

I Am Here To Win

An Anthology of Sixth-grade Student Writing
IS 187-Hudson Cliffs School
New York, New York
Cynthia Chory, Principal
Catherine Linehan, Teacher
David Surface, Writer-in-Residence
Winter 2018
Teachers & Writers Collaborative

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Foreword

Welcome to *I Am Here To Win*, an anthology of writing by the sixth-grade students of IS 187-Hudson Cliffs School in Manhattan. It was completed during a ten-week residency from December of 2017 through March of 2018 for Teachers & Writers Collaborative.

The goal of this residency was to deepen students' understanding of the people of ancient Mesopotamia by bringing creative writing strategies into the social studies classroom.

One of the best ways to understand any civilization is through their art. We started by looking at ancient Sumerian sculptures of battle scenes. We asked, *Why did the ancient Mesopotamians create so many pictures of war? What were they trying to tell us?*

War and violent struggle are facts of history—but the hatred of war, and the desire for peace are also a vital part of human experience. Using empathy and imagination, the students were able to communicate both the terror of battle and the desire for peace through the voices you'll find here.

From visual art, we turned to the written word, and one of the world's oldest stories, The Epic of Gilgamesh. We looked at one of the most famous parts of the story, where Gilgamesh fights and defeats the demon of the forest, Humbaba. We asked the students, *Who is the hero of this story? Who is the villain? Is it possible to have a story without a hero or a villain?* The students thought deeply about these questions, and gave voice to those thoughts in some remarkable pieces of writing.

My thanks to Cynthia Chory, principal of IS 187, and to Assistant Principal Nilda Marrero for their support for this project. Special thanks to the Friends of 187 and to Parent Coordinator Isabelle Eaton for their enthusiasm and invaluable help in making this program possible. My thanks especially to Catherine Linehan, sixth-grade teacher at IS 187, for being a strong and supportive partner in the classroom.

Finally, a big thank you to all the sixth-grade students of IS 187 for your hard work, empathy, and imagination. This book is for you.

David Surface

Writer-in-Residence

Teachers & Writers Collaborative

Class 6-409

Ms. Linehan





Here You Are

Maya Nimowitz

Here you are
at the warfront.
A surge of adrenaline races up your spine.
The men in front of you are aiming at their targets
not sure who to shoot at.
You see the opponent up ahead,
coming toward you, aiming their bows at your skull.
The cries of the battle fill your ears.
The sounds of yelling to distract the other side is a signal.
It is time for you to charge.
Your horse is finally racing up to the field of green,
being careful not to waste his energy.
The brisk wind rushes past your face.
As you go, you smell the blood of your fellow men and their horses.
Sweat trickles down your spine, from the fear of getting killed.
You want all of this to be over.
You need to go home.
You get hit by an arrow.
Blood runs down your leg from the wound.
You are afraid of losing your family, and your family losing you.
You are becoming unconscious.
Blood is running out.
You wish you could tell your family that you are safe, but you are not.
Finally, your horse falls over.
You hit your head.
You black out.
Dying is the last thing you wanted to happen to you.

A New Beginning

Nancy Lopez

My people were screaming on the ground,
hurt from the enemy's arrows.
All of this happened on the same day, but why?

Hearing the arrows hitting my mates makes me want to cry.
But smelling their rotten bodies makes me
want to cry more,
But I need to concentrate.

I can feel the sun's heat on my back
and the galloping of horses on my body.
By looking at the sky, I can feel
a new beginning coming.

I see the other soldiers coming at me.
Wariness went through my body.
I see arrows coming at me.
I feel scared, hopeless, and I think
I will never make it out alive.

I can't help thinking, *why is this happening?*

A Drop of Sweat

Francesca Schneidman

A drop of sweat is falling down my head. Slowly—so slow, it's hard to concentrate. One little drop is such a distraction, it feels like the weight of one million raindrops. I look around to try to distract myself so I can set my mind on something else. My target, anything to calm down and concentrate. I set my mind on a puddle of blood on the ground. I know, *how morbid*, you may say, but I had to set my mind to something. Some dust flies in my eye. The horses are so scared, and are kicking up dust and dirt into the air. All of these hectic actions are making me queasy. I take a deep breath, but instead of smelling fresh air, I smell the sweat of all my other war-mates. I want to win, but I am a man of peace, and I don't want anyone to get hurt. I am almost ready to let go of the arrow I have been holding. I look at my target, and then at my arrow. Target, arrow. Target, arrow... I find the right position, and fire. My hand rubs against the rough, hard wooden arrow, and the rope from the arrow being shot burns my hands. I hear screams of victory. I look around, lost, trying to see what the commotion is around me. I later find out that we had won. It took a minute for me to register this into my mind, for I didn't think we would win. I smile spreads across my face. I jump off my horse as fast as I can. I run through the wheat fields, the wind blowing fast. I scream, "Victory!" I cannot hold it in. I actually survived. I kiss my wife and pick up my children. I stood there, proudly. Pride was back.

In That Moment

Savannah Greystone

Tears falling down my cheeks, sweat dripping down my forehead. My heart was pumping loud; you can hear it from miles away. My breathing was like cold wind passing at night. The guards yelled, we start heading in. I gather my things and feed my horse Lonzo one last time. All I can think about is dying, but what I really want is to make it home to my wife and kids. Before we left, I spoke to them one last time, just to say goodbye if anything ever happened. Now my heart was pumping more than ever; the whole troop could hear it. I tried to gulp down my fear, but fear was the only thing in my mind. All my head was saying was, *You're going to die*. But I tried to convince myself, no, you're going to live. I'm going to make it home to my family and have a great life as a veteran. Finally, it was time. I mounted Lonzo. I can feel him shivering...or was it just me shaking?

We started moving, but I realized I had left my bow and arrow back at the site. I thought to myself, *How idiotic I was*. I tried to tell someone, until I felt something hit my neck straight through my vocal chords and out the back. All I could see was something on fire coming toward me. I thought for a second, what if I was meant to die? I tried to duck, but it was too late. I thought about how my life was over, and how I felt for my family in that moment. I heard thumping horses coming towards me. I thought they were coming to save me, then I realized my head had no body, then I felt the horses' hooves crushing my face. In that moment, my life was over.

A Wife of a Soldier

Kayla Flores

"I am going to get home. I am going to make it. I will survive." I am telling myself in my head. "Ooff!" I feel the pain going through my spine. How did I get into this? How do I get out? If I died, what would my family think? How would they feel? The pain...the pain hurts so much. I can't take my mind off it. "No...please, no...Gaah!" No. I feel more pain than before...

"Oh, hello. Who are you?"

"Are you a wife of a soldier?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Is his name Mattaki?"

"Yes."

"Well, we aren't sure he will come back."

"What? No...no...please say it's not true!" I say, sobbing on the floor.

"We don't know yet. Do you want to see him?"

“Yes! I want to see if he is okay,” I say, trying to hold back the tears.

“Hello are you here for Mattaki?”

“Yes are you here to take me to him?”

“No, I am sorry. I can see you are about to cry....”

“So what?” Mattaki wife said.

“If you saw him, you would cry more”

Coming to the End

Aaliyah Medina

I just feel my life coming to the end. I see people being shot with bows and arrows. It is so hard to focus when my hands are shaking. I aim at my target. I miss. I lead my horse closer. Instant regret. I start becoming nervous. I shoot...and I hit one of the people on the other side. I feel confident, like I can rule the world. My fellow soldiers help me hit the main target, the head of the whole other army. The main target shoots...he hits one of my best friends. I feel sadness instead of confidence. I have anger in me. I see my best friend fall and hit the ground. I hear people screaming. Now, the best friend I ever had...now dead. I immediately knew we were doomed. Second after second, people are dying. I instantly knew they were going to win. Horses are dying. I see arrows heading in my direction. I knew I was going to die. Sometimes life is just not fair...

I Don't Want to Lose

Jennifer Sellan

The moment I was in the war, I heard the noise of screaming, shooting, arrows, and the smell of fresh blood. My people are risking their lives to save the people they know. The feeling I have is fear, because I don't want to lose, or, the worst part, die. Inside of me, I was crying, for the people on the ground, for thinking that I would be the hero who save all the people.

