***Slate & Style***

**A publication of the Writers’ Division of the National Federation of the Blind Winter 2015**

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**From the Keyboard of the President** by Eve Sanchez

*Whatever you are celebrating, you must know that it is a time of celebration for our division. We have had a great year of expansion and new ideas. As we move forward, we are going to have an even greater year in 2016. This issue of Slate & Style reflects our achievements, if only through the absence of submissions.*

*Many of our members have been busy with their writing and life events. There have been quite a few getting published and working on their upcoming publications. Some members have been moving forward with their education, such as yours truly and Chelsea, our First Vice President. We are both in Grad School and busier than we could have imagined. And of course we need to remember all of the contest winners.*

*It has not just been our own writing contest, but writing contests all over the country, that have had our members listed as winners. Let’s keep this momentum going forward. Keep the celebrations going and have a wonderful year to come.*

**On the Slate**

As mentioned, this is a light issue of Slate & Style. It is not an empty issue though and definitely not one to miss. Its pages are filled with more contest winners from the contest. And of course the regularly expected things are here as well.

After you enjoy reading the selection of contest pieces, you will be treated to some delectable treats for the holidays and some food for thought as well as for your belly.

Plan on submitting for the next issue and plan on submitting for the contest. The Annual Writing Contest is starting up in a matter of weeks and though there has not been a lot of word out on it as of yet, you know it is coming. Be a part of it. In the meantime, enjoy your reading and enjoy your holidays with those you love.

**** **A River Called Life, First Place Adult Non-Fiction** by Allison Nastoff

May 13, 2012 is the epitome of a perfect day, the kind of day that when I step outside with my guide dog, I sigh an “Ah!” of contentment. I haven’t checked the weather forecast yet, but it feels to be about 75 degrees. Instead of rushing back into the house to make my breakfast or start checking items off my to-do list for that day, I decide there’s time to stand in the yard for a minute and just breathe deeply, letting the special freshness of the air which is unique to Spring permeate my lungs and regenerate my soul. Most of Summer’s pesky bugs either have not woken from their Winter slumber, or are too busy to think about getting right in my ear and startling me out of my reverie, so I can stand in total peace and serenity, just letting the warmth of the sun envelope me and the gentle breeze caress my face, and listen to nature’s amazing orchestra of birds and the sweet chiming of distant church bells.

There are church bells because today is Sunday, which only accentuates the already beautiful day, as Sunday in our family is a day of church, family time and rest to celebrate a week of hard work. But this Sunday, the peace in my soul is due to more than the Sabbath or the beauty of Spring, because this Sunday, my family and I will celebrate not merely days of hard work, but years. Today is Commencement day at Carroll University.

“You ready to go?” whispers a student volunteer, tapping my shoulder.

When I was a child, I would occasionally try to imagine what this moment would be like, and in my imagination, I pictured myself jumping out of my chair and running up to the stage, barely able to contain my joy. My childish mind couldn’t imagine a greater joy than conquering college which grownups told me was “very hard” and then never having to go to school again if I chose. In reality, mixed in with the joy in ways I never expected is a solemn feeling that compels me to savor the moment with an adult attitude, rather than rush for the prize like a child. Solemn and dignified, I stand up, adjusting my dress and gown that sweat has caused to cling to my skin. Gilbert, my sweet guide dog, a yellow lab who will forever retain the innocence and exuberance of a child, follows suit as I used to imagine I would: jumping up, wagging his tail and wanting to run ahead. He is also wearing a cap and gown, courtesy of the bookstore staff who absolutely adore him. I grab his leash in my left hand, adjust his mortar board which has slipped sideways on his head, and find the elbow of the student volunteer with my right hand.

In previous special milestones that involved walking down an aisle, from first communion to high school graduation, I wanted to prove that I was just as capable as everyone else by walking up to the stage by myself, and this was encouraged by my teachers. But in my high school graduation, despite practicing the route several times with my long white cane at rehearsal, and asking that the stage not be re-arranged on graduation day, there was an extra podium brought onstage for a previous singer that day that I wasn’t sure how to get around. In an uncharacteristic moment, Mrs. Hobson, the aid I had worked with for almost eight years, someone who had a very high expectation of independence from me, and a very low tolerance for pity, ran onstage with tears in her eyes and guided me around the podium, so the awkward moment didn’t last long. But for this moment, the culmination of the first leg of life’s journey, I wanted absolutely no unpleasant surprises, no awkward moments to tarnish this perfect day. I also felt that I had grown into myself, and was comfortable enough with my blindness that I had nothing to prove.

The volunteer and I take our place in the alphabetical procession and as we inch our way toward the symbolic moment of transition from the first leg of life’s journey to the next, I find myself thinking back to freshmen orientation.

“In four years, you will walk across the stage in commencement,” said a faculty member to us nervous freshmen seated on rows of plastic chairs set up in the airy, carpeted ballroom on the second floor of the student union where I would return for a career fair, an award banquet and many convocation events over the next four years.

“Commencement seems like a long way off now, but trust me. These four years will go fast,” she continued, “so I urge you to make the most of them. Get involved on campus, take advantage of the academic opportunities we offer, study abroad. The memories you make and the connections you forge here will shape the rest of your life.”

“They are talking about commencement already?” I remember thinking with a silent laugh. I hadn’t even been on campus for 24 hours and already I was almost woozy with the exhaustion and stress of adjusting to the culture shock of college, and caring for myself and a guide dog in an unfamiliar place, and the real work, the school part, hadn’t even started. “At this rate, if I survive to walk across the stage at commencement, it will be a miracle,” I had thought.

“Here’s the rail,” the volunteer whispers, placing my hand on the metal rail for the stairs that lead up to the stage. For a brief moment, I stand frozen.

“Go up,” she whispers, nudging me gently. With that, my thoughts snap back to reality as it hits me that there is no line ahead of me. How did that procession happen so fast? Then again, how does college, how does life, happen so fast?

“The handle of Gilbert’s harness clicks as I lift it and tell him “forward” and we walk slow and dignified up the narrow stairs.

The instant my feet hit the stage, “Allison Michelle Nastoff, magna cum laude!” echoes triumphantly through microphones all over the lawn outside Main Hall where four years of memories and a lifetime of love and support are assembled.

Is it just me, or does the professor reading the names, a biology professor whom I met when an American Politics class I was in collaborated with one of his classes for a video project my sophomore year, pronounce my name more slowly, more deliberately than the others? Then it occurs to me that perhaps all the graduates are thinking the same thing about the reading of their own names. The challenges I overcame to get to this stage may be more obvious to observers, but everyone graduating with me overcame challenges to get here, even if those challenges amounted to nothing more than the universal college predicaments that do not discriminate, like having to stay up all night finishing a project that was more involved than anticipated.

