

# CELEBRATING WORDS

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 29 Introduction and Call for Submissions**
- 30 A Leap of Faith**  
Hope Mauricio
- 32 “Go Make Me a Sandwich”**  
Gracie Wilson
- 33 Power**  
Michael Grey
- 34 There is Not Nearly Enough Time**  
Matthew Johnson
- 35 The Age I Used to Wish I Was**  
Sydney Wiggins

## INTRODUCTION

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*Celebrating Words* is a judgement-free space within the *English Language Arts Journal* that showcases our students’ brilliance, eloquence, intelligence and creativity. The submitted pieces need never be “perfect”—if such a thing even exists—as the most important aspect, and the heart of this publication, is the students’ thoughts and efforts and their teachers’ willingness to share the students’ ideas and practices.

## CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

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If you have student writing that you would like to share, please submit it to *Celebrating Words* at [editorelajournal@gmail.com](mailto:editorelajournal@gmail.com), along with a brief explanation of the assignment and the grade level. Please note that all pieces for *Celebrating Words* are to be submitted through the teacher. Unsolicited submissions received directly from students will not be accepted. To show our appreciation for your hard work as a teacher and for taking the initiative in celebrating student work, you will receive a \$100 gift card for your classroom.

# A Leap of Faith

Hope Mauricio

One of life's biggest challenges is learning how to truly trust ourselves. When I reflect on my development in self-assurance and trust, I realize that my journey started at a very young age. At this point in my life, I look back at this innocent little story and smile. But at that time, when I was four years old, it wasn't just a simple story. Through my young eyes, it was the biggest event of the whole year.

So let me take you back in time ...

When I was four years old, my brother was in Grade 2. Every day after my brother finished school, we would play in the glorious park together. I adored the jungle gym section. When I was in the jungle gym, I felt like a superhero. I could swing on the monkey bars just as well as the big kids. I could climb the ladder faster than anyone and I could even swing the highest on the swings. But the one thing in the park that still seemed quite scary and off limits was the fireman's pole. And scariest of all was watching the big kids make the huge leap from the tall platform directly beside that yellow fireman's pole to the hard sand far below. Through my eyes at that time, I found it hard to believe that I would ever be big and brave enough to complete that daunting task.

Day after day I would go back to the park. I was an adventurer. I loved jumping and leaping across the playground! I tried every sort of stunt possible, and I did a lot of big, fun jumps off of many tall platforms, but never the fireman's pole platform. When I performed these daring leaps, every time just before I jumped, I would ask my mom, "Mommy, can I jump?"

And she would reply "yes" or "no" because Mommy knew if I would be safe.

Every day, I would climb up to the lower platform right under the fireman's pole. I would play and jump from there, but I would never dare to go up any higher. The tall platform was only for big kids, and even then it was too high for many. I would stare longingly at the big jump, wondering if a little 4-year-old like me

would ever be able to perform such a daring leap. I watched my brave, tall, older brother climb all the way up to the high platform.

He yelled "Woo hoo," and then he jumped and sailed through the sky, landing softly and gracefully on the sand. I wanted to be like Aidan, I wanted to do that jump.

One day, I felt extra courageous. So, very carefully and very slowly I decided to climb up to that tall platform. I was terrified. I wasn't even able to stand up. From my kneeling position, I looked down and the sand looked like it was miles away. I gripped tightly onto the cold railing, afraid that I would fall.

"I can't do this," I whispered to myself, disappointed. I was ashamed and upset. Why couldn't I trust myself to make that jump? I was so close to victory, and yet my head got in the way. At that moment, I started to doubt myself. I started to question whether I really was a superhero on the playground, or if I was just a normal 4-year-old, too scared to take that high jump. I carefully climbed down from the platform of shame. Then I went to my mom and asked for a hug and to go home. I couldn't stand being at the place where I had failed any longer.

I stayed away from the park for two whole days because I couldn't face that high leap. I watched the other kids play from the bench where I sat still beside my mother. My mom might have been puzzled about my behavior, but she cleverly disguised it. She did not pressure me to get up and play. She trusted me to get back out there when I was ready.

But eventually I felt I had waited long enough. Even though I was terrified, I was no quitter. So, by the third day, I held my head high and decided to attempt the unfathomable.

I carefully climbed up that tall ladder, making sure I wouldn't fall. Getting onto the platform, I gripped the yellow railing. My hands were

shaking, but I knew that I had to do it. So, very slowly, I lifted myself up off of my knees and found myself standing on the tall red platform beside the yellow fireman's pole. Now all I had to do was ask mommy if it was safe to jump.

"Mommy, can I jump?" I asked, sounding terrified.

But, this time, Mommy said something quite different than her usual "yes" or "no." She said something that really made me stop and think. She came over close to the fireman's pole and in a calm voice she said, "What does your tummy tell you?" I was very surprised, but I looked at her supportive eyes as she continued, "If your tummy feels kind of sick when you look down and you feel like you are going to throw up, then don't do it. Your tummy is telling you that you are not quite ready."


I looked way down at the sand. I wasn't quite sure what my tummy was telling me. Then my mom smiled and counseled, "But, if your tummy feels excited and tingly, then it is saying that you should jump! It is saying that you are ready."

Mommy was trusting me to decide whether I should jump or not. And in my little 4-year-old thoughts, I decided I should trust myself too. I took a deep breath, and I focused on my stomach. It felt warm and tingly. It wasn't just telling me to jump, it was practically screaming at me to jump. I felt the adrenaline rush through my body. And at that moment I knew, this would be the day where I conquered my fear.

