

English II Pieces 2012-2013

The Ocean by Tori Ratliff

During breaks in elementary school, I remember going to my grandparent's house in California. I would sleep in the beautifully-decorated "Elvis Presley" room. The bed could be folded into a couch, but my Grandma always had it in sleeping condition for me. On the wall, there were pictures and paintings of the handsome Elvis, and there a stuffed dog with a guitar sang "Hound Dog." As I would lie in bed and close my eyes, I could hear waves hitting the beach. I was amazed at how loud the ocean was and how the sound could travel all the way to me, when the water was literally miles away.

Falling asleep, I would think about the ocean and how my grandma and I would find seaweed and laugh as we pretended to be monsters from the sea. My grandparents would hold both of my hands as we tried to jump over each swell coming our way. Sometimes we got lucky and found sand dollars on the shoreline. We snatched them up before the seagulls came to take them away. Always the best thing to do at a beach was to stand in the water, digging our toes in the sand and feeling for little sand crabs. When I felt tickling underneath my feet, I would throw my hands in the sand and catch, but I had to be fast, otherwise they would dig deeper and disappear.

I lie in bed now and imagine waves crashing on the beach in a consistent pattern. I am happy spending time with my grandparents, and I want to stay in that moment forever. I do not want to forget my childhood that dwells perpetually within that old house. My family and I still visit and nothing has changed, but now we are older and everything seems smaller. I can see everything more clearly now, but the sound of the waves will always remain the same.

Stability by Hattie Geist

The stairs in the house I grew up in were covered with light grey carpet with little flecks of color. I remember sitting on those steps, just a little bit higher than halfway up. I could peek my head under the handrail and quietly watch as my

Inside an Outsider's World by Kathryn Egnew

Situated in the center of the wildly outdoorsy town of McCall, Idaho, is PlayLive: a video-gamer's paradise. The small one-room store sits below an apartment building, between a liquor store and an art gallery. Upon entering, you realize it is truly an avid gamer's ideal store. When I first entered the building, I was underwhelmed. It was not at all what I had imagined. Fifteen flat screen TV's glow around the room, each with its own plush black chair, headphones, and mystical-seeming blue light coming from behind the screen. PlayLive almost gives off a night club feel, which leads people to being able to let loose and get totally into their games. My friend described it as a "government research center." The dark lets each gamer become totally immersed in his own world and allows the game to become his reality.

The ability to tune everything out allows socially-awkward people to leave the real world and try to be someone else. In the time I spent at PlayLive, I noticed almost all the stereotypical "gamer" types. There was an overweight guy probably in his late 20's, a ton of rowdy younger boys, and of course an acne-riddled teen. Going into this I jokingly expected to see the "stereotypical" gamers, but actually seeing each of them was different from what I had thought it would be. My first thought when I see someone who is addicted to video games is: "Wow, they have no life." After watching a few gamers for a while I realized they almost have their own set of rules and their own language. Inside their games they do not have to abide by the rules of society, but instead by the rules of the game. The gamers also have an unspoken rule—no talking to other gamers. In a place like PlayLive the game is a holy place and to interrupt it is to violate that privacy.

A few days later I took a few of my friends and we decided to try out PlayLive for ourselves. We walked in and asked to pay for thirty minutes of game time: \$8 per person. After shelling out the money, we were led over to the Xbox Kinect so we could play *Just Dance*. At first we all felt slightly awkward. We were out of place and we knew it. The time flew, and soon, we were all dancing crazily. The darkened room gave us the feeling of anonymity and freedom from judgment.

parents went about their business. On special mornings I would sit and watch as my dad cooked his famous pancakes, the smell of freshly-brewed coffee wafting up the stairwell to my nose. When I was two, I fell down those stairs. My dog knocked me over and I felt the carpet burn my forehead as I tumbled down. My parents rushed over together, frantically checking that I was okay. It scared me that they were so scared. When my parents were fighting in the kitchen, the stairs were secure and safe underneath me.

When my mom and I moved out, our new house didn't have the same kind of stairs. So only on visits to my dad did I sit on the familiar staircase. Soon my dad remarried, and instead of watching my mom and dad, I would sit and watch my stepmom and dad go about their business. From my secret spot I could see my new baby sister sitting in her bouncy chair. Different people, same stairs.

