

Week 10: Writing prompts — General writing and hunting

Turkey hunting

BY DYLAN PRATT
Rochester School, Grade 9

It was a Saturday morning at 4:45 a.m. on youth weekend. My hunting partner, Arty, and I were getting ready to go turkey hunting. We drove to Tunbridge and parked at the end of a back road. I put on my coat and loaded up my 12-gauge shotgun.

We walked out through the field where we had been seeing a couple of turkeys come to feed under an apple tree. We sat down under a big pine tree where there was good cover.

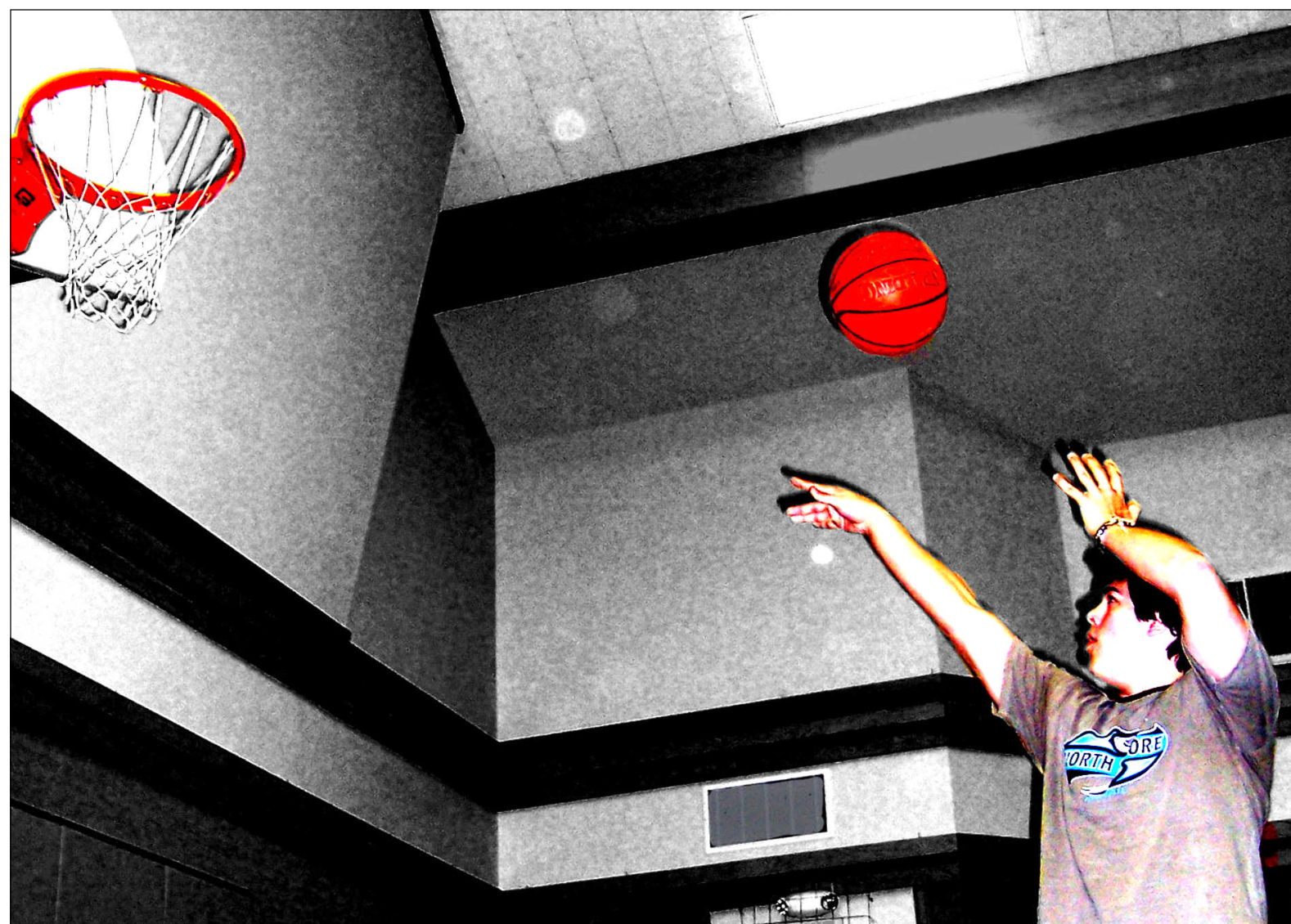
We started calling with a box call. Arty called first. It's not easy to call turkey because you have to get just the right pattern of sound. After about a half hour of calling we heard a turkey gobbling over the hill behind us. We called a couple of more times and each gobble from the turkey got louder and louder. We knew he was getting closer.

I asked Arty if I should move to another tree where I could get a better shot. He pointed out a small pine tree to the left of us and I got up and moved quickly to sit under it. I wanted to get there before the turkey came up over the hill. Arty stayed where he was and he called a few more times, and said, "Get ready."

