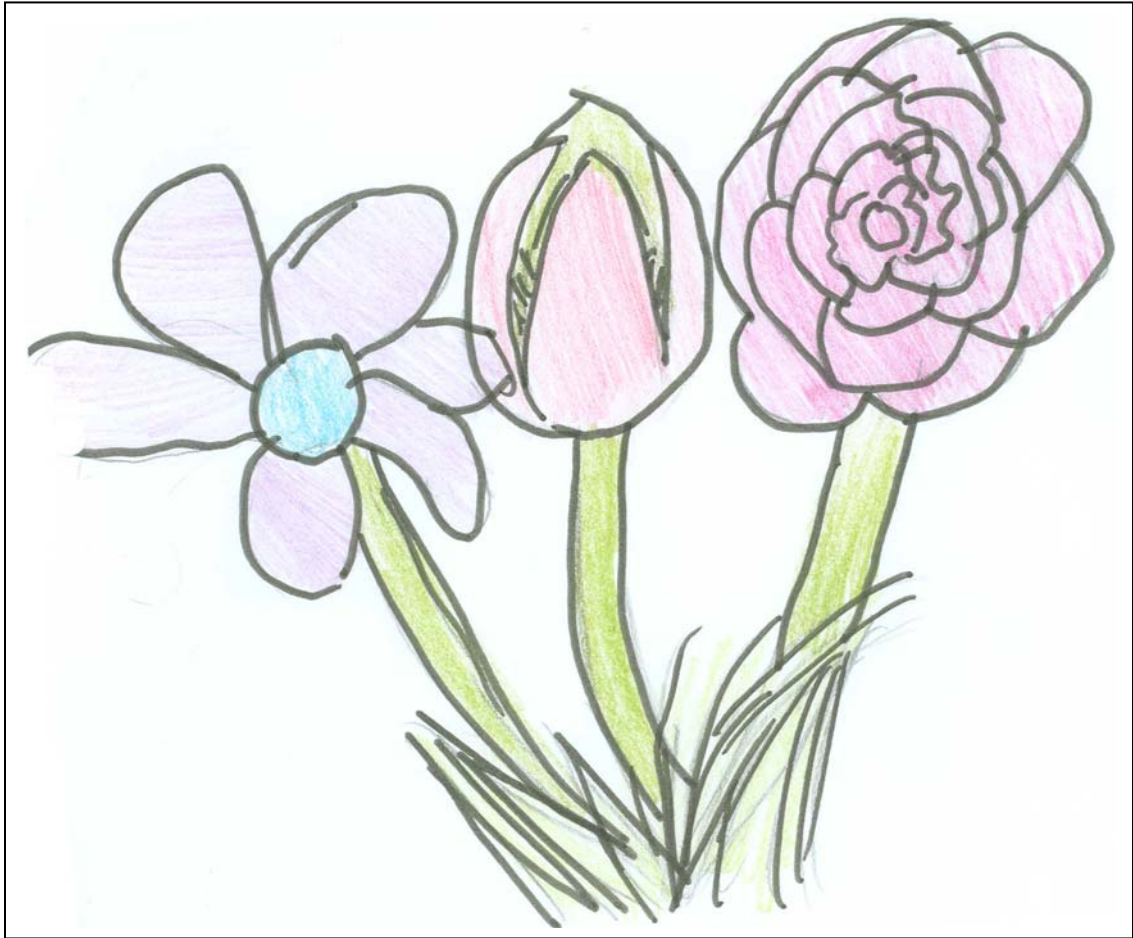


# Connecticut Student Writers



*Alyssa Marie Sauro, Grade 4, Totoket Valley Elementary School, Northford*

Volume XVIII, May 2006

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# Connecticut Student Writers

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# **FOREWORD**

On a February morning, when the clouds of an impending blizzard broached the horizon, this year's *Connecticut Student Writers Magazine* selection committee was treated to a veritable garden of over 1,800 pieces of student writing. There was vivid fantasy interspersed with exotic mystery, and lush poetry juxtaposed against evocative narrative. There were fresh voices from budding, primary school writers, and there were "hardy" words, sure to linger in the mind of the reader long after the reading was done, from mature writers. There were even, if you will, *perennial* authors, familiar names from past years.

The Connecticut Writing Project invites you to stroll through the following pages and experience the most vibrant blooms of this year's entries.

Co-Editors

*Steven Albrecht*

*Nadine Keane*

Assistant Editors

*Evangeline Abbott*

*Pat Baruzzi*

*Cathy Holdridge*

*Kathy Uschmann*



# Connecticut Student Writers

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## **The Mystery of the Disappearing Frog**

One day Lamb, Justin the turtle, and Friendly Frog were on Carter's bed playing Simon Says. It was Lamb's turn to be Simon. Lamb said to flip over backwards, but did not say Simon says. Friendly Frog flipped over backwards. Lamb and Justin looked where Friendly Frog was supposed to be, but nobody was there. "I don't know where Friendly Frog could be," said Lamb and Justin.

So, Lamb and Justin looked downstairs. First, they looked behind the couch, but no Friendly Frog, just crumbs. Then they looked in the kitchen in the cabinet. No Friendly Frog . . . just peanut butter crackers. So, they looked in the living room. No Friendly Frog . . . just the Super Scrabble board. Lamb and Justin were confused about where Friendly Frog could be. It was time for them to look upstairs. First, they looked in Lauren's room. No Friendly Frog . . . just bunny. Then they thought he was hiding in Carter's room. They looked in Carter's toy box. No Friendly Frog . . . just other stuffed animals. They thought he didn't listen to what Lamb said and maybe fell behind the bed, and they were right! So, finally, they found him behind Carter's bed!

Lamb and Justin said, "Hi, Friendly Frog. We looked every place we could for you." Friendly Frog, Justin, and Lamb were happy that they found each other. After that game, they lived happily ever after when they played together.

**Carter  
Cobb**  
Kindergarten  
Phillip R. Smith  
Elementary  
School  
South Windsor

## **Winter is Special**

Winter is fun, it has lots of snow.  
Lots of snowflakes are floating down low.  
We are making a snowman and angels, too.  
We are spraying the snow red, green and blue.  
We make a big fort and sled down the hill,  
and we stay outside till we get a chill.  
Winter is special, I won't make a fuss.  
It's so much fun, come and join us!

**Alexis  
Klimaszewski**  
Kindergarten  
Sunnyside  
School  
Shelton



**Amy  
Ziobron**  
Kindergarten  
Daisy  
Ingraham  
Elementary  
School  
Westbrook

## **My Frog**

My Frog can hop.  
My Frog can hop in the pond.  
My Frog can sleep.  
My Frog can swim.  
My Frog can play.  
I love my Frog. My Frog makes me happy.

The End

**Justin  
Antoine**  
Grade 1  
J.P. Vincent  
Elementary  
School  
Bloomfield

## **The Animal That Looks Weird**

One day I was at a pet store. I saw a weird-looking animal. I took it home. It smelled fresh like cookies. It looked funny. Everybody thought it looked cool. I took it to the carnival. I asked one of the managers if he could put him on stage. They said yes. He went on stage. As soon as the curtains opened he made a cool noise, and this is what it sounded like: "Madagascar-grrrrrr-meyo-coco." Everybody was surprised. Then the noise got weirder and weirder. Then it got noisier and noisier. Everyone was amazed. The show was over then; everyone went home with their sons and daughters. I went home and my pet was very, very happy. My pet was very smart. It could read books. It knew how to drive. I took it for a walk. It knew how to write. I loved it and it loved me.

The End

**Rhianna  
Baldwin**  
Grade 1  
Daisy  
Ingraham  
Elementary  
School  
Westbrook

## **Under My Bed**

Under my bed is . . .  
Sometimes a dog,  
Sometimes trash,  
Sometimes shoes,  
Sometimes a backpack,  
Sometimes dog bones,  
Sometimes clothes,  
And  
Sometimes . . .  
ME!

## The Dice

A one,  
A two,  
A three,  
A four,  
There's a five and a six,  
But there's no more!

They're so noisy  
On the tables,  
So quiet  
On the floor.

You can play  
Games, count  
And even more!  
A one,  
A two,  
A three,  
A four,  
There's a five and a six,  
But there's no more!

## How to Make a Build-a-Bear

1. You pick out your Build-a-Bear.
2. Then you stuff your bear.
3. Then you put a heart in the bear.
4. You love your bear.
5. You give your bear a name and birthday.
6. You give your bear a home.
7. Then you're almost ready to go.
8. You ring the bell.
9. You are ready to go home.
10. You love your bear a lot.

**Adara  
Bochanis**  
Grade 1  
Daisy Ingraham  
Elementary  
School  
Westbrook

**Elena  
Hillery**  
Grade 1  
North Street  
School  
Windsor Locks

**Anna  
Cerulli**  
Grade 2  
Tashua  
Elementary  
School  
Trumbull

## **Seashell**

A seashell  
Rests  
On the  
Sandy  
Floor  
Underneath  
The waves.

Whoosh!  
Away it  
Goes  
Riding  
On the  
Waves.

Crashing  
Onto  
Shore.  
There it stays,  
Till I  
Put it  
In my  
Bucket.

**Danielle  
Hoffman**  
Grade 2  
East Farms  
School  
Farmington

## **The Night**

As the sun sinks down, the moon rises up.  
It lies on the clouds while singing to the children.  
The stars whisper to each other as the sky gets darker and darker.  
A shooting star darts across the peaceful sky.  
The owl is still awake, and so are the other creatures of the night.  
Soon the moon will slink down and the sun will rise up again.

## My Dog Luke

He barks, bites

and even

d  
r  
o  
o  
l  
s

He's a puppy

with

d  
r  
e  
a  
m  
s

He's my

best friend.

He's Luke!

**Arno  
Utegg**  
Grade 2  
Daisy Ingraham  
Elementary  
School  
Westbrook

## Sometimes I Worry

Sometimes late at night  
I lay awake and worry.  
I worry about my brother getting older  
and leaving me for college.

I worry about car accidents  
like the time when my Dad's car  
was hit by a gray car  
and was crumpled like blue tissue paper.

I worry about wars  
and whether Uncle Jessie  
will come home safely.

**Jhared  
Crocker**  
Grade 3  
J.P. Vincent  
Elementary  
School  
Bloomfield

And then I fall asleep  
and dream  
about the golden sands of Virginia Beach  
and the sparkly taste of Sprite soda,  
and my worries wash away  
as the waves hit against the shore  
in my dreams.

**Alexandra  
Hall**  
Grade 3  
Rotella School  
Waterbury

## **My Gingerbread House**

I made my house from frosting.  
It wasn't that exhausting.  
The graham crackers made it tilt,  
But it looked nice when it was built.  
I used gumdrops, twizzlers and Hershey Kisses,  
Then I felt like I was a missus.  
I used two milk cartons taped together.  
They'll stay that way until forever.  
Everyone wanted to eat my treats,  
But I said, "They'll be no feast!"  
I made a snowman and a walkway too,  
With lots of candy for me and you!  
I had some people made of Gummy Bears,  
But most children weren't done with theirs.  
I meant to make a car,  
But I didn't get that far.  
Abbey K. helped me with mine,  
And after that it was just fine.  
I made my gingerbread house into the night,  
And then I went out and had a snowball fight.  
I felt so surprised when it was done,  
It had been loads of fun!

## **The Museum of Natural History**

*I would like to thank Mom, Anna, Steven, Rabeca, and all the people at the Museum of Natural History for making this possible.*

When my mom, sister, and I went to the Museum of Natural History, we met my mom's friend, Rabeca, and her son, Steven, age three, in the space exhibit. We introduced each other, and then Steven, Anna, and I ran down the ramp that led into the middle of the space exhibit.

First, we looked at a big glass circle filled with water and fish-lobster things that might have crawled on Mars. Then I walked over to a wall and looked at pictures of other planets and galaxies. Some were movies. I looked around, trying to find something else to do. I noticed a metal plate on the marble floor. It had a small screen with red blinking zeros on it. In tiny letters below the screen, it said, "Your weight on Mars." I ran over and jumped on the scale. The zeros still blinked. "It must be broken," I thought. I ran over to my mom, who was standing by another scale. "Your weight on a neutron star," it said. I jumped onto the scale. 1264!!!

I asked Mom, "Do you want to try it?"

"If it makes me feel better in the morning when I weigh myself, sure." I giggled. Mom stepped on the scale. I wasn't paying any attention. I had wandered half-way across the room. I was looking through a special telescope at painted-on galaxies. I walked over to a coffee-table-like object with swishy yellow stuff inside of it. I wanted to see if it spun, so I pushed it. It spun, and spun, and spun, making the yellow stuff inside of it look like a sun. Steven and Anna soon saw me playing with it and rushed over. Soon they had taken over the spin-sun. Since they had taken over the spin-sun, I walked over a rectangle shape made by silver bars. Inside the bars, there was a black screen. Two fiery dots were moving across it. "Suns!" I thought. I put my hands on the bars and leaned over trying to get a better view of the movie. The suns had disappeared.

**Alexa  
King**  
Grade 3  
Southwest  
School  
Torrington

“Hey, guys, over here!” I called. With everyone standing at the bars, we all watched how a sun is made. The way they come from different directions and then the two small suns combine to make one big sun.

At the end of the movie, Mom said, “Let’s go see the dinosaurs.”

“All right!” Steve, Anna, and I yelled. We walked down hallways, looked at maps, and jumped on T. Rex tracks until we were in a room. At the end of the tour, we found out it was more like a maze. We were a few minutes late for the tour. Rats. The tour guide’s name was Sandra. Sandra showed us lots of interesting dinosaur exhibits, but I thought two were exceptional.

One was a *huge* hunk of rock with footprints in it. Colored spotlights shone from the ceiling. As they blinked on and off, they made it easier to see tracks.

The other one was a life-sized diorama. Sandra used a black stick-like thing with a red light to show what she was talking about. She “pointed” to a furry animal that looked like a rat. It’s beady, red eyes were focused on a group of newborn baby dinosaurs. The dinosaurs were bright yellow and dark green.

I walked over to a pond made of hardened blue stuff. In it was a bunch of ugly fish. They had open mouths like they were about to bite my finger off. Most of the fish had razor-sharp teeth. Some were weird neon colors.

The last dinosaur exhibit was boring. All it had were dinosaur bones, dinosaurs, and their habitats. We snaked through the crowd until we found the exit doors. We passed through the doors to the gift shop. We watched a movie on how scientists dig up bones without wrecking them.

We walked out of Dinoland and found our way to a small room. The first thing I saw was a koala bear and a tiger. I turned and walked through a long, narrow hallway. It looked like a rainforest. On one side, there was a snake and a river. There were a few screens attached to the railing. The screens told about rainforest animals and how their habitats were disappearing.

I walked out of the hallway and went into another room. But this room was huge! The first thing I saw was the tail of the biggest mammal on earth. The blue whale! I ran down the stairs to the main level. I ran, and ran, and ran, for what seemed like weeks. Then I came face-to-face with the whale. Huge eyes and big mouth, I felt like I was an ant. I looked at a life-size diorama of two scuba divers exploring a coral reef.

“Come on!” Rabeca yelled. “Sue and I have a surprise for you,” she told Steven.

Anna and Steven came racing around the bend. I had to jump onto the bench so I wouldn’t get run over. She was standing by two giant tusks I hadn’t noticed when I came into the room.

Mom asked me, “Do you want me to take your picture here?” I agreed and stood in front of the tusk. After taking my picture, Mom called Anna and Steven over. We went back to the space exhibit and went to the gift shop. We each bought something. I bought a bubble on a stand. Anna bought a glitter wand, and Steven bought purple rocks for his collection. We all said good-bye and left. It had been a great day.

## The Cat's Meow

**Katherine  
Stoll**  
Grade 3  
Roaring Brook  
School  
Avon

It was snowing outside on a late afternoon, and I was going outside to play in the fluffy, white snow. I was about to slip on my second boot when my cat Furball leapt out and scratched my foot. In my rush to get outside, I threw her aside in irritation when my mom yelled, “Katie! You can’t go outside yet! You have to clean your messy room!” I groaned loudly so my mother could hear me and hoped against hope that she would change her mind. Instead, all I heard was silence. I grudgingly stomped up the stairs with my cat following me close behind as if she were mad at my mom too. She followed me into my room and sat down on her mat. I threw myself onto my bed and stared at the white ceiling, thinking with dread about the next boring hour of cleaning.

Furball walked across the floor of my room, and I gently picked her up. Just then, I had a funny idea—wouldn’t it be great to be a cat?!? Think about it! NO school, NO homework, and especially NO cleaning. In deep thought, I started to rub Furball’s soft, silky coat of fur and admired her smooth, jingling, new collar with its sparkling charm, when all of a sudden, I found I was looking at myself. At first I thought I was looking in the mirror. But then I realized I was mistaken. I was the cat!

I screamed as loudly as I could, but all that came out was a quiet “Meow!” My wish came true! I could not believe it. I felt confused, surprised, and thrilled all at the same time. Since I was now a cat, I decided to go and explore my new surroundings. I started off by crawling cautiously across the bedroom floor and lazily heading toward the living room. It was the same house but VERY different from way down here!

As I walked happily down the stairs leaving my messy room behind, I tried to think about what a cat would do and how I would spend my day, but I was too distracted. I could not believe I was a cat! I was blissful and jubilant. I would have no more school, no boring homework, and, best of all, I would never have to clean my messy room again! After I reached the last stair, I eagerly trotted toward the relaxing yet formal living room to continue my explorations.

Out of the corner of my eye in the living room, I spotted my mother’s wicker knitting basket next to our piano. Usually I paid no attention to it, but today since I was a cat, I felt strangely attracted to the brightly colored yarn. When I got closer to the basket, it looked very tall, and I did not think I would be able to jump high enough to even see the yarn. I tried jumping as high as I could, and found to my surprise that I had jumped right over the rim and fallen into the basket. This scared me, and I tried to jump out, but the balls of yarn kept unraveling and shifting and every time I tried I ended up falling backwards and getting buried deeper under the balls of yarn. I started to whimper and meow until my mother came and rescued me. I cuddled and purred gratefully and happily, but then she took me to the back door and threw me outside in the icy snow!

Furball was an indoor cat and had never been outside, so now I was very cold and miserable. Just when I thought things were as bad as they could get, I



heard Hershey barking. He was getting louder! My brother's chocolate Labrador lived outside, and now I started to panic. My first idea was to bury myself in the freezing snow to hide, but then I remembered Hershey was a hunting dog with a specially trained sense of smell—hiding would not work! I looked up as if to pray for guidance, and I spotted the big oak tree in our backyard.

I struggled through the snowdrifts to the base and climbed as quickly as I could, crashing through the sharp leafless branches. Eventually I realized that I could no longer hear Hershey, and that my legs were growing very tired, so I decided to take a rest on a small branch. When I leaned over to look down and make sure the coast was clear, I found I was far above the ground on a very skinny and wobbly limb. I started to move back toward the main trunk when all of a sudden, SNAP! My skinny limb split with a loud crack and I plummeted toward the ground. Luckily enough, instincts took over, and I landed gracefully on all four feet in the soft, fluffy snow under the tree.

After my long and unexpected flight I decided to get back inside and snack on the delicious cat food I had been craving. I plowed slowly through the heavy, wet snow back toward the house and Hershey's door. I scrambled in, anticipating the smell of luscious food waiting just for me. I scurried over toward my sparkling bowl, covered with bling. I closed my eyes tightly to savor the first bite, but I did not smell the aroma of my delicious food. I opened my eyes in alarm, stunned, and found myself staring at an empty dish. Furball had not put my food out! I meowed in frustration and stalked over to my favorite pink, polka-dotted couch to curl up and rest after my adventure in the oak tree.

After I had gotten comfortable and closed my eyes for a nap, I was jarred awake and swatted hard on the bottom with a broom that was clutched tightly in my owner's hand. I thought this was incredibly unfair after my long, unexpected flight and going without food!

I went to lay down on my comfortable, purple plaid kitty mat, since the couch was apparently no longer an option. I was sore from the broom and my unexpected fall from the tree, and I realized that Furball had been treating me very badly. I got really upset and struggled to understand why my pet could be so mean. The more I thought about it, the more I recognized that Furball was treating me like I had treated her! While we had great fun when I wanted to play with her, at other times when she wanted to play, I would push her out of the way and ignore her meows for attention, even forgetting to feed her sometimes. No wonder she was unhappy with me!

When I started to doze off, out of the corner of my eye I spotted the sparkling blue charm on my collar. I pawed it like I had rubbed it at the beginning of my adventures and petting Furball, when all of a sudden I heard familiar voices and looked around to see my classmates staring at me and raising their hands anxiously. My teacher was yelling "Katie, Katie" as I dozed at my desk! I realized right then that a cat's life is no easier and that I need to treat Furball with more respect and consideration. I do not ever want to be a cat again, and the next time my mom asks me to clean my room, I'll put on a smile and get to work. These are valuable lessons that I will never forget!

## Life

A whirl wind passage that blows you through every obstacle,  
with bumps and turns blocking some tunnels until you find the key.

A new place to blow every minute  
with your soul whipping inside of you  
like a hungry monster.

People swish in front of you  
directing you in a different way  
for better or worse.

Life,  
the right route to take.

**Mikayla  
Gordon-  
Wexler**  
Grade 3  
Charter Oak  
Academy  
West Harford

## Evolution

Does everyone know how animals evolve? Well, here's a story about evolution. It all started in 2004. Scientist Brandon Smith had discovered a way to give life to any liquids the elixir touched. Professor Smith had brownish hair and was on the shorter side. He was always one of the smartest kids in school. In his childhood he always wanted to be a scientist, and in the end, his dream came true.

"Thank you, thank you," Professor Smith shouted while people took his photo and asked him questions. He made his way through the crowd to the White House. Smith made his way up to the podium. He was supposed to make a speech. "Attention, attention. I am proud to announce I have created a way to bring back the dead, start life, and . . ." he paused. ". . . and give life to liquids. I shall demonstrate my experiment." Mr. Smith took out a cup of coffee. He poured one drop of the elixir in the cup. Everyone gasped.

The professor closed his eyes. "Hello," whispered a soft voice. "Did you hear it, did you hear it? The coffee said hello. Didn't you hear it?" Everyone frowned. "Are you deaf or something? I've made the biggest discovery in years and you're too deaf to hear it. What kind of people are you?!!!" Brandon screamed. "Ones that have perfect hearing. And common sense. YA!" people from the audience yelled. "I'll show you," Brandon murmured under his breath while cursing. And believe me he would.

Brandon charged out of the White House where his demonstration had taken place. People all around him crowded everywhere with frowns on their faces. While pushing his way through the crowd, a man shoved him to the ground.

CRASH!

"Oh, no. What have I done?" Brandon whispered. The elixir dripped into the sewage of Washington, D.C. "Thank you," mouthed a tiny voice from the sewer.

"Oh, no," Brandon said to himself. Suddenly there was a rumble. The ground

**Tyler  
Beaupre**  
Grade 4  
Kelly Lane  
School  
Granby

split in two and the capitol was demolished by the huge waves erupting out of the crack. A title wave big enough to sweep a full grown moose off its feet shot out of the crack. It was heading Brandon's way. He headed for a dumpster. Screams could be heard. Brandon collapsed the lid on the dumpster. The gigantic wave sped at Brandon crashing to the ground in front of him. Brandon could feel himself floating upwards. He opened the giant trashcan and crawled onto the roofs of houses. A man was struggling in the water. Brandon noticed a water-colored hand come down on the man and pull the poor man into the water. Everyone else had drowned.

Brandon saw a blue speck. A puddle with two hands appeared on the roof. Brandon staggered backwards.

"I shall eliminate you," the puddle said. Mr. Smith jumped to a building next to the building he was on. The puddle jumped across too. Strangely the puddle could see but had no eyes; in fact, the puddle didn't even have a face. It was just sort of a puddle with regular hands.

