

Write On! A Teen 'Zine



Volume 4

Write On! **A Teen 'Zine**

Pieces Inspired by
This Summer's
Teen Writers' Workshop

Santa Monica Public Library
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Write On! A Teen 'Zine

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The Printing Palace



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Friends of the
Santa Monica
Public Library

Entertain yourself, and the reader
will be entertained.

- Jenn Reese

The Mark of the Crescent Moon

or

We Love Chocolate

By the 2014 Write On! Teen Writers

[This piece is the result of a “Round Robin” group exercise, where each writer only sees the one line just written by the person before them. Each writer writes one line, folds the page down so only their line is showing, and then passes the story on to the next writer. You never know how it’s going to turn out!]

For over 100 years, the villagers had been looking for the one with the mark of the crescent moon on her hand.

One day, a newborn child had the mark of the crescent moon on his hand, and the whole village went into a big celebration. This meant that the child would be blessed with great luck and fortune. Unless...

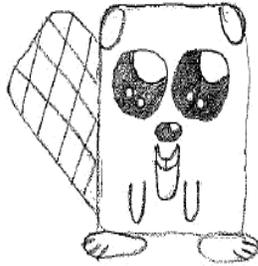
...a monkey drinks a cup of banana tea with a child. Because monkeys love tea, and children love monkeys. Children love monkeys because they have the same color as CHOCOLATE.

OOOOOOOOO Yummy! Chocolate is one of the best children’s foods ever invented. It’s sweet and it totally goes with everything.

Once, I had this dish. It was lamb tenderloins with a chocolate port-wine sauce. It was totally DELICIOUS! So I wanted to just throw myself at a huge chocolate fountain until I was filled with chocolate, and that is what I did! It seemed like a good idea at the time, but I realized it was a big mistake.

I wonder if anyone will notice?

Jordan Hadley



Coonskin Cap

I am a raccoon, happy as can be.
Frolicking in the forest, hopping from tree to tree.
Life is so blissful, I feel as fresh as day.
Then why do I feel like, it will not stay this way?

What's that? A snap of twigs, someone's right behind me.
I fear it is a hunter, who wants to try and find me.
I scurry through the branches, trying to escape
The one who wants to kill me. Is this my real, true fate?
But, alas, I did not lose him, you can be sure of that.
Because if you see me now, I'm his musty, old fur cap.

How did I get here?

Tim, an ordinary man, wakes up to find himself in KFC, his favorite place to eat. He wonders when, where, and why is he here. He is almost positive it's a dream because it would be totally insane for Tim if it wasn't. So just to make sure, he asks the cashier, "Is this all a dream?"

The cashier laughs. "Unfortunately this life is a reality."

"Are you kidding me? This must be a dream--there is no way!"

Tim says.

"I'm telling you this is real life, no dream, present, not imaginary, real chicken, real me, we are for sure in the real world. Are you crazy or something to think this is a dream? Hahaha, you're funny, young man. Now, either go home now or buy some chicken," exclaims the amazed cashier.

Tim reads the clock and begins to freak out--why would he be at KFC at seven in the morning? Tim can't remember a thing about the night before or how he got here. He feels lost and nauseated by this fact. So he decides to buy some chicken so that he won't get kicked out and can try to relax while sorting this out. He can't have a hangover because he doesn't believe in drinking and going crazy. Also, Tim doesn't have friends, a wife, kids, an enjoyable job, and not really a worthwhile life. This is the craziest experience Tim has ever had in his life. He is positive that this will just end up being a dream, but is it? Everything is so real to Tim, he definitely is living his real life in present time. He wonders if someone has broken into his house and taken him to KFC, but that doesn't make sense, and any reason Tim comes up with is all in all unrealistic.

He can't find out the way he ended up here so he asks the cashier, "How did I get here? I don't remember driving here. I think I woke up here. Do you know what happened?"

