

Inspired by chapter four of Because of Winn Dixie, Mrs. Harrison's eighth graders wrote original short stories that include a character sharing ten beliefs. After reading both stories, discuss with a friend where you believe these two authors have shown their best skills in *voice* and *organization*.



Wishful Thinking

by Jason, eighth grade writer

It was a nice, winter evening. Snow was falling, and I had my fire burning. My little cat, Toby, curled up beside it and almost soundlessly fell asleep. I was reading The Blue Moon by Laurence Housman. Soon, I peered out my window and got a quick glance of a car. I walked outside and opened the dark wood door, and saw a silver BMW approaching the driveway. A man walked outside, and I recognized who he was instantly. "Hey Dad!" he said.

"Hey, Sean. Wow, nice car you got there," I said, "and it looks like you have a beautiful wife, too."

"Yeah, she's gorgeous!" As Sean and I were talking, I saw a small girl walk over to the red fence. "Hey, is this your daughter?" I asked.

"Oh, this is Suzanne! Ain't she cute?" he said with a grin.

I walked over, and gave her a smile. I kneeled down to grab her hands. As soon as I did, she turned around and shouted, "Hey Grandpa!" I was surprised by the sudden burst of excitement, and gave a quick chuckle.

Sean's wife, Shannon, came next to me and muttered, "We should go inside. It's freezing out here!" A few moments later, we found ourselves inside my living room. All huddled around the fire. "We'll make dinner," Shannon insisted.

"W-we?" stuttered Sean.

"Yes, *we*." She said, "Now let's get going."

They both walked toward the kitchen and Sean glanced back. "You two have fun now. It'll only take a moment," he breathed, and they walked off.

"Grandpa," Suzanne muttered. She walked near Toby, and sat down. Toby stretched his grey fur a bit, and lay down on her lap. "What are your regrets?"

"Ahh, I have too many, Suzy. I can't possibly list them all."

"Then let's make them wishes!" she suggested.

I knew my first answer already, but I guess I just wanted to ramble on. "Well, let's see..." I pondered, "for starters, I want to be rich and famous." I said this seriously, and waited for some reaction.

She looked unphased, and she kept petting Toby. "What else?" she asked.

"Oh, right. Uhh... I suppose I could have eternal youth and relive my younger days. Haha!"

She didn't seem all that happy. "Come on, Grandpa! Be serious. I want deep thoughtful wishes."

"To be able to redo my mistakes," I retorted with a grin.

"Getting better..." she said.

"Well then... on to the next one. Uhh, number six?" I thought out loud.

"Five," she corrected me.

"Oh, that's right. Anyways, number five. I'd have to say not to have regrets. It pains me enough to think about what I've done wrong, but to be able to move on and not think what I did was right or wrong." I explained.

"Now we're getting somewhere! Keep 'em coming!" she said with joy.

"Haha. I wish everyone could be free. Feeling unrestrained." I walked over and opened my drawers. I had a whole collection of classical music pieces, from Beethoven to Brahms, and lots more. I put in a CD and a beautiful sound engulfed the room. It was exhilarating. Sitting back in my chair again, I let out a big sigh. "I wish I could find true love again..." I said

"What about Grandma?"

"Yeah... she was lovely. Too bad she's not here anymore. I wish I could just... speak with her once more."

"That makes eight wishes," Suzanne said cheerfully.

"You're quite the intelligent, little girl, aren't you?" I chuckled. "Apart from all these things, I want to see you grow up. It pains me to think about how I might have to leave you, and your Mom and Dad. Which then leads me to wish number ten. I wish... to stay at this moment forever."

"I do too, Grandpa! Forever, and ever!"

"Yes Suzy... Forever and ever."

"Hey, it's time for dinner!" called Sean. "Get the plates the silverware, Suzanne!"

"Okay, Dad!" she called.

Yes, I thought, *I definitely want to stay here forever.*



Evan's Earth

by Jenelle, eighth grade writer

Peering over into her hospital bed, a tear began to roll down his cheek. Trying to blink them back, he gulped down a breath. Silently in thought. I might never see my sweetheart ever again.

Seventy-four year old Evan stepped out of his wife of fifty odd year's hospital room. He couldn't handle seeing the love of his life dying, but his optimism got him stronger, past this feeling. He stared out the slightly smudged and dirty window overlooking the creek, and in his mind, he was deep in thought about how he and his beloved wife first met. Closing his eyes, with a gentle smile across his

aged face, he began to recall the memories.

It was the year of 1938. Evan Henson and his family were at the most serene, calm, and beautiful creek of North Carolina. Almost every family of that small town of Levingston gathered at that creek every single summer since Evan could remember. He was swimming in the creek, just when, at the same exact moment, he rose his head out of the water for a gasp of air, young Lee-Anne caught his eye. Evan was naive back then, but he was right about one thing though. She'd be the love of his life forever...

In awe by her beauty, he got out of the creek to dry off, and maybe even speak to her.

Lee-Anne had been reading *The Good Earth*. Out of the corner of her eye, with auburn colored locks of hair framing her face, she glimpsed a boy of about eighteen walking towards her. Sitting on a beach towel, while leaning against an oak tree, she put her book down and smiled at Evan. "Hi," Lee-Anne said to the nervous boy.

"Hi. I'm Evan."

"Lee-Anne." At this she stuck out her hand to shake his, still with a grin across her face. She noticed that he seemed apprehensive.

"What book are you reading there?" he asked timidly.

"Oh, *The Good Earth*."

"It's a great book!"

"Oh? You've read it before?"

"Yeah, it was really very interesting."

They talked for hours until the afternoon sun set into a warm evening lit up with stars and the usual bonfires. It was early August, and after those couple of hours they spent together, they knew they had found love. Those two young lovebirds spent every waking moment together...Lee-Anne full of laughter and life, and Evan making sure that's how things would stay.

Coming back to reality, he opened his eyes once again. He remembered back to his personal goals and thoughts he had.

1. First loves are never really over.
2. I'll always remember back to the day I met my true love.
3. I'm scared to ever lose Lee, but I must be strong for her and me.
4. I'll try not to let my emotions leak out crazily if something bad happens to Lee-Anne, since I've never loved anyone as much as I love her from this day 'til eternity.
5. I'll always spend every evening conversing with Lee about our day. We'll go to the park every night under the stars, full of bliss.
6. I'll be strong, but forever happy.
7. My laugh is contagious, I know Lee thinks it is too, and will join along.
8. I'll sit with Lee out on the pier of Levingston to stare up into the night on warm summer nights.
9. I'll sing show tunes just to see Lee laugh. I only live to hear her laughter.
10. I am charming and sincere. (Those two characteristics of mine are how I got Lee-Anne in the first place.)

Slowly walking towards Lee-Anne's hospital room again, he felt stronger inside.

The doctor stopped him at the door. "Uh, Mr. Henson...I am so sorry."

On that cold autumn day of 1994, his dear Lee-Anne died of cancer. She was finally free and he had to understand that she was in a better place now.

Later that evening, he set down his reading glasses on top of the book he'd been reading, *The Good Earth*. This was the exact same book that they discussed on the first day that they ever met. He looked at pictures of him and Lee-Anne on their wedding day set out on their bedside table. He lay down in bed, and fell asleep, forever... with a smile on his face. Now, Evan was free too, reunited with his love, yet again.