Never Give Up

Hailey Morel

Here we are at the war...one drop of sweat dripping down my forehead. I'm terrified. All I hear is arrows being shot at people, people crying, people yelling, and horses neighing. I was on my horse when I saw an arrow coming right to me. I dodged it so fast, it missed. I smelled the blood of people dying. All I want right now is freedom, then

everyone will be peaceful and work together. Then I fell on the ground and saw people getting killed, and horses' footprints. And then I saw another arrow coming right at me. I knew it was over for me, but then my best friend jumped in and died. I was in tears. I said to myself, *He's such a good friend, but now he's in a better place.* I just couldn't take it anymore, so I got up and tried shooting everyone. I knew it was over for me, but I knew that you can never give up, like my mom told me; Never give up, stay strong. Then an arrow shot me. I fell and started to get dizzy. I knew it was the end.

All the People He Had Known

Bradley Castro

He was on the battlefield, being scared of death. There were a lot of people fighting like it was a war. He had arrows, trying to shoot people down, and he got some people. There were bodies on the ground, full of blood, arrows aiming at him, trying to get him down. People were screaming in the background about how somebody they cared about had died. He was feeling bad for all the people he had known who died right in front of him. He hated the smell of dead bodies. Thinking of all the people that died made him sad. He still wants to win the battle.

I Didn't Think it Would Happen

Ben Heagle

Today's the day. I didn't think it would happen. So soon, it was my time to fight. I'm with my friends, fighting, only five of us, the smell of smoke in the air. Kuri is trying to give us orders, but we can't hear him over the screaming, and I'm blinded by the arrows flying in my face. *CHINK!* Kuri's head falls off. Trying not to cry, I keep fighting. Now there are only four of us. My horse is running over corpses; I wonder if I will end up like Kuri, hoping I don't die. Seeing civilians running from our horses, trying not to get knocked down. I'm hoping I survive so I can see my wife. Hoping I can say goodbye, until... It went blank. I woke up. I was in the hospital. At least I was alive, but I still felt pain. My arm...it's broken.

To Be in a War

Nicco Biehl

To really know what it's like to be in a war, you have to feel the fear and intensity in the air. The rush of adrenaline that surges through your body as you swing your sword. The sharp pang of the rope being let go from your fingers, releasing the arrow into the air. You have to really see the whole battlefield, both sides supporting different things, at war with each other. You hear the sound of your panicked horse neighing loudly. You feel your horse rear up as you fall to the ground, and then watch him gallop away. You look around, and you see and smell the bodies and blood covering the ground, and you turn away quickly as you notice that your friend is among the bodies. The sound of battlecries and screams still fills the air. You hear the arrows whizzing around, swords clashing and then hitting their targets. The smell of the horses and humans really starts to get to you as you try to focus on staying alive. You feel the hilt of a sword by your arm, and you reach for it. As you pick it up, you look and see an enemy horse coming toward you. When you panic and try to get up, the horse moves even faster. Desperately, you chuck your sword straight at the horse's rider. Direct hit. He slowly falls backward off his horse, which panics and stumbles. Luckily, you dive out of the way. Now you really start to panic. Realizing your position on the battlefield, you run for cover. Some trees appear in the distance. Suddenly, an arrow burrows itself into your upper shoulder, and you fall forward. You look up and barely have time to be afraid, as there is a horse just a few feet away from you. You let fate take you, and you stay calm, as you get swallowed by darkness.

Only then could you truly say that you experienced war.

Live My Life in Peace

Hector Corniel

All of us horses are getting ready for war. Enemies are running toward us. I see a lot of people dying, and a lot of dead people on the ground. I hear arrows shooting everywhere. I also hear people screaming for help. I smell smoke from the fire. I just feel the pain in my legs. I just want to leave this war. I think God has heard my words. The person who was riding me died, and has no head. So I just say, *Screw this, I'm running*. So I run to the woods and live my life. I just feel bad for all the other horses that are still in the war. At least I can live my life in peace.

I Hope I Win

Valtrim Kukaj

My friends and I were ready to charge into battle. I saw my friend, Nasha struggling to fight. I managed to get a person who was aiming at Nasha before he shot him. I move on to the battle. My friends knew what they were doing, except for one. He was on the ground, bleeding like no other; he had blood all over him, screaming and crying, but he got shot again and died. I saw these men not paying attention to the fight, so I just shot them. Now that so many people on my side have been shot, I've been wondering if I'll ever be able to see my family again. I'm trying my hardest not to die, so I've been trying to get all the cover I can to survive. But my best friend next to me got shot—my best friend. After he died, I tried my hardest not to think about my family and best friend, but it was too hard to stop thinking about them. The man in front of me was aiming at me. I had no more arrows, but my friend gave me some just in time, and as soon as I took them, I shot and managed to hit him. It was me and another one of my guys on our side against three others. We shot, I hit one guy, but my friend didn't, so the others guys shot him. I'm really saying to myself, *I hope I win*. I only had two arrows left, and two men trying to kill me. I hit one of them, and he died, so it was only me and the other rival. I shot and he shot. I was able to dodge it, and the rival wasn't, so I shot him. I was so happy, I tried my best to win, and I did. I went back to my family and celebrated.

The Last Thing I Saw

Miles Gonzales

Riding into battle on my horse, I aimed my bow at the nearest target. *Dang it*, I thought, *somebody stole my shot*. I aimed again. The scent of blood filled the air as I pulled back my bow. Sweat rolled down my scarred face. My fingers loosened, but my horse reared as I let the arrow go. I fell off as my arrow hit a tree. Blood was running from my mouth; I tasted the saltiness of it. My horse ran and fell. His black eyes looked so sad, like he missed me, and then they closed for his final breath. My mind raced about my family, friends, even my dog, Melshindor. I could only hear my own breathing; all the other sounds blurred out. Fires burned, horses ran, people were dying before my squinting eyes. The last thing I saw was an arrow, fast as a bird, slicing through my flesh like a boat through water. *Inhale, exhale. Inhale, exh*—a light filled my eyes.

I See My Enemy

Trevor Parkins

I see my enemy. I get my bow ready. I shoot and miss. My opponent sees that I tried to kill him. He is extremely mad. He shoots at me. His shot is right on target and my head. Doom. I fall from my horse; blood starts streaming out of my head. I am barely conscious. My head is spinning, and everything—and I mean everything—is blurry. My head, feeling like a million bees have stung it, is just resting on the ground. I can smell the horses, the dirt, the blood pouring from my head, and the blood that's all around me. I look up and see a man on his horse. It's the same one who shot me. I can see a wish of me being dead in his eyes. I hear him scream the word, "CHARGE!" When I hear that, I know I am dead meat. I see his horse charging right at me. The man shoots at me one more time, and the horse runs over my head. The last thing I ever see is the horse's hoof one inch from my head. At least I went down fighting.

The First War I Ever Had

Christopher Villa Real

This is the story of how I was the last person alive, and was fighting for my now-dead friends in a war. This all started when we were fighting for this one sword that can turn to anything in the world you want it to be. And we were fighting all over it. We had bows and arrows, spears and regular swords. At this point, my wife was so scared, she hid under the covers in our ripped-up tents. No one had food or drinks. All it was was fish, and that's it. War was beginning in ten minutes, so we were getting ready with the bow and arrows and spears.

Ten minutes later...WAR! Everyone screamed, "WAR..!"

At Least I Was Alive

Ashanty Vasquez

I heard horses running and people screaming. The sound of people crying and screaming started to scare the horses. I smell blood and spit close to my body. I saw our enemies coming toward me and my friend, dying. I feel the horses stepping on me, and dead bodies on top of me. My blood was running through my arms and legs, and I felt sad because I was afraid of dying and losing my family forever. I felt bad for the other soldiers, but I feel good for the ones who are alive and still on their horses, looking like heroes. But I also feel bad for my enemies, because they were also dying, and they were leaving families behind too. Then I woke up. I didn't know what happened, but I felt

strong, so I stood up, and all I saw were dead bodies. I was happy, because at least I was alive. I heard something coming closer and closer. It was my friends singing, “We won and everything will be better...” I felt happier when I saw them; they came and hugged me. They were so happy to see me, as I was to see them.



No Longer Mighty

Elizabeth Cepeda

Sitting on my throne, overlooking the trees which I have vowed to protect. The wind blowing through the leaves, sending a gentle wind my way. The birds' singing their morning song that they sing every day. Nothing out of order, or out of shape. It was peaceful, only me and the trees.

One, two, three, and I hear the sound of a tree screaming after being cut down. I soar over there as fast as my wings can take me, the sound of wind blowing in my ear. *A human*, I think to myself. *What idiot would come here willingly?* I've never met or even seen someone so prone to death.

"Who are you to disturb this forest, the forest of the gods?" I say in my low, loud voice. "Go back to where you came from now."

