Writing: The Intertwined Branches of Human Inspiration

Marissa McPhillips

3 June 2014
# Table of Contents

**Prose**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eccentric and Exceptional Emily McNeiece (Interview)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veritas: A Gateway to the Past (Short Story)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Interview Leading to an Epiphany (Occasional Paper)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Coffee (Great Endings)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pieces of Pompeii (&quot;Photo” Story)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pieces of Pompeii: The Photo</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Employed Idler (The Play)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Poetry**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Favorite Poem</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chains (Imitation Poem)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottled Truth (Spoken Word Poem)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Your Information: Rebellious Control (Ransom Note poem)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reflection**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Reflection</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away.”

–Maya Angelou
Eccentric and Exceptional Emily McNeiece

4 February 2014

A leader; a comedian; a scholar; an athlete; a friend. She is all of those things, yet the tall, turtle-loving teenage runner described herself as “I don’t know…fun?” She could not have picked a better word. Emily McNeiece is a caring and entertaining friend who is always in the mood to talk about a good book or an interesting television show. Conversations with her are never tedious; she unearths ways to make anything hilarious with a well-timed witticism or an awkward aside, and on rare occasions, she questions philosophical points that examine how the world works, consequently confusing us all. If any superpower was available, she would choose the ability to bend air currents to her will. Her reasoning? “Flying would be a breeze, you don’t have to buy plane tickets, and you could glide and soar around randomly.” Despite her small laugh at her answer, her choices always have a logical reason, and discovering the good in every situation is one of her specialties. Rick Riordan, Neil Shusterman, Susan Collins, the creators of Avatar: The Last Airbender, and Starkid are all individuals on her bucket list to hopefully meet one day, but not just because they are famous. She smiles and laughs when she talks about their creations and work. The odd and unusual mix of science-fiction authors, entertainment originators, amusing playwrights, and brilliant actors inspire Emily because, in her own words, “they all created something. If I could meet anyone, they would have to be someone who created something. I want to know how they did it.” Emily seeks to understand the innovation and inner workings required to construct a masterpiece, the time and effort it takes to create an incredible piece of work because, in the future, she may able to repeat their endeavors to make a creation with her name on it. These hard-working, unique individuals reflect her own personality. Diligent and determined, the avid runner, reader, and writer inspires people around her with her
strength and desire to succeed. Nevertheless, Emily finds a way to bring a smile to everyone’s face and is there for everyone when they need her. As she carefully contemplates her schoolwork or dashes across the finish line of a race, Emily never ceases to work hard while finding pleasures in the little things in life, ultimately making her the best friend anyone could ever have.
The wind caresses my face with a gentle touch, brushing its icy fingers through my pitch-black locks of hair and across my cheeks. The gale carries multicolored leaves into the air, leaving them askew on the ground and spotting the pure blue sky with shades of red, orange, yellow, and brown. Suddenly, a gust of angry air slaps my skin, causing the leaves to flee from the scene and swirl above my head, spinning like a tornado had arrived. It stops. The leaves drop. Everything is still again.

I hate the wind. It signals the start of a storm; even on the clearest day the slightest breeze can transform into an ominous and damaging airstream that carries gray storm clouds with it, and then the rain. At least the rain can wash away what troubles you. That’s how I see it anyway. The wind only blows them away, sweeping them off your skin. But they can always come back.

The handcuffs around my wrist clang against my delicate bones as they ring in the breeze. Maybe that’s why I hate the wind. Every time it begins I can hear the sound of my shackles clanging against each other, reminding me I am still imprisoned. It taunts me. It is free to gust and gale and pick up leaves, but I am trapped in the metal mouth of justice. It was my own fault, of course, and I was consciously aware of what led to my incarceration. For there is nothing wrong with the American justice system; I was given a fair trial and had plenty of choices. My deeds had finally caught up with me.

“Come on Arabella”, Roger, the prison guard, said. “Back to your cell.”

He firmly grasped my forearm before I could resist and led me into the gates of the iron block of bars and orange jumpsuits they called jail. Fresh air can only last so long.
Roger continued to strengthen his grip on my arm to assert his authority and impress on looking watches. The rookie enforcer of justice just began work last week. Frazzled, the twenty-something year old would arrive to work with his frightened hair standing in the static, a piping hot large mug of coffee, and a dozen fresh doughnuts he would offer to coworkers to compensate for his tardy appearance. His uniform almost always had a stain on it: toothpaste, coffee, breakfast, anything. I almost pitied the guy. I don’t think he knew I held back my outrage and strength when he came to get me so not to embarrass him in front of his peers. I’d had my fair share of attempting to break free from the guards’ grip, most of them out of my own impulse and desperate effort to change my fate.

My dark hair and blue eyes contrasted with the bright construction-worker orange of the prison uniform. When I became irate, my father used to say, they would turn stormy gray as if clouds of anger rolled into my head.

“Your eyes. They are gray, child.” My father would gaze into my stare, a sardonic look of worry casting over his normally placid appearance. “Is something bothering you?”

“That’s ridiculous, dad,” I dissented. But he knew me all too well.

“You know Arabella,” he would pace back and forth across the floor with his arms crossed behind his back and the same expression of concern written across his face, contemplating my fueling ire, “before you become angry your eyes turn a shade of gray quite a contrast from your blue eyes. They are like clouds, child. They roll into your mind and block any rational thoughts or reason to reconsider your anger. They take over, and you allow them to.” My father would stop pacing, and say, with urgent solemnity, “Do not be like me. Do not let the storms control you. You are stronger than that.” He would often become enraged, but he had learned to control his antagonism. At least better than I could.
And of course, my temper would flare. My thoughts raced around my head, clanging against my skull until I could not understand myself. Everything would come rushing into my head, like all I had ever experienced dashed into my mind to cloud my judgment. I would lash out against my father who only tried to help, and I felt guilty, striking him when he had done nothing wrong. Lightning struck; the clouds of impulse and rage flooded my mind with torrential rain and wind. “What do you mean? I’m fine! I don’t know why you always say that!”

Hard and heavy, the cement door welcomed my listless body as the guard thrust me into the prison. Cold and clammy, my hands rattled against the chains of my shackles. My footsteps echoed in the dingy gray hall, and my feet lead me in the same direction it had countless times before.

Roger opened the door of the cell, vigilantly removed the handcuffs, and locked the bars behind me. He shuffled quickly down the hall. He was still terrified of some of the prisoners and always hurried away from the hall as soon as he had locked one convict in their designated cell. I closed my eyes and sighed. Loudly.

