

“A Very Likable Person”:

Character Development in Louis Sachar’s *There’s a Boy in the Girls’ Bathroom*

Many students assume that while writing is difficult for them, good writers write easily, quickly, and almost perfectly the first time. Students label themselves as poor writers because the process is hard, and some give up or never realize their potential. Teachers can tell students that writing is difficult for most writers, but students often remain unconvinced. If these students could see that their favorite authors struggle through producing novels, they just might reconsider their definitions of good writers and be motivated to write themselves.

Louis Sachar’s novels appeal to many readers and writers. The Wayside School series, the Marvin Redpost series, and novels such as *There’s a Boy in the Girls’ Bathroom* and *Holes* are well known and loved by children and adults:

The situations he puts his characters in are so everyday that adults can remember being there. Children who read his books have either been through similar situations, hoped they would never go through anything like it, or have witnessed someone else living through it. His work crosses the boundaries of age and is enjoyed by young and old alike. (Sachar & Sachar, 1999, p. 421)

For his writing, Sachar has received many book awards, including the 1999 Newbery Medal for *Holes*. He has only achieved such accolades by committing time and effort to his writing, as he explains during his Newbery Medal acceptance speech:

Usually I spend up to a month brainstorming. I’ll get an idea, write a few words on my computer, think, “That’s stupid!” and delete it. I’ll try something else—“That’s dumb!”—and try again. Sometimes I may get an idea that intrigues me, and

I may work on it for a week before realizing it isn’t going anywhere. Then at some point I’ll get an idea that may not seem very special at first; however, as I write, it immediately starts to grow. One idea leads to another idea, and that idea leads to another idea, and that idea leads to another idea, until I have a story going. (Sachar, 1999, p. 414)

Sachar’s process includes many rewrites. In an interview for *Stamford*, Sachar stresses the importance of revision: “The first draft is always the most painful. My firsts are very poorly written; they contain a lot of garbage. But I have an idea in my mind of what I want it to be, so I go back and do another draft. I start tearing it all apart. Revision is not just correcting spelling and grammar. That will make the story only a little better” (Davis, 2002, p. 29). As a prolific, honored, and favorite author who makes transparent his own struggles to produce good writing, Sachar is a clear model for student writers who struggle to write.

The Kerlan Collection

As a graduate student at the University of Minnesota with access to the Kerlan Collection, I had the opportunity to closely examine Louis Sachar’s writing process. The Kerlan Collection, “one of the world’s great children’s literature research collections” (University of Minnesota Libraries, 2010), houses books as well as manuscripts, illustrations, and other original materials by authors and illustrators of children’s literature. The Collection is available to anyone who wishes to access the materials, but most of the materials must stay in the reading room at the Andersen Library on the University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus. Fortunately,

teachers do have online access to a few lesson plans utilizing materials from the Kerlan Collection, as well as other titles and artifacts contained in the full Children's Literature Research Collection (<https://www.lib.umn.edu/clrc/resources-for-teachers>). Additionally,

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as a result of working through the materials that Louis Sachar donated, I have generated and include my own suggestions for teaching at later points in this article.

Sachar's donations to the Kerlan Collection include 160 folders of typescripts, front matter, galley proofs, corrected page proofs, notes, correspondence, etc. from nine of his books (Eyer, 2008).

Of the nine books, I found a wealth of information, including multiple drafts of the novel and correspondence between Sachar and his editors, for *There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom*. I include a description of my process for working through Sachar's materials on *There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom*, a discussion of my findings related to Sachar's development of his character Bradley throughout his drafts of the novel, and teaching ideas I developed that utilize this information.