"No," he replied. "I came for the trees. And for your head." His voice was casual, but with fear hidden in it. His friend became paralyzed with fear, as he charged at me with weapon in hand. Who is this man that thinks to defeat me, the great Humbaba, protector of the forest?

I try my best, but his nimble little body wraps around me like a snake. I get a few good hits on him, but I end up in a corner, tied down, pleading for my life, not to be killed in such a shameful way. "I have no mother to love me, no father to teach me," I cried out. "My only purpose in this life is to protect the forest, nothing more." I continued pleading, "I will give you everything, all the trees in this forest. All the trees in the world, all the power in the world. I will be your slave and obey your every command." *One, two, three, have mercy on me.* One two three, he yells, "NO MERCY." With one fast swoosh, I, the mighty Humbaba, am no longer mighty.

Why Can't They Just Understand Me?

Brianna Martinez

I see two people trespassing in my forest. They look like they want something from me and the forest I am guarding. I hear their footsteps miles away, their whispers and the swords they are carrying. I smell blood dripping from the swords, like they just did something atrocious, and they aren't scared to do it again. I feel the wind swaying the trees. I feel powerful, but lonely and miserable at the same time. What if they want to be my friend? What if they want to kill me? It's not my fault I'm here. I was put here by force. Everyone thinks that I'm this big, vicious monster, but really, I'm not! Why can't they just understand me? I want freedom! I want friends that look at me and don't think I'm the bad guy. I want friends that care about the inside, not the outside.

The Only Thing I Care About

Ava Conner

A crash from the south side of the forest awakened me. I ran faster than anyone could imagine. Two men had gathered many trees, cut them down, and stored them at the bottom of the mountain.

“Who are you? And what have you done with my beautiful array of trees?” I shouted. They had destroyed my land, and what I love.

“I need trees to build my city,” one of the men said confidently. “My name is Gilgamesh. It is a pleasure to meet you, but I need to get on with my cutting.”

I slowly approached him, and then declared battle. How dare he?! We fought until I was in too much pain. This was it. I had lost the only thing I care about in life, my trees. I was defeated.

I Don't Want To Stay Here

Audrey Zawoiski

A man. In my forest. With weapons. I'm tired of this. I'm tired of protecting this forest. The forest that's been here for years. People trying to take my wood and fight me. Then, me having to kill them. They think I'm evil. If anything, it's the gods who are evil. They put me here in this spot. They told me what to do. I'm just doing my job. That man can take his wood. In fact, he should take everything, because I quit...maybe not right now. He's charging at me. Alarms go off in my head. Time to attack. I run toward him, warming up my fire-breath. He's so close, yet so far. We're about to hit each other. Only a few feet away. As we get closer, I see his spear in slow-motion, swinging about to hit me. I'm about to burn him, but then I realize, I don't want to stay here. I hold back. I stab him. I fall. I've failed.

I Will Finally Be in Control

Kalmen Kelly

My days have been really getting me angry. I have hated Gilgamesh since day one. If I kill him, I will gain fame and control over the universe. He thinks we're cool with each other, but we're not. I can't wait for our swords to cross each other. In fact, I will murder him when he doesn't expect it. My plan is...first, I will make him come to the river near

my lair. Then, out of nowhere, I'll slice his head off with my sword. Now, I will finally be in control of the universe, and 100% unstoppable.

I Never Woke Up Again

Derek Young

I see a man attacking me with a spear. Then, as I get up, he stabs me in the leg. I'm still alive somehow, but I am struggling in pain. As I took that hit, I'm afraid I am going to die. I don't want to die. I want to live a happy life. He really wants to win this fight. It will mean everything to him.

As I was charging, I fell. I couldn't sit up. I needed help. A few minutes later, the same guy stabbed me in the same spot. I closed my eyes and envisioned myself dead. And I never woke up again.

All That Matters

Abigail Gill

I saw Gilgamesh coming at me because he wasn't going to leave until he had gotten the trees and won the battle. As I am fighting, I am asking myself what I am fighting, and why is there cloth wrapped around his body? I never want to meet another human, ever again. As I fight, I smell my trees, sweat, and the dirt that's clawing its way into my nostrils as I fight off this thing. I am not nervous, because this small thing doesn't have a chance against the great and mighty Humbaba. I really just wanted to be left alone. But this thing insists that I give him my forest. I am not scared, but I just want to do what I want to do, for once. As I am getting weaker, I tumble to the ground as the creature jumps on me and drives a stake through my heart. As I see the light for the last time, I say to myself, *You tried, and that's all that matters.*

I Can Do This

Leo Stedman

"I can do this!" said Gilgamesh.

"Are you sure about this?" said Enkidu in a scared voice. Gilgamesh looked at Enkidu in a heroic way.

“Not only are you a coward, you’re stupid. Once we kill Humbaba, we will gain more power. Anyone who sees us will tremble in fear!”

It took Gilgamesh and Enkidu three days to travel to the forest. “Finally!” yelled Gilgamesh. Then, they headed to Humbaba’s lair.

“I THOUGHT I SMELLED YOU,” Humbaba roared, “PREPARE TO DIE!” Gilgamesh easily dodged Humbaba’s first attack, but then he was struck down. “HA HA HA!” laughed Humbaba. But suddenly, Gilgamesh’s eyes glowed, and then Gilgamesh killed Humbaba.

My Happily Ever After

Naila Montoya

On this beautiful day, I woke up to the sound of birds chirping. I was so peaceful and relaxed today. But then, I heard a sound. A sound of chopping down trees. I said, “Who dares to cut down my trees?” Then, I saw a pesky human cutting down my trees. I know that human. He is Gilgamesh, the greatest of them all. I don’t like humans, because they make fun of how I look. I didn’t like it when the gods made me a demon. I deserve to be in the clouds with the love of my life. I just want to be in the life of my dreams, not the life of my nightmares.

Now, Gilgamesh suddenly took out his sword and was going to kill me so he could take all the trees and make money. I was ready. “Come, human,” I said. “Give it all you’ve got!” Then we were fighting. It ended with me getting stabbed in the back. “Owww,” I cried, in pain. I was bleeding a lot. Then I dropped to the ground. I was done with the world now. At least I get to go to heaven, back to the love of my life. I should thank that pesky human. He gave me the other part of my life back. Now I will have my happily ever after.

Class 6-413

Ms. Linehan



What Victory Will Be Like

Olivia Nimowitz

As Mattaki rides his horse into battle, she sees the arrows being shot towards him and from behind him, the other side charging at him. He hears screaming and crying as fighters get shot or fall off their horse. The horses trotting sounds like pounding on his ears. Dirt and sweat are everywhere and make Mattaki gag. The smell of the arrow's wood he is holding and the horses makes him sick. The smell of blood makes him scared. The horse's fur rubs against his legs, and his arrow gives him splinters as he shoots. As he thinks about what victory will be like, he feels his wounds sting. All Mattaki really wants is for the war to end in his victory. Will he die before that happens? Will he have a fatal injury? At any point, Mattaki can be shot or knocked off his horse. The thought of this scares him. He does not want to die. As Mattaki is thinking... Bam! He gets shot in the arm. Will Mattaki be able to keep fighting?

Ten Minutes Later

Jennifer Ravel

As Uma runs through the valley on her trusty steed that she's had since she was ten, she sees her oldest friends falling before her very eyes, and a pack of arrows whizzing past her head. At the same time, she sees the person who killed her brother; she shoots ten arrows at him, but misses. All of a sudden, she hears a loud boom. As she turns around, there are rocks flying at her. She tries to ride away, but her horse gets hit and falls. She feels her horse's body on top of her; she has a broken wrist, but continues shooting from the ground. Two minutes later, she gets shot in the shoulder. She falls and smells the blood going down her arm. An hour later, she feels dizzy and thinks about her kids and family. She slowly faints, bleeds out, and dies.

They Keep Fighting

Eddie Abramowitz

He sees two of his friends dead and he wants revenge. He lines up his shot and hits the target. But he is not done. He hears other archers in pain but ignores it. He smells the horse manure when he is lining up his shot, gets distracted and misses his shot. He moves away so he can get a better shot. He wants to win, but he is in a war, so he can't focus on the future. He lines up his shot and misses his target again. The person he tried to shoot saw the arrow and shoots back, and before he knows it, he is headless. His friends see him dead and come over, but all they see is a dead body, and they keep fighting and win the war for him.

