauriana Nicole Licea. But I have many nicknames. Some of my nicknames are Mauri, Elmo, Bubbles, etc. My mom said she liked Briana and Ariana, but had to keep the tradition of the generation that the name has to start with M, so she made Mauriana, and my nickname, Mauri, just a shorter version of my name. Nicole, my middle name, is probably because of my mom's cousin and friend are named Nicole. I would change my name to Nicole because I like that name and it's shorter.

MAURIANA LICEA, GRADE 7

This is Me

My favorite neighborhood in San Francisco is Japantown because it's fun. Everyone in my family calls me Bubz because when I was little I used to love the name. My friends like to call me Marky, Mark, and M. My favorite sports team is the Bulls, and my favorite color is pink, and people can tell, because I always tell them. My most perfect day would be me buying 100 PSN gift cards. My family and my PS4 are the most important things to me at my house. One thing I would like the world to know about me is that I am a pro gamer. My nickname Bubz came from this movie that I used to watch all the time when I was 4; the movie was Toy Story and I used to love the character Buzz Lightyear.

MARK McDANIELS, GRADE 7



One Giant Problem is Violence

The way I got my name is... I am the second child, and when my parents found out I was going to be the first girl!, they were very happy. So my mother figured that since I was the first girl I would love shopping and getting my nails done, etc. Which I do. So she named me Milan, after the city in Italy.

My favorite neighborhood in San Francisco is – I don't live here, because I live somewhere else. Everyone in my family calls me Milan, because that is the name my Mom gave me. My friends like to call me Milan and M, because I am Milan and because that is my first initial. My favorite sports team is track and my favorite color is pink and people can tell, because I always say pink. Also, my room is pink. My most perfect day would be me and my family all having fun together. My pink room is the most important thing to me at my house. One thing I would like the world to know about me is that I stand for what I believe in. #BlackLivesMatter!!

The image shows the front cover of a magazine titled "WHAT'S GOOD, WESTERN ADDITION?". The cover features a large, vibrant photograph of a diverse group of young people, mostly Black, smiling and posing together. Above the photo, the title is written in a bold, serif font. Below the title, it says "A MAGIC ZONE PUBLICATION" and "Volume 3, Issue 1 | Summer 2018". Underneath the photo, there is a quote in a stylized font: "*We can create change by speaking what's right.*" At the bottom of the cover, there is a small grey box containing the publisher's information: "Magic Zone is a program of Collective Impact 1050 McAllister Street San Francisco, CA 94115 415-771-7228 | 415-967-0400 www.collectiveimpact.org". At the very bottom, a thin green horizontal bar contains the text "WHAT'S GOOD, WESTERN ADDITION? Volume 3, Issue 1".

This summer 2018 cover of What's Good, Western Addition?

I don't really have any problems in my community, but I have a strong opinion on problems in the world and America. One giant problem is violence. People are getting killed every day for things that they did not even do. For example, that brutal attack on 15 year old Junior, who was stabbed to death because of a sister's gang member brother was a mistaken identity. It's so sad what the world has come to. Or like how 4 year old Luz was run over and the person kept driving and left the young girl to die in her mother's arms.

MILAN MCDANIELS, GRADE 7

Daymaker

My mom and dad said if I was going to be a boy then my name would be Nasr (they thought I was going to be a boy), but then they heard that I was a girl so they took the R out and put in IA, which is *Nasia*. Also, I was named after the rapper Nas.

Everyone in my family calls me Nas, CeCe, Sia, and Sia Bia, because it is easy to say and because it is short for *Nasia*. My friends like to call me Nas, and also Funnybone, Daymaker, *Nasia*, and Cookie Monster, because I am funny, I make people's day, and because I like cookies. My favorite sports team is the Warriors (the most famous and best basketball team) and my favorite color is – I don't have one. My most perfect day would be me playing sports and not being bored. My family is the most important thing to me at my house. One thing I would like the world to know about me is, I am awesome and weird, and if you come with me it will be an adventure.

NASIA ROBINSON, GRADE 8

I've Already Started – I Just Need to Keep Going

My favorite neighborhood in San Francisco is the Western Addition because it is a place where I can be me without feeling ashamed. Everyone in my family calls me Asha because it is my nickname for my full name, Dayashanae. My friends like to call me Asha, Alex, and Sky, because I am gender fluid (most people don't understand). My favorite color is black, and people can tell because I always wear black on some part of my body. My most perfect day would be when D.T. wouldn't be president. Also it would be when everyone understood me and everyone wouldn't be so questioning. Myself, is the most important thing to me at my house. One thing I would like the world to know about me is that I am adopted. No one should feel bad about me having two white gay dads. I am in an open adoption so I still get to see my birth family except for my birth dad. Stop asking so many questions about me, and just let me be me!

An issue that I see in my community is homelessness. We have a community garden and a homeless person stole some vegetables. I didn't get angry at all. I was happy for them. They knew how to get free food. I hid a smile. There are many homeless people, especially in my community. Many people complain about the smell and the huge messes they make and sometimes leave behind. They like to hang out by the Safeway and the alleys. I want homelessness to stop. In fact, we should get rid of money altogether. We should go back to buying things with beads and shells. We should tear down every house and building, and build our own. We should go back to farming our own crops. I want to make more donations to homeless shelters and more money to building homeless shelters. I've already started. I just need to keep going.

ASHA (DAYASHANAE) ROMESBURG, GRADE 8

If You Know, You Care – If You Care, You Change

My name is Elizabeth. My dad wanted to name me Elizabeta, so at first they agreed on it, but my mom said she didn't like it, so they changed it to Elizabeth. Now my whole family calls me Leeza; all my relatives call me Leeza and some of them don't even know my real name is Elizabeth. My middle name is Valentina.

I was born on Valentine's Day, February 14, so they decided that because my birthday is on Valentine's Day, my middle name would be Valentina.

My favorite neighborhood in San Francisco is Potrero Hill, because I go there all the time and it has a pretty view. Everyone in my family calls me Leeza because that's my nickname; also, my grandma's name is Leeza. My friends call me Leeza and Lizzy because I am used to being called Leeza. My favorite color is gold (people can't tell). My most perfect day would be hanging out with friends doing something fun, and playing with my pets. My dog and cat are the most important things to me at my house. One thing I would like the world to know about me is that I LOVE animals. I have two pets. One is a dog; her name is Gracie, and she is a monkey terrier. She loves food; when I get home, she will jump up and lick my face, but she rarely barks. I only got her like a month ago, and I love having her around. She has a bone that she loves to chew. My cat's name is Sparrow and she loves to jump, she meows a lot and purrs really loud, but is shy when someone new comes. I have had her for a year and a half. I love both my pets.

One problem I see in our world is plastic pollution. Plastic doesn't break down; it breaks up into microplastics. *Lots* of animals die from plastic in the ocean. 90% of the world's sea birds have consumed plastic. Some ways we can change: instead of using a straw in your water, you can just drink it from the cup. You can also reuse plastic bags 2 or 3 times because usually one plastic bag gets used for 10 minutes, then gets thrown away to let animals get choked on it. You can help to change that if you reuse plastic bags. This is important to me because I love animals and I care for them. I hope people try to change the way they use plastic. *If you know, you care; if you care, you change.*

ELIZABETH STREMLOW, GRADE 7

In memory of Jeff Adachi for his grace, grit, and generosity and for his creation of Mo'MAGIC.

MORRISON SCHOOL



My Great-Grandparents' Amazing Life



Michael Dorety, Hampton Grindstaff, and Jolson Peterson await The Origin Project kickoff at the Barter Theatre.

girls didn't. Today everyone gets a choice if they want a bicycle, so anyone can have one. Also, the price of gas was very different. It was 32 cents a gallon, but Grandaddy says he could talk them down to just 10 cents a gallon! Today the prices are over two dollars a gallon. Food was much cheaper, too. A pound of hamburger meat only cost 49 cents, and today hamburger meat is three to five dollars a pound. My great-grandparents said life was calm and easy, but they had amazing jobs. They got to work on the Apollo space capsule!

My great-grandmother used to work on missiles before she worked on the space capsule. My great-grandfather also worked on the space capsule. The space capsule was the first one that went on the moon. I think it is amazing that they were able to help build the first space capsule because it was a significant moment in American history.

My great-grandparents really had an amazing life together. They have made me realize that anything is possible. If they can help build a space capsule and raise a family together, the sky's the limit to what I can do with my life. I am grateful to have my great-grandparents in my life.

HAYLEI BARLOW, GRADE 7

The History of The Blankenships

My family originated in Cherokee, North Carolina in a warm, peaceful, environment. A couple of my ancestors are my mom's great-great-great grandmother, Grandmother Blankenship, and our cousin, Bob Blankenship, who was a tribal council member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians for 12 years. It takes hard work and wisdom to be on the tribal council.

Our Native American origin lives through us daily. We were taught respect for others, land, and animals. For example, today, my family plants a tree in honor of a family member's death. In ancient days, the tree was used to carry and honor the dead.

The Cherokee refer to God as our Creator. We believe in balance. In our belief system, women balanced men just as summer balanced winter, plants balanced animals, and farming balanced hunting. The Cherokee believe that the white man doesn't own the land. We are to live in harmony with the animals, and we are to respect them, along with the land and water. This belief has been handed down throughout my family for several generations.

Years ago, the Cherokee did not separate spiritual and physical things, but looked at them as one. They practiced their religion in private daily observances, as well as public ceremonies. We have videos of some of the dances. They look like spirit dancers we read about in history. They wear traditional clothes.

I think it's great being part Cherokee because there is so much history and so many neat traditions. I heard that my ancestors like to hunt and gather food. I follow their traditions of fishing and canoeing. One day, I hope to learn their special dances.

COLTON BLANKENSHIP, GRADE 6

My Crazy Family History

I found out more of my crazy family history. My papaw and his family actually walked from Maine to Virginia. That is a very long way to walk. This was a rough time for my papaw and his family. Things started falling down a very steep hill.

Most of papaw's family started going away, so he and his one sister and their mom came here. My memaw and papaw met through a friend, because Papaw actually worked with one of Memaw's best friends.

I actually inherited some of my traits from papaw's side of the family. I got my love for interior designing from Aunt Anita, papaw's sister. I'm just like her! She has love for designing, and that is what I have too. I also get my kind heart from my papaw's mom. She had a very, very kind heart. She and I would always sit and talk, and she would always play the piano for me, which was so very good. We would sit there for hours and talk, and I loved it. Whenever I was upset, I would always go to her. But she passed away when I was seven. It was very sad. I remember my papaw and I would sit in his room and look at pictures of her and cry.

My memaw's side of the family comes from tall people. Nanny Barker was really tall, and so was Paul. I don't really remember Nanny Barker or her family, because I was very young when she was alive, I come from a crazy family, but it is worth it.

BAILEY BLAYLOCK, GRADE 8

My Grandpa

This story is about my family and my grandpa, Jerry Bleckley. He was a very important person in my life. Even though he was annoying sometimes, I loved him with all my heart. He is with the angels now. Even though he needed rest, he kept on working. He died of cancer this year, 2018. If he is resting in heaven, I will be surprised! Grandpa is probably making a garden for Grandma right now and making a home for her. I will try my absolute hardest to make my grandpa proud of me, and I will be excited the next time I see him, when I am with the angels too.

My origin starts when I was born, though this is not Grandpa's story. I remember my family lived in a log house that was mostly wood and carpet. It had big hills and a zipline, and I loved sledding there. My grandpa was just a working man all the time, so he did not come by the house often. He built his house himself when he was working with his friends.

Grandpa was always a working man. I remember that he could make his own apple juice. I liked making it even though I did not like drinking juice. He made it so if you drank too much, then you would have to go to the bathroom. He liked to give everyone who was new a big glass of apple juice. I really liked having him as my grandpa. He was a great person to everyone. At his funeral, a bunch of people were there because my grandpa touched a lot of people. He was a mason as well as an army veteran. In fact, he is going to be named Veteran of the Year in the state of Virginia! My Grandpa was in the army but I know very little about what he did in the army. Whenever I asked him about the army, he shied away from the subject. He was promoted one day and was demoted the next. At his funeral, he was given a salute with muskets.

I do know that he loved my grandma with all of his heart. He argued with my grandma sometimes about how he tickled me too much, because I am very ticklish. Grandma was always the one to stop him, because he listened to my grandma. Grandpa also loved salt. He ate salt on everything, just like me. That's where I get my love for salt. I will eat salt on anything!



Adriana Trigiani signs autographs for Morrison School students at the Barter.

My grandpa's story is the greatest. He was a hard-working man all the time, even when the doctor told him to slow down. He loved my grandma with all his heart and he loved God just as much. His family was very important to him. The best way to love us was to annoy us, and Grandpa did just that. He also taught us how to work even though we were very lazy. I loved my grandpa for everything he was, and for what he taught us. Grandpa was a great man and I love him with all my heart and I will see him in heaven.

ISAIAH BLECKLEY, GRADE 10

Identity vs. Disability

The way I figure it, everyone has something that makes them unique in their own way. Some of us have passions that have been passed down to us by family members from generation to generation. Of course, my passions happen to be art and music. As a result of being adopted almost 8 ½ years ago, I've learned that I still share some passions with my adoptive family. I've recently come to learn that my mother played piano in high-school, with my great-great-grandmother teaching her. My maternal grandmother also happened to have a taste for art. Kudos to my family for helping me find my way in my love of my passions! I like how I share these traits with my family, even though actually, I also have setbacks in my passions. My setbacks are that I'm partially deaf, as well as my fear of feeling different because I'm not like everyone else. It's just frustrating for me at times. But my passions make me who I am, even with a disability.

Despite my setbacks, all I want is to prove myself worthy of being like a "regular" person. But I *can't*. Why not? I can't always live in fear of always feeling different just because of a ridiculous thing like a disability. It's like Superman with his Kryptonite weakness. Even though he has a weakness, he still does great things.

I just want to remember the things I love most: art and music. You may also be wondering, "What about acting? Don't you love acting?" Well, of course I do! But when I said art and music are my passions, acting is too. But I don't call it "acting" or "performing," I call it art. Why? You use your imagination in both of them. Music is a little like that as well. My reason for this is because music is a way of showing your feelings and imagination with sound (even though it's hard for me), just like when you're expressing your feelings on a sketch pad or even painting.

Like my art inspiration, Frida Kahlo, stated once, "I don't paint dreams or nightmares. I paint my own reality." So, what I'm saying is that you can't have fear just because you have a disability. Just embrace it, catch your fall, and use your parachute to see how far you can actually go in your goals. Whether you're on a mountain-peak, in a classroom, or even on The Great Wall of China, you can accomplish anything . . . even with a disability.

ALEXIS BRAMLETT, GRADE 8

Home: Bristol, VA

On September 22, 2005, I was born in the old hospital in Abingdon, Virginia. After I was born, my mom and dad brought me to my new house. My house looked big and yellow. My house is very nice and comfy too. I feel very comfortable at my house because that is where I have lived my entire life.

When I was young, I called my house the Yellow House, and that was where I lived. My house is a three-story house. It has an upstairs, the middle (where the living room is), and the basement. My house also has a couple of TVs, one upstairs and the other one downstairs.

Later as I was growing up, I started to be mature enough to do chores for my mom and dad. I began to help them clean clothes, take the garbage cans to the bottom of the hill, and help them with the Christmas decorations. I was growing up really fast and helping my family out every single day.

Last year when I turned 12, my mom said I was mature enough to stay at the house by myself. She said I could stay at home by myself because she would always trust me since I was always a good boy who helped my family a lot. My house was helping me grow up, because I take care of my house every single day. It makes me also realize that whenever you start growing up, you become a little more mature with each step. My house has always been with me every step of my journey as I have grown up.

TYLER BRANHAM, GRADE 8

Mayan Culture

Four thousand years ago, Mayans wandered the Earth. I was adopted from Guatemala and I know that I am Mayan, because my ancestors were from Mexico or Central America.

The first proof of human settlers in Guatemala dates back as far as 10,000 B.C. The rulers of Mayans were called "Halach uinic" or "Ahaw", which means "lord" or "ruler". The most well-known king of the Mayans was K'inich Janaab' Pakal, also known as Pakal the Great. It is unknown to why the Mayan population had lowered, but there are theories that it lowered because of disease, over-farming, and warfare. (Kiger)

The Mayans developed a complex understanding of astronomy. They believed that the actions of the gods could be read in the stars, moon, and planets. Many of the important/well known buildings they made were built with astronomy in mind. The Mayans studied the sun, moon, and planets, mostly Venus. The Mayans used observations, shadow casting devices, and observations of horizons to trace the complex motions of the sun, the stars and planets in order to observe, calculate and record the information in their chronicles, also known as "codices." A chronicle is a factual written account of important or historical events in the order of the occurrences. (Suter)

The picture from my trip shows part of the Mayan ruins I visited in Palenque National Park. It was a really fun experience because people don't usually get to see this. It was also nice because I got to see where my ancestors were from. We got to go on the buildings, which it was kind of scary since there weren't any railings to hold onto and it was sort of high up. We also got to go inside some of them, which was really cool.

When we got to Mexico, my dad did most of the speaking because he's pretty much fluent in Spanish. I have been taught Spanish since kindergarten and I want to continue learning, so I can revisit Mexico and be able to talk to the people. My dad is working with me to understand more Spanish and I'm really happy about it. I'm probably going to get a teacher to teach me some as well.

I really want to find out more about my ancestors and where they came from. It really interests me because I love history a lot. I might want to find my birth parents as well, but it's scary because I don't know anything really about them.



Aubrey Hubbard and Mattie Kennedy are excited for The Origin Project kickoff event to begin.

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KIRI BRIMHALL, GRADE 9

My Dad's Life as a Paramedic

"Okay Dad, why did you choose to be a paramedic?" I asked my dad. "I didn't choose EMS, it chooses you instead," he said back.

My dad has always been an EMT, PA, and a parent, putting up with two kids and his job. The weird thing about living with a medic is that when one of us is sick, he gets everything to deal with sickness. It's like an apocalypse hit and he went to a pharmacy and took everything.

My dad was born on November 9, 1967 to farming family. His childhood would make other people go, "How are you even still alive today?" Plus, his family owned a tobacco farm and some woods that started on a field and went to a river.

When my dad was in college and was swimming, his swim team or one of his classes went to Britain and Germany. The Cold War was still going on then, and he was on east side of Germany and didn't see the Berlin Wall. On his last day in Germany, he called his own dad and asked him to have a big breakfast waiting for him when he got back. When my dad got back, his dad took him to Shoney's and my dad had everything there.

When my dad got into medicine, he worked his rear end off to get a master's degree and become a physician's assistant. In later years, there was a test that he had to take to keep working as a PA, but he kept failing them. So, he went back on the road and is now an EMT, and he "races the reaper" when he's on job trying to saves lives. He has even seen people die in his ambulance.

Dad has seen a lot of stuff that haunts him every day when he is on the job or at home. But he's grateful to have two kids, a great wife, and his friends around him to share a great life with him. Behind the rough skin, there is a nice guy who jokes around, helps people, and is a good person to talk to. So, if you are hurt and you're being transported to a hospital, you'll be in good hands with my dad or one of his partners. Just don't resist them, or it's going to be a nightmare trip to the hospital.

DREW BRITTON, GRADE 9

Traditions with My Grandparents Are Special

My grandparents on both sides of my family live in Greene County, but they all grew up somewhat differently. Even though they grew up differently, they have important things in common such as family values, culture, and a respect for tradition, especially celebrating holidays.

Holidays that both sides of my family celebrate, sometimes together, are Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, and Halloween. Since all of my grandparents live pretty close by, it is nice that we can all get together for many of our holiday events. One of the most enjoyable holidays we all celebrate together is Christmas.

On Christmas Eve, my mom, dad, sister, brother, and I go to my mom's parents house for dinner every year. We have different foods at the dinner each year.

On Christmas Eve of 2018 we had small baked potatoes and sausage balls. On Christmas Day, my dad's parents come to our house in the morning. We have brunch and snacks. In the afternoon, my mom's parents join us. That evening we all enjoy a large Christmas dinner together along with my dad's brother and his wife. On Christmas night, my parents cook the same thing every year. My dad cooks the turkey, and my mom makes gravy, mashed potatoes, green beans, corn, and rolls. Both of my grandmothers are great cooks and

always bring lots of other side dishes and desserts. For the past three years, I have made my "famous" chocolate sheet cake. I usually bake the cake by myself, but this year I let my younger brother help me. Everyone loves my chocolate sheet cake! My grandmother on my mom's side taught me how to make this cake. I think I may have inherited my cooking skills from both of my grandmothers.

I like being able to celebrate family traditions with both sets of grandparents. With all of us living close by and getting along very well, it makes it possible for us to share holiday events. Even though my grandparents may have grown up differently, I think they all have far more in common than they have differences. The biggest thing they have in common is their grandchildren. My sister, brother, and I are the only grandchildren on both sides of my family, and if you were to ask them what's most special to them, they would all agree that it was us.

MAX CARTER, GRADE 7

Davy Crockett: A Relative

As Americans, we are proud of our independence. We appreciate all the things our flag stands for, from our freedom of speech to our right to choose who represents us in our government. We love our freedom of being able to choose our own course in life. But, most of all, we are thankful for the people who gave their lives in order to make our country a better place. These freedoms come at a cost, and there has to be a driving force. There are people who have to make the ultimate sacrifice in order to give us these rights. Among these men and women is Davy Crockett, and I am proud to be able to say that Davy Crockett is my relative.

Davy Crockett was born on August 17, 1786 to John and Rebecca Crockett. He was the fifth of nine children. He had a rough life and was sent by his father to drive cattle at the age of twelve. He never got along with his father too well, and there was a constant stress in between them. On at least one occasion, his father even beat him. Not too long after this, Davy Crockett ran away from a violent father and wandered throughout Virginia. He worked hard to learn to read and write and eventually ended up marrying Mary Finely and settling on a farm. ("Davy Crockett Biography")

In 1813, shortly after moving to Franklin County, a group of frontiersmen attacked the Creek Indians in southern Alabama. The Native Americans retaliated and attacked Fort Mims. Davy Crockett joined the military and joined a large group of other men going to Alabama, and fought the Native Americans for six months. After returning home he decided to move to Alabama. He contracted malaria on the way and was left on the road by his family to die. Remarkably, he recovered and was able to return and catch up with his family. By this time Mary had died and Davy Crockett remarried, this time to Elizabeth Patton. ("Davy Crockett Biography")

In 1817, Davy Crockett and his family returned to Lawrence Country, Tennessee. He became involved in politics and was elected on the Tennessee legislature. In 1827 and 1829 he was elected into Congress. He disagreed with many of Andrew Jackson's principles and policies, including banishing the Native Americans. He lost his seat for his third term, but regained it when he ran for a fourth term. However, he lost his fifth term and thus exited his congressional career. ("Davy Crockett Biography")

In 1835 Davy Crockett and four of his neighbors set off for Texas, looking for new land. In January of 1836 he joined the military and began to aid Texas in the fight against Mexico. He was stationed at the Alamo, where he died on March 6, 1836. Although people love to claim that he was one of the last survivors, he was most likely one of the first to die, starved to death by the siege, alone and unarmed. Although we wish we could believe the countless rumors that state he escaped the Mexicans and returned home, this is highly unlikely. The other major theory is that he was captured by the Mexicans and taken to Mexico to be executed. ("Davy Crockett Biography")

This brave man was either my great-great-great-great-great grandfather or my great-great-great-great-great uncle. He is from my mother's side and, although he is a ways back in my genealogy, I am

still proud that I can claim a blood tie. The relatives who discovered this are some of my mom's cousins, and thus my cousins as well. They love to trace back our family lines, and have discovered a lot about our history and ancestors. I think that being related to Davy Crockett is one of the coolest claims.

In my opinion, Davy Crockett is a great example of a true American patriot. He could never seem to do enough and any time he finished one task he was ready to turn around and begin another thing. After fighting Native Americans, serving on the Tennessee Legislature, running for Congress five times, and being elected for three of those terms, most men would be content to sit back and retire. Davy Crockett wanted to keep going. He went to Texas and soon after joined the army. He fought the Mexicans until his death, giving his life for our country. If you don't consider him a patriot, I don't know what else you might want!

Being related to Davy Crockett inspires and encourages me to honor our country and do my best to take care of the freedoms that we have gained. I may not go into the army and fight the enemy. I won't necessarily serve in Congress or become politically involved. Most people will never hear of me, and I am sure that I won't ever be as famous as Davy Crockett. However, the knowledge of all that Davy Crockett has done and that he is my ancestor helps me think about the simple things in life that I can do to help others. I consider Davy Crockett to be a patriot and a great example, and that's why I'm proud to be related to him!

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AMY COTE, GRADE 6

The Midnight Ride

"The Redcoats are coming! The Redcoats are coming!" William Dawes was yelling. You may not have ever heard of William Dawes, but he and Samuel Prescott were the two people who rode with Paul Revere. The reason that I am writing about William Dawes is because I am related to him on my mother's side.

On the night of April 18, 1775, the time came for Dawes and Revere to fulfill their mission. Dawes' mission was to ride through the towns, warning the patriots that the British were coming. His main destination was in Lexington, the Hancock-Clark House. He was to warn them that the British were coming, and their goal was to kill them or take them captive. Their next and final stop was Concord. The British were trying to get to Concord also because there was an arms cache that they wanted to seize. ("Battles of Lexington and Concord")

Dawes was never able to reach Concord to warn them. The British tried capture Revere and Prescott, but Dawes shouted, "Halloo, my boys, I've got two of them," so the British would come over to him. (Yost) He was able to flee the other way while Revere and Prescott had a chance to get away. He rode towards an abandoned farmhouse. His horse kicked him off, so he had to walk back to Lexington while staying in the shadows. (Yost)

Dawes was a big help in spreading the word, but Prescott was the only one who made it to Concord. (Edmonds) After his midnight ride, he became a quartermaster in the war and served his country faithfully. After the war, he resumed a normal life. (Yost)

On April 6, 1745, William Dawes Jr. was born to William Dawes the first and Lydia Dawes. He was married to Mehitable Dawes and had three children. One of his great-great-grandsons, Charles Dawes, would become Vice President under Calvin Coolidge. Unfortunately, Mehitable died in 1793, and six years later on February 25, 1799, William Dawes Junior died. (Thompson)

I love this amazing relative because, without Dawes, there is a good chance that Revere and Prescott would have got caught and the British would have taken over our leaders and weapons and would have made us submit to their will once again. I am proud to be related to such an important person in our country's history.

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ANDY COTE, GRADE 8

Taking Things Apart

When I was little, I was always taking something apart. Like when I was three and I took apart my older sister's toy car and put it back together with no problem. My sister wanted to kill me because I took her car apart, but before she got done ranting to my mom of how I should be beaten and grounded (even though I was only three), I had already put the car back together and handed it back to her. From what I was told, she was impressed.

Once when I was about five or six, I was already starting to love dirt bikes, four wheelers, and, of course, cars. I was very intrigued by how all these cool machines had all of that power under the hood, or in some cases, in the chassis of the dirt bike or other vehicles with no hood. My dad also worked on cars, lawn mowers, building things, etc. My dad is also good at building things. One thing that my dad built when I was younger is an end table for one of our couches. He built the end table so well that it is still usable, but there's a couple minor things that I would change on the end table. One of the things that I would change is how he didn't get the measurements completely correct, so I would fix it by sanding down that one leg that was off. I would push on one end of the table and the one leg that is touching the ground, then sand it down until there is no wobble.

Today, I still love to take things apart. For example, I have a Suzuki 80 JR pit bike, and my clutch plate gasket was destroyed. How I knew that it was messed up is because I noticed that there was a big pile of transmission fluid under my pit bike. So, I knew that I would need to take apart my side plate to see what was going on. Sure enough, my gasket was in pieces when I got the cover off.

My dad and I got a 1967 Mustang coupe and we are planning on turning it from an old rusty car to a nice, clean, sparkly car that has a V8 engine. Parts for the Mustang are very expensive right now, because apparently a lot of the machines that make the parts are having some issues with functioning. So, while they get that cleared up, my dad and I are going to strip the car of the parts we are going to replace, and then sell the parts that are still usable to others who want them.

So, taking things apart is what I do, and it will be a part of my identity for the rest of my life. But there will be a lot of troubles I will run into. I know that for a fact because I run into them every day. Whoever you are who is reading this, follow your dreams of what you want to be, and never let anyone try to tell you what they want you to be. Always be yourself and nothing else.

VINCENT COX, GRADE 9

My Origin and Beliefs

My family is mostly from St. Vincent. Their origins are mostly from Africa, but actually, we have a little bit of Scottish roots too, so we're not as foreign as you may think. Do you want to continue reading about my family and me?

So, if you are still reading, my family and I have different tastes in sports than what you might be accustomed to. We still like football, but we also like a sport called cricket. Cricket is a sport that is kind of like baseball, but different. There are two teams, just like baseball, but one team bats for an allotted amount of deliveries, and then the other team does. It's pretty simple, especially if you watch it.

Now, onto myself. I know you probably don't want to hear about my religion, but it's good to hear everyone's opinion. I am a Christian. That means I believe in one God. Almost all of my family is Christian. The only exception is my brother Jacob, who has just turned 8 years old. He is still trying to make up his mind, but I think that he will be a Christian as well. I will admit, I have tried to convince people to be Christians. It's probably a good thing that I am a Christian, though some people might not agree.

All in all, my family is different than yours. Yours has different values than mine. However, we all have one thing in common. We are all humans, and because of that I guess that we all might need to be given a bit of respect.

GAVIN DIAMOND, GRADE 6

Why I Was Adopted

I was born on January 15, 2006. Right after I was born, I was fostered by my parents that I have now. They had me for a year. When I was a year old, they decided to adopt me. I was adopted because my birth parents did drugs. Because of this, a judge declared that they were unable to care for me, and they gave up their parental rights. They have probably been in and out of jail three times. If I still lived in their camper with them, they would probably sneak out and do drugs wherever they want. If I lived in that camper, it would be very confined, and I would not be able to play games and enjoy myself. I also would not have very reliable parents to be there if I was sick because they would be out doing their drugs instead.

I found out the full reason as to why I was adopted from my new parents when I was eleven. There was another family that was trying to adopt me as well, but the reason that I ended up with my family is because when we met up to talk about it at a restaurant, I had fallen asleep in my dad's lap. This showed the other family that I was already connected to my mom and dad. If my mom and dad did not adopt me, I would not have a three-story house, two nice cars, a very nice private golf cart, and the money that my dad made working very hard as president of a credit union. I also would not have my computers or be able to text my friends. It's also nice that I live in a very safe neighborhood.

My parents told me that the day I was adopted we had to go to Orlando to meet with a judge early in the morning. We spent the night before in a hotel. Apparently, I didn't sleep very well, so my father took me out of the room and walked around the hotel for hours in the middle of the night. When it was time, we went to meet the judge. He told my parents that once they adopted me, they should treat me just like their other children. They agreed, and the judge then made the adoption final. My parents said it was one of the happiest days of their life.

MICHAEL DORETY, GRADE 7

Choir With MECCA

When did I start liking choir? Well, I started liking choir when I was 10 years old. I made songs which sounded great to me, however it was just not right. Friends of mine were tired and they didn't know how to do it. I was being ridiculous back then, because I was strong willed and autistic.

Once when I was 11, on Thanksgiving I had my Mom, Dad, and Auntie Pauline sing a song called "Turn Off the Lights," which, looking at it now, sounds lame, but great. Recently, I had my family (Auntie Isa, Uncle Roy, my grandparents, my Auntie Pauline, and my parents) sing "On a Maple Tree" and "The Star-Spangled Banner." I think that I sang "The Star-Spangled Banner" at my elementary school during music class, which wasn't choir, it is just learning how music goes. When my family and I were on the beach for my 11th birthday, I wrote my own version of "Don't Worry Be Happy," while recording myself singing weirdly and playing it on the keyboard. When I was 15, I joined the East Tennessee Children's Choir. We had to sing childish songs, some with sign language, and stuff like that. The okay part of that is that we all had to dress up for performing. The girls had to wear black bows around their neck, white shirt underneath a red vest, black skirts, black tights, and black shoes.

I love singing and MECCA, Mountain Empire Children's Choral Academy, is a great part of my life. I hope that the siblings of other MECCA members who don't participate now will decide to come to choir. Same with the MECCA members' nieces and nephews. All ages from babies up to adults are welcome to come over and sing with us. We will be in one big concert performing Eric Whitacre songs, "Gloria" by Vivaldi, and others. The reason why I want everybody to sing is because that makes me happy, and God too.

KATHLEEN DOTTERWEICH, GRADE II

The Curse of Emotions

Question . . . How many times have you heard someone say, "You're so diabetic?" Okay, now another question . . . How many times have you used, or heard someone else use, mental illness to describe someone or something, or even accused someone of being mentally ill in a way meant as an insult, or even just as a joke?

In a world full cookie jar labels, we find ourselves pacing over thoughts of who we are, what we are, and what makes us, us. In our journey of becoming who we are, the world will forcefully label us and give us titles that they think describe who we are. Some labels are embraced and celebrated, but others are not. Some of the labels we did not choose nor are we proud of, while others we are instantly telling everyone about.

All my life I've been constantly fighting labels and constantly fighting for approval, working for the moment when I can say I did it, I finally lived up to the expectation of someone else. I have always strived to be enough for others, due to the fact that I never feel like I am enough for me. I struggle with bipolar disorder and I also struggle with the stigma that comes along with it. When I was diagnosed with a "mood disorder," I was told, "Don't speak about it, and don't let it show." I never understood that. I never understood why what I have should make someone feel embarrassed. I HAVE bipolar disorder, I am not bipolar. There is a difference. One defines you, and one gives you a reason to speak.

Having this horrible disorder that I never would wish upon my worst enemies, I have learned that I feel things ten times stronger than the "average human." I will feel all emotions much easier because everything is so amplified. I feel the word "bipolar" is used to negatively describe someone just because they're emotional. I honestly feel that if there wasn't so much stigma around the word "bipolar," or other mental disorders, there would be more acceptance, more options for help, and not as many deaths due to conditions like bipolar disorder. I know that word "death" is scary, however, it is proven that people with bipolar sometimes will do something without thinking and it can affect their life permanently. That is why people don't want to talk about it, because it's scary and there isn't a lot of information about it. There is this stigma that being different or not being able to see the malfunction that's going on in someone's head is not and should not be discussed. I do still have emotions and I do still feel things, even if you think I am just crazy. I accept it.

I know this is a simple topic with complex ideas, but bravery isn't always mountain that you have to climb alone. If you are sad and don't feel like moving, you have a right to feel that way. However, you have to feel it and then change it, because there is a reason you feel that way. If you have a mental disorder, speak up because it's often left unspoken, and things won't change unless you speak up and try to change them.

The way the world looks at things can be changed, and it only takes one voice to spark a conversation that can spark a whole new dynamic. Having bipolar disorder is a part of who I am, yes, however, it does not define me. What I believe will define me is what I will do to change the negative perceptions of others. Even if it is just by writing this little two-page paper, I can help to spark a conversation. Bipolar disorder is an illness that does not make me less than who I am. It makes me who I am, and I am proud to be blessed with this curse of emotions.

MAKENZIE GOLLADAY, GRADE 12

My Grandma Dixie

My Grandma Dixie was born in Telford, Tennessee, but she moved to Johnson City when she was three. She lived in a small apartment by First Presbyterian Church and then moved to a house on Poplar St. This is in the same neighborhood that I live in now! My great grandmother, May Belle Snapp, was my grandma's mom. She went to First Presbyterian Church and took her children every Sunday. My great-great aunt Rachel went to church there, too. When my grandmother went to Sunday School as a child, she learned about the Bible. She had Vacation Bible School in the summer. She also had Christmas programs and movies to watch. We do a lot of the same things now! My Grandma Dixie's children all grew up in the same church, and they go to other churches where they live now. All her grandchildren, including me, have the same beliefs. I also go to First Presbyterian with my family! Our beliefs help us to trust God, and they have not really changed over time. Some of the most important values in our family are to be kind and to share our beliefs with others. We give money to God and do our best to help others. I have learned that I have a lot of things in common with my Grandma Dixie. We both go to the same church, and I participate in a lot of the same things that she did when she was growing up. I think it is pretty neat that I am growing up in the same neighborhood she grew up in, and we both have the same beliefs. I like that we are so much alike, and I want to be more like her!

HAMPTON GRINDSTAFF, GRADE 7

Living in Colorado

Even though I have lived in Tennessee for most of my life, it is not where I was born. I was born in Loveland, Colorado. I lived in Loveland for about two years before we moved to our current location in Blountville, Tennessee.

When I went back to Colorado in 2012 with my dad for a week, Mommom and Dodd (my grandparents) were working on a new house in Glen Haven, Colorado. The new house was being built beside a river in the mountains, about an hour's drive from their old house. They had been building their house for about three years prior to our visit. One of the worst parts about the new area that they built on is that the river next to it has a very powerful current. They had a very bad flood in 2010 that wiped away everything but the foundation of their new house. When I went in 2012, there were still a lot of construction vehicles on the roads making repairs.

I would really like to go back to Colorado. I would especially like to see Mommom and Dodd and my cousins again, because I haven't seen them for about seven years. I would also like to go on a hiking trail with Dad and my cousins. One of my favorite things about Colorado is that there are a lot fewer cars and roads and a lot more rolling hills and tall mountains. I would like to go to college in Colorado, and maybe even move there someday when I have a family.

JACKSON HOLT, GRADE 8

My Family Rocking Chair

Did you know that my family rocking chair has traveled through World War I and II? The chair has been passed down from my dad's side of the family for years. It is quite interesting knowing your family owns an object that traveled through some of the roughest times in history, particularly considering the fact that it is still in good shape. My grandmother and dad were rocked in that rocking chair. So were my brother and I.

My family originated from the Pilgrims and some were Irishmen and women. As my Irish great-grandfather sailed to find a new place to live and start a new beginning, he saw a Cherokee Indian girl washing clothes and helping the white women with house chores and tending to the children. As he became close friends with her, he later proposed to her, at the age of 20. The Cherokee girl was only 18 at the time, but it was normal to be married at a young age back then. They soon settled down into a little valley known today as Watauga. They eventually had children who were plenty of help the farm.

As they started a farm and shared a home, they created furniture along with the home itself. My great-great-grandfather went into the wood shack and made a wooden rocking chair. As he made it slick and shiny, my great-great-grandfather would watch my great-grandfather play from a distance to make sure he was alright. As the little kids did their morning chores and went off to school, great-great-grandmother would be rocking in the chair, sewing new coats and such for the little ones since winter was coming. She even sewed floral designed blankets for the chair.

Why is this rocking chair important to me? The fact that my grandmother and her mum were rocked in it is really superb. Whenever the rocking chair was first created, it was immediately put into some good use. My great-grandmother sat in the chair on a cold winter's night by the fire, and sewed nice warm coats and mittens for the little kids. In fact, you can still see some parts of the chair that were burnt from where a spark from the fire got onto it. While passing the rocking chair down from family to family until my present-day family, it gained a few scratches on it. It is still going strong though.

Traveling through World War I and II. Rocking your great-great-grandparents and even great-grandparents to sleep on a cold winter's night. Simply thinking about those bad and good times they went through, it is amazing to realize what the rocking chair went through too. That is how our family rocking chair came to be in our family.

NORA HONEYCUTT, GRADE 9

My Grandpa Choo Choo

Have you ever thought about your family history? I'm going to be honest . . . I didn't really care about my family history until my teachers told us we were doing the Origin Project again this year. But now I love hearing stories about my great-great-great-grandpa, my mom's great-great-grandpa. He was a hardworking man who loved his job very much. After all, his nickname for his grandkids was "Grandpa Choo Choo"!

Now obviously, that wasn't his real name. His real name was James Walter Woolwine. He only has that nickname because he was an engineer for over 50 years. He drove the train that's now parked on the Virginia Creeper Trail in Abingdon, Virginia.

Grandpa Choo Choo was really serious about his job. He loved it, but he would always have time for his family too. My nana told me a bunch of stories about him, like for example, he would always take my nana and her siblings for a ride on the train to Damascus, White Top, and Straight Branch. When he would take them to those places, he would always bring a picnic basket and they would have a picnic. Grandpa Choo Choo would always try to scare them too, like in one of the stories my nana told me. Almost all the time,



Origin Project co-founder Nancy Bolmeier Fisher speaks to Ms. Yrigollen's middle school class at Morrison School.

when they would be walking up the stairs from the basement, he would be at the top of the stairs. He had fake teeth, so whenever they would go up the stairs, he would drop his teeth down and make weird faces at them. My nana said it always scared her!

It's pretty cool to hear these stories of Grandpa Choo Choo and to hear what kind of guy he was because, obviously, I have never met him. If I'm being honest, I'm kind of sad I never met him. Grandpa Choo Choo sounds like a great guy too, because my grandpa was amazing and I love him so much. I just wish he was still here to this day, but we all have to move on sometime. I wish I could have met him.

AUBREY HUBBARD, GRADE 9

The Monsters of the Back Woods

Have you ever taken the time to make up a monster in your head? Tall, red eyes, maybe with a loud roar, sharp teeth, or something like that? Most of us picture that in our heads when we hear the word "monster," but let me introduce you to another word: cryptid. This word means an animal whose existence is questionable. But I will let you decide that for yourself.

The reason I am writing about cryptids is because of my grandmother, who passed away of cancer. She told me of these cryptids. I did not have that much time with her, but she left these stories and legends with me when she left us. These cryptids are said to live in the states where we live. I hope everyone does not run in to these, although some people go out and look for them on purpose, and it is because of them that we have these stories today.

The Mothman is a creature that is said to live in West Virginia. He is very popular there. There is even a statue of him in the center of a town, along with an annual Mothman Fest and a museum. One of the most famous Mothman stories takes place at an abandoned TNT plant. Late one dark evening in Point Pleasant, West Virginia, two young married couples were driving past a desolate old building. They suddenly came across a very strange creature. They saw two large eyes coming from something shaped like a man, but way bigger. The figure also had big wings that were so thin that witnesses say you could see through them. As the creature moved closer and closer to the plant door, the couples high-tailed it out of there. ("Mothman: The Enigma of Point Pleasant")

Later that night, a man who lived 90 miles away had another encounter with the cryptid. He was in his house watching TV when he heard the sound of what he said sounded like a generator winding up. He went out to look for the disturbance and his dog ran out to the barn, which was about 150 yards away, and barked. He shined his light to the dog, and at the top of the dog's head there were two shining red eyes. Then he ran to get his gun and the creature tried to get his dog, running after it. When he went back out to find the eyes, his dog was gone. He slept with his gun at the side of his bed, but his dog never came back. He read later in a newspaper that people not far from him had also seen the same thing. ("Mothman: The Enigma of Point Pleasant")

Another cryptid is the wendigo or windigo. It's a Native American cryptid that kills and eats people! That's just used to scare us as kids. We are told, "Wendigo will find you!" to keep us from going in the woods, but there is some truth to it. It is told that if you are extremely greedy, gluttonous, and excessive, the wendigo will come for you. "The name "wendigo" means Windigo, Witigo, Witiko and Wee-Tee-Go — but each of them roughly translates to 'the evil spirit that devours mankind.'" ("The Wendigo") This one creature can look like any animal that you can think of or could even be a combination of two or three animals. ("The Wendigo")

Stories like these make it sound like it really happened – at least I think so! These monsters are what I grew up with. My grandmother both scared me and interested me with stories about these monsters. It is the main thing I remember her by, because in the little time I got to spend with her, these are the things we talked about. It was a highlight of my life as a kid.

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DAULTON HURLEY, GRADE 9

My Crazy Family

Someone once said, "Kids need parents, not part-time visitors with a paycheck." This is a quote that I can relate to, because I never really lived with both of my parents. My mom and dad never really got along so they went their separate ways. By the time I was 6 years old, they were divorced. I really never thought anything about it because I never saw my mom anyway unless it was a birthday or a holiday. My mom did drugs and alcohol, so my dad was like mom and dad to me at the same time. I was told that my first word was "Mom" but I was looking at my dad when I said it. I also had a baby brother, Kevin Matthew Kennedy. Kevin is my dad's first name, so he was named after my dad. A life may last just for a moment, but a memory can make the moment last forever. Which is understandable, because my dad and mom brought my brother home and he died in his crib that night. My brother passing away is a very touchy topic with my family, at least with my dad. You can see it in his eyes that even today, it still really bothers him.

Another family member who is important to me is my cousin, Adam West Dye. I always enjoy talking to my cousin. He is a very caring fellow, and he has always been there for me, especially when I have a heartbreak. "If you need me, call me. I don't care if I am sleeping, if I'm having my own problems, or if I'm angry at you. If you need to talk to me, I will always be there for you. No matter how big or small your problem is, I will be there." That quote always reminds me of Adam because he has always been there, whether through text or in person, and I really appreciate that. It kind of makes me feel important.

Adam plays the guitar, which is a very big thing with my family, because a lot of people have that in common. Playing the guitar runs in the family. Adam is in his 20's. He is a tall fellow who also helps me with decisions that I need to make, and is always there for me. Even when I cannot talk to any others, he will talk to them for me, which helps me so much. He is very supportive also. Adam has a sister named Crystal, who is also a very caring person. She has always been there for me too. Even though I do not always feel comfortable talking to her about stuff that is bothering me like I do with Adam, sometimes I can tell her if I feel like no one else would understand. I go to Crystal's house in Waynesboro on summer and holiday breaks because I enjoy hanging with her. She feels like my big sister.

I lived with my mamaw for the biggest part of my life. My mamaw will always have a special place in my heart. My mamaw has nine kids. She is always there for her kids whenever they need her. A lot of my mamaw's kids do not have driver's licenses, so she has to drive them everywhere and it really drains her. She says that she would love a day off!

I also have an unusual pet. My sheep, Dot, is a part of the family. Dot has a very interesting attitude. She reminds me of a dog sometimes! She likes to chase me and then she likes me to chase her. I bet I look pretty dumb running back and forth in Dot's fence, but I don't care because I love her so much. She could kick me in the face and I would still love her. Dot is a prize-winning sheep. She won first and sixth place at the Washington

County Fair. I got Dot when she was just a baby. Now I look back on the pictures of her, and I see how small she was and I miss her being so tiny. But I still love her anyway, no matter how big or small she is.

So, I have a kind of different family. We can be quite crazy and out of our minds, but we all have Kennedy blood in our veins. That is why we act the way we do. Have you ever heard of a normal Kennedy?

MATTIE KENNEDY, GRADE 9

Following in My Dad's Footsteps

A big part of my origin is wanting to follow in my dad's footsteps. It all started when I received my first toy train set. I was so excited to create my own track and make crazy designs with them, overlapping different

parts of the wooden pieces, and even almost breaking a few of the pieces, due to the amount of stress I put onto them. I enjoyed the building part, just as much as I did the playing.



Morrison School middle schoolers share their ideas for their Origin Project pieces.

My enthusiasm for building increased when I was presented with Legos. I got so much enjoyment out of building something and seeing the finished product on the side of the box, even more than I did by actually holding it in my hands. I learned then that there was a certain satisfaction for me in building the numerous sets of Legos, seeing the finished product, and then playing with these different sets, all in my own little world.

By the time I was eight, my dad had been in the wind industry for a few years and one day, he brought

home a wind turbine Lego set. I built it pretty fast, due to my years of experience with these building blocks. I not only got a really cool Lego windmill, but I also learned how they worked. It came with a small axle and a large axle that made the blades spin, and kept the structure standing. This was the start of wanting to do what my father was doing. It was very subtle back then, but I really enjoyed looking at my finished Lego windmill, and seeing it working the way it was intended.

After my Lego windmill experiment, my interest in alternative energy continued to grow. I asked my dad on the way to school one day about where he went to college. He told me that he went to a few different places, to get a few different degrees, and some were more important to what he wanted to specialize in than what I want to do. He told me that he went to James Madison University. I did some research and found out that JMU has a solar engineering program, a perfect blend of both career options that I want to pursue. Ever since I learned about that, I have been dead set on following that path for years now.

This career path is important to me because I have been wanting to pursue it since my early childhood. In lower grades, I always heard about my classmates wanting to become firefighters, police officers, astronauts, following the little kid stereotype, but I guess I wanted to be different. I want to do something that no one would think of, so I find it important that I stand out a little bit.

HANK MCBRIDE, GRADE 10

Fighting

I have been doing mixed martial arts, which is a type of fighting, for the past two years. I have enjoyed every single moment of it. I have learned so many things from doing fighting. It has taught me things that I can use both inside the ring and out. It has made me into a different person than I was when I began. It has

made me into a person who is braver than the person I was before I started. I love doing MMA and I don't plan on stopping any time soon.

The reason I started to fight was because I didn't believe I was brave enough to do things. I was too scared to do anything, but now that I have gone through all the training of becoming an MMA fighter, I have learned to face my fear, face-to-face. When I was young, I was different from everyone else, so I was the main target of bullying. I wanted a way to defend myself whenever I felt attacked physically or mentally. I also fight because I am good at it and I have multiple advantages when I fight. I am small, fast, and strong.

The reason I enjoy fighting is because it is good for my health. If you are building up anger that you have been wanting to release all day, nothing releases your anger better than punching someone in the face, even though I would never do it outside of the ring, unless I was physically attacked. I also do it because, well, it is just fun to do. I enjoy fighting, unlike most people who don't like to get punched. I am one of those people who actually enjoys it because I have lots of energy, and getting punched is just exhilarating.

Another reason I do MMA is because I want to control my anger. I used to have lots of trouble with controlling my anger. I used to just go off on a person for no apparent reason, but now I can control that and I don't just go off on a person. I also used to be very physical with my peers and wasn't able to control it well. Now that I have MMA training, I am able to control it because when I do fights, I can't just go all out on the person. I have to step back and wait to see what they will do. If they attack me then I will attack back even harder. This has helped me manage anger better in my personal life too.

Taking MMA has taught me so much about how to treat and protect myself. I am glad that I started it, and I don't plan on stopping anytime soon. Doing MMA has changed my life for the better.

DANIEL MCQUEARY, GRADE IO

Life

"We were to be perfectly imperfect." (Japanese quote)

"Life is a game that is played by everyone. "(By: Avicii)

I'm from the small feuding kingdoms of Europe. I'm from the strong waves of the Atlantic. I'm from the ship called Constance that ventured to this new world.

I'm a 12-year-old boy in the Appalachians. I live outside of these coal infested mountains.

I live with my family in small suburbs of Bristol by the Tennessee border.

My dad is an EMT. He's Buddhist. My mom is a stay-at-home mom. She takes care of my baby sister.

My brother and I go to a private school that has somehow not faded away into the pages of history.

The original school was an old house filled with stink bugs and books that were made before my time. I think the thing that changed me there was the discipline and love.

My family had an impact on me as well.

My Dad wants me to think freely and believe in what I want to believe. My mom teaches me not to be naive and lazy.

My papaw loves history and running and I do to. My mamaw teaches me to spend a lot more time with others.

When I was little, I loved to be active and wild, but I hated America's greatest form of entertainment, sports.

I never understood sports. It was like looking into an abyss with balls and bats flying around. I mean it looked like a bunch of crazy people chasing a ball.

As I grew older, I started listening to music that made me like feel like I have a hyperactive demon inside of me just waiting to turn my world inside out.

Sometimes in gym, we play soccer, and I stalk the ball.

I am like a wild animal chasing its prey, and I make clumsy mistakes like kicking someone in the groin instead of the ball.

The sport that I really want to play is volleyball.

I heard of this animated series called Haikyuu which means volleyball in Japanese.

I started watching it, and the next thing I know, I was wanting to play volleyball so bad. Instead of shunning sports I started playing sports.

Trying new things is like a gamble; you never know if you're going to love it, or if you're going to hate it.

JOLSON PETERSON, GRADE 7

Musical Influences

I am Jacob Regen, a resident of East Tennessee and the Appalachian area. I do not, however, identify my origins by geographics but by the things that influenced me the most as I have grown up. In regards to this, music has been a very prominent factor in my development and growth. There are many songs that have influenced me over the years, but there are a few in particular that I would like to discuss.



Insley Springer discusses her idea for *The Origin Project*.

The song "I'm Alive" by Disturbed is very important to me as a person. It is a song about not letting the judgement of others affect who you are at your core and not compromising yourself for others. This song helped me to find a balance between improving myself and being true to my core at the same time. It helped me learn to live for myself rather than care so much about what other people think of me.

"Stick to Your Guns" by Sick Puppies is also a song that has influenced me significantly. It tells of how life is not worth living if you are trying to please everyone, and that being yourself is what will make you happiest, even if you are not happy with that decision in the short term. This song helped me come to terms with myself and view myself in a more positive light than I had previously.

"Black is the Soul" is a song by Korn that helped me cope with problems in my family. There are certain members of my family who cause me great mental anguish and pain. They are toxic to my mental well-being, and this song has helped me come to terms with that fact. It is soothing in the sort of way that talking about feelings long held in with a loved one is.

In conclusion, music (specifically metal) has had a very tangible and prominent influence upon my life and my personality. Music shall forever be an important part of my origin and who I am. Whether it is the land you were birthed on, the people you were raised around, or the music you listened to, we all have an origin, and music is part of mine.

JACOB REGEN, GRADE 12

A Lot More Than Just a Sport

When I think about my origin and where I came from, I try to look at it more in depth rather than just looking at it as the place I was born and raised in. I grew up in Elizabethton, Tennessee, which will always be home to me, but there's a lot more than just the state I live in that describes my origin. If someone asked me

what I thought defined me more than anything, I would tell them that it is hockey. Hockey has been a part of my life since I was very young and is something that makes me the person I am today. Hockey has not only been a huge part of my life, but has also been intertwined with my family as well.

Hockey has been an important part of my life since I was a little kid. I started appreciating the sport around the age of four. My brother, who is three years older than me, had already created a passion for the sport and began to pass it on to me. As soon as I was old enough to barely grasp the concept, I became more intrigued by it. It was one of the first things that allowed me to bond with my brother. At the age of four I had my first ever experience ice skating, at the Bristol Motor Speedway's little ice rink. I remember being pushed around by my dad because I wasn't able to balance on my own weight. Ever since that first time I went skating, a spark of interest for hockey ignited that would never go out.

To me hockey is a lot more than just a sport, it's not just a game. Yes, it is both of those things, but I have a deeper connection to it and what it means to me. Hockey for me is a way to release stress and relax. Whenever I watch or play hockey, I can forget about everything else and not worry about a thing. That's something I like to have; being able to lose myself in it and not feel the pressures from the "outside world" is a great feeling. I also get excitement from watching and playing hockey. If I've had a tough day or I'm not in a good mood, going and playing some hockey can instantly change my mood from negative to positive. Since I've had an appreciation for the sport for so long, it allows me to connect with it and has given me a lifelong hobby.

Hockey doesn't just define me. It has been a part of my family for many years. I coincidentally have quite a few family members who live in Canada, which is where hockey originated. My dad's mother is actually from Canada, and that's where my Canadian family starts. In Canada, hockey is the predominant sport. It is what the mass majority of people watch and play. Therefore, I have had many family members from Canada who grew up playing hockey, and some who still play in small leagues. I blame my Canadian relatives for making my interest in hockey skyrocket as well. I have visited Canada three times now, and every time I go, my passion for hockey grows. Just being in an area where that's the norm and everybody plays it, makes me feel like I fit in completely. Just being in a place where hockey is a normal, everyday thing is such a good feeling and makes me feel at home more than anything. I would consider Alberta, Calgary as a part of my origin and home. Yes, I'm not from there, and yes, I don't live there, but because my family is there and because of the at-home feeling I get when I'm there, I would say it is a part of me. A home away from home, as they say.

Overall, I would say that hockey is my life in a sense. I could live without hockey; it is not a thing I need to live or function, but life would be increasingly difficult if I didn't have it. The sport means so much to me and since I've had an appreciation of it for so long it's become a part of my life. In some form every day, I express my interest in hockey, whether that is playing the sport or just by watching a game. Hockey defines me the most, and it makes me who I am more than anything else.

JOSIAH ROYCE, GRADE 12

My Dog

My best friend is my dog, Lady Jade. She is 10-years-old. Lady Jade was born at our house and I picked her out of the litter of puppies. My dog has always been spoiled. I remember when she was a puppy, she would always push the other puppies out of the way, just so she could get petted first. Lady Jade was also the first puppy to eat human food. She stole a whole entire burger off my plate when she was barely one year old! I am glad my grandma let me keep one of the puppies because honestly Lady Jade is one of the only reasons I want to wake up in the mornings. I know when I am having a bad day, she will always make it better.

At times I think of my dog as my kid because I have to take care of her just like a child. Even though Lady Jade is better than a child because I can actually have semi-intelligent conversation with my dog, even though it is just me talking, I feel that I can tell my dog anything and I know that she will not talk back. She listens better than any counselor, even though she cannot speak or give her opinions or tell me it is okay by

actually saying that. But sometimes, I don't want feedback or anyone's opinions. I just want them to listen, and that is when I go to my dog.

My dog was born when I was eight years old. She has been there for me through a lot of stuff and she is very loyal. She will not listen to my grandma. She only listens to me, which is a good and a bad thing. My dog helped me get through a lot when I was 13. I was very depressed and did not want to talk to anyone, not even my grandma. I just wanted to stay in my room and be left alone. Sometimes it was even hard for me to talk to my dog or to find anything that made me happy. I felt like I did not deserve to be happy because that is what I was told by my peers, that not even my mom loved me, which at the time made sense because my mom is not in my life. Now, I just look back to that period in my life and wonder why I had some of the thoughts I had and why I listened to the people who told me that. But no matter how bad things were, Lady Jade was always there for me, even in my saddest moments.

I am still happy that I got to choose one of the puppies to keep, but more importantly, I am really glad I chose Lady Jade. I feel that Lady Jade is a big reason that I am still here. I really believe that my dog is my best friend. That may be weird to some people, but my dog is the best thing that has happened in my life.

RAIN SHELTON, GRADE 12

My Grandmother's Life

My grandmother is a very important part of my life. From many of the interesting conversations I have had with my grandmother, I have found out that she grew up during the Great Depression, she used to work as a telephone operator, and she loves to cook and bake.

During the Great Depression, my grandmother was born in Joliet, Illinois. Her family was considered poor, but so were many other families. People didn't realize how poor they were until prosperity came during the time of World War II. Mothers, including my great-grandmother, did many of the clothes by hand-washing. This is because you might have only two, possibly three, outfits to wear! I think that this is sad because I am used to having a lot of outfits. My mother always says that I do not know how blessed I am. I believe growing up during the Great Depression made my grandmother strong.

My grandmother's family moved to the city so her dad could find work before my grandmother was born. However, when my grandmother was in 7th grade, her family moved back to the country to help her grandparents' farm. This meant she moved from a big city school, to a rural place where she had to attend a one-room schoolhouse. She was affected by this because she probably missed her friends from the big city school. I know this because she has told me lots of stories about growing up during this time. In the city, she lived in a neighborhood close to lots of people, and she went to a big school there. My grandmother could even walk to the movies with her friends. When she moved to the country, she had to attend a one-room schoolhouse which was a big change for her.

My grandmother graduated from high school when she was 17. She moved from her town to Olney, about 30 miles away. She got her job as a telephone operator. "Good old telephone operator days," is what my grandmother always tells me. When you worked as a telephone operator, you worked a different shift for 40 hours each week, and you didn't always have the same 2 days off. You could not talk to the employees sitting on either side of you. This was so that you would not disturb another operator when she was talking to another customer. There was no chewing gum, either. When taking a call from a customer, you talked business only. My grandmother liked the work, but she didn't always enjoy some of the different hours assigned. My grandmother worked as a telephone operator for over 40 years! She made many friendships which lasted over 50 years! Several mornings, they got together to have coffee before working. This later became known as "The Coffee Girls."

My grandmother's hobby is baking pies. Recipes were passed down to my grandmother, and now they have been passed down to me! My grandmother does not remember seeing my great-grandmother, her mother, ever using a recipe for cooking. My great-grandmother memorized all the recipes she used, so she didn't have

to worry about using a recipe box or recipes. By not having a large variety of dishes, it wasn't difficult to remember how to fix them. However, in later years, my grandmother wished she had written some of them down. For if you don't write them down, you lose

them. My grandmother said that no one taught her to bake pies. My grandmother watched her mother and paternal grandmother make them. After my grandmother got married, she continued to make pies because my grandmother's sweet, loving husband liked them very much! Since she had a cookbook, my grandmother used the recipe in it. "However, there becomes an art to making pie crust," my grandmother always says. She also says the more often you make it, the easier it becomes. Nowadays, they have a no failure recipe for pies.

My grandmother's favorite pies are the two crusted fruit ones. My grandmother's favorite pie to make is a berry pie. My grandmother says, "A berry pie is the easiest to make." When the berry pie is baked, and you bring it out to cool, you are through baking it. Apple and peach, in my grandmother's opinion, are good ones, too, but you have to peel the fruit and slice them. They take a longer time to make, but they are tasty. Fresh fruit makes for the best flavor, too. As my grandmother looks back, she can't believe when it was time for the peaches to be ripe, she would work up a whole bushel - freezing them to make pies later in the year. Apples are plentiful year around so she didn't have to freeze them like the peaches.

When talking with my grandmother, I found out she donated her pies! She says, "Making pies is an individual thing!" I think that this is kind-of weird because I always thought that pies were a mom-daughter thing! Even though I think this, I have never baked pies with my mother. I also thought that this was a back-in-the-day thing. My grandmother donated pies to church dinners, the Annual Summer Chowder, neighbors at Christmas time, neighbors or friends when a death happened, and Masonic Lodge meals. I think that donating pies is really cool, it is a tradition I would like to start!

I feel happy for my grandmother because of all of the accomplishments that she has made. Now that I know all of these things about my grandmother's accomplishments, I feel that I can accomplish more, too. My grandmother inspires me to believe in myself.

If you have become interested in baking pies, here is my grandmother's recipe for . . .

Pie Crust (No Failure)

4 cups flour
1 tablespoon sugar
2 teaspoons salt
 $1 \frac{3}{4}$ cups of Crisco
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cold water
1 egg
1 tablespoon vinegar

Mix together ingredients with a pastry blender until it's the texture of cornmeal.

Then add a liquid mixture of $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cold water, 1 egg, and 1 tablespoon vinegar.

Remove the amount wanted and roll it out on a floured surface. Then put it in pie pan and bake it at 350 degrees for 45 minutes.



Morrison School Junior High and High School students are eager to ask questions about The Origin Project.

Skiing

Every year, my mom, step-dad, sister, step-sister, her husband, and I take a family trip to either Park City, or Deer Valley, both of which are in Utah. We all snow ski while we are there and usually stay in a condo for a week.

While we are there, we usually spend time skiing and sometimes go out to eat. When we go, we ski greens, blues, blacks, and black diamonds. These are all different levels of slopes. Greens are probably the easiest slopes, blues are a little harder, blacks are hard, and black diamonds are really hard. The mountain we go to has a cool lodge where we will go after we ski a little and get hot chocolate. They have the best hot chocolate ever! After we get hot chocolate, we usually go back out for two more hours, and then we go back to the condo.

Steve, my step-sister's husband, snowboards which I think looks like it would be kind of hard to do. Last year, my step-sister, Danielle, and her husband, Steve, took my sister and I down our first black diamond! From the top it looked very steep, and it was called, "The Fall." There were a lot of moguls (which are bumps). I was very scared at first, but after I did it, I did not think it was that bad. My sister fell once, but she got right back up.

Skiing has been in the family since my grandfather was little. Back then he would go skiing with my great-grandfather. When he met my grandmother, they would go, and then he got his kids into it. When my mom started skiing, she was thirteen. My mom taught me how to ski when I was only six, and my sister was three when she started. When my mom met Mike, she found out he loved to ski, too, so we all go on ski trips and have a lot of fun! My grandfather has always had a love for skiing. He has been skiing for at least 50 years. I've been skiing for seven years, almost eight.

My grandfather doesn't ski anymore, but we always tell him about it when we get back. I think skiing has been in the family for over 85 years. I must've gotten my love for skiing from my grandfather. I'm so glad skiing is a family tradition!!!

INSLEY SPRINGER, GRADE 7

What Is Identity?

There are many meanings of identity, such as who you are or who you were, if you have changed. There are also many ways people can and have changed. No matter what, you can change your current life, but not your past. Your current actions will not change your past actions, but could give insight as to why someone performed those actions. This is identity.

Honestly, I do not know my identity. I feel different ways about different things. Nobody has one certain identity, but I have ways I have gained my so-called identity.

My identity doesn't really have much to do with my family, with the exception of one or two things from my mom and dad. I am stubborn like my dad and argumentative like my mother. These two things also helped me find my identity and helped me overcome things that many people couldn't overcome.

The main thing I consider when talking about my identity is the school that I attend. Once I adapted to my school, I got comfortable with who I really am. My friends now also helped me find my identity by actually being my friend and wanting to talk to me. At my old school, I was not accepted by anyone, but a few people whom I still talk to today. The school I go to now allowed me to find my true self. Over the years, I learned that I was able to overcome my years of hiding myself because of insecurities that I shouldn't have had in the first place.

I am proud of my identity because it makes me unique from everybody else. I like being different.

CAMDON SUITER, GRADE 12

Uncle Willie

My Great Uncle Willie Yeldell had an interesting childhood. He was born December 4, 1879, in Liberty Hill community east of McCormick in South Carolina. He was the son of farmer, South Carolina House Representative, and surveyor, Picton Yeldell.

Uncle Willie walked over five miles to school because he knew he needed an education to contribute to his community. Uncle Willie's family was mainly farmers. My uncle Willie had to plow the fields and feed the hogs as a child. Uncle Willie had more responsibilities than I do as a child.

When Uncle Willie was an adult, he attended Furman University where he graduated in 1902 with a degree in Accounting. Then he went to work for Greenwood Mills as the pay master. Later, he owned a grocery store named Yeldell Grocery. He ran it for over 18 years! During this time, he had married Mamie Reynolds.

At age 87, Uncle Willie was the youngest of a surveying crew for the property of Northside Baptist Church. The oldest of the crew was 101 years old! Uncle Willie was also a proud member of South Main Street Baptist Church which he helped to form. Uncle Willie loved hunting for small game, mainly birds, and averaged 250 birds a season. It was a family past time, and Uncle Willie's family and friends including his sister, hunted every Thanksgiving morning. I think the neatest thing about Uncle Willie is that he never stopped contributing to and improving his community.

JENYA WEBBER, GRADE 7

My Family Traditions

My Origin Project is going to be about my family. My mom's side of the family is from Bristol. My dad's side of the family is from California. I wish that we lived in California because it is so much cooler and there are so many more things to do there. My mom's mom lives in Bristol, Virginia at the moment, and my mom lives in Bristol, Tennessee. On Christmas and Thanksgiving, my grandma and mom's uncles and cousins come over to eat a big feast and sit around and talk. The only thing I don't really like is that we stay at the family dinners all day.

This month, my grandma came to live near us, in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee. She is now going to visit us, once she gets moved in and gets everything situated, about once every other week or month from what she said. She said that she should have everything situated around Christmas time so that we can stay with her and see our Uncle Ryan.

On Thanksgiving, my dad always has us and we always go out to a log cabin. When I am with my dad for the holidays, all we usually do is invite a couple of friends over to eat and open up presents on Christmas. My dad invites some of his friends over and they bring their go karts and four wheelers. My brothers and my dad ride them with them, but I don't. I don't really like going out to a log cabin with my dad though, because he doesn't allow me to get on my phone. He makes my brothers and I go outside and play, which I don't like doing because it's usually cold around Christmas time and I don't like being outside. I enjoy our family traditions.

NOAH WELLS, GRADE 8



Alexis Bramlette shares her thoughts for The Origin Project with Nancy Bolmeier Fisher and her classmates.

The First TV

On my dad's side of the family, the Freemans, there was a man named Guy Freeman. He was my great-great-grandfather, and he was the only one in the town of Pound, Virginia that had a TV. He found the TV, but the back was missing. Then he ordered a part for it, and was able to get it to work! Since he and his wife had the TV, their neighbors, family, and friends would all visit on special occasions. They especially liked to meet for football games and Presidential speeches. My Nana, Donna, said she really enjoyed having all of her friends and family come over. I think it's really cool to learn that I have something in common with my great-great-grandfather, because we both like to work with electronics. He worked as an electrician for a long time. I found out that he also built his own alarm clocks, and even a coffee maker that plays music when it's done! My opinion of Guy Freeman is that he was a very cool person. My dad told me that Papaw Guy loved to play pranks on people, and that he was always laughing and smiling. Apparently, I have that in common with him, too!

SHANE WRIGHT, GRADE 7

NORTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL





My Great Grandmother

I interviewed my grandmother, Pam Gilley. My grandmother was born in Newfoundland, Canada over 80 years ago. Some things from when she was little still sound like things from now, but there are a lot of things that are different.

She grew up with eight brothers and sisters. She would always play with dolls and doll play houses, but she also loved to play soccer, ping pong, and hockey. Growing up in Canada meant a lot of snow and ice, so my grandmother also ice skated a lot.

When my grandmother started school, it was a one room school house. When she got to the fourth grade, they had to build a larger school for all the children. Once the larger school was built, all of the children still attended the same school and all her brothers and sisters graduated from there.

My grandmother did have power in her house, but it was powered by a windmill that her dad had. The windmill charged all their batteries so they were never without power at her house.

My grandmother's family were mostly fishermen and carpenters. There wasn't jobs there back then like the jobs today. Her family also raised sheep.

Out of everything I learned about where my grandmother grew up, I was most surprised at what they would have to do when one of them got sick. They didn't just get in the car and drive to the doctor. My grandmother's family would have to travel by boat to get to the hospital.

EMMA ADDINGTON, GRADE 5

My Grandfather

My grandfather, Curtis McKeithan, lived on a farm that was three hundred acres of land in 1940. They grew tobacco, corn, soy beans, peanuts, oats, wheat, and some years sugar cane.

In the garden, they grew tomatoes, turnips, carrots, radishes, Irish potatoes, collards, and cabbage. They used mules to plow the ground and flatten the ground. They raised chickens, hogs, and guinea chickens. They used guinea chickens for eating insects off their crops.

My grandfather also had ten pet goats. All of the goats were his goats because nobody else liked them. His first goat only cost fifty cents. They raised tobacco, hogs, and cows to sell for money. They canned veggies in gallon jars. They cut fat off of pork into slices and cooked it in a cast iron pot. They also hung ham up and sugar cured it and smoked it, so it don't go bad. They also cut the side meat off and cooked it into bacon. They had a hand held grinder that made sausage, and they seasoned it with black pepper, red pepper, and sage. Some sausage they canned in jars, and some they hung up and smoked them.

They had no electricity. They lived on a dirt road and heated their house with wood. They didn't have coal mines. They cut wood out of trees, and fired the tobacco barn with it. They sold tobacco for money. They also used kerosene lamps. They went to a county school with grades first through twelfth.

In the summers, it was usually ninety to one hundred ten degrees Fahrenheit. They had a country swimming hole. Whenever they jumped in the snakes would scatter. That's also where he learned how to swim.

I was amazed when my grandfather told me that his first goat only cost fifty cents. I also thought it was funny whenever they would jump in the swimming hole they would scare the snakes off.

HAGAN BALL, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from my dog
From makeup and toys.
I am from a tiny house.
I am from dandelions and roses.
I am from opening Christmas jammies on Christmas Eve
And fostering children.
From mom, dad, and my sister.
I am from doing my homework with my family and making supper.
From, "You are my sunshine, my only sunshine."
I am from Lynchburg, Virginia but now Norton, Virginia.
From chicken nuggets and mac and cheese.
From the time I was born to the time I broke my leg.
I am from memories on the wall.

PHOENIX BAYS, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from flower fields,
Daisies and sunflowers so yellowish green.
I am from my dad telling me he punched a kid
When he was my age.
I'm from my memories of my baby toys and clothes.
I am from Beth talking about our mom.
I'm from loving my life to being unique.

JENNIFER BENTLEY, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from art
From crayons and markers.
I am from the loud living room laying there with mom.
I am from the dirt outside,
The hills behind the house.
I am from only opening one present on Christmas Eve and red hair.
From mom, dad, bub, and sis.
I am from church on Sunday and eating at Papaws.
From, "Love you to the moon and back."
To softball in the back yard.
I'm from Bohnert and McNew.
I'm from Virginia.
I am from biscuits and gravy and chicken
From the story of my great Aunt getting pooped on by a duck.
I am from the memories on the wall and in the closets.
I'm from hanging with my friends,
To playing with my brother.

JORDAN BOHNERT, GRADE 5

My Dada's Story

My grandfather, George Bolling, told me a story about how he got his first dog. He told me he was walking home from school, and there was a dog that kept following him. He kept jumping over a river to get the dog to leave him alone. He went home and asked his mom if he could keep the dog, but his mom kept saying, "No", but he wouldn't listen. He also said "I was very stubborn," but his mom just kept saying "No!" so he said "If you don't let me keep that dog then I'm running away, mom." His mom said, "No you're not!" He went upstairs and got a got a suitcase and packed his things and grabbed the dog and left. His mom went looking and couldn't find him so she called the cops. He saw the cops coming, and he hid himself and the dog in a river, but the cops found him anyway. The cops said, "Do you want to go to jail?" He said, "I don't know how's the food taste?" They said, "Not too good, I don't think you would like it." He went home and his mom let him keep the dog.



That was the first dog he ever had, and he named it Ginger because it loved ginger snap cookies.

RIHANA BOLLING, GRADE 5

My Great Grandmother

I interviewed my great grandmother, Imogene. I asked her these questions: What games would you play? What kind of food did you have? What are some of the things you did? She told me her and her friends would play tag, kick the can, ring around the rosie, hide and seek, and her parents would play store with her when she was little. Her grandparents had chickens, cows, and a garden. There was a little place called Kerns Bakery that sold fresh bread and pastries. Her mother would give her a quarter and she would walk down there and get bread.

One time her and her three cousins went to Pound and rode horses all the way back and to Bear Creek. Her father had a model T Ford, and every day when he would be getting back from work she would go and meet him at the corner. She would get on the running boards on the car and ride on them to the house. She would go to High Knob with her cousins and would go swimming. There was a place called the Breezy Inn and they would get food and drinks there when they were swimming.

A story called The Shadow would come on the radio and her and her family would gather around and listen to it. She would walk to school and walk back to the house for lunch and walk back to school. Her and her friends would dance to music from the record player.

I thought this all was very interesting and I enjoyed hearing about it all.

SIENNA BROOKS, GRADE 5

My Nanna

Hi my name is Brayden, I'm here writing for the Origin project. I interviewed my Nanna and asked her about what games they played, what cars they had, and what food they ate?

Some of the games they played were red rover, red rover, tag, dodgeball, and cowboys and Indians. She told me they had a playground at school. She said, "they had a slide that would burn you if it was really hot outside." My Nanna also said she played with a little Susy doll.

Now let's talk about cars my Nanna had. The first one my Nanna told me about was a Gray Subaru, then a red pickup truck, a little green Subaru, and a white pickup my Nanna named it Ole Whitey, then a maroon Toyota pickup truck and the list goes on.

Now onto the foods they ate she said they ate a lot biscuits and gravy, and there was not a lot of fast food. She told me occasionally she would go to get ice cream but very rare that she got to. She said you mostly cooked at home. She said they ate pork chop, ham, bacon, and eggs and when you sat down and didn't eat you didn't get anything else. A thing that really surprised me is how many cars they had.

BRAYDEN BROSKEY, GRADE 5

My Grandma

I interviewed my grandma Helen. My grandma Helen said she did lots of activities for fun. She used to have contest to see who could walk on tin cans, and play marbles, and they would walk on stilts and play baseball and jacks.

My grandma told me to earn money she would make socks for a nickel or a dime, and she would buy a candy bar, pop, and bubble gum.

She used to own a farm. She told me she milked a cow and got eggs from the chickens, and she had a very big garden.

I thought it was interesting hearing you could buy all that stuff for ten cents. I thought it was really cool hearing she used to play marbles, walk on stilts, and tin cans.

PEYTON BRUMMITTE, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from sweet tea.

From Lay's chips and Chips Ahoy cookies.

I am from the mountains.

I am from the daisy and sunflower.

I am from giving and receiving

From daddy and mommy and Mamaw.

I am from presents and dinner.

From honest and kind.

I'm from Abingdon, hamburgers and chicken.

From the mountains, the city, and the country.

I am from my mommy's bedroom where memories are kept.

ISABELLE BUCHANAN, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from paper and pencil.

I am from me playing outside in my yard.

I am from the baseball in my room and the haystack out in the field.

I am from family reunions and the eyes that change color.
I am from going shopping with my mom and having family game nights on Friday.
From being told I have a good arm and I'm really kind.
I am from Orlando, Florida.
I am from memories kept in the “wow” room as in pictures, old baby shoes, and
old toys.

JOSHUA CARLTON, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I'm from Norton,
From a family of five.
I'm from a quiet house who reads to a loud house yelling at each other.
I'm from being adventurous and hiking with family.
From a calm girl who watches TV with family.
I'm from playing in the sun with nerf guns,
From playing in the snow with family.
I'm from a Christian family who goes to church,
From an outgoing family who fights over the TV remote.
I'm from shampoo and conditioner.
I'm from the little white house down Walmart hill.
I'm from singing with family on Thursday,
From dancing with family on Friday.
I'm from Science class
And from Reading class.
I'm from a family who loves my Aunt's apple pie.
From having a game/movie night on Friday.
I'm from having Christmas at my Aunts,
From having Thanksgiving at my cousin's.
I'm from loving my family so much,
From never giving up on life and follow your dreams.

CIERRA COLLINS, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I'm from the good old mountains
From Buffalo wings and my dad's burgers.
I'm from the basic one story house.
I'm from the onions and the mountains.
I'm from eating family dinner on Sunday
From the Culbertson's and Sturgill's.
I'm from the Star Wars figures and my great grandpa's sling shots.
From, “Don't let the bed bugs bite,” and “If you don't have anything nice to say then don't
say anything.”
I'm from church on Sunday but not every Sunday, and I wish I could go more.

I'm from Norton, Virginia and Scottish Irish.
From pizza and bread sticks.
From the blankets made by my Pawpaw and the sling shots he made and the memories
I had fishing with him.
I'm from the tote of me and my sister's baby pictures.

BRYAN CULBERTSON, GRADE 5

Playing Cards

I interviewed my Grammy, Sherry Adams. She told me a story about her dad teaching her how to play cards. They used mixed nuts instead of money because he did not want them to gamble. She would sit for hours playing with her sisters by the fire or where it was warm.

How my Grammy and her siblings played cards is different from how we play cards. Today, most people use money and gamble, and they go out somewhere to play cards and gamble. This was very interesting to me how my Grammy and her siblings played cards when they were kids.

MOLLY DALE, GRADE 5

Where I am From

I am from fighting with my brother,
From football and fishing.
I am from tackle football.
I am from sunflower seeds and the roses.
I am from relatives on Thanksgiving and being short.
From Davis and Barter.
I am from making breakfast and dinner.
From, "Practice makes perfect," and "You'll get it."
I'm from Valdosta, Georgia.
From pizzas and tacos.
I am from memories in my dad's green tote.

GABRIEL DAVIS, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from video games from Ps4 and Nintendo Switch.
I am from the hill top.
I am from maple trees and the pine.
I am from hand me downs and baseball
From Tamara and Marvin, the Dockerys.
I am from the freckle family and brown eyes.
From the deep breaths and "Don't start fights but end one."
I am from Community Hospital.
I am from mushrooms and corn.
I am from the wooden brown dresser that holds photos.

HARRISON DOCKERY, GRADE 5

Where I'm From



From pizza and chicken nuggets.
I'm from pictures of memories in books.

I'm from outside from friends and swings.
I'm from the Appalachian Mountains.
I'm from the honeysuckle, the yellow petals.
I'm from watching TV and painting
From Mom and Nana and Mamaw.
I'm from the TV watchers and gamers
From "Love you to the moon and back,"
and "Think before you do."
I'm from Bible believers.
I'm from Pikeville, Kentucky,

TESSA FIFE, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from dirt roads,
From Clorox and baby wipes.
I am from the loudest house in my neighborhood.
I am from busy all the time and the tall trees.
I am from the dusty roads.
I am from going to Hungry Mother Park and blonde hair.
From James and Becca and Fleming.
I am from sports and manners,
From, "If you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all," and "Get what
you get and don't throw a fit."
I am from going to church.
I am from Norton, Virginia.
I am from spaghetti and McDonalds.
From the almost getting into another person's car.
From dropping something glass in a store.
I am from metals on my shelf.

LANDON FLEMING, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I'm from waking up around 4:30 am,
From a nice gravy and biscuit breakfast,
From hunting in the evening.
I'm from riding dirt bikes through the muddy trails,
From playing Fortnite and Default dancing on people.
I'm from, "Don't start a fight, but finish one."
I'm from a broken family of five,
From four arguing and fighting all the time.

I'm from a family that likes sports,
From a family that likes to eat.
I'm from a hundred yard field that's all grass
From a basketball court.

DANIEL GIBSON, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from gaming,
From FORTNITE, and ROBLOX.
I am from the bumpy roads.
I am from the flowers to the bushes.
I am from watching movies at night.
I am from playing games with my family.
From no snow outside, and always be healthy.
I'm from Big Stone Gap.
From hot pockets and pizza.
From the yellow grass, and playing with my sister, the sister that doesn't care about anything, and the brother that likes to fight.
I am from getting my first honor roll reward, that's stored in my mom's folder,
From keeping some pictures on the counter and some in her room.
I love my family so much.

DECLAN GREER, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from games,
From guitars and music stores.
I am from Lonesome Pine Hospital in Big Stone Gap.
I am from going to my single grandma on Sunday.
From a family that has always had brown hair,
From Greer and Stallard.
I am from a family of six.
From being told my parents love me more than God and I'm their hero.
I am from a storage unit with all of my family memories.

REMY GREER, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from Norton and games.
I am from the bed.
I am from the Xbox and pizza.
I am from burgers and from the laughs of my family.
I am from the love that my dog and siblings and parents give me.

I am from good friends.
I am from my favorite picture of me with my family.

DEANDRE HALE, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from good grades and mountains.
I am from a big heart on the inside.
I am from parents who raised me right.
I am from church on Sunday morning.
I am from the mountains of Kentucky,
From delicious chicken Alfredo and broccoli casserole.
I am from making cookies with my mom and the memories that we create.
I am from my papaw's button up shirts that mean the world to me now.

LAYLA HALL, GRADE 5

Where I am From

I am from the cement roads to red bridges.
I am from the red house with flags on the porch.
I am from the dogwood to the oak tree.
I am from the Thanksgiving dinner, dark hair, and the Harris family.
I am from being nice and sports from my family.
I am from having my mother telling me I am having a sister and brother.
I am from going to church on Sundays and Wednesdays.
I am from Pizza and Meatballs.
I am from taking a picture at the beach to taking a family photo.
I am from people saying I look like my father.

MALAKYE HARRIS, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I'm from cats and dogs.
I'm from the place that I love to play.
I'm from the tall trees in my back yard.
I'm from having picnics with my family.
I'm from my mom telling me to be positive and doing my best.
I'm from making dinner with my mom every night.
I'm from family pictures hanging on the wall.

HAYDEN HUFFMAN, GRADE 5

Where I'm from

I am from good friends and love.
I am from gravity falls from wonderful family.
I am from kindness in my heart.
I forgive my enemies.

I am from amazing cousins who are by my side.
I am from loving friends and from good grades.
I am from good teachers and a mom I love.
I am from a show, Big Hero Six and from a big city.
I am from awesome uncles, friends and teachers that I love.

MARIA HUNTER GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from pancakes in the morning.
I am from the big Virginia Mountains.
I am from sunflowers and dandelions.
I am from playing Clue and working together.
I am from Jones and Bradley.
I am from the funny and loving family.
From yes ma'am and no ma'am.
I am from wanting to prove to the whole world that everyone is beautiful and smart.
I am from Shelbyville, Indiana from Scotch-Irish, Swedish, and American Indian.
From the direct bloodline of Pocahontas, my family is listed in the book of Bollings as
her direct descendants.
I am from spending time with my family.

