A Festival of Writing
2013 Edition

Prize-Winning Essays
from the Thirty-Fifth Annual
Youngstown State University
English Festival

Featuring
The Thomas and Carol Gay Lecturers
Chris Crutcher,
Sharon M. Draper,
and Nikki Grimes
The James A. Houck Lecturer
Chris Crowe

7th-9th Grades
Thursday, April 18,
or Friday, April 19, 2013

10th-12th Grades
Wednesday, April 17, 2013
9:00 a.m. – 3:45 p.m.
Kilcawley Center
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For nearly all of its more than thirty years, the Youngstown State University English Festival Committee has published a collection of the prize-winning essays written during each Festival’s activities and competitions.

Such a publication is wholly in keeping with the Festival’s stated goal to “recognize and reward distinctive writing.” It is also a means for publicizing the extraordinary work that Youngstown-area students do at the Festival, both in preparing themselves by reading the works on the English Festival booklist and in composing thoughtful and engaging essays before and during the Festival.

The essays included in this 2013 edition of *A Festival of Writing* are no exception. They reflect the excellent language facility of our area’s students, as well as their careful reading and critical thinking. The YSU English Festival Committee congratulates those students whose work appears in these pages, and it commends the parents and teachers who have supported these young writers.

Gary Salvner  
Jeff Buchanan

Co-Chairs of the English Festival Committee

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**2013 Booklist**

**7th–9th Grades**

*Mississippi Trial, 1955*
Chris Crowe

*Getting Away with Murder: The True Story of the Emmett Till Case* *
Chris Crowe

*Athletic Shorts*
Chris Crutcher

*King of the Mild Frontier* *
Chris Crutcher

*The Battle of Jericho*
Sharon M. Draper

*Fire from the Rock*
Sharon M. Draper

*Bronx Masquerade* *
Nikki Grimes

**10th–12th Grades**

*Getting Away with Murder: The True Story of the Emmett Till Case* *
Chris Crowe

*Deadline*
Chris Crutcher

*King of the Mild Frontier* *
Chris Crutcher

*The Battle of Jericho* *
Sharon M. Draper

*Copper Sun*
Sharon M. Draper

*Bronx Masquerade* *
Nikki Grimes

*Dark Sons*
Nikki Grimes

* indicates a title common to both levels
The town of Douglass can feel the warmth of giving in the air. The annual toy drive held by the Douglass High Warriors of Distinction is starting again. These young men are thought of as neighborhood saints to the community. The drive is an annual project that brings toys to dozens of local families.

“This toy drive is a staple of existence to the Warriors,” member Rick Sharp explained. “The Warriors represent helping those less fortunate than ourselves. At the end of the day, we just want to see our fellow man happy.”

Known for their selflessness and generosity, the members of the prestigious group are highly regarded in Douglass.

“It’s comical they’re called ‘Warriors’, because their ways are so tender and kind,” one local community member who benefited from the drive commented. “I have complete admiration for these gentlemen, and I cannot give enough thanks for all they have done for my family.”

The Warriors will be busy wrapping and sorting toys throughout December and deliveries will be made on December 23rd. On behalf of the community, the Warriors of Distinction are undeniably venerable young men.

**Style and Fashion**

On a trip to Douglass High, one will encounter what may only be put as “unique” fashion statements. Throughout the halls of the scurrying students swarms a sea of pink T-shirts, mostly worn by men.

“We’re pledges for the Warriors of Distinction,” student Kofi Freeman clarified.

“Wearing these shirts symbolizes who we are and what we do.”

When asked exactly what they were doing, Freeman swiftly replied, “That’s classified.”

One noticeable student was Josh Prescott, who managed to accessorize his pink shirt with white blotches and black specks.

“I guess I’m not much of a maid!” Prescott laughed. “But, hey man, you don’t need to be squeaky clean to be a Warrior, right?”

The other stylish trend seen around the school was the legendary silk jacket of the Warriors of Distinction.

“The jackets symbolize achievement,” Warrior Eddie Mahoney stated. “We go through a lot to become a member, and the silk jacket is a reward to show diligence and strength.”

When asked what all they “had to go through” to become a Warrior, Mahoney simply stated a familiar answer: “That’s classified.”
Human Interest Story

A young man caught under the wing of desire and degradation: this describes Jericho Prescott. Prescott longed for acceptance and a place of belonging. However, this goal was taken beyond the point of humiliation as Prescott agreed to pledge for the local group, the Warriors of Distinction. Prescott and other pledges soon realized that this group donned the physiognomy of righteousness, while covering up unfathomable immorality with a silk jacket.

Throughout the past couple months the Warriors have made pledges execute embarrassing, painful, and simply juvenile commands behind closed doors.

“I just wanted to fit in,” Prescott recounted. “Nobody in my school really notices me and all I could think about was that fine silk jacket and everybody knowing my name. The worse the pledge activities got, I just kept thinking that it’d all be worth it soon.”

Jericho’s obsessive behavior over becoming a Warrior began to worry his father, Cedric Prescott.

“My son was never one to become dependent on anything,” Mr. Prescott explained. “Suddenly it was as if his supreme desire was to become a Warrior. He seemed so temperamental, and didn’t want to listen to any voice that told him to be careful about these activities.”

Jericho Prescott’s story illuminates a universal problem for all youth: fitting in is becoming more important than self-discretion. Young people today are so willing to do anything for a sense of belonging, even incriminating themselves to any degree. As a society, people must work to show adolescents that a feeling of belonging isn’t held in the hands of popularity or reputation, but rests solely within their own acceptance of themselves.

“If I could, I would take it all back,” Jericho Prescott ended. “All I wanted was to belong somewhere. Now I just wish I could belong with Josh again.”

Editorial

As a personal opinion on the events that passed recently in Douglass, I express my deepest feelings of anger and sorrow.

The commandments of these young men (or rather boys) to become a Warrior of Distinction not only humiliate their peers, but threaten their lives as well. The hazing that occurred amongst these Warriors of Anything-But-Distinction is an outrage. Activities like these that involve scarring on emotional and psychological levels promote bullying, violence, and exploitation in our youth today. It even ended a precious young life.

Josh Prescott died Saturday, January 31st by jumping out of a second story window. All this was an attempt to receive a silk jacket inscribed with “Warriors of Distinction.”

High school is a precious time of enlightenment. However, students learn more than just math and reading, but cultivate who they are. The advantage that students take of the malleable souls of their peers is an age-old problem that a small town like this thought would never affect them.

Clubs that strip children of their pride and innocence do not deserve survival. Douglass High should begin a new group. This group would integrate students from all paths of life, have responsible and present supervisors, and certainly no suicide attempts to join.

In particular response to the death of Josh Prescott, I also suggest to the community the creation of an organization in Josh’s name to help teens who struggle with fitting in. A support group like this that rallies our youth in a positive light is highly needed, and Josh Prescott deserves to be remembered.

If there is one thing that we’ve all learned from this experience it is this: the true warrior of distinction in this world is the one who rejoices where he already belongs and welcomes others into it with open arms.
Fashion:

It’s Winter Ball time again, and this year, fashion reporter Sandy Smith had the chance to meet with the King of the Winter Ball at Lake Michigan High School, Angus Bethune. He looked dashing in a burgundy tuxedo, this year’s fashion rage for young men. With his head held high, strong and confident, he walked into the gymnasium ready to be prom king. Now, here’s how he got there:

Q: Angus, how did you manage to find that perfect tux?
A: My Dad. He’s full of fashion advice, from top to bottom.

Q: Well, tell us about the journey to your amazing burgundy tux! First, the jacket...
A: Well, according to my dad, you don’t want to keep your jacket buttoned for a long time. When unbuttoned, it’s more casual. Also, it won’t pull so tight where you bulge.

Q: That is some great advice! And the pants?
A: My Dad also taught me how to buy those. Always buy high-waisted pants, especially if you’re a little portly.

Q: Where did you go to find this season’s hottest designs?
A: Roland’s Big and Tall. It’s especially important to be comfortable for such a special night. With that in mind, I’d like to advise against lying to a salesman about your full waist size. It’s always better to be a little embarrassed than to have half of yourself hanging over.

Q: Do you have any advice when it comes to the big question: cummerbund or vest?
A: The cummerbund is the way to go. It gives a sleeker, more streamlined silhouette.

Q: Part of your hip, trendy look is the untucked shirt. Where did you get the inspiration?
A: It’s a mortal fashion sin for a fat man to purchase a tuck-in shirt. Again, credit for my father.

Q: Last question. Why burgundy?
A: I kinda see earth tones as a tribute to my Michigan farm country roots. After all, my parents named me after a cow!

Although Mr. Bethune was not present to comment, it’s clear that this father/son relationship is a close and special one.

Remember Angus’s tips, promgoers! And most of all, remember Angus’s parting words: “A SMILE is always the best accessory!”

Darren Miller

Darren Miller, of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, passed away after an extended illness at 12:04 a.m. Sunday, July 27, 1989, in a hospital in Boise, Idaho. He was 25.

Darren attended college for two years at Penn State before he decided he would much rather take a break and travel around the country. His friends and family enjoyed his adventurous spirit and love of life.

Throughout his life, Darren focused more on others than himself. Before Darren died, he decided he wanted to go visit Uncle Gene. Once there, he connected with Louie Banks, who would soon become a dear friend. Louie had recently suffered a loss, and Darren wanted to talk about it with him. Darren was extraordinarily aware about what others were feeling. When Louie was anxious about something, even worrying about Darren, he would receive help from a true and compassionate friend. Darren faced his death with courage and confidence, knowing that his lifelong Christian faith would see him through.

A favorite pastime of Darren’s was wildlife photography. He especially enjoyed using his one-of-a-kind rifle camera, which took a picture when he pulled the trigger. This camera allowed him to be “one of the guys” in Central Pennsylvania, while remaining true to himself and his peaceful nature. He left this camera to Louie Banks, who will treasure it in his memory.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that memorial contributions be made to the AIDS Community Alliance of Central Pennsylvania.
Darren died at a very young age but lived a full life. He will be truly missed.

My View: Gender Issues in Wrestling
By Sandy Smith
Special to The Coho Times

Some people think that the United States has finally succeeded in its many battles for equality among all citizens. Actually, discrimination is alive and well in America. I saw this first-hand at the wrestling match between Petey Shropshrire (Coho Wolverines) and Chris Byers (Silver Creek Grizzlies) last Friday. Spectators were openly against the idea of a girl wrestling a boy. You’d think that in 2013, athletic contests would be free of quibbling about who’s allowed to participate, but that’s clearly not the case.

Obviously, Coho and Silver Creek High Schools are in compliance with Title IX, the 1972 federal law that prohibits sex bias in school programs that get federal support. It’s just that the spectators didn’t get the memo. The crowd was split into two distinct camps, fervently supporting one contender or the other based not on their athleticism, but on their gender.

