

10. Jurčičev memorial – natečaj v pisanju angleškega eseja

Tudi v šolskem letu 2015/16 sva mentorici in organizatorici Jurčičevega memoriala v decembru razpisali Jurčičev memorial v angleškem jeziku. K sodelovanju na natečaju – pisanju eseja v angleškem jeziku – so bili povabljeni dijaki 3. in 4. letnikov vseh slovenskih srednjih šol. Izhodiščno besedilo letošnjega razpisa je bil odlomek iz Jurčičevega dela **Sosedov sin**:

A zdaj se oče razsrdi in reče: "Moraš!" Ljudi ne bomo za nos vodili. Ne vprašam te, če hočeš ali nečeš. Jaz bom videl, če boš slušala ali ne. Pokažem ti, kaj je pokorščina!"

Mati Smrekarica se je zbalala te moževe jeze, hitro prijela hčer kakor v svojo zaslombo pod pazduho in dejala: "Saj bo, saj pojde."

Tudi danes, žal, poznamo kršitve človekovih pravic. Evropski parlament in evropska komisija želita z mnogimi projekti informirati državljane EU o samem pomenu nasilja na podlagi spola, o kršitvi človekovih pravic, stalnem boju proti kakršnemkoli nasilju in uresničitvi enakosti spolov na področju dela.

Dijaki so v pisnem sestavku razmišljajo o položaju ženske / otroka / najstnika / moškega ... nekoč in danes, o odnosu med osebami iz zgornjega citata, opisali svoja razmišljanja o razpisani tematiki.

Prejeli smo 36 kvalitetnih esejev iz naslednjih šol:

1. mesto: Lana Lavrih, SŠ Josipa Jurčiča Ivančna Gorica
Mentorica Maja Zajc Kalar, prof.
2. mesto: Gabrijela Pleterski ŠC Novo mesto, Srednja zdravstvena in kemijska šola
Mentorica: Barbara Cesar, prof.
3. mesto: Sara Sever, SŠ Josipa Jurčiča Ivančna Gorica
Mentorica Maja Zajc Kalar, prof.

PRIZNANJA ZA SODELOVNJE na 10. Jurčičevem memorialu

- Gimnazija Franceta Prešerna Kranj
- Katja Šober, Lan Razinger, Mina Rozman Hadžić, Patricija Kurelac, Eva Lebar, Ajda Kovač, Mateja Kalan
mentorici: **profesorici Robertina Rozman in Urška Cvenkel**
- Srednja šola zavod CIRIUS iz Kamnika: Luka Cerar
mentorica **profesorica Tanja Kejžar**

- Šolski center Novo mesto Srednja zdravstvena in kemijska šola: Špela Pust, Julija Košir, mentorica profesorica Barbara Cesar
- Gimnazija Nova Gorica: Nika Vidič, Maja Požar, Keli Vodopivec, Neža Vidmar mentorica profesorica Svetlana Kutin Funda
- 3. b razred SŠ Josipa Jurčiča in mentorica profesorica Maja Zajc Kalar (21 prispevkov)

PODROBNEJE o nagrajenih esejih:

3. mesto 10. Jurčičevega memoriala – Sara Sever, dijakinja 3. b Srednje šole Josipa Jurčiča Ivančna Gorica, mentorica Maja Zajc Kalar, prof.

V pretresljivi in tako vsakdanji zgodbi slika mlada avtorica prizore navidezne družine, v navideznom življenju, ki ga obvladujeta alkohol in nasilje. Nasproti zlaganosti odnosov med očetom in materjo stojijo velike, široko – odprte oči otroka, deklice, tako čiste in nenarejene, kot je bila nekoč, pravi pisateljica, možnost ljubezni. Namesto nje ostaja dan enak dnevu, večeri, ki se končajo preden se začnejo, v strahu in v želji po preživetju. In v perfektno izrisanem liku matere, ki na božični večer strmi v preteklost življenja, ki ga ni bilo. Izbrušen jezik, tekoča misel in izvirnost prikaza zgodbe skozi oči deklice in matere, utemeljujeta Sarino nagrado.

2. mesto 10. Jurčičevega memoriala – Gabrijela Pleterski, dijakinja 4. letnika Šolskega centra Novo mesto, Srednje kemijske in zdravstvene šole, mentorica Barbara Cesar, prof.

Futuristična zgodba, leto 2084 – sto let za Orwellom. Izmišljen kraj, oddaljen dogajalni čas, resnična zgodba mnogih današnjih favel – tistih pravih in tistih, ki so skrite za lepimi fasadami in ograjenimi vrtovi naših sosesk. Popolno razvrednotenje ženske, ki je prepuščena na milost in nemilost družbi gospodarjev, v mestu, ki ga avtorica poimenuje "Brez". Biti brez in nič imeti, v perfektni angleščini skozi zgodbo povprečne družine. Ko si brez vsega, nimaš česa izgubiti. Lahko pa se boriš za vse.

1. mesto 10. Jurčičevega memoriala – Lana Lavrih, dijakinja 3. b Srednje šole Josipa Jurčiča Ivančna Gorica, mentorica Maja Zajc Kalar, prof.

V dolgi pripovedi, hemingwejsko poročevalski zgodbi, avtorica z navidezno lahkoto začrta like popolne družine v popolni hiši popolnega mesta. Kjer preživetje omogočajo tablete in alkohol, vztrajanje v nasilju pa sklepa krog z novim in novim vrstniškim nasiljem zunaj zidov doma, v šoli. Zakaj bi trpela jaz, pa tega ne ve nihče, razmišlja junakinja Kelsey, ki svoje ujetosti v nasilje ne zna razrešiti drugače. Sploh pa ne sama, saj je vendar otrok, odvisna od staršev in matere, ki je v življenju obtičala med nekaj in nič, med moževimi lažmi in njegovo ljubico. Šele materina odločitev za končanje tega stanja, je začetek očiščenja, ali vsaj poti do nekega drugačnega, mogoče celo lepega življenja. Izjemno besedišče, poseganje v preteklost in živi, tako življensko portretirani karakterji, so Lani prinesli zmagovalno mesto letošnjega natečaja.

