

YWP YOUNG WRITERS PROJECT



(Editor's note: The photograph above was taken last winter by Brandon Sweet, a young farmer from Essex Junction and student at Essex High School. The story below won an award sponsored by St. Albans Cooperative.)

Farm life

By Conner St. Pierre
COLD HOLLOW CAREER CENTER

I live on a farm in Enosburg. We own about 550 acres and about 250 of it is tillable. We milk about 110 cows in a tie-stall barn. Because this is not like a parlor it is a lot more manual work. We also raise about 120 heifers. We sell some of them and milk the rest. We start milking at 4:30 a.m. and at 4:00 p.m.

It usually takes between two and three hours to milk. It takes a little longer at night because we have to feed the cows, which we only do at night. We raise all of our own animals.

In the summer we crop all of our own land. My job in summer is to haul feed. We spread our manure after every cut of hay. We usually get between 3 and 4 cuts.

In the winter we work in the sugarbush and cut wood. We usually cut about 50 or 60 cords per year. We hire a logger to pull the wood out into a pile and we cut and split it to sell. In the sugar woods we walk the lines to look for downed trees. We cut off trees that have fallen on the lines.

In the future I would like to own the farm. I like working on it and prefer working outside doing manual work like sugaring or driving a tractor. I also like working with cows and being my own boss.

28. General. Deadline: Apr. 9.

29. Farming. Do you farm? Have you ever worked on a farm? Visited one? Write about it. Do you know a farmer? Talk to her or him and tell their story. Try not to romanticize. Tell a story that describes the reality of farming today. Deadline: April 16.

30. Rain. Tell us a story about your best or worst experience in the rain. *Alternate:* **Phobias.** Heights, small spaces, thunderstorms, spiders. Do you have a phobia? How do you deal with it? Deadline: Apr. 30.

31. Dreams. Nightmares, happy dreams, daydreams. Write about a dream you have had. Or, write about your dreams for the future. *Alternate:* **Poetry.** Write an ode, limerick or a shaped poem. Deadline: May 7.

32. Success. At last! Write about a time you succeeded at something you worked really hard on. *Alternate:* **Memorial Day.** What does this holiday mean to you? Do you do anything special, or do you just sleep in? Deadline: May 14.

33. General. Your best work. Deadline: May 21.

Submit work, view prompts and see all selections on:

youngwritersproject.org

Prompts for 2009-2010

Teachers and students are encouraged to participate in Young Writers Project by submitting best work done in class or outside of school, or by responding to one or both of each week's prompts. This year's prompts were gleaned from hundreds of ideas suggested by teachers and students. Post work by creating an account and creating an entry on youngwritersproject.org. Deadline is Friday afternoons; work is selected and published in *The Messenger* within several weeks.

Students are encouraged to send best photos as well. Info on youngwritersproject.org under CREATE>>Images.

The prompts for this school year:

4. General Writing Submit your best non-prompt general writing. This call for general entries is repeated each month and you can use the same "general" term when submitting each time. Deadline: Oct. 2.

5. Ghosts. Do you believe in ghosts? Have you seen one? Tell us a ghost story. Make one up if you want, but make it believable. *Alternate:* **Favorite character.** Choose your favorite character from a book or movie and place them in a different story. Deadline: Oct. 9.

6. Object. Write about one object that defines you – or someone you know. Tell a story about why it is important to you (or them). Describe it from as many perspectives as possible. *Alternate:* **The bus.** Write a story that takes place on a bus. Deadline: Oct. 16.

7. The kitchen table. What happens at your kitchen table? Tell a story about a memorable moment at that table. If you don't have a table, or feel so inclined, create a fictionalized narrative of something happening at the kitchen table. *Alternate:* **Door.** Use these words in a story or poem: "I reached the door and knocked loudly ..." Deadline: Oct. 23.

8. General. Submit best non-prompt general writing you have created. This call for general entries is repeated each month and you can use the same "general" term when submitting each time. *Alternate:* **Hunting.** Share your favorite hunting stories or tell us how you feel about hunting. Deadline Oct. 30.

9. Sibling rivalry. Write a story about how you compete with a brother or sister. If you don't have a sibling, write about what it's like to be the lone child. *Alternate:* **Anger.** Rant about something that really ticks you off. Deadline: Nov. 6.

10. Winter Tales. Tell a story about winter; it can focus on the season or the holidays – the weather, the outdoors, or the emotions. A dozen selections will be given dramatic presentations by *Vermont Stage Company* in early December. Deadline: Nov. 13.

11. School. What experiences in school really engaged you? Deadline: Nov. 20.

12. Super powers. You've been granted powers never thought possible. What are they and what will you do with them? *Alternate:* **Excuses.** Write an excuse as to why you didn't do something that is so outrageous and funny we have to accept it. Deadline: Nov. 27.

13. General. Deadline: Dec. 4

14. An elder's story. Interview someone in an older generation — a family member or community member — and get from them a story you've never heard before. Re-tell that story. Focus on details and the most memorable moment; 400 words. You can fictionalize the story if you'd like. No real names needed. *Alternate:* **The big win.** Write about a time when you won big. Deadline Dec. 11.