"My elixir worked," thought Brandon.

"You're right. Your elixir did work," the puddle reassured him. Brandon thought that he could escape by jumping to the building to the right of him. He thought that the puddle probably couldn't jump that far considering the puddle didn't have any legs.

"Not trying to run away," yelled the puddle. That was the time Brandon put his plan into action.

"Going to the right are you." The puddle jumped right to the side of Brandon. "I'm sorry I forgot to introduce myself. I am the dream puddle. Whatever people think I can't do I really can just until the person dies. When you thought I couldn't jump, I really could. I can also read minds. That's how I knew you were going to the right. And when you thought you could escape . . . **you couldn't.**"

Suddenly Brandon had an idea. "Well, then that means you can't die," shouted Brandon.

"Of course, I can't. Wait? Curse you. My friends shall avenge me." The dream puddle burst into flames. Brandon knew that wouldn't be the last he saw of the water.

Brandon decided to call the Navy. The problem was too big for Brandon himself. Brandon climbed onto the emergency fire ladder and went inside the window. Brandon went to the nearest phone and dialed the numbers 9 . . . 1 . . . Brandon was interrupted by a voice that scolded, "I don't think so." Sparks of electricity shot everywhere. The water had burnt out the electrical wire. Brandon paced back and forth. The nearest military base was 120 miles away. He had to take the trip. No person out of a 90 mile radius was aware about the attack on Washington D.C., and everyone inside was dead. Brandon ran down the stairs. He couldn't waste any time. The brisk wind rushed in his face. The water on the ground had seeped back into the crack. The hole was gone and so was the White House. Brandon ran past many buildings. There was a lot of furniture around.

The air began to cool. Brandon came to a sudden halt. Tiny drops of water came pelting directly at Brandon. Fear struck Brandon. The drops of water covered him almost completely. The only space he had was a space to breathe. Horribly enough it was raining. The rain started to cool. Soon the water would freeze and leave Brandon frozen. Brandon hopped along with the ice bound around him. Brandon was right near a monument. The monument had names of the many veterans who had fought in any wars. There were some stairs leading to a small pool. The place was abandoned. Brandon hopped and hopped. Brandon started getting tired but he knew he couldn't give up. The world depended on him. If Brandon froze the age of men could fall. *FALL*. Brandon thought of an idea; he just had to get to the monument. His heart beat faster. The rain was falling faster and freezing faster. The ice came over his mouth. Brandon was so cold his nose started to run. His nose clogged up. Brandon took a breath of air. He kept on hopping. Finally he positioned himself to take one final leap. He jumped off the staircase not into the water but onto solid ground. The ice shattered and Brandon took a huge breath. Brandon rushed up the stairs and ran down the street. Cars were crushed and signs cracked in half. Some buildings had furniture rearranged. The flood was devastating. People lay dead on the roads. Swimming had always been Brandon's favorite sport—at least until now.

After exiting the capital Brandon came to a cornfield. The corn made good shelter from the rain, but Brandon couldn't waste any time. He kept on running, and before he knew it, he was out of the cornfield. Brandon ran out of the cornfield. Strangely enough Brandon couldn't feel raindrops falling on him. He scratched the back of his neck. He looked up and saw blue things flying in midair. These things were raindrops, but they were frozen in midair . . . literally. Brandon sauntered around and felt a cold shock in his leg. He looked down and noticed his leg was in water, freezing water. Brandon pulled his leg up.

"You shall die," whispered a soft voice. Suddenly the ice under Brandon cracked. A small circle around him formed. Brandon jumped from the circle and landed, breaking the ice under him. Brandon ran and kept on crushing the ice under him. "Trying to escape, are you?" asked the voice. Brandon wouldn't dare to answer.

Before Brandon landed on the ice, it broke. Brandon splashed into the freezing water. He started sinking under the water. Brandon had but one choice. He swam to the bottom of the pond. He bent his knees and bounced off the ground. He came to the surface and took a deep breath. He came onto the ice and started to crawl. The ice kept on breaking behind him. He could see the other side of the pond. The military base was right there. He thought in his mind that he couldn't stop, and if he tried to stand up the ice would crack under him. Brandon could feel the damp grass under his knees. He had made it. He raced to the entrance to the military base. He ran past a wall and could finally see the door. He opened the door and saw the most depressing thing in the world. Globes of water were everywhere. Carcasses were lying on the ground. Brandon was tied up and became a servant to liquids all around the world.

“The dominant species shall fall,” a voice shouted. And so the human race fell and water ruled the Earth. As slaves the humans did nothing. Years passed and Brandon still cried over his huge mistake. The world was never the same.

**Hannah  
Higgins**  
Grade 4  
Killingly  
Memorial  
School  
Danielson

## **Rain**

Shhh, Baby, Shhh,  
Or no one ain't a goin'  
Nowhere until you stop  
Crying.

So Shhh, Baby,  
Or no one never gonna  
Be happy no more,  
But I know it's gonna do  
Good for the flowers.

But Shhh, Baby, Shhh,  
Or your liquid will drown  
Everyone in sorrow,  
So you need to stop that cryin'.

Shhh, Baby,  
And rub those big cotton  
Ball eyes of your  
And stop that raining,  
Baby, Shhh.

**Yerin  
Kim**  
Grade 4  
Mary T.  
Murphy  
School  
Branford

## **Silent Shell**

Still  
as a stone,  
Unable to move  
by itself,  
Like an island  
In the ocean.

Frightened and upset  
Vulnerable and incapable,  
Crying out  
For a hand

Through old and chipped  
On all sides  
Radiant and proud,  
Old and strong.  
Silent and still,  
Like a  
Wise man  
Sitting motionless  
Deep in thought.

Striped like a tiger  
Save for the black  
Uninviting  
Silence  
But pure  
Within,  
Unable to free  
Its own little secrets  
Unless you understand  
Their song of  
The wind whispering  
To the reeds.

## Kayaking Adventure

I can still remember the feel of the wind as it whipped in my face, and I can feel the coldness of the sea spray. That was the time that I went kayaking in the Strait of Juan de Fuca. My blue kayak sped through the water gracefully. It wobbled slightly. I was terrified that I was going to fall out. I felt proud that I had made it this far without stopping. I looked up and saw five fat seals basking on big, flat rocks. Lots of other seals were bobbing up and down near my kayak. I felt like those seals, except I was bobbing up and down in my kayak. The seals were very cute with their plump little bellies and pudgy noses. I kept thinking that the pieces of kelp or seaweed were seals. The kelp was a hollow, green sphere with a long, hollow tube coming out of one end. Coming out of the other end of the ball were long paper-like strands. Our guide said they were edible, so we tried some. They were very salty, and I would only eat them if I was famished. Our guide also said that these strands could be used as lotion, so we put it on our body and it make us feel like silk. We cut the sphere in half so we had something like a trumpet, and my mom blew it. It sounded like a foghorn!

Two eagles soared above me, their sharp cry piercing the silence. The eagles soared even higher, racing each other across the sky. A heron took off from its rocky perch on one of the small islands that surrounded me. It was looking for

**Sam  
Kyzivat**  
Grade 4  
Latimer Lane  
School  
Weatogue

food for its babies. The heron flew low, its wings skimming the water. The heron's eyes caught sight of movement among the waves. Its beak shot down and came up with a silver, wiggling bass. I could see the heron's dark silhouette against the bright sky, disappearing and reappearing from behind the cumulus clouds. It reached its babies and dropped the fish in the nest. The squealing babies fought over the fish. I dipped my paddle in the water and did three strong strokes. It seemed as if I was flying over the water like the eagles.

**Christina Wang**  
Grade 4  
Wapping  
Elementary  
School  
South Windsor

## **Scattered**

Crumbled leaves stuck in rusty old rakes  
Snapping leaves and wind whistle in my ears  
Acorns look like tiny people in the large, nearby field  
With red and gold leaves scattered about like the quilt on my bed  
Dry grass scratches me as I like to read  
And turn pages made sticky by pinecone sap

**Samantha Zod**  
Grade 4  
S.B. Butler  
Elementary  
School  
Mystic

## **Banded Woolly Bears and the Truth Behind Their Tale**

I can't count how many interesting looking caterpillars there are, but I'll tell you about one of my favorites, the Banded Woolly Bear.

Banded Woolly Bear caterpillars live in Mexico, the United States, and Canada. They are usually a little over one inch long and are fast-moving for a caterpillar. They aren't really covered with wool; they're covered with short, stiff bristles of hair. The Woolies have two black bands at each end of their bodies; in the middle they have a colored band, which can be green, yellow, red, or a rusty orange. It's believed that the colors of their bands come from the many kinds of plants they eat such as dandelions, asters, birches, clover, maples, and weeds.

Some people say that the Banded Woolly Bears predict the coming winter weather. If there's more of the black bands, the winter will be harsh; if there's more of the colored bands, the winter will be mild. This has never been proven to be true. But, just for fun, the nature museum at Bear Mountain State Park in New York gathers a dozen or so Woolies every fall and makes a forecast from Woolly Bear Mountain. They claim to be right about 80 percent of the time!

The Banded Woolly Bears have several defenses against predators, such as birds and skunks. Birds don't like the way Woolies taste. The colored band warns predators to "Stay away, I might be poisonous!" When you touch a Woolly, it will curl up into a slippery ball, and, if you try to pick it up by its hairs, they'll come out, so it can get away.

Banded Woolly Bears are the larval stage of the Isabella Tiger Moth's life cycle. These nocturnal moths have white wings with black dots and a medium size body. There are four major parts to their lifecycle: egg, larva (caterpillar), pupa (cocoon), and adult (moth).

In the northeastern U.S., Banded Woolly Bears produce two generations every year. Woollies spend the winter in dens under bark or inside holes in rocks or logs. In the spring, they come out from their dens and start feeding again. When they've had enough to eat, they make cocoons out of their bristles and silk that they spin with their bodies.

After about two weeks, at the beginning of the summer, the adult Isabella Tiger Moths come out of their cocoons. After feeding for about two weeks, the moths lay their eggs on plants that the Woolly Bear caterpillars (larvae) can eat after they hatch. In less than a week, new Woolly Bears are born. They eat, make their cocoons, turn into moths, and lay their eggs. Then the second generation of Woollies is born.

These Woollies then eat, but as fall comes, they don't make a cocoon because they haven't had enough to eat yet. Instead they scurry around and find a place to spend the winter. That's why you see so many of them on the roads and sidewalks in the fall; they are the only bristled caterpillars found in the autumn. In places where it gets very cold, Woollies in their dens freeze almost solid in the winter and thaw out in the spring! Then they start the life cycle all over again.

However in the very far north, summer only lasts a few weeks. Woollies can't get enough to eat in that short time to be ready to change into a moth. In the Arctic, some Woollies may have to wait as long as 14 years to finally grow up into a moth!

I hope you enjoyed reading about Banded Woolly Bears and found them as interesting as I do!

## Should I?

I took the map of the park out of my pocket. I looked at the drawing of the rollercoaster, comparing it to the one we had passed before. It looked triple the size.

The trees blocked the view of the drop. I looked at what I could see of the rollercoaster. A car full of passengers went by like a rocket. From what I could see of the passengers, they looked like they were having fun.

As we headed towards the ride, we went by a sign that said, "Total Drop 140 Feet." That made me want to turn back, but my legs kept doing their continuous movement that made me go forward.

We got close enough so I could see the incline of the rollercoaster. The angle scared me; it looked like it went on forever. Just looking at it gave me vertigo.

All too soon we got to the part where we would enter. My dad told me he would go with my brother Dan, so I got into the gate behind them. I heard the

**Chris  
Chevalier**  
Grade 5  
Regional  
Multicultural  
Magnet School  
New London



**Haley  
Cormier**  
Grade 5  
Kelly Lane  
Intermediate  
School  
Granby

screaming of the people on the rollercoaster. I turned my head towards the noise and saw the rickety train was coming.

One side of my brain was saying, “Don’t go! Don’t go!” while the other was saying, “Don’t listen to him! It will be fun!”

I looked at the incline of the rollercoaster. What would happen if it broke coming up? I thought it would go down really fast and fall off at the end.

The person told us to get on. I sat down on the wooden seat. I buckled up. “Ching,” the bar came down and locked in place.

There was no turning back now . . .

## Twister

Annie Sapphire was strong-minded, persistent, and kindhearted all wrapped in one. Come to think of it, she was sprinkled with spitfire. Those that knew her? Well, they said she was somethin’ else.

Annie was seven-foot-seven. She always looked like she was up to somethin’ or other. Her blue eyes, clear as dewdrops when the rooster crows, glinted like she knew somethin’ nobody else did. Her freckled face beamed with her smile, and her trailing red-gold braid whipped her back rhythmically when she rode. Yes—she was the best rider there was from Maine to Tennessee. Not to brag, but she could tame anything! Her very own stallion had the fieriest heart on the plains, and, still, she fixed him up good. Her horse was as strong and athletic—and stubborn—as she was. A good match, they said.

On a humid summer morning, Annie rode her horse out into the heart of the Louisiana frontier. The day was teasin’ her—it was keepin’ a secret she didn’t know about. Annie could feel it, and her hunches never lied. As if waiting for her thought, the sky overhead billowed into shifting slate-grey clouds. A twister lowered, and it was mighty hungry. Annie rolled her eyes and cantered up to it.

“Scuse me? What exactly are you planning to do here?” Annie inquired with a fleck of fire in her eyes. The whirl-wind was puzzled and momentarily slowed. Then it responded in wind signals. The message translated to something like this:

“I came down for breakfast—maybe a couple o’ trees, missy, but I reckon you’d be mighty delicious yourself!”

“I don’t think so,” she replied, then snapped, “and *don’t* call me missy.” The twister was baffled. It started swirlin’ somethin’ fierce, sending dust devils to the heavens above. With a sigh, Annie started towards the swirling mass of anger and confusion. By then it had turned its back and begun to flee, hovering above the woods.

“Oh, no, ya don’t,” Annie muttered under her breath. She galloped after that whirlwind like a dog after a cat. She roped it with no trouble and hauled it back to earth. She squeezed the livin’ daylights out of it with that frayed and

weathered rope of hers. Then she gave that tornado a good talkin' to. After she had lectured the tarnation clean out of that thing, it wouldn't have dared to harm a fly. Then she swung it around and around so fast it made my head spin. Annie hurled that twister clear out of sight, all the way to Kansas. It landed with a thud and flattened miles upon miles of land-hills and woods and such. The tornadoes got some sense pounded into them that day, the same way that one twister got pounded into the ground. They haven't touched down in Louisiana since, no matter how ravenous they are. And that land smack-dab in the middle of Kansas is still around. The settlers called it the plains. I reckon you'd agree that what Annie did on that sultry summer day was down right amazin'.

## This December Day

afraid to step in  
                    icy water  
which would chill to the bone  
even  
            beneath the layers of  
            pants and  
            socks worn  
this December day

hoping classmates are careful climbing the slippery rocks forming the  
breakwater  
hearing a friend fall in  
                    shallow water  
            heaven on some hot July afternoon  
            hell  
this December day

finding a stick buried  
                    'neath the sand,  
carving friends' names,  
            with complicated curlicues  
            and  
                            circles of footprints,  
but using my boots  
because I can't go barefoot  
this December day

**Cecilia  
Gigliotti**  
Grade 5  
Holmes  
Elementary  
School  
New Britain

Jessica Rihm  
Grade 5  
Buttonball  
Lane School  
Glastonbury

## All Boys

The tryouts came first,  
The only ball I hit was a fouled bunt.  
I tried hard fielding the balls,  
But I'm pretty sure it wasn't my best.  
My arm was really weak.  
I was put on an all-boy team,  
Sponsored by Keith-Shaw.  
Yep, that's right. I'm in a boy's league  
With 162 boys and 1 other girl.  
Baseball that is.  
My team seemed amazed  
A girl would play with them.  
At first, I felt self-conscious  
When the coach said, "All right, boys!"  
"And ladies," when he saw me.  
I could feel my cheeks burning  
When all the boys looked at me,  
Like they just realized I was there.  
But, hey, no worries!  
I was there to learn and play!  
After the first few practices,  
I thought the boys had accepted  
A girl was on their team.  
They conversed with me before games,  
They asked me to play catch,  
And they shared their sunflower seeds.  
I must tell you, I'm not a great player,  
Like Alex or Ryan M.  
So when I dropped a pop,  
Which could've been out,  
They said, "Just rub it off."  
When I struck out,  
They told me I'll do better next time.  
And since they were so nice to me,  
I paid them back their kindness by  
Bringing in sunflower seeds to share  
And shouting encouraging calls to our pitcher.  
In that season alone,  
It was my first time playing with just boys.  
And I found out that I didn't care  
Playing with "gentlemen"  
Because baseball is my game,  
And nothing, NOTHING is going to stop me!!!

## Jewels: Gentle Friend, Warrior Cat

Once I had a silky, black cat named Jewels. She was energetic and playful, yet fierce and solemn. But that was once, once before the dark, stormy night when my beloved cat disappeared. Jewels had been near the woods where she liked to wander and explore. I called her in, yet nothing was to be heard but the hollow pangs of the rain. My mom, my dad, my brother, and I searched everywhere, but Jewels was nowhere to be found. That night and the next morning we looked for our cat in her favorite places to play, like the edge of the woods and around the one tree in our backyard, but we were gradually losing hope of finding her. We made signs with pictures of Jewels on them, but when it came time to post them, I remember being too depressed to put them up. Now there is a silent and empty, wooden tombstone with Jewels' name both written and lightly carved into it. The tomb sits in our flowerbed, cracked in half.

Jewels was a truly wonderful cat; she turned out to be more than we ever expected. My family got her at an animal shelter. An old man and a three-year-old child previously owned her. Instead of us picking her out, Jewels picked us. Her loud meow brought us over to her cage immediately. We decided to get her, the black cat with a white underbelly and paws. Our grandparents had had a jumpy dog, and I was always afraid of him. My parents decided to adopt Jewels to get me closer to animals. It worked. Jewels and I were practically inseparable. Jewels was an outdoor cat and could wander freely around the neighborhood at night. She had a good sense of danger but rarely needed to run. Jewels had the reputation as the toughest cat on the block, always returning from catfights with her tail held high. There was a cat, once, that scratched me on the nose, but he never beat Jewels! After a while Jewels' front claws were de-clawed for scratching furniture, but she still had her back ones, and no cat would attack her and expect to win.

Super Jewels! That's what I called her when I put a paper cape and mask on her. It was very funny. She tried to get the paper off by pawing at it, but would put up with nearly anything from me. Though she never got hurt in a catfight, Jewels had a broken toe once. The veterinarian said that it had probably gotten jammed between something, maybe our gate. Our cat soon had a cast up to her thigh. Wherever she went, we would hear a "clunk, clunk, clunk." With that cast on, Jewels only narrowly escaped dogs chasing her. When she was on my bed one time, she jumped off and the cast flew across the room. No one ever bothered with it again. My mom used to read me stories out of books with huge pages. Jewels always interrupted by sitting on the book, even when her cast was on. There could never be a better cat, ever.

When I realized that Jewels was gone for good, I was heartbroken. But then I read the book, *Warriors into the Wild*, which is one in a series of books about cats living in clans in the wild. I quickly read through the entire series, which gave me a whole new point of view about Jewels' disappearance. At first, I had been so worried for my cat. But reading about cats in clans, who were part of a whole secret civilization, made me feel much better about losing Jewels.

Christopher  
Thomas  
Grade 5  
Westwoords  
Upper  
Elementary  
School  
Farmington

Perhaps my cat had found friends like Firestar and Graystripe, two brave and loyal cats in the series with a home and a den with enemy rivals. Maybe she likes being in the outdoors more than the indoors. She was always an outdoor cat after all.

But in a way, I don't want Jewels back. In the book, *Warriors into the Wild*, people are always a secondary enemy of the cats, poisoning foods and capturing cats, until they finally invade the forest. I would never do anything mean or cruel to Jewels, but what I would consider nice might be taking her home, while she could be happier where she is. Cats are too unpredictable!

The book, *Warriors into the Wild*, inspired me and gave me a whole new way to look at my lost cat. Reading this story has turned a tragic memory into an adventurous one. I will always remember my truly wonderful cat and the excitement she created in the family, especially in me. I still miss Jewels and the way she could be amazingly protective and fierce one moment, but suddenly switch to adorable and funny the next. But now I can imagine an adventure that my cat might be having somewhere in the wild and feel hopeful again.

**Katelyn  
Wildman**  
Grade 5  
Tootin' Hills  
Elementary  
School  
West Simsbury

## My Dog

My dog is like a storybook.  
There are short tales  
and  
long tales. Hers is a long one.  
Special words are missing  
but  
I can always figure them out.  
You can feel  
the warmth of the old pages  
wrap around  
your  
heart.  
As the binding is falling  
apart,  
it gets sewn back up  
again  
like nothing has  
happened.  
Even though the pages  
are stained,  
ripped,  
and  
faded  
the love stays.

## The Secret

A lot of people have secrets. I'll bet every single one of them that my secret is much bigger than theirs. I'll bet each and every one of them thirty bucks. Actually I won't. I won't get into my secret with any of them. Not with anyone. The only people who know about it are me and the Company, the Underground Company.

It all started back in seventh grade, in Mrs. Scuzzkinaltinzal's class. If you are wondering how to pronounce this, don't ask. Everyone calls her Mrs. S. or "the Scrux" or . . . I'm getting behind, just let me tell the story. It was March 18, last period, and everyone was waiting for the bell, everyone that is except Miranda Fisher. I swear she loves every class. She gets pretty good grades too. I can tell the way the teacher looks at her. Teachers love good students. My grades are OK. I'm a B average. I made honors, but my Mom wants me to be in high honors. She says I have the potential to be a better student. School's OK, I guess; it just never seemed that important to me. My Dad did give me the "the things you learn in school will serve you well your whole life" lecture, but I always stayed at B.

The bell rang, but we didn't leave until three minutes later. Mrs. Scuzzkinaltinzal is known for keeping us late, but today it didn't matter, because it was last period. Mrs. Scuzzkinaltinzal was a science teacher, and we were in the middle of an animal genetics unit. "Moles, class, are the great diggers of the earth. Their holes are magnificent and sometimes lead to many underground chambers where they live and thrive." I raised my hand. "Is that what those lumps in the soil are?" Everyone laughed. "Yes, Robert," she said ignoring the giggles. "Yes, that is what they are." Jeez, I thought. How was I supposed to know? They acted like I was a college professor or something. "You are dismissed," she said. Everyone hustled out of the room in a mad hurry for their lockers. I was the last one out of the room. Mrs. Scuzzkinaltinzal didn't say anything as I walked out the door.

I always walked home after school because our green house on the left was only three blocks away. My mom always said, "A five-minute walk is better than a ten-minute bus ride." On my way past my next door neighbor's house was where I saw it—right next to the sidewalk. Sure enough, just like my teacher had said, there were lumps in the soil. "Moles," I thought out loud.

I stepped onto the lump like I had so many times before. Like every other time, the lump squished like it was hollow, and I reminded myself, it was. I walked all the way down the long mound, flattening the ground as I stepped. All of a sudden, I stopped. Underneath my right foot was something hard that I could feel through the dirt. It didn't feel like a mole, it felt like a plastic box. I got down on my hands and knees and dug into the mole hole. I was right. Underneath the soil was a black plastic box with a single red button on top. On the side, in big gold engraved letters, was this: UC.

Before I took the time to even consider what I was doing, I pressed the button. The button went up and down easily, like it had been used a lot, and

**Ryan Glista**  
Grade 6  
Horace W.  
Porter School  
Columbia

someone had kept it working right. My biggest surprise was the fact that nothing had happened.