Esej nagrajenke Sare Sever, 3. b

I

'And they lived happily ever after,' she says. I don't really remember who exactly it is that lived happily ever after. That is because I'm sleepy and I didn't pay attention to the story. It was boring and I'm still mad at my mom. She is making us go to bed earlier and earlier with each day! I hate it! We didn't even get to watch the cartoon this evening. I hope it wasn't about that dragon, that one is my favourite. Mom doesn't like dragons. She gets really mad whenever I talk about dragons. I will never understand that! Mom is wierd. She is always in a hurry, she rarely smiles, never laughs. Sometimes she is also really annoying. And she always forbids us to do things. Why can't we play? We always play with daddy. He is fun! I like daddy. Although I don't see him much lately. It's mom's fault. Me and my sister have to go to bed before he comes home. I will never understand that! Daddy is really smart. He fights dragons. He tells me if I obey him, he will let me see a real dragon one day. I really want that. I have to behave nicely. A little while ago he saw me playing with Pippi Longstocking and he was really mad. He told me dragon fighters don't play with dolls. So I never see Pippi anymore. I kind of miss her. But I want to be like daddy. I really do. I miss daddy. Why doesn't mom let me be with daddy? I will never understand that! Maybe I will see him tomorrow. I'd better fall asleep as soon as possible so I can see him soon.

What is this noise? It almost sounds like howling. What is that? Who is so loud? Is that ... mom? Moooooom, why are you doing this? Why can't she let us fall asleep? She is mad at us when we don't fall asleep, but now she is being so loud. I will never understand that! It is not fair! Mom is so wierd!

II

'And they lived happily ever after,' she says. I like this fairytale. It is so beautiful. The princess ends up happy. I want to be like her. Someday, I want to find my prince and live happily ever after with him. In a big castle. I wonder why nobody ever lives in a castle in real life. Is it expensive? Probably. That's the answer to most of the questions I have. At least that's how mom always responds. There she goes, she's turning off the lights. She left. She seems so stressed lately. She seems unhappy. I hate that. I think, maybe, mom and dad aren't like the princess and the prince in the story. I think that might be the reason she never smiles anymore. I loved it when she smiled. I miss it. When I was younger, we used to go to the water park and I loved it so much. Mom and dad were playing in the pool and they both laughed so much. It was really funny. My brother probably doesn't remember that. I also remember how much I enjoyed when we went to visit grandma and grandpa. Grandma made the best chocolate chip cookies. Oh, how I wish I could eat them again! And I miss both of them so much. I don't really understand why we don't go there anymore. It just sort of feels like if I say anything about them, mom looks at me with this wierd look in her eyes. She doesn't really answer me why we don't see them anymore, but she just looks at me in such a wierd way. It's probably better if I don't ask her at all. I don't know. Something is wrong. It has something to do with dad. I think he has changed. Has he changed because mom never smiles anymore? Or does mom never smile anymore because dad has changed? It's not fun anymore when we are all together. But it's actually not fun when my brother and I are alone with either of them. I am still really mad at dad for Pippi. Oh, how mad I am! One time, when we were at the water park, after we had been swimming all day and we were getting ready to leave, we saw a crane machine. Mom and dad decided to buy me a toy. Dad picked out a Pippi Longstocking doll. I loved it. It was my favourite toy for quite a few years. It reminded me of that day, of my family and what a great time we had at that park. I took good care of Pippi, I took her to bed with me, I played with her all the time. Then, when my brother got older, he realized he liked

Pippi aswell. He started asking me to play with her. At first I didn't really let him take her away from me. But then, my mom said that she was disappointed, that she thought I was a better older sister. I was really sad that day. I didn't want to give up Pippi, but I didn't want mom be disappointed in me. So I let my brother play with her. Eventually he got quite possessive and he didn't let me have her anymore. I would close the door and cry in my bed. I missed Pippi. But everytime I cried, I told myself it was the last time. I was happy I had made my little brother happy and I wanted to prove to everyone that I wasn't selfish. I also wanted to show that I was old enough not to care about a doll. Then one day, dad saw my brother playing with Pippi and he was mad. He told him boys don't play with dolls and he also said something about dragons. I didn't pay attention because at that point dad took Pippi from my brother's hands and after talking to him, he threw Pippi in the trash. My brother was trying not to cry and he was trying being brave for dad, but I just couldn't do it. I ran to my room and cried my heart out. I almost got used to my brother having her instead of me, but this was too much. While I was in my bed crying, my dad came in and told me: 'Shut up, or I'll make you.' I stopped crying. Because I wasn't allowed to. I hated dad. I still hate him for this. My brother acts like he doesn't, but I know he was sad too. I will never forgive dad. This is one of many things I don't understand about him. But there are many things I don't understand about mom aswell. For example, why do we go to bed so early? Especially today. Today is Saturday. A few days ago she told us with a smile on her face the weekend would be special. Then she looked outside, started staring somewhere into the unknown and her smile gradually disappeared. But she said it with such a happy tone, I was sure today was going to be special. But nothing happened. Nothing special happened at all. We went to bed early. Like every other day! Once I asked mom, why we started doing this. She gave me the same look that she did when I asked her about our grandparents. Than she said very quietly: 'Because we can't risk to wake the dragon.' I didn't understand anything. I don't understand what is happening. I just wish I could go back to the day we went to the water park. And get Pippi back. But we can't go back in time. It's probably too expensive. I'm getting really sleepy. I think my brother is already sleeping. I guess i should to. Maybe tomorrow I will understand.

