



the best midwestern  
high school writing:  
a celebration and  
recognition

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Best Midwestern High School Writing 2014  
Winners

Best Midwestern High School Writing: A  
Celebration and Recognition of Outstanding Prose

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## Janus Faced Journalism

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Benet Academy

Lisle, IL

Grade: 9-10

Genre: Journalism

First place winner

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As a journalist, a person aims to accomplish two things. For the first item, one wants to tell a story. For the second item, one wants to tell the Truth.

For this assignment, I chose to go undercover.

What is the stereotype for beauty? Is it luscious blonde hair with long legs and a surfer's tan? Or is *really* the person on the inside that counts? Well, I chose to find out, and I'd find out by carrying out a sort of social experiment. I chose to carry out this little experiment at a local mall, wearing two different outfits that represented two different characters. I figured that the only way to go about this was to play the damsel in distress. So, I took outfit one for a little ride.

The first outfit was a real stunner. I wore a pair of knee-length boots, a leather jacket, a red camisole that complimented my hair color, and cat-eye makeup. Now, now, I know what you're thinking...

*Wow, she went a little crazy.*

But hear me out. I did this in the name of science, not because I wanted to look like a Biker Chick Barbie doll... as if those existed.

So I went out to the local mall during the regular lunch hour. The place was packed for the holiday season since I went a few days before Christmas. I went into the middle of the cafeteria where people were lounging around after some intense holiday shopping. It wasn't hard to fake a fall near the mall cafeteria steps since they were steeper than usual and polished to a slippery shine. I took two steps upwards, and that's when the damsel in me took charge and faked a fall.

My boots had literally no traction, and my jacket fell off my shoulder as I hit that tiled ground. Aside from putting an imprint of the floor on my spine, I was generally okay. I looked up, and a bunch of people had crowded around me. They were all straight-faced and appeared to be genuinely concerned about me. I smiled a large smile and took the first hand up from the person who offered.

“Oh my God! Are you ok, miss?” The stranger who helped me asked.

I pretended to laugh it off when really, I was cringing inside. “Oh, yeah. Happens all the time!”

I then amped it up a little bit. I began to start limping over to the nearest bench. A young shopkeeper walking by eagerly rushed over. He was about my age, and began to ramble as soon as he saw that my elbow had, in fact, been scraped during the fall and was now taking on an unpleasant purple tinge. I winced when I saw it. I didn’t exactly expect to get hurt during an experiment, now did I?

Ah well, it was for science.

The shopkeeper had been really nice. He said that he had seen the fall and wanted to compensate me for it with a few bars of soap for free from his store and a couple of Band-Aids. He even offered to bring a security guard over and tell him the whole story, but I stopped him there.

I had enough information to carry out part two of my devious plan.

I came back the next day, and the mall was even more crowded than before. This time, I looked like a *real* damsel in *real* distress. I looked like the average, incredibly lazy

teenager. I had bed hair, dull gray sweatpants, my retainer, a chunky pair of glasses, and my hair all tied up in a knot. I went to the same set of steps in the mall, and pretended to fall at the same exact time onto the tile. This time, nobody helped me.

Surprise, surprise, when I limped over the bench, there weren't any shopkeepers either.

I carried out the outfit trick yet again the following week. The mall wasn't crowded anymore, but I didn't need the crowds. I went into a store wearing outfit number one. Everyone was friendly and kind. I made a small purchase and went my merry way. When I wore outfit number two into that same, anonymous store, the only assistance I got was a glare from the cash register person and a huffy, "*Can I help you?*"

I smiled, shook my head no, waved my money in front of her, and walked out of the store.

Phase two was complete.

I noticed other little things while wearing the two different outfits. People seemed to notice "spiffy" me more than they did bedhead girl. Heads turned and people said "hello" when I acknowledged them. I didn't get it.

Does Good Samaritanism only apply when you look like you were born in a Barbie doll factory? Wasn't it the beauty *inside* that mattered? I can at least understand the deal in the store. Nobody wants to help out a teen who has no cash and might be fooling around. Sure it's harsh, but it's business. But what did the people in the cafeteria have to gain by walking away from a hurt person? Was it the bystander effect or something else? Weren't we all supposed to help people we saw in pain, "spiffy" or no?

In conclusion, I discovered the dark secret behind beauty by carrying out my personal outfit experiments.

Beauty hurts, but the Truth hurts more. So you better shower in the morning...

Or it's a long fall down.