I waited there for five minutes and nothing happened. I was disappointed; it seemed very important, like I had just discovered a secret device used to control the world. I laughed a hollow laugh. It was probably just an old remote for a remote control car that had been buried by accident. But why then was there just one red button? And why was there no evidence of an antenna that might have broken off? I just stood there for another few minutes trying to figure it out. If I had only looked down the effect wouldn't have been so dramatic. I actually did look down several seconds later and saw the black box floating in the air. The weird thing was I could still feel it with my hands. It felt like I was holding it. Then I realized it. I was invisible. I dropped the black box and stifled a scream, putting a hand over my mouth. I was not dreaming; I really was invisible.

Suddenly, I noticed Mrs. Scuzzkinaltinzal walking down the sidewalk in back of me a good 30 feet away. I wanted to run and hide because I thought that I would look pretty suspicious standing in the middle of the sidewalk doing nothing, but I remembered I was invisible and it didn't matter. A thought hit me. Maybe Mrs. Scuzzkinaltinzal had seen me disappear. She didn't look surprised though, so I took it as a no.

Nothing could have prepared me for what happened next. I heard a whizzing sound and suddenly in front of me, a well . . . it's hard to describe. It looked almost like a computer screen, but there was no screen. And I could see through it. When I turned around it was in the same place. On the top of the screen were the same gold letters, UC. The screen was blue and word bubbles started to pop up and I began to read them, but noticed that Mrs. Scuzzkinaltinzal was a few feet away. I ducked off the sidewalk and the screen followed me. She walked by not noticing the screen. I guess it was invisible to everyone but me.

As Mrs. Scuzzkinaltinzal walked down the sidewalk, I started to read the bubbles. They seemed to be options for what to do:

1. To be transported to station 1, press here.
2. To make a call, press here.
3. To visit headquarters, press here for the password.

I stopped reading. What I really needed was an option that said, "If you have no idea what's going on, press here." I looked farther down the list of options and saw it: "If you are Robert Mason, press here." I stuck my finger into the screen and magically it hit a surface that felt like wood. Everything went black, even though I hadn't closed my eyes and then lit up again in a small empty room.

There was only a desk in the corner. A bald man with a red T-shirt got out of the chair and introduced himself as if I knew what was going on.

"Hello and welcome, Robert. I am Mr. Morton, assistant chief of the UC." He stood there waiting for me to say something. For once, I couldn't say a word. I had so many questions, I couldn't pick one. Mr. Morton did it for me.

“Are you wondering why you’re here?” The man had an arrogant tone, and I didn’t like it. “No, I am wondering where I am,” I said slightly agitated. The man seemed to notice that I seemed angry and answered instantly.

“You’re at the UC and as I just said, it stands for Underground Company.”

“What do you do here?” I asked.

“We test inventions to see if they work, and if they don’t, we keep them secret from the rest of the world.”

“Who knows about this?”

“Just the people who are involved in the company.”

“What kinds of inventions?”

“Oh, all kinds . . .”

“Well, what was your latest invention that you tested?”

“Which one? Ho . . . Ho . . . Ho . . .” His laugh was just like Santa’s was supposed to sound; the only difference was that it didn’t sound jolly. It sounded like he was laughing at me. He was. The man continued. “We have different stations for different kinds of inventions. This one, for instance, is the liquid inventions station, or station 1.”

I thought, but I couldn’t think of any other questions besides the one that he had asked. “Why am I here?” I asked.

“Why to test a liquid potion by the name of SNYL.”

“What does that stand for?”

The man suddenly seemed to be in a hurry. “I really must start the test, Robert—all you have to do is drink it.” He took a little bottle out of a black case in his desk and handed it to me.

Not wanting to, but hoping this would all be over it I did, I gulped it down. After that I can’t remember anything. The next thing I knew I was back on the sidewalk and everything was normal again.

Now I’m 15.

My girlfriend is Miranda Fisher.

I’m an A student.

I still don’t know what the DC had me drink.

That is my secret.

## Season of New Beginnings

You know it’s spring when you start seeing  
new green peak from  
under the old fall leaves.  
Flowers blooming like a tidal wave  
everything from thorny roses  
to bright yellow buttercups.  
Green grass pushes up  
struggling to reach the sun.

Coe F.  
Gavette  
Grade 6  
Torrington  
Middle  
School  
Torrington



You know it's spring  
when you see kids  
on bikes and skateboards  
doing tricks with friends  
at the local park or playing baseball  
just killing time  
until the school year ends.

You know it's spring  
when you take out the old T-shirts and shorts.  
They have a musty closet smell  
from being put away for the winter months.  
Some that fit perfectly last year,  
are a little too tight now.

You know it's spring  
when it's starting to get warm and  
the last of the winter snow melts away  
flowing into the gutter to mix with the rainwater.  
You know it's spring.

**David  
Katter**  
Grade 6  
Bedford  
Middle School  
Westport

## **Grandpa's Football**

Sweaty, grimy, muddy  
Adjectives of the ball  
It's crackled, mud-caked layer  
Set on the ground  
Patiently  
Waiting to carry its team to victory  
Be it cradled between two protective arms,  
Or soaring through the air, into  
outstretched arms  
Either way the ball works its magic,  
Leaving a weaving web of white shirts  
in its wake  
On the road to victory.

Victory  
Victory  
The goals of the ball:  
To carry Notre Dame to Victory

It's a vicious mother bear  
No matter the tides of the battle  
Its spirit remains undiminished  
With its velvety, maroon skin  
And agile, muscular body  
Victory  
Victory  
Its only choice

Its days of glory  
Are now  
A faded memory  
The scrawled chicken scratch  
On its armadillo skin  
Covering  
Only a faint reminder  
Of its days of glory  
At Notre Dame  
Now it sits  
Like an eagle  
Perched up  
In its nest  
Glaring with yellow eyes at its new domain  
A blue room  
With one inhabitant  
A small boy  
Who loves it

Yet Still  
One signature stands out  
Pagna  
Pagna  
The ball reads this and remembers  
One other  
Who worshipped it  
A coach  
Beyond all others  
A friend  
A companion  
A fellow victor

## The Leader

A young fairy named Rhenee woke up one late spring morning. She rubbed her eyes and sniffed the sweet aroma of the Oak tree. She stood up and peeked outside of the hole in the old Oak tree where she lived. Among the green drapes of leaves, the fairy children flew, hiding from their older siblings. Rhenee launched herself through the hole in the tree and flew toward her friend Mongolia's tree house. As Rhenee landed on the branch of Mongolia's Birch tree, she watched two young sparrows take flight. The mornings in Mist Valley are beautiful. Mist Valley is the deep forest where most fairy kind lived in the tall trees, with neighbors of numerous species such as birds, rodents, wild cats, and wolves of all ages.

"Mongolia?" Rhenee called for her friend. She glanced around the inside of the hollow tree and saw several juicy strawberries in one corner. Rhenee pictured the three newborn robin chicks that lived eight trees away, scarfing down the sweet berries. She heard a faint rustling behind her and a loud yawn.

"Good morning," Mongolia sighed.

"Oh, hi," Rhenee began. "Do you mind if I borrow a few strawberries? I'm awful low on food supply." After Mongolia scolded Rhenee for being unprepared, even in spring, she finally gave up and agreed to loan her three or four.

"Thanks a bundle!" Rhenee hollered back to her fairy friend as she headed to the robin's nest. As she grew closer to the neat cradle of twigs, she could hear the helpless chirps of the robin babies. Rhenee landed on a long twig peeking out from the nest. She bounced a berry into a drooling beak, then she popped another into a snapping one. She whirled around upon hearing an angry robin father darting right toward the nest. Rhenee dropped the one strawberry still in her arms and flew off. She flew low so the father robin would not find her if he chased her.

As Rhenee hovered over the green grass, she noticed a young black bear digging for roots. Rhenee knew this bear well; it was Petunia, probably the most clueless bear cub in the valley.

"Petunia," Rhenee began, "would you please stop clawing at this maple tree, I don't think that you realize that it is home to two sparrows, thirteen mice, and a hedgehog." Then Rhenee remembered the berries she had snatched from Mongolia. "Here," she dropped them onto the mossy ground. At that moment, Rhenee spun around realizing how quiet it was. Before her were all of the fairies of the forest, two wolf packs, and many other concerned-looking animals.

"What's going on?" Rhenee asked.

There was a long pause until an elf named Jack told the bad news. "The unicorns haven't come yet." Rhenee remembered how the unicorns spend spring in Mist Valley, and it was already two weeks into Spring.

"Well, where are they?" Rhenee wondered.

This time an Alpha Waif spoke. "They're trapped," he began, "in a Dragon's Keep." Rhenee didn't hesitate to find a solution.

“Well, we gotta help them! We have to go to the Dragon’s Keep!” None of the creatures spoke. After a while, Rhenee gave up; she was about to fly off when a beaver muttered, “I-I guess she’s right, I guess.”

Then three birds chimed in. “Yes! Yes! We should!” they exclaimed.

“Finally!” Rhenee sighed.

A woodpecker chirped, “Let’s make a plan!”

A crow cawed, “Yay!” And three coyotes howled. Everyone cheered with enthusiasm.

“Husshh!” Rhenee grabbed the excited creatures’ attention. “Come on,” she announced. “We have to get organized here.”

After a while debating ideas, the creatures agreed on a conclusion. By then it was lunchtime, and everyone was hungry. Jack, Mongolia, Rhenee, a few mice, and a beaver couple sat in a mushroom circle.

“So,” Rhenee climbed atop a wilted mushroom, “when were the unicorns trapped?”

Two mice answered, “Well, they set off for Mist Valley at the usual time, but they were late, so we had two wolves search for them.” The mice bit into a grain of rice. “The wolves came back today and told us the bad news. Oh, I do hope our plan works,” the mice worried.

“Me too,” Rhenee whispered as she bit into a corn kernel.

After lunch, the creatures packed for the journey to the dragon’s lair. So many questions and sounds of weeping came from family members whose children, spouses and other relatives were leaving. “Be careful’s!” and “I love you’s!” passed through the forest. Soon Rhenee grew tired of hearing sobs and weeps, so she started off.

“Come on!” she cheered as two coyotes, three wolves, two beavers, two elephants, a woodpecker, and a crow followed.

Soon it was past dinner and most were tired. The beavers and the woodpecker rode on one elephant. Rhenee rode on the crow, Moonshine. They stopped to camp, then Rhenee woke with the sun and soon everyone was awake. They were all on their feet, and, by noon, they could make out the shape of the dragon’s cave. The group stopped fifteen feet away from the cave just to be safe.

“Okay, everyone,” Rhenee called. “Let’s review our plan. Moonshine, go look for some shiny stuff so we can fill the hole in the tree.” As soon as that was said, the woodpecker, Woody, started to make the hole in the tree to store the shiny objects. “Elephants, Lena and Lily, go fill your trunks with mud; Mr. and Mrs. Beaver, go get some branches. Wolves, coyotes—start the hole in the ground, I’ll go stand watch.”

Soon the crow returned with aluminum foil, a silver wire, an old penny, a diamond ring (which he insisted on keeping later) and a key. By then, Woody had finished the hole in the tree in front of the cave, and the beavers were laying branches over the hole the wolves and coyotes had dug.

“Are we almost done?” complained Lily as she squirted mud into the hole.

“Yes, darling. Now come along,” her mother called as she stumbled back to the mud puddle.

Within fifteen minutes, everything was completed. “Let's go!” two wolves called as everyone except the crow hid behind the cave. Rhenee motioned for the crow to do his part when everyone was hidden.

“Caw! Caw! Cawwww! Caw!” Moonshine cawed annoyingly. Within moments, a tremendous roar echoed through the cave. There was a crash! . . . Crash! . . . CRASH! . . . getting closer and Closer and CLOSER until you could make out the fiery shape of the dark red and gold dragon erupting from his lair. Woody nearly laid an egg, and Lily almost ran off. Even though it didn't show, Rhenee was terrified also.

The dragon eyed Moonshine and then glanced at the hole in the dead tree. He studied the shiny artifacts inside and thinking it was treasure, ran straight toward it. He was so anxious about running his claws through pearls, gold, and gems, that he obviously wasn't paying attention to where he was running and—Kaboom! He fell into the enormous hole that was dug by the coyotes and wolves then covered by the beavers' sticks. Rhenee and the other creatures heard the dragon scratching at the mud that the elephants had squirted into the hole. The dragon roared with anger and continued splashing in the mud. Still going with the plan, Rhenee and two wolves went looking for the unicorns.

“Stay here,” Rhenee whispered to the others, “and don't make a sound!”

She continued walking with the wolves until they heard helpless whinnies—the unicorns!

“Nei-i-igh!” Rhenee flew toward the unicorns with the wolves running closely behind her. Then she saw them—once beautiful and free creatures—now gray and weak. They whinnied softly and lowered their drooping heads. Rhenee noticed the strong, steel chains locked to the two unicorn's hooves. How was Rhenee going to save them?

“What are we going to do?” she asked the wolves.

“Uh . . . use your magic!” they replied. Now this wouldn't help the least bit because, for one thing, she didn't know a spell, and for another, she had just begun attending Jaque's School of Magic and she wasn't allowed to use magic outside of school until she had the basic spells down, which she didn't. But then she remembered back to when they left to save the unicorns. Mongolia wished her luck and told her to be careful. Then Professor Jaque said, “We rely on these unicorns; do whatever possible to save them, please.” Jaque was a very wise fairy, and Rhenee supposed she could at least try. She thought of her appearance tricks; perhaps she could make a torch appear to melt the steel.

“Arombus, Parorch, let appear a shining torch!” She cast the spell and there, before her, lay an unlit torch. “Ugh.”

She nearly lost hope when the oldest wolf barked, “Look, in the corner!”

Rhenee spun around hoping to see a bright torch, but instead she saw in the dim shadows, Mr. and Mrs. Beaver yelling, “He's escaping, he's getting out!” Now what?

“ROAR!” Rhenee watched the dragon pull itself from the sticky mud and fly out of the trap. The scared unicorns screeched in pain. The dragon blew fire at all the creatures, and the unicorns were in the way. The two enchanted horses galloped past the beavers and Rhenee with flames at their hooves. The

dragon spun around ready to chase the unchained unicorns. Then, Rhenee saw it. Directly in the middle of his lower abdomen was the scaleless patch of skin. Rhenee darted around the cave and found a stalactite and grabbed it. She flew underneath the beastly dragon. Then—WHAM!—she plunged it through the dragon’s unprotected skin. He let out a terrible screech and flew through the top of the cave. Rocks fell in every direction. Rhenee remembered the unicorns and flew through the hole.

She searched in every direction, then atop a green hill, she saw them, rolling around in the blue river. She flew towards the strong, silky unicorns and called to everyone to follow. Moments after arriving on the hill, the elephants, birds, wolves, beaver, and coyotes met up with her. They all rejoiced when they found the unicorns quite healthy. They had burns from the fire, but, in Mist Valley, Jaque could cure them.

Soon, the heroes returned to Mist Valley and everyone cheered as they heard the unicorns’ story. They had been right on schedule, but the huge dragon captured them. They fought back for days until they became too weak. But, soon after, the heroes came to the rescue. Everyone was very proud of Rhenee and her friends. The unicorns thanked them with an award ceremony. For the beavers ~ The Travelers. To the woodpecker ~ The Heart. To the crow ~ The Sturdy. To the wolves ~ The Brave. To the elephants ~ The Fearless. To the coyotes ~ The Passionate. And to Rhenee ~ The Leader.

And that dragon never passed within a mile range of those creatures again.

## **My Grandpa**

My Grandpa  
He gives us a hug  
But not just any hug  
A hug that stands for love  
For joy  
For us being with him  
My Grandpa hugs

My Grandpa  
He laughs  
But not just any laugh  
A laugh that thunders down hills  
Soars through the skies  
That makes our hearts beat with it  
My Grandpa laughs

My Grandpa  
His love is strong  
But not just any strong

**Caitlin  
Meuser**  
Grade 6  
Latimer  
Lane  
School  
Simsbury

A strong that is like a lion  
Protecting their young  
Like a bird bringing worms to her babies  
Even though she's risking her life  
My Grandpa loves

My Grandpa  
He reads He skis  
He takes photos  
He makes models

My Grandpa  
He teaches  
He teaches us about faraway places  
And things nearby  
About his life  
And some history  
He teaches us who we've been  
Who we are and what we're to become  
But best of all  
He teaches us how to find  
Ourselves

**Amy  
Tomasso**  
Grade 6  
West Woods  
Upper  
Elementary  
School  
Farmington

## **A Dream Deferred**

My stride was like a poor man's stutter: faltering, shuddering, breaking. My mind was like a rich man's greed: selfish, hopeful, oblivious to destiny. Yet my eyes were neither poor nor rich—my eyes were dead to all signs of life. My eyes held only deep sorrow and confusion. That was the way of those times, those dark days of 1912. But this day was not one of ordinary work. This day was . . . different.

Mama grappled for my hand as we neared the station. There was a certain rising tension in her grip. I could not tell if she intended for it to be there. As her eyes surveyed the scene which lay before us, she hissed, "Don't lose me from your sight." The words Mama spoke that day were like hail bouncing from a plaited roof. Everything whirred by without meaning; the chipping red sign reading "Stacja Kolejowa"—"Train Station"—the brick framework, the slate steps. Doors wide open, could they possibly be called inviting? A gusty breeze blew about us, nothing new to the bleak, early-winter landscape. We neared the front of the wide, warehouse-like train station. Was there no color at all in this Poland, my home?

The rush of people, some faintly familiar, some strangely different, became a normality as we entered the bustling, rowdy station. The result of a few steps left me gawking in admiration and disbelief. Marble pillars, standing

erect and mighty, yet scratched in turn, cherry-wood siding, peeling recklessly from its conceited position high up on the wall, signs and posters faded in a vain attempt to shine. Yet the real attraction was a bronze clock, hanging high on the wall, below the gilded angel.

“And so you see how time withers . . . I remember I walked these steps once long ago with my parents. Oh, we were coming to see Empress Alexandra arriving—and how these walls were polished, and the pillars nearly golden. I find it almost shameful to see everything in these conditions,” Mama mused sorrowfully. Of course, she was sad of the downturn of the economy, leaving most of Poland’s public places without means or way of upkeep, yet Mama was saddened most by her memories, now burnished by this brief visit.

“Come over this way. We must first buy tickets.” We followed a crowd of people to a large booth, where Mama nervously ordered three tickets, undid the clamp on her handbag, and laid out the necessary money. We were directed to a gate and a platform beyond, where the train would arrive.

Cautiously, my brother Albert piped, “But Mamuszka, I’m scared!” He’s four and I’m six. We had only traveled to the neighboring town once by foot, but a train was hardly a common form of transportation. Yet before the matter could be further considered, a creature so wild and alien growled up the track. Mama glanced at us, then the train, then at us again before we began lugging our trunks across the platform and onto the thick step that led into the train.

A wooden compartment hardly boasting of color, the train's only visible accessories were stiff, hard-backed chairs and foggy, sliding windows. The whole scene offered little comfort to my tumbling stomach. We took a seat towards the back, me by the window, Albert on Mama's lap. The weary, drawling voice of a conductor rounded the corner. “Where to: Brennan?” he asked. Mama nodded silently.

Then, just as I began to lean back, the wheels gave an unexpected lurch, a sound like two fantastical dragons being let out of captivity filled the air, and we were off. The blanket of scenery surrounding us began to disappear. Faster, faster! Then all was just a whirlpool of color, bright and blinding. It was all so exciting, overwhelming, everything new and different. I laughed happily, then naively opened the window next to me. As if I were Princess Anastasia, I perched on my seat, the wind blowing my hair. I could almost see the men holed up in the front-most compartment of the train, hauling coal into the tender's fire to fuel the train.

Oh, the joy! Yet it was momentarily trampled by the shriek—shrill, agonizing, painful—that released from my clamped throat. My arms flailed through the air, hitting the windowpanes, the seat, my own thighs, until they found my eyes. As if on fire, they burned wickedly. It was the ashes from the train’s cinders which blew back from the tender through the open compartment and into my eyes. What kept this train living was what had killed my eyes.

Because I was temporarily blinded, we would have to wait for healing, or else our chance at passing through Ellis Island was slim, if any. Even Mama’s farm-worn, familiar hand couldn’t calm a world so dead and pitiful. Though Papa’s hard work in America to earn our transit was wasted, it was easy



enough to catch a train home. Yet to have the courage to start a life over?  
Could I, Anna Puskarz, have ruined a precious, only chance? My soul, a palette  
of expression, refused to even hear the soft wail that escaped from my mouth.  
A dream deferred . . . somehow I'd have to believe I'd make that dream live  
again.

### Afterward

Sticking her head out a train window was probably the most foolish thing  
Anna Puskarz ever did! Anna's recovery back in Poland lasted only a few  
months before my great-great Aunt Anna, my maternal great-grandfather  
Albert, and their mother made their incredible journey to America in early  
1913, this time safely. Anna graduated high school at the early age of 16 and  
college at 19, where she went on to become the first woman in the United  
States to work for the IRS. However, her career was not yet completed. Anna  
earned her MBA from the University of Hartford at the age of 61, graduating  
first in her class. Though I never made her acquaintance, Anna's story will live  
in me forever, and that fact alone is something of which I am more than proud.

**Maria  
Caputo**  
Grade 7  
Ponus Ridge  
Middle  
School  
Norwalk

## **Land of the Umbrellas**

*Kf, kf, kf*

Our flip-flops beat the sand  
as we trudge up a velvet-smooth dune  
the color of French vanilla ice cream  
dusted with a little cocoa powder  
so fine our knees hurt.

Long grass combs over the top  
and we know we're almost there  
when the green-brown plants  
are on our left.

A bolt of excitement hits my navel  
when I see them  
hundreds of them  
all spread out in a colorful panorama  
an exotic garden that greets my eyes with  
stripes  
words  
zigzags  
dots  
pictures

All different  
and yet the same.

A mischievous wind  
focuses on one of the shapes  
one with blue and white stripes.  
It dances away like a ballerina  
twirling and whirling on the breeze  
evading its owners who are  
trying to capture it  
resisting stillness and servitude.

Blue and white stripes a blur  
my heart soars with it  
spinning like a top  
dancing on the Cape Cod sand.

## The Decision

Sweat poured down Grumio's slender face and onto his tattered rags, which acted as a shirt. His heart pounded hard, and he felt he was going to die of exhaustion. It was a hot summer day, and Grumio was stuck doing labor instead of enjoying the beautiful weather outside. The seabirds chirped with delight, as waves crashed onto the rocky shore of the Bay of Naples not far from the home where Grumio worked. He was a slave, and he couldn't enjoy nature often; his parents, impecunious, left him absolutely no money to spend. His master despised him and often tortured him as often as he got a chance. Grumio often wished he had power like a Roman Emperor and could punish his master for all the ruthless things he had done to him. When he wasn't doing labor (which wasn't a lot of time), Grumio often relaxed with panoramic views of the stunning, clear blue ocean water. In the opposite direction, there was a gorgeous mountain looming high above the clouds, about five miles away from his master's home. Grumio gazed at it often and admired its lush green forests which thrived with vegetation and wildlife. The odd thing about the mountain, Vesuvius, was once in a while it let out steam.

"Grumio, get over here, I have more work for you," his master bellowed, interrupting his thoughts. With a deep sigh of dismay, he hurled down his shovel and unhurriedly walked to the kitchen. When he got to his master and his son, he respectfully bowed. "Clean the dishes," his master ordered, scurrilously. With his head down and his back slouched, he went over to the sink and started to clean the filth off the delicate dishes.

"*When can he be nice to me?*" Grumio thought, angrily. Today was August 23, and this year, 79, was Grumio's sixteenth birthday. Throughout the day, he

**Aaron  
Chen**  
Grade 7  
Mansfield  
Middle  
School  
Storrs

received no congratulations, praise, or anything. In fact, his master hadn't said a pleasant word to him all day long.