How Did This Happen

Keith Warden

Kuwari was on the ground, smelling the grass, hearing his friends scream, arrows going by, and horses galloping around him. As all of this was happening, he thought, *How did this happen?*

One hour ago, he was riding on his horse with his friends and family. Kuwari was ready for battle and had his bow out, looking for a fight. Then he saw the horses, and then the people on the horses with bows and arrows. As soon as he saw them, an arrow whizzed by, and he heard someone scream in pain. Kuwari took up his bow, notched an arrow, and discharged it at someone. He hit someone! He got braver and shot another arrow and hit another person. He felt the adrenaline rushing through his body. He got hit in the leg, but he kept on fighting. But his horse got shot, and he felt the pain his horse was in; then he got jolted off his horse and was flying to the ground, and *bam*, he was knocked out for a while, but it felt like hours. He finally looks around, seeing what is happening around him. He sees his friends on the ground, hurt. He smells the blood all around him, the dirt, and the horses. He finally sees his brother on the ground in front of him; he tries to get up but he doesn't have the strength. Then he sees arrows go right into his brother's neck, and he dies right in front of his eyes. He wants to get up and kill the person who killed his brother. He finally gets the strength to get up. He looks up and sees a horse coming right at him, and then all he sees is darkness.

How It Came to This

Gavin Chang

I charge into battle, not knowing how it came to this. An arrow flies right at me...and I collapse on the ground.

One month earlier...

I wake up like normal, happy, trotting to the open field, ripping up grass from the ground and eating it. My name is Ninsar, and my owner is Mattaki. I see him reading a clay tablet, and occasionally eating a few berries. He is an ex-soldier; he retired and bought me. He is a nice owner, and rides me when I am sick, and cheers me up when I am sad. Sometimes he puts a saddle on me and we ride to the market, then we head back home.

Present day...

I wake up in intense pain. I see my owner Mattaki trying to get up. I fall. I look at my stomach, remembering what happened. I have bandages all over. Josh gets a carriage to bring me home.

This Once-Beautiful Land

Hayley Morales

The battlefield lays before me as my friends and family die off, one..by one...by one. This once-beautiful land that I ran across when I was just an infant, is now a place of evil and war. I fight only for this land, the dirt and grass, the trees, the animals, I will fight for that. The arrow-shot that whizzes past me brings me back to reality and this war. It goes into my horse, and we both fall over. I quickly jolt up and start running, running to save my own life. More arrows charge at me as I jump over another dead corpse. My buddy, Kishar, is there on the ground and I stop. My face flushes with a mortified expression. My mind flies through all the heartfelt and great memories together, as every sound, all the white noise, blurs. I look down at my stomach—I was shot in the abdomen. My clothing starts staining red because of the blood. I lay on top of Kishar, as she's dead. I keep closing and opening my eyes before they stay shut.

I Wish To Be Happy Again

Brianna Salcedo

The scene of arrows aiming at enemies and people yelling for their lives being taken away makes him feel terrified. He rode his horse with his fellow soldiers to the battlefield. Men were already lined up in front of him, with dark glances like they're looking into his scared but strong soul. His knees were shaking, afraid that his death might be today. Arrows were flinging past his head, only an inch away from touching him. It was only minutes later that he realized he was the last one standing on his horse. Looking at the dead bodies lying flat on their backs with eyes closed, feeling like he could have protected his friends, he looked down at the cuts he had from gripping his hands too hard on the arrow. He trotted around the battlefield, looking at the dried blood on their clothes. Holding in his tears and palm-sweating his lonesome victory, he pulled out a candle and lit it up. Singing "Happy birthday" to himself, he blew out the candle while a drop of rain plopped onto his skin. He looked up to the cloudy sky while he was crying all of his pain out. The horse galloped to the exit of the battlefield, alone on his horse in the pouring, cold rain, soaked, his clothes as heavy as an elephant. *God, I wish to be happy again.*

Died a Hero

Alexa Anderson

I entered the battlefield on my horse. I felt brave and anxious. How did I get here, lying on the ground in the puddle of blood my wound has formed? The smell of blood makes me nauseous, while the sound of screams and bodies collapsing on the ground wakes me up, pulling me in and out of consciousness. Thoughts about my family and friends being ashamed of me flood my mind. I need to persevere. I need to keep going. I need to fight for my people. I need to be able to go home and hug my wife. I'm about to reach my hand out, but I feel a gentle hand placed on top of mine. I look up to see my son, Harold, kneeling in the grass beside me. Tears forming in his eyes, dripping down to his uniform. I shake my head and give him a stern look. As if he could read my mind, he stood up. Before leaving, he whispered, "I love you." I opened my mouth, but nothing came out. I was in too much pain. I can't stand just laying here, knowing people are dying out there. I reach my hand out again, trying to crawl. The other soldiers run past me. The round shakes under me as horses race to the opposing side. I'm scared, and afraid of what might happen. What if I die? I'm about to reach out one more time, but I'm stopped by the sound of a horse coming toward me. The horse charges right over my neck, decapitating me. At least I died knowing that I, William B. Fitzgerald, died a hero.

Where No One Could Find Me

Hana Licina

"Hey, help, I'm over here. I see an arrow coming towards me. I can't move. My foot... it's broken." Right before he knew it, the arrow struck him, and he was lying on the ground with dirt surrounding him.

One year later:

A year later after the last war came another war. There were less people because of the last war. I saw something lighting up behind a wall of rocks. It was a big fire. It smelled like burning metal. I wanted to win the war, but after I saw and smelled the blood and flesh of my teammates, it told me we weren't going to win. I saw the dirt rise just like a group of tiny bugs beginning to fly together. I hear a horse being shot. I saw a horse getting dust in his eyes, and the blood dripping down its body. I saw an arrow pointing at me, but I ran and hid in a safe spot where no one would find me until the war was over.

Thankful

Soraya Fuentes

“Dad, please don’t leave, please don’t go!” My six-year-old daughter Ianna said. I tried to hold my tears back when I was saying goodbye to my wife Lilith, Ianna, and my six-month-old daughter, Kisha. As my family cried, I walked out of the door, depressed that I couldn’t be with my most precious things. “I was supposed to be their caretaker,” I thought out loud. Every single day I trained for war, I thought about Lilith, Ianna, and Kisha, and how I missed them.

Swoosh... an arrow flew past my face so fast, I felt the air. Now I knew the war had started. I was riding my horse and heard the noises of people falling off of their horses. I heard the noise of bows and arrows being fired by my fellow soldiers, and the speedy footsteps of loose horses running from the battlefield. “Watch out!” soldiers warned me. I’m scared but confident at the same time. My eyes see a headless man. When I look down, I see my arm bleeding, gushing out blood. I feel sick to my stomach. I’m wiping my tears from my face and trying my hardest.

I’m on the ground, hoping no one will kill me. I smell the odor of strong sweat hitting my face. The aroma of blood hurts me. I can smell the stench of horses. I’m scared of dying alone. I’m scared of my family not forgiving me. I’m afraid I’m not strong enough. I’m in my head, but I get up. My army calls victory. Then I pick up an exotic rock I’ve found on the ground for my family. I have an injury, but I’m alive. I’m so thankful!

Victorious

Luke Hoppa

Nasha ran through the field on his horse, shooting down enemies, cleaving through them like wheat in the field. He hears his bow twanging as he shoots down his enemies. He hears his enemies screaming as they are cut down in cold blood. The blood on his sword drips down and mixes with horse sweat as it falls. He sees the enemy, but he knows they are no match for him! For he is a reaper of men. His scythe cuts through the enemy’s armor like putty, and he hears the battlecries of the enemy. He knows he must win this battle for his family. He knows he must be victorious for the great king Gilgamesh!

The Sound of Screaming

Hunter Flattery

I woke up to the sound of screaming and fire crackling. I knew there was an attack going on, and people needed my help. Running out the door, I grabbed my bow and jumped onto my horse. The attack was on the other side of town. As I rode through the streets, I saw children crying and running down dirt roads. Multiple times I stopped and axed down the door of a burning house to search for those trapped inside. The sweat running down my face made me want to be back in my bed. As I ran out of the house, I saw my horse lying dead on the ground with an arrow in his neck. With rage flooding through my veins, I ran down the dirt road toward the attackers, the ones who killed my horse. Then I saw a man taking prisoners. With sweat trickling down my face, I shot him in the chest and beheaded him with one swing of my blade, saving the family and telling them to run. As I mounted the captive-taker's horse, I pulled back my bow and ran off toward the attackers.

