To Bee or Not to Bee . . . Storytellers

2017

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Edited by Darolyn "Lyn" Jones and Andrew Rosser

Illustrated by Megan Hall

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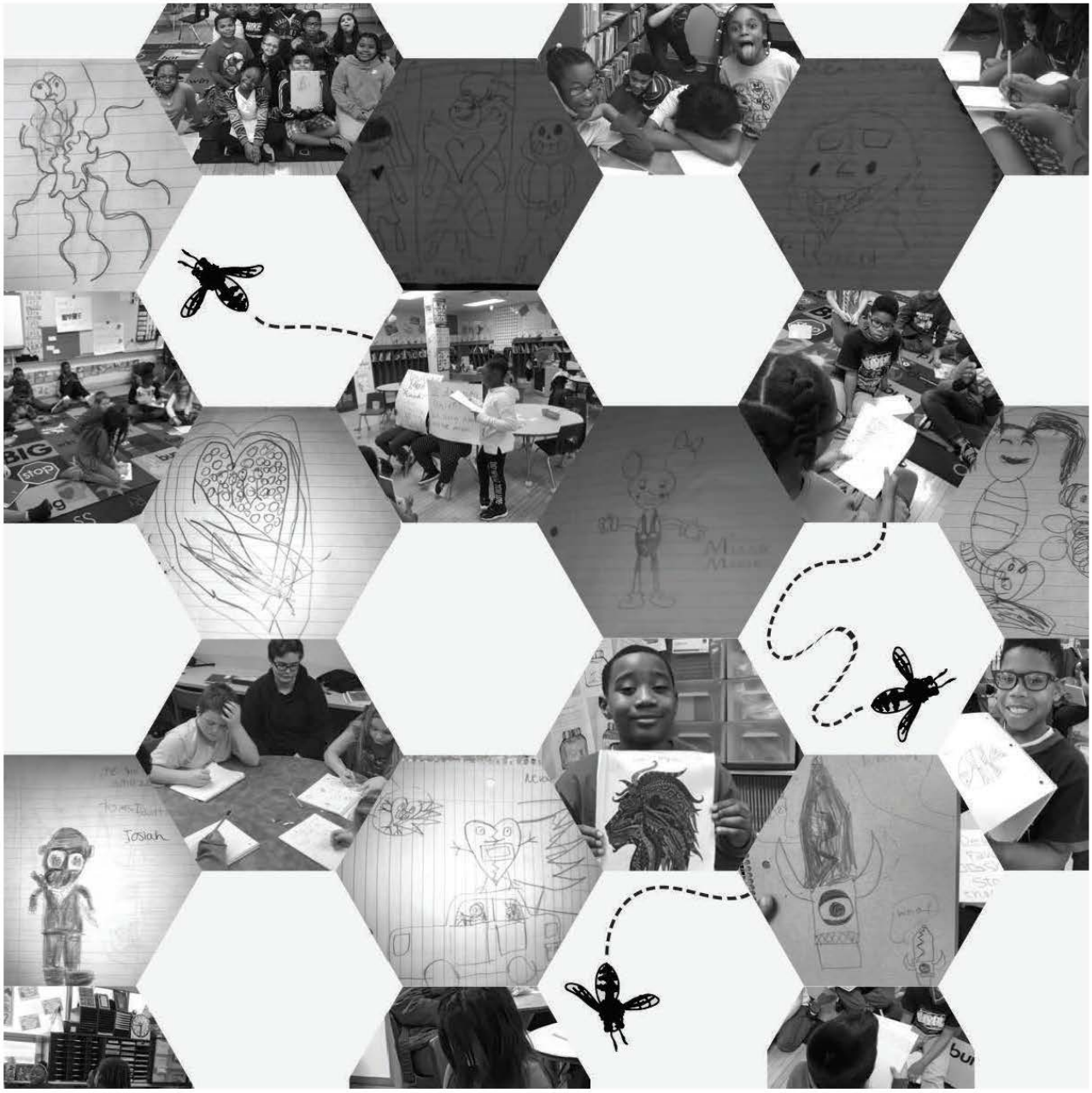
409 Press

Ball State University


BIG
stop
Josiah

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Every Little Thing Wants to Be Loved - Darolyn "Lyn" Jones

She reminded me that the world was really one bee yard, and the same rules work fine in both places. Don't be afraid, as no life-loving bee wants to sting you. Still, don't be an idiot; wear long sleeves and pants. Don't swat. Don't even think about swatting. If you feel angry, whistle. Anger agitates while whistling melts a bee's temper. Act like you know what you're doing, even if you don't. Above all, send the bees love.

Every little thing wants to be loved.

— Sue Monk Kidd, The Secret Life of Bees

Some background on how this collection came to press...

Creative Writing in the Community is an English course at Ball State University. An immersive, service learning opportunity, English 409 students meet with young writers in the community to teach creative writing techniques and to write and create a collaborative text. This semester, our young community partners are 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders at Longfellow Elementary School. Longfellow is part of the historic, strong, and primarily African-American Whitely community area in Muncie, Indiana. Many of our young community writers live in poverty and are struggling in school.

The objectives of the project and course include the enrichment of the creative writing major through:

- Engagement in the local community;
- The scholarly study of a creative genre (memoir);
- Relevant essays about creative narrative nonfiction writing pedagogy;
- Scholarly study about community engagement models; and

- The use of critical and creative examinations of the student's own and collaborative work created for the class.

The end product of these objectives results in a published anthology and celebration of the writing generated by both the university students and our young community writers in the greater Muncie community.

This semester, university students also engaged in the book publishing process, learning design, layout, and editing with our independent, 409 Press, which is committed to publishing young Muncie voices.

Our essential and guiding element was that it is an honor to be trusted with someone's story. And our role was to honor our young community writer's voices so the rest of the world can hear the simple, yet poignant and sometimes humorous wisdom and stories that only children and young writers possess.

A discovery my Ball State students and I made during this semester is that young writers haven't learned to filter. They don't yet know what society teaches us about not sharing or revealing too much about ourselves. You ask them a question, and they will answer it… with brutal honesty. You ask them to create, and they will conjure worlds and images we can't imagine. You ask them to tell you a story, and they will paint every sensory detail with their words.

My students also learned to lean in and to love. They became very attached to these young writers and reciprocally, the young writers to them. My university students saw earlier versions of themselves, remembering best friends and birthday parties, parents breaking up, being bullied, and even current versions of themselves, who didn't know what to write about or how to write about it. My university students had forgotten how

NOT to filter, yet they took a cue from these young writers and stopped editing themselves.

They learned to work the hive. To write and write and write and write, just like our young community writers. They learned to "love every little thing" the Longfellow students said, wrote, and taught them.

I never tire of teaching and working with what I call "the littles" or elementary children. I learn so much from them. It's not just their inability to filter, their brutal honesty, or their natural story telling … which school later strips away from them. It's that they don't see color or gender or power. They didn't notice or care that my university students were black or white or Latino, male or female, that they were transgender or gay, that they spoke with a different dialect or accent. They only saw this person who sat at a table with them, who encouraged them, who wrote with them, who loved their stories, and who looked forward to being with them.

Every little thing wants to be loved.

These young community writers at Longfellow do what we writers want to do, what we try to do. It's the thing we writing instructors want all of our students to do. Yet, with little coaching and little time for revision, our young community writers at Longfellow were able to achieve this. Ball State students only met with their community writers for six writing sessions, so the Ball State students had to quickly gain their young community writing partner's trust and design and deliver prompts that the writers couldn't wait to write to.

And then we had the task of selecting and editing their work and revealing their published work in a final community ceremony and this publication. Because of time and budget constraints, we chose each student's one best story. The book's theme is based around a beautiful metaphor designed by Caleb Miracle-Haro, a student in the course. I can't wait for you to read more about how our writers learned to buzz around, find a story, and pollinate it, creating a sweet honey of a story.

Not only will you read works from the young community writers, but also responses and reflections from the Ball State creative writing students who participated in the course.

A university semester (15 weeks) is a very short amount of time to study, write, teach, and publish a book. Many thanks need to go out to first to the young community writers who were brave enough to tell us their stories, to Longfellow MP3 Director, Wilisha Scaife who worked with me to make this happen. To MP3 Longfellow teacher, Faith Serf and XSTREAM Longfellow teacher, Kendra Hirons, to the parents for sharing your students with us, to the Ball State students in the course, many busy seniors, who worked overtime to make sure the book was a success, to my assistant student editor, Andrew Rosser, for his keen design and editing eye, to our illustrator, Meagan Hall, for her inspirational images that help us tell the story, to the English department at Ball State who has been incredibly supportive, particularly, Sean Lovelace for believing in my work and allowing me to teach a course he loves and has helped develop, to Interim Dean, Dr. Jeff Grigsby, for funding and encouraging the project.

And finally to Marjorie Hiner, an English Alumna from Ball State University, and her husband, Homer, who continue to fund the publication of this collection and support events associated with the project. Their vision made this book possible.

And now...join our hive. Buzz around, read the stories, and start pollinating by writing your own sweet stories down.

Editor's Note - Andrew Rosser

When Dr. Jones asked me to embark with her on this project as an editor, I was glad to say yes to the opportunity. I had worked with her before on the topic of working with kids and writing down the stories they had to tell, but this time was different. On this journey, I was taking part in the class and acting as an editor. As a group, we would write a collection of memoirs, but as the assistant editor there was also a responsibility to Dr. Jones to make sense of all the memoirs.

We as a class, had to put this book together in only fifteen weeks, a very short amount of time. On top of this, I also had the responsibility as an editor to ensure everyone else's work was also in ship-shape. The first part was learning how to write and teach memoirs. This was honestly my first attempt at writing in scenes of memoir and to teach it to kids I felt that I was swimming in the deep end of it all. It took practice and a lot of time to get used to it, but eventually, I gripped some of the skill required and got the kids to start writing too.

The second part of this was the piecing together of the layout to this book as the assistant editor. Much effort and energy was placed into making sure that this book was put into an order that fit our metaphor for the class. I also had the responsibility as assistant editor, to be sure each story was unique and completed in some manner that reflected the metaphor as well.

In this book, you will read stories from 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders of Longfellow elementary who told us their stories. There are also stories and responses from the students of Ball State University who worked with the students of Longfellow

Elementary; these essays and letters to these students explore the emotions and connections that these students have made with the kids of Longfellow.

I'd like to thank Dr. Jones for this opportunity to work with her as more than a student but as an assistant in this process. I'd also like to thank my classmates and the students of Longfellow Elementary for working with me and being so patient and understanding during the process of making this book a reality. Lastly, I would like to thank you the readers, for engaging with this book and these stories and letting these kids feel that their stories are being read and heard. Join our hive and feel the buzz. . . read our stories and join us; write your own!

Artist's Statement - Megan Hall

Megan Hall is a student at Ball State University majoring in Visual Communications and minoring in both Women and Gender Studies and also Art History. She is especially interested in the fine art process of printmaking and draws her art inspiration from the Surrealist art movement, a slightly out of control horror and science-fiction obsession, and imagery from dreams and the subconscious. Megan is also very interested in lighting details and enjoys experimenting with light and color in other projects. She learned the process of bending neon glass tubing and is always experimenting with colored light bulbs and colored Christmas lights. After Megan graduates from Ball State, she plans on moving to a large city and working for a design company focused on either branding or illustration, as well as continuing her never-ending, yet very exciting, journey to learn more about art for her personal projects.

As the artist for the cover of this book, Megan enforced the idea of community with the bees and the bee hives. She created a unique typeface for the title and connected brightly-colored flowers to the image of a honeycomb. She chose to illustrate the font in this way because she felt like there was an interesting relationship between the shapes in flowers, which are curvy, and the shapes of honey combs, which are more jagged. Together, these two worlds of shapes create an interesting juxtaposition and dynamic. She used brightly-colored yellows to be bright and eye-catching, making it a celebration of yellows, bees, and young writers.

Memoir Writing: A Writing Bee Metaphor

The Writer searches for pollen using only its sense of smell.

The Bee spends most of its time looking for that certain flower, a vibrant pink or purple, ones where the nectar has more sugar and the pollen, more protein.

The bee smells a story, a flower, and pollinates, carrying the food rich pollen sac away back to its hive to feed its fellow bees in the community so honey can be produced.

The honey is then tasted by an agent, a publisher, an editor, and passed around for all to indulge and inhale.

Readers taste and smell differently. Some like your story, while others turn up their noses and story away.