I picked up my gun and a turkey came walking over the hill. I was trying to breathe slower because I was breathing really heavy, and I could hear my heartbeat. I knew it was a Tom because it was strutting, and I could hear it gobbling. I put my sights right on the Tom's head and pulled the trigger praying that I would get it. It rolled over. I ran up to it and started stomping on its head. That's what you have to do to totally kill it. Then we checked it out. We estimated how big we thought it was. We thought it was about 16 pounds with a six-inch beard, but we tagged it in it was actually 18 pounds with an eight-and-a-half-inch beard. I was really excited and spent the day driving around showing family and friends.

Then we went home to clean the turkey. That's the worst part because I had to skin it. You have to put a slit in the skin down the chest and slide your hand between the meat and the skin and rip the skin off. I cleaned off all the meat and bagged it up and put it in the freezer. We saved it to deep fry when we had our friends over.

SNAP THE WRIST



Devin Larsen, a student at Mount Mansfield Union High School, talks about how he created this photograph: "An action shot taken, desaturated then recolored. The person in the photo is Dan. The recoloring with the high contrast gives it a rather cartoony feel while the selected color brings focus on the important points."

Deer hunting gone wrong: When guns attack

BY STEFANIE BAKER
Fairfield Center School, Grade 8

I was in the emergency room. I kept shaking and I couldn't stop crying. I was so nervous; my heart was beating so fast I felt like I was going to pass out. Hang on, let's start from the beginning — youth hunting weekend 2006, I was hunting with Dad and my sister when something terrible happened.

It was 4:30 a.m. and I was just waking up to head out into the woods. My dad, sister Jackie, and I went out with flashlights and guns in hand. I had been waiting for this day all year, especially after seeing a nice 8-point buck on a motion detector camera in the area where we were hunting. A few hours passed, and we saw our first deer. The deer was moving so I followed it with my gun, then it decided to stop behind a tree. I had a choice here, the head or the hind leg. I chose the leg and missed.

To calm myself down, I looked at the scenery around me. Then out of nowhere I saw a doe jump the brook; it was a beautiful thing to witness. I decided to take the shot. I missed the deer, but the kick-back from the rifle sure got me. The rifle scope hit me directly between the eyes. My dad, keeping his eyes on the deer, yelled at me to shoot again. I couldn't even speak I was so dizzy. Ignoring me, he turned to Jackie to get her ready to take the shot. Finally, he noticed the "Oh My God" look on her face, and looked at me. He flicked on the safety, lowered the gun, and we were out of the woods in a matter of minutes.

When we got to the house, my mom was just getting up. She had heard our gunshots and thought we had gotten something. Little did she know that instead of inspecting a kill, she would be taking one of her daughters to the hospital.

We sat in the waiting room for what felt like forever, even though the clock only showed 10 minutes had passed. Finally, a nurse came and called my name, and my mom and I followed her into a room. It was determined that I needed stitches. The doctor came in and immediately freaked me out. He had a name I couldn't even begin to pronounce. As he was giving me the numbing shot, he asked, "Now, what do we do if the doctor passes out?" I didn't know what to say, but I was thinking "Oh, my God, are you serious?" Instead I gave him a sort of nervous laugh. I guess the doctor freaked my mom out, too, since the whole time he was stitching me up his hands were shaking very badly. I had no clue until after the fact; my eyes were glued shut the whole time. After he was done, I was left with three ugly stitches and a pile of paperwork on how to care for my wound.

The next day, my dad tried to get me to shoot a gun again so I wouldn't be afraid. You know how the saying goes: If you fall off the horse, get back on. But I couldn't do it. I kept thinking, what if it happens again? If it does will I be injured even

worse than before? My thoughts weren't helping the slightest bit. Every time I cried I felt like I disappointed my dad.

Then came Monday, the day I had been dreading. School. I swear I told my story a million times that day. I had a lot of people pick on me. My fellow students had a great time coming up with nicknames for me, such as Scarface. I had a hard time doing classwork without getting a headache, and I kept having that "uh-oh, I better sit back down" feeling when I stood up.

About five days later, I had my stitches out. I went to my regular doctor and told the story — again. When she asked if I wanted to pull the stitches out myself, I said, "Um ... I think I'm all set, thanks."

Now, almost a year later, I still get picked on for the careless error that I made that Saturday morning. Most people say I'm the girl who "shot myself" in the head, but I don't care; they don't hunt or know how to shoot a gun.

I think my dad was really hoping I'd be able to shoot a gun again because it was something that he, my sister and I could do together. In June 2007, I applied for a moose permit. I really didn't want to, but I also didn't want to tell my dad that I didn't want to. I knew that I would get a permit because I wasn't sure about hunting anymore. Guess what? I was right. I knew I would have to fire a gun again so that July I stood with my dad in the driveway to do some target practice. The first shot after the "accident" was the hardest. My dad was holding the barrel of the gun so that made me feel safer. I didn't aim; I just closed my eyes and pulled the trigger. After I did that a sigh of relief went over me. I shot a couple more times with my dad holding the barrel. Then I began shooting on my own! I was so excited to be shooting again that I told everyone I saw. My papa even commented, "I heard you and guns are back together."

A few weeks later we did some target practice to sight in our guns. I noticed every time I flicked off the safety, I would hesitate. I go back to that moment, and remind myself to be careful.