Parole begins tomorrow. Only one more night in this lonely cell. I guess that’s something to look forward to, right? Wrong. No home, no family. I was not going to tell the guards that though. I don’t want any more of their “guidance” or “rehabilitation”. I can work it out myself. I don’t know. I never know anymore. Decisions rarely come easily to me, but when I make them, they are –

Loud footsteps of the incoming guard interjected my train of thought. They always do.

“Got a letter for you,” Roger gruffly stated as he passed a perfect crisp white envelope through the slot on the door. Angry that he had rudely interrupted my thoughts once again, I ripped it out of his hands and shredded the flap, creating an uneven edge. Peering into the
envelope, I saw something shine. Unable to control myself, I dumped out the contents. A folded yellow paper and a key attached to a string fell to the hard cement floor of my cell. I carefully unfolded the paper to find the few words that an anonymous source had generously scribbled. *This will unlock the gates of your past.*

That’s informative. What past? My criminal past I already know. I lived through it enough times already, in my life and in my dreams.

I noticed another small scribble. Written so small I could barely make out the words, it read, *77 Thorn Road, Portland, Oregon.* An address? Are the gates of my past there? Or is it another nightmare coming to scoop me up? Maybe it’s both. I know where the road is, at least. From what I can remember, it’s actually pretty close.

I shrugged. Perfect timing mystery scribe, whoever you are. You caught the right girl on the right day. I have nothing better to do with my first day of parole.

The key had clanged to the unforgiving cement floor and bounced under my sad excuse for a bed. Clutching the paper in my hands, I searched for the key with another. I grasped the jagged metal edge of the key and examined it. It was like any ordinary key with some additional rust decorating the shiny metal, except for another word: *veritas.* Where have I heard that before? Ugh, it’s unbelievably frustrating. It seems after I was jailed, everything I had learned abruptly grew wings and flew out of my mind. Is it Greek? Latin? I guess I’ll figure it out tomorrow.

I tied the string so that the key laced my neck like a crude piece of jewelry and I lay on my bed, if you could call the sad lump of cushioning on another cement structure a bed. My eyes shut, and the blackness of my mind painted light brown and beige, the boring and repetitive colors of the court room, back to the day a group of strangers had decided part of my fate.
“Has the jury reached a verdict?” The corpulent protector of justice had blended with the jurors; all had the appearance of weary, overweight men who were late for their afternoon nap.

“Yes, your honor,” one of the men responded. “Guilty.”

One word; two syllables; years of confinement; all in those six letters spoken with great certainty. The evidence was clear I assume. The decision was truthful. I had killed him. I guess I was looking for some kind of enlightenment or epiphany. “Maybe she didn’t do it after all”, “She’s too young, she had no idea what she was doing”, or “Maybe she’s insane”; any of those statements would have been acceptable.

Luck was not granted to me that day. The only reassuring statement I received before I was in handcuffs was “guilty”. I hung my head in shame as they led me away in the shackles that would soon become my close friends behind the dehumanizing bars of the iron cage, keeping this young menace away from society.

“Wake up. Come on girl, it’s time to test your freedom.” I rubbed my eyes as Roger cautiously opened the door. I gathered my few belongings, making sure to take the letter from the anonymous source. Pausing to glance one last time at the worn and discolored cell, I felt my neck, my fingers delicately tracing the string until they felt the chilled metal of the key.

Grasping my arm firmly again, Roger led me down the hall. “Are you excited?” He actually sounded enthusiastic.

I shrugged. “Sure.” I didn’t know how to respond to his inquiry. What did he mean? Am I excited to finally leave? To finally face the real world again? I don’t know Roger. All I know is that someone sent me a letter regarding my past and a key with the riddle veritas inscribed on it.

“Arabella Sicarius. Parole,” another guard grumbled under his breath as he scribbled the information on a note. Prisons need to keep track of everything.
We rushed through the whole parole process. Soon enough I was standing on the ragged sidewalk staring at a sullied green street sign with the white words *Thorn Road*.

I inhaled as much air as I could hold, then let it out in small gusts. The wind slapped my back and flipped my long frizzy hair into my face, trying to blow away an old trouble. That trouble is what ultimately brought me here on this day.

Drunk. The only word you could ever use to describe my brother. I don’t think I’d ever seen him when he was sober. Always had a pint of some liquor in his hands, which reeked of alcohol as if the cracks in his skin had soaked in the intoxication and developed an uncompromising addiction. Every day it seemed he would stumble in the door at some unearthly time when even the moon hid behind the clouds to rest. He never acknowledged me, but I wanted to know and understand him and his odd ways. I really, truly cared for him.

A fighter. I guess you could say he was that too. He did not ever back down from a brawl, even if the enemy was twice his size or a family member. He would never cease to argue with my dad. The alcohol would start talking, using my brother as a puppet. The puppet master often had its marionette grab the nearest weapon: a knife, a chair, and even a jewelry box of ornaments my mother collected when she was still alive. One day, the ventriloquist was extremely sadistic. I did not hear what they fought about. The house rattled, dishes crashed, furniture shook. The clouds rolled in. Lightning flashed as my brother wielded his knife, ready to attack my father. I was young, and I couldn’t stop myself. I grabbed the clock on the mantel and struck my brother. All I wanted to do was kill the puppet master controlling my sibling’s mind. Time froze; the clocks stopped ticking. I succeeded, at a high price; the puppet died in a pool of its own intoxicated blood dripping from its cracked skull. My father fled, never to be seen again and leaving leaving the killer alone with the body.
I took a step forward as these memories flashed through my mind. My eyes began to sting; no tears now. It’s too late to stop her. She had committed murder. The penalty was steep and prison seemed appropriate, according to the law.

74, 75, 76…77. Snapping back to the present reality, I glanced at the crinkled letter again. 77 Thorn Road, Portland, Oregon. This is the place. A run-down, one-room wooden cabin lay in front of my eyes surrounded by unkempt dying blades of thirsty grass. The splintered and cracked bark of the small porch was plastered with green mold, and the front door hung on one hinge creaking in the howling wind.

“Well, I didn’t expect rainbows and butterflies,” I muttered. Here we go, past. Let’s find some answers.

Blades of grass crunched under my feet, their dying screams not halting my mission. The door opened wide, as if it welcomed my presence. I peered inside, only to find one item. A large, intricate chest sat in the center of the fragile floor. The familiar message veritas covered the trunk in elegant cursive letters. Images of ancient warriors, kings, queens, and gods swathed the bronze box.

