

voices

A Publication of Write Local

volume
issue

1



Inspiring young writers to think creatively and innovate locally.

Preface

Ice:
you make wonder
while I watch from a fallen tree

Noise:
you boil the explosive water
but you will not speak for me

Aloneness:
you interrupt me
like the ice interrupts the stream

Ice:
you can go now
and leave the stream to be.

-KJS

Foreword

Welcome to the first issue of *Voices*, a publication of Write Local. This issue collects pieces from young writers in Write Local's workshops as well as submissions from Write Local's December 2014 "Home" writing contest. To that end, the pieces in this issue unite as they explore, challenge, and reaffirm our ideas about home.

We begin with Paisley Adams' poem that calls home "every place the heart yearns" and "every place people go" (5). To me, this poem questions the notion of home as a fixed place. Is Adams suggesting that anywhere could be home? To me, this poem communicates that home is a decision to be at peace with our surroundings; home is not a physical location. I invite you to ponder this poem's rich language and consider its emotion.

We turn to Connor Evans' story *Coming Home*, a dark and mature look at a man's search for comfort in an unsettling world. When I read Evans' work, I wonder if we do crave a physical home, a place where we can feel youthful, peaceful. I wonder, too, if our perceptions of home change as we change. He writes, "The house was still there, but much different" (6). How often have you felt this way?

Then, Thomas Beck brings us *Southwest Pennsylvania* and reminds us that our region offers a rich history and culture; we can brag of "sandwiches piled high with French fries" and somberly consider the pioneers who "dared to live in wild frontier lands" (8, 7). If the first two pieces suggest that home and our perceptions of home are not fixed, then how does this piece (with its regard for the local region) complicate those ideas?

If only we could read each story and poem together and hold a conversation.

Since we cannot, I invite you to ponder each selection in this issue of *Voices*. What is your relationship with home? When you think of home, do you envision a state of mind, a physical location, a region, or something else altogether? How might you interpret the collection if you are without a home or if home is a painful place? The submissions here tend to uphold home as sacred, but how might that definition change depending on the reader's personal history? We encourage you to ask your own questions, too, as you read.

Even better, share this issue with someone and discuss your different reactions to the pieces.

As you read, I hope you will be inspired to pick up a pen and write something of your own.

After all, you have a voice. Now, have the courage to share it.

Krista Sarraf
Founder and Lead Facilitator
Write Local

Table of Contents:

Paisley Adams - <i>Home</i>	p. 5	Michael Brackney - <i>My Birthday</i>	p. 13
Connor Evans - <i>Coming Home</i>	p. 5	Margaret Krom - <i>Secret Agent Friends</i>	p. 14
Thomas Beck - <i>Southwest Pennsylvania</i>	p. 7	Ryan Gorsich - <i>My Life as a Blacksmith's Apprentice</i>	p. 15
McKenna Brackney - <i>My Mom's Birthday</i>	p. 9	Megan Brackney - <i>Bringing Snickers Home</i>	p. 16
James Krom - <i>The Fish</i>	p. 10	Luke Vanden Berk - <i>(Untitled)</i>	p. 17
Marcia Speicher - <i>Sliding Into My Kitchen</i>	p. 10	Robert Tremblay – <i>I Prayed</i>	p. 17
Madison Brackney - <i>This is the place</i>	p. 11	Sarah Opst – <i>My Home</i>	p. 19
Henry Krom - <i>Lost</i>	p. 12	Aarushi Agrawal – <i>Home</i>	p. 21
Steven Foss - <i>Annie's Wild Trip</i>	p. 12		



Home

Paisley Adams

Ligonier, PA / 12th Grade

every place my foot falls, is home
whether verdant green or lost in snow
where the leaves cascade
on their frigid parade
and the buds of new life show

every place the road goes, is my home
from bustling town to pastures far
under city street lights
or firefly flights
huddled under every star

every place people go, is my home
both long vacation and work day
all those mountains to climb
so I work overtime
it feels like home either way

every place the heart yearns, is home
all those small hopes in Pandora's box
the world is our home
so let the truth be known
we have the key to all locks



Coming Home

Connor Evans

Latrobe, PA / Grade 11

He slowly dragged himself out of the ditch. It appeared that the scavengers who had shot him had moved on. As he pulled himself out, he looked at his leg. It was a mess of mangled flesh, and he could see his bone. With a cry of pain, he was back on the roadway. Well, he amended himself, it had been a roadway, back before everything went dark. No one knew who started it. Someone launched a missile, then someone else, and then the world was on fire. The plants died, the cities crumbled and burned, and the animals disappeared. Those who had survived found themselves struggling for even basic needs. It had been three

