



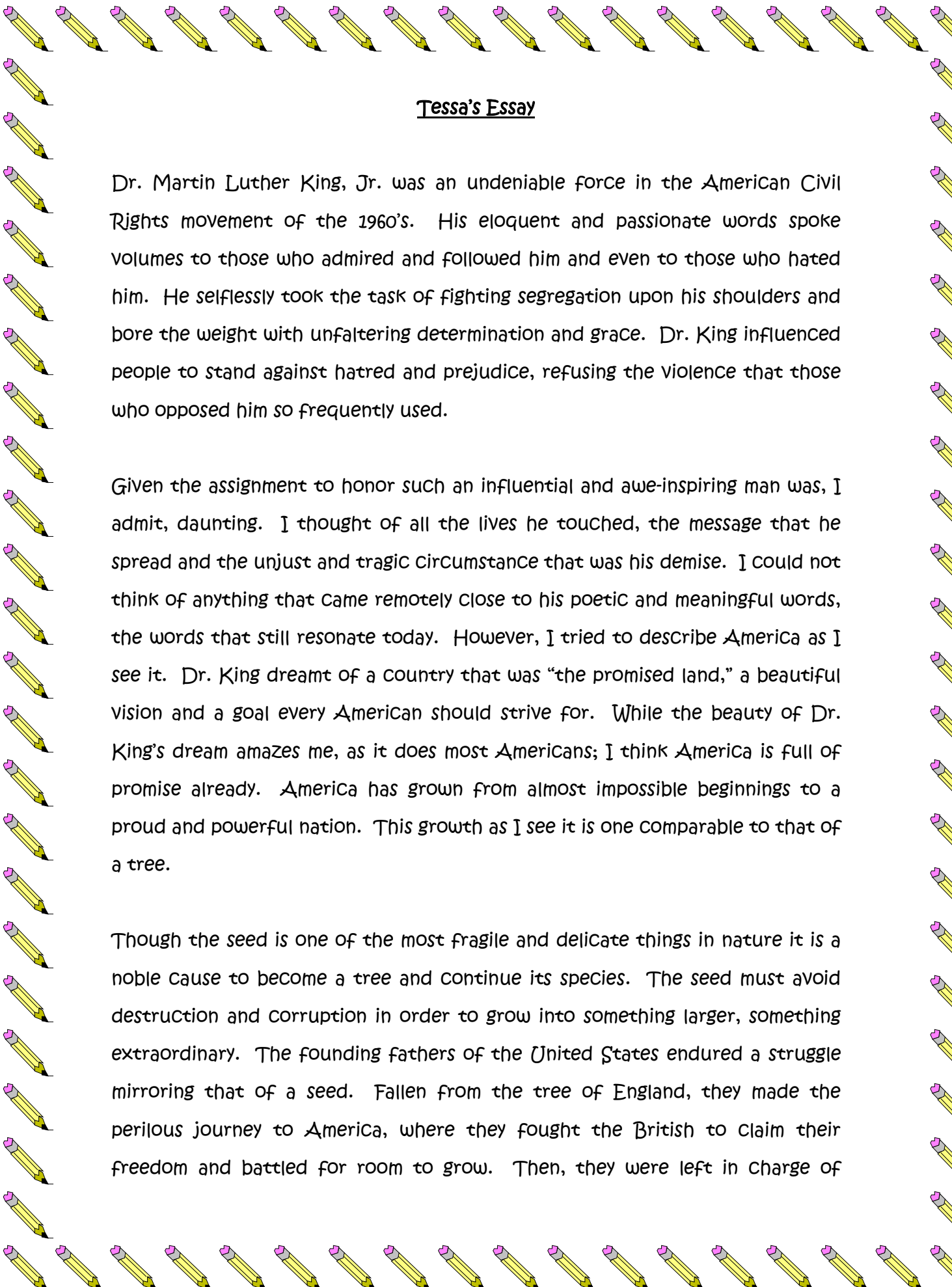
11<sup>th</sup> Grade Essay Winner

Tessa Liniger

River High School  
Hannibal, Ohio

Principal: Dr. Manseau

Teacher: Mrs. Hall

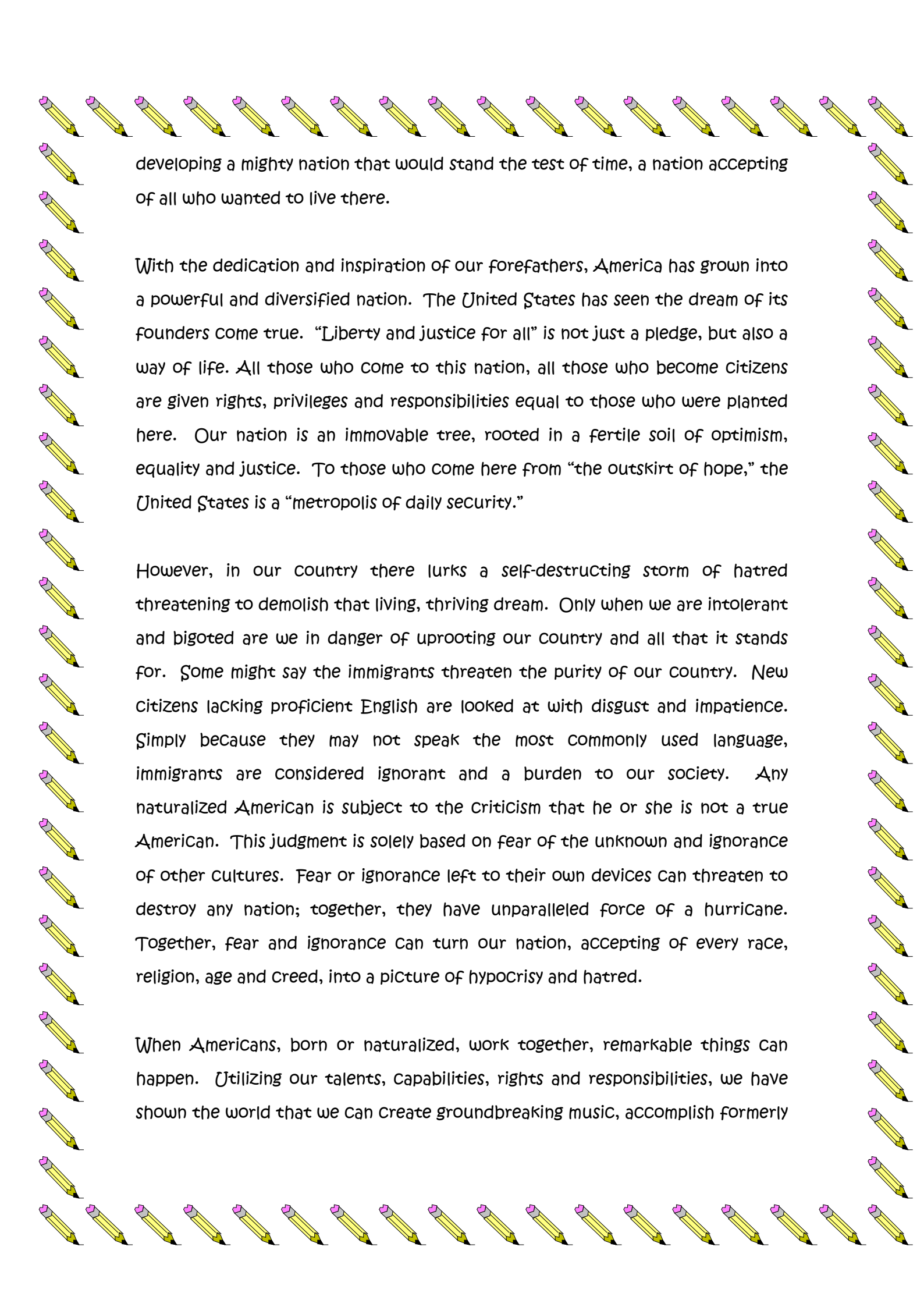


## Tessa's Essay

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was an undeniable force in the American Civil Rights movement of the 1960's. His eloquent and passionate words spoke volumes to those who admired and followed him and even to those who hated him. He selflessly took the task of fighting segregation upon his shoulders and bore the weight with unfaltering determination and grace. Dr. King influenced people to stand against hatred and prejudice, refusing the violence that those who opposed him so frequently used.

Given the assignment to honor such an influential and awe-inspiring man was, I admit, daunting. I thought of all the lives he touched, the message that he spread and the unjust and tragic circumstance that was his demise. I could not think of anything that came remotely close to his poetic and meaningful words, the words that still resonate today. However, I tried to describe America as I see it. Dr. King dreamt of a country that was "the promised land," a beautiful vision and a goal every American should strive for. While the beauty of Dr. King's dream amazes me, as it does most Americans; I think America is full of promise already. America has grown from almost impossible beginnings to a proud and powerful nation. This growth as I see it is one comparable to that of a tree.

Though the seed is one of the most fragile and delicate things in nature it is a noble cause to become a tree and continue its species. The seed must avoid destruction and corruption in order to grow into something larger, something extraordinary. The founding fathers of the United States endured a struggle mirroring that of a seed. Fallen from the tree of England, they made the perilous journey to America, where they fought the British to claim their freedom and battled for room to grow. Then, they were left in charge of

