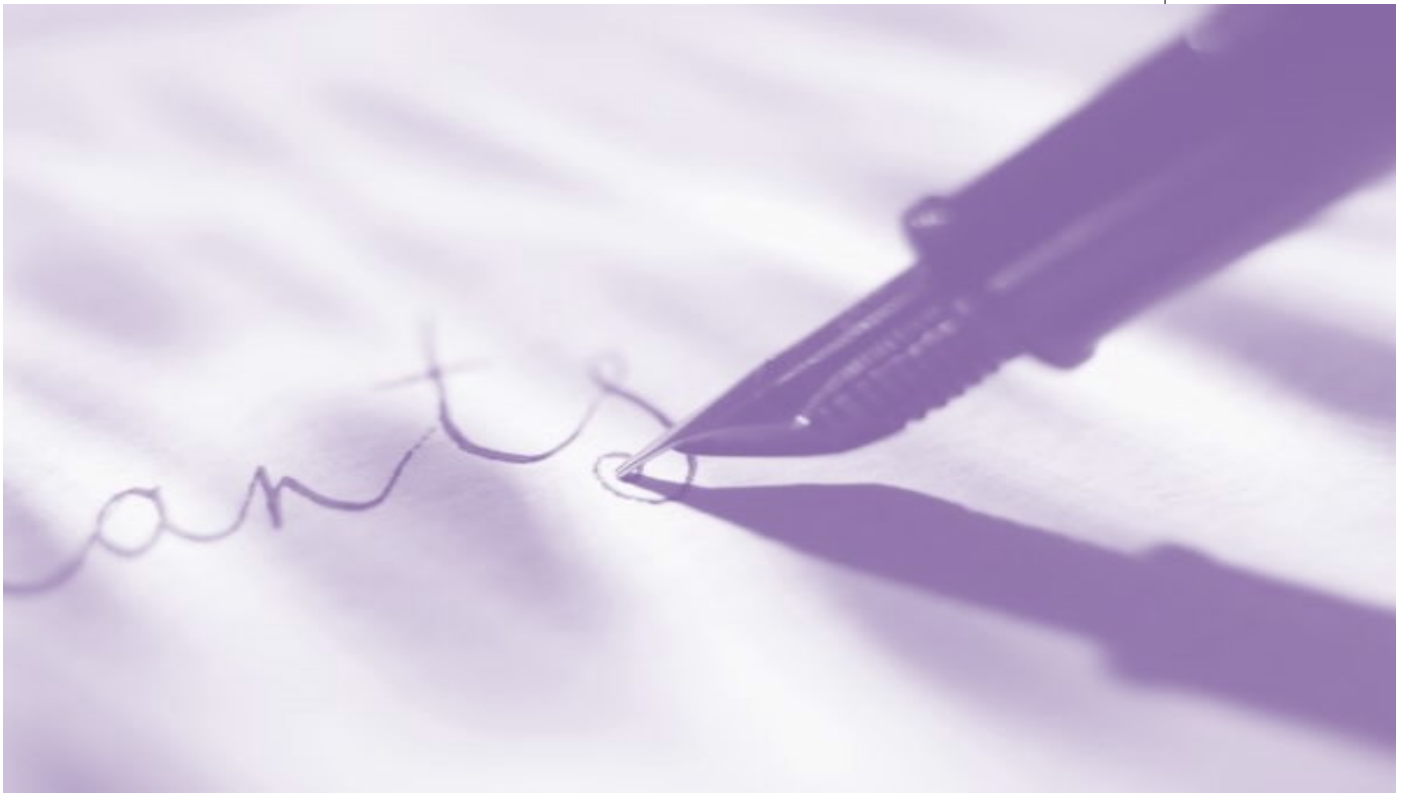


Eastern Illinois Writing Project

Summer Institute 2018



Creative Anthology

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The Salamander--Tara Allen

As I sat by the bay window looking out at the sun shining down on the brown, weathered deck, I saw a colorful, small salamander crawling along the side boards. He was moving slowly, taking his time weaving in and out of the cracks, possibly looking for a snack. As I watched him move slowly but deliberately, he then wandered to the top of the deck where the summer sun was heating the dark, wooden boards.