My Process

What intrigued me most about *There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom* was the protagonist, Bradley Chalkers, which is not surprising since I connect most to literature when I relate to or react strongly to the characters. At the beginning of the novel, Bradley's only friends are the toy animals he plays with and talks to in his bedroom. He has difficulty making friends with his peers because he comes across as very belligerent. As the novel progresses, Bradley meets and begins to work with the new school counselor, Carla, who helps him open up to others, allowing him to make friends with other fifth graders in his class. My question as I finished the novel was: *How did Louis Sachar create a character that seems so unlovable in the beginning but becomes so sympathetic by the end?* At this point, I

knew that character development would be my focus as I delved into the folders in the Kerlan Collection.

The Folders

Sachar's notes, drafts, and correspondence fill three boxes in the Kerlan Collection. Unfortunately, the items are not arranged in any particular order (the Kerlan Collection, like many archives, chooses to preserve the order of materials in which they were donated). Not only are the drafts out of order, pages are misplaced within drafts, and some pages (even chapters) are missing from various drafts. Therefore, my first order of business in tackling this project was to try to organize the folders. I wanted to be able to look across drafts to see if/how Bradley changed/developed from the first draft to the last draft, so putting the drafts in order seemed important.

I decided to start with the first folder of the first box (MF 2717), keeping notes related to the organization (where I thought the pages and drafts belonged and what I thought was missing from the drafts). Unfortunately, the pages of the drafts in the first eight folders are neither titled nor numbered, and I spent a frustrating amount of time trying to figure out their order by referencing the novel. Thankfully, throughout this process, the librarians and staff at the Andersen Library kept the boxes out for me in the reading room so that I would have access to them whenever I had a chance to work there. To avoid giving up on the project, I moved to the last box (MF 2719), which contains three almost complete drafts with page numbers. Given the slight differences between two of the drafts and the novel, I was able to ascertain that these had to be later drafts. However, relying on the correspondence in addition to the novel expedited the process.

Most helpful in organizing the drafts was the correspondence between Sachar and various editors, dating from July 2, 1982 to June 24, 1986 (MF 2719, Folder 46). Sachar first sent the manuscript to Avon, where it was rejected. He then sent the manuscript to Western Publishing Company. The editor told Sachar she would be willing to look at it again if he rewrote it, and she accepted the rewrite. However, Western "decided to cancel the preteen fiction line for which *There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom* was slated" (MF 2719, Folder 46), so Sachar had to find another publisher. He rewrote the novel again and hired an agent who sent the manuscript to Alfred A. Knopf and

Pantheon (Knopf), where it was eventually accepted and published. Students who balk at rewriting a paper might benefit from knowing that Sachar worked on this novel for over five years and completely rewrote the novel at least twice! The correspondence helped me distinguish earlier drafts from later drafts, assisting me in my purpose of focusing on Sachar's process of developing Bradley as a character.

The Focus

In the process of going back and forth between the correspondence and the drafts for purposes of organization, I noticed that one of the most common suggestions the editors made in the letters regarding Sachar's early manuscripts was that he needed to decide whose story he was telling (MF 2719, Folder 46). And in fact, in the early manuscripts, the story switches its focus between Bradley, Jeff (another student), Carla (the school counselor), Colleen (another student), and Lori (another student). However, the later drafts become less about Jeff, Carla, Colleen, and Lori, and more about Bradley. At this point, I became interested in the idea that Bradley becoming the focus of the novel probably related to the development of Bradley's character in the novel. My notes shifted from a focus on which drafts came first and what was missing from the drafts to how the drafts differed from the novel in terms of the focus on Bradley.

As I moved back and forth between the novel and the drafts, I quickly became overwhelmed by the amount of information available and realized I would need to narrow my focus even further. Since I was interested in Bradley's development throughout the novel, I did not want to limit myself to one chapter or event. As a character, Bradley was most real to me in his exchanges with others (Jeff, the other students at school, Carla, his stuffed animals). Of the other characters, I was most interested in Carla, both because of her role in Bradley's transformation and because of the interesting fact that Sachar modeled her after his wife (Children's Book Council, 2006). At this point, then, I narrowed my focus to the sections in the drafts in which Carla and Bradley interact.