Regardless, our bee returns to its hive, its community, to supply the honeycomb, to create more honey.

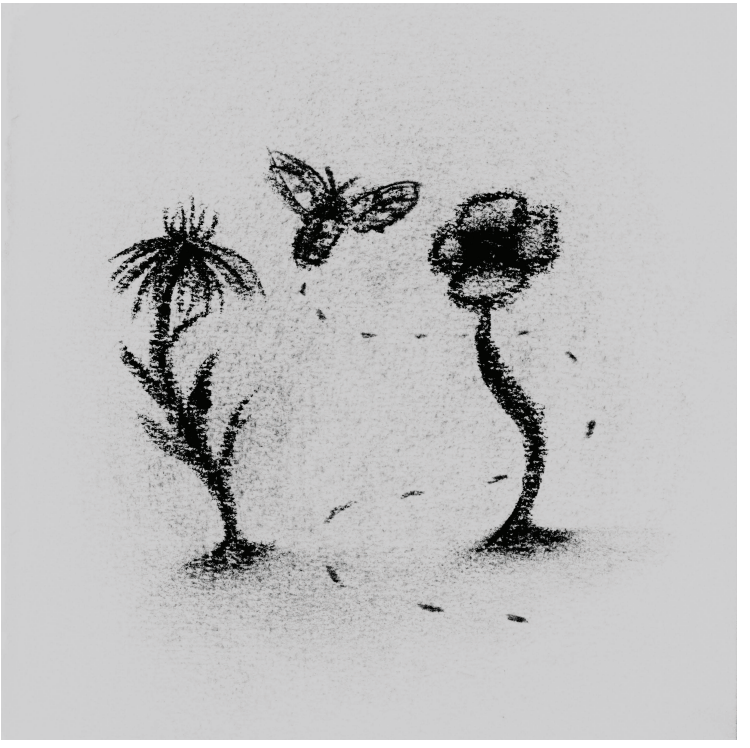
A community of writers writes together, discovers despair together, makes meaning together. They produce sweet honey and uncover hope together.

Section 1: Memoir Writing is a Writer Bee

In this section, find Longfellow writer memoir drafts where students are improvising, playing, discovering, seeking direction for the story they know is in there.

Memoir writing is a worker or writer bee buzzing around, always with sound, but no known direction.

The Bee spends most of its time looking for that certain flower, a vibrant pink or purple, ones where the nectar has more sugar and the pollen, more protein.



Aaliyah - "My Best Day Ever"

February 25, 2017 was my best day ever because that was the day I went swimming with my best friend and my cousins.

It was very sunny outside and it was warm. When I woke up it smelled like water (because I was at the pool) and I woke up my mom up and she said I could go eat breakfast so me and Lauren and Sara went to go eat breakfast.

We ate waffles, sausage, eggs, and an egg omelet and we drank orange and apple juice then we sat down and talked.

After that we went back to our room and got our swimming suit then we went to the pool.

Once we got in the room with the swimming pool, Sarah and Lauren went to the hot tub and I went to the swimming pool (because I was at the pool!).

Aniyah - "When we Met!"

Do you have a best friend? Well I do, and I'm about to tell you all about her. First thing I'm going to tell you is her name. Her name is Sarah. Sarah and I met in Kindergarten when we became best friends. Now we both are in 5th grade, about to go to middle school.

When Sarah and I met, I had already knew Sarah and I were going to be best friends for a long time. Now that Sarah and I are older, we really know the meaning of best friends and we are glad we call each other best friends.

Sarah is nice, pretty, kind, and smart. When Sarah and I decide to hang out, we have the closest tie ever. When Sarah and I don't decide to hang out, we still see each other at school. So no matter what I do, I spend some time with my best friend.

Brian - "Moving"

One day in first grade in my old school I had to move. I said good-bye to my teacher. I was so sad and I knew I would miss my only friend, Grace.

I moved quick so I wouldn't be sad. I went to my new school the next day and it was Longfellow. When we went in, I thought it was going to be the same as my old school, on the other hand it wasn't. When I went in, my mom told the office ladies my name. I

was scared, but.... my mom thought we started the next day, but we started that instead.

When I walked in my classroom, no one was in there but my teacher. Everybody was at music. As soon as I walked in this girl Amaya asked if I wanted to be her best friend, I said, "Ya." After music we went to class and my teacher was Mrs. Colvolt. Then we had recess. I played with Amaya at recess until I met Melodey and Paige. After that we were all friends.

Carlysia - "The First Time I Played a Video Game"

The first time I played a videogame is when I was nine. I was playing with my cousin AJ. He was teaching me how to play because I didn't know how. When he was playing I watched him play so I can learn. When it was my turn to play I started to play but I didn't know what button to push. So I asked him and he told me. So I pushed the button and I changed into either a villain or a superhero.

My favorite superhero is Spiderman. Spiderman fights Venom. AJ kept on telling me what to do on the game, like how to fight and stuff. My favorite villain on the game is Venom because he shoots webs like Spiderman, and when he gets mad he gets really big, and when he's not mad he turns small. We played the game a long time downstairs in the basement.

When we was playing it, AJ's dad, mom, or his sister, Sharmain, came downstairs in the basement to tell AJ that it was time to go. So AJ turns off the game system and the TV, and we both said goodbye. We gave each other hugs.

My other cousin's name is Morrice. He gave AJ a hug too. We went upstairs and gave them hugs. When they went outside: me, Morrice, and also my sister waved goodbye and they started the car and drove off. All three of us or two of us watched them go by.

Corey - "My Shark"

My shark had a fork.

My shark's fork had a dork.

My shark's fork's dork eats pork.

Then, that one piece of pork had a pork jr.

Then, pork jr had a pork jr., jr.

Then, the shark eat pork, pork jr. and pork jr., jr.

Daevyn - "First Date"

One day I fell in love with Aeronn. Today was Valentine's Day, I ask her to be my Valentine and she said, "Yes." My heart was starting to beat. I was in love with her. I want her to marry me. I told my mom and she said, "My little boy is in love." I told her to stop and she said, "Are you going to marry her?"

And I said, "Yes mom."

Aeronn said, "Come and pick me up at 6:00." I was going on my first date. I'd pick her up and kiss her. It was my favorite song and I asked her to marry me and she said, "Yes"! She said, Will you date me forever?'

And I said, 'YES!" I was the happiest boy ever. Me and her go on a date every day. She is so cute. I got the hottest girl in the school. She is my girl forever.

Dalton - "My Best Day Ever"

My best day ever is when I spent the whole day with my Uncle Way.

It started when he picked me and my brother up. First, we went to McDonalds so we could eat. I ordered a McChicken and gobbled it down.

Then, we went to get our Uncle Todd to go swimming. It took him a while to get ready because his house was a mess.

Then, we went to Tuhey Pool. My Uncle Way spent his time with Logan mostly, but he read a little. Uncle Todd hung out with me.

When we left, we dropped Uncle Todd back off at his house. Then, we went to the comic store and we all got to pick a comic book.

Then, Uncle Way had to drop us off back at home. That is one of my best days!

Diontey - "Colorful Land"

When I went to Legoland, I was 8 or 9 years old. I was with my mom, my little sister, my mom's friend, and a friend.

I saw a yellow and brown giraffe sticking its head out of the building.

When I walked in, I saw the big, gray head of Albert Einstein spinning in circles!

We walked through a jungle of Legoland built with Legos. There was all sorts of animals like lions, snakes, gorillas, spiders -- just all sorts of animals.

Next, we walked in a room with Lego Barack Obama, Lego Darth Vader, and Lego Harry Potter.

After that, we rode a little roller coaster and saw our picture on the roller coaster.

Emmanuel - "My Friend"

Can you believe that I've known Niko since Kindergarten? But honestly, we did not get along until the fourth grade. We really became friends on a Tuesday when we decided to talk and hang out at the Muncie Public Library.

My other friend, Jorell, and I played checkers while Niko did his homework at a different table. Jorell left and I went to go talk with Niko and at first we didn't like each other very much. We were quiet but then started talking and argued a little.

What I like about our friendship is that we don't compromise when we argue— we like to debate ideas. We spend a lot of time talking about things that we like, like sports and videogames, but when we disagree we sit down and make sure we figure it out like grown ups.

Ethen - "What is your Favorite Holiday?"

I like Christmas best. I like that holiday the best because you get tons of presents. To me, presents are the best. If it was up to me I would make Christmas every day of the year. One year when I was 10, on Christmas morning I woke up and decided to tell everybody in my house to wake up, I was so excited. When everyone was finally up, we opened our presents. I got some great stuff: video games, toys and tons of other stuff too. Then after the presents, it was time to start cooking. My mom made a ham and she let me help make the sugar cookies. After we finished cooking, we went to my grandma's.

When we were there, we ate and I played some of the games I got for Christmas with my family, but when it was time to open presents, we were all in the front room. It took us a while cause there were a lot of us, but when we were done we played a little more with some of the new stuff we all got. Then we left. I played with a lot of my new stuff when I got home too.

James - "Games we Play"

Last year for Halloween, I was a skeleton zombie and me and brother played ding dong ditch. And then we tried to pop my mom's boyfriend's tires on his car. But, we couldn't pop them. And then me and my brother threw darts at a teenager. And then we played "trick the kindergarteners.". And then we quit the game.

Then we had a family game night and we played Monopoly. Then after that we ate dinner and drank pop. Then we played "Black Ops 2" and I beat dad about 299 times before bed.

Then I get up and play "Call of Duty World at War." And my brother played too. And then I beat my brother some more times. Way before 12:00 in the middle of the night. And we drank some pop. And then we kept playing until my brother beat me 62 ties, and he only beat me 1 time before I got tired of that game and me winning.

Jaylin - "My Pet"

My pet is my friend because he loves to play. He is also my friend because he always knows when I am coming home. He is the coolest pet, but my brother uses him as a pillow, so I can't get on his bed because it has dog hair all over it.

What my dog looks like:

My pet is yellow. He's as yellow as the sun. Also he is the funniest, sunniest, bestest, runniest dog ever.

One time he knocked me down. Then he jumped on my face. Then he licked me to death.

Then when he eats his food, all he eats is the cat's food every single time.

Jovanni - "The Favorite Day with My Pet"

I had three fish— one of them was Nemo. Some people think that if you get a fish from a carnival, you should just kick it like a football. If it hits the ground soon, the bag will pop. If you throw it in a tank, it will pop and the fish will not die. I got mine from the carnival. I will not throw it or kick it.

The next day my mom and dad put the fish in the tank. All of my fish are orange, but one was white and orange. My sister and brother were playing with the fish. When I was alone I played with my best fish, Nemo.

Jovon - "My Best Day Ever"

On my best day ever it was sunny.

I went to the fair and it was amazing. It smelled like fresh funnel cakes. I ate funnel cake, and elephant ears. They had cinnamon and sugar.

I drove a big red truck. It was me, my cousin, sisters, mom, dad, and brothers.

We got to ride an elephant. There were 2 elephants so everyone got to ride.

I got on a ferris wheel.

I saw fireworks.

It was the best day ever.

Kayla - My Pony Palace

"My Little Pony Palace" (Title by Mallory Grantz)

Last year for my 8th birthday I got the best present in the whole world. I'd been begging for it ever since I saw the commercial. It was the My Little Pony crystal palace. I'm a big fan of My Little Pony. You have to build it. My mom said "I don't know about getting this palace."
It was the morning of my party, me and my best friend, Taylynn were playing in my room.
"Come look at the cake," my mom shouted. We rushed to the kitchen. My cake looked like this. . . (It had a lot of whipped icing)

I was so shocked when I saw the palace. My nana had a big smile on her face. "Thank you"! I shouted. It was the best present ever!

Kennedy - "Aunt's Pet"

When I was nine, my aunt had a pet cat and she was soft, fluffy, and cute. She loved to play. Her favorite tug rope was long and it was purple.

I would just pick up the rope and I would just start running and she would come running really fast after the rope. I could hear her little paws pounding against the hard floor, and when I turned corners really fast, she would stop and wait for me to come back around. Then she would try to pounce on the rope. Then I would turn around and go the other way for the rest of the day. I

I would pet her and she would purr. She would flip over and let me pet her stomach. It was so cute when she did it. She would look at me with big, green eyes. Then she would run off and sit in the window. Then we would go to bed.

Lakaia - "The Women I Admire"

There are two people I admire. One is my mom. I like a hundred things about her.

Here are some of the reasons: One is when we do multiplication she has to get her calculator out on her phone. When I want a type of Jordans, I beg and beg for them. Eventually she buys me a pair.