I Knew I Was Needed

Nikolas Jasinowski

I hear the bells in the distance and I run back into town. I ask someone what is happening. He tells me that the Chaldeans are advancing and have almost reached our large farming city. Being one of the warriors defending the city, I knew I was needed. I grabbed my bow and quiver and mounted my horse. I heard screaming in the distance and I drove my horse in the direction of it, bow armed and ready. The smell of blood crashed over me like a wave and almost made me faint. This is one of my first battles, so the stench is still new to me. I reach the peak of the hill and look down at the sea of gleaming copper armor. At the bottom of the hill, I see my comrades loading their bows. As I armed mine, I thought of my family and friends who I am fighting for.

I Can't Back Down

Edelynne Guillermo

Once I got on my horse I was scared but I couldn't back down. I had to fight with my friends and win for my family, and in my head, I was thinking, *I can't back down now.*

We start fighting. I see people in front of me—my rivals. I see my arrow hitting one of them. People are on the ground, dead and hurt.

I hear their bows and arrows shooting so fast. I see my friends falling to the ground. My friends are calling for help. But I can't. I have to keep fighting. My people are yelling at the top of their lungs. Once the battle is done, I smell all of the blood before and after; the horse dung smells really bad. One of my best friends died.

Will I Survive?

Tara Mladenovic

Once I got on my horse, I already had the smell of horse dung traveling through my nostrils. Soon, I had to go into war, so I hit the horse, and got the unpleasant feeling of bumping when the horse trots. All of a sudden, I heard loud screams of my fellow men, and I realized we didn't have to go to war, the war had come to us! I soon felt arrows whooshing by my head, and saw my friends dead on the ground, being stomped over like trash. Now I knew I had to win. I had to win for my friends, family, and other fellow men. I soon had this sorrowful feeling come over me; I couldn't stand witnessing my friends falling before my eyes. This motivated me even more to win the battle. I just hope I don't die as well, because I would love to go home to my loved ones and let this war be over. A few minutes passed, and I still see men on horses running towards me and aiming for me. I questioned myself, *will I survive? Will I get revenge on the ones who killed my fellow men? When will this war end?*

For All My Friends and Family

Sophie Santana

I heard arrows flinging past my head. Hearing the sound of my good friends' bodies falling on the ground made me feel sad. This makes me want to avenge my friends and defeat the enemy. As I heard horses galloping past me, I shoot my arrow and miss. I think to myself, *I have to win for all my friends and family.* This encourages me; I shoot my arrow, and I get the shot. Perfectly, it cuts through the enemy's flesh.

I feel the nice warm air blow into my face. I see the big, open battlefield. I feel scared, but I know that if I try to take on ten men alone, I will be recognized as a hero. This makes me feel good inside. I take on the ten men, I injured them, but they have injured me; I got my fingers cut off. But I have my sister next to me. She gets shot in the heart. She tells me to keep going. I scream, "*Jessie, noooo!*" I know I have to do all I can to defeat the enemy. One hour later, I'm shot down. But I know we have won, and I feel happy. Before I die, I think to myself, *I'm a hero.* I think of all the nice memories I had with my friends and family. I am now dead.

I Am a Warrior

Nikki Loukatos

Today is the day. I'm going to be on the front line at battle. I equip my horse with good gear, and I put on the best I have. My horse then neighs in excitement. Then, I grab my bow and arrow, and mount my horse. We set off for the battlefield. When we get there, we already see dead people on the ground. I'm already feeling nervous, but I'm strong—that can't bring me down. I start shooting the enemies. I kill a few, which makes me confident. I am very worried that my comrades have died. I turn back, because I hear loud screaming. I see it all; everyone who I loved has died. After that, I am determined to win, but as I turn my head, a strong arrow strikes my shoulder. I fall off my horse. I see the people of my tribe coming closer, and I scream for help. Before I know it, I am under the horses' feet. I see dirt on the ground, another dead person, blood, and rocks. I can hear the cries of my tribe, horses running, yells, bow and arrows firing. I can smell lots of other peoples' and my own blood. I feel sad and tired, mad and hurt, regretting coming into the battle. All I want is to go home and relax with my family. I hope I survive. I am a warrior.

Pride

Juel Reyes

A long time ago in a land named Mesopotamia, a brave warrior was riding off into the battlefield of the Chaldeans. He sees his comrades next to him, side by side. He sees motionless corpses on the grass. The mane of his horse swinging left to right. Arrows covering the daylight.

His heart pounds faster as arrows fly right past him. He hears the clap of the horses galloping. The smell of blood makes him nauseous. He grips his bow and arrow. He sees so many things that are passing through him. He shoots an arrow and misses.

He takes another arrow, ready to shoot. An arrow is coming his way—instead, it hits his horse. He braces for impact as he hits hard enough to break his bones. He thinks of his pride. His tribe needs him. So he takes his bow and arrow and kills every last one of the enemy. He knows he doesn't have much time. So he uses every last breath praying for his family.



My Last Time

Malena Upson

I am Humbaba, the demon that rules the cedar forest. I have the face of a lion, and my breath ignites fire, while my roar unleashes floods. There is death in me, so try not to make me angry. For I will kill you in seconds. I have never been defeated. I have protected these beautiful trees for so many years, I can't remember. I rarely ever have company that I can feast on, so I was surprised when the watchman sounded his warning. I was standing there, ready to defeat whatever was here to take me down. As I waited, I took a long look at all the cedar trees. I did this because I did not know if this would be my last time looking at them. I do this every time. I was surprised to see Gilgamesh and Enkidu. They were the two souls who did not fear me. I'd heard that they had set out to kill me for fame. Then, all of a sudden, I was pushed to the ground, a sword was held to my neck, ready to chop my head off. I never understood why they would want to kill me, until now—they wanted the trees, to make houses. So I began to plead, "I'm only doing my job by protecting the forest. I was sent by the gods. Don't kill me, I know what you are able to do." Right then and there were my last few seconds of guarding the cedar forest. All these trees would be chopped down, just like my head. Then I realized, I have been defeated.

The Forest Seemed Empty

Brooke-Lynn Pride

The forest seemed empty, but I knew it wasn't. I heard dry leaves crunching while someone was walking. I got prepared to attack, although I like to give people chances. Today, it was no regular people, it was the great Gilgamesh and Enkidu. Soon enough, we crossed paths. I could tell their motive was to kill. I begged and begged, but they would not change their minds. "Kill him," said Enkidu.

"Ha," I laughed, "You may be the two greatest fighters in the world, but you will never beat me." But before I could really get my hands dirty, I died.

I disappointed my gods. I failed my one and only responsibility, the trees. The great Humbaba was no longer great.

I Knew This Day Would Come

Havanna Garcia

My name is Humbaba. I am a demon who protects the forest. People think I'm bad because I killed a lot of people, but it's not my fault. The gods wanted me to protect this stupid forest, so I had to kill some people. But I think today is the day I will retire.

One hour later...I see this guy walking up to me with his weapon. I stare at him and he stares back. I can see he does not really want to do this. His friend was scared and it looked like he couldn't move. Then, he made his move and I dodged him. I asked him what his name was, and he said, "Gilgamesh." He was very strong. I didn't want to die, but before I knew it, he cut off my head.

I knew this day would come. I knew the gods were going to be mad at me. I saw Gilgamesh's friend happy that he had finally killed me. Now they would have all the fame in the world. I didn't want to die, but everyone ends up dying.

I see the gods, and they all have a disappointed face, while I see the bright line shining in my eyes. I think to myself, *how aren't they blind?*

10,000,000 Years Before

Sofia Debnar

I see two warriors...humans...marching toward me, with two blades each. It's time for me to do my job...protect the forest. I hear yelling, but I keep fighting. I hear my own wings getting slashed by blades. I smell my own blood, and the stench of unwanted humans. They're probably just coming for fame. I feel scared, cuts and scars all over my body, but I keep fighting. I want to kill them. I want to protect. They have trespassed on my territory, and I am mad! I am going to lose the fight! I am going to lose the fight. I think that I am going to die. They want the forest, but I will not give it to them...

10,000,000 Years Before...

I just got back from scaring people in a nearby village, when I saw the gods staring at me. "We choose you!" they all said at the same time. "For what?" I said, feeling brave. "To protect the forest," they said. What me, a demon, being chosen to protect a forest? In shock, I say, "What forest?" "The big forest." "Okay, I shall protect that forest with all my life." "Be...careful..." And they drifted away.

