Youth Art Day 2020

Division: Literature
Category: Essay
Grades: K-2
Sierra Engle

First Grade

Susquenita Elementary

Essay

Sierra’s Ducks

1st Place
Sierra’s Ducks

I had one of my best days when my family and I got some ducks. The ducks were babies. We built a duck house. We got the ducks at an auction. I like to play with them and I feed them. One of the ducks bites but he is the only one that lets me pet him. Yesterday, I went down to my secret hideout. There was a surprise. I found baby ducks. I gave them a rock. They keep the rocks and put them in the duck house. I love my ducks.
Ella Eichelberger
First Grade
Susquenita Elementary
Essay
Hurricanes

1st Place
Hurricanes

Hurricanes have an eye in the middle of them.

They start in the ocean. They are very dangerous. In some places the weatherman tells you when a hurricane is coming. Some people even go someplace far away. Some people go into their basement. Sometimes houses are ruined. Hurricanes are really strong.
Malinda D. Smiley

Grade: 1

School: Susquenita Elementary School

Category: Literature - Essay

Title: How to Find Fossils

1st Place
How to Find Fossils

By: Malinda Smiley

I'm going to tell you how to find fossils. First, you have to go to Little Buffalo State Park where there are lots of rocks. Next, you have to look up and down and above and under the rock to see if you found a fossil. You're looking for if you found a shell or another shape. It can face up and down. Then, you ask the park ranger what kind of fossil it is. Finally, you can only keep the fossil during a special event. I found a brachiopod which is a little shell, a coral and a Crinoid which is a stem to a special flower. It is awesome to find fossils!
Jaxon Portzline

First Grade

Susquenita Elementary

Essay

The Funny Pups

2nd Place
The Funny Pups

My pets are the best. I love my pets because they are funny, silly and they jump on me when I get home! Their names are Zoro and Zoey.

They are dogs. They are black and white. Zoro shakes my hand. Zoey is crazy. She runs all around and drags her butt on the ground.

They are nice dogs.
Avery Wevoda

First Grade

Susquenita Elementary

Essay

The Red-Eyed Tree Frog

2nd Place
The Red-Eyed Tree Frog

The red-eyed tree frog is afraid. It uses its camouflage to not get eaten. It has sticky pads on its feet. It sleeps in the day, then wakes up in the night. It eats moths. Then it went to sleep.
Bridget Wilson

First Grade

Susquenita Elementary

Essay

Mommy's Office

3rd Place
Mommy's Office

One day I had the best day ever! I went to my mommy's office. It is called Chambers. It was awesome. I drew a beautiful rainbow. We got delicious snacks. Also, we played hide and seek. Mommy has a candy stash. Mommy is so pretty. It was INCREDIBLE!!
Hunter Mullen

First Grade

Susquenita Elementary

Essay

Special Day

3rd Place
Special Day

I love Valentine’s Day. It is so much fun to get lots of candy from my family. I love them so much. I love my dog too. I get her dog bones every Valentine’s Day. Woof! Woof!
Youth Art Day 2020

Division: Literature
Category: Essay
Grades: 3-5
The Artic Fox

Meghan Wechsler

Susquenita Elementary School

Grade 3

Mrs. Book

Essay

1st Place
My favorite animal is a fox. That is why I picked the artic fox to write an essay about. I like foxes because they are cute, fluffy, and small! I really like their colors too. I really like foxes because they help each other and are strong.

Arctic Fox Facts:

The arctic fox is a mammal. Did you know that an artic fox’s scientific name is “Vulpes lagopus?” The arctic fox is an omnivore, which means it eats plants and meat. Its life span is three to six years. Arctic foxes are pretty small. The female is usually a bit smaller than the male, which is on average 23 inches for their head and body. Their tale can add up to another foot. Artic foxes are usually 6.5 to 17 pounds. In the winter arctic foxes are white or bluish-gray. When the seasons change arctic foxes turn brown or gray to blend in with their surroundings.

