

VOICES

ALBERTA

STUDENT WRITING CONTEST

Supplement to Alberta Voices

Volume 4, Number 2



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It is with great pleasure that I present to you the *Alberta Voices Student Writing Contest* supplement for 2005. The primary goal of this writing contest is to celebrate excellent writing by students and teachers in Alberta by publishing this annual supplement and by providing teachers with an opportunity to acknowledge excellent writing in their classrooms. The simple act of encouraging students to submit their work itself validates students' writing. It also serves as an effective tool for motivating students to continue to create and share their writing. With these benefits in mind, I encourage both teachers and students to submit their writing to future contests.

I thank those of you who entered your work in this year's contest. Your writing was interesting, stimulating and a pleasure to read. Congratulations to the contest winners and to those who received honourable mentions. The publication of your writing in this supplement is a tangible acknowledgement of the quality of your work.

I am pleased to inform you that the number of submissions increased significantly this year. Consequently, we were able to offer prizes in four of the contest's five categories: Upper Elementary, Junior High, Senior High and Teachers/Student Teachers. Unfortunately, we did not receive any entries in the Early Elementary category.

I thank the judges—Marg Iveson, Gail Sobat and James Nahachewsky—for volunteering their time and expertise. Marg Iveson, a professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta, has dedicated much of her career to training and supporting English language arts teachers throughout the province. Gail Sobat is the coordinator of YouthWrite (an organization that offers summer writing camps for young Alberta writers) and the author of two young adult novels, *A Winter's Tale* (Great Plains Publications, 2004) and *Ingamald* (Spotted Cow Press, 2001). James Nahachewsky is a seasoned English language arts teacher. He is currently completing a Ph.D. in secondary education. This spring, in recognition of his commitment to excellence, he received a graduate fellowship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

In editing the pieces in this supplement, we have corrected simple spelling and punctuation errors but have left word choices, paragraphing and sentence structures that indicate the author's age and level of development. I thank the Document Production team at Barnett House for their professionalism and conscientious work in editing and formatting the contents of this supplement. I also thank Dorothy Stanley for her assistance and guidance in implementing this year's contest.

Working on this contest has been a pleasure. As I look forward to the coming year and the next contest, I encourage teachers and students to share and celebrate their writing by submitting their work. To this end, entry forms for the 2006 contest have been included.

Happy reading!

David Slomp

In a Woodpecker's Life

Jan Ong

I'm a woodpecker
living a happy life.
Eating.
Sleeping.
Then in the darkness
A noise.
Louder than a screech.
A human
is coming.
He chops down the tree.
I go down with it.
Falling,
falling
to the ground.
One
less
bird
in
the
world.



Jan Ong is a Grade 6 student at Cardinal Newman School in Calgary. (Janet Hamilton, teacher)

War and Peace

Ryan Stocco

War is wrong,
Peace is right.
Let's do the good thing,
And not fight.

War is here,
Peace is gone.
Only blood,
No happy song.

War is near,
War is near.
It makes us all
Cower in fear.

Let the war cease,
Let the war cease.
Stop the fighting,
And begin the . . .
PEACE.



Ryan Stocco is a Grade 6 student at Cardinal Newman School in Calgary. (Janet Hamilton, teacher)

Through a Cheetah's Eyes

Brandon Venier

The steel bars are as hard as armour.
There is no way I can escape.
They stole my freedom, but not my pride and that's what they will
Never take.
I am stuck here forever now, behind these
Steel bars.
Sitting here watching them stare at me from afar.
It scares me much to think of them coming for me with guns.
But for some reason every day this always crosses my mind.
How would they feel if they could see through a cheetah's eyes?

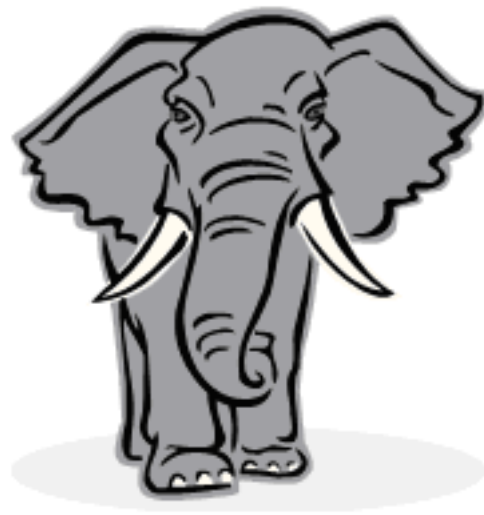
Brandon Venier is a Grade 6 student at Cardinal Newman School in Calgary. (Janet Hamilton, teacher)



