

# **30<sup>th</sup> Annual Write Women Back Into History Essay Contest Winning Essays**

## **Best Essays, Grades 6-7**

- 1. First place: General category**  
**Author: Ellen Harrington**  
**Cowles Montessori School**  
**Teacher: Edward Moody**  
**Subject: Dr. Ada Hayden**

### **Ada Hayden the Naturalist and Her Passion for Preserving Prairies**

Innumerable Iowa women should be acknowledged and written into history for their vigorous efforts to make Iowa a better place. One such person is Dr. Ada Hayden, a determined conservationist who strove to protect Iowa prairies. Her accomplishments were not easy to achieve because she was a woman and a pioneer in her field. Among Iowa's prairie conservation visionaries her achievements deserve attention. Dr. Hayden taught us the importance of prairies and why they should not be destroyed. Many Iowans are benefiting from prairies and do not even know it. Dr. Ada Hayden has inspired many others to follow in her footsteps and do what she did more than 64 years ago.

During Ada Hayden's childhood she developed a love for prairies at her family farm near Ames, Iowa, where she was born on August 14, 1884. Her parents left a tract of several acres of beautiful, virgin prairie and wetland unplowed. She later studied the land where she grew up and learned the importance of prairies. After she graduated in 1904 from Ames High School, she enrolled as a botany major at Iowa State College. She also started to study under Iowa State College botanist Louis Pammel, her friend and mentor. In 1908, Ada Hayden graduated from Iowa State and received a bachelor of science degree. Two years later in St. Louis, Missouri, at Washington University, she received a master of science degree. At Iowa State College in 1918, she was the first woman to receive a Ph.D. degree. From 1917 until her death in 1950 Dr. Hayden worked as a professor of botany and plant pathology at Iowa State. She was an important member of many conservation groups including the Grassland Research Foundation, the Ecological Society of America, and the Iowa Academy of Science. Her love for prairies continued until her death.

Through her diligent grant work and writing, Dr. Hayden protected native prairies from destruction. In 1944 she was awarded a \$100 grant by the Iowa Academy of Science to survey the entire state, and locate and document native prairie tracts for potential preservation. Of the 22 prairie tracts in ten counties she photographed and described, two (Hayden and Kalsow Prairie State Preserves) were purchased and preserved in her lifetime. She wrote many articles and papers published in Proceedings of the Iowa Academy of Science, American Journal of Botany, and Iowa Parks. Her articles not only stressed the sentimental value, but also the scientific and ecological value of preserving native prairies.

Dr. Hayden taught that preserving prairies is important to the community, society, and the world. She wanted to help people understand more about the native prairie and its beauty

and to learn about the different soil types, composition, characteristics, wildlife management, and endangered species, such as bobwhite quail, certain species of owls, and rare plant groups. Many grassland birds such as meadowlarks and bobolinks are on the decline.

I believe we Iowans are benefiting from prairies by learning about the flora and fauna. Fifty years from now, people need to know the significance of what prairies have to offer. The benefit of native prairies today is teaching Iowans why the remaining prairies should be conserved, not tilled. More than 64 years ago Dr. Hayden told Iowans the essentials of why prairies are crucial, hoping we Iowans today would follow her footsteps to make the community, society, and Iowa a better place by preserving prairies. We need to maintain the remaining prairie land because it is irreplaceable.

In the late 1940's, the first prairie preserves were set aside. After Dr. Hayden's death in 1950, the Hayden Prairie located in Howard County was named in her honor. It was one of the many prairies she documented and recommended be preserved. The Hayden Prairie comprises 242 acres of prairie, and is rich in fauna and flora. Rabbits, deer, and pheasants are inhabitants. There are more than 461 bird species. There are 20 different species of butterflies. There are more than 200 species of plants and grasses such as big bluestem and blue joint grass. In the spring time, plants like shooting stars, yellow lady slippers, prairie smoke, pale purple cone flowers, and bird's-foot violet grow there. In the summer, Michigan lilies and wild rose grow there.

Dr. Hayden's accomplishments as a college botany professor, researcher, illustrator, photographer, and writer fueled and reflected her personal passion and vision for the preservation of prairies. She was a crusader for Iowa prairies. She should be remembered as the long-standing and well-known prairie lady, who advocated for the preservation of prairies.