Arctic Fox Fun Facts:

Each spring female arctic foxes give birth to up to 14 babies that are called “pups.” The arctic fox can survive very, very cold temperatures, down to -58 degrees Fahrenheit! This is very helpful because they live in the tundra, which is a cold and snowy area. Arctic foxes steal snow goose eggs from nests. They use
their tale to help balance, just like cats do. Arctic foxes are the only mammals native to Iceland.
Hunter Mitchell
Third Grade
Susquenita Elementary School
Essay
All About Nudibranchs

1st Place
All About Nudibranchs

Have you ever heard of a Nudibranch? If not, read about this fascinating creature. Nudibranchs can live in shallow water but can also live in water that is up to 130 feet. If a Nudibranch is hungry, he will eat fish eggs, coral, and bacteria. Although nudibranchs look small, they can grow up to 12 inches and weigh 3.3 pounds! Did you know that nudibranchs only live 1 year? There are two main kinds of Nudibranchs, there is the eolid nudibranch and the dorid nudibranch. The way to tell the difference between the two is that the eolid have these finger-like appendages on their back that are called cerata and the dorid have gills on their backs.

Here are some fun facts about nudibranchs. A fun fact about nudibranchs is that they are sea snails but do not wear shells. The word Nudibranch means naked gills. They are not very good at seeing and move around using their feet. Also, they get their color from the food they eat. Over 3,000 nudibranchs live in the ocean. That is why I think nudibranchs are amazing. What do you think?
Molly Eicher

Grade 5

Susquenita Middle School

Essay

“Winter the Dolphin”
It was December 10th, 2005 when Winter the dolphin was found swimming in Mosquito Lagoon, and she was only two months old when she got entangled in a crab trap that cut off circulation to her tail flukes. She was taken to Clearwater Marine Aquarium for her injuries. Her name was given because she was rescued in winter. After many tries to keep it, her tail could not be saved. Kevin Carroll designed a prosthetic tail for Winter. Winter was non-releasable because she cannot survive in the wild. She is a permanent resident at Clearwater Marine Aquarium (CMA) and spends her time with other rescued dolphins named Hope and PJ. Winter has inspired millions of people to never give up and push through life’s toughest obstacles.
Annemarie Ciccocioppi
3rd Grade
Susquenita Elementary School
Essay
I'm Thankful and Grateful

2nd Place
I’m thankful for many things. I’m thankful for my cats and dogs because they comfort me and make me happy. I’m grateful for my parents because they take care of me and because they love me. I’m also grateful for my friends Isabella, Meeya, Natalie and Layla because they are kind to me and they are friendly to me. I’m grateful for my teachers because they help me learn and they are kind. I’m also grateful for my stuffed animals because they help me when I’m sad and they calm me down. I’m also grateful for my family because they’re nice to me and they always have my back. These are the people and animals I’m thankful for.
Madelynn Smiley
3rd grade
Susquenita Elementary School
Essay
How to Carve a Pumpkin

2nd Place
Today I’m going to teach you how to carve a pumpkin. First, you pick a pumpkin.

Second, you get all the tools. They are a knife and a marker. Then, you cut out the part where you put the candle in and make a triangle to remember that place so you don’t fight with it.

Next, you get the guts out. Then, you draw the eyes and mouth. Then, you carve. Finally, you put a candle in it.
Reece Thomas John Walborn
Grade 3
Susquenita Elementary School
Essay
The Amur Leopards

2nd Place
The Amur leopard is critically endangered (CR). Luckily there are more than 84 individuals left. *Panthera Pardus Orientalis* is the scientific name for the Amur leopard. The Amur leopard weighs 70-105 pounds. The Amur leopard lives in forest habitats, and mountains near the equator. Similar to other leopards, the Amur leopard can run at speeds of up to 37 MPH. This amazing animal has been reported to leap up to 19 feet horizontally and up to 10 feet vertically. The Amur leopard is nimble footed and strong. It carries and hides unfinished kills so they aren’t taken by other animals. It has also been reported that some males stay with females after mating. The Amur leopard is also known as the Far East leopard, the Manchurian leopard or the Korean leopard.

