

美国中学生优秀作文选

Nominated
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American Library Association

Taking Off

起飞

美国青少年作者 著

吴薇 刘昕娅 译

冯斗 审校

by American Teen Writers



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美国图书馆联合会提名最优秀青少年作品

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内 容 提 要

《起飞》收入的 13 篇文章,是关于成长中的美国青少年的故事,时而少年老成引人深思,时而滑稽嬉戏引人发笑。虽然你并未亲临其境,但阅读时也会感同身受:女生间的秘密,情窦初开后的心事,对死去兄弟的追思,与继母的矛盾与和解,夏日鱼趣,神话幻想等……这一切都出自青少年作者的手笔,真实可信,无拘无束,毫不掩饰。

本书配录音带 1 盘。纯正美音。

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Taking Off

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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、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的、向上的、健康的、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

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Nightgowns

by ASMA HASAN

MILLIE'S STORY

It was deathly hot at Austin, and the beginning of the school year. All the Fourth Formers, sophomores in normal language, came back early to go on this retreat; we were supposed to become acquainted with the others. The campus was quiet and empty, nothing like its usual state. Prize Day of last June was still in my mind: Candice Bergen's commencement speech (the closest I had ever come to a celebrity), packing everything up, the dictionaries that were supposed to be prizes, the long, long handshaking line. I couldn't believe we were back already. I ran around with the old girls, laughing, saying, "Let's check our mailboxes." I felt sorry for the new girls; they all stood around with shifty looks on their faces, arms crossed at their waists. I wondered which of the new girls was my roommate. Some of the new girls were wearing flashy, fancy jewelry and had permed hair. I smiled to myself, knowing that Austin would change them and

by Parents' Weekend they would all have straight hair and simple silver earrings.

For the most part, I hadn't changed to the Austin norm. I had dark brown hair, which I kept very short and never lightened. I wore what I liked, much beyond J. Crew, and hated Birkenstocks. I wore glasses because contacts were too much of a pain, and I would have to wake up fifteen minutes earlier to put them in my eyes. That never bothered the other girls there, who could stay up all night and function normally the next day. Maybe all this was why I had had trouble finding a roommate.

The retreat was average. We went swimming a lot. All the girls wore turquoise one-piece swimsuits. The daring ones wore orange or fuchsia suits; their muscular legs stuck out like pencils with knobs in the middle. Kyra was the only one in a bikini; she was obviously a new girl—no one wore a bikini in front of the guys. I thought she was nice, cutesy with her dark eyes and blondish hair. She was skinny and had a little perky nose. I had no idea that she was my roommate.

I was surprised at her excitement at being my roommate; she had been so quiet at the retreat. Later somebody who was in her cabin during the retreat told me that she had thought Kyra was a social climber; I didn't think so. We set up the room, her bed by the window, mine in the corner, tapestries and black and white posters on the walls. Pre-season sports began, and we didn't see much of each other, running around to practices and meals.

Suddenly it became cold and classes had already begun. All my classes were surprisingly hard, and I went to bed late on school nights for the first time in

two and a half years. Kyra and I liked each other, and we became good roommates; she didn't party in our room, and I didn't talk about her behind her back.

We had that unspoken understanding. We would lie in bed at night and tell each other our secrets—who we thought was hot; which girls were pretty or snobby; who was smart. We would talk about our flirtations; Kyra did most of the talking. She was the first roommate I had ever had.

We started playing this game in which one of us would describe the other out loud. Kyra would always say that my nose was soft and round (she was too nice to say that it was big), and that my lips were thick and round. I would always avoid describing Kyra; I was afraid that too much of my admiration of her would seep out.

Kyra had made a lot of friends, even with the old people. I remember in the beginning thinking that it was nice she had made so many friends, even with seniors. I was sort of condescending. Then I realized she was more popular than I was; she had made greater progress in three months than I had in two and a half years! She was even better friends with some of the girls I had known since Second Form, eighth grade in normal language. I wasn't upset, just surprised. People were coming to visit Kyra, addressing the notes on the door to her.

Kyra's grades weren't as good as mine, at least I don't think they were. I would just see a few grades on wisps of paper here and there. It was a comfort to me, though, to be able to think that I was at least smarter than she in school, that those two years had paid off for something. But I secretly thought to my-

self that my grades could not be *that* much better.

