



Voices - 2017  
Bristol Eastern High School  
Literary Magazine

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Art and photography by Olivia Allen, Anna Korpanty, Miya Spinella, Alesandra Testa, Kelsi Catalano and Ms. Janet Kenney

*Thank you to Project Writeous for our creative Friday afternoons. There's no better way to begin a weekend! Thanks to Lexi and Gabby for co-presiding.*

*Thank you to Mr. Matthew Mercure for inspiring so much poetry while I was convalescing.*

*Molly Doub was a math teacher at BEHS for a few years, before moving on to Boston. I always told her she had a writer's soul. She passed away in May 2017, much too young and with so much left to do. This year's edition of Voices is dedicated to her.*

*For everyone who's ever dared to disturb the universe...for everyone who asks the overwhelming questions and for those who try to find the answers...KEEP CREATING!*

*Love, Ms. Peluso*

## **The Hidden Masterpiece**

We are a painting in a colorblind world of people too lazy to bother finding art worthwhile

We paint our masterpiece on paper of blacks and grays

We use vivid colors everyday

They dry and They fade

Creating blacks and grays they almost wash away

Corrections of all the imperfections

Hiding them under more and more shades

We use blacks and grays To keep the brightness away

Nothing can drown out the defeating blacks and grays

Above pencil, crayon and charcoal

Pastel, oil and water

Lay more and more of those same blacks and grays

After so much smudging and covering up

Isn't this painting a failure anyway?

Chip away at those blacks and grays

And you will see the widest array

Of rainbows and blossoms on the sunniest most perfect day

Because behind those clouds made up of those blacks and grays

The sun still shines

And will shine everyday

So if you would just take the time to chip away that wall of blacks and grays

And swim the abyss of imperfections and mistakes

You'll find the masterpiece

Someone painted and tried to hide away

On their wonderful canvas made up of blacks and grays

- Emily D.





- Olivia A.

## Staged

The curtain opens, The lights are blinding,  
The voices hush,  
not even the smallest child says a word.

You can taste the anticipation in the air like a plain candy ready to be broken open  
to find a sweet inner filling.

You can smell the backstage Excitement and fear Salt and sweat mingling together.  
An actor bursts From behind the curtain The character he plays captures the audience's  
attention.

He bows.

The curtain closes.

There's an audible silence.

Then a roar of applause.

Behind stage a goofy grin is plastered on the actor's face.

His hair damp with sweat from the white, hot lights.

His eyes brimming with joy and bright with the feeling of success.

He breathes a sigh of relief and victory.

Like an actor I put on a face.

Only my stage isn't so pretty, it is molded by war, torn apart by famine.

My audience is not so kind.

They are puppets on strings  
being pulled by masked strangers,  
Sitting upon their piles of wealth,  
politics clouding out the good.

When being right is more important than what's right  
Hiding their lies through a Predatory, sickeningly white, sharp smile.  
They take turns picking off the weak,  
    ignoring the cries of the helpless.  
I hold on tightly to my curtain. Shielding myself,  
    from the cruel world.  
Only to have my curtain slip.  
At that moment I see clearly.  
Not only am I an actor;  
    everyone else is too.  
We all hide from the world We were given  
Hoping things will fix themselves.  
Fearing they won't.  
Our perfect little world is not so perfect.  
So we pretend like we are blind, we are deaf,  
    we cannot say anything.  
It's all staged.  
Open your eyes!  
Look at what is happening around you!  
Do not go back into hiding.  
Do not shield your eyes.  
Do something to fix it.  
The world is counting, on someone like  
You.

- Sarah D.

## Complication

Complication

Turning great minds into minds that run off of fermentation

To ease the pain of frustration and lust for something that just can't happen

So don't tell me you love me unless you *want* to hurt me

But was that temporary feel...real?

I'd say it was but now it's just been drowned by a sea of regret for *believing* you

I just can't be...

Leaving you

You told me you'd see if we can have something again when I get "better"

But Sir,

Man,

Boy,

There is no "getting better" if you don't let me go

You have made me iller

For I am *your* Guinea Pig in this science lab we all call

"Life"

But being a Guinea Pig is inevitable

They say that "the first cut is the deepest"

But Sir,

Man,

Boy, You have made an incision that can only be stitched up with security in either or connection or our departure

But there's no purity in these back and forths

So what do you feel, Sir?

Man?

Boy?

Or is it better to just leave things in complication?

- Julia M.



## Asylum

“I, a disfigured skin capsule over  
flowing with broken pieces,” they name me.  
“The very embodiment of a natural  
Disaster,” they swear. “Extraordinary!  
Another pauperized, disheartened child,  
imprisoned behind the white, padded walls;  
A mental safe haven, where you belong,”  
they laugh, oblivious like imbeciles.  
How incredibly sane the insane are.  
Escaping Asylum is too easy.  
No one is truly mindful of “Crazies,”  
Swing, swing, from the tangles of surveillance;  
We are free at last. Capsules disfigured,  
Permanently unrecognizable.  
Now, running wild, free, at them I laugh.

- Tiana B.

## **The Art of Love**

Love is not an instrument  
An instrument is a tool  
Something you use without deep thought  
Created by endless use of our hands  
While love is something else  
Love not only uses hand but heart, mind and soul  
A river that flows through you like no other  
When you love, you become love  
It embodies you  
Many mistake it for something to be tampered with  
Like a candle that can be relit with a single spark  
This is not the truth  
For love is not an instrument  
But love is, in fact, an art.

- DeQwon B. and Julia M.

## **Existence**

What does it take to prove existence?  
Is it how fast or slow your heart beats?  
Is it how big of a breath you take?  
Or is it measured in the thoughts shown in one's very mind?

Just the ideation of a stance is maddening.  
It's enough to reduce a perfectly healthy man to shambles.

But what is it about existence?  
Purely living for fun isn't good enough?  
Do we have to struggle through life?  
Is struggle enough to prove we're worth it?

That's what draws us to this looming figure  
The fear and curiosity of life itself.

So what do we do?  
We give in and purely exist,  
No questions asked,  
Until we do just that.

Then we lose a note to existences' gnarly fingers,  
Its grasp just loose enough to allow us to breathe.

As our vision fades, we remember  
We exist to question existence.  
So we do just that.

- Alexander M.

## **My Heart Bleeds**

My heart bleeds

For the young boy with the sunken face

Who must be the man in their home

In place of the haunting monster who wears a crown of tears

Who wears a necklace of broken hearts

Who sits upon a throne of empty promises

Holding in his hand

A bottle of liquid destruction

Bought with the young boy's hard work

Which is only paid off with painfully silent nights

The ones where he holds his little sister

As they try not to let their cries crack the silence

Because shattered silence means shattered bones

My heart bleeds

For the black boy

Who has been damned by his own skin

Branded as an enemy to the purity he'd surely soil

Blackening it like his skin

Accusation after accusation for no good reason

But are believed as if they held true

As they believe any word from his mouth was darkened with lies

Unless those words formed a confession

My heart bleeds

For the man who is meant to be a woman

Or the woman meant to be a man

Or the either who is really neither

Or something in between

Thrown aside by family as though "it" was a defected product

Meant to be sent back to the factory

Fixing "its" programming, wiring "it" to be what "God wanted it to be"

As *their* cries hold nothing against "God's" words

Even if only one of them is heard

My heart bleeds

For the man who finally gathered the courage to call 911

Who finally shared his story

Only to be shunned

By a world where "women are too weak to abuse a man"

And "men are weak if they've been 'abused' by a woman"

His story was eclipsed by "more important" affairs



Like what Kim K. wore on the runway  
Even though her life is very fake  
And his pain is very true

My heart bleeds  
For the girl in the back of the class with straight A's  
Shy but bright  
Only to have her light dimmed  
By parents who can't appreciate the daughter they have  
Caught up on the one they wish for  
The one impossible to be  
They lament their "misfortune"  
Grateful that she finds punishment  
In her "friends"  
The ones asking for answers on all the tests  
The ones who won't answer a single one of her texts

My heart bleeds  
For the straight white boy who is forever seen as "lucky"  
Who, when he reaches to those who preach equality  
Is greeted by hisses, as he is not "troubled"  
They call him selfish and ungrateful  
Saying he has claim to every privilege  
Except the privilege to feel sorry for himself  
Or his family  
Even when the doctors say his mother's chemo isn't working  
Or when the bills leave his father overworking  
Or even when the stress makes his sister's breathing stop working  
Halted by a rope wound by gleeful hands  
The ones that deal nothing but cruelty  
The ones feigning compassion after what's done is done  
No, the white boy shall not be allowed to say he is suffering  
He is to silently watch his world crumble around him  
Only to be accepted when the rope of cruelty has claimed him too  
Leaving all to say they wish they'd done more when they had the chance  
But they had their chance  
And they chose it to waste it on bitterness  
Bitterness formed not by him, just by those like him

My heart bleeds  
For the woman kept out of our country  
Banned with one look at the hijab around her head  
Feeling as though it surrounded her neck as well  
Tightly, as she tells her children that they are not welcome here  
All while holding back tears  
At the fact that her two daughters had to face this so soon  
Before they could even understand what it was  
Or so she thought  
They knew

My heart bleeds  
For a world that nobody should've asked for  
Where fear reigns  
Letting its sharp claws shine in the faint light of hope  
Serving a painful reminder for anyone who dares to think of straying  
A world where I can recite this poem where so many problems are explained  
Over and over and over to remind us  
But still it will refuse to improve  
Remaining stagnant for as long as possible  
As change would require "too much effort"  
A world I can only hope will see its flaws  
Lowering its claws as it accepts the truth  
So we all can finally be free  
In a world where my heart doesn't bleed



- Olivia A.

**“My body is my only home”**

My body is my only home.  
Shaky construction cursed me. When it storms, ceilings leak,  
floorboards soak.  
Curtains drawn over the window to my soul.  
I welcome no spectators here.  
Hundreds of hands rattle the doorknob.  
Vicious knocks rack at my head,  
beating to the rhythm of a hardened heart.  
I ignore them and disappear to the inside.  
Cold radiates from the bare walls, freezing exposed skin.  
It's okay. You get used to it.  
Inside, I'll be up in the attic, where dust breathes and  
cobwebs speak.  
Where the light won't reach.  
Where buckets collecting rainwater spill over the edge,  
drenching my feet.  
I do not hear. I do not see.  
The knocks, the people at the door.  
I am alone, and the cracks in my construction struggle  
against even the weight of one.  
It's better this way. The knocking will fade to a full stop.  
My body is my only home.

- Rebecca C.



## **Panic!**

What happens when you lose hope?  
When your heart pumps hate instead of blood  
Rushing to your brain, intoxicating your thoughts?

When the words of others you were told to ignore  
Wrap around your neck and fill your lungs,  
Ending your ability to speak

You're tense,  
Freeze up like it hasn't happened a thousand times.

Because you're trying to get help but can't  
You choke on the words that will set you free -  
Stockholm syndrome of the mind.

Just breathe.

- Brianna M.

