

# THE DRAGON

The Student Newspaper for Middlesex Middle School!

## Welcome to the Fifth Year of THE DRAGON

*The following is a message from this year's student editor...*

Dear Middlesex Students,

Hello to all the students of Middlesex, from the rookie sixth graders to the veteran eighth graders. Welcome to our little haven we call middle school.

Fortunately, we are lucky enough to have a school packed with many events. With the magazine drive, eighth grade trip to Boston, and the Variety Show 4 already behind us, Middlesex will be as busy as bees in the upcoming months. The sixth grade trip to Colebrook and Ivoryton are right around the corner. Plus, local field trips always show promise throughout the year.

Setting aside the activities outside the school, it is important to take advantage of one of the many opportunities that our school offers to benefit the community. Some examples of these at our school include Kindness Counts, Darien a Darien, and UNICEF.

However, it is important to remember that learning is the most important part of any school year, and it is the main reason why we are all together here. We all have arrived here with our differences such as our talents; whether they may be athletic, artistic, or academic.

Though we cherish our interest diversity, we need to take advantage of what our school offers us. Middlesex provides so many opportunities. Making the right balance of academics and personal interests is

what makes us well-rounded people and will help us in our bright futures.

Sixth graders, you have quite a jump to make. Coming from smaller elementary school environments and having to come to a place where independence is a necessity. This is one of the key lessons that middle school teaches, as well as providing new friends, experiences, and teachers. I personally promise you that these next three years will benefit you in all the ways you would want it to.

Seventh graders, you are like the middle siblings of our family-like school. You are revered by the sixth grader, but questioned by the eighth graders. The seventh grade year is infamously known to be the most academically challenging year of middle school and some of you may have already felt the burn of the homework load. There will be no fun trips like the Boston or Expo Trips but don't worry; you'll still get breaks during fun team activities like the seventh grade field day, and field trips to Costco and the sewage treatment plant.

For the eighth graders, you've been here for two years now, and you know all the ropes and could walk to your next class blindfolded. At times, you may have the feeling to rule over the younger grades, but I encourage you to respect the younger grades. You are well on your way to the best year at Middlesex, and although you may have already guessed the highlights of the year, it's still as much as a mystery to you as it was to the eighth graders of

the past. Do not fret; I have been assured by older students that eighth grade is a year to remember. Before you know it, you will be at the promotion ceremony, and summer and high school will sneak up on you before the blink of an eye.

Regardless of how old you are or what grade you're in, we need to make the most of the school year. But being part of a team or a club is only half of it. This year, whether you're a veteran student or a rookie 6th grader, look out for those opportunities. Each and every one of us can be powerful, but when we come together as a school and a community, we're unstoppable.

Sixth graders, even though you're new, don't let that get in your way. Step out of your comfort zone, because this is your opportunity to take a chance. Whatever doesn't kill you just makes you stronger.

Seventh graders, it's your year to work hard in all your classes and excel in whatever you love to do. Though it may be a challenging year, you will realize it will all be worth it once you enter grades above.

Eighth graders, this is your last year at Middlesex; make the most of it! It's your last chance to make a name for yourself before you enter high school; you want to end on a good note.

And from all of us at THE DRAGON, we wish you a great school year and hope to see you around in the classrooms!

Sincerely,  
Brendan Ferguson  
Student Editor

## New Student Council Announced

Two weeks ago, the Student Council elections took place. As in year's past, each candidate gave a speech making a variety of campaign promises.

The usual promises of spirit days and fundraisers were bolstered this year by calls for more variety in the cafeteria and a return to recycling. One 8th grader even performed a rap, while another wondered among her fellow students during her speech!

THE DRAGON is happy to announce this year's Student Council members. Check back in our December issue for profiles on the candidates and find out ways for you to get involved here at MMS.

THE DRAGON would also like to thank Ms. Warren and Mr. Pavia for providing the following election results.

### Your 2010-2011 Student Council

#### Grade 6

Mairead Ferguson  
Kelly Moran

#### Grade 7

P. Adams  
Carson Stewart  
Will Collier

#### Grade 8

Brendan Ferguson  
Lindsey Green  
Katy Murphy  
Tiger Sullivan

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# Here Lies Arthur

By Sarah LeHan, Gold Team

"You've heard of him. Everyone's heard of Arthur. Artorius Magnus; the Bear; the *Dux Bellorum*; the King that Was and Will Be. But you haven't heard the truth. I knew him, see..."

