

# Inkspot

Medina County Literary Review

Educational Service Center  
of Medina County  
Vol. 36, 2023-2024

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**Grace Karas**  
Medina High School  
Grade 12

Greetings! On behalf of the Educational Service Center of Medina County, thank you to the students and staff in all our county schools for everything you've done to ensure education in Medina County continues to meet the levels of excellence our community has come to expect.

As always with Inkspot, our goal remains to feature the best of Medina County - and this year's Inkspot does not disappoint. In fact, I think it is appropriate to say that the number of submissions and the quality of these submissions clearly indicates students in Medina County are amazingly creative and thoroughly thought provoking. With amazing works from all ages and topics, the 36th volume of Inkspot showcases the talented students we are so fortunate to have in Medina County.

As a graduate of Cloverleaf High School myself, I value the education, support, and creative outlets that our schools offer. As contributors to and supporters of this edition, I encourage you to reflect upon the significance of the works in Inkspot. There's always a story behind the story - whether it's something which impacted the author in unimaginable ways . . . perhaps a seemingly insignificant event to others made a lasting impression . . . or a teacher encouraging a student to cultivate their previously untapped potential in creative writing. In any case, the creativity and skill demonstrated in this edition does not disappoint and, moreover, provides an amazing snapshot of the talented hearts and minds of Medina County students.

With sincerest appreciation for your talent and dedication,



Robert A. Hlasko, Ed.D.  
Superintendent  
ESC of Medina County



Grace Karas is a senior at Medina High School who has taken almost every art class offered. She is known for her playful artistic style and exceptional skill. Grace is in the AP Art Portfolio classes and hopes to be a full-time artist someday.

**What was the inspiration for your artwork on this year's cover of *Inkspot*?**

I attended the Cleveland Institute of Art summer program. I spent two weeks away from home and had many art assignments. One of our assignments was to create an image based on a fairytale or folktale. I chose the story of the fisherman and the golden fish. Since there are many versions of the myth, I chose to represent the part they all have in common: the part where the fish gets caught. The fish is an important, magic fish, so I wanted it to look that way.

**Please tell us about yourself as an artist.**

I try to do art as much as possible. I enjoy working with acrylic paint, as well as digitally. I always love trying new mediums as well. I like to make stuff that has lots of energy.

**Please tell us more about yourself (i.e., hobbies, future plans, favorite place to travel, etc.).**

Next year, I plan to take a gap year and get a job while still creating artwork. Then, I plan on attending the Cleveland Institute of Art.

**How does it feel to be selected two years in a row for this honor?**

It makes me feel more confident in my abilities as an artist, and it makes me think that I can make it into an art profession, just like I have always wanted to do.

## Grades K-6

### Snow

Snow. It's all around, in the air, on the ground,  
on a sleigh, in bells, it's melted in tar.  
It's across wide and far, up on the bar.  
It's up high in the clouds, in the towns,  
on the roofs.  
But most of all, it's on reindeer hair  
and Santa's beard.

**Mason Franck**

Central Intermediate  
Grade 6

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**Allie Chafin**

Isham Elementary  
Grade 2

## Winter

Winter here and winter there!  
Down falls the snow  
There on the hill.  
Kids yelling here and there  
There's yelling everywhere!

School is out,  
It's time to shout.  
Hope and wish  
For a snow day today.  
I have a feeling we will LOVE  
What's yet to come.

**Ellie Howells**

Hickory Ridge Elementary  
Grade 4

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**Wyatt Williams**  
Isham Elementary  
Grade 3

## Winter

Winter is cold  
I am getting old  
My life is beginning to get quite bold

I used to ride my sled  
But now I stay in my warm bed  
Father still has to grab the shovel from the shed

My dad grabs a snowsuit  
And he fetches his boots  
He goes outside to shovel the yard  
He will soon have the snow discarded

**Molly LeHue**

Hickory Ridge Elementary  
Grade 4

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**Xavier Owen**

Isham Elementary  
Grade 3

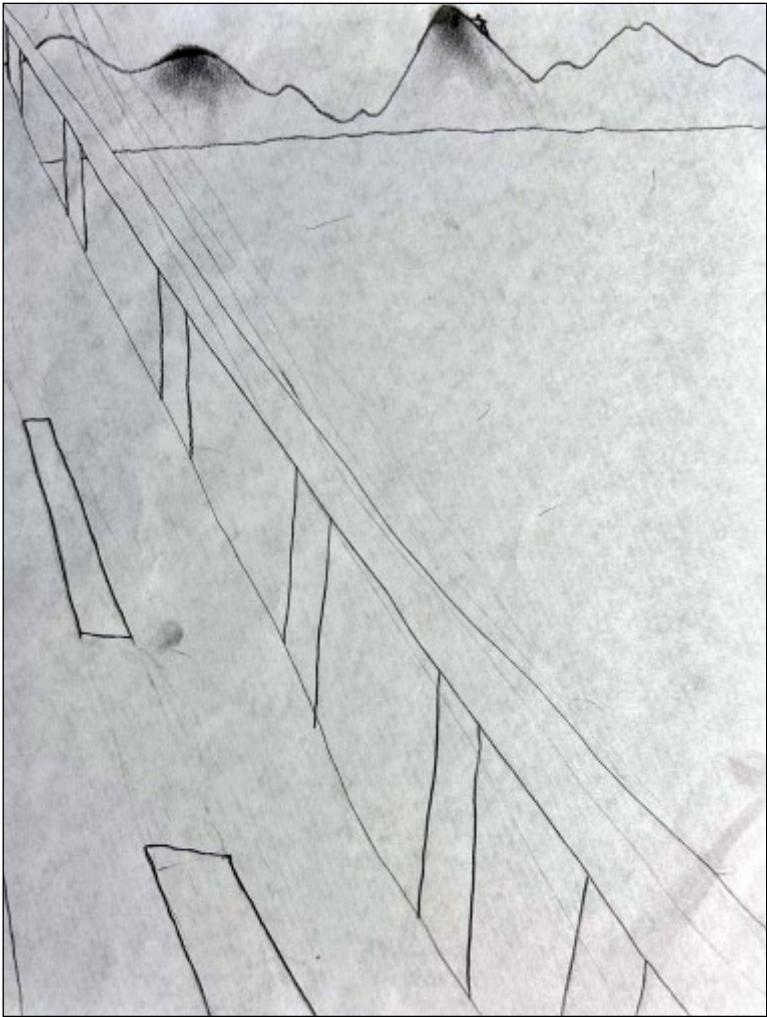
## **Magic of Seasons**

Snow, snow, how far will it go  
Silent but cold, it falls down below  
Cold but pretty, white as below  
It lands on your nose, cold as before  
You fall to the ground, landing in fluff  
Fun as before, dawn to dusk  
Dawn to dusk, it falls  
Falls like symmetry, into place  
None like the other  
Pointed praise  
It comes to a time  
The snow must melt  
Then Spring arrives  
It melts and melts  
Snowmen alike  
Young and old  
Spring comes with beauty  
Spring comes bold  
Flowers precise  
Bees a buzzing  
It comes with the wind  
It comes a spinning  
The beauty of seasons  
They fall into place  
They switch all around  
And come to race

**Emma Raines**

Central Intermediate

Grade 6



**Henry Smith**  
Isham Elementary  
Grade 4



## Winter?

You've heard them all  
 "So this is Christmas . . ."  
 "It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas"  
 Is it though?  
 We haven't gotten any snow  
 It is cloudy outside instead  
 It looks like Halloween  
 I think I'll lie in bed  
 We haven't had a snow day  
 My parents say "Be of good cheer!"  
 My sisters ask me "What is it like outside  
 When Christmas time is near?"  
 So I think about it for a bit  
 I think about it for a while  
 And then it pops into my mind  
 Sure to make them smile  
 I say: "There is a shrill bite in the wind  
 And people singing carols  
 And loads and loads of hot chocolate  
 Enough to fill 30 barrels  
 There's candy cane's  
 Dancing bears  
 And many sugar plum fairies  
 And cinnamon rolls  
 And a turkey  
 And Cake made out of cream cheese.  
 And as one of many of the famous  
 Christmas stories goes  
 'The wind will send a shiver  
 From your head to your toes'  
 Now go to sleep  
 Nice and sound  
 And wake up in the morning  
 When you do  
 Santa will have come  
 Without much of a warning."  
 So off to sleep they drifted  
 All asleep and sound  
 To the place where the greatest  
 Of all Sugar plum fairies may be found

*(Continued on page 10)*

*(Continued from page 9)*

And while I was walking out of their room  
My mindset had changed quite a bit  
For that mindset that I had earlier  
I think I might just quit  
Maybe it doesn't matter  
How it looks outside  
It will be the brightest  
And best yuletide  
When you realize that  
It doesn't matter how it looks outside  
When you realize that it's family that matters,  
You might as well stay inside  
So make sure that you enjoy your time with family  
Before the time has passed  
Because if you don't, you will be lonely  
For these years go by fast

**Nate Hunter**

Central Intermediate  
Grade 6

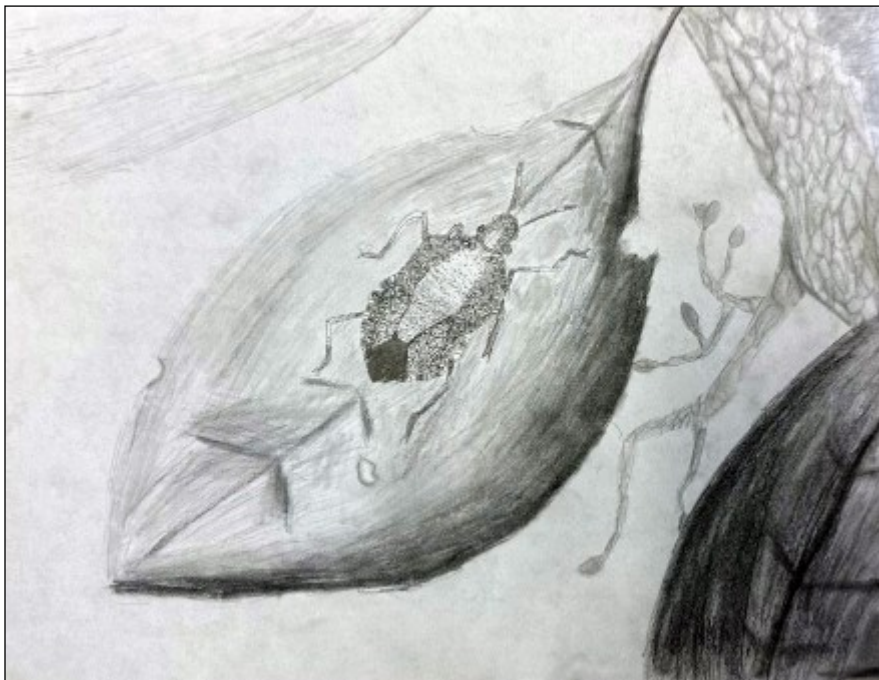
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**I Hate December**

"I thought you loved December?"  
I did.  
Until last year  
I hate the snow  
I hate the gifts  
I hate fluffy things  
I hate hot chocolate  
I hate Christmas  
All because of you.  
You ruined half the things I love and I hate you for it.  
So no. I don't like December.

**Kennedie Gray**

Central Intermediate  
Grade 6



**Lily Matteson**  
Central Intermediate  
Grade 6

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Dew lands on the fallen rose  
Pink and glimmering  
Shining like stars in the sky

**Lisette Hill**  
Central Intermediate  
Grade 5



**Aubree Peacey**  
Buckeye Primary  
Grade 1

## The Sound of the Rain

Drip,Drop.  
 That's the sound of the rain  
 Tip, Tap.  
 That's the sound of the rain.  
 Tip, tap.  
 Wait,That isn't the rain...  
 Tip, tap.  
 WHAT WAS THAT?!!  
 Tip, Tap  
 That's the sound of the floor.  
 TAP TAP.  
 IT'S GETTING CLOSER.  
 Maybe if I get under the covers it will go away.  
 Drip Drop.  
 It's gone.

**Dani Massey**  
 Hickory Ridge Elementary  
 Grade 4

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## Water Spills

Water spills, oh water spills  
 You make me ill  
 Every day.

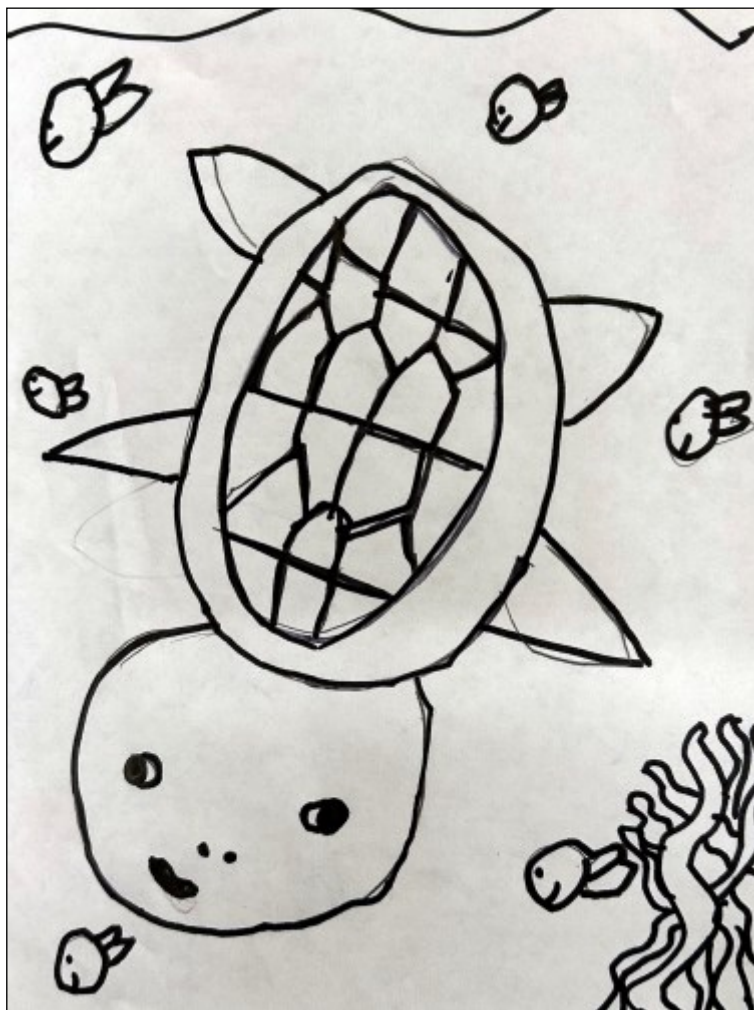
You make it like a drill  
 Cleaning up the wet  
 Before our room  
 Becomes a lake.

Hurry, hurry!  
 I'm talking to you, friend!

**Gabe Paolino**  
 Hickory Ridge Elementary  
 Grade 4



**Suzie Zebrowski**  
Isham Elementary  
Grade 3



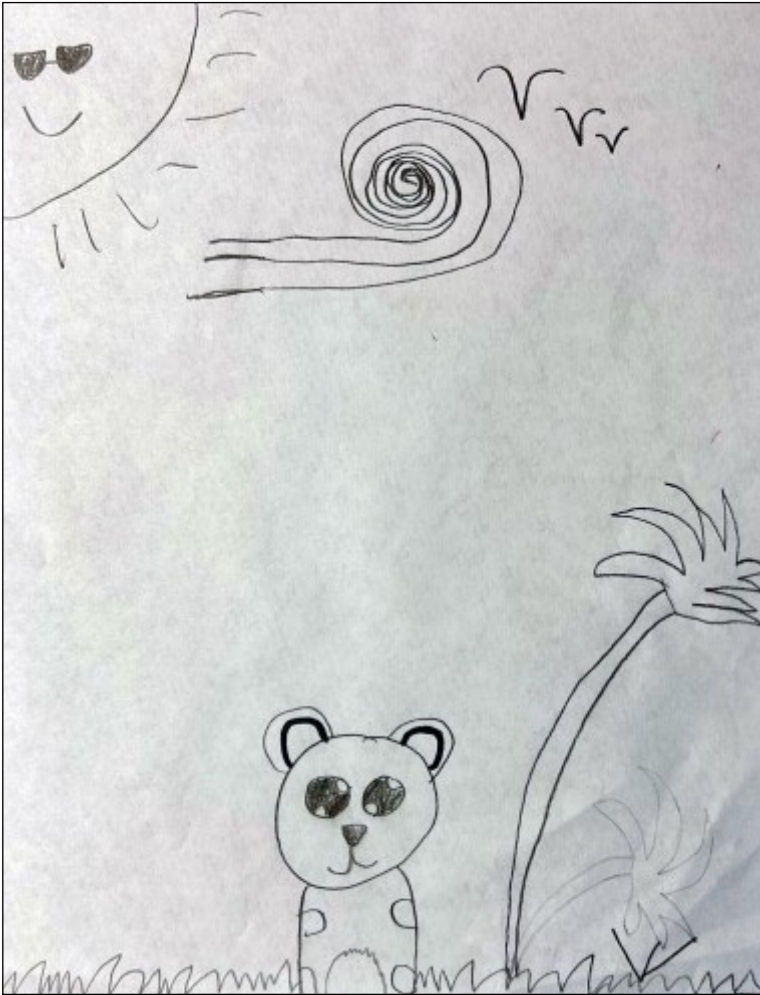
**Evelyn Fein**  
Franklin Elementary  
Grade 3

## Beautiful

If you really look  
Everything is beautiful  
Just open your heart!

**Timmy Haviland**  
Central Intermediate  
Grade 6

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**Blake Scavinski**  
Isham Elementary  
Grade 2



## **When Day Turns to Night**

When day turns to night  
There shall be no fright.  
Just a little light.

That will shine through the night,  
As all your fright will flow  
Through the midnight skies.

There will still be a little light  
That glows through the dark night.

**Gabe Paolino**  
Hickory Ridge Elementary  
Grade 4

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## **Night**

Night means many different things  
To owls, it means the day has just begun  
For some animals it may make them feel safe  
For others, it could be dangerous  
But to me, night means that is time for me to go to sleep so  
good night!

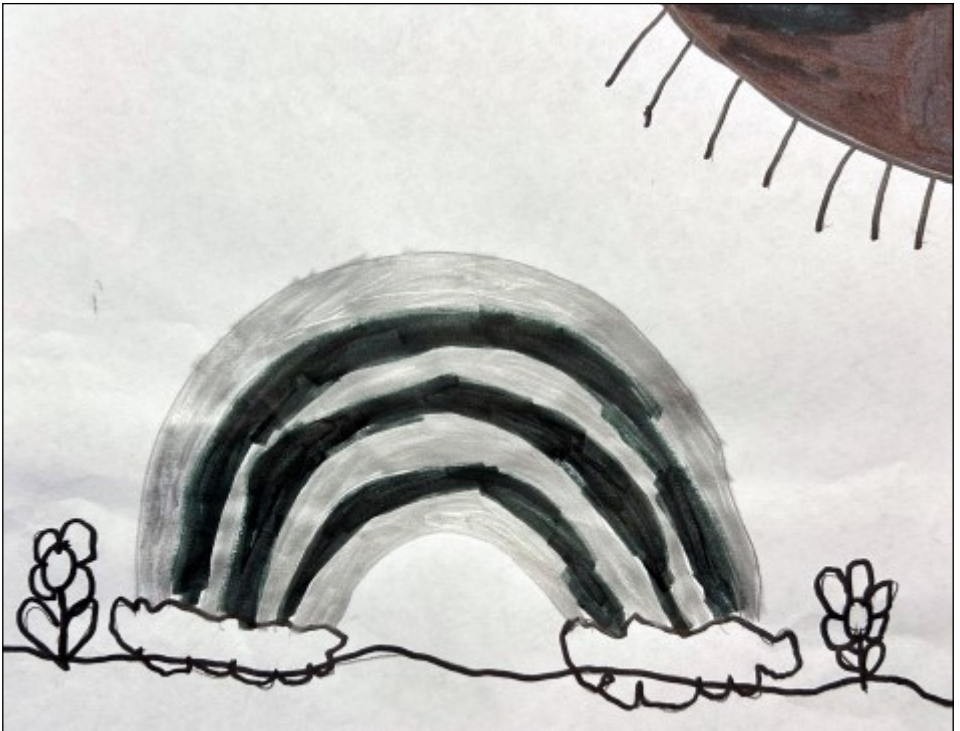
**Ava Ramsier**  
Central Intermediate  
Grade 6

## Stars

Stars, way up high in the sky,  
stars shooting across the night.  
They all have a unique color and size.  
Stars helping each other shine so bright.  
As constellations grow,  
let them be known in the night.  
Stars watching us until they blow.  
After they go the night is dark,  
but don't worry,  
they'll be back again,  
with a spark.

**Mason Franck**  
Central Intermediate  
Grade 6

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**Josie Vanduzer**  
Isham Elementary  
Grade 2

## The Secret of the Moon

A curious thing the moon is,  
Lighting the way through a darkened night.  
As I stroll the streets of London at midnight,  
Gazing at the moon in the clouded, starless sky.

A curious thing the moon is,  
A mere reflection of the sun.  
Without warming rays of heat,  
Instead with a sparkling cold light.

As I turn the corner of the street,  
Each footstep an echo through the tall stone buildings.

A curious thing the moon is,  
Breaking through the barrier of the lack of people wandering the  
roads.

And creating an effect so dazzling,  
That you cannot think anything else.

A curious thing the moon is,  
A setting of many horrors,  
But also one of serenity.

A symbol of balance the moon can be,  
Or of good and evil,

As I splash through puddles full of the moon's rays.

A curious thing the moon is,  
With a beginning and an end that always keeps repeating.

As the moon begins to set,  
And the sun begins to rise.

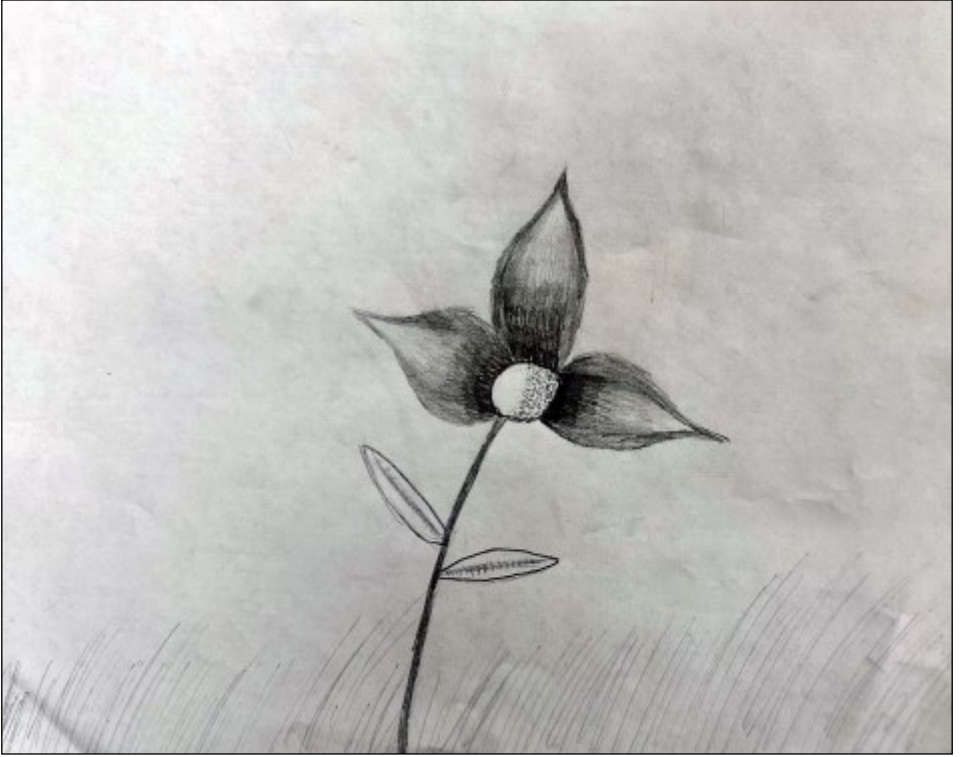
A curious thing the moon is,  
It must be one of those mysteries that will never be solved,  
But always a secret for us to ponder about.

As I gaze onward to the rising sun.

**Rania Papakonstantopoulos**

Root Middle

Grade 6



**Gavin Coates**  
Franklin Elementary  
Grade 4

## **Brunswick, Ohio**

I always like fall  
best,  
You can eat pumpkin pie,  
From grandpa's oven  
And apple pie  
And chocolate pie  
And my birthday cake,  
And lots of  
candy  
And cider  
And birthday cake  
At my house  
And listen to  
Rap music  
inside  
In the car  
trips  
And to go on field trips  
With classmates  
And make friends  
To play with  
Not only on the weekend  
But at school too.

**Conley Barth**  
Memorial Elementary  
Grade 4



**Presley Oing**  
Isham Elementary  
Grade 4

**Brunswick, Ohio**

I always like fall  
best  
you can eat fresh pie  
from daddy's oven  
and cider  
and chile  
and squash  
and lots of  
apple crisps  
and chicken wings  
and homemade pumpkin pie  
outside  
while listening to  
football music  
at the Brown's  
Home opener  
and go to Mapleside Farms  
with your grandmother  
and jump in leaves  
and have fun  
all the time  
not only when you go to bed  
and sleep

**Michael Woloszyn**  
Memorial Elementary  
Grade 4



**Isla Kneale**  
Isham Elementary  
Grade 3



## Flowers

I sit and wait like I have every hour since the sun arose from its slumber in the morning. The sky is almost soft like a baby blanket crocheted by a loving grandmother, and the light fluffy blue color added to the cloud's pure white hue was hollow. When they breathed like marshmallows after being pushed on, their lungs floated up and down as they danced in the sky.

I looked down and saw an assortment of flowers, a sunflower pulled my attention as it was sitting alone among the many other plants. The shades of burnt orange, maroon, and canary yellow danced in swirls painting the sunflower's beautiful details. I look down and see the green stem of the lone beauty, waving the rest of the flower in the air. The stem looked more yellow from the sunset rays shining down making everything look burnt.

I abruptly turned my head after hearing a call for my name. I remember what I had been waiting for before I got caught up with all the beauty around me. My family came to watch the sunset with me, before resting.

We sit in silence, watching the world around us change. The atmosphere had turned black, and then I knew it was time to leave my flowers.

**Natalie Spence**

Root Middle

Grade 6

## Summer in Brunswick, Ohio

I always like summer  
best  
you can eat fresh tomatoes  
from the garden  
and carrots  
and cabbage  
and strawberries  
and lots of  
salad  
and bananas  
and ice cream  
at my grandma and grandpa's house  
and go fishing  
With my grandpa and my brother  
outside  
at the lake  
and playing outside  
with my brother  
and be warm  
everyday  
not only when you  
have a coat on.

**Chris Coulehan**  
Memorial Elementary  
Grade 4



**Laura Wert**  
Isham Elementary  
Grade 3



**Izzy Nichols**  
Isham Elementary  
Grade 1

## Summer Bummer

Here it is!  
It's finally come!  
The time when I can do some swimming, have sleepovers, and  
go to the park.  
Summer!  
Wait, what's that mom?  
No, not chores!  
What a bummer!  
Anything but chores on a nice summer day I could be swimming  
and cannonballing and saying Hooray!  
But my friends are waiting for me.  
I have to go play!  
Eat junk food?  
Oh, come on dude?  
But I'm just not in the mood.  
But Dad would let me go play!  
It's outside!  
Fine but I'm gonna whine and shout—  
Wait its all a TV show?

**Brielle Harris**

Central Intermediate

Grade 6



**Blakely Shank**  
Isham Elementary  
Grade 4

## Cloud

What is that fluffy ball of white?  
That you see so high in plain sight,  
Up in the sky when the sun is bright,  
Floating gently with all its might.

What brings the rain and helps the crops grow,  
And is it higher than any bird or plane we know?  
Say it out loud, and let it show,  
It's nature's beauty, the cloud that glows.

So, the next time you look up high,  
And see a cloud passing by,  
Think of the magic it holds inside,  
And the wonders it brings worldwide.  
Cloud

### Avery Hinds

Central Intermediate  
Grade 6

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## Space

Space is a thing.  
A mixture of atoms.  
A balance of things.  
Space is a thing that is two things.  
The thing that consumes earth.  
Along with the stuff between you and that dust puff.

### Larissa Miu

Claggett Middle  
Grade 6

## Look Into the Future

The future is coming  
 Look over there.  
 No!  
 Not there!

Over here!  
 Can you see the light?  
 Shining bright,  
 Not like the Night

That's right!

**Gabe Paolino**  
 Hickory Ridge Elementary  
 Grade 4

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## Araguaney

I look out the window to see my favorite tree.  
     Glowing in the distance radiant as can be.  
         Though it might be gloomy.  
             It is always blooming.  
 I can look out the window to see that you are  
     teeming with leaves.  
 All of my worries roll off my shoulders, which  
     makes me feel very relieved.  
 I can look out the window and think . . .  
     that is my favorite tree.

**Victoria Sanabria**  
 Central Intermediate  
 Grade 6



## Household Pets

Cat  
Funny, Loud  
Annoying, Hunting, Meowing  
Calm, Abigail, Chaotic, Marley  
Slipping, Playing, Eating  
Silly, Stinky  
Dog

**Adeline Doyle**

Central Intermediate  
Grade 6

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**Alexis Kershaw**

Isham Elementary  
Grade 2



**Addison Price**  
Franklin Elementary  
Grade 4

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Determined to break all of their toys

Oh so nice

Greatest pet ever

**Aviana Oatman**  
Hickory Ridge Elementary  
Grade 4



**Marshall Pramik**  
Isham Elementary  
Grade 2

I have had a lot  
Of dogs.

And one of their names  
Were Cookie.

Cookie was a really  
Good dog and was always  
So sweet.

But then one day something  
Happened that I was not  
Expecting to happen so  
Soon.

I went outside to get Cookie inside.

I hollered her name and usually she  
Comes to me right away but this time  
She didn't.

So I hollered her name again and she  
Still didn't come so I went outside to get  
her and I saw her laying down under a tree.

So I went over to try and wake her up  
But she didn't move so I checked  
Her pulse and there was nothing to  
Feel. I laid down next to her as my eyes  
Poured tears.

Cookie had died that day . . .

Oh wait did I mention you got too interested  
in reading Gary Paulsen again.

**Brooklyn Grywalski**  
Central Intermediate  
Grade 6



**Rose Maynard**  
Isham Elementary  
Grade 2

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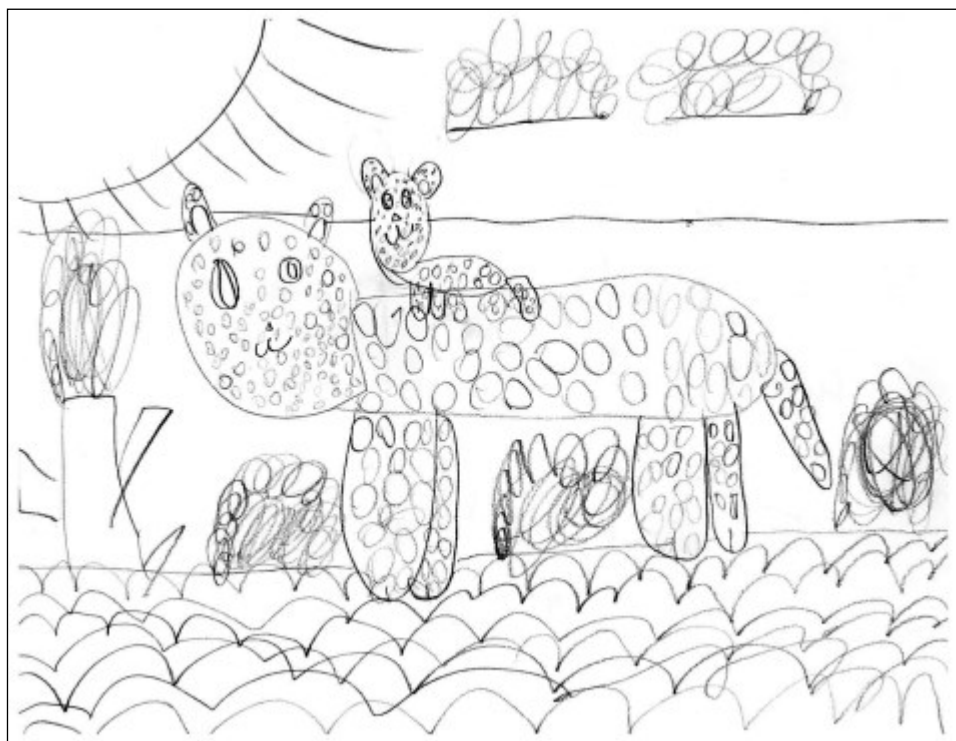
### Cute Cats

Oh look at those cute cats!  
We should give them some cute little hats!  
Are they better than those fluffy puppies?  
For me it's a no, but they are still my buddies!

So adorable!  
They are not ignorable!  
Why can't I adopt one?  
I can just cuddle with them outside with the warm sun.

They are so fluffy!  
And very puffy!  
Just let me have one please!  
I just want to squeeze!

**Rebekah Watkins**  
Hickory Ridge Elementary  
Grade 4



**Lily Dole**  
Buckeye Primary  
Grade 1



**Cecilia Brodwold**  
Isham Elementary  
Grade 4



**Kylie Yoak**  
Franklin Elementary  
Grade 3





**Shelby Hoff**  
Franklin Elementary  
Grade 4



**Gabbi Accordino**  
Isham Elementary  
Grade 2

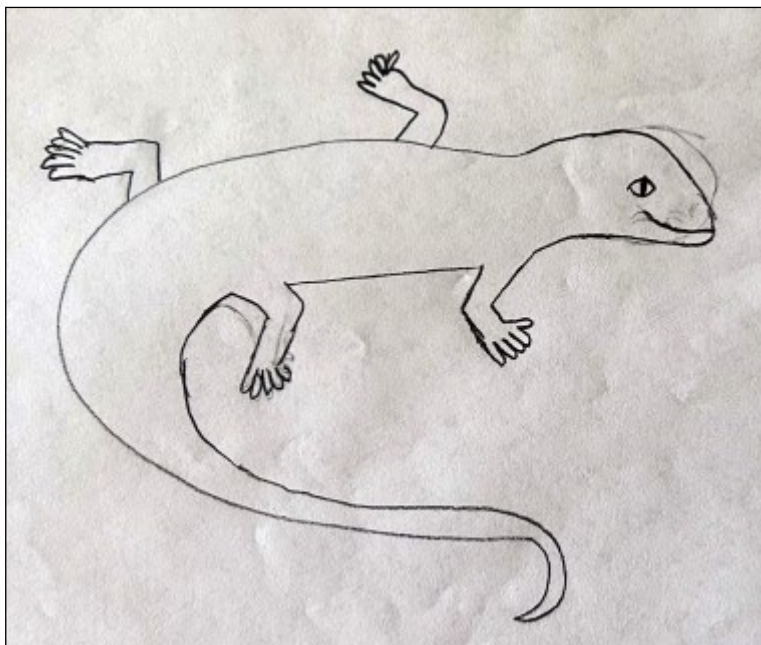
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### **Quack, Quack, Quack**

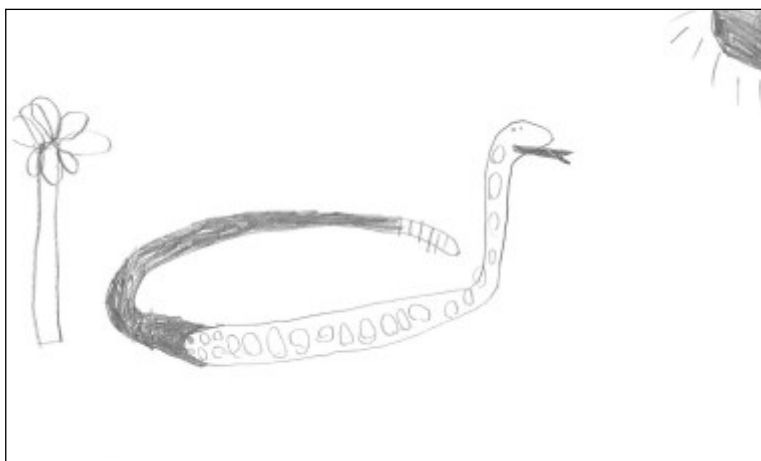
There are ducks migrating everywhere  
To Hawaii or maybe even France!  
We hope summer comes soon.

Although winter's at our feet,  
Summer is in our hearts.  
The winter air is still there  
And it is here to stay.

**Ellie Howells**  
Hickory Ridge Elementary  
Grade 4



**Alessia Wagoner**  
Isham Elementary  
Grade 4



**Wesley Haney**  
Buckeye Primary  
Grade 1

## Winner

You will win, yes you will.  
But to be the winner  
you have to work for it.

Every winner worked for it  
and earned it.  
The winner works hardest.

Not all winners are the best  
But the winners  
are the ones who work.

Winners are workers!

**Robbie Piecarczyk**  
Hickory Ridge Elementary  
Grade 4



**Emmalyn Strauss**  
Cloverleaf Elementary  
Grade 5

Me

Multitasker  
Outrageous  
Likable  
Loving  
Young

Joyful  
Optimistic

**Molly LeHue**  
Hickory Ridge Elementary  
Grade 4

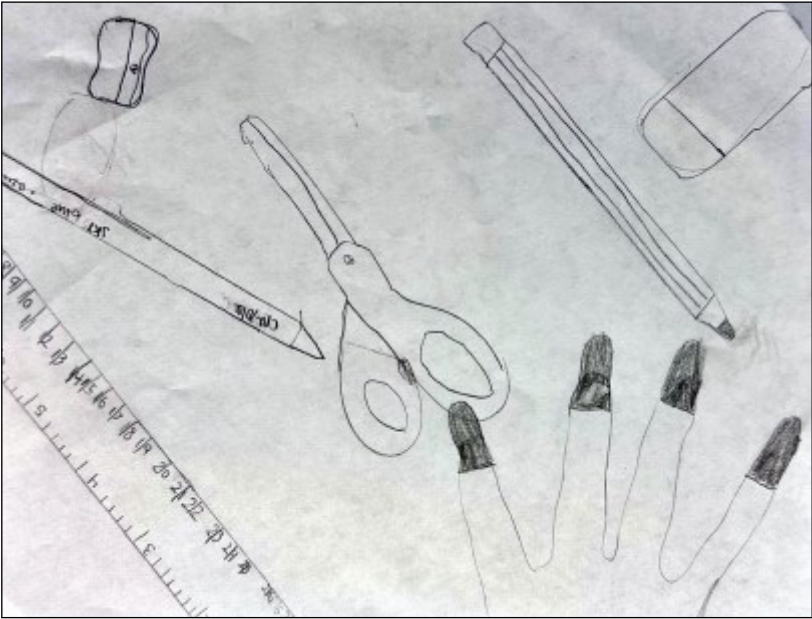


**Elyse Haas**  
Franklin Elementary  
Grade 3

## The Pencil Pouch

From pencils to erasers or scissors to glue  
the pencil pouch is there for you  
From helping with drawings  
To notes night and day  
The pencil pouch will be there  
For all that you need  
It's got highlighters for notes  
Or when you need help  
The pencil pouch has got the supplies for you  
It will be by your side  
For school or the ride  
The pencil pouch is there for you  
To be taken on trips or to be stored in a bag  
It will have what you need  
From pencils to glue  
From erasing to crafts  
The pencil pouch is there for you  
For whatever you choose to do

**Brock Cardinal**  
Central Intermediate  
Grade 6



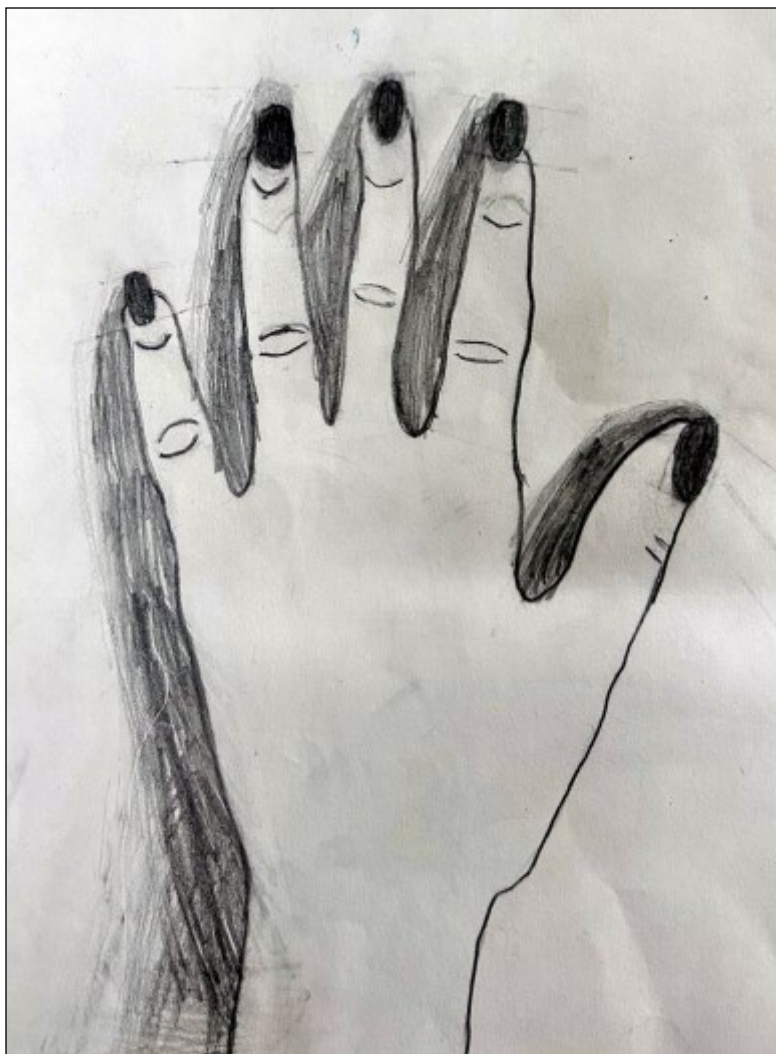
**Jace Miller**  
Isham Elementary  
Grade 4

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### Writing Poetry

It was pretty quiet in my class  
 My hand touches the paper  
 Words flow out of me  
 Idioms  
 Similes  
 Metaphors  
 Rhymes  
 I create some words  
 They all come together to create  
 A great  
 Poem

**Alexis Bodor**  
Claggett Middle  
Grade 6



**Brooklyn Hoover**  
Franklin Elementary  
Grade 3



## Blank

My brain is blank.  
 I don't know  
 What to write  
 Normally I'm shooting out ideas  
 Left & right

I am just so confused  
 I'm bored out of my mind  
 Maybe if I take a break  
 I will find

Never mind that idea  
 Is useless!  
 Just like my brain,  
 I am so clueless.