Discussion

Many readers find Bradley's character to be "real, worrisome, and funny" (Sebesta, 1988, p. 83). Sachar achieved this positive portrayal through many re-

writes, specifically as they relate to the focus of the novel. In this section, I show how Bradley's creation as a complex, multidimensional, sympathetic, transformed character happens through the changes Sachar makes in narrowing his focus to tell mainly Bradley's story. I first illustrate the changes in the novel on a global level, as Carla's story becomes less important and Bradley's story becomes more important. I then explore how this focus on Bradley's story creates space for Bradley to become a more multidimensional character. Finally, I highlight Bradley's transformation in the novel from seemingly unlovable to sympathetic as a result of Sachar's decision to shift the story's focus to Bradley, drawing out his multidimensionality and encouraging the reader to identify with him.

Whose Story Is This?

As indicated earlier, one of the most common suggestions the editors made in the letters regarding Sachar's early manuscripts was that he needed to decide whose story he was telling (MF 2719, Folder 46). The editor at Avon, the first publishing company that rejected Sachar's manuscript, wrote:

As always, your characters are evocative and moving, and your dialogue is good. But before the novel can come together, you must decide *whose* story it is and what you're trying to say. The novel starts as Jeff's story, then becomes Bradley's, then Carla's, then Lori's, then Colleen's, etc. The point of view shifts continually. . . . I feel that especially in a children's book there should be one kid readers can identify with, one kid's story. It's too much in too little space to try and develop all of these kids' stories, and Carla as well. (correspondence dated July 2, 1982; MF 2719, Folder 46)

While the editor at Avon identified the shifting point of view as a problem, she did not offer a solution. However, the editor at Western Publishing Company, who also rejected the manuscript but offered Sachar a contract to rewrite the story, suggested:

At present the reader doesn't know where to direct his caring and attention. If we are right that it's Bradley's story, then Bradley is the focus and you must keep that in mind as you revise. We have to care about the others too—and we do! But Bradley's the important one. . . . It seems to me that you have to get inside Bradley's mind more, if you can, and that we have to see all that happens largely from his point of view. (correspondence dated August 16, 1982; MF 2719, Folder 46)

The editor at Western Publishing Company wanted Sachar to focus on Bradley, but even after initial revi-

sions, Sachar still, according to his eventual publisher, Alfred A. Knopf and Pantheon, failed to focus his story: “It is disconcerting to be following the situation through so many different eyes, and the frequent shifts keep the focus from being sharp enough and keep the reader from establishing a strong link with Bradley” (correspondence dated September 24, 1984; MF 2719, Folder 46). All three editors desired to see the story from one point of view, and two of the editors suggested that the story should be Bradley’s. In these early drafts, though, Sachar’s story remains unfocused.

This shifting point of view mentioned by the editors can be illustrated using the sections in the manuscript that focus on the exchanges between Bradley and Carla. These exchanges are particularly relevant, as two of the editors comment specifically on Carla’s presence in the novel. Joanna Cotler from Avon Books remarks, “Another major problem for me is Carla. . . . This is a *kids*’ story, not one for—or about—adults. Her story is a major part of the book and I’m not sure why” (correspondence dated July 2, 1982; MF 2719, Folder 46). Likewise, Ellen Rudin from Western Publishing Company states:

[Carla] is a special problem in that you have let her take center stage, literally, in a story that isn’t really hers. I’m not sure how you would fix this, but I think the reader must see much less of her. . . . In short, although Carla is extremely important to Bradley (and I think to you, too, Louis), she is not all that important to the reader and you need to rethink the size of her role in what actually takes place in the span of the story. (correspondence dated August 16, 1982; MF 2719, Folder 46)

Teaching Idea: Whose Story Is This?