days since he had eaten. He had found a sealed bag of chips in a small cabin. Even if they had been new when they were placed there, they would have been five years old by the time he had found them. Or would they have been six? He had lost track of time, and he doubted anyone else knew the exact date. It didn't matter anyway. He crawled a few feet along the roadway and saw a random piece of metal. Not much, but at least with its help he could stand. One moment he had been trudging along near the side of the road, the next moment he'd hear the boom of rifles. He'd run, been hit, fell behind an abandoned truck, and crawled into the ditch. How they had missed him he could only guess, but he imagined they hadn't seen where he fell. He'd heard a car drive by, unusual in this different time and place. Gas was rare, and a working vehicle rarer. He began trudging down the road, wishing he had a car. He had had one once, but it had been left behind when he abandoned his house. It hadn't been anything special, just a small silver sedan, but it had been his. He would have given his leg for a car, and he knew that there were some who would take that trade. He had seen the remains of those who had been eaten by their own kind, torn apart, the meat ripped off the bone, sitting in piles next to the ashes of a cold fire. He had felt sorry for them, though not enough to bury them. That would have taken too much energy, a thing he had very little of. He remembered a time that he could have run a marathon, but back then he had food, warmth, and energy to spare. Now, as he trudged along the road, dragging his leg and grunting with pain, he could hardly believe his life had been so good. It was at this point that he looked up and saw a road sign, covered in graffiti, but he could still read the name of a nearby town. He had lived in that town once, when he was a boy. It had been a small brick house on a hill. It hadn't been much, but it had been enough for him, his mother, and father. He began to think of them but stopped himself. They were long dead, and thinking of them would not make his situation better. He did think of the house though. If it was still standing, it would be a nice play to stay until his leg healed.

He began heading that way, and after several painful, long, and exhausting hours, he made it to the base of the hill. The house was still there, but much different. What had once been a lush green hill side, with large oak trees and flowering bushes, was now a mass of dead underbrush, with a few bare grey trunks sticking into the air, like memorials to what had once been. The house was in better shape, though most of the windows had been shattered, one of the doors had been beaten in, and the roof was now sagging. Then there was the body. He found it in what had once been his parent's bedroom, a bundle of rags and bones, with a dark stain on the wall behind it. This man, at least he assumed it was a man, had been sitting against the wall, staring at a picture. The picture was of a man, a woman, a boy, and a girl. They had probably been his family, and since he had noticed three mounds beside the house, he assumed that he was the last of them. He had shot himself, it appeared, though with what he could not tell, for a gun was a rare and valuable tool these days. After staring at the body for a few moments, he staggered out, closing the door behind him.

After a week, he knew he was dying. His leg was now infected, and he found himself growing weaker. He thought more of the friends he had known and of his parents. Soon he would be gone too, with no one to remember him. He also found himself thinking more of the remains in the other room. He didn't know what made him do it, but he crawled out to the garden shed, and found a trowel, rusted and lying forgotten in the corner. Dragging it and himself to the side of the house, he began to dig. After what felt like days of agonizing work, he had dug a shallow trench. It was small, but it would be enough. He dragged what was left of the man out, and rolled him into the ditch, covering him with dirt, and finding a stick nearby, he stuck it into the mound. Exhausted, he lay there, motionless, next to the small mound. It was near the end now, and his vision was beginning to dim. Then, he saw a light, and he thought he saw his friends, and there beside them were his parents. He smiled. He had finally made it home.

Southwest Pennsylvania

Thomas Beck

Acme, PA



I've heard the Monongahela rush through wooded glade
And smelled the richness of your soil as it's turned by spade.
I've walked your verdant valleys and climbed your gentle hills.
Been told tales of "revenuers" hunting for "shine" stills
Where few of your farmers still walk behind horse and plow.
I've seen tired miners trudge home with coal dust darkened brow.
Pennsylvania, your rivers were gateways to the west,
Your wilderness was haven for those who were oppressed.
Your mountains rise as monuments to all who were slain
In lands purchased with sacrifice of blood, sweat, and pain.

I've walked the Youghiogeny, fishing her small streams too
Awed as bright morning light sparkles on blankets of dew.
I've eaten buckwheat cakes in golden-brown steaming stacks
And walked in fertile fields cleared of trees by sweat and axe.
I've been to Ohiopyle and rafted waters white,
Visiting Fallingwater and Kentuck; homes built by Wright.
Your lands are rich with history's strong cultural mix.
Your life blood still flows in your rivers and "cricks."
You're a diverse land born of your people and places,
A heritage that's etched in your son's hearts and faces.

I've walked the land at "the Point" where three rivers meet,
A land where the French and English trod with marching feet.
Great beehive ovens were built to bake huge piles of coke.
Steel was forged in your factories, amid flames and smoke.
Mountain laurel grows with pale blooms and dark leaves.
I've watched women working their looms, making rag rug weaves.
Your daughters and sons dared to live in wild frontier lands
Carving homes and farms from the wilderness with bare hands.
The harshness of their world was deeply etched on each face;
Hunting, clearing, planting, fighting: all to claim their space.