The other person I admire is my stepmom. She is the best stepmom in my life. My mom and her take care of me. They feed me. They clothe me. They even make sure that I have a roof over my head.

I love both of them no matter what.

Malikai - "The Most Colorful Place I've ever Been is..."

Disney World with my family. We were on a dinosaur track ride. There were glowing green and blue mushrooms with light and dark green vegetation and trees. There were glowing puddles of water that were clear blue.

The dinos were the most colorful and more awesome than anything else in Disney World. I like how the green, red, and black t-rex actually chased us. We had to go through a rainbow waterfall without getting wet.

Then we saved a certain dino that was trying to get away from the t-rex and some raptors. Then they said "you did it, you saved the dinosaur."

Then, we went to the aquarium and saw a lot of colorful fish like the Humuhumunukunukuapua'a, the Hawaiian state fish. We also saw a predator that will attack sharks: a killer whale, which is also called a white and black orca.

MarQuis - "A Love Poem"

Oranges are sweet
They grow on trees.
Like lemons as yellow as
pee. Greens make you
fart like You're in the park.
And they are so good.

Marquis - "The Haunted House"

The best Halloween I had was when I was 9 or 10. That year, I went to a spooky haunted house.

Through the door, I saw a scarecrow jump out at me. I jumped with fear. It retracted and I walked into the haunted house. I found a set of stairs. A spider jumped out at me from the top of the stairs. There was a riddle written on the spider. The riddle said "I can eat, I can walk, but when I drink I die, What am I."

I guessed "Fire." I was correct.

A big spider jumped at me. I wanted to just run through the haunted house to get the rest of it over with. Zombies, skeletons, witches, creeper-things, and more spiders kept jumping at me.

I finally made it though. That was a very creepy Halloween.

Marshall - "My Favorite Holiday"

My favorite holiday is Easter. I love this holiday because you can earn money and get candy at the same time.

I also like finding the eggs as well. I can recall an Easter from a few years ago. It wasn't just an ordinary Easter though.

It was set up to where the eggs had a message. After I collected them all I ordered them by number. The message sent me to the backyard to find my new bike! It made me feel elated.

My bike is a mixture of orange and black. It was so shiny and elegant. I had it until I was 7 and then my mom got me a new one when I got older. Other than the money and bike, I got candy.

The one that I'm sure everyone gets is a chocolate bunny. I also received Milky Ways and Snickers. But out of all of that candy my favorite was gummy bears.

They tasted like heaven. My favorite are the red ones because they taste like cherries. The chocolate I also liked, but after a while I got tired of it.

Let's talk about my bike again. I had, had it for about 2 years when it started to fall apart. My mom told me when I learned to ride it. She would get me a new one. I Finally learned and since then have had my neon green bike.

To this day I think about that terrific Easter. It was magical, and ever since then I've enjoyed scavenger hunts.

Melodey - "What I want to Be"

My dream is to become an actor. The reason why I want to become a actor is because you are on TV. I want to let everybody see me. Actors get paid a lot of money. Actresses can play in movies and TV. Actors get taught lines.

I want to be on new shows like Ice Girls, and like Batman vs. Superman. Actress's are great they can be on comedies like Bernie Mac show. The time when I get older I want my own show that is what I want to.

Quintin - "My Best Christmas"

The best Christmas of my life was when I was 10 years old. The present that made it my favorite Christmas ever was when I got my first pair of Lebron's that were blue.

Another thing that made it my favorite is a racing drone and a drone that has bumpers so it won't break.

Another gift I liked was a game called Pie Face. I got the one that was for two players instead of one. That was the best Christmas I ever had.

The End.

Taj - "My Favorite Song"

My favorite song is a song by Bruno Mars. The name is "Count on Me." It makes me feel like I can sing! The part I like is when he says, "You can count on me like 1,2,3, I'll be there, and I know when I need it, I can count on you like 4,3,2, you'll be there, cause that's what friends are supposed to do, oh yeah!"

I like the song, "Count on Me" because it makes me want to make my own song with the same beat. Also I like the song "Count on Me" because it makes me want to be a singer when I grow up instead of a hairstylist. I like all of Bruno Mars' songs, but "Count on Me" is my favorite because of all of the reasons I just said.

Some of Bruno Mars' songs are bad, and I don't listen to them, but most of the good ones I like. What I mean by good ones is the songs that are not nasty. In music class my music teacher always lets anyone sing a solo if they want to.

All of these reasons are why I like the song "Count on Me."

What's your favorite song?

Tayera - "BFFs"

My best friend is Taj.

Taj and I met in second grade. She was the smart one, and I was the funny one. She was funny too, but I am funnier. Just kidding. We are both smart and funny.

We were in Mrs. Hiron's class when we met. Then she moved to Georgia, and I cried. Then she came back in 2 ½ weeks to visit. Then she didn't come back until fourth grade. I was happy when she came back for good.

Terry - "Admiration"

Who I really admire is my teacher Miss Serf. She really helps me with who I am.

She makes me say what I got to say so it won't hurt me—now or in the past—by getting it off my chest. So I can feel better.

She do a lot of things she don't have to do for me. She help me with a lot of things, like my feelings. She ask me what's wrong if I'm feeling down, like if I'm not with the group or I'm sad or upset or not participating.

So she says, "Let it go."

Sometimes I feel better, sometimes no. So she do a lot of things for me, things she don't got to do for me.

Thank you, Miss Serf.

Section II: The Bee Smells a Story

In this section, find Longfellow student memoirs where stories are realized, uncovered.

The bee smells a story, a flower, and pollenates, carrying the food rich pollen sac away back to its hive to feed its fellow bees in the community so sweet honey can be created.

Alex - "My Best Friend, Terry"

The time when I met my best friend is Terry. I met Terry in 2nd grade, he also met me in 2nd grade. We would always play during recess and we would play different things every single day.

But even some times we would play the same thing like either 4 or 5 days straight. Even sometimes we would get bored but we would still play the game.

Then we get more bored so then we would play a different. If we can't think about a game to play we would play basketball and we usually go against each other and Terry would win and I would win once or twice. Sometimes we would just shoot around and it wouldn't be like a competition.

Amaya - "A Fight with Paige"

One hot spring day in class, I was in the second grade. My friend Paige and I was besties! The teacher called out, "Bathroom break!" My friend Paige and I went first. We were just coming out of the bathroom, I don't remember what she fully said, but I heard her say, "I can't be your friend no more because you're black."

Then the teacher was by the bathroom and I told her what Paige had said to me. Paige got in trouble. "You do not say that to people!" When it came time for the next bathroom break I was first to go to the bathroom. I went in my stall and I cried. It felt like a river of tears. Then my teacher, Mrs. Cavalt, shouted "Times up!"

Paige and I didn't talk for the rest of the day. Every time I saw her I lifted my head, said "Hmph!", and crossed my arms. I told my mom. She was sad to hear what happened. She told me, "You will know the right answer on what to say or do to Paige." I thought about what my mom had said and she was right. The next day, I talked to Paige and told her that I forgave her. She looked down and said "Sorry", and then she started to cry. She swiped her one tear off her cheek as it fell. We gave each other a big hug and we had a fun recess with our other friends.

April - "Dent in the Face"

When I was about 2, it was my dad's birthday and I was running around. I hit the corner of the TV stand that was pentagon shaped. I busted my face open on the corner. My mom and dad rushed me to the hospital; it hurt!! :(Now I have a dent in the face.)

Here's some safety tips:

- Don't drop a needle and leave it.
- Always take anything in your body that may lead to infenction out.
- Don't Take it out yourself. Let a parent do it.
- Don't go near broken glass.

If cleaning wood or glass, wear gloves and have a First aid kit near by.

And finally, be safe and don't run!

Ben - "The bad, no good, kinda good day"

One day on July 4, it was morning, me and my brother could not wait! Tonight we had 3 fireworks, 3 bags of fire rackers, plus some sparklers.

To pass the time, we played games, some more games, and even more games. While I played games, I ate some cake, then it was nighttime.

This is where it all goes down...

We got the fireworks when the neighbors came out of their houses, then I had some sort of thing that when you throw them down, they smoke green, blue, yellow, red and some black.

So then me and my brothers got out the firecrackers. We took handfuls and threw them at each other. We each got a bag of the firecrackers—it was like a very dangerous version of dodgeball.

Then we went inside and it turned out, we had more cake, ice cream, grilled hot dogs, hamburgers, and some peppers with some cream cheese and bacon! It was really good. We ate 'till I could not eat anymore.

So I sat down and watched TV till 11:30 pm. We went out for some races till 12:00 am, that was when the other neighborhood lit their fireworks. Then we went to a parking lot on the other side of them, then we went home so we can race some more, but with sparklers. The first race I won, also the second race. But if you include my big brother, I lost the first one and I lost the second one.

I also didn't just lose, I scraped my knee and a rock got inside of the cut! We put rubbing alcohol on it, but it burned really bad like I was going to die! It foamed up, that means there was an infection on the cut my mom got some tweezers to pull the rock out while I sat down in pain, my friends got to have fun. But while they did that, I got bowls and bowls of ice cream and cake.

The end.

Calvionna - "My Funny Sister"

One of the funniest people in my family is my sister. I love her so much. She always tries to crack jokes. But let me let you in on a little secret, her jokes are really bad. But I pretend that I like them anyway.

My mom always tells her, "Girl, you're crazy!"

When I'm always sad, my sister jokes, "I heard you was talkin' bout my momma!" But psssst! I got to tell you something else—she is just playing."

We end up fighting after we're done joking around. She tickles me. I think it's funny because she makes little noises. Sometimes I'll play this app on my phone and we will dance to its music. Then my sister runs in and pushes me out the way of the phone.

Another time she told our dog to lick my face. It's so nasty but it's funny. I laugh until my stomach hurts!

When we go to the grocery store we play a game that we got off of a show. It's called "Impractical Jokers." We grab stuff out of my mom's cart without her knowing. I usually throw the stuff over my head and my sister has to catch it. Each catch is a score. We laugh and laugh, but my mom never finds it funny.

Clarissa - "My Worst Scar Ever"

One hot summer's day, I was riding my pink and purple bike up and down the street. While I was riding, I came to a stop sign. This was the farthest I was allowed from home, so I knew I needed to turn around. When I was trying to turn around my bike ran into a small pot hole in the road. I lost control and I tried to turn around, but my tire couldn't move fast enough and got stuck in the hole. My bike couldn't move any further and I lost my balance.

I fell off my bike and I skinned my knee a little bit, but then I felt a stinging on my hand--- it had a huge scar going diagonally across it. I screamed like someone who was getting surgery with no anesthesia!

Luckily, I was close enough house, I think my mom knew she would be able to hear me from here, and she had heard me all the way down the street. So my mom came running down the street to me and helped me with my bike and to get back home. She told me to leave my bike in the yard and then she took me to the bathroom and fixed my hand. All she had to do was clean it with some peroxide and a towel and then wrap it up. After a few hours I was good as new and all I wanted was to ride my bike again.

Deven - "Favorite Birthday"

My favorite birthday was when I turned eight.

I got money. I beat my cousin in football. My dad came too and we had a water balloon fight. My cousin hit me with the balloon. One hit my back and "clacked". My grandmom bought me the water balloons. She was mad about buying the balloons.

We ate hot dogs. We were at my grandmom's she told us: "Don't run in and out of the house". We did and she said, "Stop running in or out," and we stayed in and we played the game. The game was called Madden 25 and that is a football game. I won, like always.

Then, we went back outside. They sprayed me with the hose. Then, my sister came with a water bottle and poured the water on me and my cousin. We sprayed her with the hose.

It was my favorite birthday.

Dylan - "Really Dog"

Well, I live out in the country.

Now, here is the story.

Me and my friend was driving my Grandma's golf cart. Then, my grandma said, "Come here".

We lost our dog.

We went 2 hours. We ask 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9 neighbors. But there was no luck. Everyone just said, "No". I was sad!

Well, we was all sad. Even my friend was sad too. We went back home. Then, me and my friend went inside for 1 hour and 30 minutes.

Then, we went back outside for 1 hour. We were on the golf cart again. We went acting like we were in the Walking Dead. We use my toy guns to kill zombies.

Then, we went in the garage! Guess what? My dog was in his cage. My grandma got mad at the dog! So, she locked him up.

So, the rest of the day, we played the Walking Dead. I wasn't sad anymore.