ELLYANA JONES, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from games from phone and battery.
I am from the couch.
I am from the car in the driveway.
I am from board games and food,
From mom, dad, and brother.
I am from the table and games,
From, "Suck it up buttercup," and "Love you to the moon."
I am from Norton, Virginia.
I'm from the hospital to pizza, and burgers,
From hunting to the doctor and the mechanic.
I'm from Florida and adventures.

DAKOTA JOSEPH, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from the railroad,
from model trains and hot wheels.
I am from the Lane's house.
I am from the thorn bush and the branches.
I am from train chasing and meeting from Melanie and Shawn.
I am from cars and trains, from the boogie man
I am from believing in God.

I'm from Norton, the chicken and ham,
From my papaw being on a ship.
I'm from my parents being in Coeburn to Norton.

SCOTT LANE, GRADE 5

Where I'm From



I am from Big Stone Gap.
I am from wooden floors to furniture.
I am from sunflowers to roses.
I am from celebrating birthday parties to saying Happy birthday to my cousins.
I am from being told not to go too close to the TV it will hurt your eyes.
I'm from being born on April 26, 2007,
To chips and salsa.
I'm from playing outside,
To getting really hot and to eating ice cream to cool down.
I'm am from family pictures being hung on the wall and to being put in a picture album.

JUAN MARTINEZ, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from hunting
From Winchester and deer.
I am from the woods.
I am from the daisy and the rose.
I am from family parties and the Bible,
From my dad, Jason and my mom, Jessica and my brother, Jason.
I am from blue eyes and tall people.
From they love me to the moon and back and that I was cute.
I am from Norton Community Hospital,
From pizza and ice cream.
From the picnic when I was six, fishing when I was five,
From my family taking me to my Grandma's when I was four.
I am from the chest in my room.

DAKOTA MAYS, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from glove and bat.
From a softball field.
I'm am from playing with a brother.
I am from the garden picking, and the dirt getting in my eye.
I am from going to Grundy, Virginia every weekend and eating and playing with my Poppy.
I am from Friday night football games and long rides home.

From, "You're the apple of my eye,"
and "I love you to the moon and back."
I'm from Norton, Virginia,
From chicken and fresh green beans.
I'm from people saying I look like my dad and saying you are a true McCurdy.

MAKAYLA MCCURDY, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from bacon,
From Walmart and Food City.
I am from the dandelions and the breeze.
I am from the trees and the daisies.
I am from the dark hair and T-shirts,
From, "I love you," and "You're so sweet."
I am from going to church on Sundays,
From being born in Norton.
I am from pizza and bread.
I am from the story of my dad seeing a ghost.
The story of my parents getting married and kisses from them both.
I am from Wise, Virginia.

ALYSSA MCFALL, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from the trees and the flowers,
From a kind, loving family.
I am from the field beside my home,
Green, shining grass that feels like home.
I am from opening a present on Christmas Eve, and my red hair.
From Evelyn and Jason McGraw.
I am from my two siblings.
From, "I love you," and "I told you so."

I am from the kind helping hands of my brother and sister.
I'm from my kind hearted friends.
I'm from Appalachia, Virginia.
I'm from scattered memories,
As I've traveled from house to house.

ALISSA MCGRAW, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from Pokémon cards,
From Lunala and Sagaleo.
I am from the City of Norton.
I am from the rose and soil.

I am Italian and blonde hair and blue eyes,
From Leonard, Daniel, and Rosey.
I am from the going out to eat and spending money.
From "Watching too much TV can dull your brain,"
And "If you keep your mouth open your jaw will be glued."
I am from going to church.
I am from Norton Community Hospital,
From spaghetti.
From the Leonards and the Gilleys.
I am from my room in Duffield.

PRESTON MCNEW, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from Xbox,
From football and Dolphins.
I am from the trees around my house,
From the grass and roses.
I am from boys and football,
From Anthony, Jason, and Jamie.
I am from playing together,
From sleeping and being told to go to sleep!
I am from the memories hanging from the refrigerator.

BRYSON MILLER, GRADE 5

Where I Am From

I am from baseball,
From hats, and gloves.
I am from the place that is my home.
I am from the dandelions and the roses.
I am from sleigh riding in the snow and swimming in summer.
From Moore and Presley.
From, "I love you more than infinity."
I'm from Norton, Virginia.
I'm from good grades and my twin and big sister.
I'm from the memories in two houses.

CONNOR MOORE, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I'm from gymnastics on Tuesdays to dance on Wednesdays.
I am from the state of Virginia.
I am from the leaves to the trees outside to the flowers on the ground.
I am from opening one present on Christmas Eve.
From brown eyes, twin brother, Connor, Gracie, and Cindy.
I am from playing games on the TV with my family.

I'm from the Moore's.
From, "I love you to the moon and back and I love you Moore."
I am from church on Sundays.
I'm from Johnson City.
My whole family loves peaches and strawberries.
From the story of me finally doing my back handspring and my gymnastics teacher Jimmy throwing me on a mat and saying now you go do that in a grocery store.
From the story of my twin brother coming to my dance recital and when I got my trophy Connor, my twin brother, wanted to hold it, so I let him hold it and he dropped it.
I am from putting my family pictures around my house because I love my family so much.

SOPHIA MOORE, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from KFC from gravy and chicken.
I am from a big soft bed.
I am from the woods and the leaves.
I am from going to my mamaws and basketball.
From Ty and Quaid.
I am from shopping and cooking.
From not drinking and not doing drugs.
I am from Norton.
From pizza and chicken.
I am from getting metals in basketball.

REMI MULLINS, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from Big Stone Gap,
From playing video games and watching TV.
I am from the loud house.
I am from the sunflower and flower bed.
I am from watching TV shows with my family and eating taco soup together.
From mom and step dad and Owens.
I am from the loud and quiet.
From even if someone is not your friend, be nice and move on.
I'm from Gatlinburg, pizza and taco soup.
From the loud house, the quiet house, and the sister.
I am from my mom's phone, gymnastics, winning a recital.

CADENCE OWENS, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from state to state from gas and fishing.
I am from my room with games.
I am from poison ivy and the itchiness.
I am from hanging angels and from being country.

I am from Vernus and Culbertson and Partin.
I am from TV night and lake time.
I am from, "Don't start a fight, but always end it," and "treat others the way you want to be treated."
I am from God and church.
I am from Kentucky and potato salad and fried corn.
I am from slow to walking and to being messy.
I am from the memories on the piano.

APOLLO PARTIN, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from Math class,
From shampoo and conditioner.
I am from the little white house near the fire department.
From the big tree on the corner and the dandelions in my Granny's yard.
I am from Christmas late at Granny's and church on Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights.
I am from Dasanye and Shameyiah.
I am from going to bed late on Fridays and watching McGiver and Hawaii 5 O.
I am from, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."
I am from Jonathan Short singing at church.
I am from Big Stone, VA,
From Granny's potato soup and cornbread.
From the storage room by the door.

ADRIANA PRUITT, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from baby toys,
From Under Armor and Nike.
I am from the trees all around.
I am from the red roses and the sunflowers.
I am from secret Santa.
I'm from brown hair.
I am from playing cards.
I am from Big Stone Gap.
I am from chocolate and apple pie.
I am from the treasure chest full of memories and love.

DEVEN ROBINSON, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I'm from pizza and games from Doughmakers.
I'm from the spaghetti boiling on the stove,
From watching the football game downstairs on my smart TV.
I'm from smelling roses to the bees on the sunflowers.

I'm from going to the beach in July to a happy family.
I'm from the Rowes and Buchanans.
I'm from the dark brown hair to the cute dogs.
I'm from, "Don't be sour to don't be a bad apple."
I'm from Coeburn, Virginia to pizza and cheese sticks.
I'm from the family telling stories to dad fighting off a bear.
I'm from an old box in my mom's closet gaining dust while
Memories are being erased.

DILLAN ROWE, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from a big hearted family,
From laughter and love.
From a small tiny house,
From bacon and biscuits that are homemade.

I am from playing games all night long,
From the Russells and the Bumgardeners,
From short and tall to fat and skinny.
I'm from the pass it ons and the I don't knows,
From, "If you can't say anything nice don't say nothing at all."
I'm from singing at church.

From my memory I will always remember when my grandmother was laid to rest.
I am from the memories in the box in front of my mom's bed.

ADRIAN RUSSELL, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from art,
From drawing and painting.
I am from the big blue house.
I am from the sunflower and the tulip.
I'm from opening one present on Christmas Eve, and from blue-eyed, From Courtney, and Micheal and Angela.
I am from, "If you don't have anything nice to say then don't say anything at all and "Treat others how you want to be treated."
I am from movie nights,
I'm from Virginia, from fries and pizza.
I am from a chest in my mom's room.

HAYLEE SLAGLE, GRADE 5



Where I'm From

I am from TV,
From Doritos and Funyuns.
I am from the heart shaped leaves under the brown porch.
I am from a tree and the sunflower.
I am from going to Ohio on Thanksgiving and a caring family,
From Noah Hall, Krystal Hall, and Lance Hall.
I am from shopping and visiting friends.
From I was told I was smart and a good artist when I was little.
I am from Norton, Virginia,
From pizza and hot dogs.

AUTUMN SMITH, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from my cell phone, it is a Galaxy.
I am from a happy home full of love.
I am from the gravel and grass my bike roll over.
I am from nightly TV shows and the laughs of my family, especially from my brother.
I am from the love that fills my family.
From being told I can be anything I want with hard work.
I am from the mountains of Virginia and the hamburgers and fries.
I am the picture of my friend Moe that is now in Heaven.

QUINCY SMITH, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from rags,
From goldfish and cheeseballs.
I am from the dogwood.
I am from buttercups and roses.
I am from Christmas and being smart,
From mom, dad, and Kayleigh.
I am from late night movies and late night snacks.
From, "Clean your room and don't do that."
I am from Virginia,
From soup beans and corn bread.
From the fighting with my uncle and wrestling with my dad and playing with my
cousins.
I am from the box under my mom and dad's bed.

GABE STIDHAM, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am the sharing shirt.
I am from, "If you can't say something nice don't say it at all."

I am from pizza on Fridays to Just Jump on Saturdays.
I am from my cousin spending the night to my Great Dane
thinking she's a lap dog.
I am from the power going out in snow storms to playing board
games while we wait for it to come back on.
I am from a loving mother that would give me and my sister
her last breath.
I am from the memories in the scrap book in my mom's closet.

LEXI STIDHAM, GRADE 5

My Great Aunt Sid



I interviewed my great Aunt Sid about her Christmas tradition. My great Aunt Sid was born in a rather remote section of our rural area. She comes from a large family and although poor, had a fun upbringing where Christmas was special. Being a person who loves Christmas and who loves to decorate, she would seek the help of neighborhood kids to go out into the woods to cut down a tree for her home. After several years of doing this, the prettiest and easiest trees had been cut down. So, she started chopping down two trees. After standing the prettiest tree in the stand, she would cut the limbs from the second tree and tape them in bare spots of this tree which turned a plain tree into a full and well Christmas tree.

KAENAN STURGILL, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from video games.
From Twix and Ram.
I am from the house in which I live.
I am from the blueberry bushes and the trees.
I am from Christmas and tall people,
From the Taylors and the Riners and the Mullins.
I am from ball games on Saturday and watching wrestling on the TV.
From, "Don't do dope," and "Shake it don't break it."
I am from church on Sundays.
I am from Russell County Hospital,
From chicken and cornbread.
From the story of my papaw.
I am from memories on the shelf.

PEYTON TAYLOR, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from a basketball,
From Converse and One clothing.
I am from the kitchen table.
I am from the mini basketball rim,
From every shirt I have.
I am from the grass in my backyard,

From my old baby pictures.
I am from movie night every Tuesday,
From, "Never give up."
From Blueboy, Jr, and Jay Rock.
I'm from football game special and basketball on Friday,
From, "With great power comes great responsibility," and "Can't never could."
I'm from church every Sunday.
I am from Wal-Mart,
From Hot dogs and Fries.
From being born to you almost died,
From living is a blessing and my dad left for no reason.
I am from ten year old scrap books and phone pictures.

JAYLEN TEASLEY, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from cribs.
From Dove to Lindore
I am from a small home.
I am from the roses to the violets.
I am from movie nights and looks,
From mom, Jake, and Thompson.
I am from cleaning up and making a mess.
From stories and songs.
I am from Cape Coral,
From beef tips and chicken.
From my aunt's story,
From kindness and love.
I am from home.

KEIRA THOMPSON, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I'm from shoes
From Nike and Under Armor.
I'm from the Fortnite Battle Bus
(Blue Shiny it looks like a blue bus).
I'm from the trees whose branches have fallen.
I'm from home to school,
From eating to sleeping.
I'm from having a milk allergy to outgrowing it.
I'm from January to December,
From April to October.
I'm from Loot Lake to Salty Springs.
I'm from old memories to new memories being made.

CAMRON WAMPLER, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from Oreo blizzard from
Dairy Queen and playing
with my Xbox One.
From Xbox and facetimeing.
I am from the town house on
the hill.
I am from the dandelions in the
yard.
I am from licking the spoon and
being nice.
From my mom and my dad and
Wells and Belcher.
I am from the Wells reunion
and taco Tuesday.
From, "Never forget I love you," and "If you don't have anything nice to say, don't say it."
I am from Esserville Church.
I am from Pound, Virginia,
From cornbread and soup beans.
From the bike race when my cousin went into the creek and my dad jumped in to save
him and my older cousin went in to get his shoes.
I am from old baseball metals to new hospital bracelets.



CONNOR WELLS, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from paperclips,
From paper and work.
I am from the garden
From the rose and rosebushes.
I am from Thanksgiving and Christmas dinner.
From blue eyes,
From Allen and Wells.
I am from the know it all's and the do it now's.
From, "If you can't say anything nice don't say anything at all."
I am from Johnson City.
From pizza and cake.
From the little girl who peeked at a present.
I am from the chest at my dad's house.

ZOEY WELLS, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I'm from pizza and You Tube.
I'm from the woods and the dandelions.

I'm from Pigeon Forge and baseball.
I'm from tall relatives.
I'm from, "Think before you do."
I'm from Community Hospital and hot dogs and Dorritos.
I'm from giant spiders.
I'm from baby clothes and pictures in a closet.

CHRISTIAN WILLIAMS GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from two siblings a sister and a brother.
I am from a mom and a dad.
I am from a little house.
I am from singing in the bathtub.
I am from Mr. Williams and Ms. Smith.
I am from pizza and coke zero.
I am from Norton, Virginia.
I am from trees and leaves.
I am from house to house where I'm making memories.

MIAH WILLIAMS, GRADE 5

My Grandpa Walter Williams

I interviewed my grandpa Walter Williams. When he was a kid he played games like red rover, four square, and hide and seek. He had a fire truck that could hook up to the garden hose and spray water and the ladder went up and down.

He told me a story about when he and his sister were home alone and their dad knocked on the door, but they did not know it was him. They did not let him in, so their dad had to break in to the house.

He had a dog too, but he didn't tell me his name. He had four older sisters. His favorite color is blue. He was born in Oklahoma and raised in the pan handle. He loves cars. He likes to work on them. He worked on the railroad and drove heavy equipment. He was also a Chromalloy welder and a Tom Cat welder. He also lived in Kansas and Utah. I had a lot of fun interviewing my Grandpa.

SYDNEY WILLIAMS, GRADE 5

Where I'm From

I am from paintbrushes,
From Bounty and Dollar Store cups.
I am from the trampoline in the yard.
I am from roses and the blueberry bush.
I am from Christmas with my family,
From the Wilsons and the Pecks.
I am from, "Don't start throwing rocks when you live in a glass house."
I am from memories all over the house.

RILEY WILSON, GRADE 5

PETER PAUL DEVELOPMENT CENTER



To the PPDC students:

I too have The Origin Project journal and one of my friends who attended early events at PPDC challenged me to pick up my pen. She has kept encouraging me and succeeded. I would like to share one of my entries with you, after all, it is about you. Here we go....

In my mind's eye, I see you, journal in hand, pencil at the ready, not yet meeting paper, eyes focused on your individual Origin Project – family, community, personal stories that you have gathered this year. How wonderfully rich and empowering it is to reach for the truth, honesty, strength and pride of where you have been. Even more joyful is to face tomorrow and tomorrow's tomorrow having tapped into your own creative power. Your words may appear on paper but they live in your hearts and create your future.

I am so proud of you and I celebrate your most excellent work.

BETTY JANE HAGAN

Peter Paul Development Center and The Origin Project

Peter Paul Development Center is an outreach and community center serving children and families in Church Hill and neighboring communities in the East End of the City of Richmond. Founded by John Coleman in 1979, Peter Paul is the oldest continually operating community center in the area. Today, our

mission is one of empowerment through education: to support the residents of the East End and educate its students, equipping them to serve as positive contributors to their family, community, and society.

Peter Paul has been blessed with a wealth of volunteers, mentors, and friends. One such friend, Mrs. Betty Jane Hagan, after learning of The Origin Project knew that Peter Paul would be a perfect fit to the program. She contacted Nancy Bolmeier Fisher, telling our story and we received an invitation to have students participate as a pilot. The process has not only allowed teachers to work through the writing process but provided our students with the opportunity to express themselves in modes that demonstrated their creativity in a unique manner. Students participated in a writer's workshop with a former Peter Paul student, a creative and imaginative session at SPARC (School of the Performing Arts in the Richmond Community) and expressed themselves through interpretative dance with Mrs. Ebony Stewart. The experience of The Origin Project will be valued and remembered by all.

STEPHANIE D. BASSETT, ED. D.

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

PETER PAUL DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Kick-Off



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The after-school program at the Peter Paul Development Center, founded in 1979, has continually served the East End Richmond community, motivated by its motto: Educate the Child, Engage the Family,

Empower the Community. This fall, an academic-year-long creative writing program, The Origin Project, was undertaken to inspire the children as writers who look into their own family stories, grow in appreciation for who they are, develop their own dreams of the future and become published authors. The two organizations, PPDC and The Origin Project, have a shared commitment to our youth, their creative spirits and their securing of enriched futures. As for myself, I can think of no more perfect union!

Neither PPDC nor The Origin Project is possible without the sustained commitment of passion, generosity, creativity, highly skilled staff and the engagement of their surrounding communities. At a time when we find so much troubling news, anger-generating events, upsetting environmental and political environments, hope, creativity, possibility sustain us. I find great joy as well as comfort that along the way we find organizations and individuals who speak by their words and actions on behalf of all that is positive, forward-looking, encouraging. Thank you, staff, volunteers, sponsors and families for your loving support for our children.

BETTY JANE HAGAN

SPARC

For over 35 years, SPARC has been setting the stage for life, serving youth, schools, families and communities throughout Richmond and Virginia. Our mission is to profoundly influence young people's lives through exceptional performing arts education. So when SPARC was asked to participate in partnership with Peter Paul Development Center and the Origin Project, it was a natural and immediate fit.

Working with some of SPARC's top teaching artists, sixteen students from PPDC explored artistic and creative ways of presenting their written work. The goal was to create a performance piece for each student that involved multidisciplinary art forms. They painted headbands that depicted their written work through pictures. They explored dancing and speaking while being accompanied by live musicians. Most



Student Presentations



Nancy Bolmeier Fisher talks with students



PPDC visits SPARC

importantly, each student stood up in front of their peers and shared, out loud, the stories they had written about their own hopes, fears, and wishes. Each student received support, coaching, and the validation that comes from finding, and using, one's own voice.

SPARC is thrilled to continue this project and looks forward to seeing the efforts of these brilliant students culminate in a live performance that illustrates perfectly the power and importance of art, in all of its forms.

ERIN THOMAS-FOLEY, SENIOR DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
DANAË CARTER, RESIDENT FACULTY & PROGRAM DIRECTOR
SPARC

My Family Get Together

My family is very important to me. We all get together to have a good time and celebrate special occasions. Once, my aunt invited my family to dinner. I saw lots of relatives. There were seven children who were my cousins-five boys and two girls. One cousin was a new baby boy. He was so cute! We were all happy to see each other.

When we first got there, my older cousins and I played Twister, Monopoly, GTA5 and Fortnite. Then, I took pictures of my family. I used an app on my iPad to make cartoons of their faces. I explained to my cousins how to make cartoons using the app. First, take the picture. Second, save the picture to the app and third,

add colors. I even showed them how to add freckles to two pictures. We all laughed at our silly pictures.

Next, we prepared for dinner. We were so hungry, and the food looked delicious. We had mac 'n' cheese, chicken, carrots and fruit. A little later, we ate cookies and ice cream. My aunt told me that other family members helped cook the meal, too. I thanked them for the delicious meal.

Family get-togethers are good for children and adults. People can talk, play and have



PPDC visits SPARC

a good time. I cannot wait to see everyone together again. I love my family!

ZEPHANARI BRANCH, PPDC
CENTRAL, GRADE 4

My Favorite Pastime

My favorite pastime is art. If you ask me why, it is because I like to create new and different things. Art is my favorite pastime because it makes me feel peaceful and happy inside. Another reason is when I make art, I learn about different people and how to look at things around me differently. I like to draw spiral and all types of lines and shapes because when I stand back and look at my picture, it becomes something else to me.

Sometimes, I don't know what I'm painting or drawing or what I want it to be, but later I recognize what I see and what it is to me.

Once someone told me, "There are not mistakes in art." And that someone was my MOM. When I was younger, I would look at my art work and want to change it, but now I realize that there are truly no mistakes in art.

Today, every time I express myself through art, I think of my mom, and remember just what she said, "There are not mistakes in art." When I remember what she said, I look at all the pictures I have painted, and I know that when I grow up, I will be a great artist. That is why art means so much to me, and why art is my favorite pastime. One day I will be a great artist!

DENE'EJA BRAXTON, PPDC @ GEORGE MASON ELEMENTARY, GRADE 4

An Awesome Football Team

There is an awesome football team in my neighborhood. It is my team, The Pains! We run the ball, tackle, block players and score touchdowns like professional players. Neighborhood players talk "trash" and sometimes lose. They say things like "We won, you lost" and then do a happy dance. My team talks very little trash. Instead, we brag about winning and showing good sportsmanship.

I think football players need discipline and must stay



Classroom Display



SPARC

focused. These two things help teams concentrate on the game and show good team work. My team has both. We are called, The Pains, because we are tough and bring pain to other teams.

Go Team Pain!

DAMARE COSBY, PPDC CENTRAL, GRADE 4

Creating Books

Books are creative. I think books are creative because you can write whatever you want. You can also illustrate interesting pictures in your books. I have created a book and I think people will enjoy reading it.

The title of my book is The Next Ninja. It is about a boy who did not want to be a Ninja but ended up becoming one. The main character, Trey Sapphire, faces dangerous challenges and fights criminals. His ninja skills help him to conquer any challenge he faces.

My favorite illustrator, Jazza, wrote a book. The name of his book is Draw with Jazza. This book tells how to improve your drawing. Jazza gives details and step-by-step directions for the reader. Some of the directions are very helpful. They have helped me and even some of my friends. I love to draw, write and create books.

VE'JON DAVIS-HAMIEL, PPDC CENTRAL, GRADE 4

Cars

Cars in the streets on both sides.

Men working on cars.

Fixing engines, changing tires, checking under the hoods

Doing their thing,

Fast cars, slow cars, different colors

Going somewhere

I wonder where?

JAEDEN DEHANEY, PPDC CENTRAL, GRADE 4

We Need Justice

Everyone get down! One afternoon there were two men across the street from us that were shooting at each other while I was walking to the playground with my baby cousin. The bullets rang like explosions! We did not know what to do! We ran inside my cousin's house as my cousin screamed and cried fearful for her life. My heart sank because she had witnessed something very terrifying which will affect our lives forever.

After that day, our lives were affected because we both were scared that we would get hurt. After the incident, my neighbors called the police while everyone in the neighborhood discussed what happened. Finally, the police caught the gunmen. Due to the neighborhood watch involvement, the police patrol our neighborhood every day. In conclusion, I feel so much safer traveling to the playground and walking within the neighborhood. I want to make a change in my community because I am tired of continuously seeing people that I know die. We need justice!

KEMARII DEWITT, PPDC CENTRAL, GRADE 6

DON'T LET ME DOWN

I am somebody that dances and does what I want.

I don't care what people say anymore.

I bring the light into the day.
I don't let anybody bring me down.

I'm important to everyone.
Don't let me down because it will come back around.

I will never stop.
I'm on the top.
I will never stop.
You assume that I'm gay
But I'm not.
I'm not fat.
I'm a real sassy cat.
I know that God loves me.
He wants me to be free.



Student author Israel Dixon

ISRAEL DIXON, PPDC

CENTRAL, GRADE 6

Bullying

Why do we bully each other? Well, I believe we do this because we think it is okay, and it will make people upset so we may feel better. One thing I learned was that hurt people hurt people! I am not saying that this is okay, but we need to realize how it affects other people when we say things that are negative. I know this because one day at Peter Paul Development Center on January 9, 2019, I stated something that could have hurt my true friends. It was insincere of me and this is my way of saying I apologize. However, it really hurt me when I felt I was left out of most of the conversation when all my friends were hanging out with me.

First, the day started as a good day. However, it turned into a "why did I do this" day. I wish it would not have happened this way and I think we should change the way we speak with others and the way we think. I say that because if you always say what you think negatively, then nothing would get accomplished, and I would hate to think that I am being mean when I know I dislike it when people are mean to me. The next day when I had free write in class, I started to reflect and write about this situation because I knew what was going through my mind. I put my mind to it and thanked God for my family, staff, and friends. I want to say I apologize for the way I treated people who deserved a lot more respect than what I gave them. Furthermore, one thing you should remember from all of this is when you think of saying things to hurt people, please do not because one day you could end up saying something disrespectful to someone you love. In conclusion, I owe my three most genuine friends' apologies for the way I acted towards them, and I thank them for still being there for me.

The End

I love you all and thank you for listening!

AREYANNA DUNKLEY, PPDC CENTRAL, GRADE 6

Letter to Peter Paul Development Center

Dear Peter Paul Development Center,

I have had a great time at Peter Paul Development Center this summer, and I am so thankful for the experiences. During my experience with Peter Paul, we went on several field trips, but my favorite trip was when

we traveled to visit the National Museum of African American History and Culture located in Washington, D.C. In addition to that, I saw ancient cars, costumes, and even an exhibit about my favorite singer, Lauryn Hill. The story of Emmett Till really made me cry my eyes out! Furthermore, I am also very thankful that I made the trip to Mount Olympus because I had so fun swimming, paddling, splashing, and rowing. Our skating trip to Roller Dome was very fantastic even though I fell several times. In conclusion, I am very grateful to Peter Paul for all of these experiences!

Your Truly,

AZYA GAINYARD, PPDC CENTRAL, GRADE 6

SLIME

Slime is really cool, because you can create different types of slime. Slime is also an awesome stress reliever if you have headaches. Most people get irritated or mad, so they can use slime to calm down. Slime is as gooey as mud and as stretchy as a rubber band! Also, slime is something confused with putty. The difference is that slime is more stretchy. Putty is pretty hard and that makes it difficult to stretch! That's why slime is really cool!

JOEL GILMORE, PPDC @ BELLEVUE ELEMENTARY, GRADE 5

Electronic Devices

I see many things through my eyes. One of the most interesting is electronic devices. I see adults using electronics at bus stops, in stores, on jobs, at sports games, in restaurants and while driving. People can be seen using electronic devices everywhere!

One helpful electronic device is a cell phone. A cell phone can be helpful in the case of an emergency. Sometimes, I have to call my mom to tell her something or ask a question. She also calls to give me instructions. Cell phones can help save many lives when they are used to make emergency calls. There are rules posted in movies, schools and libraries that prohibit the use of cell phones. These are good rules because cell phones can be disturbing when people are concentrating on important things such as reading, working and having quiet time. I see electronic devices staying around for a long time.

TAESHAUN GRAY, PPDC CENTRAL, GRADE 4

Professional Cheerleader

I want to go to college to be a professional cheerleader because I like to do flips and cartwheels. Doing cartwheels makes me excited. Every time I hear the people clapping for me and my team, I smile because it makes me so happy. Sometimes we don't win but that doesn't mean that we will not win again. We will!

I like being in the cheerleader's competition because I can make money and donate it to people that have cancer. My friend is my age and has cancer. My friend does not get to play with me very much anymore, and that makes me very sad. We have been friends for a long time but now, I don't get to see her a lot because she is in the hospital trying to fight cancer. Maybe one day I could do my cheerleader's dance in her hospital room. I think that would make her laugh and smile. I would also like to bring her a special toy, so she would know that I'm thinking about her. I love my friend and really miss her.

In ten years, I hope that my friend, Diamond, beats cancer when she grows up. I think she will be a teacher because she is so nice and smart.

LOVE IS MY TRUE POWER

TKNYAH HAWTHORNE, PPDC @ FAIRFIELD COURT ELEMENTARY, GRADE 4

New Neighbors

New people are moving in my neighborhood. Big trucks bring furniture, televisions, bags and boxes. They have a lot of stuff. Some neighbors have children, cats, and dogs. I have not met them yet. I see them playing outside.

My neighbors are shy. They are quiet and do not talk a lot. Weeks later, they begin to talk more. I like to tell them about places to go and what to do. Getting to know new neighbors is a great way to make friends.

TERIEQ HENDERSON, PPDC CENTRAL, GRADE 4

Violence

I see violence throughout the city. People are getting hurt while they are hanging out in the streets and walking in their neighborhoods. Gunshot sounds make me so scared. I scream, run and hide under my living room table to stay protected.

Watching the news at night makes me very sad. I hear about people dying, getting hurt and fighting for their lives. One day, I heard that a young boy got hurt and it made me really sad. Later, the young boy died, and I cried. I prayed for him and his family.

Something needs to be done about so much violence. Laws need to change, and people do, too.

T'MORA HICKMAN, PPDC CENTRAL, GRADE 4

New York

I do not miss New York City!

I do not miss New York City because when I lived there, there was a lot of shooting.

In the city, the crime rate was very high, but everything else was fine.

I had many friends when I lived in New York City and there were several events in my area that I participated in.

In conclusion, I guess you could say I do and do not miss New York City!

DAVONTE HINES, PPDC CENTRAL, GRADE 6

I want to be a Professional Athlete

I want to be like Tom Brady and Kyrie Irving, because I want to make a lot of money, so I can take care of my family.

I want to be a professional football and basketball player, so I can buy a house for my family. I want to buy a house for my family because they take care of me now, so I want to do something for them when I become a professional athlete.

RASHAD HOPE, PPDC @ CHIMBORAZO ELEMENTARY, GRADE 4

Football Big Money

In ten years, I will be waiting to get drafted by the NFL. When I go to the NFL, I will be making BIG MONEY. After, I become a star football player; I will buy myself a Big House. Then, I will buy a big house for my mom, sisters, my aunt and my grandma.

I will buy them a house because of all the shootings in the Fairfield Apartments—that's where I live. When we hear gunshots, we run so fast and hide because it is not safe where we live.

I wish I could move to another house and maybe we would be safe. That's why in ten years I'm going to be out of Fairfield Apartments! Making BIG MONEY!

LADDARIAN JOHNSON, PPDC @ FAIRFIELD COURT ELEMENTARY, GRADE 4

A Cool Vacation

Traveling to different states is cool. Last year, my family traveled to Florida. The trip was cool because it was my first time on a plane. I was very excited about my plane ride. My family and I arrived at the airport early. We waited for a long time, then boarded the plane. We found our seats and buckled our seat belts. I sat next to a window beside my mom.

After the plane took off, I watched TV and ate cookies and popcorn that the flight attendant gave me. The snacks were very good. She gave other people snacks, too! The plane ride was not long. We were in Florida before I knew it!

Once the plane landed, we sat for a while, then we got off. We picked up our luggage and waited for a taxi. The taxi picked us up and took us to our rental house. The house was big! We opened the door and looked around. We were so excited! Everyone picked out their bedrooms, put on swimsuits and headed for the pool. We had so much fun!

Later, we ate dinner, chilled, watched TV and went to bed. I could not wait until morning, because I wanted to get in the pool again. My Florida vacation was the best ever! I cannot wait to go on another cool vacation.

BREION JONES, PPDC CENTRAL, GRADE 4

Newborn Babies

I see newborn babies. I hear their cries say, "I am here, hello world." The babies are as cuddly and soft as newborn puppies. Their skin is warm and fragile. Delicate! Just close your eyes and visualize a newborn baby. Does he or she remind you of a fluffy pillow? I think so.

When my sister was born, my family was very happy. She was pretty, happy and cried a lot. I held her for the first time in the hospital. She was everything I imagined—soft, cuddly, warm and fragile. She was fidgety too!

My grandma spoiled my sister then and spoils her even now. I guess that's what grandma's do. Newborn babies grow up fast. Some are still cuddly, some fragile and some are fidgety like me.

JAKAYA LAWRENCE, PPDC CENTRAL, GRADE 4

I AM

I am not a stranger.

I am a beautiful and intelligent young lady.

I am a person who everyone loves!

I am someone who everyone cherishes.

I am a confident person.

I am loving, caring, and gorgeous.

I am a person who can and will achieve anything and everything.

I am a giver and I am creative.

I am a lot of things, but I am not filled with negative energy.

As you can see, I have an amazing personality!

I am Amaria Martin!

AMARIA MARTIN, PPDC CENTRAL, GRADE 6

Bullying

Bullying is not a good thing.
It makes me sad and mostly angry.
Bullies tell lies about me.
They attack me.
I don't say anything.
I just take it!
I want to hit back,
But the school principal says you can't.
A bully needs to stop
Making people sad,
Making people angry.
I have had enough!

EXCELLE MASSENBURG, PPDC CENTRAL, GRADE 4

Where Will I Be in Ten Years

In ten years, I will be 20 years old and I want to become a teacher. I like teaching kids, because I want to help them learn and get smart. I want to be a teacher and make enough money to buy my family a house. The apartment where we live is very small and our neighbors are not very nice.

I think a house is so important because I can have somewhere to sleep, eat, take a shower, dress, and brush my teeth, and all of us will have a place to live. We live in four rooms-my two brothers, three sisters, and my mother and father.

The reason I want to be a teacher is, so I can get my mother and father a larger house. I want my sisters and brothers to also finish college. If they get a good education, they will also get a good paying job and our mother will not have to work so hard.

FURAHA NDAYISHEMEZE, PPDC @ FAIRFIELD COURT ELEMENTARY, GRADE 4

What I Want to be When I Grow Up

My goal when I grow up is to be a singer. I love to sing because I can express my feelings. Sometimes when I am upset, singing helps me feel better. I am going to be an original singer and songwriter, which is a singer who writes her own songs. I want to become famous and rich.

When I become rich, I will help and spend time with my family and friends. I would like to get my grandpa a cane because he can't really walk. I will also get my grandma a new couch because hers is broken. I would also like to go on a fun vacation and spend time with my brothers.

I will get my mother a new car and house. Last, but not least, I will get my dad a new car because his is horrible and dirty. I love singing! It's my dream and I'll do anything to make it come true. I want to go to college to learn how to sing as a professional.

NEVAEH NICHOLSON, PPDC @ CHIMBORAZO ELEMENTARY, GRADE 4

Spending Time with Friends

I love to shop at my favorite mall, AGC. My mom drives my friends and me to the mall after I do my chores at home. Once we arrive at the mall, we head straight to the food court. Everyone orders their favorite Chinese food and drinks for lunch. My favorites are orange chicken, rice, noodles and orange soda.

Next, my friends and I go to Forever 21. This is my favorite clothing store. We try on outfits, check each other out and leave the things that we do not want behind. Then, we go to the checkout line and pay for our purchases.

Our last stop is Pro Nails. We get our nails filled and polished. After we are done, I call my mother to tell her that we are done shopping. She says where to meet her and drives us home. Going to AGC Mall is a great place to spend time with your friends.

IYANAH PLEASANTS, PPDC CENTRAL, GRADE 4

A Walk to the Store

One day while I was walking to the store, I saw a black van pull up. I went to the store to buy hot chips. Next, the people in the van walked into the store and robbed it! "Give me the money!" stated one of the robbers. As this was happening, I dropped to the floor and never got back up until they were finished robbing the store. I was so afraid; my heart sank to the floor. After the robbers walked out of the store, I got up and the owner of the store let me have the chips for free. I thanked him, and he stated, "you're welcome!" as he called the police in a panic. Finally, the robbers were eventually caught by the help of the community members, and the robbers received 12 months in jail.

JAHTWON PLEASANTS, PPDC CENTRAL, GRADE 6

I Love Animals

When I finish high school, I want to go to college to be a veterinarian. I don't know the name of the school. I just know that I want to be the best veterinarian ever!

I want to be a veterinarian because my grandma had a black dog named Lucky. Lucky loved to play and jump and, the most important thing, Lucky was going to have some puppies. I was so excited about Lucky having puppies.

One day Lucky got twisted up in the leash and Lucky stopped breathing. My whole family was so sad. We buried Lucky in the back yard. My grandmother said she did not want another dog. She was going to have to wait before she got another dog. Maybe it was because she had Lucky for a very long time.

I don't want a dog to live with me because I am afraid that if I get another dog, something will happen, and my dog will no longer be living. My dream is to become a veterinarian, so I can help other people when their dog or cat or any animal is sick, I want to make them well.

JAKARIUS RAMSEY, PPDC @ GEORGE MASON ELEMENTARY, GRADE 4

Remembering Grandma

One of the saddest days of my life was July 7, 2018. That was the day my grandmother passed away. It started when my Granddad put us in the car and we rode for a long time until we finally got to New York City.

When we go to New York, we went straight to my grandmother's house and stayed for a few days.

One morning, I got up and went to my grandmother's room to say good morning, but she was not in her room. I looked all around the house, but I could never find her. I asked my family, "where is grandma?" They looked at me with sad eyes and said, "Your grandma is at the funeral home. She passed away."

I don't know how long it was before we went to see her at the funeral home. It really seemed like a very long time. Going into the funeral home made me very sad. No one knows why she died. The one thing I remember, is I still love my grandmother and I miss her very much. I will always love her because she was

always very special to me. I don't talk about my grandmother much anymore because I don't want my family to know just how sad not having my grandmother really is for me.

JAZMIN RICHBURG, PPDC @ GEORGE MASON ELEMENTARY, GRADE 4

What I Am Thankful For

I am thankful for my little sister because when she was born, she almost died! My little sister is healthy and well and living her best life!

I am thankful for my older sister for protecting me when my peers try to bully me!

I am thankful for my grandparents for raising me and providing me with food, clothes, love and shelter!

I am thankful for my teachers' love, patience and guidance.

I am thankful!

AASIA ROBINSON, PPDC CENTRAL, GRADE 6

My Best Christmas

My Christmas was wonderful because my big sister came to visit from out of town. I was so excited to see her! She surprised me with pink, fluffy slippers, and they felt so soft like cotton, so I kept them on all day! Next, my mother gave me the best head phones, four different styles of shirts, a beautiful sequin fanny pack, beautiful sequin slippers and a scarf maker. My mom said that the first scarf I create was for her, so I know I must make it beautiful. Then, I helped my mother make a delicious dinner, which included: chicken, rolls, cornbread, vegetables, macaroni and cheese and a salad. In conclusion, my family and I laughed, danced, sang and played fun games. I really enjoyed spending quality time with my family, and this is why this was my best Christmas.

ALBIEGELLE SIMMS, PPDC CENTRAL, GRADE 6

Through My Eyes

One of the saddest times of my life is when I don't get to see my brother. I live with my mother and he lives with his mother. We have different mothers. Because we have different mothers, it breaks my heart because I don't get to see him much. He lives in California.

My brother is 13 and the last time I saw my brother was on his tenth birthday. It makes me sad because I miss him very, very much. I want to move to California or I want him to move back to Richmond. When I think about my brother, I get tears in my eyes. I hope one day we will be together because I love him.

IYANNA DONTAY NICOLE SMITH, PPDC @ FAIRFIELD COURT ELEMENTARY, GRADE 4

Drawing and Singing

The two things I like most are drawing and listening to music. I want to be an artist because if I am an artist my pictures will be in the museum next to all the big pictures in the museum. I want other kids and adults to see my art pictures hanging in the museum next to other great artists. I will sell some of my art and make a lot of money. I don't want the money from my pictures for stuff I don't need. I will only use the money to help my mother and brother.

If I get married, my husband will work, and he will buy a house, a car and take care of me. Because when I grow up, I am going to be just like Lena Horne beautiful, confident and a wonderful singer.

LYNAYAH STEWARD, PPDC @ FAIRFIELD COURT ELEMENTARY, GRADE 4

What Makes Me Sad?

Biscuit

I get sad when people die because when they die, a lot of people will miss them. When people die, their family will not be the same. If one of my family members die, I know it will not be the same for me. I will not be able to eat or sleep, and my family and I will be sad. When other things or other people die, it makes me really sad because they could have had a good, long life.

When my dog Biscuit died, I was so sad but other people said, "it's just a dog." Biscuit was not just a dog to me, he was a part of my family. My dog was so nice and sweet. If another person's dog died, they would know how I feel. I miss my dog so much.

When I went home, I did not see my dog. My mom told me she had bad news for me. She told me my dog was dead and I said it was a prank, and she said it was not a prank. I was very sad and began to cry because my dog was not there anymore. I think my dog died. Because she was very old. In dog years, she was 50 years old.

TAHYIA STITH, PPDC @ CHIMBORAZO ELEMENTARY, GRADE 4

My Birthday



Student author Marilyn Walker

My birthday is a special day because it is like Christmas! I get gifts and lots of new things. My favorite gifts have been a cell phone, skates and an electric scooter. These gifts are fun to have around.

I also like to stay with my friends in my favorite hotel overnight and play games. We play Connect Four and Monopoly. We have lots of fun. They are good players and so am I. We end our day with swimming and playing in the hotel pool. We have a good time!

By the way, my birthday is June 8th, and this is a Girl's Party Day!

MARILYN WALKER, PPDC
CENTRAL, GRADE 4

The Hope of My Community

Through my eyes, our community is based in love.

For example, I believe our community is based on how we care for others!
Also, I believe our community is based on friendship and loving our community.
In addition, I believe our community must show how much we care about our environment by keeping it clean!
Furthermore, I believe our community must protect the feelings of others by being there for them in any situation.

In conclusion, it is my hope and it is my dream that we will all walk together, we will all sing together, and that we will all live together in harmony.

Welcome to my community!

MYASIA WHITE, PPDC CENTRAL, GRADE 6

Homework

Through my eyes, I see homework. Sometimes my classroom teacher lets us do our language arts and math homework in class. Sometimes I finish my homework at Peter Paul Development Center or at home. I always do my homework for as long as it takes!

Some homework is tricky for me like math problems such as 24×12 , but some problems are easy such as 24×2 . Reading is super simple for me. It's also my favorite subject, and I love reading mysteries and graphic novels.

Homework is good for students because it helps them know how to study and you learn from it. So, do your homework and you will do awesome!

PEARLYANNA WHITE, PPDC CENTRAL, GRADE 4

Electronics

iPhones, Samsung, Flip Phones, Trac Phones

iPads, iPods, ZTE's and more.

People talking and texting

Telling their business to family and friends.

Long conversations

That go on, and on, and on, and on.

SAA'ID WHITE, PPDC CENTRAL, GRADE 4

My Favorite Food is Rice and Chicken

My favorite is rice and chicken because it tastes good! My mom makes the best rice and chicken ever! Her rice and chicken makes me grow strong. It is so delicious! When I have rice and chicken, it always makes me so happy.

When my family has rice and chicken, we sit at the table, we talk about how our day went, what we did and if we had a good day.

After we eat all of our rice and chicken, we clean up the kitchen, watch TV, sometimes we watch Spiderman. At 8:30 p.m. I take a bath, brush my teeth and go to bed. Rice and chicken, Spiderman that's how I know that I had a good day.

The End

KENDRICK WILLIAMS, PPDC @
GEORGE MASON ELEMENTARY,

GRADE 4



Writer's Workshop with Isaiah



MY MENTOR

The person who has been meaningful to me for the last 3 years is my mentor, Mrs. Margie. Mrs. Margie is meaningful to me because she helps me with my homework, helps me with the problems I have, and takes me to fun places. My mentor is also meaningful to me because she cares a lot about me. She encourages me to get good grades and yet we also have fun.

JERREL WILSON, PPDC CENTRAL, GRADE 6

Student author S. White

ST. CHARLES ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



My Mom

My mother was born in Kentucky, in 1974. Her house is not there anymore. The people who lived there after her, did not take care of it. My mom had electricity in her house when she was growing up. My mom did not really have any traditions growing up. Her favorite subject in school was Science, she did not like to play sports. She liked to watch the Smurfs, and Full House on television. My mom's first job was as a babysitter. She says the biggest difference between when she was growing up and now, is that things are much more expensive. Her advice to me is to do well in school, so I can go far in life.

JAYLA BALLARD, GRADE 4

Traditions

Every year on Christmas morning, my parents and I go visit my Nana. Usually, we spend most of Christmas with her. We always have more food than we can eat. Some of the favorite foods we eat with Nana, are mashed potatoes, ham, and turkey. My favorite thing that Nana makes is macaroni and cheese. After we eat Christmas dinner with Nana she gives us our presents. When we get back home I like to play with my dog Little Bit, and then I go to bed. My Nana is such a good cook, that besides our Christmas family tradition, we also eat supper with her a lot. My Nana is a great cook!

CIARA BENTLEY, GRADE 4



Great Grandfather

Paul Jessee is my great grandfather. He was born February 10, 1947. He was one of sixteen children. He liked to work in the garden when he was growing up. He got a job when he was sixteen years old. He got married when he was twenty one years old. His wife, my great grandmother, was fourteen years old. They were married for forty one years. They had two children, one of them is my mamaw. My great grandfather has four grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren. He was a coal miner for thirty years. He is retired now, and has a chicken farm.

DANIEL BLONDELL, GRADE 4



My Family's New Tradition

When my mom was nine years old, she had a lot of holiday traditions. So my family and I started a new tradition this year. We drove almost an hour to a Christmas Tree Farm. When we arrived, the owners greeted us and gave us a saw to cut down a tree. We walked around about thirty minutes looking at different pine trees. We had a hard time agreeing on a tree. My sister saw a tree and said, "It is perfect!" She liked the tree because it didn't have any gaps in it, and it was fluffy. So, my dad started sawing on the

tree, I got to saw next, and then my brother and sister. I took about twenty turns! After about twenty minutes of sawing the tree fell over. Dad carried it to the barn. The workers sent it through a big circle machine that put a net around it and then we put it on top of the car. We drove home, and after we arrived home we decorated the tree. My family and I loved the tree so much we kept it up until after New Year's Day!

RYLAN BROWN, GRADE 4

My Mom

My mom was born in Bend, Oregon. When she was six, she rode everyday for four days, to move back to Virginia with her mother.

It was summer, and she learned how to swim. She met a four year old little boy named Neal.

My mom, her sister, and my grandmother would end up living next door to this little boy. They would have a great time together. During the summer, they would play outside together, all day long. In the winter, they would play in the snow and build snowmen.

EMILY COVINGTON, GRADE 4

My Dad



My dad's name is Brian Huff. When my dad was five-years-old, he was at his brother's house playing in a swimming pool with his other brothers and sisters. After a while, his brothers and sisters got out. He stayed in for a little while longer. His mom stuck her head out the window and said, "Brian, come in." So, he got out, and as he was running toward the house, his uncle was mowing the yard. Suddenly, the blade snapped and hit my dad in the hand, almost cutting his hand in half! The only thing that stopped it from cutting it off, was his bone. He did not feel anything because the blade cut his nerves. He had to have surgery. Thankfully, he has had no problem since.

AJAY HUFF, GRADE 4

My Papaw Kenny

I would like to tell you an interesting story about my Papaw Kenny. When he was eleven years old, he wanted to go hunting by himself. His mom did not approve, but his father let him go. His father had gotten him a six gage, single shot, Steven shotgun, and a bag full of old paper shells. He walked to the top of a ridge and tried to kill a rabbit. Something went running through the sage grass, but it was not rabbit, it was a red fox. He did shoot and kill the fox while it was running through the sage grass. He was so scared he ran all the way home.

KINLEY HUFF, GRADE 4

My Mom's Life as a Child

My mom was born in Harlan, Kentucky, in 1979. She had a cat named Blacky. My mom didn't earn an allowance, but she did have chores to do. During the holidays, my mom celebrated with her family. Her favorite holiday was Christmas Eve because she spent it at her Mamaw's house. My mom enjoyed English and Math in school, along with playing t-ball and basketball. In her free time she liked to watch She-Ra, The Smurfs, and Kids Incorporated.

J.T. JENNINGS, GRADE 4



Two Very Special People in My Life

I would like to introduce you to two very special people in my life. The first is my dad, Joey Kegley. My dad was born on August 6, 1986. Some of his favorite hobbies growing up were, fishing, hunting, riding ATVs, and dirt bikes. He still enjoys these activities, and sometimes now, he even lets us go with him. My dad was very athletic when he was younger; he played several sports, including baseball, basketball, and football. He had a couple of favorite TV shows, he really enjoyed watching Saved by the Bell, and the Fresh Prince of Bel-Air. My grandfather's name is Marion Kegley, he is my dad's father, a fun fact – my dad has the same name as his dad. His Mom is Betty Kegley. Something interesting about his mother is that she has Alopecia, an autoimmune condition, which causes hair loss, and she has had it since she was a teenager.

The next person I would like to tell you about is Alana Grace Pennington, Alana was born, June 8, 2004. She was adopted when she was six months old by Lisa Pennington, "AKA", Nana. Alana was born without a brain. She had ten per cent of a brain stem. She had to go to the hospital numerous times. I can only remember going one time. She could not see colors, she was legally blind. So, I do not know what her favorite color was. She could not walk or talk, but I still loved her, like any other child. She also has a feeding tube. She loved church, she would just giggle, laugh, and try to sing! She could only drink water. She loved my Nana's dog, Little Bit. Alana unfortunately died on September 2, 2016. We were all very sad, but we know she is in a better place. She is in Heaven dancing, talking, walking and having a great time!

JAYDEN KEGLEY, GRADE 4

My Mom

Our family tradition that we enjoy most is Christmas. We like to celebrate Christmas because it is Jesus' birthday! My mom gives us presents on Christmas too.

I got my mom a present, and she liked it. I love my mom.

EMILY KING, GRADE 4

Halloween

When my mom was little she liked Halloween, because she got candy. She really enjoyed

walking around and getting to see all the costumes. She liked when they had the costume party, walked around, and the judges picked people to win. She won a couple of times. She enjoyed seeing her friends dressed up. When it was all over, she could not wait until the next year. She was excited to pick out her next costume, and anxious to see what everyone else would be.

JENNA KING, GRADE 4

My Spectacular Dog

I have a spectacular dog, his mane is Jack. When I was two years old, my mom took me the pet store. My mom was picking out every animal except for the one I wanted, Jack. He was the one!

One day I came home and Mom, Dad, Dom, and Devlin were worried. They were crying. Jack was hurt. He was hurt on the leg, chest, the arm, the throat and the neck. My neighbor's dog had bitten him, he looked like he was dying. I stayed with him for 10 days. I even stayed with him at night. I talked to Jack all the time. I told him, even when I am away, you are always in my heart, and I will always be in your heart.

ATLEY MCALISTER, GRADE 4

My Cute Dog

My dog is little, and scared. She's named Bit-Bit, short for Bitty. She has a sister named Marley. She is brown and white. Marley and Bitty are not twins. One is younger than the other. Bitty is just brown. One thing they have in common is they have brown eyes.



DOMINICK MCALISTER, GRADE 4

Mom-Ashley

My mom, Ashley, was born August 30, 1990. My mother was born in Big Stone Gap, Virginia. There is a movie about where she was born, you might have heard of it. When my mom was growing up she had a dog named, Candy. Some of the chores my mom had to do were washing dishes, and doing laundry. One of the best memories my mom has about growing up is when her family all ate dinner together. She and her family enjoyed being around each other, and they celebrated every holiday. Her favorite subject in school was English. Some of the technology that my mom used when she was growing up was a phone and a computer. My mom worked at McDonalds when she was fifteen years old.

KINSLEY LONGWORTH, GRADE 4

Dad

When I was little, my dad and I would have light saber battles. We played Call of Duty. We watched football games together. He was also my coach for my baseball team. He drove me to all of my games. The last season our team was the Astros. Our favorite football teams are the Oakland Raiders and the Huskers. We can't do those things anymore, on my parent's anniversary, my dad died. We had fun together, but now I am lonely. When I get lonely though, I think of all the good times we had, and all the wonderful memories that we share.

AUSTIN MEYER, GRADE 4

A Great Christmas

I have a Christmas Family Tradition. Every Christmas my aunt and uncle come to my house. We eat turkey and mashed potatoes. When my aunt and uncle are at my house, we play a lot of different

things together. We open presents on Christmas Day. We all get a lot of great presents. We all have a Great time!

ETHAN PICKETT, GRADE 4

My Mom

When my mom was a child, and growing up, she had several traditions. During Christmas her family got to open one gift on Christmas Eve. Then, she and her family, would bake cookies for Santa. At bedtime, she would put out two cookies in a small plate with a big glass of milk, for Santa to enjoy.

JACOB RAINES, GRADE 4

All About my Dog

I love my dog so much. I am the one who named him. When I named him I thought that I should call him Spot, because he has a lot of brown spots on him. He is such a good dog. I got him when he was a tiny puppy. He is so cute. My dog and I have done so much together. In the mornings, when I go outside to the bus stop, he barks. He barks because he is scared. He is scared because my neighbor has a lot of big dogs. My dog barks to protect me, because he thinks the big dogs will hurt me. When he gets hungry, I go outside and feed him some dog food. I put a lot of blankets in his doghouse, so when it is cold, he will stay warm. He has several toys to play with. His favorite toy to play with is one that squeaks. He plays with it all of the time. When it snows, he loves to run in it.

DONNIE RIVERS-HOLMES, GRADE 4

The Three Mighty Warriors

I have a dog, his name is Ceaser. He is from Russia. You might ask where in Russia is he from? Well, he is from Serbia! He is almost one year old in human years, so that makes him seven in dog years. My Nana, my cousin and I, all went to Atlanta to pick him up. Ceaser has a monkey face and a stubby tail. Caesar is an inside dog.

I also have two other dogs that live inside the house with me and my family. The dog's are named Bebop, and Blanca. They are all friends with each other. Ceasar and Bebop are black and Blanca is white, that's how she got her name. Bebop got her name from my Papa before he passed away. I had a dog before Bebop, her name was Lela. Lela got her name because she only had one eye.

LILLY ROGERS, GRADE 4

Dad-Greg Seals

Greg is my dad. My dad was born on January 25, 1987, he is thirty-one years old. He is married to a nice lady named, Whitney.

He is a hard working man. He works at home as well as at his job. He works in the coal mines, close to St. Charles. He works from 5:00 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. He likes his job. I do not know what he does at work, he comes home dirty, with lots of black stuff all over him. He loves to work, and he is very tough.

He used to coach basketball at St. Charles. He is good at a lot of sports.

He owns several vehicles, including a Jeep J10, a 1962 Jeep Truck, and a 1500 Dodge Ram.

JAYDEN SEALS, GRADE 4

An Interesting Story

This is an interesting story about my mom, it is up to you to gauge whether or not you think it is true.

When my mom was little between the age of zero and twelve, she lived in St. Charles. She also went to the same school I go to, St. Charles Elementary.

My mom lived in almost every house in St. Charles. Some of the houses, she live in them three or four times!

When my mom and her sister lived on Webb Hill, they went into the woods and saw a house, so they were about to go in and they saw a bobcat. The bobcat started chasing them, and they out ran the bobcat.

My mom is a good mom, and I love her so much!



CAYLEIGH SCOTT, GRADE 4

My Cousin

My cousin and I have a Christmas tradition. We do several things while my cousin is at my house. We put up the tree, and put decorations on it. We both open presents, as well as both of our Moms. We all get presents for each other. We like to play Fort Nite. After that, we play outside. We either play football or basketball. Then, we eat dinner and go to bed. The next morning, we get up and enjoy a big breakfast. We play until he goes home.

GAVIN SHIRKS, GRADE 4

My Mom Growing Up

My mom, Kellie Smith, was born in 1971. She was in Lee County, Virginia, in a town called Pennington Gap. She was born at the Lee born County Hospital which is no longer there. She grew up in St. Charles, Virginia, and went to St. Charles Elementary.

The school was very different when she attended as opposed to now. The classes ranged from Kindergarten to Seventh Grade. My mom loved her school dearly, and still does. She talks about the teachers that were there when she went here, and the teachers that are here now. My mom always tells me how important it is to get an education. She said an education helped her to go through school and then make something of herself. My mother graduated and then went into nursing. She worked at the St. Charles Clinic, and then at the same place, received more education and then transitioned herself into a dental hygienist. She remained there for ten years of her life.

GABBY SIMPSON, GRADE 4

The Best Papaw Ever

My Papaw's name is Allen Smith. He was born in Pennington Gap, Virginia, in 1956, but now he lives in Keokee. My Pappaw has lived in Keokee a long time. My Papaw had a dog named Prince when he was growing up. I wasn't even born, yet! Papaw grew up in Virginia in a five-room house. He said it was a good house, but it's not the same, now. He restored it and his sister lives there now. His favorite subject in school was history. That's my favorite, too! He says math was okay. He probably didn't like it too much, and I don't either! Papaw also liked going to the library. He says he liked reading Little House on the Prairie books.

When he was 9-years-old, he got his first job mowing yards. I bet he got paid about \$1.00 for each yard he mowed. He said they didn't get a lot of money growing up. When he was younger he got a small allowance of \$1.00 each week. He had a lot of chores growing up! He had to feed the pigs, cow, and chickens, and he had to bring in coal and wood. His family needed the coal and wood to stay warm in December. He says he bought baseball and football cards with his allowance, but I think he might have bought Christmas candy, too.

Papaw had lots of traditions and did lots of fun things growing up. He and his family always celebrated Easter, Christmas, Thanksgiving, and the 4th of July. Everyday, he woke up at 5 o'clock every morning to eat breakfast, and on Sunday mornings, they went to church. I think he might have eaten biscuits and gravy for breakfast, but he eats cereal, now. When he was younger, he liked to play baseball on their own field, he liked to fish, and he like to play Rook. His family had a black and white T.V. and he had a small transistor radio, too. When he watched T.V., he liked to watch Daniel Boone, Bonanza, Gunsmoke, football games, and Popeye. On Saturdays, he liked to watch Laurel and Hardy in the mornings, and baseball games in the afternoon. He also had an old telescope that he would use to gaze at the stars. I would have liked to have used that old telescope to look at the stars with my Papaw.

Papaw says the biggest difference between when he grew up to now is technology, a faster pace of life, the love for one to others, and the cost of living. My Papaw gave me the best advice I have ever been given. He told me to set some goals in your life, work hard, be honest, always be kind to people, be humble, never fear man, fear God, pray daily, and He will supply all of your needs.

TOBY SMITH, GRADE 4

Dad

My dad is an interesting man, he used to be in the Navy, but he broke his neck. Thankfully, my dad is still alive. He can't do as much as he used to do, and he gets sick easily. My dad and I both like Heavy metal music. My dad is very cheerful, and makes me and my brother Dakota laugh. We like to go up in the mountains. I am very happy to be with my dad. I'm so happy that I have my dad.

GABBY WILLIAMS, GRADE 4

Cool Papaw Ron

My Papaw's name was Ron. My Papaw was so cool. His favorite color was blue. When I was sad, he cheered me up. He gave us candy, but we could not have peanut butter unless we went outside, because he was allergic to peanut butter. My name is special because my Papaw named me. He named me after a Harley Davidson motorcycle.

Michelle, his daughter, had a problem with her foot that made it difficult for her to walk on it. Papaw took her to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. The doctors and nurses helped her get better for free. My papaw gave donations to them every time Michelle had the St. Jude Math-A-Thon fundraiser. So, to continue Papaw's tradition, my Nana is giving me five dollars for the Math-A-Thon in my Papaw Ron's name.

We loved him very much. Destiny and I had to take care of him. We had to put lotion on his feet because his feet were dry and badly cracked. We had to make sure he had his oxygen mask on. We made sure when he got up he did not fall. My cousin, mom, Nana, and I helped him up and put him in his chair. He was so heavy! When he passed away it was sad, but we pushed through it. We will always remember him. He was our life. I loved my Papaw so much and we still celebrate his birthday. He was so great and the coolest papaw you could ever have!

HARLEY WILLIAMS, GRADE 4

My Mom

My mom was born in Big Stone Gap, Virginia. When she was growing up she had a pet, his name was Sparky. She did not get an allowance, but she still had to do chores. She did chores, like washing dishes and doing the laundry, and she also had to clean her room. She played basketball when she was in school. She celebrated all of the holidays. The kind of technology she used was computers and phones. Her house was medium sized and it was grey. Her favorite subject in school was Math. Her favorite television show was Scooby Doo. The biggest difference in when she was growing up and now is that her house has changed. Her advice to me was to always do my best, and never give up.

KAYLEE WILSON, GRADE 4

ST. PAUL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



7th Graders from St. Paul Elementary

My Brother



When I was growing up with my brother, I had good memories. My brother taught me how to ride my bike, how to cook, how to make fire, and he taught me how to play games. My brother and I did not always get along. We would fight over everything. We would fight over food, over TV stations, and over who would get to play games.

Today my brother is my hero. He is in college to be a respiratory therapist. He recently tried to save a man's life. He was driving to college and saw a man wreck. The man had a heart attack while driving and accidentally hit another car. The people in the other

car were not hurt too badly. My brother was there, and he did CPR to try to save the man until the ambulance could get there. The family then called my brother and thanked him. My brother was only 19 at the time this happened. He had only been in the RN program for 1 year. My brother is a hero to me and the man of the family.

BRADY ARMISTEAD, GRADE 7

How I'm Related to Robert E. Lee

My name is Noah Barnette and I'm going to tell the story on how I'm related to Robert E. Lee. If you don't know who Robert E. Lee is, he served as a military officer in the U.S Army as a West Point Commandant and was the legendary General of the Confederate Army during the American Civil War from 1861-1865. He was the commander of the war from Northern Virginia, which he would lead for the rest of the war.

Anne Hill Carter Lee had Robert in January 19, 1807. My grandpa was a coal miner, then he retired. Then he had my mom and her brother. It wasn't until I was 10 that I found out that I was related to Robert E. Lee. I was pretty shocked when I found out he was my uncle. You would be pretty shocked if that was who you were related to.

Robert E. Lee was probably one of the best to lead the Confederate Army. I'm really glad to be related to him. Most people are not related to someone who served in the war. I'm really glad to be related to him, and I'm pretty honored. It's pretty cool to be related to someone that served in the Confederate Army.

Robert E. Lee had barely any free time because he served the Confederate Army. He also had a wife and a couple of kids. He sadly passed away in 12, 1870.

NOAH BARNETTE, GRADE 7

My Grandma Paula

The year was 1949 was when my Grandma Paula was born. She was born and raised in Washington, D.C. When she was young, she and her two siblings would listen to the radio sometimes. The whole family would sit in the living room and listen to the radio because back then they didn't have TV nor did they have cell phones. When she was twelve years old, she finally got to watch TV. While she was growing up, she had to sit in the front of the bus. Back then the rules were that African Americans had to sit in the back of the bus and Whites had to sit in the front of the bus.

While she was growing up, she wasn't a poor child nor was she a rich child. Both of her parents had jobs. Her mother worked as a court clerk and her father worked for the government. When she was growing up, she and her family raised a garden and farm animals. When it hit winter, they would have to kill the animals for meat. They had pigs, cows, and chickens. In their garden were veggies, fruits, and flowers. They would fence up the garden to keep out the wild animals.

While she was young, she didn't have indoor plumbing. They would have to use an outhouse. When she turned fifteen, she finally got indoor plumbing. My Grandma Paula graduated from high school in 1966 and then she met my Grandpa James Hagy. They got married in 1968 when she was twenty years old. After that, she got pregnant with my mother in 1970, had my Aunt Joanne in 1973, had my Aunt Jane in 1974 and after that had my Aunt Jackie in 1976. My Grandma Paula devoted her life to caring for the elderly. My grandpa died in 2012 when I was only seven years old.

The year 2015 was when my grandma got remarried to my step grandpa. To this day she has ten grandkids, five great-grandkids, and more to come. As of October 11, 2018, she's sixty-nine years old. I, my grandma, my mother, and my great-grandmother all have a special necklace. It's a gold and silver heart and in the inside of it says "love makes up family." When my great-grandmother died in 2018 we buried her wearing the necklace. She was holding it in her hand when she died in her sleep. After my great-grandmother's funeral, the whole family went to my Aunt Joanne's house. All the children went to the back of the house where the hot tub and swimming pool were, and all of the adults went to the living room to watch sad drama movies.

After that, everyone gathered around and ate together, watched funny videos of my great-grandmother at each holiday; we would all laugh and laugh, but at moments we would cry. After that, we all said our goodbyes and went home.

BECKY BARTEE, GRADE 7

What My Grandad Did For a Living

"What is something you remember as a child growing up in the Appalachian region?" I asked my mom. She said what she remembers as a young girl growing up in the Appalachian Mountains is how hard her parents worked to provide for the needs of the family. One of the ways my granddad made money was by making homemade maple syrup. This is a true art in the Appalachian Mountains. She remembers helping him on chilly fall mornings as he would set up what he called his sugar camp.

He hand carved the spouts that he would carefully place into the tree bark at an angle so it would not damage the tree. He was a nature lover and did not believe in hurting nature. He would hang a bucket on the spout for the sap from the maple tree to run into. Once he had enough sap, he would cook it down in a big copper kettle at his camp. When he had the fire going, he was able to make many quarts of maple syrup from a long day of work. He would sell this to make money for the family.

My grandad really loved making maple syrup. It was one of his hobbies. My grandad was very dedicated to what he did. He also was an herb hunter. He would also try to find ginseng, which is used in medicines, and would sell it. He would also sell aluminum cans.

He would raise tobacco crops every year. My grandad raised cattle and he sold them at the market. He also gathered walnuts every year. He would always put his effort into everything he did. He always had a passion for what he did. My grandad would go out of his way for his family.

JENNI BOARDWINE, GRADE 7



My Great-Grandma



My Great-Grandmother and Me

My great-grandma, Coreta Jeffries, was a strong women, shall I say. I would always call her "GG." She went to Seminole High in Seminole, Oklahoma. She ended up with four kids, each of them living great lives except one, who unfortunately passed away, but he's in a better place now. Her three other kids live in very different places. Currently two of her children live in Florida and one lives in Virginia.

She grew up in Seminole, Oklahoma, but eventually moved to Florida when she got older. Before she moved to Florida, she graduated from Seminole High School. She did not go to college. In Oklahoma she was a telephone operator. Then she moved to Florida where she worked at a department store.

From what I remember, my great-grandma was one of the sweetest ladies I've ever met. She was caring, kind, and had many other great traits. She always had a smile on her face. She absolutely loved tennis - it was her happy place. Unfortunately, there was a sad part to her life.

Sadly, later in life my great-grandma had Alzheimer's Disease. She would forget some things every now and then, but she would never forget her family. She loved her family. She would always put her family first before she even thought about herself. She truly loved life.

ALEXIS CARTER, GRADE 7

Fiddling Ike Makes Happy Music

Many people have heard of Hank Williams, Sr. If not, he is a country music legend and my grandfather was the fiddle player in the original Drifting Cowboys (Hank Williams, Sr.'s band's name). His name was Ike DeRamus. He was 6'4", weighed 300 + lbs., and he was very smart. He was born in 1905 and passed away in 1990. He lived to be 85 years old. He played with Hank Williams, Sr., for a while, but he stopped playing with the group over a misunderstanding.

He was born in Alabama and had 5 sons and 3 or 4 daughters, and my dad was the second youngest. His wife (my grandmother), known as Suzipurl, also lived to be 82 or 83. She was also born in Alabama. Where in Alabama, I don't know.

I like him because from the stories I have heard, even though I have never met him, he sounds like a pretty cool guy. He also sounds like a pretty funny man.

BLAKE DERAMUS, GRADE 7

My Great-Grandmother

My great-grandmother, Waverly "Bummy" Evans, was a quilter for most of her life. Not only did she make quilts, she made hundreds of them for all her friends and family. When a new baby was born in the family, she had a baby quilt ready for the new baby. I still have my baby quilt she made for me and so do all my twenty plus cousins.

My great-grandmother was born in a small area of Wise County known as Carfax in 1916. She was the seventh of fifteen children. My dad has told me many stories of all the things she learned from her large

family growing up. One of her favorite memories was learning to quilt with her mother and sisters. She told dad they had to make quilts so they could keep warm on cold winter nights back when houses were much colder because there were cracks in the walls.

I have been told she loved to share her quilt-making skills with anyone who wanted to learn. Many years before I was born my dad, her grandson, who taught 5th grade for 19 years at L. F. Addington Middle School in Wise, VA, invited her to teach his fifth graders how to quilt. Dad said she packed up all her quilting supplies, including a big room-sized quilting frame used to stretch the fabric so it could be stitched. Each student quilted a square and wrote their name on it so they could identify their square when the quilt was finished. Dad said his students were very proud of their quilting and did not want to stop quilting once they got started. After they finished quilting, she took the quilt home and stitched over their names or embroidered it. My dad has this quilt displayed in our home, and I get to show everyone this quilt and tell the story every time someone looks at it.

I never got to quilt with my great-grandmother, but I am lucky that my grandmother on my mom's side knows how to quilt and has taught my mom and me some things about quilting. Hopefully, I will continue to learn about quilting and pass it down to my children, just like my great-grandmother did.

JESSALEE EVANS, GRADE 7

My Dad

Many people have a hero or someone to look up to. I have a person in my life that I look up to, and that person is my dad. He loves to do the same things I do. We love to go hunting, play basketball, and watch TV. My dad has taught me how to do so many things. My dad was born in Dante, Virginia with his brother. He went to school at St. Paul Elementary School. My dad loves going hunting with his dad.

When my dad and I play basketball, he mostly plays horse and pig. When we play, we can get too rowdy and start getting competitive. Playing basketball with my dad is also fun because he gives me good advice to help my game. He played when he was in school and he liked it, too. We always watch basketball games when they come on the TV.

My dad and I also love to watch football games on TV. My dad loves to watch football with me. The other sport we watch is baseball. Watching the World Series is fun with my dad. I love my dad and I want to be able to do all these things in the future.



Me and My Dad

NATHAN FIELDS, GRADE 7

My Mom Jamie

Today I interviewed my mom, Jamie Garcia. I asked her what it was like in the 1900s. She was born in Abingdon, Virginia, in 1977. She is the daughter of Katie Carter and Wesley Turner. She has 3 sisters and 5 brothers.

My mom Jamie enjoyed growing up with many siblings because she always had someone to play with and she was never alone. She said that she played hide and go seek and she loved playing in the creek with her



siblings catching crawdads. She's the youngest of nine children. She grew up in Virginia where she got married to Juan Garcia in 2004 and had 4 beautiful children of her own. She still resides in Castlewood, Virginia where she has been for the last 19 years.

Her favorite childhood memory involved a family Christmas tradition. Her family always used to put milk and cookies out for Santa Claus. They would lie under the Christmas tree waiting for Santa and singing Christmas carols. Her childhood friend was Faye Ely and they are still friends today. She used to walk to the store after school with her friend and get penny candy.

Things have changed nowadays. I had fun interviewing my mom. I learned more things she did as a kid. I also learned more about her family. I had fun because she has told me how everything was in the 1900s.

MAYA GARCIA, GRADE 7

My Dad

My dad was born on November 28, 1974. Sometimes his birthday falls on Thanksgiving Day. He is originally from Ervinton, VA, but we moved to St Paul, VA, this year. My dad is the youngest of 3 kids. His name is Anthony, but Shane is his middle name, and everyone just calls him that. My dad loves to coach, and he has coached basketball and softball and played football in high school.

My dad Shane coached softball at Haysi High School. He coached there for only one year before the county decided to close the school in order to open a newer school. The team had not won a game in 3 years, but they ended that year with 7 wins. The year previous to that, he got a job as the assistant softball coach at Castlewood High School, then returned years later as the JV Girls Basketball Coach. Two years ago with dad coaching, our AAU team won the AYBA (American Youth Basketball Association) National Championship.

Dad and I started working on basketball when I was in kindergarten. We have traveled to Georgia, South Carolina, and Pennsylvania together to tournaments and skills camps. Dad and I work on basketball almost 7 days a week. Some of my best memories are of when we have traveled to basketball events. Sometimes we get lost, but dad is really smart. He always helps me study and do my homework when I need the help. Dad is really good at spelling and history.

I enjoy spending time with my dad. We have the best of times just playing basketball. When I have trouble with my jump shot or a certain skill, dad always takes the time and helps me. Dad always makes me feel better when I'm sad or hurt. Dad always knows how to make feel better. My dad is pretty awesome!

AZZY HAMMONS, GRADE 7

My Origins

Years ago, Indians would trade goods for other goods and if they did not have the proper amount, then the chief would trade his daughter. My grandfather was trading goods with the chief of the Cherokee tribe. He did not have the proper goods, so the chief traded his daughter to my grandfather, and she later became my grandmother. They eventually learned to love one another and had children together. She died in 1985. I never got to meet her, but I was told she did not like being called Granny.

There is a recipe in my family that has had 5 decades of use. The ingredients include a pot of water, confectioners sugar (also known as powdered sugar), crushed peanuts or peanut butter, vanilla, and chocolate. First, let's get cooking by putting the water on 100 degrees and add the sugar. Stir until thickened and then add the peanut butter. Stir for about 5 minutes and then roll into little balls. The chocolate needs to be melted,

and then pour chocolate over peanut butter balls. Now you've got chocolate covered peanut butter balls.

I was told stories about grandmother many times. One of the stories was about a time she hit a guy called William Cox in the head with a shovel because he called her Granny. She would hit anyone with whatever she had in her hands if they called her Granny. She was always offended by being called Granny. She later passed away because she developed Alzheimer's Disease.

My great grandma Ira was one of 16 children. She has a many grandchildren. She was very religious and respectable woman. She loved children and husband very much. She was a very caring and loving woman. She will forever be in my hearts.



CORBAN LESTER, GRADE 7

My Family's Recipe

In my family, it is a tradition to hand down recipes. My favorite family recipe is how to make a pumpkin roll. The ingredients include three eggs, one teaspoon of lemon juice, three-fourths cup of pumpkin pie filling, two teaspoons of cinnamon, one teaspoon of ginger, half a teaspoon of nutmeg, three-fourths cup of self rising flour, one cup of confectioners sugar, half a teaspoon of vanilla, four teaspoons of margarine and eight ounces of cream cheese.

First, you must beat the eggs on high speed in a mixer for five minutes. Next, mix in the sugar with the eggs. Add the pumpkin pie filling and the lemon juice, then stir it. In a separate bowl combine the flour with the dry spices and mix with the pumpkin mixture. Grease the pan. Add flour in the pan (fifteen by ten by one) and spread the batter evenly. Bake it in a preheated oven at three hundred degrees for fifteen minutes. Take the cake out and put it on a confectioners covered towel. Roll the towel and cake together gently into a log. Let it cool. Let the cream cheese soften. Combine all of the filling and ingredients (but not the cream cheese) and beat until its smooth. Unroll the log (towel on the outside) and spread the cream cheese on the roll.

ETHAN MULLINS, GRADE 7

My Mother

My mother's name is Mary Ann Blevins. She is 1 of 10 kids in her family. She was the 8th born of them. My mother was born on February 5, 1964, in St. Mary's Hospital in Norton, VA, delivered by Dr. Ingram to her mother, Mary Geraldine Laney and her father, Lonnie Harold Blevins. My mom grew up on a farm. Her chores were feeding pigs, bottle feeding calves, feeding cows hay, picking strawberries, helping in the garden, and removing weeds in the pasture. When she got done, she played tag with her brothers and sisters. My mother had pets besides the farm animals that included a dog named Frog, another dog named Popsicle, a rooster named Charlie, a cow named Jerbiqueen, two albino turkeys, and a horse named Snowball. When my mom was young, she used to play in the creek near our house. In the spring and summer months, she caught fireflies and tadpoles and climbed trees. During the wintertime she liked sleigh riding, building a snowman, "watching her brother try to ride down the creek on a bike when it was frozen," playing basketball and football, riding bikes when they had them, and running through the pasture.

My mother's happiest moment was when she found a secret Santa gift. She was so happy because she knew they wouldn't get many gifts because there was so many of them. Mom had regular holidays like

Christmas and Thanksgiving. My mom's first job was as a housekeeper in the St. Paul Hotel while she was in nursing school. She was 22 when she met my father, Jeffery Wayne Mullins. She married him on October 7, 1992. A year later she had my oldest brother, Michael Jared Mullins, on April 30, 1989 and then 2 or 3 years later she had another boy named James Andrew Mullins on May, 8 1992. A year later the youngest of the three boys, John Wesley Mullins, was born on June 20, 1993. My mom got another job as a housekeeper when Wesley was 8 and went back to school, but stopped because her dad needed to be taken care of. I was born on July 4, 2006, when my brothers were in their teens.

RACHAEL MULLINS, GRADE 7

My Grandmother

Today I'm going to write about my grandmother. My nana helps me in many different ways. She takes me to my baseball practices and games. She always supports me with everything I do. She always helps me no matter what. She drops her plans just to help me in any way she can. She always has my back and always tells the best jokes.

My nana was born and raised in Dickenson County and attended Ervington Elementary School. She worked on a farm every day. She helped around the house, fed all the animals, and did all of her chores. She was very hard working and never gave up. If something wasn't right, she always fixed it. She would always go to her family's barn and read, write, and do her homework. She loved nature and the outdoors. She loved to walk and look at the birds and the flowers.

My nana loves to read, write, and sew. She always cares about her family and friends. She is a really amazing person. My nana loves to cook. Her favorite thing to cook is cookies. She makes the best chocolate chip cookies. She loves arts and crafts and is awesome at making crafts. My nana's favorite craft is a reindeer popsicle stick.

My nana has always helped me in many ways. She always knows how to put a smile on my face and brighten up my day. I love my nana tons and tons. She is an amazing person. I think of my nana as a superhero.

TANNER PERRY, GRADE 7

My Grandfather

I have been interviewing my family about my grandfather. I have learned so much that I did not know about him. He is from Castlewood, Virginia and he was born on May 22, 1965 in Norton, Virginia. He had four brothers and one sister. When he was a child, he loved spending time at his grandparent's house.

My grandfather grew up with a dog named Denver. He had chores growing up just like me. When he was a little child, he mostly played hide-n-seek and tag. He also played with his siblings and rode bikes. His career growing up was to be a coal miner or a mechanic.

My grandfather grew up traveling with his family. He married my grandmother whose name was Evonne. They were married for over fifteen years. My grandmother and grandfather had five children. They had three girls and two boys whose names were Tonyia, Sondra, Maggie, Justin, and William. I chose to interview my grandfather's kids because they have known him longer than I have.

I admire everything about the people I interviewed. What I learned from interviewing my family was how much things were different years ago. My grandfather's proudest moments were watching his grandchildren grow up. The biggest changes in his life were when technology became a thing and when the Clinchfield Mines shut down.

My grandfather served in the army, but his greatest achievement was having his children and his grandchildren. His favorite song was "It's a Great Day to Be Alive" and he listened to it all the time. One morning I got up for school and my grandpa was hitting the wall in his sleep. My mom went into the bedroom to check on him. He wasn't breathing and was turning purple and blue. They called the EMS and he was rushed to the hospital. They diagnosed him with diabetes.

Despite his struggles trying to defeat diabetes, he failed and passed away on May 19, 2018, in Matoaka, West Virginia. He was taking a nap. My grandfather's brother came in the living room to check on him, and he wasn't breathing. He was too late coming into check on him, and my grandfather was gone. He was always fun and crazy to be around. There was never a dull moment when he was around. He loved to go four wheeling, fishing, and camping.

My grandfather and I always sat around, and he told me about when he was a little child. My grandfather is my favorite person in the world. He is my superhero. He may be gone, but he will never be forgotten. I love and miss my grandfather a whole bunch. I know now that all his pain and sickness is gone, and he isn't hurting anymore. He is now in a better place from where he was before.

He loved to be around his friends and family. His name was Bill Wray, but my siblings or I never called him by his name. We called him Grandpa or Pappaw. I will never forget the memories my grandfather and I made together. He will always be in my heart, no matter how old I get.

MADISON ROBERTS, GRADE 7

My Grandpa

I am writing about my grandpa Delmar James. He lived here in Virginia for a long time until he got married to my grandma. He was married for 22 years. He lived in Florida with my grandma, but then he moved to Virginia until he was old and got sick. My aunt welcomed him back to Florida and put him in a nursing home. Then he got sick and passed away on September 29, 2016.

We went to his funeral, and then we went to the park with all the family members. He was in the World War 2, and he got shot in the leg. It took him up to 1 year to recover. He didn't want to join the military again. He was afraid he wouldn't make it. We went to Dana Beach, and we had a lots of fun. We went diving and built sandcastles. When we were finished at the beach, we went out to eat at Cici's Pizza.

ALEX RODRIGUEZ, GRADE 7

My Grandma

My grandma's name was Goldie Sanchez. My grandma is from Baltimore, Maryland and was born on February 27, 1942. She had no siblings. My mom says that my grandma had to do lots of chores, like washing the dishes and making the beds. She also had to cook for the whole family. In her spare time she liked to read books and play outside.

When my grandma was young, her favorite childhood memory was spending time with her grandma. She didn't get along with her cousin and she didn't celebrate any cool traditions that I know of. My grandma always went to church. When my grandma was 18 years old, she married Delmar James and they stayed married for 20 years and then they got a divorce. She had 7 kids five girls and two boys.

When I was born, my grandma came to live with my family. My grandma has always been able to make me laugh. She loved me so much and was always looking out for me.

My grandma passed away on March 3, 2018. I was 11 years old and she was a big part of my life. I miss her because she was in my family.

AMELIA RODRIGUEZ, GRADE 7

Family Origin

I live on a farm with my family, two dogs, and two goats. With two dogs, they keep my family safe from wild animals or thieves. Where I live on a farm, sometimes it can be happy, sad, or funny. For the happy, we could get new farm animals. For the sad, we could have to sell the farm animals or one of the animals could

pass, such as an animal like a goat or a dog. A family like mine is a blessing to have with a good mom and dad because most children do not have a good mom or dad or worse, the children might be homeless on the street somewhere or in foster care. With a good mom and dad like I have, they help me in school, at home, or somewhere like a restaurant.

My dad is from Baltimore, Maryland, and he lived with his mom and dad. In 1984, he and his family moved to Castlewood, VA. He lived on the outskirts of Castlewood with his mom and dad. Later on, he bought another farm and built a house. Then when he met my mom, they got married, and he built the house where I live now.

My mom was born at the hospital in Lebanon, VA. She lived with her mother, father, and brother. My mom's dad's mother was an American Indian from Oklahoma. My mom's mom's family lived all over Southwest VA, like Russell County, Wise County, and Washington County. My mom lived in Wise County until she met my dad, and they married and she moved to Russell County. My mom even graduated from St. Paul High School.

My grandfather was born in 1931 and was raised in Kentucky. His ancestors came from Germany in the 1740s. His great-great-grandfather was in the Civil War, and he was in the Confederate Army. My grandfather was a veteran, and he served for 27 months in occupied Japan. Now, since my grandfather is in his 80s, he just stays home. He takes care of his big chickens and gets the eggs from them. In the summertime, he enjoys sitting on the porch with his dog. He loves to take care of the birds. He feeds and watches the birds, if they come close enough for him to see them. My family might have some sad or happy history, but mostly it is making memories to tell people in the future about the Slemp family.

CAMERON SLEMP, GRADE 7

My Family



My Dad as a Child

My dad's name is Ryan Nolan Smith. My dad was born in 1979 in Virginia. My dad likes to fish and he normally fishes once a week. My dad does not hunt much, but he does occasionally. My dad is a corrections officer and he works the night shift. This means that I don't get to see him much because he is asleep all day.

