

# LSU WRITING PROJECT

Summer Institute Anthology 2021

100% Virtual



## **Introduction to the Anthology**

The Annual LSU Writing Project Summer Institute, typically an intimate, personalized institute, was reconceptualized due to the safety and health concerns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Sassy C. Wheeler and Dr. Courtney Brown, this summer's co-directors and School of Education faculty, quickly pivoted, delivering the 2020 Invitational Summer Institute 100% online.

The Invitational Summer Institute's intent is to improve teaching of writing. The participants must first view themselves as writers, then teachers of writing, which ultimately, helps Louisiana students become accomplished writers and learners. Participants who complete all course requirements for the summer institute earn the badge of being a National Writing Project Teacher Consultant, signifying and recognizing their ability to deliver professional development in writing pedagogy, and earning endorsement from the LSU WP site.

As is the custom of the LSU WP, an anthology of writing submissions is compiled at the end of the institute as a presentation of the journey of the institute's participants. This year's family of writers forged forward through the pandemic to fully engage the writing process. What is represented here is truly a labor of love.

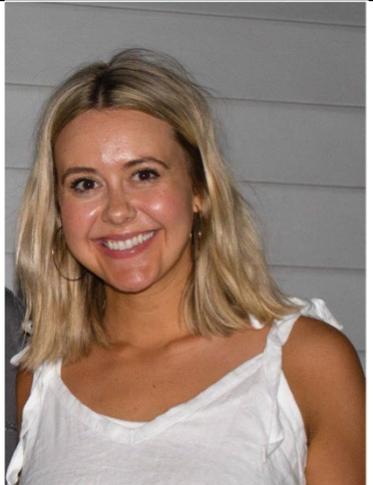
### **Executive Staff**

Margaret-Mary Sulentic Dowell, PhD., Director, LSU Writing Project,  
Professor of Literacy, Leadership, and Urban Education – School of Education  
College of Human Sciences and Education Louisiana State University

Sassy Wheeler, PhD., Co-Director, LSU Writing Project  
Assistant Professor of Professional Practice – School of Education  
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Courtney A. Brown, PhD., Co-Director, LSU Writing Project Invitational Summer Institute 2020  
Adjunct Professor – School of Education  
College of Human Sciences and Education Louisiana State University

## LSU WP 2020 Participants

Participant Photo	Participant Name
 A portrait of Alvera McMillan, a woman with long brown hair, smiling. She is wearing a black t-shirt with the letters 'I'M A' and a yellow smiley face visible.	<b>Alvera McMillan</b>
 A portrait of Jamie Broyles, a woman with long brown hair, smiling. She is wearing a pink top and a necklace with a yellow flower pendant.	<b>Jamie Broyles</b>
 A portrait of Melanie Moroni, a woman with blonde hair, smiling. She is wearing a white top.	<b>Melanie Moroni</b>

	Participant Name
 A portrait of a woman with long, dark, wavy hair, smiling. She is wearing a white top with a pink ruffled collar. The background is a soft-focus outdoor scene.	Kelly Kelly
 A portrait of a woman with long, dark hair, smiling. She is wearing a blue and white vertically striped button-down shirt. The background is a solid blue color.	Caroline Tolentio

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction to the Anthology	2
Participants' Photographs	3
Jamie Broyles	6
Kelly Kelly	8
Alvera McMillan	15
Melanie Moroni	18
Caroline Tolentino	23
Courtney Brown	26
Co-Director Biographies	29



## Trifecta

### **Jamie Broyles**

Yesterday I was  
Jamie Paulette  
A nice conversation piece and  
Source of jokes  
Hmmm....mom-dad,  
“Did you want a boy?”  
Yes, I think so  
James means “may God protect”  
Grandfather on both sides  
Uncles as well

But it’s a girl  
So we shall drop the es and add ie  
Paul means small-humble  
Why not add ette?  
For Paultette  
I am semi-small  
Hopefully humble

Today I am  
Mom  
Takes my breath away  
Stabs at my heart  
Two are here to call me mom  
One is not.  
But one day I will be with you  
For eternity  
For today I look for signs  
Mostly butterflies

# Name Poem

## Jamie Broyles

Mom to one girl  
17 and almost independent  
Spread your wings and make your mark  
But you will always be my little girl

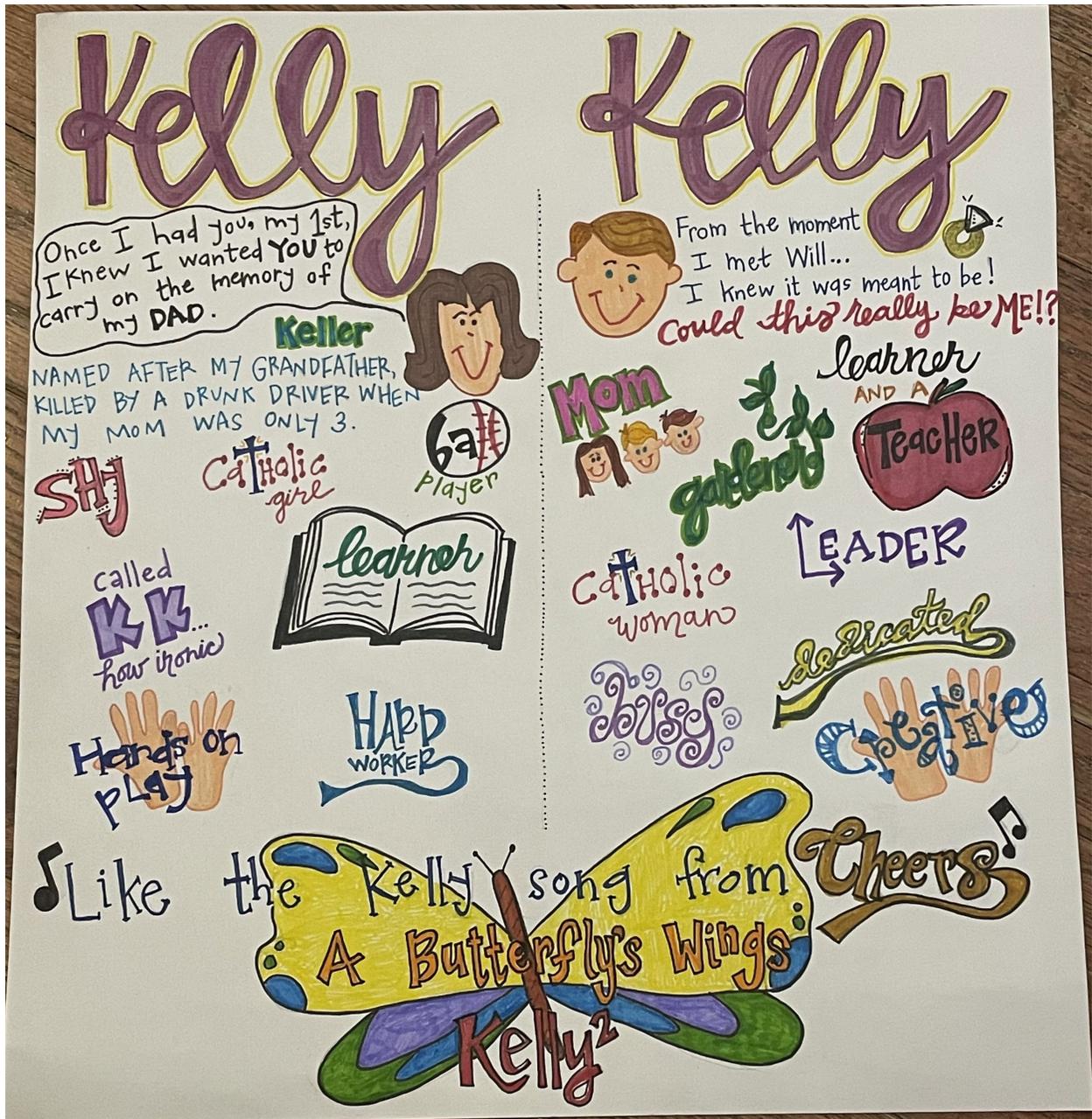
Mom to two boys  
One who is 14, stinky, messy, yet sweet  
And most importantly on earth with me  
It's your job to prepare to leave the nest  
My brain understands this  
But my heart cannot accept that  
You will leave me  
The only thing that matters is  
You are both here with me now  
And I have  
One who is waiting for me.

