

# Writing Well



Adult Writing Contest  
Fort Resolution, NT  
March, 2003

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## Acknowledgements

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## Foreword

The Fort Resolution Community Writing Contest for ages 15 - adult was held in February and March, 2003. Prizes for this contest were awarded by genre. Minnie Whimp's "How a Low Literacy Level Affects Health" was the best essay. Henry Mandeville won the prize for best poem with "Great Spirits of the Land." Arlo McDermott's "The Devil's Chains" won the award for best narrative story.

The purpose of the writing contest was to inspire the development of writing skills. The ability to express ideas and convey information in writing is and always has been crucial to academic and professional success. Hopefully, other Northerners will follow the excellent example set by the three authors of this booklet and discover the power and the joy of writing well.



From left to right:  
Henry Mandeville, Best Poem; Minnie Whimp,  
Best Essay; Arlo McDermott, Best Story

## How a Low Literacy Level Affects Health

Low literacy and health have been an issue in small communities, affecting people of all ages. Having a low literacy level may come from a bad experience in learning or having too many barriers. This may lead to health problems as people are unaware of issues revolving around their problems. Low literacy affects the health in that people cannot read the medical information they are given; they might take the wrong medication, develop poor nutrition and be left feeling powerless.

For one thing, people with a low literacy level would find it hard to read the medical information that is given. The information would require people to change their lifestyles to prevent their illnesses and injuries from getting worse. When people go to the health center for a medical reason, they usually get a pamphlet for their problem. If a person cannot read, then he or she may have a hard time understanding what the pamphlet says. People with a low literacy level would not know what to do to prevent more injury or illnesses because they are not able to read about what they should or should not do.

People with low literacy levels also find it hard to read a medication bottle and the instructions. They would get medication for their injury or illness and would have to take it at a specific time. If people cannot read, then it would be hard to know what time to take their medications at. When people get their medications, they have to follow specific instructions. The instructions would say to take food with the medication or not to drink alcohol while taking the medication. If they take the wrong medications, they will get sicker.

In addition, people with a low literacy level will lack nutritional information to keep themselves healthy and regulate their diet. People who have diseases like heart conditions, diabetes or obesity have to follow a strict diet. If they go for a check up and any of these diseases are detected, they would get information on their condition. They would have to change their eating habits from greasy and sweet foods to low-

fat and crunchy healthy foods like vegetables and fruits. For people to be more aware of the prevention of diseases, they would have to learn the four basic food groups. Also, they would need to know how important proper nutrition is to maintaining a healthy diet.



Furthermore, people with a low literacy level are left feeling powerless. When people with a low literacy level are given a diagnosis, they do not know what the diagnosis means. They then feel helpless and bad about themselves. People then are unaware of what they should know of their diagnosis and the treatments. They feel scared to receive the treatment because they do not know what to expect. The low literacy person would then be stressed out thinking about the worst, and that would just add to the sickness. People will have to learn to understand their diagnosis so that they will not feel powerless and stressed out.



In conclusion, people with a low literacy level have many barriers when it comes to health issues. If people cannot read, they lack information about the importance of a healthy lifestyle. They can overcome their barriers by taking a literacy program to help them, going back to school or asking someone in the health profession to explain about their health issues. People do not have to feel powerless, get stressed out or feel like they cannot do anything for themselves. If people with a low literacy level can go back to school or get into a literacy program, they do not have to feel powerless.

**Minnie Whimp**

## Great Spirits of the Land

The arbor by the south shores  
of Great Slave Lake is filled with people  
of all ages ranging from  
youngest to the oldest.

The water is beautiful and blue  
as the sun reflects,  
like little shining stars that are floating  
on top of it and just drifting along.  
On the shore you can see the green grasses  
and all the green trees,  
with their shadows touching the ground;  
and near by them are a bunch  
of little flower beds here and there.