I Have Lived

Tara Silverman

I am shocked about what is happening right now...the great guardian of the cedar forest, Humbaba is being slain by a harsh ruler and his friend. The gods sent me here to protect the forest, and I am failing them. At certain times, a feeling of remorse washes over me for all the people I have killed. Gilgamesh and Enkidu should not be doing this, for I am protecting the beauty of this amazing forest. As they pin me to the ground, I hear them arguing about whether or not to kill me. Then, Enkidu strikes me with his sword, and I see the last people I will ever see. I am upset that my life is ending, but I have lived a full one.

Guilty

Eddie Kim

I might have some regret about what I did. Enkidu wanted fame. I wanted trees. If we had waited and listened to Humbaba, we might have gotten more fame from dealing with a demon. When Enkidu told me to kill him, I did, because he might have had revenge-plans for us. The gods sent him here. It's his job. I feel guilty about killing him.

Would it Have Been Better

Diogo Morales

As we walk toward the gate, we hear the powerful Humbaba roar with rage, along with his breath that ignites fire. Enkidu looks at me with worry and fear, as if he doesn't want to die. He places his hand on the gate, but when I look at him, he slowly turns pale. From the fright in his eye, it's like I see his whole life flash before my eyes, watching my good friend freeze, not able to move any part of his body. I whisper into his ear, hoping he hears me, "Everything will be okay. I will slay the beast. Just for you." I continue to open the gate, but when I do, I get this feeling in my body, a feeling of fright, but I tell myself, I won't let this get in the way. I've made a promise to not back down. I walk in. As I look around, I hear the owls hoot, and the wind blow past me. The roars get louder, my legs begin to shake, it feels almost as if the hairs on my neck have run away. The stomps of Humbaba get louder and louder as he gets closer. The slash of my sword when I take it out hurts the demon's ears. From that, I know I have an advantage to defeat this beast. It has begun, the battle for the trees.

The loud metal sound waves hurt him. He flies into the air and comes rushing back. I raised my sword, and when I had the chance, sliced him, my sword going right inside of him. A bright light shined—the beast was defeated.

I stopped for a moment, thinking, *Would it have been better if Enkidu was here? Yes, it would have.* I cried, wishing Enkidu was here. How lovely it would have been. So I decided to cut down the trees, hoping there were enough. I walked into town, hearing the cheers of the people. I feel brave for what I've done, but sad for leaving my friend. So, most of the time I stay awake, thinking about him; but at the same time, I try as hard as I can to let it go and leave it behind.

Where I Belong

Azariah Blunt

While Gilgamesh is fighting me, I can barely focus. Since I'm the bad one, I'm supposed to be very strong and skilled, but there are so many things going on around me. It's like the only thing I can hear is my breathing and my heart pounding against my chest. I can only see him; my vision won't focus on anything else. For a moment, I second-guessed myself. Then I remembered who I was. I don't lose. I'm a fighter. A survivor. I could tell Gilgamesh was ready. He looked me in the eyes, and didn't look away. Our eyes were locked, until...he shot his arrow. It was a perfect shot. It was aiming right for my chest.

I looked around and saw a woman. She was holding up a sign with my name on it. Like she had been waiting for me. She reached out her hand, so I took it. We walked to this circle with things surrounding us. I looked to my right, and I saw my old name. I looked

to my left, and saw the battlefield. Then I blinked, and everything stopped. The only thing there was the woman. She said to me, "You are where you belong." Then she disappeared. All around me were flames. Everything was so dark. I thought about what she'd said to me. I started to understand. Everyone who I had every hurt was there, right in front of me, waving goodbye. I turn my back and see another person. Gilgamesh. He said again, "You are where you belong." After those last words, there was nothing but flames. Something grabbed my foot. It started to drag me through the sky.

I'm lost. I'm where I belong.

The Gods Appointed Me

Amadou Fall

This demon is fiercer than I thought. He has the face of a lion, the scales of a lizard, sharp claws and horns. Big, terrifying horns. He is made of death. I don't want to kill this demon, but Enkidu is promising fame. I still don't want to kill him. His breath ignites fire, while his roar causes floods. Then, the fight starts. I pull out my double-sided tridents, one in each hand. Humbaba blows fire our way, but we move just quick enough. I look over at Enkidu. He looks crazy. We finally pin down Humbaba, and he is pleading for his life to be spared. "Please, my job is to protect this forest. The gods appointed me to do it. My wife and kids will be very sad..."

What Have I Done

Ariana Blumstein

I was confused. Enkidu was pressuring me to kill the demon. I didn't know what to do. I wanted to believe that if I said no to him, he would still be my best friend. *I am my own person*, I told myself. But, on the other hand, I needed the forest and the wood. I couldn't give up on my family. I had to put my family first.

Enkidu was sick and tired of me hesitating. I had to face the demon and put my fears away. I didn't have a choice. I decided, if I wanted to be famous, I had to kill the demon.

I held my bow and arrow tight. The demon's scared and nervous face was so close. This was my chance. I held my bow and arrow so tight, my fingers started sweating. My hands felt numb. It hit the demon right in the heart. *What have I done*, I thought. I felt a pain of regret. The demon didn't deserve this ending. He instantly collapsed to the ground. The forest was ours.

What's the Reason?

Elma Ljesnjanin

I'm Humbaba. I felt fear and anger when Gilgamesh killed me, for he was only doing it to become famous. I smelled my own blood gushing out of me. I protected the forest; whatever that man was thinking was cruel. I heard him and his friend questioning whether to kill me or not. I saw Gilgamesh holding spears. I'm afraid of going out by a petty human who thinks that they're almighty.

The truth is, I was much stronger than him. I just didn't like killing people for no reason. I wanted to kill him, yes, but I'm not that kind of demon. He wanted the woods, he wanted fame. I didn't choose to be a demon, I was just made into one.

Everything happens for a reason, right?

What's the reason?

Class 6-419

Ms. Linehan



Then I Was Gone

Damaris Martinez

I can't feel my fingers. I can't feel my hands. I can't feel anything. I'm numb. It didn't have to be like this. But it was. I feel tears running down my face as my brother is shot through his chest. It all happened in a heartbeat. His horse was trailing right behind mine, and I saw the arrow flash by my eyes and embed itself into him. He flipped off his horse and was trampled. I tried to keep going for my brother's sake, but my heart ached. Arrows whooshed by my face, hitting the trees passing by. My heartbeat quickened as an arrow grazed my ear. It stung. Now, my blood, sweat, and tears were mixed together. I wanted to go back home. I didn't want to be in this war. I was forced to fight, for my people and honor. I remembered the sad look on my wife's face as she kissed me goodbye. I was reminiscing so much that I didn't notice the soldier running up to me. I gasped as he lodged his knife right in my heart. He pushed me off my horse, and I lay there, gurgling blood. I smiled one last time as I remembered my beautiful wife. Then I was gone.

I Am Here To Win

Jasmine Silverman

I can hear people and horses crying out in pain as they are shot by strong, sharp arrows. People crying out in fear, hoping they will survive this brutal battle. The clomping of horses' hooves fills the air with dust, as they powerfully pound against the rough, dirt ground. I hear my horse's mane whipping around in the wind as we gallop onward.

The smell of blood is in the air. I can feel the dirt and dust flying into my face as we race by. The smell of hot, tired horses fills the air as the cruel battle rages on. The battle is fierce, but we aren't going to give up yet. I want to win the battle so I can have freedom, so my people can have freedom. I see my strong-muscled arm pulling back my arrow, aiming at the enemy. Arrows being shot and riderless horses are everywhere. I see people gasping for breath, lying on the ground. My fellow soldier surround me, some on horses, some not. I see so many people dying and falling to the ground, spooked horses galloping around as their riders clutch their manes, holding on for their life. I can see and hear people crying out in pain and fear.

I think to myself, *what if we lose? What if we aren't good enough? We'll lose everything.* But then I remember—I need to focus and concentrate. I am here to win. I get my confidence back and shoot sharp, powerful arrows at the enemy. I then realize, we have taken over half their army; we are winning!

Will My Family Survive

Faiza Mohamud

I see enemies coming forward with angry faces, getting ready to fight. I see my friends fighting their hardest to get freedom, people being scared to fight and die in pain.

I hear someone crying for help; within seconds, the voice is gone. I look back and see a guy with no head twitching very little. When I see him, I think of my family, my wife Lilith, and my daughters Lianna and Kishar.

I can smell blood everywhere the wind goes, and arrows swooshing by my right shoulder, almost stabbing me. I smell the smelly sweat that runs through me and the other fighters.

