

FINALIST

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### **Looking Fear in the Eyes**

Courage is important, not because it destroys our fears, but because it utilizes them. Fear has the ability to trap us in ourselves. It can prevent us from proceeding to live life to its zenith. Fear is a disabling disease for which courage is the only cure. A term that goes hand in hand with courageous is the word cowardly. Cowardly people are those who let their fears eclipse everything else due to their lack of courage. But people are not born with or without courage; it is not a trait that can be inherited. Courage can be gained and lost anytime, and the causes of these effects lie within our own selves. The mistake that most make is in thinking that courage exterminates fear. Having courage isn't about being fearless; it's about having fear and facing it anyways.

Today, there is a lack of courage due to our current forums of communication. This is because of an absence of realism in everyday situations. We speak with each other through phones and social media, settle arguments through video games, and live our lives through characters on a screen. These new changes in the world have brought about artificial courageousness. Seemingly saying whatever they want and acting confident, people cower from behind a screen. The online bully is the epitome of bullying these days. Kids send hateful words out into the world for everyone to see from the safety of their home. The internet has created an optimum environment for cowards, who can now avenge their own pains by torturing others 24-7. These kids feel sublime in their cowardice because they have deceived themselves into thinking they are brave when, in reality, they are hiding behind a computer screen.

But we cannot hide from our fears, we must believe in ourselves and our power to overcome fear. The power lies in that belief. People often infer that a lion is a symbol of bravery, so many also assume that bravery is determined by whoever roars the loudest. One doesn't need to inform people of the courage they have if they are truly courageous. It should be implied. Courage is about being sure in oneself and it's about being secure in insecurity. An ironic quintessence of this is the well-known character the Cowardly Lion from "The Wizard of Oz," his name itself a paradox. When we first meet him, he attempts to attack Dorothy's dog Toto, to show how "peerless" and "brave" he is. Dorothy then tells him going after a little dog--who had done him no wrong--is terrible and that he is nothing but a coward. Though these were fictitious characters, situations such as those occur in everyday life.

Every day, cowards make themselves feel brave by coming after others. This is why the kid who fails a math quiz, picks on the kid who got an "A". The student who failed is afraid of being deemed "stupid" so he deflects the negativity toward the smarter kid to make himself feel better. Fear can lead us to hurt those around us: our friends, family, and, in this case, schoolmates. Since courage isn't

inimitable, we continue to live in the world where a false definition of bravery enables people to exist in false security.

Despite the frauds, there are still truly courageous people in the world. There are the men and women who fight for our country every day, so that others must not live in fear. There are the students who stand up against bullies, even if it makes them the next target. There is the man at the bank who tries to stop the gunman and is shot in the process. There is the politician who backs a bill that will help millions even if it means he loses favor. There is the gay football player who comes out to everyone and opens himself up to the hatred and cruelty of many. Each and every one of us is capable of being courageous. All people become scared, but we cannot let it stand in our way of living. Courage today is being able to coexist with fear, look it in the eye every day, and not let it get the best of us.