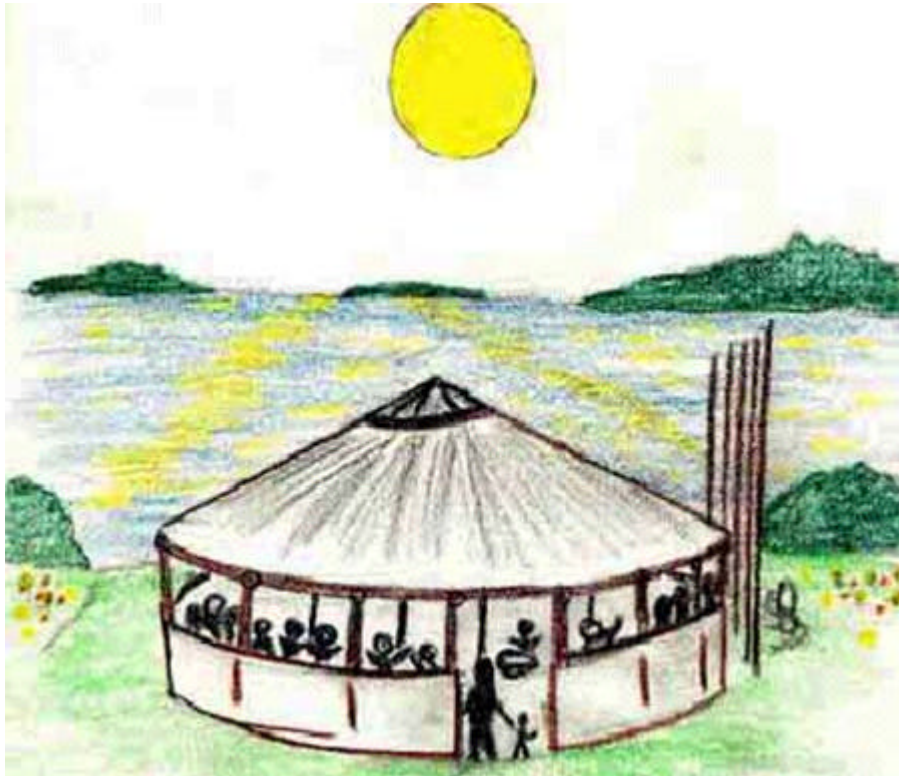
The sun also shines through the openings  
that are around the arbor,  
giving them warmth and kindness  
among the people.

As the drummers gather around the fireplace  
for their preparation for the traditional event,  
the incense burns and we smudge ourselves.

As the beat of the drums goes on,  
we are in harmony as one.

Drumming, beating, and dancing,  
for we are as proud people of our land,  
singing to the beat of the drums  
that gives us power and strength,  
sounding better and more beautiful  
as each minute goes by,  
with the beat echoing in our hearts.





Strong voices touching across every direction  
with feelings and happiness  
transcend into the spirit  
of respect and caring  
for all living things on this Mother Earth.

**Henry Mandeville**

## The Devil's Chains

This story involves my paternal grandfather. I don't know if it is true, but it is a good story. My great-grandmother would always tell my grandfather that if he ever misbehaved or disrespected her, the devil would come with a chain and drag him down to hell.

Well...one night, he stayed out a little late and drank a little with the boys. By the time he decided to head home, it was well after midnight. Needless to say, he was scared to start with. Not only was it well past the time he was to be home, but he was also drunk! He knew that his mother would be very upset with him!!

Knowing that he couldn't stand in the doorway of his friend's house all night, he set out down the road to his house. It was a dark night with no moon in the sky. He could only see the unpaved road because it was lighter than the grass around it.



All the while he walked, he kept thinking about what his mother had said, "If you misbehave or disrespect me, the devil will come with a chain and drag you down to hell!!!"

Needless to say, he was getting more and more scared. He came to a point in the road where he had to pass between two fenced cow fields and on and over a hill. Just past the field was his home.

Right about then, he heard it...the unmistakable sound of...dragging chains!!! Right behind him!!! His heart leaped out of his chest. There was someone...or something...only a few feet behind him, and it had a chain! He just knew it was the devil, coming to drag him to hell. He started to run, not daring to look back into the face of the devil.

Behind him, he heard a low moan.... Obviously, the devil was calling out to him. And worse yet, he heard the sound of hooves on the road as the devil ran after him. All the while, the sound of the jangling chain echoed in his ears. He ran faster than ever, but the devil was closing in. He heard the low, mournful moaning sounds only a few feet away, and that chain!!!



He crested the hill, thankful for the pull of gravity as he sped up going down the other side. In the distance, he saw the lights of his house, and someone was standing on the porch. It was his mother. She was screaming....NO....His mind reeled....She wasn't screaming. She was...laughing???? Yes! Standing on the porch steps, laughing at him as the devil got ever closer.

He ran into her arms, crying and begging for forgiveness that he misbehaved and disrespected her, begging her to pray to make the devil go away. But...she just laughed at him and at the poor old cow with the chain around its neck that had gotten lost...and followed a familiar face back to the barn.

**Arlo McDermott**