The Amur leopard is important ecologically, economically, and culturally. Conservation of its habitat benefits other species, including the Amur tigers and prey species like deer. With the right efforts we can bring the Amur leopards back. The Amur leopard is poached largely for its beautiful fur. In 1999, an undercover investigation team found a female and male Amur leopard skin being sold for $500 and $1,000. Agriculture and villages surround the forests where the Amur leopard lives. As a result the forests are relatively accessible, making poaching a problem.

There are still large tracts of suitable habitat left across China and Russia for the Amur leopard. In China, the prey base is insufficient to supply large groups of leopards and tigers. For the Amur leopard to survive long term, it needs to repopulate its former range. For that to happen, the prey population must recover.
Youth Art Day 2020

Division: Literature
Category: Essay
Grades: 9-12
Kenyon Johnson

Grade 12

West Perry

Essay

The Closet Personality
It is not always just the quiet kids who sit in the back of class that seem unpredictable or like they live these disgruntled and dreary lives. Sometimes it is the student who has everyone’s attention, the student that makes themselves heard and their presence felt, the one that everyone knows and thinks that they have figured out. The black athlete. As you sit in your desk in a classroom, sometimes you can not help but to look around at all of your peers and think about what they have going on in their lives, what they might be thinking about, or what their individual experience has been growing up. You can try and profile them as much as you want or even judge their actions as harsh as you would like, but the truth is you would never know or even be able to formulate the reasons that people act and respond to their environment the way they do. This is called ignorance. People may think they can read others like a book, but it does not matter how many sentences they might be able to put together because unless it is their own book that they are reading, they might as well be dyslexic because they will never understand.

Growing up black in a predominantly white school has gone exactly how you would expect it to go. The occasional degrading racial comments, the nervousness of meeting your white girlfriend’s parents, the assumption that you are an amazing athlete, and most of all, the fear of not fitting in or feeling like you belong. That is just the “black” part though, people usually guess that correctly. I am not saying that some, if not all of those assumptions or stereotypes do not apply in this case, because they do. I feel like they are all just the prerequisites of being black though, especially in this school. Being one of the only black people in the school, I feel the pressure to represent the entire race and embody the culture that is linked with the color of my skin like being mentally strong and thick skinned or talking a certain way. Personally, I think one of the most demoralizing things that can happen to someone with a dark complexion is
to have their culture, history, or as people around here say, “blackness” called out or belittled. To be made to feel like you do not reside with the others that share the same history as you. It is often that my patience for ignorance is tried and that my “blackness” is called to attention but I just ignore it, because just like everyone else, they are wrong. People continue to struggle with their profiling when it gets to the athlete part. For the athlete part, they start to hone in on more of your individual traits. As an athlete, especially male, your peers will innately feel like you are just some meat head, no substance, no depth. It is because of these premeditated dispositions that I have spent my entire life trying not to be what you see on TV. I have always wanted to be more. As upfront and open book as I may seem, I hide a lot about myself. This is a part of my personality that not even my closest friends see. I am sensitive to people’s feelings, I take pride in being someone that people choose to talk to, I am personable, I have the utmost respect for people who are mentally strong and those who have endured pain, loss, and those who power through their struggles. I have even more respect for those who know that they can not deal with their pain on their own. For those are the people who are the strongest because the courage it takes to open up to someone and ask for help is unmatched. There is also a common misconception that all athletes care about is their respective sport and that they are all athlete and no student. I am not claiming to be anything close to a valedictorian, but behind religion, I value intelligence and education more than anything. Not school subjects such as civics or math, but being educated in the sense that you know your rights and you know how to make calculated decisions and abstract thinking as well as cognitive thought.

Atop all of that though is being educated in who you are. That despite all these words that people throw around, trying to make assumptions about your character, you know who you are
and what is important to you and you keep hold of your very foundation, your morals and values. I guess you can say that is why I took this class, because there is a piece of my personality that people have made comments on that I don't even know that I can put truth to or justify. But whether my father was right about me having a gift or my coach telling me I should use it as a crutch for after i'm done with sports, I still have some excavating to do into my own personality; that being said it is impossible for someone to actually make a precise analysis of who I am. Regardless of what people say, I intend to find out exactly who I am, so here I am in creative writing, digging and excavating.
Jacob Smith

Grade 12
West Perry High School

Essay
Behind the Closet Door

1st Place
I first recognized my preference toward boys when I was six. Too young to know what it was to feel attraction, all I knew was that my eyes rested easier on the boy in my kindergarten class than I knew that they should. The world had taught me to fear myself before I was old enough to understand the parts of me that were crafted wrong. My sexuality’s claustrophobia took issue with my desire to keep it hidden, and it eventually broke through the prison of my ribs.