The cashier says, "You didn't sleep and wake up here, you came here. I believe this is KFC, not a motel. I don't know how you got here or what's going through your mind. No one has ever showed up here this early in the morning. You sure are a crazy man. Now you either buy some more chicken *now* or you leave."

Tim is sure offended and definitely very worried. He figures that if he just heads home everything will go back to the normal boring life he loved having, and he could figure things out. He then walks home trying to calm himself down, telling himself over and over that nothing's wrong and everything is going to be all right.

When he arrives at his house, he sees nothing there but dirt and a homeless man sitting on his lawn. All the other houses on his block are there and where his house used to be is just an empty space of land. Tim is blown away by this sight. He is freaking out again, but on a whole other level.

"Where's my house?" Tim yells at the homeless man.

He answers, "There was never a house here!"

Tim is shocked. What is happening to his life? Why did his house disappear? Why was he at KFC? This must be a dream, Tim thinks. There is just no possible way this actually happened to him. But this is no dream; Tim is going to learn to live with his reality. He runs back to KFC, because he remembers that he left his important cash-filled wallet on the counter. Tim is so worried and terrified by what has happened to him. All he can think about is what happened to his house and where everything in it went.

As he returns to where KFC was always located, he sees that it has disappeared! Tim's life is turning upside-down; he is so confused and scared. A million horrible thoughts are racing through Tim's amazed mind. "What am I going to do?" Tim yells. "What is happening to my life?"

Tim is losing it; he just can't believe what is happening to him. He is trying to put aside the fact that he has no food, money, house, clothes, phone, and sooner or later, no job. And he is trying to figure out what and why this is happening to him. He thinks he knows one thing: that whenever he is in a building, that building will soon disappear and when he is in a building for too long he will be transported somewhere new. So everywhere he goes and everything he touches will soon disappear! Is everything going to disappear because of him? What is he going to do with his life? Why has Tim been cursed? What is poor Tim going to do about this? He could think of 1,000 more questions to ask himself, but the most important question is: how's Tim going to survive?

Delightful fruit

Take care to round off the rough edges first —
some don't but then it doesn't go so smoothly down
your esophagus, doesn't absorb nicely
into your chest, makes its way into your heart
in erratic lumps, instead of all at once.

Sometimes it isn't as perfect
as the fairy stories and manuals say —
they insist on palm-fitted spheres but
all you have is a crooked chipped egg with cracks
on its top that mirror your life lines.

Sometimes the cracks might open, exposing
satiny sleek insides. Do not poke at it —
this runny condensation of wobbly laughter, light as a film
on your fingertip — the ambrosia that feeds your soul
is best consumed whole.

Roxy L. Ong

Slowly Turn Away

I open the door,
Stifle a scream,
And slowly turn away.

My friend broke her arm,
It's weirdly bent,
So I slowly turn away.

My kitty is dead,
And so is the fish,
And I slowly turn away.

Nothing to see,
Nothing to hear,
I just slowly turn away.

Her Fingers and Coco

I woke up in the middle of the night in a cold sweat. I felt her fingers run down my spine, but I knew that it was my mind playing games. I heard her voice, so I got up and walked around the house. I remembered that night perfectly and clearly. She got mad at me and ran out into the street. The car just rolled over her like a steam roller. I literally broke down for the next three years.

For the first six months, I didn't leave my house at all. Then my friend put me in a sanitarium because I wouldn't talk or eat. I spent the next thirty months at Willowbrook Psychiatric Institution trying to get stable again. I made amends with her death and now I'm moving on with my life. I bought a new house, moved to a different state and changed my name. My new name is Kevin. I used to be known as Andrew.

I went for a walk to try to clear my mind. I learned how to calm my nerves and clear my mind at Willowbrook. After two and a half hours of walking around a dark Los Angeles, I stopped in Griffith Park. I sat at a bench and played with a stray dog. Her name was Coco. Coco was the most playful and loving little puppy I have ever seen. She licked my face and I licked hers. That's actually weird. ... I was in deep thought and I looked up at the starry night. The darkness of the sky penetrated my soul, and it was clear now. I had a purpose in life.

