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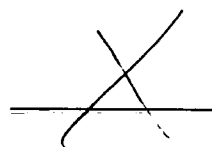
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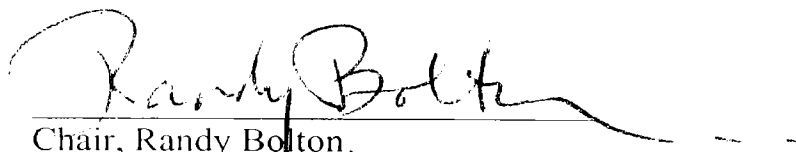
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Writings of the Lakota Youth at Red Cloud Middle School

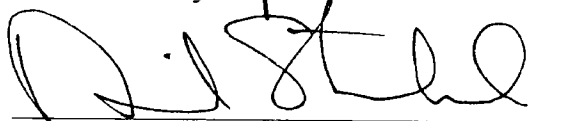
by  
Timothy Patrick McLaughlin  
B.A. University of Virginia, 1997

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Fine Arts, Integrated Arts and Education  
The University of Montana  
2003

Approved by



Chair, Randy Bolton



Dean, Graduate School

12-29-03

Date

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McLaughlin, Timothy Patrick

Master of Arts in Fine Arts, Integrated Arts Education, August 2003

Is This Good?: Writings of the Lakota Youth at Red Cloud Middle School

Committee Chair: Randy Bolton 

## **Abstract**

Is This Good?: Writings of the Lakota Youth at Red Cloud Middle School is an anthology of writings that represents the expressions of my students on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. The selections all come from a three year period, between 1997 and 2000, during which time I taught reading and writing classes with fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students.

The book is an attempt to honor these Lakota youth and their powerful words. The Creator has wonderfully blessed these kids with tremendous gifts of creativity, inside their often difficult lives, and through this project I humbly offer some reflections of these gifts to the reading, and hopefully non-reading, world.

In many ways, the book tells the story of my time living on the reservation, or at least the classroom piece of that story. It is a profile of my experiences with teaching writing in South Dakota. The collection consists of seventeen chapters, each based around a general theme or idea that the students and myself explored in our classes. Each of these chapters opens with some introductory comments, either about how we worked through a particular assignment related to the focus theme, or what was noteworthy about the kids' insights on that topic, or even a depiction of a relevant anecdote, and then presents the students' writings.

The anticipated result of the project is to take the book manuscript to the level of publication as my gift to these young writers and in recognition of my responsibility as partial caretaker of the words written in our classroom. My hope is that these sacred words will find greater life in the minds, hearts, and spirits of those who read them.

## Table of Contents

Intent of the Project .....	1
Background .....	2
The Idea .....	4
Assembling the Book .....	7
Impact of the Project .....	9
Appendix	
<u>Is This Good?: Writings of the Lakota Youth</u> .....	14

## **Intent of the Project**

For my final creative project, I decided to organize a collection of writings authored by my students at Red Cloud Middle School on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. My main intention in this endeavor has been to honor the words of my students, as well as my relationships with them. I was profoundly affected by the experiences of three years with my students on the reservation and felt that compiling a book could be a simple gift to demonstrate my respect and love for all of them.

Additionally, I had a strong sense that I was charged with the protection and care of the deeply personal and very skillful written creations of the students in our mutual classroom. Ultimately, I trust that the writing could serve a larger purpose through reaching the minds, ears, and hearts of the world audience.

This project is the result of countless hours of work and many blessed interactions with students, and as such, it is appropriately the centerpiece of my graduate studies. I believe that the book is the most significant written product I have ever helped to craft as it represents the most important work I have participated in, facilitating kids in opening the gates of their imagination and learning through the lens of creativity.



## **Background**

Between the years of 1997 and 2000, I had the supreme honor of teaching and living among the Lakota people on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. An extraordinary place named Red Cloud Indian School was my home, a place where I taught reading and writing classes, coached basketball and soccer, drove a school bus, and generally became woven into the fabric of the Holy Rosary Mission community.

As a writer who believes strongly in the power of creative expression through language, I was excited to try my hand at the teaching of writing when I moved out to South Dakota. I hoped to make the classroom a place where kids could openly explore their inner selves and their experiences of the world around them. At twenty-two years of age, a very recent college graduate, I was certainly equipped with more enthusiasm than savvy and didn't quite realize the scope of the task set before me.

Two major challenges were not fully anticipated or understood at the onset of my teaching career. My expertise in working with children of various races, ages, and backgrounds had not fully prepared me to work with Native kids, nor had it taught me the subtle art of leading a classroom. This was not the summer camp or after-school recreation setting to which I was accustomed and these kids were not quite ready to immediately follow my lead.

This was their world and I was their guest. Before doing anything of real substance under my guidance, the kids needed to both know and trust me. Because the arena of creative writing is highly personal, I believe trust must be built in any

group before the gifts of discovery and sharing become true and strong. With the Indian kids at Red Cloud, this process of trust building was utterly crucial and happened in a way that I can only describe as a mystery, and yet very genuine. A passage from “the Blank Page” chapter of the book captures the essence of this initial step in our journey with writing.

*The important thing was that I allow the students to open their minds and hearts on their terms, at their speed, and in their own way, or not at all. In the most essential terms, this is exactly what happened. Over the course of many months, and in full, three years, our classroom became a place where the kids could feel safe about expressing themselves and were constantly encouraged in their pursuit to find their own voice and pronounce it joyfully.*

*Once given this freedom to open themselves, [my students] ran with it much further than I imagined possible. Somehow, in a sacred way and with the blessings of our Creator, I witnessed a transformation in my students. From the motionless bodies and hard faces of day one, [paralyzed by the task of facing a blank page and creating something new], to a point where kids would often begin class with a smile or a laugh, then get to work and produce something of power, and finally even want to read it aloud to their class.*

Some details of this transformation are elaborated in the chapters of the book itself, (appendix, page 14). In short, all I did was carefully open a doorway and then try to get out of the way as the kids rushed through and proceeded to do amazing things with, around, and through language.

## The Idea

As my students engaged more with writing, their creative voices quickly appeared and began to mature. At first, a few lines or images here and there would resonate as strong writing, and soon enough kids were crafting short poems or statements that flowed well, demonstrated ability for word choice, and communicated something substantial. I rapidly learned that these indigenous kids had a lot of real things to say and maybe just needed the right opportunity to articulate them. To me, it made sense that in the sometimes chaos of life on the impoverished reservation, where things seldom follow any rigid structure, kids could easily adapt to the notion of open-ended assignments where creativity was the primary rule and format.

Before long, I began xeroxing the writings that seemed to carry a power about them. At times, I wondered if the kids' Lakota ancestors were directly guiding their pencils and pens to group words in profound ways. I always asked the students' permission before xeroxing and never once did anyone say no; in this willingness, I glimpsed that maybe the kids were a little bit proud of what they had done.

As I gathered the writings of my students, it seemed natural to want to share them with a larger audience. After all, isn't writing meant to be read or heard and experienced in the soul of the reader? In collaboration with the computer teacher at the middle school, some of the writings found publication in a school newspaper of sorts, the Crusader Quarterly. By the following year, the publication had evolved into more of an annual literary magazine, featuring solely the work of my students. The feedback we, the students and myself, received from these publications was very

positive and encouraged the kids to keep writing and myself to keep facilitating that writing, and then finding ways to share it with others.

I consider my students' writing to be in the Native tradition of sacred stories and have attempted to treat their words with great respect at all times. The literary magazines seemed like a decent way for the larger Red Cloud Indian School community to dialogue with the voices of my students. When I left the reservation in the summer of 2000, I took a good look at the enormous stacks of xeroxed papers and wondered about further possibilities within their contents.

As I poured over the pages collected over three blessed years, the idea of a book filled my heart and soul. However, my mind was not yet convinced. I felt very anxious about several realities involved with assembling a book. First, should these writings, as sacred stories of a sort, be shared with people who have no connection to, or even conception of, the Pine Ridge Reservation and the Lakota people? If so, am I the appropriate one to do such a thing or should it be a Lakota person? And then the larger question, if I did construct a book, how should it be published? By my own means or that of the school, as the literary magazines were, and then distributed to students, teachers, employees, and families of Red Cloud School and other reservation folks? Or should it be a book in the proper sense, more widely published and sold to the public?

This last question proved to be the most challenging. Lakota spiritual leaders had taught me that sacred items are not to be sold or associated with money. Obviously, funding is required to produce a book and get it out to an audience. These difficult considerations perplexed me and so I sought out the guidance of a couple

spiritual leaders whom I had grown to know and respect. After receiving their support and encouragement of the project as a book, I chose to go ahead and begin to shape a product.

Later, the difficult issue became whether I should associate this sacred project with my Masters degree, a distinction invented by the typically secular world of academia. In both cases, I decided that yes, it is the right thing to do and that the complexities and profane imperfections of modern life should not withhold me from this important work. And so, the idea went into motion.

## **Assembling the Book**

The movement of the idea was both deliberate and complex. First, I needed to meticulously go through literally hundreds of pages of student work and somehow label any and all writings that had a chance of inclusion in the manuscript. After this initial process, I started to group the selected writings, just as I had when forming the literary magazines. I began to see seventeen decent assemblages of relatively similar size, each centered by a broad theme. These would be the chapters of the book.

As I grew to visualize the book as more than a collection of writings and as the story of my classroom experiences on the reservation, I felt it would be appropriate to draft some commentary to accompany the students' expressions in each chapter. For each theme, an event of note, a reality of reservation life, or an observation about my students' writing emerged that seemed to match my purposes with these introductory remarks.

In the next major phase of the project, I alternated between writing these chapter openings and transferring the actual text of the chosen writings from their xeroxed pages to new pages according to their respective theme-related chapter. Slightly laborious and quite lengthy, this process moved me to the rough draft stage of the book.

The final step of assembly consisted of editing and re-editing the manuscript innumerable times until I felt it was in a good place and ready for presentation. As I imagine a composer of music must do, I continually revisited the manuscript over the past year to fine tune it, pulling out certain pieces, adding others, re-arranging the

order of selections until the whole seemed to flow together as seamlessly as I could fashion it. The end product is not perfect by any means, but the hope is that it is essentially true to the character of my students and presents their voices clearly.

## **Impact of the Project**

In the simplest terms, the largest impact of this final creative project is my continued dedication to writing. This begins with the development of my own writing, which I feel is essential to keeping my teaching of writing fresh and honest. As an artist, I have grown much over the couple years that I have been working on this book. Taking the leap of actually committing myself to this project has helped to ground me in more confidence as a writer. I have found myself increasingly performing my writing and somewhat involved in the literary scene of Santa Fe, New Mexico, my present residence. I plan to publish some of my own work after getting this collection of my students' work published.

My devotion to supporting young writers has equally been confirmed by this book. I have come to understand the tremendous value and influence of teenagers actively involved with artistic endeavors, particularly through writing. This year, I helped lead a poetry slam at the Santa Fe Indian School, where I currently teach, and truly felt it was one of the most positive and inspiring educational events that I have done with kids. Watching teens get super excited about language, even if unconsciously so, was highly motivating.

The book itself serves as a foundation for my teaching of writing. It is like a map of where I have been and what I have learned in this area. I refer to the book for writing prompts and for examples to read to my current students. Looking it over from time to time also reminds me why I have consciously chosen to walk this path with writing. Although I don't expect to connect with a group as deeply as I did on



the reservation, where the kids became like sons and daughters to me, I know that advocating the writing of young folks will always be a meaningful pursuit.

Through my experiences of teaching in South Dakota and through the reflection I have done while composing this book, a basic structure of how to teach writing well has manifested before me. Although I do not credit myself for any of the strong writing that my students craft, I have a pretty good idea of the kind of environment that stimulates solid work. In my classes facilitating writing, this issue of a “safe” classroom, mentioned in the background, is one I hold at the core of my teaching philosophy. Students must feel safe physically, emotionally, and spiritually before they will risk looking deeply inside themselves and translating what they find into words. An even larger development is building an atmosphere where kids, especially self-esteem deficient teenagers, will share their writing with the group.

This type of setting is definitely an ideal to be strived for, not a model of perfection realized at all moments. The key to forming such a classroom is to have students recognize and value their desire for a safe and expressively open place to interact with their peers and teacher. This happens through positive group experiences with writing.

Silent concentration is the first ingredient. I believe teens, and probably most humans, are hungry for more silence and liberty from the noise of modern existence. The greatest gift of silence is communion with the divine, however it can be used very well with writing, too. Once kids have tasted silence in the classroom and written something of quality within its presence, the construction of a creative safe place has begun. When a kid witnesses his or her classmates immersed in writing and

then listens to them read aloud something profound or sensitive or inspiring or humorous, the foundations become a bit more established. And when all the students in a group have risked sharing their writing and had it received positively, a writing class is born.

The energy of each of these steps is intense and holy. When a group gets to this point, a teacher can now do things that challenge kids to their fullest potential and beyond. I have learned that facilitating the creation of this energy and channeling it effectively is the art of teaching writing. This is why I treat writing assignments very seriously, honor the silence of kids engaged in writing, preach and practice respect for everyone's expressions, and compliment my students' writing efforts.

During my third year of teaching on the reservation, when we were examining the purposes of writing, I took a moment to reflect on the importance of writing in education. My conclusion or hypothesis, as written in my lesson plan notebook of that year, was as follows.

*Writing involves young adults with the real happenings of their minds, hearts, and worlds. They must be able to connect their writing to their actual lives and actual concerns. Perhaps the most important academic lesson a young adult can learn is mastery of the skill of effectively expressing their thoughts and emotions.*

It is hard to speculate on the potential influence of this humble book project. As stated, the hope is to find a way to have it published. My sense is that the writings are something of a collection of teachings that inform about the realities of reservation life, offer insights gleaned from living within those realities and among a wide continuum of backgrounds influenced by Lakota

culture, and present artistic language shaped by talented young folks.

Hopefully, others will find it worthwhile to take a look at the world through the perspective of these Lakota youth.

Some of those readers will invariably be teenagers themselves and it would be very good if the expressions of my students were to generate or grow any inclination toward writing among more young people. Also, some educators, particularly those working with writing, may find some useful ideas, lessons, or techniques inside this manuscript, although it is not explicitly constructed for that reason. Before any of these possibilities, the student authors themselves may be the most directly affected by the project, and I pray that it will be in all good ways.

A not entirely anticipated impact of this project has been my re-connection to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and the Lakota people, a connection I both value and respect enormously. The Lakota people offered me a spiritual home inside their circle, and I have accepted the invitation. Editing this book has kept me in direct contact with a few significant mentors and some of the student authors, and the others I have been in touch with through memory.

Moreover, the reading and re-reading of all these writings has given me the space to process much of what I experienced while living on the reservation for three years. The intensity of experience seemed to grow as I stayed longer and was able to receive more, and so there was little opportunity to work through much of that raw and powerful life footage until I left the

reservation. I knew that somehow I had changed in large ways, really was brought into manhood by virtue of many kids looking to me as a dad figure, but the composition of the book has helped me to know those changes and my own self more precisely.

I would like to thank all of my students for their sincerity and courage in our journey with writing. As I wrote in a poem shortly before leaving the reservation, I “wish the world for each one of you, that your spirits will fly in unfettered freedom and your feelings find a good home...Love your family, respect everyone, do not be afraid to leap into the unknown...Make your voices heard, loud and powerful, or silent and perfect.” With this project, I am giving away what these kids have given to me and I ask Tunkasila, our Grandfather, to bless the offering. Hau. Mitakuye Oyasin.