So begins *Here Lies Arthur*, a tale proclaiming that not all is what it seems, and that the stories, not the truth, write history.

It's a far cry from the Camelot of the *Magic Tree House* books you may have read in elementary school. In fact, it's really like no book I've seen before. *Here Lies Arthur* shows the unreliability of stories, how with stories, you can paint the world however you see fit.

*Here Lies Arthur* is a fictional adventure about an orphan named Gwyna that helps make King Arthur the greatest ruler in all Britain. Driven from her burning village by his war-band, she comes across a storyteller and magician named Myrddin (an earlier version of Merlin). The 9-year-old agrees to help him in his plot to make Arthur appear to be favored by the gods.

Posing as the Lady of the Lake, a mythical goddess, she gives Arthur his famous sword. She then goes on to disguise herself as a boy and serve for five years in Arthur's band of warriors, and it is in this part of the book into which many King Arthur tales are interwoven, and it also comprises most of the book. Finally, she serves as a spy in Gwenhyfar's (Guinevere's) court, becoming a witness to a version of the tale of Guinevere and Sir Lancelot. The book ends with the fall of King Arthur and his kingdom, and Gwyna flees- only to become a storyteller, like Myrddin, and spin the stories of King Arthur into legends almost unrecognizable from the truth.

This book has great characters. Gwyna, the main character, isn't very brave, but often finds herself in situations that require bravery. But instead of choosing to stand and fight, she scampers away when trouble is approaching, which earns her the nickname of "Mouse". As the story goes on, she fights that tendency, but never fully conquers it; but the flaw only adds to her believability as a character.

This applies to most of the characters. In fact, Philip Reeve makes the reader care for them as if they were real people. Additionally, no character is truly good or bad.

The author did a great job at describing sixth century England. Instead of devoting a whole chapter to the era's customs, he weaves it deftly into the storyline. I could also really imagine myself in the setting, even if some aspects of Arthurian daily life might be hard for a 21st-century kid to believe.

As one 7<sup>th</sup> grader says, "I usually don't read historical fiction, but I enjoyed *Here Lies Arthur* because its idea is original even though it takes place in a time period many authors write about."

This book has so many amazing qualities, great characters, a well-described setting, and the main character's voice, which can make you smile in the darkest of chapters. It's certainly not a happy-go-lucky fairytale where the prince and princess go skipping off merrily into a Technicolor sunset, but has some truths that made me rethink what I had previously thought about heroes. It shows that the world is gray, not simply black or white. But isn't everything?

## HG: Mockingjay

By: Sophia Fredo, Maroon Team

With all the hype surrounding the third book of the *Hunger Games* trilogy, *Mockingjay* by Suzanne Collins, I decided to check it out and see if this book would give me the "Oh-my-God-I-never-expected-that-give-me-more" kind of feeling I expected. Sadly, I was a little disappointed in the overall book, and ending of *Mockingjay*.

The main character, Katniss Everdeen, has lost most of her pizzazz. In this final book, she isn't as bulletproof or mentally strong like the previous books. Here, she seems to be a little love troubled, akin to Bella Swan from *Twilight*, who spends most of her time swooning over two guys.

In the first two books, Katniss was more wary, cautious, and more dangerous. One of the things that remains constant throughout this epic trilogy is that Katniss' desire to bring down the Capital and put an end to the Hunger Games.

Lara Cerruti, an eighth grader on the Maroon team, said, "Katniss started out ferocious, desperate to save her family and was willing to go to any length to do so, but now she seems to be more dependent on revenge on the Capital and not as strong-willed as she used to be. I also think that, like some other readers, that the end to *Mockingjay* was a little disappointing."

*Mockingjay* has a plot that is dense and complex. The good guys and the bad guys are trying to promote their own agendas: the Capital wants people to live in fear of them and use propaganda to keep people on a tight leash. The good guys, District 13, are trying to get into the Capital by destroying it from the outside. They believe if they can get more people on their side, they can successfully kill the president and take over the government, in a way that seems "better" to them, when in fact their way is really not much different from their opponents.

