LITERATURE

READINGS FOR ENGLISH 9A

Short fiction, essays and reviews

Ms. Mauer

This packet belongs to: _____

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ESSAY #1: Opportunity from Misfortune (Personal Narrative)
By: Joseph (2013)

Directions: Read the student essay below carefully. With a pen or pencil, underline or circle key words/phrases that stand out to you. In the right-hand column discuss why the various words/phrases stood out to you (what they made you think or feel, etc.). When you are done, make a few notes. What do we learn about this applicant?

As my seventh-grade classmates ventured into the life of Harry Potter, I was left with the *Three Little Pigs.* I learned to read English when I was 12. For the second time. A car accident knocked me off the football and baseball fields into a coma and a four-month hospital stay. I lost my native language to the disorder of aphasia. I survived a severe traumatic brain injury. I cannot, however, stand and boldly wish it had not happened, for the experience, as awful as it may sound, was essential to my persona today. Will, dedication, persistence, all of which instantly became a daily struggle, are now a second sense to me; a gift that would have lain silent without the opportunity from misfortune. Therefore, this is no sob story. It is a story of personal triumph over adversity. Life was daunting. For the first five nights after the car accident, I had to wrestle with death. The pressure in my brain was astronomical. It was as though Mars was ripping me open. I was given enough morphine to bring down a horse. As the coma began to wane and I started to regain consciousness, but my feeble voice was only able to say "hi." The entire week, the only word I could manage was a faint "hi." My parents and doctors were amazed at the accomplishment: a simple "hi." Soon, I was moved to the National Rehabilitation Hospital to begin intense therapy, physical, occupational, and speech. I thought physical and occupational therapy would be easy. It was far from it. Even walking for a mere two minutes required a half hour nap. As the days progressed though, my memory of the recent physical successes pushed me to trudge on through a tunnel of misery. At last, the light at the end was visible. Speech, English to be specific, was not as easy to relearn. I remember the first day of hospital school; I could not even spell the word "dog." So, a paragraph, let alone an essay, was	

definitely out of the question. I also lost the ability to read. We memorize words and our brain organizes them as we read to comprehend the meaning. My memorized words were messed up, so reading for me, was a guessing game. I could not differentiate between the words “it,” “was,” “there,” “someone,” etc.. I could sound longer words out, but the simple words were confusing. Frustration was eminent, but its force was not strong enough to take down my persistent will. The National Rehabilitation Hospital solved the mystery of the full extent of my mental injury, but I left with a devastating order: any sport or activity with the involvement of contact was prohibited, including my beloved sports, baseball and football. Forever.

Then, just like a virus-filled computer is sent to Microsoft to be debugged, I was sent to Kennedy Krieger Institute for three months. At the new institution, therapists helped me relearn scholarly arts. Six hours a day, five times a week, I anguished under the mental pain to relearn. I soon devised tricks to help compensate for my injury. I used my hands to give queues to speak. I learned to focus on each and every word while reading. Soon, I started to be able to speak in a full sentence, write a paragraph (with severe grammatical mistakes of course, can’t have it all), and I was able to read again. Four months after the accident, I returned to school. I got straight “A”s for the next three years and was admitted to the advanced scholar program. Lastly, after two years, I was back on the baseball and football fields with my doctor’s blessing.

My struggle still exists, but the experience added valued traits to my now rounded personality. I am respected for my work ethic in school and sports. I even won the Sportsmanship award for my efforts. The path was rough and dark, and I may have had a few moments of faithlessness along the way, but it got brighter. The talent of work and commitment sparked the light, and I will never let it burn out.

“Adversity has the effect of eliciting talents which in prosperous circumstances would have lain dormant.” Ironically, this quote by the famous Roman poet Horace turned up as an essay prompt on my AP Language Exam.

ESSAY #2: The March (Personal Narrative)
By: Carly (2014)

Directions: Read the student essay below carefully. With a pen or pencil, underline or circle key words/phrases that stand out to you. In the right-hand column discuss why the various words/phrases stood out to you (what they made you think or feel, etc.). When you are done, make a few notes. What do we learn about this applicant?

"Maryland!" It was at this point that I realized something. I was usually in the honking car. I was usually the person who would be giving weird looks to the protesters. But not today. Today I was taking a stand, participating, making a change. I was fighting for a cause that affects me. I was fighting for a cause that I am passionate about. We rounded the street corner and slowed to a stop outside of the park. I remembered coming here in middle school on family bike rides. My mom would lead us, and my siblings and I would follow. It was always serene. Birds would be chirping; you could hear the occasional engine of the cars driving by on an early Sunday morning, and the conversations of the people walking down the road into the heart of Bethesda. It was a time to relax. We brought blankets from home, ate picnics, and played on the playground equipment. However, on this cold November day, the park was completely the opposite. People were everywhere. They were loud, and looked and smelled like they hadn't showered in days. People were standing on top of gazebos; waving banners, signs and flags. Some were older and had canes, others were still very young children, some had no shoes on, and many were still in Halloween costumes from festivities the night before. I got out of the car and waved bye to my dad, and he drove away. At first, I was extremely uncomfortable. None of my friends were here yet. Of course I was early. For my family, early is on time and on time is late. I unconsciously fidgeted with my hands, checked my phone every three seconds, and didn't make eye contact with any of the other people. It felt like the longest ten minutes of my life. Finally, people I knew started to slowly trickle in. Sam had told us about the Great March for Climate Action about a month before in Environmental Club. I had looked at my friend Sarah, and through the raising of eyebrows and shrugging of shoulders we silently made a deal to do the march only if the	

other was doing it too. Now it was actually here.

The Great March for Climate Action was on its final stretch. After starting in California eight months and about three thousand miles prior to today, the marchers were only ten miles away from their goal, our nation's capital.

We were walking in the streets. Marchers were banging drums made from cardboard and plastic wrap, playing guitars and ukuleles, chanting with bullhorns. We were stopping traffic, and getting honked at by frustrated and enraged Bethesda drivers.

Once we got to the Maryland- DC border we stopped suddenly in the middle of a busy city sidewalk.

"California! Arizona! New Mexico!" The thirty-five full time marchers began chanting all the states that they had marched through, and were soon joined by many people in the crowd. They were remembering the journey that had led up to these final moments.

"Colorado! Nebraska! Iowa!" They were recognizing the sacrifices the marchers had made for their mission. Some people dropped out of college or quit their jobs.

"Illinois! Indiana! Ohio! Pennsylvania!" All of this in order to communicate to the government, citizens of the US, and the world that we need to do something about the climate crisis.

"Maryland!" One of the marchers passed me a bullhorn.

"Washington DC!" It was almost as if she had passed me my voice.

"Show me what democracy looks like!" I yelled to the group, smiling.

Many months after the march, I won the teacher nominated Chatham College Rachel Carson Book Award for my excellence in Science and English and concern for the environment. This march helped me see what I can achieve and see how I can make a difference, no matter how small the change.

ESSAY #3: Learning from Failure (Personal Narrative)
By: Natalie (2014)

Directions: Read the student essay below carefully. With a pen or pencil, underline or circle key words/phrases that stand out to you. In the right-hand column discuss why the various words/phrases stood out to you (what they made you think or feel, etc.). When you are done, make a few notes. What do we learn about this applicant?

For as long as I can remember, putting on a pair of dance shoes was natural. Walking into the gym to try out for my school's highly competitive Poms dance team, I was determined to take my lessons from the past two years and correctly execute them. This was year three of trying out in front of the same judges, teammates and coach. Junior year, I decided to dedicate myself even more to dance. Although I missed out on countless social activities, I promised myself once I made Poms, it would all be worth it. Smiling and sashaying into the gym, I felt confident. Jumping and spinning while correctly executing the choreography only made me feel more at ease about my placement on the team. Leaving the gymnasium with a genuine smile, I was thrilled when my peers asked me how my routine went. As the night wore on, and I waited for the callback, I tried to stay positive. But as the hours passed, I stopped looking at my phone and laid motionless next to it on my bed, hoping for the call. Unlike freshman year, this time there would be no communication if we didn't make the team. The coach told us she would begin to call the accepted girls at eight pm, so the only picture I could imagine was hearing my phone ring and being thrilled with my newest accomplishment. By nine I came to the realization that I was not going to receive the news I had been hoping for. No email, no phone call,	

silence.

Having experienced rejection multiple times with Poms tryouts, I now take on the responsibility to assist my friends when they too are reeling from defeat. My defeats forced me to look at what really mattered. I have come to believe success is based on your own standards and no one else's. I am well aware I will face rejection in the future, yet now I know how to handle it with acceptance and grace. According to Winston Churchill, "success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts." Over time my goals have shifted from vying to be a member of the dance team to dancing simply because it makes me happy.

This experience has given me the courage to propel forward and pursue what I desire even if at times it may appear unattainable. I am resilient. Following my third tryout, I continued to take dance lessons weekly, practicing the same steps and technique that have experienced highs and lows. Not being on the Poms team, has opened new doors that I would not have experienced otherwise. Due to the hours of dance classes, I now know how to balance extracurricular activities with academics. This is a skill I will carry with me throughout my life. Although people ask me why I still dance, my commitment to the activity is stronger than any hurdle. The journey of my tryout was more important than a placement on the team.

A year later, hair pulled back in a gelled ponytail wearing a black leotard, grey jazz pants, and worn dance shoes, I dance. I smile while executing triple pirouettes, so even the last row can see my confidence.