I feel so tired fighting that my head and my legs feel like they're going to fall out. I'm thirsty to death, and hungry; my stomach calls out, *eat something*.

I think of the money that my family needs to survive. I ask myself, *will my family survive and miss me, or...* Just then, an arrow stuck through my heart. Seconds later, I've been killed.

I Will Win

Iman Wisdom

I feel my bruises throbbing. I'm bleeding.

A few hours before...

I was nervous—what if I never saw my family again? I saw people charging at me. Arrows whooshing past. I feel the horror of getting hit. Swords are clanking against each other, and all I want is to go home. My horse, like me, was scared. He was sweating. I could feel sweat crusted on my horse's body, and on my blood-crusted uniform. I saw an arrow slide into my shoulder. It goes dark, and the next thing I know, I'm on the ground and bleeding. All I am thinking about is my family; I'll never see them again. No, I can't think like that. With all my might, I stand up. I have to fight. I will win. All I hope is to see my beautiful daughter and wife again.

Will I Make it Home?

Jayvien Tobal

The men on my team fall from their horses. Some die, others curl up in fear, wondering, *Will I make it home?* The horses are neighing in fear and confusion, still pushing on through all the noise. Arrows fly through the wind and leave men in pain, slowly passing away. The fear of death overwhelms me. I want to go home and see my family once again. Wishing for it to be over is pointless—for that to happen, you have to make it happen. Sometimes, for peace, there is war. Looking around, I see bodies filled with death, so I shall fight for the people I... *Ack...* I've been shot, my body going numb. I am the next lifeless body on the ground.

Why Me?

Maria Vivar Del Pozo

As I heard the sound of the horn blow, I suddenly woke up, knowing that today was the day. I finish dressing and give a kiss to my wife and my kids, Lilith and Kuri, in their sleep. As I hear people screaming, "War!" I take my armor, and now I am all armed. "War!" I scream with the others. When we arrive at the battlefield, I get chills, and thoughts. *Am I going to die? Will I see my family again?* I erase these thoughts from my mind. I see the first arrow flying by my head, making me fall over. Fortunately, I cling to my horse. As my horse neighs, I climb back up, feeling the muscle of her legs and her fluffy tail swinging around. I want to go back. Why did they choose me? Why me? I can already see people dead, lying on the floor, blood all over me with scrapes on my feet and toes.

I Stay Alive

Denis Kuznesov

I am Korin, I am thirty-four years old. My friend's name is Fili. He is thirty years old. Today we have a war with another civilization.

"Hey, Fili, it's our first war. How do you feel?" I ask.

"I don't know why I'm scared, Korin. And what about yourself?" asked Fili.

"Enemy attack!" the guard shouts very loudly.

“Fast.... our horses!” I say.

“Yes,” says Fili

Our horses die after some time, because archers kills them. I think I will die, but I do not die. Fili dies. I see many dead bodies. I feel scared without Fili, and angry. I fight with a lot of anger. I have an arrow in me.

The war is over, and I stay alive. I take Fili’s body and give it to his family. And now I understand why nobody goes to the war with a friend.

I Will Survive

Aaron Timkovsky

As I go into war, I grab my bow and quiver, get on my horse, and gallop away. As I shoot my arrows, my arrows hit my enemy’s head with blood gushing out. My horse stomps the dead corpses that are on the ground. I hear cries for mercy from the enemy, but I have to shoot them for victory. As I shoot, I cry for my loved ones dying; I tried to save them, but alas, I was not strong enough. After that, I swore to kill anyone who tries to kill me or my friends, and if they do, they will die. I smell my sweaty horse along with all the blood on the ground. My arms hurt from getting shot, blood is dripping, but I will survive! I shoot, I shoot, I shoot, until there are just a few fighters left on each side. We killed the enemy, and the rest fled. We won the war! I head home, putting my horse in his pen, and I go to sleep, hoping that I don’t smell the smell of blood any more.

I Want the War To End

George Foote

There is a war going on. I have fallen off my horse as I try to dodge an arrow. I am trying to kick someone off their horse and get on it. I see the horse hovering over me. I see slobber dripping from the horse’s mouth, falling onto me. I see the man on the horse who I’m trying to kick off. Arrows are flying through the air from the bows of the soldiers on the horses, whipping back and forth, making the horses go faster. I hear neighs of the horses, people screaming as they get shot. Bones are crunching as horses step on people, arrows are whizzing past my head. I smell blood from the people getting stabbed. I smell dung from the horses as they ride into battle. I smell sweat from all the men working so hard to win the war. I feel the horse’s chest as I’m trying to get on it. I feel the slobber raining down on me. I feel like I’m getting run over by the horses. I feel like I’m about to die. I feel devastated because I may lose my family. I feel like I lost the war. I want the war to end so I can go back to my cozy bed. I want to win the war so we

can have peace. I want to be on top of the horse and in control, not on the ground getting trampled. Hopefully, one day the war will finally end.

Blessed To Still Be Alive

Devin Hernandez

The smell on the ground was very strong. It was cold blood. My ears are ringing from the people screaming, "Help me!" Every single one of us can see the dead bodies and the people taking their last breath. Everyone is nervous that an arrow will go through their head. All of us can see the arrows whooshing by us and landing on the ground. I wish I was never here, and could take a one-way trip straight back to my friends and family. This war is not the place for me, but I will still fight for my people and make sure we win this war. I'm blessed to still be alive and fighting for everyone.

I Am Determined

Jaret Salas

As I enter the battlefield, I see arrows passing over my head. I hear the screams and cries of my enemies. I am afraid that I might die, but I must live to protect my family and friends. I can feel the blood of my fallen enemies. I feel the horse's sweat and the dust hitting me. I hear the arrows swishing over my head. I am determined to win this battle and come back to see my family again. But an unexpected thing happens. I am shot by an arrow. The arrow is stuck to my arm, and I fall off my horse. I can see the person who shot me; I am afraid that I am going to die, but a soldier shot the man. I got back on my horse and continued. Then we won the battle.

This is It

Emma McCarthy

You wake to the sound of someone pounding at your door. Today's the day. The impatience that has been lingering around you for days on end has finally vanished. Once you're outside, you realize your horse has been stolen. You'll have to steal one—that is, if you want to survive. The battle smells of blood. The smell of sweat from all the terrified people pollutes the air. Dead fighters' remains lie everywhere. You brace yourself and jump in front of an enemy's horse. Almost immediately, arrows start flying in your direction. The only thing you can hear are the frightened cries of the horse. Suddenly, the rider points an arrow at your head. *This is it*, you think. This is the end...

No! You can't let that happen! Not after all the effort you made to stay alive. You look into your enemy's eyes with rage and hatred. He is the one responsible for all your pain. Out of anger, you push him off his horse to be trampled to death by the others. Quickly, you jump onto the horse and ride away to continue your fight.

A New Day

Patrick Mahoney

As the battle starts, I see the people attacking in front of me, arrows shot, killing one by one, as I lead in battle. I look as see that the army set up an ambush. I try to escape, but I'm trapped. I hear the horses' hooves pounding the grass, not stopping at any cost. I hear the loud war cry ringing in my ears, the grunts of my allies dying. Suddenly, I smell the foul stench of blood in the air, and the smell of my own sweat growing rapidly. But it's not just me—I smell the sweat of my allies too. I feel my helmet banging on my head. I feel my fingers quickly grabbing and releasing arrows. I feel, under my leg, the horse's rippling muscles twitching. As the army gets closer, I think, will I ever see my family? Will I win this war and go home? Or will I lose and die of shame? I'm afraid of dying and being sent into a black, endless pit. I'm so afraid of losing what I worked so hard for. I want to win. I have to. I have to. Then suddenly, the army retreats, and we emerge victorious. The sun comes up, and it's a new day.

I Want To Win

Marilyn Lara Pascual

I see terrible things happening where I am. I see arrows shooting through people's heads. I see people shooting arrows across me. I hear people screaming for mercy. I hear people crying for help. I hear people attacking. I smell blood from other people. I smell the sweat of angry people. I feel horses running through other people. I feel the releasing of the arrow from the bow. I feel the sweat on my body. I want to win so my enemies will know who rules. I want my enemies to feel the pain that I am feeling. I want my people to be proud of me. I am afraid of not coming back home to my family. I am afraid of not winning.

Did We Win?

Atticus Kramer

“Jeez,” Kuri said, “There sure are a lot of them ...”

“Should we attack?”

“Okay,” said the martial “ATTACK!” *Phwoooo* whistled the volley of arrows from their bows. They smelled blood.

