

The Landry News

“I just reported the truth, and I know I hurt a lot of people’s feelings, and I’m sorry about that. But I really like being a reporter.” That is what Cara Landry tells her mom in *The Landry News*, a tale of excitement and surprise which strikes a deep chord in the heart of readers. With Andrew Clements’s vivid depiction, I understand more American school cultures and admire Cara’s bravery.

The story is set at Denton Elementary School in Carlton. Cara Landry, a fifth grader, is good at observing people and being a reporter. However, sometimes she doesn’t think before she edits an article. The drama begins when Cara publishes her own individual newspaper titled “The Landry news.” In the newspaper, Cara writes an editorial about her teacher, Mr. Larson, who was once a top-quality teacher but has over time become too apathetic to teach. Needless to say, Mr. Larson is enraged.

Cara’s mother also reads the editorial about Mr. Larson. Concerned, Mrs. Landry quotes the book of Psalms to enlighten Cara, “Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven.” Cara decides to give an apology note to Mr. Larson. After he thinks it over, he unexpectedly permits Cara to continue reporting her comments. Even more surprisingly, he encourages the whole class to participate in the project. However, when Cara allows a very personal and poignant story written by her classmate, Michael, concerning his parents’ divorce to be printed Dr. Barnes, the principal, sees it inappropriate and wants to dismiss Mr. Larson by this opportunity.

Dr. Barnes schedules a hearing in the auditorium. Since the case concerns the amendment at the board of rights and Cara is interviewed on TV, all the town people are going to the hearing. What frightens Mr. Larson and his students is the possibility that Mr. Larson will still lose his job even if the freedom of the press wins its battle. Therefore, Cara asks Michael in advance if he can read his article aloud at the meeting in defense of Mr. Larson, for this might be the only way to help Mr. Larson keep his job. After Michael reads his story and reveals how writing the story help him vents the frustration he gets from his parents’ divorce, everyone, even Dr. Barnes, realizes it’s not a good idea to fire Mr. Larson. At the meantime, Cara hands out a special edition of the “Landry News” with one article headlined “Larson is vindicated!” and a story explaining what happens in court. Cara makes everyone understand that Mr. Larson will always be the best teacher ever

because he gives room for students to express their opinions in a constructive way.

All in all, I enjoy the novel very much because it broadens my horizons. Clements uses vivid and unsophisticated ways to depict Cara. She is a bright, good-hearted girl who not only publishes her own newspaper, but also insists on the motto “Truth and Mercy.” Through Cara, I learn the spirit of democracy and American school cultures.

Freedom of the press is prominent in the novel. Expressing opinions and ideas bravely is a good thing. It will be a special way of communication, if it is handled correctly. Cara initially doesn’t like Mr. Larson’s philosophy of education. Nevertheless, after she writes an editorial about Mr. Larson, Mr. Larson gradually changes his educational methods and practices, allowing his students, including Cara, to continue publishing the newspaper and expressing their opinions in a reflective way. Cara has a great esteem for Mr. Larson because of his respect over their freedom of speech. He’s willing to risk his job teaching his students in his own way. Besides, I’m also touched by Cara’s sympathy, for example, she has the same condition as Michael so she can understand Michael’s feelings. Finally, I learn that the existence of the media can be double-edged. The media can expose things no one knows, yet it has to be handled with discretion. When we look around nowadays, the media is everywhere. We have to understand it and make good use of it.