

First Place  
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She trembled in the February breeze, yellow coat bundled close to her small chin. Recess, she decided, was best suited for Spring. She had a corner, tucked away between the school and the rolling, snow covered playgrounds. If she ducked into in far enough, she felt as if no one could see her. That was how she and her rotating circle of bent-paged books liked it. Today shouts crescendoed into a cascade of double, triple dog dog dares just outside her nook. Dares to climb the swing set, dares to throw a snowball at the Young-5. She remembered a lesson her mother had taught her: integrity. "Doing the right thing because it's the right thing to do," even when no grown-up was watching. She spun out of the corner, leaving Harry Potter on the cold stones. She came face to face with a group of boys acting against the rules, no supervisor around. That was when Leadership realized she was around, and wasn't she a supervisor, too? She pointed her short, pencil-thin finger, demanding that they stop. And they did. Like any concept, and like any person, no one could define her. As with all concepts, she had to define herself through actions.

She sits confidently, not as an emperor, not as a war general, not as a CEO, but as herself: a girl attending high school. Of course, Leadership was once Confusion, once went by the name Fear. Like any concept, and like any person, no one could define her. As with all concepts, she had to define herself through actions.

Far away, in another school, he struggled to string the right words together to explain evolution. Across sat a boy two years younger, wide eyed and trembling under the weight of his failing classes. The tutor understood the lesson himself, but to guide another student through it was an entirely different skill set. He supposed he could create flashcards with the boy, fill his head with definitions like paper in a waste basket. He could throw away the match he held in his hands to ignite the boy's education. Instead he pulled out his own notes, pulled out his own understanding, and guided the student through Biology. They met crossroads, they struggled with questions; they struggled under his leadership together, throwing fists into the air when the boy looked up and stated "I get it." His name was Leadership, and like any concept, and like any person, no one could define him. As with all concepts, he had to define himself through actions.

Another school, another lunchroom, shouts soar above the heads of the students of the cafeteria. She staggers in place, unsure which direction to follow her black tray. A girl from her previous class sits across the room . . . Should she join the girl? Her body falters between movement and stagnation, swaying in the breeze of indecision. She wills her foot to direct the first step, then the body follows. The world blurs, the noises of raucous teenagers drowning into the white noise buzzing deep inside her ears. Her heart pumps, beating her body in a pulse of apprehension. And she sits. She sits next to the stranger and with her shares a meal. She has directed herself, thus modeling for how to help build a successful community. Her name is Leadership.

Leadership is not a trait with which one is born. Leadership does not wait in the office of leaders, face unknown to the people. Leadership is the person within all of us who speaks against the

comfortable, against the fear and apprehension, and with assuredness motivates others to follow the trail one level above the expected.