

## Canadian Boy Fights for the Rights of Children

Craig Kilburger is 13 years old. His home is in Ontario. Last year, Craig started a group called "Free the Children". The group wants to help end child labour. Craig says child labour is a serious problem. "In some countries, children work 12 or 14 hours a day in factories making things like carpets and glass. If the children try to leave the factory, they are often beaten. Sometimes they are killed".

Craig and his group are writing letters and raising money. They want Canada to stop importing goods made by children.



## Background Information

Many people believe in social causes. They try to help the poor, the sick and the environment to name a few. People volunteer their time, their money and their skills to help others. Do you have a cause that you believe in? Do you know someone who believes in a cause very strongly? Talk about this.

### Questions

1. How old is Craig?
2. What is the name of his group?
3. What is the group trying to do?
4. How do you think one 13 year old child can make a difference?
5. What is child labour?
6. How long are children made to work?
7. What happens to the children if they try to leave the factory?
8. What is a factory?
9. What are Craig and his group doing to stop child labour?
10. Do you think it will work? Why or why not?

**Other Activities:** Write a letter to the Editor of a newspaper about something you feel strongly about. Ideas might include: disability issues, healthcare, gun control, the environment, child poverty or anything else you can think of.

## Feeling

by Linda Doerksen

It's really hard to think people like to hurt other people. True I try to understand why they do hurt people. I know people don't do it on purpose, and maybe people who are doing the hurting don't stop and think what they are hurting until it's too late. I guess that's life. Some people are sincerely mean. You have to take the good with the hard feeling too. You hope it will pass and you can forget it, or maybe try to talk about whatever hurt you in the first place. I really hope people can work things out.



## Background Information

Everyone has been hurt by someone else. Talk about a time when you were hurt by someone. What happened? How did you feel? Have you ever hurt someone?

### Questions

1. What does Linda try to understand?
2. What don't people do on purpose?
3. What does the word purpose mean?
4. Use the word sincere in a sentence.
5. Do you think that some people are just mean?
6. Why do you think people have to take the "good with the hard feeling too"?
7. What's another word for pass as it's used in this story?
8. What does Linda say people can do when someone hurts them?
9. What does Linda hope?



## Are You Superstitious?

People in many countries have superstitions. Here are a few superstitions common in Canada.

1. It is unlucky to walk under a ladder.
2. A four-leaf clover will bring you good luck.
3. The number 13 is unlucky. Friday the thirteenth is an unlucky day.
4. If you break a mirror you will have seven years of bad luck.

## Background Information

Are you superstitious? Do you know anyone who is? Talk about the superstitions you know about and where you think they come from.



### Questions

1. What is a superstition?
2. Why do you think superstitions are common to different countries?
3. What is unlucky to do?
4. Use the phrase four-leaf clover in a sentence?
5. How do you know you have good luck?
6. Why do you think the number 13 is unlucky?
7. What do you have to do to get 7 years bad luck?

## Superstitions

### **China**

If you sneeze, it means someone is thinking of you.

### **Romania**

If a woman spills salt, she will have an argument with her husband.

### **Korea**

Combing your hair in the bedroom is bad luck.  
It is good luck to dream about a pig.

### **India**

If you sneeze when you walk through a doorway, you will have bad luck.

### **Canada**

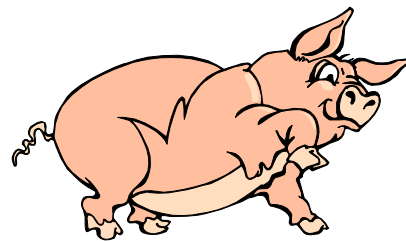
It is good luck to pick up a pin.  
If you kill a spider, it will rain.

## Background Information

Are you superstitious? Do you know anyone who is? Talk about the superstitions you know about and where you think they come from.

### Questions

1. In what country does a sneeze mean someone is thinking about you?
2. What will happen if a woman spills salt in Romania?
3. Use the word argument in a sentence.
4. Why do you think it is good luck to dream about a pig in Korea?
5. What happens if you sneeze when you walk through a doorway in India?
6. Why do you think it is good luck to pick up a pin?
7. Why do you think killing a spider brings rain?