I've watched the Chestnut Ridge turn from green to red and gold
And toured festivals where steam belches from tractors old.
I've read the words your patriotic sons dared to speak.
They fought for their own liberty and protect the weak.
I've fished for trout in brooks fed by icy mountain springs
And been scared by grouse, exploding with thunderous wings.

Pennsylvania, your streams chuckle and your rivers roar
Still keeping your covered bridges and small country store.
Your trails have turned to highways, your ferries to bridges
And built roads over and through thick glacial ridges.

I've been to Highland Games celebrating the Scots' past
And worked factories where huge valves were poured and cast.
Your part in the underground railway helped free black slaves.
Walking on your lakeshores, I've heard the soft lapping waves.
Osprey fly over your lakes with fish clutched in its claw.
I've eaten sandwiches piled high with French fries and slaw.
Germans, Irish, Polish, and Scots came to live and die.
They came to build their homes and shops, to work, sell, and buy.
They raised their children, passed on old ways while starting the new.
Western Pennsylvania, all your children salute you.

I've climbed the steep hill crowned by Jumonville cross.
Finding love in those hills to raise children and taste loss.
I've watched storm clouds gather, then erupt with lightning streak.
The touch of your pale winter's sunshine warms my chilled cheek.
Driving through the Wilderness Trail from Cumberland Gap
I've seen rugged lands where brave men came to hunt and trap.
Rivers forming the Ohio were the settlers' roads,
Local built flatboats carried them and their household goods.
Your small homesteads grew, fed by river's trading flow
to become towns, earning wealth from above and below.

I've toured the forts of Ligonier and Necessity
Walking the woods where Indian's voice rang loud and free.
In history, we rebelled at paying whiskey's tax.
I've been to festivals where linen thread's spun from flax.
Hunters and trappers carried knives with handles of bone.
Where Quakers and Amish settled this land for their own,
Your religious liberties drew folk from far and wide.
Boys became men in your wilds as their mettle was tried.
Conestoga wagons and carriages plied your trails.
Peddlers and freighters hauled supplies in bundles and bales.

I've ridden rides at Idlewild and Kennywood Park
And explored your caves and caverns gloomy and dark.
Some folk have used crossing rods, dousing to find water.
Jugs, crocks, and bowls were formed by the hands of a potter.
I've been awed by beautiful barns, bathed in moon's soft glow.
And been inside grist mills once powered by streams swift flow.
Pennsylvania, rich with history and things to do
From your museums to your aquarium and zoo.

Hayrides and sleigh rides and riding the Duquesne incline;
Bakeries, breweries, markets, and places to dine.

Views from Mt. Washington, stunning when Pittsburgh's lights shine
At Amish farms, bright hued quilts hang to dry on a line.
Your mines delved deep seeking your veins of coal and iron ore
I've hiked through groves of chestnut, oak, elm, and sycamore.
Inns still give rest and respite along your roads and pikes.
I've watched your smithies shaping rods into nails and spikes.
Your lands shaped the folk who came and they reshaped your land
With pick, axe, gun, shovel, or whatever was at hand.
Western Pennsylvania's shared your bounties of the past.
Your mark in history's journal, wide ranging and vast.

Horseshoe Curve built to guide train cars filled with coal and grains
You've even kept museums for your trolleys and trains.
I've watched colorful parades rolling down flag lined streets,
And been to games, where girls cheer for their heroes in cleats.
You have battlefields that give the dead respect that they're due,
Where soldiers' tombstones are draped with flags; red, white, and blue.
Southwest Pennsylvania, grassroots of the Keystone State
Your place in history is proud. It will not abate.
Present treasures are still found in your peoples and lands
Constantly reshaped by their ideas and their hands.



My Mom's Birthday

McKenna Brackney

Latrobe, PA / 2nd Grade

Maddy, Michael, Megan and I were walking in the woods with my mommy on her birthday. Megan, looked behind her and saw a small, black and white cat. She wasn't a kitten, but she wasn't a grown up cat either. The fully kitty started walking behind us. She started meowing because we were walking too fast. She kept meowing as we were walking towards our home so we picked her up and brought her home. We named her Patches because she has patches of white and black fur. We fed her and guess how many cans of cat food she ate? She ate three cans of cat food! When we showed her to our dad, he let us keep her because we told him she was our mom's birthday present.

The end!

The Fish

James Krom

Latrobe, PA / Age 12

I don't know if we, my brothers and I, really wanted fish, but we were pretty excited when we learned we were getting them. "But you're going to have to feed them yourselves," our Mom said. "Okay," I muttered to myself. "This is kind of cool."

Unfortunately, it was not as easy as we thought to feed the fish the right amount of food, and soon three of the fish were dead. That kind of got us to start feeding them more often. Maybe feeding them more often would help.

A while later, our neighbor Justin came over. "I want to see your fish!" remarked Justin. "They're upstairs," I answered. "You go up while I put this stuff away. I'll be right up." A few minutes later I heard, "James, all your fish are swimming upside down!" "Yeah right," I thought. "Why would our fish be dead?" I rushed upstairs. Our fish were floating in their tank, eyes dark as coal. I guess you can feed fish too much food.



