AC • CENTS!
A Journal for ESL Writers

Look Inside!

Passaic County Community College, ESL Department

Issue Two  December 2004
To Our Readers,

Welcome to the second issue of Accents! We’re excited to be on-line and hope you enjoy the wide variety of showcased writing, art and photography. We were ecstatic to have had such a large number of written submissions to choose from — submissions from every level of ESL student and such a tremendous outpouring of support from faculty and staff.

Accents! is an ESL journal that showcases exemplary student writing and art. It reflects the colorful lives, vivid imaginations and clear voices of PCCC’s ESL student writers and artists. The journal celebrates the diverse cultures, languages, ethnic backgrounds and opinions of its contributors and embraces the common thread between us — life experience and the gift of expression. Accents! aim is to encourage and support ESL students who, in both demonstrative and quiet ways, contribute to our campus’ diversity and intellectual life.

In an effort to continue our tradition of excellence in writing in the ESL program, Accents! recognizes and awards top writers in each issue — Spring and Fall. Awards are given in the following categories: Best Narrative (one award for each level — 001, 002, 003, 004, 107), Best Non-Narrative (one award), Best Fiction (one award), Best Poem (one award) and Best Art (one award). In addition, the Editor’s Recognition Award is reserved for two outstanding pieces in each issue that don’t win a standard award. Award-winning writers will be recognized at the ESL Awards Night once a year in November.

Expressions of gratitude are given to Dr. Laurie Moody, ESL Department Chair, for her constant support and advocacy, to the Fall 2004 Accents! Selection Committee, to Fatmir Fanda Ibraimi in Information Technology and to the many faculty members who encouraged their student writers to submit writing and art work.

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Voting Power

by Wilfredo Munoz — Puerto Rico — ENW 107

Tension is rising in the Yankee Stadium and the crowd is screaming euphorically, “Who’s your daddy!” Bases are loaded with Derek Jeter approaching home plate. People at home are gathered together to watch the game drinking beer, eating junk food and cheering for their favorite team. Simultaneously, the political debate is being broadcast between George Bush and John Kerry but no one is bothering to watch it.

For the most part, adults have lost interest in choosing the right candidate to assume the position of commander and chief, the man who will lead this great nation to a prosperous future. Perhaps people are tired of hearing politicians say, “I will do this or I will do that,” delivering false promises that discourage people to go out and vote. What is weird about politics is that if people do vote they will often cast a vote in favor of a candidate that has a better physical appearance rather than choosing a candidate that has better convictions and new ideas that will guide this country to progress. People’s minds are interested in other things like baseball, football or work rather than political issues that affect our society. Everyone complains but no one takes action to change the course of life that affects us all.

Voting will guarantee us the power to make our voices heard in every city, town, and state, choosing what kind of government we want to lead this country. Also, exercising the right to vote will secure us the enjoyment of liberty and freedom of speech that we enjoy today.

Civic groups like Rock the Vote have been inviting thousands of eligible teenagers to get involved in the upcoming election by registering their names on the voting list. The organization has been backed by MTV and numerous musicians who have performed at different venues around the country, enticing younger people to come out and cast their votes. Sure enough, Rock the Vote will mark a historic precedent in the upcoming election in 2005, where thousands of young people will come out for the first time and choose the candidate of preference, exercising their constitutional voting right.

It is the bottom of the sixth inning, Republicans and Democrats are at play. Bush just struck out for the second time and Kerry is in the batter’s box, lining up, holding the bat tightly and locking in to hit a homerun.
I came to the U.S.A. in August’03; at that time I had no interest in America. I didn’t want to stay here too long, just finish my studies fast and leave. But since then, I’ve started college and have become involved with this strange journey that is the discovery of America.

The best part of it is I never feel different from other people around me. I feel genuinely accepted. When I came here, I observed that if you catch someone’s eye while you are walking on the road, they will always smile at you. It might seem like a normal thing to everybody else, but to a foreigner, a smile goes a long way to make this country seem like home.

America is a wonderful place to live because we are free. Freedom is important, a privilege many people in other countries do not have. A free country allows its citizens to have happy lives, doing what they want to do. I am glad that I have a place in which to live where I know that I can be equal with other races and the other gender. In my country, I wouldn’t be able to get the education that is available to me in the U.S. and I wouldn’t have many of the rights I have simply because I am female. Women’s rights have been a major issue in the past, especially in some other countries, where women must walk around completely covered. In America, even though we had to fight for these rights, we are enjoying the fruits of our efforts today. Not only can we vote, but we can also get the same education and same jobs as men in today’s society.

From my point of view, America means freedom, happiness and safety. It is a country which has power, wonder, justice, trust, and love. In America everyone can live the life they have always dreamed of and believe in. It is a place to be equal, to learn, to grow, and to live in peace. America is a beautiful, varied country with everything from woods to cities. It is one of the best gifts that God has given us. America allows us to find the wisdom we have inside ourselves.

No matter how hard terrorists try, they won’t ever be able to damage the freedom of America. America doesn’t mean the color of skin or country of origin; being American is a state of mind. I am so glad I live in the USA, and if I lived anywhere else, I would want to move here.
The Right to Vote
by Milagros Rojas—Peru—ENW 107

Do you know how important your vote is?

Sometimes one vote can make a difference. For instance, in an election if candidates have the same number of votes, your vote can be the one that makes the final difference. Your opinion about the right candidate can establish a better political system. When you vote you are making a decision that is going to affect the country in which you are living. These decisions affect yourself, your community and your children. You should elect a candidate that upholds and defends your personal opinions and viewpoints. I like to exercise my right to vote when there is an election because I can express my ideas and thoughts about the candidate. In this way, I can take part in the political history of this country. Voting is a privilege that citizens should execute.

No Need to Vote
by Gloria Santos—Dominican Republic—ENW 107

“Everybody has the right to vote” is a popular saying that I often hear. But is voting really necessary for all people? For me, the right to vote is not important. I don’t believe in all the promises that politicians make in order to become president, so why should I cast a vote for someone I don’t trust? People who want to lead a country try to convince the public in order to win; when they win, they quickly forget all about what they had promised. When we vote we are voting for false promises.

I don’t think that one person can make a decision about a nation. After September 11th when we were attacked by terrorists, the president decided to go after the wrong people (Saddam Hussein); now our nation is in danger because nobody knew where the person was who was responsible for the attack.

I know that the majority of people don’t agree with me, but after the war and all the young people are dead, many people will realize that they made a mistake by giving their vote to President Bush. The right to vote is in the constitution, but I feel that it is something unnecessary and useless.
Too Busy to Live
Workaholism in the United States
by Clara Esposito—Dominican Republic—ENW 107

Working hard to “get it all” or working hard and just getting old?

Most people work to be able to pay bills and cover their needs, but there are people who work like dogs just to get money. Unfortunately, these kinds of people seldom realize joy or achieve a quality lifestyle. I know a man who is eighty years old. He is still working 24/7 without vacations. He says, “I work hard because this is the only way that I can get everything.” Everything? Ironically, he has never had the beautiful things that life can offer even the common person — family, vacations, relaxation and health. One of the most treasured gifts of life is family but my friend, “Mr. Workaholic” (Mr. W.) was too busy to think about that. Because he was so absorbed in work, he forgot to marry and have children; he didn’t have time. Mr. W’s love for work is so extreme that he has no time to take care of his health; he is sick all the time and unable to enjoy the piles of money that he has made. Mr. W. never goes anywhere; no time for fun. He’s simply missing out on the most important things life has to offer.

Working in a Foreign Country:
No Guarantee for a Better Life
by Beatriz A. Naguita—Philippines—ENW 107

The perception that the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence has driven many people to seek employment abroad. Thousands of workers leave their countries every year searching for a better life and future. But does working in a foreign country guarantee they will find what they’re looking for? Lucky are those people who are really successful in their journey abroad; some people have less optimistic experiences in a foreign workforce.

Many people work abroad because they believe that the experience will give them more financial freedom and enable them to provide better for their families. This may be true, especially if they come from developing countries where the employment opportunities are fewer and the salaries are lower. Many of these people believe that working abroad will save them from poverty and for many of these immigrants, their dreams are realized.

While working abroad may satisfy material goals, sooner or later working in a foreign country will most likely take its toll on the family and even put the health of the worker at risk. A person who works abroad typically
has to leave his family and become an absentee parent. This means that there may be a constant battle with loneliness and guilt. Stress due to loneliness may build up in the nervous system and could eventually result in a heart attack or stroke, some even return home in coffins. Certainly this brings heartache and frustration to the families and relatives in the country of origin. One example was the classmate of my husband who was an engineer in our country, the Philippines.

He decided to work in Singapore due to unemployment problems in our country. He worked in Singapore for three years and earned a higher income. During that time he was working and sending money back to his family in the Philippines. Of course the family was very happy because they were able to acquire some property and many other valuable things. But in the middle of the fourth year of his job in Singapore, my husband’s friend had a stroke and died. He returned to the Philippines in a coffin.

With that, working abroad has its perks but the person who wants to pursue this venture must be willing and strong enough to face the consequences.
It is ten o’clock at night, lights are switched off for the most part, and enormous metal gates are shut tight behind me with an early 20th century door lock that looks like it was taken from a haunted house in Transylvania. Alone and armed with only a flash light and a religious scapulary hidden in a secret pocket in my vest, I enter another world called “The Wall” or “The Big House” where many forgotten souls gather together for the rest of their eternal life.

