

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

May 23, 2006

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Edgar Schmidt, Acting Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Margaret T. Stevenson Talented Young Writer Award Recipient: Katherine Brown

ORIGINATOR: J. Klaray, Principal Ottewell

RESOURCE

STAFF: Carol Anne Inglis, Anne Mulgrew

INFORMATION

Katherine Brown from Ottewell School is the 2006 recipient of the Margaret T. Stevenson Talented Young Writer Award. Margaret Stevenson is best known for her encouragement of young writers and promotion of quality children's literature during the years she served as supervisor language arts for Edmonton Public Schools. The purpose of this award is to promote annual recognition of a talented young writer completing grade 8 in Edmonton Public Schools. The portfolios of all the applicants are impressive demonstrations of the board priority "to improve achievement of all students in core subjects with an emphasis on literacy and numeracy."

Samples of writing submitted by Katherine demonstrated evidence of her personal growth as a writer, her positive attitude towards the literary arts, and satisfied the following selection criteria:

- show a range of writing for different purposes, situations and audiences
- show persistence with complex writing tasks
- display a strong personal style and sense of voice
- demonstrate excellence in content, organization, word choice, syntax, and control of writing conventions
- show evidence of reading a wide variety of literature
- show evidence of valuing the work of other authors

Excerpts from the writing of Katherine Brown are provided in Appendix I.

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APPENDIX I - Excerpts From the Writing of Katherine Brown

**EXCERPTS FROM THE WRITING OF KATHERINE BROWN,  
OTTEWELL SCHOOL**

**From Katherine's Introduction to her portfolio**

Writing has always been very important to me. It allows me to express myself - to understand who I am, and to make sense of the world around me. When I write, I feel like I am discovering something new about the human race. It is as if, with my pencil, I am unlocking the fundamentals of humanity.

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When I write, and when I look back on my work, my soul is soothed. I don't know if my writing soothes others' souls as well. It would be one of the biggest compliments that I could get, if my writing did play a role in someone's life. I find that I learn so much about myself and my world when I write, I think that it would be wonderful if others learned about themselves and their world by reading my writing.

**“Friendship”**

**(A poem, written June 2004)**

When the road he's taken,  
And the choices he's makin',  
Make his future seem grim.  
His dam has broke and he doesn't know how to swim.  
As a last resort, he looks back at the port, and says,  
“Why am I all alone?”  
Then he looks behind,  
For some piece of mind  
And sees a familiar face.  
“You're following me?  
But why?” says he.  
“Can't you see I'm bound for destruction?”  
“I know,” says the follower, and his smile flowers,  
“But I am your friend  
And I will follow you to whatever end.  
I will always be there,  
When you are scared,  
When you are sad,  
When you're mad.  
I delight in your joy,  
I weep at your ploys,  
I will always be there.  
Don't run away,  
Please do stay.  
For I have been here before  
And I know a way out,  
But you will have to listen – I won't shout.  
If you think back,

To when you chose your track,  
Do you remember how you did it?  
    You told me,  
    That we were no longer a “we”,  
    That you’d go off on your own  
And forget the love that we’d shown  
And find more powerful friends.  
    Did you mean it?  
    Do you now?  
For that will change where you are right now.  
But it is your choice and I will still be your friend,  
And I will still follow you to whatever end.”  
    “You’re right,” said the man.  
    “You are my friend  
And I will follow you to whatever end.”

**From Description for “Dress Rehearsal”  
(A short story written September 2004)**

This piece is about Ed White, Gus Grissom, and Roger Chaffee. They died in a launch-pad test fire in a practice for their real space mission on Apollo 1. Their death was an awful one – one so filled with pain that I cannot imagine it. I tried to establish how terrible their last moments were in this story. Also, I tried to convey the message that there is always hope, that we need to keep trying, just like Ed White did in trying to save his crewmates. This is why I ended the story before Ed died, to leave the reader with a message of hope.