I hurried forward, curiosity getting the best of me. Floorboards wailed as my anxious feet scampered towards the valuable coffer. Like a flash of lightning, I ripped the key from its string around my neck, francically trying to stabilize my shaking hands to unlock the truth. After what seemed like hours of an agonizing struggle, the key finally clicked. The top lifted. Images – aged paintings, sketches, and pictures fell from the overflowing chest, littering the floor with various shades of black, white and sepia. Frayed and burned edges bordered descriptions of persons I did not recognize and characterized many of the illustrations as being from flames. Golden white silk and lace draped the over sides of the box, revealing an antique dress. When I pulled the dress
fully out of the box a stain of red caught my attention. Encircling the torso of the dress, an angry stain of lifeblood framed the bodice, undoubtedly from a violent strife. Hiding beneath the gruesome artifact were several small daggers and a manuscript. I left the daggers but grasped the journal, furiously scanning the yellowed parchment. Lists of names and dates accounted filled half of the book in graceful handwriting from the 17th century. I began reading the few written pages of text.

\[\text{It need not be important who I am. I am only here to write what I have seen, and what has been done. Lives of many, taken due to a family tradition, one that has lasted the test of time, justice, and incarceration. They will not stop. The Sicarius family.}\]

The author skipped a few lines, and in bold, centered calligraphy, they scripted:

\[\text{Sicarius Assassin}\]

“What does it mean?” I couldn’t quite grasp what this person was writing. My last name Sicarius, and assassin? Why were these two words compared? And how is my entire familial lineage involved in this veritas and my own personal history?

\[\text{Images, saved from a fire. One of the Sicarius tried to obliterate all evidence of their past crimes against humanity. Their planned murders; their unscripted homicides; all immoral. Images of victims and perpetrators are now held safely, hidden from society, but not completely destroyed. Although horrendous, the Sicarius family must be documented. All information must be written.}\]

Speechless, I could not understand what I just read. So I continued reading.

\[\text{These artifacts that I have collected are from their ancient crimes dating to Queen Elizabeth’s rule and even to ancient Rome. Every member of the Sicarius family has committed a murder at one time or another. In ancient times planned assassination was a practice, a hobby of}\]
the family. As time progressed, formal assassinations were not conducted; simple murder was enough to satisfy their legacy. It is in their blood. It is their drive, their passion, their purpose in life. They will not stop. They do not know how. Assassin is the only word that can be used.

A crash awakened my senses. The journal had fallen to the floor. Killing is in my blood. I am labeled an assassin. My drive to kill my brother was not me. All my ancestors, all convincing the other murders must be done; they all drove me here, to this day.

A time capsule, that’s what this trunk is, reminding me not only of my own past, but the history of everyone in my family, every Sicarius relative that had ever lived and breathed. Shocked and dismayed, I gathered every item and stuffed it back in the trunk.

The door creaked open. My head snapped towards the broken entrance. There stood the man – the fleeing man – who left his child alone. Although I was confused, I felt my scrunched brows begin to soften at the familiar face. Looking no different than those many years ago, my father stood in the doorway. Black hair salted with white strands covered the top of his large head, a black jacket insulated his arms, and a devious smile crawled across his weary, wrinkle ridden face.

“Your eyes, Arabella,” he laughed. “Gray as the storm clouds during a typhoon.”

Anger swelled up in my chest as my misunderstanding heightened. Fueled by seeing him after he abandoned me to the law, my rage climbe...
He walked closer, gazing intently at the trunk of precious familial heirlooms. “I came to see if you received my letter.” My brows furrowed. “I wanted to make sure you knew about your past before you died.” He slowly circled the chest as if he was closing in on prey.

“Before I died? I probably have a while to wait for that moment,” I quickly deduced.

He smirked. “I don’t think so.” He whipped out a knife from his boot, ready to strike me. I raised the trunk to block his attack, and the artifacts clattered to the floor. I shoved the trunk into his stomach and grabbed an ancient knife from the pile.

“Why? Why send me here just to kill me? Your daughter!” I backed away as I screamed at him. “What will this do for you?”

“This little expedition,” he explained eerily, “would help you realize your own past. But, it would help you understand the reason I must kill you. I must go through with our family’s traditions and complete our legacy. Assassination is an art form. You tried to understand it when you were young, but you did not proceed correctly. What better way to learn than experience murder for yourself?”

His logic made sense to him and him alone. He charged. We fought, parrying each other’s strikes. Side by side, knife by knife, we were equally matched.

“I control the storms now!” he declared. His wisdom had diminished as years had passed. Age had worn my father’s once abundant energy as well. He became less and less concerned with protecting himself, turning his focus on wounding his victim. The clouds rolled in. However, my anger controlled my fight; another puppet master operating the actions of their doll.
Before I could react, my blade pierced his chest straight in his heart. He collapsed to the floor, another pool of blood. I went back. I saw my brother in a heap, a red spill encircling his head. Familiar images of my crimes. Reliving my past.

Physically and emotionally drained, I crumpled to the floor. Tears began to roll down my cheeks. Again, another cold-blooded murder of my own flesh and blood. How could I kill the one I still cared for? I lay on the cracked, dust-ridden floor, lamenting over my actions. But I remembered his determination, his strength and his power, and I began to gather my own.

Anger wrote across my expression as I searched in the heirlooms for the journal. Opening to a fresh page, I wrote *Assassin is the only word that will ever be used*. I flipped to the list of murders and penned my own name in my unsightly, vulgar scrawl. My last tear fell.

My duty has been fulfilled. A true Sicarius. *Veritas* has been revealed.
 Recently in my Government class, we were assigned to create a documentary addressing a concern we believed was the upmost important issue for Congress to discuss in the upcoming year. I struggled to decide on a topic that I felt was controversial but needed to be solved to help better the United States as a whole. With the recent war on terror occurring around the globe, I finally decided to create a film about the nation’s recent policy involving the utilization of drones, unmanned aerial vehicles that hover over high-ranking terrorist leaders and launch a missile to kill targeted individuals. Through research, my partners for this project – Rachel Benz and Leah Franklin-Silva – and I gathered information regarding the weapons and originally found two very distinct arguments: one supporting drones and the other opposing them. The opinion supporting drones emphasized the many successful terrorist eliminations made without risking sending in American troops into the hostile environment. On the other hand, the opposition brought forth the resulting civilian casualties from drone attacks, and how the U.S. was violating human rights by killing targeted and innocent individuals with the advanced weaponry. Based on our research, we felt the topic was very black and white; in other words, we thought the two differing opinions were separate and had their own, vital points.

