

Skylar Blue  
1<sup>st</sup> grade

My dad means the world to me. He takes me to the mall. Daddy brings chocolate home. He treats me like a princess. My daddy hugs me when I fall or trip. He buys me shoes from the mall. Daddy loves mommy and me. My daddy is a hero. He served in the military. He fought in the Iraqi war. I think he's the best.

Nikera Young  
2<sup>nd</sup> grade

I nominate my father for the Washington Nationals 2010 Father of the Year because he loves me so much. I play Sorry! at his house. I love him so much. Both of us made pancakes at his house. It was fun. I don't see him that much because he doesn't live with me. It makes me feel sad. I wish I could go over to his house. That's why I'm crying now. I want to go over to his house.

Darrow Sherman  
3<sup>rd</sup> grade

My father is very enjoyable. He has a good sense of humor. He is very kind and considerate. He has dark brown hair and is very thin. He doesn't care if you do the best as long as you do your best. He was born in Boston and is very good at writing and math.

My father and I do a lot together. We fly kites, go biking, go sledding, go on vacations, fly my mechanical bird, play tag and go skateboarding. One special memory I have is a picture of us on a roller coaster. Mom was grinning from ear to ear, Dad was just smiling and I looked bored to death. It was hilarious!

My father makes lots of sacrifices to get me and mom what we want, but sometimes I think he sacrifices a little too much. He works until it's almost my bedtime, so I don't get to see him much. Another one of his faults is that he's late a lot and the annoying thing is that when he's late he usually calls to say he's late when he's already late! It's kind of like saying HEADS UP!!! when the ball has already hit you in the face.

Despite all the "not so good" things, he's a great dad. He loves me and I love him and that's what's important.

Imari Galloway  
4<sup>th</sup> grade

There are many different ways to describe what my father means to me. But before I talk about how much he means to me, it is important for me to elaborate on our relationship. I am nine years old and for most of that time my father has been in and out of jail and because of this I have not had a chance to have a real relationship with him. This has been very hard for me because without a dad in my life all of the time I feel unintelligent because I do not have a man to correct me. The times when he is able to stay out of jail, we do wonderful things together. For example, he teaches me to play some sports and comes to my sport games like baseball and soccer. When I wake up in the morning he tells me I look handsome even though I know I do not look handsome. I am already a good reader but my dad teaches me things so that I can become a great reader. These are some of the things that my dad does with me and they make me feel special and great. But because my dad spends so much time in jail doing nothing but watching TV is showing me how not to be a man. I would like my dad to come home from jail (he is due home this March) and do things with me like go to church with me and eat Sunday dinners like chicken, greens, corn and rice. But until he does that, I am left feeling empty and sad about our relationship. So, what my father means to me is that in order to be successful in life you have to have family around you to support you and if your family is in jail, then something is going to be missing. Does that mean that I am not going to be successful without my dad? No. It means that I have to work harder than most to become a success and that if my dad needs help becoming a success he can look to me because he has taught me in his absence to always keep my head up and always reach for the stars.

Brandon Odemns  
5<sup>th</sup> grade

I am writing this essay to acknowledge my stepfather. Greg is a hard working man. He is the best, even though he's not my real father; he has always been there for me through thick and thin and lots more. I love everything he does for me. My stepfather does things I thought a stepfather would never do. When I am down he picks me back up and tells me words to remember. My stepfather Greg is the man I look up to and can go to for advice. The reason I really like him is because he keeps my mom and sister and me happy. He gives me advice like "stay strong, keep your head up, be better than your father, prove him wrong. One day you are going to be the man of the house and you have to stay strong." If someone should win Dad of the Year it should be my stepdad, Gregory Murray.

Tatyana Shelton  
6<sup>th</sup> grade

I strongly feel that my grandfather is the best father figure that anyone can have. He has been there for me every day in my entire life and I have grown to love him more and more. He's a reliable, strong, encouraging, inspiring man and he has also worked for our country in the Army. My grandfather is the kind of father any one man should want to grow up and be like. Since my father isn't really there like he should, he's my father and he is the person I look up to to show me how a young lady or someone's daughter should be treated. My grandfather is someone I can rely on to be there anytime in my time of need. When things are going bad, I know he will be there. Every time we're together, we have a great time and when I see him it brightens up my day. There are plenty of things that we do together, but I still would like to become even closer. Even though that's what I want to see, he loves me and I love him.