Today I am Mrs. Broyles to  
1,950 kids-well- mostly adults now  
Lover of words  
Obsessed with mastering the art of teaching  
Forming joyful confident beings who will  
Make this world more beautiful

Jamie Paulette  
Mom  
Mrs. Broyles  
Mom for eternity

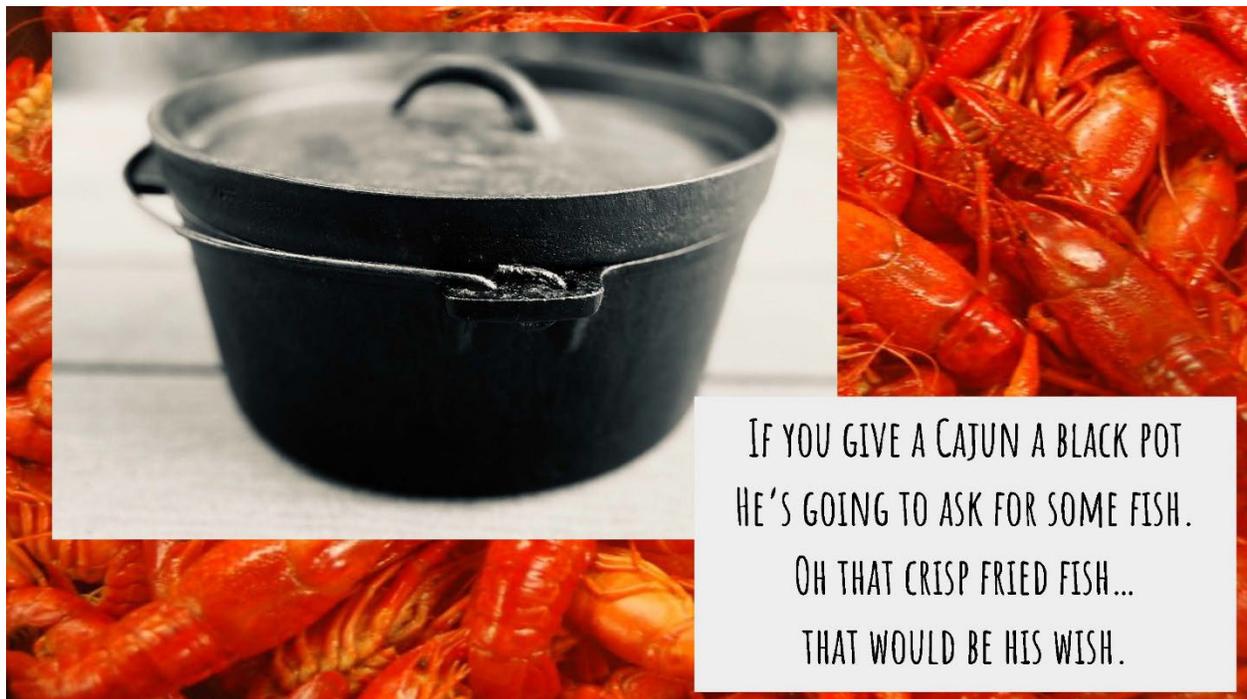
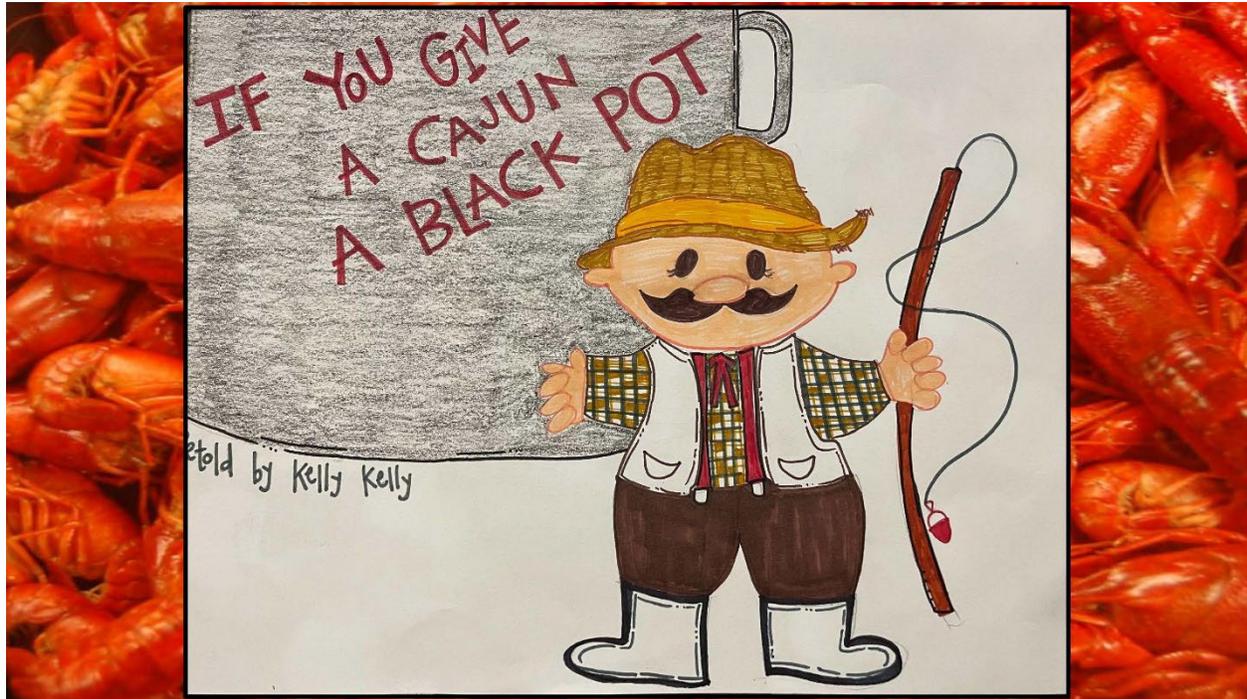
# Name Poem

