

THE URBAN WRITERS

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An Anthology of Personal Narrative Writing
by 7th-Grade Students from MS 340
Brooklyn, NY

⋮

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Winter – Spring 2018

Teachers & Writers Collaborative

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Alice Pencavel writer-in-residence

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TEACHERS & WRITERS COLLABORATIVE (T&W) partners with New York City schools and community-based organizations to offer dynamic creative writing programs led by professional writers. Since 1967, T&W has worked with more than 750,000 K-12 students and more than 25,000 teachers at schools throughout New York City; published more than 80 books and an online magazine about creative writing education; and provided free resources for students, teachers, and writers on our website (www.twc.org).

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INTRODUCTION

Urban Writers is a collection of personal narrative essays written by the 7th grade students of MS340 in Brooklyn, New York. The title is devised by the students of 730, reflective of the place they found themselves when tasked to navigate their sense of self in relationship to their environment. Working in conjunction with College Access for All, the purpose behind this residency was to prep students for the college essay writing process as they venture toward high school.

What makes the college essay so important for an aspiring applicant is it provides the opportunity for students to communicate their emotional intelligence and self awareness. Unlike test scores and class grades, the ability to articulate and represent one's self on paper is a practice that goes beyond the confines of a classroom. It is from this place of practice we approached the writing process together.

As a means of reducing the engrained aversion to the word "essay" and all that implies, the first five minutes of every class was spent free writing. Students were encouraged to write whatever they wanted, without worrying that their words would be collected and evaluated. Free of inhibitions, students were able to practice connecting with their natural voice. Every free write was followed by an inquiry: how did it feel for you today? In this way, students are not merely willing their colloquial voice to arise in their writing, but they are to actively consider their thoughts and feelings alongside the writing.

Reflection is aided by guidance, so we examined the work of other writers. Stand out college essays pulled from sources such as the *New York Times*, or the Johns Hopkins highlights list, were brought in to the classroom. As we sifted through the words and choices of these other young writers, more potential entry points became available. For example, one writer we read focused the environment she grew up in, inspiring some students to enter their writing from an environmental perspective. Another writer played with time, prompting us to create our own timelines, and investigate the threads of personal history. Above all students were asked to tap into material that makes them energized, to hone in on a pivotal moment change or passion.

Ultimately, our work culminated in writing an essay response to the 2018-2019 Common Application Essay Prompts. For context, these prompts are listed on the following page. Some students titled the work, others didn't, and no one was asked to indicate which prompt they were responding to. This explains the boundless array of topics written here. Also, some work included are excerpts of responses to the prompts.

None of this would have been possible without the utter willingness, support, and amenable collaboration of the 7th-grade teachers: Mrs. Katrina Banks, Mr. James Sydney, Mr. Andres Rodriguez, Mr. Dwight Reid, and Ms. Marjorie Richards. Without your kindness, advocacy, and classroom management, we would not have been able to write! My deepest gratitude also for Mrs. Candace Elliott for her facilitation of the program, and Principal Tamara Johnson for being such a skillful champion of her students.

And of course, to the 7th graders of MS340 – what a pleasure to read your work. It is my deepest hope – more than anything – that you have tasted the gift of this practice of writing and reflecting, and that you carry it with you as a means of deepening your engagement with yourself and the world(s) you inhabit.

Alice Pencavel
Spring 2018

2018-2019 Common Application Essay Prompts

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
4. Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma - anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.
5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?
7. Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

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Mark A.
Courtney A.
Kamarl B.
Jacob C.
Kadiatou D.
Deborah E.
Elijah G.
Paris G.
Verone H.
Darnell H.
Pierre J.
Tyquan J.
Sariah L.
Janneil M.
Jayden R.
London S.
Vian A. S.
Ethan W.

THE BEST GAME EVER

Mark A.

I was playing a mobile game called WWE Champions. It had cool superstars like AJ Styles, Shinsuke, Finn Balor, and Seth Rollins. There are different types of gems that represent the superstars such as Techanians, Powerhouses, Showboats, Abcabats, Trickers, and Stikers.

A few days ago, I got mail. I opened it and saw that it was a new game: 1 Star Bronze Strike Sinsuke. I was happy and dancing. I leveled up my Superstars so they would have health and enhance and evolve to another level.

* * *

CASE OF THE FAKE PEOPLE

Courtney A.

Hey! Well, you are probably wondering why am I talking to you right now? Well, my name is Courtney Ashton and I'm here to tell you about fake people.

We all have fake people in our lives – at least once in a lifetime. You know those people who pretend they care about you, but really don't?! Well I'm here to share my experience about those kinds of people.

It was the first day of school and you know there are always those shy people at school... Well, I was one of them. (But when you get to know me, I'm a whole new person.) I was always that type of girl to be chill. I didn't really talk to a lot of people. I was that type of girl who kept to herself.

MY CHALLENGES

Kamarl B.

The lessons I learned from the past year is that I always have to be creative and that practice makes perfect. When I grow up, I want to be an architect because I want to make and decorate people's houses and bring my creativity to life.

The challenges I have faced through the years include thinking of what I will be when I grow up and trying to draw better. I was having trouble thinking about what I wanted to be. When people see my drawings, they always tell or ask me about growing up and being an artist. I didn't know whether to be an artist or not, because being an artist is hard, but I could make a lot of money, so I don't want to be an artist and instead become an architect.

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SCIENCE/HISTORY IS WONDERFUL

Jacob C.

Last year I went on a series of science trips. Myself and other students learned about bodies of water and some of the things that live in those waters. We also learned about what happens in rivers, lakes, oceans, and what happens when salt water and fresh water meet. During those trips I took good pictures from places like bridges, riversides, parks, piers, and the boardwalk. What we mainly focused on was the Hudson River and New York in the 1900's.

One of the setbacks I had was when were learning about New York in the 1990's. We went on a scavenger hunt, and what I thought was tea leaves (because of the smell) turned out to be unburned tobacco. A couple days later I had an asthma attack and almost could not go on the trip the next time. The last thing we had to do was write an essay or do a PowerPoint presentation. I picked a presentation and did it with maps. The experience was nice and the pictures came out great. Thank you reader for taking the time to read this.

MISSION Kadiatou D.

My personal mission is to be the first in my family to receive a degree in fashion. What motivates me are my siblings. They motivate me because they all have bachelor degrees. My oldest brother has a bachelors in psychology. My second brother has one year left to get his masters degree. My third brother serves this country as a US Marine. My parents also motivate me. They motivate me because they are immigrants and came to this country with no education and had to pay someone to teach them how to read and speak English. As a daughter of immigrants and the youngest in my family, it is important to make them proud. In this essay I will talk about the characters Farrah Ahmedl from *The Other Side of the Sky* by Farrah Ahmedl and Tanim Ansary, as well as Annie Johnson from *New Directions* by Maya Angelou. Both have different motivations in life that kept them going.

In *The Other Side of the Sky* Farrah has a prosthetic leg and tries her best to leave Afghanistan because of all the war and violence. She and her family try to leave the border but the guards are only taking bribes and they have no money. She writes, “I myself hardly felt the exertion. I was walking quite well that day, quite athletically. I had that good prosthetic leg from Germany. The foot was a little worn by then, but not enough to slow me down.” This shows that it did not matter what was happening to Farrah, she was not going to give up on her mission.

In *New Directions* Ms. Annie Johnson, a former slave, always goes out of her way for her sons. Especially after her divorce. She always wants to provide for her family. Even though Ms. Annie Johnson is a single mother with two toddling sons and very little money, that never stopped her from providing for her sons. She writes, “That same night she worked into the early hours boiling chicken and frying ham. She made dough and filled the rolled-out pastry with meat. At last she went to sleep.” It did not matter how hard she had to work herself, she was going to provide for her sons.

Just like how Ms. Annie Johnson would do anything for her sons, my parents would do anything for me. They would go out of their way to provide for all their children. In *The Other Side of the Sky* Farrah had a prosthetic leg, but never gave up. Farrah never stopped trying just like

my dad when he broke his arm in a car accident. I also will not give up regardless of anything.

In conclusion, Farrah and Annie Johnson both pursued their personal mission relentlessly. They never stopped trying to pursue their personal mission. Now it is my turn to accomplish mine.

* * *

HEART

Deborah E.

Have you ever loved or cared for someone? For example, taken a dangerous risk for that person? Well, I would for my family and friends.

My friends and family are very supportive. They are here when I need them. They always want the best for me. To be honest, they are sometimes very annoying. My mom is a doctor so she knows what is healthy to eat and not. So for my health, she doesn't let me drink soda and only a little juice, and six cups of water every day. I can't even eat too much candy, but that's okay because I know she's only doing this for my health.

My friends are annoying too, but they got my back. They help me in problems and eat all of my food. They care for me, and encourage me to do my best, and go beyond my limits. My friends are everything to me and very understanding, loyal, kind, and smart.

In conclusion, my family and friends are the best things a person could ask for.

MY FIRST TIME PLAYING WITH A BASKETBALL TEAM

Elijah G.

My first time on a basketball team was when I was seven years old. I tried out for the team on a Monday and I was accepted on a Thursday.

My first ever game was at my old school PS138. We lost, but we still had a great game. That was my first and last game that year because my mom said I had to start studying for my state test exam.

But the next year I joined the team, and that summer I got much taller and stronger. The first game of that year didn't go so well because the other team forfeited. So we had to play against each other. When the game started I scored a layup, and I could see my mom saying, "That's my baby, that's my baby!"

Overall it was fun playing with teammates. We also had girls. That was nice at basketball. That was fun too. And the girls were the top two players on the team.

Then the next year we won a championship for our school. Then in 5th grade we won another championship and we were the top elementary basketball team. Our team was called PS 316 WILDCATS!

