

“Discrimination is discrimination,  
even when people claim  
it’s ‘tradition.’”



# MASCOT

Charles Waters  
Traci Sorell



MASCOT





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 Charlesbridge

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*For Todd, Billeigh, Keri, Suzie, Akida,  
and Dane—C. W.*

*For Native youth, who deserve to attend school  
and enjoy sports as participants or fans  
without disrespect to their identity—T. S.*





*“That non-Native folks think they get  
to measure or decide what offends us  
is adding insult to injury.”*

—Suzan Shown Harjo

(Cheyenne/Hodulgee Muscogee),

author, poet, policy advocate,

president of the Morning Star Institute,

and lead plaintiff in the 1992 court case

*Harjo et al. v Pro-Football, Inc.*

regarding the name of the Washington, DC, football team



# Fall Semester

(September–December)



# HONORS ENGLISH- SEVENTH PERIOD

## CALLIE

Last class each day.

Grateful to see Ms. Williams.  
Much-needed melanin in a sea  
of white teachers.

She says,  
"Share your name,  
your favorite memory  
from school or somewhere else,  
and what you love to read."

"I'm Callie Crossland.

"My favorite memory  
is meeting Secretary Deb Haaland,  
the coolest auntie ever,  
this summer.

“Since I just moved to Rye,  
I’ve got no memories here  
to share yet.  
But I’ll say  
that’s not ‘art’  
on the cafeteria wall.

“The copper-toned,  
muscled,  
loincloth-clad,  
tomahawk-wielding caricature  
with *Rye Braves Rule*  
painted up top.  
Just awful.

“The best place  
in this school, though,  
is the library.

“Shelves full of new books—  
nonfiction, fiction,  
and the best part,  
an entire wall of graphic novels.  
Off the hook!”

(What I don’t say is  
there’s also no mascot “art” in there.)

# FRANKLIN

"I'm Franklin Keys.

"Best memory is going to my first Rye Braves football game way back in kindergarten. Ate too much cotton candy and got sick. We won the game though.

"Anyone who's a part of the Rye School District knows that sports, especially football, is in our blood.

"It's the backbone of our community.

"I can't wait to go to high school next year and actually see the football players walking in the hallway.

"They're the gladiators of our town.

"Don't know what I want to be when I grow up. Thought it would be a football player. But me and a ball? Not a good combo.

"I have a collection of Billionaire Boys Club sneakers. They're much cooler than wearing Jordans, in my opinion.

"While I don't enjoy reading much except the sports section, I can read almost any book, no matter how difficult, and explain it, for some reason. That's why I'm in this class, I guess."

## *Priya*

"Priya Bhatt here.

"I cover sports for the school newspaper. My favorite memories are from the people I meet and stories I write.

"Last year's new gym proposal and pushback from the residents on that side of campus about construction meant lots of great interviews.

"I love reading a variety of books,  
but my recent favorite is  
*Ahimsa*, by Supriya Kelkar.  
It reminded me  
of the people I come from and  
why I am who I am."

## *Sean*

"My name is Sean McEntire.  
Well, let me see, my favorite memory is  
winning the fourth-grade spelling bee.

"I love to fish.  
My grandpa was a genius at it.  
Miss him.  
Only kind of homework I've ever liked  
is reading.  
Settles my mind down,  
which otherwise moves  
in a million directions at once.  
Didn't expect to talk this much.  
I'll stop now."



# Tessa

"Hey everyone, I'm Tessa Ostergaard.

"I'm new to this school.

Been homeschooled for years.

Now I want to see if going to Rye High  
next year might be for me.

So here I am.

"A few things about me:

I've never eaten meat

or dairy products. . . . Ever.

I like to read—duh—that's one  
of the reasons why I'm here, right?

My first memory is hearing songs  
by Bob Dylan while sitting on my grandparents'  
laps when

I was two years old.

Then as I got older, I read Dylan's lyrics.

It was my first introduction to poetry.

"Favorite book is *Inside Out & Back Again*, by

Thanhà Lai.

Being new in school is so weird.