They both seek control and little freedom for the people, which is all they want after almost a century of the worst abuse.

Ms. Scott, the Maroon team English teacher, said, "Katniss became a universal symbol for the rebellion and less of an individual. Also, her feminism dwindled by the middle of *Mockingjay*, which was one of her greatest traits. It was a big part of who she was, not of what she became. Katniss is a survivor, just like Buttercup."

The ending disappointed me because Katniss had become a puppet for District 13, and had lost her sense of self. She had changed so much from the first book that she was unrecognizable. Katniss became an empty shell and wasn't being who she truly was. The admirable character we met in the first two books was gone.

Since everyone needs to form their own opinion, I would still recommend this book, and the entire trilogy, to kids twelve and up who enjoyed Harry Potter or Percy Jackson.



# Thanksgiving Origins Remembered

By Pablo Castro, Tan Team

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Thanksgiving is a holiday that is the pinnacle of thankfulness, gratitude for the bond between family members, and the close connections between friends. Its name brings up memories of festival gluttony, Turkey Bowl football games, and family traditions.

How-  
ever, as this holiday descends upon us, it is important to remember the original intentions the Native Americans and Europeans had, and to appreciate the beginning of a stupendous day of merriment.



The view overlooking of the Plimoth village, replica site of the original Thanksgiving meal.

Thanksgiving falls on November 25<sup>th</sup> this year. Initially, however, Thanksgiving was a three-day celebration in the year 1637. Although there are countless accounts of what truly occurred there are some stories that are not nearly as festive as those we typically hear of today.

One of the possible tales of what truly happened is much more gruesome than what is often heard. After a colonial militia armed with weapons raided countless villages and towns, they presented authorities with documentation of what they had done.

In celebration of their "success", Governor William Bradford proclaimed these days a period of celebration and feasting.

The more commonly told tale is that it was a celebration of a plentiful harvest after a cold and miserable winter. This scenario would include Plymouth colonists and Wampanoag Indians uniting together to feast and play.

What probably happened is most likely a much less dramatic story than those that are thrown around, be it the celebration of success after a miserable winter, or be it the celebration of gained power, territory, and food, but on November 25, when you find yourself indulging in a savory

turkey breast, or passing a football around, take a moment to remember the year of 1637. If anything, it is truly symbolic of how far the United States has come in the last 374 years.



## Congratulations to the 2010-2011 DRAGON Staff!

### Grade 6

Morgan Doherty  
Katie Huffert  
Aditya Krishnamachar  
Mia Malizia  
Jana Powers  
Samantha Wind

### Grade 7

Paige Adams  
Molly Bell  
Oliver Burke  
Patricia Collins  
Breana DelGatto  
Sarah LeHan  
Claire Lincoln  
Carson Stewart  
Dominick Wood

### Grade 8

Jenna Buckley  
Jessica Campbell  
Pablo Castro  
Jack Duggan  
Brendan Ferguson  
Sophia Fredo  
Matthew Hayes  
Eleanor Larsen  
Morgan Peters  
Amanda Sload

Advisors: Mrs. Boulter & Mr. Sorensen

## Ask Alice Provides Thanksgiving Advice To Be Thankful For

Dear Alice,

So as you know, Thanksgiving is coming soon. And every year, I go to my grandmother's house. She cooks all of these huge meals for us. Unfortunately, she is the worst cook EVER. How do I tell her that I don't want to eat it? I always feel really bad because she works so hard to feed us.

--I'm Not Hungry

Dear J'm Not Hungry,

Your grandmother obviously worked very hard to cook for you. So why not give her food another try? Ask her what she thinks the best part of the meal is, and dig in! If you are still worried about this, eat something that will tide you over before you go over there (or at least before the meal). That way, when she asks you why you aren't eating, you can genuinely say that you are not hungry. Problem solved!

Dear Alice,

I am a vegetarian, and Thanksgiving is always a nightmare for me! We always go to our cousins' house, and they make tons of ham and turkey... What should I do?

--Think of the Turkeys

Dear Think of the Turkeys,

Maybe you could ask your parents if your cousins could come over to your house for Thanksgiving! It would be a change, and you'd be able to escape their carnivore cooking. If not, try some of the stuffing or the sweet potatoes! And if those aren't available, bring something else from home to munch on. Maybe you can make a salad or some other side dish. Hope this helps!