I’m not opposed to rowdy fans. After all, sports competitions come down to winning or losing. That’s the point, right? It’s just unfortunate that emotion got especially intense not only because Coho might have lost a close match, but also because they might have lost to a girl. How are students supposed to have a commitment to gender equality when their parents don’t?

During the match, you could see something was going on. These two talented young wrestlers weren’t living up to their reputations. I believe there might have been a plan between those two teenage minds, something to tie the match. Something in the way they looked at each other made me wonder.

Anyway, the Shropshrire/Byers match awarded no points to either team. Probably because they were so hung up on the gender issue, neither athlete wrestled to their full potential. Which truly is a loss... for everybody.

Feature/Human Interest Story: “Student Poets Bloom in the Bronx” (page 144)

BRONX TOWNSHIP- High School English teacher Edward Ward recently started to host “Open Mike Fridays.” Students write poems and read them in front of the class. Students have been sharing their poems once a month. So many students have decided to write poems, that Mr. Ward says he is going to have to let the students read more frequently. The student’s poems are “energetic” (page 144) and “rich in positive social messages” (page 144). Published poet, Pedro Pietri, also “took up the mike” last Friday and read a couple of his newest poems. He also gave the students advice. Student Devon Hope read one of his pieces titled “Bronx Masquerade” (page 32) and student Diondra Jordan recited one of her poems entitled “High Dive” (page 99). Student Tyrone Bittings said that the poems give the students a release and that it helps them relate to one another. The school is also had an assembly on Tuesday (see article “Poetry Assembly”).

Sports reporting: Quitting for Books?

Star basketball player of the Bronx Tigers handed in his jersey on Monday after the team’s practice. Devon Hope told the coach that he didn’t want to play basketball anymore and wanted to read and study instead. Player Mike Andrews said that Devon seemed to read more lately and the reading seemed to take priority over his playing. The coach of the team said that it was such a shame to see all of Devon’s basketball skills go to waste. Close friend of Devon, Tyrone Bittings said that Devon had some “moves” (page 33). When asked why he was reading, Devon said, “I’m reading...for me, actually,” (page 83). Devon said that he had often snuck into the library and read before and after practices at the school. Once he even skipped the whole practice!

Style/ Fashion Writing: Homemade Clothes

Local school student, Judianne Alexander, makes her own clothes. Judianne Alexander goes to Bronx High School and says that she started to make the clothes because her family couldn’t afford nice clothes. She also wanted to show off her body and “accentuate the positive” (pg 59) parts of her. Other students think the clothes are “cool” (pg 59) and hip. Some students are even jealous of her skills. Judianne’s most recent creation is a “patchwork denim skirt and a vest with red leather pockets...” She has also made jeans, hats, gloves, shirts, and she once made a dress! She is starting to think about being a fashion designer.

Local/ Community News: Poetry Assembly

Edward Ward’s high school English class held an assembly on Tuesday. The students read poetry pieces that they had written throughout the year. Mr.
Ward said a few words then Tyrone Bittings gave a short speech. “I’m really glad I got to do this poetry thing because... I feel like we connected. I feel like I know you now... I feel like we’re not as different as I thought,” (pg 164) said Tyrone in his speech. Student Chanakra Troupe (pictured right) read her piece entitled “Bruised Love,” (pg 15) student Raul Ramirez read his poem entitled “Zorro,” (pg 22) and students Wesley Boone and Tyrone Bittings read a new poem they called “Together” while student Raynard Patterson played the saxophone. Student Porscha Johnson read her poem entitled “A Letter to My Mother,” (pg 161) and student Tanisha Scott read her poem entitled “For the Record” (pg 79). After the assembly, Mr. Ward said a few words then Tyrone Bittings gave a short speech. “I’m really glad I got to do this poetry thing because... I feel like we connected. I feel like I know you now... I feel like we’re not as different as I thought,” (pg 164) said Tyrone in his speech. Student Chanakra Troupe (pictured right) read her piece entitled “Bruised Love,” (pg 15) student Raul Ramirez read his poem entitled “Zorro,” (pg 22) and students Wesley Boone and Tyrone Bittings read a new poem they called “Together” while student Raynard Patterson played the saxophone. Student Porscha Johnson read her poem entitled “A Letter to My Mother,” (pg 161) and student Tanisha Scott read her poem entitled “For the Record” (pg 79). After the assembly, Mr. Ward said that the school plans on hosting a “Poetry Slam” next year. The “Poetry Slam” would be a competition where different school’s students would write poems and read them aloud at the competition. Judges would judge the poems and prizes would be awarded for the best poems.

Local/ Community News:
Local Artists

School students Raul Ramirez and Dionsdra Jordan both enjoy painting and their friends say that they are excellent at their hobby. Raul enjoys painting with paint and Dionsdra prefers watercolors and charcoal. Dionsdra said that she has “been drawing since [she] can remember,” (pg 25). Raul also says that he has “been drawing all [his] life,” (pg 20). Raul says that sometimes he makes his sister “model for [him],” (pg 20) but most of the time he just has his “girlfriend [sit] for [him],” (pg 20). Raul was the first to catch The Bronx Insider’s eye, but soon Dionsdra also did. Raul’s friend, Tyrone Bittings says that Raul is really “good” (pg 19). Dionsdra prefers to draw abstract paintings for her mother but she is staring to draw portraits of other people. Raul tends to draw portraits of anybody who is willing to model for him.

Police Blotter story:
Abusive Father Arrested

An abusive father was arrested last night. DeAndre Bittings was arrested at 7:42 last night for abusing his wife. The call came from the twelve-year-old son of DeAndre, Tyrone Bittings, at about 7:34 pm. Police rushed to the scene and found Tyrone curled up underneath his bed. DeAndre also had beaten the young boy. DeAndre apparently did not know that his son had called and is now serving 7 years in federal prison for physical abuse to his wife and son.

Second-Prize Essays

Wednesday
Anna Livia Rice
Cardinal Mooney High School
Sequencing The Battle of Jericho

The Fashion Beat

It’s that time of year again, when scarves, hats, gloves, boots, basically any article of clothing that can possibly keep a body warm are slung on with complete disregard to fashion Do’s and Don’ts! However, while most people prioritize warmth this time of year, one group chooses their attires to demonstrate the strength of a group: The Warriors of Distinction. Pledges for the group are currently flaunting their florescent pink shirts for pledge week, and in this case, pink on men is undoubtedly fashionable! The shirts are not fancy; they are just regular highlighter pink t-shirts with the words “We are not yet distinguished” printed on the back of the shirt. Fourteen boys snubbing the typical gender rules regarding colors simply to make the statement that it is all of them, or none of them. In this case, girls cannot resist men in pink because that pink promises full potential and inclusion in the most venerated club around!

However, not one person brandishes their pink shirt better than Dana Wolfe, the first female ever invited into the Warriors of Distinction. Dana defies not only the rules of fashion with her pink shirt, but also the former male-dominated rules of the guild. Besides, what better color than pink for the pledge shirts this year to represent the newly female integrated values? All people should anticipate new fashion trends after it is revealed how she will model The Warriors of Distinction black silk jacket.

Luckily, these pledge week shirts hold promises of better fashion for the group ahead. The Warriors of Distinction are honored as the most up-to-date on trends, often sporting the latest and greatest Nike sneakers and of course their irresistible black silk jackets that denote them as members of the group. These undistinguished pledges promise to blossom into sophisticated warriors soon!

Joshua Prescott

Joshua Prescott died late on the last Friday of January from the Warriors of Distinction’s pledge activities. Joshua, commonly called Josh, was a junior at Frederick Douglass High School in Cincinnati, Ohio and deceased from a fatal head injury after jumping from a two-story house during the Leap of Faith challenge.

Josh was the only child of Brock and Marlene Prescott. He was a strong ath-
lete at his high school and was identified by his humorous nature. The investigation of his death is ongoing.

A memorial service will be held in the school’s auditorium on Saturday and his funeral is on Monday. Classes have been cancelled at the school on Monday so students can pay their respects.

**Hazing in Schools: How far is too Far?**

With the recent tragic death of Joshua Prescott, a junior pledge from Frederick Douglass High School from the hazing rituals of a Warriors of Distinction, a club respected for their good deeds around the community, hazing is brought into the forefront everyone’s minds. Hazing is defined as “Force to perform strenuous, humiliating, or dangerous tasks.” Josh Prescott died after taking part in the clubs “Leap of Faith” activity during which pledges leaped from a two story abandoned building. Josh hit his head on a rock and perished at the hospital from the fatal head wound. With such a respected club causing Josh’s death with hazing traditions, members of the community are demanding answers to many arduous questions such as: did the school faculty know about this, who was overseeing it, why were illegal activities allowed into pledging ceremonies and why were the boys unsupervised. However, alarmingly enough, these questions may never receive answers due to the alliance’s vow of silence.

Despite the secrecy oath, whispers of the organization’s hazing were evident but unable to be proven due to the fellowship’s unity in silence. Mr. Boston, Frederick Douglass High’s math teacher, experienced hazing firsthand when he was a high school football player and recognized the warning signs of hazing. When questioned about his knowledge of the activities, he remarked, “As you know, they keep it pretty secretive. But bits and pieces of information escape.” (p.171). Without witnesses willing to give testimony to the hazing, Mr. Boston was incapable of exposing it but claimed that he warned and offered assistance to pledge, Jericho Prescott, the cousin of the deceased Josh Prescott. When queried if he reported hazing when he was a victim of it in high school, Mr. Boston replies, “No, someone with more guts than I had finally told the authorities. The coach was fired, and the practice was stopped.” (p.171) The only action he took against the hazing was to quit the team the next year when he heard members making similar plans for the new players. Victims staying unvoiced about abuse is quite commonplace. According to the national study “Hazing in View: Students at Risk” conducted by Elizabeth Allan, Ph.D. and Mary Madden, Ph.D. from the University of Maine, 36% of students say they would not report hazing primarily because “there’s no one to tell,” and 27% feel that adults won’t handle it right.

Although The Warriors of Distinction was not affiliated with Frederick Douglass High School, Richard Culligan, a teacher at the school, was technically in command of the group. At an impromptu news conference at the scene of the death, Culligan admitted that he was not present for the pledging endeavors, “I…I wasn’t here. I was back at the school getting things ready for the party.” (p.310). When confronted by the drinking during the “Leap of Faith”, Culligan also admitted “I wasn’t aware of every single pledge activity.” (p.310) and elucidated that he trusted the seniors in charge. Culligan has since been arrested.