ESSAY #4: A Legacy (Personal Narrative)
By: Sheridan (2016)

Directions: Read the student essay below carefully. With a pen or pencil, underline or circle key words/phrases that stand out to you. In the right-hand column discuss why the various words/phrases stood out to you (what they made you think or feel, etc.). When you are done, make a few notes. What do we learn about this applicant?

I have a dusty bookshelf in my bedroom that houses the neatly arranged medals and trophies I have collected over the past ten years. I have awards dating back to early 2006. But the O'Kelly legacy extends far before me. My mother was a diver at UVA and she became my inspiration and one of my first coaches. She put me on the Glenwood dive team when I was a shrimpy seven-year-old, and since then I have competed in nine divisional meets, eight all-star meets, and broken four pool records. But it wasn't until the age of 15 that I discovered my favorite aspect of diving: coaching. When I turned 15, I landed my first job as an assistant coach. I looked forward to putting my skills to use and sharing my knowledge. I found particular interest in a five-year-old named Cady Emerson. She was one of the youngest kids on the team, and on her first day, she showed up in a green bathing suit with a glittery purple tiger stenciled on the front. She was about half the size of everyone else. She wasn't one of the kids that caught my head coach's eye, but I noticed she picked up things very quickly. And I have always been one to root for the underdog. I made sure that I was her primary coach and I poured a lot of extra time and energy into teaching her new things. I taught her a front dive, back dive, front flip, and an inward dive. It was a long, bumpy road, but to this day she is at the top of her age category and doing extremely well. In her last meet of the season as an eight-and-under, she absolutely rose to the occasion. I was so excited to see how she did that I peeked at the scoresheets. I knew she had won	

before she did. I wanted to tell her, but I didn't want to take anything away from her big moment. At halftime, after she stepped up to accept her blue ribbon, I jumped up, sprinted over, and gave her a huge hug.

Diving doesn't come as easily to everyone as it did to Cady. Every day I work with kids where it is much more difficult to encourage them to try new things. Diving is all about mental toughness, and sometimes children are scared to take the next step. I, for one, can relate. I was terrified to learn a 1 ½ somersault dive when I was younger. Learning new things can be terrifying, and it takes someone with the right mindset, like my mom, to instill confidence in a young diver.

I was working with a nine-year-old named Madeline for the entire summer on just one skill—a back dive. New divers tend to have difficulty learning a back dive because it is a blind dive. Madeline could easily do a back dive with me spotting her, but when it came to doing one by herself, she was nervous. My patience and support as her coach helped her finally pull off her back dive at the last meet of the season.

Bill Bowerman, a former USA Olympic track and field coach, once said, "Victory is in having done your best. If you've done your best, you've won." Even though Madeline didn't win an award, her performance in her last meet of the season was just as big of an accomplishment as Cady taking home the blue ribbon. She had overcome her fear.

Coaching is all about selflessness. I have learned to take my experiences and expertise and pass my knowledge on to young divers. I put my diving on the back burner to focus on coaching. By season's end, I was able to do for others what my mother did for me. Legacy isn't about personal medals. Often it is about paying it forward.

ESSAY #5: Star-Crossed Lovers (College Essay Supplemental Response)

Prompt:
Johns Hopkins University was founded in 1876 on a spirit of exploration and discovery. As a result, students can pursue a multi-dimensional undergraduate experience both in and outside of the classroom. Given the opportunities at Hopkins, please discuss your current interests—academic or extracurricular pursuits, personal passions, summer experiences, etc.—and how you will build upon them here.

Star-Crossed Lovers

UrbanDictionary defines a love triangle as a situation "When two people both love a third, and that third loves them both. He/she may be conflicted as to whom he/she wants, and generally nobody emerges happy." Typically, love triangles arise within cliche drama shows where the star quarterback and the bad-boy fight over the girl who can't make up her mind. But in my case, it's two subjects battling over my undying love and affection.

The love story of science and me began one stormy night, when the browse selection on Netflix was my only companion. After my indecisiveness eroded, I finally decided to start a new TV series, one about a group of successful surgeons dealing with their everyday lives while saving other people's lives: Grey's Anatomy. The infatuation developed instantly; from the beginning, there was chemistry. Our bond grew stronger with each and every passing season and by the ninth one, I knew it was true love. I dedicated a piece of my heart, and more importantly, my future, to science and medicine that day. So I signed up for AP Biology, AP Chemistry, and anatomy, joined the National Science Honors Society and the National Medical Honors Society, created the Pre-Med Club as its

acting president, and spent my Summer at Sibley's Memorial Hospital-Johns Hopkins Medicine in the ER and post-operational ward; I mapped out our entire future together. It seemed like I had finally found my happily ever after until another caught my brain: Math.

Math and I had a very different romance. We started off rocky, in AB Calculus junior year. We didn't get along at all and struggled to maintain civil, at times I really I hated it. But everything changed May 7th, 2014 when I took the AP exam. It was fireworks, sparks flying, a function finding its inverse, a derivative finding its integral. The exam showed me a possibility of something real between Math and me, and the AP Score results in July confirmed that assumption. I decided not to terminate the relationship after all, to pursue it and see where it may lead. So I joined the math team, signed up for BC Calculus, and decided to intern for my calculus teacher for AB-Calculus my senior year. I'm still exploring this affair, but right now the connection feels strong.

UrbanDictionary was right; generally, nobody emerges from love triangles happy. Constricted by core curriculums and the pressure to choose just one, all three parties were bound to end up unhappy. The complex relationship I hold with both pieces of my heart and future continuously pull me in both directions; I just can't seem to chose. This love triangle belongs somewhere where it will be nurtured, accepted, and even encouraged. In the right hands, specifically, in Hopkins helping hands, with its lack of a core curriculum, individualized study, Woodrow Wilson research opportunity, and diverse student organizations, this love triangle seemingly destined for disaster will soon be transformed into the ultimate triple threat.

Essay #6: A True Friend (2016)

People were murmuring to her in Romanian as I walked up the stairs. She hugged me but I knew she didn't recognize me at first. Then, I saw her eyes start to water.

"Ana Maria?"

"Yes," I replied. She embraced me in a hug, and quickly took my hand and showed me to a room surrounded by red couches. Then I recognized her: she was the red-headed lady from the video. I was finally standing in the room I had been in 13 years ago…

Every year, on the anniversary of my family becoming a family, I watch the video of my four-year-old self in a room with a red-haired lady, surrounded by red couches and toys covering the grey carpet and sit amazed that I spoke a different language at one point in my life---one I no longer speak.

In 2003 all international adoptions from Romania closed. Only because of the help of Azota, our adoption was one of the last ones to sneak through. So, my sister and I did not meet our parents until we were four; we were in an orphanage as infants and toddlers, before being placed in a foster home. Now, every May 18th, we watch the video of us leaving Romania. Pigtails swinging from side to side, we walk hand in hand. We pass two women sitting outside of the flower shop where we pick out a bouquet of lilies for our new mother. We wave and say, "Goodbye, we are going to America," in thick accented voices. Our faces glow and our eyes sparkle as we walk down the pebble-lined street, step by step, getting closer and closer to the place we will finally call home.

I always knew I wanted to give back, so during the summer before my senior year, my mother and I planned a service trip. When I returned, Azota told me that I had the same smile and cheeks. She kept pinching them and I felt like the same four year-old. We took several pictures together, and I noticed that she always held both of my hands in the photos. She must have sensed my curiosity. She explained, "a true friend grabs your hand, and touches your heart."

It was a busy trip. We sorted donations and made care packages for the kids. We visited several orphanages. I played soccer with the kids and showed them tricks. I let the little girls braid my hair, pull on the roots, and tie it in knots. It hurt and I wanted to tell them to stop, but I refrained from saying anything when I caught a glimpse of one girl infatuated by my long black hair. These children yearned for attention. As we drove up to each orphanage, kids ran with our car. Not accustomed to visitors, they seemed to question why we were there, but when we smiled and waved, their faces lit up and they grinned from ear to ear, and within minutes, we were best friends. One day, I met a boy my age who did not get adopted before the law changed. Watching him greet me with a smile, despite his daily challenges, makes me appreciate even more what Azota made possible for me.

By the end of the trip I didn't want to leave. In fact, since my return, my friends and I have discussed how incomplete we feel. We are not needed here like we were in Romania. I am now working at my high school to gather donations to send to an orphanage in Romania. And, recently, I volunteered at a dinner for foster parents. That night, I stood hand and hand with a child, her little fingers barely fit into my palm. As she clung onto my hand, I thought about what Azota said to me, " A true friend grabs your hand, and touches your heart."

Essay #7 The Master of Windows (Personal Narrative)
By: Walker Butterfield (2015)

If there's one word to describe Charles, it's American. Every day, he dresses up in red, white and blue from head to toe. From his star-spangled socks to his striped bandana, his whole image just shouts "patriot". Even his bike is styled after the American flag, a custom built Specialized Hardrock in red, white and blue. It's always a pleasure to fix his bike up for him when he comes into the shop where I work, Big Wheel Bikes.

He's a strong-looking guy. This isn't just true of his build, but his character as well. He's a dark-skinned man about six feet tall, with a weathered complexion and old eyes. He moves with absolute confidence, like a man who knows exactly what his place is in the world. He looks like he could be in his fifties, but he's in great shape and very well groomed. He has a firm handshake, and always looks me straight in the eye when he talks to me. When I talk back, he gives me his full attention rather than thinking about the last movie he watched or checking his phone. In some ways, he almost represents yesteryear's man of integrity: down to earth, respectful and ever humble.