III

'And they lived happily ever after,' she said with a voice so soft and caring like only a mother's can be. She looked at her children. The boy at the bottom bunk had his eyes closed, but he looked as if he was angry about something. She hated seeing him unhappy, but lately that had been happening quite often. His older sister above him was still awake. She was staring at her mother with her bright eyes. You could see her dreaming about that fairytale, believing happy endings do exist. Her mom unfortunately had lost all hope of ever believing in those things again. That thought made her feel gloomy and a bit guilty.

She loved spending time with her children. She felt safe even though she was the one protecting them. If she had ever done something right, that was her children. She could sit on that bed and hug them forever. But when she checked what time it was, the bitter truth hit her again; she could not stay there any longer. She had to let both of them fall asleep. Timing was quite important.

She got up, put away the book, kissed them both goodnight, turned down the lights and left. Any one but her would feel so scared and weak, they would have cried at that very moment. But she got used to being strong. For her kids, for herself, for survival. There was no other

way. She had to be a rock, otherwise this whole family would have fallen apart and lived on the streets. She took a deep breath. She had learnt that was what was keeping her sane. Sometimes a deep breath helps a lot.

There was that day's mail on the kitchen table. She had not had the time to sort it out yet. It was hard for her not to worry as most of the mail were bills to pay.

Breathe in, breathe out.

One envelope though was not a payment slip. It was a christmas card. It was from her mom and her new boyfriend. When she was little she and her mom would make christmas cards for all the relatives and friends. She loved cutting paper and putting glitter on it. It was one of her most cherished moments of her childhood. This time the card was not hand made, not even the writing, except for the signatures which looked like they were both written by the same person. The writing looked foreign. She tried to ignore the thought that her new stepfather was probably the one that bought and signed the card. She also tried to ignore the thought that was the only christmas card she had got that year.

That was not really a surprise. She hadn't spoken to her father in a long time. That was because she didn't know which bar he went to at that time and she would have to be really lucky to find him at home. He didn't make the effort to contact her either, so for her that was enough of a reason to think it was not worth the effort.

Her husband's family did not send her any cards either. That was because they had stopped talking to her when she *cursorily* mentioned that they had not been getting along very well. She guessed they blamed her for everything and her hubby probably did not defend her or explain the situation when talking to his family about his marriage. Well, why would he? There is nothing wrong with his children never seeing their grandparents. They did not have any aunts or uncles, so lacking of a few more family members should not be a problem.

She placed the red card on the kitchen table next to a white vase and a little scented candle. She looked outside. The nature looked devastated. There was no snow and no sign of a winter fairytale. That little decoration on the table was one of the rare things that showed a least a little christmas spirit in their home.

As she gazed out the window she noticed a tall dark silhouette walking down the pavement. It looked confused and it could not walk steady or straight. It crossed the street and walked to their door. She ran to the door, so the visitor would not ring the bell and wake up the kids. As she opened the door, she was greeted with a smell of alcohol and sweat. 'Oh, hey. I was just about to ring the bell. I did not take my keys with me. I lost them somewhere, I think,' he said and entered the house. He sat down in the dining room. He took off his jacket and threw it on a chair next to him. He tried to take off his sweater too, but he was too inebriated to be able to take it off. It had a very tight collarneck. No matter how much he tried, he just kept lifting everything he wore and he wasn't able to get it through his head. His naked torso was showing. You could see a dragon tattoo on his shoulder.

He gave up and stopped trying. He tapped his fingers on the table and looked around. 'Where are the kids?' he asked. 'They went to bed already. They were really tired,' she answered not looking him in the eyes. He laughed and spoke in a juvenile, nonserious tone: 'Hahaha, but it is christmas eve! Shouldn't we be opening presents and stuff? You know, Santa, elves, reindeers, and all of that? Or is that something you do the next day? How does it go again? I don't remember. I don't care! The kids should get to work like I did when I was their age. Reindeers! The boy is all softened up already. A while ago I saw him playing with a doll. I threw it away instantly. The girl is too old for it anyway.'

She suffered. She disagreed with basically everything he ever said. At that moment he was offending everything she believed in, everything that meant so much to her. She so desperately longed for all those family holiday moments she had heard about. But he was destroying childhoods of the two people she loved the most, and didn't even try to provide the

environment she wanted for them to have. He didn't know them, he didn't appreciate them. And it is not normal to put your kids to sleep as soon as possible to protect them from their own father. Even though they probably didn't realize it, for them the real boogeyman did not live under their bed, but slept in one, next to their room.

In all the storm that was going on in her head, she carefully tried to pick out the right words: 'Don't you think we are currently kind of unable of going and spending our money in a bar?'

He looked at her as if he had not understood: 'Don't you think you should shut up?' She looked at him with a scare in her eyes and her mouth shook. She quickly tried to escape the argument and started explaining: 'I just meant, you know, we are short of money, and we couldn't afford to buy them nice presents that all the other kids get, and you know, I just don't think we are in a position, where ...'

'You know I can make you shut up,' he interrupted her. His tone had changed. He wasn't acting childish anymore. His look was as cold as ice. He didn't move. He had stood up and leaned over her. 'It wouldn't be the first time, would it?'