Some of you reading this are likely thinking, “but the usual challenges of college pale in comparison to getting through college without sight. I could never do that!” In fact, you could fill in this refrain with every stage of my life because all my life I have heard this sentiment from well-meaning people who cannot imagine living without sight. To them, and by extension, to you if you are one of them, I hope that if you take away one thing from my story, it will be an awareness of the fact that you only have access to, and therefore can only fully understand life from your own perspective. So if you have never lived with a disability, it is difficult to imagine how you would cope with it. In fact, I shouldn’t be preaching because I have felt the same sentiments toward people with other disabilities unfamiliar to me. But in terms of blindness, the disability I am familiar with, I can say that while the obstacles this disability presents may seem unimaginable to you, for me, someone who has been blind almost my entire life, they aren’t obstacles at all, just a normal part of life. The dictionary defines normal as “conforming to a standard; usual, typical or expected” and believe it or not as “(of a person) free from physical or mental disorders.” Society likes words and people to fit into neat definitions, but this definition should be scrapped in my opinion because I have a physical disorder and yet I feel normal. There is no neat definition for normal. It means something different to everyone, depending on the perspective of life you were dealt. With that being said, I hope that none of my peers in my graduating class minimized the challenges they overcame upon seeing Gilbert and me step onto that stage. Disability or not, everyone’s normal presents them with challenges. The reading of my name sounds slow and deliberate because as my mind flashes back to the challenges I overcame to earn this moment, my mind yearns to savor it, but I hope everyone else savored their own moments too because everyone earned them.

After my name is read, a large-sounding contingent of people greet it with joyous but dignified applause. My face is bursting at the seams with a smile as I am handed the smooth leather diploma cover, a beautiful keepsake and tangible reminder of this joyous milestone. After posing for a professional photo before exiting the stage, the student volunteer directs me back to my seat.

As a child, I was always baffled by the phenomenon of how the eager anticipation of a special event like Christmas, a birthday or choir performance builds up in your mind for the longest time, but then is over in an instant. This phenomenon used to make me sad when I lay my head down on my pillow after these special days, perhaps with the feeling that I was so wrapped up in the build up that when the moment actually happened, I didn't savor it as completely as I would have liked to. But this isn't the case as I return to my seat today, my moment of recognition having passed. Perhaps it is because I have become more introspective since my childhood and took care to make sure I savored my moment. But beyond that, I think with maturity, I understand more completely what adults always said in speeches given at every milestone. Graduation may signify the end of one chapter, but it also signifies the beginning of a new one. Maybe I shrugged these statements off because at every previous milestone, as nervous as I was about starting a new chapter in a new school, it was only that, a new school. The chapter was already written. But today, with my formal education complete, it occurs to me that with the end of this chapter, the pages are blank. There will be no school next year and I don't even have any job prospects lined up. The rest of the book is mine to write now, and the possibilities are endless. Any lingering melancholy about the end of this chapter is overshadowed by the eager anticipation of chapters to come.

As I listen to the remaining names being read, I recall a conversation my parents and I had just a few weeks earlier around the dinner table.

"I have no idea what I am going to do after graduation," I had said nervously, "maybe I should have applied for grad school or jobs this semester, but I don't know what I would study and none of the few job postings I have seen in my field interest me. All I know is that I want to try my hand at living independently soon, support myself financially and be a contributing member of society.”

"You know, people like to view life as a neat linear continuum where you move from one thing to the next. But from my experience, I have found that life is really more like a river," Mom said, "sometimes you're just happily floating along. Sometimes a current takes you somewhere you never expected, and sometimes you hit sandbars. But if you just take one day at a time and let life unfold, everything works out the way it is supposed to."

"That's true," Dad added, "for instance, we really missed our friends and the beautiful nature up in Eau Claire when my job brought us here to Milwaukee shortly before you were born, so at the time the decision to move was rough. But if we hadn't moved, we likely would have had to take you to the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota for the complex medical care you needed, you may not have gotten the quality education and services available here, and we probably never would have thought to even visit Carroll University. So see, everything works out the way it is supposed to."

I think I kind of brushed off this analogy that day because I wasn't in a philosophical mood, but I am in a reflective philosophical mood today and as I sing Carroll University's theme song loud and proud with my class to conclude the ceremony, I fully appreciate what a perfect analogy the river is to life.

Every time I have graduated from one school and transitioned to another, I felt as if my life jacket, made of dedicated, wonderful teachers and a building I had come to know well was being stripped from me and I would have to swim on my own. The waters would be rough in the beginning of the transition, but before long, I was comfortable in a new life jacket of new dedicated teachers and a building that felt like home. After my high school graduation, I feared that the college waters would be roughest of all, as my life jacket was even stripped of the peers I had grown up with, and the support of two aides, Mrs. Hobson and Mrs. Reich who had stayed with me all through school. But now I realize that even in college when I thought I would really need to swim on my own, the foundation of my life jacket, the unwavering love and support of my family stayed firmly in place and before long, I had bolstered my life jacket until college felt like home too. Every diploma I have held in my life, but especially the one I hold today, proves that everything really does work out the way it is supposed to. So as I process out with my class to the joyous beat of bagpipes and drums, instead of succumbing to anxiety over the uncertain waters ahead where my life jacket is stripped even of the certainty of a new school routine, I decide to let myself be at total peace, trusting that wherever the river of life takes me next, I will find a comfortable new life jacket and navigate the waters with the confidence and grace of a sailor who has successfully conquered rough waters all her life.



**Cookie Cutter Christmas, Second Place Adult Non-Fiction** by Shirley Ann Grauel

I am not the best cook in the world, but I believe I am a pretty good baker! My specialty is my Christmas cookies. They are a true piece of art! After I lost most of my vision, it became difficult to critique my masterpiece cookies like I was able to do in the past. Because of my daughters, I learned a lesson about creativity, imagination, and the true meaning of the phrase, “Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder!” I may have missed out on all of the fun baking and decorating cookies with my girls growing up, due to my anal ways, but now, because of the important lesson I learned, I enjoy the time I spend baking with my grandchildren.

My Christmas cookies had to be “true” perfection! The berries on my poinsettia leaves could only be made with red hot candies. Santa’s mittens had to always be red with white cuffs made with coconut frosting. My bells could only have a silver ball as the ringer. Candy cane cookies only could be curved to the left. My gingerbread boy and girl had a specific dress code. And for heaven sakes, you would never see a blue snowman on display! Sprinkles had to match to the color of icing being used. All colors and designs had to be to mom’s satisfaction! What a Drill Sergeant I must have been.

It was past two o’clock in the morning, and I was still struggling to decorate my Christmas cookies like I was able to do in the past, before I lost my vision to Glaucoma. While holding Santa in my hand, with my nose only centimeters from the frosting, trying to paint his eyebrows on just right, I mumbled, “I might as well give up. I can’t see to do anything right.”

My daughters Tammy and Audrea said, “Mom, let us finish them for you. We promise to do them just the way you want them done.” After about another hour of frustration I gave in and told the girls to go ahead. Before I went to bed I gave them specific instructions on what colors of icing and what candies went with each type of cookie. “We know! We know!” was their chuckling response.

When I woke up the next morning the first thing I did was go and examine the finished product. I shrieked, “You’ve got to be kidding me!” I had enough vision to see the orange Christmas trees, purple mittens, and blue poinsettias. At that moment my two darling daughters came into the kitchen giggling. “You really think you’re funny, don’t you!” I exclaimed! The girls then took off the top layer of cookies to show me they were just trying to humor me. Underneath were my prize cookies! I gave a big sigh of relief!

