

# Wall

## Danielle Davis

Wall's parents, Tom and Norma, named him for the guy who wrote *Ben Hur*, Lew Wallace. Lew was a Civil War general. Wall likes to jump off the deck of his family's house with an umbrella.

He feels like he is flying for a second, his feet light and the sound of air inside the umbrella's rainbow dome like water boiling on the stove. His older brother Peter calls him Mary Poppins for a while, until he tries such a jump himself one afternoon and sprains his ankle on the landing.

Wall is unlike other boys in some ways. When he is eight, Wall makes a life-sized alligator out of newspaper his father has discarded in the recycle bin—the alligator stretches from one end of the garage to the other, including the movable tail. He works for hours after school crafting its mouth so the jaw hinges open and closed, revealing rows of coned teeth made from triangles of paper. His fingers rubbed black from folding, he flies in the house to have his mother, Norma, come see what he's made.

"Oh, Wall," she says when she comes outside, "You are such a talented guy." She smiles and pats his shoulders toward the door, inside of which his homework lies on the kitchen table unmarked. Then she touches her fingers to her dark, feathered hairline and shakes her head just a little.

But Wall can also drink a whole carton of orange juice in one sitting and likes P.E. more than any other subject at school because he climbs the hanging rope faster than anyone else in his grade.

Wall's father Tom prays every night at dinner. Mom and the boys, Wall and Peter, sit around the big brown kitchen table behind plates sectioned into meat, grain, and vegetable, heads bowed, listening to Tom's gravelly voice.

"Thank you for the day's blessings..."

Wall usually keeps his eyes open to observe the details of the ritual everyone else is missing behind their eyelids.

"... for keeping us safe and the food that's been prepared for us..."

Like his mom's scratchy-nyloned ankles and Peter wiping his nose.

"We ask that you would give us all a good night's sleep..."

The bits of spittle in the corners of his dad's mouth.

"... and that we'd help all those we come in contact with to know you..."

And the cat licking his privates on the pale tile.

"In Jesus's name, A-men."

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The night before Wall turns ten, Norma opens his bedroom door and creeps inside. She winces at his newest obsessions, dead beetles tacked all over the walls with push pins. They are such a morbid contrast to the baby blue curtains she's hung and the series of watercolors above his bed, one a scene of Pike's Place Market with fish stalls and people streaming through, another of the snow-capped Olympic mountains.

She sits on the edge of the tangled covers, and he stirs.

"Happy birthday, Wall" she whispers, and he grunts in response.

Norma strokes his narrow back in circles with her mother of pearl nails, humming, until her eyes are dry and sleepy.

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The next day, Wall has a kite-flying birthday party at Gasworks Park where he and six or seven other ten-year old boys fly kites, eat Otter Pops, and tell stories about the troll who lives under the bridge.

At home after the other boys' parents have picked them up, Norma gathers Wall, Peter, and her husband around the dining room table, the one used only for special occasions. Wall sits at the head of it, the birthday boy, in a high-backed chair, his feet almost touching the peach carpet, staring at his dad and brother standing there awkwardly, gold-striped wallpaper their background.

Norma steps out of the kitchen with a round chocolate cake covered in blazing spiraled candles, and the singing begins. Peter sings "Happy Birthday" as though it's a military

anthem, shouting in hard syllabic spurts; Norma uses her church singing voice; and Tom says each word with as much sing-song as he can muster.

Norma sets the cake down in front of Wall at the last “you,” and the family pauses. They close their eyes and bow their heads, and Tom begins to pray, thanking God for his son and praying for the year ahead. Wall closes his eyes this time, too, thinking that his Mom might be looking at him and pondering how old her baby is getting or something like that. He knows that he cannot blow out the candles until his father says A-men and he also knows that his parents have forbidden him to make a wish at all when he does. *But isn't a prayer a lot like a wish?* Wall thinks.

As he does, he feels heat and smells something like charred cookies and rotting meat.

“Fire!” he yells. “My eyebrows are on fire!” His family’s eyes open and his mother springs to action.

