

**Family Ritual**

**Writing Situation:** In *The Giver*, Jonas and his family share their feelings each evening. This family ritual allows them to bond together, soothe fear and anger, and maintain a tranquil living environment. Every December the entire community gathers to celebrate various rites of passage, following a prescribed sequence of events. Often families in the United States gather together nightly to have the evening meal. Many families meet with extended family and friends over a turkey dinner to celebrate a Thanksgiving meal. Think over any family traditions, holidays, or rituals that your family takes part in - from family dinners, to carving pumpkins, to birthday traditions, to annual fishing or camping trips, to planting a garden- even to the rituals associated with sports teams...

**Writing Directions:** Write a descriptive essay about a family ritual. Your goal is to make your memories come alive through carefully chosen details and descriptions. Be sure to provide a sense of beginning, middle, and end. Be sure to make the significance of the ritual clear!

We'll be revising essays on Friday. Please:

- Read over read your essay to make sure you've used correct mechanics, punctuation (including paragraphs), and spelling.
- Double-space** your essay (word-processed pieces preferred).
- Use 12-point font.

Descriptive writing techniques to keep in mind: simile, metaphor, personification, specific details for effect, personification, dialogue, full-circle ending, sensory details about smells, sounds, tastes, how things feel... (See your lit. log and the "Analysis of 'Morning Ritual'" Assignment for explanations & examples.)

The following essay, written by Matthew Weber, a 7th grade boy, was published in *Merlyn's Pen*.

**Fishing: The Family Ritual**

Fishing comes the first Saturday of summer. That's the day when we load up the boat and head for the bay. We wake at 4:30 a.m. to the aroma of fresh brewing coffee that fills the air. I get out the flashlight, chain up the dog, and latch the boat up to the truck while listening to the crickets singing like a choir. My dad throws the morning newspaper in the back of the pickup, and we're on our way.

I turn on the radio, listening to the weather report while watching rows of trees fly by. I see the Chevron Plant puffing our clouds of marshmallows that float through the black sky. I hear the huge eighteen-wheeler roaring as it passes by.

When we get there, Crawley's Fishing Camp is just opening at 5:30. We walk in, and we're greeted by the odor of fresh shrimp and crabs. I pour the bucket full of live shrimp into the live well, and we're on our way with the wind in our hair. When we get to our spot, we hook the shrimp and throw it into the water that looks like it cam out of

an Ozarka bottle. I watch the cork until the fish pulls it under and then my heart starts beating like a Greyhound running. When I get it up to the boat, I recognize that its a four-pound trout. After I get the hook out, I measure it and place it in the ice chest as if it were a hunk of gold.

When the fish stop biting, we pull out the morning paper, put it over our heads so we don't turn into prunes, and take a siesta. We wake up and decide to call it a day. When we pull up to the dock, I take one last smell of the water and air and decide I'll need to remember these moments forever.

The following essay, written by Jennifer Stephens, an 8th grade girl, was published in *Stone Soup*.

### **Grandma's Breakfast**

The trees awakening, the sun coming out from its nap, and the sweet aroma of the country breakfast spread all over the house. Those were the days when my grandma lived in the country, and she always made coffee, biscuits, bacon, and scrambled eggs when I spent the night with her. I never had to have an alarm clock at her house because the smell of the bacon would wake me up. I would always get coffee while I was wrapped up in her terry-cloth robe. It made me feel like I was older. We would sit on the big backyard screened-in porch to eat breakfast, drink our coffee, and watch the sun's rays hit the fog on the ground. The birds would be frolicking through the trees and over the fog on the ground. Their two dogs would play around on the patio and chase my little sister. The Sunday comics were so funny. I liked Garfield the best. We would read the weather to see if we could go fishing, drive to Galveston, or feed the ducks. If it were raining or hot outside, we would go into her sewing room and work on a variety of things, such as her Christmas tree skirt. It didn't matter to me where we went as long as it was somewhere. Time was never wasted there. We were always doing something.

Since my grandmother has moved, we don't share those special moments as often- the smell of bacon, scrambled eggs, coffee and fresh biscuits. It's just another picture in the movies of my lifetime. The ones that mean a lot stay with you, and you will never forget them.

Since Grandma's country breakfast is part of my movie, it won't get lost.