That is until we conducted an interview for the documentary. In class, Mr. Joubert had referred Professor Sean Henseler of the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island as an informative source. He had scribbled the email address and phone number of the former general on our documentary proposal in green ink, and with that contact information, I emailed the professor to ensure an interview would take place. Within a few days of my request, Professor Henseler responded with an enthusiastic “yes”, and we discussed the details – the date of the
interview, where it would take place, et cetera. We agreed the U.S. Naval War College would be the location, and we would meet at a nearby Dunkin Donuts because he had to drive us onto the base due to increased security measures. Although I originally thought this was a bit strange, I realized why this was necessary on the day of the interview.

On December 30, Leah and I sat in the Dunkin Donuts across from the shopping plaza on JT Connell Highway, the smell of freshly baked doughnuts filling the air of the small building. Clenching our cameras, we nervously talked about what questions we would ask Professor Henseler and how the interview would play out. About ten minutes after we arrived, we spotted him. A middle-aged, dark gray-haired man in a black jacket calmly entered through the door of the eatery, walked to our little round table, and shook our hands as he introduced himself. Then, Leah and I gathered our belongings, got in his car, and drove to the college campus. After passing through the initial gates accompanied by a security check, we gazed out the window at the beautiful grounds and various buildings of the Naval War College that resided on a miniature peninsula; the brick structures stood tall and powerful, with the ocean laying on the horizon line behind the imposing college buildings. The professor parked his car and we entered the college. In a large classroom complete with dozens of computers and a Smart Board, we set up both of our cameras at an ideal filming angle and began conducting the interview. Leah and I alternated in asking our prepared questions to the knowledgeable man, and while he answered our inquiries, an entirely new perspective was introduced to us. As we listened to him recite information about the legal limits against drones, the resulting collateral damage, the violations of human rights, the debate of where is the battlefield, and the need to interrogate terrorists, not just kill them, Leah and I realized there was a lot more than ethical and moral arguments surrounding the use of drones. We concluded the interview feeling accomplished with the information and more aware
as the facts furthered our understanding. Following the exceptional meeting, Professor Henseler, the kind man that he is, gave us several documents he used to research about drones prior to the interview, and these sources became vital in our documentary. Also, he showed Leah and I around the halls of the college to his office and to an incredible conference room. The immense room had numerous computers lined in neat rows on the tables, while one side had giant screens that took up most of the wall. He explained how people held meetings with others from across the globe; I stared in awe at the technology and envisioned a meeting taking place with powerful military leaders discussing strategies. Amazed, I could not believe what he had just shown us.

Also, the entire experience opened my eyes to the growing problems in the world. Our epiphanies from the 35 minute interview lead to the creation of a documentary that touched on all of the points Professor Henseler mentioned within his deliberation of the vital information regarding the controversial weaponry. I never realized the extent of action the U.S. would take in order to eliminate suspected terrorists, even if it means compromising some of our values and possibly violating international law, and I never truly understood how the actions of our country create hatred towards us. As we drove back to Dunkin Donuts, Professor Henseler talked about the Patriots’ game he went to the night before, but all the information I had just heard was swimming through my head, making the ordinary world seem completely different. Overall, the interview with Professor Henseler, who was an “oasis of knowledge” through his experience as a military leader, enhanced my understanding of the altering tactics of war, opened my eyes to overlapping and complicated viewpoints in a seemingly simple problem, and changed my perspective about the way the world works. As I continue to learn about our country, I am interested in the decisions that affect the world’s dynamic, and I want to understand how
humanity transforms as time passes to be a more informed citizen and try to make my own changes to the world.
Blue Coffee

9 April 2014

Blue: the color of the vast sky, the crystal water, and a letter. A small letter wrapped in an asphyxiating envelope stains the chocolate brown of the side table with a rude smudge of blue. And I feel myself twitching, my finger angrily drumming the sides of my coffee cup as it cries with a clink each time I tap its side.

This is my fifth coffee, and it’s only four o’clock in the morning. My addiction to caffeine keeps me awake. And I have an addiction to staying inside. I don’t particularly enjoy the hustle and bustle of the outside world. I decided that I had had enough of the busy bodies, the people always needing to go somewhere or do something or say hello to so-and-so or check something or take a trip somewhere far away. My life lies inside, away from the open spaces and the forever frazzled population of the world. I panic too easily. Agoraphobia, some said it is. I don’t know if I believe that.

The pitch black coffee swishes in the jittery cup and splashes onto my pale hand. I ignore the burning sensation in my fingers and stare at the envelope. Why had it decided to enter my safe haven? No stamp, no sign of any postal service interference. On their own merit, this person had slid the letter under my door.

Hours ago, it had awaited my arrival on the cold, hard floor. I only noticed it when the sky began to sleep and the sun pulled its curtains of night over the windows of sunshine. The moon had begun to rise as I walked by the front door, sipping a fresh, piping hot mug of vanilla coffee that I usually have before bed. But the letter. My eyes fell on the slash of bright blue on the floor. My eyes widened and my fingers slackled, their grip on the handle of the cup loosening.
And it crashed, shards of my favorite cup flew askew on the floor and the remaining coffee spread like blood on a crime scene. The letter was the perpetrator.

And now, after finally picking it up and cautiously examining the envelope, I know who it is from. Jacques. Who else? He is the only one who knows of my residence. Everyone else thinks I have disappeared, that I have been taken somewhere far away, away from the past and the pain, carried by a bus that never stops travelling for those that need it.

Late at night, when my endless coffee keeps me awake past reasonable sleeping hours, I often wonder what I could have done. What I should have done. Why didn’t Jacques stay to help me? Why couldn’t I help myself? Why am I afraid? Now, the same thoughts are rushing back into my head, clanging and rattling against my skull as they demand to be answered.

Jacques, my oldest friend. He was really the only person who, for a short time, understood my obsession for the indoors. Or at least tolerated it. And although his fondness of staying inside could not compete with mine, he used to visit to keep me and my coffee mugs company. As the years passed, Jacques’ visits became less and less frequent, blaming his absence on work meetings, dates, and occasionally on “real-world” events. Sometimes he tried to force me outside, pulling my sleeve as coffee spilled from my mug clenched in my white-knuckled hands. He would swing open the door and try to shove me out into the open. The blinding light, speeding cars, and busy civilians. My body washed with anxiety and dread. And my sleeve ripped from his tight grip and my strong resistance. His brows would furrow with heightening anger. And I knew with each shortening stay, Jacques’ frustration and irritation with me increased. One day, he lost all comprehension of my fear; he had simply had enough.