Wall madly slaps at his face. “Oh, shit!” he yells.

And this is what makes Norma and Tom stop where they are, she coming out of the kitchen with a damp cloth, and he, lurching toward Wall, his undershirt pulled up to his shoulders and almost off. They stop and stare at Wall while he slaps his forehead, thinking he’s extinguishing a fire, when there’s no fire, only the heat and smell of singed hair. Peter snickers and having just seen an apocalyptic melodrama in Sunday school, breaks the silence by joking that Wall is some kind of spawn of Satan hiding out in their family. Their parents are not amused.

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Wall grows into a bigger, more adultlike boy. He saves money to get his own hair cut and buy glasses that his Mom didn’t pick out at K-mart. He stops setting booby traps for his family—falling pails of water from trees and confetti from opened doors. His eyebrows get darker and darker until they are almost black, and his footsteps become less like those of a soft-footed bird and more like those of a giant cat you see caged at the zoo.

He stops coloring and starts to draw with a pen and tries his first cigarette with his best and only friend, Josh, who already knows how to blow smoke rings.

But he still notices the world around him as though he is the same ten-year old child—the blink of white when a mockingbird flaps its wings, how most men walk with their toes pointed out, the way his mother’s cheekbones arch just the way his grandma’s do, how a

mango tastes both slimy and powdery at the same time, the way his own private parts look a lot like an old man with a big nose. He never says any of these things aloud to his family because he fears, he knows, that they'll think he's strange and probably sinful. So, he walks around with a black beat-up spiral notebook scratching out drawings of all the things he sees, PRIVATE written in white-out on the cover.

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Wall arrives at the coffee shop a little late, after going back to his house for his favorite ink pen—the one he likes for the scratchy sound it makes—and missing the bus he'd planned to take. The instructor had said the class is at a coffee shop. He didn't specify the name, just gave Wall the address and said it was on a block with a Starbucks on the east corner and a Tully's on the other. Wall finds it and notices that the inside is very un-chain; it doesn't have CDs for sale and the baked goods look to be a week old.

He enters the back room through some hanging beads and sees eight other people in it, aside from a man with a gray beard who's talking, who Wall assumes is George, the guy he'd spoken to on the phone.

"You're just in time. Luella went to the bathroom to get ready for this session. What's your name?"

"Wall." He feels himself standing very, very still and shifts his weight from one Converse to the other.

There is an empty chair between a middle-aged woman wearing an Indian tunic who looks a little like his mom, only looser, her hair kind of messy, chunks of it falling around her lined face, and a twenty-something guy with a raven tattooed across his forearm. While setting down his drawing paper and wiping his damp hands, Wall tries to imagine his own mother sitting in a class like this. He can't, like the pressure in the room would get imbalanced and explode if she walked in with her pearls and nylons.

His parents had seemed nervous about him going downtown to hang out with strangers once a week, but they wanted to be supportive of his interests, too. He told them that he wasn't sure exactly what the class was, but that a teacher at school had recommended it. This was enough for his parents. They trusted the teachers at Pine Christian High. He didn't tell them it was Ms. Sams, the history teacher, the only one who doesn't have a fish on her car and lets them read the *Seattle Times* editorial page and *Newsweek* in class and that she also

lets them listen to headphones when they finish their assignments without censoring what they play.

"Your father and I can't really help you with your art, so we'll have to let you go see someone who can," his mother said, as though Wall were going to see a psychologist every week about an addiction. "I agree with your mother," his father said. "Sounds gay," Peter said, to which their dad responded, "We don't say gay in this house."

Wall added this to the list of words he couldn't say in his house that already included the obvious shit, as well as sucks, bitch, shut up, fart, slut, ugly, and fat, among others. Wall rehearses almost everything he utters to his parents a moment before so as not to say the wrong thing that to him sounds perfectly normal but to them sounds positively suspect. The no-brainers are changing hell to heck and God to gosh and when tempted to say hate, he doesn't say anything at all.

