

## PART C: PROSE

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Read the following selection and answer the questions on pages 8 to 13 of the written-response booklet.

excerpt from *I Know This Much is True*

by Wally Lamb

- 1 In less than half an hour, we'll be in a new state, New York, because we're on our sixth-grade field trip to the Statue of Liberty and Radio City Music Hall. We're riding in a coach bus with cushioned seats and a bathroom in the back. We're still in Connecticut: Bridgeport. Eddie Otero says Bridgeport's close to the New York border. Otero has cousins who live in the Bronx, and this is the same way they go when they go to his cousins'. We've been riding almost two hours. I'm sitting in the way-way-back seat with Otero and Channy Harrington. Thomas is midway up the aisle. He got stuck sitting with Eugene Savitsky, this weird kid in our class who always talks about the planets and geology and weather. Mrs. Hanka let us pick our seatmates. Thomas and Channy both picked me, and I picked Channy. No one picked Eugene. At recess last week, Billy Moon asked Eugene to name five football teams and he couldn't name *any*. Not *one*.
- 2 My brother and I have been waiting for this trip a long time, but for different reasons. Thomas wants to see the Radio City Easter show. Ma went once; she said the religious part was so beautiful, it made her cry. It sounds boring to me; it sounds like church. I can't wait to get to New York because then I'll have visited four states and because I have spending money—thirty-seven dollars I earned from shoveling snow and walking Mrs. Pusateri's dog and helping Ray on weekends. Last weekend, my stepfather Ray and I installed a tool cabinet in his truck. Ray let me do some of the drilling and tighten the screws. It's always me who Ray asks to help him, not Thomas. "Handy Andy" he calls me. He calls my brother "Charlie Ten Thumbs."
- 3 They show you a movie with the Easter show. The one we're seeing is *The Music Man*. Mrs. Hanka—we call her "Muriel Baby" behind her back—she saw *The Music Man* when it was a play instead of a movie. She brought in her record of all the songs and made us listen to it. Everybody was laughing because it was so corny. Eddie Otero started making pig snorts. Then three or four other kids started doing it. Muriel Baby got so hurt, she stopped the record and looked for a minute like she was going to cry. She told us that if she hadn't already bought the Radio City tickets, she'd cancel our whole trip. She gave us this big speech about how if we didn't care about anything, then she didn't care either. Then she did something weird. She turned off all the lights and went to the closet behind her desk and put on her coat. She just sat there. No social studies like we usually have. No nothing. Nobody said anything. All of us just sat there, nobody saying a word, until the intercom started calling the bus runs at 2:55. Like I said, it was weird. Creepy. The next day, everyone behaved, even Otero.
- 4 Eugene Savitsky is giving my brother a lecture on how things break the sound barrier. He's so jazzed up on the topic, you can hear him over everybody else. We're not just going *to* the Statue of Liberty; we're going *inside* it. They have stairs that go right to the top. Eddie Otero says he's going to climb down the nose and hang out there like he's the Statue of Liberty's booger. He would, too. Otero's insane.
- 5 Our seats are right next to the little bathroom on the bus. Otero and Channy and I say wiseguy things to the girls as they go in and out.

- 6 Susan Gillis turns around and gives *me* a dirty look, and I go, real snotty, “What are you looking at?” Susan’s mother was supposed to be our chaperone for this trip, but she came down with the mumps. Now Susan’s acting like *she’s* the chaperone. “You’d better stop talking like that,” she says.
- 7 “Make us,” I say.
- 8 “You’re already made and what a mess.”
- 9 It’s not like Mrs. Hanka’s going to let us sit wherever we want to when we get to Radio City, anyway. She’ll make us all sit together in the same row, like babies, and I bet you any amount of money she plops right down next to Otero. Last week we had the word *incurable* on our vocabulary list and Muriel Baby used Otero as an example.
- 10 Thomas gets up from his seat, climbs over Eugene, and walks back toward us. Someone trips him accidentally on purpose and everyone laughs, Channy and Eddie Otero loudest of all. Thomas acts so stupid sometimes. I look out the window so that I don’t have to look at him.
- 11 He opens the bathroom door. Channy and Otero make rude remarks. Thomas doesn’t answer them. I hear the bathroom door click shut. Hear him slide the bolt.
- 12 Five minutes go by and he’s still in there. Then six or seven minutes. I heard him flush a long time ago. Marie Sexton and Bunny Borsa have both gotten out of their seats about a million times to see if the bathroom is free. “Who’s in there?” Bunny asks us.
- 13 “His brother,” Otero says, jabbing his thumb at me.
- 14 Then the door handle starts clicking back and forth like crazy. “Dominick?” It’s Thomas. “Dominick?”
- 15 He’s locked himself in there. He can’t get out. I can hear the panic in his voice, in the frantic clicking of that door handle, the thump of his fists against the door. Channy and Otero are busting a gut.
- 16 “Calm down,” I keep telling him. “Keep your voice down. You’re making it worse.”
- 17 “It’s stuck! It won’t budge!”
- 18 Five or six other kids are standing there now; everyone’s shouting orders at Thomas. Mrs. Hanka starts down the aisle. In class, she likes my brother better than me. You can tell. Mr. Goody Two-shoes. Mr. Perfect. But now she’s mad at him. “To the left! Push it to the left!” she shouts, in the exasperated voice she usually saves for Otero.
- 19 I know it’s serious when the driver pulls over to the side of the highway and stops the bus. “Sit down! Sit down!” he’s yelling at everyone, elbowing his way down the aisle. I can’t believe it: my stupid brother is wrecking our entire trip to New York City.
- 20 “*Together!* Move the handle and the bolt *together!*” the driver keeps screaming at the locked door. He takes off his uniform jacket and the back of his shirt is soaked in sweat. His face is the same colour as rare roast beef. We’ve been on the side of the highway for fifteen minutes.

