

# **New Jersey Literacy Association 2021 Writing Contest**



## **Grade 5 Honorees**

**Declan Gallagher**, Middletown Village School, Middletown

**Kaitlin King**, Middletown Village School, Middletown

**Vardhit Venga**, Arbor School, Piscataway

**Aily Wei**, Harrison School, Livingston

**Bella Wu**, Harrison School, Livingston

Declan Gallagher,  
Grade 5,  
Village School, Middletown NJ.

Have you ever been left dangling ten stories above the street in the most thrilling moment of your life? It was my father's 45th birthday and we took a family trip to Las Vegas. By researching things to do, I knew without a shadow of a doubt that I wanted to zipline down Fremont Street. Little did I know that it was going to be the most jaw dropping moment of my life.

I stared up at the walkway where we would register for the zipline. I didn't want to do it now standing beneath it and seeing how tall it was. But this was our last day there and I wasn't going to get the chance again.

My Dad who told me he would do it turned to me and said, "Yeah I'm out." I was shocked! He said he would do it the whole time and then chickened out last minute.

"I'll go, even though I don't want to." My mom said. She was supposed to stay with my younger brother who didn't weigh enough to safely ride. So now, my Mom was going and my Dad was staying with my brother. We registered and then began the climb to what I thought was my demise. With each step I could feel my heart pounding faster. Near the top they stopped us and fit us in our harnesses but there were still more stairs to climb.

"Don't look down." My Mom said and of course that was just what I did. Bad move. The people on Fremont Street looked like ants.

Once at the top the operator said, "Alright you're up!" And then they hooked us in. But the worst part was when we were left dangling waiting to be released over the street.

"UH, I CAN'T DO THIS" My Mom cried. Then all of a sudden. Click! We went flying. My first reaction was to close my eyes but when I opened them I realized it wasn't so bad. I began to look around to see all the people below us. It was like I was flying. I saw all the stores we went to, casinos we walked through, there were lights and street performers below us. Then at the end we came to a screeching halt. We waved back and forth for a second. Finally they lowered us and it was all over. All that worrying for nothing. Just like that we were done. We all walked down the stairs to where my brother and Dad were standing. We were jumping and laughing.

"That looked terrifying." My brother said.

"It was actually pretty fun," I said and I wanted to do it again. "Can we do it again?" I asked my Mom.

"Noooo, we have to go home." she responded. I was sad that we could not go for another ride. In the end I was glad that I did it and not chicken out...like my Dad!

**Kaitlyn King Grade 5**

**Middletown Village Elementary School,  
Middletown, NJ**

### **IT'S SUITE..... Or is it?.....**

It all began in the most dreadful year. The COVID-19 pandemic made everything crazy. I was forced to do school from a computer while my dad was working from home. We could hear each other through a shared wall making it difficult for either of us to concentrate. Things needed to change. What did my parents think? I am getting to the age where I shouldn't have ALL of my baby things anyway, so they decided it was time to change rooms and go from a kid playroom to a pre-teen suite. I saw my life flash before my eyes and I panicked. I knew that I was getting older, but inside I still felt like a little kid.

When we started taking everything out of my room, I realized that I didn't need all of my little kid belongings, but I did need some. Some board games like Zingo, Operation, or Disney Princesses could go, but somehow I felt like I needed to keep some. I also let go of my arts and crafts table. It was time and I couldn't have them in my room any longer. In the end, I didn't really "get rid" of it, I just moved it to the basement. I guess my heart still needed my things. Sometimes you want to be little and other times you want to be big.

As we moved things out of the room to paint and redecorate, I decided maybe I'd keep just ONE big kid thing. So, I made the decision to keep my toy chest because it reminded me of my Poppy who is no longer with us. Keeping that one thing, turned into keeping just a few things more. I kept my kindergarten backpack because it was from my first year in my elementary school and my first pair of baby shoes. These are still here because they both remind me that even though trying new things is hard, I can get through it.