It feels like a hundred degrees in here and sweat drops start to pour from my forehead while I walk through narrow, dimly-lit corridors as long as football fields. For the most part, my walk ways are covered with piles of rotten meals that are thrown on the floor, a sign of discontent and disgust. Hundreds of mice feast on the gourmet appetizers in the middle of the night. Sometimes the smell of human sweat and foul odors overcome all my senses, revolving my stomach in a dry heave. Hundreds of television sets, radios, screams, and shots are being blasted off loudly all night long, entertainment in a place where time is perpetually frozen. The days, hours, and minutes just look the same. All the walls and doors are painted gray and white, with black covers and thick metal bars, holding behind them at least two hundred convicts in a single wing.

Sitting down at my desk and looking forward inside the cells barely large enough to accommodate one human being, I see the faces of sorrow popping out in the middle of the night with penetrating looks that tell the stories of their incarceration. I don’t know what moved these people to extinguish someone’s life and lose the precious feeling of being free. While doing my rounds, inmates often come forward and express the reasons for their misfortune. It started one night when a prisoner in cell 23 was celebrating the arrival of the new year with family and friends. Between drinks and dances and the excessive consumption of alcohol, the prisoner recalled losing control of his vehicle on the way home, instantly killing his best friend and his brother. Miraculously he came out of a mangled vehicle with just a few scratches and bruises. How could he tell that a few drinks would change his destiny for the next thirty years?

On the third floor in cell 152 resides an inmate that killed his wife in an altercation that started with a suspicion of infidelity, ending tragically and leaving behind several orphaned kids. Seeing this guy in a cell prompted my recollection of responding to that incident on a cold winter night. As I walked through the kitchen corridor traces of blood revealed an act of cowardly, cold cruelty.
Lying still was a corpse of a female on top of a bed, a bed that was gradually changing color from white to bright red. Rendering fist aid, I bandaged countless deep lacerations and I hovered over her, witnessing her agonized breaths that begged for a second chance. She gradually faded out of this unfair world.

Down on the flats reside an inmate, small and thin in complexion with long hair that seems like it has never seen a hair brush before. No one has heard him speak a word in years and he always stands staring at the wall like a recruit soldier in formation. He always dresses with state khaki clothing and faded leather boots like he is expecting someone from the outside to visit him.

Inside his cell there is only a mattress, no TV, no radio, not even a letter from his loved ones. The only companionship he has is a silhouette of his forgotten soul imprinted on the wall of his cell, produced by the cigarette tar that he expels from his lungs each day. I ask myself what triggered this little person to commit such a heinous crime by stabbing his parents to death in the middle of the night?

It is ten o’clock again in this city within a city where I walk through metal doors and thick walls that seem impossible to break through. Many noises emanate from this place where tears, sobbing, and discontent are now laid to rest in this house of pain. A house where pain always persists and never goes away.
After graduating from the San Marcos University as an obstetrician, I moved with my 5-month-old son from our home in Lima, Peru to a town in the north called Vegueta. The town is about a 20-minute car ride from the city of Huacho, which is two hours away by bus from Lima. The town of Vegueta is on the Pacific Ocean and is known primarily for fishing and farming. I rented a large house in the town in which I made my home and set up my medical practice. After hanging out my sign, I was soon treating many patients since I was the lone medical practitioner in town.

I had been in Vegueta for about a year and I was becoming very successful. What I did not know at the time was that my success would almost cost me my life.

It was July. In Peru, that is the middle of winter. Since we don’t have heat in our houses, after washing my hair I had the custom of going to a nearby salon and drying my hair. It was 3 o’clock in the afternoon and after returning from the salon, I began to notice a pain in my head. At first, I ignored it but as the evening wore on, it intensified and started to spread to other parts of my body. By the time I was ready to go to sleep I had so much pain that I could not lift up my infant son. The next morning when I got up, the pain was even worse. I did not know what to do so I decided to ask a woman I knew who ran a boarding house nearby. Some how I walked over to her house in spite of the overwhelming pain that made each step I took a nightmare.

When my friend saw my red eyes and I told her that I had pain in my whole body, she was alarmed. She called to her daughter and asked her to bring an egg. In my country, many people practice a ritual called ‘passing the egg’. If a person is suffering pain or discomfort, someone can cure them by passing an egg over the entire body while reciting a prayer. The egg is a large cell and absorbs the bad energy that is causing the problem. After the egg is passed over the body, it is broken into a large glass of water. The white of the egg will form different patterns and shapes in the water depending on the cause of the problem. As my friend passed the egg over my body even the light touch of the eggshell caused me to wince with pain. After she was done, she cracked the egg open into the water and examined the forms that appeared in the water. She shook her head and said that it was very serious. Then she said, “You have a 24 hour curse”. I asked her what that meant and she replied, “Unless you receive a cure, you will be dead by this afternoon”.

I felt scared by what she had said. Thoughts raced through my mind. It was 11 o’clock in the morning. “I don’t have much time. What will I do? Who will cure me?” My friend gave me an address of a Shaman in town, and said that he could help me. I left the house as fast as I could and proceeded to the address I was given. I
knocked at the door and an elderly man answered. I asked if he was the person my friend had recommended and he replied he was. He recited prayers over me and also passed the egg. He confirmed what my friend had said and added that someone was working black magic on me. He explained that in order to break this spell, I would have to visit six more Shamans before 3 pm, if I were to remain alive.

I moved from Shaman to Shaman going to 5 more. Some were men and some were women, and each one guided me to my next destination. At the sixth Shaman, I was told that my final healing would be by a very powerful magician named Chuchui. When I was given the address, I was surprised that my final destination was very near my own house. I had no idea when I moved to the town of Vegueta that there were so many Shamans in residence. Later, I learned that this town was famous for its magicians. People in the town are scared to drive a car at night because of the many strange events that have been reported.

When I arrived at the house of Chuchui, a very old man who was at least ninety years old greeted me. I was told that he practiced the black arts and that he was reputed to change his form into that of an animal. He knew my situation and said that he could remove curse that had been put upon me. He asked me if I wanted him to reverse the curse and kill the individual who was trying to kill me. I answered that I was only interested in being cured and not looking to harm anyone else. He replied, “You are a good person. I will break the curse and also teach you how you can protect yourself”. He did his work and the pain finally left my body. At last I was cured! Before I left, he gave me some instructions. I was to go to Lima and return after three days. When I returned, as I got out of the taxi, the first person I would see would be the person who had put the curse on me.

I followed his instructions and went back to Lima. When I returned three days later, I was getting out of the taxi and spotted a man sitting on a park bench in front of me. When the man saw me, he was terrified; he looked like he had seen a ghost and promptly ran down the street. I recognized him as the owner of a pharmacy in the town. Evidently before I setup my medical practice, his business had been the only place available for medical treatment. His business was obviously being affected by competition from my office since I would regularly bring back medicines from my trips to Lima and prescribe them to my patients. His solution was to remove the competition, permanently! I learned a lot from this experience. I also followed the advice of Chuchui. He told me that it would be better for me to return to Lima, since people may try again to harm my son or me.

One year after that incident, I was back in Lima setting up my practice again. That was my first experience with the Shamans of Peru, but not my last. That’s a topic for another story.
We live in a huge world, a world in which we can travel far from home. The hardest separation is when you separate from your homeland where you grew up and start living in a new environment. No one can fully understand your heart that is waiting to return.

As I remember, my eldest brother Dara occupied a big part of my mother’s heart. He was our hero and he was my mom’s prize. We used to live close to him even after his marriage. He had two boys who were our dearest sweethearts. Dara’s eldest son was ten years old when the war between Iran and Iraq started and nobody knew when the war would finish. At the age of fourteen boys are considered old enough for military service and Dara worried about the near future of his sons, so he decided to leave Iran and immigrate to the USA.

After immigrating to the USA, he sent us mail and called us every month. My father was always looking forward to his return, but the war continued and he couldn’t come back. My father died eight years after Dara left the country. However, my mom remained hopeful and believed that he would come back one day. She used to say, “Dara is my eye’s light. But I am afraid that I won’t see him this side of glory.” She always asked him to come for a visit and Dara replied that he would come if the time was suitable. I recall that my mom used to sing this poem to herself, “Whoever becomes distanced from his roots, seeks to return to the days of his union.” Dara had been away from Iran for 16 years.

It was before New Year when we found out my mother had liver cancer. The physician said she would not live for more than four months. We called Dara and asked him to come and visit her. He became anxious and replied he would be in Tehran as soon as possible, but it was New Year and it was hard to find a ticket. We moved our mother to the hospital but the cancer’s root spread every day like a wild raspberry and after ten days, the cancer had infected her lungs, too. Then, she fell into a light coma. We told her that Dara was coming, but she said that it was too late. After two weeks of hospitalization, she became unconscious. Whenever she woke up she would turn her
head and look around carefully. We realized that she was waiting for Dara. All of us were around her bed, but she looked for him. She was waiting. Now she hardly spoke, but we felt her heart because of the tears that floated in her eyes. She passed away twenty-two days after we learned she had cancer. She melted in front of our eyes and we couldn’t do anything. It was exactly forty hours before Dara reached Iran. When he was flying through the sky, may be her spirit went to say, “Welcome” to him.