Hazing is not a regional problem; rather it is becoming ever more prominent across the United States. According to www.preventhazing.org, 1.5 million high school students undergo hazing each year, and 47% of students come to college already having experienced hazing and 82% of deaths from hazing involve alcohol. It seems deplorable that the Warriors of Distinction was established fifty years ago and these traditions are just now being exposed. The investigation is ongoing.
Emmett Till had a fun personality and always knew how to make others laugh. He enjoyed hanging with his friends and having a good time. He went to McCosh Grammar School. Emmett had lots of friends and family who loved him dearly. He grew up in a middle class neighborhood for colored people. He was very willful, high-spirited, and accepting of people of all races. Because his mother often worked all day he quickly learned how to take care of himself, but that didn’t stop him from caring dearly about his family. Emmett was always very good and listened to what his superiors said. He has touched the lives of many during his time here.

Service: The service will be held on September 8th at Good Shepherd Protestant Church in Chicago at 2:00pm
Burial: Fellmont Memorial Cemetery in Chicago, Illinois

Opinion

As you are all aware, the racism in the south has started to become more severe. It hasn’t been this bad since before the Emancipation Proclamation. Although there is nothing I can do to stop it all together, I can state that the Emmett Till predicament should have never happened. It is a mockery to our fine country that a boy was so brutally murdered for simply speaking out of line. His outbreak against Caroline Bryant may have been uncalled for, but he did not deserve what he received. Murder is not the way that we should solve our problems. If that were so this nation would be a physical wreck. I can understand that Bryant was upset, but that was no reason to murder someone who had done so little wrong. Emmett grew up in the North where the racism is substantially lower. When he came to the South, he didn’t realize it would be so different.

I can honestly say that the trial for Emmett Till was completely biased. The judge was racist and the jury was racist. If I had been in that courtroom, I would have charged those two men with manslaughter and sent them away to prison for ten years. I am aware that many of you who read this will disagree with me, but it is my hope that the few of you who agree with me will make a stand to put a stop to these unfortunate times so that our children can live in a nation that is free from all of this hatred.

Police Blotter

Police were called to the banks of the Tallahatchie River on August 31st when a local fisherman spotted the body of Emmett Till, the black Chicago youth that had gone missing. The boy had been taken from his uncle’s house three days earlier by two men. These men, identified by Till’s uncle as Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam, were then brought into custody for further questioning.
YSU English Festival

Friday
Anna Bodo
Mineral Ridge Middle School
The Story of a Boy Named Emmett Till

Journal Entry #1
Obituary
Emmett Till died on August 26, 1955 at the age of fourteen. “Born in Chicago, Illinois, on July 25, 1941 Emmett was the only child of Louis and Mamie Till” (Crowe 37). “At five feet six inches and 160 pounds the boy was taller and heavier” (Crowe 54). Emmett, nicknamed “Boo”, was a teen who loved baseball and enjoyed having a laugh with his friends. Emmett’s favorite baseball team was the Chicago White Sox. He attended McCosh Elementary School a segregated all-black school. Besides, his exceptional personality he also was a great person in his community that would help his neighbors and relished going to clean his great-grandmother’s house. Emmett grew up in southern Chicago in an all-black community. Emmett was a fun, loving child who enjoyed helping others.

The cause of Emmett Till’s death is that he was murdered and sunk to the bottom of a river with a bullet hole in his head. Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam already said that they had kidnapped the boy and will be put on trial for murder. The loss of Emmett Till will weigh down greatly upon our hearts.

Emmett will be preceded in death by his mother Mamie Bradley, his great uncle Mose Wright, grandparents, cousins, his aunt, uncles, great-grandmother and also many of his friends. His father died when Emmett was a young child in World War 2. There will be an open casket viewing of Emmett Till all day on Saturday September 3 and Sunday September 4. There was controversy over if they should have an open casket, but Mrs. Bradley said “Let the people see what they did to my boy”. This viewing is open to the public, so that all can mourn over the loss of Emmett Till. He will be laid to rest on Tues September 6 in Burr Oak Cemetery. In dear memory of Emmett Till, a boy that the world has lost forever, but that will never be forgotten.

Journal #2
Community News
“Missing Boy Found Dead in the Tallahatchie River”
Early yesterday morning, the dead body of a fourteen year old Negro boy was found floating in the Tallahatchie River. It was a boy named Emmett Till who had been missing for three days until floating up from the river on Wednesday. There were worries about Emmett and the Sheriff was concerned of foul play.

Wednesday morning Aug, 31 a seventeen year old white boy, Robert Hodges, saw the body and called the police. “Officers said that the body had been weighted down with a cotton gin pulley tied with barbed wire” (Crowe 68). Till’s body was beaten, bruised, had a missing eye, and a bullet in his head. The body was very badly damaged and hardly even looked human.

The two men that had been convicted of murder were Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam. The two already had admitted that they had kidnapped the boy, after he made dreadful remarks to a white woman at Bryant’s Grocery and Meat Market. The two stated that they “Turned him loose after they took him to Bryant’s store for identification and Carolyn Bryant said he wasn’t the man who had harassed her” (Crowe 63).

The trial will take place this weekend and will be held in Summer Mississippi. “Can justice be done in one of the most notoriously racist states in America?”(Crowe67). We will all cry for righteousness of Emmett Till and also for the inequality of blacks all throughout America.

Journal #3
In our opinion the Southern States have corrupt people with cruel laws. They practically let two guilty men get away with murder. The world is coming to something awful if men can go around killing innocent children. The Jim Crowe laws and everything else in the south is appalling.

Northerners believe that schools should be integrated and that blacks should be given more equal opportunities and treated better in the South. African Americans are just as human as whites, so we think that it’s incorrect that you can kill a boy just because he didn’t know any better. The people in the North are going to try to change the ways they treat blacks in the South to make it even more unprejudiced.

The entire South is to blame for their carelessness of our youth and African American people. In every way we look down upon the South for what has happened because no matter what happens the murder of Emmett Till will not be forgotten. “Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam did willfully, unlawfully, feloniously, and of their malice aforethought did
kill and murder Emmett Till, a human being, against the peace and dignity of the State of Mississippi” (Crowe 67). They had an unfair jury which made it impossible to convict Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam of the murder that they committed. It is the responsibility of South and their detrimental ways that got Emmett Till murdered.

We dream of a world where children are not killed for fun, where humans are treated like humans and a better world for African Americans, so they can live without a fear of being killed. Life magazine published an article that said “Sleep well, Emmett Till, you will be avenged. You will be remembered as long as men have tongues to cry against evil” (Crowe 65).

Journal #4
Police blotter story

It all began when Emmett Till went into Bryant’s Grocery and Meat Market and made “ugly remarks” to Mrs. Bryant on Friday. Then, the following Sunday morning the police station received a call from Curtis Jones He informed us that his cousin, Emmett Till, had been kidnapped by two white men earlier that day. “Around 2:00 Sunday afternoon, Sheriff Smith drove from Greenwood to Money and arrested Roy Bryant for kidnapping” (Crowe 63). Later J.W. Milam was picked up and both men were put in jail. After that, different units began to search for the third man involved and any sign of Emmett. The police kept searching, but had no luck on Monday and Tuesday.

Wednesday morning a 17 year old white boy, Robert Hodges, found Emmett Till’s body and reported it to the police station. Next, the body was identified as Emmett Till by Mose Wright. Later that day, “Sheriff Smith added murder to the charges against Bryant and Milam” (Crowe 65). The evidence that has been found is still under further investigation.

Local store-owners Roy Bryant and half-brother JW Milam were arrested on September 1 for the kidnapping, beating, and murder of a young African-American, Emmett Till. Court dates have yet to be scheduled.

Obituary

On August 28, Emmett Louis Till passed away at the young age of fourteen. He is survived by his mother, Mamie Till, his great uncle, Moses Wright, and multiple cousins and extended family.

Emmett Louis Till was born on July 25, 1941 in Chicago, Illinois, the only child of Louis and Mamie Till. Those closest to Emmett described him as funny, responsible, and infectiously high-spirited. Whether it be a joke to dry someone’s tears, or aiding his single mother with housework, he was always eager to help others, no matter who they were. Emmett was a sincerely kind young man who saw life as a privilege, determined to live every moment of his precious time to the very fullest.

Raised in a thriving, middle-class, African-American neighborhood on the South Side of Chicago, Emmett was given a life full of potential and opportunities. His neighborhood harbored multiple black proprietors; African-American owned insurance agencies, beauty salons, pharmacies, and nightclubs lined the streets and boulevards. Unbeknownst to young Emmett, not all African-Americans enjoyed the same standard of living he did.

Although he attended a segregated school, Emmett was not prepared for the intense segregation and racism he faced in the South. While visiting his great uncle Moses and cousins in Mississippi for the summer, Emmett, ignorant to the strict enforcement of Jim Crow laws, made a pass at a white woman.

Witnesses did not unanimously agree to what exactly was exchanged between Emmett and the woman: some say he either whistled at her, flirted with her, or touched the hand of the white female clerk—and wife of the owner—Carolyn Bryant. Either way, the woman took offense to Emmett’s harmless actions.

Allegedly, upon hearing of Emmett’s “insolence”, Mrs. Bryant’s husband, Roy Bryant, and his half-brother, J.W. Milam, kidnapped, beat, and tortured Emmett. Stealing him away from his great uncle’s house, they beat the young boy all night, and then dragged the mutilated youth to the bank of the Tallahatchie River, where they shot Emmett in the head and, after tying his body to a large metal fin with barbed wire, remorselessly dumped his maimed being into the river. Three days later, Emmett’s corpse was recovered, so disfigured it could only be identified by a ring engraved with his father’s initials, L.T., that Emmett wore on his finger.

Authorities wanted to bury the body quickly, but Emmett’s mother requested it be sent back to Chicago, where funeral services will be held at Roberts Temple Church of God. Ms. Till has courageously opted for an open casket funeral and is allowing services to be held for five days in order that anyone who wishes to can pay their respects to the young martyr.
Opinion

With the recent kidnapping, beating, and ruthless murder of young African-American boy, Emmett Till, the entire country is abuzz with what effects the crime, trial, and ruling will have upon legal segregation and blatant racism in “the land of the free”.

For those of you who have been out of the loop recently, Emmett Till was a young, black Chicagoan visiting extended family in Mississippi, when, because of harmless flirting, an action expected of all adolescents, his life was savagely stolen from him.

Blissfully ignorant to how serious bigotry is in the South, Emmett flirted with a white store clerk, who took offense at his harmless pass. When her husband heard of the exchange, he and his half-brother kidnapped the boy, beat him past the point of recognition, and finally shot him in the head and then discarded of what was once a promising, handsome, young gentleman into the Tallahatchie River. His only crime was having skin a different color than the barbarians who took his life.

The two disgusting men were arrested and now await their date in court. I, for one, am hoping, praying, pleading for them to be locked up for the rest of their lives, which is still not a harsh enough punishment. However, the harsh reality looms above us all: the two murderers will most likely be acquitted.

No matter how hard it is to swallow, that’s the bitter truth of it. Where the two racists will be tried has segregated court houses, where a jury of their peers will almost definitely consist of only white men. White men who sympathize, even glorify, the actions of the racist perpetrators.