### Olivia Plues

Hickory Ridge Elementary  
 Grade 4

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## Fitting in to Standing Out

We all want to fit in  
 At school, practice, or at meetings  
 But sometimes we stand out  
 You try to fit right back in, but everybody already notices you  
 But maybe sometimes it is better to stand out  
 Standing out isn't always a bad thing  
 You might stand out because you are the only one behaving  
 Or you are the only one who knows the answer  
 But that's okay, just be yourself

### Ava Ramsier

Central Intermediate  
 Grade 6



**Hannah Baker**  
Franklin Elementary  
Grade 4

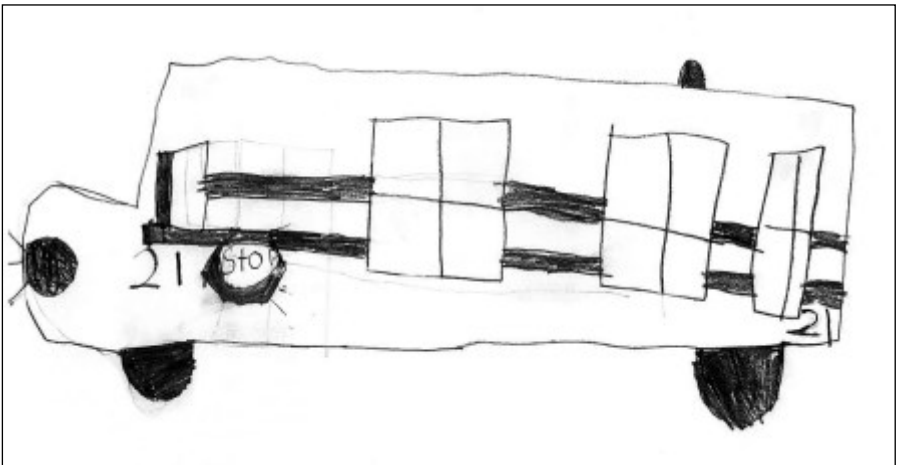
## Home

Getting off the bus and walking down my long driveway  
Making cookies and brownies with my family  
Playing in our pool and eating popsicles in the summer  
Or playing in the snow and drinking hot chocolate in the winter  
Raking leaves in the fall  
Or playing in the creek in the spring  
Hear the birds chirping because they came back home  
This is what means home to me

**Ava Ramsier**

Central Intermediate

Grade 6



**Forrest Myers**

Buckeye Primary

Grade 1

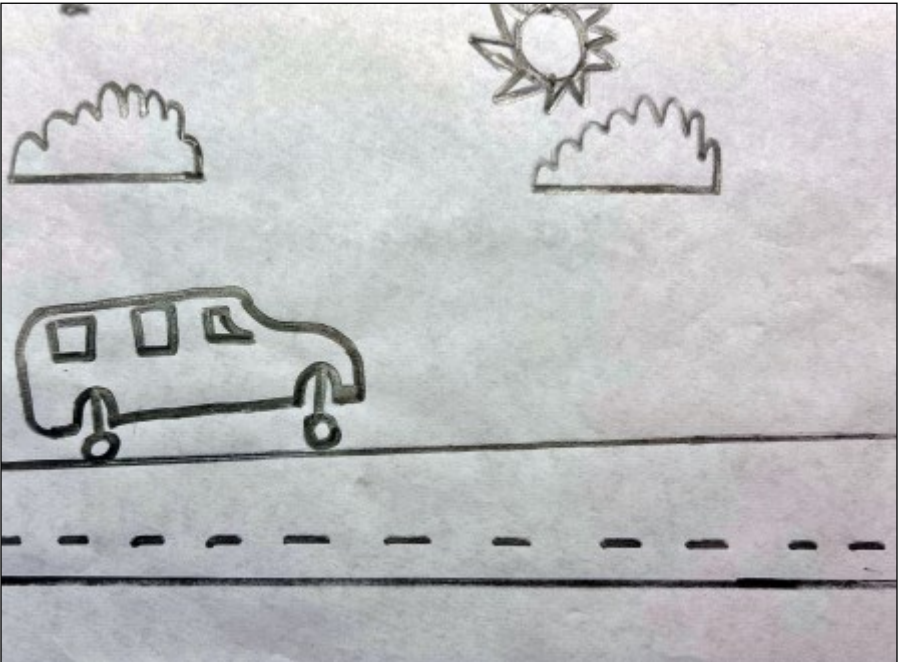
## Home

The calming way that my mother talks  
And walking on the sidewalks  
From scraped knees  
to fun birthday parties  
And having the audacity to talk back  
To the people who pack my snacks  
The arguing of my sister and I  
When I sneak in her room on the sly  
Playing with slime  
And cleaning it up just in time.  
But in moments of mess family is best

### Avery Wolf

Central Intermediate  
Grade 6

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### Seydina Diop

Isham Elementary  
Grade 2

## My Old Home

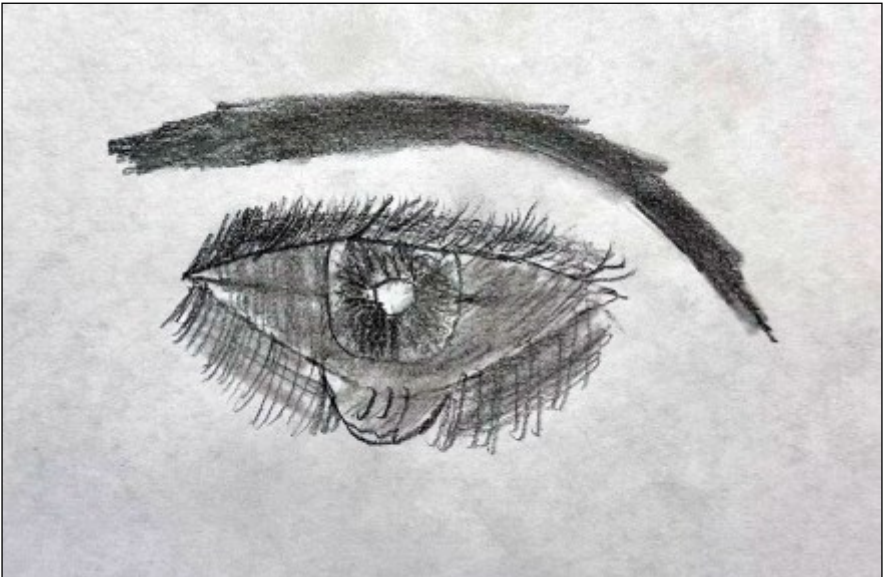
I miss my old home  
The beautiful yard with the garden gnome  
My old bed where I had slept  
I felt really blue when I had left  
The great big tree  
That I used to see  
I looked out my window and there it would be  
I miss my small little yard  
When I had left it was really hard  
I miss my old room  
When I left I felt a big wave of gloom  
There was my old toy bin  
there are so many things that I don't know where to begin  
All of these memories would make me sad  
But I realize that my current house isn't so bad  
Because it doesn't matter the place and where  
Because the important thing is family and they will always be there

### Sofia Massara

Central Intermediate

Grade 6

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### Graham Dunwald

Isham Elementary

Grade 2

### Best Friends

Best friends are always there  
Especially if you get a mean glare

When you get new shoes  
They help you spread the news

When you fall  
They come to help without a stall

On your birthday  
They definitely make sure to say hooray

They never leave you miffed  
Best Friends truly are a gift

#### Ainsley White

Central Intermediate  
Grade 6

### Bio Poem

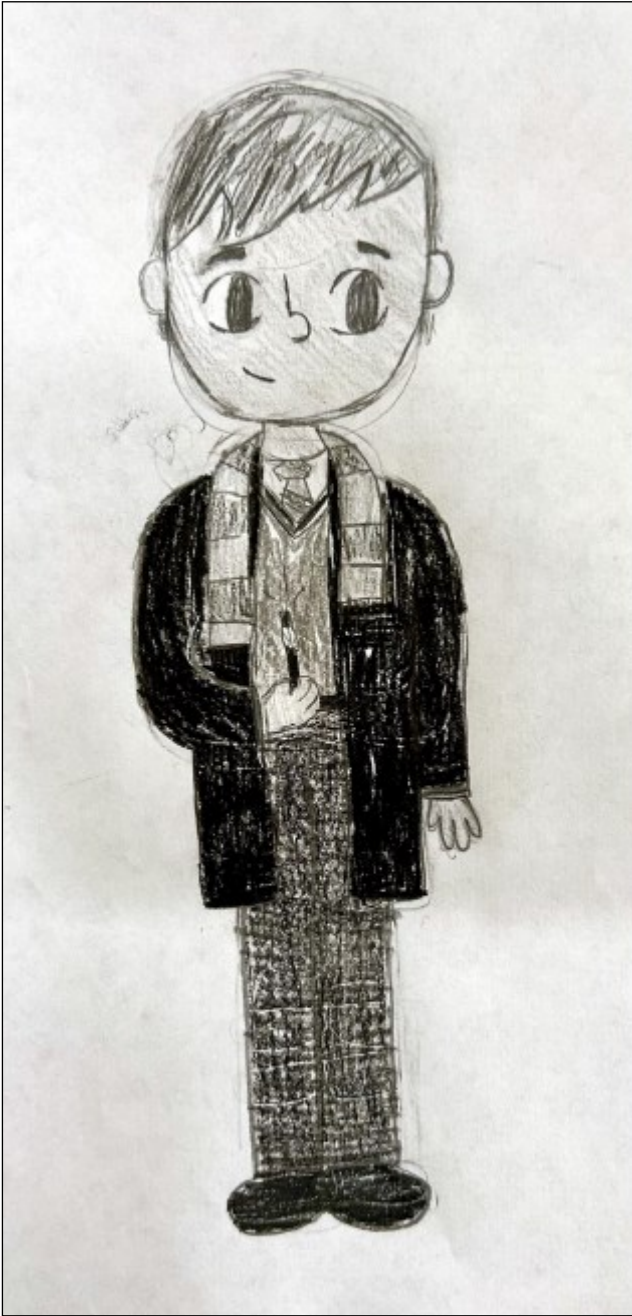
Christina (my mom).  
Kind, Helpful, Gorgeous, Athletic.  
Daughter of Boba and Jimmy.  
Lover of Volleyball, Dogs, and Family.  
Who Feels Kindness, Happiness, and Silliness.  
Who Gives Advice, Comfort, Help.  
Who Fears Losing Family Members.  
Who Would Like to See Carrie Underwood.  
Resident of Brunswick Ohio  
Mohorcic.

#### Asha Muchewicz

Hickory Ridge Elementary  
Grade 4

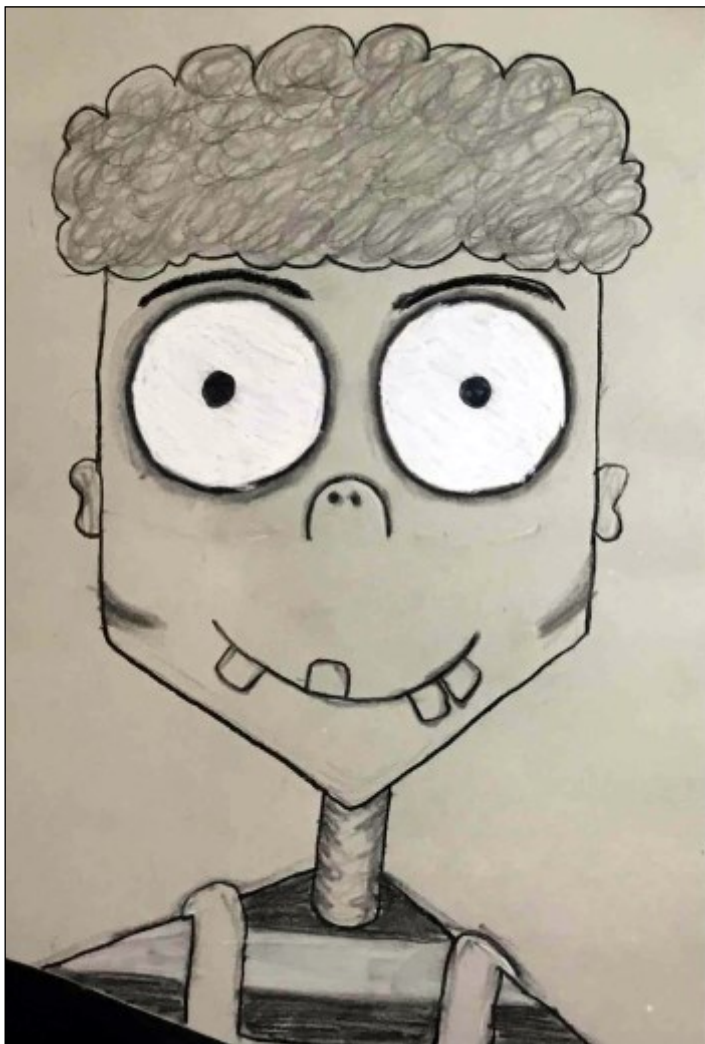


**Paisley Pol**  
Isham Elementary  
Grade 2



**Lainey Hoff**  
Franklin Elementary  
Grade 4





**Charlotte Konkel-Speck**  
Cloverleaf Elementary  
Grade 5

## Family

Family to me has many meanings  
 They are the ones that I have some of the best memories with  
 They are the ones who help me cope when bad things happen  
 They are the ones that make me feel important and valued  
 They are the ones who change my feelings in seconds  
 From sad to surprised, from angry to laughing,  
 But the best one they always make me feel is . . .  
 Loved

**Ava Ramsier**

Central Intermediate

Grade 6

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## Siblings

Siblings  
 That is what they were meant to be  
 Younger ones, older ones, all of them  
 They were meant to be the people you fight, argue, and hate  
 Siblings  
 That is what they were born to be  
 Annoying, intrude your privacy siblings  
 Annoying, awful, hated siblings  
 Crying like a baby siblings  
 Punch you in the face siblings  
 Siblings  
 That is what was made of them  
 Awful and smelly siblings  
 Threaten you siblings  
 Not talk to you until you play with them siblings  
 Yell at you because you touched something siblings  
 Siblings  
 Sadly, that is what they are  
 But they are the people who love you no matter what  
 The people who will protect you no matter what  
 They are your family  
 Siblings

**Ayana Bennett**

Central Intermediate

Grade 6

## Yes It Is My Grandparents

My grandma

Sweet

Kind

Caring

Artist

Always took care of many pets

Welcomed my family every time I visited

It was a blast to be so close

And now

So far

I will always love you and  
your beautiful smile, too

My grandpa

Kind

Gamer

Sweet

Caring

Always played Roblox with me and my brother

Always ready to play fun games

And do fun activities

My grandparents

Welcomed my family every time I visit

It was a blast to be so close

And now

So far

No

Matter

Where

I

Am

I

Will

Always

Love

You



**Isaac Rowell**

Isham Elementary

Grade 4

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**To My Brother**

To my brother  
 The man I look up to  
 I've seen you through rain and shine  
 You have also seen me at my highest  
 And at my lowest

To my brother  
 You are the one I can trust  
 With all my secrets  
 You're the one I can call

If I need help  
 You would drive  
 As far as needed to help me  
 If I was in a bad situation

**Lillian West**

Claggett Middle

Grade 6



**Ethan Kelley**  
Isham Elementary  
Grade 3

## Yes It Is My Parents

Yes it is My Parents  
 The ones who help me through everything tough  
 The ones who fed and raised me  
 Yes it is My Parents

Yes it is My Mom  
 Who plays with me  
 Yes it is My Mom the one that loves hiking  
 Yes it is My Mom

Yes it is My Dad  
 My hard-working Dad  
 The one who reads stories to me as a kid  
 Yes it is My Dad

Yes it is My Parents  
 The best of all  
 My fun and loving Parents  
 The best of all..

**Michael Kehoe**  
 Claggett Middle  
 Grade 6

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## Yes It Is My Grandmother

Yes it is my grandma  
 who loves teaching

Yes it is my grandma  
 who loves to sew

Yes it is my grandma  
 who loves to cook

Yes it is my grandma  
 who loves to play

Yes it is my grandma  
 Who loves me

**Emma Elseser**  
 Claggett Middle  
 Grade 6



**Finley Bluely**  
Isham Elementary  
Grade 1



**Harlow Sabot**  
Isham Elementary  
Grade 3



## **Just Like Water**

Just like water you fall and you rise.  
Just like water we are all different whether it's shape or its size.

Just like water you change how you are.  
Just like water you are your own star.

Just like water you know what to do.  
Just like water you always get through.

Just like water you have emotion.  
Just like water you always stay in motion.

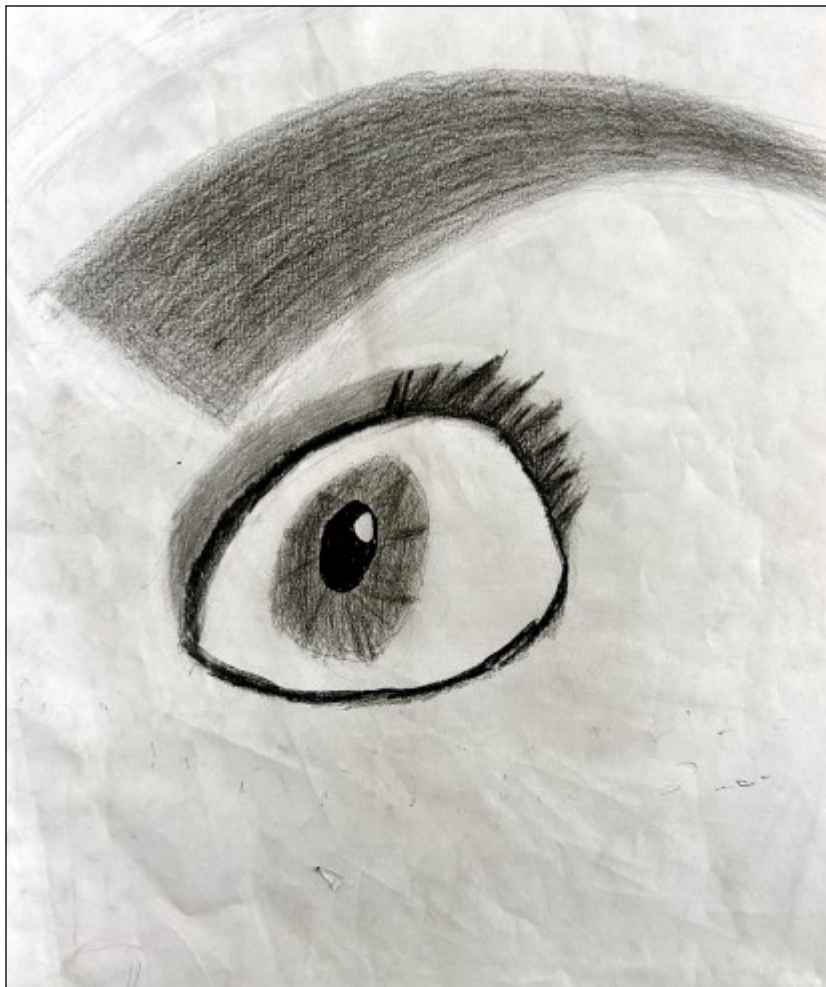
Just like water you always stay true.  
Just like water you always stay you.

**Rylan Milford**  
Central Intermediate  
Grade 6

## Nothing Is Perfect . . . You Already Are!

Ribbons are red  
Tears are blue  
No one is perfect  
And neither are you  
skies can be clear  
And snow can be white  
But no one is ever perfect tonight  
You could wear glasses  
Or have no shoes  
But everyone is kind  
And share's their love  
So why be perfect if you already are  
You are a creation  
One that is clear  
One that is pretty  
One that is Super and superior  
One that sheds tears  
Tears fall for a reason  
And they are strengths  
Not weaknesses  
So why stay there and wonder  
If you could be perfect when you are already just what you need  
to be  
And that is the one and only YOU!

**Hannah Watson**  
Central Intermediate  
Grade 6



**Ella Wagar**  
Franklin Elementary  
Grade 3

### **I Remember**

I remember her soft smile and the way she hugged me every  
time she saw me.

I remember the night my parents told me she was sick.

I remember walking in her house and seeing the medical  
equipment by her bed.

I remember waking up in the morning and hearing my dad's  
sighs.

I remember my parents sitting me down and saying she was  
gone.

I remember sitting at the funeral as everyone said their  
goodbyes.

I remember saying the last goodbye.

I remember.

### **Maya Cook**

Central Intermediate

Grade 6

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### **I Remember**

I remember the way your hair was always gelled back

I remember your light blue ocean eyes

I remember your laugh

I remember the nickname you gave me

I remember the way you would look at me

I even remember the way you would kick the soccer ball.

I remember it all.

### **Kennedie Gray**

Central Intermediate

Grade 6



**Limarie Lugo**  
Cloverleaf Elementary  
Grade 5



**Emma Martin**

Franklin Elementary  
Grade 3

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### **Heavy Weights**

I have a heavy weight, I feel it in each step I make  
But I've held it on my shoulders as time goes on  
Heavy weight, feel it in each breath I take  
But I think I've carried it for way too long  
Heavy weights make me bury my thoughts deep today  
But I think they come alive as I walk, they still aren't gone  
All my heavy weights, flowing through each bone I break  
Although I am letting all my bad days fall

**Callie Titus**

Central Intermediate  
Grade 6



**Aiden Yatsko**

Isham Elementary  
Grade 2

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**Don't**

Don't beg for them to give you real love

Don't beg for compliments

Don't beg to be posted

Don't beg for attention or appreciation

*Don't beg for the bare minimum*

Don't re-read the same story 2 times

It won't have a different ending

It will say the same words and say them in the same order

It's just a waste of time

Don't re-read the same story twice, it won't be worth it

P.S. This isn't about a book

**Kennedie Gray**

Central Intermediate  
Grade 6

### Reasons to Skip School

It rains and pours  
Snow blocks my door  
My dog ate my homework  
I got stung by a wasp  
I can't move my leg  
It's hailing too much  
I also caught the flu  
And I lost my other shoe  
There's just no way I can get to school  
It would be too cruel.

**Elena Errington**

Central Intermediate  
Grade 6

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### Shopping for Books

Shopping for books is like going to a candy  
shop so many books  
This and that or this so many options  
You never know what they will have  
But when you find that piece of candy I  
mean book its magical  
You say I'm excited to read this' and think you will be  
done in a week or 2  
But it ends up taking a day and once again your  
begging to go back.

**Roman Ray**

Central Intermediate  
Grade 6





**Marco Zaborek**  
Franklin Elementary  
Grade 3

## Dust

Little speck of dust on the floor.  
I see you there by the door.  
You stay there all night  
but when the vent blows you will fly like a kite.  
Then you will be free  
as happy as a flea  
that found a Corgi.  
You are an inspiration to me.  
I need to take a closer look.  
A-choo!

**Rylan Svenson**

Central Intermediate  
Grade 6

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**Sadie Conklin**

Cloverleaf Elementary  
Grade 5

## Decision

A decision can be bigger than  
picking what to eat for lunch.  
A decision could be asking yourself  
who to choose  
Your Mom? Or your dad?  
A decision is asking yourself what  
you want more.  
This or that.

**Ivy Taylor**  
Central Intermediate  
Grade 6

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**Aliyah Poole**  
Isham Elementary  
Grade 2

## Drawing

It could be a tree, Or It could be me  
It could be a dog, or maybe a bog

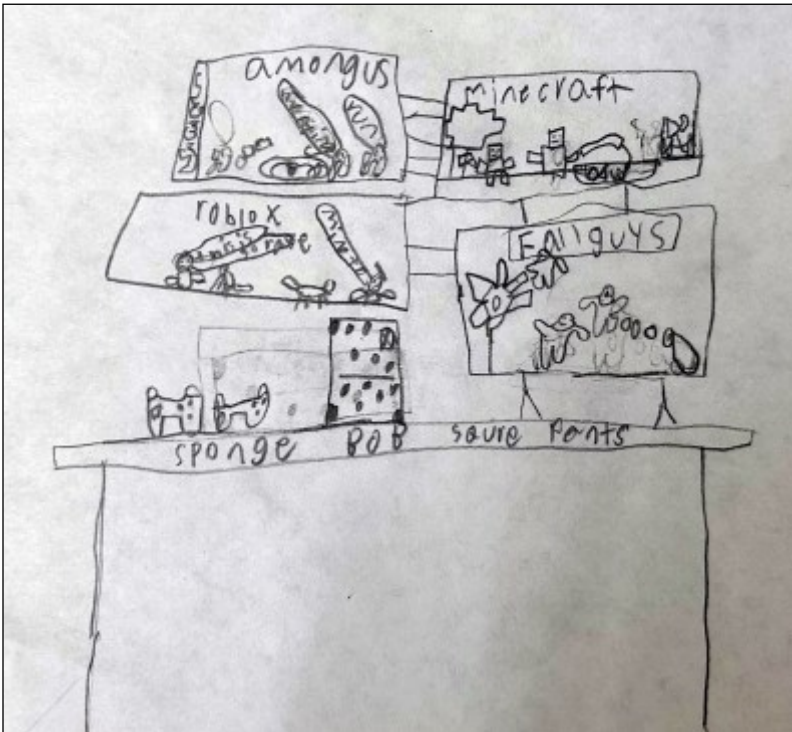
Maybe a cat, it could be a mat  
Definitely A sack, or a yack

How 'bout a train, maybe it's Main  
It could be a fact, or maybe an act

Oh, I forgot to mention that it's Abstract.

### Ada Dyson

Central Intermediate  
Grade 6



### Brooks Frantz

Franklin Elementary  
Grade 3

## Listening to Music

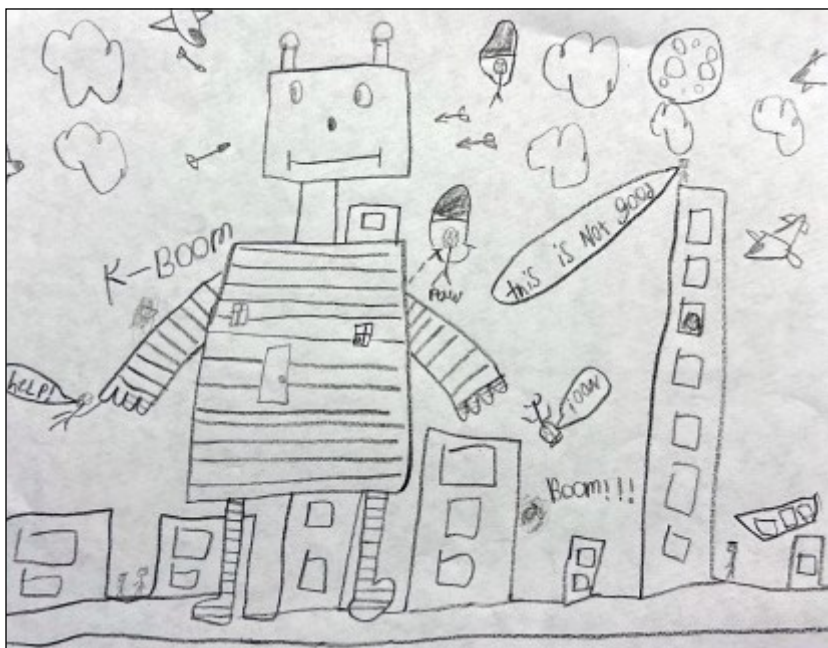
Music in my ears  
A symphony of sound  
Rhythm, beat, and melody  
Making my heart pound

Bassline shakes my bones  
As I tap my feet  
Lyrics tell a story  
Making my soul complete

Every note a brushstroke  
Painting colors in my mind  
Music is my escape  
A world of its own kind

**Kylie Priore**

Claggett Middle  
Grade 6



**Owen Mcle**

Isham Elementary  
Grade 4



**Caiden Sims**  
Cloverleaf Elementary  
Grade 5

## Pretty Privileges

Have you heard of  
Something called  
**“Pretty privileges?”**  
There’s ugly ones, too.  
The wind can’t blow your beautiful hair  
You styled so well  
And people wouldn’t stare.  
But what if I told you  
The pretty ones would sell for millions of dollars  
And it wouldn’t matter if you had the intelligence of  
**50 scholars**  
Or the brainpower of  
A human who hoots and hollers.  
That anyone would want to be  
That **beautiful** girl you saw on TV  
And you would probably agree  
That that’s who you want to be.  
But when the day’s finally over  
She’s just wishing to find a four-leaf clover  
So she could wish  
To have those privileges  
Yes, those unlikely privileges,  
That nobody really, **truly**, had.

**Ava Lenc**

Central Intermediate  
Grade 6



**Caylee Todd**  
Cloverleaf Elementary  
Grade 5

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### **Wasted Wishes**

When I was 4 I was excited to turn 8 so I could hold up 2  
hands, I thought it would be pretty cool  
When I turned 10 I was happy because I could hold up all my  
fingers and I thought it was a big flex  
When I turned 11 I was excited because I could wear crop  
tops and makeup  
When I turned 12 I wanted to be 4 again.  
I realized the real world isn't what it seems.  
I wish I was 4 again

**Kennedie Gray**  
Central Intermediate  
Grade 6





**Lydia Vrona**  
Buckeye Primary  
Grade 1

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## The Meaning of Love

Laugh  
Often  
Vacation  
Emotionally

**Rylee Whitworth**  
Hickory Ridge Elementary  
Grade 4

## Wonders

When you're walking around from time to time,  
You wonder why the clock chimes,  
Why the robber does crimes,  
Or even why glue makes slime.  
But maybe you could go deeper and think,  
What your curiosity could do,  
Why the rock had to sink.  
Take a book for example,  
Or the page in your hand,  
Why can't time reverse,  
Like walking to stand.  
Are you wasting your time just to look at this now?  
What are you doing,  
Why can't curiosity kill the cow?  
Why does honey come from bees?  
Guess you'll have to wake up and see.  
Wake up and see!

### Aden Adkins

Central Intermediate  
Grade 6

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### Alexander Hamilton

If I could choose one historical figure to be my butler for the day, I would choose Alexander Hamilton. I would choose Alexander Hamilton because he organized the National Bank, so he could tell me how to save my money better. He was also a smart man, so he could help me with my schoolwork. He was organized so he could help me organize my room. In conclusion, I would choose Alexander Hamilton to be my butler for the day.

### Ashley Renner

Central Intermediate  
Grade 6



**Aubrey Jenkins**  
Isham Elementary  
Grade 3

### **The Smell of Apple Bread**

The heat of the oven on a cold day  
The scent and feeling of picking apples

The promise of fresh fruit  
The memory of family  
The feeling of warm bread in the fall  
The smell of bread on a cold winter night

**Ellie Howells**

Hickory Ridge Elementary  
Grade 4

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### **Hot Dogs**

I feel bad for hot dogs.  
Aren't they hot in their fur?  
Aren't they steaming hot in the sun?  
Like real hot dogs steaming on the grill?

**Jonah Gonzalez**

Hickory Ridge Elementary  
Grade 4



## Unopened Presents

Your letters to me  
 Sit on my dresser  
 Presents that were **never opened**.  
 Don't get me wrong,  
 I still **love** you,  
 But what I didn't realize was that  
**I never read what was in the card.**  
 Maybe all those letters  
 Yes, those sugar-coated  
 Candy-painted letters  
 Were all **rejections** in disguise  
 I treasured them far too much  
 To even tear back the wrapping paper.

**Ava Lenc**

Central Intermediate

Grade 6

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## Remember This

Everyone has to remember something  
 Captain Hook has to be careful with his hook  
 Trolls not to step on their own  
 Goblins not spend their gold  
 Unicorns have horns on their heads  
 Dragons not to burn their tails  
 Pegasus not to fly away with their wings  
 You have to remember your shoes  
 So next time you forget something just know  
 You're all in the same boat with everything else

**Connor Shultz**

Central Intermediate

Grade 6



**Joseph MacDowell**  
Central Intermediate  
Grade 6

## Lacrosse

Sticks in hand ready for the game.

The whistle blows the kids start to play.

The sound of the pads hitting each other is as loud as day.

The sound of the ball goes from stick to stick as the kids try to score  
in the game.

The parents scream and yell as their kids are playing the game. The  
grass crunches as they play.

The kids have a feeling that they are going to win this game.

They are scoring so much that the other team knows that they are  
going to claim this game.

But the other team shoots and scores making the game tie.

The team starts to pray that the other team doesn't win the game.

The game is slowly ending as the team gets the ball with one second  
left they shoot and score.

The sound of the screaming and yelling that has been happening all  
game.

It starts to get louder as the team wins the game.

### Mason Berger

Central Intermediate

Grade 6

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## Ode to Volleyball

Oh, Volleyball

How much joy you bring me!

Diving to catch you!

You could say I'm ridiculous!

Swinging and hitting right at you!

Oh, sweet, sweet volleyball

Keeping me on my feet!

Making me fall to the ground!

Thank you volleyball, for making me so proud!

### Adelynn Van Arnam

Central Intermediate

Grade 6



## Volleyball

Give me those knee pads  
Then give me a ball  
There is no time to stall

Come on team!  
Let's hit this ball.  
Don't make this a free for all.

Finish off strong— 24-1.  
It's great to win,  
But better to have fun!

### **Ellie Howells**

Hickory Ridge Elementary  
Grade 4

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## My Cleats

Soccer is my jam,  
It's who I am.  
So give me my cleats.  
There's a team to beat!

So have you thought about it?  
Do you want to give me my cleats?  
Yes, no, maybe so?  
My team can not be beat!

I have my lucky cleats  
So I will not know defeat.  
So get up off your seat  
This game will be a real treat.

### **Gabe Paolino**

Hickory Ridge Elementary  
Grade 4

## Gymnastics

We get ready for practice  
The coach starts yelling  
“GET GOING”  
I’m in my leotard  
And I’m already  
Sweating

We get on the floor  
And I start running  
We stretch with a split  
And end with a tuck  
We roll  
And we  
Flip  
Until the time’s up  
Beam is approaching  
And people are groaning

I get on the beam  
And I feel taken off my feet  
I balance so well  
And  
Then I do a dismount  
I land on my feet  
And everyone screams  
Cause that’s what a team is made of

We go to vault and I get scared  
I count my steps  
Then I start running  
My hair is blowing and I am sweating  
I jump on the springboard  
And onto the platform  
My layout was perfect  
I’m so glad I landed it!

*(Continued on page 91)*

*(Continued from page 90)*

At the end of the day  
 Everyone says hooray  
 We give our coaches a big high five  
 Before we run outside  
 I hop in the car  
 In hopes that  
 Dairy queen wouldn't be far

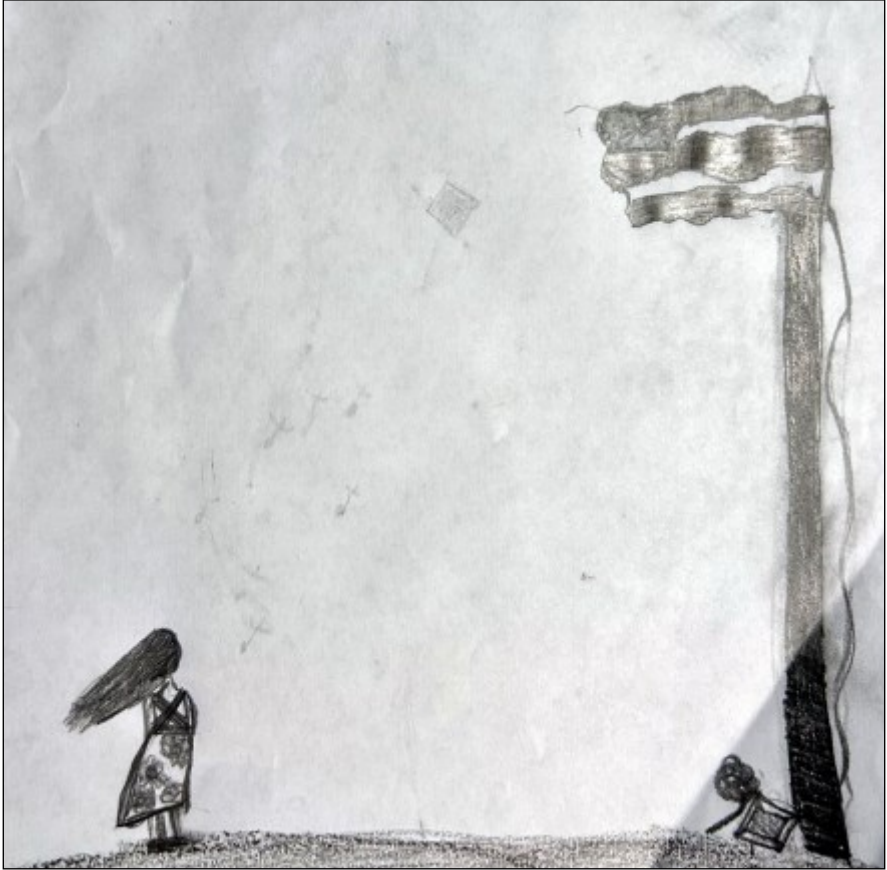
**Elle Steiner**  
 Claggett Middle  
 Grade 6

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### **Swim Team**

They call my number  
 I'm up  
 I climb up the block  
 I form so I can catapult myself into the water  
 I wait until they call the buzzer  
 BEEP  
 Every one of us fly out into the water  
 Everyone cheers for their team  
 I flow out over the water  
 I kick my legs  
 My arms cut through the water  
 SPLASH  
 I get to the other side  
 Before I flip kick to the other side  
 I breath in the hot air so I can swim for longer  
 I flip and kick under the water  
 I fly out  
 I see where everyone else is  
 So I can get a good ribbon  
 I swim faster than an orca  
 I get to the end of the pool  
 Snap  
 as I high five the person beside me  
 I get out of the water  
 And wait for my next race

**Amelia Albertino**  
 Claggett Middle  
 Grade 6



**Harper Klein**  
Isham Elementary  
Grade 4

## Band

Percussion starts the song off

I am creating sounds of wind

SHHHHHHHH

Brass start off

BUM BUM BUM

I start with trilling the notes

If I messed this up the song

Won't be as good

Then I start playing the melody

Remembering the notes

G, F, C, E, C, F hold, F hold, B

And

REST

Ok now I can control my breathing

Our part starts again and carries till the end

I take big breaths of air

And blow until no air is left

Playing the song is like dancing

Its enjoyable and hard

I continue till the song is over

I get a sip of water

And the room fills with laughter

Because the bell rang early

And everyone is in a hurry

**Alexis Bodor**

Claggett Middle

Grade 6



**Isaac Watson**

Isham Elementary  
Grade 4

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## Ford

Ford is  
 A reliable car,  
 A company that comes in a variety,  
 With plush leather seats,  
 With fast cars,  
 With headlights brighter than the moon,  
 With a roaring engine, announcing its presence with authority,

**Adele Oswald**

Claggett Middle  
Grade 6



**Cayden Lafond**  
Isham Elementary  
Grade 4

## Indy 500

The Indy 500 is quite a spectacle.  
The biggest in fact with 300,000 people.  
It is quite a sight!

Three hours of racing is a dream to see.  
The best drivers from all over the world  
Compete to win.

The bomb goes off, the gates open  
And people rush to their seats  
They all know what is next.

After the ceremonies  
the drivers strap in  
and go for a ride.

The green flag waves.  
All rush to Turn 1  
At 200 miles per hour!

Who will the lucky winner be?

**Robbie Piecarczyk**  
Hickory Ridge Elementary  
Grade 4



## Bright Lights

Bright lights  
Oh how I hate bright lights  
They shine and they shimmer  
They glow  
And  
They're blinding  
It's where the models and actors  
Go to get famous  
A long runway  
That the lights get to shine on  
Oh look  
It's red  
I wish I was famous  
I wish I was there under the big blinding lights  
That the actors go under  
To get famous tonight  
I watch the movies that they are in  
The actors  
The casters  
The people under the lights  
The light that I wish I could be under tonight  
I wish I had an opportunity  
Like them  
The connections  
The people  
The fame  
And the life  
The life that the people have  
When they can be on a stage  
Oh maybe one day  
I will be on the stage

**Elle Steiner**  
Claggett Middle  
Grade 6



**Jade Williford**  
Isham Elementary  
Grade 3

## Santa's Favorite Elf

Santa has a favorite elf  
 This elf goes by the weird name Melf  
 When Melf walks into Santa's shop  
 He turns around and starts to hop  
 When Melf walks into candy stores  
 He starts to play candy cane wars  
 When Melf goes to his humans' house  
 He thinks that he is Mickey Mouse  
 When Melf walks into the reindeer barn  
 He wraps Rudolph with knitting yarn  
 When Santa wakes up from his dream  
 "Thank gosh I don't have a favorite," he screams

### Owen Meillat

Central Intermediate

Grade 6

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## Escape Reality

What's this plane of existence?  
 A beautiful castle in the distance.  
     A magical forest.  
     A metaphorist.  
 What's this? A twist?  
 The kingdom must resist!  
     This witch!  
     Gives me a bad itch.  
     A hero!  
     What a zero!  
 This world is in danger!  
 They really need a stranger.  
     To save the day.  
 They should find their way.  
     Banish this evil.  
     In this terrible upheaval.  
     But wait.  
     I'm late!  
 This book distracted me!  
     And I forgot reality!

### Leah Schnell

Central Intermediate

Grade 6



**Heath Pashley**  
Isham Elementary  
Grade 3

## Heroes

In the realm of heroes, where courage takes flight,  
A tale unfolds, a saga of might.  
In the hallowed halls of Academia's might,  
Legends are born, bathed in heroic light.

Behold the heroes with hearts so bold,  
In My Hero Academia, their stories are told.  
Midoriya, the green spark of hope,

With dreams that soar, with strength to cope.

Bakugo, fierce with explosive might,  
A fiery spirit, burning bright.  
Uraraka, gentle as a floating feather,

Yet in her heart, a hero tethered.

Todoroki, a dual-flamed endeavor,  
Icy calm and fiery fervor.  
Asui, with eyes that keenly perceive,

A frog-like grace, she won't deceive.

In Academia's arena, battles unfold,  
Quirks clash, tales of the brave retold.  
Teachers guide with wisdom and care,

Molding heroes with burdens to bear.

Villains lurk in shadows, dark and deep,  
Challenging heroes to secrets they keep.  
Yet courage rises, a beacon so strong,

In the face of danger, they march along

From All Might's smile to Endeavor's flame,  
Legacy echoes, a hero's name.

*(Continued on page 102)*

*(Continued from page 101)*

My Hero Academia, a tapestry rare,

Woven with valor, beyond compare.

So, let the pages of this tale unfold,  
 In Academia's embrace, heroes are bold.  
 A symphony of quirks,  
 a chorus of might,  
 In the world of heroes,  
 where dreams take flight.

**Owen Yeager**

Hickory Ridge Elementary

Grade 4

### **Missing in Venice**

A scream echoed throughout the house, but it wasn't mine. A chill, night breeze blew through my open window as I moved the blankets off my chest and scooted off my bed. The floorboards creaked beneath my feet as I wiped the sleep out of my eyes and crept towards the door. My hands were cool on the doorknob, as I opened it with barely a creak. A light flickered from my brother, Antonio's room across the hall, along with a slight sob. "Mother?" I whispered as I entered and saw my mother's small shape over Antonio's bed. "What has happened?" I ask again. Mother's hands were covering her face as she moved them away, and I saw her face, covered in tears, as if she just took a dip in the pool.

"My Antonio," she sobbed, "He's gone!" I crept over and set my hands on her shoulder as she cried more and more. That is when I noticed the window in his room was cracked like a mallet was slammed into the glass panel. I winced.

"It's going to be okay," I reassure my mother, "but what happened?" Mother's sobbing slowed as sounds escaped her dried mouth.

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"I heard glass shatter so I came to your room, but nothing had happened, so I ran to Antonio's room and found all this!" she exclaimed.

"Antonio is missing?" I ask my mother.

"I believe so, Giosue." I wince again, more this time.

"Uh- lets file a missing person report?" I ask.

"I don't know." Mother whines. I help my mother up and bring her down the stairs, grab her the car keys for our Dodge Coronet and bring her to the car.

My brother Antonio was always a sly one. It was hard to describe him. Sneaking away was a new one, though. We hopped into the grey-green Dodge, as my mother slid the keys into the slot. The engine whirred as we stealthily crept into the streets of Rome.

"It's alright, Mother," I tell her, "I'm sure Antonio will come back." We drove past houses of all different sizes, shapes, and colors. The old, grey, Roman Police Department building appeared in front of us, like clouds in front of a plane. I have never been on a plane, I think. I'd travel on a boat any day over a floating piece of metal in the sky. Mother parks the Coronet, and I open the door and slip out. Tears were still streaming down Mother's face, but there weren't as many as earlier.

My friend Agata would always help calm me when I would remember my father's death. I'd never really known my father, he died when I was 6, Mother said, six years ago from my age now. The area of Rome we lived in was small, so the police building mimicked that. The larger Police Force building was in downtown Rome, closer to Vatican City. It was always kind of cool to me that there was an entire country inside of Rome! San Marino was another landlocked country inside of Italy, but closer to Venice. I'd never been to the 'City of Canals' or 'The Floating City' but I had always wanted to go.

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*(Continued from page 103)*

We walked into the building, where a tall, thin, skinny man was sitting at the front desk. He had a dark blue suit on, that blended nicely with his short, black hair. His name card described him as: Officer Leonardo.

“Hello, officer,” I exclaim, “We would like to file a missing person report.

“Ah,” Leonardo sighed, “Who and how exactly are they related to you, may I ask?” Mother began to sob and cry more. Officer Leonardo’s desk had many green sticky notes covering it. With names on them? I began to think.

“Sir?” the officer asks.

“Oh, yes, sorry. Uh, my brother..... Her son.” I say, gesturing towards my mother.

“Alright. Name?” Leonardo asked.

“Antonio. Antonio LaSue.” The officer scribbled Antonio’s name on the sticky note and looked up at me and Mother.

“Do you mind if me and a couple more officers and the captain come to your house to look for any information?” Leonardo asked.

“Yes- yes please.” Mother answers with a sob.

“Okay,” Leonardo picks up his Walkie-Talkie and yells, “Emergency! Missing person! District 2 Police Department! IMMEDIATE!” Almost immediately, sirens wailed and Officer Leonardo rushed outside with Mother and me. We hopped in the police car with him. “Address?” he asks.

“654 Via del Corso,” I answer.

“Got it,” Leonardo says.

We zoom off towards our house as I look at the outside and think. *Why would Antonio run away?*

Three officers were already at the house when we rushed inside to Antonio’s room. They immediately took the room apart. That’s

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*(Continued from page 104)*

when one of the officers; Officer Antonio (ironically), pulled out a lockpick and started to open Antonio's secret lockbox. When he opened it, he pulled out a piece of paper, it was long, with black letters typed onto it. It looked like a receipt.

"Uh, maam?" he directed toward Mother, "Did you know that Antonio had a receipt for the Revenge of the Titanic? The one that sets sail tomorrow?"

My mouth gaped open in shock.

"No! He bought a ticket for a boat?" Mother exclaims.

"Ms. LaSue. I believe that your son," he took in a breath, "is missing in Venice."

We started the drive to Civitavecchia Port at the break of dawn. It was going to be a long ride in the car, and a longer one on the boat to Venice. The Dodge Coronet my mother owned wasn't one that had that new car smell. It may have been a couple years ago but not now. My mother had stopped her crying and was angry now.

"When I find that boy, oh is he going to be in trouble." Mother cursed under her breath. I look at her from the backseat and sigh.

"See, this is why we should have brought Agata," I told her.

