

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

May 27, 2008

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Margaret T. Stevenson Talented Young Writer Award Recipient: Noel Toma from Westmount School

ORIGINATOR: R. Smilanich, Principal Westmount School

RESOURCE

STAFF: Carol Anne Inglis, Anne Mulgrew

INFORMATION

Noel Toma from Westmount School is the 2008 recipient of the Margaret T. Stevenson Talented Young Writer Award. This is the 15th year that the award has been presented. It recognizes Margaret Stevenson, who 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 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." Noel's writing 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 Noel Toma are provided in Appendix I.

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APPENDIX I - Excerpts From the Writing of Noel Toma

**EXCERPTS FROM THE WRITING OF NOEL TOMA,
WESTMOUNT SCHOOL**

From Noel's Introduction to her portfolio

In this portfolio, pieces of my writing will be presented. You may say these will help to outline my writing style; however, I happen to disagree. My writing does not fit under any categories, it is a statement from my mind – and that is something that will always be unique.

Characters from not only my stories, but all pieces of writing, are strung together by the personal and emotional traits of their creators – their author. While creating a character, I do not focus on things such as names or ages, but more so on the emotional traits I see them being associated with. In my eyes, this is what shapes a character. Their emotional state of mind.

From Description for “Two Shadows, One Body”

Characters are interesting to write about. Sometimes, they come off as being simplistic and one-sided. However, sometimes the obvious is just a mask that the truth is wearing. With this piece, I simply wanted this to be visible towards the audience. I do not always name my characters or shape them in any direct ways, for I want the reader to be able to place themselves into my own stories. This piece describes a character that is a mirror of two opinionated views – society's and her own. Based upon today's generation, I see this as a common misplacement we can all sense at one point.

“Two Shadows, One Body”

Her name has no significance. It is simply a bunch of lines and curves connected in an attempt to limit a person. If you look behind the mask made from that name, you'll find the important thing. The truth.

To others around her, she is a sublime goddess. Golden hair is perfectly sculpted on her head, tumbling down in ringlets that softly caress her face. Her blue eyes are a vast ocean, they twinkle with such brilliance that dolphins seem to swim in their tropical waters. Golden freckles lightly speckle her face, goodbye kisses from the angels when they delicately placed her down on this planet. Her milky skin is purity itself, her voice consists of golden harps being plucked ever so faintly. Indeed, she is perfection itself.

However, the reflection in the mirror tells a completely antipodal story. Her golden hair swarms her face, confining her heartless emotions. Blue eyes are deeply filled with tears, refilling their murky waters whenever loneliness is brought to life. Dark freckles are splattered messily across her face, scars of a past life she once lived. Her skin is darkened from lies, her voice raw from betrayal. Indeed, she is a mistake.

As she looks at herself in the mirror, the two characters begin to mold together. Good and bad create the perfect equation, right or wrong become indefinable. She blinks slowly, and the reflection blurs even more. Standing up carefully, images cross boundaries. As she confidently walks out the door, she is complete. The last two pieces of the puzzle fit perfectly together. No more will her true-self be hidden, she'll let the reflection speak for itself.

From Description for “Reflective Boundaries”

This piece was based on a descriptive scene, but I strayed off and got into more depth with the emotional state associated with the scene. I believe this is one of my stronger pieces.

Excerpt from “Reflective Boundaries”

Once in a lifetime, a person is given a different pair of eyes. A feeling of being caught in a movie arises, as if one were watching a script unfold. It is as if someone pushed a ‘pause’ button on life itself. Yes, it is at this very rare moment that one is truly at peace with nature.

Silence enters the night like a judge entering a courtroom. The only noise one can sense is that of life itself, the steady pulse of a heartbeat. The noise penetrates the air, humming to its own tune, creating the perfect balance of silence and life. This noise hits the barrier of silence like a bullet piecing metal, unleashing a war.

Beads of water cleanse the face, traveling through closed pores, awakening the soul. Although these simply bring with them water, they also give a sense of purity. A comforting blanket of cleansing, washing away murky streaks of self-doubt.

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These raindrops are like lanterns in a world engulfed in darkness, the light of trust, the feeling of freedom.

The judge has announced his verdict, the pause button is no longer pushed. Perhaps this was only a mere rainfall. Or, perhaps this was one of the rare sides of nature that is barely visible to human eyes.

From Noel’s Reflections on her portfolio

Overall, creating this portfolio has helped me more than intended. I do not often reflect upon pieces of my work. Looking back at my writing from last year, I was rather amazed at how much my writing has changed.

Writing is my passion. All my thoughts go into consideration, for anything can be useful when it comes to writing. I dream of becoming a writer, an author, as I grow. People have inspirations in life. Some of which are to sing in a band, dedicate ideas towards fashion, or give time to help people in need. My inspiration consists of paper and a pen.

I do not waste time with these dreams, for I have already completed a book. Every bit of thought and energy are put into writing. Writing is my life. I choose to live every minute of it.

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