That entire day, as hard as I tried, I was not completely able to let go of the trick my daughters played on me. After moping around the house for hours, I decided to call it an early night and go to bed. As I lay in bed that night, I tried to figure out if I was more upset because of the loss of vision or was it because I realized how anal I had been all those years about my Christmas cookies. After hours of meditation with the Lord, I came to the realization that I took away some of my girls creative imagination by imposing my artistic desires on them.

The next morning while drinking coffee and nibbling on cookies, I told my girls how sorry I was for being such a perfectionist. I told them when they got married and would be entertaining others, they would understand. Unfortunately, so often women are still rated and viewed by what kind of wife/mother they are by their cooking/baking abilities.

Well, now I am a grandmother, and great-grandmother too! I look forward to bringing all of my cookie cutters to my grandchildren’s home for some baking fun! The boys usually just want to eat the finished product. But the girls like to make all kinds of “neat” cookie designs! My granddaughter Lain, is my little artist. She can come up with some of the most unique ideas. Mya, loves to sample the product as we are preparing our masterpiece. I remember when she was only two; she would sit on the table, with her bare little feet, covered in flour, eating the dough! I would not have it any other way.

It has been fifteen year’s since that “awakening” Christmas. Since then, I joined the National Federation of the Blind (NFB). The NFB has taught me that blindness does not define my character. No matter if you have been blind for five, ten, or even seventy five years, you can become all that you want to become! Most of all, by learning special techniques, you can still accomplish your goals, making blindness nothing more than a mere nuisance.

I still love to display my award winning Christmas cookies. But now you will see one tray with Grandma’s cookies and another with my grandchildren’s master artwork. I will be the first one to go to their tray and taste a purple tree! Better than snacking on their baked treats, is the great big hug I get, along with the, “Grandma, I love you!”



**From the Deck, Third Place Adult Non-Fiction** by Jim Gilstrap

From the deck on the back of my home, the sun dips below the westward tree tops. It is late afternoon on the first day of spring. The weather was warm earlier, soaring to nearly 75 degrees. The warmth has now given way to a modest chill. The sun, once brilliant overhead, now casts needles of sharp light that jab through the tree branches and newly budding leaves. I cannot see the sun’s spectacular display of colors as it begins to rest on a distant horizon. The vivid colors are well hidden beyond the obscuring trees but I know they are there. Many of the pastel hues are beginning to reflect on the few white clouds that hang lazily above. I try to imagine how beautiful it must be to those that can still see the colors that are displayed on the heavenly canvas. The pale blue sky will turn to a soft yellow and then graduate to even softer shades of pink and rose before thickening to dark blues and purples.

From the deck, I enjoy the long moment as the sun continues its silent slide. I take in the sights, the sounds, the sensations, and the pungent aroma of nearby Bradford Pear trees. They are in full bloom now with a covering of white flowers reminiscent of fragrant powdered wigs of long ago nobility. The heady odor is not so appealing to my pallet but to small bees and other insects, the potent aroma is alluring. They steadily work their way around each blossom, spreading pollen from stamen to pistil as they go. Awakened from the winter’s slumber by several days of warm temperatures, these insects are in a hurry to grab what they can before the cool night sets in.

From the deck, I am aware of a myriad of sounds chattering in the trees. The birds too have come to life in the warming days of late-winter. Although I cannot identify bird calls for it is not a hobby of mine, I do imagine there are wrens, jays, sparrows, and other varieties of birds calling out to one another. Occasionally, I hear the distinct caw of a crow in a nearby tree. The harsh sound dominates the ears over the other birdcalls. The quieter birds do not notice the crow and continue their undisturbed chatter. One sound they do not ignore is the shrill screech of the hawk as it glides effortlessly overhead using its keen vision to scan the terrain below for an evening meal. A hushed moment falls over the birds. They are quiet, perhaps casting cautious glances skyward at the airborne predator. The danger passes and the birds are again singing happily. “What are they saying?” I wonder to myself. Are they calling out to each other with good-humored taunts? Maybe one is trying to sing better than its neighbor. Perhaps they are calling out to a mate before darkness robs their vision and clouds the way home. Or perhaps they are just singing because they are happy to be alive as all of God’s creatures should do. Regardless of the reason, their natural melodies relax my mood as I too prepare for an evening’s rest.

From the deck, I notice that the sun has fallen below that horizon that I cannot see. The needles of light have gone now. The sun’s rays are still visible in only the tallest treetops. The leaves there shimmer and sparkle like green diamonds dancing in the fading twilight. The approaching darkness brings a soft veil that slowly calms the birdsongs. What was once a cacophony of feathered sound is now a waning effort of the birds to get a final note out before bedding down for the night. Each closing call is very distinct and seems to be one last feeble attempt to beckon back the daylight. Steadily, the birds fall quiet and their songs are replaced by other, more subtle sounds. Small night animals have come out to hunt for food. The hushed rustle of leaves give away their presence. Nocturnal insects have also started their cadence calls. I imagine they are saying much the same things that the birds once said but without the loud conspicuous bravado.

From the deck, I am aware that I have become chilled. It is time for me to retire as well. Total darkness has not yet taken over but the sun’s withering rays have now fully departed this part of terra firma. The last of the day’s light can be seen in the few clouds floating overhead. The magnificent pastels of yellow, pink and rose once reflected on them have now given way to the deeper tones of red, violet and purple. The colors are in contrast with the backside of each small cloud which is smothered in muted shades of greys. I notice a speck of barely visible silver high above the clouds where sunlight still lingers in the upper atmosphere. It is the reflection from a jet that slides by so high that the faint engine noise will not be heard for another minute. It leaves behind a thin white vapor trail that draws a line across the sky pointing back from the silent speck. I think of the people on board soring to a destination far away. I think of the beautiful sunset now playing out for someone else on their horizon. I think of the sun shining brightly on people seventy-five hundred miles westward. I think also of someone else on their own deck, half a world away, as the sun rises to their east and awakens the sights and sounds that just escaped from my deck.

From the deck, I close my eyes and burn the images into my mind, matching them to the sounds and smells of the late afternoon. As my eyesight diminishes over time and I am forced to confront a slowly encroaching degenerative blindness, I savor these moments where sight and sound are in harmony with each other. I commit the images into my memory so that I may recall them on later days to enjoy in my mind each time I hear the late afternoon sounds from the deck.

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**Seeing Beyond Seventy-five Million, First Place Adult Poetry** by Kathy Nimmer

I am strong, silly, smart, sensitive,

Musical, mysterious, motivated, maddening,

Faithful, flawed, free, frustrating,

Blind.

I am tall, timid, truthful, trusting,

Pleasant, pathetic, profound, powerful,

Creative, crusty, confused, caring,

Blind.

I am happy, haunted, hysterical, hidden,

Willing, wanting, wondering, worn,

Chattery, childish, chipper, challenged,

Blind.

I am seventy-five million things, if I truly stopped to count,

More adjectives than snowflakes in winter,

As varied as a field of wildflowers,

And yet, some see only “blind.”

