



# Chalk Talk

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## Letter from the Editor

Dear Educators:

This past week I attended a performance of 'OVO', by Quebec's own Cirque du Soleil. The first production I ever saw was called 'Nouvelle Experience' (New Experience), from the wildly creative imagination of Guy Laliberté. 25 years ago, this street performer assembled a troupe of merry men and women whose acrobatic, musical



and comedic talents were to change the way the world viewed circuses forever.

'OVO', like all of the Cirque creations, has a definite other-worldly quality about it.

While I sat watching the show, I couldn't help but think about the Cirque founder, who was, at that moment, literally out of this world at the International Space Station. For me, he is a dreamer who uses his empire of circuses to fulfill lifelong dreams. One of his dreams had been to travel into space. At 50, he became Canada's first space tourist (*right*). He used this 'nouvelle experience' as an opportunity to raise awareness about another of his passions — his environmental initiative, H2O, devoted to water conservation. On Friday, October 9, wearing his trademark red-nose, he hosted a spectacle from the space station that involved performances in 14 cities featuring the likes of U2's Bono, Shakira, and Peter Gabriel, and former U.S Vice-President, Al Gore.



For such a small population, Canadians manage to garner much fame internationally. Whether it's our singers, architects, writers, athletes, comedians, environmentalists, and those in many other disciplines, Canadians have made a difference around the world and here at home.

This week's issue of **Chalk Talk** features a very special opportunity for students across Canada to write about people who have made a significant impact on us in 2009. CoEd Communications is dedicated to supporting the important work of teachers by providing access to free classroom resources on a range of topics. We invite you to visit our website at [www.4edu.ca](http://www.4edu.ca).

[As always, your thoughts are appreciated.](#)

*Mary Kovack*

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## A&E Canadian Classroom's Essay Contest

**A&E** Canadian Classroom's 'LIVES THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE ESSAY CONTEST' challenges students in grades 5-12 to write an original 300 word essay on the life of a person they believed made the biggest difference on Canadian society in the past year. Students can win cash prizes for themselves and teachers can win cash prizes for their classrooms.

Bring Great Ideas into Your Classroom



Enter **A&E Canadian Classroom's 2009 "LIVES THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE" Essay Contest**  
**Deadline December 15, 2009**

The submissions will be judged by a national panel of education experts and A&E representatives. The essays will be judged based on the following criteria: persuasiveness (33 per cent), creativity (33 per cent) and relevancy (33 per cent). Two winners from each grade level — 5th-8th grade and 9th-12th grade — will be selected.

**2 GRAND PRIZES:** 1 prize for each of Grades 5-8 & 9-12

- Student: **\$3,000** Cash Prize
- Department/Classroom of Teacher: **\$1,000** Cash (Cdn.) for use in the classroom.

**2 FIRST PLACE PRIZES:** 1 prize for each of Grades 5-8 & 9-12

- Student: **\$2,000** Cash Prize
- Department/Classroom of Teacher: **\$1,000** Cash (Cdn.) for use in the classroom.

[Note: Due to Provincial restrictions the contest is void in Quebec.]

Each entry must include the student's name, complete address, postal code, telephone number, age, grade, name of teacher, school, school address, and local cable system (if known). Send entries to: LIVES THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE ESSAY CONTEST, c/o Temple Scott Associates, 250 The Esplanade, Suite 301, Toronto, Ontario M5A 1J2.

Educators are encouraged to set aside time in their social studies, current events, civics, literacy and history curriculum to have their students participate in this year's contest. **Deadline is December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2009.** For more information and contest rules, please visit [www.biography.com/class/canadianclassroom](http://www.biography.com/class/canadianclassroom).



# A&E's 'LIVES THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE' ESSAY CONTEST

## Be Inspired — Read the 2008 Winning Essays



[Canadian Forces Image Gallery](#), (Department of National Defence)

### Grand Prize, Grades 9-12: Cailin Mulvihill, age 16, grade 11, St. Theresa Catholic Secondary School in Belleville, ON

**True Patriot Love** — You do not know her. She has never made a television appearance. She has never been in a magazine. She is in her late fifties, and spends her days in her rocking chair. She could be from a big city; she could live in a small town. Her house is comfortable, but something is missing. Everything is in place – the framed picture of a young man in uniform atop the mantle, the photo album at her side, yet the room feels empty. [Read more ...](#)

### First Place, Grades 9-12: Matthew Dudley, age 17, grade 12, Clayton Heights Sr. Secondary, Surrey, BC

**BARACK OBAMA: His Canadian Impact in Politics** — As a 17 year old Canadian youth, I have surprised myself that I now like politics. However, my interest in politics has been captured by an African-American, 47 year old man from the United States. [Read more ...](#)