My mom and I moved again, this time more than a thousand miles away. So my visits became even scarcer, but every visit, as I walked upstairs to my room, the grey speckled carpet looked the same. As I got older the color of the walls going up the stairway changed from the familiar white to a new yellow. That change made me feel like a little part of my mom had left the house. My sisters then decided to make the walls more festive and they scribbled on them with pencil.

I grew taller but I always seemed to somehow fit on the stairs. I remember thinking I was really cool because I had learned how to make bracelets out of yarn, and I sat on the steps weaving the strings into different patterns.

Around the age of ten, I was informed that I would move out of my bedroom upstairs into a newly-renovated room downstairs. I hated this idea. The normal path I had taken all of my life, across the wood floor and up the stairs to my bedroom, was suddenly changed. I do not like change, I like knowing things are going to be okay: safe and secure, just like my stairs.

Now that I am older and have been in my new downstairs room many years, I rarely take the once-common trek up the grey-speckled steps. When I do, the sound of my footsteps on the slightly-rough carpeting and the bird's-eye view from a little more than halfway up bring back both happy and sad memories of different times and different people.

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As I step out into the sunshine, blinking heavily, I think about the fun we had. I now have a better idea of what PlayLive is about, and although I will never truly feel content here, I understand why some people do. Even though PlayLive is still not my go-to spot, I am not as quick to judge those who do spend their time and money there. Now, the dark videogame store is no longer a slightly scary nerd vortex.

It isn't Rocket Science

by Lilly Moyer

Jeff Schreppe has been very successful in many areas of his life. From the beginning, Jeff showed potential. He was successful in school, managing straight A's throughout high school and college. After college, Jeff entered the army, and was promoted to colonel. Next, Jeff went and worked for NASA as a rocket scientist. Now he is retired, but he always says that working hard can make a huge difference in anyone's life.

From the beginning, Jeff always worked hard. His siblings found it difficult to live up to his great reputation because Jeff always managed to make straight A's, and he was the oldest. In high school, Jeff was not valedictorian or salutatorian; he reflects: "I didn't want to have to write a speech and say it in front of everyone." Jeff says proudly, "I was a nerd, and I excelled in math and science," giving him an edge to becoming a rocket scientist later in life. Jeff sometimes contradicted his teachers, and pointed out errors (politely) in his math and science textbooks. However, being a "nerd" was perfectly acceptable according to him. He said, "The people who used to make fun of me and call me a nerd are still in my hometown, and I'm successful."

Uncle Jeff was in the army for twenty-seven years as a colonel. He studied at West Point in Ranger School in preparation for the army. Jeff reminisces about when his class had to take a trek through the forest with one meal a day, and a gigantic pack on his back. Every day, he said, "There was a different meal meeting place, and if you didn't get there in time, you didn't eat." One day, his team had to cross a river and hold onto a rope so they would not fall in. He said that two of the men did not have a firm enough grip on the rope, and they fell in and drowned. This changed Jeff's perspective, because he realized that he was not some little kid playing soldier; this was real and there was danger everywhere. Jeff said,

Stand Up

by Tori Ratliff

"Up until I was about 12 years old, I lived in a nice neighborhood," Jo Novoselski thinks back to her childhood. Her dad drank a lot, and for that reason he lost his job. Her mom was a waitress, working extra hard while her husband was not providing for his wife and four young children. Jo says, "We then lived in not so good of a place. Our home was shaped like a horse shoe." Her dad became verbally abusive to the children and physically abusive to his wife and the oldest son. One day her mom was cutting up food. Jo says, "My dad threatened to kill her with that knife. He also mentioned he had a gun in his car." Jo's mom finally got the courage to leave her husband, the father of her children, and filed for divorce. But he did not want to lose his wife and family, so he kept coming over to try to convince her otherwise. She was scared and had him arrested because she did not know what he would do to her and the kids.

