

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

May 25, 2010

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Margaret T. Stevenson Talented Young Writer Award Recipient:
Shannon Fitz

ORIGINATOR: T. Caley, Principal Laurier Heights School

RESOURCE
STAFF: Kathy McCabe, Mark Ramsankar

INFORMATION

Shannon Fitz from Laurier Heights School is the 2010 recipient of the Margaret T. Stevenson Talented Young Writer Award. Margaret Stevenson served as supervisor of language arts for Edmonton Public Schools. During this time she was best known for her encouragement of young writers and promotion of quality children's literature. 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 ensure every student is successful in their program of studies, with an emphasis on literacy and numeracy."

Samples of writing submitted by Shannon demonstrated evidence of her personal growth as a writer, her positive attitude towards the literary arts, and a strong personal style.

Her portfolio 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 Shannon Fitz are provided in Appendix I.

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APPENDIX I - Excerpts From the Writing of Shannon Fitz

EXCERPTS FROM THE WRITING OF SHANNON FITZ,
LAURIER HEIGHTS SCHOOL

From Shannon's Introduction to her portfolio

I've always been interested in writing. My mother is an author and our house is always overflowing with books. I started writing at a very young age because I have always been fascinated by the worlds that authors explore, armed only with their imaginations. I've wanted to be an author ever since I was little. I've always loved listening to my mother tell us about the stories, people and places that she creates.

**From Description for "Requiem"
(A poem written by Shannon)**

I wrote *Requiem* after reading a series of Japanese comics (manga) called *Naruto*. The series tells the story of a young boy learning to be a ninja, and his struggle to be recognized and respected despite having a demon sealed inside him. Throughout the story, the main character, Naruto, faces countless enemies. Some of the major antagonists of the story belong to a group of criminals known as the Akatsuki (which translates to 'Red Dawn'). The Akatsuki intend to remove the demon from Naruto and use it for their own purposes.

"Requiem"

Down the rain-slicked streets of mud and stone,
Through the lonely market where vendors held shop,
Where mothers held tight to their children's hands,
Never imagining that anything would ever be different.
Over fields of poppies where the soldiers fought,
Through the empty streets, down the echoing alleys,
To the suffocating tower of eternity.
It is ghosts who haunt these empty hallways,
It is spirits who light the dust-covered candles,
It is phantoms who twirl in the silent ballroom,
It is the lost souls of yesterday.
What mortal man flits through these halls?
What lonely soul brushes away invisible fingers?
What tormented being resides in this tower?
Only the one who brought the ghosts.

**From Description for “Escape from ‘The Rock’”
(A story written by Shannon in grade four)**

My family and I were on vacation in San Francisco. Even though I enjoyed the trip very much, the only event that clearly stands out in my mind is touring the infamous prison just off the coast of San Francisco. On the day that we had planned to visit Alcatraz, the weather was very atmospheric. Rain clouds peered down mournfully at us as we boarded the ship.

Excerpt from “Escape from ‘The Rock’”

Isabelle Capone sat staring out at San Francisco. It was one of those rare nights when if you listened hard enough, you could hear laughter. Well, it was no good listening. You were in prison at Alcatraz, and you weren't going anywhere.

One of the worst things about Alcatraz was that nobody treated you like a person, because you weren't one. You were a number. Nobody cared about you. Nobody cared if you got hurt. Nobody cared if you sick. Nobody cared if you lived or died.

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As everyone's attention was elsewhere, Isabelle grabbed the pebble out of her pocket and threw it as hard as she could toward a canister containing tear gas.

CRASH!

The rock hit the canister, spilling tear gas all over. Darting through the doorway, Isabelle slid into an empty cell as guards ran toward the source of the noise. After they passed, Isabelle ran to where she remembered the exit to be. Running over, Isabelle wrenched the door open and ran out to where the houses were. Mingling with the people, she went to the water's edge. Moving to where she couldn't be seen from the island people, Isabelle dove into the water, swimming toward a fallen pine tree. Climbing p on it, Isabelle started paddling with her hands, trying not to think about sharks.

**From Description for “Montmorency: Thief, liar, gentleman?”
(A book report written by Shannon in February, 2010)**

My intentions while writing this report was to give a detailed description of Montmorency's present lifestyle and the dark secrets that he has hidden in his past. I wanted my classmates to get to know him nearly as well as they would if they had actually read the book.

Excerpt from “Montmorency: Thief, liar, gentleman?”

Montmorency from the novel *Montmorency* is one of the most fascinating characters that I have ever had the privilege of reading about. Montmorency is a kind gentleman of French descent. He frequents the opera houses and spends his time at clubs and racetracks, gambling with his aristocratic friends. Montmorency is very fond of luxuries such as fine clothing and expensive food. Despite his vast wealth, however, he is far from arrogant or snooty. He treats all those around him as equals,

with the exception of several people whom he considers annoyances. Montmorency lives at a beautiful hotel called the Marimion in London, in the late 1800s. However, it is not his wealthy lifestyle that makes him so fascinating, for his life was not always full of grandeur and riches.

He began his life as a petty thief on the streets of London. What little food he stole, he ate. The clothes he took, he wore.

When he fell through a glass window while attempting to flee the police, he should have died. Instead, it marked the beginning of his new life. The thief was sewn back together by an ambitious young surgeon and soon became a popular exhibit at medical gatherings across the city. It is at one such gathering that he hears of a new invention. It is the underground sewer system. Suddenly, an idea begins to form in his brilliant mind. The sewer system would be the perfect escape route for a series of daring thefts, and the thief is the only one cunning enough to pull them off.

From Shannon's Reflections on her portfolio

I know that I'm capable of writing humorous stories, but I prefer writing about serious or sad topics. I seem to be able to express myself better when I'm writing about a serious subject. I don't frequently write about my own experiences because I don't really have any that I feel are important enough to share. This is why I enjoy writing about characters that have stories that need to be told.

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I write with a very distinct style. I tend to use very many details and personifications. I sometimes write in a very poetic fashion, although only with topics that I find very beautiful and/or tragic. I usually look back over my work and add in more details later, because I think that it is very important for an audience to be able to see the characters and places in their minds as clearly as I see them in mine. My writing is also very dramatic. I tend to enjoy writing the serious scenes more than the happy ones.

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Nevertheless, I think that I have a talented grasp on words and the art of using them. I think that most of this talent came from listening to my mother's manuscripts and being asked for my opinion. I also began reading at a very young age. As with the majority of younger siblings, I was very determined to catch up to my older sister and thus I excelled in reading. My love of books advanced my story-telling abilities. I don't watch television because I prefer to read. Among my favorite books are *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak, *The Da Vinci Code* and *Angels and Demons* by Dan Brown, the *Artemis Fowl* series by Eoin Colfer (a series that has been among my favorites since grade three) and *My Sister's Keeper* by Jodi Picoult.