Fortunately, no matter what the ruling ends up being, wheels have already been set in motion. Emmett Till is rightly being hailed as a martyr and because of his courage and the courage of his family, particularly his mother, who chose to have an open casket funeral so the world could see what ignorance did to her son, steps are being taken to end segregation. People of all races are banding together to truly make our country a place where all men are created equal.

I can only hope that my old eyes live to see the day where everyone in America is truly free. However, because of the huge sacrifice made by Emmett Till and his family, that day is a little closer.

Police Blotter Story:
Ohio; Near Cincinnati;
11:35 P.M.

Police and paramedics received a call from a deserted house near the warehouse on Reading Road, near Frederick Douglass High School. The call, from Rick Sharp, stated that a young man had fallen from a second-story window in the house and needed help quickly. When paramedics arrived at the scene, a young man named Cleveland Wilson was giving CPR to the injured boy. The police reported that the boy, Joshua Prescott, had apparently been pressured to jump out of the window as a part of initiation for a group called the Warriors of Distinction. In this “Leap of Faith,” as it is called, Prescott lost his balance when jumping and failed to land safely on the mattress pit below, instead landing head-first onto a large rock near the pit. No adult figure had been present, and all pledges and current members of the club, all of which in high school and under age, had been extremely intoxicated when police and paramedics arrived. Paramedics tried to resuscitate Prescott, but couldn’t get a response. He was taken to the local hospital, but was pronounced dead shortly after arriving due to unsustained injuries including multiple cuts on his body and a huge gash on the back of his skull.

Obituary:
Joshua “Josh” Prescott, 16

Ohio resident and high school student, Joshua Prescott, died around 3:00 A.M. on Saturday, January 31, in the local hospital, with his parents by his side.

Services were held on Monday morning to commemorate Josh’s short but also great and wonderful life.

Josh was a good student, and he enjoyed playing sports, such as football, for his school, Frederick Douglass High School. In addition, Josh was very outgoing and never backed down from a challenge.

Josh lived near Cincinnati, Ohio, for all of his life, and he enjoyed spending
time with his cousin and best friend, Jericho Prescott. When they were young children, they would go to picnics, spend Halloween and Christmas together, take swimming lessons, and play in Little League baseball games. As they got older, they continued to spend time with each other and with their other close friend, Kofi Freeman.

November Nelson was Josh’s girlfriend, and they were very close with each other. November always brought out the best in Josh by encouraging him to take part in the community’s activities and by making him happy.

Josh is survived by his parents; Brock and Marlene Prescott, uncle and step-aunt; Cedric and Geneva Prescott, cousin; Jericho Prescott, step-cousins; Todd and Rory Prescott, and girlfriend; November Nelson.

Human Interest Story
An Interview with Jericho Prescott

A few days ago, reporters met with Jericho Prescott, a survivor of the Ohio hazing incident that happened just weeks ago. He was very close to his cousin, Joshua Prescott, who died at the incident. Jericho has been very afflicted by all of this trauma. When asked why the events on the night of the incident occurred, he said: “We were all forced to take part in those activities by the seniors of the club. They told us that we had to do everything that we did to show our bravery, loyalty, and determination. They also said that they had to go through it, and that we would do it to new pledges next year, but I couldn’t imagine putting anyone through what we went through.” Reporters proceeded to ask why he put himself through all of it, and he responded that he didn’t know what he was getting into. He said that the Warriors of Distinction was a club looked at with respect by the community, and that members got nice clothes and were swarmed by the girls. However, he said, that when he joined, he was forced to steal ornaments for a tree to donate to orphans, and take part in gross initiation activities like acting like a dog, putting his head in a toilet, and searching through a dumpster. He was then asked why he didn’t just quit, and he said that the seniors told them that the pledges were brothers, and that if any of them quit, they would all have to quit. He said that he couldn’t betray his fellow pledges. “I even skipped my trumpet recital that could have gotten me a scholarship for college,” he said. When asked to explain more, he said that during Pledge Week, the final week before pledges become Warriors, the pledges had to attend meetings every night and take part in gruesome pledge activities, and that they couldn’t miss a night for anything. His father, Cedric, and music teacher, Mr. Tambori, were very disappointed in him, he said, because he had a musical gift and had blown his chances. “I’m very upset with the decisions I made,” he said, “and there have been more than a few consequences because of my choices and actions.” The reporters then expressed their condolences to Jericho and ended the interview.

Community News Story
Troubled Warriors

Trouble is brewing for the local Warriors of Distinction club. On Saturday morning at approximately 3 A.M., at the final initiation for new pledges, pledge Joshua Prescott jumped from a second-story window as instructed, but missed the mattress pit below, hit his head on a rock, and died from his injuries. Mr. Cullivan, the adult in charge of the club, had apparently been at Frederick Douglass High School setting up for a party to be held later, and was unknowing of the events that occurred. The Warriors of Distinction have always been a respectable club, as they have always donated toys to poor families and orphans during the holidays, but now, it seems that things have been getting out of hand. Parents and former members of the club told us that they didn’t have to go through anything that these young men and woman did and that the “Leap of Faith,” in their time, was simply jumping off of a chair while blindfolded. When exactly the danger factor escalated is still to be uncovered, but parents are bewildered and outraged at the incident that has happened, and they want answers. All that is known for sure at the moment is that the future of this once-dignified club hangs in the balance, and many people want it to be eliminated for good.
Emmett Till, from Chicago, was found by Robert Hodges early this morning while he was fishing in the Tallahatchie River in Mississippi.

Hodges saw Emmett’s knees sticking out of shallow water and checked it out since he was unsure what it was. He notified the sheriff’s office immediately of his find. Police took Mose Wright, Emmett’s uncle, to the scene of the crime to identify the body. “Officers said that the body had been weighted down with a cotton gin pulley tied with barbed wire. There was also a bullet hole in his head.” (Page 68)

Roy Bryant and his half brother J.W. Milam have been charged in connection with the kidnapping that occurred early Wednesday, August 31, 1955 Sunday morning; “the sheriff’s office said that an additional charge of murder will be made since the turn of the event.”

Emmett allegedly made sexual comments and wolf whistled at Mrs. Carolyn Bryant, who also faces a kidnapping charge. Bryant admitted that he took Emmett but claimed that he released him when Mrs. Bryant said he got the wrong boy. Two men, presumably Bryant and Milam, went up to Wright’s house and took Emmett from their care while two others, presumably Mrs. Bryant and another man, waited in Milam’s truck.

This is an ongoing report. Stay tuned and find more out each day.

**Chicago Tribune**

**Emmett Louis Till**

Emmett Louis Till, of Chicago, was kidnapped from his uncle Mose Wright’s shack a few miles outside of Money, Mississippi, Thursday, August 25 and was found early yesterday morning, Wednesday, August 31, in the Tallahatchie River. He was 14.

Emmett was born in Chicago, Illinois, July 25, 1941 to Louis and Mamie Till. A relative nicknamed him “Bobo” as an infant and the name stuck. Louis died less than five months after Mamie gave birth to Emmett.

He attended James McCosh Elementary School for his seventh and eighth grade years and was getting ready to attend high school this fall. He enjoyed playing baseball with his friends. Emmett helped run their house and helped earn extra money from helping his neighbors out of any of the many ways he could.

**Obituaries**

**Emmett Louis Till**

Emmett leaves behind a grieving mother who lost her only son, Uncle Mose Wright, Aunt Elizabeth Wright, and several cousins.

The open-casket viewing will be held Friday, September 2 to “Let people see what they did to my boy” (Page 66) at Rainer Funeral Home. The funeral service will be held the following day, Saturday, September 3 “at the Roberts Temple of the Church of God in Christ.” (Page 18) His family will lay him to rest Tuesday, September 6 “in Burr Oak Cemetery in Aslip, Illinois.” (Page 67)

**Chicago Tribune**

Today the White Sox are playing the Boston Red Sox for a consecutive game following yesterday’s game against them. The White Sox will not
be playing tomorrow so they can travel to Cleveland to play the Indians at the Cleveland Municipal Building, Friday, Saturday, and a double-header on Sunday. The White Sox played the Boston Red Sox yesterday where they won by two runs. Last Sunday the White Sox played a double-header against the New York Yankees, losing one and then, with motivation for a comeback, won one.

**Festival of Writing 2013**

**Sports**

The Boston White Sox currently have won sixty-percent of their total games, lost thirty-nine games, and tied one game against the Baltimore Orioles August 7.

Tune in to Bob Elson’s live play-by-play analysis on WCFL radio or get the new edition of *The Sporting News* to get the latest news on the Chicago White Sox.

**Chicago Tribune**

Dear Editor,

I am outraged and extremely saddened at the death of Emmett Louis Till! He was from here in Chicago and didn’t know any better; he didn’t know their way of life. He heard about the wickedness of the south but didn’t understand how bad the prejudice of Negros is down there. Emmett was a boy of young age; he died at the age of fourteen. He was fourteen years young! If you want to punish a kid that is not your own, tell a relative of his and have him whip him the boy’s backside with his own father’s belt!

William Faulkner eloquently said, “Because if we in America have reached that point in our desperate culture when we must murder children, no matter for what reason or what color, we don’t deserve to survive and probably won’t.” (Page 111)

**Editor’s Page**

I agree with it one-hundred percent. I want to see Milam and Bryant get what they deserve, capital punishment.

“Sleep well, Emmett Till. You will be avenged. You will be remembered as long as men have tongues to cry out against evil.” (Page 108-109)

With Sincere Love,

Evelyn Hayes

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### Past Six Chicago White Sox Games

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**The 2014 Candace Gay Memorial Essay Contest**

One of J. D. Salinger’s characters remarked: “What really knocks me out is a book that, when you’re all done reading it, you wish the author that wrote it was a terrific friend of yours and you could call him up on the phone whenever you felt like it.”

**Explain which 2014 English Festival book made you feel this way and why.**
Williamson Fund Impromptu Prize-Winners

Impromptu Prompts for 2013

17 April
Senior Impromptu Essay
As a reader, explain what you noticed about the different literary genres represented on this year’s Festival booklist (Getting Away With Murder and King of the Mild Frontier are nonfiction; Dark Sons and Bronx Masquerade are poetry; Deadline, Copper Sun, and The Battle of Jericho are fiction). Based on your observations, make a case for the genre that you think conveys a story most effectively. Use at least two of the Festival books that are categorized in your genre selection.

18 April
Junior Impromptu Essay
Chris Crutcher has said that one way to remember others is to commit acts in their names. Of all the characters you have encountered in this year’s Festival books, discuss at least 2 characters you’d like to remember. Say why you think remembering those characters is important. Then, describe an act you can commit in each selected character’s name.