## **All Your Friends**

You've got a great little circle of friends,  
Real ones, we're not here to play pretend.  
Loneliness is the cold December chill that rattles your bones,  
Stealing your heat, leaving you lost and alone.  
Abandonment showers you in warmth and affection,  
Giving you disease and leaving you to fight off your own infection.  
Your pal, Anxiety, who worries about you  
Worry, worry, worry, until you're up late at night worrying too.  
Passion, who doesn't seem to be around lately,  
Has left you aching and feeling empty, until you feel yourself  
Going crazy.  
Do you feel something, talking like this?  
Or have your friends showered you with lies,  
And left you out to iodize?

- Destiny D.

# Flowers of Evil

*a naturalistic story*

The damning clock chimed in the halls, belting out the six chimes that marked the dining hour. The decrepit halls, falling apart from lack of care and the murals of the ocean and large fields faded into light colors when they had once been vibrant. The floor was freezing, and the windows were filthy and semi cracked. The floorboards creaked beneath the weight of men running in fear, and scratched up from the rats looking for food. Stairs were weak and screamed with each careful step taken. The footsteps tracking in freezing cold snow shone on the floor, illuminated by the dim kitchen light. The table was set with grimy, unwashed plates, glasses, and neatly folded napkins. The cutlery was inexplicably shiny and sat neatly aligned on the filthy napkins.

A woman, slender and with graying, tightly curled hair sat at the table in the dining room, clad in her soft blue dress, freshly washed and void of any stains. Her cheeks were tinted pink, pale eyelids colored blue like her dress. Her hands folded before her, green eyes scanning the people sitting around the table, ignoring the several small girls sitting directly across from her, clad in their own soft blue dresses, like little piglets carefully dressed up to be pretty. She soon averted her gaze to her plate when she noticed the two empty chairs at the end of the table.

The thin, birdish man sitting at one end of the table sat silently, listening to the chime of the clock as the two other children hurried to the table, the more bearish, muscular of the two nabbing the seat completely across from the birdish man, a panicked look set on his pale face.

The smaller of the two, trembling and weak in his seat, stared at his grimy plate, where a small portion of mashed potatoes, peas, and steak sat carefully organized and pre-sliced like he were too weak and shaky to cut it himself.

“There you two are,” the woman said softly, without looking up from her own plate. “Didn’t I tell you both to be on time to the table?” she looked up, the same calm smile on her face as she watched the two. “You both know what God does to misbehaving children, don’t you? Have we taught you *nothing*?” she sharply said, glancing between the two that just sat down. The larger one looked away from the snake-woman’s sharp gaze.

The woman turned her gaze to the smaller male, slamming a fist on the table to purposely frighten the trembling boy, causing him to yelp and almost fall out of his chair. Her smile morphed from loving and calm to malformed and devilish as she watched the smaller, thinner male sit still in his seat, a well trained dog trying to avoid being put in a crate.

“Don’t you have a response, Eli? Since you’re such a good boy?” she said harshly.

The stalwart boy, clad still in his school uniform, looked between his siblings. His lower lip quivered when the girls simply turned their gaze away from him. He looked to the large man beside him for help - but he was just as silent.

“...I see.” the woman sighed, leaning on her knuckles. “Ezekiel? Do you have anything to say in response?” Ezekiel, stiff and mildly intimidated, cleared his throat. The eyes stared at him, and he looked anywhere but their eyes. “Um...Well, we were staying late at school.”

“What for, Son?” the woman asked, reaching over to touch his arm, only to dig her blue painted nails in his arm for every few seconds he didn’t answer.

“W-We were looking at, um...u-um, colleges. I-I was helping Eli choose one.”

The woman paused, her claws still dug into her son’s arm. She stared at his face blankly, before pulling back and standing from her seat.

“...I see.” she slowly said. She stared at the twins, before turning to Eli, “Why don’t you say grace, Eli?”

Eli paused, staring at her quickly and searchingly at her. “G-Grace?”

"You must know it by now, since you’ve been my son for seventeen years.”

Eli looked down, begrudgingly placing his slender hands on the table, silently praying for mercy.

He could feel her hands on her shoulders as he struggled to remember the words.

“B-Bless us, O Lord, and these...Th-Thy gifts, um...which we are about to...to...” he swallowed the lump in his throat as she squeezed his shoulders hard. “...T-To receive from Th-Thy bounty, Th-Through Christ, our Lord.” he managed, relaxing for a moment before he felt the hard collision of something to the back of his head. He yelped, keeping his head down for fear that she’d do it again.

“You forgot something.”

“H-Huh?”

“The end. What do you say at the end, Eli?”

Eli looked to Ezekiel for help again, a helpless look in his poor doe eyes.

But Ezekiel simply squeezed his hand in comfort. Eli bit his lip to keep it from quivering in fear.

“Come on, Eli. Everyone is waiting.”

“...A-Amen.”

He flinched as the woman ran a hand through his hair, only to grab a fistfull and yank it.

“Don’t mess up again, Eli. I can only handle so many mistakes on your behalf before it gets old.”

She released him, and took her seat again, watching him as though nothing had happened. Ezekiel was silent, hand still rested on his brother’s hand. When dinner was over, and the lot of them went to their own devices, Ezekiel pulled Eli into the kitchen with him, minding the nest of cockroaches in the hole in the corner. The filthy floor was like glass under their feet as Ezekiel quietly and carefully placed the dishes beneath the broken faucet. He turned to his brother, a hard look on his face as he inspected the bruises on his face that had yet to fully heal.

“You know we have to tell them,” he muttered, glancing at the door of the kitchen.

“B-But-”

“She *will* find out,”

“I-I don’t wanna tell her,” he choked on his words, struggling to find the courage not to cry.

“They’ll call her. Or send a letter. If you’re the one who tells her, she won’t get as angry with you.”

“E-Ezekiel, she’s going to-”



“I won’t let her.”

He turned away, lumbering up the creaky stairs with Eli in tow. Eli gripped his arm as he struggled to climb up the stairs with his trembling legs. Their bedroom was dark and unwelcoming, smelling vaguely like Summer’s dying grass. Eli stared at Ezekiel as he threw his clothes onto a small suitcase, instead of letting them sit on the floor.

“You know how Mother feels about me,” Eli mumbled. “And you know how angry she’ll be if she sees you-”

“Eli, you can’t possibly think-”

“You know me well enough to know I can’t fight back. Look at my face, Ezekiel.”

Ezekiel turned to him, an annoyed look crawling on his face. The tension in their silence was almost palpable, like it could be cut with a butter knife. Eli crossed his arms tightly, frowning deeply as his brother stared.

“She’ll punish me. It’s better to slit my throat now than let her take pleasure in seeing me breathe my last breath.”

“Eli,” Ezekiel gave him a soft look. “I won’t let her hurt you. Twins are forever,”

“God doesn’t feel the same.” Eli mumbled. “Mom told us that, didn’t she?”

“That can’t mean he’s right.” He answered.

Eli turned away, and sat on his bed, constantly rubbing his eyes. Ezekiel took a seat beside him, wrapping an arm around his shoulders as the smaller man watched an even smaller spider begin to weave her web. Her little black eyes stared out into the void, rubbing her front legs together like she was ready to start swinging.

“I can go at any time,” Eli randomly said, “That’s why they didn’t accept me.”

“Eli, that’s not why the university you chose declined to meet you.”

“Mom won’t feel the same way, though. You know what’ll happen.”

Ezekiel tightened his grip on Eli, his lips pressed in a straight line. He checked the clock sitting on his nightstand, unable to find the words to say in response. At 7:19, on the dot, they were expected to recite their prayers and go to bed, like children would be expected to eat their vegetables and memorize their alphabet. He stood, upon noticing how dangerously close it was to the time where they were expected to sleep. He ruffled his brother’s hair, rising from his seat to change out of his uniform before it was time to pray then go to sleep.

Eli looked away, biting his still quivering lip.

“Eli,” Ezekiel said softly. “If you get scared tonight, hide in the closet. I’ll come see you as soon as possible.”

“Please don’t let mom hurt me,”

Ezekiel sighed in response, pulling off his thick rimmed glasses. He knelt on the floor at Eli’s bed, closing his eyes as he folded his hands in prayer.

“Lord, please watch over our family. Please protect our mother, our father, Our sisters, Eva, Esther, and Elisha. Please protect Eli, and I...and please, please make sure Eli is safe. Amen,”

He opened his eyes, looking at the thinner, shorter man as he pulled off his uniform. He stared at the old scars and both fresh and nearly healed bruises littering his skin.

Ezekiel got into bed after a moment of watching his twin begin to cry out of fear into his dingy pillow. He lay on his side, staring into the dark, where the spider had made her home above Eli's head. He shifted, closing his eyes until he heard Eli speak again.

"I don't want to die, Ezekiel."

But nothing more was said the entire night. Ezekiel pretended to sleep until it was no longer an act, and when he woke up the next morning, he was met with the sight of his brother's empty bed, his sheets and blanket neatly made up like he got an early start.

"Eli?"

Ezekiel felt his stomach begin to tighten, like he was about to vomit. He got up from his bed, striding to the closet without hesitation, but the other was nowhere to be found. He furrowed his eyebrows when he saw his bedroom door firmly shut, and yanked it open when he began to feel the panic rise in his chest.

"Eli!" he called out, checking the bathroom and any small space he could find - until he came to the basement. His ears rang, and his head pounded. He could feel the color drain from his face as he listened to the music playing from behind the thick, wooden door, playing loud enough possibly to drown out screams. His hands trembled as he turned the doorknob, and he nearly fell down the stairs as he evaluated all of the possible endings to the predicament.

He reached the bottom of the stairs quickly, flicking on the light, only to see Eli laying on the floor, a small puddle of blood underneath and around his head, knees bent, arms twisted unnaturally. His chest still moved, albeit slowly and labored.

Ezekiel, with trembling hands and teary eyes, jogged to the other without hesitation, pawing at Eli's body in an attempt to roll him onto his back. Eli's shirt was missing, and Ezekiel was certain he could count Eli's ribs if he had any intention to. Eli's hair was matted and caked with blood, eyes staring at the ceiling like he was half awake.

"E-Eli...?" Ezekiel said morosely, his voice cracking as he tried to resuscitate the other, but to no avail. "E-Eli, wake up! Eli!" he shook the boy by the shoulders, but no response ever came.

"Ezekiel..." Eli said softly, "You...promised..."

Ezekiel held the bleeding boy close, taking a deep breath to keep the tears at bay.

"You're going to be okay," he said, "Don't go to sleep. Please, don't go to sleep. I'm so sorry."

The footsteps leading down the stairs were too quiet to be heard over the words of the music. Ezekiel looked up, only to see his mother in her soft blue dress, coated in blood like it was a medal to wear.

"How nice to see you up in the morning, Ezekiel, especially getting along with your brother."

"M-Mom-"

"Don't you wanna see God, Son?"

- Jillian E.

## Lemons Don't Always Make Lemonade

when you told me you loved me, I didn't smile  
I didn't think it was cute or sweet  
it was ugly and sour  
it left a look on my face like a baby trying lemon for the first time  
don't call me baby  
I'll pucker

- Kelsi C.

Honorable Mention, Project Writeous Contest



- Kelsi C.

## **Waters Filled With Stories**

His name was James,  
His face was coarse,  
It was filled with meaning,  
But it looked so cold.