It was mid-morning and the sun had been shining since the early morning with no clouds in sight. The deck was very hot. I knew this from past experience of walking out on the deck, barefoot, on a sunny day and being quickly reminded to put on some sandals. When the salamander reached the top he moved very quickly. I'm sure it was hot beneath his feet just as it would have been beneath mine. He scampered quickly to a shady spot where he stopped and rested as if contemplating what to do next. After a moment or two he repeated his swift movements across the scorching deck until again reaching a shady spot to stop and rest. He continued this process until he made it across the deck and then disappeared over the other side.

While in the sun, I noticed the large array of colors that gleamed and changed down the length of his body. In the shadows, along the side of and on top of the deck, he had looked mostly gray and brown. In the bright sunlight I could see shiny shades of blues, greens, and purples in addition to the grays and browns I had noticed before. Since he was moving more quickly, though, it was harder to really look at and appreciate his beautiful colors. I enjoyed knowing they were there and caught glimpses of as many of the gorgeous colors as I could as he made his way across.

Watching that salamander made me think about people and how we move. When we are in a more comfortable, cooler place do we move more slowly and deliberately, taking in more of our surroundings and enjoy the trip? When the heat and pressure of life turns up, do we run more quickly just trying to get back to a more comfortable place? Are our true colors more reflected when we feel the heat and pressure of a fast-paced life or are they more obvious when we are moving more slowly under less pressure? Are there really lessons to be learned from watching a salamander venturing across a hot deck in the heat of summer? All I know is that it prompted me to have some reflective thoughts. Maybe I needed a break from homework. Maybe I needed to reflect on when my own true colors shine through. Whatever the reason, I took it as an opportunity to slow down, think, and reflect, which I feel is always good to do.

Wide-Ruled Paper
Cami Badman

Oh, how I hate you.
Why?
I wish I knew.

Maybe it's because you remind me of someone writing, with a purple crayon, about their make-believe friend.

Maybe it's because college-ruled paper has thirty-three lines as opposed to your twenty-two lines.

Maybe it's because you should have gone out the window along with elementary school graduation.

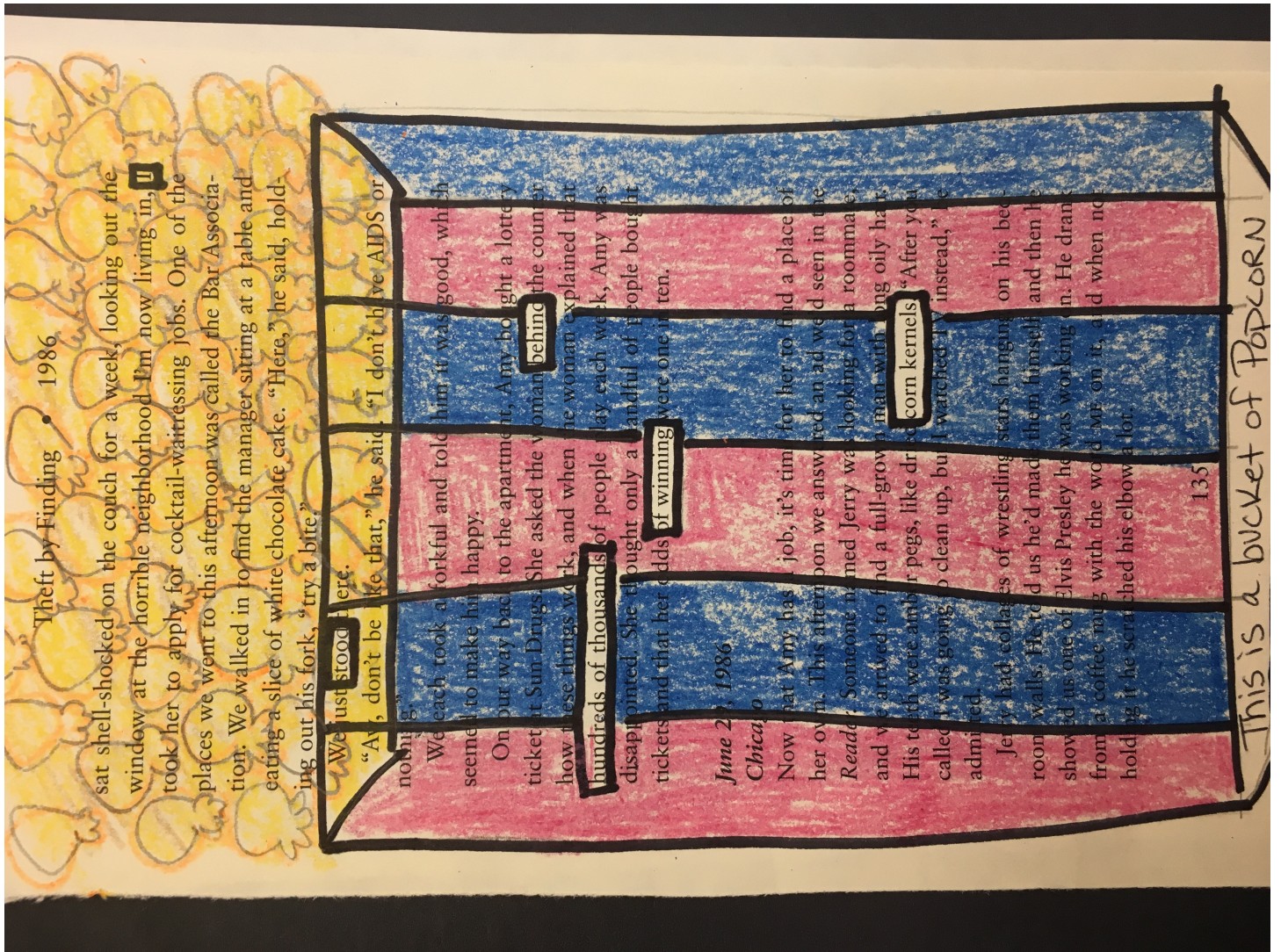
When I look at you, my eyes fill with fire.