Elisabeth - "Losing Pipi"

The most colorful place I've ever seen, is my front yard because my Pipi was there and he was always wearing a sweater. He loved every day. These sweaters always had an electric color, and every day it was like a rainbow of sweaters. Every warm summer day, we would go and play hopscotch for a while on our sidewalk by the house. Then, we would draw with chalk and make stories with our drawings. After all that, we would take a break for lunch.

After lunch, Pipi and I would take a walk around the block and pretend we were on our way to a tea party. Once we got back Pipi would let me paint his nails and do his make up at our pretend tea party. Then, I would do his makeup and hair and nails. We would do all this in the afternoon but then Pipi would always want to take a nap. I would cuddle up to him and I loved the way his soft sweater smelled.

When we woke up, we would do our chores before dinner; we would water the plants and clean up from our play time. Next, I would help him set up the table for dinner. Sometimes I would have to go somewhere else like school or shopping, and we didn't have time to play so that was sad.

But some of those memories have faded. I lost Pipi and he is in heaven with all the other angels, but I believe that he is watching over me. He died the day after the election.

this year. He was fighting Cancer for a really long time and I think us playing helped him feel better. No one ever new why he loved me so much, but was because he's my PiPi.

Josiah - "Best Christmas Gift"

I don't have a favorite birthday gift. But I have a favorite Christmas present. On Christmas morning I was at my mom's house and I opened my 80 presents.

At 3:00pm, I had to leave to go to dad's house. It is horrible over there. But I got two GOOD presents, they were a drone—and everyone would think it was three toys or something like that— but I got the most Awesome Christmas gift you could ever get.

My dad gave me LOVE.

It felt impossible to get it. When I used to ask him a question, he used to say "I don't care" or "whatever", but my aunt would say, "No, he loves you."

He has changed and now instead of "I don't care" or "whatever," he says "yes" or "no." It makes me happy to get that from him. I was so happy that I wanted to say that this was the best place ever, but it wasn't, my home was still better. But his home wasn't horrible anymore.

Lewis - "The Jokester"

I am the best Jester in the whole world. I am so funny, that when I talk, my heart starts laughing. I'm so funny that I'm funnier than Kevin Hart, because if we had a Funny-Off, I will beat him and the whole crowd would be laughing.

They would be laughing so hard that they would throw up. Then, when the throw-up comes out, the throw-up will start laughing.

My stuff is so funny that when the President hears my stuff, he will laugh so hard that he will start crying. It's so, so funny that the people who don't laugh—laugh!

Ba dum tss!

Marcus - "My Favorite Place"

My favorite place to go is the Zoo because I get to see the animals.

Once when I went to the zoo I saw a few large red snakes. The snakes were king cobras. They were black. I said "hi" and it hisssssssed at me.

I saw another snake called a copperhead. Their colors were red and white. I said "hi" and the copperhead hisssssssed at me.

I saw a mighty elephant. The elephant was gray. I said "hi" to the elephant and it trumpeted "HI" back.

Finally, I saw my favorite animal of them all: The lion. I said wow and one of the lions came up to me. The lion was nine years old and I was nine years old too. I stared and I said "hi" and it roared "Hi—RRRR" at me. The lion was yellow and I played with it, and when I had to go, I told the lion that I will come back.

Meeko - "Making Friends"

One day at school I saw a little boy sitting in a chair. His name was J'Den, as soon as he told me, a light bulb popped on in my head. Are you Sarah's cousin? He said yes. "Well do you like sports?" I said. J'Den said yes. As soon as he said yes a connection popped up. "My favorite team for football is the Patriots, my favorite NBA team is the Golden State Warriors, my favorite sports overall is NFL and NBA."

The next week my friend J'Den invited me to a back-to-school party. He told me to wear specific clothes. "Wear some red pants, black Jordan's, and a strawberry colored shirt." When I got to the street he lived on I took out my phone and entered my four digit password (can't tell you that). I went to my Facebook, and clicked on friends, and chose J'Den's name and facetimed him "Where do you live at?"

"At the yellow house."

"What is the address?" (Can't tell you that either). "On my way bro." When I get there all I did was play games and eat cheese pizza.

When it was time to go J'Den told me to call him when I got home. So when I got home I called him.

"Hello."

"Yeah I told you when we first met I would tell you a secret. Here it is I don't like going to fast food places."

"Ok then." I started to laugh, what did that have to do with me? So from that day on I always called him Home Slice.

Naomi - "A Frenzy of a Friendship"

One day my dad came up to my room, and said to get ready because we were going swimming. So I got ready and went downstairs. My dad said that we were going over to Mike's house to swim and that his daughter was going to be there. Her name was Jada.

So we headed over to swim. I wasn't too sure about her but I ended up liking her a lot. Now we are best friends. We like to stay over each other's house and just hanging out. The thing that I like most about Jada is that she always listens to me and she is really funny.

We have only argued one time. It was about whether we should go to McDonald's or Starbuck's. I wanted to go to Starbuck's, and she wanted to go to McDonald's. We stopped arguing after a minute and I told her that we should just go to McDonald's. She said, "NO. Let's go to Starbucks." Then we hugged it out and went to Starbucks.

That's what you call Best Friends!

Nautica - "Disappointed"

I get disappointed when my dad says he will take me to the skating rink. I always get disappointed. Every time he said it, I whined and he says he would take me next week.

So I say, "Whatever," and walk away fiercely. Then the next week I bring 10 dollars to go skating. And he says we will go next week.

I said, "Nevermind, I'll never go!"

He said, "I promise we'll go next week."

I said, "You better or I'll never come see you again!" He said that he keeps his promises but I had a hard time believing him. I gave in anyway and said it was okay if we went next week.

He said "OK."

I said, "OK.

But we never did go.

Nevaeh - "Love is..."

Love is hugging my family.
Love is when we play.
Love is my mom.
Love is in cooking with my aunt.
Love is to your heart.
Love is in your work.
Love is work at school.
Love is my tablet.
Love is in this place, MP3.
Love is writing books.
<3 <3 That is not love, actually love is my heart. Love is when my mom kisses me on my head. Love is mini cupcakes.
Love is cookies.
Love is my brother.
Love is the whole United States.
Love is families.

Niko - "The Pain of a Fur Friend"

My favorite pet is my black dog, a Great Dane, named Thor. He was alive before me, and he was my best friend, but he brought me the most pain.

He gave me the best memories of my life; the briefest memory was Halloween. I was a cowboy and he was my horse. I was about six.

Another thing is, I fell asleep on him every once in awhile, after we would come home from a trip.

The time I was the saddest I have ever been is when he died. I didn't see him after or before he died. I came out of school, got in my car, and my papaw said "We have a problem." I thought I was in trouble but it turned black quick. He told me the details of it. I cried the whole car ride home.

Sarah - "My Ninth Birthday"

Do you have a favorite holiday? I do. My favorite holiday is my birthday. My 9th birthday was on October 19th. It was me and my brother, also my uncle. My uncle's name is Elisha and my brother's name is Josiah.

First, I got in the shower, then me and my brother packed our clothes. Me, my uncle, and my brother hit the highway. We were going to Kansas City, Missouri. We were going there to see my cousins, aunts, and uncle.

The first thing we did when we got there was go to this place called Coco Keys. Coco Keys is an indoor water park resort. Me and my brother had the best time of our lives. After we left the resort, we went to my aunt and uncle's house.

I played with my 4 cousins, An'yah, Jaydein, Zion, and Neiamiah. Zion is 3, An'yah is 7, Neiamiah is 8, and Jaydein is 8.

We stayed in Kansas City, Missouri for 2 weeks. We also went to an amusement park called Worlds of Fun. We went there on our first week in Missouri.

We had to leave on Nov. 3rd. We got to Muncie and went straight home. The trip was long but I had to deal with it. I got in my bed and went to sleep. That was the best birthday ever.

Section III: A Community of Writers

In this final section, hear from Ball State creative writers making meaning of the sweet honey these Longfellow memoir writers have created.

A community of writers writes together, discovers despair together, makes meaning together. They create sweet honey and uncover hope together.

Johnny Baker - Fountain Pens and Pokemon

I came to Ball State with the intention of pursuing secondary education. I originally thought that high school would be the best age group for me to teach because of my somber nature and introverted tendencies. After working with these elementary school kids, I find myself more confident about my ability to connect and teach a younger age group as well. Now, that does not mean that I intend to ever pursue a license to teach elementary grades. I do not envy those grade school teachers in any way! The kids are very loving, but they're hyper as can be somedays. While I think that is a good thing and children should be excited and engaged at school, their intensity wears me out in no time at all.

I worked with a number of the kids on Tuesdays, generally not the same five but there were a couple who worked with me every week from February through Mid-March. One of these kids was Brayden. I liked working with Brayden, even though his penmanship made it almost impossible to decipher what he had written, and his story generally only took a couple of lines to write down because he would write in short sentences. But I liked working with him because I felt that he was one of the kids who needed someone to be his friend. He seemed to be the odd man out in most of the groups, but the children did treat him nice most of the times. I had him sit next to me most days, and if I wasn't having my ear talked off by one of the other students then I was focused on Brayden. I tried talking to him to get his mind focused on the prompt, and that worked some. He would talk back to me about something that he had done with his family, or a trait that he liked about himself, but the transition from speaking to writing on paper always seemed to stump him and make him lose his train of thought.
Naturally, at their current ages, these kids love to talk. Especially to older people who are older than they are, but younger than their parents. If it wasn't Brayden talking

about his sister, then it was Nevaeh trying to ask me about Pokemon. And the moment I'd answer her question, Alex would pipe up with more questions because he couldn't believe someone as old as I am knew anything at all about Pokemon.

"Do you know this one?" Nevaeh would ask, pointing at one of her pokemon cards.

"That one is Sableye," I'd answer promptly. Then I'd start rattling off statistics. "First introduced in the third generation, I believe It's a dark type, and it doesn't evolve into anything."

"Okay then," Alex would speak up, wanting his turn to try and outsmart me. "What are the three legendary birds?" The ironic thing was that Alex would ask me all these questions about the older Pokemon because he was too young to know them well, but the older ones were the ones I knew bet from my childhood.

"They're Articuno, Zapdos, and Moltres. Ice, lightning, and fire types."

When the kids would write their prompts, I would be writing my own story down too. Generally when I handwrite something, I use one of my three fountain pens. The one I use most has a red casing and is almost a perfect cylinder when capped. This red pen was what first caught the eyes of my kids. The color would catch their gaze from the corner of their eyes, then they'd look over and notice the funky looking point on the end of it.

"Woah!" I remember Terry saying. "What is that thing you're writing with?"

I'd explain it was a fountain pen, which would just raise all sorts of other questions from the rest of the kids, who had obviously looked over when Terry made his first

exclamation.

"Can I try it?"

"Can I try it too?"

"How does it work?

"Where'd you get that?"

"How much does one of those cost?"

Once, again, my head was pivoting back and forth, trying to answer the kids as quickly as they could ask their questions. They outpaced me by miles, to say the least.

This little banter would go back and forth, from kid to kid. Don't get me wrong, I liked talking to the kids! But, the whiplash I got from having to turn my head back and forth so quick, and the little bit of writing that we were getting done forced me to find a way to get them writing their stories onto paper. As a way to get them writing instead of talking, I told them that they could use my fountain pens for a little bit if they finished their prompts and made their stories at least one hand-written page. I had never heard such complete silence for such a long period of time around 3rd graders, and I doubt I'll ever get to experience that miracle again! I was really glad that they liked my fountain pens as well as they did. It was a new thing that they hadn't seen before, so they were obviously curious, but they also mentioned that they liked to write with them because the pens wrote so fluidly without much pressure. They enjoyed it, but my heart was always racing when they had one in their hands. I know how reckless kids can be,

although it is generally not on purpose. I trusted them to do their job and be responsible, and I was happy to see that I had put my trust in the right place.

All in all, I felt that my time at Longfellow was a great experience for me, and the kids I worked with. They got a little more in tune with their imagination and creative mind, and I came out of my shell a little bit. I wish that we could have spent more time at Longfellow, but is there ever really enough time?

Charlie Cain - An Open Letter to Jaynes, Corey, Dylan, and Marcus

Dear Jaynes, Corey, Dylan and Marcus,

I've really appreciated the time that I've spent with you guys. I've learned a lot about you all through reading what you wrote. I know that none of you really care about writing right now, but I promise that it's a skill (hobby? pastime? that will stick with you and help you accomplish what you want out of life. The words that you have given us to work with probably don't seem like very much, the hours that we have spent together don't add up too much of your time, but it's been really great. You've been great.

