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Artists have always found a way to speak.

Mark Twain, abolitionist and anti-imperialist, used satire as a form of free speech and protest. Upton Sinclair's novel *The Jungle* inspired President Roosevelt to create the FDA. Dr. Seuss (Theodore Geisel) championed questioning authority and respecting individuals. He wrote *Horton Hears a Who* after visiting Japan and seeing the horrors of the atomic bomb; as the Environmental Protection Movement was beginning, Seuss recognized the interrelatedness of nature in *The Lorax*. Vera B. Williams’s books celebrate multicultural families that share love and unity.

In recent years, we’ve seen the rise of Slam and Spoken Word; we’ve witnessed artists such as the Guerrilla Girls and Banksy take to the streets. Shephard Fairey, made famous by his criticism of society by plastering a city with images of Andre the Giant with the slogan “Obey,” re-ignited his fame with the now iconic image of Barack Obama bearing the slogan “Hope.” This past year Fairey created the beautiful posters of women from the series “We the People.”

Artists have always found a way to speak, and art has always caused a stir. In you, the student writers and artists of Connecticut, we put our trust that you will continue to stir the pot; we celebrate the work you have already done and charge you with the work of continuing to use your voices to make a change and to create a country and a world of your design.

Susan Laurençot and Marcy Rudge

On one coffee table in our living room we have past copies of *Connecticut Student Writers*, alongside copies of The Scholastic Art and Writing Awards National Catalog, *The Writer's Chronicle*, *Glimmer Train*, and other magazines. Another end table holds coffee table books of art and a copy of *Knowledge is Beautiful*, which is this wonderful blend of art, math, and science. Copies of *The Hartford Courant*, *The Willimantic Chronicle*, and the Sunday *New York Times* litter the kitchen counter. We have a rack of music CDs near the television and a box of vinyl albums by a turntable in the nearby office. We have book shelves in every room of our house, as well as in the hallways and stairwell.

In a 2015 op-ed in the *New York Times*, novelist Teddy Wayne discussed a study that demonstrated the importance of print books, print newspapers and periodicals, and actual albums and CDs of music. The study showed that, even among equally educated families, the children of those families whose literacy was artifactual were significantly more literate than the children of those families whose literacy was electronic. The reason was that, in homes where there were print books on shelves, print newspapers on counters, print magazines on coffee tables, and tangible CDs or albums in racks or on shelves, children were significantly more likely to pull down books, pick up periodicals, or pop in CDs out of passing curiosity, whereas children in digitally literate families had to rely upon access to mom or dad’s kindle or iTunes account, or digital subscriptions to newspapers or magazines. Homes with literacy artifacts quite simply were more successful at encouraging the curiosity of children.

Many literacy experts stress the importance of making literacy activities authentic. In the home, this means letting our children forage among our books and periodicals and CDs. In the classroom, this means giving our students opportunities to read and write about subjects that are of interest to them, and it means giving them an audience and a purpose for writing. At the Connecticut Writing Project, we pride ourselves on the fact that, for almost thirty years, *Connecticut Student Writers* has given students a venue for authentic writing. More than 1,500 students of 400 teachers from 200 schools submitted their writing to our magazine this year. We printed 700 copies, and probably could have distributed more if we’d had the funds. We hope these copies you’re holding now will end up on coffee tables and end tables in houses throughout the state, where younger siblings will pick them up, give them a read, and get some ideas and inspiration.

Jason Courtmanche
Dr. Martin Luther King
La-Kyra Campbell, Ana Grace Academy of the Arts Elementary Magnet School

Dr. Martin Luther King—My Hero Story
by La-Kyra Campbell, Ana Grace Academy of the Arts Elementary Magnet School

Dr. Martin Luther King was a hero! He was very smart and important. He helped everyone! Doctor Martin Luther King made a rule so I can go to school with my best friend Clara! Doctor Martin Luther King made it a good world to live in. That made everyone happy!

Reading with Vivian
by Kyla Lunding, Tootin' Hills Elementary School

One day Vivian wanted to read a book with me. I said yes. I got on the couch with her. Then we read an I spy book with her. We had fun reading together. Then we read the last book. I said, “I can’t wait to read tomorrow!”

Thank You
by Arianna Most, North Street School

I am thankful for my mom because she cleans the house. I am thankful for my dad because he goes to work. I am thankful for my brother because he plays cars. I am thankful for my dog because she goes potty outside.

How to Make a Smoothie
by Lily Sun, Annie Vinton Elementary School

1. Get your ninja.
2. Get your favorite fruit. I like strawberries and bananas!
3. Pour ice in ninja.
4. Turn on ninja. It is loud!
5. Pour the smoothie in the cup. Drink!
The Good Monster
by Alaina Rose Nikitas, Annie Vinton Elementary School

One time, my monster was lonely. She was sensitive. She was allergic to people. She would try to make friends but she would SNEEZE!
One day, she saw a little girl. The monster went up to her and she didn't SNEEZE!
They were friends.
The monster was Happy

Nian the Monster, Julia Schreiber, Annie Vinton Elementary

Birds
by Julia Schreiber, Annie Vinton Elementary School

I see birds every day.
I see them in the trees.
    They fly
    In the sky.
I hear them too—
    Tweet!
If you go outside
You will see birds
On every continent!
I'll see lots of birds
    (and hear them)
This morning
How to Be a Big Sis
by Lia Kimani, North Street School

Materials List: You will need a baby, mom, pacifier, bottle, diapers, changing table, dad, blanket.
First, you help made the bottle. Make sure there is a grown-up to help you do it. The baby might cry a little loud. Pour the milk into the bottle.
Next you practice holding the baby. You can get the diaper. You can get the wipes.
Last you are a big sis. Now you can help out.
Finally you can make a bottle. You can hold the baby. You can get the wipes and the diapers. You can get the pacifier.
The Magic Piece of Chocolate
by Martha Smith, Hebron Avenue School

I am going to tell you the story about how chocolate got healthy. I am Martha and this happened when I was two years old. One windy day I was walking down the road when I saw the candy store! I was so excited that I raced to it! But my mom and dad stopped me. Not for a bad reason, just to give me $2 and to remind me to look both ways before crossing the street.

I went inside and I literally had 400 choices. It took me four days to decide. There were Smarties, Kit Kats, M&Ms, popsicles, ice cream, Mike and Ike's, gumdrops, lollipops, candy canes and a whole aisle of chocolate! There was much more but I am not going to tell you about all of the other candies.

Finally after four days, I said to the man at the counter, "May I please have a piece of chocolate?" Guess what that old, old man said. "No!" he shouted. "No! No! No!" Do you know why he said, "No"? He said, "No" because I did not have enough money. I started to cry, "Waaaaa!" "Oh fine!" said the man. "You are lucky you are cute and small! I guess you can have a special piece of chocolate." I grabbed the piece of special chocolate and brought it home.

Remember ... I am only two years old and a little silly. So before I knew it, I had put the chocolate in the ground and watered it like it was a seed.

I watered it for four days. After the first day, there was something brown poking out of the ground and it had two small eyes. The second day, it had a small pink mouth. The third day, it had two legs.

The fourth day my mom and dad thought it was a weed, so they pulled it out of the ground. I was so surprised, because it was actually a chocolate person. I wondered what to do with it.

So just to test it out ... since it grew out of the garden, I said, "Make chocolate healthy!" Sure enough, that night my wish came true! I had chocolate for dinner.

After that, Mr. Chocolate could talk so we talked about how we could make the world all chocolate. After a while, Mr. Chocolate got tired and had used up too much of his magic and he died. But thankfully he already had children who had children who had children and that kept the magic of chocolate alive. So hopefully when I turn 18 the magic of chocolate will still be alive.

How to Feed Lois
by Grace Greenwood, North Street School

Materials List: You will need a dog, bowl, dog food, water, and scooper.
First you get the bowl. Then you bring the bowl to the dog food in the door. It's in the dining room! Next you open the food bag and scoop the food with the scooper. Don't spill it.
Last you pick up the bowl and put it on the mat in the kitchen by the water bowls. Do not give Lois cat food. He is a dog! You cannot give him a chocolate bar either. He will get sick.
Butterflies
by Nolan Waring, Colebrook Consolidated School

Chapter 1
Different Kinds
Different kinds of butterflies are the Swallowtail, Monarch, Painted Lady, Peacock, and Leaf Butterfly. When Monarch butterflies are caterpillars, their colors warn predators not to eat them. Peacock Butterflies have the color of a peacock. Monarch Butterflies live in the United States for the spring. For the winter, the go to Mexico.

Chapter 2
Parts
The parts of a butterfly are two eyes, six legs, two wings, thorax, abdomen, head, two antennas and six feet. The tongue doesn't taste the nectar, its feet do. Butterfly wings are made up of thousands of scales.

Chapter 3
The Lifecycle
The Lifecycle of a Butterfly is egg to caterpillar and caterpillar to chrysalis and chrysalis to butterfly. Another word for lifecycle is metamorphosis.

Chapter 4
Migration
Migration is when animals take a long journey. Butterflies migrate south to a place that is warmer.
Stop Fighting
by Raha Esmaili Zaghi, Annie Vinton Elementary School

I want people to Stop Fighting!
“I am not going to play with you. You’re a girl!”
“I am not going to play with you. You’re a boy!”
Use words like STOP IT!
“Stop it!!!”
“I am not sharing.
No. No. No”
“Sharing.
NO WAY”
“HAY”
You should share Toys
And
More LOVE!

The Sun is Up
by Leilah Rodriguez-Doubleday, Annie Vinton Elementary School

The sun is up
And the moon is
Down. We run
And run until
The day is done.
Come run with me
If you would.
The Animal Tree, Evelyn Cohen, Wolcott Elementary
Once upon a time ... there was a dog named Lucy. Lucy was a golden retriever puppy. She lived in the Hicklebury Shelter with her doggy friends Pupcake, Bailey, and Cally. It was fall—Lucy's favorite time of year. More squirrels to chase, delicious scents to smell, and falling leaves to chase, grab, and step on. One day Lucy was napping on her soft, fluffy dog bed when she woke with a start. She had had a nightmare about a pack of wolves, foxes, and bears chasing her! Lucy sat up and immediately started to whimper because she remembered that nap time had not ended yet! Lucy hated naptime! She knew that sleeping was for nighttime. She would much rather take “nap time” out of the schedule and put “outside playtime” in its place. That was Lucy's favorite part of the day. She pushed and thrashed against the iron bars of her cage. Then, she heard footsteps. They got louder, and louder until … click, click. Lucy was free! Free from the dreaded naptime! Lucy jumped out of her cage and ran in circles until she heard …

“Lucy! Lucy!” said one sweet voice.
“Lucy! Stop Lucy!” said a lower voice.

She stopped and sat at attention. Standing in front of her were two volunteers from the Hicklebury Shelter—Shaun and Cara. By now all the dogs were awake. Then, Kelly (the shelter manager) poked her head out of her office.

“Outside playtime!” she said.

Lucy was overjoyed! All the dogs sprinted to be first at the door. But, Lucy was smarter than that. She knew that if any of the dogs missed even a minute of “Outside Playtime,” the volunteers would let them stay outside for the amount of time that they missed. So Lucy trotted over to the door when … BONK!

“Lucky!” said Cara. Lucky had run into Lucy on purpose.

Lucy felt rage building up inside her body, but kept it to herself. She knew better than to growl at Lucky. She ignored the interruption and continued trotting to the door. Outside, she ran to the meeting spot she and her friends had: under the big oak. Suddenly, a pack of dogs led by Lucky charged off the deck and into the yard terrorizing the other dogs! Lucy and her friends leapt behind the big oak, tails twitching and paws shaking.

“When do you think Lucky will stop frightening us?” said Bailey. “Never!” answered Cally.

“I wouldn’t be so sure about that!” replied Lucy.

“Well, whatever happens, I just hope he stops!” said Pupcake.

“I say we make a stand!” Lucy said.

All four pups jumped out from behind the tree.

“Are we sure we want to do this?” asked Cally.

“Yeah, are we—” Bark, Bark, Ruff! Lucky and his gang were charging at them! Emma and Shaun were chasing Lucky's gang. “Grr-rowl!”

Bailey, Cally, and Pupcake stared at Lucy. Lucy had broken a rule. At the Hicklebury Shelter rule number 1 was no growling! (The consequence was organic doggy biscuits made with kale.) Finally, Emma and Shaun caught up with and scolded Lucky’s gang, and peace returned to the shelter. However, Lucy was scolded, too, for growling.

After her kale dinner, Lucy sat in her cage, miserable. Suddenly Lucy thought of something she never had—running away. If she ran away she wouldn’t have to live with Lucky! She quietly reached a tiny paw through the bars of her cage and used her nails to pick at the lock. The door silently swung open. She snuck into the hallway that led to the side exit. Kelly was the only worker left in the shelter.

“Hopefully Kelly hasn’t sealed the dog doors yet,” thought Lucy. “I might have a chance!”

Lucy crept down the hallway, avoiding the creaky parts of the floor. When she reached the door she pawed at the doggy flap to make sure it was open. She quietly stuck her back legs and bum out the door.

Strangely, Lucy liked to go through dog doors backwards. She soon realized she was standing in front of the Machi Woods. She knew this place! The Hicklebury Shelter helpers had told the dogs that the Machi Woods was “the safest wood in the world!” She crept under the window sill of Kelly’s office so she wouldn’t be seen. Down on all fours she walked towards the Machi Woods. She walked for hours until she grew tired.

“Oh no!” said Lucy. “Where am I going to sleep?” “I’ll help you,” said a voice.

Lucy jumped. She had no idea who had said that! “Who are you?” said Lucy, her paws trembling.

“My name is Oscar. I am a black cat.”

“Hello, Oscar,” said Lucy. “Do you think you could help me build a treehouse?”
“Of course!” Oscar replied. “But, first I’ll need you to collect twigs, leaves, spider webs, and find a stable tree.” “Okay!”

Lucy trotted off farther into the forest, quickly gathered the things and found a tree. Oscar made the ladder and the floor, while Lucy made the walls and roof. Soon, they had a nice treehouse with a door and two windows.

“Oscar, something’s missing.”

“I know … oh, we’re missing decorations! That’s why I wanted you to bring webs and leaves!”

So Lucy got to work making a leaf bed, two stick chairs and a matching table, and spider web curtains. Oscar made a blanket of leaves for the bed, and one that he nailed to the roof. Finally, they crawled into the treehouse and admired it. Lucy needed a nap. She lay down in the leaf bed and fell asleep.

A few hours later, she awoke to the smell of acorns. Oscar had gotten food ready for dinner. But when she walked over to the table she also saw bacon and sausage! She broke into a run and gobbled up her meal. Meeting Oscar had been nice, but it reminded her how much she missed her friends back at the shelter and she decided to find her way back. Lucy said goodbye to Oscar and he gave her some advice.

“Follow the North Star. It shines the brightest every night,” he said.

“Thank you for your help, Oscar,” Lucy replied. “I will always remember how you helped me.”

Lucy climbed down the ladder and started off into the forest. Soon it got darker, and Lucy had nowhere to go! She had expected to see stars in the sky, but it was too cloudy!

“Oh, what will I do?” Lucy cried. “I can’t see the North Star!” She saw a nearby shrub move.

“Who’s there?” asked Lucy bravely.

“I—it’s me,” a tiny voice said.

Out popped a tiny black and gray cat with a shimmering pink nose that matched her eyes.

“I’m so sorry. Did I scare you?” asked Lucy.

“I’m scared of dogs. My name is Lindi. Who are you?”

“My name is Lucy. Nice to meet you! Do you know the way to the Hicklebury Shelter?” asked Lucy.

“Do I—like the back of my hand!” replied Lindi. “And do they allow cats?”

“I think they do. And with a kitten as cute as you, they’re sure to fall for you,” Lucy answered.

They set off and soon came upon the biggest lake Lucy had ever seen. Not only was it wide, but it was also very deep.

“This is the Lagadia Lake” said Lindi. “Some people think it should be part of the Great Lakes!”

Now, Lucy was scared.

“Do you know how to swim?” asked Lucy.

“No idea.” Lindi replied.

“Hmmmm … Oh! I’ve got it! How about you sit on my head and tell me where to go!” Lucy said. “It just might work!” Lucy helped Lindi get on her head and Lindi balanced cautiously on top.

“Okay, on the count of three we’ll jump into the water … 1 … 2 … 3!” SPLASH!

“Whew!” said Lucy when they had crossed. “You’re heavy!” They ventured into the forest.

“Once we get over that hill, we’ll be in Hicklebury,” Lindi said. “It’s called Mount Raymond.”

Mount Raymond was grassy, very steep, and bumpy, but Lucy and Lindi got to the top.

“Do you want to slide down the mountainside?” asked Lindi.

“Of course! But, once we’re in Hicklebury we’ll have to look out for animal control trucks,” Lucy answered.

“Okay. Now let’s slide!” Down the hill they went. Slipping, and rolling, and …THUMP! THUMP! Lindi and Lucy landed on the grass right in front of the sidewalk.

“Do you know where to go from here?” Lindi asked.

“Yup. Right this way,” Lucy replied.

Meanwhile, Emma, Cara, Shaun, and Kelly were looking for Lucy at the shelter—outside, inside, everywhere.

“She couldn’t have gone far, could she?” asked Emma, close to tears.

“I don’t know. Animal Control might’ve taken her,” Kelly replied. “If she’s not back by 1:00, we’ll go look for her. It’s the best we can do.”

Well, Lucy would be home well before 1:00. Lucy and Lindi snuck through shrubs and across sidewalks. They had only walked half a block when an animal control truck drove by! The driver looked ugly and mean. They leapt behind a big bush and didn’t move until they heard the rumble of the truck pulling
away.

“That was a close one,” said Lindi.

“Here we are. Main Street,” Lucy said.

And at the end of the street was Hicklebury Shelter! The street was empty so Lucy and Lindi ran all the way there. When they got inside Lucy saw Emma crying in a corner with her head on her knees. Lucy sprinted up and gave her a big kiss.

“Lucy’s back!” cried Emma, hugging her.

Everyone, including Lucky, came running. Then Lucy ran over to Lindi and barked. “Lucy brought a new friend to the shelter!” exclaimed Kelly.

“So far, so good,” thought Lucy.

“Let’s see, what should we call her … Susie? Nope. Hmm … how about Lindi?” Lindi bobbed her head up and down enthusiastically.

“Lindi it is. Welcome Lindi!” said Kelly.

That night a party was held to celebrate the return of Lucy, and the arrival of Lindi. Everyone ate far too much. The best part was that a cage was open next to Lucy’s and that would be Lindi’s! Finally, it was time for bed. As Lucy climbed into her cage she thought about how much she loved the shelter and her friends there. She really would have missed them if she had left forever.

“I will never leave the shelter for as long as I live,” thought Lucy.

And with that, she drifted off to sleep thinking about how brilliant the shelter was, and not a place worth leaving.

**Cats**

*by Siena Giangrave, Glastonbury East Hartford Magnet School*

**Getting Home**

If you have a cat be prepared for it! It will wait for you! When you get home it will walk around your legs and purr but if it sees a bird it will run and chase it!

**Cat Hearing**

Cats ears are made for high pitched noises. If there is a mouse in a hole a cat can hear its voice! A cat can hear a car pulling in a driveway!

**Kittens**

Kittens depend on their mother for warmth. Kittens are born blind and deaf a kitten can see and hear 4-10 days after birth. When there is danger a mother will scarf her kittens on her neck to transport to a different place. When a kitten is born its mother will tear the membrain.

**Hunting**

Cats hunt rabbits, hares, frogs, fish and even snakes! Cats mainly use their eyes and ears to hunt. Cats pounce on their prey.

**Communication**

The most familiar sound a cat makes is meow. Some male cats yowl because it’s trying to impress a female. Some cats hiss and growl.

**Cat Eyes**

It was discovered, that most all white cats with blue eyes are deaf! Deaf means you can’t hear.

**Sleep**

Cats like to sleep in warm places. When cats sleep their head and paws are tucked in. Also the tail is wrapped around the belly.

**Conclusion**

Now that you know about cats, you can get one! But … be prepared for fur to be on the couch!
**Dolphins**  
*by Ariana Masis, Ana Grace Academy of the Arts Elementary Magnet School*

*SPLASH!* said the waves as they hit against the rocks. “Look at the water!” said Grandma excitedly. I looked and saw dolphins surrounding the beach. They were as big as sharks! There were so many people at the edge of the beach looking out at the ocean. I was standing right next to the ocean in my bathing suit and I wanted to go in the water. I was ready to jump in and have fun, but I was scared because the dolphins were so close. I wondered why they were so close to the shore. They were smooth and shiny gray. Their fins were sticking out of the water. Their fins looked so sharp that I was afraid to go near. I watched for a while. Suddenly one dolphin turned and jumped through the sunny blue sky and back into the water. Then more jumped and cruised farther away from our beach house. It was amazing. That was my first time seeing dolphins up close. I was joyful!

**Winning Isn’t Everything**  
*by Callum Young, Colebrook Consolidated School*

It was a hot summer day. I was having my first road race in a couple hours. I was excited and nervous at the same time. I got my running clothes on, athletic shorts, Tom Brady t-shirt, socks and my sneakers. I ate lunch and then I warmed up by doing jumping jacks and some stretches. I asked my dad, “Can I have some water?”

“Sure!” Dad exclaimed.

We drove to Norfolk for the race. My dad bought my tickets. I was in and so was my dad. I was so excited, I jumped up and down. We lined up in the middle of the road. There were so many people it felt like we were a herd of cattle. It was a huge crowd. Before I knew it, a loud horn blasted. The race started.

Right away there was a big hill. I ran up it, and then I ... ran really fast downhill. I was keeping up with my dad. It was hard. His long legs were helping him run fast. We passed five people on the hill. They were all older than me. I felt amazed I was able to do that. It was so fun. When the road became flat again, there were two men with cups of water. They were jogging alongside the runners, passing out the cups. As I got close to them, they handed a cup over to me. It was hard to grab, and a little water spilled. I needed a drink badly at that time, so the water felt cold and refreshing. I felt like I could now power through the rest of the race.

I asked my dad, “How many more miles?”

“About two more,” he stammered.

A little farther down, I saw some people spraying a hose on the road. I started to run faster and passed my dad. I ran right through the ice-cold water. It was like an early morning rain shower, but it felt so good.

As I continued to run, I could picture in my mind getting a big trophy. I ran and ran and ran. Finally I saw the finish line. There was a big banner and tons of people shouting and cheering. I ran so fast my body felt like a roasting marshmallow. With my dad by my side, together we crossed the finish line.

Right in front of us there was a pool. I couldn’t believe my eyes! I leaped right into it. I made a big splash. It felt wonderful!

Dripping wet, I rushed to Mama and got my water bottle. I felt like I drank a gallon. I drank and drank and drank. Then I ate a hot dog.

The awards were in a couple minutes. I waited by a table with big and small trophies and some prize bags until it started. My name was never called. I got nothing, but I was still happy. I was proud that I had run my farthest. And that was enough. Winning isn’t everything.
The Earth is a Perfect Place for Me
by Connor Broderick, Squadron Line Elementary School

The Earth is a perfect place for me
The Earth is perfect don’t you see
The Earth is a perfect place to be
I am a baseball blasting in the air—just pitched
I am a summer thunderstorm giving blackouts
I am a bright star glimmering in the night sky looking at you in your bed as you dream
I am a shiny scaled fish swimming in Cape Cod’s waters
I am a gigantic gorilla roaring to the sky letting the world know I’m here
I am a bright sunflower making the world smell better
I am a drum playing loud music creating happiness
I am a black widow jumping on my prey
I am a race car rapidly drifting down the track
The Earth is a perfect place for me
The Earth is perfect don’t you see
The Earth is a perfect place to be

The Beauty of Spring, Leah Berey, Norfeldt Elementary
Turf the Toucan, Abby Ditzel, Woodstock Elementary
Naughty Cat
by Jackson Bates, Center School

Prologue: Bad Cat
My name is Jack. My cat is named Gus. Gus is so naughty! I hate when he does his goofy shenanigans. Let me tell you about his history.

Gus has shredded furniture, scratched other people, and destroyed grass, purposely, right after I just mowed it! We can’t have him doing that, especially because now I am having a Christmas party with me as the host at my house. I’m worried that he just might knock over the tree or drink the eggnog! (Oh wait, maybe that second one’s not so bad, because I do enjoy watching kitties drink virtually anything.) I hope this party won’t be chaotic!

Chapter 1: Gus ... Again!
I walked into the room where the party was happening. Gus was nowhere to be seen.
Whew! But I heard meows. I followed them. What could it be? I slowly crept up on the strange meows. It was Gus! But the look on my face was definitely not the expression you would expect to see when someone saw an adorable kitty. Instead, I had a scowl on my face.

I looked at Gus. You’ve done it again! I thought to myself. Below him lay a scratched blue fabric. I identified the shreds of material. He couldn’t have! Underneath him was my curtain, ripped to shreds by tiny cat claws. I found some bed sheets to cover the mess, but I don’t think it was fooling anyone.

My eyebrows folded down. I was getting warmer by the second. I sighed. I felt anger working its way up my throat. Why can’t they teach cats how much things cost? I need him at cat obedience school.

Chapter 2: Party Pooper
All of our guests were playing Monopoly. Then I saw a furry object slam into my friend Mark! It was a hairball! I offered Mark a napkin. He did not look happy. I looked over to Gus. His mouth was shaped like a smile. Several guests stormed away disgusted. I buried my face in my palm. I couldn’t believe what I had to do next. I was horrified. I removed the hairball from the table. My tongue hung out in disgust!

Chapter 3: For The Last Time ...
Gus was totally driving me insane. I was just about to lose my temper. Half of the people at the party had left. I was hopeless. I was a total failure at throwing parties. All of my parties ruined ... by Gus!
So maybe it’s not my fault after all! Gus did it! Maybe I’m just a failure at raising cats.

I walked into the party room. Gus was the center of attention. Then my friend A.J went to pet him.

“No, don’t!” my eyes seemed to say. It was too late. Gus reached out a paw. It slashed smack in the middle of A.J.’s nose and mouth. A.J dashed out the door. I shook with rage. I lost control. My face was red as lava. I marched over to Gus.

Chapter 4: Two Things At Once
I reached out to pick him up and put him in his crate. But I thought to myself, I love cats!
Still, Gus does deserve a punishment, doesn’t he? My thoughts were like a tennis ball crossing over the court’s net. Should I let this one go? Or should there be a severe punishment?

I decided that a small punishment for Gus would be suitable. I’ll take away catnip for a whole week! That ought to teach him!

Chapter 5: Gus A Hero?
Now that I had cooled down, the party continued. It was dessert time. I grabbed some cupcakes. The remaining guests were wiping out all the desserts. My friend Andy walked toward the cake table. He tripped and crashed into it, and the table began to tip over slowly.

Then Gus jumped up. His paws balanced the table! He saved the cake!
Cheers came from the guests. Everyone was so impressed! They all smiled. It was like I could read people’s minds: They wondered, How could a cat could possibly do that? Maybe good things can come out of a naughty cat!

Chapter 6: Fiesta’s over. Sleep!
It had been an hour since the guests left. I looked into the party room. What a mess! I decided this mess was so big I wouldn’t even bother to think about it until the morning. I was so tired. I walked into my bedroom. I hopped on my bed. Gus sat next to me.

I thought to myself, you know, life would be pretty boring without a cat like Gus. I scooched closer and gave him a hug for being the best cat ever. Gus purred in my ear. I smiled from ear to ear.

My eyes dropped down like weights were attached to them. Before I knew it I was curled up with Gus
next to me. I dreamed about what other amazing things an ordinary cat like Gus could do.

Epilogue: The Story of Gus

This fictional book is based on a real cat that was once mine! Gus wasn’t really naughty.

At times, he could be a bit mischievous, but thankfully much less often than the Gus in this story. Our Gus was a very important family member until two thousand and fifteen. (Don’t think I’m trying to say he wasn’t important at that moment.) Guess what happened? He ran away! We were depressed that day and for a long time after. I had loved Gus, but all pets have to go at some point.

My friend Andrew has reported he sometimes sees Gus in his garage. I was relieved to hear this news. Maybe Gus was there! I don’t know where Gus is now; he could be anywhere. Gus maybe could appear in Andrew’s garage again. If I do go to Andrew’s house, the first thing I will do is search for Gus. That shows that I love him so much. In fact, I love any cat at first sight. Our family respects our amazing cat so much. We love you, Gus!

The Second Time Hephaestus Was Thrown Out the Window

by Jack Reynolds, Litchfield Center School

If you like anything that has to do with:

a. Nice things
b. Pink things
c. Real things

you may not enjoy this piece because it has everything to do with fake things, scary things, and dull-colored things, for this is a story about the mythological gods of ancient Greece.

The king of the gods, Zeus, was not always a friendly electrical circuit. He was sometimes in a bad mood. None of the other gods could help that.

Hephaestus was a sharp chap, especially when it came to engineering, as he was the blacksmith god. He just picked the wrong day to go on a walk, find a hydra,* and dodge its fire balls. This was one of those many days when Zeus found just about everything from pegasi** to the Chimera*** unacceptable. This was why Hephaestus was thrown from Mount Olympus. Zeus nodded down at him, like, I thought I taught you not to dodge fireballs when I’m in a bad mood! Why had he been so childish? He felt so helpless. The wind rushed around him, as he grew colder and colder. He fell. Faster, faster, faster.

He blacked out.

When Hephaestus came to, he found himself in some sort of enclosure, like a cave or a cavern. He heard two creatures approaching him. He heard loud, thumping footsteps, THUMP, THUMP, THUMP, and a soft, scuttling sound, followed by a human-ish voice. “Jotunhobbum!” it said.

More thumping footsteps. The creatures were closer. Hephaestus felt panicked. He shouldn’t be here! He looked around for something useful, or something he can turn into useful—thanks to his handy building skills—to escape. But no. He didn’t see enough cobwebs to make a net, the stalactite was too high, so that had no use either. But if there was nothing he could do, make, or use, was there any way he could get out of here? The thumping grew louder, louder, louder...

Hephaestus almost screamed when he saw a gigantic insect, that looked almost like a cockroach, standing on its hind legs. Next to it was a man, who had a cold, expressionless gray face, with wrinkles etched with many centuries, many millennium, and many eons of pain. His cruel, dark eyes, the color of sulfur, with slits for pupils, like a cat, felt like they were cutting through Hephaestus, turning his insides out, learning his darkest secrets. The man had no eyelashes, or eyebrows. His hands were craggy and ashen like his face although they had a greenish tinge to them, like mold. He wore pointy shoes that were so black, that it seemed like they had been charred by flame. The tongues flopped out like real tongues, inside two mouths watering in front of a hot, delicious meal. One of his toes poked out of the right shoe. It was gray, just as the rest of the body was, and had no toenail. It was truly disgusting.

He wore ripped and holey socks with plaid pants, singed on the edges, and a black-and-gray long sleeved T-shirt with a front pocket and a button-down overcoat. His gray arms were strong and muscular. He had salt-and-pepper hair, with streaks of gold which definitely didn’t go with the rest of his style, all the black and gray just didn’t go with the sudden brightness.

“Ahh. Ahh. I sssee.” he said. He almost sounded like a snake. “Oh yesss, yesss, perfect. Just perfect!” Hephaestus was stunned, though he was not sure why. Whether it was the man’s looks or his six-legged
companion, he didn’t know. He was just stunned. He did not remember the bug or the gray man from any Greek myths. So this is what he said once he recovered from his shock: “Where am I?”

“May I … handle … this … one … 0 … Mighty … Lord …?” the roach rasped. Hephaestus just stared. Horrified.

“Yesss,” the man replied. “Yesss, I don’t sssee why not.”

“When … thee … fell … thee … fell … into … another … world … thee … did,” the gargantuan bug explained.