As Jo grew up she met Donnie, who was in the Navy and stationed in San Diego. His family lived by Jo's family, so whenever he came home on the weekends, Jo and Donnie would go out on dates. They decided to get married. She says, "My mom had to sign for me to get married because I was 17." Jo thought it was a good idea and just wanted to get married. Later, the young couple had their first child, a baby girl they named Wendy. When Wendy was two months old, Jo and she traveled for a visit with her sister, brother-in-law, and their new baby boy. They spent the night and later that morning Jo went to check on her baby. "I noticed Wendy wasn't up at the time she usually wakes up." Jo walked into the room and saw her baby not breathing; scared, she ran and got her brother-in-law to see if it was true. Her baby was dead. "The coroner said it was pneumonia," Jo said, but now we know it as crib death. Wendy was lying on her stomach and suffocated. "After we lost Wendy, Donnie blamed it on me. He then got abusive." Jo left her marriage because she said, "I'm not going to stay in a relationship like this."

Jo had a new boyfriend named Marty, and at twenty-two years of age Jo was raped at gun-point by Marty's uncle. "There was nothing I could do, he had a gun," Jo said. She told Marty what had happened and he was furious. Marty did not want this to ever happen again. "He went to his uncle's house and beat him up; and then he asked me to marry him." The relationship they both had was the best. Jo says, "Drinking and abusiveness comes in one hand," and Marty was not a drinker. Jo and Marty had two children,

"While I was training, they would give you one pack of gum. I would suck on the wrapper and then chew the gum all day so as not to waste it." He has not touched a pack of gum since then. On his twelve-day trek, he lost forty-seven pounds.

After Jeff completed his stint in the Army, he moved to Alabama and started working for NASA as a rocket scientist. Jeff observes that working with other rocket scientists was very different than other, typical, everyday jobs. Jeff said, "Rocket scientists are always analyzing everything, from nutrition labels to the rockets they are making." There were always two teams of scientists: the fixers and the breakers. The breakers thought of everything possible to go wrong on the rockets, and the fixers tried to fix the problems.

Jeff loves mathematics. He once calculated the circumference of the earth and ran exactly that distance. Jeff also calculates how many Thin Mint Girl Scout cookies he needs for the entire year. Jeff counts and corrects everything he reads, including my math book. Jeff said to me, "Don't care about what others think of you, because they do not determine how you will be later on."

Hidden Code

by Hattie Geist

All senses come alive at a basketball game. Harsh whistles and the stench of greasy pizza overwhelm the senses. I walk up to the double doors of the gym, realizing that the only path to where I need to sit is right in front of the crowd, along the sidelines of the court. I feel like an animal at the zoo; trapped by a wall of players running on the court while I walk in front of glassy-eyed onlookers. After the JV game ends, the Varsity team gathers together to warm up.

The energy in the room begins to change: the game is about to start. As each starting player runs to the middle of the court, she greets each of her teammates differently. Some chest-bump or perform a secret handshake, while others just smile and high-five. Each greeting is its own language, unknown to the crowd.

During the game I come to realize that the coach also seems to have a furtive way of communicating with players. He yells out, "Cardinal," performing a few weird hand gestures. The team understands what he means and they start to run a play. I wonder how a bird has anything

Kari and Christian. Later she ended the marriage because she was told by her brother-in-law that Marty was cheating on her. She believed Bob's word, even though Marty denied that he'd ever cheated on her.

Later, in Indiana, Jo met a man named Dick. Although he was abusive when they were seeing each other, she still married him. "He was mentally and verbally abusive to Christian," her young son, but treated her daughter like a princess. Dick had children of his own. Jo reflected, "I was not aware if he was abusive to his own children." After about six years, she left him because the relationship moved toward abuse. Jo moved back to California and was content to raise her children and to work for many years.

Years went by and both her children were out of school and on their own when Jo met Bill. She was house and dog-sitting for her brother and sister-in-law. Since Jo had been single for a while, they tried to hook her up with a nice man. Bill was Jo's brother's contractor. He worked on their house and did other small construction jobs for a year. Jo says, "Their plan worked." She and Bill went on a date and started seeing each other.

