



Chalk Talk

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PLEASE SHARE CHALK TALK WITH YOUR COLLEAGUES !!!**Letter from the Editor**

Dear Educators:

Have we tired yet of letting our thumbs do the talking in 140 characters or less? When asked in an interview whether he 'tweeted', the irascible comedian, Lewis Black, responded by asking, 'how many devices do we need to NOT communicate with each other?' A while back, a young colleague of mine described **Chalk Talk** as a 'blog'. Perhaps it is, but I hope it is more than that, replete with better spelling and grammar. More recently, another associate remarked that it was a "real" newsletter, a throw-back to a more 'traditional' approach to theme and lay-out.

Luckily, the art of essay writing is alive and well in the Facts & Arguments section of the Globe & Mail. Canadians of all stripes and backgrounds try their hand at putting into words how they feel about an experience that has shaped their lives. I am amazed by how many good writers there are out there and how in this 'text and twitter' world, so many people are willing to take the time to sit down — and sit still — long enough to express themselves in full sentences. A good, well-crafted essay affects the way we think and feel about a common experience, allowing us to see it from a fresh perspective. I often find myself thinking about the essays for months after reading them.

A popular topic for essay writing is family, specifically, mothers and fathers. Not surprising when you think about the formative and important role they play in our lives, even long after they are no longer with us. With Mother's Day just passed and with Father's Day coming up on the horizon, I have reproduced one of my favourite *Facts & Arguments* essays from earlier this year. I hope you enjoy it. [See 'Related Article', below.]

This week's issue of **Chalk Talk** features four truly uplifting and thoughtful winning essays written by students across Canada about lives that had a significant impact on us in 2008.

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.

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

Mary Kovack

A&E Classroom's Essay Contest — Winners!

[A&E Canadian Classroom](#) congratulates the winners of its 2008 'LIVES THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE ESSAY CONTEST' which challenged 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.



A grand prize of \$5,000 and a first place prize of \$2,500 were awarded to one student in each of the grades 5-8 and 9-12 categories. For encouraging participation in the essay contest, the winning students' teachers each receive \$1,000 for use in their classroom and the schools each receive an A&E prize package including a television, DVD player and classic A&E DVDs.

A national panel of eight education experts and A&E representatives judged the submissions. Educational sector judges included Mark Bridges, Bev Buchan, Judy Cathcart, Rose Dotten, Pat Elliott, Shelley LeBlanc, Francie Moroosis, and Rosemary Renton. The winning essays were chosen on the following criteria: persuasiveness (33 per cent), creativity (33 per cent) and relevancy (33 per cent).



The Grand Prize winners are Cailin Mulvihill, a Grade 11 student at St. Theresa Catholic Secondary School in Belleville, ON for her essay *True Patriot Love*, on the impact the war has on the mothers of Canada's fallen soldiers, and Rachael Smith, a Grade 8 student at Pacific Christian School in Victoria, BC for her essay *Power of an Apology*, on the apology made by the Federal government to the Aboriginal community regarding residential schools. First place winners are Matthew Dudley, a Grade 12 student at Clayton Heights Senior Secondary in Surrey, BC and Ksenia Pinski, a Grade 7 student at Lord Tennyson Public School in Vancouver, BC. Both first place essays were on US President Barack Obama. **[To read the winning essays, see the feature, below.]**

Educators are encouraged to set aside time in their social studies, current events, civics, literacy and history curriculum for the beginning of the coming school year to have their students participate in next year's contest. Submissions for the **2009 Lives that Make a Difference Essay Contest** will be accepted beginning September 1st through to December 15th, 2009. For more information about the contest, please visit: www.aetv.com/class/canadianclassroom.



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

2008 Winning Essays

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. With each rock of the chair, she gazes out the window at the Canadian flag in her front lawn. The flag is faded and ripped, but flies powerfully through the wind, not afraid to show its pride. The flag reminds her of her beloved son – strong, passionate and loyal. The flag – has been lowered to half mast. I wonder if this woman knew that each small sacrifice she made for her son would better prepare him to make the ultimate sacrifice for his country. Did she know that each time she demonstrated the importance of peace, pride and justice she was raising a brave young soldier? Was she aware that when she hugged her son goodbye, she held in her arms the strength that it takes to stand up for an entire nation? She now stands alone in a crowd of hundreds, waiting for her son to come home for one last time. She wipes tears away to witness the coffin being carried out of the plane. On top of the coffin is something familiar – a Canadian flag. That same flag, vibrant and luminous will now fly in her front lawn. For years to come, she will sit in her rocking chair and gaze out the window, knowing that she has made a difference.