“Then what world did I fall into?” Hephaestus asked.

This time it was the man who answered, “You did not fall into another world of mythss. Thisss iss a world of nothing and everything, or asss you humanss call it, make-believe.”

_Human?_ Hephaestus wondered. _They don’t know I’m a god?_ “Who are you?” was Hephaestus’s next question.

“Thou … call … me … Jotunhobbum!” the bug-like creature replied.

“And I Nucasss,” said the man called Nucas.

“Nucasss” grumbled a third voice from deep inside the cavern. “Any ssslavesss?”

_Slaves!?_ Hephaestus thought. _I’m gonna be their slave??_

“Yesss. And a perfect one isss that,” Nucas replied to the voice. _Lucky day …_

Hephaestus looked around. “Who said that?” he asked.

_Whoopssss…_ That same voice again! But no one’s lips had moved …

_What isss your name? You sssmell._ Hephaestus glanced at Nucas. He was sure it was his voice …


“He isss confusssed! He is, apparently, unfamiliar with mental messssageesss!” Nucas said, sounding a little angry.

_You can read my mind!_ Hephaestus realized

_“Yesss I can,” muttered Nucas. “You finally realizzze.”_

_So if I think up a plan to get out of here, Nucas will think me, and stop me._ Hephaestus thought, wanting an answer.

“Exactly.”

_If you can think me, can I think you?_ Hephaestus then asked, wondering if the entire cave was telepathic.

There was a silence. Then the gray man spoke. “Yesss,” he finally replied.

_Yes! Thought Hephaestus, but couldn’t stop himself from thinking, this may mean a way to get out of here._

Luckily, Nucas was too busy strutting toward an opening in the slanting stone walls to hear him.


Hephaestus had been shoved into a long dark tunnel of granite and marble.

“You will wait here,” Nucas said, “for my bosssss. Hisss name isss Beun. I hope you do not need to come back wailing, because I can assssure you that I am much niccceeer than him.”

So Hephaestus stood there and waited. He was waiting for what seemed like hours. Waiting. Waiting.

Waiting for Beun, the boss. Waiting for Beun to come and get him, for Hephaestus to become a slave. Waiting. Waiting.

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* Hydra: A fire-breathing, acid-spitting snake with multiplying heads
** Pegasi/Pegasus: Winged horse(s)
*** Chimera: A monster with the body of a dragon and the heads of a goat, lion, and a snake on the tip of its tail
A Wonderful Adventure
by Evan Angelo, Tootin’ Hills Elementary School

Vroom, honk! I woke to the sound of the mototaxis on the street. A moto taxi is a three-wheel motorcycle with a tarp covered seat in the back. I could also hear the bread boy calling out “pan, pan.” It was another loud morning in Lima, Peru. I was with my family and my abuelo (that means grandpa in Spanish). “Evan, today is the day we are going to Chepate! The village where your abuelo was born,” my mom said. So we climbed in the car for an eight hour drive.

Nearly half the drive was a long hot desert. We stopped a few times so we could run on the sand dunes. Finally the landscape turned into green hills, rocky mountains, and winding dirt roads. Out the window I could see rivers and creeks.

That night we stayed in a town named Cascas near the village. We stayed in a hotel in the middle of the town square. The next morning we did NOT need an alarm clock! Roosters and church bells woke us up very early. The church bells rang every hour even in the middle of the night.

We went to the market to eat breakfast. This was the same market my abuelo went to as a boy. There was chicken hanging from hooks, there were fresh fruits and vegetables. I drank a yummy oatmeal drink. We ate fresh rice pudding and my brother had soup for breakfast. We even bought slingshots! My brother’s sling shot was red and mine was brown.

After breakfast, we drove to Chepate. We drove on a thin road on the mountainside. It felt like we might fall! There were donkeys, chickens, and pigs on the road. The houses in the village were not very big. They had dirt floors and the people were poor. So the first thing we did was give out clothes! We gave out shirts, hats, pants, and shorts. We also gave out socks and shoes. The people were very grateful. Many of them still remembered my abuelo.

Next we went for a walk and found where my abuelo was born. I would have liked living in the tall mountains because there is so much land to run and play. There were so many trees and fruit vines. I saw grapes, papaya and fruits I have never seen before. One was a large green pod and inside were white seeds. That is the part you ate. I didn’t try many new things but I did eat sugar cane! Someone from the village came with his machete and cut the sugar cane getting down to the tasty center. I sucked on the sugar cane as we hiked around the village. It was an exciting and fun day to see so many new things.

Now I always remember how brave my abuelo was to move to the United States where he didn’t even speak the language. I am so glad I got to see where he grew up.

All About Sharks
by Ali McCarthy, Ana Grace Academy of the Arts Elementary Magnet School

Introduction
Do you want to learn all about sharks? You should. There are a lot of cool things about them! You will be learning what sharks eat, kinds of sharks and more. If you have any questions about sharks, your questions will be answered!

Don’t Be Scared!
If you go to a shark infested beach, I’d recommend not to go near the water. Before you plan to go in the water remember, don’t wear anything bright, including jewelry. If you’re in the water, and there is a shark, don’t look back and swim away calmly. After that, you should try not to splash or scream on the way. Then walk out calmly and get away from the water. Do sharks usually eat people? No. Only if you attract the shark.

Kinds of Sharks
Are there lots of kinds of sharks? Yes there are lots of kinds of sharks. Here are some examples. A Silver tip reef shark, Goblin shark, Shortfin mako shark, Hammerhead shark, Tiger shark, Great white shark, Megalodon and a lot more! Are sharks aggressive? Yes they are aggressive. The Reef shark is aggressive. So is the Goblin shark. Shortfin mako shark is very fast and aggressive, The Hammerhead shark is pretty aggressive, The Tiger shark is really aggressive, The Great White shark is very aggressive, and, the Megalodon is very very very aggressive.

Bodies
Sharks have more than just a head, fin and tail, they have more. They have eyes, a mouth, snout, nostrils, first dorsal fin, second dorsal fin, pelvic fin, anal fin, pectoral fin, spine, caudal fin, caudal keel, upper lobe, lower lobe, spiracle, and a precaudal pit. Sharks have a lot of body parts! A shark’s body is rough. Its skin is rough
because, it has layers of skin. However, their bodies help them hunt. They can feel vibrations in the water to know if there is an animal to eat. Are some sharks bodies different? Yes. For example, a Hammerhead shark’s head looks like a hammer, and a Goblin shark has a point on its head.

What They Eat
Sharks have big appetites. Sometimes, a lot of sharks fight over one animal to eat. This happens when one shark gets one big juicy animal, then another shark sees it. That repeats over and over again. Then a whole bunch of sharks are going crazy! Sharks are biting other sharks, the food, and even themselves! This is called a feeding frenzy. What crazy sharks! But, what different animals do they eat? A reef shark would eat fish, or stuff its own size, a Mako shark could eat angler fish or stingray, a Hammerhead would eat fish, some sharks can eat squid, big and aggressive sharks could eat whales!

Sizes of Sharks
There are many shapes and sizes of sharks. For example, the Silvertip Reef shark has a silver tip. The silvertip reef shark is 10 feet, the Goblin shark is 12 feet, the Shortfin Mako shark is 13 feet, the Hammerhead shark is 20 feet, the Tiger shark is 24 feet, the Great White shark is 45 feet and the Megalodon is 60 feet. Its teeth were 7 inches long. Are there lots of different sizes of sharks? Yes there are lots of different sizes of sharks. So that means, there are lots of different kinds of sharks.

Megalodon is Extinct?
Well … the Megalodon is extinct. The reason why it’s extinct is because its prey swam into cold water and the Megalodon might freeze or hit multiple icebergs. Scientists found Megalodon teeth, and skeletons. That’s how they discovered the Megalodon. The megalodon was a big shark.

Ending
How big is this shark? What does it eat? Well now you know because you read this book. Now you know all about sharks. Now you know what kinds of sharks there are.

Glossary
-aggressive ready to attack
-feeding frenzy sharks fight over an animal to eat
-extinct all of them died out
-icebergs a big chunk of ice

Snowflakes
by Cassandra Santiago, Squadron Line

Soft, wet snow
No two are alike
Outside my window
White blanket of snow
Falling gracefully through the sky
Like stars made of snow
Amazing shapes in the sky
Kind and gentle
Eagerly falling to the ground
Snowflakes are all around.

The Pond
by Rachel Simmons, Norfeldt Elementary

A tree
   A boat
A pond
   A man
A woman
   A shadow
A reflection
   A ripple

A sparkle
   A light
The woman in the rowboat, the man in the shadow.
The whistle in the grass, the rustle of the leaves.
The reflection in the pond, the shimmer in the water, the glow of the dawn.
The day has just begun.

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Fourth Grade

Whale, Nori MacDonald, Bugbee Elementary
The Perfect Walk
By Claire Hart, Southeast Elementary School

As the morning light trickled into the small beautiful house on P.E.I. (Prince Edward Island) I woke up and a smile was painted on my face. Today I was going to spend a day with the best dad ever! A few hours later my dad and I were riding in the car we had packed a backpack. For the special day with my dad we were going to do a walk at the dunes. Minutes go by so slow when you are excited. The woods were a blur but we still did not arrive. Kneeling in the car seat, I was bouncing up and down, my head almost touching the top of the car waiting for us to arrive. I caught my dad’s eye in the car mirror, he smiled and let out a small laugh. Finally we arrived at the start of the walk.

A big field of grass lay ahead. I could hear the buzz of crickets and the chirping of birds. The sweet sharp smell of the grass tickled my cold nose. As we started the walk I was so amazed it was so beautiful. After the grassy field there was a patch of woods. The dampness of the woods was so different from the grassy field. The dampness settled on the tip of my tongue tasting like water but heavier. The woods were peaceful. The sounds of the wind through the trees made my mind relax and my heart finally stop beating so fast. A gentle voice shattered the small glass bubble of my day dream. The voice was soft and loving and warm like hot chocolate on a chilly December day. I knew the voice was my dad’s. He explained all about the woods. Then he said five words that made my heart shine with glee unfold its beautiful wings and smile a big magnificent smile. He said, “You are my hiking buddy.” Even though I heard that a lot I loved it! I loved it, like I love a cold glass of root beer or pink lemonade on a hot day.

I soaked those words up like a sponge not missing a drop of those special words. I put those words in my memory in the special category: dad. I smiled as we trudged on. There was a small boardwalk in the woods. As you come out of the woods, a bridge crossed over the most colorful moss I had ever seen. There was pink, orange and light green moss. It was so beautiful. The bridge connected to a very rickety dock. The dock went over a marshy swamp area. The dock swayed from side to side.

Right as I started to walk on the dock I started to feel nervous. It felt like a girl and her friend were playing jump rope in my stomach. My dad seemed perfectly fine walking across the dock. I felt miles away from him. Then he started to turn around, I thought I saw the sun lighten like the sun was smiling. “I believe it,” I whispered to myself. Of course the sun would smile for my dad. Suddenly my cold white hands were grasped by a warm gentle fuzzy hand entirely made of love. As we walked on I still grasped my dad’s hand. Holding his hand I felt stronger and braver. “I never want to let go,” I whispered as we stepped off the dock.

The dunes lay ahead towering over us. You had to climb over a very sandy hill to get to the dunes. At the bottom of the hill there was a beautiful sandy beach. I threw off my shoes and ran across the warm sand. The clear sparkling water lapped gently at the white soft sand like a tongue. I lifted my foot. The warm water swallowed my ankle making my foot plunge into the clear water. When had lost my balance and put my foot down, my foot had broken the clear glass surface of the still water. Now it rippled like I had thrown a rock into it.

I looked down at my ankle. Surprisingly I could see my toes through clear glass water. Slowly I lifted my other foot. I only dipped my big toe into the sparkling water. I wanted to see ripples on the smooth surface. I loved the way the water rippled like a shirt that just came out of dryer that needed to be ironed. The ripples made me relax. The ripples were like an optical illusion but on the water right in front of me that I had made. A small smile pulled at the corners of my mouth. I dipped my hands into the water. I was happy that the walk had ended there. A warm hand gently plopped onto my shoulder startling me, a small smile planted itself on my face growing bigger and bigger. “Let’s take a walk,” a gentle voice said. The hand on my shoulder was as warm as the smooth rippling water A light crept through me making my feel happier than I was before. “Tag,” I said as I touched my dad. We ran through the warm water. His footprints so much bigger than mine. The smile returned to my face. Out of breath, we stopped. I looked up into a face a face that was a smiling face that gave me hope. I felt tears prick my eyes—happy tears though.

A warm hand clutched my hand. I put my feet into my shoes. Still holding the warm hand, we started walking back. On the dock I felt so much stronger. As I stepped off the dock I looked back at the dock and the dunes. My dad turned around too. As we looked back my dad put his arms around me. I wonder what we looked like, a girl and her awesome dad locked in a hug, just standing there.

I never wanted that moment to end. It was just me and my dad together and happy. I will never forget that wonderful day with my dad.
“What?!” Jimmy yells. He shakes his head in disbelief as Tom tells him the spooky story about the closed school library.

“It’s true!” Tom yells back. “Get a book and you’ll never come back!” Jimmy’s hands got sweaty, stomach queasy and his head was confused, overflowing with questions. How is it possible that a school library can make innocent students disappear? How?

Just then, “pop.” A light bulb went off in Jimmy’s head. He had a plan. Not a very good one, but one that might just work. A plan that involved him going into the library. This young soul would be walking in what the kids called a death trap! With a pounding heart and a little regret, Jimmy grabbed his stuff, went out of the lunchroom and into the outdated halls. He walked toward an adventure waiting to be unfolded. A mystery about to be solved. He was starting the beginning or end of his journey.

The Missing Friend ...

Jimmy? Where’s Jimmy? Well, Tom had been asking the same question.

“I knew it,” Tom thought. “I knew I shouldn’t have told anyone about that library!” Tom piled all the guilt upon himself. Of course he wants to hear a happy answer about where his friend is, but has a deep, dark feeling inside he will find no such thing. What he needs now is hope. He needs a sign. He needs the mystery sisters.

Oh, the mystery sisters. There’s Amy, Jess and Emma. They can solve any case. For example, the hot dog or horse dog showdown in the lunchroom and even the bathroom flood. They have solved those mysteries, but are they ready for the biggest case alive? Only time will tell.

5th Period ...

“Ring!” The 5th period bell rang loud, almost like a cue, telling the mystery sisters to go to the science lab. So side by side, they walked. Walked and walked until a familiar face blocked their path. Tom Swanson. “I need your help,” he said. Then in unison the sisters sighed … “Of course.”

The desperate friend told the girls about Jimmy and the library. After every sentence, he would beg with his eyes like a dog begging for some meat. Finally, these two words were muttered out of Amy’s mouth … “OK sure.”

A big smile slowly formed on Tom’s face. He was the happiest he had been in days. It was like he had a happiness spark, and then he let it fly into a firework.

Soon the sisters were walking once again. But in the opposite direction of the science lab. ‘Where are we going?’ asked Emma. “We have a case sisters. Let’s get cracking!

Spiders, Dust and webs ...

Spiders. Dust. Webs. The sisters were surrounded by all theses. They were in the closed library. “You sure this is it?” Jess asked looking around. “Yep” Amy answered! “Ugh,” groaned Emma. “I’ve never been in a dustier place then Christmas at Grandmas”. They all let out a little giggle. “Ok, time to go explore.”

With the split up team they worked hard, checking everything for a clue. They were observing and detecting until a voice as faint as a hummingbird’s call spoke out.

“Help”

“What was that!” Emma said in a eager voice.

“Help”

They heard it again! The sisters ran around frantically, trying to pin the voice down.

Suddenly, Jess stopped. She stopped and saw a very supernatural object. A book … It lay open on the floor where the voice was coming from.

“Hello!”

“Ahhhhhhhhh!!” Amy screamed on the top of her lungs! Why? Because Jimmy Smith’s face was on the book.

Jimmy ...

“Jimmy?!” The poor boy’s head was on the book, standing upright, staring at the confused girls. “Yeah, yeah. Just help me get out before …” He stopped. His face became scared. “Before what?” said Emma. They’ve calmed down about now.

were all confused. It’s like this all was a puzzle and they just didn’t know how to put the pieces together. How was all this possible? Who knows. But what they do know is that they need to find out.

**Back to the Library...**

The wind blew. The trees shook. The sun barely shined, having a game of peekaboo with the clouds. And the mystery sisters stood on the sidewalk all geared up, ready to return to the library. Ready to save Jimmy. “Ok, remember the plan?” asked Jess. “Yeah. I stand guard, Emma goes in the book if possible, and Jess helps Emma.” Amy was annoyed. Of course she knew the plan! They only reviewed it 100 times! “You sure this is safe?” Emma asked. “Maybe. Let’s find out.”

The girls weaved through the library like a maze. In and out. They came here for one thing. To save Jimmy. And maybe have celebration cake afterwards. “Ok girls, Jess and I will go to the Jimmy book,” stated Emma. “Yep. I’ll stand guard.”

“Off we go!” Jess and Emma linked arms and headed towards Jimmy.

“Hey Jimmy!” Emma said confidently. “You’re here!” He screamed. “I thought you bailed!” They looked at each other with the same expression. “Well you think this gear falls off of trees!” They both pointed at their ghostbusters like equipment. “Sorry...”

“It’s ok. Just make room. I’m coming in.”

**The Plunge Inside...**

After a long discussion, Emma was ready. “So I just jump in?” Emma asked. She stared at the open book. “Yep,” Jimmy said, like it was no big deal. “I don’t think I can do this...” she said. “Oh yes you can,” Jess said, stepping forward. “Just with a little push.” And down Emma went.

Quick like a lightning bolt she flew down. As graceful as a ballerina she fell. All around her was a cylinder, blue with flashes of pink. Her stomach felt sick, head ready to explode. But she held it in. Until... crash!!! She landed on solid ground. Sand to be exact. And on top there was a beautiful clear sky.

“Emma!” Jimmy screamed. He ran over with his head screwed on a body, instead of a cover. Emma was so happy and relieved that she gave him a hug. After she realized it was not necessary, she stopped with an embarrassing look on her face. Then she started observing her new friend. He had a pale face with brown hair. His red shirt was sparkling in dirt. His pants ripped at all the seams. Why? she thought. Her question was about to be answered. Suddenly ... “Ugg ggggtt!” A monster appeared!

Not too far away. With a red face, scary yellow eyes and five sharp horns ready to use! “Pharaohs,” Emma mumbled. There was only one thing to do... RUN!

So they did. Tripping over their feet, jumping with fear all around. “This way!!!” Emma screamed with a dry throat. She grabbed his hand and lead him to where she landed when she got here. They saw it. A hole.

Where Emma had entered. It was black and gray with specks of gold. It seemed like it was close but it kept getting farther and farther away. I guess they forgot this was no ordinary land. And the bone shivering monster was no ordinary creature, chasing them till the job was done. Now the opening was closer. So, so close! “Grab my hand!” yelled Emma. She needed a break but couldn’t stop. Hair flew everywhere along with her fear. “Ok!” Jimmy squeaked. Emma had just realized how sacred Jimmy was too.

“Ugggg!” The evil being was closer!

“It’ll be ok!” she yelled, partly for Jimmy and partly for herself.

Now the hole was closer than ever before! So close the could almost feel it. They took a breath, looked at each other and then this word came out. “Jump.” So they did. Down the hole. Down to earth. Out of the Pharaohs way. Out of that awful land. Once again they were in that familiar place. The Alice and Wonderland like place ... Rolling back and forth, but all they could do was smile at each other. For they were not trapped. Un-trapped. Free.

**Epilogue...**

Afterwards the good feeling stayed. Others who were trapped were free and smiles rose. It turned out that the sisters, Jimmy and Tom were meant to meet and be great friends. Like PB & J. The mystery sisters are now called the mystery club, for the sisters opened it up to any other girl or boy searching for adventure. And every club needs a supervisor! That’s where Jimmy and Tom step in. Everyone was free, and everything was all good. I guess you could say it was a happily ever after.
“Dad, what’s this?” I asked, watching a long beige fish swimming through the water. It was spotted with gray dots, looking like an eel with fins and swimming erratically as I skimmed the clear warm water with my eyes. “Is this a shark?” my brother shouted. That’s exactly what I had thought. My dad ran over to me and quickly identified it as a sand shark, which are harmless to humans but deadly to fish. That shark seemed to be chasing a fish, so I quickly left the water thinking it might bite my toes. When the sand settled behind, the shark kept on circling in the water, probably hungry for its breakfast this morning. After a little while it vanished into the deeper water of the Gulf of Mexico.

I was just about to eat my lunch, gazing over the tranquil turquoise blue sea, when I noticed a massive gray blob meandering through the water. My brother Alexander and I grabbed our kickboards and ran towards the water. I tied the rope of the board to my hand and pushed myself off the beach to gain speed on the water. My older brother was already way ahead, rapidly closing in on the floating blob, but I kicked as hard as possible. I was making good progress when he shouted, “It’s a manatee!” Before he knew it, the manatee quickly passed right under his board. “This is a once in a lifetime event!” I smiled… “Will he laugh or scream?” I wondered. He swam back toward me, paddling as fast as he could, and breathing hard. “Did you see, did you see?” he asked “It was a manatee! A manatee, and right under me!”

After all that excitement, I was ready to swim to the sandbar for a break. We had been there a few times before, using it as a place to stop when we were looking for conchs and whelks. Alexander joined me and we immediately started finding many conchs. Conchs are tall shells that have a spiral on top of them. They vary from small to large, the smaller ones the juveniles and the larger ones the adults. Their color ranges from a tinted yellow to a tree brown. Whelks are elongated conchs but their color is more pink. I kept floating on my kickboard. While the shark was long gone and the manatee couldn’t attack me, another animal was waiting its turn.

I skimmed on my board toward the shoreline. It was something different than anything else we had seen before. This interesting creature was a sand colored animal, completely flat, and was flapping awkwardly in the water. This was not a bird trying to swim through water, so what could it be? It was a stingray! It flew through the water like a bird. I tried to swim around it but it wouldn’t let me. Was it mistaking me for a prey? I grabbed a handful of sand, and staying as still as possible, I waited for the stingray to come attack me. When it came really close me, I threw the sand at it, and it mysteriously disappeared. I was eager to get back to the shore to avoid any further contact with any animal.

Sitting in the sand, I was surprised by how much wildlife I had seen. The manatee was the most spectacular of all the animals. I had seen a manatee before in a wildlife preserve but never on a beach so close to me. Also, it was shocking to see a shark swim two or three feet away from me and it was amazing to interact with the stingray. Most of all, it was remarkable to see all of these ocean creatures in one day. I felt so happy and surprised! What an adventure!

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My First Race
by Alexa Orsey, Bugbee Elementary School

“BZZZ!” the starting buzzer went off as the first swimmer dove into the dark, deep water of the swimming pool. It was my first swim meet on the Waves swim team and I was second in line. The person in front of me just dove into the freezing cold water. My hands trembled as the swimmer in front of me just pushed of the wall on the other end of the pool. She was swimming in first.

“Is it your first time on the team?” the lady with the clipboard asked me.

“Yes,” I muttered under my breath. I was in lane two and the other swimmers that I was swimming against looked like they knew what they were doing, but I was just standing there waiting for my turn.

The first thing I wanted to do was run home and lock all the windows and doors. “You’re up next, doing a fifty backstroke,” the lady said as the swimmer in front of me got out of the water.

“Next up, girls fifty backstroke ... swimmers in the water,” declared the announcer. My legs felt like rubber as I slowly slid into the ice cold water. You can do it. You can win this race. I pushed on my goggles and ducked my head under the ice water to get used to it. I got hold of the bar and started tapping my fingers for no reason at all.

“On your mark, get set, BZZZ!” I kicked off the wall as hard as I could. I didn’t feel like a statue any
more, instead I felt like a real swimmer. I swam as fast as I could. I felt myself gradually slowing down, as I thought, I'm going to lose this race. As I passed some other people on the waves swim team yelling, "You can make it to first place. You're so close. You're in second place." I threw away the thought about losing the race and thought positively.

I sped up a little bit and then, people were cheering me on like crazy saying, "Come on, you can do it!" I glanced over to the stands, my mom was waving to me and she was cheering me on too! I was out of breath, so I just ignored them for a minute, while I took a breath. I saw the second row of flags. I knew that that meant that I was really close to the wall. I extended out my right arm to hit the wall with my hand. Once I hit the wall, the wall felt like it was pushing me away from it. As I reached my arms out into the air, water went spraying all over my face. The crowd was five hundred lions roaring in my ear. The other people on the Waves swim team were cheering me on, as if I won, they would win 10,000 dollars each.

Then, somebody from the crowd yelled out, "You're in first place. Keep it up!" I was in first place! It was my first time on the Waves swim team and I was in first place! I swam as fast as I could. I saw the second row of flags and I extended out my arm. I felt like someone's hand had hit the wall at the same time as me. I glanced to the side and saw the girl, that was right next to me in lane three. It seemed like she hit the wall right before me. The announcer had just yelled out, "First place is lane three, second place is lane two, third place is lane four and fourth place is lane one."

I had gotten second place! On my first race on the Waves swim team! I asked the lady how much I lost by. She said by one second! That was a record for me. My eyes widened with excitement. The corners of my mouth rose as I got out of the water. It was the best race I ever swam! I will always remember that you should always try something new, even if it is something you have never done.

The Vampire Sisters, Sang Do, Juliet Long
**Opposite Day**  
*by Madelyn Katzer, CREC Montessori Magnet*

A fish from the ocean flies high like a kite,  
A bird takes a swim instead of a flight.

A tiger that once gave a frightening roar,  
Now purrs like a kitten outside of my door.

A face once so happy that smiled like a clown,  
Now looks sad, its smile is a frown.

A day in July hot enough to melt gold,  
Now it feels like December so icy and cold.

Leaves that fell down from the tops of tree,  
Now rise toward the sky as if pushed by a breeze.

Socks once the color of the dark sky at night,  
Now look like fields of cotton so white.

A girl who played dress-up and drank tea with dolls,  
Now slides into third base and catches baseballs.

A secret once whispered as quiet as a mouse,  
Now shouts like thunder and shakes my whole house.

Once my favorite treat now candy's the worst,  
I much prefer to eat my brussel sprouts first.

A runner so fast that he won every race,  
Now walks around the track at a turtle's pace.

The boy at the pond that dug up some worms,  
Now stays at home saying "dirt's full of germs"

Singers whose songs have long pleased my ears,  
Sound like they haven't played music in years.

This world seems so strange in every single way,  
There's only one thing it could be—it's Opposite Day.

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**The March**  
*by Emma Mulligan, Burr Elementary*

A tsunami of pink.  
Different shades  
but the same message.

I feel more nervous  
than a bird flying for the first time.  
But somehow  
I know things will work out.

This is what hope looks like.

People shouting  
“Black lives matter!”  
and  
“Tiny hands shouldn't build big walls!”

I will go to sleep thinking  
I made a difference in the world.

This is what hope sounds like.

My heart beats faster as we march down the closed roads.  
I feel the rough leather of my mom's purse  
that I cling to  
like a leaf on a tree in the fall.

This is what hope feels like.

From the top of the hill  
I see millions of people who came here to fight  
for people they don't know  
but know have equal rights.

I am one of those people.

This is what hope looks like.
Fifth Grade

Elephant, Ellie Holden, Greenwich Academy

Seeing the City, Carly DeRocco, Webb Elementary
Breaking Free
by Ethan Hanzlik, Mansfield Middle School

Henry could feel the raindrops against his face, the fog and mist covering the Alabama moon. “I have a plan John,” Henry whispered. He did not want master Jones to hear him. “You and me … we can get to the Promised land.” He dare not speak louder than a whisper. John’s eyes fell silent. “I won’t do it.” It stung him like the bite of a rattlesnake. “Henry don’t do this. I won’t let you do this. I will tell master Jones.” The traitor … the dirty little pig—the anger bundled up inside of Henry. “You traitor!” Henry screamed. John’s voice lowered and softened. “Henry, master Jones would hang—” “Well, master Jones,” Henry interrupted, “can beat me until I enter the gates of heaven. He can make me feel satan’s wrath, but I will break free.”

And that was the last time Henry ever saw John.

When sunrise came, Henry looked up at the morning sky. The colors collided together perfectly to make one big beautiful sky.

Henry knew that he would die today or he would get to the promised land on his own. He closed his eyes and breathed in the air. Then he saw him. Master Jones was riding on his horse with a whip in his hands. Then Henry ran.

Just like the night before, the Alabama moon was glowing in the sky. Henry had blood on his face and arms. He was soaked with mud. Henry had cut himself going through the thorn bushes in the swamp. Soaked and cold, he had been on the run for two days—no food, shelterless, and freezing. Henry felt as though God had given up on him. Suddenly, he saw it. A house.

A boy about seven opened the door in fright. When he saw Henry, he called for his mother, crying. “Come in,” she said to him. The woman took him inside and brought him to the cellar, without saying a word. Overcome by fear and exhaustion, he neither said a word.

She hid him in the potato bin. She gave him a cup of water, a piece of bread and went away before Henry could say thank you. Henry felt better after the water, the bread, and a few of the potatoes.

The next morning, the woman rushed him out the door and said to him, “Goodbye.” Through fields valleys forests he kept running. Then one day he stumbled across a farm. There were two men sitting on the front porch, both white. When they saw Henry, one of them jumped up and ran for the guns, the other one looked for a weapon while he cussed at himself. “Slave!” one of them yelled. That’s when Henry heard the gun shoot, and he dropped to the ground, dodged the bullet, and started to run.

One of the men picked up a brick and flung it at Henry. He only got a glimpse of what was coming his way. Suddenly, Henry blacked out.

Is this heaven? Henry thought. He was in a bedroom, he looked up, and saw his grandmother, holding him. She rubbed his head, soaked with blood and said to him, “Dear child, those people can take your body, your blood, your life, but they can never take your soul. Look at me now. I’m happy. I broke free of those
nasty chains and you can too. Don’t stop believing, Henry.” And those were the last words she said to him.

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When Henry awoke he was in cuffs, surrounded by a screaming crowd. He had a rope tied around his neck, and a barrel to his left. He came to his senses and realized he was about to be hanged.

Before his father died when Henry was small, the slave master tried to beat him because he was too small to start work.

His father blocked the whip, screamed at the slave master, and pushed him into the wall where he broke his arm.

When they took Henry’s father away, his father said to him,”Henry, listen to me. You will never go down without a fight. I love you Henry. Never forget me.” And Henry never did.

Then he felt it. The anger, the power of God inside of him ... He broke free.

The cuffs on his hands broke and he tackled one of the men who was escorting him. He lurched at the men with all of his might, making them crash to the ground.

Cursing, the guards tried to get back up but Henry had them down.

He swung at them with all his might, raging like a bull, until both guards fell silent, out like a light.

The whole crowd fell silent.

Then he heard the trigger ....

I’m free.

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A Moment Under the Stars
by Haley Evans, Buttonball Lane Elementary School

My feet wandered aimlessly on the paved path through the woods. The starlight was caught in the thick pine branches above me. Crickets chirped in the darkness, serenading me and my mom. I had no flashlight, just my mom’s gentle hand guiding mine, and I had to trust she knew where she was going.

“Here we are,” she whispered softly into my ear, as if not to disturb the cricket’s song. Although I couldn’t see a thing, I could hear the sound of the churning waves as they crashed against the seaweed covered rocks, and the sand made a hissing noise under my royal blue sneakers. I looked up and saw the beautiful stars sparkling in the sky, like tiny gems wedged into the side of a cave.

I shook as the unsettled, frigid waters of the night churned around me, but my mom’s gentle hand clasped mine tighter, and her firm grip settled me.

Thankfully, my eyes quickly adjusted to the Acadia night sky. I could then see a misty shadow of Bar Harbor off in the distance, like someone painted its outline in silver metallics. Things looked like fun there, but I was right where I should be, embracing a different kind of fun.

