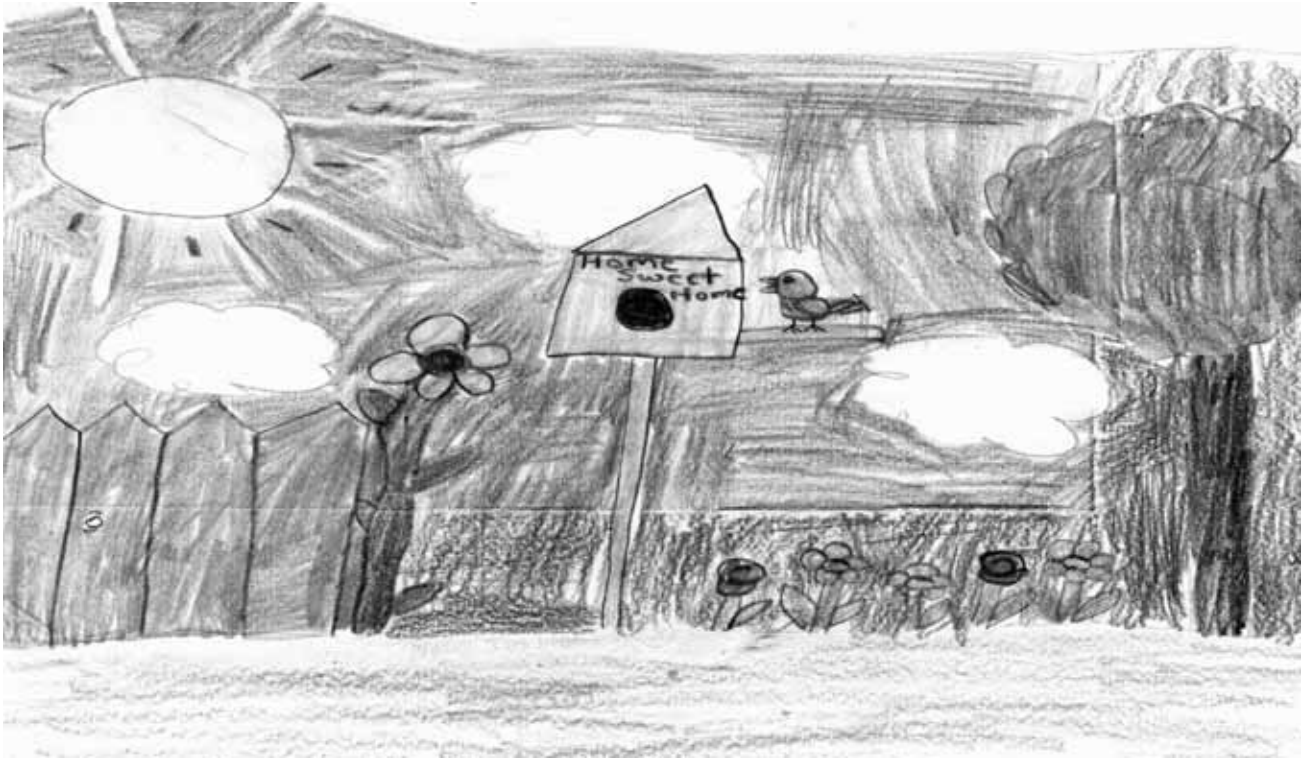


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# Connecticut Student Writers

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samantha Picard, Grade 4, Polk Elementary School, Oakville

A publication sponsored by  
the Connecticut Writing Project at Storrs  
and the Aetna Endowment



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# ***FOREWORD***

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Not long ago, writing involved a typewriter and lots of correction ribbon. For today's students, computers and desktop publishing software have made the act of writing look easy. Editing has been simplified to clicking an icon, and writing for class often involves following a prescribed formula.

The students we have selected for publication and honorable mention know that a different truth underlies appearances. As the novelist Thomas Mann once said, "A writer is someone for whom writing is more difficult than for other people." The poems, short stories, essays, and plays gathered in these pages step outside of convention. These students agonize over choosing the perfect word and take risks. To write down and share one's passions, dreams, and disappointments is to be brave.

We invite you to step into the lives of brave students. Whether they are in kindergarten or high school, they have opened doors to their private thoughts and inner worlds. Step into their writing, and experience their dreams.

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*Steven J. Albrecht*

*Pamela Baril*

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*Evangeline Abbott*

*Pat Barruzzi*

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## **The Big Brown Bear**

Once there was a big brown bear.  
He lived in a cave in the woods.  
One day a fox chased the bear and an eagle chased the bear.  
The bear heard another bear and they became friends.  
The fox and the eagle went away.