### **Secondary Resources:**

#### **Websites:**

<http://www.inhf.org/ada-hayden.cfm>

<http://www.public.iastate.edu/~ucw/HistoryofWomenatISU/Ada%20Hayden.html>

<http://www.add.lib.iastate.edu/spcl/exhibits/150/template/hayden.htm>

[http://www.ameshistory.org/exhibits/ada\\_hayden.htm](http://www.ameshistory.org/exhibits/ada_hayden.htm)

<http://www.reflectiveimages.com/AdaHayden.htm>

<http://www.cityofames.org/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=1858>

#### **Articles:**

Lewis, D.Q. Ada Hayden: Champion of Iowa Prairies. Proc. 17th N.A. Prairie Conference: 215-219, 2001.

Iowa Natural Resource Heritage Series, Iowa Association of Naturalists. Ada Hayden, First Voice for the Preservation of Iowa's Prairies. 1995. ISU Extension Service Printing and Publications Building, Iowa State University Ames, Iowa 50011.

Iowa Conservationist. Iowa's State Parks: Sustaining a Vision from 1895 to 1995. Rebecca Conard. Volume 54(1); January/February 1995.

Iowa Conservationist. Hayden Prairie: Celebrating 50 Years. Volume 54(7); July/August 1995.

Iowa Conservationist. Ada Hayden: Pioneer Protector of Iowa's Prairies. Katy Wilcoxon. Volume 46(7); July 1987.

Primary Sources

The Weed Floral of Iowa. Pammel, L.H., King, C.M., Martin, J.N., Cunningham, J.C., Hayden, A., and Kellogg, H.S., Iowa Geological Survey, Bulletin No. 4, 1913.

Iowa Trees in Winter. Aikman, J.M., and Hayden, A.

Honey Plants of Iowa. Pammel, L.H., King, C.M., Hayden, A., et al.

**1. First place: STEM category**

**Author: Sid McCrea**

**College Community School District**

**Teacher: Amy Kay**

**Subject: Nancy Maria Hill**

*"The follow your dreams thing is really important because so many people are railroaded into taking other paths by their family, their friends, people who should be supportive going, 'What are you talking about?'"*

*~Joan Jett*

This quote by *Joan Jett* practically describes Nancy Maria Hill's life, how she went against the norms to follow her dreams, even though it probably wasn't a thing young women of her era did. Many people are influenced when deciding where to go in life because others tell them what they should do. Back in 4th grade, I was the quarterback for my football school team, and although some people doubted me and said I couldn't do it because I was a girl, I did it anyway. I've been inspired by various women in history, but when I found out about Dr. Hill, I knew she was the perfect person to write about.

Nancy Hill was born in West Cambridge, Massachusetts on November 17, 1833 and attended public schools in the West Cambridge area until she entered Mt. Holyoke Seminary. In 1863, she joined volunteer nurses at Armory Square Hospital. As a civil war nurse, Nancy Maria Hill impacted many lives. With the help of other doctors and nurses, Nancy Hill saved soldiers wounded in battles near Washington D.C. Hill got assigned to Ward F and tended to many soldiers by dressing their wounds and caring for them. In addition to her work at the hospital, she risked her own life in caring for soldiers in the battlefield. This showed how she was brave and wanted the best for others.

Because of this experience, she attended the University of Michigan, one of the only colleges to accept woman, and at the age of 41, graduated with a medical degree. Instead of going back home and having her own family, Dr. Hill chose to pursue a career in medicine. She was one of the first women to become a doctor. This choice paved the path for the rest of her life. Nancy always gave everything she had to people she didn't even know. Along her journey through medical school, she likely encountered discrimination just because she was a woman. As a medical pioneer, Hill opened doors for other women to follow their dreams even in male dominated professions such as medicine.

After graduation, Nancy moved to Dubuque, Iowa and became an advocate for women and children. While in Dubuque, Hill founded The Woman's Rescue Society in 1896. This organization provided services to young, unmarried women who were expecting babies and

women with small children. At a time when it was looked down or frowned upon to be an unmarried pregnant young lady, she offered medical assistance, shelter, food and comfort. Her willingness to work with those who were shunned by society made her a leader and role model. She also showed society that we should not only take care of the patients' physical needs, but really care for them emotionally and devote time to them. In addition to founding The Woman's Rescue Society, Hill was a part of many organizations within her local community and state, which signified her commitment to the people of Iowa and the medical profession.

Nancy Hill died in 1919. In 1924, the Women's Rescue Society was renamed the Hillcrest Baby Fold in her honor. Now the Hillcrest Family Services, the organization provides physical and spiritual needs to individuals and families in need. They help with the adoption of kids and rehabilitation of adults. They also meet the emotional needs of the community by providing clinics and counseling for all ages. Hillcrest gives people with mental and physical disabilities the opportunity to work and have a job. The fact that she's still making a difference in Iowa today and that she has had many long term impacts, shows that she was a successful person in life and that nothing could stop her. Nancy Hill helped thousands of people in a variety of ways, even if she didn't come in direct contact with them and was inducted into the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame in 1989. She should be written back into history because she is still changing the world today.