As my eyes wandered back to the night sky, I spotted a beautiful circle almost scraping the top of Bar Harbor. It was shining, the color of gold, like it was delighted to see the whole world all at once.

“Mom,” I whispered in amazement as my breath floated into the wind. She looked towards the sky and gasped as she saw it floating just above the harbor.

She pulled me close, and I could feel the fleece of her ash black jacket against my cheek. I stood there, clinging to Mom as we watched the man in the moon shine his wondrous light on the ocean. And right then, wrapped up in the cloak of the moon’s golden rays, gazing at the stars with my mom by my side, I realized everyone has special moments in their lives, but they don’t have to be big things. Sometimes they are as simple as staring at the stars with a mother who loves you.

A few moments after, as we began to wander back to our campsite on the same trail we’d taken, I thought back to how Mom hadn’t wanted to come stargazing. “It’s too late,” she had told me. But, when she had seen my face darken and my smile surrender to disappointment, she had softened. “Okay, I guess we can go,” she had said, and my face brightened like the stars.

We continued on, almost at the end of our adventure. I thought about how the moon had shined brighter than I’d ever seen it before that night. I smiled up at my mom, trying to tell her I’d never forget this moment. She flashed me a smile back, and I knew she wouldn’t forget either.
An eerie, white smoke puffed from the dented pot. I sat on the hot floor picking at my blistered, wet toes, watching my younger sisters throw chipped rocks—trying to make them land in a bucket. Mam was boiling brown rice. I gazed up at our faded family portrait hanging on the wall; my eyes fixed on me sitting in my older sister, Pum’s, lap. I noticed her mischievous smile, the scar on her forehead, her two dangling braids and that crooked smile which left one eye closed more than the other (which was usually a sign she had just gotten into trouble). I remember the day that picture was taken. I had been told to stay inside because of bad weather, but I went out anyway. The storm rolled in and I had trouble getting back home. Pum ended up finding me and bringing me home. She took the fault for us both being out to save me from getting in trouble with Father.

Father climbed up the ladder of our longhouse with a worried smile.

“I sold them,” he said placing his bony hands on his hips.

“You did! Wonderful!” Mam exclaimed. She got up to embrace Father, crinkling her faded pink dress.

He seemed to exhale with relief, as if he had been holding his breath.

Today was the day when father sold many of our laying hens and several of our muddy, noisy hogs to earn money for my older sister Pum’s marriage. She would soon be moving to the new longhouse in the jungle that the village was almost finished constructing. I hadn’t seen Pum in a long time. She had been spending time with her soon-to-be husband, Y’su, at his family’s home. I had only met Y’su once. I knew he was awkwardly tall; loved cricket; had short, wiry hair; and always kept a tattered, soggy notebook.

“Tomorrow, Vanar,” Dad said, squatting down inches away from me. “I want you to travel past the chief’s meeting circle in the jungle to Pum’s new longhouse to help finish the construction. I know you are ready to take the journey without me. I want you to know that I trust you to take care of the family boat and be safe.”

“Yes,” I say. “You can trust me.” Father smiled and wrapped his gangly arm around my shoulder. I was happy for the opportunity to be trusted to go help my sister.

The next morning I woke up in a daze, found my straw sunhat in a pile of dirty clothes, and sleepily climbed down the longhouse ladder. A step wiggled and creaked. The sky was a gray-blue, and my mind was busy thinking about the day ahead of me and all of my responsibilities. I boarded the boat and rowed through the thick rice fields, avoiding all the ducks that were weeding the paddies. I paddled past my friend’s house and wondered what kind of trouble he might be getting into. The banana trees on shore were at peak ripeness, and I thought about ripping the peels off and biting into the moist fruit. But I had work to do.

When my boat crashed into the sticky land, I tied it to a tree. I tore my way through the thick jungle.

My bare feet wrapped over twigs and squashed insect villages as I ran to Pum’s partially constructed house. I followed the voices of the village men and the sounds of their work.

When I arrived, everyone was focused. “Vanar! Son of Va’yen!” one of the men said to me. “Here, work on this,” he motioned to a pile of straw which would be used for one of the walls. The house was almost finished. Father had come earlier with a friend and was already there setting up the stilts. “You’re a good boy, helping your older sister out,” one of the men said, giving me a hard pat on the back.

“Thanks,” I said. I’d do anything for Pum. She had always helped me so much. We have always been so close.

I worked so long and hard I became ravenous, parched, light-headed, and totally exhausted. Even though my fingers were bloody with bubbly blisters, I continued my work. The blue sky became wrapped in fog, and then the dense clouds broke up allowing water to tumble out. Rain clambered down, sounding like gunfire as it hit the water. Thick puddles began to form in the soggy mud. I smiled as I remembered all the days of playing in the rain with Pum. We would splash each other, and drink the rain, and see who could hold their eyes open under the water the longest.

When we returned home our eyes would always be red.

I trudged to the boat and rode home with Father when the rain really started pounding down. It blinded us, and it was so loud it was all we could hear. Chief always said rain was the spirit’s way of foreshadowing a great deal of sadness. I knew Mam and Father would feel sadness when Pum left. The wedding would be held tomorrow.

When we returned home, Mam wrapped us in a towel. We had to wash the sadness of the rain off. I could smell Mam cooking for the wedding: vegetable curry, sweet stir fry, and the tender chicken we
sacrificed for Pum.

It was preparation time. My younger sisters and I washed the floor, dusted our belongings, and folded the clothes. I remembered when Pum and I would do housework together. She would teach me how to do the different jobs, and she would tell me stories to make the chores fun. I tried to take Pum’s place. I told my sisters of talking elephants, flying lizards, and walking trees. Pum had told me of these mythical creatures, too.

I woke early in the morning. Father handed me a traditional, red, silk tunic. “Put on your tunic and pants,” he said, while forcing my sister’s feet into their leather shoes. Our boat was waiting outside, freshly cleaned, and Mam loaded her cooked dishes onto it. My sisters stuck their fingers into the sauces to taste. Everyone was nervous and anxious on the ride to the jungle.

At the ceremony we all took a seat around the chief. Buddhist monks in red robes circled him. Y’su stood in his red and white silk suit. His cheeks were red, too, along with his big ears. I waited for Pum to come out. My sisters kept saying, “She’ll look like a princess!” Pum gracefully stepped out of the thick green leaves wearing a red and gold dress, not the purple tie-dyed shirt and cotton shorts she always had on. Her hair wasn’t in braids, and her face didn’t look like Pum—it looked like it had been painted. Her hair was parted to the side to cover the scar on her forehead. She looked like the women on billboards we saw in the city. Her eyes remained fixed on Y’su.

Everything in the day seemed like a dream: the chief’s speech, the first kiss, the meal, the blessing. But when it was over something happened. Pum’s eyes, crystallized almonds with mountains of coal scooped into them, met mine. In just that quick second of surprising grief, I realized Pum wasn’t going to play in the jungle with me anymore. She wasn’t going to tell me stories of vicious snakes. She wasn’t going to wrestle with me until we both had bloody noses. Pum was leaving. She wasn’t with me anymore. I wouldn’t be, as she had always called me, her “main man.”

As she turned with her hand curled around Y’su’s, I started running. I pushed my way through the tangled crowd, shouting, “Pum … Pum!” but she only got further and further away into the jungle, leaving me all alone in a world I no longer knew.

All is Beautiful When I Dream
by Tovah Lowry, Squadron Line Elementary

All is beautiful when I dream.
I dream amid a white coyote howling in the moonlight.
I dream amid a fox prowling in light of the twinkling fireflies.
I dream amid a rabbit leaping in the night sky.
I dream amid an owl gliding in the cold night air.
I dream amid the sun blazing down like sparkling yellow diamonds.
I dream amid swans gliding through a flowing waterfall.
I dream amid cheetahs running under the blazing orange sun.
Hush baby.
Hush baby.
Feel the wonders of the night.
Sleep little baby, sleep.

Night Howler, Arielle Burrows, Greenwich Academy
Lost
by Amanda Kelly, Tootin’ Hills Elementary

One man
Heroic and brave,
whose legacy fills our souls.
His old self dances around us like a ghost,
teasing us, because now
That man,
That man is
gone.
His body remains, head and heart,
still breathing.
But his mind has faltered
Memory holds him down in the
past.
He keeps walking,
but
his mind stays in the army days,
the days where my dad was his little baby boy,
when his mother and father struggled in the Great
Depression.

New he must
Go.
To a home so that
people can help him.
So we don’t get
LOST
With him.
He says, no.
They say, yes.
I cry, help
Meeting My Mom and Dad
by Joanna Guan Raczkowski, Buttonball Lane School

Before I was six and a half years old, I was an orphan kid without a mom or dad. I went to different homes every year because I was waiting for someone to adopt me. One day I was surprised that some toys came from the mail. They were for me. My foster parents said I got adopted and I was going to the U.S.A. When I was little I did not know what being adopted meant. I just knew that the new family was giving me a package of gifts. I unwrapped the gifts, and wrappers were spread out everywhere. I was going to get a fluffy panda but I did not get it somehow. I did get most of my gifts, so I was happy. My foster parents told me that the United States was bad and guns everywhere. I thought my new home would be scary because I did not know if my parents would be mean to me or not.

One day, my foster mom woke me up while I was in a deep sleep. After I was awake she asked me to put on my clothes quickly. I told her I was hungry but she said, “No, you can not eat now. Let’s go.” I asked where we were going. She responded that we were going to the train station to see you American mom and dad. I asked, “Are you going?” She said, “No!” I started to cry. Then she said she would be on another train. I calmed down and said okay. We were riding a motorcycle that could hold two people. It was small enough to fit me in the back of the seat. My mom was riding in the front seat. It took about thirty minutes to go to the train station.

When we got there I saw other kids. There were four kids including me, and one of the orphanage bosses was there and a nanny was there to help out. My foster mom said you were going with them. I said, “Why do I have to?” She said, “Yes, you do!” and I said, “Okay!” Then I got on the train and waved goodbye to my foster mom and said, “See you on the other train.” Then the train was moving and I sat down with the kids, still wondering when I would see my foster mom.

After half an hour we started to get to know each other more and traded food. Then I said to myself, “Is my foster mom going to come or is she not going to come?” I would be sad if she was not there and disappointed with her and mad at her at the same time and wished that she would be there. It seemed like it was taking forever to get to our destination because my foster mom never told me where we were going. I thought to myself, “I do not think the other kids know where they are going and I bet that they have the same feeling as I do.”

One kid was one or two years old, the second was about five, the third was about six or seven years old, and the fourth one was me, six and a half years old. We were told that we were almost there, and I was wondering where exactly the place was. They said that we were going to see our parents today but no one seemed to understand that. So we were all in shock and some of us did not like it and started crying. After a little while the train slowed down. I asked, “Why does the train stop?” They said it was our stop. I questioned, “Am I actually going to see my parents?” They said, “Yes!” I responded, “What if I do not want to see my parents?” They said, “I am sorry but you have to!” I said, “Okay!”

The train finally stopped still. I was very sleepy and hungry at the same time. I was too sleepy to remember what happened after getting out of the train until we were in a hotel lobby. While walking to the lobby, I was a lot of people, women, men, and kids. Then some people came closer to us. I got scared but was told it was okay.

I was introduced to my parents. I thought my dad was not good looking and my mom was beautiful. I thought my mom looked like forty-one and my dad looked like seventy-two. I told my mom I did not like this dad because he was so old.

We were led to a large room with a table and chairs. My parents were looking at me and my mom called my name. At first few minutes, I got scared. Then I got used to them for a little bit. Then I got scared again. I was looking down silently for quite a while. My dad handed me a stuffed panda and my mom gave me a stick to blow bubbles. My parents were surprised that I knew how to blow bubbles. I was playing with the bubbles for five minutes. Then I was holding on to the stuffed panda, looking and rubbing the panda. After a little while, I was asked to have my photo taken with my new mom and dad. I told mom that I wanted to be closer to her and I swayed away from my dad.

Afterwards we took an elevator up and went to hotel room. I undressed completely and put on my new clothes that my parents gave me to wear. Then my whole family went shopping for shoes for me. I liked a pair of red high heel leather boots but my mom told me not to wear high heels. I saw a pair of blue sneakers with sparkling lights on them. I picked a pair and tried them on. I told my parents the sneakers fit well on me. Then we bought them. I walked for about one hundred steps and I told my parents
my legs were tired and I could barely walk. Then my mom carried me on her back all the way back to the hotel. We then had dinner, and I was very hungry. I was shoveling the food like crazy and licking the plate like a dog. My dad was getting furious, yelling like he was in a baseball game. I did not understand what he was saying. All I was doing was licking the plate as clean as possible.

After the dinner, we went back to our room. My dad was emptying out the small backpack I brought with me. He found an orange my foster mom gave me and immediately threw it in the trash bin. I told him no but he did not listen. I then started crying and getting the orange back from the trash bin and put it on the table. My dad was yelling something I did not understand and insisted on throwing the orange away. I screamed loudly and ran to the bathroom and locked myself in. I tried to call my foster mom using the phone in the bathroom but I could not make it through.

I cried in the bathroom for a bit and slowly opened the bathroom door. I quickly reached the room door and opened it up. Barefooted, I ran out as fast as I could to the elevator. My mom saw me dashing out and was chasing after me. When I got to the elevator I pressed the button going down. At the moment the elevator door opened, my mom grabbed me and carried me back to the room. My mom told me to go to sleep. I cried and cried until I fell asleep.

We stayed in China for three weeks and then headed back to the U.S.A. Back then, I didn’t know anything about English. I only knew Mandarin Chinese and I could speak it well enough to let my mom understand what I wanted.

Now I have been with my new family in the U.S. for five years. I have a mom, a dad, and a sister. I no longer am asked to move to a different family every year. I enjoy playing games, going to movies, and traveling all over the world with my family. I have made lots of friends at school. My teachers are very nice to me and help me learn English. Now I think the U.S.A. is not a bad country because people I meet are kind in many ways. I feel safe at home, at school, and at places I would visit. I feel like a princess living happily ever after.
Sixth Grade
Nothing Lasts Forever
by Makena Culligan, Ledyard Center School

The first thing I remember is opening to a beautiful light and the sun whispering “Hello.” I wave back each morning as I dance in the breeze, my summer green displayed proudly.

The birds soar above me. Sometimes I wonder what they think. What they see. What they know. Sometimes I wonder if they notice me waving to them as they drift away from me.

Now I shake in the crisp autumn air. The sun whispers soothing words to us, stroking us, changing us, to protect us from the cold. I now wear a blanket of reds and golds as the wind tries to rip us from our places, and our purpose.

We fall.

The wind rushes through the branches and grabs me, holds me hostage, then lets me go. I stare at the world around me in awe. As I start my descent to the ground, I wonder where I will go. What will happen to me? The sky seems to mock me, being so bright and beautiful in my time of darkness.

The wind reaches out and catches me, then drops me, then grabs me, then brings me over glistening waters and golden valleys. I finally see where the birds went.

It’s strange. I used to be the ruler of my world. Now the wind controls me and tosses me up. The ride seems to last forever. Then I remember: Nothing lasts forever.

Run
by Aiden Peterson, Juliet Long Elementary School

I was running, my red converse softly crunching the fallen leaves. Wind whistled by my ears, and the dead trees swayed eerily. “Evelyn!” I called, my voice trembling with more fear than I had intended, and I slowed to a stop to listen earnestly for an answer, something that could calm down my heart, just to let me know that I wasn’t alone. Resting my tired legs on the soft patch of grass I had found, I sank down the trunk of an old oak tree, and closed my eyes. I was grateful that the costume I wore was easy to run in; I wore a blue comfy dress, and a simple pillowcase had been tied around my waist to create an apron, as I was Alice in Wonderland. Although my curly hazelnut hair was loose, it sprayed behind me when I ran.

The biting fall breeze was picking up and it felt like a whip, stinging against my pale, scared face. I had dropped my jack o’lantern candy bucket, chock-full of Kit-Kats and Reese’s Peanut Butter Cups. It was left spilled-over and cracked in half. Instead of receiving a reply as I was hoping with all of my heart, all that I could make out was the echoes of my own quivering voice, and an isolated scream. My eyes widened in horror, and I sprang back to my feet, tearing across the crisp leaf-covered ground once again, only this time, I was sprinting as fast as my long legs could.

The Gales Ferry cemetery was packed with bodies, and most of the people that had been buried were soldiers. The sky was almost entirely covered with wispy gray clouds, except for the bright white full moon overlooking all. The trees, looking lifeless without the full leaves, hung stiff and cold, and the shadows stretched and tugged at my feet, pulling, pulling me back into the dim canopy of trees. I shook myself and debated going back in, terrified. I had left Evelyn back with the menacing shadows of Halloween, defenseless. I weighed my options slowly, then flung my fears behind me, and abandoned them, shocked in the dust.

The leaves crackled once again under my weight, and I smacked the trees with my cold, clammy hand as I dashed by, hoping, praying that I wasn’t too late. Suddenly, I was cornered, and I could hear running behind me. I spun around, alarmed and shivery, then turned to fly again. But I was stranded and I didn’t remember what part of the woods I was in. I whirled around once more, holding my breath, too uneasy to even breathe. Right then, the shadow emerged out of the gloom and stalked up to me. I tried to run, but I was cemented to the ground, frozen in fear. Soon, he was a breath away. I stared into his luminous blue eyes and watched his lips move.

“Boo.” Everything went black.
The Ocean Mishap
by Gretchen Davis, Schaghticoke Middle School

I remember the first time that I went out on the ocean. All I remember, looking out into the ocean’s blackness, was the creamy sunscreen smeared across my face and the waves crashing at the shore, lathering my feet. I remember the sand, as soft as a baby’s foot. The sun beating down on me felt incredible. The experience was phenomenal, all but the moment of pain. The moment when that wave made me nearly drown.

My best friend, Olivia, stood beside me as we stared out into the depths of the ocean, watching the rough, cold waves bounce up and down in the distance. We realized these waves weren’t the best waves for boogie boarding. We both exhaled rough sighs and marched out to the edge of the shore, right where the water began. Closing the clasps on our boards, we got ready to throw them onto the water, the color of a midnight sky.

The air down by the seaside was cold, the sky turning the color of charcoal, and the clouds, sweeping across the sky as if they were running. The scene made my stomach churn, and it made me get that feeling that something was going to happen.

The waves were big; we call them red flags. They happen when a storm’s approaching, and some people say bad things happen with red flag waves. Olivia’s parents seemed reluctant to come down to the beach with us; they got ready to come down to the beach slowly. Lifeguards paced the shore slowly, too. I was a little frightened at the amount of lifeguards there. They eyed us as we glided across the soft sand, towards the sapphire blue ocean.

Little did I know that the waves were born to hurt. Little did I know that anyone, can get hurt. Little did I know that that anyone, might be me ...

Down by the shore, we laid our boards on the water. Waves roared out in the distance, making anticipation fill up inside of me. The waves washed up and out of the ocean, lurking towards us. As they pulled us in, I felt the frigid water leaking into my bathing suit. It made me flinch and squirm as Olivia pulled up beside me.

“Isn’t this fun? C’mon, there’s more to do!” she exclaimed as she kicked away.

“Sure, I’m coming,” I called back, squinting as the salty sea water sprayed me. “But aren’t you a little afraid of the water? I mean, the waves are phenomenal, but you could get hurt, don’t you think?”

“Sure, but you are a natural, and I suspect that you can ride one of these waves back to shore, can’t you?” she replied with a large boost of confidence.

I had been boogie-boarding before, but I was a little nervous. Olivia told me there’d be nothing to worry about, but I kind of doubted her. She’s always there by my side, whether or not I need her, but something told me not to trust her this time. Olivia doesn’t always pressure me into these things, but this time, I was pretty nervous to go onto these waters. Something was going through me that sent a chill through my spine, but I really wanted to show her that I wasn’t a wimp, and that I don’t chicken out to these types of things.

An air of confidence that I didn’t feel swept over me as I kicked, slicing through the icy water. The water floated across my back as I shivered. I suddenly heard Olivia shout out, “Gretchen, get out of the water, now!”

I look behind me, and a huge wave bullets down on me. The last word I hear her shout is, “Gretchen!”

I awoke to find myself lying on my towel, with a small crowd consisting of a couple lifeguards, Olivia, and her parents. Olivia’s standing right above me with tears running down her cheeks. The sunlight blinds me as I try to take a deep breath. I can’t. I can’t breathe. I try and try and try, but I can’t. I let my eyelids drop and the tears slide over onto the damp towel.

“Gretchen—” Olivia leaned over to wrap her arms around me. I felt dizzy, but I didn’t pass out. The feeling of pure happiness kept me awake. I was happy that I didn’t actually get hurt. Maybe a headache and a bruise here and there, and maybe a little scratch, but I didn’t need to be rushed to the hospital. I wrapped my arms around Olivia, and we lay there, side-by-side, just like two friends should.

A couple hours later, I was ready to move again. I stood up and grasped Olivia’s shoulder. She and I walked to the car, where we stood, side-by-side, gazing at the beautiful sunset that was painted across the evening sky.

At that moment, I realized I needed to tell Olivia something. This was a moment we needed to share
together.

“You know what they say, ‘All’s well that ends well,’” Olivia sighed.

“I have to thank you, for being there when I needed you today, and for being my best friend. I don’t know what I’d have done without you.” I smiled.

Olivia looked at me with a huge smile on her face. Her eyes filled with tears as she realized I was being grateful, and while we climbed into the car, she whispered, “You’re welcome.”

We pulled out of the parking lot, happy and grateful for being friends. We looked at each other and grasped hands. The sunset submerged and coated the car with a light, a light as sweet as a caramel apple. That light filled me with happiness. I fought away the memories of the bad waves, the sky, that was the color of metal, and the clouds that had filled me with doubt. I pushed those away because that was all over, all done. I didn’t have to worry about it any more. I will never forget this moment.

Aloha, Karthika Siva, Greenwich Academy
A Day at the Hospital
by Anna Lavallee, Gideon Welles School

When I was at the hospital, I sat nervously in the waiting room, waiting for the nurse to walk in and take my weight, height, and blood pressure. The nurse came in and lead me to the other room. After that, she would take me straight across the hall to the pre-operation room. I was scared.

I heard nurses chattering and machines beeping. I got dressed into the huge gown and put on the blue hospital socks (that were very soft and comfy). I walked out of the bathroom and the doctor who was going to be performing the surgery came in to say hi, he was funny. Later the Anesthesiologist came in to ask some questions about the anesthesia and the funny thing was he had the same first and last name as my step dad. When he left the nurse from earlier came back in with a funny look on her face. She said that I wouldn’t be leaving the pre-operation room for another hour to hour and a half. This made me a little anxious. I wanted the knee surgery to be over with.

As the time passed by and I watched TV, my mom took pictures and tried to calm my nerves down. But every time they brought something up, I would ask a question about something that might happen to me. Then the time came. Three nurses came in and put the railings up. And the moment the wheels began to roll my heart pounded and my eyes began to water. Then I looked back at my mom, the very last second I could and saw her begin to cry. I quickly rolled along the highway floor, looking up at all the bright lights. I was amused by them, but still scared for what was about to happen to me.

When I woke up, the first thing my mom said I did was look at my dad wondering who he was and what he was doing here. Then I turned my head to the right and saw a towel with a hose blowing air in my face. Turns out it was oxygen I needed earlier. Then I saw my mom. She was looking at me like I was crazy for looking at my dad like that, but my eyes weren’t connected to my brain yet, so I figured she couldn’t get on me for that one because I just had surgery.

I got home safely, but I was a little bit off balance because it was my first time being on crutches since surgery. However, I managed to get myself inside. I looked around the kitchen, and on the kitchen table was a bunch of different gifts. There were bunny slipper socks, really fluffy slipper socks, balloons, stickers, a stuffed bunny, and coloring books. At that moment I realized that even though I was a little bit nervous about surgery, the nurses were really nice, and I had a fun day at the hospital.

Tears
by Layla Lasisomphone, Ledyard Center School

A wave hits my back Knocks me over Takes me under Pulls me out

I open my eyes
I see water, nothing more
I’m somewhere else
All I can think to do is swim And swim And swim
Until I can’t
When I think there is no hope I Cry
My tears rise the ocean
My tears show my fear
My tears represent me
My tears turn around
I am drowning in tears Happy, joyful tears
**Tunnel**  
*by Keane Stanton, Schaghticoke Middle School*

I can't write poems  

My pencil doesn’t  
Fly across the paper  
Like everyone else’s  

Left out  
Behind  
Losing the game  
That has no end  

The game that never  
Started  

An endless tunnel to nowhere  
Stuck  
Trapped  
I can’t get out  
Struggling to put words  
On the paper  

I’d be lying if I said it was easy  
But underestimating if I said it was  
Hard.

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**Fiddler in the Night**  
*by Henry Denton, Juliet Long Elementary School*

Sitting on the dusty step  
Quietly, the silhouette wept; The sky darkens, tears of flame, Known to me by a grim name  
Fiddler death was at my step.  
Fiddles strumming, spirits drumming All of this was meant to summon Now i’m shaking,  
Spirits waking—  
Oozing out of closet doors.  
Kitchen, stovetop, down the staircase Quickly weaving through the hallways; Now I stand and I start wishing  
Pain, agony, my head spinning  
He has found me, he has won  
But not yet, I am not done, Where is it, my dear, my son? Ah, I’ve found the candlestick Jack be nimble, Jack be quick  
Jack jump over the candlestick.  
Set his floating tail aflame Fiddler death, that evil name, Burnt, but will be back again Every Thirty-first he’s came  
Giving cruel a different name.  
Learned his lesson, he has not,  
Every battle he has fought  
Come to expect him and learned to deal His ghostly presence in me I feel.
Mollie Flannery's 6th grade students at Greenwich Academy submitted some amazing art work. There were too many for us to be able to print full size in the magazine, but we wanted to provide some thumbnails and a link in the magazine to a page on our website that features just some of the work submitted by her students.

These eight pieces here all have African countries for their subject matter. To see them better, go to the following link.


- **Exploring Guinea** by Ellie Johnson
- **Morocco** by Madeline Oh
- **Life of Senegal** by Dianna Palacios
- **Layers of Chad** by Alicia Qin
- **Taste of Tunisia** by Saskia Jakubin
- **Creative Map of Egypt** by Scarlet Fishkind
- **Madagascar** by Sara Raghavan
- **Mothusi** by Kayla Ferjuste
A Strange Day in July
by Ashley Dorais, Amity Middle School-Bethany

On this glorious July afternoon, the sun glistened in a sapphire-blue sky. Gemma and I sat together on the rocks, admiring Lake Pentney’s clear waters as they broke in rhythmic waves near our feet.

“Don’t be out too long,” Aunt Mary called as she rose from a bench in the distance. “It’s getting windy. You’ll catch cold.”

“Mary, dear, let them be,” Uncle Harry urged. “Young love, ’tis all.” He chuckled softly as he draped Mary’s cardigan over her shoulders and escorted her lovingly by one elbow.

“Harry,” she protested. “They’re only twelve. Don’t be daft.”

I didn’t bother to turn to watch them recede slowly toward the house; I only had eyes for my Gemma. She gazed back at me, fluttering her thick lashes and casting a dazzling smile in my direction. The late afternoon sunlight captured every golden highlight as her hair billowed softly around her face.

“Ah,” I sighed audibly with delight before I realized with embarrassment that she had likely heard me. I turned away quickly, trying to seem cool.

“Nigel, you’re so funny,” Gemma teased. “I love the faces you make.” She leaned forward in her peach dress and then smoothed its skirt like a princess on a gray boulder throne.

Aunt Mary’s country home, truly more of a manor, stood proudly in the distance. It was one of the finest in Norfolk, a charming village in the English countryside. It was quite larger than our London flat, and
spooky in some ways, but a brilliant place to stay in the summer. Now it was even more inviting because Gemma, my best friend and crush since Year 2, or as Americans might say “first grade,” had come to visit with her parents for a week.

Lake Pentney was a major perk of living with Aunt Mary and Uncle Harry in the summer. It was wonderful for swimming, fishing, and sailing, and it was surrounded by acres of lush grasses, forests, and wildflowers that bloomed from spring through late summer.

Gemma giggled as I stood up, then bent down and carefully picked a late-blooming daffodil. “For you,” I said softly as I returned to her side and slid the blossom’s slender stem gently behind her right ear. She stared intently into my eyes. “Thank you, Nigel. I wish a day like today could last forever.”

Suddenly a flash of sadness darkened her exquisite face. “But it really can’t, can it?”

“Nothing lasts forever, Gem. But don’t be so glum,” I coaxed. “We have six more days together. We can swim and hike on sunny days. At night we can discuss the books we’re reading.”

“Yes, I love when we do those things. Gemma shifted slightly and wrapped her arms protectively across her chest. “But I can’t help but think of next term . . . with you away.” She dropped her gaze into her lap.

“Me, too,” I replied softly, “but I have to go to Eton to please my dad. It’s a legacy—the Blackwood men all go to Eton.” I lifted a stone to examine its shape, deciding whether it was flat enough for skimming.

“And Berkshire is only thirty-five kilometers from London.”

Gemma sighed. “It might as well be the moon.”

I didn’t know what to say. I was sad, but I wanted to salvage our time together . . . to have something to remember next fall. I straightened up to my full height, rolled up my shirt sleeves, drew back my arm, and made my best skimming toss. At least this was one talent I could use to impress Gemma and lift her mood.

The stone tripped artfully across the surface of the approaching waves, bouncing ever so lightly on their crests without ruining my planned trajectory. I turned to grin at Gemma with satisfaction and then, “Plunk!” The stone landed right in the sand at my feet. “That is impossible,” I declared, stating the obvious. I couldn’t believe my eyes—it was the very same stone I had chosen less than a minute ago. And considering the distance I had hurled it, that stone should be floating down through the depths of Lake Pentney.

“Wow!” Gemma exclaimed, now standing behind me. “That’s a great trick! How did you do it?” She lifted her cupped fingers above her eyes to shield the sun’s glare and examined the lake. “Did you hide something out there so that you could bounce the stone back like a boomerang?”

I considered the possibility that perhaps I had hit a stone or log that caused the stone to ricochet. And then I tried again. This time I hurled the stone even farther and watched it trip across the top of the waves into the distance. But then, just as I was sure it was gone and turned to look away, “Thump!” The stone bounced right at my feet. “This is so strange.”

Again, for the third time, I threw with all my might. I hurled the stone and it returned to me with force. This time it seemed aimed at my hand and bounced off of my right thigh with a sting. I inhaled and threw again, not wanting Gemma to see my growing frustration. I threw as hard as I could. As the stone flew back, I decided just in time to catch it.

“Nice reflexes,” Gemma teased. Well, at least her mood was improving.

I took a deep breath and paced a few feet forward. This time I decided to aim carefully before throwing. I would skim the stone to the left to avoid whatever was causing it to bounce back. I surveyed the glistening waves and focused. I could not believe what I then saw: a shimmering, iridescent light formed into a small ball and then expanded—growing larger until a man seemed to stand right in its center . . . floating above Lake Pentney! I felt myself starting to grow dizzy.

“What’s the matter, Nigel? Is the sun in your eyes?”

“No, I’m f-f-fine,” I stammered, realizing she had not seen the man. I willed myself to look back at the lake, and he was still there. This time he held out his hand, almost gesturing for me to throw again, and he looked oddly familiar. He had sandy hair and a tall, lean physique. He was dressed in a light blue buttoned-down shirt with tan khaki pants—a look I myself might wear. Just then it dawned on me—he looked like my grandfather, but even more like a young version of my dad. In fact, he looked so much like me, he could be my older brother. I threw the stone with all my might, this time aiming at his head and hoping he would implode and disappear.