Suddenly, the earth underneath the city of Pompeii started to tremble. Glasses and plates crashed to the floor, and Grumio began to grow anxious. After a few seconds, the shaking stopped and Grumio relaxed, relieved it wasn't a major earthquake. They were used to it, having insignificant tremors often, but once in a while they experienced devastating earthquakes. Grumio bent down and began to pick up the broken pieces of china that were scattered across the polished marble floor. At midnight, he finally finished and wearily walked to his minuscule room next to the kitchen. The second he lay down on the frayed, sheer white sheets he instantly fell into a deep slumber.

In what seemed like a second, Grumio awoke due to the tremendous noise that was coming from outside. He worriedly glanced out the window and saw the stars still brightly shining in the sky. Grumio looked farther and saw the cause of the racket: Vesuvius had blown its top. Faintly, Grumio saw the silhouette of the mushroom cloud of ash that loomed high above the mountain. Below that, bright red flares erupted from the mountain and burned all the lush trees in its path. Horror filled every bit of Grumio, and he propelled himself out of bed and hurried outside. People squealed, and the high-pitched shrieks of shock filled the early morning air. Grumio turned and raced for the vast ocean, a quarter of a mile away from his master's grandiose manor. He only sprinted about one hundred yards when he saw the master's son limping with a huge gash on his right leg. He had obviously fallen and probably wouldn't be capable of escaping the pyroclastic flows that were hurtling down the mountain, in their direction, at incredible speeds.

Grumio felt his mind being torn into two pieces. One part strongly urged to go by himself and escape by boat alone. He hated his master's son as much as his master and wanted to leave him to die. Grumio badly wanted vengeance to make his master and his son's life as miserable as possible. The other part wanted him to save his master's son being the kind, caring person he was, and then go to the boat, which would certainly waste vital time.

*"If I save us both, it will take longer, and I would put myself in danger. On the other hand, he is a human so I should treat him with respect and kindness."* Grumio thoughtfully pondered. Finally, after a few more seconds of mulling the problem, his mind made a decision.

Grumio sprinted to Clemens, the master's son, and slung him over his burly shoulder. Once Clemens was comfortably on, he dashed again and focused both on speed and safety. The pyroclastic flows gained on him, and Grumio's body was losing strength fast. Panting heavily, he stopped after traveling half the distance to give his body a well-needed rest. He twisted his head around and saw the flows scorching the verdant trees and tearing down the bottom of the mountain at astonishing speeds. Not wanting to stop any longer, Grumio ran again, despite the heavy weight that was being put on his shoulders. Clemens started to sob hysterically and choked on the volcanic ash that was raining down, but like an older brother Grumio soothed him with his calm voice. Trailing them, Grumio saw his master also making his way to the sea.

His master struggled to keep up; already weakened by the heavy, elaborate jewels he carried. Grumio grimaced through the pain and urged his brawny but deteriorated body forward. He turned a corner and amazingly the boats in the harbor were in sight. The pyroclastic flows started to enter Pompeii, and Grumio knew he didn't have much time to spare. Grumio imagined running as fast as a cheetah, and it paid off, since he reached his master's boat with little time left. He gradually lifted the crippled Clemens in the boat and then he started to get in. But then he realized his master was still in great peril. Without thinking, he lifted his foot out of the boat and swiftly ran to his breathless master.

"I'll take that," Grumio offered, pointing to the expensive jewels. With a groan of pain, his master handed the jewels over and muttered, "Thanks." Together, they both raced to the dock and hopped into the vast vessel. Grumio started to paddle away from the pyroclastic flows and the danger. After a few minutes of heavy rowing, Grumio stopped and tiredness overtook him. The boat gracefully drifted over the water away from the burning city of Pompeii. A sudden pang of sadness overtook Grumio. All his life he had lived in this elegant place, and now it was gone. All that was left of most of the Pompeii were ashes that covered the many streets and homes. Grumio started to sob, and his master joined him. They cried together as the boat drifted further and further away from the life they both knew.

"Grumio, if we get out of this boat ride okay, I will free you. Your courage and bravery has saved my son, and I want to repay you. Also, you helped me escape when I was struggling to run away from the flows. I'm truly sorry about how I've treated you for most of your life and because of your valiant efforts I want to free you," his master murmured softly.

"I always thought you were a horrible master, and I hated you throughout my life. You were always scurrilous and mendacious to me, and I treated you in the same disrespectful manner. I thought we had nothing in common, but now I know we do—we are both troubled by this horrible disaster that happened right in front of our eyes. I forgive you for what you have done because I am a man that lets others have second chances. I know what you did was wrong, but, after the dreadful night like this one, I am not looking to the past, I am only looking for my future—freedom," Grumio answered.

That lone, cheerful thought of freedom filled Grumio's mind as he floated away from his home in the lost city of Pompeii.

**Joseph  
Harrick**  
Grade 7  
Ponus Ridge  
Middle  
School  
Norwalk

## **Clash**

Boom! The roar of thunder like  
The sound of clashing cymbals.  
The lights outside flicker on  
And off. The still air is an omen  
Of the upcoming battle between light  
And sound. Thunderstorm.

The gray of the sky  
Like a shroud of darkness  
Thrown over my house.  
I can't help but watch.  
My eyes are glued to the outdoor  
Fury.

The pitter-patters of rain increasingly  
Becomes a typhoon of sound.  
The trees and wind dance back  
And forth to the music of the storm.

The clouds of darkness  
Swirl overhead as a luminescent  
Drumstick strikes the ground.  
Boom! Crack! A symphony orchestra plays  
Itself in the swirling clouds.

The thunder becomes a giant bass  
Drum.  
Outside is nothing but despair  
And darkness.

But suddenly a beaming light  
Shines through that darkness.  
As my eyes adjust to the light  
The sun finally shows its face.  
It is done.

## The Killers?

Among the most misunderstood life forms that inhabit this planet, one that strikes fear into the heart and death into the imagination better than all others is the shark. Pretty much the only reason that we don't worry about being eaten on a daily basis is that sharks are restricted to the confines of the water. Picture for a moment if sharks could survive on land. Like the Great White, one of the most feared predators of all time, could stalk around your backyard in the middle of the night. What if something like a tiger shark lived near humans, the species of shark with the largest range of diet, from seabirds to sea turtles and bags of nails to license plates, was tapping on your window in the middle of the night? We may not have even obtained the title of dominant species. We could be a dead group, extinct, like other species we have forced to extinction. The human race is probably the most unlikely thing ever to be considered by nature. Somehow the dinosaurs went extinct, clearing the way for us. We discovered fire and could cook food. Lucky for us, we have the most complicated brain on earth. We have even lost most of our instincts, and feel safe almost everywhere. On this planet, we're lucky to be alive. But some creatures live in the shark's domain, and aren't as well off with that warm and fuzzy feeling of safety as we are. If we are on a beach or in a boat, we are on their turf. There are many things about sharks we still do not understand. Once we know more about these animals, we may not fear them as much, for who are we to destroy them when they have lived on this earth for millions of years?

Sharks prowled the sea while Tyrannosaurus Rex dominated the land. As our distant ancestors discovered fire, sharks still flourished. But over the past century or so, the sharks' own image of power has been its steady downfall. It is estimated that about one hundred shark attacks happen yearly, few of which are fatal. The fatal ones are most of the time because of blood loss, not the shark dragging the victim into a watery grave and devouring them. Most of the time, there is only a single bite. One hundred still may seem a huge number, but thousands of sharks die daily. Shark fin soup, an Asian delicacy, is made by pulling a shark from the sea, cutting off all its fins, then throwing it back into the sea to die. Sport fishermen kill them purely for enjoyment. When these people kill a shark, they think they have destroyed a terrible monster. But who is the monster, the hunter or the hunted, and which is which?

To better understand sharks, we must examine the shark's body and lifestyle. Sharks are fish, but they differ from their slippery relatives in many ways. First of all, sharks don't have bones. Instead, they have skeletons of cartilage, the flexible stuff in your ears and nose. Sharks' gills are also very strange. Unlike fish gills, which have a single slit, sharks have multiple gill slits. They have to swim constantly, for two reasons. The first is that sharks can't pull the water across their gills like other fish, so they have swim to keep the water flowing over their gill slits. They do not have a swim bladder either, an organ that all other fish have. It is an organ in their underside that is filled with air, which allows them to regulate where they float on the water column. Sharks don't have this organ, so if they stop swimming, they sink. To keep them from

**Jason  
Mostowy**  
Grade 7  
Mansfield  
Middle  
School  
Storrs

sinking even if they are swimming, sharks have a huge liver filled with oil, which makes them slightly more buoyant. They also have rough denticles instead of scales. These denticles are shaped like microscopic mushrooms, and channel the water down the shark's body as it swims which, along with its streamlined shape, give sharks like the Mako shark incredible speed, up to thirty miles per hour. Some sharks, like the Wobbegong, also known as the Carpet Shark, are ambush predators. They lay on the bottom in wait of prey, and then spring.

Perhaps the most interesting and terrifying thing about sharks is their teeth. Sharks can have hundreds of teeth arranged in rows, and every time one falls out, the next tooth in the row moves forward to take its place. Sharks could get pretty rich off the tooth fairy. However, something that makes fish like the Great White a deadly predator in the sea is its sixth sense. Most sharks taste their food to see if its edible, they have nerves like us, they can hear vibrations in the water, and they have excellent vision and even better smell, able to sniff a drop of blood diluted a million times. But sharks can sense electrical currents sent off by your muscles, the very beating of your heart. Every moving living creature lets off these currents. Some examples could be an injured fish flopping about in the water, a seal diving for food, or a human swimming at the beach. This is extremely useful because even in murky water, sharks still have an advantage over their prey. While the abilities of a shark differ between the species, they are all perfect predators.

Sharks have been around long before us. The biggest shark of all time was carcharodon megalodon, growing up to 40 feet long with teeth the size of your hand. Sharks like that were tiny compared to the marine reptiles of that time, such as lioplueridon, the 80-foot menace with teeth half as long as your arm. One of the modern descendents of megalodon is the Great White, which looks like a mini-megalodon.

The Great White is widely considered to be a mindless killer. For a while I took comfort that Great White sharks live far out at sea, but then I learned that the biggest fish ever caught in New England, a fifteen-foot long, seven-foot tall Great White, was caught off Montaug Point. A fiberglass model of this shark hangs in the cafeteria of the Project Oceanology building in Groton.

Whites' main diet revolves around seals, so when a surfer hangs his arms and legs over a board, in looks much like a seal sitting defenseless and unaware in the water. One of the most awesome and terrifying hunting techniques is their ability to breach, leaping ten feet out of the water to seize their prey from the surface with dazzling speed.

Most attacks by many Whites are mistakes, but the theory of a rogue White that develops a taste for humans does exist. In 1916, a young male Great White was prowling the shores off New Jersey when it attacked and killed a young man swimming off the beach. It then found its way up the freshwater Matawan Creek, attacking five people and leaving four dead (the shark itself was eventually killed when a fisherman in a dingy hit it over the head with an oar). It was these attacks that inspired the terrifying book *Jaws*, by Peter Benchly. This book was eventually turned into the movie thriller. After this movie,

millions of Great Whites were killed because of the monsters they were portrayed as in *Jaws*.

Shark numbers are rapidly decreasing. Many species have already gone extinct. The oil from shark livers is a popular ingredient for cosmetics and moisturizers. Long ago, sharks were killed because their rough denticled skin could be used as sandpaper. Sport fishers kill sharks for the thrill and the feeling that you are brave and powerful.

I think it is ironic that people think of it as bravery when they pull a shark in by a hook in its mouth and then stick a spear in it or whack it on the head with a long pole. Most of the time the fisherman never even touch the shark while its alive and dangerous. Some activists are working day and night to save the sharks. We are trying to find an alternative to the shark nets that ensnare sharks near beaches, one of these being a device that sends off an annoying supersonic buzz to deter sharks. Laws now protect some sharks from being killed. New science shows that shark meat has a high mercury level and is dangerous to eat often.

Something that makes me think we're getting closer to ensuring the sharks' survival is a quote from Peter Benchly. When a man was killed by a shark off Australia and people were going off to kill any Great White that could have been the culprit, Benchly, the author of *Jaws*, a book and movie that inspired unparalleled terror and hatred and may have condemned sharks, said, "Do not harm the creature, it knew not what it did."

## Finding Home

A girl crested the hill. Her expression, a defiant one, framed a strong nose and full lower lip. Her hair, black as the deepest night, whipped around her face as she gazed down on the village below, bathed in a blood red gloss that was the sunset. The fading light revealed the thatched roofs and livestock of a prosperous village. As the sun finally leached into the mountain, the girl melted into the forest, as quickly as she had come.

Dalini woke with a start, her body wary as her heart beat loudly. She had seen it again, the vision. Each time she had the dream, she was compelled to think it real. It was the fifth time this week the vision had come to her. This time, she knew she had to act. She gently inched her way out of bed, making sure not to wake Jijonapi beside her. She put on a plain shift and headscarf, making sure that it was in place. Pulling on her sandals, she exited the room, making sure she could hear Jijonapi's snores. She went into the kitchen, grabbing a hunk of bread. Feeling as ready as she was going to get, she stepped out into the summer breeze, savoring the feel of it as it played with her clothes.

The moon, a beacon in the sky above, threw everything into high relief. Dalini stood in indecision. In her dream, she had always started in the forest. She knew what to do when she got there, but not how to get to the starting point. She scanned the horizon; to the north, jagged peaks cut into the sky; the

**Sarah  
Perkins**  
Grade 7  
Mansfield  
Middle  
School  
Storrs



east, fields. The south and west, however, sprouted lush forests, thick with animals underfoot. Looking closely at the ridge of trees, Dalini found the place, a hill that sprouted oaks.

She set off at a brisk pace, her sandals making prints in the moist soil. Passing the headman's house, she veered off her present course, to arrive instead at the chapel. As she passed under the arch of the chapel she knelt, bringing her head to the floor. Taking the piece of bread, she placed a third each underneath the alter for Cyptihe, the god of adventure, Puani, the goddess of children, and Syacotikina, the goddess of secrecy. Kneeling once more, Dalini bowed herself out of the chapel.

Feeling new purpose, Dalini set off toward the woods, the loose clothing of her shift sighing around her. As she neared the hill, she walked into her dream. Always in the night she would dream of walking along a ridge of hedges dripping with berries. The trail would end near a sluggish bog that oozed up to the land. Here she would turn left, following a wall of bedrock. Dalini stepped into a clearing, blindly feeling the ground with her foot in the muted light. At last she found what she was looking for, a piece of bark with the words, "*The river means food and water for Lanika.*" Dalini was puzzled. In the vision she had always known where to look for this "Lanika," but now she did not remember. She had remembered to look for the note, but she didn't know why it was important.

"*The river means food and water for Lanika,*" she murmured softly, barely heard over the tinkle of water, and the rustle of the trees. *She lives at the river?* The river was not far from the clearing, yet seemed much longer since there was no trail in the woods to ease a walker's foot. She winced, the pain that had been growing in her feet from the walk increased as she was forced to step on sharp rocks and sticks, her sandals not protecting her from stubbing a toe. Rounding a corner in the never-ending maze of trees, she gasped, as she stared at the majesty of the moon glistening on the river. As she looked the breadth of the river, she could see a shelter, made out of strips of bark and logs. Nearby a banked fire smelt of dinners long past. Dalini walked along the riverbank, enjoying the feel of the night. As she neared the camp she halted, looking at the huddled form in a corner of the tent. The girl's ribs were visible, and her hair was caked with dirt. Her dress, in shreds, barely covered her body. A grim expression dominated her face as she slept. Dalini continued forward, feeling pity for the girl who had been cast out of the village.

"Lanika, you must come home," Dalini said as she gently shook Lanika's shoulder. Lanika stirred in her sleep, and suddenly woke, wide-eyed with fear.

"Please, I have done you no harm; do not hurt me!" she babbled hurriedly, trembling uncontrollably.

"Lanika, I wish you no ill will, only that you come to my home and be my daughter. The gods have made it so; you should never have been cast from the village. I am here to make all right. Will you not come?"

"Come home with you? Is this a plan to finish me off for good? This can not be true."

“But it is, Lanika. I am Dalini, a woman of the village. The gods have made it my task to bring you back to your rightful home. I am here to fulfill this duty. I swear on risk of my life, that I speak the truth.” Tears silently leaked out of Lanika’s eyes as she ran to hug Dalini.

As Lanika reached the top of the hill, she looked down at her old home, filled with a great sense of belonging. Ever since her family had died of the disease, she had been an outcast. The villagers decreed that she had brought the sickness, and they turned her out. For the first time since she had been cast out, she felt happy. She did not feel like a half starved, unwelcome nobody anymore. Now she had a family, and a future. Food wasn’t a life or death matter anymore. She sighed with pleasure.

The sun rose, its fingers reaching out towards the village. A new day had started.

## Rearrange Me

You know you cannot change me  
So instead you rearrange me,  
Cover up with a lie  
Try to make it not exist.  
Close your eyes and count to three  
And maybe it will go away.  
You have confused me with someone willing to barter  
To carry your goods  
Say your words  
A vending machine perhaps?  
Feed me lies, push my buttons, and maybe, just maybe,  
You’ll get a token.  
Rearrange me.  
Why can’t you see it makes no difference?  
Let’s try again.  
This time close your eyes and count to *ten*  
Three—you’re running out of  
Eight—it doesn’t matter does it—  
Whether I am light or dark  
Boy or girl  
Straight or gay  
Or unsure.  
Cause we’re all just a little insecure.  
I’ll take your hand and tell you my name,  
You’ll have an idea of what I’m like.  
Remember, you still have your eyes closed,  
No peeking until I say  
TEN

**Sophie  
Trusty**  
Grade 7  
Scofield  
Magnet  
Middle School  
Stamford

Natalie  
Beach  
Grade 8  
Worthington  
Hooker  
Middle  
School  
New Haven

Now you can see if I am light or dark  
Boy or girl, so does it really matter?  
If you thought I was mean, nice, shy, scared,  
Am I still now?  
If I tell you I'm gay or straight or anything in between,  
Am I still now?  
You're the reason why I'm  
Unsure  
And why everybody's just a little  
Insecure.

## Wonderin' —A Sestina of Sorrow—

My rusty old  
bed moans at night and squeaks in the  
early hours when I  
wake to the sound of Ma  
beatin on Charlie or Betty or our new baby  
Ray, and I wonder  
  
if there's anyway to *stop* wondering  
about a better life And actually leave my old  
Detroit house and old squeaky bed to stinkin Ma and her slaps. Baby  
Ray would come with me of course. The  
first thing I would do was turn around to Ma  
and say, "You been treatin us like fish bones for too long. I'm  
  
leaving you and your whiskey in the gutter and I  
wonder  
if you'll rot like wet leaves." Ma  
will slap my scarred face and pull my tangled dark hair, but I'll just leave with  
my old tin can filled with nickels and buy the  
winning scratch ticket at the gas station. Baby  
  
Ray and I will be like king and queen. I'll buy a white baby  
horse for me so I  
can gallop free, with out any worries, through the  
new life I've created. I wonder  
what I'll buy for Ray. Maybe one of those old  
toy trains I saw once in a Christmas movie. Ma  
  
will come back on her knees scaring me like only Ma  
can. She'll smile a toothy crocodile grin, clawing like a greasy rat for baby

Ray and our winning ticket. But I'll shoo that old  
hag out the door. I  
would love to see her crinkly face so mad. I wonder  
if the

pressure will build up like a shaken soda can and blow the  
old crone's head off. Then baby Ray and me would be free of Ma.  
Free to eat chocolate cake and soft fluffy wonder  
bread and rich Baby  
Ruths. We would live together forever. I  
would take care of Baby Ray until he and me grow old.

But then I wake from my old fantasy  
To the sound of Ma beatin on  
Baby Ray, and I wonder if hope is like a fluttering butterfly . . . just out of  
reach.

## **Karate: A Way of Life**

My face was sticky with sweat. Steamy heat rose from my body as I  
retrieved my sparring and grappling gear from the waiting room of the karate  
dojo. This was the last time I would be in the dojo. It was my final set of  
classes before I would be moving to Connecticut.

I strapped my helmet on tightly. My sparring vest hugged me comfortably.  
My foot guards, fist guards, vest, helmet, and mouth guard all in place formed  
the complete puzzle. I heard my breath clearly through the commotion of  
switching classes. With a heart beating entirely for karate, I marched toward  
the smiling room and bowed into my last sparring and grappling class at *T.  
Rose's Karate Dojo*.

With in minutes of entering, I was embedded in an intense sparring match  
between Keyanna and me. Everybody in the dojo was more like family to me  
than anything else, but Keyanna and I had become even closer, like a mixture  
of sisters and best friends. But when you are sparring, your opponent doesn't  
matter. All that matters is the match you are in and using all of the moves that  
had been drilled into your head. And especially now I need to keep my mind  
focused. I was leaving my last impressions on the dojo and wasn't going to let  
my determination slip. Match after match, I sparred more powerfully than I  
could have imagined, taking advantage of the wave of adrenaline racing  
through my body. It was muscle memory, my mind was set on sparring, but the  
moves flowed out of me before I could make sense of them, like water rushing  
from a faucet. I performed them exactly as I had learned and practiced them.  
My instincts were picking up on the smallest detail, as Keyanna dropped her  
hand opening a clear shot for a punch. I thrust my fist forward and quickly  
pulled it back to guard myself and be prepared to block. The instructor

**Emily  
Colby**  
Grade 8  
Pawcatuck  
Middle  
School  
Pawcatuck

watching our match held up one finger, meaning I had scored a point. Before my thoughts could catch up with present time, sparring was over and we had moved on to grappling. Grappling is similar to sparring but you stand on your knees and focus more on takedowns and holds. It has a way of capturing you, the intensity of each match is overpowering. The last grappling matches rushed by like a movie in fast-forward. I kept pushing myself to work harder. The muscle memory continued to guide my body through the moves. I simply couldn't comprehend that I wouldn't be coming back to the dojo. The class came and went like wind, an overwhelming surge that ends as quickly as it began.

All of the students lined up in rows like a cornfield after class as we were directed. The instructors all stood in front of us, looking as sturdy as tree trunks. The instructors stood in front of us. I could smell the incense burning in the waiting room. I tried to stamp the memory of the dojo in my mind like a photograph to keep forever. Our instructor, Mr. Rose, held up a shiny gold medal and looked over at me with the loving eyes of a father. He explained that he thought I deserved the gold sparring medal for all of my accomplishment in karate. I thought he should be getting a medal, not me. He had taught me so much about karate and about life. His lessons held incredible meaning because of what he brought to them. I couldn't find a way to thank him for what he had given to me.

I didn't even realize the extent of karate's impact on my life until after I had left. Mr. Rose taught everyone who walked into his dojo how to make a commitment, how to appreciate even the littlest things, to believe in your self and never doubt your own abilities. He showed us that actions have consequences, and that if you want something and you try your best you will be able to achieve it. Everything he said had hidden meanings, and he taught us to find them everywhere we looked. Walking out of the dojo seemed impossible. There was nothing I could do though. I stepped out of the dojo and worked my way through the parking lot to the car. Even now I find myself being reminded of karate and Mr. Rose's lessons by some of the simplest things. My photograph memories stay fresh in my mind and so does my thankfulness.

**Katrina  
Heilman**  
Grade 8  
East Granby  
Middle  
School  
East Granby

## **Complete Insanity. Or something of that Sort.**

### *A Memoir*

Two hundred years ago, it was the year 1805, a year of great importance.

Unfortunately, we won't be talking about it here. Now, just two years ago, it was a rather eerie night, the wind trailing its fingers against my window. Luckily, the warm comforting glow of my lamp held the darkness at bay, even if only for a while. With the soft texture of pages in my hands, and the sights and adventure filling my eyes, the world was a whole lifetime away. It was around 1:00, and I remember feeling sleep weigh down on my eyes. It was then

that it all started. I heard an odd noise. It was hard to describe, only as being a “skirtch . . . skirtch” sound.