19 April
Junior Impromptu Essay
Perhaps the greatest benefit to “Open Mic Fridays” in Bronx Masquerade was the opportunity given to students to figure out who they might be and what they might say. Using at least two characters from separate books on this year’s Festival booklist as examples, explain what enables them, and ultimately all human beings, to become more mature and complete individuals. What obstacles get in the way? What limits or allows a character’s personal growth?

First-Prize Essays

Wednesday
Arona Mostov
Ursuline High School

Character Representation Through Genre

A compelling story has many components. While these components sometimes include accurate facts and well-researched information, the most intriguing stories are ones told using emotion. Stories are most effective when the reader experiences a connection to the work. The emotion behind a story is what establishes such a connection. Fiction is the genre that truly captures this idea. Fiction effectively conveys stories through insights into the characters’ thoughts and emotional appeal.

A story can be better expressed when the reader gains insight into what and how the characters think. In The Battle of Jericho, Jericho’s desire to be accepted and approved of by the Warriors is revealed to the reader. This makes his continued participation in the Warrior’s hazing more understandable. Jericho’s wish to fit in, which is conveyed only through his thoughts, makes him relatable. Characters that are relatable help the author to better convey a story. Insight into characters’ minds aids the story in Copper Sun as well. Without understanding Amari’s thoughts and emotions, the reader may think of Amari as just a slave, as the slave owners and auctioneers did. When her thoughts and emotions are revealed, however, the reader is able to better relate to her. Gaining insight into characters’ thoughts allows readers to connect to the story and understand it on a different level.
Fiction also uses emotional appeal to effectively convey a story. Fiction authors can use tones to appeal to readers in a certain way. In *The Battle of Jericho*, the author creates a tone of desperation as the Warriors’ hazing grows out of control. The reader is able to understand the seriousness of Jericho’s situation. Joshua’s death is conveyed in a tone of extreme despair and grief. Jericho’s world shatters down around him in a way that greatly appeals to the reader’s emotions. The author of *Copper Sun* effectively uses emotional appeal to convey the story. The use of saddening and disturbing images, such as the slaves being tortured on the slave ship, provoke sympathy for Amari. Her deep desire to find freedom stimulates the reader emotionally as well. Using emotional appeal in these ways allows readers to better connect with and understand the story.

To be remembered is something most people strive for in vain. The number of people who deserve to be remembered greatly outnumbers those who actually are. Yet still, we must at least attempt to honor those worthy of memory. Two characters from this year’s English Festival books certainly deserve that.

The first character I’ve chosen was introduced and brought to life by Chris Crutcher. Written into a short story, she wasn’t given much material, but Crutcher still managed to make her story engaging and admirable. I think we can all admit, Chris Byers was easily one of the most memorable characters this year. Blessed with sharp wit and impressive physical prowess, Chris represented both the idealistic embodiment of female empowerment as well as a relatable, somewhat impulsive, teenage girl. One thing that really struck me in the story was how she wanted to quit wrestling. While most authors would have kept her as a wrestler to make a point, Crutcher chose to create a character with a relatable, realistic thought process. Chris was someone most girls could see themselves as.

To remember this character, I would choose to draw on her dramatic exit from the world of wrestling. A televised wrestling event, complete with staged violence and ridiculous costumes, featuring female wrestlers, seems to me an appropriate way to commemorate Chris Byers. She ended her run with a bang, one we can make sure is never forgotten.

The second character I’ve chosen was written by Sharon Draper. Portrayed as a young African American girl stuck in a bad time to be one, I believe the character Sylvia Patterson is certainly worth remembering.

The main reason I think Sylvia is so memorable is that she didn’t end up doing the conventional “right thing.” Sylvia never tried to be anyone’s hero, and yet that is exactly what makes her one. She was brave and intelligent, yet she was the last to admit it. Her decision was hard, but she didn’t make it spur of the moment; it obviously wasn’t easy for her. Sylvia represents a person with true humility and intelligence.

In my opinion, Sylvia should be remembered by what she fought for, a school. I would propose building a school in her name in her hometown of Little Rock, where it all began.

I’ve given you two characters today, both worthy of being remembered. However, that wasn’t the goal of either of these two girls. You can’t force yourself into memory; you can only do what you think is right and hope for the best.
From this year’s selection of books for the English Festival, I believe that the characters Jericho (The Battle of Jericho) and Hiram (Mississippi Trial, 1955) were good examples of human beings growing up with difficult obstacles to enhance their maturity. In The Battle of Jericho, the main protagonist Jericho faces the decision on how to tell when a situation has gone too far. In the book Mississippi Trial, 1955, young Hiram Hillburn learns the harsh truth of how things aren’t always as they seem.

Within The Battle of Jericho, a boy named Jericho is accepted into an organization called the Warriors of Distinction. Being in this group was supposed to be a big deal, but it wasn’t what it appeared. Jericho’s friend Dana was abused several times in the group’s pledging activities along with one activity involving the death of his cousin. However, up until the death of his beloved cousin and friend, Jericho was oblivious to the whole thing. He didn’t think that what the group was doing was bad or harmful. Not when he was stealing or his friends were being harmed. He couldn’t see what he was doing wrong. The importance of being in the group meant too much. When his friend plummeted to his death by jumping out of a window, I think it finally clicked. Being able to tell the difference of what could be harmful to you is important and needs to be realized to become more responsible and mature.

In Mississippi Trial, 1955, Hiram Hillburn returned to Mississippi after several years to visit with his sick grandpa. He was so excited in his return that he was shocked to find out how things really went down in the South. A young boy named Emmett Till that he befriended down there was brutally murdered, and rage fired up in the South. Hiram realized that things weren’t as sweet as he thought they were when he was eight. His friend R.C. was dangerous and abusive, and racism was everywhere. Hiram believed that R.C. was to blame for the murder, but it was just a false accusation. Within this book, I think Hiram learned not to be so naive and to accept the truth for what it is. To become more mature, I believe it is key to accept the world for what it is and not cover it up with lies or any false beliefs.

Within these two characters, I believe they learned not to be so naive and oblivious. To stare their situations square in the eye and decide if what they’re doing is the right thing. If not, they should try to fix it and learn from their mistakes.

Authors use a myriad of genres and techniques to tell stories, convey ideas, and connect to their readers. Nonfiction, such as Getting Away with Murder, presents the facts and the history of the Emmett Till murder case. It describes a true event, providing background and details. Bronx Masquerade gives insight into the lives of young people growing up in the Bronx, and the multiple speakers and narrators give the reader a multifaceted understanding of the characters and their environment. Fiction such as The Battle of Jericho presents truth through a story -- while the characters and events are fictional, the universal truths within the piece are very much real.

Reading this year’s Festival books, I’ve realized that fiction can be one of the most powerful mediums for conveying ideas. For example, Deadline reveals themes of life and death, inequality, and personal responsibility and guilt. The author illustrates these themes by creating a richly detailed canvas upon which characters think, feel, and interact. While the Wolf brothers and Dallas Suzuki may be fictional, they are highly relatable, especially to teen readers. When readers identify with a character, it becomes easier for them to emotionally connect to a work of literature. When a reader connects with a piece, the themes within become more apparent and more meaningful.

Another example is The Battle of Jericho, a novel in which Jericho seeks belonging and acceptance among his peers. His story appeals to young people who are still searching for their place in the world, balancing their own desires with society’s ex-
expectations and questions of right and wrong. Through a fictional portrayal, the author provides subtle guidance to the readers. Readers are able to connect with a character, feeling as though they are witnessing the story firsthand.

The reason fiction proves to be such an effective medium is that it portrays true messages in an entertaining and thought-provoking manner. Readers witness the events of the story as well as the characters’ internal conflicts. They can personally identify with characters. While the characters may not be real, they can provide readers with companionship, guidance, and inspiration. Stories reassure use that we are not alone in our struggles, that others have overcome similar problems, and that we too can overcome.

In many of his short stories and throughout his autobiography, Chris Crutcher tackles the tough topic of losing someone who you’re close to. Whether through death or some other unfortunate circumstance, loss is tough. When one is gone, we human beings often wish to forget. Yet we eventually come around and develop a desire to remember. Through the recollection of someone close to us, we can begin to feel closer to them. Even if someone is not eternally separated from us, remembering them as they were is very important. Chris Crutcher also addresses in his writings that one of the best ways to remember someone is to commit acts in his/her name.

This year’s YSU English Festival selection is wrought with heroic characters facing tough times, tough places, and all-around tough circumstances. In Fire from the Rock, Sharon M. Draper describes what it was like to be a teenage girl living in Little Rock in the thick of the civil rights movement. Not only was it difficult for African Americans, who faced the most outspoken of those opposed to desegregation, it was also trying for Jewish people. In one of the short stories in Athletic Shorts, an overweight highschooler faced discrimination because of his body. All of these characters and many more unmentioned ones faced difficulties and overcame them. For this, they deserve to be remembered. However, there are two particular characters that should really be remembered.

These two characters, one from Chris Crutcher’s Athletic Shorts and one from Chris Crowe’s Mississippi Trial, 1955, were both outstanding people and should be remembered. As was aforementioned, one of the best ways to remember these people would be to commit acts in their names.

The first character that I would wish to remember is Hiram Hilburn from Chris Crowe’s Mississippi Trial, 1955. Hiram, though quite despondent towards his father, proved to be a great person. Though he grew up around his grandfather’s antiquated, bigoted ideas, he still managed to grow into an astute and egalitarian young man. He is nice to everyone, even his crazy, “fairy” neighbors. In order to remember Hiram, I would make an attempt to be fair and nice to everyone, despite influential circumstances.

The second character that deserves memorial is Darren from Chris Crutcher’s Athletic Shorts. In the short story “In the Time I Get,” Darren is a gay man working in a town that would rather spit him out than hold their noses. Darren also happens to have AIDS. Though Darren knows that he is going to die, he still tries to live his life to the fullest in the time he gets. He also helps to influence the main character of the short story. Thought I already attempt to live life to the fullest, doing so in Darren’s name seems even more appropriate.

These two wonderful characters deserve to be remembered through acts of kindness.
There are many ways that a person’s character and personality can develop. Maybe they read or see something and take a deep message from it. Maybe they have an epiphany. One of the most time-tested ways, however, is through strife and hardship, and it is no different for characters in books.

The main character of *Mississippi Trial, 1955* is a good example of this. He is raised with prejudice and therefore doesn’t think much about it. However, his encounters with Emmett Till and Emmett’s subsequent murder pit his beliefs and the ugly truth against one another. All through the book, the main character questions the morals of not only those around him, but himself too. Seeing a boy he knew dead and the grief of Emmett’s mother makes him realize that he shouldn’t waste time fighting with the people he cares about – after all, our time is limited.

Another character who only starts to truly develop in troubled times is the main character of *Fire from the Rock*. She is asked to help integrate a school. Deep down, she really doesn’t want to, but she is torn between what she wants and what others expect of her. In the end, she decides to stop limiting herself by trying to follow everyone’s expectations and declines.