Luella, the model, comes out of the bathroom in a red kimono. She looks to be a college student. In the middle of the circle sitting in a chair that reminds Wall of something in his Grandma's living room or a Victorian movie, she slips off the kimono, draping it on a nearby crate of coffee beans. She is totally naked underneath, not even skimpy underwear or little sticky things over her nipples.

Wall cannot help letting out a small gasp that he immediately masks as a clearing of his throat. He had no idea this is actually what figure drawing meant, though he probably should've guessed based on all the studies of nudes he's seen in art books. While Luella positions herself, he works on calming his erection by visualizing his grandmother in the chair, a cup of Earl Grey tea in her hand. He crosses his legs as George passes out little sticks of charcoal, giving the room instructions.

Wall looks around and sees everyone else staring at Luella and drawing, drawing and staring, their eyes darting back and forth between paper and girl. He picks up his charcoal and stares at Luella as well. She's sitting upright, hands on her knees, and from where he is, the hang of one full breast, the hint of another, and her bent legs are all he can see. He attempts to draw the line of her profile, but can't really concentrate. What her skin must feel like fills his mind. Her breasts look nothing like what he's seen peeking out from push-up bras—taut flesh like perfectly smooth, round spheres, immune to gravity. Loose like this, there's nothing perfectly round about them except their dark maroon moons.

With only two or three marks on Wall's paper, George signals for Luella to change position.

She shifts around to face another direction, her forehead now square to Wall. She maneuvers herself for a few seconds, rotates her ankles, and ends up sitting on the chair with one leg bent, foot on the chair pad, that knee in front of her right breast and the other leg tucked under her. She's got one peach-fuzzed arm draped over her knee and the other holding the seat. Perfectly still. Wall thinks he's seen this position in a painting before. Her head is cocked and her eyes are large, brown spheres. There's a tuft of dark hair in her lap and below it, the pink folds of what is the first vagina he's ever seen.

Wall glances at the tattooed guy next to him, his paper filled with hard lines and finger-smudges, and looks down at his own blank page. He looks back at Luella and squints until she blurs into an arrangement of shapes. Now, he sees an ellipse where Luella's left breast used to be and halved peaches where her shoulders were a moment ago. He draws the shapes, their lines black and smooth, brushing back his bangs every couple of strokes. He uses the charcoal as though it's his ink pen, drawing toward him instead of dragging away as though the paper would rip, his shoulder blade dipping and rising. He is not thinking about the naked girl in front of him anymore, just the forms and his drawing. When he gets to her vagina, he sees fresh slices of mango, both powdery and slippery. For the hair above it, he marks up the blank space and uses the back of his thumb to smudge, creating a muddy, rough cloud.

That night, his parents are sitting on the pink couch in the living room when Wall gets home, his mom still dressed and his dad in a white undershirt and shorts, his glasses off and belly loose.

They hold mugs and are talking, but stop when he shuts the door behind him.

"How was your class, hon?" His mom's mauve lipstick is still on, even after making dinner and doing the dishes. He has a theory that she never sweats.

"It was cool." Wall walks toward his parents and, ignoring his mom's pats on the sofa next to her, sits on a nearby ottoman.

"What did you all do?" This is Tom's question. The "you all" must be referring to me and all the old ladies, Wall thinks, his dad never having met anyone who draws or paints he must imagine the class more like a social activity at a senior home.

"We drew stuff."

"What kind of stuff?"

"The teacher brought in vases and fruit and we sketched them."

"Let's see what you've got."

"I don't have any. We're supposed to leave them there so we can see how they get better every week."

"That's nice," his mother says and then asks if she can have the teacher's number to call and thank him for allowing Wall in the class.

Wall doesn't enjoy lying to his parents. They are always kind to him and he knows that not going to R-rated movies and having to attend youth group aren't the worst things that parents could do to him. But now, he's found something he knows they wouldn't approve of and that he can't live without.

"I lost his number. On the bus. But, I'll get it for you next week for sure. I promise."

"Hon, let your yes be yes and your no be no. I believe you."