I like my dad because we like a lot of the same things. We both really like football and we both have the same favorite football team, the Redskins.

My grandpa was born in Virginia and is a retired coal miner. My great grandpa's name is Randolph Smith, and he also served in the US Army for 2 years (1954-1956). My great-grandmother's name is Edna Smith, and she is a retired teacher's aide.

My dad's mom, Thelma Smith, was born in Maryland, and is a retired teacher. Her dad, June Johnson, was born in Virginia, and was a coal miner. Her mom, Wilma Johnson, was born in Virginia and was a housewife. Thelma's grandparents on Wilma's side were Claude Skeens and Olga Skeens. Her grandparents from June were Bill Johnson and Ida Johnson.

RYLAN SMITH, GRADE 7

The Friendship I Messed Up

Hi! My name is Kassie and I am going to write about a friendship that I messed up with my best and closest friend. My friendship was the longest friendship that I have ever had until I messed it up. Messing up my friendship was the worst mistake of my life. We used to be best friends until we had a really big fall out about an argument that was over a little misunderstanding.

We are friends now, but we aren't best friends like we used to be. This girl is a really good person, and her next best friend will be really lucky to be her best friend. Whoever gets to grow up with her is going to be a lucky person. I just wish we could be best friends again. She is really funny, and I would say her whole first name, but she hates it. This person was as close as a sister to me and she is a very loyal and good friend. She cares more about other people than herself. Her parents are so lucky to have a daughter like her.

I miss being her close friend so much. I should have never said or done the things that I did to her. She is a really good basketball player, and she puts everything into what she does. I miss being her close friend. She was always there for me when I needed her. I was not there for her.

I messed up my chance to be her best friend, and I can't go back. If I could go back, then I would. I cried myself to sleep that night wishing that I never said what I did. That is the worst mistake of my life. I will always think about what a big mistake I made that day. I will always remember what a good friend she was to me.

KASSIE STAPLETON, GRADE 7

My Papaw

I'm going to write about my papaw, Robert Gobble. He had a nickname and everybody called him R.L. He served in the army for 36 years, and he has been in the newspaper for what he has done. He was born in Johnson City, Tennessee, and now he lives in Elizabethton, Tennessee. He was also a police officer for forty years, and now he is retired. He had two sons born in Okinawa, Japan.

His son, Ronnie Gobble, died on October 7, 2013, and his other son is still alive; he works as a doctor. My papaw is a good man, and he is 88 years old. He loves to collect old cars and models of cars, and he likes to collect old antiques. He used to take me to old car shows in Tennessee, and I thought they were cool. He has had over 30 antique cars and had them in a car show. Every now and then he tells me stories of his grandpa.

He always takes me to a Tennessee Vols game in Knoxville, Tennessee. His favorite shows are *Bonanza* and *The Lone Ranger*. He collects old comic books and old action figures. He said his favorite comic books were about adventures of superheroes. He said his favorite place to eat was Does Family Restaurant.

He is in a band where he sings and 2 people play guitar and a harmonica. He has played at 20 churches so far. He is a big Christian man. His favorite holiday is Christmas. That is my papaw's origin.

WESTON STOUT, GRADE 7

The Story Of My Mother's Childhood

My mom was born May 4, 1974, and she grew up in St. Paul, Virginia. My mom's full name is Mary Allyson Jessee, but she has never liked her first name so she goes by Allyson. My mom is the oldest, and she has one sister named Sarah. She grew up spending time playing basketball and softball, doing gymnastics, cooking with her mom, and working at her family's Texaco Station. Out of all the hobbies my mother had, her favorite was basketball.

My mom's family has always been from the St. Paul, Virginia area. My mom, Allyson, used to make mudpies, play hide and seek, and go exploring in the woods. When my mother was little, she would always

invite her friends over to her parents' house. My mother's house was very popular on the weekend because she had this big swimming pool that everybody loved. My mother always liked to explore. She would make forts and tree houses.

My great-grandmother always celebrated her birthday on May 5. When my mom was born, my great-grandmother realized she had celebrated her birthday on the wrong day. Now my mother and my great-grandmother celebrate their birthday on the same day. My mother always loved to share her birthday with her grandmother. Unfortunately, I never got to see my great-grandmother because she died the same day they found out that I was going to be born.

My mother graduated high school at St. Paul High School. She played basketball and softball at St. Paul High School, too. When my mother was playing softball, the first time she went up to bat, she hit a homerun. My mother would play basketball. Every day she loved inviting her friends over to play basketball and practice. I admire the athletic ability my mom has and can only hope to fill her shoes.

BENJAMIN SUTHERLAND, GRADE 7

STONEWALL JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL





Simply scratching a pen across paper to join one word with another doesn't seem particularly transformative or life-changing. At first glance, The Origin Project might be described as a writing project celebrating culture, but its effects don't end with writing in isolation or even the publication of a new book.

At Stonewall Jackson High School, The Origin Project experience cultivates a connectedness among students that, at times, acts as a lifeline. Because the writing compels students to define their own experiences, stories heard in the abstract become concrete. Once shared, reticent

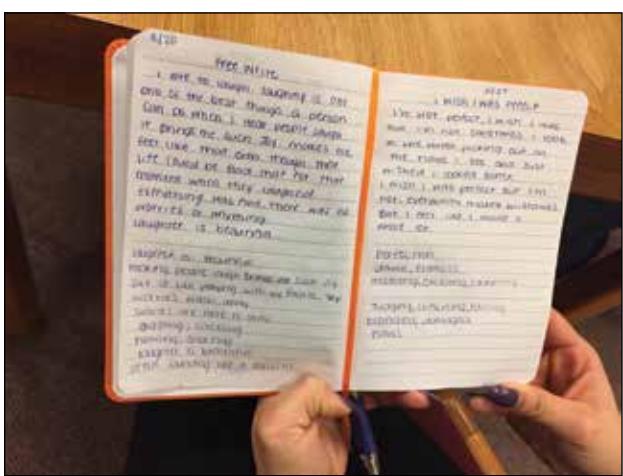
students feel validated and confident students develop their capacity for empathy. Either way, the path to finding authentic personhood is the same. Someone noticed me and someone heard my story.

All too often formal education consists of the nuts and bolts of isolated pieces of knowledge that in themselves don't actualize personal growth. It's for this reason the experiences created by The Origin Project are so powerful. Aside from the grind that is school, students have the opportunity to take risks and grow among their peers. With trust, absolute safety and a common goal, this year's class of writers and artists have proven to be hugely insightful and outrageously brave. Students enjoyed the privilege of sharing their art with the world and being a part of something bigger than themselves.

In their typical generosity of spirit, Nancy Bolmeier Fisher and Linda Woodward worked to create opportunities for our students and suddenly the isolated strands of curricular content collided with the real world. First at the launch at the Peter Paul Development Center, then at the Library of Virginia, our students' views of the world expanded. The hum of urban professionals navigating the bustle of city streets made an impression. The quiet power of 400 years of Virginia's human history at the Library of Virginia made an impression. The transformative power of the Origin Project experience has most definitely made an impression.

The labors of love in Mrs. Sterne's English class, Mrs. Duval's and Ms. Duke's Art classes are amplified by this gift of perspective The Origin Project brings with it. Whether I am from this culture and you are from that culture, we share our humanity. I will hold your hand, even if you're not ready to hold mine.

RHONDA EARLY CARPER, STONEWALL
JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL



The shimmering white snow delicately drifted down from the pale blue sky as my brother Michael and I trudged through the snow to our favorite tree. With numb fingers, we fished for rocks in the snow to aim at the bare tree branches. Our favorite game turned out to be one that caused so much pain. One after another, rocks were flying towards the tree as we stood on opposite sides of the tree. The big rock with the icy, jagged edges found its way into my hands and then into the sky in hurtful pursuit. All

of a sudden, the constant rock pelting stopped. Wiping the snowflakes resting on my eyelashes, I peeked around the tree.

I saw Michael motionless on the ground. A stone tumbled out of his hand and his face rested in a peaceful slumber. Red stains darkened the snow around his head as the seconds went by. With shivers running down my spine, I stumbled inside the warm house. Wide eyes teeming with tears and mouth agape, my horror-filled face replicated in each of my parents as they raced each other out the door.



Everything after that moment happened in a blur. Lights flashing. Parents screaming. All the while, I hid under the dinner table and curled into myself pumping never-ending tears out of my eyes. My oldest brother, Brandon, lulled me to sleep with sweet whispers as I dreamt of the big, toothy smile on Michael's face. I cracked open my puffy, dry eyes the next day to see my dream a living reality. Michael's bandages were overshadowed by his crinkly-eyed smile.

"I'm okay, Ashley," he whispered and the floodgates opened once again. To this day, when I see the snow-covered rocks in the winter, I smile to myself knowing he is still here with me. Michael is okay.

ASHLEY AGRE, GRADE 12

Shrek

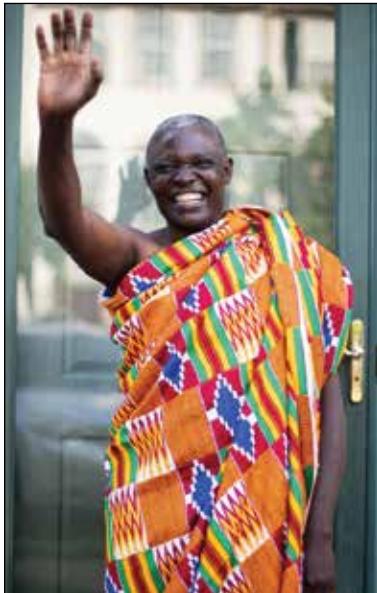
When I lost my grandma, my family was devastated. I miss her. I miss the times we watched my favorite movie *Shrek* over and over and over again on her ginormous box television. I can't even imagine how annoying it was watching that movie repeatedly. Every time I visited her house, I would slide the DVD in its player. When we began to watch it, I'd always get so excited to be there all bundled up with her on her small tan rocking chair. I remember the smell of old lady that chair possessed. After Granny died, my parents kept the rocking chair and it never, ever lost that smell.



Watching *Shrek* with Granny was the only time alone I really had with her. It was through that experience we bonded and that time was very special to me. I still have the DVD. While rummaging through the old dusty DVD's from the early 2000's, I sometimes find it. When I see it, I just feel depressed. I wish I could have spent more time with Granny in her little, green-walled living room. Unfortunately, our time was cut short. That movie is the only thing that brings memories of her; I'm eighteen now. She left us when I was four years old. If I had the opportunity, I would make many more memories with her and tell her that I love her.

JORDAN ALBEA, GRADE 12

My Journey to Being Exceptional



One day during my music class, my music director, Ms. Mulloy, called me over to speak with her and she told me, "Joseph, you can't sing." What kind of teacher would say this to a fifth grader? I was distraught by this because I knew I wasn't the best singer at the time, but I knew that I worked harder than most to become better. My music director even told my parents I couldn't sing. My parents agreed with her because they were always telling me I sounded like "a dying cat trying to sing." My motivation to become one of the best vocalists in the 2019 class came out of the combination of my music director and my parents not believing I could improve.

From that day, I vowed to myself I would sing every day so I could become better. I sang in the show I shower. I sang during class. I sang everywhere I could. All that practice finally started to pay off. My parents were even asking, "Who is singing up there?" They said it sounded good. They were shocked when they realized I was the person singing. They assumed it was one of my sisters.

I started to hear dynamic changes in my singing voice in middle school; both my middle school choir directors had big influences on my journey. My directors, Mr. Keirstead and Mrs. Phelan, were aware of how much I had progressed throughout the three years of middle school choir. I earned many accolades. One of the highlights of middle school was making All-National Honor Choir. This honor provided me a once in a lifetime opportunity to sing alongside the Mormon Tabernacle Choir in Salt Lake City, Utah. The achievements I had earned in middle school gave me the realization that my hard work was worth it, and that I was closer to becoming the singer I wanted to be.



At my final concert in middle school, I received the *Esprit de Corps* Award which is one of the most prestigious awards given to a singer in choir. As I tried to find my parents, my elementary school music teacher approached and congratulated me. She also apologized for not realizing my potential as a vocalist. This was one of the most pivotal moments in my life.



As I moved on to high school, I realized the competition to be one of the best was going to be even harder than ever. My high school choir director, Ms. Boley, was the most influential in my choir career as she helped me become the singer I am today. With her help, I have become the number one tenor who represents our district in Virginia, which is more than I could have ever imagined. Through all my struggles, I found ways to be motivated and to stay inspired. My journey will continue even though I have achieved what most people only dream. I am proud to be where I am today.

JOSEPH ANNIBELL, GRADE 12

Oh, Daddy! I Love You!

Look at this beautiful dress! My Christmas dress had just arrived. Mom went to grandma's house in Ashtown with our dresses. This is truly the most wonderful time of the year. The white, full laced dress had a pink ribbon on the back. Oh, it was the most beautiful dress I have ever seen. As I watched the dress with this excitement in my eyes, I heard my sister say, "Are these the dresses Dad brought? Is this my Christmas dress?" Mom smiled and said, "Yes." "Meda wo ase pii (Thank you so much)," my sister said with excitement.

"Don't thank me, thank God. Do you know how lucky you are, Adwoa? You didn't live the life me and your father did. Before three years ago, your father was always wondering about how to care for you and give you a better life. Now, you get things imported from America. All because of the sacrifice your father had to make. The only relationship he has with you is over the phone. You don't even know who your father is. You think you do, but I don't," Mom said. Mom didn't want us to take anything for granted.

I found myself thinking about what my mom said. Who is daddy? Well, I know dad won the American lottery. This lottery gave a few people the chance to come to America and a chance to change the lives of their families. At the time dad won the lottery, Mom had just given birth to Afriyie. Wow, what a hard decision for Dad to make. Daddy had two choices:

1. Stay with his family and live a life of poverty.
2. Go to America and make a better life for his family.

Daddy chose the second choice. Two months after my little sister was born, my dad had to leave his home and go to a new place. He had to live every day in America while his wife and kids were back home. He had to build a relationship with his kids over the phone. Right then, I realized he didn't do all that for himself. He did it for us . . . for me and my sisters. "Oh, Daddy. I love you," I whispered with tears coming down my cheeks. I never realized how lucky I am until now. I began to think about everyone in my life. I reflect on my family and friends, even those I see every day. Most of my friends don't have what I have. They don't know about my wonderful father. They think I only have my mom and my two sisters. They don't know my dad is in America. They can't know. Mom said we weren't allowed to tell anyone. I still don't know why but I don't want to ask her. Mommy knows best. I keep thinking about the people once around me. Most of them are living a life of poverty. They only have school and trade. Those are their choices. I





lived my life knowing that in a few years, I would be living in the United States of America. Wow! We are so lucky.

I looked at my dress and said quietly to myself, "Thank you, God. Thank you for this life we have. I have realized how amazing my life has been and what it was. Thank you for the family I have, especially for my father. Amen." After my prayer, I smiled and said, "Thank you, Daddy! I love you."

ADWOA ASAMOAH, GRADE 12

The Northern Neck

I spent many days of my childhood at my grandparents' house in the Northern Neck of Virginia. They lived in a rural neighborhood with gravel roads, friendly neighbors, and homes situated on acres of land. Their house overlooked brackish water where the Potomac River met up with the Chesapeake Bay.

Between my grandparents' and their neighbor's property was a small stretch of sand where I would build sandcastles and collect seashells. After playing at the beach for some time, I would quickly dash inside to steal popsicles leaving behind a trail of sand to give me away. Before I returned to the sand and water to continue creating my artistic masterpieces, I watched swarms of jellyfish glide through the shallow water and inevitably some would wash up on the sand. I bravely picked up the beached jellyfish, holding the slime-like creatures in my hand while I made miniature graves for them, which I would decorate with seashells and seaweed.

There was a dock in front of the house where my grandparents' boat rested for most of the year. I remember the red stripes on the pearly white boat glistening in the sun and the way the wind blew in my face as we sped towards the bay. We used to tie a raft to the back of the boat and dolphins would sometimes jump alongside us as we bounced over the waves. After we had our fill of the water and sand, we would go out to explore the land on my grandpa's cherry red golf cart. Most of the time we were confined to the straight roads in front of his home, but one time he drove with me on the windy roads to see several alpacas that lived on a farm nearby. I remember him getting into trouble with my mom and grandma for taking me on that little adventure. My cousins and I used to sit on the dock in huge lawn chairs as we fished with my grandpa and watched the sky explode in shades of orange, pink, purple and yellow as the sun set.

At night, I would get cozy in my grandparents' bed and watch *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *Shrek* on repeat while eating a plate full of strawberries, whipped cream and Hershey's Syrup. That house on the Northern Neck was a home away from home.

LEXI ATER, GRADE 12

11-13-12

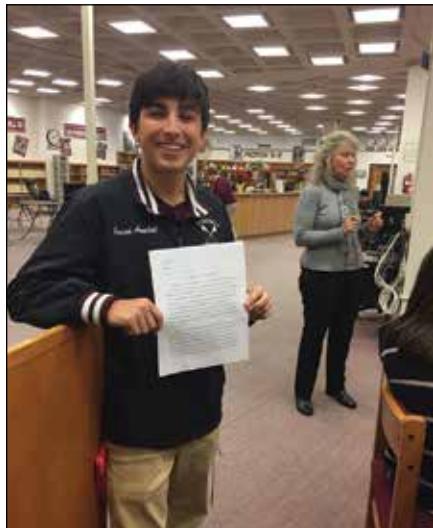


Ranen. That's the one name I will always remember for as long as I live. When I was 12 years old, my cousin, Ranen, died of a brain tumor. He was only two years older than me. I don't remember much of his journey battling through the cancer, but I do remember how positive he always was. No matter what news the doctors gave him, he always tried to find light in the situation. Ranen would always crack jokes to keep everyone's mind off the fact that he was dying.

The day he died was a sad day for my family and me, but the month before was even worse. My sister and I gathered in my parents' room and

my mom sat us down and explained to us how Ranen had been put on life support. We just sat in silence and soon began to cry. At that moment, I knew my life would never be the same. We knew he'd be leaving us soon. We just weren't sure how soon. I was devastated. My 12th birthday had just passed. He told me "happy birthday" and "I love you" was the last I heard from him. It's been almost seven years since he left us, but no matter how many years that go by after his death, I will forever remember his positive attitude and kind spirit.

DANI BRINKLEY, GRADE 12



The Blanket

I was mesmerized. The fluffy blue sheet felt warm like a ray of sunshine while it was wrapped around my body. It was a simple SpiderMan blanket my grandfather bought me for my fourth birthday. He didn't get the chance to give it to me in person. On August 27, 2005, my grandfather passed away from a heart defect. August 27 is supposed to be a day when my family celebrates my life, but instead of joyous, my birthday is now also a day of mourning. Instead of being distraught, I sit and rhapsodize about everything he taught me. He taught me to always be respectful and kind. He was never rude toward others and he cared about all people. I strive every day to be like him. The only way I feel I can keep him alive is in my heart and in my actions.

ELVIS CAMPOS, GRADE 12

The glimmer in her eyes as she wrote made me think she was doing it for a prize. Her tight grip on the pen caused one to believe that her life depended on it. It really did. The paper she was writing on seemed like a friend to whom she could tell everything without fear of judgement. In fact, those pieces of paper were the only safe way for her to express a voice because in her society, women's free speech was strictly censored. Trapped in her little bubble with work space lit up by a dim lamp, she had managed to distance herself from the rest of the world. In that tiny space, she felt a sense of security, hope and faith.





The pain of not having someone to converse with had taken a toll on her making her numb from pain and happiness. She felt trapped and the only path out was the edges of the blank sheets of paper on which she was writing. Within these pieces of paper, she documents every little detail of her life. If somebody were to gain access to these, they could imagine themselves as her. Most importantly, her intentions were pure. Through writing, she found a medium of expression that allows for the appreciation of thought and discourages concealment of any kind.

ALEXANDRIAN CARREON, GRADE 12

Once Upon a Time

Every little girl dreams about her wedding. That's why my wedding day will be like a fairy tale wedding in a children's book, preferably relating to *Twilight*. I envision the tall trees surrounding us with sparkling white lights wrapped around their limbs, beige colored tablecloths and the aisle carpet is white. As guests arrive, they grab a crystal glass of bubbling champagne and socialize all together.

My dress will be white lace with a long train, long sleeves and a deep v-neck. My hair will be up with pinned in curls. All the kids are running and smiling. Everyone is having an amazing time enjoying the view of the forest and the tasty chicken bites served as an appetizer. My parents and my sister will be seated on the first row with my grandparents. I walk down the aisle with my right arm linked with my dad's arm. My eyes are focused only on my fiancé. I think in my head about all of the beautiful qualities he has. He's gentle, caring, funny, adventurous, loyal and enjoys being a foodie just as much as I do.

Once my dad hands me over to my fiancé, our hands join together and we look into each other's eyes, which are filled with happiness. After we say our vows, we take the party to the tables. On the plates, guests will find menus describing what will be served. I stand up to make a toast to thank my family and friends for coming and say how much I enjoy everyone filling my life with love and positivity. Before the wedding ends, I go to my parents and express to them how much I value them and thank them for giving me so many amazing opportunities in life. Now, I get to share my happily-ever-after with my future kids and see how they envision their weddings when they get older.



CASSANDRA ESTRADA, GRADE 12

The Day a Closed Heart Was Opened

It's almost noon. My concentration fluctuates between defusing a terrorist's bomb and locating cameras in a canal. A noise in the distance distracts me from these objectives, but not for long. I hear the same noise a few minutes later; it is getting louder. About two minutes pass until I hear that sound again. It's my dad. I pull my headphones off and rush to his room. He is lying on his bed looking as pale as the moon on an

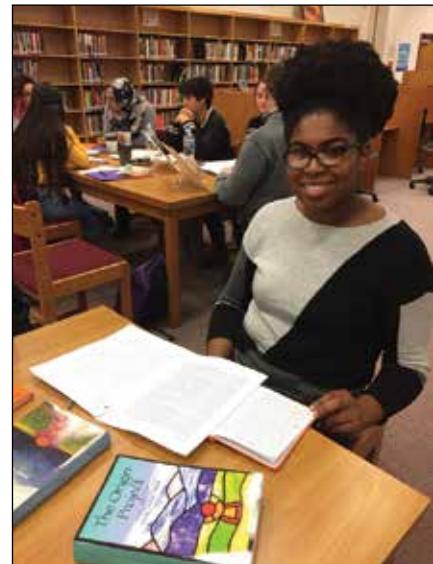
empty night sky. He yells for water and a bowl. I bring him the water and the biggest bowl we have. I walk away to turn off my computer when suddenly I hear, "Call 911!" My dad starts to feel a sharp pain in his chest. I freeze, I don't know what to do.

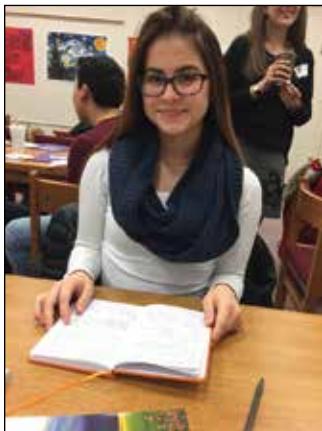
I regret freezing up. My brother is the one who calls 911. The EMTs get here in record time. They carry my dad away on a gurney while I just sit there with tears rolling down my face. The only thought going through my head is, "Please don't leave me, dad. Please." My mom takes us to the emergency room so if he does pass, we would be there to see him one last time. We sit in the radiology waiting room for about two hours before a surgeon comes out to let us know what is happening.

The doctor sits down in front of us, "Hello, I assume you are his wife and son?" he asks. We nod our heads in a melancholy fashion. He explains to us that my father technically died, but they are doing everything they can to resuscitate him. We sit in that freezing, dimly lit room for what feels like an eternity. That same tall, grim-looking surgeon returns. Our hearts were as volatile as a stick of dynamite about to be detonated. The doctor said to me, "Your dad will be alright; we successfully revived him and we are transferring him to the intensive care unit." We asked when we would be able to see him. The surgeon told us if we waited for a little longer, we might be able to see him.

When doctors and nurses first moved him to the ICU, they put him in a coma-like state. Three or four days later, they tried waking him up, but the nurses had to put him back into the coma almost immediately. My dad was thrashing about in his bed trying to pull all of the cords and tubes out of his veins. I was able to visit him in the ICU about a week after the incident happened. He looked like he was crying all the time; his eyelids covered in crust. He was laying on his hospital bed watching television when he wasn't asleep. He couldn't move anything other than his arms because of all of the machinery hooked up to him. I missed a week of school so I could see him. I couldn't stay in his room for longer than ten minutes, because I couldn't stand to see him with all of those tubes going in and out of him.

It was a slow recovery for all of us. My dad had to learn how to walk again. Being bedridden for a month and a half, he struggled the first couple of days, but got the hang of it about a week later. Walking is still difficult because my dad was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis a few years back before the heart issues. My brother had to work twice as many hours at his job so we could pay bills. My mom, who's a crossing guard, had to take a month-long break so she could spend time with my dad. She started working again once my dad was transferred to a rehab center where they made sure he could make a full recovery. I had to get a job, too. I submitted an application at Giant Foods and ended up getting a job at the same place my brother works. The





management already knew our situation, so they gave me about 30 hours a week. My grades dropped down to low Ds and Fs. I raised them toward the end of the school year. Because I missed my dad every day and I didn't like my low grades, I became severely depressed.

I overcame all of this by seeing the New Horizons therapist at school. I remember walking into her office for the first time and seeing a small room decorated with many pictures and paintings with motivational quotes on the wall. I noticed a table with five chairs around it, a bunch of stress toys in a little basket on the table, and the therapist sitting at her desk. She told me to sit down. "Hi, Joe. Your friend, Ricardo, told me you're going through some rough times?" I started crying. I told her about everything that happened with my dad and how I felt about everything. She listened to me without judging or criticizing me, and that gave me comfort. I still see her to this day, but only once a week. She helped me through all of the problems I had. She taught me family is the most important thing in my life, and to not worry about school until I was ready. I learned I always need to be there for my family or things might go from bad to worse.

JOSEPH GREEN, GRADE 12

Banana Boat

Dedicated to my mother who sat with me for an interview about her childhood. I made it into something epic.

I silently waited in the makeshift raft on the flooded second floor of the abandoned house. As I stared into the water and clenched the bamboo fishing pole, the water began to rise with each breath I took. "Hurry up, Ate! I'm hungry," my younger brother Nigel shouted in a whisper. "Shh! You'll scare the fish away!" Ate Menchie exclaimed.

I grew impatient with each little wave that made the buoy gently bob, but I knew this would be the day that I, Janette Reyes, would finally catch a fish! I felt a pull on the line. My siblings gathered beside me at one end of the banana trunk boat. My eyes never left the bobbing buoy and the sound of the pelting rain drops didn't distract me. The tugging became stronger and stronger along with my racing heart; it was finally happening!

Nothing could stop me n- SNAP. We left the flooded house with nothing, but a broken fishing pole and a sturdy banana boat.

The next day, my hopes of ever catching a fish receded like the river in which we would swim during a flood. "Oh, it's okay Anak. There will be plenty of other fish for you to catch next time," Mommy said as she placed the cooked fish from my cousin's catch onto my plate. I felt as if Neptune himself dragged that fish away from my line. I deserved that fish! I finished my



lunch, but I knew one day the food on my plate would be caught with my own pole.

Weeks later, it's toward the end of flooding season. I knew I needed to get a catch quickly. I've never wanted a flood more in my life for the sole reason of catching a fish on the second floor. This strange, scaly, angle-faced creature swam into my mind during the day, flapping its fins in my face and taunting me. I walked outside our concrete house and felt the dry dirt between my bare toes. Squinting my eyes at the island sun, there was not a cloud to be seen. I crouched down with my cheeks in between my knees and traced the abandoned house in the dirt with a stick. It felt like I'd been crouching there for an eternity longing for rain. Plop. The dirt of the drawing quickly jumped from the ground and landed back down. A small dark spot surrounding the dry dirt left an indent in the middle of my sketch. Plop. Plop. Plop. Suddenly, the sound of showers poured onto the island turning the dirt into mud. My siblings ran outside and we all looked at each other with excitement. Almost immediately, we knew what to do.

"I'll grab the bamboo!"
"I'll get the trunks!"

Thunder roared in our ears as we gathered the materials for our banana boat. Each vibration increased our excitement. My black hair was soaked from the warm showers of the clouds while I skewered bamboo into each trunk for stability. Time to set sail. We rowed our banana boat through the flooded town of Tanjay. I would imagine the fish swimming beside the boat quickly jumping into the air yelling words of discouragement. Not this time, strange, scaly, angle-faced creature.

We made it to the abandoned house. As we floated inside, the smell of wet concrete and wood filled my nose, bringing back memories of my broken line. I crouched leaning my knees on the green banana trunks holding onto the bamboo fishing pool with two hands. I stared. My mind was as focused as the sun. The buoy lightly bobbed, then immediately gulped into the murky waters. A creature was lurking. This tug was stronger than before indicating a large fish. Its strength and size riled me up even more. "Do you want me to take over, Ate? Your skinny little arms might not handle this beast," Nigel snickered. I brushed off his comment and adjusted my grip. I struggled to pull the pole up toward my face, but nothing was going to make me let go. A shadowy figure came closer and closer. My eyes widened. The fish finally appeared through the surface of the water, splashing and struggling for escape. My face lit up brighter than the time I won Tumbang Preso. A sigh of relief escaped my breath when I finally got the fish on board. With a big smile, I took a look at this Milkfish. I, Janette Reyes, finally caught the beast! We left the flooded house with dinner, an unbroken fishing pole and a trusty banana boat.



CELINE HONEYCUTT, GRADE 12

Pillow Game Gone Wrong

The house is empty with nothing to do
I could have some fun. Mom wouldn't have a clue
I whisper to my brother, "Let's go play a game!"
My goal is to win and put him to shame
We waltzed out of our rooms and into the hallway



Tiptoed past the room where my mother lay
We searched for a room and for pillows to throw
I gathered my ammo and I was ready to go
I threw the first pillow at my brother's head
My brother retaliated. "You keep missing!" I said
He threw one more pillow and it grazed my ear
Suddenly my body filled with fear
"What was that?" my mother asked
I turn around to a floor of glass
I grab my brother and we rush to bed
I get under the covers and bury my head
I tell my brother, "Don't you dare tell mom!"
I tried to coach him to remain calm
Dozing off then I hear steps near my door
The sounds were loud, but I must try to ignore
Suddenly, I hear a thunderous voice calling my name
I knew for myself that I was taking no blame
My mother was livid, she was so distraught
I was so upset that we were caught
Preparing for our talk mom hunts for a belt
I must play with the cards that I was dealt
My mother cannot find my father's "good belt" and gives him a call
She briefs him on the story and he is appalled
He tells her to calm down and that she is too mad
He rushed home and we yelled, "Dad!"
Looking at his face, you can tell he was mad
I came out alive because all he did was talk
As I left the room, I walked a different walk
What I learned from this is to stay in the bed
And that pillows are objects where I lay my head

JA'CHELLE JOHNSON, GRADE 12

The Things I Keep (Grandmother's Point of View)

The doctors said I would die when Ja'Chelle, my granddaughter, was 11 years old. The picture I treasure most is an image of me laughing. My photos will probably be the only memories she will have of me. In the image, I am wearing an outfit that is one color, which is my favorite color, purple. I have on a purple shirt and shorts while holding my purple reading glasses showing my purple nails. The whole town of Clayton knew me for my flashy jewelry. In the photo, I am wearing a bracelet on each wrist, two necklaces, and a pair of hoop earrings. When I pass away, I plan to be cremated with all my belongings, excluding my photos. When my granddaughter looks at the photos, I hope she will miss me and say . . .

I will miss the way she laughed.

I will miss the way she danced.

I will miss the way she snorted when she laughed.

I will miss her.

JA'CHELLE JOHNSON, GRADE 12

My Bright Pink Quinceañera Dress

My Quinceañera dress was a bright light pink; I HATE the color pink. The skirt was sewn to look like big roses flowing with such elegance. A trail of glitter followed every step I took, and I looked like an obnoxious fairy was following me. The weight of the dress held me down so much I could barely walk or even stand up straight. I had never given a single thought to having a Quinceañera until my mother and older sister, Nathaly, found the perfect pink dress. Even then, I was hesitant to have such a big event for myself and I hated the idea of being the center of attention.

The events leading up to the party created such fun memories I will never forget. The dance rehearsals with my court of honor lasted two to three hours nonstop. My sister made sure everything was perfect. They all helped my family set up the venue, running back and forth making sure everything was just perfect. Seeing how many people came together to make sure this night was special will always mean everything to me.

I remember that early sunny December morning in Amapala, Honduras and I enjoyed the knowledge of being on such a gorgeous island I call my second home. Awakening later than I had planned, I was convinced everyone forgot about me. Finally, after sitting for make-up and hair, I put on the dress for the last time. My reflection in the mirror was so captivating. I was finally a woman in the Hispanic society. One could not erase the goofy smile on my face as I walked into that venue by myself in front of more than four hundred guests and realizing everyone is looking at me, smiling. They're all here to enjoy this amazing day with me.

At that very moment, my fear of being the center of attention vanished. Every time I feel the fabric on that dress or look at the dress in pictures, it reminds me of that unforgettable night. It gives me an extreme rush of happiness because of the memories it brings me. The dress itself is a symbol of me becoming a woman in the culture of which I am so proud to be a part. Now that I think about it, the overheating and tripping over that large pink dress was worth it. I guess I don't hate the color pink as much I thought I did.

DESSIREE LOPEZ, GRADE 12

Pink Roses

The birds chirping
The bright yellow sun shinning
I was told there was music playing
I just recall thinking do not ruin this moment by falling
The walk into church, into womanhood. As the door closes,
All eyes on me. My path lined with those bright pink roses.

DESSIREE LOPEZ, GRADE 12

My Native Tongue

Language is the fabric of communication in our mundane conversations. It is structured on the foundation of grammar. Each of us descended from some sort of lineage or ancestry that arrived with language from different regions of the map. Even if you're a dweller in the Land of the Free, we bring with us diverse dialects, idioms and lingo to connect with our communities. Not all of us could retain our suave mother tongue and sometimes we are washed of our inimitable accents in a dire attempt to assimilate into a country severing the ties of our origins, connections to our homelands, and ultimately our identity.





Spanish is the language I was told should come to me as if it were second nature. Practically, it was supposed to act as a sister I never had, but always wanted. In a course of unfortunate events with my older brother's school, the school officials pushed our father to make English a priority. They insisted our father stop educating us in our native tongue. Spanish was pushed aside like it was food one could just toss away. While it sounds unappreciative, I will not deny that learning English has enhanced our knowledge immensely, but at the hefty price of losing our communicative links.

You might think it was a sacrificial price to pay, but what do you do when you wish to reconnect with family who only know their native language? The language from which you were kept that so rightfully belonged to you suddenly isn't. You are left with nothing but a wall that divides you and your family members. Gradually becoming more painfully enormous, the communication gap continues to expand. Family members who know the language taken away from you say you are just half of who you

are. Are you then just half a story to tell?

The answers lay within you and in me. In order to fix what's broken, you familiarize yourself with what was lost. That is what I did. I took every opportunity that blew in my direction to rekindle my vernacular. My path was rocky at times leaving me with a white flag and defeat written in bold letters on my face. It hurt my pride as I should have known and been taught better than fragments. Instead of bawling my eyes out to the point of exhaustion, I found the tenacity to attain what once was mine.

I won my battle. I defeated this misconception of not being up to standard as a girl with an ethnic background. I will live with everlasting scars of insecurity from my journey. Nevertheless, I will never regret the mental brawls to be the person that I am today. I am someone with a story, too. I overcame obstacle far beyond my tongue-tied Spanish and identity issues. I am someone who continues to learn and to relinquish herself of these invisible shackles of judgement. Through a kaleidoscope of nationalities, I am a Latina with a voice just the same in all languages.

NIRIAN LUCAS, GRADE 12

3 Demons

A soldier, ready to defend anyone at all costs

A peace maker like Ghandi

A leader, an advice giver, and a father figure

You were one of the most important people in my life

You were one of my greatest role models and still are

When we needed help you were there when we needed it the most

You were a mural, covered in tattoos that fascinated everyone

You had a "good" arm and a "bad"

Yet you never told us what the bad arm was about

Was it about the "demons" you had?

There were three; three demons
The first one was known as *Sadness*
Demon number two was *40 Ounce*
And number three was *Dose*

You were always happy until *Sadness* knocked on your door and
came in without permission
Sadness erased the smile away from your bearded, freckled face
Everyone longed for that joyous smile to reappear
But that is what your “happy” pills were for
With taking them, you kicked *Sadness*’s butt
And led him back out the door
Amazingly your contagious smile returned, and you were happy again

40 Ounce was a truculent one
He came through the door and stuck around for years
Like a bum friend you invite to live with you
But is just a burden lying on the couch
40 Ounce represented himself as bottles with a big *40* on the side
He was your weakness
He always made you go back for more
Your infatuation with him was so immense
So much that you even had a big *40 oz.* tattoo
Then the big *40* simply became a reminder
Because you decided to get help
And kick *40 Ounce* out for good

You persevered through demons one and two
Yet by the time you got to *Dose*, he took control
You really did not want to let him in
But he pushed right through the frail door
Dose would be found as milligrams in little orange bottles
And he was the toughest of them all
He was your dictator
And controlled every aspect of your life

Over time, the pain he caused worsened
You knew what could happen, everyone did
You tried to stop, but sadly *Dose* wouldn’t let you
He always tricked you into getting more of him
And one day he made you have *too much*

Even with your demons, you will always be:

A soldier, ready to defend anyone at all costs
A peace maker like Ghandi
A leader, an advice giver, and a father figure

JULIETTE MARCHEGIANO, GRADE 12

The Little Boy's Dream

I am Wilmer Marquez. I am 40 years old. Born in Ciudad Barrios, San Salvador, El Salvador. I am proud to call myself a Latino-American. In this interview I did with my daughter, Karina, I would love to share a story about how a little boy had a dream to go to the United States of America and how I accomplished it.

Waking up to the smell of wet grass and swampy trees, the weather was always gloomy in El Salvador making it harder to get up in the morning for school. My mother got my uniform ready the



day before. Getting my hair finely combed back was something I dreaded doing in the morning. My mother would scold us if we didn't look presentable for school. Already finished getting ready, as I came down the steps, I could smell the smokiness of the tortillas my mother made at the crack of dawn. I could hear the loud ruckus coming down the stairs. Finally, all my siblings are awake. After finishing our breakfast, the last thing we had to do was make sure our shoes were shiny and clean. The school would punish us or send us back home if our shoes weren't shiny—so shiny they could see their own reflections. My mother would use the ash from the bottom of pots to shine our shoes. After all our shoes were shiny, we were all ready to go to the place I dreaded the most in the world. Putting on our backpacks, we would kiss our mother on the cheek to say goodbye.

The trail to school felt like an eternity. It took an hour on foot to get to school. My weak little legs would ache, especially going up the big, steep hill. The streets are full of trash and dirt making me worried about my shoes, but my brother would help by giving me a piggy back ride. Once we reached our destination, I made sure my shoes had no trace of dirt whatsoever. I dusted myself off and stood in front of the principal. The face he made every morning bothered me. You could see wrinkles form around his eyes when he concentrated on you. Once he gave me the head motion of a 'yes', I headed inside to my classroom. I sat down at my desk not knowing what our subject was going to be. My teacher entered and greeted us. "So, students today we will be learning about the USA." I was so excited. The United States always fascinated me. Also, learning a new language was on my bucket list. Having the 'American Dream' was all I looked forward to as a kid.

Now that I'm an American citizen and living here for about 20 years, it's not what I expected it to be. As a little kid, I had no idea what to expect . . . all of the hard work you need to do to have a stable life. Coming to the United States was one of the hardest quests of my life. Going through the desert, hearing moving water and not knowing the dangerous things a human being can do. Once I came to the U.S., I started working immediately. I didn't even finish school. If I would have finished school, I would've gone into the Air Force. I love this country. I would sacrifice my life for others.

Once I started forming my family, life just became more difficult. My mother would always tell me, "Son, kids take a lot of responsibility" and of course she was right. I started learning English once I knew I had to get a better job to support my wife and kids. Learning was difficult, too. I learned by talking to people already

native to English. Also, listening to music helped. Eighties music was such a great era, by the way. Making conversations helped me to learn. I also learned by watching movies. All of the hard work I endured is all for my family. If I could say something to my kids and the generations to come, I would tell them to just work hard. Enjoy life, but measure every decision on how it will affect your life.

KARINA MARQUEZ, GRADE 12

I Enjoy Texting

Some would say it's problematic in our society

but I prefer it over talking in person

It avoids the stress of how I look
or how I sound or act or even smell

It conceals physical flaws
like when you wear make up

It makes it so I can never mumble or stutter
I have time to think about what I want to say
and prevents me tripping over my own tongue
what I say is made clear

It's not as sloppy as pen and paper
I don't need to worry about smudges or smears
or even inconsistent penmanship
what I say is made clear

It keeps me social
Without being social

It makes me heard
even when I don't mutter a word

LENORE MITZEN, GRADE 12

Ligia

“*Ligia*.”

I had a vendetta against those five letters.

Some would say I've even disowned them.

The five letters once beautifully uttered from my mother's lips had become foreign to me.
It seems almost as if those five letters inscribed upon my birth certificate no longer
represent my current self, but rather a past self I had locked away in a cage.

It was almost as if years of elementary school embarrassment and the stuttering that
always followed the sight of those five letters was what led up to its removal and
eventual replacement.

And with that disposal spawned a new set of letters.

A new set of letters that didn't cause a commotion of chuckles and mutters among
classmates.

A new set of letters that didn't create discomfort among adults and teachers who would
greet me.

This new set of letters was an assimilation into my identity.

People recognize this identity as someone who teems with confidence.
Someone who screams words of raw emotion and strums a wailing instrument to the
point of bleeding fingertips.

As the 2 a.m. front door slowly creaks open and faces of sweat and makeup are washed,
Those gentle lips that uttered my name at birth whisper my name once again.
And just like every night I recognize that
Who I was lives beneath
The skin of who I am
And I come to terms with those five letters and the identity that came with it
As the harsh winds of the early morning hours sing me to sleep.

LIGIA MONICO-BORJA, GRADE 12

The Significant One

The picture shows my parents and me on my first birthday, Oct 17, 2001. My dad is pictured and my mom is holding me in her arms. I seem to be staring at the flame of the candle my dad is lighting on my three-tiered cake. My mom appears to be staring back at the large crowd of family and friends. Similar to how quinceneras celebrate a 15th memorable birthday, in Korea one year-olds have their own great celebration. The picture itself holds an immense amount of emotion. The setting of the picture brings back memories from when I used to live in South Korea. I reminisce about when I would have every family member at large family gatherings like how everyone gathered for my birthday. I am the only immediate family in America, so sometimes I wish I had relatives close by for important holidays.

I wore the 'Han-Bok' when I visited South Korea for my grandma's 80th birthday when I was in 4th grade. Age is significant in South Korea and it is a tradition to celebrate the first, and sometimes the 70th, 80th, and 90th birthdays. The 'Han-Bok' is worn on special occasions like weddings and other formal ceremonies. Although I don't recall anything that happened in the photo, it acknowledges my culture. While I don't remember the details of my party, my parents certainly do. One activity included items such as a pencil, money, a cooking utensil, and a book. All of these items were laid upon a desk. Then, I was supposed to pick up one of the items that supposedly represented my future role or job. I picked up the pencil, which suggested that I would study hard and maybe become an educator. Coincidentally, I would like to pursue elementary education in college.

CHRISTINA MUN, GRADE 12

Resistance

"Resistance is the most toxic force in the planet. It makes us less than we are and born to be." - Steven Pressfield

We all treat our lowest points differently. When I thought I reached my point I made the peculiar decision to read a self-improvement book. I picked up a book called *The War of Art* that I thought would help me win my inner creative battles. This author pressed heavily on the idea of Resistance being our greatest evil which led to me to earn what resistance really was. Pressfield made me feel as if I should comply with everything thrown at me; that it was my fault for all the problems I bump into because all I should do is comply. I realized Pressfield never knew what it felt like to be less than you are the same way I did; we had different things keeping us from being who we were born to be. Resistance is by far the greatest thing to happen to mankind, without resistance we would be nothing but a white man's world. Resistance is what led to the freedom of slaves, the power to see people for who they are and not where they are from, the power to see a man and a woman as equal, and much, much more. Resistance is the reason we are here today, the reason we have all

these stories and the reason you are reading this book. Resistance will be the reason we will have stronger gun control rights, better immigration reform, the reason people have a voice. All of our origins come from the power of resistance. Don't ever stop resisting.

DOUAA RASHED, GRADE 12

You

I don't know why I've always felt so lonely
But I do know I have you
You take away my lonely
You have become a piece of me
You take away all my problems
And all the scary things in my head
And you put them on shelves in my own room
My very own room that I've never had before
With black wood flooring and a king-sized bed
With my own bathroom and closet and a ceiling over my head
You take everything and hide it from me behind the plants I've always wanted
The books I've never read
The clothes I've never worn
A room where there is no clutter and mess
Where life stops and I finally have my very own room.

Without you, there is no room anymore
All I can see are problems bigger than me
The 4 MILLION Muslims who died after 2001
The 12 MILLION illegal immigrants who live in fear every day
The African Americans who are treated like they are nothing
When all they have done was fight to be something
The wars in the Middle East funded by the United States
Or the wars caused by them?
The women with no rights, the women who will never know freedom
The women who are born women and never given an age
The women from a place where there isn't even a word for rape in their native tongue
How do I bring the room back without you?

I can't, I need you
You not only give me a room, but you validate everything I question
You show me the truth
Without you, I believe that
One man can change the world
But then you come and remind me that I'm not a man
And I will never change the world

Without you, I don't care about myself or my future
I just want the days to go faster and faster
But with you I am alive surrounded by the truth
The truth I must face to go forward in life

So days can stop feeling like empty boxes on a calendar
And they can start feeling like memories I'll grow up and tell my kids.

Without you, I am just surviving
But with you I feel as if I'm finally living
As if the weight of the world has been lifted off my shoulders
As if the power I imagined I had has disappeared and reality has reappeared
With you, I can hear the voices of the people who never told me goodbye
I can feel the arms of the people 5,000 miles away from me
With you, I don't have to think about the children with no education
The children without food, water or even a mother to shine bright in their darkest hours
The children who have been running before they could crawl
The children who like the dark skies
Only because that's when they can think
Without the fear of a bomb being dropped on their land
You let me know I can't fix this
You remind me that I can't even speak in a room full of people about anything that isn't funny
You make sure I can see my world before I try to see the world
I can't get out of bed without you
I can't attend a class without you
I can't even explain myself without you
You remind me that my parents gave up everything to the bone
So I can live the American dream, not them
Not so I can sit and think about the things they left
The people they left
With you, I can hear the triangle playing in the back of any song
I can hear the dogs barking as I drive with my music on
I can hear the joy around me
I can feel the joy around me
I can't hear the hunger in my father's voice
Not for food but for an easier day
With smaller problems
I can't hear the pain my mother feels in her bones
From things I cannot talk about
I can't hear the millions of people in the world who silently cry for help every day
The millions of people whose lives were over before they ever began
The people who just want that first breath after they've been drowning
The people who just want to finally swim

Without you, I crave giving these people a voice
I wish I could strip my own as if I was the little mermaid and I could just put it on the
neck of the people who were never taught to speak up
The people who grew up thinking their life could never be anything more
The people who are silent; yet, their voice could silence the world
The people who are resilient and will do anything for their freedom
For their future
For their children's future
But I'm going to go back to you

Back to my room
You're going to put everything on the shelves
In the back of the closet
Under the bathroom sink
And I'm going to sit on my king-sized bed

DOUAA RASHED, GRADE 12

His Sacrifice

My only living grandfather is one of the strongest men I have ever met. Although he is strict and tough with us, he has a heart of gold when it comes to matters that concern us. Compared to his grandchildren, my grandfather has lived a difficult life. Because his family was poor, he was only able to attend school up to the fifth grade. Soon after his departure from school, a life full of work began. He gave his dad a helping hand with his crops under the scorching sun and through winter's harsh temperatures. When he was twenty, he married my grandmother and made a family of his own.

At the age of 56, my grandfather made the decision to leave Bolivia to work in the United States. For more than a month and a half, he made the long, exhausting journey across every country in between Bolivia and the U.S. He made it here riding multiple buses or catching a ride in cars with others making the same journey as him. There were times when he would be the driver. Along the way, he met countless people, all who held the same amount of courage and tenacity to keep moving forward. Because of his age, he was usually left behind and found himself toward the end of the group. He could have easily given up, turned around and gone back to Bolivia, but he refused to let his family down.

Once he found a job here in America, my grandfather began to work in construction. This is his fifteenth year in this country. That is fifteen years of not just working, but fifteen years of not seeing my grandmother, his beloved wife. He lives a life of work in order to maintain my grandma in Bolivia and ensure my uncle, his only son, attends university so he could have a better life. Everything my grandfather does has always been for us and the family he left in Bolivia. Sometimes he will scold us over things we do not see as wrong. We know he scolds us because he wants us to become a better version of ourselves. All of his struggles have encouraged us to work harder in life and become successful. He made this enormous sacrifice so that one day he could wake up knowing that it was not in vain. My grandpa is why I am grateful for being able to live my life without making a sacrifice as painful as his.

SHARON SEJAS LAMAS, GRADE 12

The Smile from My Sister

I like to remember how my older sister, Angeli, would do EVERYTHING together.

I like to remember how my sister and I were close.

We would do EVERYTHING from playing with Barbies in our parents' room to telling each other secrets.

She would never want to leave me alone.

That all CHANGED when my little siblings were born.

I was NEVER with my older sister.

We would do everything together
and the smile she gave me was like her saying,
"This is my little baby sister".
the good times.

BERENICE TLATELPA, GRADE 12

How to Solve Kids' Disputes

All siblings fight, but I have seldom met someone who fought with their older sister the way I did. My mom, not wanting to get involved in the petty squabbles of a four-year-old boy and his seven-year-old sister, would tell our dad to resolve the situation. Even though he could easily separate us by lifting us up with one arm and holding us apart like in a cartoon, having a wrestling coach for a dad results in a more inventive solution. Every argument about whose turn it was to choose what show we were watching or who got the last Oreo in the package would become a "match" and our basement, far out of earshot of our mom, would become the "ring."

"Three two-minute periods" is all the time we had to settle our dispute and the one who won would be right. A border of couch pillows shaped in a circle was the only thing separating us from hitting a brick mantle and a thin carpet was the only thing cushioning our fall on a concrete foundation. In retrospect, it wasn't the safest solution, but it worked. The rules and moves my dad tried to teach us went in one ear and out the other; all we cared about was our tiny balled up fists connecting and how many punches we could get in in six minutes. As long as there was no blood or crying, the "match" didn't end until the time ran out or one of us pinned the other. Even though this occurred many times, my mom never found out about these "matches" until she overheard me, my sister, and our dad joking about it around a decade later.

Others may see these "matches" as kind of cruel or just strange that a father would have his kids basically fight to solve their problems, but I see it in a different light, because these "matches" have caused me to become more of a man of action. Instead of complaining or giving up whenever I encounter a problem, I'll work to fix it and I think that quality of mine is thanks to my dad's inventive solutions.

KEVIN TURNER, JR., GRADE 12

Dinner Table

Fresh tortillas mom made lay on the table wrapped in the cloth napkin she once sewed. A plate of beans laid out in front of me fresh off the stove with some mouth-watering Bistec a La Mexicana. I look around and I see my mother, my sister, and my two brothers sitting around the table with me . . . a rare family dinner. We all dig in, spoons clinking against the ceramic plates that all have diverse flowers painted on them; sunflowers, poppies, or azaleas. Greedy hands reach across the table for tortillas or the tomato-shaped salt shaker. Starting with a small summary about how our day has been, small banter is exchanged. Soon, the talk turns nostalgic as we start reminiscing about the memories we share from our homeland, Mexico. We talked about when we used to climb the guava trees with dirt-stained faces to memories here in the United States, where our lives completely changed from what they used to be. I take a look around and I feel at home. I feel content. I wish to stay in this moment forever— just us around the dinner table.

DANNA VALDEZ CAMACHO, GRADE 12

My Beautiful Afghanistan

I am sitting at the summit of the Hindu Khush mountain
Holding a glass of green Ahmad chai eating *shirpara*.
I am listening to my grandpa reading love poems from Hafez
And I am moving my body to the old Persian music.

Let me fly over my beautiful Afghanistan
And look at the crystal clear water of Ghargha lake.
Let me look at green eyes and *badami chashman* of my Afghans
And draw their eyes for the world instead of brown and black.

Let me swim in Band-e-Amir
And eat the sweet *Kandahri* pomegranate in color of blood.
Let me talk in sweet *Herati* accent
And wear the colorful handmade *badakhshi* dress.

Let me go to the kite tournaments
And run after every flying kite.
Let me hug my grandma again
And sit on the rooftop with her talking about our childhood.

Let me hear my national anthem again
And scream at the top of my lungs in the Baba mountain,
“We do not want to fly like migrant birds again!
Free my nation! Free my beautiful Afghanistan!”

Notes:

Shirpara is a sweet *herati* candy we eat with tea.

Hafez is a famous Persian poet.

Badami Chaman means eyes in almond shape. Usually the Hazara ethnicity have them.

Kandahri comes from Kandahar which is a province in Afghanistan.

Herati is also comes from Herat which is a province in Afghanistan.

Badakhshi comes from Badakhshan which is also a province in Afghanistan.

ZAHRA WAKILZADA, GRADE 12

This Woman

This woman broke down so many times,
But her vision was always there to lead her in the dark.
When a stranger touched her
She looked him in the eye
And there was no sign of apology.
This woman broke down.
When her boyfriend abused her
And the judge closed the case
Because women are not trustworthy.
This woman broke down.
When her mother was asked, “What happened?”
She touched the livid bruise around her eye
And said, “A small argument!”
This woman broke down.
When society expected her brother
To be masculine and angry all the time,
And respected his words even when they were her ideas.
This woman broke down.
When she was told she was too loud for a lady
When she was told that she was too dumb to know math
When she was told she could not decide for her body
This woman broke down.

This 18 year-old broke down.
And sobbed in the bathroom countless times.
But this woman stood up strong every time.
She wiped off her tears, spoke out, and fought for women's rights
In hope that no woman ever experiences what she experienced in her life.

ZAHRA WAKILZADA, GRADE 12

Thank You, Dad

The following is an interview with my father. I asked him questions in an effort to garner more knowledge about my dad.

My kids are very important to me. My oldest is Nathan and my youngest is Lucy. Every day they surprise me with their talent and hard work; however, I'm proudest that my children have grown up to be good people. They're kind and respectful and conscientious. I taught them to be that way just like my mother taught me to be kind to people and compassionate. I remember just hanging out in her bedroom and we'd just sit on her bed. Sometimes my sisters were with us, too. We would just enjoy each other. I think those are some of my fondest memories. My mom was really silly, too. She was always making jokes and playing with words in funny ways, but she once told me something I'll never forget. She once explained that the compassion you show toward other people can be really significant, even if it's on a very small level. Sometimes the simplest thank you or even asking someone how he or she is doing can have a big impact. You may not even ever realize the impact, especially if it's somebody you don't know. I really think our world doesn't have enough kindness like that anymore, so I'm glad my children show compassion towards others just like my mother taught me. I think I'd be happy if people remembered me that way.

After learning the most important person in my dad's life was his mother, it dawned on me that my father is one of the most influential people in my life. He has supported me through all my endeavors, whether it be theater, swimming, baseball, choir, or dance. You name it. He's been there for me. I'm so grateful for the support he's given me and the opportunities he's allowed me to pursue. I've never thanked him, though. I have never thanked the man who loves me unconditionally when I feel alone in the universe . . . the man who tells me "it will be alright" when my world comes crashing down. I haven't thanked that very same man who broke the bank just so I could attend every lesson, camp, audition and rehearsal. I always fear my two pitiful words won't compare to the things he's done for me. Instead, I want to say three words. I love you. I love you not because three is greater than two, but because I truly love you. I love you for your endless support. I love you for always telling me it will be all right when everything seems far from all right. I even love you for leaving work early just to drive me places I can't get to myself. Of all the things I love you for, I love you most because I call you dad.

NATHAN YANNARELL, GRADE 12

The Kaleidoscope For Rhonda Carper

A kaleidoscope of greetings: *hola, heyyy babbbyyy, ПРИВЕТ, buenas tardes, assalam alaikum, akwaaba, salam, hey y'all, Good Morning, bonjour, kamusta, salud, hello*

A kaleidoscope of backgrounds: *Appalachia, Mississippi, Bolivia, Egypt, Philly, Russia, North Carolina, Louisiana, West Virginia, Kabul, Mexico, Austria, Herat, Ghana, Pennsylvania, Italy, Honduras, El Salvador, Philippines, Cote d'ivoire, Virginia, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Texas*

A kaleidoscope of memories: juice sharing, The Things We Keep, Freeing our friend from the slammer, the Peter Paul Development Center, a hurt hand, a scary driver, read alouds, grammar rants, JA and his 5th grade teacher, Zahra and Douaa representing us and helping with The Kite Runner, singing, Kevin swimmin', the Icons

A kaleidoscope of personalities: Ja'Chelle the jokester, Celine the smart, David the elusive, Joseph the Golden Retriever, Makayla the truculent bell ringer, Dani the talker, Dessa the absent, Jordan the prisoner, Sharon the storyteller, Nirian the artist, Kevin the athlete, Elvis the singer, Juliette the team mom, Berenice the mysterious, Karina the snacker, Danna the plug, Ashley the moral compass, Lexi the photographer, Lily the angry musician, Zahra the writer, Cassie the classy, Christina the new kid on the block, Lenore the Pokemon griever, Alexandrian the tenacious, Joseph G the future English teacher, Adwoa the cultured, Alex the silent but thoughtful, Nathan the dramatic, Mrs. Sterne the one with no control, Mrs. Carper the heartbeat

A kaleidoscope of love: amor, carino, amore, sah lang, mohabat, ishaq, hob, odo, Я люблю тебя

A kaleidoscope of families: Brinkley, Honeycutt, Asamoah, Marchegiano, Yannarell, Campos, Mun, Lopez, Albea, Agre, Turner, Green, Estrada, Ater, Annibell, Sejas Lamas, Lucas, Wakilzada, Valdez, Marquez, Mitzen, Rashed, Monico, Johnson, Barahona, Carreon, Tlatelpa, Austin, Hernandez, Garcia, Sterne, Carper

A kaleidoscope of traditions: baptism, henna, memorable Quinceañeras, enjoying the sweetness of the sugar cane, Rap, a Sweet 16, Eid, First Communion, Scary El dia de los Muertos, Nowroz, Baby Jesus and Bread, baked mac-n-cheese, Chuseok, Bar Mitzvah, eating pecans right off the tree, Italian Christmas, Afenhiyia Pa kente, garter for the future groom, Latin Dance, jumpin' the broom, Posada, Thanksgiving, Lent, burying the weasel, Dia de los Reyes Magos, Easter, the joy of Mardi Gras, Cinco de Mayo, Hanukah, family cookouts, first birthday traditions, Ramadan, El Sid Ou, confirmation, 31st Night

...uniting into the beauty that embodied The Origin Project, Class of 2019...a kaleidoscope of gratitude
Dedicated to Mrs. Rhonda Carper, the heartbeat of The Origin Project Class of SJHS, 2019



WOODBRIDGE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL



Stonewall invites Woodbridge to celebrate the publication of *The Origin Project Book 4*

Captivity

"No, you can't go outside." These words, believe it or not, kept part of my beautiful rightfully-deserved childhood restricted. You see, when I was younger, my favorite thing was playing outside with my friends. The problem with that was I was only allowed to go outside Friday, Saturday and Sunday; while everyone else could play outside every day. Isn't that unfair? Even if you think it isn't, as a kid I sure did, and my opinion overrides yours right now, so haha. Since I believed it was unfair, I decided to fight the oppression.

I did a lot of things. One was that instead of going home right after school (since I walked home), I'd go to my friends backyard and leave my backpack there and play outside for a bit. I know, right, wasn't I a genius? "Heh" typical me.

Another thing I did was when they weren't home, I'd go outside. Pretty much the same concept. The main difference is that doing it that way holds more risk. There was a time when I did that, and I was outside playing. One of my friends comes running up to me and tells me, "I just saw your dad at the mailbox." Before he even finished his sentence, I had already taken off. I ran like my life depended on it, and it kinda did.

Did I get caught that day? Yes. Do I know how he saw me? I don't, and I probably never will. The result of all of this made me a somewhat introverted person. It also made me get used to being told "no" so it's not completely bad. I guess in a way they were trying not to spoil me or something. I mean currently I'm allowed to go outside anytime, but I don't anymore. I guess in a way those dumb restrictions have made me who I am today. I still hate them though.

AKA ANJEH, GRADE II

From Honduras to America

A wealthy known young girl from Nagarejo, Honduras, and a poor young boy from Macuelizo, Honduras, joined lives and took a journey to live a new life. My mom went to the best schools; they were private. My dad worked and barely went to school. He lived with his grandparents; his mother worked for a family. My dad came here with a visa when he was sixteen, way before getting married with my mom. He worked day and night to save money and went back to Honduras two years later. Once he went back, he owned a house and two cars at eighteen years old. My parents met at a young age. My grandma has a store in her house; in Honduras it's called a "pulperia." My dad would go there to buy things, and that's how he met my mom. My grandma liked him as her boyfriend; she thought he was a good kid. But my grandpa just didn't like the idea of his baby girl getting married. My mom was seventeen and my dad was nineteen when they got married. They had a big wedding, with bridesmaids and all. A few months later, they decided they wanted to come to America.

My father decided to come here first to change their life for the better. His mother had no input to him leaving because she wasn't financially helpful to him. His grandfather did not want him to come to America, so he didn't inform him and came hidden from him. My dad's aunt was already here and he hoped she'd support him, but she didn't because my father was a sick boy. He had asthma and frequent seizures until he was fourteen. He decided to ask his other aunt who was here, and she agreed to help him once he got to the border. His only support system was his aunt, my mother, and his grandma. His grandma gave him fifty dollars and a suitcase. He sold two of his baby cows to get money for his journey. He came here all by himself with no help from a "coyote," someone who you pay to help you on your way to the border. You pay him and he guides you all the way through. My dad would sleep on the streets and ask random people for shelter. He would also ask random people for money and food to be able to survive. He mentioned he was very scared walking all by himself because he didn't know where he was and he didn't know anyone around him. He got here in one month and two weeks, successfully without getting caught. Once he got here, he got picked up from Phoenix to go to California. He paid the driver two hundred and fifteen dollars for the ride. He hid in the trunk

of the car the whole ride so that he wouldn't get caught. He stayed at a friends house for one week and then got on a plane to Washington.

My mother came here at eighteen years old, six months after my dad had left. Both her parents didn't want her to go, but it was only right for her to go to her husband. My dad had been saving money to send to my mom so that she could be able to pay a coyote for her. She came with her cousin and like fifteen other people. They traveled in a bus and sometimes walked. They would sleep in the woods all together. She sometimes had to hold her pee, so she wouldn't have to pee in front of everyone. My mom said she suffered a lot through the journey. The coyotes would go out and get food for them. She couldn't contact anyone. The only time she could communicate with her parents or my dad was when she would get caught. It took my mom three times to get here. She got caught by immigration three times and each time she stayed in prison for one night. She never turned back, even though her parents would tell her to go back. She listened to my dad every time; he told her to keep going. My dad would send her more money every time she got caught. The third time she got caught was at a hotel in Mexico; immigration walked in and told everyone to put their hands up. My mom started laughing when they were coming at them. She laughs when she's nervous (I do too). When they took them, they took pictures of them as punishment, and they were in the newspaper the next day. After the third time, she finally made it to the border. She was very scared, but she jumped the fence at night and made it to America. Then she went to Phoenix and took a plane to Washington, where my dad was waiting for her.

At first they rented a room in Alexandria. Then moved to an apartment in Arlington. My dad worked at a bakery. My mother was pregnant with my oldest sister five months after being here. And because of that, she started working. She would take the bus to get around. My mom tells us a story about a time she couldn't get on the bus because she was ten cents short and had to walk. My parents were very poor at the time. The first few months of being here my mom would say she lived better in Honduras, but she still managed to stay here. They had only planned to stay here for about two years to save money to take back to Honduras, but they ended up staying much longer; they are still here. After seven years of being here, both my parents already had their residency. My mom actually had an appointment to get hers on 9/11, but because of the whole tragedy she got it the next day. In 2003 my dad started his landscaping company, and his company started flourishing seven years later. At first my mom did regret coming here because she suffered and missed her family. But they definitely don't regret coming here now because of how successful they both are.

GG AYALA-MONTOYA, GRADE II

Asige

1756. That's when the earliest known record began. Before then in Asige, Sweden, not only does the paper trail disappear, it's non existent. In Sweden as a whole, however, the earliest known record was created in 1615. That's over one hundred years difference. So why was Asige so behind the times?

Asige has a population of 295 as of 2018. This is in an age when media and transportation advances have made the small town (it's really more of a village) more accessible. Imagine what the population was over two hundred years ago. This place was, and still is, isolated.



Woodbridge TOP students share their writings and explore their writing ideas

Just a tiny dot on a map (if it even shows up), this place is a small, tight knit community. Small, but ancient. There not be very many of them, but these people have survived on this small plot of land for thousands of years. Bronze age monuments that have stood the test of time are a testament to this fact. They have managed to survive despite the odds, and all the while staying relatively unchanged.

Scania, in which Halland (the province where Asige is located) used to be a part of, had been settled before the Viking Age and populated through it. Not much is known about the lives of these early people during these times, although some suspect they were organized by tribes led by chieftains. Fortunately, as a few hundred years go by, a clearer picture begins to form.

In the year 380 CE, Scania became a kingdom when Alaric claimed the title Rex Scaniae. After a few hundred years of self rule, it was conquered and ruled by Denmark. Since then, different rulers played hot potato with Scania, being ruled by Denmark on multiple separate occasions, before it finally settled back in Danish hands. However, in the Dano-Swedish War, Sweden defeated Denmark. The losing country was forced to cede Scania in the mid 1600's to Sweden, where it has remained to this day.

Scania was allowed to govern themselves after they were promised autonomy in the peace treaty, however this did not last long. King Charles XI convinced the Diet (Riksdag of the Estates) to define 'king' as a Christian ruler with absolute power. He used his newfound power to institute Swedish law in the small area. Slowly the rest of the Scanians traditional customs and laws were taken away in an effort to unify the land with Sweden.

Halland, along with Blekinge, was successfully removed from Scania and integrated into Sweden. However, the rest of Scania still retained some independence, only being partially integrated until 1720, when it officially became part of the country. From then on, Asige was a Swedish parish.

Though it may not have been always known by the name of Asige, the little parish has survived everything from Vikings, to constantly changing leadership, to time itself. It may not seem much, but it's seen a lot, and is a home to some incredible Bronze Age monuments that confirm this. These ancient stones are scattered over the small village, forever a permanent record of its past.

One of these monuments has been dubbed Haghbard's Gallow. It consists of two pairs of large man made standing stones about twenty feet apart. Estimated to originate from the Bronze Age, it has been there for hundreds of years. On the stones one can find engravings, though they may not have been translated. The name, Haghbard's Gallow, is in connection to the legend of Haghbard and Signy, which tells of two lovers who ended up dying. Haghbard by hanging at the gallows, and his lover committing suicide as an act of faithfulness.

However, not all the monuments are just pieces of stone. Another of these historic sites is a cemetery where there are about forty standing stones and ten burial mounds, one of which is called Haghbard's Hill. The dead from centuries ago were buried here along with some of their belongings. Also named in connection with the legend, the mound was likely named for the hill on which the gallows were where Haghbard hanged.

There are several other monuments such as this, all with different stories that tell of Asige's past. In all honesty, not much can be told of these testaments of what once was. Whatever their original purpose may have been was lost to time; only educated guesses and theories satisfy the question. However, what information that is gleaned from these structures can only help piece together the history of the area.

It's remarkable that a place as small as this has so much history behind it. The people there who have lived there for generations are remarkable as well. They managed to keep their land with no invasion or forceful removal. There was no sudden flood of new people with new cultures. All that history that land holds is *their* history. Asige tells their story and no one else's.

My family, on my mother's side, descends from these people. My parents and brother have had the opportunity to visit the small parish, to see their ancestral roots. They were able to see the people and history that resides there. For them, Asige filled in a small part of their origin.

My Standardized Race

Too much of this,
too little of that.
Check the boxes.
Am I American? Because I was born here?
Of course,
but my bloodline tells a different story;
one I do not know well . . .
My sacred identification. Check.
My roots are spread far. Check.
But I cannot seem to grasp onto one particular identity.
Check?
Maybe, someday,
I will understand why I am not
fit to check the boxes.

TIFANY BARAHONA, GRADE 12

Mixed Relations

I am mixed. I have tan skin, dark, thin hair, and almond-shaped eyes holding dark brown irises. I have always felt more “Asian” than I do white. When living in a small, rural town, I especially felt Asian, as I looked so different than everyone else. I used to hate it. I used to hate the jokes towards my slanted eyes, or the mocking accents reciting racist slurs. I used to hate being Asian. I cursed every defining feature that exposed my Asian ethnicity. I wished I took my mother’s features instead. Rounder eyes, lighter skin, a more bridged nose. I was eight years old, staring in the mirror, wishing I could change how I look.

I am mixed. Being mixed is one thing. I was once told I’m not actually Asian, as I’m not “pure.” Being mixed with white is another thing. People will tell me I do not face discrimination because I am white. People will tell me that I do not know a struggle because I am white. People will tell me that I have white privilege. They do not understand that by saying this, they are invalidating my own experiences. I did not just imagine the racism I faced growing up, and the racism I still face. Yes, I am white. But I am also Asian. And I look Asian. How you look is what matters, like it or not. I was once told I’m “not actually Asian” because I am not fully Asian. I have been given fake comments like “oh, that must be so hard!” when describing a difficult situation I’ve faced where my ethnicity is denied.

I am mixed. I face discrimination. Not only from other races invalidating my own struggle, but my own races invalidating my involvement. I am not pure enough to be Asian. I am too tainted to be white. I belong to neither. However, this has opened a new strain of people. Mixed kids. Specifically, mixed white kids. They are accepted by neither of their races, so they accept each other. I have many friends with one white parent, and we all share the same experiences. Racism, but from our own races. Along with the rest of the world.



Linda Woodward and Nancy Bolmeier Fisher workshop with
Woodbridge TOP students

LEAH CAPILI, GRADE 12

Both Sides

My background is one of my favorite themes to explore because I come from a multi-racial background; poetry allows me to do this in a creative way.

for Papa et pour Papi
two figureheads,
the symbols
of families
woven together by their DNA

a contractor,
whose element
is with a tool box in hand

a police captain,
who protects
his beautiful Tunis

fathers,
gentle in their ways,
always watching
with an encouraging eye

grandfathers,
ready to offer a warm hug
or the honest advice
others avoid giving

opposite sides of the world,
but perfect parallels,
the vision of love
and the center of their families

we remember them every day,
their gruff chuckles
and calloused hands
floating in the memories
of those who came from their blood

we inherited
his olive skin,
his angled nose,
their passion

we are the remainders of their legacies,
dissipated across the globe,
yet deeply connected in our hearts,
beating with the love they gave us.

7 Layers

1. graham cracker crust

the foundation of the dessert,
without which
all else would be lost
this is my grandmother,
the matriarch of the family
and the reason this all began

2. sweetened condensed milk

not the most vivid ingredient,
but the invaluable protector
of all the others
this is my uncle,
a gentle giant
that keeps us humble

3. butter

the ingredient you might
not notice at first glance,
but is an essential
this is my aunt,
the one who takes action
when everyone else is focused on the small things

4. butterscotch chips

where things begin to get sweet,
surprise chunks of gooey butterscotch
add variety to the 7 layer bar
this is me,
the outlier,
with the tan skin and dark features

5. chocolate chips

the staple of all good desserts,
a light drop of chocolate
in the soft center
this is all my cousins,
who are the beacon of the family,
keeping us alive

6. flaked coconut

the striking,
tropical flavor of coconut
melts into the other ingredients
this is my mother,
who is her own entity
but conforms when she must

7. chopped nuts
this is the garnish,
the crunch atop
the soft treat
this is my grandfather,
always at the front of our memories,
his loss still fresh and stark

My origin is a common thread in a lot of my writing, and I have included two recent poems about my origins and both sides of my family.

SALIMA DRISS, GRADE 12

Mosaic

I hesitate at the keyboard, stare down at my orange little notebook. It's blank, besides the one time I used it as a journal entry on that field trip. The ladies passed them down in rows, neat little stacks of orange, *the Origin Project* in big Papyrus font, a journal of sorts. It seemed simple enough. "Write about your origins," the presenter drawled to the audience: an auditorium of Appalachian students that had recently begun including young writers from outside the area, students from Northern Virginia, like me. But the rest of them had Southern roots; they were a tight-knit collective. Simple enough.

That field trip was in November. I've been trying to write this piece for months.

I hate nonfiction.

I look down at what I've scribbled so far. *Poland, Peru*. Two countries of origin. *Mother, father*. People of direct lineage. *United States*. Country of birth. Country of residence. Country of assimilation. But then . . . *Immigration, suburbs, marriage, interracial, cross-cultural, trilingual, nuclear family, recession, divorce*—that's where it ends, for me. I became disillusioned as a young child, my formative years stunted, dissociated from my cultures, something . . . malfunctioned along the way. *It's so much more complicated than that*, I think. *It's not just my origins, I don't even know what that word entails, it's my family history, my experiences, my childhood, my two lifestyles split into pieces and squeezed together like wet socks in the laundry. I'll never be able to sort them out*. Each pair of them is divorced, but the whole is a clumped mass; stuck. That's funny.

I wake up at my father's with a certain pair in mind one morning and realize I've lost one of them, only to rediscover it a week later, tucked away in the drawer at my mother's. I go back and forth. I become an expert at packing up my things in under twenty minutes because *it's his Wednesday and he's coming to pick us up at three, you better hurry*. I'm subject to Polish dinners and *Babcia's* phone calls Sundays through Wednesdays, and rapid-Spanish, Peruvian aunties, rice and beans Wednesdays through Saturdays. These household-specific rituals never meet; they rotate. I cling to the memories of birthday parties and first communions and New Year's Eve, back when I didn't lose socks. You would hear Spanish in several corners and Polish in the hallway, English in the kitchen, on the floor . . . they fade like the patterns on my oldest pair of socks. They're replaced with the sound of arguing, something about money, I wake up to stern voices across the hall in the night and press my ear to my door to make out what they're saying. I can never make out what they're saying. I can't remember anything else.

"Write about your origin." *My origin. Origins?* I'm scattered, I'm little bits of paper torn into shreds and left to float in cross-continental waters. I'm a thousand different migrants scrambling to the border, *refuge, safety, security, stability, someone please*—Ellis Island, 1916. My great-great-grandmother arrives in New York from Austria-Hungary, safe from the perils of the Great War on her homefront. She wants to build a life, she's looking at apartments, a husband . . .

She returns home thirteen years later, unmarried, childless, the Great Depression weighing heavy on her breast, her bags empty besides falsified passports and a few scarves & rosaries. I don't remember her name. I sit on my mother's lap as she reads the letter my great-grandmother scrawled out in neat Polish-cursive to us,

alphabet inked curly and careful, but I'm seven years old and I'm fidgeting with a hand-knit doily I grabbed off the bedside table, a souvenir from our last trip to Krakow. Those things are all around the house. I fit my finger through one and trace the flower-pattern. *All those stitches really linked together to make that, huh? Must've taken generations.*

My paternal great-grandfather doesn't scare me. No, it's something . . . different. He's not scary, just unfamiliar. The adults in the room are all quiet, they're watching my brother and I interact with him, anticipation hangs heavy in the air, *but for what?* It's just a little unnerving. I try not to pay it much mind. I look at my brother, he's squirming in the woman's arms, she's much stouter but her face is just as wrinkly, she's my great-grandmother. He's three. She smiles at me, her skin crinkles up. The roots of her unnaturally raven hair are a soft, snowy white. I'm six. I can smell soap and spices on the man who's holding me, I keep forgetting he's something like family, and he's so thin I'm afraid he'll break while I'm in his lap. "Abuelito Miguel is one-hundred years old today," my father tells me. *Mi bisabuelo.* If he's so important, why am I just now meeting him? I wish I could've known more. I wish my mother would stop talking to me in Polish when everyone else is talking Spanish. "Can I let go now?" They allow me to slip off the leathery couch and my mother hands me a piece of fruit, a mango. I suck on the nectar and watch the big blue Lima sky. She murmurs to me, Slavic accent soft and motherly, about the mess I've made on the clothes her mother hand-sewed me. The sundress drips with juice. It's a flowery, Eastern-European pattern, like the one on her sheets.

My great-grandfather dies at 102, a legacy left behind in my brown, chubby little hands.

"Where are you from?"

I don't answer that if I can help it. I don't think I've actually ever answered that. My automatic response since I was old enough to understand what the question implied was, "Well, my mom's from Poland, and my dad's from Peru." Where am I from? The two of them, probably.

My mother's womb is safe and compact. No languages to learn. It's just me and her. I split off suddenly and kick her insides. That flesh, ours, all warm and blood, tissue, skin, cells multiplying, genes copying, I'm a person, I squirm, I'm a bundle, finally, I'm all red and pink and ready to take on the world, fists clenched, I don't know about gender or race or origin. I just am. This is where I originate.

Mama is the same in Polish and in Spanish.

I have her European nose and a pointed Caucasian chin, but the apples of my cheeks protrude like the natives' of Cusco, like my father. My delicate eyebrows all fan out and touch in the middle. My skin's not caramel or toffee or golden, but I'm not vanilla bean or shortbread or coffee creamer either. I'm a brown little kid barefoot in the summer with cheeks singed from the sun. Our backyard blooms with gardenias behind the white fence; suburban, domestic bliss. My two-year-old brother trails behind me with a universally content squeal, happy in all our languages. He's tanned too well to be white. My mother's red and pink all over, she applies sun lotion like it's lifeblood, but he's a lightly toasted marshmallow. His eyebrows fan out even more than mine, like caterpillars on his peachy face, but his don't touch and mine are darker. He has a wide, bulbous nose and hooded eyelids—that's the recessive Peruvian gene. My eyelids protrude outwards, the dominant. Somewhere in their rich history, the Inca-descendants made contact with the Chinese and other East Asian settlers. We still put soy sauce in our stir-fry and seafood. My brother gets asked if he's Japanese.

Tato is the Polish word for father. I never picked up *Papá* or *Papi*. But I was three, and my brother copied me, and the name stuck. I'm sixteen and I still call him that in the kitchen. We make tamales. "Tato, you forgot the olives." He curses in Spanish and I hit him playfully, he changes the salsa song blaring on the speakers, and the house swells with the gentle aroma of boiled banana leaves and steamed rice.



He never learned Polish. My mother knows all three languages, she's fluently trilingual. She learned Spanish with my paternal grandmother when she lived with us for the nine months after I was born. But Polish is ranked one of the top most difficult languages in the world to learn, rooted in Slavic, while Spanish is a Romance language and one of the easiest to pick up. I don't blame him. The rest of our family lags behind. I know the most immediately after her—I read Polish and Spanish, albeit slowly. I speak in stuttering phrases and muttered sentences and incorrect grammar tenses, but I speak. It takes me a bit to write. But I can listen to radio dramas, watch TV, and participate in family gossip on either sides perfectly fine. I'm alright, as long as I understand my little cousins and drunk uncles' jokes. My brother can't speak or understand Polish, except in bits and phrases, some words he recognises, food items and household objects. I guess three years makes a difference. There's a certain shy shame behind it, I can sense his embarrassment. The village kids on my Polish grandmother's farm babble to him and I translate.

They hang off my arms and call me *Cocia*, auntie, and ask me "Why is your skin like that?" I ask, "Like what?" And they go "It's so dark! Are you just tan?" And I respond, "Yes, but I'm like that all year round. I'm hispanic, like my dad. And so is Boleslav." I point to my brother and they marvel at my words. They've never seen a hispanic person before; the most they've seen of anyone who isn't white are the brown Romani people who beg on the streets, the ones they call 'Gypsies', and they've only seen black maids on TV.

I get called *gypsy* in the town square by one of the street performers, but it's meant as a compliment. I smile back, coffee eyes gleaming. They call them *black*, black eyes and black hair, being brown is such an novelty in Poland that it's romanticised. They write songs about brown eyes, they're so unique, so beautifully dark. *Czarne oczy*, they sing. *Jej piękne czarne oczy,śnią się czarne oczy.* *Her beautiful black eyes, I dream of those black eyes.* Gypsy queen, Snow White, Pocahontas. I walk into a cafe with my mother. She orders first, rapid Polish that the barista reciprocates. When I approach, she says "Hello," sweetly, attempting her best English. "What can I get you today?" She's thoroughly surprised when I answer back in fluent Polish, accent and all—almost flustered. She enters my order and compliments me on how well I speak. "Thank you," I tell her. "Yeah, she's my mom." I point to her, my mother, a white woman nonchalantly sipping her coffee.

My European features are praised in the mountains of Peru. The town's nestled right underneath Machu Picchu, swarming with tourists and indigenous peoples alike. "What a nice nose! And good hair, wow, and look at how nice your skin is . . ." It's not too deeply brown like my father's, they mean. The marketplaces are packed with products, alpaca wool dyed brilliant reds and purples. They eye my brother suspiciously as we explore like locals, my dad bargaining about price to get discounts. They don't discount tourists, the white men; exploitation of their cultures keeps them alive and fed. My brother gives us away. I pick up a geode for sale and caress its rough crystals. Amethyst. *This came from the ground, I think. This came right from an old murky cave, right from the ground with all the other rocks and dirt, but it's purple and familiar and has an identity of its own.* Wonder how that is.

I stand at the peak of Machu Picchu after having climbed hundreds of steps from the bottom of the highest ruin, now at the top, wheezing, but we made it. All three of us—my brother, my father, and I, but my mother's asthma gnaws at my own lungs. Our heads graze the clouds and I try to feel my ancestry, like our tour guide told us to, *feel it in the soil while you stand there at the top of the mountain, listen to the ghosts of those ancient people, your thousandth-great grandfathers, grandmothers and aunts and uncles growing corn, toiling to build these foundations, birthing generations of your family. Can you hear them?*

I got sick behind a trash can on an alpaca farm with the tour guide three hours earlier—altitude sickness, he explained. I don't know what I'm doing here. I don't feel anything except a dull pain in my stomach from the air pressure. How can this really be where I come from when it's all so foreign to me? "I want to learn Quechua," my father remarks. One of the many surviving native languages of the region; the colonizers couldn't get over the mountains. I want to be able to speak Spanish.

The cathedral is echoey and dark. 'This place is for worshippers only,' a sign out front declares. 'No tourism. Please, no cameras or recording devices.' We sit through Mass in Latin, just like at home in the Virginia

suburbs. Every motion of the priest and the clergy is the same. I glimpse at the windows to our left, stained glass that I used to marvel at as a kid, glimmering red and green and blue, trimmed with gold. My mother clutches a rosary given to her by my paternal grandmother; they bonded in their devout Catholicism while she learned Spanish. I keep looking around. All of Europe's got this look to it, an archaic, yet luxurious aesthetic. Gold stolen from civilizations abroad. The humming latin reverberates through the hollowness of the place. It sounds like there's secrets everywhere, a holy place carrying saintlike anxiety. *Are you doing okay enough to get into heaven? Do you know what that means?*

Sometimes I don't feel like a person. I'm an amalgam of identities, experiences, but they all overwhelm and cancel out, like when you mix all those beautiful colors together on your paint palette but end up with a muddy brown. It's so much that I don't know what to do with it. Somewhere between ten and twelve, I withdraw. *I don't want two households, two cultures, two birthday presents, I don't care. I don't want these origins, I just want to be normal.*

I'm less inclined towards nonfiction because it's revealing. I leave bits of me on the paper for others to consume. I feel exposed.