The first time we met I was wearing my burgundy baseball cap that says, "Sorry Mom." I thought that you would think that was funny. You guys never exactly laughed about it. But you all did start calling me "Sorry Mom guy." Which made me laugh. I decided to work with your table because you guys didn't look like you wanted to write, and I thought I could help. I think I was right about both.

Jaynes, I'm sorry that I took away your pokemon cards. I know that when I was your age that would have made me really mad.

Dylan, I'm sorry that I took away your slime. I hope you understand that I wasn't trying to be mean.

Corey, it probably seems silly, but everybody really liked your poem that you wrote on the first day; it made everyone in my class laugh.

Marcus, I'm sorry that I couldn't help you as much as you wanted me to.

And guys I'm sorry that we had to split up the table for our last meeting. That wasn't my idea. Maybe it was for the best. Every one of you wrote more that day.

There were a few times when you guys were clearly having bad days, like when James wanted to sit alone. I appreciate that you guys got a lot a of work done anyway; and some of that work is, really, very good.

Working with you guys has helped me become a better writer and teacher. Well, now the book is finished; I hope you like it. I hope that you'll be proud to have your name in it. And I hope that you keep it for a long time.

Christy Couch - To A Wonderful Group of Students

Walking into a room full of eight-year olds is something that I never would have thought of as daunting. Yet the first day my palms were a little clammy. My nerves were instantly calmed when I saw the animated faces of the children sitting on the tinted carpet in front of me. I delivered them a shallow story that I had written, thinking that it was something that they would be able to understand and maybe even relate to. I assumed that they would all be producing something about the same level, or maybe a little lower than the basic fairly unemotional piece I produced. I was blown away to see that these students were able to put some of their deepest feelings onto paper; something that I didn't feel comfortable doing until very recently.

While I had a group of three or four wonderful students that I usually worked with, there were occasionally students that straggled on over to my table to allow me to write with them. One specific day a boy, Alex, came over to my table, just because his usual writing leader wasn't there. Alex craved attention. I could feel him moving, shifting in his seat, constantly. I had five other students and was trying to divide my attention among them but I kept going back to Alex because he kept asking me. A timid sweet voice, saying "Miss Christy, I know you are busy, but I am stuck." I would help him get unstuck, and he would shift just slightly away from me to stick his nose back in his notebook. Then he would pause, scoot a little closer to me, just to remind me that he was there, and keep writing.

I glanced over Alex's shoulder just to see what the led trails had left on his paper. I saw the furrow in his brow and that he was writing about his greatest dream, to be a basketball and football player, to make lots of money. I smiled, laughed to myself and moved on to read another student's paper because I was interested in the depth of it.

I don't remember what it said. Then I hear a slow, almost noiseless "Hey Miss Christy". I turned around to face Alex's' smile asking me to read his paper because he was finished.

Reading his short "My Dream Is" paper shifted my heart around in a way I had never felt. He wrote that he wanted to donate all of the money that he makes when he is a famous basketball and football player. Half of the money that he made was going to go to his mom and dad so that they could live in a nicer house, and have a better life. My heart smiled at the innocence and purity that still existed in the world, right in front of me. I was unprepared for what I would read next. He wrote that he would donate the second half of his earnings to the Leukemia Lymphoma Society. He wanted the doctors to have more money to help cure Leukemia. Tears welled up in my eyes. I tried not to let them fall as I said "Alex this is an absolutely wonderful story. I'm so proud of you."

Alex, I am so proud of you.

Then there was the boy that nearly lost his shoe running to sit at my table on the first day. I winked at him and figured that he was going to be a stubborn one. Brian didn't say one word to me that day. "What are you going to write about?" I asked him. A shrug of the shoulders, that's all I got. That's all I got for a few weeks actually. Then I came in one day with a thin film of rain on my jacket and Brian ran over and squeezed me. Surprised by the sudden little arms around my waist, I jumped. "Well good afternoon Brian!" We sat down and began to write. I heard his pencil scratching the paper, slowly, as to not make a mistake. I realized how precise his handwriting was.

Brain wouldn't let me read his story until he has finished it. I related to that. I want my best work put forward too, with the best handwriting, the longest essay in the room. "Miss Christy?" Then I read it. Brian was in the middle of an argument with two of his best girlfriends. The story was good, an emotional roller coaster. What I remember

more than what was sketched onto the paper, was the way that you carefully handed it to me. It was like Brian handed me a prized possession, or an organ he couldn't live without. I knew he was fragile in the same way that I am. I knew I had to be careful with your piece of art because you put all your heart and soul into it, like I do. I told you how wonderful it was and how excited I was that you were finally putting your feelings down on paper.

I'm happy for you, Brian. I hope that you learn from this experience like I did. I hope that you use your writing as tool when you're feeling— feeling sad, happy, angry.

I walk up to the building, noting the sign telling visitors to press the buzzer to be let in. This is weird, I think before doing as it instructs. When the door opens, Sam, Christy and I enter the office, signing in before walking with Alyssa to the classroom. A wave of nostalgia hits me as we walk through the halls, small and child-sized, covered in the familiar markings of an elementary school.

Colorful signs mark the room as Mrs. Serf's, and we walk in, greeted by smiling faces filled with excitement. I'm not sure what I was expecting, but this is different. I'm still nervous, but less so than I was before. Dr. Jones introduces the children to us, and us to them, and then Christy begins the session with her prompts.

"Tell the story of when someone was mean to you, or you were mean to them." I think that's a rough prompt to give to children, and I hope none of them cry or anything. Crying kids scare me, and I want this day to go smoothly. I'm still not sure I can even do this.

Dr. Jones begins dividing the children up, and I stand awkwardly by a table, wondering what I should be doing. Do I sit down? Wait? Talk to them? A trio of girls walks toward me, and I look up and smile. "Do you guys want to work with me?"

"Ehh, I guess so." One says, and we sit down at the table. Maybe this won't be so bad, after all.

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The first day I was at Longfellow was exciting and terrifying at the same time. I wasn't sure what to expect from them, and I hadn't been around children that young in a while.

I was scared of being a bad teacher, and of them not liking me. But it ended up being okay, and although it was overwhelming at first, I ended up enjoying my time with that group, as well as a few others in later visits.

Working with the kids was sometimes hard for me, because I'm not a teacher. I tried my best to help them write as much as they could, as well as keep them focused, but it was hard. Eventually, I did learn more about each of them, though, and that made it easier to work with them. I like to think I got to know them, and they each reminded me a bit of my own experiences, in different ways. I loved reading their stories and I'm so glad they shared their memories with me.

On that first day, Amaya wrote about a fight she had with her best friend, who told her they couldn't be friends anymore because Amaya is black. It hurt to hear about something like that, but it reminded me of my own childhood and fights I would have with my friends. None of mine were that rough, or racially-driven, but it did spark memories that I wish I would have written about as a kid.

I'm glad that we've been able to help them write about the moments in their lives that mean something to them. Stories need to be told, and it's good that they're telling them. The fact that I could help with that means more to me than I can ever explain.

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I'm working with Kayla, Amaya, and Melodey again, and I'm starting to panic. I still don't feel like I'm a great teacher, so when Kayla tells me she doesn't want to write about either of the prompts, I don't know what to do. I try giving her others, but she doesn't want to write about any of those either.

"I don't really like that," she says, twisting in her chair. "I want to write about something else."

"Well, what do you want to write about, then?" I ask, hoping she'll give me an answer and that will be that.

I don't know," she says, laughing a little at my perplexed face.

"You can write about anything you want," I say, pleading with her. Just write something. Anything. I beg her in my mind, hoping that somehow, she'll understand. I just need her to write something, and it never occurred to me that one of them might not want to write to the prompts.

"Hmm..." she makes a face that makes me think she's thinking hard, and continues to wiggle in her chair. "I don't really know what I want to write about though." I sigh and try not to let my frustration show. It's okay, she's just a kid. It'll be okay.

Right as I'm about to break, Alyssa comes by with the snacks and saves me. "Hey, do you have another prompt idea Kayla can write to?" My eyes fix on hers, trying to convey my panic, the feeling of impending doom that's building up in my stomach.

Without even stopping to think about it, still filtering through her snack bag to grab the one Amaya wants, she replies, "Try writing about your favorite toy!"

Kayla stops moving and thinks for a second, then says, "Yes! His name is Fuzzy and he's a bear and I love him a lot. He goes everywhere with me!"

I smile and relax, knowing everything will be okay now. "Can you write that down for me? Tell me all about Fuzzy."

***

Sometimes, the kids made me panic a little. But that, again, was only because I haven't had much experience doing this type of thing. Most of the time, they made me smile. Kayla, especially, made me do so. She reminds me of myself when I was younger. I always wanted to talk to people and tell them stories, but when it came time to write them down I hesitated.

Even though at first it was frustrating, because I knew I needed her to write, I liked hearing her stories and learned to be patient with her. I didn't want to discourage her from telling her stories, because that happened to me when I was her age and I'm still learning how to tell people what I'm thinking again.

One of her stories also reminded me of myself in a different way. When she wrote about her favorite family memory, it was about eating spaghetti and making a mess. She said that she was a messy kid, and as someone with the childhood nickname of "Messy Nessy," I can definitely relate.
Some of the stories like this made me remember things about myself that I thought I had forgotten. Kayla wasn't the only one who made me dig up these forgotten events, but I think it happened with her the most.

That's what I valued the most about the time I had with the kids. I learned from them, as much as they learned from us. They taught me how to be open and honest again, and write about what matters the most. That's something that's invaluable to a writer, especially in memoir.

As I wait for Christy to pull into my driveway, I reflect on the times I've had with the kids.

Today will be the last time we write with them, and I'm kind of sad about it. When she gets here, I hop in her car, silently hoping the time won't fly by as usual.

Once we get to Longfellow and get settled in with the kids, I start to feel sad again. But I'm also happy, because since there are only three of us today, I'll get to work with more than just the few that usually sit at my table. We go through the usual routine and Christy and I both give our examples before we go to the tables.

The kids are sad that the other Ball State students aren't here, and several of mine keep asking about Sam. "It's our spring break," I say. "Most of us went somewhere else, so we're all you've got. And this is the last time we'll be here."

"What?" Amaya says, seeming upset.
"We won't be coming to write with you anymore after today." I say, sad again.
The kids are sad as well, heads down and fingers sinking into their writing. I wish we could come write with them more, but I'm also glad that we've had the time that we've had with them.

Sooner than I want to think, it's time for them to stop writing and read their stories. I snap a few photos, and Kayla reads for the first time, as she promised me she would. I take several of her, because I'm proud that she finally feels confident enough to read her words.

Alex reads a heartwarming story about wanting to make a lot of money so he can help his family and donate to the leukemia and lymphoma society, and I think we all wonder if he knows someone who has had either of those.

Some students say they want money to give to their families so that they can live in a safer place, and other just want to help those they love. All of them have big dreams, and I hope that they all accomplish them, in one way or another. They deserve it.

The last time we went to Longfellow was bittersweet. I was glad to see the end of the panic I felt whenever I wasn't sure what to do, but I was sad that we wouldn't be working with them anymore. I learned a lot about myself, as a person and a writer, from working with them, and I'll be forever grateful for this experience. I also learned a lot about them, and I'm glad I got the chance to know some of them.

I'll miss seeing their smiling faces, excited to write another story for us. I'll miss reading those stories and connecting to them on an emotional level. I hope that they continue to write, and that they don't let their stories go untold.

They're important, and so are their stories. I hope they don't forget that, or lose the open and honest way they approached their writing. To all of you I worked with, don't forget that your stories matter, and thank you again for sharing them with me.

Allison Grogg - The Shocking Skills

When working with the kids it was quite an experience. The first day there how much detail impressed me there was in a simple story that Josiah wrote. They were very excited to write but they needed help with their process from reciting the story from memory onto paper. At first Josiah was telling me the story from his memory and I told him to write it down, once he had gotten a part of the story he turned to me excited to explain. I encouraged him by asking questions and details about it.

At the end of that time, I was impressed by the details that he used, in that first story one thing he really described the sacks of a spider egg nest up in the corner of his shed at his house. While the description was good, it was concerning to me. This made me realize that Josiah had a gift of being able to exaggerate well, this makes him a very detailed oriental writer, and no matter what form that he chooses to focus his writing on he can make the story on the paper come to life in the imagination.