Bleeding through my fingertips onto him, I had my first real homosexual experience at twelve. For the next few years, my fear of the way that I loved stormed through me. I was a boy flashing a sunshine smile to friends who knew nothing of the raining of unanswered prayers for change inside. Nothing of the clouds of doubt in my eyes or the winds of self disgust that curled my organs around and over each other until I was sick of who I was. This disease of boy that I had no way of curing.

Eventually I gave in, accepting this was a battle I would never be able to win. I couldn’t live as a lie anymore. I dropped the act at what felt to me like the risk of losing everyone that I loved. I came out as gay when I was fifteen.

My worries didn’t disappear, but some were settled, like that my friends who meant the most to me didn’t drift away at the drop of the word, but rather rooted themselves deeper into my heart. Others were validated, mostly from an Aunt and Uncle that so lovingly felt no blame was to be given to me, but relentlessly wished for my Mom to send me somewhere to be rewired. As I shrugged off a few of the fears that had been clinging to my shoulders for as long as I had known myself, I felt their weight replaced by an entourage of new worry. Could I talk about boys, or would that make people uncomfortable? How could I be true to myself without fulfilling
a stereotype? Is it wrong of me to withhold my sexuality as long as possible when meeting someone new?

Despite the questions it brought, by social standard, I left the closet at fifteen. At eighteen, I write because it’s the only way that I can express how much of myself still lives behind the closet door.

Sometimes I don’t even realize it myself, how much I keep locked away. I drift through my days: laughing, talking, blinking, breathing, *existing*. Some days it feels natural, like I don’t have to try. Sometimes the smiles are genuine and happiness feels more infinite than fleeting. Those same days sometimes end in nights that I pour myself over the keyboard until I pass out at 2:30 AM. I wake in the morning with a headache and close the laptop before I have a chance to see what I typed. Morning me wants to forget myself from last night. How could my day, fine by all measures, have ended in such incessant typing of this rain inside that never subsided? Why do I always mistake a parting of the clouds as a passing of the storm? I brace for the me of tomorrow.

I always do this to myself. I grab two threads and tear them out as parallels until the knot that is the eye of the storm pulls tight. My happiness and my sadness. It’s that simple, isn’t it? No. It’s not and I’ll never be able to take it as that. I chase the sunset but sunrise ties my heart around my lungs. Maybe I just like the night. I do. I do like the night but maybe I only like the night so much because I only know how to be loved in the dark. Only know how to spill truths by starlight. I can exist more freely when the universe isn’t shining it’s spotlight over me. I can *want him* as long as it’s still behind the closet door.
I've come to learn that coming out is not as easy as telling someone who I'm attracted to. That detail is really only the end of a piece of thread, a spool's worth of tangled knots hidden on the other side of the doorway. Sometimes I catch myself in the middle of a conversation and realize I'm working out a knot I'd never noticed before. Sometimes when I work up the bravery to open that document that's a product of already sleeping inhibitions I discover that I keep myself from facing the mess my sexuality creates. I find that I worry if others will be uncomfortable because I am uncomfortable.

Each day I try to tug a little bit of thread further from the mass. I run it through my fingers, examine each piece wrapped together to form the whole, and once I'm ready, I draw it out from behind the closet door.
Trinity Snyder

12th

West Perry Highschool

Essay

Sanitized

1st Place
Pushing 65 then 80, screeching to a halt. My father’s words replayed in my head as the wind filled my ears. *Your sister’s a whore.* We peeled into our driveway, my mind screaming louder than the tires. I never knew words could ravage a home. I sat in the passenger seat in a daze until my dad opened the door and ripped me from the sanction of his jeep.