Today, as I say, speak, steady, support,

When I lead, lift, lighten, love,

As I tread, talk, tell, teach,

May my own vision be better than that.

**You, Second Place Adult Poetry** by Donna Chambers

At 75 many are tired and weak,

They get slow and become too meek,

But at 75 you are dauntless and strong,

Still fighting for the cause for which you were formed.

You present your case without a fear,

Making things right is your only care,

You stand tall when others are small,

Diligent, justifiable, and humane you are.

Through long hours you labor not play,

When duty calls you never delay,

You stand in line to take your place,

Fighting to win is your main aim.

From near and far we gather each year,

To listen and learn what's new out there,

We laugh and cheer and spread the word,

About the collaboration, laws, and technology.

75 years and still going strong,

With you by our side how can we go wrong,

Love, respect, and loyalty we bring,

To you who is so near and dear to our hearts.

How many more years will you live for,

55, 65, 75, or more,

To fight and win and bring the change,

That you alone can give, to all our lives?

**75 Celebrations, Third Place Adult Poetry** by Tasha Hubbard

Who are we?

We are the NFB

75 years of fighting for equality

75 years of growth through advocacy

75 years of working toward unity

Who are we?

We are the NFB

75 days of expanding boundaries

75 days of building our communities

75 days of increasing our capabilities

Who are we?

We are the NFB

75 moments of history

75 moments of memory

75 moments of victory

Who are we?

We are the NFB

75 in 75

Changing what it means to be blind

**The Puzzles of Haiku and Senryu** by Myrna Badgerow

Let us talk about Haiku. Haiku is a form of Japanese poetry, consisting of 17 syllables which are usually in three metrical phrases of 5, 7 and 5 respectively. Haiku typically contain seasonal references or references to nature in general. English language Haiku poets often think of Haiku as the traditional Japanese form of poetry generally, though not always, consisting of 17 syllables. These are usually within three lines, with 5, 7 and 5 syllables.

Most Haiku writers lean toward poems that refer to nature, but some of them do not always place an exacting seasonal word in the poem. Also, a few of them write Haiku composed on one or two lines in less than 17 syllables. Currently the majority of haiku are written in 11 short syllables in a 3-5-3 format. But this is a matter of choice. Here is an example which is as yet untitled.  
  
Bare branches waving  
Loss of escaping colors  
Now drifting on wind

Now let's talk about Senryu. Senryu is also a Japanese form of short poetry similar to Haiku in construction of three lines with 17 or fewer syllables in total. However, Senryu tend to be about human foibles or human nature, while, as stated above, Haiku tend to be about nature. An example of Senryu follows.  
  
Tears stain chubby cheeks  
Ice cream has fallen in lap  
Gramps wants another

Some final notes, it is often said that both Haiku and Senryu can be funny, but that if it’s funny, it’s probably Senryu. Both Haiku and Senryu can be about nature, but if it’s about nature, it is probably a Haiku. A serious poem about nature is certainly a Haiku. And a funny/satirical poem about human nature is certainly a Senryu. There are differing opinions as to whether to give Haiku titles. Some only number them while others choose to name them. Contemporary Haiku and Senryu, I have usually found to be titled. And remember, there is traditionally no punctuation in either form.

**75 Kids on a Cruise Ship, First Place Elementary Fictio**n by William Souza

Kids were running everywhere they were so excited to be on the ship. Adults tried to round up the kids but they were exited too. They finally calmed them down and boarded the ship. They all went to their rooms and checked them out. Then they went to the pool.

All 75 kids went to the pool at the same time! You could barely see the water there were so many kids! Two kids named Chet and biff tried to get everyone to take turns, but no one would listen. Then biff had a idea he got some waiters to get 75 ice cream cones.

A waiter announced “free ice cream!” everyone jumped and splashed out of the pool. Chet and Biff had the whole pool to themselves they played water tag and Marco polo. Then 15 kids left to do other things. After that, everything was going smooth until Camp Carnival.

It was a mad house in there. Some kids were hanging from the ceiling like bats. Also, kids were crawling on top of each other. The camp counselors were about to lose their minds. Chet and Biff came up with a plan again. They suggested to the counselors that they should split the group in half. That’s when the counselors blew a short blast on an air horn stopping everyone in their tracks. With half of the kids gone the rest of the evening went fine.

The next morning was a disaster, there were only three tenders, but all 75 kids wanted to go at the same time! But the tenders could only hold twenty parents and ten kids. There were plastic bench seats and plastic windows along the sides of the tender. They were packed on top and beside each other like sardines in a tin can. So they came up with a compromise, they would half of the parents first and the rest would watch the kids on the ship. Then they would send all the kids to shore in groups of thirty. The plan worked perfectly and the shore excursions went as planned.

Aarrrgh! Chet and Biff enjoyed the pirate ship excursion. Their favorite part was looking for loot on treasure beach between a ruin and a fortress. Even though it was crowded with 75 kids on board, the cruise went well.

**My $75 Day, Second Place Elementary Fiction** by Makayla Reeves

I was walking down the street one day on the way home from a long day of school. I looked down and I found 75 dollars on the ground. So I went straight home to my room without telling my mom about the money I found. I was very excited about the 75 dollars. When I got to my room I started looking in my catalogs and on the Internet for some fun stuff to buy. Once I got on the Internet I found something I really liked. I found these really cute pair of Chuck Taylors for 5 dollars on EBay. I asked my mom to take me to Wal-Mart because I was supposed to meet the person about the shoes. At first my mom said “No” you are not spending your money on another pair of shoes. I finally talked her into it and she said ok let’s go. So we got in the car and drove to Wal-Mart. The shoes were blue and sparkly with black and orange shoelaces. I was in love. I paid the lady the money and took my new shoes home. When I got back home I got back on the Internet again to look for more stuff to buy. Two hours later I found someone that was selling an iPhone 5c for 10 dollars. I thought this was a great deal but I was a little afraid it was a scam. I told the man to meet me in the parking lot of JCPenny’s. One of my favorite stores. As I was putting on my new shoes my iPhone 4s started ringing. As I dove for my phone my mom walked into the room yelling at me to answer the phone. It was my best friend Bailey calling to tell me the field trip was tomorrow and reminding me to bring money for food. Then five minutes later I was in my dad’s sports car in the passenger seat on Facebook talking to my other best friend, Madison. Then after a long car ride while listening to Luke Bryan’s song; Crash My Party on my phone and listing what I can buy for my best friend’s birthday I finally got to JCPenny. Then I paid for the phone and went inside the store. I went straight to the finger nail polish aisle and picked up 10 polished for$ 1.00 each. As I got home I turned on my new iPhone and started to download a lot of stuff. Then I realized I had to go feed my dog Lexi. When I got done feeding her I got on a website that had pets for sale. I found a really cute puppy that was 8 weeks old and was all black. I really wanted it so I went downstairs to ask my mom if I can get a new puppy. She said I could as long as I take good care of it. The dog cost 12 dollars and then I had to buy her a collar, a leash, food and water bowls. I went to the store and bought all the stuff I needed. I spent $25 more dollars. Then I told my mom we had to go pick my new puppy. As we were in the car I was thinking of names for the dog. I finally decided on Sunny. As I got out of the car my new puppy ran over to me and I paid for her and we went home to play. I spent 62 dollars in one day. I counted up the rest of my money and the grand total of what I have left to spend is 13 dollars. The next morning I got up earlier than I was supposed to because my alarm clock started singing. As I was getting dressed in a long sleeve shirt and hot pink pants my new phone started ringing. I answered it. It was my friend Bailey wanting to know if I can get off the bus at her house after school. So I yelled for my mother and asked her if I can go to Bailey’s after school today. My mom said it was fine if I got a ride home because she had to go to the vet with Lexi to see what was wrong with her. After school Bailey and I went to the Circle K and bought us a soda, some candy, and a bag of chips. I spent 5 dollars at the gas station. I had 8 dollars and I decided to save the rest of it just in case I wanted to buy something later. I had fun finding the 75 dollars and I bought a lot of cool stuff. I wish I could find 75 dollars EVERYDAY!!!!!```

