

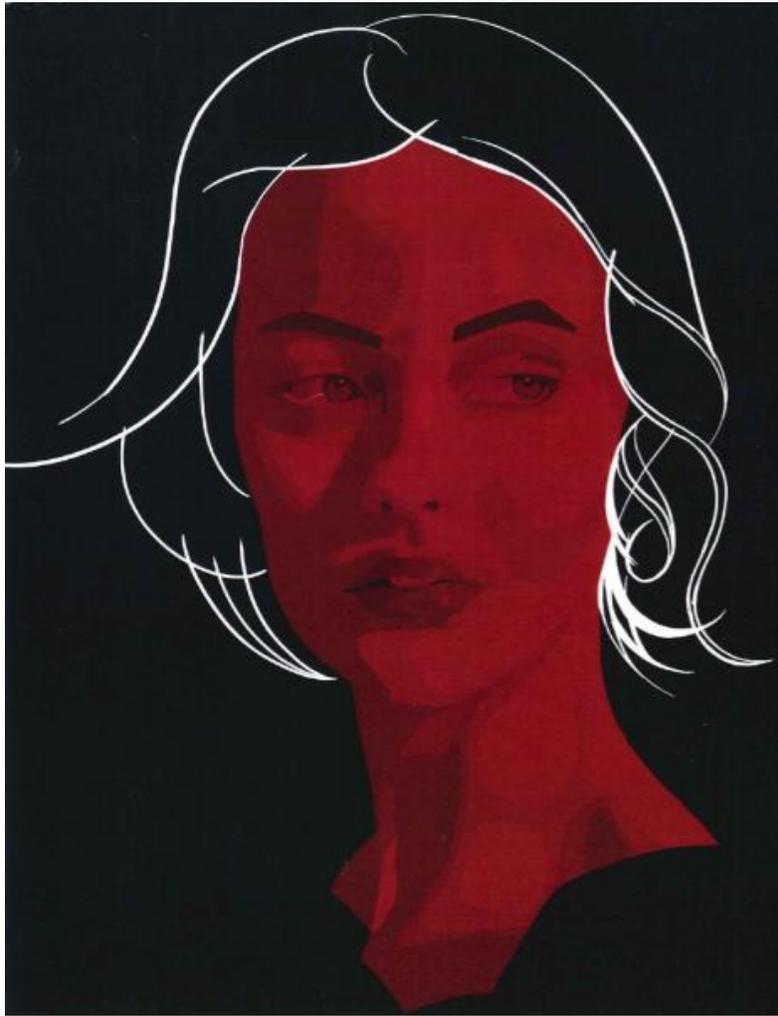
*Connecticut
Student Writers*

VOLUME XXXII

2020

CWP

Connecticut Student Writers
Volume xxxii



Monochrome Portrait by Meajah Edney

Academy of Aerospace and Engineering

Back cover, La Flor by Dana Cortes

JM Wright Technical High School

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 Foreword 

This is the 32nd issue of *Connecticut Student Writers* magazine, but it is the first year we've had to cancel the Student Recognition Night. These last few years we have had amazing attendance at the Recognition Night. Last year the entire floor of Jorgensen Center for the Performing Arts was filled, and many people stood in back and a few found seats in the mezzanine. That's more than 1,500 people. I'm confident we would have exceeded that this year. I'm sad we didn't get the chance to find out.

I'm also sad because we had such a great keynote speaker lined up in Veera Hiranandani, author of the award-winning young adult novel *The Night Diaries*. Fortunately, Ms. Hiranandani has agreed to be our speaker next year.

I know we'll all miss hearing the student readers, too, especially the youngest ones.

But I also want to celebrate the accomplishment of this issue of the magazine. We received over 1,700 submissions from the students of more than 400 teachers, which were read and scored by almost 50 teachers and student teachers and edited by a selection committee of 6 teachers. More than 500 students are receiving awards. Another 20 teachers are receiving awards, too, recognized for their incredible success mentoring student writers.

Because our numbers have grown so much since 2007 when I became director of the CWP, we decided this year to borrow an idea from Scholastic and categorize the student honorees more precisely, creating categories of honorable mention, silver, and gold—but also platinum for those 78 pieces of writing and 30-something pieces of art we publish.

Sadly, the logistics of the Shelter in Place orders and a spending freeze ordered by the president of the university prevented us from printing and distributing hard copies of the magazine and certificates. Hopefully you all will be able to take the PDFs and get them printed for yourselves. You can also go to our account at lulu.com to print and deliver copies of the magazine at cost.

Finally, I'd like to extend my gratitude and admiration to my graduate assistant Sophie Buckner and my undergraduate writing interns Olivia Grossman, Julianna Iacovelli, and Sammy vanValkenburg, who amazingly managed to work collaboratively to download, convert, type up, proofread, copy edit, design, and layout this entire magazine while working remotely from four different locations. Future teachers, all, showing their superpowers early.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *Connecticut Student Writers*, and I look forward to seeing you in Jorgensen next May. Keep writing!

Jason Courtmanche

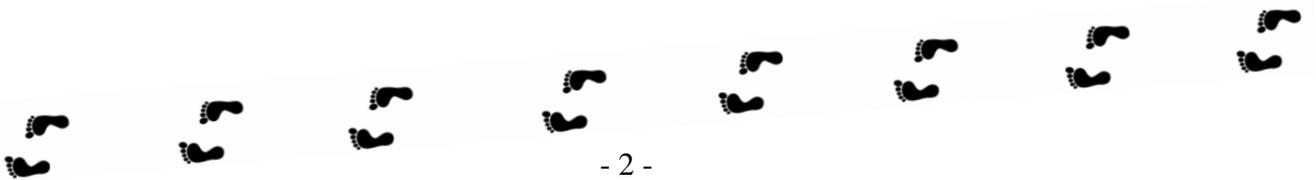
Director of the CWP

Kindergarten



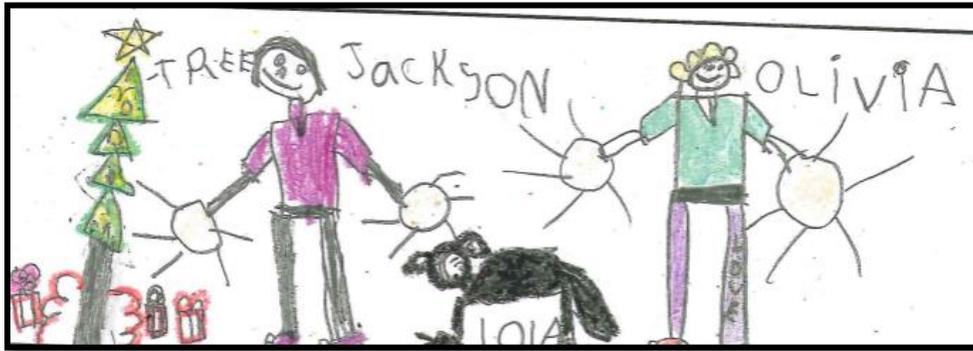
Penguin at Christmas Time

By Raina Senthilkumar



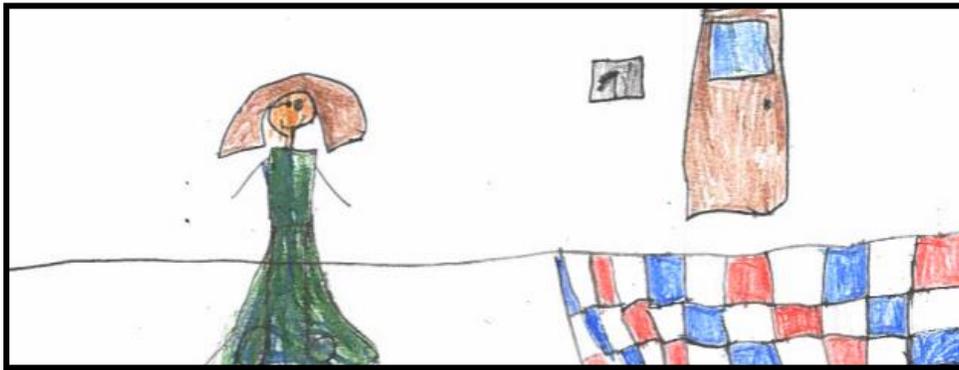
The Christmas Tree by Jackson Plourde

I fel happy and so dus my sistr. We are happy becus it is Crismus mrrning. We like the tree. My dog Lola is happy to. She wus waging her tale. She wontid a Presnt. The nxt daY we set up are FoonsBll tabl. We Loved it. Lola did to!



Raining on Halloween by Maggie Carew

This is the back of me and I have a tail. This is the frant of me im a mrimade. Here I am going on the bus. This is my bus and thats me. I am outside my classroom door. Im going in my classroom. That is the storage unet with a handel. That is the calinder that is in October. I liked doing the Halloween activities in school.



The Whole Universe by Steven Cecchini

First, there is the sun. The sun is a HUGE star. The planets are Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune. Then there are dwarf planets. Those are Pluto, Eris, Makemake, Haumea, and Ceres. There are many more planets and dwarf planets too. They are in other solar systems. I have two books all about it. Mercury is so hot. Asteroids and comets hit Mercury a lot. Venus is second closest to the sun and it is the hottest ever. Earth is where we live. It has lots of trees. It's the only planet that has water and it's the only place where dinosaurs died. That makes me feel sad. I want them to be alive. Next is Mars and then Jupiter. Mars has a nickname called the Red Planet. Jupiter is cold and the biggest planet in our solar system. Saturn is cold too and it has rings that go around and around. Uranus spins on its side. Isn't that weird? It is mostly ice. Neptune is the coldest in our solar system because it is SO SO far away from the sun. Everybody should learn about the whole universe because it is so cool!!!!

Unicorns by Ethan Schreiber

I love unicorns.

They have magic.

They look so cool
and beautiful.

If I had a unicorn

I would walk it
and be a unicorn expert.

I would draw it
and stick stickers on it,
and go in the pool with it.

I would be best friends
with my unicorn.

We would find
crystals and collections
and rocks together.

I would name it Cutester.

I would love him

Forever and ever.



Winter by Patrick Stewart



In the winter I like to Sled. You have to PuSh it down the hill.
In the winter I like to have Snowball fightS. You have to roll up a ball to
maKe it. In the Winter I like to build Snowmen. You can give it som
winter Stuff. In the winter I like to dig in the Snow. You can make a
Small mount evrest.

I love winter.

Bumblebee Rescue by Owen Gietzen

One day I saw a patch of water at a playground with a picnic table. I noticed something. I ran over to see what was in the puddle. I was surprised to see a bumble bee! I wasn't scared he would sting me. I was scared he was going to drown. I quickly grabbed a stick. I put it in the water under his fuzzy, chubby body. The bumblebee climbed up on the stick. I flung him on the ground. He was happy.

That's how I saved the bumble bee!

Untitled by Warren

Vadas



First Grade



Peace Everywhere by David Harbec

All About LEGOS by Carter McHugh

Introduction:

Are you interested in building LEGOs? Then read this book to find out if you would like to build with your own creativity or build with a LEGO set. Start finding out by starting to learn on the next page!

Chapter 1: What is a LEGO?

A LEGO is a small brick that has a lot of circles on the top. Different bricks have different numbers of small, round circles. This picture will show you what it looks like in 3-D. They have different colors. When you take two LEGOs in your two hands, put them on top of each other and then push them together until you hear a click. Put them close to your ear and you might hear the click. TIP: If you don't hear the click, then see if the blocks are connected closely enough that you can see a little black line, like when you pinch your fingers tight together. If they don't feel tight together, then push them more into each other.

Chapter 2: How LEGOs Can Be Different

LEGOs can be different in many ways. So you might see a piece with a round claw hand and another one with a round ball. If you connect the two, try to move them. That's a LEGO that can move.

There are LEGOs that have rubber on the sides of them and they look like a wheel. They are connected by a gray piece with a hole and three sides. Then they attach to a car-like piece.

People don't just come in one piece. You have to build them. First comes the feet. You grab the feet then the kind of body that matches. The feet attach to the body. You notice they have to go on the bottom, where the holes are. Get the head and push it on to the little stick coming out of the body. Push the hair in the middle to attach it to the round circle on the head. Then, whalah! Your person!

Chapter 3: What Things You Can Probably Build With LEGOs

Close your eyes. Think of the things you want to build. Not hard things, but little, easy things. The easy things to build are a mini car, a big LEGO person, some easy LEGO sets, your own little LEGO phone, so much more that you can imagine.

The hard things to build are like technology robots with moving LEGO pieces, the Millenium Falcon, and the Imperial Star Destroyer. Sometimes model trains have a remote and those are pretty hard. Tip: Little kids can only do easy ones because the hard ones are pretty hard. Ones with the remote or tablets are pretty hard.

Chapter 4: Picking a LEGO Set

To pick a LEGO set, you must pick the right one first. You see here, they have an age point on the side left. That means if you are eight years old, you can build big LEGO sets. If you're six, you can build a little bit huge set. If you're three, you can build Duplos for little toddlers.

If they have a lot of pieces, they'll have a high age. But if they have one or two bags of pieces, that would be just right for a three or four-year-old. TIP: Three or four-year-olds might need a six-year-old or a grown up to help them. Or anyone who is available and knows how to do it.

Chapter 5: LEGO Sets

LEGO sets are not just a toy you can build whatever you want out of them. You have to build the picture that is on the box. Get a grownup to open the box. Open all the bags first so you don't have to stop and keep opening bags. You'll see there's a manual in the box. If it has stickers, find them. Open to the first page and follow what it says. TIP: If you forget a step, then it won't come out the same. If you do, that's fine, just go back to where you missed the step and then take apart what you built then put the missing step in and then keep going!

Chapter 6: Free Building

If you don't know what free LEGO building is, then read this chapter. Remember how I said LEGO sets aren't things you can freely build with? Well these kind of LEGOs you can build anything you want. Pretend you wanted to build a car. You find the parts you think you'll need, then let your imagination take over. There aren't any rules in free building. It doesn't matter if it's perfect or not.

Conclusion:

So now that you've read about LEGOs, what do you want to build? Keep building and have fun. Remember, never give up!



Soccer by Yandi Castaneda

Pass the ball
Pass the ball everywhere
Pass the ball again
Shoot and make a goal
People shout "Goal!"



Catching a Reindeer by Juliet Cruz

I went home I at dinner than I went to sleep zzzzzzzzz. I woke up I went to Walmart.

Whan I want to Walmart I got food I went to the forist the food to get utenchin of the diyer.

We went to the forist and poot the food down and hide behid the bushis and the deyer at the food.

I went to the firist and I saw a deer it wus byootuful I cudit dleftit (couldn't believe) dat it ran uway cum back heyer.

I drungit home I fadit it went to slep zzzzzzz I toc it for a wooc I hoop you injoy my riting. Hiyhiy.



Solar System by Yosof Hassan

Saturn is the second biggest planet. it has rings around it. the rings are made of ice and dirt.

Neptune has a storm and its called the great dark Spot. the planet is butedful because its blue.

Uranus is a sideways planet. a huge Space object crashed in to it.

Venes is the hottest planet. some parts of venes is made out of lava.

Mercry is the closest planet to the sun. Mercry is a gray planet like the moon except the moon is not a planet.

There are diffrint **solar system**. but the solar system is our solar system.

Makemake is a planet. The name of makemake is probele weird to you. And makemake is a dwarf planet just like Haumea!

Eris looks rocky its also a dwarf planet.

The Milky Way looks like a circl.

It sounds like the candy milky way.

Black holes suck stuff in it. Its dangeros.



Bust the Beat by Josiah White

BusT The BeeT Stomp em Your

BusT The BeeT FeeT BusT The

Do iT iN Your BusT BusT The

FeeT BuuuusT BeeT Do iT

The BeeT! Do iT Do iT

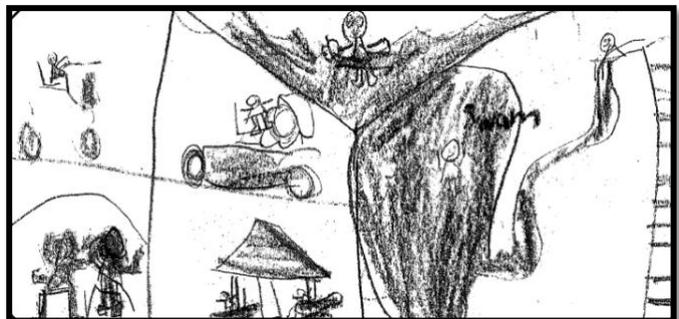
BusT The BeeT eN Your feeT



Untitled by Akif Biyikli

The day my friend left by Sam Woodward

One day my best friend left. He went to a nother country to see family It broke my heart for him to leave. He was my onle friend but it was my turn to pick ware we go. I pick the house next to my friends manchin! There lots of stores and lots of amusement parks. Its also very clean and theres lots of cleen trains. We had a very fun time I loved it the amusement parks and the manchin and there is a bech nere by and there is water slids in the manchin. We stayed for 2 months. (page is erased here) Hope you like it cuse I did I am in first grad my favorit coler is blue age 7. oldest in class.



Second Grade



Paradise!! by Olivia Perlmutter

The Secret Recess by Graham Gietzen

Do you like recess? well... One January afternoon, the recess bell rang. All the kids were excited yet... the kids who were most excited were Junior and George! They were Super excited because they had a recess secret! As soon as they heard the recess bell Junior and George Sprung out the School doors. They did not stop until they reached the rock area. Junior always beat George. George always ate an extra cookie at lunch which weighed him down. Once the boys got to the rock area, they carefully looked around like two spys going under cover. They Snuck behind the NO TRESPASSING sign and quickly headed to the magic berry bush... the bush with the bright orange berrys. On the first day of evry month the boys visited this magic spot. First, they clapped their hands three times. Next, they stomped their feet three times. Then, the magic bush split in half and revealed the Secret passage to an adventure! The boys ran through the passage. When they reached the end, they both screamed when they saw a football Stadium! Football was their favorite Sport!



Standing right in front of them was the Quarterback! Huge. Mighty. Strong. He noticed the boys on the field and threw a pass to Junior! Luckily, Junior dove for it and caught the football. The Tight End was practicing tackling in the end Zone. And, the Receiver was Jumping for a pass in midfield. First, the Quarter back invited the boys to learn how to throw a pass. Next, the Receiver taught them how to catch a pass in mid air. That was a great catch! Then, the Tight End showed them how to tackle players. Boy! Were they sore! Ding! Ding! Ding! Recess was over.

“Oh, man!” shouted the two boys.

They were about to run back to the passage when the Quarterback yelled, “Wait!” The boys turned around and saw the three football players holding something.

“We want to give you something to remember us and this Special day,” Winked the Quarterback.

And so the Quarterback gave each of the boys a football. The Receiver gave them both a pair of cleats. And, the Tight end gave them each their own helmet. The grateful boys thanked the players and shook hands with them.

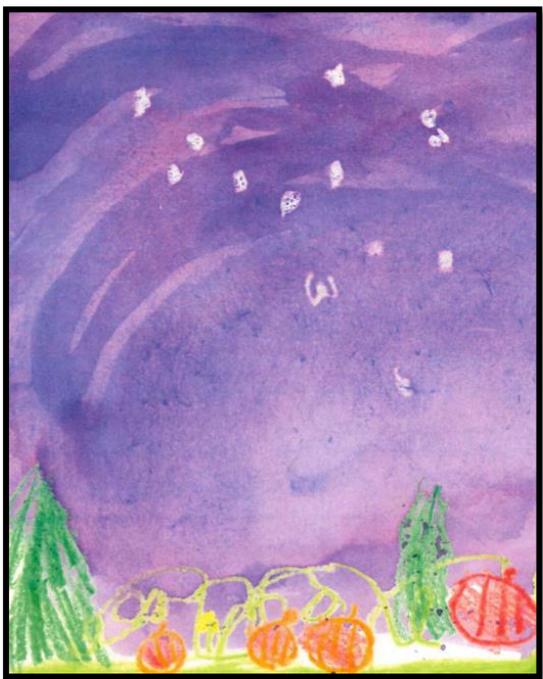
Junior and George darted back through the passage and quickly lined up with their class. A boy standing in back of them noticed their new football gear and asked, “Where did you get that stuff?”

“Oh, it’s just some old sports junk,” George said trying not to grin. the two boys winked at each other. Only They knew where the sports junk came from...Only they knew about the secret recess passage.



What about Me? by Jayliannis Rosa

Mom tells me I am the oldest.
Mom tells me I should know better.
Mom tells me just ignore him.
Mom tells me he's still a little boy.
Mom tells me he doesn't understand.
Mom tells me;
"Put Thomas he's going to fall asleep"
but he never goes to sleep.
Mom tells me just give him the toy.
Mom tells me to get away from him when he's angry;
He is always angry.
Mom tells me not to say anything when he's yelling;
He yells a lot.
Mom tells me stop bossing him around.
Mom I know he has **Autism** but
What about Me?

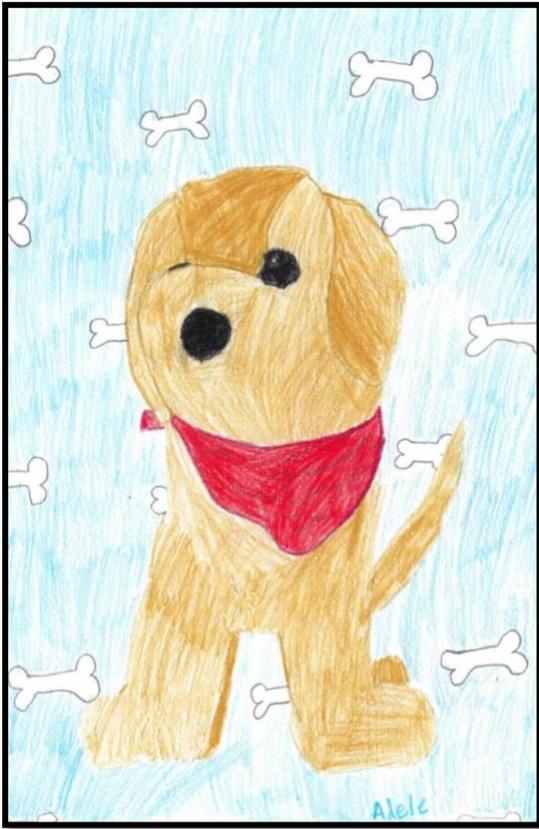


The Sunflower by Nina Radoniqi

Twilight by Arleen Sandhu

The husky moon kisses
Goodnight like a mother
Kisses its baby.
The sky sings
A lullaby
Like a mother to its babies.
The ashes clouds
Sleeps
Like baby huskies.
The pumpkins are as fat as bears.
And orange like tangerines.

Portrait of Rocket by Adele Morgan



My Sister, Harper by Caleb Beach

Harper loves cats and dogs.

Whenever she sees a dog, she asks if she can pet it.

But Mom always says no.

Harper wishes that there could be pink cast and dogs, but there are none.

Harper is very adorable. She has blue eyes. Her hair is tan.

Her favorite color is pink.

She is little and smells very cute. She is scared of monsters.

She loves to play with our neighbor, Marcus, and to ride her scooter with him.

Harper loves to play with dolls and her cat, Hunter.

She loves when he gets catnip.

She laughs.

Her favorite things in the world are cats because they are so cute.

I love my sister Harper.



All About School by Salella Senethep

Do you like School? Then this is the perfect story for you. School is a good place for you to learn and to have fun! You can be smart or not but it's okay.

There are so many students and lots of teacher there, too. There are grades up to 12th grade. Your schedule may be different. You will have snack and lunch at school. The only days we don't go to school are Saturday and Sunday. Sometimes you can have a substitute when your teacher is out. When it's your birthday and it's on a school day you may bring cupcakes or cookies. Your teacher may have different plans than other teachers. There's a superintendent. A superintendent is the boss of the whole school. He lives on the top floor.

At school your teachers may have fun stuff at the end of the school year. There is Field Day. Field Day is a day where you go outside and there are games. Sometimes a teacher comes in and you can play Bingo. Sometimes you get popsicles outside of the school.



All About Dogs by Adele Morgan

What are dogs? Dogs are cute, wonderful, furry bundles of joy! When dogs are born, they are called “puppies.” When they are adults, they are called “dogs.” They are wonderful pets to have!

Eyes: Dogs can also see very well!

Ears: Dogs can hear super well!

Nose: Police dogs can sniff out clues

Tail: Dogs wag their tails when they are happy.

Legs: For running really fast!

Dogs need less sleep puppies. Puppies need more energy than dogs Puppies don't need to take care of themselves as much as dogs. Get ready to start grooming!



What you Need to Have a Dog

- Dog bed, for sleeping
- Water / water bowl
- Dog food / dog food bowl
- Dog (of course!)
- Dog toys, helps puppies lose baby teeth and play
- Treats, for rewarding puppies / dogs
- A dog leash, for taking walks
- Dog license, to prove a dog has a rabies shot and lives in your town
- A dog collar, to hold their license

What Dogs Like

- Treats, make them happy
- Love, makes them feel cared for
- Snuggling, makes them warm
- Playing, makes them excited and entertained
- Chewing things up, is sneaky!



Dog Talents

You might think dogs are normal house pets that snuggle and play but they also have pretty amazing talents! Some dogs run obstacle courses by jumping really high, zig zagging through poles, running in things and more! They also surf! That's right, some dogs actually surf! Then there are police dogs, who find people in trouble and show their policeman where they are.

How to Train a Dog

Do you have a dog or puppy that goes out of control? Do you want a dog or puppy that you can trust to stay while you go upstairs to get something? Well I know how to fix that up! You will need treats and that's all!

So, to get started, you say to your dog, “Stay.” Then, you walk out of the room. If he or she follows you, don't give them a treat and say “no!” Then you try again. If he or she doesn't stay, then you try again and again until he or she stays. Then, you give he or she a treat. And, you have to keep practicing it until he or she learns to stay.

Third Grade



Paris by Annabelle Hobbs

Black by Annabelle Hobbs

As I look in sadness and hunger
As I clean the dishes, wash the table
I look at them
Their house, their rich beds, toys and books
I look at my haystack cover up
As I am ashamed of their selfishness, I open my mouth
I speak loud and clear
I will not stand this nonsense
I shall rise 'til its equal
No more chores, no more cleaning
I shall have a house with lots of food
No! No! This shall not go on any longer
I will not continue with it!
Now I have food and I will be treated...
Fairly.

The Dried Leaves of Autumn by Divija Adhikary

The dried leaves of autumn
fluttering around
in the wind
Looking just like
little brown butterflies
Swaying gracefully
in the bright Autumn morning
They sway until
the wind stops
they float to the ground
the snow falls
covering them in an
icy blanket.

The Ichthyosaur by Ramesh Anushka

Chapter 1: Dolphin-like reptile introduction

Once, near the ancient seas, ichthyosaur swam happily around, and boasting about how big he was. "I am over 16 feet long"! In india, the tideland was big enough for dolphin-like ichthyosaur. Ichthyosaur saw Pleazeosaur. He was the reptile he hated. Peazeosaur was bigger than him. Today he was going to prove wrong.

Ichthyosaur was about to aproche pleazeosaur when woosh! same astroides. it was a bit I tell ya! Poor dinos, astroids fell on ichthyosaur and pleazeosaur. They crashed and collapsed to the ground. When they were hit, their fighting poses were still there.



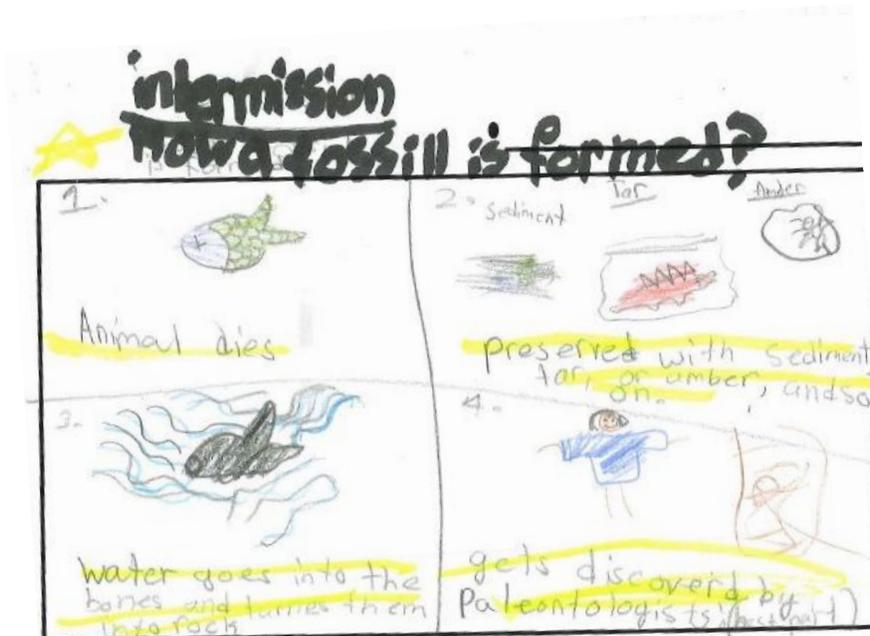
Chapter 2: turning into fossils

After over a 1,000 years the land turned into a beach. Sediment covered the old sea animals under the sand of a cliff near the sea. it was very far from the beach though. the fossils all had no idea what was going to happen next (well, of course they don't! they are dead!) they would soon bleep bleep bleep bleep bleep. Oops. I forgot. It is a secret. later. you will know the secret later dear reader. patience. later. As we continue, there would be a giant adventure later.

TO BE CONTINUED IN THE NEXT CHAPTER.



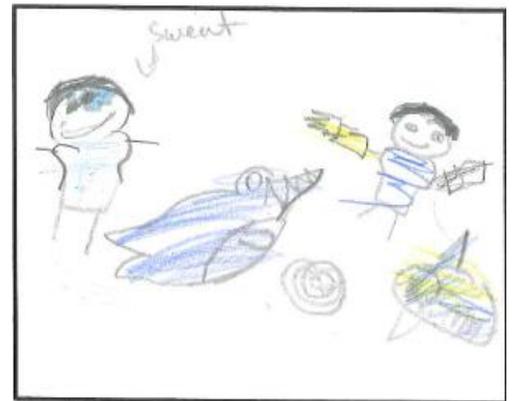
ichthyosaur had a big jaw, so it hunted and fought very well.



A fossil is the remains of a plant or animal. they tell scientists of long ago.

Chapter 3: being Discovered

on day, a paleontologist cam to Discover fossils near the beach. his name was Guntapali. now the land was in **dice** so he had come alive with a heart caring his love for fossil hunting in it. then Guntapalli saw the cliff. "fossils are there"! he shouted to his crew. "lets go"! they swam in the ocean. When they reached the cliff, they imediatly started digging. then they told prehistoric jockes. After days and weeks, they dug up all the fossils they could find. THEY FOUND..... ICHTHYOSAUR!



Guntapalli was a famous fossil hunter in india. he died in 1999. We still remember the fossils he found

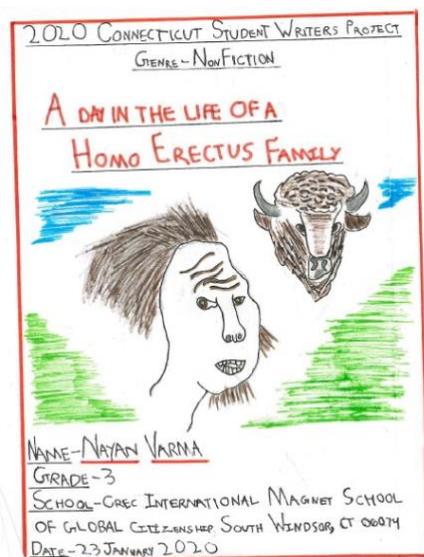
Chapter 4: Museum

all the fossils they found went to the Gunti fossil museum, directed by Guntapalli him self. Crowds came to see the fossils every day. they were famous. This is the end of the story, dear reader. but I promise to give you more books.

yours truly,

Anushka Ramesh

A Day in the Life of a Homo Erectus Family by Nayan Varma



About 100,000 years ago, a man from the Homo Erectus family named Kaya was following his morning routine in Spain. You know, farming, hunting etc. Lots of things weren't invented back then, including tooth brushes. imagine what their breath would smell like! GROSS! Also, in his morning routine, Kaya would climb trees to get fruit. He was able to do this because he was

bipedal. He got as much fruit as he can, and took it back to his family.

Next he went hunting with his stone

Stone age fruit includes grapes, blackberries and strawberries.

What was invented were tools like arrowheads, blades, and stones.

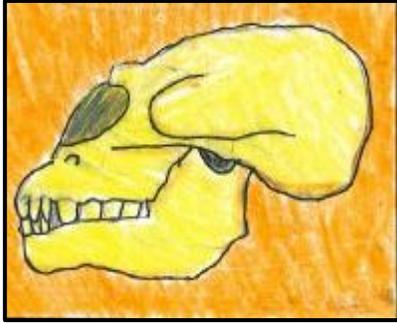
age tools. He wanted a big dinner, so he planned on getting a buffalo—the largest thing around. Luckily for him, he found a large herd of buffaloes. In the herd, Kaya found a nice, fat, juicy one. He started throwing all his stones and arrows, and finally killed the buffalo! So he called over his tribe for dinner, hear the fire. And at up the buffalo.

Unluckily for Kaya, the herd definitely noticed

know what he would say. They charged 35 miles per hour, their top speed straight at Kaya. Kaya searched for stones and arrowheads, but there were only tiny pebbles out in the plains. His tribe tried to help him, as they all agreed civilization is a great thing to have, so they started throwing all the stones they had, but that



Figure 1Buffaloes and Bears have a top speed of 35 mph.



750,000 years old Homo Erectus skull.

wasn't enough to stop nearly 30,000 buffaloes, leaderless charging 35 miles per hour!

Unfortunately, this resulted in Kaya risking his life for his tribe. Obviously the tribe was sad to lose such a caring, friendly man. (Even though he didn't talk much.) Which means you are pretty sad too but it also means we can learn how a fossil is formed.

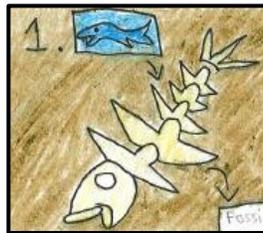
How fossils are formed?

Fossils are formed rarely. Take Kaya, for example first, no much later after Kaya died his skin would rot away. Then what is left of Kaya is bone, that will soon be buried in the ground. The 2nd step is mineralization (min-uh-ral-i-za-shun). This is when minerals start to get into the tiny holes in the bones. This turns the bones to stone. This makes a fossil.

In the stone age, people used to rub rocks to create sparks which started a fire.

Fun facts—Homo Erectus

- found use of fire
- first to use tools
- means upright man
- Also known as Java man



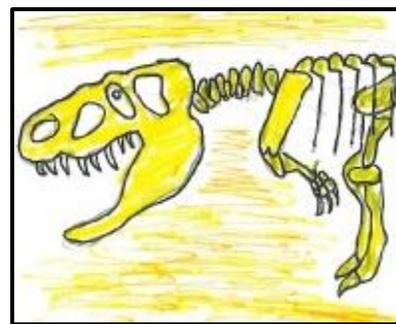
This fish will help us understand how fossils are formed. The fish is buried in sand.



The small dots are minerals in the bones.

fun facts—fossils

- first fossil—megalasaurus
- means—dug up in latin
- came from word fossilis
- more places fossils are found—ice, tar, sediment



1. Getting smarter
2. Forming communities
3. Walking on two legs

The Christmas Cat by Maya D'Amato

Once upon a time there was a cat named Snowflake. She was lost so she just kept on walking...and walking...and walking. Then, she got really tired and fell asleep. When she woke up, she was standing in front of a sign that read "North Pole". She was asking many questions like "how did I get here?" but she just kept on walking. She stopped at a sign that read "Elf's Workshop". She walked in. While she was in there, she saw a door marked "Santa's Workshop". She had a friend that people called Santa so she just thought it was her friend and walked in. She heard a loud voice saying "we could use some company" and then she heard a smaller voice saying "like a dog or cat, sir?" She jumped up on the desk and saw a man with a white beard. He was staring right at her and said "like her. We need something like her". The man with the loud voice tried to look for her collar. That's when Snowflake realized that she lost her collar in the snow.

"There's no collar. Let's call her The Christmas Cat till we find her real name."

"I'll tell the other elves, sir," the small voice said. "Thanks," the loud voice replied.

She guessed that the loud voice was Santa and the small voice was an elf. She had read a book that said if you hear a small voice, it's an elf. If you hear a loud voice, it's Santa. She didn't believe it then, but now she did. Snowflake was scared that while she was living with them, she would break something. She jumped into a red bag and fell asleep. When she woke up, there were a bunch of presents on top of her. Her tail was stuck under the presents! She had a tag on her that read: "To: Noelle Autumn From: Santa" She was confused. Who was Noelle?

All of the sudden, the sled started moving. She got scared and jumped. Her tail got unstuck and she jumped out of the sled. She landed in the chimney and slid down with all the other presents. She ran around in a circle. She was now really confused. Snowflake finally fell asleep and when she woke up, someone was holding her. It was a little girl. The girl was saying "...she's so tiny! But, I don't have enough time to take care of her. She will die from starvation. We have to bring her back to Santa!" The little girl and her family kept her until next Christmas by sending her to daycare. It cost a lot of money to do this so they couldn't keep her any longer. They put her under the tree with a tag that read "Sorry, I can't take care of her. From Noelle Autumn". Santa took Snowflake and wrote back "It's ok. I will you give you something else" and left his note with a cat plushie. Snowflake went back to the North Pole with Santa and became his very first Christmas Cat. She was happy there and it finally felt like home.