Through the Eyes of an Elephant

Sara Chomyn

Me and my friend,
Stomping,
Stomping through muddy puddles,
Laughing,
Laughing about nothing at all.
Suddenly, I hear voices harder than stone.
I try to warn my friend,
But it's too late.
Bang!
I hear a sound louder than a waterfall.
Perfect aim.
My friend falls.
I desperately run off into the thick jungle.
They take his beautiful ivory tusks,
And leave him helplessly lying there.
I am sad.
Very sad.
Please leave us alone.
Please.

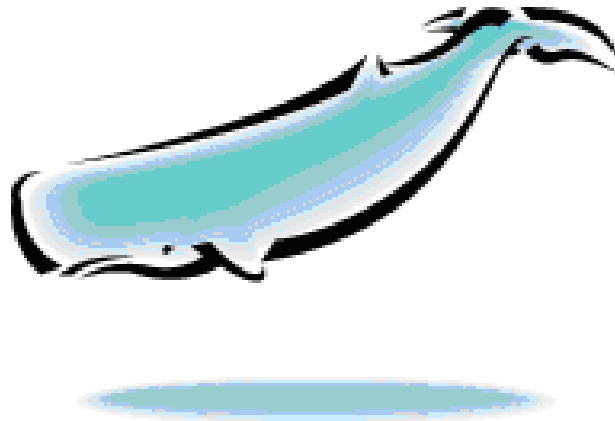


Sara Chomyn is a Grade 6 student at Cardinal Newman School in Calgary. (Janet Hamilton, teacher)

Through My Eyes

Sarah Frolick

Swimming wild and
Free,
Eating,
Playing, a boat is in the distance
I smell something, something horrible
The water is
As black as coal
I swim and swim
I may be big and blue
But it's just as hard
To get away
But
There is no use
It is getting harder and harder
To breathe
I will surely
Die here,
With all my
Brothers and
Sisters



Sarah Frolick is a Grade 6 student at Cardinal Newman School in Calgary. (Janet Hamilton, teacher)

Spiderweb

Jonathan Besecker

It was a cold spring morning,
and the moist air in the cabin felt like a wet sponge freezing to my face.
When I got out of bed to brush my teeth,
I saw the partly frozen lake.
The jagged terrain
had serrated chunks of ice sticking up every metre.
I swiftly inhaled my breakfast,
so I could go adventuring on the ice before we had to leave for the city.
On the lake I slid around like a breakdancer.
I shattered chunks of ice against my head,
visualizing that they were my mother's priceless china.
I tried to hit unsuspecting snowmobile drivers
with soggy snowballs
to watch them swerve out of control.
Wow! Two hours had gone by.
It was almost time to go,
and there was one more thing to try:
I would see how far out I could get.
I slowly inched my way from thick to thin ice.
I had just crossed the barrier where I could jump
and no cracks appeared when I heard my dad
yelling from the shore that it was time to come in.
I continued my trek despite my dad's words.
With each step new cracks appeared,
creating a colossal spiderweb.
I threw a large chunk of ice to my final destination
to see if it would support my weight.
It held on, so
I cautiously moved forward
and vigilantly planted each foot,
making sure I didn't pinpoint my weight.
I spun around and shouted,
"Hey, look how far out I . . . !" Whoosh!

Junior High – Winner

I fell into a gaping mouth.
Chunks of ice slowly encased my body,
and water seeped into my already obese boots.
I was being sucked to the bottom, so I left my boots for the lake monster.
I swam to the edge of the water,
but my legs started cramping,
and I couldn't go any further.
Then a hand grabbed hold of me
and jerked me out like a fish on the end of a line.
I lay on the perimeter of the ice,
wheezing,
my father beside me smiling,
happy to see me alive.
The lecture?
That would come later.

Jonathan Besecker is a Grade 9 student at McKernan Junior High School in Edmonton. (Don Garry, teacher)



The Evanescence of Summer

Miranda Dolphin

Sitting in a tree,
all alone,
I ponder the possibilities
of this lovely, rosy day
as I lazily watch a bee
slowly zigzag through
the sultry air,
heavy with humidity.
The day seems hazy,
and the light filtering through
the fresh, lush leaves
gives off a green glow.
The world smells of apples
that lie beneath me
slowly rotting
in the bright green grass.
It seems to me
that time has slowed
to the speed of honey
dripping gradually
off a spoon.
I just want to lie
on this sturdy branch
and absorb the summer
forever,
absorb the vivid colours,
the hum of the bees and flies
lulling me into a dream
along with the heavy air,
warm on my face
and the light breeze
rippling the top of
my leafy paradise.
But school is coming,
full of responsibility and worry.
So I sit
and try to forget it.