Wall ambles out of the living room, mentally adding promise to the list of words not to say when inside of 1171 Lakeview Circle and feeling slightly guilty about the rolled up drawings in his bag.

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Josh drives Wall to the art supply store downtown. Josh is the only sophomore with a license because he was held back in kindergarten, and he prefers the record store next door to looking at buckets of gesso. After all, Josh can spend his allowance on albums he doesn't have to hide from his parents. Wall thinks Josh's parents are from a different planet than his and can never figure out why they send him to Pine Christian. Lou and Vicky listen to Leonard Cohen at night and have parties where their friends come over, the men smoking pipes and the women drinking strawberry margaritas with big salt crystals on the edges of their glasses.

Wall has chosen his clothes carefully today, not wanting to look like a poser, settling on a Nirvana t-shirt, his favorite jeans, and Converse. The art store is packed with stuff and with patrons wearing black. He walks through the aisles of portfolios, wrapping paper, screen printing kits and brushes and canvases, looking for oil paints. After a few figure drawing classes, George has suggested Wall try playing around with painting, that if he's serious about art he should give a brush a try. The only painting Wall's done before has involved

neon-colored posters advertising school elections or the national day of prayer when all the kids gather around the flagpole to pray about making abortion illegal.

He finds the paints, hundreds of tubes all lined up like toothpaste in the grocery store. He scans the cheapest brand for the colors George recommended—he said to get primary ones, along with white, and a brown like burnt sienna. Wall runs his finger across the rim of the shelf, his neck bowed forward, and reads the names aloud: viridian, cadmium yellow, titanium white, disazo orange, ivory black, manganese blue. When he finds one he wants, he plucks it off the shelf and slides it into the waist of his jeans like a gun.

“Can I help you with anything?” A salesgirl interrupts Wall’s mumbling, and he looks up to see a girl a few years older than he is looking at him expectantly.

Wall freezes and spits out a few unintelligible sounds before managing, “Um, no. I’m cool.”

“Okay.” She has blond hair so light it is almost white and her lips remind him of ripe fruit. “It’s just that I thought I heard you talking.”

“Oh, yeah.” Wall straightens his neck out and blows at his bangs. “I’m wondering if you can help me find burnt sienna.”

The salesgirl smiles at his belt of paint tubes.

She turns around and lifting to the toes of her slipper-shoes, reaches up to the highest shelf. The ties of her black bistro apron are knotted loosely around her jeans.

Her shirt rises revealing a band of pale skin before she turns back toward Wall holding the paint. Wall figures this is where the term hourglass came from, watching a woman reach for something or pick fruit from a tree and seeing the bowed arcs of her waist.

“Thanks.”

“Yeah. Do you need anything else?” She smoothes the edge of her apron with her thumb and forefinger. The nametag pinned to its bottom corner says Ruby in bubbly letters.

“Do you know why it’s called burnt sienna?” Wall shoves the tube in his pocket this time, the flat part sticking out halfway.

“Not really. A lot of them have funny names. Some are from the pigments they’re made from. Or that they used to be made from a long time ago.” Ruby lets out a small giggle, embarrassed at her clarification.



"Like what?" Wall looks at Ruby's face and then drops his eyes below her clavicle. Since drawing class, where once there were clothes and bulges, he can now imagine what's creating those stretches and folds.

"Some of the pigments used to be made from berries and plants. I think rhubarb was even used for red, like rhubarb pie."

"I think I've heard that. They used insects and bones and stuff too." This comes out like more of a question than a statement.

"Some of them are still natural, like from rocks, but most are chemicals now. It's probably a lot easier that way."

Wall imagines what it would be like to draw Ruby. "Which is your favorite?"

She looks back at him. "I like blue the best."

"What'd they used to make that with?" Wall knows he's prolonged the conversation about as long as he possibly can.

She smiles. "A bright blue stone. It was so expensive during the renaissance it cost more than gold. That's my favorite." She points with her black-polished fingernail. "Ultramarine."

