

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

***As you read the following article, thoroughly annotate the text. We will begin in class and you will finish the article for homework. Use your annotations rubric and show all of your thinking.***

## **'Yummy' Sandifer case still resonates**

### **Spike in shootings is stark reminder that solutions to violence in city must be found**

September 11, 2012 | By Dan Hinkel, Chicago Tribune reporter

I was 12 years old in September 1994 when the mailman swung down my street and delivered the Time magazine that introduced me to Robert "Yummy" Sandifer.

I glanced at my parents' magazines every week, but I have yet to stop thinking about the words and pictures I saw in that edition. The magazine's cover showed a glowering mug shot of Yummy, who was one year younger than me. The text read, "So young to kill. So young to die."

Yummy, a scrawny sixth-grader whose nickname referred to his love for cookies, spent three days evading capture for shooting a 14-year-old girl to death in the South Side's Roseland area. Before police could arrest him, members of his gang, 14 and 16 themselves, lured him into a car with a promise of escape, took him to a tunnel under the train tracks and put two bullets in the back of his head.

Growing up in Janesville, Wis., on a quiet side street less than a mile from the nearest cornfield, I encountered none of the dangers faced by a child in Roseland. I lived 125 miles away, but Yummy and I might as well have lived on different planets.

Still, the fact that a thing like that happened anywhere to a kid my age kept me awake a few nights after I read the magazine story and other reports on his murder. My thoughts would drift to the idea of a boy looking away in a dark tunnel. Then, two gunshots.

I've thought about Yummy periodically ever since, and he's popped into my mind a lot lately as I read and write stories about the surge in shootings in neighborhoods on Chicago's West and South sides.

For all the concern that pundits and politicians voiced after Yummy died, the realities confronting kids in some places in this city don't look much better than the prospects he faced.

In 1994, Yummy's death symbolized the consequences of gang culture and poverty. He was born to a teen mother and a father who spent time in jail; whipped with an electrical cord; a felon by age 9; a car thief who could hardly see over the dash; hated and feared by neighbors; wanted for murder; and, finally, a liability eliminated by the Black Disciples.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

For three days after Yummy accidentally cut down Shavon Dean while shooting at gang rivals, he hid from police. He must have known he was going to die or suffer an institutional fate that couldn't have looked much better.

Yummy's story taught me what "execution style" meant. It meant two .25-caliber rounds fired into the back of his tiny head, and exit wounds in his forehead, stitched up for kids to see at his funeral.

Completing the portrait of youth snuffed out were Cragg and Derrick Hardaway, the boys convicted of Yummy's murder. The crime cost them the balance of their youth and then some. Cragg, the triggerman, is 34, and he's expected to be paroled when he's 46. Parole for his brother, now 32, is expected in 2016.

If they return to the crime scene, they'll find it isn't there. Concrete caps the tunnel's entrance on one end, grass on the other, creating a tomb of sorts around the place Yummy died.

Half a block from there one recent afternoon, Jerry Stokes sat on his front steps. He and Yummy were the same age, and they knew each other. Stokes said little has changed on his strip of Cottage Grove Avenue since Yummy died.

"That shocked the world," Stokes said. "Then it faded away."

No community's culture can be reduced to its violence, and Roseland is not the city's most murderous area. But it's always near the top, and, while citywide homicide totals dropped by more than half from 1994 to 2011, Roseland's totals haven't fallen. There were 15 homicides there in 1998 and 18 in 2010.

Since Yummy's death, other child victims have fallen within walking distance of where he was killed. Derrion Albert was beaten to death near Fenger High School in 2009, and Blair Holt was shot dead in 2007 on a CTA bus while trying to shield a friend. Both were 16. Both deaths caused outrage before fading from the news.

Neither I nor anyone else has an easy solution to the city's gunfire. But if the ongoing presidential race indicates where poverty and violence stand on our list of societal priorities, we don't care enough even to talk about how we'd try to fix it.

I now live in a reasonably safe neighborhood on Chicago's Northwest Side, a world away from the sections of the city where gunfire is a nightly rhythm. Still, I occasionally hear a gunshot as I watch TV or lay in bed.

On those nights, it's hard to get to sleep, just like it was when Yummy died.

*dthinkel@tribune.com*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_