Junior High—Honourable Mention

The limey light
heats the top of my head,
sun-streaked and golden.
My skin is brown from
the days of swimming
and snoozing
under the intense summer sun.
When I think back,
summer is always a surreal blur
of laughter, sunlight
and endless possibilities.
Now the school year looms ahead,
full of restrictions
and routine.
So I sit and enjoy
my evanescent freedom
before I return
to the cold classroom
and hard desks
that I had managed to forget
until today,
the last day
of summer.

Miranda Dolphin is a Grade 8 student at McKernan Junior High School in Edmonton. (Don Garry, teacher)



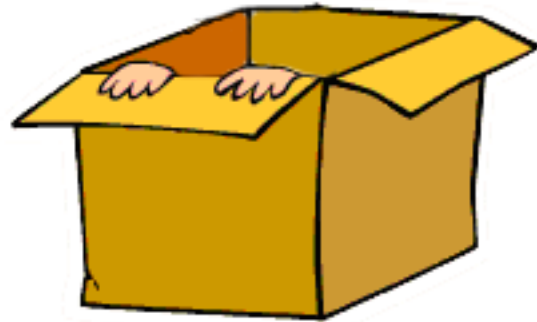
Who's in the Box?

Mika Little-Devito

Come here,
 over here
to the box in the corner.
 It's a time machine, I swear!
Hurry up
 before it's too late to leave
our world forever.
 You don't want to go,
you think,
 you're happy here.
Or are you?
 Monday they stole your lunch money,
and Tuesday it happened again.
 Can you remember what happened Wednesday?
I can.

 Come here,
over here
 to the box in the corner.
You wonder how I know,
 but I always know.
Thursday they pushed you over,
 and Friday it happened again.
Can you remember what happened Saturday?
I can.
They followed you home and egged your house.
 How could you ignore it?
You can't,
 I know you can't.

Come here,
 over here
to the box in the corner.
 Hurry up before I go.
Sunday they threw rocks,
 and Monday they did it again.
Can you remember what happened Tuesday?
I can.
Why didn't you tell?
 I know you wanted to.
So come here,
 over here
to the box in the corner.
 Hurry up so we can go.



Mika Little-Devito is a Grade 8 student at McKernan Junior High School in Edmonton. (Don Garry, teacher)

Nothing More Than Friends

Kirsten Padilla

Shielding her eyes from the sun, she scans the endless sky. A cumulus cloud sails across the wild blue expanse, which is soon to be blanketed with purple, pink and red.

"That's strange. I can't spot a single seagull," she mutters as she drops the round rocks from the palm of her hand.

"Haha, you're so mean," he replies while wading in the water. He strains his neck as he searches for the perfect rock.

She stares at him in admiration while he's at his best. *Right now, he's so genuine*, she says to herself. She wanders onto the dock, still thinking about her companion. He's her perception of earthly perfection. She walks on, not paying attention to her path.

"I'd laugh if you fell," he jokes. She realizes that with another step, her right foot would have missed the dock and gone straight through to the murky water.

"Your wake-up call is appreciated," she says. She notices that he is without success in his search. "Maybe you'll have more luck finding flat ones further down," she suggests. What she really wants is to replace the silence with a flowing conversation. Not that the silence is awkward or anything. She's never uncomfortable around him. Walking might be an impetus in its own way.

They walk along the shore with sticks in their hands, scribbling their names in the sand every few metres. Time goes by fast without them knowing it.

"What are you thinking about?" she asks him, trying to sound casual.

He responds with a burst of laughter. "I was at the pool the other day, and . . ." As she looks full in his face, he continues to tell her how some teenage girl's bikini top slipped off while she was floating on a tube. She wasn't aware of it until someone pointed it out. He hugs his stomach as they both laugh out loud, choking with laughter, trying to speak. Him, remembering the hilariousness of the situation; her, trying not to picture it, all the while never minding the fact that they're making so much noise.