So when Charles showed up at Big Wheel for some menial maintenance on his bike last September, I was more than happy to help. All he needed was a routine tube change, and it only took a few minutes. But afterward, he patted me on the back and said, "Good job as always, man", and tipped me ten dollars. At first I tried the obligatory refusal, but I knew he'd make me keep it. He tips me ten dollars every time he comes in, no matter how small the fee is for the repair. He always tells me that I earned it because I'm good at my job. He says the world needs more people who are good at and work hard at their jobs.

Charles is extremely good at his job. Dubbed the Master of Windows, he washes windows in and around the Bethesda area. He's a one-man team, without a boss and without subordinates. In fact, he's so good at his job that hundreds of businesses in the area hire him to wash windows instead of competing professional companies. And just as importantly, he loves his job. I see him in Bethesda all the time, listening to music and dancing as he washes windows. They say the man who loves his job never works a day in his life. Sure enough, The Master of Windows has none of the telltale traits of many working class men. He's always full of energy and he's easily one of the most optimistic people I know.

Which is why I was shocked to see him shivering violently as he tried to fall asleep on a park bench later that September.

It was a particularly cold night that month, especially because the weather had been strangely warm the previous week. I was walking home from a friend's house when I saw the dark figure of a man in a hoodie huddled up on a bench. At first I didn't think anything of it, but something caught my eye. Upon second glance, I noticed the unmistakable shape of a Specialized Hardrock leaned against the bench. A few steps closer, and I knew it was Charles. The Master of Windows, sleeping in the cold on a park bench. I was struck by disbelief and confusion. To see such a role model in such a dark place is disenchanting. At first, it seemed contradictory. How could this man be so satisfied with life, despite being homeless? How could a man whose country has failed him so terribly wear American flags every single day?

I didn't know the answers to these questions, but I knew I had to do something. I checked what I had in my wallet, which was exactly seven dollars. I tucked it in the pocket of the jacket I was wearing, and walked over to him. I didn't expect him to hear me, but without turning his head he casually extended a protective arm to hold onto his bike when I got close. "Hey man," I started, "It's just Walker from the bike shop". He seemed a little confused, so I continued. "You look a little cold, so I was just gonna give you my jacket for the night". He loosened up a little, "Ah hey thanks man," he said, "that's really cool of you, brother."

I didn't see him in the shop for a few weeks after that, but I thought about him every day. It didn't seem fair that someone could be so happy with so little while the rest of us were whining about not having enough. It didn't seem fair that in the twenty-first century a working man was out in the cold. It just wasn't fair that the Master of Windows, who is so good at his job and so proud of it, was struggling for to achieve comfort that I take for granted.

So I was mad. I was mad at all of the people who saw him there and didn't do a thing. I imagined dozens of people walking by and not helping him because he was "just another homeless guy" despite how easy it would have been. I was mad at myself for not doing more. But most of all, I was mad at Bethesda for not making me want to do more. Why was it so abnormally kind to lend a cold man a jacket? I didn't think much of it; I have more than enough cold-weather clothing. When I told them, my friends praised me for being nice. But at the time it just seemed like a very basic, humanly thing to do. I then realized that I easily could have gone home, gotten a hundred dollars and a warmer jacket, and given it to him without really feeling any negative repercussions. I smiled at the thought, thinking about how happy that would make him. So I decided to do it.

My opportunity came when I was walking home from work one afternoon and I saw him washing the windows of a store on my route home. I sped up my pace so I could make it before he left, bringing back a hundred dollars and a North Face coat that had been sitting untouched in the basement for years. He was still there when I got back, so I approached him saying, "Yo Master of Windows, I thought you could use a little help from a friend" and handed him the wad of cash and the coat. At first he froze, arms mid-arc upon the window, just looking in disbelief. I could tell he hadn't been offered a hundred dollars and a North Face in a while. Then his arms dropped, and his eyes got misty. "Brother," he said, "this is beautiful."

I felt a huge pride like I've never felt before welling up from deep inside my chest. It wasn't normal pride, which usually feeds the ego. It was the kind of pride that feeds the self-esteem. The ego is a balloon, and is very easy to inflate. Many people who look to feed their ego do so because it doesn't take much. It's a static object, filled with nothing but air and wrapped in a thin sheet of fragile plastic. The ego isn't hard to enlarge, but it doesn't mean much to enlarge it. Self-esteem, on the other hand, is a fire. It's can only be fed with real fuel, and it needs to be fed often. The fire has to earn its own life by creating useful things like light and heat while a balloon has nothing comparable to a life at all. A balloon can stay inflated for days and do no good for anyone; a fire that can make it through the night can do a lot of good for the cold people around it. In this moment, I felt my fire being fed. I could see how much joy I was bringing the Master of Windows, and I couldn't believe how much joy that was bringing me. He took the wad of cash, looked at it, weighed it in his hand and really felt it. Then he gave it back.

I was confused to say the least when he handed back he cash and the coat. “Thank you, brother. That’s a beautiful thing to do. I won’t forget this. But I can’t take it because I’m a working man. If I start taking handouts, I’ll be a begging man. And that’s a road that I will never go down, no matter how rocky this one gets.” I felt absolutely ridiculous as I walked home with rosy cheeks.

And for a while I just didn’t understand why he refused. I didn’t really know what he meant about the distinction between a working man and a begging man. I understood what he said, but I didn’t believe that such a small bonus would really be a big deal. But after seeing him around town a few more times, I started to get it. I started to understand the window washing, the bike, and the American flag outfit. It was all part of the same picture, which I was just beginning to see the whole of. He washes windows for a living, and he’s not just good at it. He’s the Master of Windows. His job is to cleanse the world’s view of itself.

The windows that people work and live behind are their lenses to the outside world. As people look through this lens, the light is warped and bent through imperfections in the glass. Dirt, scratches, bends and cracks all skew people’s perceptions of the world in which they live. To view the world through a dirty lens is to not really view the world at all, but to view a false interpretation of how the world is. As someone who has seen the worst of our own world, he wants the worst to be recognized. He wants people to see the world for how it is. And he dons the American flag every day because despite everything, he loves his country and he thinks that it’s something worth looking at.

And it is worth looking at. The Master of Windows is worth looking at. As he cleans the lenses of perception, he knows that people won’t understand. Kids will call him weird and adults will call him crazy, dressing up like that every day. But it’s not those people who matter to him; it’s the people who do understand that matter to him. People like me, who saw him for what he is and struggled with the stark image but tried to see it anyway, are the people he’s trying to captivate. He wants people to see things for how they are regardless of how hard they are to see, because the truth is always worth seeing. We have to realize the truth in order to improve society, and we absolutely must recognize what is wrong if we’re to improve it. Which is why the Master of Windows preaches truth through his actions.

One Sunday last April, I opened at the bike shop. By the front door was a folded up jacket. It was the jacket I gave to the Master of Windows on that cold September night. On the inside pocket was a note of beautiful cursive that read,

Thank you for this, brother. This kept me warm through many cold nights, and I hope it does the same for you.

-C

Inside the pocket, there was also a ten-dollar bill. I still have it.

#8: I am Nothing (Fictional Narrative)
By: Joey Lambert (2016)

It was 9:36 PM when Lester wiped the sweat, blood, and spit off his pant legs, and continued on to the Popeyes Chicken on 40th Street. Or rather, it was 6:30 when Lester closed the front door of his apartment on the third floor, double locked the locks, and headed downstairs out onto the street. It wasn't the most luxurious place, or the most sanitary, or the most not crumbling-to-the-ground-by-the-very-second-inhabited-with-more-rats-and-roaches- than-people-257-burglaries-and counting place. But it was home, and it was cheap, and Lester liked cheap. He liked it a lot, more than luxury or sanitation or safety, or any other less-than-necessities in life. He didn't make a whole lot of dough from manning the cash register at Walgreen's, so he tried to make the little that he earned count. And that's just what he was about to do, by going to Popeyes and getting the $5 Bonafide Big Box that he loved so much. It was the silver lining of his week in fact, the saliva coaxing, greasy, delicious smell of the slightly suspicious "where did this meat come from" grocery store worker budget chicken wings. He would buy his dinner, and then sit in front of his low definition, boxy, fuzz screen of a T.V., and catch the reruns of Magnum P.I. every Friday. He loved the show almost as much as his Friday chicken wings. He hoped one day, he would visit Hawaii, where they shot the show. He had it all planned out, he would save his money everyday, living in this garbage bin of a home, watching his favorite show on his goodwill television, and eating Popeyes chicken wings, and then eventually, he would have enough Walgreen's money saved up to go on a long, well deserved vacation. The little rational voice kept reminding him that no, this would never happen, Lester would die alone at 60 from a heart attack in the sad little containment area of dirty laundry and takeout boxes that he called home, without ever fulfilling any of his dreams. Lester didn't like his rational thoughts very much.