Show students the editors’ comments to Sachar as well as one of his early drafts (e.g., see “Carla Leaving” in Appendix A). Read the version of Chapter 40 in the published book and explore Sachar’s revision process as he focuses the novel on one character, Bradley. What is Bradley like in each version? How does he change from the draft to the published novel? Encourage student writers to visit a piece of their own and consider revising to focus on one character, as well.

Neither of the editors suggests removing Carla from the story, but they both indicate that her presence detracts from what the story could be for its readers. By examining the exchanges between Bradley and Carla from earlier drafts about the shifting point of view, to later drafts with a more focused point of view, it becomes apparent that, as the story becomes less about Carla, the focus shifts to Bradley and his story.

In the early drafts of the novel, the interactions between Bradley and Carla suggest their stories are of equal import. Sachar allows the reader into Bradley’s and Carla’s thoughts, forcing the reader to vacillate between two points of view. For instance, in Bradley’s first meeting with Carla, the reader experiences Bradley’s perspective of Carla telling him he can break something in her room: “Bradley looked at her suspiciously. He didn’t trust her. He’d break something and get into trouble and then nobody would believe that she said he could. ‘I’m not in the mood,’ he said.” On this same page, the reader then experiences Carla’s perspective of having Bradley lie to her: “Of course, she didn’t believe any of the lies Bradley told her. However, she thought that one of the reasons Bradley lied so much was because nobody believed anything he said anyway. She felt that if she acted like she believed him then he would eventually start telling the truth” (MF 2718, Folder 21).

During a later meeting, Bradley asks Carla, “What’s new with you?” and she responds, “I suppose the most interesting part of my life is you kids.” Then Bradley asks Carla if the other kids are flunking like he is, and she describes a student she sees who does well in school but cannot relax. Sachar offers readers this explanation for her candor: “Normally, Carla would never tell anyone about any of the children she sees. Whatever went on in her office was confidential. However, in this case, she figured it was alright to talk to Bradley about the boy who got all A’s. . . . she thought it would help give Bradley confidence to know that other children had problems, too, even those who got all A’s” (MF 2717, Folder 3). In these exchanges, Sachar includes Carla’s thoughts and reasoning for the reader, encouraging the reader to see both characters’ points of view, but this approach could detract from engaging fully with either one. Also, through Carla’s eyes, the reader sees a psychological diagnosis of Bradley, which might actually detract from the reader connecting to him.

In other places in early drafts of the manuscript, specific details included about Carla give weight to her story's importance. In the section of the novel where Carla tells Bradley she is leaving the school, Bradley screams, "I hate you!" and runs into the boys' bathroom. She follows him, but he tells her to leave. The chapter ends with Carla:

Carla turned and quickly walked out of the bathroom. As she stepped outside a lady teacher walked passed [sic]. The teacher stopped and looked at her peculiarly but Carla just ignored her. She walked back to her office, sat down at the round table and cried for about a half an hour. Then she picked up Bradley's wadded up book report and carefully tried to straighten it out and tape it back together. (MF 2718, Folder 20)

At the end of this chapter in the early drafts of the manuscript, Bradley is not even present. Instead, Sachar focuses on Carla, showing her emotional response to the situation with Bradley and highlighting her actions outside of her exchange with Bradley.

A final example that illustrates the importance of Carla's story in the early drafts of the novel happens in the last chapter. Initially, the novel ends with Carla. In early drafts, Sachar takes the reader to Carla's new school and shows Carla enjoying her job as a substitute teacher (MF 2717, Folder 5). Then, when she gets home, she has a package from Bradley. She opens the package, reads the letter, finds out Bradley is doing well in school, and grins "from ear to ear" (MF 2717, Folder 5). This ending highlights Carla's situation for the reader and gives the final word on Bradley through Carla. With these details included in the early drafts, it is clear that the editors were right. Carla had too much of a role, detracting from Bradley's story when the novel should be about him.