Untitled by Maeryn McDonald



The Field of Daisies by Naomi Amsterdam

When life gets tough, I escape to my secret place: The Field of Daisies. I go there when I feel like I'm locked inside an empty room, while everyone else is on the other side of the door, shutting me away from reality. I know I shouldn't be running from problems like these, but I see the field as my special place that I can escape to, my own soothing spot that only me and the wind knows about, and trust me, the wind and I are super good at keeping secrets. Fine, the wind is much better at it, but that's okay. Being quiet is the wind's nature, and I like it that way.

The Field of Daisies is a calming place. It's beautiful. The grass is as soft as Pomeranian fur against my bare feet. Sometimes I think the field goes on forever. An endless field of joy. It's so long I've never been to the other end. In fact, just walking to my favorite spot, nearish the middle, takes about an hour and two minutes, depending on how fast I'm moving. At my favorite spot, there's a place for me to sit down in the grass next to a little pond that always has one silly, bright yellow duck in it. I named the duck Sparky, because he makes me laugh with the silly things he does and brings a spark of happiness to my eyes. Because The Field of Daisies is so glorious it helps me think. And think, and think, and think. All the wonders of the world, am I the only one here to ponder them? Surely not, right? I always thought of myself as that one person who just likes being left alone, but sometimes life gets lonely. I feel like there's really no point in having such a beautiful place all to myself. Don't I need someone to share it with? I need someone to be there with me to help me get through, right?

A wonder can't be a wonder if there's nobody to wonder about it, and there's so many questions that need answering that I don't think I could wonder them all up on my own. That's why I write stories of that somebody in my little notebook, hoping they're real and that someday I might find them. Maybe they're in a field of dandelions, because The Field of Daisies is one of a kind.

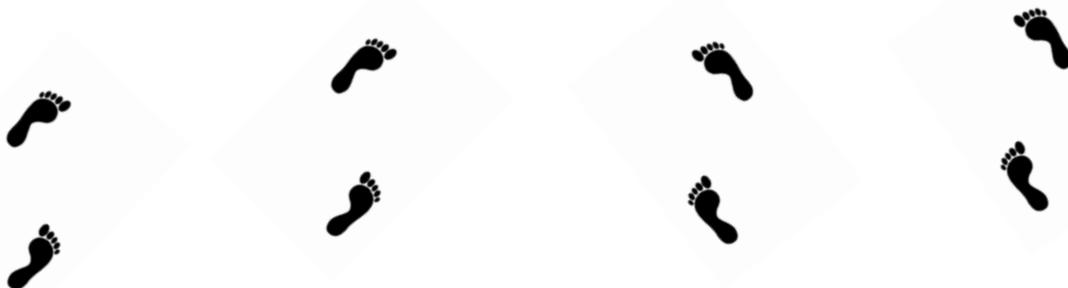
However, The Field of Daisies is just a stepping stone to achieve bigger things, like finding that somebody. The Field of Daisies gives me happiness and hope, which is just what I need to succeed. And someday, I can feel it, when I ask the world all my questions, the answers will come howling back at me.

Soon, I'll be free to escape from all the controlling things in life. I will not stop for anything until I find that one somebody who is like me. And together we will fly away, on The Wings of a Wonder, to whatever lies behind that locked door that is shutting us away from the world.

The world gave me an answer.

All thanks to The Field of Daisies, helping me find the missing pieces, and helping me gather my courage.

I pick myself back up.



Fourth Grade



Stop Global Warming! by Adelaide Gritzmacher

Let's get real Mr. Obama. It is important that people care about our planet. Global warming must come to an end. Our earth is heating up WAY too fast. People don't understand that we are killing the environment. Things have to change and you have to help us change it. Global warming is killing our environment, heating up the earth to extremely dangerous levels, and it is causing **HUGE** natural disasters. Things need to change quickly. Mr. Obama, you might think that your family or good education is more important than global warming. However, you should also care about hurricanes or tropical storms that many people have to deal with. For example, the loss of homes, good education, and the loss of family are caused from the storms. Clearly, global warming is damaging our earth and it **MUST** stop.

If we don't end global warming **HUGE** natural disasters are going to occur more often and be more deadly. For example, in Florida the number of hurricanes are increasing each year because of the heat in the ocean. Because pollution and it mixes with the colder water by Mexico and causes more hurricanes and harder for people to live in Florida. Hurricanes are happening SO often that people in Florida are asking for help. Also, each hurricane that hits Florida (or any place) takes to many lives with the hurricane. And many, many homes and schools. Isn't that important to you?

Another reason Global warming has to end is because it is killing our environment. For example, in some states the water is poisonous from the pollution that is on our planet! They cannot wash their hands, take showers, go swimming, and drink clean and non-poisonous water. Like one of the states had to get more than 10,000 packages of bottled water because they could not drink the water that was in that state! This is all because of Global Warming. Also, pollution is killing animals in the sea and on the land. For example, turtles, fish, jellyfish and bunnies and frogs. There is also SO much pollution in the ocean that at the tip of Texas has an island MADE OUT OF TRASH! This can make the sea a lot hotter! You might think that it is good to be swimming in hot water from the ocean. But no, it can't be like that.

I live in Connecticut and in January 2020, it was **70 degrees!** In the next few days after that, it was snowing! Why is that? Oh I know. Global warming. Global warming has to end is because it is destroying our planet and making its dangerous level up to 10! This because global warming causes droughts and then the droughts heat up the place and that causes forest fires. For example, in California a huge drought just ended and that drought cause forest fires all over the state. Then, the heat from the global warming also kills farmers crops and makes it hard because then the stores don't have enough food to sell to people and people will have less to eat. And have you heard about the HUGE forest fire in Australia? I don't want that to happen here. The Australian forest fire is killing millions of animals! I don't want that to happen here. And guess what made that huge fire. GLOBAL WARMING!!!!

This is why global warming *must come to an end*. Otherwise, the earth will get to over the top hot and have too many natural disasters and our environment will not be a good one. Don't you understand that this is a HUGE problem that needs to change now. When I have kids and the world is destroyed, and they ask; What was the world when you were a kid? Was is really nice? And the only thing I would want to tell them yes; But no I can't tell them that. And if we don't act soon, we will never ever be able to act again. It's not too late to make a change. But it will be soon. Thank you.

Drawing Squares by Jenna Schwarz

"Class, class, class!" Ms. Woodruff shouted.

"Yes, Yes, Yes!" The kids shouted back. "Line up for art."

There was no talking for about 30 seconds until we got in the long, dark hallway. When we walked into Mrs. Platt's room, we sat on the bright flower rug.

"Hi everyone. How are you doing this year?" Everyone gave a big thumbs up.

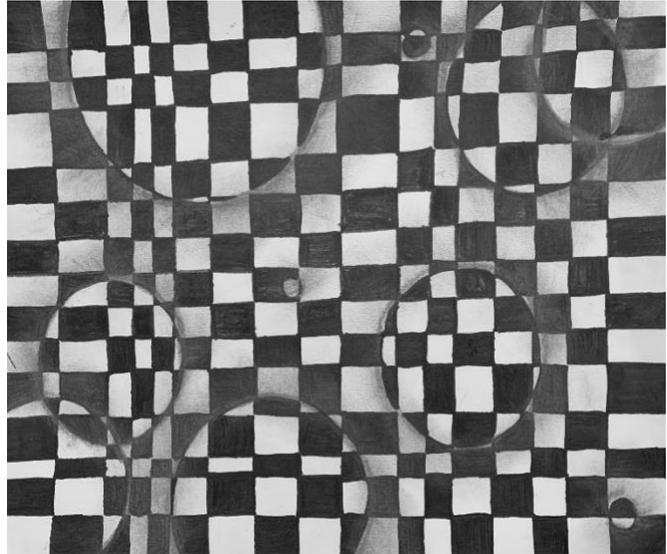
"So today, we are going to make a great sketch and then color on the final copy to show to the class." Everyone's jaws dropped. They never ever had this much control over their work in all of their school years. After Mrs. Platt gave out the instructions everyone got up and got straight to work.

Layla wanted to draw something goofy. "I know! Maybe, a unicorn eating fire for breakfast!" She was so thrilled that she got to do whatever she wanted, to show to the class. It was her first ever art class this school year. It was her fourth day of school. All Layla could think of is how amazing her drawing would be. She sketched, and sketched, and sketched, until she finished her draft. "Finally, I'm finished. That took me forever." She thought. Her hands felt like they were on fire. They felt sweaty and wet. When she finished the copy of the draft, she felt like she couldn't breathe. She just thought about how much work she had put into the draft and now she had to do more work on the final copy. After about fifteen minutes, she did her final touch with the pencil on the paper for her final copy. All she had to do now was to draw in the details with oil pastel. She was relieved the hard part was over. Now all she had to do was color it in. About five minutes later she finished her newly made drawing. She felt like she could soar across the Milky Way. Her fingers on the other hand did not like that idea. She just wanted everyone to like it. If people didn't like it, she wouldn't get the Artist of the Day Award. Layla wanted everything to be perfect because she already worked so hard on her final copy. Layla raised her hand swaying it side to side. "Mrs. Platt, I'm done. When can we share it?" Layla asked Mrs. Platt.

"In about two minutes. While you wait, you can read our new books that we just got." Layla loved reading. She especially loved to read a lot and challenge herself to see how many pages she could read in a short amount of time. She swagged her arms as she skipped to the books. She immediately started reading. "Everyone needs to get quiet. It's time to share what we have made." Immediately Layla raised her hand after she heard the word share. "Layla, I saw your hand go up first. How about you share first." Before Mrs. Platt could say anything else Layla sprinted up in the front of the room.

So, I made a..." Suddenly everyone started to whisper and giggle. Layla's hands started to get sweaty and clammy. She thought her work was amazing, but now she felt alone and scared. Even Mrs. Platt was laughing. Her stomach started to rumble. She started to lose her balance. She started to feel embarrassed. "Maybe I just made a smudge." Layla thought. She turned around her drawing and

Untitled by Olivia Auriantal



looked for about five seconds. She didn't see any mistakes. Everyone was still laughing. There were tears trickling down Layla's face. Mrs. Platt looked serious after two teardrops went down.

"Layla are you ok? You said you wanted to come up here." Mrs. Platt continued. "Are you upset because we are laughing?" Layla nodded. One of Layla's best friends spoke up. "Layla, your drawing is beautiful! What are you talking about? You are one of the best artists I know. Who would be laughing at that? It's not that you made a mistake because you didn't." Layla nodded in agreement. "It's only because the picture you decided to make is funny, not your skills of art." Layla felt joy rise up from her stomach. She felt relieved. Nobody has ever made any speech that was as heartwarming as that. She felt like people were with her in the best way. She was just focused on how she thought her work was amazing and then out of nowhere there was laughter. She started to laugh about everything that just happened. From that day on Layla never felt afraid to go up in front of people ever again! She learned to trust and be confident in herself.

Bullies by William Kim

The aroma of corned beef chili blows in my face as I run swiftly from the one person in Cooking School who hates me...Alex. The next moment, I slip on a piece of a nasty rotten banana and land face-first into my disgusting chili. *Oh God!* I think. I begin to feel queasy. Before I know it, Alex grips my shirt.

"I finally got you." snaps Alex. Uh, oh my stomach twists and turns like frogs were in it. *Right when I thought my day couldn't get any worse,* I vomit right in the jackpot, Alex's mouth.

"Glet blak hlere" Alex says angrily with a mouth full vomit. I begin to run. I look back at Alex but I'm not looking where I'm going, BAM! I run into a hard locker. Alex catches up to me, his steel like hands grip onto my shirt.

"Now I'm going to give you a beating for life," Alex screams in my face. Alex punches me in the gut so hard I can't breathe. Then I hear someone coming. I feel his soft hand touch mine. "Let me help you up," the boys says kindly. I feel my vision starting to fade. Then. Everything goes black.

I wake up in the nurse's office. I don't know what happened. My head feels like a bunch of scrambled puzzle pieces. The nurse isn't there so I wobble back to to classroom.

Alex is waiting for me, but he doesn't do anything to me. Then I see that strange boy again. He looks hurt by someone. I walk over to him and ask, "What's your name?"

"My n-name is...D-Devin," he says weakly. "Thanks for helping me out back there," I say. "Oh that was nothing," Devin stammers. "You need to work on your bully problems," Devin warns. "Okay," I say. "Think of me as a bully," orders Devin. "Yell at me," he says. "I won't yell at you," I say. "Just yell at me," Devin says. "Fine" I say so I take a deep breath and yell "Leave me alone!!!" "Wow you're ready," Devin shouts.

A few moments later Alex is chasing me at recess. "Say leave me alone!!" Devin shouts. "Okay," I shout back. "Leave alone !!!!!!" I scream. Alex begins to run away. "That will teach you," I say. "He won't be bothering you anymore," Devin says. I see Devin screaming his heart out with joy, and I smile.

The Farwell of Fall by Maggie Littler



The rustle of leaves
The whispers of trees
Crisp air and a cool breeze
Leaves bright and beautiful raining down
As the first snow nears
Fall saunters away
Winter is here to stay



Native Americans of the Northeast Region by Zoe Callahan

Have you ever wondered who were the first people to live in the Northeast Region? Native Americans of course! Native Americans live in tribes, tribes are groups of indigenous people (Native Americans) who live together on the same land. Tribes are sort of like big families, in fact there are a whole bunch of families that live in the tribe. According to the author of trueflic, "Native Americans have lived in the Northeast Region for thousands of years!" this quote shows that Native Americans are native to the land. there are a lot of fun facts about Native Americans, Like the Iroquois invented the game of lacrosse! There are many tribes of Native Americans all over the world, But in the Northeast is where most Native Americans lived and traveled. Native Americans have super interesting homes and many cool conflicts! As well as awesome life stories!

Tribes! There are many tribes that lived and traveled throughout the Northeast Region, here's a list of some! ★ Shawnee ★ Pequot ★ Powhatan ★ Mohegan ★ Lenape ★ Abenaki ★ Montauk ★ Algonquian ★ Iroquois and many more cool and interesting tribes with super interesting facts! There are many tribes like the Pequot who had a huge story and a very interesting life! The Pequot lived in Connecticut, you are standing where Native American tribes lived, like the Abenaki lived and traveled through Maine and New Hampshire! All these tribes lived in the USA and the Northeast Region! According to the author of trueflic, "The Algonquian and Iroquois were the 2 main tribes!"

"The great spirit is in all things. He is in the air we breathe, the great spirit is our father, but the Earth is our Mother. She nourishes us.... That which we put into the ground she returns to us." - Big Thunder (Bedagi) Wabanaki Algonquian.

Fun fact! Have you ever heard the word Mohegan? You are probably thinking of Mohegan Sun! It is a casino and you probably never heard of how it got its name. Did you know that the Native American tribe "Mohegan" lived on that land! They got it from the government.

Pequot Wars

Think about it: What used to be Native American land? Here's a story of the Pequots: From 1636 - 1637 was the Pequot War. It happened in southeastern Connecticut in the USA in the Northeast Region. The whole conflict started because the English wanted trade and the Pequot wanted control, so the Pequot killed the English and that started the Pequot War as the Pequots would say "It's Time for

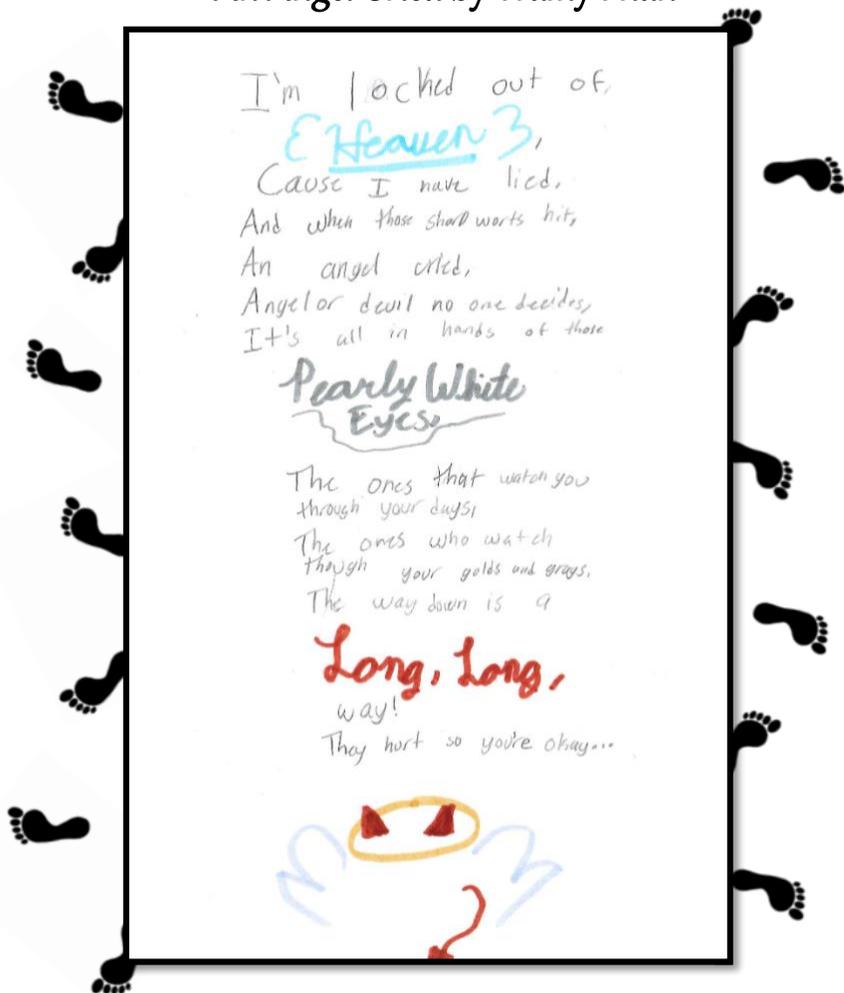
War!" So, the Pequot, English, and other tribes started the Pequot War. "It is time for the treaty of Hartford to be signed!" "The Pequot shall be spread over the Mohegan and Narragansett tribe and be forced out of their homes!" Think about it was this treaty fair?

Tribe homes! Some homes that Native Americans live in are Longhouses and Wigwams, funny names I know. Longhouses are built with elm bark that covers long pole frames. The houses are very long with raised platforms inside that makes two levels for the two families to live on, one family on each level. A Longhouse can fit about 70 people at a time. They are good for families that stay in one place at a time. According to Stephanie Cohen "Longhouses were built riverside so that the tribe can get fresh water and fish."

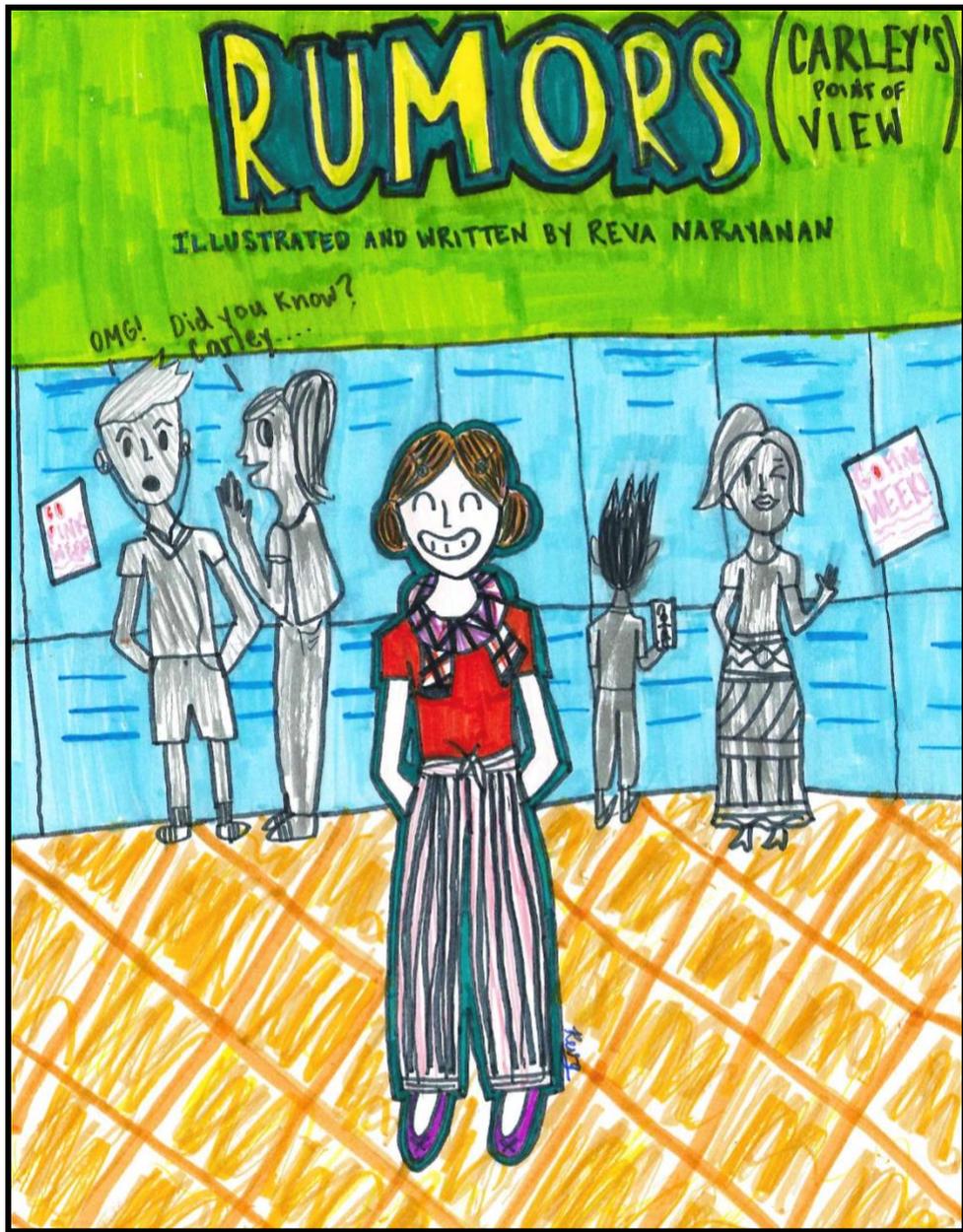
However, a Wigwam is really small like a hut, only one family lives in a hut at a time they are good for families who live in one place for a little bit at a time. They are made from birch bark woven matts that cover the poles.

In conclusion, the history of the Native Americans in the Northeast Region is very complicated yet interesting. Multiple tribes of Native Americans lived differently and had different interesting stories of their life. For example, some tribes had Wigwams or Longhouses, and they had different languages and facts. There were many different and interesting tribes that lived and traveled in the Northeast Region. I hope that the Native Americans of the Northeast Region have their super interesting and awesome history and stories shared more often.

An Angel Cried by Tramy Phan



Fifth Grade



Rumors by Reva Narayanan

The Huge Slide: Winter's Lesson by Lucas Gomes

"Swoooosh," The icy, cold wind warned me and my younger brother as we waddled outside, fat in our snow gear. We set out to play in a winter wonderland only to notice that the snow had frozen and turned into ice, glazed over and shiny. Most importantly, it looked fun to slide on. Without hesitation I coasted outside and slid right into winter's lesson, or at least into its sense of humor.

Me and my brother, Logan slide around on the ice, skittering back and forth like happy idiots. We saw that the snow plow had come in my neighbor's yard, a winding hilly driveway, leaving it like a hollowed out track for bobsledding. Excellent! We snatched our sleds from the side of the driveway and were off!

We never went so fast in our lives on a sled. I belted out, "Oh Yeah!" louder than the Kool Aid Man. Going down was a blast, but climbing back up proved next to impossible. It was like climbing Mt. Everest without a harness. I had to assist Logan because he looked like he was slipping on an infinity banana peel. I punched the snow and cracked the ice just to get a grip. To free up my hands, I propelled the sled up the hill. I scaled the driveway, dragging Logan up by his coat, sweating like a pig in a sauna under all the layers of sweat drowned in fabric.

Perched on top the driveway in the distance there was a small hill of ice chunks and smooth ice, glistening like Elsa's Magical Ice Palace (not that I've ever watched Frozen, but I've heard). We climbed up the mini hill, this time chipping in with our heels, then toes all the way to the top. It was a huge slide, too good to be true. We flew. Flying through the frozen air was nothing less than epic. We slid down even faster than before, which meant the climb up was going to be ten times worse, but we didn't think; we were too caught up in winter's magic. We punched and climbed up the ice trap. Logan kept slipping down. I did too. It was like we went through a portal in Minecraft in ice. Everything around us was ice. I skimmed along the edge on the frozen grass trying to get up, anchoring myself against my mom's frozen car. It was encased in its own personal ice cube, touching it felt like getting attacked by a frost enderman in real life. Me and Logan tried and tried to get back up, but winter was laughing at us. It aged us. Logan who was six inside that morning, was suddenly seventy-six and too exhausted to continue.

I journeyed on, alone. Then suddenly I felt like a bull rammed into me. Wham! Only I had hit straight into the side of the hill and lost my footing, right off the hill. I tried to pull myself up, arms spinning wildly like windmills, giving me no time to punch the ice and climb. I moaned, "Oooowww." The speed of it all trapped me into winter's cyclone and I was catapulted all the way down, touching down with a thud every few feet. It felt like the frost had really bitten me, savagely. I was left in a limp puddle next to Logan, who had given in long before. We laid quiet as the wind whipped around us laughing at its victims.

Still silent, we rose up, disappointed, but never defeated. We picked up ice chunks and hurled it at the ice with all our might. Did winter care? No, but we had learned winter's lesson. We stepped lightly, tip-toeing much quieter than we had come, back inside to warmth, safety, and skid-proof carpets.

Soaring by Savanna Singh



Love by Lyra Ritner

Love is inside of me,
Love is whole.
Love cannot break me,
Or tear my soul.
Love helps me in every way,
On a journey so far away.
In the forest or in the sea,
Where will this amazing world take me?
Imagine something old or new,
Love will always get me through

Middle School by Rocco Anthony Pascale

I walked down the long hall. It felt like forever before I hit the death trap that was Mrs. Beam's class. I heard chalk rubbing on the board. "Oh no," I said. "I'm late." I slowly and carefully walked in the class, past the first column of desks, past the chalkboard until I got to my desk. It had my name at the top of it in cursive. The desk still wobbled. I knew it was going to be a bad day when I saw her write three words, "Essay due today."

I knew I forgot something. It wasn't even done. "Nicholas?" I heard a voice say. "Nick, Nicholas Newman!" I saw the teacher stand above me. "And where is your essay?" she said. "Um," I stuttered. "It's right here." I opened my bag searching through all of the junk. I pretended to look for it until I found a piece of paper in an orange envelope. It said essay on it. I handed it to her wrinkly hands. "Thank you," she said.

My stomach sank when I realized it was empty. "no," I whispered. I had to do something and I had to do it fast.

After school, I decided to walk home from school with my friend Dan. I informed him about what happened but because of the different schedules he got to hand it in tomorrow. He is so perfect. Straight A's and always getting his work finished. "Ugh," I said.

and I are next door neighbors and I was going to his house for dinner. He said, "We are having meatloaf and mashed potatoes for dinner." I was excited.

I walked in the house and saw plastic wrap on all the furniture. Dan looked puzzled. "What are you doing?" he asked. His mom looked at me and said, "Oh I'm sorry Nick, dinner is cancelled for today. We are painting our rooms for a big project." I was disappointed until Mrs. Anderson said, "How about Dan goes to your house?"

We went to my house. I smelt my favorite dinner, tacos. I zoomed up the stairs to my room. "I need to tell you something," I said when we arrived, "I need to tell you that my grades are really low. We need to change them." Dan looked worried. I walked down to the garage with a duffle bag. I filled it with tools that might help. I started making a map of the school and where all of the cameras are.

"This isn't good." Dan complained. I just kept drawing. After about thirty minutes I was done. "Perfect." I said.

It was about nine o'clock. Dan was still at my house but he wasn't enjoying it. He asked, "g this anyways?" I looked at him. "You want to know the truth? The truth is, if I get one more bad grade I get kicked out of school for good."

He was shocked, "I'll help." He said, "Just, if we get caught, don't tell anyone that it was me." "Ok. I replied, " I won't."

It was ten thirty. We took our bikes to school. "Never thought I would be early to school." I said. Dan chuckled. We are really doing this I thought. "Bolt cutters." I said. "Ok?" Dan said. He gave me the bolt cutters. I snipped through the gate. It made a little doorway. I crouched and walked through.

I held up the map. Looking where the back entrance was. It wasn't that far, only about one hundred feet. We passed windows of classrooms. We saw that the back door was locked and we

needed a keycard to enter. We both knew that Mrs. Beam's window was always unlocked. It was open just a little. I popped it open and jumped in. I scrambled through her desk drawers, but couldn't find any of the essays. "Oh no!" I yelled. She must have brought them home!

"Maybe we can change your scores to a B." Dan said quietly. "Great idea!" I said. I opened up the teacher's desk and spotted a folder with my name on it. I eagerly opened hoping to find my essay, but it was completely empty except for one piece of paper. My report card.

F in math, D in reading, F in writing, D in science. "Oh no. This is not good!" I said. I needed to change all of the grades. I suddenly noticed her laptop on the desk. I hopped in Mrs. Beam's chair and turned on her computer. "Loading Please Wait," were the words on the screen. It opened to the sign in page and asked for a password. I looked around the room and saw a sign that said Beam is best. I decided to try those words and it worked! The picture on her home screen was of her as a little girl. I found a folder that said grades. I clicked on it. It had everybody's report card in period A. That's my class, I exclaimed. The first name I saw was Denis Brown. He is a bully. Before I got involved, he was getting B's and C's, now he is getting

D's and F's. I scrolled down and found my last name, Thompson. I changed my math score to an A, my reading and writing scores to an A and my science score to a B. "That was easy, Right Dan?"* «*Dan? Danny?" He was gone! I suddenly heard footsteps in the hallway. Oh no. It was a school's night guard. I ducked below Mrs. Beam's desk. The footsteps got closer and closer. Stomp Stomp! Is what I heard until they entered the class. I could see dirty boots from under the desk. Dirk, the night guard was wearing his signature blue uniform. I peeked my head through the desk. He had a flash light and real handcuffs. I'm gonna have to run. I looked over at the window and it was still open. I crouched behind the desk. I sprinted right for the window. He saw me and started chasing after me. I dove through the window and landed on my face. I got back up and ran to the gates, back through the hole and onto the road. I was safe. Or so I thought.

"Beep Beep!" "Huh?" A car was coming right towards me. Boom! I was hit. I broke my legs, hands, and was knocked out. The car turned off and the driver came over to me. It was Mrs. Beam.

"Ughhh" I groaned. "Oh my god!" "Nick! Are you ok?" She called the police. She said the location and what happened. About five minutes later an ambulance arrived. "Beedoo beedoo!" two men walked out and lifted me on a stretcher into the ambulance. I felt dead. I couldn't move, I couldn't see.

I woke up with lots of people surrounding me. Grandma, Mom, Dad, even Dan were standing around me. My leg was in a sling that was hanging from the ceiling. Everyone was crying. The doctor came in and said, "Nicholas Thompson, you are lucky to be alive.

The next three weeks were so boring just sitting in a hospital bed. Finally, I was able to learn how to start walking with crutches. The month was finally up. I was allowed to go home. I taught myself how to lift my feet up and use my crutches as stilts.

After the week was over, it was back to school for me. The first person I saw as I walked into school was Denis Brown. He walked over to me and said, "I wish you didn't come back! Nobody likes you!" I ignored him and headed over to Mrs. Beam's class. My stomach sunk as I walked through the classroom door.

In her grumbly voice, I heard Mrs. Beam say, "Report cards today.!" I was excited and scared at the same time. With a last name like Thompson, I had to wait for what seemed like forever. Finally, she walked over and handed me my report card. I closed my eyes and slowly opened the envelope. My mouth dropped. One D and three F's? "Oh no!" I yelled. Mrs. Beam looked over at me smiled and said, "Next time, don't forget to save!"

The Fishing Trip by Tommy Hennessy

"Let's go!" I shout to my Dad as he climbed onto the boat. It was a muggy August day on the Connecticut shoreline. My Dad, my grandfather and I were taking a charter fishing boat out of New London. The smell of raw fish and the salty sea blew across the docks. It was a busy afternoon. Many charter boats were going out, along with the occasional yacht slowly exiting the marina. I couldn't be more excited to get out on the open water. We backed out of the marina and started the engine. As we took off through the cool water of Long Island Sound, I prepared myself for a day of catching big fish. The wind ripped through my hair and the spray stung on my face. We kept going until we reached a spot notorious for big fish; the rocky water surrounding Plum Island. The Captain told me to be on the lookout for birds, so I decided to scan the horizon.

"There!" I screamed, jumping up and down, "On the Right! See them? See them?" My knees were shaking like Jell-O. There HAD to be fish under those birds. The Captain gunned the engine, and we headed towards the area where the birds were diving like crazy. Once we got close, we stopped the engine and let the boat drift closer. I decided to take the first cast. My heart hammered with a mix of anxiety and excitement. As I brought back the rod behind my shoulder, the whole world disappeared. It was just me and the fish lurking below. I let loose, and watched the line fly. The lure sailed through the sky, almost as if it were flying. It landed about forty yards away, and I started reeling it in the moment it hit the water. For the first few seconds, there was nothing. Then all of a sudden, BAM! Something had hit the bait, and something had hit it HARD!

I set the hook, kept the rod tip high, and started reeling in the fish. Inch by inch, he came closer to the boat. Just when I thought that I had him, he darted back down to the seabed. He found a second wind, and I needed to find one as well. The fish felt like a dead weight on the other side of the line. Nevertheless, I kept fighting the fish for what felt like hours. Finally, I got him next to the boat. Using

every bit of strength I had left, I hoisted him out of the water. We removed the hook and secured the gaff. I dragged him into the center of the boat. I held him up as high as I could, like I was holding a trophy. I was swelling with pride on the inside. It was a massive striped bass, probably 40 pounds! I set him down on the cooler, and measured him. The total, from tail to lip, is a surprising 35 inches. I took a few pictures of the fish, and then finally let him slip off into the depths of the sea.

We all caught many more fish that day, but none could compare to that first striper that I landed. As we rode back to the docks after a long day of good fishing, I felt overcome with happiness. I would cherish and remember this day for the rest of my life.

Alone with a Zombie Skeleton by Ronan Trace Curran

"Hello? Hello?" Yelled Donta desperately. It was a cold crisp October night and the pouring rain that drenched Donta was unforgiving. The low misty clouds of fog that were hovering over the crumbling roads were blinding. Maybe trick-or-treating alone was a terrible idea, Donta thought to himself. As he turned the corner, he nearly slammed into a tall rusty street sign that read: Skullhead Blvd. Where was he? He suddenly realized he was lost.

As Donta slowly crept down the crumbling road, he saw a tall brick apartment with shattered windows and splintering shutters. He ran at the thought of shelter from the hard and cold downpour. When he got to the front door, his boney fingers grasped the frigid doorknob, but it wouldn't budge. He pulled and yanked at the door. His frozen fingers gave out and his body went

soaring backwards to the ground. His black sweatpants were shredded on the left side and his freezing hands were cut and bleeding. Donta heard a shrieking owl on the top of the building. When he looked up, the full moon was shining through the dark stormy clouds. It must have been midnight. He was supposed to be home hours ago. Donta got up as the tears started to roll down his pale face. He feared the thought of never getting home again.

He saw a barn down a rocky path. Weeds were growing out of the cracks and moss overcame the the rigid stones. He stepped forward cautiously. There stood a tall oak tree with bare branches holding on by their last strand. The dead bark that was coming off revealed the rotting core of the dead tree. An old unattended rock wall laid behind the oak tree, forgotten because of the thick green vines overcoming the dark gray rocks. The temperature was dropping rapidly and the rain was still pouring down hard. He continued to cautiously creep forward. A large corn field stood surrounding the path. The now dying corn was crowding around him. Every time he took a step the corn seemed to close in on him. He climbed his way to the top of the path where the animal pens stood. The splintering wood was starting to rot. The rain made it difficult to see but Donta could make out dead animals lying on the weed covered ground. He leaped away as fast as his freezing body could. In front of him stood the old barn, paint peeling, windows shattered, and shutters barely hanging on. He slowly crept into the barn. One of the tall doors laid on the ground and the leaking ceiling was sagging. The paint was peeling off the rotting wood boards. The rumble of thunder was starting up in the background. He got inside the barn and slowly positioned himself on the itchy hay. He watched out of the barn door as the lightning crashed like fireworks. Although he knew he might never see fireworks or lightning again, he was happy to have something to enjoy.

Creek, woosh. Donta stood alert. "Who is it!" A deep hoarse voice said, "Charkoe, the zombie skeleton." Donta jumped up and hurried outside,

The cornfield was ignited with flames. He knew he had to run and he started into a sprint. His sliced hands, freezing body, and wet shoes wouldn't stop Donta. His jacket flew open in the strong gust of wind. Donta tripped, his body pierced by the rocks.

As he lay on the ground, Donta thought of his dead grandfather and remembered his words, "Donta, it doesn't matter what happens, it matters if you get up and keep going." It hurt to think about him. He was scared to think that soon he too, would suffer the same fate.

Donta rolled over. The blood was gushing from his knees and elbows. As the blood got washed away by the freezing rain, a shiver ran down his back. The searing pain was numbed by the freezing cold of the night. He had to get back up, his life depended on it. He struggled to get up, but he knew he had to keep moving. He looked back at a dark cloudy figure who stood tall in the pitch-black path. It had to be Charkoe, thought Donta. He was going as fast as he could when a tree fell right in front of him. He tried to get over it but couldn't control himself. He flipped over and hit his head.