Instead, the mirage caught the stone! Minutes passed as he seemed to turn it over carefully in his palm. Then, “Bam!” It flew back to me so close to my hand that I had to accept it was aimed for me to catch. And catch it I did.

Now the stone felt funny, with a slightly different texture. Written neatly in fine black marker on the
stone's flat bottom was a brief, but amazing note. I turned away from Gemma and read:

You know who I am: who you will be. Return to London or she'll get away. Don't lose your one true love.

I gulped and stared at the note in shock. It was written in my own handwriting! How could this be? My fingers trembled as I traced the words, struggling to digest them. Then I exhaled deeply and tucked the stone safely into my pants pocket. I looked out at the lake and the stone-tossing man—or should I say, “I”—was gone! A wave of desperation washed over my heart. I rushed to Gemma's side and realized that I could not take any chances. I was not going to lose her. I reached out and grabbed her hand to lead her back to Aunt Mary's house.

“What happened to the rock, Nigel?” she asked, seemingly puzzled.

“Just a trick of light or maybe someone playing a joke. You know, it would be easy to throw rocks from the woods.” I nodded to the left into the distance for effect.

“Oh,” she replied, softly furrowing a delicate brow with concern.

“But it really doesn’t matter. What is important is how I’m going to convince my dad that the Blackwood men are about to start a new tradition of proper schooling in London.”

Gemma broke into a brilliant smile as we strolled back toward the house hand-in-hand. “Nigel, I love the way you always surprise me.” She leaned closer and placed a soft kiss on my cheek.

“That’s great, Gem, because sometimes I even surprise myself.”

Bubbles
By Cameryn Wilkinson, Silas Deane Middle School

We weren’t supposed to be known, and we only appear in the imagination of the children who need us, but every time a child found us hiding under their bed or watching them from the view of their closet, they would go crying to their parents making our jobs harder. Once the children realize that we aren’t real, we fade away into another toddler’s imagination. Our job is to protect and keep the children safe, however all I’ve done is scare the kids from sleeping in their own bed, that is, until I met Bailey Blake.

Her brown bangs dangled from the edge of the bed, until slowly her vibrant, green, toddler eyes stared with a curiosity that shocked me, making my black scales turn into a vivid yellow. My head slowly turns to the side and she mimics me. I scrunch my nose and she does the same, squinting her eyes while making her freckled nose wrinkle up like mine. Confused why she wasn’t screaming yet, like most children who come in contact with me, I lean forward. Immediately, the toddler’s head retreats back above the bed—I back away again, knowing this time Bailey probably pulled the sheets above her head; I lift my head back up at the sound of her feet thudding the ground.

On her stomach now, Bailey reached her hand under the bed.

“Bubbles?” She says in whisper so faint I could barely hear her. With my hissing voice I let out, “Bailey.”

Unexpectedly, she lets out a giggle and I can see her small crooked teeth formed in a smile—something I haven’t seen in awhile. Bailey’s chubby hands found their way towards my face as she began to feel the color changing scales that make up my whole body.

“Bubbles!” She erupts again with laughter that changes my scales to a green almost the same shade as her eyes.

Suddenly, I could feel a vibration through the floor. I crawl out from under the bed quickly, grab the laughing child and drop her onto the bed, and as fast as I can tuck her in.

“Goodnight Bailey.” Before the bedroom door opens, I slip back underneath the bed and my scales turn black, so I can’t be seen.

“Mommy!” A head of hair, like mine, peaks out from behind the door of my new room.

“Hey sweet pea,” Mommy walked up to the bed, tucking in the blankets even though Bubbles already did that. She swept the hair out of my eyes and traced her fingers along my face like I trace the shapes at my new ‘Big Kid’ school.

“How do you like your new big kid bed?” I feel a bounce as Mommy sits by my feet at the end of the pink blankets. It’s definitely bouncy! It’s like a trampoline. I wonder if any of the kids at big kid school have as cool of a bed as mine.

“It’s big.” I wiggle my toes that can be slightly seen at the bottom of the blanket, to show her the end
of me compared to the end of the bed. “And bouncy! Oh, and I made a new friend!” I almost forgot to tell mommymy about Bubbles. I’m so silly. How can I forget about my first friend that I made since we started to live in the new house. I say it’s like Barbie’s dream house but Mommy says it’s a ranch.

“A new friend? Because of the bed?” Her nose wrinkles and Mommy’s eyebrows scrunch. I copy what she did with her face. Laughing she asks, “What’s your friend’s name?”

“Bubbles.” I point to the edge of the bed. “He’s hiding under the bed. He’s a bit shy, but that’s okay. He makes funny faces too.”

“Did I just hear that there is a boy hiding under your bed?!” Dad comes barging in; his serious face made my smile even bigger and giggles came out of me before I even knew I was laughing.

“No Daddy,” I say between laughs. “Bubbles isn’t a boy.”

“So you have a girl hiding under your bed?” Dad questions.

“No, he’s ... he’s a .... a ....” I didn’t know what Bubbles was, but he definitely isn’t like any of the boys and girls in my class. “Bubbles is a monster.” No other word could explain the scales that change from black to green, all over his body, yellow eyes that look like a cat in a book Mommy used to read me.

“You have a monster under your bed!!” Daddy put his hands to the sides of his mouth that formed a circle and his blue eyes got big. “Does he nibble at your toes in the middle of the night, scrape his long glowing nails on the wooden parts of the bed, sink his teeth into the pillow-” Before Daddy could finish, Mommy stopped him.

“Brayden!” Dad looked at mommy and shrugged his shoulders. “Bailey, there are no monsters under your bed. Don’t worry.” What was she talking about? I just told her I met Bubbles and he’s a monster under my bed, right?

“But Bubbles is under my bed,” I explained.

“Have you nothing to be scared of Bailey. Bubbles won’t come out and kill you in the middle of the ni-” Mommy nudged Daddy’s shoulder, making him stop talking again.

“What he meant was, you have nothing under your bed, so you don’t have to be scared tonight.” They don’t get it. Bubbles isn’t like the ones in the stories that Daddy tells me. Bubbles is nice and doesn’t ‘nibble my toes’.

“Bubbles is my friend, but Mommy and Daddy are almost out the door.”

“Goodnight Sweet Pea.” With a quiet bang of the door, Mommy and Daddy were gone.

A few weeks pass, and every night as I stare at the ankles of Bailey’s parents, I heard Bailey getting cut off every time she tries to tell them about me. But when I heard faints sounds of the toddler snoring, I slithered out from under the bed and wander around the house, keeping my scaly hands on the walls throughout each turn in the hallway.

Another night goes by and I watch Bailey’s parents make their way toward the door, flipping the light switch and slowly closing the door behind them.

“Bubbles? Are you here?” I saw Bailey’s bangs peak over the side of the bed, and her vigorous, jade eyes stare at my cat-like yellow ones as if it was the first night.

“Of course I’m here. I’ll always be here.”

After tucking her in, I stand at her door, staring at the peaceful child dreaming the dream that she’ll want to tell me about tomorrow. I slip out of the dark room and into the pitch black hallway. The air wafted a smell that burned my nostrils. With my hand on the wall, I work my way through the small house, trying to follow the revolting odor. In the kitchen, the scent was brought clear to me. On the oven, a cloth was left on an un-attended oven that was still burning. A small flame lit the area, growing bigger and bigger. Trying to grasp the blaze in my hand and extinguishing it, it was as if my scales gave it more fuel and power.

Why wasn’t the smoke detector going off? Was it broken?

With haste, I rush to the parents’ bedroom and try everything to wake them up from their slumber. Ripping off the duvet covers, slapping their faces, jumping on the bed, but every move I made was like I wasn’t even there, my hands would go through whatever I touched, not affecting it at all.

I needed to protect Bailey because that’s my job; that’s why she is the child chosen for me. In her dark room, with only the moon supplying slivers of light across the wall, a gentle shake of the child was enough to wake her.

Staring out the window in the bedroom, I watch her parents and herself make it out safely, tears running down Bailey’s face. The child was able to wake her parents just in time before the smoking flame devoured the front door. I, however, couldn’t leave the house; it’s one of the rules of being a monster that
protected children.

The house was consumed in flames; I remember hearing Bailey whaling outside and soon after, I lost sight of her green tear-filled eyes through the fire. Looking at my scaly arms that turned into the same beautiful shade of Bailey's eyes I began to flicker, slowly fading away with every blink.

Bailey stopped believing in me. She believed I was dead in the fire and gone forever. I watch the last glimpse of myself disappear but soon enough I look down again to see myself under a bed, orange, and covered in fur. A boy's head peeps out from the side of the bed.

"Bubbles?"

A Wild Goose Chase
by Cayleigh Goberman, East Granby Middle School

Seven year olds need their sleep. I didn't understand this as well as I do now, five years later, but I did know that I was awfully tired. Our hound dog, Goose, had been making a racket for a while and generally making it hard to sleep. She was scratching and pawing at the breezeway door. I knew how much she enjoyed running free, but there wasn't time for that activity on that afternoon. I concentrated on how comfy the couch was, and how dim it was in the room, and how very, very exhausted I was ... aaaaand Goose came snuffing up to my hand, whimpering.

"I know that you think time not spent moving is time wasted," I told the wiry, floppy-eared hound, "but could you just let us relax for one afternoon?"

Goose stared at me as if saying, "I will not."

I sighed. "Penny, make Goose go away."

Our grumpy yellow terrier mix stared balefully at me from where she lay at Mommy's feet. Then she growled at Goose and closed her eyes. Goose took the warning and decided she would rather bark at the doorknob in the next room, so she scurried off to do just that. I closed my eyes and waited for Goose to give it up and go take a nap somewhere.

"Bark bark bark bark ... Woof? Bark bark bark bark Barrorrorrorrort!" Goose's excited yapping turned to a full-on hound dog bay, then faded out.

Mommy quickly sat up. "Goose?" She called softly, then more urgently, "Goosey! Here Goose!"

She jumped up from the chair (kicking poor Penny in the process), and ran to the breezeway. Weariness forgotten, I leaped up from the couch and followed Mommy to the door- the slightly ajar door. I took more time to figure out what had happened than Mommy did.

"Dan! Goose got out!" She yelled upstairs in a panic, then bolted outside.

Swears flew down the stairs ahead of Daddy. My five year old sister, Mira, trailed after him.

"Are we going on a treasure hunt?" she asked curiously. Nobody answered her.

"Go with Mommy," was all that Daddy said before galloping out that troublesome door.

"See ya in a bit, Penny!" Mira called cheerfully as I dragged her after Daddy. We ran outside just in time to see him disappear into the woods next to our house.

"Girls, come with me," Mommy said calmly from where she had paused in our yard.

She started off into the woods with us scrambling to keep up. Mommy set a brisk pace over the dead leaves coating the forest floor. The sun shone in a cloudless sky and slanted down through the canopy, creating dappled patterns over the ferns and low bushes. The air was warm and I soon found myself taking off my sweater. It was hard to imagine anything going wrong on a day such as this.

But something did go wrong and we had little time to appreciate the green forest when we were swept up in our own worries. The only comfort we had was the persistent baying in the distance, faint but clear. We climbed over a fallen tree in the path and it suddenly occurred to me that we might never see Goose again. This scared me enough to break the silence that cloaked our little search party.

"So what's the plan?" I asked.

Mommy kept her eyes on the trail and threw these words over her shoulder: "Daddy has run ahead to search the trail. We're going to search more slowly in case Goose backtracks or Daddy happens to miss her. This way, after he has covered the woods, Daddy can look for her in the neighborhood."

"But we saw Goose run into the woods," I pressed.

Mommy gave a curt nod, but didn't say anything. I studied the trees towering over us like a forest ranger. I saw nothing unusual, but then again, I didn't know what to look for. Mira chatted along behind us as we walked under the thick, leafy canopy.
“She could have run off the path or maybe she isn’t in the woods or I know she went back home and
we’ll go back and she’s there or maybe—”
I tuned her out after about sixteen theories of where Goose could be. Suddenly the barking we had
heard in the distance increased in volume and we heard a large animal crashing through the undergrowth
somewhere to our right. The barks sounded as if they were right next to us.

“Goosey Goose-Goose! Here Goose!” Mommy called, and soon Mira and I took up the call, too.
But the baying faded and moved away from us, until it was only echoes among the trees. Mommy
picked up her phone and dialed a number while Mira and I collapsed on the ground, exhausted from our trek.

“Dan?” She said into the phone. “Goose ran right by us, heading up the trail towards you. Keep an eye
out, and listen for barking.” She exchanged a few more words with Daddy, then hung up. “Come on, girls, just a
little farther.”

We jumped to our feet (after all, it doesn’t take a long rest to get little kids recharged). We continued
our walk through the woods as we had before, and soon heard Goose in the shrubbery. The search was uneasy
after that. Mira surprised a squirrel in the path and I found a good walking stick, but we didn’t stop forging
ahead until we came to a stream. Mommy sat down on the little bridge spanning across it, and we splashed
into the cold water. I knew it was only a temporary break, but I enjoyed it nonetheless. Mira and I climbed up
onto the bridge and were throwing pebbles into the water when Mommy’s phone buzzed.

She answered it and said, “Hello?” Pause. “What?” Pause. “We’ll be right there.” She hung up and
addressed us. “Daddy found Goose.”

She stood up and started back up the path with us scurrying to keep up, peppering her with
questions. She didn’t answer many of them, though perhaps it was because we didn’t give her much of a
chance to. She said that yes, she was very happy that we found Goose, and no, we won’t ever let her off of the
leash. Mommy seemed so tired and relieved that I soon realized that questions would just make all of us more
exhausted.

I ended my chatter with the statement, “We shouldn’t let Goose off the leash on a walk. She’s too darn
fast for us!” Then I concentrated on the breeze blowing through the trees, let Mira’s questions fade into the
background, and finally got to enjoy our walk.

I got to take two steps through the door before I was knocked over by a large, slobbery, black
torpedo.

Mira jumped on top of us squeaking, “Goosey!”
Mommy walked by us and Goose jumped up to see what interesting smells Mommy had accumulated.
I watched Mommy stroke Goose’s silky, black fur, then asked Daddy, “Where was she?”

“In the neighbor’s backyard,” he said with a smile.

“She was WHERE?” I gasped. Daddy shrugged.

“It seems like she shot around the woods a couple of times, then went and frolicked around the Van
Niels’ backyard.”

Mira clapped her hands and exclaimed over “clever Goose” and how she was a “true hunting dog.” No
matter what anyone said, I knew that they were happy to see Goose home. She was part of the family, and
we’d do anything to find her if she got lost. Even Penny came over and smuffed her.

Mommy smiled and said, “Goose is all tired out, so maybe she’d allow us to have that afternoon nap
now.”

“Unless,” I added, “she wants to take us on another wild Goose chase.”

His Legacy
by Maria Proulx, St. Bernard’s School

They propelled their skateboards forward on the hot freshly paved asphalt. The vibrant morning sun
smiled down on them and they enjoyed the exhilarating weekend buzz. He gazed upon the picturesque
landscape, raindrops still clinging to the flora in local gardens from the big storm last night. Filled with the
unmistakable feeling of glee, he shouted out merrily to his friend, whizzing along side him.

They skidded to a stop in front of a long stretch of road. Glancing at each other with daring grins on
their faces, they nodded. With a brisk push, they were off, flying down the road. As he inched ahead of his
companion, he threw his hands joyfully into the clear, cloudless, blue sky above. As he hurtled by all
obstacles, he suddenly spotted an object out of the corner of his eye. A seed of fear was planted in his head as
he veered to the left, and then to the right, but to no avail. He braced himself to the catastrophe that was sure
to come.  CRACK!!!  All went dark.

One fateful day in December, he died. He was quite a character, charming, in an eccentric way. He was quirky. He wore bowties proudly to school, and was known as a prankster, a clown. Who else would make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich for the school talent show? He was smart, funny, and a talented runner.

No one expects bad things to happen to them. Every fear that I have ever pondered upon in my young life, I have been immediately reassured by the odds. There are over seven billion people on our planet. What are the odds of anything bad happening to you?

The young feel immortal. We feel invincible. Helmets are optional. Seatbelts an after thought.

I had never been formally introduced to him. I had watched him run alongside my brother in school track tournaments, heard the witty jokes and comical skits that he performed, and caught glances of him around town. In this way, he was etched into my memory. Yet, when he died, I felt an immediate bond between us . . . Was it because we attended the same school? Was it because my brother knew him? Was it because we both were young?

This wasn’t the way it was supposed to turn out. This was no fairy tale.

Memories of him . . . So many of them lay in our school, tucked into even the smallest of places. They are gathered in dusty corners, are stacked carefully upon tall wooden shelves, and are piled upon one another in boxes. Everyone wants to be known for how they lived, not how they died.

The Reading Dance
by Victoria Cannon, East Granby Middle School

There I am
Alone and bored
Glancing around hopelessly
Waiting for something to do

Across the way, it lies
Calling to me in a whisper
I grasp onto the silky cover
Feeling the luxury of letters tickle my fingers

Overwhelmed with excitement
I flip through the pages
Slowly at first, then faster
Performing a dance with my eyes
The reading dance

The scene flashes before me
My stomach lurches
I am falling into the book
Flailing as I fall ferociously
Landing loosely on my feet
Swooning through the story

The characters come alive
Like entering a dream
When they run, I run
When they fall in love, I fall in love
When they die, a part of me dies
Mentally attaching me to those in my book
When I finish one,
A spark of inspiration crawls into my mind
It forces me to write
When I write, others read my writing
Inspiring more reading
Creating a circle of read

It goes round and round
Swirling like a ferris wheel
Delicately like a dance
The reading dance

The Meadow
by Nora Youtz, Amity Middle School-Bethany

Vibrant in the cerulean sky,
the sun rules until the moon arrives to take its place
Emerald blades ripple across the meadow
Trees sway gently in the skittish wind,
their leaves dancing upon the branches
A river swims through polished stones,
through the beating earth
Birds, their wings outstretched,
take to the skies,
soaring with songs of freedom
Children run through the sun-kissed meadow,
through the emerald blades,
their gales of laughter lingering in the shy air
And as the sky streaks with red and orange,
and as the sun touches the earth,
and as the wind whispers,
the trees sway gently in the tender wind,
the jade leaves dance upon their branches,
the river flows steadily through the heart of the land,
and as the thump, thump, thump of the meadow slows down;
the end of the day drops like a satin curtain

The Hour of Pink and Gold, Isabelle Busch, Eastern Middle School
Eighth Grade

In Favor of Stars
by Elyza Bruce, Woodbury Middle School

The year is 1939, Berlin Germany, and you’re sitting on a park bench with God. You stride over with that debonair soldier’s walk of yours, drowning in decorum, and accompany a man in a newsboy cap with wise, benevolent eyes sitting on that ordinary park bench in the snow. You smile at him, as he smiles at you.

“Good evening officer,” he would say to you, eyes cunning and watchful. You would tip your brown hat bearing a red patch, brighter than any man’s blood, not thinking much of the man and reply; “Good evening to you sir, I trust your day has been just fine?”

“Oh I’m quite content,” that smile was unbreaking as the man spoke. “I trust yours was alright as well?”

All those who passed don’t shed a glance at you as you talk to God, you with your scarlet patches and your eyes like the brightest of summer day skies.

“Mine was quite alright, thank you sir.” An answer as mundane as the question. But what was crouching beneath the words? Strange how things seemingly bare yet so commonly used hold all the wisdom of the ocean.

He looks at you with those wise eyes, feeling as if he’s looking through you. You pretend to ignore it.

“My name is Klaus sir,” you would say, because in some unexplainable way you feel obligated to
introduce yourself to this man, despite the fact you think this man already knew that your name indeed was Klaus.

“It’s nice to meet you young man,” the man would smile a smile that sent a shiver down your spine, “I am God,” he would say as if he introduced himself as Hans or Wolfgang.

You would chuckle at the man’s claims, deeming him some trickster or charlatan of the prophet, but in any case, you play along. “Oh I see,” you would say with a sly grin. “It’s an honor to meet you ... God.”

Though, your smile hinders, because his does not... It's relentless, and knowing, and intimidating ...

As you sit on that park bench with God, in your brown uniform and scarlet patch you reevaluate the wellness of your day. Then you soon realize, your day wasn’t alright at all. Somehow you know God knows this but you say nothing. You never tell him of what you have heard and saw on the frigid streets of Berlin, where the ice was cruel and the people crueler. A city where at night, stars scatter the sky so acutely it's like staring at loopholes in black silk.

Have you ever seen, scarlet patches adorned on doors, arms, and hats and any place where the red contrasted ever so deeply with the gray and dank of Berlin, as if they were honorable flags to fly? Have you ever seen so many men in brown that when they march the streets it’s like a miraculous wave of dust and gunfire? Have you ever seen the ground so covered in shattered glass, that it looked as if the very ground reflected the stars in the sky?

Because I have.

Have you ever seen a man so emaciated, it seemed his soul was tugging at the pure whiteness his skin? That his bones were nothing but knives tearing at his flesh? Have you ever heard screams and tireless scratching against smoldering hot metal, of carrion clawing at their death as if they had any chance of escaping? Have you ever seen a man shoveling the ashes of stars and innocence, and let it blow into the wind so it could only be forgotten whilst the snow?

Because I have.

Have you ever seen a parade, a mirthless jamboree where the marchers trudged in the ice in striped uniforms, their faces skeletons as they groveled under eyes of a summer’s day sky like cattle? Have you ever seen a man so possessed by his uniform and his gun, the moment the stars flickered too bright, gunpowder spat from his lips and whiplashes were as intrinsic as oxygen? Have you ever felt someone’s life in your rattling hands like something as disposable as a piece of paper, and they tell you to honor your perfect blue eyed facade and shoot? To be the perfect little brainless puppet with a gun? Have you ever seen a man that only saw the world in the colors: red, white, and black?

Because I have.

Have you ever seen blue eyed children stuffed into uniforms like turkey dinners and put into endless, impeccable lines, and told to shout *God Bless the Fuhrer* like saying *please* and *thank you*? Have you ever seen your mother button up your brown uniform, and straighten your red patch and look at you in the mirror as if you truly are the perfect, little soldier. A blue eyed soldier. Have you ever seen a man gifted ten lashes because he granted the brown eyed man shelter in his own home? And ten more because he spat at those heavy boots and glared at that red patch?

Because I have.

Because I have seen hatred of the stars that covered the streets like lamp lights in a skyline, of stars that hid, and of stars that screamed and of stars that looked at you. Stars that looked at your uniform and your red patch, as if in any moment, your gun would obliterate them into a supernova.

“Your day wasn’t alright ... was it Klaus?” God asks, soft and wise.

I sucked in a breath that tasted like smoke, and I looked at God with a weak smile and said, “They say ... they say you have a plan ...” God tipped his head as those words shivered out of my mouth. “I don’t wish to be rude sir, but, I think you’ve abandoned us all.”

*Abandoned the stars*, I had thought, but had not said.

God’s smile was inextricable as the bus rolled in down the street with a low, irritable rumble as its tires raked against ice, and God got to his feet, and before he boarded that bus into the sky he said, “I don’t have a plan.” He said, “like a bird, I created your nest, birthed your egg, and taught you how to fly, and from then on, I let you fly free.”

You then watch from that park bench as the bus rolls out and off to a distant icy street. That day you give your brown uniform to an indifferent woman behind a desk. You smile at her; she frowns. You burn your patch akin with the flames that reduced books and stars to ashes.
When you strut the icy streets and cross paths with a man bearing a red patch with an utmost blooming pride and he asks you with a blue eyed smile, "Why haven't you been in work Klaus?"

And when you tell him you burned your patch he looks at you, looks at you with those blue eyes like you are the one that holds a gun, death, a devil's artifice. That you hold a gun to a man's head because he favors stars over crosses. That you are the one that God damned to Hell under the endless, infinite stars ...

And when he shoves past you on that icy street in Berlin Germany, you smile. You smile because you'd much rather marvel at the stars of Hell than be blinded by the sun in Heaven.

Then you remember how you sat on a park bench with God, and that God didn't have a plan for us all. That you were to damn yourself to the stars if you wished to burn. If you wished to ignite and succumb to the flames and overwhelm the lights of Heaven.

On that icy street in Berlin Germany, the stars wink at you and the moon smiles a devilish smile, and you are blind to the colors red, white and black, in the gray and brown of Berlin.

And with a devil's tongue, you whisper a thanks to God. The sun creeps from the horizon, the ice gone to fire, and you burn.

Gazing Hill
by Allison Su, Amity Middle School-Bethany

Time flies, going by,
Brother said to me one night,
Worth a thousand words.

I made this haiku when I was only thirteen, four years ago, after my brother had described manga as every picture worth a thousand words. I am the heart, and he is the soul, but now he rarely ever spends time with me. I need him to return.

I live in the outskirts of Tokyo, my house traditional although the world is contemporary. Soon, I will go to college, and my brother will venture to outer space as the youngest research scientist of thirty-one others. He constantly studies, locked up in his room, not a sound permeating through the door. Now, however, I can hear the tapping of fingers against a keyboard.

"Hiro," I said, knocking on his door, "I'd like to talk to you." "Suko, you know I am busy. Please don't bother me now." "But, Brother ..."

"Please, Suko."

I hesitated before saying, "All right brother. If you say so..."

Frustrated, I turned away, clenching my fist as stormy gray clouds loomed over my head.

The sun glared at me, so bright it felt like my pupils were dilated. The shiny skyscrapers reflected the light, making it even harder to see.

With one arm over my eyes, I stepped onto the main levitram, a magnetic platform that acts like an elevator, to Tokyo's Merchandise Central. Navigating through the crowds of tourists and shoppers was like twisting and turning in Daedalus's labyrinth: dangerous (at least it felt that way) and tortuous. Eventually, after squeezing between couples, I arrived at Oppo's FroYo Bar.

As I walked in, the door's bell rang and a blast of cool air hit my face. In the corner of the bar, I spotted my best friend, Yumi, at a small table with a banana split sitting before her.

"Hi Suko," she called and waved at me to come over.

"Hey Yumi," I replied, sitting down in a chair.

"You want to talk about Hiro?"

"Yeah, he's too busy studying to pay any attention to me."

"Well, he must be stressed. Perhaps you should just wait it out."

I took a small bite of creamy vanilla and banana with chocolate sauce. "But ... still. "Look, just find a time to talk with him, okay?"

"Yeah ... I'll see what I can do."

That night at dinner, the stars glimmered, and I sat at the destitute wooden table, alone.

Mother and Father were out working, and Hiro was still studying. Everything stopped moving for the quiet and melancholy. I sipped at my sakura tea, wishing for sugar.
After a few heartbeats, there came the slightest of sounds, like a creak of a door. The patter of footsteps that followed crescendoed until I saw a tall figure in the doorway. Hiro.

“Hiro?” I asked, setting down the ceramic teacup. “It’s not usual for you to stop studying so early.” Hiro’s shadow grew larger and deeper as it fell over me, and his tall form looked quite foreboding.

With a gentle touch, he placed a hand on my arm.

“Suko, will you go to Gazing Hill with me tonight? I have a late birthday gift for you.” “Gazing Hill?” I asked, setting down the ceramic teacup. “It’s not usual for you to stop studying...”

Hiro’s shadow grew larger and deeper as it fell over me, and this tall form looked quite foreboding.

With a gentle touch, he placed a hand on my arm.

“I made this haiku when I was only thirteen, four years ago...”

“Yes, Brother. I will go with you.”

***

The pervasive field of navy blue scraping my head glittered with all sorts of tiny white dots that brightened the whole world with their beauty. Even the nebulous clouds were shining like the sun reflecting on snow. The impossibly bright, glowing quasars peeked at me from behind the milky way’s canvas.

“The sky is filled with life tonight,” I murmured.

“The life of the sky is what keeps everything awake,” Hiro said in response. “And the life that is the veil of hope,” I finished.

We sat, knees against our chests, taciturn, analyzing the stars and piecing together constellations. Then, all of a sudden, there was a glint in the corner of my eye. A blazing white fireball whizzed past my line of sight. I stood up instinctively, searching for it though I already knew it was gone.

“Halley’s Comet,” I said, more to myself than Hiro. “I completely forgot. It’s July 28, 2061.”

“Yes, it’s 75 years after it appeared last. I hope you enjoyed seeing it?” A smile played on Hiro’s lips. I looked down, hair getting in my face, not wanting to express my thoughts.

“What’s wrong, Suko?”

“It’s just... Halley’s Comet is so rare, so hard to come by. I wish I caught it on my holographic camera.”

Hiro did not say anything for a few moments. I knew he was silent because he wanted me to figure something out, but I had no idea what he wanted me to say, so finally, he spoke.

“Maybe life isn’t about getting everything you want, Suko, or achieving your dreams to their greatest extent. Maybe it’s about accepting what you already have. Isn’t it enough that you got to see Halley’s Comet at all? Many people don’t get to. You have experienced something very special, Sister.”

“But... why did people have to kill so many children during World War III? Did they do it to create this ‘utopia’ we’re living in now? They couldn’t possibly think that such horrifying deeds could create peace and harmony.”

“Yes, and perhaps they were just following their goals, their dreams. They could not accept the beautiful world they already lived in. You live in a beautiful world, Suko. Just look at the sky...”

I looked up, stars smiling at me. It was then that I realized what Hiro was trying to tell me all along. We wouldn’t get much time together, and I had to welcome this fact. And I would.

“I accept.”

***

That night, I decided to call it the haiku of acceptance.

*Time flies, going by,*  
*Brother said to me one night,*  
*Worth a thousand words.*

**Living the “And Up” Life**  
*By Emily Brouder, Elizabeth Adams Middle School*

I hate shoe stores more than most people. Sure, I enjoy the idea of a room full of the newest, trendiest, foot coverings, but my physical makeup does not allow me to take part in the purchasing of such objects. In simpler terms, my feet are huge, not big, which makes finding shoes almost impossible. They take having “pretty big” feet to an artform. This is what takes the fun out of shoe shopping. Most stores carry up to a size eleven. On a good day, I’m a size thirteen. On a good day. This means that I usually shop in the back of these stores, like DSW or Payless. Not the back where they sell socks. Not the back where the bathroom and employee break rooms are. The real, tried-and-true back where no small footed beings dare to tread. I must lumber to this very back of every store I visit, no matter its location. East, West, North, South, it doesn’t
change the outcome. The dark corners of “the back” are crowded with cobwebs. The ancient sign hanging above the rack reading, “Size 11 and up.” First of all, what does “And up” even mean? Well I’ll tell ya’ what it means: You are out of luck. Say sayonara to those sweet sandals you wanted. There are no shoes here, bigfoot, you may as well make your own. This has happened to me more times than I can count on my two hands and my two, big feet. This is why ... on my most recent and unsuccessful excursion ... I gave up. I just gave up. I gave up because I live the “And Up” life. This is the life of those who attempt to buy shoes, but know in their hearts that if they have any shoes for them, they will either look like they are from an old folk’s home lost and found or left over from a New Year’s Eve party at a Nineties dance club. I wish this wasn’t the way it had to be, but sadly for myself, and those like me, this is what happens. So thank you, Zappos, 6pm, Finish Line, and all of the other places, online, or in person, who try to help us, but you haven’t succeeded yet. It doesn’t have to be this way, whether it be online stores or in person. Maybe someday, because of you, we will be able to tastefully, comfortably, stylishly, and affordably buy shoes for what seem to be, our ever growing feet.