Wide-ruled paper,
Oh, how I hate you.

Blackout Poetry – Molly Bickford

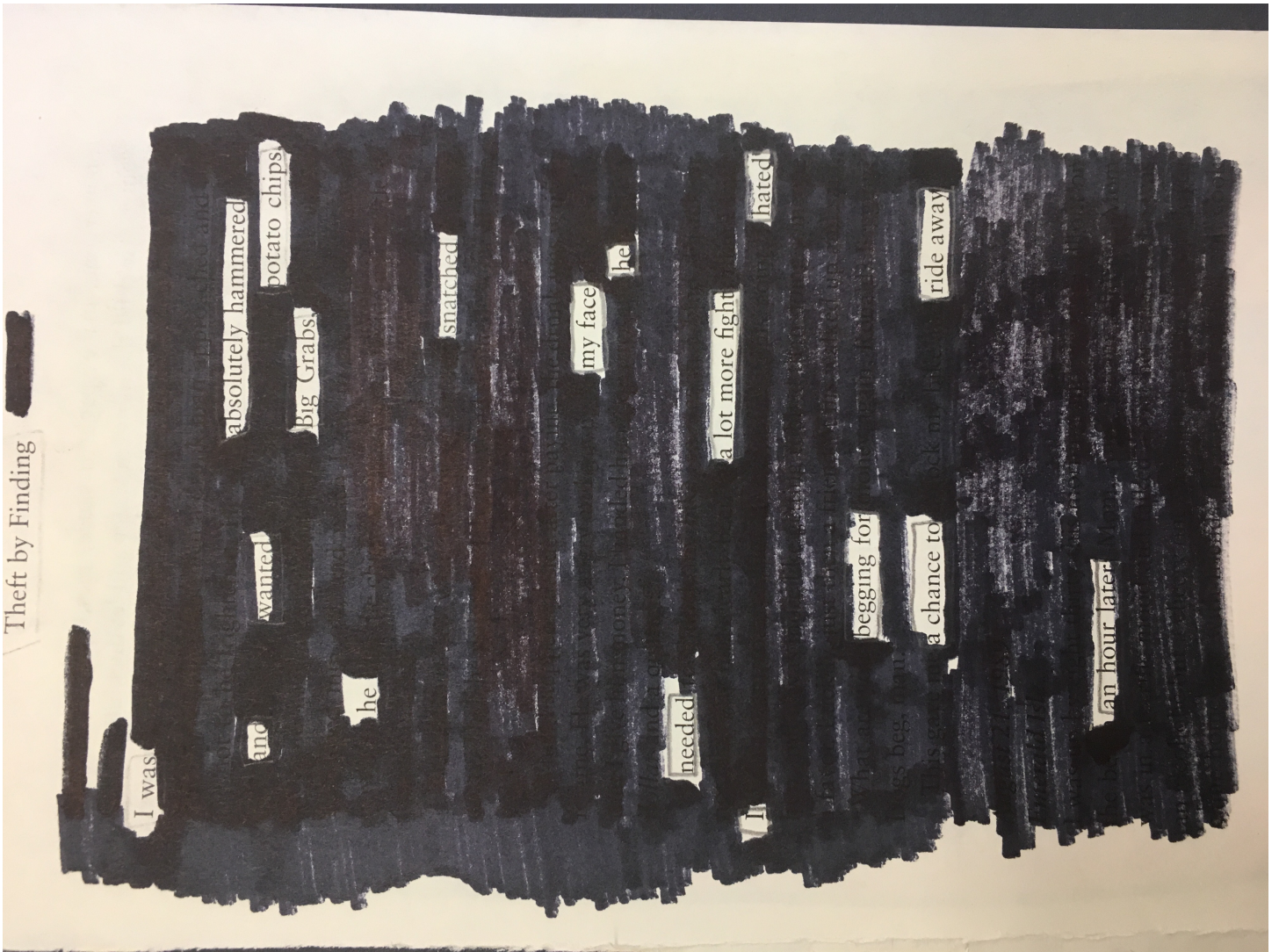
Popcorn

I stood behind
Hundreds of thousands
Of winning
Corn kernels



Blackout

I was absolutely hammered
And wanted potato chips
Big Grabs
He snatched
My face
He needed
A lot more fighting
I hated begging for
A chance to ride away
An hour later



12 Ways Coaching Will Make You A Better Educator

July 1, 2018 | By Liz Dietz

Let's face the facts. The allure of adding the title of coach to your responsibilities as an educator lie beyond the stipend, however generous it may be. The value of coaching cannot be measured on a monetary scale; because, coaches make very little. However, the worth of coaching can be justified in areas that make a tremendous impact on our future generations. Sure, coaching takes commitment, sacrifice, and may even make you question your sanity from time to time; but, coaching will make you a better person. Or at least, it did for me. Coaching has made me reimagine what I am capable of as an educator. Taking on high school cheerleading has stretched me to my limits as well as rewarded me in ways I never expected. As a relatively new teacher, coaching has improved my confidence and ability in the classroom. Whether you are new like me, or have been teaching for years, coaching is a must. Here is my list of 12 ways coaching will make you a better educator:

1. Learning to Delegate

Like teaching, coaching comes with multiple responsibilities. Delegating tasks, when possible, is the most ideal situation. If you have an assistant coach or parent volunteer, use their strengths. Allowing them to help, will lighten your load and divide responsibilities. Allow students to contribute. When I first started coaching cheerleading, I used to create every cheer, routine, and dance on my own. I wanted everything to be structured and "perfect". This became problematic because I only have so many ideas. Having the cheerleaders take ownership with their own material, made things more creative and in the end, lightened my load. Learning to delegate, makes you a better educator because you learn to ask for help and collaborate with others.

2. Effective Feedback / Formative Assessment