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On his way out to meet Josh, Wall stops at sale table and looks at a manual on color. There's a page on which paints are the best for a palette and one on oils and thinners, another on glazing. One of the pages gets into pigments and has a color wheel. On that one there's a picture of a palette smeared with blobs of paint. The caption reads: "Pigments that are not permanent fade or blacken over time. They are known as 'fugitives.'"

Before leaving, he scans the aisles for Ruby. When he doesn't see her, he's disappointed but figures she's in the back room or taking a break.

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Wall has been to figure drawing three or four more times. He's drawn Luella one more time, and then there were two male models—one an old guy in his seventies or eighties who walks with a cane, the other the guy with the raven tattoo.

Tonight, Wall walks in and sees the back of a girl in a floor-length white robe that almost matches the color of her hair. She turns to take it off, and it is Ruby.

Wall feels as though he's walked into the wrong place, his parents' bedroom or his brother jerking off in the shower, and almost turns around. Then Ruby smiles at him and he returns it, feeling incredibly awkward that his wish to draw her is about to come true. It occurs to him that maybe he should have been wishing on birthday candles the last fifteen years.

Nick Cave comes on from the CD player and the others begin drawing Ruby, who is still standing, one hand on the chair and one foot resting on the toes of the other, while Wall is unloading all his stuff, taking off his jacket, fumbling for a piece of charcoal from a box on the floor.

Finally, he is sitting down staring and drawing, his eyes almost never looking down at the paper, as George has taught him. He draws his first line—a circle shape for her head and a line marking where her spine would be, down to the inner curve of the leg she's got her weight on. From there, he draws a rough sketch of the rest of her, from the heart-shape of her hairline to her black-polished toes. The more he draws, the less nervous he feels that she is directly facing him, stark naked, and once he's filling in the details, Wall's completely forgotten he's ever spoken to her.

When drawing Luella's breasts, he'd drawn in two hard Us, like the boobs on Viking cartoon women. When he gets to Ruby's he sees that they don't hang and fold against her skin that way, but are more like the peaks of whipped cream on some kind of dessert. Instead of hard lines, he uses the charcoal to shade in the place where they curve down and into her ribcage, careful to get them just right.

The night goes by quick, the CD on repeat, and George opting to skip the formal break and just letting people go and get coffee as they please. Wall's trance is broken only when Ruby slips on her robe and slipper-shoes and shuffles to the bathroom to change.

George announces that he'll be out of town next week so there'll be a class this Sunday morning instead, if anyone can get out of bed the morning after Halloween.

Wall knows that he won't be going, that the only excuse for missing church is a fever and diarrhea. In Oregon one summer for his uncle's wedding, Wall woke up and it happened to

be a Sunday, the day they'd be driving home. Instead of everyone getting up, getting ready, and checking out the continental breakfast with all the other guests, his family had "church" sitting in a semicircle on the queen bed in his parents' room, their pajamed legs hanging off the sides.

His dad read a passage of scripture and his mom led them in a couple of songs, the kind that Wall always thought had a particularly military feel with a lot of marching and sacrificing in the lyrics. Then, one of them switched on the motel's television to TBN for a sermon by an old, white guy wearing a cream suit and holding his Bible the way a gym teacher holds a basketball, gesturing with it, whipping it around, patting it like a child's head.

Afterward, Norma turned to the boys.

"Do you have any thoughts to share about what the Pastor said? Did it convict you in any way?"

Wall didn't really catch most of the sermon but remembered it had something to do with money being the root of all evil. He thought to himself, *If money is so bad, then why is the pastor dressed in that suit with the nice watch and the big stone on his ring?* but just told his mother he didn't really have anything to say. Peter piped up with something about wanting to tithe a portion of his allowance.

Wall says goodbye to everybody and packs up his stuff, and walks out into the drizzly October night, wondering if Ruby is going to be at the Sunday class.

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Wall hears the doorbell as he's looking at the watercolors in his room. They've been there as long as he can remember. He's always kind of liked the faded one of Pike's Market, which is why he hasn't stashed them all at the back of his closet.