Just like Dick, Bill was abusive while they were dating, but they married anyway. He also had kids of his own. He was the worst out of all the men she was married to. Jo said, "He is a great person if he doesn't drink." He tried to suffocate and choke her at the same time. "He once threw a chair at a TV." Bill had trust issues because his first wife cheated on him. Whenever Jo left the house, he wanted to know where she was and who she was going to be with. He did not want her to pick up her own grandchildren. Bill knew what time she was off work and how long it took to drive home. "I never knew what mood he would be in," Jo said. Bill trusted her only with his mother. He allowed Jo to go to the casino with her.

Jo says she wasn't strong; she thought these men could change. She would have bruises: "They never acknowledged it. They don't remember because they were drunk." Jo believes things work out for a reason. She wishes her husbands had not been abusive because she loved them all. Now she knows better and would want women to know that, if they find themselves in an abusive relationship, then they need to get out. Jo says, those men "will never change; they don't think they have a problem. They consider that the other person is the problem." Jo advises a woman to voice it if she is hit, and adds: "Do not cover abuse up."

to do with basketball.

Other times the coach is very easy to understand. Animated and not afraid to show what he is thinking, at a bad play he yells: "C'mon!" or "What was that?!" frustration is etched into his face. Upset, he tucks his hands under his arms.

The referees run down the court following girls in an endless back-and-forth pattern, like a pendulum. One ref looks to be well past six feet tall. Maybe he was the star basketball player when he was in high school, but after his dreams of the NBA were crushed by the real world, he returned to his safe zone.

The buzzer sounds its final assaulting blow and the game is over. The home team has lost. Players slowly walk back to the bench, their faces unreadable. No outward anger about their loss; not much expression at all. Maybe it was not an important game; maybe they did not play to their full potential. Maybe the players around them can understand the blank faces. But the crowd is again left out of the loop. Slowly I walk out the double doors and into the dark of the cool, quiet night, erasing my surroundings of seconds ago.

Out of the Shadow

by Kathryn Egnew

As the second child in my family, I have always struggled to stand out. My brother is older by two years, and seems to have an uncanny knack for excelling at everything he does. Whether it is school, art, sports, or social activities, he is almost always on top, and is most adored. Teachers love him for his undying curiosity and love of learning; while every other adult is infatuated with his beyond-his-years knowledge and conversational skills. A curious perfectionist is a hard act to follow.

Ever since I was little, I have felt pressure to do as well as my brother. He always had straight A's, whereas I would, and still do, consistently finish with all A's and one B. At school I am always "Gerrit's little sister". Sports such as Nordic Skiing and cross country running were a competition between us; one that he always won. I tried and tried to make people, mostly my parents, realize that Gerrit and I are not the same person. He is driven intellectually, but I love sports and art and will go all out for the things I love and have an interest in. When my brother quit soccer and horse-back riding early on, I decided those would be the things for me, and only me, to

Awkward Moment

by Lilly Moyer

My body slouches over
dry, burnt grass:
I hover around the remains,
unsure of what to do next.
It doesn't seem real.
My mind
frozen
incomprehending;
I stand there
awkwardly, accepting words of comfort.
What can I say?
Things happen.

Unfamiliar face

by Tori Ratliff

Wendy White whispers
under whiskery wind. *Swish-
swash*, leaves flip-flop pasting unwanted
life. Earth grows quiet:
a baby lulled deep in sleep as if
nothing exists. The girl has yet
to see

Me

by Lilly Moyer

I'm not like most adolescents my age.
I like school,
I'm adopted.
I'll read or sing anything you
hand me, and I'll eat anything
with noodles. There are so many things yet
to do: I'm excited and up for everything.

pursue.

Fueled by my love for those sports, and my determination to not be compared to my brother, I began to excel at both soccer and eventing. Even then, despite standing out on the soccer field and pursuing a unique and demanding equine activity, I still felt intellectually tied to my perfectionist sibling. I find traveling fascinating and fun; it was another opportunity to branch out and do something that was uniquely my own. Studying in Germany allowed me to prove that Gerrit and I are different people, with different goals and interests.

