

Mrs. Banta

Language Arts

Period 1

November 10, 2022T

The Open Door

“Click... click...”

The sound of a door opens. What time is it? I dig a tunnel through the blankets to find my phone. It’s only 7 AM at grandma’s house. Why is the door opening? Did grandma go for a walk? No, it’s too early for her! The door creaks open loudly again.

Footsteps follow, and the hall is filled with the sound. “Tap... tap... tap...”

I see a faintly shadowed figure slide from the hallway into the bathroom from the cracked door of my bedroom and a cold breeze blows past. I’m starting to tear up, fear overwhelming my body, paralyzed in place. A dark hand slowly reaches out of the bathroom. My mind plays tricks on me, I’m trying to convince myself to believe I’ll be okay, but deep down I don’t. My mind sees a weapon, though my eyes just see a hand.

Time itself slows, and I realize I have a few short moments to decide if I should play dead or make a break for it--like a little devil and angel weighing down my shoulders.

“Tap... tap... tap...” The footsteps grew closer to me, and the clock was running out; I decided to take the risk and *RUN!* I sprint like an elephant stampede is after me, shooting like a bullet across the hall into the safety of my grandma’s room.

I hop under the covers as if they were a magic shield, which startles and wakes my grandma.

My eyes are wet with enough tears to fill a river. The door pushes open and as face steps into the light, the tapping culprit becomes clear...

“Oh, good morning, Grandpa.”

Maya Stewart-Birnbaum

Mrs. Banta

Language Arts

Period 1

November 10, 2022

Falling for Fun

“Dad, I think I want to jump. I think I’m ready,” I said.

“Are you sure, Maya?” he replied. “You don’t have to do anything you don’t want to.”

“No, I’m ready,” I assured him. “I want to do this.”

And so we began the trek up that cliff at Lake Chelan that hot summer day.

After climbing up the cliff for what seemed like hours, we reached the top. All around me was blue sky and mountains. My dad held on tightly to my hand as we walked to the edge so I could look over. The drop seemed as if it was miles long! My heart lurched into my throat. I could practically hear it thumping in my chest.

“Dad, I’m not sure I want to do this,” I said.

“Maya, if you really feel like you can’t, that’s ok,” he said. “But I’m not sure how safe it is to climb back down.”

And so, standing on top of that cliff, I took a deep breath and walked to the edge. I heard the cheers of my family and random strangers on boats down below. I then bent my knees and vaulted off.

I was falling for what felt like too long and not long enough. Suddenly, I felt my body slide into the lake’s crystal blue, cool water. I came back up to cheers and applause. My dad’s cheers were the loudest of all.

“Woaaaaooooooooo!!!!!!” he yelled out.

I was so proud and couldn’t wait to tell the rest of my family that stayed at the house.

Now, whenever we return to Lake Chelan every summer, I don’t hesitate to jump.

Mrs. Banta

Period 6

December 6, 2023

The 2014 Earthquake

Peacefully dreaming, I snored like a freight train in my bed. My mom suddenly opened my door. I squinted to see what she was doing. "What's going on?" I grunted. I wasn't awake enough to tell what she was saying. After a couple of seconds, I realized what she was saying. "Get up, there is an earthquake," she said, trying to act as calm as possible. I have to give it to her though, it was an Oscar award-winning performance. I got up slowly and was very confused.

The wobbly walk from my room to the front door felt as long as a century. I was still halfway asleep. It was the first time I didn't notice the squeak of each step I took on the stairs. The ground was shaking so much it felt like our house was on the ocean. The fridge was open with food and drinks falling out making a big mess. But the worst part was that the carpet was wet and squishy for some reason. Did it rain inside last night? Did the toilet overflow? That's when it hit me. In the office, we had a 55-gallon fish tank on one of the shelves. Our four fish and crawfish were probably on the carpet suffocating with broken glass all around them.

Once we finally got outside with my dad and little sister, we stood on the street and the ground stopped moving. One thing my mom grabbed for us on our way out was a blanket. We needed it; it was like Antarctica out there. We were wondering if all of our neighbors were okay, so we walked down the street to our neighbor Lima's house and checked on her. She thankfully didn't get hurt. Then we went to Roger and Amanda's house and they were fine. So we returned to our house, and by then all of our neighbors were outside. It was almost like a party on the street, except for the fact that everybody was nervous, hoping there was no aftershock.

A few minutes had passed with me and my mom trying to stay warm in the blanket together when everybody started going inside to try to fall back asleep. Although, I don't think many of us could go back to sweet dreams after one of the scariest moments in our lives.

Mrs. Banta

Period 4 ELA

December 11th, 2023

The Cheesecake Story

It had been a pretty good night for my infant self. My parents and I had been to a fancy restaurant, probably my first, and we'd all had some excellent food, followed by, for my parents, at least, a cheesecake. When we got home, however, my mother noticed something strange: On my eye, there was a dry yet somehow gooey substance approaching the color white but impeded by a strange yellowish hue, which appeared to have risen from my eyelid!

My parents immediately went into a state of alarm, searching for something that looked akin to what was on my eye. They searched and searched, as I lay there watching, wondering what the big people were doing. Why were they panicking like San Diegans when it rains? I hadn't the foggiest idea.

