Brantley High School

English Journal

Written by Tenth Grade Students in the Advanced/Honors Program

Compiled by Mrs. C. Moore

Introduction

 The works that follow were selected for this anthology because of their excellence in both literary style and entertainment value. The authors were guided to produce certain works but given freedom to develop their own style and create their own stories and images. Every author submitted a number of acceptable works, but the following pieces are representative of the most finished pieces. A piece of writing is never complete; it can always be revised and improved, and the following writers were given little time for this process. Minor changes have been made to the works to account for easier reading, but the author’s voice is left fully intact. To the reader: please enjoy these literary works for what they are- incomplete, yet, remarkable pieces of student writing.

The stories that follow are very short fictional works. In honor of this style of writing, I will begin this anthology with Hemingway’s self-proclaimed greatest work. A very short story that includes only six words:

“For sale: Baby shoes, never worn”

How to NOT do your homework

by E. Alverson

1. Enter house and put books in a spare room in the hallway, so you don’t have to see them.
2. Take a nap on couch, and try not to dream of what you should be doing.
3. Wake up, pick up cell phone, and call best friend. Invite yourself over. (It’s easiest to avoid homework when you’re having fun.)
4. Stay at friend’s house until your father gets angry.
5. After father is furious, ask your friend to carry you home.
6. Once home, enter house and go directly to room.
7. Walk toward bed.
8. Pull back covers.
9. Place your body under covers, and close your eyes.
10. Fall asleep.
11. Repeat steps 1-10 Mon-Fri.

Harriet and Charles

by E. Alverson

 Harriet and Charles watched as their youngest grandson flew off to military base camp. Their minds were filled with the wonderful and not so wonderful memories they had made raising Lawrence, since his parents died many years before.

 They had learned to say goodbye before, and if they must…they could say it again.

Poem

by T. Rayburn

The very thought of going to bed,

of waking in the early hours of the morning

to the promise of absolutely nothing,

other than near 8 hours of sheer torment

is enough to make most anyone motivated

to do absolutely nothing, but maybe sit at home.

Perhaps waller in the utter distate of it all.

The very thought of making our small journeys

to this place. This place of small overcrowded rooms,

with walls closing in, providing an even more claustrophobic

environment.

“Two people in an airport”

by T. Rayburn

 The two people in the picture are not traveling. Neither are seeing someone off or waiting for a traveler. They are simply making their weekly trip to the airport to stand in awkward silence. Perhaps to ponder impossible questions such as “what is nothing” or “could I clap with one hand?” Who knows what is going through their minds? Maybe they’re imagining themselves standing in their retirement home, staring off into the royal blue abyss of the ocean blended with a deep red sunset and golden clouds and purple skies above these clouds, which has captivated them and placed them in a period of emasculate serenity, and employing calmness, sooths their souls as they slowly drift from the reality that over the course of their lives has crept into their deteriorating souls and darkened their spirits by promising absolutely nothing (If they’re atheist).

 Or perhaps, they’re just getting something to eat from the cafeteria and simply stopped to watch a jet take off.

“Humpty Dumpty”

by Zeth Johnson

Humpty Dumpty stayed in the house

Humpty Dumpty had no spouse

Humpty Dumpty could not leave

There was no way he could be freed

Humpty Dumpty couldn’t fit through the door

So Humpty Dumpty couldn’t eat anymore

Humpty Dumpty’s house burnt down

So Humpty Dumpty is no longer around

Childhood

by T. Driggers

Childhood slips out of our lives

Clothed in faded jeans and a Spiderman shirt

Whispering “enjoy me while you can”

“Think Globally, Act Locally”

by T. Driggers

 “Think Globally, Act Locally”…something about this bumper sticker, of all things, caught my eye. It was stuck to the shiny back bumper of a newer model Toyota Prius. Something about it sparked my imagination, as I was looking for a parking spot at the local Walgreens. I found an open spot a few places down from this deep thought inspiring car. I battled and debated with myself for what to be all of 30 seconds on what this saying meant before my overwhelming curiosity got the best of me, and I went to investigate the car which had given my brain its exercise for the day.