Another time that Josiah made him stand out is when we were all writing the joke prompt. His character was revealed in his refreshing enthusiasm to make is jokes better than Lewis's full story saying that he was the funniest kid in class. They were never hostile to each other but all around the room the laughter was constant as the kids excitedly told us all the jokes that they came up with. I could feel the lightheartedness in Josiah's laugh the contentment that comes from laughing for so long. Normally I saw him as a slight outcast among the others, but this showed me that he is so much more than that social outcast and this reflects in his writing, how much details he takes in when he is observing situations.

Another time when I was just working with both boys, they were both quietly letting each other work but I sensed that Josiah had heard the conversation I had with the teacher about Marquis being self-conscious about his writing, that fact that he gave MarQuis the space he needed to really be free to write in the moment tells me that Josiah's character is really sensitive to the situations around him and that he notices a lot more than I thought children his age would.

When I first started working with MarQuis, it was on a Valentine's day prompt. He started writing this beautiful poem when he started feeling very self-conscious about his writing and he crumpled it up and threw it away in the trash. He then drew and colored the sweetest family tree and heart drawing that made me jealous of his drawing skills. After class was over I retrieved the poem from the trash. I envy his writing skill in poetry.

This shocked me that a third grader could encompass the feeling of love in just a few short lines. In response to Josiah, your gift of being an exaggerator will greatly benefit you in any writing that you are doing.

MarQuis, I would say that you have a raw writing talent that will benefit you in all areas of your life, weather you continue writing or end up doing something else. Working with these kids has been very inspiration but also eye opening. Seeing the raw talent they had made me jealous of them and prompted me to step up working on my writing because the competition is getting stronger. It also showed me how critiquing of other writing groups can be life changing and make you see your own writing through many different eyes.

Caleb Haro-Miracle - To Better Understand Myself

The first time I went to Longfellow, I was so nervous that I had a dry mouth. I was not really sure how to interact with the kids. They were all shapes and sizes. When they sat down in their miniature chairs, I hovered over different tables. I could hardly remember anyone's name. When the papers were divided, I got a girl that I had sat next to, Elisabeth. I started reading her paper when my wife picked me up. I gasped as I neared the end. The prompt was about the most colorful place she had ever been, and instead of picking the aquarium or the zoo like I thought, she chose to write about her front yard with her older male relative/friend that passed away. I thought this was a unique paper and I could feel the pain of losing this person.

Throughout this process, I have learned about myself as well. I learned that I am disciplined. I didn't just wake up a writer: I made myself a writer through intensive practice. I learned that I can talk to kids. At first, I was scared of the kids because the only younger person in my life was my brother (but he's a teen now ☹). I learned that when I got to be leader that day, I can control a classroom. I was afraid of speaking up and telling them what to do, but I can. The poor kids were just out of ISTEP and their brains were mush, so this was the best time to practice being stern. At the same time, I had to allow them a little leeway because they had been in testing.

I learned that kids don't have a lot to say on gender. Coming in, I was terrified that they would identify me as a lady and misgender me throughout our sessions, but once I told them, they were okay. I had to correct them once or twice, but they caught on. Once, Emmanuel asked who was a boy at the table.

I think he was confused about my gender, but didn't want to ask straight out, especially in front of Niko, Malikai, and Dalton. Once I raised my hand, and corrected them once, the whole table was okay. I wish my mother was like them! I learned about images throughout these visits as well. April showed me that it's okay to draw to get your visual point across. She is a talented artist, and that's the way she likes to express herself. She writes the story, and then draws the pictures to follow along with the story. Sometimes, she writes/draws comics. She was shy the first day, but the third time we went, she stood up and read. She participated in discussion. I was very proud to see April go up. She couldn't show the class her pictures, but she had enough written down.

Diontey is a character. He's very sweet and wants to be included. He was drawing when he was at the table with Elisabeth, April, and Ethen, and he stayed cool when the kids were teasing him about his drawing skills. He is a comedian and makes the rest of the group laugh. Getting Diontey to write is a bit difficult. Once he is done, he is done, but he likes to draw and is also talented artistically. All these kids are Monet compared to what skills I had when I was their age!

Overall, the kids were great. I can't wait to see them at the book reveal party.

Alyssa Huckaby - Nevaeh the Fighter

Nevaeh is my beautiful little fighter and struggler the first week at Longfellow.

When I hear the word "hate" in conjunction with "writing", I squirm in my seat and feel my heart clawing its way into my throat. The thumping I hear in my ears is challenging me. Overcome it, let her lead you and then you lead her. It's a balance: teaching and writing, but so is being a kid and being in school.

She is stubborn as all get out, but feisty with a fire in her belly, which leads her into the hands of Mrs. Serf. My heart was in a hailstorm of hurt. I had never dealt with a kiddo like her. Usually, all of the writers I work with write more than I do during our session, and end up fighting their way up for author's chair.

Not Nevaeh.

She is timid and anxious all at once. She reminds me of myself as a child: very serious, wanting to be taken seriously, and longing for a leisurely ease.

When I see Nevaeh walk back into the room from Mrs. Serf, it is already time for author's chair. I immediately pester her by asking if she feels a bit better after being with Mrs. Serf, which she clears up for me with a quick NO.

But then, I make her look me in the eye by saying her name: "Well, since it's already time for author's chair, why don't we stay back here at the table and I will start asking you questions and write all of your answers down." She agrees with me, hesitantly, but finally. I guide her through simple questions about her home life, what her favorite food is currently, and if she has a dog.

Then, she surprises me and begins smirking through her teeth and her answers. In this moment, I wiggled my way into her writing life and made her begin to at least like what I have always loved.

We ended up writing with each other every day after this first encounter.

Nevaeh continued to be my beautiful little fighter. She fought me on how much she would be writing that session, what to write about, and when to stop talking and pick up her pencil to write something. She made me push myself - every single session - to be a dedicated, fierce writing teacher. To be her writing teacher. And all of those kids' writing teacher.

Working with these young kids during this spring semester has shown me how much I love seeing kids smile because of what they have created. Nothing compares to hearing their chitter chatter, seeing their toothy grins, and listening to their pencils scratch the surface of their notebook paper with stories only they are able to share. Whether it is Melodey joking with me and cackling, Lewis singing a song about a favorite snack, or Brayden widening his eyes and smiling as big as possible, I enjoyed every moment with these kids.

I cannot say enough about them and their talents or how much they have inspired me. To write with my heart, my eyes, and my mind. They challenged me to think like them, to get the nitty gritties of every moment. Those furrowed brows and pursed lips while writing something mind-encompassing turning into silly giggles and sweet smiles. They strengthen my writer and teacher minds along with enlightening my soul.

Bri Pierce - An Open Letter to Calvionna

Dear Calvi,

When I first walked into your classroom, you shot straight up, ran over to me, and followed me to my table. You didn't look back once. Since then, I have had the absolute joy of working with you, talking about your stories, and laughing at your jokes. I can't tell you how excited I was every day to come sit next to you.

I don't know when it was that I was told I am a good writer (and to be honest, I don't even really know if that is a compliment or a curse). I didn't really start writing until I was a Freshman in high school. I started writing poetry about my past; the pain my family had caused me. I was really shy about sharing my work, afraid that this part of me, this secret, wouldn't be believed or praised...I was afraid it wouldn't matter.

There were a few times that you felt anxious to start writing, saying you felt like you unsure of what to say or that you just "didn't know." But I want to encourage you with something: the best writers start with what they know. You know your family, your friends, your favorite foods and games, you know your feelings. That is where you start, that is what you say.

I would also like to tell you how impressed I am with your writing. Once you started, you wrote so much, more than most in the class. Not only do you have so much to say (and unfortunately, we didn't have enough time) but you articulated it well. Your personality comes out in your writing, which for a young person like you, is amazing. I'm still struggling to get that right and I'm about to graduate college! This skill, this talent, that you have, will take you so, so far in your writing.

I started writing for me. I had so many thoughts swirling in my head and I wasn't sure what was real and what wasn't. So I just started writing those thoughts down. I wasn't trying to sugarcoat anything, spare anyone's feelings. This was my pain, my hope, my life, and I needed to figure it out. I want to encourage you to do the same; write for yourself first. Write down lists of your favorite songs or movies; write poems about your dog and your feelings; write down memories and illustrate them with pictures. However you want to tell your story, be creative, but never, ever, stop telling your story. Do not even think for one second that it doesn't matter, because it does; your story matters. Don't ever for a second think that no one cares, because I do.

Sometimes you will stuck when you are writing, feeling like you have too much to say but aren't sure where to start, or you may feel that you don't know what to say. I wish I could say there is a magic formula to fix this stuck feeling. But unfortunately, this feeling will happen more often than not (and you might even feel this outside of writing). My friends and I kind of have a joke: when in doubt, write it out. Like I've said before, just putting words on paper can change everything, starting is the hardest part.

You and I are really similar, I think. You are kind and funny and sassy. You feel a lot of things, sometimes even feeling what other people feel. You are not shy, though sometimes it might seem that way. You have a strong voice, in and outside of your writing. I admire you so much. When I was your age, I was not even close to your talents or attitude. It took me many years to be where I am; you're so many steps ahead of me.

Do not worry about editing, like spelling and grammar. Just write. Tell your reader about the tiniest details or the biggest lessons...even if the reader is you. Did you know you can learn from yourself, and that the easiest way to do that is to write? Even if you make up a story, writing it down and reading it can teach you so much about yourself.

During my time working with you and your class, I learned a lot about myself. It was painful, honestly. I thought that because I'm an adult, I should be done growing and learning about myself. But my friends and my teachers like to remind me of two things: you never stop learning, and when the learning is painful that means you are growing.

Calvi, I hope I see you again, that years from now I will be able to buy your books and read them. I'll remember the times you sat next to me in class, the times you were so excited to read your stories, or when I brought cookies and you ate four of them. People are going to ask you for help, people are going to ask to hear your story and for you to listen to theirs. Do it. You won't regret it. You're a good writer, Calvionna.

Always,
Miss Bri

Andrew Rosser - Ethen: The Writing Clown

After my visits with Longfellow students, I happened to see some familiar faces, but I also met some new ones. One of these students, who I had met for the first time, made me want to rip out my hair, scream and shout, and throw a temper tantrum for how stubborn this student was being. From my visits, I could tell that his teachers had similar thoughts I'm sure, but I think that because he has no creative outlet like writing or some kind of activity, he isn't pushed or stimulated enough to be the best that he can be. Ladies and gentlemen, I am speaking about Ethen. Now if you haven't met Ethen, and most of you haven't and that's okay, the above description should be enough to frighten you if your intention is to go into teaching. At least that is how I first reacted.

Once I had settled in and sat down with Ethen the first couple of sessions, I had realized that this was going to be one of those defining moments where my teaching abilities would be tested. Ethen was, to say at the very least, not the best writer, nor the most engaged writer. During our lessons, he was very adamant about not writing, vocal about how much he hated writing, and obvious in his attempts to distract himself and other students from writing. Now I felt that since I sat at Ethen's table it was my responsibility to ensure that he had at least a few sentences of whatever it was he wanted to write about, even if it wasn't about the prompts for that session. However, I was feeling ambitious. I had been in a classroom before with kids his age and felt that I was more than capable to push Ethen and get him to write his golden lines and his one of a kind story. Boy, was I wrong. Working with Ethen and getting to know him, was like someone dropped me off into the deep end of the public pool and I couldn't quite hold my head up.

Ethen was very open with me about how much he didn't want to write and I felt like that was a good start for us. Most kids that I have worked with would say something like "I don't know what to write about," or "this doesn't make sense to me," or my favorite, "can't we just draw or play a game or something?" But no, Ethen decided that writing was just something he did not enjoy. It wasn't that he was bad at it instinctively, but more that he had no immediate urge to enjoy writing or discover what passion he might have for writing.

With Ethen, I faced the difficulty of both convincing him to write, and to also write about the prompts that were given. A challenge fit for some of the strongest fourth grade teachers, one of which I am not. "Well what was your strategy?" you might be asking. Well it took a lot of practice but below you can see my strategy in action.

As Ethen and I spent our first day writing together, I also was taking pictures of students and their writing. But Ethen was the only one who was not having it. Absolute refusal and distaste for being photographed; but this is where my idea came from. "What if I bribed him with not taking his picture?" I thought. And boy did it work. Soon enough Ethen and I had developed a sort of comical back and forth with his refusal to write and his refusal to be photographed, but eventually his overwhelming desire to not be photographed won out and he had begun writing for me. On our first day, Ethen had a whole page and one drawing just to stay out of the sight of my camera lens. But of course, I still snuck in some secret pictures of him like the image below. Now, yes, my methods may seem a bit unethical, but boy did he write after that the next time I came to see him and he saw my camera around my neck. I hope that Ethen continues to write and not need the looming threat of my camera coming after him. I hope that he writes because he likes to and enjoys it.