**The Life at 75, Third Place Elementary Fiction** by Lashai Richardson

Oh my goodness I’m 75 already! It seems like I was just 11 years old. But I guess when my grandmother used to say time flies past when you get older she was right. It’s just horrible, I have wrinkles and I even have to use ointment for all of my bumps! If I run out of ointment I would have to put a whole pound of make up on my face which makes me look like a 2-year old playing with mommy’s make up. When she’s done she looks like a beast that’s how bad it is! The wrinkles make it worse it looks like I have lumps on my face! One of the things I really hate about being 75 is I have to use a walker and a cane plus I walk really slow sometimes. It’s not that bad after all.

You don’t have to go to school or work. You even get to boss your grandkids around to make them be your maids. And you could tell them to do stuff like “sweety go get grandmas rash ointment please” or “Sam honey, get the back scratcher and come scratch grandmas back.” When my hand shakes as I pour something to drink I jiggle just like Jell-O! Another thing I like about being 75 is when I yawn my cheeks poof up that’s so adorable. Something I find stressful is when I have to pay rent, bills and when I have to pay for my car. Overall, being 75 years old isn’t too bad.

The end

**Coala is 75 Miles From Nowhere,** **First Place Middle School Fiction** by Taengkwa Sturgell

There was a farmer who lived alone, 75 miles from nowhere. He had cows and horses, and one dog. The farmer was the nicest man you could ever think of. He spoils his dog Coala almost all the time. Coala was a yellow lab who loved her owner dearly. Coala could do almost anything she wanted to. She could ride in the farmer’s car, eat dinner with the farmer, and she even goes places with him. She was not allowed to go out in the animal barn. The farmer didn’t want her to get kicked by the cows and horses. They lived too far out to get help quickly if she got hurt.

One day Coala was sitting on the porch with the farmer. The farmer was reading a newspaper, and wasn’t paying much attention to Coala. She kept nuzzling him with her wet nose. Then, a sound of something crashing made Coala very alert. She ran off the porch and went to the animal barn. She knew she wasn’t supposed to go out there. The farmer was still reading his newspaper. Then, he saw where Coala was. She was barking and pacing back and forth. The farmer yelled, “Coala come!” Coala didn’t come. “Coala…come!” the farmer yelled again. He walked over to the barn. Coala was laying by the door. She stood up. She walked to the corral. The farmer followed her. Then he saw what had happened. One of the horses knocked over a fence that kept them from escaping. After a little difficulty, the farmer got the fence back up. He went back to the porch to read. Coala went with him. She sat down on the bench beside the farmer. He hugged her tightly. “My good Coals, you saved the day.” He said. Coala wagged her tail. “Now you may come into the animal barn whenever you like!” said the farmer smiling. From that day on, that’s just what Coala did. She went to the barn whenever she wanted. The farmer didn’t care a bit. The horses and cows didn’t even kick at the dog. She didn’t even kick back. That was Coala’s favorite day, and the farmer’s favorite too. They no longer worried about living 75 miles from nowhere.

**75 Werewolves, Second Place Middle School Fiction** by Michael Pickerill

One crisp, cool, clear full moon night, I was asleep and I was awakened by a pain in my arm that would not go away. It felt so numb that when I would pinch it and it would not hurt a single bit! My legs started to quiver so much that I could barely get out of bed to go somewhere else! My fingers started swelling like balloons and my feet began to shift. I could only moan and groan agonizingly as I walked outside in the cool, clear weather. The moon was shining brightly in the sky. When I looked up at the moon, it gave me a beastly energy that I could not explain! It was like something awakened within me and I began to shift into a wolf-like beast that was on 2 legs and 7 foot tall. I howled at the moon! I heard a chorus of about 74 more howls and I cocked my head in the general direction. There were 74 werewolves who hoped to wreak havoc on the town of Mt. Olive on the full moon night.

They were ordinary people when the full moon was not present but when the full moon was out, they would slowly transform into ravenous monsters that would eat lots of meat including people! One full moon night the leader of the pack began to feel a tingling in his limbs. He knew the transformation was about to begin! He ran in the woods. It was a cold winter's night and it was dark! It was very hard to do because his legs were trembling and his mentality was comparable to a wolf. Rip! All of his clothes fell away like towels! His muscles rippled underneath his skin and he started to growl ravenously! He was not an actual wolf, he was a human-like beast with a wolf head. He had wolf-like paws and fangs. His body had no hair and he was lean and about 7 foot tall in height. As his claws grew, he moaned and groaned in an agonized fashion until the transformation was complete. Then all the werewolves howled together. They were planning something that the town didn't know about. They would bring a kid to their den and make him a werewolf. They made me a werewolf. I challenged the leader and I won. I was now their leader and the used-to-be leader was the last of the rankings. We howled together and dogs yipped and howled with us but not in friendliness. We flashed our teeth at the dogs and ignored them. We then got a really good idea. We would howl back at them and we would bark and growl and pretend like we were going to bite them but they would run away. Unfortunately, that plan just wouldn't work. We pretended to bite them but they bit us before we could bite them! We bit the lead dog and it made a kind of yelping noise. I noticed them deep down as German Shepherds but my wolf side didn't care. It just wanted to eat something. We fought tooth to tooth until we won. The dogs had reinforcements, though. They had 3 Huskies, 3 Timber Wolf and Husky mixes, and a Beagle. The Beagle sniffed me and I whined but I growled at the same time. The other ones snorted, obviously laughing at me in their secret wolf language. A cat slaked out of the trees. It growled and pounced, teeth ready! It grabbed my throat and dangled on my throat. Of course I bit it but secretly I thought: Poor kitty cat! She got off, quickly! She hissed and moved along. The dogs rounded up and swirled in a vortex of anger. Mystical red eyes glaring, menacing teeth bearing, and low-pitch barks in their throats. Their teeth were malignant, full of fierce intention. They were outnumbered. We fought and we won. We moved on. The full moon was gone and we became our human selves and didn't remember a thing. Then, we remembered. We laughed and laughed! I got to know my wolfish friends and they got to know me. We had a good run together fighting those dogs.