Sliding Into My Kitchen

Marcia Speicher

Donegal, PA

A little girl snuggles deeper into the safety of her down comforter, only a small oval of face visible to the fresh morning air. The smell of toasting bread slides under her bedroom door and makes its way to the oval. Opening one eye just a peep, she sees that the sun has turned the dust particles to fairy dust, each sparkly speck suspended in the air. She watches closely, hoping that at any moment one of the sparkles will develop features, and she'll find herself face to face with Tinkerbell. She's thinking about yesterday when she got to play Peter Pan with her middle brother. Smiling to herself, she recalls how nice he'd been to her while they played. He didn't do any of his usual power plays by forcing her to do his chores in exchange for the precious playtime he gifted her. They'd put every chair they could find in the house in rows, about 3 feet apart around the sofas, so that they could "fly" through the room while singing – at the tops of their lungs, by the way – "I GOTTA CROW, UR-UR-UR-URRRR". Maybe they could be friends...

The whistle of the teapot brings the little girl back to now, and she jumps to the floor and runs straight through the fairy dust to the window. From the right angle, she can see if any of the ponies are in the little paddock near the barn. And if they are up by the barn she can sneak out fast, climb over the fence and slide on to one of their backs while they graze. There is nothing in the world finer. If she can sit on Sprite it will be perfect. Sprite is sweet and won't step away just in time for her to fall to the ground. Sprite is a white pony with a pretty little Arabian head, soft dark eyes, and a long shimmery mane like angel hair. If she gets Sprite, she will lay back with her head on the mare's rump, and even if the ponies start walking down to the lower pasture she won't get bucked off. She quietly giggles to herself as she imagines it right now: Sprite

walking through the grassy meadow as she leans back with her head on Sprites rump, eyes closed, the smell of earth, feeling each swaying step with the sun's rays baking her face, the ponies warm furry body warming her back. And even better for the little girl, this will be a ride with no supervision, no instructions on how to sit or what commands to give the pony, or that she should go clean the stalls before she played.

But that was then.

Sighing, I slide back into my kitchen. My coffee cup is empty. The reality is that it's icy and damp outside, and I want another warm bowl of latte to wrap my fingers around so that I can slide back in to the world where I lived when I was a little girl, a world where dust sparkles turned into Tinkerbell dust. Soon I'll have to go outside to the barn, smell the winter hay, and blanket the horses that are too spirited for me imagine ever sitting on them bareback, leaning back on their rumps, with the sun warming my face, and their furry bodies warming my back.



This is the place

Madison Brackney

Latrobe, PA / 8th Grade

This is the place where I grew up.

Though we've had many dogs, I never raised a pup.

My family has shared both laughter and tears.

My parents were always there to ease my fears.

This place always brought joy to my heart.

And made my memories a work of art.

Although at points I felt like crying,

As I realized that my childhood was slowly dying.

At times I felt like I was all alone,

But that just was not true in the place that I called home.

Lost

Henry Krom

Latrobe, PA / Age 8

One summer day while on vacation with our neighbors, the Duda's, we decided to go to the Big Rocks to play. All seven kids got in (some of them cramming into the trunk!), along with two adults. Papa, who was driving, and Mr. Jeff, riding shotgun, were lucky because they got to ride in the front. We were soon headed toward the Big Rocks in our Grandma's blue Jeep. We accidentally went too far down the road. We got out of the car and started hiking in what we thought was the right direction. After hiking for about ten minutes and not finding anything, we started going in the other direction. We found a relatively big clearing that we had never seen before with a weird-looking machine that Papa said was a "wheat-something." We hiked through the field which proved harder than we expected because people kept getting bitten by fire ants. When we finally found the Big Rocks we had a giant acorn fight in which I got captured by my Dad. The adults forfeited because we were throwing too hard, meaning that we automatically won. Ha ha ha!



Annie's Wild Trip

Stephen Foss

Latrobe, PA / 3rd Grade

Years ago, my parents got us a dog named Annie. A few years after she died, my brother got a stuffed dog for Easter. Guess what he named her? Bingo. Annie. This is one of her adventures.

Annie yawned. She looked around. Why was her dog bed in a car? At least her food bowl was in here. As she tried to remember, the brothers came in. So did their mom and dad.

Annie saw Jordan Hall, the dog next door, sleeping behind her. It startled her. What was he doing here? It was a mystery.

As Annie thought it all out, she suddenly remembered they were going on a trip. Annie decided to go back to sleep.

Annie was awoken by a bump, bump, bump. The car stopped. When she was let out, she was on a farm. The family spent a very happy month on the farm. Annie loved so much about the country. She loved chasing fish in the stream with Jordan Hall. She loved watching the brothers ride horses. She loved laughing at the silly chickens. All too soon, it was time to go home. Annie wished she could stay longer.