Kelly Kelly



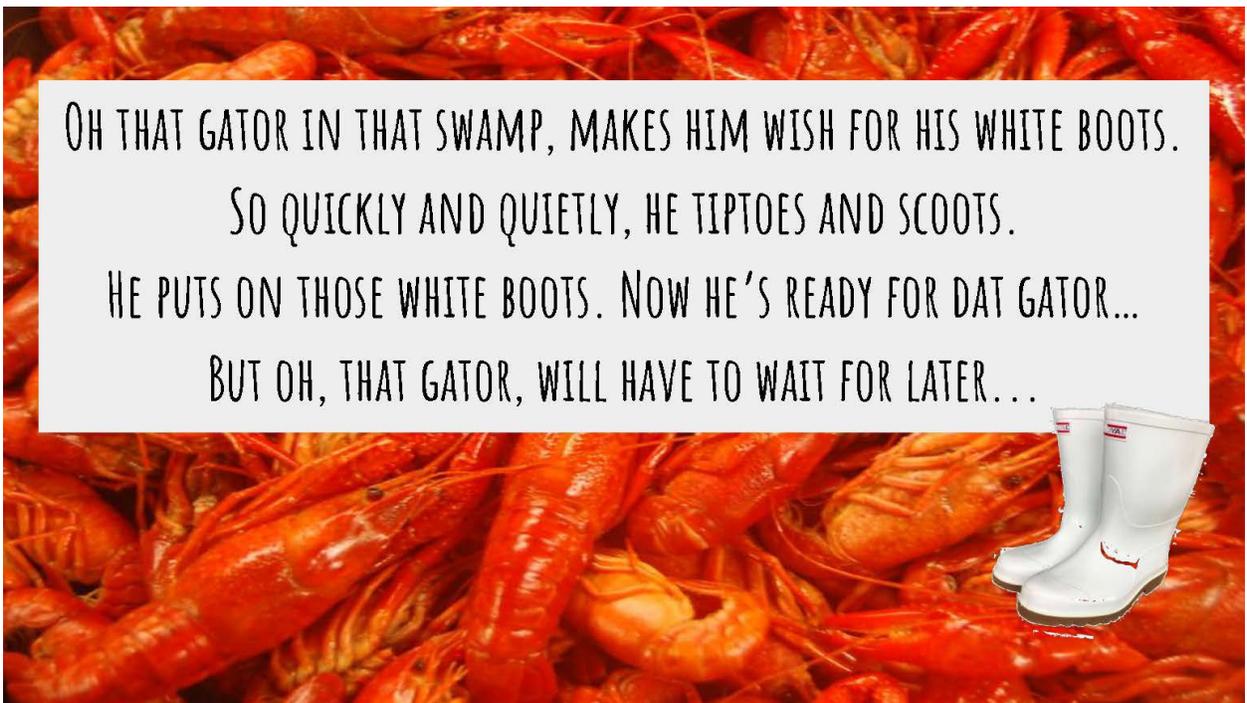
# If You Give a Cajun a Black Pot

Kelly Kelly





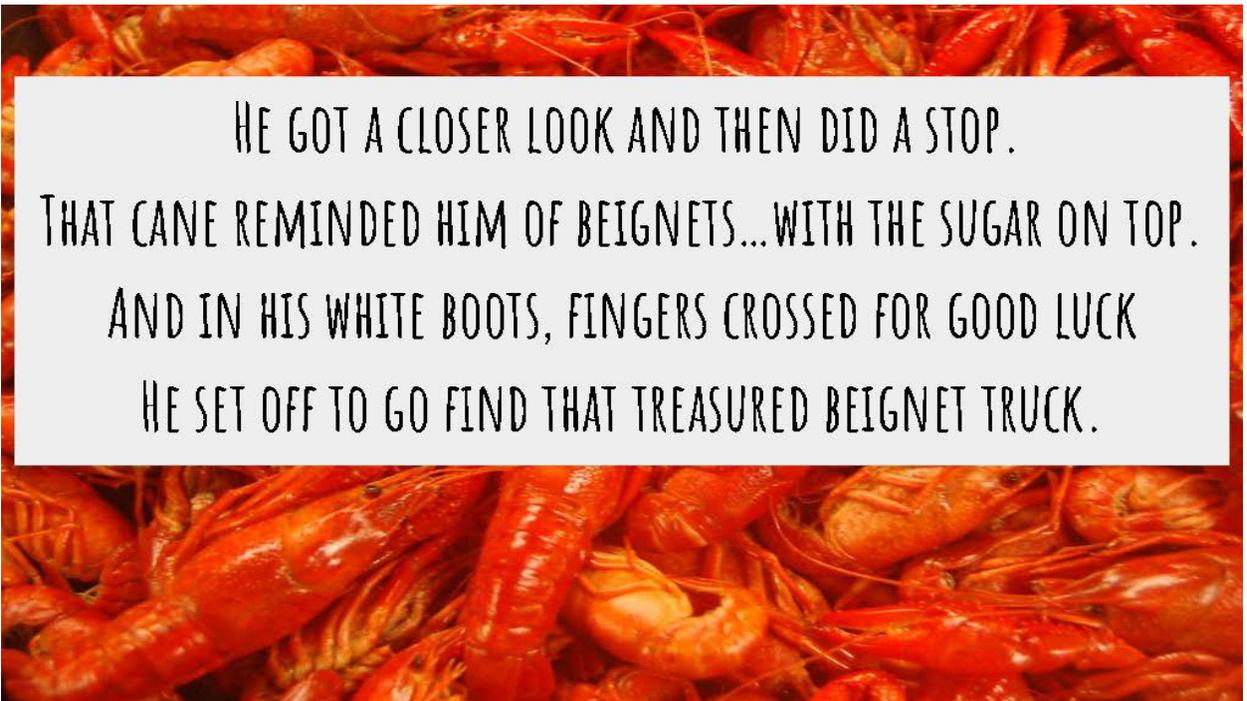
SO THAT CAJUN GRABS HIS FISHING POLE AND HEADS TO DAT POND.  
IT'S BRIGHT AND EARLY, JUST BEFORE DA DAWN.  
AS THAT CAJUN CATCHES HIS FISH TO BE FRIED...  
A GATOR, BASKING IN THE SUN... HE HAS SPIED.



