

美国中学生优秀作文选

Fourteen
Short Stories

by Eleventh
Grade Writers

Juniors

成长的故事

青少年作者 著

锋 译

清华大学出版社 <http://www.tup.tsinghua.edu.cn>

美国中学生优秀作文选

美国图书馆联合会提名最优秀青少年作品

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美国青少年作者 著

林锋 译

清华大学出版社

(京)新登字 158 号

Juniors

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Original English Language Edition published by Merlyn's Pen, Inc.

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215169

书 名: 成长的故事

作 者: 美国青少年作者

出版者: 清华大学出版社(北京清华大学校内,邮编 100084)

<http://www.tup.tsinghua.edu.cn>

印刷者: 清华大学印刷厂

发行者: 新华书店总店北京发行所

开 本: 850×1168 1/32 **印张:** 8.25 **字数:** 197 千字

版 次: 1999 年 12 月第 1 版 1999 年 12 月第 1 次印刷

书 号: ISBN 7-302-03707-8/H·288

印 数: 0001~6000

定 价: 16.00 元

内 容 提 要

《成长的故事》一书展现的是青春狂想时期的美国青少年们的亲历故事及其所见所想。书中收集了各种风格与流派的短篇佳品,而且它们完全是出自十一年级学生作者笔下的原作。文章文笔流畅,立意清新,想象丰富。每篇文章配美国文化背景介绍,词汇解释和帮助理解的参考译文。绘声绘色的朗读更给精美的故事插上了翅膀。

本书配原版朗读磁带1盘,纯正美音。

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出版说明

我们十分欣喜地向全国大中学生、青少年读者推荐《美国中学生优秀作文选》丛书。这套丛书是美国图书馆联合会的最优秀青少年作品。丛书中每篇文章都出自美国中学生之手，文中叙述了他们的实际生活及感受，吐露了他们的真实思想和情趣，也暴露了他们成长中的问题和烦恼。我们阅读这些原汁原味的作品，既可以学习和提高运用英语写作、叙事的能力，又可以对美国文化及青少年的生活有所了解。必须指出的是，生活在美国的青少年的人生观及其生活方式、思想方式和我们是有很多不同的，他们在文章中所表现出来的积极向上的、健康美好的东西是值得我们吸取的，而那些消极的、颓废的、不健康的甚至丑恶的东西是应该批判和抛弃的。

我们相信，我国的大中学生、青少年读者对于善与恶、美与丑是有分辨能力的，因此出版时忠实于原作，保持原汁原味。这样有利于学习当代英文，也有利于全面了解美国文化，了解美国青少年。

清华大学出版社

1999年6月

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What would she be without them?

Family

by KATE WILKINSON

D*ing! Dong!* Jonson Delilah Hill, aged thirteen years, shoved the roast beef into the oven and ran to the front hall. She pulled open the door. The Perfect Suburban Family was standing on the porch of the Hill's dilapidated country home. Aunt Tilly in a lavender suit, understated makeup, and artfully tossed blonde hair. Uncle Greg in shades, lightweight button-down shirt, and khaki pants. Little Cousin Steffie in a pink knit dress and white sandals. All three smiled with Christian forgiveness at Jonson's oversized men's floral shirt, blue jeans, and canvas shoes. Jonson felt a nervous breakdown coming on. She forced a smile.

"Hi, Aunt Tilly! Uncle Greg! Steffie! It's so good to see you. Come put your things in the guest room. No, Grannie won't be here till later. Grandpa George is down at the creek fishing, I think. Mom's in the city working. She should be here soon."

Jonson helped Tilly and Steffie and Greg unload their belongings and invited them to the kitchen for a cold drink. She glanced cautiously out the sink window into the backyard. Grandpa George and his 35-year-old Russian lover, Mikhail, seemed content with their fishing. Jonson made a wishful incantation to keep them there as long as possible. This Memorial Day family reunion would have been a disaster even without them. Jonson checked the clock and wondered if her mother, or Martha as she preferred, really was coming home. As far as Jonson knew, Martha had never held a real job, but currently she was a priestess at the Urban Witches' Covenant Revival Center. Three days ago a novice had phoned to say that the Exalted Mother Martha had gone into a religious trance.