MY GOALS

Paris G.

When I get older, the high school I want to go to is Art & Design. I want to go to Art & Design because I have a passion for drawing. I like drawing because I like creating different things that come to my mind. I feel like drawing is an important way of communication.

I heard of Art & Design from my father. My father also has a talent for drawing and decided to go to the Art & Design school. Now he is well known for what he does, which is an artist, designer, producer, and owner of two tattoo parlors in New York and England.

This means so much to me not only because my father went there, but my father's sister went there too and she will achieve her goal by becoming a fashion designer, owning an arts and craft shop, starting her own fashion show, and being on the news. If they can be big in life, I know I can be somewhere as big in life as well, as long as I keep following my goal and doing a great job in school.

The day I first realized I wanted this in life, was the day my father bought me a tattoo kit for Christmas. Basically, I became his apprentice and he was my master. I learned some of these tattoo words and more by watching tattoo shows such as "Master Ink." In addition, my father took me to my first tattoo convention.

If I don't get in to Art & Design I will be devastated. I think I would cry my eyes out because Art & Design is one of the top high schools I would love to get in to. I just want to be a famous artist that everyone knows. Or for someone to notice my drawing and know that it's my drawing.

In conclusion, I would do anything to get a chance to be in Art & Design, just to see where it would take me in life.

MY INTENTIONS

Verone H.

I like encouraging people because there is a moment in life where you just stop and ask yourself, why did this happen?, who am I?, why is this me? And in those moments you need someone to be there for you to give you answers and make sure you are understanding what is going on. Not everybody has the courage to say how they feel, so what I do is go to them and make sure they are all right. Some people in life need encouragement and as soon as that happens you see a change in a person. Sometimes words act better than actions and a few words is all it takes to make a person look at themselves in a better and more accurate way.

For example, my best friend thinks she's ugly, and so I, being her best friend, encouraged her. Sometimes you have to take that role to help another because you don't know when one day you are feeling down and that same person helps you. If you see an opportunity to help another, take it.

* * *

Darnell H.

It was April of 2016. It was the first time I ever stepped on a football field. I thought football was going to be easy because I saw other people doing it. The only reason why I like football is because my friends and family were playing football, including my brother.

I joined football because I want to beat the fastest person in the NFL which is 4.22 seconds. I think I can beat it if I train and focus on my foot work, because in football balance and speed and agility is key.

My first time getting into an accident was in December, my second year in football. I was running the ball up the sideline and he hit me in my knee. I tore my ACL and I stopped playing football for one year.

Pierre J.

I remember a time here I had a setback in life. I failed 4th grade. Well, in that grade not much was happening, so...

* * *

MY LEGACY Tyquan J.

My goal is to be a successful worker with the MTA (Metropolitan Transit Authority) just like my grandfather.

Before I was born, during the 1970s, my grandfather always drove the “Q” train. Later, he sadly retired from the MTA.

He then passed the torch to me. When I started growing, I started to learn more about the MTA.

Being in the Metropolitan Transit Authority would help me in many areas of my life because I would drive people safely to their destination.

If any person wants to join the Metropolitan Transit Authority, they are welcome to join, because you can accomplish anything if you just put your mind to it.

THE STORIES INSIDE MY HEAD

Sariah L.

I want to talk about how I learned I wanted to be a writer. It started with me wanting to draw. I still love to draw, but when I would draw those pictures they would “play stories” in my head. I had so many stories I didn’t know how to share it with the world.

Then I started to read books. I was fascinated that you could actually put your ideas in a book and not get judged by anybody. So, I started writing tiny books. I would write about stories I heard, but make them have a test and then show them to my mom. She would always tell me that I was going to be a wonderful writer when I grew up. I started writing when I was five.

When I turned twelve, my mom got me a note pad for me to write in. I would write the stories that were in my head or new books I would write next time. Then I discovered an app that was for readers called “Wattpad.” I was so obsessed with it that I would read it all the time. Then I found out it wasn’t just a reading app, I could write books too! I started writing a book on one of my old accounts and it got up to one thousand reads. I started getting a lot of readers and my friends even started to read Wattpad with me.

And then I just stopped writing. I felt I didn’t have what it took to be a writer. I thought all those stories in my head were just garbage. My mom told me to never give up. When you feel hate it is the time to motivate. So then I started writing again and I got my confidence back.

Now one of the books I wrote was nominated in the Watty awards and is soon to be published. I didn’t give up because I had a lot of help and confidence from my parents. They helped me along the way and now I know I want to be a writer.

WHEN I WAS YOUNG

Janneil M.

In thinking about things I would put in my common application essay, I would include my talents, such as drums. I have played the drums from kindergarten through 5th grade, then random people wanted me to play for their church. Other talents I have are reading and being an athlete. Let me tell you what I have been doing since I was five years old.

When I was five, I always wanted to be a quarterback. So my dad started to train me. Every single time I would play football, I played quarterback, but now that I am thirteen I have to put in more hard work. Somebody could just take my spot. That's why every single day I do push-ups. When I wake up, I just want to get stronger.

One other thing I can do is be very helpful. I like to help people.

* * *

HOW I REALIZED I LIKE MUSIC

Jayden R.

I remember the time when I had a realization. I realized I wanted to be a rapper. The reason I wanted to be a rapper was I found out I had a thing for music. It came out of a personal growth. When I started to listen to music, I started to write rhymes. Then I realized that I liked to write, and a new understanding of myself was realized.

One time when I had an accomplishment with music, I was with my grandfather. I told him I liked rapping and he told me he had a studio in the back. Then after a while I spoke to my stepdad about rapping and spit a couple rhymes. I have become more serious with my rapping because I want to use it to go far in life.

**2K
London S.**

I like playing 2K17. The first time I played 2K was when 2K15 came out. The first time I played with my friends on 2K was in 2K16.

* * *

Vian A. S.

I feel calm because of the setting around me. What makes me happy is playing outside. Also, video games are fun. Games like NOVA3, Jurassic World, URF, Dan the Man, ROBLOX, and Pokemon Go.

* * *

**ACTIVATED
Ethan W.**

Going to D.C. was exciting. I saw a lot of things for that two day/night trip.

Before the trip I was supposed to go three summers ago, but I went there on a Saturday morning in September. I fell asleep and woke up before I met the bus to go to the hotel. My father and I dropped our stuff in the hotel room and ventured outside.

We were going to take the train. I thought it was like an MTA train, but it was way different. It was fancy. There were colored train lines. After we took the train, west the White House. I saw a part of that said "Eisenhower's Room." I went to Capitol Hill where the statue of Abraham Lincoln sits in a chair. After that I saw more monuments, then the African-American museum.

After the trip I felt that I could live there...

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Tiffany M.
Daneo C.
Jada M.
Matthew W.
Zavan P.
Mickoy B.
Elijah G.
Sharal L.
Sebastian U.
Rayon P.
Kiefer J.
Corine J.
Lea P.
Jordan D.
Sammuel L.
Ka'Lel S.
Haylee James S.
Angie R.

TIFFANY: THE BEAUTIFUL WRECK

Tiffany M.

My name is Tiffany M., I am twelve years old. I was born on June 17th 2005 (Fathers Day). I was born in Brooklyn, but my parents originate from Jamaica. I have 8 siblings: 5 brothers and 3 sisters. I am a confident person who loves myself very much with a very bright future.

When growing up in Brooklyn I was very different from all the other kids. I was never shy or quiet. I was always laughing, smiling and happy. I was a daddy's girl. I was his Princess and he was my King. He was always here with me and for me. When I started elementary I was so excited to meet new people and have new experiences, but when I started 4th grade that's when everything left. There was a boy in my school that was bullying me and calling me names everyday. While the skinny girls got to go by through their day peacefully, I had to hear "fattie," and other words that made me feel horrible about myself and my body. I kept it to myself, which only made things worse and I fell into a deep depression which made me have thoughts that I'm glad I didn't go through with. But the bullying stopped in 5th grade because the boy switched schools. But it still left a mark.

Now I am 12 years old and I will be 13 next month. I'm very peaceful, calm, and happy. All the stuff that happened between me and the bully stuck with me for two years. I felt like I was holding a burden, and I was ready to let go of that burden. One day I decided it was time to start loving myself unconditionally. It was a hard process, but I got through it and now I'm confident in who I am and LOVE everything about me and my body. The day I told myself I am beautiful and I won't let anyone change that, is the day I started loving myself and having the confidence I knew I had in me. It just took me some time to find it. I'm comfortable in my body, so why should I change it for someone who doesn't like it? It is my body and my life so why should it revolve around others opinion? I'm not living my life for anyone else. If you don't like what I'm doing or how I look that's fine because I'm living my best life and I'm going to be happy.

My plans are to be a *New York Times* #1 Bestselling author. Or at least a very successful author... Writing is my passion and is something that I definitely want to do with the rest of my life. I haven't thought of a second choice as yet but I will most likely end up as an author because who wants to do a job that they don't like? I want to do something that I love and something I will enjoy doing.

FORTNITE

Daneo C.

What is Fortnite? Fortnite is a video game. It is a Computer Mobile System game.

There is a third person shooter that has exotic locations like Shifty Shafts, Tilted Towers, and Risky Reels. Those are some of my favorite places, but not all of them. I play this video game on my console which is a PS4.

* * *

Jada M.

Have you ever wondered what my life is like? Maybe not, but today I am going to tell you. My name is Jada Morris and I am 12 years old. I attend MS 340 and I am in 7th grade. I have many talents that I love doing and I absolutely love listening to music on my free time. Throughout my life I have faced many obstacles and I have also had some good times. So let me tell you about some of them.