Oliver Twist: A Classic of Our Time
by Aresh Pourkavoos, Talcott Academy

Does a classic owe its fame to cultural inertia that has kept it on recommended reading lists? Must it have been approved by high-brow critics and recognized officially by educational institutions, or is it even enough that it was penned over a century ago? By definition, a classic possesses artistic quality and has universal appeal, thus remaining popular up to the present day. There is one aspect of a few true classics that makes them stand out from the rest—unexpected relevance. One can enjoy the book on a superficial level, but after reflection, sees that its message, although intended for the past, still applies to today’s society. Charles Dickens’ Oliver Twist is one such classic, selling millions of copies since its completion as a social critique in 1839. It is the story of the orphan Oliver Twist, who is born in a workhouse and expelled into the world of Victorian London nine years later. He encounters the lowest criminals in that society before he is adopted by his granduncle, receives an inheritance, and lives happily ever after. Why has this novel remained a classic if it is a critique of the Victorian-era society and not of today’s? Oliver Twist's allegorical view of personal goodness rewards today’s reader with the satisfaction of seeing good triumph over evil. The horrifying conditions of Victorian London’s slums and workhouses are by no means exaggerated, so Dickens’ characters can come to life in this highly realistic setting. While the social problems exposed in the book are not nearly as bad today as they were a century and a half ago, it prompts us to look deeper into our own society. Oliver Twist’s universal appeal via its emotional connection and its exposure of social problems that still exist have allowed this novel to become a classic that remains relatable today.

The fact that the protagonist, Oliver, symbolizes the morality in all people draws an emotional response from the reader. Similarly, the knowledge that the story is partially based on Dickens’ early life makes the reader more sympathetic. Oliver never actively fights any evil forces. His “goodness” comes from resisting temptation to become a criminal, even after meeting the lowlifes of Victorian London. This is sometimes considered a writing flaw, as Oliver is just tossed around by fate, rather than taking action to shape his destiny. The advantage of this, however, is that it makes Oliver less of an epic hero and more of a relatable character with timeless human vulnerabilities. Who has not felt helpless at the hands of fortune at one time or another? The iconic moment of Oliver begging the tyrannical Mr. Bumble for more gruel has readers rooting for the underdog. Oliver’s goodness, proven to be incorruptible, allows him to survive to the happy ending. In Dickens’ preface to Oliver Twist, he remarks, “...I wished to show in little Oliver the principle of Good surviving through every adverse circumstance and triumphing at last” (Preface to the Third Edition, 13). Even though the Western world does not have as much poverty and crime today as it did in the 1800s, the storytelling element of the “happily ever after” appeals to present-day readers just as much as it did over a century ago.

The gruel scene serves to arouse sympathy in readers, and those who know Dickens’ biography feel an emotional connection to the author as well as the character. “Following his father’s imprisonment, Charles Dickens was forced to leave school to work at a boot-blacking factory alongside the River Thames. At the rundown, rodent-ridden factory, Dickens earned six shillings a week labeling pots of ‘blacking’ ...” (Charles Dickens—Author). We read about and feel the pain of a starving nine-year-old boy, especially when we begin to understand Dickens’ childhood. There were other social commentators in Dickens’ time, but this event allowed him to put much more passion and detail into Oliver Twist. The emotional connection between the reader, Oliver, and Dickens himself has elevated this scene to being one of the most famous in literary history.

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This connection is further strengthened by the novel’s realism. Dickens gave a detailed and colorful “slice of life” look at Victorian London that allows the reader to live vicariously through the characters. In *Oliver Twist*, Dickens describes an area of London known as Jacob’s Island: “… the walls are crumbling down; … the doors are falling into the streets; the chimneys are blackened, but they yield no smoke. … The houses have no owners; they are broken open, and entered upon by those who have the courage; and there they live, and there they die …” (386). This vivid description is an example of how “[Dickens] looked at London in a very original way,” says Andrew Sanders, whose new book *Charles Dickens’ London* follows the author around town. ‘London is the chief character in his work’” (Dalzell). *Oliver Twist* acts as an ambassador to posterity, allowing readers today to see Victorian London for what it was and feel sympathy for what the city’s poor endured in their everyday lives.

*Oliver Twist* exposed the gritty realism of London’s 19th-century workhouse conditions in vivid detail to highlight a social issue. “Charles Dickens wrote his novel in the wake of the New Poor Law of 1834, legislation that aimed to reduce government spending on welfare by deterring the poor from seeking assistance” (Crone 53). Those in the workhouses, like young Oliver, were underfed, overworked and mistreated. The conditions are portrayed satirically in the book, attracting the reader with witty sarcasm “Those who could work were pressed into hard labour and those who couldn’t were cared for at a minimum standard. All were subject to a harsh disciplinary regime” (Crone 53). Indeed, Dickens goes so far in his criticism of the Poor Law to illustrate the government’s false impression that the poor enjoyed their fate: “The members of [the parish] board were very sage, deep, philosophical men; and when they came to turn their attention to the workhouse, they found out at once, what ordinary folks would never have discovered—the poor people liked it!” (Dickens, “Oliver Twist” 11). Even though most people in a modern-day society do not have to fight through as much crime and poverty as Oliver does, satirizing government policy is as much a part of life today as it was then.

Dickens also portrayed criminals with gritty realism to add impact to his message that the poor were completely disregarded and their plight should be noticed by the upper class and government. This message remains relevant today. Unlike earlier novels that featured romanticized versions of the criminal lower class, *Oliver Twist* was different. “… Dickens’ 1841 preface answers those who would lump *Oliver Twist* with the [Newgate] novels… by insisting that his portrayal of Fagin’s gang, far from romanticizing villains, intends ‘to show them as they really are, forever skulking uneasily through the dirtiest paths of life, with the great, black, ghastly gallows closing up their prospects, turn them where they may’” (Muller 15-16). Oliver and the other characters are brought to life in a way that inspires reflection about connections to our society.

Another social reform message in *Oliver Twist* remains relevant today. Dickens used Nancy, a thief and a prostitute, to prove that the poor were not inherently evil. “… Dickens portrays her sympathetically — after all, she dies to save Oliver …” (Flanders). Nancy risks and ends up sacrificing her life for Oliver. This is central to Dickens’ social message, which is that many of the poor are not depraved and criminals of their own volition, but victims of circumstance. This is perhaps a message that we have not embraced fully.

We may not hear about it much, but the poor are still discriminated against in our society. Social research has proven our continued prejudice. “Many Americans disdain the poor — and science proves it. When people were placed in neuroimaging machines and shown photos of the poor and homeless, their brains responded as though the photos depicted things, not humans—a sign of revulsion” (Lubrano 2013). *Oliver Twist* remains interesting and relevant. On a deeper level, the social issues of the poor that Dickens exposes in the book are still with us.

*Oliver Twist* is an incredibly famous classic and has earned a distinguished position in today’s literature - and for good reason. The symbolism of Oliver as the “Principle of Good” has made him a relatable character, allowing us to identify with Oliver and to see into Dickens’ early life. His accurate, unromanticized descriptions of Victorian London’s slums and criminals were a call to social reform. Prejudice against the poor is an issue which remains unresolved to this day, allowing the message of the book to continue to resonate with present-day readers. *Oliver Twist* lets us look at a society of the past, and it drives us to look deeper into ours and gradually change it for the better.

*Note:* The text above is a continuation of the provided information and is not the end of the document.

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**Works Cited**


**Baby Shoes**  
*by Carley Simler, Vernon Center Middle School*

Unworn, untattered,
They sat still and quiet underneath the crib.
Although no baby sat in the crib,
To wail out in the night for love and attention.
The galaxy of stars above the rocker gleamed,
Although they seemed dull tonight.
The zoo of stuffed animals seemed to have a blank stare.
Sunlight shone throughout the empty room,
Reaching the glossy shoes as if trying to comfort them.
The sliver of light remained on the shiny shoes.
There was no need for them,
But there they sat under the silent crib.

**A Snowman**  
*by Juliet Young, Elizabeth Adams Middle School*

A snowman  
not clad in a velvet top hat  
or woolen mittens  
or a cotton scarf  
or blessed with coal for eyes to see  
or a sapling’s arms  
or pebbles for rough buttons  

A snowman  
adorned with a blue coat  
a satchel  
a pair of worn shoes  
a container of gunpowder  
a musket  
an assortment of bullet wounds  
a ruddy face  
a pair of eyes shut tight  

A snowman  
a soldier frozen in time  
A snowman  
Not of childhood design
Ninth Grade

Smile, Sophie Spaner, Valley Regional High School
**EASY STEPS TO FIT IN FOR GIRLS ~2016 Edition**

by Samantha Sims, Cooperative Arts and Humanities High School

1. **You think you’re beautiful now? Forget it!** No matter how good or decent you may think you appear, you’re ugly. Don’t fret! There is a solution — makeup. Apply pounds of foundation all over your face. Don’t stop caking it on until you feel like someone else and look like a blank canvas of nothing but your skin tone. Begin building up a plaster-like mask full of eyeshadow, eyeliner, highlight, and false lashes. Brush on a color that compliments your eyes for eyeshadow. Draw on wings so sharp they could cut. Paint on some blush and highlighter. Finally, blend out that powder we called contour so the complete look seems “natural.” Don’t ever let anyone catch you with a bare face. You’re ugly. Remember?

2. **If you’re black, be ashamed.** Afros are nappy, but don’t straighten them. If you do, you’ll be accused of “trying to be white.” It’s an easy fix, though: get yourself a weave. Your beautiful, big lips, lovely curves, and voluminous hair aren’t appreciated. Tweets like “White girls do it better!” are true. Listen up, black girls: Skin bleaching is your savior. Oh, and by the way, your brothers are destined to be killed, but you’ll get used to it.

3. **Being mean is just being nice!** Being mean is being honest. It doesn’t matter if your honesty causes tears and can tear others down. They’re too sensitive, anyway. Point out your friends’ biggest insecurities. Laugh right in their faces and right at their pain. They need to learn how to take a joke. You’re doing them a favor. Besides racism, sexism, homophobia, stereotyping, religious profiling, transphobia, and bullying are just words, right?

4. **Expose all of your skin.** Exposing certain parts you wouldn’t normally reveal to the public is normal. Dress like a stripper: boobs and butt out. It’s fashion. But if you get raped … it’s on you! It’s your fault for showing any bit of your leg, ladies. That’s right. If you get harmed because you’re dressing like society tells you to, the script will flip. “She shouldn’t have been showing that much skin anyway. It was bound to happen,” they’ll say.

5. **Paper thin is in.** Crop tops and tight fitting clothes are a very big part of fashion today. No denying that. But who wants to see a fat pig stuffed into a bikini? Do whatever you need to do to stay thin. Starve. Take pills. Get surgery.

6. **Waste your money on high-end brands.** Splurge all of your paycheck/parents’ money on the flyest brands. That’s what everyone is wearing these days. Adidas, Hollister … It’s expensive, but would you rather be laughed out of school? It’s better to just do it, like Nike says!

7. **White girls can’t dance.** End of story. Don’t even try it, Sarah.

8. **Drake is Jesus!** If you don’t know Drake, you’re irrelevant. If you don’t like Drake, you’re Satan. If you don’t listen to rap at all, you are nonexistent. The best thing to do is just to listen to Drake. It’s the safest option.

9. **Potty-mouthed kids are cute.** Think kids swearing like sailors is crazy? Oh no! It’s funny! Do not correct them. Encourage them! Make sure you get it on video, too.

Thanks for reading! As you can see, these steps are very easy to follow. As long as you follow them exactly, you’ll blend right in.

Here’s my real advice, though: **Don’t fit in.**

**TV Together**

by Sophie Spaner, Valley Regional High School

The television blared in the next room over. Without even having to be there, I knew that dad was sitting in his leather La-Z-Boy. It was worn out around his butt and back area, faded to a light, flaky, beige. Stains plagued the arm rests, probably from beer and cheap diet soda, stuff he bought from the local discount store in the $1 bin, next to pool noodles. In the cracks, stale chips and pretzels buried themselves in any empty nook they could find. Dad was probably wearing his sweat-stained undershirt, the one that used to be white, but was now various shades of yellow and brown, the one that goes down so low that his sparse hair comes out from the edges, the one that shows off his loose arms and his circular body shape. He had tried dieting and decided that it wasn’t for him, that he was more of a color-outside-of-the-lines kind of guy. Either that, or he couldn’t give up his off-brand tortilla chips with a mayonnaise and mustard dip—his specialty.
Upstairs, my mother was probably crying while watching a soap opera. Mascara was probably running down her face, wiped away only to make the tracks look like skid marks on the road. My parents didn’t watch T.V. together anymore. She felt she connected less and less with my dad and more and more with Diego Sanchez, the leading man of Promises and Secrets, which was her favorite program. She once told me that it was “his rogue manliness, his sensitivity, his rich humour,” but I think that it was just the fact that Diego Sanchez did not spend his evenings in his smelly La-Z-Boy drinking cheap beer. I never suggested this theory to my mom.

My mom was a secretary for a nail salon. I did not know that such a job was necessary, but she said that her job was more important than the governor’s—she would ready women to feel empowered and confident for them to do their work in changing the world. I asked why she wasn’t the one changing the world. She pinched my earlobes and limited my curfew from 11:00 to 9:00 and took away my phone privileges for a week. The curfew didn’t matter, as I never went out anyway, but the stern manner of the punishment made sure that I would never mouth off to my mother again. The phone thing was disappointing, as I liked talking to Tony Santos on the phone every night, as he is very knowledgeable on the topic of unique recipes. His parents own an Italian restaurant, even though they are Brazilian. He walks me through the steps and the ingredients and I listen to the sound of his voice and think about the day that I will not have to cook dinner, because I will be rich enough to eat out at fancy restaurants every night, but I will sometimes stop by Tony’s family’s place to make sure they stay in business. My feelings of disappointment in my mother’s irrelevance would never fade, and I promised myself that I would never be like her, crying with the harsh glow of Diego Sanchez projecting on her face, her eyes glazed with a reflection of his quietly muscular frame.

Tony sat with me at lunch at school. He gave me a flower every day, or sometimes the weeds from the playground, or grass. He said it was because he thinks that I’m pretty and sometimes he can’t find flowers. I told him that I thought he was also very pretty, which he is. He has hair that sits atop his head the same way a bird would nestle itself in a bush. It curls and waves all over the place. His coffee colored skin is dotted with little brown spots, similar to freckles, but more sporadic. He has very skinny arms and very long hands, which he says comes from his father. I wondered if I would grow up to have my mother’s heavy ankles or my dad’s bloated frame, mother’s bulky nose or dad’s addictions. I hoped not. Tony said that I always made sad faces and asked me why. I told him it was because I couldn’t call him that night, which meant that I would be stuck with mayonnaise and mustard chips. He laughed. Tony was always laughing.

After lunch, we went to English class. My English teacher, Mr. Raphaeli, told us stories all day. I liked Mr. Raphaeli. He stands in an angular way, pointed and sharp. Mr. Raphaeli says that I am a good student, that I am going somewhere. He also said that sometimes I was a bit outspoken, and when I asked what that meant he said “rude in an intelligent manner.” I liked that about Mr. Raphaeli. He always had a positive spin. I asked Mr. Raphaeli what he thought about my family, hoping he would have a better way of thinking of my situation. He said that everything would be okay for me, because in a story, there’s a beginning, a middle, and an ending. That I was just starting out, that things aren’t always good when the story starts. Sometimes it’s slow, sometimes it takes some time to get further, to get to know the characters. I said I already knew my parents well. He agreed, but asked me how well I knew myself. I told him I knew myself pretty damn well, and he told me to watch my language, and then he said that he thought that I was wrong.

So I invited Tony Santos over to help me to get to know myself. I prepared him with questions such as “Do you like olives?” “Who is your favorite Brady Bunch child?” and “If your hair could talk, what would it say?” which he would ask me so that I could discover myself. These were all modeled off of question in my mother’s magazines, the ones with names like Go Girl and Playful & Sexy. However, I switched out words like “sex moves” and “eyeshadow palette” so that I would not lower myself to my mother’s level. Tony thought that it was very brave of me to venture deeper into my subconscious, and that psychology could be a very great career choice for me.

Turns out I do not like olives, my favorite Brady Bunch kid is Jan, and if my hair could talk it would tell me that I really should brush it. Proudly, I reported to my parents that I knew myself. I woke my dad from his beer-induced hibernation, softly shaking his shoulder, and when that didn’t work, pinching his earlobes before he swatted me away with his burly hand. Slowly, he brought his eyes open, sat up straight, or as straight as he could without the gravity of his belly bringing him back down, and asked my what on this godly Earth could have been so important that I had to wake him up. I thought about what Mr. Raphaeli said about me being outspoken. I didn’t want to hurt or anger or even mildly upset my dad. I told him that it was nothing, to never mind. Grumbling softly, he lowered himself back to the faded area on his La-Z-Boy and let his heavy eyelids fall.
The next day at school, I presented Mr. Raphaeli with my findings. The olives, Jan, everything. He pressed his fingers to his forehead, his fingertips white with pressure. He looked the way my mother looked when her lipstick broke. “It’s not like that. It’s something deeper. You don’t need to know now.”

“But I really, really want to. What you said before … I felt … inadequate. Upset, or maybe frustrated with myself that I don’t know as much as I should.”

He laughed. “It’s okay. It’s not something that comes quickly.” I thought of cheap beer, the La-Z-Boy, the constant sound of the T.V., so familiar it became white noise. My dad’s alcoholism couldn’t have come quickly. My mother’s lingering sadness couldn’t have come quickly. What would it be for me? Self-knowledge wasn’t in my genetics. Not in the cards. Mar. Raphaeli said that it would be okay. It would be okay. I walked out of his room, feeling the ground with every step, my breath reverberating through the halls.

And I sat down. Thought about my parents’ televisions, blaring, drowned in sports commentators and physically fit twentysomethings. Swimming in words, confusion, I thought back to what Mr. Raphaeli said before.

Everything would be okay for me, because in a story, there’s a beginning, a middle, and an ending. That I was just starting out, that things aren’t always good when the story starts. It would be okay for me—mayonnaise and mustard and chips, Diego Sanchez, Brady Bunch and all, because I was still as the beginning.

I Am

by Raven Joseph, Cooperative Arts and Humanities High School

As a young African American woman, I already know that the second I walk into a room I will be labeled as ghetto, uneducated, and angry. SOME of which I am not.

Ghetto - 1.) a part of a city, especially a slum area, occupied by a minority group or groups. 2.) an isolated or segregated group or area. A website, awdude.com, uses words and phrases such as a burden to society and decent, responsible people of all races to describe black people. The website also says that black people are violent, sullen, ignorant, disrespectful, immoral, profane and filled with hatred. “Ghetto blacks are those who have dropped out of school, have numerous illegitimate children with several baby daddies.”

“Ghetto blacks are those who will not work and are content with living on welfare and other social programs.”

I am not ghetto.

Stereotypes are all around us and that was just an example of one. It can be hard for people to question the clichés that they have in their heads, but the best things come with time. Time will show how authentic you are and stereotypes will then be thrown away.

Uneducated - 1.) lacking an education or poorly educated. If I were to tell you that I don’t need a dictionary to spell supercalifragilisticexpialidocious, would you consider me educated? If I were to tell you that I don’t know what 12 times 17 is off the top of my head, would you consider me uneducated? How exactly can you determine if someone is educated or uneducated? Is it the degree that one obtains after finishing college? The same degree that sits in a box in the attic while the person who acquired the degree is doing an odd job that has no correlation with the degree that they worked so hard to receive 20 years ago?

So, what does it mean to be educated? Does it mean being intelligent, book wise? Does it mean being intelligent, common sense wise? To me, the word “educated” should be defined as a demonstrated ability to listen carefully, think critically, evaluate facts rigorously, reason analytically, imagine creatively, ventilate intriguing questions, explore and respect alternative viewpoints, maintain intellectual curiosity, and speak and write eloquently - all things that I happen to find in myself. I am not uneducated.

Angry - 1.) having a strong feeling of or showing annoyance, displeasure, or hostility; full of anger. I am not ghetto and I am not uneducated, but I am angry. I’m angry that racism still exists in our country, yet it is denied daily. I am angry that the color of my skin has the potential to prevent me from receiving the opportunities that people with lighter skin will receive. I am angry that our country is divided by black and white. I am angry that 2016 was a year of violence, death, and inequality among the black community. I am angry that in 2017 biracial couples and friendships are still looked down upon. I am angry that in our communities, it is automatically assumed that a person of color has committed a crime instead of the white person that is fully capable of committing the same crime.

Judging anyone based on the color of their skin, the shape of their body, the length of their hair, the amount of money in their bank account, the area that they live in, or their mental capacity is wrong. Open the book before immediately taking a glance at the cover and jumping to conclusions.

I am angry, what are you?
of adams and ants
by Abby Lateer, Tolland High School

as i write this someone's falling in love
as you read this someone is dreaming.
the world is so full of strangeness and light
and everything's new and gleaming.

for every one person in the world
there are six hundred thirty-six trees.
there are thousands of colors we can't comprehend;
there's so much beauty we'll never see.

there are trillions of stars around us
(we are so very small).
and trillions of cells within us
and we're in the middle of it all.

every person is packed full
of life and passion and light
and we're all poems and watercolor;
messy and weird and bright.

the world is chaotic and lovely and free
and we're the ants within it.
in the buzzing and bustle and noise,
it's beautiful to be in it.
The Bird, Audrey Finn, Memorial Middle School
Icarus, it’s said, soared towards freedom from his imprisonment. So high, in fact, that the sun melted the wax that held his flimsy wings together, so that they slipped off of him, leaving his shoulders bare and his body plummeting to the ocean below.

I am always struck by the similarities in our stories. He, blinded by his confinement, driven to escape his claustrophobic Cretan prison, was also blinded by success as an escapee, and the freedom that came with it—enough so that he tried to go higher than he was allowed, and was punished for it.

I, escaping a Vietnamese cesspool of poverty—but on a cramped ship, herded like cattle, instead of soaring over the endless blue expanse with my man-made wings. I guess that when our family thought of America, we thought of the sun—an untold promised land where wealth flowed freely from every crack, so that the whole country glowed yellow with gold.

I will never know if that promised land existed, but just someplace else, or if it would ever exist. All I know is that wherever we landed, our wings did not take us where we wanted to be. Maybe we weren’t meant to reach that promised land, so we were dumped into an ocean where we washed up onto shore, along with thousands of other hopefuls, into this strange world that was nothing like we were expecting.

Of course, my mother could not have been happier when she saw running water, or the sheer amount of food that was on display at every grocery store, and the sheer number of clothes on sale, in exotic, western patterns and colors. My father had his own daydreams about our future education and job opportunities, and although he never explicitly told us, harbored a secret dream that we would attend Berkeley or some other famed American institution.

And me? When we first came over, I was enthralled by everything American. The perfectly accented English, the light hair and light skin that defined you as established, as opposed to my own almond-shaped eyes and moon-like face. Tethered to a culture that I loved to hate, instead aspiring towards something that was so different.

The school I started to go to was going to perform the Wizard of Oz, and the posters that were put up only cemented my secret longing to somehow switch my own identity, and this was at a time when I still naively thought that I could change my look by changing my insides, too. Dorothy was from the heartland, not the coast—not the eclectic mix of different nationalities found in my Californian port city, which I’d erroneously labeled as international territory. Classically American, with her shining eyes, plaid clothes, and picnic basket. When we received the play, and were told that the auditions were in two and a half weeks, I ran straight home and highlighted all of Dorothy’s lines in bright pink. While walking through steeply sloping streets lined with run-down Chinese parlors and dim sum cafes, I’d mumble her words under my breath, trying not to attract attention while practicing my western drawl. At home, too, staring into the mirror and willing my face to melt and blur into Dorothy’s. Totally ignoring any other parts—they didn’t matter.

“There’s no place like home!” I’d say brightly, shaping my mouth in strange, unfamiliar shapes in order to get rid of my voice—with its harsh, nasal tone—and replace it with my white classmate’s. “There’s no place like home!”

My reflection, which would be distorted from the dents in the mirror, would repeat the same words back at me, and I would still sound so typically Asian, except a little strained and strangled from my efforts. I would repeat those famous words, even clicking my worn heels together, and I’d then look around at my own home—a tiny space with splintered window frames, furniture randomly piled like junk, and small heirlooms—trinkets, really—sprinkled throughout the whole mess.

While I dwelled on Dorothy, other things started to fade away. Schoolwork was one of them, of course. My grades, which had already been lesser than acceptable, had slid as I began to spend most of my time alone in a room while a pile of textbooks lay neglected outside.

But the real thing that was slipping—and had already been slipping for weeks now—was Mother, who turned into a shadow more and more with each passing day. I didn’t notice for a week, while I had been memorizing lines and repeating them over and over again so that they would be seared into my brain, and nothing else. And even after that, when I’d finally seen how she withdrew into the comfort of her bed behind heavy red curtains, how she wrapped herself in blankets even on the hottest, most humid days—when I saw that, it didn’t register. Nothing did, because by then, it was mid-April, and I was going to audition for the play the next day.

The night before, I stared at the American flag above my door frame, almost brushing the side of a
large red lantern. It took me over an hour to fall asleep, and when I woke up, the stars and stripes were seared on the inside of eyelids.

The house was less chaotic than usual in the morning before school, because my father had left for work early today. There wasn’t much to eat for breakfast, and so I snatched and gulped down an overripe banana, throwing the peel down onto the floor next to the trash, all the while furiously combing my hair. At the door, I paused and glanced at the mirror. Still moon-faced, still un-American. And I despised myself for it, but I would have to do the best I could. My mother might have been calling me faintly from the other room, but I didn’t pay her any attention, other than just saying a quick goodbye before slamming the door and hurrying down to the bus.

It only occurred to me, when the bus was pulling up in front of the school, that Mother might have not had breakfast yet. I began to feel sick, and only partially from nervousness about the audition.

The first half of the day seemed to pass in a whirlwind, and it seemed like just five minutes had passed from the moment I entered the building to where I was now, on a stage, seconds away from saying my first lines as a Dorothy to-be.

The music and drama teacher was standing ten feet away, costumed as a tree. She’d already delivered her lines, and she was now waiting for me to deliver mine. And everyone else was waiting, too--about two dozen other expectant faces looking up, waiting to see if I would best all the others who came before me.

The first words of my song were on the tip of my tongue. Teetering, as if on the edge of a cliff. It should only take some air pushed through my vocal cords to make them fall out of my mouth, I thought to myself.

So I tried.
And it wasn’t Dorothy’s lines that I spoke. It was Vietnamese.

I was mortified. My moon-face turned red, became a ripe tomato. I’d only said a couple words of my native language—after that, I’d registered what I was saying—but even after my voice faded away, I knew the damage had already been done. Snickers spread out in waves from those sitting closest to the stage to those a couple rows back. I desperately wished that I had Dorothy’s pair of ruby-red shoes to take me home, or wherever home would be, because it was now certainly not still in California. Back over the ocean, maybe?

I couldn’t try again after that. To my elementary-school mind, I was finished, my career as a student over, because I slipped into my own language while on the stage for my whole world to see. I couldn’t have got off that stage quickly enough.

When I got home, I was a mess, my hair plastered to the side of my face with tears that I’d only let fall while on the sidewalk, where no one could see me. I was, in my own childlike mind, a failure.

But when I passed through the doors, I was caught by someone who was only a shadow, but substantial enough to hold me, to keep my upright while I broke and started sobbing. Someone who led me to a small corner table in a dimly lit room. Someone who put in front of me a steaming bowl of pho that I couldn’t help but drink, even though a day ago I would’ve turned it away because of where it came from.

Now, I let myself enjoy it.

The Boy with the Jasmine Flower
by Pei Chao Zhuo, Farmington High School

When Salam was born, his cries echoed into a night thick with gunfire. Air, befouled by ash, filled his tiny lungs. He was pressed against his mother’s warm skin and lovingly cradled by her gentle arms as tear drops trickled down his forehead. The thunder of artillery roared outside.

“Be strong, my child,” she whispered in his ear. His mother had a beautiful voice.

Salam grew up in a world where utter devastation was not a variable but a constant. The carnage was living proof of the second law of thermodynamics: all things tend toward disorder. Yet, somehow, he knew that there was a time when people looked to the sky not with foreboding, but with hope, and kids dashed through the streets not out of fear but out of joy. He confided his thoughts to another child and received one word in reply—liar.

Salam’s father was a florist and grew the most beautiful jasmines. When the bombs fell, they ceased to bloom. War and flowers did not mix. However, one last jasmine lived on under his son’s care.

He laughed when the five-year-old asserted that he would rebuild his father’s garden.

Looking at his wife, Salam’s father joked, “He’s as naive as you.”

She kissed the child on his forehead and told him she was proud.
That night, in the warm candlelight, Salam's fingers stroked the delicate white petals of his jasmine as he prepared for sleep. A quick breath released the flame from the wick. Tonight, like every night, the sound of rockets exploding in the distance was his lullaby.

The light of a new day beckoned, and Salam, cradling his most prized possession, walked dreamily down the dusty streets outside his home. He spotted a tall figure emerging from a smoke plume. The man walked slowly and deliberately. Dirt and grime stained his face. Salam, with the white jasmine held out before him, approached the stranger. A black muzzle swung toward the hand that offered the flower.

“Salam!”

Salam heard his name as his mother wrapped her arms around him. Clutching the only thing that mattered to her, she turned her back against the vicious sounds that erupted from the man's weapon.

Salam was covered in blood. A red jasmine fluttered to the ground. His scarlet hands cupped his mother’s face as painful tear drops darkened the dirt road.

Her glassy amber eyes stared up into a blue cloudless sky.

The family was going to leave the country. Salam's father insisted upon it.

“We aren’t safe here,” he murmured, all the strength gone from his voice.

With each passing day, fire rained from the sky and flung lives into oblivion. During the night, Salam stared into darkness. The awful moans of his anguish father tore at every fiber of his being, and death no longer seemed so frightening.

When Salam was six years old, he saw the sea for the first time. It was a deep blue, and he was assured that safety lied somewhere on the distant horizon.

Salam’s weary father placed his bony fingers on his son’s shoulder. The exhausted man said to the only family he had left, “Salam, be strong.”

Salam remembered his parents’ refrain when the boat capsized, when fear was frozen by the chill of the water, when utter fury was replaced by deathly calm. He must be strong. As a jasmine danced at his fingertips and a smile crept across his lips, he knew the reason why. Salam means peace.

**The Universe Before You**

*by Sarai Mapp, Metropolitan Learning Center*

I am going to tell you a story and it starts as most do ...

A long time ago, before there were wizards, mermaids, and many more magical beings; there were only planets. Galaxies upon black holes just filled with planets. They would spin around beautifully like ballerinas stuck in motion, but it was clear that they were lonely. They spun without purpose, without anyone to talk to, with nothing to see. And Space saw this, for after all it was she that they spun around. She was the in-between of all the planets; it was her waist and hips that filled in the gaps, her darkness that linked them all together. So she took a few rings off of Saturn, dug out some of the Moon (leaving behind small uneven holes), and borrowed some of the Sun’s core to create these small, round lights that she held in her dark palm. Space named these lights Stars, and she flung them from her hand and into the galaxies and black holes. She decorated them in her hair, framed them around her face like freckles, and positioned them like tattoos on her skin. Suddenly the planets weren’t alone anymore; they had stars they could talk and play with.

And so life bloomed like a flower in sunlight. Fairies were born from shooting stars that went flying by so fast they left stardust in their wake, from which a fairy would form with wings so intricately designed pixie dust would fall when they fluttered and a glow of the most gorgeous shimmering light. And for a while the fairies were the hit of the galaxy with their fast talking and exaggerated stories. However, they became bored of just having planets and stars to dance with, so down to the Sea of Earth they flew and asked him to make something beautiful for them to play with. And after he got tired of the fairies annoying bell like voices, the Sea made mermaids, who were the envy of all the oceans due to their tails that glimmered so brightening clear it was told they could reflect the true heart of any magical being if you only looked at their shining scales. After mermaids emerged humans, for when the mermaids realized they would never be able to walk on land, they became so sad that they cried for a whole seven days and almost drowned away all of land. So Sea allowed mermaids to walk on land and thus humans were born who had no magical powers but legs that could walk and run a whole day. They lived near the water, letting the mermaids teach them how to swim and create tools out of sharp seashells. Last, after unicorns and all the others had been thought upon and created, wizards and witches were made. Nature would tell you that they were the most special creation, for she made them wholly out of love. When she saw that some humans had a special love for the plants and animals, she
granted them special powers out of adoration to protect her forest life. And she named them witches. Wizards, who were originally witches, did not have the same kind of love for plants and animals. Instead they favored the practice and protection of magic. So acknowledging the uniqueness of these witches, Nature created a separate bloodline so they could protect the magic they held so dear.