## Superstitions

### Japan

1. If you write your name with a red pen, you will die young.
2. You will have many children if you eat herring roe (eggs) on New Year's Day.
3. In a group photo, it is unlucky to stand in the middle.



### Taiwan

1. The number four is unlucky because it sounds like the Chinese word "die".

### Canada

1. If your left palm is itchy, you will get money soon.
2. It is unlucky to open an umbrella inside your house.

### Brazil

1. If you step out of bed in the morning with your right foot, you will have good luck.



### Nicaragua

1. The number six is unlucky.

### Egypt

1. Shaking a key chain at night is bad luck. (You will wake dead people).

## Background Information

This story is about more superstitions. See Background Information for "Are You Superstitious" for more.

### Questions

1. Why do you think the Japanese think if you write your name with a red pen, you will die young?
2. Where do you want to stay away from during a group picture in Japan?
3. What is another word for photo?
4. Why is the number four unlucky in Taiwan?
5. What is a palm?
6. What is it unlucky to do to an umbrella in Canada?
7. Which foot should you step out of bed with in Brazil?
8. What is a Canadian saying that is similar to Brazil's superstition?
9. Why do you think shaking a key chain at night will wake up dead people?
10. What is another way to say key chain?



## Flu Remedies From Our Readers

In the October issue of The Westcoast Reader, we asked readers to write and tell us some of their remedies for a cold or the flu. Here are some remedies from our readers.

### **Hong Kong**

Try this remedy when you catch a cold. Cut up a small piece of fresh ginger. Boil the ginger with Coca Cola and a slice of lemon. Drink it hot.

### **Peru**

Make a cup of tea. Add lemon juice, sugar, and pisco (a kind of alcohol). Drink this hot before you go to bed. It is good for a cold or the flu.



### **Canada**

Here are some things you can do for a cold or the flu.

Drink fresh orange juice.

Eat homemade chicken soup.

Add garlic to your food.



### **Thailand**

Eat lots of green onions with all your meals if you have a cold or a cough.

### **Canada**

Gargle with salt water for a sore throat.

### **Singapore**

Slice a small piece of fresh ginger. Put the ginger in a pan with 2 to 3 cups of water. Bring to a boil. Turn down the heat and simmer for 10 to 20 minutes. Strain the liquid and drink hot.

## Background Information

Parents and grandparents often give advice when you have a cold or the flu. Talk about what home remedies your family uses. Do you know of any others? Talk about those too. What do you think of home remedies? Where did they come from? Do you think they work?

### Questions

1. What is a remedy?
2. What is the difference between a cold and the flu?
3. What do you do if you catch a cold in Hong Kong?
4. What temperature do you drink the drink at?
5. Why do you think many countries agree that you should drink some kind of hot drink?
6. Which home remedy do you think would work best? Why?
7. What is pisco?
8. What are the Canadian remedies in the story?
9. What kind of onions would you eat in Thailand?
10. What two countries use ginger in their remedies?

**Other Activities:** Do you know of any other home remedies? Write them down and also write who told you about them.



# Spare Tire

by Harry Butterfield.

The best way to make ends meet in this world is to always have a spare. In other words, look ahead. When you drive a car you wouldn't think of going anywhere without a spare tire. The same thing applies in life. When you are working and get your cheque, put so much away in the bank. I didn't do this because I thought I had it made with 32 years seniority. The owner told me I would be working there until I retired. So never leave anything to chance. That's what I would tell all the young people starting out today, to always have a spare tire because the whole world could come down on you. Then you wake up one morning and you're old, no job, no money, no education. No one wants you. Your pride is gone and you have to take scraps from the welfare. It would be a good idea, when you're young and have a job but no education, to go to night school because you'll never know when you will need it. A spare tire.



## Background Information

Wisdom is knowledge that comes with age and experience. Many people think they know the “formula for success”. Has anyone given you some advice about living your life? Did you use what you learned?

### Questions

1. What does Harry say is the same as saving money?
2. What is a spare?
3. What does Harry think you should do when you get your cheque?
4. Why didn't Harry do this?
5. What is seniority?
6. What do you think might have happened to Harry?
7. What can happen if you don't save for your future?
8. What is welfare?
9. At the end of the story, what does Harry say would be a good idea?