That's all I have to say, at least for now!"

## Luis

“What up, cipotes!  
Luis Flores is my name,  
and fútbol is my game.  
Don’t confuse fútbol with football.  
They may sound similar,  
but fútbol, or soccer  
(as you say here),  
is the best.

“My favorite memory?  
Scoring a goal during recess  
when I was in first grade.  
I was hooked and been playing ever since.

“Fútbol—for those of you who don’t know—  
is the greatest sport ever.  
It wouldn’t be played all over the world  
for so many years if it weren’t.

“Wasn’t a fan of reading until I found  
*Booked*, by Kwame Alexander.  
Opened up my mind to poetry.  
Now I’m a reading machine.  
I don’t quit.”



# THE PEP RALLY

## CALLIE

Tigers.

My school's mascot back home.

Fierce.

Nobody harassed.

Strong.

No offensive signs or chants.

Here it's a whole other world.

Lunchtime—

the high school pep squad

comes over

and sets up a table

for face painting.

Seriously?

The whooping from guys  
after they get lines painted  
across their face  
is bad enough,  
but then the cafeteria  
breaks out  
in a tomahawk-chop chant!

“Save it for the pep rally!”  
yells one of the lunch staff.

Instead of our last class that afternoon,  
we head to the high school gym a block away.

By the time  
I step foot inside,  
I know what’s coming,  
and my *Land Back* T-shirt  
won’t help.

Clammy palms rest on my jeans.  
My mouth dry as the desert,  
heat rising on my neck.

The music pulsates.  
My classmates sing.

I spring off the bleachers—  
pass the mascot head on the wall  
and make it to the restroom  
just in time  
to heave up  
all the hate,  
disrespect,  
fear,  
and disgust.

Nope, I'm not a tiger anymore.

## FRANKLIN

There's a face-painting station at lunch,  
so I get in line to get my face covered  
in yellow and red stripes.

Man, everyone is hyped up!  
There's so much smiling.  
I bet people haven't showed this much  
of their teeth since  
they last went to the dentist.

The gym is filled with streamers and balloons,  
and cheerleaders are dancing to "Clear Eyes  
Full Heart (Can't Lose),"  
by T. Powell.

Then they jump, twirl,  
flip around as the band starts  
playing our fight song.

“We are the mighty, mighty Braves!  
We battle from morning to night!  
Strength, pride, determination—  
all across our blessed nation!  
In a dark world we shine  
as beacons of light!  
Rye Braves—fight, fight, fight!”

Tonight’s game can’t come soon enough.

## **Luis**

Honestly—and I’ve said this forever—  
all this celebrating should be for fútbol.  
Pero I ride this wave of excitement todo el día,  
porque soy un Rye Brave  
and that’s how we do. ¿Verdad?  
How could anyone not enjoy this?  
¡Qué chivo!

## *Priya*

Racism.

This pep rally—  
filled with chants and gestures that  
show no honor for Native people—  
is just racism.

## *Tessa*

This is such a bummer.  
I've heard about it for years.  
Seeing it though?  
Wow.

My mouth hangs open for so long,  
some people mistake it  
for something positive.  
They lean in and say, "Super cool, right?  
Bet you didn't get this kind of school spirit  
at home."

If only they could read the thoughts  
in my head.  
This needs to stop.

Now.

*Sean*

I thought about getting my face painted today,  
but I'm a bit too shy for all that.

Maybe next time.

I wore my Rye Braves shirt instead.

The logo is so big it takes up most of the front.

I feel that's enough school spirit for me,  
at least until tonight.

Hope the high school finally wins district  
this year!

Go Braves!



## CALLIE

Grateful to be home.

The pep rally punched me  
hard.

“HEY-YAH!  
HEY-YAH!  
Braves might!”  
The pep squad chanted.

“HEY-YAH!  
HEY-YAH!  
Braves fight,  
fight,  
FIGHT!”

Then the cheerleaders ran in.

Pulsating music,  
tomahawk chopping,  
chanting,  
yelling,  
smothering me.

I don't want to imagine  
what they do at the game.