And the universe was filled with magic, uniqueness, and life. The planets were now able to spin and watch as Earth bloomed. Space looked and saw that her stars were happy. The galaxy, the Earth, the Sea, and Nature were all together in peace. Everything was okay.

As Time spun the universe onwards in its hands, magic died down and was transferred into much simpler things like storybooks and children’s dreams. The planets and stars stopped traveling through the different galaxies and instead chose a spot in which they revolved around and watched over the happenings of Earth. Mermaids took to the bottom of the ocean where other fantasies just as them lived. Fairies started to prefer life inside the trunks of the trees deep in the forest, the aged bark providing wonder to last them for many centuries. Witches and wizards had their own small secret society of magic and discreetly contributed to the advancement of the world, protecting the forests and cleaning up the messes careless humans created. They found it not all that difficult to blend in with the human society that had forgotten the magic that once did live right in front of their faces.

So while magic was not as it had once been, Space was satisfied. For she had created more than just living creatures. She had created love, kindness, and creativity and was gifted in watching all the wonderful things that happened within her skin. She saw the love, with her fairies stirring up trouble with the Sea, who even though he denied it, cherished the little winged creatures more than any of his sea animals. Saw the kindness with the witches that would care for any and every baby bird without a mother. Saw the creativity in the wizards that were always making new inventions with the help of their magic. Space even saw all these things now, in the humans that were so innocently unaware of the enchantment that surrounded them. They loved each other through friendships and family, showed each other kindness through small acts such as smiles and reassurance, and used creativity to increase connectedness without so much hassle. There was still the same amount of magic as there had been in the beginning, maybe even a little more.

And now I put down my pen. I have told you the story from the start; I have explained how magic has helped to lead you to this sentence. Now it is time for you to go out and explore; For this is the universe before you.

My Mommy, The Picasso

by Rachel Justice, Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts

My mom and I walk past Picassos, their odd bodies twisted and beautiful. She spins around slowly, trying to look at every painting in the Big Blue Room. She always promised she'd take me to the Wadsworth, but now, she is the one stumbling around, looking as if she wants to cry. She reaches behind her, feeling for the bench before she sits down. She can’t move her eyes from the masterpieces surrounding her.

My mother, the art student, gave up her dreams of dresses and oil paints to become a working mom. And now she's here, looking around her with tears welling up in the hazel eyes that crinkle at the corners with age.

I ask her what’s wrong.
She tells me, “I lost so much of myself, Sweetheart.”
There’s a moment of silence between us, and a tear falls down her cheek.
I ask her, “Where?”
She bites her lips, not spending too much time looking at any one piece. Here eyes are everywhere, flitting from frame to frame. “Not painting”
I remember the flowers in oil paints hanging up in our dining room, the portrait of Thomas Edison made entirely out of tiny drawn light bulbs, the silhouette of a princess holding a pea in front of her. At first she seems mournful of the art never brought from her fingertips, but as we get up, I see her become a young woman again.
I see her the way she looks in college polaroids she’s saved in scrapbooks—paint and patch-covered jeans way too big for her tiny frame, long black hair tossed aside in kinky curls.
She recognizes pieces by name, by artist. She acts like they’re all her old friends—like she got coffee with Van Gogh in paint-splattered overalls once upon a time. She asks me if I recognize some. She tells me her favorite is Dali. She tells me her cancer body is a Picasso.
She smiles and asks me to take pictures with her. She talks about each piece, and she points to some that remind her of me: Giacometti’s bronze statues stand two and a half inches tall. I wonder if it’s a short joke, because I’m wearing platform shoes in an art museum. I wonder if it’s because of their texture, bumpy around the edges and yet one would still feel drawn to them. I don’t have any time to ponder her actions; as I try, she’s already moving somewhere else. I have never seen her this alive, yet still in mourning. I wonder if you can be young and old at the same time. I wonder if you need breaks like this. I wonder if my mommy will ever look this young again.

**Broken Crayons Still Color**

*by Ame Tsamaase, Woodstock Academy*

“I see humans, but no humanity.”

“What?” I shudder, startled by my brother’s abrupt words. Usually the house is quiet at four in the morning, more-so that my dad isn’t around, but today his words pierce the silence. I lie down and try to wrap myself in the morning’s velvety darkness, but a feeling of uneasiness creeps over me. I shiver. “What did you say?”

Brother takes no notice. He shifts uncomfortably, his face inches away from the flickering screen, his eyes red and square, just like the tv. He watches with tear-stained cheeks as the BBC news reporter rambles about the Sudanese war and how our camps were ambushed; particularly, the camps my father and best friend’s father were in. I hide behind my hands when gory images of wounded soldiers flash by, and through my fingers, I spot a picture of our family sitting on a shelf. In it, Father is laughing and has an arm around Brother, another round Mother and I rest on his shoulders. He sticks his tongue out at me and I stick mine back.

Finally face to face, I realize he is not the man in the pictures but what is left of him. In front of me is not Father but an unshaven bag of bones. The laughter and warmth has evaporated from his eyes and he closes them as if it hurts to look at things. Where there was once love is emptiness. Muffled sobs beat against my chest. The world blurs and all sounds deaden. Overwhelmed with pain, I fall onto him, swaying slowly as my tears soak into his jacket. Amid the cries, accusations blurt out. “What happened to my dad?”

A waterfall of sorrow engulfs us. Mother wipes away tears while Brother bites his lip. Gradually, the accusations intensify.

“You don’t care! How could you do this to us?” As I pull away, heaving heavily, Father blinks. Seeing his lashes heavy with tears makes me gag. I collapse onto him again, my howls of misery worsening.

The car ride home and to preschool the next day were grim and silent. For two whole weeks, Father has been trying to grasp my gaze but I always look away. The desperation in his eyes does not convince me to waving goodbye when he drops me off at school for my first day as a first grader. In class my best friend, Thandi, recited the alphabet. She catches me staring and toddles over.


“Oh. Well how did he look?”


“I’m sure it’s nothing,” I assure her. The teacher hisses at us. The room goes silent and we continue coloring.

We promised that we would wait for her father together but days turned into weeks, until a giant badged man knocks at our classroom door. He calls her name and whispers in her ear. As the man continues, Thandi’s cheery demeanor disappears. Rage is scribbled all over her face.

“He died,” Thandi whimpers. Her nostrils flare, her eyes narrow. “He died, in an ambush. He’s dead.” Her mouth quivers, her eyebrows knit. “Just like that.” She laughs hysterically as tears escape her eyes. “Just like that, he’s gone forever!” Her yell is strong but her voice trembles. She sobs as memories of what once was and will never be, flood her mind. The stabbing agony of loss overwhelms her.

Thandi lets out a loud scream. It shreds through the corridors and deafens the ears; it is the sound of human agony: angry and drenched in fear and hatred, confusion and awe. It is loud and high pitched and ricochets in my skull. There is a rawness to it, fresh as an open wound. She collapses and vomits human sorrow.

For the rest of the day I am a mindless zombie. Even after hysterical Thandi is sent home and the last school bell rings, her scream haunts my mind. Gloomy rain clouds congregate over Brother and me as we wait...
to be picked up.

In minutes, Mother steps out of the car, anxiety written on her forehead. Her eyes dart round, searching. Panic consumes her, intensifying with every glance. Her sweaty hands clench as she yells out our names. Brother and I stare into the distance, unmoving, unmoved. His eyes are fixed forward. “Ever notice how scared she gets?” he says. Mother calls out our names while Brother goes on. “Like she’s afraid that one day we won’t walk out of these school gates.” Frightened, I yank his arm and toddle forward but he is a marble statue. Perhaps he’s already gone.

As if on cue, Mother skirts towards us. “There you are!” She wraps us both in a bear hug. “I was so scared I swear my heart missed a beat.” Perhaps Brother is right.

From then on I start noticing little things; like how Father constantly jolts up at night and how Mother refuses to sleep until everyone is in bed. Sometimes, Brother’s shell cracks and I get a glimpse of the real him, if only for a moment. Such moments are like the one today, when his friends came over and, stupid as boys are, dare each other to tears. Brother stumbles as the boys decide his fate.

“Lock him in the closet!”

His eyes widen in protest, but no words escape him. Vicious hands grab him, shove him into the upright casket. Laughing, his friends shut the door, diminishing his last hope. His hands push against the wooden surface, all in vain, for the door remains stubbornly in its place. He bangs against the wood. “Let me out! I don’t like this!” The boys snicker. “This isn’t funny anymore! I can’t breathe!” His heart pounds. “Blood …” he murmurs. The boys look to each other with quizzical faces. “And men on the battlefield.” I feel him trembling. He gnaws at the door. “They’re all around me! They’re trying to kill me!” Apparitions surround him. He is slowly collapsing in on himself. “Save me, Dad!” The boys rush to his aid. “Dad, save me!”

The closet door flings open and Brother rolls out, sweaty and red. A multicolored sea of boys circle him. Amongst the rasps and coughs, an angry roar escapes his lips.

For a while he does not look at me, until about a week into July when, during an awkward dinner, the lights above start to flicker like in an old horror movie before all at once engulfing the room in darkness. For a minute or so I cannot make out anything in the blackness.

“Looks like we have a power cut,” Father says. “Darn load shedding.”

I paste my body to the cold wall and can’t help but feel that someone is following me. I whip round and see Brother holding a candle. My eyes focus on a framed image behind him, of a family; instead it is of Thandi’s family. She rests on her father’s shoulders the way I rested on mine. He sticks his tongue out at her and Thandi sticks hers back. Suddenly he disappears and Thandi, heartbroken, falls on her bum and cries. I shake my head, finally understanding what Brother meant. “I see humans, but no humanity,” I whisper. Carelessly, Brother blows out the flickering flame, and again we are buried in a charcoal world which seems to weigh like guilt on our bones.

Fortunately, some days are less awkward and we are a functional family again. On one rainy day, I am drawing. It seems impossible as each time I use a crayon it snaps, like it can’t handle the pressure. I am chalking in when another snaps. A growl escapes me as I toss the hundredth pretty color. Brother catches me midway. “Why are you tossing it out?” He raises his eyebrow before fishing through the bin and pulling out the broken crayon. I giggle at his joke. The grim expression mortared onto his face tells me otherwise. “I’m dead serious. That’s a waste of color. They still work.”

“But they’re broken now,” I whine. Brother plops down next to me. His eyes narrow. Brother sighs and holds out the misshapen crayon. When I merely stare back at him, his hands ball into angry fists. He takes out his rage on my drawing, coloring vigorously. I gape, surprised that the outcome is beautiful.

“They work better than before. How is that possible?” My brows knit in disbelief. “They are broken so they should be weaker.” He grins before glancing out the window into the grey world. He looks at the paper, me, the paper again. “See? It has a few chips but that’s what makes it beautiful. It’s still alright.”

This I found to be true as my family grew stronger than before. Father, the jokey man, Mother—the spa queen. Brother, constantly babbling and Thandi and I, the girls who never stop smiling. But we aren’t perfect, as no human being is. Years of ambushes have left Father jolting up whilst Mother checks on us. Brother is still deathly claustrophobic, Thandi gets mad and I will always be afraid of the dark. We are all broken crayons, each with a piece of humanity we are meant to color. No matter how broken we are, what we are made of doesn’t change, because broken crayons still color, and our dark pasts don’t define us.
The Daughter
by Molly Fording, Staples High School

Sleep stains your face.
I drink away my promises to people that mattered—bitter coffee—and hide my hands in your hair.
She was dancing through the room like rain,
slipping down the windowpane.
Engraved danger.
We watch in the quiet of the morning as she ties her hands
and sews shut her bloody eyes.
An infinity of lullabies.
“What am I afraid of,” you ask the door.
The question’s not for me but I don’t answer, anyway.
We look at the moon to confuse the stars drifting across the floor.
The cat hisses,
convivial,
but the kettle won’t reply.
There’s a love song on the radio and you hum along in fits and starts,
calling out for my radiator heart.
These storms we weather can’t keep us forever,
and the stars you spill like salt know why.
They sigh, and drop us into worlds we can’t escape,
Plant words my tongue won’t taste:
“She must be leagues deep in the water by now, and still we wait for a sign.
Curse our reckless pride.”
You stare up at the planets circling above our heads,
Beg help from an empty box, as forgiving as the dead.
When we two lie in caskets, separated by thin air
I know we’ll still be here (or there)
Between the floor and the table, between your hand and mine.
She’s still alive, somewhere below the sky.
What a wonderful thing to know as we die.
For now we will sit in the kitchen
and listen to her footsteps waltz away.
Cue the credits and fade to gray.
Paragon of Aphrodite/Art of Being Beautiful
by Jordan Pelletier, Arts at the Capitol Theater

She
twists her body seductively in ways
that would make mortals look mangled
moves with such confidence
that the air trembles in her skin's wake.

She
trips often, but falls never,
the earth knows, and it catches her,
cradles her more gently than my arms ever could,
I stand back and watch the ground teach me how to hold her,
but my turn may never come,
she prefers the softness of topsoil

She
observes beauty meticulously,
the glamor of it all resting in her irises.
yet she insists that she is the world's student,
she teaches it instead, the art of being beautiful.

She
has a way with the words she uses sparingly—
won't speak for days, instead builds the tension
on my tongue and feeds my dependency
on her sweet nectar voice and intoxicating breath

She
is with me so lovingly in the night,
but when I wake she is gone,
In her absence I am left to wonder
if my heart will ever be worth
its weight in gold, or be able to buy her love.
Eleventh Grade

Green Solace, Isabelle Busch, Eastern Middle School
“The crumbling buildings, the sparkling street lights, the fires, and the screams appeared to be frozen in a single moment as he raced through the streets. Hypersonic skid on the asphalt, leaving black streaks where his feet scraped the ground, as a 1970s Pontiac suddenly erupted into flames. He covered his face with his right arm as a shard of metal grazed his wrist, making another tear in his black and blue bodysuit.

The world remained still around him for only a brief moment. When Hypersonic slowed down, the buildings crumbled at a normal speed, smashing into dust, and the civilians ran away faster.

In the distance, he listened to a maniacal laugh shrouded in the darkness. It echoed as if the whole block was wind tunnel.

And then ... and then ... ah fuck, and then ... and—

Fucking goddamn writer’s block.

I move my head away from the computer screen. The electronic light waves were beginning to make my head throb.

I push my wheelchair away from my desk. Observing the room was a bit difficult when the only light is coming from the computer.

Staring into a dark room wasn't bad. It let my eyes adjust so I could see just slight outlines of silhouetted household objects. A bed with a ruffled blanket laid across the top, a dresser with only the bottom two drawers used for the sake of my wheelchair and the fact I can’t reach up for shit, and a nightstand. The most interesting things in this room was what was on my computer right now: Something that should have been done years ago. I guess procrastination is a bitch that I’m learning about the hard way.

Writer’s block is worse. Like I said, this novel should’ve been done years ago. Pouring out the details of the gitty life of a badass superhero is harder than I thought it would be. The climax alone has taken me months. And here I am, still sitting in my blackened bedroom, only taking breaks for when I’ve gotta piss or shit, get food, and refresh on some coffee. And right now I need some coffee.

As I shift my wheelchair 90 degrees to the left as I make my way out of the bedroom doorway, I realize how used I got to going down such a narrow hallway. Within seconds I’m in the kitchen. I set the coffee pot down low so I didn’t spill anything on my balls. Still not as uncomfortable as the many times I’ve accidently sat on them.

I rejoice at the sight of there still being three cups left, with the pot still on. I pour it all into the same plain black mug that had stains from the last batch on the inside. Without budging, I just let the steam waft over my face. I took a deep breath and took in the coffee aroma.

I finally took a sip, and thought of nothing else but the ending. I know what happened. Exactly what happened. It’s just the phrasing of it that’s stump me.

After getting halfway through the batch of coffee, I wheeled back into my room feeling the caffeine vibrate my fingers, and provide me a new source of energy.

The screen on my computer held the same glow when I wheeled back into my bedroom. None of the words changed, and the cursor kept blinking in the same spot. I took hold of my mouse and clicked the same spot again, for no particular reason.

I took a few breaths. I let words jumble around my brain and wanted them to slip into my fingers and onto the keyboard. Soon enough they did. I continued:

“...And then he looked in just the right direction. To his right, on a building with flickering lights sat the cackling man: The Machinist. And below the building that he perched himself upon sat his creation, a machine that could crumble a whole city.

Hypersonic glared at him, and The Machinist glared back. Within a second, Hypersonic ran up the side of the building, dodging oncoming debris, and stood next to The Machinist.

‘Don’t do this.’ Hypersonic pleaded.

‘You still have time to save more people. What are you doing up here wasting your time?’ The Machinist said, grinning.
‘No, I still have time to save everyone. Shut off the machine,’ he ordered.
‘The machine can’t be stopped.’
‘This fight is between you and me. Leave the city alone.’
‘This city has been destroyed already! All of you heroes just stood back and watched crime tear the
city apart. I'm doing them a favor.'

'There are still innocent people here! More than you may give this city credit for.'

'I'm not a word I would use to describe Brookhale.'

Suddenly, a helicopter appeared over them, the whirling propellers clearing away the thick of smoke and dust on the roof. 'That's my ride out of here!' The Machinist shouted. 'Now as I remember, you've got people to save!'

A rope was lowered down from the helicopter. Hypersonic wasted no time and charged. After one punch, The Machinist had flown across the roof. He stumbled at the edge. Hypersonic caught him with his left hand, and held him over the ledge.

'Shut off the machine!' Hypersonic screamed. The roof of the building began to crack as the entire city shook under his feet. The Machinist kept his mouth closed, and peered his eyes down at a lead pipe dislodged from the roof. Quicker than Hypersonic could anticipate, The Machinist snatched the lead pipe from the ground. Before Hypersonic could step away, he felt a blow to his lower spine. Inside of him the bones cracked, and his lower vertebrae shattered inside of him. As he fell to the ground, clutching his back with one hand, he dropped the Machinist onto the fire escape below. The Machinist latched on with one hand and did not let go as he hung above the alleyway.

Hypersonic attempted to stand up and run, but his shattered spine forced him back to the ground. He crawled across the crumbling rooftop to the helicopter, which was getting ready to fly away. Just before it did, he latched onto the rope with his left hand, and let it fly away with him holding on.

As they flew further away from the rooftop, Hypersonic looked back and saw The Machinist climb back onto the roof. They exchanged one final glare before the roof split apart, and The Machinist fell through. Hypersonic let go of the helicopter when they reached a hill outside of the city. The pain stabbed him as his bones split apart further. Suddenly grass was not as soft as he remembered.

He looked ahead, and saw a cloud of dust and smoke absorb the city. Skyscrapers just barely reached through the top of the cloud, but soon collapsed. The people screamed as the roads caved in, and the ash crept into their lungs. The buildings sat in flames once they fell into the crater that was forming.

Hypersonic looked ahead at his failure, the people he hadn't saved. All he wanted to do was stop time and run back in. But all he could do was stare ahead as the city crumbled into dust.

The End.
promised time and time again that she'll do well on her math tests, but every single time, she fails."

“Thank you, Mr. Sprinkles. Now, Miss Price ...” Lily hopped down from the roly-poly chair and dashed to
one across from her, quickly taking her seat and patting down the creases on her polka-dot dress. The blue
ribbon needed adjustment, but she doubted that anyone would notice.

“Yes, your honor?” She ran back to the judge’s chair.

“Is what Mr. Sprinkles said true? That you promised to do good on your math tests? That you keep failing?”

“I did promise to do good on my math tests, but I didn’t fail on the last one! I actually did pretty well,
if I do say so myself.” The judge frowned at her.

“Mrs. Fluffypants, do you have any evidence that could disprove her claims? Oh!” the judge trotted
over to where Mrs. Fluffypants was plopped on the ground and picked her up, carefully placing her back on
the chair. “I’m sorry about that! Are you okay?”

“Yes, your honor, thank you.” Mrs. Fluffypants cleared her throat. “As a matter of fact, I do have some
evidence.” She looked around, a frown forming on her face. “I seem to have misplaced the paper. Can you give
me a moment?”

“Sure thing—I mean, take your time.”

Lily twisted a strand of curly brown hair as the cat rumbled through her bag. Did she really have it?
Her last test? She really hoped not. That could spell a lot of trouble for her. Her eyes couldn’t help but drift
towards the clock, watching the seconds hand make its rounds.

Minutes passed, and Mrs. Fluffypants still hadn’t found it. Today must be her lucky day!

“Aha!” Nevermind. “Here it is, your honor! The evidence!” She held the test up into the air.

“Bring it here, Mrs. Fluffypants.” When the judge took the paper, her heart dropped. She stared at her
feet as she looked it over, sitting every second in excruciating silence. “Miss Price, you said that you did pretty
well on your last test, correct?”

“Yes, your honor.”

“So, by pretty well, do you mean getting only a single problem right?” She turned the test towards
everyone, a collective gasp being released among the jury. Lily couldn’t bring herself to speak. She was so
ashamed.

“Hold on one moment, your honor!” a voice called from the crowd. Turning her head, she could see
her best friend Butters, his fur a disheveled mess as usual.

“What is it, young man?”

“How do you know that that is Lily’s test for sure?” “Well, it has her name on it.”

“But that doesn’t mean that it’s her test!” The judge folded her hands, tilting her head in interest.

“Would you care to explain?”

“Yes, your honor. You see, it could be just like what happened in the Peanuts movie, when Charlie
Brown and the redhead girl frantically grabbed for their papers and ended up writing their names on the
wrong ones. Lily could’ve went up to hand in her test along with another student, but they both forgot to put
their names on it. So, they grabbed whatever paper they could get, wrote their names on it, and handed it in.”

“Hm ... you do raise a good point, but has Lily ever forgotten her name on a worksheet before?”

“Yes, your honor, she has. Lily is forgetful; she’s forgetful to bring in something for show-and-tell, she’s
forgotten to return a library book, she’s forgotten to do homework, and she’s most-certainly forgotten to
put her names on papers.” Lily winced with every listed fault. She appreciated that Butters was trying to help,
she really did, but he didn’t have to bring up more than he needed to.

“She’s forgetful, you say?” The judge tapped her chin, pondering. That couldn’t be a good sign. "While
you did raise a good point, it’s likely that this is her test. These answers certainly look like her handwriting,
and if I’ve heard correctly, her teacher collects the tests herself instead of having the students pile them up.”

“Is there any proof of this?”

“We do not have solid evidence, and I doubt Miss Price would like to say whether or not her teacher
collects the tests.” She turned to her, lips curling in disappointment. “Assuming that this is your test ... did you
fail because you never do your work?”

“I couldn’t have failed because I always do my work!”

“But your friend here just said that you forget to do your homework.”

“While I do forget my homework sometimes, I always complete my classwork! It may not seem like
much, but it’s enough to get me by!”

“Hm ... the question is, how do you do on your classwork?”
“What do you mean?”
“You said you always complete your classwork, but you never mentioned your grade on said classwork.”
“Um ... well, I didn't really see a point to bring up my grade.” Sweat was starting to build up on the palms of her hands. This isn't good.
“Miss Price, in your case, we need all of the information we can get, and how you perform on your classwork and homework is most certainly a factor in how well you do on a math test. So, let me ask you again: how do you do on your classwork?” She didn't respond, she couldn't respond. Tears were already welling up in her eyes. Lily knew she couldn't drag this out forever; she'd miss out on her favorite show. She should respond, she has to respond. “How do you do on your—”
“I do really badly, okay!?!” The court was taken aback by her sudden reply. “I just ... I just don’t get it. None of it makes sense to me!”
“Don't you ask for help?” the judge asked, sympathy clear in her voice. Lily shook her head. “Why not?”
“No one else asks for help, and it'd be embarrassing if everyone knew that I am the one person who doesn’t understand it! They all make it look so easy, quickly adding and subtracting their twos and fours and sixes and eights. I just ...” she sank back into her chair, burying her face in her hands. “I don’t get it. I-I don’t get it at all. I’ll never amount to anything—”
“Objection!” a voice cried out from behind her, grabbing her attention. Through bleary eyes, she sees her dad, wearing the pastel yellow shirt she picked out for him and a pair of blue jeans. His brow was furrowed with concern. He cleared his throat. “Mr. Sprinkles, why is it so bad that Lily doesn’t do well on her tests.”
“W-well,” he stammered, “she promised that she'd do well.”
“So?”
“It was a promise!”
“But was it a pinky promise?” The zebra didn’t reply. “Don’t you know that a promise isn’t a promise unless it was a pinky promise?”
“I do, but how do you know for sure that she didn't do a pinky promise?” Mrs. Fluffypants asked.
“I know, for I was the one she promised!” Lily rubbed her eyes.
“Oh?” The judge leaned forward in her chair. “If you were the one she promised, then how do you feel about her failed math test?”
“I have no problems with it. If she's bad at math, then she's bad at math, and there’s nothing wrong with that. As a matter of fact, I was a poor math student myself.” Lily’s eyes widened with surprise.
“You were?”
“Indeed I was.”
“Hmm ..” the judge scratched her chin thoughtfully. “I think we've gotten as much information as we could get out of this trial, so it’s time to arrive at the final verdict.” She turned to look at the jury, who were now huddled together, whispering. A few moments later, they stop and face her. Mr. Sprinkles was the one who spoke up.
“We, the jury, have decided that Lily Price is not guilty.” Lily let out a small breath of relief and looked at her dad, triumph glittering in his brown eyes.
“Alright, I guess that this is case closed,” she announced, a smile creasing her lips.

What Can’t I Say “You?”
by Saomai Nguyen, Hall High School

“What do you want?”
“YOU? You can’t call me that. I’m your mother. Do you think you can always disrespect me? You always think you are better. I'm your mother. I'm the adult. Not you.”
“Um ... What would you like?”
The above exchange represents a common miscommunication between my mother and me. To a monolingual speaker of a language such as English, in which there is an “open” system of status denotation, the anger arising from “you” is incomprehensible. But to my mother, that word contradicts her values; being addressed in such a way humiliates and irks her.
My mother was born in 1966 in the city of Quảng Ngãi, Vietnam and was raised by Confucian
ideologies that dominate most of East Asia. In that universe, natural order is constructed upon a framework of human relationships (Berling, n.d.). These are arranged by age, with an adult taking authority over a child; gender, with a man taking authority over a woman; and occupation, with a head of a hospital taking authority over a young doctor (McBrian, 1978). The Vietnamese language provides an array of pronouns, each connoting a different social relationship and level of discourse. For example, my mother refers to herself as “mẹ” (pronoun for mother that holds formal connotation) when talking to me, but “em” (informal, intimate pronoun for someone younger or of lower social status) when talking to my father. The way we define others and ourselves is specified by relative status; it is a "closed" system of status denotation.

English, on the other hand, has an open system of status denotation. The set of pronouns for second person has dwindled down from thou, thee, thy, thine, ye, you, your, and yours to only the latter three. This deficit permits leniency when speakers develop relationships; it is not such a feat for an adolescent to befriend and speak with an adult on the same level. Identifying social status is obscure and indirectly achieved by grammatical manipulations, such as the conditional, that inflate an impression of formality. This is the language and mentality I hold, but my mother's tongue is stubborn. She applies the same Confucian principles in English, whether or not the necessary functions are available. And when there is a transgression, as with "you"—which has acquired an informal connotation—the result is embarrassment, shame, and anger.

We see similar reactions throughout Confucian-influenced societies where status directs speech, albeit misapplications can occur due to confusion with contradictions of age and occupational status, differing perceptions of intimacy, or mere fatigue and absentmindedness. My own violations have been compensated with ringing ears, rosy butcheeks, and wrinkled fingers reeking of that citrus dish detergent.

To avoid missteps, speakers of languages such as Vietnamese are obliged to constantly compare themselves to others. The same "obligation" is present in languages such as the Australian aboriginal language Guugu Yimithirr where the orientation of the world is described by geographical coordinates, rather than egocentric coordinates. While in English one may say, "Walk forward and turn left," a speaker of Guugu Yimithirr would say, "Walk west and turn toward the north." In order to communicate within their tongue, members of societies using geographic coordinates must be constantly aware of their changing orientations; as such every second of every day "provides the most intense imaginable drilling in geographic orientation" (Deutscher, 2010, para. 20). For speakers of closed systems of status denotation, the subject of that most intense imaginable drilling is their changing status in relation to others, and each interaction therefore becomes a reminder of their superiority—or subordination.

Language's influence on our minds is a phenomenon linguists Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf developed in the 20th century: linguistic determinism. In Sapir's words, we are "at the mercy" of the language we choose to be our "medium of expression" (as cited in Language Society of America, n.d., para. 5). Our language molds our world and defines how we interact with that world.

From this perspective, the languages of Confucian societies in East Asia imprinted a culture dominated by hierarchy. For instance, in Korean, the epitome of the closed system, "no two positions may occupy exactly the same position in hierarchy" (McBrian, 1978, p. 322). Even between identical twin brothers, as anthropologist Charles D. McBrian (1978) explains, "he who first emerges from the womb is the 'elder brother,' and occupies a different place than the 'younger brother'" (p. 322). And those placed lower in society are limited—"it is almost impossible to express anger towards a status superior, although superiors may easily do so towards inferiors" (McBrian, 1978, p. 325). The language and the mindset it facilitates form a buffer between thought and speech.

In my experience with Vietnamese, this buffer has offset both interpersonal and intrapersonal interactions. Interactions are always preceded by the establishment of an appropriate pronoun to use for myself and whom I am speaking to. Before I can step into my grandparents' home, my parents prompt me with the specific title/pronoun for each adult (each connoting a different relationship, but all being highly formal and respectful) and the correct pronoun for myself (one that means "child" and places me several levels lower in social status). In addition to the distinct pronouns, they remind me of the appropriate formal syntax that tags each reply and comment I make with the word "dạ," a formal form of "yes." "Dạ, I [with lower pronoun] have arrived." "Dạ, I haven't eaten yet." "Dạ, I am leaving now." "Dạ, that is true." "Dạ, I already know." Even when saying no, "không," I end up saying "Dakhông." The language accessible to me within Vietnamese intrinsically reflects subordination and compliance.

Due to this nature of closed system languages, polemics by those of lower social status are greatly inhibited. So as my mother scalds me with her critiques and screams, my father will remind me to retract my words and show deference. The mindset dictated by Vietnamese then transfers to my communications in
English. Even when using an open system, I am still obliged to indicate a lower status in comparison to my mother. Words are carefully selected and a free discussion of thought becomes difficult.

The interference in communication is intentional. Confucianism achieves harmony in societies by defining members' proper roles and mutual obligations (Beling, n.d.). The closed system of status denotation reinforces each individual's role and obliges them to abide within that role. From today's social-equality-driven American perspective, though, the approach seems antiquated.

Over the years, the “rigid adherence to Confucianism” (McBrian, 1979, p. 21) with our tongues has become more lenient. My family is slowly adopting the status fluidity of English-speaking America; for example, my “hipper” aunts and uncles are accepting their nieces' and nephews' waves and nonchalant hellos, joking at their “American-ness.” Even in Korean society, McBrian (1979) observed minor simplifications of the differential speech levels with the end of the Korean monarchy and shift to western democracy. But there has not been total reform in the denotation of social status. The tenor of Confucianism and its closed systems prevail, manifesting as various phrases and terms, such as “you,” evoke potent humiliation and indignation from my mother.