One night after Kyra spent a short half-hour describing me, I had to describe Kyra; I had been avoiding it for too long. I started out with the normal sort of thing:

"Your hair is really nice. It's a nice type of shiny and soft. You have pretty eyes; they're like brown glass. Your nose is perfect, like a little button but with a small peak in the middle. Your ears are a little small, but not too small. Your face is round, well—more oval-shaped, like a mask."

Then I started to really let go.

"Well, everything about you is really perfect. I mean, I even admire your feet. Your toes aren't stubby like mine. Your fingers are long and skinny, like your legs. And your knees are perfect too; they're not flat and wrinkly like mine. Yours are smooth and heart-shaped."

I waited for some sort of response. I paused to give her the chance to answer, to accept what I divulged, so I would not go any further. But she never answered.

"What I'm really trying to say, Kyra, is that I really . . . admire you. I mean . . . I guess I want to *be* you. I really want to be you. Everyone likes you; the guys think you're hot, and the girls always tell you their secrets and say that they want to have a body like yours. See . . . I guess I feel that after two and a half years, I should be above your level, but I'm really below it. You have to understand; I don't obsess over you or anything. I would just like to be like you. Is that weird?"

I let out a gasp of air; it had taken a lot of guts, or stupidity, to explain myself like that. I was scared of her reaction, but I wanted to hear it. "Kyra, are you

there? Are you listening?” I realized suddenly that Kyra was asleep, that she hadn’t heard anything I had said, that she was sleeping quietly, lying there in the dark, in her nightgown.

KYRA’S STORY

I was really nervous about Austin. In addition to being racked with nerves, I also had to leave home three days earlier than usual to go on this retreat. The purpose of the retreat was for all of us to become friends—teacher-type reasons. I stood watching all the old students run around and hug each other, saying things like, “Can you tell I’ve lost weight?” “Do you like my haircut?”

I pretended to be very interested in scratching my elbows and yawning—too cool for all this. I don’t even think anyone noticed. I took a sort of quantitative look at the old girls. They all wore J. Crew, preppie clothes. I was relieved; I wore the same type of clothes. The girls were pretty skinny. Most of them were blond. They all looked the same, though. Millie looked different from everyone. She had black hair, glasses, and wore red shorts. Nobody wore red shorts. It was just one of those things. She looked good in them.

I’m glad the retreat was organized. There were times when I was so homesick; I never could have managed being in classes right away. I remember a time, during one of our few hours of free time—the nightly bonfire—that I just felt like crying. It just so happened that Millie was sitting there. She told me corny jokes and laughed at them herself; it cheered me up, in a strange way. The next day we went swimming. I was

the only one wearing a bikini; I whispered to Millie, remembering the red shorts, about how weird I felt. She said that I should feel happy that I was the only one skinny enough to wear a bikini. I noticed Sara, a really pretty girl in my cabin, and hung out with her. The guys were all over her! All the girls were pretty, in their own way. Millie wasn't really pretty, though; she was different looking. I had no idea that she was my roommate.

I was so happy when I found out she was my roommate; I was glad I hadn't been stuck with some geek. Sara was in my dorm, too. I liked the dorm for the most part. I insisted on having my bed by the window; afterwards, I felt a little guilty, but Millie didn't complain. I later learned that Millie really wasn't a complainer; she would never raise her voice for anything. I didn't see much of her during pre-season sports; I was running around trying to organize myself.

It got cold, and I had to use my wool sweaters sooner than I thought. My classes required a lot of work, but I was in bed at precisely 10:30 on week-nights. Millie would stay up all night, it seemed, but she would oversleep the next day. Sometimes she would study in the bathroom so as not to bother me. She was caring and did nice things like that. When I wanted to party, I would go to Sara's room or someone else's room; I respected Millie for not drinking. There were so many things Millie was outgoing about, and there were other things that she wasn't outgoing about at all. She didn't talk to the guys at all; she didn't avoid them or anything, but she didn't especially make an effort.