First I'll tell you about the first time I did an actual dance performance. I was in 1st grade. I was performing for an event we had called Multicultural Day. Multicultural day is a day when we all come together to represent our backgrounds. I was very nervous at first because this was my first time performing in front of a big crowd of parents, teachers, and students. But I did very well, and everyone told me how good I was after the performance. I was very proud of myself and the compliments encouraged me to want to perform more.

Now I'll tell you about the time when I got into a car accident. I was 10 years old and a car ran into the car I was in. I was very scared because the back of the other car hit my door and the door pushed in on me. But luckily I was okay. This accident wasn't a very hard challenge for me to face. It was actually nothing to me because nobody got injured.

One of the most amazing things that ever happened to me was when I won president of the school in 5th grade. I was very excited because I was selected by over 300 students. That shows that people think that I am worthy to lead them and they trust me. This was a turning point in my life because I had a lot of responsibility on me after I was elected president. This encouraged me to be more responsible and from that I became a good leader.

LIFE WITH THE WORST SISTER EVER

Matthew W.

MY SISTER IS THE WORST EVER! She pranks me all the time. This is the essay about my horrid sister. I'M NOT JOKING!

Alright, let's get serious. The first thing she pulled on me was on September 7th (my birthday), 2012. She ruined my cake by putting "happy birthday LITTLE SNOT," so that's my new nickname 'til death. So then, in 2013, when I moved to NYC, I said that my other sister is the best sister ever. Don't tell my little sister that!

Yes, I have two sisters. One is 14 (currently) and the other is 7. In 2013, my older sister got her report card for her last 5th grade semester me and my little sister printed out a report card with bad grades. ELA 65, math 55, social studies 70, and so on and so forth. She came home crying – LOL! I showed her real report card which came in the mail.

I love my sister (older one), but we don't get along. I pranked her in 2016 with the "you dye" prank.



It's a prank where I replaced her shampoo with brown dye! My sister loves blond hair, but the brown looked good on her. She doesn't know it was me who did it – LOL!

In conclusion, I love my sister and all, but we just need to know how to get along!

JUST PLAYING! This is not the end! We settled our differences by talking to each other. Lesson: no matter what happens always love family!

ESSAY TOPIC 7

Zavan P.

In my opinion one of the most fascinating sports in the world is American Football. I have played football my whole life from age five until now. I had to stop because I am 14, and there is no 14-U football team near where I live. Not to brag or anything, but I think that I am an excellent football player, well at least I hope so, seeing that I played for nine years.

Football was kind of a complicated sport when I first started playing. There are eleven different positions on offense and eleven different positions on defense. The field is broken up by yards and every ten yards a line is chalked throughout the whole field. On the sideline off the field these lines are marked with numbers, these numbers are as follows 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 40, 30, 20 and 10. The fifty yard line is in the middle of the field and there is an end zone with a goal post at either end of the field, (by the 10 yard lines).

The offensive back field consists of a quarterback, which is the leader of the team, a half back, and a full back. The offensive line has a right tackle, a right guard, a center, a left guard and a left tackle. Also there are wide receivers, who line up about 5 yards away from the offensive line, and tight ends which line up next to the tackles, (they are sometimes not even used).

There has to always be eleven players on the field and at least seven players on the line of scrimmage. The line of scrimmage is an imaginary line that goes straight across the field to show what yard line the ball is on. The offense is in control of the ball and they can either run or pass the ball. The running backs (half back and full back) usually run the ball, although the quarterback or even the wide receiver can run the ball on a trick play. The quarterback also has the option to throw the ball to the half back, full back, tight end or wide receiver, (the wide receivers usually get thrown to the most).

Mickoy B.

The cat is a beautiful small animal like a tiger. It lives on the streets as well as in our houses, and is one of my favorite pet animals. The cat's body is covered with soft hair and has four short legs and sharp claws.

Cats do not make noise walking or running. Cats have bright eyes and they can even see in the dark. Cats are all over the world and milk is a cat's favorite. Many people keep cats as pets to scare away the mice. But unlike dogs, cats are selfish. Cats steal food from our kitchen.

Many people keep cats as their pets to scare away the mice.

* * *

DOG: MAN'S BEST FRIEND

Elijah G.

The dog is a loving companion to a man. He is happy to go everywhere with his master. He wags his tail and licks his hand or face.

If his master is blind, the dog helps him to cross the street and acts as his loving guide. No man can feel lonely when he has a dog for company.

A dog keeps watch over his master's house. He will not allow anyone to touch anything belonging to his master. He will bark when a stranger comes the house. He might even bite a thief who is not scared away by his bark.

A dog is useful to a shepherd to look after his sheep. If any of the sheep stray from the flock, the dog will bring it back. He will not allow a wolf or fox to attack the sheep.

A dog is useful in catching thieves and criminals. The thief may hide anywhere. Yet the dog will use his sense of smell to find out where the thief is hiding.

Police dogs are used to catch murderers and criminals. The dog by his sense of smell will lead the police to the hiding place of a murderer.

Sharal L.

Today I went to a place I never went before. I always wanted to go there. I didn't know something awful was going to happen. As you know I love all types of food. I love to eat. So, I wanted to go to a buffet. All you can eat was a joyful thing to hear for me. My mom took me there with my brother.

When we got there it smelled so good. All types of food. Japanese food, pizza, pasta, all types. My family sat down and we took turns on getting food from the buffet. I went last because I knew I was going to get a lot of food and take forever. When it was my turn to get food, I got a little bit of everything. When I was getting some pasta someone was coughing and sneezing, but I didn't think about it too hard. I was so excited because of the buffet.

Then after I went back to my seat we all ate. Of course I got thirds. After 30 minutes of eating, I started to feel nauseated, but it went away. Then it came back again and it was worse, so I got some ginger ale. Then it went away. It was time to leave so we went to a hotel. It was a fancy hotel. Then it was time to go to bed. Then I woke up in the middle of the night with my stomach hurting. I cried out to my mom and she hugged me and told me to try to take a poo. It didn't work. Then I felt something coming up. I...threw up.

After that my mom got me some medicine. It was trouble making me take that medicine. I was having trouble falling asleep, so I watched YouTube all night (Cooking Videos). And I finally fell asleep.

Sebastian U.

I am a 13 year old boy who attends M.S.340 North Star Academy in Brooklyn, New York. I am currently in the 7th grade and I work hard because academics is important to me. My academics are important to me because I want to have a successful career.

My friends are sometimes helpful and sometimes annoying. My friends are helpful because they help me with my homework and classwork. My friends are sometimes annoying because they keep saying things like “Burger King Foot Lettuce,” “PEPSI MAN!” and many other things too.

My goal is to work hard on my academics to have a successful career.

* * *

FORTNITE Rayon P.

Fortnite is a co-op sandbox survival of the fittest, developed by Epic games and People Can Fly, and published by Epic Games. The game was released for Microsoft Windows, macOS, PlayStation4 and Xbox One on July 25, 2017, with a full free to play release expected in 2018. The retail versions of the game were published by Gearbox, while online distribution of the PC versions is done by Epic's launcher.

Fortnite is set in modern Soil, where the sudden appearance of a around the world storm causes 98% of the world's people to vanish, and zombie-like animals rise to assault the leftover portion. Considered by Epic as a cross between Minecraft and Cleared Out 4 Dead, Fortnite has up to four players playing different missions on randomly-generated maps to gather assets, build fortifications, and build weapons and traps to lock in in combat. Players pick up rewards through these missions to move forward their legend characters, support teams, and weapons store.

VIOLENCE IN THE STREETS

Kiefer J.

I'm always getting into trouble on the streets. I am always fighting people and destroying things. Many people don't like it, but I don't really care. I know I should stop, but it is so fun. I am probably destroying property and hurting people, but that's their fault for having me in their neighborhood.

One day last night my friends and I were destroying objects. We went into someone's house and shred everything. They called the cops. That day I was scared to death, knowing that I could possibly get arrested. The cops came and I hid in the bushes when all my friends got arrested. This was all my fault for planning this. I should have taken the blame. But I knew if I got arrested my mom wouldn't let me come back home.

My mom loves me and all, but if I'm arrested my mom won't love me anymore. Also she won't get me a PS4. I REALLY WANT THAT! I know in life that I won't get it. But I'm going to turn myself in. I don't want my friends to pay consequences that have been given to them. I'd rather them not take the blame than me take the blame. For the first time I am doing something good in life. I pray to God.

In conclusion, it's bad to do things and not take the blame. But you should take the risk to keep your friends safe. I'm a believer in doing good now. Later on in life I want to the college at MIT.

MY STORY

Corine J.

Singing: an art, a hobby, a stress breaker, a masterpiece on paper.

For me, singing is a passion and I wouldn't want to do anything else. It is a hobby and a stress breaker. But it's more than that. It tells a story.

My moment of passion started long time before this moment. This is when I really felt I was in the industry. I was already in singing lessons but it was also for piano lessons. My piano teacher, Ms. Edder, knew I could sing so she put me in a competition. Little did I know it was an international competition with people from around the world. That did not phase me because I didn't know at the time.

I performed a song my singing teacher wrote for me and my mom and I had a cold at the time, so I didn't know I would do as well as I did. I had a mental breakdown backstage because I was hearing everyone practicing and sounding amazing. My hands started getting sweaty and my heart started pounding, and the voice in my head started getting louder, and my voice teacher said everything would be okay, so I trusted him.

Once I got on stage I was very scared, but while I was singing I felt so comfortable and relaxed, I let my vocals come out. After I was done, I felt relieved and still a little shaken. I went to the audience where my mom, dad, and my voice teachers were, and they all said I did well, but I was still worried.

