

These three sixth graders—inspired by Judith Viorst’s [Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day](#)—wrote stories about fictional terrible days that might happen on days they’re taking school pictures. All three writers worked on the traits of organization and sentence fluency as they brainstormed, drafted, and revised the published pieces of writing you see here.

With a partner, read all three stories, then talk about where each writer shows a unique strength with organization and sentence fluency skills. Be prepared to share what you discussed with the whole class.

The Horror of Picture Day

by Alex, sixth grade writer

I never have good school days, but today was just unbearable! I got up groggily, stumbled out of bed, and halfway through saying, “Hey Mom, what’s for breakfast?” I fell down the stairs and rolled into the kitchen. My mother greeted me at the kitchen door with a shocked but pleasant smile and gently said “It’s picture day today, honey.”

I couldn’t believe my ears. I panicked and muttered under my breath, “On a Monday too!”

At breakfast, I spilled my orange juice on my pants so it looked like I had wet myself. I barely had time to clean up and while I was scrambling to pack my book bag my mother called out from the basement and said, “Don’t forget to do your chores!”

I was upset and in the process of getting things done I was too late. I missed the bus and had no choice but to walk to school. My shoe laces were untied, so I tripped on them and fell in a puddle. All my clothes got soaked. To make matters worse it started to rain and I saw my friends drive by in their warm bus, chatting, and eating pizza with Green Day blasting on the stereo. I’m going to dig a hole to China.

When I finally got to school, I plunked myself down and sighed. *What a way to start the day!* James and Will were laughing. “What?” I asked.

“I put a chewed wad of gum on your seat!” Will replied. I ripped the gum off my pants and stuck it to the underside of the desk.

As I raised my head, I saw Mr. Reynolds walking towards me and knew I was in for big trouble. Mr. Reynolds sternly informed me that my behaviour was inappropriate and that I had to stay in for detention after school. “But I have a badminton tournament after school!” I pleaded. Mr. Reynolds was firm with his decision and I knew I would have to miss my favourite game. I’m sure people are friendlier in China

At lunch, after I had piled mash potatoes, ham and pizza on my tray, I reached in my pocket for my lunch money and I closed my hand on air. Will was laughing. At once I knew who the culprit was, but I was extremely embarrassed. The lady at the cafeteria, however, was kind enough to let me have my lunch. I turned around and smirked at Will. He was grimacing. As soon as I set my tray down on the table, Will’s friends pulled me aside while Will said, “Thanks for the food, Jake!” He picked up the fork and started eating.

“Let me have my food back!” I yelled.

He hesitated. “You want your food back? You sure?” he asked with a cunning look on his face. I had no time to react. He took the pizza slice he was holding and smeared it over my face. He and his friends left laughing and joking.

“I bet there aren’t any bullies in China,” I groaned.

As pictures loomed closer, I ran outside for gym. As we were walking around the neighborhood, I stopped to watch a chickadee eat a worm. When I turned around my class had disappeared. I started to panic. I ran down the corner. “Mr. Reynolds!” I yelled. I ran further down the street.

“YAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!!!!” my class roared, and I screamed. My class burst out with laughter. “We were right behind you, panic man!”

As we turned around to go back, a skunk appeared. Everyone ran except me. I thought the skunk was cute. Nobody went near me for the rest of the day because I stunk so bad. I bet skunks are extinct in China!

Finally it was time for the class pictures but unfortunately my troubles did not end even then. Someone said, “Go away skunk face” and shoved me to the back of the line. I hate being last! I sat on the stool and before I was settled enough the camera flashed a few times before my eyes. I’m sure the photographers are more professional in China.

When I got home, I commented brightly “At least there’s retakes.”

My mom smiled sympathetically. “Those were the retakes honey!”

At the end of the year people were looking in the yearbooks and laughing at the picture of a kid with a blank expression. His face was smeared with pizza sauce and his clothes looked worn and tattered. Guess who that could have been? How I regretted not digging a hole to China!