Once my items were out, we added a new place to sit and study and a big kid desk for virtual schooling. I wanted my own couch just for me, along with a cool chandelier. Of course I had to add my own spin on things, so I got some Grey's Anatomy pillows, a ring light, and a cat picture who is drinking coffee and wearing glasses. That's just me. These things make me feel happy and grown up.

Throughout this big life event, it was an emotional rollercoaster. I wanted to feel two different ways; one being older, and the other just a little kid. This has definitely been a positive change but it was hard moving on. At first I didn't know what to get rid of and I felt unsure. I didn't know anything, I just wanted to be little. But in the end, I overcame my feelings and even now in this moment, I will always be a little kid.

Vardhit Vanga

## Six Flags Great Adventure - Jackson, New Jersey - Sunday, 8/11/2019

Six Flags is just one of those places that is never serene. Not even now. It's almost like you can hear the hollers echoing around the place where people scream the most.

It was a sunny day. Obviously good enough to ride horrifying - but at the same time, fun-packed - roller coasters. At almost precisely 9:00 A.M., we left. My dad, mom, brother, and me, packed everything - an extra pair of footwear and a towel for the wet ride that goes by the popular name of Congo Rapids. We didn't need much, and all I brought was the checklist I made - to make sure all of the rides I desired to experience were going to soon be ridden.

### El Toro

All of us were scared. All of us were excited. I first rode this exhilarating ride on Sunday, the 29th of July in 2018, that has a drop measuring 176 feet (nearly 29 stories) and has the first big drop at a 75° angle AND which won the award for #1 Wooden Roller Coaster in the World TWICE! Oh my God! This anti-gravity roller coaster made my heart literally beat out of my chest. While it was pounding, the roller coaster took many drops. It was fun, but I felt helpless. So instead I just closed my eyes for almost the whole ride and said prayers. To my surprise, the ride was over, but the fun wasn't...

### Superman: Ultimate Flight

From start to finish, this EPIC and ULTIMATE ride measures precisely 2,798 feet. Top speed: 60 miles per hour. Duration: 2 minutes, 25 seconds. Face down and head first, it was actually pretty AMAZING!!! We could hear our neighbors, the daredevils riding on Kingda Ka let out sound barrier-breaking bellows. At the end, an unexpected 360° turn wowed everyone on board. For those 2 minutes and 25 seconds, I didn't just feel like a peregrine falcon, the fastest animal in the world, stooping at 225 mph, but I felt like who this ride was meant to impersonate - Superman.

### Green Lantern

A STAND UP ROLLER COASTER???!!! WHAT IN THE WORLD???!!!

Top speed: 4 more miles per hour than Superman: Ultimate Flight. Elevation: 154 feet. Duration: 2 minutes and 30 seconds.

Just looking at the steepness of this ride horrifies me. A 155-foot hill, a 144-foot drop, and an abrupt 121-foot loop made me think again. Not that I didn't ride this terrifying and epic and insane all at the same time ride, but I'm just going to say that I did my usual pre-roller coaster mantra. I took a few deep breaths, said some prayers, and just hoped for the best - and I got it. MAN, was that fun! Some may think that loop-de-loops are terrifying, but I think that they are TERRIFYINGLY TERRIFIC or TERR(OR)IFIC!!!

Although I myself called all of these rides quote 'horrifying', I am looking forward to visit again.

Standing in line. Hearing screams of excitement as water splashes on the big rides. A shiver goes down my spine. “You’re gonna have so much fun on this one, Aily!” Hannah, my friend, tells me with great excitement. “Yeah, sure!” I say. I look down. Mom is down there, happily chatting with Hannah’s Mom. I narrow my eyes. If it weren’t for my Mom, I wouldn’t be on this ride. “Try something new!” Mom had said. “I’m perfectly fine *not* trying something new.” I shot back. After some convincing, I had finally agreed.