**Allison  
Bourassa**  
Kindergarten  
Scotland  
Elementary  
School  
Scotland

## **Where Do Balloons Go When You Let Go?**

Where do balloons go when you let go?  
Do the balloons talk to the stars?  
Do balloons go to space and race space ships?  
Where do balloons go? Do balloons never stop going?  
Do balloons pop when they get to the way, way top?  
Do balloons go up to heaven and talk to God?  
Do balloons lay on clouds when they get all the way up?  
Do balloons go up to the sun and talk?  
I wonder where balloons go.

**Gage  
Moreau**  
Grade 1  
North Street  
School  
Windsor Locks

## **Tug of War**

When I play tug of war with my dog Kirby,  
I shake like beans in a blender.

**Tyler  
Katz**  
Grade 1  
Osborn Hill  
Elementary  
School  
Danbury

**Kelsey  
Kummerl**  
Grade 1  
Osborn Hill  
Elementary  
School  
Fairfield

## **Blue**

In the day,  
the blue  
in the birdie  
is like  
the blue  
in the sky.

**Jacqueline  
LaMark**  
Grade 2  
Daisy Ingraham  
Elementary  
School  
Westbrook

## **The Parrot**

The Parrot  
The parrot is so noisy!  
I cannot sleep!  
It keeps me up  
all  
night!  
I cannot stand it!  
No matter what I do,  
the parrot  
won't  
be  
quiet!  
What should I do?  
What can I do?  
"What?" "What?"  
What can I do?  
"What?"  
"What?"  
"What?"

## A Ghostly Breakfast

There was a little ghost  
Who loved to eat toast.  
Jelly or jam, coffee or tea,  
Ham and eggs with you and me!  
Breakfast is served when the sun comes up,  
He pours cold milk into his little red cup.  
Now he's not spooky. He's a happy ghost,  
Because breakfast is the meal he likes the most.

## Socks

Socks come in all sizes and crazy colors too,  
Small, big, yellow, purple, and blue.

Some are smelly and some have holes,  
Some have pockets for my toes.

Some are new and some are old,  
They keep my feet from getting cold.

With my socks on, I can skate on the floor,  
Twirling, spinning, and even more.

When I get up in the morning and open my drawer,  
I hear my socks say,  
Pick me, pick me, it's my turn today!

Today I have my pink socks on.

**Sarah  
Broderick**  
Grade 2  
Bethlehem  
Elementary  
School  
Bethlehem

**Justine  
Higgins**  
Grade 2  
Daisy  
Ingraham  
Elementary  
School  
Westbrook

**Kyndrel  
Dawson**  
Grade 2  
Natchaug  
Elementary  
School  
Willimantic

## **Snow**

Snow is white  
Just like the clouds  
Whenever I play in the snow  
I think I'm playing and throwing  
white, puffy, clouds  
Clouds are soft  
Just like the snow  
And whenever I see snow  
I think of falling clouds

**Zoe Robbin**  
Grade 2  
North  
Stratfield  
Elementary  
School  
Fairfield

## **The Moon**

The moon is a basketball  
on the court  
just waiting there,  
waiting for me to fly  
into the sky.  
The planets cheer for me  
as I hold the moon  
in my  
hand.

**Daisy Walsh**  
Grade 2  
Western School  
Naugatuck

## **Snow Day**

I woke up and got out of my bed.  
"Snow, Mom! No School!" I said.  
Mom made breakfast. I can go outside after I'm fed.  
I put on warm boots and a scarf that's red.  
I zip up my coat and pull a hat on my head.  
Dad takes me outside and we head to the shed.  
"Wait right here, I have a surprise for you," he said.  
I hoped he was getting me my brand new sled.  
Boy, was I shocked when he handed me a shovel  
instead!

# Long Beach Island

Dedicated to Mom and Dad

Once my dad told me we're going to Long Beach Island. I said, "Wow, yippy!" So we went. I opened up the window because it was too hot in the car. I stuck my hands out the window. The sky was blue and cloudy. When we got there I was so excited, I ran straight to the beach. I walked down to the shore and made a sand castle. My mom said, "WOW!" I wanted to go into the water, but I was scared. There were BIG waves. My dad said, "Do you want to hold onto my hand? The waves are gigantic." I took a boogie board into the water. I bounced up and down. I felt like a pancake burning badly in a frying pan. Then there was a wave like an explosion. I went flying like a falcon. I fell into the water like a whale. SPLASH! I got pushed under the water. I saw fish swimming all around. When my dad pulled me out of the water, I was choking and spitting and coughing. I was disgusted. We walked back to the beach house. I was thirsty and tired. For dinner we had pasta and meatballs. It was delicious. That night I heard the waves crashing onto the shore. I thought to myself maybe someday I'll catch a wave....and the next day I DID!.