Why is this happening? Am I going to survive? The questions stormed Donta's fragile brain. It was hot, burning hot as the flames closed in on him. His body froze, he couldn't run away this time. To his left stood Charkoe standing tall and looking proud. The flames grew nearer. Charkoe started to walk closer. "Donta?" The searing pain pierced his dying body. Life was over for Donta Sorres. Then Charkoe leaned over his lifeless body. "Why did you run grandson, I was trying to help you."

Noticed by Amelia Ditzel

I wake up and look in the mirror.

A girl reflects back at me.

I say hello just to be noticed.

The girl in the mirror says hello back.

She is the first one to notice me in some time.

The girl has long blonde hair and soft eyes. Beautiful.

I wish I looked like her. I bet she is noticed.

When I walk away, she, too, walks away.

I go through my days unnoticed.

Each morning, though, she is there, in the mirror, smiling.

Each day she notices me and says hello.

Her brown eyes stare intensely into mine.

Sometimes I catch a glimpse of myself in the girl.



It's fleeting, and I again travel through my days unnoticed.

Sometimes when the sun is just so on the bus,
the girl appears on the window.

I wave, she waves, noticing me.

She disappears as we pull up to the curb.

I walk into school, again unnoticed.

Everyday she follows me,

in puddles, black laptop screens, metal spoons.

She is relentless.

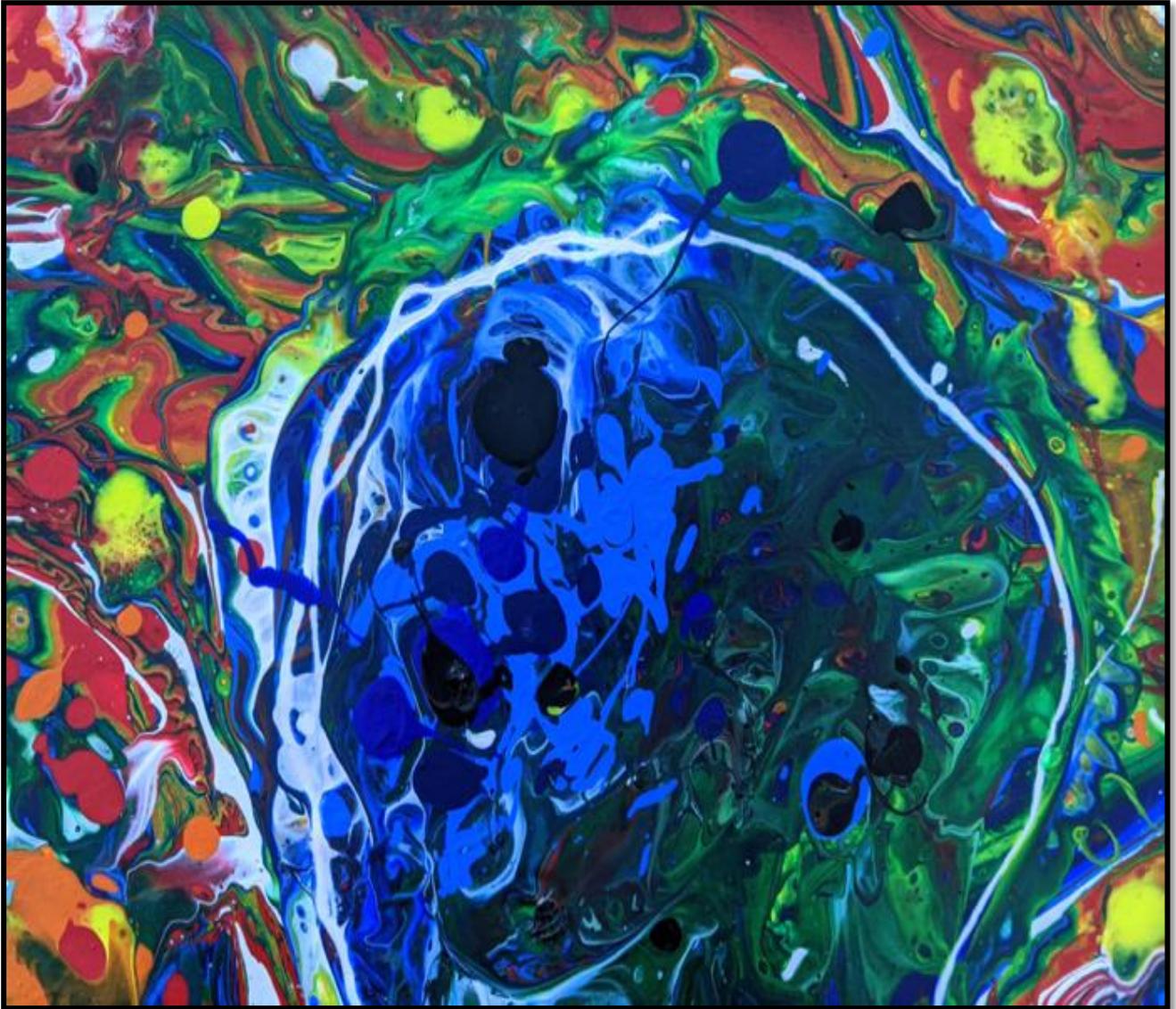
Always noticing me, always kind, always beautiful, always there.

I am noticed!

Noticed by the only one who matters,
me.



Sixth Grade



Earth Blob by Hailey Salen



I am From by Elia Amaro

I am from sand sifting through my toes from
waves crashing over me at my favorite beach
from the smell of summer floating in the Israeli air
from saying you will never know until you try over and over
again until I believe it myself
from curling up under a blanket with a cup of hot chocolate
during the winter months and flipping into my friend's pool
during the summer months
from salty french fries coming to my lips to dark, rich, silky
chocolate rolling down my tongue
from the perfect avocado toast in the morning

I am from my dog licking my face repeatedly
from my safta who gave me my grandfather's old necklace
from my mother who is always there when I need her
from my father who will do anything he can to help me
from my brothers who stand by my side even through the dark times
from the time my favorite teacher had a heart attack and died, now
November 7 will never be the same

I am from dancing like nobody's watching
from art that fills me with joy and passion
from rock climbing with my family
from squash with one of my best friends
from having an obsession of taking photos
from the contortion, I do to impress my
friends and freak out my brothers and mom
from the piano I play with all of my heart

I am from the rocky mountains of Chile and
the sandy deserts of Israel
from a family full of immigrants
from the blaring sirens of New York City
from the Friday night dinners with my family
from being one in 7 billion
from being me



My First 500 by Pema Kennedy

The loud sounds of the parents, swimmers, and coaches swirled around me as I wrapped my arms around myself. The pool deck was warm, and my tight bathing suit felt like a heavy winter coat, trapping me in the heat. My cap was tight on my head, making my ears feel weak and helpless with the cap's strength. My goggles were on top, just waiting to be put on my eyes, where they will stay for about ten minutes. Then, the voice of the official at the buzzer blared out, saying, "Girls 10 and Under 500 Yard Freestyle. There will be 3 heats. Heat one." The few short and shrill whistles rang out into the large area of the pool deck, making the swimmers get onto the blocks, calming everyone in the stands, making the pool deck very quiet, except for the noise of the big tubes on the ceiling. But only for a few seconds. The long whistle sounded, and the swimmers tightened up their form, almost in the correct dive position, but not quite there yet, just waiting for the "take your mark" that will be their cue to do so. And sure enough, it happened. I feel the adrenaline in the other swimmers, awaiting the moment for when they will dive in and stay in for around ten minutes. They were in the moment where you can hear your own heartbeat, and feel the air around you still, but then, BEEP! The swimmers dived in with a few belly flops and a few flawless dives, and the cheers erupted out of the stands, with screaming siblings, parents, coaches, teammates, and relatives. One of our

swimmers was sort of in the back, but, when she flipped at the wall, she surged ahead and took her place in first. I loved that she was excited and ready to get a good time or win or whatever her goal was, but I knew her strategy wasn't the best. Our coach had always told us, "In long distance races, pace yourself. Don't speed up in the beginning, or you will slow down in the end." That makes sense.

I watched her on her second 100, and I realized, She might come in at around second to last place, at the pace she's going. The other swimmers had seen what she was doing, and sped up too, maybe because they thought she was challenging them. I saw my coaches yelling, "Pace, pace!" And I saw that whenever you were on a side lane, like one or six, your coaches get the opportunity to scream and made kicking gestures at you, like waving your hands, you looked like you slowed down, because they are distracting you. Hm. Weird. It was all quiet for a second, then someone yelled, "GO!" And then the cheers started up again. I have experienced that before in meets, where people can be yelling and then stop, and then a random person screams something, and then the cheers go again. And during that little snippet of quiet, right now, the bell that signaled the near end of the race. The cheers screamed like a monster for its dinner. The swimmers sped up a bit, and the screams and sounds from the people in the stands got louder. I looked up at the bleachers in the higher level above the deck, and quickly found my parents. I smiled, and they waved at me, grinning. I looked right back at the pool, and just in time, too, because the first swimmers were coming into the wall. It was a heated end, with one swimmer from CAC and one swimmer from the other team. However, our person was still in the slower part, just passing the halfway line. She sprinted into the wall, not breathing, because our coaches have also told us, "When you're sprinting into the wall, don't breathe. It will slow you down." She did so. The yells died down, and the whistles from the officials were blown again. But this time, one of them said, "Heat 2" and that was it, that's all they said. Then, the "take your mark" was said again, and then, the beep! The cheers flared up again, and the swimmers were all going nice paces. I decided to stretch again. I did the one arm over stretch for both left and right, did over one on my back, both left and right, then did some leg stretches. I didn't realize it was almost time for me to put on my goggles, until the bell rang and I jumped a little. The swimmers, yet again, started speeding up and so did my heart rate. I put on my goggles and shook a little, feeling nervous but also excited. When I shook, I felt like I was just shaking a little bit of fear off, because when the swimmers were finished, I thought, Can they just do the whistles already? I want to swim! Then, I got my wish. The shrill noises echoed throughout the pool deck, bouncing off the walls, and reaching everyone's ears. I stepped up with shaking legs, and my heart was thumping, swift and rapid, threatening to beat out of my chest as I bent down, lightly sliding my fingers against the smooth edge of the block, impatiently waiting to grasp the board...

"Take your mark."

BEEP!

I threw myself into the water, with an almost perfect dive, and quick, strong dolphin kicks, and smiling just a little. I broke out of the water with a good pace and smooth strokes. I was right where I needed to be. When I got to the wall, I flipped and pushed off strong, with an extra dolphin kick. I saw other swimmers a little behind, and realized I was taking this a little towards the way of a 100, rather than a 500. I slowed my pace, and immediately agreed with myself. This was the right way to swim a long distance race. When I went to flip at the wall, I watched the little dipper thingy that counts your laps in 500's and other long distance races bob up and down but finally yanking itself up so it does not get hit by the oncoming swimmer. I watched the person handling it cheer me on, and I felt really joyful about that. I also saw one other swimmer neck-and-neck with me, and I wanted to speed up to get in front, but then I realized

she was going faster and looking at me when she was breathing, just to taunt me. I didn't take the bait, though, I was too busy trying to get a good time. The little dipper thing (I think it's called a counter) was flashing its number at me. 13, it said. Yes! I was almost done. Only a 175 to go, which was 7 laps. Then, when I passed the 15 mark, I heard that bell ring.

Almost there, I thought to myself. Then, on the last 100, (four laps) I forced my legs to kick harder, to beat that girl from the other team, who, by the way, was a little behind me! I pushed myself to go faster, however my body was almost out of energy by the time I was at the shallow end for my last flip turn. My body screamed as I threw my arms and legs into a whirlwind of organized motion, like a tree's limbs flailing as a merciless wind throws it around. I crossed the halfway point, using a little bit of courage to look at the girl next to me, and she was right here with me, speeding to the wall, and then, I slammed into the wall, with a racing heart and a trembling body, breathing hard. I dared to look at the scoreboard, and there I was, Kennedy, CAC with a little one next to my name, I stared in shock for a moment, then laughed with relief. I was done! I finished it! My very first 500, and in a meet. Then my eyes darted for a moment to the time section. 8:49:98. Eight minutes! That's unbelievable! My eyes closed and I knew, I could quit if I wanted to, but I also knew, that hard work is all paid off in the end. Never, ever give up.

Riptide by Eric Richmond

Phillip stared into the morning sun. Its faint glow intrigued the young boy, who was sitting on the porch steps. The warmth that fell on his face felt wonderful, like a gentle hand brushing over his face. It was a perfect day. He thought to himself, *Too bad father isn't here to see this*. His mother, who was in the kitchen at the time, spotted him, walked over, and sat down next to him. She looked at the mournful expression on his face. She sighed, knowing exactly what the boy was thinking.

"Phillip, let's go to the beach. We can't possibly waste this magnificent day."

The mood the boy was having was instantly changed. Ever since the first time that Phillip went to the beach, he immediately fell in love with it. The ocean smell, salty and crisp. The feeling of the sand between his toes felt like little hands massaging his feet with every step he took. The chill of the water as he put his arms and legs in. He felt that everything about it was flawless. He wasn't bothered by anything when he was at the beach. Except for one thing: Phillip couldn't swim. After all, he is only four years old.

Phillip hopped excitedly into his mother's blue SUV and saw his mother mistakenly hop into the passenger's seat. *Father was the one who drove us to the beach on perfect days like this*. His cheerful mood was tainted with sadness for a split second, but it brightened back up quickly. His mother turned the key into the ignition. The engine purred softly, and they were off. Phillip saw the blurred vision of his neighbor's houses as they drove by. The beach was not too far away. He sat up in his car seat and heard something. Perhaps it was in his mind. *I'll be better soon, Phil. Don't worry*. Phillip remembered these words. He stared out the window. He began to daydream as he started to recall a recent memory...

Phillip stared at his father. Lying in bed, eyes closed, he remembered this moment quite vividly. He shuffled closer to his father's side. His father's eyelids drifted open, and he smiled weakly at Phillip. The conversation was exactly as Phillip had remembered it.

"Dad, come play with me!"

"I'd love to, you know that. But you know that I'm sick."

"But you've been sick all week! C'mon!" Phillip's mother entered the room.

"Phillip, leave your father alone. He is quite sick." Phillip walked out of his parent's room and overheard the conversation they were having. Something about "surgery" and a "tumor." Phillip's father called out to him from his bed,

"I'll be better soon, Phil. Don't worry." Phillip's father passed out.

They had arrived at the beach. The place was completely deserted. No lifeguard, no one else. Phillip and his mother had the entire beach to themselves. Phillip waddled over to the waves and water. The waves washed ashore like a child petting a dog. Over and over again, coming down, stroking the sand. Phillip put his feet in the waves. The sand rushed out from under him as each wave retreated. His mother yelled out to him from afar.

"Remember Phillip, don't go too far into the water! You can't swim, and you know it!" Phillip sat down on the soft, squishy sand. He surveyed the sparkling ocean. *Father would love this view. It's so beautiful, it's mesmerizing.* The ocean seemed to call out to him. *Come here, Phillip. Come. Take a few steps out.* Phillip knew he shouldn't. The voice was a hallucination, a temptation to submerge himself in the cool water. But he took a few steps out into the ocean. And just like that, *Bam!* The tide swept his feet away. The tide swept him out into the ocean. A powerful tide. The riptide. His mother cried out in an ear-piercing voice,

"*Phillip!*" Her voice echoed on the quiet beach as she watched her son get pulled into the ocean. Phillip started to panic silently. He was getting pulled into the ocean. He heard all sorts of voices in his head. *This won't be so bad, your father has a 50/50 chance at surviving the surgery.*

Fire by Danny Royce

Burning rage
and agony
melting in the heat.
Tearing and ripping
all it touches.
Harsh and brutal heat
wandering on its scorched path.
Dancing in the wind,
smoke hides
hypnotic flames.
Angrily taunting,
crackling,
joyfully sparking.
It won't be contained,
in its solitary station.
The heat rises with its
blistering char.
Fire will never die,
When found inside the soul and heart.

Global Warming by Abby Ditzel



Ready or Not by Natalie Chin

I guess I haven't been the greatest sister lately. I don't know. Maybe it was because of the way I hadn't paid attention to him. Maybe not. I can't deny it. But I can't admit it either. I stared at the smooth rock, placed in the middle of my palm. I choked out a sob. "Oh god, Alex. Why'd you have to do this to me?" I just lay there. Crying for hours.

It was last year. It was summer, of course. The time of the year where Me, Mom, Dad and Alex headed down to Grandma's relaxing cabin out in the woods, less than a mile away from the lake. Mom and Dad would unpack, and Alex and I would run towards the lake, picking up little bits of nature along the way that would grab our attention. Alex with a rock or two, and me with twigs and acorn shells. After a while, Mom and Dad would join us, on the sandy, smooth shore, and we would all sit there. Watching the sun, hiding behind the trees, and bursting into millions of colors, ones I couldn't explain. We called these particular summer evenings, "Rainglows" because Alex thought that these sunsets were rainbows without any "Boy Colors". The "Glow" part comes from the vibrant feeling that it gave us. But that feeling didn't come to us that night. We must've all sensed it. The warm summer air tasted wrong on my tongue, like as though we hadn't read the assembly instructions right, and that we were missing the most important piece. I chose to ignore it. Alex looked at me. I stared right back at him. We shot Mom a troublesome look, but by the time Mom gave us the slightest chin nod, we were already sloshing around in the muddy water, splashing water at each other. With the usual, "Don't go too far?" from Dad, we would play like this for an hour, which went by way too fast. Though, once it got a little darker, and the sun refused to keep its own eyes open, we would head back to Grandma's place.

Alex and I would crawl into the twin beds, and talk all night, letting our wild imaginations get a chance to finally speak. Maybe we would talk about magical acorn shells that could talk to you if you were quiet enough, or about tiny rock monsters, living inside of pebbles. Eventually we would fall asleep, but this time we lingered longer. "Hey, I have an idea," Alex whispered to me, after my parents had pulled the door shut, with a short, firm click. "Alex, I'm tired, tell me tomorrow." I whispered back, adding a little more force than needed. "But, that's the thing, I want us to go to the lake, early in the morning. I want to give you something!" He told me, which took me aback. He rarely thought of me. Ever. It took me a while to respond, but I eventually gave in. "Fine. But it better be worth it." I huffed. I don't know how I heard, but I heard Alex smile. And it felt like a genuine smile, a smile you won't see or feel very often, I wanted to grasp onto the trail of warmth that he was leaving before I lost him, but my eyes decided to let go, assuming I would find it again.

He wasn't doing anything when I found him. He just had an unreadable face when I looked at him. I collapsed next to him, and started my sobbing fit all over again. By the time I was done crying, and started with my hiccup-y squeaks, the search and rescue team had arrived. The first thing they did was search the lake. A woman named Margo found him. My mom and I cried next to each other. He was only nine. Margo awkwardly patted my shoulder, and handed me something. "I found this. In his pocket. I figured you might want it." She said in a soft tone. I hesitated for a second, stared up at her, with cautious eyes, then took it from her wet hand. It was a smooth rock, "August 13, 2019". I dropped the rock. I had found this rock in the lake, August 13, 2019. I thought Alex had chucked it in the lake. He had wanted it so bad, but I wouldn't give it to him, so he decided neither of us could have it. Apparently not. When I picked the rock back up, Margo was loading Alex into the ambulance. I stared at his drenched body, cold blue lips. Lifeless body. I knew. It was

my fault. My fault that he was gone. My fault that I hadn't paid attention. My fault that I didn't let him have the stupid rock. My fault that Mom and Dad are never really... there. There's no more Rainglows, no more lake visits, no more visiting Grandma. It was all my fault. And it still is.

Come to your senses! Your father is a fighter. Fight the waters for him! He will live. Cup your hands and push downwards! Your mother is coming! Just stay afloat!

Phillip powerfully pushed his hands downwards, and rocketed to the surface of the water. He saw a life preserver on the water some feet away from him. He used all his strength to propel himself towards the floating ring. He grabbed onto the ring and his mother pulled him back to shore.

"Phillip! What were you thinking?! You can't swim!" Phillip stayed silent. He just shook his head and hugged his mother. His mother sighed deeply and returned the hug.

"Come on, Phillip. We need go to the hospital. They just called."

Phillip sighed as well, expecting the worst. He clambered into the car, and his mother hopped into the driver's seat. Phillip thought to himself, *I'm going to miss father. He was a great man and has done nothing to deserve this.* Phillip noticed the word *was* in his thoughts. His mother pulled into the hospital. Phillip and his mother spotted a silhouette waiting for them at the hospital door. Phillip cried out to the man with powerful emotion,

"DAD!"

The Beauty of Neuromusicology By Sandhya Sudarsanam

Neuromusicology- the most recent term that was introduced to the 20th century- is now studied and analyzed worldwide. The connection between music and the brain is an intriguing phenomenon, but there are still puzzle pieces that are yet to be discovered. The cure for a disease may lie in music, studies show, and it may change a person's life- forever.

The mystery of how music enters the brain: When you listen to music, sound waves travel through the ear canal, and come into contact with the tympanic membrane. The diminutive movements that it produces allow the sound waves to travel through the hammer, anvil, and stirrup. When sound waves reach the cochlea, it gets converted into a fluid wave, and then into electricity with the aid of hair cells. The electricity then enters the brain in what is known as the temporal lobe. The auditory cortex, which is inside the temporal lobe, receives these signals and deciphers them. The information it collects is transmitted to other areas of the brain for interpreting as well.

#1 Mood Changer: If storm clouds circulate your lethargic brain and blast all the anger out of it, then listening to music is your best hope. The brain triggers certain chemicals (that produce feelings) at certain times. One example of such a chemical is the neurotransmitter dopamine, which gives off more alacrity and happiness. A shuffled playlist causes the brain to produce a myriad of dopamine. Listening to music with peers gives off a boost of oxytocin, which increases trust and interactions with others.

A life-changing medicine: A life-saving auxiliary, music could be useful on the way to recovery for those in hospitals. An experiment conducted in 2008 shows that patients with stroke improved during recovery after listening to music for about 3 months. In

addition, another study shows that patients with epilepsy were able to line up with the beat mentally (when listening to music) without having seizures (Seizures are electrical interferences in the brain. Several seizures result in epilepsy.). Music helps to alleviate anxiety, which is the main cause of seizures. Also, patients diagnosed with aphasia (a disease where someone's thoughts cannot be expressed verbally) were listening to music. The program, Melodic Intonation Therapy, reported that patients "are often able to sing, sometimes with the same fluency and clarity they had before the onset of illness."

Music can help by palliating anxiety, depression, insomnia, ADHD, PTSD, schizophrenia, stroke, Parkinson's disease, autism, Alzheimer's disease, dementia, and other mental disorders. A study showed when Alzheimer patients listened to music, they sang to it.

America's number one academic game-changer: Music improves accuracy and concentration. Music keeps progress from plummeting downward, so it might be a remedy for schoolwork if your grades are tumbling into the garbage can. An experiment that was conducted reveals that surgeons were able to acquire more accuracy and preciseness when they listened to music. The results for surgeons who worked without listening to music were the antithesis of the surgeons who listened to music; their accuracy and precision did not increase as drastically. Anyone who is involved in making music (playing an instrument, participating in a choir, etc.) will succeed in other subjects as well.

Music can improve speech, nudge an IQ score even higher, increase test scores, and many more.

The Power of Music: Music has evolved for centuries. Although some experiments have been conducted, there are still many questions about music that are yet to be discovered. Is music the light at the end of the tunnel? Will these permanent diseases, the ones that have not been cured despite years of research, no longer be a dilemma? The people in the 21st century have unraveled several discoveries, but will the study of the brain and its relationship with music lead us to make the biggest discovery ever known to humankind? The answers lie in the roots of neuromusicology.

The Girl in the Midland by Emma Rose Pongetti



Seventh Grade



Me by Melina Velenzas

Milly by Maylyn Iannucci

A small lion crawled towards me meowing and shaking. Her gray and tan pelt was practically gone. I got out of my bed and knelt.

“Mmmmmmmmeerrrrroowww?” The lion tilted her head. I picked her up gently and put her in my bed. She wasn’t fierce, nor was she dangerous. She was a cat. Yet, I called her a lion. I laid next to her as her purring lulled me to sleep.

A few years later, as I lay in my bed at 6:07 AM, all I could think about was Milly. At 18-years-old, she had been declining for a while. *Will she live? Will I see her again? Did she pass?* This was all I could think of as I fell back to a restless sleep.

I woke abruptly by crying. I jolted up as my eyes darted around the room. I let out a sigh of relief when I realized it was my two-year-old little sister, Zoe. Zoe wanted to get out of her bed, but it was too early, so I sang to her. After 20 or so minutes passed, my mom came in, and she walked over to me.

“Milly passed in her sleep.” Mom told me, quite straightforward. *There is no way she is gone. Mom is just joking,* I thought wryly. My parents woke everyone up as I walked down the stairs and slowly entered their room. My heart sank when I saw her. Our cat Milly, my “Mon Amie,” as I called her, laid lifelessly on the ground as stiff as a rock with her mouth and eyes open.

“M...Milly...” I croaked. I couldn’t hold back my tears. The faucet in my eyes that barely ever ran finally turned on. I looked at my sister Cecilia, my sister Kenzie, my dad, my mom, then back at Milly.

Zoe stumbled over, “Cat! Meow!” she said, petting Milly. Zoe looked puzzled when Milly didn’t move. “Meeeoowww!” Zoe repeated, not understanding.

“She’s gone, Zoe. Bye bye kitty,” my mom choked. “Bye bye cat!” Zoe said to Milly’s corpse, still not understanding. The innocent, young child looked at us all, “What’s da matter?” she asked.

“M-Milly’s dead,” I cried. Zoe stared at me, then everyone. *She doesn’t understand what’s going on. She’s too young,* I thought. In that moment, I had a memory of Milly at a happier time. I was trying to sleep, but I was unable to, and Milly helped me.

“Mmmeeoowww?” Something called out from the hall. I slowly crept to the door and opened it.

“Merow!” Milly mewed. I gently scooped her up and brought her to my bed, lying down once again. Milly purred and came next to me sniffing a bit before curling up next to me and falling asleep. Her purrs helped me fall asleep like a soft lullaby.

It seemed as if she was always there for me when I needed her most. What would I do now?

Later that day, my mom and dad were outside digging something. I sat in the bathroom drinking some tea. A cup of calm tea normally relaxed me so it was easier to sleep. I hadn’t been able to for the many worrisome nights leading up to Milly’s death. I sat there writing a fan fiction story before bed, trying to comfort myself from this morning.

“Maylyn?” My dad’s voice came from the baby monitor in my room. I had to share a room with two of my sisters, one of them being Zoe. “Yes?” I called out. “Can you come down?” he asked. “Sure, I’ll be down in a few seconds,” I replied, and started heading down the stairs. I came outside onto the backyard porch and over to the gates. I descended another flight of stairs before reaching my parents. The two had made a huge hole in the ground: a grave for Milly. I sat down on the wall next to it and looked down to see something wrapped up in a towel. I knew what it was.

I sat through my mom reading a passage from a book about death and how death was okay. My dad opened the towel a little bit revealing Milly's head. He held a milk tab in his hand and put it in her mouth. Milk tabs were the only thing she played with. My Dad put an elastic band in with her as well before covering her head up again and slowly lowering her into the hole. We put tiles over her to make sure nothing disturbed her after we buried her. The pale light from the backyard lamppost illuminated the tiles. Everything was making me cry, and I started to shiver.

"At least we didn't bury her at the Pet Sematary," I said jokingly, for I was trying to lighten the mood.

"There are enough Steven King novels already, Maylyn." my mom replied.

The two of us chuckled half-heartedly before sighing. After Milly was halfway buried, I went inside and back into the bathroom. I picked up my notebook and my tea and resumed writing as I slowly felt at ease. I yawned and went to my room where I slept with my siblings. I lay in my bed, closed my eyes and tried to sleep thinking of little stories to comfort me.

The next morning, I awoke to something warm that my hands were wrapped around, yet when I opened my eyes, nothing was there. *She's still with me even if I can't see her*, I told myself as I went to get ready for school.

When I got home that day, I swore I saw Milly on her favorite spot on the couch. I sighed knowing that it wasn't her. She wasn't there. I sat on the couch and thought everything over. I didn't know what to think or what to say. Milly was my best friend: someone who I told all my secrets to. I began to cry. All I wanted was to wake up from this nightmare, but I couldn't.

I remembered a movie I watched recently called, "Happy Death Day 2U". The name of it didn't sound nice, but it actually was about getting over loss. My mind dwelled on this thought, *why can't I be like tree? Why can't I be strong and move on? I still have a life, so I should make the best of it. Milly wouldn't want me to live in grief. Death is a part of life, and at least she got to die peacefully and painlessly. Even if I didn't want her to go, at least I know that she will be alright even after death.*

Losing someone close is tough. I still come home and have to catch myself before I say "Hi Milly!" Milly may be gone, but her spirit still lingers. I will never forget her, but I shouldn't grieve forever. I know I will grow if I can overcome this loss. I must be content with the knowledge that I am strong, and I need to keep going on with my life. I won't dwell on the past, but instead, reach for the future.

If the Fireflies Break Loose from Their Stars by Mary Lynch

The moon shone strong that night, illuminating the sky against the tall shadows of the trees, and the trees looked like ballerinas dancing, united in the dark. Their limbs stretched out, reaching for the winking stars high above them. The stars themselves looked like shining pearls, unreachable but always there, brightening the sky with effulgent light, and covering the night sky with a comforting blanket. That night, the grass tickled my bare feet, which were calloused, cut, and bruised from summer days of running barefoot through the grass and rocks.

"Look, over there," my mom pointed, edging quietly over through the darkness, to a small light that was flitting through the trees, swooping down, up. I tiptoed across our quiet road, hoping, perhaps, that I could hold it in my hands. There was another, too,

flashing freely as it soared, diving down low into the bushes, and another, turning whimsically around in circles. One after another, dancing stars fell down from the sky, flitting and falling down and up.

Every time they blinked, they seemed to be appearing and disappearing into the night, again and again and again. If you stood still enough, they landed on you, lighting up and staying bright until you eventually moved, for nothing can stay still forever.

My mom and I, we were firefly hunting. Walking across the dewy grass together, we didn't care if the mud and the wetness of the dew covered our pajamas and our feet. Leaves stuck to our toes, and mud made its way across our feet. Still, we didn't care, and walked on across the yard to the dancing fireflies. The moon shone high above us and our shadows stretched long and dark behind us. We could smell the swampy scent of the pond next door, where the peeper frogs chirped, echoing in the silence enveloping the night.

Together we whispered quietly, lit up by flashes of fireflies flitting fast around us, and the stars, so small and high above us, nestled in their silent nightly abode. We talked about school, siblings, anything that came to our minds then.

Hearing footsteps coming down the driveway, we turned to see my dad, holding a small Mason jar. He smiled. "For fireflies," he said, holding the jar out to us. I took it, turning it around in my small hands. Clumsily, when one dove down into the grass near me, I made my move, toppling the jar on top of the feebly blinking light. I started to twist the jar on, but stopped for some reason, instead putting my open hand over the top of the jar. It escaped quickly through my fingers, but I didn't mind.

We stayed out until the last light faded from the sky, and we were just shadows in the dark, chasing blinking lights, jumping, leaping, hoping to, at least, feel the fireflies on our fingertips. I couldn't see my parents anymore in the dark, but I knew they were still there, chasing fireflies with me. I could hear their voices, laughing happily, but still quiet, for it seemed the night was telling us to do so. The night seemed so fragile, as if, if we shouted, then it would shatter, every star falling down, down, down. We lay down on the dewy grass, letting the night wrap us in a dark starry quilt. Everything was quiet, and the only thing we could hear was the peeper frogs chirping their nightly song. They were the symphony of the night, playing an everlasting song for the dancing trees. The night turned slowly, fading from dark blue to a vivid black, and the only thing we could see was the stars and the moon shining so brightly above us and the fireflies threading between the stars. It felt so different from the sun, which was, though bright, seemed angry and wrathful compared to the moon's gentle beam.

Making our way up the steep hill through the darkness to the shadow of the house, we squinted in the bright light as we creaked open the front door. I silently crept up the stairs to the bedroom I shared with my sister, slipping under the soft covers of my bed. But before I closed my eyes, I got up, creeping one more time over to the big window near my bed. I gazed at the fireflies outside my window one more time before I went to sleep, feeling so safe and so happy in that one fragile moment. I felt held by my family as the night held the stars. Things might change and fireflies might break loose from the stars, but I knew, in that peaceful moment, that my family would always be there.

What Happens To... by Katherine Taborsak

What happens to a falling star

As it hits the barren ground?

What happens to a search bar

When what it's looking for is found?

What happens to a jumping bean

As it tires and stops its jump?

What happens to an evergreen

If it wishes for an orange stump?

What happens to a looking glass

When it closes its eyes to rest?

What happens to a supermarket

If it simply isn't the best?

What happens to running water

If it walks for a minute or two?

Is it still considered lying down

If where you lie remains true?

What happens to a walking stick

If it has the urge to run?

What happens to some laughing gas

When it's sad, and its giggling's done?

What happens if you shoot for the moon

But your arrows don't make it that far?

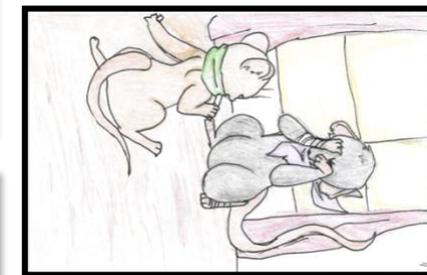
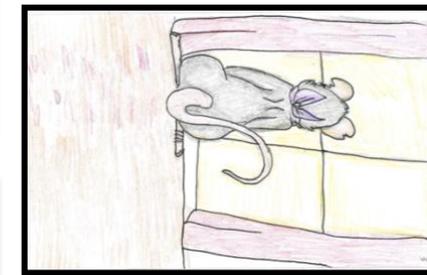
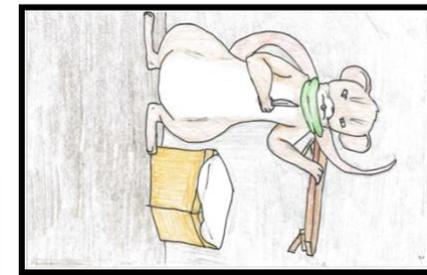
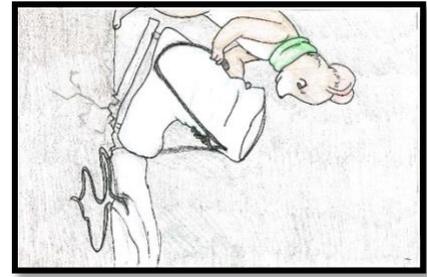
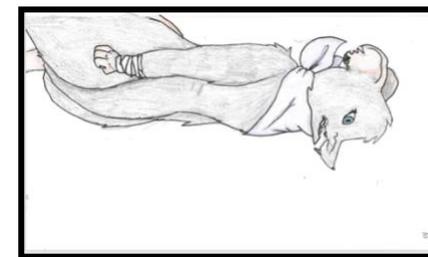
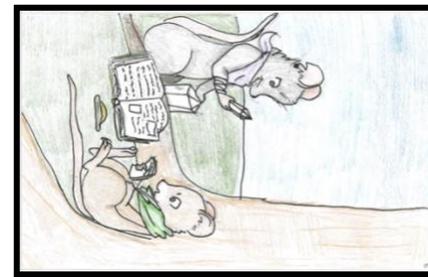
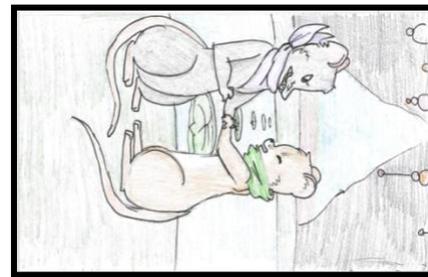
Then I'm sure you might be able to find

The remains of that

fallen

star

Uninvited Guests by Katie Smith



The Burnt Marshmallow by Ariana Pourkavoos

I am me:

Unnatural

Effeminate

Ugly

Unlike the boys I see on screens,

I long for flowing skirts

And luscious hair

And sharp cheekbones

Walking to school, I kick aside a dusting of
snow

Music is snaking through my soul

Embellishing the world with a funky beat

I reach my classroom

The clique sees me

Asking me why I dress the way I do

Unnatural

Effeminate

Ugly

Their words pierce through the thin veil

That I call my self-confidence

A challenger approaches

New

Interesting

Misfit

Her stance and atmosphere emanate those
words

She stands at the front of the room

Our teacher introduces her,

The Transfer Student

Her hands clench and unclench

She is the prey

My class, I realize, the predator

She scans the room for threats

Our eyes catch

She glares, every fiber of her being is on
guard

I glance away

Her aura intrigues me

She is a unique person:

Casual

Masculine

Beautiful

We sit together at lunch

Two outcasts, together

She looks away

Seemingly lost in thought

She looks up

Compliments the way I did my hair

How could she find beauty in

Unnatural

Effeminate

Ugly

She presents herself as:

Dark and hard on the outside

She seems to truly be:

Warm and soft on the inside

She is a marshmallow, set on fire and
blown out

Behind her eyes

There is a glimmer

Offerocious intelligence

Leaving school,

I notice two boys

Sweatpants and graphic tees

The bane of an unpopular kid's
existence

I pull my hood to obscure my face

My heartbeat and feet begin to go
faster

One of them calls out to me

I ignore him

Their words and hands hit me

Like I am a prisoner, sentenced to a
stoning

I am on the ground

Bruised

Helpless

Hurt

The blows stop

My mind goes black

Sterile white

Potted flowers

Where am I?