## Momma, You Were Wrong

by Linda Calahan

I put that excess baggage,  
Carried from girlhood into  
womanhood,

On a fast train out  
Of town,  
Last week.

After I discovered why  
All those guys,  
And those fresh faced young men  
Didn't want only sex from me.  
Why  
I made them want only sex from  
me.  
You said that's what they wanted.

Momma, why'd you fill my head  
With such nonsense?  
Momma why didn't you tell me  
I was pretty and gentle and kind.  
All those men saw it, Momma.  
All those baby faced boys.  
They saw my spirit and my soul,

But you,  
You said BEWARE!  
Men only want one thing  
I thought that was all I had  
To offer.  
MOMMA,  
you were  
wrong.



## Background Information

Have your parents given you information that you thought was true, but have since found it to be wrong? Parents sometimes tell their children things that may be untrue, to protect them from what the parent sees as dangerous. Talk about whether or not that is helpful for the child and what you might do instead.



## Questions

1. What is excess baggage?
2. Why did she think all the guys wanted sex from her?
3. Why would her mother tell her this?
4. Do you think the woman loves her mother? Why or why not?
5. What's another word for kind?
6. What does a baby faced boy look like?
7. Do you think people have souls? Why?
8. What is the one thing the mother thinks men want?
9. Do you think men only want one thing?

**Other Activities:** write a response to this poem from the mother's point of view. Include reasons why the mother told her daughter what she did, and why. It can be in the form of a poem or a letter.



## Garnish

by Paul Ho.

Before we send a dish out, we always garnish it first. As a final touch, a small twig of parsley does a great job. Actually garnishing a plate is an art by itself. It doesn't take you too much time or cause you too much trouble, yet it really makes a boring plate look attractive. People always eat with their eyes first. Some of them even say, "What a delicious dish"! by just looking at it. See, my little magic parsley works out so wonderful just like the sudden shower in April days.

Without a proper garnish, even life looks like a boring dish. Once in a while we really need something to boost up ourselves. Your date didn't show up? Fail the exam? Fighting with your family or lose in the game? Sometimes we really push our luck and yell around that life is getting tough. Take it easy, don't get mad. All these little misfortunes are just like magic parsley put on the boring dish; they can make our life more interesting, more challenging and more fruitful.

Since our dish of life was carefully prepared by invisible hands, in order to make it more attractive, a little bit of garnish is a must. Memories are exactly

like our tasty dessert and usually we don't use parsley to garnish them because the whole dinner course had almost come to an end. "What a wonderful dinner". We always say it from our hearts with thankfulness.

Do you agree, that kind of wonderful feeling is exactly like the merciful smile hanging on our granny's wrinkled face?

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### Background Information

Have you eaten in a restaurant and found a small sprig of green on your plate? That's a garnish. Do you know why restaurants put that green stuff on your plate? Talk about this. Why do you think it's there? Also talk about how people garnish (or add to) their lives. What makes life more meaningful. How is that connected to what is put on a plate of food? Or is it?

### Questions

1. What is parsley?
2. What is an art?
3. What does garnishing a plate do?
4. What do people eat with first?
5. What do you think eating with the eyes means?
6. What does Paul say all our misfortunes are?
7. What's another word for tough?
8. What does the word fruitful mean in this story?
9. What are memories exactly like?
10. What do you think the last paragraph means?



## What To Do In An Earthquake

Scientists say a big earthquake could hit British Columbia at any time. Do you know what to do in an earthquake?

### ***During an Earthquake***

If you are outside, get into an open area. Stay away from buildings, trees, and hydro lines. If you are inside, stand in a doorway or get under a heavy desk or table. If you are in a car, drive to the side of the road and stop.



### ***After an Earthquake***

Check everyone in the family for injuries. Check gas, water, and electrical lines. Do not strike matches or light fires. A gas line may be broken. Use your phone and your car only in an emergency.