When we are practicing a new stunt, I will record my cheerleaders in every step of the process. I will record even when the stunt is not polished and ready to be seen by an audience. The cheerleaders enjoy watching their stunt groups right after I film. This strategy provides immediate feedback. I can tell a cheerleader to fix her arm, but if she can see it for herself, she will note the change. Utilizing various forms of formative assessment is crucial as a coach. It improves your team and as a result, improves your practices as an educator. Coaching has taught me that timely and effective feedback, ideally in the moment of the skills, will give confidence and stronger results.

3. Building Relationships

Our Athletic Director once told me that, "They don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." Building relationships with athletes and students is a necessity. Learning students interests and utilizing their interests will make material more engaging. Learning about a home life situation might explain why they are late to practice every Tuesday. Showing that you care will build respect and will make for a stronger team. Building relationships in the classroom will create trust.

4. Communicating Clear Expectations

I have athletes from every corner of life. Having clear and firm expectations provides needed structure for every athlete. It is often difficult to not bend rules or expectations and consider an especially difficult situation. However, having set expectations, no matter the circumstance, will prepare your athletes for

life beyond school and cheer. In the classroom, students crave structure. Having firm expectations creates fairness and a positive learning environment.

5. Motivating All Abilities

As a coach, you will have your star athlete and you will have your athlete that always struggles. This is no different in the classroom. However, the goal as an educator is to challenge the assumption of what a student is capable of doing. Coaching has not only taught me how to encourage those lacking confidence but also the importance of earned praise. Praise and encouragement are directly connected with motivation. When praising students it must be earned. Your praise should be timely and only given when deserved. This will create merit in your encouragement and a “good job” will have meaning to those you are praising. Considering ability is also important what might be an easy task for one student is challenging for another. Knowing your students, will allow for meaningful encouragement based on ability as well.

