

**QUESTION:** Discuss some issue of personal, local, national, or international concern and its importance to you.  
(500 words)

Hanging upside down in the dumpster, I wonder again what I've gotten myself into. My desperate arms clutch at the old phone books, ACT prep pamphlets, and weeks of junk mail as I valiantly defy my need for oxygen. After an eternity, Tariq hauls me out, scraping my stomach against the inch-thick gunk on the walls. I land on my feet and gasp for breath.

"Did you get them?" he asks hopefully.

I glance at my armload of recycling. "Some," I tell him.

We plod across the parking lot to the infinitely cleaner, empty receptacle marked, "RECYCLING," and thrust our paper through the opening with a little more aggression than necessary. A rogue pen catalogue flutters to the ground as the two of us retrace our steps back to the trash and I begin to lever myself in again. My math teacher stares at us as she drives away.

I want to yell an explanation after her: "All of the guidance department's summer recycling! Someone put it in the dumpster!" But alas, the fumes of rotting cafeteria food and spilled soda have engulfed me again, and I can only choke in defiance.

Running "350," the school's environmental club, is dirty business. Just yesterday, I groveled before half a dozen restaurant owners, attempting to procure donations for the club's upcoming environmental awareness event. The day before that, I examined the intricacies of composting, earthworms and all.

## “Banana”

By Nathan W. Hill, who attended a small private school in Portland, Oregon.

I was hungry and the sun impaled me on its searing ray. I wore a wool coat, black with red cotton lining. It had served me well in the misty foothills of the Himalayas, where His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, gave his blessing. The coat had recently returned from a long absence. I wore it despite the heat.

The humid weather and the final wilting blossoms of late September conspired to fill my head with snot. The mighty hammer, Mjollnir, pounded his lament between my ears.

I walked down to The Barn, our cafeteria, but it wouldn't open again until three. Then, I remembered Clint, my junior year English teacher, and walked back to the Upper School. Clint always kept a few overripe bananas in the fruit bowl with the past due vocab tests. Laura, who shared the office, complained of the fetid smell of rotten fruit and that Clint made grunting noises as he worked hunched in his bow tie, over a mound of disheveled papers. On occasion, he stretched his arm towards Laura's desk and asked her, with a bruised banana dangling from his hand, "Would you like a banana, Laura?" With a crinkled nose, Laura always politely replied, "No, thank you, Clint," and watched in disgust as he wolfed it down.

The heavy wooden door to Clint's office stood propped open because of the heat. Inside, a small electric fan sat on top of the computer; it made an obnoxious noise between the sound of buzzing bees and chomping teeth. A tiny strip of paper darted before the spinning blades. Clint looked up from his work and asked with nasal condescension, "Can I help you, Nate?"

I responded phlegmatically, "May I have a banana?" the sweat dripping off the end of my nose.

With a mixture of pity and reproach, he raised his arm to point at the wooden bowl on top of the gray file cabinet. I lifted three vocab tests away.

I grabbed it, soft and brown. Its sweet aroma distracted me from the throbbing of my head. I held the banana in my right hand, and moved my left hand to its stem, ready to divest my prey.

A thin sticky liquid started seeping through my hand. Not expecting a banana to leak, I dropped it, and heard a low thud, followed by splattering.

The banana burst open; its mushy yellow guts flew. A dripping peel remained of my search for happiness.

## ANALYSIS

Hill has taken the basic narrative form in this essay and transformed it into something memorable. While Hill has alluded to the fact that he was in the Himalayas and that he was given a blessing by the Dalai Lama, he does not dwell on those events, however significant or unique. Rather, he chooses to concentrate on simple topics: hunger and a coveted banana.

The strength of Hill's essay rests with his descriptive language. The end of the essay particularly impacts the reader with vivid imagery. Few who read this essay will forget the image of an overripe banana exploding. Hill's phrasing is at times perfect: "... ready to divest my prey," is one such example of convincing, powerful language. Hill has conveyed the exact magnitude of his hunger and desire for that banana with this phrase.

A few areas could be strengthened, however. Hill is somewhat meandering in his opening, touching on topics like the Dalai Lama and the Himalayas, which, though interesting, are not significant to the main thrust of the narrative. Also, Hill's use of dialogue and the description of Clint and Laura are a little awkward. He might have done better to have simply