As Sachar revised the novel to highlight Bradley's story, he removed passages that explained Carla's rationale for the ways in which she responded to Bradley. For instance, in later drafts that describe Carla's first meeting with Bradley, the explanation for how Carla reacts to Bradley's lies has been removed (MF 2718, Folder 24). Instead, the focus is on Bradley and how he finds it amazing that Carla believes everything he says. Likewise, when Bradley asks Carla what's new, Sachar removed Carla's comment ("I suppose the most interesting part of my life is you kids," p. 144) from the novel, thereby eliminating the explanation of why she would tell this story to Bradley. Also

in the novel, Bradley and Carla have a brief conversation about a shower curtain (new in Carla's life because she bought one yesterday), and then Bradley tells Carla about being invited to a birthday party. Carla is still important in these exchanges, but only because she is important to Bradley, not in her own right. In these exchanges, Bradley becomes the center of the story instead of just one of the participants.

Sachar also removed details about Carla's life that were unimportant to Bradley's story. In the section of the novel where Carla tells Bradley she is leaving the school, the chapter ends with Bradley instead of with Carla (Sachar, 1987, pp. 160-161). Sachar removed any mention of Carla's reaction to Bradley's unhappiness that she was leaving. Instead, she leaves him in the bathroom, and the chapter ends with, "Bradley stayed in the bathroom until the bell rang, then he went home, sick" (p. 161). Here the reader still knows that Carla cares for Bradley, since she follows him into the bathroom and tries to talk to him, but Bradley is the character that keeps our interest throughout this exchange. Because Carla is less developed as a character, she no longer detracts the reader from identifying with Bradley, and her lack of development allows space for Bradley to be developed further.

Sachar's most noticeable revision is in the last chapter. The conclusion changes drastically from the early drafts, which end with Carla, to the published novel, which concludes with Bradley. In one of the last revisions, the chapter begins with Bradley's letter to Carla, leaving out Carla's experience as a substitute. However, this revision ends with Bradley telling his stuffed animals that they would visit Carla often (MF 2718, Folder 26). This revision focuses the reader on Bradley's experience, but Carla is the last thought, albeit from Bradley's perspective. The chapter in the published novel, however, ends purely with Bradley. In the last two pages of the final version, Bradley puts his letter and stuffed animal into an envelope to mail

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to Carla. The last paragraph states, “He stared out his window for a moment, then looked back down at the bulge in the envelope. He frowned. But it was an unusual frown. In fact, it might have been a smile” (Sachar, 1987, p. 195). Sachar still shows Carla as a substitute teacher receiving Bradley’s package, but instead of ending with her reaction to Bradley’s letter, the novel ends with the words of Bradley’s letter (MF 2717, Folder 13; MF 2719, Folder 33). Carla may be the focus, but Bradley gets the last word.

As the story became less about Carla, it becomes more about Bradley. The reader stops seeing Bradley through Carla’s eyes; in fact, the reader sees more of Bradley, since Carla takes up less space on the page. These changes not only provided the necessary focus to the story that Sachar’s editors suggested, but they also created a space for Bradley to become a more multidimensional character.

Who Is Bradley?

After reading Sachar’s initial manuscript, Joanna Cotler, editor for Avon Books, commented, “As it now stands, Bradley is the most developed character and he’s quite sympathetic. But why is he so ‘bad’ and troubled? . . . What makes Bradley who he is?” (correspondence dated July 2, 1982; MF 2719, Folder 46). Similarly, Ellen Rudin, editor for Western Publishing Company, suggested, “It seems to me that you have to get inside Bradley’s mind more, if you can, and that we have to see all that happens largely from his point

of view” (correspondence dated August 16, 1982; MF 2719, Folder 46). These two editors identified for Sachar the importance of developing Bradley and opening up the mind of this character to the reader. Sachar achieves this largely through narrowing his focus to Bradley’s story, which allows him to create a more multidimensional Bradley.