I spent most of my late childhood void of an inner cultural identity. The divorce brought on a sense of disillusionment, a veil of unreality. I didn't really feel like anything. I tried to fill the void in online communities of writers and artists, lost myself in fantastic worlds of fiction and literature to find an escape from the real world, even if it was just for a little while before bed.

But I knew I couldn't avoid things forever, especially not when it began to resurface in the form of panic attacks, depressive episodes and overwhelming gender dysphoria.

I discovered my LGBT identity in middle school around that time, after being bullied out of talking so passionately about my interests in fantasy fiction. Maybe it was the force of another thing being crammed into that emotional file cabinet, *things you have to keep to yourself now*, that finally forced it to burst. My teenage years then catapulted into a different sort of quest for identity, a gender and sexuality label that fit me. Thankfully, I'm there now. People tell me they like my name, and that it's such a cool gender-neutral title, but laugh at how it sounds compared to my brother's. *Boleslav*, named for the twelfth-century Polish king, and *Tyler*. It is pretty funny.

"I don't know how to start. At all," I complain to my friend on the bus ride home from the field trip. I tell her about the disconnect, how my cultures tear at me, how I feel like one big brown blob. She tells me, "A whole is more than the sum of its parts." I consider the concept; it's nice. Like a mosaic of individual pieces, all glimmering different colors, but it's more than just those bits glued together. "Who said that?"

I tune out of the conversation before I can hear the clear answer. Some French philosopher, or was it a German psychologist? I guess it doesn't matter. I look out the window. We're passing hills and mountains, little farms dotting the grassy landscape, the afternoon sun pouring through and spilling onto my hands. I look at them in the light, through the glass, and I imagine a faint, colorful glimmer shining back.

TYLER ECONA, GRADE 12

Little Stories in the Bigger Picture

2019

Five months. It took five months for me to decide what I wanted to write about. I stayed up for several nights giving myself a new refresher of my entire "origin" story. I questioned what I've done, what I'm doing and if my life was even an interesting narrative to read about; but, you see, I have multiple origin stories, each one as special and prestigious as the next. I never knew where to start, until now. July 3, 2003, I was born to two college kids who fought through their own coming of age chronicle—two student-athletes from a small country town that forced them to want to experience the city. They traveled to Woodbridge, Virginia, to live with an aunt who opened her doors for them to nudge the fresh start. A traffic light stood at each corner, and

land was covered by huge metal blocks called buildings. The city was a new adventure, and the place where their journeys would eventually become separate. But that's a different Origin story . . .

2006

Their faith is tested. Their simple child who ran the playground and smiled for miles was bound to the hospital bed to be fed liquid happiness. The tube ran from machinery to her armpit and switched to her forearm which would later be lightly stitched to a nice crease. The parents were put through bitter sadness. With doctor visitation and medicine on deck, the parents grew closer to God. They asked him to heal their daughter and to let her calling come another time. "Most children who experience this don't make it." The doctor tells them to prepare for the worst. They couldn't understand if God truly heard them, but that's a different origin story . . .

2008

Roaring twenties. New graduates turned businessman and woman with dating apps. Blackberries in one hand and kindergarten in another. They settled on a private school. Their five year old could learn about the lord and get a better education than they were given. Fifteen hundred dollars a month took a big toll on the co-parenting bank account. New interests in softball and ballet coupled with Girl Scouts and afterschool care was kicking 26-year-old butt. The parents were adapting to arguments. Loud voices and agony-filled hearts were abroad. The kindergartener, torn between feelings and tears, became the new coping mechanism. But that's a different origin story . . .

2011

We transitioned from private to public school. The parents tell me it's so I can learn new things and meet new people. But it's because we can't afford it anymore. With an aging mind comes broader thinking. The now eight-year-old is wondering when she will ever get a biological playmate. "It won't happen" becomes the scripture that the parents preach. Not quite yet, but that's a different origin story . . .

2013

Fifth grade, the year I am honored for finally finishing one of the longest learning periods of my life. Through that year my stomach flairs out, and my hips form small mountains that contour little hills before they reach my feet. I realized that my locs are not as luscious and flowy as the other sunkissed kids, and I treated my blackness like a skin disease that I wanted to hide. I took such beautiful features and made them seem like "Freakshow Criteria" . . . but that's a different origin story . . .

2017

Officially thirteen! In 2017 the parents mended their broken hearts. Eleven years of re-dating, re-evaluating and mysterious events slowly bring them closer again. With eleven years of catching up a priority, my sister Cambri was conceived. Six pounds of rekindled love and a head full of hair. She was the chosen one! The last to share the same blood as me, or so I thought . . . but that's a different origin story.

2018

Big dreams and big rings. Growing up I always dreamt of the happy big family that lived in the white picket fence cliche. More than two children in one home, a housewife and a working father. Picture perfect right? For eleven years I thought that was only a dream, until 2018 the parents, Cambri, and I all moved into a nice townhouse in a gated community. My smile returned. Running for miles like in 2006, with "cheerful" thoughts about HOA fees, Cornelius Gary JR—sorry, let's make this easier for you—J.R. was conceived. Our

family portrait was finally ready for its debut. New home, New blood, and new engagements or maybe I forgot that story? Well . . . That's a different origin story.

2019

Current day. I finally breathe the fresh air I so desperately asked the lord for. Loving my blackness from head to toe. Envyng my "white picket fence" and accepting the past for what it had in store. As I mature and slowly reach adulthood. I finally indulge in the smallest moments and linger in the larger ones. I've learned that there are stories within the bigger picture and that without these stories, my origin wouldn't be as significant as the next student's.

CINIYA GARY, GRADE 10

A Way to Cope

Blood trickles down the arms of a broken person.

Not a single tear stops as it's rolling down her cheek making its way to the depths of her breasts.

She looks dead inside hoping for comfort but is yet to find any.

Both her parents are too busy in other lives to realize what is wrong with their little girl.

She sits anxiously watching the blood make its way down to the ground.

Not knowing what to do next, She slowly makes her way to her room and cries herself to sleep.

"Maybe tomorrow will be a whole lot better," she says.

The next morning she's up by 6:00 ready for the day to make its course; the bus soon arrives and she's ready for school.

She arrives with a scared look, a scared feeling and A sense of discomfort; you can still see the dried tears from last night.

She makes her way to class and is looked at weirdly; people are talking behind her back and seeing her differently, seeing her in a way only one will know.

She's judged by her looks, judged by her personality, judged by any insecurities she herself is trying to fix. She takes the horrid words to heart, not wanting to cry in front of anyone to seem weak; she holds it in. After what felt like forever, school ends.

She is filled with joy knowing that finally she can be home where no deceiving looks can overcome her.

Tears rolling down her face, she makes her way to the restroom, looking at the mirror, debating so many things.

It was all crashing down on her: the bullying, the teasing, the nasty looks,

Everything . . .

Time goes by and she considers getting help, it took months and almost 5 years for her to recover all this.

Medication after medication, therapist after therapist, she was able to gain all her strength back.

Some days were good, some were bad, but it took time for her to heal.

Now, she's able to see herself in a different way; she's happy and calm and now is able to overcome challenge in life.

At times, things get rough, but she's able to cope with anything whether it be anxiety or depression.

NANCI GOMEZ-CASTRO, GRADE 12

Intertwined

My earliest memory in my life is standing in the driveway, looking at the brand new house my family would move into. I was holding my mother's hand, and we looked at the house before it was finished being

built. The sun was setting, which made the wood in the house glow from the orange sky. The air was warm, and I remember feeling happy at that moment. I felt complete. I felt comfortable in my skin.

My family moved to Fredericksburg when I was around the age of five. My memories of living in Fredericksburg come in short, detailed clips. It's like skipping through a movie, before getting to the part where the story starts picking up. I remember folding up paper airplanes and dropping them off the staircase. I remember learning the dance moves from Disney movies with my sisters. I remember running around in the backyard with my dog. We'd lie under our trampoline, where the grass was the highest and we got the most shade away from the sun. All of my fond memories of living there mix together.

The neighborhood kids I'd play with were all white. I never fully noticed this; it went completely over my head as a kid. I'd still chase frogs in backyards and play with the ladybugs that would land on our legs in the afternoon sun. I only had one black friend in my neighborhood that I would play with. We would play video games and ride our bikes together, along with some of the other kids in the neighborhood. We played volleyball and enjoyed being kids. I made friends, and I didn't think about the color of their skin. I didn't think about how they were different from me. Looking back, it makes me miss being completely unaware of the world around me.

Being both black and white, I didn't think about how different I was compared to everyone around me. For some reason, in my little head, I didn't notice how my skin was a mixture of colors. I didn't notice that I was the only kid that was a blend of races. I didn't look at life that way when I was younger, my mom was my mom, and my dad was my dad. They were one and the same for me because they were my parents. I was completely oblivious, and I stayed this way for a while. It wasn't until we had to move from Fredericksburg, that I realized my perception of things were distorted.

We had moved to the first house my parents could find in Woodbridge. I had started fourth grade late, and was known as the new girl. I was being shocked when going to school and seeing people that were so many different colors. The concept of diversity was new to me, and I didn't realize what that meant until I left Fredericksburg.

I soon made a couple new friends. Some of them were white, some of them were black, and some in between and many other races. It was different for me, to be in a new environment. I felt more relaxed for some reason. I was able to fully adjust to a new life in Woodbridge after a couple months, and everything was behind me.

Living in Fredericksburg changed my perception of life. I realized that living there made my thought process different. As a kid, I would subconsciously put myself under one category: black or white. I would feel like I had no choice but to choose one or the other. When I was with my white friends, I would think I was just white, and the other way around with my few black friends.

I often thought that I looked more white than black. I wore my hair in big braids, usually in twos or fours, but I rarely would wear my hair out curly. I found my curly hair frustrating, since my curls were tighter and had more knots. This led me to wearing my hair straight more often in middle school, so I wouldn't have to deal with the knots. Whenever I did wear my hair curly, which I did occasionally during the summer, I found myself 'feeling' more black. Though my complexion was darker than it is now, I was constantly around people that were white, so I would subconsciously associate myself with being white more than being black. I felt guilty when I noticed that I did this later on, and it made me realize how much of a difference it makes on you personally when you're around the same type of people.

I'm convinced that I developed this thinking when I wasn't exposed to diversity. It was also frustrating when I was forced to choose between the two when certain school tests asked for it. I would have this internal conflict with not being able to choose more than one answer. I would just resort to "other," but I wanted to be able to choose both. I felt as if I was choosing one parent over the other, and I didn't want that. I wanted to represent my parents equally.

Being around diversity in Woodbridge made me feel better with being a mixed child. There were others that were mixed like me, and I didn't feel so alone and so outcasted. It felt more natural to be around other

people that were like me. It truly was a cultural shock to me. I found myself being more open, more than I already was.

As I lived in Woodbridge longer, I grew more comfortable in the skin I was given. I was able to confidently be mixed, without being confused or conflicted with feeling pressured to only identify as one race. I was able to truly feel mixed, being with others that are just as intertwined as I was. I wasn't constricted with my actions, and my ways of looking at life weren't strictly black and white, but *mixed*. Living in Woodbridge made me realize the value and importance of being biracial, and what it really meant. It made me acknowledge that being mixed was a part of my origin and that I should cherish it. It helped me understand myself and who I was more, and I'm thankful for that. Without moving to Woodbridge, I wouldn't have realized the depth of being biracial and how cherished and appreciated it should be.

Now I sit, watching the sun rise in my driveway before I head to school. It's early morning, and the rest of my family is peacefully sleeping inside our house. The sky is set in an array of pinks and lavenders. The clouds in the sky look soft, and I look at them with sleepy eyes. The cold morning air chills my body, and my curls are messily set upon my head. My heart feels whole. I feel complete. I feel comfortable in my skin.

NATALYA GREEN, GRADE 12

Road Trip
Big Stone Gap, July 2018
For Alexandra

I

A summer traveler in rural mountains,
you navigate a winding path,
your favorite verdant trees
beckoning you toward elusive sunshine,
cocooning you in natural love,
inspiring artistic energy—
photographs through windshield glass,
meandering words honed as poetic lines.

II

I ride along in video, imagining the warmth
of sunshine as treetop leaves retract,
allowing a beam to reach your path.
I read provocative verse, conjure neon brushstrokes
capturing your spirit in black light galleries,
wishing my arms could reach around you,
that protection was still possible if it weren't for
crumbled safety glass on a rainy Halloween afternoon.

CATHY HAILEY, ENGLISH & CREATIVE WRITING TEACHER

My Weirdness

"You are so weird," "Why are you so weird?" "You are one interesting chil!" Those are just a few of the things people say to me when they see me being "weird," which in their minds, they do not deem as normal. You want to know what I say back? "Because I am and I can be."

I like to lead my life being me and only me, not saying I don't have my times where I could be a little more authentic. I grew up in a family where you to be you. My grandmothers from both my father and mother's side are probably the weirdest women I know. They taught me how to not care about people's judgments because if it makes you happy and you aren't hurting anybody, what's the use in being anything but yourself. I grew up, dancing, laughing, making funny voices and faces, and joking around. When I was little, my mom and dad used to just break out into these dances or just start singing, like crazy people; they still do at times. Seeing this as child is one of the reasons I just start randomly dancing during the day. Some people when they see me doing this will ask, "What are you doing, like are you okay?" as if something has to be wrong with me because I choose not to stand still. I just reply, "I'm good."

My weirdness is what keeps me laughing twenty-four seven, it's what keeps me from falling into that hole of what others want for me to be. It's what keeps me happy. It's what my family and close friends love the most about me. It's what I love the most about me.

ZYIESHA HARGRO, GRADE II

Natural Curiosity

When I think of the word origin, my brain immediately goes to where my family is from. My mom's mother's side is from Italy and her dad's, directly from the small island, St. Lucia. My dad's Ancestry.com spit tube results have yet to come in. If I let my mind wander over other meanings of the word origin I think about my childhood, the way I grew up and what I have learned. I haven't practiced any traditions of where my family is from, other than eating a lot of pasta. The way that I have lived my childhood has shaped me as a person. Being a Florida native included a lot of running around the neighborhood barefoot, in shorts and tank tops all year round. We took long drives to new beaches because the local beach became a second home.

I spent my child to pre-teen years in the woods searching for the perfect spot for a treehouse, making blue-prints, but it was never built. Spending any hours that I was inside, with my nose in a book and eyes burning from the lack of blinking from being completely invested in the movie I was creating in my head. I spent a lot of my childhood outside, in the woods, riding my bike, and discovering new places. I worry for my younger brother who isn't going to experience what it's like to grow up outside in nature. Rather he sits on the floor, a few inches from the huge TV screen, playing games on the Xbox for hours, with "friends" that live eight states away. I've come to accept it and try to understand that that is what this next generation holds. I'm sure there will be many benefits that come with this new generation of kids but also many faults.

They will never understand the curiosity that runs through your veins when you find a new place in the woods that you have never seen before. Hearing the birds having conversations with each other and imagining what they could possibly be saying to each other. Watching the squirrels chase each other in circles up large pine trees and wondering what they are fighting over or if they are just play-fighting like puppies. The sunlight beaming through the trees at just the right angle, lighting up a spot of the ground that is covered in densely packed pine needles. Just staring up at the trees wondering how long it took for them to grow and what they looked like in their beginning stages of life. Wondering how these stationary, upright logs could possibly be alive and feeling sorrow for any trauma they have been through in their past. In school I learned that trees give us oxygen and we give them carbon dioxide. I would thank the trees for helping me live and tell them "you're welcome" for giving them what they need to flower.

My childhood consists of a lot of imagining. I would make up stories based on the places I was. When I found shells in the dirt in the middle of the woods I would imagine the world around me but under water. I saw the ground as the seafloor and the birds and squirrels as fish. Swimming around and the shells scattered around the floor. I got these imaginative visions most likely from the books that I read all the time,

influencing the way that I saw the world. I enjoyed overthinking any situation I was in. I'd watch the cars pass by and catch a glimpse of the people in them. I would imagine their lives and where they were going that day. Even as a child I understood how different everyone's lives are. Now as a young adult, I still think about how everyone's stories are different. Everyone knows different things and have learned different lessons throughout their life. Nature has taught me how beautiful our lives are and how lucky we are to be visitors on this planet. My origin story is nature, just like every human being, but you just have to find the greater meaning.

HALEY HUDSON, GRADE 12

That Which We Call a Rose

My grammy calls me Léah
Her voice a gentle lilt
We sit next to each other as the service begins
I hear her muttering the prayers next to me
She's self-conscious of her Hebrew
She wasn't taught the way I was
At oneg, I find her a chair so she can rest
Her formerly nimble dancer's body isn't as strong as she likes to pretend it is
Raising seven kids will take its toll

My grandma calls me Leah
Her voice a deep drawl
We sit next to each other in her small trailer
She is settled in her special armchair, the one reserved for her
I sit on the couch next to her, watching my cousin Olivia's kids show
We will be like this for the entirety of the trip
There's not much to do in Battle Creek, Michigan
The sun drifts down in the sky, exposing darkness spotted with lightning bugs

My grammy calls me Léah
We sit next to each other at the dinner table
She brings a newspaper about something Jewish
I never read them
She tries to keep the conversation flowing by asking me questions
My mother checks the chicken in the oven
The familiar scent of herbs and spices wafts towards us
I'm hungry but I don't grab a snack
I've always wondered she felt about my weight
We don't talk about things like that

My grandma calls me Leah
We snack on chips side by side
Still sitting in the trailer
There's less worry about what we eat here
We watch a Lifetime movie
She asks me a couple questions, but we mostly sit in silence
I don't wear makeup during my stay with her

There's no pretense for femininity here
I play with Olivia outside when rifle blasts fill the air
I stop while Olivia continues to hit the ball
I've never experienced hunting season before

My grammy calls me Léah
When I decided to go by my Hebrew name
My parents stumbled over the change for a year
She never hesitated
I was always Léah to her

My grandma calls me Leah
When I decided to go by my Hebrew name
My parents stumbled over the change for a year
She never noticed
I was always Leah to her

LEAH ICAN, GRADE 12

My Name

Hi, my name is William Carl Iverson. My first and middle name have great meaning and come from my two grandfathers. William comes from my grandpa on my mom's side, and means something along the lines of "strong-willed warrior" (thanks, Wikipedia). Carl comes from my grandfather on my dad's side and quite simply means "strong man." My last name, however, is an entirely different story. Not only is its origin an entertaining story in and of itself, but it took a couple of weird steps to make its way into my own name.

Oh, and some liberties were taken with this story as I don't exactly remember all of the details. I have a short attention span, sue me.

I'd like you to imagine a lone immigrant from Norway. Or, eh, Denmark. Maybe the Netherlands. Maybe a combination—look, the point is that he was from one of those and had very strong Nordic roots. As a result, he only went by one name, which I'm too restricted by a deadline to care to remember. Oh, and he was a horse thief, which got him kicked out of his home country, forcing him to migrate to America some time in the late 19th/early 20th century.

He lived a fairly average life for a poor immigrant worker in America at the time. Had a sub-par factory job, bound by a restrictive and soul-crushing work schedule, lived in a sad, beat up neighborhood, probably had at least slight hints of a drinking problem—honestly, half of the people reading this could probably relate. But, luckily for him, he managed to land a small apartment all to himself! Probably wasn't the most functional or aesthetically pleasing place in the world, but it was all his, and he earned it!

Slight problem, though: other human beings exist. Cruel, spiteful, evil human beings—the kind who only ever wish suffering upon their neighbors. Their crime? They stole his mail; that's what they did! Honestly it's a pretty ironic problem for someone who used to steal horses, but by god was it still a cruel one to face!

Grief stricken by the loss of his precious mail—whatever might have been in it—he filed a report to the police. They asked for his name. He gave them his name. They asked for his last name. He didn't have a last name. They told him that because he doesn't have another name, they can't actually prove that it was *his* mail.

And so he went to the post office! Why? To get his name changed, because apparently that's where you did that back then! He started talking to the clerk at the post office, who filled out the form for him. The

clerk asked him what he wanted his last name to be, something that he probably hadn't thought about until that very moment. He eventually managed to come up with "Ivarson," since, you know, he's the son of Ivar.

The clerk barely understood him through his accent, however, and ended up writing down "Iverson" instead. The clerk handed it back to him for confirmation, and he noticed the misspelling.

WILLIAM IVERSON, GRADE 12

Tale of a Momma's Boy

In my seventeen years of life, I have learned one thing about myself more than anything else; I am a momma's boy. While some may find that sad, I find it wonderful. I take great pride in the fact that I have such a wonderful relationship with my even more wonderful mother. I take solace for the mutual dependence we share for one another. I feel that I have greatly benefited from our relationship, so I am going to narrate the specific parts of my life where being a momma's boy truly meant something.

When I was three years old, I had my first truly sentient memory. At the time, I was leaning forward on the railing of a slide platform, contemplating existence, something I never stopped doing. One of my first thoughts regarded my mother. My formerly stone-cold expression turned to a warm smile at the thought of her. At how she would react to my sloppily crafted painting. Upon her return from a grueling day at work, the look of exhaustion in her eyes became one of joy as she gazed at my painting. With her beauteous smile, my rather boring day, only half of it being memorable, became a great day.

When I was eight, one of the older boys (by two years) in my neighborhood punched my seven-year-old niece in the stomach. Upon hearing this, my mother confronted the boy and demanded where he lived. He cockily grinned as he answered with snark. He then uttered something rudely about how my mother would not go to his house. She then looked him dead in the eyes and asked, "Wanna bet?" My mother then marched on to the boy's house, catching the attention of my friends, niece, twenty-year-old brother and his friend. As my mother trudged on, my brother and his friend following along. The boy nervously muttered as he too followed my mother. She calmly knocked on the door, and a rather small, petite woman came out. My mother said, "I don't know how you do things where you're from, but in America, little boys don't punch even littler girls in the stomach."

About an hour later, the boy came back out. My niece was playing inside, and my mother was resting. Gathering up all the courage I could muster, I audaciously challenged the boy to a fight on a hill (I was two years younger, so I needed the advantage in altitude), not only for what he did to my niece, but for how disrespectful he was toward to my mother. We met five minutes later at the top of the hill, he looked down at me callously as I glared up at him. He drew the first blow as I landed on my back. As he prepared to stomp me ferociously, I kicked at his ankle, causing him to slip and roll down the hill. It was over; the momma's boy triumphed over the bully. I could not have felt more proud of myself at that moment.

When I was ten years old, my grandmother passed away from burn wounds. Her death left my family devastated, my mother in particular. As my tears subsided, I knew I had to be there for her. I had to rise above the hardest adversity I had faced yet in a timely manner. From that moment on, I would have to be man by being a momma's boy.

When I was fifteen, my mother and brother had a verbal altercation. When he came to me, he uttered a foul, crude, rude word regarding her in front of his wife, sons, and nephew. Almost immediately, I told him to shut up. He responded by telling me no to say that to him; how hypocritical. Two years later and he has not apologized for what e said that night, so I doubled my affection toward my mother. (Keep in mind, he was never the loving one, so I doubled my affection once before. That's, like, a lot of love)

A month later, my ex-stepfather assaulted my mother, tearing the muscle in her shoulder. Two years later and the pain still lingers. As you read this, I still despise him for what he did. Not only for causing her permanent pain, but from breaking her heart. She was depressed for over six months. Even after rising from

her bedridden state, her sadness lingered. I felt like there was nothing I could do. Being a momma's boy felt seemingly pointless.

When I was sixteen, my mother had her first and only heart attack. When I first heard those dreaded words, my heart sank deeper than the aforementioned trench. My first thought was, "Was this it? Was this the day I would lose her; the most important person in my life?" As my thoughts became shrouded in what would happen if I lost her, my throat tightened and the floodgates that were my tear ducts poured open. When I went to see her in the hospital, my heart skipped a beat as I saw her awe-inspiring smile. She apologized deeply for making me worried as I lightly hugged her, not wanting to hurt her. A year later and she has cut back on all of her dangerous vices. Still though, that day reminded me that I will have to one day say goodbye to my mother.

These experiences based upon the relationship I have with my mother have shaped me into the person I am now. Without her treasured guidance, I would not be half the things she says I am. Because of my time spent with her, I will not have regrets when her time comes; that in itself is an incredible feeling. To feel satisfaction after a lifetime of loving someone. Many may call me pathetic for being a momma's boy, but I know that title will bring me a life of happiness. Plus, my mom told me it's a good thing to be a momma's boy, so it's basically in stone.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON, GRADE 10

Being Black in America

For most of you, your biggest worry walking to your local 7-Eleven is having enough coins to buy that big bag of Starbursts. For me it's not getting shot. It's excessively smiling and laughing to seem less threatening. Or letting that white boy cut me in line to not start any problems. It's not putting my hands in my pockets, no matter how high they have the AC blasting so no one will think I'm stealing. It's "yes ma'am," "no ma'am" to establish I'm not one of "*those black kids*." It's doing things to accommodate for the skin I was born in. Being black in America is one of the most dangerous lives you can live. You live a different life. You have to; any misstep at any given time could mean your life. And retaliation can be fatal. You have to find a way to not be "*that scary black person*" everyone already thinks you are. You don't even know you're doing it until you think about it. You don't consciously make the decision to act differently; you just do it. It's survival. I wanted to spin the narrative: too tell you what it's like growing up black in America. These are real truths, real struggles, real problems I face and every other Black individual faces on the *daily*. Sincerely, the truth.

Racism comes in many forms. It's not like in the old days where we're being forced to use a different fountain or being a target of the KKK, but the racism is still here: more commonly now in the form of prejudice. You know, like when you're walking down the street with your hoodie on and a car is following you because you look "*suspicious*." Or like that man tailing you in Walmart because "*I think she's gonna put something in her pocket*." Or maybe "*it's that woman calling the police on you for legally barbecuing with your family*." Or that one neighbor who feels the need to make you uncomfortable. And you can't even do anything about it—retaliation can be fatal, so you just have to deal with it. Now listening to this you may not be able to relate—you may even feel a little taken aback, appalled, surprised. But that's a day in the life. People are always going to look at you differently just because your skin isn't like theirs. Just imagine. Every. Single. Day. As a black person, I am always aware of who's around me. I'll take note of that lady with the confederate flag on her hat; it would probably be in my best interest to not walk over there. I'll take note of that woman clutching her purse in fear of a fourteen-year-old girl. Oh sorry, a *black* fourteen year-old girl. It's not right. It's not fair. But it's the way it is.

Statistically, black youth are *five times* more likely to be detained than white youth. Same crimes, different times. The reason that is, is because they already had their first strike; being black. Whatever petty,

minor crime they committed after was only extra incentive which is why we don't play around with the law. Colored kids *will* be punished to the fullest extent—and then some. White kids are going to get away with it. We won't. Step out of line once—one toe out of place—we'll be shipped into whatever detention center not already filled to the brim with troubled colored kids. You guys live a life of freedom because the world favors you. For you, you can be young and dumb and make mistakes. We can't. And it's not anyone's fault. You all can't control how the world perceives you: as innocents. But we will always be seen as guilty. Our color is our crime; our guilt is evident, like a flashing sign written in our dark skin and kinky hair. Before we even do anything, we're at fault. Before I even commit a crime, I'm a criminal. I don't have to provoke anyone because they're already provoked. Every day I draw breath, someone is going to hate me for it. Walk too slow, that's suspicious. Move too fast, you're threatening. Tell me, how do I have a fair chance at anything when I've already been written off?

Someone could argue, "Black kids are more problematic, more rowdy"; someone could argue we are the problem. But I would beg to differ. When I was young, too young to even understand the concept of racism, I was the victim of racial hatred. It was my first time, but it would not be my last. I remember swimming in my Godmother's neighborhood pool. As my sister and I splashed around in the kiddy section, a girl our age approached. Being no older than five, I did not recognize she was a little white girl and I was black; to me she was someone who wanted to join our game of mermaids. Before we even had the chance to slay our first shark, her mother was roughly yanking her out of the pool. We called to her, we hadn't yet finished our quest. Her mother looked down at us with disgust searing in her eyes, and if looks could kill, we'd be six feet under. She hauled our new friend away to their chair. My sister and I looked on wondering why she snatched her daughter out of the pool so abruptly. As we watched, the mom spoke quickly and aggressively to her daughter, who looked truly confused as to why she was getting reprimanded. I caught a couple of the words the woman spewed: "they're dirty," "we don't play with those kind of girls," something she was calling us "black" and some kind of a foreign word, n something? Understandably, we were confused. I mean, I did pee in the pool after an especially alarming round of sharks and mermaids. Maybe she saw me? I didn't have much time to ponder it before my mom was giving her a much-deserved scolding. My mom made her way over to us, all the while telling the woman off. We left the pool. My mom, who spent the *whole* morning packing snacks and juice boxes for our pool day, hurriedly led us out to the car. We drove home in silence—well silence from my mom—but Amber and I wanted to know what warranted our sudden departure from the pool. And who was that woman and why was my mom so upset with her? Did mom know her? Or maybe they were playing some game? Clearly now I know, but at the time I couldn't put together what she meant or what those words she used were? Why should any child that young have to go through that? What possible explanation could that woman—or anybody—have for exposing us to that kind of hate? What could two innocent children have ever done to deserve her hatred? Nothing.

It's clear we have a race problem in America. It's been apparent for centuries, though we as Americans fail to address it. For whatever reason, it's 2019 and racism is still alive in the hearts of our own neighbors, poisoning the minds of generation after generation. We have a faceless, nameless foe living amongst us, festering in our neighborhoods, creeping through our schools, crawling into our work place, ripping its way through our *country*, our home. I see it in the hushed whispers and blue-eyed stares that follow me down the street, I see it in the way that white woman moves her bag away from me when I sit beside her, the alarm in her face or the surprise in that man's when I speak coherently and intelligently. *I see it.* And every day we allow this infestation to grow, we *all* will suffer for it. We have to stop. Stop the hate, stop the prejudice, stop the senseless killing. One of these days, we as a nation are going to have to start making better choices. We as a nation need to rid ourselves of hatred—nonsensical hatred—might I add. We have to stop. End the violence. Break the cycle.

Where I Come From

I come from a place that holds pride in its name.
A place where your neighbors are like family.
A place where we've been through war.
We walk on top of hidden gold and diamonds.
A place where we cry blood, sweat, and tears struggling trying to make it.
A place where we have to walk MILES to get clean water, and to get to school.
A place where a child could be easily abandoned, left with no mother, father, any type of care, nor supervision.
Where I'm from, people go days without eating, drinking, or sleeping.
But where I'm from, we know to NEVER give up.
We push through and fight.
Where I come from, we hold our heads up high and hold our flag with great pride.
Green
White
And
Blue
Sierra Leone is Where I Come From.

MARIKA KOROMA, GRADE 12

Lights in the Night

I turn seven in a few days, a big number for most. It's where things really start happening in your life and adults start to take you seriously. Or at least that's what I think.

I sit in the Lake Jackson house, positioned next to the big wall of windows that stretches along half of the log cabin-esque home. The ice covered water outside bends around the big hill dotted with homes and docks, but halts at the towering cement dam, the frozen water failing to trickle down its edge. I ignore this view and instead stare at another.

My grandmother's Christmas tree is a beautiful mess. It's almost ugly and seemingly haphazardous in its construction, but it's still charming and entrancing in its own unique way. Pine needles litter the hardwood floor, and the branches droop with the weight of bizarre yet homely ornaments. From one branch hangs a glitter-coated pinecone, while from another hangs a box of animal crackers. There's even a piece of soap stolen from a Walt Disney World hotel tied with a piece of twine somewhere amongst the chaos. It's a hodge podge. But that's okay. So is our family.

I am the middle Marovelli, one of three. First came cousin Rachel. Rachel is hispanic, and the daughter of our close family friend, Diane. But that doesn't really matter, she's more of a Marovelli than any of us. Rachel is old enough to drive, which is an impressive feat to my seven year old brain. Then of course is me, the son of the youngest Marovelli and the only grandson. I was then followed by my cousin, Olivia. Olivia is only a year younger than me, and my Aunt and Uncle adopted her from China soon after I was born. I know she's a rising talent in her ballet troupe, and much more coordinated and flexible than I am.

I hear the soft padding of slippers across the floor, and turn to see my Grammie enter from the kitchen. She has a sweater wrapped around her body, and her head of bright, white curls seems to explode as she moves. In tow are her two ever-present hounds, Daisy and Peepers. Peepers is thin with a layer of course brown fur and a sharp snout, while Daisy is covered in a mass of blonde, almost white fur that contradicts

with her pinkish button nose. Despite Daisy having long outgrown Peepers since they were puppies, Peepers still commands the duo, trotting ahead of her.

"Here," she says, holding out a small box wrapped in bright red paper. "I forgot to give you this on Christmas."

I tear into it, pushing past the wrapping. The box is black with a purple logo and golden lettering, but it's in cursive, which I can't read yet. Inside is a small glass object covered in copious amounts of glitter. It's in the shape of a dog with a big lolling tongue sticking out, and shines in the light of the window. A wire hangs from its head.

"It's an ornament," she says. "I'm giving one to you and your cousins each Christmas from now on."

"Thank you," I whisper, as I run my fingers along its textured surface.

"Get your coat on," she says, turning towards the doorway. "We're gonna go run some errands."

She helps me zip up my puffy winter coat, and tucks a big knit cap around my ears. She wiggles open the iron gate and makes sure the dogs don't get out as she closes it behind us.

As I run up the gravel hill and speed past her well-tended garden, I turn back to ask, "Where are we going?"

She moves slowly up, careful of her footing. In between steps she answers, "First we're going to the fabric store, and then we'll stop to get you art supplies."

"Me?" I ask excitedly.

"Yes, you," she replies. "For the art class we got you."

Grammie is cheap with everything but her grandchildren, and I suddenly remember my birthday present, art classes at the old candy factory downtown. I smile widely and clamber into the backseat of her car.

Later that day I return with a big green box of crayons and fingerpaint.

...

I turn eleven in a few days, a big number for most. It means I'll be going to middle school soon, and I'm going to get to meet a whole bunch of new people. But I'm trying to push that from my mind. I don't want to leave my friends just yet.

Even though I don't turn eleven for another few days, we're celebrating now, the Christmas tree still up in the corner of the house. There aren't that many of us, but it's all family. Olivia is curled up in one of the armchairs, while my uncle and my dad drink cheap Italian beer at the dining room table. My mom and my aunt are preparing something in the kitchen, while other family members are spread out around the house.

Grammie is in bed this year, and I wish she could get up. I really do. But it's okay, I guess, they put her in the living room so she could have more space and be with everyone. Peepers lays his head across her blanket-covered legs, while Daisy curls up beneath her shoulder.

We've already had our Christmas this year, so I got my annual ornament from her. This year it was a glittery octopus.

As I consider where the octopus might fit on the tree, the lights suddenly dim, and my aunt and my mom enter from the kitchen. It's my cake ablaze with candles. Illuminated in the center is my favorite comic character, TinTin, with his little blonde swoop of hair and button eyes. Next to him is his dog, Snowy, with a big cartoonish bone in his mouth. I'm amazed at the craftsmanship that's been put into it, but it's to be expected in my family. My aunt places her amazing artistic skill into everything. She sets it down on a small table in front of my grandmother, who smiles as she watches me blow the candles out.

After adequate amounts of cake, and TinTin and Snowy's faces had been thoroughly ravaged we move on to presents, which is of course what I most look forward to.

I get plenty of things, like a new pen and new books. Even a strange knot-tying kit is gifted to me by my uncle for no clear reason. My aunt hands me a huge book of art by Herge, the creator of TinTin, and I marvel over its dense pages. I desperately want to be able to draw like this.

Finally, I'm given one last big box. *From Grammie*, it reads. I meet her eyes, and she smiles, motioning for me to open it. I tug away at the paper, and find a stark white and purple box. It's a slanted blank object, with a black chord spouting out from its top.

"Plug it in," she says.

I scramble around until I find an empty socket to force the plug into. The face of the object explodes with a brilliant light when I do, and I nearly drop it in surprise.

"It's a light box," she explains. "It's for you to use with your art. You can trace and finish your work with it." Before I can even muster up a thank you, I start to draw on it.

...

My mom hands me the phone. Grammie's voice is slow and laborious on the other end.

"Hi Grammie," I say, unsure of what to do as I stand outside my house.

My mom and I are on our way to the bookstore.

She can't speak anymore. She's too far gone. But as I talk, her breathing slows.

"Tell her how much of a great Grammie she was," I hear my aunt say.

I refuse to say was. She doesn't deserve was.

"You're the best Grammie in the entire world," I choke through sobs.

We're in the bookstore when we get the next call.

I'll miss you Grammie.

...

I turn eighteen in a few days, a big number for most. It means I'll be leaving for college soon, and saying goodbye to all my friends. But I'm trying not to think about that now, I don't want to leave them just yet. Before even then, I'll be taking a trip to Belgium, where I'll get to see a mural by Herge in person. I'm excited even though I haven't read *Tin Tin* in years.

All around me are lights. I'm surrounded by thousands upon thousands of beautiful, multi-colored bulbs wrapped around a plethora of different types of objects. A few yards away there's a bright dinosaur display with a moving T-Rex, while right next to it is a recreation of the capital. Even further down there's a huge phoenix shooting out from a blindingly bright structure. It's Christmas lights on steroids, and explodes into the night sky.

Olivia walks next to me, staring at a huge panda lit up in the distance. She was Sugar Plum in her Troupe's Nutcracker production this year, her dancing prowess ever-increasing. My aunt inspects one of the small animatronic dinosaurs, and pulls her scarf around her neck. Meanwhile a few yards away, Rachel desperately tries to explain to my mother how to use portrait mode, as she and Diane pose by the phoenix display.

Suddenly something small darts past me, and sprints through the swampy ground, little footprints sticking in the mud as it goes. A ponytailed head swings around and giggles at me mischievously.

"Get back here, Miss Lila!" I call out and chase after the kid.

I am still the middle Marovelli, but I am now one of four. Lila is the newest, only three years old, being Rachel's daughter. She can be shy when she wants to be, but undoubtedly has the biggest presence.

I grab her and shake her around, and she laughs wildly as I do so. I grab her mitten-encased hand and walk her back over to the rest of the family.

"Ready to go get food?" my mom asks.

We walk out of the lights festival, and back to our cars. Luckily the food place is only a few minutes away. We enter into the quiet, semi-formal restaurant, and obnoxiously impose ourselves in peak Marovelli fashion. We pile presents high around the table, a makeshift Christmas our servers have to maneuver around. We haven't had a chance to celebrate with Lila yet, and we want to give her our presents.

First is a small envelope. Inside is a small drawing of Lila done by yours truly, having done my best to capture her impish grin and goofy nature. Alongside it is money for her to sign up for art classes.

Next are things like triceratops toys and dress up clothes. She gets a stack of picture books, and a little R2-D2 doll she won't take her eyes off of.

Finally, as we pay off our checks and clean up our food, my aunt produces a small box wrapped in bright red paper. Inside is another little black box with a purple logo and gold lettering that's still in cursive. It's an ornament.

The tag on the box reads, *From Grammie*.

ANTHONY MAROVELLI, GRADE 12

Grandma Kay

her white gardening gloves fit
perfectly loose

she always walked with grace
but that is probably just her age talking

my childlike hands
remind me of her own

always carrying a rosary in one palm
and a cup of tea in the other

the smell of fancy perfume and antiques
are embedded in the off white pearls
that she never took off

they long to be on my wrist
but instead lay
in a wooden jewelry box
waiting for the right occasion

sitting next to it is a box
filled with poofy pink dresses
that she once thought I absolutely adored

so appreciation was the only sign I gave
because I never wanted to disappoint

and now
her white gardening gloves
that never once touched soil
still planted something,

love.

ABIGAIL MEYER, GRADE 12

I'm Not Deaf

For the longest time, I'd never consider myself deaf. 'It's not that I'm deaf,' I'd explain, 'but that I just can't hear right.' I was afraid of *being* deaf, even though that's what I am and what I will always be. I was afraid of the negative connotations that being deaf had—that if I'm deaf, I'll be too dependent on others, too annoying for people to be around, and just a hassle overall. I jumped at the opportunity to call myself something else, like 'hearing impaired' or 'hard of hearing,' which took even longer to explain than the former.

Growing up, I lived in a somewhat traditional Puerto Rican family. I'm the eldest of three siblings, which means I serve as the exemplary child (admittedly, a very poor one). We share the same culture, we share the same nose, but I'm the only one in my family who is deaf. At first glance, it doesn't seem like that much of a

difference; my hearing isn't completely gone and I speak clearly enough. I can act just like everyone else—and that's where my problems began.

Because I can still hear, my family is usually under the impression that my hearing is perfectly fine. They'd complain whenever I wanted to put subtitles on and would nag whenever I ask them to repeat themselves. I'm given expectations that I'm unable to achieve because I'm put on the same level as a person with your average hearing. It made me feel like my hearing wasn't actually as bad as it is; that I was grasping at straws for attention. I had accommodations that I needed that I never got until much later in my life because I so happened to have thought, 'how bad can it be?'

Oftentimes, however, my parents blame themselves for my hearing loss. You see, I wasn't born deaf; rather, as a baby, I had a really bad ear infection that wasn't treated properly. And thus, I became deaf! For the first four years of my life, I wasn't able to speak properly. Everything around me was just 'daddy'—but that's just the story I was told. No matter what happened, my parents didn't take anything away from me, and I wish they understood that. Being deaf didn't destroy me as a person. Instead of trying to make me feel like a hearing person, I wish they saw being deaf as just a part of me.

ELIZABETH NAZARIO, GRADE II

My Purpose

She has never had a home; she's only had houses or places she was just staying. She never belonged anywhere, just passed along from one place to the next. She's never felt the sense of belonging, and she envied those kids she saw on TV who had the best friend who lived two houses down, the friends who have known each other since preschool. They already have their weddings planned out to match each other's schedules. She was born into a military family so she moved around a lot. Staying only in one place for a few years then uprooting and moving along to the next place made it hard to make friends, so after a while, she just stopped trying.

She has four sisters who don't get along with her and parents who made their favorites, and in her case, least favorite, very clear. Throughout elementary and middle school careers, she was lost in every aspect of her life—her home life would sometimes be manageable, and other times made her want to run away forever and hide with Alice and the Cheshire cat. In school she was above average but was bullied for grades so she threw a few tests and stopped turning in her homework. After-school clubs, when she went, didn't have any stereotypical personality to them; she had robotics Mondays, art club Tuesdays, newspaper Wednesdays, science club Thursdays, and sports Fridays. She didn't think she had a passion or a purpose and she was coming to terms with her ending up like her mom, an unhappy wife and disappointed mother with only a high school diploma. She didn't have anything against being a wife and mother, but it didn't feel like her.

Then the chapter of high school. She was a transfer student because she'd gotten in on a specialty program. She thought it'd be another miserable four years, if she even lasted that long, because she only knew three people none of whom were in any of her classes. She was in for a rude awakening sophomore year when she found her purpose here after leisurely wandering into a robotics interest meeting. The next thing she knew she was trying out and being fought over by the captains. The following year she joined Project Lead The Way, a four-year engineering class which introduces students to the main categories of engineering, and she just fell in love. Since then she has fast-tracked all my engineering courses, taken a few extra ones that weren't required, become one of the captains, helped start TSA, another STEM-based club, which she is now the president of. To her delight, she found out late junior year that she had a knack for and desperately wanted to be a cybersecurity engineer. She's finally found my purpose after years of wandering and I think she's found her place where she can be happy.

EMILY NOLAN, GRADE 12

Of Crossed Daggers

Artifacts of places and times long lost hang, shrine like, in my room. Swords and knives recovered from the fields of war, metallic edges that have seen spilled blood and limp bodies, ranks delicately poised for battle. These remind me of who I am, and what I stand for, in an oblique way, for a few reasons.

Firstly, my lineage barely exists. My paternal great grandfather, Tage, is a Scandinavian man who I've never met or seen, and he brought jewelry with him when he immigrated to America. This is what I know of him. Maternally, everything is erased by death and disease. I've never met my maternal grandparents, aunts, or uncles, and my mother suffered a stroke when I was a child, erasing her memory of who she was as well, so I never got any maternal culture or lineage. So I incarnate the patriarchal Ring dynasty, generations of soldiers and nomads, loyal to a fault, yet stubborn and disobeying the way a traitor would.

My origin doesn't stem from culture and recipes, it comes from the blade and barrel of war; physical history that shows me who my blood used to be, and who I will become. UNITED STATES PROPERTY. M1911A. U.S ARMY. No.1980557. DEC 19, 1905. FEB 14 1911. AUG 9, 1913. These are the engravings on my grandfather's service pistol that was given to me when I was a small child. I keep this artifact much like my mother's ancient secrets: behind locked heavy doors and hidden in a dark corner, somewhere where I can't quite reach it. Jack was my grandfather, stationed in Alaska, deployed above Berlin, 1940-1942. I have his maps with coffee stains and pencil scrawls on my desk and on my walls, and a liberated Nazi service dagger on my wall. Both the pistol and dagger he took away from the United States military against orders, preserving them as history in pristine condition. This reminds me to chart my own courses, and inspired me to write for the origin project, since my history died as he did, without warning, without being able to catalogue the past. I must take what I can salvage in the present and move forwards, somewhere, as the next generations have.

My uncle's artifacts are unlabeled, origins based off of oral stories that may or may not be embellished in a few ways. Italian stiletto knife, circa 1949. Congolese machete, circa 1980. Spear tip from the Euphrates river, circa 1400. None of these artifacts are from my Uncle's deployment in Vietnam, since he still holds onto all of those, but he's given several of his finds from world tours to my full brother, Kaden, and I. He, like my ancestors far enough back to be nameless, traveled across the world and never stayed in one place. This is why I live in a cultureless realm. No family dishes, traditions, holidays, significant gatherings, nothing. I use the Stiletto knife he gave to me every day, since it's the sharpest most practical artifact I've been given, I use it to open boxes and obnoxious college letters. Every heirloom that I've been given has come through my uncle, which makes me grateful for his role, essentially, as a historian; he gives me my history. My present and my future, has been given to me from my half brother.

I have three of those, half brothers. Two from my mother, one from my dad, and an aforementioned full brother. My paternal half brother, Jason, was deployed in Iraq for operation Desert Storm. Most days during the winter, I wear his boot camp jacket, which is admittedly too big for my slender body. This mirrors reality, however. All of my brothers and uncle live in Virginia, except Jason, who moved to Colorado, unknowingly following the footsteps of our forefathers, being nomads. I don't fill Jason's shoes, more rather, his mantle, because I am not a soldier. I'm not cut out to be one. My mind is hardwired into nomadism, however, I've known this for years. I can feel it in my blood, my culture makes me anxious when I sit still in class and drive under the speed limit, I'm possessed to move somewhere new constantly. From my grandfather, deployed to Alaska, having my dad and uncle, redeploying to the Philippines, to California and Arizona, Texas, then Virginia, my father having Jason, Kaden, and me. Jason moving to Colorado, and my uncle back to the Philippines for his retirement, it is innate for me to go somewhere else, and that is my origin: nowhere. The space between here and there where people build their lives, we move as temporary fixtures and take artifacts with us from the time and place, building a map of where we've been rather than where we're from. I grew up agnostic and in a generally hedonistic household, we all survive for ourselves and gain for self improvement.

We are tied nowhere, so I am attached to everything at once, I call nothing my own, but pull from every influence around me. I am an amalgam of the places my ancestors have been, and where I am now.

I embrace my destiny, and I will become a nomad, as my father has. He spent a good amount of his adult life on government contracts moving all over the American east, installing coax cable and teaching computer systems on army bases. He was never in service, but heavily tied to them, as am I. The anticipation of the day I am set free into the American West, as Jason was, gives me motivation to get out of where I am and complete college. My Uncle's artifacts show me that I leave behind who I am, and become who I want to be by attaining what I want by any means. My grandfather gives me the gift of movement, and I know now, that it is mine, and it was given to me to continue our only tradition: Unstoppable motion forwards, wherever that may be.

DECLAN RING, GRADE 12

Dear Lebanon,

Peace and serenity

What more is there to see

Other than what we are

And what we will be?

7.7 billion people

In the world

But there is only one you

And there is only one me.

I come from a land

Far from here

A land that lives

Beyond memorable stories

A land filled with war

Yet, pure in the heart

Of my long-lived ancestors

A place like no other.

My Jiddi's father,

A man I only know

Through pictures of the past

That never fade away,

Boarding a ship

He and his wife

Arrived to Ellis Island

Hello, America.

You are my home,

But to the land

I've never been to,

Lebanon,

You are my heart.

My best friend

Meeting her last year

Beautiful, curly-haired Maria Eid

Taught me more about you.
She moved away from you
Three years ago
Leaving you behind
Because you are no longer safe.

Coming to America
She found me
And I found her.

America,
You are where I live
But I find my home
As I become closer
With her.

Ironic is it not?
That the world works
In mysterious ways.

I come from a line
Of Lebanese ancestors
With even more descendants
Hoping to meet someday

Yet never knowing or seeing them.
Feelings of worry
Wrap around my waist
Loss of hope in my heritage
Prevails.

And just when I feel
Myself slipping away
From a place so genuine,

The universe pulls me back
With a friend
From my origin
Is it not ironic?

Peace and serenity
I know what I am
But soon, I hope I will find out
Who I will be
With you,
Lebanon.

JESSICA SEBENALER, GRADE II

Nana

Huddled around the fireplace
Shoulder to shoulder, waiting...
Waiting for the walls of the single room house to hum,
To simmer with the heat of the flames
Licking up and over the coals.
Six pairs of potato-sack-covered shoulders
Yearning for their next meal:
A dish of boiled cabbage, the rancid smell
Mingling with the asbestos in the walls.
A pregnant mother, hunched over her needlework,
Patching the soles of six pairs of shoes.
A father, covered head to miner's hat in black soot,
Wanting to give his family a better life,
All the while knowing
He doesn't have two pennies to rub together.

The oldest dead.
Whooping cough, they said.
Baby born.
Six shoulders still mourn.

Supper is served in the evening with pop...
Pop was cheap.
Carbonated liquid burning holes through little teeth,
Still chomping at the bit for new soled sneakers...
But sneakers weren't cheap.
Growing everyday, one boy and five girls,
Learning to hide their shame from the other school children,
Who couldn't bother to remember their names.
The six would go home and practice playground rhymes
Around the fireplace at night,
Breathing in the carbon monoxide.

All grown up.
The six leave the nest.
No college plans.
Save that for the rest.

No longer in a one room house,
The six go their separate ways,
Forever remembering their past,
The warm nights by the fire.
Momma and Pappa are long gone now;
They only have each other left.
Scattered throughout the mountain state,
They indulge in their adulthood,
Gaining spouses, children, riches of their own.

They serve their own suppers, with diet pop...

An acquired taste.

They think they've escaped their childhood;

They have electric fireplaces now.

Little did they know,

You can't escape the coal

That fire eats from the inside out,

Leaving traces of white, no doubt.

Phantom flames lick through their limbs,

Slowly eating from within.

Jumping from sibling to sibling,

Seeing red and attacking again and again.

Growing every day, moving through new terrain.

No man could ever contain.

The marker of death, the six meet their end.

Six became five, then quickly four.

The fire careening towards the third.

Eventually only two were left, a fight to the death,

The youngest prevailed, leaving her brother to burn.

A fighter till her last breath,

Seventy seven years and nothing left.

A cold grave, headstone black.

Little did they know,

You can't escape the coal

That fire eats from the inside out,

Leaving traces of white, no doubt.

PEYTON SHREVE, GRADE 12

Karachi and California

I was on vacation in California when we found out my grandfather had passed away. The contrast between the excitement I felt and the grief that quickly followed it continues to impact me months later in a way which I struggle to explain, but I am beginning to understand.

We flew out to Orange County for a huge event hosted by a company my dad works with. As an importer of South Asian foods, my father has made many connections around the world, connections which have presented unique opportunities. This particular event was a day of meetings and workshops, followed by a huge dinner, all hosted by the American branch of an Indian rice company. Instead of packing shorts and bathing suits for our West Coast adventure, we packed formal Pakistani garb for night and jeans for daytime outings; we were off to have a halal adventure as a family. My mother's best friend from her college days now lives in San Francisco, and my dad took this opportunity to book tickets to see their family as well, his business trip now a rare family vacation and we couldn't be more excited.

We were supposed to fly a discount airline to Los Angeles, but we were greeted with the news that this flight had been cancelled after our mad dash to the airport. My parents were visibly annoyed, my dad remarking after everything that perhaps it was a sign we never should have gone at all. After several phone calls and a brief period of panic, we booked a new flight.

The flight itself, was mind-numbingly boring. Perhaps I have been spoiled by the Emirates flights to Pakistan via a layover in Dubai, with their doting staff and wide movie selection, but this five-hour flight stretched out endlessly compared to the fourteen-hour flights I am used to, characterized only by the memory of salty pretzels and Diet Coke. Actually arriving made it all worth it, however; I was in complete awe as soon as we exited the airport.

The sun was golden, and the weather nothing like the harsh heat I had braced myself for. It was pretty hot, but in a mostly comforting way, with the breeze taking me back to Karachi beaches. Throughout the entire trip, my sister and I kept remarking, "It feels so much like Pakistan," and it was true; despite still being in the United States, I was reminded more of my childhood trips to Karachi than of our own East Coast origins. We arrived at our hotel after a lengthy drive, but the view of palm trees lining the highway alone was enough to make it an enjoyable new experience. The hotel was adjacent to Disneyland and overflowing with tourists. As stupid as it felt, the corporate realities of where we were staying and the marketing we were surrounded by were shrouded by a childlike perception of magic. It was baby's first trip to Disney, at sixteen years old, but a milestone nonetheless. We were greeted warmly by my father's colleagues and his families, my siblings and I the only teenagers among business people and their small children, and my family the only Pakistani among a majority of Indians. But none of that seemed to matter, as we were all now in the same Californian hotel, living out the same American dream through the sale of long grain basmati rice. We were well aware that this was a unique predicament to be in but found comfort and even humor in that fact.

We arrived in the evening, the rest of the day quickly passing by until we were in bed. The next day was to be full of business meetings and seminars for my parents, and closed by an awards ceremony. The day itself went by quickly, my siblings and I sitting in on meetings at our father's urges to become educated on the family business. I became bored out of my mind, but this became alleviated by simply reminding myself of my location. Perhaps this is odd, but when I travel, I enjoy picturing myself on the globe, and understanding my location in correspondence to the cities I view as my home bases, D.C. and Karachi.

The awards ceremony was a banquet, not a stiff professional affair like I had feared. It was just outside of the hotel by the large pool. My brothers and father wore suits, while my mother, sister and I wore our Pakistani attire. I wore a golden-yellow, loose tunic and made my little brother take pictures of me under the warmth of the setting sun—photos of me smiling which got posted on social media where they stay up as a reminder of that night.

We snacked on Indian appetizers—samosas and miniature kabobs—as the comedian droned on about Asian-specific experiences (he was Indian and Japanese). I remember an incident in which he made a political joke, saying with a smile, "I'm sure no one here supports our current president!" A table of young, Indian-American salespeople all laughed heartily and pointed out one of their friends, a smartly dressed South Asian man with a clean shaven face, as a supporter of the president. "And proud!" he exclaimed in response. I laughed uncomfortably and waited for dinner.

The food was also Indian, with a spicy fragrance that stuck to my clothes after I took them off. I piled my plate high with my favorite foods, and socialized with all my friends at the function—meaning my siblings. We got dessert afterwards, pistachio kulfi on a stick, and decided to walk around the front of the hotel instead of remaining with our parents. My sister and I sat on a bench, looking up at the palm trees together, remarking once again just how much we were reminded of childhood visits to Pakistan. Sitting in the warm breeze with my siblings, a frozen dessert melting down our hands felt natural and nostalgic.

My dad ended up receiving the highest possible award for his sale of basmati rice on the East Coast. He knew he'd get it, but showed a sense of pride nonetheless. It was getting late at this point, but my dad, still in a good mood, suggested an impromptu trip to downtown Los Angeles. We had just received free tickets to Disneyland for the entire next day in conjunction with my dad's award, meaning this may have been our only opportunity to see L.A., so we set out to the city (after changing out of our ethnic clothing of course). We drove in a rented car down congested highways and reached the city after close to forty minutes.

My parents, tired from a long day and unable to find parking, stayed behind after letting my siblings and I out of the car along the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Rather than visit specific iconic destinations, we simply walked around aimlessly and took in everything. As it neared 11 P.M., the walkways and shops were crowded, with people dressed for the club, or like typical tourists. There were stylish tourists of all races and backgrounds, walking by each other in rowdy groups unaware of one another. We stepped into shops, specifically places my mom would have hated: a tattoo parlour with hijabi tourists browsing the wall of band tees, a smoke shop with a tapestry of Hindu gods. Normally I'd feel out of place in these environments, but the fast pace and diversity of the people surrounding me motivated me to stand with confidence. My sister told me in the car she had felt a bit uncomfortable, but I truly felt nothing but a sense of belonging in the chaos.



The ride back to the hotel was peaceful, and I reflected on the fullness of the day. It was one of those rare occasions in which a single day is so full it feels like several—I could hardly remember the happenings of the morning. And, I still had Disneyland to look forward to the next day. We returned to our hotel room and with care I selected an outfit: ripped jeans and an oversized yellow tee shirt. I showered before bed, part of my typical routine. The warm water relaxed me after a fulfilling day. I was putting my pajamas on when I heard a knock. It was my brother. “Come upstairs right now.” We walked to the elevator together, “It’s Abaji”, he said. My body crumbled under my feet.

I sat in my parent’s room in a complete daze. My dad cried and frantically looked at flights. I had never seen him this way. I got up and tried to help them pack as my mom made phone calls, telling people what had happened in formal Urdu. My grandfather had been sick for only a few months, and my parents had been to Pakistan and seen him only weeks before our trip. He was diagnosed with dementia, and had an inability to recognize many people, or even realize what was going on. My mom said it was almost endearing, as he asked to do things he had just done moments before—eat or use the bathroom. He still prayed, or at least did the motions and tried to feed himself but forgot what he was doing midway through. My extended family in Pakistan prepared for years of this condition, buying a new hospital-style bed and other equipment that hadn’t yet been opened. I was pained when I realized he would never know who I was again, never have the ability to show the selfless concern he’d once had for everyone. But I didn’t accept that it was truly lost—even my dad clung to hope that he’d return to himself, that the doctors in public Pakistani hospitals had to be mistaken.

None of this mattered anymore. In the scramble to get home, my sister and I went up to our room to change and pack, but we got locked out, as my brother had the key. We stood opposite each other in the hallway and slid down the walls, until we were sitting across from each other, our legs extended. We talked and cried and laughed. The amusing prospect of a stranger seeing two girls acting like this in a hotel hallway eased the pain in my chest a bit. After we entered our room, I put on the yellow shirt that was still out from before, but a different pair of pants without any holes.

I slept through most of the flight home. It didn’t feel right to listen to music or even read. I could hardly get what happened though my head. We had a layover in Denver, and I didn’t bother picturing where I was on the map like I usually do. By the time we got home it was early afternoon, and it felt like so much time had been lost. We were greeted by extended family who beat us to our own house, bringing food and comfort. My uncle booked my dad a flight to Pakistan as he continued to show his emotions in ways I had never seen before. A weird, selfish part of myself was still upset about the trip I had been looking forward to. But months later, when I carefully told this to my mom and sister, they said they both understood.

I was disappointed at my lost happiness, and guilty because of it. I felt bad for having been joyful just before tragedy. I was losing a connection to my background, to my familial and ethnic origins and kept imagining a future where they all faded away. But my grandfather's life was so incredibly much more than its impact on myself and I felt enveloped in guilty selfishness once again for pitying my own loss.

This day was truly the longest of my life, characterized by so many individual parts and experiences. My perception of my trip, and of everything I experienced, was unmistakably connected to my origins, ethnic and familial. My family is central to my identity, and if nothing else, I've learned to truly value the ways the people around me have enriched my life. I know that I am lucky, fortunate to have so many opportunities and be surrounded by such amazing people, and all of these blessings and losses are a result of my complex origins.

ASRA SHUAIB, GRADE 12

The Hair on My Arms

It was spring, the time of warmth and allergies. I was a seventh grader in a middle school behind my house. Like any other person I wanted to wear short sleeve shirts to feel the spring's warmth. I didn't think much of it. I just wanted to avoid a nose bleed. I was sitting at my desk with my arms on the table, trying to work on a science worksheet. My crush happened to walk by and he looked at me, but not in the most flattering way. I realized he was intensely analyzing and looking at my arms. I was confused as to why he was making such a scrunched up face. Now I never really thought of my arms as *that* eye capturing, but they were kind of nice looking. He opened his mouth and proceeded to ask, "Does your mom not let you shave your arms?" and although I was kind of hurt, I responded back with, "No, it's just that I don't want to shave them." That's the best excuse I had because I've never questioned the amount of hair on my arms. Well he continued on by saying, "Well maybe you should because they're really hairy." I played it off and laughed, but I was hurt.

I knew middle school boys were rude, but I assumed they had some sense of control over what they say. My immediate reaction was to put on my jacket to cover my arms. It surprised me that I felt ashamed, just because of one foolish comment. The emotions emerging through me were mixed between sadness, embarrassment, and rage.

I got home and I was infuriated with my mom. She didn't shave her arms and made me think that it was fine for a girl to have hairy arms. According to middle school boys it wasn't, and I listened to them. My brain was as undeveloped as theirs, so of course I'd listen. I began to tell her about the embarrassment I went through and she responded with, "That kid is ignorant and knows nothing. The hair on your arms look nice, just like mine, and don't shave them because the hair grows back thicker." What she said went in through one ear and out the other. Her opinion did not matter to me because I was too blinded by my crush's opinion, that I let his comment get to me. I didn't have the courage to shave them completely so I grabbed an eyebrow shaver and shaved a tiny section. It made me uncomfortable to see a bare section of my arm, it looked so strange. Instead of completely shaving, I resorted to constantly hiding my arms under jackets and long sleeve shirts even though the weather was warm. I tried not to be self-conscious, but it was kind of hard fighting the fact that I was a very hairy girl.

There was something that made me a bit more comfortable with myself. All the women in my family had arm hair and never shaved it. To them it was normal to have a lot of hair on their arms. In the Mexican culture it was normal for women not to shave their arms. With my family I felt comfortable flaunting my arms and wearing clothes that exposed them. On the other hand, when it came to people at my school or in public places, my whole attitude would change. I'd plan the things I would wear to specifically cover my arms. It wasn't one of the best decisions I made, but I just didn't want to deal with the comments.

Hairy arms bothered me until one day I decided to get over myself. I always look up to my mom, and she continues to be my role model. Her hairy arms never bothered her, so why should mine? I am Mexican and it's common for girls to be hairier than other girls. It's a big part of me and will remain that way. I'm comfortable with myself and that's all that matters.

NEREIDA SOSA ANTUNEZ, GRADE 10

Days of Blue

Day 1

Today she seemed fine. She went out with a friend to an ice cream place, talked, laughed, even smiled I suppose. She made it back home three minutes before curfew. She's good about getting back home early. She knows that every minute she isn't home worries her mom. Those melodramatic novelas really take a toll on Mom's view of the real world although she always tells Mom how the world isn't overflowing with crime; there's good in everything. Nonetheless she made it home safely, went to her room, got ready for bed, and told her mom and me goodnight.

I thought nothing of it, just her regular night routine. She's a good kid: responsible, smart, thoughtful, everything I hoped for her to be. I went into her room to check that the lights were off and noticed used tissues around her bed. I figured she must be getting sick.

Day 2

I tiptoed into her room this morning before I left to work, hoping that my construction boots wouldn't make any noise so I could unplug the charger from her laptop. Over charging those things is bad so i've heard, stumps the battery life. She was sound asleep. She seemed peaceful. I succeeded in not waking her up. I would see her later that afternoon once she got back from school.

She came back from school. I heard the slight screech of her car's brakes as she parked in the driveway. She came in and did not say a word to me or her mother. She just smiled, but she's like that; quiet. Sometimes I can't help but feel she's this way because of her mom and me. Maybe we really hadn't given her the space she always claimed she needed, but this also could be a phase like those that most teenagers face when growing up. I saw this on some American T.V. drama, has to have some credibility.

She went to her room and only came out once during the rest of the day to eat dinner. She told us she had loads of work to get done, as always. She's hard working. She makes me proud.

I stepped into her room just before bedtime to set a cup of manzanilla tea that her mom made her on her desk. Her mom is really persistent about drinking tea—believes they help to reduce the stress in people's muscles. I'm not entirely sure if that's true, yet I still do as she says. I walked into her room; she had fallen asleep on her floor, a realm of what looked like notes and school work around her. I noticed a violet colored journal propped open near the corner of her head. I squinted to read what looked like a single line written on the page. I guess that it would have been helped if I'd worn my glasses, but i don't like them; they make me look old. So I got closer. The line read "it hurts." I closed the journal, placed a blanket over her and turned off the lights. What could be hurting her? A boy, possibly ? She's never talked to me about any boy—she tells me everything. Or maybe she really is sick. I hope it isn't some grave illness. God please protect her. Thank you for another day of life, amen.

Day 3

I didn't go to work today since it was raining for most of the day. The work sites would be too slippery and muddy to work on, so I stayed home and spent half of my day looking through books of auto part coupons. I was looking to fix that break situation she has going on with that car. The other half of the day was spent anxiously waiting for her to come home, keeping in mind the line i had read. I was worried. I hadn't spoken to her mom about it yet because it might blow the situation out of proportion. It's for the best.

She arrived a little later than usual, told us it was because of "rain traffic." She quietly went off to her room, as usual. I waited a few minutes for her to get settled and then went into her room. I asked her what hurt and naively if she had caught a cold or something. All she did was stare at me in awe. Her breathing was steady and her eyes grew glassy. Then finally she blinked and told me she had failed a math test but surely she could

make up for it, she was just a little upset that was all. I believed her. I guessed that was enough of a reason for her to be hurting. I hugged her and told her not to stress out too much. Everything would work out. Her eyes grew glassy again, this time they were shaky, almost as if their crystal like surface were ready to shatter. She told me how much she loves me and how she wishes she could help us in some way. She's overheard my talks with her mom. Work wasn't going so well, but it's always been this way. I told her I loved her too and that she had no reason worry.

I left her room now thinking she'd be fine. She simply worries too much. I'm relieved.

God, thank you for bringing her into my life, protect her from all the malice, amen.

Day 4

I was packing my lunch for work this morning, some leftovers from yesterday, when I heard a gasp then followed by a sob. I thought it must be her mother. She always wakes up in the midst of some nightmare. The nightmares about losing the house and being sent back to a country that has nothing left to give. I've gotten used to talking her back to sleep. So I walked past our bedroom but the crying seemed to be coming from another room. I walked to the room and cracked the door open enough to peer in. She was sitting up on her bed in the darkness of the room. She looked over at me and told me she didn't want to go to school today. I told her it was just a nightmare assuming she was sleep talking. She shook her head violently as she said "I'm just not enough" and laid back in bed, still crying. I figured she'd fall back to sleep soon enough. Everything was okay. I left for work and came back. She left for school and came back. She came back asking if she could get a job. Her reasoning being she needed a little bit of money to pay for college applications. I told her that there was no need, that I could pay for any cost dealing with school. I've been working a few jobs on the weekend; the money from these would surely be enough. She smiled and said that she was aware but insisted that this job would benefit everyone. She has a way of convincing me, she seems to have every move so well thought out.

Now lying here in bed, I can't help but think that she's cracking under pressure. She'd be getting a job. Now I felt that this was all because of me.

God, what do I do? I ask you for your help. Help surviving amen.

Day 5

She spent the entire day writing in her journal on the couch today. She really likes it. When she was younger she'd tell me that she wanted to become an author when she grew up—write books about mysteries like the ones in those magic tree house book that she'd devour in one sitting. That dream died down once she realized author's couldn't make money as fast as lawyers and doctors could. She still made time for writing, though, along with some weirdly named math classes that had equations with letters in them. Who woulda thought that were possible. Anyway, I really wish I were able to understand what she writes about. Maybe I'd understand her better if I could, like what's going on in her head recently. But it's okay because she seemed happy today. I haven't seen her this expressive in a while. Eventually I'd understand.

Day 6

It's a weekend and she didn't go out with a friend today. Nor did she go to that party her best friend invited her to the last weekend. I assume they must've gotten into an argument of sorts. That's normal among girls her age. Anyway she was in her room for most of the day, so I cracked open her door for a quick second to check that she were all right. She was sitting on her bed staring out the window as if she were off in a daze. Her eyes were reddened. I went along with my fatherly instincts and opened the door completely. She didn't bother looking at me. She stared intensely through the window. I asked her if she'd been crying. She nodded still not turning her head. A few seconds passed. She turned her head to face me and told me that she was sorry. The pain in her tone and facial expression was perfuse. I was confused as to what she had said, but the sight of her in pain was overbearing; rather than questioning her, I held her in my arms as she cried. In

a muffled whisper, she said, "for being weak enough." I still didn't know what she was referring to. She is the strongest person i know. She takes after her mother in her determined ways and ability to overcome, yet they both seem to be heavily in doubt. Im worrying again. I'll try to discuss this with them in the morning.

Day 7

I told myself everything would sort itself out and whatever happened was for a reason. Everything lay in the hands of god. Yet today I learned how oblivious I am and that I've been looking for god in all the wrong places.

She's gone. I'm at fault.

She left for school this morning and told her mom and me that she was staying after school for a club. Her mom told her to text us when she'd be coming home. It was six and she still hadn't texted. The hours passed by tediously. When nine arrived, her mom panicked and began dialing phone numbers trying to contact those who might have seen her. There were no recollections. But I had faith. That's all I thought I needed.

YARELI SOSA ANTUNEZ, GRADE 12

A Tale of Five Dogs

I've lived in the same house my whole life: a moderate family home with four bedrooms, the smallest being the guest room, though I think my room loses smallest by barely an inch. The house is nothing grand and its size doesn't really allow room for anyone beside the family living in it, let alone multiple large pets. However, despite our living conditions, my family has always found a way to smuggle in two or more dogs.

Now dogs have always been in my life and as strange as it is to make my origin project about them, to me it seems the most fitting topic I could discuss. They've guided me and supported me without even trying and although I'm sure everyone has these kinds of connections with their pets, I still feel like the bond is stronger in my case. It could be the knowing comfort that dogs don't judge you—they just care about food, love, and play time; it could be the fact that I've had so many dogs, that I've never really lived without at least one in my life. Dogs have always been my family, and my interactions with them have come to shape me into who I am currently; I'm sure their influence and my family's influence will shape me into who I am ten years from now.

Coco (thirteen years old)

As a large chocolate lab weighing in at least ten pounds above average, Coco lived a lot longer than I expected, but then again she always was surprising. We got her before I was born, and she lived with us until I was roughly twelve years old. She was a moderately sized dog for a moderately sized house, or at least she was moderately sized once my parents moved out of their townhome shortly after I was born.

Coco had a lot of heart and even more stomach— you'd either find her head in my dad's lap or in the trash. We tried everything to get her head out of the latter, even buying a lockable can, but she was still somehow able to get the moldy leftovers that coated the sides of the bin. It wasn't until later that my parents found out chocolate labs were commonly known for shoving their heads in the garbage. Other than that, she was a very good dog—a complete sweetheart that was gifted to us as a newborn by a friend who intended her to be for my then three-year-old brother's birthday gift.

She was never really his dog, though; her heart was completely owned by my dad, who loved her almost as much. I never really got to know her because of how engrossed she was with my father. Honestly, he and the trash can were the only two that could really hold her attention. Still I was able to learn a few things from that old soul and she was my first dog, despite me not being her favorite. She helped me become more outgoing and carefree, and I was saddened when she passed away. Old age and arthritis, a very fitting death for such an old spirit, and she accepted her time with that same smiling face and long, lolling tongue. My dad was crushed that night; he could barely touch the tasteless KFC. That was one of the first times I saw my dad cry and he really tried not to because he thought we'd be more hurt than him, but really there was no one as close to Coco as he was.

I think that was the biggest lesson Coco taught me, on that evening of her death. She indirectly taught me the importance of staying strong for others. As a dog, she just wanted to see everyone happy and even after going through fight upon fight with our other dog, she still smiled with her tongue hanging out. It was the evening of her death when I finally saw this common act that she would be pulled by a human. I finally understood its importance and how her almost unknowingly selfless act helped me support my family. Coco was the base of the house known as my personality and it took her death for me to realize that.

Patsy (thirteen years old)

I don't know where to begin with Patsy. She was *my* dog, not my brother's, not my mom's, not even my dad's. My dog. Though she did like to try and make me regret that sentiment.

Before we adopted Patsy at that monthly dog adoption day PetSmart always holds, she lived in an abusive household for her first year. From what I've been told, the owner would beat his wife and Patsy would try to interfere in order to protect her. This would lead to Patsy being left outside for days on end, despite whatever weather conditions. That first year was her hell and it shaped her to become the dog that lived with us for her remaining ten or so years.

She was a mutt but with the primary looks of a yellow labrador, the perfect contrast to Coco. We had gotten her because Coco was feeling incredibly lonely and depressed and it was recommended that we adopt another dog to combat that depression. If only we knew what kind of dog we would be adopting.

Patsy's past owners had affected her behavior and personality and despite the ten loving years we gave her, that one year she spent with them had traumatized her until last day. She would attack Coco quite a bit for the smallest of things, like food or attention. It wasn't soft fighting either. She really would've been one hell of a dog fighter or a police dog. Honestly, the floor saw more blood from their brawls than it did from fallen food. Nevertheless, I loved that dog with all of my heart and it's probably because she never hurt me.

She had really big, sad eyes and she was my best friend. I remember one time I was on my knees just crying really hard. I can't remember why, but she sat next to me and like a scene pulled straight from Marley and Me, she placed her head on my shoulder and allowed me to hug her for a good few minutes. It was a small action but I could never really shake it. It still comforts after all these years. That hug was the biggest sign she would never hurt me. My dog would never hurt me.

When Coco died, Patsy got worse. Her attacks got more violent and after one particular fight, she put one of our other dogs in a cone. Her mental stability declined with her age and my dad was at his wits end with her. I think he slightly blamed her for Coco's death though she had nothing to do with it. Towards Patsy's end, I was the only person in her corner. I thought she was a cursed angel, as cliche as it sounds, I didn't want to face the truth about my dog. My sweet dog.

It was a week before the first day of eighth grade. I don't know how it started and I don't know who started it but I remember watching my mother throw her hand into the fray, an act that's been repeated on multiple occasions, and I remember watching as she yelped and for once the blood on the floor was not that of a dog's. We wrapped my mother's hand in an old towel and my brother drove her to Patient First. My dad and I waited anxiously at home though I felt the most anxiety. My dad decided yelling at the dogs would help him cope with the fact one of them had actually bitten her. At the time we didn't even know who bit my mother, though truly everyone knew and I was the only who tried to put the blame on someone else.

My heart was aching because I knew Patsy would never hurt one of us; she didn't have the ability too. She was a good girl. A good dog. The best dog. She was *my* dog and she wouldn't hurt me or anyone else. I knew she wouldn't.

It was two days before the first day of eighth grade. I was at home, watching HGTV as my parents discussed how they could try and redecorate the house to resemble the perfect homes on the TV. I felt happy, overjoyed even, despite the fact I'd be returning to my last year of middle school in a few days. It felt like a good day. I wanted to share it with my family, so I stood, kissed my mother and father on the head, and then

went around in order to kiss the heads of the dogs that littered the living room. Patsy was my first stop as she was closest and she was strewn about the living room carpet with hazy eyes as she drifted in and out of sleep. I leaned down and softly caressed her head, and I felt her calmly react to the action. Feeling emboldened, I got down on my knees and placed a light kiss on her head, but I guess that was too much.

I had just heard the snarl and suddenly there were teeth lodged in my cheek with a few trying to make their way through my nose. The funny thing is, I didn't feel a thing. No pain, no anger, no sense of betrayal, just numbness. A numbness that swallowed my face, specifically my cheek, and a numbness that swallowed my joy. My face was bleeding yet all I could think about was her. I knew she wouldn't hurt me. This wasn't Patsy. This wasn't my dog but an imposter placed there to trick me, to harm me.

Yet that was my dog. At least that's what I had to say to animal control when they showed up at the doctor's office. I had tried to play it off as a cat scratch even though they know my mom was in here a week earlier with claims of a dog bite. The doctor even pointed out that the mark was too deep to be a cat yet they still played along in order not to upset me.

It was the first day of 8th grade. I went in with a swollen face and a heavy heart as I held Patsy in my thoughts the whole time. It was hard not to think about her considering every five minutes people would ask about what happened, but my mind still drifted to her sleeping at home. Did she feel remorse? Did she mean to lash out? Is she still my dog?

My day went on and I slowly started to cheer up. I got home with a big smile on my face as I rushed through the empty house yelling for my dog. There was no sign of her. However, the back door stood wide open so I rushed out to be greeted by my mother and brother who wore solemn faces. I ignored it and cheerfully discussed my day. I was only about two minutes in when I asked the question they were dreading.

"Mom, where's Patsy?"

Silence. My mother's mouth was moving, but that's all I heard. Silence... and then screaming. I heard screams and wails for the first time. I felt my heart shatter for the first time. I finally understood what my dad felt when Coco died, yet I didn't try to hide my pain. At least he got to say goodbye.

It's been two years and I still choke up at the thought of my dog and that day. She was my best friend. She was one of the few things that helped me get through the day. She was everything to me. Patsy helped me accept myself and slowly come out of my shell. Her death, on the other hand, forced me back into that shell and I'm still working my way out. If Coco was the foundation of the house of my personality, then Patsy was the walls that built the house. She was my protection from the outside world and for the longest time, she was my home. I learned about death the hard way, and although she taught me so much more, it was her death that shaped me. I only hope it's not her death that drives me.

Teddy (ten years old)

Shiba inus, an iconic dog breed. Teddy was always the opposite of the stereotype that surrounded this breed. Most shiba's were friendly and cozy dogs that would do the cutest performances while Teddy is a grumpy old man who is more cat than dog. He hates being picked up and if you do lift him, then his legs and arms will go stiff and his claws will dig into whatever clothing you have. I lost a few good shirts to him.

My connection to Teddy is slim and almost nothing. He's too distant to build a relationship with, and he's too grumpy for anyone to love on constantly. Of course the exception is my father, but even he had trouble cuddling the dog unless it was bedtime. Teddy has always been elusive and he still is today—even more so, after we got the large puppy that drives him mad almost 24/7. I think Teddy was just aggravated that he couldn't keep up with the puppy's spry young behaviour.

Teddy has always been the outsider in our family. Not as affectionate as the others, not as happy as the others yet it didn't seem to bother him. He truly didn't care about what anyone thought about him. He was just living the best of his shiba life, and that's what he taught. He taught me to live my best and to not stress on what people thought of me. He knew what people said didn't matter and through observing this small

dog, I was able to gain not only a self-esteem boost but also a new perspective on life itself. Teddy is like the windows on the house of my personality, a way to see past the walls that surround me and even though he still gets annoyed by me, I can tell he still loves our family.

Waffles (nine years old)

Waffles has always been the smallest in the family and has truly been the smallest dog I've ever had. Of course, jack russells aren't really known for their hulking size so her small stature was just genetics. However, her large belly that wobbles when she walks is almost the same size as a bowling ball. She isn't really fat though, it's mostly left over weight from her pregnancy.

We didn't have Waffles during her multiple pregnancies, she was a breeding dog before even being considered for a cage at the classic PetSmart adoption day. Her body hasn't been able to heal perfectly, but she still tries her best to move through day. Her day-to-day life is usually the same routine of sleep, bark, and cuddle. Waffles is definitely the most affectionate dog I've ever had or even come across. She just loves attention. I guess she didn't get a lot of that before adoption.

Waffles was kind of a replacement for Coco. My dad needed another dog in his life, and despite the fact we still had two others at the time, he needed one that would love him as much as Coco loved him. Waffles was that replacement, and she was one of the best additions to the house. Her attention, like Coco's, was dictated by my father, and my father was only allowed to pay attention to her. She was an attention hog with emphasis on the hog part because she snorts just like one.

This little pup has so much love to give to my family and to my life, and her love seems to be the driving force to her life. She loves unconditionally like any normal dog and she cuddles like a small stuffed toy. A little white dog truly holds more love in her heart than some people I know and that's what she taught. She taught me to love without condition and to love with all my heart. Waffles is the door to the house of my personality because she taught how to open up. She taught me how to open my heart. Although she was for my dad, she helped me more than I've ever helped her and I'm eternally grateful for this small dog. A small dog that created and inspired my love for people and animals.

Kota (one year and three months old)

There isn't much to say about Kota considering the fact we've only had him a year. As a large goldendoodle who has been raised strictly by lap dogs, he's become convinced that he can comfortably sit on my lap without engrossing the entirety of my legs. He also has more energy than the electricity pumping through the telephone wires across the street. He loves jumping up and onto his back paws, and I believe he's about five foot two inches when he stretches to his full height. He really has nothing to offer besides his size and his smile. The largest smile I've ever seen on a dog always sits kindly on his face. That smile has gotten me through difficult nights—nights that I considered saying goodbye to his smile.

Kota and his smile still have so much to learn and so much to teach. He's just starting his life and he'll be living the entirety of it with us. I've yet to learn a lesson from him, but I know there are plenty in plan for our future. He will be my teacher and I, his. He is my future. I don't know what he'll add to the house of my personality. I don't know where my life will take him. We still have so much to do and so much to see. Knowing is only half the battle right now, but Kota is my current origin. My current personality. My current future.

As cliche as it sounds, dogs have been my guardian angels. They've guided, protected, and educated me through my years of growing up. They've shaped me in ways I still have yet to comprehend, and although they're just pets, to me they're so much more. Dogs are my origin. Dogs are the guiding light that will lead me to my final destination in life. Dogs are the house of my personality and Coco, Patsy, Teddy, Waffles, and Kota are or will be the items that make up this home.

ADRIANA VASQUEZ, GRADE IO

Just Black

The day after Christmas, I sat down in front of my family's desktop and opened up Sallie Mae's scholarship search engine. I had decided to dedicate the last few days of my winter break searching for ways to fund my secondary education. With hopes of pursuing a career in mathematics, I figured there would be plenty of money available for someone such as myself heading into a field where both of my minorities are underrepresented. The process of building my profile began as effortless and comfortable; I am a: high school senior, Resident of: Virginia, Gender: Female, Age: 18, Citizenship: U.S Citizen, Ethnicity: Black—except, 'Black' was not an option.

This immediately puzzled me. Affirmative Action, policies favoring groups known to have suffered from discrimination, has been in place since the 1960s, surely there are scholarships intended for Black people. I spent the next 10 minutes scrolling through the provided list of ethnicities and nationalities, tracing my finger meticulously down the monitor; 10 options for Asians, 23 options for Caucasians, 5 options for Indigenous populations and Islanders, 4 options for Hispanics and Latinos. My only option was 'African-American.' Not even 'African-American or Black,' just 'African-American.'

I struggled to press down on my mouse. Am I African-American? I do not know where I am from. My parents do not have records of any semblance of a family tree. My grandparents certainly are not aware of their roots. What right do I have to identify with a continent whose only claim to me is my complexion? Am I not *just Black*? I decided to ignore the unsettling feeling in my stomach and select 'African-American' in favor of missing out on opportunities for college funding, but the experience left a sinking pit in my stomach that has resurfaced frequently since then.

Now that I am a legal adult and fill out my own paperwork, I stumble into this challenge often. Every formal documentation wants to know "which category best describes" my race. Though their inquiries are seemingly innocent, college applications, DMV registrations, and census surveys all induce a momentary internal crisis. If a person asked my race, I would simply respond 'Black'—my mother is black, my father is black, therefore so am I. But on many official forms, my only option is to identify as African-American. On some gracious occasions, I am offered 'Black/African-American' ('Black or African-American' if I am lucky) with the two terms offered as one synonymous option, their cultural uniqueness dumped into a melting pot and fused into one nondescript category. I am rarely given the opportunity to appropriately represent myself. Sometimes this incites confusion, sometimes sadness, sometimes uneasiness, but most often irritation. It is utterly essential to correctly define a people whose history is centered around the loss of their identity.