He screamed at me, challenging me to brave the dangerous open space outside the safety of my home. “Why do you need to stay inside? What is so frightening about the outside world?”
I cried, memories of horrible accidents I tried to bury in the depths of my mind returned into my thoughts. “No, no, no,” I mumbled under my anxious breath. Terror swallowed me whole. The outside world of hectic, frantic, and demanding people was too much. An earthquake overcame my body, creating massive tremors. I began to sweat and my vision became blurry. “No, no, no… I can’t do it!”

When my earthquake ceased, I looked up, and Jacques was gone. The front door closed. And years passed without any contact with him. He had given up on me. Until this unbelievable letter.

I break my stare at the envelope and glance down at my empty coffee mug, the naked bottom grinning back at me as if to say, “time for a refill.” The clock chimes. Five o’clock.

I regain my focus on the letter. What could possibly be in that little blue envelope? What does Jacques want me to know? That he is coming back? He will come to visit me, to help me? Unlikely, though that is what I’d like. Had he finally hitched a ride on that bus to nowhere that only carries the passengers away from what they want to run from? Had he run from the memory of me? Maybe that’s what he did.

And maybe I don’t want Jacques’ help. Maybe I need my own liberation. My “agoraphobia” has only worsened over the years, trapping me in a monotonous world of coffee mugs. But today, that letter. I feel empowered.

Suddenly, for a brief moment, my underlying warrior surfaces to battle his enemy. And I scoop up the letter and my house keys, determined to conquer the foe. And I find myself staring at my front door. My warrior huddles back in the bushes, his cowardice returning at the prospect of facing the open air. My eyes widen. The closest I’ve been to even taking one step outside in many years. But today, today is different.
“Today is different,” I repeat out loud. I take a deep breath, my cheeks puffing up as I hold the precious air for as long as possible before letting it escape from my lips. My trembling hand reaches towards the handle, shaking uncontrollably as it touches the knob. It turns. The lock clicks. The door opens gingerly.

A soft breeze threatens to close the door. I slowly push it open to gaze upon the sun opening the curtains of sleep to wake the world from its slumber. Gravity wants me to sink into the earth as I try to take the first step onto fresh blades of grass. I feel the warmth of the sun on my cringing face and begin to relax. I close my eyes and shut the door. There is no turning back now.

And at last I step out into the morning and I lock the door behind me. I cross the road and drop the keys into the old lady’s mailbox. And I look up the road, where a few people stand, men and women, waiting for the morning bus. They are very vivid beneath the awakening sky, and the horizon beyond them is beginning to flame. The morning weighs on my shoulders with the dreadful weight of hope and I take the blue envelope which Jacques has sent me and tear it slowly into many pieces, watching them dance in the wind, watching the wind carry them away. Yet, as I turn and begin toward the waiting people, the wind blows some of them back on me.

James Baldwin, Giovanni’s Room
She is young, yet she is old. She is weak, yet she is strong. A butterfly emerging from the flames of the forgotten Roman city in which she once resided. Pompeii: a city visited by a furious volcano, its angry flames pouring out of its screaming mouth, yelling loud enough for the gods of Olympus to hear its roar. Mount Vesuvius conjured a tsunami of magma to bury the prosperous Roman village and several others surrounding it, hurling pumice and flames at the city. No warning, no time to escape. Somehow, she was the lucky survivor of the eruption, and now travels down a lonely path to nowhere.

The sun dips in and out of clouds of ash blanketing the sky. Grim flakes of flame float down to earth. The young girl would normally be tempted to catch the friendly flakes with her tongue, but she already knows they burn. How the white-hot ash burned her delicate skin, her thin clothes, and her fragile mind. Her mind had been shattered. She only hears the screams of the dead, cut off by hungry magma swallowing them whole. She only sees the victims’ fearful eyes filling with the orange-red of lava that encased their bodies. She sighs softly; inhaling the ash would cause her to cough violently. A plaintive tear rolls down the young girl’s cheek, cooling her burning face.

The soot caking her scorched bare feet remind her of trips to the Amphitheatre with her friends. Their hurried bare feet would dance across the streets, a dusty checkerboard of different colored brick that lined the grounds of the city. Faded shades of rusty red, brown, and beige covered the walls of the city’s structures and streets. On the way to the show, they would race through the arches of their city, tripping over the long layers of cloth draped over their bony
frames and stumbling across uneven blocks of the avenues. Cardo Maximus, their favorite street led straight to the theater; it was an ideal race track.

She never turned away from competition. She loved the rush of wind on her face as she sped by her fellow racers, the look on their face as they saw the girl soar by them, thin legs pounding the hard surface of Pompeii’s streets. A smile would emerge on her face as she pumped her arms towards her conquest, fueled by the cheers from younger children idolizing the elder kids. They had already placed secret bets on the boys who were competing in the race. She loved proving them wrong.

As the children all finished, they celebrated their little wins and little losses, pretending to be athletes in the Olympics. Their celebratory ceremony often featured crowning the victor with a crude laurel wreath made out of sticks, leaves and bits of thorn. Although the sharp points of the thorns would dig into her skull, she loved the feeling of the laurel circlet cradling her head.

When they finally reached the crowded Amphitheatre, they snuck around corners, dodged guards, and attempted to blend with the mass of Romans eager for an entertaining gladiator show. It wasn’t the show that she liked the most; she didn’t care to see people viciously killed by ferocious animals while sadistic spectators hollered profanities. Being with her friends, being with the people of Pompeii, she was part of a community. Part of a whole. One with the people.

One day at the theater, giant quakes struck as if the gods grabbed the auditorium and shook it. People shrieked and pointed at the sky. Angry gray clouds billowed out of Mount Vesuvius like the smoke had been bottled inside for millions of years. The volcanic roar drowned the screams of frantic people running through the theater, tripping over the stone seating and other Romans. The crowned racer leapt over the stands and weaved her small, fragile body in and out of frightened spectators. At last she escaped the madness of the Amphitheatre and
hastened to the seashore to abscond Vesuvius’s wrathful rage. Heat swirled around the city and strangled its victims as they attempted to fight the flames. Pebbles dug into her worn skin and scratched her rough, callused feet, adding to the scars that had accumulated over the years of running on the abrasive streets. The laurel wreath bounced on her head as she sped towards the shore, and it finally let go of its champion as she dove into the frigid waves.