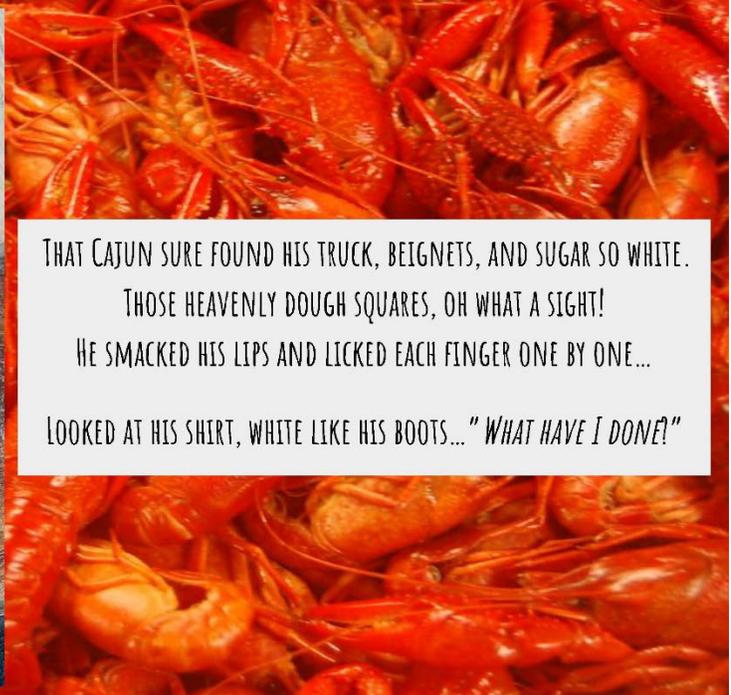
OH THAT GATOR IN THAT SWAMP, MAKES HIM WISH FOR HIS WHITE BOOTS.  
SO QUICKLY AND QUIETLY, HE TIPTOES AND SCOOTs.  
HE PUTS ON THOSE WHITE BOOTS. NOW HE'S READY FOR DAT GATOR...  
BUT OH, THAT GATOR, WILL HAVE TO WAIT FOR LATER...



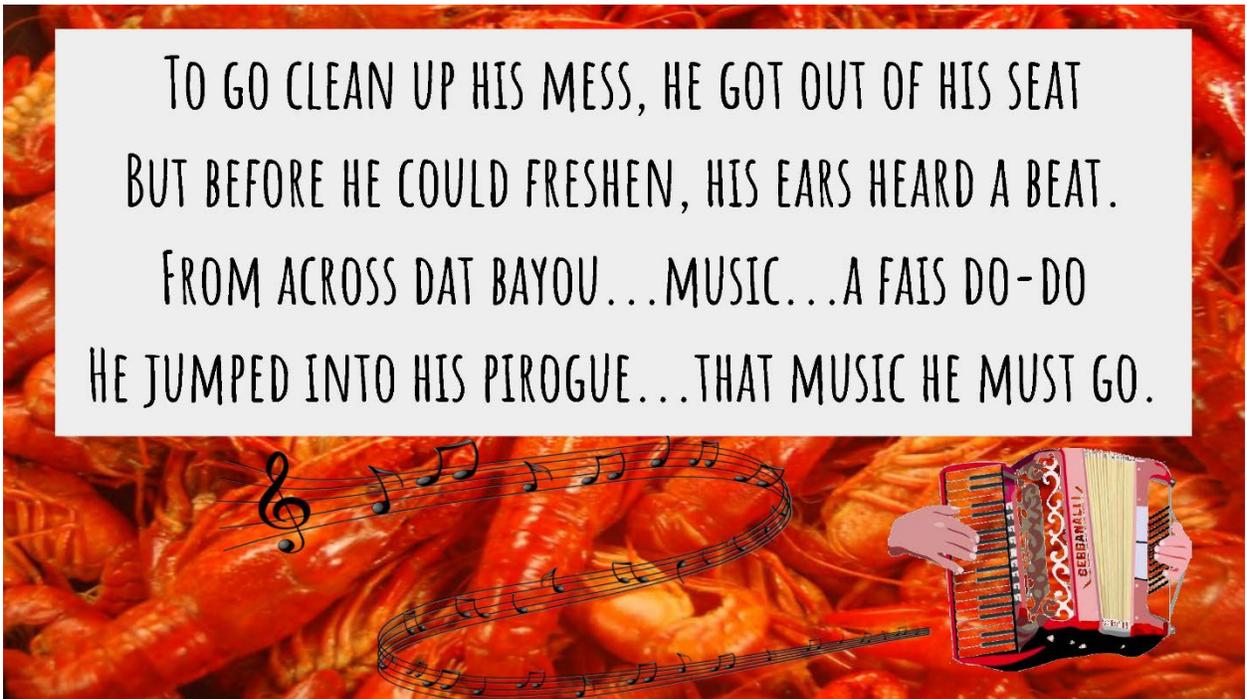
BECAUSE THAT CAJUN GOT DISTRACTED BY THOSE TALL GRASSES  
TO GET A BETTER LOOK, HE PULLED OUT HIS WIRE RIM GLASSES.  
INDEED THAT WAS NOT JUST ANY OLE' GRASSES OF GREEN  
THAT WAS THE SUGAR CANE...TALL, STALKY AND LEAN.