Something went wrong on the way home. "Are you sure this is the way?" asked the mom. "Yes," said the dad. A half hour later he changed his mind. "This is not the way home after all," he said. Everyone was

getting worried. Annie let out a whine. She had had too much to drink and had to go. So they stopped the car and Annie and Jordan Hall went into the woods to do their business.

They went too far into the woods and they got lost trying to get back to the family. Annie sniffed the air and said, "This is not the way back!" At first she wanted to go back to the farm.

"Home is very important to us dogs. We must go home," Jordan said. He started off. "You won't survive!" Annie called. "I'm going home," Jordan said solemnly. Annie considered her options and decided to follow him. The farm was fun but she knew her family would be waiting for her at home.

After two days in the wilderness, Annie said, "I'm sure learning a lot about this place!" She was silent for a minute, then said softly, "I also am learning the importance of home. I'm starting to really miss it."

Finally, looking over a tall cliff, there was the town that they lived in. "Come on," Jordan said. "Let's go home."

For Annie, no place was as good as home.

Annie learned an important lesson on that wild trip. "Now what was that lesson?" I bet you're thinking. Annie learned that friendship, love, and caring are all in one place. That place is home.



My Birthday

Michael Brackney

Latrobe, PA / 7th Grade

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away but, also right now and right here, my mom and I were walking through Wally-World getting ideas for my birthday present, when suddenly ninjas jumped out of the shadows of the lawn and garden department. I couldn't see where they came from because before I knew what was happening, they put a Walmart bag over my head and took me away to a dark, deserted storage room. I tried to escape, but they had bound my hands too tightly.

One of the ninja's came over to me and said, "We have finally found you! You are the one who made us wait for over an hour to buy a pack of gum the last time we were here. Because of you, we missed our National Ninjas' November Knockdown. It's the not to be missed ninja event of the year." "Hey," I said, "that wasn't my fault, the computer broke while the cashier was scanning my dad's groceries." It doesn't matter, we are still going to terminate you, just like you terminated our chance to make it to the N.N.N.K!" the nasty ninja said as he left the room. At this point, I knew what I had to do. I had to escape or be eliminated.

Luckily, a careless Walmart worker had left an open penknife sticking out of a cardboard box behind me. I quickly cut the ropes that imprisoned my hands. I couldn't believe my luck, I saw a box that contained a rocket launcher that launched confetti blowing teddy bears at the rate of 20 bears per second. I quickly grabbed the launcher and ran out the door. I launched teddies and confetti at any ninja in sight. Soon it was

a teddy-confetti massacre. When the confetti settled, there wasn't a ninja standing. They were down for the count, covered in teddies and confetti. Now it was time to run!

I caught up with my mom in the Lego isle. My mom said, "Oh my gosh Michael, I was so worried! What did they do to you?" I said, "Mom, I'm fine, let's just get what we need and get out of here." As we were leaving the isle, I saw this really cool Lego set that I wanted. "Mom, can you get me this set please?" She said, "I'll get it for you for your birthday but you have to promise to act surprised." I said, "Ok, I will". I held the set in my hands the whole way home. My mom had to pry it away from me when we reached the door.

So now we fast forward a couple of weeks to the day of my birthday. I woke up for school knowing that I was now twelve. I had to go to school, which is not the best birthday gift, but my day was actually great. My oldest sister, Madison, was nice to me the entire day. I got to pick my lab group in science. Everyone sang Happy Birthday to me at lunch, and at recess the kids let me pick the teams for soccer. And did I mention that I brought in delicious doughnuts to share with the whole entire school?

When I got home from school, my mom asked "What do you want for dinner?" I told her I would love to have Chinese food. She said, "Done!" About an hour later, we were all enjoying our favorite Chinese treats, fried dumplings, General Tso's Chicken, egg rolls, and wonton soup. Dinner was DELICIOUS! Singing Happy Birthday is a big deal at my house. I love when McKenna, my youngest sister, excitedly yells "cha, cha cha" at the end of each verse. Then it was cake time! I had chosen a marble cake with white icing. Marble cake is the best of both worlds, yellow and chocolate in one cake...no need to choose. . After we finished our pieces of cake, it was time to open my present. I sat down in front of my family. Everyone was sitting on the floor and I was up in one of our wooden chairs, the birthday seat of honor. Megan, my middle sister, gave me my present, which I opened in a flash! It was the Lego set! I had almost forgotten about the Walmart ninjas, but seeing the Lego set brought it all back. I could have sworn that just for a second, I spied a snickering, ninja gliding past my window as I put down my Lego set.

I was still thinking about that ninja when we moved onto our next birthday tradition...confetti poppers. As I pulled the string, and the confetti burst from the barrel, I heard a high pitched ninja scream coming from outside the window.

Oh no...here we go again, well at least it's never boring at my house.