Grateful I'm babysitting  
the Tsoodle kids tonight.

## **Luis**

Franklin can hardly eat dinner  
before the big game.  
So I eat for both of us.  
Mrs. Keys loves me,  
because I inhale her cooking!  
"The human garbage disposal strikes again!"  
Franklin says.  
I laugh. "What can I say, chero?  
Your mom's cooking is the bomb!  
Ella cocina delicioso."

We play *Gears Tactics* on Xbox.  
I let him win, because I'm a nice guy.  
He's really not that good at it.  
Homie has so many video games.  
He has so much of everything.  
I'd have to mow lawns forever  
to get a tenth of what he has.  
He's never worked for anything.  
Still love him though—he's my dude,  
mi chero.

## *Sean*

Fired the heck up about the football game!  
I'm in the bathroom getting ready.  
Showering, brushing my teeth,  
putting on a fresh Braves shirt.

There's a knock on the door. It's Dad.  
"Have fun tonight," he says,  
slipping me some money.  
"Thanks, Dad," I say, trying not to drop  
my chin to the floor in shock.  
I don't know how he coughed up  
the extra cash, but I'm grateful.  
I walk over to my friend Connor's house,  
and his dad drops us off at the game.

Walking into the stadium,  
I see a sea of red and yellow.  
We're united by one thing:  
kicking the Larrimore Ravens' behinds!  
When our school song starts,  
I know I'm home.

## FRANKLIN

There's something about the beauty of fall.  
And high school football is in the air.

What a party. We get our faces painted again.  
The air smells like popcorn, hot dogs,  
and us getting knocked around  
by the Ravens in the first half.  
Better up our game before homecoming  
against the Bears in a few weeks!

Second half. Here come our Braves,  
charging forward, tying up the score.  
Game goes back and forth.  
One team gets the lead—the other team on the  
attack and answers back.

Less than two minutes left. Game's tied.  
Ravens are on our twenty-five-yard line.

Hand off to number thirty-four, who gets  
stuffed by our defensive tackle, fumbles.  
Our linebacker recovers, runs it all the way  
back to our ten-yard line! Six seconds left.  
J. J. Addison—all five feet, seven inches of him  
with a right foot lightly touched by the  
almighty—kicks the game-winning field goal  
as time expires.

We storm the field, hugging players.  
Even the high schoolers  
are giving us high fives.  
Trust me—that never happens.  
All because of our Braves!  
Through the cheers  
I hear Luis shout,  
“Maybe this American football ain’t so bad!”

I scream back, “You got that right!”

## *Priya*

How I wish I’d gotten  
that features assignment.

Instead I cover sports  
centered on objectifying a culture.

Not how I expected my last year  
on the middle-school newspaper to go.

My dad's a White House reporter.  
He says plenty of assignments  
gave him grief.

But he's grateful now.

"Politicians often pontificate and obfuscate.  
My job is to cut through all that.  
Uncover what's really going on  
and share it with others."

Hope I can do that too.



MONDAY

## CALLIE

Broke down on Saturday  
and told Mama and Daddy.

Mama was ready  
to head to school this morning.  
As a Native-rights lawyer,  
she doesn't put up with much.

Daddy is worried about me  
getting harassed by other kids.

I told them I can handle it.  
But really,  
can I?

Priya from English class  
sits next to me at lunch.  
Tells me she saw  
how uncomfortable  
I was at the pep rally  
and she hopes I'm okay now.  
"At least you weren't  
at the game!" she adds.  
From what she describes,  
I'm really glad I wasn't.

But I'd also be glad not to be  
at school right now.

## *Sean*

Here's what I love about our Braves:  
they bring people together  
who may not have  
anything else in common  
except the love of our sports teams.

On Monday I knuckle-tap Wilson Rhinebeck,  
a dude I only sort of know,  
whose parents are co-CEOs of some company.  
They all came to the game  
in a tricked-out Jaguar SUV!



We happened to sit next to them,  
and afterward they offered us a lift home.  
How did Connor and I score such a  
sweet ride?

Braves power, baby!