From a very young age, I've wanted to become a doctor, particularly a neonatologist, and Nancy Hill is a great role model for me. She's taught me that sometimes we need to go outside of our comfort zone because the risks may be worth the rewards. Nancy has showed me that no one is better than anyone else because they're male. By becoming a doctor, Hill opened doors for other women to enter medical professions. I know that I don't have to do what is considered normal and can change the world in my own ways, not necessarily the ways people I think I should. She inspired me to follow my dreams even if at a certain point they seem impossible or unrealistic. Dr. Hill taught me that we are all put on this earth for a particular reason even if it's not evident at the beginning, or if it seems impractical.

All in all, Dr. Nancy Maria Hill should be written back into history. She was a brave, committed, and inspirational role model for all young women. We can learn a lot from her way of life, especially how she put others in front of herself. Imagine what our world would be like today if everyone was as brave and committed as Nancy Hill was and gave everything they had for others. Nancy was a great leader. Consequently, she should be written into history and be taught about in schools all over Iowa as the first woman doctor in the state.

## Works Cited

- Boccella, Kathy. "Civil War Nurses." *Nursing History Chronicle*. Wordpress, 16 Apr. 2012. Web. 16 Jan. 2014. <<http://warnursing.wordpress.com/2012/04/16/civil-war-nurses-2/>>.
- Colson, Jean. "Nancy Hill." *Find a Grave Memorial*. 09 Jan. 2012. Web. 16 Jan. 2014. <<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=8318993>>
- Cherba, Constance R. and Deckert, Edward E. "Nancy Hill- Civil War Nurse, Pioneering Doctor." *EBSCO Host*. Oct. 2006. Web. 16 Jan. 2014.
- "Dr. Nancy Maria Hill" *Iowa Commission on the status of Women*. Web. 16 Jan. 2014.
- "Hill, Nancy." *Encyclopedia Dubuque*. 24 Mar. 2012. Web. 16 Jan. 2014. <[http://www.encyclopediaDubuque.org/index.php?title=HILL,\\_Nancy&action=edit](http://www.encyclopediaDubuque.org/index.php?title=HILL,_Nancy&action=edit)>.
- "Hill, Nancy." *Encyclopedia Dubuque*. 24 Mar. 2012. Web. 16 Jan. 2014. <[http://www.encyclopediaDubuque.org/index.php?title=HILL,\\_Nancy](http://www.encyclopediaDubuque.org/index.php?title=HILL,_Nancy)>.

"History." *Hillcrest Family Services*. Web. 16 Jan. 2014. <[http://www.hillcrest-fs.org/about\\_hillcrest/history.cfm](http://www.hillcrest-fs.org/about_hillcrest/history.cfm)>

## 2. Second place

**Author: Connor Fagen**

**Prairie City-Monroe (PCM) Middle School**

**Teacher: Jennifer Ropes**

**Subject: Stephanie Langstraat**

### **Stephanie Langstraat, A Woman of Character, Commitment, and Courage**

*"My goal is to help the students that I have become productive citizens, be responsible, be respectful and hopefully they all get all that good stuff academically because it's all equally important in my eyes. So we just take it one day at a time."* - Stephanie Langstraat

Radon is a harmful gas that you can't see or smell and it can be in your home or school and you wouldn't even know it. Radon is responsible for about 21,000 lung cancer deaths every year. Stephanie Langstraat, our principal at PCM Middle School, survived lung cancer probably caused from the harmful gas Radon. Ms. Langstraat has shown great character and courage. As a survivor of lung cancer she is trying to do something for the state of Iowa. Brave, trustworthy, caring, and courageous are words that describe her. Ms. Langstraat is what the people in Iowa need as an example of a good citizen. Stephanie Langstraat should be written into history for her efforts to have all schools tested and mitigated for Radon.

Ms. Langstraat grew up in Pella, Iowa. She began her career in education by becoming an elementary teacher. She then moved to New Mexico and spent a couple of years there, but she came back home to Iowa. When she got to Iowa she became the Dean of Students at PCM Middle School. A couple of years later, in 2012, Ms. Langstraat became the principal of PCM Middle School.