The only thing she could remember after her oceanic escape was waking up on the sand, volcano quiet, and city silent as well. Thousands of inhabitants, gone. Her friends, all gone.

She had been walking for hours and hours in any direction as long as it was far away from the cracked and scorched city of Pompeii. A metropolis full of content citizens one day ago now the red of magma and the gray-black of ash blankets the structures and streets. People buried in graves of lava and pumice.

“Who am I now?” She could not help but say out loud. How could the gods possibly answer her if she kept her thoughts concealed behind recent memories of destruction?

Amidst the fields of dying blades of grass dusted with a thin layer of wind-blown ash, a river hid. Night had come too early, almost without notice, as the veil of volcanic dust forbid the sun to light the way. Darkness suppressed all brightness except for brave fireflies that sporadically illuminated the path for her.

Dipping her hands into the river, the girl splashes her face and body, hoping to cool the multitude of superficial burns that lay awry on her delicate skin. The girl winces as the cleansing water enters her wounds. She glances at her reflection in the river, fireflies lighting the reflection, seconds at a time. Her dark eyes hold a grief-stricken story too deep inside for another to read the melancholy pages. The cover of that sorrowful book is scorched and burned, covered in dark, blistering scars from her battle with the flames of a vile volcano. Her face, arms, and legs are
patchy, proof of the angry, merciless flames’ need for human flesh. Her wounds of war; no others survivors. And with this thought, the river’s image distorts her reflection. Her face cracks like the fractures left in the earth from the wrath of Mount Vesuvius. The fissures run up and down her body, crisscrossing at random intervals and breaking apart her soft features with rigid crevices. She is beautiful, but she is scarred. As she moves, she notices herself crumbling, bits of fragile dust brushing off her cracked skin. If she endured another catastrophe, she would surely disintegrate all together, no artifacts to be found. The living relic of Pompeii with enough scars herself to mimic the cracked, magma-covered crumbling earth of the city is who she is now. To carry on the traditions, culture, and legacy of her homeland is now her destiny.
Pieces of Pompeii Photograph
CHARACTERS

RALPH, lazy seventeen-year-old who hates his job

JERRY, seventeen-year-old friend of Ralph

An ordinary suburban street with older, run-down yet well-kept houses lays the setting of a normal Friday night. Fallen leaves of red, orange, and yellow float in the autumn breeze.

Opening scene occurs in the house of JERRY, a messy, cluttered home with open windows disturbing the chaos of papers, clothes, and other belongings out on the floor. [Slightly dim lights when in the house. Lay papers askew on stage, giving appearance of cluttered teenage room.] Upstairs, JERRY lies on his bed facing towards the ceiling. [Lying face up center stage with feet closer to audience.] He tosses a tennis ball up and down, immediately throwing it back up when he catches it. The rhythm is controlled and constant, not breaking for any distraction.

[Brighten lights. Enter RALPH from upstage right.] RALPH walks home from his job to his friend JERRY’s house. His pace is slow and meticulous as if he is trying not to fall over. Exhausted from another long week of work, RALPH’s steps become slower and slower. [moves diagonally across stage to downstage left.] He wipes his sweating face with a grease-covered hand, leaving a streak of black oil scar his cheek. [Turns and walks toward center stage.] He finally reaches the home of JERRY, and his face lights up. RALPH smiles slightly, but still appears weary. [Direct spotlights so that one lightens RALPH and the other illuminates JERRY’s house.]

Scene 1

RALPH slowly opens JERRY’s door which creaks noisily. [Dim lights as he enters the home from left stage.] He steps into JERRY’s house with loud, heavy footsteps. JERRY lies on floor in center stage and continues tossing the ball towards the ceiling, now counting his impressive catches, but his head turns towards his open bedroom door at the sound of the creaking door. He quickly returns to his game with unbroken focus. RALPH enters JERRY’s room and collapses. He hits the floor and sighs loudly.

JERRY 79, 80, 81, 82

RALPH [sighs loudly as JERRY continues counting]

JERRY 88, 89, 90. [stops counting but still tossing ball] Hey Ralph. [quickly galnces at his friend] What are you doing?

RALPH [sighs; slowly speaks in exasperated tone] Ralph…tired. Can’t…work…anymore…

JERRY [glances at RALPH and continues tossing ball] Oh yeah! How’s that job going?

RALPH [looking up to glare at JERRY, frustrated] Horribly. [He lowers his head to JERRY’s floor.] I only took the stupid job because my parents kept hounding me, saying “You gotta get a
part-time job if you want to drive because we’re not paying for car insurance.” [sighs] Jerry, I didn’t even want to work…[widens eyes to emphasize]…at all.

JERRY [engrossed in his ball tossing game] That really sucks man.

RALPH [sits up] I know, right? My dad’s a Vice President with a hundred employees and they all make more bread than the local bakery, and he claims he was [makes air quotes with his hands] “underprivileged” when he lived in the little shack in the outskirts of Detroit. What does he know about working now?

JERRY [pauses his game for a second still looking at the ceiling] …134. I know what you mean. My old folks have been begging me to work for the last two years, but I’m fine! [sassily] I don’t need hard labor to teach me how to make some cash.

RALPH And then my dad gives me the old Abe Lincoln speech again…

JERRY [stops tossing ball and jumps up from reclining position; excited] Oh. Oh. Oh, you mean the one where he’s all, [tries to stretch himself upward to appear taller, deepens voice to imitate RALPH’s father] “Ralph, I used to trudge through ten feet of snow in zero degree weather just to get to school every day.”

RALPH [joins in on the game by stretching himself upward to appear taller, deepens voice, pretends to smoke a cigar and strokes his chin much like his father] “Son, I used to do my homework by the firelight on the back of a shovel. [wags his finger to point at JERRY.] You should appreciate opportunities that are available to you.” [laughs with JERRY] Yeah right. How much of the used-to-go-up-the-hill-both-ways personality is even true? Who even knows if Abe Lincoln was like that? They were all probably lazy kids with normal problems like everyone else.

JERRY [forgets tossing the ball, placing it on the bed as he sits down] Probably. [pauses] Where did you even get the job?

RALPH [sighs and begins pacing back and forth from center stage to left] Well, I had enough of my parents saying “Working’ll make a man outta you” and “the responsibility will be good for you”, so I figured the only way to get them off my back and if I ever actually want a car was to try to get a job. So I went to the little shop behind Sears…

JERRY [interrupts] You mean the one that time-traveled from 1920?