After seeing the art book, he puts together why that one's faded over the years. It hangs directly in the path of morning sunlight, on mornings when there is sunlight. The rich red of the sign has faded to light brick and the blue of the sky is more of a washed-out gray now. Fugitive pigment, he thinks.

When he hears Josh talking with his mom in the entryway, he finishes stashing stuff in his catcher's mitt. He's dressed as a baseball player for Halloween. Halloween. What for most kids

is ghosts and goblins, for Wall is the harvest carnival at church and bunny and farmer costumes. Luckily, the bunny thing stopped in about second grade, but the farmer, pitchfork in hand, was a staple until eighth. Now, as a sophomore, his parents are letting him trick or treat for the fourth or fifth time ever. But not before giving him a talk about All Saint's Eve.

"Just remember that a lot of bad things happen on Halloween." His dad had said this with a completely straight face while dishing out scalloped potatoes to Wall and Peter the night before. "There are real witches and people who like to do dark things." Holding in his retort that they lived in the suburbs and that the only witches are little girls in black hats, Wall started in on the thin, oniony rounds in front of him.

"That's right. I know you boys are all grown up, but I still worry about you." Their mother dabbed a goldenrod napkin in her glass and wiped a water spot from it.

Peter was going to the harvest carnival at church, even though he was a senior in high school. Wall figured he went every year so he could make out with perky, good girls who smelled of kettle corn behind piles of hay once the sun went down.

Once she'd finished, she added, "And remember what we've said about trick or treat. A treat is fine, but the trick, that's where you really get caught in the mire. Magic is evil. Just like that Ouija board toy people play with." Wall's parents had asked him to say Happy Halloween at people's doors to avoid the trick thing altogether.

In the hallway, Josh is surrounded by houseplants and Norma and nodding his head maniacally. He is dressed as an umpire, a backwards hat, grate over his face, and baseball uniform.

"Hey, man, you ready?"

Once they're outside, Josh and Wall scurry to the end of the cul-de-sac to finish their costumes. Wall pops plastic fangs onto his top teeth and uses shoe polish to paint a black circle around one eye, both items having been stashed in his mitt. Josh dribbles fake blood down Wall's mouth and chin to complete the zombie look.

Josh pulls a platinum blond wig from his backpack and fixes it under his baseball hat. Wall helps him with the sloppy red lipstick, but refuses to help with the two slightly deflated plastic balls Josh is stuffing in the shirt of his uniform.

"Voila. Attack of the slutty umpire."

"Looks great, man."

"You, too. Your mother would be proud."

. . .

That night, while Josh and Wall knock on doors and ring bells, amassing Reese's Pieces packets, miniature candy bars, and individually wrapped Starbursts into Josh's backpack, Wall's parents run out of little boxes of raisins to hand out. One too many second graders dressed as cartoon characters comes calling, and they begin to search the house frantically for something to give them.

Tom suggests pennies, but Norma thinks this is crass, giving people money for dressing up as immoral celebrities and aliens.

Norma walks to Wall's room and pokes around looking for some stash of candy he may have hidden somewhere. Something compels her to kneel down, even in her good stockings, to peek under the bed. There, she sees two messy stacks of paper among running shoes and chewing gum. She grabs both, gets up from the floor, and sifts through them while pacing the room.

After the doorbell rings again, Tom storms in looking for his wife.

"Norma! What, for Pete's sake, are you doing in here?" He is almost yelling, something rarely done in their home.

Instead of answering, Norma does an about-face and shoves the papers at her husband, who forgets all about the princess outside holding a plastic pumpkin, lid off, on his doorstep.

He lets most of them fall to the carpet, afraid to touch them and sully himself with the images he sees.

"These are what he's been up to on Wednesday nights instead of going to youth group. He's been making drawings of naked people, not fruit and vases. He's been making pornography!" this last word she says in one giant puff. She picks up the drawings on the floor and slaps them in Tom's outstretched hands, one by one.