Suddenly, my dad made a face as if he'd left his brain at the restaurant. He thought out loud.

"Wait a minute..." before sticking out his pinky finger, dipping it in the substance on my eye, sniffing it, and tasting it. The taste was recognizable by its subtlety and unique sweetness, found only in one thing: cheesecake! My mother must've unknowingly dropped some on me when she was eating!

At that point, things returned to normal. My parents put me to bed as usual, before probably going to sleep themselves. I wouldn't remember any part of this story, but my parents definitely would, and when I became old enough to understand, they would tell me this story so much it became as if my infant self could remember! I think of this story quite a bit, and I sometimes find myself reliving it, at times when I'm confronted with a daunting, humongous problem... only to look closer and only find cheesecake.

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Mrs. Banta

ELA 1st Per

Dec 4, 2023

The Weeping Woods

“And suddenly...” I groaned in annoyance as I re-read the paragraph I had just written, erasing the parts I didn't like. “No, that doesn't sound right! Ugh, Brain, why no work?! It's late and I should probably sleep. I'll work on this in the morning. Maybe the right ending will come to me in my sleep,” I think out loud, my voice dripping in sarcasm as I talk to myself while pushing my chair out of my desk and start putting my writing stuff away, mumbling about possible endings I could implement. I was excited but tired, and if anyone knew I couldn't function when I was tired, it was me.

When I had put everything away and gotten ready for bed; brushing my teeth and putting on my pajamas, I lay awake, my brain buzzing like an intense ping-pong match, “*Ping,...ping..., ping.*” I had so many ideas, but I was too tired to translate them onto paper. It was irritating. I knew what I wanted to write but didn't have the words. Oh well, that was a problem for the me of the future, and with that thought planted into my brain, I started drifting off to sleep as my eyes slowly drifted closed and my swarm of thoughts came to a slow, creating a more manageable stream of thoughts.

Then I woke up, but something was...different. I rubbed my eyes and looked around, this wasn't my room, I wasn't in bed, I wasn't even in my pajamas anymore, I was wearing an outfit I had never seen before..it looked like something out of a fantasy novel...where was I?! I looked around a little more, I was in a forest, and a big one at that. It looked like it might've been midday, but I couldn't tell. The sky was hazy and everything seemed to be draped in a dark fog or mist. The trees looked like they were crying, no. They looked like their own leaves were strangling them, the leaves reminiscent of willow vines wrapped around the trunks...which happened to look like screaming faces, it was probably just a coincidence, right?

I started walking around, maybe I could find a building or another person..anything really, for trees were everywhere as far as the eye could see. After a few minutes of wondering I heard rustling in the nearby brush and froze. “What was that?” I thought to myself, my hand instinctively moving to my hip where my rapier was located. Why did I do that? How did I know to do that? Eh- who cares, right now I just need to focus on the potential threat hiding in the brush. I assumed a position that I figured was a typical fencing defensive stance, though I knew nothing about fencing, so I wouldn't know. The rustling suddenly stopped and a rabbit jumped out of the brush. I relaxed a little but something was off about the bunny. It was about three times the size of a normal one and it had a silvery green coat. With a crescent moon on its forehead, it had white paws and a row of white spots running down its back. It had almost the exact description of the moon spirits in my book, said to bring good luck and protection and also guides for lost travelers--or maybe writers?

It ran off and I chased after it, when suddenly I woke up, wondering where this magical moonlight rabbit would take me.

Mrs. Banta

Period 4

November 27, 2023

Roller Coaster Frights

I walked around, nervously looking at the fun rides and amusements at California Adventure Park. Sadly, I did not have the guts to go on one, only because I normally only like easy rides. I realized I was missing out on the action, and wanted to finally try out a rollercoaster. Three minutes later, my parents and I were standing in front of Goofy's High-Flying School roller coaster. I had a surge of bravery and decided this would be my first coaster.

"It looks simple enough," I said to my mom and dad. My mom didn't like rides, so I was only able to rope my dad into it.

"You're coming with me! It'll be fun!" I said cheerfully as possible.

My stomach turned into a light knot as we got in line. In a blink, before I could change my mind, we were buckled up in the cart ready to go! Goofy's voice was on a speaker introducing us to his "school". The ride started out slow, climbing up towards the top of the first section. In a second the cart sped up tremendously as I felt my heart beat faster and the sound of mechanical machinery spin and clank. Tight turn to the left, I felt like I was going to fall off. There wasn't a door or anything on the side of the cart to protect me from flying off. Only a seat belt. Anything could go wrong, I thought. Another turn towards the right, I piled on my dad who was screeching with laughter. Left, right, left right. "AAAAGHH!" we both bellowed as the cart sped into oblivion.

My eyes were very wide and it felt like I couldn't breathe. Though I was feeling fear, I was feeling something else; I was feeling joy. I was smiling as we were screaming, laughing with my dad.

We were walking away from Goofy's High-Flying School Rollercoaster, and I realized I actually loved roller coasters. I proudly told my parents that I was ready for the next adventure!