# Appendix

## Is This Good?

Writings of the Lakota Youth at Red Cloud Middle School

Edited by Tim McLaughlin

## Introduction

This book is a collection of writings that represent the expressions of the Lakota youth at Red Cloud Middle School on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. The selections all come from a three year period, 1997-2000, during which time I taught reading and writing classes to fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students. The quality of the work has little to do with any teaching expertise on my part and has everything to do with the outstanding natural creativity of my students. God has blessed these children with powerful gifts inside their often difficult lives and through this book these sacred gifts are presented to the world.

Many thank yous are in order. I would like to thank all the authors and their families for their support of this project and for their courage to participate in it. Also a large thank you to my colleagues and principal at Red Cloud Middle School who helped nurture a safe and open school environment where students could invent freely with their words. The Jesuit community at Holy Rosary Mission equally deserves my gratitude for encouraging my work with the children.

Special thanks go out to several mentors who continually guided me during my time on the reservation and particularly advised me in the effort to make this book in a respectful way that honors the Lakota people. Pilamaya to Basil Brave Heart, Linn Cross Dog, and Wilmer Mesteth. I would like to express my thanksgiving to my own family, who has always been my source of strength, love, and inspiration, faithfully willing to assist the project in any way. Above all, the greatest praise goes to Tunkasila, Grandfather, who has blessed me in this undertaking and continues to open the sacred red road before me.

## Table of Contents

<b>The Blank Page</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Elements</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Time of Day</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>World</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Emotions of Misery</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Animals</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Native Thoughts</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>From Quiet to Silence</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Family</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Spirit</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Youth</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>Colors</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>Imagination</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>Life</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>Dreams</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>Values</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>Writing</b>	<b>107</b>

## The Blank Page

I can well remember my first day as a teacher. Armed with extensive summer camp counseling and administrating experience and confident in my ability to connect with kids of any background through my inner-city work, I was determined to make my class a lot more engaging and interesting than my own memories of middle school. In fact, on this day we weren't going to need pencils and paper, books, or even desks and chairs for that matter. I had a plan and was excited to put it into motion. Without a doubt, the kids were going to love their first day back to school this year.

Needless to say, I received quite a surprise that hot August morning. Instead of nervous cooperation when I asked the students to choose a seat in the circle of rug squares I had laid out on the floor in order to play the best "ice breaker" I knew, the kids mostly gave me stoic stares of protest mixed with genuine confusion. This certainly had never happened to me before. A total refusal to do as I had asked by everyone. Clearly, the rules of the game were a bit different out here. I dug deeply into my techniques of positive persuasion and eventually got maybe seventy percent of the kids doing something resembling the game I had been sure would go beautifully.

I quickly realized that these children were much less interested in what we would be doing in my classroom than in who I was and, for the moment, what they could get away with under my authority. By the time the bell rang that morning, the planned game had been abandoned and with it all my previous notions of how to teach the class and how things would work in the classroom. We, the students and myself, would have to begin on a much more fundamental level, one devoid of any assumptions of roles or procedures, building trust and mutual comfort slowly and carefully.

The following day, we tried our first writing activity. Now this was something totally foreign to these seventh grade students. Never before had they faced a blank page and been asked to create, not transcribe answers to specific questions or follow a general format to consider a subject of choice, but to look inside themselves and make something new. The task seemed paralyzing at first, but I was ready to walk with them through the pain of adjusting to this sort of creative work.

So, after a short discussion of sorts, we began with a single word, the piece of language most personal and well known to anyone, their



individual name. I asked the students to write their own name down, in all its variations and forms. In ways they have heard it spoken or seen it printed as well as new ways of their invention, backwards, in parts, or in re-arranged orders. Every name and any name that meant them in some way was good. Any person who has ever picked up an instrument of writing knows what it is to doodle, and so the children began working. And with that, the ball was rolling, ever so slowly, but rolling nonetheless.

I had titled the class Creative Writing and even though it was evident that the personal realm would be both complicated and dangerous to work within, I felt that facing the challenge was my duty, no matter how many barriers the kids established to close themselves off, most notably from their own selves. The important thing was that I allow the students to open their minds and hearts on their terms, at their speed, and in their way, or not at all. In the most essential terms, this is exactly what happened. Over the course of many months and in full, three years, our classroom became a place where the kids could feel safe about expressing themselves and were constantly encouraged in their pursuit to find their own voice and to pronounce it joyfully.

Once given this freedom to open themselves, the kids ran with it much further than I imagined possible. Somehow, in a sacred way and with the blessings of our Creator, I witnessed a transformation in my students. From the motionless bodies and hard faces of day one to a point where kids would often begin class with a smile and a laugh, then get to work and produce something of power, and finally even want to read it aloud to their class.

The title of the book, Is This Good?, refers to the three words I heard most often in my writing classes. An articulation of a basic desire for affirmation, the students who had made themselves vulnerable by writing needed to know that what they had shared was valuable and true. Sometimes intonated to mean "am I finished?", sometimes "do you like it?", and on special occasions "did I do something great here?", this question often framed any appreciation and analysis of a student's writing. The answer was always "yes, this is good", and so many times it was excellent writing that spoke from the soul.

## **Elements**

In my third year of teaching, I decided we would begin our writing with a look at the most fundamental physical subject, the elements of life. Different cultures disagree about what are and what are not the primary elements, but I chose to go with the four that seemed the most basic and inspiring, Earth, Water, Fire, and Wind. The hope with this assignment was for my students to immediately learn to create simple concrete images that speak to the reader clearly and to avoid vague descriptions that say little of interest. The kids performed this task deftly and thereby provided a solid basis for their writing that school year.

On many other occasions, my students turned their creative focus to the various manifestations of these first elements and offered their reflections on the physical and spiritual world around them. I was continually impressed by the stark imagery and the careful investigation of natural forces within the words presented to me by the kids in response to a host of different themes we explored that year. In short, the writings of this chapter portray an experience with nature that is profound and highly respected.

### **4 Elements**

Wind blows. Fire burns. Water falls. Earth crumbles. The wind is the music that makes leaves dance. The fire is the transportation for things to go back to God. Water is the singing diamonds that take care of everything. Earth is the anchor for things.

by Carmen Fourd

### **The Elements of Life**

The wind is the motion of the spirits dancing in the spirit world. The sound of the buffalo running on the golden-yellow prairie. The fire is the symbol of the elders telling stories around the laughing campfire. The water is the symbol of eagles swooping down on the cool water on a hot summer day. The Earth is the symbol of the people all colors, black, brown, white, all the animals, and all the green plants.

by Kyle White

## **4 Elements**

The world is the head of Mother Nature.  
The Earth spins as a dancer would spin, slowly with balance and grace.  
Water is new life and waves at people as they wave back.  
Fire dances with passion.  
Wind blows your problems away as a strong forceful wind  
would make your problems seem small.

by Anthony Zimiga

## **Ocean and Sky**

The sky is a copy of the ocean. Only it is upside down. The clouds are the waves that roll and toss about. The deep blue is the water and all the birds are the fish in the ocean. The sky and the ocean are not different really, they are quite the same, just in different places. Many people ponder about them both, looking for clues and answers.

by Megan White Face

## **The Ocean**

The Ocean is the flow of the world  
as we are the flow of nature  
and its elements!!!

by Duncan Deon

## **The Sky**

I always liked the sky. The sky is always above me, no matter if it is covered by clouds or dappled by stars, it's always there. The sky is a limit. No matter how far I try to reach it, I never can. The birds can never go past it. The sky always has hidden creatures in it. Clouds are creatures in the sky. If you look hard enough, you can see the shapes. The sky has always been relied upon for life. The sun's warmth comes from the sky. A terrible drought is evaded by rain falling from the sky. Snow falls from the sky. Each is a gift from the sky. That is why I've always liked the sky.

by David Wolfe

## **The Sun**

The sun is yellow and bright.  
The sun goes in circles just for the night.  
The sun is the biggest yellowest star in the universe.  
The sun stays in one place while we have to spin, spin, and spin.

by Jessie Star Comes Out

## **4 Elements**

Earth is like a big ball spinning that can't stop.  
Wind is like people, changing their ways every day.  
Fire is like somebody crying in sadness.  
Water is like the ocean in battle surrounding the land.

by Ashley Sully

## **4 Elements**

Wind blows leaves into the blue sky.  
Water spits in the air like waves in the ocean  
where dolphins catch the surf.  
Fire is a sheet of red and yellow dancing on the Earth,  
bouncing over trees and jumping over water.  
Wind blows it farther.

by JJ Wilson

## **4 Elements**

Wind is like spirits whispering in your ear. Like a horse waiting to go somewhere. Water is like a doctor. It wants to help you not be thirsty. Earth is like life, it will never stop. Like an idea, you keep adding stuff. Fire is red, yellow, and orange dancers performing in a show.

by Kristin Weston

## 4 Elements

Wind gives us life and air to breathe into our lungs. Water is rain coming down like little crystal drops falling all over the place. Fire has smoke that looks like gray and black clouds going to the sky, showing themselves off and making friends with other clouds. Earth is like a book, it keeps our stories and tells about people.

by Sandy Red Feather

## Raindrop

To be a raindrop, you'd be falling from the sky like a freight train through a tunnel. You never know where you'll land. You might become part of the ocean, a lake, or even a river. Maybe you'll be a raindrop that hits the land and helps the grass grow or helps trees grow. You can be a raindrop that helps or a raindrop that does nothing.

by Cody Seaboy

## Rain

Rain has no pain. It doesn't even stain. As I watch it fall, it reminds me of a broken chandelier, but rain doesn't shatter it just splatters. As I sit on my porch watching, wondering when the rain will roll off the leaf.

by Dena Colhoff

## Star

Star high in the sky, burning bright  
The sun is coming up  
At dawn, are you scared to burn  
Right out of the night?

by Joyce Buckman

## The Black Sky

The sky is black with stars that seem so close, the wind will blow its way. The sky is black and the moon is bright and everything is just right.

by Kiri Hammock

## **Time of Day**

It's always fun to think about your favorite things. In my classroom, every kid had a chance to think about the portion of the day that they enjoy most. What was immediately interesting to me with this activity was the almost unanimous look to nature of my students in their effort to articulate an affection for a specific time of day.

Rarely did my students center their writing around playing video games, watching movies, or talking on the phone, all things they love to do with unstructured time. Not even the people they are with at different times throughout a day stood in the main spotlight of their sentences. In general, the kids were more drawn to express their communion with the natural world at their chosen time and then perhaps supplement that experience with other benefits related to what happens at night, morning, or afternoon.

### **Dawn**

Dawn is my best time of day because the clouds and sky are like mixed paint. The sun shines through the mixed paint, trying to keep me warm. Dawn is so pretty, nice, and peaceful. You can't hear anything but the birds out singing.

by Joyce Buckman

### **Sunrise Morning**

Sunrise morning. I like the purple orange sunrise. The way the dew drops off the leaves on the branches and onto your lawn and porch. The way the morning mist flows in the air. The purple clouds, the frost on the windows. Half of the orange sun, the nice cool breeze.

by Eugene Giago

## **Dawn**

The dawn is very beautiful with pink, dark blue, and yellow all spreading like watercolors. It is the beginning of a new day, a new life, a chance to start over again. Dawn is also something undescrivable, a promise that there will be continuous life, as long as that star rises in the sky.

by Carmen Fourd

## **Waking Up**

Dawn is like a newborn baby born each and every day. You awake to fresh smelling dew. Birds chirping for the beautiful day God gave us, as if they were angels singing to bless us all day.

by Chanda Thompson

## **Bright Dawn**

Bright dawn is beautiful when the sun and hills overlap. And it is colorful with red, orange, and yellow. The beautiful yellow sun comes up.

by Candida Bagola

## **Colorful Twilight**

Shining colorful twilight starting with a sunset, lighting the sky on fire. Then the sliver of a moon douses the fire in a cool blue mist. The first stars sparkle like diamonds and a gentle breeze makes the trees dance, rustling their leaf tambourines as I walk Tiger in the field.

by Amy Groening

## **Playful Evening**

The playful evening is a dark blue sky outlined by purple. The people are at one place in different times as I run around playing basketball. People are walking under the beautiful evening. People are talking before the darkened sky.

by Jessie Star Comes Out

## Sunset

Sunset is a peaceful time of day, unlike Dawn bustling around with the colors of her robes and the birds twittering in her hair. The cool morning breeze, no matter how hot the day, ruffling the broken pieces of silence.

Sunset is calm and peaceful, stepping softly up until you know she's there. Silencing the world with a slowly spreading blanket of twilight, tucking it in for the night. Sunset is there, always, something to hold on to after a hard unexpected day.

Gathering up the pieces of broken silence, putting them together with wisps of soft colored cloud. Watching twilight creep in and then slipping away before you know she's gone, leaving soft spots of color, her footprints, in her wake.

by Alinea Groening

## Starry Night

I picture myself in the sky with wings flying, seeing roses pass by, looking down on everyone, watching over like an angel.

by Jenna Tapio

## Night

Night is my sanctuary from the world. When everything is in peace and the rest of the world is asleep. When the creatures of the night come out and the stars show up. The moon dimmer than the sun, but enough to see through the darkness. My favorite part of the day, or should I say night.

by Kiri Hammock

## Night

My favorite time is night to watch the stars come out and sparkle like Christmas lights and the moon as it glimmers through the night sky as if it were a light underneath the ocean.

by Brandon Lacey



### **Starry Night**

A starry night is a very nice evening when all the animals are awake and the owls and bats come out. The moon is like a flashlight that smiles straight down on you and if you talk to it, a gust of wind will go by and it will talk back to you.

by Danielle Merrival

### **Snowy Night**

A snowy night is when my family is asleep and the coyotes are howling. I see the world through my window and it looks like a polar bear's back. The stars are bright and dogs are running around.

by Dallas Nelson

### **Night**

Night is dark but pleasant. It has a rhythm in the flow of the wind. The sky is like a chandelier of lights, high, high up beyond the clouds, which float like they're boats in water.

by Dena Colhoff

### **Lazy Night**

A lazy night is a time when you're laying down looking up at the sky, hoping you will see a falling star or wishing you will go someday and enjoy the beauty of the clouds covering the Earth.

by Curtis Red Owl

### **Night**

Night is when the stars come out in the black sky above, and all the little kids go to bed. So all the crazy teens and people come out into the night, to laugh and fight the whole long night. Then, at sunrise, a dramatic change occurs and all the people go in to wait for night to fall again.

by Kayla Matthews

## **Starlight Night**

I like night because it's all bright  
and you see yourself in the night.  
The other people are fast asleep,  
the little creatures in the night are half awake  
crawling at the star light bright night!

by Lorraine Little

## World

Without a doubt, I found my students at Red Cloud to be keen observers of the happenings in the world around them. Their basic knowledge of nature's rhythms and phenomena, as well as the frequency with which they comment upon such matters, is noteworthy and quite evident in this volume. Even more interesting to me are my students' reflections upon their observations in the outdoors. Often, the kids' prior experiences with aspects of the Earth's living cycle provided them with a foundation for making statements about today's world. The precocious insight of my students' commentary and the conviction with which it was articulated may stem directly from a very deep mutual relationship with nature, understood and respected by the Lakota as Unci Maka, Grandmother Earth.