I went home and made myself a tasty quesadilla. I sat down to enjoy that quesadilla, then I heard a dripping sound coming from somewhere in the house. I sat there a little longer until I couldn't take it anymore. I got up and followed the sound to the bathroom. It was dark, but I went to the sink to see if the water was running. I felt nothing. I took a deep breath and smelled something unsettling. I turned and turned on the light and saw Coco's head shoved onto my shower head. I looked down and saw her leg pushed into the shower drain. I was sad, confused, scared, and not sad at the same time. Sad because there was a dead dog in my bathroom. Confused because Coco wasn't my dog. Scared because someone must have seen me at

the park and broken into my home. And not sad because Coco wasn't my dog.

I stood there staring at Coco, while I ate my quesadilla. I decided to alert the authorities, and in five minutes' time, there were six news vans at my house. I was a little appalled at first because it's sick how media has to display everything, but then I thought they're just doing their job. I had to get out of there because too many painful memories were hitting me in the face. I remembered my time at Willowbrook, when she died, when I first met Coco. I was sitting outside on my porch, thinking about a time when I was happy. I remember when I was a little kid, I used to play catch with my Dad. He used to tell me, "keep your eye on the ball." Somewhere along the line I lost it.

The next day I was at the police department, filling out some forms about the incident with Coco. I again decided to go for a walk. I bumped into my old friend, Ryan. He told me all the things that he's been doing with his life and it made me think, I haven't done anything productive with mine, except for me getting stable, emotionally. I went to a Starbucks and got a venti mocha Frappuccino and sat down to use their free wifi. I blogged about how my life has been, and I received a lot of response. Some people were saying that I needed to get some mental help, and others were sympathetic. I didn't know how to react, and I most certainly didn't know to actually respond to these people.

I went home to a crime scene from the night before. There were still some CSI detectives there trying to figure out who did this horrible crime to Coco. I went to my room and closed the door. I laid down on my bed and fell asleep. I woke up and opened my door. The detectives were gone, my house wasn't a crime scene anymore, and Coco's body was out of my bathroom. I was rather shocked that they were able to clean it all up so quickly.

I sat down and turned on the TV and felt her fingers run down my spine.

Six-Word Memoirs

By Donya Partovi

Smile, when sad,
when mad,
whenever.

Fall
then get up
100x better

Live young
and wild
and free

I'm the black-seed
inside a watermelon

Working/trying your best
is amazingly difficult

There's nothing wrong
with
being weird/crazy

Being yourself
is harder
than it seems

Take risks -
you only live once!

Reach for stars
never give up



Fun with chenille-stem writing prompts (and photobombing!) on the first day of the workshops

With author Jenn Reese



Immersed in a creative writing exercise



With Sonya Sones,
author of
banned books!

Having sooo
much fun
with author
Scott Bly!



With author
Ann Redisch
Stampler

With author
Robin Benway



A bonus for
workshop teens:
author autographs!
(with author Robin
Benway, seated)



Writers'
block?

A photojournaling session had teens create collages, which they used as prompts for writing



Photojournalist and facilitator Cathy Lander-Goldberg advises teens on their collages



Teens with collages and Cathy (holding camera aloft)

Fall

I love the fall
Best of all
When leaves turn brown
And tumble down

Tacos

Tastes delicious
Munching, chewing, devouring
Tastes just like heaven
Yum

Hamsters

Plotting destruction
Smashing, gnawing, destroying
Wants death to all
Diabolical

Shanya Galbokke Hewage

Is SeaWorld Saving Orcas ... or Abusing Them?

SeaWorld: The amusement park where you watch orcas do amazing tricks--swimming with trainers standing on their tails, waving to the audience, doing flips in the air, and splashing the audience. Have you ever thought about how they actually treat these amazing animals? The orcas are living in horrible conditions. SeaWorld should not treat these astounding, majestic orcas so callously. Out of many harsh problems, here are two: many orcas were captured from the wild even though they were not injured, and all of the male orcas in captivity get a disease called dorsal fin collapse.