“We’re leaving, pack your bags.”

I almost puked at how much the world was spinning. Another car could be heard in the distance coming to a stop, my mother emerging like a tsunami.

My mother ran through insults and tainted relationships. But with love comes loss. We as a family didn’t know how to survive. We breathed in, but always found ourselves hyperventilating, choking on our own hate. My father grabbed my arm and dragged me through our small yard, yet somehow in this moment it seemed too vast. My yard was foreign territory, uncharted waters waiting to drown us all. I panicked. My heart raced and my mouth went dry. Dad slammed the door in my mother’s face. Her screams splintered the air as she turned the knob and threw battle axes of past mistakes and hidden secrets at my father while I stood in the crossfire.

I couldn’t speak; the words formed in my eyes, spilling over. The fighting swayed from the kitchen and up the stairs to the narrow hallway. My mind raced in circles as the hallway began to shrink. Trudging my way through this confusion, I made it to the entrance of my parents’ bedroom. My father pushed my mother to the ground, the demons that had haunted him since long before my birth twisting around his hands. There was no remorse in his eyes. My mother’s sobs stoked the pride in his chest. He knew of shame and deceit; she knew nothing of acceptance and self-worth.

My parents were both broken china, chipped in different corners. She prayed he could polish away her remarks, but little did she know she was paving a path through her heart. He let
my mother suck him in and envelop him in a sense of corruption; he used to be a criminal, but now his only crime was loving my mother and wishing he never did. In an instant the bedroom door was closed, I barged on the door. I needed to see inside that decaying room. I needed to know it was over. Our family was over.

Backing away from the door, my hands discovered the wall as I crumbled to the ground. Crawling along the floor, carefully sliding down the stairs. As soon as I got to the bottom, I ran my hand along the furnace, burning myself. Feeling the sensation I snapped back to reality. Stumbling over toys and shoes, I made it. Outside of this mayhem stood what was left of our so-called family, my siblings. Walking over to the oak tree I stood and I listened, everyone was holding their breath.

My sister cried and blamed herself, but played the fool all the same. I knew what she did, she knew what she did, but the cloud cast over her since birth had started a storm. It left the roots to her heart singed. Her boyfriend comforted her, knowing that he was 21 and she was 15, and he played the victim while he lured her deeper into his skin, making sure she formed a home in his heart. My eldest brother was at work; my eldest brother who is slightly autistic; my eldest brother was 19 and paying the bills; my eldest brother who would never recover. My second eldest brother put his fist into the oak tree. He scraped the tender empathy from his knuckles and bled his words.

As we stood beneath that old oak tree it swayed; we realized one thing. *Life could never be the same.*

Gun shot. All eyes were locked on the window leading into the master bedroom. Curtains were the only saviour protecting us from seeing the war that waged inside. Phones were being glued to ears as my throat scorched; the hope was gone, what was left was fear. I ran to the steps
only to be swayed back to reality, I was 9, but somewhere along the line I had already grown up. I guess I never really got a childhood.

My brother charged up the stairs of our rickety, half-cut house. He saw no gun; no shots had been fired, but my dad’s back was covered in the stab wounds of her words. She plunged all his flaws into him: fat, disgrace, gambler, cheater. She was riddled in scars containing every name of her past loved ones: Jeffrey, Jason, Calvin, Josh. They both fought battles; it tore our family further apart.

On that day I saw a house concave and no one knew until it was too late. On that day I left my bike to collect rust in the front of our yard. On that day I found God and became an atheist. On that day my world separted and made me contort my mind to keep pieces from floating away. After four cop cars, five clueless kids, and six fallen leaves, I crept from my solitude.

The sun kept itself tucked away behind the clouds. Yet I found myself burning to a crisp.

