

pool yet. To be fair, the brother suggests they race instead and even gives her a head start. After they have both won a few races, they tire and decide to play something else. They play make-believe for awhile and swim around and dive for rings. By now the water is starting to get cold because they have been in for so long, so the children get out and jump back in a few times to make the water feel warmer. Then the little girl asks her brother for a buckin' bronco ride. This is a game where he twists and turns, jumps and flops, and goes underwater until she cannot hang on anymore. Occasionally he gets choked in the process of jumping around, but the little girl does not mind going underwater. In fact, she loves it. If the sun is just right, she can look up at the surface of the water and see a merry-go-round of sun rays so close she can almost touch it. Sometimes, if the little girl has spent a long time playing underwater, she feels as if she could breathe underwater.

While they are still playing in the water, Grandpa comes out to the orchard to pick fruit. Immediately, thoughts of cooked apples come to the children's minds, so they jump out to help and climb a tree or two. Sure enough, when they are done picking they all go back to Grandpa's and have supper with cooked apples for desert.

At dusk, the children's dad calls, wondering if they want to go back to the creek with him to burn some branches. The creek, which is on their dad's other property, has plenty of places to explore and is a special treat. The flames from the fire accentuate the colorful flames in the western sky. For a few minutes, the children stand and watch the brilliant show of colors with delight and then catch lightning bugs in the cool evening air. As the fire gets dimmer and the crickets become louder, the family heads home--the end of a perfect day.

BARN SWEET BARN

by
Emily Waddle

Political Science Major
Hanover Central Jr./Sr. High School, Cedar Lake, IN

[Assignment: Describe a place for which you hold significant emotion. It could be a place you have been to only once or one you visit regularly.]

It is a sweet smelling spring day, the kind in which one can actually feel the warm weather starting to push the gray winter away. Slowly walking down a gravel driveway that is in desperate need of a replenishing of stone, I can hear the wet gravel crunching beneath my feet as I make my descent. I smile as I take in the beautiful scenery that surrounds the farthest barn on my family's farm.

On the left side stands a rickety fence that was once a gleaming shade of white; however, now it has returned to its natural shade of sun-bleached, splintery wood. Beyond the fence there are various pieces of farming equipment that my father and brother will soon be preparing for a long summer of baling hay and barn cleanings. There is an antique manure spreader that my father has religiously kept in mint condition, including its trademark colors of John Deere green and yellow, and the hay rake that has been used for close to twenty years, and now has a rusty sheen in the bright April sunlight. Even further behind the equipment rolls the hay fields filled with lush and fragrant kelly green grass and deep purple alfalfa flowers. Then, finally, as small as peas in the distance stands a protective barrier of oak trees planted years before I was born. The trees are powerful and tall to prevent wind and erosion damage.

To the right of the barn is the pet cemetery where our favorite and most prestigious loved animals lie. Our miniature Schnauzer, Pepper, and an old stray tom cat named Bootsie are among the most endeared buried here. In the middle of the cemetery stands a mammoth weeping willow tree that mourns the loss of our pets. It was planted by my family in memory of our dog, Vickie, a Doberman that we grew up with. To the far right are the horse paddocks, arenas, and pastures. They are lined with fencing that is six feet tall and white in color, and fire engine red gates separate the pastures and the training arenas. They are almost obsessively aligned with perfect precision.

Focusing my attention on the barn itself, I realize what a striking figure it is. One might expect a large, red, three story, traditional old barn that is lovingly taken care of and preserved, but this is new, brown, aluminum, and state of the art. Perhaps it is my favorite because it contains the horses that I consider to be so important to me, or maybe it is the smells that greet me when I pass the threshold. A large white door ends the gravel drive that leads to the barn; this door is used for passage of the horses and machinery. Large skylights rim the edges and provide lighting and warmth inside the barn.

I carefully step over the strategically placed railroad ties to get to the side door, which we refer to as the "human door." I place my hand on the cool brass door knob and twist, anticipating the sights and smells that will greet me. I step over the semi-protruding door frame and into the barn. Immediately in front of me is the stall of the oldest mare in the barn. She is an old and healthy Appaloosa, and her white spots seem to light her dim stall. Dotty, the old mare, lifts her craggy head, sniffs the air filled with dust particles that float tauntingly in a warm sunbeam, and snorts a greeting to me. I hastily step in the wood shavings pile and take notice of the odors that pierce my nose: the musty smell of shaved wood, clipped hay, the heady scent of horse sweat, and of course, manure, which most people find repulsive, but I find, strangely enough, reassuring because it is a staple and constant reminder of life in the barn.

I turn left and follow the first hallway of the building. To the left is my sister's huge, sixteen-hand, chestnut gelding named Dandy; since he is so large a special stall was built for him. The stall allows him to jut his

long neck and head into the walkway and enables him to nuzzle my shoulder. To the right, more stalls line the way. Another large chestnut gelding occupies the space across from my sister's horse; he whinnies his hello and goes about his business. I gently push Dandy's head away and promise him a sugar cube. I continue along the way and venture into Kelly, a lovely little quarter horse mare. She gently pushes on her stall door, and does her best to look sweet; my father always says she is a real lady. I chuckle and walk on.

The next section of the barn contains the necessary training and food items for the horses. On the left, piles of baled hay are stacked uniformly, waiting for the months that will follow. Further down are three rooms, the first containing several bulky red barrels that hold grain, crushed oats, corn, feed supplements and vitamins that the horses need to be in top shape. On the wall, there is mounted a marker board that lists all the horses names, stall numbers and their allotted feed amounts and combinations. Spotless, stainless steel scoops line the walls and glimmer in the light. Across the hall is a large room with high ceilings. This is the pride and joy of the barn. Ribbons and trophies in a rainbow of different colors that have been earned at horse shows and competitions line the shelves and cases displayed in the room. Pictures hang on the wall capturing smiles and tears of pride and happiness from the past. A once impressive, beaten, overstuffed couch sits against the far wall looking inviting. Its faded shade of blue was once rich and royal; however, now it is worn and gives remembrance to many lazy afternoons spent there in the crisp barn air. Then a set of table and chairs, that had been declared unsightly for kitchen use, sits in the corner being weighed down with dog-eared magazines. The third and final room has all the tack needed for the horses. The room smells of leather and saddle oil. I flick on the light and a glint of silver catches my eye. Western saddles, English saddles, leather halters, bridles, brushes, and lead ropes are neatly put away in their proper spots. These rooms are all kept spotless and clean like a nursery.

I hope I only begin to portray the strong feelings I have about this place. Not only does it remind me of many happy days spent with my family and friends, but it promises many more. I love my home as well, but nothing relaxes me like the farthest barn on my property. It may not be antique and mysterious, but it feels like home to me.