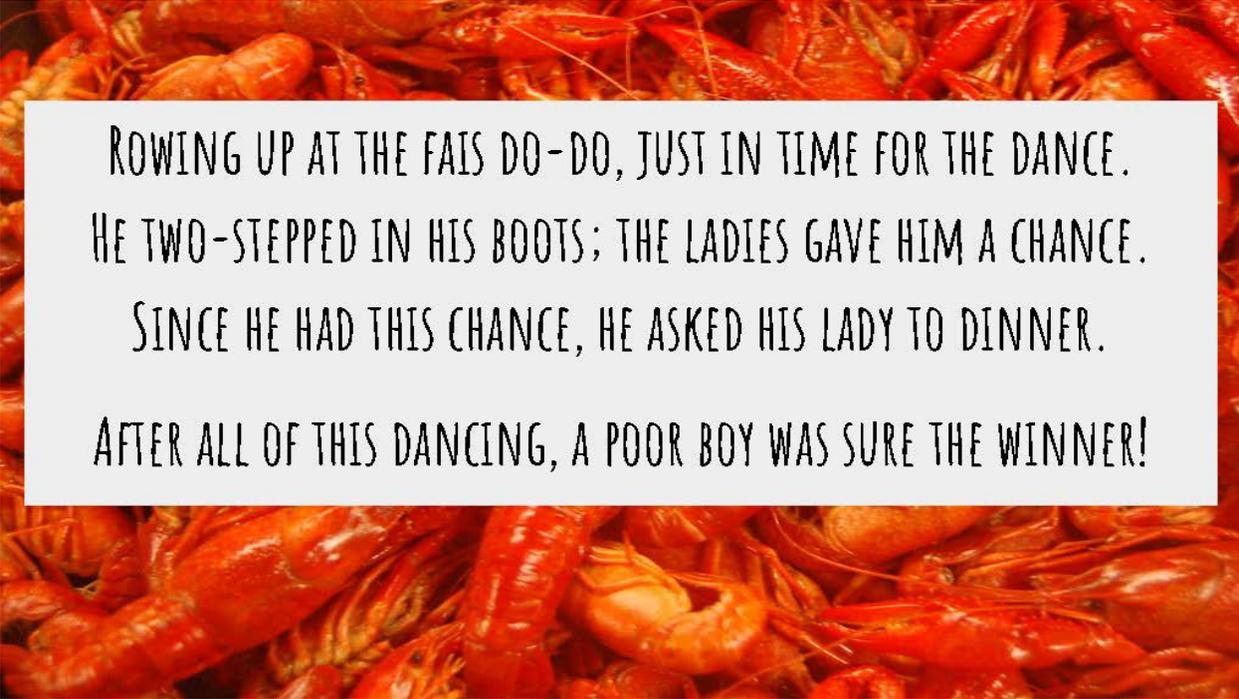
HE GOT A CLOSER LOOK AND THEN DID A STOP.  
THAT CANE REMINDED HIM OF BEIGNETS...WITH THE SUGAR ON TOP.  
AND IN HIS WHITE BOOTS, FINGERS CROSSED FOR GOOD LUCK  
HE SET OFF TO GO FIND THAT TREASURED BEIGNET TRUCK.



THAT CAJUN SURE FOUND HIS TRUCK, BEIGNETS, AND SUGAR SO WHITE.  
THOSE HEAVENLY DOUGH SQUARES, OH WHAT A SIGHT!  
HE SMACKED HIS LIPS AND LICKED EACH FINGER ONE BY ONE...  
LOOKED AT HIS SHIRT, WHITE LIKE HIS BOOTS... "WHAT HAVE I DONE!"



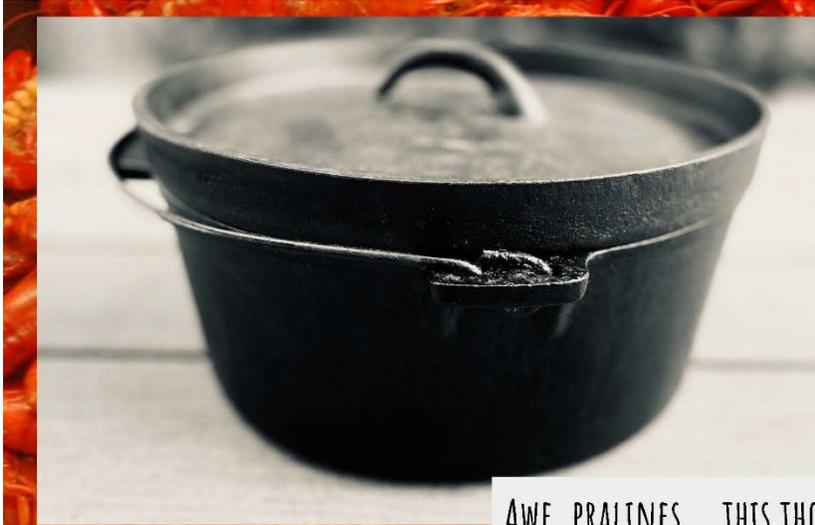
TO GO CLEAN UP HIS MESS, HE GOT OUT OF HIS SEAT  
BUT BEFORE HE COULD FRESHEN, HIS EARS HEARD A BEAT.  
FROM ACROSS DAT BAYOU...MUSIC...A FAIS DO-DO  
HE JUMPED INTO HIS PIROGUE...THAT MUSIC HE MUST GO.



ROWING UP AT THE FAIS DO-DO, JUST IN TIME FOR THE DANCE.  
HE TWO-STEPPED IN HIS BOOTS; THE LADIES GAVE HIM A CHANCE.  
SINCE HE HAD THIS CHANCE, HE ASKED HIS LADY TO DINNER.  
AFTER ALL OF THIS DANCING, A POOR BOY WAS SURE THE WINNER!



ONE GOT DA SHRIMP; ONE DA CRAWFISH  
THAT CRISPY FRENCH BREAD... NOT A CRUMB ON THE DISH.  
NOW THAT THEY ATE THEIR POOR BOY... MMMMM... JUST RIGHT.  
A LITTLE SOMETHING SWEET WOULD MAKE IT A NIGHT!



AWE, PRALINES... THIS THOUGHT PUT HIM ON THE SPOT.  
BUT REALLY ALL HE WOULD NEED... BROWN SUGAR, PECANS  
AND HIS CAJUN BLACK POT.



Laissez les bons temps rouler

# Who is Alvera Anne?

Ali McMillan

Al-who? Alvira- with the long i, Alvera- with the accent on the soft e,  
Alovera- with the long o --- Like the plant? Definitely not!  
I am Alvera Anne!

I used to cringe on the first day of school each year.  
I would sneak up to the teacher's desk before they called roll  
Or try to catch them in the hallway to give them my nick name.  
Most of the time it didn't work  
They weren't paying attention  
And it would happen ... "Al- um, Al-um, Al- how do you say your name?"  
The other kids would snicker... "What's your name?"