Dear Alice,

For Thanksgiving, my mom always makes

this big huge buffet of food. And it's delicious, but I can only eat so much. She always asks me if I want some more... And I can't help saying yes because she worked so hard to cook it for us! How do I tell her (nicely) that I DON'T WANT ANY MORE?

--I Might Explode

Dear J Might Explode,

The best way to tell her is just to tell the truth! You can say something along the lines of "Mom, this food is DELICIOUS, but I'm stuffed! Thanks." She won't take it offensively, don't worry. After all, a person can only take so much food!

- Alice ♥

\*\*Alice is our resident expert in all things middle school. Got a problem?! Email for at advice at: [alice.dragon.advice@gmail.com](mailto:alice.dragon.advice@gmail.com).\*\*

## *Darien Football Prepares For Big Week*

By Morgan Doherty, Red Team

Which is bigger? Fulfilling a Darien tradition passed down each year, or playing for an FCIAC Championship?

That is the question in front of the DHS varsity football team, as they prepare for not one, but two massive games in just a six day span.

This Friday, November 19, Darien will travel up the line to Trumbull to play the Eagles for the FCIAC Championship. This is their latest attempt at a league title, after losing to New Canaan two years ago.

However, before the announcement of this game earlier this week, this wasn't the biggest game on the DHS schedule.

On Thursday, November 25 the Darien varsity football team will be just as pumped! Pumped for their 10:00 am game on the Darien High School stadium field, the annual even known as the Turkey Bowl.

As usual, they'll be playing their rival New Canaan High School in this annual event loved by many Darien football fans.

"I loove the Turkey Bowl!" says 6th grader Elizabeth Lane, "I go every year."

Emma Powless, an 8th grader says, "Even though it's a regular season game, it is very school spirited and fun to be at!"

Off to another great season, the varsity team has won their first 9 games starting with a home victory of 31-0 against Warde, Fairfield.

There were other bumps along the way. During the homecoming game against St. Joseph's, the Blue Wave trailed 10-0 at the half, before scoring two touchdowns in the second half to eventually take the win.

Then there was Red Lion Academy. Head Coach Trifone was worried about the game against this Delaware team - which featured a nationally recognized quarter back. Blue Wave were losing but took the lead 21-20 with a touchdown with only 4:45 left to go.

"The Wave" lost the Turkey Bowl last year to New Canaan but the game against the Lions showed some serious Blue Wave Pride. All varsity players agree; "We have to bring the Turkey Bowl trophy back to Darien."

For tickets to either of these great events, stop by the main office at the high school.



## **Alumni Profile: Granath Named to Local Top 10**

By Jack Duggan, Green Team

Nicole Granath, a Middlesex Middle School alumna, was recently voted one of the Top Ten Teens to Watch in *New Canaan, Darien, and Rowayton Magazine*.

Nicole used to be a normal middle school student like all the kids at our school. Someday, one of you could be one of the Top Ten Teens to Watch.

Nicole is going into her senior year at Darien High School. She is currently co-captain of the golf team and the captain of the debate team. Last year as a junior she was Student Council Vice President, and this year, she was voted Student Council President. I asked her a few questions about what it felt to be voted a top teen and how she liked MMS.

**Q:** How did it feel to be voted one of the Top Ten Teens to Watch in the recent *Darien, New Canaan, and Rowayton Magazine*?

**A:** I was honored to be recognized as one of the Top Ten Teens. I am well aware, however, that I am surrounded by people whose accomplishments merit similar recognition, and that it could have just as easily been one of them as it was me. It's fun to see myself on the cover of a magazine, but as long as what I do is recognized by those whose respect I want to earn-i.e. family, close friends, teachers I hold in high esteem-I am content.

**Q:** What was your favorite part of MMS?

**A:** My favorite thing about MMS was being part of a team, because it became something like a family. Each of my teams gave me the sense that my teachers were working together to maximize the benefits of my educational experience. Additionally, the team system gave me the opportunity to have classes with a different group of kids every year and to better get to know the 4/5ths of the grade with whom I did not go to elementary school. The camaraderie and team spirit that the teams generated made my middle school years fun.