“Eeee! We’re going on the ride next!” Hannah squeals. A shiver goes down my spine as I hear screams of delight. The lifeguard blows his whistle for the next people to come for the next ride. Next to us is the other ride, Victoria Falls. It’s the ride that I really like. But I wasn’t going on that ride. I was going on the ride, Smoke That Thunders. That title creeped me out. As Hannah and I walk up the stairs and the next floatie comes, Mom’s words repeat in my head. *Try something new*. The lifeguard took the clover float and placed it on the big slide. He held it as Hannah and I sat across from each other. “Are you ready?” The lifeguard asked us. “Yup!” Hannah says. *No, I’m not ready*. I think. I nod anyway. Then the lifeguard let’s go off the float.

*Splash!* My eyes grow wide. We went to a steep place and then went down. Water splashes in my face. I shake it off. Suddenly, everything lights up. “WE’RE OUTSIDE!!” Hannah hollered. As my eyes adjusted to the light, I started enjoying the ride. My grip loosen on the handles. Then we swung side to side, and water splashed on our faces once again. I laughed the first time throughout the whole ride.. Then suddenly, it felt like we went straight down. I screamed. Hannah laughed. Water splashed our faces once again. I shook it off. “THIS IS AWESOME!” I shout. Water crashed side from side.

Soon, it became pitched black. I was sure we were near the end of the ride. As water splashed into our face once more, light came back to us. The ride had finished. I let go of the handles and wiped the water off my eyes. Another lifeguard pulled our floatie to the stairs. Hannah and I got off and climbed out of the pool. My Mom came to greet us. “How was it?” My Mom asked. “It was ok.” I replied. “Can we go again?” Hannah asked. I stopped, and pretended I was gonna say no. Then I grinned. “Definitely.” I replied.

I hope that Covid ends soon, so then Hannah and I can go back to Kalaharri. One thing’s for sure. I can’t wait to go back on Smoke That Thunders. Maybe i’ll bring more friends next time. After all, what Mom said was right. *Try something new*.

**Bella Wu**

## Easterns

“Next up, NJ Skyliners!” That’s us. I glance at Sophia, my best friend. Then, without thinking, I step onto the ice. My team follows behind me, and the frigid air devours us.

We’d been working to this moment all year. It was now or never, we had to get this right. Today was Easterns; today was the day.

*Please, please, please --- please just this one time, let us have a perfect run.*

The air is chilly but fresh. I tune out the cheer of the crowd and skate towards the middle of the impressively large rink. The rest of the team follows. My anxiety grows by the second.

My fingers turn numb from the cold as we skate across the ice. I’m in sync with my partner, and we form perfectly straight lines. We hit every beat, the cheer of the crowd booms in the background. We glide across the ice, it feels as though we are flying! The beating of my heart slows down and the butterflies in my stomach fade away. But then disaster strikes.

Suddenly, I am flying back into the air. I hit the ice with a solid “thud.” I make the connection at once, someone let go.

All those relentless hours we had spent to get to this moment were in the trash. The rest of the program is a mess as people scramble back to their spots.

-x-

After the program, everyone scoots off the ice. We drag our feet back into the dressing room, and slowly kick off our skates. Everyone knows it; there was no way we could win. The air smells like stinky feet as we change into our shoes. No one complains, we're all too depressed.

"Um-" I say, breaking the silence. My teammates glance up at me. "Uh- so today was a throwback," I continue, ""There's still one more competition in the season though. We can't give up now." A few people mumble in agreement.

"There's still a chance, the results haven't come out yet," says a voice from the other side of the room.

I turn to see our coach standing up from the bench.

"We can still win," our coach says reassuringly, and she's right. There was still hope. Hope that my teammates and I could still win, hope that there was still a chance that the judges enjoyed our program enough for us to place.

-x-

The judges told us that we'd ended up in last place. Tears were shed but by now, we had gotten over it. If you were to look at the team, you wouldn't see the slightest trace of sadness or despair on any of our faces.

Neither my teammate nor I can deny that losing the competition was a major disappointment. Though from the experience, we learned an important lesson: if no one lost, no one would win. If by some chance you're on the losing side, learn from your mistakes and next time, don't make them again.