Lester then realized he had been standing as still as a statue the whole time that he had been thinking all of this, and that a couple people were staring at him mumble to himself about chicken wings. "Got to stop doing that, Lester" he said to himself. "Also gotta stop talking to yourself, Lester", he thought to himself. Lester put his ear wax coated earbuds in his ears, shoved his hands in his pockets like an angstful teenager, and started his journey with a moderate hunch in his posture. He had his vintage 1980's Discman equipped on his belt, with a scratched up Miles Davis CD playing to accompany his lonely walk downtown. He made absolute certainty that his feet were moving up and down one at a time in the general direction of his destination before he started thinking again. He thought happy thoughts. He had a phrase he would utter to himself whenever he

needed to reassure himself that life was not terrible. He would say, in slightly jumbled, stuttery speech, “Everything is alright Lester, everything is okay.” Lester would repeat this over and over again under his breath until he had said it so many times that it was a reflex, not a choice. It was automatic, so automatic that half the time Lester wasn’t even sure if everything was alright, or if he was okay, but he would rather be deceiving himself with comforting lies than have to face the somewhat unsavory truth. “Everything is alright, everything is oka-.” He stopped dead in his tracks like a deer in headlights who had just remembered it forgot to turn the stove off. He had already walked a good mile or so, and wasn’t that far from Popeyes, but he wasn’t worried about chicken when he saw it.

It was a little pigeon. Not an entirely uncommon sight for someone who lives in New York, but Lester was fixated on it. It was stumbling around the street, flapping around in circles like a drunkard on rollerskates. Everyone else on the street avoided it, some laughing too, as if it was a quaint little detail they would tell their families when they asked about their day at work and their commute home. Lester looked closer and saw that its wing was tarred and feathered, literally, and the poor little bird couldn’t lift it to fly away. All its other bird friends were soaring away, looking happy as a pigeon could look, breathing in the smog and fumes of the New York City air, and scanning the ground for peanuts or french fries. Not this little guy though, this little guy was stuck. He was chained down to the Earth and couldn’t pull himself up. Lester took interest in his new feathered friend. He identified with him. He realized he was the bird. Lester was the bird. Lester started repeating this over and over again in his head, staring at the crippled fowl. He stopped the music, dropping down and crawling on all fours, lowering himself until he was flat on his belly on the concrete a homeless man probably peed on yesterday, snaking towards the pigeon. He laid still observing it, it's twitching motions and its frantic movements, hoping somehow he would be freed and would be able to fly again. Lester thought for a moment, and raised his gaze towards the people around him. A few were crowding now, waiting to see what the crazy man would do next. He started to feel uneasy, like he had suddenly turned claustrophobic and was in an elevator standing next to an elephant, except in this elevator there were no walls, only people, and they were coiling around him, fiery serpents of curiosity and amusement choking him and burning his flesh. A few took their phones out and took pictures. One said, “Wait till my wife hears about this,” chuckling. Lester was the pitied conversation piece. The thought of someone mentioning his name at a dinner table and the kids laughing while eating their meals almost gave him some fleeting warmth inside. But the opposite of that deadened him more that anything. The fact that his life was filled with such sheer isolation that the highlight of his day was being laughed at, not with, was a horrible thought. He was nothing, Lester was nothing. Already having made a scene, Lester informed

the gathering crowd of his recent discovery. "**I AM NOTHING**," he screeched with veins popping out of his neck and flem flying from his salivary glands, and in that moment there was quiet. With his palms and knees on the concrete, he repeated the statement, whispering, "I am nothing," his cry of defiance turning into a whimpering sigh of defeat. Lester crawled into fetal position on the street, leaving his earbuds and CD player scattered on the street, shaking and drooling while muttering under his breath, "Nothing, nothing, nothing," hitting his head on the cold gravel as everyone around him stared in astonishment. A man in a yellow jacket and brown jeans cautiously walked over and asked, "Hey man, you good?", his hand outstretched. Lester wanted to look up at the man, take his hand, and to respond to him, saying, "No sir, I'm not good. My life consists of nothing but hot wings and tv reruns, and I'm currently laying on the street yelling at passers bys because of an injured bird I saw, please call an ambulance immediately, for I am bleeding profusely from the head," but it came out a little more like "Ahhnuhhahuhhuhahhooohoouuuh," as he continued his regiment again and again.

And it continued for sometime, until he looked up at the sky and the moon had taken place of the sun. The man in brown jeans was long gone, and the bird had hopped away. Lester laid there for a moment in his own bodily fluids, taking in his surroundings, and evaluating how his day had gone. He thought about the people on the sidewalk, and the bird, and the man in the brown jeans. He thought about what he said and he thought about it hard, perhaps harder than he could ever recall thinking in his whole life. Was he really worth nothing? Was all that Lester would amount to in life a spectacle for busy new yorkers to casually commentate at and then get on with their days? He was nearing 37 and he was right where he was at during 36, 35, 34, and most other years he could recall. There wouldn't be any friends over to celebrate his birthday, there wouldn't be any cake, or any fun decorations or surprise gifts. It would be just him, Lester, watching Magnum P.I. on his dirty coffee stained couch feeling sorry for himself, and wishing he would of followed his dreams and became a NASA engineer or a deep sea diver or a zookeeper. Wishing that he wasn't shot into the world with a brain defect and a mental disease and a stutter and a shake and the nickname Spaz permanently tattooed on him with big, flashing, anxious letters. Lester thought about all that he wanted to accomplish in life, all that he had, and all that he would, and what he thought about didn't make him feel good. But he was also wet, bleeding, and hungry, and while he couldn't fix his crippling anxiety or chronic depression with a $5 Bonafide Box, a hot shower and a fresh change of clothes, it would certainly make it more manageable. So Lester stuffed all his little worries in a crowded closet in his head, slammed the door, put his earbuds back in, and continued onwards, to Popeye's Chicken.

#9: “Soul of a Scrapyard” The Hidden Gem of New York (New York Times Op-Doc Film Review)

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Right across from the Mets baseball field, NY, lies a hidden neighborhood called Willets Point. To the average human, Willets point, as many people say is rundown, with trash everywhere, it would seem like a dump, you would think that it would be nothing but this. But at Willets Point, there are lots of people who find a way to work and make a living in such a place. Sam Sambucci, the owner of the scrapyard talks in depth about how it is like to live there. Sambucci talks about how people need to look past the trash and really see the true beauty of this community. Most of the shops are automobile shops, where people go to get their cars fixed or any other automobile service you could want. Sambucci says that at the “Iron Triangle” as most call it, is a very diverse community with many benefits and should be admired by the city. The film starts with very long shots and high angle shots of the actual yard. We can see rundown cars, trash, and lined up shops that lead to the mets stadium. The lighting is somewhat gloomy, with clouds dangling in the sky, but the sun is pushing them away and peeking out just rising over the horizon. After some visuals of the yard, we get to see and hear about what it is like to work there all year. We see shots of the workers, of customers, while getting input and insight from Sambucci about how things work around there. The problem is, is that the city of New York, in 2008, approved a plan to develop Willets Point. They have not disclosed when they plan to end the project, which then means that the workers there do not know for how long they can stay in the neighborhood. We can see how the situation of the neighborhood escalates and gets more serious, as “The neighborhood [vanished] as quickly as [they] filmed.”

One major theme of this film is that sometimes you have to look past the appearance of something to really appreciate its true value. The film is able to address this theme very well, as Sambucci points out that “ Willets point isn’t just a pothole in the middle of queens… It’s a hidden gem.” Throughout out the film, this theme is portrayed, from shots of trash, and the workers, to shots of construction workers for the city demolishing certain structures in the area. The main subject of this film is about these workers find away to make it through all the madness, trash and so forth. The subject does change eventually to how the workers will be able to survive when the city comes in and destroys Willets Point, when we hear about the city’s plan

for the neighborhood and we see construction workers destroying parts of the yard.

This film is full of technical elements, which is one of the main reasons I love this film There is a lot of long shots of Willets point, allowing the viewer to really visualise and understand Willets Point. There are also a lot slo-mo shots of the landscape and workers welding, tweaking and fixing other things. Along with these slo-mo shots, there are voice overs of Sambucci explaining the situations, this makes the viewer feel like they are along in the scrapyard with Sambucci, experiencing all the workers struggles, and day to day chores. The filmmaker puts in text to explain what is going to happen to the city, and during those shots, the filmmaker uses low-angle shots, pointed up at the sky, and films airplanes flying across the sky, this creates a beautiful shot of the planes and sky. There is also a lot of visual imagery, such as the shots of tires, and the sky, showing us how the community looks like nothing but is actually very important, hence the low-angle shot making the tires look bigger. All of these choices makes the film more powerful and enjoyable to watch. All if the film techniques also pulls the viewer into the film and makes the experience more personal. The Sound and music in this film is interesting, there is not much rhythmically going on in terms of music, but there is background noise, that is mainly piano, strings and ambient noises, that is slow, to mimic something going in slow motion, as often in the film the filmmaker uses shots of the workers in slow motion. There is also a lot of diegetic sound, of metal, sparks flying, cars rolling, metal hitting cars to make us feel we are in the scrapyard, and allows us to connect with the workers.

I would highly recommend this film. I think it is very powerful. The shots are beautiful and the concept is very interesting. The story that the filmmaker found at Willets Point is greatly inspiring. All the sounds, angles, and film techniques as well as Sambucci narrative allows the viewer to make an emotional connection with the characters and Willets Point. After watching this film you will find yourself feeling as if you've been transported into the heart of New York in Queens. I think as well the message that the film holds can affect us all in a very special and personal way.

Soul of a Scrapyard. Dir. Andrew David Watson. NY Times Op-Docs. 2017. Film

#10: Two Kinds (Personal Narrative)
By: Amy Tan (1989)

My mother believed you could be anything you wanted to be in America. You could open a restaurant. You could work for the government and get good retirement. You could buy a house with almost no money down. You could become rich. You could become instantly famous.