I have never met another Alvera.  
I never found my name on a mug or a license plate.  
I used to wonder why I wasn't named something "normal"

But, my mom and dad had other ideas  
Two girls and two boys, they named each of us after one of their parents.  
Then there was my baby sister, well she was going to be Mary or Joseph  
after the parents of baby Jesus, of course!  
And, if you didn't notice- My middle name- Anne- YES, that's right. It is for the mother of Jesus'  
mother!  
You are probably starting to see a theme.

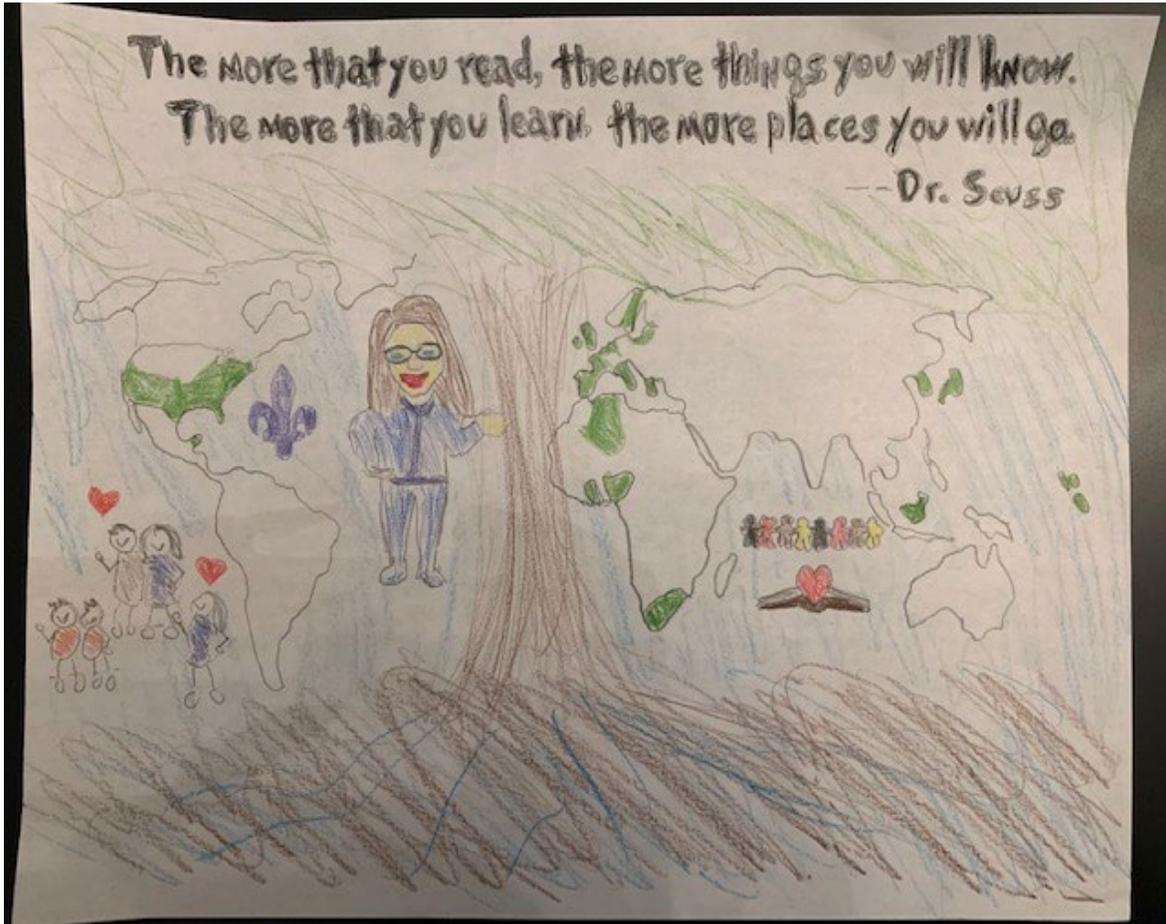
My mom chose to name me after her mother.  
Her mother that she looks up to.  
Her mother that she loves with all of her heart.  
Her mother that she misses every single second of every day,  
now that she has gone on to a better place.  
She passed peacefully at 93 and my mom still says she was gone too soon.

What an honor indeed  
If only I had been brave enough to see it!

Now, when people do a double take at my name,  
I am proud to tell them about my name sake  
I am honored to carry her name  
I am trying to be at least half the mother she was...

But, I am still kind of glad that she always went by Vera  
And I got to be Ali!

Ali McMillan



# "Meet Me at the Birdman"

A fictional story by Ali McMillan

This morning we are meeting at the Birdman. It is the cutest little place. A small shop in a small town. There are small tables and the walls are covered in beautiful nature scenes from the surrounding areas. The barista smiles and greets us as we walk towards the back to find a table. Why the back? Well, the view is better. You can see the front area with the customers who come to socialize, and you can see what happens in the back. Cooking, washing dishes, making sure everyone has what they need.

We order. One hazelnut latte. One chocolate milk. The front door opens, and two girls come in. They head straight to the cash register and rattle off an order they have probably made a dozen times, then find a seat to wait. Another man sits with his coffee, straining to see the print on his cell phone. There is a talkative young lady with her baby perched near the register. The longer I sit, the more I learn that I never wanted to know about the trip she is planning with her husband this summer. The Barista is nicer than I might have been. Nodding with engagement and providing just enough feedback to encourage her monologue to continue on. She seems so unphased when he has to break free from the conversation to help the girls, then picks right back up once they take a seat. I am happy she has a place to pass the time with her sweet baby girl. I am glad it isn't me on the receiving end of that conversation.

The door opens again. This time a couple walks in. They move slowly, surveying the scene. It is obvious that they are not from around here. They ask the waitress if they can sit anywhere. She nods. No, they are definitely not from here. Their body language is stiff and awkward as they move through the store. They pick the table in the far back corner. I cannot see them, but I can't help but to hear them. Oh my gosh. I really don't want to hear this conversation. I can feel the tension and forced smiles as they each order a coffee. One black and the other with almond milk. No wonder they don't seem like a good fit. She starts talking again, this time in short, hushed statements. He shifts from accommodating to becoming more defensive by the minute. I really want to leave. This is too awkward, but my latte is so good, and you can't hardly find anything on TV that is this entertaining. The staff behind the counter is hearing this too. They try to act busy, but I can tell they are all paying attention. Suddenly, the couple falls silent. There is a long pause, then she stands and heads for the side door. Fumbling for the right thing to do, he throws some money on the table as the server is approaching with the coffees and rushes after her. We all try to curb our desire to see how this ends. Looking up, I see everyone trying to look out of the window without being noticed.