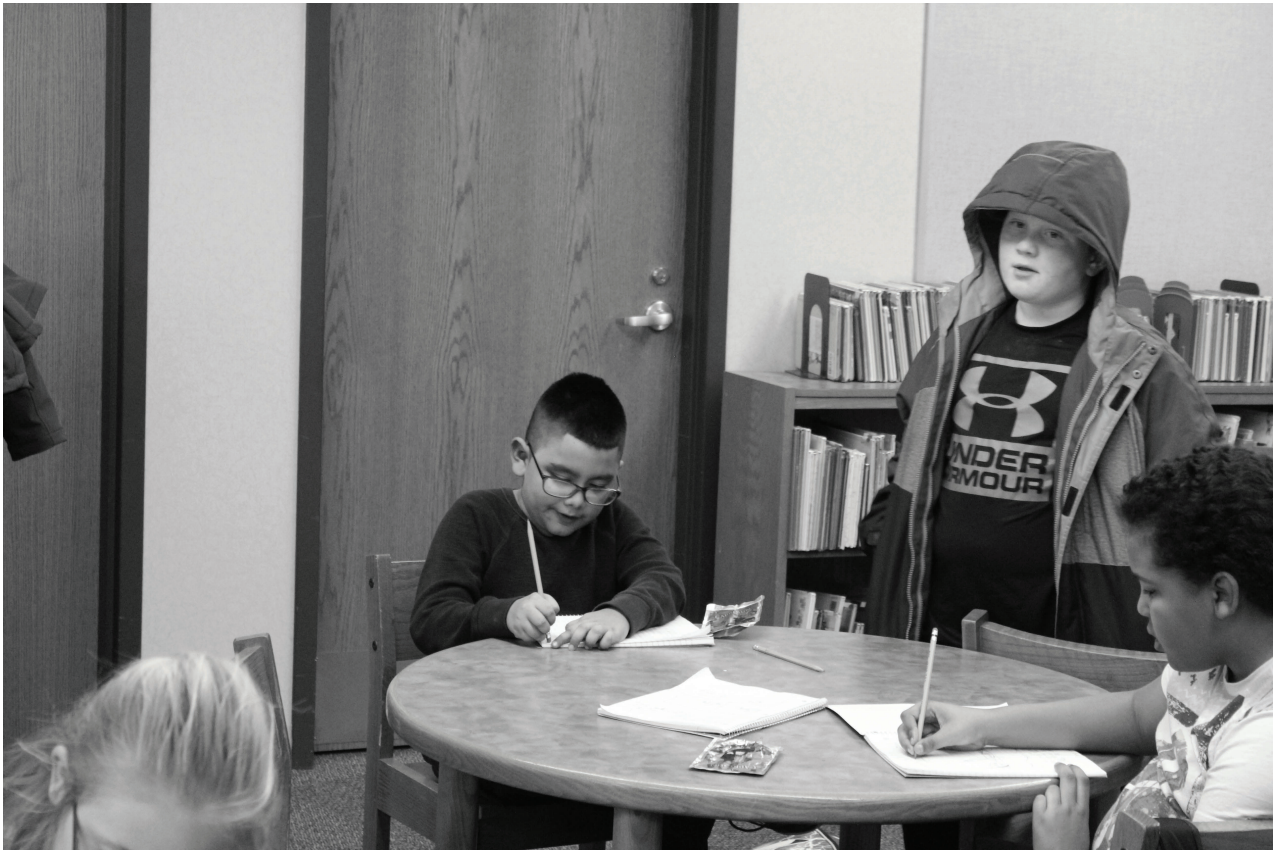


Photo credit to Andrew Rosser

Alex Siyopoulos - Not What's Expected

It was Friday and I was exhausted. I wasn't even at the Longfellow school yet and I already felt drained to the point where I couldn't feel any color in my face. I didn't know how I was going to survive today with how tired I already was. So I told myself that it was only an hour and a half and promised myself a nap after the event.

I went inside and signed in. I found my classmates and slowly but surely I started to feel better. My energy was picking up and adrenalin started to kick in when the kids started to file in and take their seats. The warm weather must have gone straight to their heads because they were rowdy and filled with more energy than normal as they pushed each other through the door.

Today one of the student assistants announced that they were getting assigned seats. I admit I was somewhat relieved because one of the students I was working with, was a bit of a distracted guy and had to be separated from the group the day before due to his behavior, and I had felt bad for him.

However, as my classmate started speaking, I soon found out that assigned seats were going to make no difference to him, everyone was his friend. He started talking to his friends around him and distracting his table while my classmate was talking. But, with a small glance in his direction, and he would quiet himself down, something that I wasn't able to get him to do that day before.

After my classmate was done talking I went over to his table and did what I always did: I asked him and his table what the two prompts were. None of his table could tell me, however, to their credit, it was very hard to hear from the back of the room, which is exactly what that student told me.

I believed him and wasn't upset and told him the two prompts then summarized my classmate's stories again for him and his table. I then asked him to just vocally tell me the story he was going to write so that he might have the chance to think about what he is going to write first. He refused, as usual, but went straight into writing anyways so I left him to be.

We set the kids into motion and let them write and discuss, with their voices being at a low level. The students, of course, were taking advantage of this. I found it amusing how the student I was working with persisted in his mischief. However, I found him being one of my favorite students because of how he challenged me. Every so often, and by that I mean every five minutes, and by check on him I mean (thankfully) just glancing at him. Only a few times did I have to go over and tell him to quiet down.

After a while, I sat down at a seat in the back and watched them work. I didn't want to disrupt any of the kids when they were working. I looked out to the circles of tables and felt content. I was tired and I was letting my sleepiness get to me as I sat there. The loud room of students became a blur of working bees. That was short lived. To him, I must have looked bored because shortly after this small period of content, he started to be disruptive again by talking to his neighbors at the table across from him and to tables across that.

I don't know how he managed to always get everyone's attention all at once. So I went over to his table and asked him if I could read what he wrote. He quickly took his arms and covered his notebook so that I couldn't see even the smallest bit of it, not even the teal blue cover of the front folder that was so bright it should have been easy to spot. I told him that I wouldn't read it if he didn't want me to but that he needed to keep writing and stop distracting his classmates.

He quickly scribbled a few words down then handed me his story and told me to read it. I laughed with joy at him finally allowing me to do something that would be more useful to him and me in his work. So I stood there for the few minutes it took me to read it to myself. It was a story about a game that he had learned to play. He only had a few sentences explaining how he liked the game a lot. So I asked him questions about the game, like how it was played and where he learned to play it.

I handed it back and he told me he wasn't going to write it. So I told him that that was fine, but he can't distract his classmates, adding in quickly that he could draw if he wants. I walked a few tables away and went on to talk to another one of my students who was a focused, little girl who also wanted me to read her story as well. I looked up just for a moment and saw him writing vigorously. My heart felt light and so happy with relief knowing he was taking charge and ownership of his work. I knew that he would write!

At the end of the day I reread his story. I was very impressed! It was quite possibly one of his best stories! I was so happy. I felt my heart lift and happiness filled me completely. I felt like I had accomplished something and I was given hope for my future self. I also felt good because I felt as though had helped Jovon accomplish something as well. For the first time in a while, I was truly happy and excited for the future, in the same way I was when I finally decided upon a major. The weights were lifted off of my chest as i realize that I am making the right choice for myself, which was such a great feeling.

Makayla Swart - To a Lost Boy

The first day I came to Longfellow, you sat at my table. Little did I know how much of an effect you would have on me and the other college students. I remember the first day when you were excited to tell me what you were writing about. You sat right next to me in a room full of young writers. I could tell you had a mixture of emotions. You would go from feverishly writing, excited talking, and some moments you would sit thoughtfully looking at the words you wrote down with your elbow on the table, and your face resting in the palm of your hand. It wasn't until after you gave me your prompt, while I read it for transcriptions, that I saw what you chose to write about that day.

Over these last few weeks, I've read and helped you with your writing. If there's one thing you seem to know about, it's missing a parent. My parents split up when I was a bit older than you, and my dad left. Like you, I felt lost. Why did he leave? Why didn't he want me? Did he really love my sister and me? At your age, these were questions I couldn't begin to answer, or even begin to understand. I wouldn't be surprised if you've asked these same questions to yourself. Maybe at home eating dinner with your mom, maybe with your friends on the playground, or maybe while we were writing.

It took me a long time to realize that my parents were humans just like me. They had feelings and lives that began a lot longer ago than I did. Like you and me, they also feel confusion, love, loss, and many other feelings that you and I have yet to know. If I know one thing, it's that everyone expresses love in different ways, and even though some people feel it, they don't know how to show it.

This may be an old saying, but things get better. You'll feel such love from people you don't even know yet, and this lost feeling you have now will become so distant. You will

be found by people waiting to give you their love, and won't feel lost anymore. Thank you for giving me the chance to meet such a kind, intelligent, and important kid like you. I hope you keep writing. You have powerful stories to tell.

Sincerely,
A Found Girl

Samantha Stevenson - A Writer by Any Other Age

One moment stands out to me now as I reflect. Every Wednesday I would rush in, going to Longfellow first began as just another part of my day. At first, this was just a class that sounded interesting to add to my junior year roster. Sure, I liked kids. I mean I had never had to teach kids, but I was sure I could I could figure it out.

I don't know if I ever did. But I know, that sitting in a classroom with 20 or so kids all excited to write—and swap their wooden pencils with my mechanical because mechanical pencils "helped them think better"—gave me a writer's community I never knew I needed.

I would run out of my car and into the Longfellow office. After scribbling my signature on their paperwork, I would walk down the hallways. The cement blocks are painted and covered in construction paper, assorted artwork for each class. It always takes me back to when my artwork plastered a school's walls. I can see the classroom, and their faces. All of the children would look at me as if I was their teacher—as if I was their leader. It terrified me.

The faint smell of glue and GermX fill the room of chatter. They were usually antsy. I know why, because I know I am on borrowed time. They have already completed their school day, and now they would have to sit with me as I asked them to work even more. And yet, they always did.

I remember when MarQuis wrote about his best friends and chose students in the room. He made a chapter for each friend. I looked over and noticed that he had broken up the paper into chapters. I asked, "MarQuis, why did you want there to be chapters?"

He said, "It's like a book. They are all a chapter in my life." That was so creative. He wanted Lewis, Terry, and Alex to all get their own chapter. But, not once did he tell them. In fact, when Terry asked about what he was writing about, MarQuis became embarrassed. He began to frantically scribble out the chapters in blue ink. I said, "No, MarQuis I liked the chapters!" It reminded me of something I think I might have done at that age; try to make all of my friends in the class feel special.

After writing about sports, and wanting to win games, this was the most emotional piece. This evoked an emotion in me. It made me realize just how deep these kids are, and how much they have grown up with each other. MarQuis wrote about how he met each of his friends in different classes at younger ages. I began to remember myself at this age. The tight friend groups that felt like my whole world. The groups of girls I would jump rope with, sit with each other in class. Friendship at this age is so important. It can make or break your grade school experience. I was always terrified to not have friends at recess. I was so scared no one would sit with me at lunch. But here in this average sixth grade classroom, the friendships are so easily seen. The bonds are visible to even me, a visitor who comes in once a week for an hour. Working with these kids has changed me. It forced me to reflect each day on myself at their age. It forced me to remember how important mentors and teachers were to me in that setting. That is what pushed. I watched as he scribbled his response quietly and to himself. He liked to

I watched as he scribbled his response quietly and to himself. He liked to me to never miss a day at Longfellow. That is what pushed me to try my best to be a guide to the kids in the small time that I had with them. And each time, like with MarQuis, they reminded me what it is like to be a kid. Another distinct moment is when Terry didn't want to turn in his paper at all. I didn't understand.

talk, but not when he was writing. I should know because one particular day, he kept asking me to be quiet as other students at the table asked how to spell words. He threw his pencil down in frustration, "How am I supposed to write if you keep talking?" It was then I began to see more of Terry's personality. He cared very deeply about his work. I quietly answered the other children's questions from there on out. But, Terry never asked for help once. He didn't think he needed it, and I was beginning to understand that.