I firmly believe that the categories Black and African-American are not interchangeable. An African-American is an individual with direct descendants from the continent of Africa. They may not have a purely African bloodline, but they know what customs to participate in, what traditions to carry on, what holidays to celebrate. To be Black is to have been disjointed from your ancestry for so long that your great-grandparents do not even know what nation they descended from. To be Black is to latch onto those around you and form your own values and habits with others who suffer from the same loss of identity. It is indeed its *own culture*, one forged out of shared experiences, shared physiques, and shared loneliness.

'African-American' is not the only nationality of its kind. Any time any immigrant is nationalized as a U.S Citizen, they earn the right to add 'American' to their previous identity (think of terms such as 'Chinese-American'). The second half of this compound nationality is indicative of an individual who values their unique heritage but is proud to be a member of a new community. It is a symbol of achievement, signifying a person who has successfully made their way into a new society. Hundreds of thousands of immigrants from many nations choose to earn American citizenship, but those from any of the numerous countries in Africa have the exclusive obligation to identify as simply African-American. They do not have the option of distinction between the many ethnicities enclosed within the continent of Africa. A Nigerian who worked hard to earn the fare to the states and has recently earned their citizenship is African-American. So are

third generation Cameroonians whose parents and children were all born, raised, and college educated in the United States. And yet, someone living in the projects with an unknown distant ancestor from Ghana and an unidentifiable number of other races mixed into their bloodline, resulting from generations of slave rape, must also be African-American. African immigrants must ignore their individuality and submit under one large umbrella. They do not have the option of paying homage to their heritage; they must simply be African-American.

Although the clumping of all Africans is an injustice in and of itself, it is an even larger disservice to equate African-Americans to Black people. My emphasis on the distinction between the two is not made in hopes of augmenting cultural barriers, nor is it a claim of superiority—neither one is lesser than the other—rather it is an acknowledgment of the fact that being African-American submits you to unique trials just as being Black has its own tribulations. Being Black requires that the color of your skin be the source of your identity. It means your heritage was stolen from you when your ancestors were kidnapped from their homes and sold into slavery. It means your great-great grandfather had his culture beaten out of his memory. It means your great grandmothers struggled to grasp for any sense of who they were, who they were supposed to be, and who they would become. It means that at some point in the long history of their lineage, their identity was brutally and unapologetically stomped into the dust of the very earth that they were forced to work on.

I am black. As obvious as it sounds, there have been many times in my life when I have felt like I had little to no right to even try to identify with black culture. I grew up in an upper middle class suburban neighborhood surrounded by people of other races, I didn't feel like I *could* relate to other black children. Then again, it's impossible to form any concrete assessments when you are constantly beleaguered by an arsenal of contradictions. How am I supposed to feel about myself in a country that can't decide how it feels about me? I can't tell whether or not my life matters, whether my talents are appreciated or exploited, or whether my body is exotic or unshapely. This very struggle is the reason I can be so confident in my race now. I know I am black, not because of my elusive family tree or even because of my complexion, I know because I feel the full force of my displacement every day that I live in everything that I do. The beauty of my race stems from the acceptance of our disjunction. It lies in our resilience, our persistence, and our strength. We thrive, even when we aren't wanted.

CANDACE TODD, GRADE 12

Go Ahead

After Maya Angelou

Go ahead and poke fun at me
Sneer at my pudgy lips
Laugh at my broad nose
Revolt at my miry skin
But at least let me sing

Go ahead and pet me like an animal
Poke my stiff, upright bush
Yank my rebounding coils
Stroke my exotic fur
But at least let me sing

Go ahead and brainwash my sisters
Bleach their flesh off
Burn their hair up

Relax their brains out
Go on and condemn my children
Rob them of opportunity
Taunt them with prospect
Feed them their niche
Go and kill my brothers
Beat my cousins down in the alleys
Throw my uncles in crowded cells
Refuse my father his duty of provider
But at least let me sing

Go ahead and tell me what I know
Call me who I truly I am
Enlighten me on all that I can amount to
Cripple me into believing you
But At least let me sing.

Take that rusted blade from my throat
I am well aware of my displacement
Let me feign ignorance of my circumstance
Let me close my eyes and sing.

CANDACE TODD, GRADE 12

The Real Black Me

My hair haunted me in middle school.
The nappy texture filled me with disgust.
Society taught me it wasn't good enough.
I combed and combed and tried different styles.
None of it helped.
Instead I should have tried to love myself.
Woe is me, I'd cry myself to sleep, constantly feeling ugly—
That's what I would hear around me—
Ugly for being naturally me,
Ugly for being who I am.
I grew tired of the European beauty standards.
I grew tired of the hate.
I forced myself to love me and didn't know what I'd create—
Self love so strong it nullified the hate.
Attracted those who saw my inner and outer beauty—
Those who loved me, the real me,
The real black me.

DARCHAN TURNER-DAVIS

The Hardship of Living

I had a pretty rough childhood. I didn't realize exactly how it made me feel until I was older, only because as a young kid, I obviously didn't understand. I was always a very energetic and happy child and I would

brighten any room I walked into. That was as a kid, though, when my mind was still in a playful, immature, carefree state and the only thing that mattered to me was what color crayon to use for my triangular shaped dress on my stick figure drawing. Around my fifth grade year, I began noticing hurtful comments, rude looks, snarky attitudes, and unsettling gestures from other kids. My father was put in prison when I was in the fourth grade, and my family was crumbling in my hands. At the time, I didn't know how to feel. I was bombarded with feelings and thoughts that I didn't understand and wouldn't understand until a year later. My family was poor, my dad was in prison and everyone knew that. Looking back, I was always bullied in elementary school, but I didn't really care because I didn't comprehend it happening, and I never truly knew what having "fake friends" was like.

As I got older, and my life started really falling apart, everything started to make sense. I learned how to self-loathe only because I believed everyone around me already had some sort of negative opinion about me. I thought I was a problem, a mistake, a liability, a pest. It only got worse in middle school. I was played by boys because they knew I was vulnerable; girls, on the other hand, were disgusted by me. I only had two real friends through it all: my best friends, Nisi and Myles. Two losers, just like me. They made things easier to get through my sixth grade year. In the beginning, though, I developed the bad habit of self harm. I would mentally abuse my self-conscious and physically abuse my body. I told my best friends in hopes they could get me to stop, but it became an addiction, and I was out of control. I wasn't addicted to the pain, or the blood, or the fact that it's fun to pick at scabs, but to me, self-harm was a circuit to feeling okay again, or at least, a way of numbing the emotional pain with physical, so that I didn't feel anything at all. I felt as if no feelings were better than too many. I finally understood how I felt, why I felt it, and in a way, found how to not feel it anymore. It wasn't an easy battle, having to wear long sleeves everyday, hiding my hurt behind a mask, and putting on a show enabling people to see how I actually felt. Somewhere along my sixth grade year, my secret got out and other kids started making fun of me. They labeled me as "that emo witch." It seems like people don't know their facts—"emo" is a genre of music, not a descriptive word that discriminates normal from abnormal and I just so happened to be fairly nice to people, never once was I a "witch." I knew what it was like to have someone be rude to you, call you names, make fun of you, and just straight up hurt you for no reason. I didn't believe anyone should have to feel that way, but I somehow convinced myself I deserved it.

The bullying didn't only happen at school; once my dad was released from prison, I would come home and be greeted by degrading comments and slaps upside the head every now and then. My father made me forget what it was like to have a dad. He was never home, he called my siblings and I worthless, he made fat "jokes" here and there, and the worst of it all he broke our family. He morphed himself into a ghost that haunted the depths of my mind. When he was around, the air felt heavy and cold. He only ever did something when it benefited him. Our "family" was like taxidermy to him. He would hunt us down, kill us, stuff us, and present us as he pleased. If I'm being honest, I thought my dad was my hero until he returned from prison. I was always too young and naive to see all the hardships and the struggle my father put my family through. When I did, however, it was too late. My mind had already been tainted and corrupted, so he didn't help much.

Shortly after my father's release, the only man in my life who ever treated me like I mattered had passed away. My grandfather was my rock for as long as I can remember. He was diagnosed with Stage IV spinal cancer. Since it was in his bones, there was nothing they could do to remove it and he was doomed to lose the fight against cancer. He was strong though, physically and mentally. The doctors said two months, and he fought through six. The day before his passing, I made breakfast for the two of us. He was on a lot of medication which caused him to drift in and out of consciousness. I brought him a plate of rainbow colored pancakes that morning and I will never forget his last words to me.

"Good Morning, Papa, I made you some pancakes!"

"Hi Baby..."

And that was it.

Throughout middle school up until my freshman year, I was a walking devastation. I didn't want to be alive anymore. My arm and my thighs were always raw with cuts. Freshman year was the worst of it though. I was already an outcast, and the friends that I thought I had hated me, but didn't even know it yet. They had sworn to themselves they wouldn't say anything, but the secret had gotten out. On top of that, I had a boyfriend who almost raped me, but luckily he was interrupted at the perfect time. Those people play the part in my life that explains my trust and abandonment issues. For example, I became the laughing stock of the year when I broke my ankle jumping down the stairs. The one person I truly believed was my only friend, the one person who was first to make fun of me. We got into an argument because I questioned her loyalty to me; naturally, she didn't like that very much and retaliated. I was alone again after that, and I felt bad for interrogating her and eventually apologized, even though I had done nothing wrong, I still took the blame. I always did. We made up—or so I thought. It turned out that she was still going behind my back and was deliberately stabbing it repeatedly. She found out that I knew about it all and confronted me. Demandingly, she won over all my friends and turned them against me. Betrayal wasn't unfamiliar to me, but this time it had an outstanding effect. I started hating myself more than anyone else did although I gained the skill of identifying real from fake. So, in a way, this was a good loss.

Sophomore year was a fresh start. My mom had packed us up and we moved to Virginia. It was my father's birthday the day we left. His gift from us was a heavy argument and an empty house. Sounds cruel, but we literally got evicted because of him and had nowhere else to go. Virginia was a place where I could become someone new, where no one knew my past, where no one called me "emo," where I could change everything about who I am and no one would ever know. Unfortunately, that was easier said than done. It took me awhile to make friends: I was alone for the first two months of school until some seniors that I was in theatre with took me under their wing. Yeah, I had friends, I was doing well in school, I had a roof over my head and food on the table, but I still didn't feel like myself. I wasn't happy.

At that point in my life I felt like I was missing some part of me—as if there were a hole in my heart that I wanted so desperately to fill. Key word: "wanted." I didn't need it to be filled, so, I became boy obsessed and chased after any guy who was relatively attractive in some way, shape, or form. Of course, this didn't go well; I had my heart broken directly and even indirectly. Trying to force someone to love me was a bad idea, and I didn't fully realize why until the end of summer 2016. Looking back now, I actually learned a lot after everything I've been through, and one of those things was, if I don't love myself, I will never truly be happy and I will never be able to love someone else without loving me first. This idea sparked something in me. I told myself that I would take time off of boys, drama, tears, and hurt to focus on me. I did that for the remainder of the summer and became, surprisingly, happy with myself, so I took an oath for myself:

"Junior year is going to be my year. I only have to worry about me, myself, and I."

Funny enough, that was the moment I fell in love. Ever since then, life has been stable. I have gone over a year without self-harming and even though there have been many ups and downs, I was able to pick myself up and keep going. Now, I have been running full speed towards the rest of my life and fighting each battle with everything I've got and never giving up.

I am comfortable with who I am and I have accepted that my past is only the hands that are molding me into the animated clay statue that I am today. People try their hardest to bring me down or ruin my happiness, but I've evolved into something strong and powerful. Even on my darkest days I try to find the slightest bit of light to hold onto. My life wasn't perfect then; it wasn't the worst either. I'm glad I finally found the courage to stick around because life is a beautiful and an amazing gift. I have learned and grew from my past. I used to want my life to be over, but now I never want it to end.

The following poems helped me get through it all:

Blood vs. Water

They always told me
“Blood is thicker than water,
Family should and will always come first.”

But when I am drowning
It's not water that fills my lungs
It's blood.

A Ton of Bricks

You're always gone,
you're never here,
but when you are you build a tier.
The bricks you stack
upon my back
weigh a ton
and soon I'll crack.
As you build
the higher they go
the more they weigh
the less you show.
You're always gone
it's been too long
for you to see
the damage
I bleed.
You can't erase
the pain in place
of the love
that should've been,
but never was.

At Sunset

Looking out into the unknown
seeing the world at its peak of beauty
the smell of sunblock and salt water fills the air
at this time the sand is cool to the touch
the wind blows slightly creating a bit of a chill
the sky turns into a swirl of creamy pinks and purples
with a hint of orange and a dash of yellow.
Peacefully, the sun lays upon the water
the world sighs in relaxation
another illuminating day is put to rest
until next time.

The City

I have always dreamed of the city
Bright lights and shiny people
Tall buildings and car horns
Everything I wanted to be.
Some maybe say
It's too crowded and loud
Like my mind
Others might say
It's beautiful and bright
Like my soul
And few will say
It's pure but damaged.
Like my heart.

Fall Time

Red, orange, yellow, brown
The colors of fall that go around
Chilly weather and pumpkin carving
Things that make fall so charming
Spooky lights and midnight frights
Fall elements of amazing sights
Costume parties and candy galore
Fall time is never a bore
Red, orange, yellow, brown
The colors of fall are starting now

A Time Someone Went Too Far
Sitting in his room
on his bed
his hands start wondering
My mind begins pondering
He starts undressing me
I'm **scared**, I can't breathe
I voice how I'm feeling
but his body keeps proceeding
His mouth tastes like poison
my body lies **frozen**
I pray for it to end
I don't want this moment to extend
as he goes in for the kill
my stomach feels ill
I said I was **scared**
but he never cared

there's a sudden knock on the door
He jumps to the floor
and leaves the room
his bed now feels like a tomb
cold and closed.
It's over.
I almost fell through the crack
I could've lost that part of me
I would never get back.

Happy Hour

Party time some may call it
Relax time as my mother always said
An hour in which we would celebrate, simply, being happy.
My happy hour however
is every hour
any place
any time
as long as
I'm with you.

I used to only write sad and dark poems, but as life goes on I have learned to find beauty in everything and chose to pick the poems that best describe me as a writer.

ASHLEIGH VEGA, GRADE 12

Glimpses of Mom

The Woman in White

I hadn't seen my mother in three years when she showed up for my middle school formal. I couldn't believe that she was there but not in a good way like I had when I was younger. Now the odd way she walked in and out of my life wasn't welcomed. I suddenly had to deal with a wide range of emotions minutes before I was supposed to be dancing and acting a fool with my peers. I couldn't wrap my head around it, and there was barely time to do so. I shared awkward hugs with the mother that seemed to remember me when it was convenient and the brother that hadn't meant to forget me. God it was a somber moment. I hugged Seron, my younger brother, to me and thought about how years ago a moment like this had been able to make me so happy. Now our lives seemed so separate that I didn't know how we could ever come together without it being awkward. I thought about how the last time she'd shown up I had been so happy it had been so easy.

Everyone wore white at my elementary school graduation, I can't remember why we did but I just know it was something everyone had to do. I didn't pick out a cute dress like the rest of the girls in my class. I'd had such a hard time finding something to wear, it seemed like nothing was fitting right. I felt too big for the cute dresses in the stores thinking about how my Poppi was always saying my stomach was too big. When I stood in the dressing room glancing at the dresses I'd tried on, I thought maybe he was right. At the end of the day I'd picked out a white top and a long flowy white skirt to wear at my graduation. I remember at first feeling awkward. I wasn't use to wearing anything other than pants, but soon enough I felt comfortable and maybe even pretty.

My dad wasn't a super-involved parent when it came to school activities; he didn't volunteer like all the other parents did at school. It was rare for him to do anything other than pick me up from school and

occasionally drop me off when grandparents couldn't do it for him. Graduation was something he wouldn't miss though; he was so proud that day. I'd thought that it would just be my dad, my grandmother who I called Gmom, and myself. After the ceremony started, though, my dad started hinting at some big surprise he had for me. It was then he told me my mom was coming to my graduation. I had felt so happy in that moment and then a little nervous when I went off to find her. I took my phone out of my pocket, scrolled through the contacts and hit the one that said "Mom." Most of my classmates didn't have phones, but my dad bought me one to prove something about my mom to me. I didn't quite understand what he meant then, but sadly it wouldn't be too long before I did. The phone rang for a couple seconds.



"Hi, Mom?" I said

"Hi, poo" she replied

Our phone calls always started like this because my mom could never keep a phone for long. I always had to double check that it was her and not someone else. There were times I'd call one number after the other trying to reach her; sometimes I would and sometimes I wouldn't. I searched for her face outside in front of the school. I couldn't seem to find it, so we started describing our surroundings to each other. I saw the trees she saw, the crosswalk and the parking lot, but I couldn't see her. Then she started to describe the woman in a white dress;; my mom said that she was a tall woman in a long white dress that had a phone pressed against her ear. I looked around, but I couldn't find her.

"It looks like she's searching for someone poo..."

I stopped looking around because I realized that long skirt I wore could easily be mistaken for a dress. I looked dead ahead and finally saw her; we both laughed into the phone. We'd been practically right in front of each other the whole time. That close but we couldn't even recognize each other. It had been funny then, but now it gives me pause.

Does that mean after all these years, now my mom won't know my face?

Origin

My origin had never been something on my mind; people asked and I answered. It was a simple trivial question that held no consequence to me. I moved around so often as a child that I had never really gotten a sense of having roots. At first, I felt like my origin was lost to me, but the more I thought about it the more it became clear that I had many origins. I had a genesis, a dawn, so many different beginnings that made me who I am and will make me who I have yet to become. Some of my beginnings are painful some came and others started and went by without me noticing.

Even now writing about my origins I am doing something my dad hates, I'm dwelling on my past. I remember a time when everything then was simple, I had a mom I loved fiercely, and my dad was mostly forgotten. My mom was always "Mommy" but my dad was never "Daddy" and only occasionally jokingly did I ever call him "father."

My mom was my best friend, we moved so often sometimes she was my only friend. I had trouble making friends even after I settled down with my dad. The night she tried to kill herself changed my life forever, but in the way some may expect, in attempting to take her own life, she saved my life. When I lived with my mom, I had a horrible lisp, I had trouble keeping up in school, and had a tough time reading.

After I began to live with my dad, most of my problems went away. He pushed me to do better in school and bought me all sorts of books to read. Gradually, I started to improve in school and form a relationship with my dad. It was hard; his affection was harder to understand than my mother's. There were no more long hugs or lying against each other while watching TV together. Unlike when I lived with my mother, my dad's room was a forbidden place, it's door usually closed. I slept by myself every night in my own bed for the first since I could remember; it felt incredibly lonely. Sometimes I'd sleep on the floor because sleeping in a bed felt so weird to me; a lot of times I slept better like that. I felt lonely despite having the family around, so I started reading books. When I moved in with my dad, there were so many rules that I had never had with my mom but what I read was never restricted. I read when I was sad, lonely, bored, or happy; slowly but surely it was one of my favorite things to do.

My mom made so many mistakes. She'd call and then disappear; I felt like I missed out on all the moments that a daughter has with her mother. I wondered why she wouldn't try, she walked in and out of my life when it suited her, and I was left to pick up the pieces of the mess of my heart she would make.

Not too long after I started attending a private school in downtown Baltimore, my mom moved into the area so I could visit. No one really talked about what my mom did and where she went. The room where we all slept (my mom, half-brother, step-brother, and I) at my mom's townhouse in downtown Baltimore was cramped, dirty, and housed all sorts of creepy crawlies. I didn't care at the time; after months without a mother' I just wanted to see her, so every other weekend my dad would take me there. I don't remember how long she lived there' but it wasn't long. Even though she still held a large part of my heart, I was already starting to change. I no longer called her Mommy and every time she called me "poo" I felt a slight irritation and embarrassment that hadn't been there before.

My stepdad never scared me, but we were never close. He was this person I couldn't completely ever get comfortable with. I never called him anything but Mr. Deron, and maybe for a similar reason I never got comfortable calling my brother by his name. His name is Saron a mashup of my name's and Deron's. I could only every call him my mom's pet name for him, "Doo doo." My mom moved away without a word; she said they couldn't afford to pay rent anymore.

By the time I was in middle school I had internally decided I no longer needed my mother. When she called, I didn't always answer. When she went months without calling, I'd rarely remember to call her back. It began to feel like it was something I was supposed to do, not something I enjoyed. I'd have fun talking to her sometimes, but our conversations somehow felt fake. I realized she knew nothing about my life. We were strangers to each other trying to fit our lives together, but it didn't work. I kept thinking back to the words my mom repeated to me over the years. She always told me "no promises." I was never to expect her visit plans to pan out because she never made any promises. I'd foolishly promised my younger brother so many things that I couldn't possibly make sure. I couldn't keep him safe over state lines, there was no way to mend the broken home I knew he lived in.

Genesis: Red Lights, Blood, and Chocolates

It was a couple days after Valentine's day I'd gotten caught for sneakily eating my candy from school. Mommy took the candy away and made me sleep in the living room by myself. We had one bed and one TV in our house and both were in mommy's room, so there was nothing to do out in the living room. I'd glanced at the books that my father had sent me, they were so boring and I hadn't even opened one yet. It wasn't long before Mommy opened her bedroom door and slipped out to use the bathroom.

Trying to ease my boredom, I listened hard to the sounds of running from the shower. The door opened, and Mommy called for me. I untangled myself from the couch and took the few steps to the bathroom. I look at Mommy and she's bleeding. She's bleeding, and I've never seen mommy bleed. She starts to speak, but I can't focus on what she's saying. She goes back in the room, and when she comes out, suddenly she thrusts the phone into my tiny hand.

"Here, talk to your dad. You're going to stay with him awhile, poo."

"Okay, Mommy"

I start to speak to my dad. Suddenly tears are rushing down cheeks, and my throat feels like it's closing. I wheeze, trying to breathe and listen to my dad on the phone. Why? Why is Mommy sending me away? Why is Mommy bleeding? Then I see the lights: red lights and the sounds of sirens that get louder and louder. A woman walks through the open door to our house. Mommy looks at me telling me that Noel, my godsister, will be here soon and then she's gone. I started to hear crying so I walked into the bedroom, barely looking at my stepfather who'd just made his way into the living room. My eyes settled on the crib where my little brother lay. I reached into the crib and pulled him close rocking back and forth and singing the silly songs that I'd made up for him. Most were lullabies that I had forgotten, so I sang my own lyrics to the melody, but that was enough

I held onto my brother for dear life, making promises at the time I didn't know that I couldn't fulfill. The sun set without me noticing, and it wasn't long after that my cousin as well as godsister, Noel, arrived with her then boyfriend, I said one final goodbye to my baby brother and then I left.

SA'RAYE WYNDER-BURS, GRADE 10

Strawberry Frosting

I remember

Being scared

Not in a good way

I had no idea what was going on

I could feel my heart racing

I felt like I was going to throw up

I couldn't move

I couldn't breathe

I couldn't speak

Why was this happening?

I didn't think anything of it when he followed me upstairs

I just wanted to get more food

I grabbed a cupcake and smiled when we made eye contact

I was just being polite

He was a friend

He is a friend

Right?

Heading back down to join in the comradery

He was suddenly there

I could feel him behind me

He was too close

But the stairwell was empty

No one else was hungry for seconds?

He grabbed my arm

Causing me to stop one step below him

Maybe I had forgotten something upstairs

And he was bringing it to me

But my phone was downstairs with my jacket

And I didn't bring anything up with me except my plate

Then everything was in slow motion
And I couldn't breathe
Or speak
Or move
And I was being pushed into the wall behind me
While he shoved his face into mine
He handled my body like he was angry
And I just stood there
Questions racing through my brain
I was angry at myself more than I was angry with him
It was him
He was the nice guy that everyone loved
Always giving out friendly hugs
He knew everyone's names
And he was always in such a good mood
His positivity was contagious
This was so out of character for him

Then one word emerged in my mind
"No"
He stopped
"You don't like it?"
"No"
He laughed
He didn't believe me
"No"
I whispered and ran
Before anything else could happen

No one noticed the tears
No one noticed the shock
I sat down
And ate my cupcake
Scared of sudden movements
Or speaking
Or breathing My head was spinning
So I pushed everything down
With strawberry frosting

JULIE ZYLICH, GRADE 12

UNION MIDDLE SCHOOL



Sounds of Big Stone Gap

Birds Chirping
Dogs Barking
Squirrels Climbing
Kids Screaming
People Cheering
Bands Playing
Bears Roaring
Streams Babbling
Wind Blowing
Snakes Rattling
Raccoons Chittering
Turkeys Gobbling

All the sounds that I hear in the mountains of Big Stone Gap

KAMRON ABNEY, GRADE 5

My Family

Last Summer my family went to a blue lake to go fishing. It is close by my house in Appalachia, Virginia. My dad took us, but my mom stayed home because she says she is "allergic" to the outdoors. It took me about an hour to catch 3 fish, but we threw them back in.

My sister, who is a year younger than me, caught nothing because she tripped over my foot, then she fell into the lake. My dad didn't really fish, he was just trying to teach us by helping with hooking the worm, casting, and things like that.

We go fishing every 2 weeks in the summer. It is an important part of my summer because I get to spend quiet time with my dad. We talk about things like video games.

I hope we can do it again next summer.

AYDIN ADAMS, GRADE 5

My Family History

I have a great family with an interesting history. I have many grandparents that have worked in the coal mines and been in the military. My family on my mom's side were Cherokee Indians. I come from a family of caretakers and hard workers.

Several members of my family worked in the coal mines. My great grandfather had a big piece of rock fall between his feet. His feet were injured for life. My other grandfather was injured by a coal scoop. A scoop tears a coal wall down. One of the workers didn't see him and hit him with the scoop. They thought he would have to have his leg amputated but he only had mild injuries.

My Nanny's dad was in the Korean War, his name was Robert Smith. My grandfather's dad was in the Navy during World War II. He was a coal miner and was drafted into the Navy to go to war. My great uncle took care of Governor Holton's mother. He would mow her lawn and take care of her property. My grandmother was a school nurse, she was very good. She went back to school to become a guidance counselor and principal. She is the principal of Coeburn Primary. She loves taking care of kids. I have an uncle that is a scientist that works in a lab making medicine to help make people better.

I hope to be an astronaut, a detective, a golf pro, or an Elvis impersonator. If I can't help people, I want to make them laugh.

TALAN ADAMS, GRADE 5

My First Time Racing

The first time I went racing was a sunny day, and my dad and grandpa loaded the Go-Cart in the truck. After the cart was loaded on the truck we set off for a track in Kentucky. When we got there we unloaded everything and looked around. My cart had blue fenders and the number 51 in yellow on the sides. It used to belong to a kid who won the race the year before and is now NASCAR driver. I went to see other carts, and I found my friend Gabe. Gabe told me we would be racing each other and I was happy because it was my first time ever racing.

Finally, it was time for practice race. I started my engine and started to pull out. I was ready to go and we all went out at once. I went slow at first and then it got interesting because there was a crash ahead of me and the inside lanes were blocked. I couldn't stop in time, so I went up the bank.

I had three wheels off the ground and I drifted back in the lane. Then, there was another crash ahead in the same spot. One kid went over the barrier and the gap was even smaller, but I made it through and the practice was over. After that, I went to look at carts again.

Finally, it was time to race Gabe. It started out well because I was in the lead, but then I heard a strange noise. My clutch had broken and I couldn't stop the cart in the turns. I spun out five times and Gabe spun out too. I had to stop, but I couldn't because the brakes weren't strong enough, then the engine died and the race was over. I had some fun and a lot of mud on me!

EAN BAKER, GRADE 5

My Great Grandfather

My name is Jackson Creed Baker. I am named after my great grandfather Creed Tate. He was born and raised in Big Stone Gap. He joined the Navy when he was 16 years old. He lied to the recruiter about his age. He was a Pearl Harbor survivor. He was a Chief Gunner Mate at that time. There were a lot of ships at Pearl Harbor. On the morning of December 7, 1941, he had gone onshore. When he was returning to his ship, he saw planes coming in. The ships on both sides of his sank. He ran back onto his ship to man his crew in the gunner's room. They shot 16 inch diameter guns. As they were shooting, repairmen were repairing the ship because it was sinking. They fought for a long time and drove back the enemy. It was very scary. This is the event that caused America to join World War 2. A lot of men died that day. I think he was very brave and is a hero. He served in the Navy for 22 and a half years. He retired and came home to Big Stone Gap until he passed away in 2005. I never met him but I've heard a lot of stories about him. He was also an avid hunter and fisherman, and a true gentleman who treated everyone the same. I wish I could have met him.

JACKSON BAKER, GRADE 5

I Am Kaylee

I am kind and helpful.

I wonder how many people are in the world.

I hear music on my computer at home.

I see the ocean when I close my eyes.

I want everyone to be happy.

I am kind and helpful.
I pretend to work at a pizza shop and eat all I want.
I feel happy everyday.
I sometimes worry about my family.
I cry when my pets die.

I am kind and helpful.
I understand how people feel.
I say I love you to my parents everyday.
I dream of happy people everywhere.
I try to help people.
I am Kaylee.

KAYLEE BALLARD, GRADE 5

A Coal Mining Family

Our coal mining heritage started in 1934-1935 with my great-great grandfather, Rueben Ford. My great-grandmother, Marlene, told stories of how hard it was growing up in a small coal-mining town. There were times when she was growing up that her father, my great-great grandfather, Rueben, would get up and go to work before dawn, walking miles during the winter in the cold and snow, and walking during the summer in extreme heat, carrying his metal coal mining lunch bucket that my great-great grandmother, Pauline, would always pack for him with foods from the garden that they grew. He would wear his hard-hat with the light on the front so that he could see when he went into the mines, where it was cold and dark. My great-grandmother Marlene used to tell about how she remembered him coming home late of the evening, exhausted, with black coal dust on his worn out face, all just to make a living for his family and the ones he loved. She told of how she remembered her dad going out and loading coal into a small bucket to carry into their old, wooden house to put into the coal stove that kept them all warm. My great-grandmother Marlene told me that money was hard to come by because mining in the 1930s did not pay what was needed to keep up a family of eight children. She told me even during the school year that my Great-great-grandfather Rueben ordered the girls in the family only one skirt, one blouse, and a pair of shoes. She said they would all share clothes. The brothers got one pair of jeans each, one shirt, and a pair of shoes that were all ordered from the Spiegel catalog. Times were hard, but they always made it through.

My great-great grandfather Rueben passed away in September of 1981 from black lung due to his time in the coal mines, but the coal mining tradition didn't stop with him. My great-grandmother Marlene, and her brothers, Tom and Roger Ford were also involved in the coal industry. Her brothers worked in the mines while my great-grandmother ran forklifts and ordered parts that were used in the mines. She was raising four kids in 1973, making only \$3.25 an hour. People were amazed that she was a woman doing a "man's" job. Mamaw Marlene worked for Westmoreland Coal Company for over twenty years, until they closed their doors. She then worked for Teco Coal Company in Kentucky for thirteen years, and finally retired in June of 2013. Two months after her retirement, in August of 2013, she was diagnosed with cancer. Three years ago, she passed away in November, 2016. She loved working in the coal mining industry and everything about it. It ran through her blood! She took pride in her coal-dust-covered face and wearing her hard-hat and steel-toed boots. I'm thankful to have heard her stories and am proud of how tough she was!

RILEY BARBER, GRADE 5

Hannah

I am Hannah Brooke Barker and I am ten years young. I was born on May 22, 2008. My mom's name is Brandi Mashel Barker and my dad's name is Jeffrey Allen Barker. My dad passed away July 2, 2016. That day I felt like a piece of my heart was missing. Today I live with my mamaw and papaw. They are Debra Lynn and Kevin Lee Burke. My life everyday is different which makes it fun!

HANNAH B. BARKER, GRADE 5

My Great-Grandfather

My Papaw Barton, Paul Barton, was born in 1924. He joined the Army in 1943 as Private First Class. He served in World War 2 for two years, nine months, and six days. He was in the 82nd Division and was first stationed in Fort Bragg, NC. The battle he fought in was against the Japanese forces in the Philippines. He luckily survived the war and after it he lived all of his life in Imoden, Virginia. He worked in the coal mines and after he retired he spent the rest of his life doing what he loved best. He loved making wooden toys, planes, and cars. Most of the ones he made he gave to his grandchildren and great grandchildren. He gave me a model of a plane made out of wood. It was a model of a Japanese plane the Mitsubishi A6M Zero with the words "X man" on it. He also gave me some wooden cars that were modeled after old Nascar cars. Later in 2018 he passed away. He was a good, kind man and was one of the best parts of my life.



Xavier Barton

XAVIER BARTON, GRADE 5

My Summer Vacation

I went camping at Pound Lake and my aunt's. I enjoyed playing with my cousins. We went to Natural Tunnel swimming and I jumped off the diving board. We stayed up all night playing Fortnite. My dad taught me how to use a chainsaw. We went to Pigeon Forge and bought boots for me to wear when I work with my dad. We also went to Dollywood and rode all the rides. At my aunt's we went skeet shooting and target shooting. I loved being with my cousins, my dad, and playing fortnite.

CHRIS BATES, GRADE 5

Cherokee Lake Adventures

My family and I have been going to Cherokee lake for a long time. I love it because there are so many fun things to do and we get to spend so much time with family. My mamaw and papaw moved their camper just up from ours, so our whole family gets to be together. We even take our dog, Hooch, because he enjoys the water as much as the rest of my family. My mamaw and papaw have a golf cart. They let Austin and me take

turns driving it around the campground and down to the lake. There is a trail that goes through the woods to the water. My favorite thing to do there is the jungle boat. It has trampolines and rope swings over the water, so you can bounce or splash into the water, then swim. My mom enjoys swimming too. She always swims out to the buoy from the beach area. My brother and I also fish a lot while we are there. I caught my biggest catfish there this summer. It was huge! When we get tired of fishing, I will usually ride my kayak. When I first got it, I thought it was easy to learn how to ride. My dad had a little bit of a harder time. He flipped it a few times, but finally got the hang of it. When we get tired of the water, my brother, his friends, and I go play basketball at the campground basketball court. I love going to the lake with my family! There is always something fun to do and we have a good time together.

LOGAN BATES, GRADE 5

My Great Grandpa Belcher

There are many special people in my family I could tell you about. The one I have heard many stories about, was the one that served our country, my great grandpa, Lester Belcher. He grew up in a coal camp, but decided to go the navy. He lied about his age and he said he was eighteen, but he was only seventeen.

Great grandpa Belcher choose this to support not only our country but his family. Great grandpa Belcher was a diesel mechanic on a submarine while he was in the navy. It must have been hard staying away from his family, he knew what he had to do. Our country needed him, but he must have been sad especially at Christmas.

He served our country until after World War 2. Although I had never met my Great Grandpa Belcher, I feel like I do because of all the stories I've heard.

NOAH BELCHER, GRADE 5

Three Special People In My Life

Hi there, my name is Maddi Bishop. I am going to tell you about three special people in my life. The first person I am going to talk about is my 5th grade math teacher. Her name is Mrs. Bolling. Although Mrs. Bolling has four children she will always be my best friend. We have a great bond and she is so easy to talk to. She listens to me even if it is not a good story. I can tell her my secrets and she will keep them. That is why I trust her. She gives me a ride from home, to school and back home. I thank her for everything she does for me. She is my true friend and a real blessing to me.

Now I am going to talk about my cousin Patton Bishop. My cousin Patton is going to College and I am going to miss him so much. He and I have a great relationship. I told him that I would put him in my story because I love him.

The next person I am going to talk about is my Mamaw. My Mamaw is one of the nicest people I know and she is so kind to me. She is a babysitter and she lets me help with the babies. My Mamaw donates to Goodwill. She inspires me to be a giving person when I grow up. When I am with my dad she cooks for me, my brother and dad. I love her so much and thank her for everything she does for my family.

Now time for my parents. I know that they are not one of the special people in my story. However, they do so much for me. I just wanted to say, I love them so much and I thank them for everything they have done for me –and my brother.

MADISON BISHOP, GRADE 5

I Am From

I am from PS 4, Fortnite, BO 4, tacos and a farm
I like NBA, Madden 19 Basketball and Football

I am from soldiers, a good cooking family and a family that has a big farm with horses, sheep, cows, and chickens

LANDON BLANKEN, GRADE 5

A Miracle for Blevins

I was in the fourth grade and school was almost out for the summer. On April 28th, 2018 our lives would change forever. My biological mom, Victoria, decided to go for an ATV ride in the mountains at Maples Gap. She was with my Dad and my Dad's friend, Jeff. When they were driving, the ATV that Victoria was driving broke down and she smashed into a tree. After she hit the tree, the ATV rolled on top of her. By the time my Dad got to her, she was unconscious.

Around 2:00 in the afternoon, my Mom got a call from Jeff. He said that Victoria was seriously injured from an ATV accident. The Sheriff's Department was there within minutes of receiving the 911 call. Meanwhile, my Dad was holding Victoria's head in his arms to keep her airway open. This was the only way that she was able to breathe. When the Sheriff reached Victoria, she was still unconscious so he had to put smelling salts in her nose to keep her awake. There were two ambulances and two fire trucks there to help, as well as, a helicopter. Later, we found out that she had stopped breathing three times before the rescue workers were able to get her off of the mountain.

When we arrived at the Valley Fire Department in Crackers Neck, they were bringing Victoria off of the mountain. I saw that Victoria was strapped down on the gurney and covered in blood. There was so much blood that I couldn't see her face. She was unrecognizable. They loaded her into the helicopter and my Mom, my two sisters, my great-grandparents and I watched as the helicopter took off and flew away with her.

My Mom, my sisters, my biological-Dad Johnny, and I drove to Holston Valley Hospital in Kingsport, TN where they had taken Victoria. When we arrived at the hospital, the doctors gave us an update on how bad she was. She had bleeding on her brain, a fractured skull, and she was in a coma. My Mom was able to talk the nurses into allowing my sisters and I to see her. That would be the only time we got to see her for two months because of age restrictions in the ICU; you had to be 12 years old or older.

When I got into the room, I wasn't able to see her face because she still had blood all over it. She was in a neck brace. She looked so horrible that I could not help but cry. My Dad took my sisters and me to the waiting room. While we were there, we threw pennies in the pond and did a lot of praying.

About 2 ½ months later, she got discharged from the hospital and had to go to the nursing home. While she was there, she had to learn how to walk and speak again. Once she got out of the nursing home, she stayed with us for about three months because she was not able to be alone. After some time, she started to heal and was making progress. She also started to remember what happened to her on that day.

Victoria told me that while she was unconscious, that she was in Heaven laying on the ground. She seen the rest of our family that had passed on years before. She also saw Jesus. She said that Jesus seemed to stand as tall as two people. Jesus told her that she was going to be alright. She also seen a little boy with blond hair and blue eyes that change colors just like mine. The little boy spoke to her and said "Hi Mommy!" The little boy was my brother Noah Hunter.

I thank Jesus every day and night for what HE did for my family. Victoria continues to make improvements with her health every day. The doctors say that she is a walking miracle. We thank everyone for all their thoughts and prayers during this trying time in our family. Thank you dear Lord for answering all of our prayers.

LILY BLEVINS, GRADE 5

The Trip

Our class took a trip to Bullitt Park,
the Splash Pad was my favorite part.
I was sad because my best friend wasn't there,
but it was fun playing in the water instead of being at school.
We had lunch at Food City, and then we came back to school.
I can't wait until the next trip.

KAYLIE BLEVINS, GRADE 5

Miciah

My name is Miciah
I live in Big Stone Gap, Virginia
Christmas is my favorite holiday
I like to play basketball.
Alicia is my mother's name
Hard challenges are what I like.

MICIAH BOGGS, GRADE 5

Heartache and Memories

Life has not been easy for my family lately. First, one of my aunts broke her ankle in three places. My mom and I had been trying to help her with all of her daily activities, when we got more sad news. My aunt, DeeDee Rogers, recently passed away from melanoma. It is one of the fastest acting cancers and makes people really sick. She had been fighting to stay alive for three years and was only 38 years old when she died. Before she got sick, she would visit us and take me outside to play. We would eat Reese Cups and Snickers together and color in coloring books. I will always miss her, but I am so glad she is not hurting anymore. I loved her with all my heart and will always remember our happy times.

MADISON BOND, GRADE 5

Christmas Traditions

Before I was born, my family would celebrate Christmas at my dad's great-grandmother's house. Sadly, she passed away the year I was born. My family had to start a new tradition and they decided to rent a cabin in Gatlinburg. The new tradition started.

They wanted to be together, and not be sad, so they decided to do lots of fun things together to celebrate Christmas. They planned to make their time not about presents, but about spending time together while making memories.

Every year, we bought a real Christmas tree and decorated it with some of my Dad's great grandmother's ornaments. We would fix popcorn and string it on fishing line and hang it on the tree. We also did the same thing with dried cranberries and put them on the tree too. We also made lots of homemade Christmas ornaments to put on the tree. We take the homemade ornaments home with us when we leave.

There are usually lots of steps in the cabin, and my cousins and I like to run up and down them. We always play hide and go seek, and have a pool table and arcade to play with while there.

We have good food to eat while we are together. All of the grown-ups cook a very big breakfast. We also have lots of homemade candy and desserts that each family brings with them. The adults also cook a big Christmas dinner. It is nice having so many family members eating together, talking, and laughing.

My favorite part is building gingerbread houses with all of my cousins. They always look nice and is one of our fun Christmas traditions. We usually eat the candy while we put the houses together.

Before we leave to go home, each family will take pictures by the fireplace or in front of the Christmas tree. My mom and dad make special homemade picture frames to keep the pictures together. It is a nice way to remember our time together.

We did this for several years, but sadly we stopped. It is some of my best Christmas memories. I really hope we can start doing this old tradition again. Some of the best Christmas memories don't have anything to do with presents, they come from spending time with your family.

BEN BOWMAN, GRADE 5

The Haunted Forest

It was a Saturday evening and I was getting ready to go to the Haunted Forest with Sarah, Lexi, Sean, and her parents. They were coming to pick me up from my house. I was ready to go with my phone and money. I was paying since it was my idea, so they came and picked me up. Sarah and Lexi were all excited.

On our way there, I looked up what it would be like this year, because they change it every single year to something different. It had a farm that was haunted with chainsaws, and a scarecrow with blood on its face. I, for one, had never been to the haunted forest so I got a pretty good idea of what it was gonna be like.

So we are there, at Mountain Empire Community College, where the Haunted Forest is, and as soon as we get out of the car, there is a freaking werewolf that stands at least 6'0 feet tall with glowing yellow eyes and is staring at us! Lexi screamed, then, Sarah screamed.

We waited a good half an hour before we finally entered the trail. It was kind of sketchy because it led you in between the woods and we had to enter this house that contained voodoo dolls and there was a "chosen" one. The chosen one had to lead the group and be the very first person to enter all the houses and stuff.

And, of course, the house before the end had Jason in it. Sarah screamed, Lexi screamed, and I screamed. We all 3 darted out the house and waited for the others. The next house was weird. There was this chief that offered us "guts" (really it was gummies with red dripping candy liquid stuff). We ran out of there and we got a ticket to go to the slaughter house where there was chainsaws and a pig called "Bubba" -we ran out of the slaughter house as fast as possible.

At the end of the slaughter house there was this steep trail and we had to be careful going down it because there was a bunch of potholes. So we walked down the trail and went to get hot chocolate before we left. After we left the haunted forest, we went to McDonald's than I went home. But I'm never going back to the haunted forest ever again and that is something I will never forget.

RYLEIGH BOWMAN, GRADE 5

The Story Of My Life

I was born at Holston Valley Hospital in Tennessee. I was the first kid my mom had, but my brother was born 2 minutes after me. I went to live in Big Stone Gap and I lived in two little houses when I was little. Then, I moved to a bigger house with more rooms. I like it much better. I can have more stuff in my bedroom, and I have more land to hunt deer and squirrels. I love to go fishing to.

One day, I went fishing and I slung the fishing pole back and hooked my dad in the head. He got so so mad at me he when it happened. He finally got it out of his head and now, every time we go, he wears a hat so if I do it again it will hook the hat not his head.

I go hunting as much as I can. I love to go because it is so fun to kill deer and squirrels. The gun I use is a 20 gauge shotgun, and sometimes I use a spring bb gun with iron sites. I love deer soup and deer jerky. I also like squirrel meat with barbecue.

One time, my brother, Nick and I went hunting and we were shooting squirrels. The squirrels were in their nest so we shot the nest and they ran out. My brother is better than me with a scope on his gun, but I am better with iron sites on mine. We killed a lot of squirrels that day.

NATHANIEL BOYD, GRADE 5

The Time I Went To Sevier Air

One night, my dad told me and my brother that we were going to Pigeon Forge.

We were happy and I asked him if we could go to Sevier Air. So we left the house at 9:00 a.m. and then stopped at a restroom at 9:20 a.m. That was the only one we stopped at, and we made it there at 10:59 a.m.

We went to Sevier Air after we ate and it was awesome -I did flips and stuff. They had several trampolines, Ninja Park, Dodgeball Arena, and a foam pit. The basketball trampoline was my favorite. It was so much fun we went back and did it again.

The hotel we stayed in was Best Western. They had popcorn and cookies at 6:00 at night at the pool. And then, It had breakfast in the morning.

We went to the outlets and the flea market. I got some under armor shirts and some other stuff. I went to a place that sells Army and N.R.A shirts.

The next day, we played mini putt putt golf. The funnest thing was when I rolled the ball and my dad did not get it and it rolled in the creek and I had to get it. Thankfully, it was not deep. I love Pigeon Forge and I go there almost every weekend.

NICK BOYD, GRADE 5

What I Like to Do

Video Games are my favorite thing to do, but I also like to go outside. When I play video games, I play online with my papa, my uncle Dustin, and friends from school like Sebastian. When I play outside, I play tag, hide and seek, freeze tag, and football with Gavyn and Brycen.

Video Games educate you because it actually has stuff from the Army. It has robots called A.S.D that were used in the Sahara Desert. There are also missions in it that actually happened. My favorite games are Black Ops 3.

Outside, I have a backyard fort. Once, we tried to play tag on the inside, but I actually cut my leg open so that didn't work. Sometimes we go to Gavyn's house and he has a forest in his backyard. Inside the forest, there is a tree that we swing on. Just a few nights ago, lightning hit the tree and it fell. When it warms up, we can climb and play on it now.

I loved living here. I was born here and so was my dad but my mom was born in Kentucky. Someday, I will go to college and probably move somewhere else, but I will always remember growing up in the Appalachian region.

JAMES BRADY, GRADE 5

I Am

I am Aiden Bright

I wonder where the next update is going to be

I hear someone's footsteps

I see my legendary scar

I want the win

I am Aiden Bright

I pretend I'm good
I feel my controller
I touch my controller
I worry that I will lose
I cry "I win, I win"
I am Aiden Bright
I understand I'll probably lose
I say I'm gonna win
I dream I win
I try to win
I hope I'm gonna win
I am Aiden Bright

AIDEN BRIGHT, GRADE 5

Where I Am From

I am from Knoxville, Tennessee. I was raised in the mountains.
I am from a place that loves basketball and am always active and doing sports.
I am from going to church, praising and worshiping him.
I am from a loving caring family.
I am from washing dishes and doing the laundry, and I enjoy it.
I am from wearing leggings and shorts and wearing heels and boots.

EMMA BROYLES, GRADE 5

Mamaw

My Mamaw cooks great fried chicken.
And she is great at drawing; especially flowers!
Mirror, by Kid Rock, is one of her favorite songs
An actress, is how I would describe her
Westerns are her favorite theme for decorating and movies.

LANDON BRUMMIT, GRADE 5

Traditions

Each year during the month of December, we have a calendar of things to do until Christmas day. Some of them are fun, and some are things we do for others. Some of my favorite activities are having snowball fights, and when we pay for someone else's food. Each Christmas we alternate between expensive trips and getting presents. On our last trip, we went to Mexico on a cruise ship. Some other trips we went on were: Hawaii, New York, New Jersey, and Delaware. These were some of my favorite family traditions.

DYLAN BRUGGER, GRADE 5

Great Great Great Grandfather

My mom told me the story of my great great great grandfather. He lived on a big farming plantation. He was a slave on the farm. And his owner's name was Mr. Thomas.

Mr. Thomas valued the work that my grandfather did so much that he gave him his own farm and his last name. To this day my family still does not know his born name.

The farm had horses, pigs, and sheep. My grandfather married another slave on the farm and had a family. The family still lives on the farm today. I went to a family reunion with my mom and my dad to meet all of the descendants. And I am glad I'm one of them!

EMILY BRYANT, GRADE 5

The Toy Box

My brother and I had this big box, filled with a lot of toys. Everyday, after school we would ask our mom if we could dump it out. She would let us, only if we agreed to clean it up when we were finished. We cleared the floor in my room or my brothers to dump out the toy box. We would play for hours, after hours. When we were finally done playing my brother would say," let's clean it up!". I would say,"NO!" and would go to my room and lock myself in. My brother would always tell on me but I would ignore them.

Finally, my mom would say, "Fine, I will clean it up!". So, my brother and I would play while she would clean up our mess. Sometimes she would make us clean up, but, we would always leave some on the floor.

One day, we dumped out the toy box and played for a few hours, then we went outside to play. Our mom had to clean it up. Mom almost, always cleaned up our messes. Especially "The Toy Box" messes.

OLIVIA CAMPBELL, GRADE 5

I Am From

I am from Tennessee and Virginia, from Caruso and Maggards

I am from the big green house in Big Stone Gap

I am from the trail of the lonesome pine,

I am from guitar pickin and music making people

I am from Carolyn, Darren, and Dallas

I am from the hard work and determination

I am from Lordy, Lordy and 10-4 good buddy

I am from Johnny Cash's "God's Gonna Cut ame Down"

I'm from little Italy and pizza and cheese sticks

From Mommy and Poppy

ALEX CARUSO, GRADE 5

Family Vacation

This year, I got to go to Pigeon Forge with my family the week before Christmas. The Christmas lights there were beautiful! We stayed at a hotel called Baymont. It had an indoor pool and was very nice. We spent one of the days at Dollywood. There were lots of rides to choose from. My favorites were the roller coasters! I got to ride the Tennessee Tornado, Lightning Rod, Wild Eagle, and others. The food was really good too! I ate hot dogs, pizza and lots of other snacks. After that, we rode go-carts and went to the aquarium. We saw all kinds of different fish and sea creatures. We got to touch jellyfish, clam fish, and stingrays! Lastly, we took family pictures to remind us of the great time we had. Next year, I can't wait to go to Splash Country on our next family vacation!

MAELYN CHADWICK, GRADE 5

My Dad

My dad is very important to me. He is a hard worker for the railroad and me the value of hard work and appreciating things we have. He taught me how to hunt and fish. We usually go hunting on my great uncle's land for deer. We like getting and sharing meat with our family. My dad taught me how to roll it flour and fry it. We love the tenderloin, jerky and sausage. The Amish butcher in Knoxville, is where we take our deer meat for processing. They do a great job.

My dad and I usually go fishing in the summer on Big Cherry Lake. We will catch anything right off the shore, but bluegill or bass is usually what we get. This is one of the places where we had good father/son talks.

When grow up, I don't know what I want to do yet, but I do know that I want to have sons so I can teach them all the great things my dad taught me.

BRAYDEN CHANDLER, GRADE 5

My Mom and Dad and Their Lives

My mom always makes straight A's in school despite the many challenges throughout her childhood. My mom grades meant everything to her, she was always studying and trying to always do the best she can. Because of her hard work she was always getting first and second honor roll. She was always in spelling bees. She would strive to reach perfect attendance. My mom always took pride in life and tried to make her mom proud.

She teaches my sister and I the same values about school and family. I hope to try and do my best in school like my mom. My mom inspires me to work hard and do my best. When my mom was in High School, she was a cheerleader and she would always do the other cheerleader's hair before the game. My mom loves to read, she told me she always read and she always loved to draw in school when she had free time. She would draw doodles like cartoons and her name in different ways.

My dad was also good in school. He had good grades and he played sports. One time in High school, my dad got a metal cleat stuck in his fingernail and the coach just duct taped it! My grammy got mad at the coach because he didn't really do anything about it to be honest. My dad was the preppy kind of guy. He was really good at drawing and he's teaching me how to draw. There's a magazine page on his wall and he had to draw the other half of the girl on the magazine page. It was perfect!

My dad and I go shoot our guns. He let me shoot a hunting rifle because he was checking out the gun and it was loud. I have a little rifle myself. My dad and I love to play video games. He plays this boring game called, Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon, and in my opinion, all you do is steal cars and do missions. I think it's boring. I like to play Fortnite. My dad tries to compete with me at both of the games.

My mom and dad are very special people. They teach me lots of things and we really have fun together.

TRINITY CHANDLER, GRADE 5

My Guinea Pig

My Mamaw told me she would buy me a guinea pig if I was good at school, made good grades, and was good at home. I had to behave the entire time I was at Powell Valley Primary. I had to be good for a very long time. It was hard sometimes, but I worked very hard to be good. I only got one D when I was in fourth grade. When people would talk to me, I would try not to talk back. Sometimes the teacher would think that I was talking and I would not be.

On the last day of fourth grade, I got home from school and the guinea pig was sitting in a cage on the table. I was happy that I earned it. I cried happy tears. I named it Moo Moo, because it was black and white like a cow. I told Mamaw thank you very much and gave her a big hug.

I take Moo Moo out of his cage to play and brush his fur. I take good care of him. He likes to climb on the couch. Mamaw made a rope leash for him and I can take him for walks outside. I am going to take good care of him because I had to work hard for him. If I am good during my years at middle school, she is going to buy me a bearded dragon.

HUNTER CHRISTIAN, GRADE 5

My Life

My name is Gabriella Michaela Clem. I was born January 25, 2008 I have three sisters their names are Ally, Katherine, and Lily.

Ally is 13 years old, Katherine is 7 years old, Lily is 5 years old. I am 10 soon to be 11 years old. I am in 5th grade. My home room is Mrs. Ramsey, Mrs. Dillman is my science and social studies, Mrs. Bolling is my math teacher, and Mrs Ramsey is my reading teacher.

Math is my favorite subject. My mom and dad are great. My favorite games are Minecraft and Roblox. I have lots of friends. My favorite holiday is Halloween. I have a cat named Angus he is 3 years old in human years; cat years we don't know.

I play sports. I love to play basketball and soccer. I love to play dodgeball, but I get out in a couple of minutes.

GABRIELLA CLEM, GRADE 5

Summer Camp Fun

Every summer, I go to Camp Bethel in Wise, VA. It is a Christian camp that teaches kids how to do lots of outdoor activities while learning about God. They have a day camp and a week-long overnight camp. I always go to the overnight camp because I like staying in the cabin with my friends and camp counselors. The cabins have bunk beds, but I always bring my sleeping bag and pillow from home. At first, I was bummed that there was a "no cell phone" rule, but after a day, I got used to it. It was kind of fun making shadow puppets with flashlights and drawing with my friends at night instead of being on my phone. My favorite part about camp was getting to swim in the lake every day and going canoeing. I also liked making bracelets at craft time. I heard the camp has recently closed and I won't be able to go this year. That news makes me sad because it has always been the part of summer that I look forward to the most.

BROOKLYN CLARKSTON, GRADE 5

Overcoming Polio

When my Paps was five years old, he was diagnosed with polio. He had to spend three months in a hospital in Roanoke, Virginia, and most of the time he spent alone. His family could not afford to live in Roanoke or travel there. He has trouble walking and most of the time he uses a walking stick. Some people had to use an Iron Lung to help them breath, but thankfully, it is only in his leg.

My Paps does not let it define him. In fact, he worked until he retired and he drove a stick-shift car that required him to use his leg until just a few years ago. The reason he has this polio is because his mother's religion did not think that you should have vaccines. It is because of this that I believe you always need to have vaccines.

Paps went to college at East Tennessee State University. He worked very hard and became a Special Needs teacher. Most of the students he had to deal with, changed his life and gave him a new perspective. Paps retired in 2006, when my brother was born, so he could help take care of him. He was happy when I came along too.

My Paps is not afraid to tell people what he thinks and speak his mind. He loves to shoot pool and take care of his Patterdale Terrier, Rastus. We do wood-carvings and wood-burning, play arcade games, and make homemade bread dough.

Although my Paps has Polio, he still does everything we can do. He is very courageous and he always believes in me. If you want to know anything about vaccinations, just ask my Paps. I am sure he will tell you exactly what he thinks.

ARABELLA CLENDENON, GRADE 5

I Am

I am happy for my mom and dad
I wonder about most people these days
I am a sassy girl
I pretend my name is not Cheyenne
I feel like I don't belong
I worry about my brother
I cry when my mom is leaving
I am a sassy girl
I understand my mom left
I say that unicorns are real
I dream of moving to Hollywood
I try to have good grades
I hope I move to Florida
I am a sassy girl

CHEYENNE COLE, GRADE 5

My Favorite Tradition

The smell of crisp leaves
Vibrant colors of the mountains
Candy apples being made
Pumpkins transforming into jack-o-lanterns
Vision of various costumes
The enjoyment of dressing up as your favorite character
The sound of laughter while trick-or-treating with your best friends
Being greeted with a friendly face while getting handfuls of candy
The aroma of Nana's famous hotdogs fill the air
This is my favorite tradition

HALLI COLLINS, GRADE 5

Christmas 2018

My favorite Christmas was this past Christmas. This Christmas I didn't have the best night of sleep, but in the morning I went into my living room to find presents under my family's Christmas tree. I got everything

on my list. My list was a Lego heavy assault walker, Lego heavy scout walker, Lego Millenium Falcon, alien isolation, Star Wars Battlefront 2, Mcfarlane FNAF backstage, and new clothes. I loved my presents and I play with them every day.

JON DAVID COLLINS, GRADE 5

My Papaw

It's been almost one year since my Papaw Lee died. I still miss him and ask my mom for stories about him, so I wanted to write about him.

He was actually my great-grandfather, but I called him Papaw. He was loud and funny and always trying to sneak me candy and sweets even if mom said no. She said he did the same thing when she was little and he would take her to the store to get candy and tell her she could hide it under her bed. He always had candy hidden around the house.

Papaw's full name was Jessie Lee Smith and he was born in 1936. He had several sisters and a younger brother, their mom died of a heart problem when he was only nine years old. His dad was always gone working so the kids were on their own. Sometimes they even had to beg for food. Mom says that's why they all grew up to be such kind people and such good cooks! They knew how important it was to be nice, and how nice it was to have good food and fully bellies.

Papaw was a contractor, and could build just about anything. Even though he never had a lot of traditional school he was very good at math. One of the things people liked most about his work was how good of a painter he was. He could paint entire houses very fast without spilling any or making a mess. He loved to paint, and so does my mom and my mamaw. They say they got it from him.

He liked to tell jokes, and loved going to church. He took good care of his family and loved to sing silly songs, and sit on the porch and watch the birds. Even after he had his stroke, watching the birds was one of his favorite things to do.

He was very strong and knew a lot about just about everything. I'm glad he was part of my family and that I got to know him. Even though we all miss him, it makes us happy to talk about him and tell stories of all the good things we remember.

I'm very lucky to have a family that loves each other so much and that has learned so much from my Papaw Lee.

ALAFAIR DALTON, GRADE 5

A Day at the Lake

One day, I was with my neighbors, we went to the lake. There were five of us including myself. Their names are Kim, Evan, Aerial, and Michael. We were about 5 minutes away from the camper when we saw a deer. It was a baby deer! The baby deer had a broken leg. We were trying to help it, but it was too afraid. It was kicking frantically. The deer finally got up on its legs and ran off.

GRACIE DAVIS, GRADE 5

My Origin Project

I always loved thinking about where I came from. For my last birthday, I got Ancestry DNA and learned that I am made up from ancestors from Germany, England, France, and even the Mediterranean area. But all of that couldn't be more important than where I came from most recently, my family here in the Appalachian Mountains. This Thanksgiving I interviewed my grandma Patsy and I will tell you what she told me.

The first story she told me was about where she grew up. She lived in a small house with a farm in the mountains of Southwest Virginia near the Council area in Buchanan County. She lived in a really small house with several brothers, sisters, and her two parents, Barry and Maggie Owens. They grew enough vegetables to get by and enough livestock to can and cure for the upcoming winter. They really didn't have extra to sell for money. She also picked vegetables like corn and potatoes my favorite! Sometimes she skipped school just to pick them. One time she and her siblings picked so many veggies you wouldn't believe it!

The second memory she shared is that she walked a long way to school. She had to do this because the bus didn't come her way. She went to a small one-room school with several grades and lots of students and only one teacher to teach them all. She had one teacher that loved baseball. At recess she and other students loved to play baseball, and they forced their teacher to play as well. And let me tell you that teacher absolutely loved baseball and the students would not go back inside until time to go home because he loved it so much. Also, she was pretty shy and had few friends and was very nice and never got a whipping from her teacher.

The last story she shared was about the harsh winters when she grew up. During one winter she was skating at school in her normal shoes when she skated a hole in them! To hide this from her parents, who would probably get very mad, she changed out of her wet socks into a dry pair before she got home every day. But about a week later her parents found out. She got a whipping from her parents. The worst thing was she had to pick her own whip.

Learning more about my grandma made me feel closer to her. It also allowed me to learn a lot about her and where I came from. I am really glad I did this project.

Well, that's my grandma's story about her growing up. I hoped you liked it.

EASTON DEEL, GRADE 5

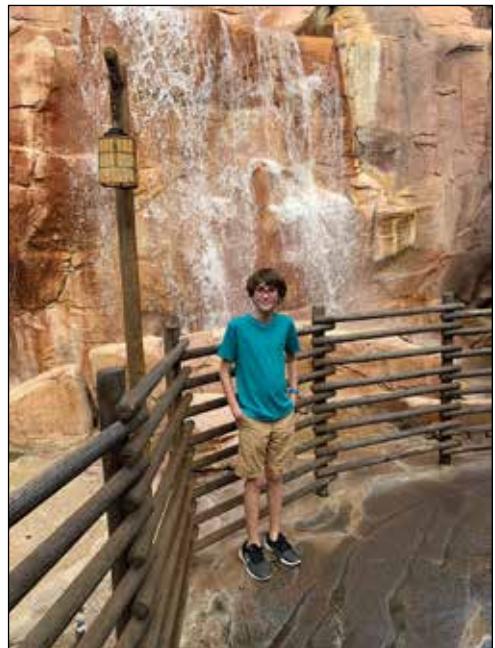
Devil's Bathtub

This past summer my family and I went on a hike to Devil's Bathtub. It was a long hike through the woods. During the walk we saw a deer and a turtle. We got hot during the long hike and we couldn't wait to reach the bathtub. When we finally arrived at our destination I jumped into the bathtub and it was very cold and deep. I slid down a naturally built rock slide. I swam two hours and then it was time to get out and start the hike back and on our way back down the mountain we saw about a hundred beautiful butterflies. It was an amazing adventure.

KINSLEY DORTON, GRADE 5

My Dog, Marabell

On November 31st, 2014, I went up to the strip job with my papaw to pick up some gun shells for recycling. This a place where people can go and practice shooting in the woods.



Easton Deel

My papaw said to me, "Hey Taylah, look, there is a dog behind you"! I looked and I was in shock because the dog was just a baby. She looked like she was about one and a half. The dog came up to me shaking because she was cold. I let her sniff my hand, and she was friendly.

She let me hold her and I thought she looked really hungry, but my pappaw did not have dog food in the truck. We did have water, so we gave her water and brought her home.

As soon as we got to the house, I wanted to take care of her. We fed her and gave her a bath and she still lives with me.

TAYLAH EADS, GRADE 5

I AM

I am a friend, brother, son
I wonder if heaven is real
I hear cars
I see a bear
I pretend I am in the NFL
I feel like I am a NFL superstar
I touch a helmet
I worry a tornado will happen soon
I am a friend, brother, son
I worry when my dog gets hurt
I am a friend, brother, son
I understand I ain't the best
I say Trump is awesome
I dream I will go to the NFL
I try to work hard
I hope school ends soon
I am a friend, brother, son.

HUNTER ELLIOTT, GRADE 5

I Am

I am an inquisitive person who loves basketball
I wonder about the future
I hear the breeze of wind
I see the mountains
I want world peace
I am an inquisitive person who loves basketball
I pretend that I'm on a beach
I feel relaxed
I touch the ocean water
I worry that I will get bitten by a shark
I am an inquisitive person who loves basketball
I understand everything is not easy
I say people should be treated equally
I dream about making a difference in the world
I try hard at everything I do

I hope I live a long and healthy life
I am an inquisitive person who loves basketball

SEBASTIAN ELY, GRADE 5

Meant To Be

This is the story of how God played a hand in how my parents met. God knew what my Mom would need long before I was born.

My dad's name is Glenn Fore. He was born and raised in Lee County, Alabama in 1980. His father taught him at a young age the art of construction. He graduated high school in 2000 and joined the US Marine Corp shortly after. He served our country for 5 years.

My mom's maiden name is Jessica Hoke and she was born in Big Stone Gap, VA in 1981. She was raised in Lee County, Virginia. Her father worked in a nearby coal mine as a Diesel Mechanic. Like my dad, she graduated high school in 2000. During school and after graduation, my mom was employed with several different companies.

Little did they know, God had plans for the both of them. My Dad was stationed at a military base in Camp LeJeune, NC. My mom and a friend went there to visit some of their friends stationed there in 2003. That is when my Mom and Dad met. They married a year later in 2004 and I was born in 2008.

My Mom started having kidney problems a few years after I was born. There is where God shows up. In 2017, my Mom was put on dialysis because of kidney failure. She was added to the transplant list and she would have to stay on there until a donor came along. In 2018, my Dad was tested and found out that he was a perfect match. He gave his kidney to my mom in November of 2018. God put them together all those years ago because they were meant to be.

KAITLYN FORE, GRADE 5

My Dad

For my Origin Project, I want to write about my dad, Greg Gibson. He used to be in the Army. He works for my papaw Randy as a welder. They own their own business in Appalachia, called Clark Welding.

When my dad is not at work, we like to go for hikes. Sometimes we go to Roaring Branch, High Knob or the Devil's Bath Tub. Most of the time we just go in the woods behind our house to walk our dog named Luna. She is a German Shepherd.

Another thing I do with my dad is go fishing. There are a lot of rivers and ponds to fish at in Appalachia. Sometimes my mom and sisters go with us. That's when it's the most fun!

BRYLAN GIBSON, GRADE 5

A Long Way From Home

We packed up and left for Orlando, FL. We were going to go to Disney, Seaworld, and Aquatica. It was a long trip, we stopped two times. The first was to sleep and eat at a motel. The motel did not have an elevator. My mom and I had to pull six suitcases up three flights of stairs. That motel did have good breakfast, but there was no microwave.

After we left, my sister caught up to us. We stopped for gas and we followed her. Soon after that we reached Atlanta, GA. I didn't mention this, but this was my first trip out of the surrounding states of Virginia. Once we arrived at Orlando, we saw three limousines drive by us with two black SUVs behind it. My sister Bella and I said, "It's the president!". We went to our resort and checked in. After getting settled, we went shopping at a mall not too far from the hotel.

The first full day we went to Aquatica. It's SeaWorld just no animals or roller coasters. It's just lazy rivers, wave pools, and waterslides.

The day after that we went to SeaWorld and saw orcas, dolphins, and sharks. We also saw turtles and manatees. I went on three rides. My mom and I got stuck with Branson, my nephew. We couldn't go on big rides, and I'm deathly scared of heights anyway.

The next day we went to Disney World. I didn't like it as much as people say. I only liked a few things like the Monsters Inc. play/ride/thing. The Buzz Lightyear shooting game/ride it was very, very fun. I also liked the Pirates Of The Caribbean ride it was a little spooky. It had fake skeletons or were they, "DUN DUN DUN!" SPOOOOOOOOKY!

The final day of the trip was pretty fun. We went to Clearwater beach. The water wasn't clear, it was a scam. After that we walked around. We went to Ron Jon Surf Shop. We bought some shirts and a fidget spinner that glows in the dark. After that we went to eat at Hooters. That night we played some mini golf at the resort, and some frolf (frisbee golf).

We swam everyday at the resort. It had 2 pools with different slides. The resort had activities for everyone all day, everyday.

It took us 14 hours and 17 minutes to get there but it took 13 hours and 34 minutes to get back. I AM CONFUSED AMERICA, EXPLAIN!!!!

GAVIN COLT GIBSON, GRADE 5

My Coal Heritage

Decades ago coal brought my family to Big Stone Gap, Virginia. Our family history started in Black Mountain, Ky. My great great grandfather, Matt Bunch, worked there in the coal mines. The mines had no union or support for the workers. He decided to take his family to Montana. There, he started working in a mines that had an established union. Being a preacher and good with speaking engagements, he was appointed to the United Mine Workers Association as an international board member, a spokesman for the miners. He was then sent to Harlan, Ky. He helped fight to organize unions to represent the coal miners. The time he spent in Harlan was to be known as Bloody Harlan. Matt Bunch was known for a pistol in one pocket and a Bible in the other.

My great grandfather, Carl Bunch, worked at the U.S. Steel coal mines in Danville, Il. Like his father, he was also appointed as a representative for the union. He was sent to Harlan to work with his father. After living in Harlan, Ky., he moved to West Virginia to work as the secretary treasurer for the union. There my grandfather, Don Bunch was born. Carl eventually moved his family to Big Stone Gap, Va., where he worked for 28 years for the U.M.W.A., helping miners with their healthcare and pensions.

My mother, Kristi Bunch, met my father, Tony Gibson many years later. Each night when my dad got off work from the coal mines, he would stop at a little store where my mother worked. My dad worked for 19 years as an electrician and mechanic inside the mines. The coal mines have had a strong history in my family history.

JAMES ANTHONY GIBSON, GRADE 5

Family Christmas Traditions

I asked my mother what her Christmas traditions were when she was a little girl. She said as a little girl growing up at Christmas time, my granny, my pawpaw, my uncle, my great grandpa, and her would always load up the car and drive down to Jonesville, VA to stay with my great uncle, great aunt, and lots of cousins. It was always late at night when they got there and everyone would sit around and talk about what they had done through the months that had passed, while the kids played and wore themselves out.

The next morning, everyone would wake up early to the smell of my great aunt cooking breakfast. It was always the same and would give my mom a feeling of joy and love because of being with loved ones. Then, after breakfast, all the kids would start putting up and decorating the Christmas tree and hanging the stockings. Next, they would eat lunch and play around until it was time to walk down under the hill to Cumberland Bowl Park to look at "Christmas in Lights." On Christmas Eve night, they would sit around the living room telling Christmas stories, singing songs, and all the kids would get to open one present before Santa came the next morning. My mom thought that was the best part of all!

On Christmas morning, they would wake up to all kinds of presents! My mom said she can still hear the laughter and feel the joy and love when she thinks back on this time with her family. They would celebrate for three or four days! She said she wishes our traditions could be spent like that now, but times have changed and we have our own traditions that we are doing now. We still do some of the same things, but are missing a few memorable people. Hearing my mom talk about her childhood makes me realize that family memories can be made anywhere anytime.

ALYSSA GILLIAM, GRADE 5

My Dad

My dad, Gary Gilliam, is a lawyer. He has had to put many people in jail, and has solved many cases. He has prosecuted brutal murder cases, but he has also done some heroic things. He was a medic in the Vietnam War, which makes him really old, but him being old means he is very wise. You can ask him anything about law, math, or any subject really, and 99% of the time he will tell you the correct answer. When he isn't being a genius, he is sittin' on the couch yelling at reporters that are talking about politics. The thing I think he is best at is caring for our family. I have two brothers and four sisters, and he is always making sure we have what we need. He goes out in the cold at night and gets wood to put on the fire to keep us warm, and helps us with all the work we have to do. I hope to be just like my dad when I grow up.

DONOVAN GILLIAM, GRADE 5

My Mom, the Bully

It all started when my mom, Jennifer, was in high school and her sister was getting bullied by another kid at school. My mom decided to take action and give the bully a taste of her own medicine. When she did, she got in trouble and was suspended from school. When my grandma found out about what my mom had done, she decided she would talk to my mom about it. She told her that she was also bullied in school and how it had hurt her feelings, but instead of retaliating, she decided she would show kindness to the bully. She was shocked to see that the bully started being nice to her! My grandma told my mom that instead of being mean, she should try to be nice. She told her that something bad could be happening to the bully at home that was causing her to be mean to my sister, so my mom went back to school the next week and was nice to the bully. The bully admitted that she was being mean to my sister because she didn't have any friends. My mom learned that retaliating wasn't the answer. She decided that the best way to handle a bully was to just be nice. If that didn't work, my mom decided that she would just walk away and tell someone what was happening, but she learned that bullying in return was never the answer.

CHRISTINA GREER, GRADE 5

Memories in the Garden

My pappy is Gary Stanley. He is the best Pappy ever! I love helping him in the garden! Not only does he teach me how to plant and grow everything, he also tells me stories about "the old days" while we're planting.

One day, he was telling me about how he moved away from Wise County when he was a kid with my great-grandparents, Evelyne and Hershel Stanley. He said that they had moved because they wanted their kids to have a better life growing up and didn't want them to have to work in the coal mines. He said it was kind of like when my family moved away from northern Virginia to get away from the busy city living, sort of like history repeating itself.

As the day went on, we began planting some apple and pear trees, along with some grape vines. Pappy began telling me how cheap things were back in the 1950s compared to now. His family used to shop at a store called Shorts Supermarket. Canned goods were only ten cents a can and hamburger meat was only 29 cents a pound! He remembered gas being only 18 cents a gallon! Everything is so much more expensive now!

He talked about a one-room schoolhouse in Wise that he and both of his parents attended when they were children. It was called Baker School and it still stands on Birchfield Road in Wise today. He also told me that they all had the same teacher. His name was Bascom McCoy. I can't even imagine going to a school that only had one room and having the same teacher year after year! I will have to ask Pappy about where they ate lunch and what kinds of games they played the next time I visit. Things in the old days seem so different than what they are today. I love spending my time helping Pappy in the garden and listening to what life was like when he was a kid.

VICTORIA GROSE, GRADE 5

Guerrant's Goodies

My family owns and operates a homemade bread and candy business. I would like to tell you how it all got started. When three of my brothers were very small, my mom needed to make extra money for our family. She used to work in an automobile factory and just was not sure what job she could do next. My mom and her children decided to get together with their grandmother's recipes and start to bake and sell at local festivals. They started out by making homemade breads, fudge, and fried pies. The first festival they did together was called Duffield Days. It was a success! Throughout the years, my mom decided to continue doing the festivals but incorporated my brothers and me to help sell her items. Our business name is called Guerrant Goodies. She has been in business now for fifteen years. Her speciality breads are pumpkin, applesauce, and banana nut. Each and every recipe my mother uses has been from my great-grandmother and my grandmother. My brothers and I are the official taste-testers. My personal favorite is my mother's brownies. For years, she has sold them at the little league stand. Someday she is going to open her own business so that we can continue the tradition that she started.

JOSHUA GUERRANT, GRADE 5

My Grandpa

Hi! My name is Noah and my grandpa died four years ago. In 1934 James Paul Hale was born and his wife Magaline was born in 1935. James was in the Korean War and the funny thing is he would not eat rice or shrimp. He saw Koreans take poop and throw it into the swamp where they grew the rice. He died in the same place I was born. He is in a better place now. I miss him very much! I am named for my grandpa and I learned a lot from him.

NOAH HALE, GRADE 5

My Trip to Disney World

One day in August 2011, my mom decided to take the family to Disney. So they all said "yes" except my Aunt and her daughter. We packed our clothes and things and hit the road! But Disneyworld is so far from Big Stone Gap. We drove in the car for 14 hours!

When we finally got to the ticket place, we bought them and then went to check into our motel to unpack. Since we arrived in Florida so early in the morning, we got to eat breakfast at Mickey's Place. I got the Mickey ear shaped waffles. They were delicious! Afterwards, we went to have some fun: roller coasters, rides, water-parks, pool, and funny shows!

Later, we ate dinner at a fancy restaurant where the waiters carry plates on their arms. It was so quiet. I think fancy people don't talk in restaurants. When it was night time, we went to the Haunted Mansion. There was a roller coaster inside. It was so scary that we went back to the motel.

I had to share a bed with my sisters and that was not good, they move too much! After eating cereal for breakfast in our room, we went back and saw the Disney Parade. It had all the princesses and characters. I loved it!

That night we headed home. We all had the best time! That was the first trip, and we went back 2 more times!

MADISON HALL, GRADE 5

I Finally Became A Big Sister

I finally became a big sister on September 8th, 2010. I could not wait! I was so excited! I had been the baby of the family for the past two years and now I was going to be a big sister. At two years old, I was used to getting all of the attention, but all of that would soon change with the arrival of my baby sister. When she came home, all I wanted to do was hold her and feed her.

As she got older, we played with each other all the time. Being a big sister was not that bad at all. Even though we are older, we still do things together. We play on the computer together, jump on the trampoline together, and we talk for hours. Although we have arguments and disagree often, overall we still love each other.

SOPHIE HAMM, GRADE 5

My School Years

When I was 5, I started kindergarten. Even though it was my first year in school, I was not afraid. I was happy, and without saying goodbye, I left my mom and ran to class. My mom cried, but my step dad didn't and he got it all on video. I was happy to be going to school. I wanted to make friends with kids my age, but my mom didn't want me to go to school because I was her first and only baby at the time. I remember being happy playing with friends and sleeping or taking naps and I still love school ice cream.

During primary school, I met two great friends, Kaitlyn and Rylie. Kaitlyn moved that year and it was really hard. I didn't get to see her for two years. Then I met Sara, who is still my good friend, and we were in 4th grade together. I loved gym class in primary school because we didn't have to run 6 laps every day.

Now, I am in the middle school and I have met a lot more new friends and surprisingly, I thought I would be picked on, but it has been better than I thought it would be. I like that every Wednesday and Friday we play Dodgeball, but I skip with Sara and we play Ping Pong instead.

LEXIS HOLDER, GRADE 5

My Brother

My name is Montana. I am 11 years old and I live in Big Stone Gap with my family. My brother's name is Dacotah. He is almost 5 years old. He has some disabilities that make his life a little different from mine. Sometimes my brother and I fight because he can not tell me what he wants to do because he has speech problems. When Dacotah was much younger, he started talking to the animals before he started talking to us. Mrs. Goodman has been helping him since he was 3. He calls a banana a ba-lemon, but he is still my best friend.

About a year ago we drove to Tennessee to pick up a dog. Dacotah's dog's name is Loki. Loki's mom's name is Midnight and his dad's name is Tucker. We saw some of his brothers and sisters. They were brown, white, and black. Loki was born on my papaw's birthday!

Loki is the black lab that my mom is training to be a service dog for my brother. Dacotah does not do well with going to my sporting events and my parents are always having to chase him, as he darts everywhere. Once Loki is trained, Dacotah will be attached to Loki's vest so he can not run away. I already notice when we go shopping that Dacotah does not scream or dart away. Loki is given a "down" command and this keeps Dacotah from running off. It has made a big difference.

Dacotah talks my head off and yells for the dog a lot. We may be loud but I know that we are loved to the moon and back by our parents. That is very important to me.

MONTANA HOOD, GRADE 5

Sweet Summertime

My favorite family memories are the summers spent with my cousins, Skylar and Ally, and my aunt, Stephanie. We have so much fun together! Last summer, we went to Natural Tunnel State Park. We got to ride the chair lift and spent the day at the pool. The waterslide was my favorite part, but I also liked playing Marco Polo in the pool with my cousins. After we finished swimming, we drove to Golden Corral in Kingsport and ate dinner. They have the best meatloaf and the chocolate fountain was yummy! When we got home, we played basketball in the driveway until dark. We went inside and played hide and seek until bedtime. Summer days with my cousins are the best!

KILEY HUFF, GRADE 5

Blessed

Through the years, I have been blessed to be surrounded by family during some scary times in my life. My mom, dad, and grandparents have always supported and loved me and helped me thru hard times. On December 22, 2009, when I was almost two years old, I got a bad pneumonia and was put in the hospital. It was a hard time for me, and the hardest part was having to spend the night in the hospital over Christmas. I was in the hospital for a week and had really good nurses taking care of me. There was a big snow that came, and one nurse was with me the whole time. My mom and dad thanked everyone, and on December 29, I got to come home.

A few years later, I started third grade and the year started off bad. I had to have my tonsils taken out. I had to spend the night in the hospital, and I was very scared. My mom and dad stayed with me, and the nurses were very nice. I got to come home the next day and stayed out of school for a week. My teachers helped me make up all my work and were very nice. Two weeks later, I started having pain in my stomach and had to go to the emergency room. The doctors did lots of test and x-rays. They sent me to Johnson City Children's Hospital because I had an infection in my stomach called e-coli. They don't know how I got it, but they gave me medicines and iv fluids and I got better. I had to stay out of school another week this time. I finally got to go back to school and for a while, things were back to normal.

The next year, in March of 2016, I had some pain in my chest one day and had to go see my doctor. He sent me to the heart doctor who ran more tests and said that I had a problem with my heart call Wolff Parkinson White Syndrome (WPW). My mom and dad took me to Vanderbilt Hospital to have surgery to fix my heart. The doctors and nurses were really nice, and even though I was scared, my mom and dad and God was with me. When I woke up, my mom and dad were at my bed, and they told me that the doctor said he could not find anything wrong with my heart. We were all so happy and we thanked God for healing me. Once again, I had to be out of school for another week to heal, and my third grade year was over just like that.

Since that hard year, I have been blessed and got to enjoy my fourth grade year and now my fifth grade year. As you can see, I have been through a lot in my life. I want to thank my parents, family, and friends for all the love and support they give me and show me each day. Now, I am good as new. God made me whole again. Being blessed by God has encouraged me to be a blessing to others by helping people in need. I have learned a lot from my experiences. Some things I do with my family to serve others is to help fill shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child, help give away food to people that are not as fortunate as me and my family are, helping my family serve free meals at our church at Thanksgiving, and by giving joy to all the people around me. I am thankful for my family and the things they have taught me about helping other.

TAYLOR HUGHES, GRADE 5

Living in Big Stone Gap

My family lived other places before moving to Big Stone Gap. My 4th great grandfather was an Indian from Kentucky. His daughter married my 3rd great grandfather. His last name was Flanary and he was from Ireland. He was a settler and built homesteads in Missouri, Kentucky, and Tennessee and liked to play the fiddle and dance. His son my 2nd great grandfather was a coal miner and made watches. His son was my great grandfather Edward Flanary who was the first one to live here in Big Stone Gap. He and my great grandmother Ruth had five children and moved here when my grandmother was six years old. They lived next door to a large dairy farm in Crackers Neck. My grandmother Jacquie and her brothers and sisters spent time fishing in the creek, building tree houses in the woods, exploring caves for Indian pieces, and sleigh riding for fun. They found lots of arrow heads when the garden was plowed each year. All the children helped in the barn with the milking of the cows, putting up hay, planting gardens, and canning food.

My mom and dad both grew up in Big Stone Gap. My dad is an auto tech and works at Freedom Chevrolet in Big Stone Gap. My mom likes living in Big Stone because she loves to explore the mountains. We have been to High Knob hiking. I like to go to Little Stony Falls and play in the cold water and hike. But you have to watch for broken glass in the water. We also like to go to Natural Tunnel and ride the chairlift and hike. We also like to go fishing at Big Cherry Lake but the last time my dad's nephew brought his dog who jumped in the water and scared all the fish away. My family likes to have bonfires at night. I also like to go shoot at targets in the summer. We like to ride go karts.

This summer a big bear ran out in front of me when i was outside playing ball in the front yard. It was a big black bear and he just walked down the road during the day. We also had raccoons and possums. The kittens did not like the baby red fox because he would eat their cat food. You never know what you will see in Big Stone Gap. It is always an adventure.