Stephanie Langstraat was diagnosed with lung cancer in 2012. Her doctors say this might be linked to Radon from one of her childhood schools. She had to go through treatment which was hard for her. Some of the major influences that helped her battle through cancer were her faith, family, friends, staff, and students. It was heartbreaking for the students because it was Ms. Langstraat's first year as their principal. She tried to keep in touch with the students by email messages and video chat messages during her treatment and they also tried to keep in touch with her. The whole district helped by selling cancer t-shirts that said "She's kind of a big deal".

Ms. Langstraat initiated the testing of the PCM School District because she wanted her students to be in a safe and secure environment. She didn't want anyone to have to suffer what she went through. All of the buildings in the PCM school district were tested for Radon and mitigated because of what the doctors had said about the cancer maybe being from one of Stephanie's childhood schools. Ms. Langstraat's mission to keep the school environment Radon free and to keep the students safe was the leading cause for our district to test for Radon. Our school district did this testing and mitigating to keep all of us safe, because at PCM we're one big family.

Right after she was done with her treatment in 2013, Ms. Langstraat started working with legislators and went to the Capitol to try to pass a bill. The bill was about testing and mitigating schools for Radon. But in April of 2013 the bill didn't pass, which for many people was sad. *"I just hope lawmakers pay more attention to children's health than the bottom line," Langstraat said-WHOTV.* Ms. Langstraat hasn't given up on the Radon bill. She is still working on it, and she is going to keep trying to pass the bill. Ms. Langstraat thinks the future of raising awareness about Radon is important for the people of Iowa and that is why she wants Iowa government to pass the bill. She is continuing to work with legislators to pass the bill about testing for Radon in the schools, and is being asked to talk about what it is like to go through lung cancer.

Ms. Langstraat was presented with golden apple award by WHOTV in September of 2013. She felt humbled, like she didn't deserve the award but it made her feel special. "I think she's probably the best principal in the state, honestly. She's really nice and she doesn't treat any students better than any of the other students," said student Wes Cummings-WHOTV. The whole school was happy that they got to see their principal receive an award for what she has done. I know she deserved the award for all that she's done for her staff and students and all the opportunities she has given them.

I think she should be written into history because she's a courageous woman and she really cares for a lot of people, especially her students. She is trying to do something that could save thousands of students and teachers in Iowa from the damage that Radon can cause. My principal, Ms. Langstraat, cares about you and your health. This is why Stephanie Langstraat should be written into history.

#### **Source List:**

"GOLDEN APPLE: September 2013 Winner." WHOTVcom. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Jan. 2014. <<http://whotv.com/2013/10/04/golden-apple-october-winner-2/>>.

"FUNNEL WEEK: Radon Bill Dies In Committee." WHOTVcom. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Jan. 2014. <<http://whotv.com/2013/04/05/funnel-week-radon-bill-dies-in-committee/>>.

Langstraat, Stephanie. Personal interview. 16 Jan. 2014.

### **3. Third place**

**Author: Emma McHargue**

**Prairie City-Monroe (PCM) Middle School**

**Teacher: Jennifer Ropes**

**Subject: Ola Babcock Miller**

#### **Ola Babcock Miller**

Ola Babcock Miller was born in Washington County in 1871. She moved with her parents to Washington, Iowa. Ola Babcock Miller was elected the state's first female society of state and in ensuing years became one of Iowa's most popular elected officials. As a young woman, Ola taught in rural schools in her home country. When Ola was 5, her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Nathan Babcock moved their family to the community of Washington, where she attended public schools. She married a newspaper editor Alex Miller. She attended Washington Academy for four years, as well as Iowa Wesleyan College at Mount Pleasant. When her husband died of a heart attack, Ola continued an active role in Democratic Party, traveling the state and speaking out for social reforms.

When Ola found out that she was running for office - as a reward from the Democratic Party- Ola never dreamed she could win. But Ola told her friends she thought it would please her deceased husband and she called her campaign "a martyrdom to the cause." But Miller was swept into office in 1932 on the coattails Franklin Delano Roosevelt, despite having won by fewer than 3,000 votes. Ola had no trouble being re-elected in 1934 and 1936. After her victory, a reporter interviewed the new secretary of state and noted: "It is obvious Mrs. Miller is nobody's fool."

Saddened and motivated by the highway death of a good friend's son, Ola began to advocate tirelessly for uniformed state road patrol. "Enforcement was not enough," Des Moines Tribune reporter Lillian McLaughlin wrote her 1975 series "Iowa Women Ahead of Their Time." "She spoke constantly throughout the state ... driving home the gospel of safe and sane driving." Miller initiated patrol on Aug. 1, 1934, by organizing a group of 15 motor vehicle inspector's who helped reduce the highway accident by stopping violators.