I look at myself

Bruised

Bandaged

Healing?

The Transfer Student makes an
entrance

My head is a blur of confusion

It is explained to me

That she stopped my struggle

She fought the bullies off

She explains, the corners of her mouth
tipped up in quiet amusement,

"I have two brothers

Louis could rock a pair of flashy heels

and George was first table on the
chess team

I've always had to fight off people
bigger than me"

Days passed

Then years

No longer am I

Unnatural

Effeminate

Ugly

Today, I am

Me

Myself

And I

Today, **I am beautiful.**

Life in a Different Key by Samantha Henske

I wanted to wear the dress she got me for my middle school graduation, her last gift before she

got sick, but it didn't fit. I ended up wearing a knee-length dress that was in my closet. When we got to the cemetery, I stayed in the shadow of a towering oak tree, unable to handle the laser-like stares boring through me. For a while, I stood there, watching people walk up to the coffin which gleamed in the early morning light, the final resting place of my beloved mom. All of these people, many of whom I had never seen before, streamed past to pay their respects. Finally, I walked up and stood next to her. She looked so tranquil resting there. It was almost a relief to see her free from all the chaos of the hospital. I didn't say anything; I just stood, looking at my beautiful mom. I adored her more than anyone could ever conceive, and at that moment, life without her seemed hopeless and pointless.



Many days later, the phone rang and my dad, a doctor himself, picked up. I sat on the couch and watched his mouth slowly melt into a worried line. His eyes had the same sorrowful gleam that I remembered all too clearly from when my mom got her diagnosis.

He continued speaking with the person on the other end for nearly 20 minutes, while I sat trying to catch bits of the conversation. The broken pieces of information I got floated around in my head, like leaves drifting down on that breezy fall night. Dad got off the phone, and sat down on the couch with me. What followed was one of the most unexpected conversations of my life:

He said, "Remember Dr. Graham, the doctor I'd met at the Tanzanian clinic? Well, he had a heart attack at the beginning of the week, and was flown back to the United States for treatment."

"That's sad," I said, "but why are you so upset? You hardly knew him."

"Well, that's the problem," Dad went on. "With Dr. Graham gone, the clinic has been shut down. He ran it by himself, aside from one native lady who speaks the smallest amount of English."

I still wasn't sure of the issue. "So are they going to pick someone in Tanzania to become the new doctor there?" I asked.

"No," my dad said. "They picked someone from the hospital. They picked me, Katie."

The awareness of what he was saying sunk in. I sat in silence for a moment and then asked a simple question, one I believed I already knew the answer to: "Can you say no?"

"No," he solemnly replied. "The board voted, and I don't have a choice."

He continued to talk but I wasn't listening. I understood what this meant. Without Mom alive to stay home with me, I would have to go with him. Slowly I came to the realization that I was moving to Africa.

"How soon?" I asked.

My dad looked at the ground. "Nine days," he whispered, meek as a mouse.



I sat down at my desk, frustrated. It had been four weeks since the move and all I could think was that this was my new reality. I was living in a country where less than 5% of the population spoke English. Even worse, in my town of Korogwe, I didn't know of one English speaker, excluding my dad, my tutor, and I.

Every day, at 8:00 A.M., I would enter our main room where my tutor sat, with that day's tedious work planned out. Before the move, I had assumed I would be immersed in Tanzanian culture, therefore eventually learning Swahili and making friends. Instead, I was continuing with the same education I'd had in America; furthermore, I wasn't even learning Swahili. The social isolation was unbearable, and I quickly slipped into a dark state. I had no one to talk to. My dad was overtaken with work, and as for my tutor, well, you get it.

Time passed and I immersed myself in my routine. During my school day I worked hard, and in my free time, I helped my dad in the clinic. While there, what amazed me most about this beautiful culture was that despite the extent of their poverty our patients were so happy, kind, loving, and funny, reminding me of my mom. What I struggled to understand was this: How was I, who was so financially fortunate, feeling a deep emptiness in my life, while these people, some of whom had nothing, had a joy that was so rare, and so beautiful? This question followed me everywhere I went, and I gradually began to search for the positive in my everyday life. I still felt as though I was missing an important piece, but I was hopeful things would improve.



One day I walked down the dusty gravel road towards the outdoor market. The air smelled of the wet grass that sat in patches among the road. The sun beamed down my back, hot but bearable. I looked over my list of things to buy: fruit, spices, fish, beans, and milk. I could tell I was close when my mouth began to water, almost tasting the pungent spices in the air. Then suddenly, I heard a powerful voice singing a beautiful melody that I seemed to remember from somewhere, I followed the sound, crossing the street and stepping into the yard of the house where the music was coming from. Peering in the window, I saw the singer, an old woman who appeared to be in her late 80's. That was when I realized that not only did I know the tune of this song, but I recognized the words as well. The song was being sung in English! I stood perfectly still as the soft yet distinctive voice resonated in my head. The woman's voice quieted as the song ended, and a shaky breath got caught in my throat.

I continued to stand there after she had finished, mesmerized. After a few moments, a harsh voice broke through my trance, "Unafanya nini kwenye mali yangu? Toka nje! Sasa!" screamed the old lady, who was looking right at me.

I jumped back in fear. She was quivering with anger and fury. I was shocked that the same lady who had been singing so beautifully a minute ago was now gripped by a fit of rage. I also realized that if she did speak English, I only had one chance to get through to this angry woman.

"Do you speak English?" I asked, timidly.

"Unaongea nini hata sielewi." she replied, but then cut off. Her face froze, and then slowly melted into a smile. She took a breath and as her anger vanished, and there appeared an entirely new person. "Yes! This is incredible! My name is Edith. Please, child, come to my porch. I have many questions," she said gently.

I didn't know it at the time, but this would be the start of the relationship that saved me.



A few weeks later, I was at Edith's house when she told me it was time for us to start working on something. She began singing the lyrics to a popular American song, accompanying herself on the piano. I smiled because I loved hearing her voice. She sang the song through once and I followed along. Once she finished, she started over; but this time instead of singing the song in English, she did it in Swahili. I listened as the song morphed into something completely new. As she sang, I substituted words in my mind. By the time we were finished, I had already learned a few words in Swahili,

"You need to learn Swahili at some point," Edith said. "Let's just do it through something you're passionate about, music!"

These sessions continued every day for months, until I decided it was time for me to test my skills. "Edith," I said hopefully, "will you come to the market to practice Swahili with me?" What Edith didn't know was that it was my turn to help her. She had spent hours tutoring me on her beautiful language, but in our time together I'd realized something. Edith never left her house, and when people came by for things, such as solicitors, she transformed into the person I saw when I first met her: an enraged, intense, and all-around crabby old lady. With all the help she'd given me, I owed it to her to use every ounce of my effort to help her become an amazing, lovable woman to everyone, and not just me.

To my excitement, she agreed to come with me. And so, I opened the door, and together, we took the first steps towards our future

Noose by Brooke Vazquez

One thought. One breath. One decision. It's hard sometimes to distinguish hopelessness from that feeling of defeat. It's hard not to give in to the temptation that death releases. Life is so hard to live, it can seem like the only escape is death.

A cerulean sky raged over a fiery meadow. Taylor Everfalls slowly walked through the field of flowers which she often frequented. She went there to cope with life in the meadows marigold beauty, her sanctuary. Now, Taylor was running away. Not from home, but from life. There was no going back, not this time. Her steps were heavy with anticipation. A rope lay hanging off her right arm. It dragged slowly through the plants. It seemed to pick up some of the dirt, sending the smell of decay and worms to her nostrils, making Taylor feel like clinging to the Earth.

For once, Taylor was certain about what she wanted in life, for it to end. She wasn't frightened. Taylor's black, torn Converse plunged through the captivating field as if each step was sending her mixed messages. Every flower had its burst. She stopped for a moment to look at one in particular. It wasn't like the others. Its bittersweet nature was hidden by dozens of ladybugs covering the surface. Taylor could relate to this. Too covered by the black and red of the world to roar with the other flames that torched the luscious green grass.

Taylor held her head up and looked far out to the edge of the meadow that hid the steepest cliff in the small town of Suicide. A very odd, yet purposeful name for a town. Many came to the dazzling flower field only to soil its dirt with crimson, ending their lives early. There were so many that town residents began to ignore the obituaries in the paper. Taylor figured no one would care, not her parents

nor “friends.” The people who are supposed to care no matter what. Those who left Taylor standing alone while Becky Prim smashed her perfectly manicured fist into her face.

The amber eyes that once saw the beauty in the world now appeared isolated and gray. The strands of carrot hair that curled over her shoulders were tangled and muddy. The smile a once happy little girl wore was now a frown. Arms reaching out for a hug now covered in slashes.

Taylor reached the end of the meadow at the top of the cliff. A place known by school children as “Kill Yourself Cliff.” She glanced at the old rock she sat on every day that overlooked the trees in the forest below, with a serene view of the sun setting above the horizon. Now, a rock that once brought peace would be her downfall. Taylor didn't tremble as she skillfully tied the noose. *Loop, bunny ear goes through, pull.* She bent down to the dusty rock that would miss her company. Her arms hesitated for a moment, a natural reaction. Taylor approached the cliff and slid the rope around her frail neck.

Taylor inhaled deeply and shut her eyes. Soon she would be floating below the flowers. Her feet grazed a few, but most flowers left a clearing near the end of the cliff. Taylor coolly exhaled. Taylor didn't bother writing a note. Her mind was clear. It was time.

Just before she leaped, laughter jolted her to an abrupt stop. There wasn't anyone here, she was certain. Taylor gazed about and spotted a four-year-old boy playing with a paper airplane, close to the drop-off. She refocused and began to countdown in her mind. *Four three, two, one...*

It seemed completely silent, and out of the corner of her eye. Taylor could see the boy attempting to fly his plane off the cliff. Body flooding with adrenaline, she fearfully slid the noose down her neck, fastened it around her malnourished waist, let out a heavy gasp, and sprinted as fast as she could toward him. The sky raced against her, the sun barely dimming. He was too young to die, a whole life ahead of him. Taylor thought about this without realizing it was the same for herself.

Her feet were ahead of her mind and before she knew it Taylor was flying off “Kill Yourself Cliff” The boy was wailing as the fear of falling to his death set-in. Arms wrapped around his striped shirt. The rope made a crackling sound as it straightened. Taylor clutched the boy tightly like a protective mother as warm tears dampened the front of her sweatshirt. She was comforting him but had no idea why she chose to save him. What was the difference between his death and hers? Letting him pummel into the river below was easy, but her mind forced her to save him.

Taylor started up the rocky cliff. The cerulean sky now a deep navy blue with glimmering stars illuminating the night. The soft stir of the river was distant, and if she hadn't interfered, the boy would have been victim to a monstrous cry for flesh. Her foot slipped a few times on mossy divots in the jagged rock that were covered by the most beautiful flowers Taylor had ever seen. She often tried to be like the cliff, something ugly holding up something pretty, but she found that can only happen for so long before the real Taylor erodes into pieces.

He didn't say a word the whole way up. He trembled and dropped his airplane. As Taylor ascended closer to the top. she suddenly heard a faint noise that could only be described as a shredding sound. Taylor's eyes quickly adjusted to nightfall, and she pinpointed the source of the noise. The rope near the tip of the mountain was fraying and splintering off and the pair began to drop. Taylor's scaling pace increased, but so did her unsteadiness.

Along her desperate race to the end, she lost balance once again, and while falling. Taylor quickly tightened her grip on the rope to secure them. Rope burn had caused her hand to be a bloody mess, and pieces of her skin were flaking off. With a crack, her right arm, wrapped around the boy, smashed against a boulder. A blood-curdling shriek came from Taylor's lips as she bit down to stifle the pain. However, her grip remained strong. If Taylor had a reason to live, right now it was for this boy. He cried for his mother and clung to her, and Taylor could feel the fear radiating off his body, or maybe it was her fear for him.

The shredding grew louder in the silence of the night. Taylor always disliked silence, it was ironically loud in the way it forced unwanted thoughts to appear. Her breath quickened. She braced through the pain to the top of the cliff while only a few strands remained. With both hands. Taylor launched the boy upward and onto the flower field. She knew the rope couldn't hold them both.

Snap. Mournful cries from the boy grew distant as Taylor Everfall fell through the air. Time slowed. Death is funny. You can die for selfishness and throw your life away, or you can die being a hero. Taylor, despite her plan, chose to be a hero. The air of salty water and pine filled her lungs. She often took scent for granted. In fact, she often took herself for granted. Taylor never understood the meaning of your life flashing before your eyes," and her flash brought her back to the little girl she was, with glistening amber eyes, smiling, laughing, playing and being alive.

Taylor looked over and saw a flower falling with her. Gracefully, it was gliding through the harsh air. The flower didn't fear, it lived a life and provided for the Earth. A warm tear streamed from her eye and drifted upward into the air. She was laughing in her last moments. Taylor realized life was precious. If she had spun to her demise sooner, another would have paid the price for her sin.

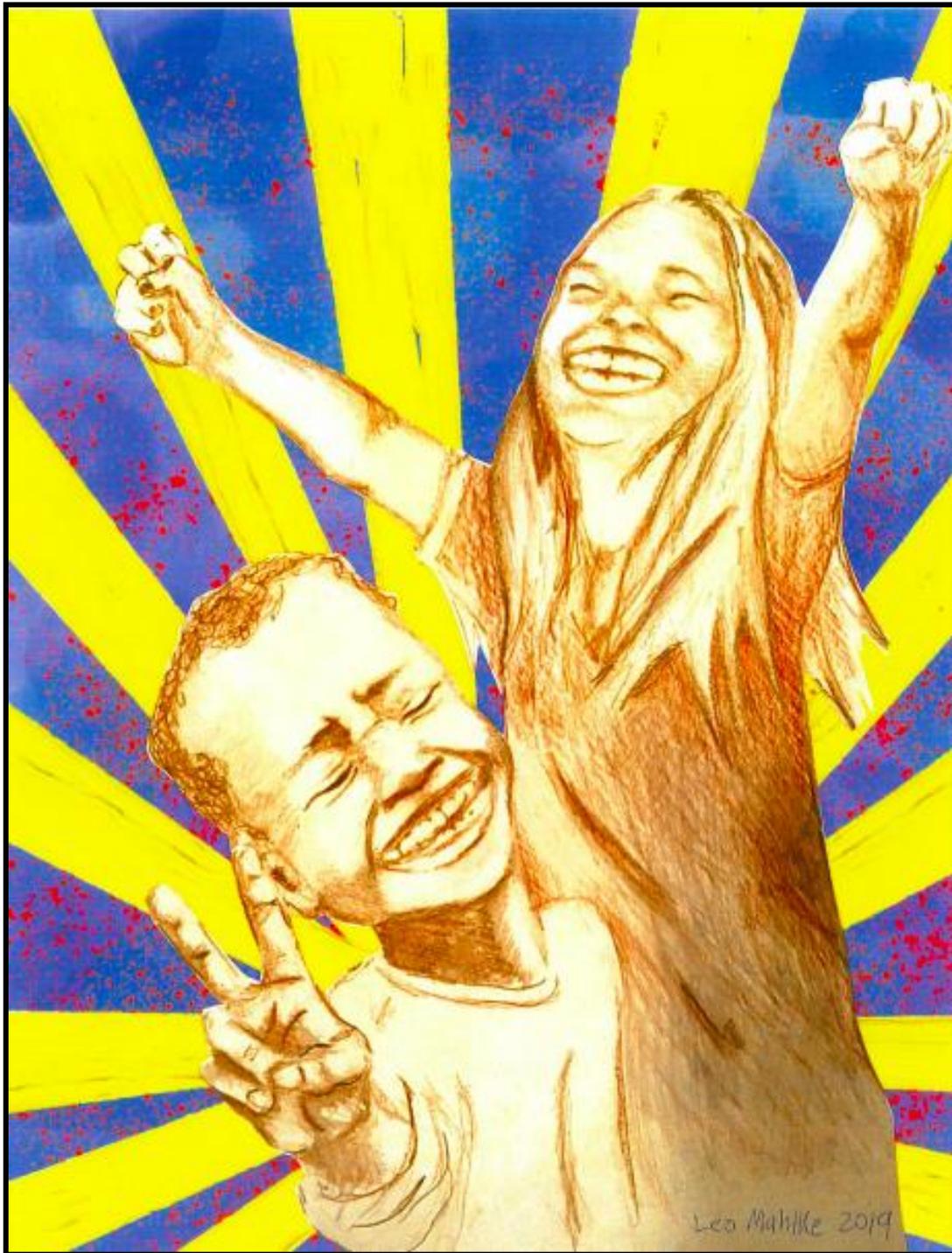
Her heart was filled with happiness for putting another's life before her own. Cool air brushed rapidly against her abused skin. Falling to death was more peaceful than she thought. It felt like flying. Time sped-up and caught-up. Life was cruel, yet fair. Taylor could depart proving her worth and with no hatred in her heart. A loud splash echoed below the boy looking down overhead. The noose saved them both in a way, but not by its intended purpose. Perhaps, they saved each other.

Taylor Everfall awoke to a golden day as a bud in the flower field. Waiting to bloom into a masterpiece and express her colors. She was not like the other apricot flowers in the patch. Taylor was an explosive red, extravagantly unique from the others. She felt free. For once, Taylor Everfall did not feel like she was falling.





Eighth Grade



We Will Rise Up by Leo Mahlke



White Dwarf by Hebah Habib

We are stars
Fragments of matter and particles to create a mind
A soul
A person
And light
Color
Blossoming amongst the pallid gray of the winter
Joining on the chorus in the spring
The vivacious neon's of summer
We are light and color
Some are simple, white
But they contain a multitude of colors
A whole spectrum within themselves
It just takes the right person to bring them out
A prism, releasing hues of crimsons, golds, and sapphires
but some are not what they seem



Colors reflect what they are not
So do people
Their rich velvets being everything but
Our brain changing them to make sense of it all
For us to understand
Because when the stars split
The earth had to balance itself
Verdant life to our rusted desolate ruin
The ratio was right
Temporarily
It will be unbalanced
And we are stuck
It's only a matter of time before we cause ourselves to split
Or the Earth balances the ratio
Rust into incandescence
By itself

Bubbles by Isabella Wang

Standing at the wreckage near the foot of the spindling fairy tower, Jen gazed in wonder at the bubbles. Her thin, translucent wings stood erect, glistening and illuminated from the reflection of the globes surrounding her. From the East they came, and to the East they returned. Carried off by the wind, they floated to the witches' realm. Strange, that something so beautiful and innocent could be of the witches. *How exactly do the witches even create these otherworldly objects? If I didn't know beforehand that the bubbles were made by the witches, I would have thought that the fairies had been the ones who had created them...* Jen wondered, as her ever curious gaze stayed fixed on the spheres that had enraptured her.

The bubbles picked up small bits of reaper stone, shining particles of azure, and lavender rocks that shone like stars. This battle had been a long one: the fairies against the witches. The winner of this one had been the fairies again, but the witches had done their damage on the fairies' home turf. In a sense, the witches were the ones who had won the victory.

Deep down in her mind, Jen knew that she ought to be unhappy about the intricate fairy landmark being destroyed, but to her, the bubbles were worth it. When she had first seen the bubbles, her mind and heart waged a war, her common sense fighting against her desires. In the end, her heart had won, and her conscience, when faced with the bubbles, was pushed back into the far corner of her mind.

Once, a lone fairy had stayed after the unfortunate destruction of a healer's hovel, not that far away from where Jen was currently - perhaps only a couple thousand wingspans away. Of course, little was left of the hovel now, as much of the wreckage had been vacuumed up by the bubbles - along with the unfortunate fairy. He never returned. Jen knew that she shouldn't be at the site of the scene at the tower, but she couldn't help it. The bubbles astounded her. They drew her to them. Before the warning reports for staying away from a soon-to-be bubble-infested area came in, Jen was already there.

Subsequent to the destruction of a building, the fairies were unable to do anything, since the bubbles were seemingly impenetrable. The bubbles that Jen enjoyed to watch so much, but almost all fairies feared: sparkling globes of color, floating on the air currents, arriving at the scene and engulfing everything that might be useful to the witches, one way or another. The first time that the witches had used the bubbles, many fairies had disappeared, never to be seen again, as they had tried to stop them. Jen didn't care. When other fairies would have left at the sight of a bubble a mile away, Jen rushed towards them. She was different. She was eccentric, bright, energetic - full of spunk in a way that most fairies were not. Quietness and shyness were two qualities that she did not possess. The other fairies didn't make fun of her for it - they simply accepted her without a second thought, and they were all gentle and kind. Whenever she needed help, they lent a hand. However, sometimes Jen would feel a bit lonely, as it seemed as if she was the only fairy who wasn't delicate, quiet, shy, and subtle... and the only fairy who ever seemed to break the rules. Ever.

Each bubble was different, unique, in its own extraordinary and special way. Some of them seemed to be miniature rainbows, shaped and molded into the form of a ball. Yet others were the floating embodiments of fire, drifting in bursts of yellow, orange, and red, flames licking the walls' inner and outer surfaces. Even more commonly seen were flowing blues and greens, the lustrous forms melting into each other like watercolor, as if the colors on a paint palette had been spilt. The sight was breathtaking.

She was so immensely immersed in watching the bubbles at the spindly tower, so focused at the wondrous sight that she had seen so many times before, that she didn't notice that one of the bubbles had separated from the group, floating right behind her. She was still staring, when a loud rush covered up all other sounds, and the strange sensation of being sucked into a vacuum tingled all over her body.

"Wha- what is going on?!" Blinded temporarily, dark circles dotted Jen's vision.

Moving her hands and arms to feel her surroundings, she was greeted with smooth, moist curves in every direction. As her vision cleared, she realized that she was in a bubble. A very big bubble, in fact. Looking down, Jen realized that the ground was far below her. Everything was tiny, as if she were gazing down at the toy landscapes that one might glimpse in a shop window. A small amount of fear lit up inside her, but was quickly extinguished by the wonder of the beauty of the view from so high above the rest of the world. From so high up, Jen could see everything, the remains of the spindling tower, the beginning of the forests stretching away to the South, her small village, with berry pickers, artists, and council members seeking to reinstate their everyday routines, walking along the many beautiful bridges and pathways. Fields full of every kind of flower and fruit, crops just beginning to ripen, and even the mountains in the distance, she saw it all as the bubble headed into the wide sky! This was a sight she had never before witnessed - going up this high was dangerous for fairies, with the high winds and humid air of the world in the clouds.

The particular bubble she was seated in was made up of all the cool colors - blues, greens, purples, violet and aqua, indigo and turquoise. Sighing, the Jen shifted around inside of her accidental confinement to find a more comfortable position. She tucked her wings tightly beneath her jacket, and lay down. *As this ride might take a while, there is no harm in being comfortable, right? Might as well enjoy the view some more while I'm at it...*

As she gazed out of the bubble's glass-like interior, Jen let her gaze reach to all of the bubbles and scenery around her. Now relaxed, Jen began to think about her predicament. Thought after thought entered Jen's mind – yet, few of them were fearful. Adventurous and curious strings of words made themselves known to her, and she thought about the adventure that awaited her far, far away from her cozy - *boring* - fairy village. Where exactly was she going? Rumor was that the witches lived in a massive grotesque castle, in the middle of a barren wasteland. Jen wasn't sure if she believed this or not, though. *Seems a bit far-fetched if you ask me. I refuse to believe that anyone would willingly live in those evil picture book buildings.* Her bubble passed more fields, hills, a few small ponds and rivers. As her trip progressed, however, she noticed there was less green dotting the world below her, stone slowly replacing the grasses as the bubble floated to whatever destination that it had. Turning around in her confinement, she looked forwards – and found out why. For the first time since she had been swallowed by the vessel that she sat in, she felt raw fear blossom inside her, grabbing control of her muscles as she shot up with her wings packed against the back of the bubble. A mountain – or more specifically, a volcano. *Of course. How could I have not connected the details?* The rocks that covered the landscape before were the dried remains of lava. Her only condolence was that it looked as if it were dormant currently, but she wasn't well versed in knowledge of volcanos, so that's not a sure fact.

Backing up against the curve of the bubble the farthest from the fast approaching landform, Jen knew her heartbeat was speeding up. She could hear it pounding in her ears, and sweat began to form between her fingers as she clenched them into fists. The jagged rocks on the volcano's side grew in clarity, and looked all the more menacing for it. Putting her arms in front of her head, even though she knew it was a useless act, as she was still in the bubble, Jen braced herself for impact. The bubble was now completely dark, shadowed by the volcano's looming frame. All color had turned monochrome – but all Jen could think was, *Oh no*, before all was black.

The Interview by Leo Mahlke

My older sister, Chomden and I would gather around Father in the evenings, watching him tenderly trim at the mustache on his lip. My father would set the mirror on the spice rack, crouching down on the floor with no shirt on, watching with tight concentration as the rusted scissors slipped down the mustache.

Then Ma would step up, snatch the scissors with authority, and slim her eyes at the back of Father's head. The scissors would race up and down his scalp, curls falling to the floor.

"So handsome. What a good job I do." Ma cooed. She trimmed the hair of all of us, kids and some of our cousins.

"My turn." I stood up, awaiting another long coo from my ma.

"Not today, my little Bao." She stooped down to my level. "Just Father. He is going into the city in Burma for a job interview!"

Ma's eyes lifted in my father's direction in pride as I sat down in frustration.

"I want my hair to look *just like* Father's!" I pouted, feeling the tickle of bushy hair on the back of my neck. My father looked so fancy, and I was jealous. We always got the same haircut.

Father peeked over at me from behind his shoulder, a little grin. "Lin, honey, cut his hair. Just like mine!" He reached out a big hand to me, and I crawled into it, like a baby kitten. Ma neared with the scissors, mumbling about wasting important time where she could be going to Chit's house to iron Father's clothes.

"And don't go asking to get *your* clothes ironed now, Bao."

When the haircut was done, Father lifted me up to the mirror so we could see and compare our haircuts. I giggled seeing our reflections, our hair looked the same!

"We look handsome, my boy."

The next day, Father left the village early in the morning for his interview. He put on silky clothes and put clear goop from a bottle into his hair that made it shiny.

"I want some!" I tugged at the papery cloth of his pants.

"Ai! Don't tug on these! They're too big, my boy! You don't want to see my britches, do you?" Father laughed, and I pulled my hand away and reached up towards the mysterious bottle.

"I need to save this for my job." He said, but when Ma turned, he put a bit in my hair, raising a finger to his pruned lips whispering, "Shh!"

"Nice shirt, Father." Chomden said.

Father straightened the wrinkles of his candy red shirt, smirking. "Got it free. Some idiot threw it in the dump."

Ma shook her head. "Should have bought the white one. And red tie. City men wear that." She folded her hands at her throat.

"Can't beat free!" And with that, Father kissed Ma's head, hugged Chomden, swung me up in the air, and left.

All day, Chomden and I stood on the porch under the sweltering sun, waiting for our father's boat to return. I couldn't stop running my fingers through my hair, feeling the little layer of goop Father put in it.

Late in the evening, Ma squished her hands together, and flattened her face in worry. Stood up. Looked out the window. Nope.

She had light pink tea, fluffy rice, and lemony fish all made up for him. The smell finally brought my sister and me inside to beg like puppies.

"Can we try it?" We put little fingerprints on the shiny glass plate, too good to use on us.

"No!" Our hands were swatted and then kissed.

Ma paced. "What if he doesn't get it? It was the shirt. Red doesn't look good on him. The mustache will get him the job. Business likes mustaches. Wait-- did he wear shoes? I bought some for him, but did he wear them?" I heard shuffling and something heavy fall on the floor. "Oh!" Ma shrieked, and there was more shuffling. "Oh, okay, he must've worn them. I don't see them. We're going to be okay! We're going to be okay, Chomden!" She shouted breathlessly.

"Would we be okay if he doesn't get it?" She asked, fingers feverishly trekking down her braids.

“Oh, Chomden.” Ma’s voice softened, as she stumbled over words, trying to explain something to her. “I, it’s, well, we need this! We have garbage for walls!”

Chomden laughed but Ma glared. “...We don’t have *garbage* for walls.” Chomden said hesitantly.

Ma watched the wind rustle the plastic walls.

I liked the colorful walls. But I didn’t dare speak.

“We’ve been eating batfish and cassava for the whole season. I hate cassava. Too *bitter!*” Ma scrunched her face up. No one really loved cassava except Father, but we all ate it. Well, Ma put it into her mouth, shrieked as if it had bitten her, spat it out, then embarrassed, placed it on my or Chomden’s plate. “I need to...fatten you up.” She would say as an excuse.

“If we got extra money,” Chomden started, her eyes getting even wilder, “I would want to get new comics! Right, Bao?” She had officially riled me up.

“Yeah!” I stood, and Ma grabbed my hand.

“He has to get the job.” Ma breathed, trying to make eye contact with both of us, twirling Chomden and bouncing me.

“For the comics!” Chomden chanted, and I joined in, Ma swept to the window.

Father’s boat pulled up and he ran in, hands in the air, smiling, throwing a brown bag on the floor. He took off the plastic feet clothes and threw them in disgust. My heart pounded and Chomden eyed me. I imagined how crisp the pages of the comics would feel on my fingers, how brilliant the illustrations would be.

“Ai!” Ma screamed. “I knew you would get it!” She grabbed the feet clothes and put them on a shelf for our nicest things. “You even remembered the shoes.”

“Father!” Chomden leapt onto Father, latching onto his neck, feet above the ground. “We have to go to the market right now and get comics.”

“No, no.” Ma pushed through. “Food. I want almonds! Floral tea! *Rice wine!*” Ma shoved Chomden off Father and hugged him.

His face fell a bit. “No.” He sat on the hammock, Ma’s smile reducing. “I didn’t go for the interview.” He said. The world froze, waiting for him to smile again.

Ma laughed and fell on the floor. “Joking! He’s joking! So funny!” Her voice resembled an angry cat, but tears sprinkled in her eyes. Still hopeful. Her hands trembled.

“I... really didn’t.” Father’s words became stale and sour.

“Stop it. I want to celebrate.” Ma whined, unbuttoning the top button on his shirt, stroking his neck with her swollen fingers, purple from labor.

“I was thinking it over, and I decided that it was foolish to leave my family just to get a better job. You are all I need. I wouldn’t be here with you if I had gotten the job. I’d have late nights and early mornings. I wouldn’t be home for family dinners and fishing trips. I love my family with all my heart. We don’t need *pre-made cigars* and *shiny wood walls* to be happy. We need each other. We are a family,

and I couldn't be happier." He laid back, looking at Ma. "I will work as hard as I can. I promise I will get more fish. I promise." His voice got tight like ringing out wet clothes. "I have Bao to help!"

I leaped into the hammock and climbed into Father's lap, pulling at his fuzzy mustache until he lifted me up above his head.

I giggled and asked, "Can we go fishing again tomorrow?"

"Yes, my boy. My boy, my son!" He laughed and bounced me in his arms.

I yelped as he pretended to let go then caught me. "Wh-oh! Almost went down!" It was his big trick. I loved it.

"I'm flying!" I exclaimed, arms extended, as my father held me up, carrying me all around the house in his arms. "I'm flying!!"

We started laughing, saying, "Bao is flying! Bao is flying!"

Warm pink pride filled my heart as everyone melted a little, for once. A round tear rolled down Ma's face as she dumped Father and my hair clippings out the window and followed us around the house made of trash.



Hansel and Gretel by Elsa Nocton

This I Believe by Angelina Wisdom

I believe I am a storyteller.

Once I was asked to think about what I was good at, so

I decided to find just the right thing. It was like I was doing a treasure hunt in my own mind.

I searched for hours, but found nothing. I did not believe I was good at anything.

I was afraid because nothing was coming to me, everyone else had oceans of ideas flooding their

brains. They had stories to tell and I did not.

So, I prayed to God hoping he would turn my water into wine, like he did for them,

My words into ideas, my ideas into stories.

Hopefully into stories that could soon be told.

Like this one.

I never considered myself good at anything. I stopped looking. I was looking for something I already had.

I am good at telling stories and giving them a name with a place to live.

I am good at putting words together, bringing them alive and teaching them to walk.

I am good at taking oceans of words and making them into mosaics.

I am good at teaching similes and metaphors how to breathe.

I did not need God to create my ocean, I created my own.

I let my words swim in my ocean and let them take pieces of it to create rivers and ponds, which you guys call sentences,

Sentences are my shields. That is why I enjoy writing them.

Sometimes we fall in love with ideas, not people.

I fell in love with the flow of words, the way you can create and destroy anything.

Create a world where innocence can die without a reason.

A world where you can bring things like similes and metaphors alive.

In my world, I wish I could become a story in the end, but instead,

I will become just another thing to mourn about.

I wish stories could be told as easily as lies, because lies are what keep us sane.

And I wish that dreams could be more than just dreams. Like stories are just sometimes more than stories.

And I hope that my story is more than just a story.
I believe I am a storyteller,
I believed that God had the power to turn my water into wine,
Maybe he did. Maybe he had *the* power to give my stories
meaning and purpose.

I believed that I wasn't good enough. I believed in
everything but myself.

But instead of letting him turn *my water* into wine
I gave my dark tunnel light just like he said "let there be light."

I gave myself light in a time where I only saw darkness.

Darkness is what made me.

It made me fierce and strong. It made me powerful and powerless.

It made me notice things that I did not notice before.

I believe I am a storyteller.



My One Year Closet by Leo Mahlke

It was a sickening feeling, opening that closet. It always has been. The closet, the clothes, nothing ever fit, no matter how hard I tried to make them. The closet contained twelve years of clothes that swallowed me into the wrong life.

When I was younger, my mom used to try to help me choose my clothes for the next day, holding up the striped dresses, floral skirts, dotted blouses. I'd feel sick, always refusing to the point where we'd go through nearly the whole closet. There was something wrong, but I wasn't sure what.

"Well you've got to wear something. Choose one of these." She'd hold up two hangers, and I'd bury my face into my pillow, wondering what was wrong with me.

At the time, I didn't understand why everyone wanted me to wear girl's clothes. Inside, I was sure I was a boy. There was no getting around it. But, what I didn't realize was that no one knew this.

I am female-to-male transgender, and I've just begun my transition to living as male. Recently, I've been happier than I've ever been. I cut my hair, got new clothes, and changed my name to Leo. But there is still one thing left to fix; that female closet has got to go.

Even though the world has only seen me as Leo for a couple weeks, I feel like I've been a boy my entire life, and seeing the old dresses I used to wear is frightening. It's hard for me to believe that I'm the same person who stuffed himself into that floral dress for the sixth-grade academic awards. Walking up to collect my award that night, it was clear that I've been two completely different people in my short twelve years.

Today, mom told me to hang up my laundry, but I can't stand the discomfort of opening my closet anymore, so I've decided to get rid of all those girl clothes. I've plotted tossing them into a bonfire, or throwing them off Mt. Everest. Something like that.

When I grab the knobs and pull, the closet doors creak open, and I'm suddenly absorbed by an array of painful memories. It's strange how something as meaningless as fabric can hold so much agony. I take a deep breath and try to calm my nerves as I reach for the first thing I see--a white tee shirt.

Holding it in my hands, I remember panicking in the store when I refused everything in sight. My parents told me it was just a shirt. I recall lifting it off the racks, staring down at the tag, "Women's Small," then looking across the store at the boy's aisle. I knew this would never be *just a shirt*. I knew it would ring my lungs out of oxygen and pound my brain for being inside-out. It was bleached like a surrender flag, the sign of surrender I knew I would have to climb into. It had a livid V-neck, a suffocating jagged fit that crinkled my body like burnt paper. Shoving my head through it, pulling it over my shoulders, I told myself, one more day. One more day and then you will tell them. Tell them it is not *just a shirt*.

So I snatch that "Women's Small" from the hanger and twist it, wringing out the memories, and then watch as it collapses onto the floor in an exhausted heap. Because it was never *just a shirt*, and now everyone knows.

I turn back to my closet where I come across the dress I wore to my cousin's wedding. I was around ten or eleven, and was told to pick it out myself from hundreds of others, like going to a candy store. It was supposed to be an exciting gift, *picking out my very own dress*. But I was filled with embarrassment and shame. I couldn't find a dress I didn't hate. All I could think of was the tuxedos on the

other side of the store, because I knew that that was what I should be picking. I wanted to smile and love the dress, my lips were cracking, and my eyes were welling with tears, and I felt like I couldn't breathe. The whole day was one of those nightmares where I just kept falling deeper and deeper into a world I didn't fit into. Every night, I stared at it in my closet, fearing the dress like a monster under my bed.

I uncover the skirts I was shoved into when I was young. Whenever I wore boy clothes, they had to be paired with something girly to "mix it up," my parents said. I would feel like I was being split in half, the two sides inside me battling for my control. The girl side that the world seemed to think I belonged into, and the boy side that always seemed to catch up. Only six years old, I wasn't sure whom to follow, so I allowed my closet to split me into pieces. I would be boyish sometimes, without thinking of consequences, and girly other times when I knew I was being watched.

Then there's some of my fancier articles of clothing I had when I was young, the ones that I'd receive in a heavy silver box with a thick bow on it. When I was very young, I didn't mind the girl clothes, so these boxes were exciting to open. But as I got older, getting these boxes meant that the terrible disguise would continue. I'd try to clarify with my gift-givers the clothes I wanted. No pink, no skirts, no dresses, no sparkles, nothing that says 'beautiful' on it, etc. No matter how long the list was, I'd always end up with that terrifying silver box that my family hoped would excite me.

