

Week 25: Writing prompts — “Iraq” and “Bullying”

Drifting off into Iraq

By BRANDEN TAYLOR
Mount St. Joseph Academy, Grade 9

While I sit in class I hear the word Iraq. Immediately my mind wanders. I think of all the people working hard and trying to keep me free. But at the same time I think of my uncle who will be leaving the safe place and entering the place where he could possibly die. These thoughts rush through my head and at the same time my mind is blank. The war is normal but has no meaning anymore. Just then I snap back into reality. My teacher asks me a question. I answer and I realize I had drifted off because of one word ... Iraq.

I hear

By ASHLEY HAVEN
Rutland Middle School, Grade 8

I hear America crying
I can hear the soldiers crying
I can hear the families begging
I can hear the gunshots and the pain.
I can hear Bush telling them to stay.
I can hear the bad news
I can hear the mournful cries
I can hear their stomachs growling
I can hear them coming home safe
But somehow changing.

I hear America crying.

Open your eyes

By MAYR SNIATKOWSKI
Dover Elementary School, Grade 5

Iraq: That is what everyone is talking about these days. People talk about how we shouldn't be there. My opinion is that maybe if people would think about it they would understand that if we left Iraq and hid in the safety of our homes, our homes wouldn't be so safe anymore because the people in Iraq would come and declare war on us.

On the Web

at

youngwritersproject.org

CHANGE YOUR HIGH SCHOOL! A special challenge on the site: Tell us one thing you'd change to improve your high school. Your voice matters: Educational leaders and the Vermont Principals Association are developing a program aimed at helping students get more voice in school decisions and curriculum. Your voice will help focus that project.

Aggravation

By NATHAN BEAUREGARD
Benson Village School, Grade 8

One day I was aggravated Annoyed Bothered. I had been called names Simple names. Aggravation I could feel it Building up. I couldn't hold it. I wouldn't. I wouldn't stand for it.	Not any more. I wanted to hit her, But I couldn't afford The punishment. So I turned my head, And said a word A horrible word Especially to her. I need to learn To watch what I say. Because the punishment, Was worse.
---	---

Bullying

By JOHN RIKER
Mount Saint Joseph's Academy, Grade 9

You can beat me
Cuss and spit on me
Push me
But you don't hurt me.
You bully me 'cause you can
But you don't understand.
I know you do it to feel big
Because someone at home
Never loved
Never cared
Never gave you any respect.
So go ahead and push me 'cause tomorrow
I'll still give you the respect
Love
And care that we all deserve.

Pebbles

By BRIDGET IVERSON
Mount Mansfield Union High School, Grade 9

I'm laughing and He's laughing Too. The insults are Friendly, tossed like Pebbles. They hardly chip his Smooth Exterior Shell. It must not hurt Because then He'd ask us to Stop. Right?	I'm laughing to show it's a Joke And he's laughing Alongside Because it's just Fun. Right? If it hurts he Doesn't show it. He just Laughs Along with us. But Pebbles still Sting.
--	---

COLOR ME



Sean McCleary, an eighth-grader at Hartford Memorial Middle School, says this of his self-portrait: "The reason I chose to draw a rising sun in the background was because it reminded me of one morning when my mom and I were going to the airport, and we saw the sun rising over the tips of the mountains. I thought that it was one of the coolest things I'd ever seen. I'll never forget that morning."



Rebecca White, an eighth-grader at Hartford Memorial Middle School, says this of her self-portrait: "I've always considered myself a colorful person and this picture certainly shows it. My main inspiration was the Northern Lights. I used pastels in many different shades to show my personality and the natural beauty of the Aurora Borealis."

Reflection

By RACHEL SULLIVAN
Burlington High School, Grade 11

"I hate you."
She looks up, startled, innocent wide eyes gazing back, astonished, into my own.
"Look at you. You're repulsive. How can I not hate you?"
She looks down, fingering the worn tattered edges of her graying hoodie, her breath catching audibly in her throat.
"You're disgusting. I bet that hasn't been washed in weeks."
She looks up quickly, tears gathering at the corners of her eyes, making them shine in the harsh lighting.
"And let's not forget those jeans," I add, glancing down at the hole-riddled atrocities, "they really don't do anything for that pear shape you've got going on."
Her hands go immediately, almost protectively, to her midsection, causing her to double over slightly, shoulders hunching in shame.

I shake my head at her, "It's too bad none of those diets are working for you. Seriously. You must just have been a born cow, since you hardly eat anything."
I can tell I hit a nerve as her lip quivers, but what would normally be a sympathetic reaction fast becomes disgust at the sight of her pathetic whimpering.
"You really don't have a spine, do you? I guess that's why you never win anything. That's probably also why you suck at sports. Remember gym last week when that puny little kid managed to knock you over, and then everyone laughed? That must have been so embarrassing! Then again, that kind of stuff happens to losers like you all the time, so maybe by now you've built up immunity to it."
Clearly not, as tears begin to roll down her pasty cheeks, dribbling down her chin and landing on her grimy sweatshirt. Then again, I wouldn't have expected anything less from a wretch like her.
"Oh, don't cry," I growl at her, "It only makes me hate you more."