6. Team building / Group Relationships

Trust is the glue of any successful cheerleading squad. It makes sense, right? People are being thrown in the air and trusting that their peers will not allow them to hit the ground. Team building is extremely important and spending valuable practice time to encourage better group relationships is worth the planning. I recently took my girls to a low ropes challenge course. On this course, they were presented with tasks that they could only accomplish as a team. Everyone needed to be successful in order to defeat the challenge. Among several teenagers, that are all typically leaders, communication was rough at first. There were arguments and maybe even some tears. However, my team left with a sense of confidence and a sense of family. Team building can be utilized in the classroom as well. Take time to build relationships and better communication among peers. This will create an accepting learning environment.

7. Communication With Parents

Build relationships with parents and community members. Parents can be a wonderful resource or can be a pain in your butt. Either way, communication is important. Building relationships will open access to community resources as well as create life long relationships. Reaching out to parents with updates and progress reports keeps everyone involved and will foster positive relationships.

8. Authentic Audience and Assessment

Creating authentic audience and assessment is something I struggled with during my first years of teaching. However, when looking to coaching, it helped me consider what is authentic and encouraged me to incorporate more of this in the classroom. Cheerleaders perform for an audience. Large scale, cheerleaders perform at competitions. This is the most authentic you can get. In the classroom, finding that thing that will make students invested is what is key. Publish their work, have students voice their opinion, create assessments that value skills that will be needed beyond high school. Capturing an authentic audience will create lifelong learning.

9. Strategic Planning

Effective coaching can be achieved by having a long term plan. When I first started coaching, I would plan a week at a time. This wasn't the worst situation but I soon learned that planning long term would allow me to achieve more skills and accomplish more as a team. Strategic planning for short term (practice) and long term (season) is important. In planning, consider the various learning styles of the athletes/students. Strategic planning with coaching has transferred to strategic planning in the classroom. The concept is no different. Short term as well as long term planning eliminate the stress and craziness of everything else.

10. Scaffolding Skills

We will be performing a “Meet the Eagles” routine in August. It is not realistic to expect this routine will develop overnight. Instead we break down each section and work on each skill individually. Each skill will eventually compile and create the overall routine. Coaching has taught me how to break down complex schemes into manageable steps. In order to achieve a complex end result, such as a routine, there are several previous steps. Using repetition to gain skill, moving on when the skill isn’t being achieved, and revisiting a skill when it is lost are components that are needed for scaffolding in both the classroom and on the field.

11. Adaptability

As a coach, you have to be flexible. For example, our summer practices are outside on our track. One morning it started to rain. No problem, we will move inside and continue practice. The gym was in use by another team. Ok, time for Plan B. Today seems like an excellent time for some conditioning. So we took a hallway and worked on various conditioning exercises. Eventually we ended up sitting in a circle and talking about our season’s goals (the girls successfully distracted me) and had a meaningful conversation. Did we accomplish what I wanted that practice? Not exactly but it was still productive. Similarly, in the classroom, sometimes the best lesson is outside of what is planned. Be adaptable and willing to scrap the original plan.

12. Finding Joy and Appreciation

There are hard days as a coach. There are difficult days as an educator There are days you will consider quitting. However, these are the days you push through and find at least one positive. At the end of the day, coaching should bring you joy and you bring joy to your athletes. The best educators are those that care and further, those that enjoy what they do. Love your job as a coach or don’t coach at all. Be all in as an educator. Bring passion and determination to everything that you do.

About the Author

Liz Dietz is a third year English teacher at Rantoul Township High School in Rantoul, Illinois. She teaches English Three and Honors English Three. She has coached varsity and junior varsity cheerleading for two years.

EIU Writing Project Creative Anthology--Jennifer Harris

Last week we adopted a cat. It has been quite an adventure. My daughter and I went twice to the shelter to look at the cats. I was thinking a full grown cat or a juvenile. My daughter was looking at the kittens. The shelter had them divided into three groups in separate rooms consisting of kittens, juveniles, and cats. My daughter wanted an orange one. After the second visit she narrowed it down between two. One was Lilly, who was considered a juvenile. The shelter worker said she wasn't quite one. However, on the shelter's facebook page she is listed as an adult, which I was told she would have to be one to be listed in that category. The other choice was a kitten who was a couple months old. He didn't have a name.