As Sachar crafts his story to be less about the other characters and more about Bradley, he has more space on the page to show Bradley to the reader instead of telling the reader about Bradley. In the initial drafts, Sachar judges Bradley as a liar with statements such as, “Bradley found it easier to lie than to tell the truth” (MF 2717, Folder 2) and “He lied out of habit” (MF 2717, Folder 6). However, in the published novel, Bradley lies in specific instances (Sachar, 1987, p. 36) or tells stories (p. 40), but Sachar does not label him a liar. Rather, through the various exchanges with his teachers, his parents, and Carla, Bradley is shown as a troubled young man who sometimes makes things up to protect himself, to make sure people react to him in a certain way so that he can avoid getting close to people and getting hurt.

Sachar also complicates labeling Bradley through his portrayal of Bradley’s reactions to Carla. In two different situations, Sachar’s first drafts include Bradley reacting to Carla by shouting, “I hate you.” At the end of his first visit to Carla’s office, when Carla offers her hand to shake, Bradley shouts at her and runs back to class (MF 2717, Folder 6; MF 2717, Folder 14; MF 2718, Folder 16; MF 2718, Folder 21). This exchange occurs near the beginning of the story and shows Bradley to be predictably belligerent and antagonistic. In the published novel, though, Sachar portrays Bradley somewhat differently. He does not shout, “I hate you,” but still ignores Carla’s outstretched hand. Then, “when [Bradley] got to Mrs. Ebbel’s class, he crumpled his picture into a ball and dropped it in the wastepaper basket next to her desk” (p. 42). This picture was one Carla asked to hang on the wall; Bradley was not used to teachers wanting to hang his work on the wall and refused to let Carla have it. In this final version, Bradley is not so much belligerent and antagonistic as he is scared and self-destructive.

Similarly, when Carla tells Bradley she is leaving the school, he gets upset and runs to the boys’ bathroom. In the initial drafts, Bradley shouts at her

Teaching Idea: Who Is Bradley?

Show students the editors’ comments and an early draft of the beginning of *There’s a Boy in the Girls’ Bathroom* (see Appendix B). Compare this draft to Chapter 1 in the published novel to explore Sachar’s revision attempts at showing the reader who Bradley is, at “getting inside Bradley’s mind.” How much do we know about Bradley with each beginning? How is he portrayed?

Encourage student writers to visit a piece of their own and add details that show their readers who their characters are and why they act the way they do.

to “Go away!” and, when she tries to talk to him, he screams, “I hate you!” (MF 2718, Folder 20). Again, he is portrayed as belligerent and antagonistic. In the novel, instead of yelling at Carla, Bradley responds “coldly” to her efforts to comfort him, even though “he felt like his insides were being ripped apart” (p. 160). Here, Bradley’s response to Carla and the explanation of how he is feeling illustrate the complexity of his pain more clearly than the shouting in the early drafts.

As Bradley becomes more multidimensional, he also becomes more realistic. When Bradley discusses with Carla his recent invitation to a birthday party, he indicates nervousness about attending. In early drafts, his nervousness stems from inexperience, as he has “never been to a birthday party before” (MF 2717, Folder 3; MF 2718, Folder 19; MF 2718, Folder 29). This statement might indicate that Bradley has always been such a horrible person that he never had friends willing to invite him to a birthday party, but that seems unlikely, and Bradley is a more developed character than this explanation would allow. In later drafts and in the novel, Bradley has not been to a recent birthday party: “‘I’ve never been to a birthday party!’ he blubbered, then hiccupped. ‘Not a real one, where other kids are there.’ He hiccupped again, then blew his nose. ‘A long time ago, when I was in third grade I went to one, but then they made me go home because I sat on the cake’” (MF 2719, Folder 44; p. 146). Bradley had, in fact, been invited to birthday parties but, in a memorable instance, exhibited unwelcome behavior, a more likely and realistic explanation for why others would not invite him back. Ultimately, by creating the space for Bradley to be a multidimensional character, Sachar was able to depict a transformed Bradley from the beginning to the end of the novel.