"Your friend wasn't going to help this situation. My oldest son is missing!" she replied. I winced. Mother was never really angry at me. I assume she was just upset with Antonio. The police had warned her to keep watch for Antonio on the ship. They also told her that they were sending backup onto the Revenge of the Titanic. The name wasn't that creative. The creators of the ship just took the name of the ship that tragically struck an iceberg in 1912. But now it was getting its revenge? As more fishing and bait stores appeared on the sides of the road, I began to notice how many bridges we were crossing and the water beneath us. We were in a fishing town.

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A giant store; *Fishing and Swimming* appeared to the left of the Coronet. Once we passed it, I saw her. Her brown smokestacks scraped the clouds themselves. Her shining rails gleamed like newly fallen snow in the sunlight. I swear I could see my face in the reflection of the ship's black body. We pulled to a stop, hopped out of the car, and ran up the ramp to the ticket area, where a slim, young man, with the slimmest of a beard stood.

"Halt," he warned, "My name is Sailor Angelo. Tickets please?" We gave the sailor our tickets and he said, "I hope to see you on board, Ms. LaSue and your little, Giosue." he said looking at our names on the tickets. Once aboard the vessel, we saw Officer Antonio and Officer Leonardo sitting in soft chairs, drinking what looked like champagne.

"Hello, officers," Mother greeted, "Have you seen any evidence of Antonio?" Leonardo opened his mouth to speak but then the ship took off. It took off fast. I looked to my left where Sailor Angelo was standing but we were already zooming away from the dock, where he fell into the water.

"The ship wasn't supposed to leave until 1:00. It's only 12:00," Leonardo exclaimed. I narrowed my eyes. I scanned around the room. There were around 12 chairs. They were all a red velvet with a golden touch and effect. There was also a spiral staircase that had a sign next to it that said; TO DECK.

"Mother, can I go check out what's going on, on deck?" I asked my mother. Mother nodded. I walked up way too many stairs to be on a boat. It was like climbing the Leaning Tower of Pisa. When I reached the deck I saw a weird sight. Buildings. But what surprised me more was what was beneath me. Canals. I knew where we were. I didn't know how. But I knew where. We had already arrived in Venice, in 5 minutes.

"What is going on?" a man's voice yelled from the Captain's Quarters. I looked over to see a bearded man with a bald head that wore a captain's hat.

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“Captain Benedict!” a sailor replied, “How are we already in Venice?” Benedict grunted, “I don’t know!” The ocean liner was squeezing into one of the canals. People screamed all around the ship and in buildings lining the canals. As it got in, buildings collapsed onto the decks of the *Revenge of the Titanic*. “Nobody’s even moving the ship!” Captain Benedict yelled.

“I can help!” I yell up to the Captain.

“Yeah right, kiddo,” Benedict replied. More buildings crashed down onto the ship, muffling his reply.

“No, seriously! I did a report on a ship like this, in school!” I replied back. Benedict sighed but he gestured back to the quarters. I ran up the stairs into the Control Room. “Let me see.” I murmured under my breath.

“You sure you know what to do? I’ve been sailing ships for decades now,” the Captain asked.

“I’m sure. We just got to get it in reverse,” I answered. I pressed the buttons to activate reverse and whispered to myself, “The moment of truth.”

I pressed a big, red button and then I heard the ship groan. I heard metal scraping the sides of the ship as we went deeper into Venice. But we still went forward.

Even with her mighty engines in reverse, the ocean liner was pulled further and further into the canal. We still went forward as we dropped. Benedict and I ran out to the deck to see that the ship was sinking lower into the canal. *We are sinking*, I thought.

Water started to cover my feet as I heard a familiar voice, “Giosue!” I whipped around to see my brother, Antonio grinning from ear to ear reaching his hand out. I ran across the deck as my older brother picked me up onto a building in the canals.

“Antonio!” Mother said, relieved with joy. Antonio and I helped Mother up as we all hugged each other.

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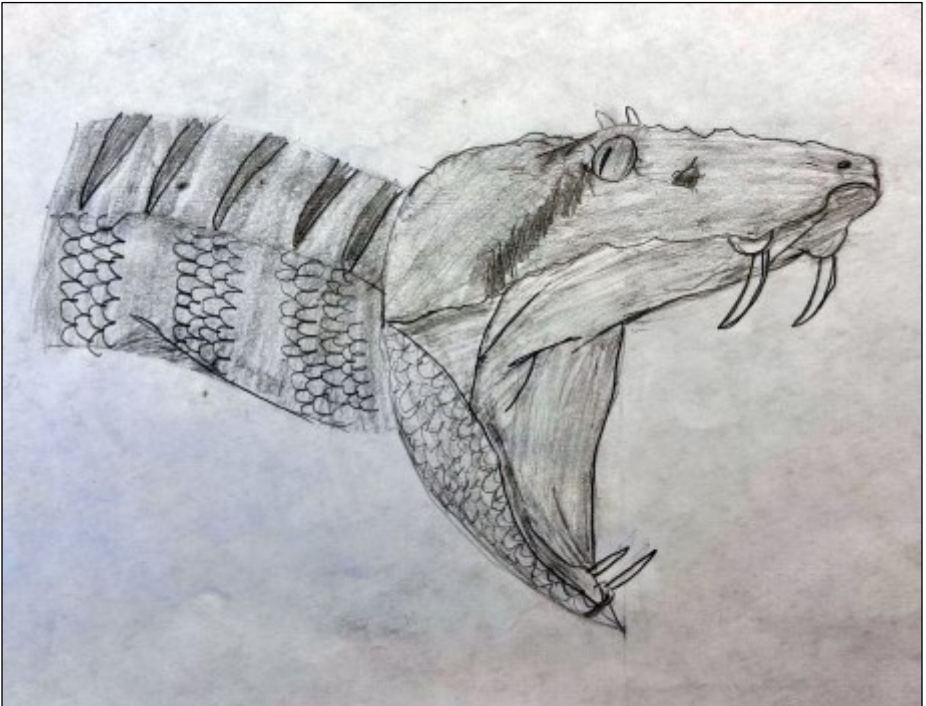
(Continued from page 107)

"I didn't know if you noticed by now, but, the *Revenge of the Titanic* had rockets attached to it. We had the US FBI come to investigate a meteor crash in Venice. The metal of the ship was drawn to it." I hugged Antonio again as we watched the ship sink to the fathoms of Venice, where a meteor sat below the surface, in which a slow heartbeat thumped against the burning rock from the inside.

THE END

**Ethan Milford**  
Central Intermediate  
Grade 6

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**Isaac Watson**  
Isham Elementary  
Grade 4

## A Dragon Named Don

There once was a dragon named Don  
And you know he ran a marathon  
It was quite a race  
He won first place  
And in second place was his friend Shaun

**Julia Clemons**

Memorial Elementary  
Grade 3

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**Macie Delnoce**

Isham Elementary  
Grade 2

## Dragons Fire Dance

In the realm of flames that dance with desire,  
A saga unfolds on wings of fire.

Dragons majestic, their spirits aspire,  
In the land where destiny fuels the pyre.

Scales shimmering with hues untold,  
Legends written in fiery gold.  
Wings stretched wide, a tale to be told,

In the heart of embers, stories unfold.

Through the night sky, they soar and sing,  
With flames that burn and voices that ring.  
Fierce and free, on wings taking wing,

In the symphony of fire, they dance and swing.

Each dragon's heart, a burning flame,  
Fanning the fires of destiny's game.  
In the crucible of time, they claim,

A legacy written in fire's name.

The skies witness their fiery ballet,  
As they weave through the night and day.  
Wings of fire, in the heavens play,

A dance eternal, come what may.

For in the fire, a saga unfurls,

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Of dragons bold, with wings that swirl.  
Onward they fly, their destinies twirl,

Guided by the fire that forever swirls.

**Owen Yeager**

Hickory Ridge Elementary  
Grade 4

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**Evan Oplinger**  
Isham Elementary  
Grade 3

## Grades 7-12

### The Feeling of a Snow Day

The flurry of snow swirls around me in a blissful breeze.  
It nips at my nose and makes my toes freeze.  
What happens on a day full of fun?  
Well school gets canceled and my homework gets shunned.  
I sleep until 11 and stay up really late.  
Maybe today I'll make brownies or cookies to bake!  
I don't know what to do during the cold winter days,  
where I'm snowed inside and can't go out to play.  
I look out the window and see the white powder  
I can't help but ponder if I'll wait much longer.  
To trek to the bus stop,  
To talk with my friends.  
The only time I see them is when we should be learning instead.  
I let out a breath, another, then again,  
Maybe I want this snow day to end.  
With tired eyes I head back to bed,  
A day full of nothing was exhausting instead.  
My eyes stay shut as I drift off to sleep,  
I wish that tomorrow, today won't repeat.

**Devon Heiskell**

Root Middle

Grade 8





**Samantha Budd**

Highland High

Grade 10

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### Winter Is Calling

The snow is falling.  
 It's that time again.  
 Family starts calling.  
 At this time there is no Zen.  
 The leaves stopped falling.  
 And the sun seems to be gone and hiding before seven.  
 The stockings are stuffed and the snow is falling.  
 Is it that time again?  
 The time when children are stalling.  
 Because they want to see Santa arrive with the hen.  
 Just to find out he is long gone hauling.  
 His bag of toys for the girls and boys.

**Olivia Zimmerman**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 8

## Snow Falling

The snow is falling down  
On the little town  
It does not make a sound  
As it reaches the ground

'Oh what a pretty sight'  
'Oh what a silent night'  
A women might say  
Not able to look away

The trees shake as the fierce wind goes by  
Making a small whistling cry  
Stars twinkle in the dark sky above  
Onto the snow that is a white as a dove

A family gathers around a fire  
Signing carols without tire  
There might never be a more pretty sight  
Of a silent night

**Elena McCabe**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 7

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Christmas time is for fun and cheer  
To be excited all throughout the year  
Watch the lights shine so bright  
Then go to bed on Christmas night  
Wake up in the morning for presents to see  
And we will have fun, you and me

**Madilynn Johnson**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8



**Ashton Lewis**  
Highland High  
Grade 10

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White Christmas, the most wonderful time of the year,  
the season when people have the most cheer.  
Christmas, about decorating the tree with family and friends,  
and tying up all the loose ends.  
Christmas, love giving, not receiving!  
Christmas, we love Santa! although some are disbelieving.  
Christmas, baking cookies to spread Christmas spirit,  
and singing carols for all to hear it.

**Delaney White**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8

Christmas time chimes  
 Hot cocoa seems fine  
 Sugar cookies adds a glee  
 Only gifts await, Christmas morning, by the tree  
 Family, friends, all a great joy on Christmas eve  
 Snuggle around the fire for some warm candy  
 Stay up late to see Santa only to find you fell asleep  
 Open your gifts with a smile of glee and time will go by quickly  
 Open and open until there's none left  
 And at the end of Christmas day  
 All of a sudden all the glee will flee  
 But wait till next year and once again  
 Christmas time will chime and hot cocoa will seem fine and  
 Children will be filled with glee

**Lily Mong**

Wadsworth Middle  
 Grade 8

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**Christmas**

This time of the year  
 Everybody sure  
 Is filled with cheer  
 Love, kindness, and more.

The little children  
 All try  
 To catch a glimpse of the crimson  
 Red coat on Santa as he stops by.

And on Christmas day  
 The presents are opened with joy  
 Once finished, the kids all play  
 With their new toy.

**Caelyn Letner**

Wadsworth Middle  
 Grade 8

## The Christmas Tradition

It's the Friday after Thanksgiving,  
 And you know what that means?  
 It's time to visit one of my favorite scenes!  
 The one and only Miller's Tree Farm!

As we pull into the parking lot,  
 What do my brown eyes see?  
 A million Christmas trees looking at me.

My whole family plowed through the snow that was sparkling like  
 a diamond ring  
 To pick up the saw that would be used to cut down the family  
 tree.

As we walked up the hill in search of the perfect tree  
 The question is what will it be?

A blue spruce

A fraser fir

A white pine

All will be fine when we all agree.

Chop with the saw.

Plow!

Down came the tree.

Wow!

Together we got the tree on the sled  
 And began the journey back to the main barn.

As my dad was paying,

The workers were busy wrapping our tree.

"It's a good thing we brought dad's truck," Taylor said.

"We arrived back home at dusk."

The question that everyone is now thinking was

"Is our perfect tree going to fit through the door?"

Unfortunately, the answer was no.

"Snip, Snip, Snip, Snip"

Now it is a perfect fit.

Lights and ornaments," tinsel, too;

"The tree is ready for the holiday season with you!"

**Brooke Kresowaty**

Highland Middle

Grade 7

## I Like Old Friends and Christmas Break

It was an ordinary day for me. I was finally home from college and was shopping at Whole Foods for the ingredients for my favorite traditional Christmas tamales. Christmas time always reminds me of my mom, and my aunties had a way of filling every second I was home from college with food, music, family, and cheer. I was just picking up a barbacoa beef package when I heard a familiar voice.

"Lía is that you?" It was my best friend from high school, a girl named Camille. I hadn't seen Camille since the summer after graduation and Camille was more tired than I'd remembered her.

"Hey, I didn't know you were in town!" I had said with a smile. Camille gave a shrug and glanced down.

"Yeah. I didn't think I was going to be here this year. But my mom needed a little extra help and I didn't have anywhere else to go. So, yeah. It's just us this year. Yay." Camille flashed a bitter smile and shrugged like the whole situation was just a minor annoyance. I was overcome with the desire to help and then struck with sudden inspiration.

"Why don't you guys come over to our house? We're doing our tamales assembly line this afternoon." I offered. Camille paused, weighing her options in her mind. She had never been the type to take help directly.

"I wouldn't want to get in the way." Camille replied finally. "My mom's still in an awful post-divorce stage and your aunts seem so happy."

"They would love it if you came. They'd probably see it as a chance for them to spread Christmas cheer. And besides, you don't have to help directly. You could just be an objective taste-tester!" I told her with a smile. Camille grinned. At the time, it was just a friendly offer, but what I hadn't known then was the true pain of their situation. Camille's mom, Vera, was recovering from a truly terrible divorce where her ex-husband had taken most everything, and Camille herself had lost her minimum-wage job two weeks ago. What was going to be one afternoon, turned into all of Christmas break when my aunties heard they had nowhere

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to go. They continued supporting Camille until she found a well-paying job as a secretary and started going to a community college. As for her mom, she found a small apartment and started a small business, Vera's Cuban Cookies, off of her love of baking. But it all started thanks to an old friend who let Camille and her mom share their first truly happy Christmas in quite some time.

### **Evangeline Sondles**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 8

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### **Too Cold**

It was too cold to go to school  
My mom wanted me to clean my room  
But I would rather look like a fool  
So she said it would be cool  
But I'd rather snooze  
So I took off my shoes  
And started to snooze  
But when I started to snooze she said "What a fool"  
I pulled out the pool  
For a nice winter snooze  
But she brought me a pool  
Full of cleaning tools  
She said get to work  
So I asked for some pork  
But all she said was work, work, work  
She told me to clean  
But I said I was weak  
So I layed down  
For a week

### **Olivia Mcshane**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 7



**Delilah Sikora**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8



I was asleep. It was a dark, cold, winter night. White snowflakes landed onto the ground leaving a white sheet of soft fluffy snow behind. I was in my room, sleeping on my bed. My room had pink walls with colorful flowers and posters of my favorite bands hung onto the walls with tape. I was sleeping peacefully until I heard a loud *CRACK!* I instantly jumped out of my sleeping state and looked around the room, rubbing my eyes as they adjusted from waking up.

“What was that?” I asked, slowly getting out of bed and going to the window.

As I opened the curtains I saw . . . nothing. Nothing but the sight of snowflakes falling onto the ground in a repeating cycle.

“I must be hearing things . . .” I closed the curtains and yet again heard a loud sound. “Okay well, I’m definitely not just hearing things.”

I walked back to my bed and sat down, I couldn’t go back to sleep, I felt awake now. I sat down like this for a good 8 minutes until I decided to go downstairs. I crept down the wooden stairs and into my living room. I read the clock, 10:58 pm.

Quickly I sat down on the leather couch, turning on the TV. I turned it onto the animal channel. I have always loved animals ever since I was 5, now I’m 14 and I still love them.

I looked at the TV and spoke to myself quietly, “aww that’s cute.” It was a polar bear on the TV with its cubs.

I leaned back onto the couch’s pillow and kicked my feet onto the table. I looked at the TV and heard a loud bang coming from the door.

I looked over at the door, the banging continued. I got up from the couch and walked to the door. I started to speak, “Who in their right mind would be knocking at 10 at night?”

I creaked open the door, I looked outside, the cold air from outside washed inside the house. Nobody was there, not a single trace of someone or something being there except two footprints on the ground, snow covering them up.

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"I don't see anything . . . I must be hearing things." I turned back to the living room and TV and closed the door as I walked back to the brown and leather couch.

"It's probably nothing." I said, as I continued to watch TV.

**Lola Roden**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 7

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**Song of the Seasons**

Sister spring  
Is leaving  
It's too warm for her here  
Summer's love  
Is coming  
To bring the heat near.  
But soon  
Summer will fade away  
Making room for Fall  
Who creates fireworks  
With tree leaves  
That disappeared before Winter's Ball.  
Ice and snow will be everywhere  
Spreading joy and cheer, 'till  
Sister spring comes over  
She'll melts all the snow here.  
The lilacs bloom  
Birds sing  
Leaves start to grow.  
This happens all around the world  
That's one thing we know.  
It just keeps on going  
Till the cycle nears its end  
Then Sister spring  
Puts down her roots.  
Then it just happens all again.

**Evangeline Sondles**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 8



**Kendall Elchico**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 7



**Giuliana Hulesch**  
Black River High  
Grade 11

## **That One Summer**

Bikinis and sunshine

Life jackets and tubing  
All day long

Sandals with sand in our toes

Bright warm fires late at night  
Smores that made memories

Boat rides that seemed to last a lifetime

Movies late at night to keep the parents from hearing  
The clatter of laughter

Sunsets oh so bright they put us to sleep while watching from  
afar

Although it seemed to be right before my eyes

Shopping all day being broke by night

Pulling all nighters was the norm

Oh these memories will forever be with me of that one summer

**Amelia Whitman**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8

## The Never Ending Night

Drip,

Drip,

Drip.

The distinguish sound of rain mocks me in my struggle to sleep.

The ominous sky tells me this was going to be a long night.

Good luck to me.

BOOM,

BOOM,

BOOM.

The thunder in the night cracks, and begins to drive me crazy.

The pillow over my head, and the tears of frustration come.  
Nothing will work.

Tic,

Toc,

Tic,

Toc.

The vexing sounds torture me as I wait for the sun to come.

A glass of warm milk, watching the clock, trying to keep eyes shut.

Sleep shall not come.

Wait,

Wait,

Wait.

The unhurried sun loves making me wait, and wait forever.

I stare out the window until I see a glimpse of sunlight.

It now arrives.

Chirp, Chirp, Chirp.

The beautiful sound of morning, it is music to my ears.

Everyone is now awake like me now, and I start my day.

Until we meet again, night.

**Taylor Green**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 7



**Riley Knechtel**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8



**Jena Koeberle**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8

## The View From a Space Station

Space,  
Floating weightless,  
In the pitch blackness,  
Of the universe.

You feel so alone,  
So small, so insignificant,  
In the wide, wonderful world.

You know that one wrong move,  
Will propel you to your doom,  
Floating, unable to stop,  
In the wide vacuum of the galaxy.

And yet, this new perspective,  
Makes you consider how big the universe is,  
And how much we will know before we go extinct.  
And how much we will never discover.

Because, among the stars,  
Is there anything as fascinating,  
As the vast world, and wow,  
How great is it to get the chance to live,  
To make a difference, to become,  
Who can know?

**Olivia Weinberger**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8





**Gretchen Catherwood**  
Medina High  
Grade 12

## Space

If I want my space I go to my room.  
 My warm, boring, clean room.  
 That is where I study, sleep, and even relax.  
 If I want my space I jump in bed and lay there.  
 Thinking about the test I have that week.  
 Thinking about doing extra credit.

If I want space I go outside to get fresh air.  
 I will think about the fun summers I have in my neighborhood.  
 From 4th of July parties to volleyball games to pool parties.

### **Krista Dobbs**

Wadsworth Middle  
 Grade 7

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## Beach

Beach  
 Salty air  
 The sun beaming on the hot sand  
 The beautiful sound of crashing waves  
 Pulling me in like a comforting hug

Beach  
 Walking along the shore  
 Footprints being washed away by the tide  
 Picking up shells  
 Tracing my finger along the grooves  
 Colorful umbrellas  
 Different experiences  
 In every grain of sand

All memories that were made  
 Are captured in the sea  
 Never to be forgotten

### **Alayna Nagy**

Wadsworth Middle  
 Grade 7



**Ella Tople**  
Highland High  
Grade 11



**Hannah Faulkner**  
Medina High  
Grade 10

Walking barefoot through the sand in Port Austin Michigan  
Our feet burned by our time in the sun and Michigan sand  
The sand becomes cooler later on in the night  
    Still holding July warmth  
Bugs, evading us, dart away from our every move  
    As we try to shoo them away  
Temporary waves—you have to let them go  
Evening light becomes dark skies  
Listening to the waves crash  
Evening light makes the long break wall that the waves crash into  
    And the spikes we walk barefoot on  
Hurting  
Sunset  
Waves  
Sitting on the break wall at night  
The concrete cool  
The waves crashed against the wall  
Midnight calls us to bed  
Midnight keeps us safe  
Midnight is curfew

**Olivia Dombrosky**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 7



**Addison Alspach**  
Medina High  
Grade 12

## Senses

I have five senses.

touch, taste, smell, sight, and hearing

We have the same senses

However, you do not acknowledge mine

### Touch

You are sitting right next to me

our arms are practically touching

You are sitting right next to me

Yet we do not feel close

### Taste

I can *already* taste the regret of starting a conversation

Only this is just a soliloquy

### Smell

I can smell the stench of your breath

As yours is no longer making room for mine

### Sight

I cant see you anymore

I cant see through the tears forming in my eyes

I push them back

### Hearing

*I can hear you*

I can hear you yelling

I am trying to form a sentence but cannot think over the clamor of your voice

I listen

It is quiet now

My senses are not sensing

You come into my room

And ask, "what do you want for dinner"

I have not forgotten, but you seem to have

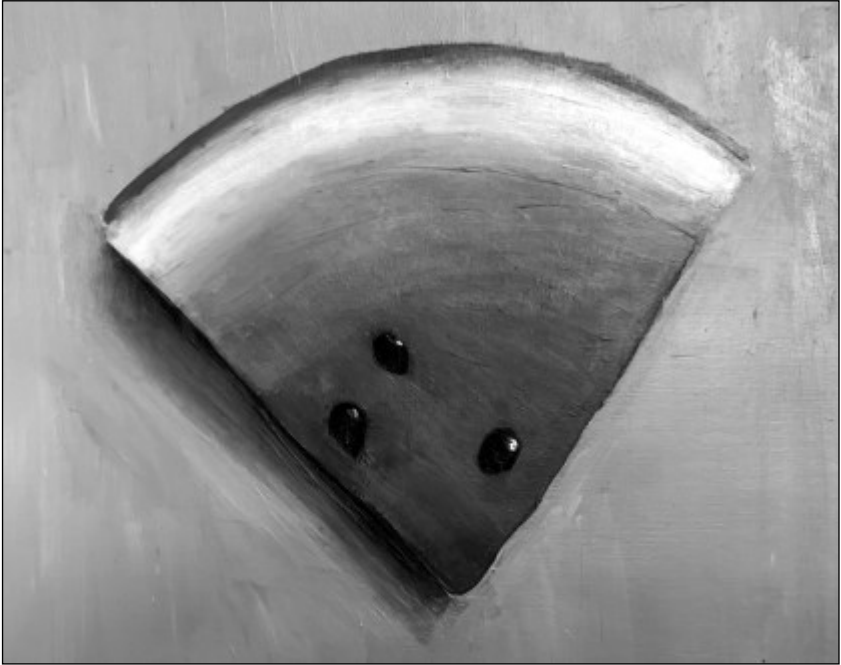
We have the same senses

But you *still* do not acknowledge mine

**Jacy Johnson-Pol**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 8



**Meagan Beidelschies**  
Medina High  
Grade 10





**Hannah Faulkner**  
Medina High  
Grade 10

## The Wonders

Evening stars make me shine  
As bright as that pearly white wine  
Days come and go but you never seem to let me go  
So our time has come but yet it feels so slow  
So I wrote this poem to give you an idea about the things we don't  
    behold  
But yet we still haven't become a little bold  
So let's try something new  
And let's see what we can do

**Ma'Leah Hawkins**

Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 7

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**Molly Sullivan**

Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8

## Perfection

Perfection doesn't exist  
 It is irrelevant  
 Nothing is perfect  
 Not the fish nor butterflies  
 No one can be perfect  
 If they say they are they are  
 Not the right mindset  
 If you think they are perfect  
 They have a few flaws  
 The few flaws affect perfection  
 The clearest water is not fully clear  
 There is always dirt  
 On the clearest day  
 There are always clouds  
 Nothing will ever be perfect  
 Even though we still push  
 To be perfect

**Jackson McFarland**

Wadsworth Middle  
 Grade 7

## The Mirror in Us

Like a mirror in the sun,  
 we reflect on our past selves and aspirations

Spreading rays of inspiration  
 for the future to shine.

Like a sparkling mirror,  
 we hold brilliance in our souls.

Continue to hold on,  
 especially when dust threatens to bury it.

With the mirror in us,  
 reflect the better  
 and spread the truth

because all mirrors deserve to see brilliant reflections.

**Avneet Singh**

Wadsworth High  
 Grade 9



**Monica Horschler**  
Medina High  
Grade 11

## Life

(Inspired by the poem A Slice of Life by Katherine T.)

Let's play a game.  
What can be as calm as a sleeping child?  
Then suddenly as furious as a wave?  
Comes slowly  
But speeds up out of the blue?  
Can bring you to glory  
But also torture you endlessly?  
Just when you think you've mastered its tricks  
It throws its hardest curveball yet  
Those who are close to the end of it  
Either tell you about its amazing wonders  
Or tell you they wished it never happened to them  
Perhaps you know what I'm talking about  
You don't want to waste it.  
Or ignore its warnings.  
It only comes once, and soon the ignorance of your dreams,  
Opportunities, and goals  
Will all just be a regretful part of your past.  
Did you guess what I'm thinking about?  
It's life.

**Will Falanga**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 7

## Life

Life is like a roller coaster.  
One moment you're living your best life with your friends and family  
The next you feel like a tornado has shook the ground where it once felt stable to stand.  
It might seem hard to understand,  
And you might never get it until you experience it firsthand.  
People will give you advice,  
But nothing about life is exactly precise.  
Life is something that you just can't control,  
But that doesn't mean you should stop striving for your goal.  
Love your family.  
Love every friend.  
Don't ever forget to love your life,  
Because one day it will end  
You can't go back and change the mistakes,  
So live your life in the present.  
If you mess up,  
Learn from it and then move on.  
Strive to reach your goals.  
Visit your friends and family.  
Go on your dream vacation,  
Or ride a scary roller coaster.

**Angelina Gambaccini**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 8



**Gretchen Catherwood**  
Medina High  
Grade 12

It takes an unexpected turn  
Life is full of those, there will be good times  
You get an A on a test  
And bad times  
Times when your nervous  
Your first day at middle school  
And times when you take risks  
Times where you listen  
Your teachers tell you to do something  
And times that you don't  
Sometimes you might be sad  
Your parents get a divorce  
But sometimes you won't  
Times when you fail  
You fail the math test  
And times when you get back up and start again  
Times when you put in the work  
You study for your next test  
And times you don't  
All these turns in life impact who you are  
It takes an unexpected turn - The good and bad

**Gabriella Wenger**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 7





**Lauren Chapman**  
Highland High  
Grade 11

## Challenges and Dreams

I think that life is like a video game  
You face challenges in different ways  
Some of these challenges could be dreams  
Some you think are easy  
And some you think are impossible  
These challenges can define the person you are  
say you are facing a very hard challenge in life  
You might just give up  
you don't achieve your dream  
But you don't wanna lose your dream  
So you keep trying  
you keep trying and trying and trying  
Practicing day and night  
Learning from each attempt  
Then you finish the challenge  
You are so excited  
Relieved by all the pressure that was on your back  
You might not even notice that you say  
"What's the next challenge"

**Cole Patterson**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8



**Calista Mills**  
Highland High  
Grade 11

I was standing on the line between life and death.  
     What would happen if I went the wrong way?  
     Would anyone miss me?  
     Would anyone ask questions?  
 I'd never know.  
     Should I choose life?  
     Or just end it all?  
 I could just jump, no one would miss me would they?  
 My parents might.  
 My friends might.  
 But some would be relieved,  
 Some would be grateful.  
 My dog would be the only one who would miss me.  
     Should I live just for her sake?  
     Will I be remembered?  
     Will it matter?  
 I'll be able to see Roxie again,  
 That's all I really want.  
 I'd be able to see Dominic,  
 And Roman,  
 Even Rufus.  
     Which way to go?  
     Is there even anything worth living for?  
     Should I stay?  
     Or should I just go?  
 I could leave this place forever.  
     What would be waiting for me?  
     If I were to jump?  
     Which side of the line should I choose?  
 Life, always life.  
*There's always something worth living for.*

**Trinity Barton**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 8



**Annalise Deserto**  
Highland High  
Grade 11

## Fire of Life

Fire is destructive  
Burning houses, people, anything  
Your life is the same  
Hurting anyone and everyone  
Burning  
Burning  
Anything it can find  
A curse

But fire is a blessing  
Heat  
Light  
Safety  
Providing beauty, a way to survive  
And again  
Your life is the same  
Every life has a meaning  
No matter how big or small  
It can be a blessing, a miracle  
Giving light to your emotions  
Safety from the storm of unrelenting criticism  
Survival for those who see the meaning

You need to decide  
What you will choose  
Blessing  
Or  
Curse  
And believe me when I say

Your life depends on it

**Leila Hughes**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 7



**Isabelle Oehler**  
Medina High  
Grade 12

## Friends

I wish I had known, so long ago,  
When the stars first brought me to you,  
When we had first met, and things were different,  
When the flowers shone with morning dew.

Before the snow had fallen, and all the paths walked,  
When your kindness burned through,  
When I was still a child, sad and alone,  
And you showed me a new road, walked by the few.

There were stories to be read, and games to be played,  
Fun to be had on those warm summer days,  
When we would run through the grass, and pretend to be gods,  
And a friendship burned, never to be faded.

But as weeks turned into months, the leaves began to fall,  
And those two little girls, began to grow,  
And with the new breeze and the shaking of the trees,  
They abandoned such things with the falling of the snow.

**Hadley Petkovic**  
Root Middle  
Grade 8





**Brooke Englehart**  
Black River Middle  
Grade 8

## Echoing Thoughts

It comes and goes in waves of fire  
It almost feels as if it never leaves

The fear of loss and love and the fear  
Of the echoing voices  
In your head, they echo loudly  
As they pound

As you hide them in your mind, they still  
Never leave

They make you sad, mad, confused, lost  
As you cry or just hope for the best

All those thoughts in my head that don't ever  
Show their faces in halls with friends and family,

They stay aside  
As you put on a mask that hides the inside

You do your best  
To hide all the anxiety of the kids and adults behind your back  
Talking as if you can't even see it

It's what our brain is told to keep balled up inside  
We can't let it show

**Leah Scolaro**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 7



**Cosima Carey**  
Highland High  
Grade 11

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### The Real You

Take the heart of a girl  
Use it like its yours  
The inside  
And the mind  
Memorize how you hurt her  
(and how you messed her up in the head)  
Does it hurt to think about?  
Do you regret it?

By late August  
Crumble the memory in your hand  
So that the memory is just a thought

Show her the real you.  
Listen to her.  
Finally realize that you don't love her.

**Annalise Harris**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 7



**Gwenyth Deyaeger**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8

## Enough

Am I not enough?  
Is that why you leave me for your cooler,  
Better,  
More popular friends?  
Why did you  
Leave the lunch table  
We've sat at  
since school started?  
To sit with them.  
You say "it's no big deal."  
If it's really "no big deal,"  
Why do you  
Stop talking when  
I walk up?  
Is your conversation,  
I don't know,  
Too good for me?  
You don't think  
I'll be able  
To handle  
Whatever it is you're talking about?  
Why do you do this?  
Am I just not  
Good enough?  
Cool enough?  
Popular enough?  
Tell me.  
When will I be  
Enough  
For you?

**Evangeline Sondles**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 8



**Megan Kelps**  
Highland High  
Grade 12

## **Cold Shoulder**

Part of speech : noun

Definition : a show of intentional unfriendliness, to ignore or snub someone you know.

Examples: You're my best friend, or you were. We used to play neighborhood tag or hide-and-go-seek as the sun went down. We went to separate elementary schools but that didn't stop you from coming over every day for a snack or to invite me out to play. You always were so nice to my little siblings. They definitely looked up to you. They would ask me if you were coming over, but recently I haven't been able to tell them for sure. I always imagined sitting with you at lunch and having pretty much every class together when middle school started. I was sure you didn't ask to see my schedule because you were nervous we wouldn't have any classes together. At least, I did until you ignored me at the bus stop, and sat next to some random kid who was picking his nose like his life depended on it. You barely said anything to me in first period and sat with the ultra popular kids at lunch. I wanted to sit next to you on the bus home, but you asked your mom to pick you up instead even after I told you to save me a seat. I don't know what I did to you, but whatever it is, I'm sorry.

Synonyms : snub, ignore, look right through, everything you do to me.

Antonyms : warm welcome, acknowledge, appreciate, everything I do to you

**Evangeline Sondles**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 8



**Jay Milewski**  
Medina High  
Grade 11



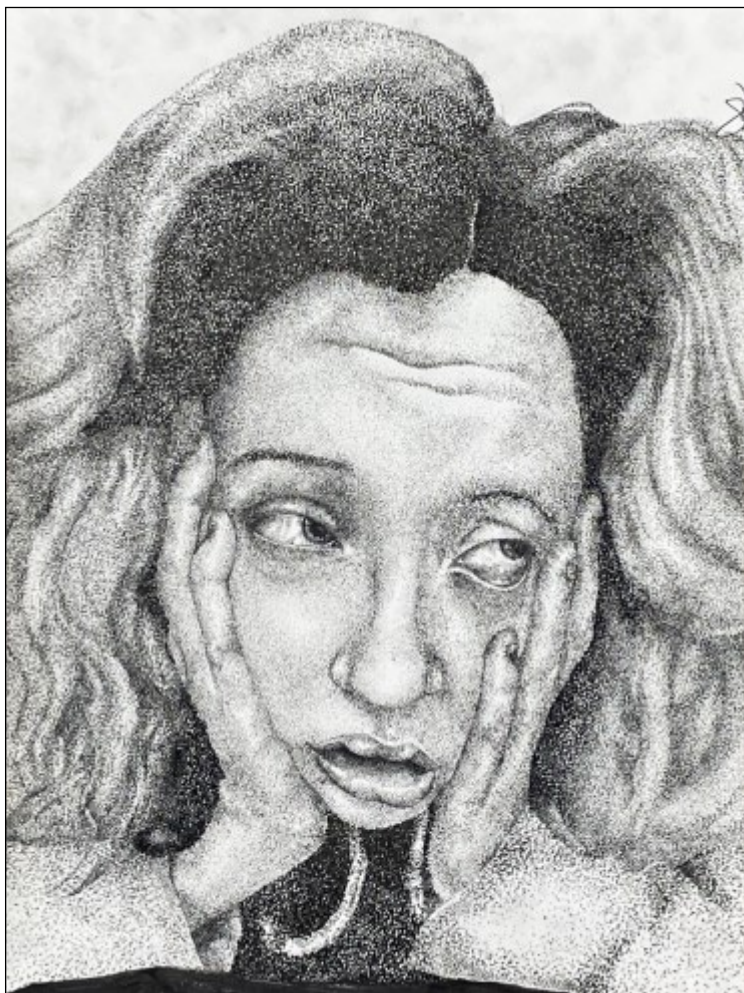
## Failure

Say something, say anything  
It won't work  
You're building me up, but I'm staying down  
After everything, it's nothing

Say something, say anything  
I've given up  
Everyone is walking forward, but I'm standing still  
The voices inside get louder and louder  
Yet the house is empty

Say something, say anything  
It's not helping  
Reflecting back, I'm not proud  
Still getting better and better  
But might stay a failure

**Julia Hartman**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8



**Sarah Kerrigan**  
Medina High  
Grade 12

You were one of my friends  
One of the best of them all  
I tried to make you happy  
But I just take the fall  
For every mistake you make  
Not everything is my fault  
You just take and take and take  
Not everything is about you  
I'm sorry, but it's true  
I hear you don't have favorites  
So you lied to my face  
You talk behind my back  
With every word you say  
If you never wanted me to know  
Then why would you tell me all of this?  
My life isn't fair  
And I don't understand why  
You think you're the only one who gets to cry  
You never understood loyalty  
And I hate the way you treat me  
I wish I could be a good friend to you and be myself  
You say you love me  
But I don't understand  
Why you're the only one who can have feelings  
Every one of my days is horrible  
And it's your fault  
Remember the golden rule?  
Treat others how you want to be treated?  
That's what's happening here

The only people I can trust now  
Are me, myself, and I

**Leila Hughes**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 7



**Samantha Budd**  
Highland High  
Grade 10

## Love Is Pain

You always hear about that ever-burning passion  
 That spark  
 But love is hard  
 Feelings for another twist you up inside, making you second guess your  
 every move  
 Forcing you to fake being someone you're not so they might finally  
 glance your way  
 Embarrassing you when your friends talk to you, talk about the one you  
 have fallen for  
 Until the moment of confession, where your heart and soul dangles  
 from a fishing line  
 For the whole world to see and judge, until the moment of inevitable  
 rejection

Love hurts you, even if that rejection never comes  
 You start to go out with the person and realize all the things you thought  
 you loved  
 Were fake, an act, a ploy to seem more cool, popular, anything to make  
 them have a  
 Better image to other people who they find more important than you are  
 to them  
 All the things you did love that weren't an act turn out to irritate you in  
 the end  
 Your love starts to turn into annoyance, then hatred when they stop  
 talking to you  
 Then they break up with you and your feelings rush back to you like a  
 tsunami

And then there are people like me, who will never find it  
 Even if they have a match, they don't want it  
 But the secret is that the altogether pain of love is not worth the reward  
 The prize of fleeting weeks and scarce displays of affection  
 But with that sadly unsatisfying prize comes the likelihood of rejection or  
 heartbreak  
 So we shelter ourselves, never taking the leap  
 What if we fall?  
 What if nobody catches us?  
 Even if our hearts are like a frisbee, meant to be caught, I'm more like a  
 boomerang  
 Bouncing back before anyone has the chance to catch me  
 And make my poor lonely heart experience some happiness before the  
 solitude returns

*(Continued on page 166)*

*(Continued from page 165)*

Love is a pain many people experience and I will never understand  
Why people fall in love, throwing themselves to the wolves  
Maybe one day I will understand why they make this choice  
But for now, love is the thing of fairy tales, the only ones that have a  
happy ending  
But if all of the Disney princesses could find true love  
Maybe one day I can too  
But for now, love is a pain I don't want to experience  
Love hurts.

**Leila Hughes**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 7



**Shirley Chapman**

Highland High

Grade 11

## Toxic

You stab me through the back  
With every word you say  
Say "You're always negative"  
Even when I'm happy  
I don't understand  
You're my best friend  
Or so I thought  
You were half my life  
But  
Life is like the universe, but life has lost its meaning  
You told me I could talk to you but when I try  
I get attacked, told why my feelings are wrong  
My anger growing stronger with every locked word  
I thought it was forever  
But I guess that I was wrong  
My smile is a pretense  
I have to force it to be real  
Poisoning the waters  
Of my consciousness  
Sapping my energy  
Calling me selfish  
I never could have guessed  
Talking about me behind my back  
You never understood loyalty  
You put the blame on me  
Why me?  
Why do I have to carry the weight of your mistakes?  
I never did anything wrong  
My heart goes into solitude  
Shattering into pieces like broken glass  
The feeling that I'm all alone  
Solitude is all that's left  
In my miserable life  
A life you've created  
A toxic life I have to live now

All because of you

**Leila Hughes**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 7



**Victoria Semon**  
Highland High  
Grade 12



## Critic Thoughts

How does she look at her  
Stomach in the mirror?  
She looks with disgust  
Yet somehow some way  
She believes she's still beautiful

The disgust in her eyes  
The hatred in her mind  
Turns to a soft  
"You're gorgeous"  
In lovingly sweet tones  
Flicking the words off her tongue  
Like nothing was wrong

She hates the way  
She looks  
In the mirror  
Her stomach  
Her legs  
Too big too gross

Yet she still calls herself beautiful  
Like nothing happened before  
She still believes she's gorgeous  
Even though  
She was just looking at herself  
With disgust  
5 minutes ago . . .

It's crazy she thinks she's pretty  
I mean look at her  
Her confidence  
It's not fair

My inner critic thoughts  
About the girl  
I see  
Every morning  
Standing and looking In the mirror

**Isabella Lewis**  
Wadsworth High  
Grade 9



**Jay Milewski**  
Medina High  
Grade 11

## A Faerie Revel

Wander there, maiden fair  
 Frolic through the trees  
 A dress of woven petals  
 Jewelry in threes

Skip and sway, my darling  
 We promise no regret  
 Our music flows like honey wine  
 Guide you step by step

Dance on, dance on, why don't you!  
 Our beauty has no level  
 Starlight winks and flowers spin  
 For this is a faerie revel

**Reagan Barnes**

Root Middle

Grade 8

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## I Love You

When I think about you  
 My mind is in paradise  
 Your hugs, your words, your tone, your smile  
 They all have me paralyzed  
 The way you always look at me  
 Sends me to another world  
 The way you say you love me too  
 Has my heart and my mind twirled  
 Just the way you make me feel  
 Like I'm the only girl that matters  
 When you walk away from me  
 I swear my heart shatters  
 You know I do love you so  
 You're always on my mind  
 Every minute of every day  
 This love is a different kind

**Kylie Ocepek**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 8



**Samantha Budd**  
Highland High  
Grade 10



**Kylee Studd**  
Highland High  
Grade 11

## Arcane

I learned a new word today  
 It is “arcane”  
 It means something understood only by a few people  
 The word reminded me of you  
 When you glanced at me in class  
 So quickly, so quietly, no one saw except me  
 Except me  
 And I suppose you also thought of that word  
 When I glanced at you back  
 With a smile that held whispers  
 And a heart that held secrets

**Reagan Barnes**

Root Middle

Grade 8

## Somewhere Along the Way

Somewhere along the way in my fourteen years  
 of life things have changed

Somewhere along the way; my dresses became  
 sweatshirts and leggings  
 Somewhere along the way; my pulled up hair became  
 free  
 Somewhere along the way; one brother became five  
 brothers and a sister  
 Somewhere along the way; my fake smile turned real  
 Somewhere along the way; the five of us grew, we grew  
 together

At this point in my life I wouldn't change anything,  
 even though I'm only fourteen

But things will change, and if I had to choose something

Somewhere along the way; one day, I will find you

**Chole Sasson**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 8



**Sarah Kerrigan**  
Medina High  
Grade 12



**Jacob Freas**  
Highland High  
Grade 10



## Hypocrisy

To be in love is to indulge in hypocrisy

To be in love is to look upon your face,  
riddled with the very same scars of past that I curse myself for  
knowing,  
and to say you are beautiful

To be in love is to recognize the same tender shyness  
that I try in vain to rid myself of,  
and to say that you are brave

To be in love is to see the very same downfalls of myself that I  
hate,  
to look upon them in you  
and to believe you are perfect

To be in love is to indulge in hypocrisy

**Reese McQuaid**  
Wadsworth High  
Grade 9



**Jennifer Wilson**  
Highland High  
Grade 10

## Mom

You make me happy  
When I am sad

You calm me down  
when I am mad

You take me out  
to shop all day

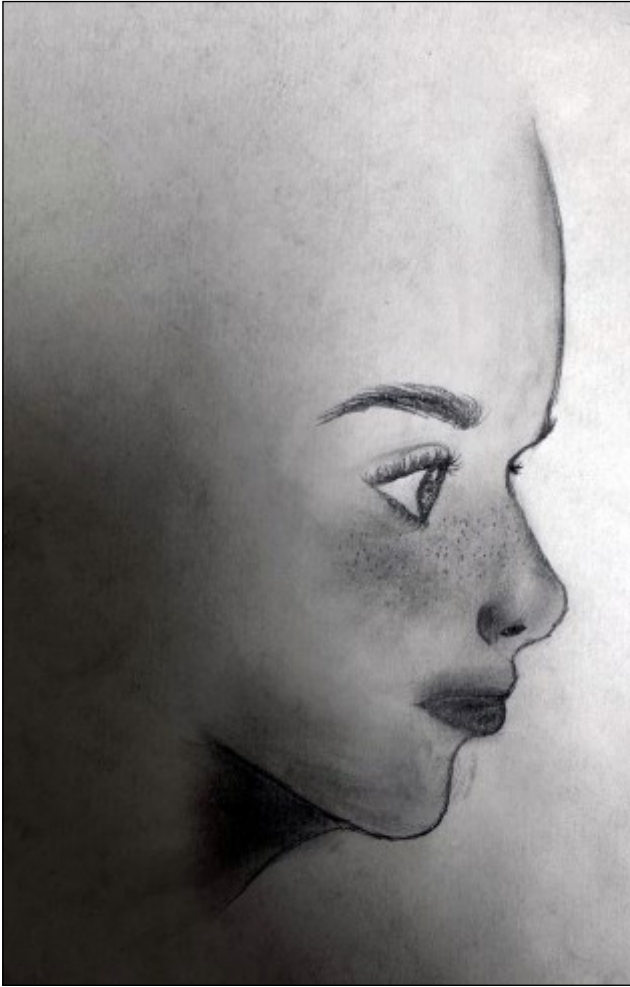
You take me to practice  
To run and play

You do so much  
I don't understand how you are  
Are always there for me

You fill a spot in my life and  
No one could ever take your place

Oh how much I love you mom  
That will never change

**Tess Highsmith**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8



**Ainsley Calkins**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8

## Feeling Like Atlas

Dreary. Slowly.  
I crawl through the day.  
Feeling like Atlas  
The world on my shoulders.