Back then it wasn’t odd to hear this type of noise. My most beloved cat, Wiggie, enjoyed visiting me in the middle of the night. So, I believed that the noise was the sound of her scratching at my door, hoping to get in.

I put the book down, pulled the covers off of me, and stumbled sleepily over to my door. I opened it, smiling a warm and loving smile, expecting to see my favorite little black cat’s face, and maybe a high-pitched mew of appreciation as she came waddling (yes, waddling, the poor, fat kitty) into the room.

Nothing was there.

I glanced around, in a hope that maybe she had wandered off due to my delayed response. Nothing down the halls, or even down the stairs when I checked. Nothing. Convincing myself it was all just a pre-sleep hallucination, I crawled back into bed with a sigh. Tucking my book under my pillow, I pulled up the covers and turned out the light.

Just when I got comfortable (always how it works) I heard the noise again.

I wearily got up, pushed the covers down to my feet, turned on the light, and stalked over in an angry little frog march to the door. I opened the door, the cold of the metal doorknob searing up my arm, as, almost, a warning.

Again, nothing.

Grumbling about “stupid, no-good, indecisive” cats, I climbed into bed, pulled up the covers . . . Well, you’ve already read about it, so let’s skip the boring details!

Thrice the noise echoed throughout the small chamber I called my room, along with a plaintive “merow.”

Feverishly, I leaped up, opened the door, and glanced around. I began to dig in the comers of my room, heedless of the mess I was causing, hoping to see a little black face laughing at me, telling me it was going to be all right.

Not so. Again I heard the noise, closer to my bed. I began to crawl underneath, pulling things out. A shoe, a long lost book, a picture, an old toy, and a homework piece from Kindergarten (Might I add it had one of the scratch and sniff stickers). Clouds of dust that engulfed my head, like a fog on an early October morning. Though this dust smelled old and musty, like it has existed under my bed since the Mesozoic era. More of the noise. Dear god the Noise. The constant “skirtch, skirtch” over and over, a clawed hand against knotted wood.

“Holy crow!” I clutched my head in horror as I thought. “I’ve finally done it! I’ve finally gone off the deep end! I’ll end up in a padded room, wearing a straight jacket, twitching at odd intervals!”

“Maybe . . .” a small voice in my head whispered, “it’s one of your worst enemies, and this is all an evil plot to destroy you!”

“How could a noise destroy me?” I thought back to it.

“It could be an ultrasonic sound underneath it, so after it’s finished, your room would be destroyed, you in it!!!!!!!”

“I find that very unlikely. And who ARE you?!”

“Err . . . Quick! What’s that?!”

At this moment I heard the noise again, and I glanced up out my window, expecting to see an answer written there.

Instead I saw a pair of great, glowing, golden eyes.

With a rush my heart jumped up into my throat, pounding there painfully. Senses going into to hyper drive, blood pumped into my muscles, ready to be used to defend my life. Eyes locked on the strange creature, mouth dry, I felt I could take on anything!

Well . . . anything except the creature.

With a strangled cry of “ACK!” I ducked. I stared at the floor, my eyes doing a very realistic impression of ping-pong balls. My heart hammered like the fist of a sales man on a hollow door.

“Oh, God!” My mind raced, thinking of every possibility, each more outlandish (and more plausible) than the one before. “It’s worse than insanity! I’ve been cursed by a demon cat!”

Shakily I stood up. (I swear my legs were like a politician’s promise. Completely unreliable and unstable.) I looked at the window again, where those impossibly golden eyes still hovered.

“Be ye demon or foule apparition, leave me be!” (Okay, fine, I really didn’t say that, but it’s much more dramatic than what I really said. And less embarrassing.)

“I didn’t mean to kick my brother! Oh, God, don’t eat me!”

The eyes flashed momentarily (for anger or madness I do not know), then disappeared. The Noise sounded again, along with a short “merow” before I had been so keen on just finding the voice itself, prove to myself that I AM sane (Unfortunately I have yet to prove this.). But I listened closely now, trying to detect any emotion behind it. Would it sound malicious? Humored at my pathetic display? Would it be hungry? About to jump on me, fangs and claws bared ripping though my epidermis, then muscles, then nerves and tendons until it bit deep enough to reach my red-stained bones? Then with a hungry cry would it shake its head rapidly to remove my flesh from my being? Then . . . Okay sorry, I’m getting a wee bit too graphic. Back to my previous question, did it have any emotions in its voice?

Well, it sounded terrified.

With the caution of a cat (no pun intended), I crept slowly over, ready to leap to the floor and throw my arms over my head, just in case. I inched closer, baby step by baby step, and I saw, also gleaming in the half-glow of my lamp, a small white patch of fur, in a distinctive heart shape.

“*Bart?!*”

Now Bart, yet another black cat we own, was named for his mischievous streak like a certain Simpson character. Now Bart was always getting into trouble. Catching chipmunks, staying outside for days on end, getting into fights with our other cats, getting stranded on the top of a door (yes, you did read that right) the list goes on and on.

And now he was sitting outside my window. (Which is hard, considering the roof outside my window is in a downward slant.)

I felt my legs go weak from pure relief, putting the wobbliest and weakest of jell-o to shame. I strode over to the window, removed my plants from the little

ledge I had installed (Cactus Bob, who is still alive and well), opened my window, removed the screen that kept the bugs out, and let the trickster of a cat leap in.

He started purring as soon as he landed on my bed, quickly walking with the arrogant, yet benevolent swagger that only a cat could walk, towards my door. I let him out, my heart beat slowing down, and positive I had escaped.

A sigh escaped my lips, a grateful sigh, and I crawled into bed, and managed to move the covers up before I completely collapsed. Turning off the light, I contently snuggled with my pillow, the picture of innocence.

“Wow, to think, all of that stress and worry, just because my cat was stranded on the roof!” I jokingly said to myself, as if confirming it.

“That’s what you THINK!” A deep double timbre voice resounded throughout my room, a portal of Pure Darkness opening in my ceiling. Letting a thick cascade of purple smoke assaulting my nose, as lightening flashed, blinding me.

. . . No, I’m not lying. This really happened. I swear.

Okay, fine! I fell asleep, and then, when I awoke, I found out that Bart had pushed the screen out of my parents’ window, and worked his way over to mine (when I look back I wonder why he came to me.) There! The bitter, unmagical truth. Happy?!

## Mysteries

When looking at the skies so deep  
Dotted with a crystal heap  
All the threats and pain to cry  
Absorb deep in the emerald sky

Where constellations flicker near  
Yet not so close that you can hear  
The whisper of the wind that blows  
That chills and warms how no one knows

Where life is sweet as nectared flowers  
Where you can find the lies of power  
That other things can win the heart  
And all that’s needed from the start  
Is love and hope and wisdom, too  
Life flows, a lie that’s true

And warmth can cool the fevered breath  
Don’t understand, but heed the rest  
Circle, line, time never cares  
The patterns birth and death can share

**Kaitlin  
Hulce**  
Grade 8  
Whisconier  
Middle  
School  
Brookfield



All that's known is but one thing  
Time is but a golden ring  
Worn upon the hand of God  
Silent in the morning fog

Hold it dear and listen near  
Maybe soon you will hear  
The stories that the stars above  
Tell of time and love

And never understand  
That you cannot command  
What happens on the course of fate  
Will happen neither early nor late

But you must always know  
When to trust and how to love  
For now, I've told you so  
And forget not this poem of word  
This advice is to be heard

For life is short and long in a way  
Do not waste a single day

Because things happen in such splendid time  
Without reason and without rhyme  
All I say to you is this  
Please do not live  
    In shadowed bliss

**Rachel  
Miller**  
Grade 8  
Interdistrict  
School for  
Arts and  
Communication

## **Lost and Found**

Something I've forgotten  
Is killing me inside,  
I've tried to remember  
But it's got a reason to hide,

There's really something missing  
Really something gone,  
Now I'm really wishing  
I knew what was wrong,

I can't think now  
If I can remember I will be freed,

Like a puzzle left on the floor  
Broken, incomplete, left an unfulfilled deed,

I couldn't really say  
Some memory is dead,  
Maybe it's imagined  
All in my head,

I think I do remember now  
What's caused me so much pain,  
I recall everything but I don't know how  
As my memories flood back,

It's you that I've remembered  
You that I'd forgot in my mind so set,  
I'm really sorry I remember now  
The pain I wanted to forget.

## The Wonders of the Middle Fork

The rapids of Pistol Creek boiled and frothed as the nose of our raft dove down into what felt like a bottomless pit. “*BOOM!!*” Not a moment later, I rocketed back as the water from the “hole” completely soaked me. I yelped a shout of joy as we plunged into the next mouth of Idaho’s most ferocious animal: the river.

Five years ago my grandfather had first mentioned a possible white-water-rafting trip. A veteran rafter, he had gone on five or six over the years, and wanted to share the wonder of rafting with my father, brother, and me. I have never been a fan of boating, and (at the time), was not very keen on the prospect of floating down a river for one week. “When you say you’re going to do something, you do it,” is my grandparent’s motto, and, in keeping with his slogan, our family took off for Salt Lake City in late June, not knowing that we were in for the trip of a lifetime.

Velvet Falls. Pistol Creek. Rubber Falls. These names identify one of nature’s most powerful resources: moving water. Usually when I think of rivers, I do not regard them with any special interest. Yet rivers contain enough energy to light the world; the Middle Fork (which is not large at all) runs at a couple million cubic *feet* of water per second! The governing principle of white-water rafting is that water always wants to go down. Small rivers contain many rocks, and, consequently, when the river reaches a particularly rocky area, a rapid forms. Rapids are much more than splashing water; they are full of eddies and holes. The realities of rafting dawned on me when one of the many eddies sucked our entire raft into Velvet Falls backwards—an awakening precursor to the wild ride that awaited us.

**Oliver  
Porter**  
Grade 8  
King Philip  
Middle  
School  
West Hartford

**Christie  
Amrein**  
Grade 9  
Simsbury  
High School  
West Simsbury

When I first went down Pistol Creek Rapid, which is approximately twenty miles downriver from Boundary Creek (our trip's put-in), I had so much adrenaline coursing through my veins that I started to shake. Called "Pistol" for short, the rapid is truly a "pistol" for first-time rafters. We were even required to hike to a cliff hanging directly over the monster to scout the best way through its claws! Once in the raft, I anxiously awaited our run as we swung around the bend in a sudden forward burst of speed, this time head first into the writhing rapid. Just as happens to me at the end of the climb to the top of a roller coaster, my stomach was in my mouth as we dipped into the jaws of the first frothing depression of the rapid. As we shot upward and through the rapid, the pristine sapphire of the sky captured my thoughts in a pure moment of peace as I marveled at the untainted wilderness all around me. After a few more violent "Bangs" and the squeal of rubber against the rocks, we entered a patch of clear water. I knew that I belonged here, in that special place where only I and the sky exist in an unspeakable harmony of natural beauty.

## **Silly Little Storm**

"There is no way that we are staying at the Sheraton. If you insist on leaving, at least book us in the Hilton Hotel. The Sheraton doesn't even use silk sheets, so if you think I'll get a decent night's sleep, you're dreaming. No pun intended," Holly retorted in response to her mother's question about which hotel they should stay in.

It was September of 2005 in a small town outside of New Orleans. It was a time of change. Change from the warm, innocent summer to the harsh reality of the fall. More change than Holly could realize.

Holly Remme was a freshman in the most elite private school in the town. The Remmes were well known as one of the wealthiest families in the town. The four-story mansion that they lived in was gradually becoming a popular tourist attraction. The house was made of deep maroon bricks with creamy white pillars all along the wrap around porch. It was adorned with forest green ivy in a way that made it seem as if each ivy strand was individually placed. The garden was breathtaking, with such a myriad number of colored flowers that it looked as if a rainbow had exploded into perfect little pieces that rained gracefully into their backyard. The inside of the house was always in immaculate condition, with gleaming marble floors and spiraling staircases. And of course, there were pictures of Holly everywhere that one looked.

"So what are you saying that I need to pack?" Holly asked her mother, who was sitting at the computer, looking to reserve a hotel room. For the past week, there had been many news stories surrounding an upcoming hurricane, Katrina. Many of the Remmes' neighbors were evacuating the city to stay safe. Holly didn't think that there was anything to worry about, but Mrs. Remme thought they should follow their neighbors' lead and evacuate their house for a few days.

“Pack your valuables, honey,” Mrs. Remme replied.

“My valuables? All my things are valuable, and it would be impossible to decide which things to leave and which to bring. But it doesn’t matter. I’m just going along with this little evacuation thing to keep you from bothering me. Hey, why are you only booking one room at the Hilton? That’s two beds, and there are three people—you, Dad, and me,” Holly stated while looking over her mom’s shoulder at the computer screen.

“No, it’s just the two of us. Dad has to stay and work at home. All of his projects are on the computer in the first floor office, and he can’t transfer them onto his lap top,” Mrs. Remme responded.

“Whatever,” Holly thought to herself, “he’s been getting on my nerves lately anyway. It’s not like this is going to be a big storm anyway.”

Holly went into her room and stared at her new suitcase, feeling absolutely no motivation to start packing. She had already planned on eating dinner at The Grand Lux Cafe the following day with her friends, Julie and Rebecca, and was very aggravated that her plans were going to be ruined by what she referred to as a “silly little thunderstorm.” Instead, she decided to call her friend Mark and complain about the situation.

“Mark, aren’t you annoyed that you have to pack and leave your house?” Holly asked.

“Well, no. It’s for our own safety,” Mark answered.

“But for the next few days I’ll be without my own bathroom, without my tennis lessons, and, worst of all, without my computer!” Holly whined.

“Well, when are you and your parents leaving?” Mark asked.

“It’s just my mom and me. My dad has to work or something,” Holly said.

“Oh, that’s—“

“Oh, my gosh, it’s nine-thirty and I haven’t even begun to decide what clothes I need to pack. I have to get started.” And with that, Holly clicked the phone off and sighed with annoyance.

The next morning, Holly and her mother loaded their luggage into their eight-seat SUV. They were going up to Virginia for the next few days. They wanted to get an early start on the road to beat the traffic caused by the other evacuating families.

“Bye, baby. You’ll be fine,” Mrs. Remme whispered to her husband while giving him a hug goodbye.

“Have a nice stay,” Mr. Remme replied. “Bye, Holly!” he called over to his daughter.

“Uh-huh, okay, yeah,” Holly responded distractedly. She was busy stuffing her last suitcase into their SUV. After much struggling, Holly closed the trunk of the car and climbed into the front seat and slammed the door. As she tried to find a comfortable position while they began to move, she glanced back at her house and noticed her dad waving with a smile at the departing vehicle. Then, the car turned the corner and he abruptly disappeared from view.

“Eww, Mom, those boots are so last season. Either change, or eat alone,” Holly blatantly told her mom the next day. They had made it to Virginia and were about to go to eat at the restaurant in the hotel. Holly approved of the

hotel room, although she did complain that the mints on the pillows had a bitter aftertaste.

“These boots are out? It’s a good thing you told me that. I would have looked simply ridiculous,” Mrs. Remme gratefully replied, grabbing a new pair.

“So, when is Hurricane Katrina supposed to hit?” Holly asked.

“Soon. The weather forecasters predict that the worst of the storm is supposed to be around eleven this morning. That’s pretty much all I know; I was really busy with our dinner party plans this week and didn’t hear too much about it,” Mrs. Remme replied.

A couple of days later, Holly was flipping through the channels of the television at the hotel while her mom was outside in the hallway with her cell phone. Holly figured she was checking in with her dad. She hadn’t heard from him since they left, because her mom and she had kept busy with the shopping outlets located a few minutes away from the Hilton.

After finding nothing suitable to watch, Holly clicked off the TV. She lay back on her pillow and then heard a strange sound in the distance. It was a soft, high-pitched noise, and, after about thirty seconds of careful listening, the sound stopped. A minute later, Holly’s mom stepped back into the hotel room, and it was very clear to Holly that her mom had been crying.

“Mom, what’s going on?” Holly asked nervously.

“He didn’t make it,” Mrs. Remme said in an almost inaudible voice, with a blank stare that was making Holly increasingly uncomfortable.

“Who? Who didn’t make what?” Holly asked, becoming more confused as the seconds ticked by.

“Dad. The hurricane. Dad’s gone,” Mrs. Remme said, her voice becoming louder and squeakier. With that, she burst out of the room.

Holly was frozen, with the sound of the slamming door echoing in her ears, running her hands unknowingly on the silk sheets that she had been so insistent on having.

A month of tears, frustration, and confusion later, Mrs. Remme and Holly returned to what was left of their city. They had stayed in Virginia for much longer than expected, knowing that what was waiting for them at home was nothing that they were willing to come to terms with. Holly was still in shock, unable to comprehend what had happened. It was only a little storm. How could this have happened?

As they walked through the debris, looking at everything that was once their home, they couldn’t believe what they were seeing. Buildings were collapsed, with items from stores and homes scattered all over. People were strewn about here and there, crying, wandering, observing. Water was everywhere, creating a wet, dreary disaster.

Holly eventually learned that her mom had talked to her neighbor that day that they heard the news about her father. Their neighbor had gone back and visited their street three days after the storm. It was all too clear that Mr. Remme could not have possibly survived.

“I didn’t even say goodbye,” Holly thought for the millionth time. “If only I could rewind to before the hurricane, if only I had realized—”

“Look, Holly, your favorite store is still standing,” Mrs. Remme interrupted her daughter’s thought.

Holly didn’t even look up. “That doesn’t matter. That doesn’t matter at all.”

## **Friday the Thirteenth**

Some days I wish the world would stop.  
Just for a while,  
To give me time to think.  
Chill. Breathe.

Today is one of those days.  
A day when my so-called friends are sociopaths,  
A day when everything is fragile glass in the hands of a child.

If I could only have an hour alone  
Just one hour  
To lie curled up in my blankets  
Just me and a book and a flashlight  
Taking a break from everything  
Wishing the world would stop for a while.

Fridays aren’t supposed to be gloomy.  
Today is the exception to the rule.

## **Halcyon Eyes**

Her eyes have been around a while;  
Longer than their adopted bus bench home.  
Beaming of wisdom with no one to share it,  
Concealed under disheveled hair and winter coat reduced to rag.

Their knowledge spans decades,  
Decades of men lost and men found,  
Of war and of peace, of love and of  
Hatred.

**Rebekah  
Clark**  
Grade 9  
Granby  
Memorial  
High School  
Granby

**Amy  
Hanson**  
Grade 9  
East Lyme  
High School  
East Lyme

They know of losing.  
Men losing quarters to the gutter,  
Men losing friends in quarrels,  
And men losing their lives.

She has walked on all lands and tasted all traditions, and  
Though her tired legs no longer travel,  
These eyes still learn  
As they journey among the passing faces.

Yes, they've learned from the businessman,  
Feet carrying him to work each day  
But eyes blinded by phone conversations  
And the hurry of rubber soled shoes as they scrape cement.

They know more than he will ever know,  
More than his job could ever require, because  
He does not stop every couple of hours and blink.  
His looks glaze over time, he does not see.

These eyes are radiant memoirs of hope that would  
Captivate a city if understood.  
Through her eyes she could speak  
For days on end, yet no one would hear.

For all educated men know that truth is not  
Spoken from chapped lips and coffee stained teeth;  
Weathered skin in folds like paper encircle her  
Incessantly youthful opals.

The whole world in tumult,  
Men's lives unscrewing,  
But their pride seals their ears from the sound of a voice  
That could be their savior.

And so, she will wrap her scarf tighter round her neck,  
Disappear amongst the furor.  
And through these serene, knowing eyes,  
Watch.

## Hurricane of Hope

Colleen  
McAlister  
Grade 9  
Masuk  
High School  
Monroe

In late August 2005, Hurricane Katrina hit southern New Orleans, Louisiana. It was a category five storm, with torrential rain and horrific wind that uprooted trees, destroyed houses, and ultimately wreaked havoc on southern Louisiana. After the storm, New Orleans was a wasteland. Streets were flooded with several feet of water, buildings had been reduced to piles of rubble, and cars had been picked up and flipped or tossed around by the wind. Most of the police force had fled, so there was much disorder. Believe it or not, this was just the beginning. When I heard about all the things that had happened, I wanted to help. I also hoped that many other people in America felt the same way.

I had watched the news coverage for weeks that showed reporters in raincoats just trying not to get swept away by the wind. But even worse than these were the clips of floods as high as traffic lights, piles and piles of rubble, and people who had become homeless in a matter of days. The devastation reminded me of the tsunami that had happened earlier in the year in Indonesia. Just like the tsunami, I knew there would be celebrity relief concerts on television asking for donations to help the hurricane victims. There would be community service projects and collections to help, too. I knew that the President would address the nation asking for their help and prayers for the victims. Like the tsunami, I knew that it would be all over the news, and I thought that people would try to help, but they would not really pay very much attention. I mean, it was not directly affecting their lives, right? Why should they care? I thought most Americans would think like this. I was wrong.

When the tsunami hit, it seemed to me that people were not helping enough. Sure, they would write checks to the Red Cross and donate some extra food, but it was not coming from their heart. They were not doing everything in their power like they should to help the extremely unfortunate victims who could not help themselves. I thought: “Why don’t Americans help these poor people?! If we live in such a great country, why are we not living up to that reputation?!”

I read a story in a magazine of a girl and her family who had lost everything to the hurricane. They had been split up and taken to different parts of the country to live in foster homes. Many of their friends were starving or without clothing or water. These facts and the pictures in the story broke my heart. Again, I thought, “Why are we not doing all we can to help these people?!”

What I did not realize is that Americans *were* helping the victims of Hurricane Katrina! Equal to the number of stories of ruin and devastation were the stories of hope and compassion. In the president’s address, he told a story of a starving Katrina victim who had tried to rob someone’s home. Instead of calling the police, the family took him in and fed him and gave him a place to sleep. This started to make me see that Americans were helping. Extra credit for my math class was to bring in food, water, pet supplies, or cash for the Katrina victims. Movie studios that had pictures opening donated large portions of their profits to the Katrina relief efforts. Kids all over the country



**Donald  
Pomeroy**  
Grade 9  
Granby  
Memorial High  
School  
Granby

set up lemonade stands to raise money for the relief. A high school raised almost \$2,000 from collections during lunch periods. “Help Hurricane Katrina Victims” was everywhere you looked! I saw all these things happening, and I realized one simple thing—Hurricane Katrina had given me hope.

Americans really were making efforts to help. They were putting their hearts and souls into making sure all the victims had food, water, and a place to sleep. My wish had come true! They really had reached out and did all they could. There are a lot of dark things in our world today, and seeing my country band together and help out the less fortunate shed a little light on those dark things, just gives me hope that we do not live in such a dark world after all. I am proud of my country for what we have done. Hurricane Katrina will go down in history as one of the most devastating storms of this age, but it will go down in my heart as the Hurricane of Hope.

## **The Beheading!**

A plastic scimitar darted through the air ready to strike down my cousin. Then with the utmost speed and precision, it tore into the wooden neck of my mother’s hand-made Victorian Santa Claus. The Christmas Eve party jolted to a stop as the gaping throng of relatives gave me a collective stare. My mother shrieked with horror and her eyes filled with rage. My maternal grandfather advised me with these words, “Boy, you’d better run!” I left the room as Santa lay dismembered. Christmas had started in a morbid way this year.

Every year our family has a Christmas Eve party. This familial gathering is always held at our home. We spend the week before Christmas rushing about, cleaning. My mother turns into an irritable insomniac as she works 24/7 to cook, clean, decorate, and shop. She is an absolute perfectionist when it comes to Christmas. Missing a spot of dust is a capital crime in her realm. She also has to have her decorations perfectly positioned. She proudly displays the garlands, the ornaments, the lights, and her favorite hand-made Victorian Santa Claus.