Everything inside her shook. Unfortunately this was a feeling well known to her. Why couldn't her husband understand something as simple as this? She just wanted to take care of their children. They were supposed to be a team. They were supposed to stick together through everything. All she wanted was a sober father who isn't violent to his family. That was all. She had expected the fact that their marriage wasn't ideal and not at all what she had hoped for. But she thought they would still have moments when they would smile at each other and be happy for creating such wonderful lives. She had never imagined this is what it would be like. Her life partner was supposed to be the one to prevent her from loneliness, not cause it. He was supposed to be the one to protect their children, not endanger them.

Apparently she had said too much. Were her words not chosen carefully enough? Or was this the only possible reaction to any of her words? Something inside her was screaming and she would gladly scream out loud, tell him everything she wanted to say for a long time. At the same time, there was nothing she could possibly want to say. Her thoughts were loud and speechless. She felt blood pumping in every vein of her body and she also felt numb. She felt hot and she was also freezing. She remembered when being in love made her feel that way. The difference was, when she met him, she felt all this in colour, at that moment she felt it in black and white.

Breathe in, breathe out.

Then he passed her by and left the house. Through the window she saw him walking to the same direction he came from. Her bones were still shaking. She buried her head in her hands and stood there for a while.

She then sat down on the couch and turned on the television. She flipped through the channels. She stopped pressing the buttons on the remote when she saw a certain scene from a movie. It was a typical christmas film. A big family with grand parents, cousins, aunts, uncles and all the other relatives sitting around a big dining table with delicious-looking dinner on their plates. The women were chatting, the men were laughing, the children were playing. There was a beautiful christmas tree standing in the corner and outside the window it was snowing. It seemed like a warm, loving home.

She couldn't keep it in anymore. She let it all out and wept her heart out.

Sara Sever, 3. b

Esej nagrajenke Gabrijele Pleterski

A nonviolent world? Yes, please!

"We can't stay here!" said Eleanor through her tears. "I can't let Lynne grow up in the society like this!"

Wilson hardly looked into his wife's eyes. It was unbelievable how once they had been heavenly blue eyes of an angel but what he saw now was a red and sore pit of pain. "Honey, there's nothing we can do."

"No!" screamed Eleanor. "You saw what they did to Melyna and you expect me to do nothing? What if same happens to Lynne?" She was now sitting in the corner of the small kitchen. "I can't take this anymore!"

Wilson had nothing to say. He felt a lump in his throat and couldn't get over the guilt he felt. *It's your fault. You shouldn't have come here.* His inner voices were getting louder because his mind was playing with him and there was a thin line between going insane. They had to get out of there but he had no idea how.

Tanpa was a small country between Peru and Brazil in South America. Its name means *without*. But without what? Without problems? Without bad people and violence? No, Tanpa was everything else but that. When the Lanham family moved here, they had no clue of what was going on there. People outside the borders had this illusion that Tanpa was a friendly country but maybe a little bit mysterious and strange. Tanpa was not written on any map of the world, it hadn't appeared on any news and you could only hear about it by the locals living close to the border. Tanpa kept its secrets to itself. And nobody knew why.

Wilson and Eleanor Lanham with their daughters Melyna and Lynne moved here in 2084 for a simple reason. They wanted to escape the modern technology which was quickly developing in most countries. A calm, backed up country was what they needed and so they packed up their bags and left.

"You've made a terrible mistake," said a woman who seemed close to her forties. Her eyes were big and dark brown and you could see a big fear in them. She was warped into a big and very dirty cloth but she didn't seem to be ashamed of it.

"What?" asked Eleanor and looked into the woman's face. She noticed a deep scar going from her left ear towards the nose.

"You can't get out of here," said the woman while looking straight into Eleanor's eyes.

"What are you talking about? Who are-"

"My name is Nella Armento. But my name doesn't even matter in this country," said the woman now finally looking away from Eleanor's face. Eleanor felt how her neck muscles started tensing. "Women here are discriminated in every way possible. No jobs for us, no social rights, not even a basic education. Girls at young age are sold for slaves and men do with them whatever they want to," Nella nervously looked around. "Nobody tells you what is going on here. What happens here, stays here, just like in Vegas. People on borders generously welcome you, give you shelter and you enter this country without knowing what will happen to your family. And the worst of all is..." Eleanor's eyes were filled with tears now. "...you can never leave Tanpa."

The Lanham family lived in a tiny one-bedroom apartment which had been given to them "until they settle". Late at night, several days after moving in, someone knocked heavily on their door then without waiting further opened it and entered. Wilson and Eleanor were

already in bed with their youngest daughter Lynne sleeping next to them. Suddenly the blood froze in their veins.

"Mooooom! Daaad!" screamed Melyna.

Two men, who seemed to be in their thirties, were holding her while she tried to escape but they were too strong. Since she hadn't stopped resisting, a man brought a cloth out of his pocket and put it on her mouth. The more she struggled and the deeper she breathed, the faster the sweet-smelling chloroform filled Melyna's nostrils, choking her, making the world spin in dizzying circles as she fell into a dark pit.

Wilson ran to the kitchen and tried to stop them but he got punched and passed out. He woke up about half an hour later, finding Eleanor on the kitchen floor crying her heart out.

"We can't stay here!" she screamed.

A few days later the Lanham's were looking for any clue of where Melyna might have been. They split apart, Eleanor and Lynne together and Wilson on his own, so they could search a bigger area. While walking down the street, a strange black van passed by Eleanor and her daughter. It had stopped at the end of the street.

Two men in disguise stepped out of the van then quickly approached Eleanor and Lynne and before they could even run away, they grabbed them put the blindfolds over their faces and tied their arms. Lynne started crying and Eleanor was so shocked she couldn't even speak.

"Don't panic," a woman's voice whispered.