15. Lost. Tell a story about losing something or getting lost. Write a story or poem about how you feel or how someone else felt because of a loss. *Alternate:* **Utopia.** What does your utopia look like? Provide images if you'd like. Deadline: Dec. 18.

16. Stuck. Describe a time when you found yourself in a tight spot. Tell us how you got there and what you did to get out of it. *Alternate:* **India.** What images come to mind? Write them down and tell us where those images come from? Are they accurate? Deadline: Jan. 8.

17. General. Deadline: Jan 15.

18. Stress. What stresses you out? How do you deal with stress? Write about a time when you have felt stressed out, or create a story in which the characters have to deal with a stressful situation. *Alternate:* **My story.** Pick a memorable moment from your life. Something that happened, something you did, something you witnessed. Tell a story about it that will tell us about you. 400 words, no real names, please. Give us detail. Deadline Jan. 22.

19. Faking it. Admit it, you've had to pull the wool over someone's eyes when trapped at an unexpected moment. Write about it. *Alternate:* **Four.** Write about the number four. Could be the time on the clock, the number of people or anything. Use the number in a story, poem or play. Deadline: Jan 29.

20. General. Deadline Feb. 5

21. Cold. Hate it? Love it? Want to move to Florida? Write about an experience you have had with cold. *Alternate:* **Rules.** What's the silliest or most pointless rule you've ever encountered? Tell a story about it and tell how you got around the rule or got the rule changed. Deadline: Feb. 12.

22. Elevator. You are in an elevator. The door opens and in walks an annoying type of person. Suddenly the elevator stops between floors...tell us what happens. (No real people, please!) *Alternate:* **Peeves.** What is your number one pet peeve? Or what are your top 10 peeves? Deadline Feb. 26.

23. Blue. "It was the most brilliant color blue I'd ever seen..." Work that phrase into a poem or a story. *Alternate:* **Photo Prompt** Write a story about this photo taken by Esther Bublely, 1943. (Go to youngwritersproject.org to download photo) Deadline: Mar. 5.

24. Avoidance. What do you avoid? What do you do to avoid doing it? Tell a story about a time when you avoided something. Make it funny. *Alternate:* **Intolerance.** In your life have you seen intolerance or prejudice or discrimination? Is there intolerance towards students who look different or dress differently? Tell a story about your own experience or observations. Deadline: Mar. 12.

25. General. Deadline: Mar. 19.

26. Pocket. You have found something strange in your pocket. Describe it to someone who has no sight. Tell the story of how it got there. *Alternate:* **My Town.** Write about your town or city. Tell us one anecdote that reveals something about your community — why you like it (or don't), what it stands for. You can tell a historical story. Deadline: Mar. 26.

27. Bullying. Have you been the recipient? What did it do to you? Have you ever bullied anyone? Why? *Alternate:* **Cell phones.** Make the case that cell phones should be allowed or should not be allowed in school. Due: Apr. 2.

Welcome to the first weekly installment of great writing by area students as part of a new partnership between the *St. Albans Messenger* and the Young Writers Project, a Vermont nonprofit dedicated to helping students improve their writing.

Each week we will feature work from Franklin and Grand Isle counties on this space as a tribute to students' talent, insight and energy. All work is submitted to youngwritersproject.org as part of scheduled prompts or as general writing created during and after class. Student and adult volunteers at Young Writers Project read all the submissions and then select best work for publication.

The mission of Young Writers Project is to engage students to write, help them get better at it and find authentic audiences for their best work. The organization:

- Oversees a civil, online community: youngwritersproject.org, where young writers can share work, give and receive feedback and post images and podcasts;
- Trains college students to mentor student work on youngwritersproject.org;
- Creates and supports Digital Writing Classrooms for schools (for more, go to: ywpschools.net); and
- Maintains a Web resource for teachers: digitalteachers.net, where teachers can access and share best practices.

Young Writers Project began as a nonprofit in August, 2006, after receiving founding support from the **Vermont Business Roundtable**. This think-tank for chief executives of Vermont's university and colleges and top businesses understood well the importance of strong writing skills.

Since then, Young Writers Project has received support from businesses, individuals and foundations, including:

- A.D. Henderson Foundation
- Amy E. Tarrant Foundation
- Bay and Paul Foundations
- Cabot Cheese
- Council on Vermont's Future
- FairPoint Communications
- Lake Champlain Basin Program
- Metz Family Foundation
- Northfield Savings Bank
- Oakland Foundation
- Physician's Computer Company
- Queen City Printers
- Richard & Deborah Tarrant Foundation
- Small Dog Electronics
- St. Albans Cooperative
- Vermont Humanities Council
- The Windham Foundation

Many individuals have also donated. For a full list of supporters, and information on how to donate, please go to: www.youngwritersproject.org.

Young Writers Project is looking forward to working with students in Franklin and Grand Isle counties and working with *The St. Albans Messenger*, which understands the value of community newspapers and the value of student voice. We hope you enjoy the student work. Please make sure to offer feedback to the students — you can change their lives!

— **Geoffrey Gevalt**
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