Sadness arises within me.  
A lump of hot coal in my stomach.  
The reaper has my family in its grasp.  
Gravity feels heightened, trying to rip me down.

People gloss over  
Unknowing of my troubles.  
Easy work is given  
Though it feels sisyphian

To carry on feels impossible  
But I know it must be done.  
Feel sick and tired to the bone.  
Yet life is ruthless still.

Time stops for no man  
Every minute is a day  
Every day is a year  
Yet once home, I am at ease.  
Cared for, and the world is lifted off my shoulders.

**Lucas Gove**  
Brunswick Middle  
Grade 8



**Riley Spellman**  
Highland High  
Grade 10

## Clean

After you I was finally clean  
I found clean in my drowning  
Found my smile after frowning  
Not that life is so empty  
But when you left me  
That's when I was finally clean  
Finally free of the mess named you and me  
The world fell from my shoulders  
No longer lifting mountains, no longer pushing boulders  
For so long I was carrying the burnt out weight  
So naturally I began to suffocate  
And in the pouring rain, the winds and haze  
I let water hush my teary gaze  
I weathered my storm  
I baptized my dark  
I stared at my puddle missing oligarch  
Grieved in my storm for what I will miss  
As I walked to uncertainty an endless abyss  
I learnt to heal I learnt to feel  
I learnt the subtext of life and what's real  
So yeah I am lonely but at least I am free  
I am finally clean.

**Marissa Rankin**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8



**Kaden VanDuyne**  
Highland High  
Grade 9



## Mountains

I think that carrying the mountain on my shoulders has only  
made the devil sitting there stronger.  
While the angel will tell me which way to move to avoid the falling  
rocks  
The devil will throw himself out to protect me  
Maybe it's all backwards  
The angel is a demon in disguise, filling my heart with false hope  
of faith and trust  
The devil is a fallen spirit, no longer fooled by promises and  
appearances  
Not afraid to take the blame and bear the hatred  
I had entered this hike with a stick, and I have returned with a  
spear  
I understand now that others are only farther ahead because  
they were climbing up the mountains  
I was climbing out of the trenches  
Carrying the mountains on my shoulders

**Reese McQuaid**

Wadsworth High

Grade 9



**Gabrielle Lima**

Highland High

Grade 10



**Kayla Bloom**  
 Medina High  
 Grade 12

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### **This Is Me Trying**

I'm scared to let you know  
 How things are in my head  
 I worry words will betray me  
 That you won't hear the right ones  
 Beneath the smile is an iceberg  
 Made of the effort to show you  
 Shiny parts you stand on  
 Holding them high at the surface  
 When I falter, you slip  
 The ice melts and it scares you  
 This time, the ice is so thin  
 I'm scared you'll drown with me  
 Your face gives away  
 What voices won't dare speak out  
 Loving me is relentless  
 I swear that I'm trying.

**Marissa Rankin**  
 Wadsworth Middle  
 Grade 8



**Adalyne Wasmer**  
 Highland High  
 Grade 12

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### Forgotten

Among the branches  
 lies a heart long forgotten  
 Deep in the meadow  
 The apples lay rotten  
 Children come to play  
 Skipping through the tall grass  
 On this warm sunny day  
 One looks around  
 And spots the olive branches  
 Prancing over, leaning forward  
 Sees the heart covered with scratches  
 His hands are steady as he picks it up  
 He rocks it back and forth ignoring the calls  
 He looks back down and says "I won't let you fall"

**Bethany Hofmann**  
 Root Middle  
 Grade 8



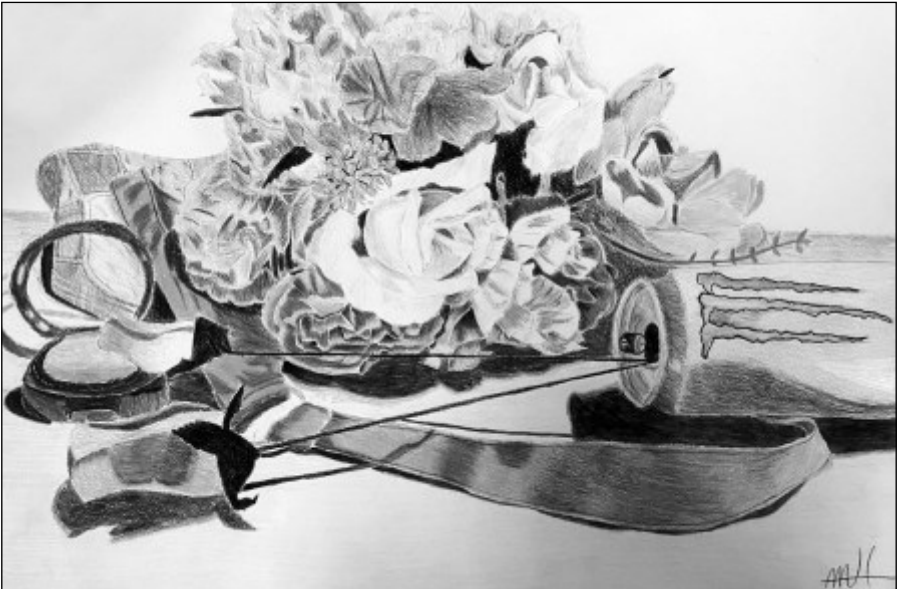
**Riley Beyer**  
Highland High  
Grade 11

## Cake

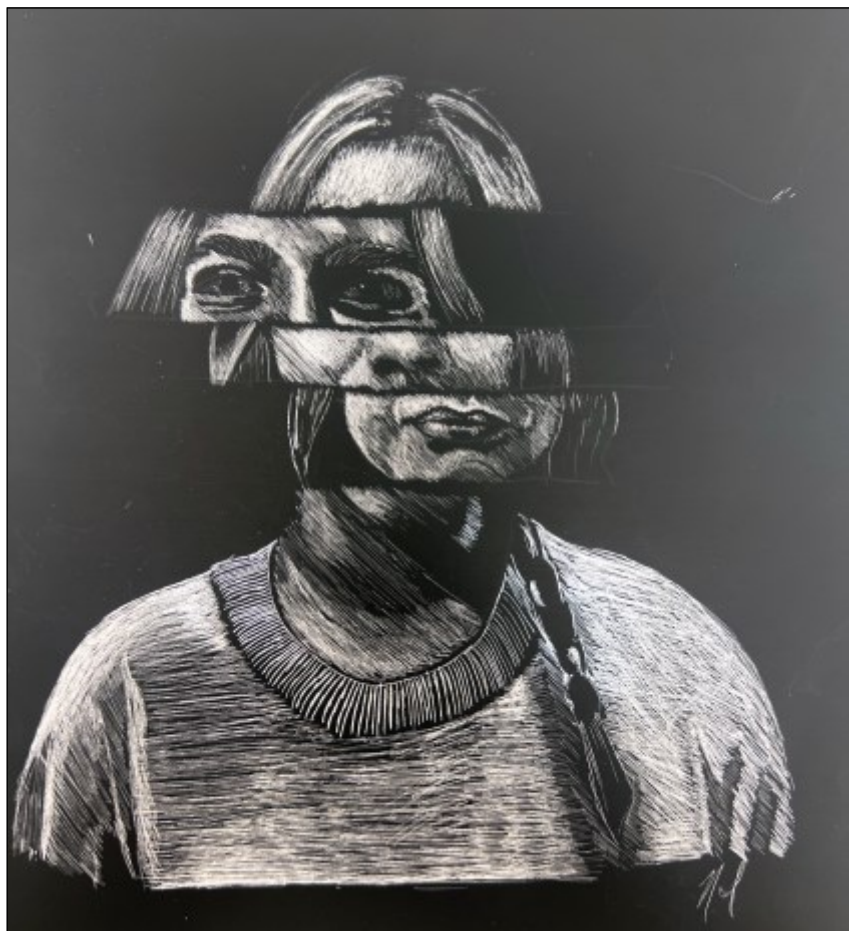
This may not be the last poem about you  
This may not be the last time I cry over the past  
Or think back to the days of 'us'  
But there will be a day when I remember that I have forgotten you  
And I will smile  
And slowly, I am getting there  
The other day I tried to remember your birthday, but couldn't.  
I tried to remember your jersey number and failed.  
I forget the names of your family members.  
And I have no idea what your favorite food is.  
When I forget your favorite color, I will throw a party.  
Maybe I will even buy a cake, and smile because I'll have no idea if  
you'd hate the flavor

**Reese McQuaid**  
Wadsworth High  
Grade 9

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**Monica Horschler**  
Medina High  
Grade 11



**Nicole Iwasieczko**  
Highland High  
Grade 12



**Natalia Pirro**  
Highland High  
Grade 10

**Dear Friend**  
(Cry warning)

Dear friend,  
I don't remember anymore  
How you sounded,  
How you looked  
How you talked  
How your hair was  
All I remember was a smile,

A smile that made me happy,  
How you took care of dogs  
The shelter . . .  
Do you remember?

You taking care of dogs,  
You loved pit bulls  
Any dogs  
You owned a shelter  
You helped people

I miss your smile  
Your laugh  
Your eyes  
Your hugs when I visited

I remember Shen, Gui, and your dogs  
Your wife, too

Walking me back home from school,  
Taking me to meet the dogs you owned  
Getting ice cream with you,  
I still remember  
Banana split for you  
And strawberry for me

At rocky tops frozen treats,  
I missed those times

Hearing the ridiculous Dad jokes you said to your kids  
Me saying "I'm so bored" in the car while you were driving

*(Continued on page 193)*



*(Continued from page 192)*

And you responded “have you counted the rain drops on  
the window?”

“No?”

“Try it then”

And me actually doing it, counting

“1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . . 5 . . .” while the rain drops got  
bigger and fell

Watching the water move all in different directions

I still do that now,

After 4 years

Thank you,

Friend

(This poem is dedicated to Steve White.)

**Xin Yao**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 7

She was ripped away from me

I feel a part of me

Has been ripped free

So, I will carry on

And I will always see

The light you wanted to be

Is here with me.

**Eva Smith**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 8



**Peyton Joeright**  
Highland High  
Grade 10

## Purple Lilacs

A sign was what it was.  
A sign from her in heaven to me on earth.  
She always said "Remember I am with you when you see deep  
purple lilacs."  
Every day of my younger years we would go on short strolls  
around the backyard, talking about nonsense.  
Now, I go on strolls alone, thinking to myself about how much I  
wish you were here.  
Years go by and I never skip a daily walk without your spirit  
beside me, I can feel you leaving invisible footprints in the dirt  
path.  
I know you never wanted anyone to express sorrow or even cry  
when you died, but how could I not?  
You were the person who meant the most to me.  
The person who never left my side.  
Without you I am something empty, until I see those purple lilacs.  
When I see them it gives me faith that maybe I will be reunited  
with you someday.

**Olivia Bailey**  
Black River Middle  
Grade 8



**Caitlin Gray**  
Highland High  
Grade 11

## You've Waited So Long

She's out there.  
In that field.  
Surrounded by flowers,  
Wearing the dress you love,  
Waiting.

You're in the woods.  
Looking at the trees.  
Walking your dog.  
But you didn't go for Murphy.  
You came for her.

"Maybe he's walking his dog right now," she thinks.  
She pretends to look at the wildflowers  
Really, she's daydreaming about you.

You can see her clearly now.  
You watch her blond hair shine in the sun.  
The wind ripples the field and you wonder what she's thinking  
about.

She lies back to look at the clouds.  
She sees your face mirrored in them.  
It annoys her how much you're on her mind, but she kind of likes  
it too.

You can see her scrutinizing the clouds.  
You can envision her clear blue eyes just watching.  
Murphy sees her too now and he whines.

She hears a distant dog bark.  
"Could that have been Murphy?" she hopes.  
She sits up and looks around.

You see her search  
Her eyes trace the edge of the forest.  
She sees the blossoms on the trees

*(Continued from page 197)*

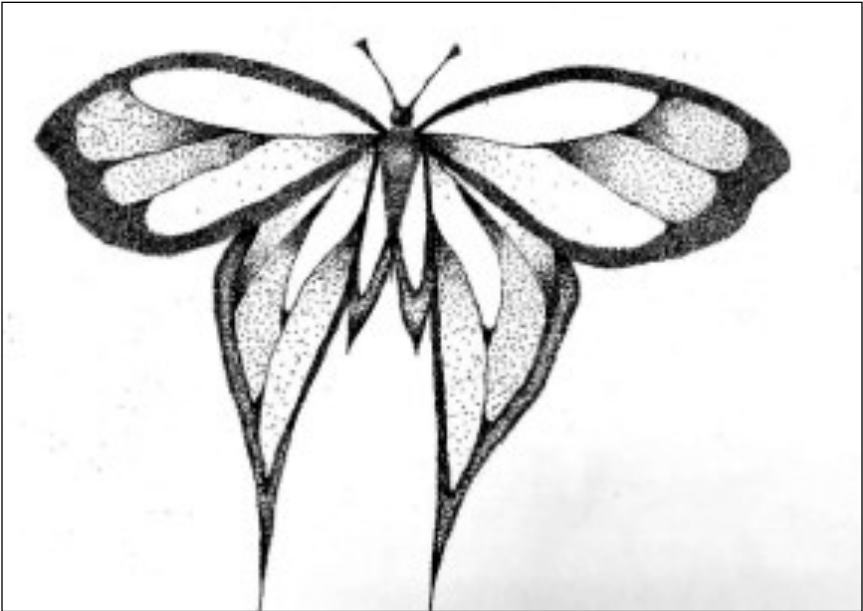
She sees blue jays, butterflies, and the wind in through the leaves.  
A deer bounds out of the clearing, and a hawk circles the sky.  
She's not looking for that.

You watch as she stands in desperation  
You see her spin around as she looks again  
Just then, she beams.

Because  
she sees **you**.

**Evangeline Sondles**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8

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**Samantha Budd**  
Highland High  
Grade 10

## Pieces of a Sinking Ship

How was I to know  
That pieces of me would be left behind  
In you?  
That they would grow beyond measure,  
Haunting my nights,  
Washing ashore to look for the pain  
Only I could give.  
The pain I meant for the world  
That I gave to you.  
The love that grew from the salty aftertaste of hate  
Just to return back to its original harbor.  
The thrown-out letters and apologies  
I almost said to you  
Cut through my sea,  
Leaving my soul  
Only and forever speechless.

**Eva Taylor**

Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8

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## A Fond Remembrance

The water was still, and the sky was quiet, the stars twinkling down on me. The water lapped against the bow of the ship and splashed me, filling the air with the smell of saltwater and the sea. I hugged my knees closer to my chest and buried my nose in my baggy pants. I felt like a kid again, staring out across the ocean, though this time she wasn't with me.

"Saydia?" A small figure plopped down beside me and I smiled softly, turning my head to the figure.

"Hey Az," I ruffled the little boy's fluffy hair and looked back out at the ocean. Az grinned at me and then scooted closer, resting his head on my shoulder.

"I miss her," his voice was filled with grief as he tilted his own head up to the stars.

*(Continued on page 200)*

*(Continued from page 199)*

"I know buddy, I know," my voice cracked as I hugged Az tightly. "Hey. You wanna hear a story?"

Az's eyes stayed sad but a smile played on his lips. "Yeah,"

"Okay. Mama told me this one when I was younger," His eyes lit up. "There was a sailor once. Her name was Cay and she was known to be the greatest sailor in the world,"

"Like mom?"

Tears stung my eyes but I refused to let them out. I ran my fingers through his hair and nodded.

"Exactly like mom,"

"One day, you're going to be like that. An amazing sailor,"

I smiled sadly. "Maybe. Maybe," I took a breath and then continued. "Cay was young when she set out on a journey,"

My mouth spoke the words but my mind was elsewhere and all I could hear was my mother's voice, recounting the story over and over again while I sat in her lap staring at the stars.

"What's a sailor?" I had asked. My mom had replied with, "Someone who loves the sea so much they just can't stay away so they decide to live out in the open waters."

I could almost see the spirit of my mother behind Az, her curly hair matching his and her face pulled up into a gentle smile that never left her mouth.

I looked back at Az whose eyes were half closed as he stared up at the sky. I stroked his head as I finished up the story. A single tear escaped my eye and I blinked harshly, trying to tear my eyes away from the spirit of my mother. She gave me the look of "I'm proud of you".

"Wow. So she saved the world?" Az's eyes were fully open as I ended the tale.

*(Continued on page 201)*



*(Continued from page 200)*

“She did,” When I looked back to where my mother’s outline had been, there was nothing but air and stars in its place. Grief washed over me and I hugged Az closer.

“Are you okay?” Az’s little voice was filled with concern.

“I’m okay Az. I’m okay,” Silence rocked us, the ship gently cradling us within its deck.

“Hey Saydia?” Az snuggled closer.

“Yeah?”

“I love you.”

**Bethany Hofmann**

Root Middle

Grade 8

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**Peyton Joeright**

Highland High

Grade 10



**Amelia Waibel**  
Buckeye High  
Grade 9

## The 3rd Time

“Oh no. Oh God no,” I heard my mom whisper, barely audible across the room. She started violently shaking and turned pale as if she'd seen a ghost. She dropped the phone she was clutching and its screen broke into a million pieces on the dirty gray tile.

“Mom, are you okay?” I asked hesitantly from across the room.

“Oh honey,” she started falling to her knees, “Oh honey it's Mason.” She then started sobbing. Through the tears she managed, “They gave him a 20% chance . . . 3 months,” I felt my body go cold. No tears would come. No tears ever came.

Silently I whispered, “No.”

My name is Annabelle Shipley. I'm 14 years old and in 8th grade. I'm an only child and have lived with my mom ever since my parents got a divorce 4 years ago and he moved to Arizona for a job. Mason's my cousin, basically my older brother since I don't have any siblings. He's only a year older than me but he's always seemed so wise. We were the perfect pair. We did everything together.

Every year, our moms took us on a trip to the beach. While his older sisters tanned and texted their boyfriends we would run through the sand barefoot and play Truth or Dare late at night. For a while, we were both carefree like that. That changed 4 years ago, right before the divorce.

Mason was diagnosed with lung cancer and given a 95% chance to live. After about 3 months he was back to his old self, but two years later, right before Christmas, it came back. He was given a 70% chance. He got worse than before. He'd be up all night coughing. Thankfully, right before Easter, he was declared cancer-free. After that, he seemed wiser, but even crazier. “Life's short Belly,” he would tell me. Belly, that was his name for me. It sounded stupid coming from anyone else but amazing from him. But now the cancer is back. And he didn't look to be getting any better.

*(Continued on page 204)*

(Continued from page 203)

"Mason!" I cried as I entered his hospital room and ran to his bed. I hugged him gently and began to cry, stepping back so my mother could hug him. He looked so small hooked up to all those machines. I was scared.

"So how are you Belly?" he asked then, going into a coughing fit - in clear pain. I just nodded. We chatted for a while, such meaningless chatter under the circumstances. The moms then left the room to give us some time to ourselves.

"Belly," Mason started in a deep, serious voice that barely sounded like his own. "You and I both know that at this point only a miracle can save me." I nodded, and he continued, "And you know I don't want to die before 16 but I don't really get a stay in the matter. I just . . . if I don't make it will you promise to live for me?" He was crying at this point. So was I.

"But . . . you're not gonna die. You're not gonna die. You're not gonna die." I started violently shaking. "You got better last time, and you can do it again. You're not going to die. You're not going to die." I ran from the room and past my mom and aunt. "You're not going to die." Down the hall. "You're not going to die." Around the corner. "You're." Up the stairs. "Not." Around the bend. "Gonna." Through the door. "Die," I whispered. I was now out on the roof. There was a thin metal railing around the perimeter. I walked over to it. It was ice cold. "No," I said, just to myself. "No." I looked down three stories to the busy highway. Why me? Why Mason? Why now? I could feel my thoughts start to get foggy. What good does my life do in this world anyway? I can't save Mason. Can't think straight. How easy would it be to just jump? That pain would be temporary, but if Mason died and if I had to go to the funeral? No, that would last forever. Can't think. If I just jumped. I looked down again. I breathed in. The air was ice cold. If I . . .

I froze. It was as if I had been punched in the face. My thoughts cleared and I stepped back from the railing. Was I really going to do that? *If I don't make it will you promise to live for me?* I heard Mason's words repeated in my head. Yes, Mason, I will.

(Continued on page 205)

*(Continued from page 204)*

Two months later Mason died in his sleep. His mother, father, sisters, aunt, and cousin were there with him. His suffering was over. Annabelle realized that now. There was nothing she could do to stop it - to stop him. But even though she would ache for his loss forever, she would live for him. Forever.

**Olivia Weinberger**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8

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**Bri McMaster**  
Cloverleaf High  
Grade 12

## Forever

Reminds me of the days of basking in the summer rays,  
     splashing through the current Even exploring the canopy of  
 trees that were at the foot of the path

With you

Forever

Is the window to look out into the world I now know  
 I wouldn't have drawn back the curtains to see it

Without you

Forever

Shows me the camera and the journal, claimed by your initials,  
     that sit beneath my desk, collecting dust

The things that documented everything

With you

Forever also carries

Pain

Reminding me of the day where our adventures came to a halt

The day where you became a memory

I would be

Without you

Forever

As I open the door to your room, deserted and seemingly frozen  
     in time, I inhale the scent of your sweet perfume.

My eyes gaze upon the hundreds of books organized in rows

With a few scattered on the floor

I grasp a novel that is on the top of a stack

A blue novel with a rose

A cheesy romance, of course

I flip through the pages and smile as my eyes well up and

A letter falls out

In your elegant handwriting, you write

*I am not immortal, but the memories I make can make me last*

Forever

**Brooklynn Bemiller**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 7



**Paige Kaltenbaugh**  
Black River High  
Grade 12



**Riley Beyer**  
Highland High  
Grade 11



**Are You Still There?  
(six feet down)**

Your grave is dark  
The shadows sit there  
Making home  
Something is littered in the dirt  
Thousands  
Of glittering shards of broken promises  
The oaths you said  
Now lay frozen and dormant  
In the once bare soil  
The headstone is covered in moss  
Your name that once fit so comfortably in my mouth  
Has now been mourned  
Though not by me  
Your deceitful smile  
Is shiny through the six feet  
As worms devour your rotten soul  
And mother nature claims you as hers  
Once again  
A tree moans in the wind  
Covering up your spiteful laugh  
As you sink into the ground

**Andrea Harden**  
Claggett Middle  
Grade 8



**Avery Kott**  
Cloverleaf High  
Grade 12

### **The Whispers in My Ear**

I hear something in the wind  
Just a whisper  
A thread of uncertainty  
It follows me  
Flows in one ear  
And out the other before I can grasp the words  
It climbs up my back  
Arousing goosebumps  
And perches on my shoulder  
Just out of sight  
It is a distant melody  
Eroded over years and years of unuse  
I don't believe the sun has ever reached it  
Ages spent  
Cooped up and hiding  
Whether in an attic  
Or at the bottom of a river  
It has remained docile  
Until something came along  
Something tousled it  
And now it sits  
In the darkest crevice of my mind  
And it just keeps whispering

**Andrea Harden**  
Claggett Middle  
Grade 8



**Karleigh Joeright**  
Highland High  
Grade 12



**Hannah Faulkner**  
Medina High  
Grade 10



**Delilah Sikora**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8



**Bryanna Freed**  
Medina High  
Grade 12

## How Are You?

You send signs of red cardinals  
Everywhere I go  
I'm always asking you for protection  
But how are you

It almost has been empty without you  
Same traditions, different house  
Saying 'I love you' for the last time, not knowing  
Leaning on your shoulder for everything  
But how are you

From candy jars to pierogies  
From cardboard spaceships to old rolling pins  
Memories flow my mind  
Can you hear me  
How are you

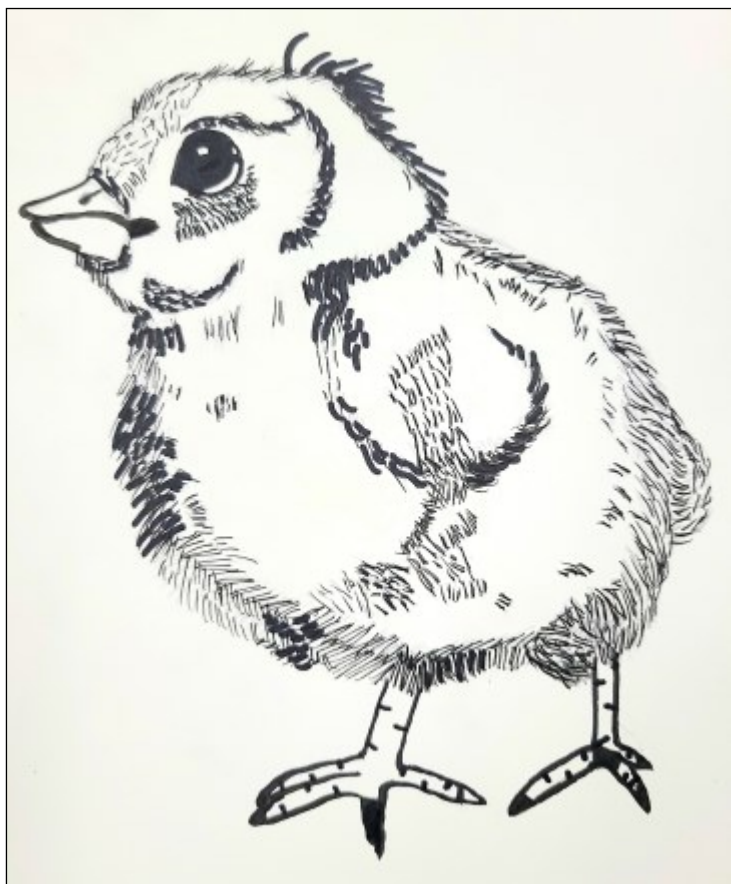
**Julia Hartman**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8

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**Amelia Waibel**  
Buckeye High  
Grade 9





**Leah Stulpin**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8



**Kiara Scharfenberg**  
Cloverleaf High  
Grade 12

## Loving

I still love all the people I've loved  
Even when I cross the street to avoid them  
Or move to the other side of the hallway  
just to not make eye contact  
Or ignore every little thing they say  
I still love them  
Just not like I use to

### **Aurora Bican**

Root Middle

Grade 8

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### **Bryanna Freed**

Medina High

Grade 12



**Russell Kovalchik**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 7

## Reality

The last time something felt real  
Was in 2019  
The night before Christmas  
Everything went according to plan  
But something was missing  
Something important  
Someone important.

**Aurora Bican**  
Root Middle  
Grade 8

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**Bryanna Freed**  
Medina High  
Grade 12



**Delaney Twombly**  
Highland High  
Grade 9



**Emily Smith**  
Black River High  
Grade 11



**Natalie Klaehn**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8



## The Storm of Change

She sat, staring out the window watching the storm roll in with rage. She waited in her room, in her somber black dress preparing for her mother's funeral. Her mother wasn't sick, or hadn't been in a while. But the cancer came back unexpectedly. Her mother didn't even bother to tell anyone it had come back, maybe her mother knew this was the end. The girl sat in silence wishing the rain would become louder, so loud it would drown out her thoughts and questions which were swallowing her whole. What will I do without her? Will I be able to go on? Who's going to be there when I feel alone? Why her and not me? Will **anyone** want me? The girl asked the final question with an answer she wasn't ready to face. Will I ever see my mother again? She gazed outside again because even though this storm was dark and disgusting she found it fascinating. She looked outside to see her old tire swing blowing in the wind. For a second she even thought she had seen her mother pushing the swing. The image sent chills throughout her body. She knew this was only a daydream, but it almost seemed real for a minute. She blinked hard and a tear ran down her face. "I'm not going to cry again, I'm not." She couldn't cry anymore, if she would start to cry again she knew she wouldn't be able to control herself. Almost like the storm, she thought, uncontrollable. What if the storm is like me in a way? The storm, it's unpredictable, alone, enraged and maybe the storm was even scared. No one has the ability to control it and what it does. The girl was like the storm without her mother. Dangerous, wild and uncontrollable.

The storm had quickened, throwing giant branches from the yard into the street, cars sliding through the water, people praying that they wouldn't hydroplane, a telephone pole lay across the sidewalk after it had been struck by lightning and split in two. The girl felt her heart starting to race as the raindrops grew and became heavier hitting her window like bullets. In the midst of the storm, she couldn't believe that she saw a butterfly, full of color and life. With all of its might it was pushing its way through the storm. Each raindrop hit it with such force she thought without a doubt the butterfly would fall. Yet it kept flying higher and higher. Its color stands out from the grays and blacks in the sky making it hard to miss. The girl thought "I need to find the strength to get through this, just like the butterfly." Her eyes darted around making sure not to lose it, she forgot to blink she was so worried

*(Continued on page 226)*

*(Continued from page 225)*

she would lose the butterfly. It landed very elegantly. She opened her window and rushed to the tree climbing down very carefully making sure not to slip and trying to avoid everyone inside.

The rain hit her like cold needles all around. The feeling was calming in a way. She slowly approached the butterfly. Just then she realized the butterfly had landed on a rose bush. This made her laugh, mostly because her mother's middle name was Rose and her mother loved butterflies. She wondered if this was a sign from her mother. Probably not, right? She let the butterfly slowly crawl onto her finger and she gently blew off the water on the butterfly's wings. After, it crawled up her arm, onto her shoulder, and flew off. The girl felt like a weight had been lifted off of her and she had a warming sensation around her heart. It seemed crazy but it was almost as if the butterfly had healed her a little. She turned walking to the front door. She finally had the courage to go inside, she doesn't realize she pushes the door so hard until after it flings open. Everyone's eyes turn to her. Even if the room was full of people, she couldn't feel more alone. She still thinks she's not ready and can't face anyone, let alone a whole family without crying. She runs to the stairs. Ready to go back up but turns as a sparkle catches her eye. In the corner of the steps lay a beautiful gold chain with a small butterfly charm. She had forgotten all about the necklace; it was her mother's and she never took it off. So why was it here? Was it a sign from her mother? She picks it up, puts it on and in spite of everything she feels hopeful and her heart feels finally fulfilled with the warmth of her mother's love. She turns back to see everyone and in that moment she knew she was ready to try to face the people again because her mother might not be here, but she knew she would be watching over her. It still seems crazy that something so small can change your life in such a short amount of time. Even if it is just a butterfly. The girl's butterfly was her sign to move forward even if the road ahead is harsh. Keep looking for your butterfly because it might not come when you need it most, but when the time is right you will find it.

**Savanna Landrum**  
Black River Middle  
Grade 8



**Blair Crandall**  
Medina High  
Grade 10

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### **Second Chance**

I still wonder if I could ever go back  
What would've happened?  
Would I change myself for you  
Or become a whole person built around your needs  
The fact is though  
Even if I could go back  
I wouldn't belong there anymore

**Aurora Bican**  
Root Middle  
Grade 8

## Music of Life

Music.

Music is the crying of your mother when you were brought into the world.

Music is the special lullaby that was sung to you before resting your eyes.

Music is the bus engine resting at the edge of your driveway on the first day of school.

Music is the tapping of the blinker when you get your license.

Music is the hollering when you turn your tassel and throw your cap to the sky.

Music is the songs on the radio as you drive your first date to dinner.

Music is the bells clanging and hands clapping as you kiss your spouse on your special day.

Music is your newborn's cry at birth.

Music is the first word that is spoken by your child.

Music is the sound of the engine fading as your only child takes off to college.

Music is the sound of laughter as your grandkids play in the backyard.

Music is the slow beats of your spouse's heart on the Holter monitor.

Music is the trumpets bursting on the day we knew would arrive but couldn't bear to imagine.

Music is the whispers of secrets you never told your child as you lay on your deathbed.

Music is the stale beat that echoes through the room as you finish the end of your journey called life.

**Aaron Snyder**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 8



**Hayleigh Handy**  
Medina High  
Grade 12

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**Hayleigh Handy**  
Medina High  
Grade 12

## Night

Tonight I'll ache  
With an undefined longing for no reason at all  
With thoughts still lingering in my mind  
With the memories we could of had  
With thinking of everything I've let go of  
With the thought of  
No guarantee I'll be loved again

### Aurora Bican

Root Middle

Grade 8



### Lucas Kennedy

Medina High

Grade 12



**Abigail Vitko**  
Medina High  
Grade 12

## How I Was Before

When I look in the mirror;  
What do I see?

I see the face I saw when I was 5;  
Missing teeth, splotch of jelly on my cheek, and wild hair tugged  
into a braid  
Just getting done examining the makeup my mom did on me for  
fun.

I see the face I saw when I was 8;  
My first pair of earrings, cheap lip gloss, and a high ponytail I  
thought made me look like a popstar;  
About to put on my new mascara I got for Christmas by myself.

I see the face I saw when I was 11;  
Noticing first signs of growing acne, my face filling out, and  
angrily straightening my hair because it decided to look curly that  
day;

I set down my concealer and blush, not knowing what I was  
getting myself into.

And now, as 14, I look into the mirror;  
Examining every feature to the tiniest pore on my skin, prodding  
and shaping so I can appear as beautiful, and redoing my bun so  
it looks like I did it effortlessly when really I was on the verge of  
ripping out my hair because it doesn't look like those girls with the  
easy, shiny hair.

I look at all the versions of myself that somehow led me to this  
moment.

I realize that it's not about what I looked like at that time.  
It was how I felt.

And for once I wish I was that five year old girl again,  
Stepping down from the mirror with a smile on my face.

Where did it all change?

What went wrong?

When did it all start to matter?

**Georgia Obendorf**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8



## I'm Only Fourteen

Every day is a battle in my head  
 Wondering if my brain is dead.  
 Why do I feel so much ache  
 If I'm only 5,189 days.

I wish every day for the sun to rise nice  
 And wish every day for my future to be bright.  
 But how shall I make it on and nice  
 When I suffer so much pain and spite  
 While only being 5,189 days?

My heart is shattered  
 Every time I look in the mirror,  
 I feel like I deserve zero.  
 But why do I feel so much ache  
 If I'm only 5,189 days?

**Selena Pintos**  
 Black River Middle  
 Grade 8

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## Days

I've been alive for exactly five-thousand-seventy-six days. Out of all of those days I have had good, bad, lazy, active, talkative, and quiet days. To choose out of five-thousand-seventy-six days is hard, I get it. But it's not really the days that are memorable, unless it happened recently or you have a wonderful memory you won't be able to say "I went to the park on November 2." Instead of it being the days, it's the memories that you remember. Memories are the things that stick to you the best. Like for example, I went to go see the new Hunger Games movies, I don't know the day but I do remember the movie.

**Lucy Roesink**  
 Wadsworth Middle  
 Grade 7



**Adalyne Wasmer**  
Highland High  
Grade 12



**Dimitri Jurewicz**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8

Twelve had just become familiar.  
 I stopped stumbling, stuttering over the word,  
 Hoping it was right.  
 It came out awkward, choppy,  
 From beneath the word "eleven."  
 I shoveled back when people asked,  
 Because that wasn't right,  
 Not anymore.  
 Twelve had just become familiar.  
     Just in time for thirteen.  
 Thirteen that came too fast  
 Because twelve had yet to leave  
     And yet to come.  
 When did twelve become thirteen?  
 When will twelve become thirteen?  
 When will I ever feel the age I am?  
     And when will I ever be the age I feel?

**Olivia Dombrosky**  
 Wadsworth Middle  
 Grade 7



**Addison Alspach**  
 Medina High  
 Grade 12

## The Confidence I Wish I Had

I feel like it's hard to socialize sometimes  
To be vulnerable and let others know what's going on  
Sharing my emotions feels Impossible but yet inescapable  
It feels like others won't understand  
What I have to say  
So I like to stay away.  
Locked inside my own head.

I wish I could loosen up but my emotions are strung tight like a  
corset.  
I feel held back  
As If a force field won't let me through  
The words get stuck in my mouth  
My lips close like a barricade.

I try to be strong, but It's like weights are pushing down on my  
shoulder  
Making me feel weak and broken down  
Too scared to take risks and let my words escape.

Sometimes I wish I could be like others  
How their words and emotions flow out of their mouth  
Like the flood of water out of a facet  
But the truth is the facet can be switched off as easily as it's  
turned on.

One hurtful comment and you can shut someone up  
But if you have confidence with you it's like having a knight in  
shining armor  
Guarding your emotions.  
Keeping those comments from getting through to you.

Confidence protects your palace of personality

If you have confidence in yourself that knight can keep all the  
dragons out.  
But I struggle to find that knight  
I struggle to find that guardian  
I struggle to find that confidence I wish I had

*(Continued on page 238)*

*(Continued from page 237)*

Instead I find that I feel like I'm locked in the dungeons,  
Held behind bars,  
Far from the fun the kingdom holds.  
Because sometimes it just seems too hard to be vulnerable.

It's like every word that comes out of my mouth could be wrong

And sometimes it feels like every day is a beauty contest  
Getting judged by judges that are thinking beauty's only skin  
deep  
Instead of getting to know the beauty of their personalities.

So I get scared to get judged by people who judge because they  
feel you don't meet the standards.

Sometimes I'm just far too scared what others think

And sometimes I just want to hide from everything that scares  
me.

But getting the confidence I desire  
Start with sharing my fears

So someday I can have the confidence I wish I had.

**Madelyn Hanson**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8



### **Grace Netherton**

Medina High

Grade 12

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Dreams,  
 The things that keep us either  
 Asleep at night or up at night  
 It can always go both ways  
 Just like a road  
 Dreams are things that people feed off of;  
 In a good or bad way, it can go both ways  
 Just like a road  
 And when a dream is sparked, it can create  
 Happiness, freedom, and love  
 But when provoked or if it becomes a obsession,  
 Your dreams turn to nightmares and  
 Everything goes somber; Look at it like nature,  
 Our world can create flowers and they can bloom like a full  
     moon  
 But the earth and nature can also create disasters that ruin  
     lives

*(Continued on page 240)*

(Continued from page 239)

Dreams are something that you can create yourself  
Or they can become a dream when you sense something  
Like a compulsion or urge  
It can go both ways  
Just like a road  
And you can let other people tear you downward  
You can let people around you take away your dreams  
You can let those dreams become insecurities  
Or you can keep them, not hidden, but just to a point where you  
Can show people, but you let it seethe first and then,  
When you know that it is time, you let it out to paint your  
World from black and white to a rainbow of love and equality  
Perhaps even inventions, ideas and dare I even say . . . peace  
and unity  
But all we have to do is dream  
And that doesn't mean taking someone else's dream  
And driving it down to make yours look superior  
Because when a flower is blooming  
We don't take off the bud and state  
"This is a flower," when, yes it is  
But is it really a flower?  
It's only the *start* of something amazing, only the *start*  
Of a change . . .  
So, is it a flower?  
Are you willing to walk down that road?

**Natallia Cottrell**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 7



## Mind Battles

She forgive, forgave, and forgot  
Then she re-learned your ways  
She heard your sharp voice  
The whispers behind her  
She feel your stares burning her skin  
Your whispers clawing into her back  
She walks away  
Bruised  
Battered  
But not done  
She sees you again  
Your stares  
Your whispers  
Now she returns  
No bruises  
No burns  
She has won  
You have lost  
She will not listen to your comments anymore  
She does not care anymore  
I watched her learn not to crumble in their gaze  
Not to fall in their arrogance  
Not to hide from them  
Instead she leaves  
Laughs at their stupidity  
Loves herself

**Annaliese Pivato**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 7



**Addison Alspach**  
Medina High  
Grade 12

## Royalty

Royalty. That's what we had. My wife was happy, we had a good life. But was I happy? No . . . I wasn't. When you saw my life it was full of riches, money, jewels, fine china. Everything one might ever want or need. Though, through all of that, I was alone.

My family, distant. All a show, for the banquets and parties. Yet deep down, still, I was alone. Soon that started to eat away at me. Slowly, day by day. The thought of it was frightening. I hated my life, my family, the things. It was all fake. I wanted it gone! The things! The fortune! Everything! All I really wanted was to live! Out of the spotlight, away from the crowds, the people. The diplomats and duchess. I wanted them *gone!*

But there was no way out. They would follow me. Follow me until I am gone. Yet even then, most likely, not. I would go down in history as another rich swine, done nothing, but sit with the others and wait for death.

**Ingrid Reynolds**

Brunswick Middle

Grade 8



**Jay Milewski**  
Medina High  
Grade 11

## The Girl Who Cried Fire

There was a girl who cried so hard flames licked her cheeks. When she cried, she couldn't breathe as smoke tangled and swirled into her lungs. When she cried, her cheeks and lips would burn and blister. They became permanently red and charred, for which she was made fun of, which made her cry more.

She didn't cry at school. She couldn't. If she did, she would be perceived as weak, taking away from her strong and funny appearance. She cried at home in her bed as she lay awake, trying to sleep as her cheeks burned.

The thing is, she is always happy at school. At least, she makes it look that way. When she goes home, it all releases. Her plastic body returns to flesh and bone, and her face frowns. Her chest becomes heavy and she sits. Sits and falls into a paralysis with a snack or a show, since that is all that can decompress her and keep her in a state of no movement.

Every day of coming to school is unpredictable and anxiety inducing. The day usually started out okay, but something or someone would trigger her. She would even trigger herself. For example, whenever she looked in a mirror, the smoke from her tears would whisper in her mind something cruel and awful. The smoke would mimic people's speech as if it had become their body. The girl believed it too. She listened to the smoke and the fire. Only some days later she was able to tame the fire. She snapped back at the manipulating smoke and claimed that what it said wasn't true. But some days, she cried and let the fire envelop her body and chain her chest so she couldn't breathe. When she was like this, there was no stopping her. She was cruel and angsty when the fire whispered to her. She snapped at her own family members and friends. When the fire would die down, she would feel bad but the smoke wouldn't let her apologize.

However she has good days too. She just chooses to ignore them and dwell on the flames on her eyes and under her eye bags. She usually has good days, but the smoke *always* returns. She can't talk to anyone about it except her family. But she

*(Continued on page 246)*

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already complains about it so much that her family is sick of it. That makes her fire stronger.

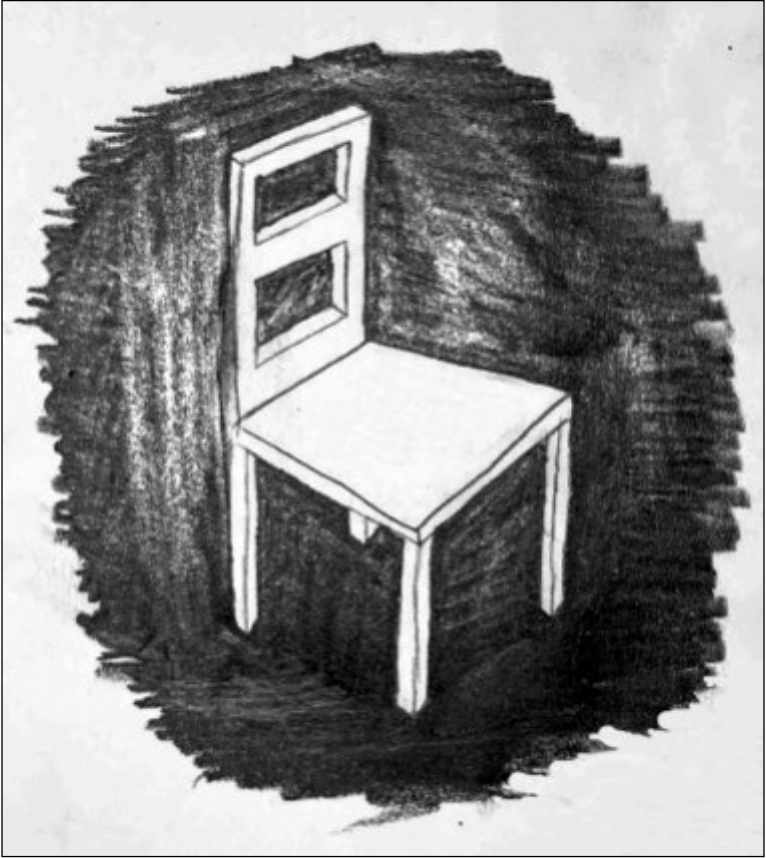
Sometimes, the smoke is creative. The smoke likes to tell her that everyone is judging her, hating her, or silently appalled by her. The smoke likes to do that when she has nothing to do, which makes her even more lethargic. It likes to bother her about that. It circles around her head whispering cruel words. *Lazy... lethargic... fat... boring...* and other things.