He looks at each, his jaw clenched, outraged at being forced to hold the abominations.

When she's transferred them all to her husband, like transferring responsibility of the sin to him, Norma collapses on Wall's bed and lets out a couple of sobs before dabbing at her eye with a corner of the bedspread and looking to her husband for an answer.

Tom joins her, still holding the drawings like a breakfast tray, and they sit in silence for almost five full minutes.

The one on top of the stack is of an elderly man sitting naked in a chair, a cane beside him. Tom can't help but notice how well the drawing is done, how it's really quite beautiful. The heavy lines of charcoal, like a great deal of pressure was used leaning into the paper. Tom begins to shuffle through them the way his wife had done while pacing, but slower, careful not to rip them.

They're all like that, clearly done by a beginner, but each one having some detail that's incredibly lifelike: the veins of a man's hand, the round of an abdomen, the curve of a back becoming a buttock.

They both are transfixed now, feeling alternately angry and scared and slightly aroused. Tom and Norma stare at their son's drawings, proud at how good he is, ashamed that he lied to them, and feeling vaguely that they are missing out on something that Wall is not missing, keenly aware of their clothing and that they've been handing out raisins all evening.

At the same moment, Ruby is hanging up her apron at the art supply store, thinking about the party she's going to and whether Wall will be at the figure drawing class tomorrow.

And Wall stands in a doorway, fangs exposed, saying the words his parents have forbidden and holding open Josh's backpack in front of draped cotton fuzz covered in clinging plastic spiders, noticing only the added weight of the M&M packets just dumped in his bag.

## English 1302 Final Essay

Choose **ONE** of the following questions to answer about the story "Wall."  
Use the planning/ homework sheet to outline your ideas.

### Important Reminders

- Use MLA format
- Distinguish between using Wall as a character (just Wall) and when referring to the title ("Wall").
- Make sure you use examples to back up your claims.
- You will cite page numbers in in-text citations for quotes and paraphrases you use, and as long as you name the story and author in your introductory paragraph, you won't need anything more than the page numbers in your text.
- Make sure to cite the whole story at the end on a work cited page. Use MLA style. See [Writing down the Basics](#), MLA Works Cited Page Citations: Magazine/Journal Articles.
- Do not use any sources other than the story itself, and if you want to provide a definition in answering question 2, you may cite that.

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### Questions

1. It's easy to focus on Wall as the main character in the story, but read the story again and think about Tom and Norma as the main characters. If they are the main characters, the story is about how they change and discover things. Discuss Tom and Norma, looking at how they are described early in the story and comparing it with the last moment of the climax of the story. What does that show about them and their development, and what does that say about the relationship between and knowledge of parents and their children?
2. If you had to define Wall in one word, what would that word be? How does Davis illustrate that through words, descriptions, or actions, and what is she saying about that concept or idea through this story?
3. In the story, Wall lies to and deceives his parents on many occasions. Are these acts of selfishness or selflessness? Using specific examples from the story, write an essay in which you explain whether Wall's acts are selfish or selfless. In the end, discuss how this shows the ways in which we can be either selfless or selfish through our choices to deceive and whether that's necessary or good.
4. The term *fugitive color* is explained as "Pigments that are not permanent fade or blacken over time. They are known as 'fugitives'" (33). How are either Wall and/or his parents like a fugitive color? What's the significance of that? Make sure to use examples from the story to support your points.
5. What traits are unique to Wall and what do they reveal about human nature or about the theme of the story? Explain those unique traits using examples from the story to show how they define Wall, and connect them to human nature or the general theme of the story.
6. What does the imagery used during Wall's art lessons reveal about who he is and who he's becoming?
7. What is the moment of grace as discussed in class in this story? Explain it and discuss the significance of it in terms of these character's lives and situations as well as in general.

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### Citation Information

This was published in the monthly magazine *Carve*. It was published in 2008, volume 5, issue number 9. You will find the page numbers on the copy of the story above. You will need to include page numbers in in-text citations in your essay, and a work cited page at the end. Cite this in MLA style.