Burnt new. Sanitized.
Dried Up Glue

Literature

Salma Morales

11th Grade

West Perry High School

2nd Place
Dried Up Glue

"Where did everyone go?" I say to myself as I walk into the living room. The once noisy house lays in silence. The TV blares out the noise from a baseball game but no loud opinionated Tios watches it. I walk into the kitchen only to find pots on the stove filled with half cooked food and cutting boards with partially cut vegetables on them. Not a gossiping Tia around. The feeling of panic engulfs me as the floor begins to rattle. The walls shake and split from each other, falling to the ground. I close my eyes, unable to watch any longer, and when I open them I find myself outside and alone in the dark. I cry for my family but no one comes to my rescue. "The glue is gone," someone whispers but I cannot see them. I cannot see anything.

I was seven years old when I had this nightmare. It happened the night I found out my Tio passed away. I didn’t really understand what it meant until recently when my dad and I were talking about our memories of him.

Every family has "the glue"; whether it be a person or place, it’s something that keeps everyone together. Without it, everyone peels apart. Tio was my family’s glue. He kept us together through the thick and thin. When we lost him, nobody knew what to do. We had a connection through him and when we all came to terms that he was gone, we lost it. Nobody tried to—no, nobody wanted to come back to each other. It was if the Hunger Games became a reality. People started bringing up things from years before; blaming others for things that probably didn’t even happen. Secrets that were kept hidden for years broke through like water overflowing a weak dam. Fights broke out in front of houses, people took sides, brothers became enemies. Some acted as if they
didn't know us. Nobody visited anymore, and we did the same. People moved away. My aunt, who was my own neighbor, who’s door was right next to ours, never visited us. Unless, of course, she wanted something. She barely mumbled a hello to us when we saw her in the mornings, the complete opposite of the warm greeting I was used to. The feeling of embrace and love I received from them was replaced by cold bitterness. If you asked me to tell you anything about any of my family members I would not be able to tell you anything other than their name, if that. We never had a real relationship. A few people tried to rebuild a bridge with insufficient materials. A few “family reunions” were organized but they only caused more problems. The only thing holding us together was him.

They say time fixes everything, but I say time is an imposter. The only thing that could possibly fix my family is dead.
Elizabeth Lentz

Grade 10

West Perry High School

Essay

A Fear of Feeling

2nd Place
“That’s the cow business.”

That’s what my Dad tells me every time one of our cows die. I’ve grown up on a small farm, so I’ve heard that quite often. Raising animals shows a person how to foster life, but also familiarizes one with death.

And no matter how many times you experience it, the feeling doesn’t change.

That’s what my Grandma told me the day after Christmas this year, after we put her dog down. Jasmine’s lyme disease treated her kidneys like punching bags, as if blinding her three years ago wasn’t enough. It didn’t matter how good of a dog she was.

Death doesn’t discriminate, and life isn’t a fair game.

The dirt on my Grandfather’s shoes followed him inside, fresh from the Miniature Schnauzer-sized grave he had just dug. We didn’t go along to the vets’ office.

I told my mother, “I don’t want to see her dead.”

That statement struck me a few days ago, when I walked into a funeral for a friend of mine. He had so much promise that he’ll never fulfill; so much life that he’ll never get to live. He was only nineteen.

Mom told me that there wouldn’t be a viewing.

Caleb’s face was so covered in make-up that I could see it from the entrance, covering the bruises and broken bones that will never heal. He died in a car accident on the way to help my Dad at his job.

My Dad buys and sells cows for a living.

When I went through the receiving line, Caleb’s Dad said, “You must be the singer.” He said that Caleb never stopped talking about me.
That wasn’t the first time I’d gotten compliments from a dead boy.

Chandler said I had a beautiful voice. I couldn’t sing for a week after he died. I didn’t go to his funeral.

I didn’t want to see him dead.

I cried the day I came back from Christmas break and Chandler wasn’t in chorus. That was the first time I let myself feel in front of other people.

I’ve always been afraid of feeling.

An unintended side effect of being human is feeling. But nothing else makes us more human. Chandler’s death allowed me to be human, which is something that I’ve never been particularly good at. So did my grandparents’ dog’s. And so did Caleb’s.

That’s the human business.

Their deaths dragged me kicking and screaming through the sand. Every time I breathed, salt burned my throat. Water filled my lungs.

So I built a dam.