School is the girl's biggest challenge. She is faced with cruel comments and words. This makes her and her fire furious. Her fire practically explodes out of her throat when she is angry. Her fire screams more cruel words at its enemies. The girl tries to stop it, but it burns her throat when she doesn't. So she doesn't try even though she knows it is the wrong thing to do.

So the girl began to take water filled capsules to tame her fire. They began to work! She began to talk to a therapist more regularly, and her fire became less and less of a problem. It was still there, but it was calmer. She came to terms with the fire, and even made friends with it! She uses makeup to conceal her singed face, and cuts her hair to gain her confidence back. She dresses differently, and is practically a new person. Even inside! She is happier and more carefree.

In the end, the girl who cries fire no longer cries fire. Just bursts of smoke. Her lungs are practically healed, and so is her face. If you ever feel like this girl, take some time off, reach out for help, and remember that you are not alone. The girl improved and so will you. It feels impossible, but it is nothing but a blip on the radar of life. Everything will be okay.  
Signed, the author.

**Chloe Spencer**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 7



**Jennifer Wilson**  
Highland High  
Grade 10

## Peace

I will pray for peace,  
no matter what comes my way,  
peace in the madness,  
peace in the stress,  
peace in the insecurity,  
and peace in the guess,  
I will pray for peace.  
Through the heartache,  
and through the pain,  
and even through the gain.  
I will pray for peace.

**Andrea Derr**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8

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## Jesus Saved Me

Every day the sun doesn't feel so bright  
I look up at the sky and remember  
Jesus loves me always and forever  
Like how coffee loves creamer  
How the sky needs the stars  
I need Jesus  
I love life  
Every minute of it  
Every second I'm here  
I'm thankful yes thankful  
That I am here

**Madison Ambrose**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8



## Fear

Fear  
 It's everywhere  
 Creeping up on me  
 Like a mysterious fog  
 Rolling onto a city

Under my skin  
 There's fear  
 Deep down inside  
 There's fear  
 Fear  
 Fears everywhere

Fear  
 Will people judge me for what I wear?  
 Fear  
 Did I say something wrong?  
 Fear  
 Will my friends care if I do this?  
 Fear  
     Fear  
         Fear  
             Fear

Fear spreads through my body  
 Like ink  
 Bleeding through paper

Fear follows us  
 Fear stalks us  
 Fear haunts us  
 Fear controls us

*Fear stops us*

We don't fear the dark  
 We fear the unknown  
 Not knowing what's coming next

We don't fear losing people  
 We fear being alone

*(Continued on page 250)*

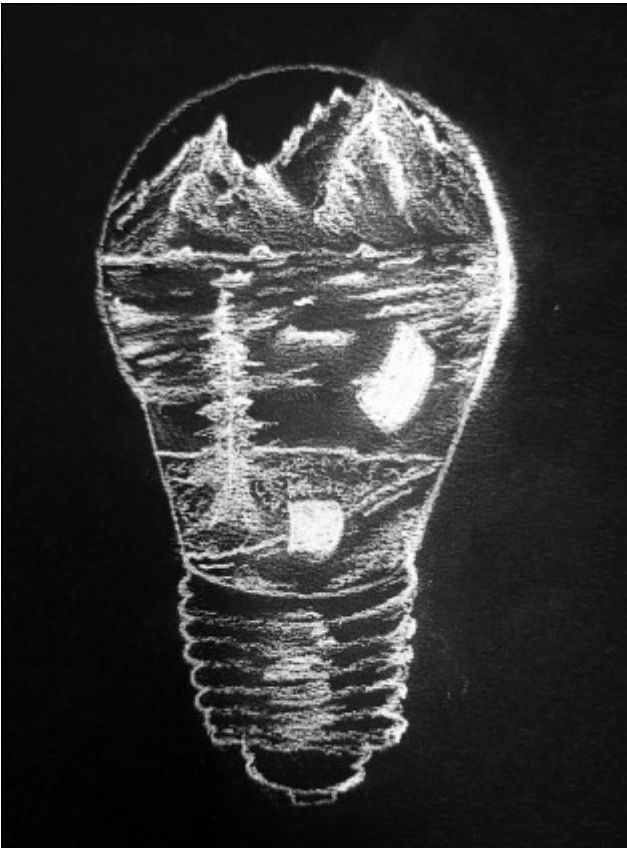
*(Continued from page 249)*

Fear doesn't exist

Except in our mind.

**Vera Wildrout**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8

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**Mason Silvka**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 7

## The Block

Fabricating a story around writer's block is legendary but quite frankly, overused. You'd think I'm out of creativity and all out of ideas.

If you thought that . . . you'd be correct.

Kind of

This is where my story just begins.

The story of the infamous BLOCK

The thing that engulfs you when you feel you have essentially . . .

Nothing to create.

Not all blocks appear in writing. You could have an art block, a mental block, a Lego blo-

Oops I didn't mean that one.

But blocks are there. Disturbances. Inconveniences. For individuals trying their very hardest to ignite a spark inside their heads. The block is the sock riding down your heel on the inside of your shoe. The block is the stain you just got on your brand new shirt. It's even the one question you missed on your math test, keeping you away from a perfect score.

When you are under attack from the block, so annoying and bothersome, you must keep in mind it is only a part of the story before the interesting stuff actually happens. Many people don't acknowledge this side of the story.

Blocks are needed to be an amazing story teller. They are just a challenge you must face to get onto the final boss. The story. Once it has done its job, your world inside the writing will come to life. All coming full circle once again.

**Brooklynn Bemiller**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 7

### At This Point: A Letter

This would have been a poem.  
 Had I not taken out all the  
 Pointless  
 Useless  
 Parts

I took out the metaphor that you were supposed to read  
 And think it was about you  
 Because it was  
 So that hopefully you would notice how I felt  
 But you never read into the meaning of why I wrote the words I  
 did  
 Never stared at these sentences until you understood what they  
 meant  
 So I removed it.

I also removed the analogy about my trauma, my pain, and my  
 guilt  
 Because all I hear is  
 "Nice poem"  
 When I want to hear  
 "Are you okay"  
 So I removed it.

Another thing, I took out all the parts that made people sad  
 Because no one wants to talk about the real world  
 They read to  
 Distract  
 I write to  
 Remind  
 So I removed it.

Then the rhymes had to go  
 That's because rhymes have to make sense  
 Form a pattern  
 Be predictable  
 Nothing makes sense - there are no patterns - and  
 I AM NOT PREDICTABLE  
 So I removed it.

*(Continued on page 253)*

*(Continued from page 252)*

Finally I deleted all of the imagery  
All of the parts that you should've had to analyze  
Because no one understands what I mean when I bury my words  
    in similes and allusions and analogies  
The connotation in my speech is undefined because how can  
People  
Understand my feelings when  
I  
Don't  
So I removed it.

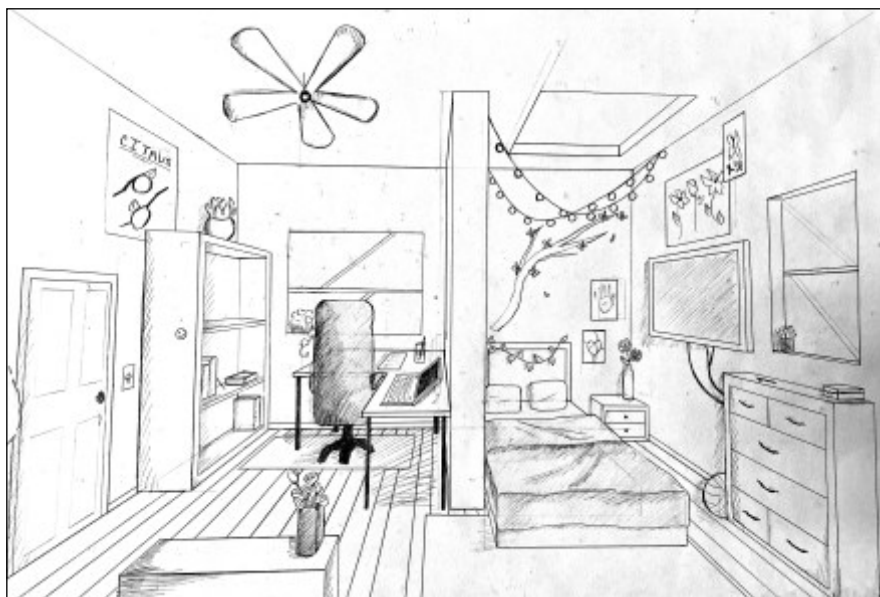
I am not a raging sea, I'm just angry. I don't care about thorns on  
    roses, what I mean to say is that you hurt me. I could care  
    less about the sun and the moon and the stars, I just meant  
    that I feel insignificant.  
So you see, this would have been a poem, but without language,  
    feeling, and purpose, it becomes a letter:

Hello,

I am angry. I am hurt. I am lonely.

Signed,

**Reese McQuaid**  
Wadsworth High  
Grade 9



**Meah Cerne**  
 Black River High  
 Grade 11

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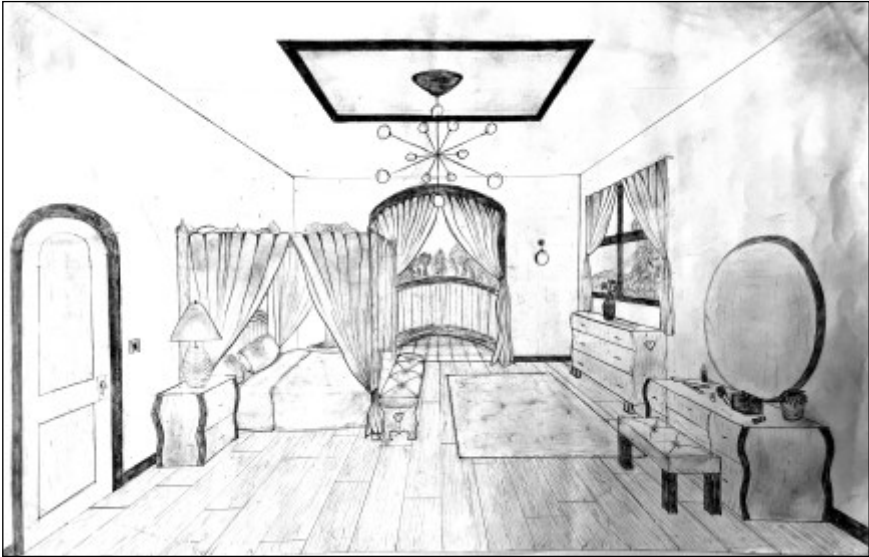
When day becomes night,  
 When the lights turn off,  
 And you're in your imaginary world,  
 You realize you aren't paying attention.  
 When you're failing your classes,  
 When you keep getting in trouble at home,  
 And you feel like you cannot do anything right,  
 You realize you are a disappointment.  
 When you're left out,

*(Continued on page 255)*

*(Continued from page 254)*

When friends never invite you,  
And people don't like to be around you for long,  
You realize you're better off without friends.  
Even everybody feels down at some point,  
But that's no reason to frown.  
You aren't going to be sad forever.  
But when time goes by slowly,  
When you start to tear up when the bright lights turn back on,  
And when you start understanding the lesson,  
You realize you are finally paying attention.  
When you're acing all of your classes,  
When you do things at home without being told,  
And you start to find hope,  
You realize maybe you aren't a total disappointment.  
When people start complimenting you,  
When people take time out of their day to talk to you,  
And when you make a ton of new friends,  
You realize people do want you around.  
Everything will get better,  
Even if you never feel like it will.

**Ava Seeley**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 7



**Giuliana Hulesch**  
 Black River High  
 Grade 11

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**Don't Tell Me**

Don't tell me you love me,  
 Don't tell me that you care.  
 Don't tell me that things will get better,  
 Because I know that life's not fair.  
 Don't tell me that I matter,  
 Don't tell me to always hope.  
 Because If I were to fall,  
 No one would even care.  
 And yet the sun still rises,  
 And the birds still always sing.  
 And there's still a beautiful world out there,  
 All just waiting for me.  
 Now tell me that you care,  
 Assure me that I'm loved.  
 Show me how I matter,  
 And that I'm fine the way I am.  
 And I now know that life's not fair,  
 And I'm the best me I can be.  
 So remind me of my blessings,  
 So I can live worry free.

**Tyler Ramsier**  
 Wadsworth Middle  
 Grade 8



## Family Tree

Sometimes we'd over water it  
Because we don't know when to stop giving  
Because we don't know always know how to support each other

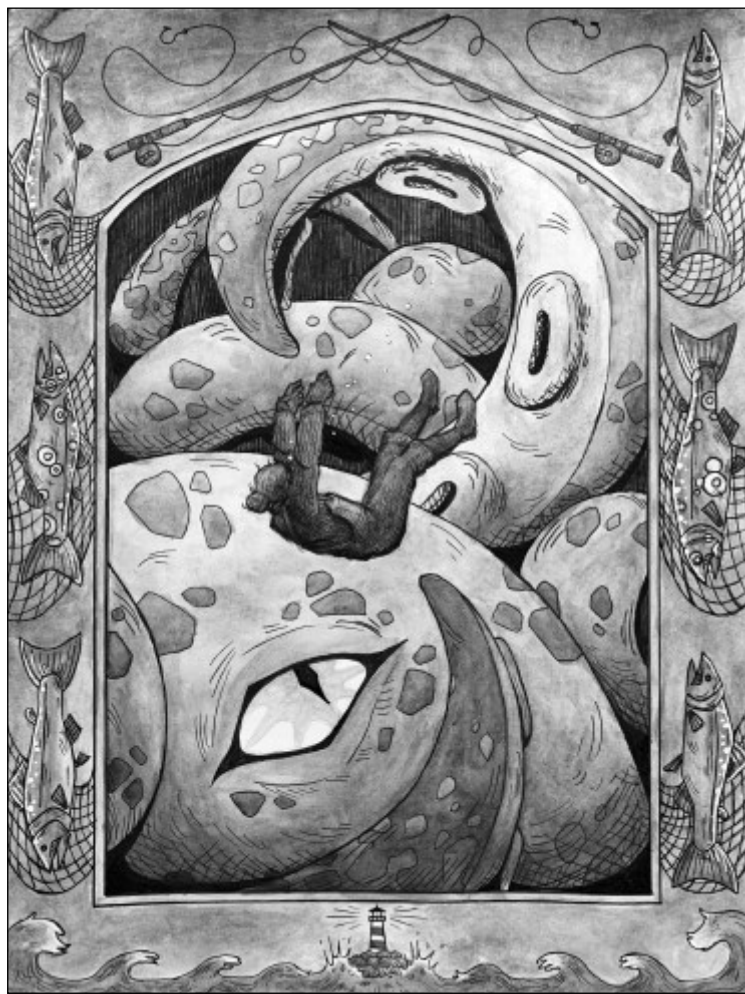
Sometimes we'd under water it  
Because oftentimes one of us is gone for a while  
And can't always be there to tend to its needs

Sometimes the leaves start peeling  
When we are all in a dark place for too long  
And it takes a while to open the curtains again

Sometimes we'd have to decorate it  
With pretty baubles and garlands to distract people  
And act like everything is fine

But most of the time we'd look at it and smile  
Proud of the initials carved over time  
Proud of ourselves for turning over new leaves  
And proud of the many years it's had to grow

**Reese McQuaid**  
Wadsworth High  
Grade 9



**Sid Frazier**  
Medina High  
Grade 12



**Sofia Veres**  
Brunswick High  
Grade 12

## The Pen

Take a pen  
A writing utensil  
It was yours then  
It was theirs as well  
You used it once  
Maybe twice  
They used it once  
Maybe twice too  
Poems writings notes  
You dropped it once  
They dropped it too!  
Then, someone new  
Someone new found it  
They used it too  
Poems writings notes  
They didn't drop it though  
They left it  
They swore they'd come back  
Never did  
Someone new, someone new, someone new  
The same things happened  
Different people come and go  
And the pen stays a pen  
A single pen

**Adyn Klusti**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 7

### As a Writer . . .

Your hand is shaking  
 Shook  
 Your words rub off on your palm  
 Sweat smears the ink  
 Seconds tick by  
 Sadness, Suffering, Sometimes  
 A happy ending  
 Slip, Skip, Show  
 How

Will

It

End

S  
 H  
 O  
 W

Not Tell  
 Stories pour onto the page  
 Scribble, Scrabble  
 Write faster, hurt your wrist  
 Your eyes are glued to your paper  
 You can't help glancing at the clock  
 Tick, tock  
 Finishing touches

### X Sign Your Name

It's over when it just began  
 It is out of your hands, out of your mind  
 Done

This is how it feels to create.

**Olivia Weinberger**  
 Wadsworth Middle  
 Grade 8

A story is something you can relate to. It is something that will make you feel different emotions. Some stories will make you feel scared, others happy and others sad. Sometimes people don't like stories but I believe that it isn't that the story is boring it is that the person can't relate to that story or because they are not feeling those emotions that make them want to read more because some people will like one story but then others will not like that story because they just can't relate to the story. A lot of people will say that they do not like to read but I don't think that is it at all. I think that it is people who are not keeping their options open or who do not care to read say that because they do not care enough to look out and find a story that they would really like. When you find a story that you like it will expand your mind a little more and then the more you keep reading the more your mind expands until you love reading. So it isn't that people do not like to read it is that they don't care to read and it isn't that the story is boring it is that you cannot relate to it. I love to think whenever a book you read is boring find a book that is short when you read that short book read a little bit of a bigger book then eventually read really big books but don't just randomly read these big books because if you have already read all of these smaller books working up then you clearly love reading so once you get to a really big book find a book to relate to. That is enjoying a book.

**Kai Shepard**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 7

## Virgo

Hair like silk and soul as pure as light,  
Eyes like the moon shining through the night,  
You are shy but your mind is always loud,  
You prefer to be alone than stand in the crowd.

Hated by the Libra and loved by the Taurus,  
Your heart as peaceful and sound as the forest,  
Torn by your own soul and hating the silence,  
You walk alone fearing such defiance.

You are fragile like a dove, your feathers like glass,  
Waiting for the day when they see you at last,  
You like things simple, slow and calm,  
You are wise as the owl yet as clumsy as the fawn.

Though sweet and kind, you will bear your claws,  
You speak with truth and accept your flaws,  
You hold friends close to protect from harm,  
You wear a beautiful smile and a heart pure and warm.

**Hadley Petkovic**

Root Middle

Grade 8

## Change

January:

Please tell me this is all over.

December:

I promise, it all works out.

We fixed it? We're all friends again?

No, they don't talk to you anymore.

But I thought you said-

I know. It's okay. We learned how to burn bridges.

But . . .

It's better this way. I promise.

So we're alone?

No. Well - yes. For a while.

For a while? How long is a while?

I promise you'll be okay. He's worth it.

He?

Talk to September.

September? . . . I can wait until September.

I know. We did.

**Reese McQuaid**

Wadsworth High

Grade 9



## **Family**

**F**un times with my parents and siblings playing board games on a snow day

**A**ll of my family members are very supporting and loving

**M**y grandparents are very supportive and they are always by my side no matter what

**I** love my dad so much even though I don't always act like I thank him because he always has my back and I'll always have his

**L**ake, laugh, love is my favorite saying because I love to go to the lake with my family and make everlasting memories with the people I love the most

**Y**outh football is something I participated in and all my family members sat in the cold rainy nasty weather just to support me.

**Karsen Caldwell**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 7



**Isabel Kirby**  
Cloverleaf High  
Grade 11

## **Sister**

**S**he is always arguing with me but she is always there for me and I wouldn't change my sister to anybody else even though we fight a lot

**I** like my sister a lot more than I show

**S**omething me and my sister love doing together is tubing off the back of our grandparent's boat

**T**he first thing that comes to my mind when I think of my older sister Kailynn is mean but there for me.

**E**very time we get into an argument she somehow ends up winning every time

**R**iding my bike with my sister around our campground is one of the many things I like to do with my older sister.

**Karsen Caldwell**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 7

**Ella**

The sister I never knew I needed  
Still holding our memories close to my heart  
Catching fireflies in your backyard  
Bonfires every summer Saturday  
Doing each other nails  
While we fill each other in on the neighborhood drama  
Inventing games for too hot for outside kind of summer days  
Teaching each other how to hop a fence  
Making slime out of unusual ingredients  
Yelling at each other over a four square call  
Tackling each other under the volleyball net  
Having sleepovers through out every summer  
Who cares about the age difference  
Who says sisters are blood related  
She's 10  
I'm 12  
A decade of friendship  
No,  
A decade of sisterhood  
That I wouldn't trade for the world

**Anna Hanzie**

Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 7

## Mirror

Corrie and Haven Thomas  
have been together  
since birth.  
and they're tired of it

Corrie's tired of  
Having to go  
in either the middle  
or front of the line  
for sports pictures  
so that the photo  
people  
don't think  
they accidentally  
took two pictures  
of the same person.

Corrie is tired of  
Joint names  
Like Caven  
Or Horrie  
from people who've  
stopped trying to tell  
which one she is.

Corrie hates how  
People assume  
she likes something  
Just because  
Haven does.

Corrie wants  
There to be  
One thing.  
That is **just hers**.

Corrie wants  
Her parents  
To just focus  
On her for once.

Haven is tired of  
her grandma  
saying to her  
"Oh Corrie.  
You're blossoming into  
such a beautiful  
young woman,"  
And having to say  
back;  
"Actually, I'm Haven."

Haven's sick of  
people saying  
"Oh! There go  
'The Twins'"  
like it's some  
secret code name.

Haven wishes  
that they had  
separate  
friend groups.

Haven wants to yell  
"I AM NOT  
MY SISTER!"

Haven would love  
If people  
Would stop  
Comparing  
Who is  
better grade-wise  
the prettier one the  
funnier one.

But really, they wouldn't trade it for the world.

**Evangeline Sondles**

Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8

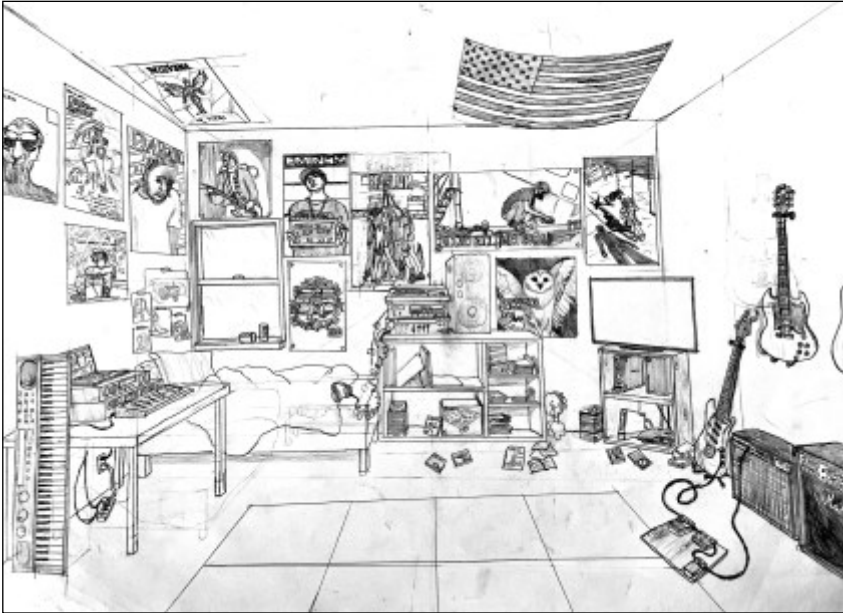
**Mrs. Wolf**

Yes I still remember you  
Always smiling when I walked into class  
Always making language arts fun  
Always listening to Six-Minutes Podcast  
Always teaching me new things  
Always giving us cozy spots to read  
Always finding fun things for us to do  
Always telling me and Hudson to be quiet  
Always having fun class parties  
Always telling funny stories  
Always helping me with my writing  
Always making sure we have fun  
Always being there for me  
Thank you

**George Gale**

Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 7

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**Peter Howard**

Black River High  
Grade 10

## Paper and Ink

The type on the page,  
The pen and its ink,  
More peaceful than sage,  
More powerful than you think.

Begin to dream,  
As letters fold,  
Creating seams,  
Of the greatest gold.

Write with heart,  
Soul and mind,  
For the writer,  
Is a beautiful kind.

**Hadley Petkovic**  
Root Middle  
Grade 8

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**Kaila Carmody**  
Highland High  
Grade 12

## The Serenity of a Good Book

Getting lost in the pages.

Gliding through the heavy plot.

Soaring through the character arcs.

This is the serenity of a good book.

Feeling a connection to the characters.

The thrill of anxiety and excitement when you reach the climax.

The soft feel of the pages as you race to find out how the story ends

The feeling of calm and satisfaction when you reach the end.

This is the serenity of a good book.

### Reese Gruver

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 8

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### Isabelle Oehler

Medina High

Grade 12



## Unlucky

When I was wandering by the well  
I made a wish, but don't you tell  
To be lucky throughout the year  
I thought my wish was oh so clear.  
But apparently, not at all  
For that day I took a fall  
I broke my leg and now I'm due  
To try that lucky horseshoe.  
Although I shouldn't ever dare  
The shoe belonged to a Nightmare.  
And my lucky penny just won't work  
Luck is driving me berserk!  
Oh, this isn't fair at all!  
I was so mad I kicked my wall.  
My calendar fell on the floor  
And then I wondered why no more.  
"Friday, October 13th"

**Evangeline Sondles**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 8



**Katelyn Dean**  
Brunswick High  
Grade 10

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### Ode to My Tap Shoes

Black leather exterior, shiny and new,  
With thin black laces throughout it.

Hard silver heel to make a beautiful sound,  
No need to misdoubt it.

Split sole, faded toe, from years of use,  
But beautiful, no doubt about it.

Knotted twice before I perform,  
Oh how could I go without it.

**Olivia Weinberger**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8



**Amanda Liggett**  
Highland High  
Grade 12

## Ode to My Jean Jacket

If my jean jacket was a person  
I'd befriend it.

If it was a game  
I'd never end it.

I could never make it without it  
I keep it safe, so don't you doubt it.

If I lose something inside it  
I just know I'll never find it.

It's now a part of me  
We're bonded.

It's like my wings  
I can take flight

Try to do without it?  
Yeah right.

**Evangeline Sondles**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 8

## The Alleyway

Dimly lit  
 Right in between  
 The Pharmacy  
 And  
 The Book Shop  
 If you asked someone walking down the street  
 They couldn't tell you  
 If it even  
 Existed  
 But I know it does.

Musty, Cold, Dark, Dirty.  
 They would say that it is rat infested  
 Full of low lives and scraggly animals that no one ever loved  
 Of course, they had never been down it to check  
 But I had.

The crunchy leaves, fallen from the hickory tree down the street  
 Back in fall, many months ago  
 A street full of shops and cafes for those who can afford it  
 Police officers stationed about for those who can't  
 The diamond in the rough . . . or the rough in the diamond I  
     suppose,  
 The ground in the alley covered with trash and garden scraps  
 Swept off of the sidewalk and into the place  
 Where no one can see it  
 But I can.

An old green chair reclining chair  
 That no longer reclines  
 Covered in dirt and infested with bugs  
 Stuffing pulled out in several places from years of wear and tear  
 A ratty old baby blue blanket  
 Now it looks brown  
 Cardboard boxes  
 Layed down for a floor and an awning  
 Protecting from the bright sun, but not stopping the seemingly  
     ever present pouring rain  
 And yet they don't know, don't care  
 But I do.

*(Continued from page 277)*

They see a dark, filthy, bleak alleyway  
But I don't.

I see home.

**Olivia Weinberger**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8

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**Amelia Waibel**  
Buckeye High  
Grade 9

## I'm From

Homemade apple sauce  
From small peach pits in the backyard  
I'm from snowy afternoons and chilly mornings  
From berry crisp and sugar cookies  
I'm from Bing Crosby Christmas music that we would listen to on  
the holidays  
From warm cider in the fall as we smell the sweet caramel candle  
that sits on the counter  
I'm from splashes in the cool pool on a hot summer day  
From wasps in the sand  
And later Benadryl  
I'm from a small fish pond that holds almost too many memories  
From goldfish swimming under the cool waters.  
To broken pumps and dirty rocks

This is where I am from and I am proud of that  
When the day is over, I get to see and be grateful for all the  
things that make home  
home.

(Inspired by George Ella Lyon's "Where I'm From")

**Norma Cunningham**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 7



**Grace Karas**  
Medina High  
Grade 12



## Home

Taylor Swift once said “I can go anywhere I want, anywhere I want but just not home.” but what’s home anyway? Four walls and a roof? I like to think home is something you can create in your own imagination, something that’s hard to crumble or break down. But it’s so easy to create a comforting cottage and have it blown away and taken down by the wind. So, after many long years of trying I’ve decided to find a home within myself. Because I can take people’s picture off the shelf, all the friends who promised they’d be there for the long run, all the guys who said they would show me the sun. You see I can take them out of that home, but I can’t take myself out if it. So yes, I can go anywhere I want, anywhere I want even home.

### Marissa Rankin

Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8

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Something you should know,  
is that as a kid, I rode my bike  
in the neighborhood  
downtown, chasing accomplishment,  
hard-work, and freedom.  
I watched the houses fly by, as  
I raced down the sloped side-walk, going faster and faster as I  
gained momentum  
exponentially, closing in on my final  
destination with triumphant speed.  
The breeze ruffles my hair, leaving me looking like a scared  
chicken,  
but lacking any real fear.  
Until you suddenly stop with a jolt, yearning for the experience  
again.  
Perhaps that is when life became the hill. Perhaps you live  
life wanting to be older, which starts slowly, but gains speed  
when youth is just  
a dream, and you want it all back

### Ray Koeberle

Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8



**Ruth Musser**  
Highland High  
Grade 12

### **Out of the House**

I hate the world of mayhem outside  
So you'll never hear me state that  
I'll get over it  
I know in my heart that  
The evil people outside will catch me  
And that  
Being inside will make me happy; safe and secluded all  
by myself  
I refuse to believe  
There is hope  
I am terrified of the world  
No longer can I say that  
It is worth it to give the outdoors a chance  
Now read it the other way.

**Brooklynn Bemiller**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 7



**Grace Karas**  
Medina High  
Grade 12

## Adolescence

(Inspired by “A Slice of Life” by Katherine T.)

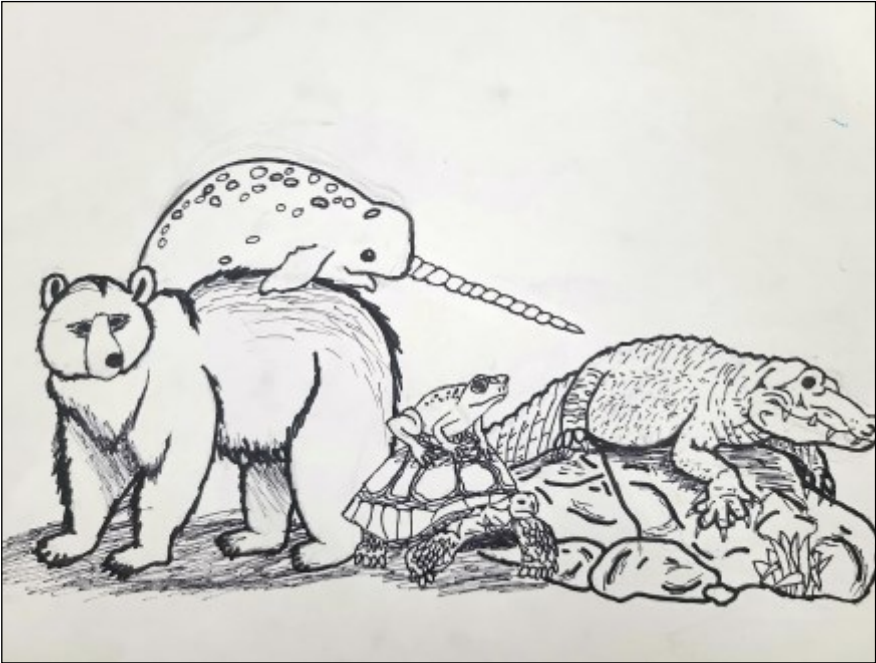
Do you even remember what you did in the past week?  
The memories you had?  
What about a year ago, or maybe even two years ago?  
I know that was definitely a huge gap to compare to.  
Do you remember what you learned in math class last year?  
Fractions?  
Decimals?  
Or do you remember when you learned “algebra”, but in reality it  
wasn’t anywhere compared to the actual existence of  
algebra.  
When you think you have it all figured out,  
Everything.  
Whether its school related, or home related.  
It approaches back at you, because really thinking about it, did  
you acknowledge it?  
Did you figure it out?  
Or are you too young to understand, they all say.  
Even though you’re the one encountering those memories of life,  
major or miniature.  
Even though you’re the one living it, you’re the one who’s in the  
enormous part of your life, going from a child to an adult,  
growing each day.

That’s simply called, adolescence.

**Zoe Jackow**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 7



**Erik Hamilton**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8

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### Innocence

My 3-year-old niece likes to go to the zoo. She likes to stare at the silly little animals that she feels get no attention. She couldn't care less about the popular attractions, like the cheetahs, lions, kangaroos, no. She'd sit and stare at the vermin and reptiles the whole trip.

When she was 7, she asked for a porcupine. My sister agreed to get her a hamster instead. She didn't want a cat, or dog, or any other typical pet. In fact a porcupine was really her second choice, since her parents refused to get her an iguana. She settled for a hamster, nonetheless. You would never know that it's not what she wanted. She religiously watered and fed it, and cleaned the cage down to its bones at the recommended times that no one actually follows for their pets. She held it, played with it, and drew it pictures routinely.

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When she was 11, she started packing lunch. She began pulling the food from the back of the fridge. Old leftovers, discarded pineapple pizza, burnt casserole. Since then nothing in my sister's house has expired. Not a single unused ketchup packet, no stale chips, every tub and jar of condiments and sauces scraped clean.

My niece treats everything like a lost puppy on the side of the road. Her moral conscience is straight as a ruler and hard as a brick. The naked mole rats don't care whether or not someone pays attention to them, the hamster would be fine if its cage wasn't cleaned every single week, and the ketchup packets don't have feelings.

Sometimes she makes me wish that I was a naked mole rat, or a hamster, or maybe even an old ketchup packet. I think she knows what it is like to be unwanted, and she feels for the animals born unluckily into the world, or the items discarded by the people on Earth.

Maybe all young children are like this. Innocent, pure, and wholehearted. But of course they don't get gratitude from the mole rats and the hamsters and the ketchup packets. Maybe as she grows up she feels unrecognized, so she grows out of it.

She starts spending more time at the tiger and bear enclosures, she doesn't clean her cage every week, now it's maybe every three. And sometimes I find old uneaten pineapple pizza in the back of the fridge from last week.

Maybe we grow out of our innocence before pineapples and hamsters turn into real people.

**Reese McQuaid**  
Wadsworth High  
Grade 9

## Gum

I am gum  
I am the piece that you stick under the desk and then forget  
about  
The one that other people don't notice until I get caught in them  
And they get furious  
I am the piece that janitors scrape off under the tables  
The one that only gets touched by accident  
The one that brings revulsion to other's faces when I am  
uncovered and noticed  
I am the piece that lies on the gym floor  
With a thousand footprints on me  
The one everyone tried to avoid  
I get stretched, torn, and popped  
Because for all I know you will never keep me  
All you ever do is spit me out because you don't care  
People complain that you leave me in unwanted places  
And what a hassle I am to take care of or to keep quiet  
Will anything ever change your mind to keep me  
From chewing me up and throwing me away  
I'll say in no time that I will have to recite this poem again  
Because in the end  
All I am is just a piece of gum to you

**Naomi Sundermeier**

Root Middle

Grade 7





**Colin Parker**  
Brunswick High  
Grade 12

## Ode to Ice Cream

Ice, Ice,  
So creamy and nice,  
Perfect for a hot summer day.

So much, so many,  
Any flavor you can imagine,  
Any color of the rainbow,  
Any topping in the book.

Completely customizable,  
Completely cold and sweet,  
Perfect to satisfy any taste needs.

Like a rainbow through the rain,  
You brighten my day,  
Like water on a dry day,  
You salvage the crops.

Ice Cream,  
Creamed Ice,  
Lick it once, slurp it twice,  
Refreshing and perfect no matter the reason.

Who would complain,  
Who could complain,  
Worth every calorie.

Ice, Ice,  
So creamy and nice,  
In the heat of the sun,  
You make my day complete.

**Olivia Weinberger**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8

## Valentine

When I see them I can't help but smile  
Their beauty hits me from a mile.  
I probably don't need them though I think I do  
This crush is fake, a lie, a ruse.  
After I've had time to ponder  
I'm afraid I can deny it no longer  
I don't care what others say  
Love is love and that's ok.  
All I want is for them to be mine  
So, will you please be my valentine?

### Violette Folk

Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8

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### Katelyn Schreiber

Medina High  
Grade 10



**Katelyn Schreiber**  
Medina High  
Grade 10

## Jealousy . . . How Is It Fair?

How

Do you keep under control, while figuring out what is the explanation behind this?

To figure out

Why

One goes behind someone's back,  
to leave them and give out an emotion you cannot handle?

Where

Was this when it happened?

The questions to it are all around, waiting for answers, whilst you are still skeptical on what this emotion has to you that is making it so unusual,  
so interesting . . .

When

Did someone learn that it's okay to purposefully gain someone's attention in something they knew that would create chaos,  
that would create . . . Jealousy.

Who

Let them be so selfish? Like they can do such a thing and not expect the other to hold a grudge, to keep acting like it's alright, to keep making it seem like it's fine, it's not a big deal.  
Even though they found it little to them because it pleased them, you feel jealous, you feel like it's just not fair,  
It's just not fair to be replaced, to be treated like that.

We're all human, but we all wonder,  
**What is fair?**

**Zoe Jackow**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 7



**Blair Crandall**  
 Medina High  
 Grade 10

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## Jealousy

Someone loves you.  
 but I love you  
 You love them too.  
 But you love me too right?  
 I don't want you to love them..  
 I want you to love me . . .  
 Am I not enough?  
 Can't you just love me?  
 Do you not want to love me?  
 Why didn't you tell me?  
 Just tell me!  
 Just tell me if you don't love me!

**Annalise Harris**  
 Wadsworth Middle  
 Grade 7

## One More Minute

"Just a second, let me finish this up!"  
 Man this whole work thing is boring . . .  
 How about a break; just a quick moment.  
 Maybe I'll feel better, get back to it in a second.  
 Swipe.  
 Swipe.  
 Swipe.

click

click

click.

"Do you want to go out for dinner?"  
 "No, I feel tired right now."  
 But in your head it's just 'LET ME PLAY MY GAMES AND  
 LEAVE ME ALONE'  
 The screen, it can tear people apart.

Dosing in class  
 Trying not to crash  
 I feel like I'm gunna . . . BAM!  
 Wake up in class-bump, on the head, feels kind of dizzy  
 Shocked straight back to concentrate on the lesson.

Teacher comes up.  
 "SORRY I FORGOT MY HOMEWORK"  
 Evade the eye, find an excuse, quick! the story is coming loose!  
 Too late to go back, lie, disinformation corrupting the grades,  
 Missing after Missing after Missing, piles high as the eye can  
 see.

Middle of the night, plop down in bed-  
 Did they like my video? The internet is FUN, until . . . it's not?  
 What might do that, oh never mind, here's a funny video!  
 The phone laughs and dances as it shows you its jig  
 Flashing lights take over the mind like a needle in the eye.  
 But we keep coming back for what? For ANYTHING.  
 Look at that cat! Look at his little hat! Hang on.  
 Something feels wrong . . . what time is it? 1 AM?!?

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Can't sleep right now not in this trap, am I really glad THAT THE  
WORLD IN MY HANDS?

With the touch of a button it all goes bright-  
Maybe...

It's not right-

Not the best.  
Not the best to stare at it.

The Z's are just out of reach as the screen tears you back  
The screen is a trap, waiting to grab whatever it can find.  
We are all stuck in the screen like a fly in a trap, looking at the  
same scene - for the rest of it's life... That's not right, we can quit  
when we want. Right?

WE CAN QUIT WHEN WE WANT! right?

"I can stop at any time!"

A common phrase, plain and simple, but . . . Is it true?

We all know it's just plain awful, wasting time, over and over until-  
wait, what was I talking about?

The attention span

Is small

Continues to go down.

**Shrinking** by the minute.

Maybe it's time for a break, a break from the break;

A time to-----

Dis            con            nect.

**Cohen Buxton**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8





**Kaden VanDuyne**  
Highland High  
Grade 9



**Carmen Olivares**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8

## **My Adventure of Snowboarding**

I arrive at the ski resort and see the steep hills,  
Then I go up the ski lift and tensions build,  
Now I am at the top of the mountain and feeling some chills,  
As I buckle my boots, I realize I could be killed.

I point my board, then jump and go,  
I start to slip with a consequence of humiliation,  
Head over board, I tumble through the icy cold snow,  
But I get back up and keep my determination.

As the day goes on, the fear subsides,  
I begin to feel free as I glide down the trails,  
The feeling of joy is what snowboarding provides,  
While leaving behind my thoughts and fails.

It has been a nice trip, but I am cold and exhausted,  
I am going to the lodge for some hot chocolate to get myself  
defrosted.

**Delaney Sinkovitz**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 7

## Basketball

The air is crisp as I walk into the gym.

I stand confused, wondering why Dad brought me here.

I hear the thump of a bouncing ball.

It is wonderful,

A round, orange sphere.

My hands extend and grasp the smooth, pebbly leather

The ball light as a feather,

It is comforting, in a way.

Crouching down, my dad points me toward the hoop.

I grasp to see the basket, a skyscraper with a top far beyond my view.

The rim, the crown, is high above me.

“Try and shoot.” He says, with a sparkle in his eye.

I heave the ball toward the pinnacle,

My muscles tense as it soars through the air.

I hear my minute heartbeat and feel my breath catching in my throat.

The ball is striking, like a bird drifting across the wind.

But no, it falls short.

I have been defeated by the king, high on his throne,

Challenging me to try again.

I am new to the concept of shooting,

But I know this is the game for me.

## Basketball Is Life

Shooting and dribbling makes everything better.  
 When I step on the court, everything bad goes away.  
 The sound of the ball dribbling is like light rain coming down.

With teamwork and plays, we win the game.  
 The bench cheering to give us energy.  
 We work hard every day and give it our all.

We work on our skills at practice and fix our mistakes.  
 We pick each other up and never bring each other down.  
 Because we're a team.

A team is a group of people who work together.  
 A team supports each other.  
 My teammates love the game of basketball.

**Brooke Pinkerton**  
 Wadsworth Middle  
 Grade 8

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## Nike Basketball Shoes

I've got new basketball shoes  
 I'm gonna make you lose  
 You trip and fall and get another bruise  
 I'm like a fireball going straight to the hoop  
 Dunking the basketball gives you proof  
 These brand new shoes make you spooked  
 My dribbling is fire  
 My confidence rising higher  
 I jump so high that I could touch the clouds  
 Everyone likes it, loves it, cheering in the crowd  
 Everyone's shoes all the reds and the blues  
 Just don't compare to my brand new Nike basketball shoes

**Carson Glass**  
 Wadsworth Middle  
 Grade 8

## **Inkspot**

Once upon a time, there was a young kid named Cooper who loved playing basketball. The coach put him in with 10 seconds left against their rival in the championship game. He took the shot as time was expiring, the crowd was chanting, "3 2 1!" as he took the shot it looked good. But he missed. The whole team was mad at him and nobody wanted him on the team. He practiced every day and was determined to get better. Once tryouts came around next season he improved a ton. He proved he should be on the team and even start. As the season went on he kept improving and getting better. He led his team to a 24-3 record only losing to the top ranked team, their rival. Once they made it back to the championship it was a close game. The whole time Cooper was dribbling through defenders and making threes. With ten seconds left he got subbed in. As time was expiring he shot and it went in. The crowd went nuts and the team went crazy. He even got a scholarship to a D1 school after the season. But by putting in hard work and determination you can achieve any goal.