My age division came up: "In 3rd place Jhon P., 2nd Sara K., 1st place Corine J.!" I almost died I was in so much shock. I almost didn't go up to get my award. My family had to push me to get up. It was crazy. I didn't think I would win, but I did. I was so proud of myself. Never underestimate yourself.

LIFE IN PENNSYLVANIA

Lea P.

The first day I went to Pennsylvania I told my parents I wasn't going to like it, but everything changed once I got through the bridge. There was so much open space. Everything was green and old fashioned. What really caught my attention was the big outlet that had all my favorite stores.

At that time we had to stay in a hotel. It was amazing. The next day we went to have breakfast in a diner. The pancakes were amazing. After that, because my dad and my uncle had to go work on the house, me, my mom, and my friends went to Camelback Beach. It was awesome. My mom was scared to go down the slides, so she was let everyone pass us. When we finally went down, she was screaming like crazy and I was just laughing.

I lived for a year in Pennsylvania. The house was finally ready and I was ready to learn how to ride a 4 wheeler. Everyone who lived in Pennsylvania had one. It was normal to be ride them down the street, which was weird because if you do that in New York you will get in serious trouble. This is why I like Pennsylvania. You are free to do what you want.

The facts that I learned about Pennsylvania are crazy. Did you know that the first newspaper was published in Philadelphia?

Jordan D.

FORTNITE IS THE GREATEST GAME ALIVE. If you do not like FORTNITE YOU MUST BE CRAZY. Fortnite is very fun, and I play it all day, every day. Without Fortnite I have no idea what I would be doing with my life. If I am not playing Fortnite, (which is a very rare thing), then I am playing Brawlhalla, AKA the second best game alive.

Brawlhalla is a really good game and I love it. Literally, the only two games I play are FORTNITE AND BRAWLHALLA. I'm serious...that is how good those games are. I would like to thank Epic Games and Blue Mammoth Games for making such amazing games with such amazing names. The best part about both of these games is that they are both FREE.

Fortnite is a co-op sandbox survival game developed by Epic Games and People Can Fly and published by Epic Games. The game was released as a paid-for early access title for Microsoft Windows, macOS, Playstation 4 and Xbox.

Fortnite is set in contemporary Earth, where the sudden appearance of a worldwide storm causes 98% of the world's population to disappear, and zombie-like creatures rise to attack the remainder. Fortnite has up to four players on randomly-generated maps to collect resources, fight the storm, protect survivors, and construct weapons. Players get rewards through missions.

One day, 98% of Earth's population suddenly disappeared, and the remaining population found zombie-like creatures that attacked the living. The survivors found ways to make "storm shields." The player is a commander of one of base, working with other allies to find a way to return Earth to its normal state.

BRAWLHALLA

Sammuel L.

According to Playstation.com Brawlhalla is a free to play game. There is a battle arena where the greatest warriors fight to prove who's the best that ever were, is, or will be. Every match is an epic test of skill, speed, and strength. Every victory brings glory to the winners. Fighters try to grab swords, axes, hammers, blasters, rocket lances and more! Every weapon changes your play style and your options. Gadgets like mines, bombs, and spiked spheres add even more danger into the mix, letting fighters change the course of battle with a well timed-throw or carefully laid trap.

The first time I played Brawlhalla, I was in 4th grade and I took my laptop to school. I started out as Hattori. Hattori is one of the fastest characters in the game. My friend Bevon had a controller for PC and I had asked him for it. A few weeks later he asked for it back. I figured out how to use a playstation controller on my PC. Ever since then, I have been playing the game on my PS4. I currently have 200+ wins on ranked 1 v 1s.

One challenge I face almost everyday is “spammers” or people who continuously use the same move throughout the whole entire fight. This challenge made me break one of my controllers. I punch my wall nearly everyday.

Playing this game has increased the speed of the movement of my fingers. It has made me very competitive, and I do things more independently. According to kotaku.com, “Anyone who’s played a game or two of *Super Smash Bros.* will have the muscle memory for *Brawlhalla*. In the game’s main mode, the last legend standing wins, and whoever is depleted to zero loses.”

In another popular mode, whoever has the most points when the clock runs out wins. The mode I can’t get enough of is 1 vs. 1 “Strikeout,” in which I choose a new legend for each stock, and the survivor wins.

MY BACKGROUND Ka'LeI S.

My name is Ka'LeI Strickland and I am 13 years old. I like to dance and step. My birthday is March 23rd and I am an Aries. I am in 7th grade, I attend to MS 340, and I get good grades. When I was in 2nd grade, I realized I liked to dance, and in 4th grade I realized I like to step. Over the years I got better at both of them, and I hope to get even better over the next few years.

My favorite thing to do in my free time is go on social media listen to music, watch Netflix, and eat. My favorite social media apps are Instagram, Snapchat, and Youtube. My favorite female artists are Cardi B, Nicki Minaj, and Beyonce. My favorite male artists are Boogie Drake and Jay Critch. My favorite Netflix shows are *On My Block*, *13 Reasons Why*, and *Stranger Things*. And My favorite places to eat are Applebees and Buffalo Wild Wings.

My first time leaving the state I was 7. I went to Georgia to visit family members. I met so many family members that I had never met before, and I got close to them. I got to meet my great grandmother a few times before she past away last year in 2017. It was a sad time but I am glad I got to meet her before she went to better place. I went to a small town called Columbus, and all the people were so nice and polite. I really liked it down there.

In December 2016, my sister moved down south to Charlotte, North Carolina. I was really sad and cried for a long time because me and my sister have a close relationship and I loved it. I know that if I ever have a problem I can go to her for help. My mother and sister are the people I am closest to and I love them dearly. My mother does everything she can to make sure I am alright. She loves me unconditionally and vice versa. I appreciate her very much.

When I am older, I want to be a pediatrician or a judge, but I don't know which field I want to excel in yet. I want to be a pediatrician because I want to help to help others in need. I want to be a judge because I want to be able to choose if people are guilty or not based on the law and not do anything illegally. Ever since I was younger I wanted to be both of those. I like to watch a lot of judge shows and *Doctor Oz*. This is the story of my life.

Haylee James S.

Singing, dancing, music and art are my talents. I practice and train my body and my mind to accomplish these things. As time goes on I will improve in my talents and might become someone to the world.

I first got my inspiration to sing when I was in elementary school. Not too far from now. My friends and I had singing battles and I was voted the winner most times. People gave me compliments and suggestions. That encouraged me to practice on my voice on my own time. Watching videos and writing my own music was fun and really educational for my on music, and how to sing in different pitches and depths. Some of my favorite singers and songwriters are Sam Smith, Sia, Adele, Billie Eilish, Khalid, Instupendo, Bazzi, Tyler the Creator, Clario and many more.

They inspire me to keep up my practice, because I can be like them one day. Music is my life, literally I listen to it all day, I write songs all day. I eat, sleep, and breathe music. I play the clarinet, recorder, ukulele, and a little violin. I practice as much as I can to perfect my skills. Or saying that nobody is perfect I can be close to it, better.

Dancing is also one of my many talents. I perform hip-hop, modern, African and Caribbean. I love Caribbean and African, because they represent my culture. When I dance, I feel happy and relaxed. I like watching people dance too. I went to a show once, it was interpretive dance. They told a story by just moving their bodies. I found that amazing. I try to reach that goal with my dancing – to entertain the audience with my movements and tell a story. I performed many times, and they were fun and I enjoyed dancing with my friends and colleagues.

Art is such a great platform for displaying your creativity. I like to sketch and paint. I also enjoy working with pastels. There are so many beautiful colors like pastel pink, blue, and yellow. Looking at other artists paintings is inspiring to me, especially oil paintings. They look so realistic and the details along with all the work put in is astonishing. My family supports me with my art. They get me supplies necessary for my art work. I draw portraits of my family members. They aren't as accurate as they should be, but I try my best. Like all my other talents, I work hard to get better everyday.

To conclude, singing, dancing, music and art are my talents. I practice and train my body and my mind to accomplish these things. As time goes on I will improve in my talents and might become someone to the world.

THE FEELING I FELT WHEN MY GRANDPARENTS DIED

Angie R.

On December 1, 2014 my grandmother died. In Tela, Honduras, she died at 3:00 in the morning. My grandmother had died of a kidney problem. I never met her at all. When I found out this news I was really sad and it was the worst day ever. My grandmother died on picture day! But on that day I was sad and didn't know how to feel. My father had the worst reaction ever because at that time I was planning on going to Honduras to go see her. But now she is in a better place.

My aunt died at a really young age. She also died in Tela. She was really young when she died. When I found out, I saw my mother cry looking at a picture of her. I was named after her. Since her name was "Paola" my mom named me Paola as my middle name. My aunt died of a disease. She would have been 20 something years old if she didn't die. I was really sad because I never met her, and only saw her through pictures! But she is in a better place.

My grandmother's mom also died. I never met her. I saw my family one time looking at a video of her and I didn't know her at all. From my perspective, I thought she was still alive. But when I found out she was dead I was sad because I never met her. She died when my grandmother was in her 30's or 40's. She is in a better place.

My grandfather died when my father was young. My grandfather died because of drinking. So I never got to meet him. I think he died in Tela, Honduras as well. But I was sad when I found out he died. I wasn't even born yet when he died. I wish one day that I could go to Honduras to go see their graves. I have wanted to do that for a long time. I hope it comes true. I was really sad when I found out that these people from my family died. I'm really sad that I didn't get to meet them, but it is what it is. They are all in a better place, and don't have to suffer anymore.

So all of these people died before I got to meet them. 1 or 2 died before I was even born. For my birthday I would want to go to Tela, Honduras to their graves and put flowers. I want to cry all of my pain out when I see their graves!