"Of course, you can be a prodigy, too," my mother told me when I was nine. "You can be best anything. What does Auntie Lindo know? Her daughter, she is only best tricky."

America was where all my mother's hopes lay. She had come to San Francisco in 1949 after losing everything in China: her mother and father, her home, her first husband, and two daughters, twin baby girls. But she never looked back with regret. Things could get better in so many ways.

We didn't immediately pick the right kind of prodigy. At first my mother thought I could be a Chinese Shirley Temple. We'd watch Shirley's old movies on TV as though they were training films. My mother would poke my arm and say, "Ni kan. You watch." And I would see Shirley tapping her feet, or singing a sailor song, or pursing her lips into a very round O while saying "Oh, my goodness."

“Ni kan," my mother said, as Shirley's eyes flooded with tears. "You already know how. Don't need talent for crying!"

Soon after my mother got this idea about Shirley Temple, she took me to the beauty training school in the Mission District and put me in the hands of a student who could barely hold the scissors without shaking. Instead of getting big fat curls, I emerged with an uneven mass of crinkly black fuzz. My mother dragged me off to the bathroom and tried to wet down my hair.

"You look like a Negro Chinese," she lamented, as if I had done this on purpose. The instructor of the beauty training school had to lop off these soggy clumps to make my hair even again. "Peter Pan is very popular these days" the instructor assured my mother. I now had bad hair the length of a boy's, with curly bangs that hung at a slant two inches above my eyebrows. I liked the haircut, and it made me actually look forward to my future fame.

In fact, in the beginning I was just as excited as my mother, maybe even more so. I pictured this prodigy part of me as many different images, and I tried each one on for size. I was a dainty ballerina girl standing by the curtain, waiting to hear the music that would send me floating on my tiptoes. I was like the Christ child lifted out of the straw manger, crying with holy indignity. I was Cinderella stepping from her pumpkin carriage with sparkly cartoon music filling the air.

In all of my imaginings I was filled with a sense that I would soon become perfect: My mother and father would adore me. I would be beyond reproach. I would never feel the need to sulk, or to clamor for anything. But sometimes the prodigy in me became impatient. "If you don't hurry up and get

me out of here, I'm disappearing for good," it warned. “And then you'll always be nothing."

Every night after dinner my mother and I would sit at the Formica topped kitchen table. She would present new tests, taking her examples from stories of amazing children that she read in Ripley's Believe It or Not or Good Housekeeping, Reader's digest, or any of a dozen other magazines she kept in a pile in our bathroom. My mother got these magazines from people whose houses she cleaned. And since she cleaned many houses each week, we had a great assortment. She would look through them all, searching for stories about remarkable children.

The first night she brought out a story about a three-year-old boy who knew the capitals of all the states and even the most of the European countries. A teacher was quoted as saying that the little boy could also pronounce the names of the foreign cities correctly. "What's the capital of Finland?” my mother asked me, looking at the story.

All I knew was the capital of California, because Sacramento was the name of the street we lived on in Chinatown. "Nairobi!" I guessed, saying the most foreign word I could think of. She checked to see if that might be one way to pronounce Helsinki before showing me the answer.

The tests got harder—multiplying numbers in my head, finding the queen of hearts in a deck of cards, trying to stand on my head without using my hands, predicting the daily temperatures in Los Angeles, New York, and London. One night I had to look at a page from the Bible for three minutes and then report everything I could remember. "Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honor in abundance and...that's all I remember, Ma," I said.

And after seeing, once again, my mother's disappointed face, something inside me began to die. I hated the tests, the raised hopes and failed expectations. Before going to bed that night I looked in the mirror above the bathroom sink, and I saw only my face staring back—and understood that it would always be this ordinary face—I began to cry. Such a sad, ugly girl! I made high-pitched noises like a crazed animal, trying to scratch out the face in the mirror.

And then I saw what seemed to be the prodigy side of me—a face I had never seen before. I looked at my reflection, blinking so that I could see more clearly. The girl staring back at me was angry, powerful. She and I were the same. I had new thoughts, willful thoughts—or, rather, thoughts filled with lots of won'ts. I won't let her change me, I promised myself. I won't be what I'm not.

So now when my mother presented her tests, I performed listlessly, my head propped on one arm. I pretended to be bored. And I was. I got so bored that I started counting the bellows of the foghorns out on the bay while my mother drilled me in other areas. The sound was comforting and reminded me of the cow jumping over the moon. And the next day I played a game with myself, seeing if my mother would give up on me before eight bellows. After a while I usually counted only one bellow, maybe two at most. At last she was beginning to give up hope.

Two or three months went by without any mention of my being a prodigy. And then one day my mother was watching the Ed Sullivan Show on TV. The TV was old and the sound kept shorting out. Every time my mother got halfway up from the sofa to adjust the set, the sound would come back on and Sullivan would be talking. As soon as she sat down, Sullivan would go silent again. She got up—the TV broke into loud piano music. She sat down—silence. Up and down, back and forth, quiet and loud. It was like a stiff, embraceless dance between her and the TV set. Finally, she stood by the set with her hand on the sound dial.

She seemed entranced by the music, a frenzied little piano piece with a mesmerizing quality, which alternated between quick, playful passages and teasing, lilting ones.

"Ni kan," my mother said, calling me over with hurried hand gestures. "Look here." I could see why my mother was fascinated by the music. It was being pounded out by a little Chinese girl, about nine years old, with a Peter Pan haircut. The girl had the sauciness of a Shirley Temple. She was proudly modest, like a proper Chinese Child. And she also did a fancy sweep of a curtsy, so that the fluffy skirt of her white dress cascaded to the floor like petals of a large carnation. In spite of these warning signs, I wasn't worried. Our family had no piano and we couldn't afford to buy one, let alone reams of sheet music and piano lessons. So I could be generous in my comments when my mother badmouthed the little girl on TV.

"Play note right, but doesn't sound good!" my mother complained "No singing sound." "What are you picking on her for?" I said carelessly. "She's pretty good. Maybe she's not the best, but she's trying hard." I knew almost immediately that I would be sorry I had said that.

"Just like you," she said. "Not the best. Because you not trying." She gave a little huff as she let go of the sound dial and sat down on the sofa.

The little Chinese girl sat down also, to play an encore of "Anitra's Tanz," by Grieg. I remember the song, because later on I had to learn how to play it.

Three days after watching the Ed Sullivan Show my mother told me what my schedule would be for piano lessons and piano practice. She had talked to Mr. Chong, who lived on the first floor of our apartment building. Mr. Chong was a retired piano teacher, and my mother had traded housecleaning services for weekly lessons and a piano for me to practice on every day, two hours a day, from four until six.

When my mother told me this, I felt as though I had been sent to hell. I whined, and then kicked my foot a little when I couldn't stand it anymore.

"Why don't you like me the way I am?" I cried. "I'm not a genius! I can't play the piano. And even if I could, I wouldn't go on TV if you paid me a million dollars!"

My mother slapped me. "Who ask you to be genius?" she shouted. "Only ask you be your best. For you sake. You think I want you to be genius? Hnnh! What for! Who ask you!"

"So ungrateful," I heard her mutter in Chinese, "If she had as much talent as she has temper, she'd be famous now."

Mr. Chong, whom I secretly nicknamed Old Chong, was very strange, always tapping his fingers to the silent music of an invisible orchestra. He looked ancient in my eyes. He had lost most of the hair on the top of his head, and he wore thick glasses and had eyes that always looked tired. But he must have been younger than I thought, since he lived with his mother and was not yet married.

I met Old Lady Chong once, and that was enough. She had a peculiar smell, like a baby that had done something in its pants, and her fingers felt like a dead person's, like an old peach I once found in the back of the refrigerator: its skin just slid off the flesh when I picked it up.

I soon found out why Old Chong had retired from teaching piano. He was deaf. "Like Beethoven!" he shouted to me: “We're both listening only in our head!" And he would start to conduct his frantic silent sonatas.

Our lessons went like this. He would open the book and point to different things, explaining, their purpose: "Key! Treble! Bass! No sharps or flats! So this is C major! Listen now and play after me!"

And then he would play the C scale a few times, a simple cord, and then, as if inspired by an old unreachable itch, he would gradually add more notes and running trills and a pounding bass until the music was really something quite grand.

I would play after him, the simple scale, the simple chord, and then just play some nonsense that sounded like a rat running up and down on top of giraffe cans. Old Chong would smile and applaud and say, “Very good! But now you must learn to keep time!"

So that's how I discovered that Old Chong's eyes were too slow to keep up with the wrong notes I was playing. He went through the motions in half time. To help me keep rhythm, he stood behind me and pushed down on my right shoulder for every beat. He balanced pennies on top of my wrists so that I would keep them still as I slowly played scales and arpeggios. He had me curve my hand around an apple and keep that shape when playing chords. He marched stiffly to show me how to make each finger dance up and down, staccato, like an obedient little soldier.

He taught me all these things, and that was how I also learned I could be lazy and get away with mistakes, lots of mistakes. If I hit the wrong notes because I hadn't practiced enough, I never corrected myself, I just kept playing in rhythm. And Old Chong kept conducting his own private reverie.

So maybe I never really gave myself a fair chance. I did pick up the basics pretty quickly, and I might have become a good pianist at the young age. But I was so determined not to try, not to be anybody different, and I learned to play only the most ear-splitting preludes, the most discordant hymns.