"I think they are breaking up." I hear one of the servers say to the lady behind the counter.

"Sad," says another.

"Awe. They looked like such a cute couple," say the chatty Kathy by the register.

That just shows how much she knows. This girl is too much! I take the last sip of my latte and pay my bill. As I walk out, the couple is standing between two cars. You can tell that she has been crying. Her face is red and puffy. Her long hair draped across the side of her face. She is trying to be discrete. The chirp, chirp of my car alarm startles both of them and they look up. I hop into my car and start the engine. Time to get back to my real life.



## Sam

**Melanie Moroni**

I'm sitting here  
and I'm thinking of you.

The coffee reminds me of you.  
The place.  
The smell even.  
Just missing the scent of tobacco,  
The one that still lingered  
Even after you'd quit.

I've got my regular concoction  
The one I learned with you:

A little coffee  
A lot of milk  
A whole lot of sugar

I'd like to compare that last line to you,  
But it doesn't quite fit.  
I mean sure,  
you were sweet.  
But God,  
Were you funny.

I'm picturing you smiling  
Ear to ear  
Infectious  
Even in memory.

And now I'm smiling too  
Here  
In a coffee shop  
Among strangers.

But you're here too,  
Next to me.

In my mind you flicker  
Back and forth  
Between young and old.  
I wish I could have been with you then.  
Young.  
More time left.

Who were you?  
The same, if I had to guess  
Laughing and making jokes.  
Always laughing.  
The glint in your bright blue eyes  
When you'd gotten something over on someone.

Your face is so clear to me  
I can picture it.  
I wonder,  
Can you see me too?  
The smile on my face  
Still echoing yours  
Long after you've gone.



# Memory Garden

**Melanie Moroni**

It didn't seem like  
It was big  
At the time  
I forgot to take it in  
Everything  
just moves so fast  
You don't notice  
when it's the end.  
And suddenly,  
It's a memory.

We're at the counter laughing  
Nana, Montana, and Me  
Use our hands to knead the dough  
And seeing how much we can sneak

If I'd known it'd pass so quickly,  
I might've stopped to say,  
"This is the last time that we'll do this  
Let's make extra for today."  
But suddenly,  
It's a memory.

I'm hopping in the Mack truck  
He picks me up to take a ride  
It smells like corn and dust and leather  
Just the two of us  
Side by side

If I'd known it's pass so quickly,  
I might've stopped to say,  
"Dad I know you're tired, but you make me proud  
I see the work you do everyday"  
But suddenly,  
It's a memory.

I sit and watch her from the corner  
At work with her all the time  
Her clients light up when they see her

And I'm so proud that she's mine

If I'd known it'd pass so quickly,  
I might've stopped to say  
"My favorite days are spent here with you  
You're the best in every way"  
But suddenly,  
It's a memory.

We're piled up watching movies  
First time we're on our own  
Skipping class and staying out all night  
Feeling like we're grown

If I'd known it's pass so quickly,  
I might've stopped to say,  
"We won't always be together,  
Let's not sleep the days away"  
But suddenly,  
It's a memory.

There's a box in every corner  
And a mattress on the floor  
I'm complaining we'll never finish  
What'd we buy this damn house for?

If I'd known it'd pass so quickly,  
I might've stopped to say,  
"I'm thankful for this phase with you  
Every second of every day."  
But suddenly,  
It's a memory.

She runs to me from across the room  
Her smile lighting up my heart  
Her little arms are wrapped around my neck  
It's like we've never been apart

Now I know time passes quickly  
I've learned it many ways  
But the way she grows in the time between  
Reminds me to cherish all our days  
Before suddenly,  
It's a memory.



# Name Poem

**Caroline Tolentino**

I have been asked, since I was born in a foreign land,  
why such an American name, has a change been done?

So let me tell you a short story,

I promise it will be quick so do not worry.

My mom and dad were big fans  
of Christmas and all the holiday shenanigans.

They sure were happy and felt so lucky  
to have a real baby close to their Christmas tree.

I was born nine days before Christmas,  
the beginning of the series of dawn mass.

Nine glorious days to celebrate  
with children singing, jingling all the way.

All is done to commemorate  
the birth of our savior on Christmas day.



## Under One Sky

**Caroline Tolentino**

Have you ever wondered how the sky looks like on the other side of the world? Is it a deeper blue color? Do the white, lacy, puffy clouds line-up across the vast sky in a different way? Growing up, I often wondered about these. I have never visited any other country until I was an adult. My parents were believers of exploring your world before the outside. We have travelled a lot as a child, but none of them ever satisfied my wondering thoughts about the sky.

I was extremely enthusiastic when I finally boarded a plane to go to a foreign land. I was in my 20's but the excitement felt like I was 5 waiting for my very first carrousel ride. I remembered taking pictures and constantly looking out the window during my long, 23-hour trip. I was waiting for that time when I can visibly see the difference in the sky.

When the plane landed in California, as I stepped down from the plane, I was lucky not to miss any step or fall and stumble as I walked. My eyes were set on looking at the clean, wide, floor to ceiling glass walls of the popular LAX. As soon as I was in the busy airport hallway, I

walked to the closest window where I can see the sky. I looked up at the vast light blue sky that was filled with cotton-like, white, fluffy clouds like the ones I used to find on a hot summer day in my homeland. I glazed at the sky for a good bit of time. I watched the clouds as they rolled past the window which made me feel like things were turning like on a carousel ride. The experience made me realize that wherever we are, we are under one sky. That day ultimately answered my wondering thoughts about the sky but that did not stop me from adoring the great, massive, clear, blue sky.

# Reach for the Rain

**Dr. Brown**

Life was doing what it does you know. I totally am not surprised by the challenges that day to day experiences bring. I'm just glad that the things I've encountered recently have brought growth in my life much like that of my garden here in the front of the house.

After that cold snap back in late February, I'd thought I lost everything in the garden. I was getting ready to pull everything up until my best friend told me "noooooooo!!! Stop, just cover the roots with good soil. They'll come back." She was right. My elephant ears in particular started pushing through the soil and now they are multiplying so rapidly that I almost don't have enough room for them.