She bites her lip and does her best to stop the tears, but she doesn't quite succeed in arresting her clearly visible anguish.

"I bet you'd shut up real quick if Paul was here."

That catches her attention, and I laugh at the pure ridiculousness of her schoolgirl crush.

"Yeah, I bet you would. He's real cute, isn't he? Of course, he only goes out with cool, skinny, clean, pretty girls, so I wouldn't exactly hold my breath if I was you."

"He could like me," she whispers, voice crackling with emotion. "You don't know."

I snort derisively, "Yeah. Sure. What was that thing he said to you the other day in the lunch line? As I recall, it was pretty romantic."

She looks down at the floor, hugging herself, "That doesn't matter."

"Sure it does. He asked you to move. That's the most acknowledgement he's ever given you, and that's got to count for something."

"Enough!" She yells, eyes livid with feeling, "I've had enough! Just leave me alone!"

I shake my head slowly, "No, you haven't. Not yet. You see, I just can't live with you like this. Something has to be done."

She looks at me, recoiling within herself, almost as if she knows what I'm about to do.

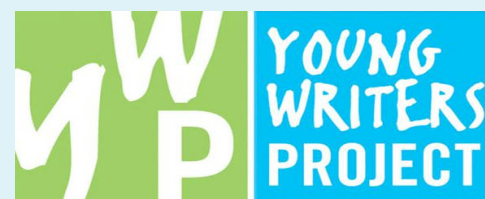
Hot, white electricity shoots through my veins as I look at her, seeing her greasy hair, vacant eyes, dirty clothes and pasty white skin.

I hate her.
I really hate her.

With a cry full of loathing and rage, I raise my fist and throw all my weight behind it, striking her squarely in the face.

A scream.
A flash of pain.

And then her image explodes, the glass shattering as the mirror breaks, the sharp pieces shredding my skin and spilling my blood all over the floor.



YWP is a grassroots nonprofit that helps students write better and gain an audience for their best work. YWP offers writing prompts, special projects and a safe Web site, youngwritersproject.org, where students share their writing, comment on the news and each other's work, participate in group discussions and work on projects. YWP is indebted to the generosity of the Vermont Business Roundtable which is funding its core work for the second year.



UPDATES

YWP thanks Ann Chapman's creative writing class at Leland and Gray Union High School in Brattleboro for assisting in the selection process for this week's submissions.

DEADLINE APPROACHING:

CHAMPLAIN COLLEGE WRITING CONFERENCE

Don't miss out on this year's CC Young Vermont Writers' Conference. Held on Memorial Day weekend, this conference is a great experience. **Deadline for applications is April 1.** Go to: www.champlain.edu/write/ for more information and application forms. Or call: (802) 865-6451

The Daily Read

By MATTEO BJORNSSON
Woodstock Union High School, Grade 10

As I get my daily news from the walls
Of the bathroom stalls
I read so much needless hate
That the last user felt the need to make.
Why is it people need to declare such words at all
In this meaningless place on the wall?

The bully

By JORDAN DiNAPOLI
Monkton Central School, Grade 5

One time there was a girl named Ilianna who got bullied by a kid named Bruno. (If your name is Bruno I was not thinking about you.)

It all started when Ilianna was at her school getting her lunch out of her locker. All of a sudden Bruno came up to her and stole her lunch.

"Hey why did you do that?" Ilianna asked in shock.

"Because I am hungry and I have only stolen three other lunches today," Bruno said getting very mad.

"I am not going to deal with this right now because I have had a bad day already so if you bully anybody else that I see I will go straight to the principal." Ilianna said very strictly.

"That will never happen. I'm allowed to bully anytime I want to so, HA!" Bruno replied.

The next day ... Ilianna saw Bruno bullying a kid named Eliza so she ran and got the principal. The principal had a very big talk with Bruno and Bruno's parents.

From then on, Bruno never bullied anybody again.

Cheating

By MINDY YEUNG
Hartford Memorial Middle School, Grade 8

One glance,
Then another.
I try to conceal my paper,
But their hungry eyes follow it like a cheetah stalking its prey.
I want them to stop,
But I can't tell them.
They'll think I'm selfish,
And I'll drop a level of popularity.
They steal another quick glimpse at my paper,
And I submit.
I push the test farther out on the desk,
And let them devour it,
Like a cheetah wolfing down its blood-covered prey.
Finally they thank me.
With vast smiles, it almost warms my heart,
But I know their smiles are phony
They are through with me.
Leaving me like a cheetah dashing off for another prey.

Check out the Web site for more student writing – blogs, forums, podcasts, commenting, a Writer's Library and the 2008 prompts. Register and log in to participate.