So that's all the family members that died before I was born or even before I met them! This impacted me because it made me feel really confused.

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Bradley B.
Rafael C.
Jennifer G.
Jahnice G.
Cherno J.
Jaden M.
Brandon M.
Janice M.
Karron O.
Anil P.
Javier R.
Sanaa S.
Mamadou B.
Jan C.
Jariely B.
Zeinab K.
Zoree B.
Zamara F.
Brianna S.
Amanda G.
Mikaila T.

Bradley B.

It was a hot summer morning when Mr. Seal, my camp counselor, came and shook my tent like a wild man. He screamed, "Wake up wake up!" very loudly. "Come on man, we have a hike to go on!"

I quickly thought in my head, and remembered that the 20 mile hike was today. I jumped out of my sleeping bag and took a water bottle and threw some water on my face. I zipped down my tent and ran to the cabins to get my clothes. I picked up my toothbrush, toothpaste, shorts, boxers, shirt, and a stick of deodorant. I sped over to the bathroom and squirt some toothpaste on my toothbrush. I did three brushes on my teeth and rinsed it out with some Listerine. I sprayed some deodorant on my armpits, then I heard Mr. Seal say, "Bradley, I'm heading over to Ryan and the others to get some snacks for the hike."

I quickly ran out to try and catch up with him. I ended up getting to the mess hall where the vending machine is. Then I took 5 dollars from my bag and put it in. I got 3 Coconut Clusters, and 2 bags of trail mix. It took a while for the machine to give you your stuff, but I waited.

I saw Mr. Seal from the window, and the rest of my friends walking in the forest trail. I got very scared thinking that I might get left behind.

I took my food and ran out the mess hall. I ran to the trail. No one was in sight. I look around and around. I caught up, and then we kept walking. Later on, the the group got split up without any adults. We tried to walk back but no one knew which way. I got scared and I started to die inside thinking that no one was coming back.

We found our way back, but there were many ups and downs. I learned something that day: that when you believe you can do anything, you can. I believed I could get back to safety and we did.

SCHOOL YEAR Rafael C.

The moon shone brighter than ever. I felt free, a light breeze gently brushing through my face. I didn't feel the same since I figured out that it was a dream. I had to continue on my regular basis like a regular day. I had a weird feeling. As the butterflies in my stomach begin to ache, I later realized that the beginning of the school was around the corner. All I could think about was being around my friends.

It was a fresh start to the day. Being in a new class with most of my friends in it was what I hoped for. But one of my good friends went to another class and the only time I saw him was at lunch or strategic reading. It really impacted me, Brandon, and Javier, because Kiefer always made good and funny jokes that made our days. I told myself that this will be a interesting school year. Even though we didn't see Kiefer most of the time, when we see him, he is always a blast.

Being in a top class was challenging. Having advanced classes was something that was new. These were things I had to get used to. My first marking period grades were something I wasn't proud of. I had to do better in my classes. I was working really hard, focused and paid attention in my classes in order to have a better chance of getting a better grade than previous marking periods.

Even though this school year isn't quite over yet, I still have things to improve. I usually rarely participate in my classes which is something I have to improve. There are many things I have to do to in order for me to be in my full potential. I learned many things throughout this school year. School is just awesome.

This school year is just a better version of last school year. I met new people this school year that were chill. Almost a month left of school and there are still many things to complete this year. After the state exams, There is still more to learn and prepare for 8th grade. What a school year it's been.

THE CHANGE

Jennifer G.

Walking down the block I get a glimpse of the big school. As I get a better view, I see new kid's faces, I see new teachers, as the wind blew my hair. Then I recognize some faces. Many kids from my elementary school were in my new school. Then I looked down and I realized I was shaking, not because I was cold but because I was scared. I had never seen so many new faces. The worst thing was that I was a shy person. In my elementary school I never talked, I never shared my ideas with anyone but myself. Now I was starting a new beginning, a new start that could change everything.

Starting at a new school is difficult, many changes occur when changing schools. Starting middle school for me was a big change. It encouraged me to start over and open up to others.

"New changes lead to new destinations" is what my family would tell me and it really has. Middle school was a point in my life where it really changed who I was. Walking down that block really changed who I am today. Before I wouldn't talk to anyone, not even my teachers. Now I am more sociable with people. Middle school was described as a scary place with new things, and yes at first that's what it seems, but it's not that bad. I met new friends, new teachers, and did new things. At first it was very difficult to get used to because I didn't talk and I didn't know my way around. I was too shy to ask for any help. My classmates helped me out. Most of my classmates were in my old elementary school, so it was easy to get along with others.

Walking to school I saw many new places. My cousin came to MS 340, so she showed me around the blocks close to the school. My favorite place near MS 340 is Starbucks. Middle school was the first time I tried Starbucks. My friends were in the same place I was in and now it sounds funny to talk about it, but we have a lot of things in common. Some teachers have pushed us to our limits.

I LOVE TO TALK Jahnice G.

I love to talk. I can talk about anything, anytime, anywhere, any place. However, I never used to talk. I pointed to what I wanted as a child. It wasn't just a struggle for me, it was struggle for my family as well. Since I never talked it was hard to understand me sometimes. I even didn't know what I wanted. Most of the time my parents were heartbroken that I didn't talk. But my mom believed in me. She knew I could talk. She just knew it. I had to believe in myself, not for me but for my mom, because she knew I could talk. Now I love to talk.

When my mom realized I wasn't talking she left it alone. After a while of not talking she started to get worried. I didn't know what to expect from her. Once I got to 3 years old and I still wasn't talking she started to get really worried. She said enough is enough, I had to go to speech therapy.

The first time I had to go, I was nervous. I went to the Brooklyn Hospital Center to get therapy lessons. I wore a pink shirt, a pink hat, and a green and white plaid pants. I might have looked nice, but I didn't talk. I didn't want to go. I was on my knees crying, "I don't want to go." My mom bent down to me, and said in a calm voice, "It's ok. I'm here with you." That comforted me. I had to be brave not only for me, but for my mom. She believed in me more than I can ever know.

When I got there I was still very nervous about the therapy lessons. We had to take an elevator up to the 11th floor. I remember there weren't many lights, just one at the opposite end of the hallway. The light lit up only halfway. I was very afraid then. I ran to go under the light and stayed put waiting for my mom to get closer to me. I went behind her as she walked in. She had scheduled an appointment I didn't have to wait. I was still very nervous because of the whole situation.

I went in and I sat down. The therapist's name was Lisa Rubin. When I met her she was shorter than my mom, with light skin and black hair. She was very pretty, I thought. I said to myself, "Breathe Jahnice, you can do this." I walked into the door. I looked at the soft yellow walls she had with a bookshelf full of toys and books. I sat down, and she kept the door open so I won't be so afraid. I sat beside the door while she sat facing it. It made me laugh when she sat in the baby chair. She fit in it. She didn't break it because she was very skinny and small. We did lots of fun activities. For example, we created a picture frame with stickers of

snowmen and glitter. I have it on my fridge up to now. It was a 30 minute session and after the 30 minutes I felt I accomplished something. I felt I did it for my mom and for myself. I had to do this for 6 more months every single day except weekends. However, my mom was proud of me. She said, "You did it, Jahnice." I was even happier. I ran to the elevator and she said, "I have a surprise for you." We went to Applebee's and then Chucky Cheese. It was great. It showed me I can do anything if I try.

Right now I'm 12 years old and I am thankful for having Lisa Rubin in my life. She helped me learn how to talk and I wouldn't have been able to, not just because of her, but my mom had hope and believed in me. She still believes in me today to accomplish my dreams. After a while, after going for about 2 months, I realized what I want to be in life: I want to follow in Lisa's footsteps. I want to be a speech therapist just like her. I want to help other kids like me who had trouble speaking, because that can help and change someone's life, and I want to be like that.

I love Lisa so much. She was and is still a part of my life. I want to go to her and see her so she can see how I have grown, and how she has helped me learn one of the most important aspects of my life: to speak. I thank her for that and love her for that and I might go back and surprise her I want her to see me.

TRIP TO DISNEY WORLD

Cherno J.

It was mid May when my mom told me she was booking a spot at Disney World. I was so excited when I found that out that I got mad that the date we were supposed to go was so far away. Every night I would imagine how it would be in the warm weather, nice breeze, and on fun rides for 4 days straight. It was going to be perfect. I was so excited I started looking at all the things to do. I was going to be staying at the All Star Sports Resort.

The day was coming closer, and all I needed to do was impress my parents with my report card so they could buy me extra gifts for when we got there. And that's exactly what I did. They bought all the new shoes and clothes I wanted, and a tablet. The next day we started packing for our trip. There was one more day until we set off on our adventures.

It was 5:00 am July 3, 2017. My parents were finishing up packing while I got myself ready. I was ready to go. 30 minutes later we drove to JFK airport where we parked the car and waited for our flight. We boarded on Delta Airlines, and spent the next 2 hours on the flight. I have to say the flight was pretty boring, but we made the best of our time.

When we got off, we went straight to the air shuttle and went to our terminal and took a Disney coach bus to our resort. When we got to our resort I was so excited. I saw all the wonderful sculptures related to sports. We went to check in, but our room wasn't ready so we decided to eat breakfast. There I saw one of my debate judges, and we greeted each other politely and went our separate ways. I got scrambled eggs and pancakes with hash-browns. It tasted so good. When our room was ready we settled in and headed straight to the pool. It was so fun. I started swimming under water and I played football in the pool with my brother. That was a fun day. Later that day we ate lunch and got a bunch of snacks. My mom bought a snack and drink package so we can have 50 free snacks. This was so good. We started exploring the area when we discovered another pool on the other side. We stayed there for a little while and then went to the football field. There we engaged in a intense soccer game. Even though my team lost, we all had fun. That day was so fun I want to do it again.