"Hey, you! Don't be afraid, you're gon' be okay here." The woman, who introduced herself as Azalee, removed the blindfold from Eleanor's eyes, and she blinked, momentarily blinded by the light. As her eyes adjusted, she saw that she was surrounded by many women holding weapons. One of them was Nella Armento.

"What is happening? Where am I?"

"Mommy! Mommy!" Screamed Lynne, running towards her mother and hugged her. As Eleanor was holding her youngest daughter, she felt someone approached her back.

"Mom?"

Eleanor turned around and saw Melyna. She had bruises on her arms and a cut lip but she was there and she was alive.

"We," Azalee now stepped in the middle. "are all here for one thing. To resist the leader of Tanpa and overthrow the government," she said and fire was burning in her eyes. "We have to stand against them. We have to get our justice and what belongs to us. We have to fight for women rights!"

Some young girl raised her rifle and shouted: "For us!"

"For us!" others joined her.

The army of 176 women went into the war against the impossible. Nearly half of them died but they achieved what they wanted. The collapse of Tanpa's government, the execution of its leaders and the forming of new laws which give women full education, jobs and the right to speak.

Gabrijela Pleterski K4. a

A non-violent world? Yes, please!

Violence is a monstrous act that can hurt deeply and can never be forgotten. You may have moved on, became stronger, you no longer fear what you used to. The mask you put on every day, deflects all the things that may hurt you. On the surface, your will has become strong, unbending, unwilling to break under the pressure of others. The loneliness and the pain of the past seem forgotten. New people, their kind gestures, their hypocritical acts of kindness they express towards you, makes you feel loved and needed, no longer cast aside. But on the darkest nights, when you tuck yourself in bed, say your prayers and turn off the lights, everything becomes awfully quiet. You try to resist, but your efforts are in vain and your demons of the past keep scratching to the surface from your deep subconscious. Their fangs hurt, with every scratch a painful memory rises from the ashes, right in front of you. Everything ends with a suffocating nightmare, when you finally awaken into a new day, hoping that today is the day you cure yourself from the scars past left on you. This is not a sweet story about growing up, overcoming trivial difficulties and teenage love. It is a story about painful friendships, shattered hope and overcoming all of the difficulties with great effort. It's about violence.

To begin our story, we have to introduce our main character, named Kelsey Fletcher. Kelsey is, as stated by her friends and teachers, an ambitious and cheerful young lady. She never cries, even if she scrapes her knees or things don't go her way. She talks to others in a polite, soothing manner and her intelligence shows even in the shortest conversations. Her parents, Paul and Leanne Fletcher are happily married couple. Paul is an office employee and despite his hardworking nature, knows how to relax and have fun, especially with his family. Mother Leanne stays at home and tends to their garden full of white tulips and orange lilies. Every weekend, the family members spend the time together, preferably in the nature. Everything appears perfect, from Mrs Fletcher's always curled, dark hair to Paul's neatly tied yellow tie, which he wears every Tuesday. The Fletchers are in fact an ideal model of a family, it represents unachievable perfection that the other citizens of a town aspire to. But my duty as a writer of this story is not to precisely describe thickness of Mr Fletcher's eyebrows, praise Mrs Fletcher's taste in fashion or be surprised at Kelsey's collection of stuffed teddy-bears. My function in this story is to expose the act that the members of this family play so well. I will tear their porcelain white masks from their faces, expose to the light their inner ugliness that the world doesn't know of. And the reader's position is to quietly watch and evaluate the actions that the desperate characters make; in the end, we are, after all just quiet spectators in the theatre called life.

Every morning, 17-year-old Kelsey wakes up exactly at 5.30 a.m. and goes for a jog. When she returns, she showers and dresses in respectable, but still very fashionable and complimenting clothes. Her dark, long and straightened hair is put into a neat ponytail with a ribbon. After early breakfast, Kelsey cycles to school, where she meets with her friends. Her effort in schoolwork is enormous and it reflects well through her grades; teachers keep praising her kindness and intelligence. Her closest friends are called Cassandra, Emily and Giselle. Their surnames or any further precise information is not crucial for the flow of the story and will therefore not be paid any special attention. The group of four girls is well known and very popular within the school, with Kelsey's leading position. Everything seems to be going to be well for Kelsey, at least for now. Wait, wasn't this the story about pain, violence, not about fluffy teenage feelings of love and friendship? How silly of me! I seem to