# When I Was Little

For my little sister, who always looks out for me

When I was little I cried. But now I am a big girl and I don't cry that much. I only cry when someone hurts my feelings. When I was little I couldn't walk. I crawled everywhere my mom went. But now I stand on two feet and I take giant steps. When I was little I slept in a crib. But now I sleep in a bed with no sides. It is cool with flowers and a comfy mattress. When I was little I had to stay with my mom. But now I go over my friend's and sleep over. But I still bring my bear. When I was little I scribbled. But now I draw kitties, words, books, horses, cats, and dogs. When I was little I couldn't reach the door. But now I can touch it and can turn the knob. When I was little I rode on a bike with training wheels. But now I can balance with no hands. When I was little I drank out of a baby bottle. But now I drink out of a big girl's cup and I don't spill. When I was little I didn't know if I was a boy or a girl. When I was little I didn't know how to spell. When I was little I couldn't read...but now I do!

**Jason Nerreau**  
Grade 2  
Osborn Hill  
Elementary  
School  
Fairfield

**Rebecca Paul**  
Grade 2  
North Street  
School  
Windsor Locks

**Julianna  
Frenette**  
Grade 2  
Bethlehem  
Elementary  
School  
Bethlehem

## **The Windy Night**

Once there was a winter night when some children were playing in the snow. Suddenly, a gust of strong wind came and blew them high up into the night sky. The stars twinkled brightly all around them. Their feet danced in the clouds, and their arms flapped like birds. They were having so much fun they were not afraid, and they didn't want the night to end.

They heard their parents calling them, and slowly, gently the wind blew them home. The moon seemed to wink at them, and the wind seemed to say, "We will meet again."

**Shaina Stamp**  
Grade 2  
Middle Gate  
School  
Newtown

## **Cuddles Died**

Beep! beep! I slammed my alarm clock as I woke up with the sun blinding my eyes. I lazily walked to the kitchen and slowly munched down my breakfast wondering where mom and dad were. I was confused, my mom and dad are often at the breakfast table in the morning, unless they sleep late. It was odd, I had just never ever seen my parents sleep late. So I just shrugged. Finally I went to the window and stared out it. Is that my cat Cuddles on the ground, I asked myself. Why are mom and dad making a hole in the backyard? I was getting suspicious. Then, I ran outside. I was really worried something had happened to someone.

"Mom, Dad what happened?" "Cuddles died," my mom mumbled. "What did you say?" "Cuddles died," she whispered to me. A tear rolled down my cheek into my mom's arms. "Where did did Cud Cud Cuddles die," I stammered. "In her sleep honey," my mom said in a soothing voice. Another tear rolled down my eyes.

I had never had a death before in my life. My heart cracked. All the love ran out of my heart, and it felt like it was broken. My love for Cuddles just fell into the ground. I felt a little happy that Cuddles got her rest in the great, deep, blue, sky. My tears now fell down like a faucet.

Next, I tried to cheer myself up, but nothing worked because all I could think about was Cuddles sitting there in that deep dark hole. I remembered when she used to sit on my lap. I wished she could sit on my lap so I could remember her at least one more time. I will always remember her. I really wanted to say bye. My heart stopped, and I stood by the little grave of Cuddles. I imagined I heard something. The voice told me I will be okay don't worry. I knew it was Cuddles. For some reason I got over Cuddles. I don't know why, but I thought it was because I knew she was alright. Last, I peacefully walked into the house and felt much much happier because I knew Cuddles was okay.

## The Bus Stop

Waiting at the bus stop  
On a cold winter's morning,  
I hop on one foot  
And then the other,  
Dreaming about  
Biting, sucking, licking  
An icicle until it falls apart.  
Teeth chattering until it falls apart.  
Teeth chattering inside of red cheeks,  
I hear my mom yell,  
"Alana, wait inside."  
So I waddle home in my snowsuit.

## Nighttime Wheel

Tic Toc!

Clocks are spinning, clocks are turning, clocks everywhere are closer to nighttime. People look at the clock and say, "The nighttime wheel is ticking closer to night." Owls screech at the sound of mice tripping on a green thread of grass. The screech pierces many ears with the ringing sounds of a hundred bells, chiming to an awful tune. That is nighttime.

Bats linger through dark misty caves while flashing their red eyes of pure blood. They make caves rot and icicles crash to the ground. That is nighttime.