I saw my emotions as weakness. A part of me still does. I close myself off, so that no one can use my own feelings against me. I use sharp words and harsh comments so that no one gets too close. Nobody can disappoint me that way.

But I’m not the moon. I can’t control the tides. And I don’t want to live like that anymore.

Because of them, I learned how to swim.

They made me human. And they made me whole again.
Only Us

I can still hear his muffled voice as he tried to speak to me on the phone, and I saw his smile when he was finally able to touch me. He felt as if he had not seen me in 100 years, which I could infer from the way he embraced me and stroked my hair as he had never done before. I often picture him laying in that bed, basically chained to it because he could barely move. I cannot get the image out of my head of him making those sudden movements, jolts, as the pain rushed through him like a lightning bolt. I could not take my eyes off of him while he moaned and tried to speak, but his brain would not let him do so. I watched him as his breathing started to get slower, slower, slower. I watched him as he raced towards death faster than I could think. I can feel his soft, warm hands take mine, and he gave me a look of relief, relieved that he had the chance to see me one last time, and now he could pass on. His last amount of energy saved for me, only me. And as he took that last gurgling breath I knew that I would never be loved and thought of the same way that he thought of me ever again.

When my best-friend, my great-grandfather, died two years ago from cancer, I felt as if I had lost part of me. Many of the people who saw us together would describe our bond as “connected hip-to-hip”. A bond that could not be broken by anyone or anything. A bond that made me get up an hour early every morning and go up to his house to eat breakfast with him and talk about random things. A bond that kept me going up to his house even when he stopped talking with me and making me breakfast, simply because he was not able to. He would work up enough energy to say “good morning” when I got there and “I love you” when I left for school. This did not weaken our bond, though, for I knew that I would always hold on to that bond, but I have to admit that I am starting to forget the feeling of it a little more every day. And I long to
feel the full affect of that bond again, but I am afraid that I will eventually lose the person who I form that bond with, and I will forget its affects once again.

I still tell myself that I did not spend enough time with him, but I know, deep down, that I spent time with him every chance that I had. Why can I not be content with the time I had with him? Did the time I had with him mean nothing? Was it not enough for me? The answer to that is no, I am not content with the amount of time I had with him. I distinctly remember a time when he talked to me after one of my middle school soccer games and said something that I will never forget. He promised me that he would stay alive to see me graduate from high school. At the time he did not have cancer, but, about a year later, that promise would have to be broken. And this is where I came to the conclusion that time is what breaks these promises, these bonds, and everything else in life. Time is a word that makes me feel nervous when I hear it, for I know that time is slowly, but surely, wasting away just as my great-grandfather did.

The last memory I have that involves my grandfather is his funeral. It was a terrible, snowy day, and the funeral was almost rescheduled due to the weather. I remember getting to the church and being the first ones there, waiting for my relatives to arrive, to see their fake faces as they cried and mourned my great-grandfather’s death. The sight of them acting this way made me feel a sense of anger that I had never felt before, simply because they were faking it and being complete liars at my great-grandfather’s funeral. All of a sudden they cared about him, they wanted him back, but I could not understand why. They never came around when he was alive, they never called him or wanted to be with him, and they never sacrificed their time to make him feel wanted and loved. That is why he waited to see me until he could be content with passing on, for he knew that I cared about him and actually wanted to be there with him, and he
knew that I was not sacrificing my time with him, for I did not want to be anywhere else but with

him.

Many people who I know constantly bring up my great-grandfather and talk about the

things he did in the past, and I can't help but smile. Even if those people are the ones who were

not there for him when he was alive. They are the ones who cry when stories are told about him,

but I do not. They are the ones who cry when they see something that reminds them of him, but I

do not. And I do not cry any time I am reminded of him because I know that I spent as much
time as I could with him, even if it was not enough for me. And I know that the reason why they
always cry when they hear about him is simply because they know that they did not spend

enough time with him, that they did not even go see him when they had nothing else to do. They

know that they did not invest any time with him, they only spent it when they even bothered to
come around. And from his death I now fully embrace the statement that you should invest time

and not spend it, cherish time and want more of it, for it goes by faster than you think.