

**2015 Greenfield Peace Writing Scholarship Honorable Mention
(Lauren Weber, Century High School)**

Preventing the 'Walking Shadow'

The pitiful Macbeth once said, "Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player/ that struts and frets his hour upon the stage/ and then is heard no more. It is a tale/ Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / signifying nothing" (5.5.24-28).

The world is full of Macbeths. Standing in line at the grocery store, sitting next to you in the airport, and driving in the car speeding past you. There are thousands of volatile, misunderstood people just "strutting and fretting their hour upon the stage" without direction or ambition.

I don't think life signifies nothing, but I do understand Macbeth. To feel hopeless, full of grief, and out of purpose – it is a human trait.

Purpose comes from passion, and without passion there is no purpose. The role of education is to find passion and purpose for all of us. Maybe if Macbeth had taken my Literature class, he would've read Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe and realized the importance of perspective. Or if Macbeth had sat beside me in European History, he would've found that many of the most powerful rulers ended with blood on the guillotine.

Maybe if Macbeth had the kind of education I've been privileged enough to receive, he would have found that politics was not the place for him. He could have discovered a love for the medical sciences, and pursued his obsession with blood for the rest of his long, peaceful existence.

Malala Yousafzai claims that education is the one solution to all of the world's problems. The biggest problems in the world are a lack of understanding, a lack of purpose, and a lack of passion. It was Dave Eggers who wrote, "Don't you think the vast majority of the chaos in the world is caused by a relatively small group of disappointed men?"

Without the cultural understanding that is gained through education, we lose perspective. We dwell in the bitter memories of the past and shove our frustration onto the undeserving world. Our mess of discrimination is not the world's fault – it is our own, for holding tight to stereotypes and prejudices.

Education is what can polish off all of the false pretenses and cultural judgment that has tarnished our world. It isn't about memorizing history or the reciting the periodic table, it's about learning how to think critically and logically – valuable skills in and out of the classroom.

After "our hour upon the stage," we leave behind a chapter of history. By allowing education to be taken from fifty-seven million children, we are letting the Macbeths of the world dictate what headlines our newspapers, plays on the news, and flashes on our computers. We are letting the stories of our years in this world be "told by an idiot."

In oppressing the freedom of expression and education, those who are devoured by their Macbeth-like tendencies find passion in turning life into a "walking shadow." It is a terrible, despicable passion, a passion that I believe would not exist if education were as accessible as oxygen.

But unfortunately, it isn't. Education, a prominent part of every child's life in the western world, is rare and risky for those in the east. Malala Yousafzai lived, but education isn't meant for one to survive through, it is meant to cause one to thrive.

We must use education to break the streak of "tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow," because if passion carves out our individual paths of purpose, the injustices of history will not be repeated again, and again, and again.