As the red came from his pierced heart,  
I looked into his eyes and saw him start.  
He was the first of many,  
He was smart, he was strong,  
He also worked for days that felt endlessly long.

He was a brilliant cook.  
You would see he had no frowns,  
But he had no money,  
So the bank shut his store down.

He joined the war  
To make his family proud.  
Sadly I'm sitting here,  
Looking at him on the ground.

His face turned pale,  
As the bullets flew  
Then the water on the beach  
Was no longer blue.

I looked up  
At the rest of the beach  
The craters in the ground looked so deep.  
Fires were burning,  
The air was heavy,  
Yet all i could think about  
Was the beach so deadly.

There were men of two natures,  
Good or scared.  
Some had red crosses,  
Some had clothes that were beginning to tear.

I could hear the screaming,  
It was getting to my head.  
So I ran...I ran...I began to panic.  
I didn't know what to do.  
So I ran with elegance.

A man that was brave  
Ran to us without shame.  
He told us to keep moving  
Before it was too late.  
He said, ""Keep moving, keep moving, move ahead!"  
Everyone ran with strategy...  
But we couldn't cheat death.

- Zachary A.

three love poems

1. he grasped her hand like a vine  
latching onto a railing, twirling around it, nails like thorns  
piercing into it. he led her through a sea of  
withered flowers,  
whispering empty words of comfort  
into her ear, they  
came across a secluded beach with  
violent black waves and little  
pearly foam forming with each  
crash.  
a breath of frozen salt forcefully  
filled their lungs as they walked along  
their own paths,  
crafted by their bare, scarred feet, all of  
their fresh footprints on the surface of the earth, the  
only evidence that the two had existed  
washed away and buried  
along with every blink, every breath,  
every smile.

2. a lone pearl lay  
buried  
beneath the frigid sand, the  
heat from the earlier sun was  
entirely lost, nowhere to be found.  
the existing light was gray,  
weak,  
able to illuminate nothing but the  
ocean's greetings and goodbyes. the  
pearl longed to see the moon, and  
perhaps the sun, but  
it would never have the pleasure of experiencing the light.

3. a pair of feet gently moved,  
tracing each grain of sand with  
warmth and comfort.  
it enveloped and welcomed each  
small feature  
of the sand as a whole.  
only did the feet stop their adventure when he  
knelt down on the sand, sifting through it,  
examining it for something worthwhile.  
a pearl was picked up, greeting with a  
shine; at that moment, it knew it would be  
cherished, wanted, protected,  
saved.

## Midnight

I walked out, just walked out.  
I put on comfy clothes  
And although they protected my body,  
They still left my skin vulnerable  
To the midnight air.  
Washing over me  
A sense of freedom.  
Or could it be renewal?  
And slowly, but surely,  
Some happiness peeked through,  
Through the curtains of misery.  
My lungs filled up  
With every relieving breath.  
But this time,  
Instead of drowning me  
In pure defeat, I felt some strength seep in,  
In with the breeze.  
Despite the black skies,  
The stars seemed to shine brighter,  
Brighter than ever before.  
Their sparkle reignited my own dull spark.  
I ran, just ran.  
I let the warmth in,  
And although  
My skin was still vulnerable,  
I felt alive  
Once again.

- Julia T.



## **Time**

Tick, tock.

The sound the clock makes when time passes minute  
by minute, or maybe hour by hour.

Time is relative to the beholder, as seconds for  
Some may be years for others.

Tick, tock,

Goes the clock as we all ponder, “Should we  
Or should we not?”

Courage is the lock which binds the box of  
Uncertainty, a box which has yet to be closed  
By many.

Tick, tock.

The clock is ticking.

What will you do before its hands stop turning?

Will it be time wasted, or time well spent?

Only you, the beholder, have controlled how  
Time has passed.

- Daniel S.

### Sonnet

My life is dictated by ticks and tocks.  
Seasons change quickly but minutes crawl by  
Doing nothing but staring at the clock.  
I have begun to believe that clocks lie.

I am always wishing away my time,  
Waiting for something better to occur.  
But wasting away my youth is a crime  
And I pray these memories will not blur.

I often say, "I will do it later."  
Laziness is a way to avoid pain  
But time is the ultimate dictator.  
Many heroes and villains it has slain.

My life is dictated by ticks and tocks,  
Praying that an opportunity will knock.

- Maura M.



## Chimerical

To determine what someone means to you  
Seems to never be an easy task  
But at one point in life, I knew...  
That she would be my best friend, whom I could not lose

As we danced and sang together  
I realized we were almost the same  
But with just enough difference to learn  
Something new about her every day

And to think of us as anything more?  
Well, that is a thought that never entered my mind.  
As best friends, I was happy, I never thought about it much.  
That is, until our lips touched.

Now I am faced with conflict:  
To lose her forever? Or stay with her forever?  
Because love may come with happiness,  
But when love leaves, leaving, is how to obtain peace.

- Collin S.

## Loving You

loving you doesn't feel like a chore  
it's not something that I procrastinate  
it's not like when you throw in laundry and let it sit overnight because you're too scared to go down the stairs in the dark  
it's not something I want to check off of my daily to-do list

loving you is sweet  
it tastes just like lemonade  
on a hot day  
not too sour,  
just right

loving you is warm  
it's that perfect temperature where you can wear spring clothing and not feel sweaty or freezing  
it's perfect

loving you is like a drug  
I want to get high off of the smell of your sweatshirts  
I don't want to get high to forget you, but to remember

loving you is so easy, because I know you love me too  
you don't tell me  
you show me  
everything you do is an action of your love

it's the little things, they always told us  
I didn't know they were serious.

- Kelsi C.

## Way Back Then

As I sit here and wonder  
What could have been, I think  
Back to the days way back then,  
When the days were long and the  
Nights seemed like forever as I played  
In the streets as light as a feather.  
My favorite nights were the ones  
With no end when we had sleepovers  
And began to befriend. Oh those were  
The days, those were the days, how I wish  
I could go back way back then.

As I grow up I feel like  
The days do too, becoming shorter and shorter  
Leaving me with no view. I sit in my  
House as the days go by, watching them buzz  
By just like a fly. How I wish, how I wish  
Again and again that I could go back to the days way back then.

- Cameron M.

## Fake I.D.

How did this come be?  
It's seems that I've lost me!  
And all because, you see...  
I made a fake I.D....  
Well, three.

Harry Thomas Jameson,  
That one was my favorite one.  
Thirty-five,  
Successful life,  
A businessman,  
philanthropist.  
My folks found out,  
Boy, they were pissed.

Now, don't start screaming, Momma.  
It's something I had to do.  
To find myself, or whatever,  
I made a mistake or two..  
Or three.

Believe me,  
I didn't think it'd get this far.  
I no longer am, but are.  
Some want personality,  
Well, they can have mine, I've plenty!

I don't remember who am,  
Harry, Jimmy, Tim or Sam?  
I kept losing my I.D.'s,  
So I'd make new ones, I have three.

The next one was James Hickleby,  
Your average Joe, age twenty three.  
He liked to tell old dirty jokes.  
I would use him to buy smokes.

Some time went by,  
He wouldn't fly.  
He lost his credibility.  
We said goodbye,  
It was time that I  
Made a new identity.

I had to find a new name,  
A new person I could be.  
Then came Tim,  
Oh, I miss him.  
So do the gals  
and his night club pals,  
But he wasn't right for me.

I'm also in debt  
To "The Old Cigarette"  
Store.  
Wait, there's more.  
You remember Harry?  
Well, I did something very dumb.  
Don't start yelling, Mum.  
I, well not I, but Harry,  
he's promised to marry,  
Not one,  
but four.  
There's more.  
They each run a charity.  
And I promised to double,  
Oh god, I'm in trouble,  
I promised to double their collection  
To earn their affection.

Alright, you can yell,  
Though there's much I have to tell  
What's that?  
No, no more.  
Just a small thing on the side,  
It's best that I hide,  
Well, alright,  
There's a problem I had.  
I think I'm a dad!

There we go, now she's fainted.  
My image is tainted.  
Well, at least she can see  
There's much worse that could be  
Than my D in chemistry!

- Alex M.

Honorable Mention, Project Writeous Contest



## The Creation of Fate

I am the creation of fate. I live a life of unknowns. I have questions with no answers. And I wouldn't want it any other way.

My entire existence was built upon chance events. I have always had this story to tell, long before I could speak, and long before I was old enough to understand. And it wasn't until recently, when life began feeling much more real, that I began questioning who I am.

The story begins on the other side of the world, 8,000 miles away, on Mu Yuan Road in Foshan, China. On September 23, 1999, upon this very street, an unidentified motorcyclist drives through the Shushan District and spots an abandoned baby girl on the side of a dirt road. The passerby carries this six week old child to the Foshan village committee, who later brings her to the police to conduct a formal investigation. It takes only a few days to come to conclusions: no family could be found. I had been abandoned.

All my life, I have carried with me an unknown past. So, in search for answers and a clearer understanding, my family and I traveled to the place that knew me before I knew myself. After arriving in Beijing, I experienced this overwhelming sense of belonging. I didn't know the faces that surrounded me. I couldn't understand the dialogue I heard. But I felt like I belonged. I felt like I was home.

The first week drew me closer to my country's culture, opening my eyes to a life that could have been mine if I hadn't grown up in America. The moments I spent on Chinese soil are ones that will go on to shape the woman I grow up to be. My feet walked the Great Wall, my eyes gazed at the Terracotta Warriors, and my hands touched the very people whom I owe my life to.

June 24 will always remain a beautiful memory. It was the day I had always been waiting for, but never imagined would happen. And here I am, an ocean apart from where I was, and my heart still races just thinking about what had happened on that day.

Even before I boarded that plane to discover my Chinese roots, I knew I would return as a new person. I emotionally prepared myself for the unexpected. I have always known I spent my early life in an orphanage. I never questioned out loud who my birth parents are, but there have always been moments in time that I wondered. For the majority, I forget that my life started on a different path than those around me. It does not phase me that my parents don't look like me. It does not make me feel out of place, and it never will.

The day before we headed back, I was able to visit the orphanage that provided me with the unconditional love that saved my abandoned self. I remember trembling in fear, worried that upon our arrival I wouldn't be able to take in all that I was about to experience. The director of the orphanage greeted us with open arms. Unable to speak to one another, I resorted to showing her a timeline of my life through pictures, starting with the same photo of me as a baby that the orphanage sent to my parents. And at that instant, once she saw me as a baby again, she was overcome with emotion. Even after almost 17 years, she remembered me.

We continued on to visit the children whose understanding of what happened to them was nonexistent. I couldn't help but look into their beautifully innocent eyes and see a reflection of myself. When their hands interlocked mine, with our fingers nestled in between, I felt as though we were family. I felt like I had known these children all my life, even though I had met them once and will never see them again. As I stood beside the crib of a motherless child, I was reminded of how my life began. In my mind, I whispered, "You are loved."

There were two more caregivers that remembered me that day. I don't know their names. I don't know their story. But I do know that they saved my life. They knew me before I ever became Mikayla. They loved me before I knew what love was.