Dara came back after 16 years and all of us sisters and brothers and our children went to the airport to welcome him. We were filled with sorrow because of our mother’s passing. However, we were happy to see him whom we loved. When he came out of the gate, he understood she had gone because of our black clothing. The Mehr-Abaad airport in Tehran was in upheaval because of our crying and Dara was completely mixed up. He yelled, cried and grabbed his hair. He shouted, “God, watch me. What can I do? Mom has passed away without me.” His lament made us cry; we couldn’t stop him nor console ourselves.

Only God knows how much pain he had in his heart and how much patience my mother had. He could see mother’s face before burying. He hugged her so tightly that we were almost unable to separate them. I know that Dara has not forgiven himself yet.

Although they were far from each other, their hearts were close. For me, his white, washed out face beside the coffin was an unforgettable scene, which always reminds me of a poem by Molina, “Listen to the reed how it narrates a tale, a tale of all the separations of which it complains. Ever since they cut me from the reed-bed, men and women bemoaned my lament. How I wish in separation, a bosom shred and shred, so as to utter the description of the pain of longing.” I wished they could have seen each other before death. I hope everyone can reach his/her beloved before it becomes too late.
“Shame on you”, my first husband told me. He said this after I left the bathroom and walked out to the place where his company Christmas party was being held. “Where is she going and where has she been?” everybody murmured. All of them were looking at me and I felt like a lighted candle that was getting smaller. I felt so ashamed and embarrassed. My flame flickered and went out.

It started earlier that day when my employer’s daughter got home early. She told me that I could leave work early. I felt so happy and I hurriedly called my husband. I couldn’t contact him because our telephone was busy so I went home and planned to surprise him. I thought we could go Christmas shopping and do other household chores.

When I got home I quietly entered through the back door. I heard him talking on the phone from our bedroom on the second floor. I waited because I did not want to interrupt his call, but it was taking such a long time that I decided to get my other phone on the first floor. I unplugged it first and covered the speaker before I plugged it in again so he wouldn’t hear a sound. Then I clearly heard what my first husband and the other person “a woman” were talking about. They would have a Christmas party that night and he told her not to mention it to me. These few words were enough for me to understand what was going on. So I unplugged the phone, took off the speaker cover and slowly put the phone back in its place. I waited until he finished his conversation.

When he finally came downstairs he was surprised to see me. I told him the reason why I got home early and after a few hours, he dressed up and told me that he needed to go out for awhile to fix his friend’s TV. I knew that he was lying. I understood that he would go to a Christmas party with the mysterious woman from the phone. I went downstairs and didn’t know what to do so I quickly decided to jump in the back of his car and hide. I sat down in the back and just waited for him. It was almost dark. A few minutes later, he opened the car and I covered myself in the back under a small black plastic clothes bag. I had mixed feelings. I felt tired, angry and worried but I tried to calm myself. He did not see or even notice me until we reached the place. He was shocked after he saw me in the back seat and he asked me what I was doing there and why I was hiding. I couldn’t answer. Nervously and angrily, he brought me inside the hall where the party was and I went to the bathroom to fix my hair.

After I came out, I saw him talking with a woman and when he saw me he quickly changed the topic. Then he and everyone else noticed what I was wearing, tight fuchsia-colored pants with a matching house-blouse with a deep, wide, round collar. I looked like I was wearing pajamas. To complete the outfit, I was wearing big white house slippers. Everyone was all dressed and staring at me. “Shame on you,” he said.

At this time, I couldn’t hold my temper anymore. “It is your fault not my fault that I look like this. You said that you would go to your friend’s house to fix his TV, but where are you now? Since the beginning, you told me a lot of lies and I always forgave you”. These were the last words I said to him. I yelled and blushed when I said those words. I wanted everybody to understand. I left the party and called one of my friends to pick me up and take me home. I felt so embarrassed but I didn’t feel sorry because I had been honest.
Have you ever thought about how great it would be to meet with family and friends that you haven’t seen for a long time? Actually, I had never thought that returning to my country after three years of absence would be one of the most exciting experiences of my life. On November 1, 2001 at 11:30 am I was sitting in the airplane waiting impatiently for the moment that it would take off for Bogotá, Colombia.

After five hours of a pleasant trip, I arrived in Bogotá, the capital of Colombia. My heart was beating fast and my hands were shaking because I was very nervous. After a while, I went to pick up my luggage and I was ready to find my family. They were outside carefully looking at each person that got out of the airport; they were looking for me. When they saw me, hugs, kisses and tears made that moment special. A few minutes later we were on our way home. On the way, I was answering all sorts of questions from my mother, uncle and cousins. They were very curious about my life in the United States.

As soon as I arrived at home, the first thing I did was go to my bedroom. There were photographs and many things that brought me beautiful memories. That was strange! There were things that I had seen hundreds of times without thinking much about them, but that day they seemed to have great value. For memory’s sake, I asked my mother to take me on a tour of the city.

Looking through the windows of my mother’s car, I realized how the city had changed during my absence. New buildings, huge bridges, gorgeous parks and wide avenues decorated the city. They all looked fantastic! I was enjoying the breeze, the sounds and smells of the city. Then my uncle suggested we go to my favorite restaurant. Crepes & Wafers is the name of my favorite restaurant. There is a large variety of delicious dishes. This place also has a warm environment so everyone is relaxed and full of joy. For all of these reasons, my family and I were very comfortable in this place. There we shared a meal and celebrated the happiness of being together again.

My first visit to my country after three years was really exciting, so those moments will be in my heart forever. I hope to return again soon. I miss my country and my people a lot.
Everything was red and lava exploded from the volcano in front of my eyes. I felt like the sparks were grabbing me and then my body got loose and I felt dizzy.

It was almost two o’clock in the afternoon and the sun was shining like a tube light. Some people were taking naps and the road was as quiet as a library, then suddenly human nature got angry and exploded. The atmosphere altered as Hindus and Muslims were beginning religious disputes. A fight started because a couple of Muslims killed a cow; for Hindus, cows are considered sacred. Because of this harsh act, Hindus became angry and started to fight. People started killing people and religion became the reason for bloodshed.

When fighting broke out on the streets, my friend and I were walking to our professor’s house for an extra lesson; we weren’t aware of the fighting at that time. We were happy and in a good mood, singing and telling jokes along the way. When we reached our professor’s house we opened the door and went in. Our happiness vanished like smoke.

Our eyes got as big as watermelons when we saw our professor’s body lying on the floor. The floor was red with blood; he was dead. My body was shivering like a car engine and my tears fell heavy and wet like rain. My friend froze and suddenly got dizzy as if she were riding on a merry-go-round. We didn’t know what to do. We were in SHOCK!

It was almost 3:30 pm and we heard screams coming from nearby. We peeked out the window and saw angry people near the professor’s house. “What do we do now?” we whispered. We ran and hid in the dark basement and didn’t dare turn on the light for fear of being killed. We were only able to breathe because of a small hole in the basement and through that hole we saw many people killing each other and others pleading for their lives. Many people lay dead, while women and children cried and prayed to God for mercy.

After a half hour the police came and tried to break up the riots, but with no luck they had to resort to force; they were ordered to shoot and many more people were killed. After the violence subsided, we dared come out of our hiding place and walked home on the same road we had walked on two hours earlier, but the atmosphere was different now. There were dead bodies and blood everywhere. “Was this the same road we had walked on happily and peacefully just two hours before?”

Every now and then I think about that day. It shouldn’t have happened. The volcano shouldn’t have erupted. If people hadn’t discriminated, people wouldn’t have died. I lost one of my favorite professors. Now whenever I see blood that day flashes in front of my eyes. I try to forget the “volcano” it but it never leaves me.
Have you ever felt scared in an unknown place? Generally, many of us feel panic when we are in a difficult situation and in places where we have not been before. It happened when I went to my friend’s home three years ago. We had not seen each other since high school. So, we planned to meet at her house. I will never forget that day when I took the wrong bus and got lost.

It was Saturday evening. We were supposed to leave home at 6 pm with my sister and we were going to my friend’s party. I took a long time to get ready so we left at 6:30 pm instead. My sister was so upset because none of us knew where my friend’s home was. We were going to my friend’s house but I had no idea what bus we had to take that day. However, my sister Sandra said, “I think we have to take bus number 72A. We have to walk toward the next corner”. Suddenly, she realized that she had left the address at home, so Sandra went back home while I kept walking to the bus stop. A few minutes later, the bus arrived and I did not know what to do. My sister wasn’t there. I decided to take the bus when I saw my sister coming.

I sat close to the bus’s door. There were so many people in the bus that I could not see Sandra. I was so nervous because it was getting late. We had already spent about a half hour trying to find our way. As a result, I asked the driver about a street nearest to my friend’s home. He told me that the bus didn’t pass by that street and that I should have taken the 72A. The bus I was on was 72B. I realized that I had taken the wrong bus; I began to look for Sandra. She was not there. Therefore, I decided to get out of the bus.