This Santa Claus was purchased from a woman she knew from her job as a toxicologist at Stauffer Chemical. It was mounted on a wooden base and hand-crafted. It always looked to me like a Boyar of the old Muscovites with a bag of toys. His crimson cloak was lined with fur, and he held a wooden staff. His head was a small, rotund object made of wood, on top of which was a fur-lined cap. The Jolly Old Elf seemed perfectly peaceful. Until Christmas Eve 1999.

Our Christmas Eve party began like every other one that we had ever had. Our grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and friends came over. Things were usually jovial and light. My closest cousins are my father’s sister’s sons and stepsons. That night we decided to play with the pirate sword I had received as part of my Halloween costume. Sam, Nate, Ryan, and I were going to fight each other with my weapon. We took turns pursuing each other with the intent to (pretend) kill. I had the sword and I was hot on the trail of my feared enemy, Nate. I closed in and took a mighty swing. Like a mythic hero, I engaged in

mortal combat. Unfortunately, my enemy was Old St. Nick. With a crushing blow I decapitated Santa Claus.

After the dramatics, my mother confiscated my sword and sent Nate and me back to my room for more mundane activities. “Ha, Ha! You killed Santa” and other jests filled our conversations that night. Since my transgression wasn’t seriously punished and Santa’s head was later reattached after five minutes of intense surgery, it seemed pretty funny. Though I had no idea what had happened to my sword, I laugh about it to this day.

My sword was later returned to me after a year in the wilderness. The murder of Santa will probably be one of my favorite Christmas memories. Unfortunately this wasn’t my only “act of indiscretion.” Several years before this I had destroyed my mother’s antique green glass bowl. She later saw the bowl in a newspaper article about antiques valued at two hundred dollars. But that’s another memoir.

## Seeking for the Only One

It was an ordinary sleep-over when Bok Yeh woke up from a terrifying noise. Her friend’s parents were already downstairs and in the room, wide-eyed. Her friend, Sun Za, ran to her parents. Bok Yeh sat alone, frightened. She looked at the clock, and it read 5:12 a.m. A thump caught her attention. Continuous thuds deafened everyone in the room.

“What is happening?” Bok Yeh shouted over the ear-splitting blasts.

No one seemed to hear her. Bok Yeh could see Sun Za’s mom trying to tell her something, but she could not hear a thing. She could not even hear herself. Sun Za’s mom started quickly grabbing food and water. It seemed there was no time. After few moments, Sun Za’s family and Bok Yeh was out the house and walking on the street.

“Where are we going, Mrs. Lee?” Bok-Yeh asked.

“The North Koreans have invaded South Korea. We need to walk over the Korean Bridge and go to as far to the South as we can,” said Mrs. Lee.

“But what about my family? I need to see them,” said Bok Yeh.

“You live across the bridge. Do not worry, Bok Yeh. We will go to your house. Even if we somehow miss your parents, I will take care of you,” comforted Mrs. Lee.

This comforted Bok Yeh a little. Thousands and thousands of people were walking on the streets. Everyone in the streets looked afraid. The adults held onto their babies and children. Sisters and brothers were hand to hand. No one was alone. Bok Yeh started hearing cries of babies as she got used to the booming sound. Then, Bok Yeh heard a thunderous boom behind her. She and everyone else around her looked back.

“No!” Mrs. Lee shouted sharply as her hands quickly covered Bok Yeh’s eyes, but it was too late. Bok Yeh already saw the scene. She saw body parts flying into air and the blood splashing all over. Bok Yeh trembled as she

**Kimin Um**  
Grade 9  
Simsbury  
High School  
Simsbury

turned around. She held onto Sun Za's hand even tighter and did not let go. She kept on walking. She could not see a thing behind her tears.

At last, Bok Yeh and Sun Za's family were on the bottom of the Korean Bridge. The bridge looked as if there were no more spaces left for anyone. However, people somehow squished themselves in the chaotic crowd. Although Bok Yeh could not see the other end of the bridge because of all the smoke and people, she could see her mom opening the door when she rang the doorbell. A strange noise from the sky broke her image. She looked up and saw two missiles dropping onto the bridge! Then, she heard the most outrageous noise. The pain went through from her head to her toe. She pressed her hands hard against her ears. Everyone was running back toward the entrance of the bridge. The frantic crowd carried her along with them. Then, she heard more outrageous noises as if thunder was hitting down upon the bridge.

Once she was on land, not the bridge, she turned around.

"Ooh!" Bok Yeh gasped.

The beautiful Bridge of Korea was completely destroyed. People were falling onto the deep Han River, River of Korea. People hung onto the broken parts of bridge, but could not hold onto it long enough. Everyone on the bridge fell into the dark river and swam until the hungry river finally swallowed them. Some people made it to the shore. Endless tears blocked Bok Yeh's vision.

Somehow Bok Yeh was holding onto Mrs. Lee's hand. This young little girl longed only for her mom. Even Mrs. Lee could not comfort her now. Bok Yeh did not know what to do. She did not know what was going on. She looked around. Everyone was running wildly. Some people were on the ground, wailing. Some people just stared into space. Some people could not move from the shock. No one knew what to do. The only way to the safe side was gone. Hope was gone. They were all going to die. North Koreans were going to kill them.

"Mommy . . . Mommy," cried Bok Yeh.

"Oh, God. Oh, God," murmured Mrs. Lee.

Mrs. Lee looked around and found a small boat underneath an arched rock. It looked as though it could fit only one person. "What a miracle!" she thought. She looked at herself and then at Bok Yeh. "My family is somewhere around here. I need to be here. I need to look for my husband and my daughter. Bok Yeh needs to be with her family. Yes, she must go to the other side . . . to her mom," Mrs. Lee thought to herself. Determined, Mrs. Lee called to Bok Yeh.

"Bok Yeh, come here."

Bok Yeh walked toward Mrs. Lee. She saw a boat with a paddle besides Mrs. Lee.

"What is this?" Bok Yeh asked.

"You must go across the river, Bok Yeh," said Mrs. Lee firmly.

"Are you coming with me?" asked Bok Yeh.

"No, I am not. You must go alone," said Mrs. Lee. She stared into the shocked little face. Then she spoke determinedly. "Listen, Bok Yeh. You need to return to your home. You must be with your mom. You cannot survive here.

Do this for you and your family. Your family needs you, especially your mother. I know her. Here is your one and only chance. Take it. Please.”

Bok Yeh could not look up. She was stunned. She knew that Mrs. Lee decided to sacrifice herself for Bok Yeh. She could not thank her enough. With panic-stricken mind, she could not form any words, but somehow she knew that Mrs. Lee understood her feeling. She took the paddle Mrs. Lee handed to her. Mrs. Lee helped Bok Yeh into the boat and pushed the boat as hard as she could out to the river.

“Goodbye!” shouted Mrs. Lee.

Bok Yeh could see her waving hard.

“So long!” shouted Bok Yeh.

Bok Yeh rowed with all her life. She did it for herself and her family. Her flesh on her hands was torn apart. Her hands were full of splinters. However, she did not stop. Blood oozed from her hands, but Bok Yeh did not feel a thing. All she could think about was getting out of this tragedy and finally safely back in her house. She only had one goal and that was to get to the opposite shore of the Korea River.

The houses that had looked like ants now looked like actual houses. Bok Yeh was close to the shore! She paddled faster and faster. Her clothes were soaked from her tears, sweat, and blood. Bok Yeh could see an endless line of people on the southern shore. They looked shocked but not as terrified as the people on the northern shore. Everyone stared at her. Everyone came running up to her. Bok Yeh has never been so happy and exhausted in her life. She looked at the people and realized that they were her neighbors. They cried at the sight of her.

Out of all these people, Bok Yeh looked for only one person. Once she located her, everything disappeared. All the people and houses went away. All the mourning and crying drowned away. She was only with that woman in a cozy room. Bok Yeh’s heart thumped louder as the woman ran closer to her. She kneeled beside Bok Yeh and opened her arms. At last, Bok Yeh was finally embraced in the arms of the one and only one, her mother.

## **My Modern Atlas**

Michael Bernardi. This name, though inconsequential and perhaps trivial to most of the population of the world, is an essential part of my life, more so than just the name I have to scribble fervently on all my medical forms or documents for school under the label: Father’s Name. As my parent, my dad has fulfilled his required position of authority and has mastered the art of inculcation in his forty-seven years of life both at home and in his workplace as a director of food services at a chain of nursing homes and mainly as a chef. My dad has maintained my exact picture of what a real man is likely to become when he becomes of age, despite the nearly insuperable feminine atmosphere of the Bernardi household. Some of my father’s most distinctive idiosyncrasies are all aspects of his physical appearance.

**Stephanie  
Bernardi**  
Grade 10  
Woodstock  
Academy  
Woodstock

My father is very unlike the stereotypical-looking, mortgage broker, television commercial “father” with sandy brown hair, perfect smile and a little excess bulge around the middle, as a probable result of the deliciously square meals prepared by his Betty Crocker wife. The lanky, tall, nearly skin-and-bones figure that is my father most likely contains a less than three percent body fat proportion regardless of his large appetite. My father by definition, is one of those people about whom you ask yourself “Where does he put it all!?” His slightly gaunt looking, sunken-in face with insanely high cheek bones and skin screaming of Italian heritage, in combination with his less-than-perfect grammar and Italian voice make him look like he just stepped out of an episode of the Sopranos. His salt-and-pepper hair, still clinging on to its more pepper than salt ratio, is streaked with small amounts of product which I often refer to his as attempt to stay hygienically hip.

Possibly my favorite thing about my father is the combination of scents he leaves behind as he walks by: a blend of his Adidas deodorant, Ralph Lauren cologne, traced with a hint of coffee from when he spilled some on himself earlier, which has become a habitual part of his morning routine. Giving my dad a kiss on the cheek every morning before school and feeling his scratchy, sandpapery, five-o’clock-shadow-at-seven-in-the-morning is one of the greatest parts of my day. With my slight phobia of feet, it is unique that I truthfully don’t mind brushing against my dad’s feet because they are as soft as a baby’s bottom, due to his wearing of double socks his entire life. This nearly matchless quality is not the only distinctive trait of my father’s.

A mere list of adjectives does not do any justice in describing my father, but it can give an outsider a vague idea of what kind of man he is. My dad is absurdly determined, and, when he sets his mind to completing something, it is almost guaranteed that this task will be completed with grace. He is intelligent, involved in his community, and has a sense of humor that can truly split my sides. His patience might be his most admirable feature, which is exemplified during one of the many outings my father has taken me on throughout the past 15 years. In an attempt to help me understand why he spends so much time playing in golf tournaments and spending hours occupying himself with the Tiger Woods video games at home, regardless of my tedious complaints about missing my favorite TV shows, he decided to take me par three, pitch and putt golfing. Naturally, I was a maladroit golfer in every aspect, but my dad never once became frustrated with me, even when he had to apologize to another golfer I hit with my golf ball and explain to him it was my first time playing and I did not know of the useful phrase “Fore!” In retrospect, it was a completely intelligent choice on my father’s part to take me golfing, because I came away with a new found respect for the game I had previously deemed as quiet and mind-numbing, and the drone of my constant whining over having to watch all the PGA tournaments on Sundays has dulled considerably. In addition to his patience on the fairway, my father has numerous other surprising capabilities around the house.

I suspect my dad took classes in every trade there is, including masonry, plumbing, carpentry, etc., because any mishap that might go wrong (and does)

around our house, can and will be fixed by our own Mr. Fix-It. We must save countless sums of money on the fact that we have never once had to call upon a tradesman to fix anything for as long as I can remember. It is no wonder my mother chose him as her life companion, seeing as she can spend the saved money on more relishable things like, say, trips to the mall or subscriptions to her favorite magazines.

Without my father in our family, every member's sanity would be in question. When my sisters and I were little, my dad was the electric current that kept our Easy Bake Ovens working. Now, and rather unfortunately, he is the bank from which we can withdraw money for our favorite pair of Abercrombie & Fitch jeans, which he allows simply because he knows it will put a smile on our faces. The image of my father will continue to change as I grow older and mature, but never changing will be my picture of him as our own Atlas, holding up our world, minus the mythological atmosphere and old Roman dress. Without him, I would not be the strong-willed, classy young woman I have become.

## Pygmalion

Blinking the crust out of my early morning eyes, I silently curse the rumbling of the rickety old subway, which just caused my coffee to spill on to my pant leg, promptly jerking me out of my tired stupor. So much for spill-proof caps. I stared in desperation at my work spread out over a series of cracked and faded yellow plastic seats. Looking down I involuntarily chuckled. The vulgar graffiti and sexual offerings amid my sketches and neat notes made the chemical formulas look like some kind of foreign text.

I was nearly considering one of the more enticing written offers when the usual nasally voice cut through the stale air, announcing the next stop in a language unbeknownst to all but those who perpetually dwell behind the "do not approach the driver" line. Then with the pulsing sound of protesting air the doors opened into the chilly, outdoor air. The hint of springtime faded the farther we drove into the raucous city, replaced by that of anxiety and gasoline. The usual crowd shuffled in: nervous-looking interns and their smarter-looking cubicle-counterparts. The only difference between the two was that the interns self-consciously straightened their ties and the wrinkles in their shirts. The ones with the paychecks no longer cared. Mixed in with them was the usual cast of self-proclaimed "brooding artists." They were even easier to pick out. If the shaggy hair didn't give it away, it was the stifling air of someone who is trying very hard to make it appear that they aren't trying at all. Finally, last but certainly not least, like the first promises of life poking through the winter snow—her.

She was my *rara avis*, the Helen to my Paris, she was the sun that brightened my day and warmed my spirit. Every day she was the drug to get me through the day. Not that I was unhappy, but I knew it was her I needed to be truly

**Danielle  
Dumaine**  
Grade 10  
Woodstock  
Academy  
Woodstock

complete. She sat down on the seat across and pulled a dog-eared volume from her bursting bag. This month she was in a classics mood and was reading Homer's *Odyssey*. Last month she was into Bukowski and, boy, was I glad that was over. If I had to read about one more trip to a horse track, I don't know what I would do. Her slender fingers turned the pages while her electric gray eyes scanned the battered text. Oh, I knew those hands so well. After months of secret gazing I had memorized every line, every dimple in the soft ivory. I smiled to myself as her lips softly and slowly moved with the words. She made reading seem like a treat, like she needed to carefully test the taste of each word with the tip of her tongue, weighing it for meaning, form and truth.

As she read she began to absent-mindedly twirl her ring around one of her beautiful fingers. That ring was my enemy. Each tiny diamond peak seemed like Everest to my desperate, yearning eyes. I knew she didn't love him by the way she winced at the sight of lovesick students, skipping duties to see the sights. I knew she didn't need him by the way she laughed. That laugh cut through my heart like it was butter, not the stone I once feared it was.

So every day I sat, silently dying as she teased my senses and scope of rationality. And every night I lay, trying to dispel the crazy betrayal of reason that consumed my soul. I read what she read so that perhaps one day I might un-stick my tongue long enough to spark a conversation worthy of such a mouth, such a mind, such a soul. I knew today would be the day. I could feel it from the innermost marrow of my bones out to the prickling goose bumps on my exposed arms.

Through the din of my conflicting thoughts the normal nasal drone once again cleaved its way through my predicament, calling the next stop as we slowed to the familiar screeching halt. This was the last stop before we would be in the city—my city, her city, the city that manages to steal my mind, soul and wallet Monday through Friday and all the hours in-between. I liked my job though. Or at least I liked my job more than my father had liked his, and that's the only like I ever knew.

As we jolted back into motion, I slowly and purposefully began to gather up my belongings, partially out of necessity and partially because of the angry sideways glancing I was receiving from my fellow passengers. They were currently clutching the bars for dear life as their feet attempted to cling to the linoleum floor, like it was the only thing keeping them from floating away to where they really yearned to be.

I sighed and shoved everything into my battered bag and wiped the hair out of my eyes. The subway slowly came to a stop. This destination needed no introduction. As she gracefully stood she stared right through my eyes and into my soul, as a smile cracked her face. I knew she had caught me staring so I sheepishly smiled back and my mouth opened in what it had promised would bare a resemblance to speech, and somewhere the words "Good Morning" formed and started to push themselves out of my welcoming lips. But looking up all I saw was the back of a jacket as she rushed into the melee waiting outside. I closed my now vulnerable mouth and hitched my bag higher onto my shoulder. Then, with a deep breath I stepped out of the car and back into reality.

# Trapped

“Rrrruff! Rrruff!” I rolled over in my bed, to be greeted by my Bernese mountain dog, Luke. He licked my newly French-manicured nails and obviously needed to be taken out. I swung my legs over my green duvet and shuddered as my bare feet grazed the frozen floor. “Grrrrr!” he threatened playfully.

“All right, all right. I’m comin’,” I moaned as I opened my crusty eyes filled with last night’s dreams. I rummaged in the dark to find matching socks as he ran off. “No one will see me anyways . . . it’s six in the morning, for God’s sake!” I whispered. I pulled my old robe out, tied my silky, blonde ringlets up and went off with Luke.

He tugged the leash, sniffed the grass, and stopped nearly every five feet as I sleep-walked besides him. The leaves crunched with each careful step. Luke finally managed to find the right spot, and we started to head home.

“Natalie!” someone called in a raspy, yet friendly voice. I turned; I felt my cheeks becoming crimson with the thought of someone seeing me with tasseled hair and morning breath. “Oh, Natalie, dear, so good to see you.” I heard in the memorable southern voice.

I squinted around to see who was calling; I hadn’t even brushed my teeth, let alone put my contacts in. Even with my myopic vision, I spotted the speaker, Mrs. Gaunter, standing alone in her barren yard, not even a leaf dared to pass her fence. She was an intimidating lady; the black steel fence surrounding her house kept her as a prisoner. The trees spread wild rumors around the neighborhood.

“Well, you’re up early,” I replied as cheerfully as I could, forcing a fake smile between clenched teeth. “Can I help you out this morning?” I asked, dissembling my wish to go back to my cozy bed as her obnoxious yellow car stunned my sleepy eyes.

“Well, sweetheart, you know my son, Rust?” She paused, burning her eyes into my skull. “I just don’t have anyone to watch him. You know how I just adopted him and with my hubby dying and all those rumors . . . about his death . . .” Her dark eyes were overflowing with tears like a dam about to burst in a raging river. “Anyways, I know its last minute, but could you watch him tonight? I’m goin’ out with my galfriend’s, and I need me a sitter.” I smiled, letting my sapphire blue eyes meet her chocolate ones. She pushed back her dark hair, dragging her scarlet nails through it roughly.

“I can do that, no problem. You know how much Luke loves little Rust.”

She grinned back at me, grabbed my hand and squeezed it tight with her wrinkled hands. Shivers went up my back, causing the hairs on my neck to stand on end. *It was just the wind*, I reassured myself.

“All right then, Natalie; we’ll see you ’ound six then.”

I began walking home, suddenly enjoying the crisp morning air. I followed my normal morning schedule, sneaking around my town house trying not to wake up my roomie, who was lucky to have afternoon classes. I got a coffee and went off to Neuroscience and then to Latin.

Anna  
Hill-Moses  
Grade 10  
William H. Hall  
High School  
West Hartford



*And as he spoke these words of wisdom! Like a cruel joke beyond his scope!*  
*With just one stroke from his fountain pen, he cut the last . . .* the popular Steppenwolf song blasted on my cell. I picked it up, curious to see who the blocked caller was.

“Natalie?” that familiar raspy voice began.

“Hello, Mrs. Gaunter, everything okay?” I questioned.

“Oh, yes, I was just callin’ to tell you that Russell won’t be home ’til seven, and I’m leaving at five. There really is no reason for you to just sit ’round the house alone. Why don’t you come over at ten t’ seven, and I’ll just leave the front door unlocked.”

“Wait, Russell? I thought his name was Rust.”

“Oh, well, you see, he sounds like an old man, a *rusty* man.”

“Ha, ha . . . I see. All right, so I’ll see you and Rust later tonight.”

“Okay, so you’ll be over then. This is just *too easy*. Buh-bye.”

The rest of the day went by quickly. I worked on my thesis paper, had lunch with some friends and took Luke to the park. I looked up at the clock and realized I should get ready. I packed a bag with a book, my cell, some candy, and Luke’s toys. Then, Luke and I strolled down the dimly-lit street towards number seventy-three Hallow Lane. A black SUV rushed passed me, with a dark-haired blur in the window.

I unlatched the gate, and it creaked open. “Come on, Lukey!” I tugged at his leash, but he would not budge. “Awww, Luke, don’t you wanna go play with Rust?” I crooned. I stepped in, yanking on his leash until he forcefully tore it out of my clenched fist and raced home with celerity. “How strange,” I thought to myself.

I started up the pathway, careful not to step on their clean-cut lawn. I grasped the gold door handle and pushed down. It didn’t open. I pulled the door towards me and then shoved it away. It didn’t open. “Damn it!” I said out loud. I looked under the mat: no key. Better try the back door, I thought to myself I felt my way to their back yard. Click! A motion light went on, thank God. I stared up at the mansion; it had a high deck, but no steps that I could see. I walked around the deck: no way up, no way down. Then my eye fell upon the garage. I rushed over to it, hoping I could pull it up. It wouldn’t budge. I went around front again; I pressed my crisp, cold ear against the door. I heard voices! I looked in the window, pounded on the door, rang the doorbell. No answer. I banged my head against the door in frustration. A red blotch dropped from my cheek onto my hand. I touched my cheek, whipping the blood off. I felt for my cell phone, worried out of my mind. Where was it? I emptied the contents of my bag: my book, candy, Luke’s toys. No phone.

Now in a panicked voice, I yelled out, “Please, Mrs. Gaunter! Open the door!” I pressed my ear against the door, awaiting a response. Nothing. I went around to the back, searching for my cell phone. Tears started to stream down my face, stinging my fresh wound with their brackish taste. The motion light clicked on. I kept searching for a back door, my cell, anything of comfort, but found nothing. On my hands and knees, I felt through the thick grass for my cell, I made my way towards the garage. It was open. My heart began to beat

rapidly. Baboom . . . baboom. I could feel the gash on my cheek overflowing with blood. Baboom . . . baboom . . . The garage door was open! I heard a raspy voice singing from inside . . .

*“You’re still young, that’s your fault; there’s so much you have to know, find a girl, settle down, if you want to, you can marry. Look at me, I am old . . .”*

Trembling I looked inside. A figure turned towards me. I turned away, afraid to look, trying to scream, but my mouth only merely opened with soundless motions. I turned back. With a quick glimpse I saw old Mr. Gaunter in the middle of a chalk circle, fire behind him, his eyes wide open and searching for help. His legs were shaking, his mouth moving, trying to form words. Rust and Mrs. Gaunter were dancing, their bodies undulating around him, and a life-sized picture. A picture in a gold frame, with a dark red background. The fire occasionally tried to creep through the canvas, attempting to burn the girl sitting with a poker face. The picture—it looked like me! It was *me*. Me, with my golden ringlets, my two dimples, my mesmerizing blue eyes, and even the cut I had just gotten below my eye.

*“You’re still young, that’s your fault; there’s so much you have to know, find a girl, settle down, if you want to, you can marry. Look at me, I am old . . .”*

I started to run, tripping over my own feet, cracking sticks and leaves. I kept glimpsing back, and my next fall like thunder in a clear summer night and the singing was silenced. I glanced back; they were racing towards me. I got up searching for a way out, but found nothing, nothing but a closed fence. The world began to spin around me, leaves swirling in a maelstrom. I wanted to scream, but all I heard was the sound of feet scampering towards me. I fell on my hands and knees, tears blurring my vision. I felt something hard. It was my phone! I pressed 911; listening for a ring, I heard voices on the other end but I remained speechless with fright. A frozen hand grabbed at my wrist.