Ola had already been active in the suffrage movements, as well as the Daughter's of American Revolution and the women's society P.E.O. In May 1935, then-Gov. Clyde Herring signed the law creating 50-member patrol within the state's motor vehicle department, which operated under Miller. In the patrol's first days, up to 5,000 Depression-stricken men applied for the jobs, which initially paid \$100 per month. The patrol chief made \$200 monthly, and his assistant earned \$165 per month. Ola pushed herself, and illness proved her downfall when she continued to go on the road to fulfill a speaking engagement despite having influenza and a temperature. During treatment at Iowa Methodist Hospital in Des Moines, she requested the her "boys" not send flowers, but they did in great quantities, and she commented that it was "the first time they've ever been guilty of insubordination."

She died of pneumonia Jan. 25, 1937. Statehouse offices were closed her funeral, and services were attended by 1,500 people at the Washington Methodist Church. Included among the mourners were the 55 highway patrolmen who served as her pallbearers and honor guard who stood by her bronze casket. On the first-year anniversary of her death, a delegation of patrolmen, wearing black arm bands, put flowers on her grave in Washington. Ola was one of the first four women to be inducted into the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame in 1975.

In 1999, the Iowa Legislature, prompted by the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women, authorized the remaining of stately Old Historical Building at East Grand Avenue and East 12th Street as the Ola Babcock Miller State Office Building. The State Library and other state offices are housed in the building a \$20 million renovation. The dedication of the restored structure was held in 2002, and a plaque honoring Ola was unveiled.

She should be written into history because she founded the state patrol.

#### **Source List:**

Annette Wetteland Jan 01, 2009 -State library of iowa  
<http://www.statelibraryofiowa.org/about/history/miller>

TOM LONGDEN - Des Moines register <http://data.desmoinesregister.com/dmr/famous-iowans/ola-babcock-miller>

## **Best Essays, Grades 8-9**

### **1. First place: General & STEM categories**

**Author: Nisha Barnhill**  
**Merrill Middle School**  
**Teacher: Kari Ferring**  
**Subject: Trina Erickson**

I think that Trina Erickson should be written into history because she is an amazing vision instructor! A vision instructor is someone who teaches visually impaired students Braille, including the Braille alphabet and Braille contractions. She also teaches students how to use a BrailleNote (a small and portable computer that you can carry anywhere and use for your writing and email and schoolwork). Students also learn how to use a CCTV (closed circuit television), a Braille writer (Braille typewriter), a monocular and a dome magnifier. It's good to learn Braille and how to use the other devices when you are a kid. When you are grown your memory doesn't work as well and it's harder to learn.

Trina is awesome because she is funny, nice, caring, and really wants students to learn. When I was in kindergarten I went to Hubbell and the teachers there knew I needed a vision instructor. I came from India when I six and started school later than other people and needed to learn English and Braille. I met Trina that year and we introduced ourselves to each other. At first I was kind of scared but when we talked a little bit I liked her and thought she was really nice. She made me feel safe.

Later on, when I first got my BrailleNote, I was confused but also excited to learn a new technology. Trina taught me how it works and how to use all the keys. I also learned how to use a CCTV; it was pretty easy because you just have to turn it on and put a book or papers on it and it enlarges. Trina had to make sure there were CCTVs in different parts of the school so I could learn in all my classes.

When Trina was in high school she had a teacher named Debbie Lyons who took a summer job being the director of a kids' camp for the visually impaired. Debbie Lyons asked Trina if she wanted to come be a counselor because they needed counselors for each visually impaired child. Trina decided to go and ended up working there for five summers. While she was a camp counselor she had the idea that it could be her job to teach these kids and she decided to go to college to learn how. Her family thought it was a great idea and were proud of her for wanting to do something rewarding and different.

Trina went to college for four years. She went to classes about the eyes, classes about Braille and classes about diseases that cause people to be visually impaired. For example, she learned about albinism, which makes your skin and hair lighter and causes low vision. (I am one of her students who have albinism.) She learned a lot of other things and was a student teacher for a semester.

Trina has been teaching for thirteen years and has taught quite a few students, including teaching Braille to about ten students. She has been a consultant for teachers about many other



students. Teaching was hard at first there were only two transient vision instructors who were both new and there was no one to tell them how to do their jobs. Their bosses knew about teaching but not about teaching blind kids, so they had to figure out a lot of things on their own. She had to learn about different technology and software for visually impaired people. Transient vision instructors go to different schools to teach. Trina had to go to new schools and new classrooms all the time.