To begin, SeaWorld unfairly captures these animals in the wild. Let's take the 32-year-old orca, Tilikum, for example. At the age of two, Tilikum wasn't captured because he was injured; instead he was torn away from his family since he was smaller, cost less money to transport, and was easier to transport to SeaWorld. In the movie *Blackfish*, they show us the capturing of Tilikum. You can hear his mother wailing as her calf is being lifted on to the boat. Tilikum wasn't the only orca who experienced this; there were many more.

Scientist Naomi Rose (from the movie *Blackfish*) showed us, through a neurological brain scanning, that orcas' brains have a capacity for emotion that is much larger than the human brain's capacity. This statement provides evidence that splitting up an orca family pod is like kidnapping a child from a human family, and killing the child while the parents have to watch. This also shows why she thinks that as Tilikum grew older, he built up more rage for humans, which probably caused the killing of his former trainer, 40-year-old Dawn Brancheau. This elucidates why we should stop SeaWorld from ripping families apart. We definitely should recreate SeaWorld and make sure you can only view these animals in the wild.

Second, male orcas held in captivity get a disease called dorsal fin collapse since they don't have much leg room to swim in and are

fed an abnormal diet of thawed dead fish. This is when the dorsal fin is not straight up and down; instead, it flops over on one side, which is an indication of an unhealthy orca. SeaWorld claims that this condition is common and natural for all orcas. However, collapsed dorsal fins are caused by the unnatural environment of captivity and are rarely seen in the wild. Marine biologist Jennifer Kennedy states that “only 1 to 5 percent of male orcas in some populations (in the wild) have collapsed dorsal fins.” Orcas in the wild have an average life expectancy of thirty to fifty years; their estimated maximum lifespan is sixty to seventy years for males and eighty to over a hundred for females. The median age of orcas in captivity is only nine, so orcas at SeaWorld rarely make it even to the average life expectancy of their wild cousins because they are so unhealthy. This shows why letting the orcas swim freely in the wild and not in a jail cell would help prevent dorsal fin collapse.

However, you might say that SeaWorld is a world leader in animal rescue. While SeaWorld does “rescue, rehabilitate and release ocean wildlife,” this statement included in SeaWorld’s letter against the movie, *Blackfish*, is reprehensibly disingenuous. The animals released by SeaWorld are usually manatees, sea turtles and other animals that cannot be used as “performers” in their shows. Dolphins, whales, and other animals such as sea lions rescued by SeaWorld who can be forced to perform tricks for food are kept and used as performers.

In conclusion, SeaWorld should treat orcas better. They should never rip apart families and have the whales suffer dorsal fin collapse. This is why we should not let SeaWorld keep these remarkable animals in a concrete jail cell for all their lives and instead let them swim free and in the wild.

So what do you think about SeaWorld now, reader--is it still “the happiest place on earth” for orcas?

My Weaver

My name is Stephanie Eve Maggie. I need to tell you what happened when I was a young child. I never thought that this would have happened in real life, but here is my story.

The things that I've always loved were my toys. I don't know why, but they always made me feel so happy and young at heart. The way I saw it, if you could still genuinely have fun with your toys you are forever young. That's how I used to feel, before that night.

I remember when I first got that toy. I was about six or seven years old. I thought it was the most magical toy in the whole world. It was a toy clown and it had the most adorable face. I named it Weaver. It slept with me in my bed every day until I was about 12, when I thought I was a "big girl." I put all my "little girl" toys in a big box and put it in my garage.

Now, I have always been a little bit paranoid ever since our house was broken into, so I'm always watching my back. The garage always kinda gave me the creeps and, because we bought a new TV, I had to help my brother move the old one into the garage. So because I was so creeped out by the garage, I was just crazy and brave enough to stay in there to try to get over my "fear."