Conflict, such as in the above books, often forces people to change, whether for better or worse. Sometimes, it is because what appeared to be the truth can no longer be viewed as such. Other times, people are forced to choose. There are many other ways hardship can change someone. In the end, we aren’t that different from fictional characters – we laugh, cry, and get hurt. We fall and climb back up. But what truly makes us human – what makes fictional characters and worlds seem alive – is that we change.

The plethora of genres in literature keeps reading interesting, fun, and diverse. From poetry and fiction to meticulously researched nonfiction, different genres can tell different stories in amazing ways. Fiction writing, however, is the most effective at telling a story. For its detail and ability to expose readers to different worlds and elements of fantasy, fiction writing can convey a story to its readers most effectively.

Firstly, fiction writing can convey a story to readers due to its ability to expose readers to different worlds more effectively than nonfiction. Nonfiction books are, by their very nature, limited to true events which have already occurred. Missing from nonfiction are elements of fantasy, whimsy, and often characters’ hopes, dreams, and thoughts of the future. For example, a nonfiction book about the slave trade would not have captured the slave experience or a slave’s emotions as well as Amari’s story in *Copper Sun*. Nonfiction books are full of interesting facts and details, but the reader would probably not have felt the pain of a slave like Amari, who is taken from her home and forced to assimilate to a new culture against her will. Although wonderful nonfiction writers can at times capture emotions which stir readers, emotions abound in less scientific fiction writing which are often absent in nonfiction. Fiction books are also not limited to the present, past, or even this universe. This can stir imagination in a way that nonfiction cannot. Fictional worlds are alive with possibility. For its ability to make stories come alive and create new realities, fiction writing is effective at conveying stories.

Fiction writing also bests poetry in its ability to incorporate details. While poetry is also not limited in the stories it can tell, the worlds it can inhabit, or its ability to capture readers’ hearts and minds, it is limited in the amount of detail it can provide. Stanzas in poetry are much shorter than their paragraph counterparts in fiction and are almost always less descriptive. Poetry can be beautiful and stirring, sometimes more so than fiction, but the terseness of the genre makes capturing all the details fiction can all but impossible. For example, if *Deadline* had been a book of poetry instead of a fiction novel, the story may not have been so rich in detail. It would have been difficult to capture the characters’ emotions or the details of their everyday lives. Poetry could
have captured the fear of dying or the themes of sexual abuse, pedophilia, or dark secrets in chilling lines, but it is unlikely that its readers would have known the characters as well as they would after reading a fiction book. Sympathy for characters often comes through deep, meaningful connections and an intimate knowledge of their personalities, feelings, thoughts, emotions, and lives. This is possible in poetry, but it is much more common and actually expected of fiction. Minute details in a story, from a mole on someone’s cheek to a glass of water on a counter, do matter. Details in a story can change a reader’s perception in an instant, and in that way poetry has a disadvantage. The lingering storylines in fiction can pull readers into a story, and this makes reading fiction more compelling for readers.

The various and unique genres that line bookshelves around the world each possess the ability to tell a story in an amazing way. When the right story is paired with any genre, the result can be a literary masterpiece which shapes the world. Due to its remarkable ability to introduce new worlds, bring emotions to readers, and its ability to use details to pull in readers, however, fiction writing is able to convey a story in the most effective way. Fiction books and the stories they contain stir imaginations, open minds, and fill hearts with emotion.

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In life, people come and go. Rarely is someone, real or literary, impactful enough to really leave a mark. This English Festival, I have encountered quite a few characters that made their marks on me. Two of these, Sylvia from Fire from the Rock and the girl wrestling champion from Athletic Shorts, are characters that are important, in my opinion, to remember, and are also characters who deserve to have good things done in their names.

The main reason I want to remember Sylvia is because she is brave as well as true to herself. Throughout the book, Sylvia is struggling with the difficult decision of switching schools to the all-white/newly-integrated school. She is confused on which way to go, and she is unsure about which direction is better, but she eventually decides to stay. Her decision made me like her all the more – she was honest with herself upon making it, a trait I wish I had. In her name, I could try to be candid with myself and others in the face of difficulty. By showing bravery and honesty in real life, I would be honoring her in some small way.

I also admire the girl champion wrestler in Athletic Shorts, for several reasons. The greatest, quite simply, is that she is a girl. Generally speaking, girls don’t practice sports like wrestling; that rough-and-rowdy game is usually reserved for boys. She did, however, and she did it very well. I can honor her by trying some new things I want to do, even if I might not fit in at first, and by doing my best to excel in them. She didn’t quite fit in at wrestling, even though she was great at it, and was teased, but she still didn’t give up. Because of that, this character is important to remember, and trying a new thing is the least I can do in her name.

Undoubtedly, these two characters are important to remember for their qualities, and their names can be honored for the same reason. Both have great attributes and prevailed in difficult situations. Sylvia, from Fire from the Rock, and the girl wrestling champion from Athletic Shorts have left a mark on my mind that will not disappear for a long time.
What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger. We’ve all heard this saying at least a dozen times or so, and it’s true. Obstacles in life, whether emotional or physical, do make us stronger and more mature in the long run. Many characters in the English Festival books faced obstacles that made them more mature, complete, and sure of themselves as human beings.

In The Battle of Jericho, Jericho, our protagonist, faces a great moral and emotional conflict. He has decided to join the Warriors, a distinguished club at his school with fraternity-like qualities. Joining the Warriors guarantees you a wonderful high school experience, especially with the ladies. Jericho is overweight, insecure with about zero confidence, and he is in love with the beautiful and completely put together Arielle, so he joins the Warriors to win her over. The Warriors turn out to be an immature, rude, bullying group of hazers that force Jericho and his friends to do things that they would never do. Things quickly escalate from gross to dangerous when a gun is found and then deadly when Josh, Jericho’s cousin, dies. All along, Jericho knew that this was wrong and that he should quit, but he didn’t. If he had, he could have saved Josh, as he too would have been forced to quit. Jericho knows this, too. The fact that he didn’t do anything limited his personal growth in the short term because he didn’t do the right thing, but in the long term he learned a lesson he would never forget. The Warriors and the hazing were big obstacles that got in Jericho’s way, but he became a mature and secure individual with closer friends because of it. Hopefully, Jericho can overcome the obstacle of Josh’s death to evolve into a more confident and emotionally secure young adult.

In the short story “Goin’ Fishin’” in Athletic Shorts, we meet another character going through hard times by the name of Lionel Serbousek. Lionel is an orphan who lives alone in a dingy old apartment. His parents and brother were killed in a boating accident by his drunken best friend. To overcome this obstacle of pain and misery and grief, Lionel has become a tougher, more hardened person. In his mind, this is a good thing, but really it’s stunting his personal growth because he is too closed off to do anything good in his life. Something that finally “jumpstarts” his personal growth is his best friend Elaine. Angry at her, he threatens to hit her, and she yells at him, telling him what a jerk he is and that she is sick of being his friend. Eventually, this and the guilt he has accumulated over time prompt him to seek out Nick. Nick is the best friend who killed Lionel’s family and has since become a drunk and a drug addict in an attempt to self-medicate his obstacle of guilt away. Lionel still hates him, but in a show of a more open Lionel, decides to take him fishing. Without realizing it, Lionel has finally gotten over his obstacle by turning the page and letting go of the past.

There are many obstacles in life, but how you defeat them makes the biggest difference in the world. The human race was made to overcome obstacles, and Lionel and Jericho show that. Neither is perfect: Jericho ignores his conscience and continues with being hazed even though he knows it’ll end badly, and Lionel becomes angry and closed off, but in the end Jericho becomes a better, more confident person playing his trumpet with pride and moving on from Arielle, while Lionel realizes he has to let go of the past. Ultimately, that’s life: going from one obstacle to the next and becoming stronger to defeat the rest.
Nikki Grimes knew two things from a young age. One was that she wanted to be a writer, and the other was that she needed her “writer’s eye” to do it.

Grimes appeared at the Youngstown State University English Festival in Maag Library on April 17 to give a press conference about herself, her life and her books.

Clad in a black shirt and pants accented with purple books, Grimes took questions from the students, many of whom read her books to prepare for the festival.

“I was one of those weird birds,” she said early on. “I knew I would be a writer. I can’t understand why it took me so many years to convince everyone else.”

She draws her inspiration from life, she said, from things that happen to her and to those around her. It was Grimes’s father who told her to use her writer’s eye, to file away everything she sees.

Characters have been born from lines of dialogue overheard at a restaurant and scribbled onto a piece of paper. It is what Grimes called the “magic aspect” of writing.

That is not to say that all of Grimes’s life has been magical. Her teen years were some of her most formative, a time when she dealt with issues ranging from health problems to her mother’s mental illness.

“You’re still being shaped and formed,” said Grimes of high school.

A favorite teacher from 10th grade provided Grimes with stability, encouraging and supporting her through the troubles, a concept similar to the reliable teacher in Bronx Masquerade.

She could not control everything, Grimes was told, but she could control her life and her future.

She held onto books and stories and threw herself into the arts: dance, music, literature and theatre. She eventually did get a chance to thank the teacher “for her investment,” a time she recalled with a smile.

“Events are all how we choose to respond to them,” she said. “Whatever you do is going to be hard. Find your passion and go with it.”
Interview with Chris Crowe
by Allison Beckinger
Liberty High School

“You have to do something that you like, not something that can make you a lot of money.”

Chris Crowe gave this piece of advice to students on April 17, during a press conference at the journalism workshop at Youngstown State University’s 35th annual English Festival.

Crowe has authored books on “stories that others haven’t.” From a young age, he loved to read, but he wanted to be on the other side of the book. Throughout high school, he was a jock and went to Brigham Young University on a football scholarship. That was when he discovered that someone can be a jock and creative, as he was the only English major on the football team.

He said that in football there is an “all or nothing” attitude toward the game, but “things aren’t what we think they are and as you get older you see how things are changing.” So with this creativity, he changed from the history major he no longer cared for to an English major, which was his passion.

Crowe was not always a successful writer. He began by writing freelance and in one summer received one hundred rejections. He kept pushing on, though, until he was a success, and that is why he tells students that “writing is hard so you have to like what you are doing.”

His writings today focus on civil rights. He says that what drew him to this topic was that he did not know a lot about the Civil Rights and his ignorance made him curious.

Crowe said that through his experiences in writing he has learned that perseverance is important, especially for a writer. He said that he does not procrastinate, he just thinks. His perseverance, he said, is what allows him to fool himself into writing a complete book.

Crowe also told students that having a good family background helps with that perseverance, because then there is a support system. He himself did not have a good relationship with his father as they “just didn’t see things the same way.” That is why he works hard to have a good relationship with his own children.

Crowe told students that the best advice he could possibly leave them with is to always persevere and to try to have a good relationship with their parents, “because those relationships are a big deal.”