have forgotten that one time, when Kelsey unintentionally caused Mallory to slip, or when she accidentally locked her into a toilet cabin. A month ago, Kelsey met her in secret and cut a rather large amount of her hair. To everybody's surprise, long-haired Mallory suddenly decided to trim herself a bob cut, although she recently pledged to never cut her beautiful blonde curls. She even got a nasty cut on the arm, another one was very close to her eye; apparently her unskillfulness with a knife backfired while making dinner. Mallory Jeanes was a bit shy, innocent Kelsey's schoolmate, who's small height was absolutely adorable in a combination with her previously long and voluminous hair. Her dark blue eyes could make every boy's heart skip a beat, and that was something that Kelsey could never forgive. To tell the whole story, Kelsey's long soured love in form of a young teenage boy Brody, apparently expressed his admiration for Mallory's beauty in the course of a conversation with his classmates. Kelsey, who heard the news from Cassandra, felt furious and underappreciated, being this school's idol in terms of beauty. She confronted Mallory two days after that, right after she furiously devoured her lunch that her mother had prepared for her. Kelsey's yelling at Mallory was so hard and so close to Mallory's face, that she could practically guess all the contents of Kelsey's lunch and made evaluation that Kelsey ate way too much onion. Mallory tried to resolve the problem with a calm explanation that she had no feelings for Brody whatsoever, but her speech got interrupted by Kelsey's well-aimed slap towards her cheeks. It left a painful bruise afterwards, but Mallory was so busy pulling Kelsey's hair that she barely noticed. Their conflict kept growing and Mallory started to intentionally talk to Brody and gain his further interest in her. That soon stopped after Kelsey cut her hair, hand and nearly made her blind on one eye with knife. She locked her in toilet cabin for few hours until janitor found her; she threw her bag into a trash bin and poured coffee all over her notes; she had bruises all over her body and she no longer felt any joy for life. Kelsey's friends that knew about the whole thing, helped Kelsey in every way possible. Emily spread the rumour that Mallory frequently smoked and took drugs, Cassandra made her trip while walking in the hallway and Giselle flushed her precious bracelet down the toilet. Mallory felt sick of this life and was too afraid of calling for help. She feared that her accusation would be taken for false, as the whole Kelsey's crew presented a group of smart, pretty and seemingly kind and harmless young ladies. Last time she tried to tell her teacher, but was conveniently interrupted by Giselle, that requested her presence in another classroom to help her with something. Giselle's evil eyes gave away her intention to badly hurt and threaten Mallory, but teacher didn't seem to notice; as an aspiring actor, Giselle's daily performance was superb and undetected by others. Mallory's days drifted on painfully and unnoticed by others, while her whole inner mind was screaming for help. She felt so helpless, bound by unlucky circumstances that suffocated her daily life and there was nothing she could do about it; at least she believed so. Kelsey was a dark existence that disturbed her everyday bliss and turned it into repeatable nightmare.

Now, to return to our seemingly evil main character and to explain her cruel behaviour, whose trigger wasn't only painful jealousy, but family circumstances, hidden from normal bystanders. To tell the truth, the Fletcher family isn't perfect at all. I can show you a well presented example of something that the Fletcher family members critically lacked; sympathy and love to share with one another. On a beautiful day, on which Giselle threatened Mallory with all the puny death threats she could come up with, Kelsey was cycling on her red bicycle to return home, while wind softly played with her hair. The smile wouldn't leave her face, now that her competitor's will and spirit was broken; the birds' song never sounded so pleasant and sun never shined upon her face in a more soothing manner. But her laughter of triumph soon vanished after she caught the first glimpse of her house that was still mainly hidden by forest trees. Her eyebrows formed an unpleasant frown that reflected her hatred towards the house she resided in; she detested the whole house in entirety, even its residents.

She hated mother's flowers, neatly formed in lines; father's tone, when he talked to his mistress and thought nobody heard him; even the colour of the house. Slightly reddish façade of a smartly designed, modern house was Kelsey mother's idea. Red was a colour Leanne adored; and Kelsey hated it with passion, which the colour red ironically represented. As a constant reminder of her hatred towards her parents, she never parted with a red bracelet that her parents had given her on her 16th birthday. As soon as Kelsey arrived in front of her house, she noticed her mother nervously gulping down pills, just like candy, gulping them down like they were the only thing keeping her from becoming insane. Her look was distant and sad, but soon got stricter when Kelsey became a part of her field of vision. She corrected her glasses with one hand while nervously holding an overpriced trace magazine in another. With a demanding, but very disinterested tone she demanded to know if Kelsey received any grades that day. After hearing, that she received two A's and got a B on an essay report, she angrily clicked her tongue, making it clear that she sees an ultimate disappointment in her daughter. She no longer felt any parental love towards her, Kelsey reminded her of long gone days, when her husband still looked at her with affection in his eyes. He might've continued to love her, if it was not for Claudia; oh Claudia, that villainous woman, Paul's rather close co-worker. Her hair was always shiny and put into a fashionable hairstyle; her clothes were very expensive, but not bought from her own money; and her face that reflected youth and well, too much make-up made a disgusting, smug grin, whenever she awkwardly encountered Mrs Fletcher in public. Mr Fletcher and his wife never discussed Paul's affair; but it was there, Leanne knew about it and Paul never doubted that she did. Kelsey hated her father above all; it was his fault that he ruined this family! He started drinking. It was him that attacked Kelsey every day, beating her in places, where it wouldn't show. He made his wife fall into depression, making her consume pills like it was nothing and smoke like it was her ultimate purpose in life. He was the one that triggered his wife's insane, abusive side that humiliated her daughter. She degraded her. Gave her cruel punishments for minor, trivial things. But Kelsey never cried, not from sadness nor from pain. The evil and hatred towards the world inside her grew. Her parent's treatment pulled the worst out of her, made her a monster that overlapped and viciously murdered her innocent, child-like nature. With every word and action that parents took against her, her anger grew, just waiting to burst. It was well-hidden behind her convincing calmness, acted disinterest what happens to her. She never thought about escaping, like a beautiful bird out of golden cage. She was just waiting for a chance to bite of a hand that fed and abused her at a same time. But her anger was getting harder and harder to control. At first, she started punching their backyard tree so hard, her knuckles started to bleed. She furiously ripped apart her blanket and set fire to her father's important documents. She was severely punished later and wasn't able to leave the hose for three months in total. She was beaten every day, in the same spots, which made it even more painful. Her father didn't spare her with pain and he used everything he could to hurt her; his belt, , his fists, even words that stung like bees and caused immense inner pain, incomparable to physical pain. But no matter what her parents did, her will was never broken. On the day her father broke two of her ribs and her hand (and later claimed it was his clumsy daughter's fault to the medicine personnel), she vowed to never give up. To, despite her father's abuse, rise up every time they push her down; to have the last laugh, to vengefully spit into their faces, denying the power they had upon her. To ease her anger, she vented it into other people; to be more precise, Mallory. At first, yelling at her meant nothing to her. It was a flash of jealousy, she just wanted to put her back in her place. Mallory knew nothing about her pain. She knew nothing about her love for Brody and his deep, chocolate-coloured eyes. His compliments made Kelsey very happy, it made her think she can achieve that one happiness in her life by loving him an allowing him to love her in return. Mallory's existence was an obstacle, like her parents, she was something that kept her from achieving her happiness