### ***Be Prepared for an Earthquake***

Keep these emergency supplies in your home:

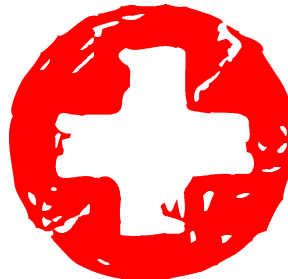
1. First aid kit.
2. Portable radio and extra batteries.
3. Flashlight with extra batteries.
4. Water in closed containers.
5. Canned or dry food.
6. Fire extinguisher.

## Background Information

What do you know about earthquakes? Talk with your tutor about earthquakes, or find out some information about them before reading this story. You can find information at the library, on TV or in an encyclopedia.

### *Questions*

1. What is an earthquake?
2. What do you do if you are outside during an earthquake?
3. What do you do if you are inside?
4. Why do you think you should stand in a doorway during an earthquake?
5. What's the first thing you should do after an earthquake?
6. Why shouldn't you strike a match or light a fire?
7. Why do you think you should only use your phone or car during an emergency?
8. What does a first aid kit have in it?
9. Why do you need extra batteries?
10. What do you think is the most important emergency supply you should have? Why?



## I Watch TV

by Rosa Ciszek

I'm one of those women who prefers to watch TV than to spend time chatting with my friends. I'm not saying that I'm not a social person. On the contrary I'm very friendly, but I choose to watch TV more than to chat.

There are quite a few things that bother me regarding some TV programs, or movies. Take soap operas for instance. They are basically about rich people with marriage problems, hate among families, cheating among couples, and violence among people. People tend to automatically do what they see on TV, so my opinion is why not reverse things around putting more emphasis on poor people, good marriages, no hate among family, no cheating among couples, and most importantly, no violence. If people would learn more to love and help each other this world would be a better place to live.

There is a program shown on TV every so often that breaks my heart, and also makes me angry. The program's name is: "Famine in the World".

Every time I watch it, I can't stop crying and feeling guilty for what I have, even though I don't have or never had very much myself. It's almost hard to believe that when some people have so much, others die day after day for not having the most important things like food, drink and clothing.

It breaks my heart to see children, as well as other people who are skin and bones, stuck in a corner and waiting to die, or waiting for some food. All this is so unfair, and I feel that if people would care more, this wouldn't happen. I only wish I had the power to rule the world. If so, I would make sure there would be no famine in the world, and I also would make sure that there would be equality among people and that there would be peace and love in the world.

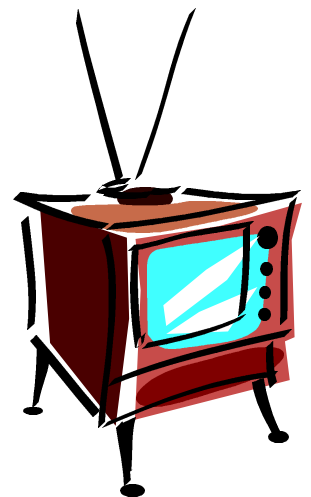
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### Background Information

People have many opinions about TV shows. Talk about what kind of shows you like and don't like. Why do you feel the way you do about these shows? Do you think TV has the power to make people do things like commit crimes or have sex?

#### Questions

1. Why doesn't Rosa like soap operas?
2. Do you think that people really do what they see on TV? Why or why not?
3. Would you watch a TV show about poor people, good marriages, no hate, no cheating and no violence?
4. What is the name of the program that makes Rosa angry?
5. What happens to her when she watches it?
6. What is famine?
7. Why does she feel this way?
8. What could the world do to stop world poverty and hunger?
9. What does equality mean?



**Dear Sir**  
by Ruth

Manager,  
C B C,  
2055 Kings Road,  
Vancouver, B C

Dear Sir:

I was watching the Journal's piece on Adult Literacy February 11, 1986. As an adult who has reading problems, I was not too impressed with the announcer because he made me feel like I had a disease. Because as an adult illiterate it was not all my fault. In the fifties schools just failed you or put you in a special class because that made them happy. Because we were out of the way we would not be any problem to them. One thing they forgot was we would grow up. And now we are unemployed or on welfare or part of the working class. I have been looking for some help for over twenty years. I have found help now, thanks to the TV news. But even then the broadcast almost made me miss it. On the news program they had a story on Adult Literacy programs in Surrey, B. C. The interviewer asked about the subject of literacy. There were two Adult Literacy teachers talking, and I was so interested in it. The newsman said, "Sorry I do not have time to put the phone number on TV. People can look it up in the phone book". How can you look it up in the phone book if you cannot read or spell? I was so mad. But at the end of the program they showed the phone number. I feel that the interviewer should tell people how to get in touch with the program.