#11: The Stunt Pilot (Personal Narrative)
By: Annie Dillard (1975)

Dave Rahm lived in Bellingham, Washington, north of Seattle. Bellingham, a harbor town, lies between the San Juan Islands in Haro Strait and the alpine North Cascade Mountains. I lived there between stints on the island. Dave Rahm was a stunt pilot, the air's own genius.

In 1975, with a newcomer's willingness to try anything once, I attended the Bellingham Air Show. The Bellingham airport was a wide clearing in a forest of tall Douglas firs; its runways suited small planes. It was June. People wearing blue or tan zipped jackets stood loosely on the concrete walkways and runways outside the coffee shop. At that latitude in June, you stayed outside because you could, even most of the night, if you could think up something to do. The sky did not darken until ten o'clock or so, and it never got very dark. Your life parted and opened in the sunlight. You tossed your dark winter routines, thought up mad projects, and improvised everything from hour to hour. Being a stunt pilot seemed the most reasonable thing in the world; you could wave your arms in the air all day and all night, and sleep next winter.

I saw from the ground a dozen stunt pilots; the air show scheduled them one after the other, for an hour of aerobatics. Each pilot took up his or her plane and performed a batch of tricks. They were precise and impressive. They flew upside down, and straightened out; they did barrel rolls, and straightened out; they drilled through dives and spins, and landed gently on a far runway.

For the end of the day, separated from all other performances of every sort, the air show director had scheduled a program titled "DAVE RAHM." The leaflet said that Rahm was a geologist who taught at Western Washington University. He had flown for King Hussein in Jordan. A tall man in the crowd told me Hussein had seen Rahm fly on a visit the king had made to the United States; he had invited him to Jordan to perform at ceremonies. Hussein was a pilot, too. "Hussein thought he was the greatest thing in the world."

Idly, paying scant attention, I saw a medium-sized, rugged man dressed in brown leather, all begoggled, climb in a black biplane's open cockpit. The plane was a Bücker

Jungman, built in the thirties. I saw a tall, dark-haired woman seize a propeller tip at the plane's nose and yank it down till the engine caught. He was off; he climbed high over the airport in his biplane, very high until he was barely visible as a mote, and then seemed to fall down the air, diving headlong, and streaming beauty in spirals behind him.

The black plane dropped spinning, and flattened out spinning the other way; it began to carve the air into forms that built wildly and musically on each other and never ended. Reluctantly, I started paying attention. The pilot, Dave Rahm, drew high above the world an inexhaustibly glorious line; it piled over our heads in loops and arabesques.

The air show announcer hushed. He had been squawking all day, and now he quit. The crowd stilled. Even the children watched dumbstruck as the slow, black biplane buzzed its way around the air. Rahm made beauty with his whole body; it was pure pattern, and you could watch it happen. The plane moved every way a line can move, and it controlled three dimensions, so the line carved massive and subtle slits in the air like sculptures. The plane looped the loop, seeming to arch its back like a gymnast; it stalled, dropped, and spun out of it climbing; it spiraled and knifed west on one side's wings and back east on another; it turned cartwheels, which must be physically impossible; it played with its own line like a cat with yarn. How did the pilot know where in the air he was? If he got lost, the ground would swat him.

Rahm did everything his plane could do: tailspins, four-point rolls, flat spins, figure 8's, snap rolls, and hammerheads. He did pirouettes on the plane's tail. The other pilots could do these stunts, too, skillfully, one at a time. But Rahm used the plane inexhaustibly, like a brush marking thin air.

His was pure energy and naked spirit. I have thought about it for years. Rahm's line unrolled in time. Like music, it split the bulging rim of the future along its seam. It pried out the present. We watchers waited for the split-second curve of beauty in the present to reveal itself. The human pilot, Dave Rahm, worked in the cockpit right at the plane's nose; his very body tore into the future for us and reeled it down upon us like a curling peel.

Like any fine artist, he controlled the tension of the audience's longing. You desired, unwittingly, a certain kind of roll or climb, or a return to a certain portion of the air, and he

fulfilled your hope slantingly, like a poet, or evaded it until you thought you would burst, and then fulfilled it surprisingly, so you gasped and cried out.

The oddest, most exhilarating and exhausting thing was this: he never quit. The music had no periods, no rests or endings; the poetry's beautiful sentence never ended; the line had no finish; the sculptured forms piled overhead, one into another without surcease. Who could breathe, in a world where rhythm itself had no periods?

It had taken me several minutes to understand what an extraordinary thing I was seeing. Rahm kept all that embellished space in mind at once. For another twenty minutes I watched the beauty unroll and grow more fantastic and unlikely before my eyes. Now Rahm brought the plane down slidingly, and just in time, for I thought I would snap from the effort to compass and remember the line's long intelligence; I could not add another curve. He brought the plane down on a far runway. After a pause, I saw him step out, an ordinary man, and make his way back to the terminal.

The show was over. It was late. Just as I turned from the runway, something caught my eye and made me laugh. It was a swallow, a blue-green swallow, having its own air show, apparently inspired by Rahm. The swallow climbed high over the runway, held its wings oddly, tipped them, and rolled down the air in loops. The inspired swallow. I always want to paint, too, after I see the Rembrandts. The blue-green swallow tumbled precisely, and caught itself and flew up again as if excited, and looped down again, the way swallows do, but tensely, holding its body carefully still. It was a stunt swallow.

I went home and thought about Rahm's performance that night, and the next day, and the next. I had thought I knew my way around beauty a little bit. I knew I had devoted a good part of my life to it, memorizing poetry and focusing my attention on complexity of rhythm in particular, on force, movement, repetition, and surprise, in both poetry and prose. Now I had stood among dandelions between two asphalt runways in Bellingham, Washington, and begun learning about beauty. Even the Boston Museum of Fine Arts was never more inspiriting than this small northwestern airport on this time-killing Sunday afternoon in June. Nothing on earth is more gladdening than knowing we must roll up our sleeves and move back the boundaries of the humanly possible once more.

#12: Salvation (Personal Narrative)
By: Langston Hughes (1940)

I was saved from sin when I was going on thirteen. But not really saved. It happened like this. There was a big revival at my Auntie Reed's church. Every night for weeks there had been much preaching, singing, praying, and shouting, and some very hardened sinners had been brought to Christ, and the membership of the church had grown by leaps and bounds. Then just before the revival ended, they held a special meeting for children, "to bring the young lambs to the fold." My aunt spoke of it for days ahead. That night I was escorted to the front row and placed on the mourners' bench with all the other young sinners, who had not yet been brought to Jesus.

My aunt told me that when you were saved you saw a light, and something happened to you inside! And Jesus came into your life! And God was with you from then on! She said you could see and hear and feel Jesus in your soul. I believed her. I had heard a great many old people say the same thing and it seemed to me they ought to know. So I sat there calmly in the hot, crowded church, waiting for Jesus to come to me.

The preacher preached a wonderful rhythmical sermon, all moans and shouts and lonely cries and dire pictures of hell, and then he sang a song about the ninety and nine safe in the fold, but one little lamb was left out in the cold. Then he said: "Won't you come? Won't you come to Jesus? Young lambs, won't you come?" And he held out his arms to all us young sinners there on the mourners' bench. And the little girls cried. And some of them jumped up and went to Jesus right away. But most of us just sat there.

A great many old people came and knelt around us and prayed, old women with jet-black faces and braided hair, old men with work-gnarled hands. And the church sang a song about the lower lights are burning, some poor sinners to be saved. And the whole building rocked with prayer and song. Still I kept waiting to see Jesus.

Finally all the young people had gone to the altar and were saved, but one boy and me. He was a rounder's son named Westley. Westley and I were surrounded by sisters and deacons praying. It was very hot in the church, and getting late now. Finally Westley said to me in a whisper: "God damn! I'm tired o' sitting here. Let's get up and be saved." So he got up and was saved.

Then I was left all alone on the mourners' bench. My aunt came and knelt at my knees and cried, while prayers and song swirled all around me in the little church. The whole congregation prayed for me alone, in a mighty wail of moans and voices. And I kept waiting serenely for Jesus, waiting, waiting - but he didn't come. I wanted to see him, but nothing happened to me. Nothing! I wanted something to happen to me, but nothing happened.

I heard the songs and the minister saying: "Why don't you come? My dear child, why don't you come to Jesus? Jesus is waiting for you. He wants you. Why don't you come? Sister Reed, what is this child's name?"

"Langston," my aunt sobbed. "Langston, why don't you come? Why don't you come and be saved? Oh, Lamb of God! Why don't you come?"

Now it was really getting late. I began to be ashamed of myself, holding everything up so long. I began to wonder what God thought about Westley, who certainly hadn't seen Jesus either, but who was now sitting proudly on the platform, swinging his knickerbockered legs and grinning down at me, surrounded by deacons and old women on their knees praying. God had not struck Westley dead for taking his name in vain or for lying in the temple. So I decided that maybe to save further trouble, I'd better lie, too, and say that Jesus had come, and get up and be saved.

So I got up. Suddenly the whole room broke into a sea of shouting, as they saw me rise. Waves of rejoicing swept the place. Women leaped in the air. My aunt threw her arms around me. The minister took me by the hand and led me to the platform.

When things quieted down, in a hushed silence, punctuated by a few ecstatic "Amens," all the new young lambs were blessed in the name of God. Then joyous singing filled the room.