The Absolute Worst Picture Day Ever!

by Annie, sixth grade writer

"Erg! Oh my gosh!" It's 8:30 and I just woke up for school which starts at 9:00! I ran downstairs and threw on my All Star Converse and remembered that today was SCHOOL PICTURE DAY! I splashed water on my face and put a comb through my hair. Today just plain clothes would not *do*. And speaking of *doo* - I stepped in doggie doo at recess. Why can't I just dig a tunnel to England?

After cleaning my shoe off, I discovered I forgot my lunch. Later, while we were doing a unit on Helen Keller, my great guide person, Nicole, led me into a tree, messing up my hair! Why can't I just dig a tunnel to England?

At lunch, someone spilled grape juice on me. Now my cream colored shirt looked like those disgusting yogurts. Also my no-longer friend Jodey's mustard flew off her sandwich and landed on me!

At pictures, my so-called friend Carrie put baby powder on my face, saying I had a zit and she was covering it up! I went into a sneezing fit and I fell through the picture screen. Why can't I just dig a tunnel to England?

When my family got the pictures my mom said, "Well (long pause), they're okay," with uncertainty. She also said, "There's always retakes!"



Simply a Bad Picture Day

by Mathew, sixth grade writer

What a great day, I thought to myself as I was getting out of bed. The sun was shining, the birds were singing, and everything seemed perfect. Then I remembered it was the day for school picture retakes! That was a bummer because, the day before, I had to get my front chipped tooth fixed, and my mouth still felt frozen; as a result, my smile was a little lopsided. When I tried to comb my hair, it seemed like someone had put a spell on it because it just didn't go the way I combed it. Having finished with the ordeal of getting dressed for school, I bolted downstairs, but I tripped and landed on my face. As I got up, my tooth felt funny. I rubbed my tongue on it and realized that half my tooth was missing. My mom was horrified when I told her about it. I couldn't eat breakfast because my tooth hurt too much, so mom made me a fruit smoothie. My mouth was still numb, and unknowingly I spilled the smoothie all down my shirt. From that moment on, I knew I was going to have the worst school picture ever. I wished I could fly to Mars.

Arriving at school, I was greeted by Cory, the school bully. He tried to tease me as much as he could, but when I didn't react, he pushed me in the mud. My white shirt was soiled and my trousers were wet and smelly. At that point I thought that I had seen the worst for the day, but I was very wrong. As I was walking inside, I heard someone call my name. I turned around to see who it was. It was my friend Dawson. "Hi," I said. When I turned back around--*WHACK!*--I walked into a pole. I went out like a light. It was horrifying. I really wished I could fly to Mars.

When I awoke (which must have only been a few seconds later because everything was still buzzing inside), there was a big red mark in the shape of a pole on my forehead. At my locker, my lock wouldn't open, so I kicked it as hard as I could. This idea worked because my locker opened, but unfortunately my foot felt like it was going to explode. After getting my books and entering the classroom, I sat down for the first period. It seemed like everything was finally under control, but just then the announcement came over the intercom: "Could all grade 6 students who are getting picture retakes please report to the gym." I thought to myself how I could possibly pose for a picture in this state. My clothes were a mess, my front tooth was chipped and I had a big red mark on my forehead. Mom says there's no air on Mars, but I'm sure it's better to live there than being humiliated here.

The wait time for the pictures was very long. I'm always last because my last name is Ztropilisky. I was so nervous that I almost wet myself waiting in line. When I nearly reached the head of the line, I felt like I was going to vomit. As I sat down to get my picture taken, I winced because a sharp piece of metal dug into my leg. I thought it was a tack, but it was just the latch that made the stool fold up. I barely had time to relax and the camera flashed right in front of my eyes. Unfortunately the camera man was in a rush and did not take a second shot. This was my only chance and I could see what a mess my school photo would be. I bet the aliens on Mars have high tech photo shops so everything is always picture perfect.

Nine months later, on my way home I was looking at my yearbook. Dawson was walking home with me. As we were flipping through the yearbook, we arrived at the specialty pages with pictures of students who have been voted the *class leader*, *athlete of the year*, *smartest person* and so on and so forth. On the page designated for *funniest* pictures, right in the middle was a snapshot of none other but me. I looked as comical as ever.

What had started out as the worst school picture day turned out to be the cause of some laughter amongst my friends. I guess going to Mars isn't necessary after all.