### Sunset and Stars

Sunset is like God reaching out and healing all that is sick.  
Stars are the beaming madness brought out to all the messed up world.  
Sunset is beautiful colors settling on the horizon  
waiting for the watchers to come out.  
Stars are the watchers that look upon us and see nothing will happen to  
you.  
Sunset and stars are like I wish I could live and look at it as a landscape.

by Tyler Seaboy

### What the Clouds are Saying

The clouds are saying I'm tired of looking down on this sick, sad world  
with people killing, having babies, and violence.  
I wish I could see a better tomorrow.  
The clouds are sad, it's gonna rain.  
The world is all pain like a stain that can't wash out.  
I wish there's a better tomorrow, all I feel is sorrow.  
I'm not happy with all this gossip and violence.  
I'm gonna close my eyes so I can drift away.

by Kristie Tapio

## **Nature**

The sky is my mom watching over me.  
The water is my memories to be.  
Nature is my home and family.  
Images in nature put my game to a higher level.

by Derrick McCauley

## **Center of the World**

I was looking into the sky at a mountain thinking only time could destroy it. I climbed to the top, from there I could see the ocean with waves gently washing over the shore. I could see the setting sun, in time it would be dark. For now it is light. I stand up here smelling the sweet brisk mountain air. When I stand here, I know I am in the center of the world.

by David Wolfe

## **Rainbows**

I think rainbows are a circle of light, rainbows are just so bright.  
I think rainbows are just there after it rains to show it gets calmer.  
Rainbows remind me of the summer.  
Rainbows make me think of my Dad  
and that's when I get mad, and then I start feeling sad.  
I think rainbows are just a half circle that is colorful, a circle that is painful.

by Ashley Sully

## **Rose**

soft and delicate  
blooming with beauty  
floating in stars

by Jenna Tapio

## **Spring**

Spring is when you catch some good bass. Spring is when it starts to rain. Spring is when all the berries start to sweet. Spring is when it gets so hot that roads start to dry up.

by OJ Two Bulls

## **A Seed is New Life**

A single seed grows and becomes a tree for children to play on and climb. A seed plants the grass that the deer and rabbits run on. A little seed plants a forest. A single seed grew the whole world. A single seed grows and raises each human or animal.

by Kathy McLaughlin

## **What the Roses are Saying**

What the roses are saying cannot be heard through voice  
But through beauty as you watch the rain slip  
From its petals and hang from its edges.

by Dena Colhoff

## **Dreams of the Trees**

Dream about flying and being able to walk around and be free!  
Being proud to be here for us, our air. Being here for every breath of life,  
knowing they are the reason for our life.

by Tia Catches

## **Looking at Clouds**

One way of looking at a cloud is as a soft pillow that you can't sleep on. A cloud is like a bunch of sprinkles hooked together to make a storm. A cloud is like drawing your family, warm and comfortable. Always there when you need to be warm and comfortable. Every sprinkle in a cloud is every person's love for God, and He didn't have room for all of this love, so He made clouds.

by Danielle Merrival

## **Nature**

I walk out into the open, never dreaming of what I'd see. I sat on a tree and saw Mother Nature crying to me. When I looked around, I knew the pain She felt. All the trees lifeless on the ground. She cries and asks me, "How?" She continued, "It's gone. I had to say goodbye to my grass, trees, and little animals, too. This was once beautiful and I was happy, but now I feel like you."

by Larissa Ross

## **Rainbows**

Rainbows come after the rain. They are beautiful in many ways.  
They have pinks, yellows, oranges, and reds.  
I look at them until they all go to their beds.  
I know they are as beautiful as can be. From as far as I can see.  
I would love to watch them day and night.  
I would like to touch them if I could.  
But only God can do that.

by Christina Cordier

## **It's Peaceful in the Country**

In the country, it's peaceful. The birds chirp a lot and make music. The wind blows like a smooth wave of the ocean. The horses and cattle run wild and free. It is also peaceful because everyone gets along. When the wind blows, the weeds sway. When the sun shines, everything glows.

by Blue Dawn Little

## **Summer**

Everything blooms. Dazzling colors explode across a green meadow. Little baby animals roam with their parents. Lots of memories come back to haunt and linger of summers past. Music being blared across a town. Trash cans exploding. Fireworks going off. Then a little quieter, but not much. Still full of fun and happiness. Then it slips into fall. That's where the story ends.

by Carmen Fourd

## Emotions of Misery

There were countless occasions when we explored the subject of emotions in my classroom over the three years. Only a scattered few times did the kids produce anything of substance that was explicitly about positive feelings. A few representations of this select group of writings open this chapter. It seems my students were much better at revealing their joys and hopes in assignments that were not specifically about that topic.

When it came to focusing on emotions of loneliness and fear, however, the writing came alive and really commanded the attention of the reader. The poignancy in these selections really comes from their origin in the reality of the kids' lives. Rarely did I receive an abstract description of a feeling, the words here come directly from the heart of experience.

A significant development occurred when I came upon an assignment that incorporated Langston Hughes' last published work, Black Misery. In this children's style book, Hughes speaks about the experience of race in this country and utilizes the word "misery" as a framework for dealing with racism and its associated emotions. This framework of misery and Hughes' articulation of real life as a black person opened my students in ways that I think were both healthy and piercingly honest.

Unfortunately, there was an almost unanimous identification with incidents of prejudice among my students. The word misery seemed to serve as an effective vehicle to write about these incidents and other painful truths. On the days when we worked on this assignment, the students' faces and words often glowed with a serious intensity that spoke loudly.

## Laughter

What is laughter? Is it the moment between reality and insanity or is it the true way to express yourself from all the torture you endured as a child and you look at your past and all you see are razor blades.

by Ryan Ross

## Love

When I think of love, I see a waterfall overflowing with flowers, a flowerfall. I also think of two people being happy together. I see doves, eagles, and the color white. Doves for the long lost love, an eagle for two people to reach the height, and white for the innocence.

by Sharon Tobacco

## Where the Love Goes

I know where the love goes! They say the love goes in the heart. When you like or love someone, such as family, it goes in your heart. Like when I love my parents. I had this experience and it turned into the thought in my mind and the smile or laugh on my face and in my voice. That's where the love goes!

by Blue Dawn Little

## Love

Boats sailing away forever and ever. They never stop, always sailing.  
Being lost, alone and happy,  
Together forever and always in peace.

by Tia Catches

## Pain and Pleasure

Pain is when you lose somebody.  
Pleasure is when you enjoy something.  
Pain is when you awake in a very bright place.  
Pleasure is when you pop champagne, like winning the championship.  
Pain is when you are sick or get put in the ground.  
Pleasure is making all-state.  
Pain is when you have cancer and when you awake you think it's all a dream, but you're stuck with it.  
Pleasure is romance or a true love.  
Pain is when you got a gun to your head.  
Pleasure is like a red rose and a fern.

by Tyler Seaboy



## **Loneliness**

Loneliness has no feeling for you, no one has any love for you or they leave when you want them near. Loneliness is what comes from the rainclouds, the closet, the darkness. It comes from behind and creeps up when you are unaware of it. Loneliness can find you anytime, no matter where you are.

Loneliness is when you're all alone in a quiet dark place, then you start hearing voices of those who were with you the day before. It's a feeling that's sharp as a knife in your heart, it makes your mind go blank, and your throat hurt when you feel like crying. It tortures you when you don't cry because you can't.

by Stephanie Sully

## **Loneliness**

A time of sadness  
A time away from your family  
A time for being hurt  
I think this is being alone in a dark valley  
Feeling lost in another world but still in the same  
You're alone in a dark dark place with only you  
and some kind of animal no one knows about but you  
A time for being scared

by Alisha Patton

## **Loneliness**

Loneliness is being a bird without feathers. Loneliness is a part of growing up. It is hard if you are very social. Everybody needs loneliness. Sometimes loneliness helps you if you're a writer. Loneliness helps strengthen the soul.

by Tami Matthews

## **Loneliness**

Loneliness is like being in a white room ready to pull their hair out they feel so bad inside. They want to yell as loud as they could. They wish you could see them in their eyes. Their day is the same, they just want a life again.

by Brandon Schreiner

## **Loneliness**

Loneliness is rolling yourself into a ball and going far away from anyone,  
so if you're alone at least it will be by choice.  
Loneliness is being by yourself in a room full of people.  
Loneliness is half a pocket that can't hold anything.  
Loneliness is yelling at the top of your lungs and no one hearing you.  
Loneliness is hating anyone who isn't.  
Loneliness is turning invisible, slowly and painfully.

by Alinea Groening

## **Fear**

Cold and lost  
Quiet and dark  
Click, click and snap  
Night moon  
Are fear

by Tia Catches

## **Fear**

When I see fear, I hold myself together, forget about it. I say tomorrow's another day. Fear makes me want to cry, cry because I'm scared of what will happen or what people will do or what people will say.

Fear is like being alone, no one to see or talk to. Laying in your bed, just laying there thinking about anything or everything, just waiting to fade away as the sunset fades in the evening.

by Kristie Tapio

## **Destruction**

Tear up the phone book  
and leave the pieces on the floor  
then decide to burn them instead.  
scribble on my door  
with a black marker  
drop something glass  
out a window  
and play the sound again  
in your head, over and over.

by Alinea Groening

## **Misery is**

Misery is when you go to eat somewhere and two old white people are watching you. Misery is when you go to buy food and they charge you extra. Misery is when you walk down the street and there's an Indian and a white person fighting and you know there won't be peace between the two. Misery is when you watch TV and see all the cowboys killing all the Indians. Misery is when people think Indians scalp everyone. Misery is going to a place and everyone watches every move you make.

by JJ Wilson

## **Indian Misery**

Indian misery is when somebody takes your land.  
Indian misery is when somebody kills your friends.  
Indian misery is when your people turn against you.  
Indian misery is being slaves to people.  
Indian misery is being locked up in jail.  
Indian misery is people killing your food for money.  
Indian misery is fighting. Indian misery is no peace.  
Indian misery is when you get killed. Indian misery is if you lose the fight.

by Andrew Herman

## Misery

Misery is living in a fascist world where you have to believe in one thing and believe in someone or you go to "Hell". Misery is being afraid to believe in what you believe to be true. Misery is being yelled at all the time. Misery is being afraid of someone bigger than you. Misery is being someone you hate being. Misery is becoming someone else. Misery is being judged on what you look like. Misery is being hated for being yourself and not the perfect little angel they try to mold you into.

by Kiri Hammock

## Still I Cry

They always treat me like the dirt. Like I'm some kind of beast.  
They beat on me and don't treat me right.  
So still I always cry.

I say I'm the wind and I'm the dust. I watch the eagles fly.  
They say I'm just a savage.  
So still I cry.

They put me in a jail cell and laugh at my bare feet.  
I didn't do anything wrong, they all just hate me.  
Still I cry.

I cry at their light skin, their wrinkled faces and evil eyes.  
Still I cry.

I risk my life for one of them. I wish this racism will end.  
They shoot me down and hang me up.  
Still I cry.

I cry  
I cry  
I cry  
I cry  
As I am left here bound to die.

by Kathy McLaughlin

## **Racism**

Racism is a strong bullet through a person's heart.  
Racism is like a bank with lots of unkind words.  
Racism is like a gun in a child's hands,  
loaded with all the words a devil would say.

by Julian Bear Runner

## **Despair**

Most of my life is despair.  
It's to a point where I don't care.  
I could just sit alone and watch cars go by.  
I've been this way since the day my grandfather died.

I'd like to be like my dad, who is unafraid.  
He is sharper than a razorblade.  
Give me a paper and a pen  
So I could write about my life of sin.

I feel like beating down someone with a chair  
Just to get rid of this despair.

by Walker Thompson

## **Recipe for Despair**

If you want to feel sad, think of all the world's problems  
That'll make you mad.

If you really want to feel down, look at all the trash in town.  
Think of all pollution and say to yourself, there is no solution.

And just listen to this,  
All over the world there is a lot of prejudice.

Think of all this if you don't wanna feel glad  
If you wanna feel happy that's just too bad.

by Dusty Nelson

## **Pain**

Pain is a feeling. Pain is so strong, you have to struggle to keep it inside. Pain is a friend who is annoying and won't leave you alone. Pain can tear you apart and put you back together. Pain is essential to being strong. Pain is an ally. Not an enemy. Thank you pain for being there when no one else was there. Pain is my friend.

by Carmen Fourd

## **Cry**

Cry makes me think of wakes and funerals. Its like you're trapped inside a small room and you can't breathe. So you cry. When you are helpless, you cry.

It's like you're sitting at a wake and you're crying and you can't do anything. Like a knife keeps stabbing in your heart, over and over. You look around and everyone is crying. Your head is turning and you feel like going up to the coffin and waking the person up, but it feels like your legs are tied down to the chair.

by Jeannie Trueblood

## **Misery**

Misery is when you always seem to be getting dressed in black to go to a funeral.

Misery is when you get there and realize that the person who is dead is another close friend.

Misery is when you look around and all your friends are crying.

Misery is when you hear them say they'll try to stop and stay away from this stuff.

Misery is when the next day you see them stocking up in White Clay for a party soon to come.

Misery is when you hear the sirens and you have to sit and wonder whose funeral you'll be attending for the next few days.

Misery is when you realize they'll never stop and you'll always be choosing black clothing for the next day.

by Kayla Matthews

## **Animals**

Animals are an integral part of life on the reservation. Of course, all of my students have been educated about the time when the Lakota people achieved a harmony with nature and when animals, particularly the buffalo, provided for all their physical needs. Indian kids today recognize that such an idyllic relationship has long been ended by modern technology, but there remains a genuine respect and honor for the inhabitants of the land, sea, and sky.

My students live in relationship with animals through appreciation, prayer, dancing, hunting, riding, and through hearing stories about the significance of specific animals. The writings here reflect the basic fascination of most young people for the appearance and habits of natural beings, but a difference may exist in the extra attention my students give to the details of each animal's role and its connection to humanity.

### **Buffalo**

Buffalo are powerful and graceful at the same time. A buffalo is like a fierce but beautiful wind. It protects its calf like a bumblebee protects its hive. It's swift as a butterfly, but can sting like a bee. More like a thousand bees. I like it because it's important to my people and it is also beautiful to watch.

by Gabe Means

### **the Buffalo**

I praise the buffalo so strong. I kill him for food, good meat. I hunt him for his coat, so warm so soft. He is my friend.

by Kiri Hammock

### **White Buffalo**

The white buffalos are saying, "I am the Great White Buffalo. I would go and roam the land, then I will go to sleep. Save your life and don't die."

by Ashley Jones

## **Animal Power**

A butterfly is like a stained glass window flying through the air. Sprinkling powers over children to make them laugh, happy, and full of joy. A butterfly is a quiet, yet graceful flying animal. The beautiful bright colors on its wings light up the morning sky. It is so delicate; it feels like powder. Its wonderful body just soaring through the air. The wonderful body no child could resist. The antennas are like two little slivers stuck in its head. They make you dance and sing. They come in many shapes and sizes.

by Anna Diaz

### **Butterfly**

Butter Butter fly fly fly  
Can you fly up in the sky?