The full moon swaying among the stars shines like a magnificent pearl glimmering under the sea. The moon casts shadows over the huge willow trees. That is nighttime.

Trees rippling their branches to stretch their hands and grab at us. Mysteries sneak around them and then lurk beyond and out of the corner of our eye. That is nighttime.

Cats slink around in the night's territory. Huge yellow eyes gaze farther than the view of God. They scramble up weeping willows and purr to the revolting owl's screech. That is nighttime.

Coyotes howl at the moon in pride that they are nocturnal. Coyotes are thought to be about, but all they do really is linger in the creepy forest. That is nighttime.

Stars twinkle, bouncing up and down in the dark blue sky. They are very shiny and sparkle with the gleam of a hundred suns. That is nighttime.

The dark navy blue sky looks down at us with a sly smile. The sky gets darker with every peek because the hour is coming closer to nighttime. That is nighttime.

Nighttime is an immense shadow so large that it falls over the world.

**Alana Seldon**  
Grade 3  
J.P. Vincent  
School  
Bloomfield

**Aneri Pattani**  
Grade 3  
Highland  
Elementary  
School  
Cheshire

**Lianna Pevar**  
Grade 3  
Eric G.  
Norfeldt School  
West Hartford

## **Onabujet**

I wanted to put up a swing in my backyard,  
went to the store to buy one  
price tag hit me hard!  
Went home and found some rope, and worked like an elf!  
I measured, cut, sawed, and sanded,  
I made that swing for myself  
'cause you see I'm,  
Onabujet smart shopper in blue jeans.  
Call me old fashioned, but I live within my means!  
Onabujet, the business strikes a chord, chord, chord, chord!  
Things catch my eye, I start to sigh.  
They're the ones I can't afford.  
Being broke is such a sad ti-i-me  
that's why I'm, really glad I'm,  
Onabujet. The business strikes a chord, chord, chord, chord!  
Things catch my eye, I start to sigh,  
they're the ones I can't afford!

## **The Three Bears, Goldilocks and the All-New Tempted Cut-Off**

**Monica Chin**  
Grade 3  
Salisbury  
Central School  
Lakeville

Once there were three bears. A baby bear, a mama bear, and a papa bear. One day Mama Bear said, "Baby Bear, please go get some berries for dinner. Please go down to Berry Valley. But beware of the tempted cut-off." The tempted cut-off was a cut-off that you were tempted to take if you saw it. She didn't want him to take the tempted cut-off because although it got you to where you wanted to go, it wound you the long way'round and in figure eights and down trick paths. Then, you were always late.

"Okay Mother," said Baby Bear and he set off. He closed his eyes when he passed the tempted cut-off. He saw a cabin. The cabin was home to Goldilocks. She was a mean girl. Her days were simple. Eat porridge for breakfast then sit in a chair all day. There were three bowls of porridge on her kitchen table. A big bowl of porridge for her, a medium one in case a friend came, and a small one for her teddy bear. The living room had three chairs. A big one for her, a medium one in case a friend came, and a small one for her teddy bear. In the bedroom there were three beds. A big one for her, a medium one in case a friend came for a sleepover, and a small one for her teddy bear.



Baby Bear went inside. He explored and found himself in the kitchen. He saw the porridge. "Hurray," he thought. He took the small bowl, the one for Goldilocks' teddy bear. "Mama and Papa will be so pleased." He began to walk back home. He turned his head to see if there were any berries in the bushes, but there was the tempted cut-off! He was forced to change his route. He turned and raced down the cut-off. He ran and ran and ran. He ran straight into a field where Goldilocks was picking berries! The tempted cut-off had lead him straight into Berry Valley! "Oh my!" he thought.

Goldilocks spotted him with the porridge. "Hey!" she shouted. Just then Baby Bear realized who she was. "My teddy bear will starve!" she shouted again. Baby Bear had just enough time to escape with the porridge. Both Baby Bear and Goldilocks ran as fast as they could all the way home. That night the Bears had porridge for dinner instead of berries. Meanwhile, Goldilocks's teddy bear went hungry.

The next day Mama Bear said, "I must go buy some chairs for the Parents Only Club meeting." She set off. She closed her eyes when she passed the tempted cut-off. She came to Goldilocks's cabin. She was dying of curiosity so she went in. She explored and found herself in the living room. She saw the chairs. "The Parents Only Club will be so pleased," she thought to herself. She climbed into the medium chair, the one Goldilocks had in case a friend came over. She noticed it had wheels. She wheeled out the door and towards home, but the chair took her right down the tempted cut-off! This made her very late for the meeting. When she arrived at the Club house with the chair, there was Goldilocks outside watering plants. "Oh my!" thought Mama Bear. Goldilocks shouted again. Mama Bear had just enough time to wheel into the Club House and lock the doors before Goldilocks got to her. Goldilocks ran all the way home. Later that day Goldilocks had a guest. She said Goldilocks was a brat because she wouldn't give her any place to sit. Meanwhile, the Parents Only Club had a wonderful time taking turns sitting in the chair.