Secret Agent Friends

Margaret Krom

Latrobe, PA / Age 6

I was in the woods with my secret agent friends. The woods were white with snow and it was between warm and cold. We had on cloaks of warm red silk.

We were petting a wolf together. She was bigger than a dog with soft and black and gray fur. Suddenly, we heard another wolf screaming. It sounded like a sad and loud howl. I felt like crying when I heard it. I asked my friends what we should do. We went to the rescue!

When we got to the wolf we saw a boy wearing a black suit with a whip in his hand. He was probably as big as a teenager boy and he had black hair and brown dark eyes that looked like bad guy eyes.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

"I am trying to capture this bad wolf!" he shouted at me and my friends.

"It's isn't bad," I said. "This wolf has friendly blue eyes and it has soft gray and black fur."

"Oh," said the boy. He looked sad. Then he put the whip down and made it into a leash for the wolf. He apologized to all of us and he went to his house.

Then we all went to our secret hideout in the woods with the wolf on the leash. We brought the wolf with us because the wolf turned out to be the mom of the wolf we had been petting before we heard the wolf scream. We went to bed and then the next morning we thought about what we had done to save the wolf.



My Life as a Blacksmith's Apprentice

Ryan Gorsich

Latrobe, PA / 8th Grade

Hi, I'm William, an apprentice to a great man and an even better blacksmith, Thomas Krieder. I am 14 years old, and I have been an apprentice nine months. To become a blacksmith I must serve seven years of apprenticeship. I didn't choose to become an apprentice, my father chose it for me. You see, I am not a muscly person, so my father brought me here to become stronger. My morning starts while Mr. Krieder and the family are sitting down for breakfast, which is very early. While they are eating, I must clean out the forges, break up the charcoal needed for that day, and start new fires in the forges. After that, I go inside and eat the leftovers from the breakfast table, if there are any. If there are not, the missus usually gives me some bread and hot water (for it is typically cold for the whole morning).

Once we get to work, I go pretty much unnoticed. My job is to pump air into the fire to start it up, once it is roaring and feels as hot as the sun, I go on to the next job. Sometimes the master yells at me for not paying attention to the fire. My father was told that I was going to be treated almost like one of the family, but now that I am here, I am treated more like a slave. After a while, the master usually gets impatient with me and tells me to just go haul more charcoal for the forges or something extremely painful like bringing him loads of heavy metal bars that weigh almost as much as I do. After months of this, I am starting to wonder if a broom is the only tool I will be allowed to use here.

At about one o'clock every day, I am told to go break up more charcoal to put into the blazing fire. I break them up with an axe, this is my least favorite out of all the jobs. This is because lots of fine charcoal dust is covering me from head to toe when I am done. But doing it is one of the very few ways I can get the encouraging words, "Thank you", from Mr. Krieder.

After hours of forging weapons, tools, cooking accessories, and also many hooks, we end our day. I clean up the shop, which takes about an hour. Then, I finally get to eat some dinner, which, after a long day, tastes like it came directly from paradise. My dinner usually consists of some bread, potatoes, and delicious green beans. While during the day my master treats me like a slave, the evening makes me feel like I am rich. After dinner, I go to bed, which feels like laying on a giant cotton ball after such a trying day.

So there is the day of a blacksmiths apprentice summarized into four paragraphs. Doesn't sound like the most interesting day, does it? But if you were to spend one day like that, you would become very knowledgeable in the ways of a blacksmith. Here are some examples of what a blacksmith would probably make during his twelve hour day.



Bringing Snickers Home

Megan Brackney

Latrobe, PA / 4th Grade

My family and I, except for my dad, because he was working, went to my brother's Boy Scout camp out with some friends. When we got there a little scruffy dog jumped into the car and onto my lap. When I got out of the car, the half bald dog kept hugging my legs with his front legs. Then he followed me up to the campsite.

I called my dad and said "We found a little dog who will not leave my side, but he will not go near anyone who lives here. He has very little fur and will probably not survive the winter." My dad said "If you really love this dog and he will not survive the winter, then you may have him." I shared my food with him as much as I could because, I knew he was now my new dog.

We brought Snickers into the tent, but he was not allowed on the air mattress because we did not know what he had gotten into. We started to think about names for this little Jack Russell Terrier mix, first it was Twizzler, then Buddy, and finally we thought, how about Snickers! The next day, guess how many ticks we discovered Snickers had? He had 15 ticks on his skinny little body. We brought him home, and we immediately bathed him from head to toe and put flea and tick medicine on him. But, he was still not allowed on the couch or beds for a few weeks. To this day he still loves it when we put up the tent to camp out! Because he knows that is how we brought Snickers home!