Don't tell a lie when you fly  
Up in the sky so high and bright  
In the light of the night

How is it to fly so high up in the sky?  
Do you ever see a pretty guy  
So high up in the sky?  
Will you die so high up in the sky  
In which you fly?

by Dena Colhoff

### **Vision of a Butterfly**

I don't believe in god. I don't believe in the devil. I don't believe in good. I don't believe in evil. The most powerful thing is a butterfly. A butterfly is graceful and delicate. The most power is found in such a fragile thing. Butterflies can make you exhausted and weak. They can make the strongest dog become as a puppy. They can tease you with their happiness or make you happy. They are made of the most delicate items. Miniature eagle feathers, every color of the rainbow. Little platinum antennas through which they absorb the world's information. A butterfly is the most powerful and beautiful thing anywhere.

by Carmen Fourd



## **Dreams of the Butterflies**

The butterflies dream of fluttering softly in the air with their wings spread out, into the summer breeze. Perching on a flower, the butterfly rests. She closes her beautiful brown eyes and sleeps peacefully.

by Misty Merrival

## **What the Birds are Saying**

When I hear the birds, I think they are saying, we have started a new generation and we want to pass on our knowledge to the little ones. Then when they get bigger, they will be great and vicious hunters like us.

by Blue Dawn Little

## **What the Birds are Saying**

They gave me advice. They said, "When you go and become the undead, you fly to heaven like me."

by Laiken Lessert

## **What the Horses are Saying**

The horses are saying, they will run around the world in a big group. They will be the fastest of the fastest in the world. They run like they are flying. They live in the best country. It's called horseland and it's nice and cool, not too hot, not too cold, it's just right. The horses love things and everyone, but they hate evil.

by Dani Steele

## **Wolves**

A wolf's teeth are like razors. Wolves are swift like the winds. They are quiet like a whisper. Wolves have claws so they can bring down their prey. Their eyes are yellow as the sun.

by Christina Cordier

### **Dream Pet**

My dream pet is a white tiger. Big, strong, and proud. It would protect me from bad. Be loyal to me. Its pitch black stripes like raven's feathers. Alert and fearless. Eyes sharp like daggers piercing your heart. Yet, he is gentle. He gives me comfort when I'm scared or lost. He is my best friend.

by Kiri Hammock

### **Dolphins**

Dolphins are the magical creatures of the sea. When the sun sets, the dolphins swim all over the sea and turn it into glitter. Dolphins are the protectors of the fish. They keep away the predators from the magical kingdom. The magical color of the dolphin is magical blue and white.

by Kristin Weston

### **Dolphins**

Dolphins are like big blue waves moving across the red reeds of the sea.  
Dolphins are like beautiful blue and white starquils.  
Dolphins are as smooth as a boat rowing across a lake.  
Dolphins are as soft and gentle as my loving grandmother.  
Dolphins are like a bright blue star passing by the night sky.  
Dolphins are as sweet and caring as a little dolphin poem I once wrote.

by Ashley Jones

### **What if**

If there were no animals, the world would be dull. And have no meaning because they're the god of interesting beautiful scenery. They leap, hop, jump, crawl, bark, meow, growl, bite, lick, claw, and bump. The one thing that puzzles me is they can't talk. However, they do communicate with their sounds of loudness.

by Dena Colhoff

## **Eagle**

An eagle is like a jet in the sky. It has claws like a knife. Eagles are four times as big as a crow. An eagle has an eye sharp as a needle. An eagle is ten times stronger than any other bird.

by Sam Nelson

## **Eagles**

Eagles are our future. And they are our nature of life. They gave us protection, provided us with life, and didn't leave us behind. Eagles are sacred in our tribe, so they really are our future because they furnished us with pride.

by Lorraine Little

## **Eagles**

The eagles say to me, the Great Spirit has come to tell me what to do and protect me. He says, I was sent by the Great Spirit to tell you stories and to protect you.

by Sammie Tapio

## **Seven Ways of Looking at Eagles**

One way is how he soars high above the clouds.  
The second way is when the eagle sits on a tree branch looking over the countryside.

The third way is when it grabs its prey on the prairie.  
The fourth way is when its protective eyes are keeping you safe at all times.

The fifth way is when the eagle lets us borrow his feathers.  
The sixth way is when he talks to the rest of the sacred animals so they can also keep you protected.

The seventh way is how the eagle sits waiting for your own flight to the sky.

by Tonia Scabby Face

## **Native Thoughts**

So often, Indian kids are encouraged to incorporate their culture into what they are doing in school that I sense it can sometimes feel like a tired cliché to them. However, when these same kids willingly share their feelings of Indian self-identity and tell their experiences with modern Lakota culture in their own words, the language carries a power and sincerity that is, in my opinion, true art.

In this chapter, the words speak for themselves quite clearly and with authority. The kids have both pride in the strength of the Lakota ways and terrific frustration in some of the realities that accompany the impoverished condition of their tribe.

### **Being Indian**

Being Indian means a lot to many natives. Some people are so proud they say, "NP" or "Native Pride". A lot of people write this on their school paper or other things. Being Indian gives you the meaning of respect, generosity, courage, and also wisdom. These things mean a lot when you are Indian. Many elders speak to young children about these four values that still live in the Indian beliefs and part of our culture. Indian clothing, tools, marriages, and other stuff are still treasured today.

Being Indian takes a lot of courage to stand up for yourself and people that are part of Indian culture. Like when prejudiced people say Indians are dirty and stink. A lot of people are like that in this world and that's why you have to stand up for yourself and others.

by Ashley Jones

## **Being Indian**

To me, being Indian means a lot because our ancestors were brave, courageous, and educated. Being an Indian means you have to stand up to people and demand respect because a lot of people stereotype Indians. Being Indian is an honor because long ago we were the only people who used the land in the right way.

Being Indian means you have to have respect for everyone because that's the way Indians are. Being Indian, you have to decide on which way you want to live. To make it in the world, you have to be educated in the white person's way. Instead, you're an Indian and you want to live that way, but you can't.

by Blue Dawn Little

## **Being Indian**

Being Indian around here is kinda hard. There are even Indians that don't like Indians. Our life is like a race, everyone runs through life forgetting the most special things just because they try to win. But not me. I stop and take time to look at my family and friends, while others run past so fast I can feel the wind in my face. I have the opportunity to love and be loved by others. I look at all the people and see nothing, not evil, not hate. I believe that all Indians are equal and should not compete against each other.

by Kathy McLaughlin

## **Being Indian**

Being Indian means respecting your elders and praying for your ancestors. Being Indian means listening to your parents, and being good to your uncles and aunties. And most of all, being Indian means respecting yourself, others, and Mother Earth.

by Candida Bagola

## **Circle**

A circle is connecting at all times. A circle has no ends. A circle is round. The world is a circle. Our life travels with a circle. A circle is strong. Strong enough to hold together a tribe.

by Raymond Ghost Bear

## **Walking in a Circle**

I'm walking in a circle, inside and out. Walking with my friends, walking for my parents, seeing old ones, seeing old friends. Everywhere I look, I see people, dancers, tourists, some asking very stupid questions. I see stands with dark people, behind them a few with white. I go to sit down, but my parents make me go dance. I search for a friend, then I'll be okay. I'm walking in a circle.

by Minnie Bourdeaux

## **Every Little Dance**

Every little dance is like the wind.  
They are the gods running in the sky.  
Every little dance is the drum beating.  
The Indian dancers on the pow-wow grounds.  
Every little dance creates a new world.  
Every little dance is a new life  
Another baby comes into a person's life.

by Alisha Patton

## **Tradition**

Tradition is a thing or a thought that lasts forever and ever.  
Tradition is very special and will it end, never.  
Tradition is my homeland, a very sacred place.  
Tradition is my people, full of love and grace.  
Tradition is what we believe in.  
Tradition is the color of my hair, my eyes, my skin.  
Tradition is the eagle feather.  
Tradition is my loyal tribe; we will stick together.  
Tradition is my family. Tradition is all of us.  
Tradition is in me.

by Kathy McLaughlin

## **Being Indian**

This is what an Indian means to me. An Indian is brave and he or she doesn't care how you look. He or she gives instead of taking. They stand up to anything, are ready for anything and don't take anything for granted. They listen to other people's needs and take care of what is sacred as well as everything else. He prays for what he kills and uses everything on the animals.

by Dusty Black Elk

## **Being Indian**

Being Indian means to use stuff you need instead of wasting it. And to use our land the proper way instead of trashing it. To not pollute the air that our animals and us breathe. That's what being an Indian means.

by Lorraine Little

## **Being Indian**

Us Indians respect our land and buffalo. We know how to live and respect others. The life we live now is different from the way it was back then. We have relatives who lived here and their spirits are flying all around us.

by Sandy Red Feather

## **Ugly Life on Dirty Rez**

Life on  
Life on the reservation  
Life on the reservation is dirty  
Life on the reservation is dirty filthy  
Life on the reservation is dirty filthy dogs.

by Dena Colhoff

## Lakota

The Lakota people are holy and sacred. I'm Lakota and I'm proud to be. It's embarrassing on the reservation. Every time you look around downtown, there's always drunk Indians called winos, or drunks, or junkies, or whatever else you want to call them. It's trashy here on the reservation. So if the Lakota people are so holy and sacred, why are they like this? They should quit drinking.

by Stef Wince

## The Battle

Through the hills and in the night  
I go straight to my final fight.  
With my axe and bow in hand  
I ride across the forest land.

On my horse and in the moon  
I will see my battle very soon.  
As I look into the sky  
I sound my mighty battle cry.

Now the mighty battle starts  
I grow with courage in my heart.  
As we attack the white man's station  
I now know I am Sioux Nation.

by David Wolfe



## **Native Americans**

The Native Americans had to leave their land.  
The whites came and took over their land.  
The Native Americans were always in wars.  
The whites came and took everyone out.  
They killed most of the Native Americans.

### **Life Now**

The Native Americans now live in peace.  
They never have to be in wars.  
The life for me now is very peaceful.  
There are no wars and everyone is getting along.  
The whites and Native Americans are kinder close friends.  
They all get along very well.

by Edee Clifford

## **Lakota Culture**

The Lakota culture is good  
It helps us in many ways.  
The Lakota culture is beautiful  
The Lakota culture is wise.  
The Lakota culture is our people.  
The Lakota culture is our culture.

by Brandon Brave Heart

## From Quiet to Silence

I would venture to guess that in today's world, many of us have too few encounters with real quiet. In urban areas, the sun's control over the rhythms of day and night, of energy and rest, is largely ignored and so the city never sleeps, as they say. Noise abounds at all times. In the country, and particularly on an "undeveloped" Indian reservation where capitalism has not been able to get a steady grip on the land, the situation is perhaps a bit different.

Although a lot of my students live in houses that have too little space for too many and quiet is probably far from the norm, most of them have at least tasted a very thick helping of quiet at one time or another. And, in writing on quietness, the kids revealed their desire for more of it and the accompanying sense of peace that they felt inside quiet.

In my first year of teaching, we moved from the topic of quiet to the deeper and more prayerful entity of silence. This concept really had many of the students thinking hard and looking way inside themselves, as well as far outside, for images that would articulate the essence of this word. We talked about places or times that could be silent, venturing from the bottom of the ocean to a relative's funeral, and after varying degrees of reflection, everyone found an avenue to present silence as they knew it.

### Quietest Time

The quietest time was when I went to a graveyard. It was so quiet that if you snapped your fingers, not a thing happened. The people moving were quiet, like shadows on a full moon night. Some of them praying, others crying. The only sound was the wind rustling weeds and the cracking of twigs.

by John Little Finger

### Quietness

The quietest time was when I sat in my room after I shot a hole in the window of my house.

by Josh Donnell

## Quiet

When I am thinking, it is quiet. When I'm alone, it is quiet. When I'm sad, I am quiet. When there is death, everyone is quiet.

by Tracy Charging Crow

## Quietness

Everything is quiet, but nothing is quiet. It is so confusing. One person may think that quietness is when you sit in a room that is totally quiet and all you can hear are cars outside and the clock ticking. Some people think quietness is when you live in the middle of nowhere. With bees buzzing and cows mooing. But only one person in this whole world may know what quietness really is and we will never know who that person is.

by Sonni Richards

## Quiet

Quiet is the ringing in the ear.  
Quiet is the pitch of the night.  
Quiet is the feeling of relaxed.  
Quiet is the soft touch of friends.  
Quiet is the tenderness of babies sleeping.

by Tia Catches

## Silence

Like the time I had walked up to my friend and all she did was cry. I felt really bad, but I didn't say a word. I hugged her and let her know that I cared. In some way, I knew she wasn't afraid. We didn't say anything, but silence fixed what I couldn't say.

by Larissa Ross

## Silence

Silence is like a bird flying through the air. It's even when Kobe goes for a backwards lay-up and everyone gets quiet. Silence is a house that's bare. It's like a big city that's non-violent. Silence is when you know someone is gone forever. It's also when someone has an idea that's clever.

Silence is a sound that's no sound at all. It's a thickness that's so smooth and gentle, you can feel it when you're alone or with people. Silence is the sound of the ball waiting to fall. It can also be like the bell in a steeple.

Silence is like a conversation ready to erupt. It can be a thug in the night with a loaded gun. Silence is like a massive riot ready to corrupt. It is the rising and setting of the sun. Maybe the word silence doesn't exist or maybe silence isn't a sound at all.

by Blue Dawn Little

## Silence

Silence is the darkness of night when the moon shines bright and the pine trees make the only sound, the sound of a hundred cars on the freeway. Then, when the wind stops, there are no more cars, just silence.

by Isaac Red Owl

## Silence

Silence is the loudest noise I ever heard. The wind blowing gently across the prairie grass. The horses galloping around the field, birds flying quietly to the trees. Silence is the loudest noise I ever heard.

by Julia Martin

## Silence

Silence is in the morning when you wake up. Silence is when it is night and you are reading a book in your bed before you go to sleep. Silence is when you are in the sky and the clouds are giving you rides all over the place.

by Cody Lacey

## **Silence**

It is the brushing leaves of a cottonwood on a cool spring day with the breeze through the grass. It is the nice damp dew washing pain from my soul. It is the soothing water running between my toes.

by Tia Catches

## **Silence**

Silence comes when night covers the sky like a blanket, meaning it's time for everything to calm. Half the world is asleep and everything is in silence. Silence comes when a close friend dies and all you want is silence to be at your side and leave the other side to weep with tears.

by Jen Giago

## **Silence**

Silence is when the last teardrop drips from your eyes. When the strong gentlemen help the coffin down into the hole as the family member that you will always love goes deeper and deeper to the ground. Others help to bury the loved one and burn sage or cedar to bless the one that is loved. To show generosity and courage, family members drop a handful of misty dust over the coffin. To remember the person that was once alive, give a tear to the everlasting cries.

by Ashley Jones

## **Silence**

The day when Rose died in the hospital was a day I will never forget, the day silence was gliding in the air with only the whispers of our prayers to keep us from crying. When we all waited in the lobby and hoping to hear good news was when silence was there, tormenting us with all the frustration. Silence is a sound we hear all the time; it's the sound I heard at the funeral of my aunty when we had to lay her in the ground beside her son. We all hear silence screaming and crying in agony through the wind of loneliness.

by Stephanie Sully

## **Silence**

Silence is when you're lying in your grave at night. And you can see only pictures of your life popping up in front of your eyes. Silence is when you are living on your memories. And re-living your life in pictures.

by Gabe Means

## **Silence**

Silence is when you're walking all by yourself thinking, listening to the wind blowing in your ears. Listening to the birds hum all day, hearing the water splash. Knowing that no one is around you, just nature and yourself.

by Eugene Giago

## **Silence**

Silence is when I saw my mom for the last time. The air stopped, the people were silent, and my heart was still. Then I opened my eyes and saw that it was real. A world full of silence, I could hear no more. It was like I was on a beach and all you could hear was the waves coming onto the land. Then I saw her hand. She took me to a place of non-belief. I saw the world of silence and peace.

by Derrick McCauley

## **Family**

The Lakota phrase, “Mitakuye Oyasin”, which roughly translates as, “All my relatives”, has been and continues to be my greatest teacher since the day it was first introduced to me. For several years now, I have been walking with this teacher and learned that not only are all things connected, as perhaps most people accept, but that all things including people, animals, and natural elements and objects are very intimately connected, like the relatives of a family.

My students in South Dakota inherited this lesson as a part of their upbringing and one of its most powerful consequences is their almost universal understanding of family as the highest priority and as the purest expression of their own identity. Clearly, this deep respect for relatives runs through essentially all of the writing in this collection, but it is especially significant to look at what the students said explicitly about this subject of family.