This fall, when I go moose hunting, I hope to follow in my sister's footsteps and get a big bull the first day. I'm really happy that I brought myself to shoot again, otherwise I wouldn't be able to get the thrill of the experience I'm going to have. My scar is barely noticeable now, but every once in a while it seems to really stand out. One night my father looked at me and said, "It broke my heart to see you hurt." It made me cry when he said that.

This season I'm going to be hunting again, and hopefully the only thing I'll hit hit this year is what I'm aiming at.

Pillar of sparks

BY SEAN MCCOY
Fairfield Center School, Grade 8

It moves in golden waves that twist, turn and fly, It sends off pillars of sparks that trail up into the sky, Its colors are amazing, ones that move in a beat, And its reassuring light gives off a calming heat. It's man greatest weapon, but also a tool, And it saves us from dying of temperatures too cool. It's what we have, that animals desire, If you have not guessed yet, I'm writing about fire!

Published yet?

One of the goals of the **Young Writers Project** is for students to get published, either online or in our partner newspapers. The work can be in response to our prompts or general writing; writing can be fiction, non-fiction, essays, poetry — any genre. We are also looking for art — photos or scanned drawings. To submit work, go to: youngwritersproject.org, register or log in, select "create content" and create an "entry."

Taps

BY TYLER HOGSTROM
Woodstock Union High School, Grade 10

A breath of cool, sharp air enters into my lungs as I am waiting under a canopy of coniferous trees. My trumpet rapidly cools after each of my failed attempts to keep it warm; out of sheer impulse I keep blowing warm air into it. I can see His family talking, but I cannot hear what they say. I can see their looks of disbelief in what has happened, though from the age of the widow, surrounded by a comforting couple considerably younger than her, it was not completely unexpected. The crowd organizes, and suddenly seems to become more respectful. Their inner conversations stop, and the groups congeal into one mass. I look down to check my valves, warm my now cold mouthpiece, and straighten my dull tie.

A man steps in front of the crowd, and they stiffen so as to not allow any more emotions run wild. The Speaker talks for a length of time, speaking of His life. He must point out many of the good things in His life, His good deeds and His relationships. The man walks into the crowd, with his head down. He has no more to say. Another man steps up, dressed in a uniform, and he looks to have been in the army in his younger days. He makes no eye contact with the crowd, and talks. I imagine he is talking of a war. He was best friends with Him, was in every foxhole with Him and never left His side. It looks as if he can almost see the time he spent with Him. I look down at my shined leather shoes, empty my spit valve, and yet again blow into my polished instrument.

The flag that is draped over His coffin is folded by a pair of uniformed men and handed to His widow. My cue is three shots. I hear the first, then the second. I take a breath as five men reload blanks into their wooden rifles. The third rings through the air, and my tone hits the group. First I play to Him and to His family; my echo is played to His memory and His accomplishments; and my third time through I play for every man whom He ever loved, that He will always love and who died so He could have a longer life in this world. I don't know His name, but I feel like I know Him, I know His life and His family. My last ringing note bounces off the mountains, never stopping, in a constant remembrance of what love He brought to his family, and to the world.

The soldier

BY JUSTINAH DUHAIME
Hartford High School, Grade 12

The black shine in his boots is the only part of him I can remember, as he walked toward the faded yellow taxi at the end of our driveway.

I remember the way his boots danced across the concrete, the way they fearlessly scattered the sand of the ant hill protruding from the crack in the curb, and that last escape inside the shadow of a closed car door. Not long after the exhaust fumes chased him around the corner, I found myself curled up next to that broken-down ant hill, trying to recover the pieces of a home. But all on their own, a stream of blood red soldiers poured out of their new front door to attack me. The first sting rippled out into a burning desert; blinding my eyes with storms and burying the years under dry dunes. But I stay here, defenseless, waiting for the wind to breathe strong enough to carry my brother back to me.

Escape

BY RACHEL BUHLER
Woodstock Union High School, Grade 10

The leaves rustle
and the deer takes note
Looking all around
To see
Who's near.
A trigger is pulled
And a shot is fired
But the deer
Runs.
Away.
And survives a terrible fate
Escaped.

I see nothing but black

BY MIRANDA SHEPARD
Rochester High School, Grade 9

I can't see them,
I don't know if they notice me,
They talk of brightness, and different colors,
But black is all I see.
I want to see what they talk about,
The colors and the light,
I want to once see the day,
Instead of always seeing night.
You see, my life is filled with darkness,
My eyes they cannot see,
And not many people realize,
What the world doesn't look like to me.
I have never seen a flower,
I have never seen a tree,
I've never once looked at a cat or dog,
Nor have I watched a honeybee.
It's hard for people to understand,
What it is that I go through,
Close your eyes for just one moment,
And you'll see life from my point of view.
My world is dark and lonely,
Always very black,
But I guess that's how life is supposed to be,
When it's vision that I lack.

YWP is a grassroots nonprofit that helps students write better and gain an audience for their best work.



and a safe Web site, www.youngwritersproject.org, where students can share their writing, comment on each other's work, participate in group discussions and work on projects. YWP is indebted to the generosity of the Vermont Business Roundtable



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