Her thoughts give her feelings away. *My goodness! He has the best smile in the world. This is an almost-perfect day. If only . . .*

They resume understandable conversation. They jump back and forth from topic to topic, but all of it ties together somehow in the end. They reach the end of the beach, and are now facing giant rocks coloured different shades of grey. The sun begins to set, but they're careless, free. They catch sight of a wooden bench and make their way over to sit. A breeze brushes their faces as they stare at the sunset in stillness. She wishes that this moment could last forever.

Of course, he doesn't know about her emotions. If he did, he wouldn't be with her now. He'll never find out, because she'll never tell him. She doesn't want to ruin what they have; she doesn't want to lose such a close friend.

Her cheeks blush the colour of the sunset, but he doesn't notice.

Kirsten Padilla is a Grade 9 student at McKernan Junior High School in Edmonton. (Don Garry, teacher)



The Lunchroom

Alexandra Dixon

The lunchroom is jam-packed with munching students,
like buzzing bees in a hive.

The odour of chicken wings and burnt popcorn hangs thickly in the air.

Everything's fine at first, but then . . .

there's a huge long line for the microwave,
and somebody's spilled his juice.

Another girl can't open her granola bar
or someone's taken her chips.

Where are the innocent kids they once were?

Each one of them is playing pranks and switching names.

The girl you thought was Christy is now known as Joan.

As they begin to get anxious to get outside

(to play fun games like hopscotch or hide-and-go-seek),

they all begin to run around, turning off the lights and screaming.

All the boys want to be the first one to be let outside,

so they start to push, punch and kick each other just to get to the door.

You're madly running around trying to get control,

but they're all laughing at you like a pack of hyenas.

You're getting frustrated and angry at the kids.

Finally, you get things under control, and things are quiet.

As you shout, "All right you can go outside now!"

it's like the gun in the 100-metre race.

They all shoot out the door to claim the tire swings.

You head to the back to clean up the microwave.

Inside are the remains of what looks like a pizza pop and a french fry.

You dread tomorrow, when you have to come back.

You look around and see if everything's clean and in good order,
but there's still one kid left inside.

She walks up to you and gives you a hug,

and finally you see why you're spending your time here!

She runs outside to join her friends on the Jungle Gym.

You lock up the classroom, a huge smile on your face.

Suddenly, it doesn't seem that bad that you'll be in the lunchroom tomorrow.



Alexandra Dixon is a Grade 9 student at McKernan Junior High School in Edmonton. (Don Garry, teacher)

Dew

Naomi Leibel

You are near me,
As dew on morning lilies.
 If only for a moment,
 I sparkle.
 If only for a second,
 I shine.
 If only for an instant,
 I am happy.

No longer a weed
In comparison to roses.
 Identical,
 In beauty.

But now I become
A delicate, shimmering flower.
Unique and perfect in a way that's my own
Amongst THORNS so "sweet."

The jealous sun
Beats down on us.
 Hot.
 HARSH.

And you are taken from me.

But I still have the memory
Of that moment
 When the dew stole a kiss
 From the morning lily.

If by chance we meet again,
My heart will only bloom again
 In that eternal moment,
 As the rest of the world sleeps,
 Suspended forever at daybreak,
 The dew kissing the lily.

Gentle awakening

Naomi Leibel is a Grade 10 student at William E. Hay Composite High School in Stettler. (Peter Weeks, teacher)



[tinted] glass.

Kait Young

she was the girl in the corner that saw everything through [purple] tinted glass. her strength was not hidden in the spoken language in the tossing of a [basket] ball in the world of numbers and computations but proudly exhibited in words. written in neon in black in [blood] red and white for the world to see. her eyes were privilege to sixteen years of human abuse and triumph to the everyday and sometimes [imaginary] fairy-tale world everyone wished they had. these eyes were able to watch [people] things events and document them [with]out prejudice. and maybe her lack of strength of confidence people tried to reason with the verbal world was a bit odd. but she lived to be [colourfully] odd. the ordinary was boring was simple was plain and monotone. yet colour was music was life was [spirited] vibrancy she was still getting used to. still learning to paint with [sunshine] instead of [midnight] black and look [high] up not down as far as she could. and the words she etched onto paper of journal or dresser or napkin had gotten her to [this] point where she could sit in [almost] non-existent comfort and admit that she did not [really] like people or putting herself [ideas] out in front of them. that writing was the [only] thing she had it was the [driving] force in her life. that feeling [stifled] and lifeless and uninspired was a fate worse than death and the inability to write and create and express [emotion] was [absolutely] petrifying. and [just] maybe she was deranged and crazy for wishing [needing] something different out of the world she truly believed she belonged in. because [only] that world accepted those who looked through [purple] tinted glass.