## Luis

On Monday at school, we're all still fired up.  
Before the bell rings to start final period,  
I overhear Franklin say, "That game went  
back and forth like they were playing with  
a hot potato."

I start laughing, then say,  
"Nuestras emociones went up and down  
like a battery-packed yo-yo."

Next thing you know, most of the class  
is trading similes.

We're definitely meant to be  
in honors English together,  
because if other kids heard us  
being this nerdy,  
we'd get jumped after school  
for real.

## FRANKLIN

Don't know what gets into me,  
since Ms. Williams doesn't put up with  
foolishness, but I start singing  
our fight song in class.

Luis and Sean get in on it, followed by most  
everybody else.

I feel like the director of one horribly off-key,  
though super enthusiastic, choir.

## Tessa

I saw pictures of the game online.  
It looked like the pep rally on steroids.

By the time I get to Ms. Williams's class,  
I decide I'm going to talk to Mom and Dad  
about being homeschooled again.  
I think I made a major mistake coming here.

Wait. What the hell?  
Franklin starts singing the fight song,  
and now most of our class is doing it!  
I look down and shake my head.

Incredible.

*Ms. Williams*

These boys.  
They want to be grown.

Hollerin' about football  
and singing the fight song.

Gotta get these young minds  
focused instead on  
Langston Hughes's  
"Theme for English B."

I read it aloud.  
Silence everywhere.  
I see minds turning.

Looking forward  
to what they craft  
for their own version  
to share in class tomorrow.



TUESDAY'S  
SEVENTH PERIOD

THEME FOR 7TH PERIOD  
HONORS ENGLISH  
BY CALLIE CROSSLAND

tsi tsalagi—

I'm a Cherokee Nation citizen.

Daughter of Alana Adair and John Crossland.

Born in Claremore, Oklahoma,

raised in North Tulsa and Tahlequah—

all within the Cherokee Nation reservation.

Before the forced removal of my ancestors,  
we lived on our Cherokee homelands  
south of here.

I also descend from African peoples  
brought to this continent against their will.  
Enslaved by whites and then by Cherokees,  
they too walked the Trail of Tears.

They are all within me.

Where I come from,  
Cherokee people are everywhere.  
But here, no one sees the Cherokee in me  
at all.

Doesn't seem like anyone knows  
there are Native people  
living, working, and breathing in Rye,  
in all these other cities,  
and in Washington, DC.

I know diplomats and  
people from around the globe live here.  
Everyone thinks I'm from some other country  
too, rather than being Indigenous to this land.

I babysit for a Kiowa-Shawnee family  
who live just east of us.  
Native people are spread out  
across the DC area.  
We are everywhere.

You see that made-up image painted  
on the cafeteria and other school walls,  
that stupid tomahawk-chop chant,  
and that cheap chicken-feather headdress,  
and you think that means me,  
means Native Nations.

None of that represents anything Indigenous.  
Just white supremacy.

This is my poem for 7th period honors English.

**THEME FOR 7TH PERIOD  
HONORS ENGLISH  
BY FRANKLIN KEYS**

I grew up in Rye;  
my parents work as defense contractors.  
I see the frustration on their faces  
when they try to teach me Black history,  
and I stay nose deep in *Sports Illustrated*  
instead.

Maybe I could read more about my people  
or read more in general.

I don't like being forced into anything.  
Let me find my path in my own time,  
at my own pace, in my own way, okay?

Don't get me wrong, I'm proud of who I am.  
I know the blessings I have in my life.  
Yet I feel like I have to block out those  
who say I'm an Oreo—Black on the outside,  
white on the inside—or that I talk like a white  
boy. What does that even mean?  
Those harsh words are arrows I have to dart and  
weave around so they don't hit,  
but sometimes they still strike the bull's-eye.  
My best friend's name is Luis.  
He's another brown-skinned boy like me.  
We are all one race anyway.  
All of us have bones, skin, eyes, ears,  
and our blood is red.  
I found out last year that  
my sixth great-grandparents  
got snatched out of Benin,  
a country in West Africa,  
and brought here in chains.  
I overheard my mom talking about it  
to my dad. Hers is one of the few families  
who can trace a direct line to their actual  
birthplace—the Bight of Benin.  
See? I know a little about my history,  
probably more than most people my age.  
I pay attention when I want to.

