

Blake Bockholt

Mr. Bockholt

English 11

9 September, 2014

Yellow highlight  
indicates reflection.

### Double Back Flip

There are only two things I remember about my fifth grade teacher, Mrs. Underwood. I only remember two things because it's nearly impossible for any ten-year-old kid to pay attention to an old, grey-haired woman with a mole the size of a nickel protruding from her neck. Tiny black hairs grew from her benign blemish and worked like little arms, waving at me to capture my attention. Her massive mole simply prevented my small mind from concentrating on anything she ever said. When I think of Mrs. Underwood the first thing I recall is her mole; the second thing I recall is what she shouted across playground one day at recess: "Don't jump out of the swings."

*There goes my fun*, I thought. Recess was the most anticipated time of the day, and Mrs. Underwood banned my favorite pastime. Jumping out of the swings was my life. I lived for it. I was the best at it. Not only was able to jump higher and farther than any other boy at recess, but I was the only one talented enough—and stupid enough—to perform the most coveted acrobatic maneuver: a backflip. Mrs. Underwood and her potentially cancerous ally were determined to make me miserable.

The next day at recess, however, Mrs. Underwood was nowhere to be found. I was free to jump. *Victory!* I thought as my friends and I ran over to the swings and resumed our typical students. Just after I completed another backflip with a picture-perfect landing, a challenge came.

“So what if you can do a back flip. Professionals can do two!” an envious friend dared.

*Two? Professional?* I was caught off guard. “I’m a professional!” came my reply. The spirit of pride and competition swelled inside me, compelling me to attempt the impossible, the unimaginable. I got into the swing and pumped my ten-year-old legs as hard as I could, sending myself higher and higher into the air; when I reached maximum height and velocity, I threw my feet over my head, tucked my body into a tiny aerodynamic ball of talent, and flew helplessly into the air. I watched my surroundings swirl around me when suddenly I forgot how to count. Had I listened to Mrs. Underwood’s math lectures, then I would have realized that one-and-a-half is far from two—especially when it comes to backflips. Two flips puts the performer safely onto his feet; one-and-a-half onto his head. Realizing that my face was headed for a mouthful of sand and a broken nose, I put my hands out to break my fall. But my hands didn’t break my fall; the fall broke my hand—the impact pulverized my wrist, fracturing it in seven places.

The cast the doctor put on my arm was a six week reminder of my youthful stupidity, the act-before-you-think impulse plaguing children and adolescents everywhere. Every time I looked at the cast Mrs. Underwood’s stern command invaded my mind: “Don’t jump out of the swings.” In my mind, I didn’t disobey Mrs. Underwood. I didn’t “jump” out of the swings; I flipped. But for the first time I realized that maybe—just maybe—I should listen to the wisdom of my teachers.