Trina says the hardest part of doing her job now is doing lots of paperwork and also when she doesn't get to teach students anymore that she has known a long time. She says that teaching Braille is the most fun thing she does. She likes to have fun with the kids teaching daily living skills and organizing a cool pizza party with her students twice a year.

Trina says she would encourage students to become vision teachers because it is very rewarding. She gets to do a lot of things other teachers don't get to do and gets to go a lot of places in one day. She says she gets to really have an impact on kids' lives.

Trina makes a big difference in students' lives because she comes to local schools and students don't have to go live at a Braille school. Blind students in Iowa used to live at the Braille School all year. Trina works with each student almost every day and helps them learn anything that sighted students learn. I and other visually impaired students learn skills that we can use in college. In the past visually impaired students often weren't able to get jobs that paid well and that they enjoyed. Trina has taught me and other students to use all kinds of tools and software so we can have any career we choose.

Trina is a remarkable teacher and makes me feel like I can do anything. I can even do things sighted people can't, like taking notes they can't read! I think all visually impaired people could do anything they desire, and achieve their goals if they had a teacher like Trina. She should be a part of Iowa history.

#### **Source List:**

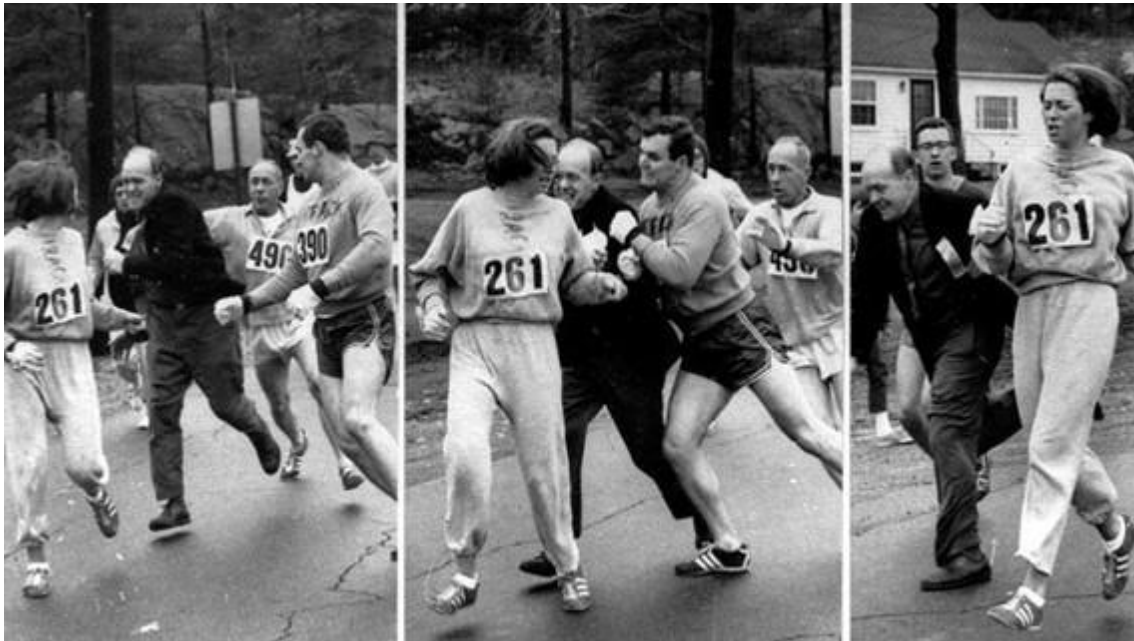
Personal email interview with Trina Erickson, January 21, 2014

History of Blindness in Iowa, <http://www.idbonline.org/blindhstory/education-iowa-braille-school-vinton>

Personal experiences, Iowa Braille School, Vinton, Iowa, 2006-2014

2. **Second place**  
**Author: Ryan Weiss**  
**Ames High School**  
**Teacher: Kate Engelkes**  
**Subject: Kathrine Switzer**

### Kathrine Switzer: Running for Rights



Race Director Jock Semple attempts to remove Kathrine Switzer from the 1967 Boston Marathon. Kathrine's boyfriend Tom pushes Semple out of the way. (AP Images)

Sometimes when you are fighting for rights, things are slow to change. But other times, one event or even one picture can change history. On the day of the 1967 Boston Marathon, Kathrine Switzer said, "Why not?" and forever changed running. Because of Kathrine Switzer's determination, I, and other girls around the world, are able to enter and run races today. That is why I think everyone should know how Kathrine Switzer's journey paved the way for women's rights through running.

When Kathrine Switzer first started running, people thought women could not handle the strain of running a marathon. When she finished, she had proved them wrong. Kathrine Switzer was the first woman to legally enter and run the Boston Marathon.