**Dale Highsmith**

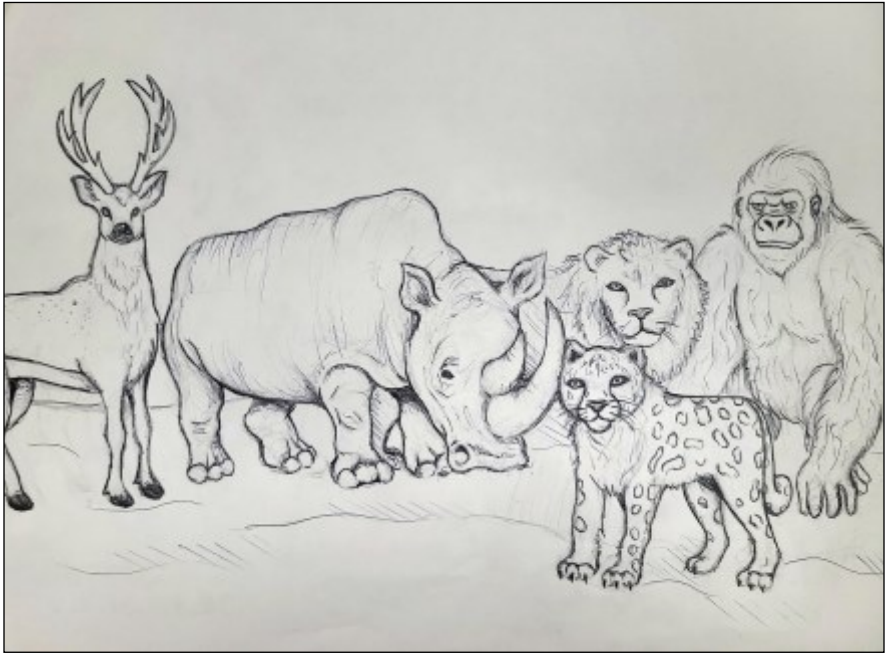
Wadsworth Middle

Grade 8

## The Game

We were in Kentucky for a baseball tournament. Our team didn't do great but one game was very exciting. It was the battle for second place and it was a thriller, it came down to the last out. Through the first inning we were up 8-0, which sounds like we should destroy them but no. After the second the score was 8-2, and I got a hit but I was stranded. The score after the third was 8-3. That inning I made a great play at second base to save a run. After the fourth, the score was 8-5. They kept chipping away and it kept getting closer and closer. After we batted in the fifth we left three people stranded, and the score was still 8-5. Someone wild came onto the pitch in the last inning which was odd. We got one out on a pop fly, then he walked someone the next pitch he stole second base and was safe. The next batter sacrificed and got the run in, now the score is 8-6. The next batter struck out. However, the next batter hit a single and stole second right after. Then the next batter hit a single, runners in the corners, winning run at the plate. The next hitter comes up to the plate. It's a pop-up, center field, deep . . . He goes for the catch . . . HE CAUGHT IT. WHAT A CATCH, DIVING, SAVING THE GAME!

**Rylan Cummings**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8



**Maggie Ciccolini**  
 Wadsworth Middle  
 Grade 8

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### The Game

I am in the championship game of 12u City League Baseball. This is my first ever season of baseball, so I am not the greatest player. Honestly though basically nobody is, each team has a few good players but that's it. My team was the most well rounded team by far. Almost our whole lineup actually could hit the ball. We also had great pitching and defense. We had a pitcher that pitched near twenty innings and gave up two runs the whole season. So clearly our team is well rounded, but the other team has a reason that they are in the championship. They had the two best players in the league. One of their players usually plays travel baseball and the other is just a really good athlete. One of them throws faster than any kid by probably near 10 mph and the others throws the second fastest in the league. Then the same two kids also have the highest batting averages in the league by probably .200. This team beat us both times we played them in the regular season, but we finished with the best record. We knew we were

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the two best teams, but who was better?

The first inning both teams pitched their second best pitching, clearly saving the other one for the end of the game. By the end of the first innings they had scored two runs and we had scored zero. In the second inning though that changed. They had the bottom of their order hitting so they ended up going 1-2-3. Then we started really hitting the ball a ton and the runs just started counting up. We hit a single, then we got a walk, then another walk, then a double (that scored three runs). Then we got back to back outs, but then we hit another single, and then another single. Then finally another double, by then we scored five runs and we had the lead. Going into the third inning they had their two best hitters hit. One of them hit a single after his teammate got walked. Then their other best players hit an absolute rocket up the middle, or so everyone thought. The pitchers caught the ball and threw the ball to second because the runner ran all the way to third. Then the runner on first base ran all the way to second base and we threw it to first, now we're out of the inning. This is the last inning for both of the starting pitchers, but then the best pitchers are coming in. We had the bottom of the order hitting for us, so we knew the chances of us scoring many runs again were low. We try though and end up with the baseball loaded with our best hitter at the plate. On the 1-2 pitch he smokes one that everyone thought was gonna get past the shortstop, but then he makes a crazy diving play and then fires the ball over to first base for an out to end our inning. Now we are in the fourth inning when both of the best pitchers come into the game. They have the middle of their order up and they started hitting some balls to the outfield. They pile on two runs and make the score 5-4. Then when it was our turn to hit we just couldn't handle how fast their pitchers were throwing and we went 1-2-3. Our pitching wasn't doing the best and was throwing a lot of balls right down the middle of the plate. He didn't stop by giving them back to back singles and bringing up their best hitter. On a 2-0 pitch he puts one right down the middle again and they smoke one to the right field gap. They chased the ball down but by then they scored two runs and now have a guy on third. They also have their other best player up to the plate and he singles and brings in a run. Luckily they didn't score anymore runs but the damage was already done. The score is now 7-5 and we

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need to score runs to keep us in the game assuming they aren't done hitting. Now it's the bottom of the fifth inning and we have only two more innings to score two runs or we lose. With two good at bats we find a way to get people on first and second then with one of our best hitters up to the plate. He hits it in the air and it flies. Everyone wonders what will happen, will it drop? Will it get caught? After what felt like a whole minute the ball dropped deep in left field. All the runners are sprinting as fast as they can trying to tie the game. The lead runner scores with ease, then the second runner barely scores and now we have a guy in scoring position. Then comes the best hitter, with the score tied we could take the lead. On a 3-2 pitch he hits one right up the middle and we take the lead. Sadly they got out of the inning, but we are happy with what we had done. The score being 8-7 we knew anything matters. Coach decided to put me in center field, trusting that I would catch a ball if it was hit to me. With them having one of their best players up to the plate to lead off the inning we wondered if we really would win. He gets a single because of our shortstop making an error on the first pitch of the inning. The next pitch the runner steals second and is now in scoring position. With no outs and them in position to score everything gets very intense. Then on a 1-1 pitch the batter rockets one to deep center field. Everyone goes crazy and the runner is off trying to get to home plate. I lock onto the ball and start running backwards trying to prevent this from becoming a hit. I run as hard as I ever have and jump... I caught the ball! I fire it into second base as fast as I can so I can get the double play. The runner doesn't even notice that I caught it and we get them easy out at second. In the span of ten seconds everything changed in the best way possible. Now all we need to do is get one more out and we are champions. On the 0-2 pitch the batter swings and misses! We are champions! We all run to the mound all screaming and excited as can be. Coach tells us to huddle up in the outfield, like we do after every game. We all ran as fast as we could because we were just so excited. Coach has us all get on one knee and tells us how good of a season we had. He tells us that we improved so much throughout the season into this championship team. Then for the first time all season, coach announces that he will be giving out a game ball. Everyone is wondering who it will go to because all of us impacted the game in a great way. Then coach says that the game ball goes to Ajay!

*(Continued on page 307)*

*(Continued from page 306)*

I got the game ball! In my first ever season of baseball I have already won a championship and a game ball! He explains if I didn't catch that ball in center field we would have most likely lost with no outs and a guy on third base. On the way home I even got to stop at a dairy queen in celebration. Reflecting on it makes me remember how a game can shift with just one play. The question is though, would I become a champion again?

### **Ajay Hill**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 8

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### **Volleyball Is More Than a Sport**

It was a sunny day out but it was cold from the wind blowing harshly at my face. We all quickly jump out of the car sprinting to find an unlocked door nearby. Found one, locked, found two, locked, found three, open. We swing open the door with a quick turn to the right, still sprinting like all our lives depended on it. We reach the gym doors. They're playing. It was surprisingly quiet in there. We quickly ran across the gym floor by the bleachers to get to the end. We all set our phone down and just start cheering. We watch them play as we start streaming cheers at them. They had lost the first set and were so close to winning the second. In that moment I look at the bench as I'm cheering and see all of them smiling at us. Then all of a sudden the whole gym goes loud. They had won the second set. As they are huddled around together. We all run to the other side and start screaming, "Hey fans in the stands you got spirit clap your hand!" So now we have all the parents streaming and cheering along with us while we wait for the third and final set to start. When we finished we ran back to our spot and started cheering them on as they had just started the third set. Every kill they got we screamed their names at the top of our lungs. Although my head was pounding and my hands were red as blood I kept cheering them on. It's half way through the set, bam another kill. 15 points. We all got out of the bleachers and start running towards them, then quickly stopped because the set was going to 25. But we go back and start cheering them on again. Until finally the last point was earned. They had won the tournament! We start sprinting out to them.

*(Continued on page 308)*

*(Continued from page 307)*

We all crowd around them screaming because we were all so happy. We all just start jumping around in a big blob on the court. Then we all slide onto the floor and start clapping, "Let's Go Grizzlies." After everyone had gotten pictures from the big win we all got one final team photo together. Everyone was crying, bawling their eyes out because no one ever wanted it to be over.

**Claire Shipley**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 7

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## **Football**

The smell of turf, the feeling after a big hit, and the adrenaline running out are why we play this game through all the blood and tears. We love it because this is what we have done since we were little, we know it like a second language, it is not forever but we hope it will be. It does not matter what life is like when you are on the field you forget everything and the only thing that matters is what you are doing then. It is like the world slows down and it is just you and your brothers against the world. Doesn't matter what anyone thinks or believes about you guys, they are like family in a way. That is why we come to the back through thick and thin, we love it because football is kind of like life.

**Hayden Stark**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8

## The Field

The field is the most exhilarating place ever. The twitch of the hips, the shift of the body, and the change of eye direction are all things I must watch to block the ball from receivers who are some of the fastest players on the field against a little corner like me. The second I put my foot exactly 7 yards away from the receiver I know that I have to be ready to back pedal and immediately shift my body to stop the ball from getting into the receiver's hand. The sound "blue 40 set hut . . . Hut" The ball is in the quarterback's hands. I look at him as he runs into the pocket and shifts his arm this way of the receiver. The man I'm guarding is already 10 yards down the field, but I'm right next to him. The ball is spinning in the air getting closer by the second, everything drains from my brain. Its pure silence and the seconds feel like minutes. The ball comes down and I put my hand up.

I feel something hit the back of my hand as the receiver falls and I hear the sound of the whistle blowing "tweet". Cheers from the home side of the bleachers can be heard as I blocked the ball. I just stopped the last play and we won the game. The sidelines came flooding out as I was carried into the air. My coaches and teammates are all screaming in joy. The other team lines up at the fifty-yard line with sad looks on their faces as they prepare to slap hands and say, "Good game". After we exit the field we flood into the locker room yelling, jumping, chanting, and laughing all in the excitement of the game. 100 yards, 22 players, 2 sidelines, 2 field goals, 1 ball. This is my home. This is the field.

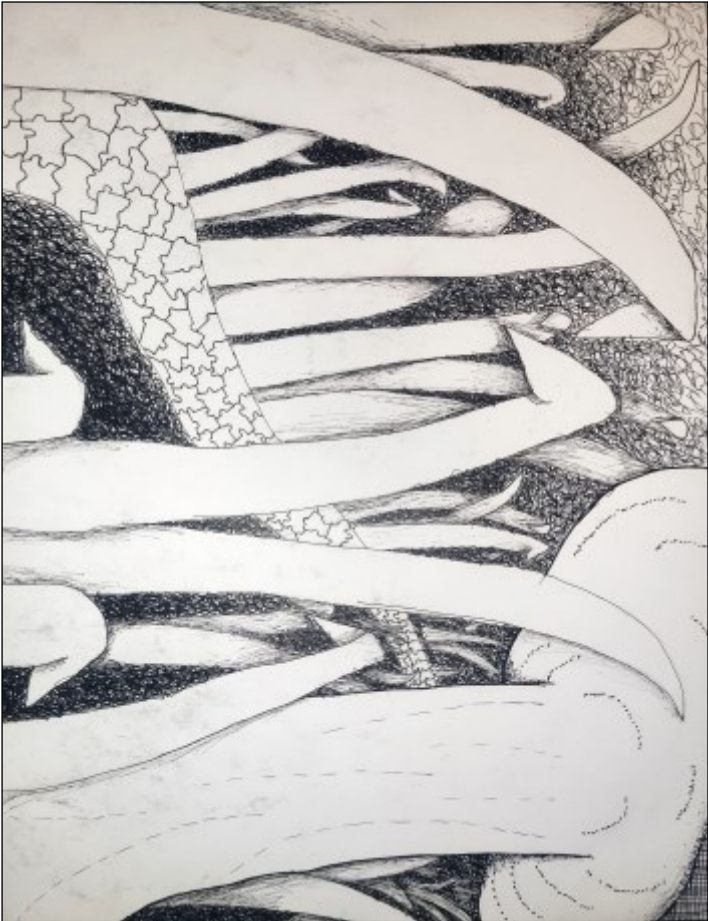
**Cameron Schreiber**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 7



**Hailee Wilt**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8



**Calista Harden**  
Medina High  
Grade 11

Music is perfection in all forms  
allows some to cope with new norms  
absorbs your atmosphere with one note  
protects you from the world like a coat

Music is a gift to all  
it bounces through your mind like a ball  
planting new ideas through sound  
unlocking ways for knowledge to be found

Music is made to inspire  
spreading feelings to the world like fire  
rudimentary no more  
makes all situations less a bore

Music is meant to engross  
when vibrating in your ear there is nothing close  
it can be used to get in the zone  
sometimes it just exists, sounding like a drown

Music is perfection in all forms  
allows some to cope with new norms  
absorbs your atmosphere with one note  
protects you from the world like a coat

**Paige Ross**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8





**Mya Kennedy**  
Medina High  
Grade 10

## Country Life

(Inspired by the poem "City Life" by Sheryl L. Nelms)

At night, when the moon still shines bright enough for our late  
 night parties.  
 The way the moon hangs there at 5 am for our desired early  
 morning quad rides.  
 The scattered tree sticks from the crazy wind.  
 As our faces begin to turn pink around the edges because we  
 thought it was warm enough to go without a coat.  
 The street lights shine on us as we rush by to hopefully get back  
 before the barn work begins.  
 Down across the land towards the small donut shop where we  
 get breakfast but only on certain occasions.  
 The way I want to live.  
 The place I want to be.  
 The country.  
 Where I belong with family and friends.  
 That's the life.  
 The Goal.

**Colten Hoffman**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 7

## Wildlife

Woods and wildlife surround me  
 I see the slow motion movement of everything around me  
 loud noises of regular life muted by the water trickling down  
 stream  
 dare to explore and find a new world to escape to  
 lilac flowers dancing in the wind  
 I hear the birds singing to one another  
 faint pastel colors painting the sky  
 earth is beautiful here

**Tenley Mendel**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 7



**Lilly Gaeckle**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8



**Paige Kaltenbaugh**  
Black River High  
Grade 12

## **My Best Friend**

Fur is long  
I'm very strong  
Sharp claws like a cat  
Big like a big cat  
Big ears like a bat

Tail like a brick  
With a big lick  
And the biggest grin  
And such strong limbs.

So soft and nice  
For a very high price  
Trouble makers  
To double the trouble.

**Mason Hiltner**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 7



**Joshua Bennett**  
Highland High  
Grade 11

## **Golden Retrievers**

Guaranteed to make you laugh or smile  
Obeying to their owners  
Loyal to their humans  
Dog to most people way more to others  
Energetic all the time  
Nice to everyone

Real friend  
Every day brings an adventure when you're with  
them  
There for you when you need them most  
Right by your side  
In every way amazing  
Excellent in every way possible  
Very loving  
Every day is amazing with them  
Real listeners  
So much more than what we think

**Alaina Bohmer**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 7



**Kalliopi Makris**  
Highland High  
Grade 10



## Not Just a Photo

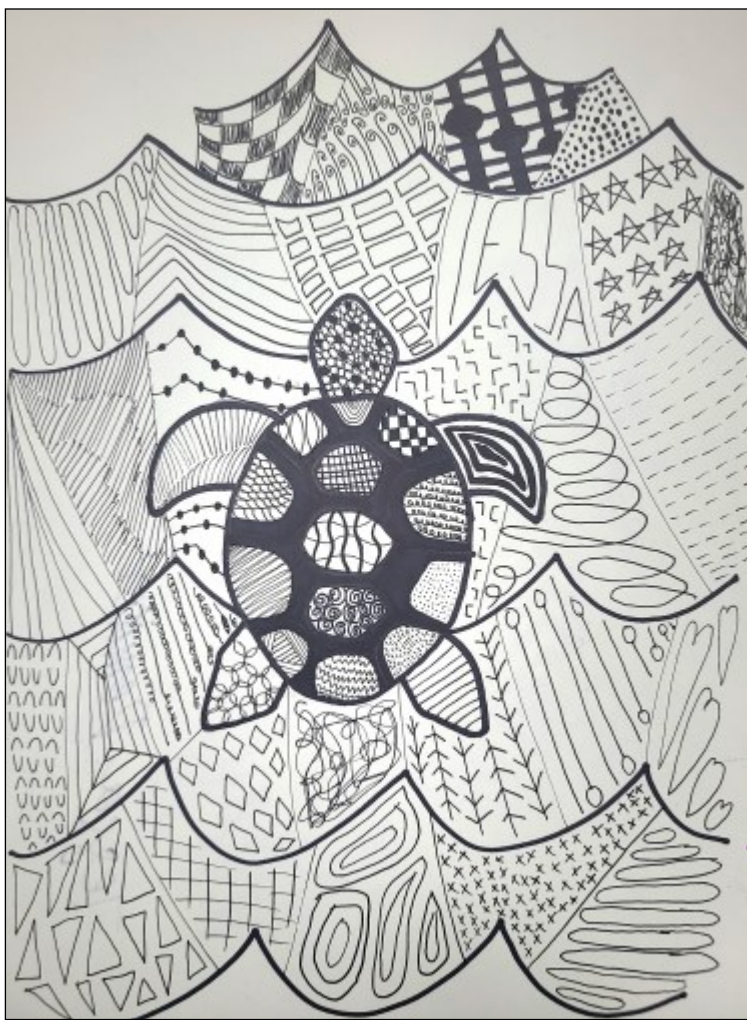
A click and a pop a moment saved in a flash as the camera prints the memory, it seems to glide a soft smile onto my face. A sea of black ink shows a fluffy face of my favorite chow-chow. I see the gray of her fur come through like a giraffe joining a stage of people. As the corners join hands of green grass, I can't help but call her over to see the dazzling photo.

“Oh, Roxy sweetie come over here” I watch as a cloud of fuzz becomes a doormat at my feet. I slowly descend to her, leveling tears dripping out of my eyes making them full of joy as I look at her.

“Oh, Roxy, look how beautiful you look in this photo.”

Watching closely, her marbled eyes seem to go from the grass to the gliding photograph, and then in a blink, I am in a layered cake of warm embrace of soft heat. I laugh with joy remembering years ago. Roxy was just a small pom-pom of brownie batter brown and white. But now she is a choky tan of ash gray. Never losing her love or sweet eyes, never losing her cozy fluff and heart, never losing her in old age.

**Sam Aller**  
Root Middle  
Grade 8



**Tessa Demiter**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8

## Ducks

Why hello there quack, quack, quack  
I'm just here looking for a snack  
Do you have some rye, sourdough, or toast?  
You see I've just drifted in here from the coast.  
I am very hungry from my journey  
I'm fine now, be quiet, do not worry  
Thank you for the snack, yum, yum!  
Delicious snack now in my tum, tum.

**Violette Folk**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8

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**Isabelle Oehler**  
Medina High  
Grade 12

## Save Them

Elephants

They need help

Poachers are killing them for the ivory in their tusks

It is illegal to kill them

But people kill them for money

It's horrible

When I hear about this

I feel like I took a bullet to the stomach

Like the bullets shot into the hide of a huge elephant

I feel like I want to cry

Like the trumpeting sounds of these elephants

I feel like I can't do anything to help

Unlike a mom elephant who would do anything to save her calf  
stuck in a stream

I feel ashamed that I feel like I can't do anything

Unlike how elephants show strength to other elephants

I feel like people just don't care anymore

Unlike how elephants care about others of their kind, not just  
the ones in their herd, all

I feel like people just want money

Unlike people, elephants can't kill each other for money, they  
wouldn't want to anyway

I'm sad

These elephants are getting killed for no reason

For some people

They think there is a reason . . .

Money

But there is no reason

Money doesn't matter

Elephants are amazing

They don't deserve to die

People need to help save elephants

Elephants

They need help

They need saved

So

Save them

**Kenley Fela**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 8



**Greer Johnston**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8

## I Am a Distance Runner

I have been trained to run when it hurts.  
I have been trained to never look back just forward to get to the finish  
line.  
Because I know that the pain I go through in the race won't ever hurt as  
much as not passing the finish line.  
And with every step I take I think about being one step closer to the  
finish line.  
Everyone can run but true runners true distance runners can run  
marathons.  
Races end but true runners just start a new run.  
I know what kind of runner is inside me.  
I am a distance runner.

**Alaina Bohmer**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 7

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**Nick Allen**  
Brunswick High  
Grade 11

## What If Money Grew On Trees

If money grew on trees  
Everyone would want trees  
Which would help  
But it would make everyone more greedy  
Because they would say  
Go find a tree

Then someone would look for a tree  
But because everyone is selfish  
There would be no more money  
Which means once everyone spends it  
There would be no more  
Money

Everyone would have to be careful  
Because they can't just go outside  
To get money  
They have to get a job  
To get more money  
But when the owner  
Runs out

They can't get paid anymore  
Which means they have to find a new job  
Which probably pays less

**Justin Hrutkai**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 7

## Silver Sky

I ran as fast as I could.

Rocks tumbling below my feet.

I heard the eruptions, screaming, yelling.

I saw the people dragging children, grabbing pets  
and food nearby.

I watched Mount Tambora spill its fiery, inferno

A

S

H

E

S

Plummet down like a  
snowstorm.

What I hoped that was the end, it was only the beginning of  
the tragic loss, of Mount Tambora, the thing I loved most.

**Melody Jester**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8



## The Real Explorers

In my eyes,  
Scientists will forever be seen as my Indiana Jones  
Using the clues they find  
To support the upbringing and health of you and me  
Step by step  
They will conquer and fight  
All so we can live in delight  
Living by the rules of:  
Formulating  
Fabricating  
Plus becoming familiar  
With all of the challenges they might face  
For you and me they will live day by day  
But they're barely seen  
Not a single trace  
Vaccines, medicine, and bacteria is what some live by  
Or possibly stars, galaxies, and all of your super stellar "why?"s  
There are so many scientists that deserve more than what is  
    shown  
Move to the side Indiana Jones  
Let scientists take the throne

**Brooklynn Bemiller**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 7



**Madeleine Hicks**  
Brunswick High  
Grade 12

I met a man named Easton,  
Some may call him Beaston.  
He was very weird and interesting.  
Beaston liked eating twinkies  
while playing with slinkies.  
A man of many talents he was,  
and in a tree he heard a buzz.  
Many bees on the attack,  
Then Beaston fell on his back.

As the fellow got up,  
he turned yellow, then a feeling hit his gut.  
Easton the Beaston started to throw up.  
But Beaston will always bounce back.

**Evan Johnston**

Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8

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**Haunted**

Small within the eerie halls  
Inside lies a doll there with no cause.  
Eyes of black, evil and glass  
With a windup key that's made of brass.

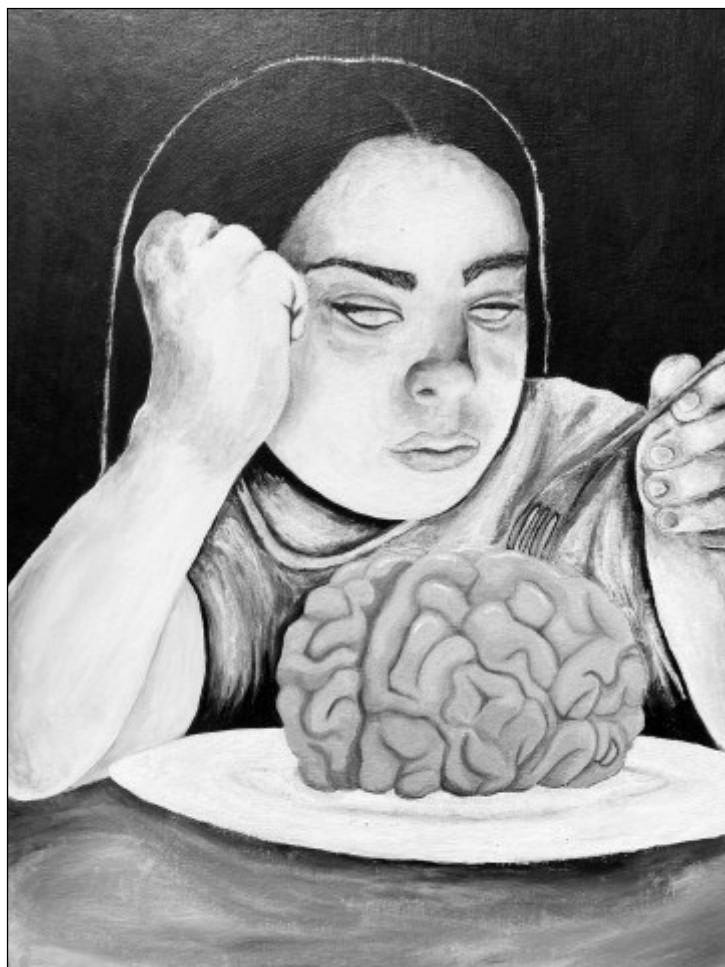
Once loved and now forgotten  
Her insides are made of balls of cotton.  
Her pale face was once pure and clean  
Now it's revolting, dirty, and obscene.

Disgusting garments upon its back,  
Its body covered in bloody cracks.  
Creaking gears rusty and giant  
Its voice box for years has been dead silent.

It's not worth fixing, it's too broken  
If it had something to say it's been outspoken.  
Lock it away with boards away from sight  
Maybe somebody else will rescue them another  
night.

**Violette Folk**

Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8



**Emma Bazemore**  
Cloverleaf High  
Grade 11

## Prologue

I write in my journal. The adventures I had, the sneaking out I did, and other stuff that makes me feel good about myself. I'm writing peacefully until I hear my friend Blade calling to me, "Emergency meeting!" He bursts through my hut doors, and scares me so bad I fall out of bed.

"Ever heard of knocking?" I hiss angrily. "Umm," He thinks for a moment, "Yes?" He gives me a remorseful look. I growl annoyed, "Well you don't act like it." Blade blushes fiercely, "That's not the point! Emergency meeting!" He taps his foot absentmindedly. I call it his happy taps. I can't tell what to do. My thoughts are in a whirlwind. I snap out of my thinking stage and point to Blade. "Me. You. Council room. NOW." I begin to walk out the door when a chill settles over me. My mind becomes fuzzy. Something whispers in my ear, "Bring . . . me the . . . girl . . ." I pull out my silver sword out of its sheath. I swung behind me because the sound almost beckoned me from behind, there was a swish of silver, small yip, and a gleam of blue. I turn around to see who I hit. It was Blade. My mind starts racing, "Oh no . . . What did I just do?" My mind yelps. I feel heat run to my cheeks. My mind has a million thoughts happening all at once. It piles up on me, One thought racing past me appearing for a moment, and disappearing again. Almost like a stray seashell on the beach. There, and then gone. I'm now lost in my thoughts trapped in a loop. Worrying, and worrying. I feel a hand on my shoulder.

"Niry! Snap out of it!"

"I can't!" I yell back. It feels like I'm being smothered by a thick blanket on a hot day. I can't seem to breathe. I shut my eyes. Thinking this will help it all go away. It doesn't. My worry swells, and I think I'm going crazy. When I hear rushing water.

"Niry," Blade is begging, "Please come back."

I feel his presence, and the rushing water slows. I finally am out of my worry loop. My hut looks destroyed. Pictures torn off the frame, My fern leaf roof has leaves out of place, and everything is wet. I look around, my feelings now starting to jumble up. I shiver and I hear the rushing water. I feel so guilty.

*(Continued on page 334)*

*(Continued from page 333)*

“How could I be so stupid? I can’t do this right. I shouldn’t exist. I am so stupid.” My voice sounds distorted. The rushing water sound increases. I feel so scared to do anything. Like it will corrupt everything. This time I opened my eyes. My room around me is a disaster, water in long, thick pillars moving slowly and cautiously, as if a predator stalking in the tall grass. Blade’s copper sword gliding right through them. One of them silently approaches, gliding quietly. It touches my back, letting fresh cold water seep down it. The water scares me, and reflexes kick in. I pull my silver sword from its protective cover, and swing. Like Blade’s sword mine goes right through it. Cold water splatters everywhere.” I don’t think swords work.” I called to Blade. “Yeah? You think?” He says back agitated. I mutter something in stratum. Blade looks at me, and says, “Did you just tell the water to, ‘Go to the spirits!’ in stratum?” He gives me a questioning look.

“Maybe,” I mumble, “I didn’t know what else to say!” My voice gives a distorted shriek, and the water falls to the ground.

Blade looks near to passing out, and I’m just . . . there. Standing. But it starts to feel like the floor is dissolving out from under me. About to send me spiraling into my thoughts. I am forced to sit down, and I start to rock back, and forth on my heels. Before I know it Blade is beside me.

“Stay out of your head. Okay?”

I stare at him. “But it’s all my fault . . . I screwed up everything.” I whimper. Just then, a huge explosion is heard outside. I start to smell smoke. I ran outside. My surroundings horrify me. The smell of smoke tinges the air. Houses are burned and charred. Hot, thick air swipes at my hair. Huts burn, and water shatters scatter the dirt streets, shrieking and yelling in horror. I pull a civilian to the side, and ask, “What’s wrong?” She looks around terrified. As if saying the word will have the spirits at her head. “Shadows . . .” She whispers. I start to worry, but I think to myself, “Stop. Not now. My home needs protecting.”

Blade and I pull our swords from their sheaths. Prepared to defend. As I suspected, a shadowy figure recognizes the smell of silver. The monster takes the form of a mangled lion-bear looking

*(Continued on page 335)*

(Continued from page 334)

creature. It sees me and gives a distorted howl. I cover my ears from the horrible noise, and collapse. The shadow catches me off guard, and then,

**WHOOSH!**

I'm swept off my feet, and now in the grasp of a shadow. My sword falls out of my hand from me trying to position it. "Niry!" Blade calls. He runs at the monster, a crazed look in his eyes. He hits in the chest. The Shadow howls in agony, along with me, because the grip on my waist tightens. Suddenly the Shadow dissolves into black powder dropping me down. I lay motionless on the ground for a moment. Then I pick myself up. I gaze upon my village, destroyed, weak. "That seems to be the only one." I turn and look at Blade. He looks like he's seen a ghost. We need to go see the Prophetess. I look at him in disbelief. I look at him, giving the look telling him, "I know you're playing some sick joke on me. Well it won't work." He gives me a look back that doesn't need words for me to hear, "Brace yourself."

I half jog, half walk to the Prophetess's home. I'm desperate to know what I think is happening. When I enter her hut Blade limping behind me, she sits a few feet away from the door poised in a way like she knew I was going to come. "I know what you're here for." Her raspy, whisper voice calls to me. I bow in front of her, and Blade does the same, but winces when he touches his stomach. I look at her with authority and state, "Prophetess tell me what I need to see."

She admires me for a moment, and then chuckles, dry, and eerie.

*You will find the one to tell the moon.*

*You will lie to flee, to find your doom.*

*You will lose the one important to you.*

*The tables will turn, if not solved soon.*

I blink. The Prophetess is looking at me like nothing ever happened.

I stare at Blade we both have one thing going through our head,

"The Moon Whisperer is back."

**Piper Schoonover**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 7



**Abigail Vitko**  
Medina High  
Grade 12



## Lottery

The sun's golden shine engulfed the city skyline. The illuminating, blue sky was bright with white, puff clouds sprinkled throughout the vast, blue ocean. A flock of flashing, bright birds soared through the vast blue sky.

A man was walking down the street. He wore a green shirt and light blue jeans. Upon his face was a large smile brighter than the sun.

On his left hand he wore two golden rings. One ring was his wedding ring. The other, embedded with diamonds, was a gift from his family on his 18th birthday.

The man's name is John A. Berlin. He was born in 1975. When he was 31, he became a doctor. When he was 35, he married his wife.

John was walking toward a convenience store. He was thinking about buying a snack, and talking to the cashier. Afterwards, he'd probably call one of his friends.

John hated being bored. Maybe that's why he liked talking. He hated his job too. Maybe it was fun at the start, but now it's a long, dull job.

John walked a few more steps toward the convenience store. He arrived at the doorsteps of the fairly large store. He opened the door and walked inside.

The first thing he saw was the cash register. The man working it was very young, looking 20 or younger. Of course, everything expected from a convenience store was there, like the snacks. However, only one convenience store necessity is most important to the events you will soon witness, the lottery.

As John wanted, he grabbed a snack and went to the cash register.

"How are you?" Said John as he was checking out.

"Good," replied the young man.

"You seem too young to have a job like this, Is this a side job?"

The young man, a little irritated by the assumption, said, "Side job, I go to a university across the city."

He lied. He doesn't go to any university, he dropped out of school as fast as he could. Why? Why would he not? School's boring. It's too much work for nothing. For his job, he didn't want to be a mathematician or a scientist, it'd be just like school. No, he wanted to pursue something away from school. Something he thought would be fun. I'll promise you this, he didn't wanna work at a convenience store.

*(Continued on page 338)*

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The young man caught a glimpse of John's golden rings. Much more interested in the man he spoke: "Why do you have two rings?"

"Oh," John looked at his rings and continued, "the golden one was from my wife, and the one embedded in diamonds is from my family."

Now the young man was more interested. So, he continued: "where'd you get the second one?"

John answered: "I was going to college when they gave me it. I was sad to leave for college, and so were they. It was my mother's idea to surprise me with the gift. They said to me: 'so no matter how far you are, you'll always have us.'"

As he spoke those words, the biggest smile came upon John's face. At that moment, he remembered how affectionate his mother was, and all the good she had done. His father was nice too, when John got older. His father usually was the one to discipline him by yelling. He was the strong man in the family. And though it was tough to be around him as a child, John found that he appreciated him much more in adulthood.

A scream of rage was heard throughout the convenience store. Both the young boy and John looked at the source. It was at the lottery section of the store. It was filled with people. There were different types of lottery machines almost looking like a mini casino.

Now a smile crept on the young man's face. Finally, something fun. He hates his job. Hates the crummy apartment he lives in. It's a boring life. And to that, why would he not be thirsty for action?

The rageful, screaming man punched the lottery machine multiple times. Of course, why wouldn't he? The man was on his last penny. He had it all, until his business collapsed. He was very wealthy and kind. It's sad to see a goliath of a man fall so hard.

The screaming man had now made his knuckles bleed because of the constantly beating up the lottery machine. The Screaming man then did something unexpected, he ripped a chain off his neck and threw it across the store. The chain was no gift, and had no special jewels that made it good to sell. His family had worn it, and so did his relatives. It was a chain attached to his religion. So why did he throw it? Only people who have seen his life would understand.

*(Continued on page 339)*

*(Continued from page 338)*

He then dropped to the floor and wept. People throughout the store watched this occur. Nobody went toward him to comfort him. Why would they? Many people say they're different from the rest. But if they were, they would help the poor, weeping man.

The young man however, took this as an opportunity to juice out as much entertainment as he could from this event. So as fast as he could he left the cashier spot and toward the drama.

"Hey, aren't you gonna finish checking me out?" questioned John, with a tint of annoyance that such a young man would flock toward a drama he wasn't a part.

The young man, desperately trying to get into the action said: "Why not you come with me. You can play with the lottery as I try settling this."

"For free?"

"Of course."

Both of the men walked toward the lottery machine section of the store. The young man walked toward the weeping man. Not to comfort him, but to yell at him for beating up the machine. And John went toward one of the many lottery machines.

They weren't the normal type of lottery machine John knew. And only now, with a close up view, was he able to spot how different these machines were from actual types. For one, you couldn't get tickets from it. Instead you had to insert your card into the machine. Then the whole thing would light up like a cell phone. In fact, the entire thing was just a big cell phone (if we don't count the numerous advertisements all around the big, red machine).

John found the little place where you'd insert his credit card. And so, he did. And like expected, it lit up. On the screen was a big square button that said: "WIN" so, seeing there were no other buttons to press, he clicked it.

Now the screen changed and instead showed three different columns. In each column were different symbols. Huge red sevens, golden coins, things you'd expect from this type of game. There was also a big red button he had to press. And the instructions of the game were right below it.

John read the instructions. To win, he had to have each column show the same symbol. Losing would be when each column doesn't match.

*(Continued on page 340)*

Seemed simple and easy. Of course, it isn't. Behind the game, would be probabilities. The game was there so the player could be entertained.

John pressed the big red button, and each column began to spin. For a while it spun. John's heart wasn't beating. He was completely calm. But of course there was a bit of excitement. The columns continued to spin. Soon the columns slowed a little. Tension began to grow. The thought of winning began lingering in the back of John's head. The columns slowed even more. Now the thought of winning had grown more enticing.

John loved the excitement. The columns slowly stopping. The thought of winning slowly grows more wanting till it becomes a need. It was addicting.

Soon, The columns slowly stopped. The tension and excitement had grown strong. Then the first column to the left revealed itself as a seven. Then the second column was a seven. Then the final column, the most exciting one, was a seven.

John screamed with joy. He smiled as big as he could. Jumped up and down like a child.

"I WIN!" John screamed.

Everyone noticed John. Some even made an attempt to steal the credit card that supplied the winning money. But before they could, John took it and ran out of the store like a child.

The young man was no longer yelling at the poor man. Instead, he was much more jealous of the events that occurred. He used that machine multiple times to try winning the three hundred million dollars it offered. All to no success. It all frustrated him.

The crowd of people did nothing but stare. Some tried their luck on the machine. Some, like the young man, were jealous. Others went outside to look for John. Perhaps to be his friend and use him. Or to steal the credit card.

One man in the crowd was much wiser than the rest. His name is Ronald R. Simons. He worked for the government for sixteen years and built the lottery machines. He now was a banker far east of the city. He has no one to keep him company. So he's usually isolated. To escape from the isolation and the lingering sadness that would come, he goes to the city to hopefully find a soulmate. He's now eighty-seven, and is hoping to find a nursing home close to the city.

Ronald felt bad for what happened to John. Because the government is meant to take some amount of the money. Why? Who knows why. The government will not take any of the winning money John earned or any money from any winners from that

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particular machine. Why's this? Nobody knows. Only the government, and the winners.

John knew exactly what he'd first do, tell every single member of his family of the good news. He'd especially tell his mother. Perhaps even give some of the money to her.

The sun was bright. The blue sky was strong. The birds continued to soar. The clouds were white, except one.

"NEVER CALL ME AGAIN!" Screamed one of John's cousins on the phone.

"FINE!" John screamed back before hanging up the phone.

He regretted it. Never had he snapped like that. But after that day when he won the lottery, many of his family members asked for his winning money. He would, but he started thinking they were using him. But why would his family do that? Is it because they believe they have any authority? Is it because now that he finally has something amazing people want to use him? On top of that, more people tried being his friend. All because he won the lottery? Were people trying to use him for money, or to have a sense of fame? He didn't know who to trust. It's his money and if he believes it to be not smart to share, then why should he? Why must he be forced to do something he doesn't want to do? He wanted to give money to his family. but as far as he knew, they were using him.

John was in his car in a parking lot. He placed his phone down and tried to rest his body to think. He regretted what he had said to his cousin. But, under the circumstances what else could he say? He already said he didn't want to give the money to him. Why would he? John doesn't respect people who do wrong. Using him for money was wrong. Either way, he felt he should say sorry. But, it wouldn't do anything.

John got up and started his car. He then drove home. While driving, he thought of what he'd do at home. All he wished was to see his wife at home. Sadly she isn't home at this time. He thought of calling his mom for support. But, settled on going home to sleep.

Johns' wife was a construction worker. Her name was Veronica. Veronica was only a year younger than John. The two fell in love in high school. They were very close classmates and

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promised to stay connected throughout their life. “She’s pure” was the word each of Johns’ family members said about her. Was it true?

As John drove through the large buildings, he saw couples talking together. He saw families talking to each other, saw kids playing, and saw real friends talking to one another. It ached to look at all the happy faces. It reminded him of the times he talked to his family, or when he had friends. Now, he only wished for the people he loved to stop talking about the lottery. It all was confusing. Why would they use him? It’s just paper. Was it just paper?

John finally parked his car in front of his house. He opened the car door and began walking toward the doorstep of his home. The home was fairly large, along with all the other houses beside his.

He made it to the doorstep and opened the door. The first thing he was greeted with was a smell from the kitchen. And so, he picked his way toward the kitchen. He was shocked to see right in front of the kitchen was his wife.

“You don’t come here at this time.” He said with shock.

As she washed the dishes she said, “I came early to see how you’ve been. You didn’t tell me you won the lottery.”

“I was going to tell you on your birthday.” John said, aching a little at the words she said.

“We can go to the mall as a celebration.” She said a little excited.

“I’d like to sleep instead.”

“Ok then, that’s fine with me.” She said a bit disappointed.

John wanted to talk to her but figured it would be best to sleep instead. And so, he began picking his way toward his bedroom. He hoped sleeping would allow him to forget this dreadful day. It didn’t.

When John woke up his wife was nowhere to be found. John regretted not talking to her, maybe it would’ve made him stop thinking about the lottery, and all the pain it was causing. John looked out the window. It was dark. He did see a reflection of himself through the window. John wore his occasional outfit, but had started wearing the same necklace the poor man was wearing. He started wearing it right on the day he won the lottery.

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Before he could think anymore, his phone started to ring. He went toward his phone and picked it up.

“Hello?” He said on his phone.

“How’s your day?” said his mother

He knew it was his mother calling right when she said:

“How’s your day?” A common way she started any phone call.

And so, with excitement that he could finally escape from the lottery he said: “Amazing, what have you been doing?”

“Nothing much, just starting to go to sleep”

“Don’t you think it’s a late time to sleep?”

“Yes, but work was hard today.”

“Being a nurse is hard? Isn’t my job harder?”

“You wouldn’t believe the patients we had today.”

“I see.”

“How’s your wife?”

“Good, she doesn’t come home very often though.”

“Well, your dad still comes home late.”

“I’d expect that.”

Then she stopped talking for a second. And then continued.

“You won the lottery, I heard.”

“Yes . . . ”

“I know it’s rude to say . . . But may I have some of the money?”

“Please don’t say that, I’ve heard it from all the people I’ve loved. Now, I’ve lost connection with them. I don’t want to lose you too.” His voice began to shake. Hoping It doesn’t end with regret or loss.

But, his mother wanted money. And so, like a hungry cat she said, “You understand how much I’ve done for you with little return? Is it wrong to ask for a portion of the money?”

“Why would it not be? You ask for money you don’t need. You have a sustainable home and job, why ask for more? It becomes greedy to ask for more. Perhaps even unthankful. You’ve worked for what you got. Now, you don’t work but only ask.”

“What’re you talking about? I only ask for this favor.”

“It’s not a favor.”

“What else is it?”

“YOU USE ME FOR MONEY!” He didn’t mean to

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scream. It just came out.

Before he could make another mistake, he hung up the phone. He then threw his phone at a wall, and began to cry. He didn't know if he was in the right, or the wrong. But he truly believed they were using him for extra cash, and he didn't like it. He began thinking that he didn't know the people he loved. Were they strangers? Who knows. Maybe he should give them money. But, why? They were the ones arguing with him when he said no. They were the ones using him.

He wished he didn't win the lottery. He wished this never happened. He wished for this all to be resolved. Perhaps it never will.

Twelve weeks had passed since John won the lottery. Was winning something he felt good about? No.

John lost all his winning money. Not because of the pressure thrown at him. Or because someone stole it. He lost it through the sadness that the lottery had caused him. Believing it to be a burden of truth. He no longer wanted such pain to burn him.

John no longer had any jewelry on him. No necklace, no golden ring, no golden ring embedded in diamonds. Why? I believe you should know why.

John lives on the streets now. He lost his wife and any connection to the people he loved. He was alone on the street. Stealing when he has the chance.

It was a dark night, and John couldn't sleep on the green bench. He wished he could, but multiple parties were occurring around his area. He could try leaving, and he did try multiple times. But, it never worked.

John got up and began to grow hungry. He figured he'd go to a certain place that supplied free food. He went there a few times but never by night. Since he knew where it was, he began trotting toward the location. It wasn't a far walk, only had to go into an alleyway across the street. It's easy to miss, the only thing you could see was a metal door, on the left side of the alleyway. John looks at the door. He knocked at the door. The door opened. The only thing seeable was black. Then, a rugged man appeared at the door. The rugged man recognized John and allowed him in. And so, John proceeded.

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Upon entry, John found the room to be the exact same. The room was bare. It had the same style a restaurant would. Multiple chairs and tables. Only difference is this one looks more beat up. There were cracks on the walls, and broken tables. It wasn't abandoned, even if it seemed like it, there were many people standing or sitting on a chair eating alone. Some were even sleeping on the ground.