I hugged those three women with all the love they passed on to me 17 years ago. Little do they know how much of an impact they had on me, and it amazes me how far an act of love can travel. The final stop of the day was on Mu Yuan Road, my "finding spot". The last time I was there was on the day I was found. If it weren't for that motorcyclist, this road would've been the site of my death. But because I was spotted, it became the beginning of the beautiful journey I am still traveling.

I am not angry at my birth parents for leaving me. And I am not embarrassed of what happened to me. Because of my story, it has deepened my appreciation for life and those who gave me all that I have become. One day, I'll be a mother whose care for my child will be unquestionable. I'll be a nurse who will pass along the love I have spent my life receiving. Everything that has happened and everyone that I have encountered all played a role in shaping my identity.

Who am I? I am the creation of fate. I live a life of unknowns. I have questions with no answers. And I wouldn't want it any other way.

- Mikayla L.

First Place, Project Writeous Contest

### Dread of Night's Noon

Through the leaves of autumn,  
The cold from harsh snows,  
To the warm glow felt by some  
As summer approaches, the cold wind blows.  
As the year begins to wear,  
The boisterous colors of fall stay,  
The fall of next year won't compare.  
Yet as Mother Nature lay  
To rest as night sets,  
Students stay awake to write  
As the new school year lets  
Their minds race and thoughts shone bright.  
Yet untold fear and despair  
Will consume their weak souls through the night air.

- Luke D.



- Olivia A.

"For all who live..."

For all who live, there are those who don't  
and lack therefore the ability to persuade  
those lost to the voices of the estranged, the  
violent eyes of those free of restraints  
that hold us chained to the world.  
They yell: be wary of the ones who upon  
their backs carry the baskets filled with  
thread that weaves together our individual universes.

- Nana B.

## My Waste of Time

Possibility  
Changes waiting to happen  
Life is in your hands

Gazing through the stars  
Restless planets circling  
Never reaching end

Creeping in the dark  
A creature of the black night  
Don't look behind you

A shy water witch  
A life of isolation  
Freedom never known

I am a monster  
A beast beyond all belief  
Because of my skin

A world of my faults  
Constantly serenading  
My goals unachieved

Procrastination  
A curse that always plagues me  
How did I finish?

The one that I love  
Just their presence is enough  
A light in the dark

Stand up for yourself  
Pushed to the dust, forgotten  
You are more than that

Gay, straight, bi, or pan  
It doesn't matter to me  
I mean, why should it?

I like anime  
I don't care if you judge me  
It's just my preference

Wolf in sheep's clothing  
The bad apple of the tree  
Never to be seen

A small wallflower  
Wilting from interaction  
Flourishing alone

There are many arts  
Music, drawing and much more  
None tops the others

Why do we censor?  
Is it the fear to offend?  
Or fear of ourselves?

Wow, these are a lot  
Why did you read all these?  
Just get a hobby

The last one was rude  
I'd offer apologies  
But I don't care that much

Will you look at that?  
Some continuous haikus  
A structured story

I really should stop  
Writing all these, I mean  
Nineteen is enough

Well, maybe twenty  
An easy, even ending  
A good place to stop

Oh hey, twenty-one!  
Remember that old, dead meme?  
Yeah that was stupid

Okay, twenty-two  
Think of that Taylor Swift song  
I don't like it much

Onto twenty-three  
I'm just wasting our time here  
Why even read this?

Geez, now twenty-four  
I'm sorry for doing this  
(P.S., not really)

This really should stop  
But I'm having fun with this  
Is that kinda weird?

Okay, I'll give in  
I'll write meaningfully for now  
Just for a little

The gaze of the moon  
Ever-present during night  
Sometimes in day, too

Our deep, dark oceans  
Full of horrid nightmare fuel  
Like God's bad OCs

Oops, couldn't help it  
But have you seen a blobfish?  
They should get some help

Fine, I'll stop now  
I'll go back to pretty stuff  
Only one more time!

The creeping black cat  
A predator of the night  
Feasting on the mice

Okay, we're done here  
I hope I made you laugh  
Or even just a smile

- Brithanie Liddy

# Icarus

Here we go again,  
Our voices hushed and excitedly  
Giggling,  
You struggling to contain yourself,  
Me struggling to climb out of your  
quicksand.

Here we are again,  
As I've sworn myself in secret to you  
Late when you slept and I was  
Plagued with the thought of you.

You were everything,  
I was nothing,  
And you still took my heart  
And crushed it in your soft hand.

I was Icarus,  
And you were the sun I  
Desperately, hopelessly  
Wanted to admire.  
But my wings came to melt,  
And you still laughed as I drowned.

You came into my life in a flurry,  
All at once and all too quickly.  
You wanted to fly with me,  
But now, you'll be the death of me.

Because all I wanna do is set you free,  
And yet it still feels like  
You're still with me,  
Beside me,  
Laughing,  
And you're perfect,  
And I'm an embarrassment,  
You belong and I don't,  
And more than ever,

It's real

That I loved you.  
But here we are now,  
And here I am,  
Icarus,  
Loving the sun from afar.

- Jillian E.

# Survival

“Hey, Yaw, wake up man, c’mon wake up,” pleaded the boy shaking him.

“Huh?” the boy named Yaw responded, full of sleepiness and confusion. The bright sun shone upon the sailors on the deck, making their dark skin darker. In the sky, you could see bobby birds encircling above them while on the sea you could hear the rushing water slapping against the ship's walls.

“Kofi, what time is it?” asked Yaw frantically, already knowing it was time for work. After pulling their shirts and slacks the two rushed to the front deck of the ship.

“Damn man, how we suppose to get back to the states if you oversleep?” asked Kofi, grabbing a mop.

“What does it matter?” Yaw responded. “All the money we make ain’t gon’ be enough for rent back in Chicago.”

As the boys continued to work, the sun continued to bolster but the pleasant breeze made it manageable. Out of the corner of his eye, Yaw spotted the captain’s daughter Rosaline. Ever since they boarded the ship months ago, Yaw has had feelings for the light-peach colored 16 year-old. Known to stare, Yaw quickly lost concentration on the chicken dung in front of him.

“Better keep that big head of yours looking at that dung instead of my girl,” said a familiar, unwanted voice.

The voice belonged to Andrew, who pushed Yaw’s shoulder, making him spill his water bucket all over his area.

“That son of a--” Yaw started to say, balling up his fists and dropping his mop. He started to reach for it, but felt a firm hand on his shoulder. When he turned around he saw Captain Hudson, tall and broad, with a wide smile.

“Yaw, you and Kofi better get on the lower deck and continue there, this is not the time for fighting,” the Captain said.

Looking straight at Andrew with his dumb grin, then back at the captain and his daughter, Yaw picked up his mop and bucket, motioning Kofi to follow.

After a day's work full of cleaning and maintaining the vessel, Yaw and Kofi returned up the wooden steps to their beds made of straw and blankets of wool. There they saw the other sailors, most of whom were black with the exception of a few whites and Spaniards. Mordecai, who, like most of the rest, was talking about another one of his schemes: “We gotta demand more respect from the pasties if they’re going to treat us more like animals than people,” he protested, munching on his green apple.

Among the other sailors there similar murmurs and nods of agreement.

“These guys are idiots, how we suppose to get paid if they always want to start problems?” asked a frustrated Kofi, munching on an apple of his own.

Yaw just responded with an agreeable nod, laying on his bed of straw, eating an orange full of juice, and staring up at the sea of stars in the starry night.



“We just need to survive, man,” Yaw said with slumber creeping upon him like a lion and its prey with a stealthy approach for a strong kill. Before the lights of the ship went out the sailors snored away, using each other's body heat as their own.

The next morning was accompanied by the sounds of violence. One to be woken rather than to wake himself up, Yaw knew exactly what was happening. Shaking Kofi with all his strength, he shouted, “Wake up man, these bastards have finally done it!”

Fully awake now, Kofi and Yaw sprinted to the main deck to see the problem. The sailors had easily tied up the captain's crew as well as a hollering Rosaline.

“You shut up beautiful, you're too beautiful to be hollering like that,” said Marcus, hulk more than man.

Without any thought the skinny and lengthy Yaw went towards him. Before he could even get between Marcus and Rosaline, one of the other sailors shouted, “Mordecai, we're about to hit land!”

Ahead, the boys could see an island full of green trees and golden sand rushing closer and closer to them by the moment.

Captain Hudson, beaten, lay against a wall with bruises on his face.

“Cap, you alright?” Kofi said as the boys approached him. All they received for a response was a slight nod from the beaten Captain.

“This ain't good man, we need to stop Mordecai and get Cap back in control,” Yaw said, already heading to the control room with a loyal Kofi following. There they saw Mordecai leading the ship on the voyage to chaos.

“Mordecai, what the heck do you think you're doing, we gotta get back to the states, not a damn jungle?!” said Kofi.

Mordecai acted as if no one had ever entered the room and festively kept controlling without any sense. Finally having enough, Yaw approached the rebel leader and grabbed his shoulder. Before he could say a word, he felt Mordecai's fist.

Now on the ground with pain spreading throughout his face, Yaw was too weak to fight back on his usual empty stomach. With half-opened eyes he saw Kofi, full of bravery, charge at Mordecai. Kofi lasted only minutes before he, too, was beaten by Mordecai. The last thing that they heard was the sound of the ship stopping; the last thing they saw was the sight of the rebels leaving the forsaken room.

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The severe pain of his swollen eye awoke Yaw. Kofi was already awake, and the two rushed back to the front of the ship. The area was as deserted as the banks had become during the depression. The tied-up Captain's council as well as the beautiful Rosaline were nowhere to be found. The two checked the wall where they'd once seen the beaten Captain but he had disappeared like the others. Above them, thunder roared viciously with cracks of lightning illuminating the tropical night sky. At fifteen years old, one year shy of his best friend, a defeated Kofi started to shed tears of defeat. The second Yaw turned to look at Kofi and see the tears, he cocked back his hand and smacked him upside the head.

“What the hell you do that for man, dang!” Kofi whined, rubbing his now pounding head.

“You really gonna start acting like a wimp and cry?” Yaw asked. “What are you even crying about, we ain't dead, we still here and we can survive.”

“Yaw, how we gonna get back to states with no captain, no crew, and a lot of damn fruit!?” Kofi furiously asked, spreading out his hands wide.

“Look, man, we find Captain and the others, get them back here, and contact the navy or someone to help us,” Yaw said convincing Kofi a little more.

“All right, if we gonna do this we gotta make survival kits or something,” Kofi said.



The boys grabbed their knapsacks and filled them with as many oranges and apples as they could find. Then they went into the Captain's headquarters, where they found spare blankets and a little meat. After they had finally packed, they set upon the mysterious land.

On the island, the first thing Yaw noticed was the heat of the golden sand through the worn soles of his feet. The sun's rays seemed to shine with much more intensity on the land.

"Yaw, look at this!" Kofi exclaimed, pointing at the first set of footprints. Yaw knelt next to the wide footprints which sank heavily into the sand.

"These prints are from that fool, Marcus," he observed with much disgust. He then looked up and saw the numerous pairs of footprints that led to the jungle ahead.

"They're in there" said Kofi, as if reading his friend's mind.