**Heart Counting, Third Place Middle School Fiction** by Jessea Vaughan

Today is an ordinary Monday. My teachers will give way too much homework. I will have to deal with my sister for another four days before the weekend.

My sister, Selma and I, don’t get along. She acts really surly when I’m around, and we rarely talk. When we do talk, it’s always the same rant, in which she says I slighted her during a series of events that happened when I was a baby. My parents are usually not home because they both work long, hard shifts. My mother works ten boring hours as a typist six days a week for a government firm. My father mines coal for 12 hours a day six days a week. The only thing that keeps us civil is our brother, Peter. He’s essentially our go-between, as he always has been.

Things are going to get nasty. I just know it. Today, I got very disturbing news from my mother when she came home from work.

“Iedi and Selma, come here. Peter has been drafted. He will be deployed in a week. With these odds, with it being World War 3, he may die fighting for the European Continent against the Young Men’s Army.” she said gravely.

I know what the Young Men’s Army is. Their name is quite misleading. Their platform they post is that they stand for everything that will help the common people. But in truth, based on the acts they commit and the way they conduct themselves, they stand for everything EXCEPT the needs and wants of the common people. They are actually an army of terrorists. Things are not looking too good for my brother, nor are they looking too pretty for Selma and I, because now, we’ll be left alone to face each other six days a week.

Now, at school, Selma pretends she doesn’t know me. She never really hung out with me at school. But now she’s trying to discourage my friends from associating with me. Luckily, they don’t believe her. In fact, my friend, Alexis, is bold enough to openly blurt out that Selma is wrong on a daily basis.

I never had understood why Selma has always disliked me so much. I’m not a bad person. I try to be helpful. Her rants make no sense. She’s either misinterpreting facts or making herself believe something that’s obviously not true. She must be making something up. What could it be?

Today I heard something from Selma that really bothers me. We were eating egg-salad sandwiches that mother had left in the fridge for us, when suddenly, Selma puts hers back on the plate

“What?” I said, noticing the expression on her face, which was a mixture of stress and dissatisfaction and some sort of cross between nostalgia and hope, showing emotion for something more, something distant, something I couldn’t fathom.

She said, “Oh, these dark times remind me of the day Mother found you. You see, you aren’t really my sister. You were left on our doorstep twelve years ago. You were only eighteen months. You see, at the time Mother found you on the doorstep, we were trying to get by. It was not until three years later that she started as a typist, and Father was temporarily laid off. Do you know why he was laid off? It was all because of an explosion caused by your birth father. Destruction is not free. They had to pay thousands of dollars in expenses and damages and compensation, all because of you. If your birth family had not been so dang dysfunctional, we wouldn’t have been right on the cusp of losing the house. All because your birth father got himself killed in that explosion, your birth mother went insane and left you on this doorstep. If you had not been left here, I wouldn’t have been slighted. You stole my attention. That is why I don’t like you.”

Seconds later, my brain ran away from me. Out of panic, I saw images in my head that made me panic even more. I saw Peter being killed in this vile war. I saw another mine explosion occurring. I saw everyone else disappearing into nowhere. I saw myself standing alone on the remains of the house.

I told my parents what Selma had ranted about the other night. I asked them if it was true.

Mother said, “I’m sorry we never told you. We didn’t think you were old enough to handle it. Yes, you were left on the doorstep when you were a year and a half old. It did happen during the time when your father was temporarily laid off. We have indirectly gathered that, yes, your birth family may have been a little on the dysfunctional side. No, your birth father did not cause the mine explosion, but he did get killed in it. Your mother was too traumatized by her husband’s death to take care of you. Selma was not slighted. If she’s spreading that junk around, she’s just being ridiculous. Selma is not talking to you because she doesn’t like it that I took you in, and she’s angry. You see, Selma’s great at holding grudges. If she can find a motive, she does the rest.”

Now that I think about it, it’s all a matter of heart counting. In order to keep myself contained, I must make a mental list of all of those I know--people I must count that truly like me--the good things in my life. How could I have not known that all along? Heart counting is a simple process, which I will continue from now on. I wonder if I can get my list to 75 people and/or things. I must do the counting and figure out how much of it is really important. At the same time, I can’t just talk the talk. I have to walk the walk. That is what this experience has taught me.

**75 Stones, First Place High School Fiction** by Caitlyn Laster

Adriana Alexander did not receive cake, candles, or even so much as a happy birthday wish for her sweet sixteen. No... That would have been too easy- too normal- for the Alexander family. But then again her family could never be mistaken for anything close to normal, and the easy thing was never quite good enough for them. And so it came to be that she was sent off to the Temple of the Masters, with the fate of her family's reputation resting on her shoulders alone.

As the only child of Illiana Alexander, and therefore the last of her line, Adriana was the sole heir to the Alexander’s seat on the Mage Council. However, if she failed her initiation quest, her family would be forced to forfeit their position to another royal bloodline. It should have been so simple, and yet she could not help thinking bitterly that she had a better chance of failing than she had of passing.

Over the past century, the Mage Council had implemented a new system of "academic magic" that utilized complex spoken spells and affirmations to carry out the caster's will. "Impulsive," her mentors had called her, and "undisciplined," when she had been unable to conform to the present-day beliefs; but she simply felt no power in the precise affirmations of the academic ways. Instead she was drawn to the ancient ways that utilized the life-force energy contained in the natural elements of the universe. But she couldn't indulge in self-pity... Calypso Counta, head of the Mage Council, motioned her forward, and the time had come to make or break her family's name.

"Greetings, Initiate," Lady Counta said as Adriana entered the initiation chamber and knelt at the stone alter that held a single flickering candle and a bejeweled goblet filled with a clear liquid, "May the nectar of vision show you the way if you wish to begin your quest."

"I do so wish," Adriana responded, true to custom, and lifted the crystalline cup to her lips.

The liquid was cool and sweet, and as she drank, the room began to shimmer with a silvery-gray mist. The mist thickened, and the room disappeared altogether, leaving her standing at the head of a trail comprised of polished stepping stones that wound its way through thickly-packed trees. Still surrounded in mist, Adriana began to walk along the path, counting the stones as she went. The mist rippled as she walked, and the acrid smell of smoke started to burn her lungs. The instant her foot hit the eleventh stone, hungry tongues of flame began to eat away at the foliage, so close they threatened to singe her skin. For one awful instant, Adriana froze, wondering if she would perish in real-life if she were swallowed by mage-fire in a vision quest, but then she realized that she had a way of quenching the flames, though it would not be the way the council wanted.

Closing her eyes, Adriana called to the natural moisture stored in the air and soil as so many mages had done in the ancient days before the complex spells of academic magic were created. She willed the moisture to fall from the sky as rain, and heard the flames sizzle as droplets of water touched them. Rain began to fall steadily, and the fire fizzled out, allowing her to continue on her way.

Upon reaching the thirty-fifth stone, she was encompassed in a dense fog that made it near impossible to see the ground in front of her feet. Try as she might, she could not think of a proper academic spell to banish fog, so she once again turned to the wild magic of her ancestors. Inhaling deeply and allowing her own life-force energy to connect with the energy of the air currents, she summoned a brisk wind to blow the fog away. It dissipated into thin whisps, and she began to walk once more.