In high school Kathrine decided she wanted to try out for cheerleading, but her dad had other ideas. "You know, honey, you shouldn't be on the sidelines cheering for other people.

People should cheer for *you*." ("Marathon Woman", pg. 8-9) Her dad thought she should join her school's field hockey team. He said all she had to do was run a mile a day to get in shape. And that's how she took her first steps towards becoming a marathon runner. She played field hockey all through high school and at Lynchburg College. She transferred to Syracuse University where she began to run with the men's track team (there were no women's sports at Syracuse). Team manager Arnie Briggs began to train with Kathrine and encouraged

her with his stories about running the Boston Marathon. Finally, one day while running together, Kathrine said, "Let's stop talking about the Boston Marathon, and just run the darn thing." (p. 73) So Arnie and Kathrine trained for several weeks. They checked out the rule book and there was no rule about women not being allowed to enter. This was because people back then couldn't believe that a woman would want to even try.

She ran her first Boston Marathon (the famous one) on April 19th, 1967. She signed her name "K.V. Switzer" on the entry form, so they didn't know she was a girl. Two miles into the race, Jock Semple, the race director, tried to grab Kathrine and yelled at her to give him her race number and get out of his race. Little did he know that Kathrine's boyfriend Tom was a football linebacker.

*"I felt unable to flee, like I was rooted there, and indeed I was, since the man, this Jock guy, had me by the shirt. Then a flash of orange flew past, and hit Jock with a cross-body block. It was Tom in the orange sweatshirt. There was a loud--Whoomph!--and Jock was airborne. He landed on the roadside like a pile of wrinkled clothes." (p.92)*

Timing is everything. Because the press truck was right in front of Kathrine when it happened, cameras clicked away. Reporters had a front row seat to the Jock Semple/Kathrine Switzer showdown and the world soon knew that a woman had successfully run a marathon.

The photos above were in all the major newspapers, Kathrine Switzer became famous, and an activist was born. The photos were even included in the Time-Life book, "100 Photos that Changed the World."

Kathrine Switzer was not only the first woman to run a marathon, but she also encouraged women around the world to run and helped to get the women's marathon in the Olympics. After the famous Boston Marathon, Kathrine Switzer was hired by AVON, a beauty company that had agreed to sponsor races for only women. The races included clinics for beginning runners which encouraged more women to take up running, at a time when it was still a novel idea.

The races Kathrine organized were crucial in the development of the sport. For a sport to be entered into the Olympics, it has to be contested by 25 countries on three different continents. The Avon International Running Circuit encouraged women's marathons in countries all over the world, so when the time came, enough countries voted to add the Women's Marathon into the Olympics. The success of the Avon International Running Circuit was proof of the sport's capabilities, which left the International Olympic Committee no choice but to include the Women's Marathon in the 1984 Olympics. Nothing made Kathrine Switzer happier than to be included in the broadcasting team covering the Women's Marathon in the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles and for many years afterwards.

Kathrine changed the world's view of women and their capabilities during the 1960's when women's rights were at the forefront. Her impact on the world wasn't just inspiring women to run, it was inspiring women to believe in themselves and to follow their dreams.

"When I go to the Boston Marathon now, I have wet shoulders—women fall into my arms crying. They're weeping for joy because running has changed their lives. They feel they can do anything," says Kathrine. (Zirin)

Even though Kathrine Switzer became famous for being the first woman to legally enter and run the Boston Marathon, her lasting legacy is her successful campaign to encourage

women around the world to take up running and her tireless efforts to get the women's marathon in the Olympics.

Kathrine Switzer is important to me because I love to run. Thanks to her efforts, I could run a marathon someday. She opened doors and led the way for many women and runners around the world. Her example of hard work and dedication continues to motivate me to pursue what I believe in.

**Source List:**

Switzer, K. (2014, January 19). Kathrine Switzer: Marathon Woman. Retrieved from <http://kathrineswitzer.com/press-room/photos/>

Switzer, K. (2007). *Marathon Woman*. Cambridge: Da Capo Press.

Zirin, D. (2013, April 15). The Boston Marathon: All My Tears, All My Love. *The Nation*. Retrieved from <http://www.thenation.com/blog/173851/boston-marathon-all-my-tears-all-my-love#>

**3. Third place**

**Author: Lyndi Kiple**

**Sergeant Bluff-Luton High School**

**Teacher: Kelly Grote**

**Subject: Mildred Wirt Benson**

**From the Heart of Iowa into the Hearts of Millions**

Until I started this project, I had no idea Carolyn Keene was not the legitimate author of the legendary Nancy Drew series. I quickly discovered that “Carolyn Keene” is actually a pen name for multiple authors who have contributed to various parts of the series. Though I haven’t read any of the original novels, I’ve read the more modern series *Nancy Drew: Girl Detective*. Through these books I’ve gotten to personally experience the unique characters, specifically Nancy, whom this author created. She revolutionized young adult literature, and that is something I so admire her for doing. She may have had the plot set out for her, but the characters were all her own.