"Well, looks like we're just going to have to find them," Yaw responded, standing now. Without a second thought, the teenagers made their way towards the undiscovered forestation.

The jungle had a rough and hard dirt floor compared to the smooth sand of the beach. Numerous vines and trees almost entirely covered the sky, allowing little rays of sunlight to enter. Sounds of animals and insects of various species filled the air. Water droplets glistened in the sunlight from previous showers.

"This ain't nothing like Chicago," Kofi said, looking around at the environment with wide eyes. Now looking down on the ground, Yaw noticed the once easily visible footprints had disappeared.

"Looks like they traveled by air," said Yaw pointing at the disappointing ground.

"We can just keep walking straight," Kofi proposed, half asking and half stating. Figuring that it was better than nothing, there was agreement among the two and they proceeded forward. Deeper into the jungle the forestation and nature continued to grow. Flowers of different shapes, sizes, and colors emerged from the ground, giving life to the jungle as well as the adventurers.

The boys had walked so long that night had captured day without any progress.

"Yaw, it's getting late and my feet can't walk no more, can we take a break?" pleaded Kofi.

Yaw was about to protest, but suddenly felt a rain touch his scalp through the thickness of his Afro. This one little drop soon turned into a shower. Wind accompanied the created storm with rumbles of thunder.

"Follow me!" Yaw commanded over the uncontrollable weather and started to run.

The two dodged branches, fought bushes, and clawed at vines looking for shelter. Throughout the blinding rain, Yaw spotted a dry patch in the sea of chaos.

"Over there!" Yaw shouted as he sprinted to the area.

The thickness of the trees above protected the area from the harmful soaking.

"Thank God we found this place!" exclaimed Kofi, catching his breath.

"God must be angry at those rebels," Yaw added, feeling his sticky attire.

After the storm had come to an end, the boys made camp. They laid their blankets out on the dirt floor and let their soggy clothes spread out on it. They couldn't find any dry wood, so they kept warm using the spare blankets. In the distance they could hear sounds of chimpanzees scurrying among the treetops. After filling their bellies with oranges, apples, and pears they laid on their makeshift beds.

"Yaw, you think we're going to find them?" asked Kofi.

"We have to, man, it's our only hope," Yaw responded, full of determination but going into slumber.

The burning sun in the morning sky brought the two out of their slumber.

"Kofi, today we have to find them," said Yaw, putting on his dryer clothes.

"Yaw, look!" Kofi said with urgency in his voice. Turning his head, Yaw looked over the camp and saw their bags violated. What was left of their once great amount of fruit was nowhere to be found.

“Them damn monkeys” said Kofi, breaking the silence while putting in his own clothes.”What are we supposed to do now, man?” he asked, picking up scarce remains from the jungle floor with defeat.

“We’re gonna find captain and get the hell out of this jungle,” Yaw said with complete confidence.

“We gonna need weapons to protect ourselves,” stated Kofi, stuffing blankets into his knapsack. Yaw pulled out his pocketknife from his pocket. He unleashed the blade from its containment and watched it shine in the mornings light.

“Yaw, how is a little pocketknife going to take down a giant like Marcus?” asked Kofi, disappointed at his friend's lack of thought.

“We’re going to make ours,” Yaw replied, looking around at the numerous branches on the dirt floor.

Now armed with three wooden spears each, the teenagers continued their journey through the jungle. They walked until the soles of their shoes became their socks. When all hope seemed lost, a scream radiated throughout the thick jungle air. The two gave each other a look and started to bolt through the jungle. The energy of hope pushed them forward. As the screaming came closer, the two ran even faster.

Suddenly they approached a cliff-end and Kofi pulled Yaw back by the shoulders. After a nod of thanks, Yaw gazed upon the clearing below the from the small cliff. Below they that saw the captain's council and Rosaline were tied up on the stone ground. Behind them were chaperoning sailors.

By this time the screaming had come to a halt and the two saw why it commenced in the first place. Captain Hudson was kneeling with ropes tying his arms back. A sailor was holding his arms back while Marcus was doing Mordecai’s bidding.

“Where is it!?!” Mordecai shouted in the Captain’s face.

Marcus threw a punch into the stomach of Captain Hudson. This blow caused Rosaline to plead and scream for the torture to stop.

“Just tell me where the money is and we can all go home,” proposed Mordecai, wiping the Captain’s spit off his face.

No response followed, with another blow this time to the jaw. Rosaline pleaded even more and Hudson spit out a tooth followed by blood.

“Shut up!” scowled Mordecai at Rosaline.

Yaw looked over and saw Andrew, distant from the others with his back turned.

“That coward,” whispered Yaw to Kofi.

“Captain ain’t gonna last long man, we gotta do something,” said Kofi, full of urgency.

The two made and commenced their plan. They ran along the dwarf mountain with light feet to where they were above the captives and guards. Kofi took an apple from his knapsack and looked above into the trees. There a dozen monkeys eyed the apple as treasure and not food. When the apple was moved left to right their heads followed. Kofi then took his weapons out of and dumped all his fruit down the hillside. Without hesitation, the army of monkeys jumped from their trees and scurried down the hill savagely. The sailors who were once guarding were now in battle with the ferocious animals.

Yaw and Kofi then got on their sides and slid down the hillside. Now unguarded, they cut through the ropes as quickly as they could. While cutting through her ropes, Yaw asked Rosaline if she was alright.

“I’m fine,” replied Rosaline.”But you need to hurry, my father can’t take much more.”

When all the prisoners were free, the boys equipped them all but Rosaline with their hand-made weapons. Yaw looked at the council members and said, “Y’all gotta go and stop those sailors before they stop you.”

The older members sprinted to join the monkeys in the fight.

“Rosaline, you stay here,” Yaw ordered as he and Kofi headed towards the captain. While they were running, Yaw turned his head back and saw Rosaline had already disappeared from her position. As they approached the fallen captain, a huge paw knocked Yaw to his feet. Towering above him, Marcus pulled him by his shirt up off the ground with his feet dangling in the air. Though struggling with all his might, Yaw could not escape the overpowering grip.

“Should’ve stayed on the ship, kid,” Marcus said, cocking a fist back. Yaw cocked his foot back and launched it right into the man’s weakest point. Marcus let out a loud moan and dropped Yaw to the ground. Before he could recover, Marcus was slugged on the side of his head by a heavy stick and his Goliath-like body hit thudded on the ground.

Yaw looked at Kofi but saw he had no part in the action. Now looking over to his left, he saw a grinning Andrew holding the shattered stick over his shoulder.

“I gotta get home, too,” he said, breaking the silence.

Yaw and Kofi just looked at each other, nodded at Andrew, and continued on their pursuit. When they finally reached Captain Hudson, Mordecai was nowhere to be found. The sounds of violence had ceased due to the bodies of dead and wounded sailors as well as the disappearance of the monkeys.

“Cap, you alright?” asked Kofi as he knelt down next to him.

Yaw grabbed his spear and cut through the thick ropes around Hudson’s wrist.

“Thank you all, that coward Mordecai scooted the minute a monkey eyed him,” Hudson said while rubbing his rope burned wrist.

Out of nowhere, Rosaline ran and embraced her father with tears streaming down her cheeks.

“Cap, this may not be the time but can we go home now?” Kofi asked with a smile.

Captain Hudson looked at them with sorrow and said, “Boys, the states are recovering from the depression and another world war is brewing about. We might not be able to get back until everything is cleared up.”

After all they had been through, Yaw looked at all those who had survived and wondered how he would ever get home. Getting rid of all doubt in his mind he looked at each and every one of them, including the council members and said with unshakeable determination, “We will make it back home.”

- Michael A.



- Alesandra T.

Musical Chairs: a Project Writeous Group Poem, June 2017

Send my blessings to the warriors,  
The ones who've sacrificed it all.  
The fallen heroes on the battlefield  
Whose names have never been uttered in a text book.

Oh noble knights of the realm  
Oh fathers and sons of the village  
Hear my ode and know this  
That your voices may not be known  
But your roars of a nation are heard  
Above the screams of slurs  
And powerful attacks on those you  
Defended.

Even still,  
Despite your efforts,  
Your love for your nation and  
The people in it,  
Their hearts are blackened,  
Their innocence long lost.

We remember them with warmth in their hearts  
We remember the selflessness that they gifted us with

The river of blood flowing down the street  
The pile of bones that used to be human  
Friends who fought together  
And died together  
The shadow of death hangs over them like a noose  
The unbreakable bonds forged by friendship  
Holds their spirits tight.

Brothers in arms we went into battle  
The count dropped with each night and each day  
We went into the fray and our spirits were frail  
But we fought in the name of the fallen  
We are the brothers in arms, together we fight  
Together, we fall  
Together, we unite.

- Edison, Alex, Sanj, Destiny, Lexi, Gabby, Gillian, Jillian, Maura, Emilee, Amari



## I Don't Speak Spanish

“Where are you from?”

Someone asked me this the other day,  
And I couldn't wrap my head around the question.  
What did they mean?  
Did they want to know what grade I was in?  
If I lived around here?  
What teacher I had for P.E.?  
Did they think I was new?  
I didn't understand.  
And upon seeing my deer-in-headlights look, they asked me,

“Do you speak Spanish?”

Almost all of my life, people have asked me this question.  
And I want to start off by saying,  
It's not your fault.  
I understand that you found it hard to comprehend,  
To put the pieces you didn't think would fit together.  
It's why so many of you assume I speak Spanish.  
There was a part of you --- no matter how small it may be---that thought,  
“Surely she's not...?”

Summer is my favorite time of year.  
And as much as I'd like to say it's because of the warm nights,  
The vacation, the time spent with my friends and family,  
...I can't.

“You're not black, you're white.”

“You're not white, you're black.”

“You're not dark enough to be black.”

“You're too dark to be white.”

Different person, same words.  
Too pale to be black, too dark to be white.  
I could never escape from it.  
It continuously haunted me,  
Day after wretched day,  
A constant reminder of who I could never be.  
I'd go to the beach and tan for hours,

Until my skin was burnt and peeled beyond recognition,  
Summer allowed for me to fit the standards that had been set.  
If I could not be one, then surely I could be the other?  
I tried to forget about my other half, but it always managed to claw its way back.  
And as much as I tried to,  
I could not lie to myself.

“Do you speak Spanish?”

I was-and still am-a sheep in wolf’s clothing, pretending to be something I’m not.  
But then who was I supposed to be?  
If I was one but not the other, and still not even that, then what was I?  
*Who* was I?  
What could I possibly identify as?  
Trying to find that answer  
Is like grasping at water,  
The answer constantly slipping through my fingers as I try to latch on.  
It’s *frustrating*.

“Do you speak Spanish?”

As if being half-black didn’t give me the right to stake claim in the struggle,  
The fight, the pain, the joy, the history.  
And though white people have white privilege,  
Mine seemed to have been lost in the mail.

“Oh? But your skin...?”

I felt like the same sides of a magnet being forced together,  
Each side desperately trying to escape the other.  
I would never be that perfect mixture of black and white paint,  
Because in the eyes of the world,  
Yin and Yang weren’t meant to be combined.

“Do you speak Spanish?”