I'm proud to be Black,  
even if some people don't think I am.

This is my poem for 7th period honors English.

*Theme for 7th Period  
Honors English  
by Priya Bhatt*

I am thirteen years old.  
All my grandparents emigrated  
from Gujarat in India.  
My parents met in college,  
both born and raised here.  
My mom's an economist.  
My dad's a journalist  
who covers the White House.  
My older brother, Raj, and I were born in Rye.

"You speak English so well."  
"I don't hear an accent at all."  
"Where did you learn to speak so quickly?"  
These are things often said to me,  
for which I don't have polite answers.

I learned to speak English at home  
just like most of you.



But I also learned Gujarati.  
Unlike most US citizens, I'm bilingual,  
like well over half of people around the world.  
Yet I'm questioned about who I am.

Why must I always be made to feel different,  
when I'm not?  
Like I don't belong,  
when I do?

This is my poem for 7th period honors English.

## **Theme for 7th Period Honors English by Luis Flores**

(I know this poem needs to be in English,  
but my parents will always be mis papás.  
My grandma is mi abuela, and my uncles are  
mis tíos.)

Expectations. That's all I hear about.

Mis papás came to this country  
when I was three.  
I stayed in El Salvador  
con mi abuela y mis tíos.

Then mis papás brought me here  
in first grade.

For them, the United States equals opportunity.

Both started at the Marriott Marquis—  
as a dishwasher and housekeeper—  
then worked their way up to management.

They're outgoing—  
speaking more than one language helps.  
But at home we speak only Spanish.

Both work hard.  
They always tell me I'm so smart.  
They think I'd be a great doctor or lawyer.

Even though I want to make them proud,  
I hope I can do it another way.  
I'd rather be a teacher and coach.

Maybe next year in high school,  
I can get some courage and  
try out for the Rye High soccer team.  
I don't mind if I mostly ride the bench  
my first year.

I can stand next to the coach,  
watch and learn.

Teaching math and coaching soccer  
when I grow up  
is what feels right to me.

The pressure from my parents to succeed  
weighs me down sometimes.  
Feels like I'm carrying  
their dreams on my shoulders.

This is my poem for 7th period honors English.

Theme for 7th Period  
Honors English  
by Tessa Ostergaard

My late grandparents and their parents  
marched with Dr. King in Selma  
and attended the 1963 March on Washington.  
My mom and dad met  
and fell in love at first sight  
at a pro-affirmative-action rally  
while attending college.  
The greatest song I've ever heard is  
"I Can't Breathe," by H.E.R.

BIPOC artists—especially women—don't get enough credit for reflecting humanity back at itself.

I'm privileged, ponytailed, and super sad about the way the world is going.

I know for a fact our planet has a fever that may lead to permanent destruction because of people's disregard for climate change.

I know for a fact that because my skin is white it's my responsibility to let others know that racism in any and all forms is wrong.

I know for a fact my ancestors and other white people's ancestors started this mess, and it's now up to us to clean it up—ASAP.

This is my mission in life.

Someone said a pessimist is an optimist who's had their heart broken too many times.

I'm one heartbreak away.

This is my poem for 7th period honors English.

Theme for 7th Period  
Honors English  
by Sean McEntire

To answer a question I get asked all the time,  
I like having a buzz cut because it's one less  
thing to worry about in the morning.

I grew up in Rye.  
My family has been here for six generations.  
I like wearing plaid shirts and jeans.  
I like going to church.  
I take care of my two brothers and one sister,  
plus my grandmother who's getting older and  
needs more and more help.

It's not perfect, but nothing in life is,  
unfortunately.

Oh, and I believe in standing up  
for the American flag,  
and I love my Lord and savior, Jesus Christ.  
Not sorry if that offends you.  
Also, before anyone calls me racist,  
my godfather, Khalid—a soldier who saved  
my father's life in Iraq—is an unapologetically  
proud Muslim, and I love him like he's  
my own kin.

