

"The story of Philip Malloy shouts to be shared."

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BUT THE  
TRUTH**

Reader's  
Guide  
•INSIDE•

**Tuesday, March 13**

10:35 P.M.

From the Diary of Philip Malloy

Coach Jamison saw me in the hall and said he wanted to make sure I'm trying out for the track team!!!! Said my middle school gym teacher told him I was really good!!!! Then he said that with me on the Harrison High team we have a real shot at being county champs. Fantastic!!!!!! He wouldn't say that unless he meant it. Have to ask folks about helping me get new shoes. Newspaper route won't do it all. But Dad was so excited when I told him what Coach said that I'm sure he'll help.

Saw a thing on TV about Olympic committees already organizing all over the country. Olympics. I'm going to be there! County champs. State champs. College champs. Then Olympics! Folks always reminding me about the money they're putting aside for my college, which is the only way to go. That's what did Dad in, dropping out. Too hard to get noticed with just clubs.

Rainy and cold. I hate this kind of weather. Slows you down. Still ran six miles. I'm getting stronger.

Oh, yeah. . . . At lunch Sarah Gloss came up and said she had to speak to me. Said this girl, Allison Doresett, likes me. I had to act cool because I wasn't sure who she was. Then I remembered she's in my English class and is really decent. She must have liked that gag question I asked. The two of us would be front-of-the-line. Bet she heard about my running too. Girls go for guys who win. Ta-da! It's Malloy Magic time!

Talk about Malloy Magic. . . . This time for—da-dum!—Miss Narwin. I mean, what can you do with an English teacher who's so uptight she must have been put together with super glue. Try to make a joke—lighten things up a bit—she goes all flinty-faced. Shift to sweet, she goes sour. I mean, people can't have their own minds about anything!!! Talk about a free country!!! And the stuff we have to read! Can't believe how stupid and *boring* Jack London is! I mean, really. *The Call of the Wild*. Talk about dogs! Ma says she had to read it when *she* was in school. There has to be better stuff to read for ninth grade somewhere. I thought high school was going to be different.

Have to figure a way to run past Narwin.

10:45 P.M.

From a Letter Written by  
Margaret Narwin  
to Her Sister, Anita Wigham

Yes, Anita, I suppose that after doing *anything* for twenty-one years a body does get a little tired. And I *have* been teaching English at Harrison High for just

that long. All the same, I remain steadfast in my belief that my life was meant to be *the bringing of fine literature to young minds*. When the connection is made—and from time to time it *is* made—it's all worth it. Is it wrong to speak of the work as a calling? Well, teaching *is* almost a religion to me. I will complain from time to time, but—it *is* my life. The truth is, I like it.

But the *other* truth, Anita, is that students today are not what they used to be. There is no love of literature. Not the way you and I learned it from Mother. Young people don't read at all today—outside of school requirements. They come to literature reluctantly at best, fighting me every inch of the way. It's not as if they aren't bright. They *are*. And I like them and their capacity for independence. But the other side of that independence is a lack of caring for anything beyond themselves. If they ask me once more "What's this have to do with *us*?" I think I'll scream. Of course, I don't scream. You have to treat them with care *and* fairness. Fairness is *so* important to them.

For example: these days I'm teaching *The Call of the Wild*. A student raised his hand to say he didn't understand "who was calling who." Now if I were to laugh or mock, he would be insulted. And I would lose him.

This boy, Philip Malloy, is new to me. I met his parents at First Night, and they seem like pleasant folks; they come regularly to PTA meetings. They are educated—she is, anyway. I'm not sure what they do.

But this Philip—an only son, by the way, which may be the problem—is only a middling student, and it's a shame. A nice-looking boy. A boy I like. Intelligent. With real potential. Perhaps that's why he irritates me so—for he shows no desire to strive, to make sacrifices for the betterment of self, the way we were taught. And, oh, my, Anita, so restless! Worst of all, like so many of

## Patriotism or practical joke?

*Harrison, NH*—Ninth-grade student Philip Malloy was suspended from school for singing along to *The Star-Spangled Banner* in his homeroom, causing what his teacher, Margaret Narwin, called “a disturbance.” But was he standing up for his patriotic ideals, only to be squelched by the school system? Was Ms. Narwin simply trying to be a good teacher? Or could it all be just a misunderstanding gone bad—very bad? What is the truth here? Can it ever be known?

Heroism, hoax, or mistake, what happened at Harrison High changes everything for everyone in ways no one—least of all Philip—could have ever predicted.

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