The next day Papa Bear said, "Baby Bear, you are now too big for your crib. I am going out to find a tree to build you a bed."

"Okay," said Baby Bear. Papa Bear went out. He closed his eyes while passing the tempted cut-off. He continued toward the forest. He came to Goldilocks' cabin. Papa Bear was curious, so he went inside. He did some exploring and found himself upstairs in the bedroom. Inside there were three beds. "Baby Bear will be so pleased," he thought. There were buttons on the side of each bed. He took the big bed, the one for Goldilocks. He jumped onto the bed and pushed the red button. The bed made a "vrooming" noise and moved forward. Papa Bear saw three more buttons labeled, "right," "left," and "reverse." He pressed the reverse. Zoom! The bed zoomed backwards. He pressed right, and it went right. He pressed the red button again and the bed stopped. "Baby Bear will have lots of fun with this," thought Papa Bear. He pressed the red button, and the bed zoomed out of the cabin and onto the path. He was so excited that he didn't see the tempted cut-off right ahead of him! Zoom! Right down the tempted cut-off the bed sped! He continued for a while until at last he reached the Bear's house, and guess who was knocking on the door? "Oh my!" thought Papa

Bear. Just as Goldilocks raised her hand to ring the doorbell, she spotted the bed. “Hey!” she shouted. Papa Bear realized immediately who she was. “I won’t be able to get any sleep!” Goldilocks shouted again.

The commotion caused Baby Bear and Mama Bear to come out. Baby Bear was excited. “Mama, come and look at the bed!”

Mama came out. “Wow!” she said.

“Come on!” yelled Papa Bear, and the three bears chased Goldilocks toward the tempted cut-off. Goldilocks was a few feet in front. She ran into the tempted cut-off while the three bears ran past with their eyes closed. “Help me!” yelled Papa Bear. With their eyes looking away the three bears built a stone wall to block the entrance to the tempted cut-off. Then they ran until they were out of sight of the terrible trail. Back at home Papa Bear enjoyed nice, hot porridge for dinner. Mama Bear sat in a comfortable chair at the Parents Only Club meetings, and Baby Bear enjoyed a soft cozy bed. From then on, the bears lived a nice bear life, and they never heard from Goldilocks again.

The End

## Sara’s Adventure

**Maureen  
Tracey**  
Grade 3  
Old Greenwich  
Elementary  
School  
Old Greenwich

“What a great day to run away from home and have a picnic,” Sara exclaimed happily as she ran down the path. It was a bright, sunny day, with happiness filling the air. Sara was rejoicing so much that she didn’t realize that she took a wrong turn into the woods.

Suddenly the sky blackened, leaving Sara alone in the chilly, dark forest. Sara walked slowly on tiptoe through the forest. Why did I have to run away she thought. With only her flashlight and the full moon to guide her, Sara slid along the path.

Crunch! “What was that? Who’s there? Sara yelled into the darkness. A flash of light shot across the path for a second. A shiver went down Sara’s spine as she looked around. Total darkness—no, wait, a beam of a flashlight. “Oh, no,” whispered Sara. Sara stopped short. A strange old woman appeared before her on the forest path.

The old woman sprinkled magic dust near the too-scared-to-move Sara. There was a slight breeze, but Sara didn’t feel it because she was already frozen to the spot by fear.

Then Sara and the old woman started to float above the trees. While they were floating, Sara got a good look at the old woman. The woman had very frizzy, gray hair. Her hands were covered with warts, and she had a large wart on her almost two-foot long nose. She was wearing a long cape which swished whenever the woman moved. The woman had tiny, beady black eyes which darted around this way and that way. To top it all off, the woman wore a black

pointy hat.

The woman looked Sara over carefully, through squinting eyes. “You were trespassing. Do you know what I do with trespassers?” Sara shook her head, the only part of her petrified body that moved. I don’t like this woman’s temper, Sara thought fearfully. “Well, for starters, I take children above the clouds with my magic dust,” the old woman said coldly. She pulled a purple velvet bag out of her pocket. From it, she pulled a handful of the prettiest dust that Sara had ever seen. It was the color of tinsel, and about 1,000 specks could fit on the tip of a pencil. I wonder where she gets this stuff, Sara thought.