So if anyone has a problem with what I write,  
that's your issue, not mine.

This is my poem for 7th period honors English.

# Information & Resources

# Words to Know

## *Cherokee*

The Cherokee written language uses symbols to represent the syllables that construct words, different from using letters to make words in English. These symbols, created by a Cherokee man named Sequoyah in the early 1800s, are shown below after the English pronunciation. This glossary contains vocabulary used by Cherokee Nation citizens unless otherwise noted.

**ageyutsa** (ah-gay-you-jah ᐃᑦᑦᑦᑦ): daughter

**elisi** (eh-lee-see ᑦᑦᑦᑦ): grandmother

**galiheliga** (gah-lee-hay-lee-gah ᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦ): I am grateful

**osda** (ohs-dah ᐃᐃᑦᑦ): great

**sgi** (ssk-ghee ᐃᑦᑦᑦ): thank you (specific to Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in North Carolina)

**tsi tsalagi** (gee jah-lah-ghee ᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦ): I am Cherokee

**unelanvhi** (oo-nay-lah-nuh-ee ᐃᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦ): the one who provides all; Creator

**yonegs** (transliterated slang of yo-nay-gah ᑦᑦᑦᑦ): white people



# Words to Know

## *Salvadoran Spanish*

Spanish is a language spoken in countries across the large American continent as well as in Europe and the Caribbean. As such, vocabulary and pronunciations vary based on location. The Spanish words below are used in El Salvador. For other general Spanish words in the book, you can use the internet to help translate if you want to learn them.

**babosada** (bah-bos-ah-dah): dumb, idiotic, folly

**chele** (che-lay): white person

**chero** (chair-oh): super best friend

**chiche** (chee-chay): easy

**chivo** (chee-voh): amazing

**chuco** (chew-coh): dirty, filthy

**cipote/a** (see-poh-tay): child, youth

**dundo** (dun-doh): dumb

**papás** (pah-PAHS): parents

**pisto** (pees-toh): money

**púchica** (POO-chee-kah): damn

**pupusas** (poo-poo-sahs): small, round corncakes filled with cheese and meat or beans

# About Mascots *and Taking Action*

The use of Native peoples as mascots goes back to when European immigrants sought to separate themselves from their mother countries and form their own identity on this continent during colonial times. The Boston Tea Party, when colonists dressed as Native people before sneaking onto a ship to dump tea in the harbor, is a well-known example of white people using what they perceived as Native dress, culture, and habits to further their own agenda. This disrespectful practice continues and has been adopted by professional sports teams, universities, schools, and the Boy Scouts of America in present day. To learn more about the background, studies, and how to take action, start with the resources below.

For over six decades, the National Congress of American Indians, the oldest Native advocacy organization in the country, has campaigned against the use of stereotypical imagery of Native people in media and professional sports. In 2020, it expanded its focus to include changing mascots at the K–12 education level and now tracks state legislation nationwide to change mascots in schools. You can request help to change a mascot on their site as well as find links to key resources.

**[www.ncai.org/proudtobe](http://www.ncai.org/proudtobe)**

The No More Native Mascots site founded by Amanda Blackhorse (Diné) provides a step-by-step plan for taking action for a mascot change, from crafting a letter and creating an online petition to getting on your school board agenda and connecting with national Native organizations.  
**[www.nomorenativemascots.org/take-action](http://www.nomorenativemascots.org/take-action)**

## About Langston Hughes (1902–1967)

A key literary figure in the Harlem Renaissance, Langston Hughes wrote about everyday Black life in poems, novels, and a variety of other formats.  
**[www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/langston-hughes](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/langston-hughes)**

You can read Hughes’s “Theme for English B” here:  
**[www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47880/theme-for-english-b](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47880/theme-for-english-b)**

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days

*What happens  
when a mascot  
is seen as racist,  
but not by  
everyone?*

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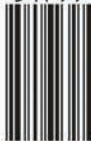
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