Once when I was sitting at a lunch table, I was do-

ing the normal girl flirt thing, laughing at what the guys said. Then Will, this tall blond kid, said something about my “gurn roommate.” I wasn’t sure what it meant, but I said, “She just studies a lot.” Will said, “Admit it; she’s a geek.” He had a smug smile on his face like he was winning points with Sara and me. I stood up and slammed the bowl I was holding down on my tray. I nervously yelled at him:

“Look, Millie is a great roommate. She is nice, considerate and caring. She would never say what you just said about anybody, whether she liked them or not. And at least she has the confidence and individuality to avoid wearing stuff like that ugly J. Crew Rugby you’re wearing.”

I was glad I did that. It made me feel good—even if the guys called me a bitch for a week.

That was the night I started playing this game with Millie. I never told her about Will, but I wanted to build up her confidence. One of us would describe the other out loud, saying her nice features. I would tell her she was skinny and had good muscle tone. I wondered if I sounded fake. She would always say she was sleepy and would never describe me.

Once I started drinking, I was accepted into this circle of people, popular people. Practically every Saturday night, Sara and I, other girls too, would sneak over to the guys’ dorm next door. We wouldn’t be running up and down the hall with beer or anything, but we would go to a guy’s room and play chandeliers. The next day, the guy whose room I had been in would come up to me and put his hands on my shoulders and make some funny comment. It was great. I had made all these friends through drinking. I never lost control

like Sara did, though; I think she would actually have sex with some guys. I would always leave when someone passed out because things were too serious then. I didn't want to be involved.

All the girls took a liking to me right away. They borrowed clothes from me, never from Millie. She told me she liked it that way. I wonder if she noticed that the girls were making efforts to talk to me and not her. I didn't want her to be envious. She didn't show any emotions, though. She was really smart, everyone told me; I knew she worked hard for her grades.

One night, Millie finally said she would describe me. She starts going on about my hair and eyes, normal stuff. I am feeling sleepy. Then she says something about a mask, and I open my eyes. Then I hear that I am perfect, and so are my toes and knees. How strange! Millie was kind of comparing herself to me.

Then the talking ceases. I close my eyes. I figure Millie is done. Then she starts into this long speech about how she wants to be me, or admires me or something. I open my eyes. It sounds kind of like she's obsessing over me, but then she says she's not. I'm scared for some reason; I don't even want to breathe. How am I supposed to react to that? Why would she want to be me? People are always telling me if they think I have gained weight, or if they have a better grade on a test than me—not stuff like Millie was telling me.

There's just quiet then. Millie asks if I can hear her, if I'm there. I close my eyes. I don't answer because I don't want Millie to know that I know she looks up to me so much. It's embarrassing. So I just lie there, not saying anything. I know she wants me to say something, but I act like I'm asleep and nervously pick at

the seam in my nightgown.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Asma Hasan comes from Pueblo, Colorado, and attends Groton School in Groton, Massachusetts. She wrote this story while in the tenth grade. She admits to "an incredible rush" from public speaking, and recently won the Richard K. Irons Public Speaking Prize. Future joys will include "traveling the world—especially Thailand, because that's where W. Somerset Maugham lived, and Italy because I love pasta."

睡 衣

——安丝玛·汉森

文化背景

Candice Bergen 是美国的电视明星；在本文中，她应邀在一次毕业典礼上讲话。

Retreat 让学生了解学校和互相了解的一种迎新活动。

A social climber 追名逐利之人。

A geek (巡回杂技团等)做低级滑稽表演的人，但在本文中指不受欢迎的人。

米莉的话

学年伊始，奥斯丁的天气热得要命。所有中学四年级和二年级的学生都早早返校，参加联谊活动。通过这样的活动我们可以彼此熟悉，打成一片。校园里十分安静，空荡荡的，一点儿也不像平时的样子。六月授奖典礼的情形还印在我的脑海里：坎戴斯·伯根的毕业典礼演说（那是我离名人最近的一次），打点行装，那些作为奖品的字典，还有为等待握手而排的长队。简直不相信我们已经又回到了学校。我和老同学们一起跑来跑去，有说有笑：“看看信箱吧！”我真同情新来的那些女生，她们四下里站着，神情不定，胳膊抱在胸前。我揣摩着新生当中谁会是我的室友。有的新生衣着时髦，佩着名贵的珠宝，满头卷发。我暗自好笑。我知道奥斯丁会让她们变样的，等到父母探访日的那一天，她们全都会蓄着直发，只戴朴素的银耳环。