I have been going to the Young Adult Literacy Program for two nights a week. I was told I have a grade three reading level. I thought I had grade eight. But they tested me first, so now I know where I stand. So now I'm reading books. I have never read a book before. I am also writing a lot. I have been very lucky in jobs. Right now I am making \$16 an hour, and nobody knows I cannot read or spell at my jobs because we are professionals at hiding it. I know I have for thirty years. I just hope the governments open their eyes so our kids don't have to go through what I did. In this day and age they should not have to. The government should hire back teachers before it's too late.

### Background Information

This letter gives the writer's opinion about a television show that was about adult literacy. Has a television program or something in the newspaper ever made you angry? Have you ever written a letter to someone about your anger? Talk about something in the news today that makes you angry. Also talk about adult literacy. Do you think enough is being done to help people learn to read and write?

### Questions

1. When was the show on TV?
2. What made Ruth angry?
3. What does it mean to be illiterate?
4. What did Ruth say the schools in the fifties did to students?
5. What did the schools forget?
6. What do you think Ruth felt about her time in school?
7. What is the opposite of unemployed?
8. What helped her find the help she needed?
9. What made her angry about the Surrey BC story?
10. What is Ruth's solution to literacy problems?



## Student Input

I am self conscious about people accepting me as a person, being in a wheelchair. I do not want their pity; I want their understanding and friendship. On the inside, I am just like everyone else, with all the same feelings and desires. I would like to be accepted into society as a normal human being.

### Geneva Carr.

We spent time being bored by looking at our cubicles. The teacher wanted us to be quiet as mice in the classroom. I felt angry that they put us in such a little space to walk around in. I always wanted to move to another classroom where there was sunlight.

### Greg Grant.

I don't understand why the school system kept passing me instead of helping me. People always think that people like me are stupid and dumb. My sister told me about three to four years ago that I wasn't. I was very surprised.

### Valerie Delaney

I was not so smart in Math, so my teacher, Miss McCray, used to hit me on the knuckles. Finally, she got tired of me and put me in grade two with Mrs. Waters.

### Bud Gaunt

The teacher would only explain the information once. The teacher wouldn't explain it a second time around. I didn't understand it the first time. He only thought about the persons who caught it the first time in

English class. In reading, he never stopped to ask if anyone understood what we were reading about.

### Greg Grant.

A doctor took me into his office and told me, "You will never be able to drive; I do not want to see you on the road". I was very upset and so was my mom. We talked to a driving instructor and he believed I could drive. So we went ahead with lessons. About two weeks later I got my licence, and I only got one wrong on my test.

### Bruce DeBruyn

I would always think about going on field trips to places to see the arts, films, music, plays and many more other things that we never, ever went to see.

## Background Information

The people in this story are talking about their experiences in school and in the community dealing with prejudice about their disabilities. Have you ever felt prejudice? What happened? What did you do about it?

### Questions

1. What does self conscious mean?
2. What did Geneva spend time doing?
3. Why do you think she was angry?
4. Why do you think there was no sunlight in her classroom?
5. What did the school system keep doing to Greg?
6. Why would Valerie's teacher hit her on the knuckles?
7. What is another word for explain?
8. Who did Greg go to for driving lessons?
9. What is a licence?
10. What would Bruce always think about?



## "My Left Foot"

reviewed by Richard Watson



No one can argue that the acting in the film is superb.

Right from the beginning you can see and painfully feel the tenseness, spasticity and rigidity of Brown's muscles and the intense concentration it requires for him to do the simplest things. An actor/director friend of mine asked me afterwards whether Lewis was really cerebral palsied. I regard it a major accomplishment to pull off both Brown's Irish and cerebral palsied accents! Lewis has played diverse roles in such movies as "Room With A View", "My Beautiful Launderette" and "Stars and Bars".