“Did we win?” someone asked.

“YES,” he yelled back.

“WOO-HOO!” the army screamed.

That was too easy, thought the martial.

Phwoooo... “ARROWS! Get down!” The battle isn’t over. *Phwooo...*

“Now did we win?” someone said.

“Yes,” he yelled back. This time, it was legit.

“Who were we fighting?” someone asked.

“The...um...well...we were..uh...I don’t know!”

“Wow,” the private said. “Just wow...”

Brave and Strong

Carmela Suozzi

Pain. That’s all I feel. The pain of the wounds on my body is making me dizzy. The feeling of pain that I might never go home is making me scared, but also determined. I *will* go home to my family. This war has to stop. I need to stretch from being on my horse for so long. I can smell the blood radiating from my armor and from the battlefield. All I want to do is go home. I don’t feel like anybody without my family. I know that the only way to go home is to be brave and strong. I have to fight to make this war end and win our freedom. I shout over to the other tired, overworked, and dirty riders around me. I can see the look of desperation on their faces, too. hey want the same thing. The enemy is across the field, getting ready to charge. I get ready too. My horse’s hooves pound hard against the ground, and I see weapons zooming past my shoulder. I really don’t want to do this. But I raise my arm anyway and shakily pull back my bow, getting ready for the fight. I think about everything I’ve been through, and how many loved ones I’ve lost. I immediately feel stronger.

The Power We Had

Nathalie Ho

I was on my horse, Lucky, with my weapons and other people by my side. An arrow was fired, the war had begun. The dust hurt my eyes and arrows flew over me. Horses fled and bodies were thrown to the ground. People begged for mercy and the air was heavy. I felt tired, but I knew I had to keep going. My clothes stuck to my skin as I fought for my side, for bravery, for winning, to go home. My heart was pounding a million times a second as my horse ran. Hours passed; our plan was working. The war went until sundown, and we finally fled, at last, to go home. I knew the power we had made us win the war.

The War of Sumer

Ethan Chang

It was cold. It was bright. It was the perfect apple. My horse, Link the Vengeful, steals it. “No!” I, Damars the Merciless, scream as Link eats my only snack before the battle of Uruk. As the apple crunches in Link’s teeth, I mount him. “Let’s go,” I say, annoyed. Galloping, the clunk of Link’s hooves keeps me calm as we ride through the sandy desert. Soon, my stomach drops as ahead, hundred of warriors scream at me. I notch an arrow and knock a warrior off his horse. I hear his last words softly, “My wife...my family...Stay sa-“ He is cut off when Link sinks his teeth into another man; his screams echo for miles. Dust gets in my eye, but I get a glimpse of Link pulling the warrior down. Hunger starves me, but I keep going. The shouts and screams don’t go through my ears. I hear nothing. I keep charging. Everything is a blur of swords. I keep firing arrows. I just want to go home. I scream, charging forward. Then, an axe hits my leg. I feel warm blood dripping as I slide off my steed. “Link,” I shout. The last thing I see are Link’s eyes. In them, I see fear. I see panic.

I Will Do Anything

Alice Levenson

As we ride into battle, I see lines and lines of overworked, sweaty soldiers in front of me. High whinnies cut through the air as we move our mounts forward. My horse’s mane whips around in the wind as we frantically gallop into battle. I smell the death around me. It is overpowering. I lose focus and hear an arrow whooshing past my ear, lodging into my shoulder. Everything goes fuzzy, and I fall forward onto my horse’s neck. Images flash by in front of me—my daughter softly speaking, *Daddy, I miss you*, my wife, tears streaming down her face as she cries into my shoulder, *Why does the war*

have to rip us apart, an innocent family? I see my muscled arm pushing me back into a sitting position on my horse, my sweat dripping as I pull my arm back and shoot an arrow. I grip my horse and feel his foaming sweat dripping beneath my legs. I look forward and see my foes in front of me. A man is shot, and he falls against, me, his face twisted in anger and resentment. He falls to the ground, and I feel my horse trample him. I know killing will haunt me, but it is the only thing to do to see my family again. I will do anything to see my family. My little girl and wife. They are the only things in my mind as I gallop into the fray of war.

I Feel Determined

Layeska Amparo

I see other people shooting arrows at me, while others are falling and getting run over. The horse's mane slipping through the air is making me nervous. I can hear people crying and yelling in pain. I hear the horses stomping through the dirt. The arrows shooting past my face are making me determined. I can smell the cruel blood of other people. The horses' disgusting smell is making me gag, as well as the dry and sandy soil. As I ride the horse, my armor is bumping against my body. I feel the horse galloping, which makes me feel like I will stumble off of the horse. I feel the wind blowing over my face. I can feel the arrows going thoroughly into my skin. I am afraid I will not make it. I feel determined to defeat the other side...so I shall.

It Was Like a Dream

Haleem Khrisat

It was like a dream, but I was half-awake, riding my horse, trying to kill my foes. I saw and felt the dirt that my horse kicked up with his hooves. Blood and sweat that was going through the air hit my face. I want victory for my family. I do not want all that sweat and blood wasted.



My Wondrous Trees

Lulu Stingone

I ran through the trees, my scaly hide rippling with the wind. As I came to the top of a hill, I looked up at the sky. The sun shone through the holes in the clouds, illuminating the great trees of my forest. Suddenly, I heard a *crack*. A noise only an axe could make against a cedar trunk. I spread my wings and took off into the sky to save my wondrous trees. For it was my job, and I would protect them under the order of the gods.

Then I saw them. Gilgamesh and Enkidu, chopping my cedar trees. I lunged toward them, my fiery breath grazing their legs. Gilgamesh wrapped me in chains that even I could not break. I thrashed and screamed, But Gilgamesh and Enkidu had no mercy. It was then that I realized, all they really wanted was fame and fortune. I said one final plea to Gilgamesh, promising him I would be his slave and build him a grand palace. I thought he might let me go, but the next thing I knew, Gilgamesh's trident had speared into my side. He and Enkidu took turns torturing me until I lay helpless, blood running down my body. Humbaba, the undefeated monster of the forest, was dead.

I Am Humbaba

Aya Henning

I am Humbaba! The demon of the trees. I see all who hurt the nature of my land. Created by the gods, I stand my ground. "Protector of the trees," I yell.

When I came to this earth, I was scared. My look was unappealing. "Why do I look like this?" I yelled at the gods.

"You are a demon," they answered, "This is how you look!" In return, they said they would let me be immortal.

I believed them. So when Gilgamesh came, I tried my least. But when I was captured, I knew the gods had lied. I begged to be freed; I would do anything to not go back to those lying gods. They created me, into this awful body. *Doesn't everyone have feelings*, I thought, and at that exact moment, I was hit. Brought back to a place I once knew.

The Protector of the Forest

Aidan Velasquez

Every night and day, I stand between this forest, my forest, my trees. I am Humbaba, the protector of the forest. Why am I so ugly, you ask? Well, the gods gave me this body. Wings of a bird, a lion body, and a face. Every day, I stay protecting; every hour, every minute, every second. Then, *Whoosh!* Gilgamesh comes out of nowhere, threatening my green nature. I'll do whatever it takes to save my trees. I'll fight until my body can't take it. I'm roaring with fear if Gilgamesh defeats me. My wings shoot a gush of wind to blow him away. When I realize he wants to be famous for killing me, I want to stop Gilgamesh from his bloody madness. Then, *Whoosh*, the trident almost hits me; it went right across my face. So nervous, I flap my wings everywhere, slapping Gilgamesh from side to side. Finally, *BAM!* The trident hits me, and I fall down. I plead with Gilgamesh to spare me, to have mercy, and to be his servant. But before Gilgamesh can even say yes, he has killed me.

Why I Killed Humbaba

Aymen Annifsafee

I just want to help these people who need to get more materials. I want people to see that I am not a bad guy anymore. I see that Humbaba is not going to give them any wood, so I killed him to get the wood; also, so the people can see that I am on their side, so they won't hate me. Humbaba was being bad, killing everyone who went into the hills to get wood...so I saved a lot of lives, and that is why I killed Humbaba in the first place.

So Afraid

Daniel Montesdeoca

My name is Humbaba. A big, giant horse with wings. I'm made to guard the cedar forest. I was sent down to earth, to the city of Uruk. I had the face of a devil, and the claws of a tiger. I hear Enkidu and Gilgamesh entering my forest. I hear trees falling on the hard ground. I hear Enkidu whispering to Gilgamesh to kill me.

I'm so afraid.