

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

May 25, 2004

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Margaret T. Stevenson Talented Young Writer Award Recipient: Reanna Neill

ORIGINATOR: J. Edey, Principal McKernan

RESOURCE

STAFF: Carol Anne Inglis, Anne Mulgrew

INFORMATION

Reanna Neill from McKernan School is the 2004 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 his or her eighth year of schooling in Edmonton Public Schools. The portfolios of all the applicants are impressive demonstrations of the board priority "to improve achievement of all students with an emphasis on literacy and numeracy."

Samples of writing submitted by Reanna 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 Reanna Neill are provided in Appendix I.

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APPENDIX I - Excerpts From the Writing of Reanna Neill

**EXCERPTS FROM THE WRITING OF REANNA NEILL,
MCKERNAN SCHOOL**

From Reanna's Introduction to her portfolio

It is not too hard to write, but it is hard to write well. There are so many ways to write, so many words, so much to go wrong. I love writing. I let the words flow from me, never daring to stop, and then they're there, and I have no idea how it happened, how I got this magnificent piece of writing, and I wrote it – I wrote it! It continues to awe and amaze me, no matter how much I write.

My writing is always changing and evolving with every piece, and not one thing that I write is like another. It shows the many sides of my "Gemini" self. Writing is like acting – playing in a movie which stars only one actor, playing every part. I am the actress when I write, playing whatever part my writing demands.

**Excerpts from a Novel Response about the books by Louise Rennison)
(December, 2002)**

Dear Georgia,

My name is Reanna Neill and I really enjoyed reading your diaries. I've had a chance to read your first and second diaries, and I am really looking forward to reading your third. I'm writing to you because I am in love with your life! Your boyfriend, your friends, Angus, and yes, even your little sister Libby.

It was really too bad Dave didn't make you go jellied. I think he was a really great laugh! Although, it was quite odd Robbie suggested him for you. Luckily for you though, Robbie came to his senses and fell in love with you! I can see no reason at all why Robbie went out with Wet Lindsay at all. You are so much smarter and nicer than she is I'm sure.

I hope it works out well for you and Robbie. Age doesn't always have to dictate relationships. You're so Lucky!

Sincerely,
Reanna Neill

**"Left"
(A poem, written winter 2003)**

If you told me
In a slightly sad way
That you would be leaving me
That you wouldn't be coming back
And I shed one small tear onto your
face
Because I love you
More than I have ever loved
Anybody else.
Would you say that you loved me?
Would you say that you would never
cry about loving me but only
For losing me?

Reflections on “Poems”

These poems came very naturally to me, in fact, I wrote them before we were assigned to do any poetry writing. When I feel strong emotions, it helps me to write poems to calm myself down, and the end result is usually quite moving. I try to channel my energy into my poems when I’m feeling upset and the tension I feel at a time like that helps me to be creative and accurate with my writing. When I’m feeling something strongly, the words seem to flow quickly and easily, like water through my fingertips onto the paper. When I was writing them, I wanted to share what I was feeling with others, and I think I achieved that by using a flowing and strong vocabulary. I intended to create intense emotions in my reader. I hope that others who read my work and are experiencing some of the same feelings recognize that they are not alone.

Excerpts from “That Night”, (Historical fiction short story, Fall 2003)

April 19, 1692

My mother has been spending all of her time in bed drinking her concoctions. She gets up only to witness the many trials that have been going on. Since last March 21st, we’ve seen the convictions of Rebecca Nurse on the 24th and Sarah Cloyce and Elizabeth Proctor on April 11th. Mother insists we both attend the convictions. I do not enjoy them one bit. They’re very depressing. I know all of those who are convicted must go to the prison to await their trial. I feel sorry for them. I keep myself busy caring for Mother and keeping up with town events. I hope Mother will be well soon. She’s all I have left...

May 10, 1692

Sarah Osbourne died in prison today. It must be as awful as I imagined. It must be the worst place in the world. There have been many more accusations and convictions. Too many to mention. Mother’s condition has worsened and she’s now up to 3 concoctions a day. I went to church alone this past Sunday and everyone was nickering at me as they have since Mother stopped attending. I’m sure Mother’s going to be accused. The town members are suspicious of everyone. I am so worried for mother.

Reflections on “That Night”

My intention in writing this piece was to better inform people about what actually occurred during the time period of the Salem Witch Trials and how the society responded to its members during a time of major conflict. The society demonstrated extreme resistance to change. I attempted to keep my writing interesting and different from the other stories about the Salem Witch Trials by adding different characters that hadn’t lived in that time period. I also wrote this piece because I wanted to see how my vision of the Salem Witch Trials compared to other authors, and I really like my version! I particularly enjoyed writing this piece because I was able to explore my voice as a writer. Because the story takes place in the past, I had to imagine what society was like, how speech was different from now, and how people acted so that I could make convincing and believable characters that people could easily relate to. Particularly in the process of writing my short story, I felt I was developing my scope as a writer, as I found this assignment extremely challenging. However, once it was complete, I experienced great satisfaction with it and that my efforts were rewarded by the piece.