The next day, July 4, was independence day. We woke up and got breakfast and headed straight to our bus. We were going to the Magic Kingdom. We got on our bus and headed to the Magic Kingdom. It was so hot that day. As soon as we arrived there was a parade about to take

place. We waited on main street USA to see it happen. We got a front row view of all the characters. After that amazing parade we went to another performance to see a musical with all the characters. That was amazing as well. After that we went to our first ride which was the Thunder Railroad. Since we had a fast pass we got to skip the line. The ride was one of my favorites. After that we went into Tomorrow Land and got some souvenirs. After that we went on the Seven Dwarfs Mine Train which was epic. It went so fast and I felt the cool air. Since the line was pretty long after that we got hungry and went to a restaurant to eat. It was a space themed restaurant with good food. I got a mega burger with some fries and a coke. That was delicious.

After our lunch we went to a go kart track were I raced my brother and my dad. Lastly we went on the Space Mountain. That was a ride in the dark and it was full of twists and turns and loops. It was so fun my brother started crying because he was scared. I thought that was my favorite because I was in the front row and I felt good during the ride. After that we went to the main street and looked at the independence day fireworks. It was so cool. They light the magic kingdom to the American flag. After that we went home and ordered pizza, watched TV for a little while, and fell asleep.

The next day we woke up late and went to breakfast and ate lunch instead. It was okay because we were going to Hollywood studios that day.

Jaden M.

This one day I had to go to my dad's house. I was playing Call of Duty World at War Zombies. Then my mom told my dad to bring me to my aunt's house. Once I get there, I saw a suitcase full of clothes packed like I was going on vacation. I asked my mom where I was going. She said I would find out. The bad thing was she was not going – just me and my sister with my cousin.

After I was done packing, I got to the car and got a Subway sandwich. It was lit when I got there. I found out we were going to Great Wolf Lodge. I had a lot of fun. The whole point of going was to go on an adventure and have to have fun. The rule is you have to go around the whole hotel and then you have to complete the challenge. It was basically a wizard adventure.

First thing, I got to see my cousin and family. Then I went down stairs in the lobby and got ice cream. Then I brought my food so I can go exploring. After that it was time to go to bed.

In the morning I brushed my teeth. Then my family and I went to get breakfast and got ready for the day. Right after that I went to an indoor pool and I had fun.

This all took place in the summertime. I also had some good food and that was around the time I started to like blueberry muffins. I also went to the arcade that they had.

MY FRIENDS AND GRADES Brandon M.

The first day of kindergarten, there was one kid who was older than everyone else. His name was Javier Robles. He was taller than me and smarter than me and he became my best friend. From that day on we did everything together like play soccer. In fifth grade we went Philadelphia and Niagara Falls, and even slept in the same hotel room. In classes we were not always in the same class, but always kept in contact. He always smells like cheddar cheese. Later, I came to find out that's because he ate nacho cheese Doritos every day.

That same kid Javier Robles graduated with me. I thought that I would never see him again and I would have to make new friends, but at the first day of my new school I saw Javier sitting there. I thought I smelt cheddar cheese when I walked in... I could see that he was in uniform and had a fresh haircut. I could eat breakfast with him, and do all the things that we did in elementary school, but that all changed we met two friends by the name of Rafael and Kiefer. Later we made a group called the A Boys because our grades were above and beyond the expectations.

As a group, we did everything together. I mean everything. As groups in gym, sitting next to each other, and then breaking up when we went to 7th grade. It was tough because we could barely see Kiefer who went to 720 instead of 730 with me, Javier, and Rafael. We still did things together, but without Kiefer. We still stood strong with grades and behavior. I still can't believe I have successfully kept a friend for 8 years and counting. I don't know what high school we all are going to end up in. But if me and my friend Javier get to the same high school, the friendship will continue.

I felt confident that I can get into a good high school and have all the good grades, but all of a sudden I got butterflies in my stomach and started slowly getting less confident. I woke up and went to my phone to check my grades. My grades were bad, and when I mean bad I mean bad. I'm freaking out! Wind is slapping me across the face and I don't even know if I'm going to make into a high school after all, not to be with all my friends. I need to get to my friends high school no matter what. I was checking marking period 1 instead of marking period 4. Sigh. Oh my God, my grades are even worse than before, what do I do?

My friends have the grades to go to at least one of the high schools they want to go to. I have the grades to go back to middle school again.

Then I got an email saying ELA and Social Studies late work is due in 3 days. (Another sigh.) Those are the two major classes I am failing in.

I went straight home and began to do the late work. My friends are going to be so happy once we go to the same high school. I saw my grade and it's good. I smell the leaves and grass. I feel confident again, and eat nacho cheese Doritos.

* * *

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS?

Janice M.

Do you know what the future is? It can be anything you want it to be. For me, the future holds the things I always imagined as a kid. I know because I'm doing now everything I have to do to get there. And I know by persevering I can accomplish a successful life the way I want it to be. When I am older, I hope to be a lawyer who stops criminals, and live in LA with a great family. I am gonna stay in contact with my other family and friends I love, but just be me and live life.

This is what I think but is reality gonna hit me? Will I be selfless and vulnerable or me as I imagined? I never know what will happen. Will I die? Get diagnosed with something? I pray to God not. The future is a mystery to me. I don't know what happens, when, why, or how.

My brain doesn't have the capacity to attain the future. Everything I want most likely won't happen if my past is a disgrace. I push myself to see me as me but how can I know what the real me is if people say I have a whole life ahead of me? As of now no one knows what will actually happen. To me, theories and predictions aren't enough, so I'll have to wait for it. How will I prepare for it if I don't know what it is? I've waited my whole life to be an attorney, shoot I'm still waiting, as I'm only twelve years old!

If I was ever taught something, it is that life doesn't always go your way. But why not? What's stopping me from being successful? Is it my age and actions? Or is it just that I'm not meant to have a life I've always seen. I love me, but how can I do things that I want with struggles and challenges interfering?

LIFE OF SPORTS Karron O.

Touchdown. My first touchdown ever. Wow. This is way better than I had imagined. I remember running as far as I could. I saw the ball in the air. It felt as if it was in slow motion. The feeling of joy and the feeling of struggle to get to this moment was overwhelming. I can feel all of the people in the stands staring at me. I caught the ball. I did it. I won the game.

Let's go back a couple of months. I had just found out that for the rest of my life, I would spend countless hours playing or watching, in my eyes, the best sport ever. I always had a knack of throwing the ball. It came to me really quickly. Going outside in the backyard to play catch with Dad was what I did to pass time. This was the greatest joy of my life. Ever since, life has been a huge roller coaster.

The first game of the playoffs. I remember it like it was yesterday. I was supposed to throw a go route. But my wide receiver was not open. I decided to run it myself. I started running and I got hit hard. Ouch. that did not feel too good. I think it's broken. I could not get up. I could hear my mom screaming, senselessly. That's the only thing I could think about. I thought that would have surely meant I would not be playing football for a long time. All the long months it took me to get my hip back to normal I watched either the NFL, college, or even high school football. Those were the most tough times of my life. I couldn't walk and felt imprisoned to this wheel chair.

Recovery required a lot of patience. Sure enough I found a way to keep the love football. Ever since the injury my mom did not want me to be playing football anymore. I was able to convince her that I still should be able to play. I had joined another team call the Brooklyn Tomahawks. Unfortunately I was not able to play because I had growing pains. One of my legs was longer than the other. This made it really uncomfortable do any type of activity that calls for a lot of running or standing.

My life suddenly became a bunch of injuries. From twisted ankles to damaged hips to one outgrown leg. But through all those injuries, it gave me a stronger love for the game. I'm now stronger than I ever been. I've fully recovered and I've already spent countless hours practicing.

I've taken on a new sport, basketball, for when the football season is over but no matter what, football will always have a space in my heart. All thanks to my dad for taking me to the backyard to play catch one day, I've found what I want to be when I become an adult. A NFL player.

MY PARENTS ARE E.T.'s?

Anil P.

I am 5 months old, having thoughts flowing through my brain like a 35 year old. I was brought into this white walled house with gold couches and a bright chandelier that blinded me. I started to weep. Why were these species so vulnerable? They kissed me and held me every time I cried. Is this their job?!

I crawled, stood up, and said "What are you and who are you?" The lady said, "First steps! Go get the camera." Are they someone who came in my life?, I thought. This is killing me, I'm so confused. I have this intriguing love for you, and I DON'T KNOW YOU! There is space being lifted me, and said "I love you." I wondered why they weren't taking me seriously. I realized the words that were coming out my mouth weren't even words. "Goo Goo Ga Ga," was all that I said.

This green thing said, "It's time to eat!" EAT ME ?! I'm a human! They put a bowl in front my face, and said, "Here comes the choo choo train," while one records me with this thing that has a bright red light on it. Whenever he said cheese, it lit up and blinded me. I think they are taking me back to their planet. I ate the food in the bowl though. Who knew unknown species knew how to cook? Humans like me are too good for unicorn bowls with veggies in it, hmph! Even though I don't know these unknown species, I had this trust in my heart for them.

I'm so tired, I don't want to go to sleep. I want to keep watching this weird man called "Barney" run around and teach me my ABC's. The woman saw me drifting off, and said, "Mommy's gonna put you to sleep." MOMMY!? Is that slang for "I'm gonna eat you?" She lay in bed with the other person beside me.

I woke up feeling something coming up my throat. It had tingles throughout my throat. One part of me says "it's just throw up," another says, "it's words." I yell "MAMA!"

I now realize what these species are. My parents, my spiritual guardians, the loves of my life. I love you Mom and Dad.