John never did that, for he believed the entire underground room would collapse at any moment.

There was a little spot where you'd get whatever food they had on that day. It was like prison meals. In fact, you could say the entire place was just a prison.

John grabbed a tray that held his food. He then walked toward one of the lonely tables till he saw a familiar man. The man wore a brown transcoat and blue jeans. The man was sitting at another table all alone. John felt it'd be a nice gesture to come and sit with him. He'd also find out who this familiar man was. And so he sat beside him.

"How are you?" John said. And then John looked at him, he then found out who it was. In surprise he said, "You! A good man like you shouldn't even be here!" It almost sounded rude, but due to the circumstances you could make the argument that it was pure kindness.

The man looked at John with despair. And then looked away.

The man's name was Carl. He was the nicest man anyone could meet. He once married his wife and had kids. His smile once lit up any room. He once gave flowers to the people he loved. Now, he is poor.

"Why?" John inquired, "Why must this happen to you?"

Carl spoke, "I gave people money, they got greedy."

Carl's voice had changed. As though he remembered something dreadful. His voice was sad. Yet, at the same time, it seemed rageful.

John spoke, "I don't get it, what do you mean?"

"I won the lottery. People asked me for some of the money, and so I gave. Then I lost all the money, they still asked for my money, even when they knew the winning money was gone. I tried to be kind and say no. They still asked. So I gave. Look where I am."

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"Why'd you give all the winning money away?"

"Isn't that kind? Charity work, why would that not be nice? That was what I was going to do in the first place."

John processed what he said. Finally it clicked. John realized he won the lottery too. But how? And so with much more amazement he said, "you won the lottery? So did I."

Carl then said something that surprised John, "most people in here won the lottery."

"In here?"

"Ask them, they'll tell you how they won the lottery and fell down here."

John was surprised. Then John wondered, Why? Carl knew this and so he continued, "even I don't know why. It's just how things are."

"You're lying."

"Ask them."

John got up and began walking toward one of the guys standing around. He was about to ask them if they won the lottery but something else caught his attention. John saw a man wearing a tuxedo with a glass of fresh water. The man seemed wealthy, very wealthy. He wore a beautiful golden watch with diamond studs all over. He wore a golden necklace. It reminded John of his necklace. John began wearing his necklace the exact day he won the lottery, And he threw it in the trash the exact day he divorced his wife. But why?

John remembered the wealthy man from somewhere, but he didn't know where. John began walking toward him.

The wealthy man seemed to notice and remember John.

John said, "I think I remember you from somewhere, what's your name?"

The wealthy man spoke, "Samuel, you're John right?"

"Yes, how do you know?"

"How could I forget you? You saved my cousin's life."

"That's where I remember you. You were one of my patient's relatives, weren't you?"

"Yes, thank you for helping my cousin."

Then Samuel wondered, why was John here? And so he asked, "why are you here? A man like you should be living happily."

"I lost everything."

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“How?”

John didn't want to explain, it hurt too much to explain. But, he did so anyway. “I won the lottery, people wanted the money, I couldn't take it, so I got here.”

Samuel understood, and so he said, “was it the people you loved?”

“Yes,” John said. Anyone who was watching the conversation knew that John was on the verge of crying simply because of that word.

Then, Samuel said something very odd. Something he knew John wouldn't understand “On the verge of facing what they fear, they'll become animals.”

“What do you mean?”

“Many fear money, because it governs us. To have no money, is to be poor. Does poverty not scare you? The idea of not being able to have enough food to feed yourself? To survive each day not knowing how things are gonna go? To have money is to live. With money you live a good life, some however go greedy and ask for more. What do you expect? No one's perfect. Money is why the people you love sacrificed you. So they can stay afloat and continue to live.”

“My family wasn't struggling. So why did they ask for more?”

“There's many reasons why people do the things they do. Perhaps it was greed, or the idea that they have become better because of something you did. In the end, we are all imperfect. No one is truly pure. We always do some kind of wrong.”

“I don't get any of this, how does money govern us?”

“To govern, is to have power above others. Money has the power to insert fear. To do anything you must first accept the presence of money. Why else did you once have a job? To gain money. Why else did you once live in a home? Because you paid the taxes. Anything you do, comes back to money. To even walk in this country, you must pay money. I feel the idea of money is horrifying yet needed. I find money as a synonym for the grim reaper. Perhaps I'm wrong. Or perhaps I'm right. Of course, I still believe Money has good qualities. It's all about how you perceive it. Anything can be looked upon as good or bad.” Then Samuel stopped then continued, “perhaps you'll never understand the words that I speak. I'm okay with it. Why should I care?”

Then, John said, “how are you so successful?”

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Samuel looked at him for a second then thought. Samuel tried piecing together on what to say. Then he simply said, "Well, to be truly honest I had a bad start. I dropped out of high school as fast as I could. My idea was to grow some kind of business, Didn't work. My family lost any respect for me, I had no home, I had no money. I tried to find a job, but it didn't work.

Then, I began to push myself. I began getting frustrated and would push even harder. Soon I was able to get a job, then a home, then a business. I finally got what I wanted."

John then said, "so, what am I supposed to learn?"

Then, Samuel said something that'd change John's life, "I could've failed at life. I could still be on the streets. I could still be looking for food. I could still be stealing. But I'm not, I rose up and became successful. The ones who hit the lowest point in their life, are also the ones who have the chance to change their life in the most extraordinary way. You don't have to be special. You just have to get up and work hard. Sometimes you have to rage at yourself, and tell yourself to be better. It's not easy, but nothing's meant to be easy. The path to success is hard, but if I could do it, I know you can."

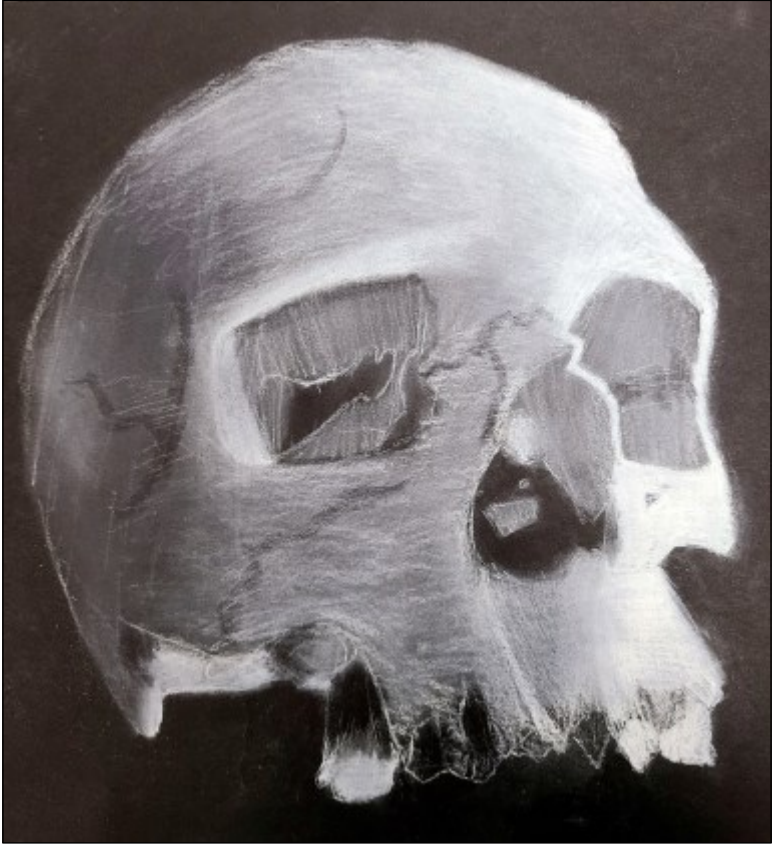
John walked out of the basement-like shelter. John walked out of the alley way and toward the open city. As John walked, he saw the bright sky, he felt he was the sun.

The sky was bright and golden. The air was fresh and soft. The birds were singing. The golden clouds glowed with the sky. The birds began to fly. The clouds began to glow brighter. The sun began to rise.

**Arveer Singh**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 7



**Dimitri Jurewicz**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8

## Boom, Whistle, Paralyzed

I squirm around, unable to get comfortable. The mattress laid upon this bed is extremely uncomfortable. It's stiff, like a pile of rocks were shoved inside of the mattress before they decided to use it. The lights don't help the fact that I can't seem to get comfortable. I can't deal with the bright, yellow, rectangular lights that hang above me on the ceiling. The fact that it's dark outside for some reason makes the lights shine brighter. The bed, the lights, and also the sounds. Constant beeping, babies crying, monitors screeching. I become more uncomfortable by the second. I attempted to reach the remote for the TV that sits on the counter-shelf hybrid in front of me, but the IV pierced into my wrinkled skin restricted me from doing so.

The clock above the door ticked. And ticked. And ticked. 11:52, 11:53, 11:54. I count in my head, hoping to fall asleep sometime soon. I feel drowsy and tired, yet too tired to fall asleep no matter how hard I shut my eyes or how many times I rolled back and forth.

Then boom. A slight whistle, then crash. Again, boom, whistle, crash. Boom, whistle, crash. Boom, whistle, crash. As soon as the clock read 12:00 AM, gunshots fired everywhere. All outside the hospital. Then silence. It is silent, quieter than space itself. It is so silent, in fact, you could hear an ant scurry across the floor. Boom, whistle, crash. The gunshots begin again and I begin to panic. I look over at the night stand next to the hospital bed. My old hat that matched the uniform hung right above it sits on the nightstand. Looking at my old military uniform mixed with the gunshots outside reminds me of when I fought in the North Korean War back in my twenties.

I press the button that sits right on the edge of my bed that calls for a nurse, panicking about the commotion outside. Would I have to fight again? I tense up more and more, feeling paralyzed and unable to move, as if I were being tranquilized, each time a gunshot is set off.

The door to my room opens. The nurse who enters appears calm, and I wonder how she's so calm. Gunshots are being fired left and right, up and down, and she looks as though it's the most normal thing ever. Boom, whistle, crash. She doesn't flinch.

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How?

“You alright, sir?” She asks in a friendly, calm voice.

Okay? Alright? Why does she seem so cheerful? “Am I alright? OF COURSE I’M NOT ALRIGHT!” I yell at her.

Boom, whistle, crash. She tilts her head slightly, seeming confused. “Is it the fireworks that are bothering you? I can turn on your TV if you’d like,” she suggests, keeping her friendly tone.

“Fireworks? Why would there be fireworks?” Was I panicking for nothing? Were the gunshots just fireworks this whole time?

“It’s the Fourth of July. People are setting off fireworks. I can open the blinds if you’d like to see.” She smiles as she talks.

She opens the blinds, and sure enough, colorful flashes fill the sky.

Boom, whistle, crash. A burst of colors, mainly red, white, and blue with the occasional gold and silver.

Boom, whistle, crash.

**Payton Wilson**  
Black River Middle  
Grade 8

## **Veterans Day Speech**

Elmer Davis once said, "This nation will remain the land of the free only as long as it is the home of the brave."

On this Veteran's Day, we salute and remember the brave soldiers who fought for our country. Without their bravery and sacrifice, we wouldn't have the freedom we enjoy every day as Americans.

To all of our veterans here today, we thank you for your bravery.

Bravery is fighting for our nation.

Bravery is having the courage to run into harm's way.

Bravery is leaving your family to fight for other families.

Bravery is putting our country above yourself.

Let us never forget how fortunate we are to have so many brave men and women who risk their lives for our lives. We are grateful. We will never forget you. And the things you did for our country, thank you for serving our country.

**Joel Manfull**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 8



## War Time

“RUN!” as bullets are flying overhead.  
1 month earlier,

It's March 3, 1944, “It's been five gruesome months since the war ended in 43. German flags over all Allied countries, Britain, America, France, Russia all now concurred by the German steam roll.” Private Jack Ryan now a POW of the Great War, WW2.” I've been in this prison for 2 months now being held by the Nazis. Food is scarce, water's very dirty almost undrinkable and at night there are weird noises from somewhere outside the barbed wire. No clue what it is or where it's coming from but that noise keeps half of us awake. Gun shots happen every so often, most likely the last of the Jewish people in these camps being found and shot on site, most hiding or pretending to be a soldier.” Hundreds of Millions of people died in WW2 alone and many more still dying of disease and murder. (Tom Scraps, a lieutenant new to war) "Private Jack is a hard, tuff man, brown hair brown eyes kind of muscular but always strict. Jacks the man that still keeps most of the soldiers in the camp from killing themselves, I know it sounds gruesome but it's true.” (Private Ryan) “Tom Scraps, he's a good man who never knows when to stay out of trouble and keeps his mouth shut, tall scrawny Blonde? Very cocky but always tells the truth even when he shouldn't.”

(German Captain George, controlling the concentration camp)  
“These Americans are foolish trying to fight the German Riech, some like Tom don't know how to stay out of trouble, others like Private Ryan only try to stay alive.” (German Captain George)  
“Most supplies are dwindling food and water ammo, this Great War has put a toll on Germans and all other people involved but as Hitler always says it is worth the price but most of us know it's not.” Now most of us think it's crazy but there's groans like monster groans outside the barbed wire and none of us know what it is. Could be the ground of a dying man or the fairy tales came true and there are zombies outside of this encampment. (Random German Soldier, scared out of his mind) “The captain always says we are all going to get supplies, we are all going to go home but we know it's just a lie.” I was told to take my first watch outside the barbed wire, something that has not happened ever since a man went missing. As the soldier was walking out with his bolt action rifle all you hear is a scream and a few gun shots and he's gone nothing left behind to know who killed him or how he died.

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### A few days later . . .

(German soldiers) It's been a few days since the incident, no one wants to talk about it nor no one saw it happen it was just noises and he was gone, no one even knew his name he was just a new recruit that was there didn't talk much he was just a blue eyed kid that was just trying to make a living." (American POWs) "Did you all hear what happened to that German kid who went outside the barbed wire and went missing, no one knows how." (Private Ryan) "Don't question it, they are the ones that put us in here in two weeks we are going to try and break free anyways. Do you all remember the plan, we have a demolition person with an improvised explosive put the explosive on the fence. The blast should be big enough to destroy most of the barbed wire in that area and be run as fast as we can and don't turn back. But remember the code of honor never leaves a man behind even if it means life or death."

### The night of the escape

Explosions are going off all around. All explosives are used. Everywhere the American soldiers running for their life trying to escape but German soldiers are shooting at them and at the same time a mysterious creature is kidnaping murdering any lone soldiers who dares to shoot or even run.

**Robert Dieter**  
Black River Middle  
Grade 8



**Connor Nahrstedt**  
Brunswick High  
Grade 10

## Clone

The darkness of an empty room covers my eyes, like someone is stapling them shut, never to be opened. "Why must I never leave?" cries my mouth. It's like my mind is skipping in a field of daisies, but a terrible monster, deranged, and screaming, chases me, mocking my cries.

"You're horribly awful! If you ever dare to leave, you shall frighten the public." I can't stand the feeling of its grasp on my shy shoulders, like a thousand needles piercing my skin. The horrible chokehold of guilt, I effortlessly feel all the time.

It seems like there are two of me. The other version of me, a perfect life, the perfect vision. I can't ever leave this empty room, I can't ever open my eyes. Yet, the second of me is pulling me out the door, trying to force me out. The horrible monster awaits, making me tremble in fear, like my hips are made of 1000 pound weights.

"Come! Go into the streets! Live the life of Me!" the other me says into my ear. I can't get the second me to stop. Step 1..2..3. I step out my gaping door, step 1..2..3..4..5. I step out of this hole called a house. Step 1..2.. BAM! Brightness hits my eyes, burning them in my head. Melting my brain, like my face liquefying onto my neck.

The clone throws the real me onto the street. Why! These streets disgust me! I can hear the growing yells and whispers. "Monster! Monster!" they all cry. Their trash is being whipped at me. "It's hideous!" they shout. The wicked townspeople, still shouting and throwing things, take me away to the church.

The horrible monsters who chased me forever had finally caught me. The center of the church, a special place just for me. A pit that was dug, especially for me. The pit sucks me up and swallows leaving an opening just wide enough for a flame to be tossed in. Burning, and burning, worse than ever before. "Come feast your eyes on this everyone! This horrible monster infiltrated our town!" The wicked people cry. "Ugh! Just look at this revolting creature with its perfectly circular blue orbs, its sharp, shiny red hair, and it's horribly blinding perfect white teeth!" I will now meet my end, the clone lives.

**Stella Oddo**  
Root Middle  
Grade 7

## Skeletons

They say there are bodies in the Great Wall of China  
Workers and slaves, nothing now but corroded skeletons  
I can't help but think of my own skeletons  
The ones rotting in the back of my mind  
Corpses that no one can identify but myself  
Perhaps I have thrown the skeletons from my own closet  
Into my own bridge that stretches in vain to you  
Desperately packing stones, mortar, and clay  
Trying to build something that resembles a foundation  
The Great Wall of China has lasted dynasties  
Centuries  
We were supposed to last  
Have I burned that bridge?  
Have I brought too many skeletons from my closet, that the walls  
    have corroded holes and gaps in between where the bodies  
    had been left to sit  
To decompose  
To dwell on mistrust and mistakes  
Can I still walk across this bridge to you or will my feet come  
    away with ash?  
Will I die from the smoke, or burn from the fire?  
We were supposed to last  
Dynasties  
Centuries

**Reese McQuaid**  
Wadsworth High  
Grade 9



**Ashley Weers**  
Brunswick High  
Grade 12

## The Sprite of the Forest

Gently as she could, Erin swung her feet over the edge of her bed and onto the floor, rising on her tiptoes before rocking back onto her heels. One foot after the other, she slinked out of her room and to the top of the steps, down and down until she reached her front door. Graceful as a ballerina, she lifted one leg into the air and dipped her toe into her boots.

As she swung her door open, the summer heat of Ireland embraced her, as did the chorus of critters; toads, crickets, and cicadas. When she set the toe of her boot onto the earth, overgrown stalks of grass raised up and tickled her legs, swaying with the gentle breeze which caught her nightgown and twirled it around her knees.

As she lifted her eyes, the stars winked at her and the moon offered its light, illuminating her way through the night as she started toward the creek. With each step she took, mud squelched and leaves crunched. She knew she made it to the creek when the gentle burbling of water greeted her.

She marched toward the edge of the water and squatted down, peering down to meet her reflection. She resembled nature in a way; the freckles on her face mirrored the constellations, and the wavy locks which cascaded down her back matched the creek's waves.

Dipping her hand into the cold water, she sunk her fingers into the soft mud and algae. The wet dirt buried under her fingernails and into the crevices of her hand. She flexed her fingers, the soft mud molding with whatever way her hand moved.

When her nerves started to tingle and her hand went numb, she withdrew her hand and flapped it around, tiny droplets of water and mud spraying. She stood tall and stretched as much as she could, inhaling the humid atmosphere before she exhaled and settled back into a slouch.

Gently stepping onto the rock, she continued her journey through the familiar area, humming a tune as she went along. To steady herself, she lifted her arms as though she had wings which allowed her to glide from rock to rock. Erin always considered

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what animal she would want to be if she were reincarnated; maybe a nimble deer, a sly fox, or an agile squirrel. As much as she mulled over the endless possibilities, the freedom and beauty that every butterfly seemed to have drew her in.

When she snapped out of her trance and re-rooted herself into the present, her eyes swept the forest floor, tracing the roots of the trees and trailing up to the very tip of the trees which reached toward the sky. Squirrels scurried and leapt from branch to branch, rustling the leaves and dipping the branches.

When her gaze lowered back to the floor, she noticed a hole dug by the paws of an animal. But, it was rather large, it probably housed a fox or some other critter.

Like any curious child, she grabbed a stick and poked it into the cavern. Nothing. Throwing the stick to the side, she lowered herself onto all fours and began crawling.

She didn't expect for the hole to be steep, and she was sent tumbling down, down, down.

She landed with a *thud* against the soft dirt. As her eyelids fluttered open, she was greeted by a mystical sight.

Hundreds, if not thousands, of miniscule humans flitting about with the help of butterfly wings which sprouted from their back. The interior of the dirt cave was lined by what seemed to be houses, a village constructed from man-made litter and Mother Nature.

Her presence wasn't welcomed; as soon as the first pixie set eyes on her it let out a shriek, more of a squeak, warning the others of her presence. Eyes as wide as marbles set on her, mothers drew their young towards them as they all huddled together and started uttering an unknown language carried by a thick accent. Their wings blended together and created a kaleidoscope of varying colors.

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Erin's grandmother always told her about Ireland's folklore; fairies, selkies, and leprechauns, but she always dismissed the matters as old wives' tales. But, as of now, she sat face-to-face with a community of fairies.

The murmurs died down as they realized she was no threat. Still, the mothers held onto their curious offspring. The crowd of fairies thinned and parted to reveal an elderly, well fed man sitting on a strip of bark.

His pale blue eyes traced her height, from her boots to the top of her ginger locks, not missing a single freckle or blemish.

His eyes snapped to meet hers, "State your name, lassie."

"Ah, uh," Erin was left dumbfounded, her tongue twisted and stumbling over her words. She inhaled to calm her jittery nerves, "Its Erin."

He lifted his snub nose higher into the air as he stared at her.

"Well, *Erin*, you skitter on home and into bed, and not a word is to be mentioned of this, ya hear?"

She nodded and whipped around, not bothering to glance back as she clawed her way back above ground. Her girlhood spent climbing trees paid off as she finally hauled her body over the rim of the hollow. Never again would she go poking her head into unfamiliar areas.

**Lilly Riccilli**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 7

## Swamp Monster

One day in a swamp, there was a swamp house and a mysterious old man whom they called the Keeper. The Keeper lived in the swamp house, here he watched over the swamp to keep the croakers out. Some days the croakers were bad, others just fine. The Keeper enjoyed his job, though sometimes he was lonely. Other days he would keep the croakers out and move on. Though one day the swamp was mysteriously quiet so The Keeper went to walk around. As he was walking he found a massive tree filled with croakers. His first instinct was to chop the tree and dismiss of the croakers. Although something inside him clicked and he realized how terrible he was being. It soon dawned on him that if wanted friends he would have to try. So he made the croakers a home, gave them food, and nurtured them until he couldn't anymore. As he did this he realized how nice, sweet, and cute the croakers were. He had friends now and was almost never lonely.

These croakers were frogs.

**Lillian Wander**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 8

## Silence

SHUSH!

We looked around

What was she sushing?

“Be Quiet!”

It's like she can hear our thoughts

She's walking over to us?

What could she want

SLAM!

“You're talking too loud!”

I look at her

“I'm not even talking?”

Oh how I regret saying that now...

She grabbed me

Dragged me to the door

Threw me into a dark room

“What is this place?”

Oh how I wish I never said that.

A monster walked out.

20 eyes and 30 horns

7 feet tall and crazy colors

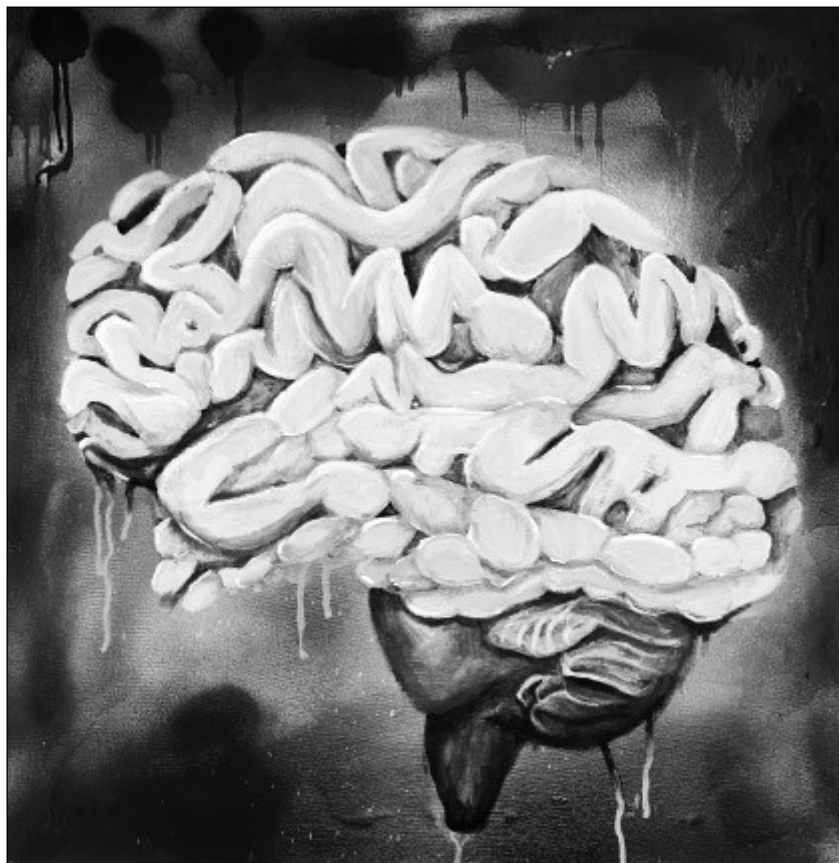
It look me in my two eyes and said in a deep voice

“Should have been quiet in the library, now I take your voice.”

**Peyton Lilly**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 8



**Zoey Weigle**  
Cloverleaf High  
Grade 11

## Universe of Disaster: Volcanous

Long ago, on a planet known as Volcanous, there lived a girl of no name. She was very cunning, ambitious and brave. Now, on this same planet, there was an egotistical boy known only as the Challenger. He was the ruler of the planet of Volcanous, and he, as his name suggests, loved issuing people impossible tasks. He was also a bit of a gambler. He would stake everything, even offering to give up his crown, just to see people try to complete the tasks he had bestowed upon them. One day, the Challenger decided to issue a new task to anyone who was willing. He said that he would only tell you what this new undertaking would be if you came up to him and accepted first. Countless went up to the palace, but once they heard what they were to do, all left in a stormy fit of anger and despair. Now, the girl was very competitive and wanted to prove her worth. She went up to the Challenger's palace, promising herself that when she asked for the task, she would complete it, no matter what it was. In her march up to the palace, she met a young boy, around the age of seven. He was sitting on the hot and hard ground of the kingdom. The girl stopped and asked him,

"Why are you here? Where are your parents?"

The boy responded, "I don't know. I've been here for almost two days, and they still haven't found me."

The girl, upon hearing this, remembered a couple she knew who had seemed very distraught lately. She had asked them why multiple times, but they never told her. She wondered if they could possibly be this boy's parents. And so she told him,

"I may know where your parents are. Why don't you come with me?" The boy agreed, and together they ran off. The little boy, as the girl soon found out, was lightning fast and did not seem to be bothered by the heat of Volcanous. The girl still wanted to get to the Challenger to get her quest issued but she thought that she could help this child. She walked far, and eventually got to the couple who were, in fact, his parents. The newly reunited family, consisting of a tailor, a blacksmith, and the boy thanked her expressly. Before she left, the family said,

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"In your utmost need, we will help you. Remember that." The girl thanked them, and told them that she would keep it in mind. She then trekked off through the black rocks, on her way to the palace where she would receive her challenge.

As night fell, the girl finally reached the Challenger's palace. The Challenger was surprised to hear a knock at his palace door, as no hopeless cases had come by in almost a week. So, in great spirits, he opened the door to find the girl. To the Challenger, the girl said,

"I would like to complete your quest."

Happily, he responded, "Are you certain?"

The girl replied with a nod, and the Challenger beckoned her inside. When she was inside the threshold of the door, he said,

"Your task is to go to the large volcano just outside of town, defeat the Fireworm, and bring me back a sample of both the Fireworm's blood and the molten lava from the volcano without getting burned. And, the lava still must be in molten state when you give it to me.

"Yes, I can do that!" said the girl. The Challenger just laughed.

"If you say so."

So the girl walked off to the volcano. It was a grueling journey, and the girl wanted to give up. But she was determined. She never gave up on the quest and when she finally reached the volcano, she was awed, as was inevitable, by the grandeur of the volcano. It was tall, so tall the girl couldn't see the top of it through the clouds of volcanic ash. Currently, it was not active, but when it was, the lava could be seen from miles and miles away. And it was as hot as if she was being cooked in an oven. The black rock that made it up radiated heat like a grill in the summer. The girl had heard that the only thing that would not melt in its lava was diamond. As she was staring, she noticed something. The great Fire worm was sleeping at the mouth of the volcano. Slowly and quietly, she crept toward it, drawing out a

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golden sword. In her pocket, she had a golden vial to hold the blood. She raised her sword, and stroke, and killed the Fire worm instantly. But now the problem was getting the blood. She grabbed the gold vial, and scooped at the Fire worm, careful not to get any on her bare hands, as Fire worm blood worked as burning acid, dissolving your skin whilst also burning you to a crisp. A drop of blood, thankfully, went into the vial. "The Challenger never specified how much blood he needed." said the girl, smiling at her trickery. She then went over to the bubbling volcano. She peered inside the open mouth and saw lava bubbling at the surface. She did not know how she could possibly get it. But then she remembered the family she had helped. "Help me, this is my most dire need!" she cried, not knowing if they would hear her. But they were there at once, the tailor holding diamond armor, the blacksmith, a diamond container, and the boy, wheeled shoes.

"Put on the diamond armor. Then take the container. Then scoop up the lava, and give it to me. I will get it to the Challenger on my wheeled shoes." said the little boy. The girl wasted no time and put on the armor, grabbed the container, and carefully leaned into the volcano. She scooped up the lava, and gave it to the little boy, who wheeled away on his shoes faster than lightning. She followed him, and when she reached him at last, he was already at the Challenger's palace. The girl presented him with the lava and the Fire worm blood, and the Challenger smiled.

"You have done well. I present to you my throne, crown, palace, and the title of the Challenged, so that the world shall forever remember what you had to go through to get this power. Never forget it yourself."

The girl, now the Challenged, thanked him, and she took the crown, sat on the throne, and was known as the greatest ruler the planet of Volcanous had ever seen. And with that, she lived on for many years as a fair and just queen, and very powerful.

**Leila Hughes**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 7

## The Countdown

Trandfert was the perfect place; a utopia designed for the great and ambitious where all was right and happy. Clocks, inventions, and gadgets galore were being made every day as the civilization was growing to an abundant size. Buildings and architecture were beautiful pieces made of marble and diamond; artwork at its finest. It was the most amazing city in all of the lands . . . until the countdown.

You see, there were *no* glitches or malfunctions with the technology in Trandfert. All technology was as pristine as it could be; carefully crafted by complete experts in the field. So when the time came that one clock was going down instead of up, panic was inevitable.

The day started as any other day would: people ate their breakfast, prayed to “The Founders”, worked their shifts- until a wealthy businessman named James noticed a peculiar thing: during his work time, a clock in his office was counting down instead of up. *That should be impossible*, he thought to himself. *This must be an intentional design choice- there are no problems in Trandfert. What is it counting down to, though?*

James rushed to his secretary. “Secretary, there seems to be a clock counting down instead of up,” he barked.

“Impossible,” his secretary told him. “There are no problems in Trandfert. Now, James, please stop with this nonsense, or I’ll have to call the forces.”

“Really, I saw it with my own eyes!” He explained. “Come with me, I’ll show you!”

They walked to the clock, and, sure enough, it was counting down. This awakened fear in the secretary. She rushed back to her desk and went on the P.A.

“Attention, please, everyone! There is a clock counting down instead of up in the office- and no, it is *not* an intentional design choice. Please escort yourself out of the building at once and call the authorities.”

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Several people shrieked in horror, terrified of what could possibly be going on- after all, there were no problems in Trandfert. James tried to intervene. "N-now, just wait a minute-" suddenly, he was trampled by a large crowd- no, a *stampede* of terrified individuals rushing out of the building like a herd of wildebeest, doors knocked off of their hinges, glass shattered- all because of one silly clock.

Meanwhile in the Grand Palace, The Founders shared a meal together talking about how great of a place Trandfert was, bragging about their accomplishments one after the other.

"The buildings I've made are astounding," Arnelius (one of the founders) bragged.

"My recipes make delectable foods," Traldero (another one of the founders) boasted.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," Ralseff (another founder) announced.

Everyone turned their gaze to him. He looked around, building suspense by waiting. Finally, he continued, "We are all great!"

All the founders cheered, holding up their cups to make a toast to Trandfert- when a servant came bursting into the room.

**"FOUNDERS! THERE IS CHAOS IN THE STREETS!  
ASSISTANCE IS GREATLY NEEDED!"**

All the founders looked at each other with concern, and then bolted out the palace door to the upper balcony as swiftly as they could. What they saw outside was terrifying.

On the streets of Trandfert, what had first been a normal, perfect day had spiraled into complete and utter chaos. Crowds bustled about with pitchforks and torches, all looking for a scapegoat. After a few minutes of fighting, they all formed into one big mob and started toward the palace.

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"BLAME THE FOUNDERS! BLAME THE FOUNDERS!" They chanted.

"Refko," Ralseff commanded, "get me the loudspeaker."

"Right away, your majesty," said Refko, a short, portly servant.

Refko fetched it right away and gave it to Ralseff. Bubbling with anger, he yelled into the loudspeaker to the crowd, "WHAT DO YOU WANT, YOU SAVAGES?! I THOUGHT WE RULED WELL!"

One member of the mob got up on a pedestal and responded, "Founders, you promised us a perfect world to live in where all was right and perfect, yet there was an imperfection, and we are led to believe that it's your fault. We have been raised to look up to you; yet you give us lies and deceit. Why, oh why would you do this to us?"

Ralseff was baffled. He looked at the mob in astonishment. *Oh, no*, he thought. *Their spells have worn off again*. He put his mouth up to the loudspeaker again. "An imperfection? What do you mean? Surely there is some misunderstanding."

"No, sir," the man said. "There was a clock counting down instead of up! I saw it with my own two eyes!"

Immediately, Ralseff remembered who the man on the pedestal was. Of course, this scenario had happened millions of times before; he'd fixed it all with a hard reset, but there was always the one guy who messed everything up; James Fredfask. He must have been the first one to spot the imperfection; he *always* was. Yes, the spells only lasted for a limited time, but that "limited time" was supposed to be every year; not every 6 months, and James always messed everything up. It was puzzling. *You know, maybe I could lock him up in a cage next time around*, Ralseff thought. *I could hide him where nobody would find him- and*

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*nobody would intervene, because “there are no problems in Trandfert.” Then, I could keep the spells going at an infinite rate every new year, and keep them all brainwashed without any unexpected interruptions! Brilliant! I’m a genius! I already knew that, though.*

Ralseff concentrated on the area; careful not to break his gaze over the city. He would do it again- but this time, he would finally be able to keep them brainwashed *forever*. He clenched his fist and held it at where he could see the center of the town, and when he opened his hand up, a giant pink bubble burst open at the center of the crowd, consuming everything within its ever growing radius as Ralseff cackled maniacally. He’d done it again . . .

. . . But not completely. What do you think that clock was counting down to? How did James recover from being trampled so quickly to become a leader of the mob? Why was Ralseff doing this?

Well, none of these questions can really be answered, but what we do know is that at that instance, right as he was completing the spell, Ralseff felt a hand cover his mouth as he was pulled backward to be met by the face of James Fredfask himself . . .

**Alex Tilson**

Wadsworth Middle

Grade 7

## The Hand of the Moon

I threw a rock into the water, listening to it fall and break the water's surface. I threw another, watching the ripples echo across the vastness of the dark lake. I skipped a flat rock next, witnessing the custom waves it created. The sun has fallen as I remain at the lakeside, awaiting the moon. I was always told to go home at dark, almost trained to hide when the shadows of the night took shape, but it was now that I would insist on reversing this conditioning. I sit here, throwing rocks and occasionally conversing with myself within my mind about overcoming the piece of the day that's the hardest to see as something not to be instilled with fear from. I watched the moon rise and that was that. It's a strange thing to take back a fear when you're already an adult, especially a fear of the dark. That's growth though, you need that stuff, they always say you need that stuff. I went to the lake every night in the summer, sitting in the dark and even starting to love my solitude, sleeping in later and staying up longer, under the moon. For three summers, I watched the rocks along the riverside fade into the darkness of the night that blanketed itself across the country, all to eventually listening to the water break as the rock fell in.

Tonight, the moon was high, hidden behind dim clouds that lacked luster. The grass folded underneath my shoes as the comfort of the dark, moonlit lake reached out to hold me. I sat listening to the water shifting its weight, the wind determining which way the waves would leap. I reached down, feeling my fingertips caress the edge of a flat rock. Throwing it with vigor, I listened as it whipped and whooshed through the air. Somehow though, there was no landing noise. There wasn't a breach of the water's surface and there was no bounce against the dirt. I looked around into the four walls of darkness around me, hearing the lake quietly moving and reflecting small shreds of moonlight. My fingers found the edge of a sharper rock, with a flat head. I tossed it softly into the water, yet there wasn't a trace of a sound. There was a silent stillness across everything as I reached down to grab my things, all the childlike fears of the dark loomed, circling over me again despite my efforts to adjust.

The longest gasp I'd ever heard emerged from the lake. It was followed by quick breaths like a newborn baby, but accompanied by no cries. I was not alone.

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“Are you okay? Hello? How long have you been here?” I called out to the surprise guest in the darkness. There was no response, nothing was spoken. In fact, there was another brief moment of silence before the hyperventilation turned into wailing screams. Screams that were deep and cruel, yet shrill and chilling. I couldn’t make out any sound other than the chord of the unmelodious disturbance that transcended further into a horn of cries, screams and drowning all at once. No matter which way I looked or flipped my head, the sound was all around me. It was a sound without direction, a sound absent of any waves. It was closing in on me, getting louder and more personal with my ears. A wail of pain from the sound escaped my lips, as listening to my own cries became a quick relief in comparison. I glanced up at the moon who was now missing from the sky, hidden in the covert darkness. I blinked rapidly as I screamed, wondering if anyone could hear me, attempting to see anything other than the darkness that was just holding me moments ago. The screams that were not mine overpowered mine quickly, feeling closer and louder than ever. There was no room in the air to listen out for footsteps, no safe direction to run. It was in my ears now, the constant scream of what I could only hope was a struggling survivor. I felt around me with my hands despite being blind in the absence of the moon. There was nothing around me, no rocks, no grass, and certainly no source of the impaling screams. Somehow, it still managed to crescendo through my ears so effortlessly, going well past my eardrums and into my brain. Whatever this sound was, it had to be right near me. I tried to scream louder, to dull out the noise. However, as soon as I widened my jaw, an unfamiliar hand struck over my mouth. It was too loud to hear my own muffled screams and there was no force against me other than the sound and the hand covering my breathing. I grabbed at the hand, but it seemed to be almost cemented to my mouth, no amount of my struggling strength could part its fingers. I felt along the arm frantically, to finally discover who was doing this in the dark. I followed the arm across my face, struggling through my shaking hands maneuvering across the wrist and elbow of the unknown limb. I felt the cold bicep of the arm around me, being led nowhere but the back of my own head.

**Sarah Kerrigan**  
Medina High  
Grade 12

It was early dawn, somewhere in the desert. I was isolated, far away from society. Sand hammered against my visor as I was being pursued by gangsters in a white van. My dirt bike was running low on gas, and I had to get away fast before they got the briefcase back. In the locked metal briefcase was an extremely valuable thing only known to the commissioner of the police. I was about 120 miles from the commissioner's office, and had around 75 miles worth of gas left in my dirt bike. Then, I saw another white van and on the van was a fuel can. I knew I had to get the fuel can, but I was unsure how. I intentionally slowed down until I was in the middle of the vans. The van to my left opened the side door and out came two giant hands. I dodged the first swing of his fists and then slowed down even more until I was behind the right van. Using one hand I unstrapped the fuel can and pulled it onto my dirt bike. At that point, I was sure that I would be able to escape that problem easily, until I heard a loud bang and it all went dark.

The room was dark and quiet, I couldn't move my legs or my arms. I was strapped to a chair that was bolted to the floor. A giant glowing screen turned on and then on the screen was the briefcase, a pair of bolt cutters, a saw, and special white gloves. I watched as the gloves were put on, and the bolt cutters were placed precisely on the lock. A loud "crunch" was heard, but the lock was unharmed. To my astonishment, the bolt cutters were broken. I had to get out of this chair! I then remembered the knife in my pocket. If I could get the knife in my hand I could break free of this horrid place, and steal a car to get the briefcase to the commissioner. I pulled my leg up as far as the strap allowed, and the knife fell into my bound hands. I started sawing at the strap, and it came off. I cut the strap off my right arm, and then my legs. I was free, I raced down the hallways and found a door that said "Projector Room." I knew this had to be the room. I tried to open the door, but it was bolted shut. So, I resorted to kicking the door down, and with one big kick, the door came down with a crash. I fought the man in the room and knocked him out. I grabbed the briefcase and a map of the facility. I ran extremely fast down the hallways and got to a giant garage. I then found a beautiful Corvette just sitting in the garage with a full tank of gas. I took the Corvette and left with the briefcase.

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As I got to the highway, I saw a mysterious low profile vehicle behind me. I only noticed it because it had been following me for several miles. Then, from nowhere, an unmarked, black SUV swerved right in front of me. Together, they were intent on stopping, but my corvette was just too fast. I finally realized they had me heading for a spike strip to pop my tires. "Pop," my tires were gone and I had to surrender. It turns out the people in the SUV were the CCS. (Commissioner's Chocolate Squad) It still didn't make sense to me, but they were there to help me and get me to the commissioner's office. In the SUV I told them about my crazy adventure to get here, and how many times I felt like Tom Cruise. We made small talk and sat in silence for the remainder of the ride.

We arrived at the commissioner's office with no problem and gave him the briefcase. The commissioner was plump and shorter than I thought he would be. He thanked me for getting the briefcase back. This whole time I never knew what was in the briefcase. The commissioner could tell that I was curious what exactly was in the briefcase, so he opened the briefcase and showed me what was inside. I was extremely surprised to find out that in the briefcase was a chocolate bar. I got shot at, got strapped in a chair and watched as the case tried to get opened, and got chased all for a worthless chocolate bar! It turns out that the commissioner loves chocolate, and this bar was the last of this type of German chocolate in the world! I watched as the commissioner ate the chocolate in one giant bite. He did give me a small bite of the chocolate. I also got an award for taking down a lot of gangsters. The commissioner appreciated it all, but crime never rests. So, he sent me on another daring mission with very little information.

**Henry Haake**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 7

## Is It a Curse or Are We Crazy?

Are sasquatches real? Most people would say no, that they are just myths to scare kids from going into the woods. However my family has seen them. All of the kids in my family have seen at least one sasquatch after they turned four.

First it was my older brother, he first saw one when he was 5. My mother and I were cooking dinner in the kitchen when he came in and walked to the back door and just stared out into the back yard. A few years later I asked him about what he saw. He told me that he saw two large black figures and one smaller figure walking in the backyard. That he had looked away and then when he looked back one of the figures was at the door staring right at him. He had red eyes and was extremely tall. My brother stared at the thing for a few minutes until my mother asked him for help with something.

Then it was my older cousin. He saw it at his old house when he was 6. He told me that he saw a black figure around 10 feet tall walking out of his yard. That he didn't see its face. About three years ago he moved and now has a large section of woods behind his house. Three weeks after he moved into his new house he saw the same black figure. This time he saw its face it had bright orange eyes. It had one of the chickens that the neighbors had forgotten to put back in the shed that night in its hand. As it was walking into the woods it turned around and looked him in the eyes then walked backwards into the woods.

A different cousin has two barns behind his house and a field behind them. I don't remember how old he was when he saw them but I do know that he didn't only see one, there were two. He told me that one of them had yellow eyes and the other had red. That they were as tall as the barns. They stood in the middle of the two barns. They just stared at him before walking away into the woods.

The first time that I saw them was when I was 9. I was sitting on the front porch with my mom and looked over to the park across the street. It was already getting dark outside. The park had woods around it. I don't remember how many there were but I know that one had bright blue eyes and was tall.

When I was four most of my cousins and I were playing outside

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around 8 pm. The sun was starting to set. I don't know what we were playing, but I do remember one of my oldest cousins that was there telling us to run back into the house and not to stop until we get inside. We all started to run and I stopped after I got to the door and looked behind me to see why we had to run. I don't know what it was that I saw but I remember seeing a set of red eyes in the bushes. We told our parents what happened and they all said that it was just a coyote but I don't think it was.

Whenever we tell people about what we see no one ever believes us. They say that we are crazy and have a wild imagination. Sometimes I believe them but the truth is I know we have seen things and none of us know what it is. So are we just crazy? Or is it a curse that we are the only ones that are able to see these things.