While I was in there, I found some really interesting things like old pictures from my parents' wedding and old typewriter. So I was in there for about an hour and a half, and right before I left the garage I heard a noise. I turned quickly in a panic and just stared into the garage. I started to turn to leave again, but I heard it again. I walked further into the garage to see what was making the noise. I heard it again, and immediately knew it came from a box, one specific box, my box, filled with my dolls. I opened it slowly and cautiously, and, to my terror, I saw nothing in there. I backed up and tripped. I saw all my dolls, that I had packed in a box some years before, scattered all over the garage floor. I got up and ran out, into the house and away from the garage.

I told my parents what had happened, and they got up to go look in the garage. When they got outside, they called me to them. I slowly and fearfully walked outside to see that all the dolls were gone. They weren't even in the box that I had originally packed them in. I

looked at my parents with a terrified expression and they just knew something was wrong. So for the next couple of days I was just kinda freaked out and was a little on edge. After a month, I sorta just let it fade out and I was back to somewhat normal. I went on with school, I had a Sweet 16, and I totally forgot about what happened. Everybody made sure to not say anything about it.

One day I was in my room, just listening to music and texting my friends, when I heard something hit the window. It wasn't a big hard bang, but more of a tap that was very noticeable. So I looked at the window and I saw nothing, and I just continued listening to music and texting my friends. I was home alone, so I was a little paranoid, but that's normal for being home alone at night and you hear a tap on the window and there was nothing there that could have possibly made the tap. So any way, I heard the tap again and I walked up to the window to see what was happening. I opened the window and looked outside and saw nothing. I went back to sit on my bed and I saw something that I never thought I would see again: Weaver.

My heart sorta jumped and skipped a beat. I walked up to Weaver and he did the most terrifying thing imaginable. He asked me why I left him. I screamed, threw him out of my room and called my mom. While I was on the phone, my phone dropped the call. I started to get really scared, and, to top that, the lights went out. I screamed bloody murder. I ran out of my room, down the hall, down the stairs and then slipped and hit my head. I laid there in pain, trying to get up. I saw Weaver across the room; I blinked and he was gone. I started to climb back up the stairs and then I went into my room and locked the door. Still, with the pain my head, I laid down in my bed and pulled the covers over my head. After ten minutes, the lights came back on and I tried to call my mom and I came out from under my covers and talked to my mom. She calmed me down and I just turned the lights off and went to sleep. I slept for a couple hours and woke up in a panic.

The sound of small steps crossing my room stopped my heart, as I saw my toy clown standing over me. I blacked out and woke up in a hospital. My parents told me what happened and I was just so confused, so I just rested there. I opened my eyes, glanced over to the window and saw nothing but a pitch black background--and Weaver.

The Wake-Up Call

[based on a writing exercise by Scott Bly about raising the stakes in your story]

"Wake up!"

I woke up with my mom's face glaring at me. "Frank, today is your first day of high school, and you wake up at 8:15!? You have 15 minutes to eat your breakfast and get ready, young man, or you'll be late for school."

I jumped out of bed, putting on my clothes while running to the kitchen. I finished my oatmeal and OJ in record time, and jumped in to my mom's car. As we were driving to school, one of our tires hit a thumbtack, so we had a flat tire. Mom fixed it, thanking herself for putting a spare tire in the trunk. By the time mom started driving again, I was already 10 minutes late.

"Well," mom said, turning around to look at me, "at least you have an excuse for being late." And then she drove off a cliff because she was looking at me instead of the road.

A note from the editors:

Write On! A Teen 'Zine, volume 4 is a publication of writing by participants in the Summer Teen Writers' Workshop 2014 at the Santa Monica Public Library.

We hope you enjoyed these pieces, inspired by creative writing exercises, author visits, and teen life experiences. We felt honored to work with these talented young voices.

- Ann Wagner and Ivy Weston, SMPL Librarians