“Help!” I screamed in a distraught manner, nails digging into my soft skin. “Seventy-three Hallow Lane!” I cried with last hopes of being saved. Mrs. Gaunter and Rust dragged me into the garage and placed me next to Mr. Gaunter. “What are you doing? Let me go!” I begged. *“You’re still young, that’s your fault; there’s so much you have to know, find a girl, settle down, if you want to, you can marry. Look at me, I am old . . .”* the two sang.

“Let me go, please . . . please . . .” I watched the two of them dancing around me, hypnotizing me with their words. *“You’re still young, that’s your fault; there’s so much you have to know, find a girl, settle down, if you want to, you can marry. Look at me, I am old . . .”* I began to feel relaxed, my eyes closed as I leaned back in the chair, sobbing.

I felt calm. I opened my eyes, it was quiet. I felt my cheek, no bloody cut, but wrinkled skin. I felt my hair, it was dry. I pulled some over my shoulder and looked at it. It was straight. It was brown. It was straight and brown. Hurriedly, I looked for my French-manicured fingers, but found wrinkled hands, with scarlet nails. Someone was carrying me; it was a medic. I looked behind, and saw myself, or what used to be me: a girl with beautiful blue eyes, blonde curly hair, a gash under her eye. The medic brought me to the front yard and placed me on a stretcher.

“Everything will be all right, Mrs. Gaunter,” he said calmly placing me down next to Mr. Gaunter. Our eyes met, and, even though he spoke no words, he conveyed that he was Russell. Still stunned I looked towards the girl and felt as if I was looking in a mirror. She went over to pet Luke, who growled at her and came running to my side, licking my wrinkled, trembling fingers.

Amanda  
Hoey  
Grade 10  
Old Saybrook  
High School  
Old Saybrook

## Scream Me Something Beautiful

Spin me fairy tales of California skies,  
Our enigmatic dream land.  
But you stopped believing them long ago,  
You turned away from fantasy’s helping hand.

I tried to stay for every tearful night  
And listen when life was unjust  
But what I gave was never enough  
And when I complained, you revoked your trust.

So scream me something beautiful  
And wrap it in a box of lies.  
I’m sending back your prepackaged angst  
And your melodramatic disguise.

You called me a liar, a traitor,  
For daring to confide in another friend  
That your pain was troubling me.  
And so “forever” came to an end.

I suppose there’s no point in anger,  
You made your choices, I made mine.  
You manufactured a drama,  
Claiming I crossed a nonexistent line.

So scream me something beautiful  
And wrap it in a box of lies.  
I’m sending back your prepackaged angst  
And your melodramatic disguise.

I still remember the good times  
You were so eager to throw away.  
And where our friendship existed,  
Relief, pain, regret will stay.

So scream me something beautiful  
And wrap it in a box of lies.  
I'm sending back your prepackaged angst  
And your melodramatic disguise.

## Memories of Memère's Eyes

The monotonous voice of my eighth-grade science teacher droned on and on, in what seemed like some kind of Morse code, about the affects of mercury on the brain. I, however, knew it already, being the only one who ever read the chapter. It didn't matter though. I wouldn't have paid attention if I hadn't read; my thoughts were on nothing except my family and myself.

My great-grandmother was in a coma at the hospital. She had been having a series of strokes over the past year, each causing her health to dwindle even more. But this one was different. Everyone, whether they admitted it or not, knew that she was never going to wake up. This was the beginning of the end—the last chance to say goodbye.

The last time I had seen her was a month earlier. She had been in pain, but still just as sassy as ever. She was sitting at my grandmother's kitchen table and my whole family had come over for dinner. I said hello to my unusually quiet grandfather, kissed my increasingly worn grandmother on the cheek, and then walked over to the table and sat down.

"Hello, Memère, how are you feeling?"

"Oh, just fine, Susan," she said. Susan is my mother's name. This was the first time I had actually seen her on a "bad" day. These were the kind of days where my grandmother would call my mother crying, but hearing stories about her failing health and actually seeing it was very different. I understood why she called me Susan; I look just like my mother. We have the same face and the same nose. But not the same eyes. I had my great grandmother's eyes. She and I were the only two people with blue eyes instead of brown. I understood why, and yet, she had never done that before. There was nothing that I could do; I was trapped. If I told her that I was not Susan, it would just confuse her. I sat there, looking helplessly . . . hopelessly from my great-grandmother to my grandma as she continued to talk to me about all those times in Mapleville, Rhode Island, a place I had never even been to. This was not the last time that I would be unnerved. Later that night, I saw her bending forward waving her hand back and forth, as though swatting away a fly. I walked over to her to see if she was all right and she invited me to "pet the little dog." As much as I regret it, that was the last thing that she ever really said to me; it was the last time that I ever looked into the eyes which so perfectly mirror my own.

Suddenly, the phone rang, and I jumped back into my classroom. It was a small recess from both the droning voice and my own thoughts. I turned to another student and began to joke, desperate to drive out anymore painful memories. Then, I felt a hand on my shoulder, "Ellie, you are going to go visit

**Eleanor  
Muirhead**  
Grade 10  
Manchester  
High School  
Manchester

your grandmother. Pack your things.” All thoughts were wiped away; I was filled with a feeling like no other. It was one that I had often read in books and seen in movies, what always seemed to me like a fake, Hollywood emotion. Trust me, it’s not. I shoved my things into my bag and glided out of the room, escorted by a thousand nameless questions, to which I answered, “I don’t know.” My thoughts continued to flee as I met my mother in the office. We left without saying anything. The car ride was filled with both an awkward silence, pregnant with the knowledge that I was really just going to say goodbye, and the even more awkward sound of my mother trying to make light conversation.

When we got to the hospital my mother guided me through the halls to an overly white room. It felt like an insane asylum, or more accurately an interrogation room. That turned out to be exactly what it was. A woman matching the clean, falsely happy room entered and placed herself “prim and proper” on the chair. I sat statuesque, as the woman drilled my mother, finding out more than she would ever need to know to approve my visit. I left in the same dreamlike state that had started when the hand had first touched my shoulder in school. In what seemed like a long camera shot, I made my way down a long hallway to the last door.

As I turned the corner, I saw faces of mourners. I was sat in the chair next to my great-grandmother’s bed, and my hand was placed in hers. It was a strange feeling; her hand was still warm but it felt unreal. I stared at her watching her unmoving face with surprising few emotions. I knew that this woman, whomever she was, was not really the feisty old woman who used to take us swimming and insist that I have only two cookies, lest I spoil my dinner. My mother, on the other hand, felt differently. She insisted that I speak to her. My mother might as well have told me to talk to a mannequin. Clearly, nothing would change even if I did say something; she was still going to die, and I was still going to be sad. Plus, everyone was staring at me, so how could I say anything? Despite all this, for my mother’s peace of mind, I began to talk. After about 30 seconds I stopped; it felt clumsy and weird. I was never a talker anyway, so why should I have changed then?

In order to break the oppressive silence, my uncle began to tell an “I remember when . . .” story. I was grateful; it gave me some time to myself. Soon the air was lightened and everyone began to laugh at the story, even my uncle. His booming laugh distracted me enough for the first time to make me turn around. When I returned my gaze to the sleeping face, the mouth was turned up in a faint, weak smile at the happiness that everyone had felt. I knew that she was there then. I knew that this shell of a body still housed the spirit of both defiance and tradition. My great-grandmother was still with us.

Suddenly, as though a dam had burst, everything I had ever wanted to say to her was on the tip of my tongue, waiting to spill out in the eagerly waiting air. The emotions that had been hidden all day poured out of my very being. I radiated laughter and tears all at the same time.

I never spoke. There was never a need to. The best part about being both here and there is that you can hear prayers as well as words; she knew that I miss her, she knew that I love here, and, most of all, she knew that by giving me my eyes. I can look in the mirror every day and know that she is there insisting that I only have two cookies.

## The Literary Kids and I

The literary kids and I like to talk about music and the meaning of life and sex and cigarettes and easy cheese, and we send each other prose or good music or poems or short stories through our computers because we love our keyboards and our iPods.

We talk about guitar strings and teenage drama, the what-if's and the could-have's and the we-should's, and what we do to make ourselves feel alive.

Mostly we talk about love. We're fascinated, really. You can feel it in-between the lines of those chat boxes, you can hear it whispering in our innocent little ears, "You don't like it, you *love* it."

Love, we bounce the word back and forth, I *love* the poem, you *love* him, I *love* the use of parentheses, he really *loved* her, all you need is *love*. The word echoes back and forth and back and the conversations hit closer and closer to the heart.

I tell this boy, "We're so deep." That's deep, you're deep, we're so deep.

As deep as Bukowski (because when you're fifteen, that's pretty deep).

As deep as space.

He says, "No, wait, I've got it. We're as deep as love."

Yeah, that's it. Love.

## Tribute to Milkweed (and All Things Holy)

It was an annual tradition in the fourth grade. Each year, the teachers would march the students down the road to a nearby pasture, keeping us in line with sharp words and gentle prods. We duckling'd our way down the road to that odyssey each incoming fourth grader considered the highlight of their school career, each of us carefully armed with a magnifying glass and a Tupperware container. They set us loose in the field with strict instructions as to what we were looking for. Avoid poison ivy and prickles; don't lose track of yourself; don't fry insects or each other with your magnifying glass. We carefully found the first one, and then a second and a third and they spread on and on, more than we could possibly need. We had found that graceless plant that would yield delicate gifts in only a few short months. We fanned out across the big emptiness filled with gently nodding stalks, giggling and racing to see who could find the most, the fastest, the best. These green or yellow goals seemed

**Michelle  
Schloss**  
Grade 10  
Farmington  
High School  
Farmington

**Evelyn  
Ansel**  
Grade 11  
Fitch Senior  
High School  
Groton

like giants at the time, though they only reach my middle now. They looked fearful with their spiky green pods, but the spikes were soft and when split open, the pods released clusters of seeds that skimmed away with the breeze. Those pods always reminded me of a pair of camel-hide shoes my uncle sent me from some far off land (perhaps from a fairy tale), the ones with the pointed toes that rubbed away at my heels.

We each approached the swaying stalks with care and more patience than fourth graders are generally expected to possess. For the short time that we were in the field, we were not nine or ten years old. Oh no, we were Nobel Prize-winning scientists, and we knew exactly what we were doing. It was a clear scientific mission that had many complex and carefully blocked out steps, and it would surely be chronicled in the next color-saturated *National Geographic* as the most noble and successful project ever.

We began by cautiously examining our chosen subject from afar to make sure any at first unnoticed arachnids wouldn't leap out and surprise us. Even when each deemed it safe to dive in for a closer look, we were just as cautious. Each leaf fanned out from the stalk like a spiral staircase, and I used to imagine that that's really what they were—staircases for haunts and fairies that danced in the fields at night.

Viewed from the top at first, we made sure that each leaf was whole—any with patches consumed by some unknown thing simply would not do for our purposes. Then, we carefully bent each leaf back in turn to examine its white belly. Each of us clung to the breath in our lungs in anticipation of what we might find on the underside. If there was more than one tiny sphere on the bottom of a single leaf, it was yet again no good.

If we were lucky, after our long process of elimination, we found one tiny incandescent pearl resting on the downy leaf bottom. The first to find that holy miniscule globe hooted their success and the rest of the class would stampede over to get a good look. Congratulations and jealous looks would follow when the teacher affirmed to the proud student that it was indeed a monarch egg. After an hour or so, each student had found at least two or three, and we would carefully stow our exquisite cargo in the Tupperware containers, being painfully careful to not jog or bump the now precious box.

We walked down the road as royalty, stepping with ballet posture, as if it was Cinderella's shoe we carried in that Tupperware container. We needed no prompting to stay in rigid formation on the side of the road, and proudly walked the hallways back to our classroom with heads held high in the hopes that someone would stop to ask us, the experts, what we cradled in our hands so dearly. In our excitement, we forgot to wash our hands before lunch even as our teachers reminded us. Sticky peanut butter and jelly yielded jammy fingers that tasted disgustingly bitter with the sap from the leaves we had collected. Our scientific persona was stripped away, and we were fourth graders again, pretending to puke over the sides of our desks at the horrible flavor rolling off our fingers.

But now came the most difficult part. We had to wait. And wait. We waited for hours, for weeks, for centuries, forever. We checked our charges each day,

yet there was never any change. We had long since stopped looking in the Tupperware containers on the desks every morning when the first hatched. Our teacher pointed out to us what we had missed, and we were embarrassed that after all our waiting we hadn't seen our sacred eggs hatch into the sock-striped green and yellow, miniscule caterpillars. They grew quickly, but yet again we had to play the waiting game.

And then, one day, a caterpillar had had enough. She climbed to the netting covering her Tupperware cage and began to dance and shiver. Before our eyes, our homely little caterpillar morphed into the most breathtaking object my worldly fourth grade eyes had ever seen. There hung, suspended as if by magic, a jewel, green with true gold. I decided that that was where gold came from. With wondering eyes, I explained that that was why gold was so expensive. As if the first caterpillar to construct her chrysalis had sent out some secret signal, each of our wards did the caterpillar wiggle that resulted in another beautiful green droplet at the top of his or her cage in a rush over the next few days.

And now, again, we waited until the magical day when we, the proud parents, would watch our adopted, flaming orange children fan their wings carefully to dry them after the humid confinement of the jeweled sleeping bag. We waited until they had all hatched, except for the few whose green light had sadly dimmed before the day came when they would leave their prison. And then we let them go.

Since that year, I have dutifully searched each fall for jewels beneath the green or yellow monarch havens that now only reach to my middle. I never seem to look at the right time, because I haven't found the precious pearls since. The back lot behind our house is an unkempt and wild field where I used to run away to when I was little and stubborn. We sold it this past winter and this is the last fall that the milkweed will be left growing there before the field is ripped apart. I'm still not quite sure where the monarchs have gone, but now I know I won't be seeing them again.

## My Lips

Look at me.  
Please notice my lips:  
One of the few pieces of my face  
I actually like.  
Why can't the rest of me  
Be more like my lips?  
Plump only in the right places,  
Round but still attractive,  
Glossy and gossamer.

I never felt prettier than when  
Two ladies at a makeup store

**Molly  
LaFlesh**  
Grade 11  
Rockville  
High School  
Vernon



Argued about what color my lips were.  
(They settled on a cross between  
Dusty rose and pink coral.)

I think I am jealous of  
My own lips.  
They get to talk to you,  
Whisper secrets,  
Smile at you,  
Make you smile back,  
Blush permanently,  
And still be confident enough  
To be out there all the time,  
Hidden only when  
They blurt out something stupid,  
And I bite them in frustration,  
And I feel awful because  
It's not their fault.  
*Damn brain, stupid tongue.*

To make it up to them,  
I carry Chapstick  
In my pocket all the time,  
To soothe them  
When they get cranky,  
Like a mother placating her own  
Soft-lipped child.

With luck I won't  
Make them look stupid,  
Up here at this podium  
Reciting these awkward words  
My clumsy hand wrote.  
*Damn brain, stupid pen.*

**Chelsea  
Love**  
Grade 11  
Arts at the  
Capitol Theater  
Willimantic

## **Static Cling**

the rustle of her baby fine  
blonde hair, as it clings  
with gentle malice  
to her paper white forehead;

she smiles, tiny teeth  
tells me about unusual

helping vowels, uncommon  
to word middles.

the dog barks, its whine  
crested back towards its snout  
like waves in a storm, the chill  
of the cold air, breaking  
the caps into ice.

her independence pulls  
on her father's big gray sweater,  
adding electricity to her flaxen  
silky strands,

and as we go toward the darkness,  
her fists are suddenly palms,  
reaching up to me with disregard  
for all unspoken boundaries.

I carry her to the house  
through the sliding doors  
into the spacious garage  
and back safely to the sneakers on the step,

wondering if it was only the static cling  
bridging the gap  
from her hair to mine  
that brought us together.

## Why

why  
why must we know everything  
and when we do not know everything  
why must we make things up

The government says a life is worth 6.1 million dollars  
is the life of an old person worth less  
is the life of someone crippled worth less  
perhaps the government should do a cost-benefit analysis  
inquiring minds would like to know

The human life is as priceless  
as a moment on a credit card commercial

**Nathaniel  
Rook**  
Grade 11  
Granby  
Memorial  
High School  
Granby

as we are charged with our lives  
they buy intelligence, discovery, and hard work  
until our credit limit runs out  
and society pays interest on our final years

Even God has rules and regulations  
which God are you praying to  
choose carefully or else you're fired  
by the men who claim to speak for Him

Does it matter where everything came from  
and does it matter where it will end up  
how about we just listen to our lives  
dire straits says philosophy is useless  
theology is worse

why am I still writing this  
as I try to quantify the pitfalls  
of quantification  
or quantifaction  
quantition  
Shakespeare spelled his name many a way  
Andrew Jackson said it is a damn poor mind indeed  
which can't think of two ways to spell any word  
and Ben Franklin achieved perfection by charts  
and government by desks

**Natalie  
Panno**  
Grade 11  
Greenwich  
Academy  
Greenwich

## **An Introduction**

“Jillian?”

“Hello?”

“Jillian, thank God. The kids just went to check on Petunia, and he's, uh, not moving.”

Jillian stiffened and hunched over her desk. “Are you sure he's not sleeping?” she whispered.

“No—Yes. I just poked him.”

“—No?”

“No, not moving. Kat and Robbie are just about bursting with questions.”  
Petunia was the Peterson Hamster and confirmed as male ever since Lester had given birth to a litter of naked babies quite a few years ago. The babies and Lester soon disappeared from the premises, but not Petunia, and no one could explain why they kept him. He wasn't particularly cute, or friendly, but would always react favorably, which meant movement, to a carrot. Not one of the

family members under thirty-five could say his name. Kat, six, called him 'Nunia, and Robbie, eight, called him 'T'ny.

"Oh, shit. You let them see the body?" He was white and orange, remembered Jill, with a funny splotch running across his back.

"They *found* it. Well, I'm moving him to a *paper towel* in the sink now, Jill. I was thinking we could, uh, use this opportunity to teach them about *death*, you know, with a *familiar thing*."

She wanted to remind him that her uncle had died the year before and hadn't the kids been at the wake? But then she remembered that they had stopped the two children from lining up to see the body in the coffin. Jill had gone around alone instead.

"Bob, I can't talk, I've got a lot to do and—"

"I have a *dead hamster* in my *sink*, Jillian." Bob had an unfortunate habit of punctuating his sentences with copious amounts of implied italics. Jillian had a feeling that if he wrote his words down instead of saying them, they would look a lot like the comic books he pretended not to read. Now, over the phone, his disembodied voice sounded even more like a masked vigilante. "Jill," she could imagine his next words, properly bubbled, of course, as Super-Bob, protector of the home, "I can't *control* the *repercussions* of this *shocking death*. I need *backup* from the *Peterson League*, pronto, or there could be an appearance by *Dr. Tears*."

"Ok, do we have a shoebox? Do you have a shoebox?" she said hurriedly, bending ever closer towards her keyboard in hopes that it would muffle her voice from her office-mates. Without a window, Jillian couldn't hazard a guess at the time. A flick of the wrist told her it was mid-afternoon. Three-ish. Kids were home from school, obviously.

"Have you bought shoes in the last couple of weeks?" Bob asked.

"Negative."

"Have *I* bought shoes in the last couple of weeks?"

"Have you?"

"No."

"Ok, what about shopping bags?"

"*Honey*, I can't put Petunia in a *shopping bag*. That's not very respectful."

She glanced up as her computer chimed dutifully at her. It was telling her she had an email, and it was important, and she ignored it and instead caught her reflection in the screen. Slightly distorted, Jillian nevertheless winced at the picture she made: the room was lit with the fluorescent lights normally associated with public bathrooms, and her face looked overexposed and washed out like a home video. Her cubicle was gray-on-white plastic and carpet. She felt a little zombie-esque, maybe combined with a little Igor, the poor, slogging bastard.

"Maybe we should have a funeral when I get home?" she ventured.

"Maybe I should go find the spade?" he replied.

Jill could hear the clamor of children's voices behind him. Our youthful wards, acrobats stolen from the circus, she thought. What would that make me? Invisible Woman? Their father was certainly not Super-Bob, on second

thought. Something to do with flexibility, or a role under the alias of “Jack-Of-All-Trades,” although that sounded vaguely evil.

“Put her—him—Put them on.” Kat and Robbie sounded alike, so she couldn’t tell who was shrieking next to Bob.

“Mom?”

“Kat?” said Jill, gambling. She had a fifty-fifty chance at getting it right.

“Nunia isn’t moving. He’s like a furry bag of, um, things-bones.”

“Petunia is very old.”

“No, he isn’t.”

“Yes, very old for a hamster. It was his time to die.”

“No.”

“Yes, and—” She checked her watch again, wondering how long a hamster body would keep. Probably long enough. “—Yes, it was. Tonight when I come home we’ll bury him in the yard, okay? With a headstone and everything.”

Which brought up another question: what headstone?

The family’s first pet, now dead. Jill sighed out of the corner of her mouth. “I’m so sorry,” she said, feeling guilty. She was hoping they wouldn’t ask for another one, or else in a few years a corner of their lawn would be a small graveyard. She could only imagine what would happen if they asked for a dog.

“Why?”

“Why am I sorry? He was a good pet. It’s respectful. You remember, at Uncle Cliff’s funeral, when you couldn’t laugh or run around?” She said this looking up at the ceiling, at those unforgiving, unflattering bars of light. I am a zombie, Jill thought, an undead spawn of unnatural and evil bulbs.

It was apparent after a few seconds that Kat didn’t remember which was to be expected since she had been around four and a half at the time. She said,

“Can we give him carrots?”

“What?”

“He’s going to get hungry in the box without carrots.”

“I’ll—I’ll get something together, don’t worry,” said Jill, and then, liking the sound, repeated it, cradling the receiver with one hand. “Don’t worry, okay? Don’t worry.”

**Fatima  
Zaidi**  
Grade 11  
Glastonbury  
High School  
Glastonbury

## **Me, My Mind, and Coffee**

“It’s quite amazing. A little sliver of ice can make a big guy like him go down,” said a short bald man to another as they passed me. For a while, I wondered about the statement the man made. And it’s true, even I slip on the smallest patch of ice. I made my way through the icy sidewalk by walking on the parts with snow. My legs were stiff and I couldn’t move them as I tried to go up the step and into the coffee shop.

Thank God it was warm and sort of cozy in the shop because I was in severe need of defrosting. I placed my order and took a seat next to the window. I picked the seat for two reasons—one, because then I could see the cold white outside while I sat inside and drank my burning hot coffee and, two, it was the farthest away from people. I don't like to sit next to people. I feel uncomfortable sitting close. I mean I feel strange when there are other open seats and somebody chooses to sit very close to me. I guess I have a very large personal space bubble around me. Thinking about personal space brought me back to the time the officer for D.A.R.E. told us about what personal space was and how to stop people from entering your personal space. The way to stop people was to come out and say "you're invading my personal space." I think that is ridiculous. Who says that? I mean, really, what "normal" person says "you're invading my personal space"? Do they know that we are not aliens? I'm not sure; policemen always seemed a little strange and robotic or something not human to me.

"Number twenty-five, your order is ready." That was me. I went up to grab my scorching hot drink. Like an idiot, I took a sip right away without sugar or waiting for it to cool. It hurt. It burned my tongue and it didn't taste good with out lots of sugar. Why did I take a sip out of it as soon as I got it? I mean, I knew it was hot and it wouldn't taste good, but I took a sip anyway. I felt like slapping myself but I think the burn was enough anguish. I put my sugar in and went to go sit down when I saw somebody else sitting in my seat. How rude. But then I quickly thought about what I had just thought of. Who am I to judge? I think it's human nature to judge people for every action. But I tried to look around it. Lately, I've been trying not to judge people. When I do I think for a moment and say, "Oh, they must be better than what they are doing/saying." So then I let go of whatever they did, then again sometimes I don't, but this time I thought it through and let it go. After all, I might have done the same thing he did.