I’d never be that unopened can of black paint,  
And I’d certainly never be that perfectly whitewashed fence.  
I was a white fence too dirty to ever be used,  
I was the black paint of a clumsy artist who’d mixed in too much white.  
I was always too little or too much of something, but never just enough.

“Do you speak Spanish?”

The only reason they asked was because that small voice in their head,  
The one who doubted me in the first place,  
Didn't understand how warm air and cold air,  
Could be put in the same place.  
After all, didn't that cause a tornado?

“Do you speak Spanish?”

Maybe they all ask me that question,  
Because they don't want to imagine the war that had taken place inside my body.

The white side of me had lost the battle long ago,  
And would cower behind the black,  
Averting its gaze from anybody who looked too closely,  
Ashamed of what it was.  
Like it *knew* I had never wanted it there,  
Because without it I had an identity,  
Without it I had every right to my black side's history.

“Do you speak Spanish?”

And my white side wanted to do everything in its power to rip the melanin from my skin.  
Without it, I had every right to claim its advantages,  
And no one would ever say otherwise.  
With it, I was a mutt,  
A half-breed that would never be good enough.

“Do you speak Spanish?”

...It's not your fault.  
You were trained to process things one at a time,  
So that you'd have a better chance at understanding.  
But...maybe it wasn't because of that.  
Maybe you *did* understand,  
And that was why you asked.  
You hoped that I *wasn't* being torn apart from the inside.

“Do you speak---”

No. I don't speak Spanish.

# haiku

## *Night*

Heavenly moonlight  
tiptoes into my bedroom  
at night, while I rest.

- Danielle B.

## *Haiku*

Don't hide in the bleachers,  
Take on the field and conquer,  
Become who you are.

- Ava G.

## *The Bunny*

Sitting on the hill  
Questions his entire life,  
How do I lay eggs?

- Noah P.

## *Orchid*

Just like me; complex  
yet simple; beautiful yet  
fragile; rare, valued.

- Tiana B.

## *Just for today*

Who am I today?  
Do I let the world decide?  
Or just be myself?

- Alexander M.

## *Haiku*

Thoughts are imprisoned  
Unable to speak freely  
Yearning to be free

- Adrian S.

## *False Hope*

False hope is what drives  
me, why the laughter young man.  
It is not yet known.

- Sean S.

## *Frenemies*

Two unlikely pals  
Destined to be enemies  
Choose friendship instead.

- Zachary A.

## *Death With a Lover*

Only with my love  
Will I deteriorate  
With tranquility

- Julia M.

## *Haiku*

As his words sunk in  
And they stood the test of time  
Never forgotten

- DeQwon B.

## *Galaxy Surreal*

unable to speak now  
maybe at a later date  
breathe and watch the sky

- Nana B.

## *Haiku x 2*

Upon battlefields  
I see no vegetation  
Only man-made sights

Upon battlefields  
I see no natural sight  
Only armored shields

- Collin S.

## *Haiku*

Parents got divorced,  
and i n s t a n t a n e o u s l y  
everything scrambled

- Ashlynn J.



# haiku

## *Lonely*

I am lonely, not?  
Surrounded by friends, but not.  
I'm not lonely, not.

- Preshea A.

## *Autumn*

Leaves fall to the ground  
Satisfaction from the crunch,  
Autumn has arrived.

- Shahana T.

## *Haiku*

Winners are the ones  
Who strive to be the greatest  
When no one's watching.

- Carter D.

## *Haiku*

Summer comes and goes  
Summer, beautiful and bright  
Summer, back again soon

- Ashley P.

## *The fall of innocence*

The leaves crackling  
Left, right, left, right, where am I?  
Lying in secrets.

- Emily B.

## *Piece by Piece*

It's drifting away  
Slowly but surely it falls  
There goes the petal

- Emily B.

## *Verano*

Waves roaring through the sea  
Rising and falling sunsets  
A day at the beach

- Emily B.

## *Haiku*

setting golden sun  
no longer illuminates  
the world; it is dark  
- Weronika Z.

## *Anxious*

Heart palpitations;  
Numbness with every short breath;  
Seemingly the end.

- Julia T.

## *Haiku*

Blank pages, blank mind  
Thoughts forced into syllables  
Like five, seven, five.

- Maura M.

## *Haiku*

Mellow yellow gold  
Colors fade and scars behold  
Broken shattered dreams.

- Brianna M.

## *Haiku*

Fruits ripen with time  
Flowers bloom with the seasons  
We'll grow with our love

- Rebecca C.



- Miya S.

## Details

My therapist told me to study every detail of my surroundings when I felt panic coming on and try to compare them to something else as a distraction. I always chose aspects of nature, a feature of the world that I perceived as serene and calming:

Canary yellow rug in my living room, like a magic carpet longing to fly with the birds.

An empty sea glass vase in my kitchen, begging to be filled with a bouquet of flowers like the ocean longing to be closer to the shore.

I memorized every pattern of every painting in my house, but I noticed nothing of you, for all you brought me was joy. There was never any angst to suppress.

It was only when you were finally walking away that I saw the bold, green veins protruding from your forearms, like a forest attempting to break free from your skin, the messy honey locks resting on your scalp, bringing envy among the bees. I compared you to the element of earth, but you were much more than that. You were the roaring of a fire, you were the chill of the winter air, and then you were the fleeting wind.

- "there are no more details of the house to distract me"

- Anna K.

## Summer Rain

Spring here doesn't bring flowers,  
only the endless drought  
and scorching heat.

Instead of daffodils  
mushrooms bloom  
along the cracked river beds  
of memory; wandering  
through the stark meadows:

Seething spores putrefy  
memories,  
the empty dry air flowing over you,  
Mold covered remembrances,  
that's all you have left

Sanity is a hazy, circling crow;  
hovering, to make sure  
everything is dead  
Eating his fill of the bodies,  
stuck in the mud.  
Then he will move on,

The black bird leaves only his tree,  
Its rough stony bark  
spirals upwards  
Forming a crumbling pillar  
reaching for the clouds.

Dead branches only go so high.  
The wet flesh of the sky  
just out of reach. Falling short they sag,  
touching their toes. Seeking solace  
in their own shadow

The wild, amber grain  
has turned gray and stiff  
in the heat.

Even she, the blade of grass  
was too anxious  
for the death of the sun.

She dried out in the light,  
silken threads around her neck  
before she heard the thunder  
of summer's  
rain.

- Edison S.

## Death Gets Fired

“You’re fired.”

“...I’m sorry?” I asked in disbelief. Mr. Dog, my boss, leaned his furry head into his paws sympathetically, glasses sliding down his long nose. I crossed my arms over my chest and he straightened, shuffling papers on his desk.

“I’ve gotten far too many bad reports concerning your... language.”

“The f\*ck’s wrong with my language?” Dog sighed and crossed his front paws.

“Death, that’s exactly the problem. Your job is to collect souls and determine where they go. Your job is NOT to,” he paused to glance down at one of the documents, “ ‘throw these trucking bastards into the pits of Hell where they belong.’ ”

“I didn’t say trucking.”

“I know, I changed it because your language is too vulgar for the workplace. It is in your best interest to find employment somewhere else.” Dog shook his furry head and nudged his glasses back up his nose, leaving no room for argument.

I decided to walk all the way home instead of just taking an ever so convenient NYC taxi to sort my thoughts, but all the dogs I ran into started barking at me, as if mocking my pain. I trudged up the stairs in my apartment building instead of taking the elevator, because I had a strong feeling I might’ve stomped a hole in the elevator.

I hastily unlocked the door to my apartment and threw myself onto the couch, already feeling Lucy’s presence. I felt her staring at me from the armchair across the living room where she was elegantly settled stroking Decay, my security kitten. Her blonde hair cascaded around her like a halo, her blood red eyes piercing into mine looking for any small glimpse of guilt. Of course, she found none.

“How did you get in?” I asked, staring at the ceiling, hands folded across my stomach.

Once she was inside the apartment she could leave quite easily, but getting in was a whole other convoluted matter. I had a pet kitten named Decay, but of course she was no ordinary kitten. The second someone stepped into the apartment who had no place being there, she grew into a monstrous three-headed furball, ready to rip the intruder a new one. No complaints had been filed against me yet, so either no one’s tried to break in or Decay ate them.

“It doesn’t matter. I heard you got fired,” she said in the tone of voice a mother would use to scold her child, even though I was outrageously older than her. She was no spring chicken herself, but it was hard to remember sometimes because of her youthful appearance.

“Yeah! Can you believe it?!”

“Yes. You’re reckless and you don’t have a filter between your brain and your mouth. It’s a wonder you didn’t get fired centuries ago.” I sat up and placed a hand over my heart dramatically.

“And I thought we were friends!” I said. She rolled her eyes and Decay pressed herself further into her lap, purring happily.

“Why don’t you just keep your crude comments to yourself, and then maybe you can go ask for your job back?” She suggested. I scoffed.

“Yeah okay, and while we’re at it we might as well start raising the dead just for kicks. ...Actually wait, I think I did that last week.” Lucy rolled her eyes again.

“That’s what I’m talking about! Remember the time I was helping you sort souls when you were working overtime? There was a woman. An elderly woman looking for her husband. Do you remember what you said to her?”

“Oh, c’mon Lucy that was ages ago,” I said, waving her off and falling back into the couch. She narrowed her eyes at me.

“You said, and this is a direct quote by the way, ‘Yeah no, your husband’s still alive, he just faked his death because he couldn’t deal with your shit anymore.’ ” I laughed, both at the memory and the way Lucy mimicked my voice perfectly, clutching my stomach and wiping a tear from my eye.

“Well, I was being honest. Isn’t that what people want?” Lucy stood, Decay meowing in protest and stretching lazily, and I sat up quickly. I watched as she picked up her sweater, preparing to leave.

“Obviously not, otherwise you’d still have a job.” She shot me a stern, red eyed glare. Her eyes glowed as bright as a signal flare.

“I think it’s in your best interest to be a bit more tactful from now on,” she threatened, disappearing with the usual red smoke and crackle of electricity. I rolled my eyes.

“So dramatic.”

But still, her words kept replaying in my mind and I found myself pacing the apartment, occasionally glancing out of the window. Through the crowded streets and skyscrapers I could spot Central Park, though there wasn't the usual flood of inhabitants today, surprisingly. Having obviously nothing better to do, I pulled on a jacket and closed my eyes.

After a rush of wind and brief moment of lightheadedness, I opened my eyes again and found myself alone beside a dying tree, crimson leaves falling gently from the tall branches. Shoving my hands in my pockets, I walked along a path until I came across a pair of children playing an improvised game of soccer. I settled myself on a bench, staring at the way the leaves died and withered away. The beautiful clash of colors kept me momentarily distracted until I was hit in the face with the children's soccer ball. I cursed quietly and looked up at the blonde girl who covered her mouth in shock and the dark haired girl who was doubled over in laughter. I gently tossed the ball back to the blonde girl.

"Sorry!" She called to me. Then she turned to the other girl and punched her on the shoulder.