在很多方面,我并没有变成奥斯丁学生的标准模样。我的深棕色头发剪得很短,而且从来不染成浅色。我爱穿什么就穿什么,远不限于吉克鲁牌;我也讨厌贝肯斯塔克牌。我戴有框的眼镜,因为隐形眼镜让人非常不舒服,而且为了把镜片戴进眼里,每天还得提前十五分钟起床。这种麻烦事儿难不倒别的女孩,她们可以头天晚上熬个通宵,第二天照样若无其事。也许就是这些原因让我很难找到室友吧。

联谊活动没什么特别的。我们常常去游泳。女生们都穿着一件套青绿色的连身泳衣。那些胆儿大的穿橙色或者红色泳衣,露出她们结实的腿,好像一支支中间生着节的铅笔。只有凯拉穿着比基尼;她显然是新来的——当着那些小伙子的面可没人穿比基尼。她长着深色眼睛,浅色头发;我觉得她人不错,也很漂亮。她身材苗条,鼻子小小的,显得很神气。我没想到她就是我的室友。

成了我的室友,她非常兴奋,这倒让我很惊讶,因为在联谊活动时,她一直显得很文静。后来,一个在联谊活动时和凯拉同住一室的女孩对我说,她认为凯拉是个爱出风头的家伙;我可不这样想。我俩布置好房间:她的床临窗,我的床靠墙角,墙上装饰着挂毯和黑白海报。季前运动会开始了,我俩很少照面,各自忙着运动和吃饭。

天气忽然凉了下來。开始上课了,我的课程都出乎意料地难,两年半以来,我第一次每天很晚才睡。我和凯拉彼此都有好感,相处融洽;她不会在我们的房间里开聚会,我也从不背后议论她。

我俩之间有一种不必言传的理解。晚上躺下以后,我们彼此诉说秘密,例如我们认为同学里谁出风头啦,哪些女生漂亮啦,哪些势利啦,哪些精明啦。等等。我们也谈论情情爱爱的事儿;凯拉是这类谈话的主角。她是我的第一个室友。

我们开始玩一种游戏，就是大声地形容对方的长短。凯拉总是说我的鼻子又柔滑又丰满（她很好心，并不说我的鼻子很大），说我嘴唇又厚又圆润。我却总是逃避着，不想去形容她；我怕自己对她的羡慕会过分溢于言表。

凯拉交了很多朋友，其中包括高年级同学。记得起初我想，她能交这么多朋友，甚至还和高年级学生交了朋友，倒是不错；我的这种想法还多少带点儿优越感。后来我才发现，其实她比我要受欢迎，她只用三个月就超过了已经在这儿呆了两年半之久的我。连一些我从中学二年级（即八年级）就认得的女孩，和她的交情也远远好于和我。我倒不是为这不高兴，只是感到意外。常常有人来找凯拉，在门上给她留字条。

凯拉的成绩不如我，至少我想是这样的。我不过是零零星星地从纸片上看到她的一些成绩，但是已经令我有了解安，因为我可以告诉自己，至少在学业上我比她强，两年的时间没有白费。然而我私下里又想，我的成绩也就那样了，不会再有更大的长进了。

一天晚上，凯拉只用了短短半个小时的时间来描述完我，轮到了我，我得描述她了；我回避这事儿已经太久。我开始说些普通的词儿：

“你的头发真好看，是那种又有光泽又很柔和的类型。你的眼睛也漂亮，好像茶色玻璃。你的鼻子没得说，像那种中间隆起的小花苞。你的耳朵有点小，不过也不算太小。你的脸型圆圆的，嗯——更像椭圆形；跟面具一样。”

随后我真的说溜了嘴。

“总之你的一切都十全十美，我是说，我简直连你的脚都羡慕呢。你的脚趾头不像我的那么短粗；你的手指，还有腿，也是又细又长。你的膝盖绝了；我的膝盖扁平，还有褶皱，哪像你的心形膝盖，那么光滑。”