I guess I can see parallels between Brown's life and my own, though certainly I never experienced the poverty and the poor living conditions he knew as a child growing up in the slums of Dublin. And I'm sure I do not have the same incredibly happy ending to look forward to. But I do understand the frustration, disappointment and rage he suffered in that climactic restaurant scene in which the woman he loved announced her engagement to the man who arranged his first art exhibit. What could he do? Run? He had no choice but to face the situation. And I think it took guts. And if we can simplify his behaviour as abuse, then it certainly was eloquent. I thought one of the funniest scenes in the film, and perhaps the saddest, was when he took the tablecloth in his teeth as he was being pulled away from the table.

As for the gaps in the story, it appeared to me that Brown learned to read and write because he was always there when his parents helped his brothers and sisters with their homework everyday. As for inspiration, haven't you found that people with verbal communication difficulties turn to writing as a release. It's highly therapeutic; and then we get to call it art.

### Background Information

Books and movies are often based on true stories. Have you seen a movie that was based on a true story? Have you ever really identified with a character in a movie or book? Talk about any characters you know of that you think are like you, or have gone through some of the same things you've gone through.

### Questions

1. How does Richard know that the acting is good?
2. What is superb?
3. Is Lewis (the actor) really cerebral palsied?
4. What other movies has Lewis been in?
5. What is a role?
6. Why do you think there aren't many movies out there about people with disabilities?
7. Where did the character, Brown, grow up?
8. Why do you think Richard could understand the frustration, disappointment and rage that he saw the character suffer?
9. What is another word for guts?
10. How do you think a scene can be both funny and sad?





## Fat Cats

by Leslie Kish

Dear Editor:



I am writing in response to Mr. LJ Joy's letter of November 15<sup>th</sup>. He refers to union members as "fat cats" with large pay increases and juicy fringe benefits. I guess I am one of Mr. Joy's "fat cats", but I certainly am not in any position to "sit back and purr contentedly". I am a longshoreman, and I would like to tell you a little about my job and life.

In the morning I get up at 6 o'clock and arrive at the dispatch office at 6:45. I am dispatched to a job by 7:20, and sometimes I must drive 20 to 40 kilometers to get to the job site. Once there, I work from 8 a m to 5 p m with an hour for lunch and two ten minute coffee breaks. Most weeks I must go to the dispatch office seven mornings a week to ensure I get five days work.

Because I can never be sure of getting work five days in a row, my life is very chaotic. I cannot enjoy a normal family life because I can never plan ahead when I am unsure what days I will be working.

As a longshoreman, if I want to have a good living, I really have to hustle. When my day job finishes, instead of taking a chance on getting a job the next day, I will try to get on the graveyard shift which is dispatched as the next day's work. If I am "lucky", I will be at work again at 1 a m for another shift which finishes at 8 a m.

Then I will go home to sleep until 2 p m when I must go to the dispatch again and attempt to get another graveyard shift. If a longshoreman chooses to do this, his life becomes a revolving door of eating, sleeping, and working.

Hopefully, this will give Mr. Joy and those who support his point of view a better idea of what life is like for some of us "fat cats". I am not complaining about my job, I am only trying to point out that, like all jobs, mine too has its negative aspects.

Almost daily, I read something negative in the papers about this or that union or unions in general. Like any organization, there will be problems, but I am happy to be a union member. Too many people have forgotten or never learned just how much the unions have done for workers in this country, both union and non union workers.

### Background Information

This letter is about unions. Talk about what you know about unions. What do they do? Do you think unions are good or bad? Why? Also, talk about the work of a longshoreman. What do you think you would have to do to do this job?

### Questions

1. What is a "fat cat"?
2. What kind of letter did Leslie write?
3. What is a dispatch?
4. Why do you think the life of a longshoreman is hard?
5. Use the word chaotic in a sentence.
6. Why can't he enjoy a normal family life?
7. What is a "graveyard shift"?
8. Why do you think he works as hard as he does?
9. What's the opposite of negative?
10. What do you think the unions have done for working people?



## Shadows

by Judy MacFarlane.



What are they?  
Who are they?  
Do they belong to  
someone? I have  
seen many shadows.