Kait Young is a Grade 11 student at Jasper Place High School in Edmonton. (Rick Fedorak, teacher)



His Castle

Holly Gray

Maurice was the type of mouse who would travel from place to place searching for the perfect home. He'd lived in some of the very best living spaces known to mice, from a spacious attic in a French chateau to the stairwell of a luxurious hotel. But no matter how comfortable his surroundings, Maurice would always be driven away by the inhospitable nature of the residence's other occupants. Women had attempted to batter him with brooms, men had tried to lure him into traps, and children had cried out in horror whenever he tried to introduce himself. And so Maurice would gather his few belongings and leave, searching for a new place to live where he would feel welcome.

One evening, after a very close encounter with a chef and his knife, Maurice left the restaurant where he had been staying and found himself out in the street. He scurried up and down the cobblestones searching for the largest and most elegant building where he could spend the night. Instead, he found nothing to greet him but the rain, and was forced to scamper into a small hole to protect himself from the weather.

Maurice then ventured into the hole and realized that it led him directly into the living room of a very small house. It must have been a tenth of the size of the restaurant that Maurice had just departed; and he gazed up at the faded, peeling wallpaper and dusty furniture. It was strange to be in a place without marble flooring, and he walked across the carpet without the sound of his movements echoing throughout the room. A fire danced about in the fireplace and Maurice felt warm and protected from the terrible storm outside. He felt a longed-for sense of peace.

Suddenly, a wave of panic flashed through Maurice when he heard the sound of footsteps in a nearby room. A man appeared in the doorway, walked past Maurice, and sat down in a worn, comfortable-looking armchair positioned by the fire. He was dressed in a faded sweater that contrasted greatly when compared to the ornate attire of the men in the French chateau, but his face looked kind in a way that theirs had not. Maurice, frozen in terror, watched as the man opened a book and fumbled about in his pocket for his reading glasses. After placing them on his nose, the man looked down at Maurice for a moment, smiled, and then began to read his novel.

Maurice was puzzled. The man had not screamed, tried to squash him with his book or attempted to shoo him out of the room. Instead, the man appeared to be rather content simply sitting by the fire and reading his novel, knowing that a mouse was lying on the carpet nearby. It was strange for Maurice to see a man so happy with the simple pleasures of life; occupants of his former homes seemed to buy things to make themselves happy. They were always busy and too engrossed in their opulent trappings to enjoy such simple pleasures.

After an hour or so, the man rose from his chair and left Maurice alone in front of the fire. He returned a few moments later, however, and set down a small piece of cheese in front of the mouse before leaving again. Maurice had never witnessed such generosity, and to him the man was much more beautiful than those who surrounded themselves with exquisite possessions.

Maurice was the type of mouse who would travel from place to place searching for the perfect home. After several famous restaurants and grand hotels, he settled down in a small house with dusty furniture, peeling wallpaper and a man with a kind face. Maurice had found his castle.



*Holly Gray is a Grade 11 student at Bellerose Composite High School in St. Albert.
(Brian Grant, teacher)*

Stephanie

Susan Basaraba

she breaks your heart
with her painful stories
morbid memories
knowing that the day will come
soon
w a i t i n g

the time comes
you want to comfort her
but the hug is more for yourself than for her
you want to find words
but words escape you
-speechless-
hoping you can still reach out
say more with your actions and your heart

and now you want to be extra
c.a.r.e.f.u.l.
no slip-ups about mother/daughter shopping trips
you don't want to whip your head around
when others talk about
cancer
or dead parents
because maybe she'll heal faster that way
(really, you're naive to think she'll ever heal)
but mostly

you want to protect her
because even though she seems fine
you know she hurts
(you know there will be times when she'll just want to go shopping with mom)
you want to lessen her pain
give her a shoulder to cry on
because she was your best friend
when you both were innocent
and you don't want to see her lose that



Susan Basaraba is a Grade 12 student at Austin O'Brien Catholic High School in Edmonton. (Rene Hyde, teacher)

Living Language

Don Garry

Words infuse life,
add depth to experience,
and provide the inner dialogue of mind and heart,
the essential sustained conjunction
 between structure
 and soul.