[Canadian Forces Image Gallery](#)

(Department of National Defence)

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. I believe that Barack Obama has influenced Canadian society, individually and collectively in 2008. He has motivated Canadians to be interested in politics again. I also believe that this interest in American politics will “boil over” into Canada as well. At least, that is my hope. In my own house, my family planned their TV watching around Obama’s speeches, debates and television appearances. My family started discussing world issues, political ideals, wars, economics, topics we rarely talked about before. We examined and compared both political parties and their promises. I believe this renewed interest in politics was felt all across Canada in many homes, businesses and schools. For example, conversations in my History 12 class focused on the great speeches and political leaders in the past: Martin Luther King, John F. Kennedy, and even, our own Pierre Elliott Trudeau. Obama rekindled the hope and dreams of all of us that change can happen. I found myself clinging to every word he was saying, and actually believing in him and his promises. My only disappointment was listening to our own Canadian leaders and being so bored. Why don’t we have an Obama in Canada? As I recently watched our own federal election take place, I just wasn’t as engaged and excited, and found myself turning to CNN again to watch the American election. I want to feel the passion for our own leaders, not only federally, but locally. I can’t wait to have my own chance to vote one day. I know that because of my experiences watching Barack Obama that my interest in politics will remain throughout my life. My goal now is to gain knowledge and experience in Canadian politics and find my passion there. I believe my experiences echo across Canada, and that Barack Obama has successfully ignited a new generation of believers and Canada. Can we do it?...YES WE CAN.



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. It was the first formal apology from a Canadian Prime Minister for what he called “a very sad chapter in Canadian history”. Businesses were closed that day. Hundreds of affected First Nations children cheered, and some of the wept as Prime Minister Harper spoke. Although some former students spoke positively of their experiences in the residential schools, most of them gave tragic accounts of the emotional, physical and sex-

ual abuse that took place. They spoke of the neglect of confused children as they were separated from their families, with helpless parents looking on. Assembly of First Nations National Chief, Phil Fontaine, was a former residential school student himself. He was one of several aboriginal leaders who responded by saying that today's occasion was nothing less than a miracle: "For the generation that will follow us, we bear witness today... never again will this House consider us the 'Indian problem,' just for being who we are". He continued, "We have heard the government of Canada take full responsibility for this dreadful chapter in our shared history. We have heard the Prime Minister declare that this will never happen again. Finally, we have heard Canada say that it is sorry". My dad has always taught me that there is no shame in saying, "I'm sorry," but Stephen Harper taught our society the healing power of an apology.



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?" I was one of millions in Canada who asked the same question. Barack Obama's enthusiasm captures us all. There are no doubts he marks an important turning point in North American history by being the first non-white presidential candidate for a major political party. His composure and ease in talking, intelligence and youthful looks cut across generations and continents. He has been engaging with the Internet community like no one else had before him, and this year all Canadian parties learned from him on how to reach people who are usually not interested in politics. But the main reason why even in Canada so many young people are signed up for the Barack Obama support group on Facebook, and are now excited about politics, is how he sees the world. Times are changing, but politics aren't. Barack Obama calls for "new ideas and new leadership, a new politics for a new time". Barack Obama inspires us to see beyond colour and not to be afraid to listen to our hopes. He reminds us how much we depend on each other. When people are willing to trust, cooperate, and compromise, their power becomes unlimited. The global appeal of Barack Obama is that he speaks a universal language, so he can bridge the differences in the whole world. "Change we can believe in" has gripped our imagination. Barack Obama is an inspiration for young people in Canada to work for social and political change. We are all learning to dream a little bigger and step a little higher.



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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](#).

Related Article — *What I Learned From Dad*

[What I learned from dad; I used to wish my dad had passed on skills like how to play hockey or fix cars. Now I appreciate his wisdom](#) -- DANIEL GOODWIN, *Globe & Mail*, *Facts & Arguments Essay*, January 26, 2009

"No matter how much he tries, no matter how gifted with empathy he is, no matter how naturally sensitive, a man can never fully understand or appreciate his father until he has become one himself. Every son must have some regret about his father — at least it's a rare son that doesn't. The litany is well known: He wasn't around enough or wasn't affectionate enough. He was there but was a domineering tyrant. He didn't support your career choice. He was too focused on his own career. He left his wife (and more importantly, your mother). He didn't leave but should have. When it comes to my father, my biggest regret, the only regret that I remember, is that he died too



soon. He lived a good, long life, dying almost nine years ago at 83 of prostate cancer. But he was 54 when I was born, and he never got to meet my son and daughter.

My father, like all fathers (it must be in the paternal DNA), worked hard to pass down his wisdom to his progeny. At the time, I didn't appreciate it much. The fathers of my friends all seemed to have good, solid, practical talents, whether it was teaching their sons how to play hockey, fix cars or repair their homes. I must admit that my father did teach me how to swim and ride a bike. We even threw the ball around a bit when I was a kid, but he didn't teach me many practical things. I still remember turning 12 and

hoping for something fun and useful for my birthday. Instead, my dad came home from work and proudly handed me a collection of Hemingway short stories, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *The Catcher in the Rye*. My father loved books. The walls of many rooms in our home were lined with bookshelves. History. Philosophy. Poetry. Politics. Novels. Biographies. Short Stories. Essays. Plays. I still remember my 12-year-old sense of disappointment when my father handed me those books, but now, more than 25 years later, they're one of my favourite birthday presents." [MORE ...](#)

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