Growing up in the American society that decorates equality, individualism, and "resolute disobedience," I question which values I will pass on to my own children. I advocate for free communication as equals, but wish to preserve at least vestiges of my mother tongue and culture of respect. The incongruity of the two mentalities is perplexing. However, a more recent interaction with my mother may be the rough beginnings of a consolidation.

"Đạ, but mẹ, I don't want to."
"No, you have you to."
"Mẹ!"
"Hey! Con [pronoun meaning “child”] is my daughter. You listen to me."
"No. Mẹ. STOP. I need you to listen to me. PLEASE. Can you let con say something first? Con muốn mẹ listen to con."
"Con... okay, okay. Mẹ is listening. I'm listening to you."
And we talked.

References


Endnotes

2. Reference to Deutscher (2010), who asserted that "if difference languages influence our minds in different ways, this is not because of what our language allows us to think but rather because of what it habitually obliges us to think about" (para.5).
3. The theory is popularly known as the "Sapir-Whorf hypothesis," a less creative title in my opinion.
4. In the early 1800s, during the American Transcendentalist movement, a British traveler was astonished when he witnessed an American father excuse his son's "resolute disobedience" as he was displaying the qualities of a "sturdy republican" (Henretta, Hinderaker, Edwards, & Self, p. 234). This defiant and rebellious nature is idiosyncratic to the American individual and has cemented throughout history.
Hammock Nature Story
by Rory O’Connor, Notre Dame High School

Life is full of niches. Niches are what creates happiness for many people. Happiness is what make people want to do things. When people want to do things, they do them. When they do them, only good can come from it making even more people happy. Niches can be a quiet place, and for many people they are. In my case, a quiet place is something almost nonexistent. I live in an urban neighborhood in the small city of New Haven. I do not live in what many consider the nicest part of New Haven, unless you’re me. In terms of landscape, it is not perfect. In terms of persona, it is not exceptional. But that is where I live, and for me I would not want to live anywhere else. Quiet may not be there, but peace within my imagination certainly is and that is what is most important. The place with which I find most peace is outside on the hammock, the place I lay to gether my thoughts, relax, and hopefully take a nap.

My dad bought this hammock about nine years ago. He bought it in order to have something to lay down on outside that supported his back well enough to be comfortable. The hammock is outside, lying on the bed of rocks my dad place on the dirt years ago in order to make the yard look nice and more healthy, considering grass was unable to grow there due to the trees. It is under the trees we have growing in the backyard, to the left of the wooden fence we have, and about three and a half feet from the grass. This hammock is a white rope hammock hanging off of two metal posts; therefore with all honesty it is not the most comfortable hammock to lay on, but that does not affect me. When I lay there I feel the peace, though there is not always peace surrounding me. Sometimes I can hear an argument between my mom and my sister through the window. Other times there is an argument between neighbors that usually ends up with a broken beer bottle spread across the sidewalk. That is all irrelevant when I lay on the hammock though. Thoughts circle in my head that typically end up blocking the surrounding noise out. The trees right above me changing colors, the squirrels running across the power lines, the breeze smacking me in my left ear, and the sunset with a million colors straight ahead of me are the only things that really matter when I am laying on that hammock.

I think about everything when I lay on the hammock: grades, plans, running, what is for dinner, and quite often girls. The hammock is my time to relax and plan on my next move whatever topic it may be for. Life is how it used to be when laying on the hammock...simple. I don’t worry on the hammock, I just think. It is crazy to think sometimes that at some point I am going to have to get off of this hammock and get back to the real world. Still I do not worry, I just think. Sometimes, if I know I will be outside for a period of time, I will take along either the pink or the spiderman blanket we have to throw it over myself to stay warm. Listening to the cars fly by, neighbors arguing, and often my dog barking at the runners attempting to sprint up the hill we live on, are a few things that are a reality and prevalent in my life that I take time off of thinking to pay attention to in order to find a way to appreciate.

Taking some time off of my busy day, busy week, and busy life in order to lay on my hammock and think is the reason I believe I am a happier person. I feel that taking time off is essential to my life at this point. Everyone should try and find that niche that they feel most comfortable and least stressed. My dad bought mine nine years ago. Niches are special and relevant. I found mine, and I could not be more thankful to the Lord for navigating me towards that spot.
Vows; A golden shovel in two parts
by Grace Bassick, Rockville High School

I
Show me a man that will love me till I die
—Gwendolyn Brooks, “Queen of the Blues”

You tell me life is just a matter of show
and tell. Then you race me
down the freeway at rush hour to prove your point. A
couple of speeding tickets mean nothing to a man
whose main purpose in life is to prove himself worthy. I wish I knew that
before you got lodged in my thoughts as I was trapped in your embrace. My conscience will
regret this, but tomorrow morning is lifetimes away. You say you love
me, and right now that is all that matters. Dropping me
off at the foot of my driveway, my body is empty of feeling seconds after I leave your presence. “Till next
time,” you whisper before speeding off into the darkness. I
-crave you in the ways of an addict. But I know the consequences, and I’m not ready to die.

II
I promise to love you for every moment of forever, and when everything else crumbles, I will never.
—Jamie Emms, “For Her”

My father taught me that I
must always keep a promise
as I would a child. To
raise as my own with support, guidance, and love, a responsibility so large yet rewarding. You
are my promise. For the past two years and eight months, You have been the subject of my every waking
moment.
A human full to the brim with compassion and empathy, made of
only the best there is to offer. I have searched for nothing less than forever
to find a soul as forgiving as yours. My screw ups and
bad decisions fade away when
you hold me in your arms. “Everything
will be ok,” you whisper on our drives to nowhere. Anyone else
would only worsen the cracks and crumbles
that have formed in my life, but instead you mend my faults. I
clutch to you like the cement that holds me together. Only time will
tell how our story ends, but in my heart it will never.

Sword Swallowers ("Vocal Chords")
By Alex Castro, Arts at the Capitol Theater

They are sword swallowers,
eaters of sharp words.
The words start small
practicing
for bigger things,
leaving a deeper cut
when used on others.
They swallow
what they are given,
yet better at spitting swords than swallowing them.
When they open their mouths,
they hurl knives through the air,
and pierce the skin of someone
too complex for their ignorance.
The edge of the blades slice
vocal chords,
taking away the voices of their victims.
What a terrible way to lose one’s voice,
to have it cut away by those who hate
who you are.

**Terminal**
*by Kaleigh Perkins, Rockville High School*

The English language isn’t pretty.
*Te amo, Je t’aime. I love you.*
He tells you he can’t begin to speak the words raw enough to explain how he is breaking,
Like entire forests opening up in want of a thunderstorm,
the summer rain and the ground that is dry and thirsty for it.
You are standing in the kitchen doing the dishes with water up to your knees
counting down the days until you can no longer swim.

You look at him and think lighthouse, think love that is all-encompassing,
think throw your heart into small things and large things and everything, wildly,
think there is so much that is beautiful even after it’s gone.
Think that maybe our idea of permanence is what we’ve got wrong.

We still pick roses knowing that we’re killing them.

He points up at the sky and smiles and tells you that our bodies are made up of the dust of long dead stars.
There are fractured pieces of constellations in you that have been gone so long we’ve forgotten their names.
And this emptiness or maybe weakness or maybe just being so full of love we can’t see it
Is all because something, at some point, was beautiful and didn’t last.

We are just hearts and bones and blood and scars but mostly we’re just human loneliness.
*Je t’aime. Te amo. Ich liebe dich. I love you, you are my everything, I’m so sorry.*
How do you describe the feeling of being temporary?
How do you describe having so much love you’re bursting with it?
How do I tell you I’m running out of time?

We still pick roses knowing that we’re killing them.
*Te amo. Je t’aime. I love you.*
Something isn’t beautiful just because it stays.

**Young Witches**
~*after Marian Thanhouser*
*by Mae Santillo, Arts at the Capitol Theater*

“*Young Witches have strange eyes ...*”

Young witches have strange eyes,
though cold and dodgy, they are voodoo
and broken collar bones
tied tight in dresses.

Let her watch you with strange
eyes as if she is judging you before the court.
The irony of swapped roles: she casts her
curses upon you
and you are are a doll in the hands of a child.

Stuffing hands and pockets with stones,
young witches have not yet learned the
tactic of subtlety.
Prideful and vain, they flaunt
hats and brooms and mockery—they're taught
to taunt and tease and tell
themselves they're truthful
in tongues tainted by telling lies.

The truth they seek is sought well, fought hard for,
but young witches wonder too hard and waste too
many words on explanations
and too much time on obsolete books,
written by broken hands
and dark magic.

Young witches have strange notions
of orange-eyed cats in the night
and green haze rising on moons.
They dance in their nakedness
and offer blood at the altar in vain,
for the Mother does not wish curses
upon those who love her.
She wishes for enlightenment,
found in gently running water
and the way the wind blows so
gently through unkempt hair.

Young witches,
find solace in the way fire scorches,
and leaves dark marks along everything
it touches.
The way earth trembles and shakes,
unwavering and sturdy.
The violence of forest fires
and earthquakes.
Tremble not
beneath the young witch's strange eyes.

Young witches,
with strange eyes
kneel before the mother,
their knees bound,
and buckled.
Twelfth Grade

Étretat, France, Megan McKern, Ledyard High School
I'm Sorry If I'm a Little Crazy
by Daniella Deragrah, Cooperative Arts and Humanities Interdistrict Magnet

I can't remember what I dreamed last night. I woke up and I smelled your vanilla perfume, and I think that was your way of telling me that you love me, and that you are sorry, and that you miss me. I went back to sleep to try and see you, but I woke up too soon.

It's frigid today. I can feel the bite of the cold through my thick sweater and coat, and I've never realized that loneliness has a temperature. Someone says, "I'm sorry for your loss," and for a minute I think she's you, but then I realize that she could never be you.

The sky's still dark and thick like the ink from your favorite pen, the ballpoint one that you would chew the cap of when you were deep in thought. I absent-mindedly draw birds on the pamphlet the guidance counselor gave me. I scribble out the words How to Cope With Loss, and write your name instead: Maggie, Maggie, Maggie, Maggie.

I'm running out of ways to keep you alive. I'm worried I'll misplace a dimple on the other side of your face, or raise the pitch of your laughter. I can't focus in class because your desk is empty, and I'm scared if I look away I'll forget what your silhouette looks like.

"Are you okay?" the teacher asks me.
"Are you okay?" I remember asking you.
"Yeah," I say.
"I'm fine," you sniffled.
"Okay," The teacher says.
"That's a load of bull," I said.

"Maya. I know you two were close, and ..." She swallows. "If you need anyone to talk to, I'm here. I'm sorry."

"That's a load of bull," I said.

Sorry. Sorrysorrysorry, it doesn't have meaning anymore. It's become nonsense, hollow, empty. “I'm sorry,” lacking substance.

No one knew what to say before you were gone either. They didn't even try to say anything to you, because they were intimidated by the scars that marred your body.

"Is it weird I like them?" you asked me once. "Like, I know it's wrong, and that I really messed up my skin, but, I don't know. It feels safer with them, like people know I'm not weak or something."

"You're wrong," I told you. "It doesn't show that you're strong. It shows that you've hurt yourself. It shows that people have gotten to you."

I reached out and held your hand.

"And your skin isn't messed up. It's just scarred."

My mom picks me up because she doesn't want me walking home alone. She keeps rubbing my knee, dividing her attention between me and the road.

"This is how people die," I told her. "They don't pay attention when they drive."

"Don't talk like that," My mother chided.
"Why not?" I ask a little too hotly.

She is quiet for a minute. From the corner of my eye, I see a tear creep down her cheek.

"Just ... Don't talk like that," she repeats wearily.

We drive by your house, and there is a blaze of molten candles surrounding your school picture like some shrine. Your smile flickers in the shadows of the flames, and I remember how much you hated that photo. You said your hair was a wreck that day, and I told you "next year's will be better."

That's what I would always tell you, "it'll be better next year." One time, someone wrote "FAGGOT" in big, angry, red letters all over your planner. All you did was stare at it, etching and re-etching the awful slur into your brain—Faggot, faggot, faggot.

I held your hand, unaware of how fragile it really was.

I think I dreamt about you again, but this time I wake up and hear my name, over and over again, Maya, Maya, Maya, Mayamayamaya. It was just the blades of the fan slicing the air. I swear I feel you breathing against the back of my neck, but it is just the murmur of a breeze through my window. I swear I see you, beckoning to me like a death wish, but it is just my guilty conscience.

I don't sleep after that. I can feel your fingers tangled in my hair. If I try really hard, I can bury my face in your chest.
“I’m sorry,” I whisper.
“It’s okay,” the fan replies.

It’s raining this morning, and the shrine outside your house is all melted wax and soggy cardboard. The candles have long since stopped burning, and the ink in the picture runs and distorts your face into a golden smudge.

I’m worried that’s what you’re becoming to people, a fuzzy, two-dimensional thing, nothing more than something that was. *Maggie, Maggie, Maggie.*

I help your mom clean up the molten mess of wax and cardboard that was your shrine. She doesn’t cry or blame me, because I do enough for the both of us.

“Maya, do you want to stay for dinner?” She keeps asking me. “You look so thin, and we’ve felt so lonely since Maggie … please, stay for dinner”

I think about having to sit at a table with your family without you. I think about you drinking Coke and laughing, and it feels too real and vivid like some awful nightmare.

“No,” I mutter. “I’m sorry.”

I lie in bed for a minute, and I think about the last time you were here. It was a sleepover, and we were watching bad horror movies on Netflix. You let me rest my head in your lap, and everytime the music would start playing I’d squeeze your hand real tight.

“It’s just a movie,” you would whisper into my hair. “It’s not real, it’s a movie.”

You played with my hair, twisting it in tight coils around your fingers. We kissed and you tasted like popcorn and Sour Patch Kids.

Last night, I dreamt of your mouth whispering “it’s not your fault” into mine, and your arms felt tangible and solid and there.

I woke up and my fan sounded like my fan, and the breeze raised goosebumps on my neck.

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**HE/SHE/IT**

*by Gabrielle Stonoha, Manchester High School*

i experienced existence like a headache. The waves and upheavals, were throbs in my temples.
i began to seek an unraveling. The sinewy tendons that tethered me to my existence were, i had concluded, also the tensions that led to the unending migraine. If i could untie the knots and separate all the parts of me neatly, it wouldn’t hurt anymore. i would undo the strings before they had a chance to fray.
i wanted to be separate from my Identity.
i looked through the *My Little Pony* sticker-book my Cousin got for Christmas when We were eight, and that is why i am not a Boy.
i cried in my Mother’s bed for a long time when i found out what growing up was not going to do to my Body.

This was long ago.
i cried in my Mother’s bed for a long time when i found out what growing up was not going to do to my Body.
i felt like i was any of the words They said on TV and so i didn’t exist in that world. And that world is the only one i have ever known about.
i do not know if my Mom knows that i feel Wrong. i do not think that She wants to know. There are
already enough things wrong with me, anyway. What's one more? (Or one, two.)
i relegated all of the primal things that i could feel into my Human Heart and i imagined they could seep out of there every month, to replace something else that i had wanted. A wet thing that moved with the moon and would have made me corporeal—soft and real and right.
i constantly felt the need to divide and conquer and describe everything i felt and experienced (before i thought to unravel). i was set on the messier process of chopping myself up into messy pieces of things that were common enough to not need a definition in the first place.
    i am hypocritical
    i am consistent
    i have pretty interesting hair
    i have pretty boring hair
    i feel neutrally towards most types of yogurt
    i am a good speller, i am a mediocre speller
    i am alright with my middle name
    i feel comfortable when wearing t-shirts
    i am not sure which pony i would be
    my lips are a nice shade of pink
    i hate my lips
    And So On.
my Grandparents’ fridge does not shut all the way unless you push it. Deliberately. A little bit of light slips through, and it does not go dark inside. All the cold gets out.
my trusting, conversational doorframe slipped near-shut, closer. my Consciousness has already left, wandered off with a cold snack. the light still slid through, the safe cold continued its getaway.
And He grabbed the door in two places (one, two! and-a three four five!) and the light turned off. and the inside of IT was cold and dark.
    one, two, deliberately.
He touched IT in two places (count 'em: one, two) and i did not want Him to lose his job.
The bell rings with all the clarity of a blank sheet of paper. my mind is full of fibrous wood shavings. i drift through the air. i drift through the hours.
    i drift down the cement steps, over a corner of wet grass, and onto beige. Square, crack, square, crack after crack after crack. Rain-soaked vacancies within determined concrete.
    i have a sense that there is something inside my brain, waiting for me to think about it. Like in class, when i know that if i push myself, i can figure out the answer. But i am so tired, and so fuzzy. i could not unravel myself as fast as i could dissolve. The strings of me melted, no longer distinct. The edges of the world are melting. They are all dripping with something thicker than rainwater. The rain usually makes me feel soft and warm. Now, i am just dizzy and lost. i cannot see where i am going.
my foot sets down on the floor of the my house. our house. The House. Her House. i am not sure where i am for a second.
    there is a framed picture of me on the stairs. i think it is me. i clutch the stairwell, because i do not know why a strangers face is hung there. i do not know why, out of all of the faces, that one is mine. i do not remember that face the way i should.
A sob wrenches off a refrigerator door, and all the cold gets out. All the thoughts get in.
Because of what happened. Because i am not whole. Because She doesn’t love
    i wanted to tell someone, just to tell Them, but i imagined the police swarming and so i didn’t.
Because i sensed somewhere in my Human-Hurt that the police didn’t care about the Kind of Person (“Person”) that i was. that i was now. that i always was. i shuddered.
    i lay in my bed and i watch the cars outside race along my walls. i stay so still that i can feel mushrooms growing underneath my skin. (they started in His two-places.) i let them tear up through my skin and erupt outward from one, two. my Body is screaming. i decide to feel in in my cheeks next. the burning red comes back. one, two, three. Each individual link of my skin pulls apart like a fabric. They join together like raindrops on a car window, forming streams, forming rivers, all bleeding. The flesh, i decide, my flesh is falling off of me, exposing my skull and my raw, rotting insides. there are maggots inside, waving at me. The only thing left after they are done, when the sun races along my walls instead of headlights, is my Human Heart. It
is the only thing left to Human-Hurt.

i wake up in a cold sweat because i dreamed that i wrote it down in a notebook. One, Two. He found it, and He corrected my grammar in His red ink.

i hurt in 3 places.

One, Two, and my Human-Heart.

i made decisions about the world instead of observations:

Show, Don’t Tell.

the sky is fake.

bad things don’t happen in Ponyville. (and the sky is fake there, too.)

i am not a Girl and so i cannot live there.

i have a Human-Heart and that is why i Human-Hurt.

i am only a He in the places He touched me.

They only see a He.

i only see It.

Glow

by Gabrielle Stonoha, Manchester High School

The High-5 campus is nestled in Vermont’s foothills. State police, corporate executives, even the Boston Bruins come here for leadership training. One climbs ropes, plays games, the usual challenges. But all throughout, there are murmurs of something that happens on the last night of the retreat.

The big reveal: the final activity is to take a journey in the dark. Empowerment, the director says. Immediately volunteering to go first, phoneless and empty handed, I approach the trailhead. A glow stick hangs on the first tree. I am wired, veins buzzing. Neon Uranium green. Aliens ... fae ... my imagination wanders. Intrepid, over undulations, I walk. My well-worn Chuck Taylors crunch beneath me and my pulse is calm, but insistent with adrenaline.

I realize there are no clues. Only these glowsticks, the ground, and the darkness in between. Nothing material waits for me—how could it?

I struggle uphill, my breath faster. As always, fixated on completing the activity “correctly,” I contemplate the given theme.

In the penetrating glow, I consider every kind invisible hand that has blessed me. I never realized how much kindness uplifts me, unnoticed, and now it is crushing and exhilarating all at once. Every smile, suggestion, word of praise or favor.

The lights bore into my eyes.

I think of my mom, which fills my chest with warmth. How much she endured for me, an accident.

The selflessness that took. Now that force has become a tangible path.

I am crawling through bushes.

I think about my broader journey so far. My thoughts turn to my body, how much I worry about gender and passing and pronouns and the perceptions of others. The performative nature of it all. I feel the worries, the selfishness and ego, shed. In the dark, I am a warm walking pile of organs. I am Hansel, I am Childe Roland, I am a nameless, formless protagonist, I am a pair of eyes.

Merely human.

I am festina lente-ing.

The glowsticks grow farther apart. No longer on a well traveled trail, I have to trust myself. I breathe in. I make peace. Everyone has trusted me thus far, enough to leave me proverbial light. I must, too.

But fear is building in my throat.

There are so few failsafes. Everything expected is untrue. In the middle of an unfamiliar forest, disaster could still strike. The only thing to do is reach the end. The lights are it, beyond them there’s no path.

The journey turns to rough terrain, untamed. The darkness is crawling with question marks.

I am thinking about the future now, as I negotiate with trees and brambles. About what I want.

In a dried river bed, steep and covered with boulders, illuminated by the sparse, drifting light of the glowstick, I climb.

My thoughts, once meditative, feel wilder now.

What-is-it-all-for. A cultish mantra on repeat. The glowsticks feel miles apart.

I see black and evil creatures, formless tricksters rearranging the lights and on top of that, I have no
idea what I’m really going to do with my life. Dizzy with uncertainty, I go on.

My eyes swing from one glowstick to the next. The path is curving, gently smoothing out, rising upward to familiar terrain. Then, an explosion. In the distant hills, the city of Brattleboro twinkles red-yellow-white-green.

Humanity.

THIS IS WHAT IT’S ALL FOR.

Falling for Me
after Ashley Wylde
by Juliet Duchesne, Arts at the Capitol Theater

Don’t you love it when you’re in a public place
and you just see someone that makes you really believe in love and beauty.
And then you leave and they leave and you never see them again?

I was at Walmart the other day, in the candy aisle,
keep in mind that this was the day after Valentine’s.
So I’m scanning all the chocolate truffles, and sweethearts,
and then I see them.

I never knew fluorescent lights could shine off of olive skin so elegantly.
Silk hair strands falling over a smooth forehead,
hands gripped tightly over the shopping cart handle.
Their dark eyes looking over shelf after shelf of bagged sugary goods,
then flicker to mine for a second of high fructose passion.

And I know that in this moment I could fall in love
over and over again.
because beautiful people are the easiest to fall for, right?

Then we part ways, after an eternity within a second,
and we never see each other again.

Now this happens to me a lot.
You know, love.
A meaningful connection followed by affection.
I’m a sucker for Rom Coms, sappy love stories,
the more clichés the better.

On average, I probably fall for at least two people a day.
Whether it’s over slight glances, cheeky smiles,
or a second more of attention dedicated to me than usual.

But love sneaks up on you,
clutches your brain, whispers softly in your ears that this is destiny.
That this love is unlike any love,
that this is the stuff that poets have been dreaming of for centuries.

There are so many stories about star crossed lovers,
People who did not know life until they met their “one” their “only”
But does that mean that I have no purpose
until the stars in my eyes align with someone else’s,
and we ride off into the sunset together?

This really makes me wonder,
How do I fall in love with myself?
I am an expert at falling for others,
but I have never been able to see
the same beauty,
the same adoration,
the same magic
in myself.

Someone once said to me, “Tell me what you love,”
So I said to her as many things as I could think of,
I love bright smiles with crooked teeth,
I love my mother,
I love falling in love,
I love the sky,
and the sea,
I love my brothers,
and my sisters-
The she stopped me and asked,
“How long do you think you could go on before you said ‘yourself?’”

And I didn’t know what to say.
So she said, “Some people go on a lifetime.”
And then I realized,
I’ve loved love for so long
that maybe it’s time for me to love myself.

**Borrowed Words**  
*By Mechelle Horelick, Rockville High School*

The Filipino language is full of borrowed words, evidence of the amount of “influence” foreign countries had.
The roots from Tagalog, with words from Spanish and English, all weaving into an intricate tale of colonialism and assimilation of the death of my ancestors and their culture.

‘Cause see, an airplane in Filipino is “eroplano,” reminiscent of how Spanish the word sounds, of how Spanish was the God of my people for 333 years. Of how, despite being the original inhabitants, we were still below the white conquistadors.

But Tagalog makes it sound like music. How “himpapawid” seems like a dream, of the view of the ocean as I leave my country to a foreign one for a Better future.

“Himpapawid” sounds like the merriment of my ancestors as they celebrated life and death as they loved themselves as they became proud of something I have no luxury of knowing.

My language is full of borrowed words. Not because we wanted to, but because we had to. Because my culture had been wiped out. The lives of the ancients all but a memory of what once was. All for the sake of glory, gold, and whiteness.

And I laugh. Because Filipinos live a life borrowed from them. Last names that sound foreign despite being born here. Festivities and attire borrowed from them. Worshipping a God borrowed from them. Of despite practising folk Catholicism we still pray to the face of
a white God.
And I realize just how badly colonialism fucked with us.
How being lightskin was once an issue of class.
But now an issue of how you can embrace your own whiteness.
Of looking down on your own countrymen for having the skin the color of the earth that birthed them.
My mother once told me that somewhere in the family lineage, a great-grandmother of mine had Spanish blood.
And I mindlessly cherished that fact for so many years.
But now I wonder how that got there.

Pretty House
after Amy Conover's Lupine Espy
by Meagan Thomas, E.O. Smith High School

It used to be a pretty house.

The wind would carry the taste of salt and the laughter of gulls and children from all directions; It blew cool and gentle, where my mother spent the warmest days of her youth, working and playing in harmony with the sea.
The sandy loam supported purple lupine and the summer dreams of six children as they grew.

I remember little feet crunching across the only grassy yard in the neighborhood, and padding, bare, down asphalt to the bay where I could watch sunsets and sailboats, safe from the traffic of the city center.
The earth supported me too, and the rest of my generation.
To us, the house was as the earth, constant and forever,

so we didn't notice; over years, behind our backs, the pretty house turned ugly: its grasses overgrown and as unforgiving as the dunes that cut soft unshod feet, half-choking the purple lupine in its quest for its own desires.

Wood and stone faded by harsh sunlight, weathered by winds and too much sand, rotted and crumbling from powerful storms that we didn't see coming when sadness and death could not touch us.
This close to nature, the storms of our parents seem unnaturally harsh. Sibling unity is shredded by gales of discord.
They tear each other down about tearing it down, so much that they forget about the house, the ugly house, that will fall before they can make a decision because they can't make a decision.

I watch the grass blowing in the sea wind, and marvel at the calm after the hurricane that flooded the living room.
The wood may not be worth saving, maybe not the stone, but nature will return no matter the damage.

The purple lupine can grow again. It's like me, I guess, growing no matter the damage. It only needs a little water, a little sunlight, a little warmth; it's persistent and forgiving until it reaches a state where the grass stops competing, and everything is naturalized.

I don't care about the ugly house. I don't want a pretty house. I want a pretty home.
1.

What happened? The best I can do is try. Try to put into words what exactly that woman wanted. What she did.

She wanted to die, that’s for sure. I don’t think—Really she must have known. She asked for a one way trip, no question about it. At her age, really, what else could she have done? At least, that’s what I tell myself.

Like every job I take, it started with a meet up. It was some back water solar system, I think. One with a dingy, dying star. There were no code names or bodyguards, she didn’t ask for weapons or ID. I met her at some dive, it was sunset.

What was she like? She was—I’d say she looked like me in fifty years or so. Dark skin wrinkled and spotted from to many hours standing to long in the rays of a sun. Her hair must have been like mine. Just as thick and dark. Her hair it’s—it was—it was grey then. Not really a monotone grey, more a blue grey, I guess. Really though, an aged version of myself. Except—Her eyes, they were so much kinder. Clearly, she never lost—something—Hope or some shit? Faith? Maybe innocence, who knows? When I looked in her eyes, they were unfairly warm. Unfair, yeah. Her eyes were unfairly welcoming, so right away I had a bad feeling.

“First things first,” I say. “What’s your offer?”

How I usually start this shit, getting to the point, you know?

“You offer?” I repeat. I’ve been standing, waiting for a response. She’s been—She just sat. I’m frustrated now, annoyed. If some senile bitch like this is going to take up my time then I wasn’t staying long. Really, there were plenty of other jobs to take.

And shit, all she says is, “take a seat.”

All things considered, maybe I should have followed my gut. Shouldn’t really—Shouldn’t have trusted those eyes.

I sat.

She had a drink, almost finished. She must have been waiting for a while. Just—in this dirty ass, what, pub? Waiting for me.

“I have a job for you.” She says this like its the shit.

We started talking numbers, big numbers. I was interested again. I was—it’s always the money, always. All I knew was that job was gonna make me fucking rich. I was ready to agree, “sign me the fuck up,” I was thinking.

I tell her my name. A little Old Earth word I picked up a couple dozen planets ago.

“Wind chime.” She said my name like a—She said it like a hex. She looked like a fucking witch in that—in that pub.

“Wind chime,” she said. Now she’s landing and her body cracks somewhere. Fuck, she had this smile. All the fucking wrinkles on her face, all at once, they just—Her whole face made way for that smile, including those eyes.

“Wind chime,” she said. “This is my job for you. There’s a reason I’m offering you so much money.”

God she had this fucking smile, god.

“Wind chime,” she said.

“You’re going to help me die.”

2.

Her name was Magpie.

This was her deal.

I was going to help her die.

Was it suicide? Was what happened a suicide? Did I help her kill herself? Is that really what I call it? For the most money I’d ever been offered, here was her deal.

“You’re going to bring me to the center of this galaxy, you will halt your ship as close to that black hole as close as you can get, and you will assist in launching me into that black hole.”

Of course—First instinct—“No, fuck no, I’m not murdering some old women.”

She looked like less a witch then, more a—more like a fucking—god. She looked like fucking death.

Still, it was a lot of money, and a lot of money meant a lot of money for, you know, the folks planet-side.

“Murder?” she laughed.
“That’s bullshit,” I said. “You’re not finding anything in a fucking black hole. You’re just fucking dead.”

“You think I don’t know that?”

She—I remember—she doubled her price. I don’t think she had anyone to leave it too.

She looked like an old woman asking for death, she was asking me to bring her there. God, it was so much money. God.

I took the job.

3.

To that black hole? About a month of space travel at maximum speed no fucking pit stops. She paid for supplies, she had everything ready. There was no bull shitting her. Fuck, we were long gone by midnight.

I—Those first few days were—they were unfortunate. God, I think I already saw her as dead. Really, she’d try to talk to me and I’d just give her the fucking “Uh-huh” the “yea.” Maybe I—I saw her as that money, a dad woman who I was bringing from one point in space to another for a—just a—God just so much money.

I didn’t see that smile.

4.

A few days in—I must have been more than a week. We were cruising. Nothing was wrong with my ship. Cookie’s a sturdy girl with a strong hull and very good sped. I trust her every day to keep me safe out here in space, the least safe place.

Yeah, it was a few days in. We were both quite. I was spacing out—Ha fuck, in space—and she was reading, I think. Something—Yeah something thick, really wordy. Nothing I’d ever read. Yeah, we were both wasting time, when I got an alert from Cookie.

She told me, “Unknown assailants entering Hyperspace vicinity.”

“Probably some waywards trying to board Cookie and take whatever she’s got,” I made sure to tell Magpie before snatching whatever weapon I had on hand.

Checked one of the portholes and yeah, there she blew. Pretty much a giant fucking space beetle, riding through hyperspace with ease.

It latched onto the hull and the whole ship shook because, fuck, a giant space bug was trying to claw its way in with giant space battle hands.

“Shit” I said. Actually, I think I said it more like “Shit, shit, shit, shit, shit.” Just a bunch of times.

“I’m gonna have to shake it off,” I shouted to Magpie. I dropped the weapon I’d gotten before. I got behind the wheel, started turning that shit, hand over hand, trying to save this old women, myself, and most importantly, my spaceship.

But this space bug was a fucking fighter

I was starting to get those warnings like “Your whatever’s broken because of space bug.” And I was thinking, “Looks like you’re getting that dramatic death scene a little early old woman.”