(Untitled)

Luke Vanden Berk

Latrobe, PA / 3rd Grade

When I was younger, our friends had 6 dogs. Three of them were grown dogs and the other three were puppies. They were Yorkshire terriers. My mom, my dad, my two sisters Mary and Theresa, and my two brothers Anthony and Matthew, and I (Luke) puppy sat all 6 dogs. We liked that a lot! Our friends told us that one of the puppies was still for sale. We all wanted the puppy! The puppy was called Thunder. Our friend called him Thunder because he made a growling noise that sounded like Thunder. Thunder was black and brown. His fur was very soft.

We counted our money and found out that we had enough money saved to buy Thunder. We asked our mom and dad if we could buy Thunder. Our mom wanted him too but our dad said "No!" We begged and begged. He still said "No!" We promised we would take care of Thunder. He still said "No!" Then, we told him we had enough money to buy Thunder and that we would pay all the bills for him, we would pay for his food, and whatever we needed to take care of him. Then our dad didn't say no (but he didn't say yes either).

A few days later, our dad and our mom called us downstairs and told us to sit down on the couches. Then, our dad said that we could buy Thunder!

That evening, our family walked to our friends' house. They lived down the hill from us. One of us was carrying our piggy bank. One of us was carrying a dog crate with a blanket inside. And, one of us was carrying Cheerios. We were on our way to buy Thunder! We didn't have any dog treats so we brought along some Cheerios to give to Thunder.

We arrived at the house and we bought Thunder! Then we walked home. Then we were trying to name him. A couple of days later, we decided to keep his name Thunder. We've had Thunder for four years and now we have another dog too!

The end.



I Prayed

Robert Tremblay

Mesa, AZ

Home is where the heart is and I was blessed to have been saved after my Near Death Experience. It was in this realm that I realized where the real "home" actually is. It was an honor to see it and I share it with you and some lessons I received from it. One day we all will return home. In the interim I hope you all enjoy the now. I survived the past four years and two terminal diagnoses as well as a stint in hospice so I might share with the world. I write this having realized the gravity of the changed man before you today. I have a

tremendous feeling I have something important to say to the world and will attempt to put it on paper for my own peace, I hope it helps one person, I hope it makes a difference.

I also wrote it for one person in my life to allow that inspiration to wash over me in a moment so she will understand her impact on me. I hope it finds its way into your heart somehow in your own way and makes any level of impact...I have always remembered the unknown confederate soldier writing where he asks for things and receives others. It is in this spirit which I write an additional chapter of it...It inspires me!!! I wrote this last night in an inspired twenty minute over load...I enjoy writing but never had such an inspiration. I think it's important somehow, maybe for just me but I can hope for others. I have found sharing my experience is very healing for me as well as others and in that regard I hope you enjoy this as much as I did writing it. May all that's beautiful fill your heart daily. Don't ever waste a minute, the next one is just not guaranteed.

I prayed for heaven and the ability to reach the stars, instead I touched the face of god and was returned a different man so I might say something to the world.

I have prayed every day since my illness, but never for a cure, only for mercy. I was given instead a hard road but endless moments of hope so I would have a deeper understanding of life...

I prayed for a healthy body in a dark time of life and was given a "soul-shine" to illuminate my way so I might see clearly.

I prayed for wisdom to understand, instead was given a "beautiful mind" so I might appreciate the world without defining it...

I prayed for courage of self, instead was gifted the ability to strengthen those around me to remind me humility...

I prayed for a clear understanding of my life and past and got a deep clarity of thought to see into others so I may understand the meaning of service to mankind...

I prayed at times simply for one more day, instead I was given years so I may remember it's about each day and truly appreciate it with others...and understand...!!!

I prayed for help from people in my life, and I was honored instead with solitude so I would have a deeper meaning of myself and the daily epiphany of self-awareness...

I prayed for a quiet lone death to spare others around me their pain, instead I was given my father's final wish of family unity and the tender support within, so I might understand the true nature of unconditional love...

I prayed for at times, for a quick thoughtless death, instead was given an endless gift to impact people's lives so I might understand my purpose in the world...

I prayed for a voice to speak out, instead I was blessed with the ability to hear angels weep at the beauty and possibilities of my future for love and compassion.

I prayed for the strength to stand alone, instead was made weak in the presence of real love to ensure my heart was always open so I would truly see and make an impact with another..

I prayed for the eyes of god, instead was given a rare love so I might see god every day in their eyes....so I might daily understand what real love is...thank you for that !

I prayed for all beautiful things for myself and instead was given wonderful gifts for others so I might know selflessness.

I prayed for all singular things and was given multiple things, none of which I requested... so I might always understand the gift of giving more than I receive, ALWAYS!!

I was given life and all things man searches for in life and death and a new profound impactful spirit that everyday gets stronger...an open heart rewarded, and a great sense of peace and purpose.

I was given No fear of pain, as I was shown it is in the fire of pain that shapes beautiful things and forges our character every day.

I was gifted no fear of death so I might truly appreciate life and understand death is not the end.

I was given the rare ability to see beauty in all things, so I might never miss one thing.

I have never prayed much before my illness but I did believe...today I thank god every single day, out-loud, at the first beauty I see every day. You see, I was most importantly, given hope, and the realization that hope gives me all things.