We've had laughs, we've cried. Sometimes only I cried! We have bonded, but I didn't know you, you knew me. Now I know you as my unknown species. Call us the E.T.'s!

Javier R.

Have you ever gotten 1st place for a competitive competition? I have experienced winning 1st place in soccer tournaments, but also lost some. Winning 1st place or not is truly amazing, and brings a lot of mixed feelings. Whether you are sad about losing, or angry when you think you can't succeed and win, or feeling relieved when you've won. Winning not only brings out emotions, it also keeps motivating yourself and brings success to you. Losing is always a part of life and you got to accept it and realize the little details that made you fail, so you won't face the same mistakes. Also it is relieving to even get to the finals because of all the hard work that was put in and the environment around you is very enjoyable to feel.

A time I have won a tournament was last year around the middle of November. I was really nervous and scared because the day before that, I was playing a soccer game, but for my academy team and I got injured badly on my ankle. I was doing anything possible to heal and recover quickly. I was really anxious since that day when I got injured, I had some deep thoughts about whether I can make the semi finals tomorrow or not. There were so many strange and uncomfortable feelings I had when I woke up to the day of the finals. All I can feel was the pain on my ankle with tape around it to heal it. I thought I couldn't make it since it was the worst moment. When I got to the pitch, I was feeling a little better from my ankle, but it was still hurting a lot. All I heard was "GOALLL" from the other team, so I thought to myself, "I can't help my team with this weak thing."

So then, I passed the ball to my friend and he scored with a little tap on the ball and went in the net. Suddenly, my heart was racing. I felt some type motivational feeling as soon as the ball went in the net. We were down by 2-1. The only thought I had on my mind was I can score with the ball on my feet running to the net and finishing the shot. But as soon as I took a step, the player from the opposing side slide tackled my injured foot. However, our team got a penalty for that and my friend scored. But I was in more pain than I usually was. So I was subbed out so I could heal. The only sounds I heard were my teammates screaming at each other for the ball, parents of both teams chanting, and the wind blowing on my face. At that moment, I got back in even though I was

hurt. My teammate ran for the ball and passed it to me, but as soon as I got the ball, I controlled it with my injured foot, but it didn't stop me.

I kicked the ball with all my force, and made the defender and goalkeeper trip over each other. I heard a lot of people screaming in an exciting feeling. I knew I could do something to help. I was proud of myself when that moment happen. However, I had to sit out for the finals game which was sad. But we won the finals. As soon as I touched that gold trophy, I wanted to cry in excitement. That day, I motivated myself and looked on to that day and realized what more I can improve on.

Most times, success won't come the way you want them to be, and that's what I expected from the day I won and the day I lost. There were many mistakes during the process of succeeding. The way I expected to win the finals I lost, was to have the same feelings as of the winning the tournament from November. The feeling of touching another golden trophy and having more motivation to win. However, it didn't happen sadly. But improving is the key to the success that I have made.

Sanaa S.

I am an incredibly awkward person. I tend to embarrass myself a lot. To make it worse I am extremely clumsy. I like to think of myself as a nerd. Like one of those stereotypical nerds in the movies that wear big glasses, high waters that are pulled all the way up to their chest, and a packed lunch from their mom with a thoughtful note on the outside. Yup, that's me. All these things are true, but one thing. Nerds in the movies are usually not good at sports. As a matter of fact any physical activity at all. Usually they look all awkward and weird fleeing away from the competition. That is the total opposite of me. I enjoy doing sports like track, and tennis. I play on a track team and it is really fun. We go to track meets and we all get to go up against people from all the other districts. The last track meet our coach didn't get to go, but his substitute was so impressed with us he got us ice cream after. He even brought his 5 year old son, he was so cute. That was even more of a win for me than getting first place in the 100 meter. I don't enjoy all sports though, like basketball and baseball, so I guess I do have a little more nerd in me than I had thought.

Just like a nerd, I'm a shut in. If I were to be invited to the best party in the whole world I would go for at least 5 minutes, and then go back home to my drawing book. I find myself drawing a lot. Even when I am in class I randomly draw things on the margin of my loose leaf. I get easily distracted by the ideas and pictures that I get in my head. Once that image is in my head it's like it's stuck there until I draw it. I usually space out sometimes trying not to lose the thought that I had in my head. I sometimes get in trouble because of it, but it is worth it. I find it to be therapeutic almost like an escape from the chaos outside. It's like it is apart of me.

I find that photography is apart of me too. It makes me feel as if I am an all seeing eye. Looking down at everything. Like I can see and hear everything, but I am completely silent and still. To me, taking a picture is like freezing time, as if the world stopped spinning and I was the only one who could move. Stuck in that beautiful moment as long as I could stand. The feeling of capturing a picture is almost indescribable. Like a breath of fresh air.

The first time that I remember really being able to take pictures was when I rode the ferry with my family. It was with my three siblings, my cousin, and my father and his girlfriend. It was also the first time that I had been on a boat before. I thought that I would get sick, but lucky for

me I didn't. When we got on the boat I automatically went to the top. I was blown away by the feeling I got on the top. It was like a rush of excitement. As soon as we had started moving I was kind of scared. But I got used to it. It was incredible. I got some good pictures and some good memories.

I have a special connections to the arts and sport. They all describe me and define me in multiple ways. They all hold a special place in my heart. Photography, drawing, and track are all apart me.

* * *

Mamadou B.

When do you feel truly alive and happy? I feel truly alive when playing soccer. I can feel a rush of excitement as I'm about to play. The wind rushing towards your face as you run, the feeling of the grass every step you take. The soccer field is where I truly belong. The moment of truth – the best part of all – is when you score a goal for your team which helped secure your victory. It makes all the effortless practice and training worth it. Soccer is a teamwork/group game. It is not meant for one person to play. It is not as enjoyable if it is.

The first time I played soccer was at school with my friends during recess. I didn't know how to play though, so all did was run around kicking the ball, but it was still fun. A few weeks after that the school started a soccer team. I was anxious to join because I didn't know the rules or how to dribble But somehow I made the team. The first practice we had our coach see how good we were and what we needed to improve in. I was surprised because when I tried to play and stay focused, I wasn't as bad as I thought. However, I knew that was only the beginning. I went to practice every day and came home every day with my legs sore. Nevertheless I was still happy and couldn't wait for the next practice.

As time went on, there was a moment I didn't see coming during our first game. Before that, our coach said she was going to take us to Prospect Park so we could know how it feels to play on grass instead of wood so we can get used to it. It was amazing. The grass was so soft and all you could hear was the silence and wind blowing around your face as

you were about to start the game. We played 2 games, each about 45 minutes. Then we noticed it was already time to go home. And I was as tired as ever. Nonetheless, I will never forget that amazing feeling.

The day has come: the day of our first game. It was exactly 8:00 and I had brought so many bottles of water because I knew this was about to be a long day. It took about an hour and 30 minutes to get to Long Island. When we got there we saw so many other schools and there were going to be different tournaments happening at the same time. First we had mini games like 2 on 2, then we had some drills. Then it was the final game. Surprisingly my school was in it. I honestly thought it was going to be an intense game. I was prepared. The whole game was about 45 minutes. Sadly I only played for about 15 minutes because the seniors took most of the time since they were leaving. However, the game was so easy it ended up with us winning 15-1. I was kind of disappointed with how easy it was. We went and got our trophies and it was time to go home.

It was the one of the best days of my life and I knew soccer might be what I wanted to do for a career and I will be happy if it is.

Jan C.

The soccer field is a great place for me. It gives me a great sense of belonging where everything is fine in my own world. Even when I lose I still feel good because each time I touch a soccer ball it brings back memories of good times I had playing with a ball. When I am dribbling past players it gives me a certain rush. The soccer field is full of emotions for me as I grew up basically in one.

My dad loves soccer, so he would bring me there at a young age regularly so I could run around and just play. He would often try to show me certain styles of playing. At first he just taught me to just dribble and get close enough to shoot. I had to be fast in order to play like that, so he made me do sprints to condition my body for intense sprints. This became effective as in games I would burst down the wing and get close enough to shoot. I was only use to running like that. Later I learned a new style of using my body to get past players. I would put my body at an angle to push players off, then I would find a space to take a shot and get it in the back of the net. It felt so good when I got my shot to hit the target. Even if it was blocked, I still felt happy. I can still run fast just not as fast as I would like to.

These type of actions bring me joy. Even if I lose I still am happy.

Jariely B.

My best friend pees in public, is furry, bites people, licks people, and has a tail. If you didn't already figure it out, my best friend is my dog. My dog is my favorite being in the world and the being I love the most. He was the first dog that I got to take care of because I was actually old enough. He was also the longest living dog I ever had. My dog and I have had a long history and went through everything you could possibly imagine. There was even a time that he almost died. Although I don't know how, but I still have him after 5 years.

Let's start from the beginning. I remember the day perfectly. It was August 16, 2013 on a Friday. I was 8 years old at the time. It was also hot because I was in Dominican Republic which has summer weather every day. My mom, my brother and I were looking everywhere in every pet store for the perfect dog. We finally went to this one store that is called "La Serena" which means mermaid in Spanish and it was like a super store because it had everything. From clothes to food to even animals. When we arrived we had found out that all of the Yorkies were already sold and we came too late.

Later that day we went back to "La Serena" to go grocery shopping and by then I thought I would never find the perfect dog. While my mom was getting fruit, I decided to check in the animal section just one more time. I then found out that the last person who adopted a dog wasn't allowed to take the dog back to his home country, meaning that the dog was up for adoption again. When I discovered this fantastic news I quickly called my mother and rushed her to come to the animal section. We called the rest of the family and came to the conclusion to get him. When we signed the adoption papers we already had an idea for a name which I picked out. His full name is Blue Batista and his birthday is May 13. He just turned 5 a few days ago.