Walking carefully through the streets, I could see many unfriendly faces — groups of people drinking beer and talking in a coarse way. I got nervous and alarmed. There was a pay phone on the corner so I called Sandra’s cell phone. She did not answer. It was late and I was afraid. A group of men drinking beer got me so panicky that I was not careful crossing the street. There were many vehicles around me and I was lost in the situation until I saw a green light. I tried to call my sister again but I did not have coins. Fortunately, I found a store where I could change my bill and then call her again. She answered the phone very worried and took a cab in order to reach me. Later, Sandra got there but she was very angry. We took a cab to my friend’s house but unfortunately when we got to my friend’s home it was very late. My friend thought we had gotten lost and we told her the whole story of how we had taken the wrong bus. Being in an unknown place is really scary.
Are you afraid of dying? Do you know somebody who is? Have you ever wondered how you would survive the loss of someone you love? I have never seen death, but once and that was an infant. It was years ago. The look was calm and placid, and the face was fair and firm. It was as if a waxen image had been laid out in the coffin and strewn with innocent flowers. It was not like death, but more like an image of life! No breath moved the lips, no pulse stirred and no sight or sound would enter those eyes or ears more. I was like a ghost standing near this little grave and a welcome breeze refreshed me, and eased the tightness in my breast! Please, God, this small angel was my first baby, my first son.

The birth of a baby is one of the greatest miracles of life. After months of waiting and hours of painful labor, a new baby comes into the world. Since time began, the gift of new life has been celebrated with great joy. The famous Ukrainian poet, Lina Kostenko said, “When a woman is in travail, she has sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she is delivered of the child, she no longer remembers the anguish for joy that child is born into the world.” Yet there is wisdom in the old saying that a woman in labor has one foot in the grave. Even in our day, every birth is attended by some anxiety for the health of both mother and child, and there is always the chance of something going mortally wrong.

My son Ilya was born nine weeks premature in the Ternopol hospital sixteen years ago. The miracle of his little kitten cry will always stay with me. That was the only time his voice was heard. I only caught a glimpse of my son as he was whisked away to be examined. A few hours after his birth I was wheeled down to see and touch my firstborn. He was tiny, less than three pounds, with a shock of dark hair, but he had absolutely unforgettable eyes. They were dark blue and very deep. I wanted to see and touch these eyes forever; moreover, I wanted to kiss my beautiful son and tell him about the unbelievable love that had filled my heart. However, he was attached to every conceivable monitoring device, and the ventilator was breathing for him. I was filled with joy and gratitude for the miracle of our son, sure that he would live.

Ilya lived fifteen hours and twelve minutes. His pre-maturity was compounded by several serious medical conditions that could not be corrected. I remember the tears that would not stop when a group of doctors brought us into consultation five hours before he died and told us that they suspected a genetic condition that would mean his early death. There will never be words to tell how I felt at that moment. From the depth of my soul I cried to God. It happened a long time ago, but I still find myself wondering, “How old would he be now? If he would have lived what would life be like?” And there are still times when I cry in deep sadness.

Each time a baby or small child dies, we are reminded that the earth is not yet fully our home and that our life here is short – like a flower, like grass, like a butterfly. Our life is like one moment between past and future. No matter how young the child, no matter how many hours or days or months we were given to love and know that child, the pain seems unendurable; the wounds never quite seem to heal. What else can we do? We should trust with the grieving parents that God will give healing even though slowly, almost imperceptibly.

In a newborn we see innocence and perfection, and we look for the day when the whole universe will be redeemed and all creation made perfect again, the day when there will be no more death, the day when new life begins. “My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and portion forever.” (Psalm 73:26)
Looking at the blue sky with white clouds, experiencing the change of seasons, enjoying the beautiful flowers, you might ask a question, “Who made this beautiful world?” When you stand on the high mountain or sit beside the ocean, you might marvel at wonderful nature. Actually, if you pay a little attention to your life, you have to recognize there is a high being that exists in the universe above all humans. But how do you know that God lives in your life? Is he close to you or far away from you? As I ask myself this question, I understand that God has lived in my life as a grandfather, a judge and a friend.

When I was a little child, my mother told me that we had a Holy Father in heaven, who was like my grandfather with white hair and a long golden beard, walking with a stick, kindly loving and taking care of us. She told me that he especially loved the obedient children and he lived in the beautiful sky. I remember that I liked staying in my yard and looking at the sky, trying to find where God lived. One thundering and lightning night, I looked at the sky again and asked my mother, “When God is alone, is he afraid of darkness and thunder?” My mother replied, “No, he doesn’t fear the dark.” My mother also told me, “If you are a good child, you will not fear darkness and God will love you.” From that day, I tried to be good and dreamed that I would go to heaven to see God, my dear “grandfather.”

As I grew up, I didn’t believe that God was my grandfather anymore because my mother always said that the almighty one would punish us if we did something wrong. Consequently, I began to feel that God was like a strict judge in my life, someone who always watched out for what I did. Besides my parent’s eyes, there were other ones (God’s eyes) that watched me everyday. I got annoyed when my mother said that God knew everything. I couldn’t do bad things. Otherwise, I would be punished by him. As a result, I began to hate the Holy One and wondered why he was so stern and serious. I didn’t even like going to church anymore. Although I didn’t like this God, I tried doing good things in order to avoid the punishments that might come from him.

Time flew! When I got a little older, I started asking myself the question, “Do you really believe that God is in your life? Who is he and who are you?” I couldn’t find a good answer until one day when I had a special experience while on a college excursion in 1995. I took a big tour houseboat to visit the Three Gorges of the Yangtz River, one of the most famous scenic spots in China. During the whole trip, I was attracted to and shocked by the wonderful nature — the high mountains with the tidy green trees standing on both sides of the river. The water was clear enough to see the fish below, moving freely. The blue sky with several white clouds was marvelous. As I enjoyed the beautiful nature a lot of questions came to my mind, “Who made this beautiful mountain and ocean? Some famous people or scientists? Oh, no, it’s impossible!” I thought and thought. Suddenly, I felt that I had found the perfect answer and I knelt down on the ground saying “Oh, Almighty One, my God, you are here and everything is yours”.

After that experience, I felt that God was very close to me, a new-found opinion which stood in contrast to my perception of God as a child. He was neither my grandfather nor did he live in the sky. Instead, he was
the master of my life. I could find him anywhere, in beautiful nature and in nice people who were around me.

As an adult, I began to realize that God was a giver of blessings. Looking back at my life, I can’t count how many blessings I’ve received from others. For example, I have a good family; I have had many nice teachers and I have many good friends who help me. I believe that all of the blessings come from God’s love. Moreover, I have experienced that the Holy One is not only the giver of blessings, but has become my good friend with whom I share my happiness, sadness and problems. I talk to him, cry before him and even complain to him. He is just like my intimate friend who accompanies and listens to me. I don’t keep secrets from him. He knows everything and loves me more than I love myself. Although there are still a lot of difficulties in my life and even though I have done wrong things, I believe that God is always with me. He is not a severe judge anymore, instead, a good friend and support, he forgives me all the time.

There is the Holy one that exists in the universe and he never changes. I have experienced God in different ways during my life. However, all the imaginations of God have gone, the true God goes lives in my life and I deeply experience his presence and will be with him forever.

“Babies” That Bark
by Milagros LaPuente—Peru—ESLW 001

Rocio is my friend. She isn’t married, and she lives by herself. She doesn’t have any children, but she has two dogs that are her “babies”. She wakes up at 7 am and goes running with her dogs. Then she goes back to her house to prepare her breakfast. It is ready at 8:30. She eats breakfast and then takes a fast shower. She says good-bye to the dogs. She goes to work, where she is a secretary. She works eight hours. She thinks about her dogs all the time because they are alone. She finishes work, and she runs home to see her “babies.” She always takes care of her pets. I usually say that Rocio is “a good mother.”
Have you ever had a moment when the only thing you wanted was to die? I have! The day I took my twin sister's place in her job interview was such a moment.

Since my twin sister finished high school her dream was to work in a bank. In fact she said that the only work she ever wanted was to work in a bank. She had at least three reasons why she wanted that kind of job. The first reason she usually mentioned was that if you work for a bank you don't have to work on holidays or weekends. The second was that banks offer a comfortable work environment, and the last reason was that she loves numbers. She always has been excellent with numbers.

As soon as my twin sister finished high school she went to the bank and asked what she needed to do to work there. The manager told her that she needed to have some experience with numbers and with computers. My twin sister didn't lose time and the next day she began to take a computer class. Six months later she had learned about computers and numbers and soon after, filled out an application. However, after much time she didn't receive any answer. She finally decided to visit our grandmother who lived in another city far away and forget about the job in the bank.

Two days after my twin sister was with my grandmother I received a call from the bank. The call was in the afternoon and they told me that my sister had an interview at 8:30am the next morning. My sister told me that she was going to be there on time, but because my grandmother lived so far, I thought that she would be late. The next morning at 7:00am, I decided to take her place. I was pretty sure that the manager wouldn't go to know that I wasn't her because we look identical. I arrived to the bank on time and a handsome man interviewed me. I answered all the questions and after the interview he told me, "Welcome to the National Bank you got the job." Right at that moment his secretary interrupted us saying that a girl named Carolina Colon was there. The manager was surprised and said that that was impossible because Carolina was with him. A few minutes later my twin sister entered the office. The man was very surprised and the only thing he said was, "You are like two drops of water". At that moment I wanted to die and I began to explain why I did it. I told him that that job had been my twin sister's dream and I began to cry. At that moment my twin sister hugged me and told me, "It doesn't matter if I don't get this job, but stop crying! I don't want you to damage your make up."

The manager finally told us that Carolina would get the job, but if I took my twin sister's place in the bank again I would have problems with him. That day was the most difficult day of my life, the only day that I wanted to die and leave my twin sister alone in this world. In fact, that day I understood that even though my twin sister and I are identical, we are individual people and we have to solve our problems by ourselves like people who are not twins do.
Ramadan is in the 9th month of the lunar year. In this month, healthy adult Muslims fast. The purpose of fasting is to develop consciousness of God, self control, and improvement of health by reducing or eliminating impurities from the body.

In many parts of the world, Muslims prepare certain favorite foods during the month of Ramadan: Chabbakia, Mkharka and Sellou. It is a common practice for Muslims to break their fast (Iftar) with dates. Iftar takes place at Magheb, as soon as the call for prayer begins (Adan). After that, Muslims go to the mosque which is followed by dinner.

There is a special night during Ramadan called Lailatul-Quadr, the night of power. This is the night on which the Quran was first revealed to the Prophet Muhammed by Jibrael. The Quran says that Ramadan is better than a thousand months. On this night, Muslims read the Quran. Moroccan women cook couscous and every Moroccan family puts incense in their home.

The completion of Ramadan is Aid Alfitr. People put on their favorite new clothes. Children receive money and people greet each other with hugs.

Ramadan is a spiritual time. It is a very joyous occasion for Muslims.
A Red Chameleon
by Mehmet Nuri Ayyildiz — Turkey — ESL W004

If you want,
take me away.
If you want,
leave me here.
I am a blind chameleon,
red chameleon on a green leaf
sad and alone.
When are you going to whisper
in my ear softly?
"You are a red chameleon
on the green leaves"
or
leave me in the jungle
sad and alone.
Love (Another form of god),
Amor (La Otra forma de dios), Pyar (Ishwer ka dusra roop)
by Priyank Desai — India — ESLW003

When you feel bad,
I will give you love and make you happy.
Whenever you need me,
I will always by present, there.

You are like an aroma of love.
You are like the warmth of love.
You are like a rose of love.
After all, you are everything for me.
Oh, my love!

Your happiness is my happiness.
Your smile is my smile.
Your sorrows are my sorrows.
After all, you are everything for me.

I will love you until death comes.
I will love you until the kingdom comes.
I will love you until heaven comes on earth.
I will love you in my all incarnations.

If you leave this realm and go to God,
I will plead very dearly to God and
make you mine.

Whether the sun doesn’t rise,
Whether the moon doesn’t appear,
Whether the rock melts one day,
Even then, I will never keep you away from
me, oh my love.

You are in my life.
You are in my heart.
You are in my soul.
But if you are not in my life,
Then there is nothing at all.
My Dream
Yumila Zayas — ESLW 001

Maybe one day darkness
will disappear.
The light will come over the world.
Not one day,
Not one night.
Only some subdued light
Into men’s spirit.
Through Apprehensive Eyes

by Gulen Topcu — Turkey — ENW 107

Humankind!
Look at the World carefully
that was surrounded by peace a long time ago
and where everybody was singing love songs.

It was a World that connected hands
and offered help.
The competition was kindness,
healing wounds, unlike today.

One day, like every beautiful thing
this magic ended.
Cruel people replaced helpful
and the love songs stopped; they could be heard no more.

Now,
Children are dying in Africa because of war.
Children are dying in Iraq because of war.
A mother in the U.S. is crying for her son because of war.
A mother in Iraq is yelling for help, “No food for my baby”, because of war.

One soldier was injured while fighting for his country,
One baby lost his legs – the cost of being innocent.

Why are you looking at the world apprehensively?
Whose fault is this meaningless war?
What will satisfy your greed?
Have you forgotten your humanity?

You are looking at the world through apprehensive eyes.
You created the war to become more powerful.
There is no limit to your greed.

You buried your humanity in a grave!
If I See You Happy
by Eduardo Manuel Huaman — Peru — ESLW 002

I don’t know why..., I can’t take you out of my dreams, and even though you hurt me so bad, all I dream is having you next to me.

In every day and every night, there is a fight between my head and my heart, they fight because they don’t know what’s wrong or right, in other words..., they don’t know if I should forget you or else take you back.

I guess that the only choice that I have left, is to let you go and make my own way, and even when I know that doing this will only cause me more pain, I will smile if I see you happy with someone, some day.
White Dreams
by Delara Raboodan — Iran — ENR 107

Last night you were in my dream
and I felt how much I’ve missed
talking with you again.
I cried and said
what I would never say in the day.

You were just sitting, listening with your kind eyes
and I felt so alone, so missed, so strange
yet I yelled all my complaints.

Country-less birds
have broken their wings,
don’t have endurance to stay
neither can return.

So I yelled all my complaints
‘cause I would never say it in the day.

You were there to hear me
because you were free of time and place
and I felt how much I’ve missed
talking with you beside your grave.

Last night you were in my dream.
The Blind Can See
by Pinki Patel — India — ENW 107

The way I feel your feelings,
the way you feel my feelings.
The way I see this world,
you don’t see this world but
feel this world with your sixth sense,
as it is very beautiful.
What would happen if you tried to break one of the important rules in your family? Each family has its rules, and these rules are different from one family to another. In my family, we have many rules that we can’t break. One day I tried to break the most important rule by going out without telling my father.

While I was sitting with my friends playing cards on a hot summer day, an idea jumped into my mind. I had finished my school and it had been a very long year for me. I was tired of studying so why I not go on a trip and have fun with my friends? I asked my friends, “Why don’t we go to the sea for four days?” I didn’t expect all my friends to agree with me, but they did so we sat together, and planned our getaway.

The next day we made reservations at a hotel and bought the bus tickets. I was very happy with my friends as we prepared everything for the trip. We collected all our money and chose one of us to keep it and spent an entire day shopping. We went from one store to another choosing what we needed and in the evening we packed everything and got ready for the trip. At that time, I remembered that I hadn’t told my father about my excursion. I started worrying about what would happen when he found out.

At nine o’clock my father came home. Many things suddenly jumped into my head and I was scared because it was the first time I had done something without telling him. After a while, I decided to tell him. I went to his room and said, “I will go to the sea tomorrow with my friends.” I didn’t finish what I wanted to say because I didn’t understand what was happening to my father. I had never seen him so mad. He jumped from his chair, his face turned red, and he was very angry. His voice was loud, and his hands were shaking. He said to me, “How could you do that? Why didn’t you tell me? You will not go on this trip.” So, I went to my room. I didn’t want to see or talk to anyone. I was very sad.

Early the next morning, my father came and he said, “Wake up”. I opened my eyes. My father was standing beside my bed. He said, “get up and prepare yourself for the trip. I will let you go just so your friends don’t say that you are a boy.” I couldn’t believe what I had heard. I apologized to him and said, “This is the first and last time I do something without telling you.” I had learned a lesson from that bad experience and until my father died, I never did anything without telling him again.
In some ways, Sveta is like other people. She has a morning routine. Every day, she gets up at nine in the morning. She doesn’t usually have much time for breakfast, so she only has a piece of toast and a cup of coffee. Then she goes to the gym. Other people exercise for one hour, but Sveta exercises for two hours. She has to look good for work.

Sveta is an exotic dancer. She works in a big night club. She has a very exciting and dangerous life.

At 2 o’clock, she eats lunch with her boyfriend. Then she goes to a special place to practice dancing. She is a special dancer. She isn’t like other dancers. She puts on an incredible show. She likes her job very much because she likes when people look at her. Sometimes, rich men invite her to parties and she dances for them. But sometimes, she has problems. After work, strange men follow her, so she often has to call the police.

Sveta makes a lot of money doing this job, but I think that the money is dirty and dangerous.

I like my job. I work in a Colombian bakery, and I have a comfortable schedule. I only work four days a week, from Thursday to Sunday. I always work in the morning from 7 am to 1 pm. I am a cashier and also I help the customers choose the bread. I don’t need to wear a uniform.

I don’t have any benefits or insurance, but I like my job because I meet friendly people and also I can eat a lot of bread and cakes. This is a benefit because I’m from Venezuela, and Colombian bread is similar to the bread in my country. I like it because it is one of the things that I miss from my country. That’s the best part. I think that it’s a good job for now.
“Every nerve in my body stood on end.” Have you ever felt that way when you are thinking about ghosts, Dracula, or Frankenstein? I was twelve years old when I felt panic for the first time in my life. It happened when I was walking to school late and suddenly somebody took me by surprise.

I always used to be the last one to get up. I am the third between two sisters and one brother and all of us went to the same school, but I often walked to school alone. Every morning, my father turned on his loud radio to wake everybody up. I stayed hidden under my blanket while my brothers ran from here to there. The clock kept ticking and I could not hear any of my siblings so I got up and quickly took a shower. It was 7:20 am and nobody had waited for me. The last minutes before I left the house were terrible because my father began screaming every two minutes like an alarm until I left.

There were many things to do to get ready on time. I had to wear two kinds of uniforms, one for sports and the other for study. I had only one of each so I had to wash them at night and iron them the next morning; my shoes were drying behind the refrigerator. Because I didn’t want to get in trouble with mom, I had to eat a big breakfast. There were so many things to get ready in such little time.

Finally I went to school. The school was located five blocks away from my house so that I could walk. I could not see any of the students that used to pass my house. It seemed that every body was gone. I began walking, almost running. I had to walk three blocks and cross the double street that ran beside the school. The last two blocks had a large path with big trees. Every time I passed it I felt as if I were entering a forest where the wolves could come from anywhere. I began walking in a hurry without looking back. Suddenly, I heard something fall from a tree, but I didn’t want to know what it was. Seconds later I felt something pushing me on my back. At first I thought it was one of my classmates bothering me so I turned my head and then I felt a big frozen current shoot through my body when I saw a big sharp knife that a strange man was pushing on me. I felt panic! I think that my entire face turned white. Instinctively, I ran like an athlete sprints in a hundred-meter race. The school’s front door was almost closed, but nobody could stop me. In seconds, I got upstairs and sat, full of panic, in my classroom. I could see that man in my mind so I kept silent for the rest of the day.

Since that day, nobody still knows why I was early for school. I’ll never forget that event. Even though it was so terrible, I learned that if you are on time to whatever kind of date or appointment you have, you are going to feel better and there may not be so many bad things that can happen to you.
It is curious how the importance we have for people, places, and events change throughout our lives. Every child has a special place where they enjoy spending time and many times children beg their parents to take them to those magical places. Like every other child I had a favorite place, too. When I was a child the toy store was the place that I loved and enjoyed the most. However, as an adult, toy stores do not grab my attention anymore.

In my childhood going to the toy store was one of the most exciting and wonderful moments. In the store I found so many ways to entertain myself and have fun. It was impossible for me not to enjoy it with all the amount of magic that was there. When crossing those doors I felt like I was in a world of fantasy, where every toy seemed to be alive. It was the big, long rows full of toys dreamed to have. It was able; for me it was my perfect little world where I played and enjoyed myself.

Shelves of colorful boxes and every kind of toy that I could imagine were all there. There were many things to look at and play with that I could have spent a long time in the store, having fun without getting bored. From toys for babies to toys for young children, there was everything you wanted. My favorite part was the trucks and cars section. On that row, I could find my favorite toy, a big fire truck. It was big and red with a long latter on top and eight wheels attached to it. This toy was my favorite along with other great toys. The toy store is a world for kids and I as a kid enjoyed this extraordinary world.

But everything in this world had an end, and without any exception, my childhood ended with the exciting days of going to toy stores. Today I stand inside the store, not finding any more excitement or entertainment. Now the magic that I once enjoyed has disappeared, too. The toys are not alive anymore, they are just pieces of plastic and metal. Now I am aware that millions of red fire trucks were manufactured while I was a kid, and not just the ones I saw at the store. For me, the enchantment is gone with the years. Now a toy store is just a place for children and its magical effect on me has disappeared. Those big long rows now seem like a simple business. Now my eyes see the toy store as something commercial.

The toy store means nothing to me now. It is just a boring place. While I like to see the new toys that have come out recently, the feeling is different from when I was a child. That magic was left behind in memory, a beautiful memory that forms part of my childhood. The loss of these beautiful times has brought me to the path where I am now.

Now I can see how life changes and how we change with it. Beautiful things get left behind, but other things as beautiful as these come along the road. For me, the magic and fantasy went away. But I know that there are others that come behind me that believe in that magic and fantasy as I did long ago.
Nightmare
by Kevin Lalicon — Philippines — ESLG 004

It all began when I was over at my friend Rikku’s house. Her parents had just left for vacation to the Caymans, leaving their daughter home by herself. I asked my parents if I was allowed to stay at Rikku’s house during the weekend and they said, “Yes”.

Rikku and I were sitting down watching a movie called “the Exorcist” when she got a call from a new family in the neighborhood. The Himuras asked her to baby-sit for them and they said it was all right if I came too. They wanted us to come over about six thirty that evening.

When we got there, Mrs. Himura introduced her three-year-old daughter, Kaoro, to us. Mr. and Mrs. Himura didn’t leave right away because they wanted Kaoro to get to know us better. They told us that Kaoro could stay up until 8:00 p.m. She also warned us that she had been having problems with her phone. It would ring but no one would be on the other end.

We were eating and watching television when the phone rang. Rikku and I looked at each other, seeing who was going to answer it. I answered the phone but no one was there. I said “hello” a couple of times but no one answered. All I could hear was someone breathing like someone had gotten stabbed in the back. It was heavy, loud gasping and very frightening. I said “hello” one more time and I heard a faint, feminine voice. As I began to tremble, the voice shouted, ”You're next!”

All of a sudden the lights went out. Rikku, Kaoro and I let out a loud shriek. I ran over to Rikku and Kaoro and Rikku started laughing and trying to convince me it was probably because of the storm outside. Koaro began to cry and we comforted her and told her it would be all right.

Rikku was going to go down into the basement to fix the fuse box so she could turn the lights back on and while she went down, Kaoro and I went upstairs to her bed. It was time for Kaoro's bedtime and I tucked her in and read her a short story.

All of a sudden, I heard a loud screech coming from the basement. I jumped up and ran down into the
basement where Rikku was. I hurried down the basement steps where I saw Rikku’s body lying on the floor and her head was on top of the fuse box. I froze with astonishment, when I saw written on the wall with blood “You’re next”.

I ran as fast as I could without thinking. I locked the basement door behind me and ran to Kaoro’s room. As soon as I got there, the bed was empty and she was gone. I heard footsteps coming from the basement so I searched for Kaoro. I tried calling the police but there was no dial tone on the phone.

I got confused and I did not know what to do so I hid in the closet together with Kaoro and grabbed a baseball bat for protection. The footsteps were getting closer and closer and the door was open just a crack. A tall guy with a black leather coat and a butcher’s knife in his right hand came into the room. He had bloodstains on his body. He was walking towards the closet knowing we were there. As soon as he got closer I kicked the door as hard as I could and grabbed Kaoro. We ran all the way down the stairs and outside.

We left the backyard when it was raining hard and angry thunder rolled against the dark clouds. We were saturated. Soaked to the skin as we ran through the woods, stopping only for a second to look back to see if he was still following us.

I heard a rustling of leaves and heavy breathing so I grabbed Kaoro’s hand. I was more frightened than I had ever been. We ran as fast as we could trying not to look behind us. We stopped... it was a dead end; we were at the end of the cliff. When I saw the man coming closer to me, I put Kaoro down and told her to run back to the house and ask for help as fast as she could.

I was face to face with the man in the black leather coat. From behind his back, he pulled out a large, bloody butcher knife. Then all I could think about was seeing Rikku lying dead in the basement. I stepped backward as he stepped forward but unfortunately, without noticing it, I was already at the edge of the cliff. I slid and fell down from the cliff and I felt myself falling through the air, looking down at what I might hit.

Suddenly, I woke up in my bed with sweat dripping from my head and I realized it all had been just a terrible nightmare.
A Scary Story
by Vasily Gerasimov — Ukraine — ESLW 002

I am not a person who gets scared very easily, but I remember this one time when I got really scared. I was 6 years old and I was sleeping over my grandmother’s house. My grandma lived out in the country in a nice small house, where I loved to spend my vacations. So that night, I went to sleep around 10 o’clock and grandma stayed up a little longer to watch TV. In the middle of the night, I was woken up by sounds coming out from the attic. Immediately, I thought that thieves got into the house through the attic window and they were going to come down and kill us. First, I took my little flashlight and hid under my covers; but then I thought about grandma and I knew that I had to go warn her. So I got out from under my blanket and quietly went to my grandma’s bed. I woke her up and told her what was going on. When my grandma understood what happened, she started laughing and told me that she let one of her cats in the attic and he was the one who was making the noise. I still wasn’t very convinced, so grandma let me sleep in her bed that night and promised that in the morning she would make sure everything was all right. That moment was the scariest one in my life.

A Robbery
by Manal Abdalla — Jordan — ESLW 002

When I was five years old, a big robbery happened in my neighborhood in Jordan! My father woke up early, as usual, to take my brothers and sisters to school. He wanted to wait for them in the car, so he took his coffee and went out. A big surprise was waiting for my father.

All the car doors on the block were open. I think that the shock moved him as he ran to our car and called our neighbors. A few minutes later, everyone was outside. I don’t know who called the police, but after fifteen minutes the police were there, too. Everyone was talking to every one at the same time. What I understood from all that talking was that nothing was robbed and nothing was missing from any of the cars. Only the doors were open and some things weren’t in their right place.

A few days later I heard them talking about a new car insurance company that wanted to use this situation as a way to get new business.
Trust binds people together and friendships bloom. I had never understood how fragile trust was until I became distrustful of someone-one who had always been with me, one that had helped me in my worst times and felt delight in my best times. It was none other than my best friend, Tiya.

Tiya and I were the "ideal friends". We got along like peanut butter and jelly. One word and we were instant buddies. The connection eased our social life and made us feel like we belonged. It was a union based on trust and no matter what, we agreed we’d be there for each other. However, as time passed our relationship changes colors.

Life dealt us a low blow that threatened everything we’d established. We were treading on unsteady ground in our junior year of high school. The year started with gossip, jealousy, and infrequent argument between Tiya and me. Our friend’s circle was so big that I didn’t know some of them were jealous of our friendship and trying to split us. Moreover, Tiya and I always liked to participate in extracurricular activities such as dance, volunteering and club elections so we both decided to be Peer Leaders in our school, Passaic High. So we applied and made a deal that if one of us were elected, we would be happy for the other. Throughout the interview process, we would send each other reassuring smiles or glances. The three-hour process went by quick enough and we were both sure we’d made it. During the week, we’d boost each other’s confidence but for Tiya, it had become more of a passion to prove herself. Maybe that was Tiya’s first mistake.

The time we were waiting for had came. Every applicant received notification from the advisors of the group. The letter could’ve shattered my dreams or it could’ve made my day. My hands were shaking and I was perspiring. I fought against picking up the telephone and calling my best friend and I decided this was something I had to face alone. It was a half hour before I actually opened the envelope.

The top of the letter read: "Congratulations". My relief was immediate. I broke into happy sobs. At the same time, Tiya called me. For a moment, I thought since I’d been accepted, she’d been accepted, too.
It was an easy conclusion to jump to. It never occurred to me that one of us wouldn’t make it. But it happened. I told her, "See, I told you, we’d win and we won". She didn’t say anything for a while and then murmured, "I didn’t". I felt really strange!

Later on, one of my friends called me up. She already knew what had just happened between Tiya and me. She told me that Tiya was jealous of me and that’s why she didn’t even congratulate me. My friend was trying to influence me against my best friend Tiya. My other friends weren’t nice.

On the other side, I tried to call Tiya many times, but she didn’t pick up the phone. It was both of us who wished to win Peer Leadership; thereby I understood her feeling. I tried to explain to her and talk to her, but she started ignoring me. I even told her that if she wanted me to resign, I would. But she took it wrong. Tiya thought I was just trying to be noble by making this offer and consequently, I hurt her feelings.

The trust that we had once shared, no matter what the circumstances, seemed to have failed miserably. I had won the election, but the cost was just too high. Sooner than later, it cost me a friendship.

Five years seemed to vanish before my eyes. It feels like they never existed. No matter where I turn, I can’t seem to find what I’ve been looking for ever since that day — a best friend.

What counts today is that her one mistake, treating me as a mistrusted person, ruined our comradeship. It ran through my mind like wildfire. At this point in my life, we are as two shores that will never meet again. And you know what? I’ve come to realize that trusting someone doesn’t seem too hard at all, but getting the same trust back from someone else is most difficult.

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An Unforgettable Story

*by Abdelfattah Hammad — Turkey — ESLW 002*

It was one of the most unforgettable stories in my life; my friends and I went to the mountain to hunt. We had just met a new friend, and we were planning to play a joke on him. The plan was that I would shoot my best friend with an empty bullet. Then he would put some ketchup on himself and pretend that he was dying. The rest of us would run and leave the new friend alone with the injured one.

So, I shot my friend and the plan was going OK but no one ran except me. My friends started screaming and telling me, “Abdul you killed him.” They kept saying it over and over again. At first, I thought I really did shoot him with a real bullet, but I checked my gun immediately and realized that it wasn’t a real bullet. When I turned back to them, I saw them laughing hard. Then I realized that the joke was on me, not on our new friend.
I always thought that when my grandmother would visit my home, she would bring peace and happiness with her. However, I was completely wrong. When my grandmother came to my home, many things happened that made me think differently.

First of all, there were the bad comments that she always made about everything and everybody. For example, she always had something negative or had to say about our clothes. She wanted us to dress like she wanted. If we were watching TV, she wanted to watch something different. Also, she always had something bad to say about my sister’s husband, even though she had only seen him twice.

Secondly, there was her careless way of eating. Even though she had always been diabetic and suffered from blood pressure and heart problems, she was always eating sweet, fatty junk food. When she was caught eating this kind of food, she always blamed the kids for giving it to her. Also, when my mother or I tried to give her vegetables, fruits, or healthy food, she refused or just threw them in the garbage.

Lastly, there was her attitude towards us. During the time she stayed in our home, she never showed us any affection or love. Actually, she was always mad or angry at us. Sometimes, when we tried to talk to her, she looked at us with a bad expression and in a way that made us feel uncomfortable.

In conclusion, from the first day of my grandmother’s visit to my home to the last day, my life and the lives of my family members were full of stress and sadness. However, I hope that the next time my grandmother comes to visit us, she will be happier with a better disposition.
Driving Without Glasses
by Corina Flores — ESLW 004

I will never forget the day I had to take my driving test. I was so happy that I was going to get my driver’s license, but I never thought that because of my broken glasses, it would be difficult to pass the test.

That day I woke up late, around 9:00. My appointment was at 10:00 am. I took a shower at 9:10. When I got out of the shower, I was running to my room and I didn’t notice that my glasses were on the floor. I got dressed faster than ever before and then I told my mother that I was ready, but my glasses were missing.

I asked my mother if she knew where my glasses were. She said, “No, look for them”. I looked for them everywhere, but I couldn’t find them. My mother that was rushing me and I was nervous, mad and sad; I felt hopeless. I knew I couldn’t pass the driving test without my glasses.

After searching for my glasses everywhere, my mother told me to look for them in the bathroom. As I was going to the bathroom, I stepped on something hard that cracked. At that moment I jumped. My mind went blank. I didn’t want to think that those were my glasses. I looked down hoping that it was something else I had stepped on, even though I knew they were my glasses. My mom saw me with my broken glasses in my hands. She looked at me, and said, “Do you think you can drive without them?” I started crying and I cried all the way to the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Finally, we arrived for the road test. My eyes were puffy and red, as if I had spent the whole night crying. Even if my glasses had not been broken, my eyes were so puffy that I couldn’t see anything. I was so nervous that my hands were shaking like an earthquake. The car in front of us left and I was next. I asked my mother to give me a tissue. She opened my purse and there were my sunglass. I was saved! I knew I couldn’t pass the driving test with out my glasses. At that moment I felt relieved because I knew that I was going to have my license. After that, I had to wear my sunglasses for two weeks until my original glasses were fixed.
I do believe in God.

From this point, will I look utterly ignorant? Will you listen to me as a person who has released herself from matters and follows her heart? Will my views look close-minded or fanatical? Will you read my words as they run over this page, the word that convey my belief and my ideas?

I do believe in a force that exists everywhere through the earth, skies and nature and its glorious order is incredible and obvious. I can see footprints of His existence everywhere. You may ask me for evidence, but my God isn’t a dinosaur that leaves a fossil. He is an invisible merciful existence, who is perceptible by heart. He has guided me through fate. You may call me close-minded because I can see what you can’t. You are amazed by the label I give God, “realistic”, but your reality is dusted because you can’t see his presence around yourself. “Reality was a mirror in God’s hand which fell down on the earth and broke. Everybody found each piece and thought all the reality is with him”.*

I understand the point that religions can be used to get power over a society, but this fact doesn’t prove to me that there is no God. I have seen people who pray for His help with calamities and have gotten help and have been rescued. I have been in the worst condition when nobody could help me, but he was there to give me confidence to continue on my way. There is a huge difference between experiencing God’s miracles personally and hearing about them. You may claim it is a fancy, but I have experienced that fancy.

Everybody can have a special way to recognize God. The world is full of his colors, but it just needs the eye that can see. However, the closed-hearted will never learn it because “they are deaf, blind and mute to understand the truth and their hearts have sealed”. **

* A free translation from Molina (A famous Persian Gnostic poet and philosopher)
** A free translation from a verse of the holy Koran
Yes, I believe in God. I think God is everywhere — in our heart, in our soul, in our surroundings, in the mountains, in the rivers, in the atmosphere, and within you and me. God has made this beautiful world and has given us a chance to enjoy this wonderful life. Yes, it is true that we cannot see God, but we can not talk with him but he can see us and can listen to us. That is the reason why whenever we are in trouble we always say, “God please help me.”

I was raised in a family where I was taught to first worship and respect God before anyone else. All the holy books like the Geeta, Kurun-Sharef and Bible have made us believe that God really exists in this world. God is like the supernatural or an immense power which shows us the right path in life. In my religion, we pray to a sculpture of God. This is our way of showing respect to a higher power.

I believe that wherever and whatever I am today is just because of God. I think God is a great invisible but believable power. It doesn’t matter if anyone believes it or not. I do believe in God and will always believe in God because I know that wherever and whatever I am today is just because of God. I think God is a great invisible but believable power.

Yes, I believe in God. I think God is everywhere — in our heart, in our soul, in our surroundings, in the mountains, in the rivers, in the atmosphere, and within you and me. God has made this beautiful world and has given us a chance to enjoy this wonderful life. Yes, it is true that we cannot see God, but we can not talk with him but he can see us and can listen to us. That is the reason why whenever we are in trouble we always say, “God please help me.”
An exceptional teacher can create another life with her own knowledge and ideas. She is a person who helps her students throughout their whole educational career and can understand her students as her own children. A teacher can keep her students in her mind and soul and act as a guide for all the students in their bad and good times. She is someone who attends to students’ study problems as if the problems were her own.

A teacher always enjoys seeing her students study under her hand and achieve success in their future goals. She always hopes that her students reach their goals and become impressive, confident people, standing on their own feet and able to face any problems in their lives. An teacher is a person who improves the lives of many students and when students stray, she drags them the right way. A teacher who is born for the job makes her students’ lives easier and can read students’ minds, helping them with their study needs, becoming a “highway” for students.

An exceptional teacher never steps away or turns her face when she sees students coming towards her; a teacher isn’t selfish. She sets the tone for students’ education and is more than a parent for students, always following her students in an honest way, so when they graduate they can be very proud on themselves, remembering her as the “power” of their progress.

An effective teacher is able to use many teaching styles — hard, easy, fast, slow, funny, strict — for many different students. Teachers are great people who students will always remember. I love my writing teacher who never leaves me behind.
Careful Comparison is Crucial in Cookie Choice

*by Orlando Mundaca — Peru — ESLG 003*

I’m in the store thinking about what kind of cookies I’m going to buy. The first thing I look at is appearance. The raspberry cookies look the most colorful, but I don’t really like raspberry cookies. What about price? The chocolate chip cookies cost the most, but I don’t have too much money. The oatmeal cookies cost less, but they’re still more expensive than the raspberry cookies.

Meanwhile, I don’t want to get fat. That’s why I go to the gym every day. So, I think I might want to try a low-fat cookie. The oatmeal cookies have fewer calories than the chocolate chip cookies, so they’re less fattening. Also, if I consider the oatmeal cookies in comparison to the raspberry and chocolate chip, they are the healthiest.

But I also need to consider a couple more things, such as how crunchy the cookies are. The chocolate chip cookies are as crunchy as the raspberry cookies, but the oatmeal cookies are the crunchiest. I like that. I also like sugar. However, the oatmeal cookies are not as sweet as the other two, so they might not be a good choice.

I don’t care if a cookie is popular or not, but my friends eat a lot of chocolate chip cookies. I think these cookies are the most popular. Now, I think, I need to choose between the chocolate chip cookies and the raspberry cookies. I don’t know... let’s see. Well, the truth is—I love chocolate. So, in my opinion, the chocolate cookies are better than the raspberry cookies. In fact, they’re the best cookies of all. So, I think I’ve finally made a decision. I will buy the chocolate chip cookies!
The Gallery

Wanted
by Clara Esposito — Dominican Republic — ENW 107
(Pencil and paper sketch)
The Greatest Pearl in the World
by Brijeghna Rana — India — ESLR 002
(Pencil and paper sketch)
Krishna
by Ragini Rana – India – ENW 107
(Pencil and paper)
The Gallery

Sounder's Facts

From the Book

by Roberto Marquez
ESLR-002-51
Change Your Hair...Change Your Life

Magic Hair Wand Infomercial

Written and Acted by

Ricardina Haller — Peru
Ismelda Fermin, Nelfa Fernandez,
Marlyn Payero, Manuel Rivas — Dominican Republic

Produced by Lisa Egle — Instructor, ESL
ESLS 003

Actor A: What’s wrong, Marlyn? You look stressed out…

Actor B: I AM! I have a date in an hour and my hair is a MESS!

(Hair is extremely curly and frizzy…out of control)

Actor A: Why don’t you go to the salon?

Actor B: It’s too expensive. Besides, I don’t have enough time.

Actor A: Can you use an iron?

Actor B: No—I’m afraid of burning my hair.

Actor A: Wait a minute—I have the solution!

The Magic Hair Wand.

Narrator: The Magic Hair Wand is the best way to have straight hair…in minutes.

(Actor B straightens her hair…in second)

It’s not as expensive as going to the salon. That can cost $30 a week.

You can own the Magic Hair Wand for just two easy payments of $19.99.

Low-quality hair irons can damage your hair—not the Magic Hair Wand.

That’s because it’s made of ceramic—not metal.

The Magic Hair Wand is easy to use. Just plug it in and get started…

Actor C: Wow…you look GREAT tonight. You look so…different. Your hair looks (boyfriend) so healthy, so shiny….and SO straight.

Actor B: Thanks….

(She smiles at her date)

That’s the magic of the Magic Hair Wand…

Narrator: Change your hair….Change your life... Order a Magic Hair Wand TODAY!

(Toll-free number, etc. flashes on screen)

VIDEO OF INFOMERCIAL AVAILABLE IN PCCC LIBRARY
Flippy...Fantastic and Free...For You and Your Friends

Flippy Phone Commercial

**Written and Acted by**

*Basema Ijbara — Palestine*

*Juana Mora, Julia Goytendia Huamancaja — Peru*

*Beatriz Ortiz, Denia Adames — Dominican Republic*

**Produced by Lisa Egle — Instructor, ESL**

*ESLS 003*

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**Actor A:** What? I can’t hear you. Huh? What did you say?

*(Person on X-press cell phone with a bad connection… looks frustrated, sad and lonely).*

**Narrator:** That’s the X-press for you. The limited coverage means more dropped calls and more lost friends. It’s frustrating—and infuriating!

**Actor B:** Hi. How are you?

*(People on cell phones in two different locations)*

**Actor C:** Fine. Wow. I can hear you so clearly.

**Actor B:** Oh yeah? That’s because I got a new cell phone.

**Actor C:** Let me guess…you got the Flippy Phone, didn’t you?

**Actor B:** I sure did. Right now, there are some incredible monthly plans. For just $29.99 a month, I get 10,000 anytime minutes and another 50,000 mobile-to-mobile minutes.

**Actor C:** That’s great! It’s so much cheaper than a land line.

Also, you can talk anyway, any time now.

With all those minutes, you may never go back to work!

**Narrator:** Just flip and talk…it’s a fantastic phone! Also, it’s free.

That’s right—sign up for a one-year contract and get a free Flippy Phone. Buy one phone and get another for FREE. Sign up 3 friends and get 2 months free. Act now! These deals won’t last long….

Flippy…Fantastic…and Free.

For YOU and your friends!

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**VIDEO OF COMMERCIAL AVAILABLE IN PCCC LIBRARY**
“Don’t let the wrong camera ruin your special moments”
Olympus Digital Camera Commercial

Written and Acted by
Cristina Berrios — Chile
Mercedes Gamio, — Peru
Manuel Rivas, Dilia Solano, Ruth Rodríguez — Dominican Republic

Produced by Lisa Egle — Instructor, ESL
ESLS 003

(Bride and groom are cutting the cake.)

Bride: Let’s cut the cake.

Groom: Ok, honey…

(Looks over at Friend 1…acknowledging photo opportunity)

How about a picture?

(Friend 1 holds up regular camera, attempting to take picture.)

Friend 1: Oh no….I’m out of film…What am I going to do?

Friend 2: Don’t worry…I’ve got a digital camera. I don’t need film!

(Friend 2 takes photo)

(Bride comes running…looks at photo…meanwhile, Friend 1 is still fumbling with her camera)

Bride: Let me see that…

Oh no….my eyes are red and Manuel’s eyes are closed!

Friend 2: Not a problem…I’ll just take it again!

(Bride checks…is happy with new photo)

Friend 1: Hey…could you e-mail it to me?

Friend 2: Sure.

Narrator: You’ve waited all your life for this special moment…

Don’t let the wrong camera ruin it…

The Olympus Digital Camera…get your pictures instantly, e-mail them easily….and make your memories last forever.

VIDEO OF COMMERCIAL AVAILABLE IN PCCC LIBRARY
Hey Level 004 Writing Students …
Professor Egle has a tip for organizing those 5-paragraph academic essays.

Tell me what you’re going to tell me.
Introduction

Tell me.
Body

Tell me what you just told me
(but use different words).
Conclusion

Writers … Professor Summerhays says, “Take time to proofread!”

To improve in-class writing results, leave 5 minutes at the end of the writing session to PROOFREAD. You’ll catch silly grammar mistakes and organizational accidents.
Lament of the Reed by Delara Raboodan (p. 14)

What is Delara’s thesis statement? Is it stated or implied?

What is the purpose of paragraph 2?

How did Delara organize her essay? What are the clues to her organizational style?

Find and underline all the time words and expressions. How do they contribute to the story?

What is the tone of the essay? How does Delara’s tone affect you?

How do you feel about the title? Is it effective? Why or why not?

How are quotes used in this essay? Are they useful or confusing? Why/Why not?

WRITE: Write an essay about a life-changing event in your own life or in the life of someone you know. It can be positive or negative, happy, sad, funny… Use time words and expressions to help organize your story.

Careful Comparison is Crucial in Cookie Choice by Orlando Mundaca (p. 46)

What is Orlando comparing?

What kinds of desserts do you like?

Underline all the comparative adjectives and circle all the superlative adjectives.

How does Orlando organize the essay? What specific words help organize the essay?

WRITE: Compare two of your favorite foods. Describe why you like each of them, then decide which one of the two is the very BEST. Describe why. Include lots of comparative and superlative adjectives that describe taste, smell, color…