The forty-ninth and fifty-third stones held yet more challenges: a swollen stream moving much too rapidly to cross, and a dense patch of nettles that stung her legs whenever she attempted to force her way through them. She met both challenges with the old magic, calling on the energy of the water to make the stream split so that she could pass through, and creating mage-fire to burn away the nettles. Each time she knew that it went against the council's present-day academic teachings, but she simply felt no power in the precisely spoken affirmations that she was now expected to use. And so she met each of the challenges the only way she knew how: by utilizing the power of the natural elements that the creator had given them when he first brought the world and all of its creatures into being.

As she reached the seventy-fifth and final stone, the forest around her shimmered with the silvery mist once more, and she once again found herself kneeling at the stone alter in the initiation chamber. "Congratulations, initiate Alexander," Lady Counta said as she placed a necklace of seventy-five polished stones, symbolic of the quest and the many challenges she would face as a member of the Mage Council, around Adriana's neck, "Though you did not follow our present-day philosophy, you over-came each of the challenges with remarkable skill. You have also taught us that, no matter how hard we may try, we cannot turn away from the ways of the ancients. We were created in harmony with the four elements, and in harmony we must remain if we wish to carry on in this world. May you serve the council well."

"I so serve the council." Adriana replied, hardly daring to believe that she might have succeeded, and rose to her feet to join the other initiates in the Hall of Records, where their names were being recorded in the Council's scrolls and they were each assigned to an existing council member for their apprenticeship.

**Eat, Drink and Be Merry**

**Solstice Tea** is a great way to start your day. You can sip it while making the holiday cookies or while sitting down to enjoy your finished treats. Warm or iced, it will always warm your heart.

Ingredients:

½ cup sugar

1 jar Tang

2/3 cups unsweetened instant tea

1 tsp cinnamon

¾ tsp cloves

Directions:

When mixing all of the ingredients, remember that it may fill the air if you mix too vigorously. It is best if you put them in a container with a lid and let the kids shake it up. It is a great exercise for you as well.

Store or give as gifts with a pretty tag. Use two teaspoons per mug of hot water and enjoy.

**Betty’s Classic Christmas Cookies**

**Ingredients**

**Cookies**

1 1/2 cups powdered sugar http://www.bettycrocker.com/recipes/classic-christmas-sugar-cookie-cutouts/~/media/Images/Shared/RecipeParts/Savings/SavingsIndicator.ashx

1 cup butter or margarine, softened http://www.bettycrocker.com/recipes/classic-christmas-sugar-cookie-cutouts/~/media/Images/Shared/RecipeParts/Savings/SavingsIndicator.ashx

1 teaspoon vanilla http://www.bettycrocker.com/recipes/classic-christmas-sugar-cookie-cutouts/~/media/Images/Shared/RecipeParts/Savings/SavingsIndicator.ashx

1/2 teaspoon almond extract http://www.bettycrocker.com/recipes/classic-christmas-sugar-cookie-cutouts/~/media/Images/Shared/RecipeParts/Savings/SavingsIndicator.ashx

1 egg http://www.bettycrocker.com/recipes/classic-christmas-sugar-cookie-cutouts/~/media/Images/Shared/RecipeParts/Savings/SavingsIndicator.ashx

2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour http://www.bettycrocker.com/recipes/classic-christmas-sugar-cookie-cutouts/~/media/Images/Shared/RecipeParts/Savings/SavingsIndicator.ashx

1 teaspoon baking soda http://www.bettycrocker.com/recipes/classic-christmas-sugar-cookie-cutouts/~/media/Images/Shared/RecipeParts/Savings/SavingsIndicator.ashx

1 teaspoon cream of tartar http://www.bettycrocker.com/recipes/classic-christmas-sugar-cookie-cutouts/~/media/Images/Shared/RecipeParts/Savings/SavingsIndicator.ashx

**Frosting**

2 cups powdered sugar http://www.bettycrocker.com/recipes/classic-christmas-sugar-cookie-cutouts/~/media/Images/Shared/RecipeParts/Savings/SavingsIndicator.ashx

1/2 teaspoon vanilla http://www.bettycrocker.com/recipes/classic-christmas-sugar-cookie-cutouts/~/media/Images/Shared/RecipeParts/Savings/SavingsIndicator.ashx

2 tablespoons butter milk for a surprisingly tangy twist. http://www.bettycrocker.com/recipes/classic-christmas-sugar-cookie-cutouts/~/media/Images/Shared/RecipeParts/Savings/SavingsIndicator.ashx

**Directions**

In a large bowl, mix 1 1/2 cups powdered sugar, the butter, 1 teaspoon vanilla, almond extract and egg until well blended. Stir in flour, baking soda and cream of tartar. Cover and refrigerate at least 3 hours.

Heat oven to 375°F. Divide dough in half. On lightly floured surface, roll each half to approximately 1/4 inch thick and cut into assorted shapes with cookie cutters. Place on ungreased cookie sheet.

Bake 7 to 8 minutes or until light brown. Remove from cookie sheet to cooling rack. Cool completely; about 30 minutes.

In medium bowl, beat all frosting ingredients until smooth and spreadable. Separate into smaller bowls before tinting with your choice of food coloring. Frost and decorate cookies as desired.

**Hanukkah Latkes**

*Enjoy this crisp, holiday treat anytime.*

**Ingredients:**

5 large potatoes, peeled  
1 large onion  
3 eggs  
1/3 cup flour  
1 teaspoon salt  
¼ teaspoon pepper  
¾ cup oil for frying

Finely grate the potatoes and onion. Add eggs, flour, and seasoning. Mix well.

Heat ½ cup of oil in a pan. Lower flame and place 1 large tablespoon batter at a time into hot sizzling oil and fry on one side for approximately 5 minutes until golden brown. Turn over and fry on other side 2 to 3 minutes. Remove and drain excess oil by placing on paper towels. Continue with remaining batter, adding more oil as needed.

It is suggested to serve with applesauce on the side for a truly traditional treat.

**North African Spiced Carrots**

A Kwanza dish to share and unite; it uses the trinity of African spices, cumin, coriander and paprika.

**Ingredients:**

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

4 cloves garlic, minced

2 teaspoons paprika

1 teaspoon ground cumin

1 teaspoon ground coriander

3 cups baby carrots

1 cup water

3 tablespoons lemon juice

1/8 teaspoon salt, or to t

**Directions:**

Heat the oil in a large nonstick pan over medium heat. Add garlic, paprika, cumin and coriander; cook, stirring, until fragrant but not browned, about 20 seconds. Add carrots, water, lemon juice and salt; bring to a simmer. Reduce heat to low, cover and cook until almost tender, approximately 20 minutes. Uncover and simmer, stirring often, until the liquid is syrupy, 2 to 4 minutes. Stir in parsley. Serve hot or at room temperature.

**Pink Champagne on Ice**

Make your New Year celebration the best ever.

Before the big night you will want to freeze some Maraschino cherries, enough for each person to get three. Place them flat to start the freezing so that they do not stick together. Get your favorite champagne chilling.