"Please, Mom, break the trance for supper, please," prayed Jonson while she rescued a plate of cream puffs from Steffie. Jonson poured four glasses of iced tea and brought them to the kitchen table.

"Here you go," she said. "Uncle Greg. Aunt Tilly. Here Steffie, careful, don't spill."

Jonson sat down with the others.

"So how was your trip?"

"Just fine, honey, just fine," answered Tilly. "It was really the most lovely drive up here. The flowers were in bloom everywhere. Weren't they lovely, Greg?"

"Yep. They sure were, sure were," said Uncle Greg as he stirred three teaspoons of sugar into his tea.

"So how's the school year been, dear?" asked Tilly in Good Aunt fashion.

"Pretty good," said Jonson. "I'm doing well in all of my classes, especially social studies. I had some trouble with pre-algebra, but Mikhail helped me through

that.”

Aunt Tilly’s pinned-up smile fell.

“Oh, how nice,” she said. Uncle Greg coughed nervously, and Steffie blew bubbles into her iced tea. Jonson was immediately lost in a huge drink. She mentally kicked herself for saying the taboo name. The family had nearly split when Grannie Em had moved out of the house thirteen years ago and Martha and her baby daughter had moved in. However, when 22-year-old defector Mikhail Yakov took up residence, the family entered chaos. As far as Jonson could tell from Memorial Day reunions, it had never exited. She gulped down the last of her tea and turned to Steffie.

“So what have you been up to, Stef?” she asked politely.

“I’ve been in the first grade mostly. Except when I poured glue on the teacher’s chair. Then I was in the principal’s office for almost three days it seemed like.”

Everyone laughed, grateful for the relief from the tension. Jonson left the group to tend to supper, and Aunt Tilly got up to help. Uncle Greg found some crayons and colored with Steffie. An hour later the doorbell rang again.

Jonson called “I’ll get it” to Aunt Tilly, who was using a food processor she had apparently brought with her, and ran to the door. Jonson crossed her fingers for Martha, but instead was greeted by a distinguished lady in her fifties. Grannie Em was neatly dressed in gray slacks, a white blouse, and a black blazer; she carried a modern-looking black purse with silver clasps. Jonson groaned inwardly. Grannie was everything Jonson wasn’t.

“Good afternoon, Jonson Delilah,” said Grannie

Em crisply. "Is that Tilly and the others I hear back there?"

"Um, yes, Grannie," said Jonson, but Emily Hill was already clicking her high heels down the hallway. Jonson sighed. She couldn't remember a time when it wasn't impossible to say even hello to Grannie. Jonson knew that Aunt Tilly and Grannie together were more than she could stand at the moment. She ran upstairs to her mother's bedroom and searched the address book. She didn't find what she was looking for, so she pulled the phone up onto the bed and sat with it. She dialed the operator.

"Hello? Yes. I need a number for the Urban Witches' Covenant Revival Center in downtown . . . OK, 613-5948. Thanks."

Jonson dialed the number and waited six rings before a young, vague voice answered.

"Hi, I'm Exalted Mother Martha's daughter. I was wondering if she's come out of trance yet? Yes, I know we're all spiritual daughters of the Exalted Mother, but I'm her *real* daughter! Is she out of the trance yet? Oh, thank goodness! Can I talk to her?"

Jonson stood up and did a dance on her mother's bed while she waited for the young witch to get Martha.

"Hello? Martha? Oh, I am so glad to hear your voice. Listen. You've got to get here. Uncle Greg and Aunt Tilly and Steffie and Grannie Em are here. Yeah, Mom, yes I know they aren't blessed by the wisdom of the Goddess Gaia. They aren't blessed by any wisdom at all, but you have to get home. OK. Good. And Martha! Martha! Please dress normal. Normal? Well, Mom, just no tie-dyed robes, all right? Bye."