NOAH INGLE, GRADE 5

The Best Birthday Ever

One of my most favorite memories is of my tenth birthday. Our family friend, Donnie Seymore, planned a special day for just me and my brother, Hunter. First, he took us to my favorite restaurant, Golden Corral. I had steak, ham, cotton candy, and ice cream. It was so good! Next, we went to Just Jump. We played trampoline dodgeball and our team won! Even the refs joined in! After that, we went to Bass Pro Shop and we got to bowl. It was a close game, but my brother won. We left and went back to Donnie's house for a sleepover. He made my favorite chocolate birthday cake and we watched Ghosts of Mars, Chernobyl, and a scary movie called Life. It was the best birthday ever! I am very thankful to have Donnie as a family friend.

JAYDEN ISON, GRADE 5

Big Sis, Little Sis

One of the best days of my life was when my little sister, Sydney, was born. I remember arriving at the hospital, and I saw my Aunt Jackie and my cousin, Madison. My mom and dad went into the room with the hospital bed, and I went with Aunt Jackie and Madison to a room that was filled with toys.

While Sydney was being born, I stayed in the room and played. I had so much fun! They had a rocking toy that I rode. It was Tigger, from Winnie The Pooh. I played with that the most. A little while later, my dad came in the room where I was and said we could come back. We all went into the room where my mom was, and there was my new little sister. She was so tiny and adorable! I was an official big sister. I was so happy! I sat down on this little couch-bed thing, and I got to hold her. I kissed her and loved on her, then my dad picked her up and everyone took turns holding her.

After everyone left, I wanted to stay at the hospital with my mom and little sister. A nurse offered to get my dad and me a mattress off of another hospital bed. She brought the mattress in the room where my mom was with Sydney. I slept on the mattress with my dad, and stayed at the hospital for two days. And to this day, I still love her to death, even though she is a little booger.

ABIGAIL JACKSON, GRADE 5

My Beach Trip

I went on vacation to the beach, it was so much fun. We left Big Stone Gap and drove there for more than 5 hours, and when we arrived we went on the beach at night and got in the water. We caught two baby crabs. My dad took me into the deep part, and I got pushed over by a huge wave that took me under water. The salt water went in my mouth, and it did not taste good. Then it went in my eyes, and my nose. It burned so badly that I went in the pool and stayed there for a while. After that, my dad, took me back to the room to get changed because we were going to eat.

We went out to eat at Freddy's. I ate the wings, they were so good. My Dad, Papaw, Missy, and Barb all laughed at me because I had sauce on my face. Then we went back on the beach and found lots of seashells. We went in the ocean and my dad caught a fish with a bucket. After that, I saw a homeless bird, so I got the fish and feed the bird. The bird was so nice that I made it a home and gave it some water.

The next day, we ordered pizza and of course I got more wings because I love wings. When we got in the hot tub, I was sitting there and realized my bracelet was gone. I told my dad and he said, "The last place you were at was the Lazy River and you had it on there." I went to the Lazy River and saw it in the bottom and I jumped in and got it back.

That afternoon, we went up to the room and watched a movie called Sharknado. It was so funny that we were laughing very much. My dad said that I must have been tired because I slept like I was in heaven. The next day, we packed our stuff and headed home. A couple days after we were home, I remembered that I left my slippers in South Carolina. I was so sad, but I got over it. My Papaw said next year we get to go again and I know it will be so much fun. Who knows, my slippers might still be there?

SERENITY JEFFERSON, GRADE 5

I Am

I am awesome and smart

I wonder what California looks like

I hear birds

I see fish

I want puppies and kittens

I am awesome and smart
I pretend to be funny
I feel happy
I touch the air
I worry about my animals and all of my family
I cry over my dead animals and family
I am awesome and smart
I understand about life
I say mythical creatures are real
I dream about falling off a cliff
I try to make good grades
I hope to live a long time
I am awesome and smart

ABBIE JOHNSON, GRADE 5

The Time I Almost Met Santa

It was the night before Christmas and I was so excited to rip open my presents. My brothers and sister were also excited about Christmas. I was putting milk, cookies, and then one of my lego-builds I made, on a plate "*If he gives presents I will too!*" I said getting ready for bed. I walked to my bedroom, climbed the ladder to my bed, and fell asleep.

I woke up to a noise in the living room, got out of my bed, and looked out my bedroom door. I didn't see anybody or anything. It was all black and I still heard a noise. "Santa," I said, "*I forgot it was Christmas*". I wanted to see him but, I was scared of the dark so, I thought for a second. "*I'll do it!*" I said. I tried to forget it was the dark, but I couldn't. I didn't care so I quietly ran to the living room and no one was there "*Great.*"

It was the next morning "*It is Christmas!*" I said running to the living room. My brothers, my sister, and I opened our presents. I got a lot of presents, but only remember one. It was a football- my first football. Anyway, we opened all of our presents and the last thing I did was tell my parents what had happened. They were surprised, but a nervous way. Anyway, that was the time I almost met Santa.

JEREMY (J.J.) KAMPLAIN, GRADE 5

Family Vacation

Last summer, I went on vacation with my whole family. There were ten people that went. I was excited that my MiMi and Papaw got to go with us. We went to Gatlinburg. We stayed in a cabin for a week. The best part was doing rides, eating, and spending time together.

We spent one day at Dollywood. My mom took me through a maze and I got a wand. I rode lots of roller coasters there. I didn't like the ride that would go straight up and down. My favorite ride was the water slide, it was a big deep slide that went into a pool, it was great. We also rode bumper cars, I liked bumping into people. The more people you bump into, the more points you get. My dad won me a teddy bear because he won the bumper car race.

We went out to eat the whole time we stayed. We would go to big fancy restaurants. I loved eating at the Chinese and Italian restaurants. We would go to eat the breakfast buffet at Waffle House, I would barely eat because I just wanted to ride the rides.

I really liked spending time together because we would play board games and watch movies. It was a lot of fun. I would love to go again with all of my family.

(CASSIE) LAUREN KELLY, GRADE 5

Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving is a fun time of year. This year we decided to celebrate on the 21st and the 22nd. We went to our cousin's house.

First, we visited our first cousin; who lives in Bristol. When we got there we played video games, then we had a nerf war. After we enjoyed our family dinner, we were on our way.

The next day we went to our other cousin's house. They have a big house.

First thing I did was run up the stairs to play games with my cousins. We started by playing Minecraft.

The second thing we did was play bean-bag-toss and smash pumpkins.

Then we went inside to eat another family dinner. After we ate, we went back outside and we played basketball. My brother and I won.

Spending time with my cousins is always fun, so I'm glad we decided to have two Thanksgiving celebrations!

MALAKAI KENNEDY, GRADE 5

Sausage Balls

Ingredients

- 1 pound of Hot Sausage
- 1 Box of Red Lobster Cheddar Bay Biscuit Mix
- 1 Cup of Shredded Cheddar Cheese
- 1 8 oz. Block of Cream Cheese

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees
2. Mix all ingredients together in a mixing bowl
3. Roll mixture into 1" balls
4. Bake for 25 minutes

I chose this recipe because it is my favorite thing my Mom makes. We always have some of them in our house. I don't like cheese, so she had to trick me to even try them. All of my favorite memories of them come from being around my family and friends.

ZOIE KING, GRADE 5

My Family's Summer

My family and I go to Gatlinburg every summer and sometimes in a different month. It is very fun, I love having fun there. It's my favorite place to go and I play with my mom and granny and my brother and sister. I love to swim there and ride go carts because I can drive them by myself. I could drive them by myself for 2 years now. I can't wait to go back there! Also, I like to go to the arcade. It is very very fun and I hit the jackpot 5 times the last time I was there!

We eat at Steak n Shake. I love that place in Bristol. We go to a candy shop that sells caramel apples, and very good candy and suckers. We go to a Just Jump place. It's cool, I like it and my brother and sister go too. We go a lot more places, but I really can't think of them, but they are very cool. I like to swim in the hot tub and they have an indoor swimming pool and an outdoor swimming pool. We stay at Willowbrook lodge. I love it ! It is pretty cool.

JARRED KINSLER, GRADE 5

My Papaw's Story

My grandfather is Richard Bryan Hazlewood, JR. He is one of the most important people to me and to all of his family and friends. Most people call him Dickie but I call him papaw. His family originated in Texas. His dad, Richard Forrest Hazlewood, was in the Army and started writing letters to his mom, Virginia Stidham who was from Keokee, Virginia. When his dad got out of the Army they married and settled in Keokee.

My papaw was the 7th of 9 children and they were all raised in Keokee. He was born on June 3, 1960 in Appalachia, VA on Wise Street at the Appalachia Hospital, delivered by Dr. Porter. In 1977 the family moved to Exeter, VA. He graduated the following year from Appalachia High School.

My papaw became a painter and a carpenter after high school. In 1980 my mom was born. In 1992 he married my Nan and they live on Spruce St in Appalachia with my aunt Sydney and their cat Smokey.

My papaw's best memories when he was a child all involved his dad. They were very close and did most everything together. His dad was the coach of his little league baseball team and the Cub Master for his cub scout troop. They did everything together including thumbing for a ride out of Keokee before my papaw got a car. Once on their way back from walking they were with my uncle Joe crossing some railroad tracks, Joe and his dad crossed a moving train and my papaw didn't have enough time and had to wait on the other side of the tracks until the train passed by. When he got a car his dad would sneak and buy his gas so they could keep going places together, his brother's and sister's didn't find out about this until years later when they found receipts in an old box.

Another memory from his childhood of course involved his dad but also includes his sister Mary Ann. His dad would always save a lunch cake for whoever got to him first when he came home from work. He would always race Mary Ann down the hill to make sure he got there first, sometimes he would grab her ponytail and push her to the ground if she was ahead of him. He said they can look back now and laugh at this.

My papaw makes sure we all know how much he loves us and how important his family is to him.

LACI LANCASTER, GRADE 5

Talton Hall

My name is Maddy Laney and I'm writing about my Dad's Great, Great, Great, Great Grandfather Talton Hall. Most people know him by "Bad Talt Hall." He was written about by John Fox Jr. in his books. Talt was an outlaw in his day of time. Some say Talt killed 100 men, but was famous for killing Police Chief Hylton of Norton, Virginia. Talt was conviction he was hung inside a specially built covered gallows in Big Stone Gap in 1892.

They also say that Talt's case, he dropped feet-first into eternity at the end of a stout rope at the Wise County Courthouse on September 2, 1892. He was the 1st person to be legally "hanged by the neck until dead" in Wise County. Also some say his body was buried back in a cemetery in Letcher County Kentucky. So much has been passed down about Talt's life and where he is buried. Really no one knows. Talt has been written about by many people around Wise County and the history of Wise County.

MADDY LANEY, GRADE 5

My First Deer

To most eleven year old boys, going hunting for the first time is some of the most exciting times of their lives. Its seems like forever before that day arrives. The anticipation is very hard to endure. Finally, that day came for me when my grandfather took me this past fall.

The weather was perfect, it wasn't too windy and the temperature was just right for animals to be moving around and feeding. We walked up the small hill until we reached the area that he had chosen for me. I learned a lot that day. I learned to be patient and to make sure that I had a good visual on the animal as to not just injure it. I was just enjoying being outdoors with the crisp feel of the autumn air, and the golden and red leaves flying around us when I felt a tug on my arm. I suddenly looked up. My heart started racing like I had been running, and at times I felt I couldn't breath. I had been waiting and I was ready for this. Then it happened! I got my first deer!

My grandfather taught me what to do next in order to preserve the meat. I am so thankful to that noble animal that gave its life for me and my family to sustain ours.

Since that unforgettable day in November for this eleven year old boy, we have been enjoying the many ways of preparing delicious venison. I can only dream now and wait until the next season of deer hunting arrives.

AIDEN LANE, GRADE 5

Alabama Football

It was the fall of 2013 when I was five years old and my papaw, uncle, dad, brother and I went to Kroger field in Lexington, Kentucky at the University of Kentucky to watch Alabama vs Kentucky game in football. During the drive there I got to play my favorite game called Super Meat boy with my brother, Ethan. I got to sit with my papaw and Uncle Chris and talk to them. We finally arrived at the football game where we got pizza, ice cream, pop, and popcorn. The fans were loud and the game was exciting. In the end of the game Alabama beat Kentucky 48 to 7. We are Alabama fans and I will never forget this great adventure with my dad and brother. Roll tide!

LUKE LANE, GRADE 5

My Nanny

My Nanny's name was Connie Gardner Lawson. She had three brothers and one sister. When she was little, my Nanny really loved to draw, but back then they didn't have the money to buy extra paper, so her dad would take the paper that she had drawn on and erase it for her to have paper. My Nanny loved Hershey candy bars and her dad would often bring her one in his dinner bucket for a special treat. When my Nanny was eighteen she married my papaw, Jessee Lawson, and had three kids; Scott (my dad), Alan, and Dave. My dad, Alan, is the middle kid. My Nanny had six grandchildren. I am the youngest.

When I was five, we took a trip to Florida. My Nanny and I shared a room together. We went to Disney World, the beach, and we flew in a plane for the first time. We had a blast! A few years ago, my Nanny had breast cancer and passed away on her birthday, March 7, 2015. Since she's been gone, it's been really hard without her. I really miss her. We had so many great times together and I loved her so much!

KHARIS LAWSON, GRADE 5

My Fun Day

Sunday was amazing! My friend and I went to Norton. It is the next town over from Big Stone Gap. We ate at Little Mexico, and we went shopping at Walmart. When we go to Little Mexico I always get cheese dip for my chips. It was fun. But my friend, Lexi, had to go home. I was a little sad to see her go home, but we know we had fun.

Finally we got home and watched The Walking Dead and my dog, Snowball, is so spoiled that she has to sleep with me or my brother, Sean Lawson. We always have to take turns.

SARAH LAWSON, GRADE 5

Chicken-Tender

My name is Emma and I raise chickens. Like my family before me, I am a chicken-tender. In 1937 my great uncle Cart Rogers would walk down from his mountain home in Scott County Virginia and trade his eggs and chickens to the local general store for supplies his family needed like flour and sugar. Times have changed since then. I raise chickens as a hobby, but they also provide eggs to my family and friends.

Taking care of chickens includes many things. They must be given food and fresh water every day, sometimes more than once. You also have to give them attention so they stay friendly and are not mean especially the roosters. Chickens can have health problems and diseases like any other animal. When they are sick you must give them special medicine and treatments.

At least once a year chickens lose their feathers. This is called molting. It can leave them with a few bald spots, or they may lose most of the feathers on their body. New feathers grow back like sharp points and are called pin feathers. It is very painful for chickens to be held during molting.

Hens also go broody which means they want to raise babies by sitting on eggs to hatch them. Broody hens are mean and they will attack if you try to move them or their eggs. A chick will hatch after 21 days of being station.

Even though having chickens is work and extra responsibility. I enjoy them very much. I hope I can keep learning about them and raise beautiful, healthy birds.

EMMA LESTER, GRADE 5

Christmas Traditions

On Christmas Eve, I visit my mamaw and spend time with her, Mammy, and my baby sister, Kira. My pappy passed away when I was seven months old. My mamaw is sad this time of year because she misses him. We all sit around and talk and play and Mamaw gives us gifts. I get to open Mamaw's gifts early every year.

Christmas Eve night, Mommy, Jayden, Hiram, Kira, me, and my step-dad, Jamie, all sit down and open one present. The first present is always pajamas and a movie. We pop popcorn and watch a movie, bake cookies and make hot cocoa. After we watch movies, we set a plate of cookies out for Santa and his hot cocoa and then we all go to bed.

I am always the first one up and see the tree all lit up and full of gifts for everyone wrapped in all different kinds of wrapping paper. We all put on our shoes and jackets and go to our other Mamaw and Papaw's house and have breakfast and then open presents there. All the family joins together there to open presents and the grown-ups have a Chinese Christmas. I like to watch them steal presents from each other. It is funny. When everyone is finished, we all clean up the mess and everyone goes home to open gifts. Mommy has us open one at a time. She goes in order, oldest to youngest. Mommy says there are too many of us to go crazy. I think she says that because she is the oldest! We all open presents and our stockings. After we all clean up, we get to play with all of out presents.

Later, everyone meets at our house on Christmas. All the men in the family get the karaoke equipment set up and we all get together and sing. My little sister dances the entire time. She loves music! We then gather around and have Christmas dinner and play for hours. Before everyone goes home, we always go outside and have a snowball fight, this is, if there's any snow. If there is not, we play another game. We all dare daddy to jump in the freezing cold green pool. We always win and he has to jump in the green pool.

Late that evening, my mommy takes me to my daddy to spend Christmas night with him and his family. We also have Christmas dinner there as well. Mommy drives me over an hour to get there to drop me off so I can spend time with my daddy and his family. All the family comes over and we open presents there.

Christmas is my favorite time of year because it is spent with all of my family.

HUNTER LEWIS, GRADE 5

Vacation

I love to go to new places. I like to go with my cousins, Emily, Easton and Hunter. I have a new baby sister and she gets to go with us too. Sometimes my grandparents will take us on fun trips. I also go with my aunt and uncle and my parents.

My aunt Stephanie and uncle Corey took me to Disney World, it was fun because I had never been. I went to Panama beach in Florida this year with my grandparents. We could only stay two days because of a hurricane. We spent the rest of the trip in Pigeon Forge. I went to Dollywood about 2 weeks ago with my parents.

I love going on trips because it is fun to spend time with my family. I hope to go to Disney World again with my mom and dad so my baby sister can go for her first Disney trip.

KYLIE MAGGARD, GRADE 5

My Mom and Dad

My mom was born in Norton, Virginia in 1987. She grew up on a farm called Nealy Ridge with goats, pigs, horses, cows chickens, turkeys, dogs, barn cats, and a bunny. She had two brothers and one sister. My mom met my dad in high school. After they got married, they had me, Hannah. I'm 11 years old and live in Big Stone Gap, Virginia. Afterwards, she had my brother, Hunter; who is 8, and sister, Hailey; who is 6. My mother is a great mom. She stays home to take care of us. She does everything for us: cook, takes care of the house, takes us fun places; like amusement parks and camping, helps with our homework, and watch movies together.

My dad works on a drilling rig and goes to work for a week, then is at home for a week. He says he likes it. Sometimes, when he is home we go places, such as, the movies, or fishing in a lake in Appalachia. We like to go hiking in the mountains together. We also go shopping in Norton for clothes and food. A few years ago, we went to the drive-in movies in Appalachia. It was really fun because we went in our pajamas and ate snacks.

My mom and dad are fun and I feel happy when I am with them.

HANNAH MCCOWEN, GRADE 5

My Dog, Chase

On my seventh birthday, I got a dog. I named him Chase because he liked to chase things. His favorite games were Hide and Seek and Tag. He was kind of weird because he always had one ear up and one ear down.

It was winter now, and I'm eight years old. I went to Sebastian's house to sled down the hill and play in the snow. While I was at Sebastian's house, my dad drove home. When he drove over the train tracks, his tires got stuck in the snow and were spinning.

Chase thought I was in the car and got excited, so he ran toward the car and slid on some ice and then under the tire. Chase was laying in the driveway and was hurt really bad. My dad tried to help him, but he realized he couldn't help him. My dad grabbed his gun, and put him out of his misery.

When I got home, my dad said, "Notice anything gone?" and I looked around and said "No." It took a few seconds and then I remembered and asked him where Chase was. He said that he died. I didn't believe him at first, then my mom said it was true. I was heartbroken, and I still am.

Ever since Chase died, I've realized that we still have a connection. He sends me cloud pictures, at least that's what I call them. He sends me cloud pictures of his life in heaven and memories of me and him playing. Only I can see those clouds.

Last month, on the fourteenth of October, my eleven year old dog died. I don't have siblings, so she was like my sister. So it was a really sad, and I wasn't even there to say goodbye. Her name was Shawnee. Shawnee

and Chase used to play together, so I hope that now that they are both in heaven, they can see each other again. I miss them.

LEXY MEADE, GRADE 5

I Am

I am a sassy girl
I wonder if I'll ever see a cloud up close
I hear coyotes
I see little faces in the clouds
I want vanilla ice cream
I am sassy girl
I pretend to have a home of my own
I feel like I want to touch a cloud
I touch the clouds
I worry about dying
I would cry if I lost my dog
I am a sassy girl
I understand science
I say I believe in ghost
I dream bad nightmares
I try to do cheers
I hope to be a cheerleader
I am a sassy girl

KEYONNA MILLER, GRADE 5

The Worst Halloweens Ever!!!!!!

I have some really good memories of Halloween with my family in Big Stone Gap. We usually trick-or-treat downtown by the park. My first Halloween costume was a blue ninja from Power Rangers Super Ninja Steel. My mom got it to surprise me. I got so much candy that year my bag almost broke! Then we had a Halloween party the same day. We went to bed at 3 am the next morning.

Every year, my parents like to pull a prank on my sister and me. One year, I saw my mom under the car and when she moved I screamed out loud! It was Halloween so I thought it was scary when she moved, but she laughed out loud. I was so creeped out that I had nightmares for weeks! Another prank was when my dad cut a nail in half and used fake vampire blood to trick us into thinking he got a nail stuck in his hand. Another time, my dad walked around the house in a spooky black phantom costume. My mom asked us to help cook, and when we walked into the living room, there he was! It creeped us out!

I think that I will not continue that Halloween tradition, because it was too scary for me, and I don't want to scare my future kids!

BLAKE MOORE, GRADE 5

The Day I Went to Dollywood

On Dec. 29, 2018, I went to Dollywood. First, I had to wait in line to get my Picture I.D. Next, my family and I walked down a path to look at Christmas lights. The first ride I rode was a rollercoaster. The rollercoaster wasn't scary for me, but it was for my uncle! When it took our picture on the 100ft drop, he looked

terrified and I was laughing. After we rode the roller coaster, we ate. Then we rode the Cinderella train. After that we rode a spinning, swing ride. Again, my uncle was terrified and I was having a great time! When we got off of that ride, it was time to go home. We had a lot of fun that day! Since Dollywood is pretty close to Big Stone Gap, I'm sure we will visit here again!

TABATHA LEADO CHEYANNE MOORE, GRADE 5

Football in Big Stone Gap

Every year, kids from Big Stone Gap and Appalachia play Peanut Football at Bullet Park. There are four teams, the Packers, Chargers, Dolphins, and Chiefs. Kids look forward to playing peanut football because all the games happen on the same field that the high school team plays on. This is a tradition that has been in our community for many decades.

The draft is held on the practice field at Union High School. I tried out when I was in third grade and I got drafted to the Chiefs. I was so excited to go to the field house and pick up my black game pants and white practice pants, but the best part is putting on football pads for the first time!

I practiced really hard and it was finally game day! We played the Chargers. Two of my best friends play for the Chargers team and it was fun to meet them on the field. Sadly, my team lost by a touchdown. I decided to practice harder and get better so that we wouldn't lose to them in our next meeting. It worked! My team went to the championship, but ended up losing to the Packers. We got beat 14-12. It was a really close game! Next year, I am going to practice and work harder so that my team will win the championship!

KEYAN MORELOCK, GRADE 5

My Family History

My name is Ben Mullins. I was born in Bristol, VA. I have always lived in Big Stone Gap, Virginia. I like it here it's safe here we have beautiful mountains here good weather and I have a lot of good friends.

My family starts with my great grandfather and great grandmother, Fred and Chloe Mullins. They had nine kids, four boys and five girls. They were all from Dickenson County. My grandmothers name is Barbra Adkins. She is from Clinch County. She lived there until seven years ago. That's when she moved in with us.

My mom is from Davenport, VA. Her name is Jill. She grew up in Tazewell, VA. Her dad is Dean Oquin. He lives in Wise, VA. My mom has a brother named Steven.

My dad was born in Bristol, Tennessee. His name is Rick Mullins. He is a pretty important guy here in BSG! My dad is a very generous person. He donates to the school a lot. He watches a lot of football. He helps my brother and I. We like playing minecraft all together. I have one brother, no sisters. My brothers name is Nate, he was born in Norton, VA. We all like to go hiking in the mountains together.

I like our school and teachers and its a real good town to live in.

BEN MULLINS, GRADE 5

I Am

I am smart and funny
I wonder about the bottom of the sea
I hear the wind
I see mountains
I want to be a bird
I am smart and funny
I pretend to fly

I feel softness
I touch a turtle
I worry about dogs
I cry when I die in fortnite
I am smart and funny
I understand about life
I say God
I dream scary things
I try on my school work
I hope to be the best fortnite gamer
I am smart and funny

JORDAN MULLINS, GRADE 5

My Family Christmas Traditions

Our Christmas traditions begin on December 1st. We get the Christmas tree and decorations out of our building and decorate the house. My mom puts lights outside and fixes our Olaf blow-up. Then, that night, after we go to bed, our elves on the shelf, Holly and Frosty, come and sit on our mantle and bring us a note. They hide every night after that until the day after Christmas, which is when they return to the North Pole.

We celebrate Christmas Eve with my mom's family by going to our church and having a big dinner. Later that evening, we go up to my Mamaw and Papaw McKinney's house and eat again, then we open presents. When we get home, my parents let each of us open our stockings. There are usually little toys and things we can use, like toothbrushes and makeup, inside.

On Christmas morning, we wait until everyone wakes up, then my three siblings and I begin to open up our presents. We get so excited and anxious with each gift we open. We all end up playing with each others' toys and have so much fun! Mom and Dad clean up the mess and help us put together toys, or get them out of the boxes. After that, we head to my Mamaw Cari's house. I get to see my other cousins and have dinner with them, then we open more presents.

By the time all of the celebrating is over, our car is packed full of presents and left-over food. We are usually all worn out, but it's the good kind of worn out, the kind you don't mind because of all the fun that came with it. I love being able to spend so much time with all of my cousins and family during the holidays. I am thankful to have a big family that loves and cares for me. I look forward to our Christmas traditions all year long.

MARISSA MULLINS, GRADE 5

Granny

I was born Oct. 1, 2007 in Holston Valley hospital in Tennessee. I am the first out of five children. It was cool at first, however, one day all of that changed. That's a story for another day.

The first time I went hunting I was four years old. I had a 44 mag pistol. I shot a tree and I was done but I still had fun. My granny told me a story about her grandpa Frank. One night he went to the outhouse, he heard something while in there. He looked and what he saw was crazy. A BIGFOOT! She said, he ran in the house with his pants down.

My great great grandpa was in WW2. He passed away due to being shot in the leg. He got a infection from the wound. My granny has told me story after story about her life. I'm sure there will be many more to come.

SEBASTIAN MULLINS, GRADE 5

My Christmas Tradition

My family spends a lot of time together during Christmas. On the day before Christmas, our mom and dad let my brothers, sister, and me open one present. My family also fixes a big dinner. My favorite thing Mom makes is oreo pie. My favorite thing Dad makes is ham. He deep fries it and it is delicious! I also love my mamaw's banana pudding!

After we eat, we go outside to play. If there is snow on the ground, we have snowball fights, build snowmen, make snow angels, and go sledding on my mamaw's hill. One of my favorite Christmas memories was when my dad went down my mamaw's hill on a stand-up board and fell over the basketball goal. We were laughing so hard! Thankfully, he was okay! Then, I went down another hill and got stuck in the fence. It took both of my parents to get me out of the fence! I cried, but I wasn't badly hurt. After we played outside, we drank hot chocolate together. I feel that Christmas is special and love our family traditions.

CHLOE NIDA, GRADE 5

My Abuelos

I am from Mexico. My Grandfather died before I was born. I always wanted to meet him. He died at the hospital. I think he was kind. I don't know. My mom had a broken leg, so she could not go see him. My mom dreamed about him. She saw him in her dream, and he had a tube in his neck. Later, she told my grandmother, Abuelita, and it was true. My Abuelita is still living in Mexico. She is very kind to people. In the summer, I go visit my Abuelita in Mexico. It takes three days in a car. At night, we sleep in a hotel. I have also been to Florida to visit my aunt who lives there.

On my Dad's side, both my grandparents, Abuelos, are still alive. They are nice too. They live close by, in Johnson City. They also have a house in Norton, and we go there for a big family Christmas party.

ANAHÍ REYES ONATE, GRADE 5

I Am

I am Julie Orange
I am amazing and kind
I hear the wind
I see snow that comforts me
I am Julie Orange
I pretend to have kids
I feel happy
I touch my cat, it is so fluffy
I cry because my cat Jack got run over
I try to work hard in school
I am Julie Orange
I dream of peace and love
I hope that I get a good job
I worry that my aunt is going to die
I want to get married
I am Julie Orange

JULIE ORANGE, GRADE 5

My Papaw's Dog

Over the years my papaw had a dog. His name was Buddy. The dog was nice all of the time, however, he would not allow me to pet him. Out of the blue, one day the dog allowed me to pet him. From that day on, Buddy always allowed me to pet him. Buddy passed away a few years later. It was sad for us both. Buddy is buried in a flower bed in my backyard.

RILEY ORANGE, GRADE 5

My Thanksgiving Tradition

Every Thanksgiving we go to my grandparents' houses. We go to Appalachia and Strawberry Patch in Big Stone Gap. A few days before Thanksgiving, we eat with Mamaw Janet. Mamaw cooks most of the food, sometimes my papaw will help cook. Her food is yummy and delicious. I love her potato salad and deviled eggs. We eat with family and friends there. We eat and play outside together.

On Thanksgiving Day, we go to Mamaw Tammy's. Sometimes some of my cousins will come to eat with us. My mamaw is a good cook. I love her mashed potatoes and green beans. We stay there most of the day. I love playing with my cousins when we are there.

I love Thanksgiving because it is fun going to my grandparent's. It is not about the food, but hanging out with your family members.

BRYCEN OSBORNE, GRADE 5

The Most Wonderful Time of the Year

Winter is my favorite time of year with my family. I love the big snows we sometimes get! When it snows, my mom, dad, sister, uncle and I go sledding at my grandma's house. She has a huge hill that we ride our sleds down. We have to walk back up the hill to go again. It's tiring, but so fun! We also build snowmen and have snowball fights.

Another reason I like winter is because of Christmas. On Christmas Eve, my family gets together and we eat turkey and dressing with all the trimmings and have cookies for dessert. I love helping bake the cookies with my grandma. I also help her bake gingerbread men that we get to eat after dinner. After everyone finishes eating, we open presents. My cousins and I play with all of our new toys together, then we all go home. There are so many fun things about winter!

ETHAN OWENS, GRADE 5

Colors of Big Stone Gap

White balls of fluff falling from the sky.

Red foxes play in the snowy field.

Green trees sway in the wind.

Red mountains cover the Gap in the fall.

Blue and Orange Bears take the field to play ball.

Blue beautiful rivers cover the forest biome in the summer.

Black skies in the night, listen to the owls call.

Silver stars twinkle on clear nights.

DYLAN PALMER, GRADE 5

The Heritage of a Coal King

My great-great uncle, Charles Bondurant, helped build the coal industry in St. Charles, Virginia. He earned his title as one of the early coal kings by opening the first coal mine in St. Charles. The town is actually named after him and his office assistant; with his first name being Charles, and his office assistant's last name being St. John. Charles Bondurant also helped to establish the railroad lines in Southwest Virginia for transportation needs. Family stories retold for generations reflected that Charles believed in hard work and education. When he was nine, he started working in a brickyard for forty cents a day. Then, he worked at a grocery store and got paid \$3.00 a week. He gained a reputation for honesty and hard work. The story goes that Charles often said, "It's more important to teach a man how to work and earn his keep rather than give freely." My family still believes this is true today. Charles was very active in politics and bettering the community to help everyone. He even received an invitation to and attended Franklin D. Roosevelt's Inauguration. Even though I never had an opportunity to meet my great-great-great uncle Charles Bondurant, I am very proud to be his relative.

SAVANA PARSONS, GRADE 5

My Papaw

My Papaw was born on Halloween, October 31, 1963. He has eleven siblings and all of them are awesome. Papaw and his siblings Juanita, Freddy, Wayne, Kevin, Thelma, Joyce, Linda, Jc, Billy, Ronnie and Danny were always creative and playing. Some of the good thing in his life are that they would swing on vines, shoot dynamite, throw stuff at car windows, and play football, etc.

His Maw, Mamaw Reta, had antique bears that I am supposed to be getting soon. I have some of them, but not all of them. Sadly, she passed away before I was born, and I never got to meet her.

Papaw's dad wasn't very nice. He was malicious to him, mamaw Reta, and papaws siblings. I don't like the stories where they would leave and hide from him. Papaw told me everytime Billy would say, "Do you think he's coming tonight? He would. Their dad was abusive and drank a lot. I am thankful my dad is not like that.

One story papaw told me was that his brother Billy fell in the outhouse, Papaw said, "What happened?". Billy yelled, "You dummy, I fell in the outhouse!" My Papaw thought that was funny and a good memory.

Sometimes, Papaw and his siblings would play Hoopy Hide (Hide and Seek). I like the name Hoopy Hide better.

Every year now, they have a reunion that kids and grandkids come to. I want so badly to keep it going for years and years. My papaws family is awesome and make me feel free and active. I will continue to hear stories and admire all of them.

KAMI PENNINGTON, GRADE 5

My Sweet Little Brother

I love my little brother so much. Sometimes he can be a bit mean but I still love him. We play together every day. He is just the best at playing pretend. We also love to play minecraft together. He isn't the best at it but he tries his best. I was so excited for him to be born. I loved him so much. I was little and learning where my own eyes were so I liked to ask, "where are his eyes". I wanted to play with him all the time.

A few years later when my brother was 4 he started to play with me more. Now that we are a little older we play with our plushies. We have so much fun! My favorite is Freddy Fazbear. My brothers favorite is Golden Freddy. We don't actually have that plushie so we use a golden bear plush. I am so grateful I have my brother and love him so much.

JACELYN PETERSON, GRADE 5

My Adoption

I have lived with my parents for four years. I love them with all of my heart. They care for me because provide me with a home, good food, and a big bedroom. My parents buy me pretty clothes.

They have not always been my parents. I was in foster care with them when I was six. I got moved to another home and I felt very sad, I cried because I didn't want to go with the new people. I lived there for two days and then I went back to them and I was so excited and happy, I jumped up and down. I have been there ever since.

One day when I came home from school, I found out that I was officially adopted. I was very, very happy. Now I know I will never have to leave again. That was the best day of my life.

ABBY PHILLIPS, GRADE 5

Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday. We have very good cooks in our family. We had ham, turkey, stuffing, mash potatoes, and pumpkin pie. I made homemade brownies with frosting. It was the best but the pumpkin pie was my favorite. I really loved the turkey too! It was the best thanksgiving ever!

ALYSSA PHILLIPS, GRADE 5

The Terrible Halloween

Halloween is not really a big holiday for my family, but we do celebrate because everyone else does. Costumes are important and we go to Halloween Express in Kingsport, TN to find our costumes. My first halloween, I had a Barney costume. Every year for the first 4 years, I wore the same Barney costume, and every year I fell in a ditch. The funny thing about this is, it was the same ditch. I started watching Barney when I was really little and I liked him very much. The following year, I wore a Bumblebee costume and did not fall in the ditch or any other ditch. Needless to say, I never wore the Barney Costume again.

We trick-or-treat in Big Stone Gap. We start in the middle of town and go through the park. After that, we usually go behind the hospital and that is where we get most of our candy. My favorite place go would be my Papaw's house because he buys all kinds of candy and just gives it all to me.

The best part of Halloween is that you get to act the part of someone you really like and you can pretend to be them in real-life. This year, I dressed up like a Sumo-Wrestler and it was the best costume I have ever had. People thought it was funny, and my parents laughed the whole entire time.

ELI PLEASANT, GRADE 5

My Life

I was born in Maryland, and I lived there for ten years. We lived in a big city, and I didn't like living there. There were no kids that lived near me. It was very crowded, and had no trees. My old school was crowded, and was like a maze. The teachers did not get to know the students there.

I moved to Appalachia, Virginia when I was in fourth grade. My mom wanted to move to smaller area. There are many things that I like about living here. I love having the trees and mountains around me. They always change colors. The only thing I don't like about them is that some companies want to cut them down. My new school is a lot of fun. My teachers know me better, they help me a lot more than my old school.

I hope I never have to move away. I really like the area. It is a pretty place to live, and a lot of things to do. My mom made a good decision when we moved to Appalachia.

DYLAN POORE, GRADE 5

Family Christmas Traditions

I love Christmas! I get to spend time with my family. We decorate, make crafts, and eat a lot of food. My favorite food is my Mamaw's homemade peanut butter roll. Some other fun things we do are go see the Christmas trees at the museum in town and go see the Christmas lights in the park at Jonesville.

Family is a very important part of our Christmas tradition. My dad remembers always going to his Mamaw's house on Christmas Eve. He said they always ate a big dinner before opening presents. My mom has similar memories. She also went to her Grandmom's house on Christmas Eve. They would always eat dinner before opening presents.

We have carried on the tradition of going to my Grandmom's house on Christmas Eve. We start our day by going to our church and taking Communion. Then, our evening begins by eating dinner as a family. After dinner, my sister and I go separate all the presents. We open the presents starting with the youngest person first. After all the gifts are opened, we stay and play with them. Then, we go home so that we will be in bed before Santa comes. On Christmas morning, we open our gifts and then mom and dad cook our traditional breakfast. We always have homemade hot cocoa and breakfast casserole. I am glad that my families' Christmas traditions have been passed on to me.

MAKENNA RASNICK, GRADE 5

My Favorite Holiday Memory

My name is Adam. My favorite holiday is Christmas. When it was Christmas, my mom would always make a big, nice Christmas dinner. My mom and dad always let us open a few presents before Christmas Day. One time, I got a really cool drone from my aunt.

When it is Christmas, my mom makes the big sweet ham, peach cobbler, green beans, mash potatoes, corn, and some other stuff. After, we open all the presents. We eat the food and then my sister and I go outside and play with our friends.

ADAM REDMAN, GRADE 5

Virginia's Best Big Stone Gap

Baum Hollow
Italy Bottom
Maples Gap

Southern Section
CadeT
COuntry Boy Hill
Cracker's Neck
VallEy

East Stone Gap
Artesian Well Hollow
Strawberry Patch

All GRAND places to live in Big Stone Gap

LUCY CANTOR-REDMAN, GRADE 5

My Uncle

Matthew Markland was my great, great, great uncle. He was born in 1690 in Wiggin, Lancaster, England and died in Prince George's County on June 18, 1744. He married Margaret Morley Jones, widow of David Jones, on October 22, 1722 in Anne Arundel County. Margaret was the daughter of Griffin and Elizabeth Morley. Margaret died about April 4, 1751 in Frederick County. Her sons were Thomas and Michael Jones as well as their son, Matthew Markland. In 1735, Matthew lived on the Maryland side of the Potomac River across from the Hunting Creek Plantation which was owned by Augustine Washington. The property is now known as Mount Vernon. Matthew and Augustine were friends as both served as vestrymen in their respective Episcopal Churches. Matthew often held small George Washington on his knees and taught him songs and stories.

ANGEL RICHARDSON, GRADE 5

Animals

Animals in the night, what's that I see? Is that a bear?
Night time in my town, should I run or backup slowly?
I am scared and I hope that bear is gone.
My brother is here too! "Sis, let's go to the clubhouse," whispers Hunter. Shh, I hear it.
Ah! It is the bear, run!
Let's get in the house! Run as fast as you can!
Safe! Inside our house, so watch out for the bears!

PAYTON RUSSELL, GRADE 5

Edsil Huff

My great-grandpa is Edsil Huff. He was born March 13, 1927 in Virginia. Edsil lived in Lee County, Va. in Olinger. He worked as a farmer his whole life, and he also worked as a coal miner. At home, he really liked to saw lumber. Twenty years after he was born, he met Mary Walden and soon after, they married. He and Mary had five kids; James, my papaw, Robert, Harold, Eugene, and Wendell. He worked for Westmoreland Coal Company for 40 years. Later, he retired from Westmoreland and continued his work on the farm. He always asked my mamaw to bring me over to see him. When I was only one year old, he passed away from cancer on February 6, 2009.

I miss my grandpa, and I know one day I will get to see him again. He was a hard worker, and he loved seeing his family. I hope to have a horse farm and work just as hard as he did when I grow up.

KAYLEE RUTHERFORD, GRADE 5

My Papaw

My Papaw lives with me. His name is Joseph Church, we have the same first name. I am happy that we live together. I help him by watching what he eats, he is diabetic. He is allowed to eat candy once a week. He tries to sneak candy, so I make him show me what is in his hands. He tells me some good stories. All of his stories are true. He tells stories about when he grew up and about our family. He told me a story about hitting someone when they were playing. He said that he learned the difference between hit and run and hit

and stand. He said to always hit and run, and make sure they are not faster than you. I love to hear his funny stories. I am so glad that I get to live with my Papaw, he is like my best friend.

JOSEPH RYAN, GRADE 5

St. Charles Elementary

Saint Charles has a very special place in my heart. I went to St. Charles elementary school for six years. I miss my teachers so much! Especially Mrs. Dye, Mrs. Martin and Mrs. Mitchell. Mrs. Dye was a great teacher. She made us laugh a lot. I remember the stories we used to tell. My favorites . . . well, actually I don't have one because there all my favorites. Something that always makes me laugh is, the first day we walked in her class she said, "Imagine you have nine fingers and you chop off six of them". We all just stared at her so confused!

Mrs. Martin was such a funny teacher. She always made us laugh! My favorite memories are, sitting at the table talking, telling stories and laughing. She made us so happy. She helped us become so smart when Mrs. Dye was gone for a few months.

Mrs. Mitchell was such a good teacher. I will say one thing, she taught us so many things. She was good at every one of them. She started teaching our gym class the first day she did became my favorite day for me. We had so much fun! When Mrs. Mitchell had bus duty we would talk the other's ear off. I sure do miss those days.

Most all of my family went to St. Charles. My papaw, mamaw, dad, Aunt Amy, Aunt Lee, Aunt Linda, Aunt Gail, Uncle Jay, Uncle Aaron, my brother Johnny, my cousins Mason, Morgan, Matty Polier and Gavin. My papaw played football and basketball there when it was a high school. My dad played basketball there too. Out of six years I have so many great memories. I miss getting to do Christmas plays, having a gift exchange, getting everyone to sign our yearbooks, picking out gifts for teachers, celebrating holidays, field day, earth day, basketball games, helping other students, helping the teachers, reading to the class, the talent show, school dances, laughing with the teachers, having fun in lunch, celebrating Christmas, watching movies, playing games on the computers, sitting on the steps with Mrs. Gibson and Mrs. Mitchell, reading to the lower grades, reading Dr. Seuss books on Dr. Seuss day, playing outside, and playing in gym. Something I don't miss is the last day at St. Charles. It was a really was sad day when I had to leave. But I hope all my friends are doing good in middle school and all the Teachers are teaching well.

KYNDAL SATTERFIELD, GRADE 5

Georgia Football

Last year my family and I went to a Georgia football game. My dad is from Georgia, and it has been his favorite team all his life. It was about a 7 hour drive, but well worth it the trip! We watched them play Mississippi State and Georgia won. The score was 35-13 and we played well. I like watching Georgia because they are my favorite team too.

Before the game, I got to meet a bunch of my favorite players. A few of them were Sony Michel and Nick Chubb who are both running-backs that now play in the NFL. They were in the bookstore meeting people and signing autographs.

After the game, I went back to the bookstore and bought some things because it was my birthday. Some things I bought were a hat, football, and a jersey. I thought it would be cool to have one of my favorite players jersey. After the game I also got some people to sign some stuff.

That next day, we got up and left our hotel and ate at Zaxbys. Then we went home and made it back safely. In conclusion, it was a good trip and we all had fun.

ELI SCHLOBOHM, GRADE 5

I Am From

I am from Thailand, and Virginia, from the Shulars and the Roses
I am from the brick house in East Stone Gap
I am from the apple tree, the peach tree
I am from football and black hair, from David and Amanda
I am from war soldiers and farmers
From Xbox and Rainbow Six
I am from a religious mother that prays for me
I'm from Norton, dumplings, and rice
From the M&M's, the Cola, and Pizza
I am Ethan

ETHAN SHULAR, GRADE 5

The Great Blizzard of 1993

One of the stories that I love to hear my family talk about is the "Great Blizzard of 1993." My mom was about to turn nine years old and my grandparents were planning her birthday party. On March 12th, the day before her birthday, they decided to cancel the party because the weather radar showed a huge snow storm approaching. Instead of a party, my grandparents took her out to celebrate and she was able to choose her own present. My mom decided on getting a fish tank with a fish. They went home and put the tank together, put the fish in, and went to bed.

The next morning, on March 13th, my mom woke up to find her fish dead. Determined to make my mom's birthday a good one, her dad decided to go out and get some more fish for her. When he stepped outside, there was 16 inches of snow on the ground, but that did not prevent him from going to get another fish. While he was gone, the National Guard called to find out if their family needed anything. My grandmother let them know that they were okay, but also told them about my grandfather being gone to Walmart. The National Guard was shocked, stating that no one else had come out of their houses.

When they were finished talking to the National Guard, they looked out the window to see my grandfather trying to come up the hill they lived on. His car was sliding badly, so the family got on their knees and began praying as hard as they could. When they were done praying, they looked outside and my grandfather was safely in the driveway. To this day, it is still remembered as "The Great Blizzard of 1993" by some, but to my mom, it will always be remembered as one of her most crazy, exciting, and scary birthdays of all.

ALEXIS RAEANN SHUPE, GRADE 5

My Great-Grandfather

My great-grandfather, Warren Harding Cole, was born in Mountain City, Tennessee. He had 8 siblings. At 19 years old he went to World War II and was stationed in Korea. He stayed there for three years. While he was there, he had a baby girl and adopted a boy. The girl's name was Nicole and the boy's name was Jarod. When he got back from war, he married my great-grandmother, Betty, and had 7 more children. His second-youngest child was Danny, who died at one-week-old. The night before he died, he pointed to a picture of an angel and smiled. His children multiplied over the years and gave him 13 grandchildren. He lived across the street from my mom. She and her siblings would sneak across the street to see him. One time he went to Tweetsie with them and rode all the rides because they were scared to do it themselves. He was amazing

and they all loved him. He died in 1999 of double pneumonia. I never got to meet him, but I enjoy hearing the stories my mom tells me about him.

ETHAN SMITH, GRADE 5

My Grandparents and Great-Grandparents

My grandfather, Jim Clark, grew up in Lee County, V.A., and owns a sawmill. We call him Pappy. He was on the Grand Ole Opry twice, and sings with the Good Shepherd Quartet. Every year he goes to Sunset Beach to king fish.

One day, while we were at Sunset, my dad and I decided to go and fish with my Pappy at the pier. When we got in, we were greeted by my Pappy and he let us use a small pole. We spent an hour fishing, but we didn't catch

anything. I eventually got bored and just started looking around. And just then, something happened. Something triggered one of the main poles! Pappy ran over and grabbed it! It was a long and hard fight, and it took about 15 minutes. Once we had the fish and saw what we had hooked, we were shocked. We looked over the peer and on the line was a seven foot long, Scalloped Hammerhead Shark!!! We couldn't bring it up on the pier for three reasons: 1. It would be WAY too heavy. 2. It would likely bite someone. 3. If it was a tagged shark, we would be arrested because bringing up tagged fish is illegal.

We ended up cutting the line, and my dad and I went back to the beach house. Pappy came back and we got in the car and drove out to eat. Along the way, my Pappy told me something. He said, "Landon, there is a seven foot hammerhead out there with a sore mouth."

My Nana, Renia Clark, was born in North Carolina and she met Pappy when she moved to Virginia. She started as a teacher, then was a principal at an elementary school, then as a principal at Lee High School. She has a sewing room upstairs that she calls her "happy place." One of my favorite memories with Nana is the

time she came with us to Boston. That day, we were walking to Harvard University. When we opened the doors, there were two fossils already on display! On one side there were the preserved remains of a Dire Wolf, and on the other side was the skeleton of a Saber Tooth Cat (Smilodon)! And no, it's not a saber tooth tiger! As we looked around, I found something amazing. It was a nearly complete skeleton of a Utahraptor! Now, stories like this always have to have a grand finale, so let me tell you that we got to take a selfie with a fifty foot long Tylosaur skeleton!!! That day was one of the best times I've ever had.

My Great-Grandmother, Rheta Russell Humphrey, was born in Lee County in 1936. We call her Granny. Her dad was in the Navy during WWII and she ended up graduating high school. This is what school was like for my Granny. So, to start things off, the teachers were strict. VERY strict. If they caught you talking, even a whisper, the teacher would take you out into the hall and paddle you. You can imagine that the students were pretty scared of the teachers. Now, my Granny had some friends in school, and they played a game where one person would throw a ball and another person would run around and try and catch it without being tagged. Remember, this is when they only had one room schools, and there was no principal, so that's why you got paddled. Life was a lot harder than it is today.



Landon Spain

My Grandma Spain, Linda Septak Spain, was born in Kansas. Her grandparents immigrated to the U.S. from Italy. She once took a school trip to Italy and she studied in Paris for one summer. At my Grandma's school, they had only three rooms, and only three classes. One of the teachers was the principal and his name was Mr. Writer. As with Granny's school, the teachers were strict, and if you got in trouble, you went to see Mr. Writer and he yelled at you.

My Grandpa, Herb Spain, was born in North Carolina. At his school, they only had one room, but it was divided into sections. There were four grades, first through fourth. He said when they didn't have any chewing gum, they would take hot tar and chew that, instead!

Even though my Grandma lived in the middle of tornado alley, her house was never hit by a tornado. My Grandpa Spain, on the other hand, was hit and it did lots of damage. My Grammy (my great-grandmother) was also hit, but she was so lucky. It destroyed all three houses beside hers but it died out once it got to hers.

Grandma Spain also told me that my great-great grandmother went on strike when she worked in the textile factory. She hid her face from reporters so they couldn't take her picture.

These were some stories of my grandparents and great-grandparents. I really enjoy learning about their lives. And I have learned so much about the "old days".

LANDON SPAIN, GRADE 5

When My Grandmother Met the Criminals

When my Nay-Nay was a young girl, her grandmother took her and her siblings to pick pawpaws, which are nuts, in the orchard behind their house in Lee County. When they came back, they found two men in their cellar. They would keep canned food in the cellar, I think they wanted to eat their food. The men tried to leave the cellar, but the kids blocked them from leaving. My Nay-Nay's grandmother called the police while they had the men trapped in the cellar. The police came and arrested the men. The police told them that they were two escaped criminals that they had been looking for. They were scared.

CLOE SPEARS, GRADE 5

Unlucky Catch

When I was in primary school, I went on a fishing trip with my brother, my mom, and her friend. We went to a pond somewhere in Wise. I cast my line and immediately felt a tug! I was so excited! I thought I had caught a fish, but then I heard my brother yell, "Something is poking me!" My mom told me to drop my pole and I realized I had caught my brother! My mom got the fishing hook out of his back and we left. I haven't been fishing since.

CAMERON STACY, GRADE 5

My Family Traditions

Every Christmas, my family draws names to buy gifts. They put names in a bowl and everyone gets to pick two or three names. No one knows who picks their name.

The day before Christmas Eve, we go to my Mamaw's house for dinner. When we finish dinner, we pass the gifts out. We don't know who has our name until we see it on the tag.

I hope we can keep doing this tradition. I think it is fun finding out who picks my name every year, I like the suspense as much as the gift that I am receiving. I like spending time with my family and continuing traditions at Christmas.

GABE STANLEY, GRADE 5

My Mountain Home

Big Stone Gap has the prettiest mountains. I love walking in the woods. There are mountains all around my house. My brother and I like to find trees to climb. We see different kinds of birds and squirrels. I like to hunt in the woods.

The mountains look different each season. My favorite is winter because it is pretty when it is covered with snow. In the spring and summer, the trees give good shade on hot days.

I would not want to live somewhere without mountains. I like to look at the mountains and play in the woods.

ELIJAH STAPLETON, GRADE 5

My Backstory

Hi! I'm Caitlynn and this is my story. My childhood was normal until the day I got separated from my mom. The way it happened is that my mom was asleep and I was at my friends house down the road. All of the sudden, I was told that someone was there for me. My great aunt and uncle were there to get me. They told me that I was going to stay with them for a few days, but they lied! So, the longer I stayed the more I would ask to go home, but as days turned into weeks, and weeks turned into months, I got more and more frustrated.

As a nine year old, I didn't know what was going on. I was very confused. My mom was gone from me for a year and a half, but I'm proud to say that I now live with her! Also, I never knew my dad, but I met him on my birthday. I know this sounds private and sensitive but, I want other kids that are going through this are not alone. And also, there is hope. Things will get better. Things are better for me now. I get to see my dad, and I am with my mom now. We don't always understand things as children, but there are reasons that adults do things that are hard for us. But, remember to have faith that all will work out.

CAITLYNN STEWART, GRADE 5

My Great-Grandfather

My papaw's papa was in World War II. I don't know his real name, but my papaw called him Paulp. My papaw has told me stories about him since I was five years old so I know he must have really liked him.

He liked to go hunting and fishing and watch tv. While he was in the war, he was on one of those ships that had the guns that were really big. He shot those big guns and my papaw has one of the shells from those guns. My papaw said he would shoot the guns and eat at the same time so they could fight.

Then he came back home and lived. He died in his sleeps a few weeks after I was born. I wish I could have met him. I am thankful for him every single day.

KAMIERON STIVERS, GRADE 5

My Famous Mamaw

My mamaw is LuAnn Summers. She was born in Pennsylvania, but moved to Big Stone Gap when she was approximately 27 years old. My dad was three years old when she and my papaw moved to Big Stone Gap. I have lived with my mamaw since I was three years old. She has such a kind heart and is fun to be around, and she takes really good care of me.

She has told lots of stories over the years, but my favorite one was about the time Liz Taylor, a famous actress from the past, came to Big Stone Gap. My mamaw remembered that Liz got choked on a chicken leg

bone while she was in town. My mamaw recalls driving by the restaurant that Liz Taylor was eating at, and saw some ambulances. She didn't know who the ambulance was for until later. Liz Taylor's accident was the talk of the town!

36 years later, Adriana Trigiani made a movie titled Big Stone Gap. My mamaw was one of Liz Taylor's look-alikes. She had to wear a bunch of different fancy clothes. I thought she was a very good actress. There were about six or seven other look-alikes in the movie. One day I want to be just like her.

KAYLEIGH SUMMERS, GRADE 5

My Trip to the Zoo

Two years ago I went on a trip to the zoo in Knoxville, TN. It is about a 3 hour drive from Appalachia, Virginia, where I live. My mamaw, papaw, brother, and my two sister all went on this trip. That night, we stayed in a hotel really close to the zoo. There were so many people there we had to wait an hour to get in.

While we were there we saw owls, snakes, monkeys, elephants, a giraffe, lions, and some other animals I don't remember the names of. The zoo was big and we walked a lot. We ate in a restaurant there to rest. While we were there, we got to play with goats, pet horses, and see all kinds of animals from everywhere.

The hotel was fun. There was a big waterpark and they had free breakfast. Before we left we bought my older cousin a knife and ate on the way home. This trip was a lot of fun for my whole family.

LANCE SUTPHIN, GRADE 5

My Sister Sydney

Sportsmanship
Youth inspiring
Dedicated
Never gives up
Effort 100%
Yes! She's my sister!

My sister Sydney Mckinney has always been my biggest role model. She has taught me to never give up even when things get hard. She always gives 100% effort in school and sports. I hope to be like her one day.

GRACIE SWINNEY, GRADE 5

Tinkerbell

My cat is named Tinkerbell and she is the only house cat I have ever had. I have had her for four years and I got from my



Gracie Swinney

mamaw. She sleeps everywhere in the house. She used to be playful then she got fixed, and now she is very lazy. Tinkerbell is brown, grey, and black. She is my favorite cat and the best pet anyone could ever have.

GAVIN TAYLOR, GRADE 5

My Wise County Ancestry

My great-grandpa Taylor was from Texas. He and his wife met during his service in the military. They moved to Exeter during the coal mining boom and he started his own trucking business. My great-grandma owned a general store in the coal camp they lived in.

My great-great grandpa and great-great grandma Campbell were both from Stoney Creek in Elizabethhton, Tennessee. They grew up on farms during the Depression. They married and decided to move to Rhoda, Virginia so my great-great grandpa Hughie and Campbell could work in the coal mines and provide a good life for his family. The coal mines brought my family to Wise County, Virginia over 75 years ago. Several generations later, the coal industry is still providing jobs for our family.

MADDOX WESLEY TAYLOR, GRADE 5

I Am

I am a country boy
I wonder how many people are alike
I hear crickets at night
I see kids running around
I want to go to New York
I am a country boy
I pretend to be someone else
I like quads and dirt bikes
I can handle mud
I worry about school shootings
I cry if someone dies in my family
I am a country boy
I understand school
I say life is good
I dream about life
I try to do good
I hope to go to college
I am a country boy

JOSH TEASLEY, GRADE 5

My Family Vacation

Last year my dad let us choose between either going to the beach or Dollywood and we chose Dollywood. After school let out for the summer break we went. On our way there it was scary because it was raining so hard and we almost got in an accident. Thank goodness we didn't. We finally got to our hotel that night and the hotel had an inside pool and we got to swim. The next morning we woke up early ate breakfast and we rode the trolley to Dollywood. That was fun too. We arrived at Dollywood the first thing we did was rode a wet ride that was called Daredevil Falls. My hat fell off and my dad caught it and we got wet and it was really exciting. My favorite ride was the Wild Eagle. Everytime we got to the top my mom would close her eyes because the

drop was so high, but not to me, I thought it was so much fun. We stayed for two days and left on a Sunday. I was so bummed because we had to leave. My mom and dad took us back a couple times that summer.

BRAYLEN THACKER, GRADE 5

My Eleventh Birthday

Birthdays are always a special time at my house. My favorite birthday memory is when I turned eleven years old. I had a party at my Ninnas house. Instead of cake, we had ice cream sundaes, my favorite! I got two games for my PS4, Battlefield 5 and Spiderman, a telescope, and an Iphone 6. My friend, Tony, came and we watched YouTube and hung out. We played tag and watched TV, then we took him home. On the way home, we got to listen to music on my new phone. It was a great day!

AVERY THOMAS, GRADE 5

A Trip To The Devil's Bathtub

On summer break my Mom, sisters, grandparents, uncle, and cousin went to The Devil's Bathtub. My mom had heard about the place from one of her friends. It is a natural pool made from a waterfall in the middle of the woods in Scott County, Virginia. We had to park and hike two miles to get to it. The trip took longer than expected. It wasn't a regular hike. We had to jump over fallen trees and cross a stream eight times to get there. All the rocks were slimy in the stream, so we slipped very easily. We all managed to get hurt. For example, I busted my finger on a rock looking for my sisters because they ran off all alone and I fell trying to keep up with them. My grandparents were struggling so we had to help them the whole way. We found walking sticks to help them too. Finally we got to the bathtub and it was FREEZING! We couldn't see the bottom of it because it was so deep.

My dad showed up and surprised us! We were so happy because he had to work that day and we didn't think he could go! After my Dad got there, we all jumped in the Devil's Bathtub together and I heard a lot of screams because it was so cold. We were all freezing, tired, and hungry at this point, and then we realized we had to hike ALL THE WAY BACK OUT! We were all wet and uncomfortable, but it didn't feel like it took an eternity when we walked back. It only felt like five minutes. Looking back on it, The Devil's Bathtub wasn't all that bad! It was beautiful and we even found a turtle and some lizards. We just need to be a little more careful not to get hurt next time. I would love to go back someday!

LEAH TUCKER, GRADE 5

My First Anime Drawing and More

My first anime drawing was on a Sunday. I was bored. I broke out my notebook and started drawing. I drew a skeleton in anime. Not just any skeleton but one from a video game, named Gaster Tale. In my opinion, it's not that bad of a game. I think it's really fun. I get to meet and talk to monsters. There is also a ghost named Chara! The skeleton is named Gaster Sans, but in the game, it's G-sans. It's just shorter, like a nickname. While playing the game you fall from the hole in Mount E.b.bet! When you fall into gray flowers you meet a living, talking flower named Flowey. Flowey the flower, he is annoying but you will get used to it. Then you meet a goat named Torial. This is not a normal goat, she has fire powers and she lives in the ruins!! I try to beat Torial, however, it depends what path I am on. Would you rather fight or spare them? I would fight! I'm funny that way. When you exit the ruins, you walk near a town named Snowdin. When you see a skeleton named G-sans. he will tell puns. So back to my drawing!! So I got out my pen and drew for an hour. Finally, I was done! The perfect, the amazing, the great PAPUYRUS!!!! Lol I am so happy to get Papuyrus in this story because well, why not? He is cool *cricket*! Well I think so and I'm right!!

ABIGAIL VALDEZ, GRADE 5

The Candy Man

My great-papaw enjoys hunting, fishing, woodworking, attending church, and visiting family. One of his favorite hobbies has become making and delivering candy. Many people in our community call him "The Candy Man" because he makes a lot of homemade treats to give to others. For example; rice crispy treats, no-bake cookies, mounds, smoothies and peanut butter balls are some of his specialties. My favorite Christmas tradition is to make peanut butter balls with my great-papaw and family. Last year, we misread the recipe and put three times the amount of butter and had to go to the store to buy more powdered sugar to fix it. When we finished we had over 100 peanut butter balls to give as Christmas treats. I am already looking forward to this Christmas for our candy making session with my great-papaw. If you and your family would like to start this tradition, use the recipe below.

Peanut Butter Balls

12 oz. semi-sweet chocolate chips
2 cups peanut butter
1 stick of butter (melted)
3 Tsp. vanilla
2 bags of powdered sugar
 $\frac{1}{2}$ stick paraffin wax

Mix together peanut butter, butter, vanilla and powdered sugar. Roll into balls, place on a tray and chill. Melt wax and chocolate chips using a double boiler. Dip peanut butter balls, one at a time into chocolate. Place on a buttered platter and cool again.

SYDNEE VARNER, GRADE 5

Deer Hunting with Dad

One of my favorite memories is when my dad took me deer hunting. We dressed in camouflage so we would blend in with the woods and the deer wouldn't see us. We found the perfect tree to hide underneath and we sat very still. Pretty soon, we heard the leaves rustle. I got very excited! I thought it was a deer, but it ended up being a squirrel. After about an hour, we still hadn't seen a deer and we decided to give up and go home. Even though we didn't see a deer, I loved spending time with my dad.

JERRI WAGNER, GRADE 5

Memories

Collecting seashells at the beach
The waves wash sand on my feet
Riding waves, fun was had by each
Sitting in the sand was a nice seat
Hanging in the wilderness was a treat
With my best friend we had a good time
Relaxing in the heat
Not a doubt in mind
Disney World was fun while it lasted
Theme parks, Mickey Mouse, and the princess' castle
All those surprises blasted

A lot of fun, but a lot of hassle
All those memories were fun
I wish I could go back to those days in the sun

BROOKLYN WALKER, GRADE 5

I Am

I am an epic gamer a TFUE
I wonder about McDonalds
I hear Cringe
I see dogs
I want a gun of my own
I am awesome a fortnite man yes
I pretend IDK
I feel paper
I touch a clock at night
I worry about glasses
I cry about where I am going in life
I am fun twitch streamer
I understand why I have a small brain
I say Minecraft is good
I dream about no school
I try to get money yes
I hope we all die when we are 200
I am a good boy

COLIN WARDELL, GRADE 5

The Adoption

I was born in Big Stone Gap, Virginia on October 21, 2007. I lived with my mom and dad and older brother, Tyson. My parents did not take care of my brother and me very well, so we were taken away and put in foster care. I was two and my brother was three the first time we went to a foster home. We were moved to many different foster homes and some were nice but some were not good places to live. After we got older when we moved homes we had to change schools too. Once we went back home with our mom but that did not last very long because our mom was still doing drugs and other bad stuff. One day DSS came to my school and took my brother and me again and put us back in foster care. We were in the first and second grade, and we moved to Wise, and then to another home in Pound. Then one day a family that we have been in foster care with when we were little went to court and asked for custody to take us out of foster care. We had to go to DSS and have visits with them and then go back to court for the judge to give them custody of me and my brother. Finally, on January 13, 2015 we left foster care to go live with Momma Vicky and Momma Jen. After we lived there for over a year, they asked us if we wanted to be adopted and never have to move again. My brother and I told them we wanted to be adopted and change our name to be one big family. It took a long time but we finally went to court to be adopted and our biological mom didn't even come to court to fight for us. The judge talked to my brother and me one morning in the courtroom and we were adopted on March 11, 2017. Now I have a new family with three brothers and two moms that love me very much.

PAYTON WELCH, GRADE 5

My Family

I live in Crackers Neck. The Wells were one of the first families to live in this part of Big Stone Gap. When my family first moved here, it was nothing but mountains. We have a cabin up on the mountain behind our house, this is where my great grandparents, my papaw Doyle (Junior), and his sisters grew up. Everything they had they built on their own, grew, or traded for. My Papaw had many chores to do every day before and after school. I can't imagine having to do that much work. He had to make axes, chop trees to get wood so he can make a fire to be able to cook and for the warming of the house. My great grandmother Naomi sheared wool from sheep and my great grandfather Doyle hunted animals for leather, fur, and meat. My Mamaw Naomi took these items and made items to sell and trade to be able to provide for the family. They did not have electricity or running water. They carried water from the stream near the land. To be able to bathe the water was brought in, heated, and then everyone shared the same water in the tub. I cannot imagine having to share water with my whole family! My great grandfather worked in the mines. He would walk down the mountain and go to Skeen's Store to catch a ride to work in Stonega. He worked all week to try and provide for the family. He would buy the flour, salt, sugar and any other necessities, and that often put his paycheck in the negative. He always did whatever necessary to take care of his family. They canned, gardened, raised chickens and cows for meat, eggs, and milk. Anytime they traveled off the mountain it was by horse and sleigh. How neat is that? I love to listen to my Papaw talk about how they lived back then. He takes a lot of pride in it. He worked early in the morning before school, and then after school just to keep their house, gardens, and family going. I can't imagine if I had to do all of that stuff before and after school. My parents don't ask that much of me. I do not think I would be that good at doing that much work. It was definitely different back then. I didn't realize how good I have it. A lot of the work ethic has been passed down from my great grandparents to my Papaw and then to my dad. They always try to make sure that I know how good it feels to earn something. I have to admit that it is a good feeling to earn what you get and not just be given something and not work for it. I have always liked to go up on the mountain with my Dad. It's very peaceful up there. He has taught me many things about the woods, hunting, trees, and just enjoying nature. Man, it was hard back then but the crazy thing is, the cabin that my great grandparents and Papaw grew up in is still standing. It is up behind our hunting cabin. It's not in the best shape of course, but I take pride when i see it, knowing what we came from. It also brings a big smile and you see a twinkle in his eye whenever my Papaw reminds me that i have it easy, and "We kids" as he says it, "don't know what hard work is." I just tell him that it's time to get back to Fortnite.

TUCKER WELLS, GRADE 5

Shadow

Shadow was my Mamaw and Papaw's dog. He was a good dog. After all, he loved to play, and when I was little I shared a dum dum sucker with him. In fact, I would lick it then I would let him lick it. I know this sounds gross, but I was little. But then he died. I think he died because he was just old. My brother cried a lot and I was sad but I don't think I cried. I loved him so much. After he passed away we buried him in their yard. Then they got a new dog named Sadie. She is so cute, but I miss Shadow a lot.

MADISON WHITE, GRADE 5

My Great Grandpa

The oldest living relative that I knew was my great grandfather, James Williams. He lived a very interesting life and lived to be 94 years old. I was named for him. He was born in 1917 in Christiansburg, Virginia. His family were mostly farmers but his dad also owned a truck to haul coal and gravel for people in the area.

When he graduated high school, he was the first of his family to attend college. He took civil engineering at Virginia Tech.

After he finished college, the war was beginning to get serious in Europe. He decided to work for the U.S. Government in the Civil Service as an Engineer. In 1942 he went to Washington DC where they assigned him to Trinidad, British West Indies, as a resident engineer.

After a short time at Port of Spain, Trinidad, he was moved to Nanaus, Brazil where he packed for his trip up the Amazon River. He and several men traveled by plane up the Amazon and then to the Rio Negro river. They landed the plane on the water and found a spot to unpack all their supplies. From there they found a village and hired men to help them survey and cut out a place for a military base and airstrip. They would live near the river for several months. They would take a bath in the river which has alligators and piranha living in it. A tribe of headhunters lived on the other side of the river from them but they had no trouble from them. My great grandfather would grow a big red beard since there was not reason to shave in the jungle. He definitely looked funny to the natives.

He left Brazil and returned to the United States in late 1943. He spent a few months at home with his mother and father. He then joined the U.S. Army. He went to bootcamp at Ft. Leonard Wood in Missouri. After Boot Camp he went to Geiger Field in Spokane, Washington. He became part of the 1891st Engineer Aviation Battalion which would be assigned to the 14th Division known as the Flying Tigers.

They traveled by boat from southern California in September of 1944. They stopped in the Fiji Islands, Melbourne, Australia and landed in Bombay, India almost a month later. They were lucky that they didn't have any troubles with the Japanese as they crossed the Pacific. They went from the boat and boarded a train which took them to Assam, India. Their assignment was to build airstrips in Burma which was located over the Himalayan Mountains.

My great grandfather and his buddies loaded their equipment on to airplanes. Bulldozers, trucks, jeeps, and anything else they needed were flown over "The Hump." This took many days and many trips. They then made their way across the countryside on small roads and watching for the Japanese Army. They would build several airstrips in Burma and slowly work their way toward China.

Grandpa William's last assignment was an airstrip in China. He was there when the Japanese officers landed and surrendered to the Allies. The war was over and his unit continued on across China to Kunming. He then made his last trip across the Pacific on the merchant marine ship. They were in such a hurry to leave that they left port with very little provisions other than beans. It was a long trip home.

My Great Grandfather left the army when he returned home and went to work for the Virginia Highway Department. He continued to work as an engineer with his largest project being the Interstate 81 project but he would also work on the roads in Wise county on highways 23 and 58. He retired and spent his remaining years raising cattle and farming.

JAMES WHITT, GRADE 5

Winter in Big Stone Gap, Virginia

I see snow everywhere,
It falls slowly from the sky to the ground.
It covers everything, cars, houses, trees, and me.

I hear kids playing,
Building snowmen and making snow angels.
I also hear nothing,
The animals are away trying to stay
Warm for the winter.

I smell the smoke from the chimneys,
And soup cooking on the stove,
They will warm my bones on a cold winter day.

I feel cold from the winter air.
I wear more clothes to stay warm,
Coats, jackets, gloves, snow shoes,
And long pants.

I taste wet snow flakes on my tongue,
Hot chocolate makes my tummy happy.
Peppermint candy canes taste like Christmas.

Winter in Big Stone Gap is awesome.

CAMERON WILDER, GRADE 5

Men in My Life

I was born Dec. 7, 2007 at Holston Valley Hospital in Tennessee. I was the first child born to my mom and dad. My mom's name is Lisa Owsley and my dad's name is Wes Williams. I was the second grandchild of my maternal grandparents and the first grandchild of my paternal grandparents. After I was born, the hospital staff put me in a stocking and put a red hat on my head. When I came home from hospital, my mom would sing "Silent Night".

Now my parents are divorced. They were married until I was 2 years old. My dad lives in Tennessee, and I get to see him about every six months. I spend time with my step-dad, Josh. We have a good relationship.

I started shooting guns when I was 4 years old. My first gun was a 22 caliber Smith and Wesson. My dad gave it to me, and taught me how to shoot and defend myself. He taught me how to hunt and skin. Sometimes, we would eat what I hunted. My dad and I keep the coyote population down in the mountains here.

I spend a lot of time with my grandfather, or Papaw, Roger. We work on fixing houses and trucks together. He teaches me mechanics and how to fix lots of things. My favorite thing to do with Papaw, is to go down to this little stream by an abandoned bathhouse to do some fishing. We will catch a few crawdads sometimes too. We made up this joke: *One day we went fishing for crappies, and we had a crappy day!* I love spending time with my Papaw.

GAUGE WILLIAMS, GRADE 5

My Family's Holiday Traditions and Memories

Thanksgiving

My Dad, Ryan's, favorite holiday is Thanksgiving. He always enjoys spending the week hunting with his dad Saturday through Thursday morning. They hunt on Huff Rock with several close friends. Early Thursday morning they come home and get cleaned up for Thanksgiving dinner. The whole family eats at 2:00pm. Dad's favorite dish is Papaw Winky's baked oysters. He said he will never forget the good times spent with family and in the outdoors.

Christmas

My Papaw, Rob Moore, remembers my Great-Grandmother would always make homemade ornaments for my mom, Elizabeth. She would make ornaments from paddleball Santa Clauses to crochet angels to

carousel horses. She even made a Christmas tree with only Noah's Ark ornaments. Every Christmas Eve, my brother, Everett, sister, Loren, Mom, Dad, and I, along with my cousin Berkley's family attend the candlelight Christmas service at First Baptist Church in Big Stone Gap. It ends with everyone circling the church and singing Silent Night and blowing out their lit candle. After, we go to Mamaw Judy's house and eat salmon and watch *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*.

New Year's

My Mamaw Judy has a New Year's Day traditional dinner every year. She cooks fried cabbage, black eyed peas, and hog jowl. The tradition is to eat some of everything and each represents good luck for the coming year. Cabbage stands for money, black-eyed peas represent happiness, and hog jowl is for good health. It has been in her family for at least four generations. She remembers enjoying the meal with her mom and her grandmother growing up. I really look forward to my family's traditions during the Holidays and continuing to share them for years to come.

KATELYNN WITT, GRADE 5

The Memories

Hi, my name is Yasmin Woods and I am a 5th grader at Union Middle School, the Bears, and here are my memories:

- When I was little, I used to do gymnastics which means that I did flips, backbends, cartwheels, handstands and other things like that. I can still do most of the things but not all of them. Now that I'm older, I'm able to do more than just gymnastics. I can hang with my friends and do whatever I want.
- My mom had her first cooking contest in the 6th grade and I had mine when I was in the 4th grade.
- When I was 9, I did ballet and hip hop. My mom teaches yoga and zumba and it is really fun to dance and relax.
- One time I ordered a happy meal and my dad was with me. They swapped our sandwiches and my dad was so mad but he ate my burger and I ate his, and we still had a great time.
- One time I snuck out of the house and my mom had a flip out on me! Plus I almost got ran over by a big red truck. That was all to go play basketball with my friends.
- Not too long ago, I went to L.A. and got lost in the water park. As soon as my mom found me, I was eating a snow cone in the middle of the park. That was funny and cool without my parents.

YASMIN WOODS, GRADE 5



VIRGINIA HIGH SCHOOL



According to award-winning author Barbara Kingsolver, one of the primary functions of fiction is not only to raise awareness, but also to foster hope. For Kingsolver, entertainment is important, but so is the message. On December 6th, Kingsolver gave a free lecture at The Martha Washington Inn to celebrate the release of her newest novel *Unsheltered*, a novel which pulses with the hopelessness of our current divisive culture and with the hope of redemption and restoration. Kingsolver's novel is a thermometer of the current times. She understands how literature reflects society.

In her lecture, Kingsolver noted the importance of literature in encouraging people to consider their values and their behaviors. "Home" is a term she often considers in her literature, highlighting the importance of the Appalachian landscape in her own works. Kingsolver is a native of Kentucky and settled in Glade Springs after she married a professor from Emory and Henry. Kingsolver mentioned that the ideas we associate with home can often lead us to create barriers and establish prejudices, but if we develop our sense of empathy, we can live harmoniously in society. Literature helps us to develop that empathy, and it enriches our lives with far greater hope and purpose.

Several Origin Project students attended the event and had their copies of Kingsolver novels signed by the author. The students found the lecture exciting and have devoured their copies of her work.

CRYSTAL HURD, ENGLISH TEACHER
VIRGINIA HIGH SCHOOL

Things About Me

I am Brandy Davis,
I live in Bristol City,
I am adopted by Betty Davis and Norman Davis,
I have five sisters, and I also have five brothers,
I am a teen country girl,
I go to Virginia High School,
I love dogs, cats, turtles, horses, foxes, and lots more,
I miss all my friends at Eastside High, and all the other schools I've been to over the years,
I am a huge blonde, and I love everyone I meet,
I love my teacher Mrs./Dr. Hurd,
I will graduate in 2021; I'm in the 10th grade; best high school year yet,
I am a girly girl, yet a tom-boy at the same time
I will always be the country girl like I was raised to be, when I get into a song I sing it in a country voice,
I was in choir at Virginia Middle, and I will continue my love for singing in Virginia High School,
I love the country artist Luke Bryan, Kane Brown, Miranda Lambert, and lots more,
I love to write about anything that I can get into writing about interesting,
I have the favorite sports: Volleyball, Baseball, Boxing, and Running; I enjoy doing all these sports, if I didn't have these sports, I don't know what I would be doing,
I have lots of hobbies like: writing songs, cleaning the house (on my own), cooking and listening to country music, and watching movies with my family,
I enjoy school, but like most people, I don't like to be there all day doing work; yet we must because that helps us for the real world,
I enjoy books, but I love books that are my kind of book,
I hope that this "Origin Project," goes on for years.

BRANDY DAVIS, GRADE 10

Enclosed

What an enclosed space
The room is tighter than my throat
Is my heart running a race?
Images flipping through the screen
Why are they all negative?
All I want to do is scream
As I sit there and shove my hands into my ears
What is that sound
Why is it so loud?
Is it going around
This seat is so small
My legs are too long
Why can't the seat just be tall?
That smell it burns my nose
Makes my head spin
Wait no, that isn't no nose
This is pain
Nothing else but burden
I have nothing left to gain
This knowledge of fear
Is something my heart can feel
I will remember every single tear
As I shut my eyes
The room goes dark
I will always remember the lies

CRYSTAL FISHER, GRADE 10

I Am From

I am from TV
From couch and bed
I am from the normal
Feel
I am from the grass
The tree
Whose long-gone limbs I remember
As if they were my own.

I'm from thanksgiving and anger
From Norleen and Jessica
I'm from anger and sadness
And from confusion

I'm from don't and stop
And Tech switch

I'm from Christmas
I'm from Illinois and American
Steak and pizza
From my grandpa not being able to join the army
He had heart problems
Family pictures
In my heart

A.J. MILES, GRADE 10

Appalachia

Appalachia.
Vast and long ancient mountains.
I call this my home.

TRISTAN MULLINS, GRADE 10

My Mother

My family has been going through a rough time since September 11. On that day, I received a phone call from my mother, after my volleyball practice, and she said "Bre, I had a doctor appointment today, and I was told I had stage three invasive breast cancer." In the moment, I didn't have a clue what to do. I felt my heart shatter, I broke into tears, and I was clueless on what the next chapters in our lives were going to be. I feel worse each day because there is nothing I can do to help her progress or get better. Therefore I attend every chemotherapy appointment I can, and we have a lot of "mother-daughter time." Without my mother I don't know where I'd be or what my lifestyle would be like now!

BREANNA OWENS, GRADE 10

The Hope or Despair

I was sitting in class, listening to the teacher, wondering about my future. College or work; I kept wondering that thought until the bell rang. "1st period is over," the teacher says, "time for 2nd period!" Of course, me being me, I go to my next class.

During my daily math, the sharp thought came back to haunt you; like your brain wants to talk. "College or work," It says, "It's like that game, except you don't know which is hope or which is despair!" It sends chills down to my spine as I thought of that more.

It's not bad as you think; you just need to think about it more. When I got back home from school, the thoughts are still there like they're your friends except they're just mere thoughts that kept asking, "college or work?"

It kept bugging me all night; until one college I saw on the internet. *Full Sail University*; a dream college for those who want to be them. Since I always wanted to become a game developer at a young age, I decided which is hope and which is despair.

The answer; both was neither was hope, nor was it despair. They're just the thoughts of worrying. Alas, I decided my future; the future of being happy.

GABRIELLE PHIPPS, GRADE 10

Of Grandma's Garden

R

She blooms with the rose
Patch
And her hair coils with the barbed wire
Stems.
Weeds climb esophagus, they crawl off her
Tongue,
Collecting golden drops of sun.

Appalachia, oh how she cries for you.

She exhales fog that fills autumn's
Dawn
And her blood tumbles with the
Cricks.
Skin chills with a morning
Frost,
The Blue Ridge coats her lips.

Appalachia, oh how she cried for you.

O

He is
The hot July
Sun,
His face
Shines with the
Stars.

(Too much.)

His eyes,
Two glossy chestnuts:
Mirrors.
Lemon moonshine
In an orchard:
Memories.

(Not enough.)

His saliva
Is liquid fire.

Complete?
An empty
And skin-stretched
Canvas.

(Too much.)
(Not enough.)

S

Little boy blue
Filled the canyon
In her soul.
A little boy new,
Cheeks soft as cotton,
A marigold.

Little baby,
Surrounded by
A forgotten,
Tempestuous sea
Of wildflowers;
Tiny daisy
Blooming nigh.
(On rotten,
Broken hyperboles,
Death cowards.)

Little boy lovely,
Mama's tender kiss
Hushes your cries.
Her little boy, fussy,
A hidden, sinister abyss
In cage here lies.

Mama, too, cries
And downs pills
With cheap liquor.
But the white lies
Herself she tells
Will kill her quicker.

E

He was only eighteen,
Or somewhere in between
A boy and a man.

Peter Pan
And his lost boys
Aged fast.
“Fear’s past!”
They ran
With dangerous toys
Aimed with command from a boss-man’s tongue;
Cold air heaved from tar-coated lungs.

Cigarettes dangled
From brothers’ lips
As they told tales
Of simpler days, tangled
With musty smoke that nips
At his nostrils.

That day, he took his first drawl—
He coughed.

With his comrades,
He pushed forward and watched
As those around him fell.

The boundary was set in blood.
A victory, indeed.

“Be nice, he’s not all there.”
I must have been five,
Or maybe even six.
“If he’s not there, then where?”

When he spat in the floor,
There was a certain twinkle,
A mischievous gleam in his eyes
When someone cleaned it up.

“Sorry, Honey, did you just mop?”

Was he crazy?

Or was it,
Perhaps,
An odd reclamation of the youth
Stolen long ago. . .

To Neverland we go.

ABIGAIL SLUSS, GRADE 12

Emotions

First, there was darkness,
into a void of emptiness that had sucked me in,
and that was when the suffering began.

I was screaming, crying, and begging for help,
Then there were tears, depression, blood, and guilt,
but there was so much pain behind my eyes.

So much pain, with so many fake smiles,
all happiness drained from my life,
my heart throbbing with each breath.

There was a feeling a void, endless, dark, and cold,
feelings were demolished, tattered, and torn,
I need that fire to warm my heart,
and that is all I desire.

After time had passed by with suffering and guilt,
I could only reassure myself to pick up the broken pieces of a wilted heart,
and tattered soul.

After months of constant sorrow,
my pain had finally ended,
my heart had begun healing,
filling with the fire I genuinely desired,
now that happiness is in my life once more,
now I can finally say,
“I am okay.” again.

EMMA SNEAD, GRADE 10

Where I'm From

I am from the folded laundry in the closet,
From food and Clorox.
I am from the garden.
(herby, glistening,
It shines like the sun.)
I am from a fern,
The furniture

That was worn in I remember
Because the leather was dingy.
I am from grilling out and being tall,
From Taylors and the cooks.

I'm from happiness and respectfulness,
From mind your p's and q's and money doesn't grow on trees.
I'm from a Baptist family
And believe God died for our sins.
I'm from households and parks,
Lemonade and the dinner table.
From right after World War II and
Raised on a dairy farm.

There was a box that was stored in the attic full of
Pictures and souvenirs,
A treasure trove of special memories
The pictures and souvenirs remind me to be happy

I am from the Midwest in the early 1700s
Bonding with friends while hunting
They're more like brothers than just friends.

