

## **Creative Nonfiction**

I stand frozen on the stage, the heat of the spotlight blaring down on me. I can feel the beads of sweat forming on my forehead. My heart pounds against my ribcage, threatening to burst out at any moment. This is it – the moment I have been dreading all week long. The moment when I have to step out of my comfort zone and give a speech in front of a crowd of hundreds of students and parents.

When I was asked to compete in a speaking competition, I never could have imagined how far I would make it. I never want attention to be brought to me, yet for some reason, I decided to still compete. I'm only a fifth grader, how can I be expected to compete against middle schoolers?

One of the judges hands me the microphone, her encouraging smile barely masked my growing apprehension. I clear my throat, glance at the sea of expectant faces in front of me, and begin. The words come out stuttered and hesitant, hardly resembling the eloquent speech I had painstakingly written. My voice trembles, betraying my nerves as I stumble through sentences and tripp over words I had practiced numerous times. What I hoped would be a confident delivery is turning into a chaotic symphony of shaky breaths and cursed consonants. With each glance at the faces staring back at me, my confidence sinks deeper into the abyss.

I take a moment to pause and collect myself. Everyone in the audience was there to hear what I have to say, and I just need to calm down and give the speech I've practiced time and time again. With a deep breath, I continue giving my speech.

As my speech progresses, the words start flowing more smoothly. My voice grows stronger, my sentences more coherent. My confidence grows with each passing

minute until finally, I belt my final line with joy. A second of silence causes a deep panic in me, but the applause that follows envelops me like a warm embrace, wiping away any lingering self-doubt.

I sit back down and listen to the rest of the speeches. Every other student who goes up on the stage gives an incredible speech, leaving me with no expectations of victory. The end of the speeches approaches, and the judges take a moment to consider everything. I feel happy with my speech no matter what placement I get. My friends and I joke and laugh in the waiting period, none of us expecting much from our performances. The judges return to announce the top three speeches from the evening.

“In third place, Drew!” the judge announces.

I think to myself, “Well, I probably didn’t make top thre-”

“Second Place is Adam!”

I can’t believe my ears. Even after the terrifying start, I’ve managed to come in second place out of about a hundred students, many of whom are in middle school. My friends turn and look at me with a face that can only be described as a mixture of shock and happiness. I walk up to the stage after the victor of the competition is announced, and the top three get to stand on the stage and appear in a picture. The judges hand us medals and envelopes with our winning prizes. I earn \$10, which is certainly not a big price by any means, but I’m happy to win anything.

My parents drive me home and congratulate me on my accomplishment. But after the original shock of placing second, I can only think about how a better start could have landed me first. If only I wasn’t so scared and nervous at the start. I could have done so much better and then been the true winner of the competition. I can’t even say I

was the best placing fifth grader in the competition because the winner was in my grade too. Despite my accomplishment, I can only strive for more.

## **Creative Fiction**

The large, glimmering egg causes a bright shine in the evening sky. Jeremiah, who is walking through the woods near his house as he typically does after school, catches a glimpse of the light and runs over as fast as he could to check out the source of this blinding sparkle. He runs up to an open field where the egg sits, holding his arm up to shield his eyes from the light. All of a sudden, the egg dims in an instant, and lays calmly on the ground.

“What the hell is that?” Jeremiah mutters to himself. “Why was it so bright? What is going on?”

Jeremiah gives it a puzzled look, but cautiously creeps towards the egg. The forest was dead silent aside from the slight crunching of leaves under his feet. His heart pounds faster with every step. When he reaches the egg, he slowly puts his hand out to touch it. After finally feeling the egg, he settles down and eventually picks it up. The egg is almost half his size and weighs about 50 pounds. Jeremiah waddles home with the large egg in his arms.