Jonson set down the phone. "Please, Goddess Gaia,"

she whispered. "You've taught the Exalted Mother Martha wisdom; now could you please teach her some common sense?"

Jonson looked at her mother's bedroom clock. It was 5:36. Martha would be home by 6:00. The roast would be done by 6:45. If she could just keep Grandpa George and Mikhail out of the house until the Exalted Mother arrived, there would be only 45 minutes of all-out family warfare before supper. Jonson raced down the stairs, out the front door, and around the house to the backyard. She caught her breath by the garden before walking down to the creek where Grandpa and Mikhail were talking and fishing.

"Hi, Grandpa George. Hi, Mikhail. Caught anything yet?"

Grandpa laughed. "Nothing big enough to keep. Lots of five-inchers, though."

Mikhail sighed dramatically.

"I," he said, "I have caught nothing. I never catch anything. These American fishes are prejudiced, I think."

Jonson sat down on the bank. "Did you catch very many in Russia?"

Mikhail faked a sob. "No! Never."

All three broke up laughing. Grandpa cast his line into the deep hole near the raspberry bush.

"I suppose everyone is here now?" he said.

"Everyone except for Martha. She came out of her trance, though. Should be home by six."

Grandpa George shook his head slowly.

"I love your mother dearly," he said, "but you do realize that she is completely crazy."

"Yeah," said Jonson. She threw a pebble into the creek. "I realize it. I told her to dress normal. I hope

she does. Anyway, supper won't be ready until 6:45 or thereabouts, so I was thinking, if you guys stayed here till Martha shows up . . ."

Mikhail interrupted, saying, "Trying to keep everyone from breaking all of the dishes in the house and the lamps, too?"

Jonson giggled. "Precisely."

She climbed up from her seat on the bank. Grandpa George reeled in and cast again.

"I think we can manage that, Jonson." He looked up at Mikhail, who nodded in agreement.

"Thanks, Grandpa. Bye. See you, Mikhail." Jonson walked back to the house.

Mission accomplished, she thought. *Now all I've got to do is put up with Aunt Tilly and Grannie Em for a little while, and Martha will be here in a half-hour, and dinner will need looking after up till then . . .* Jonson opened the screen door into the kitchen.

"Fishing?" asked Grannie sarcastically. She was grating cheese over some sort of casserole. Jonson didn't answer. Instead, she opened the oven and spooned juices over the roast. She peeled potatoes silently while Grannie Em and Aunt Tilly gossiped. Uncle Greg was in the living room now, watching the news on television. Steffie was underfoot. Jonson felt that she was managing well until Grannie Em turned to her and asked, "I hear you took part in some sort of coming-of-age ceremony in February. I'd like to know more about it."

Jonson blushed. She was not going to tell Grannie Em and Aunt Tilly about the Urban Witches' ceremonial dance for young girls who have just had their first period.

"It was at our church. Just like a First Communion, really," Jonson lied, and went back to her potatoes. She switched to carrots and the three were silent. Steffie wandered out the back door. At 6:07 the crunch of an old station wagon rolling up the gravel driveway reached them. Aunt Tilly looked up.

"That's Martha, I imagine," she said wearily. "Will you fetch Steffie, Jonson dear? I believe she's playing out back."

"Sure," said Jonson. She didn't want to witness the first greetings anyway. Jonson opened the screen door and walked slowly to Stef, who was playing at the far corner of the yard near the old pine. Grandpa and Mikhail had already left the creek and were meeting Martha at her car. Jonson noticed with satisfaction that the Exalted Mother Martha was dressed comparatively tamely in a black skirt, shapeless crimson blouse, various crystals, and leather sandals. Jonson sat down under the tree next to Steffie.

"Hi, Stef. What're you doing?"

The first low sounds of quarreling were issuing from the house. Martha and Mikhail's presence always lit the fire.