When it is nearing time for your toast, pour a little Maraschino juice into each glass. Add three frozen cherries; one to remember the past, one to look to the future and one to live in the present. Pour your bubbly over this concoction and everything will be rosy.

**Inside the Dictionary**

When the word is Wyrd, do we mean what we say? Wyrd is an old Germanic word used by the Anglo Saxons. The things we say and do are woven together in a tapestry of our lives and the lives of those around us. One of the ways that we shape our Wyrd is by how we act upon what we say.

To keep one’s Wyrd is binding, if the Wyrd is broken. It tells much of the person speaking. If we want to be judged by our words, we might want to consider our Wyrd.

For the many Sci-Fi writers, and the eclectic collective, try putting some Wyrd in your words. Oh, and for the poets out there; Wyrd is pronounced like weird. Weird, huh?

**Let’s Write the Lives We Want**

Slate & Style is a quarterly publication of the National Federation of the Blind Writers' Division. It is dedicated to writing pursuits such as literary pieces, resources, and information about various writing styles. A majority of Slate & Style's contributors are blind, but we welcome submissions from any contributor. We also accept submissions touching on any subject matter. We encourage submissions from both experienced and beginning writers with our goal being to hone our writing craft and share our thoughts.

Slate & Style accepts short fiction, short creative nonfiction, poetry, articles discussing and providing tips for various writing styles including literary, technical, editing, public relations, and academic, literary criticism, resource information, and book reviews.

Subject matter is not limited but will be up to the editor's discretion to publish.

Slate & Style accepts material from adults and children. We require email submissions.

Below are some of the highlights for submitting. Go to writers.nfb.org/Slate&StylePage for the full submission guidelines.

Include an attached cover letter and a short biography. This should be no more than 150 words. Keep your bio to the key items you feel are important for readers to know.

Multiple submissions per email are fine, but all must be listed in the required cover letter. Use Microsoft Word or RTF. No other formats are accepted. Send all submissions and questions to [s-and-s@nfbnet.org](mailto:s-and-s@nfbnet.org).

Please read through all the guidelines carefully. Submissions that do not follow these guidelines may not be considered for Slate & Style.

Though submissions are welcome at all times, if your submission is specifically about a particular season or time of year and you would like your submission to appear in that corresponding issue, please read the dates and submission deadlines in the guidelines.

For the Spring issue, which will come out on March 21st, the closing date for acceptance of submissions is February 28th.

**2015 WRITING CONTEST GUIDELINES**

The annual youth writing contest to promote Braille literacy, sponsored by the NFB Writers’ Division, is open January 1st to April 1st.

NEW THIS YEAR: All youth may enter a new category called Federation History. Any style or genre of writing is acceptable as long as it pertains to the history of the National Federation of the Blind. The best of this category will be honored at the National Convention and will be able to read their piece at one of the National Organization of Parents of Blind Children’s functions.

As always, in the general contest, there may be up to three prize winners (1st, 2nd, 3rd) and one or more receiving honorable mention. Additionally, a prize winning entry may be published within the Writers’ Division’s magazine, Slate & Style. Finally, each winning piece will be included in our yearly anthology of winners, with all entrants receiving an electronic copy.

All contest winners will be announced during the first week of July, at the Writers’ Division’s business meeting, during the NFB national convention to be held in Orlando, Florida.

**PRIZES**

\*Youth contest winners will receive $30 for 1st place, $20 for 2nd place, and $10 for 3rd place.

\*Adult contest winners will receive $100 for 1st place, $50 for 2nd place, and $25 for 3rd place.

**SUBMISSION GUIDELINES**

Youth: \*This is a contest for students who use Braille.   
\*Entries must be submitted in hand embossed Braille, either with a slate and stylus or on a Braille writer.   
\*No computer Braille entries will be considered.

\*Submissions must be brailed by the entrant.   
\*All submissions, no matter your grade level, must be in contracted Braille, unless, you have yet to learn the full system. Let us know which you are, either- I’m studying contracted Braille. Or, I know contracted Braille.

\*Each entrant must provide an identical electronic copy of the cover letter and story or poetry, as a Microsoft Word file [doc] or as a Rich Text Format [rtf] file).

\*Attach the electronic copies to an email and send them to- [thirdeyeonlyinaz@gmail.com](mailto:thirdeyeonlyinaz@gmail.com).

\*Send your hardcopy Braille and cover letter to:

Come back later to find the mailing address for the 2016 contest.

COVER LETTER

Entries must be accompanied by a cover letter containing entrant's information: Name, address, phone, e-mail, title of the entry, school and grade of entrant.

**ENTRY REQUIREMENTS**

\*We will consider only unpublished original entries.

\*Youth short fiction stories submissions cannot be more than 1,000 words, and poetry of no more than 50 lines.

\*Authors of either poetry or fiction are encouraged to submit multiple pieces.

**Youth ENTRY FEES – None**

Are you the best brailler in the contest? Be sure to double check your work. Remember to use braille paper so the braille is easy to read. Good luck!

**Adults:**

\*We will consider only unpublished original entries.

\*Fiction short stories can be of any main stream genre, and cannot exceed 3,000 words.

\*Non-fiction entries should be either a memoir or personal essay, and cannot exceed 3,000 words.

\*Stories for youth are stories with content written at an intellectual level appropriate for the younger reader, and cannot exceed 3,000 words.

\*Poetry: We will accept poetry of any length (prior, the limit was 36 lines per poem).

\*Authors of either poetry and/or prose are encouraged to submit multiple pieces.

\*Adults are required to submit all poetry, fiction, non-fiction, and stories for youth entries as attachments to an E-mail message.

\*The attachments must be in either Microsoft Word (doc) or Rich Text Format (rtf).

\*Fiction, non-fiction and stories for youth should be written in a normal prose style, with paragraphs being left justified, lines are single spaced, and having a 14 point font of Aerial, regular.

\*No hard copy submissions will be accepted.

**COVER LETTER**

Along with your entry or entries, include a cover letter providing the following:

\*Your name, mailing address, phone number, and e-mail address.

\*List the titles of all submissions, including the category in which they are being entered.

\*State your method of payment for the entry fee (check or PayPal).

\*Finally, the cover letter could be your e-mail message, or a separate document attached along with your submissions.

**CONTEST ENTRY FEES PAYMENT AND METHODS**

Adult Fees:

\*The fee for each short story, non-fiction piece, or story for youth is $6.00 for members and $10.00 for non-members.

\*The base fee for poetry will cover up to three poems, if the combined line-count of all three pieces does not exceed 108 lines - additional poems require a second fee, following the same fee payment scheme. Accordingly, a base fee is required for a single poem of more than 108 lines; submit as many of these longer pieces, following the same payment scheme. Base fees are $6.00 for members and $10.00 for non-members.

PAYMENT:

\*You may use PayPal from the Writers’ Division website, <http://writers.nfb.org>

\*Alternatively, you may mail a check made out to NFB Writers’ Division, with a note in the memo line relating to the contest.

\*E-mail submissions should be sent to EvaMarie Sanchez at: thirdeyeonlyinaz@gmail.com

\*\*\*\*We look forward to seeing your words.\*\*\*\*