### Grand Prize, Grades 5-8 — Rachael Smith, age 13, grade 8, Pacific Christian School, Victoria, BC

**The Power of an Apology** — In June 2008, a Canadian leader made a huge impact on our society. He had done something that no other leader had done in more than a century. Prime Minister Stephen Harper apologized to the First Nations people for what the government had done in removing their children from their homes and communities and placing them in residential schools. [Read more ...](#)

### First Place, Grades 5-8 — Ksenia Pinski, age 11, grade 7, Lord Tennyson Public School, Vancouver, BC

**"YES WE CAN"** — I have never been interested in politics. I thought it was boring and too complicated. Up until one day, I glanced at the TV, took the iPod headphones out of my ears, and asked my brother, "By the way, who's Barack Obama?" [Read more ...](#)



## Website of the week



## Canadian Classroom

**A&E Canadian Classroom** offers a commercial free and copyright cleared block of programming designed for classroom use. A&E Classroom airs Monday through Friday from 8:30 to 9:30am NT/ 8 to 9am AT/ 6 to 7am CT/ 5 to 6 am MT and 4 to 5am PT.

Twice each year, **A&E** develops support materials to help you incorporate A&E Classroom into your history, literature, performing arts, science and social studies curricula. The **A&E Classroom Calendar** provides six months of scheduling information and program descriptions. **A&E Study Guides** include classroom activities and discussion questions for select programs. Additional Study Guides are available online. For more information about A&E Canadian Classroom, go to [www.biography.com/class/canadianclassroom/index.html](http://www.biography.com/class/canadianclassroom/index.html).

A&E Classroom and the support materials have been developed as a classroom resource for Canadian educators to use **free of charge**. For additional information, please call 1-800-722-6146.

A schedule of upcoming program air-dates is available in A&E Classroom's **"Idea Book for Educators"**. This free resource guide is printed twice a year and offers educators a six month programming calendar, program descriptions, and lesson plans to accompany some of the programs. To order your copy of "The Idea Book for Educators" [click here](#).



Bring Great Ideas Into Your Classroom!

[A radical alternative: real teaching; Toronto's Howlett Academy offers direct instruction, a no-no in the age of 'child-centred' education](#) -- Margaret Wenté, Columnist, *Globe & Mail*, September 30, 2009

"The Howlett Academy, housed inside a plain red building in Toronto's Annex, offers a radical alternative to the public-school approach. Its teaching methods are heavily discouraged in today's public schools. It stresses penmanship and spelling, accuracy and focus. Every mistake in every essay is corrected – in red ink. The school's three Rs are resilience, rigour and repetition... I watched as a teacher took her students through a quick vocabulary and spelling drill. Threadbare," they spelled aloud in unison. "This would be a no-no with the board of education," said Ms. Howlett. "It's called direct instruction." In the age of "child-centred" education, direct instruction is thought to stifle children's inherent creativity. They're supposed to discover math and spelling, not memorize the times tables."

[Raise-a-Reader aims to improve literacy and that helps us all](#) — *Vancouver Sun*, September 18, 2009

British Columbia has one of the highest literacy rates in Canada, yet 40 per cent of B.C. adults lack sufficient knowledge or skills to locate and use basic written information effectively in English in everyday work and life. That was the finding of an auditor-general's report on literacy several years ago, which noted that little progress had been made over a decade. It corroborated data from the 2003 Adult Literacy and Life Skills study, which found 42 per cent of Canadian adults have low prose literacy skills, and 20 per cent have serious problems with reading and comprehension. Low levels of literacy underlie many intractable social problems." [Read more...](#)

[The battle over Boo Radley: Should parents be allowed to decide what their kids read in school?](#) – Kate Hammett, *Parentcentral.ca*, *TheStar.com*, October 11, 2009

"Much to the dismay of the average teenager, the Pythagorean theorem and natural selection are required elements of a high-school education. But when it comes to the classics of literature like *Brave New World* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the lines begin to blur. Campaigns for wholesale bans on these and other classic works make occasional headlines, but many students are barred from reading such books through a simple request from a parent. The question of how often this happens, and whether the practice should be allowed, is forcing its way into public debate following a controversy at the country's largest school board, where a formal policy allows students to opt out."

[A tale of two countries' libraries: In recession-wracked U.S. cities they are being targeted for closure. Not so here](#) – Lynda Hurst, *TheStar.com*, September 20, 2009

"And what about the news out of the U.S. of library closures and outsourcing to private management companies? Or the mayor of cash-strapped Philadelphia threatening to shut down all the city's libraries on Oct. 2 if the state doesn't ante up? So Friday's Libraries in 2020 conference in Toronto is likely to be a bleak affair, a death knell of sorts, right? Don't even suggest that to a Canadian librarian. Contrary to what you might have heard, libraries are not in a terminal state of decline, "they're not even sick," says Wendy Newman, a senior fellow at the University of Toronto's faculty of information, formerly library sciences, now known as the "I School." "Libraries are back big-time, they're having a renaissance." [Read the entire article.](#)

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