**Q:** What was your least favorite part of MMS?

**A:** Occasionally the people around me would become wrapped up in interpersonal drama. What I liked least about my time at MMS was that often times people would spend a lot of energy talking to friends about other friends instead of trying to work out the issues that they had with the person. I tried to keep away from drama as much as possible during middle school, but it was hard to avoid completely.

**Q:** Who was your favorite teacher in your years at MMS, how did he/she help you?

**A:** My favorite teacher at MMS was obviously Mr. Sorensen. :) I was lucky enough to have him for writing (I can't remember

any more whether that was LA I or LA II) in sixth grade. I enjoyed Mr. Sorensen's class because he challenged us to improve our writing by giving us fun and creative projects that made us enjoy doing our work. Mr. Sorensen gave me a solid foundation of writing skills for the years beyond!!

**Q:** What sports were you involved in during your years at MMS?

**A:** I played soccer, basketball, softball, golf, tennis, and sailing.

**Q:** In playing sports at MMS, did you find that the time commitment to those sports detracted from your studies or did it help you to be more focused?

**A:** The time commitment I made to sports and the sports themselves definitely made me more focused. They took up just enough of my time for me to make productive use of the rest of it. Even now, I participate in many extra-curricular activities because, besides enjoying being involved, they help me get my work done in a timely manner.

**Q:** What worried you most leaving middle school and going into high school?

**A:** I was worried that high school would be much harder than middle school was. I was also worried that I would get lost or be late to class, that I wouldn't know anyone, and that I would be overwhelmed by all of the new things that I had to keep track of. In reality, high school has been amazing. I've loved every year that I have been here.

**Q:** Did you have a favorite subject? If so, why?

**A:** No, I actually enjoy all of my subjects. What I love most is making connections across subject areas.

**Q:** Did you go on the Boston Trip when you were in the 8th grade? If so did you like it?

**A:** Yes, I did! I loved it! I roomed with my four closest friends at the time and I loved touring the historic places with them--it made it much more memorable.

**Q:** Lastly, rumor has it that 7th grade is the toughest year in all of middle and high school years. What are your thoughts on that?

**A:** I don't believe it. I think a lot of it depends on what team/teachers you have and what type of work is easiest for you. In terms of both middle school and high school, I think that junior year (last year for me) was particularly difficult, but not unmanageably so. Each year has different difficulties associated with it.

Nicole is certainly one of the top teens to watch. She is very smart and athletic, and she learned to manage both at once. That's some pretty amazing stuff. She obviously applied herself in middle school and that carried over into high school. She has done so well in her school years, many colleges would be very happy to have Nicole.

# New Winners in Second Annual Post-it Writing Contest

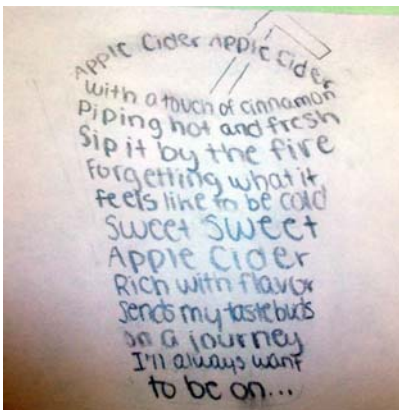
In celebration of the National Day of Writing on October 20th, Middlesex took part in the second ever Post-it Writing Contest. This event took on a school-wide scope as participants from all grade levels, and even staff, took part. The idea was simple: create a piece of writing that could fit on a standard Post-it.

As a tribute to those winners and honorable mentions, we have posted their work here. A special thanks goes out to Ms. Sacks and Ms. Plant for organizing the event, the library staff for hosting, and the various staff members who took time to judge the event.

## Winners (in no particular order)

This post-it could glide through the air like a fighter jet. It could soar to the ground, from my desk like an eagle stalking its prey. It can be crumpled like a crushed car in a junkyard. It could be torn to bits by your teacher like a T-Rex tearing open a pterodactyl. It could be turned into a playful swan. Or it can be an extraordinary piece of writing.  
(Ryan Cornell, 6, Orange)

The dark tunnel greeted me as I descended the cold cement stairs for another long day of dark, dangerous work. Workers were groaning about work and money. One was talking jollily about his soon-to-be child. After four hours of chipping endlessly at the stone wall, the lunch bell rang. The group traveled to the safe area, their stomachs roaring with hunger and thirst. We sat and ate, savoring our lunch. Suddenly there was a rumbling and the lights went out. And there was silence.  
(Sarah Garijo, 7, Aqua)