Zeinab K.

As I was eating dinner in Tennessee with my siblings. My mother had just gotten off the phone with my aunt and found out some very depressing news. My mom then came in the dining room to tell us this unfortunate news, which was my grandfather had just died.

At that time I wasn't really depressed because I was really young. I didn't understand what it meant to pass away or die. Until I went to his funeral. Going to my to my grandfather's casket, where he was lying there dead, affected me so much. When my grandfather was alive, we had so many good memories. To know someone who I really loved had died still makes me feel depressed.

I was too young to have to confront my grandfather's death. It was too much to handle. However, what really helped me stay happy was my mom being pregnant with my little sister. At this time, me and my twin brother were the youngest. So, knowing that I was going to have a little sister was the best news. I always looked up to my mother and most of the time my big sister. But now someone was going to look up to me.

However, that wasn't the only thing that I was merry about. I knew once my little sister steps foot in this house, (not literally steps foot because she's a newborn baby), one of my responsibilities would be to protect and care for her. I know I was young, but it was still my responsibility. But mostly for my parents. My mom's pregnancy was long, but it felt like it was only for a month. Until she went to the hospital.

Nothing bad happened at the hospital, I just really couldn't wait for my sister. When I really want something and have to wait, I become impatient. I was so excited. It felt like my mom was at the hospital for a whole month or two. But she was only there for 5 days.

Everyday I would come home, with a mindset that my mom was at home, but she wasn't. After those few days, to my surprise my mom was there. The first thing I did was look at my sister. To me she was one of the best things that happened to me. Of course I wanted to hold her but she was newborn and I was too young. But I was still happy to see her and have a little sister.

TRACK Zoree B.

As I was running, I felt the wind across my face. I was too in the moment to realize that I fell. I overheard people laughing at me. I got mad at myself for not being fast. And I was very young. So what I realized in gym, was that I wanted to get faster.

Now, since I am in my track club, I am exposed to a lot of track meets. It was really big. I was nervous when I first stepped foot in it. I believed in myself that I could win. I used all my might to run the 55 meter dash. I was tired, but I was happy. I came in first place! I was excited. It was my first track meet and I came in first place. My parents were proud of me and told me that I should stay in the track club so I can get faster. At that time, after I was so excited to get a trophy since I went in first place. But I didn't know that I was going to get one. When my coach told me that I wasn't going to get a trophy, that was a setback.

Since I was at a young age, I did not understand some things. At every track meet I kept thinking I was going to get a trophy. But until 3rd grade, I noticed that I wouldn't get a trophy at the end. I was really disappointed and it made me want to quit. But my friend told me it was not about the winning, it's about the fun you have. Then I realized, if I had more fun, I can stop thinking about getting trophies. So I started to have more fun while running. And it's actually a lot of fun. I can feel the wind in my face making me feel free.

I do this because I love to feel the wind in my face while in running. It made me realize that I had to train to get better. So I did. I kept on winning first place and being happy. Then I went to middle school. I met new friends who also like track. I had new best friends who kept on inspiring me. This is who I am. I love to run. And I love to do sports. As you can see. I am very athletic all because of running.

To conclude, my friend told me it was not about the winning, it's about the fun you have. I love sports. Especially track. I like being happy. When you are happy, you like to have a lot of fun too. It can make people feel free. What's your story? Cause this is mine.

OVERCOMING LOSS

Zamara F.

Have you ever lost a loved one? I have. It was one of the saddest days of my life. Life was incomplete without this person. My soul was cold with the lost warmth that my aunt's life left in my soul. I will never again see her, until I lay down to rest. A person who I used to see only in a photo. No longer smell her scent when I walk into her house. Only a frail remembrance of her life. The day I put her 6 feet under to walk to the other side was the calmest day of my life. No one was able to breathe the same way anymore with her gone!

The days passed really fast after the death of my aunt. We had a big celebration to celebrate her new life on the other side. To celebrate it might sound weird, but my family puts a smile on their faces and dance to overcome the pain they feel deep inside. My pain was so hidden that everybody thought I wasn't suffering. I kept a big smile and bright eyes, and never got weary of my loss. I wasn't sad for me. It was a release of emotions set free. My aunt could finally rest without feeling the pain of others. As everyone one wept, she lay upon the hospital bed, and said these simple words: "Don't be sad I already see the light." That same night she died.

Then came the big funeral. Family from all corners of the earth come to see this once loved woman be dropped down deep into the ground. At first my soul ran through sadness and anger. I never really thought she would be gone so fast. Why didn't they try harder to save her life? Endless thoughts went through my mind. I was unable to comprehend the thought that she would be gone forever. The thing is, to this day, no one knows how roughly this death hurt me. Until today, I have kept myself from saying my secret aloud.

CARDI B
Brianna S.

Belcalis Almanzar, personally known as Cardi B is an American rapper. Cardi was first an attention grabber but she has changed. To me Cardi is very inspirational. Listening to her music has made me realize that I should do what my mind inspires. One of my favorite songs by Cardi B is "Be Careful." This song lets people in general know that the heart is very fragile and if it gets broken something bad may happen. Yes, some of her songs might be a little intense, but they all have a point.

If I ever was to meet Cardi I would explain to her how much she means to me. I love Cardi so much that one day I hope I can be like her. People look at Cardi as a bad person. In my eyes she is a great person. She inspires little kids like me to make sure that they don't let anybody disrespect them.

Cardi B has been through lots of hard times. She has suffered but she made sure she got through it. I can relate myself to Cardi in many ways. One is that we both like to create music. Hip-hop and rap are two types of my favorite music. One of my favorite songs I made so far is "Why Us." This song expresses my feelings about something that happened to me and my best friend.

In conclusion, Cardi B is a great person with a huge mind. Her music is very relatable. She has changed throughout the years. As she said in one of her recent songs, she bossed and she changed the game. So, the next time you have something bad to say about Cardi B, just know she has a different and great mentality now.

DANCING Amanda G.

Dancing is a form of art. Dancing provides an outlet for people to express themselves. It is a way to express feelings that words may not be able to. I use dance as a way to show and describe how I'm feeling. I look up to many dancers who have made it to several famous dance academies. Dancing helps me to release all negativity energy that I may have attained throughout my day. It helps me to think positively through my hard times. Dancing plays a huge role in my life.

I started dancing at the age of 6. Ever since, dancing has shaped me in the confident girl that I am today. My first solo was definitely a breaking point in my life. It was June of 2016, when I performed my first dance solo. It was a section from the Broadway musical *Newsies*, in which I performed. An audition was held a couple months prior to the performance. I practiced the part almost everyday and eventually, my hard work paid off. Rehearsals were rigorous and stressful. I felt as though I was lost at a point and couldn't match what my teacher wanted. The stakes got higher as the show time got closer. Nerves over took my body as I entered the stage. At last, the curtains rose. I was ready. I had danced my heart and soul out and gave a lot of emotion throughout the piece. This was the moment that I felt like I could do anything.

Dancing makes me feel confident in myself. It helps me to feel as though I am in my own world. Like I own the world. I overcome a lot of things by dancing. Dancing is like a barrier to reality. Auditions are a major part of the dance world. Auditions are the showcases that you do to show leaders of a company or production that you are eager to dance and dance with that particular group. Auditions help show people what you capable of when being watched and if you are passionate. I've done only a couple of auditions in my life. However, I always take advantage of those opportunities to grow as a dancer and a better person.

Even though this art form has a lot of benefits, of course it has its disadvantages. Firstly, dancing takes dedication. You have to give up a lot of things such as parties and events that you would want to go to. You would also have to eat right and give up fast foods such as McDonald's. Secondly, you have to be able to manage failure. In New York, there are many people who want the same dream that you might have so you have to be the best of the best. Lastly, dancing can be very harsh on your body.

Mikaila T.

A topic that I find intriguing is art. When I am drawing I lose track of time because there are endless possibilities when you put pencil to paper. It captivates me because drawing can be a form of expressing my feelings or I can draw just for the fun of it. I don't think any of my family members enjoy drawing as much as I do. But when I want to learn more about different techniques used in art I go online and search up drawings that interest me. I hope that one day I can draw like a professional.

Every little kid has made cards and art project for their parents at school or home. This was something I did all the time and it was fun in my opinion. But something I will always remember is when I first painted on a blank canvas with actual paint. I was in Pennsylvania at the moment with my father and he brought a canvas and paint home. We painted on the canvas a sunny day with house, trees, and grass surrounded with a light blue sky. That's when I found out I also love painting! Then as I grew up I stopped making cards for my parents every time I got the chance to, but my art skills got better and my passion for art grew deeper.

As I grew up I started drawing more complicated things. Everything around me was my next idea for my next drawing. I even got into watching anime which is something I never thought I would do. As I watched these animes I got the urge to draw some of the characters and to my surprise they actually came out good. I felt that I had a lot of accuracy in drawing these characters and so did my friends. I had always got compliments saying you draw very good but sometimes I felt like I had been lied to all along.

But sometimes I felt my drawings were just atrocious. I tried and tried but what was on my paper looked very different from what I was trying to draw. On top of that recently school has been really stressful. Being in a top class means high expectations and this means more work. I don't really have time to be drawing and when you get out of habit you can't do it as well as you have before but I will try to draw more now that school is coming to an end.

Why does art make me complete? It makes me complete because when I draw I am doing more than just drawing on a paper. I don't have a very wild imagination but when I draw I see everything in a different perspective. Each of my drawing either stand for something or they don't. But art is important because art is something where you can truly be yourself and show the people what you are going through by putting pencil to paper.