**Hannah Hoelk**  
Black River Middle  
Grade 8

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**Sid Frazier**  
Medina High  
Grade 12

## The Blizzard

A fury, beyond any known human's control  
 Your life feeling as if it's on its last toll  
 While your body lays enveloped with warm, soothing coats  
 You start to see figures through the storm like soulless, deathly  
 ghosts  
 The breeze begins pressing like an iron wall of power  
 Something slicing through the winds like a violent, deadly prowler

As you focus on beyond in the raining, continuous snow  
 A shape of something begins to partly appear to show  
 Something pale with an uncanny human form  
 Looking as fierce and as cold as the storm  
 Like a skeleton with a thin layer of pale skin  
 The creature rising looking undoubtedly slender thin  
 With sunken pale eyes placed atop on its sinister skull  
 Making a ghastly noise from its throat like an old, crippled gull

The figure gets closer, closer, like death itself  
 With its movements of its body like a broken creaking shelf  
 It opens its wide jaw that spreads far across its face  
 Your heart instantaneously begins to violently beat and race  
 Its mouth is filled with repulsive fangs as sharp as a huntsmen's  
 daggers  
 Its lemon yellow teeth are arranged in clustered, unorganized  
 clatters  
 Blood red tongues begin to exit from its grimly, murderous maw  
 The creature's breath reeks of carrion that is disgustingly, freshly  
 raw

You try to push forward against the infinite beating gusts  
 You grow tired as you feel like your bones begin integrating rusts  
 You lust for remaining energy you know you can never receive  
 Facing the chalky, white snow constantly makes your vision  
 deceive  
 Hearing the thing grow closer, closer, by its raspy panting  
 breaths  
 Your hopes begin to fade into spiraling, diving depths

You see something coming into view, within the far, outstretching  
 distance  
 Your mind is set into an immediate, ongoing, nonstop instance  
 Power starts to surge throughout your frostbitten, stiffening veins

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Pushing through all your dreadful, awfully tortuous pains  
 Something then finally slowly begins to appear  
 An escape from this monstrous, devilishly cruel fear  
 A cabin with warm, pleasant lights crawling from its window  
 The thought itself brings a tear to your eye like a dismal,  
     mourning widow  
 You see a person opening the old, crumbling door  
 The snow then steadily decreases its now sprinkling pour

You begin to have hope to escape your deathly, final race  
 Realizing that the creature is in no apparent, trackable trace  
 You begin to smell the smoke from the chimney's ancient peak  
 Making it the only thing you now ever wanted to desperately seek  
 The man in the depleting porch stares in awe and marvel of you  
 The snow and winds from the skies finally stopped to ensue

Becoming so close to the cabin, the shocked man awaits  
 As you continue to run, a jolting pain in your back agitates  
 Nails like fisherman's worn, sharp hooks enters your back  
     through your skin  
 A squeal from the beast's gullet roars, sounding like that of a  
     demonic creature of sin  
 Turning to your shoulder you see two cold, gray glaring eyes  
 Making you realize your utter, awful demise

The stranger watches the carnage from his eroded, old crippling  
     porch  
 While the pain of your misery feels like an awful, hellfire of a  
     scorch  
 It opens its mouth wide, swallowing you like a loathsome, greedy  
     snake  
 Feasting on your lifeless, frigid corpse while it begins to statically  
     shake  
 The man watches in absolute terror of his gruesome, horrid sight  
 His hair on his old, wrinkled skin starts to rise from pure primal  
     fright  
 The thin, hollow creature then finishes up it's long lasted meal  
 Turning its head slowly toward the cabin and the man in appeal

**Drew Divis**  
 Highland High  
 Grade 10

“Why aren’t you eating, Gabrielle? Is something bothering you?” Antoinette asked, her voice hushed and tender. Gabrielle had expected a dinner with the queen and her friends, as well as the king, to be at least somewhat difficult and awkward, as the only people in the party to whom she had spoken before were Their Majesties, but she had not expected herself to have such a strong reaction to simply being in unfamiliar company. Paralyzed by the fear of being looked down upon or being spoken of without her knowledge by the strangers watching her, she had been unable to eat; it was not that she had merely lost her appetite—it seemed that even the slightest interference with her body, whose entire supply of energy had nearly been exhausted on keeping her mind above the water, would be enough to completely destroy it. But something about Antoinette’s gentle, yet reassuringly firm voice had, miraculously, managed to bring peace to Gabrielle’s mind. It felt as though it had wrapped her in a blanket of safety; she no longer worried if she had been performing well enough, and the mass of discomfort in her abdomen began to unravel, like the spools of thread she used to stitch images of flowers for the queen in her spare time. Enough was left for her to remain slightly uneasy, however. Nevertheless, a comforting warmth spread throughout her body while a great portion of it dissipated. The prickly feeling of tears approaching her eyes, which typically functioned as an untimely warning for some impending emotional disaster, was finally an indication of something good.

Despite having been presented with the option of everyone in the room, Antoinette had, without any visible reluctance, chosen to spend the entirety of the gathering in close proximity to the individual with whom she was least familiar. The question of whether it was nothing more than a dream she was experiencing—this agonizing doubting of reality often loomed over Gabrielle during stressful situations, particularly when things “too good to be true” happened during them—threatened to pull her attention away from what really mattered then: deepening her friendship with the queen. She had begun to doubt that it was still possible since she had been so focused on making a perfect first impression that she had forgotten to, or was simply unable to, act naturally. An excruciating combination of disappointment and despair pooled in her chest as she realized that the queen undoubtedly would have been more attracted to rawness than insincerity, especially in such an informal setting. *Complicating*

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*things for yourself again, are you, Ellie?* her mother had once asked upon witnessing the eight-year-old Gabrielle's failed, yet equally impressive attempt to replicate, in the form of stitch work, a master's painting of an elaborate bouquet of roses. Fortunately, she did not sense that Antoinette intended to shame her by bringing attention to her stilted, obviously staged mannerisms, and for this she was infinitely grateful, but it was not yet time for her to fully drop the act. Something that required so much vulnerability could only be done in private, away from the queen's other friends. Something that Gabrielle could not quite discern told her that they already had no intention of accepting her as one of them, though no one had explicitly confirmed or done anything to fuel such an assumption.

"May I speak with you alone, Your Majesty?" Gabrielle asked, her eyes resting longingly on the door at the other end of the table. It almost seemed to taunt her by being so far away. It did, however, spare her the pain of being able to observe a diminutive portion of the outside world through a pane of glass as clear as the waters of the Melissani Lake without being allowed to reach it. "It's nothing serious, but I would rather explain in a place where there aren't so many people. If it wouldn't be too much trouble, could we go outside, perhaps?"

"I don't see why not," Antoinette responded. "It would make it much easier for us to get through to each other, anyway. By the way, there's no need to be so polite, Gabrielle! You can call me Antoinette from now on. I prefer to be addressed by my real name whenever I'm away from the palace. It makes me feel more human, I suppose. 'Your Majesty' can only be thrown around for so long before it becomes completely meaningless. It seems to me that the only reason for people's use of such titles is not because they genuinely feel compelled to do so, but because they are afraid of what will happen if they don't. What right have I to blame them, though? I cannot say that I have never lived my life in constant fear of judgment. With every opportunity I get, I thank God for having allowed me to give up the person I used to be. Although I cannot bring myself to hate her, I cannot imagine what my life would be like now if He had left her here with me."

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Antoinette took Gabrielle by the hand as she swiftly led the way from the table to the door, intentionally disregarding the suspicious, reproving stares of the others in the room, which followed them both like shadows until they reached their destination. Their high-heeled slippers made it sound as though they were treading upon a floor of glass, but when Gabrielle observed the ground there was nothing but a plain of milky-white marble, whose occasional patches of rose quartz reminded her of the peonies that Antoinette proudly wore in her hair every day, knowingly violating court protocol. They were often gathered by her daughter, little Marie-Therese Charlotte, a near replica of her mother whom Gabrielle absolutely adored. The queen planted herself beside the door and bowed, pretending to be a valet; Gabrielle, forever fond of Antoinette's playfulness, caught on immediately and proceeded to exit dramatically, her nose and chest held arrogantly high. Looking back over her shoulder once she was outside, her expression changed to one of fluster upon seeing that Antoinette had lifted her head and was smiling up at her. It was the most beautiful smile Gabrielle had ever seen; for the first time in what she guessed was far too long, she felt truly loved. *How fortunate I am to have you, Antoinette*, she thought.

Before the queen followed, however, the king, seated closest to the door, softly called out her name, implying that he, too, wished to speak with her privately. She apologized to Gabrielle, went back to the table momentarily, and, vaguely bothered by her husband's interruption, stood expectantly before him. Unable to hold her gaze for more than a few seconds at a time, he suddenly appeared embarrassed as the heat of his evident nervousness indiscreetly crept across his face. He anxiously intertwined his faintly charcoal-stained fingers as he spoke, uneasily twisting his wedding ring whenever he approached a loss for words. What Gabrielle could hear of their silent conversation suggested nothing more than that he was willing to accompany them outside, but, despite the sense of safety and comfort Gabrielle felt while in the king's presence, she hoped that the queen would decline his offer. She yearned to be completely alone with Antoinette, the fear of awkwardness ruining their time together deterring Gabrielle from accepting his invitation herself. She refrained from verbally admitting this, for she was aware that the decision was not hers to make and did not want to appear

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audacious or impolite in front of the queen. It was the only thing her mind could focus on at the moment, so she continued to wish it to herself, hoping that such repetition would work in her favor. To Gabrielle's relief, Antoinette, having shared the same concerns, ultimately did refuse. A slight flash of regret momentarily appeared on her face, her guilt prompting her to apologetically embrace her husband. While Gabrielle awaited the queen's company, she noticed that the king did not appear to be at all disappointed about having been rejected, though she could not tell whether he was relieved or simply did not care. All she knew without question was that he was not offended—he had repeatedly reassured Antoinette that there was no need to be sorry, as he would have been content with any answer she could have given him—and that was enough for her.

Ever since the beginning of the dinner, Gabrielle had found herself inexplicably fascinated with the king's preoccupied countenance and aloof behavior and, after thoroughly considering the reasoning behind it, had gradually come to the realization that she and him were very similar individuals. Despite the spirited, vivacious conversation that had illuminated the room, neither of them had spoken a single word to anyone, instead having silently observed the activity and people surrounding them and occasionally offering a charming, yet insincere smile to anyone who appeared to notice their lack of enthusiasm. Although the king was an experienced adult and therefore likely possessed a significantly greater amount of knowledge than she did regarding independence, it felt as though she was looking into a mirror when she looked at him. Gabrielle had always felt drawn to this "species," having learned that it was generally less dangerous to exist freely and without so much self-consciousness around them. She found solace in knowing that they often cared much less about perfection and were especially welcoming to people whom society did not consider "adequate." For some reason, however, enjoying the company of a certain group of people, or even a single person, was always a strange and uncomfortable experience that always made her feel as though she was doing something wrong. Whenever she made an effort to be gentle with herself in the same way she was with them, harrowing feelings of guilt and frustration would infiltrate her mind, plaguing it with the idea that to be kind to others is

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nothing more than the bare minimum but to do the same with herself is unacceptable. Something had changed while she watched him earlier, though, much like how the queen's kindness had alleviated her apprehension just moments ago: she no longer felt alone in her struggle to obtain the normality she had been so desperately pursuing since childhood. She realized that she did not need to obtain it at all, for she already, and always had, possessed it. Her normality was only her own; it belonged to no one but herself and could not be taken away by anyone. It did not need to be justified by those who supposedly represented the concept for it to be valid. It would remain with her, even when questioned, ridiculed, and doubted, until it no longer had someone to remain with. It felt as though some ancient burden had been lifted off her shoulders, and with that feeling came a refreshing and vaguely familiar sense of accomplishment that Gabrielle wished she could relish forever and keep inside her heart until the feeling inevitably caused it to rupture.

When the queen arrived outside, she offered Gabrielle her hand again; within a split second, Gabrielle's had become unyieldingly intertwined with it. Together they began walking leisurely along the grassy, winding pathway that wrapped around the perimeter of the hamlet, the brilliant light of the moon, a crescent more perfect than the curve of an Ottoman emperor's lustrous blade, guiding them as they went. Silence had overcome both of them, but such an absolute lack of speech was more soothing than it was uncomfortable; Gabrielle did not feel pressured to say anything, nor did Antoinette, whose thoughtful gaze was fixed on the immense, star-speckled sky above. Surrounding them were flower beds full of bulbous roses, cottages that simultaneously appeared rustic and luxurious—the Queen's Hamlet, or *La Hameau de la Reine*, as it was known at Versailles—and a vast, still body of water in the center. Numerous oversized lilies, as well as their fallen petals, were scattered across it. Upon a shore of mossy boulders near the *réchauffoir*, the building from which Gabrielle and Antoinette had left, stood, with an air of regality, a magnificent, cylindrical tower engulfed in ivy. From a distance, it did not seem to be the poisonous kind, for each strand was embellished with hundreds of tiny, multicolored flowers that flaunted their vibrancy despite the night's oppressive darkness. Gabrielle was reminded of the queen once again, though the joy

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it brought her this time was considerably greater than before, during their fleeting blur of an escape from the dining room, due to the fact that they were now entirely alone in each other's company.

"I see the tower has caught your attention," the queen said. "It's beautiful, wouldn't you say?"

"It's absolutely marvelous! And the ivy is, too. I'm glad you've kept it. I think it makes the tower look enchanted, like something from a fairytale! Actually, I've seen similar ones all over Italy: many of the vineyards of Piemonte are located in areas near the water, which gives their owners the opportunity to enhance the atmosphere of their establishments with fancy structures like this one. Visiting that country was one of the most wonderful experiences of my life! It has a very special place in my heart, as does this one. Italy and France are really quite alike. Have you ever been?"

"Unfortunately, I have never had the chance to visit Italy myself. I have heard very good things about it, however, and have confidence in your high opinion of it. I have also had the pleasure of meeting several Italian ladies and courtiers in the past, and they seemed like very friendly, virtuous people. But you don't know how happy it makes me to hear that you've fallen in love with it! It seems that Italy is to you what Austria is to me: a place that truly feels like home. As much as I love it here, it will never feel the same as the country in which I was born and raised. I will never stop missing Vienna, the German language, or the Hofburg, though I must admit that Versailles is certainly not a bad replacement.

"Anyway, about the ivy: I completely agree! Everyone constantly pesters me about getting rid of it, but I just can't bring myself to go through with it. The king never does, though, and for that—and other things, of course—I love him. After all, I am the one who made the choice to build on this land, so it is only fair that I allow its natural inhabitants to go about their lives freely. They're hardly any different from us; ultimately, the only difference between plants and humans is that we're sentient and they aren't. Both species need water and food to live; they both

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reproduce. I don't think their lack of sentience makes them any less deserving of respect or personal space. Besides, they're practically helpless! They have no power to reprimand me or force me out, so what reason do I have to do those things to them?"

"Wonderfully said, Your Majesty!" Gabrielle exclaimed.  
"Antoinette, I mean. I'm sorry."

"Don't apologize, Gabrielle. You've done nothing wrong. I understand that it may be strange for you to address a queen by her name—the French version of it, at least—rather than a formal title; I was not expecting you to become comfortable with it immediately. In fact, many of my other friends whom I have known for years still haven't adjusted to it! I know they don't do it intentionally, and when they do, they correct themselves as you just did, so it hardly bothers me. It only becomes a problem when someone blatantly disrespects my wishes, but, thankfully, that very rarely happens."

"Thank you for understanding. I promise that I will do my best to honor your preferences going forward. Please know that I would never deliberately disregard them. Although we haven't known each other for a very long time, you are incredibly special to me, Antoinette; I want to do everything I can to prove my perpetual devotion as a friend of yours."

"My goodness, what a beautiful soul you have! I find it difficult to believe that God has deemed me worthy of your friendship. Speaking of which, there's something I want to show you. It's at the top of the tower, which, if you're curious, actually serves a greater purpose than merely being something to behold and, as such, can be ascended. Would you mind coming with me? We've already made our way out here, and it isn't far. I suppose we got a bit carried away; we're already nearly there!"

"Please, lead the way!" Gabrielle agreed.

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Their conversation had led them to the opposite side of the pond, a considerable distance from the cottage in which the dining room was situated, though neither Gabrielle nor Antoinette had become aware of it until they had taken their attention away from each other and averted it to their surroundings instead. To Gabrielle's surprise, the tower was significantly taller than it had appeared from afar; a sturdy set of wooden steps, which had been obscured from her previous point of view, revealed itself as she and the queen approached it from around a corner. As the staircase only offered enough horizontal space for one person, the queen allowed Gabrielle, who had become dizzy at the sight of the altitude to which they would have to climb, to go up first, graciously stepping aside to let her through. Noticing her companion's paleness and tense countenance, Antoinette placed her hand on Gabrielle's shoulder and reassured her that there was nothing to fear.

"Watch your step," she warned, keeping herself at a close distance from Gabrielle's back. "These steps are quite slim, and the darkness makes it difficult to see them clearly."

"I'm doing my best, but my vision is blurry. It's somewhat frightening to see the ground through the spaces between the steps, that's all. You're still behind me, Antoinette, yes?"

"Yes, Gabrielle, I'm right here. Don't worry. You won't fall, I promise."

Gabrielle inhaled deeply as if trying to absorb the queen's reassurance. In an effort to ease the sense of dread that had suddenly overcome her, she kept her eyes ahead, using what remained of her courage to persuade herself to continue upward—and that doing so would be worth it in the end, which she desperately hoped would arrive soon—and tightened her grip on the rails of the staircase. Eventually, after Gabrielle had repeatedly reminded herself that she was not alone and that the queen was there to help if something undesirable were to happen, the nauseating lightheadedness from earlier began to fade, and, as a result, her sight gradually regained its true clarity. A newfound courage welled within her body as its once-impaired facets returned to their normal states; she found herself less

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reluctant—eager, even, as strange as it felt—to proceed from each previous platform to the one that lay ahead. It had become a purely recreational habit for her to, rather than keep her gaze unwaveringly locked on her objective, survey both her eye-level surroundings and those below, leaning against the rails for optimal observation. It felt silly for Gabrielle to admit, but in only a matter of minutes she had, with Antoinette’s help, of course, conquered a fear whose existence she had never before been aware of, and felt empowered by the notion of control and autonomy it gave her.

“We’re here!” Antoinette announced, raising her hands in relief. “We made it! I had forgotten how tall that staircase is. It’s been quite some time since I’ve been up here.”

“Everything down there looks so far away,” Gabrielle marveled, her eyes full of wonder as they admired the distant scenery. She stood behind a section of the railing that enclosed the area with her forearms laid flat upon it; her face protruded through the empty space below the roof of the tower just enough for it to be occasionally graced by the crisp, clement midnight breeze. “So, what was it that you wanted to show me?”

“Before I tell you, I want you to tell me about what had been upsetting you earlier. I recall that you said it was ‘nothing serious,’ but something tells me that it really was something serious. I can assure you that whatever you say will stay between you and I, and that I will not criticize you for it. You can tell me anything. I’m here to listen, and I always will be.”

“You’re too kind, Antoinette. I suppose you’re right: it was something serious, though, since I tend to dismiss or entirely conceal my emotions when I’m ashamed of them, I spoke of it like it was nothing more than some trivial issue that needn’t be given much attention or concern. To put it simply, I was terrified. It was not you who made me feel that way, nor was it His Majesty; you and him actually greatly helped me combat my discomfort. I mean no offense to you when I say this, as I know that they’re your friends, but it was everyone else I was afraid of. As I said before, we haven’t known each other for very long, so I feared that, because of this, I didn’t stand a chance with you and

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that you would forget about me as soon as you invited me to the court, or, perhaps, replace me with someone you've known for a longer time. I wanted so badly to be important to you, but I thought so poorly of myself that it was impossible for me to believe that I was deserving of something as sacred as a friendship with you. But the altruism you've shown me—"

The queen suddenly embraced Gabrielle, nestling her head against the shoulder of the woman in her arms and interrupting her speech in the process. Unsure how to react to such an abrupt show of affection, Gabrielle refrained from making any sort of movement, standing completely still with her eyes fixed on the summit of Antoinette's woven sun hat. It was not until she felt the wetness of the queen's tears through the muslin fabric covering her shoulder that Gabrielle forced herself to make an attempt to reciprocate. She folded her arms around the queen's waist and gently grasped the lace bow that hung at the back, toying with its appendages in an effort to resist the unshakable urge to let her own tears fall. Antoinette continued to weep silently into the skin of Gabrielle's neck, which glistened with moisture in the moonlight; Gabrielle gave in to her body's demands and wept with the queen, whose downy cloud of ashen hair Gabrielle's face had sunken into and now rested within. Neither of them knew exactly why they cried, for their tears were a confounding blend of sorrow and succor that could be perfectly understood between each other but never coherently explained to anyone else.

"I'm sorry, Gabrielle," the queen whispered, holding Gabrielle's damp face in her hands. "I'm so sorry. I should have known better and paid more attention to you when I had the chance. It should have only been you and I in the first place. I had intended for the gathering to be enjoyable and for it to help our relationship flourish, but, because of the selfishness with which I handled it, all it turned out to be was a source of misery for you, as well as an utter invasion of your privacy. With all of my heart, I beg for your forgiveness. You are more precious to me than words can say, and I love you very much."

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"I love you, too," Gabrielle responded, inadvertently laughing as a thin stream of excess water trickled down to her chin. She clasped Antoinette's hands and leaned her cheek against one with her eyes closed. "I was never upset with you, though. It was all in my head. You didn't do anything wrong. There's nothing you need to be forgiven for. If it makes you feel any better, I wasn't crying out of sadness just a moment ago; I was crying because it finally occurred to me that I had been wrong in assuming that you didn't care for me simply because you have other friends whose bonds with you have existed longer than ours has and are therefore more developed. I must admit, though, that it was actually quite liberating to cry so freely. The time had never been right, I suppose, for me to have done it sooner, so I thank you for having allowed me to be so vulnerable tonight. It has somehow made me feel healed, as though I had been suffering from some terrible malady that only you possessed the antidote for. Thank you, again."

"Oh, don't be like that. You're going to make me cry all over again! Before I do, however, I'll show you what it was that I brought us up here to see. I've stalled for long enough, don't you think? It's just over there, on the section of railing across from this one. I apologize if the anticipation leading up to this moment got your hopes up for something grand; it's only a little engraving. Upon first glance, it may not seem like anything special, but, once you understand the story behind it, its importance becomes a bit more obvious. Come, come!"

Wiping a hand across her fatigued eyes, Gabrielle curiously followed the queen toward the other side of the aloft gazebo until she stopped in front of a segment of the marble barrier—wrapped in vines, like the tower's lower body—that appeared slightly more worn than the others. Carved into the uppermost slab of pearly stone was a jagged image of a crowned heart within which the letters "L" and "A," as well as "1783"—presumably the date of the inscription's creation—had been deeply incised. Antoinette had been required to lift several layers of aromatic green rope to reveal it; once she had, a look of bittersweet bliss illuminated her face. She gingerly traced her fingers along its fissures as though the act of doing so would allow her to interact with long-gone, yet not since forgotten

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visions of the past. Gabrielle, seeing that Antoinette now stared, entranced, at the *réchauffoir*, opened her mouth to inquire about the engraving but failed to produce any sound, having become distracted upon noticing the perfect silhouette of the king's motionless visage projected onto a window of the cottage. His distinctly Bourbon features, particularly his grandiose aquiline nose, were striking against the soft, golden glow of the candles that hung in the chandelier above him. During her stay at Versailles, Gabrielle had often overheard spells of callous conversation concerning his appearance; those of the court who behaved so respectfully and politely in his presence, never daring to insult their king with him around to hear it, were the very same people who, despite the king's purity and benevolence, spread ruthlessly demeaning slander about him in his absence. She understood that some were jealous of him, or, at least, his marital situation and position as the sovereign of France—according to popular opinion, he was undeserving of both Antoinette's beauty and the throne, which, in the eyes of the majority, rightfully belonged to and would have, without question, been better held by his late father, an unfortunate victim of the inevitable atrocity that is tuberculosis—but she could not comprehend how their hatred of such petty things was strong enough to completely mangle their perception of him, distracting them from the fact that the objects of their envy had fallen upon the king not as a result of desire, but as a result of chance alone. Gabrielle's heart ached with sympathy for him; she felt heavy as she stood beside the queen, weighed down by the density of the melancholic air that filled both her and Antoinette's lungs.

"Antoinette, do these letters represent you and the king?" Gabrielle asked, pointing first to the cottage, then to the engraving. The sound of her voice, though mellow and kindly, disrupted the queen's reverie. "The 'A' must be you, and the 'L' His Majesty!"

"You're very clever. Seven years ago—in 1783—he and I made this together to celebrate two things: Monsieur Mique's completion of the hamlet, and the unexpected success of our marriage up until that point. I'm not implying that its success ended there; it has continued to be successful ever since. We were wedded to each other at very young ages—I was only

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fourteen years old and he was only a year my senior—and without anything of a voice in the matter, so I had not expected our union to be anything like it currently is. For the first few years, things were awkward and uncomfortable between us; neither of us knew each other well enough to form even the simplest friendship, nor were we sufficiently educated on the subject of romance to develop something more. Everyone, especially my mother and his grandfather, the then-current king, had expected us to connect immediately, despite having left us to figure it all out by ourselves, but we were absolutely clueless. We were far too young, I'd say. Over the years that followed, though, we grew and learned much together—and, of course, gained experience with our positions as sovereigns, which I believe also helped us become less tense and confusion-ridden—so our situation did not remain as it had been before, without change. Now, although we certainly do have our different ways and opposite minds, we're genuinely comfortable in and value each other's company; the relationship we share is impregnable and allows our lives to be more happy and enjoyable than they ever could have been under any different circumstances. It has also given us the privilege of being parents to Louis Joseph, Louis Charles, Marie-Thérèse, and Sophie Hélène. The moral—or summary, rather—of this story is that we love each other sincerely, regardless of our messy past, and are proud of what we have become since the beginning. I know we didn't have to make the engraving in order for people to believe that our love is as legitimate as we claim it is, but we didn't do it for the purpose of satisfying anyone else; we did it only to bring comfort to ourselves and to create a physical and, ideally, permanent piece of evidence that represents us and the progress we've made during our time together."

"Your ability to persevere is astounding! I hope you know that you are beyond deserving of every bit of happiness, comfort, and love that your marriage has provided you with, Antoinette, as well as that which the future holds for you. You and the king have, in my opinion, been wonderful leaders thus far; it is obvious that you have achieved your goal to master the skill of working harmoniously. Anyone can see that you are, or, at least, have grown to be, an exemplary dyad, an image of true nobility. I'm aware that I am in no position to say this, let alone have it mean

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anything to someone of your social status, but I'll say it anyway: I'm proud of you. One simply could not be unmoved by that story; you took the life that was forced onto you for the benefit of selfish ministers and nobles and turned it into something of your own, something beautiful that brings you joy and fulfillment. If you were to ask me, I would say that such an accomplishment is more worthy of a monument than a barely-visible engraving!"

"A monument, you say? As much as I appreciate monuments in all their commemorative glory, I think not. The fact that it is barely visible only makes it more special! It means that only my trusted friends, Louis, and I know its precise location, which is exactly what we had intended. If it were on display for everyone to see, it wouldn't be exclusive to us. You know, while we're here and on this subject, why don't you and I make one, too? It's actually what I wanted to do before I went on that tangent, but, evidently, I got myself distracted before I could propose the idea to you. We can put it anywhere you'd like!"

"I would be honored!" Gabrielle confessed vehemently. "But wouldn't that defeat the purpose of the one that's already here? It seems to me that this is your and His Majesty's private spot; I wouldn't want to invade your or his privacy."

"Gabrielle, the relationship between you and I and the relationship between the king and I are of equal importance to me," Antoinette replied, lifting Gabrielle's chin with her thumb and forefinger, "and, besides, I know him very well; this wouldn't upset him at all. You are no less necessary to my happiness than he is. What we've established together tonight deserves to be preserved in stone, too; I won't allow it to be so easily forgotten. It would please me very much if you agreed to help me by replicating—we would replace the "L" with a "G," of course, and date our creation with a different year—what has already been made. I promise that you wouldn't be committing any treasonous act by going along with my urging, but the decision is yours to make."

"If you say so, Antoinette. I would love to make one with you."

Gabrielle contemplated her options for the engraving's location, visiting each surrounding pillar to assess their stability and

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visualize how they would look adorned with the yet-to-be-finalized design. Her heart and mind set on perfection, she took into consideration the background scenery that laid behind them; a landscape too complicated would make it difficult to focus one's attention on the marks, but one too plain would do nothing to enhance them. After having carefully examined each possible option, Gabrielle made a final decision: she and the queen would carve on the pillar in front of the *réchauffoir*, in spite of the unpleasant memories attached to it. She informed Antoinette, who had already retrieved a chisel, whose smooth, gleaming bevel fascinated Gabrielle, from beneath a mass of tangled greenery in a corner of the floor, and, immediately afterward, they began to bring their vision to life. The queen took the making of the foundation—the heart, which would soon contain their initials—upon herself; she and Gabrielle alternated possession of the chisel to carve the letters within and the numbers of the year, 1790. This engraving was, undeniably, more neat than the other, having been crafted by a pair of august women with much less haste and much more fastidiousness. The closest attention to detail, it seemed, had been its creators' top priority.

Once the creation of their masterpiece had come to an end, Gabrielle and Antoinette returned to the center of the lookout to admire their work. No words were said as they stood beside each other, hand in hand, before the pillar that bore the proof of their everlasting devotion, but communication was, in that moment, not necessary for their thoughts to be conveyed to one another. Unconsciously tightening her grip on Antoinette's hand, Gabrielle allowed her head to fall against the queen's shoulder and her eyes to take a much-needed rest. She felt unreal and incorporeal as the warmth of the ethereally radiant sunrise beamed onto her skin, lulling her to sleep. The queen listened contently to Gabrielle's slow, deep breaths, gently stroking the bridge of her nose while silently lauding the paragon of amity that she had had the privilege of helping to bring into existence that night. As morning seeped into the sky, exiling the moon and stars to a life of shadows until the next episode of celestial darkness, the outgrown past selves of Antoinette and Gabrielle eagerly escaped through the patchwork of their bodies, making room for their neoteric selves to come flooding in.

**Ella Glau**  
Medina High  
Grade 10



**Ava Oleksiw**  
Brunswick High  
Grade 12

I woke up just like a regular day. My routine went on without a speck of dust moving differently. Everything was going the same as it had every day. But little did I know my life was going to change forever. I was so dumb and naive.

Hello, my name is Brandon Kroft. I'm 25 years old my job involves graphic designer. I joined this job about four years ago. I have amazing coworkers, a boss, and an overall work environment that is very positive. I make pretty good money. I also have a perfect girlfriend that I love. Some would say that I have the perfect life.

I woke up one day and felt brighter than ever. I knew that today was going to be a great day. I went through my routine like normal. Everything was going great I took a quick peek at my phone and saw that my girlfriend had sent me a text message. I thought about answering it. But I knew I could answer it on my way to work. I took one step outside. Something was off as soon as I took the tiniest step.

I felt a tiny shiver slide down my back like a snake. The hairs began to stick up as soon as the shiver left the part of my body. I couldn't figure out what was wrong. I just began walking to my work. I finally dug my head into my phone screen and looked at my girlfriend's text. While I began reading it I said it out loud.

"Brandon I need you to read this soon or it might be too late. Something is coming and I know it. But the agency will end me if I tell" I said in a tone beginning to lower after realizing what the text had stated. I back at the next message and read it all over again.

But, in an instant heard blaring sirens in the distance. The blaring sirens sounded like nails on a chalkboard. I then saw several planes flying overhead. I then turned around and took one glance at the inside of my house. I then saw a man in the kitchen of my house with a type of weapon that I couldn't see very well.

I knew in that instant that she was very right. Something is off, and we need to leave before everything goes downhill. I then turned around to see them running away as fast as they could. Screams hauled like wolves on a full moon. A red-colored gas was coming closer. I saw people in the gas begin tearing tiny

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parts of their flesh. Once they got through their skin turned pale, but the pale skin tone slowly faded into a lighter green.

They began acting ravaged like bears. They ran at people and jumped on them. But instead of biting or even physically harming them, they let the gas envelope over them also turn them into some sort of creature. I knew that the gas changed the DNA in that person's body.

I turned around seeing the man right in front of my eyes. It was clear that this man had worked for the agency. He had a hazmat suit on signifying that he knew of the attack or was preparing for something like this. He then began charging right at me. I then saw him begin to dive at me to hurt me. I swiftly jumped out of the way, and he fell to the ground and was tackled by one of the many creatures.

He then threw something at me. The thing that he threw didn't look like anything at all. The thing that the man had thrown looked to be like an explosive. But in an instant, the bomb looked alike and slowly letting out gas. The gas was blue and not red. The man then jumped at me but as one of the creatures. He lunged and all of his body weight had come to a stop when he hit the gas.

Then other creatures did the same thing as creatures before him. But, the same thing happened to all of the zombies. I then turned and bolted to my basement to get safety. The creatures continued to jump into the blue gas. It was clear that as the creatures continued to jump into the blue gas they began getting hurt.

I then began going down the stairs, but while heading downstairs I was tackled by something and blacked out. The next thing that I knew I only saw black and looked to see you two investigating me. Those are the only things that have happened to me in the last well I don't know how long.

**Maxwell Davis**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 7

## The Lady That Haunts the Lake

Mireya clutched the lantern handle tightly as she rushed through the rain towards her home. The downpour was relentless. She had spent the entire day at the market, selling her handmade blankets and sweaters to earn enough to support her husband and the child they were soon expecting. Despite the fatigue that weighed heavily on her, she quickened her pace, eager to see her husband after a long day apart.

She loved her husband dearly and couldn't imagine life without him. He provided for her, and she did the same for him. However, she had a gut feeling that something was wrong but decided to ignore it.

Mireya was walking along a treacherous and slippery path, and she had to concentrate hard to keep her balance. Mud stained her skirt and shoes. The rain was pouring down, making it challenging for her to see ahead. The baby kicked inside her stomach, causing her to slow down. Despite the pain and discomfort, she kept running as she was close to her home.

Finally, she arrived in her neighborhood. The rain came down harder, and the thunder was booming in the sky, illuminating her face with lightning. Mireya gripped the door handle and twisted it. The door opened with a squeak. She sighed, glad to be home.

Her blood boiled as she saw her husband with another woman. He held her hand and gazed upon her countenance with a deep sense of a sorrowing face. "Miguel?" She gasped. Her husband snapped his head around, not expecting to see his lover home yet. "Oh, Mireya. Welcome home dear." He said, trying to play off his guilt. The young girl looked confused, staring at Mireya. "Who is this, Miguel?" Mireya exclaimed, jealousy rising in her. "Don't lie to me. I knew something was up with you, you're such a fool."

"Mireya, this is just my friend honey," Miguel said nervously. "Right, Carmen?"

Carmen's hand left his. She was a beautiful woman. Her hair was long and silky. Not tangled or knotted like Mireya's was sometimes. Her skin looked young and smooth. "You did not tell me that you had a wife."

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The young woman strutted up to Mireya. "If you cannot tell, your Miguel no longer loves you. He chose me because you were never home. I am better than you will ever be."

She felt as if her heart had been rolled in glass, and thrown into an old rotting well. Tears pricked at her eyes, a lump in her throat. "He only likes you because you're pretty. He does not care about how you are inside." Mireya yelled angrily. "Leave my house, now." She pointed to the back. "Get out."

Carmen scoffed, grabbing her things and pacing to the back of the house. She shoved Mireya on the way out and slammed the door behind her. She turned to face Miguel. "I was getting us money. So we could support our child." She sniffled and fell to the floor. Her husband sank next to her and tried to explain himself.

"My love, you were never home and I was getting lonely. Can't you forgive me?" He looked at her apologetically. "I'm so sorry for what I have done, I know it was wrong. I am so foolish." He tried to grab her hand and she slapped it away, standing up. "I'm going to raise this child by myself. Which you seem not to care about."

She grasped the small bag of coins and hurled them at Miguel's lap. "You wouldn't be a responsible father anyway, you cannot even care for yourself." He looked at her in disbelief, "Mireya, you can't be serious." He rose, coming to try and calm her down with a hug. She avoided him and grabbed a bag to pack her things.

"Please princess, I will be all alone." He begged her, not wanting to let go of his wife. She stuffed clothes, blankets, and her yarn into the bag. "You don't have to do this." Mireya turned away from him, ignoring everything he said. "I am leaving now. Don't expect me back." She cried, "Goodbye Miguel."

"Mireya!" He called.

She sobbed as she walked the path, trying to find a place to relax. The rain had slowed to a drizzle, settling in beads on the fabric of her shirt. Sadness rested within her. Her husband of 5 years is suddenly washed away from her life. Mireya was now

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poor and homeless. Left to sorrow on the streets. She couldn't go to her mother after she said how she never wanted to see Mireya again. Or her father, who has been in prison for half of her life.

She shivered and held herself closely by the shoulders. She came to the rocky shore and sat on the stone. Tracing her fingers along the sharp edge. She thought she would never find love again. All she wanted was Miguel, for the rest of her life.

"Hello." A voice said. Mireya gasped, not expecting to hear anyone. She turned around. Carmen. Her beautiful long hair blows in the gust of wind, chilling her skin. "Miguel is mine." She said, coming towards Mireya. "I do not want you near him." She scoffed, "I won't return to him anyway."

"Why are you here, Carmen?" She cried. She just met this woman and immediately despised her, envied her. Carmen didn't say a word. She bolted at her. Mireya's life flashed before her, she felt dizzy and frightened.

Mireya screamed, losing her balance and falling back into the rocks. Her head smacked against the hard stone. Her skirt was torn. She tried to yell but it came out as a mumble. She slipped into the water of the deep ocean. Panicking, she tried to swim to the top, barely conscious.

She kept sinking, and sinking, and sinking. She couldn't hold her breath any longer. Mireya let the rest of her air out and accepted her fate, anger resided within her.

Carmen watched her body until it was no longer visible. She grabbed Mireya's bag and threw it into the water with a big splash. She ensured every trace of anyone being here was gone, and that Mireya would never be remembered again.

**Melina VonDuyke**  
Brunswick Middle  
Grade 7



## Sheikia: My Magical Pet Dragon

Hi, my name is Emma Harter and I live in a small town called Posidiea, and this is how my life was changed by a tiny bubble-breathing dragon.

How it all started

It all started on an ordinary day at school. Our Language Arts teacher was reading old Chinese myths from about 2700 B.C. They were all about different emperors, daring monkeys, and horrible monsters that even I can't imagine. But there was one in particular that caught my attention, It was one about a powerful, wise dragon that ruled the entire world. One day, the dragon got attacked by angry villagers who thought the dragon was too dangerous. Then, a little girl becomes friends with the dragon and shows that the dragon was never a threat to the villagers and was quite a friendly creature. I've always wondered the same thing after reading that story "Were dragons ever real and if so, would I ever become friends with one?". My social studies teacher always thought I was crazy and said that dragons only existed in fictional legends, but I knew that there had to be at least one dragon that existed in the world somewhere, little did I know that I would've been the lucky person to find one.

The Adventure Begins

After another long day at school, I finally opened the door to my small, but cozy home. "Welcome home!" my mother Suzanne said in a cheerful attitude as I entered the house. "What homework do you have today?"

"Well, Mr. Irv, our science teacher, requested us to take a stroll out on the beach to look for shells. We are learning all about them and how they form."

"Be careful out there!" my mother exclaimed. She is always worried about me getting lost or hurt. "Do you want to take the walk with me? It would be much safer than walking alone

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Emma?".

"I'm fine Suzanne. I'm old enough to take a walk on my own" I hang up my book bag on the doorknob and grab a basket to put all of my shells in. Then I put on my sandals and exit out of the door excited to see what kinds of shells I will collect.

As I walked through the forest on my way to the beach, It started to rain. I say calmly to myself "It's only a small rain, nothing bad is going to happen-". Then I heard something; It was the loud crashing of thunder. At that moment, I thought to myself that it would be a smart decision to head back home as it might be dangerous to do such a thing in bad weather. But I was determined to get the assignment done, no matter what the conditions might be.

After another 10 minutes of walking through the forest, I finally made it to the beach. I started to quickly collect all of the unique shells I could find on the shore. Suddenly, while I was collecting a beautiful blue shell, I heard another loud noise, but this time it wasn't thunder. I investigated where the noise might have come from, and then I saw something peculiar being pulled around by the intense waves of the water. "I know I shouldn't be swimming in turbulent water in stormy weather, but it looks like something might need my help out there," I say in consideration. I slowly passed the shoreline and into the water with a desperate need to save the creature. As I got closer to the creature I noticed, it was not conscious and might need some serious help. I finally approached the creature, it had blue scales and yellow wings. It also appeared to have a large charred spot, which I can assume could be from lightning, on its back.

### My Amazing Companion

I touched the creature's bright green chest; Its heart was still breathing, but there wasn't too much time left. I knew what I had to do with the creature; take it to the veterinarian while I still could and hope, just hope, it would recover. I picked up the creature and set it on my right elbow as I swam to the sandy shore. After getting out of the water, I picked up the basket in my left hand and frantically ran through the woods.

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When I finally got to Posidea, I rushed as fast as I could to the animal hospital on the other side of town.

I slammed open the door and yelled exhaustedly to the receptionist "Help! This creature is hardly breathing! Please help it now! It needs it!".

"Okay, I'll take it to the emergency room! It might recover there! The vet will be there in one minute! Follow me!" the receptionist replied seriously.

As we ran down the long hallway with the injured creature still on elbows, we entered a white room with medical supplies and a medical bed. I gently put the creature onto the bed. A minute later, the vet walks into the room.

"Hello! What seems to be your emergency?" the vet asks me.

"This thing I found on the beach went unconscious and is hardly breathing!" I say as terror races through my heart.

"What kind of creature is this?" the vet questioned

"I don't know! I don't have enough time to think of it! Just help it now!" I reply at this point with dread. I wondered if the vet could even take care of the thing if he didn't know what it was. But then, I heard him reply "I will see what I can do with him," My heart was slightly relieved, but the rest of my body was still tense. The vet did some medical procedures and I hoped it was still alive. After the procedures were done, I looked at the bed, its eyes were slightly open, and it was alive.

"Thank you, veterinarian! You saved this creature!" I say happily

"This creature will be fully recovered after a couple days of resting. I suggest you take care of it for those days" the doctor says.

"Me? Are you sure about that vet? It might be dangerous?" I concernedly say

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"Don't worry, this little girl seems to be friendly," The doctor tells me. "Also, one question, What even is this creature? I've never seen it in my life,"

I left the building, it was no longer raining outside and was getting dark.

### Have My Dreams Come True?

As I walked back to the beach, I observed the creature for a couple of minutes. It had blue scales and beautiful green wings. It also had pink horns and very small arms. It seemed oddly familiar, but I couldn't put my finger on what it was. The creature then exhaustingly yawned which revealed a set of pointy teeth. I finally figured out what it was; It was a dragon. I looked at it with disbelief, I didn't even know if this whole day was a dream the entire time. But it wasn't, and I was sure that the dragon was real. Then I decided to give the dragon a name. I had several ideas in mind but I eventually named it Sheikia.

I fed and took care of Shekia for a couple of days. When I returned to it on the fifth day, I saw it gracefully prancing across the shore. It had recovered and I saved it. Sheikia looked very happy with me as it blew some bubbles from its mouth. When the bubbles popped, they formed a small ball of fire followed by a burst of smoke. It was fascinating to watch and I almost wanted to keep the dragon. But I knew it was time to release him out into the ocean. "Goodbye Sheikia, I will miss you," I say with happiness but yet with a strange feeling of sadness. Sheika ran up to me with a worried face, it looked like it didn't want to leave.

As I walked into the forest, I noticed that it was following me. I wondered what it still wanted from me and why it was following me. I took a couple of supplies out of my basket including some meat, water, and a brush. It looked unpleasant with the supplies. At this point, I figured out that it wanted to stay with me. I knew I wanted it as a pet but I knew there would be some high risks involved. I finally decided that I would visit it on the beach every afternoon after school no matter the weather.

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And ever since that day, I had a dragon companion. I didn't know how I even had a chance to find one but I knew one thing for sure. Sheikia is wonderful and I will never stop visiting and caring for her.

**Blake Porinchok**  
Wadsworth Middle  
Grade 8

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**Kadence Cassidy**  
Black River High  
Grade 10



## A Final Note

Editorials abound about the inevitable death and disappearance of the physical book as a format and an object. Books are read on electronic devices, newspapers are published online, and the art of writing a letter has been reduced to “tweets” and “text messages.” Messages 140 characters in length send news, but they lack the art and imagination that come from the pleasure of reading and writing for the stimulation and relaxation that they inspire.

The Father of our Country, George Washington, wrote, “To encourage literature and the arts is a duty which every good citizen owes to his country.” This 36<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Inkspot* proves that the art of writing is alive and well in the schools of Medina County.

This literary review highlights the imaginations and creative thoughts of today’s youth. The stories, poems, and works of visual art that are contained in this review allow the reader the opportunity to share in the creativity of the authors and illustrators and to reflect on the teaching that took place in the schools to encourage and support the students.

The Medina Sunrise Rotary Club supports the expansion and encouragement of literacy through the distribution of the *Inkspot*.

Rotary dedicates the *Inkspot* to the 27,000 students in Medina County and to Rotary International’s goal of achieving global literacy. Whether Rotarians work to eliminate poverty, polio, or hunger, it all starts with education and literacy. As B. B. King, the King of the Blues, wrote, “The beautiful thing about learning is that no one can take it away from you.”

William J. Koran  
Superintendent (Retired)  
ESC of Medina County  
*“Rotary Promotes Literacy”*



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