ADAM TAYLOR, GRADE 12



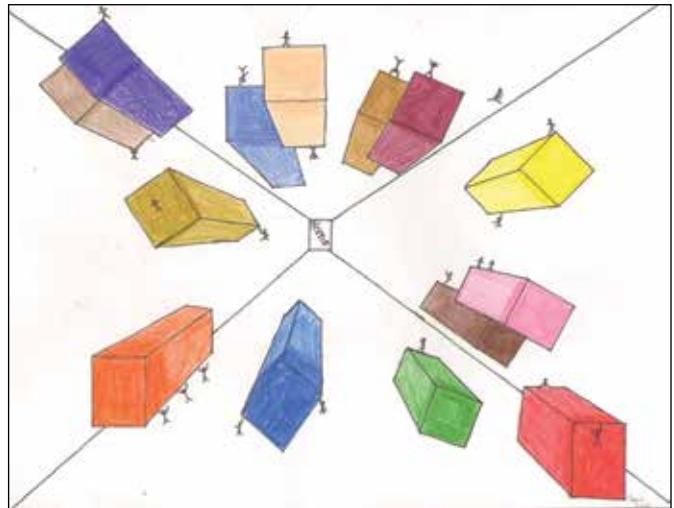
Students Tenisha Poore and Gavin Eans with Adriana Trigiani



Alexia Ellis, Grade 12



Tenisha Poore, Grade 10



Gavin Eans, Grade 10



VHS Students with Adriana at Barter Theatre Launch



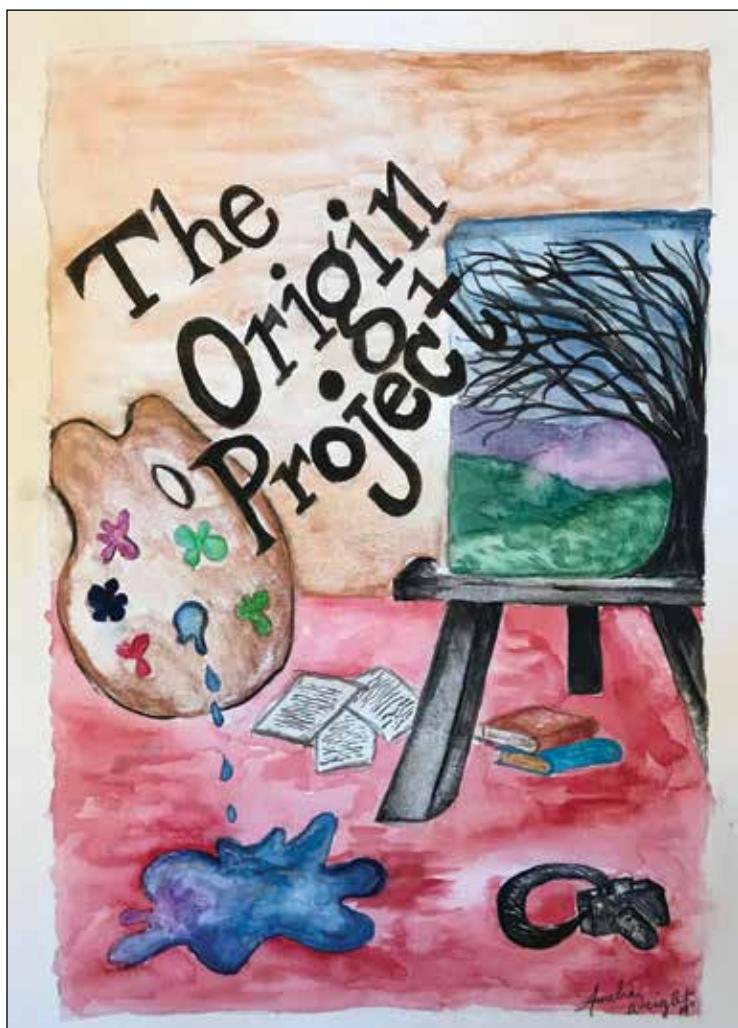
Madaysia Watkins (Grade 9) with Barbara Kingsolver



VHS Students with Barbara Kingsolver



LOGO ART



Amelia Wright, Eastside High School

The Origin Project Logo Art

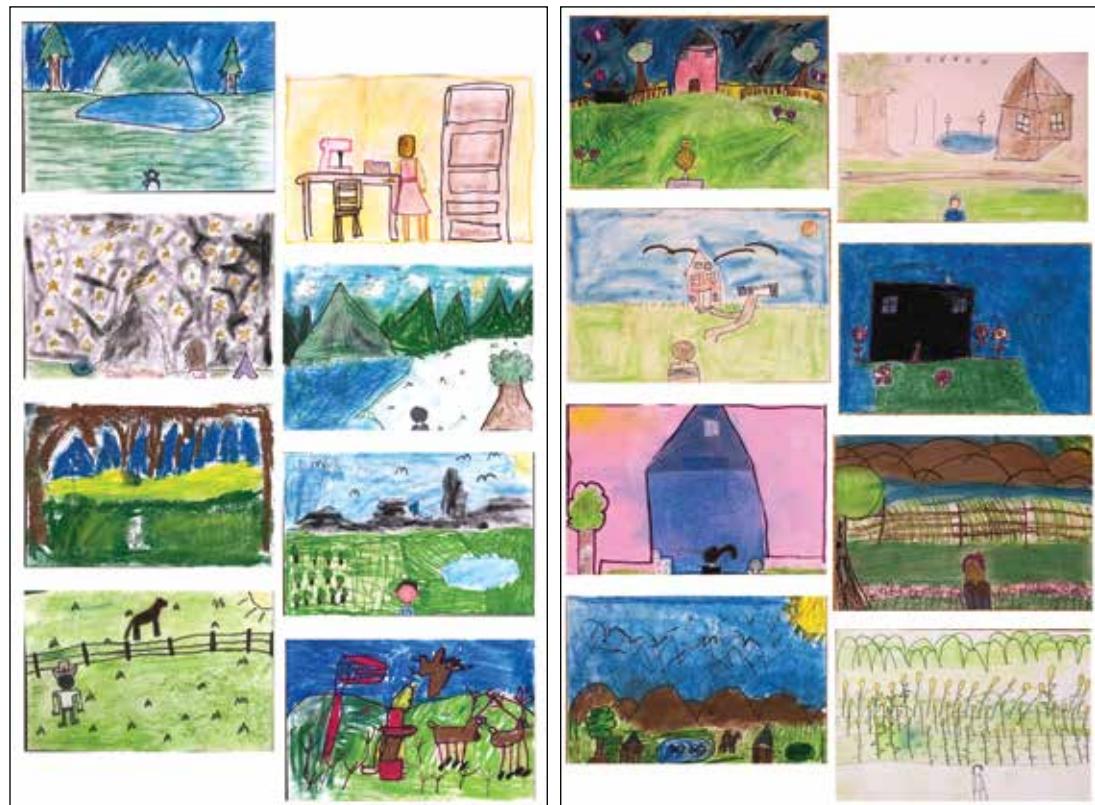
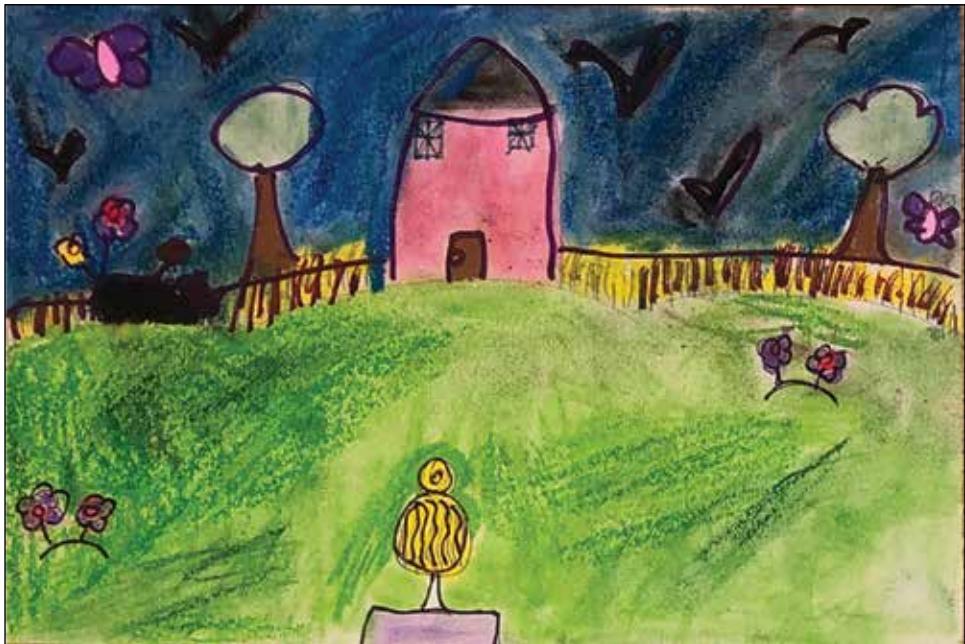
This year we asked all our art teachers and students to create their own renditions of the The Origin Project logo lovingly created as an oil painting by Elizabeth Berry when TOP was born. We are delighted and inspired by all the thought and talent that went into the creations we proudly include in this section.

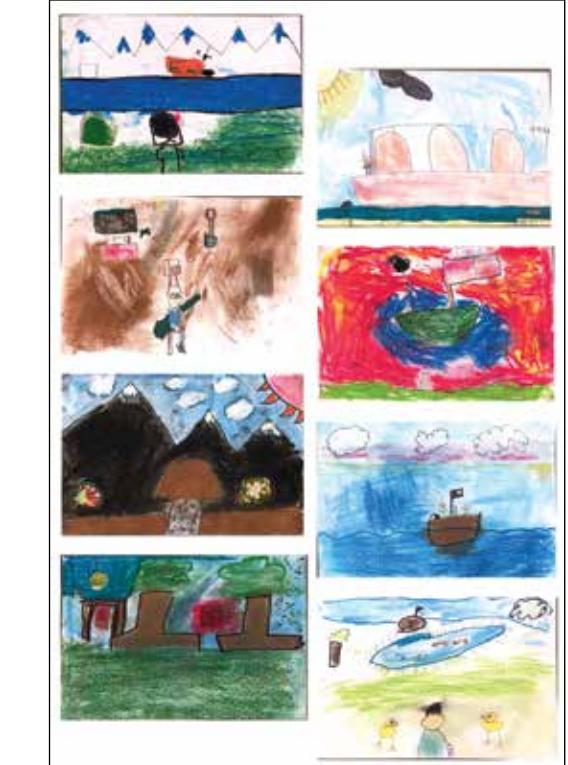
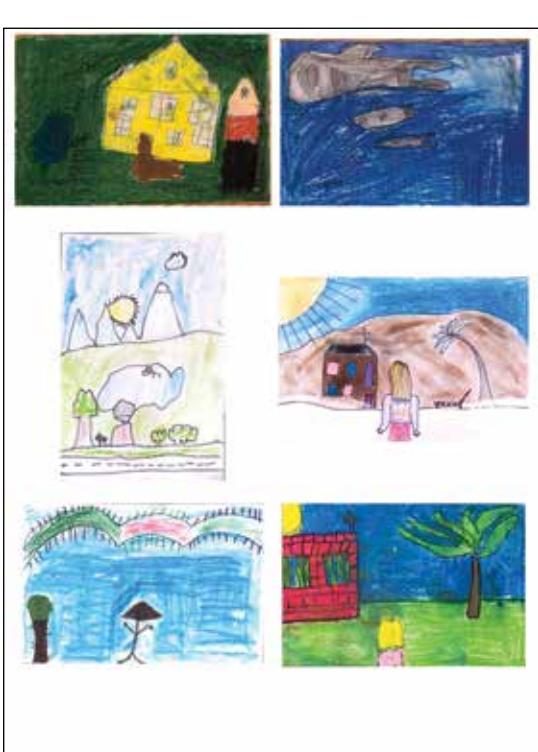
Art Project Reflection

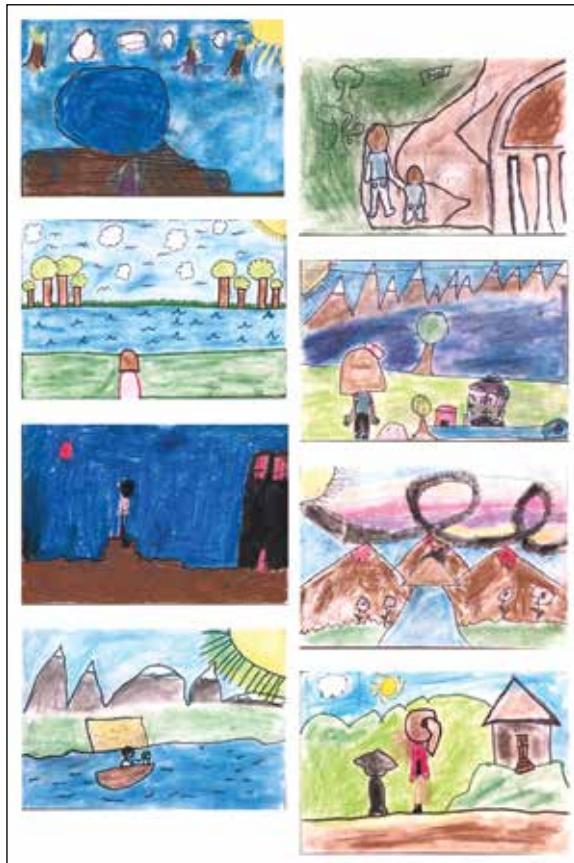
To begin the art project with the Flatwoods Elementary fourth graders, we took a close look at the logo for the Origin Project and discussed how it made us *feel*. After some group conversation, they established that the logo, while beautiful to look at, didn't feel relevant. We spent a lot of time figuring out what would make them feel more *connected* to that artwork. The rich conversations between classmates about where they come from was beautiful.

They eventually decided it needed to be a place they knew personally, with themselves looking out on the scene. We jumped right into exploring a brand new medium: chalk pastels. They finished with brightly stained fingers, wrists, elbows, and even faces, but we laughed and learned even more about our classmates through art.

ALYSSA MEADE, ART TEACHER
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

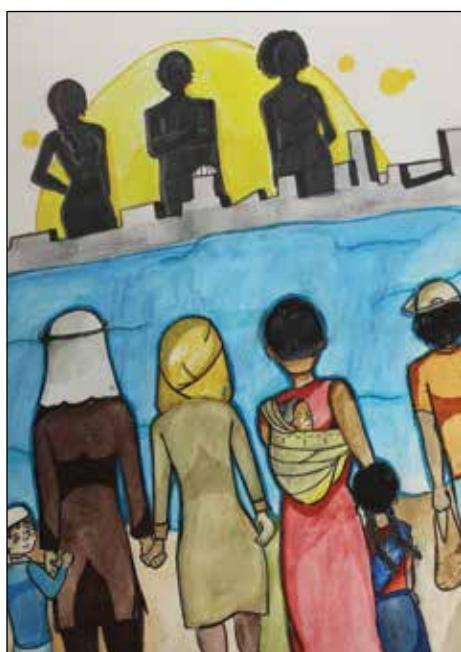
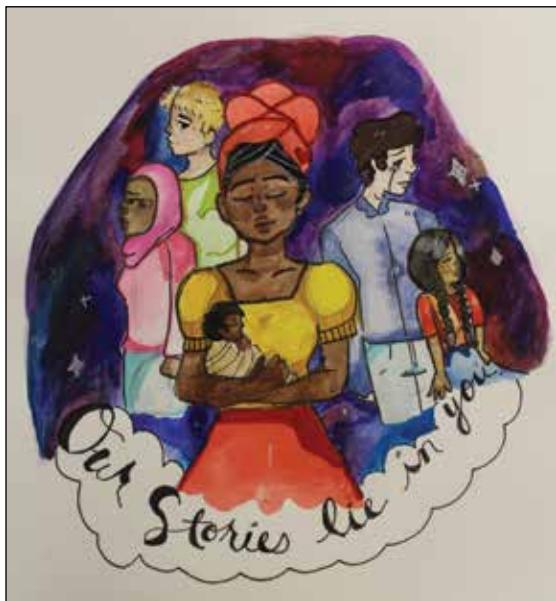
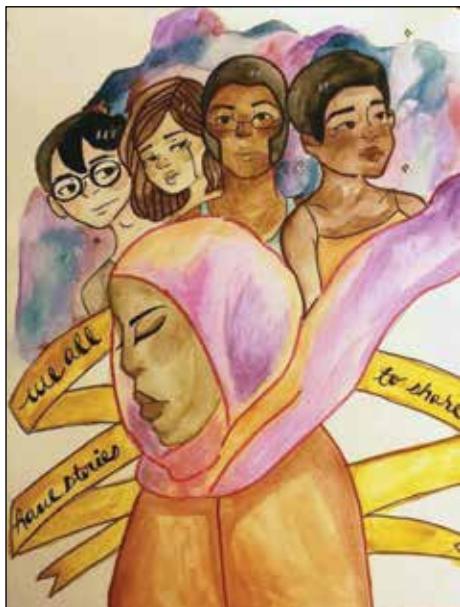












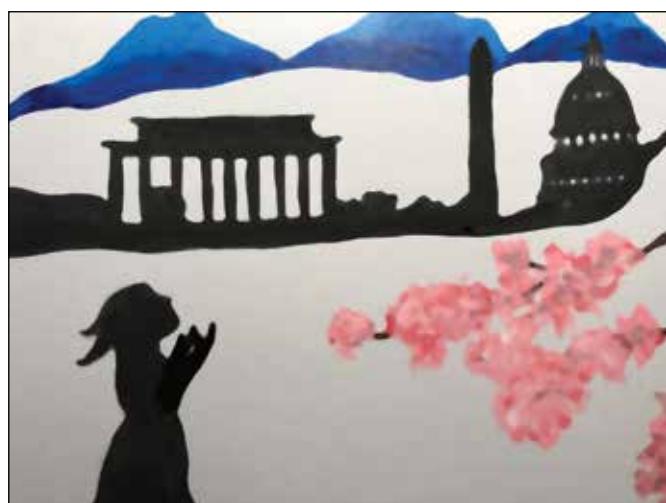
Nirian Lucas, Grade 12, Stonewall Jackson High School



Yasmin Aguilar, Grade 12, Photograph, Stonewall Jackson High School



Sydney Shepherd, Grade 12, Painting, Stonewall Jackson High School



Sarah Duval, Art Teacher, Painting edited digitally

ART & MUSIC





7th Graders from St. Paul Elementary



Thanks to the collaboration with our teachers, Ms. Almarode and Ms. Harmon, our 2nd grade classes completed their regular writing assignment, but with Appalachian music as their theme. I'm very pleased with the writings shared for The Origin Project as well as the exposure and expansion of knowledge our 2nd graders have gained about music from our region.

MELISSA GALLIHER, LIBRARIAN AND MUSIC TEACHER

The Crooked Road's Traditional Music in the Classroom – A Teachers Guide

When I received a request for a copy of The Crooked Road's *Traditional Music in the Classroom – A Teachers Guide*, little did I know that this would lead to a major collaboration with an organization that, through imagination and commitment, is changing the lives of youth in our region and beyond. The Origin Project (TOP) is now using this publication in each one of their 17 programs, serving over 1,500 students!

I am blessed to be the librarian and music teacher at St. Paul Elementary School in St. Paul, Virginia. During classroom music, our 2nd grade students completed a unit on Appalachian music, which included a discussion of its origin, instrumentation associated with this style, and themes related to song lyrics. Many students shared stories about growing up watching and listening to family members play Appalachian music in various venues. We also listened to performances through the use of YouTube and with the CD from the book "Traditional Music in the Classroom: A Teacher's Guide" produced by The Crooked Road and compiled by Jonathan Romeo.

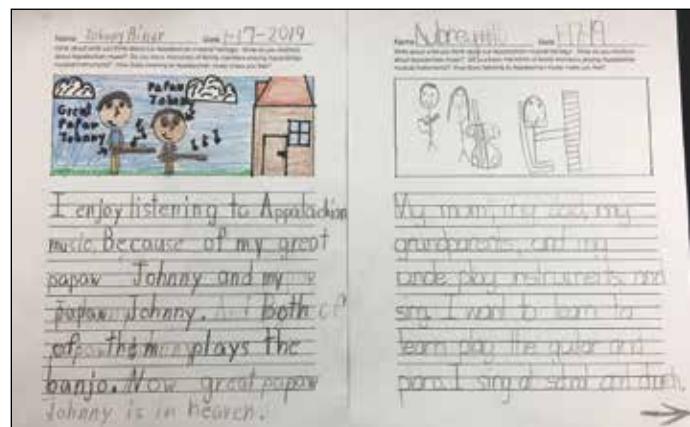
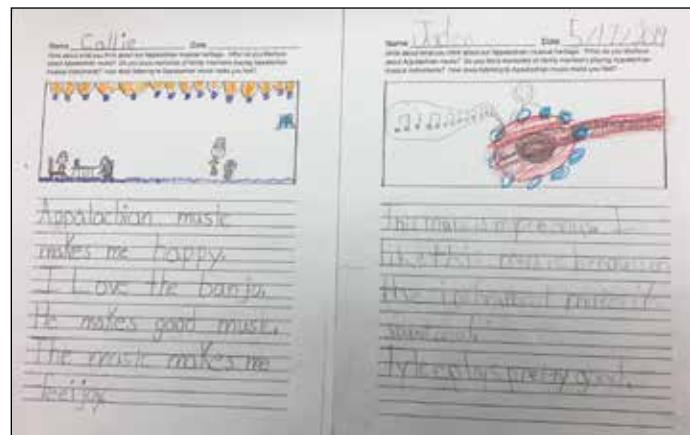
Recorded music is enriching to enjoy, but there is nothing that can replace the experience of live performance. To end our study, we were very excited to have the special musical guest Tyler Hughes come visit our school to perform for our 2nd grade students. He played and sang many songs. In between the music, Tyler discussed the history of Appalachian music, the stories behind songs, and even involved our students in performing as a group. His precise playing of the banjo looked absolutely effortless and his interaction with our students brought many toe taps and smiles.

A few months later I was invited to attend a TOP Program site visit at Flatwoods Elementary School in rural Lee County with executive director Nancy Bolmeier Fisher and star volunteer Linda Woodward. It was here that I realized the depth of what our collaboration meant. I heard students read their writings inspired by one of the lesson plans in the *Teacher's Guide*. Their work reinforced my belief—based on the work that I already do with young musicians—that our region is blessed with a wealth of talented youth.

As the students read descriptive, compelling, sometimes heart-wrenching, and colorful stories about their families, homes, and their lives, I understood that they were learning how to express their thoughts and feelings through writing—a skill that will serve them throughout their lives. The Origin Project provides a unique opportunity for students to create meaningful work inspired by their own experiences. Engaging in this process is not only validating and empowering for all the young people involved, but also helps them to develop the wonderfully life affirming qualities of insight, awareness, and accomplishment. Congratulations to these students, who, thanks to TOP, are contributing to our region's long tradition of creativity and artistic excellence.

JONATHAN ROMEO, THE CROOKED ROAD

I've spent the last decade traveling around the United States and the world sharing banjo tunes and stories from Southwest Virginia. Together



they weave a tale of diverse people who over hundreds of years mixed and meshed their culture together to create the unique cultural aspects so closely associated with the Appalachian Mountains today. Like most, the only reflection of our culture I saw as a child was in mass media as it twisted and promoted stereotypes. It wasn't until much later in life that I realized these mischaracterizations were shaping the way the world saw people from Appalachia. I made a promise that I'd work to make sure generations growing up here would know that we were more than news snippets of poverty or reality television clips of moonshiners. We are a hardworking, loyal, loving, and accepting people and our culture and our stories, individual and collectively, are important. I've been blessed to play on stages in San Francisco and New York City, but stepping into the region's classrooms continues to be my favorite memories. There is nothing quite like hearing a child tell stories about their grandparents playing guitar in church and seeing them realize that even those small details make up an incredibly important story that we are telling every day. I'm grateful for the opportunity to work with The Origin Project. Thank you for giving the next generation a platform to tell our story.

TYLER HUGHES, MUSICIAN

This music is mysterious. I like this music because the instrument makes it sound cool. Tyler plays pretty good.

JADEN BARTON, GRADE 2

I was happy that Tyler Hughes came to sing at my school. He made me sing too. He is a good singer. I loved his music.

ALEEAH BLACKWELL, GRADE 2

Appalachian music is lovely! Tyler was good and it made me want to sing and dance! The music was funny. The music was super awesome.

KAYDEN BOARDWINE, GRADE 2

Appalachian music is new to me. Then Tyler Hughes came to my school and showed us the banjo. Tyler played us a couple of songs. I would like to play the guitar when I grow up.

CONNER BOONE, GRADE 2

I like Appalachian music. It was new to me. Tyler Hughes came to our class. He taught us about Appalachian music. He sang songs and played the banjo. I really enjoyed the music.

CALLIE BURKE, GRADE 2

Appalachian music is great. The music made me want to dance! I liked the banjo so much! I liked his voice. The music is amazing and it made me happy.

AMELIA BURKETT, GRADE 2

Appalachian music makes me feel happy! The music made me want to tap my feet! I like the banjo! It made me happy!

NICK CAMPBELL, GRADE 2

Listening to Appalachian music makes me feel happy. It made me want to dance. It is the best music. Appalachian music reminds me of my cousin.

LANDEN DAVIS, GRADE 2

Appalachian music is new to me. Tyler Hughes is a good banjo player. It makes me tap my foot. I want to learn to play the banjo because it looks like fun. I love listening to the songs.

BRADY EVANS, GRADE 2

Tyler Hughes came to our school. He played the banjo and sang songs. I want to learn how to play the banjo.

ZEKE FUNK, GRADE 2

Tyler Hughes came to our school. He sang songs and taught us about Appalachian music. I liked Tyler's music.

LILLY GRIZZLE, GRADE 2

I love Appalachian music. Tyler Hughes came to our school. He played music to us. He taught us about Appalachian music. Tyler plays good music.

ANDREW GROSS, GRADE 2

Appalachian music is sad and happy. The banjo sounds happy. I loved this music!

ALLEX HALL, GRADE 2

Appalachian music is good. Tyler Hughes came to my school to play Appalachian music. I play the guitar in my room so my mom does not see me. I hope to play music one day.

BRODY HAMILTON, GRADE 2

Appalachian music is happy and sad. I first liked it because my papaw plays the banjo. It is very catchy. Tyler can play the banjo very good.

CAMILLE HAMMONS, GRADE 2

Tyler Hughes came to my school. He played the banjo. He sung several songs. I want to learn to play the banjo too because it looks fun! The music is new to me, but I really like it.

KENDRA HOLFIELD, GRADE 2

My mom, my dad, my grandparents, and my uncle play instruments and sing. I want to learn to play the guitar and piano. I sing at school and church. I like learning music with my family.

AUBREY JOHNSON, GRADE 2

Appalachian music reminds me of my Papaw Dan. He played the banjo just like Tyler Hughes.

OLIVIA JOHNSON, GRADE 2

My family enjoys playing Appalachian and country music. I am learning to play the guitar. My family has played the guitar for many years. My dad plays the bass and the mandolin. My grandma can sing. My uncle plays the drums. I really enjoy learning about music from my family.

SOPHIA JOHNSON, GRADE 2

I like Appalachian music. It makes me want to dance. My family doesn't play instruments, but I like listening to Appalachian music. Tyler Hughes came to my school. Tyler Hughes sang songs about Appalachian music. I like learning about Appalachian music.

LOGAN LAWSON, GRADE 2

I like to listen to the music. Tyler Hughes played the banjo. We sang songs together. It was fun.

JADEN LEACH, GRADE 2

Listening to Appalachian music makes me feel joyful! It made me want to dance! It made me want to move all around and sing along! It was the best music that I have ever heard!

ASPEN MCKINNEY, GRADE 2

Appalachian music is a sound that makes me happy! The words were sad. I want to listen to more of it from now on.

BRYSON MULLINS, GRADE 2

Appalachian music is amazing because it makes me want to dance and sing! I liked how the banjo looked. This music sounds so nice.

PARKER MULLINS, GRADE 2

Tyler's music made me want to dance and sing. I loved his music so much! Appalachian music is new to me. I remember that my papaw played the banjo.

GUNNER PHILLIPS, GRADE 2

Appalachian music makes me happy. I love the banjo. He makes good music. The music makes me feel joy.

CALLIE RHYMER, GRADE 2

Appalachian music is new to me. I like singing Appalachian music while my grandpa played the banjo. I got to see Tyler Hughes play the banjo and I sung with him.

ELLA RINER, GRADE 2

I enjoy listening to Appalachian music because of my great papaw Johnny and my papaw Johnny. Both of them plays the banjo. Now great papaw Johnny is in heaven.

JOHNNY RINER, GRADE 2

Tyler Hughes came to school and taught us about Appalachian music. I like listening to Appalachian music.

CARSON ROSE, GRADE 2

Appalachian music was very new to me. Tyler Hughes sung songs to my class and talked about Appalachian music. My brother is learning to play the guitar. I would like to learn to play Appalachian music.

TATE RUFF, GRADE 2

I really love Appalachian music. It made me want to tap my feet. It made me want to dance. I just love this music by Tyler so much!

TAYLOR SEAY, GRADE 2

Appalachian music is good. I really liked Appalachian music. I love the banjo. I like the strings on the banjo. This kind of music makes me happy.

TASHAWN SKEENS, GRADE 2

Appalachian music is good. I really like the banjo! It made me tap my feet. Appalachian music makes me smile.

JOSEPHINE STUTZMAN, GRADE 2

I really liked Appalachian music. The words make me feel good. It made my feet go up and down. It was so fun to listen to Tyler. This kind of music makes good songs.

BROOKLYN VANCE, GRADE 2

Appalachian music is new to me. I also loved Tyler Hughes' music. He is a good player. His music made me tap my feet.

AIDEN WARD, GRADE 2

Appalachian music is different to me and my mom. We don't listen to it. I like different music. Tyler was good at singing.

CAILEY WILLIAMS, GRADE 2

Listening to this music makes me feel good. The banjo was amazing. The songs made my foot move up and down. It was great!

ZANE WILSON, GRADE 2

Flatwoods and St. Charles Music Class

There are so many directions one can go in the topic of music, and I knew that I had a limited amount of time. As general music teacher for Lee County, I only see students once every other week, so I opted to include TOP writing activities as lesson enrichment for selected music classes. Second grade students at St. Charles Elementary and third grade students at Flatwoods had the opportunity to both perform and write about music through The Origin Project.

In October, the students had the opportunity to learn additional lyrics for the well-known children's song, "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star." They also had the opportunity to play the tune of the song on the bells. During the lesson, they learned that the lyrics are about 212 years old, while the tune is over 240 years old. The children were then asked to consider that their parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, and so forth had likely learned the tune and song that they themselves were learning in the present day. The students were asked to choose their favorite verse of the song and to draw a picture showing what the lyrics meant to them.

In December, the students were asked to think about winter words and holiday words. They were then able to choose what to write about, and they were asked to write their own song to the tune of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" or another tune of their choice, if preferred.

In January, I introduced the students to the echo-song, "Down by the Bay." The song is quite repetitive except for the verse, which is sung in question form. After singing five verses of the song, I talked with the students about what each verse had in common, so that they could then work on writing their own verses. Students learned that each verse was a silly question, featured pairs of rhyming words, and also featured an animal. I guided students through the activity, and then encouraged to make up their own verse or verses within the guidelines.

The students have enjoyed writing and reflecting about what they have learned, and I plan to continue to use the writing journals with them through the end of the current school-year. Music is a wonderful medium through which students can express themselves and connect to the past, and I am so appreciative of TOP resources that have enabled my students to reflect on and write about the music in our lessons.

**ANDREA RUSSELL HINES
LEE COUNTY GENERAL MUSIC TEACHER**

Did you ever see a cat wearing a hat down by the bay?
Did you ever see a cat under a mat down by the bay?
Did you ever see a snake eating a cake down by the bay?
Did you ever see a goat trying to float down by the bay?
Did you ever see a fox eating a box down by the bay?
Did you ever see a cat sitting on a mat down by the bay?
Did you ever see a bat licking a mat down by the bay?

Did you ever see a cat kissing a bat down by the bay?
Did you ever see a mat eating a cat down by the bay?

HUXLEY ALDRIDGE, GRADE 3

Did you ever see a cat hugging a bat down by the bay?
Did you ever see a bat kissing a rat down by the bay?

BELLAH BACH, GRADE 3

Today we are learning how to play "Twinkle-Twinkle." The song is 212 years old. Twinkle, twinkle how I wonder what you are. My favorite verse is number 2, "When the blazing sun is gone."

AVERY BATES, GRADE 3

Did you ever see a fat cat before down by the bay?

GRACIE BLANKEN, GRADE 2

Did you ever see a shark eating bark down by the bay?

HAYDEN BURKE, GRADE 3

Did you ever see a snake take a shower down by the bay?
Did you ever see a dog jog down by the bay?

BREANNA BURTON, GRADE 2

Did you ever see a snake eating a cake down by the bay?

ERICA BURTON, GRADE 2

Christmas
Snowman, snowman melting in the yard
It looks like a man.

Did you ever see a goat kissing a coat down by the bay?
Did you ever see a hippo eating a libbo down by the bay?

LUKE CANTOR, GRADE 3

Did you ever see a cat that was flat down by the bay?
Did you ever see a fox sitting on a box down by the bay?

DEVON CHILDERS, GRADE 3

Did you ever see a goat riding a boat down by the bay?
Did you ever see a duck playing in a truck down by the bay?

ADDISON CLARK, GRADE 3

Did you ever see a rat that was under a hat down by the bay?
Did you ever see a cow kissing a girl down by the bay?

J.T. CLARK, GRADE 3

[Referring to *Twinkle, Twinkle.*]

[The tune to the song existed in about] 1778. [It is more than] 240 years old. My favorite verse is 4, "In the dark blue sky you keep . . ."

ZACK COPE, GRADE 3

Christmas time is so much fun.
Ugly sweaters, presents, Santa, shopping, reindeer, and Rudolph.

Did you ever see a goat playing with a remote down by the bay?

LEAH COWDEN, GRADE 3

Did you ever see a fat bat under a hat down by the bay?

CHLOE CRUSENBERRY, GRADE 3

[After writing the note names for *Twinkle, Twinkle*, and playing it on the bells.]

[The words to the song] are 212 years old. The tune is 240+ years old. My favorite verse is 4. "In the dark blue sky you keep . . ."

AARON ELDRIDGE, GRADE 3

My favorite verse [of *Twinkle, Twinkle*] is 2, "When the blazing sun is gone . . ."

AVA FORTNER, GRADE 3

Did you ever see a goat riding a remote down by the bay?

Did you ever see a llama riding pajamas down by the bay?

MIA FORTNER, GRADE 3

Did you ever see a cat sitting on a mat down by the bay?

JOSHUA GALE, GRADE 3

I celebrate Christmas in winter.

I throw snowballs.

I like Jesus and Mary and Joseph.

I like to pray to Jesus.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

I love Santa.

I love Rudolph.

I make an igloo.

Mary had Jesus.

Did you ever see a cat running with a rat down by the bay?

KAYLEE GREER, GRADE 2

Did you ever see a cat under a rat down by the bay?

Did you ever see a pig and a wig down by the bay?

LILA HINES, GRADE 3

Did you ever see a bat riding on a cat down by the bay?

Did you ever see a squirrel kissing on a girl down by the bay?

MICHAEL HINES, GRADE 3

Did you ever see a very, very fat cat down by the bay?

Did you ever see a donkey going he-honk, he-honk, he-honk down by the bay?

BEN HIXSON, GRADE 3

My favorite verse [of *Twinkle, Twinkle*] is 2, "When the blazing sun is gone."

BRAYDEN HUDSON, GRADE 3

[Referring to *Twinkle, Twinkle*.]

My favorite verse is 4. "In the dark blue sky you keep . . ."

Did you ever see a rat on a mat down by the bay?

Did you ever see a goat kissing a float down by the bay?

KAMERON JERRELL, GRADE 3

[Referring to *Twinkle, Twinkle*.]

The tune is [more than] 240 years old. My favorite verse is 2, "When the blazing sun is gone . . ."

SHELBY JOHNSON, GRADE 3

Did you ever see a pig kissing a woman's wig down by the bay?

Did you ever see a bat who kissed a rat down by the bay?

ALLIE JONES, GRADE 3

Did you ever see a cat with a flat hat down by the bay?

Did you ever see a goat in a boat down by the bay?

KAYLA JONES, GRADE 3

Did you ever see a bat very, very flat down by the bay?

Did you ever see a horse play [on a] golf course down by the bay?

KAREN KING, GRADE 3

[After writing down the music notes for *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* and playing on the bells.]

I love music. Today it was fun. The song is 212 years old.

Did you ever see a fox with a box down by the bay?

OFFIE KING, GRADE 3

Did you ever see a pig wearing a wig down by the bay?

Did you ever see a cat hugging a rat down by the bay?

KAYLA-SHEA LANE, GRADE 3

Did you ever see a goat driving a boat down by the bay?

Did you ever see a fat cat beating a bat down by the bay?

JADEN LAWSON, GRADE 3

Did you ever see a cat with a hat down by the bay?

Did you ever see a mole on a pole down by the bay?

Did you ever see a bear doing a prayer down by the bay?

CHASE LEICHTENBERG, GRADE 2

Did you ever see a mat hugging a cat down by the bay?

Did you ever see a dog licking a log down by the bay?

JOSSLYN LINDSAY, GRADE 3

Did you ever see a cat with a rat down by the bay?

Did you ever see a fox in socks down by the bay?

JAKOB MABE, GRADE 3

Little angels in the sky

Friends celebrating

Snowflakes in the sky
Presents under the tree
Santa is here with his reindeer in the sky,
And the Christmas Star.

Did you ever see a fat cat down by the bay?
Did you ever see a dog kissing a log down by the bay?

JANELL MANESS, GRADE 2

Did you ever see a rat with a bat down by the bay?
Did you ever see a pig with a wig down by the bay?

LATISHA MILAM, GRADE 3

Let's gather around the Christmas tree and sing our Christmas song
Our C-H-R-I-S-T-M-A-S song
And if you don't think we can sing faster then you're wrong
But it will help if you just sing along, Ho, ho, ho,
C-H-R-I-S-T-M-A-S song
Santa Song C-H-R-I-S-T-M-A-S, Rudolph,
It will help, it will help if you just sing along, Ho, ho, ho

Did you ever see a goat kissing a tote down by the bay?
Did you ever see a hippo eating a bippo down by the bay?

DRAKE MILES, GRADE 3

[Referring to *Twinkle, Twinkle*.]
The song is 212 years old. [My favorite verse is,]
"In the dark blue sky you keep,
Often through my curtains peek.
For you never shut your eyes,
Til' the sun is in the sky.
Twinkle twinkle,
[Little star,
How I wonder what you are.]

BRAXTON MISTER, GRADE 3

Christmas time is so much fun.
It is all about Jesus and God, Mary, Joseph had a baby, Jesus.

Did you ever see a goat on a boat down by the bay?
Did you ever see a moat on a tote down by the bay?
Did you ever see a moose on a goose down by the bay?

ASHLEY MOORE, GRADE 3

Did you ever see a cat under a mat down by the bay?
Did you ever see a dog kissing a frog down by the bay?

RYAN MOORE, GRADE 3

Christmas time is so much fun,
Laughing, playing,

Everyone is happy and
Snowballs fighting and food

Did you ever see a dog kiss a hog down by the bay?
Did you ever see a cat that fat down by the bay?

ISABELLA MORGAN, GRADE 2

Did you ever see a fat rat down by the bay?
Did you ever see a fox in a box down by the bay?

LINCOLN MUNSEY, GRADE 3

My first Christmas was when I was 2. I had so much fun. My brother and I had my first snowball fight. We made a snowman. We tried to catch snowflakes on our tongues.

Did you ever see a goat with a remote down by the bay?

ADDISON NASH, GRADE 3

Did you ever see a rat under a mat down by the bay?
Did you ever see a goat in a float down by the bay?
Did you ever see a lizard in a blizzard down by the bay?

EVAN NEFF, GRADE 3

Did you ever see a flat cat at the bay?
Have you ever seen a snake with a blue beak down by the bay?
Have you ever seen a fox holding boxes without topses down by the bay?

HAGAN NEFF, GRADE 3

Did you ever see a goat that wrote a fairy tale down by the bay?

JACOB NEFF, GRADE 3

Did you ever see a cat fixing a mat down by the bay?
Did you ever see a rat kissing a bat down by the bay?

ISABELLA OAKS, GRADE 2

Did you ever see a cat with a baseball bat down by the bay?
Did you ever see a pig with a wig down by the bay?
Did you ever see a shark at the park down by the bay?

HAYGEN PARKS, GRADE 3

Did you ever see a cat that fat down by the bay?
Did you ever see a dog eating a cog down by the bay?

JOSEPH PARSONS, GRADE 2

Christmas time is all about Jesus.
Mary had Jesus.

Did you ever see a goat wear a boat down by the bay?
Did you ever see a llama riding [its] momma?

JOSLYN PENNINGTON, GRADE 3

Let's get around the Christmas tree and sing our Christmas Tree Song
Do, Do, Dun, Bumb
Let's open up our presents and have a lot of fun

And if you don't think that we can do it just join us and it will [be fun]
Here, if you just sing with us C-H-R-I-S-T-m-a-s- t-r-e-e song. And then we will ride on Rudolph the Red Nosed Seahorse, oh yeah.

Did you ever see a goat using a remote down by the bay?
Did you ever see a hippo eating some Grippo's down by the bay?

JACOB PILON, GRADE 3

Did you ever see the fat cat wearing a hat down by the bay?

LANDON PRICE, GRADE 2

Once upon a time Santa and his elves were making presents on Christmas Eve. Santa said, "Oh, it's Christmas." He said, "I need to travel to give presents out. I remembered about that. It's Christmas play at 5:00 a.m. and I am finished." The End

Did you ever see a rat pat on a back down by the bay?
Did you ever see a goat fly with a remote down by the bay?

AUSTIN REED, GRADE 3

Snowflake, snowflakes
Falling from the sky on my reindeer, reindeer
Reindeer fly.
Snowman came to life,
Santa and an elf and giving me coal

Did you ever see a goat wearing a big fat coat down by the bay?
Did you ever see a lizard trying to be a wizard down by the bay?

DALTON RIDINGS, GRADE 3

Did you ever see a cat with a bat chasing a rat down by the bay?
Did you ever see a mouse in a house down by the bay?

KAILYN ROBBINS, GRADE 3

Did you ever see a deer drinking root-beer down by the bay?
Did you ever see a cat under a mat down by the bay?
Did you ever see a goat kissing a boat down by the bay?

KYLEE RORRER, GRADE 3

Did you ever see a bat wearing a hat down by the bay?
Did you ever see a funny bunny down by the bay?

MARLEY SCOTT, GRADE 3

Did you ever see a goat using a remote down by the bay?
Did you ever see a fat cat wearing a hat down by the bay?
Did you ever see a rat in a hat down by the bay?

MICHAEL PAYTON SCOTT, GRADE 3

Twinkle Twinkle Little Star. My favorite verse is 2, "When the blazing sun is gone . . ."

Did you ever see a fox wearing spotted socks down by the bay?
Did you ever see a cat wearing a hat down by the bay?

AVA STAFFORD, GRADE 3

Did you ever see a cat kissing a rat down by the bay?
Did you ever see a cat hugging a mat down by the bay?
Did you ever see a fox eating a box down by the bay?

BREANNA SYKES, GRADE 3

Twinkle Twinkle Winter Star,
Wisemen followed you from afar.
Christmas star is so bright,
Like it shining in the dark.

Did you ever see the cat that was so fat down by the bay?
Did you ever see a fat bat down by the bay?

WILLOW TACKETT, GRADE 2

Did you ever see a cat with a bat down by the bay?
Did you ever see a goat in a boat down by the bay?

BRYCEN TAYLOR, GRADE 3

Did you ever see a deer drinking root-beer down by the bay?
Did you ever see a fox wear socks down by the bay?
Did you ever see a fox under a box down by the bay?
Did you ever see a pig wear a wig down by the bay?
Did you ever see a goat on a boat down by the bay?

WILLOW TAYLOR, GRADE 3

Did you ever see a snake rake down by the bay?

ZACHARY TAYLOR, GRADE 2

Did you ever see a cat wearing a hat down by the bay?
Did you ever see a dog sitting on a log down by the bay?

BLAKE TRITT, GRADE 2

Did you ever see a cat under a hat down by the bay?
Did you ever see a fox wearing socks down by the bay?
Did you ever see a flat bat down by the bay?
Did you ever see a pig trying to dig down by the bay?
Did you ever see a shark eating bark down by the bay?

JACE WOODS, GRADE 3

Did you ever see a goat buying a coat down by the bay?

MOLLY WYNN, GRADE 3

Christmas time is on my mind.
Ready to get in my ugly Christmas sweaters.
I keep wrapping gifts.
How many more days till Christmas Day?
Where can I get some gingerbread?
When I got some stockings I put them under the fireplace.
What is the point about the presents?
But what I really want is my ugly Christmas sweaters.

But what I think about Christmas is Jesus and Friends and Family.

Did you ever see a goat holding a tote down by the bay?

Did you ever see a panda traveling to Canada?

EMELINA ZAMORA, GRADE 3

Stonewall Jackson Art Class

Washington, D.C. has a major part of my family history in it. My great grandmother immigrated here from Colombia. In 1976, when my grandmother was eighteen years old, she joined my great grandmother in Washington. My dad was born three years later.

YASMIN AGUILAR, GRADE 12.

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY.



When my mom was 14 years old, she came to Virginia from California. She built her life in Reston, Virginia. This picture is one of the high school she attended, which is where she made the friends we consider family today.

YASMIN AGUILAR, GRADE 12. DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY.

My origin resides in this image of my grandfather's brother. Growing up, I was taught the importance of family, spending a majority of summers shuffling between my cousins' houses. Every year on Labor Day weekend, we host a family reunion that involves camping, cooking and the joy of being with family. This image was taken at 7:00 a.m. on the second day of our reunion. It captures the emotion of pure joy. At this moment, all the cares of the world vanish, except one.

JAYSHA WASHINGTON,

GRADE 12. DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY.



This art piece and who is painted in it are both important parts of my childhood. As a little girl, I was very into art. I always looked up to my sister, Madison, when it came to creating pieces of art because she is very good at it. I'm continuing my passion for art and plan on continuing it in my future. Pictured here is American actor, John Wayne. I remember watching Westerns starring John Wayne with my dad. My dad grew up with these movies as well. Art has a way of telling a story and I wanted to create something that represents my origin and has meaning associated with it.

SYDNEY SHEPHERD, GRADE 12. PAINTING.



Nicholas Ayoub, Grade 12. Painting.



This photograph was taken at my great grandparents' house in Loudoun County, Virginia. Every summer my cousins and I go to see them. I love this house; it feels like home. The backyard is beyond any little kid's dreams. It has a huge terrace, a pool that has a deep end, and a backyard field that extends for what looks like forever. We've always brought the whole family's dogs so we can drain their energy outside before the long ride home. This house has been my favorite place for so many years simply because of how happy my family is when we're there, together. This family tradition will last as long as we do!

ALYSSA DUVALL, GRADE 12. DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY.



Ever since I was little these pots have been in my family. They are authentic Mexican clay pots that are just decorations, but to me they hold special childhood memories. When I was little, I had a toy kitchen and it was my favorite thing ever. The pots were the special china of the kitchen. My sister and I would always pretend to have tea and coffee in the pots. It's one of the only things that we have from Mexico, so it means a lot to me. They have gone through a lot. Some are broken, and some have the paint chipping off, but they hold special meaning to me. When I think of them I think of a simpler time.

ELIZABETH MORAN, GRADE 12. DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY.



Madysson Sanchez, Grade 12. Photograph.



My piece shows my origin by allowing the people to see both of my family's countries in one piece. Half of my family is from the Dominican Republic on my dad's side and the other half is from Guatemala on my mom's side. Both the countries' traditions and cultures have been passed down to my brothers and me. We always show our pride in both of our countries.

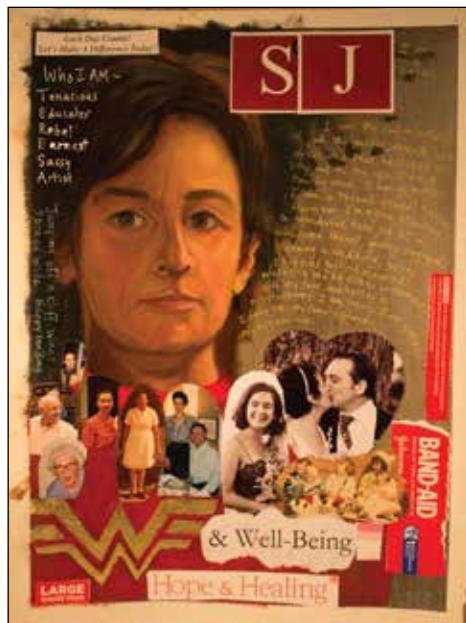
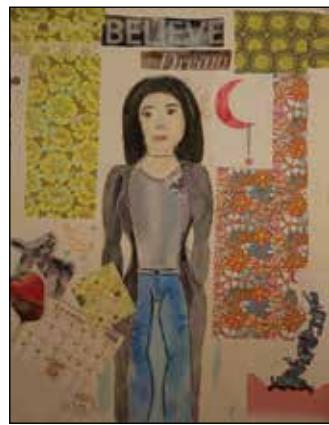
EMELY SANCHEZ, GRADE 12. PAINTING ON CARDBOARD.



Alexis Ater, Grade 12. Digital Photography.

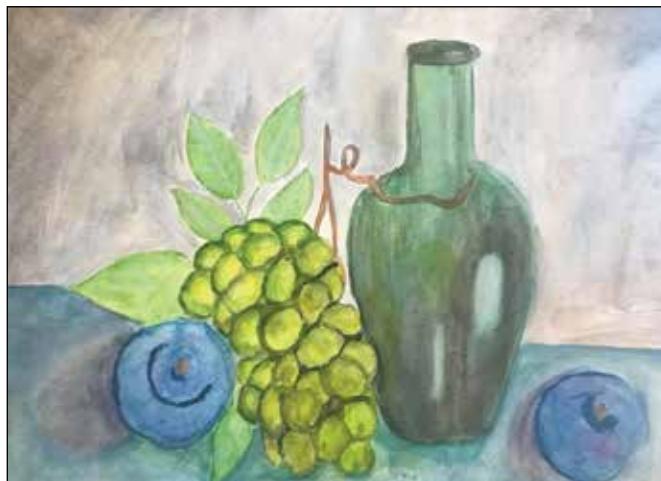


Adwoa Asamoah, Grade 12. Digital Photography.





Dreamer : Acrylic by Alyson Teasley



Still Life: Watercolor by Alyson Teasley



Sunny Daze: Relief Cut by Alyson Teasley



Rosey Sunset: Tempera by Alyson Teasley



Sitting: Relief Cut by Candace Backherms



Colored Up: Acrylic by Ciera Collins



Dazy: Torn Paper by Ciera Collins



Foxy: Torn Paper by Dakota Turner



Snowed In: Tempera by Dakota Turner

Snowed In: Tempera by Dakota Turner



Rainbow: Acrylic by Dallas Mead

Pick of the Crop: Acrylic by Dara Stanley

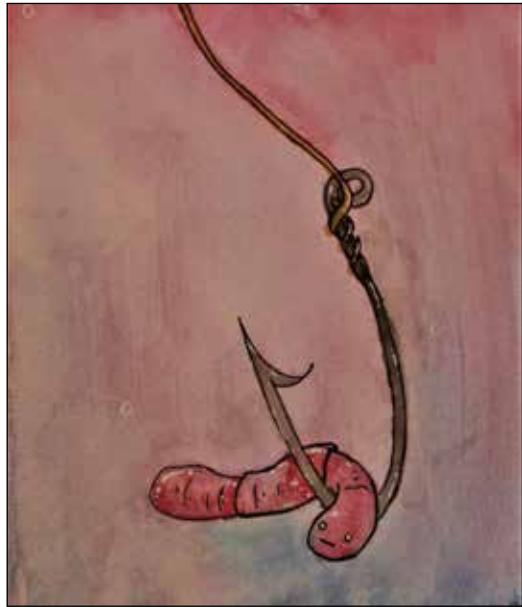


Sunny Faces: Multi-media by Dara Stanley

Bubblegum Explosion: Prisma Markers by Joshua Levy



Kesha: Prisma Markers by
Joshua Levy



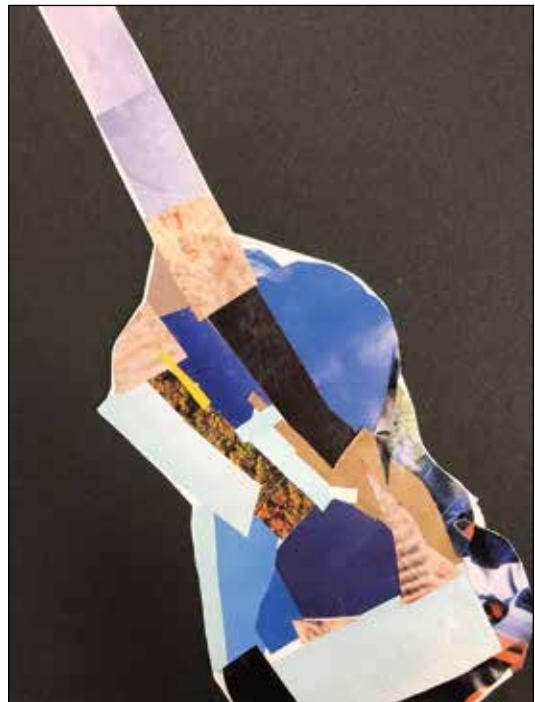
Hanging by a Thread: Watercolor by Joshua Levy



"Why Are You So Bipolar?" by Makenzie Golladay



Dog



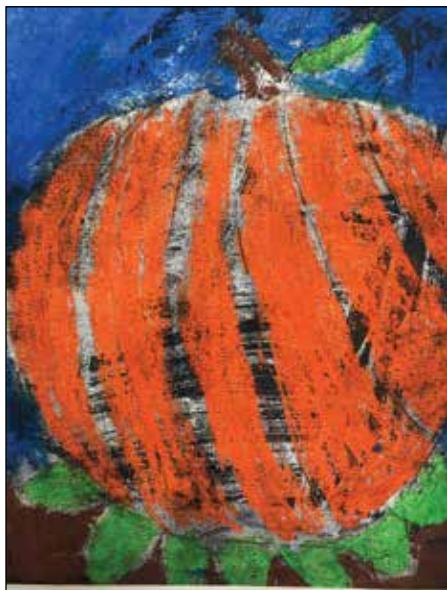
Pick a Tune



Ocean Sunset



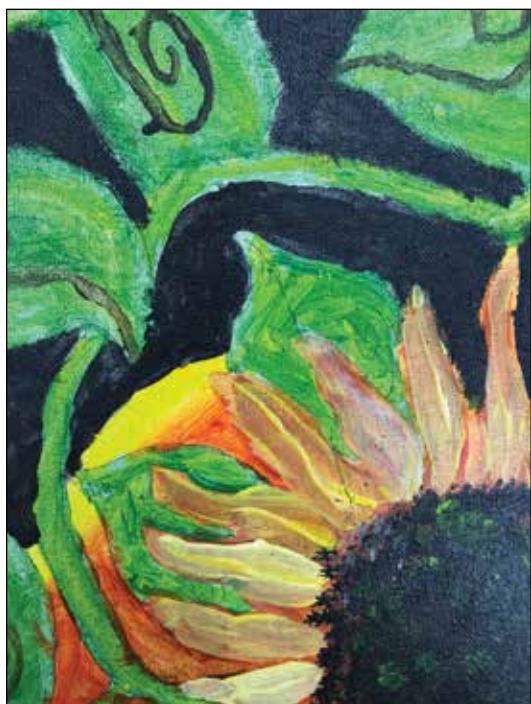
Snowman



Great Pumpkin



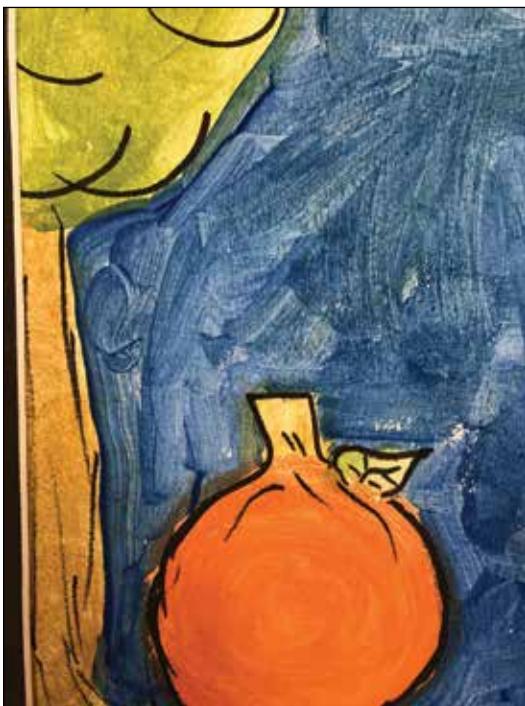
White Raven



Sunny Face



Autumn Leaf



Great Harvest



Frosty Winter

COMPETITIONS, FESTIVALS, & ACHIEVEMENTS



5TH ANNUAL THE CROOKED ROAD
YOUTH MUSIC FESTIVAL
Saturday, May 12th | 11 am - 7 pm

FESTIVAL SCHEDULE

PERFORMANCES | HEARTWOOD STAGE

1:00	WiseJAMS-Big Stone Gap	2:00	PittsylvaniaJAMS
2:20	WiseJAMS-Wise	3:30	HendersonJAM
3:30	Eli Wilhite & Victor Pineda	3:35	The Origin Project Readers
3:35	The Origin Project Readers	4:30	VAOCE Old Time String Band
4:30	Scott County JAMs	4:30	Hanover County JAM
4:45	Blue Devil String Band from Greene County High School	5:05	Broad River: Bluegrass Band
5:45	Washington County JAM	5:45	The Mitchell Family
5:55	The Accidental String Band	6:05	The Yates Family
6:30	Hot Elm String Band		

Photo credit | Katie Mullen



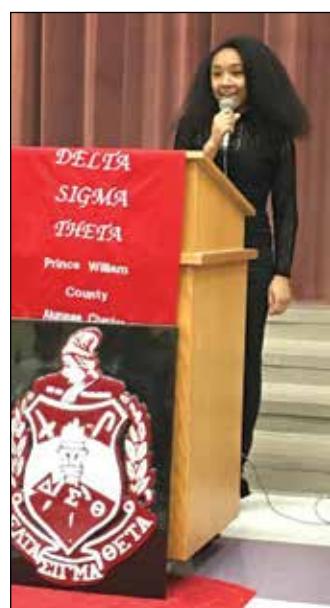
The Work of a Writer

Over the years, I have encouraged students to increase the audience for their writing by submitting their work for possible publication in *Eddas*, our literary/art magazine. Eventually, submission to *Eddas* became a requirement with the goal of teaching students to do the work of a writer. I also encourage them to send

to contests and publications outside of Woodbridge Senior High School (WSHS). Sometimes these contests involve recitation and performance.



Woodbridge Senior High School's POL Finals with Four Competitors from The Origin Project



Candace Todd performs her poem, "Ode to My Hair," at Delta Sigma Theta's Red Carpet Showcase

ticipants, I was able to convince even more teachers to participate. We held our classroom competitions in November and our school finals in December. Our three top scoring students were all participants in The Origin Project (TOP): Leah Ican, Winner; Tyler Econa, Runner Up; Candace Todd, Second Runner Up.

TOP student, Asra Shuaib, also competed in the school finals, and the following TOP students participated at the classroom level: Darchan Turner-Davis, Ashley Vega, Marika Koroma, Abigail Banks, GG Ayala-Montoya, Ava Kemp.

Because of the interest of additional teachers this year, I am hoping POL continues at WSHS after I retire.

CATHY HAILEY, ENGLISH & CREATIVE WRITING TEACHER
WOODBRIDGE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Ode to My Hair

You saucy minx
You exude courage
You radiate strength and power
You throw caution to the wind

Leaving yourself exposed to the elements
You dance in the breeze unapologetically
Your hypnotic waist shuffles with my every movement
Your voluptuous curves shroud my face
Like a mother's bosom as she hugs her child
There is a bounce in your stride
A free spirited skip in every step that you take
Your grin overflows the expanse of your visage
Wider than the open embrace of your arms
Ready and willing to hug the world
You are proud of yourself
Joyful, dancing, smiling, and proud
Everyone stares when you walk by
You steal the attention wherever you go
You are the elephant in the room
Your state of being is disruptive, selfish, large, and unruly
Your presence makes them uncomfortable
Your confidence is confusing
Your impudence is offensive
Your happiness is undeserved
Your love is unrequited
You look foolish
Don't you know that they're whispering about you?
Don't you understand that they find your behavior unacceptable?
No, you don't
Unfortunately, I do
I understand it all
I take all the heat, hate, and slander
I absorb the shock of every attack, every grenade, every ambush
I take it all because I love you
It may not seem true, but for every time that I've yelled at you, cursed at you, disowned
 you, and beaten you into submission
I promise that I love you ten ten times more
I love your capricious shape and unpredictable length
I love your width, your comforting largeness
I love your history
Your promises to transcend on to my children as my ancestors' hair did to me
I love everything that you've taught me—or at least have tried to
I apologize for the grievances I commit against you
I'm young and don't understand your infinite value
Forgive me of my perpetual trespasses
I know not what I do and I know less what I say
Just know that I love you
Honestly, truly
I love you

CANDACE TODD, GRADE 12

SECOND RUNNER-UP, POETRY OUT LOUD



Student Reflection on POL

I have gone on to POL regionals two years in a row now. The first year that I won, I was completely ecstatic. It was one of the first times I was recognized for my performance abilities. Losing at the regional level was okay because I knew that I had the next year. Winning this year I was ecstatic, but also nervous. I wanted to move onto states for my creative writing teacher who is retiring this year. Unfortunately I didn't advance, but I've realized that it's okay. My teacher just wanted me to try my hardest and enjoy the experience.

Cathy Hailey and Leah Ican after Leah competed in the Region 4b Finals for POL

LEAH ICAN, GRADE 12

FIRST RUNNER-UP,
POETRY OUT LOUD

Scholastic Writing Awards (www.artandwriting.org)

Tyler Econa, Anthony Marovelli, Yarelli Sosa, and Asra Shuaib will all be honored at the Washington Metro Area Awards Ceremony for their Gold and Silver Keys and Honorable Mentions in the Scholastic Writing Awards. Tyler's Gold Key Writing will go on to national competition, and one of these writings earned an American Voices nomination.

Student Reflection on Scholastic Writing Awards

I've been heavily involved with writing for four years now, ever since I entered the writing program at my school. Now, this isn't to say I didn't write before then. Quite the opposite in fact. I would constantly write and create, but it feels like once I entered high school, I started to take it much more seriously and do it much more often. A part of taking writing more seriously, is entering my work into more contests and publications.

At first, things like this made me very nervous. The thought that strangers would be looking at my work was very strange to me, and hard to grasp. However, the more comfortable I got in myself and in my work, the easier it became. I'm never really proud of my writing, as it always feel like I'm improving. But contests have taught me to become content, and know that even though my work will never be perfect, I can still share it and present it to other people.

My piece, "Hand in Hand," was the biggest teacher of this to me. A little page and a half story I wrote ended up winning a ton of accolades including second place in the Virginia High School League's Creative Writing Contest and Best Story published in a literary/art magazine from the American Scholastic Press Association. "Hand in Hand," was also included in my portfolio that led to my being selected as a finalist in the National Council for Teachers of English Achievement Awards in Writing. Even though I had issues with the writing and how I worded certain things, it still did well. Hopefully this will push me to keep entering into contests even after I leave high school.

ANTHONY MAROVELLI, GRADE 12

The Center for the Arts' Off the Wall Poetry Contest

Many WSHS students entered this local poetry contest, which required that they include the phrase "a poet's mind" within the structure of a poem. Our students won two of three places and two Honorable Mentions. The first, second and third place students also won cash prizes.

Student Reflection on Off the Wall

Getting an honorable mention with the Off the Wall contest was an exciting experience. Seeing my poetry being showcased somewhere felt unreal. It was the first time I'd ever gotten any kind of recognition for my writing, so it was nice to get that. I felt like I had achieved at something, I feel proud that I got recognized, and it encouraged me to put my writing out more.



NATALYA GREEN, GRADE 12

Eddas Literary/Art Magazine

Many TOP students are on the staff of the *Eddas* magazine, and some will likely be published this year.

Stonewall Jackson High School

Last year in November, I tried out for All-National Choir which I had done in eighth grade, but this was a more competitive choir to get into because I went up against people from all over the country at the high school and collegiate level. I waited about a month for the results and I found out that I had one of the best scores in the country and made the choir like I did in middle school. This is the highest-level choir there is for high school and it is such an honor to be a part of this; I worked really hard to get to this point and I know my hard work has paid off.

JOSEPH ANNIBELL, GRADE 12



I danced in Washington, D.C. on the 4th of July with my dancing group, Alma Boliviana. Our group dances in a lot of festivals, but our biggest one is July 4th because we enjoy how we see new faces and are filled with happiness when we see them clapping for us along with the music. Every time before we dance, we feel the energy of the crowd and are automatically pumped with adrenaline. We still dance in festivals today, and every day, we are motivated to keep dancing for our viewers.

CASSANDRA ESTRADA, GRADE 12

Kevin Turner, Jr. is the 2019 195-pound Cedar Run District Champion and Northern Region Champion Wrestler and following in his father's footsteps. In addition to his athletic accomplishments, Kevin is in the





National Honor Society and has been recognized as a Youth Salute member.

KEVIN TURNER, JR.

Since the age of 5, I've had a strong passion to perform; more specifically singing and acting. I sing in the car, the shower, the halls, pretty much anywhere. That fondness for singing over the years has given me the opportunity to be selected for choirs at the county, state and national level. When I'm not singing, I've had the opportunity to take

part in television shows, PSAs and numerous plays throughout the years starring in roles such as Captain Hook in *Peter Pan* and the Beast in *Beauty and the Beast*. In January 2019, I was accepted into the musical theatre program at James Madison University, giving me the opportunity to continue doing what I love while expanding my knowledge on the topic. As time goes on, my adoration for performing will only grow.

NATHAN YANNARELL, GRADE 12



Youth Music Festival



The Crooked Road's Youth Music Festival at Heartwood

In addition to outstanding musical performances by traditional music programs and bands, The Crooked Road's 2018 *Youth Music Festival* featured student authors from The Origin Project reading their original work. This was a fitting expression of the culture of our region and added a new and well-received element to the festival, which took place on Saturday, May 12th at Heartwood in Abingdon.

The Crooked Road's 2019 (8th Annual) *Youth Music Festival* will take place on Saturday, May 11th and will once again feature readers from The Origin Project. The partnership between these two organizations is both unique and natural, much like words and music blending together in the form of song.

JONATHAN ROMEO, THE CROOKED ROAD



Dominion Energy ArtStars Award Winner Press Release

In late January, The Origin Project of Big Stone Gap was honored with a Dominion Energy ArtStars Award. The Origin Project is a non-profit that helps K-12 students find their voices and tell the rich stories of their Appalachian upbringing through writing, creative expression and exposure to the arts.

Landon Spain of Big Stone Gap is one of those students who participates in The Origin Project. He interviewed his grandparents and great-grandmother for his Origin Project essay. He wrote about his memory of shark-fishing with his Pappy and traveling to Harvard University with his Nana.

Landon's great-grandmother told him about what school was like in the 1940's. While interviewing his grandparents from Richmond, Va., Landon learned that his third greats-grandmother Bess, an immigrant from what was then Czechoslovakia, marched with what the NY Times called the "Amazon Army" of women in 1921, whose husbands were coal miners in Pittsburg, Kansas. Armed with red peppers, she helped to barricade the entrance to the mines from strikebreakers.

Landon says, "I absolutely loved interviewing and learning new things about my grandparents. It was a bit stressful during the writing and revising, but worth it to see my family's stories in print!"





Landon Spain Grandparent Interview

-profit organizations across Virginia to be recognized as 2019 People of all ages in creative endeavors. Each organization received \$10,000 to use towards their winning arts or cultural education program. To learn more about The Origin Project or to get in touch with Landon Spain, please contact us at (415) 601-2409.

BARTER THEATRE





We are deeply grateful to Richard Rose and his staff at Barter Theatre for the inspiration and support they continue to provide to The Origin Project. We look forward to more exciting collaborative endeavors in the years to come.

Barter Theatre and The Young Playwrights Festival are proud to partner with The Origin Project. It's a privilege to help young people create art from a place of authenticity inside themselves. We've enjoyed hosting TOP kickoffs and events; there is nothing quite

like seeing Adriana in action with students. Their excitement is palpable, and the work they create as a result is wonderful to hear and see.

KATY BROWN, BARTER THEATRE
ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF THE BARTER PLAYERS



As always, it was good to see you folks and watch you change the lives of these young people. Thank you! Adriana Trigiani and the Origin Project ask young Appalachian people to be profound. To look at their lives, to discover for themselves who they are, to dig deep for the thing that roots them, to make decisions now that will determine their future, and to *write about it*. These kids are taught the sacredness of words, the limitless depth of language. As I watched this event unfold before me, as I watched these young people be inspired and transformed before my eyes, I couldn't help but be envious. Where was the Origin Project when I was 13?

CATHERINE BUSH, BARTER THEATRE
PLAYWRIGHT-IN-RESIDENCE

Barter Theatre's Project REAL

Barter Theatre's Project REAL has been working with Morrison School for 6 years, and this year we got the privilege to assist Morrison's high school students with their writing for The Origin Project. Through theatre tools, students got the opportunity to reflect on qualities their families possess while also at the same time finding commonalities amongst their peers families. From this, students then reflected on a trait they received from one of their family members and wrote a monologue. With a partner, they each sculpted the other person into an image that represented that trait to present to their peers while reading their monologues. The Origin Project and Barter's Project REAL compliment each other well as both programs seek to

aid in the students' reflection of their own lives and learning from it. Thank you for letting us be a part of this great initiative.

MEGAN (ATKINSON) HAMILTON,
BARTER THEATRE
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR OF
PROJECT REAL

The Origin Project

Abingdon, Virginia, is surrounded by blue capped mountain majesties, flowing rivers, famous trails, such as Creeper and Appalachian.

The tranquil landscape transforms Southwest Virginia into an enticing wilderness infused with the theatrical pride of the United States.

In 1933, The Barter Theatre was erected from one man's idea to have patrons pay with produce. "With vegetables you cannot sell, you can buy a good laugh." This was the theatre's motto during the Great Depression and is reiterated with a swelling of pride and nostalgia. At least one performance a year celebrates this unique heritage by accepting donations for an area food bank at the price of admission. People really take to the "ham for hamlet" philosophy here and show up to partake in this time-honored tradition.

Around 160,000 people attend performances at Barter Theatre yearly. From a town hall, to a fire hall, to a pound, to a Methodist church; Barter Theatre has seen many faces and has been the center of life in Abingdon for many generations.

WSHS creative writing and journalism students had the privilege of attending this renowned theatre in order to partake in *The Origin Project*. This writing project was started by Adriana Trigiani, an American author, who grew up in Southwestern Virginia and whose past has helped her achieve the success she has today. Adriana met with many schools under the Barter Theatre's roof and delved into the reason for The Origin Project.

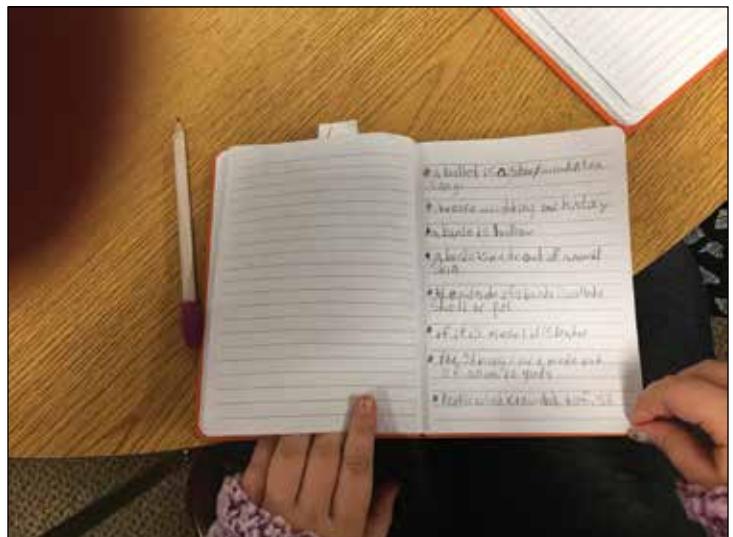
Everyone has a story and a past that defines them, whether that's where their ancestors originated from or where their parents grew up; everyone has an "origin" which defines them. Mrs. Trigiani wanted to emphasize that no matter who you are, or where you come from, you have a story that needs to be told.

This school year, WSHS invites all students to participate in sharing their past and discovering how their origin has made them into the person they are today.



PEYTON SHREVE, GRADE 12

WOODBRIDGE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL





BIRTHPLACE OF COUNTRY MUSIC MUSEUM



A New Partnership with The Origin Project and the Birthplace of Country Music Museum: Using Exhibits as a Learning Tool

After attending an Origin Project book release at the Barter Theatre, I was so impressed and wanted to figure out how the Birthplace of Country Music could get involved with this great organization. This year we partnered with The Origin Project for the first time, and it was an honor for us to work with Linda, Nancy, and the participating teachers and students. We are thankful for the opportunity and look forward to being part of this great work for many years to come.

LEAH ROSS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
BIRTHPLACE OF COUNTRY MUSIC



photo of Emmett Till

At first glance, you wouldn't expect to find an exhibit about civil rights at a museum about country music. However, the Birthplace of Country Music Museum, which tells the story and celebrates the legacy of the 1927 Bristol Sessions, also shares temporary traveling exhibits in our Special Exhibits Gallery, and while these are primarily focused on music and the museum's content, we also bring in interesting exhibits that can act as educational resources to our community.

For All the World to See: Visual Culture and the Struggle for Civil Rights, which was made possible by NEH on the Road and toured by Mid-America Arts Alliance, examined the role that visual culture played in shaping and transforming the struggle for racial equality in America from the late 1940s to the mid-1970s. This exhibit gave the museum ample opportunities to connect with students and the public in an engaging way, and one of these opportunities was working, for the first time, with The Origin Project to host students from Lee High School at the museum. During their visit, they explored the permanent exhibits and then had a special tour of *For All the World to See*, which gave us the chance to discuss the power of visual imagery and think more deeply about how images impact the way people view the world, both in the past and today. The tour was followed by a powerful writing activity led and facilitated by Langley Shazor (The Casual Word). The students focused on writing poems or prose inspired by an image or story from the exhibit, tapping into the emotions and reactions they felt as they learned about this difficult history, the ways that visual representation influenced perceptions about race, and how images were used to motivate activism and change. Using the typewriters made the students think about their writing in a very different way as they picked their words out on the old keys in a careful and thoughtful manner. And the impact of the exhibit on them was obvious from their resulting pieces – some of just a few words, others with many more, but all that held power, compassion, and new understanding and that found resonance and connection between the past and the present.



generations of those who experienced Civil Rights in East Tennessee

It was a wonderful program, and experiencing this exhibit through the eyes and the voices of the Lee High School students was also gratifying and inspiring to us. We were glad to be able to share this experience with them, and we are looking forward to working with The Origin Project to connect more students to our museum, the music heritage of this region, and future special exhibits.

RENÉ RODGERS, HEAD CURATOR
BIRTHPLACE OF COUNTRY MUSIC MUSEUM

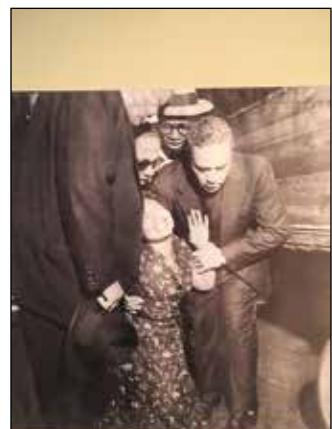
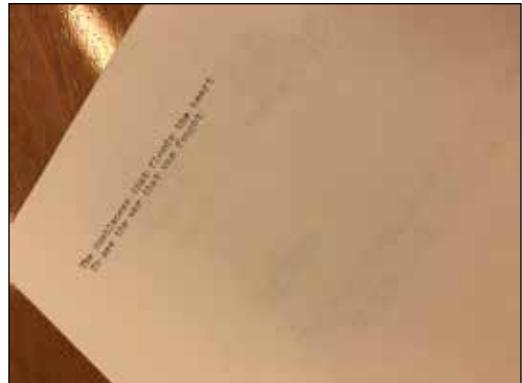
A Day for All the World to See

December 5, 2019

I started my afternoon getting set up for a workshop, the same as any other event. I had brought in about 15 typewriters to the conference room of The Birthplace of Country Music Museum. I was very excited to facilitating a poetry workshop centered around a special exhibit; For all the World to See. This exhibit highlighted the use of imagery and media to perpetuate racism, as well as how African Americans used those same tools to bring awareness to the atrocities being committed against them. Today would be my first time going through the exhibit, along with the students coming from Lee County, Virginia, as part of the Origin Project. The idea was that the students would go through the exhibit, discover images or artifacts that really spoke to them, and would move over to the conference room to use typewriters to create poetry or simply type their thoughts.

After the introduction given by Rene Rodgers, Curating Director of the museum, the students (and me) were able to venture through the exhibit. There was so much to see that one could have easily spent hours reading all the material, watching videos, and interacting with certain displays. I found myself equally fascinated by the reactions and conversations from the students. This was an eye-opening experience for them. Lee County is an isolated area in Southwest Virginia. Rural, impoverished, and predominantly Caucasian, many negative ideals and philosophies about race still existed. These students had never been exposed to the civil rights movement in the way it was presented in the museum. The emotions expressed from facial expressions, as well as from some of the comments I overheard gave me a myriad of reactions: I was saddened and angry that they had no idea many of these events had happened or had never heard of many of the people mentioned. I was simultaneously encouraged by the change in attitude and the offense many of them took to that level of treatment to other humans. I also learned more about myself and others that day.

The culmination of this experience was in the poetry workshop. As the students filed into the room, the interests and curiosity rose to an almost tangible level. Students were clamoring to lay claim to certain machines and eager to start writing. After a brief lesson in the operation of typewriters, I turned them loose to explore their creativity. The poetry written by these students was powerful, profound, emotional, empowering, and



Emmett Till's mother after seeing his mutilated body



thought provoking. It was abundantly clear that the exhibit truly resonated with them as they shared their pieces with all in attendance. At this moment, I was given immense hope for the future of our country and our world.

I am deeply grateful to The Birthplace of Country Music Museum, The Origin Project, Lee County High School, and all those who were instrumental in bringing this exhibit to Bristol, Virginia. I am equally grateful to have been asked to partner with these organizations in assisting to create a memorable experience for young people and adults. I know that I have been forever changed by the words of our youth. I wish them well in all future endeavors, creative, philanthropic, and otherwise. Keep up the good words!

LANGLEY SHAZOR OF THE CASUAL WORD, LLC

Civil Rights in Appalachia

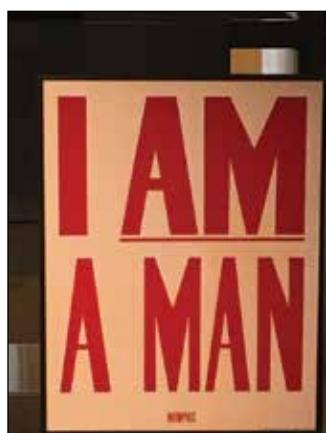


Our students recently took a trip to the *Bristol Country Music Museum* in Bristol, TN/VA as a supplement to our investigations into our family histories for the *Origin Project*. What we discovered was a treasure trove of lore and artifacts of our region's rich musical heritage. However, importantly, we also discovered our rarely talked about history with civil rights in the Appalachian region.

In a special exhibit for the museum, we found loaned personal possessions of families in Appalachia who bore witness to the discrimination of the civil rights era. What was shocking to many of us was the amount of history of this era we had never heard before, nor that was ever covered in schools. From this display of origins of another nature, my students wrote honest and biting poetry on antique typewriters left out for the accompanying writing workshop. Featured here are reactions to what we saw and heard from fresh voices now awakened and dedicated to progress and change.

ALEXANDER LONG, ENGLISH TEACHER

Lee High School



As my students typed poems, collected their thoughts and tried putting into words the images of race relations with which they had been exposed, I, too, became reflective. My hope for them, as they come face to face with the bitter truths of our society's past, is a better future. I imagine a future whose fruit is one of love rather than hate and one of unification rather than division. Yet, when I see their similar faces and acknowledge our area's lack of racial diversity, I can't help but wonder what truths they've been able to glean on their own, what relationships with peers of other cultures they've been able to form. And I remember the enormity of my role as a teacher. I remember that I am responsible for introducing them to various cultures through the beautiful means of literature. Through speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr. and poetry of Gwendolyn Brooks, through autobiographies of Maya Angelou and essays from Frederick Douglass, my students can learn of African-American culture—of struggles for freedom and equality.

They can develop empathy with others and a general sense of the collective nature of human beings. They can learn, as did Scout Finch, that “[y]ou never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view ... until you climb in his skin and walk around in it.” And until diversity comes to southwest Virginia, I will, instead, take my students to diversity through the written word.

SINDY FIELDS, ENGLISH TEACHER
LEE HIGH SCHOOL

Skin

We are all made the same so why does my skin color make me different from you?
Why should the color of my skin tell me what I can and cannot do?
I am unique and should be loved the same as you.
We all bleed, but with this attitude, we cannot succeed.

JASMINE BREWER, GRADE II

Be Thankful

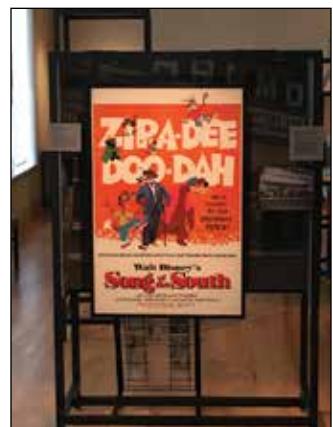
It's crazy how people would lie about something that never happened.
Where is the respect?
Children being blamed for nothing they said,
Having to pay the consequences for innocence.
Be thankful for who you are today.
Appreciate the things that you have.

I was inspired by the exhibit feature on Emmett Till. To understand that a young boy would cruelly face the evils of a racist world all because he was another color brought tears to my eyes. But, how many times does this still happen today? It may not just be because of color or race, but because of something else. When will we stop and think about our actions and how they impact the children of tomorrow?

BAYLEE COX, GRADE II

Cruel World

It's a cruel world
Where is the sympathy?
Why is there no consequences?
People only think about themselves
Imagine peace
Can you imagine peace?
Why can't we imagine peace?
Because it's a cruel world



This poem is inspired by the Emmett Till exhibit pieces. As I looked at the pictures of 14-year-old Emmett Till, I wondered what could go through someone's mind to do something so tragic. I thought about how even today people are still badly abused. People choose to argue instead of

being peaceful. This world will never truly know peace because people argue and people sin. It is an imperfect world after all.

BETHANY DAVIS, GRADE II

Behind the Camera

He is a man.
He is of color.
His name is known by many.
His name is known by none.
He is a hero to a nation.
He fought against the separation.
His weapon was a camera.
He showed the good and evil.
His song was the chants of peace.
He was no longer seen as just a man of color,
But a man of heart.
This world of ours thanks you,
Gordon Parks.

ADRIAN ESTRADA, GRADE II

I Am A Woman

I am a woman
I am a woman in a man's world
A man's world where women are no greater than
squirrels
A man's world where women take care
And men don't care
Women are powerful but that's never told
A man's equality is what's sold



Our inspiration for this poem was the "I Am A Man" protest poster. It inspired us because they were fighting for equality yet they did not include women. This is still an issue in today's society. Where women are not looked at as equal to men. Yet women are usually the ones who wake up early to provide breakfast for their family before work. Then they come home, clean, cook, and get their children taken care of. In men's eyes that's just their job, so women aren't appreciated like they should be. That's what inspired us.

