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*What makes this challenge unique is that you don't have to write a whole story. Instead, think of it as capturing a snapshot of a moment—the middle of a scene, perhaps—where the character's internal struggle is laid bare. There's no need for a clear start or end; it's all about immersing the reader in the character's mind and experiencing their thoughts and emotions firsthand.*

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### **YEAR 6 WINNER: Joanna Lim**

All the yelling and criticism for a meagre broken plate! That was enough! Grounding me for 6 months seemed like eternity for a tiny accident! Anger flooded through my veins, a whirlwind of thoughts taking over my mind. This wasn't fair! My parents were always blind to the truth, lying to themselves over and over again. Fury washed over me. Every word of criticism that escaped my parent's mouth felt like daggers to my heart. My every heartbeat sent a new wave of anger and desire to fight back. Yet, the fear of disapproval was an overwhelming sense of dread.

I wanted to stand up for myself but the disapproval of my parents was insufferable. My throat ached to scream as I felt my anger rising. My hands balled into fists, my brain spiralling uncontrollably. My jaw clenched so tightly that it felt as if any second my teeth would not be able to take the pressure and crumble in my mouth. I wanted to scream. They always had to argue about things like this....it was just a mere broken plate! It was just a simple slip when washing the dishes that I did not want to do in the first place!

My brain felt like it was being torn into two, ripped apart with the decision of fighting back or silently grinning and bearing it. If I chose to fight back, I could be sent to boarding school, kicked out of the house or worse! It would be horrifying! I felt myself losing control as the dread took its toll on me, fear slicing through me like knives. But if I did not act now and be able to be brave and stand up, I would regret it forever.

I had to say it now ... That was it and I had to do it. The words came out of my mouth in a sea of anger and fury. Shock rippled through me as I saw my parents sympathetic eyes. I felt my heartbeat calming down and my anger slowly fading away as I smiled, relieved.



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## **YEAR 5 WINNER: Hadi Kazmi**

### ***A Desperate Boy's Thoughts***

After much anticipation, only a few minutes remain until the winners for the writing competition are no longer concealed. I sit in the bustling school gymnasium, surrounded by hundreds of chattering students. To someone observing me, I look comfortable, normal, calm. But on the inside? On the inside, my mind races. It argues with itself. It goes from positive to negative, optimistic to pessimistic. What if I don't win, and they win instead? What will people think of me? Will life be the same? I look around at all the talented students also waiting, making me feel as if succeeding is impossible. Maybe there is one tiny mistake that causes me to suffer in the depths of loss and humiliation? Is there a capital letter or period that I missed? No, there couldn't possibly be, right? Maybe there is. What if?

I fiddle anxiously with my fingers until they're bruised and sore. At this point, I couldn't care less about my fingers, I only want to know the competition outcomes. Swarms of butterflies flutter in the pit of my stomach, I gnaw at my fingernails until there is nothing left to nibble on and I am drenched with greasy sweat. How is everyone so calm? Are they putting on a mask just like me? My pulse increases. 99, 105, 112. My hands feel unusually cold and my breath shortens. I even start rocking back and forth! I stare at the wall, thinking of cartoons and going nuts. I imagine what it would be like to win. The fame, the luxury and pleasure. Standing there, everyone focussed on me. Some envious, some impressed. My past teachers knowing that they taught all of this to me. That is a feeling I yearn for. That is why I put all this effort in, but what if that effort isn't enough? My face grimaces at these thoughts.

Am I going too hard on myself? Should I just give up and accept that what happens, happens? Or should I be confident and know that I will win? At this point, I am not in the state of mind to ask myself anything. I don't feel so good. Am I pale? How much more time until they say who it is? I am dying to know. Just tell us! I sway between hope and fear, anticipation and doubt. People might think of me as a disgrace if I do not win. Or worse, teachers could think that I am an average, untalented child. Oh, please be me! I'll do anything for the winner to be me. I'll beg on my knees to win. My fingers are crossed.

I hear 'The year five winner' This is it! Who won? 'Is'...



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## **YEAR 4 WINNER: Ainsley Clark**

### ***Grounded***

Darkness. Silence. I try to stand up but my despair weighs me down. Nights are long and sleepless. I ponder over every little detail. *What are my friends up to? Do my parents really think that this is fair?* My head spins. I feel restless. This restless feeling surges through my body, making me twitch uncomfortably. *Why me? Why me? Why me?* The space around me feels like a prison cell, but with a secret way outwards, waiting for me to discover it. This feeling keeps on feeding me hope and energy; conjuring a sort of courage that keeps me going.

I need to get up. Moving upwards in any way is even harder than it was three minutes ago. I try to move myself but my chest wrestles me down. *What is going on?* Feelings that are so unexplainable and uncomfortable flood in, folding onto me like a piece of tarp. I just want to ditch my life and start over!

When was the last time that I disposed of my clothing? What's the point anyway? The only thing that I stink of is perspiration and last week's socks. Again I ask: Why me! I'm starting to imagine idiotic things. I guess the silence is making me long for the days that I didn't have to worry as much. Everything starts to go a blur. It clears up as my congestion loosens up as well. Everything goes blurry once again. Hearing my sister outside laughing tenses up my joints; hoping, longing for the time that laughing was regular.