(Maddie Burke, 8, Navy)

¿Quién?  
¿Qué?  
¿Dónde?  
Porqué?  
¿Cómo?  
Todos estas preguntas, pero nunca respuestas.  
(Christina Boccadoro, 8, Green)

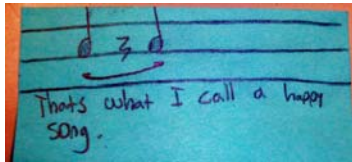
## Honorable Mentions (in no particular order)

"Wonder"  
Wonder is incessantly picking her jaw up off the ground. She has wide, staring eyes, and thin lips from not talking too much. She is always looking up at others' actions, but not trying them herself. And THAT is Wonder's big mistake.  
(Kate Halabi, 8, Green)

One down. Two gone. Monday? Again?  
(Tim Stowell, 7, Blue)

We are a pair. Perfectly matched, with every twist and turn folded neatly together. It is as rare for us to argue as it is rare to win the lottery. Not a bump that can't be smoothed over, Me and Johanna. We are a pair.  
(Julia Cornacchia, 6, Silver)

Too old for Trick-or-Treating, but too young to give away my candy  
(Julia Russo, 8, Tan)



(Bradley Morgan, 7, Blue)

Life is like a sea current. Some go with the flow, with the norm as the followers. Others go against the current defying the odds thrown at them. It's not the easy way, but the hard, but that's how success is created and leadership formed. In order to go forward you have to go backwards against the current.  
(Jonathan Stimpson, 6, Silver)

Something was wrong. I could feel it rattling my bones, screaming through my skin, telling me to run, but I couldn't, I wouldn't. I didn't want to. There was something about her that drew me in. I knew that if I took that step into her world there would be no going back. Standing there, looking at her with all my body screaming not to, I took that step.  
(Emma Hagey, 8, Maroon)

She doesn't eat. She doesn't eat.  
She doesn't eat. She doesn't eat.  
She doesn't eat. She doesn't eat.  
She doesn't eat. She doesn't eat.  
She doesn't eat. She doesn't eat.

I'm sorry, I can't keep your secret any longer.  
(Claire O'Leary, 7, Aqua)

The most powerful words you can say are, I am sorry, I love you, and I am sure.  
(Catriona McIntyre, 6, Silver)

A wide expanse of indigo blends with the horizon, so I can't tell water from sky anymore. Countless twinkling lights burn brightly above me, cradling the full moon, which casts a shimmering pathway of white light on the water. I feel as though I could hop right out of my boat and land on the light, feeling its silkiness in-between my toes. No waves disturb the peace, the stars are reflected on the ocean as well as the moon. Silence envelops me, carrying my spirit.  
(Hanna Vassler, 8, Maroon)

Success is always trailing behind you. It is watching you, ready to reveal itself. Success lives in your heart, your blood, and your brain. He is the one who watches over you. He cares. Success wants you to do well, but your actions and words are the main tools he uses. Success is a privilege that you decide to use. Everyone has it in them  
(Armstrong Noonan, 7, Aqua)

"Fear"  
Happiness is simply, brushed away with Fear's icy palm. Fear's eyes flicker with worries and memories from your years. His cackle freezes you to the spot and the squall from his breath pushes you this way and that until tears rocket down to Fear's satisfied soul. Everyone has faced Fear. Few have overcome him.  
(Katie Huffert, 6, Orange)

The sound of crunching leaves fills my ears. The frost nips at my ears and nose. The escaped strands blow from underneath my hat. A gust of wind changes the path of the tear sliding down my cheek.  
(Nicole Santella, 6, Orange)

The stars seem so small to me, but in truth they are so large. It's all in the perspective. What if our perspective was different and everything we knew to be right was wrong?  
(Luke Sheridan, 8, Green)

Bucket list won't be completed, unless there's BACON.  
(Kit Parsons, 6, Bronze)

There will be a five dollar charge for reading this.  
(Gracie Maybell, 6, Red)

I have a dream...  
Every night...  
Every day...  
In class...  
I have a dream that I can re-wind bad times and re-play good times.  
(Emily Hannigan, 6, Orange)

**\*Congrats to these and all the others we could not fit on this page! Great work MMS!**

## Writer's Spotlight

*A section dedicated to creative writing from MMS students!*

# Opportunity: Part I

By Morgan Peter, Green Team

There are two types of people in the world: the ones who can accept change and the ones who can't. If I were the first sort of person, then I might actually embrace my father's interest in running for Congress. I might be happy that he is achieving something important, and that he will be the hope of change for many. All of that might happen, however I am not the sort of person who can accept change.