MIKENZIE MOONEYHAN & YAZMIN MUSE, GRADE II

All Out of Spite

Using cameras to fight
Different perspectives take flight
It shouldn't matter if it's black or white.
Many lives were taken

Many men were mistaken
Innocent minds were awakened
All individuals deserve rights
We shouldn't have to fight
It's sad it was all out of spite

Viewing the exhibit at the Bristol Country Music Museum, I took inspiration from all the photographs, especially the first, front, centerpiece of the exhibit, which showed a black man behind a camera. Photos, like his, were the evidence we have for the cruelty and injustice many faced during the horrible times surrounding the Civil Rights movement. It's from these photos that we can learn from our mistakes, and hopefully mature towards a better tomorrow.

HANNAH REASOR, GRADE II

Discrimination at Lee High School

Discrimination at Lee High,
Directed towards Sam and Bryce.
Starting fights by calling names,
Are Chris, Seth, and Andrew to blame?
Similar to Emmett Till,
Not as savage but still not chill.
Are the children the ones to blame
Or is it the parents being lame?
The differences are in the resistance.
Emmett was beaten and brutalized.
Bryce and Sam went for the eyes.
The fights started even though they kept their distance.

We were told to pick a picture as inspiration to come up with a poem about discrimination, civil rights, or something similar that would also hit home and was personal to us. The only sort of personal experience I have had with racism and discrimination was watching it happen to Bryce and Sam and other African Americans at Lee High, so I decided to write about that. Then, I picked a picture that related to that idea for my poem,





and the Emmett Till photo was the closest match to the idea. When writing my poem, I involved dark humor because it is a way that I cope with difficult situations and topics. I involved the fights that happened at Lee High as they are big events that happened due to racism. Due to trying to rhyme and the dark humor used, I do feel that my point did not come across like I wanted it to. I wanted it to portray a viewpoint against fighting and against racism, but I felt like the viewpoint would not have come across like that to the people at the museum unless they knew personally those involved.

CURTIS L. REECE, GRADE II

Excellence in Sports

Civil Rights was very rough for African Americans
In sports, today Jackie Robinson is known
For what he done as the first black ball player
Then he was known for his talents on the field,
He changed the outlook for African
Americans in professional sports.

In my poem, I wanted to do free-verse because it is irregular and unique, like the African Americans in sports during the Civil Rights movement. I am talking about how rough it was for African Americans during this time. As well as how Jackie Robinson was known then as a good ball player and for his talents despite no one really liking him. But now, he is known for what he did in history. He really changed the whole outlook on how blacks are looked at in professional sports.

KOLBY REED, GRADE II

America's Game

America's game
Involves many walks
Who all go by different names
And many different talks
In the sixties it wasn't this way
Blacks could not play with whites
And their games were on different days
The whites stole the fields on Fridays with delight
It wasn't until desegregation
When integration swept across the nation.

My poem was inspired by a photo of a black football player from the sixties that spoke of the ways that black football teams could only play each other and not the other white schools in their area. Now we could never imagine such a thing happening, but this speaks to the lengths society would go to make sure segregation was seen in all ways.

DALTON RIVERS, GRADE II

Gordon Parks

A camera is often just a tool,
but for me it was a weapon.
This man used it for his people
as a form of defense from segregation.
A true hero for all coloured people.
He has even impacted the world today,
his involuntary work has changed the world forever.
Gordon Parks and an everyday camera played a role.
Just like every single person in our community.

Gordon Parks' contribution to our outlook on segregation during the Civil Rights Movement was all due to his love for photography. His photo-journalistic stories leave a lot to be interpreted. Like it is said, "a photo is worth a thousand words." He showed the shocking truth the news tried to cover-up or gloss over. We have a lot to thank Mr. Parks for today.

SHEA SNODGRASS, GRADE II

Faith

Fighting for something you believe in takes bravery.
In general . . . believing in anything takes tremendous faith.
Somehow, if one finds the thing they are most
certainly faithful in . . . life and its purpose
Suddenly makes sense.
What is faith?
It has come to my understanding that faith is more
than saying I believe. Faith is saying I am certain.
Faith and courage walk down the road of life hand-in-hand.
One must turn their "I think" into "I am beyond certain"
without a shadow of a doubt.
Out of all things I could choose
to be, I'd chose to be faithful

DARRIEN YEARY, GRADE II

LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA



For more than 400 years, immigrants have shaped the character of Virginia in ways that sometimes have been overstated and other times overlooked or actively denied. These New Virginians are community builders, founding and supporting schools, churches, and cultural and civic institutions that enhance their own communities while contributing to the “common wealth” of the state. They believe in giving back. As we reexamine the histories of Virginia’s peoples, and create new histories, the contributions of all people become clearer. Including diverse stories creates a richer history—one that is fascinating, fraught with anxiety, and full of surprises. “They” are us.

SANDRA TREADWAY, LIBRARIAN/STATE ARCHIVIST, LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA

AMY BRIDGE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA FOUNDATION

Stonewall Jackson High School

My experience with the origin project field trip was insightful. I felt inspired by the artifacts the Library of Virginia held. The artifacts each told a unique story of immigration and described in depth its origin. I was drawn in by the complexity of each artifact’s and person’s origin. This impacted the way in which I viewed items that my parents had brought along with them when migrating and the story that they hold in store. The New Virginians exhibit contained immigration stories that I was able to deeply relate to as a first generation American. I have witnessed my parents face some of the same struggles when immigrating to the U.S. I felt motivated to record the immigration stories of my relatives after listening to the stories of other Virginian immigrants. Overall the origin project field trip to the Library of Virginia allowed me to cherish my unique Mexican origin and the immigration story that my parents share.

YARELI SOSA, GRADE 12

When we went into the library, I was amazed by how many random artifacts they had there. It was cool to see all the things people chose to bring here. It also raised the question, what would I bring? I couldn’t really give a detailed list as there aren’t many material items I place a lot of value on. They also had countless interview videos with a map showing where each interviewee was from. I found the map the most interesting. I enjoyed seeing how far every person was from, yet their stories all came together so perfectly. Overall, the library gave me a chance to reflect on myself and what’s important to me.

LEAH CAPILI, GRADE 12



At first, the library seemed like a place where I would never find answers. I had just spent the first part of the trip viewing learning about immigrants and their cultures, only to question my own roots, and my own culture. The answer didn't come to me with the pamphlet they gave me— listing extraordinary individuals who came to my country through extreme and unfortunate circumstances. The answer didn't come from the cultural artifacts and personal treasures which I gazed upon in the floor below. Instead, the answer came to me when Declan Ring stood up to discuss his own struggles with lacking culture and having unclear family history. The answer wasn't through the things I saw, but the people I spoke with and listened to. There in the library, I realized that culture isn't physical, it's personal.

WILLIAM IVERSON, GRADE 12

The visit we took to the Library of Virginia was eye opening and educational. I compared the experiences of those whose stories were displayed, both modern and past, to my own family's story of ending up here. I appreciated the focus on Virginia, as that was more relatable to me than the stories that are about arriving to America with which I have been presented in the past. The New Virginians exhibit was inspirational in how accomplished those interviewed were in the face of adversity and put into perspective the privileges I have as someone who was born here. It struck a chord with me personally as my parents are immigrants and had to go through a lot to establish the life we now live.

ASRA SHUAIB, GRADE 12



Visiting the Library of Virginia presented several viewpoints to me that were previously unknown, mainly concerning immigration. I'm white, and a lot of my history has been erased by death, disease, and stubbornness, so my own ancestral immigration is not something I've ever known. This made me think deeper about one of the assertions from my origin project piece, questioning whether my lack of origin is freeing or trapping. I still haven't come to a decision yet; however, it's made me reconsider who I am and what my goals are in terms of finding individual worth.

DECLAN RING, GRADE 12



With the origin project came eye opening trips to help guide me into my personal writing. On the trip to the Library of Virginia, we were given the question, "If you were migrating to a different country, what would you bring?" I replied with "a blank notebook, a family portrait, and a simple pencil." They express an easy recovery from a grand rearrangement. With my notebook, I would write down all of my past golden memories and with my family portrait help commemorate my ambiguous past.

CINIYA GARY, GRADE 10



The Origin project field trip made me reflect a lot on my personal family life. Going to the Library of Virginia and seeing other people's stories made me think about what I know about my family. It was interesting to

see all the different places that people come from and what they have gone through. It made me reflect on what my family has gone through, and it made me wonder more about my origin. I don't know very much about my origin, and I want to learn more about it.

I enjoyed the field trip to the Library of Virginia. My favorite part of the trip was discovering the Virginia slave schedule from the 1850s. I found my last name in the book and there were about ten people with the same last name who lived in Suffolk, Virginia. It interested me because my family on my dad's side lived in the Norfolk Tidewater area. My teacher drew the conclusion that these slaves from the 1850s could possibly be my ancestors.

DANI BRINKLEY, GRADE 12

This year of English has been the best year so far. All other English classes I have taken aren't even close to being my favorite. This year was the best because it gave me the chance to learn about something I probably would have never researched without this class. I got to learn about my family. My parents don't know much about our origins or ancestors, so I had to step out of my comfort zone and reach out to people and family I never speak to. I learned that I am mostly Russian from my mom's half-sister, despite being told I'm mostly Irish from my mom and dad. The half-sister gave me a photocopy of the immigration records my great great grandparents were given when they came to America. I also did something I thought I would never do in a class like this one, which is make friends. I have always seen myself as an outcast and a loner, but this class has given me the confidence to talk to other people and become friends with them. Even though I'm probably never going to see ninety percent of these people ever again, I want to cherish the time I spend with them. They are my second family and Mrs. Sterne is my second mom. If I could, I would never leave the class.

JOSEPH GREEN, GRADE 12

As I look back at the field trip, I wonder about the slave schedules and think, "What if my family was listed in the slave schedule?" I wish my last name was not as common so I could easily find my ancestors. I really enjoyed the bus ride home, because I have never been on a charter bus before and it was really fancy. I would definitely return to the Library of Virginia.

JA'CHELLE JOHNSON, GRADE 12

My experience at the Library of Virginia was like walking through Stonewall Jackson High School. Walking through the exhibits was like talking to a fellow student at SJ. It was exciting to connect with what they were saying about their experiences because I know many people in my life who have been through the



same. Coming from a diverse school has already taught me of many different cultures. I wasn't as shocked as maybe some of the other students regarding the immigrants in Virginia and their hard work ethic. My father came to the United States over twenty years ago and made a name for himself. He started his own company and it is still thriving. I have witnessed first-hand the hardship and motivation someone has who comes to the United States to make a better life. I'm glad we went down to Richmond to see how others appreciate immigrants in Virginia.

DESSIREE LOPEZ, GRADE 12

Glass Murals

Visiting the Library of Virginia was like getting another history lesson in a social studies class. It felt like a history textbook you were trying to read to highlight the important details for a project that is due soon. This is only because it felt like my class lived the statistics, as we come from a community of diverse native tongues and ethnicities. We live it every day as we speak our pleasantries to one another. In a way, as we passed the alluring antiques derived from cultures other than our own, I felt as if I was viewing a glass mural, something that was enticing with its vivacious colors and well-formed designs. I felt that most of us could emotionally connect to the video narratives we listened to, as it was like reading and watching our own experiences. Nevertheless, I found the experience to be euphoric as I was inspired by the many donated pieces we had seen and the stories that were told.

NIRIAN LUCAS, GRADE 12

Library of Virginia

For The Origin Project class trip, we went to the Library of Virginia. The trip was a nice easy-going time outside of class to observe Virginia from a different perspective as well. At the Library of Virginia, the tour guides gave great descriptions of the pieces that were displayed. They seemed to know an immense amount about each exhibit they described, although the statistics on immigrants in Virginia was not exactly surprising to me.

At Stonewall Jackson High School, a lot of students, including myself, are immigrants. I didn't seem to find myself as fascinated as the tour guide when she presented the statistics about immigrants in Virginia. I suppose this might be due to the different location, and they don't come across as many immigrants as we do. I have never been to such a big library before, and it was fascinating to see how many books there were. I thought the interviews from the immigrants in Virginia was unique, and how they incorporated it into the Library of Virginia. Overall, it was a fun experience to learn more about the different backgrounds and cultures that are in Virginia.

CHRISTINA MUN, GRADE 12



The New Virginians Exhibit

As a proud Virginia native, I'm embarrassed to say I had never known about The Library of Virginia and the information it houses. *The New Virginians* exhibit was especially noteworthy to me because as the tour guides took us through the exhibit and spoke of refugees and highlighted the origins of some of the interviewed immigrants, I looked around the room at my class, the living, breathing microcosm of immigration today: great great (etc.) grandchildren of immigrants like me whose ancestors came over in the 1600's looking for opportunity that America could provide; immigrants like my refugee student who left her home land with only some legal documents and a little money; and children of immigrants who brought them along or sent for them later but who all simply wanted a better life that America could provide. All these students sharing the common story of people searching for safety and security.

Then, meandering with a few students to another room, we found a volume entitled *Slave Schedules: Virginia*. My student, an African American, opened the book and I watched as her finger traced the names of eight or nine souls who shared her last name, in the area where her father was born. We wondered together if these were the names of her ancestors, not immigrants, but forced to come to America, leaving little or nothing in the way of written history, but whose hopes and dreams look upon the page through Dani's eyes.

I needed to revise my original thinking as I so often do. Maybe the commonality is that we share a community now, we have united into a common culture and it is we who are the continuation of the hopes and dreams of our ancestors. We are The United States of America.

LORI STERNE, ENGLISH TEACHER, STONEWALL JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL

Library of Virginia

When we hear the word *library*, we often think of books, but only a few of us might think of a place like the Library of Virginia. The Library of Virginia was not like a typical library. It reminded me to be proud of who I am and where I came from. As a refugee, I knew how many problems we face to get to USA, how many

problems we face to settle here, and to live here. The Library of Virginia's staff talked to us about most of the challenges my family and I faced without knowing that I am a refugee. They educated so many students who were afraid of asking questions about these issues.



Besides that, they did not only tell the sad part of the story, but they showed us videos and talked about how successful and impactful people these immigrants and refugees become when they find their way. I will always remember this place and I will never forget how proud it made me.

ZAHRA WAKILZADA, GRADE 12

Woodbridge Senior High School

Dear Library of Virginia,

To the land of the immigrants down the line of a thousand generations, I sit here writing to you. I am grateful for seeing the history of

immigrants in Virginia. Knowing how diverse we are is pointless, unless Virginians are willing to put aside cultural differences and learn about each other. Therefore, I am grateful that I got to see the past and the current lives of others that are different but hold a common internal bond. As I sit here seeing the past lives of immigrants and all of their divergent possessions, I realize I am not just from America, but from a land of the diverse— a crucial aspect to unity.

SINCERELY,
JESSICA SEBENALER, GRADE II

Woodbridge Senior High School

Field Trip Itinerary

Library of Virginia

Lunch

Institute of Contemporary Art, VCU

Da Vinci Center, VCU

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

Snack

BEFORE & AFTER: WHY THE ORIGIN PROJECT MATTERS



What might the title be?

My kids are very special to me. My oldest son Nathan is a senior in High School and my daughter Avery is in 8th Grade. Every day, they signed me through their school and had work hours. I'm grateful that my children have grown up to be good people. They're kind, respectful and compassionate. I taught them to be that way just like my mother had taught me to be kind to people and compassionate. I remember just having out in his bedroom at 6:30 AM in the wee hours of the morning. My mother was over with us too, but we could just be around each other. I had this in mind of my best friend and she can really say yes to the car always riding after school and playing will end a happy ending. But she once told me something I'll never forget. She once explained that the compassion you show towards other people can be really significant even if it's on a very small level. Something as simple as telling you or asking somebody how they're doing can have a big impact on them and you may not even realize it, especially if it's someone you don't know. I really think our world needs more caring behavior. We all say more, so I'm glad my children share compassion towards others just like my father taught me. I think it'd be happy if people remembered me as a good person.

Focus on her memory of her mother, her past and how her children continue that.

- Not comparison of her mother to her children's response.

What does she do that makes her kind?

← I like this point - try to cut extra stuff + decide how to structure this to reflect the focus

Before and After

Some students have quite a gift for writing. The words come so easily and seem to just flow onto the paper. The process seems almost effortless for them. Other students, however, struggle to find the words to express what they want to say. Countless times I have heard students say, "I know what I want to say, but I just don't know how to say it." These students have wonderful stories to tell, but their motivation inspired by an interesting topic is quickly destroyed when they pick up their pencil, look at the paper in front of them, and suddenly realize the words are gone.

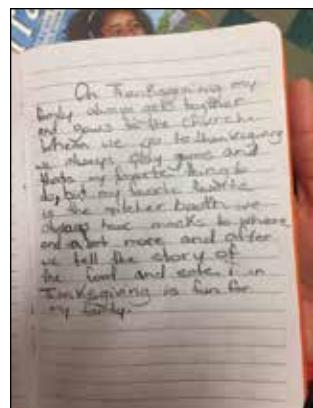
Strategies are implemented with hopes of helping these students overcome this obstacle, and there are some success stories. Success, in this case, is measured by the quality of the student's writing, not the quantity written. When students realize they have written a short piece well, it only grows from there.

SHEILA SHULER, TEACHER
JONESVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Before February 2018

My dad is the person I admire. My dad works hard. He works a lot. He tries hard to make time for me. Dad is a good shot with many kinds of guns. People say we look alike.

BRECKEN NIMETY, GRADE 4

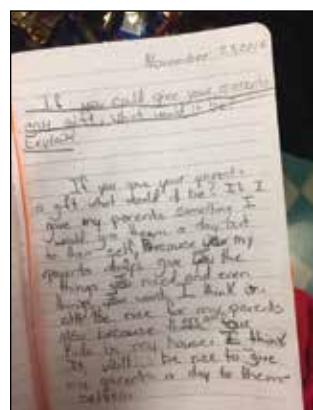


After November 2018

Soldier
On the battlefield
Loyal to your fellow man
Dedicated to your country
In our time of need you were there
Even if you fall you are still a hero
Realized what you did for our country

My favorite quality about myself is I try to be helpful. I do random stuff around the house. I mow, do dishes, take out trash, weed eat, feed the animals, take stuff out to the building, and dump out the water bucket. I try to help my family as much as I can.

BRECKEN NIMETY, GRADE 5



Why It Matters Eastside High School

It Matters

It matters to me because these stories that spill from page after page will live forever but the storyteller will not. As I sat down to begin what I thought was an ordinary assignment, just merely "busy work," I was completely blindsided by the weight of the words that I begin to write. Stories of hard times and good times. Sweet words only to be heard in the mountains

of Southwest Virginia. Recollections of days gone by. Thoughts on the simpler times and the longing to be back there. Memories of loved ones who have passed and the thoughts of recipes that once filled our stomachs, and more importantly, our hearts.

What I thought had little to no significance turned out to be the most humbling and inspiring thing I have ever done. And what I didn't know beforehand was that where I am from, both physical location and the loved ones that have gotten me to the place I am today, matter so much more than I ever dreamed. One day when my kids ask me to tell them a story, I will proudly tell them one that sprang from the Appalachian Mountains straight from the mouths of the branches of our beautiful family tree that they never got the chance to meet.

The words filling these pages matter because it doesn't matter where I go in life, I know I will have the comfort of home typed in black ink. And maybe to you the words I write won't mean a thing, but I think that's the point of it all. I write not from my mind, but rather my heart and that is why it matters. Because stories live forever; people do not.

KATELYNN ELLIOTT, GRADE 12

In doing this, I discovered that roots aren't where you or your family are from. It's the force that holds a family together. The stories told by the parents and grandparents to the new generation.

The new growths in the family tree need the old roots to keep it grounded. Searching through each generation of my family I found new things about myself and those I love. I found that I take after my great-grandfather in my height and the fact that at random times I'll whistle while I do certain things. On my dad's side I found that I have the same temper and looks as them.

I learned that my interests usually will match to another family member or that some birthdays are shared through all generations. I take a lot from my uncles too; from my mom's brother, a love of aquariums and fish, and from my dad's, with a more laid back attitude compared to the regular Fields family temper of "leave in the next five seconds or you will be hurt."

This is not just an English assignment; it's a door.

A door in to the past – into the best times of my family. It brought up fond memories of people long gone. It helped me get closer to my family. It always seems like these things will just be a cut and dry, copy and paste assignment no one's really being any different. However, no one has the same family even if they look like they would. We all have these key differences that define us as who we are, and this project has shown me who I am and who my family is. It's important to learn about the past and just to sit and connect with my elders and finally learn how to make my grandmother's calzone bread.

ETHAN A. FIELDS, GRADE 12

This is our heritage. This is where we came from and how we grew up. We say buggy instead of cart, y'all instead of you all, lighten' bugs instead of fireflies, and fixin' to instead of getting ready to. Others may (and do) look down upon us, but we can't let that hold us back from living our truth. We are often called stupid, dumb, and ignorant, but we're quite the opposite - it's all about perspective. There are ignorant people all across the country, so why are we singled out? When interviewing my great-aunt, she said, "I'm proud of my heritage. It was a good time when I was growing up." I completely agree with her - I had an amazing childhood because of the family that raised me and the friends I met along the way. I feel so blessed to have grown up here. Southwestern Virginia has shown me things I couldn't dream of seeing anywhere else. People always talk about how they want to leave because they have nothing here. That's not true - they have everything here, whether they like it or not. I am moving away to college soon, and although I am excited to start the next chapter of my life, I am sad to move away from my life here. I owe everything to Southwestern Virginia, because it molded me into who I am today, and it will always have a special place in my heart. We are a part of a special and important piece

of history. We are the people who are responsible for keeping these memories – our memories – alive for our future generations.

EMMA FLEMING, GRADE 12

Before I started my assignments for the Origin Project I never really acknowledged how my family got to where it is. I have never really thought about where my family comes from and what my grandparents' lives were like when they were my age. After asking questions and learning just how different times were back then, I realized that I had never been asking enough questions. Today, many people my age do not see the point in learning about the past. Many of them ask why does it even matter?

Why does it matter? Asking about the past and learning where the roots of our life were first planted is the most important thing we can do. The elders in our lives have stories to tell and we as the next generation have a responsibility to take their wisdom and turn it into lessons for the kids in our lives. Learning about our families and what makes us *us* is why asking questions matters. After I learned so much about my family I realized that I need to ask questions. If I ask questions, the stories that are my grandparents' and great grandparents' lives never die. We must truly understand where are roots were planted so that our trees of life can grow.

KIARRA GIBSON, GRADE 12

I have always been close to my grandparents on my mother's side, but I didn't know a lot about their childhood. I knew a few things like they grew up without a lot of money, but I never understood what it was actually like to grow up in the time period that they did. The sad thing is that it wasn't that long ago and I have more now at 17 than they had when they were 20. Asking your family questions you aren't really sure about it so important. In April of 2018, my granny on my father's side passed away and I never really asked that many questions about her life or her childhood and as a result I know almost nothing about her. I don't know her maiden name, where she went to school, what it was like growing up, or hardly any of her recipes besides what she had written down in cookbooks found after her passing. I don't even know what year she was born in because she didn't want us to know how old she was. She was so reserved and closed off and didn't like to share stories about her childhood or past with us (my brother, sister, and me), so we just stopped asking.

After that, we made sure to start asking questions about our other grandparents. Since then I can tell you almost anything about them. I can tell you what house they grew up in, how many brothers and sisters they each have, what school they both attended, how much money they both had growing up, the story about their wedding day, plenty of recipes, how much my papa's first car was and how he got it home, and the story about how my nana told her friend Evy the first day she ever saw him working in a store near her house that she called dibs on him because one day she was "gonna marry him." Asking questions matters because nothing is permanent, no one lives forever, and after someone is gone you'll never get the answers to the questions you had. Time is precious and so are the stories they will share with you about their past. I'd give anything to be able to ask my granny one more question.

AMANDA GREEAR, GRADE 12

Years from now we aren't going to remember those sleepovers where we played "truth or dare" and laughed until we cried

We won't remember all the siblings gathered in the kitchen, making a mess while trying to help mom cook Thanksgiving dinner

We won't remember family movie nights where we talk the whole time even though we swore we would pay attention this time

We won't be able to recall the heart to heart talks we had late at night in Mimi's living room because she gave the best advice

We won't remember family picnics with the cousins you see twice a year
We won't remember who ate ALL the cookies or which team won the annual family volleyball game
We won't be able to recall those feelings as easily years from now
However, we can look through old photo albums while piled up on the couch
We can watch and rewatch the home videos we begged dad not to record at the time, but are now so glad he didn't listen
We can belly laugh all night about embarrassing stories that only we remember when our now grown siblings come in to visit
These pictures and stories and videos . . .
These memories MATTER because they are able to bring back feeling we forgot we had and in doing so, they bring us close together.
Even those with the best memories out there are unable to feel the same way they did in the moment
But, bring back those who you shared the moments with and flip through the old pictures that were taken, printed, and developed right there with that old Polaroid that Papaw loved
Just talking to your siblings, friends, and parents that were there for it all can fill in the pieces that you had lost

Always look forward to the future, but sometimes, when things are tough, it is comforting to fall into the nostalgia of childhood memories and happier times.
It is so important not to forget the good days and memories you made together, because without all of those nights, even those you don't remember . . .
Those memories are your childhood and without them you would be somebody completely different than who you see today.

KATELYN HALL, GRADE 12

Growing up in Southwest Virginia, I hear many of my peers talking about how they can't wait to leave this area because there is nothing to do and nothing to be proud of. In my opinion there is nothing wrong with wanting to go off and experience new things. However, I do think there is something wrong with not being proud of where one is from, especially in this area.

From a young age, it was put into my head that preserving family history is something that must be done. When I interviewed my grandfather, Clinton Johnson, I asked why he decided to stay in this area instead of moving away. His only response was, "These are my roots." To me, the way he responded said it all. Being proud and knowing where one comes from is important because it's our roots. Our roots make us who we are. It determines the way we grow up, the activities we do, the food we eat, and the accents we speak. Preserving our family history matters because the ones who came before us deserve to be known. They deserve to have their stories of dedicated work and sacrifice told because without it, we could be completely different people.

All in all, heritage matters because the ones before us matter. Stories matter. Traditions matter. And most of all, family matters. Just because our little area on the map does not get noticed does not mean that there is not rich family history in our deep Appalachian mountains. Family members and people we all know want their stories to be told, all we have to do is dig deep and try to find it. After all, sometimes family is the only consistent thing in our lives and I believe that it is important to learn their stories and thank them for all the sacrifices they made for our family.

ELIZA JOHNSON, GRADE 12

The Origin Project has made me look back and think about my childhood. It has been a very thoughtful time as I look back and remember memories I made as a child. I look back and think about all the good times that I have made with my family, but also the sad stories that influence and have a major impact on my life. I felt as if I was reliving my childhood, which I would do anything to go back and relive. I had an amazing childhood and I am blessed with a great family.

I got closer with my Pappaw as I interviewed him and shared some special moments. I remembered all the great times I had with him growing up and that I continue to have as my life goes on. The stories that I listened to gave me a different perspective on life and I realized how blessed I truly am. I have a great family that I would not trade for the world. I shared many laughs with my parents as they argued how stories went while I asked them questions about their young relationship. They have strongly impacted my life and are the best parents a kid could ask for.

I was able to focus on myself in some of these poems by thinking what means the most to me and what impacted my life the most. I was also able to look through old pictures and remember all the good times that happened. I worked on rhyming in poems that helped my vocabulary and made the poems better by making it more fun to me. In the end, the Origin Project is a great idea. It matters to me because I looked back at all the great times in my young life and was able to see all the people that have impacted my life. It was amazing to go back and relive all the memories that I will forever cherish as I leave my young childhood life and go off to my college/adult life.

JOHN ROBERT KILGORE, GRADE 12

Reflection is a word commonly used when referring to a mirror or a glass surface. Standing in front of a mirror, we appreciate our own presence or pick apart our flaws, and sometimes both at the same time. We notice certain physical traits about ourselves that we believe define who we are. We are all guilty of describing ourselves as simply short or tall, skinny or fat, blonde hair or red hair. However, we are more than adjectives! The mirror cannot reflect the sound of one's laugh or loyalty to a friend. We are our past, our future, and the journey to each.

It is crucial to look back at our past and ask questions to understand who we are today. Most questions cannot be answered by glancing in the mirror, but by daring to travel back to our childhood. Why did we sleep with that specific stuffed animal? Why did a certain room seem to have an atmosphere of sadness while another emitted joy? In order to move forward, we must first look back. Our past is a part of each of us, and impacts the way that we approach situations today. The mirror cannot reflect our past; for this is a different type of reflection that we each must practice: *self* reflection.

Through rediscovering my past and daring to open dusty photo books full of both joyful and tearful memories, I believe I now understand the purpose of The Origin Project. My origin is my nanny's devotion to music, my sister's playful smirk, and the two brick houses that have welcomed me at all times. My origin is my "Once upon a time . . .," and after all, what is a story without a beginning?

KAILEY KYLE, GRADE 12

People often feel the need to chase down their heritage, to find out where they came from. It is as if there is a missing piece in ourselves if we don't know where we came from. The Origin Project helps fulfill this need for all its authors and readers. Tales from Southwest Virginians bleed through the ink on the pages of The Origin Project journals. Each story, poem, narrative, song, and/or picture tells a specific story about the heritage of an individual in this area. This area connects us all, and it is highly possible that a native will find many similarities of their own lives with the text of The Origin Project. It is important to find this unity in any area, so that a group of similar-minded people can make decisions to form a better world for our posterity. Also, there is no better way to communicate impactfully on a large scale than literature. In completing this portfolio, I have revisited fond memories and examined the good and bad in my life. It has been an almost

therapeutic process. I find that many others will experience this also in reading and writing entries of The Origin Project. The Origin Project is not just a book or a collection of lofty poetry. It is our Appalachian heritage. Our origin. The Origin Project matters for various reasons but I believe the most important ones are identity, unity, and therapy. We should be proud of our heritage, we come from a remarkable place.

ELIZABETH MANN, GRADE 12

After graduating high school, some students are so excited to leave this area and go somewhere other than these mountains of Southwest Virginia. Our area is very misunderstood as a whole. Our beautiful mountains we call home are viewed as hillbilly towns, and outsiders see us as a group of people who are unsuccessful. That stereotype is very far away from the truth. Southwest Virginia is a culturally rich area with elders who can tell you anything you need to know about the past. We have coal miners who put their lives in danger to support their families. We have local businesses that survive every day with our support. Our area celebrates achievements far and wide. We celebrate sports, the musical arts, the dramatic arts, and many other forms of art. We have stars in basketball, drama, football, band, track, and about any other sport you can name.

We live in a small area where everybody knows everybody and when you meet an older person they ask who your parents and grandparents are. Having people like this around make life less like living around strangers. We should cherish the people. They are our roots. This area has grown significantly from when they were growing up here. We will continue to develop through the years, but we must talk with our ancestors and write things down so we will remember when they are gone.

My aunt told me one of her biggest regrets in life is not writing things down. She explained that people you meet have stories to tell and you can listen, but if you don't write it down, these people will have no legacy to pass down for generations. When grandma starts talking about what it was like, don't just listen. Record what she has to say because someday that will be the only thing you have left to hear her voice. Hearing the accents in our ancestors' voices and how they say certain words displays their heritages. It is important to talk to your elders before they pass. If you don't ask them about how different their lives were, your children and grandchildren may never get to remember what life was like when they were growing up.

MADILYN POWERS, GRADE 12

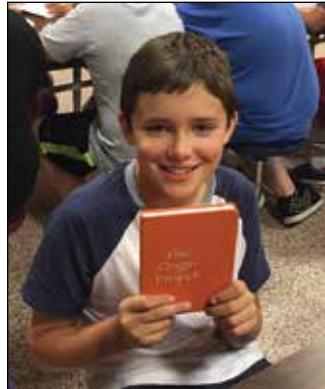
While doing this project I heard stories I have never heard before, learned about people I never got the chance to meet, and discovered a piece of my family's history I would have never known if it was not for the Origin Project. I get so caught up in my day to day life I often do not think to stop and ask about my family's past. Recently my family lost our great-grandma; she was 100. I never got the chance to sit down and ask her about her childhood, or hear the stories of my grandma when she was a child. Missing out on learning about my great-grandma's life made me realize why it really matters. It is now too late to talk to my grandma, but I still have other living relatives. Knowing that people do not live forever, and that when they die their stories die with them makes you realize how important it is to know where your family came from, and to hear those stories because those stories make you who you are. Interviewing my grandparents and hearing about everything from their early life to how they met, having my mom, and then my mom having me really made me smile. Hearing those precious stories made me stop and think about how if I had never asked I would have never known any of those things.

SELENA MICHELLE POWERS, GRADE 12

This project matters because it helps individuals find and learn about their heritage. During this project, it helps younger generations learn about what it was like when their family members were their age, how times have changed, and more about their relatives. To me, it matters because it helped me gain a new perspective on my mother's childhood and my own as well. Everyone has a place they have grown up or call home, which is why it is important to know about the background or history of their hometown. I think that

everyone should know where their family may come from and their origin. For many young adults, they are getting ready to move away to college and start a big journey of their life. Whether that be medical school or becoming an electrician, everyone must remember their roots. It is important to me to remember where I have grown up and the people that have made an impact on my life. A place is just a place to one, whereas to another, a place could mean where their heart is. To me, my heart is not in one place, but in multiple; from the smiles that my mother gives every evening after school or where I lost my best friend, but a big piece of my heart will always remain in a small town - home.

NATALIE RHODES, GRADE 12



Show me

Show me where you're from.

You say it is not much, yet you think the world of it.

You say it's a broken town, yet you always go back.

You want it to grow and develop.

There is nowhere for it to grow to though.

You want to show the world where you came from.

This little town of Coeburn.

You live right in the middle.

You hear the football games from your porch,
the live music downtown as well as the special preaching.

You say you can't sleep without
the blast of the train,

The rattle of the tracks.

The zinging, zinging, zinging as
the packs of ATV riders
zoom for the mountain,

You being one of them.

This place you talk about,
Frosty Bossie.

You say it has lights like no
other.

You hear the fluorescent tubes
buzz as you walk towards it,

Asking for your favorite milkshake, Twix.

Only asking for it a few times a year.

Your favorite memory is walking through the bridges,

Looking for the trees glowing with Christmas lights.

You say that they do not stay on all year except when someone messes up.

You beg to drive through town to look and see what has changed.

You are never disappointed by the changes.

The rocker and

The love sign that your mother designed.

You say you go and sit in the rocker just for fun,

So you can listen to the fountain.

The water splash all around.

You say you cannot get too close unless you want to be wet.



Beautifully frozen in the winter it sits there.
You say you miss school,
Everything about it.
You said you were a teacher's kid,
Which doesn't sound good.
You say you spent your days running the halls.
The middle and high school you say were your domain.
You said you never wanted to leave,
Yet you did.
You always return to this little town.
Let me show you where I am from.

AMELIA WRIGHT, GRADE 12

Before and After: Why It Matters Stonewall Jackson High School

When I first came into The Origin Project class, I was worried I was not going to be able to share my story in the certain way I wanted to, but it happened to be an amazing journey where I was able to share my story in a way that suited who I am. This class was a combination of people who originated from different parts of the world ranging from El Salvador, the Ivory Coast, Afghanistan, and many more countries around the globe that made this class feel that much more special. The Origin Project has allowed me to become more creative and imaginative in my writing than I ever thought I could, and I now enjoy writing little entries in my Origin Project journal about my day or how I am feeling. We had written many different types of writings, such as writing a transcript for an interview, a college essay, the Stonewall Tale Poem, and many more that were all very fun to write. Over the course of The Origin Project experience, I found my story to share among others. It was a wonderful experience. Without this class, I would never have been able to express myself like I did without the guidance of my teacher and the icons of The Origin Project.

JOSEPH ANNIBELL, GRADE 12

The New Experience

The Origin Project has been a whole new experience for me and I've enjoyed every second of the journey. I came from many years of International Baccalaureate English where the focus was solely on literature and dissecting every minute detail down to how the weather was a symbol for Gatsby's emotions and life journey. The routine of reading, annotating, analyzing, and presenting were beneficial skills to have, but it was all done in a dull manner that made me lose my adoration for writing and literature. The Origin Project has granted me back my creativity and has freshened up my outlook on people and life. The class was entertaining and gave us so much freedom to get to know ourselves and our origins, which most can say have been neglected for a long time. As a person who loves writing, I am so glad I have been able to do research on my family and hear about others and their families because it provides inspiration for my future writing and reality to the situations I may write about in time. Everyone has a different story; there are no duplicates of life on this earth. Humans hurt differently, humans think differently, and humans find successes in themselves differently, but I am relieved we can all still come together and melt all those colors together to make a beautiful abstract painting.

ASHLEY AGRE, GRADE 12

In the spring of 2018, Mrs. Sterne came into my English class to tell us about an exciting new class that was coming to Stonewall Jackson last year. This new class was partnered with The Origin Project. The class

allowed students to explore their heritage and family history and write about what they have learned. It sounded amazing for me. It sounded like something I wanted to be a part of, but I don't think I knew exactly what I was getting myself into. I just thought I was going to be a regular English 12 class, but with extra writing and that we were going to be writing for a book sounded amazing. I was happy to join this class just so I could be in a book, but I honestly didn't think that this book would actually change my life. Honestly, it changed my perspective of my heritage and my history.

At this point in my life, I thought I knew most of my family's history and that all I needed to do for this class was just use everything I already knew. I honestly thought this class was going to be an easy "A"; it was just going to be like every other year, except I was going to be in a book.

This year has been more than I could have ever imagined. I learned about my family history. I got to interview my mom to learn more about her side of the family and the people I thought I knew a lot about and realized that they were amazing people that I didn't know much about. I learned more about my heritage and why I should be proud of where I am from and who I am. And, we got to have these three amazing women who acted as our mentors: Mrs. Sterne, Mrs. Duval and Mrs. Carper. As a bonus, I got to meet the icons of The Origin Project. I'm really thankful for these ladies that allowed us to explore cultures, write about it and help teach people about things they don't know about the world. Sometimes we get so consumed in our own world in our own life or did we forget that there's a whole world filled with beautiful, beautiful, beautiful rich histories and cultures? Not only did I get to learn about my history, I got to hear about some of my classmates' families' stories. This project helped me appreciate diversity in our world's cultures. It made me see how much I love learning about people's culture and not only my own.

Through it all, I found my passion, which is writing and culture. This project taught me more than I honestly thought I would ever learn from writing a book about my culture. I honestly can't wait to see the final product and learn more about the world we live in and the cultures that are in it. I'm so proud to be a part of The Origin Project.

ADWOA ASAMOAH, GRADE 12

The Origin Project has helped me open up in my writing. It has taught me how to look deeper and bring out emotion. Rather than just telling my stories, I learned how to show them. The most important thing I learned from The Origin Project wasn't how to improve my writing, but learning the stories of my classmates. I always knew how diverse Stonewall was, but hearing the personal stories opened up my eyes and allowed me to understand what everyone has gone through so far in their lives. It also brought me to ask more questions about my family's history and I learned a lot of things I never knew. The interviews we did helped bring me closer to my grandpa, which I am very thankful for. Overall, the experience I have had because of The Origin Project has been amazing.

LEXI ATER, GRADE 12

The Origin Project class has provided me with an amazing opportunity to be a part of something big. I've had such a great time being able to express myself through my writings and tell my story. I feel as if this class has helped many students including myself learn more about themselves and their families. I really enjoyed reading my classmates' stories and connecting with them on a different level. It has truly been an honor to be a part of such an amazing class.

DANI BRINKLEY, GRADE 12

I signed up for The Origin Project at the end of my junior year and was very much excited to hear the stories of many students that walk the same halls I do at Stonewall Jackson High. At the beginning of my senior year, I was able to meet and speak with many of my fellow classmates to hear not only their stories, but their thoughts. It was such an honor to be sitting in that classroom and be able to tell people who I was

and be proud to tell everyone where my family originated from. Mrs. Sterne taught the whole class a lot of life-changing information; I felt so honored I didn't even realize I was being very ostentatious to my parents about being in her class. I was able to meet authors and advocates and even share some writing with them! Never would I think that I would have an opportunity to actually speak to authors to get their opinion on my writings. It encouraged and motivated me to want to keep writing. It has been such an amazing experience so far being a part of The Origin Project and I can't wait to share my experience in this class with others.

CASSANDRA ESTRADA, GRADE 12

Initially, all I knew about The Origin Project was that I would get a piece of my writing into a book. I thought we would follow the same curriculum as any other English class and that we would occasionally go on field trips. Since it's been half way into the school year, I've learned that it's way more than just writing into a book. The Origin Project teaches you to explore and to learn more about your background. I've taken so much interest into my culture, history, and family. TOP opens your eyes to other people's stories. After all, it does make you into who you are. I've become more aware of how some people came to be, and why they do what they do. I love learning about it.

CELINE HONEYCUTT, GRADE 12

This year, The Origin Project has allowed me to tell my story. Although there's a lot of writing involved, I had the opportunity to share stories that have made me who I am. I also enjoyed that we got to go on different field trips and see new places like the Virginia Capitol. I have many memories from that class such as the sharing of the juice in front of the principal, but more importantly, I will never forget the influence that Ms. Sterne has had on me.

JA'CHELLE JOHNSON, GRADE 12

Looking Through A Rose-Tinted Glass

For most of my life, I have only seen the happy endings of my family's stories and never once had I peered into the looking glass of truth. Only seeing the tint of the glass, I failed to notice the blacks and the blues, the ups and the downs, and our highs and our lows. With this class, I was given my own taste of realism and saw the world in different hues. I saw my father's colors and his own cracks to his story and how much he paid the price for the decisions he made for his next of kin. I discovered the places my mother had been and saw a glimpse of our picture memories I failed to notice in the beginning. I learned to be open about my mental scars of my own progress to self-discovery. I watched as my class became a safe space to not only be told narratives, but a class to tell our own adventures of where it all began. Realization dawns, when you open your eyes and see the world for what it is rather than what it isn't. When I look on the world now, I see it for its collection of stories still yet to be unveiled in their own picturesque glory.

NIRIAN LUCAS, GRADE 12

When I first started The Origin Project, I was very apprehensive about it all. I thought that I would not have much to write about, since the culture in my family has depleted over the years. I was nervous because many other kids in the project with me are very cultured and have intriguing backgrounds. Then, the first day came and the nervousness disappeared. Even though I didn't know much about the other kids, it still felt like we were a big family. The fact that everyone shared their stories made us all close and more respectful of one another. This whole year has helped me discover and appreciate other people and their cultures and their life stories. The Origin Project showed me that even though I don't have much of a cultured background, I still have thousands of things I can write about and still feel accepted.

JULIETTE MARCHEGIANO, GRADE 12

Taking this class and being in The Origin Project really opened my eyes on my background, immigration, and all different cultures in the United States. All the projects and essays we did in class gave the students and me the chance to really discover ourselves and hear stories about other people. Reading in class other students' writings made me think that all people have different stories to tell. When I started to ask my parents about themselves growing up, their stories were interesting. Going on the field trips and hearing poetry from other kids made an impact on me. This class made me think more about other students' writings. I came into this class thinking it was just writing stories we knew off the top of our heads about our family, but we had to dig deeper. I loved how we had to have an interview with a relative and hear stories about cultures and traditions.

KARINA MARQUEZ, GRADE 12

Initially, I didn't think much of The Origin Project. I generally don't opt for writing poetry or writing creatively, so by being given this opportunity, I was really able to expand my horizons. By dedicating small 15 to 20-minute increments of writing in each class, I was able to challenge my creative writing abilities. Within the first Origin Project field trip, I learned so much more about other students in other parts of Virginia—my mind had fully expanded. My entire life I knew nothing but northern Virginia, so it almost seemed as if everything below didn't exist. Following that trip, my memories of hearing my other classmates' stories became more vivid. With time, everyone had shared even a little of their family's history and we all began to feel more interconnected. Now, as the Origin Project book is about to be published, I can fully say that I have so much more respect for the students in my class than I did at the beginning of the school year.

LIGIA MONICO-BORJA, GRADE 12

Although I didn't get the full year experience of being part of The Origin Project, I can converse about what my experience has been like so far. When I first came to class, Mrs. Sterne allowed me to introduce my name to the class with more depth. This was a rare moment as nobody actually talks about the origin of their name. I was surprised by how many people were actually interested in my response. By just asking this question, I kind of got the jist of what the class might involve, such as my background, culture and language.

The people in the class itself and Mrs. Sterne made it livelier. It was nice to be in a class where everyone is engaged and actively participating all together. While working on the assignments from class, I got the opportunity to learn more about my family who I haven't seen in eight years. It sparked my curiosity about my families in South Korea, and I asked my parents questions to find out more about them.

I enjoyed reading when I was little, but as years passed, I grew distant from books. I would only read when it was given as an assignment in school. In the class, I was able to pick a non-fiction book of my choice to read. The book I chose was *A Child Called 'It'* by Dave Pelzer. When Mrs. Sterne gave short summaries of each book she had, *A Child Called It* caught my attention amidst of others. I finished the book and it was a good awakening, as I plan to become a teacher in the future. The book taught me how horrendous some of the child abuse cases can be and filled me in on the manipulative plays that the mom did to make other people believe everything was okay. By reading this book, I hope that spotting a child in trouble will be easier. So far, my experience in the class has been a great way to get to know myself and grow as a person.

CHRISTINA MUN, GRADE 12

At the beginning of the school year, I did not expect to get much out of the class other than having fun writing about what I don't typically talk about: my culture and family background. It became a brand new way for me to freely express myself. The conversations we had as a class about each other were so easy to have; it felt as if we were all already friends.

With each shared story, I began feeling more and more comfortable with everyone in class. Being a shy person, I usually keep to myself, but with this class it was different. For the first time, I felt comfortable

sharing stories with the entire class. It helped me to open up and I saw that it was easier for me to talk to others without feeling so shy. Ever since we first wrote about “The Thing I Keep”, I slowly started to feel more proud of my culture. I was never ashamed of it or had any negative thoughts toward it; I simply started to feel a sense of pride. That was something I never thought I was missing. Now that I have it, my culture somehow seems a million times more beautiful than it did before.

SHARON SEJAS LAMAS, GRADE 12

The day I walked into this class, I thought to myself, “I cannot wait until I start writing essays.” I thought that it was going to be a regular English class, but it turns out it was not. A lot of great things have happened in this class. From appreciating my name and all the people I have met to sharing about my culture, I love the diversity of this class. It’s a kaleidoscope of cultures. I have learned how to appreciate my culture more this year because of this class. Before this class, I would say, “I am Mexican.” Now I say, “I am Mexican and I am proud.” I love the diversity of this class; there are so many people of different “colors” who come from immigrants.

BERENICE TLATELPA, GRADE 12

Taking The Origin Project class has opened my eyes to the uniqueness that everyone possesses. Before I took the class, I always had an idea of my family’s past, but I never put too much research into it. This class made me go back and talk to my older relatives and ask them about the history of our family and it made me more interested in our history. I do know, however, that I cannot go back too far because of the vagueness of slave records, but I know more now than I did before I participated in the Origin Project. I also have a greater appreciation for everyone else’s story. Everyone has a special and unique story that should be appreciated as that is what shapes the person they are today. Without the Origin Project, I don’t think my appreciation for other people’s stories would be this high.

KEVIN TURNER, GRADE 12

Before I started going to Stonewall Jackson High School, stories to me were cool. Just cool, maybe awesome, but nothing more. I had always enjoyed hearing people’s stories and sharing mine with them, but Stonewall changed my perspective on stories. At Stonewall, stories oftentimes are heroic, inspiring, heart-warming, and sometimes very moving. They involve hardship in students’ lives and success they find through hard work. Stonewall is a giant story book, but not many people read it or even take the time to look at it. Many discuss our book, calling it ghetto, dirty or shady. Many judge our book solely on our cover, but that’s where The Origin Project comes in. They saw Stonewall for their stories and gave the students a platform to present our tales to the world, so people can see past our cover and see us for us. Through sharing our stories, I also think our class became closer knowing more about each other. It made us more unified. Even though we all come from different cultures, locations and languages, we all have cool stories to tell.

NATHAN YANNERELL, GRADE 12

The Origin Project Journey

Reflecting upon “The Origin Project” journey, I feel that I should include flowery diatribes, meticulous metaphors, precise modifiers and fawning accolades, but the words that leap from the keyboard to the screen spring from bursting memory bubbles, small moments, which, when bound together, have created a song that is music to my soul.

On the first day of school, when we memorized each others’ names, their pronunciations and understood to never again say, “Whatever’s ok” when someone says it wrong; tears during the poignant story about the doll; a student who never speaks to me and in December, I am gifted with “Bye, Madre” on her way out the door; the male Mariah

and singing.

A MEMORY BUBBLE POPS

Growing into a family that is unafraid to share feelings and stories; embracing our differences and growing because of them; a sweet angel being thrown under the bus for talking when really, it was always the lovable, wriggly golden retriever I've known for four years next to her

and singing.

ANOTHER BUBBLE POPS

Speed revising; a heartbreak when a schedule was changed, but then welcoming a new member of the family when the same thing happened; waiting for a student to feel better and come back to school before we read her favorite part

and singing.

ANOTHER POP

Giggling; a memory of a grandfather's cane; "You Should have Seen it in Color"; dancing; the tragedy of addiction; a water-filled Philippine home; an old white lady trying to rap; a student asking to talk to me on day one-and starting over; a teacher evaluation going horribly wrong

and singing.

POP

Pride in our SJ speakers in Richmond; the ICONS; a BIG. PINK. DRESS; a hallway visit on day one with a green-eyed boy who made this class even more energetic, eventually getting "slapped out tha slammer"; poor matchmaking; quiet praying, a bus trip to Richmond; Christmas Carols; a new haircut and a new attitude

and singing.

POP

Sneeze-induced laughter; difficulty with the retainer; poetry and a mother fleeing her beloved country; Happy Birthday; Mrs. Carper; meeting my Origin Project Soul Mate; coming out; gallon juice-drinking; "Unwritten"; FINALLY getting to discuss *The Kite Runner*; Colgan trash-talking; interviewing, recording and singing.

Encouraging; teasing; crying; reading; cacophonous talking (but in a good way); writing; illustrating; "Don't let me see your name in the news for anything other than good"; so loquacious, this teacher has lost all control of her classroom, Stonewall Tales, grammar rants

and more singing.

POP

Voices originating worlds apart: California, Washington DC, El Salvador, Maryland, Mexico, Louisiana, Honduras, New York, Bolivia, Virginia, Saudi Arabia, North Carolina, Egypt, Kansas, Honduras, Pennsylvania, The Philippines, Maryland, Ghana, Texas, Afghanistan and The Ivory Coast, uniting to create the harmony that was this year. These voices and the memories they created became the soundtrack for the Class of 2019 Origin Project class.

It will be June before I know it and the final memory bubbles, the notes that formed the melody, carrying the memories of this chorus, will rise into the air, seeking another audience to be blessed by their dynamics and distinctive chords; their staccato, legato and glissando.

As my eyes strain to see them, and as my ears strive to hear, their sounds decrescendo and the memory bubbles converge into a cloud of maroon and gold words, prose and poetry, before dispersing and ascending toward the next chapter in their story.

They have faded away and I sing the final words to the song:
"Because I knew you, I have been changed for good" – Wicked

LORI STERNE, ENGLISH TEACHER
STONEWALL JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL

THANK YOU



We wish to express our deepest gratitude to the following individuals for donating their time, talent and treasure in furthering the mission of *The Origin Project* as we present this year's anthology. Every student receives a copy for his or her home library.

All school libraries and public libraries will have a volume available for students and the public to enjoy.

The Honorable Mark Warner, US Senator for Virginia

The Honorable Tim Kaine, US Senator for Virginia

Pam Northam, First Lady of Virginia

Laurie Eustis

Denise File

Barbara Kingsolver

Apex CoVantage

Kate Schafer

Leah Ross

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Southwest Virginia Museum
Amy Greear
Mountain Empire Community College
Rebecca Pepin, WCYB
Olivia Bailey, WCYB
The Woodward Family
Ryan and Ian Fisher
The Stephenson Family

INDEX



KICKING OFF THE YEAR

Ely, Jayden, 8
Lawson, Kaylee, 8
Johnson, Kynlee, 8
Mullins, Jalin, 9
Pennington, Maddox, 9
Weston, Avery, 9
Woliver, Kasey, 10

MENTOR TEXTS

Carroll, Gretta, 14
Long, Gigi, 15
Pendergraph, Karder, 16
Hammonds, Presley, 16
Pennington, Maddox, 16
Woliver, Austin, 16
Hines, Alexandra, 17
Woliver, Kasey, 17
Shuler, Sheila, 18
Bishop, Taylor, 18
Bledsoe, Johnna, 18
Coomer, Brycen, 19
Lane, Zach, 19
Lewis, Riya, 20
Lowder, Justina, 20
Morris, Glocklyn, 20
Parks, Chloey, 20
Shupe, Taylor, 20
Arnold, Aaron, 21
Foster, Kaylena, 21
Gale, Samantha, 21
Johnson, Kynlee, 21
Miles, Lacy, 22
Pendergraft, Karder, 22
Stutler, Navaeh, 22

EASTSIDE HIGH SCHOOL

Elliott, Katelynn, 24
Farmer, Cassidy, 24

Fields, Ethan A., 25
Fleming, Emma, 25
Gibson, Kiarra, 26
Greear, Amanda, 26
Greear, Logan Patrick, 27
Hall, Katelyn, 27
Johnson, Eliza, 27
Jones, Erik, 28
Kilgore, John Robert, 29
Kyle, Kailey, 30
Mann, Elizabeth, 30
Marshall, JJ, 31
Powers, Madilyn, 31
Powers, Selena Michelle, 32
Rhodes, Natalie, 32
Rose, Daniel, 33
Sanders, Tyler, 34
Wright, Ameila, 34

FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

SCHOOL

Adams, Brayton, 36
Aikens, Celsie, 36
Ashley, Vincent, 36
Bell, Cadyn, 36
Barnette, Cecelia, 36
Baumgardner, Gabriel, 36
Bellamy, Brayden, 36
Bledsoe, Raymond, 37
Boggs, Cameron, 37
Caughron, Gracie, 37
Chasteen, Carder, 37
Chasteen, Collyn, 37
Cody, Zachary, 38
Cowan, Hunter, 38
Clifton, Audriana, 38
Collins, Chris, 38
Collins, Evan, 38
Collins, Jayden, 39
Coomer, Karsyn, 39
Cowden, Jasmine, 39
Flores, Arianna, 39
Garrett, Aidyn, 39
Garrett, Emmy, 40
Gibson, Zoe, 40
Helbert, Sharpei, 40
Hines, Aiden, 40
Jaynes, Bentlie, 40
Johnson, Kairi, 40
Lawson, Lacole, 40
Lewis, Braelyn, 41
Marcum, Bryce, 41
Marcum, Kadance, 41
Marshall, Abigail, 41
Martin, Lilly, 41
Maugh, Aaron, 41
Muncy, Jackson, 41
Neff, Coltyn, 42
Neff, Hudson, 42
Nimety, Kianna, 42
Pearce, Connor, 42
Pennington, Jessee, 42
Price, Hadlea, 43
Robbins, Caroline, 43
Robbins, Walker, 43
Rogers, Cloi, 43
Santos, Gabriel, 43
Shelton, Ariana, 43
Skidmore, Saxon, 44
Smith, Dorothy, 44
Spurlock, Caden, 44
Turner, Sierra, 44
Zamora, Eva, 44
Aikens, Carly, 44
Allen, Kamrin, 45
Arnold, Aaron, 45
Bates, Aiden, 45
Blanken, Austin, 45

Bloomer, Kyrie, 45
Brown, Aiden, 46
Burch, Briana, 46
Burgan, Dakota, 46
Carter, Emily, 47
Collins, Dakota, 47
Collins, Kyle, 47
Cox, Halee, 47
Cretors, Clark, 48
Davis, Hunter, 48
Drummond, Isabella, 48
Edwards, Taylor, 48
Eldridge, Colby, 49
Ely, Jayden, 49
Foster, Kaylena, 49
Gale, Samantha, 49
Grace, Ian, 49
Hammonds, Presley, 50
Harvey, Kristen, 50
Hines, Alexandra, 50
Ingle, Jayden, 50
Isley, Harley, 51
Johnson, Kynlee, 51
Ketron, Allie, 51
Ketron, Kelly, 51
King, Shane, 51
Lambert, Hunter, 52
Langley, Emily, 52
Lawson, Kaylee, 52
Long, Gigi, 53
Macedo, Edlynn, 53
Milam, Abbiegail, 53
Miles, Lacy, 53
Mullins, Jalin, 53
Newton, Caidence, 54
Owens, Kylee, 54
Parks, Dalton, 54
Pendergraft, Karder, 54
Pennington, Maddox, 55
Perkins, Ethan, 55
Rash, Kaylin, 55
Riggs, Savannah, 56
Sharrett, Elijah, 56
Sizemore, Tucker, 56
Spivey, Bruce, 56
Stutler, Nevaeh, 57
Taylor, Alysa, 57

Taylor, Keegan, 57
Weston, Avery, 57
Wilson, Charles, 58
Woliver, Austin, 58
Woliver, Kasey, 58
Wyatt, Jordan, 58

GREENDALE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Sprinkle, Brenda, 60
Abel, Jayla, 60
Davenport, Cheyann, 60
Lee, Hannah, 61
Heath, Cassidy, 62
Hess, Haley, 62
Hubbard, Hunter, 62
Little, Peyton, 63
McCoy, Khloe, 63
Rose, Alyssa, 63
Singleton, Caden, 64
Turner, Larkin, 64
Vannoy, Arabella, 64
Wise, Gracie, 65

JOHN I. BURTON HIGH SCHOOL

Barnette, Caleb, 76
Bevins, Sarah, 77
Blair-James, Lydia, 77
Bohnert, Madison, 77
Cochrane, Jonah, 78
Collins, Caitlyn, 78
GonzalezPrince, Chloe, 79
Hayes, Joey, 80
Hollinger, Akyssa, 80
Hunnicutt, Holden, 81
Ingle, Keaton, 81
Phipps, Regan, 82
Pritchard, Jaden, 82
Rose, Hunter, 83
Shupe, Marisa, 83
Smith, Dasanye, 84
Tootill, Mary, 85
Williams, Caleb, 85

JONESVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL, 87

Austin, Briana, 88
Shuler, Sheila, 88

Amey, Mattie, 89
Baker, Walker, 89
Barber, Nick, 89
Bishop, Taylor, 90
Bledsoe, Johnna, 90
Britton, Julia, 90
Cantor, Mollie, 91
Carmony, Ryan, 91
Carter, John, 91
Cavin, Samantha, 92
Clasby, Ashlee, 92
Coomer, Brycen, 93
Cowan, Hannah, 93
Cox, Claira, 93
Cretors, Trey, 94
Deirth, Landon, 94
Eldridge, Subrina, 94
Eldridge, Travis, 95
Epperly, Taylor, 95
Evans, Savannah, 95
Fleenor, Megan, 96
Franklin, Justin, 96
Fritts, Laila, 96
Gailey, Nick, 96
Garrett, Gracie, 97
Head, Hiram, 97
Head, Jayden, 97
Helbert, Cheyenne, 98
Horner, Joseph, 98
Howell, Grant, 98
Hughes, Bailie, 99
Hurd, Christopher, 99
Keene, Jace, 99
Kelly, Bryson, 99
Lane, Zach, 100
Lester, Logan, 100
Lewis, Riya, 100
Linton, Piper, 101
Litton, Randy, 101
Livesay, Jayme, 101
Lowder, Justina, 102
Malle, Aubrey, 102
McKnight, Taylor, 102
Mitchell, Olivia, 103
Moore, Adriane, 103
Moore, Charisa, 103
Morris, Glocklyn, 104

Mosley, Cameron, 104
Neff, Collyn, 104
Nelms, Gunner, 105
Nimety, Brecken, 105
Parks, Chloey, 105
Parks, Jaycee, 105
Parsons, Kylah, 106
Pearce, Chase, 106
Pendergraft, Braylen, 106
Scott, Wesley, 107
Shelburne, Nathan, 107
Shupe, Taylor, 107
Skaggs, Chandler, 108
Snodgrass, Jacob, 108
Stafford, Elijah, 108
Stapleton, Miley, 109
Sutphin, Jacob, 109
Sutphin, Joseph, 109
Taylor, Katelynn, 109
Thomas, Matthew, 110
Toney, Tawni, 110
Troutman, Cade, 110
Wallace, Mckendra, 110
Washam, Nevaeh, 111
West, Brandon, 111
Weston, Chase, 111
Wheet, Markus, 112
Willis, Matthew, 112

Nimety, Brecken, 478
Elliott, Katelynn, 479
Fields., Ethan A., 479
Fleming, Emma, 480
Gibson, Kiarra, 480
Greear, Amanda, 480
Hall, Katelyn, 481
Johnson, Eliza, 481
Kilgore, John Robert, 482
Kyle, Kailey, 482
Mann, Elizabeth, 483
Powers, Madilyn, 483
Powers, Selena Michelle, 483
Rhodes, Natalie, 484
Wright, Amelia, 485
Annibell, Joseph, 485
Agre, Ashley, 485
Asamoah, Adwoa, 486

Ater, Lexi, 486
Brinkley, Dani, 486
Estrada, Cassandra, 487
Honeycutt, Celine, 487
Johnson, Ja'Chelle, 487
Lucas, Nirian, 487
Marchegiano, Juliette, 487
Marquez, Karina, 488
Monico-Borja, Ligia, 488
Mun, Christina, 488
Sejas Lamas, Sharon, 489
Tlatelpa, Berenice, 489
Turner, Kevin, 489
Yannerell, Nathan, 489
Sterne, Lori, 490

LEE HIGH SCHOOL, 113
Aldridge, Latchlon, 121
Anderson, Haley, 114
Baker, Trent, 124
Bales, Ryan, 125
Barnette, Jaden, 125
Bishop, Kamrin, 125
Bishop, Keaston, 126
Bledsoe, Cassie, 126
Bowen, Ally, 126
Brewer, Austin, 127
Brewer, Jasmine, 127, 463
Brooks, Laine, 128
Calton, Meghan, 121
Cecil, Clarke, 128
Cecil, Isabella, 129
Chadwell, Brooks, 122
Chance, Parker, 129
Clasby, Elizabeth, 122
Collingsworth, Autumn, 130
Cottrell, Colee, 130
Collins, Carolina, 131
Cox, Anna, 131
Cox, Baylee, 132, 463
Cox, Tatum, 132
Cox, Rylee, 122
Davidson, Devin, 122
Davis, Bethany, 133, 464
Davis, Scotty, 133
Edwards, James, 134
Eldridge, Jacob, 135

Elkins, Matthew, 135
Ely, Brennon, 135
Ely, Caden, 122
Ely, Kat, 122
Ely, Madison, 136
Emerson, Brandon, 136
Estrada, Adrian, 137, 464
Fischer, Bronwen, 138
Fleenor, Logan, 138
Fritz, Lexie, 139
Garrett, Dewayne, 115
Gilliam, Brandon, 122
Glascoe, Kaylee, 139
Goodman, Alyssa, 115
Gunter, Maddie, 140
Hall, Grace, 116
Hall, Jaelyn, 122
Hammonds, Zachary, 117
Hampton, Jordan, 140
Hampton, Shawn, 141
Harless, Travis, 143
Harvel, Tatum, 143
Hill, Landon, 144
Hines, Sydnie, 117
Honeycutt, Kylie, 144
Horner, Abbie, 123
Howard, Miranda, 145
Huff, Chastin, 123
Huff, Hunter, 145
Hurd, Jacqueline, 146
Hurd, Jeffrey, 146
Jessee, Madison, 147
Johnson, Sarah, 123
Kelly, Hunter, 122
Kennedy, Arianna, 147
Laster, Landon, 147
Laster, Tanner, 148
Lee, Ashlyn, 118
Leedy, Haley, 148
Lefevers, Emily, 149
Litton, Libbey, 149
Long, Alexander, 123
Marcum, CJ, 150
Martin, Michael, 150
McKnight, Lexi, 151
Mooneyhan, Mikenzie, 152, 464
Moore, Cameron, 153

Muncy, Kimberly, 118
Muse, Yazmin, 154, 464
Nash, Bailey, 154
Osborne, Hannah, 121
Parsons, Asia, 155
Pennington, Ava, 156
Perdue, Emilie, 157
Perkins, Callie, 158
Phillips, Kylene, 158
Phipps, Madison, 159
Potter, Brittini, 159
Quillen, Kandace, 160
Reasor, Hannah, 160, 465
Reece, Curtis, 161, 466 Reed, Kolby, 161, 466
Regan, Xavier, 162
Ricker, Tayler, 162
Rivers, Dalton, 162, 466
Seiber, Sierra, 163
Shoemaker, Karley, 123
Shuler, Evan, 163
Shuler, Sarah, 119
Silvers, Lacey, 164
Skidmore, Jillian, 121
Smith, Emily, 164
Snodgrass, Shea, 165, 467
Spain, Jayden, 166
Stapleton, Samantha, 167
Sweeney, Amber, 167
Taylor, Mason, 168
Tignor, Dillon, 168
Tomlinson, Katlyn, 123
Tyree, McKenize, 169
Vermillion, Isaiah, 169
Weston, Kayla, 169
Whitaker, Jacob, 171
Williams, Andrew, 119
Winegar, Joshua, 172
Woliver, Morgan, 120
Yeary, Darrien, 172, 467
Yeary, Tyler, 173
Zhang, Angel, 120

MO'MAGIC SUMMER READING PROGRAM

Bolmeier Fisher, Nancy, 176
Zinzuvadia, Devi, 177

Adamson, Lorenzo, 177
Adamson, Lorenzo, 177
Bailey, Shylah, 178
Culclager, Myracle, 178
Giang, Adam, 178
Hamilton, Mwanee, 178
Kelly, Evan, 179
Licea, Mauriana, 179
McDaniels, Mark, 179
McDaniels, Milan, 181
Robinson, Nasia, 181
(Dayashanae)Romesburg, Asha, 181
Stremlow, Elizabeth, 182

MORRISON SCHOOL

Barlow, Haylei, 184
Blankenship, Colton, 185
Blaylock, Bailey, 185
Bleckley, Isaiah, 186
Bramlette, Alexis, 186
Branham, Tyler, 187
Brimhall, Kiri, 188
Britton, Drew, 188
Carter, Max, 189
Cote, Amy, 190
Cote, Andy, 191
Cox, Vincent, 191
Diamond, Gavin, 192
Dorety, Michael, 192
Dotterweich, Kathleen, 193
Golladay, Makenzie, 194
Grindstaff, Hampton, 194
Holt, Jackson, 194
Honeycutt, Nora, 195
Hubbard, Aubrey, 196
Hurley, Daulton, 197
Kennedy, Mattie, 198
McBride, Hank, 198
McQueary, Daniel, 199
Peterson, Jolson, 200
Regen, Jacob, 200
Royce, Josiah, 201
Shelton, Rain, 202
Sluder, Mara, 203
Springer, Insley, 204
Suiter, Camdon, 204

Webber, Jenya, 205
Wells, Noah, 205
Wright, Shane, 206

NORTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Addington, Emma, 208
Ball, Hagan, 208
Bays, Phoenix, 209
Bentley, Jennifer, 209
Bohnert, Jordan, 209
Bolling, Rihana, 210
Brooks, Sienna, 210
Broskey, Brayden, 211
Brummitte, Peyton, 211
Buchanan, Isabelle, 211
Carlton, Joshua, 212
Collins, Cierra, 212
Culbertson, Bryan, 213
Dale, Molly, 213
Davis, Gabriel, 213
Dockery, Harrison, 213
Fife, Tessa, 214
Fleming, Landon, 214
Gibson, Daniel, 215
Greer, Declan, 215
Greer, Remy, 215
Hale, Deandre, 216
Hall, Layla, 216
Harris, Malakye, 216
Huffman, Hayden, 216
Hunter, Maria, 217
Jones, Ellyana, 217
Joseph, Dakota, 217
Lane, Scott, 218
Martinez, Juan, 218
Mays, Dakota, 218
McCurdy, Makayla, 219
McFall, Alyssa, 219
McGraw, Alissa, 219
McNew, Preston, 220
Miller, Bryson, 220
Moore, Connor, 220
Moore, Sophia, 221
Mullins, Remi, 221
Owens, Cadence, 221
Partin, Apollo, 222
Pruitt, Adriana, 222

Robinson, Deven, 222
Rowe, Dillan, 223
Russell, Adrian, 223
Slagle, Haylee, 223
Smith, Autumn, 224
Smith, Quincy, 224
Stidham, Gabe, 224
Stidham, Lexi, 225
Sturgill, Kaenan, 225
Taylor, Peyton, 225
Teasley, Jaylen, 226
Thompson, Keira, 226
Wampler, Camron, 226
Wells, Connor, 227
Wells, Zoey, 227
Williams, Christian, 228
Williams, Miah, 228
Williams, Sydney, 228
Wilson, Riley, 228

PETER PAUL DEVELOPMENT CENTER
Hagan, Betty Jane, 230, 231
Bassett, Stephanie D., 230
Thomas-Foley, Erin, 232
Carter, Danaë, 232
Branch, Zephanari, 233
Braxton, Dene'jea, 233
Cosby, Damare, 234
Davis-Hamiel, Ve'jon, 234
Dehaney, Jaeden, 234
DeWitt, Kemarii, 234
Dixon, Israel, 235
Dunkley, Areyanna, 235
Gainyard, Azya, 236
Gilmore, Joel, 236
Gray, Taeshaun, 236
Hawthorne, Tknyah, 236
Henderson, Teriq, 237
Hickman, T'Mora, 237
Hines, Davonte, 237
Hope, Rashad, 237
Johnson, Laddarian, 238
Jones, Breion, 238
Lawrence, Jakaya, 238
Martin, Amaria, 238
Massenburg, Excelle, 239

Ndayishemeze, Furaha, 239
Nicholson, Nevaeh, 239
Pleasant, Iyanah, 240
Pleasant, Jahtwon, 240
Ramsey, Jakarius, 240
Richburg, Jazmin, 241
Robinson, Aasia, 241
Simms, Albiegelle, 241
Dontay, Iyanna, 241
Steward, Lynayah, 241
Stith, Tahyia, 242
Walker, Marilyn, 242
White, Myasia, 243
White, Pearlyanna, 243
White, Saa'id, 243
Williams, Kendrick, 243
Wilson, Jerrel, 244

ST. CHARLES ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Ballard, Jayla, 246
Bentley, Ciara, 246
Blondell, Daniel, 246
Brown, Rylan, 247
Covington, Emily, 247
Huff, Ajay, 247
Huff, Kinley, 247
Jennings, J.T., 247
Kegley, Jayden, 248
King, Emily, 248
King, Jenna, 248
McAlister, Atley, 249
McAlister, Dominick, 249
Longworth, Kinsley, 249
Meyer, Austin, 249
Pickett, Ethan, 250
Raines, Jacob, 250
Rivers-Holmes, Donnie, 250
Rogers, Lilly, 250
Seals, Jayden, 250
Scott, Cayleigh, 251
Shirks, Gavin, 251
Simpson, Gabby, 251
Smith, Toby, 252
Williams, Gabby, 252
Williams, Harley, 253
Wilson, Kaylee, 253

ST. PAUL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Armistead, Brady, 256
Barnette, Noah, 256
Bartee, Becky, 257
Boardwine, Jenni, 257
Carter, Alexis, 258
DeRamus, Blake, 258
Evans, Jessalee, 259
Fields, Nathan, 259
Garcia, Maya, 260
Hammons, Azzy, 260
Lester, Corban, 261
Mullins, Ethan, 261
Mullins, Rachael, 262
Perry, Tanner, 262
Roberts, Madison, 263
Rodriguez, Alex, 263
Rodriguez, Amelia, 263
Slemp, Cameron, 264
Smith, Rylan, 264

Stapleton, Kassie, 265
Stout, Weston, 265
Sutherland, Benjamin, 266
Schrenker, Catherine, 70
Austin, Madelyn, 70
Creger, Abbie, 71
Rose, Savannah, 72
Russell, Bailey, 72
Tunnell, Britni, 73

STONEWALL JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL

Early Carper, Rhonda, 268
Agre, Ashley, 269
Albea, Jordan, 269
Annibell, Joseph, 270
Asamoah, Adwoa, 272
Ater, Lexi, 272
Brinkley, Dani, 273
Campos, Elvis, 273
Carreon, Alexandrian, 274
Estrada, Cassandra, 274
Green, Joseph, 276
Honeycutt, Celine, 277
Johnson, Jächelle, 278
Johnson, Jächelle, 278
Lopez, Dessiree, 279

Lopez, Dessiree, 279
Lucas, Nirian, 280
Marchegiano, Juliette, 281
Marquez, Karina, 283
Mitzen, Lenore, 283
Monico-Borja, Ligia, 284
Mun, Christina, 284
Rashed, Douaa, 285
Rashed, Douaa, 287
Sejas Lamas, Sharon, 287
Tlatelpa, Berenice, 287
Turner, Jr., Kevin, 288
Valdez Camacho, Danna, 288
Wakilzada, Zahra, 289
Wakilzada, Zahra, 290
Yannarell, Nathan, 290

WOODBRIDGE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Anjeh, Aka, 294
Ayala-Montoya, GG, 295
Banks, Abigail, 296
Barahona, Tifany, 297
Capili, Leah, 297
Driss, Salima, 300
Econa, Tyler, 303
Gary, Ciniya, 305
Gomez-Castro, Nanci, 305
Green, Natalya, 307
Hailey, Cathy, 307
Hargro, Zyesha, 308
Hudson, Haley, 309
Ican, Leah, 310
Iverson, William, 311
Johnson, Chancellor, 312
Kemp, Ava, 313
Koroma, Marika, 314
Marovelli, Anthony, 317
Meyer, Abigail, 317
Nazario, Elizabeth, 318
Nolan, Emily, 318
Ring, Declan, 320
Sebenaler, Jessica, 321
Shreve, Peyton, 323
Shuaib, Asra, 326
Sosa Antunez, Nereida, 326
Sosa Antunez, Yareli, 329

Vasquez, Adriana, 332
Todd, Candace, 334, 335
Turner-Davis, Darchan, 335
Vega, Ashleigh, 340
Wynder-Burs, Sa'Raye, 343
Zylich, Julie, 344

UNION MIDDLE SCHOOL

Abney, Kamron, 346
Adams, Aydin, 346
Adams, Talan, 347
Baker, Ean, 347
Baker, Jackson, 347
Ballard, Kaylee, 348
Barber, Riley, 348
Barker, Hannah B., 349
Barton, Xavier, 349
Bates, Chris, 349
Bates, Logan, 350
Belcher, Noah, 350
Bishop, Madison, 350
Blanken, Landon, 351
Blevins, Lily, 351
Blevins, Kaylie, 352
Boggs, Miciah, 352
Bond, Madison, 352
Bowman, Ben, 353
Bowman, Ryleigh, 353
Boyd, Nathaniel, 354
Boyd, Nick, 354
Brady, James, 354
Bright, Aiden, 355
Broyles, Emma, 355
Brummit, Landon, 355
Brugger, Dylan, 355
Bryant, Emily, 356
Campbell, Olivia, 356
Caruso, Alex, 356
Chadwick, Maelyn, 356
Chandler, Brayden, 357
Chandler, Trinity, 357
Christian, Hunter, 358
Clem, Gabriella, 358
Clarkston, Brooklyn, 358
Clendenon, Arabella, 359
Cole, Cheyenne, 359
Collins, Halli, 359

Collins, Jon David, 360
Dalton, Alafair, 360
Davis, Gracie, 360
Deel, Easton, 361
Dorton, Kinsley, 361
Eads, Taylah, 362
Elliott, Hunter, 362
Ely, Sebastian, 363
Fore, Kaitlyn, 363
Gibson, Brylan, 363
Gibson, Gavin Colt, 364
Gibson, James Anthony, 364
Gilliam, Alyssa, 365
Gilliam, Donovan, 365
Greer, Christina, 365
Grose, Victoria, 366
Guerrant, Joshua, 366
Hale, Noah, 366
Hall, Madison, 367
Hamm, Sophie, 367
Holder, Lexis, 367
Hood, Montana, 368
Huff, Kiley, 368
Hughes, Taylor, 369
Ingle, Noah, 369
Ison, Jayden, 369
Jackson, Abigail, 370
Jefferson, Serenity, 370
Johnson, Abbie, 371
Kamplain, Jeremy (J.J.), 371
Kelly, (Cassie) Lauren, 371
Kennedy, Malakai, 372
King, Zoie, 372
Kinsler, Jarred, 372
Lancaster, Laci, 373
Laney, Maddy, 373
Lane, Aiden, 374
Lane, Luke, 374
Lawson, Kharis, 374
Lawson, Sarah, 374
Lester, Emma, 375
Lewis, Hunter, 375
Maggard, Kylie, 376
McCowen, Hannah, 376
Meade, Lexy, 377
Miller, Keyonna, 377
Moore, Blake, 377

- Moore, Tabatha Leado Cheyenne, 378
Morelock, Keyan, 378
Mullins, Ben, 378
Mullins, Jordan, 379
Mullins, Marissa, 379
Mullins, Sebastian, 379
Nida, Chloe, 380
Reyes Onate, Anahi, 380
Orange, Julie, 380
Orange, Riley, 381
Osborne, Brycen, 381
Owens, Ethan, 381
Palmer, Dylan, 381
Parsons, Savana, 382
Pennington, Kami, 382
Peterson, Jacelyn, 382
Phillips, Abby, 383
Phillips, Alyssa, 383
Pleasant, Eli, 383
Poore, Dylan, 383
Rasnick, Makenna, 384
Redman, Adam, 384
Cantor-Redman, Lucy, 384
Richardson, Angel, 385
Russell, Payton, 385
Rutherford, Kaylee, 385
Ryan, Joseph, 386
Satterfield, Kyndal, 386
Schlobohm, Eli, 386
Shular, Ethan, 387
Shupe, Alexis Raeann, 387
Smith, Ethan, 388
Spain, Landon, 389
Spears, Cloe, 389
Stacy, Cameron, 389
Stanley, Gabe, 389
Stapleton, Elijah, 390
Stewart, Caitlynn, 390
Stivers, Kamieron, 390
Summers, Kayleigh, 391
Sutphin, Lance, 391
Swinney, Gracie, 391
Taylor, Gavin, 392
Taylor, Maddox Wesley, 392
Teasley, Josh, 392
Thacker, Braylen, 393
Thomas, Avery, 393
Tucker, Leah, 393
Valdez, Abigail, 393
Varner, Sydnee, 394
Wagner, Jerri, 394
Walker, Brooklyn, 395
Wardell, Colin, 395
Welch, Payton, 395
Wells, Tucker, 396
White, Madison, 396
Whitt, James, 397
Wilder, Cameron, 398
Williams, Gauge, 398
Witt, Katelynn, 399
Woods, Yasmin, 399
- VIRGINIA HIGH SCHOOL**
- Hurd, Crystal, 402
Davis, Brandy, 402
Fisher, Crystal, 403
Miles, A.J., 404
Mullins, Tristan, 404
Owens, Breanna, 404
Phipps, Gabrielle, 404
Sluss, Abigail, 407
Snead, Emma, 408
Taylor, Adam, 409
- BARTER THEATER**
- Brown, Katy, 454
Bush, Catherine, 454
Hamilton (Atkinson), Megan, 455
Shreve, Peyton, 455
- ART & MUSIC**
- Galliher, Melissa, 422
Romeo, Jonathan, 423
Hughes, Tyler, 424
Barton, Jaden, 424
Blackwell, Aleeah, 424
Boardwine, Kayden, 424
Boone, Conner, 424
Burke, Callie, 424
Burkett, Amelia, 424
Campbell, Nick, 424
Davis, Landen, 424
Evans, Brady, 424
- Funk, Zeke, 425
Grizzle, Lilly, 425
Gross, Andrew, 425
Hall, Allex, 425
Hamilton, Brody, 425
Hammons, Camille, 425
Holfield, Kendra, 425
Johnson, Aubrey, 425
Johnson, Olivia, 425
Johnson, Sophia, 425
Lawson, Logan, 425
Leach, Jaden, 425
McKinney, Aspen, 425
Mullins, Bryson, 426
Mullins, Parker, 426
Phillips, Gunner, 426
Rhymer, Callie, 426
Riner, Ella, 426
Riner, Johnny, 426
Rose, Carson, 426
Ruff, Tate, 426
Seay, Taylor, 426
Skeens, Tashawn, 426
Stutzman, Josephine, 426
Vance, Brooklyn, 426
Ward, Aiden, 426
Williams, Cailey, 427
Wilson, Zane, 427
Russell Hines, Andrea, 427
County, Lee, 427
Aldridge, Huxley, 428
Bach, Bellah, 428
Bates, Avery, 428
Blanken, Gracie, 428
Burke, Hayden, 428
Burton, Breanna, 428
Burton, Erica, 428
Cantor, Luke, 428
Childers, Devon, 428
Clark, Addison, 428
Clark, J.T., 428
Cope, Zack, 428
Cowden, Leah, 429
Crusenberry, Chloe, 429
Eldridge, Aaron, 429
Fortner, Ava, 429
Fortner, Mia, 429

Gale, Joshua, 429
Greer, Kaylee, 429
Hines, Lila, 429
Hines, Michael, 429
Hixson, Ben, 429
Hudson, Brayden, 429
Jerrell, Kameron, 430
Johnson, Shelby, 430
Jones, Allie, 430
Jones, Kayla, 430
King, Karen, 430
King, Offie, 430
Lane, Kayla-Shea, 430
Lawson, Jaden, 430
Leichtenberg, Chase, 430
Lindsay, Josslyn, 430
Mabe, Jakob, 430
Maness, Janell, 431
Milam, Latisha, 431
Miles, Drake, 431
Mister, Braxton, 431
Moore, Ashley, 431
Moore, Ryan, 431
Morgan, Isabella, 432
Munsey, Lincoln, 432
Nash, Addison, 432
Neff, Evan, 432
Neff, Hagan, 432
Neff, Jacob, 432
Oaks, Isabella, 432

Parks, Haygen, 432
Parsons, Joseph, 432
Pennington, Joslyn, 432
Pilon, Jacob, 433
Price, Landon, 433
Reed, Austin, 433
Ridings, Dalton, 433
Robbins, Kailyn, 433
Rorrer, Kylee, 433
Scott, Marley, 433
Payton Scott, Michael, 433
Stafford, Ava, 433
Sykes, Breanna, 434
Tackett, Willow, 434
Taylor, Brycen, 434
Taylor, Willow, 434
Taylor, Zachary, 434
Tritt, Blake, 434
Woods, Jace, 434
Wynn, Molly, 434
Zamora, Emelina, 435
Aguilar, Yasmin, 435
Washington, Jaysha, 435
Shepherd, Sydney, 436
Duvall, Alyssa, 436
Moran, Elizabeth, 437
Sanchez, Emely, 437

BEFORE & AFTER
Shuler, Sheila, 478

STONEWALL JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL
Ross, Leah, 460
Rodgers, René, 461
Shazor, Langley, 462
Long, Alexander, 462
Fields, Sindy, 463

COMPETITIONS, FESTIVALS & ACHIEVEMENTS
Hailey, Cathy, 446
Todd, Candace, 447
Ican, Leah, 448
Marovelli, Anthony, 448
Green, Natalya, 449
Annibell, Joseph, 449
Estrada, Cassandra, 449
Turner Jr., Kevin, 450
Yannarell, Nathan, 450
Romeo, Jonathan, 451

LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA
Treadway, Sandra, 470
Bridge, Amy, 470
Lopez, Dessiree, 473
Lucas, Nirian, 473
Mun, Christina, 473
Sterne, Lori, 474
Wakilzada, Zahra, 474
Sebenaler, Jessica, 475