"Look what you did! Geez, be careful," the blonde girl said to her friend. I smirked and the dark haired girl fell into a pile of leaves, laughing hysterically. *Well isn't this familiar.*

I thought back to Lucy's words. She could be SUCH a nag sometimes, but I couldn't deny that she was my oldest and closest friend. I had only met her through my job working for Dog, and I was able to see her every day because of that. I sure as hell wouldn't tell her anytime soon, but I could admit that I could be stubborn at times. I sighed and put my face in my hands.

*Well, I guess it's time for my least favorite activity: begging,* I thought, standing, stretching, and swearing. I did kind of need a job to be able to support Decay. I turned back the way I came, and settled on a brisk pace to the office. Normally, I would've just *zapped* myself over there being Death and all, but I still needed an extra bit of time to prepare what I was going to say. Dog could be lenient but once he made up his mind about something he was extremely difficult to persuade. Maybe I could just show him a picture of Decay being extra cute. After all, who could say no to *that face*?

And *BAM*. Before I knew it, I was walking back into the office. I started walking past Dog's secretary, who moved to stop me with an outstretched hand. I shot her a glare and she slowly withdrew her hand, sitting back down with flushed cheeks. I pulled open the doors and walked in as Dog was messily eating an uncooked steak.

"...Is this a bad time?" I asked, grinning.

He growled at me, the redness of the meat contrasting threateningly with the pearly whites of his teeth. Then he nuzzled his face into a napkin in an attempt to clean himself off.

"Death--"

"Before you say anything, I want you to know that I've changed."

"...Really? You've somehow managed to change your whole personality in a manner of a few hours?" He asked derisively. I snorted.

"Of course not. BUT, I think if you give me another chance, you'll find that I've matured," I added, batting my eyelashes. He shook his head, gently adjusting his glasses.

"Death please. If you haven't matured in the millions of years you've been here, there's no hope for you." I placed a hand over my heart.

"It... hurts me when you say things like that. ...Okay but see, see? No swearing!" Dog sighed.

Just then, a soul appearing to be a suburban white dad dressed in a Hawaiian shirt, entered the room raving and screaming as they usually did, followed by an old man with a drained look on his pallid face. He was dressed in a suit but the color was faded and it appeared to be covered in dust, as though it had been freshly peeled off of a corpse. The man's hair was wispy, almost fragile white color that contrasted with the empty blackness of his eyes. I could almost smell the mothballs on this guy.

"Are you in charge here?!" The suburban dad yelled at Dog. My body stiffened. It was one thing for souls to get angry and yell at me, but to yell at Dog? He had no clue who he was dealing with.

"Yes... Can I help you Doug?" Dog asked calmly. A little too calm if you asked me. I snickered and the angry soul turned his attention to me, the blue glow that accompanied him flaring up dramatically.

"What's the meaning of this?! Who are you people?! Why can't I see my family?!" The man stared at me in tears, snot dripping freely and his eyes wide like a small animal caught in a bear trap. The old man who followed him in didn't change his blank expression. He almost looked murderous in a cold and calculative sense. Dog kept staring at me, so I swallowed back a very unsympathetic 'Dude,' and instead tried to reason with him.

"Listen... Doug. Um, okay, so you were vacationing with your family in Honolulu, right?" The man sniffled.

"Yeah."

"Okay. Well uh, you know that you're not the best swimmer, right?" He looked down.

"Yes."



“And you also know that you swam pretty far away from shore? Well, the thing is, Doug, is um, well-- oh damn it. Doug. You. Are not. Alive. Anymore. I’m sorry you had to hear it from me, but you drowned while you were away from your family.” The soul sniffled some more and I swore internally, giving him an awkward pat on the shoulder.

“If it’s any consolation, Linda and the kids are fine. Well not FINE per se, since they’re grieving, but y’know, they’re not physically hurt or anything.”

“Thank you, thank you, thank you...” he repeated over and over again as the old man with the blank face led him out of the office. I jabbed a thumb in the direction of the door.

“Who the f\*ck was that old, creepy, ‘I have candy in my van’, guy?” I asked, crossing my arms. Dog sighed.

“That was Ted. Your replacement.”

“That guy? ...Really? His name is Ted? Him, you picked that guy over me?” Dog shook his head, simultaneously trying to figure out the best angle to continue eating his steak without getting blood on his tie.

“Ted is fired. He uh, doesn’t seem to be very talkative. As of right now. Death, you proved to me that you can handle being mature in the workplace. Or at least, in front of souls.”

“Permission to ‘Hell yes!’?” I asked, barely containing my excitement.

“Just this once.”

“HELL YES! Haha, I’ll see you tomorrow Dog!”

“Actually you have to pick up the work that Ted was unable to complete.”

“I’ll see you right now, Dog!” I shouted, almost breaking the door down to get my old office back.

On my way back to my office, I noticed Ted’s things had been cleaned out already and Lucy was sitting reclined in my office chair. She smirked at me.

“Told ya so.”

- Destiny D.

## High School

Teenage problems of high school drama  
Ego and status are imprinted in bold  
Carried out by friends, foes, and our very own cell phones,  
Can't say I haven't fallen victim.  
Though not all fall, but shine their differences in gold.  
False reputations may set in stone,  
If not the reputation, it's love to bring you down.  
Heartfelt thoughts soon turn you cold,  
Though not all fall, but choose to be alone.  
If it's not love to cause chaos,  
It's school work to grip you in a tight hold.  
All too challenging, but do wrong and get disowned,  
Though other factors may play small roles, we all fall to the workload.  
But summer approaches, we look back and grow.  
School is out, you're free to go.

- Jaden L.



## **Making Sonnets**

I am taking a class called English 2.  
My homework is to create a sonnet.  
But I am wondering what to do.  
Need to be creative. Think upon it.

I figured out what I should talk about.  
My topic is about making poems.  
It is very hard to write a plan out.  
I am stuck on this line, please help me bro.

One more stanza and a couplet to go.  
Then I will be finished with this piece.  
I need to think of more things to write, Joe.  
This is very tiring, I'm fatigued.

Alas, here is the end of the sonnet.  
My wish has come, when I wished upon it.

- Cory O.

## Stress

Always stressed  
About the upcoming test  
Oh these problems seem to progress  
If only I could go somewhere to decompress  
But I'm totally obsessed  
With EVERY LITTLE MESS  
Oh gee,  
Then there's this pressure, you see,  
To be "as great as your great uncle McGee!"  
All depending on me  
When in actuality,  
All I need is a dang degree!  
I'm doing my best.  
But many would disagree.

- Ashlynn J.

“Shakespeare and Frost...”

Shakespeare and Frost

Brady and Moss

Name a better duo

I'll wait

Teamwork is key

Like the moon and the sea

Like the birds and the bee

Solo is cool too

Like T-Swift up on stage

Or like a reader turning a page

Just remember one thing

Pave your own path

Go your own way

Because you'll always be happy at the end of the day

- Jacobi B.

## The World

The world is a place  
A place, like any other  
Full of many things  
Some choose to enjoy the best  
While others are depressed  
Some are wanderers  
Others lay at rest  
Some are men of the night  
But why, why stray from the light?  
For the world is a place  
A place, like any other  
Full of many things  
Remember, young child,  
You only have but one life to live.

- Joseph M.

## Flash Fiction

A darkness shrouded over her as she walked down the hall. The hospital room lights and televisions flickered and snapped off as she walked past each doorway, turning the entire hall behind her into a black void. The windows shattered as she walked past them, cracking at first, then completely splintering into shards. The heartbeat monitors all fell to a steady ring as she passed each room. 'It' had taken over her after she used a Ouija board with her friend. The game was common among kids her age, although it was not something to be described as a 'game'.

The rules of the Ouija board are as follows:

- 1.) Never use the board if you think it's a game.*
- 2.) Never let the planchette count down through numbers or the alphabet.*
- 3.) Never let the planchette touch all four corners of the board.*
- 4.) Never let the planchette fall from the board*
- 5.) Never ask when you are going to die.*
- 6.) Never ask about God.*
- 7.) Never use the board alone.*
- 8.) Never forget to say goodbye.*

They never said goodbye. Her friend passed away that night, but she continued to live, darkness following her wherever she went.

It was now her turn to carry out 'its' wishes.

- Angela G.

“With inhuman gentleness...”

with inhuman gentleness, a warm breath escaped past his soft lips  
as his eyes penetrated through the foggy window near him.  
an open book lay on the table in front of him, open on a random page,  
threatened by a porcelain cup of herbal water which lay beside it.  
flakes of snow danced in the air on the opposite side of the glass,  
painting the once-green scene white.  
the cackling of the fire contained within the bricks was the only sound heard,  
other than the throbbing heart in his chest.  
at once, he stood at the sound of a knock on his door;  
book falling, porcelain shattering, and warm tea spilling.  
he gave no attention to it and left his chair.  
opening the door greeted him with a puff of cold air which blew past him.  
a girl, his guest, his girl; stood on the porch waiting to be let in.  
the cold had picked at her nose and cheeks,  
giving them a pink tint.  
the girl was taken by her hands and pulled into the warmth;  
for once without protesting against the boy's methods.  
she was enveloped in his arms after the door was shut,  
cold skin clashing with warm skin;  
flakes of snow disappeared from her hair as they stood in silence,  
the two accompanied now only by sweetness.  
sweet whispers of love from the boy,  
sweet laughter of the girl,  
sweet and calm atmosphere . . .

and the sweet thought of them being each other's.

- Weronika Z.

## Running

I'm running  
My feet moving forward inch by inch  
The sun trying to break through the dense forest  
Day after day; night after night.  
I'm still running  
A baby took its first breath  
An old man took his last  
But I'm still running  
My feet moving forward...foot by foot  
It begins to pour  
Each single droplet, someone's tear  
But I'm still running  
Until I hear a child's voice:  
"Help me please."  
My feet stop moving forward  
"I'm lost."  
The girl stood, her gaze piercing through me.  
I knew her sad eyes,  
I knew the teddy bear  
She clung to so tightly.  
I was that girl once before,  
Before I went running,  
Feet moving forward, story by story.

- Angelina Rose L.

## Wishful Waves

Swift waves wash on the shore  
pulling life in and pushing it out.  
Always changing, never the same  
washing in and out.

Underneath is swirling with life,  
from small snails to stupendous sharks.  
Moving from one wave to the next,  
a continuous battle called life.

Slither from danger, back to safe reef,  
where we wish Hades' hands could never reach.  
Go back into your shell to avoid the inevitable  
of the waves pulling life in and pushing it out.

- Danielle B.



Sometimes...

Sometimes a person can be a sun  
Keeping everything in order  
Mattering a ton  
Like bricks and mortar.  
When erased all goes dark,  
A light that holds all the fun  
Kinda like a dog, besides the bark.  
It's sorta a lock and a key,  
Holding back the joy it will bring.  
If the key is lost,  
There's no access to the light,  
Diminishing the beautiful sight,  
Causing all loose to become tight  
Making tensions that no one can fight.

- Ben W.

## Untitled

The blue sky lightens my hope  
The sun brightens my eyes  
The organisms begin their daily routine  
Life continues; reproduce and decompose.  
Who will remember your existence on earth?  
The human nature that is being established?  
The civilization continues arguing, fighting over power.  
We are all selfish.  
Each organism of their species follows the rule of  
Survival of the fittest.  
Innocent and mature humans are not as innocent as they think they are.  
In old age all bodies will decompose,  
Decompose into ashes.  
When the wind blows, the ashes are gone.  
Existence is gone.