Instead of a tiny 4-year-old girl, I envisioned a heroic superhero, coming to save the day. This brave superhero felt her cape blowing in the wind, and she surveyed the citizens all looking up at her ready to watch her fly. And most importantly of all, she herself felt ready and proud, knowing she could take the jump. For the first time, she felt a strong sense of trusting herself. She stood on the side of that platform and gathered all of her courage. Bending her knees, she lifted off.

That leap was every bit as magical as I dreamed it would be. That superhero, me, soared through the sky with a victorious smile. I gazed down at the citizens and saw their shocked faces when they realized how high I just jumped. It felt like time had stopped. It seemed as though everyone in the entire world was holding their breath, watching me, hoping that I would land safely. And guess what?

I landed perfectly, without a scratch. Mommy clapped enthusiastically and was beaming, with tears of joy in her eyes. I was so proud of myself that I had conquered my fear. I trusted myself. I believed I could do it, so I did.

Maybe I was just a 4-year-old girl, but when I took that jump, when I was that superhero, I felt like I could do anything. And nobody will ever be able to take that feeling away from me. Maybe that's just it, maybe we all want to be superheroes. And why can't we be? Sometimes, we get in the way of our own success because we don't trust ourselves. We don't believe that we are good enough, brave enough or strong enough. We don't allow ourselves to be the superheroes in our own stories. Back then, in my own simple 4-year-old way, I started to ask myself these questions about trusting my own abilities. And even today, if I am wondering how I feel about any new adventure, I often ask myself, "What does my tummy say?" And I am happy to report that more often than not, my tummy says I am ready to take my next leap of faith. 

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At the time of writing, Hope Mauricio was a Grade 8 student at Vimy Ridge Academy. She created this short story as part of a trilogy based on stories from her own life. This story is about a moment from her past that taught her an important lesson in life.

# “Go Make Me a Sandwich”

Gracie Wilson

A simple phrase

Takes us back to the old days

The days in which I couldn't vote

The days in which I was a housewife who couldn't work

*Go Make Me a Sandwich*

A simple phrase that takes away my meaning

A phrase that kills my personality like a lion killing its prey

Kills my interests, passion, and values

A simple phrase that reminds me

I am a woman. 

# Power

Michael Grey

•~•~•

In shadows deep, where tyrants scheme,  
A struggle rises, like a dream.

Against the grip of power's might,  
Some people sit, while others fight.


With voices raised, in unity,  
They challenge chains, seek to be free.  
Injustice trembles, as hearts ignite,  
The struggle against power, a relentless flight.

Through whispers sown in winds of change,  
Resilience grows, it will not estrange.  
In every heart, a flame ablaze,

Defying power, seeking brighter days.

The struggle weaves through history's thread,  
Where dreams of justice have often bled.  
Yet hope endures, an unwavering tower,  
In the timeless fight against oppressive power.

Through the pain, where shadows fall,  
Blood may stain, yet hear the call.

Together, a chorus, voices spun,  
In unity, we are many, in the end, we are one. 

•~•~•

# There is not nearly enough time

Matthew Johnson

Not nearly enough time for me to experience all that I dream about  
There are far too many places to visit  
Concerts to see  
Cities to live in  
People to meet  
Movies to watch  
There are far too many adventures I wish to go on  
At least within this lifetime

Some may say it is futile then  
To continue exploring and expanding my world  
Knowing that I will never be truly satisfied  
It would be better to stay where I am  
But I cannot stand the thought  
Of not endlessly learning and growing  
Through new experiences and revelations  
I believe the desire to grow and explore is one of humanity's defining traits  
We would be nothing without it

To give life meaning is to accept that it does not make sense  
And build your own understanding of the universe around your experiences  
Even though I cannot do all that I wish  
I still try  
Because it is in that desire that I find meaning and motivation 📖

# The age I used to wish I was

Sydney Wiggins

I sat next to my older cousin on the couch,  
I gazed at her as her long dark hair flowed nearly to her waist,  
I compared it to my frizzy mop that grew barely past my shoulders,  
I began wishing away my youth,  
From then on I would make comments such as, “I can’t wait until I turn sixteen,”  
I’d admire the older girls at my dance studio and idolize my teenage relatives,  
For they had beauty and maturity that I could not wait to possess,  
“Life will be so much more fun when I am a teenager,”  
My relatives would roll their eyes at these remarks and advise me to enjoy every  
second of my girlhood before it became just a bittersweet memory,  
Before I could under  
stand what they meant the barbie dolls in my hands transformed into makeup  
brushes and curling irons,  
The sport I used to love was now a scale measuring my worth,  
I gripped my thighs and lined my outer eyes for I grew to despise every piece of me,  
But, my hair flowed neatly as my cousin’s once did,  
So why did I feel incomplete?  
In desperate efforts to fill the void I starve the little girl who only wished to be  
sixteen,  
Why do I punish her?  
For she would have watched me in awe simply because I am now the age I used to  
wish I was. 📖

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These students are from All Saints High School in Calgary, Alberta, and were in an ELA: Creative Writing and Publishing 15 class. As part of the curriculum, they were required to research publishing markets and submit their pieces to three of them. They were asked to choose a piece from their writer’s notebooks, workshop it with their peers, make revisions/edits and submit their best draft to the chosen publishing market. Throughout the semester, I also provided them with prompts for different genres and they free wrote. What they wished to submit was entirely their decision.

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