I asked my husband to go back with us the next day over his lunch hour to help make the final decision. After much discussion it was decided the kitten because he could grow up with my daughter. We told the shelter employees our choice. There was some grumbling because the juvenile and kitten room were both being medicated. They explained here was an upper respiratory cold that was being spread through the two rooms. I explained that we had been there the day before and were told we could adopt then even with the medication. After some questioning it was agreed that we could adopt because we didn't have any other animals to pass the sickness to and we were willing to medicate the kitten. Next they pulled the kitten's chart. It revealed he wasn't fixed. On previous visits I had been told by more than one staff member that if the cat or kitten is in the adoption room they are ready for adoption. This means they have had their shots, been spayed/neutered, dewormed, and tested for feline leukemia. At this point I was upset because this was our third trip back to the shelter, my husband had given up his lunch hour, and we promised our daughter we would bring one home. One of the nice workers, sensing my frustration, offered to grab the folders of all of the kittens who were currently available without a pending application and were already spayed/neutered. My daughter's favorite color is pink. There was one kitten with a collar on and it happened to be pink. We chose her.

The shelter staff filled out the paperwork and gave me a syringe with her medicine. The syringe was labeled .1, .2, .3, etc. They told me to give her half, so .05 of the medicine one time per day for ten days. I told the staff we had the supplies for the kitten but hadn't purchased food because we didn't know what brand to buy. They said any worked as long as no red dye was present because it is bad for their digestion. They gave me a baggie of food to get me started. It was Purina Kitten Chow. I also explained my house set up and asked where best to put her litterbox. They said my house was spread out so they thought I needed two. Two on our main living level. I really just wanted to put one downstairs, out of site then out of mind. They said with a kitten until it gets used to everything it needs two to not be confused. They then gave me a litterbox that had just been donated.

The kitten was really good riding in the pet taxi home. We got there and she settled in quickly. She found her food, water, and litterbox. She began walking through the house sniffing and exploring. I set up the second litterbox and she explored it. We have now had her a little over a week. We have discovered she loves to cuddle. If we are sitting on the couch she curls up on our chests or laps. At night I often wake up with her cuddled next to me or around my head. She still is exploring things and loves any electric cords. We try to block them and tell her no and then pray she doesn't get electrocuted exploring. I have claw marks in my curtains and couch. We are patiently working on that behavior too.

I have been giving her the medicine. That has also been an experience. Getting just .05 is not easy. The first time I lost two whole ounces. Then I have accidentally shot a couple of ounces into the cap before. I called the vet's office about getting more. They suggested calling the shelter. They said no problem and I went out last weekend to get more. Her last dose will be Saturday. I will be glad to be done with that part.

We love her very much and look forward to all of the upcoming adventures.

“It Was Time” by Amy McClain

The whiffle-ball bat had been used. Bite marks cover the grip where Ernie, our family dog, had mistaken it for a bone . . . or more likely, had wanted our attention. It is cast of a cobalt blue plastic and hasn't been used for its intended purpose for at least a year. However, the bat is our primary tool in collecting eggs.

“Ain't gonna be no chickens on my farm,” grumbles my five-year-old brother, brandishing our weapon and egg collecting utensil. He stomps out of the garage snapping the spring on the screen door so that it nearly slaps me in the face as I hustle to catch up to him.

Together – but not really – I'm always a step behind, we crest the hill, cross the backyard, and step into the barn lot . . . home of the dreaded chicken house. More specifically, the rooster. We silently scan the area for him, looking for his bright cock's comb and his plumes of green-blue tail feathers nested in his brilliant brown feathers. He is easy to spot. As usual, the rooster held court in the chicken house with the ladies.

My mother was also smitten with this devil of a creature. She had defended his honor at the dinner table countless times and bestowed him with a beauty and grace he did not deserve. At one point, we thought karma had finally come around when he was swaggering past a fence panel that separated him from some hungry hogs. Unable to resist, they pulled him through the fence, stripping him of feathers. He squawked. We watched, sure that he would meet his demise. My mother sprang into action, leaping the fence in a single bound, throwing him to safety. He limped away, with an injury only to his pride.

As you can see, the chickens were my mother's idea. We would gather eggs, wash, and package them so that she could deliver to neighbors in town. Eggs had to be collected, and it was time.

With a sigh of relief, we cross the gravel trail, careful to hop onto the grass tufts and make no noise. Matt tiptoes and stealthily stalks up to the chicken entrance of the white clapboard building. He nods to me, and I make a squawking noise . . . because it seems appropriate.