First-Prize Articles: Thursday

Interview with Chris Crutcher
by Natalie Eusebio
South Range High School

“Don’t you have to read to write?” were the first words that author Chris Crutcher’s dad said when Crutcher first spoke of being a writer in his early twenties.

On Thursday, April 18 of 2013, young adult author Chris Crutcher stepped in front of a group of young students in the Maag Library on the campus of YSU. The Maag Library was holding a journalism workshop as one of the many sessions offered to students at the 35th YSU English Festival.

Crutcher was wearing jeans with a t-shirt and open button up.

When asked about his writing process, Crutcher explained, “I do a lot of thinking before I start.” He added that he has a short attention span and often takes a swim or a jog before he can put pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard).

Crutcher also told the students that his main characters are often reflections of himself. But for the tragedy, he pulls from his experience as a therapist. He spoke of his clients as people who kept trying to stand back up or children who had been abused.

Crutcher laughed and said, “Actually, a lot of my clients ask to be in my books!”

When Crutcher was asked to reflect on his childhood, he said, “There are a lot of memories I haven’t written about yet.”

Crutcher also talked of how children growing up in today’s society have so much more access to information via technology.

“When I was a kid you had two channels on your TV and your remote was a stick.”

Chris Crutcher is one of the most-banned authors in America. Crutcher spoke of the first time he realized he was banned.

“I picked up an issue of New York Times and saw that I was on a banned books list with authors like Mark Twain and Harper Lee. Do you know how many copies I bought?” he said with a smile. Chris Crutcher went on to explain how he believes kids should have the power to decide what they read.

As advice for young aspiring authors, Crutcher listed three things: “One, read as much as you can. Two, write! Three, never let people tell you you can’t do it!”
Festival of Writing 2013

Interview with Chris Crowe
by Katy McClelland
Laurel Jr./Sr. High School

- Wake up at 4 a.m.
- Write all day in absolute silence
- Go to bed at 8 p.m.

That is the schedule of author Sharon M. Draper.

Draper got into writing when she was challenged to enter a writing contest. Her story was influenced by a time she went to the store and saw a lady cursing at her young son. She went home, wrote about it, and won first prize on the first thing she had ever written.

Draper said, “I was meant to be a writer,” and she said she believes she would’ve begun her writing career even if she wasn’t challenged, but not until much later in her life.

Despite being inspired by the angry woman in the store, she stated she doesn’t know where her ideas come from. Draper then joked about going down to Walgreens to buy them.

“Ideas come from everywhere,” Draper said. “A writer pulls the ideas from that place and puts them on paper.”

Draper stated that she thinks it is important that people know about kids their age changing the world, and that is why she wrote Fire from the Rock.

Draper told the interviewers, “I didn’t kill Josh, he killed himself.”

She said he was stupid, and she’s not trying to teach children not to follow in his footsteps. Draper stated that people get whatever they want out of books, and it’s not her job to teach morals.

Draper told aspiring authors to aim for quality and master the skill.

More books can be expected from Draper in the next year. She informed us that last Monday she turned a book in to an editor, and it should be finished by next year.

First-Prize Articles: Friday

Interview with Sharon M. Draper
by Victoria Johngrass
Boardman High School

Every story has a beginning, and Chris Crowe’s story started with an attractive librarian. In Chris’s summer after sixth grade, he started the bulk of his reading because of a pretty librarian who kept recommending books to read; that’s what inspired him to write.

When Chris writes his books, he tends to relate the story to his own experiences, as well as relate the characters to people he knows. His wife, being a big reader herself, is very skilled in picking out what will work and what won’t work to grab attention.

One of the interviewers asked why he liked writing historical fiction so much.

He replied, “My own stupidity really. As I learned more about it, I asked, ‘Why don’t I know this?'”

Chris was born in Danville, Ill., with a sister and two brothers who had a tendency to hold him down and shove a sweaty sock in his mouth for a laugh, he said.

Before wanting to write, Chris had an interest in being a teacher and a coach. He has done both but had to quit coaching because of the time commitment.

Crowe says he tries to write 600 words every day, typically in the morning. Another interviewer asked him what encourages him to finish a book.

He said chuckling, “A deadline and contracts.”

His influences are travelling, his wife, the books he has read, and his teachers. All of those influences help him write for his favorite target audience, adolescents.

Historical fiction is his favorite genre to write because he said that he is terrible at making up plots. Although some people don’t have a thirst for writing, Crowe says that writing is just part of a typical day for him.

Whenever he is writing, he sits in his writing room that has no windows or cell service to distract him. To encourage him to write, his local bookstore has a candy counter with toffee covered peanuts that he eats one when he finishes a page.

Chris Crowe is very dedicated and proud of his writing.
Imagine a young girl living in the Bronx. She’s staying with a stranger, her current foster home. With a clouded mind and a heavy heart, this girl finds comfort in something very dear to her: poetry.

Nikki Grimes, a New York Times best-selling author, spoke to a conference of 7th through 9th graders at the 2013 Youngstown State University English Festival in the Maag Library on Friday, April 19. While speaking to the crowd, Grimes told of her broken childhood, her dream of becoming a poet, and obstacles she overcame to achieve her goals.

It was “beyond broken,” said Grimes, when asked about her childhood. Her mother, an alcoholic and mentally ill, did anything she could to discourage young Grimes from writing.

Her father, she said, gave her her cultural education; he died when Grimes was 16.

The author said how she spent her childhood in numerous different foster homes, mostly with strangers. Poetry, she said, was her stronghold; “It was how I survived.”

Grimes explained the obstacles she faced on her way to achieving her dream of becoming a poet, a dream that began at age six.

“I felt like an endangered species.” At the time, narrative poetry was not popular. Editors did not encourage it. This advice went “in one ear and out the other,” said Grimes. “It’s like telling a leopard not to have spots: if you’re a poet, you’re going to write poetry.”

This idea of obstacles in the way of your goals is expressed in Grimes’ Coretta Scott King Award-winning book, Bronx Masquerade. In said book, 18 teens, all of different ethnicities and backgrounds, express their feelings through poetry and rap.

In writing the book, Grimes said she wanted the characters to “explore the difference between who they really are and how they present themselves to the world.” Everyone wears a mask, she said. When we take them off, “we are more alike than we are different.”

Grimes got the idea for Mr. Ward, the English teacher in Bronx Masquerade, from a friend of hers after being invited to witness one of their own poetry readings.

“It was just phenomenal,” said Grimes.

As a result of her book, poetry readings and open mic classes have appeared all over the country.

When asked about this, Grimes said, “I had no idea what I started with this book.”

Grimes said she writes for her audience, that her goal is to explain important subjects that aren’t being addressed, to “fill the gap.” Through her own personal experience, and through her writing, Grimes shows that you can overcome adversity to achieve your dreams.

Tips for Journalism Articles

• Prepare ahead. Research the author and plan your questions.
• Think of a good lead—a one-sentence paragraph that will catch the reader’s attention.
• Keep paragraphs and sentences brief and to the point.
• Focus on what makes this person interesting and relevant.
• Use active verbs and straightforward description. No fluff.
Interview with Chris Crowe
by Nathan Watt
Kittanning High School

Chris Crowe remembers a summer where he was rejected by publishers one hundred times. In a situation where many budding authors would have thrown in the towel, Crowe persevered and continued writing until he got his big break.

On Wednesday morning, students from several regional high schools got to interview historical fiction author Chris Crowe at Youngstown State University to learn a little more about the man behind books like Getting Away with Murder.

Crowe cited his athletic background as a major contributing factor to his success. Coming from a family with several athletic and studious siblings, Crowe said that he was inspired to achieve in the classroom and on the playing field.

One of Crowe’s significant memories comes from his career as an offensive lineman at Brigham Young University.

Crowe said that he remembers blocking a punt but failing to capitalize on the touchdown opportunity. Later, Crowe said that this experience taught him to accept mistakes as well as successes.

The mindset that Crowe developed as an athlete led him to be persistent as an author as well.

Crowe said, “I learned a lot about writing just by being turned down all the time.”

As a child, Crowe not only had a love for sports, but also a voracious appetite for reading.

“I loved to read as a kid,” Crowe said, and also noted that among his favorite childhood authors were H. G. Wells and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

Crowe also credits his wife, whom he has been with since high school, as a major help to him creatively. His wife is an artist and often helps Crowe critique his work.

Crowe said, “She is a really big help to me.”

Crowe’s advice to young authors was to write and read as much as possible, even books that do not initially seem appealing. He also said to “fill the hole in the bookshelf,” meaning to try and appeal to a specific audience.
Interview with Chris Crutcher
by Cortland Stone
South Side Middle School

“I’ll tell you my writing process, but you don’t want to follow it,” Chris Crutcher said when asked if he would tell the “press” how he writes his stories at the YSU English Festival on April 18, 2013.

Crutcher added that he finds an intense topic and just writes. After getting burned out from a long four-hour session of straight writing, he gets away from it and doesn’t go back to it for about four months. On purpose? No. Crutcher claims it is his ADD, procrastination, and short attention span that keep him from writing, but once he gets back into it, he’s in it.

Inspiration was also a topic brought up in the press conference. Crutcher says his “smart alec” attitude mixed in with tragedy from past patients and favorite authors including Christopher Paul Curtis, Terry Davis, Louis Lowery and Tom Robins all inspire his stories.

Also added were three pieces of advice to young writers. Those were to read, write, and “never let anybody tell you you can’t do it,” as Crutcher says he was not discouraged by people who told him “no.” Advice to his teenage self was also given by Crutcher, and that was simply to not be a goof and don’t be proud of it.

“Are there any characters that you have the most ties with?” a student asked Crutcher.

Confidently, he said “yes” and that “Angus and I were buddies for a long time.”

This author also unveiled that his characters were a big part in his life. Most characters were based off of him, but the tragic-storied characters were from his years of being a therapist.

“As human beings, we are responsible for what we do,” Crutcher says is the message he wants to bring out in all characters.

As Crutcher left the scene, he told the students, “Make me look good,” and he left.

Interview with Sharon M. Draper
by Lydia Marshall
Niles Middle School

Sharon Draper was at the grocery store one day when she witnessed something that would influence her writing. She saw a mother screaming at her child. Draper saw the woman curse at the three-year-old boy.

Soon, that event would help inspire her to write a story, and that very story was turned in to a contest, and Draper won first place.

“All life influences writing,” Draper shared when questioned about what inspires her. “It’s a good job; I lie for a living,” she added.

At the Thursday morning press conference in the Maag Library, Draper shared why she loves writing for teenagers.

“I actually like teenagers,” Draper laughed.

She also shared that teenagers are her favorite thing to write about. She likes how young people are open to asking questions.

“I was always meant to be a writer,” Draper said. “I was always really, really good at reading and writing...math, not so much,” Draper shared.