### **All my Relatives**

All of my relatives are like the wild prairies, different sizes that are old and new. We are like the stars; there are a great many of us. We are like the sea; we have many voices. We are like the skies, always changing from beautiful to ugly and mean. Some of us are like the trees, very old and wise. The rest of us are like the flowers, still young and learning.

by Kathy McLaughlin

### **Family**

In my family, I have two brothers and one sister. My family is loving, caring, humble, respectful, nice, and generous. I hate when they fight or drink and break the circle of our family. We help one another to get through. Our circle is like a force field over us. Like we're on a team. All goes good until one of us drinks or smokes, then that force field breaks and one of us might go. Like my mom broke the circle and she is gone, but that doesn't mean we all go. We have to connect again and combine to build our force field.

by Dustin Star Comes Out

## God and Ma

God created things from left to right, but Ma told me how to use them just so.

I don't know who is right.

God created hands, Ma told me to use my silverware.

God created feet, Ma told me to put some shoes on.

God created my mouth, Ma told me to hush up.

God created my face, Ma told me to wash it.

God created my hair, Ma told me to comb it.

God created my food, Ma told me not to play with it.

God created others, Ma told me not to talk to strangers.

God created my mind, Ma told me not to be stupid.

God created my voice, Ma told me not to be so loud.

All in all I think that they are both right,

God and Ma.

by Megan White Face

## Family

My family is my soul, the keepers of my smile. They are the floor that I walk on, keeping me from falling down. My family is my comfort, the bed that I sleep on. They are what keeps my head up and still to reach for the stars.

My family is all I have, all that I'll ever need. Without them, all I have is pity, sorrow, and grief. With them, I have a smile, blood running through my veins, no love to lose, only love to gain.

by Brandon Hooper

## Family

When I'm down, my family comes around. When I am feeling gray and the clouds are in the way, my family chases them away. My family fights sometimes and says things we don't mean, but deep down we truly love each other. My family is like a circle that cannot be broken. My family loves and respects each other just the way God would do.

by Joyce Buckman



## **Family**

Families are like peas in a pod. They come in all different sizes. Families go through everything together. They go through good times and sad times. They fight. They make up. And they don't hold grudges. That's what a family is to me.

by Dena Colhoff

## **Family**

Family is important.  
My family cares about me.  
Because they put clothes on my back, food on the table, and a roof over  
my head.  
My family works hard.  
Especially my dad, and my sister for her baby.  
Me, when I grow up, I am going to college.  
And make my own family.  
"Thank you, Mama".

by Steve Goings

## **Family**

In a family, there are a lot of things:  
mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, aunties, uncles, cousins, nephews,  
nieces, in-laws, outlaws.  
Problems, answers, confusion, laughter, horror, and more problems.  
And when you don't know, you love them.

by Duncan Deon

## **Family**

A family is caring.  
A family is a teacher.  
A family is Mother Nature.  
A family is a hard working person.  
A family is a heart.  
A family is a picture I painted.  
A family is valuable to me.  
A family is wisdom.  
A family is supposed to be fun.  
A family is a god.

by Tyler Seaboy

## **Home**

Home is like a warm blanket on a cold day. It warms your tummy like a warm cup of cocoa. When you open the door, it's like cool air on a hot day. When everyone sits around the dinner, it's like hot gravy soothing your throat.

by Dusty Nelson

## **My Sister**

My sister is a heart with many love in it.  
My sister's heart is many diamonds filled with ocean water.  
It holds many beautiful creatures with lots of love for  
my sister's heart.

by Ronnie Beane

## **Saying Goodbye**

One thing I had to say goodbye to was my Grandpa who left me so long ago. I didn't know how to let him go, he changed my life in so many ways. He helped me become stronger inside as well as outside. He taught me to look beyond this world and see a whole new better one. He saw something in me no one else ever did. He showed me how to make others laugh and have a good time.

by Jenna Ward

## **Relations Write**

Me and my mom are like a tree, a tree that got cut down and made into paper with us glued down on it. My mom on the left and me on the right. That paper got ripped between left and right, knocked on the floor, and up and away to the trash. Here comes someone to take out the trash and when we get to the dump, the trash bag rips. There I go into the wind and it drops me on the ground. More wind comes and takes me off, and I never see my mom again.

by Dusty Black Elk

## **Me and my Mom**

Me and my mom are like a bright star shining in the night sky. The bright star shines when the love of its home breaks through. The star is sometimes very dull when the clouds cover the Earth and the care can't reach out. When the star is dull, sadness and tears break through. When the clouds arise, there is nothing that could stop the sadness. When the star is bright, the love and care shines through the evening skies.

by Ashley Jones

## **Mother**

Your mother is always there, even if you're miles apart. Your mother is your heart. Mom understands, no matter the situation. Your mother lets you go when you're in a bad mood. Your mother is there when you're feeling sad, depressed, and afraid. Your mother is like your guardian angel. She watches you. She's there.

by Kristie Tapio

## Spirit

One of the first things I noticed upon moving to the reservation was the comfort among most people I met to talk openly about spiritual matters. The frequency with which I heard mention of God or spirits or prayer by the kids was remarkable and for me, inspirational. Walking much of my life in circles of thought where the divine was never an assumption, this environment of belief provided me with a freedom that deepened my relationships with my students and allowed their writing to explore the full depth of their own spirits. For many of my students, Native spirituality is integral to their way of life and their understanding of the world. Some traditional Lakota ways are alive and strong on the reservation, and so many of the kids grow up in the midst of a rich spiritual environment of prayers, songs, dances, ceremonies, stories, practices, and arts.

I decided to attempt a writing activity in this pervasive area and asked the kids to relate their visual or emotional conception of the higher power as best they could. Of course, we left open the possibility of simply writing about anything they believed in and, as is generally healthy when working with teenagers, we also reserved a space for determined apathy, if needed. The results were quite good, and more importantly, my classes seemed to enjoy the challenge and real meaning of dealing with such a subject, in whatever manner they chose.

A few months later, a recess conversation I had with a group of sixth grade girls energized me to include all my students in the debate. The girls had asked me what I thought happened to us when we die and after making a couple general statements about maybes, trying not to taint their own ideas, I asked the kids about their thoughts. Among the four of us, there was such diversity of opinion and creativity of detail that it seemed everyone could benefit from examining this question together.

## **Vision of God**

God is everything that can nourish us. He's in the sun which gives us life and power. He's in the elk and buffalo which give us food to survive. He's in the vegetables and fruit to keep us healthy. He's all around for someone to talk to. He's there when we need help with something. He's around us answering our prayers. God is my Dad and Mom.

by Eugene Giago

## **Vision of God**

God is a stairway to our destiny  
God is an old man telling stories  
God is a pre-mature baby living against all odds  
God is an image only certain people can see  
God is a behemoth cloud covering the sky

by Earl Brewer

## **Vision of God**

My vision of God is a little kid playing in the dirt. He is inside of me. God is the dirt the kid plays in. He is everything around the kid. He is the toys the kid plays with. He is the blue sky above him. He is the school the kid goes to. God is love in the kid and everyone else in the world.

by Mike Kocer

## **Vision of God**

My vision of God is all around us. He looks like a tree with His arms stretched out and protecting us from the sun. God is like the moon giving us light to see at night. The Earth is God's face showing all over the place.

by Sandy Red Feather

## **Vision of God**

My vision of God is a spirit moving with us through every step we take along our path of life. He is in every living thing, in the trees, helping it move its leaves, in a rock, helping it live. He is in us, helping us paint all the colors of the world.

He lives in us as we cross the beating sunset. He is with us through the coming moon. He is there when we hear the rivers roar. The Great Spirit is there when love and hate is in the painting winds.

by Anna Diaz

## **My Vision of God**

I picture God like a big ball of fire just like the sun, but you can only see Him in your mind. Like a diamond that glows so bright, sometimes He will catch your eye, but only for a second. When you die, you can see Him all you want, but until you die you can only see Him in your dreams. His bow is as strong as a great oak and His arrow is like a lightning bolt. His pony is like the wind and it is His destiny to kill everything evil in His path.

by Dusty Black Elk

## **Vision of God**

My vision of God is an old Lakota chief that is wise and powerful. When you have a choice to do good or bad, He is in your mind saying, don't do bad. When you have a dream, He might be there telling you something bad is going to happen.

by Dallas Nelson

## **Vision of God**

I vision God as a white cloud in the sky. I think God looks like everybody that He created in the world. God can also look very different that we've never seen in our lives. If God does look like everybody, He would be all types of colors.

by Alisha Patton

### **Vision of God**

My vision of God is that He is a little boy standing on the curve, waiting for his mom, an old lady trying to find a bite to eat. A person on the streets trying to make it through the night. I see God in everything that I see everyday, and I know God is in me.

by Kyle White

### **Vision of God**

I vision God standing in the rain and He is in the rainbow waving, "Hi", making pretty bright colors, pink, blue, orange, yellow. He is holding out his hand to the spirit eagles dancing around near him. The bears hollering. The bold eagles flying in a circle. The fish of an eye glowing and jumping up to sharks and whales.

by Sammie Tapio

### **Vision of God**

I picture God above us, looking down upon us, a huge bohemeth titan towering over us with a whip of lightning, a hammer of mountain, a saber of wind known to us as tornado, and a huge battle axe made out of hurricane. He is all around us, the elements, the world, the universe, our destiny.

by David Wolfe

### **Vision of God**

My vision of God is an Indian with his face painted like a warrior who went back in time and helped us be free and get our land back. He made it so white people won't kill all the Indians. He has a lot of muscles.

by Tyler Little Finger

### **Vision of God**

I see God, He is like the Earth. He's like the rivers, lakes, and sea. I know one thing for sure, He's in me, He's in everybody. He loves, cares, and gives. He gave us lives to live and live. He gave us the Earth to take care of, but we messed up. There's sin with you and me and everybody.

by Dani Steele

## **Vision of God**

My vision of God is in the flowers, in the trees looking down from the top. My vision of being God is painful, looking down from the trees to see us fighting. But one day, He will take us away and show us the right way.

by Raymond Ghost Bear

## **Vision of God**

I don't picture God as a human looking person. I picture God as a thing that lives in everyone and everything. In all the living things and the non-living things, such as rocks and dirt. Controlling everything, deciding what lives and what dies.

by Gip Young Man

## **After Death**

I believe that after you die, your spirit goes to a place unknown. It's a place so beautiful that no one can ever harm it. Because it's precious like a baby. It's always nice there, never a cloud or a drop of rain. It's so nice that when the wind blows, it smells of something sweet that no one knows. And as the sun goes down, it's so breathtaking that you see the sunset dancing in your eyes. As you enter those pearly gates, you hear a warm welcome that you're finally home. On the other side awaiting your arrival are your loved ones who went before. It's okay to be here. In a place unknown.

by Chanda Thompson

## **After Death**

After death to me is on the plains with mountains around the village. There are tipis, people laughing and enjoying themselves. Whatever they want is there. I imagine God, Tunkasila, as an Indian walking around. Talking to people. All everything I loved that died is there. That's how I imagine the next world.

by Eugene Giago



## Death

People die in a quick history. When you hear, it's like a mystery. I see people's shoulders drooping like teardrops. Dying is like a blackout. When you arrive, it's like a whiteout. I pray day and night I won't go the next day. When you get in trouble, you have to pay. Sometimes when I awake, I think it's all a dream. The sun and the stars are like dreams. People saying why. I hear little people saying goodbye. The flowers are blooming. And the night is glooming. Babies are born. Humans are dying everyday; people are torn in two.

by Tyler Seaboy

## After Death

When your body dies, it turns into a lot of small animals watching you. When you go to heaven, you watch over your family. You protect them, keep them safe. Then sometimes, your face is the sun which comes out and watches you until you go to bed.

by Rainelle Two Bulls

## After Death

I say living life is like a stage, so when you die, it's game over; you go to a whole new other place. A place no one ever saw when they were alive. At first it gets dark, then you'll be awakened by little angels. The white smoke you walk through is like a blanket, it feels your every fear, pain, and sadness that you ever had and it takes it all away. It's like the other side of the other world, people will be doing good, guns and all that bad stuff will be like candy, you could eat it up and move on without getting hurt.

by Joyce Buckman

## Death

When I look at death, I think of when my cousin died in an automobile accident. Death is a feeling inside you that no one can heal. It's like being a butterfly with no wings.

by Danielle Merrival

## **After Death**

I think death is not so bad and that when you die, you go wherever you want to go or be whatever you want to be. I won't lie, I don't believe in God or the devil, but just an evil side of death or life, and I'm not talking about the Force. You can go to heaven or hell, go into outer space, or be reincarnated. There is no good in the world, so if there is a heaven, that's the only place you could go to because it's hell on Earth. I don't know what's going to happen when I die and I don't think anybody does. It's hard to understand what I think and I can't put it into words either.

by Kiri Hammock

## **Dreams of the Dead**

The dreams of the dead would probably be about the death of wandering souls. Remembering the love and success they have gotten in the past. Seeing the next generation. Seeing the image of the ones left behind.

by Alisha Patton

## **What the Spirits are Saying**

They tell us when danger is near by using the wind, snow, and all weather. They tell us by letting us feel their presence or by a creature that we never saw before. Or by just letting us see them.

by Morris Ward

## **Being Alone**

Being alone is like being with your inner spirit. You're in the dark and the wind just shatters your sweat. Then, when the light comes on, you come out of your dream.

by Blue Dawn Little

## Youth

Many of my classes shared with me their frustration at not being heard or understood by adult generations. My students sometimes thought, as maybe all teenagers do, that no one outside of their peer group really listened to their voice and that they did indeed have things to say. Writings that illuminated their perspective as youth came up from time to time and these will comprise the first portion of this chapter.

In response to this frustration of not being heard, I presented a monologue-based exercise developed from an idea of a teacher, Stephen O'Connor, with his classes in New York City. It seemed to me that O'Connor's students related sentiments and troubles quite similar to those of my own students; they just lived them in a different, urban environment. My seventh grade creative writing class took off with this personal monologue assignment modeled on a poem written by one of O'Connor's students, "Being a Kid". Many of them even chose to use that title, or a variation thereof, to organize their thoughts.

After reading what my students had written, I realized that we could go further with this monologue style of expression. This particular writing class had consistently reminded me that, at the beginning of the year, we had discussed possibly writing a movie. Combining the factors of the kids' desire to make their voices heard and now having a format in which to say something well, I felt that the previously ominous and potentially disastrous task of making a film with middle school students was now a real option.

My students were quickly off and running, writing monologues from the perspective of all the different sorts of people and personalities they could imagine living on the reservation. They built a body of work that became a good movie entitled, Through Our Eyes: A Look at the Rez, which received first place in the South Dakota State Media Fair in the spring of 2000. The kids' personal statements hold the whole project together and they are the some of the selections that appear at the end of this chapter.

## **My Bike**

I like my bike  
It's shiny  
And it's clean  
And it goes fast  
Down the hill  
And the reflectors shine like gold  
It means a lot to me

by Kyle White

## **What is a Friend?**

A friend is someone who is with you in whatever you do.  
A friend is a person you can talk to, someone who'll listen.  
A friend is someone you can't explain in one word.  
A friend tells the truth, he or she cares.

by Dusty Nelson

## **Friends**

Friends never let go; they stay by your side.  
They are there when you need them,  
You go through a lot together.  
Friends stay with you until the end.

by Lynelle Running Hawk

## **As if**

As if, as in supposing  
Never letting on, knowing.  
As if, as in denying  
Never letting one, shining.  
As if, as in smiling  
Never letting her, remind me.  
As if, as in caring  
Never letting one, nurture me.

by Edee Clifford

## **If I Ran the School**

If I ran the school, it would be a jewel. It would be so pleasant, just as a pheasant. And when you look at the floor, it would sparkle, so as the door. And as you peek out the windows, you would seek no sorrow. But as you watch the kids play, you wouldn't have to say, hey!! The kids would be filled with joy and glory, they wouldn't need any more story. So just remember, if I ran the school, it would be cool.

by Dena Colhoff

## **Who am I?**

I am a horse that runs through the valley after a colt is born.  
I am a cloud that moves across the sky like a big brick wall that  
breaks the sunlight.