Ding Phna  
7<sup>th</sup> grade

My dad was the most important and wonderful person in my life. He was an awesome guy, a good role model, and simply an amazing dad. He meant a lot to me. My dad was always there when he was needed and happy to help whenever he can and to do it with a wide smile on his face. My dad would always take our family to do the most fun things. We would go on vacation, fancy restaurants and even the movies and he would do it just to please us. And my dad would work at his job all day just so there would be food on the table. He would never complain about anything and even when the rain is pouring outside, he would come home drenched but with a smile on his face. My dad was understanding and helpful. If I had a problem with anything, I would always go to him for answers. For anything, he was always there to support me and congratulate me from start to finish just because I've done something that made him proud. But on May 28, 2009, my dad left me, my family, everyone and everything. He was no longer there for us and this made me think how lucky I was to have known him and the privilege of having him as my dad. This made me think of how important he was and what he really meant to me.

Julisa Larios  
8<sup>th</sup> grade

When I think of my father the word loving comes to my mind. He is a good father. He always loved me and my brothers. My relationship with my father was trust, strength, and helpful. My father always took care of me when my mother got sick. He would make me happy everyday. Every time I got upset with something he would always make me feel better. He would work everyday. I would see him on the weekends and after school. As I got older my father taught us how to be respectful to everyone. He would make sure that me and my brothers never got out of line.

We kept our grades high. We never stayed back a grade. Every time we got good grades he would take us out. My greatest memory with my father was when he taught me how to ride a bike. I would keep telling him don't let go. He would say "don't worry princess." He let go and I was riding on my own.

He would keep telling us that he was so proud of us. I will always remember the good memories we had. Even if my parents are separated, I still see him every weekend. My father will always be my number one role model. I will never forget about how my father always cared for me since the day I was born.

Jonnetta Bratcher  
11<sup>th</sup> grade

Without having my mother in my life to raise me, my father became “daddy and mommy” in my eyes. When I was younger, I could not understand why my mother was not raising me. I always thought that if the parents split, it was mandatory for children to live with their mom. My father proved me wrong on this belief. When I was barely fifteen months, my father took complete custody of me and that’s when the journey began.

We moved to South Carolina then to New Jersey only so that I would start school when I was five. That was the caring part of my father, looking out for my best interest. Everywhere my father and I lived, it was only us two.

In the evenings, when my father would pick me up from school, he always asked me, “What did you learn new today?” As we walked to the corner store and then home, I would describe to him everything in detail, the best and the worst part of my day, everything except the question he had asked me. Then by dinner time, we would be engaged in a conversation about something new in my life.

Over the years, my father evolved from being my “daddy” to one of my closest friends. He became someone who I was eager to come home and talk to. Even when I began taking interest in the opposite sex, I was always able to talk to my father about that, although, I don’t believe that he agreed with me. When I was in the eighth grade, my father and I were walking to the grocery store and I started explaining to him why I felt like this boy was interested in me. Instead of an instant response, like I was used to, he paused. In that moment, I looked up at his face and all the confusion that he was feeling was printed all over his face, clearly. Then he told me that no one will ever love me the way he loves me. Then, that is when I realized that no one has the key to my father’s heart except me. I will never lose it! On random Sundays, my father would take me to get steamed shrimp and we would sit and eat them in a park close to our house. My father and I spent a lot of time together which evolved into a best friend relationship. Now I speak to my father on the daily basis for at least fifteen to twenty minutes. When I talk to him, I explain everything that is happening in my life.

Even when my father punishes me, he is fair. My father always made sure that I respected myself and everyone around me. I remember the first time I got into a dispute with a teacher, although I was right, I still got in trouble. When I got home I got a spanking just because it is disrespectful to argue with an adult. My father groomed me into the person I am today, but in the process he became a life long friend!