Draper describes her writing genre as “realistic fiction.”

“If one day I meet a zombie I will write a zombie book,” Draper said while gesturing with her hands. The sun shone through the windows onto her hands, illuminating her rings and bright red nails.

Draper was also questioned about her novel Fire from the Rock.

“You guys don’t know anything at all about 1957...I thought it was important that this generation knows that there was a group of kids who changed the world.”

After growing up in Ohio, visiting Africa four times and being a middle school and high school teacher, Sharon Draper has learned to collect inspiration from her daily life. She likes to be influenced by nature. So, when she writes, she sits in a room with windows covering one wall, two bookshelves covering two more walls, and her desk and door on the others.

Sharon Draper loves sharing stories with young people. She says “sometimes a book just needs to be written.”
Interview with Chris Crowe
by Morgan Jessep
Champion Middle School

“I think a good story is interesting, fit with interesting characters that have something unique about them and are easy to relate to,” said Chris Crowe during a press conference held at Maag Library at the Youngstown State University annual English Festival on Friday, April 19. Crowe, author of Mississippi Trial: 1955 and Getting Away with Murder: The True Story of the Emmett Till Case, spoke to a group of 7th and 8th grade students participating in the Festival about his thoughts and experiences as a writer.

“If I’m being good, I write every day – first thing in the morning,” said Crowe.

Crowe also talked about his writing environment: “No windows, no internet, my cell phone is turned off – nothing I can do except write.”

The author rewards himself for every page completed with a toffee-covered peanut.

“Not a great idea if you’re trying to lose weight,” said Crowe.

Crowe first got his interest for reading and writing when he was in 6th grade.

“There was this real good-looking librarian,” said Crowe. “She was gorgeous, a redhead.”

Even though Crowe had no idea what he was doing when he started writing, he still thought it’d be cool to be “one of the ones to write a story.”

Being the author of various audiences, Crowe’s favorite audience is young adult literature.

Crowe is currently writing a book taking place in 1968.

Interview with Nikki Grimes
by Tessa McClish
Crestview Middle School

“I grew up in the Bronx and moved from one foster home to the next. Poetry helped me through my troubles.”

This was author Nikki Grimes’s response when the question “How did poetry affect your childhood?” was asked.

This question came about at a press conference during the Youngstown State University English Festival.

“If I had listened to what every editor said about my early pieces of writing, I wouldn’t have a career.”

Nikki Grimes got the inspiration for the novel Bronx Masquerade out of her experiences in life.

“I live in California and visit lots of schools. Mr. Ward in Bronx Masquerade came from one of my good friends that did an activity similar.”

Nikki Grimes said her character Mr. Ward was based off of one of her good friends, who was a teacher. Nikki had previously visited her friend to listen to some of his personal poetry. In the act of reading this, his students decided to join in the reading.

Grimes said, “Poetry became the hot thing. It generated a lot of much-needed energy.”

Soon enough, this session became a regular thing. Mr. Ward set up a stage and a spotlight and began videotaping students.

“The students amazed me. Some were making up poems on the fly and reading them to the beat of music.”

In her free time, when she’s not writing, Grimes said she enjoys watercolor painting.

“I enjoy painting florals. Painting is a sort of stress reliever.”

“My father had always been the one to encourage writing. In this, he included the need for a writer’s eye and ear.”

Nikki Grimes said, “Poetry helped me though my troubles as a kid, and I continue to enjoy it today.”

She concluded the conference with her advice for writing.

Nikki Grimes said, “Read, read, read, and write, write, write.”
Interview with Chris Crowe
by Jenna Holub
Newton Falls High School

In a press conference with Chris Crowe on April 17, 2013, students sat down to talk with the author and dig deeper into his life and writings. The English professor and writer talked about life as a jock-turned-author for the participants at the YSU English Festival.

Being the only English major on his college football team at BYU, Chris Crowe has always faced different forms of challenges as a writer. Crowe even said he was once rejected “one hundred times” over a span of time before getting his works published.

“Writing is hard. You have to like it even when it isn’t fun,” Crowe said.

When talking about his inspirations, he said he gets them mostly from history. He was even a history major when he first started college. Crowe has said that writing historical fiction is good for him because it gives him a platform to base his writing off of.

This platform helps him, he has said, because he is a “sloppy” writer and the process can be very unorganized. He has said he is terrible at setting up direct plots. So when he faces writer’s block, it doesn’t help. He has said that on many occasions he faces it, but tries to consistently write to try and avoid it.

With that all being said, Crowe has still managed to write books that seem to capture the attention of some people today. In 2007, Crowe was awarded the Karl G. Maeser Excellence in Research and Creative Arts award from BYU, and in 2008 he was also awarded the Nan Osmond Grass Professorship Award in English.

Crowe continues to write to this day while maintaining his teaching job. He enjoys creating healthy relationships with his children and is married to his high school sweetheart. He is currently working on a new book set for release in 2014.

Interview with Nikki Grimes
by Harvest Radich
Howland High School

A young child, at the mere age of six, sits down to write a new short story or read her favorite poetry book, dreaming about the day she will finally be what she knows she is destined to be: a writer.

Nikki Grimes, now an older version of her six-year-old self and fresh off an American Airlines flight with only four hours of sleep, sat down with students on April 17 in YSU’s Maag Library.

The Dark Sons author, adorned in various jewelry pieces, talked to students about her early childhood and what inspired her throughout the years.

“I knew from the age of six that I wanted to be a writer,” Grimes said.

She adds that her father played an integral role in her early childhood, always encouraging her to observe her surroundings.

He coined the phrase “writer’s eye” and never stopped encouraging Grimes to pursue her dreams.

Although Grimes’ father proved to be a major supporter in her life, Grimes put most of her trust in her faith.

Today she infuses this sense of religion into every work she completes and hopes that her readers connect to her emotion.

“The most important element in writing is to connect to the reader,” Grimes said.

It is this sense of understanding and the impact she has with readers that keeps Grimes writing.

The Bronx Masquerade writer enjoys learning about those readers she has had an effect on and encourages those inspired by her work to achieve their own dreams.

“Choose the thing that you’re passionate about,” Grimes said.

The distinguished author concluded the makeshift press conference by advising practice and determination in order to achieve those most sacred goals.
When Chris Crutcher’s father found out about his son’s new writing career, the first words out of his mouth were, “Don’t you have to read to write?”

Crutcher himself admits that if he could give a piece of advice to his teenage self, it would be to stop being such a goof in the sense that you’re proud of doing work. He was not an avid reader.

In an interview with Chris Crutcher on Thursday, April 18 at 10 a.m., he opened up to the group of students seated in front of him, scribbling notes after everything he said. As part of a journalism workshop at the YSU English Festival in the Maag Library, Crutcher stood, relaxed, smiling at the questions and answering them thoughtfully.

On the topic of banned books, Crutcher said with fire in his eyes, “Freedom of the mind is the big deal.”

The First Amendment and freedom of expression were key words Crutcher used when telling about his feistiness when dealing with people “with very different ideologies.”

Being a therapist, Crutcher said he heard stories he could not have imagined. The question he digs deep for is, “What got you here and how can we get you out?” He bases many characters off of people and their real-life experiences, so he develops a personal tie with each of them. Main characters are a reflection of him and his own response to happenings.

“As human beings, we are responsible for everything we do,” Crutcher told the group. “This responsibility is how we respond to something.”

His message was what he wanted to leave us with as the press conference wrapped up. He also told the group that he is inspired by injustice, unfairness, human rights, and when his own sense of decency is violated.

Crutcher has two books in the formative stages, which are currently in the four-month “thinking” span of his writing.

As he left, after shaking hands with the coordination, he snuck back over, grabbed his bag, and exclaimed, “Make me look good!” with a warm smile, completing the mood in the room.

Draper says that her teacher, although mean, was a source of inspiration for her later novels, such as Fire from the Rock, 1957, and Copper Sun.

“I wanted to write Copper Sun because I went to Africa, and I wanted everyone else to know how great it was.”

Sharon finished up the press conference by encouraging the journalist prodigies to clap louder than another group that was interviewing Chris Crutcher.

More information about Sharon Draper and her works can be found on her website: www.sharonsdraper.com.

“Come dream with me.”
This Friday, April 19, Chris Crowe spoke to a group of students in a journalism workshop at Youngstown State University for the annual English Festival. His books being featured at this event were *Mississippi Trial, 1955* and *Getting Away with Murder: The True Story of the Emmett Till Case*.

In response to how Crowe began writing, he said, “There was a really good-looking librarian.”

He continued to describe this librarian as a “gorgeous redhead.” He was in 6th grade at the time, and from this librarian he read many novels which led Crowe to think, “There’s somebody behind this book.”

From then on, Crowe led a normal life, as any other teen with three brothers would.

He chuckled and said, “They tortured me.”

From a family of “jocks,” Crowe said his brothers would “hold [him] down and get a sweaty sock and shove it down [his] throat” for a laugh. He then continued to say that his brothers influenced him to get good grades and stay in sports, however.

Now, Crowe is an English professor at Brigham Young University. Being an English teacher, Crowe said, makes writing worse because of time consumption.

Crowe does try to write every day, though; he writes in a place with “no windows or internet” where his cell phone doesn’t work. On rare occasions, said Crowe, he keeps toffee-covered peanuts in his drawer. When he writes a page, Crowe said, he gets a piece.

“This is good,” Crowe smiled, “unless you’re trying to lose weight.” This silence sent an echo of laughter in the room.

Currently, Crowe is working on and finishing a new novel. This Monday, he will also be travelling to Boston to speak, and he’ll be going to England in the summer.

When asked if Crowe was glad to attend the festival, he said, “Of course!”

Nikki Grimes, author of many books, visited a high school in California that a friend of hers taught at. Her reason for being there was to speak to students about her career.

The students had been learning about the Harlem Renaissance and the surge of poetry. Grimes was struck by how many students brought in poetry to read in the open mic setting the teacher had created.

This became the template of one of her newest books, *Bronx Masquerade*, a story of high school students who “explore the difference between who they really are once they take off that mask.”

She has loved writing since she wrote her first poem at six. She used to think of herself primarily as a poet, but no longer does because the narrative poetry that she writes is, in fact, narrative, so she does enjoy writing stories.

Poetry, however, is her forte. It comes naturally to her, and she enjoys the wordplay, how she can paint a picture or tell a story through just a few words. She says as a child she “was fascinated with language, that one word can mean many different things.”

Grimes spoke at a press conference for the Youngstown State University English Festival on the morning of April 19. The conference was organized by the Tribune Chronicle in Maag Library on campus.

She sat in a chair facing every student and answered every question, from her childhood ambitions to whether or not she wrote about superheroes.

She talked about obstacles, saying, “Actually, I felt like an endangered species.”

Despite all of her roadblocks growing up, she continues to write and educate the world on issues of today.