Hot, red verbs surge through syntax veins,
feeding muscle,
telling us to exclaim! interject! live life first!
We make adverbial connections to determine direction,
and if we compound the complexities
as we slip inexorably from noun

 to verb,
and if we use imperative statements
to cover the insecurity of interrogative thoughts,
 it is simply part of the process,
 the relating of pieces to the whole,
 the coating of bare subjects with adjectival flesh
 as we search for ways to vocalize our identity.

Through time we become more objective,
overcoming the lonely realization
 that some pronouns are indefinite,
 that “no one” is always singular,

and we begin to understand
that language is a vibrant, progressive source
 of positive energy
 that feeds the spirit,

and as we write our life sentence,
attempting to delay the inevitable period permanence
of terminal punctuation,
there is always the hope
that though the past and present
may not be perfect,
 the future
 might be.



Don Garry teaches at McKernan Junior High School in Edmonton.

In Defence of Series Books

Pam Chamberlain

*Series books should be banned from LA classrooms
Students don't learn a thing from them*

Trixie Belden

A spunky sleuth and backyard adventure
What more could a girl want at 10?
I wrote out a numbered checklist
I was going to read them all

*SLO 1.1¹—Students will pursue personal interest
in specific genres by particular writers.*

Why couldn't Kathryn Kenny
Write as well as Julie Campbell (#1–6) did?
I needed more exciting mysteries!
At #25, I quit

*SLO 2.2—Students will discuss differences in
style and their effects on the audience.*

Nancy Drew

Real crime! Coded letters, kidnapping, spies
What more could a girl want at 11?
I wrote out a numbered checklist
I was going to read them all

*SLO 2.1—Students will use knowledge of authors
and genres, developed during previous reading,
to direct and extend reading experiences.*

Why didn't George *ever* wear a skirt?
Why couldn't Bess ever solve the crime?
Could anyone *really* be as perfect as Nancy?
At #22, I quit

*SLO 2.2—Students will comment on the
credibility of characters.*

¹ Specific Learning Objectives are from Alberta Learning's program of studies for English language arts.

Teachers/Student Teachers—Honourable Mention

Louis L'Amour

Horses, Indians, gun-toting cowboys

What more could a girl want at 12?

I wrote out a numbered checklist

I was going to read them all

SLO 2.3—Students will identify various genres and describe key characteristics.

Did a cowboy ever *not* catch his outlaw?

Did he ever confuse right and wrong?

Do the good guys *always* win?

At #19, I quit

SLO 2.2—Students will observe and discuss aspects of human nature.

Harlequin

Heaving bosoms and eternal love

What more could a girl want at 13?

I wrote out a numbered checklist

I was going to read them all

SLO 2.2—Students will compare the choices of characters with those of self.

Why didn't the heroine grab some integrity

And tell that angry brooding man

To get lost and never come back?

At #16, I quit

SLO 2.2—Students will reflect on and revise their initial impressions of texts.

Series books should be banned from LA classrooms

Students don't learn a thing from them

Pam Chamberlain teaches at the Augustana Faculty, University of Alberta, in Camrose.



Read. Forget. Teach: The Life of a Student Teacher

Cindy Stevens

Go. Move. Move faster.

STOP.

Keep going. Reading. Writing.

More reading.

More reading? Really?

Go. Move. Move faster.

Study. Work. Study. Reading?

More reading?

Speed-read, gotta get it done.

Study more.

Tired. Sleep.

Sleep? What is sleep?

Group work, fun?

No.

Assignments?

No.

Teaching?

YES!

Adrenalin.

Go. Move fast. Move faster.

Teach. Study. Teach. Study.

Gonna go teach.

Stories, poetry, plays?

I gotta teach.

Sweat. Nerves. Panic!

I gotta teach.

I . . .

Gotta . . .

TEACH.

AHHH!!

Okay, classroom.

Students.

Students staring.

Say something.

Teachers/Student Teachers—Honourable Mention

Something intelligent.
Freeze.
Froze.
Oh no.
I forget.
I forget everything.
Think. Think fast.
Remember.
Think back.
All that reading.
Assessment, Drama, English.
Oh, what was the book about?
Think.
Shit, they're still staring.
Sweat.
PANIC.

Remember.
Calm yourself.
Calm.
Relax.
You can do this.
Yes, r . . . e . . . l . . . a . . . x.
Teach.
I can teach.
I'm going to teach.
Yes.
Teach.



Cindy Stevens is a student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta.

Barnett House
11010 142 Street NW
Edmonton, AB T5N 2R1



English Language Arts Council
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