 As I approached this almost brand new, shiny, blue Prius. I noticed that both of the windows were down. The first thing that went through my head was to peek inside and see what I could find about the owner of this car. I quickly shot that idea down, after all, it would be trespassing, and what if the owner walked out and saw a complete stranger snooping through his car. But the urge just kept popping in my head. And it’s the owner’s fault for leaving the windows down anyway…how irresponsible.

 I decided I would just take a little peek inside. I somewhat discreetly poked my head through the window and started my spontaneous quest to learn more about the mysterious owner of this car. Inside the car, everything was pretty average, nothing very unusual. The smell of some sort of air freshener and maybe lunch from the day before were the only scents I detected. Not unlike other cars, the seats were leather. The steering wheel had a soft rubber cover over it, maybe the driver had arthritis and the soft, almost pillow like cover lessened the pain of gripping the steering wheel. There weren’t any objects that caught my eye either. A bottle of water, a laptop, and a GPS, were really the only things visible to me.

 Then something odd grabbed my attention. The steering wheel had quite a few buttons on it. There were the usual volume up, volume down and cruise one, cruise off buttons, but there were two more that puzzled me. There was a gas pedal button and a break button. Before I had a chance to really let myself think about this I noticed a man on a wheel chair rolling himself straight for the car that I was now sitting in!

 Oh no! I knew it was his car. Why else would someone have a gas pedal on their steering wheel? I panicked. I knew he could see me. What should I do? I made a decision and began to open the door and make a run for it, but before I could take my first strides, I heard a surprisingly calm voice say, “Can I help you?”

 His voice surprised me; it had a tone of confidence and intelligence. A voice like I had heard from CEO’s and political leaders. I turned to face the man I had been so curious about. He was an average looking man, except for the wheelchair of course. He had light stubble growing on his pale face. He looked to be in his upper 40s. He had a medium built, not chubby, not incredibly fit either. His hairline was beginning to recede, and he had what hair he had on the sides brushed to the middle to fill in his gap. He was wearing a dark grey t-shirt with blue jeans and tennis shoes. His eyes looked experienced, wise, and knowledgeable. Then he spoke again.

 “I remember when you could leave your car doors unlocked and nobody would try to get into your car. You wouldn’t give a second thought to leaving your windows down. You just thought people were decent enough to respect other people’s belongings. I guess I’m at fault here; I’m the one who left my windows down. I should have known that you can’t do that today. Things have changed you know.

 People use to have a sense of pride in what they did. These days it’s all about making it to the top anyway you can; it doesn’t matter who you have to run over to get there. That’s why you’re here isn’t it? They sent you. I knew they’d do just about anything, but this…this is pretty low. Sneaking into my car? Really? I’m trying to do something good for this town. It seems like all anybody does here anymore is gamble at your boss’s casino. That’s why I’m doing this. You’re boss is the whole reason why four years ago I made it my mission to shut down that casino and get this town to the way it used to be. I don’t care if the whole police force is on your side. I will shut down that place. It’s ruining people’s lives, and you’re a part of it. How do you sleep at night?”

“The P.O.W.”

by T. Driggers

 She looked to her right and nervously said, “It’s been so long; I wonder if he’s changed.”

Her husband of fifty years turned back and said, “I’m sure he’s still the David we raised.”

“I hope so,” she replied. “I still remember the day he left. We were okay with his joining the army. It paid for college, but when the news came that he actually had to go, I was a wreck. He was so young, only 21. My son, the boy I raised, was now going to be overseas in some foreign land risking his life as a soldier. Even though he wrote and called every day, I still worried about him constantly. I just knew that something would happen to him. And then one day, it did. The phone rang that cold December day; I went to answer and what the man on the other line said is burned into my memory to this day, ‘Ma’am, I’m sorry to inform you of this, but your son is missing.’ He said it was just a routine transportation mission when they were ambushed. Some were killed; others were taken prisoners of war. I had so many questions for the man on the other line, but all I could do was weep. I was utterly and completely devastated. My son was seemingly gone forever.”

“But he’s not,” her husband turned to her and said. “He somehow survived; only by the grace of God is he here today.”

Suddenly something caught the mother’s eye. A tall, well-built man was walking toward them with a slight limp. His hair was cut short, and he was wearing his army green. She knew it was him from the second she laid eyes on him. Her son was finally with her again.