Bradley’s Transformation

At the beginning of *There’s a Boy in the Girls’ Bathroom*, Bradley Chalkers has no friends, and his teacher has given up on him. In class, he sits apart from everyone else and smiles “a strange smile. He stretched his mouth so wide, it was hard to tell whether it was a smile or a frown” (p. 4). He does not do his work, and the teacher pays little attention to him. However, when a new counselor comes to the school, Bradley’s

teacher suggests that Bradley see her, and it is through these visits with Carla that Bradley is transformed.

Initially, Bradley resists Carla’s efforts to help him. He makes rude comments, tells stories, and refuses to shake her hand. If Bradley had been labeled by Sachar and the reader as a liar and antagonist, it would be difficult to see him transformed. However, since he is portrayed as a complex character: “As the story moves along, readers will begin to sympathize with Bradley; they’ll root for him, hoping he’ll exchange his misfit status for reasonable contentment” (*Kirkus Reviews*, 2002). Slowly but surely, Carla convinces Bradley that she believes in him and that he can believe in himself. Bradley decides, “I’m going to be good” (Sachar, 1987, p. 95), though it takes time for others to notice. He begins to look forward to his visits with Carla, and he starts doing his homework. He becomes more friendly to others because “he knew Carla would appreciate it” (p. 128). He even makes friends, and all is well because he has Carla.

Because Sachar’s portrayal of Bradley encourages readers to “establish a strong link with [him]” (Knopf, correspondence dated September 24, 1984; MF 2719, Folder 46), it is a crushing blow to find out with Bradley that Carla is leaving. Bradley quickly reverts to his old ways, but this time with sadness, because life is different after his time with Carla. In this new version of life, he finally receives a gold star from his teacher for the book report he wrote about one of Carla’s favorite books. And he still has friends who want him to feel better. Although it seems that Bradley might give up upon Carla’s leaving, he cannot because he has changed.

Before Carla departs, she leaves a letter apologizing for hurting him, encouraging him to keep doing his work, and telling him, “You’re a very likable person” (p. 172). With this encouragement, Bradley attends the birthday party (and has a wonderful time) and writes to Carla telling her that he is doing well in school. Bradley has, in fact, become a likable person who likes himself. His transformation could only occur because Sachar abandoned the multiple perspectives and focused his novel on Bradley’s perspective, creating a multidimensional Bradley in the process. With this story focused on a complex character, the reader can connect to Bradley and follow him through his process of fitting in after having been a misfit.

Conclusion

Sachar's development of Bradley as the main character in *There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom* from the first draft to the published novel illustrates the painful but rewarding process of writing. Knowing that a prolific and honored author such as Louis Sachar struggles through the writing process to complete his works gives students and other aspiring authors hope for their own writing. Sachar's process began before his first manuscript submission in 1982, and the novel was published in 1987. Throughout these years of writing and rewriting and receiving help from his editors, Sachar creates in Bradley his trademark writing, characterized by one reviewer as "a humorous and realistic portrayal and exploration of relationships and feelings; his storylines characteristically chart the efforts of his various characters to discover and then assert their young identities" (Vang, 2005, p. 179).

My understanding of Bradley as conveyed in this article was only possible because of Louis Sachar's generous donation of his materials to the Kerlan Collection, his willingness to grant permission for me to quote from these materials in my paper, and the welcoming support of the librarians and staff at the Andersen Library. It is my hope that as more materials from the Kerlan Collection are made available online, more teachers and their students will benefit from glimpses into their favorite authors' writing processes.

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Appendix A: Carla Leaving

ON Friday, Bradley's father told him that since he didn't have a temperature he had to go to school.

"Hi Bradley," said Robbie. "Where you been."

Bradley didn't answer him. He just took his seat in the back of the room.