simply by existing. Making Mallory feel miserable made her feel like she was in charge of something. She enjoyed venting her anger and frustrations into punches, hurting somebody physically and emotionally like her parents did. She never understood her actions like wrong, she never took a moment and evaluated her decisions. She simply saw Mallory as a weak existence, unable to defend herself. Unable to attain Kelsey's respect, as Kelsey vowed to never break under her parent's abuse and seeing Mallory cry every time made her even angrier with the world. What made her angry the most was, how similar she was to Mallory as a child; innocent, full of hope, her parents still showed her affection and were part of her carefree childhood. She wanted to crush that hope and love that reflected in Mallory's eyes, she wanted to consume them with darkness and despair, the same way her parents forever destroyed hers. And just like that, Kelsey became a bully, while being abused herself. She was linked into an enormous, never ending link of hatred and violence, and she didn't know how to break out of it, she was chained too strongly to break free.

Few days after Mallory's last not-so-friendly chat with Giselle, awful news was told to the students; Mallory had attempted the suicide the night before. After not coming for dinner, her older brother checked on her and found her lying on the floor, all pale-faced. Because of his inability to wake her up, he immediately called an ambulance. Mallory was admitted to a hospital and saved from certain death; if her brother Jeremy hadn't saved her as soon as he did, she would've died shortly after. Mallory woke up three days later, in an unknown place. White and grey blur around her started to get shape as she slowly retrieved her consciousness. And when a sudden realisation hit her, she screamed as loud as she could, waking her brother up in the process. Jeremy looked very tired and pale, and when he saw Mallory awake, he couldn't help but cry tears of joy. They lovingly hugged and none of them could stop crying. Their tears of relief flowed down their cheeks like waterfalls and they stayed hugged for minutes. Mallory suddenly felt happy she survived; How can she ever leave her family, her brother behind? She selfishly thought only about herself, not realising the damage that she could leave in the hearts of her loved ones. She would perish into unknown, selfishly leaving scars behind. When she would recover, she decided to finally confront Kelsey and her own demons that crippled her. She will rise as stronger and fearful, even fuller of life. Thinking about her made Mallory very sad and in pain, but also very angry, she would hit her as hard as she could if she saw her right in front of herself right now. She took a deep breath, and started to sing a melody her now deceased grandmother used to sing as a lullaby. Because her brother was gone and left her alone in the room, sorrowful melody filled the whole space with melancholy and sadness. It echoed through the walls and Mallory couldn't stop crying. Right after she wiped her tears, she received an unexpected guest. She heard footsteps, hesitantly getting closer to her room, emptily echoing into the hallway. The doors creaked loudly and she saw a face of a person she truly despised. The visitor's face was pale and tired-looking and her dark hair looked like it hadn't been brushed for days. Sudden wave of anger rushed through Mallory, and all she could through clenched teeth was to be gone out of her sight. The visitor did not move an inch and finally looked up to her face, eye-to-eye. It was a look of honest regret and self-hatred. She held colourful bouquet in one hand and clenching another, mustering courage to speak up. Finally, the visitor said: "I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. I can never repent for what I've done. I am so sorry, Mallory, I understand that you hate me." Her words made Mallory even angrier, which made her tone even ruder. She barely controlled her raging emotions. "You think this is a joke? You nearly made me kill myself, and all you can say is 'I'm sorry'? You, you think that one word of apology will make me forgive, don't you? You think that you actually deserve my forgiveness! You don't! Get out of my sight! I never wish to see you again, I hate you, do you hear me, I HATE YOU!" The visitor's mouth couldn't stop muttering: "I'm sorry. I'm sorry." Her eyes were full of tears and while Mallory was yelling at her, she wouldn't stop repeating those three tragic words. In the end, Kelsey left the

room crying, not saying anything. She ran to the forest next to her house, she ran and ran, as fast as she could. She kept yelling "I'm sorry!" while sobbing in grief. She ran until she nearly collapsed, until her tears dried out and her throat was sore from yelling. And that my readers, is how Kelsey Fletcher was denied forgiveness. And that's how she realised how messed up everything was about her. She broke in body and spirit. Her legs felt soft and she collapsed on the ground. She could no longer feel any hatred towards anybody, just immense sadness that was she now drowning in.

A week later, Kelsey returned to school; she had lost weight and was just a shadow of her former self that never let anything hurt her. The rumour, that she was in fact the one pushing Mallory towards a suicide, made everybody abandon her. The one who was now Brody lovingly looking with his chocolate eyes was Cassandra, who bravely made her advances. Seeing them together was tearing Kelsey apart, it was like somebody ripped her heart right out of her chest. Giselle and Emily of course acknowledged Cassandra as a new leader of the group that Kelsey was no longer part of. Kelsey realised the gravity of her actions. It hurt others and isolated her. She was seen as a monster, and she realised that it wasn't very far from the truth. During the lunch, she sat alone. When she was leaving school, bunch of other girls humiliated her and even beat her. Kelsey no longer cared. Every punch and slap was something she deserved; they could never measure up to the pain she caused to others. The tears no longer flew through her bruised cheeks and her eyes no longer reflected her stubborn, prideful arrogance. She felt degraded, her existence meant nothing more to her. Violence will only result in more violence. If the chain isn't broken, it will only continue and cause people to hurt each other out of their own selfish reasons. And when sun laid its first rays of light after a day of rain, she finally decided to break that curse. The curse of violence that plagued her family. She must destroy it at its roots, not continue to hurt other. She will no longer passively wait for her parents to beat her. She will finally stand for herself, she will fight, not only clench her teeth and take all of the hits. All of the painful abuse that has been piling up inside of her, corrupting her like chronic, slowly developing illness. She will find the cure.