I was given an iron clad faith in all things and the belief that all people are, and want to be, beautiful.

I was given love and all these other things so I might understand the power of dreams, and oh how I dream...

I was given time to live most importantly by and through the love and support of others so I might always be in a state of gratitude. One more Day. Thanks for that.



My Home

Sarah Opst

Mt. Pleasant, PA / 11th Grade

I have imagined a day when I return to my home and see it uninhabited. Old and dusty, tarnished and gray, it stands, petrified, in silence and loneliness. Not a soul has breathed within it for many years, and the world has moved on; the earth turned on its axis many times, the mind of man reaching into a new expanse. It is a hall of memories, though, preserved in dust, apparently hollow, but truly overflowing with thoughts and

paths and song and conversation, unspoken love, and tears; erupting souls, bursting anger, and somehow in the end, a perfect, angelic peace.

If I could revisit my home like a ghost—not part of the world but in it—I would re-experience the person I was during those years and what I thought and how I felt about life in general. The smells would bring a rush of memories, and through those scents, I would re-experience specific moments. But my presence there would simply bring back the same presence I represented the years I lived in that house; I would re-experience the same person, but in a different form, a younger version of me. In that way, through standing in that house, I would embody the past and be the past and relive the past.

Perhaps my home holds an especially acute significance because it is the place where I was schooled or maybe because I lived almost my entire childhood there—unbroken, uninterrupted, and an ongoing story. Childhood homes, though, are a world away from any other home because within them, the unformed mind begins to form its foundations, and this is its charm. Home is where I learned how to think and what to think, but more importantly, where I really grasped the concept of who I am and why I am.

My home holds all the conversations, the integral moments, the emotions, the decisions, that shaped my identity. It was the place that sheltered me and preserved me as I grew, but also a place of windows and doors, opening up the world to me in ways no other place could because home is dear and close. There, I was sheltered from the world and introduced to it all at once in a tumbling, colorful array of events and emotion and time. The walls of my home witnessed a heart and mind trying to nestle into place and to learn and understand through each stage of life as new information wreaks havoc and beauty.

I can remember lying on the deck with my sister, a piece of my own soul, and looking up into the sky, watching the meteors in December. We were on the earth, and they were in the sky, farther than we could reach, but close enough for us to see. They freely made their shimmering arcs by concepts still unlearned and by a power yet to be fathomed. They painted a picture for us. Flickering and spattering in silvery brightness, they danced, and we watched breathless. At sixteen and fifteen, we really were still little girls, but we shared that beautiful ignorance together, for without it, we would not have been amazed.

Countless times, I lied in bed and gazed out the window. As the only one awake, isolation thickly clothed me, but it served to water my wonderings as it did so often those nights. The moon glowed and beckoned me, speaking something of another language—the language of lights and galaxies—but something beyond what I could understand then within the box of my bedroom.

Within my home, I sat in the living room on the piano bench many nights when I was the only one in the house and felt the rush of energy and passion and power as my own hands played a sequence of notes that meant a thousand things at once within my mind, but only black and white on the page. Within my home, I read the passage of a book and felt my mind revolutionized as I stared at the pages, wondering where the power of those words really came from—a flat page, a writer's heart, or the power and wonders within this world, or even the code of my own being? In my home, I whispered to my younger brother about the mysteries of the world, or the limitations of our minds, or gazed upon his face as he slept, studying it as if he was the only child on earth. Within my home, bonds grew stronger than ever between my family and bonds grew within myself as I connected my heart to the important places and things in my life.

Within my home, it all formed: my feelings, my dreams, my thoughts, faults, fears, my ideologies. They all coalesce together to form the world I live in and to form the person I am. My home was where I grew up. But those few words truly mean thousands more and then again, a thousand unspoken ones which are incapable of human expression because the future has not yet played out.



Home

Aarushi Agrawal

San Jose, CA

Home is where

The inner peace takes over mind.

Cement of love will

keep family members bind.

Home is where

The heart craves to return.

Fire of gripes and grudges

is often seem to burn.

Home is where

Empathy is must to survive.

Floors of pains and sorrows

not burnished but are skived.

Home is where

The discipline see, no neglect.

Facade of terms and house rules,

so robust to keep the members intact.

Home is where

We argue and we fight.

Windows of adjustments

will open to a delightful sight.

Home is where

Expectations are kept very low.

Garden of “forget and forgive everyone”

will often blossom and grow. Home is where

Respect is given to each one’s say.

Doors of discussion and communication

will keep the infliction at bay.

Home is where

Members have faith and support.

Walls of trust and fidelity strong stand

to hold the roof of rapport.

Home is where

The family happiness comes first.

Hinges of laughters and chatters

can never go squeak in rust.

Home is where

We always believe in the unity.

Blinds of blunders and mistakes are rolled down,

we brace to fend for familial dignity.

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