



Sunday at Ground Zero

by Alex Hornbeck, Towson High School

There is a silence here, unlike anywhere else in the city. Somber pedestrians walk by, silent. Pigeons fly overhead, silent. The cars pass on the street; they are silent, even the taxicabs. It seems as if a soft blanket has fallen over the area known as Ground Zero, smothering the sound. I whisper something to my mother. Everyone whispers here.

I notice the windows and awnings, black – black with soot and dust from that September morning. No one has bothered to wash them. An acrid smell still lingers. It burns the nose slightly with the scent of destruction.

I am outside a church, and an empty space is in the sky behind it. It doesn't belong. Emptiness shouldn't be in the New York jungle of buildings. The emptiness creates an uneasiness, and everyone feels it. I walk on and reach a ramp, which I start up. I travel toward the emptiness. A wall of wood has been erected, a temporary

structure that has lasted for months. A layer of signatures is slathered upon the wall, and I take my pen and sign it between a woman from Illinois and a family from Britain.

I reach the site, the epitome of silence. It is surreal. Beyond the trailers, a pit appears, ugly, with bent wire and pipes that come out of the ground and stop, pipes that never reach their destination, for it is gone. I am at a national disaster site. My mind doesn't accept the truth, and I can't believe it. Now that I am actually here, it becomes all the more unbelievable. And now I am walking away, and it seems like it never happened, like I never went.

But I know that I did, and that it happened, and only now, once I am away, can I realize the horror of it all. Only now, can I cry.