I tossed the floral jeans and frilled sweaters on the floor with the rest of my girl clothes. I was tearing through my closet. Each article of clothing was becoming slightly easier to bear. I found the women's flannels that my parents tried to convince me were just like men's. But I knew there was a major difference. Shirts I felt so uncomfortable with that they still had price tags on them. I tore through those twelve years that I had desperately tried to climb out of until it seemed I had only been left with year thirteen. Nike shirts, button downs, soccer jerseys, khakis, Adidas pants, jeans, neck-ties, and baseball hats.

I stepped back, almost starting to laugh. I was so happy looking into my closet and seeing *my* life, *my* clothes. My one-year closet.

Then I looked beside me, and saw my twelve-year closet, all crumpled and wrinkled in a sad heap on the floor. I stood up and started jumping on the heap. Jumping like revenge on the memories, on the pain, on the twelve years of taking the wrong turn, on the twelve years of living the wrong life, on the twelve years of being the wrong person, on the twelve-year closet. Jumping in joy and pride in who I have become, what I have been through. My feet planting into the soft cotton dresses, my palms digging into the twirled stitching, I ground and crushed that pile. Obliterated that big, sloppy pile of twelve years.

Then, I rose up again. I rose several feet above it all, flying up above everything, smiling in my freedom over the twelve years that I was and the one year that I am.

Ninth Grade



Audrey Hepburn by Audrey L. Finn

The Ghost of the Holocaust by Lillian Westerberg

"It's fine Liem." I said, "It isn't as if we're actually going to get stuck in here."

"What if this camp is haunted?" My twin brother asked.

"Really, Liem. No wonder mom and dad were hesitant about us coming here. Look, a real live ghost!" I added, to have a little fun. "Noah." My mom scolded. "Quit teasing your twin."

"I'm sorry," I apologized. "But it isn't my fault he is such a scaredy-cat." "Noah," My mom warned.

"Okay. I won't tease him." I sighed. *At least with you listening.* I thought, smiling a little. We kept walking, my brother to my left and my parents in front, leading us. We walked through the crowd of hot sweaty people.

"Noah, hold on to your brother!" My mom yelled looking at us. I felt my brother's hand grasping mine as if he would die if he let go of it. A rush of people pushed through us, making us lose sight of our parents.

"Mom!" Liem yelled, "Mom? Dad? Where are you?"

"We're over here!" They hollered through the maze of people. My brother yanked my arm and pulled me towards where he thought their voice was. I slammed into people, making them yell at me.

"Liem slow down!" I pleaded. "I'm not as fast as you!" I added as my brother's hand slipped from my sweaty hand. *Now what? Mom's going to kill you if you lose Liem.* I lectured myself. *Don't worry, I'll find him.* I assured myself. I fought my way through the crowd towards the outer edge. Suddenly an unfamiliar hand grasped my arm yanking me from my surrounding ranks of people.

"Who are you?" I questioned shakily to my capturer, afraid to look at him.

"I just saved you from the crowd, you're welcome." A voice said. I slowly looked up. He was a man, probably in his thirties. His shiny black hair had been neatly combed and didn't have even one stray hair. He was wearing a wrinkle free war uniform. His coat had two pockets and a strange symbol on it that looked like two zs crisscrossed. His pants were clean and next to him was Liem, unharmed.

"Liem!" I exclaimed. "What happened?"

"Well I ran off because you were going to slow and tried to find our parents but instead found this man and his two sons." Liem explained. I now noticed the two boys behind the man and my brother.

"Hi," One of the boys said. "I'm David and this is my brother Michael." He said extending one arm. His eyes were emerald green and sparkled slightly in the sun. He was wearing a white and blue striped uniform with a yellow 6-pointed star on it had matching pants on. Michael was wearing the same thing. *Why do their names sound familiar?* I wonder.

"Hi, I'm Noah and that's my brother Liem." I said extending my arm as well and shook his hand. "Thank you for helping me find my twin." I added.

"So you are twins." The man asked with a grin. "I love twins, they are my favorite to find."

"That's great because we love finding people who can help us." Liem said, eyes full of excitement. "We're trying to find our parents. We lost them in a crowd. They're probably worried about us because we are only 9 and have never been separated from them or

each other." *Liem just shut up, we don't need to tell these strangers our life story. For all we know they could be kidnappers.* I want to yell at him. I don't though, not wanting to ruin his new found friendship.

"That's great!" David exclaimed. "We're nine as well! We got separated from our family last year but this man took us in."

"Speaking of 'this man' he's walking away." I butted in, watching the man walk gracefully away, now just a small dot in the distance with Michael next to him. Liem, David, and I ran to keep up.

"Good, we're here." The man said as we approached a building. The building was fenced off and had a blocked off door. The sides were brown and dirty as if it were old. The windows were covered with wood.

"It doesn't look like we're supposed to be here." I nervously said. *It doesn't look like we can get in either.* I added to myself.

"Stop worrying." The man assured. "I've been here thousands of times and have a secret way to get inside." *How did he know about my worry of getting inside?* I pondered.

"Is this where our parents are?" Liem asked innocently.

"No, but they will find you here." The man calmly said. *I doubt that.* I thought. *This place is abandoned.*

"Don't be so doubtful Noah." The man said. "Your parents will come when the time is right." We walked through the doors, *creek!*

"Right this way kids. From what I heard this place can get scary at night."

"But it isn't even sunset yet." I mentioned, confused as we walked inside the abandoned building.

"Oh. I didn't mean outside." The man grinned as he closed the door behind us. The room got pitch black except, I could still see the man. I mean I could actually see every single detail of the man in the dark, the man was glowing!

"Sir, what's going on?" I asked, anxiously waiting for my parents to jump out and tell me 'that's what happens when you talk to strangers' and then all of us leaving the building.

"Noah, Noah, Noah." David said smirking. I looked behind me to where his voice was coming from and saw him glowing. "I thought that you were the smart one. Mom and dad always said you were."

"Who are you?" I asked, goosebumps crawling up my arms.

"Don't you remember? We're your brothers. We disappeared last year when mom and dad took us on this extrusion and you two were left with Grandma." Mitchel whispered in my ear nervously glancing at the man.

"That's right Mitchel, look over here. I thought we agreed not to tell them until later." The man said glancing at Mitchel.

"Little friends," The man announced, now looking at me. *Where's Liem?* I suddenly wondered. "Your parents will be coming for you later, so for now why don't you lay down." All of the sudden the lights flashed on, blinding me for a second. There were beds that looked like the ones at the dentist's office. The bed was white but the blanket on it was red and so was the pillow case. *That's strange. Usually beds have the same color for the sheets and blankets.* I thought.

"Hey Noah." I heard from my right. I saw Liem laying on one of the beds, a blanket over him. "Come lay down. The pillows are soft."

“Liem, you don’t know what those are from. Don’t forget where we are. There is probably a reason for this building to be left alone.” I warned, but I did walk over to a bed and touch it. *He’s right, it is soft.* I thought. *And don’t you feel tired, especially after chasing him all day.* Another voice inside of me said. *I guess it would be okay if I laid down, just for a little bit.* I laid down on the bed next to Liem’s. Just as abruptly as they turned on the lights flashed off. I could no longer see any one thought, not even the glowing man or David. I felt something grab my wrists and ankles and wanted to fight it but my brain wasn’t sending the message. I wanted to yell but my mouth wouldn’t make a sound.

“Shh. Don’t fight him Noah.” I heard someone say. “Fighting will just make him angry.” The lights turned on and I saw that someone had strapped me to the bed, keeping me from getting up. They had done the same to Liem.

“It is time to reveal ourselves boys.” The man laughed looking down on me. I saw David and Michael coming over to my bed. Strangely though, David now had a scar developing over his left eye and his arm was becoming puffy and abnormally large. David’s legs become black as tar and I saw bits of what appeared to be bullet shells piercing his right lower thigh. Michael looked the same except I could almost see through him as if he were becoming the air and disappearing.

“Noah what’s happening.” Liem asked, finally scared of what was happening.

“That is an excellent question little boy.” The man said. “I believe I can answer that question. “I am Dr. Josef Mengele and these are your older twin brothers. I found them here last year and thought that they would be perfect for my collection. Now that I have you though, I can let them be freed.”

“What? Your lying. Michael would never do that. David might try to put me in harm’s way but he would never hurt Liem and Michael would rather die then let anyone harm either of us.” I croaked, choking on tears of fear and sorrow. A feeling of betrayal started to leak through me like a poison.

“That’s the thing Noah, they are dead.” Mengele said. I heard Liem scream.

“I’m sorry, Noah. I didn’t want to lead you here but Mengele gave us no choice.” Michael quietly apologize in my ear.

“That is quite enough Michael. I don’t need you getting all sentimental on me now. You should have learned by now after being with me for a year what happens to those who go soft.” Mengele scolded.

“Liem, say goodbye to your body.” Mengele laughed. From the corner of my eye I saw as Mengele stabbed a knife into the stomach of my poor twin. “No!” I cried.

“Don’t worry your next.” Mengele said with a new sparkle in his eyes as blood poured from my brother’s stomach and Mengele grabbed his liver.

“How can you watch this?” I yelled to David. “I thought you and he were friends!”

“We have no choice Noah. Him going first though just means you know what to expect.” Michael whispered in my ear.

“For once the pitiful boy is right.” Mengele said, raising his hand in the air. “Except I won’t be doing this while you’re alive.” I felt something stab my chest and I was lifted into the air. I looked down and saw my body only, it was no longer mine. Michael was drifting into it. I turned to see Liem and saw David gently picking up a transparent shape out of Liem and David disappeared into Liem.

"Liem, Noah!" I heard people cry from outside.

"We're in here Mom!" My body yelled. My parents walked in. "What are you doing Noah." My mom asked, looking at mine and Liem's body. My body now had no wounds except for a tiny black dot on my left arm. Liem's body had a dot in the exact same place and had a faint line over his left eye.

"We were playing around and wanted to explore," my body said.

"Come on you two, we don't want to get into trouble," My mom said. I watched as our bodies walked away unscathed. Yet I could have sworn that the eyes were glowing red.

"Don't look so troubled boys." Mengele said. "I promise you can have the next victims. Now clean up this mess."

I guess this is our life now, I thought, picking up the blanket and shaking it. The blanket absorbed the blood and we disappeared, waiting for the next pair of victims, although I hoped they would never come.

One Last Sign by Victoria Mitchell

Sitting in the smooth wooden pew, rows and rows of them. Everyone had walked out of the church. Alone I sat rubbing my hands together, praying. I sat in the same row of pews every Sunday morning at 10, the same service, the same priest. So why was I sitting all alone on a Sunday morning at 10, at the same service with the same priest? Maybe because it wasn't the same service, maybe because it was missing something, or someone. He used to be someone I could talk to about things but that all changed. He wasn't there when I needed him most. Every time the girls picked on me at school, my first boyfriend, the start of high school. He was not there. It was one of those nights where your eyes close but your brain stays awake. You know, those sleepless nights where all of your thoughts and worries finally reach the top of the list to keep you up at night. The visions and thought that come onto the black screen of my eyelids and then the tapes start rolling.

How about the one where we were sitting at the dinner table and he was telling us that he had a frog in his throat, or what about the blurry one that he was just lying in bed and we weren't allowed to see him, maybe not that one it's a little hard to see. How about the tape where he was in the dreadful room with the beige walls and the technical machinery hooked onto him? yeah, that sounds like the right one. Laying alone in the small section of white pillows and blankets that made no one feel at home. There he was, so quiet you could hear a pin drop. Not as comfortable as he remembers it to be. It was hush for a while, sometimes there would be a friend of his to walk in but it wasn't common to see anyone outside of the immediate family. That Sunday night when he got admitted, he had no clue I was looking over him, or that I was holding his hand, he had no interaction with me or with anyone. He was speechless, no words escaped his mouth, he was in a medically induced shut down and we all knew what was happening. He was dying. Cancer was taking its toll. I had been so young yet I understood everything.

Like the day we found out he had stage four lung cancer, when mom told me he didn't have much time left or the fact that he loved my cousins more than he could ever love my sister and I though no one would ever admit it. I knew he was dying and I couldn't do anything about it. He had survived four years with cancer why would he end now. I kept telling myself that he was going to keep fighting as he had been for those previous four years, but he couldn't. He couldn't go on living in pain anymore. Sometimes I would try to imagine

what it would be like if it were me in that hospital bed and not him. Maybe he would finally tell Dad he was proud of him or that he loved my sister and I so much, but this wasn't a fantasy. It was him in that bed, watching the clock waiting for his time to come. Sitting in the hospital room wasn't fun, Papa just laid there restlessly with his eyes shut. He looked peaceful, but we knew he wasn't, he was in pain. That's why it would have been selfish for me to ask him to keep fighting, I think he just gave up after some time. After all we aren't all strong enough to make it through the toughest of times. He was good at making himself look happy. I mean there were times that he'd snap at my sister and I but we never really took it too close to heart. He didn't want to die either and I knew that.

That night I lay restless in my bed trying to find a comfortable position to fall asleep in. The hands on the clock ticked slower than ever. I contemplated going into my sister's room to talk, but I figured she was already asleep so I decided not to bother her. Moving in different positions around my bed, trying to see if any of the positions would help me sleep. Nothing seemed to work. I stared at the ceiling for a while, counting to the highest number I could go to hoping it would help me fall asleep. I finally resorted to my last option, I texted one of the only people with him that night. I unplugged my phone and opened the messages:

ME: Hey mom I know I shouldn't be up but I can't sleep can you just tell me papa is ok

MOM: yes, he's fine.

I let out a sigh of relief. Calm and tired I rested my head on my pillow. Finally drifting away, my eyes closed and I was ready to finally fall asleep. Nothing stopped me after that, no nightmares, no worries, I was fine.

The next morning, I woke up getting ready for school as always. I had gotten dressed and brushed my teeth. Everything seemed normal, nothing out of the ordinary. While I was getting ready, I realized that I happened to misplace my shoes. I ran downstairs to check with my mom to see if she had seen where they had gone or where I had misplaced them. Normally my mom was downstairs by the time I had gotten dressed. Although this time she wasn't. I searched all over the downstairs, looking in the kitchen, the living room, the basement, but she was nowhere to be found. Maybe she overslept or took the day off, who knows. I cautiously tiptoed into my parent's room trying to avoid awakening my father. There I was to see both my parents still in bed. Ideas of why my mother was still laying down trolled through my head. My fingers tapping on my mother's shoulder trying not to startle her.

"Mom, have you seen my sneakers? I need them for gym so I don't have to borrow a pair"

My father rolled over while my mother was barely awake. It was quite odd seeing my mom in bed because normally she would tell me if she had taken the day off.

"We have to tell you something." A big sigh escaped his mouth. We exchanged glances as I waited for him to tell me what was so important that made Mom stay in bed. I was confused, I didn't know what he was trying to say.

"Last night Papa passed away..." Thoughts poured into my head, I knew he was dying but I didn't know his time was now. Just last night Mom told me he was doing alright, how could something that big change over eight hours?

"No" my voice cracking. This couldn't be true, there was no way he could have passed away. He was supposed to be okay, he was supposed to live. He was supposed to see me graduate, get married, have kids and now he's gone for good.

"I know, it happened last night when Mom and I were at the hospital"

Breathing faster and faster, my throat was closing in on me. I wasn't okay, how could I be?

The pews aren't filled anymore. Once the man who showed me all of God's ways disappeared from my sight, so did that church. This man taught me to live day by day and not get caught up in the future because everyone who lives, dies. Some people see it coming, others don't. We don't get to control it. Death works in mysterious ways. There were no more long conversations about life, we didn't make princess-shaped pancakes, camping trips no longer existed. Everything we did together, was gone. All the childhood memories I shared with him, faded to the background and I was back to struggling with the real world all on my own. With no one there to guide me.

The Complete History of *Taraxacum Officinale* by Annabel Brown

I lift my head up
and survey the
piles of poisoned carcasses
that litter the battlefields we're losing.

We are hiding in the shadows
barren head covering
behind closed doors,
Forgotten fluff drifting in the wind.

Small refugees
look for solace in our life of war.
They are not sure where is safe,
Learning the secret codes and signs of rainbows
like we once did,

hoping,
praying,
they won't be intoxicated
And trapped within walls of death.

We have been trampled on
for too long.
Stepped on, and called weeds.
Forced to watch our kin
be pulled from the Earth,

roots ripped and mutilated,
history repressed,
our past preserved only in the pages of our genetic forms.

Tentative tendrils reach out in desperation.
Maybe they can carry on our resolve.
Push through the Earth and start a revolution.

Not one that makes us forget
the name that littered our kind,
but one that allows us to lift our heads
in pride of our near extermination.
Not erasing our history
But wiping the trauma from our brow
In longed for relief.

Once, we were stuck in the shadows,
Aching bones
and phantom scars lurking
At every surface.

But now, there is—
The eventual promise
and elusive hope
for dandelions.



End of the Era of Erudite by Sarah Wallace

As a monarch waves to a lily of the valley,
guided by a whispering wind,
tranquilly breezing under curtsying branches,
and the expansive blue yonder,
not sailing towards toil not ecstasy,
yet seeking solitude and wisdom,
my weathered hand begins to turn to the next page.

My forefinger draws a leaf down,
snakes into the story,
and caresses the hills of the
yellowing pages, my thumb
captures the edge, and my
gnarled fingers gently
lift the vanilla page.

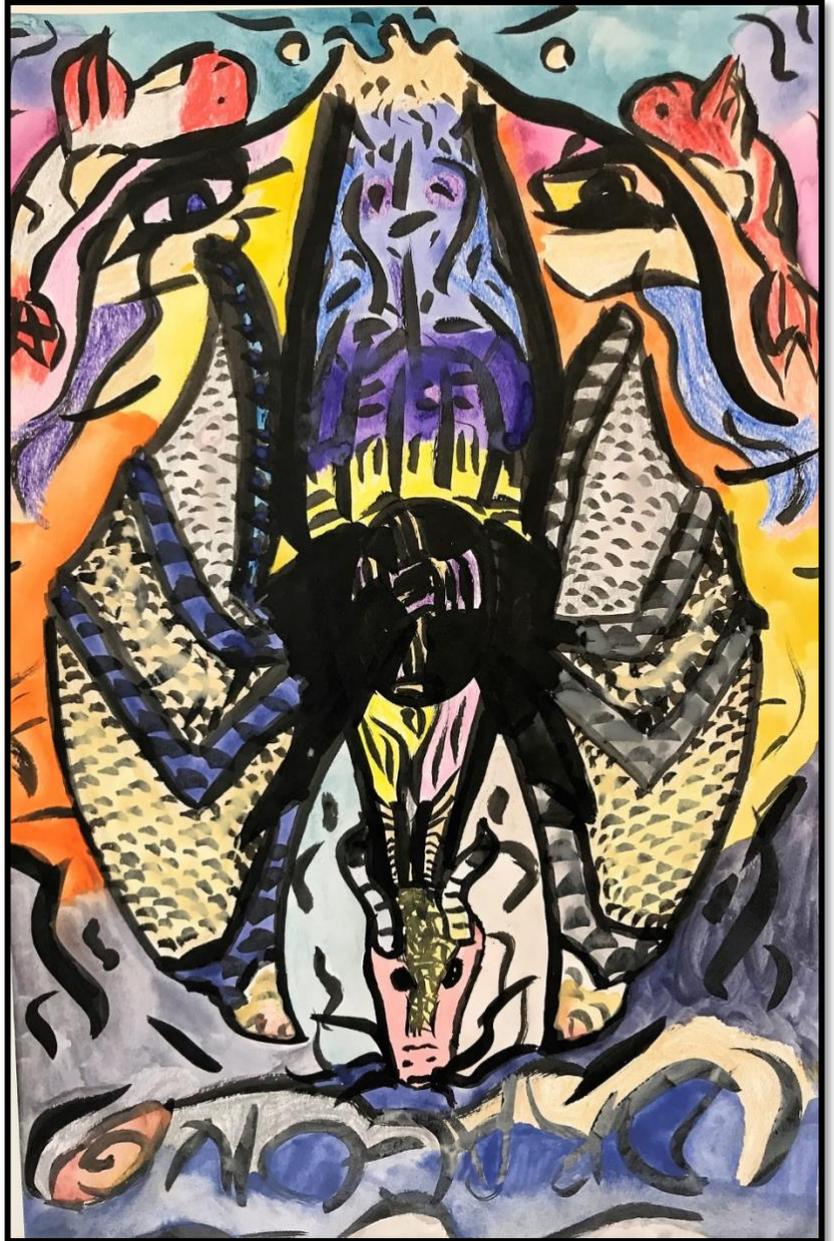
The book puffs
a fleeting breath
into my face.

The rustle of paper
crescendos from
a hiss to the
crackle of a fire.

The monarch,
caged.

Obscenely,
we swipe
on the
screen.

Obscenely,
we swipe
on the
screen.



Dragon

by Nelaigedalise Reeves

Hannah by Kayla-Mae Morgan

Lyrics from Girl In Red's "i wanna be your girlfriend"

As I search through Spotify to find the perfect song, I can't stop thinking about her. We're in class and I can't stop myself from taking quick glances in her direction. Sighing, I decide to choose a random song from Girl In Red, and it softly hums into my ears.

Closing my eyes, I finally looked away from her, her corvine locks still lingering in my head. They curl in the deep depths of my mind, twisting my thoughts to her. Her chocolate eyes burn right through me, giving me every emotion of hers. I know when she's happy; I understand when she's upset; I smile at her nose crinkling and her eyes squinting from laughter, realizing she loves my joke.

I can imagine her rosy cheeks, as they blush a deep strawberry when I use a pickup line on her, and she giggles maniacally. Her rosy lips curl up from laughter, playfully yelling at me to cut it out. I stare at her lips, getting lost in them, wanting so deeply to connect hers with mine.

Oh, Hannah

Tell me something nice

Like flowers and blue skies

Oh, Hannah

I will follow you home

Although my lips are blue and I'm cold

I know she loves me; she's told me thousands of times. I was too oblivious to realize I felt the same. She was love-drunk, and I was stupid. I was too late, however, as she dated this boy. He's good for her; he's sweet and playful, and would never hurt a soul. My heart stops as I realize my mistake. I feel frustrated, more than I ever was before. How can someone be so unaware? As I try to calm myself down, I get a text from her on Instagram. I can imagine what she wants from me, probably to humorously brag she was happy. I sigh, getting myself ready. I know I should be happy for her, but it's too hard knowing I can't be

the one to make her content. I should be the one to make her laugh. I should have known my feelings earlier. It's hard, but I have to do what I can to keep her joyful. If she's happy, then I'll put on a show. Only for her.

Although my lips are blue and I'm cold

I don't wanna be your friend

I wanna kiss your lips

I wanna kiss you until I lose my breath

I don't wanna be your friend

I wanna kiss your lips

I wanna kiss you until I lose my breath

"I know this is a bad time but I can't stop thinking about you and I don't know what to do."

My heart lingers on those lines, as I take it in. What should I say? I text her back. "I know you've liked this boy for a while; if you love him more than your crush on me, I'll wait for you."

I throw my phone down on the counter, pulling at my hair. I feel my heartstrings pulling at me the same way.

"She admitted her feelings for you, dammit! You're just going to lie down and die like some loser?" I lay down on a bench next to the table, as I hear another buzz, signaling a response.

"I don't know. I'm so confused. I need to take a break for a while."

~ ~ ~

A week passes, and my bed is the one true escape for my thoughts. Should I be going down without a fight? It's not my choice who she loves. If she loves him, then I'll have to let go.

I feel myself sinking deeper and deeper into sleep, my one true escape from the pulling of my fight or flight responses. I feel a buzz from my phone.

Although my lips are blue and I'm cold

The look in your eyes

My hand between your thighs

Oh this can't be real

It's all just a dream

"It's been there forever. I was gay. I *am* gay. I should have guessed it. It's been you.

How did I miss it?"

I read her text, a smile forming on my chapped lips, a wave of relief drowning me from everything else happening in my life.

"I'm glad you figured it out. That being said, would you like to go on a date next Saturday?"

"Well, duh."



I don't wanna be your friend

I wanna kiss your lips

I wanna kiss you until I lose my breath

I don't wanna be your friend

Lose my breath

I don't wanna be your friend

Lose my breath



The Places In Between by Samantha Alexander

I am from the chalk in the garage.

I am from the willow tree,
looking into my room from outside my window,

I am from cleaning
from toaster ovens and coffee mugs,
from the neighborhood cafe

I'm from ice cream and books,
from Black Rock and Chapel Hill
I'm from the "thank yous" and "I love yous"
from it is what it is.

I'm from camping in the California mountains and a trip to
London,

and all the places in between

I'm from airports and beaches,
pasta and tea.

From the tool my grandpa used to escape the Czech Republic
the rainstorm my grandpa kissed my grandma in
after asking her to marry him.

I am from these moments-
the moments that have shaped me
the moments that have been passed down
from those before me

Tenth Grade



Untitled by Carley Richardson

The Exchange by Emma Gilbert

Within the walls of the night there are only two things:
a thick fog that dusts dew over the fields,
and stars which cut through the thick velvet mist in several
shades.

They flicker in varying tones of gold,
the starkest of whites,
and hues of honey made in a beehive by droning worker
bees.

The trees above extend their branches towards the night,
framing the full moon who illuminates the fallen leaves
and wildflowers-
asking for one simple picture of her beauty before she
retires for the night.

There is absolutely no absence,
the air is filled with fireflies whose luminescent coattails are
reminiscent of a simpler time,
in which a jar filled with insects is used as a nightlight.

The night seems to runs autonomously,
In the bursts of wind that have blown for decades on end,
and the crickets that have passed on their song from chorister to
chorister over the years.

The world turns in such a way that the sun must regularly replace the
moon,
who, just a few hours ago,
created His own simplistic sort of beauty.

The Words I Carry by Libby Riggs

Many people enjoy searching for rocks or shells, but I like collecting words. Some are from family, while others are gifts from strangers. Many words, though, categorize me as one meaning. Talented. Disabled. Short. Slow. Sweet. I receive a multitude of contributions: ranging in colors, tastes and feelings. They can flow from a person's tongue with a silky touch that, in my mind, is purple. Or the letters can form into rough waves, knocking me into a surf of blue until I find the strength to stand up again.

"That's cheating," a man walking down the street once teased, and it was hard for me to smile back. Sunlight was streaming through the Spanish moss hanging from trees as we rode along one of the many bike paths on the island. Although I enjoyed the beautiful surroundings and the peace of being on vacation, I found it hard to concentrate. I had heard multiple comments about my motorbike already that afternoon. I desperately wanted to tell this man of my struggles on a bike with pedals: how it hurt my hips and my knees, and how although I appreciated my current bike I disliked the loud hum it created that interrupted the singing birds and the whistle of the wind. If only I could explain to him, to all those who do not understand my body, that my physical disability is a part of me. I can walk, but for longer distances, I often need a powerchair due to the threat of pain the next day. I wished I could also tell him that my disability is not my entire identity- unless a person sees me only as that label. The second after his words were spoken, however, I was speechless, so I forced myself to curl my lips into a tight smile. I decided then to remember this man's phrase, tucking it away so I could examine it later as an artifact of the past: of my years growing up, and how they were quite different from my peers' experiences.

I believe everyone feels different versions of pain. Sometimes it is felt in a leg, or caused by a death, or provoked by words. Words. They not only bring more comfort than medicine could ever provide; they also can produce a stronger pain than arthritic joints or a broken bone. Agony once choked my tears because of sentences that were spoken, and I found my cheeks dry; the sorrow was trapped inside me, afraid to come out because I was called “a trooper” and I thought I needed to fulfill this title. Perhaps I seemed “brave” during the day, but late at night, while brushing my fingers through my dog’s soft fur, I tried desperately to understand the cliché, “sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never harm me.” Often I reminded myself of the “Tortoise and the Hare” where the slowest *does* win; a fairy tale where life, words and fate are utopias of fame and fairness, but even then, I still was not consoled.

I cannot escape words, especially those I don’t expect: like “I would never date you because you can’t run” from a boy I had no interest in, or “I wish I could ride in a wheelchair like yours.” Phrases that resurfaced in my mind when I tried unsuccessfully to fall asleep. I wondered if I would ever date someone who loved me for who I was; who didn’t just see my limp, but could see, could recognize the person I am- the girl with a lopsided smile and soft-spoken words that hold a unique strength. I wanted people to stop noticing the zig-zag lines stitched into the backs of my lower legs. Scars can come in different forms; words were the kind that kept me up at night.

It was the softer words that eventually lulled me to sleep: memories of my Grammy telling me to smile more, my dad encouraging me to always get back up, my mom whispering *I love you*. Although I am an avid reader and writer, those were the times I appreciated the English language the most. I collected more words- even the ones that threatened to push me down. My disability does bring people’s judgment; I have a limp, ride in a powerchair and do not ride a “normal” bike. The words, though, especially the harsher ones, remind me that I am not the stereotypes people perceive me to be. I am not the “cripple” or the person who exaggerates an injury. I have more than a future of countless surgeries and scars. I am more than the words I carry.

Felt Like Fall by Sydney Zicolella

I was sitting in a spring-heat filled classroom in late June when my teacher had asked me to write about my favorite place. It was to be a graded assignment, one hundred points, and truth be told if I had lived just three more months of my life before they asked, I think I would’ve been able to get it right. Sitting in the white bricked shoebox for just thirty minutes felt like an eternity just then, blinking cursors and all- I never ended up turning in the assignment. But after various suffocating evenings of overthinking, 10PM conversations that always seemed unfinished, and 3AM stargazing into the pools of dark grey velvet and silver speckles riddled in between- Mr. Sierakowski, I think I have it now.

You see, for the past year I felt like I was pouring my heart out to a stranger, although we had met nearly two years ago and it felt so familiar the more I thought about it, wrote about it, memorized every second of it. I said I liked it when the earth smelled like freshly cut grass, when the leaves turned orange yet the sunflowers still stayed in bloom; when the sunsets were sleek and orange and the weather was just cool enough to wear ripped jeans and black leather boots.

I remember fondly recalling the slight tinge in my stomach I would often feel when I remembered that it was getting colder and nights like these couldn’t last much longer- That’s why I crystallized each moment during autumn in my mind like the statue I saw in

Philadelphia when I was twelve, beaming as I stood on top of it as if I was standing on top of the entire world. Yet again, maybe to a twelve-year-old I *was* on top of it. That's how September felt whenever I spent more time with myself; with my friends, with him. Like I was progressing silently without ever moving more than twenty-five feet outside of my small town at a time.

I think that is why I memorized each grin, each glance and grazing of fingertips for those three months as if it was life or death not to do so, and wrote down each head tilt to the moonlit sky like I was the poet of my own life, like I could paint each moment behind my eyelids just perfectly in the most vivid colors, if I tried hard enough. The problem was, feelings couldn't ever fully translate onto a paper, no matter how much the ink I wrote with seemed to drip onto the page and run freely, it was never enough.

I had finally found comfort in the simplicity of fall- familiar scents amongst my clothes that lingered a little too long; remaining to the point where it could've made me uncomfortable if I wasn't completely willing to strip away at my own vulnerabilities one-by-one like color-ridden painters tape- across my heart and soul, in my lungs and up my throat.

I decided that his familiar scent was of that nature too, leaving a reminder that could heal and burn all at once, but it was enough for me to stay. I don't remember everything from September, but I do recall how the air seemed so much more pleasant that year, more welcoming, more *safe*, whether it be six in the morning, observing my breath dance across the wind like an autumn ballerina; or eleven at night, when I shared my poetry underneath the sky I could fall into so easily, laying on top of dry pavement and wandering along an abandoned bridge for what seemed like hours.

Autumn felt like catharsis that year.

I learned that same month that blue eyes could feel so much more invulnerable and gentle than my immature poetry could've ever described, even after I brushed soft hands off of my cheek abruptly as if it was unwelcome, even poison if used properly- but blue eyes never seemed to change within those moments, they were solace, soft, a place I could always fall into without even trying. Familiarity, I decided then, was my safe haven.

That fall, I was held so softly, as if had he held me any tighter than his gentle embrace just then, I might've shattered into his palms- as if I could've cut him just by being close enough. And for that reason, I think he was holding me enough to pull my pieces together, close enough to heal, but far enough not to burn. I knew in that moment, that he was no stranger to me.

Autumn felt warm and gentle that year.

I learned in the weeks following that maybe the reassurance of a feeling I had felt so deeply for so long would have to be enough for me sometimes, and that would have to be okay. Fall felt like low-top converse and ripped jeans like I had imagined, but it also felt like love and pain all at once; comfort and unsteadiness; healing and hurting. It felt like stargazing and sitting on cold concrete steps for whatever reason- it felt orange and welcoming, but purple and empty. As if fall was a song that only Daniel Caesar or Brandy Burnette could describe between chilled melodies on a quiet yet chaotic Friday night. Yet, fall had seemed to pass by so quickly.

And with that, the moments that had felt like fall were few and far in between. But I'd like to think that distinct feeling has returned before, within familiar scents that make me linger just for a minute longer than usual before spotting a nearby bonfire in my

neighbors backyard or an eight-year olds surprise party down the street; a flickering flame of a candle in the corner of an empty room, or a soft hum of a melody that seemed all too familiar to be coincidence.

Autumn felt like home that year, until it couldn't anymore.

But I have decided, sitting here writing this, that *Autumn* was my favorite place that year. And that just maybe, a favorite place could be enough to capture a *feeling* I had felt so strongly then; like the idea of something that can leave you at peace, simply by the comfortable reminder that it had existed, that you had lived it, and the fact that you once *had it* was all that mattered in this moment. And that the idea of what once was— maybe, just maybe, could be enough.

Broken by Abigail Ursin

15

I got asked on my first date today.

I'm scared

because of you and

what you did to Mommy and me--

Could be a Round Two

if I ever fall for a guy like you.

14

13

12

11

10

You and mom got into a bad fight again today.

Your hands made their way around her neck

and the words you screamed weren't so nice.

You told me you hated me

that I was the biggest mistake of your life.

9

I witnessed you passed out on the couch with a needle in your arm today.

Trying to wrap my nine-year-old brain around why you had a needle.

I thought only the doctor's gave you shots.

8

Hey, you forgot my birthday and to make up for it you made me shoplift my own gift.

7

So today you hit me because you felt like it.

Putting butter on the places you left welts

because it helped make the swelling go away.

6

You played dead in our kitchen,

because you found enjoyment in seeing your daughter cry above your body.

Daddy don't go.

5

Tonight, I woke up hearing *Please just leave...*

I hate you

Fuck you, nasty whore

echo through the walls

My first panic attack

But at the age of 5, I didn't know.

You threatened our lives,

We stayed for another night.

Stained Concrete by Violet McCabe

She was picking flowers in the yard

Her snack of vanilla yogurt

And pomegranate seeds

In a bowl by the stairs

I wanted her to feel

Like a child

I needed her

To stay one

She was picking

Dandelions and daisies

Under the maple tree

Examining every petal

For perfection

She had six flowers in her delicate hand

When you shoved me out the door

And down those stone steps

Her eyes widened

And her mouth dropped open

As I knocked over

Her bowl of yogurt and seeds

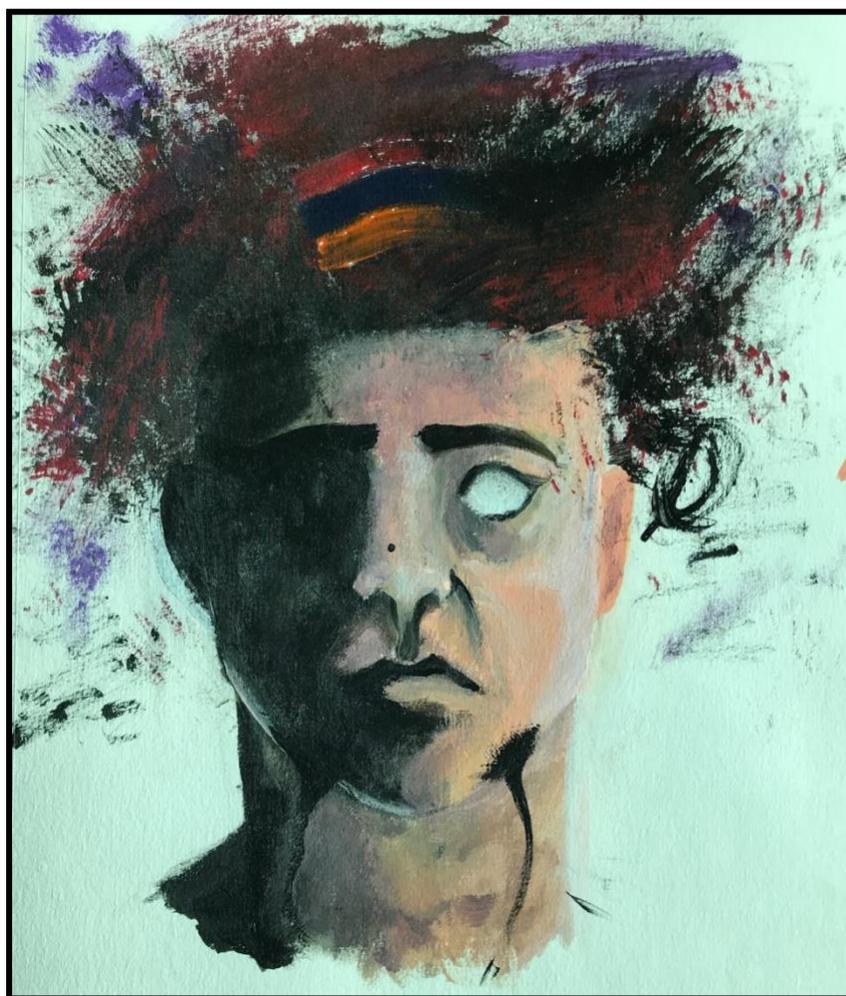
She dropped her lifeless flowers

As I fell to the ground, staining it

Like the pomegranate

Stained the vanilla yogurt

Red



Mind of Malakan by Damon Keown

How Fashion Happens by Thomas Kannam

Fashion means more than trendy clothing. A society's standards, products, and preferences at any given moment may achieve fashionable status. Can what's "in" or "out" of fashion be a collective, conscious decision made by the masses simultaneously? Fashionable require popularity, but how does this popularity happen? Well, every television station, Instagram account, and magazine advertisement constantly tells viewers what to want. Consumers, however, rarely notice, failing to read the ads as manipulation. Instead they absorb messaging as accurate representations of their pre-existing wants, highlighting choices their peers already *seem* to be making. In a self-fulfilling circle, the ads determine what's fashionable by simultaneously generating desires and validating them. A sense of ownership over a trend results from the feeling that consumers are part of the movement. If the masses organically initiated a fashion, they would be trendsetters. In actuality, the *real*/trendsetters are the people who deliberately manufacture this feeling.