- Lori C.

## Be You

When people tell me not to be me,  
Me is the only person I want to be,  
Gives me the strength to keep on pushing,  
The courage to keep on pursuing,  
The power to become anything I want  
And the inspiration to keep on inspiring.  
People say wait for the perfect moment.  
I say take that moment and make it perfect,  
Because every moment is worth it.  
Don't let haters bring you down,  
Haters are only worth pennies.  
Be the creators of new creations,  
Dream big,  
Gleam into the sky and see who you really are  
And that you don't need to hide behind fear,  
Instead you need to flourish your fate,  
Be who you set out to be  
Because being you is the best thing you could do.

- Ava G.

## Seasonal Track

I swear these humans can't appreciate what I provide everyday  
They pluck and pick,  
And break my sticks,  
They pollute and poison me,  
How do you expect me to be?

I revel in their precious sunburns,  
They're squinted eyes  
They're whines and cries,  
My core boils but I must remain calm,

So instead I let off steam,  
And let the leaves fall,  
As my fury goes on a slight stall,  
My heat lessens and the pumpkins come out to play,  
As they dress in horror and trick or treat their way.

Eventually I cool down,  
And try not to frown,  
But I become frigid and watch the blanket of white cover the ground,  
Flurries of snowflakes dancing around,  
Carols and excitement can be found

Eventually I reset  
But don't fret  
I'll be back  
It's my seasonal track.

- Alexis F.

## Last Stop

It's been a long winter,  
A long winter without you.  
I've missed the soft blush of cherry blossoms.  
I've missed knowing a world without snow.  
In the corners of my mind our song still slips through the cracks.  
A song to burn my fears.  
A sonata for the broken soul.  
A melody where we ran our youth to its limit exhausting it.  
But it all turned cold.  
You left me to drown in the memories.  
To chip away the smiles and laughter splattered across my heart.  
Somehow leaving me surrounded by mirrors  
Before I realize I'm alone.  
I miss you,  
I wish it were a lie but I miss you.  
There's still so much our eyes haven't deciphered yet,  
Is it selfish for me to save them until we're together?

The train stations continue to whizz by my deaf ears.  
Yet I haven't left my seat once  
Afraid of missing the sun set over the frozen plains.  
Afraid that I'll be too late to catch your tears.  
So let me dream again.  
Imagine you're the one facing me on this long journey to euphoria, smiling.  
It's as if I can hear your laughter in the next booth  
Gently shaking the cabins.  
Everyone tells me I should have fought harder against the icy winds  
Because our time is running out,  
Slipping through the splinter in the crystal chalice.  
All I want is just a little more,  
Give me the taste of honey on my tongue one last time  
Before it's too late.

The mournful whistle howls announcing my arrival.  
With a deep breath I enter the abandoned corridors.  
Waiting in line with my rusty hinged luggage in hand.  
For some reason the hesitation of ancient memories is revived within me.  
The realization that  
If I step out to the frigid atmosphere I'll lose it all.  
The memories of your gentle embrace.  
The memories of when you could still look me in the eye.  
The times we watched the ocean blend into the horizon.  
Without a breath in my lungs I take the only chance I get,  
Withdrawing from the safety your name brings.

The train screams at me in mockery as our gravity disconnects.  
My ticket expired long ago,  
But I chose to linger just a few stops more  
Because I wanted to stay but couldn't speak pleasantries of a departure just yet.  
Instead I left you with all the doors locked  
On a train that will inevitably crash soundlessly.  
I really do miss you.  
I hate to admit it but I really do miss *us*.  
And so the winter continues on  
Whispering its lies of what could have been into my heart.

- Emilee W.



- Olivia A.

## **You Change With the Seasons**

Summer is when you are at your best  
Look at that smile, look at that radiating glare riding up your cheekbone in the light  
It seems sunshine has possessed something inside of you, because all you want is to be happy  
No complications  
You are summer, you are the sunshine you soak in each morning then spread throughout the day  
You are the porch swing that lets the wind blow it wherever it may swing  
You are free  
You haven't seen your friends for some time, and you enjoy your own presence  
Being alone is your time  
You and the sunshine, every day

Then one day everything changes  
You aren't as warm as you used to be  
You've become Autumn  
All your liveliness is falling, and you express new colors no one has seen before  
For a brief moment they like it  
You awe the people with what you've become  
And you look nice, you look pretty  
But Autumn is short and the beauty doesn't last  
You didn't change for the better  
Those beautiful colors you once flaunted have only turned brown  
And everything falls apart

You've turned cold  
You enjoy the aloneness not because it helps you think  
But you have turned away from all surroundings  
You bury yourself in a blanket sometimes, a cold blanket  
And with that, no one interacts  
All kept inside because of you  
You are the barrier now  
You make people miserable  
They liked you for a moment, when you were pretty,  
but now you are a mess that takes forever to clean up  
You've become Winter  
And people want to move away and escape you

Then you have a meltdown  
You are tired of everyone hating what you do  
All your ugliness, all your flaws, eventually turn to puddles  
And it felt good  
You have been rid of all the negativity in your life  
It's when you warm up again  
That everything bad melts away

Now you are Spring  
And people welcome you back  
They've been waiting for this version of you  
You start growing into new things  
All the people come back out to see you  
You are the main attraction now  
Look at you, thriving  
It seems Winter, it seems you needed that period  
Because people appreciate you now  
You are sprouting through the dirt  
And no one can stop you  
People can't wait to see what you bring next  
People like you  
And here comes that sunshine again  
There you go  
There you go, being a stunner  
And now you are summer.

- Sophia C.



- Olivia A.



## The Art of Winter

The chill of the early winter morning had frozen yesterday night's rain, replacing puddles with thick layers of glistening ice. Heavy snow was expected to accompany the coating of frost, preventing any type of travel by foot for the day. The utterly silent environment was only occasionally interrupted by the chimes hanging on my porch, twinkling when a sporadic breeze blew. These chimes were my father's most valued possession, and it was the only item of his that currently remained in the house.

It had been two months since I had spoken with him, a conversation that ended with a mumbled list of obscenities and an abrupt slamming of a door. He had deserted his duty as a parent to search for answers to his questions concerning the purpose of life. My father, a reiki master who believed in healing through chakras and disapproved of modern medicine, handed me the hardest pill I've ever had to swallow: I was now "abandoned."

I frequently made jokes to my peers about it (claiming I had "daddy-issues") and used it as a humorous excuse if I was too lazy to do something ("I can't go get you some water, my Dad left me"). Of course, some believed this sense of humor was cynical, pitying me for how I chose to cope. In a way, making jokes did comfort me. It made the situation less heart-breaking and more manageable.

Today would have been the type of day where my father and I would go outside at night bare-foot, stomping into the shimmering snow for a few minutes until the color of our feet transformed from a tickled pink to an unhealthy burgundy. This was a tradition celebrated every winter, since my father claimed it soothed our inner spirits by introducing them to the new season. I had never believed in this, yet it was always an experience that I treasured.

But today I was instructed by my mother to remain inside and avoid the dangerous weather conditions while she treated herself to a day of relaxation that she desperately required. She was the damsel in distress of a twisted fairytale, for the fire-breathing dragon that haunted her was also the prince charming she desired. My father was both the villain and the hero in her eyes, and she couldn't decide whether she hated him or missed him. The only thing I knew for sure was that she was in despair, so I decided to take care of the house while she attempted to enjoy herself.

Although I had longed for the house to myself for years, there was really not much that could occupy me. After completing the short list of chores, consisting of feeding the cats and unloading the practically empty dishwasher (my father packed my mother's appetite with him, and my brother refused to be home very often now), the only thing I could do was observe the changes outside.

A few snowflakes began to gently land on the branches of the malnourished trees, ill from the bitterness of the harsh New England winter. Only a few minutes had passed before they began to curve downwards, for the snow had already accumulated immensely. I watched as the world quickly turned white, my phone constantly dinging with weather alerts and hazardously low temperature warnings. I suddenly recognized how much time had passed, for the glittering of the sun was now the glow of the moon. The conditions continued to intensify, leaving me most likely alone for the remainder of the night, since my mother would not be able to drive back home. The ground now resembled a blank canvas, longing to be painted.

And I knew of only one adequate paintbrush.

I didn't think long enough to realize that no one would be home to help me if I ended up injuring myself, I didn't even think long enough to consider the repercussions that come with going outside in only a flimsy t-shirt and baggy shorts during a snowstorm. I just raced into the backyard.

I rushed in a variety of zigzag patterns, crushing the new, soft snow underneath the palms of my feet. It was as if temperature did not exist, because all I could feel with each step was a growing sense of empowerment. My father's absence had left me constantly worrying about my mother, my ability to trust, my family's financial future. But there was no distress in this moment. There was simply me and the snow.

About a minute went by before a strong wind slammed me into the realization that I would surely get frostbite if I remained outside. I quickly maneuvered a way back into the house, rubbing my numb toes between the closest towel I could grasp. A prickling sensation spread throughout my body, leaving me in a state of utter shock for a few seconds before I wrapped myself into a plush quilt. The tingling of my skin soon subsided only to be replaced with stronger stinging deep within my chest.

Because even though doing this alone granted me freedom, a feeling that had become foreign since my father had departed, it was a reminder that he was still a part of me. No matter how badly I longed to rid myself of any memory of him, he was still a part of me.

As I cocooned myself within the blanket, I gazed at the messy, intricate patterns I had created and wondered if he had also trotted through the snow tonight. And I wondered if his spirit was truly being healed, because maybe if it was, he would find his answers. And he would come back home.

- Anna K.

UCONN Connecticut Writing Project Student Writing Contest, Honorable Mention

## Fears

I am afraid.

I am afraid that the sky is too big and that

I will not be able to see

it all.

I am afraid that my wings are too small,

Or too frail-

Unable to permit my flight.

I am afraid that I will spend my entire life trying to fly

But never reaching the heights I wish.

I have a dream.

A dream in which I am a rocket ship

A dream in which I am able to fly

Higher than any man

Any Bird

Any dream

Ever has.

In my dream the stars come to life

I learn to touch Jupiter, I am

Not afraid.

I am afraid that my ambitions are

Too big for my body.

That my goals are unachievable, that

My hands are too small to hold

All of my wants and needs.

I am afraid my words will never be heard

That I am too unimportant to make change- I am

Afraid.

But I have hope.

Hope that one day I will stop making mountains out of molehills

And start turning words into pages into inspirations into

Admirations.

Hope that one day I stop needing pills to focus stop needing

Help to feel motivation

Help to feel happiness.

I have hope.

I have determination.

I have a dream.

- Lexi S.

Project Writeous Co-President

A midsummer's night

Right around seven the sun starts to fall

Tiptoeing through the grass

A wolf starts to let out a call.

Roasting on sticks, burning to a crisp,

Marshmallows crack like glass.

Night bugs all over begin to crawl

One by one, all in all.

The sound of crickets fill the air.

All but one cries in despair.

One bright star shines like brass,

Others begin to fall,

The fire begins to tear all but one coal.

That is what you call a midsummer's night.

- Emily B.