RALPH [nods head] Yeah, that one. I saw a “Help Wanted” sign and figured, why not give it a shot? I go in, and talk to this guy. I get a job sorting hot, greasy, steel parts and putting them in crates from three to five on weekdays and eight to noon on Saturdays. It’s easy but boring. It’s really only money work. But the place is so dark because there are no windows and it smells like bad transmission so it’s super depressing.

JERRY Oh man, that sounds bad. What about the co-workers?

RALPH I swear those people are vampires! They never see the light of day because it’s so dark in that old shop.

JERRY I would not want to work with a bunch of Twilight movie rejects either.

RALPH [laughs, then pauses to look down at hands] And get a load of my hands! [puts hands in front of JERRY’s face]
JERRY [examines friend’s hands] Is that…all grease? Your hands are stained with black! You actually have some on your face too.

RALPH [frustrated] Of course. [tries to wipe grease off face with grease-covered hand, only adding to the black stain on his face] Ah…it’s no use. It’ll only get worse. [brushes hands on pants] There’s enough oil to lube your Chevy. And it’s impossible to get out.

JERRY I don’t know too many girls who are into grease-stained hands.

RALPH That’s the problem! Does it matter whether I drive or not? No, because no girl is going to go out with a guy wearing gloves. [slumps to sitting position in center stage]

JERRY [pats RALPH’s shoulder] It’s okay, man. You should quit if you hate it that much.

RALPH Tomorrow I’m outta that wretched place. My parents say “you gotta learn about money.” You know what? I know enough about money. It’s the green paper stuff that no one can get enough of, but working this miserable job isn’t worth it. I’m not Abe Lincoln.

JERRY [laughs] No, no you’re definitely not Abe Lincoln.

RALPH [suddenly exclaims] I gotta get outta that polluted, vampire-infested shop!

JERRY [raising voice exclaims] You should, man! Stick it to ‘em!

RALPH [suddenly jumps up] I can’t stand to work there anymore! Even if my parents are mad, I can’t do it. I’ll gladly take their disappointment over another minute of grease and vampires.

JERRY [questions; raises voice] Yeah?

RALPH [exclaims] Yeah!

JERRY [exclaims] Yeah!

RALPH [exclaims] Yeah!

Repeatedly exclaim “Yeah!” to each other as RALPH walks offstage left. [dim lights] Scene ends.
“Life is going to come at you armed with hard times and tough choices, your voice is your weapon, your thoughts ammunition – there are no free extra men, be aware that as the instant now passes, it exists now as then. So be a mirror reflecting yourself back, and remembering the times when you thought all of this was too hard and you’d never make it through.”

Shane Koyczan

From the Spoken Word Poem “Instructions for a Bad Day”
Instructions for a Bad Day

Shane Koyczan

There will be bad days. Be calm. Loosen your grip, opening each palm slowly now. Let go. Be confident. Know that now is only a moment, and that if today is as bad as it gets, understand that by tomorrow, today will have ended. Be gracious. Accept each extended hand offered, to pull you back from the somewhere you cannot escape. Be diligent. Scrape the gray sky clean. Realize every dark cloud is a smoke screen meant to blind us from the truth, and the truth is whether we see them or not - the sun and moon are still there and always there is light.

Be forthright. Despite your instinct to say "it's alright, I'm okay" - be honest. Say how you feel without fear or guilt, without remorse or complexity. Be lucid in your explanation, be sterling in your oppose. If you think for one second no one knows what you've been going through; be accepting of the fact that you are wrong, that the long drawn and heavy breaths of despair have at times been felt by everyone - that pain is part of the human condition and that alone makes you a legion.

We hungry underdogs, we risers with dawn, we dissmisers of odds, we blessers of on – we will station ourselves to the calm. We will hold ourselves to the steady, be ready player one. Life is going to come at you armed with hard times and tough choices, your voice is your weapon, your thoughts ammunition – there are no free extra men, be aware that as the instant now passes, it exists now as then. So be a mirror reflecting yourself back, and remembering the times when you thought all of this was too hard and you'd never make it through.

Remember the times you could have pressed quit – but you hit continue. Be forgiving. Living with the burden of anger, is not living. Giving your focus to wrath will leave your entire self absent of what you need. Love and hate are beasts and the one that grows is the one you feed. Be persistent. Be the weed growing through the cracks in the cement, beautiful - because it doesn't know it's not supposed to grow there. Be resolute. Declare what you accept as true in a way that envisions the resolve with which you accept it.

If you are having a good day, be considerate. A simple smile could be the first-aid kit that someone has been looking for. If you believe with absolute honesty that you are doing everything you can - do more.

There will be bad days, Times when the world weighs on you for so long it leaves you looking for an easy way out. There will be moments when the drought of joy
seems unending. Instances spent pretending that everything is alright when it clearly is not, check your blind spot. See that love is still there, be patient. Every nightmare has a beginning, but every bad day has an end. Ignore what others have called you. I am calling you friend. Make us comprehend the urgency of your crisis. Silence left to its own devices, breed's silence.

So speak and be heard. One word after the next, express yourself and put your life in the context – if you find that no one is listening, be loud. Make noise. Stand in poise and be open. Hope in these situations is not enough and you will need someone to lean on. In the unlikely event that you have no one, look again. Everyone is blessed with the ability to listen. The deaf will hear you with their eyes. The blind will see you with their hands. Let your heart fill their news-stands, Let them read all about it. Admit to the bad days, the impossible nights. Listen to the insights of those who have been there, but come back. They will tell you; you can stack misery, you can pack disappear you can even wear your sorrow – but come tomorrow you must change your clothes.

Everyone knows pain. We are not meant to carry it forever. We were never meant to hold it so closely, so be certain in the belief that what pain belongs to now will belong soon to then. That when someone asks you how was your day, realize that for some of us – it's the only way we know how to say, be calm. Loosen your grip, opening each palm, slowly now – let go.
Chains
Imitation of “Hanging Fire” by Audre Lorde
20 March 2014

I am sixteen
and I cannot escape from the chains.

They pull,
they tug,
they grasp my flesh and weigh me down.
I cannot breathe;
I suffocate,
I choke,
I claw at the thirsty air.
All I want is to be free
from stress,
from pain,
From the chains of worry that wrap around me.
They hold a great burden.
A burden that defeats Happiness
defeats Joy,
defeats Lightheartedness,
Defeats thoughts of a brighter future.
They cast their ominous shadows over
Fields of serenity.