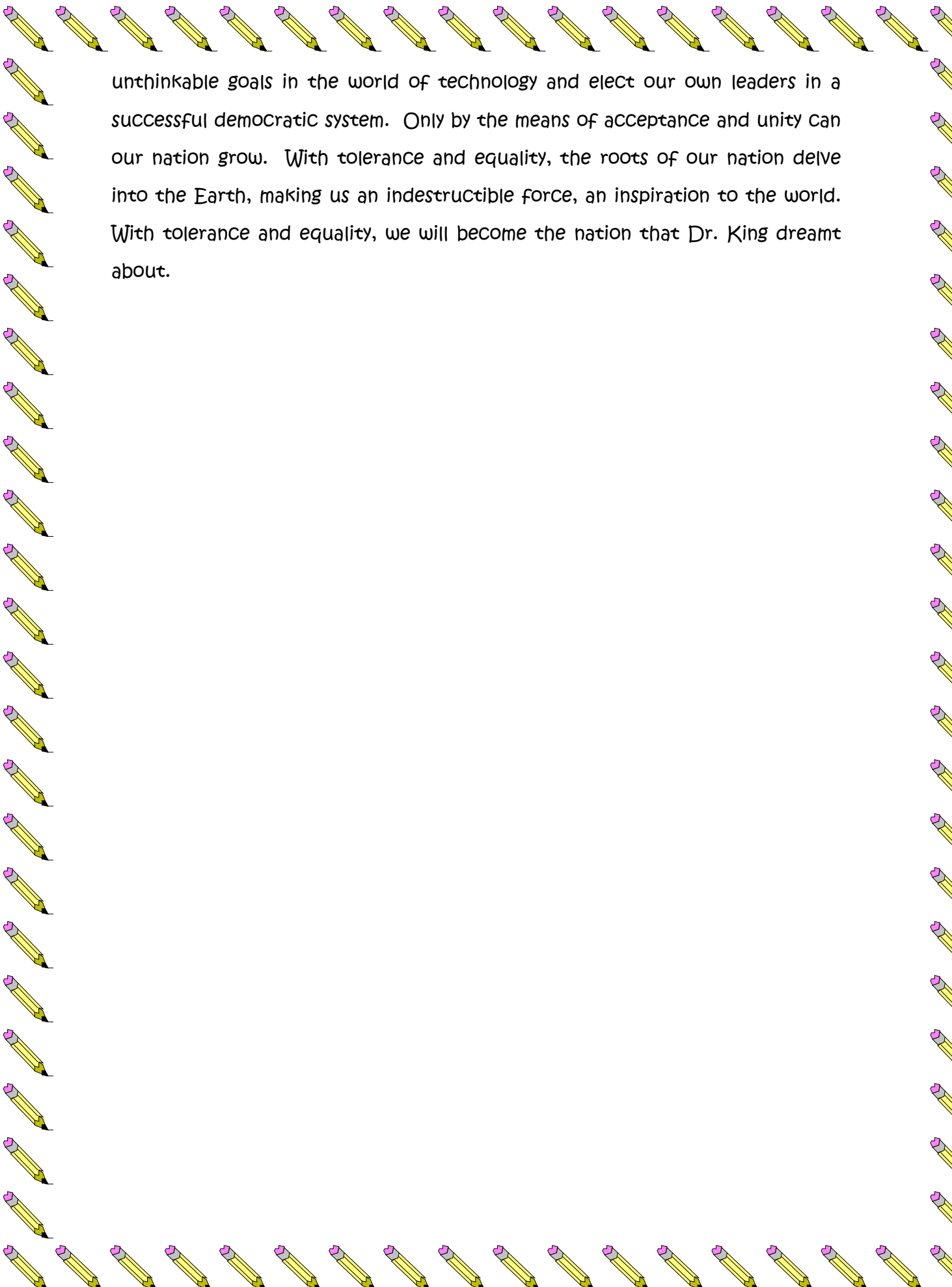


developing a mighty nation that would stand the test of time, a nation accepting of all who wanted to live there.

With the dedication and inspiration of our forefathers, America has grown into a powerful and diversified nation. The United States has seen the dream of its founders come true. "Liberty and justice for all" is not just a pledge, but also a way of life. All those who come to this nation, all those who become citizens are given rights, privileges and responsibilities equal to those who were planted here. Our nation is an immovable tree, rooted in a fertile soil of optimism, equality and justice. To those who come here from "the outskirts of hope," the United States is a "metropolis of daily security."

However, in our country there lurks a self-destructing storm of hatred threatening to demolish that living, thriving dream. Only when we are intolerant and bigoted are we in danger of uprooting our country and all that it stands for. Some might say the immigrants threaten the purity of our country. New citizens lacking proficient English are looked at with disgust and impatience. Simply because they may not speak the most commonly used language, immigrants are considered ignorant and a burden to our society. Any naturalized American is subject to the criticism that he or she is not a true American. This judgment is solely based on fear of the unknown and ignorance of other cultures. Fear or ignorance left to their own devices can threaten to destroy any nation; together, they have unparalleled force of a hurricane. Together, fear and ignorance can turn our nation, accepting of every race, religion, age and creed, into a picture of hypocrisy and hatred.

When Americans, born or naturalized, work together, remarkable things can happen. Utilizing our talents, capabilities, rights and responsibilities, we have shown the world that we can create groundbreaking music, accomplish formerly



unthinkable goals in the world of technology and elect our own leaders in a successful democratic system. Only by the means of acceptance and unity can our nation grow. With tolerance and equality, the roots of our nation delve into the Earth, making us an indestructible force, an inspiration to the world. With tolerance and equality, we will become the nation that Dr. King dreamt about.