I changed directions and aimed at a new seat. I'm too much of a coward to say anything. So I sat down in an uncomfortable chair near this very loud group of people. They were talking about what they were going to get each other for Christmas or something like that. I wish I celebrated Christmas. I mean our holiday which is like a Muslim Christmas I guess had already passed, and it was so lame. I never said this aloud to my family, but I always wanted to have a cute Christmas tree with neat little lights and cute little ornaments and wake up bright and early, excited to go check out presents and hang out with relatives who came a great distance just to be with us. I have always wanted to feel that warmth of tons of family around Christmas time and people in Christmas sweaters drinking egg nog and talking and laughing and having a great time. I always wanted to do that. I just want to feel the same feeling. I think Christmas is a great idea. Now I won't get into anything religious, but it's great that one of Christmas's points is to bring people together. I think it actually does, or maybe I have too many Christmas movies stuck in my head. I absolutely love this time of year. Well, minus the cold part about it, if only there was fake snow. I don't think that the winter holidays

would be complete without snow; I wonder if they feel that same feeling we do up on the north side, on the south side of the equator. I wonder how winter would be down south.

I finished my coffee slowly and sat for a while with the empty cup. Now the loud group started to talk about how they hate their lives. Wow, what a different conversation, I buzzed out for a while so I didn't hear what was said between the gift exchange thing and the life sucks part. The girl went on about how her life is horrible and she wants to die, but then another girl was like, "Aw, that's so sad; no, don't kill yourself."

I hate bringing down a group. Even when I was depressed I tried to stay the happiest. Making people laugh and be happy just makes me feel good about myself. I remember that I used to write poems about that, and my personal symbol was a mask. I masked how I really felt with a happy clown face. I look back on my poems from then and it makes me cry sometimes because I was very depressed and somehow it shined through in my poems. I heard somewhere that if a person who writes a song feels sad that most likely the listener will feel sad too. I believe that. Look at me, that girl even made me sad. I tried to think about something more pleasant but the loud crowd was still talking about suicide. Wow, suicide, that's dangerous. I believe suicide is sad, not because somebody wants to kill themselves but because they just gave up. I mean it just means that they're weak that they can't toughen up and take life like the rest of us. I hope that kid realizes suicide isn't the answer. I realized it, and I'm better than ever today. I really enjoy my life and feel that the worst moments in my life later brought on the happiest times I have ever had.

Why do we fall? So we can learn to get up. I follow that kind of thinking now. After months and months of meditating (like I am doing in the coffee shop) I realized that I am just an amazing human being. But then again all things alive amaze me in different ways. But what amazes me the most is the human brain. It's just magnificent how the mind thinks of thoughts. They are millions of little notes on every scrap of paper available.

I thought about the mind for a little longer. Meditation can be done anywhere, even when you least expect it; it's a remarkable thing because you prospect deep thoughts and examine them under a microscope and turn them twenty-one different ways until you've unlocked them. And this is why I find the mind to be absolutely phenomenal.

I threw my cup into the garbage basket and walked out into the cold again. But more of a person than when I walked in.

**Dominique  
Arsenault**  
Grade 12  
Frank Scott  
Bunnell School  
Stratford

## **Rocks at the Beach**

We walk down to the beach, down the same little path we used to walk long ago. It is overgrown now, but the air above it still smells as salty and intriguing as ever. As we approach the end of the path and our feet hit the sand, our eyes catch the view that our minds know so well by memory. There are clouds overhead, and the sky is purple. The water is deep and scary and comforting. It

is windy and our hair brushes across our faces as we stand there hoping that the wind will pick us up and transport us, across a sea of time, to our childhoods.

We begin our favorite activity of throwing rocks into the water and watching for a splash.

You pick up a perfectly round, white stone. I snicker. You always were obsessed with beauty. As if the rough rocks and the broken rocks and the sandy-colored rocks didn't even exist!

"This one is for all the bike rides we've taken together!" you say as you pull back your arm and fling the rock towards the water.

I pick up a rough, gray rock and release it into the air, laughing. "This one is for the time you rode out in front of a truck and almost got yourself killed!"

You look at me and shake your head. You are always upset when I point out your mistakes. You grab another pearly white rock. How do you find those so easily? "This one is for the way you started acting like my mother after that day, never letting me go anywhere without you!" You release the rock and let it fly through the air.

"This one is for all the times you spilled nail polish on my rug!" I screamed, letting another rock fly.

"This one is for all the messes you made in my playroom that you didn't clean up!"

"This one is for all the Barbie dolls that are headless because you couldn't keep your hands off my things!"

"This one is for all the clothes you borrowed that you never returned!"

"This one is for all the times you embarrassed me in front of my friends at school!"

Rocks fly through the air in every direction. We stop checking to see if they make a splash. I'm not looking at the rocks I throw anymore. You are forgetting to be certain that the ones you pick up are perfect.

"This one is for all the days that I couldn't concentrate on my homework because you were banging on that stupid piano next door!"

"This one is for all the movies you dragged me to see that really sucked!" A little heart-shaped pink rock. A big brown rock. A round rock with little speckles all over it.

"This one is for every time you took the last fudge pop from the freezer!"

"This one is for the motion sickness I got on your Dad's fishing boat!"

"This one is for my bike that you left out in the rain!"

"This one is for all the ridiculous soccer games. I attended in the freezing rain just to see you sit on the bench!"

"This one is for the time you cut your foot on a broken bottle, and I had to carry you all the way home from the school playground!"

You pause for a moment, before picking up another annoyingly perfect white rock.

"This one is for teaching me how to love!" you scream.

I drop the ugly brown rock I am holding, and it makes a clunking noise as it falls at my feet. We are both silent for a moment. Then you start to laugh. So do I. We turn and head for home.



**Ellen  
Cupo**  
Grade 12  
Wilbur Cross  
High School  
New Haven

## She Is

**Grandma:** She is a short, Italian woman. She loves my sister, Jesus, and me. She took care of me when I was a baby until I started kindergarten. She raised me to be a good girl. I have always been grandma's angel, her "principessa." "*Are you still dating that colored boy?*" She told me that I should be good to everyone I meet so they'd do the same for me. We see life differently because when she says "everyone" she means Italians, not black people like my boyfriend or people like her neighbors who are Puerto Rican.

**Aunt:** She is my mother's sister. She's hip and younger than my mom. She has a Coach bag and a VW Bug convertible. I learned to be a woman from my aunt. If it were up to my mother, I'd have one eyebrow and the social life of a vegetable. "*I've never seen anyone make your mother cry the way you did.*" She bought me my first Clinique compact and brought me to a Backstreet Boys concert when I was eleven. She wants me to grow up but she disapproves of the choices I make. I've bloomed into a flower, but she looks at me like a weed.

**Mother:** She is a Swedish/English woman married to a crazy Italian family. She is a 1970s libber who is conscious of society and how it sees and influences little girls. She fixes drainpipes and made all my Halloween costumes. She drove me to flute lessons and back home in time to eat the dinner she made. "*We don't hate him, we just don't want you to have a boyfriend, that goes for any guy, not just Khafre.*" When I started dating she cried. My mother expected me to break stereotypes and be an individual. I defied my mother's expectation when I had sex before she was ready. She thinks I am beyond repair.

**Me:** I am seventeen years old. I juggle four AP classes, a steady boyfriend, and music theory homework. They said I had to become my own person, but I had to be nice and mind how society was going to look at me if I left the house looking like *that*. Khafre was their worst nightmare. He is my best friend, and he is three years older than I am. "*For my birthday I want you to trust me.*" From high school, to a boyfriend, to sex: I'd blossomed into a woman. My mom instituted an early curfew. My aunt said I "disgraced the family." We never told grandma.

**Alexander  
Goldman**  
Grade 12  
William H. Hall  
High School  
West Hartford

## Bright and White

She looked over to find a light switch and saw Philippe sprawled on the bed, and a few bells outside were ringing resoundingly. It was so late in the afternoon. Light came from the vast windows a scorching orange attitude.

For the life of her she could never remember being so tired so early; plane-ride or not, she felt her head swimming in thick, dark, and lost places. Uncouth contrast between the light shining in, which fell on Philippe's head, and the darkness of her periphery, no matter which way she turned, gave her direction, as though she lies in a tunnel and sees a way out.

Suddenly, it was Philippe sitting up. "What a city," he said to the walls.

"At least we are a place we can stay clean for a while," she pointed out, and got up from the bed, obligingly, and danced to the windows, waltzing with herself, making Philippe laugh in a deep kind boom—the blinds slid shut as a cord was pulled closer to the floor—the bed creaked as she fell upon it again.

What followed was a silence that contained, for both of them, considerations of deep secrets, supposedly well-hidden. Her husband thought of everything that was left behind, across the world: things with which distance accomplishes peace, people with whom distance withholds a fraction of humanity. Rightly, he was worried.

"Tell me, Katherine, when they will come."

"On the same plane as we, in three months."

"Tell me why we left."

"Because you would have been taken into service. *Listen*—leave your guilt there." Philippe sighed. "And yours?"

"I have no guilt. I would have been left behind, and they would bring me maybe to take care of the wounded, and to feed them. You know I'd make an absolutely horrible nurse."

Again, Philippe let out a booming laugh. It sounded exactly like the last one, and, therefore, seemed angry, almost infinitely remorseful.

Katherine said, "Tell me what worries you." So that he could see that she meant to receive an answer, she pleaded, "Over the sky we flew! And the clouds, husband and wife together. A journey farther than all of the walks we have taken together, *combined!*"

He shook his head, to mean that whatever bothered him hadn't been left behind.

"Tell me," she put her head on his chest; his hands were between his hair and the pillow.

"Tell me the truth, if you please."

"I can't."

She ignored him, again insisted upon the truth.

There was nothing for him to do but to chuckle, this time softly. It felt like the first honest thing he had done in a while.

"What was that! A weak laugh! I thought that you were always big, and manly, and forceful."

He paused, where before he might have laughed, or rolled his eyes with an accompanied sarcastic grunt. For a second Katherine wondered if perhaps he had fallen asleep. But then he spoke up, very informatively, the room still dark.

"You see, I can't pretend everything," he explained. "And when I lie, I can carry on with such sincerity" —he strangled the air adamantly with his hands—"that one might call it genuine. And whatever I do falsely becomes so

habitual that it overwhelms natural response, becoming instinctive. So although I could lie to you right now, I choose not to; it would all spiral down.”

“You *are* weak,” she said playfully, not listening, letting his words equal silence. From the darkness, she began stroking his arms, and found them to be sweaty; if it was lighter, at least she would have known.

Philippe rolled out from underneath her and stood heavily and walked, groping for furniture, to where he knew there had been a chair. It seemed that he was not tired, merely pensive, as he often was. Katherine used to go to bed late, after caring for the babies, and she would fall onto their straw mattress, covered by a thick fur comforter—and, without opening an eye, he would greet her with some well-considered question. But across the ocean the beds were so different, it almost made her scream.

“I used to love you more,” he confessed, without instigation.

It was her turn to laugh. They were playing laughing games now, in the dark, as a bit of moonlight began to pour through cracks above the blinds. Katherine found herself afraid to imagine what her husband would look like illuminated by this light. Moonlight, she thought, is too judgmental. It never looks beyond the truth.

They were sitting in the room, Philippe waiting for his wife to say something. Clearly he was anticipating some kind of revealing monologue, and he would listen and then they would sleep. For her part she needed to be inspired—already her enmity for moonlight kept it from becoming a kind of cosmic muse. They battled without words for perhaps half a minute.

“We’re kind of hibernating,” he said at last. “Waiting for summer in our cave?”

“This is our cave,” she admitted. “But what is our summer?”

Philippe ignored her. “I can’t wait to see our sons. Big strapping boys, about to reach full size.”

“Please,” begged Katherine.

“Tell me!” His voice was so forceful!

“They will look like you someday,” she said. “And they will only laugh when the situation calls for something of exacting falsity.” She held her breath, waiting. She held a breathless question, too, beginning to achieve the minimal liberty that it demanded from her. And as she began to voice another stinging response to her husband’s order, her question ceased demanding minimal liberty and became greedy for moving room, and without a complete answer, the question would remain obstinately unfulfilled, and therefore not free, and therefore it would be as though the question owned her. She was only dislodging the question from her own cloth of doubt, the question of their children. She continued. “Our eldest son will remember his father as a great and guilty man.”

Philippe pressed painfully on. “Why am I guilty?”

Philippe waited for her answer and asked again. “Why am I guilty?”

“You took me from them,” she replied thickly. “Mother from child.”

For the last time, Philippe let out his booming unkempt laugh. Finally, a fitting place for that laugh—it was so genuine, so harsh, that it left edges, scrapes in

the wall, and so truly sad that it was a kind of cry of regret—and Katherine had no choice but to begin to weep. Whatever she was guilty of, whatever great crime, had revealed itself to be known by somebody else. Philippe had laughed because he knew how Katherine was hiding her crime so absolutely that she was trying halfheartedly to persuade herself of innocence as well.

He watched a drawing line of moonlight stumble towards the far wall, and thought of what he had needed to abandon in making a recent choice—at one point, he had lived with a past and a future at the same time, one of memories, the other about hopes—but now Philippe is a king whose domain extends only to the end of his own tongue, and lives under the suzerainty of his wife’s sadness.

If this were just a story, (which, admittedly, it is to you, and yet is certainly not to our couple, not by any means) some kind of climax would strike soon and swiftly in the form of Katherine’s explosive confession, outlining the nature of her sin, rebounding with uncovered wickedness. We would discover, you and I, why she has blamed herself and left her husband to make a choice that none should be forced to make. You would hate her thoughtlessly, and pity him, and realize the magnitude of the unraveling that lie between them. That will happen, all of it.

And it did; Katherine confessed to the truth and told Philippe what he already knew. That she had *done* something to their children, to their sons, and that was that. She told him that she no longer sees herself, no matter where she looks. All she can see is the fact that she cannot undo her actions. She spoke so truthfully that if Philippe hadn’t known Katherine as well as he did, he would have believed her regret. Instead he listened; for now, it was enough that she was willing to admit to iniquity.

Philippe leaned back in his chair, reclined until the point at which he no longer saw the door, or his wife, whom he loved but mistrusted; he placed himself in an exposed position. He wondered what keeps moonlight sounding quiet and what makes neon so bluntly intrusive. He confessed, “They *will* look like me, our sons, and not like you. And maybe one day, they will learn to laugh.”

## Story Maker

My mother,  
She is all knowing.  
I ask her a question,  
She takes the long way around,  
And gives me a story.

Tales of Friday night football games  
And human pyramids with pom-poms.  
How she skipped school with friends

**Jennifer  
Jackson**  
Grade 12  
Enrico Fermi  
High School  
Enfield

To chow down on tacos,  
Laughing and cracking stupid jokes.

Tales of the “good old days,”  
When she soaked up the  
Sunny sunrays of a California beach.  
Went cruising in convertibles with girlfriends;  
Meeting my dad.

Tales of me.  
Of when I was wrapped up in her arms.  
Quiet and small I was, content with myself.  
Daddy’s little girl, always giggling.  
Her sweet angel.

My mother,  
She has seen much.  
I ask her a question,  
She takes the long way around,  
And gives me her life.

**Katharine  
Mackel**  
Grade 12  
Westbrook  
High School  
Westbrook

## **Death of an Optimist**

When once I celebrated life, I cannot anymore.  
I have become a mystery to myself—an enigma of the body.  
My body, foreign to me, now nothing more than a  
collection of bones.

My stomach cries at breakfast, but its pleas go unheard.  
It shudders at lunch, but I do nothing to quell it.  
It weakly protests at dinner, but I silence it,  
My gums bleed, my nails turn purple, my skin pales,  
yet my mind refuses to thaw, refuses to aid my  
desperate body.

Outside, birds flit, energetic and vibrant, full of life.  
Inside, I lie, lethargic and pallid, wasting away.  
The flowers blossom, beautiful and full.  
I am too miserable to be envious.

I only relate to depressed days of winter,  
where the trees, stripped of their layers,  
stand naked and cold, waving their anorexic arms.  
They are helpless, sickly, and vulnerable.  
I watch them with dull eyes  
and understand their feelings.

# Mama Told Me Not to Love

Inspired by *Chocolate Sangria*

Mama told me not to love his kind  
She says they're no good  
But mama is wrong because he's good to me  
And is as faithful to me as the stars are to the moon

Uncle told me not to love his kind  
He says they're evil at heart and dirty at the soul  
But uncle is wrong because his heart is good with me  
And his soul is cleaner than mama's polished hard wood floor

Buddy told me not to love his kind  
He says they only want to be on top  
And Buddy is right because on top of me he shall be  
And on top of the world is where we're going

Mama told me not to love his kind  
She says they smell like heathens and their dirty hard flesh once violated her  
But not him, Mama; his skin is so soft and his scent is so sweet  
That when we have a child, I'll name her Peach

Uncle told me not to love his kind  
He says they are a waste of skin sucking up all our good air  
But uncle is wrong because with every breath he inhales  
He exhales sweet lullabies in my ear

Buddy told me not to love his kind  
He says they are disease-ridden and I am likely to catch something  
But Buddy is wrong unless love is the disease he has given to me  
And I don't need any cure

Mama told me not to love his kind  
She says they are Satan's children and should be damned by God's powerful hand  
But mama is wrong because I am he as he is I and I am somebody  
And we are going to make it out of this loveless world together.

**Carlisa  
Watts**  
Grade 12  
Cooperative  
Arts &  
Humanities  
Magnet  
High School

# Honorable Mentions

Lucas Benjamin	Arts at the Capitol Theater
Devin Karbowicz	Avon High School
Luke Sofair	Bethany Community School
Daniel Sheehan	Bethlehem Elementary School
Emily Oatley	Brooklyn Elementary School
John Fincher	Coleytown Elementary School
Jayan Nandagopal	Coleytown Elementary School
Julia Greenspan	Coleytown Elementary School
Brody McConnell	Coleytown Middle School
Michelle Tedford	Coventry High School
Casey Burns	Daisy Ingraham Elementary School
Alysha VanDerMaelen	Daisy Ingraham Elementary School
Paola P. Sanchez	East Shore Middle School
Marianna Triolo	East Shore Middle School
Allison Paradis	Elizabeth C. Adams Middle School
Alyssa Freiman	Eric G. Norfeldt School
Julie Benko	Fairfield Ludlowe High School
Evan Feinberg	Fairfield Warde High School
Alex Lanzano	Fairfield Woods Middle School
Beth Soucy	Farmington High School
Michaela Bottari	Forbes Elementary School
Samantha Murphy	Frank Scott Bunnell High School
Joe Schaffer	Glastonbury High School
Ariel Puleo	Granby Memorial High School
Erin M. Lavitt	Granby Memorial Middle School
Aviva Grossman	Greenwich Academy
Sasha Prell	Guilford High School
Ryan Seery	Hall Memorial School
Ritu Raman	Hamden High School
Natalie Abreu	Hamden High School
Marie Celeste Gigliotti	Holmes Elementary School
Alec Chin	J.P. Vincent School
Erin Strickland	Juliet W. Long Elementary School
Ashley Mayo	Killingly Intermediate School
Kelly Kimball	Latimer Lane School
Benjamin Winnick	Latimer Lane School
Mariah Kane	Ledyard Middle School
Katie Threlfall	Long Meadow Elementary School
Carlos Negron	Middletown High School
Franchesca Nowak	Mill Hill School
Anthony Henry	Montville High School
Laura Paik	Newtown Middle School
Thomas Russo	Old Saybrook High School

Molli Goetz	Parker Memorial School
Molly Hannon	Pine Point School
Jordan Brathwaite	Poquonock School
Xavier James	Regional Multicultural Magnet School
Max Malinofsky	Simsbury High School
Connor Fitzgerald	Spaulding Elementary School
Joel Esquivel	Stillmeadow School
Elizabeth Card	The Morgan School
Emily Lewis	Thompson Brook School
Jessica Dean	Timothy Edwards Middle School
Matt Keene	Tolland High School
Katelyn Wildman	Tootin' Hills School
Luke Pepper	Torrington High School
Kyle LaBonte	Torrington High School
Alexander Hassen	Totoket Valley Elementary School
Arturo Gonzalez	Western Middle School
Samantha Carlucci	Whisconier Middle School
Catharine Holcroft	Windham High School
Kaela Hernandez	Windham Middle School
Sarah Furie	Windsor High School
Rainelda L. Zayas	Witt Intermediate School
Scott Mullin	Woodstock Academy
Theodore Wuest	Worthington Hooker Elementary School



# Teachers of Published Authors

Lisa C. Taylor	Arts at the Capitol Theater
Lynn Sakuma	Bedford Middle School
Denise Rose	Buttonball Lane School
Sarah Dalton	Charter Oak Academy
Mindi Englart	Cooperative Arts & Humanities Magnet High School
Carolanne Powers	Daisy Ingraham School
Joyce Grassl	Daisy Ingraham School
Amy Charron	East Farms School
Kate Stewart	East Granby Middle School
Paul Helvig	East Lyme High School
Laura Hayden	Enrico Fermi High School
Virginia Gillis	Farmington High School
Jeri DeSantis	Fitch Senior High School
Richard Diedrichsen	Frank Scott Bunnell School
Christine Rodgers	Gallup Hill School
Michelle Godin	Glastonbury High School
Rosemary P. Walcott	Granby Memorial High School
Kelly Price	Granby Memorial High School
Jeffrey Schwartz	Greenwich Adacemy
Tricia Putnam	Holmes Elementary School
Tammy Ekstrom	Horace W. Porter School
Rose Ryan	Interdistrict School for Arts and Communication
Julie A. Griffin	J.P. Vincent Elementary School
Judy Johnson	J.P. Vincent Elementary School
Lori A. Armentano	Kelly Lane Intermediate School
Russ Bombard	Kelly Lane School
Kelly Andrews-Babcock	Killingly Memorial School
Nancy Horton	King Philip Middle School
Melanie Swider	Latimer Lane School
Charlene Kilcomons	Latimer Lane School
Kelly Cecchini	Manchester High School
Debra St. Jean	Mansfield Middle School
Nancy Ryan	Mary T. Murphy School
Michelle Caruso	Masuk High School
Joan K. Degen	North Street School
Michael Harten	Old Saybrook High School
Virginia D. Bitting	Pawcatuck Middle School
Margaret Francis	Phillip R. Smith School
Tani Kruseski	Ponus Ridge Middle School
Christine Wilkie	Regional Multicultural Magnet School
Lori Henderson	Roaring Brook School
Victoria Nordlund	Rockville High School

Suzanne Gravel  
Diana Dane  
Lizanne Johnson  
Antoinette Muoio  
Paula Robinson  
Kelley Browning  
Jamie Weber  
Kelly Nash  
Sandy Lipscomb  
Karen Barton  
Suzanne Spalinger  
Daria Plummer  
Tara Vazquez  
Kerry Jones  
Steven Albrecht  
Pamela Rogalin  
Leslie Abbatiello  
Keith Robichaud  
Cary Blocker  
Holly Singleton  
Tracy Savoie  
Eden Stein

Rotella School  
Rotella School  
S.B. Butler Elementary School  
Scotfield Magnet Middle School  
Simsbury High School  
Southwest School  
Sunnyside School  
Tashua Elementary School  
Tootin' Hills Elementary School  
Tootin' Hills Elementary School  
Torrington Middle School  
Wapping Elementary School  
West Woods Upper Elementary School  
West Woods Upper Elementary School  
Westbrook High School  
Whisconier Middle School  
Wilbur L. Cross High School  
William H. Hall High School  
William H. Hall High School  
Woodstock Academy  
Woodstock Academy  
Worthington Hooker Middle School