Nancy Drew was real. She *is* real. She was created to be brave but not fearless, outgoing but vigilant, and respectful but still spunky. She had some fun and bent some rules, but at the end of the day, she got the job done. Though Nancy always cracked the case, her adventures were nowhere near predictable. She was not a traditional heroine by any means, but she captured the spirits of young girls nonetheless. She was what the world had been waiting for.

So was Mildred Wirt Benson, the woman who created this unique character and revolutionized young adult literature along the way.

As a little girl, Mildred loved to read anything from children’s books to famous novels, and she declared that one day she would be writing great pieces herself. A small-town girl from Ladora, Iowa, Mildred would go on to accomplish more than she, or anyone else, could ever have anticipated. Born on July 5, 1905, she published her first piece in St. Nicholas magazine at the age of thirteen. This incredible feat gave her even more courage and determination for the

future. Mildred graduated from her local high school before most students her age and immediately went to study at the University of Iowa. In 1925, she earned a bachelor's degree in English and just two years later became the first woman to receive a masters in journalism from the U of I.

While she was still studying for her masters, Mildred was hired by Edward Stratemeyer to be his "ghostwriter." He wanted her to bring to life his detailed plot outlines and write young adult mysteries, the first of which was titled *The Secret of the Old Clock*. Mildred took on the project without the faintest notion that it would become such a hit. Sitting in front of her typewriter, she birthed the title character of the series, Nancy Drew, and shaped her into a refreshing role model for girls across the nation. This amazing lady created an equally as amazing protagonist who encompassed everything a girl could strive to be, including "smart, brave, level-headed, curious, independent, thoughtful, and spirited" (Longden). This young author not only went on to write 23 of the first 30 novels in the original Nancy Drew series, but she also published over 100 books of her own. After fifteen years in the business, she settled down as a journalist in Toledo, Ohio, to work for a couple of the local papers until her death in 2002. In the spirit of her characters, she also tried her hand at piloting, archaeology, and adventuring. Mildred was truly an honorable woman and deserves more than she was ever rewarded.

Mrs. Benson is absolutely worthy of being written back into history, especially because she herself wrote part of history but was not properly acknowledged. In fact, she stayed under the radar to keep the secret for 50 years, and she remained humble even when Mr. Stratemeyer's daughter tried to take credit for the Nancy Drew novels Mildred wrote. I believe Mrs. Benson should be recognized for encouraging people of all ages to break the mold and not care about others' opinions. She showed girls, young and old, that it was okay to be different--something nearly impossible to do in today's society.

Nancy Drew is a timeless character. Though her first adventures were published in 1930, they are still enjoyed today and will continue to be loved for many more years to come. As the author of this beloved series, "Carolyn Keene" may not have a birth certificate, but her spirit will never die. Mildred Wirt Benson, dubbed the original Carolyn Keene, didn't think much of the pseudonym when she brought it to life. "It was just a job to do," she told *Salon* (Benfer). Today, however, it represents much more than just a job to many people, including myself. Carolyn Keene is a symbol of rebellion, resilience, and redefining character.

And Mildred was the start of all that.

Without her, Nancy Drew would not be the exemplary young lady she still is today. As one of the many girls who has been positively influenced by the strong character she created, I would simply like to thank Mrs. Benson for her hard work, dedication, and perseverance. She is a woman of strong character herself and has made a tremendous impact on the history of literature and the lives of women.

#### **Works Cited:**

Benfer, Amy. "Who was Carolyn Keene?" *Salon*. Salon Media Group, Inc., 8 Oct. 1999. Web. 21 Jan. 2014.

Fisher, Jennifer. "Who is Carolyn Keene?" *Los Angeles Times*. Los Angeles Times, 28 Mar. 2010. Web. 21 Jan. 2014.

Longden, Tom. "Mildred Wirt Benson." *DesMoinesRegister.com*. [www.desmoinesregister.com](http://www.desmoinesregister.com), 2014. Web. 21 Jan. 2014.

Lum, Cynthia Adams. "Carolyn Keene and Nancy Drew." *About.com*. About.com, 2014. Web. 21 Jan. 2014.