He gets home and brings the egg straight into his room, thankful his mother has not yet come home from work. Jeremiah sets it on his desk and watches it from across the room on his bed, hoping for some sign of movement or an indication of what creature it might belong to. Nothing he can find online matches the appearance of this egg, leaving him even more confused as to what creature it came from. He knows there are no creatures in the woods large enough to lay an egg this size. His parents eventually come home and he hides the egg in his closet for safekeeping, then decides to go to sleep.

Jeremiah wakes up the next morning and immediately checks the closet, to which he finds nothing.

“Must have been a dream then. That’s weird, it felt so real.”

He goes to the bathroom to get ready for school. Jeremiah brushes his teeth and combs his short, blonde hair despite planning to throw on a hat anyways. Suddenly, he hears a squelch noise come from behind the shower curtain. As he pulls the curtain aside to check out the noise, he finds the creature who hatched from the egg. It is a slug-like creature who stands at around four feet tall, with more time to grow. It constantly drips black goo that dissolves into thin air. Jeremiah screams at the top of his lungs to this sight and nearly faints while backing up against the door.

“Honey, are you okay in there?” Jeremiah’s mom questions as she runs over to the bathroom. “What is going on, why are you screaming?”

It takes Jeremiah a second to compose himself before replying, “Uh, yeah mom I’m ok. Sorry. There was just a jumpscare in a game I was playing on my phone.”

“Alright, don’t scare me like that again.” She walks away and back to her room.

Jeremiah stands in the bathroom, looking shocked at the creature in his shower. It doesn’t appear to be dangerous, but it scares him nonetheless. He doesn’t know what to do and tries to tell the creature to leave, but it does not understand his human babbling. It squirms out of the shower and moves closer to the door, causing Jeremiah to burst through the door and close it behind him, locking the creature away.

“Hey hurry up, I got to take you to school,” Jeremiah’s mom calls from down the hall.

His mom takes him to school, but Jeremiah can’t focus at all. He is thinking about what he is going to do when he gets home.

The school day passes and he hurriedly takes the bus back home. His mom's car is still parked in the driveway, which he finds odd considering she should be at work by now. He runs inside to find nothing out of the ordinary at first; however, the bathroom door that held the creature back was open.

"Mom?" Jeremiah calls out, hoping she knows what happened to the creature.

No response.

He walks downstairs to her bedroom. The door is closed, but he hears strange noises coming from inside. He knocks on the door, with again, no response, so he decides to just open it. On her bed, he sees the creature, except now it has grown to be nearly eleven feet long. The blankets are starting to disintegrate under it.

"I'm sorry for bringing you here, but you need to leave. I can't have my mom seeing you or the things you're destroying," Jeremiah says to the disgusting, black slug.

The creature starts to inch to the side, revealing the skeleton of Jeremiah's mother on the bed. Jeremiah realizes instantly what has happened, and he bursts into tears. Through the tears he starts to scream at the creature for what it has done, but the creature does not understand. Instead, the slug lunges towards Jeremiah at what feels like a million miles an hour, absorbing him and reducing him to just a skeleton as well.

## **Poems**

"My Bed"

Awake in bed through the night  
so late  
the rays shining through the blinds;  
Sheets hide me  
and keep me dark  
pained by perpetual beeps  
a constant snooze  
as gravel crunches

under tires far away;  
I'm stuck in bed  
to waste the day

Why live each day  
waste of time;  
Repeat of useless nights  
What fills us with rest can be a trap  
a snare  
to block forward stride;  
Grow old  
nothing to show;  
The pillow yanks my head back down

"Azula"  
Chop it all off  
The hair in my face  
Whatever isn't perfect  
Not a hair out of place

I break away  
Cast out those around  
Til I'm left all alone  
Crying on the ground

Perhaps I've done this myself  
Should my mother take the blame  
Left blue and broken  
My family left to shame

While my father has left  
And taken out of power  
I have been bested  
It's the end of my hour

"Change"  
Plastic on the ground  
Water turned mucky and brown  
Gray smog we all breathe