**Excerpt from “Dress Rehearsal”**

“Fire in the spacecraft!” Roger finally screamed. The flames were engulfing Gus who was screeching for help as well. The air felt thick in my lungs as I reached for the hatch. Thick black smoke clouded my vision and made my eyes burn, as if acid was being poured over them. I fiddled blindly with the latches, trying to remember where each one was. I felt flames begin to surround me and felt its corrosiveness do its work on my feet. Concentrating, I pushed a lever down, and pulled the hatch toward me with all my might. The first layer broke free, and I frantically began working on the second. I felt a hand touch my back, and saw Gus, still alive but coughing badly. He seemed to be searching for the latch as if thinking that being able to touch it would get him out of this furnace. I grabbed his hand and smiled with my eyes. His hand felt strangely dry, not sweaty as I would have thought; as if it was already turning into ash.

**From Description for “The Unknown Soldier”**

I was first inspired to write this story when I was nine, in Grade 4. . . . At that moment, I decided that I would write a story about the possible life and death of the Unknown Soldier – dedicated to him, and to the other Canadian soldiers who had lost their lives in the many wars that we have fought.

Finally, three years later, I was given the chance to write the story of my choice in my Grade 7 Language Arts class. It was the week after Remembrance Day, and with my passion rekindled, I decided to fulfill this dream.

**Excerpts from “The Unknown Soldier”  
(A short story, written November 2004)**

The crowd gathered around me, but listened only half heartedly to the reverend’s prayer. No one cared for the tragedies of war anymore: they had other things to do. Finally, guns sounded in the background and the trumpeter gave the call. The crowd almost gave a sigh of relief as they backed away and started mumbling to each other.

The cold pebbly stone of the war monument became covered in wreaths, overflowing with poppies. The cold winter wind softly blew small pellets of snow across Parliament Hill. But this breath barely met my ears. As the skeleton of the trees quivered, mine did too; but it went unnoticed inside my stone tomb.

The reverend began to talk of the countless lives lost in the war. How many had died unknown to the world. Their mauled faces would never be recognized; they lie in unnamed graves. But at the end, he added that they were still honoured Canadian sons. “Just like our Unknown Soldier,” he had finished.

“How nice,” I thought, “for them to mention me.”

The wind breathed again, but this time, the breeze was warm. It took me back eighty-three years before, when I could still run, and walk, and jump.

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It started to snow as the sun set. The mud turned to soup, but still I ran. Hill 145 loomed ahead of me, like a giant mountain – impossible to climb over, impossible to dig through, impossible to conquer.

Dodging a barrage of bullets, I jumped in and out of shell holes, but as I grew closer to No Man’s Land between the Allied trenches and Vimy Ridge, I had to do this less and less often. The land here had been flattened by the bombardment of shells from both sides and the soil had been compressed to the point that it was one continuous shell hole. The rain and the bombs had churned this once fertile field into a canyon of death. Men lay scattered on the ground, some still alive, but I could not linger anymore. I had to get to the Ridge! I could see the creeping barrage far ahead of me, almost at Vimy Ridge. It was their job to keep the enemy in their trenches so that we would have less trouble getting there. But that did not stop the deaths. There were snipers hidden everywhere, and when they had a chance, they would swoop down and with a whirl of their machine guns, they would snatch up a life, and disappear from view.

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Suddenly, I heard a bang that echoed in my ear. Then, I felt a sharp pain in my chest. I cried out - it too, echoed. I felt my body crash into the muddy ground. Cold water splashed into my eyes, I closed them with a moan.

**From Katherine’s Reflections on her portfolio**

So, who am I as a writer? Writing is part of my identity. I love to explore and learn more about almost anything. Writing is one of the only ways that I can explore and learn more about one of the most important facets of my life, one of the facets that people often forget about – humanity. In this portfolio, I believe that I have shown some of the different aspect of humanity that I have learned about in the past few years of writing. I hope that reading my writing has helped you, as much as it has helped me, to become a better person, and to think more deeply on human nature.