Media companies have become so good at determining and altering our emotional responses that we are blind to the overwhelming fog of messaging surrounding us, telling us what is in fashion. In order to develop awareness of the mass manipulation, we can learn about experienced merchandisers, like the influential Frank Luntz, a renowned wordsmith who crafts strategic advertising. Such master manipulators know how to persuade each consumer a specific amount, still leaving room for us to feel as if we're making our own decisions. But what we can learn most from these experts is that all media manufacturing stems from a purpose. To learn an ad's true motives, we need to examine the motives of those who created it. Take for example, Meredith Corporation and its leadership team.

Meredith Corporation reigns as the fourth largest grossing magazine publisher in the United States. Therefore, these five people on the leadership team impose calculated world views and sets of values onto a broad range of audiences, 28 in fact.

What looks like 28 different representations of fashion, built for 28 different audiences, really represents one profit-driven



corporate viewpoint. Readers of any minority ethnicity or interest group who browse at the magazine stand will find themselves restricted to a remarkably limited worldview of fashion, because the five older, white people (two of whom confirm themselves to be straight in their company bios) in charge don't present other options. (Seeing a woman on the leadership team surprised me at first, but her role becomes less shocking when you consider her job; Human Resources. This role is commonly reserved for women because it deals with emotions and keeps females out of the financial or agenda-setting sides of a business.) This preliminary look into the patriarchal foundations embedded in Meredith Corporation will affect our perception of the fashions portrayed in any of their magazines; take the

2019 December issue of *Real Simple* as an example.

Real Simple effectively targets its female consumers through both its articles and advertisements. The consistency of messaging makes me wonder how a different kind of person, seeing through another lens, will interpret the lifestyle fashions that *Real Simple* sells. Let's take one of the first ads in this magazine as an example. When we stop to examine what the ad shows as "in fashion," many things become evident.

“Woke” readers will recognize the central figure of the Capital One ad: a man-splaining and man-spreading antagonist. His direct eye contact demands attention, and his blue outfit pops against the white/neutral background. The phrase “Why settle for average?” tells the targeted female reader that she has been unsatisfied and doesn’t know enough about financial topics to make informed decisions. Instead, the fashionable thing to do, *Real Simple* tells her, would be to listen to a white, male expert.



Men might perceive this advertisement differently, seeing a relatable peer, one man telling other men that they deserve more. This implication of privilege becomes interesting when we examine race in the advertisement. Everyone but the central figure has been photographed out of focus where workers and customers appear to be people of color. The workers, portrayed in lower quality, all wear a uniform, dress shirts and name tags. The central man wears jeans, a blazer, and no name tag, implying that he carries higher status.

While men are targeted with media encouraging them to be oppressors, women are targeted with media telling them the opposite; they are inferior to men and must let them maintain control. These beliefs have become so mainstreamed they equate with what it means to be attractive, and this in turn plays a large role in defining current fashion. Even in magazines with different target audiences and less overtly sexual ads such as *Real Simple*, a reader with a critical view will see much more being promoted than merely benign products.

Take, for example, the JC Penney ad on the first page of the magazine, featuring a mother and daughter reading in bed. next to



a dog, underneath the words “all cozied up with nowhere to go.” Clearly alluding to the phrase “all dressed up with nowhere to go,” the ad at first glance takes a stand for comfort over style. But when put in context of the picture and the magazine, the phrase tells a woman that her place is at home. It suggests getting dressed and securing a job would be out of fashion, and make her a poor mother to the child (and pet) pictured.

Some advertisements present less subtle commands telling women how to be in fashion. The Arm & Hammer kitty litter ad depicts a woman as a domesticated house cat in a mask, working under hazardous conditions. This is objectification. Because we feel superior to them, no human thinks twice about getting out the spray bottle and punishing a cat. This ad implies that the same treatment would be appropriate for women, not just when they don’t do work around the house, but also when they don’t look as cute and cuddly as a cat while doing it.



By bombarding society with such messaging about how to look, eat, work, love and exist, advertisements define our current fashions. This is a byproduct of any ad’s ultimate goal, persuasion, and in turn profit. Essentially, merchandisers work to learn our desires and sell us a version of ourselves where our problems have vanished and we reach the heights of fashion.

Advertisers have clearly defined their reader's desires by building on assumptions about the target audience: middle-aged women who long to be fashionable. Take these final two ads which focus on the concept of "joy" in a relationship. The perfume ad (figure 10) sells the affection of a man who buys pretty things and writes love notes. The Starbucks ad (figure 11) sells the reader a version of herself where she receives affirmation and appreciation from a man for decorating the tree, thus "bringing home joy" and deserving a happy relationship. In both cases, the magazine ads understandably define fashion in a way that promotes their products. The problem comes from the fact that the fashion trends portrayed limit the reader's choices and diminish alternate realities.



Analyzing the ad content and management team of a magazine like *Real Simple* quickly reveals fashion messaging that doesn't come organically from some mass mind meld of society. Individual readers are much messier and more complex than the concept of the target audience. The oversimplification of fashion messaging in advertising that appears in *Real Simple* dismisses alternative lifestyles, variant cultures, and unique viewpoints. Efforts to encourage critical readership and support more individualized choices have the potential to disrupt the fashion cycle. As society progresses and evolves, stereotypes and fashions must go out of style.



What Happens after a *Quinceañera*, escrito por Alexa Esparza-FinSmith

After a quinceañera,
you sit there,
on your bed,
in your abuela's house
in the middle of Cofradía.

you ask yourself: what now?
and you sit there, in your puddle of not knowing,
you stand up and look into the mirror
and the only part of your makeup still visible
is your eyeshadow.

and the rest, you have sweat off
in your five hours of dance.
you look at yourself,
in the mirror
and remember getting your makeup done
and how the lady told your face was *so beautiful*

you touch your dress
and remember the little girls
screaming at your princess like appearance
they all gave you kisses and wanted to touch the gems
lining the top of your soulful gown

you remember dancing
and dancing
and
d
a
n
c
i
n
g

you see yourself in the mirror
and remember when you first saw yourself
you remember feeling like you were going to cry
and your abuela telling you,
las quinceañeras no pueden llorar.

you sit down again
and you feel happy.
the music still echoes in your brain
the *banda*, the *pastel*,
the *tacos*.
everything is resonating
as if the memories of that night
would be *siempre bailando*
to the melody of your mind.

and you remember your Tía Celina
telling you
as you danced away the sweet aftertaste
of a microwaved childhood
ahora sí eres muy mexicana.

you remember dancing
with your papi
he looked like he was
going
to
cry.

it's hard for you to realize:
the night is over
but as the moon has told you
aunque el tiempo ha pasado, lo disfrutaste mucho.

you take off your earrings
the same ones Mari wore at her quince
the same ones Olivia will wear at hers.

you take off your crown
and feel somehow more grown
as if this one night
the presents and hugs
have transformed you
(it's probably all in your head
but it's still fun to play with fantasies).

you take off your black heels
and your red toes smile at you
a big girl color for a fake big girl.

you look at your hand
and see the quinceañera bracelet
that your grandma gave you
and the quinceañera ring
that your abuela gave you.

you take out the Bobby pins of your hair
remembering when you were little enough
for the pins to be baretts
and the makeup
to be fairy dust

you stand up
and let the remainder of your entourage
unlace your back
and you feel your mind
unlacing
and you don't know what to do.

you lay down, a moment of calm
after a night of excitement
and you remember
how everyone kept telling you were *so pretty*
everyone asking you
¿cómo te lo pasaste?

you feel the pillow under your head
and remember dreaming of this day
this one day
and four year old you
had no idea what was to happen afterwards
and now fifteen year old you
still doesn't know

and it is that moment,
that moment that you see yourself
void of the gemstones and glitter of the night
that maybe, just maybe that you realize
this is little you
this is 14 year old you, 13 year old you,
12 year old you and all the years back
that have given their years
for yours

maybe what happens now
is nothing
maybe what happens now
is everything
as 2 am is ending your night
you realize
maybe tomorrow will be a good a day as any
to figure out
what happens after a quinceañera



Eleventh Grade



The Spark by Matthew Jamison



The PS Canterbury High Tales by Cynthia Nocton

1. The Artifex's Tale

The Artifex's Prologue

"We five youths sat about the fire/Never far from road nor tire/The Tweed, the Imp, the Athlete/And then there's I, and last the Geat/Our roguish host procured a knife/One he'd carried in case of strife/'Why, Jonathan,' he said to me/'It's time to hear a tale, you see?'/I took a breath, and rubbed my hands/And told a tale of grandiose plans."

Words Between the Artifex and Geat

While the tale was being mulled/The Geat in black was sweetly lulled/By Spotify, into a trance/The flames before her seemed to dance/The Artifex snapped her awake/When a sweet cracker he did break/'Fancy a treat?' He said to her/'Which chocolate would you prefer?'/The wyrdish lass replied with snark/'You woke me up, but I'll take dark'/With althaea the snack was served/And the Geat went back to sleep deserved.



The Artifex's Tale



"Well on our way to class reunion/I get a chance to riddle you one/Tale about a great campaign/A noble pursuit that's all but plain/Six or seven friends of mine/Gathered 'round an ancient pine/Where lay a blanket, for us to sit/And not a soul eager to quit/For we were engaged in quite a game/With dragons and dungeons in its name/My good chum Kevin rolled a die/Hoping to make our rivals fry/But by some pity, rolled a one/Dear Kevin's cleric was good as done/Daniel, our fighter swung/So hard at scoundrels our ears rung/But alas! The dice don't deceive/As much as one would like to believe/Our party now was down by two/Enough to make you need the loo/When our game was interrupted/By a man of heart corrupted/Walking up to us to say/'Scatter, knaves, out of my way!'/We refused him and stood our ground/But now our lunch could not be found!/While affixed our eyes to scamp/His hooligans raided our camp/Now hungry and without a meal/For the bandits chose to steal/We chased the brigands for a bit/But for our craft none were too fit/Finding ourselves with naught to chow/A great big hound did bow his wow/The sound we followed in growing dark/And found ourselves outside the park/A little bistro we did see/Serving rations, victuals, and tea/Our stomachs roared for tenderloin/But none of us had any coin/We sat and think of business schemes/Far beyond our wildest dreams/But none of them would come to pass/For we would end up in terms quite crass/The place in which you call the jail/Where all the gruel comes from a pail/For all our plans did involve fraud/We would bring shame to king and god/To bring ourselves to such low levels/As those picnic-snatching devils!/Our crafty ways shant come to fruition/'Lest we lose our college tuition/For running scams and shams and hacks/Like 2008 stock maniacs/When Brian Walters had a thought/That proved our smarts were not for naught!/We went to get our game and then/Entered into a fighting pen!/Dressed as wizards, rogues, and knights/We won all our dueling fights/The prize we got upon our win/Was cake of chocolate dark as sin/And 30,000 dollars apiece/Which we spent all

on rent and lease/For we all live in dorms on campus/Our landlords' moods are quite like Krampus/All the spondulicks we did earn/Went fast away as if to burn/We wasted all our filthy lucre/On fattening food and crème á la sucre/But in the end it was beneficial/So confections became our staple victual/That last couplet may not have rhymed/But in my defense, it wasn't timed/To fit the verse, the rhythm, or meter/I think by now my tale has peter-/-ed out, again, it was a stretch/This storytelling makes me a wretch/My fable now comes to a halt/Despite the ending trite with fault/And so I must say to you goodnight/And see you again at morning's light."

Dying at a Rave Isn't Much Fun: A Golden Shovel by Madeleine Brouillard

"We real cool. We left school. We lurk late. We strike straight. We sing sin. We thin gin. We jazz June. We die soon." - Gwendolyn Brooks

Summer's Plight by Isaac Beltran



Walking into smoke and mirrors, *we*
entered the pulsating rave. Is this even *real*,
I heard you say. The lights turned a *cool*
shade of blue and purple as *we*
mingled with the bodies. You had *left*
about an hour ago. Faces indiscernible as those at *school*,
you had suggested that *we*
ditch the place for somewhere else to *lurk*.
After all, you had said, it's way *late*,
we should head home. I said, *we*
just got here! No need to *strike*
up a fuss! You always did shoot pretty *straight*.
Though to you, it was always *we*.
My real friends and I, we'd *sing*
karaoke under neon, thinking of something better than *sin*.
Sobbing under the influence of whiskey, *we*
looked at the other girls, so *thin*,
drinking crystal clear *gin*
as if it was the apocalypse. *We*
heard the first gunshots ring out as *jazz*
sounded through the early *June*
morning. Even though *we*
had the night of our lives, if I knew I was going to *die*,
I wouldn't be in heaven this *soon*.

Clean Slate by Abigail Vartanian

“One iced caramel latte with skim milk?”

I smiled, nodding my head as I reached for my phone. Cole worked today from ten to two, one of his longer shifts since it was a Tuesday. I made sure I showed up during his shifts enough times throughout the week for him to remember my order. I still pretended to be surprised.

“How did you remember?” I winked as I asked. A smile spread across his face, as he reached down to hand me my coffee. I reached out my phone for him to scan, a whooshing sound sending through the air as at the press of a button the payment went through.

“Can’t believe you still pay like this,” Cole teased. I shot him a glare, but threw in a grin. *This was a good sign.* I grabbed my coffee and left the cafe, my eyes once again blinded by the bright lights of the city. Each step I took through the busy streets made me feel shaky and uneasy, the caffeine usually did that to me. My eyes danced along the bright signs of the city, a flashing screen on every corner. Each street was always constantly swarmed with a sea of bodies, hurrying along their way to work. Somehow every person seemed to have a smile on their face, waving and nodding at those to passed them. I hurried my way through the crowd, my hands still shaking from the caffeine now in my system. A group of girls I had seen around school waved at me, the brightest smiles plastered on their faces. I waved back, passing on the friendliness. I had lived around here for years and it never ceased to amaze me.

I finally reached my apartment, the elevator slowly but surely bringing me up to my floor. Walking out the door, I reached for my phone. *Missed Call from Avery. Of course.* I quickly tapped the notification, glancing around the hallway as I listened to ringing through the phone. The ringing stopped almost instantly.

“Serena, are you home yet?” Avery sounded as if she was shouting into the phone.

“Well hello to you too. I just got home, what’s up now?” I stopped in front of my door, waiting for my face to be recognized. Light shone out from the door up and down my face until it finally unlocked with a click. Avery continued talking.

“Okay, listen to me, Serena, this is important.” I sighed. What was important to Avery was usually just some drama. Not that I really minded though, Avery’s drama was pointless but pretty entertaining. I pretended to be interested nonetheless, the gossip being part of our daily routine.

“Let me guess, something about Aubrey, and how you think she is such a bitch?”

“Okay okay, but before you judge you need to hear the whole story. So I was talking to Sam, right, and I told him that-”

My mom interrupted, yelling from the kitchen. “Serena, baby, you’re home? Have you been on your computer today?” I yelled back to her, phone still in hand.

“No, Mom, I’ll do it later. There’s still more I need to download from today.” *Hopefully Avery’s drama is worth remembering.* I flopped down onto the couch, laying my phone down onto the coffee table.

“Okay Avery, keep going. So you were talking to Sam and you told him...”

“Right, so I was talking to Sam. I told him that Aubrey was talking shit about him to me, and that I don’t even know why he still likes her. He got all defensive, but what he really doesn’t get is how fake she is. Like yeah, she thinks we’re friends but I *know* she’s talking about me too.” I rolled my eyes. Usually I liked hearing about Avery’s drama but this was too much. But I continued to nod along, adding in a “uh huh” and an “oh my god” in every few sentences. The conversation came to a close, when Avery was finally finished ranting about how stupid it was that her mom went on vacation with her boyfriend last weekend and how much of a bitch she still thinks Aubrey is. I always played along, never really expressing my real opinion. Avery didn’t really care if I agreed or not, so there was no point in letting her know if I did. Avery hung up the phone leaving me to lay on the couch by myself, now having to converse with my mother.

“Serena, baby, you need to download everything tonight. Your brother forgot last Sunday and lost his whole week. I’m not letting that happen to you, you have a lot more to remember, being that it’s your senior year and all.” Knowing that the nagging wouldn’t stop until I dragged myself out of the living room and upstairs, I listened. *Why do even need to download this week anyway, it’s not like I’ll even look back on it. Senior year was already kicking my ass.*

When I reached my room upstairs, it was spotless, the only thing in the same state that I had left it being my monitor, open on my desk. When the cleaners came every morning, that was the only thing left untouched. Everyone’s lives lied within their computers, so much so that even the automated cleaners were programmed not to tamper with them. The bright city lights from outside shone onto my clean white walls, making everything including the screen of my computer appear brighter. It had been years since they rebuilt the city, but the illumination still hurt my eyes. I sat down at my desk pulling my computer closer to me and placing my scanners carefully over my temples. *Well, better to do this now, before I end up wasting an entire week like my brother.* With a single click, my computer began to download. My whole week flashed upon the screen before my eyes, from waking up on Monday morning, to my many trips to coffee shop, to the waving girls on the street, to my last conversation with Avery, all quickly displayed before me. Within a matter of seconds my week was cleared from my mind, every thought and memory from the past seven days now downloaded and locked away. I sighed, the process being short but a little exhausting. It was now a fresh week, with new thoughts, new memories, new conversations. And by next week, no one will have to remember any of it. I slid out of my chair and flopped onto my bed. *Senioritis* was kicking in hard for me, my motivation to do schoolwork or keep up with friends nowhere to be found. Breezing my way through assignments and just shooting a quick smile to a passing “friends” in the hallway was so much easier anyway. No one *really* had to know how I actually felt about them. Despite the caffeine in my system, my eyes grew heavy, my cleared mind slowly drifting off to sleep, preparing myself for another hectic week with the same old routine.

“Justin, turn on the news!” My mom shouted at my brother from downstairs. I was quickly awakened by the voices from downstairs, along with sudden murmur coming from outside. The whole city seemed to be rumbling, loud, echoing conversations audible even from inside the apartment building. I shot up out of bed, rubbing my eyes, as I took off down the stairs. The news station boomed from the living room. My phone instantly started to blow up with messages and calls, but I ignored it, joining my mom and brother on the couch.

“Mom, what’s going on? I just heard-” The news anchor cut me off, standing in the streets of the city, almost swallowed by the mass of bodies. The crowd was angry. “Just in! It seems that our government’s current memory system was hacked, personal information and thoughts of the civilians of the city now being leaked.” Viruses have taken over computers, and the personal information of others’ is quickly spreading. Contact your provider immediately if this is affecting you or your family. More updates are on the way.”

I froze, unable to process what was being said. The commotion continued outside, loud shouting and banging echoing through the streets. My mom and brother also remained still.

“Go check your computer,” my mother slowly ordered, an eerily calm tone to her voice. “Both of you. Now.”

I ran upstairs to my room, my phone still rapidly buzzing in my pocket. I reached for my computer, the screen reading, “*System Error, Files Transferred*”. My heart stopped and dropped in my chest. I frantically tapped on the screen, trying to reverse the damage that had already been done. The original message disappeared. My heart, beating out of my chest seconds before, suddenly stopped. I froze, staring blankly at the screen. A new message had appeared. *The system was giving me another option. Would you like to: Clear Memory Card?* My eyes darted back to my window, the horrified faces and ear piercing screams still filling the city as entire lives were displayed on the billboards for everyone to see. I shuddered, turning back to my computer. The horror that was my once perfect city grew louder, as my phone continued to blow up with texts that I couldn’t get myself to check. I hesitated, my hand shaking as I reached towards the screen. *Memory Card Erased*. My eyes shot open, my body suddenly aware of an echoing of screaming voices flooding through my windows. *How strange, I wonder what all of the fuss is about.*

When I Play by Ayla Taylor-Robichaud



Silence.

Even if it’s only for a second, the moment when an orchestra is completely silent feels like an eternity. It feels so unnatural, holding back a supernova of voices desperately trying to break free. In those moments, nerves consume me and eat away at my core like an acid rain. My voice will soon be shared with hundreds; not mere words, but my raw, vulnerable voice. But unlike most, my voice lives outside my body and has found a permanent home in my violin. I silently position my fingers on its frayed strings, settle its perfectly curved wood against my knee. Months of practice, hundreds of hours of work can be so easily destroyed by a single outlying note. I silently pray I will not be The One who Played During a Rest.

My violin is my best friend. One of my closest relationships is with something most would consider a foreign piece of warped wood. You would think this quirk would act as a brick wall between me and relationships with actual people, but on the contrary, my violin has opened up a whole new world of opportunities. I have found people like me, people who speak the universal language of music. However, our speech does not consist of words. We express passion, experiences, deep emotions that are the essence of humanity. When I play, something extraordinary happens. Reality disappears, leaving nothing but my voice in a world full of eager minds. I am no longer constricted by societal standards. I am no longer a young girl, desperate for people to hear my words. When I play, people listen to my voice. I am free.

Our conductor raises his baton and in response, I raise my violin and nestle my chin into its soft wood. As everyone else does the same, we glance around. Breathe in, breathe out. The anticipation lingers in the air like electricity, the sweet taste of ozone before lightning strikes. Suddenly, our conductor begins to move, flicking his baton although it was a wand casting an elaborate spell. I begin to drag my bow across the string, a cloud of rosin exploding on contact. I barely even look at the notes scattered across the pages of Beethoven's Egmont Overture. I am no longer playing from the pages. I am telling a story. A rich, mournful vibrato, a navy sea swirling around me. The power surges through us as we share an electrifying note. This is a story worth telling.

Suddenly, the sound drops, leaving nothing but an oboe whistling an eerie melody. It creeps up our spines like a snake, waiting for the perfect time to strike. Egmont has been lurking in the corner, hiding his presence, but something is very wrong. Oppression creeps up behind us and fills the air, suffocating the strings like a wet blanket. Egmont finally emerges in a valiant effort to fight back, resist, but the rebellion is stamped out by a deep roll of the cellos. Anger surges through us and unites every instrument in a powerful chord. My violin buzzes with energy and sends little flecks of rosin off the worn wood. Egmont rises up, determined to fight back against his oppressors when something catches him like a fishing line and reels him back in.

A sweet melody dances through the air and draws the attention of every soul in the room. Egmont's wife; the love of his life calling for him to come home. Her voice is as fragile as a butterfly's wings, so easily torn by a strong wind. She is a calm blue sea, a stark contrast to her husband's dark ocean. She pleads for him to stop, the terror clouding her crystal eyes like murky water. Her desperation flows around us as her song becomes darker. The deep notes of the bass cast a shadow over the flutes, extinguishing their light. She begins to lose hope as his ocean clashes with hers and pierces her sweet serenity. A patriotic melody confirms worst fears; he has to keep going. Her calm blue sea is gone, replaced with a black sea of fear and sorrow as she is swept away in the wind.

Egmont marches to the steady beat of the violas as his love is left behind in the dust. My violin wails in protest as he quickens, gathering supporters along the streets. One by one, voices join the rebellion. An oboe belts a victorious tune, validated by our hero's cause. The strings unify and we fall into neat sets of triplets. But the voices soon intensify, become faster, more powerful. I am about to be swept away by a riptide and dissolve into their restless sea. My bow flies across my strings, trying desperately to break free. Like a rider and her horse, when I play my violin and I are one. However, the bond that unites us is delicate. One wrong note, just one missed beat can send me spiraling out of control. But we don't dissolve. We steady forward, chased forward by the rapid beats of the winds. We are no longer marching; we are sprinting. Sprinting to victory, to freedom, to hope. But suddenly, we slow as though a brick wall were set in our path. A worried clarinet sends a warning to the strings, confirming our worst fears. Egmont has been captured, sentenced to death by his oppressors.

The music ripples across bodies, carrying the purest form of sorrow. Every note crashes like waves and threatens to drag us in. The cellos croon a mournful march, the hopeless cries of mercy for a beloved father. A lone flute chirps the last glimmer of light before it is swallowed up by the deep rumble of a bass. My violin cries in defeat as Egmont's wife accepts her husband's inevitable mortality. Her desperation pierces through us. The last sliver of hope shatters like glass as the fateful gunshot rings through the air.

Silence

The silence is deafening. It looms over us like the grim reaper, waiting for the ring of the last note to die.

Suddenly, everything changes.

Solemnity is overwhelmed by a flickering golden light, washing over us like a warm summer day. Hope. My violin shrieks with laughter as my bow dances across the strings. Harsh chords are replaced by tender melodies, jarring notes are swept away by a soft song. We march forward in unison, deeply touched by Egmont's sacrifice. The wails of Egmont's children are replaced by the cries of soldiers running into battle. The black sea of oppression is overcome by the blue waters of freedom. Freedom.

The orchestra unifies as we fall into the last set of chords, ringing into the air like church bells. My bow is in the air, letting strings ring one final time. Victory. I take a deep breath, allow my shoulders to drop and my face to relax into a smile. I look around slowly as the audience erupts into applause. I feel alive, rejuvenated. Free. It is bittersweet. At the end of every song, I look down at my violin's grainy wood, worn like the spine of a child's favorite book. I know that the portal to my world has closed and I am once again condemned to reality. But I know it will be waiting for me. Waiting for me to pick up my violin, pluck its strings, balance its perfectly weighted bow in my hand. Waiting for me to tell another story. And when I play, my world will open once again.

Of aching knots by Rachel Brooks

Brezel, my mother says, is German for pretzel,
but it isn't enough to turn dough into knots.

The art's rigid, divinely mathematical, so
she takes each body of flour and sugar,
water and yeast, twisting till the two ends touch.
Taste, she pleads. Her voice a rising cadence, a
punctured syllable. My teeth whittle the salt into bits,
grains of bitter earth lingering on lips. I just want
to gulp it down. In the kitchen: pot boils, while I sit
cross-legged and mother kneads
with calloused palms, dropping each shape into
the steam. How I wait for the vapors to condense,
form a ghost, my thoughts to settle like precipitate
and I wonder where the *brezel* got its shape.

So, I read up on the monks in northern Italy, who
twisted strips of bread as rewards for their pupils'

holy efforts - kneeling, chanting hymns, slivered
tongues reciting scriptures. If you flip a pretzel
verkehrt herum, meaning upside down, it resembles
hands crossed in prayer. Now I picture that knot
in my stomach: calcified. This mouth has not tasted
brezel since I was nine and no wiry nymph of willow
limbs, free from the plagues haunting my thinning
wrists, sifting the rifts of my clavicles. My ribs
protruding like railroad tracks. I've forgotten
that hour where my body didn't scorn me for
eating wheat's bounty. I want absolution. To taste
blessing and bread as one. The pain's sharp,
hollowing out my organ. Jagged. Like a knife slicing
fish belly to the bone. For now, I'll fold my own arms.
What else am I to do but pray?

A Dragon at the Doctor's by Madeleine Brouillard

"All right sis, I got it... Yeah, love ya. Bye." Zach tapped the end call button on his phone, sinking into his seat a bit further. The room was plain grey, with a stripe of light blue towards the ceiling. Some magazines and a lamp sat on a table, the fluorescent light flickering under the lampshade. Brushing his almond hair out of his steely eyes, he noticed some lollipops sitting on the secretary's desk. Busy typing away at the computer, her petite face and blonde hair were illuminated by the screen.

"Hey twerp, get back here!" The man yelled. Zach's feet pounded the concrete as he sprinted along the sidewalk of the city, hand full of candy. Blowing a raspberry towards the old man, he jumped onto the ladder of a fire escape and started to climb, scrambling over towards a half-open window. Jumping in, he shut it closed, letting a sigh of relief escape his lips. He wandered over to the decrepit living room, sitting down in front of his sister. Handing some candy to her, he smiled, and unwrapped a caramel for himself. A successful trip for all.

Zach stretched languidly and glanced at the clock. It'd be another thirty minutes at least until the psychologist came to collect him, so he had some time. He could feel his slender fingers itching, reaching towards some spare change in his pockets. Pulling out a penny from his pocket and passing it between his fingers for a bit, he put it back and picked up a magazine. *Reader's Digest*, he thought. *Just a buncha bull, if you ask me, but it'll make me look busy. Ally likes this stuff, doesn't she?* Eventually, the secretary got a call from her cell, so she got up and left the room to answer it. Zach eyed around the room. No one was there, so he was free to scratch his proverbial itch - as long as he didn't get caught.

Zach stood up from his chair and scrambled over to the secretary's desk. Scooping up some lollipops, he dropped them into his jacket pocket as he shuffled over to the desk drawers. Careful not to make any noise, he opened the top drawer and took stock of what lay inside. A pen, some pieces of gum, a dollar, and - score! Some jewelry sat at the back of the drawer, clearly abandoned. It was a nice charm, a painter's palette, with a jeweled inlay as the colors. Passing it into his pants pocket, he perused the other drawers and returned to his seat nonchalantly, sucking on a cotton candy lollipop as he plopped down.

"Look, look, I drew a pony!" His sister giggled. Zach looked up from counting bills to see her shoving a picture in his face. Ever since he bought her that painter's set, she wouldn't do anything but draw. The picture was of a horse, presumably, but it was clear that she was proud of it. He replied, "Looks great Ally. Now, to give it a home!" Taking the painting gently from her hands, he hung it up on the fridge, next a picture of them together, also made by her. She left to go paint some more, picking up her little painter's palette. He stared a while, admiring the colors on the palette as she began to paint.

A few minutes later, the secretary returned, sitting daintily in her chair. She booted up the computer again, typing away at a document. Opening the desk drawer, she started to rummage around in it, when she stopped and started again - more frantically this time.

She eventually gave up, and turned to Zach, saying, "Hey, did you see a necklace lying around? It's of a painter's palette. It was my mom's, and it's very special to me, so if you happen to see it, could you give it to me?" Nodding, Zach fingered the delicate chain in his

jacket pocket. The woman glanced around frantically, whispering to herself. Feeling his stomach drop, he watched her leave the room at a half-jog, presumably to go check another room.

As the secretary returned a few minutes later, he got up and walked over to her, grabbing the necklace out of his pocket. Handing it to her, he voiced, "I found it under the magazines. Be careful where you put your things." Sitting back down, she nodded, clasping the necklace around her neck.

The psychologist returned to the waiting room, and called out Zach's name. Turning away from his conversation with the secretary, he stood up to go to the examination room when she called out to him. "Hey, Zach?"

"Yeah Melanie?" Zach responded, turning his back and head to face her. He gulped as he saw the look in her eyes, hard as blue agates.

"Hey, Zach, come here! I wanna show you somethin'," his sister called out. Walking to catch up to her, he stopped short by his sister's side to look at the lake in front of them.

"See the boats?" She asked, her blue eyes sparkling. He nodded, turning to face some motorboats down on the water. She continued, "When we grow up, I'mma buy a boat. Then we can do what we want!" Laughing, Zach nodded again, ruffling her hair and replying, "Of course we will." They'd buy a boat and get out of there, as soon as he had the dough. He promised.

"Throw out the lollipop?" Melanie inquired. Zach mumbled a "yes ma'am" sheepishly, spitting out the one he had in his mouth. He sighed. At least she didn't figure it out yet.

As Zach left, he grabbed a sticky note off of her desk. The secretary was soon left alone as Zach and the psychologist walked over to the examination room. Sighing, she turned to her work and began to type.

In the examination room, the psychologist had him sit on the chair across from his desk. They exchanged greetings and names as he set up his computer in the corner of the desk. Turning to Zach, he asked, "So, Zachary, why are you here today?"

"I... tend to take things that aren't mine," Zach replied. Shifting his feet, he turned to look at some of the trinkets on the doctors desk. A newton's cradle, some sticky notes... and a paintbrush.

"Why do you think it is you do this?" The psychologist, named David, questioned, leaning onto the desk. Zach responded hastily, "I dunno doc, I just have a problem with it." Scratching his chin, David leaned back, and replied, "Well, did you have a rough time growing up?"

"I don't remember much. Most of it's fuzzy," Zach lied. The psychologist typed a few notes into his computer and turned to face Zach once more. "Any siblings?"

"A younger sister, Ally," Zach replied. Making a few more notes, David turned to him and asked, "Any other family?"

Shaking his head, Zach slouched a bit into his seat. Family was a bit of a touchy subject. Noticing his change in demeanor, David turned the conversation back to Ally, saying, "Anything else you want to talk about concerning your sister?"

As soon as the words left David's mouth, all Zach could do was ramble on about his sister. Zach told him about her paintings, how she wanted to buy a boat, her love of sweets. It all came out like a flood, emotions and stories jumbling together into a tidal wave of conversation. They must have spent at least half an hour just talking about her before David started to ask other questions.

"Any bullying in school at all?" The psychologist questioned. The question came to Zach as a bit odd, but at this point, he was comfortable enough with David that he could answer truthfully, so he just shook his head "no". After a couple more questions, David seemed to have a diagnosis written up. The psychologist announced, "Since you don't seem to have any other problems than your early childhood, I think that you steal to make up for what you've lost." The thesis seemed wrong to Zach, too general. He recounted their conversation for a few seconds, thinking about his childhood, how much time he had spent talking about Ally... Ally...

The realization hit Zach like a brick. Not only did he steal money for the boat she wanted, he stole things for her. The dolls, the candy, even the necklace today - it was always for her. Melanie even reminded him of her. As the psychologist turned back to asking questions, everything became a blur. He answered truthfully, and the psychologist was soon ushering him out the door of the office. The only thing he clearly remembered was nabbing the paintbrush out of the mug it sat in, dropping it into his pants pocket along with some loose change.

Zach eventually returned from his appointment to the waiting room to find the secretary gone. He placed the note on her computer, where he knew she would notice it.

(XXX) XXX-XXXX If you ever want to talk some more.

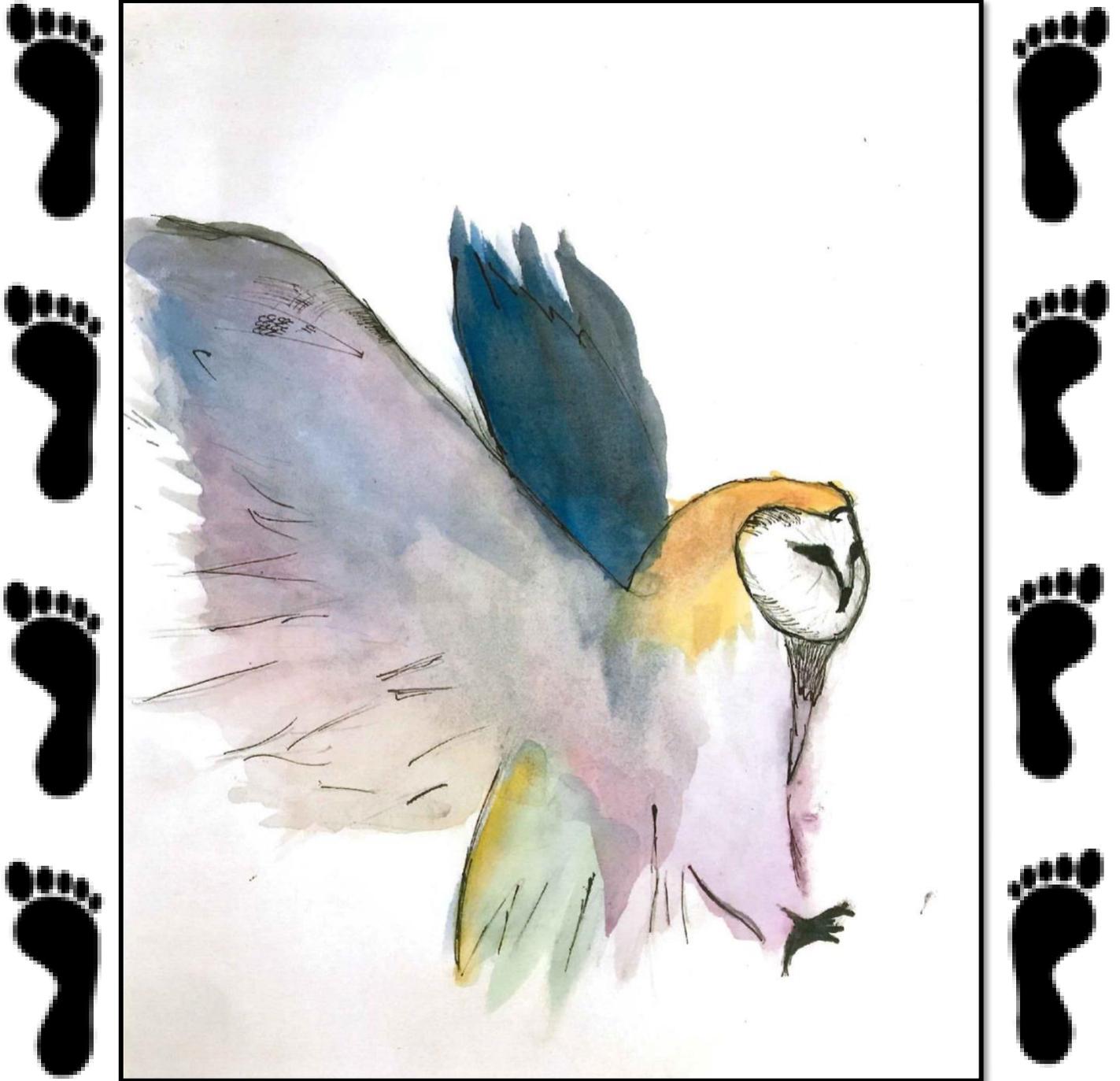
- Z

Pausing at the candy bowl yet again, he dumped the rest of the lollipops into his jacket pocket. He wound around the halls, and eventually bumped into Melanie once again, returning from dealing with some paperwork. "Have a nice day, doll," he remarked as she passed by.