The rooster bolts out of the chicken house. Matt throws the chicken-sized door shut, and we both sprint to the human-sized door on the side of the house.

“Cover me! I'm going in!” I shout.

Matt throws the door open for me to catch it and spins to defend the path. The rooster sees intruders, bows his head slightly, and charges. Matt's voice quakes; “Hurry up!”

I squeak and hold the door for my protector who is swinging the whiffle-ball bat in chopping motion. The bat connects, the rooster is dazed, and Matt scurries through the door. We set to work quickly in the dusty coop.

Two rows of galvanized steel nesting boxes are filled with broody hens. They are all identical white Leghorn chickens, but we know them by their box and their bite. Both sides gear up for the siege. Beaks at the ready, they are as happy to see us (and the bat) as we are to see them.

“Let's get this over with,” Matt mumbles. He faces the first victim and pokes her with the barrel end of the bat. She retaliates swiftly, but does not harm my brother or me. Matt shoves the end of the bat under the chicken and pries her up to the ceiling of her nesting cubby. I swiftly reach under the chicken, grab her eggs, and gently set them into the bottom of the ice cream pail that is our basket. We continue in this fashion through all the cubbies; I check the two, low windows after each capture.

We are nearly finished collecting the eggs when I look out the windows and motion for Matt to do the same. Together, we watch the rooster's head come into view and pass. We follow it to the next window; the sentinel continues into the next frame, pacing back and forth in his chicken yard.

“I don't know how we are going to get out of here,” I whisper, as if the hens would pick up on any plan we devise.

He pries the next hen off her nest. As her tail feathers hit the ceiling of the nesting box, he mutters back, “I have a plan.”

I grab the eggs, nearly filling the ice cream bucket. I steady the fragile pyramid in the container while Matt checks the window. The rooster passes the window furthest from the door. In one motion, my little brother pivots on his left foot and kicks open the chicken door with his right. “Move.”

I fly through the door, snapping the spring back to the exterior of the chicken house. Through a blur of green grass and white feathers, I sprint toward the house. Not until I cross the gravel trail do I turn to check on my brother.

Just outside the chicken coop with his back to me, he swings the blue whiffle-ball bat, slicing the air like a true Jedi. The chickens stay away, but the cock charges. Matt connects, drops the bat, and runs like hell. Cheeks puffed out, hair flying from side to side, arms pumping . . . he himself looks like a bantam rooster running across the barn lot.

Like Hansel and Gretel, we leave a path of broken eggs back to the house. We quickly wash the eggs, destroy evidence of any scuffle, and place the eggs in their cartons ready for delivery. We do not speak, nor would we again about the reconnaissance mission that day. Our conflict would soon resolve itself. Time is strange entity. Moments like this particular one can be filed away for an entire lifetime, and yet years can evaporate from the human memory as if they never happened. My early adventures with my brother ended as we aged and moved on and out of the house. However, I have looked for his adventurous spontaneity in nearly every relationship, working or personal. Life is too short to ignore the twinkle in the eye, the sense of comradeship, and genuine risk. I have my brother, my very first friend, and our shared foe – that surly rooster - to thank for that early and timely lesson.

A few hours later at dinner, my father shared the highlight of his day. “You two left the ball bat in the barn lot today. I went to check on the hogs and picked it up. I know you love that rooster, Mary Margaret, but that damn thing attacked me. Took a chunk right out of my leg!”

My Dad stuck out his lily-white leg and motioned for us to look. Just above the white tube sock sticking out of his work-boot, was a small hole in his flesh that could have only been caused by a rooster’s spur.

Matt glanced at me. I gulped. “What did you do, Dad?” I asked.

“I drop-kicked him over the chicken house! And then I shot him!”

Our eyes were huge with wonder and worry. Unfazed, Dad continued with his meal. Matt and I eyed our sweet mother who counted on that rooster to crow for her in the morning. I reached out to touch her elbow resting on the dinner table. “Mom, I know you loved him.” She shed two tears, and said, “It was time.”

“A Sonnet On the Summer Writing Institute” – Lauren McDermott

We begin with sacred writing each day,
Sharing our hopes, our fears, a travel list. Our
composition books may start to fray; Becoming writers
ourselves is the gist.

Worries emerged when receiving our books. We split up the
chapters to ease the load.
Our nerves became clear through our concerned looks. Robin soothed
our stress with samples she showed.