I am the wings of an angel that soars the evening sky.  
I am the moon that watches over the world of all worlds.  
I am a pretty butterfly that flies across the pink blue sky and  
I am a box of toys that holds all these wondrous things.

by Ashley Jones

## **Who am I?**

I am a butterfly fluttering in the wind. Sure my life will end soon, but enjoying it while I can. Loving everyone I see. I know I am beautiful, but not taking advantage of it. Not looking down on others, but helping them up. Not holding them back, but encouraging them to go on. Not telling everything they did wrong, but what they can do right. Not asking favors of them, but helping them meet their needs. I know who I am. Well, you can't change the past, but you can help the future.

by Kathy McLaughlin

## **Who am I?**

I am a lightning bolt passing people. I am a sonic boom being left behind. I am the smallest person in a stadium and everyone notices me. I am a painted picture in the art museum and everyone admires it. I am a wolf catching its prey.

by Eugene Giago

### **Who am I?**

I am a rose in a patch of weeds.  
I am a storybook with some dictionaries.  
I am a house cat with lots of lions.  
I am a chokecherry bush surrounded by oak trees.  
I am a window that is broken.  
I am a boy with lots of sisters.  
I am an Indian surrounded by white people.  
I am a football player at a basketball game.  
I am a cat with a bunch of dogs.  
I am an angel around a lot of devils.  
I am a walkman in a Back Street concert.  
I am a block that tries to fit into a circle.

by Dusty Black Elk

### **Who am I?**

I am the wings of a butterfly, colorful and happy. I am the big blue sky, always wondering why. I am the mud you step on after it rains. I'm nothing but a big stain. I am the basketball bouncing on the floor. I am the slamming door. I am nothing.

by Kristie Tapio

## Survival

Survival in the real world is not easy, but it's not hard. Sometimes it's frustrating. Sometimes it is fun. It is sometimes depressing. You're supposed to enjoy the fun parts while they last. There's also this thing called pride. It's a feeling you can't really explain. You feel it for yourself or someone else when you or they do good. You have to survive by yourself, or you can ask for help and people might give you support.

There are four stages of survival: childhood, teenage years, adulthood, and senior citizenship. Childhood is fun, you learn a lot of things. Parents survive for you. You can't wait to get older.

The teenage years are probably the hardest. People always telling you what to do, how to do it, and then saying it's not good enough, "give it your all". Pretty soon, you'll be an adult, telling teenagers what to do, how to do it, and saying, "give it your all". It's all just a cycle.

When you're old and grey, you'll be telling people twenty or thirty years younger than you all of your war stories and lost loves, all the things you did and all your regrets. Not knowing that they dread hearing it. That is survival.

by Dusty Nelson

## Short and Tall

Short child stands beside  
Tall parent  
Child holds onto hand, almost too high to reach  
That helps them up the stairs  
Tall protecting short  
(in everything we let ourselves see)  
And putting a wall  
Between short  
And the tall world

by Alinea Groening

## **Make-up**

Hiding the most prettiest sight in the world. Hiding the complexion of God the Lord. And letting go the complexion you once had. Thinking that you make yourself look better. Thinking that you don't need books to be seen. But books bring good looks out in education. You don't need make-up to be popular. You don't need make-up to be beautiful. You just need the beautiful complexion that God the Lord gave you.

by Ashley Jones

## **Dreams of the Babies**

Young sweet innocent souls dreaming of how they came to be. Sleeping in their beds with the moon, stars, sun, and clouds hanging over their heads. Hate, jealousy, envy, racism, and sin revolving in the world but they have no clue of it. They just know when to smile, cry, laugh, and play.

They know when others are asleep because everything gets quiet; they don't hear any old, odd voices. They dream of all the things heaven wants them to. When they awaken with a cry, the angels are there to comfort them and make them smile and laugh.

by Stephanie Sully

## **Perfect**

Perfect is green plaid and a white blouse straight and neat, tasteless, does not feel rough, feels too shiny, sounds like shoes clicking in a high-ceilinged hall. You say I'm perfect. Yes, I'm perfect. As perfect as a set of crooked teeth. As perfect as a floor tilting sharply. Perfect for storing glass, isn't it? I'm as perfect as a seen through lie. Why can't you see through me?

by Alinea Groening



## **Life as a Kid**

Today if you are a kid, you need to keep your privileges. If you want to fit in, you have to do what is going on. Like drugs and drinking. If you don't, they'll treat you like a reject or something. You also feel like you are forced to have your parent's life, or older brother or sister. It gets you mad. When you feel pushed, you have more and more anger inside you. It's just like your parents wanting you to live their lives.

by Alisha Patton

## **To Be a Kid**

To be a kid is very hard. It's like a lonely place where no one pays any attention to you. It's like when you see a couple of high school girls and they smoke to be cool. You just can't walk out on your own; you're just a kid. You need an adult to walk with you, watch you, feed you, raise you, and to care for you.

While you grow up, you become more obsessed with what older kids do and so you want to smoke and drink to be cool like them, but you can't just go out and do it. You don't know that you are cool, but you are. Your friends always tell you. But, sometimes friends that you think are real friends aren't always true friends. That's when you feel all alone.

by Ashley Jones

## **To Be a Teen**

Being a teen is hard these days. It is easier to get a hold of drugs and shots, and the cars go by like mosquitoes looking for blood. Not too much happens physically, but mentally is where most of the damage takes place. The hurt inside builds up so much that you can't think at all. Sometimes it gets too great that we search for help, but most of us never find it.

by Tami Matthews

## **Being a Kid in Pine Ridge**

Being a kid in Pine Ridge is hard. I live in the country about two miles east of Pine Ridge, but no matter what it's hard. Like you don't know who to trust or who to hang out with. Other kids think you're mommy's baby if you don't get to go somewhere. Kids tease you if you don't do what they want, like smoke, drink, and get high and all that.

Grown-ups think us kids don't have problems, but we do. Like they'll say, "Oh, you're just thirteen, you don't have any real problems." But they're wrong. Sometimes our problems are bigger than the adults! That's what it's like being a kid in Pine Ridge.

by Tia Catches

### **To Be a Kid**

To be a kid it's like being strong and being tough. You have to stand up for what you believe in and what's right. People try to push you around, but you gotta tell them that you're your own self. People try to force you to do drugs, sometimes you do it, sometimes you don't. I guess it all depends on the person you are and the person you want to be.

Being a kid is like being in your own world and making your own decision. What happens to you when you're a kid sticks with you in your future. Whatever you want to do is what you're gonna do. Your parents can try to help you, but they can't keep you locked up in a cage. When you're a kid, you gotta be like a kid or be the way you want.

by Blue Dawn Little

### **To Be a Kid**

To be a kid is like being your own boss. It is hard here and there. Grown-ups are too strict, nobody will get off your back. Sometimes, you feel the world is against you and you can't trust nobody. Sometimes you're so bored, you feel like you're seventy or something. Sometimes, you just want your own space to get your head together. Sometimes, you wish you lived in a bigger city. Sometimes, you feel like everybody's out to get you.

by Curtis Red Owl

### **To Be a Child**

I am a child full of fear, and I get scared when no one is near.  
I am a child full of hopes, dreams, and fantasies.  
I am a child not accepted for who I am.  
I am a child being told what to do again and again.  
I am a child being stomped to the ground.  
I am a child who falls but remains proud.  
I am a child who tries but never wins.  
I am a child who cries at the wind.

by Larissa Ross

### **To Be a Kid**

To be a kid is like having no responsibilities and not having to worry about anything. It's all about you and what you want, but to you nothing really matters. Everything is all just fun and games, but as you get older you gradually lose the insight of being a kid and everything starts to matter.

by Earl Brewer

### **To Be a Kid**

Being a kid is like being a raindrop in the desert where it's hot and dry; you're all alone until you hit the ground and become part of the sand. You become dry, you grow up and blend in or are mixed in with the rest of the people. And then you're part of the real game, you are not alone anymore. You are an adult.

by Isaac Red Owl

## To Be a Teen

I feel the world looking at me with evil jealous eyes. I watch TV and see people across the world who don't have anything at all; no food, no clothes, no nothing and at night, when I think of them, I hear their dying cries. People are jealous of me because I don't run around and start fights and make enemies. I live in a world filled with loneliness, hatred, and jealousy, but there's a whole new generation who could do something about that. I have fun and don't worry sometimes. I like to live in excitement and do this and that. To be a teen is hard. I don't think I would get through all my days without a friend beside me. I want the world to see me as me and I want the world to let me be.

by Stephanie Sully

## Colors

Colors communicate directly to the human soul and evoke images and feelings so strong, they are often beyond words and quite difficult to write about. I believe young people experience colors in an especially intense and pure way that they understand, but sometimes cannot explain. It's very easy for kids to linguistically connect colors with the over-referenced objects that bear a sort of stale, generically accepted shade and end the discussion there.

Arthur Rimbaud, the French poet, created a brilliant poem, "Voyelles", using the five major vowels of the alphabet as a structure for engaging with colors. In this way, he cut language to its most basic form, a single letter, and then could mix words and colors in a creative way. Kenneth Koch developed an assignment that uses Rimbaud's poem as an example; I followed Koch's lead, hoping my students would find this format of exploring the relationship between vowels and colors sound enough for them to develop some original thoughts. The kids responded with precision and freshness in their statements about various colors.

### 5 Vowels

Blue A, Black E, Yellow I, White O, Red U

A, beautiful blue skies and the color of people's eyes. Flowers that bloom in spring.

E, the blackness of night and the symbol of death and misery. What keeps us from sleeping and the color of the sky in stormy nights.

I, the morning sun and the beautiful dandelions that take up fields.

O, the clouds that cover the sun and the milk that fills your thirstiness and the whites in our eyes.

U, the beautiful morning sky and the reminder of hot summer days.

by Grace Brewer

## Colored Vowels

Blue A, Green E, Purple I, Black U, Silver O

A, up in the blue sky unlatching and turning into a bird so high. A blue jay singing, looking, standing on a pole so high in the sky.

E, the envy of you. The envy of her. It's like saying I'm green, but I'm wise. Sitting on the grass eating salad and drinking green kool-aid.

I, the fake eyes she has. The purple sunset. The bruise when I hit my leg against the bottom of the truck.

U, as in you're lost walking in the moonlight. Her hair flowing down her back trying to find her way.

O, the earring in her tongue. The color of her car. The jacket her sister always borrowed. The sunglasses on her face.

by Minnie Bourdeaux

## Vowels and Colors

A, blackboards are black as night. Beards woven together by looms as dark as the beards. Night darker than a closet.

E, pink beautiful lips large and luscious. Big full lips cut open and liquid flowing from them.

I, yellow pieces of cloth stranded together in a giant braid. Cut by a yellow razor blade.

O, orange oranges sweet when they hit your tongue. Orange hair swinging in the wind.

U, red blood flowing from the cut on my finger. Drying and flowing at the same time.

by Sonni Richards

## Vowels and Colors

A, blue, early in the day when the sun comes up, it's a beautiful color  
blue.

E, black, late in stormy nights, whenever the sun is gone, it turns black  
and cold.

I, white, during the day, white clouds in the sky, snow on the ground, it's  
really cold.

O, purple, sometime in the day there is a special tint in the sky right  
before the sun goes down, it's purple and beautiful.

U, silver, the clouds sometimes look a bit silver and sparkly. It's just a  
simple color.

by Dawn Crowe

## Vowels

A, blue, reminds me of the sky. When days are nice, the sky is bright. No  
worries, helps me get by.

E, green, reminds me of peace and happiness.

I, red, reminds me of darkness and death.

O, white, reminds me of heaven. It is the color of the clouds.

U, black, reminds me of the dark places in life. When people die, lose their  
family. Black reminds me of people who are always sad.

by Lyle Wilson

## Vowels and Colors

A, blue is the color of the sky when clouds make weird shapes of animals  
and other things you can imagine.

E, red is the symbol of dawn when the beautiful colors sprinkle over the  
hills with the scent of pine.

I, white is the sign of snow which falls through the air in the shape of a  
star with a mirror reflection.

U, green is the shade grass where blossoms bloom and rabbits come to eat.

O, black is the symbol of darkness when the cruel swims through mists of  
fog, the sign of death, when the good quivers amongst them.

by Amery Brave Heart

## Vowels

Blue A, morning sky sparkling. Blue jays singing.  
Red E, a bloody fight going on. A red head walking down the road.  
Green I, catching bass. Looking at grass.  
Orange O, eating an orange. Looking at leaves in fall.  
Black U, darkness of the night. The bottom of the sea.

by RJ Pond

## Vowels and Colors

A, deep below the black sea, a lonely sense of darkness where nothing at all exists. Where no air is held; nothing can survive.

E, on the bottom rests a sunken ship where once many were aboard, but all is lost and many sank with the ship. Green moss is all over the ship and emeralds lie inside.

I, alongside the emeralds lies a chest full of gold, pearls, and silver. None of it is rusted or polished. It lay in the sea of darkness waiting to be found.

O, it is said only the person who follows an all purple rainbow to where it ends will find the treasure below the sea's surface.

U, he was told to follow the yellow sun to the bottom using a single air tank. He had fifteen minutes to get the treasure and come up.

by Morris Ward



## Imagination

Good metaphor is arguably the first key to original writing. As this book hopefully demonstrates, genuine experience and emotion are the ingredients that give the images made by well-chosen words their power. But, my students had to learn a formula for clean writing in order to deliver phrases with power, and this began with metaphor, crafting fresh comparisons that interested the reader.

The kids had little difficulty traveling far into the realm of imagination. When we discussed possible new meanings of the five words that I suggested best described the substance of our classroom work - story, read, create, act, convince - my students almost immediately constructed strong personal definitions for these terms.

When I came across Kenneth Koch's notion of "the third eye", a visionary tool that sees only when the other two eyes are closed, I felt sure this construct would give my students room to really stretch the scope of their artistic sight. The crucial lesson that the kids absorbed, probably unconsciously, was to compose concrete and specific images that their reader could visualize. In some ways, these writings that follow laid the groundwork for much of what was created throughout the three years.

### Metaphor

When you laugh, it's an echo of your past.  
The moon is a round diamond.  
The stars are pieces of memory.  
The ocean is a blanket of dream; it lasts forever.  
A rainbow is a bridge to your future.

by Minnie Bourdeaux

## Comparisons

Flowers are like a bed of silk.  
Death is like a deep dark cave.  
Life is an open gateway.  
Children are as free as the wind.  
Sunlight is like a hot oven.  
Horses are like clouds, they roam wherever they want.  
Loneliness is as calm as a night sky.  
Life is like a watch, you never know when it will stop.

by Grace Brewer

## Comparisons

My hat is like an umbrella in the sun.  
The moon is a lantern, it lights up the night.  
A book is a door, it can open and close.  
Grass is a big carpet that covers the world.  
A star is a distant flashlight in the dark of outer space.

by Stephen Eagle Bull

## Comparisons

A sheet is like a wave in the ocean.  
by Brandon Brave Heart

A shell is like a book, they are both hard with many stories to tell.  
by John Little Finger

Death is us moving onto another life.  
by JR Richards

A planet is a seed that I want to hold.  
The stars are like salt to God.  
by Tony Weasel Bear

Gloves are like an extra hand.  
The sun shines like a crystal.  
by Dallas Nelson

A tunnel is like a giant's ring.

by Jessie Star Comes Out

### Comparisons

My brother is an energizer bunny.

A dog is a faithful leader.

A phone is a connection of love.

The ocean is God's bathtub.

Chess is like real life.

Music is the way of words.