As if the woman could read Sara’s mind, the woman said, “I am a witch. I go out into the woods and capture children who trespass on my property. I make children freeze, as you are about to now.” Sara was horrified. Would this old hag really do this?

Sure enough, Sara felt a cold feeling inside, a feeling that made her shiver from her head to her toes. Suddenly, Sara froze. Sara could see, but she couldn’t move. The sight was beautiful from above the earth, although the air wasn’t nearly as nice. Dark clouds covered the moon and dust filled the air. Sara breathed the smell of smoke in her nostrils and she choked.

The witch laughed. Sara had never heard a laugh that scary. It had a tune that made Sara almost scream.

After Sara and the witch had floated for about five long minutes, they flew over a very smoky part of the forest where the weeds and poison ivy choked everything else out. Slowly they continued through the chilly night air. Bats passed as they flew.

“You are going to be frozen until we land,” the old witch cackled. Sara screamed, but no sound came out. “No one will come looking for you because as soon as we start flying, time stops. Now no one will ever find me, Sara thought. “I will eat you tonight!” The witch finished with a flourish. Sara started to cry. “Oh, stop your bawling,” the witch said. “I don’t like salty food.”

Slowly the witch and Sara landed by a hut, which had a huge yard, swarming with mice, bats, and old dry leaves. I never ever should have run away from home, thought Sara.

Then with a bang, their feet touched the ground. The old woman mumbled something under her breath and Sara defrosted. The woman grabbed Sara’s hand and half-pulled, half-dragged Sara into her moldy, creepy old lair. Sara’s blood froze. The old woman’s hands felt clammy and her fingers pushed into Sara’s pale, soft skin.

The old woman opened the door and screamed. Sara leaped for joy, for inside the house was a policeman. “While you were floating around in the air, someone saw you and called us,” the policeman said. “Little girl, why did you run away from home in the first place?” he asked Sara.

“I wanted to have a secret picnic,” she whispered.

“I hope that you won’t do that again,” said the policeman. He arrested the old witch and then drove Sara home. Sara was overjoyed! She told her parents about her adventure, and promised that she would never run away again.

**Laura  
Frechette**  
Grade 3  
Spaulding  
School  
West Suffield

## **An Adventure in Every Wave**

“Splash!” I was on a beach my whole long life. I was a grain of light sand and very proud of being no heavier than a rabbit’s hair. “Swoosh!” A huge wet cold wave took me, hurling into the freezing cold air towards the big deep scary ocean and the mysteries that splash in every wave.

“Plop!” Suddenly, I tumbled into the ocean feeling lousy and scared. Calmly and swiftly, I landed next to a heavenly green seaweed plant. I saw the sun’s glare brightly shining above the cold and mysterious ocean. I heard the wonderful, but pesky, seagulls flying over the soft golden sweet sand where I once lived all my life. I was crushed with sadness.

Fish swam merrily and happily without a worry in their small minds. Their bodies were shielded with many shiny and glimmery scales. I thought they looked beautiful shining in the bright sunlight from above. I was lying there in the ocean for a long time, watching the beautiful plant next to me actually enjoy swooshing around and slurping up water all day and all night. I was indeed very homesick for my beach far away, because I was in a place very far from my family, friends, and other grains of sand.

The sun slowly and silently rose each boring day, and the moon appeared every quiet and frightful night. A giant sadness covered my face and a long sigh filled my life as I wished for a great miracle, a miracle that would take me home to my beach.

“Splash! Glub! Glub!” A colorful fish came floating by and was very hungry. Its stomach growled like a lion! It came to a stop looking at the seaweed plant and coming closer every minute. I was frightened! Its mouth opened wide and he took a huge bite out of the plant. The fish swallowed the plant up with a gulp and accidentally swallowed me too!

I thought about my old home on the hot beach and started to whine. I was bouncing around in the fish’s stomach when the fish started to get very sick. It had eaten too much, and it spit me out onto the golden sand! I stayed there for the rest of my life as the blue waves splashed with sand mixtures. Every wet cold splash was a new adventure!

**Steven Nilla**  
Grade 3  
East School  
New Canaan

## **Moon**

The moon hangs up at night  
with the sun out of sight  
in the shadows of the moon.  
And all of time has lost its way  
into the darkness of the night.  
And all the creatures below  
fall into an endless sleep.

## Heart Broken

I didn't want to admit  
It was easier to lie  
And hide the hurt and emptiness  
And to smile and not cry.

I didn't want to admit the fact  
My life is full of pain.  
I long to stop my heart from bleeding.  
And my kindness rain.

'Cause I feel oh-so forgotten,  
So betrayed and so alone,  
Without a soul to call my own.

I didn't want to admit the fact,  
I cannot spread my wings.  
My happiness has melted into tears and other  
things.

It's hard for me to hide the fact  
My wishes have no home,  
And return to anguish,  
Bow my head and cry alone.

## Snowboarding

Snowboarding is like a bird getting major air.  
On the slopes  
Not one person in sight, I watch the snow  
Make miniature tornadoes as I make  
Huge powder waves,  
As if I'm the water  
Breaking sandcastles on the shore.  
But the biggest jump  
Showed on the horizon line.

Swish, Swash, Swoosh  
And

**Ayla Heald**  
Grade 3  
Pomfret  
Community  
School  
Pomfret Center

**Jake Oe**  
Grade 4  
Julian Curtiss  
School  
Greenwich

up I go

up

up

As if I'm the bird  
And the bird is me.

**Gabe V.  
DeRosa**  
Grade 4  
Bethany  
Community  
School  
Bethany

## The Wee Surprise

Young student Robert Vincent decided it was imperative to change his blood soaked Band-Aids whenever he gardened. Little did he know how nutritious human plasma could be. Although he was desperate to share his experience with his best friend Gabe, he's not sure this result could ever be explained. It defied all credulity.

It all started as he was scoring elongated lupine seeds that he confiscated from the fields of Bangor, Maine, while vacationing with his mother and brother Luke. Miles of the New Hampshire Highway were filled with five-foot-long yellow lupine perennials. "What harm could there be in digging up a few of these lovelies to replant in our own yard?" thought Robert. His garden at home needed a little spice of yellow.

So there was Robert Vincent scoring a dozen lupine seeds, marking an X on each one and placing them in a bowl filled with water when suddenly he was distracted by the family toy poodles nipping at his ankles. The knife slipped and caused Robert to incise the web between his index and middle fingers.

Robert started bleeding profusely and was desperate to get a paper towel to stop the hemorrhaging. Several drops of blood must have landed in the water bowl where the lupine seeds were soaking. There is no other explanation.

Within a week's time, the lupines were sprouting stems in the front garden where the sun is the strongest and protected by the gusty winds. "Mom, look at the plants," said Robert, "they are coming out of the ground!" Give it time and don't let the soil get too dry," was Mom's reply, "every living thing needs some attention."

Robert Vincent was diligent in caring for his young plants, making sure they were well fed and watered. Within a month's time, the plants sprouted large round buds in preparation for bloom. These buds didn't really look like the other plants, they had a warm glow about them.

Robert wanted to be present during the first bloom. He ran off the bus everyday from school evaluating the development of his plants. He felt a connection with them. It was as if a part of him was growing in the soil.

The day came when the first bud opened up, but a flower did not sprout out of the pod, instead, a little round person landed on Robert's hand. "What is this marble sized being? Is this a flower? Am I dreaming? Robert's face was



filled with confused amazement. He stared at this little round seed for what seemed to be hours. Finally, Robert decided that this weird seed seemed more like a friend than an alien.

Robert decided to name him Master Yang Chow because Robert felt strong and invincible when he held him. Master Yang Chow was not the only pod to open that day. Robert met another that he named Lenny. Lenny's arrival caused Robert to giggle, laugh, and be silly just by the funny faces he made. Lenny's special trait seemed to be humor.

Robert was amazed at these two little friends that gave him such strength and pleasure. "How did this happen?" he was pondering in the tall grass in front of the house. Within the next few minutes, several pods began to open, Dali Lama, Tux and Hippy were next to arrive on the scene. Dali Lama brought peace and tranquility, Tux exuded charm and charisma, and finally Hippy caused Robert to feel like a free spirit and very happy.

"How wonderful I feel!" thought Robert at the introduction of these new friends! I must take care of them overnight without anyone knowing about them. So Robert placed the wee people in a tinted bug-catching box. He placed the box next to his nightstand and fell fast asleep.

The next morning was Saturday. Thankfully he didn't have to go to school and leave his friends. The day developed with more wee people. Crag gave Robert a feeling he didn't expect. This time Robert was cranky and tired and felt like he was catching the flu. Devil arrived next and Robert got very angry and disgusted with the day's new arrivals. It got even worse when Robber arrived and tried to steal whatever happiness was left in Robert's mind. Just when Robert was ready to plant these little people back into the soil, King Sluggnut arrived. Robert felt like he experienced the apocalypse and couldn't wait to wake up from what seemed like a horrible nightmare.

Suddenly a thunderous roar shook the ground, Robert couldn't imagine what was happening next. "Control yourselves!" screamed Master Yang Chow, "This is not how wee people should behave." Master Yang Chow was able to remove all the bad and depressing feelings Robert was having. Robert was very thankful for his assistance.