On nice sunny days you can see your shadow while outside walking. Shadows in the lake showing the trees, and hills that surround the lake. You can make shadows on the wall, by using a lamp for light, and your hands to make the shadows look like animals. It is possible to make these shadows move by moving your fingers. But, what about the shadows that appear in your mind? Shadows that seem to hold a secret. Secrets of the past, some of these shadows are very thick like a storm cloud. These are the ones that stay in the mind. Causing a tidal wave in my body. Then there are the shadows that are very light and fluffy, but shaded. These ones seem to have a face from the past. But the faces won't focus. Are these shadows a part of me? Are they a part of my past? Will they ever identify themselves?

## Background Information

This story is about two kinds of shadows. The kind you see when the light hits something or someone and the kind that you might find inside yourself. Talk about both kinds of shadows. Which shadows are easier to describe?

### Questions

1. What can you see on a sunny day?
2. How do you make shadows on the wall?
3. What is a shadow?
4. Why do you think Judy likes shadows?
5. What is another word for fingers?
6. What kind of shadow do you think can appear in your mind?
7. What does Judy say inside shadows may look like?
8. What is a tidal wave?
9. What do you think Judy's light and fluffy shadows might be?
10. Do you think these inside shadows are part of Judy's past? Why?





## What if?

by Richard Watson

I have often thought about what I would say if a Jinn (genie) offered to grant me three wishes. Would one of those wishes be the obvious one?

"Cure my cerebral palsy". Well, so far it hasn't. My three wishes thus far



have been: Give me clearer speech, give me a better memory, and give me a lower household insurance premium! To some, that might sound pretty close to "Cure me", but it really isn't. It's something anybody might ask for.

I have just about everything I want in life, though admittedly my world is small. A long term relationship and a few kids might be nice, but what the hell. I have come to recognize that this missing piece is part of some cosmic lesson I'm supposed to be learning in this lifetime. And then there's that '57 two-door hard top-Pontiac.

I have thought about what my life would be like if science could make me 'able-bodied' tomorrow. I think it would be pretty traumatic! I'm too old to start all over again. And that's what I would have to do. If I were on GAIN for the Handicapped, I would lose it immediately. I'd have to get out and find a job. But I have no experience in the

competitive job market.

I would get evicted from my beautiful, big housing unit (with the mega-view of downtown and the mountains) which I helped design to be wheelchair accessible. I would have to get my driver's license and incur the expense of a car, gas, maintenance and insurance. I would actually have to learn the streets of Vancouver, Kamloops and Calgary, and how to get to any one of them. And, oh God, I'd have to tolerate my mother's backseat driving!

I would have to learn new social skills to fit into the 'able-bodied' crowd. I would have to develop a whole new sense of humour. I couldn't make fun of my cerebral palsy anymore, and I'd have to drop the gimp jokes. I would have to become an expert at something else, and find a way to be needed by another group of people.

My two attendants would lose four hours of employment a day, plunging them into financial distress.

Well, see my point? Guess I'll stay where I am. I grew up with cerebral palsy; I know nothing else. There is a certain pride and sense of brotherhood in being a member of the disabled community. It has its own culture, language and politics. Its members share an understanding of each other's predicament. Being cerebral palsied has given me a rare insight into the human conditions and into what visible minorities have to endure and overcome just to be alive. It has made me appreciate all minority groups, women, gay people, people with AIDS, alcoholics, people of different ethnic backgrounds, because I am one of all of them, I can no longer speak out if the world discriminates against me.



## Background Information

Talk about what you know about Jinns or Genies. What do they do? Where do they come from? Then talk about what you would ask a genie for. Do you think people would be surprised at your requests?



### Questions

1. What is a jinn or genie?
2. Why do you think Richard wouldn't ask for a cure for his cerebral palsy?
3. What is a premium?
4. What would he ask for?
5. What is the cosmic lesson that he's supposed to be learning?
6. Use the word traumatic in a sentence.
7. What five things does Richard say would change if he didn't have cerebral palsy?
8. What has having cerebral palsy given Richard?
9. Why do you think having CP has helped Richard appreciate other minority groups?
10. What is a minority group?

**Other Activities:** write about what your life would be like without a disability. Do you think it would be better or worse? Why? Write about what your disability has taught you about people.