Paradise is a dream.

Friends are forever.

Reading is the world.

I am the true run run.

by Duncan Deon

### Comparisons

Clouds are cotton balls.

A beast is anger.

A sun is flaming.

A sky glides.

A ladybug sings.

by Dena Colhoff

### Third Eye

My third eye would be able to see into the past, future, present, and far into a different world. When I see the future, I see two people. They are very young children; they are ageless. But my past is very old, people that age forever and ever. When I see present, I see people killing and fighting. I can see far and close in and out of something.

by Tia Catches

### Third Eye

My third eye can see the clear blue sky and not the dirt that is in it.

by Kiri Hammock

### **Eye Between My Eyes**

The eye between my eyes can see everything. It can see a pot of gold under a rainbow, the pearl inside a clam. It can see an angel flying in the sky. It can see God, the one who loves us.

by Chanelle Douville

### **Eye Between My Eyes**

When I close my eyes, the eye between my eyes opens and helps me see everything that I dream of. All my fantasies. My third eye is my imagination.

by Jeannie Trueblood

### **Third Eye**

With my third eye, I can see the bees and birds that fly by me. When I open it up, it feels my two eyes don't trust, which makes me see different things, but I will always like the eyes on me.

by Georgina Little Hawk

### **Third Eye**

When I shut my eyes, my third eye can see everything that my other eyes can't see. It can see the stars up close and the moon more clearly. It can see eagles flying around the Badlands. That is what my third eye can see.

by Tonia Scabby Face

### **The Eye Between My Eyes**

The things I could see would be like flying unicorns that dance above my bed and sing relaxing songs. I would be able to see my guardian angel. She would tell me her opinions of my life. And how to fix them.

by Dena Colhoff

## **Nothing**

The whole pencil is nothing.  
It lies there and does nothing.  
You pick it up and create many things.  
It is the window to creativity.

by Grace Brewer

## **New Definitions**

Story: a tale that will make your eyes glow with interest and your mind fill with excitement.

Read: to understand the meaning of a book that fills your heart with joy

Create: to bring a story alive with words that scare you.

Act: to do something in front of people to give them entertainment and fill their minds with excitement or maybe disappointment.

Convince: to have someone believe what you're saying.

by Chanelle Douville

## **New Definitions**

A story is a narrative told by the ancient ones or written by the new generation. Something you carry in your heart forever.

To read is to take something in and remember it for the rest of your life.

To create is to make something and to put a piece of you in each and every little word or thing.

To act is to become, pretend you're someone else and leave the real world behind.

To convince somebody that there really is a dragon living under your bed.

by Kiri Hammock

## **New Definitions**

A story is a portrait into another world, any world I choose.

Read is to go over something that was thought of by another.

Create is to bring something out of my mind to reality.

Act is to show action from an emotional being.

Convince is to give reality to another.

by Walker Thompson

## **New Definitions**

Story is a world where I can get away.  
Read is when I read to my little brother and he falls asleep.  
Create is when I let what's inside come out through my pencil.  
Act is a way of expressing myself to other people.  
Convince is when I talk myself into something and win.

by Kayla Matthews

## **Imagine**

All people have imaginary thoughts, mine just happen to see visions of worlds in the clouds and carnivals in the pond, oceans with no seaweed and fish. I could see kids playing catch with stars.

by Tia Catches

## **Imagination**

When you want to get out of life, you call for imagination and it comes and takes you away to a new life.

by Jeannie Trueblood

## **Imagination**

Imagination is when you open your eyes to the world beyond and don't let people hold you back. To fulfill your dreams.

by Kayla Matthews

## **Imagination**

Imagination is like a whole new world. You could have imagination when you're asleep or when you're writing. Also, when reading a book, you could put yourself in the spot of the character. It is important so you can get ready for the future, think ahead when you are feeling down and it will probably cheer you up. Imagination can help you through life.

by Derek Martinez

## **Imagination**

Imagination is the sea of colors that flows in your mind. Imagination is the pinkish orange of dawn and the bluish purple of sunset. Everyday sunset, sunrise, sunrise, sunset. Feeding your soul and watering your mind. The sound proof dimension in which you live at night. Where anything you want is yours and is. Imagination is the key of everything that was and is to be.

by Carmen Fourd

## **Imagination**

Imagination is when your thoughts bring you into a new world. Like when you see a butterfly flutter in the sky as your tears begin to dry. Imagination is when the real world is abandoned by your heart. Like when you imagine that your heart brings apart the colors of the rainbow. Imagination is when I'm bored, have nothing to do, and go in search of something to write about. Like when I sit and daze about unicorns, beautiful waterfalls, and an eagle flying through the sky.

by Ashley Jones

## Life

Many times my students would expand a subject we were studying, go in a unique direction with an assignment, or simply discover an idea that inspired them and about which they had something to say. All of these possibilities were highly encouraged when the kids' energy was moving in a positive and creative direction. The selections of this chapter cover a wide field of topics and very often present a unique look at some of life's components.

In some ways, these are the writings that didn't quite fit into any of the other sections, but stood out as worthy of consideration in their depiction of general truths. The final seven poems in the chapter all follow the Japanese haiku format, and are all untitled, so they have been grouped together under the heading of "haiku".

## Eyes

To be the eyes of a person would be like exploring a new and different world of sights. Eyes can see good things and they also see the worst of things. They give you a sense of direction. A sense of knowing where you are. And knowing what kind of person you are. Eyes seeing good things like a miracle, or a new born baby. A new life equals a new set of eyes. As eyes, you would also see bad things like a person dying. A set of eyes being lost.

by Raymond Ghost Bear

## Mr. Time

Mr. Time is six foot one, dresses like a casual person in blue jeans and white shirt. Mr. Time is a companion to us. He lives inside our minds. We hardly think about him; when we do, we're either worried, excited, or anxious. We can replay him back to a specific time in the past. When we get old, we sometimes forget time is there.

by Isaac Red Owl



## Separateness

Everyone wrapped up in their own cocoon of silence  
Or of noisy agreement with everything.  
Covering up fear or shame  
Holding everything to yourself, not selfishness but protection.  
If everyone shared all their thoughts, they might lose themselves.  
Walking down a busy sidewalk, looking at the ground  
Never noticing the others walking by  
Or pretending not to.

by Alinea Groening

## Mr. and Mrs. Greedy

They live in an old mansion that used to be a college school. They have seven children and have never set foot on their own porch since they moved there. People think they are angels that are hiding and worship them for their food and clothing, but they just call the police and have them arrested (even the kids).

In each spare room, there is a special device like a machine pool. They have over 4,995,500.1 dollars. They even have their own gas pumps. How greedy they are, not sharing. They even have electric fences. Every time someone asks for something, Mr. and Mrs. Greedy call those people greedy, but they don't look at their own selves.

by Dale Pine

## Life

Life is so precious, especially when you're fighting for it.  
Life is a book that never closes until you give up your only hope.  
Life is a card catalog and if you pick up the wrong card, it will say don't  
give up.  
Life is a paper that doesn't need any work.

by Ronnie Beane

## Life

I think life is like a butterfly. So fragile, it can be smashed easily.  
by Kiri Hammock

## **Words of Life and Death**

The words of life are words of joy,  
but the words of death are sad and lonely.  
And often, death is soft and peaceful  
And life is often stale.

by Tia Catches

## **Fifteen Ways of Looking at Life**

Sparkling clear water running along as a river  
with the pebbles showing at the bottom.  
Leaves falling from trees to the ground and watching the tree start a new  
life.  
A deer running along the herd with fast legs.  
Dancing with your might at a pow-wow or Sun Dance.  
Feeling the wind blow against your face.  
Cleaning up so we'll have a better chance at a healthy life.  
Learning in your classroom so you'll know more for your career.  
An eagle flying in the mountains along the horizon.  
A bear watching her cubs run and play with glee.  
Watching a rose bloom in the sunrise.  
Watching a horse run with freedom in the wild fields.  
Watching a butterfly fly through the sky, then land on a flower.  
A bee buzzing and sucking the nectar out for food.  
Running along the seashore, running away from the fifteen ways.  
A frog hopping on a lily pad from bank to bank.

by Kathy McLaughlin

## **Where the Blue Rose Grows**

The blue rose grows in a little town called Dream. The blue rose grows in a garden by a very blue lake. The water soaked into the roots of every rose, so they turned blue. The blue rose is known as the flower of life to the town of Dream.

One day, a little boy about seven years old got run over and his parents had to go pick a blue rose or their son would die. So, they picked a blue rose and took it back to their house. They had to feed it to the boy. A day after he ate the rose, he was not injured at all.

by Ashley Jones

## **The Next World**

After we die, we go to the next world as a different person, like aliens. We move from planet to planet to improve them because we all have different minds so each world can have more improved stuff. God made all the planets, all the galaxies, everything. The worlds far away were made trillions of billions of years ago. That's why they're so advanced, way more than us.

God made this planet only one thousand ninety-nine years ago. We are not that advanced. After Earth is advanced, He will make millions of new planets with different looking people. After He is satisfied, He will stop. God likes people so much, He keeps making them and their planets. After we're all so advanced, God will make a planet so big it will take a year to fly around it. Then we will all meet.

by JR Richards

## **Me and Basketball**

Me and Basketball  
Are like Steve Young and San Francisco  
Me and Basketball  
Are like my Grandmom and bingo  
Me and Basketball  
Are like your butt and my big toe  
Me and Basketball  
Are like gas and Conoco  
Me and Basketball  
Are like frybread and dough

by Walker Thompson

## **What if?**

What if a creature came out and cast us into an eternal winter by stealing all the other seasons. Blizzards would wipe across the land and all water would freeze over. Every animal would soon begin to die out. Humans would be forced to move underground and rely solely on electricity and eventually die out. The only life to stay alive would be sea life. All life on land would end.

by David Wolfe

## **I Always Like**

I always like to awake in the morning, to look upon the sunny sky. And listen to the birds sing their songs. To hear the wind blow, the leaves and flowers grow, is to awake in the morning and wonder what is to be done in this joyous day.

by Dena Colhoff

## **Looking at the Human Race**

An alien looks out of a port window onto a younger version of the Earth and sees some monkeys fighting and gnawing on a carcass.

A squirrel is sleeping in its tree peacefully, when all of a sudden, gravity shifts and he hits the side of his burrow. He crawls outside and realizes his forest is destroyed. His home is gone. He sees these huge creatures walking on his trees and the smaller ones riding on them. He starts to feel cold because it's a winter night and he has no home. In the distance, behind what's left of the trees, are these strange lights. He hears a loud crunching noise to his right... "Watch the Simpsons, South Park, and WCW Nitro."

As a man watches a pro basketball game in an insane asylum, he thinks, "Has the human race gone so far from an animal that they've turned life into a big game?"

by Jon Decker

## **To Be a Heart**

To be a heart, pumping. When you get nervous, I pump even harder. Then when you calm down, I give you hints. That's why people say things have to come from the heart.

by Jeannie Trueblood

## **Mr. Soulkeeper**

Mr. Soulkeeper wears a cloak with a hood on it. He carries a shepherd staff in the right and in the left hand he carries a little gold box. If anyone is in a fatal position, he hooks the soul with his shepherd staff and forces the body into a golden box and closes the box. He never lets the staff and the golden box with designs on it out of his hand. And he never sleeps. He lives in an old castle. Only the dead can see him. Only the spirits could see him.

by Eugene Giago

## **Music**

Music is a piece of art that people in the world make. Music is a sound that you listen to. Music is life to me. Music is the bass bumping in my car. Music is comforting when you're sad, enjoying when you're relaxing. Music is a tone that is in the music. Music is a vocal, instrumental, or mechanical rhythm, melody, or harmony and it is running in my mind.

by Amanda Zimiga

## **Music**

Music is a rhythm to which the soul can relate.

by David Wolfe

## **Saying Goodbye**

Saying goodbye isn't really what I want to do. Because goodbye is a really strong word to use. But maybe saying goodbye is a way to lock a memory inside you forever.

by Chanda Thompson

## **Goodbye**

Saying goodbye doesn't always mean the end, not even when you're dying. You'll always meet again. You may wave your hand or blow a gentle kiss, but when the end comes round, you'll live in tender bliss. We may wave a hand, but we'll always meet again.

by Brandon Hooper

## **The End of Saying Goodbye**

There is an end to saying goodbye  
Because there is always another hi!  
There's an end to leaving and not just pain but receiving  
If you say later days, you'll find yourself in another maze.  
To everything you have to leave it behind  
and go look for the future until you find.  
When you find your destiny, it'll seem like your ecstasy.

by Blue Dawn Little

## Goodbye

Sa            fo  
ying        r th  
hell        e sec  
o to        ond  
you        time

by Minnie Bourdeaux

## Ends

I stand at the beginning of everything and wait till the end.  
Like getting stabbed and waiting for it to mend.

by Walker Thompson

## End Poem

Maybe there isn't an end. Maybe the end is really the beginning.  
Maybe there is no end and our puny little minds simply can't accept it, or  
it's just that we can't explain it.

What if the end was like a wrinkle in time, but we're just too scared  
to jump to the other side, so we die and hang around until God comes  
after us.

Or maybe, we didn't really die, just that somebody made this rule  
that we have to die, and everybody started making lies and forgot that it  
was a lie and started believing it. So, they didn't really die, only in their  
mind.

by Tia Catches

## Haiku

Tears fall from my face  
As I walk the lonely grass  
To a place unknown

by Kristie Tapio

The night of the death  
Open your heart to the world  
Only God knows why

by Alisha Patton

The wind is silent  
And it is like a tiger  
Waiting to attack

by Cody Seaboy

A thousand years old  
And moves faster than I do  
And whispers live long

by Stephanie Sully

Nature is pretty  
And beautiful comes out fast  
It blooms without fear

by Dustin Star Comes Out

I am spiritual  
Meaning very strong inside  
Not hurt easily

by Derrick McCauley

Imagination  
will always exist for me  
Never dies for kids

by Isaac Red Owl

## Dreams

Originally beginning with an assignment that I designed in reaction to my students' dismay at having school on Martin Luther King, Jr. day in 1998, the concept of dreams proved to spark a pure analysis in them. The students went right to the core of this idea and examined its definition based on what they had experienced and learned.

They discovered that dreams could be life goals, daily fantasies, hopes for the world, or personal messages and instructions from beyond meant to help them. Without a doubt, these kids have paid attention to their dreams throughout their lives, as they all seemed to have a wealth of stories and memories around dreams that clearly held importance for them. The selections printed here are not descriptions of dream sequences, but rather a combination of rewritten "I have a dream" mini-speeches and individual studies of that infinite part of existence that we call dreams.

In Lakota culture, dreams or visions are perhaps the most sacred gift that Wakan Tanka, the Great Spirit, can offer to a human. Visions provide wisdom and illuminate the intended path of a Lakota person or of the Lakota people and their guidance must be followed precisely through the assistance of a spiritual leader. Very often, these visions are not meant to be shared with anyone other than that spiritual leader out of respect for their power and sanctity. This reverent conception of dreams informs the writing of my students in this chapter.

## Dreams

Dreams are thoughts that come true while you're asleep. Dreams could be reality if it wants. People say that dreams are windows to enlightenment and keys and doors to the future. But are they dreams, nightmares, or reality? You will always remember your dreams. Good dreams stay alone to you and bad ones are eliminated and destroyed by telling other people.

by Dustin Star Comes Out



## **Dreams**

I see blackness, I see dust. I'm getting old, I feel like rust. My dreams aren't as exciting as they used to be. I think it's because I don't believe in them, I don't have enough time to dream and see.

When I was small, I thought of crazy dreams. I would see blackness for a moment, now here comes the picture. Looking at a wall would change it all. I could see faces. There's some kind of scripture.

Going into a fantasy world makes the wildest things become real. Looking into that mirror that isn't really there lets you see things that help you see yourself more clearly. It makes you see, touch, smell, hear, taste, and feel good. Being in two places at once lets you know what you do is impossible and that you could do anything.

by Stephanie Sully

## **I Have a Dream**

I have a dream that one day everybody will get along. I have a dream that someday a lot of people will come from all around the world and get together and rebuild homes, schools, old buildings and turn them into something. I have a dream that one day the world will be a better place. I have a dream that one day Pine Ridge and Oglala will be a good, healthy, strengthening, protective community.

by Anna Diaz

## **Dreams**

Dreams are yourself being truthful. When you sleep, you allow yourself to open up and have a real good look at what's going on. Your various shells disappear and you become vulnerable. You sometimes see the future and get scared, but you have to realize you can change it. But, you can also become stronger by accepting what you see. You can lie to yourself when you're awake, but when you sleep you can only see the truth. Dreams are like little amusing but painful stories you can read about your life.

by Carmen Fourd

### **I Have a Dream**

I have a dream there would not be any more killings.  
I have a dream there would be peace everywhere.  
I have a dream everybody will respect each other.  
I have a dream where there is no gossip.  
I have a dream where nobody dies.  
I have a dream where racism does not exist.  
I have a dream where there is no violence or cussing.

by Tony Weasel Bear

### **I Have a Dream**

I have a dream that one day an Indian person that was like Jesus, not sinning, stopped racism. I have a dream that one day all the drunks in the street will not drink and have a good life. I have a dream that one day I will be the next Michael Jordan.

by Eugene Giago

### **I Have a Dream**

I have a dream that one day Indians will be treated with real respect. Not just Indians, but all people. Whether they're black, white, brown, fat, or thin, they would all be treated with respect.

by Kiri Hammock

### **I Have a Dream**

I have a dream that one day we could all have the freedom that we all want. I have a dream that next year we will not judge other people by the color of our skin. And we will live in harmony to love and cherish each other.

by Brandon Brave Heart

### **I Have a Dream**

I have a dream that one day all countries will cry in one voice, we declare peace. I have a dream that one will cure all disease and cry in one voice, thank you.

by John Little Finger

### **As I Sleep**

As I sleep in my bed, I see the dreams in my head. They look like visions of my life; I see Native Americans dancing by us. As I look harder in, I see me dancing. I soon hope I will dream again.

by Georgina Little Hawk

### **Still I Dream**

There are people putting drugs in their bodies and trash all over the  
ground.  
But still I dream good dreams.  
There are people dying. But still I dream about the past and how happy  
we were.  
People are starving and have no home. But still I dream all of us are a  
family and we each have food and a home to live.

by Chanelle Douville

### **Dreams and Reality**

A dream is something great you hope may happen someday. A vision you see in your imagination. Everything seems perfect. It's utopia. Everything is delicate and delightful. Reverie. Fantasies filled with love, freedom, justice, and peace.

Reality is the real life we're in now. Hatred, evil, war, injustice, slavery, starvation. Homeless, poor. Things happen in this world that aren't worth living for. Suicides are because of these things. Families split up and killings go on. I wish everyone can live in a dream.

by Kathy McLaughlin

## **Drug called Dreams**

I dream about crazy people strapped in the memories of smoking a few joints, dropping acid, laughing when the rain fell. I dream of a place called heaven, a place where there is no drinking, getting high, fighting, a place so different than this place we call hell.

I remember sometimes being alone, digging through old photo albums, staring at the wall or out the window. I remember hardly talking to my parents when they're not drunk. Hiding behind my bedroom door when they're drunk, hiding in the shadows.

My mother and father know all about broken hearts. I can't imagine being in love, like my mom and dad. I figured the way they talk about it, it seemed like it would hurt, hurt like a balloon filled with love popped by thousands of darts.

by Stephanie Sully

## **Dream**

A dream is a hope.  
A dream is a wish  
It could be a goal.  
But a dream is my will become.

by Tia Catches

## Values

I believe that the middle school years, and particularly eighth grade, is a unique period of self-discovery. At this time, teens often give birth to their intellectual curiosity and begin to view the world and their own identity as subjects of new and larger interest. As they start to form and reform their own character, traditional values becomes less abstract and make a little more sense in the context of their lives. As eighth graders make decisions and live with an increased awareness of their own role in the events around them, it is not surprising that some can articulate a personal conception of principles by which they may want to live.

## Courage

Courage is what our ancestors needed to live; it's how we survived. When our people needed food in the freezing winter, some sacrificed their lives so others could live. When someone was dying, it took courage to turn around and help your family off the ground.

When we needed each other we came, we never left one to die. We helped each other and even though people tried to get us down, we never gave up, we kept fighting. Lakota people are strong and it takes courage to keep going.

by Larissa Ross

## Courage

Courage is the brave warrior inside you. He never is afraid of anything. He always sleeps until you need him. He casts his super powers into your soul. Then he goes back to sleep when the problem you had to solve is over.

by Brandon Zimiga

## Courage

Courage is the muscles in your brain. Courage is standing up for what you believe in. Courage is needed in tough situations when you don't know what to do. Everybody has courage, but most people don't even know it's there. They never know it until they need it. Some people never use their courage. Courage makes people feel like they got an inner side that's strong.

by Raymond Ghost Bear

## **Courage**

Courage is a big thing that's needed in today's world. Only the strong survive and only the strong have courage. Courage means to stand up for what you believe is right. It means you need to believe in yourself.

Courage is something certain people are blessed with. Other people work hard to get it. Courage is something that grows stronger and stronger inside your mind, body, and soul. It's will power because you show the world what's right and what you can do to change something that you think is not right.

by Stephanie Sully

## **Determination**

Determination is something that keeps you going on. Never letting go, always staying strong. It's the inner soul that keeps telling you to never give up. Anything that comes along, don't let it interrupt. Determination is something that will always stay inside, keeping your wills high and not letting you run and hide.

by Brandon Hooper

## **Tradition**

Tradition means passing something down, like a story. Something that means something special to you. Your love to a child. As the child remembers the love you gave to him. He passes it to his child. And so on.

by Jenna Ward

## **Truth**

Truth is trust and if you don't have that, you have nothing.

Truth is in your eyes and heart, it's screaming your name.

Truth is in a baby's breath, a baby cannot lie.

Truth is in a flower, full of life and power.

Truth cannot always be found. Truth is important.

Truth is in everything.

by Kathy McLaughlin

## **Faith**

They say home is where the heart is,  
So my home must not be here.  
For my heart is in a place called Faith,  
A small but lovely place.  
With trees to climb  
And fields to play in  
And friends to fight and forgive;  
Friends that will always be there.  
So if home is really where the heart is,  
My home is far, far from here.

by Kayla Matthews

## **Faith**

Faith is a destination.  
Faith is telling you to go deeper.  
Faith is believing.

by Sharon Tobacco

## **Promises**

A promise is a promise kept. People make promises about lots of things. Everything. A promise is a single word that means a whole lot. It sometimes means the world to people. If you break a promise, it's like crying wolf. God makes promises by making rainbows after it rains. It means it will never flood. It's kind of true. So, it makes you think. Should you trust others' word? If they're homeless and you promise them a house, they'll believe it and count on it, pack their things. Then you might break it and they'll be heartbroken.

by Kathy McLaughlin

## **Mr. Strength**

Mr. Strength is a man that can lift anything in the world. He is ten feet tall and nothing but muscle and talent. Mr. Strength comes out when you need him; he is that little part of you that comes out when you're tired. He's the one who fights tired to give you strength.

by Mike Patton

## **Confidence**

Confidence is a person; he comes to you like the sun comes to the moon during an eclipse. But confidence comes more often. Confidence is his first name; his last name is Makes Dreams Come True. So his whole name is Confidence Make Dreams Come True. I guess he comes from the Imagination tribe.

by Julian Bear Runner

## **Freedom**

Freedom is like an eagle where you can fly away from people and be free, no one to tell you what to do or what to say. All the chains and big rocks are off and you can run into the night free.

by Joyce Buckman

## **Freedom**

Freedom is when you can do anything you want to do. But when you have freedom, you have responsibility. Freedom is when you let your mind free, let it travel to other worlds, think. Freedom lets your spirit free, free of all harm, all the bad things in life. Freedom is like prejudice in a way, when you are not free of the sick, sad world, you're being judged.

by Kristie Tapio



## **Freedom**

Freedom is coming to school everyday, knowing you'll get an education to go on. Going on to another grade until you graduate college. Freedom is when you're told you aren't gonna get off the rez. But believing you're gonna be the first Indian woman President and maybe you'll make a difference.

by Chanda Thompson

## Writing

Within the space of three years, my students certainly taught me as much as, if not more than, I could ever pass on to them. I am glad that the medium of language gave these young people the freedom to communicate from their souls. In some ways, the road we traveled together was a long one, but by my third year, I would pick up papers from the desks of my students and read solid metaphors where I once saw vague, incomplete statements. As I admired their clean images, my students would ask, "Is it good?", and I would smile into eternity.

I distinctly remember one incident with a sixth grade student who was having a little trouble finding an idea to write on and appealed to me for some help. I asked her what she had considered thus far and from there we mutually bantered back and forth and formed a wild scenario involving some of her original thoughts. This interchange served its purpose of stirring some creative energy, but after completing her final touch to our humorous invention, she countered herself plainly saying, "No, not like that. I want to make it sacred." To me, this comment beautifully illustrated my students' understanding of the importance of choosing words carefully and with respect.

At first only because peers and adults were congratulating them on their work, the kids saw that language has power and that their personal expressions were significant. Later on, many of my students knew when they had fashioned something of value and were eager to share their writing, which they knew carried meaning. I am thankful for every word written in my classroom and know that all praise is due to Tunkasila, our God, who watched over and blessed my students and me in our journey. Let us pray that the children's voices will always soar for all to honor and receive, for they are perfectly strong and true. I would like to close this book with the words of my students about writing itself, the act of using language to create something new, something sacred.

### The Writer

The writer can make any time, place, or person beautiful. A writer can control people's thoughts and emotions. The writer is a person who takes time to group words to make changes.

by Larissa Ross

## **Why Do I Write?**

When I write it comes from my heart. When I write from my heart, I do not want to stop. I want to write until I pop. When I write from my heart, nothing but the truth comes out. I can make up stories with my mouth, but not on paper. When I write it's like a dream.

by Dusty Black Elk

## **The Writer**

The writer is like a breath of fresh air after a stormy day. When you come out and smell the clean air, it makes you feel good. It clears your mind and makes you want to be outside and do something, so you could smell the sweet rain that fell on cut grass. New rain is just like the writer. In the morning, you feel ready to write. To write something new and try something new is a fun thing to do.

by Stephanie Sully

## **Writing**

Writing is when you feel good and can't stop thinking about a dream, so you grab a paper and a pencil and begin. It can also be when you have thoughts deep down in your body and want to get them out so bad, you get anxious.

by Lorelei Standing Bear

## **Writing**

Writing to me is a way to get away from the world and slip into a world unknown that only writers imagine. Every time you put down a word, you take a step farther in your knowledge. Writing is like a basketball with no player. Or a child with no parents around to say I love you, I'm proud of you. Because writing takes a lot of imagination. Without writing, there would be no humor or sense of what's wrong or right. So writing is a way to drift away.

by Chanda Thompson

### **Why Do I Write?**

I write to get away from the world, to be on my own for just a little while. I write to get all my feelings into just one sentence. I write to remember that day forever. I write for the fun of writing.

by Christina Cordier

### **Why Do I Write?**

I write to get all the hate, bad, and not good stuff out of me. I just want something to do. I want to let all my good thoughts go on paper. I want to experiment with all the words. I wish to accomplish something by writing.

by Tony Weasel Bear

### **I Write About**

I write about real life problems and adventures. Reality. I try to write in my free time and whenever I can. I write because I like to and find it to be very interesting. I want to be a writer because maybe someday my stories and poems will help other people's problems and troubles.

I want to write so I can change people's lives. Maybe some kid is abused and then I write about that. Writing makes me feel calm and good about myself. I want to write about my generation. My mission is to get my feelings out and get people to listen. But for now, I'll continue to follow my dreams and consider myself as a writer.

by Kathy McLaughlin

### **Why do I Write?**

I write because sometimes it relieves my feelings of pain inside. I write because I need to get things off my chest or out of my mind, so I write them on paper. I also write when I need to express myself; it really helps a lot. It clears my mind and makes me feel better.

by Blue Dawn Little

## **Why do I Write?**

I write to gain confidence.  
I write because I'm good at it.  
I write because I want to have a big vocabulary.  
I write because it makes me feel good.  
I write because it's fun.

by Kyle White

## **Writing**

Writing is an education you learn. It is also expressing what you feel inside and writing it in words on paper. Writing is sometimes fun to do, when your hand is in the mood for moving around. Writing is cool because so many people write at the same time and everyone writes different. To me, writing is so cool.

by Misty Merrival

## **Writing**

Writing is when you sit down and write your thoughts and feelings. Writing is when you sit down and write about people you know and what you think about the world around you.

by Candida Bagola

## **Why do I Write?**

I write because if I don't, my brain will explode. Too many thoughts with nowhere to go except onto a sheet of paper. My imagination is overwacked, I have to let the ideas go out of my mind and flow through my pen onto the page. If I never wrote, I don't think my brain could stand it. It's good to have ideas, but not too many. The brain needs rest from the weight of ideas. That's why I write.

by Amy Groening

## **The Poet**

The poet is like the spirits. They both help people make right decisions. You can feel them inside your body, like the poet, his words are what you feel.

by Chanelle Douville

## **Writing**

I feel good writing, you write fast, or slow, and you get an image of that. You could say that I have an imagination or a wide mind. It's kind of hard; I think it's easy.

by Duncan Deon

## **Writing**

Writing is like taking a ride on a stallion. You could either do it good or do it sloppy. Writing is something you dream about, you never know what you're going to get. Writing is like a sport you love, you never get tired.

by Steve Goings

## **Writing**

Writing is like a wild animal. It can be timid and hide from you for a long time, but soon it will grow on you and get bigger and better as it does. It needs to be fed ideas and it needs to be rested when overworked. Writing can also be like a leech; it will slowly drain the life out of you if you misuse it. So use it wisely and it will be like a drink of water, life giving.

by David Wolfe

## **Writing**

Writing is like flowing water. As your ideas pour onto the paper, it is almost like the way water flows in a river. Going on and on in a constant stream of ideas being transformed into letters and words. Dams are like writer's block and when people fish out a pond, it is like when others skim ideas out of a paper.

by Jon Decker

### **Why do I Write?**

I write to express my thoughts and feelings for the things I write about. Even what people say about it, I don't really care because it's what I'm about and what I think about.

by Alisha Patton

### **Why do I Write?**

I write because I can help myself from being bored sometimes. I like to tell my feelings by writing. I write because it makes me feel happy. It makes me feel like there's no one else in the world but me.

by Jessie Star Comes Out

### **Art**

Art  
Art is  
Art is pure  
Art is pure and  
Art is pure and good.

by Sonni Richards

### **Why do I Write?**

I write because when I grow up I want to write and direct my own movies.

I write because it's fun sometimes.

I write because people make me feel good when they say I'm a good writer.

I write because it gives me something to say about the world.

I write because I want people to read it.

I write because I like to show my imagination.

by Tia Catches

## Freedom

Everyone has freedom, no one can take it away from you. People can chain you and make you work until you almost die, they can take everything away from you, but not the most important freedom. That freedom is the will to live in other worlds and imagine other things. To live in fantasy and forget reality. That freedom is something no one can chain to walls or beat. That freedom is invincible and will live forever, never die.

by Brandon Hooper