"I'm making a little fort, see?" Steffie showed Jonson her carefully arranged dirt, twigs, and pine cones. Jonson nodded enthusiastically.

"That's neat," she said. "What if we made a little road over here?" Jonson and Steffie played for fifteen or twenty minutes while the low quarreling sounds rose to the volume of a hurricane. At the cry of "Merciful Goddess Gaia, Save Her Untaught Soul!" and a following "For the Love of Jesus Christ!" Jonson stood up and helped Steffie to her feet.

"I guess we'd better go in and see what's going on," she sighed.

Steffie ran up to the house. Seeing the grownups fight was a great source of entertainment. Much better than sticks and dirt. Jonson followed reluctantly. She went through the kitchen and stood in the hallway. She was roughly in the eye of the storm. Grandpa George and Grannie Em were shouting at one another at the front door.

Probably just started fighting there and never bothered to move, thought Jonson. She caught snatches of "It's absolutely sickening! Keeping our disaster of a daughter here in the house is bad enough. But that horrid boy-creature? What do you think people think?" and "I've been telling you for thirteen years, Emily! We're in love! And that's more than I ever could have said for you and me."

Martha and Aunt Tilly were upstairs somewhere. Aunt Tilly's high, indignant voice carried downstairs.

"But, Martha! You're raising the girl as a heathen. Why, anyone could tell by looking at her that she's an atheist!"

Martha's best priestess tone rang back. "My daughter and I are both blessed by the Goddess Gaia."

Jonson shook her head sadly. Gaia, Buddha, Ra . . . Martha had tried almost every religion known to man. Jonson listened for Uncle Greg and Mikhail. They were in the living room and were much calmer than the others. So far as Jonson could tell, they were discussing foreign trade policies.

Martha, Aunt Tilly, Grandpa, and Grannie became more and more heated.

Oh, what am I going to do? thought Jonson over

and over. *They have to stop for supper. They have to.*

Steffie rushed down the stairs giggling.

"Jonson! Jonson! Come see!" shouted Steffie, jumping up and down. "Auntie Martha and Mommy are fighting. Come see!"

Jonson grabbed hold of Steffie and made her stand still.

"Oh, what am I going to do?!" she cried aloud. The scent of burning meat made up her mind for her. Jonson dragged Steffie into the kitchen and sat her down at the table. She turned off the oven and removed the roast. It was not badly burnt. Jonson placed the roast on the table along with the other food. She began rummaging in the pantry. When she found the old cymbals left over from her brief band days, she ran into the hall with them. Martha, Aunt Tilly, Grandpa, and Grannie were still shouting. Mikhail and Uncle Greg were talking loudly now. Jonson closed her eyes and, with a cymbal in each hand, spread her arms wide.

CRASH!

"Everybody! Suppertime!!!"

The house was silent. Jonson carried the cymbals back into the kitchen and set them on the counter. She sat at the head of the table. Steffie stared at her in awe.

"That was loud," she whispered.

One by one the grownups filed in. Uncle Greg first, looking embarrassed, then Mikhail, trying to keep from laughing. Grannie Em marched in furiously, patting down her hair and striving to regain dignity. Grandpa George came behind, grinning. Aunt Tilly entered with her suburban housewife face only slightly flushed and Martha followed last, the very picture of controlled holy rage. Everyone sat.

"Um . . . Would you like to say grace, Jonson?" suggested Aunt Tilly timidly. Jonson nodded. Everyone bowed his or her head except for Martha.

"Dear God," started Jonson. Martha glared wrathfully across the table. Jonson continued smoothly, "and Spirit of the Great Goddess Gaia, we thank you." Jonson paused and smiled happily around the table.

"We thank you for family."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kate Wilkinson is a student at the Interlochen Arts Academy in Interlochen, Michigan, and a native of Sheridan, Montana. Majoring in creative writing at Interlochen, she also enjoys playing the violin, hiking, swimming, and cartooning.