

Week 37: Young writers wrap up another year of work

The face of time past

By EMILY KULIG
Rutland High School, Grade 10

The boy tried to balance the door as he opened it unsteadily for his mother and father. The mother shook her fur coat as she walked in, and the little boy took off his hat and gloves. The father brushed off his shiny new shoes.

They took a seat in one of the pews closer to the front with a scowl from the father, as their normal seat was in the back. The father knelt down to pray, and the mother and the little boy followed suit. The boy, whose name was Jacob, finished quickly, sat back and made shapes and animals with his hands.

The father finished second, and started to look around to greet people he knew with a silent nod. He turned to his son and scolded him for such behavior in such a grand and pious dwelling. The mother took her time, for it was still quite early, and the service wouldn't start for another five or 10 minutes. She then sat back, satisfied, and grabbed her husband's hand, smiling. He kissed her smoothly and softly on the cheek. She made a gesture of gratitude, for she had been tired of her husband's scratchy beard that was no longer there. She leaned forward and looked at her son, who was on the other side of her spouse, and gave him a smile. She watched him swinging his feet, as they couldn't touch the ground just yet; she grabbed a hymn book and started browsing through it.

Jacob then felt a chill on his legs, realized that someone must have come in, and turned to look.

An old man with a cane walked slowly down the side aisle. The child stared at the old man, taking in his ragged coat and shoes. Through his gloves you could see his knuckles, white from gripping his cane so firmly. His face was decorated with wrinkles, unshaven and frowzy, and his eyes were a delicate soft gray. The father turned to see his son looking at the old man and he too looked over him for a while. He then realized his manners and looked away. He turned to his son and whispered, "It's not polite to stare, son." Jacob looked back at his father and then at his shoes, ashamed at what he had done.

The old man took the seat in front of the family. He then knelt down to pray, and when the service started he was still on his knees. The church stood up as the cross led the priest, servants and reader. The noise of paper filled the small church, as the priest echoed a Psalm number.

The mother and father shared a book, and the father thrust a book to his son's chest. A soft cry escaped him and his face reddened as he took the book and gave a glance to his father. He opened the book, and sang an out-of-tune melody.

The old man then got up and Jacob studied him, glancing ever so often at his father, for fear of another scolding. The old man reached in his coat pocket and pulled out the same book the boy was holding. But it was different. The color was faded; the book dirty. It was about to fall apart, the boy thought. The pages inside the book were an ugly shade of yellow and were ripped and torn. Jake imagined that the aged book would have a horrid smell like the deep-rooted, mistreated books he used at school.

The old man opened the book, and began singing. Jacob thought it strange that the old man never once looked down at his tattered old book. He stopped singing and listened to the old man. His voice was confident and right. It never wavered and was a warm, tenor tone with an attractive intonation that was never wrong. The boy's jaw dropped. A dove must have flown in here into the old man's mouth and was singing his sweet tune. Not the old man! He was the loudest, most beautiful voice in the church. Even better than my mother, he thought. He gazed in total amazement that something so old could produce something so young and dynamic.

After the entrance song, the church sat down and up countless times and Jacob slipped into deep thoughts about the aged man. Time flew by and his father looked at him, smiling. The boy snapped out of his thoughts, and realized that church was almost over and that his favorite part of the Mass was here. His father grasped his wallet and opened it, and pulled out a 10 dollar bill and bestowed it upon his son. He took the crisp, green bill and examined it. What power, he thought. I'll be just like my father and earn money like this. He drank in the sight of the fresh money and sniffed its scent, remembering, dreaming.

The old man reached inside his pocket as well, and pulled out some change. As the basket was passed around, the old man dropped in his change with a clink. When Jake deposited the bill, he looked at the coins. One dime, three nickels and five pennies. Jacob sat back down and tried to then count up how much the old man put in. He finally came to the comprehension of 30 cents. Embarrassed, he looked down again at his shoes; even secretly knowing how poor the old man was sent him on a guilt train with a great, loud engine and an even louder horn.

The service then came to an end and the ostentatious couple stood up to sing the final song. Jacob stood up, too, but didn't sing. Instead, he studied every singing note, every tone the old man sang. As the boy's parents left with Jacob in tow, the boy stopped short and turned to the old man. He gave the old man a smile, and the old man looked at the young boy, returning the smile. His father called sternly for him and as the little boy turned his head to look, the old man directed his eyes toward the restful altar. The boy noticed that his lips were moving ever so slightly and saw some beads in his hands. Jake bent his head in confusion and then saw a tear materialize on the old man's cheek, sliding down like liquid metal and finally disappearing under his chin. A shocked expression broke across the boy's face, feeling it was his fault, he'd made this tattered man cry. He decided he needed to escape, and quickly. So the boy then stepped out into the chilling air, and left the old man behind.

THE LAST HUDDLE



Rebecca Sheeran, *Essex High School*

Sheeran writes that this photograph and the others in the series were "meant to reflect my love for basketball and the emotions that come with the game. I tried to capture the emotion of that moment in time and ... tried to capture unity and how you can still be an individual while working toward one goal. The emotions I was trying to capture were hope, desire, expectations and determination. I chose to have my photos in black and white because it doesn't distract from the emotions of the subject."

Open all summer. youngwritersproject.org Write on!