"Hi Bradley," said Jeff. "Were you sick?"

Bradley didn't answer him.

"Look," said Jeff. "You have a gold star next to your name." Bradley took out a pencil and scribbled on his desk. Out of the corner of his eye, Bradley looked at the chart on the wall. Next to his name was a gold star.

"Bradley," called Mrs. Ebbel. "Will you come up here, please?"

He walked up to her desk. "I was sick," he said. "I have a note from my mother. Call her if you don't believe me."

"Oh, I don't care about that," said Mrs. Ebbel. "I just wanted to tell you how much I liked your book report. Miss Davis gave it to me. She explained how she accidentally ripped it but she taped it back together. Did you see, I put a gold star next to your name."

"No, I didn't see it," said Bradley.

"Go look at it," she told him. "Oh, and I'd like to borrow the book from you. I want to read it."

"I don't have it," said Bradley. He walked away from her. "Anyway, it stinks."

Bradley sat back down and looked once again at the gold star next to his name. It seemed to shine. It shined the way Carla seemed to shine, when she smiled at him. He hated her. But still, as he looked at the star, he couldn't help feeling a little proud, no matter how hard he tried not to care.

At lunch and recess he refused to play basketball. He hated all those guys, anyway. ~~XXXXXXXXXX-just-sat-by-himself-~~

"He's still a little sick," Jeff explained to the other guys. "The doctor says he should wait a couple of days before doing any strenuous activity."

Bradley sat by himself. He knew it was Carla's last day and he wanted to see her again, but he wouldn't let himself do that. It felt as if ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ his heart was tied in a knot, and everytime he thought of her, the knot ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ was pulled tighter.

Lori and Melinda walked passed him. "Hi Bradley," they said. He stuck out his tongue at them.

They walked away. "Euuu," said Lori. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ "Hell ruin Colleen's birthday party."

"Good," said Melinda.

After school Jeff tried talking to Bradley again. "You should go say good-bye to Carla," he said. "Today's her last day, you know. I asked her about you. She said she hoped you'd stop by and talk to her."

"I hate her," said Bradley.

Jeff walked away.

It would have been so easy. She was in her office, hoping he'd stop by. He wanted to go see her. But he walked straight home, instead. And the knot inside him was pulled even tighter.

Appendix B: Beginning of *There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom*

1. A smile or a frown?

Before he left for school, Bradley hid two objects under his pillow. These were two little animal figures; a red rabbit and a brown and white bear. He patted the pillow, then headed out of his room.

"Where's your homework?" his mother greeted him. She was a large woman with very fat arms and legs.

"I did it yesterday at school," he answered. That was a lie. He hadn't done his homework all year. "Call my teacher if you don't believe me."

His lunch sack was waiting for him on the kitchen counter. He looked inside it, then made a face like he smelled something putrid. "What's this stuff?"

His mother didn't answer him. "If you don't hurry you'll be late," she told him.

"I'm never late," he said. That was a second lie. He was

late for school at least twice a week.

Bradley's father, using a cane to help him walk, stepped into the kitchen. "What are you still doing here?" he said when he saw Bradley.

"I'm going," said Bradley.

"I better drive you," said his father, "so you won't be late."

"No, you can't," said Bradley. "I'm supposed to meet my friends at the corner so we can walk to school together. They're waiting for me."

That was a third lie. Bradley wasn't supposed to meet his friends. The sad truth was that he didn't have any friends.

(Bradley lied several more times before leaving for school, but perhaps it would be better to stop numbering his lies now, before the numbers get too enormous.)

He was in the fifth grade although he was old enough for the sixth grade. He had taken the fourth grade twice. He would have taken the fourth grade a third time, except there were only two fourth grade teachers and neither would have him again.

He walked into Mrs. Ebbel's class, late, and took his seat at the back corner of the room. Last seat, last row. His desk was an island. Nobody sat in the desks next to or in front of him.

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