"Don't forget to schedule another appointment!" She called out. He waved her off, remarking, "Yeah, yeah, sure doll. See ya later." A sly smile played on his lips as he stuck a new lollipop in his mouth, sauntering out the door into the cold city street. He never did make another appointment.



Twelfth Grade



Fight or Flight by Ajay Sharma

Alfie by Sophie Spaner

When Sinclair was little, there was a spider that lived in the kitchen, web posed delicately between the dusty side of the refrigerator and the back of the stove. It had been there since autumn, and we watched together as it spread its nimble legs and collected all of the strange little creatures that lived in our kitchen, unbeknownst to us. Alfie, she named it. She must have been about three or four at the time, we had just finished reading a collection of T. S. Eliot poems, my choice. Her favorite was *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, so Alfie it was. I told her not to name the spider, but she did, of course she did, because Sinclair did what Sinclair would do, and that was how it would always be.

We never bothered to do anything with the spider—Sinclair’s mother would have insisted we dispose of it immediately, but she had run off with E, the man who changed our furnace two summers ago. When I asked why, why she left, she said simply, “Vous écrivains, vous êtes trop compliqués.” *You writers, you are too complicated.* These were bad times. So when the spider arrived in our kitchen that one morning, I decided to let Sinclair keep it there, as a sign of protest to be sent into the universe, a screw you for leaving and a screw you for breaking our hearts.

Sinclair was immediately attached to the spider. She read stories to it, hoping, perhaps, it would learn to spell out words, “Terrific,” or “Radiant,” just like Charlotte had. Of course, Alfie was not so intelligent, not in this sense. Nonetheless, Sinclair was positively fascinated by him; she watched him weave new designs into his web, kaleidoscopic patterns unlike any we had ever seen. She left out food for him—apple slices, cookie crumbs, “small food,” she said, “for his small mouth.” I threw out the food when she went to bed, and in the morning, she would return to the empty plate, delighted that Alfie had enjoyed his meal. “Terrific,” she said, “truly terrific.”

I found myself growing a liking to the spider as well, checking to make sure it was still there when I made my morning coffee, careful not to disrupt the web when I opened the fridge door. So Alfie quickly became a part of the family. We took pictures of him and hung them on the wall, alongside the few photographs that didn’t have Sinclair’s mother in them. It was silly, but it gave us something to focus on. A pet of sorts—while the other children had golden retrievers and yellow Labradors to play with, we had a corner between a dusty refrigerator and the stove. I played into it, did everything I could to make sure Sinclair didn’t grow resentful of the fact that we simply didn’t have the time or money to take care of something larger, a dog or a cat or a hamster. Neither of us were particularly responsible either, at least for anything beyond ourselves, and I knew that the animal would inevitably escape or die, and either outcome would be tragic for Sinclair. Alfie it was, and Alfie it would be.

I should have realized that all things come to pass. As winter grew near, Alfie’s limbs grew less limber than they were in the crisp autumn. The web slowly deteriorated until all that remained were the bare bones of the original structure. He spent most of his time scrunched up, like a child in fetal position, trying to leave the world as simply as he came. I knew the end was near. Sinclair knew it too, and she tried everything she could to stop it. More apple slices. More stories. She even made me make an extra cup of coffee in the morning, “to wake him up.” But nothing worked.

And one morning, the first snow of the season, Alfie stopped moving. The spider had died.

Sinclair sobbed for hours that morning. I tried wiping her face, to no avail. Her sorrow was insurmountable. Had I let her innocence die, I asked myself, had I let her attach herself to a fantasy? I put the spider on a plate, one of the ones she had so often regaled with the finest snacks in our home, all for Alfie. I held her hand as we took it outside, her in her nightgown and boots and me in my coat and underwear. I dug a hole, probably about two feet deep in the frozen ground. "Come on, angel," I said to her. "I think it's time." She held the plate delicately and placed it in the bottom of the hole, then wiped at her nose. We watched for a moment as a light layer of snow covered the plate. "I brought a poem," I told her, "*J. Alfred*. For Alfie." I kneeled down next to her, knees stinging with cold. I traced my finger along the words, and she sniffled along, clutching my shoulder.

It was a funeral unlike any other. The whole world somehow condensed into our backyard. It was silent; the snow absorbed any sound into pure and utter nothingness. As time went on, the entire plate was covered in snow, and Sinclair said it was time to cover it completely. I poured dirt over the body; she tossed in silt alongside me.

After an hour or so, we went inside and ate apple slices and cookies. I let her have a sip of my coffee, which she promptly spat out. She didn't take her eyes off of the corner where Alfie once lived. I didn't either.

"Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?

I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.

I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.

I do not think that they will sing to me.

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back
When the wind blows the water white and black.
We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
Till human voices wake us, and we drown."

--The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock, T. S. Eliot



Bengal Tiger by Susie Poisson

I Don't Like Being Black by Samantha Sims

Growing up, I quickly understood what society expected from me. The word “black” comprised a strong, negative connotation, commonly associated with impurity and wickedness. It symbolized being at the bottom and, innately, at a disadvantage. Before uttering a word, I was a villain, a ravenous monster up to no good. My intellectual capabilities were insufficient compared to my white counterparts. My intentions were tainted. From birth, I was ugly and everyone was on the edge of their seats, waiting for me to fail.

Flattened by a thousand tons of pressure to fulfill the black identity designed so kindly by society, the immense weight left me defenseless in an internal war with who I wanted to be and how I should present myself in a white world. My strategy was to peel back my hideous, black layer, beginning with my vendetta against my hair.

I was always known for my braids. Colored beads and bobbles swung from their ends like ornaments on a tree. When my mother finished braiding my hair every week, I would go to the mirror to study the girl looking back at me. She didn't look like the other girls at school with silk hair, strands of gold that grew to the floor and danced with the wind. Her hair said it all; she wasn't one of them.

In fourth grade, I stumbled upon the remedy—hair relaxer. With my straight, chemically-tortured hair, I had snuck into an exclusive club; my hair was my disguise to hide the brown skin I didn't want others to see. I was falling joyously into a hole of self-deconstruction, internalizing the centuries of self-hatred that filled the consciousness of the smiling women of color on the boxes of Curl Out and hot comb ads.

It wasn't until my freshman year that my understanding of black hair shifted. In high school, I was suddenly surrounded by black women with volumes of curls and confidence. I found myself totally captivated by their poise and mettle. I wanted to be one of them, comfortable in my skin where there was room for me to be articulate *and* black.

That year, I decided to end perming treatments for good. By the summer of my sophomore year, I cut the straight ends of my hair and became officially natural. I was elevated by having curls. No longer was I dependent on a thick, cold cream to define my beauty.

Something deep inside was awakened. The black beast everyone feared was unleashed, not hungry for chaos or social affirmation, but for education, personal growth, community, and having more to contribute other than the fear of being an outcast. I saw the versatility of my hair and identity.

Without the chains of age-old racial stereotypes, being black was no longer a liability. Doors opened and I began to take advantage of every leadership opportunity I could. I now see myself as a trailblazer, not the follower I was for many years. Considering what I was able to accomplish in a few years once my blinders were removed, I am energized by what is to come. As a college student and beyond, I will be able to define myself by my abilities rather than external measures.

My hair journey is a narrative of my growth and self-acceptance. For years, I tore down the girl in the mirror. I was trying to “fix” her. I should've told her she was beautiful and valued. I should've told her not to let herself get in her own way. Today, I owe myself an apology for misdirecting the anger I had towards the antiquated racial hierarchy that swallows minorities whole.

It's true that I don't like being black; I love it.

Coming Out Arin by Aria Mikalonis

There was silence
we stared for a long time,
her old eyes searching my blotched young face
I wasn't so young anymore, hat hot tears falling from my eyes,
down my chin
It felt like fire
I was cold, but
it was fire falling down my cheeks
yet it did little to warm me.

I couldn't see her well, but knew she was watching.
I shifted again in the stiff car seat,
back pressed hard against rough fabric,
fingers running over the paper straw wrapper ringing in my
hands,
one of many in my pockets, aged with stress, anxiety
It gave me little comfort as I waited for response,
It came, there was relief and pain
I was relieved, but her words gave me more pain.
I love you she had said, she had told me that she loved me.

Hope in Death by Joseph Bode

Throughout elementary school, I frequented a set of abandoned railroads with my brother. They sat atop a loose mound of jagged basaltic rocks. Beyond my backyard rested a geological depression that the railroads passed through. The basalt was stacked high underneath the tracks to raise it above the muddy lane below, creating black slopes on either side of the tracks. The depression was filled with trees and perennial reeds that grew in a large patch beside a creek that continued to flow past the basalt mound through a concrete tube underpass. The railroads and the mound it straddled cleaved the depression in two, separating my forested half from a field with high grass, dotted by patches of trees.

A trip to the railroads was a brief walk across my backyard, through the reed patch, and finally an all-out dash to the top of the basalt slope. As we passed through the reeds, my brother and I hacked away at them to clear a path, relishing the crack and flying plant matter, stopping only to catch our breath as we reached the foot of the slope. One at a time, we quickly ascended to the top, giving ample

But then
you'll always be my little girl.
I cried more, said ok.
It wasn't ok,
I wasn't ok;
but it was alright. What else could I do?
I had declared the death of the girl I was in turn for me to live,
I mourned,
She mourned.
Mourning is alright.
I mourned for the loss of myself as she did,
we mourned the possibilities together, what would've become of
her
We didn't know, or
at least she didn't.
I didn't let her know what I knew.
She still would have died, later perhaps, but she would have died
and it wouldn't have left room for the boy that took her place.
It's a long road, and that's alright,
we'll keep walking



space to the first person—as the person climbed, the black rock became backward-firing projectiles under their feet. This short trek became ritual, each summer day the same as the last. The parts following this hike, however, drew my brother and me back time and time again—every day was a different adventure. Most days, we would build small forts of scrap wood left to rot in the fields. Some days, we would walk to the swamp at the far South end of the tracks. Other days, very rarely, an adventure of its own would await us.

Of these rare occasions, animal encounters were predominant: an eagle soaring, circling overhead, a beaver bathing by the Creekside, or a dog—yes, a dog—laying atop the basalt, propped ever so slightly against a large rock. The dog was basking in the sun, dormant. Upon seeing the dog, my brother and I were stupefied and perplexed as to why it was here. As inquisitive children, we approached. Its tan fur had a dull shine in the midday sun. Its ribs left flagrant ridges on its flanks. As we drew nearer, the dog showed no interest in us, not moving a muscle. An offensive odor, barely noticeable, filled the surrounding air. We drew closer still. A thick miasma hung heavily in the humid summer air, swamping our senses. Black flies flew an angry swarm near its unblinking eyes and its ribs lacked the typical ebb and flow of respiration.

My brother and I had never encountered something like this, leaving our list of actions a blank slate. Though our day had just started, we returned home and told our uncle—with whom we lived—of our discovery. The dog was buried where it laid; a single red rose marked the grave of black rocks.

Burial is a peculiar action to commemorate the dead. To my knowledge, the first species to bury their dead was *homo neanderthalensis*: the Neanderthals. After burial, flowers were commonly placed on the grave. Perhaps as a symbol of beauty or maybe to draw a parallel between the short, beautiful life of a flower and the relatively short life of their dead loved one or perhaps was an intended gift from the living to the dead. In truth, no one knows the thought process of such highly cognitive creatures before the invention of written history. However, it is certain that the cause of mourning their dead is the heightened cognitive capacity of these creatures. As cognition increases, life becomes more important and the living have more to lose at death. Neanderthals experienced life to a degree unbeknownst to any other creatures of their time. In short: Death has meaning because life has meaning. The evolution and advancements in cognition serve to make death more meaningful for creatures affected by these improvements. As creatures have evolved, their posterity—and this is seen particularly in mammals—began to take some sort of action to grieve for their deceased loved ones. Wolves let out a heart-wrenching howl, elephants stand guard over stillborn babies, and geese hang their heads low; the world and species around us have changed, but not to an extent that shows equivalent—or greater—cognitive capacity to modern man. In the end these creatures do not hold ritualistic beliefs similar to burial. Their life is impulsive, their bonds superficial, their experiences mere perception. A fond saying of mine: “a frog in a well knows nothing of the depth of the ocean” reflects on the fact that we cannot understand that which we have not experienced, everything that we do understand becomes relative. The well is deep to the frog for lack of experience in the ocean. The same saying can be applied to cognition. We as humans have experienced the ocean—we live in it. Most animals, in comparison, cannot begin to fathom our thought processes and the multitude of complex thoughts that fuel our every action in everyday life—these hapless creatures are doomed to the bottom of the well. The result is a global hierarchy with humans occupying the highest peak of the pyramid.

While these aforementioned creatures may not have cognition on par with humans, their perception of what is bad—in a general, possibly lethal sense—may be somewhat equitable, an experience considered less bad is perceived as good and so on. Animals are not on the same cognitive level as humans—high cognition is not necessary for survival. In fact, thinking of other animals in a humanistic way is disadvantageous to survival. On the battlefield of survival, a split-second lapse of animosity results in death, which has obvious repercussions.

The anxiety behind the mystery of life after death is crippling. Burial rites reflect this fragility and insecurity that all humans share. We—like our Neanderthal relatives—are highly cognitive and understand the significance of a lost life. However, at their core all sentient creatures fear death for the same reason; whatever crosses this final threshold will not return. The isolating factor of the fear of death lies in intensity; humans are differentiated from every other species inhabiting the earth on the basis that humans fear death most intensely. It's only natural—humans are intelligent and self-aware, creating a more intense fear of death—and is expressed in how humans treat themselves and other animals post mortem. Hence difference in a goldfish's toilet bowl ceremony and a human's funeral and tombstone. The way that these two unlike creatures are honored at death vastly differs although in both cases a life is lost. A swirling toilet bowl to the gently rolling earth. A single rose—soon to wither in the summer heat—to an unaging slab of granite.

The fact of the matter is that humanity's intense fear of dying has led to a simultaneous desensitization to the lives of other living creatures—plants and animals alike—and the deep-rooted selfishness that drives humanity forward like a rocket with every other life form as fuel. It is inaccurate to say that death merely gets its meaning from life. Death has control over life. Death and the fear of it are the driving factors of human action. Humans are fixated on themselves, rarely giving other creatures a second thought. Each invention, construction, and minute action are designed to increase the survivability of the human race. Humans treat animals carelessly—that is, whichever way is easiest to dispose of them—after death, a trend that continually shows in the callous treatment offered to these creatures while still living. Plants and animals alike fall victim to the apathetically self-serving manner of man, be it deforestation, poaching, or the satisfying crack emitted by the reeds by the creek, humanity's actions serve themselves, caring little—if at all—for the collateral damage as a result.

While insecurity and anxiety may certainly have a role in burial, there is one other the polar opposite called hope. Humans hope that when their time comes, they ascend the black slopes of death and find on the other side a serene landscape. This hope is the foundation of religion. A common thread that unites faiths throughout the world is the belief in rewarding a good life with the promise of a worthwhile afterlife. The Abrahamic Faiths exemplify this perfectly. Each of the three faiths provide guidelines by which its followers live. For Judaism and Christianity, the Ten Commandments are undisputed and command adherence whereas Muslims' Commandments are rewarded with the promise of life after death. Through this, religion can be seen to act as a reinforcement for hope by increasing the expectation of the afterlife. Religion acts as a conduit through which hope works to quash the power of fear.

Death is certainly given its meaning from life. Yet, what death means to an individual differs from person to person. The fear of death has monopolized human decision, instilling a fear that causes callous attitudes toward the suffering of other beings and a lack of

consideration for the life that they have and are living. However, fear of death has also given birth to the lasting concept of an afterlife—a fragile, ill-supported thought if left to sit alone. This morsel of imagination has become a cornerstone for the formation of some of the world's most widespread religions. With religion as its forge and its followers the fan, the fires of hope have tempered the fragility of the afterlife to an unquestioned state of reality for many. Some humans do not subscribe to the bandwagon belief of an afterlife and choose to work as marionettes manipulated by the puppeteer of fear. Others still choose to live on the wild side of existence, living each day to its fullest using a combination of hope and fear. In the end, like a vast multitude of things in this world, the maddening enigma of death is open to interpretation. Many fan flames. Some are puppets. Others simply live. Life is short; death is imminent. How will you live?

A Beautiful Disaster by Siara Chanterelle

Give me something that will never last

Breathe air into my lungs

Inflate my heart

And watch me fall towards the moon

As you fill me with false hope

Naïve giddiness

and unexplainable desire

Feed me your empty promises

And fruitless gazes

Only to deflate me with the truth

Tie to me the weight of reality

And watch me sink to your feet

Only for you to pick me up

Hold me to your heart

And remind me of the impermanence of our condition

Harp on about how it's the only true notion keeping me
tethered to you

Give me something that will never last



Turn all my oceans into skies

And then drown me in nothingness

Quench my drought of dopamine

And watch me transform

When I'm at my highest point

Let me go

And lose me

The same way a tear gets lost in the sea

Break me

So I can learn

to put myself back together

Make me believe you're everything I need

Then toss me into the wilderness

And force me to survive without you

Show me the beauty

Behind the colors that resonate from your skin

And from my fingertips when we connect

But don't let me forget

They exist beyond you

Give me something that will never last



Pointless Sobs by Chelsey Jara

Red watery eyes reveal a heartbroken stare. A soft suppressed whimper followed by the clank of a dropped fork. A pair of shuddering shoulders, sharp inhaled breaths result in harsh hicks. Damp cheeks and palms meet endless tears. Across the table a dry throat, turned stomach, sweaty hands, heated face, and noticeable discomfort.

I was watching my father cry for the first time. My father: a drunk who has only ever expressed anger, was sobbing like a child in front of me. And why? His father had died. It was a perfectly good reason to cry, but it didn't seem right that my father would sob for the abusive alcoholic who'd beat him into depression and a life filled with misfortune. No. He couldn't possibly be crying for the man that forced him to leave his family and home at the age of thirteen. Not the same abuser that allowed him to live through years of neglect and trauma. *Why was my father crying? Shouldn't he be relieved? Shouldn't he be devouring his food like normal? Like he'd learn to do as a child because he never knew when his next meal would come? Shouldn't my father be angry? Why was my father crying?* He should be angrier than normal. He should be angry that this father asked for forgiveness two years prior and not when he had tried to kill himself.

I can't figure it out, so I sit there motionless. I only react after my mother ushers me towards him. I hug my father. Trembling breaths and tensed muscles. Hushed pleas escape his mouth while he shakes his head no. My father is distraught. I start to feel uneasy. I attempt to push the feeling away but resentment takes its place. I'm confused and annoyed. I'm angry, so I push away from my father and sit to eat. I watch him cry. I hate it.

August 9, 2014

I entered my childhood home. A cold tile floor led into an empty hall. Tall ceilings, gold-trimmed couches, and an ivory fireplace. A large mahogany table neatly decorated with China plates, pristine and perfect, no littered with bouquets of flowers and "Get Well Soon!" balloons.

Two broad elaborate paintings hung against the stone walls, ornate porcelain lamps on either side. A reflective marble coffee table placed perfectly center in the living room. Eggshell wooden cabinets and granite countertops. Murmurs of prayer, turning Bible pages, and the silent whimpers of my grandmother.

Tear-stained faces in the living room. Sobbing aunts and uncles surround the dining table. Slow somber bodies exit the bedroom, a heaviness traveling with them. Two young daughters enter, then a faint yell of grief and despair echoed out of the room that held my dead aunt.

I stood there angry and nervous. An overwhelming feeling of disgust rose in my stomach, but before it could overpower my sorrow, I broke. I sobbed. I sobbed for an hour, and then I stopped. I never again cried for my aunt. And I hated seeing others cry for her.

Present

I'd say that was one of the earliest memories of my discomfort in seeing people cry. Since I was seven years old, I've been irritated, uneasy, and even repulsed at the sight of seeing others cry. It wouldn't matter who or why; I just hated it. It's an offbeat trait that

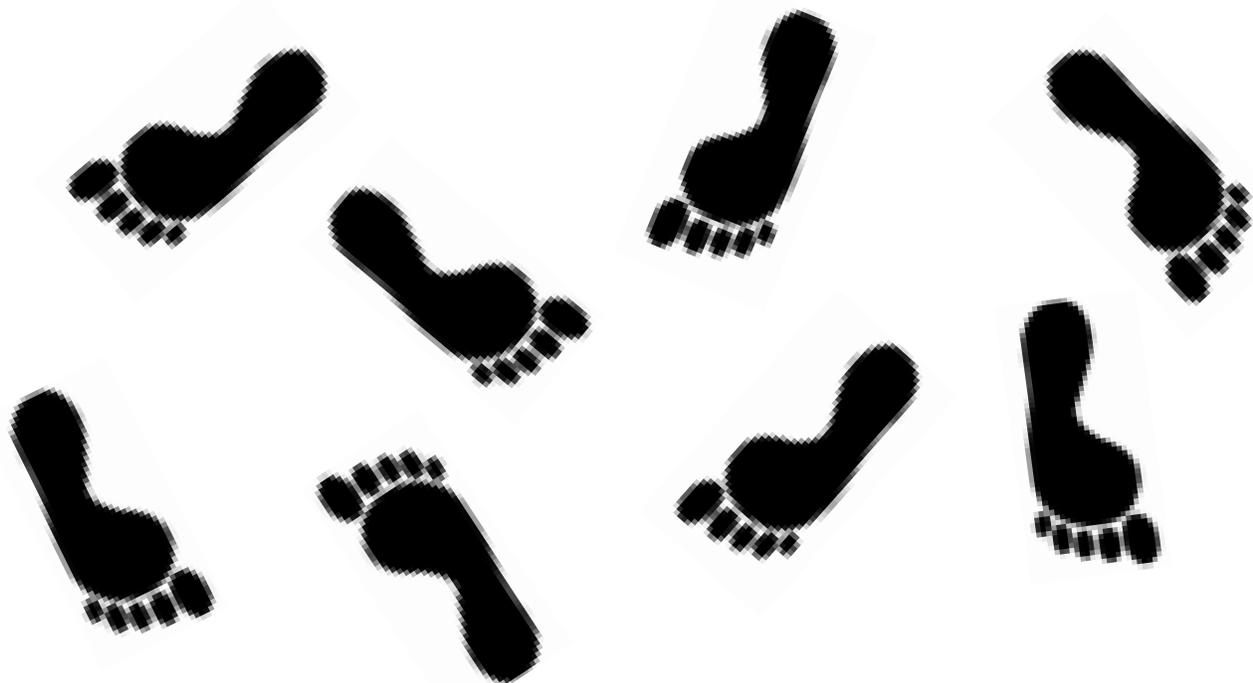
I've learned to mask with concern and tenderness, but as a child, you don't question your reactions or feelings. That's why before the age of thirteen, I never once wondered why I didn't feel genuine sympathy. No one was excluded from my judgment, not even my mother. In fact, it took my favorite aunt's passing and the death of my mother's father to finally make me curious about my unusual characteristic.

I decided to pay more attention to the overbearing thoughts and emotions I experienced when I did see someone cry. The same memory dominated my mind every time I tried to understand. Of course, it led back to my father. Finally, I figured it out, I hated seeing others cry because I hated seeing him cry. Watching my father back then—a strong, cold, and stern man—finally erupt in an emotion that wasn't anger had really shaken me. Up until that point, I had only ever witnessed my father's drunken rages and unsettling highs. Crying was new. It was scary, and it was unfair. *Why was this the only time he'd let his guard down around us? Why was this the only reason he was vulnerable with us?* I couldn't fathom why he'd let such an awful person have that effect on him. He had never cried for us. Not once. So why his father? Why the man that ruined him? I asked myself these questions for years. But I came to find that the same man that had ruined my father had save him too.

After his father's death, my father sobered up. It only took a month; now he's been sober for 11 years. I'm still shocked it was that easy. He never had a violent outburst again. He's changed completely. I have a dad. I still ask myself the same old questions whenever he laughs or we're at the dinner table.

Almost ten years later, I still feel uncomfortable when I see someone cry, but I'm happy now. Although my dad still feels the effects of his trauma, I know he's found peace. I've never seen him cry again; now he communicates his emotions through habit and gestures, whether it's his routine questions or inside jokes.

My dad unintentionally taught me to never cry for people or things that don't deserve it. But when the time comes, I will cry for him. I will sob. I will scream, kick, and bawl because my father deserves it. He deserves my grief. He deserves my tears, so I will cry for him.



Gold Medalists

Kindergarten

Poetry	Owen	Gietzen	My Magic Blocks	Northeast Academy Arts Magnet School
Poetry	Ethan	Schreiber	March Poem	Annie E. Vinton Elementary

Second Grade

Artwork	Elias	Santiago	The "sew"-lar System	Annie E. Vinton Elementary
Fiction	Adele	Morgan	Jessica's Ski Story	Tootin' Hills Elementary School
Fiction	Catherine	Skiba	Sensational Six Flags	Glastonbury East Hartford Magnet School
Poetry	Graham	Gietzen	Grandma's Windows	Northeast Academy Arts Magnet School
Poetry	Eloise	Quinn	Freedom	Goshen Center School

Third Grade

Artwork	Avery	Bourque	Dots	Annie E. Vinton Elementary
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Fifth Grade

Artwork	Andrew	Garfinkle	Whispering Mountain	Beecher Road School
Fiction	Xavier	Crespo	The Fight that Changed Space	CREC Discovery Academy
Fiction	Nate	Lee	The Story That No One Should Read	Talcott Mountain Academy
Fiction	Alisdair	McLaren	The Little Dragon	University of Hartford Magnet School
Fiction	Ariel	Mebane	Dimensions in the Mirror	University of Hartford Magnet School
Non Fiction	Cora	Hefner	How a Book Inspired Me	Brooklyn Middle School
Non Fiction	Maya	O'Brien	Really Cool Red Pandas	Latimer Lane Elementary
Non Fiction	Atkinson	Olivia	Tardigrades	Wells Road Intermediate School
Poetry	Cassia	Faison-Joseph	There's No Planet B	University of Hartford Magnet School
Poetry	Charles	Mauldin	I	CREC Discovery Academy

Sixth Grade

Artwork	Faith	Dalton	One Line Animal Drawings	Ledyard Middle School
Artwork	Mihika	Joshi	A Moment of Serenity	Timothy Edwards Middle School
Artwork	Jack	Reynolds	The Misfits	Litchfield Intermediate School
Fiction	Pema	Kennedy	Hold Time	Ledyard Middle School
Fiction	Priya	Marsh	Deserted	Greenwich Academy

Fiction	Nikolas	Vajdos	The Dragon Sanctuary	Ledyard Middle School
Non Fiction	Madeline	Laplante	Rio Attack	Gideon Welles School
Poetry	Pema	Kennedy	Swirl of Feathers	Ledyard Middle School
Poetry	Olivia	MacEachern	I Am From	Greenwich Academy

Seventh Grade

Fiction	Alexia	Ninios	The Traffickers	Bedford Middle School
Poetry	Ella	Esteve	The Paper Child	Elizabeth C. Adams Middle School
Poetry	Melina	Velenzas	What Once Was	Talcott Mountain Academy

Eighth Grade

Poetry	Leo	Mahlke	Memories at a Town Fair	Schaghticoke Middle School
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Tenth Grade

Artwork	Madison	Stevenson	Bath-Time in the Primordial Soup	ACT Magnet High School
Fiction	Luke	Beerli	The Sacred Dimension	Notre Dame High School
Fiction	Libby	Riggs	The Truth and Lies in Reality	Haddam-Killingworth High School
Poetry	Libby	Riggs	Counting America	Haddam-Killingworth High School
Poetry	Sydney	Zicolella	For the Trepid, Anxious, and the Uneasy: When You Need It	Killingly High School

Eleventh Grade

Non Fiction	Connor	Ferguson	Language Paper	Hall High School
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Twelfth Grade

Artwork	Brenna	Dahr	Aura	Bunnell High School
Fiction	Helena	Lessne	Playing Dress Up	Miss Porter's School
Fiction	Helena	Lessne	Treasure Hunt	Miss Porter's School
Fiction	Sarah	Mende	Beth Kills Herself	Miss Porters School
Fiction	Thomas	Rhoades	Glass District	Rockville High School
Non Fiction	Joanne	biju	Mulled for a Second Too Long	South Windsor High School
Non Fiction	Maya	Hennessey	The Privilege Walk	Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts
Poetry	Rebecca	DeMatteo	I9-Mar	Cooperative Arts and Humanities High School
Poetry	Chelsea	Koss	Pro Choice	Rockville High School
Poetry	Jillian	Lesieur	Voodoo Doll	Lewis S. Mills High School
Poetry	Tyler	Senethep	A Car Ride Can Change the World	Glastonbury High School

Silver Medalists

Kindergarten

Fiction	Owen	Gietzen	The Five Brothers	Northeast Academy Arts Magnet School
Non-fiction	Luke	Gordon	My Afternoon in Kindergarten	Hopewell Elementary School
Non-Fiction	Izaiah	Montes	My Dad	North Street School
Non-fiction	Asher	Yanez	The Adventures of Asher	CREC International Magnet School
Poetry	Carmen	Trallero	Elsa Powers	Annie E. Vinton Elementary

First Grade

Artwork	Tyanne	Chen	Untitled	Annie E. Vinton Elementary
Artwork	Aria	Pulk	Untitled	Annie E. Vinton Elementary
Artwork	Johannes	Schaffoener	Untitled	Annie E. Vinton Elementary
Artwork	Maya	Syharat	Untitled	Annie E. Vinton Elementary
Fiction	Mohamad	Alsaleh	The Class Pet	North Street School
Fiction	Kimble	Nesmith	The Flying Car	CREC Museum Academy
Fiction	Apeksha	Vejendla	Accidents and Accidents	CREC Discovery Academy
Fiction	Collin	Craig	Magic Beds	CREC Discovery Academy
Fiction	Dawid	Gawek	Friendship	CREC Discovery Academy
Fiction	Javielis	Maldonado	Christmas	CREC Discovery Academy
Fiction	Maximus	Ricks	Adventure with Goldilocks	CREC Discovery Academy
Fiction	William	Robles	Leafy & Firey	CREC Discovery Academy
Fiction	Matthew	Royster	Pokemon	CREC Discovery Academy
Fiction	Ketann	Sahoo	Ninjas	CREC Discovery Academy
Non Fiction	Asia	Brown	A Book of Dogs	CREC Discovery Academy
Non Fiction	Kiyaan	Bukhari	Space	CREC Discovery Academy
Non Fiction	Bailey	Davis	All About Cats	CREC Discovery Academy
Non Fiction	John	Donlon	All About GEHMS	Glastonbury East Hartford Magnet School
Non Fiction	Ibrahim	Hassam	Lions	CREC Discovery Academy
Non Fiction	Nola	Ross	I Love School	Reggio Magnet School of the Arts
Non Fiction	Shaelyn	Soraghan	How to Draw a Unicorn	Reggio Magnet School of the Arts
Non Fiction	Michael	Stanco	Welcome to the Planets	CREC Discovery Academy

Second Grade

Fiction	Coralin	Andrews	Cookies	Squadron Line School
Fiction	Emily	Augustyn	Jack and Callie and the Lost Shoe	Litchfield Center School
Fiction	Serena	Leemon	Bunny Spiers	Glastonbury East Hartford Magnet School
Fiction	Dace	Lewchik	The New Dance Studio	Squadron Line School
Fiction	Autumn	Morgan	The Adventures of Abby	Tootin' Hills Elementary School
Fiction	Sawyer	Perillo	Charlie Jones' Noisy Nights	Squadron Line School
Fiction	Isla	Ritchie	The Lost Tooth	Tootin' Hills School
Fiction	Phoebe	Stowers	The Wacky Chicago Trip	Anna Reynolds Elementary
Fiction	Thomas	Clark	Alex the Brave	Tootin' Hills Elementary School
Non Fiction	Charles	Hanna	Cats!	Tootin Hills School
Non Fiction	Daniel	Huo	Chengyu Changes His Name	Buttonball Lane Elementary School
Non Fiction	Avery	Marchinkoski	Dogs	Tootin' Hills School
Non Fiction	James	Mimnaugh	Our First Dog	Anna Reynolds Elementary School
Non Fiction	Emmett	O'Toole	My Dog Cranberry	Tootin' Hills School
Poetry	Emily	Augustyn	A Week of Treats!	Litchfield Center School
Poetry	Kenzie	Colon	My Dog	North Street School
Poetry	Everett	Ferreira	Spiders	North Street School
Poetry	Royce	Johnson	Hard Feelings	North Street School
Poetry	Aiden	Rodriguez	Sunset	CREC academy of Aerospace and Engineering
Poetry	Renzo	Vattuone	Tree story	Goshen Center School
Poetry	Cazmere	Taylor	Twilight	CREC academy of Aerospace and Engineering

Third Grade

Fiction	Lila	Coppeler	Medusa's Life Story	Central School
Fiction	Andrew	Taggard	Little Red Hen, Little Nice Lion	Tootin' Hills Elementary School
Non Fiction	Madeleine	Cubeta	One Christmas Miracle	Naubuc Elementary School
Non Fiction	Gracee	Goyette	How to Take Care of a Lizard	Scotland Elementary School
Non Fiction	Anotnia	Seals	Natural Disaster	Glastonbury East Hartford Magnet School
Non Fiction	Ahmar	Simpson	No Homework	University of Hartford Magnet School
Poetry	Aiden	Patel	The Questions Of Flowers	Lebanon Elementary School

Poetry	Angela	Zheng	My Trip to Niagara Falls	Reggio Magnet School of the Arts
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Fourth Grade

Artwork	Isabelle	Caddy	Sol	Annie E. Vinton Elementary
Artwork	Jeyliel	Rodriguez	The Ninja Skin	CREC Museum Academy
Artwork	Hailey	Strauss	Sunset Reflection	Buttonball Lane School

Fifth Grade

Fiction	Sidra	Maghaydah	Home	Buttonball Lane School
Fiction	Emma	Mao	Blue Cheese	Greenwich Academy
Fiction	Dylan	Mirro	A Safe Place	Wells Road Intermediate School
Fiction	Leelah	Mouradov	Ugh!	Glastonbury East Hartford Magnet School
Fiction	Jack	O'Neill	Never	Glastonbury East Hartford Magnet School
Non Fiction	Christian	Bard	My Niece Was Born!	Brooklyn Middle School
Non Fiction	Sophia	Borer	Intercontinental Hotel	Bugbee Elementary School
Non Fiction	Aoibheann	Browne	The Snorkel Story	Tarriffville Elementary School
Non Fiction	Ivie	Caffee	One Tree Too Many	Tarriffville Elementary School
Non Fiction	Jane	Carty	The Angel	Eli Terry Elementary
Non Fiction	Srinaas	Chintapalli	Awesome Astronauts	CREC Discovery Academy
Non Fiction	Claire	Ellsworth	Pollution	Brooklyn Middle School
Non Fiction	Jane	Morris	First Day at Buttonball	Buttonball Lane Elementary
Poetry	Emily	Beall	Amber Thief	Greenwich Academy
Poetry	Jane	Carty	I Am	Eli Terry Elementary
Poetry	Tomas	Gutierrez	Chains	Brooklyn Middle School
Poetry	Julia	Kuczet	I am Me	CREC Discovery Academy
Poetry	Emma	Mao	Mad	Greenwich Academy
Poetry	Angelina	Pacheco	May Not Be the One	Brooklyn Middle School

Sixth Grade

Artwork	Lin	Zhang	Mammoth Hot Springs	Greenwich Academy
Fiction	Jonah	Church	Raid of the Final Tomb	Tootin' Hills Elementary School
Fiction	Hadley	Huebner	Cookies or Dog Food?	Ledyard Middle School
Fiction	Ellie	Kirk	Sage's Sorrow	Tootin' Hills Elementary School
Fiction	Tristan	Lunding	This Was It	Tootin' Hills Elementary School
Fiction	Isabella	Rafter	The Fire	Gideon Welles School
Fiction	Sam	Wu	The Sea of Debris	Talcott Mountain Academy
Non Fiction	Elias	Israelsen	The Beauty of Nature	Gideon Welles School
Non Fiction	Benjamin	Lee	Breaking News: Some Video Games are a Problem!	Tootin' Hills Elementary School