**OVER**

- 21 “Let...me...out...of...here!” Thomas keeps shouting. “Please! Please! LET ME OUT!” His body keeps making shuddering noises against the door. My stomach feels like I’m on this elevator that’s dropping way too fast. If I start crying in front of Channy and Otero, I don’t care what anyone says. I’m changing schools.
- 22 “Well, how long will it take to free him?” Mrs. Hanka demands. “Our Radio City tickets are for the 2:30 P.M. show. We have to get on the ferry by 10:45 at the latest or we’ll miss the Statue of Liberty.”
- 23 “I don’t know how long it’ll take, lady,” he says. “I can’t give you any guarantees.”
- 24 “I’m sorry, Dominick!” Thomas screams from behind the door. “I’m sorry!”
- 25 The bus gets off at the next exit and is crawling through traffic on some main street. Eugene Savitsky has gotten up and come to the back of the bus. He stands there, staring at the locked bathroom door like it’s a science problem. “Have him push the bolt the opposite way,” he tells me. “Have him push it to the right instead of the left.”
- 26 “It doesn’t *go* to the right,” someone says.
- 27 “But just tell him. Maybe he’s mixed up.”
- 28 “Push it to the right,” I tell Thomas.
- 29 The bolt thunks. The door squeaks open.
- 30 Thomas emerges to the sound of hoots and applause. He’s so pale, his skin looks blue. At first, he smiles. Then his face crumples up. He begins to cry.
- 31 I feel bad for him. And mad. And humiliated. Kids are looking at me, too, not just at Thomas. The Birdsey brothers: identical twins. I’d like to punch that smirk off of Channy Harrington’s rich little stupid face. Bust Eddie Otero’s big, fat nose.
- 32 For the rest of that whole, long day, Thomas acts really out of it. At the Statue of Liberty, he tells Mrs. Hanka he feels too scared to go up inside. She makes me stay down with him. Some guy in a uniform comes over and yells at me for chucking gravel into the water. After that, my brother and I sit on a wall, looking out at the harbour. “Just think,” Thomas says, finally breaking the silence. “This is exactly what our grandfather saw the day he first came over from Italy.”
- 33 “Would you do me a favour?” I tell him. “Would you just shut up?”
- 34 I spend all my money. At Radio City, I buy a three-dollar souvenir book that I don’t really want. At the novelty shop in Times Square I buy a back scratcher.
- 35 Channy’s brother Trent gives Thomas and me a ride home. It had been arranged before—Channy’s idea. Channy and Trent sit up front and Thomas and I sit in back. Channy doesn’t say two words to either of us. He talks to his brother, turns up the radio loud, mentions something about someone they knew in stupid California. I know I’m never going over to Channy’s house again.

- 36 “How was your trip?” Ma asks us when we get home.
- 37 “Pretty good,” Thomas says. “I really liked the Easter show. It was nice.” He says nothing about locking himself in the bathroom. I say nothing either.
- 38 “And how about you, Dominick?” Ma goes. “Did you have a good time?”
- 39 I’ve left my deluxe souvenir program on the bus. Someone has sat on my back scratcher and broken it. Of the thirty-seven dollars I brought with me, I have only eighty-three cents left. For a second or more, I’m on the verge of tears. Then I’m all right again. “It was boring,” I tell my mother. “It stunk, just like everything always stinks.”
- 40 That night, I dream I’m trapped in a small, dark cave in a woods I don’t recognize. It’s pitch dark. I bang and cry for help and when, at last, I discover a way out, I realize I’ve not been trapped in a cave after all, but inside the Statue of Liberty.