Instead, I'm the type of person who refuses to acknowledge the fact that her parents are going on the campaign trail for four months until they have packed my bags and put them in the car. It wasn't until after I accidentally set off the smoke alarm that they agreed to make other arrangements. Maybe I wouldn't have complained so much had I known that their idea of "suitable arrangements" for their teenage daughter is shipping her off to live with an aunt who she's never met before.

That only half explains why I am sitting on a green bean-bag chair in the back of a RV that's going about ninety-five miles an hour and wishing I were anywhere but here.

I had figured that I could just hide down in the basement until Aunt Sasha had gone to the grocery store or something. She had given me a bedroom, but it smelled strongly of lavender soap that made my eyes water and gave me a really bad headache. She also has a cat named Cypress, and if that doesn't give you an inclination to what sort of circumstances I'm living in, then I doubt anything will.

I was there, hiding from a woman who was quite clearly insane, when she bounded down the stairs in purple leggings. Is it normal for a forty year old woman to wear purple leggings? No, quite frankly, it is not.

"Samantha!" she trilled in a sing song voice, "I have really exciting news!"

"The press found this horrible scandal about my dad and they have to go home?" I asked, because there really wasn't anything

else that could be so exciting as to make someone skip. Or there shouldn't have been.

"No, of course not," she said, waving me aside, "I rented an RV!"

I stared at her blankly, not comprehending.

"You did what?" I asked cautiously and she beamed.

"I rented an RV! We're going on a road trip, all the way across the country!" I suppressed a sigh and once again wondered how my parents had considered this a good plan for me.

"Aunt Sasha, you know that it's hardly acceptable to leave a fifteen year old alone while you gallivant around with a cat, don't you?" I asked her, and she just shook her head and tutted at me.

"You're coming with us, of course!" she exclaimed and pulled me into a very awkward hug, partially because I was still sitting down.

I couldn't really understand this. What was she raving about? I couldn't go on an RV trip, and not just because the whole idea was mortifying. But I did have school, and friends, and a life that could not be left behind to travel cross-country. Surely she could be reasoned with.

"This will be so exciting!" she repeated clapping her hands together. No, there would be no reasoning with this woman.

"I suppose I'll go repack then," I mumbled, however didn't move my feet. A road trip, of all things, how could she have picked something that no teenager on the face of the planet would enjoy? Clearly, she was insane.

Now I am driving down an empty highway at four in the morning with a psych patient and a cat who looks on the verge of being sick. Absolutely fantastic.

**\*\*Wanna know what happens next?!**  
**Check back in the next edition of THE DRAGON, coming in mid December!**

## Under the Pine

By Sammy Alptekin, Green Team

As I sit here,  
Under the pine,  
I can relax.  
I am safe.

The intertwining branches  
Hug me like a second mother.  
They keep me close,  
Not relinquishing their grip.  
I am safe.

The soft ground  
Underneath me,  
Seems to have been waiting  
For a person to rest here.  
Nothing pokes me,  
Nothing stabs me,  
I am safe.

The sounds muffled,  
The sights obstructed,  
Of the outside world, I am unaware.  
I am safe.

Here I can relax my guard,  
Here I can lose myself  
In thoughts unthink for years.  
I am safe.

No longer must I listen.  
No longer must I obey.  
No longer must I pay attention  
No longer must I worry.  
No longer must I be afraid.  
I am safe.

Here, under the pine,  
Where I am alone,  
I needn't wonder,  
Nor need I fear,  
My effect on others.  
Here, under the pine,  
I am safe.

I wish others would come,  
And sit under the pine,  
To bask in the stark beauty  
That nature has to offer,  
To listen as the wind whistles  
Through the trees.  
They should be safe.

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