Except she’s not in the fucking spaceship anymore.

And suddenly, this fucking bug is just gone, and I know why.

The weapon I tossed, she brought that shit with her when she borrowed one of my space suits and took a little walk across my hull to shoot this bug in the fucking head.

Guess she wasn’t ready to die then.

5.

After that, we started talking.

“Why are you doing this?” I’d asked her, after a few hours of mindless piloting.

“I’ve spent my whole life finding out amazing things. About the universe, about humanity, about space, and time. Now, before I finally kick the bucket, I’m going to answer one more impossible question.”

“What’s it like to go in a black hole.”

“Precisely.”

I remember, she leaned back in her chair, signed, and smiled.

6.

About two weeks in, I was definitely listening to the radio. Some guy was singing about—Old bones, I think?

“You asked me why I’m doing this,” I think is how she started it. Yeah— “You asked me why I’m doing this, now, what I’m wondering is, why are you doing this?”

It took me a moment—I wasn’t really paying attention. I said “doing what?” Like, shit man I was piloting a spaceship.
She responded by asking again, except, I think she might have changed something or other so it sounded more like.

“Why are you piloting a spaceship around for cash?” Something like that.

I said the usual shit.

“Oh you know, it’s just the wild life for me, Hoorah.”

“Aw man, I got folks back home who need the funds”

“It’s just my calling to be up here with the stars bud.”

She saw through that shit no problem, probably heard it before from hundreds of other spacy before. We all hid the real reasons deep inside ourselves.

Somehow, though, I caught a flash of those eyes of hers and—fuck—I told her. Fuck—I said, “Yeah, you got that’s bull. Yeah, I get it.” and I saw her smile from the corner of my eye.

“I’m out here because I can’t settle down. I just can’t, you know? The instant I’m planet-bound I just, can’t keep it together.

She says something like “huh” or, like, snorts or some shit.

Then I just sat for a while—I really should have kept quiet, shouldn’t have, given so much of myself to this old women.

So I turned to her and said, “I had a wife once.”

And she smiled.

I turned to her and said, “I had a wife once. I fell in love with a beautiful merchant from an ocean planet hundreds of light years from here. I would always visit her between jobs. She had such warm eyes. I decided I would give up my life as a spacey for her, didn’t want to leave her for months to travel solar systems.”

And she said “huh,” I think.

I kept talking.

“I gave her a ring, one blue as her eyes, blue as that water planet. We were married by this huge fucking ocean, on an almost infinite beach.”

She might have sighed then.

“Two months later, I was space bound. Couldn’t face her again. It’s been—it’s been a while.”

There wasn’t much talking then.

7.

After that, we didn’t have long.

I started reading that book of hers.

She kept on, just, smiling.

8.

Parking by a black hole, just close enough to launch an old woman scientist, was not easy. That alone took a day of precision control and lots of sweating.

When it was time, she had me record every detail. All this data she wanted me to write down and save and send one place or another. Guess answering those questions of hers still mattered even when—This crazy shit—even when she was about to die.

She got in, like, a sort of modified life pod.

She waved, I think she was laughing. Like fuck she ever cried.

I—Should I have—Could I have saved her? I could have—God, there must have been something else.

What- What could I have told her to change her mind? Why couldn’t I have thought of some other impossible questions? God—I’m sorry, it’s hard to talk about, I’m sorry. You shouldn’t have to—No I, I know you can.

I watched her go, her little life pod got smaller and smaller until.

Gone.

Definitely, she was definitely laughing.

And then space swallowed that fucking women whole.

9.

I know where I’m going now, I’m going to a distant blue planet, hundreds of light years away. I’m going to see your eyes again. I hope all these fucking messages arrive before I do, otherwise I’ll have a lot to explain. But I swear love, it might have been a trick of the light. I swear love, The light of millions of stars seemed to form her face in my windows out into the dark unknown. Galaxies and solar systems forming her wrinkles and folds and crevasses.

She was smiling.
## Honorable Mentions

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<td>Gavin Gorecki</td>
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<td>Parker Perillo</td>
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<td>Harry Sudnick</td>
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<td>Thais Bran</td>
<td>Ana Grace Academy of the Arts</td>
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<td>Kaela Jia</td>
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<td>Jaylene Collazo</td>
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<td>Abby Ditzel</td>
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The Blue Sky
What Love Has Been Since I Met You
Whose School? My School!
Football

Fourth Grade

My Journey to Becoming a MLB All Star
Man and Time
The Bracelet
Visit to the Secret Garden Tea Cafe
Winning Fill-a-bus
Fear is Bad if You Let It Control You
The Corning Museum of Glass
Touch the Sun
Winter
Crayons
I Live For Balling
The Trouble With
Family Is

Zachary Anderson
Lincoln Martindale
Sarah Pulley
Nory Mcdonald
Caroline Saulsbury
Leila Taweh
Anna Witinski
Richard Baer
Sophia Caneira
Sophia Caneira
Sullivan Clancy
Gavin Rose
Emma St. Clair

Bugbee Elementary
Juliet W. Long
Latimer Lane Elementary
Bugbee Elementary
Bugbee Elementary
East Farms
Bugbee Elementary
Bi-Cultural Day
Annie E. Vinton
Annie E. Vinton
Bugbee Elementary
CREC Montessori
Wolcott Elementary

Fifth Grade

The Gardening Days
The Week
Stitches
The “Unsinkable” Ship Sinking
My First Singing Contest
The Snowman
The Kickball Game—The Girl and Her Kickball
The Journey to Scepter of Light
The Girl with the Broken Light
The Door of Hope
Pearl Cove
Hold Tight to the Reins
The Miracle
Zero Gravity
As Is
Journal of Albert Hawkstone, 1940
The Accident
Hiroshima
Bad Flashback
My Little Berserk Kitty
Zachary Joseph Jones
Vivacious Venice
The Dollhouse
Spineless
Waterpark of Terror
Water Wars
Don’t Stop
Scared
The Monster
Adoption
Passage

Jacob Cohen
Jack Flanagan
Daniel Gorenbeyn
Beckett Hayes
Yifan Jiang
Sophie Moore
Alexandra Peto
Michael Silk
Riley Soucy
Linette Spaner
Andrew Ung
Campbell Vinci
Eve Young
Emerson Dyer
Tess Johnston
Lucy Jones
Caitlyn Lodge
Stella Mahlke
Hebah Mariyam Habib
Olivia Piri
Melina Salame
Mark Stein
Kirra Baker
Aiden Deutsch
Cassady Dzurik
Lillian Fontana
Zachary Hochhauser

Tootin’ Hills Elementary
Burr Elementary
Glastonbury East Hartford
Burr Elementary
Tootin’ Hills Elementary
Glastonbury East Hartford
Goshen Center
Martin Kellogg Middle
Tootin’ Hills Elementary
Reggio Magnet School of the Arts
Burr Elementary
Burr Elementary
Burr Elementary
Buttonball Lane
Deep River Elementary
Burr Elementary
Burr Elementary
Burr Elementary
Ashford
Mansfield Middle
Samuel Webb Elementary
Greenwich Academy
Sarah Noble Intermediate
Martin Kellogg Middle
Tootin’ Hills Elementary
Greenwich Academy
Bugbee Elementary
Burr Elementary
Burr Elementary
Burr Elementary
Int'l Magnet for Global Students
Burr Elementary
Parties
Leaf
Still
A Beautiful Love
Mean
Make Up Your Mind
Daylight
Country Leaves
Where I’m From—Zhan

Stella Mahlke
Sarah Noble Intermediate

Paige Mahoney
Latimer Lane Elementary

Nora McConville
Tootin’ Hills Elementary

Logan Meenan
Regional Multicultural Magnet

Maytal Meskin
Burr Elementary

Marina Mucka
Goshen Center School

Dasha Scaminaci
CREC Montessori Magnet

Sarah Skilton
Bugbee Montessori Magnet

Edith Zhan
Bugbee Montessori Magnet

Sixth Grade

Monster
Ashford School

Living as a Leaf
Granby Memorial Middle

Wings
Tootin’ Hills Elementary

A Magical Night
Juliet W. Long

The Smallest Words
Schaghticoke Middle

Somehow
Abraham Baldwin Middle

Fly like an Eagle
Greenwich Academy

The Pole
Vernon Center Middle

Vanished
Schaghticoke Middle

Healing Dogs
Schaghticoke Middle

Trapped
Greenwich Academy

My Last Christmas with Maddie
New Fairfield Middle

Coral Reefs In Danger
Memorial Middle School

Letter to a Congressman
CREC Montessori Magnet

A Lion in the River
Woodbury Middle

The Big Hill
New Fairfield Middle

Friends
Woodbury Middle

Derrynane Bay Goosebumps
Greenwich Academy

The Twister
Schaghticoke Middle

Sugar Gone Deadly?
Tootin’ Hills Elementary

No Pizza
Schaghticoke Middle

Sailing in a Storm
Hartford Academy of the Arts

The Barbie Syndrome
Schaghticoke Middle

Letter to Sharon Draper
CREC Montessori Magnet

The Accident
Schaghticoke Middle

Gator-Aid
Greenwich Academy

The Phone Call
Hartford Academy of the Arts

Jack
Hartford Academy of the Arts

Book Camp
Greenwich Academy

Racism
Talcott Mountain Academy

This Is Me
Memorial Middle Schools

Clocks
CREC Montessori Magnet

Letter to Sharon Draper
Ledyard Center

The Accident
Woodbury Middle

Karthika Siva
Ledyard Center

Hannah Spivey
Tootin’ Hills Elementary

Kyleen Spivey
Meteor Middle School

Madeleine Sweet
CREC Montessori Magnet

Ty Andrews
Ledyard Center

Morgan Burrus
Tootin’ Hills Elementary

Casey Campellone
Hartford Academy of the Arts

Natalie Norbut
Schaghticoke Middle

Meaghan Sheedy
Schaghticoke Middle

Kathika Siva
Greenwich Academy

Hannah Spivey
Hartford Academy of the Arts

Kyleen Spivey
Hartford Academy of the Arts

Madeleine Sweet
Greenwich Academy

Ty Andrews
Talcott Mountain Academy

Morgan Burrus
Memorial Middle Schools

Casey Campellone
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Natalie Norbut
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Greenwich Academy

Ty Andrews
Tootin’ Hills Elementary

Morgan Burrus
Greenwich Academy

Casey Campellone
Tootin’ Hills Elementary

Natalie Norbut
Vernon Center Middle

Meaghan Sheedy
Vernon Center Middle

Karthika Siva
Tootin’ Hills Elementary

Hannah Spivey
Greenwich Academy

Ty Andrews
Tootin’ Hills Elementary

Morgan Burrus
Tootin’ Hills Elementary

Casey Campellone
Vernon Center Middle

Natalie Norbut
Vernon Center Middle
Seventh Grade

And She Had No Shoes  
Sophie Alcyone
Coleytown Middle

Healing Storm  
Erin Durkin
Coleytown Middle

Decania  
Zachary Garfinkle
Amity Middle

Holding Onto the Spotlight  
Amy Hogan
Bedford Middle

Falling Into the Future  
Laurel Maus
Amity Middle

Into the Crow's Nest  
Kaitlyn Pryor
Amity Middle

Archetype  
Libby Riggs
Haddam-Killingworth Middle

The Rocking Chair  
Sarah Suhail
Irvin A. Robbins Middle

The Barrier  
Gabrielle Wincherhern
Amity Middle

Love From Heaven  
Troy Artis
East Granby Middle

Farther Away  
Tirna Iqbal
East Granby Middle

We Have to Change  
Julian Kage
East Granby Middle

The Battle with the Beast  
Mumtaz Khan
Two Rivers Magnet Middle

Letter to the Next President  
Mia Sommers
Two Rivers Magnet Middle

What Should We Do About Illegal Immigration?  
Haritha Subramanian
Two Rivers Magnet Middle

Jacky  
Nathaniel Welsh
East Granby Middle

The Ambulance  
Sophia Albright
Two Rivers Magnet Middle

Things To Do in Dark Times (Cellar)  
Jayda Awua Peasah
Two Rivers Magnet Middle

Wandering Onto a Blanket of Snow  
Madison Collenburg
Old Saybrook Middle

A Bed Never Lasts  
Hadi Elhakim
East Granby Middle

Weeping Willow  
Cayleigh Goberman
East Granby Middle

Finished Silver  
Bella Johnson
Avon Middle

I Don’t Know What to Write  
Brooke Johnson
Tolland Middle

May Leaders See  
Jacob Kuczek
Two Rivers Magnet Middle

The Ride from Mother Nature  
Hannah Lee
Old Saybrook Middle

Art  
Ella Niemeyer
Tolland Middle

La Aventura de Sorpresa  
Jeneddis Nieves
Two Rivers Magnet Middle

Life  
Ashlynn O'Marra
Hartford Academy of the Arts

The Snowball Fight  
Josiah Perez-Henry
Two Rivers Magnet Middle

Death  
Libby Riggs
Haddam-Killingworth Middle

Peace  
Emma Ruccio
Talcott Mountain Academy

IF  
Mya Saylor
Two Rivers Magnet Middle

Fate in the Palms of Our Hands  
Tajiah Seals
Two Rivers Magnet Middle

Witches and Wizards  
Mia Sommers
Two Rivers Magnet Middle

The Abused Laptop  
Sydney Soucy
East Granby Middle

Ode to Ireland  
Madalynne Stone
Irvin A. Robbins Middle

Growth  
Sarah Suhail
Amity Middle School

Deserted Beach  
Alice Youtz

Eighth Grade

Perfection  
Matylda Biskupski
RHAM Middle

Abe's Journal  
Dash Corning
Ralcott Mountain Academy

Two Bird of a Feather Flew Together  
Brianna Forbes
City Hill Middle

Fatso Bill  
Lillian Gray
Saxe Middle

The Jade Pendant Falls  
Giovanna Nucci
Mansfield Middle

Hana  
Natalie Wang
Amity Middle

Discovering Oliver Twist  
Andrew Wu
Talcott Mountain Academy

Blinded by the Light  
Krista Mitchell
Stafford Middle

Where I Am From  
Brianna Nurse
Metropolitan Learning Center

The H Project  
Sarah Ocampo
Two Rivers Magnet Middle

The Drag  
Honora Saccu
Wintergreen Interdistrict Magnet

Surface  
Kate Wilson
Greenwich Academy
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<td>Irvin A. Robbins Middle</td>
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<td>The Guardian</td>
<td>Kiara McCay</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Yewande Olumide</td>
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<td>Ashley Portillo</td>
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<td>Megan VanDyke</td>
<td>E.O. Smith</td>
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<tr>
<td>I Have Hopes and Dreams</td>
<td>Imani Bowerise</td>
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<td>Ask Me About Brian</td>
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<td>Where I Live</td>
<td>Elizabeth Condall</td>
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<td>Laura Ruggiero</td>
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<td>Attack of the Future Frat Boys of America</td>
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**Ninth Grade**

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**Tenth Grade**

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<td>Brianna Bradley</td>
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<td>The True Order</td>
<td>Phoebe Chung</td>
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<td>The Faceless Prince</td>
<td>Yesenia Contreras</td>
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<td>Stuck in the Gutter</td>
<td>Tabitha Hinke</td>
<td>Suffield High</td>
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<td>you should go</td>
<td>Amie Lee</td>
<td>Rockville High</td>
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<td>Basin City</td>
<td>Christopher McAuliffe</td>
<td>Rockville High</td>
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<td>Little Henry</td>
<td>Mackenzie Schultz</td>
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<td>His &amp; Hers</td>
<td>Julia Somma</td>
<td>Rockville High</td>
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<td>Cold Cement</td>
<td>Taylor Therrien</td>
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<td>Christina Thompson</td>
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<td>Deus Ex Machina</td>
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<td>Ally LaPrad</td>
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<td>Disgustingly Mine</td>
<td>Samantha McQueen</td>
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<td>When the Stars Danced</td>
<td>Alexandra Spencer</td>
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<td>Eric Fenn</td>
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<td>Whisper of the Wind</td>
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<td>Samantha McQueen</td>
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<td>Lady Liberty</td>
<td>Youssef Mezrioui</td>
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<td>Soldier</td>
<td>Marissa Minor</td>
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<td>Recipes</td>
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**Eleventh Grade**

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<td>Headspace</td>
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<td>Never Twice</td>
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<td>Life Changing, and Life Ending</td>
<td>Haley Francesca Armstrong</td>
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Divine Feuds
Cassidy Magowan
E.O. Smith High

Bite Marks
Kaleigh Perkins
Rockville High

Sticky Notes
Lauryn Porlier
Rockville High

Fishbowl
Amir Suhail
Farmington High

Martin Luther King, Jr.
Catherine Magowan
Notre Dame High

A Modest Proposal to End Gun Violence
Kaitlyn Daly
South Windsor High

Keep Me in the Running
Cyrus Gould
Woodstock Academy

The Right Rises, The Word Watches
Dalton Hawie
Woodstock Academy

The Art of Winter
Anna Konrady
Bristol Eastern High

Open Letter to the US Soccer Federation
Tessa Rigby
Granby Memorial High

My Not So High School Fantasy
Victoria Rovirosa
Science and Innovation

Curriculum Vitae
Xavier Rouleau
William H. Hall High

Your Countrymen
Joshua Archibald
Montville High

Life Bi the Years
Tanner Bosse
Rockville High

highway blues, you're in my head
Ness Curti
Suffield High

Thunderstorm Heart
Isobel Daniels
E.O. Smith High

African Queen
Zakhiyah Days
Science and Innovation

How My Sister Signs
Sophia Durand
Hartford Academy of the Arts

The Aftershock of Pulse
Grace Ellis
Arts at the Capitol Theater

The Fallen
Shakya Felix
Rockville High

Cats in the Cradle
Sarah Ference
Rockville High

Undead
Victoria Griffen
Rockville High

Letter to a Stonesmith
Aidan Kaminer
William H. Hall High

Stories for the Morning
Kimberly McGuire
Rockville High

Dissociated
Katelyn Mullen
Rockville High

Advice from Father to Child Soldier
Sydney Parrot
Rockville High

Finish Line
Lauryn Porlier
Rockville High

But You Act White
Briana Roque
Rockville High

The Smaller Picture
Rachel Saal
Rockville High

Everlasting
Serena Sevigny
William H. Hall High

I Am Who I Am
Annelise Sonner
E.O. Smith High

The King of Misery
Cierra Taber
Rockville High

Unfulfilling Truths
Azya Thornton
Rockville High

Slow Dancing
Nicole Whidfeldt
Woodstock Academy

View of a 19th-Century Photograph
Elizabeth Winkler
Hartford Academy of the Arts

Murderers of Humanity
Shumoel Zafar
Greenwich Academy

Twelfth Grade

Sanctuary on 811 Hansfield Avenue
Rebecca Ageyi
Metropolitan Learning Center

Stage Fright
Andrew Biondi
Notre Dame High

The Right Thing
Andrew Biondi
Notre Dame High

Harry and Clyde
Catie Curtis
Hartford Academy of the Arts

Pathes
Juliet Duchesne
Arts at the Capitol Theater

Playful Murder
Anastasia Gilchrist
Rockville High

Good Saul's Limitless Road
Isabella Hernandez
East Hartford High

Migration
Mechelle Horelick
Rockville High

The Rain
Nadia Jalal
Arts at the Capitol Theater

Chasing Time (Excerpt)
Kimberly Okeke
Science and Innovation

Cotton Candy Skies
Vy Dinh
South Windsor High

Analysis of the Gettysburg Address
Elizabeth Dinielli
Hartford Academy of the Arts

Seven Words
Brooke Dominello
Montville High School

Roots
Joyce Hida
Rockville High

Looking Out
Kiara Johnson
Hartford Academy of the Arts

My Hidden Pocket of the Universe
Wesia Malik
Science and Innovation
College Essay
My Paradise
Finding my Strength
College Essay
Adoption Day
Picking Tomatoes at Cold Spring Farm
Metamorphosis
Late Night Insights
Last Drive
Nightmares
Six Years After Death
Grief Will Look Like
The Home Within Ourselves
Roses (Inspired by “Tulips” by Plath)
The Speech I Really Want to Give
Thirteen Ways to Burn This
Love, in the Context of Lodging
Cinderella
The Voice of a Celebrity
White
Doll’s Life
Declaration of War
Eccedentesiat
Who I Think of When I Stand …
Yggdrasil, Ended
Draped in Klimt
A City of Love; A City of Blood
Future
Black Boy
Funeral
Blue
GIRLS GIRLS GIRLS
Without a Shield
Goat
Future Fears for Future Children
Born Again
Blue Vagabond
Kendall Okeke
Pieta Okonya
Trinity Perez
Gabryel Porter
Murphy Ruocco
Laura Sokoloski
Kaitlyn Tonkin
Alan Abutin
Roselyne Anyah
Jessica Bajorek
Alivia Begin
Verne L-Markoff
Renee Bosse
Ayannah Brown
Chelsea Chatterton
Elizabeth Chew
Alicia Chiang
Karishma Chouhan
Ashley Crispim
Brooke Dominello
Julia Froelich
Audrey Fromson
Samantha Gonyeau
Faith Heywood
Nadia Jalal
Hanna Johnston
Hannah Kanfer
Marisa Karasik
Damani Mack
Alyssa Mount-Bycholski
Sara Ramos
Nicole Sellew
Sameena Shah
Jessica Sheely
Victoria Sun
Enijtan Tejuosho
Ember Wheeler
Science and Innovation
Science and Innovation
Hartford Academy of the Arts
Hartford Academy of the Arts
Rockville High
Bacon Academy
Rockville High
Montville High
Ellington High
South Windsor High
Hartford Academy of the Arts
Hartford Academy of the Arts
Northwestern Regional District 7
Hartford Academy of the Arts
Rockville High
Rockville High
Tolland High
Montville High
South Windsor High
Montville High
South Windsor High
Hall High
Rockville High
Hartford Academy of the Arts
Arts at the Capitol Theater
Rockville High
Hartford Academy of the Arts
South Windsor High
Hartford Academy of the Arts
South Windsor High
Choate Rosemary Hall
South Windsor High
Rockville High
Arts at the Capitol Theater
Choate Rosemary Hall
Nonnewaug High
All Teachers of Published and Honored Students, by School

Abraham Baldwin Middle School  Karen Chapman
Adams Middle School  Heather Chapman
Amity Middle School  Phillip Day
Ana Grace Academy of the Arts  Amy Benton
Anna Reynolds Elementary School  Jennifer Riccio
Annie E. Vinton Elementary  Sarah Hayes
Arts at the Capitol Theater Magnet School  Sue Files
Ashford School  Taylor Eck
Avon Middle School  Jeffrey Helming
Bacon Academy  Catherine Hain
Bedford Middle School  Eliza Sparks
Bi-Cultural Day School  Jessica Cydylo
Bristol Eastern High School  Karen Leferre
Bugbee Elementary School  Marcy Rudge
Burr Elementary School  Joanne Peluso
Buttonball Lane Elementary School  Kate Craven
Center School  Paul Hills
Central Elementary School  Janice Brennan
Choate Rosemary Hall  Elizabeth Simison
City Hill Middle School  Hallama Lorien
Colebrook Consolidated School  Michelle Gordon
Coleytown Middle School  Elizabeth Burdelski
Cooperative Arts & Humanities High School  Joanne Peluso
CREC Academy of Science and Innovation  Courtney Phelan
CREC Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts  Danielle Norden
CREC Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts Middle School  Jeanne Pascon
CREC Montessori Magnet School  Kelly DiPietro
CREC Museum Academy  Karis Beno
Deep River Elementary School  Kristen Kurimai
Cooperative Arts & Humanities High School  Lauren Noonan
CREC Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts  Alison Zimmerman
CREC Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts Middle School  Ann McFee
CREC Montessori Magnet School  Jennifer Johnson
CREC Museum Academy  Paige Colantonio
Deep River Elementary School  John Cobb
Cooperative Arts & Humanities High School  Laura Litewka
CREC Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts  Amy Helminiak
CREC Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts Middle School  Sylvia Crunden
CREC Montessori Magnet School  Paul Ferrante
CREC Museum Academy  Mindi Englart
Deep River Elementary School  Kathleen Butler
Cooperative Arts & Humanities High School  Anna M. Guarco
CREC Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts  Caine Schlenker
CREC Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts Middle School  Jason Beauregard
CREC Montessori Magnet School  Megan Collins
CREC Museum Academy  Sarah Delorm
Deep River Elementary School  David Adamson
Cooperative Arts & Humanities High School  Shay Pearsall-Lee
CREC Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts  Diana Dewolf-Carfi
CREC Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts Middle School 
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Name</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discovery Academy</td>
<td>Cardyn Gossler, Jaime Knowles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.O. Smith High School</td>
<td>Denise Abercrombie, Mary Bucaccio</td>
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<tr>
<td>East Farms School</td>
<td>Renee Klucznik</td>
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<tr>
<td>East Granby Middle School</td>
<td>Kimberly Shaker</td>
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<tr>
<td>East Hartford High School</td>
<td>Ben Quesnel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eastern Middle School</td>
<td>Michael Festi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eli Terry Elementary</td>
<td>Mary Gelezunas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ellington High School</td>
<td>Anne Forzely</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eric G. Norfeldt Elementary School</td>
<td>Kathleen Buckley</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farmington High School</td>
<td>Nelle Andrews</td>
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<td>Gideon Welles School</td>
<td>Eileen McIntyre</td>
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<td>Glastonbury East Hartford Magnet School</td>
<td>Laura Berent</td>
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<td>Goshen Center School</td>
<td>Lesley Mroz</td>
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<td>Granby Memorial High School</td>
<td>Lisa Silva</td>
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<tr>
<td>Granby Memorial Middle School</td>
<td>Traci Damico</td>
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<td>Greenwich Academy</td>
<td>Cheryl Martinelli</td>
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<td>Guilford High School</td>
<td>Lauren Shafer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Haddam-Killingworth Middle School</td>
<td>Caroline Martin</td>
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<td>Hall High School</td>
<td>Brent McKinley</td>
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<td>Hebron Avenue School</td>
<td>Dana Johansen</td>
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<td>Hopewell School</td>
<td>Jeff Schwartz</td>
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<td>International Magnet School for Global Citizenship</td>
<td>Maureen Corbo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Irving A. Robbins Middle School</td>
<td>Mollie Flannery</td>
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<td>Juliet W. Long School</td>
<td>Phillip Day</td>
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<td>Lake Street School</td>
<td>Tim Houlton</td>
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<td>Latimer Lane Elementary</td>
<td>Carol Blejwas</td>
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<td>Ledyard Center School</td>
<td>Mieke Hamilton</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ledyard High School</td>
<td>Jessica Wolf</td>
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<td>Litchfield Center School</td>
<td>Jennifer Shannon</td>
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<td>Manchester High School</td>
<td>Bonnie Frascadore</td>
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<td>Martin Kellogg Middle School</td>
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<td>Memorial Middle School</td>
<td>Megan McNabney</td>
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<td>Metropolitan Learning Center</td>
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<td>Estela Merrow</td>
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<td>Kelsey Klebart</td>
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<td>Maryann Lindquist</td>
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<td>Barbara Park</td>
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<td>Jennifer Vignone</td>
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<td>Kelly Cecchini</td>
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<td>Tara Achane Miller</td>
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<td>Rachel Ritacco</td>
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<td>Barbara Marano</td>
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<td>James Walsh</td>
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<td>Joyce Sidlosky</td>
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<td>Rebecca DiPinto</td>
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<td>Sheryl Wilkerson</td>
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<td>Joshua Cushing</td>
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<td>Susan Laurencot</td>
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</tbody>
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New Fairfield Middle School
Nonnewaug High School
Norfeldt Elementary School
North Street School

Northwestern Regional
Notre Dame High School

Old Saybrook Middle School
Oliver Wolcott Technical High School
Reggio Magnet School of the Arts
Regional Multicultural Magnet School
RHAM Middle School
Rockville High School

Samuel B. Webb Elementary School
Sarah Noble Intermediate School
Saxe Middle School
Schaghticoke Middle School
Silas Deane Middle School
Simsbury High School
South Windsor High School
Southeast Elementary School
Squadron Line School

St. Bernard’s School
Stafford Middle School
Staples High School
Suffield High School

Talcott Mountain Academy

Tashua Elementary School
The Master’s School
Tolland High School
Tolland Middle School
Tootin’ Hills Elementary School

Wendy Halsey
Sondra Olivieri
Conor Gereg
Lorie Campagna
Joan Hijeck
Kara DeWolf
Tricia Lee
Jessica Angell
Kim Butz
Lucy Abbott
Peter Smith
Joanne Galenski-Girardin
Nicholas Feaerici
Lynn Hancock
Rebecca Curtin
Shaune Santos
Victoria Nordlund
Eric Silver
Mary Ann Olson
Jennifer Amodeo
Madilyn DaRos
Michelle Walker
Amy D’Orio
Samantha Gati-Tisi
Colleen Budaj
Martin Leftoff
Amanda Flachsbart
Danielle Pieratti
Chuck Warinsky
Elisabeth Rollins
Kara Maslar
Kristine Walker
Maureen Billings
Nicole Harold
Pamela Lindley
Alex Rode
Lynne Dennis
Lindsay Spose
Bronwyn Monahan
Christina Reiser
Lydia Gibb
Mary Hartell
Sally Kenler
Sarah King
Kris Coffey
Hank Fay
Catherine Hoerle
Hayley Brown
Jeffrey Hall
Jessica Flaherty
Lisa Burg
Lisa Jacobs
Melissa Champagne
Nadia Eagan
Peggy Bruno
Teachers Honored for Multiple Student Honorees
(three or more for K-6, four or more for 7-12)

**Platinum**
 Secondary
 Vicky Nordlund

**Gold**
 Secondary
 John Wetmore
 Caine Schlenker
 Megan Collins
 Elementary
 Maureen Corbo
 David Adamson
 Molly Flannery

**Silver**
 Secondary
 Gillian Zieger
 Danielle Pieratti
 Caroline Camera
 Amy D’Orio
 Renee Klucznik
 Melissa Mazzaferro
 Ruth Macijauskas
 Mindi Englart

**Elementary**
 Dana Johansen
 Alex Rode
 Marcy Rudge
 Sarah Delorm
 Kelly DiPietro

**Bronze**
 Secondary
 Kathleen Butler
 Carol Blejwas
 Denise Abercrombie
 Mary Hartell
 Elementary
 Cynthia Pezzullo
 Danielle Norden
 Hayley Brown
 Lisa Jacobs
 Maureen Billings
 Peggy Bruno
 Peter Smith
 Rebecca Snav
 Zandra Trudeau
 Catherine Hoerle
 Madilyn DaRos
 Sally Kenler
 Shay Pearsall-Lee
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Category (circle one): poetry non-fiction fiction artwork

Title of Piece:
________________________________________________________

Student: ___________________________   _____________________   Grade: ____________
First Name                       Last Name

Home Address: ___________________________ Phone: ___________________________
Number and Street Email: _____________________________________________________
City, State, Zip Code

School (Full Name):
_______________________________________________________________

School Address: ________________________________________________ Phone: ____________
Number and Street
City, State, Zip Code

Teacher (Full Name): ___________________________ Email: ___________________________

Principal (Full Name): ___________________________ Email: ___________________________

Student’s Signature/Date: ____________________________

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Teacher’s Signature/Date: ____________________________

☐ I am familiar with this student’s writing, have read this entry, and am satisfied that it is their own work.

Guardian’s Signature/Date: ____________________________

☐ I give permission to the Connecticut Writing Project to print my minor’s writing if it is selected for publication.

A COPY OF THIS FORM MUST ACCOMPANY EACH SUBMISSION

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Department of English, University of Connecticut
215 Glenbrook Road, Unit 4025
Storrs, CT 06269-4025

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