

Students write about **FEAR** & express **OPINIONS**

CHALLENGING FEAR



By Maggie Sullivan
MILTON HIGH SCHOOL, GRADE 10

I had pictured this moment so many times before in my head, so that now that it is actually in front of me, at my fingertips, it almost doesn't seem real.

There is a slight breeze, faintly ruffling my fair hair. ...It's so high up. I can see everything below me. Tiny specks. ...

I take a small step forward.

I have wanted this for so long. Not because I am unhappy, not because I want to die. Because I don't. I don't want to die. I fear death in a way I cannot explain. I see faces before my eyes that beg me to back off the ledge. But I just want — need — to know what it's like. Need to know what it's like that very last second. It is a desire that has overpowered my soul since I can remember, a curiosity that quite literally killed the cat.

This is it. I take my last step forward, and I am falling ... falling ... falling.

The first second is overwhelming. My stomach drops as my body does, but that is the only unenjoyable aspect of what I am doing.

I let go of the rope attached to my harness and swing my legs up, intertwining them for dear life on the rope. Even with my body stretched out like this, perpendicular to the ground, I am nowhere near touching it. I am flying horizontally away from the climbing wall from where I jumped.

As my ride on the zip line comes to a slow, I am grabbed by someone and directed to the ladder.

"How was it?!"

Too many words rush through my

body: amazing, beautiful, breathtaking, stunning...

My hands sweat with adrenaline as I shakily unclip the carabiners. I want to cry.

Never have I experienced such a thing. Never have I understood what it meant to die. Never have I fulfilled such a strong desire.

Never has abandoning fear left me so breathless.



VERMONT WRITES DAY UPDATE

At least 51 schools — and some 8,000 students — did the seven-minute write. YWP has sent 150+ selected "Dear President Obama" letters to Washington. We'll let you know if we hear back.

NEXT VERMONT WRITES DAY MARCH 17

Check youngwritersproject.org or vermontwrites.ywvpt.net for details as the day approaches.

NEXT PROMPT: Send in your best "general" writing — stories, poems, essays, whatever. Submit to: youngwritersproject.org

Young Writers Project is an independent nonprofit dedicated to creating a generation of confident, passionate Vermont writers. YWP works with students and now with schools through its new online writing classrooms.

My opinion **ISLAM**

By Selma Ibrahimovic
SPAULDING HIGH SCHOOL, GRADE 10

In modern times, we have many different people who believe in various different religions. Each religion has its own rituals and expectations. Christianity is the world's biggest religion, followed by Islam. Many people have different opinions about Islam, and many opinions are stated with such a little knowledge of this religion.

One thing that stands out to me so much is how so many people just think about Islam when they think about Islam. Muslims live worldwide and they are not all Iraqis or terrorists. Not all Iraqis are terrorists. Just because a few people from that country decide to do something politically unintelligent, does not mean everybody is the same. Muslims are just like Christians: Some are religious, some are not, some are proud of their religion, and some are not. However, Muslims are treated differently.

People are more "suspicious" of Islam as a result of the terrible incident that took place in New York and killed many innocent people in 2001.

Islam is a very "clean" religion. It is one of those religions that people convert to because they want to be clean of sins. They do not smoke, drink, swear or do anything of that nature. Again, as I stated before, there are some people who are more religious than others. People who are more religious are usually people in the Middle East. They have different expectations from the Muslims in other parts of the world. Many people would not know if a Bosnian woman was a Muslim, because we do not cover every inch of our bodies.

Scared

By Breana West

BARRE TOWN MIDDLE AND ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL, GRADE 4

One night I heard a loud, crashing sound in the kitchen. I ran in to see what was the matter. I saw a plate smashed into pieces and heard a huff and a puff. I saw a black figure and I got really scared. I ran into my room. I tried to scream, but couldn't. Then I got really curious to go see what happened — plus my brother was still out there. My words came back, but I did not want to scream. I ran into the kitchen and my hand flew at the light switch, turning it on. And you know what? I looked where the black figure was. It was my coat on the chair and the huffing and puffing was my dog Max. I looked where the plates were and I saw my cat in there lying down. So it was my cat who broke the plate. I calmed down and went to sleep.

Since people do not know that we are Muslims we are not treated the same way as a Middle Eastern person would be treated. We are not judged as soon as we are seen because we have a different appearance than other Muslims that have different beliefs and come from a different cultural background.

One thing that I think all Muslims have in common is Islamic holidays. We have three holidays that we all celebrate! Ramadan, Eid Al-Fitr, and Eid Al-Adha. Ramadan is a month in a year when all

*"I am
just like you,
and
you are
just like me"*

Muslims are required to fast from sunrise to sunset to help cleanse our souls of sins. This holiday is highly respected and recognized. Eid Al-Fitr is a holiday that lasts three days and occurs right after the holy month of Ramadan. This is the time when you call your family, friends, and neighbors, and get together and celebrate. Eid Al-Adha, also known as "Festival of the Sacrifice," is another major holiday in Islam. This festival takes place at the end of Hajj. Some countries celebrate it by skinning sheep in honor of their family member(s) who have passed away. Then the sheep is distributed to neighbors with a special Islamic greeting.

The thing I want people to see is that not all Muslims are the same, and people should not judge Islam by the actions of a few people who did something wrong. I want non-Muslim people to see Islam the same way they see Christianity and Judaism. Do not take your friends' side and discriminate against Islam just because they happen to see it from the wrong point of view. Teach yourself about it first. I am just like you, and you are just like me; our only difference is religion. Should we really let that get in the way? Different beliefs should not segregate us; we should not let them segregate us.

Scared 2

By Alicia Martin

SPAULDING HIGH SCHOOL, GRADE 12

There have been many times I was scared, but there was this one specific time. One night my mom and I were headed home from the mall and we stopped at a convenience store to get some sodas. I went in to get them, and while I was in there a really creepy guy walked in. He stared at me and kept following me around. It was really freaky so I quickly got the sodas and walked out to the car. Of course he had parked right next to us and when I walked out he did, too. He was walking really fast, trying to catch up to me. I swear I thought he was going to grab me or something, and it was just really scary. I never felt so scared before.

Ever since then I have never liked going to that particular store.