Every day,
Chains are lifted so
the light of the sun
can illuminate the path of life.
Or
Every day,
Chains are added so
the darkness consumes those
who allow it.

One worry
One chain.
They pile on.
Worries of:
Do I wear the right clothes?
Do I say the right things?
Do I fit in?
Why do they criticize me?
Why am I not as good as I want to be?
Who am I?
and many more concerns that bury the once carefree
in their own fears.

I want to go back,
Lift the burdensome shackles,
Reverse time and space
To a simpler time
When snow was magical,
Not a frigid and heartless annoyance.
When a doll was a best friend
Who would laugh alongside you
and keep you company when you felt alone.

I want to go back,
Lift the burdensome shackles,
Reverse time and space,
to playing
to giggling
To being yourself with absolutely no fear.
No fear of not being good enough.

Return to a time when the worries never outweighed the happiness,
When I could see the light at the end of the tunnel.

The tunnel is dark.
Heavy chains pile on
and tighten their grip.
Conscience cautiously creeps out of the corner
Emerging from the dark shadows in the depths of your mind where you sent it to hide.
Omniscient, overseeing, all-knowing
It saw what you did
And is now here to plague you despite any self-convincing phrases you conjure.
Angry and frustrated, you shove the truth into a tightly sealed bottle so even air, the sweet source of life, cannot carry the whispers to eagerly awaiting ears.
It feels as though you’re digging a hole with a broken shovel,
You try to bury that bottled truth.
The pit becomes so deep the furious flames of hell arise and lick the ground, hungry for another guiltless soul to join them.
The Devil awaits your arrival, grinning menacingly at the thought of your sanity slowly crumbling away.
Guilt. It is consuming you.
A cannibal gnawing on your own flesh until the very bones are picked clean and the angry blood has dried.
And even then it is not satisfied.
The tell-tale heart cannot stay silent forever and stars cannot always hide their fires.
Open the bottle.
Let the truth be heard.
Let it be known.
FYI
Decoding a nation beyond the Internet
This is a world of renewed rebellion.
Secret king stands up to steal the universe
Extreme Arsenal dependability
Chaos, a nuclear bomb. Lucky close call. An exciting new impression
Still believe in perfect control?
"Now I truly understand the world is an immense place overflowing with countless philosophies and beliefs; it is an art to transform these into penned words, making the endless concepts of life tangible to the reader in a creative and compelling manner, in a way they will never forget."

~ Marissa McPhillips
Reflecting on the Experience of Writing with Imagination

19 May 2014

Throughout my Creative Writing class, I learned a great deal about how to construct and develop my ideas through carefully selected words to create an original piece of prose, ultimately improving these various abilities. I chose the class because I wanted to advance my brainstorming and writing skills through different types of work without a specific graphic organizer, and utilize varied language to clearly communicate, for example, a story’s plot or a poem’s theme. During second semester, I thoroughly enjoyed the class. The lessons provided freedom to write what a person wants and how they want with only a little assistance from a given prompt such as an ending paragraph of another piece of literature or a picture. With the small yet helpful starting pieces, I needed to find other ideas that connected to the prompt to finish the remaining bulk of the work, thus producing a unique and innovative new anecdote. Personally, my main writing goal was to improve my writing skills, especially clarification and necessary succinctness. By completing the various assignments, I accomplished my objective since now I am able to describe and explain ideas without being redundant, and I took chances in many of my pieces by fluctuating the sentence structure and tense of the pieces. I loved changing and enhancing my writing style which allowed me to experience new methods of creating a story, a poem, a play, et cetera.

Out of all the wonderful assignments in this class, my favorite project was the photo story. Being prompted by only an image, the task was open to many ideas as long as they connected to the picture. I selected an image of a girl in the shadows with a cracked face and related this to a narrative during Mount Vesuvius’s’ ancient eruption in Pompeii. Throughout the writing of this piece, I enjoyed creating the memories of the main character prior to the volcanic
catastrophe and tying them to her recent escape from the eruption. Also, I liked incorporating the image of her cracked face as her perception of her own reflection, showing how she was fragile and damaged like her home became. On the other hand, my least favorite assignment was the play because scripting dialogue is not my forte. In addition, I picked a description of a character named Ralph who was an ordinary, lazy teenager who wanted to quit his job. It was very difficult for me to convert his thoughts into spoken lines and stage directions to create emotion, setting, and tone. Furthermore, being limited to only two characters and a short length of only one act challenged me. I feel as though the play restricted creativity more than the other tasks. However, when the class performed the plays on stage, I became more confident about my script and began to fully appreciate the assignment because it was easier to comprehend and visualize the script when the lines and stage directions were presented in a theatrical manner. Throughout my experience in the class, I began to develop common themes in my compositions: creativity and connection. Many of the pieces assigned required an original thought to develop a full story, and although extensive creativity was necessary, the narrative must relate to the brief prompt provided to help guide the writer’s ideas. After producing a variety of writing pieces, I know how to direct my designs in an effective manner while still linking other ideas or prompts within the story so that they all sensibly intertwine.

Professional writing appears to be an advanced extension of the creative writing class with longer assignments that touch on any manner the author desires, while the editors are the teachers, correcting and revising any flaws in the task. A career in professional writing is an impressive feat, allowing the world to read and hear the inner thoughts of the author’s mind. Throughout the creative writing class, I have developed an appreciation for professional writing and the effects writing has on the world. Now I truly understand the world is an immense place
overflowing with countless philosophies and beliefs; it is an art to transform these into penned words, making the endless concepts of life tangible to the reader in a creative and compelling manner, in a way they will never forget. Regarding my own creativity, I have learned how to use my ideas and explain them in a sensible plot in order to convey a theme. Through the many varied practices, I have improved greatly as a writer. I learned how to utilize the appropriate amount of words without being repetitive, and I ascertained how to select sophisticated vocabulary throughout the literature. In the future, I plan on applying my newly-acquired writing skills to writing pieces in college and in upcoming English, social studies, and science classes. Also, I hope to continue producing creative stories to further my knowledge and ability. Although the creative writing class was an excellent way to edify students on inventive writing, I wish the course changed some of the requirements for the play. A few of the provided character descriptions were interesting, but they had very normal problems or concerns. One alteration may be to provide unique prompts to spark an idea for a thought-provoking or humorous theatrical performance. Overall, I genuinely enjoyed the creative writing class since it allowed me to express my original ideas in a new plot or poem to make an impression on the reader, ultimately improving my writing skill and furthering my appreciation for both professional and amateur literature.