That night, for the first time in my life but one for I was a big boy twelve years old - I cried. I cried, in bed alone, and couldn't stop. I buried my head under the quilts, but my aunt heard me. She woke up and told my uncle I was crying because the Holy Ghost had come into my life, and because I had seen Jesus. But I was really crying because I couldn't bear to tell her that I had lied, that I had deceived everybody in the church, that I hadn't seen Jesus, and that now I didn't believe there was a Jesus anymore, since he didn't come to help me.

#13: Shame (Personal Narrative)
By: Dick Gregory (1964)

I never learned hate at home, or shame. I had to go to school for that. I was about seven years old when I got my first big lesson. I was in love with a little girl named Helene Tucker, a light-complexioned little girl with pigtails and nice manners. She was always clean and she was smart in school. I think I went to school then mostly to look at her. I brushed my hair and even got me a little old handkerchief. It was a lady's handkerchief, but I didn't want Helene to see me wipe my nose on my hand. The pipes were frozen again, there was no water in the house, but I washed my socks and shirt every night. I'd get a pot, and go over to Mister Ben's grocery store, and stick my pot down into his soda machine and scoop out some chopped ice. By evening the ice melted to water for washing. I got sick a lot that winter because the fire would go out at night before the clothes were dry. In the morning I'd put them on, wet or dry, because they were the only clothes I had.

Everybody's got a Helene Tucker, a symbol of everything you want. I loved her for her goodness, her cleanness, her popularity. She'd walk down my street and my brothers and sisters would yell, "Here comes Helene," and I'd rub my tennis sneakers on the back of my pants and wish my hair wasn't so nappy and the white folks' shirt fit me better. I'd run out on the street. If I knew my place and didn't come too close, she'd wink at me and say hello. That was a good feeling. Sometimes I'd follow her all the way home, and shovel the snow off her walk and try to make friends with her momma and her aunts. I'd drop money on her stoop late at night on my way back from shining shoes in the taverns. And she had a daddy, and he had a good job. He was a paperhanger.

I guess I would have gotten over Helene by summertime, but something happened in that classroom that made her face hang in front of me for the next twenty-two years. When I played the drums in high school, it was for Helene, and when I broke track records in college, it was for Helene, and when I started standing behind microphones and heard applause, I wished Helene could hear it too. It wasn't until I was twenty-nine years old and married and making money that I finally got her out of my system. Helene was sitting in that classroom when I learned to be ashamed of myself.

It was on a Thursday. I was sitting in the back of the room, in a seat with a chalk circle drawn around it. The idiot's seat, the troublemaker's seat.

The teacher thought I was stupid. Couldn't spell, couldn't read, couldn't do arithmetic. Just stupid. Teachers were never interested in finding out that you couldn't concentrate because you were so hungry, because you hadn't had

any breakfast. All you could think about was noontime; would it ever come? Maybe you could sneak into the cloakroom and steal a bite of some kid's lunch out of a coat pocket. A bite of something. Paste. You can't really make a meal of paste, or put it on bread for a sandwich, but sometimes I'd scoop a few spoonfuls out of the big paste jar in the back of the room. Pregnant people get strange tastes. I was pregnant with poverty. Pregnant with dirt and pregnant with smells that made people turn away. Pregnant with cold and pregnant with shoes that were never bought for me. Pregnant with five other people in my bed and no daddy in the next room, and pregnant with hunger. Paste doesn't taste too bad when you're hungry.

The teacher thought I was a troublemaker. All she saw from the front of the room was a little black boy who squirmed in his idiot's seat and made noises and poked the kids around him. I guess she couldn't see a kid who made noises because he wanted someone to know he was there.

It was on a Thursday, the day before the Negro payday. The eagle always flew on Friday. The teacher was asking each student how much his father would give to the Community Chest. On Friday night, each kid would get the money from his father, and on Monday he would bring it to the school. I decided I was going to buy a daddy right then. I had money in my pocket from shining shoes and selling papers, and whatever Helene

Tucker pledged for her daddy I was going to top it. And I'd hand the money right in. I wasn't going to wait until Monday to buy me a daddy.

I was shaking, scared to death. The teacher opened her book and started calling out names alphabetically.

"Helene Tucker?"

"My Daddy said he'd give two dollars and fifty cents."

"That's very nice, Helene. Very, very nice indeed."

That made me feel pretty good. It wouldn't take too much to top that. I had almost three dollars in dimes and quarters in my pocket. I stuck my hand in my pocket and held on to the money, waiting for her to call my name. But the teacher closed her book after she called everybody else in the class.

I stood up and raised my hand.

"What is it now?"

"You forgot me?"

She turned toward the blackboard. "I don't have time to be playing with you, Richard." "My daddy said he'd..."

"Sit down, Richard, you're disturbing the class."

"My daddy said he'd give...fifteen dollars."

She turned around and looked mad. "We are collecting this money for you and your kind, Richard Gregory. If your daddy can give fifteen dollars you have no business being on relief."

"I got it right now, I got it right now, my Daddy gave it to me to turn in today, my daddy said. .."

"And furthermore," she said, looking right at me, her nostrils getting big and her lips getting thin and her eyes opening wide, "We know you don't have a daddy."

Helene Tucker turned around, her eyes full of tears. She felt sorry for me. Then I couldn't see her too well because I was crying, too.

"Sit down, Richard."

And I always thought the teacher kind of liked me. She always picked me to wash the blackboard on Friday, after school. That was a big thrill; it made me feel important. If I didn't wash it, come Monday the school might not function right.

"Where are you going, Richard! "

I walked out of school that day, and for a long time I didn't go back very often. There was shame there.

Now there was shame everywhere. It seemed like the whole world had been inside that classroom, everyone had heard what the teacher had said, everyone had turned around and felt sorry for me. There was shame in going to the Worthy Boys Annual Christmas Dinner for you and your kind, because everybody knew what a worthy boy was. Why couldn't they just call it the Boys Annual Dinner-why'd they have to give it a name? There was shame in wearing the brown and orange and white plaid mackinaw' the welfare gave to three thousand boys. Why'd it have to be the same for everybody so when you walked down the street the people could see you were on relief? It was a nice warm mackinaw and it had a hood, and my momma beat me and called me a little rat when she found out I stuffed it in the bottom of a pail full of garbage way over on Cottage Street. There was shame in running over to Mister Ben's at the end of the day and asking for his rotten peaches, there was shame in asking Mrs. Simmons for a spoonful of sugar, there was shame in running out to meet the relief truck. I hated that truck, full of food for you and your kind. I ran into the house and hid when it came. And then I started to sneak through alleys, to take the long way home so the people going into White's Eat Shop wouldn't see me. Yeah, the whole world heard the teacher that day-we all know you don't have a Daddy.

#14: A Holographic Reminder: An Op-Doc Review of “116 Cameras”

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“116 Cameras” is an extremely moving documentary about the repetition of history, and the immortalization of stories and people. The main subject, Eva Schloss is an 88 year old woman who survived the Holocaust. She has been telling her story since 1986, when more conflict around minorities started to arise again, after World War II. I would strongly recommend this film to my fellow peers, since it addresses a very sensitive topic carefully, in an informative and thought provoking way.

The director chose to film this so that people watching would understand why history needs to be remembered. The Holocaust isn’t taught in schools because students want good grades, and rewards from their teachers, it’s taught because we need to remember. Preserving these stories is essential since “most survivors are now in their 80s and 90s.” This makes remembering the Holocaust all the more important, because we need to make sure never to repeat that part of history again. The goal of the project Schloss participated in was to immortalize the stories of Holocaust survivors, using different camera angles to create three dimensional holograms. There are many children, even middle schoolers, who don’t have an understanding of Nazi Germany, and that is why education on this topic is important. Learning from a real survivor is more influential.

One thing that really stood out to me about this film, was that it combined the unique lighting of the scene with closeup shots to better show Schloss’s emotions. She kept a fairly steady expression throughout the entire documentary, however the close up detail showed the slightest movement on the face. I think that what the cameraperson did with the closeup angles was quite ingenious since they conveyed emotion by pairing extreme facial details with the stories she retold. This technique is used to evoke emotion from the viewer, and really does add to the significance of the film.

Another aspect of the film that helped better convey meaning, was how the filmmaker used the background and environment to set a mood. I found it interesting how Eva Schloss described the room she sat in “like a cage”It adds to the feelings of hopelessness she communicated through her stories. In that room, the subject was somewhat trapped, and although the creators of the

space probably didn't mean it, I do believe the filmmaker tried to make the setting seem like a cage, since it does somewhat relate to what Schloss was recalling in her stories. In her stories she was trapped in a camp, and was unable to escape. The environment seems even more unsettling with the abnormal lighting. especially with all of the flashing lights.

The music in the documentary was mostly ambient, used to enhance voiceovers and interviews, however the songs weren't completely bland. They did set a tone for the documentary, just not in a very obvious way. I noticed the music grew more and more depressing as she shared more about her experiences. That combined with the closeups on her face made for some very emotional shots. The music definitely wasn't as prominent when she was talking with the people interviewing her for this project, because there isn't really any emotion behind it. Her talking with the interviewers is used only to help try to communicate what their film plan is, it explains to the audience how they would conduct the project. Meanwhile, when Schloss is talking to the camera, the music becomes more apparent, adding even more gravity to the words she uses.

Schloss, when describing what life was like in Auschwitz, stated, "Men and women were separated, so people clinged to each other, cried, and really, really horrible. And the guards came and beat us apart..." This part of the film was shot from the waist up, however she was sitting down in the center of the scene. In most of this scene, frontal lighting was used to emphasize the main subject, Eva Schloss. The focus was on Eva Schloss herself, not the music, environment, nor lighting. All of the emphasis was put on what she was saying at that moment.