Parents are limited by their experiences as children and by experiences with their first child. My parents' perspectives are limited by my brother's reactions and achievements: they have expected me to be the "female version" of Gerrit. In the past year or so, even slightly before my European trek, my parents started to change their ways towards me. They have become more understanding about my interest in design and psychology, and less insistent on science and discussions of medical school. My going to Germany and showing them that I will never be excited about medicine or engineering like Gerrit is, has opened their eyes to their two very different children.

His spirit inside

by Tori Ratliff

A spirit animal is present in a person's life for one of three reasons: to teach him something important, to send her a message, or to eat his flesh so that the animal may absorb life force and grow exceedingly more powerful. (1) For everyone who knows or has met Kellen Crawford, this knowledge may be eye-opening. On November 8th 2012, Kellen mentioned that a Condor, the largest flying land bird in the Western Hemisphere, was ". . . my spirit animal. It's hard to explainÉ I just know." Kellen has also said that he does not think he is strong in weight training. "I feel weak compared to Corbin," he reflects. Sounds like he wants to become powerful?

The way Kellen talks is ironically strange, very much different than the way most kids talk, or at least what somebody would call "normal." One day, driving to the North Fork School, Kellen rambles on about wanting to eat this one person. Everyone laughs; no one thinks anything of it, not knowing what Kellen's true feelings are. In his interview, Kellen reassures: "the condor represents my urge to break free and escape from my

Tone Dumb

by Kathryn Egnew

Thinking, thinking, thinking, my pen hovers
over blank paper like a child
at a game she was not invited to.
I so badly want to write, but everything arrives like a bad
country song.
I try pictures that simply transform into meaningless words.
Days turn to weeks; my paper stays blank:
the only improvement is a doodle mural in the margins,
threatening the fog of unused writing space.
As hard as I hammer, my thoughts cannot be beaten into
paper and ink.
They flit through my mind, transient as snowflakes in a
storm.
The smallest things distract me:
hushed voices whispering German,
the tapping of my own pen: *tip tap rat tat tat*;
bright sun shining outside; rain pouring down over houses
and radiant green hills.
I pick at my nails, play with my hair, eavesdrop. Anything
but this dreaded poem.
So many ideas, so little rhythm. I like
to ramble, no beat.
I have no rhythm with music, and even less
with written words.
A narrative poem is like singing; I do
not sing.
I stutter and ramble, no clear
end in sight.

Never to Forget

by Tori Ratliff

This year was the first time I did 4-H, a youth development organization that serves more than 6.5 million young people, who learn leadership, citizenship, and life skills. I have wanted to do 4-H for years, not knowing exactly what type of animal I would raise: lambs, horses or rabbits. This year, the 4-H leader who helps teens raise lambs asked my mom if I wanted to do it. Two days later, I traveled with the others in my club to pick out our lambs. I did not know what to look for. My mom says I have the "magic touch" with animals, so to just pick the lamb I wanted. Through this project, I learned an incredible amount; the experience changed my mind about the reality of 4-H.

The first thing I discovered was that 4-H is a lot of work. It is like school, in that participants must do homework to

reality." He explains it's like Holden in The Catcher in the Rye, "when he sees the ducks and the pond, and Holden wonders where they go when the pond freezes."

Last summer, Kellen started playing disk golf. Spending his time in nature, ". . . one day I thought about my life. I hate my life. I thought about leaving. I thought about birds." While he was thinking about his life and feeling pressured by his parents about school, he looked down at his disk and saw a condor. Right then, he knew that the condor was his spirit animal.

1 -- www.pleated-jeans.com

Kathryn Egnew

by Hattie Geist

Most people who know Kathryn Egnew know that she does not enjoy being compared to her brother. "I feel like people are trying to make me what my brother is." She describes him as "smart, perfect, and totally himself" and she hates that everyone loves that about him. Even her teachers expect her to be just like Gerrit. Kathryn strives to separate herself from her brother's shadow; by developing unique skills in soccer, horseback riding, and traveling to Germany where she lived for a semester. She dreams of becoming a fashion designer or an Olympic goalie, she wants to be a role model for others to look up to. Yet as much as she tries to keep her ambitions separate from Gerrit's, he is her role model. "I like how my brother is his own person and doesn't care what other people think." Kathryn strives to keep distance between Gerrit and her while still looking up to him. "There is a fuzzy line." She looks at what he does and tries to "make it her own." As far as her life goals, they are undefined. She wants to continue to travel, play soccer and be successful at whatever she ends up doing.