Meanwhile, in the Fletcher family's residence, Leanne was violently gulping down pills, as per usual. Tucked in her comfortable green armchair, she blankly stared at her husband's and daughter's pictures, hung on the wall. It filled her with immense sadness, although she could not understand why. Her thinking got interrupted by her husband's entrance to the room. His presence made her happy and sad at the same time; it was a mixture of messed up emotions, all she knew was, that she hated and loved him at the same time. She loved him for her memory of him in his younger years, when he was handsomer, kinder and more attentive towards her; his love was sincere and his love poems towards her made her feel like she could achieve anything. She hated him for not already telling her the obvious, for letting her drown in depression, cigarettes and pills. She hated how he hadn't ultimately broken her heart already; it would set her free and at the same time plunge her into even a bigger darkness, even deeper depression. As she was thinking, Paul told her the news; that Claudia was expecting a baby with him and that he demanded a divorce. It struck her out of nowhere, it left her without a breath. His tone was emotionless, just like their marriage. Something inside Leanne finally broke; she couldn't even think about it, it just came naturally, but she slapped her husband's face as hard as she could. Paul furiously slapped her back, he paid her back in pain tenfold. When he started, he couldn't stop, his kicks and punches were now reaching all over her body, paralysing her with fear and helplessness. Never in her life had she been beaten by her husband. Never, even once. They never even had a serious argument. All the years of suppressed feelings came bottling up to the surface and every blow she took was another realisation, that her husband doesn't love her anymore. He doesn't love her for a long time now. She felt like a fool, believing that her husband will come back to her someday. Someday... was now so far away and unattainable. Tears wouldn't stop streaming down her

eyes. When Paul stopped and left the room, Leanne stayed laying on the ground long time after. She decided to leave this toxic house, the colour red was slowly suffocating her, just like her neatly organised flowers, she felt like pulling them out, every single one of them. She wanted to set the house on fire and watch it from afar, while it slowly disappears into nothing. She decided to no longer cling to her husband's unattainable love. Today is the day she makes a difference, the day she sets free herself and her husband.

The very next day at the same time, Kelsey and her mother are already 2 hours into a car drive to their destination, Leanne brother's farm in the south. They say nothing to each other, but you can feel it in the air that there is no tension between them, just deep sadness. The whole time, they never say a word to each other. With every moment, they are closer to forgiving each other, one step at a time. Sometimes, they catch an occasional glimpse of one another, but then suddenly look away, staring into the deep blue sky that is opening above them. The sun is slowly piercing its way through the clouds and they slowly disperse. Kelsey finally closes her eyes and falls into a deep slumber. She dreams of a fictional world, in which she loves her mother and her sins are nothing else but shadows of the past. While she dreams, she gently smiles and word 'forgiveness' pleasantly echoes in her mind.

Seven years later, in a town 50-kilometres south-west from Kelsey uncle's farm, there is an adorable little house near the forest. It has little, almost too little windows and snow white façade. It's surrounded by roses of light pink colour that are messily dispersed all around the house, making it a lovely sight. In a pink mailbox, there is a simple, white letter sticking out of it like a stubborn child, refusing to fit into a box. Lovely lady, near her thirties, slowly walks towards the mailbox and curiously reaches towards the letter. She opens it with haste and gets interrupted by a young child, her son apparently. He loudly demands lunch and his mother cheerfully smiles back at him and assures him that his little appetite will be taken care of. She continues to open a letter, revealing a neat handwriting on light green paper. The contents of the letter were.

Dear Kelsey,

I hope you are enjoying your calm lifestyle in the countryside. But I didn't write this letter for idle chat about superficial matter. I just wanted you to know the truth, the feelings that I have dealt with since you left. When you left the town, I really hated you. I hated the fact that you cowardly ran away from me, from painful reality that you created. Thinking about you was painful for me, it made thousand hurtful memories resurface in a second. It reminded me of the pain I experience. It also made me stronger. And for that I should thank you. I later heard that you had some problems in your family as well, and for that I am sorry. But you had absolutely no right, to continue that vicious circle of pain. In a sense, I later realised, we really were very similar to each other, both unable to stand up to those who humiliated us, made us experience pain in every way possible. It took a long way for me to become the way I am now. It was painful, I'm not going to lie. But I came to a conclusion that my hate will only give birth to more hate. To stop this, I will no longer hate anybody, but love them even if they hurt. It's painful, but you know what's even more painful? Giving birth to more violence, rather than stopping it. I decided to never meet you in person again. I do not know my own strength, even after all these years. But I sincerely do not hate you or wish you anything bad. I honestly do hope your life is and remains a constant bliss, without pain or worries. But let me write my final words I ever give to you: I forgive you for everything you've done. You are free now. Both of us are.

Mallory

Kelsey read the letter once, twice, three times, she read it so many times she almost memorised it by heart. She could feel an enormous worry leaving her chest, that monstrous black void that was consuming her entirely. It went through her mind and evaporated into

thin air; it was gone like it was never there in a first place. After all this years, a single tear fell down her cheeks, while her smiling mouth uttered the words that sounded so unearthly pleasant and sweet: "I am finally free."

Lana Lavrih, 3. b