Demonstrations gave us inspiration. and supplied
beneficial strategies
To help us end our writing frustration. And end the “I
cannot write” fallacies.

We are walking away better teachers And National
Writing Project preachers.

Marsha Steele

Haiku Poem

My favorite dream
 You came back to comfort me
 One last hug good-bye...

Cinquain Poem

Nostalgic

Old Soul

Trip Through Time

Feelings of Great Joy

Reminisce

Acrostic Poem

To make an impact

Explain

Activities

Children

Hearth

Inspire

Nurture

Giving

Change by Nicole Vineyard

She sat there combing her hair and looking at herself in the mirror. As she stared at her reflection, she tried to remember what had happened to her. When had she decided that she needed to make a change? She had never thought to question herself before. She had never been given any reason. She thought of her family. She had come from an excellent family, rich by no means, but a loving and supportive family. She has always been given everything that she needed. She possessed an excellent combination of book smarts and common sense. She was beautiful, polite, and well-mannered. Everything that a proper young lady should be.

She tried looking back to pinpoint the exact moment in time that the change had occurred. When she felt things had shifted. She had difficulty remembering the first demeaning remark. Was it something she has said, or maybe the way she had addressed him that evening? The remarks were so frequent now she had trouble recalling the first incident. She knew she was not perfect, but she did not understand the disdain that he felt for her. He often talked about their differences. He would remind her that he was from a better family, better upbringing. She listened to him, but dismissed all his remarks for she knew better. There was no real difference between his family and hers. Money did not make someone better or worse. Her family showed her love and that was all that ever mattered. She often wondered if that was the reason she never quite fit into his life.

In the beginning she had tried her best to see past their lack of toleration for her. She studied the way this family interacted with one another and took solace in the fact that they treated even the closest members of the family with the same awkwardness. She wasn't too disheartened. She knew this was not her real family. Her interaction with them was minimal. Besides, she thought to herself at the time, this was not anything serious. She did not feel any type of love for him. There would be no future there.

Maybe that was when things changed? A year had gone by and their courtship continued. She still did not believe it was a serious relationship. They rarely saw each other, and she had tried hard not to get his hopes up. She was honest with him about her feelings. Then the accident, so sudden, left her an orphan. No place to go, no one to turn to, no family to love her anymore.

She thought about that day. Was that the day that it happened? She found herself without much choice. Her feelings had not changed for him, but her circumstances had. Why had she said yes? Did she believe that she would grow to love him? This must have been the reason. She must have thought that time would cause her love for him to grow. Everything would work out, besides what choice did she have after all?

After their marriage she began to see changes in him. He became more insistent on her. He demanded that she do things exactly as he commanded. At the time she just ignored the voice in her head. She dismissed his eccentric behavior. Growing pains she thought. Everyone must experience this when they are starting out. The months slowly passed, and she found herself slowly hating him. She had thought she would grow to love him, but that was not the case. Her hopes of a joyful marriage and a happy life were dying with every cruel word or harsh look.

She has tried to convince herself that she could manage. Many women before had survived difficult marriages. Not everyone could have the wonderful love and life her parents had. Still, he took every opportunity to criticize her. She had no peace. She worked hard to make herself into his ideal wife. She worked endlessly, managing their household and her wifely duties. He was never satisfied. Her only reprieve was her own solitude and her reading. There she could be herself without any fear. She could escape her life for a few short while.

She found herself becoming a slave to her life. As time passed he treated her no better than a stranger. She was merely a whipping post, someone for him to take out his anger on. She believed that he treated her this way because she was the only one he thought he had any power over. Her fears were beginning to grow, as lately he had begun to talk of having children. She knew in her soul that she could never give this man a child. She could bear him alone, but she would not subject a child to his cruelty. Before they had married, before the accident, she had dreamed of the type of life she would have. But her life now was nothing like those dreams.

She often daydreamed of how her life could have been different. She wondered if it was possible to survive on her own. She knew she was strong enough, but she had nothing. She could never make it with a child in tow. She allowed herself to believe that she could have a wonderful life, that there must be someone out there for her, that this was not all there was.

She sat there looking at her reflection in the mirror. Her reflection revealed no change in her face or body. She was still the same person on the outside. So why did she feel different? Today she felt happy with herself, content, confident. Her self-reflection was interrupted by a noise outside. She glanced at herself one more time in that mirror. Her idle time had come to an end. It was time to start her day. She stood up, took her suitcase in her hand, and walked out the front door.