This is where things get interesting. Sunday morning, I came outside for a moment just to sip on my coffee and ran right into a downpour. I sat down to listen to the wind whipping through the wind chimes and to hear the rhythm of the rain as it fell upon the things around me. Each had a distinct sound and I enjoyed the solitude of the noise. The peace in that moment— while sipping on my morning's dark roast— was exceptional. As the sleep cleared my eyes and the rain continued to fall, I noticed something exceptional.

The elephant ears were standing at attention and curving themselves towards the rain. What a magnificent sight this was to behold! The harder the drops, the more the stems straightened and the more the leaves began to reach for the rain. In the examples of my elephant ears, I heard "reach for the rain. Reach for the rain."

The wind chimes playing the soundtrack to this moment with the pat of the rain thumping the leaves, I began to connect the natural inclination of the elephant ears to reach for what they needed. Without me coming outside with a water pot to refresh them, they knew how to dig deeply into the soil for support and nutrients, to lean towards the sun for light, and to reach for the rain.

I began to think through what reaching I needed to do. As for me, I usually run from the rain. I try to get indoors. I avoid driving in it because I am well aware —as one who has always lived in the south—of the destructive path of rain when hurricanes and floods come. Before my hair was natural, I'd run from the rain because I didn't want to frizz. Very rarely have I thought of rain in other contexts.

However, watching those elephant ears stretch and reach for the rain, I thought of all the things that rain, even when inconvenient, can bring. Rain facilitates growth. Rain softens hard soil. Rain even brings refreshing. So, instead of trying to avoid every rainy day, we should consider reaching for those drops. Reach for the growth. Allow the refreshing to come. Let the drops break up any hardness in your heart. And even when the rain is accompanied by stormy winds, grow through it.

# Lessons From My Fur Babies: Marley

**Dr. Brown**

I absolutely love Marley. If ever you wanted a mild mannered, sweetheart, teddy bear of a dog, Marley would be the one. Most days he enjoys the comfort of being in the same room with me, lying on the floor or on his combat blanket. When I'm in my home office, he finds a corner and rests there until he's interrupted by my movement, by Amazon, or by noises that he is compelled to investigate by first barging through the French doors.

He is the perfect dog.

I came to know Marley because of my godson who decided when he saw my CJ (a golden lab) that he too, wanted a "CJ." Marley was the closest that his parents could find. So, Marley quickly became an expected part of everything because my godson's every move was wrapped around his furry best friend.

Marley is a living, breathing bear of a dog with a heart of gold. He's trained my younger dogs in a way that humans never could've, and has special relationships with each of them. Watching him greet the other dogs everyday when my son takes them for walks is such a joy. Seeing him do any trick for bacon treats is bliss. Literally, Marley will do anything for a bacon treat.

He loves to play and to bring joy to others as long as he doesn't have to be outside. Marley is not very fond of the outdoors and will only stay in the backyard if his humans are there or if his best buddy Nala is there to play with. But even in those moments, there's a shelf life on the length of time that he'll comfortably spend out in the elements. Heat? Cold? The rain? Forget it.

Marley also struggles with being behind closed doors which makes his crate a problem at times. He is so concerned with being where his humans are that his vet diagnosed him with something called barrier aversion. He hates being separated from those he loves.

After a long day of bursting through doors, being a good best friend to everyone, and guarding his loved ones against the dangers of delivery trucks, Marley begins a score of rhythmic snoring, symphonic in proportions. Then he wakes up with every intention of starting his busy schedule all over again.

But there is one thing about Marley that gets him in big trouble. Yes, the perfect dog has an imperfection, a weakness I should say. Like kryptonite is to Superman, Marley's obedient strength is diminished by poultry. You heard me correctly. A piece of chicken left too close or some turkey left unattended is as good as gone do you hear me? This same sweet, loveable dog turns into a sneaky criminal who waits for just the right moment to creep in and indulge himself.

Recently, this good brother sniffed out some smoked turkey that I'd ordered from a local restaurant. I'd planned to really bless my taste buds with it.

Not thinking that my prized turkey was in danger, I walked away to get a workout in before dinner. I put my headset in and got to work #goals. In the middle of my workout, Amazon showed up and my super sleuth investigative detective dog Marley rushed to the door and alerted the delivery person that he was inside. He barked until the package was dropped off and then he returned to me for a sign of approval that he had done a good job protecting me. Crisis averted. Good job Marley! Both me and the package were safe.

Well, I got super involved in my workout and forgot about Marley. I didn't notice that he'd disappeared at all. As a matter of fact, Marley came and parked his hips near me and went to sleep. Little did I know that he was probably in a tryptophan, serotonin induced food coma!

Anyways, my calm work-out euphoria was interrupted by shrieks from the kitchen. It seems that the turkey bandit had eaten my delectable smoked treat. I approached Marley to discuss his actions and before I knew it, he was off to his crate. That's right! You heard me. The dog with barrier aversion put himself in his crate to avoid consequences!

When I sat down to think through what had happened and what I'd need to do to replace the turkey, a moment of inspiration hit me. I pondered what things in my life cause me to... never mind...I started identifying my kryptonite. What's my turkey? What makes me disobey every rule and indulge down to the last tasty drop with no regard for the consequences? What do I struggle to resist? What makes me wear myself out and then willingly run to bondages that I have an aversion to? How many times have I caged myself to avoid ... never mind.

Let me get up from this rocking chair and turn on the tea kettle. Whew! Would you like some? While I'm getting our tea started, I'd be curious to know, "what's your turkey?"

## **2020 Invitational Summer Institute Co-Director BIOGRAPHIES**

### **Dr. Sassy Wheeler**

Dr. Wheeler brings a wealth of experiences to the 2020 Invitational Summer Institute including her extensive background in special education, proficiency with differentiated instruction, knowledge and skill in expediting multicultural education, familiarity with inquiry-based learning, expertise with at-risk student populations, and involvement in both instructional and leadership coaching. Dr. Wheeler was Co-PI of a 2017 National Writing Project Invitational Leadership grant focused on supporting effective educator development. She was also a founding Board Member of Success Preparatory Academy in New Orleans.

### **Dr. Courtney Brown**

Dr. Brown earned her doctorate from the School of Education in 2018 and is the first returning Teacher Consultant to co-direct an Invitational Summer Institute. Her unique ability to integrate the theoretical concepts of writing with creative practical applications is a remarkable benefit to the 2020 Invitational Summer Institute. Brown brings to the Summer Institute many years of experience in teaching students from elementary through college as well as deep experience facilitating professional development for content area teachers in East Baton Rouge and Caddo Parishes. Her reach through the LSUWP further extends into the community through engagement with the West Baton Rouge Museum and the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities.