

# English II Pieces

## 2002-2003

### Autumn

by Krista Van Velzen

Rust and amber leaves  
shiver  
amongst skinny arms  
reaching toward the sky.  
A cold breeze  
Whispers, luring spiraling leaves,  
one by one, to dance  
weightlessly  
until they forever rest on  
frosty grass.

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### Race Wars

by Tyler Bork

The purr of the deep-throated exhaust brings back memories of past summers. Summers filled with girls, friends, and a whole lot of fun. But it is more than just girls and friends. It is the feeling of racing from street light to street light. It is feeling the vicious purr in my whole body, mostly in my heart, working its way up to my head where I am overwhelmed by the sound.

With the engine revved for an invite, I grip the steering wheel and stick. I drop the clutch, slam the gas pedal to the floor and go for shit. I can smell the bitter smell from the rubber burning off the smoking tires. All I can see are two blurred objects that look like cars, but one could not be sure. That feeling can never be taken away from me.

So much adrenaline, like doing something really scary for the first time. It is the feeling as if my heart could burst at any given moment. A world of freedom begins when I touch the steering wheel and rub my hand over the precious gear knob; the hair on the back of my neck stands straight up and I get the chills. Driving cars is more than a hobby to me; cars are my life and just thinking about them makes my heart start to race.

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### The Taste of the Ocean

### The Most Educational Game

by Toby Johnson

Sweat slowly runs down my neck unnoticed, all of my concentration focused on the remaining defenders of my last fort, located south of my villages. While I ponder what type of men to train, I send a small force of cavalry to the west, a short distance from my fort, to flank any siege weapons. Next I march my heavy infantry and pikemen south into the fort, and keep producing archers from the ring of castles surrounding my fort.

As my last columns of infantry march through the gate, I look back to my villages in the north to find all of my houses, barracks, and farms ablaze. In my concentration, armies of Frankish knights had marched past me on the east and had destroyed my whole village. Challenging my enemy to another game, I resign, having no chance of winning without an economy to support my army.

When I walk through the video game section of a store and see kids with games like *Harry Potter*, *Need for Speed*, and *Madden Football* in the cart, I am disappointed. These games may keep the child occupied, but cannot teach him anything worth learning. Most parents only check a game's rating and price before deciding whether or not to purchase it. This is poor parenting; a lot of games are both entertaining and educational. The best example of a game that is both fun and educational is *Age of Empires*. *Age of Empires* teaches history, as well as a plethora of skills, from math to strategizing, prioritizing, and problem solving. The child can have a blast without throwing time in the garbage.

*Age of Empires* is a strategy game spanning periods from the fall of Rome through the Middle Ages. While building a civilization, the player is forced to make decisions about what types of buildings to build, and what types of men to train. When deciding what type of unit you will train, you are forced to calculate the cost, attack, armor, strength, speed, and range of each unit, to decide which one will be best for the situation. Beside each unit in the manual, there is a description of how the unit was deployed in real life and the importance each one had in medieval battle. To become successful at the game, it is necessary to remember the descriptions to properly deploy your own troops.

In action and shoot-'em-up games, the player puts useless

by Clay Charles

In the beginning, I was intimidated. Standing on the tepid beach, I listened to the incessant thunder of the ocean's waves. The sound was like the constant revving of an engine in high gear. I would progress down to the wet sand and the waves would race past my feet. The ocean's dense, salty exhaust lingered in the air and filled my nostrils. I remember standing there, ten-years-old, bewildered by the prodigious size and awesome power of the endlessly surging water. That feeling and the unique smell of ocean air have been with me ever since.

Every time I smell salt, I instantly remember standing on that golden-glazed beach looking out into the vastness of what seems like a never-ending water source. I remember diving through a wave just before it rolled over me like a sleeping giant. Sometimes I would make it through; other times I wouldn't and I'd tumble all the way onto the shore with sand itching all over my body like a swarm of pesky bugs. Most of all, though, the scent of salt water reminds me of the only time I ever felt greater than a giant.

Riding an uncontrollable natural phenomenon is awesome! During a trip to Hawaii, my older brother, Colt, decided to teach me how to surf. We rented eight-foot foam boards. The salty ocean air referred me back to my first experience with the ocean as we walked toward the hip-high surf. Colt demonstrated for me while I sat on the beach taking mental notes. Then it was my turn. I wouldn't stand in the beginning. I was partially scared and partially guilty for trying to take advantage of something so strong and extraordinary. The first few times I was shocked by how quickly the wave shot me out in front of itself. It was like I was pulling myself back on a long rubber band and I finally decided to release myself and allow the rubber band to fling me like a slingshot. I didn't dare look back. White foam was racing toward me like wild horses and I heard the rumbling of their hooves.

After riding the stampede in, I got that old adrenaline rush and I scrambled back out to where my brother was. He was waiting, examining each wave out loud, teaching me how to read the water. He was an old sagacious local trying to teach me the "tricks of the surfing trade." Finally, he said, "Here's one," and began to paddle as if he were in a kayak, trying to escape the deathly grip of class IV rapid, "Time Zone." The wave crested, and I watched its back continuously cycle as the sun danced off it, reflecting the purity and beauty of a

information into his head by memorizing the location of guns, keys and other objects or secret passages. Unlike action, sports, and racing games, *Age of Empires* is a game that is fun because you know that you are putting good use to your time. Parents can feel confident buying this game because children can learn something and exercise their minds while playing the game.

Before my second game, I read up on the heavy cavalry unit that had proved so devastating to me in the last game. As the game starts, I build a small defensive force after laying out my villages and constructing my forts, but I send out a scout to see what units my enemy has before building the bulk of my army. After learning that he is training mainly cavalry again, I start mass-producing pikemen, a unit that has a huge attack bonus against cavalry. The manual contributes this bonus to the fact that knights could not get near enough to attack, due to the pikes long reach. Because of their cheap cost I produce a large amount and combine them with some trebuchets and knights for an attack force. I place my pikemen in front, while my trebuchets destroy enemy buildings from behind. By the time my enemy starts training swordsmen and archers to counter my pikemen, I have destroyed his defenses, and can easily move in with cavalry to win the game.

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## Communication

by Bret Van Velzen

Talking to my stubborn sister is as productive as speaking to a wall. She will yell at me until my ears ring (for hiding a binder which sits in the same closet where it has always been. For stealing a folder which lies on her desk). When I advise her to search in her room she acts like she is smarter than to take such silly advice.

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## Who's Judging Whom?

by Clay Charles

The game begins and the competition is tough and evenly matched. Pads crash, sweat beads slowly drip down tired

thousand illusory diamonds.

Snapping back to reality I saw another adequate wave approaching. My adrenaline was still flowing from my last ride. Now I paddled as if I were trapped in the Time Zone Hole. The wave crested behind me. For a while, time stopped. I inhaled the ocean's dense air through my mouth. It filled my lungs and my tongue assimilated the humid, salty air on the way down. Then I realized I was too far up my board. It cut deep into the silky-blue ocean. I ended and slammed onto opaque water. Dark chaos followed as I tumbled along with the wave. It shook me, rolled me, stuck salt water up my nose and in my ears, then let go.

I reached the surface and gasped for air. I was scared. I looked at the wave that was now washing onto the shore, and it laughed. It was laughing at me like little kids giggle when older kids screw up. My previous guilt turned into a battle between me and the ocean. Back and forth we tested each other. I would talk trash after I rode a wave all the way in. The ocean would laugh after it threw me off.

Colt finally told me we needed to go in for lunch. Walking up the beach, I smelled the thick air that surrounds the ocean hovering around me. The noon sun dried the water on my body, but the salt remained. The sun cooked my back with gentle radiant heat. I walked back for lunch but had already had my appetizer. I would return. I had tasted the ocean.

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## Interesting Hobbies

by Hannah Hoke

As one of Kathy Golden's art students, I recall her creating scenes for her students to paint or to draw, each scene having a pin or ball in it. Wondering why, I stopped by her house in Donnelly, Idaho, one day. As I walked toward the house, all of the bowling objects caught my eye. The front garden was lined with bowling balls, each propped on an ashtray. Brightly-colored balls lined the path to the door on both sides. The balls were all different colors. Goldie told me, "The black ones are a drag but I collect them too." Many of the balls are different sizes, because players who really get into bowling have different finger sizes, and hand sizes, plus, little kids want smaller balls.

Off the path, one part of Goldie's garden is a "Hall of

bodies, and the smell of war lingers in dense air.

Suddenly, yellow hankies begin to fly like migrating geese in the fall. All of the fouls are against us; some fair; others, inconceivable. These many horrible calls turn the momentum toward our opponent. Due to the blatant bias of the referees, our mental composure slowly crumbles. Teammates are furious with teammates. We slowly self-destruct from the inside out like a poorly-programmed robot. The rest of the game drones on. We walk off the field, disappointed, fuming because of the series of bad calls that ultimately costs us a chance to compete fairly.

Poor officiating causes countless high school athletes to suffer negative competitive experiences. Poor officiating keeps teams from competing at their optimal level. Poor officiating interferes with sport. During pre-game warm ups, referees sometimes come over to our team and try to explain that some players have illegal mouthpieces. Since when are mouthpieces illegal? When mouth protection exhibits referees' unusually keen eye for fouls against a team, something is up.

Energetic fans, electric atmospheres, and competitive match-ups are all part of what make sports worth watching and playing. Athletic competition should be pure fun. But throw human greed into the blender, and what pours out is a nasty combination of personal desire and unfair bias. Unjust calls sometimes prevent superior teams from winning games.

This injustice is beginning to seed itself into many different sports. From Olympic judging to high school athletics, referees and judges have an obligation to serve honestly between competitors, remaining consistent in their judging patterns.

In the winter of 2002, I sat on the couch to watch the internationally unbiased Olympics. I always have a blast watching countries compete for the coveted Olympic gold. I was able to witness many exciting finishes: the last stretch in cross-country skiing, the final seconds in men's ice hockey. This Olympic Games was turning out to be fun. You never knew who was going to win any competition because everyone was trying so hard to be the best.

That night I sat down to watch the pairs figure skating. The reporters were predicting a hands-down competition in favor of the talented Russian pair. The Russians are always favored in sports like figure skating and gymnastics.

Pairs went by and performed decently, but nothing spectacular happened. It looked like the Russians were

Fame," with balls that have names on them from famous bowlers or from people who wanted their name engraved on their ball. Goldie explained that "Barb" is for my friend Barb Plye. Or "I have "Marilyn" because I know Marilyn Olson." Hanging in her living room is a beautiful painting of her garden with all the balls in it. Standing on the steps above the garden, with a perfect view of everything, Goldie begins to tell me how she began collecting all these bowling articles.

As a door gift for a party she gave a bowling ball and pin. The person who received the gift did not really like it, so she gave it back to Goldie. Goldie put the pin and ball on her doorstep for everyone to admire. She became very fond of the objects, and left them outside her house as decoration. After having the ball and pin outside her house for some time, her neighbors thought the ball and pin, "were some kind of code to notify my friends if I was busy or not, and therefore, could be visited or not." However, that was not the case.

That Halloween, someone stole Goldie's ball and pin. This was when she became very interested in collecting such odd but unique objects. She wondered why anyone would want to steal something so out-of-the-ordinary. From then on, Goldie was all over every thrift store in Boise looking for every ball and pin she could get her hands on. Shortly after that, her boyfriend started giving her bowling balls and pins as presents. Many people she knew noticed she had become fond of these articles. Some days, Goldie would come home and find bowling balls or pins on her doorstep, never knowing whom they were from. Years later, the father of the boy who had stolen the first ball and pin told Goldie about it. "His dad told me long after it happened, at a party at my new house in Donnelly," Goldie said. The kid never returned her original ball and pin, though.

One time while Goldie was searching through the thrift store, she came upon a beautiful, glittery gold ball, which is now her favorite ball. "My heart began to beat hard inside," she said. She had fallen in love! Goldie keeps her special balls inside at home. A few days ago, while walking through her living room, she hit her ankle on this gold ball. She thought she had broken her ankle, it hurt so much! Although Goldie loves bowling items, she does not even bowl.

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## **Confused**

by Toby Johnson

going to have an easy trip to Olympic gold. Then came the Canadians. They landed every throw and jump imaginable. Their performance was flawless, and they had smiles on the whole time, like cheerleaders.

Next were the Russians. You could tell they were hesitant throughout their whole routine because of their lethargic body language. They just weren't skating like they were predicted to. The Russian pair committed many minor mistakes, which every pair does, but they also committed one big error. The commentator announced that the Russians had one more throw to complete and then their routine would be finished. Then, the woman skater slipped when she landed, which is a major deduction. When the final marks came up on the television screen, they were fairly even with the marks of the Canadian pair, except for a few judges who had marked the Russian pair near ten! I remember losing feeling in my jaw as it dropped and hearing the boos out from the crowd.

Later the International Olympic Committee (IOC) launched an investigation and found that certain judges had accepted bribes, from the black market, to award the Russians with superior marks. By accepting the bribe, the judges predetermined the outcome of the competition, giving the favored pair gold before the contest even began.

In today's world, athletic upsets and new mile-stones are becoming as common as cellular phones. Who would have thought Mark McGuire would hit seventy home runs and crush the previous record of sixty-three? Who would have thought that the Indiana Hoosiers would advance to the Final Four Championship Game and almost overthrow the highly ranked Maryland Terepins? This is why games are played. You never know what will happen. Unless, of course, you happen to be a judge.

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## **Yosemite**

by Krista Van Velzen

My eyelids flutter open as golden light filters through the faded red cloth of the two-man tent. A cold shiver runs up my spine before I burrow deeper into my sleeping bag. I hear voices and see human shadows dancing on the walls of my tent. Andrew's voice yells: "Sarah! Krista! Get up."

Sarah and I slowly crawl out of our warm, down sleeping bags. I dig into my faded, red, 30-year-old backpack and pull out some hiking clothes. I slip a tee shirt over my head, put my black basketball shorts on, and pull clean socks over

Random words pour  
into my head --  
a large scoop of fine grain,  
tainted by thistles and green,  
unripe wheat.  
Each distorted, unwanted word  
followed by others  
bound in strands: long hay bales  
filled with value, but having  
no relevance  
to the thoughts I seek.

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### **Challenging Life** by Hannah Hoke

Straddle-cut-catch mount:  
complicated, but extremely challenging.  
Executing a front hip circle,  
I quickly flash around the bar  
like a windmill: smooth and continuous.  
Continuing with no hesitation,  
I cast to an awesome handstand,  
coming down to feel my feet on the wooden bar,  
and whirl around again.  
This time, flowing backwards, a blink move, I am  
unable to see what is ahead.  
Suddenly stopping on the bar,  
like a bird perched on barbed-wire,  
I take a breath.  
Jumping and catching the high bar, I am a cheetah  
pouncing on prey: fast  
and accurate.  
Now  
swinging perfect giants,  
I prepare to dismount carefully as a mouse strategizes to  
obtain his cheese.  
Shutting my eyes and spinning what seems like a  
thousand times,  
butterflies in my stomach, a baby bird learning to fly by  
falling from its nest.  
Almost instantly, the rush is over.  
My feet touch the firm mat on  
the ground. I open my eyes  
and look around  
a fumble-free dismount. The execution  
of a double-back off the bar  
displayed  
to perfection.

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my feet. After crab-walking to the front of the tent, I unzip  
the door and stick my feet out into the cold mountain air. I  
pull on my leather hiking boots, put on my fluffy down  
jacket, and wait for Sarah.

We walk over to where Andrew, Sarah's brother, Ian,  
Andrew's friend, Mary, Ian's mom, and Merry and Pat,  
Sarah's parents, are camped. Before breakfast, Sarah and I  
walk to the cold, clear stream to pump water. The water  
flows through the pump and into the aluminum pan. Pat  
lights the backpack stove, and I place the pan on top of the  
blue flame. While the water is heating up, I run back to my  
tent to get instant hot cocoa and instant oatmeal packets out  
of my pack. I dump the cocoa into my "Sierra Mug", then  
sit on a smooth granite rock slab as I slowly sip my  
steaming, rich hot chocolate. The sun warms my face as it  
peers between mountain peaks and reflects off the slopes of  
remaining snow and the calm lake.

We all join in cleaning the camp and disassembling the tents.  
I strap the green hip strap of my backpack around my hips,  
and slip my arms through the arm straps. Then we stride  
down the narrow, muddy path, deeper into Yosemite. As  
we climb over snow, we sink in it to our knees. I had never  
expected to see snow in California in the middle of June.  
Our feet are soaked from crossing cold streams that flow  
from under the snow. After thirteen miles of hiking on tired  
muscles and blistered feet, we reach a campsite. It is only  
one mile from the trailhead to Half-Dome, but with a  
beautiful view of the granite dome illuminated by the last  
rays of the sinking sun. Ian and Andrew collect wood for a  
fire, as Sarah and I walk the dusty path to the stream. We  
pump water into our water bottles and into the aluminum  
pan. Then we splash ice-cold water onto our sunburned  
faces. I pull out a towel to clean my feet and legs, which are  
caked in dirt.

The fire is blazing when we arrive back at the campsite. As  
the water is heating to cook Macaroni and Cheese, Sarah  
and I scout for the most flat, soft place. We set up our tent,  
which only takes about ten minutes, then walk over to  
where dinner is being served. I never thought Macaroni and  
Cheese could taste this good.

After Sarah and I finish cleaning the dishes, we brush our  
teeth and get ready for bed. I am so exhausted that I fall  
asleep the second my head touches my pillow. It is still  
dark when my eyelids spring open. A shadow of a bear is  
cast on the wall of the tent. As he sniffs the tent, I grab for  
Sarah's hand to see if she's awake. I can feel that she is  
shaking as much as I am. I wonder if I had left anything in  
my bag that the bear might want, but I'm sure that I took all  
of the food, my cherry-flavored chapstick, and all the

## Mexico

by Tyler Bork

Before I left for my trip to Mexico, I was imagining what our rental houses were going to be like, and how the food was going to be and of course, all about the beach. I did not even consider the driving laws, and the kids who do not attend school. I just sort of took it for granted, that there were no strict laws on school or driving.

Sayulita, Mexico, turned out to be a ton of fun, as I had the chance to check out Mexican culture. While walking around town one night, my friends and I met some girls from Montana in the square where all of the vendors sell their wares. We walked down to the beach while getting acquainted with one another. We had almost reached the beach when we were ambushed with raw eggs. I was tagged in the foot and everyone else was hit too. We dashed onto the beach and split up. I thought maybe it was a way of getting the girls' attention to flirt with them. But then I started to really think about it, and realized that the town was full of tourists. I got the feeling that they did not like us and wanted us to leave. But why would they want us to leave when we, the tourists, bring in a ton of money to the community?

This happened three nights in a row, until the girls' parents got help from a couple of bouncers from Don Pedro's, a nearby restaurant. Two guys talked to the kids who were doing this egging, but it did not help very much. Later in the week, we discovered that the Mexican boys were throwing the eggs because they did not like Saddam Hussein and they did not like us, either. They thought that we had started the war with Iraq. After this whole controversy, we eventually found out that a girl from France was leading the Mexican boys in the egging sport, and eventually, all the egging was put to an end.

Our daytime adventures were as unexpected as the cultural clash we experienced. Mexicans are insane when it comes to driving. Ten cars would pass at once, in a pack of solid traffic that extended for four or five miles. I was holding on inside our rental car for dear life. The door handle definitely got a workout. All of this crazy excitement made me feel thankful for what I have and gave me more respect for others. Driving is a scary thing in Mexico; Mexican drivers are not like the people who drive in the United States because we are courteous.

granola bar wrappers out of my pack. Once the he has circled the tent a few times, he walks away. This scares Sarah and me even more, because Andrew, Ian, and Pat are all sleeping outside. Soon we hear a crash, and then sounds of a rustling of a plastic bag.

The next morning, we wake up to see the branch that we had hung some of our food on chewed through, lying on the ground with a ripped plastic bag next to it. Fortunately, most of our food is in the "bear boxes", which bears can't break open. Still, the bear had eaten a lot of food, and, even worse, Ian's and Andrew's toothbrushes were eaten, too. We pick up the remaining shreds of plastic, and throw them on the roaring fire. After breakfast, zipping the daypacks off our backpacks, we fill them with granola bars and water, then set off on the trail toward Half Dome.

The trail is precipitous, but it is shaded by enormous Ponderosa Pines, and easy to hike. Two miles later, I turn a corner, and all the trees disappear. All I see is a vertical granite face. I ask, "Where's the trail?" Pat just points to two flimsy cables that are suspended three feet above the smooth granite. I just want to stop, because I had thought it would be a dirt path to the top. As we approach the cables, we find a pile of about one hundred pairs of gloves. We dig through the pile until we find a pair that fits each of us. Then, we start to climb the slippery path.

Halfway up, I have to stop because my gloves are getting hot from the friction of the cables. As I look back at Sarah, a cold shiver runs up my spine, and I realize that if I fall, I will tumble down about 100 meters. I keep going until I reach the large flat top. We all walk to the edge, and stare down at Yosemite Valley, which is 4,000 feet below us. Andrew and Ian convince us to go out on a ledge. We crawl slowly out on the ledge so Pat can take a picture of us. It is the most exhilarating thing I have ever done. I am so scared, I can hardly breathe. Sarah and I are so proud of ourselves for being so brave, but our bubble is quickly burst, as a guy walks out on the same ledge and does a handstand. As I sit on the granite next to Sarah, I realize that this is the best trip I have ever taken.

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## The Art of Kayaking

by Sarah Armstrong

The water swallowed my face, and I was momentarily blinded. My body was violently thrown around. I continued slicing the water with the blade of my paddle. The boat seemed ready to plummet to the bottom of the river as I fell from the apex of each whirling and threatening wave. The

Although I had felt like creeping down to their level of boredom, I restrained myself from retaliating after the eggs had been thrown. Mexico gave me a whole new perspective at how lucky we as Americans really are. Mexico is a beautiful place and the towns are friendly during the day, but at night the scene is a lot different.

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## Revival

by Clay Charles

Attempting to redeem themselves  
from last year's catastrophe,  
home fans roar  
like thundering herds of the Serengeti,  
in hopes of inducing brilliant play  
from their black-and-orange warriors.  
Intensity is an electric lightning bolt  
circulating through the stadium.  
Home-team Beavers bombard Bulldogs  
while fans frantically foul-mouth  
opposing coaches.  
Justifying last year's loss,  
Beavers continually rack up points  
as home-town fans pound on bleachers.  
*THUD, THUD, THUD...*  
thundering herds stir dust  
while points compile...  
Dust leisurely settles;  
mists of the day's final sun rays  
sparkle through  
while salty sweat beads  
drizzle down Beavers' faces...  
redemption's satisfying draught.

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## First Baseball Game

by Toby Johnson

Last year, my uncle called to say that he had just bought tickets for my family to go to game seven of the 2002 Yankees vs. Diamond Backs World Series in Arizona. He had already bought the tickets, but if the Diamond Backs did not win their next game, there would be no game seven, because the Yankees were up in the Series, three games to two. When the deciding game came on television, my brother and I were thrilled to see that the Diamond Backs got an early lead and ended up winning the game by over ten points. We packed our stuff that night: a change of clothes, and our baseball mitts, just in

only thought occupying my mind at that moment was the advice my instructor, Marty, had given me seconds before: "Remember that all you have to do is lean into the wave and kiss it and hug it and love it!" One last splash in the face, a rise and fall with the last wave; then it was over. My first rapid in a kayak!

After two days of having to stay behind at sand bars learning to roll my kayak while everyone else ran a stretch of the Main Salmon River, I finally had my chance to go kayak. Following what seemed like millions of failed attempts, I had successfully rolled my boat by myself. Intense excitement filled my body. Because of my newly-proficient roll, my instructors felt that I had the ability to run a stretch of river with them.

We approached a wave train several miles down the river. I was second in our line of kayakers to run the rapid. I plowed through a wave. However, once I reached the point at which I thought I had made it safely through, I began to be pulled backward, upstream. The wave drew my boat backward, and I panicked. The kayak flipped over. My attempts to roll back over were unsuccessful. Kayaking is so much harder than it looks. The thrashing water seemed to grab my paddle away from me, preventing me from rolling to the surface. Fortunately, Mike was near enough to Eskimo rescue me, by allowing me to hold on to the front of his boat, and rolling up, preventing me from having to swim.

After catching my breath, I realized that I was now participating in a much different sport than I had been at the beginning of that particular rapid. No, kayaking had a different meaning to me now. Kayaking was hard; it was a sport that was frightening, yet energizing and fun. I would no longer look at a kayaker and think to myself that those waves were just little ripples; how could anyone flip in them?

Although an experienced kayaker would consider the rapids that I ran that day easy or perhaps boring, for me it was the ride of a lifetime. Each stroke seemed so crucial to my survival that I slowly began to realize that kayaking is not only a sport, but an art.

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## Hatred

by Toby Johnson

Tear streaks  
run across dusty, flushed

case a foul ball or homerun came our way. Once we arrived in Phoenix, we went to my uncle's house, ate lunch, and then took a short nap. We woke up at 4:00 and headed straight to the game so that we could watch the 5:30 batting practice.

After finding a parking spot in a parking garage, we walked several blocks to the stadium. While we were walking, I could not believe that I was really going to watch the World Series. It was a dream that I had had ever since I watched my first baseball game when I was four.

This was the first professional baseball game that I had been to, and I was amazed by how different it was from those on television. The field was a lot smaller than it appeared on television, but the stadium itself was much larger. I was especially excited about going to see this World Series because I really liked the Diamond Backs, and I fervently hated the New York Yankees. Curt Shilling, one of my favorite pitchers, was starting for the Diamond Backs while Roger Clemens, my least favorite pitcher, was starting for the Yankees. After batting practice, we found our seats, halfway up behind the center-field wall.

The Diamond Backs scored a couple of runs in the middle of the game, and then the Yankees came back to gain the lead towards the end of the game. In the bottom of the ninth inning, the Diamond Backs scored three runs to win the game. After the game, everyone in the stadium was thrilled, excluding a handful of Yankee fans. The sidewalks outside of the stadium were packed with excited Diamondback fans. Everyone was eager to slap your hand; it felt exhilarating having so many people happy for the same reason.

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## **A Matter of Pride**

by Travis Drake

Recently, the Dallas Cowboys played the new National Football League expansion team, the Houston Texans, on Monday Night Football. As is customary, the announcer played the national anthem before the start of the game. The players took the field, and, while the song played, the camera panned across the new Texan players. It focused on the new Texan quarterback, David Carr, who proceeded to make a remark to his friend, roll his eyes, fidget and shift his weight from leg to leg, topping off his performance by spitting on camera. When the song finally finished, Carr looked relieved,

cheeks. The pressure of pure anger pumps out evil thoughts that buzz briefly: each idea more malicious than the previous one. Reactive compounds mix with former thoughts, tiny atoms in a brain, combining to form fusion bombs.

Red eyes seek nothing but fault from fury's instigator. All thoughts focus only on revenge. Muscles tense in a fervent desire to inflict pain.

Warm blood floods the head as a river rushes to the ocean; the whole body works only to maintain hatred and to cause suffering.

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## **The Final Countdown**

by Clay Charles

Another pass slips through our receiver's sure hands; the offense stalls. As the golden-footed kicker struts out to the spot, suspenseful silence surrounds enormous crowds. The kicker steps back as exhausted, sweaty defenders ready themselves for one more exasperating push. The ball snaps back as white-clad foes attack a wall of blue. Gunners race around the periphery. The hold... gunners lay out in final desperation; the kick bullets past outstretched hands, squeaking through uprights. A silent crowd slowly rises,



like a kid who had just sat out a long Sunday sermon. He pulled on his helmet, and started the game.

This horrible display of patriotism by a national role model was viewed by thousands, if not millions, of people. No wonder few Americans are patriotic; they have no example to follow. Such poor influences are rampant in athletics.

Every year for several decades, the United States basketball team has dominated the World Basketball Championships. By never losing a game, they have clinched first place and a free trip to the Olympics every year. I was excited to sit down and watch this year's team. In the past, America has had strong line-ups, consisting of some of the best players in the National Basketball Association. By donating their time during the off-season, the professional players were able to represent their country. This year's foreign teams were full of skilled players, the best in their respective countries. During this year's Championships, I was surprised to find that our national team was woefully deficient: few professional players turned out, and many stars were conspicuously absent from the roster. As the games progressed, the sparse United States team was beaten twice, taking a ignominious eighth place and losing their free ride to the Olympics.

Are professional athletes so lazy that they will not even represent their country in the Olympics or the World Championships? Prima Donnas of American popular culture, professional athletes seem to lack the pride and motivation to display their talents by playing on the national team. If the mishaps of this tournament do not inspire some American players to represent their country, the U.S. Olympic basketball team could be in trouble.

This lack of nationalism plagues the American public. Several years ago, I took a trip with my family to California to visit, among other places, Sea World. I was pleased to see the American flag flying proudly over the compound. When the gates opened, everyone was asked to stop and honor the flag as the national anthem was played. It was as if no one had even heard the announcement. The terrific noise of people's voices as they joked with their friends or asked directions, nearly drowned out the notes of the nation's anthem. Other than small handful of people who covered their hearts and gazed upon the flag, most tourists just continued on through the park. When the anthem ended, my family made its way into the park, contemplating the lack of appreciation displayed by the public for these two

waiting for the signal...  
IT'S GOOD!  
Crowds burst into frenzied cheers,  
and storm the field.

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### Chilling

by Travis Drake

Refreshing, soothing, discomforting, life-threatening.  
*Brrrrr*: Cold is a fickle gift.  
It soothes burns, relieves pain,  
makes possible winter recreation.  
A double-agent, cold  
represents loneliness, connotes  
depression and isolation.  
Cold takes and preserves life.  
A mystery,  
cold lives  
a double life.

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### Television Evolved

by Bret Van Velzen

I first saw a plasma screen television in a department store. It was hanging from the ceiling. This amazing television confused me, so I asked about it. This TV can be hung like a picture on any wall because the thickest part of it is only about three inches. Plus, it has close to the clearest picture of any television available today. Compared to older big screens, the plasma television is about twice as clear because it has double the dots of color per square inch.

The only reason that I have not bought one of these plasma screen televisions is the price. The Sony 32" Plasma WEGA' Flat Panel Television runs around five thousand dollars. This particular Sony is the clearest I have seen, but it is expensive. There are cheaper plasma screens, but they are not equipped with all the features that the Sony has. Any plasma screen television would bring me more joy than my television, though, because they all have a clearer picture.

During the next few years, the price of plasma TV's should drop by about one third of the current price. In a few years, when the price is closer to eight hundred dollars, I hope to buy a plasma screen. The money is worth the upgrade, because you can hang the TV anywhere and the picture of a

precious emblems of American freedom.

Everywhere I look, I see disturbing reminders of the lack of respect Americans have for our country. Youth rarely say the Pledge of Allegiance in schools anymore. The average citizen is not familiar with the workings of the United States' government. Few people remember the national anthem, and many do not even have the courtesy to remove their hats when they hear it. The American people have lost their pride in the American flag and forgotten the sacrifices and values for which it stands. Gone is the appreciation and understanding of the sacrifices made to make our country free. We, the people, need to recapture the spirit and the sense of pride our country has lost, and to pass it on to future generations.

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### **Past Midnight**

by Hannah Hoke

Walking with an air of eagerness,  
whispering to a pal,  
looking at stars hanging,  
silent, like a portrait  
on the wall,  
unable to talk:  
tiny  
balls of fire  
illuminate the navy sky.  
Beneath them,  
the chill surrounds us  
as if we were standing in a freezer  
all alone.  
Warmth rises from the ground where  
we lay upon dark asphalt.  
In the blanket above figures begin to emerge.  
Surprised, we  
identify constellations.  
Orion, Ursa Major and Minor  
glow down upon our still bodies. Now,  
greeting early Morning,  
we rise to our feet, and  
walk aimlessly back  
in the direction of home.  
The night is over,  
like the last bite  
of the best dish of ice cream  
ever.

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plasma screen is clearer.

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### **The Trip**

by Travis Drake

My father, brother, and I gaze out of the windows of the small, rumbling Cessna as our backpacking trip becomes a reality. The scenery flows by below us, and we recognize the mountains depicted by our topographic map. Soon our destination becomes visible in the distance: Chamberlain Basin in the Frank Church Wilderness of No Return.

Our pilot, Jerry, skillfully lands on the rudimentary landing strip. We unload our gear and say goodbye. The obstreperous airplane engine slowly fades away and I am overtaken by a sense of seclusion. Standing in the middle of a meadow, my brother and I tighten our packs while dad orients himself on the map. A short walk across the meadow and we find the trail where we plan to begin. We are off!

The scenery is captivating and filled with variety. A recent fire has burned through the basin, where spots of charred ground and black trees alternate with green forest unharmed by the fire. We filter water into our water bottles at the first stream we cross. It is crucial that we fill at each stream because we have brought no water. We see little wildlife, though numerous wolf and elk tracks punctuate the trail. The going is easy and the scent of pine trees and water permeates the air.

Nearing the end of the first day's hike, the trail darts back and forth up a steep hill in a series of frustrating switchbacks. On the other side of the hill we see Fish Lake. The landscape is scarred from the fire and the lake provides a vibrant contrast. Its waters teem with small rainbow trout. We erect the tents and then heat our delicious, dehydrated meals. Full and content, we call it a night. The almost-full moon casts a warm glow over the lake.

Crawling out of my tent early the next morning, I look across the lake to see a moose feeding off the lake-bottom. His prodigious head plunges into the water and comes out, followed by a vigorous shaking. The animal's large ears smack loudly against the sides of its head. After a quick breakfast, we set off on the second day of the trip. This time we plan to stay at reputedly awe-inspiring Sheepeater Lake.

Today we climb. It is overcast, the clouds offering

## **The Pit**

by Dylan Crawford

I could feel the energy. It pulsed through every molecule in the air. Energy moved through the very ground I, and thousands of others, stood on. I was close.

Pushing through the churning crowd, I could see the pit. Density thickened as I inched closer. The energy was overwhelming; I was fully charged. At the edge, I thrust my right hand into the pit, instantly getting sucked into a tremendous whirlpool.

I hit turbulence the second I was pulled in. There was no telling which way I was jumping or getting pushed. I was in the source of the energy, and was releasing as much as possible.

Before I could tell what was happening, I was lifted to the canopy of the pit. It was heaven. I slowly drifted towards the front gate, the only solid barrier between the moshing crowd and the stage, and was lifted out by a bouncer. The bouncer sternly suggested I walk around to the back of the crowd. I had to return to the pit again...

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protection from the hot rays of the sun. Dad, Bryce, and I make camp in a meadow and then climb up to Sheepeater Look Out. Renee, the lookout occupant, is pleasant and the view is fantastic. Relaxing later in camp, we are surprised when a moose walks right through our meadow.

The next morning is harshly frigid. We pack our things and move along quickly. Today we loop through a basin back down to the airstrip. The sun slowly rises and this last day is refreshing. We descend through a draw which is forested and subsequently cool, but soon come upon a hot, dusty basin, torched by the fire. Approaching the airport, we pass through an area that seems like savannah. The trees are tall and branchless from the fire and the grass nearly reaches my shoulders. We set up camp at the airport and rest after our long day of hiking.

Waking early, we have a small breakfast and pack quickly. Our pilot buzzes the airstrip and then lands gently to pick us up. Flying back to McCall, I look longing back at the wilderness with its freedom and relaxation as I am transported back to the realm of homework and school.