He didn't wish to share his work after the time was up. And actually,, he didn't want me to read it either. It had become time for me to go and collect the work. Terry stared at me under lowered eyebrows, clutching his notebook to his chest. "May I have your paper before I go?" I asked. "No." It was a standoff. "May I pretty please have your paper?" He didn't budge. "No," he replied, "It's not finished." I left that day without his paper but learned something more about this classroom.

They weren't just students. They were young writers. And this feeling of our work not being good enough, or finished for other people's reading is something every writer can relate to. It's that feeling that we have created something and we won't give up until it's something we are proud of. This classroom is full of young writers, and their pieces were ones that wanted to feel proud of, and feel as though they said all they can. But, as most writers know, some pieces are never finished.

Kayla Veal - "Nothing Comes Easy"

The saying, "nothing comes easy," is one that sticks to my brain more than anything else. The saying is all encompassing in my opinion; it can range from personal things, to academics, even career choices. Anything that someone is trying to accomplish may not come easy. In the case of working with the students at Longfellow I applied this saying to their writing and our relationships.

Say it with me... "Nothing comes easy."

Students had trouble thinking of things to write about that related to the topics we chose for them. Often, we'd spend 30 minutes brainstorming ideas and trying to remember simple details.

"Nothing comes easy."

When I would sit down at the little round tables with chairs so small that my knees were pushed up against my chest, I would be greeted with stares from every student sitting there. "What are we writing about?" is always my first question knowing I would hear them say, "I don't know Miss. Kayla," all at the same time.

I could see the frustration written all over their faces. We worked in the school's library. The waist high shelves were lined with books that filled me with nostalgia. I could see some of them eyeing the books with hunger, as if they'd rather devour one of those than the pages in their spiral notebooks.

Trying to get them to remember things that happened in the past was a challenge...

What happened next?"

"How was the weather?"

"How did you feel?

"Why did you feel the need to write about this?"

Which provoked the responses....

"You ask too many questions."

I don't remember, I told you that."

"Why is that relevant?"

"...okay, I'll add that."

Every week was a new challenge. New questions to get them to dig deeper into their souls, brains, stomachs, and bring up a fantastic story. Once a topic was established they ran with it because the hardest part was coming up with what to write about. When it came to writing, the students were incredible. They acted as if they dreaded my questions when deep down I knew they appreciated me pushing them.

This is known because when it was time to share during author's chair and a student liked their golden line, they would look my way and roll their eyes while simultaneously smiling. "I told y'all you had something amazing to say," I would turn around and

chuckle towards the table. I quickly found out that eyes being rolled in my direction was a good thing. It was as if they were rolling away their excitement. Hiding it deep in the back of their head as encouragement for next time. I simply had to remember, just like recalling memories, that "nothing comes easy."

My first day there I was met by Meeko - rather tall boy, with glasses, and a contagious smile. "Hey braces," he said. Laughter escaped my lips as I squinted my eyes at him.

"It's Miss Kayla," I responded, but that didn't stop all of them from adopting the name braces for me.

Since that first encounter Meeko found himself at my table weekly. We shared laughter and often joked about things that had nothing to do with the task at hand. It helped him become comfortable around me. Comfortable enough to share his new love life with me and include me in the creation of his rap about his girlfriend.

I looked up from checking the time on my phone to see him cracking up with Tanera. I must've missed something important because their eyes were watering from laughing so hard. To my right Marshall was writing as if someone set his pencil on fire and he had to get his story out before it all turned to ash. It's as if he didn't hear the laughter because he was in his own little world. I thanked him for working so hard and turned my attention back to Tanera and Meeko.

"Okay let's keep writing," I said pointing out the fact that he only had the first verse of his rap done.

"Alright. Alright. What rhymes with Genelle, and what beat should I use?"

I had no service on my phone to gain access to a thesaurus. So, we both began to just spit out words until we came across one we liked. We did this the entire time because the last word in every line rhymed with the previous one.

"Who knew rhyming could be so hard" he said with a smile. We built a relationship in a matter of weeks, which is something I was skeptical about my first time there. These students were older than students I have worked with previously and the first day there some of they were very clear on the fact that they weren't interested in becoming friends. They weren't receptive But, all of that changed, because I kept in mind that, including friendship…

"Nothing comes easy."

"Nothing comes easy, and nothing leaves easy." These kids have become something I look forward to weekly. Their smiles, their ideas, their energy, their determination. Nothing we accomplished over the last few weeks as community partners was simple, but I know it won't leave easy. These memories and their stories that they were confident enough to share with me will forever be a part of me. It's another piece that makes me who I am. There's no way that I will ever forget any of these students.

Nothing comes easy, and nothing leaves easy.

Photo credit to Andrew Rosser

Join our Beehive! Write with us!

In this section, find all of the many prompts we used with our Longfellow writers that inspired the stories you read in this collection. Write your own stories!

The prompts below were either replicated with permission from the Indiana Writers Centers' Build a Rainbow Memoir Project or were designed by Ball State University Creative Writing Students in the course.

Memoir Prompts

- Tell me a story about a time when you felt total content with no worries.

- Tell me the story about a time when you felt tough and brave.

- Tell me the story about what happened when you had the most fun with a friend.

- Write about your best qualities or what you like most about yourself.

- Tell me a story about a time when you felt proud of who you are.

- Tell me a story of a time you played a new game and didn't understand the rules.

- Talk about your favorite song. Who sings it, what does it make you feel? Tell about when you first heard it.

- Describe your favorite pair of shoes and tell me the story of something that happened when you were wearing them.

- Who do you admire? Tell me a story about that person.
- Tell me a story about a time when you changed your mind.
- Tell me a story about the best birthday present you ever received.
- Tell me a story about a time when someone let you down.
- Tell me a story about a time you did something that you were proud of.
- Tell me a story about how you and your best friend met.
- Tell me a story about your favorite pet.
- Tell me a story about the most colorful place you've ever been. Where were you? What happened there?

- Tell me a story about your favorite holiday? What holiday is it? What happened?

- Who is the trickster in your life? What are some of the things they do that make you laugh? What are some of the funny stories they have told you or that you remember about them? If there is not a trickster in your life, what is funniest story you have ever been told? How hard were you laughing and do you still laugh today when you think of it? What is the best joke you ever heard?

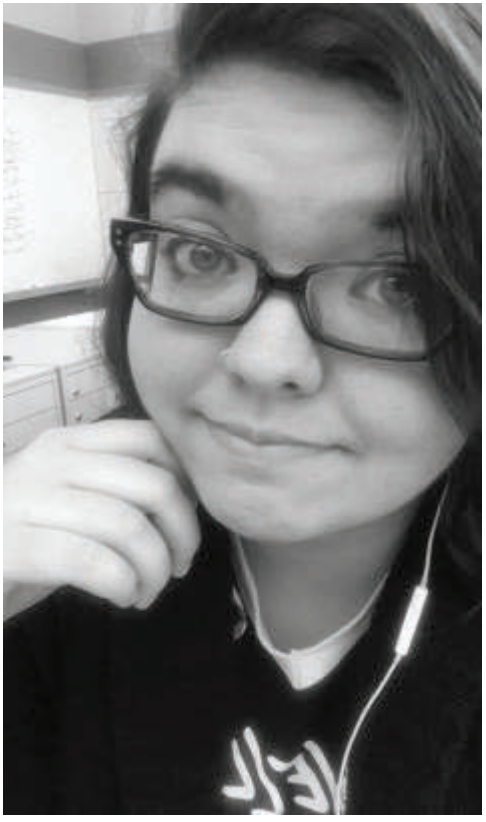
- Tell me a story about a favorite memory you have with your family? Was it Christmas morning when there was so much excitement? Was it when everyone was laughing at something you said?

Editor, Dr. Darolyn "Lyn" Jones—Dr. Darolyn "Lyn" Jones is an assistant professor in the Department of English at Ball State University. Lyn is passionate about literacy, story, and social and educational justice and has committed her twenty-five years of professional life to those topics. She is the best-selling educational author of *Painless Reading Comprehension*, the editor for a digital literary magazine, *Rethinking Children's & YA Lit: Read for Change*, the editor for the children's book series, the *Neon Tiki Tribe*, and the lead editor of the independent press, INwords Publications.

She has edited and published multiple essays and literary collections including six volumes of *I Remember: Indianapolis Youth Write about Their Lives, Monday Coffee and Other Stories of Mothering Children with Special Needs*, *Where Mercy and Truth Meet: Homeless Women of Wheeler Speak*, "Sitting at the Feet of My Flanner House Elders: A Lesson After Dying." She publishes scholarly narrative research in disability studies and community and collaborative writing. Besides teaching at Ball State University, Lyn also serves as the Education Outreach Director of the public Memoir Project at the Indiana Writers Center. Read more about Lyn's work and follow her blog at www.thelynjones.com. Learn more about the *Rethinking* magazine at www.rethinkingkidlit.com.

Photo credit to Ayanda Underwood

Student Assistant Editor, Andrew Rosser - Andrew Rosser is a senior at Ball State University studying in English Studies with a focus in poetry and creative writing. He often spends his time working with photography and writing poetry. This is Andrew's second experience working with kids in this style and finds every opportunity to do so a great experience. Andrew is a published contributor to the digital literary magazine, *Rethinking Children's & YA Lit: Read for Change*, a collection focusing on texts and authors of various minority groups and social injustice issues.



Illustrator, Megan Hall – Megan Hall is a Visual Communications major with a minor in both Art History and Women's and Gender Studies at Ball State University. Megan has always known she wanted to be an artist since she was a little girl, always drawing, trying new things, taking every art class she could in high school, and later deciding to go to art school at Ball State.

Photo credit to Amanda Underwood

Johnny Baker - Johnny Baker is a student attending Ball State University, Majoring in English. Hailing from the small town of Orleans, Indiana, Johnny is an aspiring author/editor/teacher. At Ball State, Johnny is also a member of the Ball State Pride of Mid-America Marching Band.

Charlie Cain - Charlie Cain is a junior at ball State University and studying writing. He is an aspiring editor and fiction writer. He enjoys well-crafted stories and his favorite part of writing is using and grammar to communicate carefully.

Christy Couch - Christy Couch is currently a junior at Ball State University and enjoying studying English Education along with a Creative Writing minor. She has passions for kids and young adults and can't wait to help teach them about reading and writing in the very near future!

Vanessa Ford - Vanessa Ford is a junior studying creative writing, journalism, and Spanish. She loves writing and helping people realize their own stories, so this class was an interesting experience for her and definitely brought back some memories. She also loves bad jokes, cats, and playing video games.

Allison Grogg - Allison Grogg is a Creative Writing Major wanting to write fiction. and she is a junior at Ball State. She started writing when she was a junior in high school and fell in love with the endless possibilities of it. This made helping work with the kids and class on this book worthwhile.

Caleb Haro-Miracle - Caleb Haro-Miracle is a Creative Writing major with a Spanish minor at Ball State University. In other words, he is a language nerd. In his free time, he enjoys playing video games and blogging on Tumblr. He and his wife have a wonderful cat daughter named Chaos.

Alyssa Huckaby - Alyssa Huckaby is a junior English education major with a creative writing minor at Ball State. This is her second experience producing a book with Dr. Jones involving kids' memoir writing. She is thankful for having the continuous opportunity to work with kids in one of her favorite genres.

Bri Pierce - Brianna Pierce, Bri for short, is a senior at Ball State University with a major in Public Communications and a minor in Creative Writing. This opportunity has been one of the most exhilarating experiences in her college career and has expressed much pride for what has been accomplished for this project.

Alex Sinopoulos - Alex is a student at Ball State. She is majoring in Secondary English Education and minoring in Creative Writing. She enjoys reading poetry, nonfiction, and memoirs. Taking this class and working with the children was a really rewarding and beneficial experience that she has enjoyed.

Makayla Swart - Makayla Swart is a senior English Studies major with minors in Creative Writing and Literature. Makayla spends most of her time reading, writing, or watching movies. Her favorite genre is Creative Nonfiction; so helping the Longfellow students find their own stories to tell was an incredibly rewarding experience.

Samantha Stevenson - Samantha Stevenson is a junior Magazine Media major at Ball State University, Stevenson spends her time either writing or obsessing over the latest in music. Although a journalism major, Stevenson's other passion lies in her minor of creative writing. She is the Managing Editor at Ball Bearings magazine.

Kayla Veal - Kayla Veal is a junior English education major at Ball State. She is an avid reader, writer, and activist. Her passion lies with kids and the stories they have to tell. She has expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to be included in this book.