Tori Ratliff

by Kathryn Egnew

When Tori Ratliff walks into a room, people think petite, shy, and quiet. Many don't have a great idea of what Tori is truly like, but I am closer to understanding. In November, Tori talked about her life and dreams. She giggled when she talked about her brothers, saying, "I like having a brother; it made me stronger." Tori is the middle child, between two brothers. She said having

learn about their animals and must even do speeches in front of judges. Honestly, I was expecting to just raise my lamb and sell her. My summer was mostly spent with my lamb, which I named Corin. I had to walk her every day, feed and water her, and spend time loving and nurturing her. My whole family actually got into the experience and Corin became a loved member of our family, just like one of the dogs. I had the best lamb because she was always around humans. She even thought she was a dog! Soon I did not need a harness to walk her; Corin would follow me and even came when I called her.

Showing my sheep at the County Fair, I overheard a judge tell a man that the kids next year better watch out for me, because the way I handled my sheep was amazing! I am so excited to do 4-H again, because this is a great life experience to have. 4-H teaches kids not just about raising an animal but how to go out for themselves and relate to others in the "real" world.

Solo Steps

by Hattie Geist

Heavy weight presses
down on sore shoulders;
breathing
echoes in still quiet around me. Whispering
breezes gently flow, tickling
my sweaty face. Tree roots,
intricate mazes,
follow me along winding paths.
I notice more
when I am hiking alone. Unseen,
my friends walk only a few minutes in front
and behind. In this moment,
I appreciate peaceful
solitude
alone with my thoughts.

Summer

by Lilly Moyer

As I step onto dry, crunchy brown grass,
small green grasshoppers waltz around exhausted feet:
chirp, chirp, chirp, prrum, prrum, prrum;
spots of green on dry, colorless land.
I drag along, trying to escape;
heat bakes me in a toaster oven.
Finally, fresh flowering fun:

brothers made her stronger both emotionally and physically. Her older brother would always use her as a punching bag and call her fat, but over the years she has grown a thick skin and has learned to fight back and not be affected by the insults. Now that her brother is almost out of the house, Tori says she is realizing how he felt: "I'm now the mean person in the family." Being picked on by older siblings is a rite of passage and accomplishing the task is a must for the older sibling.

Thinking where she might be in ten years Tori reflects, "I like to live in the moment; I can't even imagine where I would be in the future." She feels much the same way about college. Tori says; "I don't even know if I want to go to college. I want to travel and find my passion." Tori Ratliff is a bright teenage who doesn't have a clear idea of what she wants in life, but is in no rush to force herself into something that she isn't passionate about. Tori wants to find her own kind of happiness and satisfaction before she rushes into stability and order.

Betsy

by Lilly Moyer

Betsy is a very bubbly, sociable girl who is easy to talk to. Betsy strikes up a conversation without being asked, and needs no urging to talk about herself. This year, Betsy's family moved to Boise. "Boise is different than McCall," she says. "There are more people, and that is a good thing to have. I like having more people and having different personalities around me." However, she adds, "being in Boise isn't as individual as McCall, but Bishop Kelly has more pride and school spirit." Betsy says that in Boise, students have to be in charge of themselves and be more responsible, because the teachers have many students and cannot track individual students down if they have a bad grade.

Betsy's favorite subject in school is English, because, she says, "I love to talk, and I've always been fascinated with words. . . I also find it really interesting how much meaning can be behind a small short story when you use symbolism." Betsy also says that having a good teacher makes all the difference in people's learning, because the teacher determines whether something is interesting or not. Betsy's most life changing-experience was being in a jet skiing accident this summer. This experience really opened her eyes and showed her that she cannot mess around, no matter how good she is at something, and she has to be cautious and careful. Betsy is very easy to get along with, and can make friends with anyone.

an oasis of bright greens and blues --
I've reached the swimming pool!