One of the most well done parts of this film was around halfway in, when the lighting was changing rapidly in front of her. Shadow moved across her face in cycles, and some moments she was shrouded in shadow, and some moments you could actually see her expressions and features. What really made this visual element stand out was the dialogue. "I've always seen it in front of my eyes, so I lived with it really, y'know?" It seemed as if with the darkness that kept flashing across her face, the filmmaker was trying to capture what she had seen during The Holocaust. This was an interesting approach to further intertwine the visual elements with the audio.

This film was deeply stirring. I felt like Davina Pardo dealt with this topic very carefully, however she still conveyed her message clearly. As we head towards the future, we must never forget our past. Eva Schloss and other survivors will hopefully play a big role in informing children across the globe of The Holocaust, and how to prevent something like that from ever happening again.

#15: 150 Years (Historical Fiction)
By: Giuseppe L.

"Hello, Mr. Rubenstein?"

"Yes?"

"My name is Douglas Stiles and I have something that might interest you."

Harry Rubenstein leaned back in his chair, holding the phone to his ear, listening intently. The man on the other end of the line seemed nervous, but Rubenstein waited. Taking this as a cue to start talking, Douglas Stiles spoke. "Mr.Rubenstein, I have a very peculiar object that has quite a fascinating history. I am the great-great-great Grandson of Jonathan Dillon, do you know him?" Mr. Rubenstein sat back, trying to recall the name from his memory, but he could not. "Who is he?" The man on the other end went on. "Jonathan Dillon was the watch cleaner that maintained Abraham Lincoln's pocket watch." Suddenly, Mr. Rubenstein's eyes lit up. He looked around as his spacious office, adorned with books of every kind, every single one on American History. Harry Rubenstein was the Chair of the Division of Political History at the National Museum of American History, in Washington DC. He leaned back, eyeing his untidy stack of Lincoln books on the floor. "Go on" he said with an interested tone. Stiles continued. "Well, this man was cleaning Lincoln's watch, because the Whale Oil had gummed up the gears, as it usually did. Watches during this time period needed to be well maintained. Dillon was cleaning the President's watch when Fort Sumter was attacked in 1861." He paused, breathing heavily. Rubenstein, fascinated, asked him to continue."After the Fort was attacked, Dillion inscripted on the inside of the watch...something. I don't know what. It's just a legend, but I know it must be real....I have proof." Rubenstein thought for a moment. Legend. One of the many words that he despised. He suspected that this was just another sighting of Bigfoot, or spotting of a UFO, but Rubenstein, being a respectful man, listened on for the next two minutes as the man on the other end desperately tried to defend his claim. "What is this proof you have?" Rubenstein inquired. Stiles paused for a moment, then said "I have an article from 1906, sir. I could send it to you." Rubenstein, not wanting to sound rude, respectfully agreed, not intending to read the article at all.

Later that day, Rubenstein shifted through the many papers that littered his desk. His book draft lay open on the other side of the room. His hair disheveled from the wear of the day, and his glasses nearly sliding off his nose. He pushed them back up as he glanced at his calendar. He has lectures, conferences, and artefact transportation with Philip LoPiccolo. He could hear the faint sounds of the crowds downstairs in the main museum. His computer then lit up. He moved over to it, and proceeded to scroll through his many Emails. He spotted a new Email from Mr.Stiles, and deciding that he had nothing better to do, clicked on it. He read it for a first time, interested.

Over the next few days, the article intrigued Mr.Rubenstein more and more. He began debating in his head if it all really was a myth. He even decided to go down to collections to look at the watch. Nothing seemed peculiar. It was just a watch, well, on the outside. This watch had stayed in Abraham Lincoln's pocket during the war, and his assassination. It was a priceless piece of history, and that's why it was in the Smithsonian.

Harry Rubenstein finally fell through after another week of deliberating and debating. He decided that even if there was no inscription, it was worth trying. He was a

historian, and his community loved this kind of thing. Besides, it would be another nice addition to his resume.

He paused for a moment, hands on his keyboard back in his office, writing an Email to Mr. Stiles. He thought. He began to type his Email, telling Mr. Stiles that he thought that it would be a good idea to finally open the watch. Two hours later, Mr. Stiles wrote back, asking what the next steps were. Harry Rubenstein thought as he leaned back. What to do next? He picked up his phone and called a few people, and Emailed even more. Over the next few days Rubenstein asked himself many times, what to do next? Finally he got a date and venue for the opening of the pocketwatch. He then Emailed Douglas Stiles and asked him if he was available for the date. He wrote that he was, and Rubenstein booked him a flight, courtesy of the United States government. Rubenstein worked for days on end with this. He Emailed Members of Congress, Senators, historians, and, of course the Media. He wrote to the Washington Post, then the New York Times, along with many others. CNN and NBC were invited as well. Journalists from all over the country were coming. He even booked a watchmaker to open the watch, because he certainly could not dismantle a one hundred fifty year old object. During this time, Mr. Rubenstein periodically asked himself, "What if this is a failure? What if there is no writing in the watch?" He persisted though, and he could not get out of it if he wanted too.

Mr. Stiles arrived at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport on March 8th, two days before the opening of the watch. Mr. Rubenstein greeted him in his office, and took him on a tour of their collection. Rubenstein, of course, made sure that they passed by the century and a half old pocket watch. It was solitary in its case, waiting. It was in perfect condition. Almost the exact same the day the sixteenth President was assassinated. They stood there for a while, staring at its gleaming gold, perfect shell, and beautiful face.

March 10th, 2009, a day which will live in infamy, at least for Harry Rubenstein. He woke up that morning, wanting to get to Washington to get this over with as fast as possible. He rushed out the door, nearly forgetting to kiss his wife goodbye. He arrived at the museum as early as possible, around five. Half awake, he walked through the staff entrance, nodding to the scowling security guard as he walked by. The media was already arriving. Seeing them gave him a jolt to the stomach. Many people were flooding into the museum, cameras and microphones, pens and papers all in hand. Rubenstein rushed to the theater, where the event would take place. He peeked in, only he was allowed in at the time. He then rushed downstairs to check on the watch. It was just getting settled into its perfectly designed case. The men handling it were in white gloves, and sweating profusely. Rubenstein traveled to the elevator with the watch and its' guard. Ten minutes later, he was back in the theater. The media was setting up their cameras and scribbling away on their clipboards. He turned around and nearly bumped into Douglas Stiles. He was sweating almost as much as Rubenstein was, his face ablaze with color. Rubenstein had grown to like Stiles. His mustache furrowed, looking almost like Uncle Vernon from Harry Potter, he said in a low tone "I hope this works out." Rubenstein, his glasses inching ever so slowly to the edge of his slick nose, said "I hope it does." His phone then vibrated in his pocket, nearly scaring Rubenstein to death. He picked up and it was the event manager. "We are ready now Mr. Rubenstein."

Rubenstein walked up the small desk where the watch was placed, and recalled the story of how this all happened to the cameras. He could hear the clicks and snaps of the many photographs that were being taken. He recalled the events of the past month to

the many eyes of the reporters. “It was about a month ago, I got a call from Doug Stiles.” gesturing to the man in the front row. “He basically said do you know anything about the story that's been in my family for a while about my Great Great Grandfather? And I said no.” He paused, looking into the crowd. “Mr. Galt, the owner of the jewelry shop ran up into the room and said “The war, meaning the Civil War, has begun. At that moment, a jeweler in the shop by the name of Jonathan Dillon is holding Abraham Lincoln’s watch. Carried away at the moment, he unscrews the dial, and behind it writes something like “The first shots have been fired, slavery will end, at least we have a President who will try.”

Rubenstein introduced the watchmaker, George Thomas. Thomas sat down in front of the solitary watch on the solitary table in the middle of the stage. His Optivisor made him look like a character from Star Wars. He and Rubenstein, who was behind him, leaned into the watch. Rubenstein held his breath as the timepiece was picked up and examined. This was the moment of truth. He could hear Stile’s heavy breathing behind him as they both dared to breath, as if it would shatter the artefact into a million pieces. They watched. “So what we’ll do is take the dial off now.” The watchmaker removed the fingerprint free glass from the watch. “And we will see if there is a legend under the dial.” The watchmaker removed the perfectly white face. Thomas, smiling, said “The moment of truth has come. Well is there or is there not an inscription?” Many people laughed in the crowd, but Rubenstein didn't hear it. He was zoned in on only one thing. The watch. “I will let the Great Grandson of the watchmaker read it, there is an inscription.” Taking the wath out of the shaking hand of George Thomas, Douglas Stiles looked at the watch, in awe. He leaned towards the lamps on the table. Rubenstein, going crazy over what he may have just discovered, kept silent. “It is there!” he exclaimed. “April 13, 1861, Fort Sumter was attacked by the Rebels. On the above date, Thank God we have a government, Jonathan Dillon.” He went on. “This was inscribed by someone else! Jefferson Davis.” The crowd was stunned. Rubenstein was shocked.

The watch lay in its’ case. Unaware of the people moving past it. Unaware of its’ history. Unaware of who it had previously belonged to, and who and scratched into its’ sleek surface, during the War of Rebellion.

Note: This story is a true story, told from the perspective of Harry Rubenstein, the Curator of the Political History Collection at the National Museum of American History, located in Washington DC.