I hear, I fear, the wide world calling me

By DOUGLAS CLIFT | Mount Mansfield Union High School, Grade 12

I hear, I fear, the wide world calling me
But still I feel a deep connection here
Uncertainty is all that I can see

I still remember tumbling from the tree
And hands, her hands that wiped away the tear
I hear, I fear, the wide world calling me.

I still remember bouncing on his knee
And music, music whispered in my ear
Uncertainty is all that I can see

I still remember Christmas morning glee
And wonder, wonder at the magic near
I hear, I fear, the wide world calling me

I still remember standing by the sea
And watching, watching our sun disappear
Uncertainty is all that I can see

And now, they tell me, I must turn and flee
And leave the people I have held so dear
I hear, I fear, the wide world calling me
Uncertainty is all that I can see

Fantasies

By HANNAH REICHEL
Dummerston Middle School, Grade 7

You and me
Our hands entwined

Have picked dandelions
Spoken of who is kind
Have danced in the fields
To the songs in our head
Have traveled all over
Fought over bread
Have cried all night
Into puddles of fear
Have chuckled long hours
Have worried of something so near
Have dreamed up fantasies
And built our own kingdom
Have read books of adventure
Basked in freedom
Have chased the ladybugs
That were holed up for winter
Have made up songs
Held races to see who's the best sprinter
Have hurt each other's feelings
Then made up
Have dreamt of being ladies
Wished for a pup.

So much fun we've had
You and me
I don't think it a shame
That you're imaginary!

Geta

By BRIDGET IVERSON
Mount Mansfield Union High School, Grade 9

The kimono-fabric straps press
cruelly into the tops of my
feet, but the wood is sanded smooth
to the point of
almost
soft.
The shoe is
wood
and fabric
and a little piece of metal on the
sole
that has no purpose except to
make a clicking noise
when I step.
The bottom is
pitted, pockmarked, marred
with the indents of
gravel
from when I wore these outside last summer.
They seem
disfigured, now
scarred by the bite of
gravel teeth.
A tiny, complicated
geometric symbol
is carved
painstakingly
into the back of the
thick wood sole.
Am I the only one who notices?

Again... none

By CASEY HAYES
Rutland High School, Grade 12

I wish you could see
The look on your face at this precise moment.
The way those blue eyes sparkle.
And your lashes seem to be taking a nap.
You're only half-smiling
'Cause you're not entirely sure
How to handle me.
(Or this situation.)
I'm sorry I'm a disaster.
(I never meant to drag you down with me.)

When I

By CAITLYN REILLY
Dover Elementary School, Grade 6

When I walk I move
When I speak I talk
When I sleep I'm still
And when I think I'm changing the world.

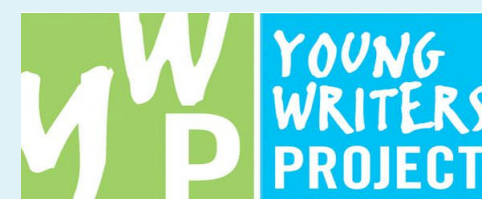
In love

By KELSEY M. LEBLANC
Proctor High School, Grade 9

She's with him
So much in love.
They're so perfect
Walking down the hall.
Hand in hand and smiling.
She has always longed for someone
Like him, nice, sweet, kind, handsome.
Someone to protect her when she is hurt
Someone to talk to when she's alone
Someone to make her day so much better
just by smiling.
He's everything to her.
She's so in love.

He's taken her heart; it's his now.
To do what he pleases, except break.
She trusts him, admires him and adores him.
She's in love.
They're meant to be, she knows it.
He's all she can think about, talk about and dream about.
She can't stand being away from him.
She wants to be in his arms once more.
She's so in love.

They kiss good-bye and butterflies dance in her stomach.
It hurts to be away but she can't wait for her
dreams
Which will be filled with thoughts of him.
She's so in love and can't help it.



Today, Young Writers Project finishes up its 2007/08 season. Young Writers Project is an independent nonprofit that supplies great student work each week to five daily newspapers around the state of Vermont.

This project is made possible by the interest and generosity of those newspapers. Please continue to support the fruits of their hard work.

The project is deeply appreciative of the help of hundreds of Vermont teachers, who incorporated the YWP into their classrooms. And, of course, none of this would be possible without the work of thousands of students.

YWP, which became an independent nonprofit in 2006, has received 7,000 submissions for this series from students at 225 schools.

YWP has received 14,000 postings — and more than 40,000 comments — on its Web site: youngwritersproject.org.

The entire project is made possible with generous support from many. YWP has been receiving its primary support from the Vermont Business Roundtable, an association of business and higher education leaders who understand the importance of good writing skills.



YWP has also received grants from the A.D. Henderson Foundation, the Oakland Foundation and the Richard and Deborah Tarrant Foundation.

And YWP is indebted to the many individuals who also have given to the work of this organization. YWP depends on individuals' generosity and if you are interested in learning more, please go to youngwritersproject.org and click on "Support."

A final thanks to you, the readers. We are particularly appreciative of all of you who read this fine work and then made the effort to drop the student a note. Your words of support to these young writers has power you can only imagine. Sometimes, a word of encouragement is all a student needs.

See you in September when the series resumes.

And young writers are welcome to go to youngwritersproject.org, which will be open all summer.

—Geoffrey Gevalt

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