Non Fiction	Priya	Marsh	Sunflower Blooming	Greenwich Academy
Non Fiction	August	McLeran	Passion	Woodbury Middle School
Non Fiction	Dialis	Salgado	Love Lost	Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts Middle School
Poetry	Phydena	Liu	The Box	Talcott Mountain Academy
Poetry	Priya	Marsh	I Am From	Greenwich Academy
Poetry	Jack	Reynolds	Rip Currents	Litchfield Intermediate School
Poetry	Juliana	Kreuzer	In the Pouring Rain	Greenwich Academy
Poetry	Abigail	Suarez	This Weird Emotion of Mine	Killingly Intermediate School

Seventh Grade

Artwork	Ariana	Pourkavoos	Portrait of Somebody Important	Talcott Mountain Academy
Fiction	Akshita	Ashokkumar	The Crickets Start to Chirp	Henry James Memorial School
Fiction	Addison	Aubin	At the Hands of God	Ellington Middle School
Fiction	Sophia	Caneira	Red Knight White Knight	Mansfield Middle School
Fiction	Juliet	Dahlström	Hole in the Ceiling	Westside Middle School Academy
Fiction	Riya	Pharsiyawar	A Mere Facade	Westside Middle School Academy
Fiction	Katie	Smith	Uninvited Guests	Killingly Intermediate School
Fiction	Asad	Syed	The greener movement	Fairfield Woods Middle School
Non Fiction	Elia	Amaro	Sky Full of Stars	Greenwich Academy
Non Fiction	Riya	Pharsiyawar	A Picture of Our Misery	Westside Middle School Academy
Non Fiction	Aiden	Rustigan	Bike Ride Terror	Schaghticoke Middle School
Non Fiction	Anna	Utterback	The Importance of Family	Mansfield Middle School
Poetry	Soleil	Asano	Poetry	Talcott Mountain Academy
Poetry	Elsa	Nocton	Memories of Dementia	Mansfield Middle School
Poetry	Brooke	Vazquez	Flowers	Vernon Center Middle School
Poetry	Keira	Zheng	Winter's Afternoon	Saxe Middle School

Eighth Grade

Artwork	Shannon	Collins	One More Lap	John F. Kennedy Middle School
Artwork	Hebah	Habib	Angelica	Martin Kellogg Middle School
Fiction	Lauren	Conde	The Falling Man	Killingly Intermediate School
Fiction	Alice	Xu	A New Home	Amity Middle School Bethany
Poetry	Makayla	Minor	Good Enough	Woodrow Wilson Middle School

Ninth Grade

Artwork	Maeva	Dawson	untitled	JM Wright Technical High School
Fiction	Robyn	McNeilly	Love With A Side Of Chocolate	Rockville High School
Fiction	Samantha	Seepersad	weIghT	Simsbury High School
Poetry	Caitlin	Chatterton	The Field is Silent	Rockville High School
Poetry	Dylan	Guth	The Road to Nowhere	Fairfield Ludlowe High School

Tenth Grade

Fiction	Zachary	Garfinkle	The Cave	Amity Regional High School
Fiction	Mark	MacDaniel	Never Forget	Notre Dame High School
Fiction	Kaylin	Maher	Snail Shell	Rockville High School
Fiction	David J.	McGroary	The Disappearance	Notre Dame High School
Fiction	Ashley	Petit	Unordinary Circumstances	Suffield High School
Fiction	Julia	Wilson	Fragments	Ellington High School
Non Fiction	Sophia	Goldberg-Dayle	The Lord of the Freuds	Manchester High School
Non Fiction	Gabrielle	Wincherhern	oscar	Amity Regional High School
Poetry	Kaylin	Maher	Orlando	Rockville High School
Poetry	Madison	Stevenson	Dear Younger Me.	ACT Magnet High School
Poetry	Gabrielle	Wincherhern	complaints	Amity Regional High School

Eleventh Grade

Fiction	Elyza	Bruce	On the Island of Saint Helena	Nonnewaug High School
Fiction	Shawna	Cote	Game of Life	Rockville High School
Fiction	Isabelle	Fauteux	Blue Picket Fence	Rockville High School
Fiction	Jonathan	Leonidas	How I found The Answer to my Nervousness Problem	William H. Hall High School
Fiction	Ashley	Ruth	"Frosting and Nuts"	New Canaan High School
Fiction	Hannah	Swimm	Blazing Lights	New Canaan High School
Non Fiction	Michaela	Metcalfe	What You Took From Me	CREC Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts
Non Fiction	Keshav	Ramesh	The Abstraction of the English Language	South Windsor High School
Non Fiction	Andrew	Van De Mark	The Lonely Oak	Farmington High School
Poetry	Sara	Cove	Tidal Bore	Rockville High School
Poetry	Kimberly	Gonzalez	Up Into Flames	Rockville High school
Poetry	Coralin	Hawkins	Please ...	Griswold High School

Poetry	Ashna	Prakash	Heritage	South Windsor High School
Poetry	Clayton	Sinlgeton	Seeking the Satisfaction	The Woodstock Academy

Twelfth Grade

Artwork	Lucas	Boothroyd	Death In the Tropics	Rockville High School
Fiction	Angel	Blauvelt	Perfection	Wamogo Regional High School
Fiction	Emma	Foley	The Metronome	Lewis S. Mills High School
Fiction	Maisy	Hoffman	For Aaron	Miss Porter's School
Fiction	Emily	Kocur	My Brother's Ghost	Ellington High School
Fiction	Gregory	Nowinski	S.O.S.	Academy of Aerospace and Engineering
Fiction	Charlotte	Whalen	Evil Stepmother	Miss Porter's School
Non Fiction	Indira	Alic	The Tears of My Father	Academy of Science and Innovation
Non Fiction	Julia	Cianflone	What You're Made Of	William H Hall High
Non Fiction	Natalie	Lederman	Just Say Yes	Northwestern Regional High School
Non Fiction	Megan	Meyerson	A Lesson Learned	Greenwich Academy
Non Fiction	Lauren	Schultz	He Broke Me	Wamogo Regional High School
Non Fiction	Rania	Shafi	Dil Se Alvaz	Miss Porter's School
Non Fiction	McKenna	Tedford-Coles	Church Pews	Lyman Memorial High School
Poetry	Charlie	Case	oh, please, let it be lightning	Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts
Poetry	Rachel	Charron	November Ghosts	ACT Magnet High School
Poetry	Rachel	Charron	November Ghosts	ACT Magnet High School
Poetry	Shine	Lee	Summer	The Hotchkiss School
Poetry	Ellis	McGinley-Knapp	Nostalgia for the High School Sweetheart	ACT Magnet High School
Poetry	Theodore	Rodriguez	Traffic Jam on Hallway I-94	Manchester High School
Poetry	Khana	Santiago	Fearing with Fury	Manchester High School
Poetry	Mary Rose	V Maughan	Life is a Fairytale	Rockville High School

Honorable Mentions

Kindergarten

Fiction	Violet	Jangula-Mootz	Flowery Finds a Friend	Lake Street Elementary School
Non Fiction	Eli	Balanda	I Can	University of Hartford Magnet School
Non fiction	Violet	Jangula-Mootz	Cats Can...	Lake Street Elementary School
Non-Fiction	Pratheek	Koneru	Camping	North Street School
Non-Fiction	Brennan	Mason	How to Go Camping	North Street School
Non-Fiction	Ariannie	Mendez Torres	Mom Loves Me	North Street School
Non-fiction	Carter	Pacholski	Skiing	Glastonbury East Hartford Magnet School
Non-Fiction	Cecilia	Rivas	Frozen 2	North Street School
Non-fiction	Mason	Ward	Skiing Sundown	Hopewell Elementary School
Non-Fiction	Mali'ya	Wilson	Auntie's Dog	North Street School
Poetry	Lucas	Day	Roasting Marshmallow with Dad	Annie E. Vinton Elementary
Poetry	Yachtson	Newton	My Brother is a Skateboarder	Annie E. Vinton Elementary
Poetry	Aaron	Zhao	Slimy Guy	Annie E. Vinton Elementary

First Grade

Artwork	Natalia	Singh	Sunrise	Morley Elementary
Non Fiction	Avyukt	Archanapally	How to Brush Your Teeth	North Street School
Non Fiction	Maxwell	Taylor	Trucks	CREC Discovery Academy
Non Fiction	Kellen	VanTasel	All About Baseball	Glastonbury East Hartford Magnet School
Poetry	Tyler	Hobbs	Rain	Central School Simsbury
Poetry	Anabelle	Williamson	Rain	Glastonbury East Hartford Magnet School

Second Grade

Artwork	Megan	Song	Rainbow Sky in Sewing	Annie E. Vinton Elementary
Fiction	Emily	DaCosta	Molly and her Friends	CREC Ana Grace Academy of Arts Elementary
Fiction	Terence "TJ"	Ferguson	The Time There Was a Snake in the Pool	Tootin' Hills Elementary School
Fiction	Jacqueline	Frappier	The Dog	CREC Ana Grace Academy of Arts Elementary
Fiction	Ella	Hamilton	The Turkey	Central School

Fiction	Toby	Hermenegildo	My Perfect Vacation	Anna Reynolds Elementary School
Fiction	Saanvi	Jahagirdar	Spooky Dog - A Tale Of Kindness	Catherine Kolnaski Magnet School
Fiction	William	Katz	The Shark Bite	Central School
Fiction	Kimaya	Kolhe	Too Much TV for Dad	International Magnet School for Global Citizenship
Fiction	Ella	Muroski	Miya in the Ocean	Tootin' Hills Elementary School
Fiction	Olivia	Perlmutter	The Time I Went To See A Fake Dinosaur!	Anna Reynolds
Fiction	Harlem	Santiago	No Party for Zack, Yet	Squadron Line School
Fiction	Tessa	Zimmel	The Fight	Tootin' Hills Elementary School
Non Fiction	Matthew	Coslett	Mako and the Big Cut	Tootin' Hills Elementary School
Non Fiction	Olivia	Ferguson	My Animal Report About Saber Tooth Tigers	Anna Reynolds Elementary School
Non Fiction	Graham	Gietzen	Fireflies in My Pockets	Northeast Academy Arts Magnet School
Non Fiction	Reese	Griffin	Horseback Riding	Squadron Line School
Non Fiction	Samson	Grongon	My Lizard, Blade	Squadron Line School
Non Fiction	Connor	McCall	The Trip to Hershey Park	Buttonball Lane School
Non Fiction	Cartermarie	Washington	The Surprise	North Street School
Non Fiction	Evelyn	Wrice	I'm Sick	North Street School
Poetry	Connor	Claffey	Love	North Street School
Poetry	Liam	Kochey	Cats Are Great	Montessori Magnet School
Poetry	Alejandro	Armstrong	Twilight	CREC academy of Aerospace and Engineering
Poetry	Rithik	Ramesh	Twilight	CREC academy of Aerospace and Engineering

Third Grade

Artwork	Gracee	Goyette	The Castle	Scotland Elementary School
Artwork	Kai	Scott	The Dude	Buttonball Lane School
Artwork	Lily	Sun	Owl	Annie E. Vinton Elementary
Artwork	Nayan	Varma	Striped Hyena	International Magnet School for Global Citizenship
Fiction	Gracee	Goyette	My Pet Dragon	Scotland Elementary School
Fiction	Ameen	Habib	The Missing Meringue	Anna Reynolds Elementary School
Fiction	Caroline	Stehling	Snow Dogs Adventure	Buttonball Lane School
Fiction	Glanovsky	Taryn	Fireball	Academy of Aerospace and Engineering Elementary

Non Fiction	Soleil	Blancato	When I Made the Travel Soccer Team	Buttonball Lane School
Non Fiction	Henri	Docì	Dolphins	Glastonbury East Hartford Magnet School
Non Fiction	Grayson	Gibbons	How the Olympians Defeated the Titans	CREC Academy of Aerospace and Engineering
Non Fiction	Ebony	Osei	When my Tooth Came Out	Glastonbury East Hartford Magnet School
Non Fiction	Esenam	Rockson	A Different Childhood	University of Hartford Magnet School
Non Fiction Poetry	Isabel Armin	Stanco Alagic	When I got my dog Winter in Twilight	Discovery Academy Academy of Aerospace and Engineering Elementary
Poetry	Riley	Haggerty	My Beach	Anna Reynolds Elementary School
Poetry	Annabelle	Hobbs	Flower	Central School Simsbury
Poetry	Sanchaya	Vibrananarayanan	Dad Like You	Crystal Lake School

Fourth Grade

Artwork Fiction	Kiran Aidan	Behringer Barreria	City Flight The Toy	Brunswick School Glastonbury East Hartford Magnet School
Fiction	Ryan	Hefferon	When Dragons Couldn't Breathe Fire	Central School
Fiction Fiction	Caden Abhipsa	Lewis Pattnaik	Secrets Uncovered Lizzie & Emmie meet the Dragons	Tariffville Elementary School Pleasant Valley Elementary School
Fiction	Avery	Stewart	Trouble in Egypt	International Magnet School for Global Citizenship
Fiction	Nidhi	Vijayakumar	Rumors	CREC Academy of Aerospace and Engineering Elementary School
Non Fiction	Emory	Andrews	Pollution: The Catastrophe We Created and We Must End	Squadron Line School
Non Fiction	Madeline	Phair	Cats are Weird but Amazing Pets	Crystal Lake School
Poetry Poetry	Katia Abrielle	Panko Rodrigues	Walking down Colors	Squadron Line Elementary Pleasant Valley Elementary School

Fifth Grade

Artwork	Amelia	Liersch	Visiting	Greenwich Academy
Artwork	Jane	Moro	Water Droplets on the Grass	Greenwich Academy
Artwork	Mary	Winston Codraro	Tree and Its Roots	Greenwich Academy

Fiction	Kaelyn	Baran	Ocean Wave	Glastonbury East Hartford Magnet School
Fiction	Madison	Bloom	Waiting	Burr Elementary
Fiction	Jaiden	Crespo	Pap Takes a Stand	CREC Discovery Academy
Fiction	Landon	Damiata	The Dangerous Journey to Mars	CREC Discovery Academy
Fiction	Ariana	Hamm	My Dad	Brooklyn Middle School
Fiction	Sydney	Hartley	Rise of the Hubble Space Telescope	Discovery Academy
Fiction	Madelyn	Haynes	Warriors	Brooklyn Middle School
Fiction	Annabelle	King	Never Again	Burr Elementary
Fiction	Jane	Moro	The Fuss on the Bus	Greenwich Academy
Fiction	Aryana	Patel	All Because of Grandfather	Tootin' Hills Elementary School
Fiction	Elena	Sadeghi	Rumor Trouble	Glastonbury East Hartford Magnet School
Fiction	Lily	Vincenzo	A Game of Queens	Wells Road Intermediate School
Fiction	Caitlin	Worley	Walking to the Orphanage	CREC Discovery Academy
Non Fiction	Abigail	Cook	Ivy's Life	Greenwich Academy
Non Fiction	Delaney	Enright	The Slope	Greenwich Academy
Non Fiction	Eva	Keleher	The Box	Elmer Thienes-Mary Hall Elementary School
Non Fiction	Tara	Mahoney	Going to the Quarry with Violet	Latimer Lane Elementary
Poetry	Malakai	Bowens-Otero	If I was..	CREC Discovery Academy
Poetry	Julia	Duval	Infuriated	Greenwich Academy
Poetry	Josiah	Figueroa	We are the Puerto Rican flag	CREC Discovery Academy
Poetry	Caroline	Goddall	Our Earth Is Beautiful	Weston Intermediate School
Poetry	Jane	Lamberton	Goodnight Turks	Greenwich Academy
Poetry	Amelia	Liersch	Waiting	Greenwich Academy
Poetry	Seven	McCauley	Monologue	CREC Discovery Academy
Poetry	Bari	MOUNTY	Sea	Greenwich Academy
Poetry	Rory	Myers	Warrior	Tootin' Hills Elementary School
Poetry	Savanna	Singh	Soaring	Morley Elementary
Poetry	Hadley	Stockton	Water Droplets	Greenwich Academy

Sixth Grade

Artwork	Neel	Behringer	From Land to Sea	Brunswick School
Artwork	Lily	Termaine	Southport Sunset	Roger Ludlowe Middle School
Fiction	Pratt	Blair	The Tide	Gideon Welles School
Fiction	Rose	Brummitt	The Thief	Gideon Welles School
Fiction	Allison	Cowan	Sunshine	Gideon Welles School
Fiction	Scout	Fishkind	Outside the Crayon Box	Greenwich Academy

Fiction	Kevin	Gu	Forests and Fangs	Beecher Road School
Fiction	Stephanie	Jackson	Neighborhood Frights	Ledyard Middle School
Fiction	Maansi	Kedlaya	Just Skill	Gideon Welles School
Fiction	Ella	Kim	The Accident	Gideon Welles School
Fiction	Elizabeth	Ladzinski	The Wild	Brooklyn Middle School
Fiction	Phydena	Liu	Under Pressure	Talcott Mountain Academy
Fiction	Abigail	Matthew	Dreams of Terror	Gideon Welles School
Fiction	Holly	Nelson	The Children's Tears	Ledyard Middle School
Fiction	Emma Rose	Pongetti	The Girl in Midland	Ledyard Middle School
Fiction	Jack	Reynolds	Warlock Meets Container of Frozen Chickpeas	Litchfield Intermediate School
Fiction	Vanessa	Slepinin	Snowscape	Talcott Mountain Academy
Fiction	Yesenia	Stein	Left	Ledyard Middle School
Fiction	Harry	Sudnick	March of the Mutants	Tootin' Hills Elementary School
Non Fiction	Callie	Anderson	That KID	
Non Fiction	Genevieve	Corricelli	My Inner Thunderstorm	East Granby Middle School
Non Fiction	Jacoby	Crawford	Taking the Plunge	Gideon Welles School
Non Fiction	Lilian	Hart	Kids Should Not Play Violent Video Games	Tootin' Hills Elementary School
Non Fiction	Amalia	Karahalios	A Different Heart	Gideon Welles School
Non Fiction	Tristan	Lunding	Animals Should Not be Captive	Tootin' Hills Elementary School
Non Fiction	Phoebe	O'Brien	Old Endings and New Beginnings	Granby Memorial Middle School
Non Fiction	Max	Rodenbusch	The Importance of Space Exploration	Tootin' Hills Elementary School
Non Fiction	Helen	Toolan	Skylar	Gideon Welles
Non Fiction	Nina	Zeppieri	Getting My Cat Dolores	Gideon Welles School
Non Fiction	Isabelle	Zimmerman	My Seizure	Gideon Welles School
Poetry	David	Adams	The Beast	Ledyard Middle School
Poetry	Genevieve	Coricelli	Time	East Granby Middle School
Poetry	Nikolas	Daynard	Crows	Ledyard Middle School
Poetry	Rachel	Ehrenwerth	The Sole of Your Shoe	Granby Memorial Middle School
Poetry	Rachel	Ehrenwerth	The Sole of Your Shoe	Granby Memorial Middle School
Poetry	Scout	Fishkind	Wave	Greenwich Academy
Poetry	Taite	Harman	Saying Goodbye	Greenwich Academy
Poetry	Amelia	Hosack	In and Out, Up and Down	Granby Memorial Middle School
Poetry	Mihika	Joshi	Blooming	Timothy Edwards Middle School
Poetry	Aarna	Panigrahi	Autumn Nights	Talcott Mountain Academy

Poetry	Sia	Reddy	The Change	Talcott Mountain Academy
Poetry	Grace	Rubacha	So This is Rideouts	Woodbury Middle School
Poetry	Vanessa	Slepinin	Midnight Wakefulness	Talcott Mountain Academy
Poetry	Elias	Starr	Climate Change	Talcott Mountain Academy
Poetry	Angelina	Wang	Empathy	West Woods Upper Elementary School
Poetry	Sara	Willingham	Anxiety	Ledyard Middle School
Poetry	Alexandra	Zummo	Keys	Greenwich Academy

Seventh Grade

Artwork	Reagan	Acevedo	Magic Forest	Ledyard Middle School
Artwork	Isabella	Batista	Chill Out	Memorial Middle School
Artwork	Sayre	Disque	Save the Hippos	Briston Middle School
Artwork	Catherine	Pamment	Girl	Old Saybrook Middle School
Fiction	Reagan	Acevedo	Stargazer	Ledyard Middle School
Fiction	Caroline	Ancona	Nothing is Everything	Old Saybrook Middle School
Fiction	Cody	Bennett	Uninvited Guests	Killingly Intermediate School
Fiction	Dani	Carlsen	Archie Smith Boy Wonder	Killingly Intermediate School
Fiction	Spriha	Dharan	Catalysts	Avon Middle School
Fiction	Shaela	Downey	Unrequited	Ellington Middle School
Fiction	Lisa	Elbrish	Secrets	Tomlinson Middle School
Fiction	Samantha	Evans	A Speck of Matter	Memorial Middle School
Fiction	Peter	Morand	The Voyage of a Young Boy	Henry James Memorial School
Fiction	Bronwyn	Mott	Wedding Petals	Mansfield Middle School
Fiction	Cecelia	Nelson	A Tear	Ellington Middle School
Fiction	Katherine	O'Neil	Scars	
Fiction	Ayla	Peterson	Run	John F. Kennedy Middle School
Fiction	Maayan	Rosenberg	A Snowy Day	Schaghticoke Middle School
Fiction	Isabella	Spangenberg	Uninvited Guests	Killingly Intermediate School
Non Fiction	Sophia	Caneira	The Showdown on Social Labels	Mansfield Middle School
Non Fiction	Ryan	Hecht	Good People Never Leave	East Granby Middle School
Non Fiction	Kate	Littler	This is Our World	Ledyard Middle School
Non Fiction	Ariana	Pourkavoos	"Huck Finn:" Prejudice Predicted For Future Days	Talcott Mountain Academy
Non Fiction	Noah	Rathbun	Men Should Wear Makeup Without Judgment	East Granby Middle School
Non Fiction	Katherine	Taborsak	Mayhem in the Mini Van	Schaghticoke Middle School
Non Fiction	Melina	Vlendezas	Racism in America: How a Boy's Journey	Talcott Mountain Academy

Non Fiction	Connor	Wilcox	Down a River	
Non Fiction	Cassi	Worlund	Teaches us a lesson	Mansfield Middle School
Poetry	Alyssa	Amorando	One Leash at a Time	East Granby Middle School
Poetry	Cecilia	Carcorze- LeFebvre	Everything Happens for a Reason	Schaghticoke Middle School
Poetry	Spriha	Dharan	Thunder Storm	East Granby Middle School
Poetry	Mira	Goberman	A Lion	Avon Middle School
Poetry	Elizabeth	Grant	Poetry	East Granby Middle School
Poetry	Aryan	Grover	My Horses	Amity Middle School Bethany
Poetry	Hannah	Guo	I Am From	King Phillip Middle School
Poetry	Alexandra	Hayes	Shield	Amity Middle School-Bethany
Poetry	Sylvie	Jacques	Who I Am	Talcott Mountain Academy
Poetry	Tamzin	Maines	Poetry	Old Saybrook Middle School
Poetry	Sara	Moore	Dark Thoughts	Old Saybrook Middle School
Poetry	Peter	Morand	My Heart is with the Sheep	East Granby Middle School
Poetry	Oliver	Morrison	Ode to Baking	Henry James Memorial School
Poetry	Hannah	Rabus	Liberation	Talcott Mountain Academy
Poetry	Noah	Rathbun	Fall Days	Ellington Middle School
Poetry	Karolyn	Richardson	Traitorous Thoughts	East Granby Middle School
Poetry	Anna	Tevelde	Raindrops	Henry James Memorial School
Poetry	Rebecca	Willett	confinment	Ellington Middle School
			The Ladder	Ellington Middle School
			A Tale Untold	Ellington Middle School

Eighth Grade

Artwork	Joanna	Rackowski	The Spirit of Double Dragon	Smith Middle School
Artwork	Linette	Spaner	Exploration in Miniature	John Winthrop Middle School
Fiction	Chase	Alexander	Excerpt from "Picking Pockets"	Granby Memorial Middle School
Fiction	Caitlynrose	Bombart- Libert	Champions of the Lost Ones	Metropolitan Learning Center for Global & International Studies
Fiction	Sarah	Fortin	You're Never Truly Lost	Amity Middle School Bethany
Fiction	Melody	Kettle	Rising Tides	Killingly Intermediate School
Fiction	Ginny	Luciano	A Broken Family	Amity Middle School Bethany
Non Fiction	Rachael	Hutchinson	Guess I Got My Wish	Killingly Intermediate School
Poetry	Rebecca	Boyer	My Day	Two Rivers Magnet Middle School
Poetry	Lila	Gillon	Not Only Dark	Mansfield Middle School
Poetry	Audra	Schliewen	NeverMore	Avon Middle School
Poetry	Lucas	Tomlin	What is it Like to be Creative	Ledyard Middle School

Ninth Grade

Fiction	Clarissa	Halpryn	Under The Cover of the Willow Tree	Rockville High School
Fiction	Mikayla	Leskey	A man's world, huh?	Rockville Highschool
Fiction	Layla	Montgomery	Bright Lights	Ledyard High School
Fiction	Alaina	Rousseau	Saying Goodbye	ACT Magnet Highschool
Fiction	Bella	Ward	The Gemini Effect	Metropolitan Learning Center
Non Fiction	Kirby	Ramores	Existentialism and the Doomer Perspective	Metropolitan Learning Center
Poetry	Shagun	Bothra	Dance the Dance of Death	Fairfield Ludlowe High School
Poetry	Charlie	Buccellato	Into the Night	Fairfield Ludlowe High School
Poetry	Victor	Cazassa	Scared.	Metropolitan Learning Center
Poetry	Jerelis	Deleon	Flight	Rockville Highschool
Poetry	Kirit	Dhanjal	Survival	Fairfield Ludlowe High School
Poetry	Sarah	Dolynchuk	She Shoots She Scores	Fairfield Ludlowe High School
Poetry	Clarissa	Halpryn	Because I Could Not Stop For Death	Rockville High School
Poetry	Mikayla	Leskey	Within Humanity	Rockville Highschool
Poetry	Sophie	Martinez	Eight Long Years	New Canaan High School
Poetry	Danielle	Proshaka	Echo of the Evocation	Fairfield Ludlowe High School
Poetry	Kyle	Schambach	Closer to the Cliff Face	Rockville High School
Poetry	Holly	Smyth	The Final Spark	Fairfield Ludlowe High School
Poetry	Anaya	Tolton	Writing Is Like Playing Bingo!	Rockville Highschool

Tenth Grade

Artwork	Gabriella	Davila	In Focus	Bunnell High School
Fiction	Alison	Caneira	The New Girl in Town	EO Smith High School
Fiction	Brendan	Barnett	Two-Faced	Notre Dame High School
Fiction	Aureliana	Brown	Baby, It's Cold Outside	Manchester High School
Fiction	Olivia	Crowley	In Ruins	Rockville High School
Fiction	Sophia	Goldberg-Dayle	The Passage of Desolation	Manchester High School
Fiction	Cali	Miville	6 Seconds	Rockville High School
Fiction	Mason	Moore	The Island	Notre Dame High School
Fiction	stella	Scheff	He said/He said	Rockville High School
Fiction	Krish	Shah	The Woman	Notre Dame High School
Fiction	Justin	Simoncek	The Man in the Red Sedan	Notre Dame High School
Fiction	Victoria	Trojanowski	The Playground	Rockville High School
Fiction	Guomin	Xu	Into the Light	EO Smith High School

Non Fiction	Gabriel	Bravo-Cancino	The European Expedition	Notre Dame High School
Non Fiction	NEYA	Kidambi	Don't Let Them In	Trumbull High
Non Fiction	Eve	Mattson	Take Two	Ellington High School
Non Fiction	Braeden	Outen	Breaking the Cycle	Notre Dame High School
Non Fiction	Noel	Roldan	Las Vegas of the East	Notre Dame High School
Non Fiction	Emily	Santiago	Scratching the Surface	Academy of Aerospace and Engineering
Non Fiction	Abigail	Shuman	I Wish . . .	Ellington High School
Poetry	Aureliana	Brown	The Quiet Side of Humanity	Manchester High School
Poetry	Kai	Carozza-Lutz	Nights	Rockville High School
Poetry	Olivia	Crowley	Ghost Town	Rockville High School
Poetry	Sophia	Goldberg-Dayle	Ode to the Moon	Manchester High School
Poetry	Olivia	Scheck	Father and I	ACT Magnet High School
Poetry	Natalie	Tolman	Illuminated	Rockville High School

Eleventh Grade

Artwork	Chloe	Eristhee	Germaphobia	Academy of Aerospace and Engineering
Artwork	Ted	Miles	Electric Water	Bunnell High School
Artwork	Krista	Mitchell	Tranquility	Stafford High School
Fiction	Alyssa	Adcock	What Could've Been	Rockville High School
Fiction	Anna	Baker	Unhappy Earth Day	William H Hall High School
Fiction	Sara	Cove	FIVE	Rockville High School
Fiction	Abigail	Green	Which is Worse: Running	Lyman Memorial High School
Fiction	Ashley	McCauley	Glitch	Rockville High School
Fiction	Cynthia	Nocton	Vamp	EO Smith High School
Fiction	Peter	Vigano	Siren's Song	New Canaan High School
Fiction	Londyn	Willis	The Reoccurrence	JM Wright Technical High School
Fiction	Valentina	Zamora	The Smell of Home	New Canaan High School
Fiction	Claudia	Zhu	The American Bird Flight	New Canaan High School
Non Fiction	Layla	Abushaqra	What it's Like To Be The Daughter of a Single Parent	Ellington High School
Non Fiction	Tyler	Bennett	A Personal Reflection on the Psychological Implications of Relational Schism	Ellington High School
Non Fiction	Allison	Blume	Secrets; Puzzle	Rockville High School
Non Fiction	Jack	Brown	Understanding Other's Realities: Smoke and Mirrors	Hall High School
Non Fiction	Sarah	Goldman	To Save America's Unions, The	Hall High School

Non Fiction	Sara	Guerette	Government Must Intervene	Ellington High School
Non Fiction	Fatimah	Jamil	Overcrowded Prisons in Relation to Prison Violence	South Windsor High School
Non Fiction	Payton	Palmer	Media Misrepresentation	EO Smith High School
Non Fiction	Noor	Rekhi	Memere	Greenwich Academy
Non Fiction	Gina	Smith	Every Sunday	Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts Full Day
Non Fiction	Abigail	Vartanian	Invasion	Rockville High School
Poetry	Emma	Blanchet	Clarity	Rockville High School
Poetry	Allison	Blume	Heliotropism	Rockville High School
Poetry	Fiona	Busch	Anacusic	Greenwich High School
Poetry	Shawna	Cote	Your Words	Rockville High School
Poetry	Eliza	DeGiacomo	Gardens	Rockville High school
Poetry	Liv	Drazen	Shattered	William H. Hall High School
Poetry	Krista	Mitchell	Stages	Stafford High School
			In Response to My Chemistry Teacher's Quantum Physics Lesson	
Poetry	Ellis	Pizzoferrato	B+ For Bulimia	Glastonbury High
Poetry	Alayia	Salmon	Kerosene Tea	Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts
Poetry	Carley	Simler	Our Young Love Grew Old	Rockville High School
Poetry	Gina	Smith	Composition	Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts
Poetry	Emily	Sunderland	Dirty Secrets	Rockville High school
Poetry	Emily	Sunderland	Delusion of Ecstasy	Rockville High School
Poetry	Abigail	Vartanian	I Am Still Moving	Rockville High School

Twelfth Grade

Artwork	Angela	Callejas	Untitled	JM Wright Technical High School
Artwork	Alicia	Chiu	lunch?	Hall High School
Artwork	Amy	Hidalgo	The Climb	Hall High School
Artwork	Lauren	Young	Docks	Trinity Catholic High School
Fiction	Phoebe	Barlow	Dinner with a Creep	Wamogo Regional High School
Fiction	Makayla	Chambers	The Letter	Cooperative Arts and Humanities High School
Fiction	Bryan	Cortes	The Beast	Greater Hartford Academy of The Arts
Fiction	Haley	Donaldson	Retribution	Wamogo Regional High School
Fiction	Eric	Fowler	A Split Up	Wamogo Regional High School

Fiction	Helena	Lessne	Hope and the Nuclear Family	Miss Porter's School
Fiction	Jesse	Lockton	Free Fall	Wamogo Regional High School
Fiction	Megan	Meyerson	Worst Babysitter Ever	Greenwich Academy
Fiction	Kenna	Might	Plastic Twins	Wamogo Regional High School
Fiction	Eric	Odenwaelder	Confusion	Wamogo Regional High School
Fiction	Sofia	Olivares	When Is Guilt Ever Fair?	Miss Porter's School
Non Fiction	Alexander	Alfieri	Adoption agencies and the underlying homophobia	Wamogo Regional High School
Non Fiction	Michael	Ansong Jr.	Vital Signs	Rockville High School
Non Fiction	Lucas	Boothroyd	The Truth	Rockville High School
Non Fiction	Makayla	Chambers	Never Again	Cooperative Arts and Humanities High School
Non Fiction	Michael	Chemy	Alive: An Abstract Term	Hall High School
Non Fiction	Alicia	Chiu	Makeup, My Truth	William H. Hall High School
Non Fiction	Lindsay	Gilton	A Letter of Recommendation: Boxed Pasta	Granby Memorial High School
Non Fiction	Afrah	Khalil	Refugee life	William H. Hall High School
Non Fiction	Danielle	Maliszewski	New Me	Wamogo Regional High School
Non Fiction	Amanda	McTighe	An Alternate Perspective	Ellington High School
Non Fiction	McKenzie	Pedersen	The Prized Orange Tabby	Granby Memorial High School
Non Fiction	Abigail	Perkins	How to Sew	Rockville Highschool
Non Fiction	Corrin	Pruitt	Farther From My Father	Academy of Aerospace and Engineering
Non Fiction	Thomas	Rhoades	The Way of Shadows	Rockville High School
Non Fiction	Khana	Santiago	Personal Narrative- My Coming Out Story	Manchester High School
Non Fiction	Sophie	Spaner	Rewind	Valley Regional High School
Non Fiction	Kalagena	Sullivan	A Family Secret	Ellington High School
Non Fiction	Marli	Waldron	Mom	Wamogo Regional High School
Non Fiction	Amanda	Winters	On Soulmates	Glastonbury High School
Poetry	Michael	Ansong Jr.	Changes	Rockville High School
Poetry	Michael	Chemy	A Standardized Test	William H. Hall High School
Poetry	Alicia	Chiu	nearly violent	William H. Hall High School
Poetry	Leishan	Clarke	When They Fly...	Windham Highschool

Poetry	Kara	DellaRocco	When She Skipped	Wamogo Regional High School
Poetry	Meagan	Dobrowolski	CT writing project	Ellington High School
Poetry	Erin	Ellefson	Beached	Rockville High School
Poetry	Madison	Irizerry	Dear College,	Manchester High School
Poetry	Megan	Meyerson	The Lion's Hunt	Greenwich Academy
Poetry	Abigail	Perkins	Visions of the Damned	Rockville Highschool
Poetry	Thomas	Rhoades	Barn Razing	Rockville High School
Poetry	Lauren	Ruggiero	Amphibian People	ACT Magnet High School
Poetry	Zoltan	Saxon	MINER'S SECRET	South Windsor High School
Poetry	Brianna	Skaff	The Goal of a Writer	South Windsor High School
Poetry	Morgan	Sokol	Mac and Cheese	Lewis S. Mills High School
Poetry	Sylvia-Ann	Ulett	Gaslighting	Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts
Poetry	Aniyah	Whittaker	This Song of Mine	Bunnell High School
Poetry	Amanda	Winters	The Bully	Glastonbury High School
Poetry	Isidora	Xasapis	Mad	Lewis S. Mills High School

Teacher Awards

Platinum

Vicky Nordlund, Rockville High

Gold

Lucy Abbott, Notre Dame High, **Sarah Aceto**, ACT Magnet High, **Maureen Corbo**, Greenwich Academy, **Enrica Desabota**, Brooklyn Middle, **Mary**

Hartell, Talcott Mountain Academy, **Dan Johansen**, Greenwich Academy, **Kim King**, Annie E. Vinton Elementary, **Elizabeth Salafia**, Gideon Welles,

Jason Scavotto, Ellington High, **Rebecca Snay**, Ledyard Middle, **Carly Tutolo**, Wamogo Regional High, **Deb Weinberg**, Manchester High

Silver

Maureen Billings, Squadron Line Elementary, **Carol Blejwas**, Hall High, **Hayley Brown**, Tootin' Hills Elementary, **Peggy Bruno**, Tootin' Hills

Elementary, **Megan Collins**, Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts, **Shirley Cowles**, Granby Memorial Middle, **Karen Harris**, Wright Technical High,

Jeff Helming, Anna Reynolds Elementary, **Renée Klucznik**, East Granby Middle, **Jessica Paole**, CREC Discovery Academy, **Cara Quinn**, CREC Academy

of Aerospace and Engineering, **Tina Rembish**, Fairfield Ludlowe High

Honorable Mention

Robin Blomstrann, Mansfield Middle, **Jennifer Blue**, Westside Middle, **Emma Czaplinski**, Ellington Middle, **Mindi Englart**, Cooperative Arts and

Humanities High, **Maggie Hamill**, New Canaan High, **Melissa Hickey**, CREC Discovery Academy, **Lori Jahoda**, Killingly Intermediate, **Nicole Jamieson**,

Tariffville Elementary, **Kathryne Keating**, CREC Academy of Aerospace and Engineering, **Jean Moore**, Glastonbury East Hartford Magnet, **Tessa**

O'Leary, Ledyard Middle, **Marcy Rudge**, Annie E. Vinton Elementary, **Meg Smith**, CREC Discovery Academy, **Sarah Worley**, CREC Discovery Academy