"We must allow the others to arrive," explained Master Yang Chow in a deep powerful voice. "Let us sit quietly as we greet our newcomers." This time Baby, Gerbil, Green Pea, and Jam sprouted into the world. Baby was filled with innocence and trust, Gerbil showed great agility and speed, Green pea was empty-minded and crude, and Jam was confusing and strange.

Robert was beginning to wonder how and why these wee people arrived in his garden. He seemed very close and connected to these little creatures and really couldn't explain this feeling. It was as though each one of them was a part of him. Then suddenly a flashback came to mind! He remembered his fresh blood dropping into the water that fed the seeds.

Robert's thoughts were interrupted by the final sprout, this one was named Tiki. He was responsible for intelligence and self-realization. Tiki and Robert sat quietly alone from the rest of the wee people.

"Robert, let me explain what has happened to you over the last few days..."

## Revenge

This is a story about a Princess who has to get married even though she is only 13 years old. But she does not want to.

A lot of people expect her to act princess-like and live up to her name, Princess Pinkie. She is not such a pink girl at all, though. She is rather blue, in fact.

She meets a prince who is rather determined to marry her. He is a mystical man from another land that no one has ever heard of. He seems enchanting in a way, but evil in another.

This story tells about Princess Pinkie's dealings with the mystical prince and also with her friend, Sir James. It leads us to a surprize ending that will amaze the audience.

### Main Characters:

Princess Pinkie (P.P.)	13 yrs old
Prince Allan (P.A.)	23 yrs old (Bad Guy)
Sir James (S.J.)	15 yrs old (Good Guy, Knight)

### Other Characters:

Tutor	43 yrs old
King man	65 yrs old
Prince Elleanor	20 yrs old

### Act 1

When tutor talks he sounds aggravated and looks annoyed.

Tutor:	Are you paying attention?
P.P.:	(surprised) What? What? What? (slouching on a chair)
Tutor:	I said, are you paying attention?
P.P.:	No.
Tutor:	You should.
P.P.:	No thanks.
Tutor:	Start listening so you can be smart.
P.P.:	How about you read to the grass.
Tutor:	(Looking furious) I give up! You can tutor yourself. (walks off stage)
P.P.:	Now I can sleep in peace. Horns in the background
P.P.:	Not another prince. (sounds annoyed; rolls eyes; gets up and walks off stage)



## Act 2

King: Princess Pinkie, there you are.  
P.P.: Yup, here I am. Who is he?  
King: This is Prince Elleleanor.  
P.P.: (falls on the ground laughing)  
Prince Elleleanor: What is so funny?  
P.P.: (stands up) Elleleanor is a girl's name.  
Prine Elleleanor: (looking at the King) This is no princess. (snootily)  
P.P.: Sir James, come and escort this prince-girl out of the palace. (Looks at Prince Elleleanor and sticks out her tongue.)  
Sir James: Yes, ma'am.  
P.P.: Thanks, Dude.  
King: Don't say "Dude." (in a very firm voice) Oh, yes, and another tutor quit.  
P.P.: He was mean and he was ugly...butt ugly.  
King: Your mother would be very disappointed...  
P.P.: My mother would still be alive if it wasn't for your stupid choices. (Runs off the stage crying)  
King: (says to himself) I'm sorry. Maybe I should sing. Like in a musical (Runs offstage) Wait for me!

## Act 3

In the carriage on the way to Franceville.

Prince Allan: I can't wait to meet the princess. In my four week stay I'm sure she'll love me. (with an evil look in his eyes, then laughs an evil laugh)

## Act 4

For a walk

P.P.: I'm only 13. Why do I have to get married. (sigh) (horns in the background) Another prince already. Off to annoy. (Looking eager) (Runs off stage)

## Act 5

The New Prince

P.A.: Hello, I'm Prince Allan (bow)  
P.P.: I'm Princess Pinkie. (Leaning toward the prince) I hate

pink!  
P.A.: I never would have known. (smiling) I live quite far away so would like it if I might be able to stay awhile.  
King: (running in from off stage - panting) Hhi, yyou ccan (deep breath) stay aas llong aas yyou wwant.. (deep breath)  
P.P.: (yells) Sir James, show him to his room on the sixth floor.  
P.A.: Sixth floor? (looking amazed)

All walk off stage.

## Act 6

The mystery.

Sir James: (walking down a corridor, passes Prince Allan's room)  
P.A.: Abracadabra, Hocus Pocus, lovely, lovely, lovely.  
Sir James: (looking into room—sees P.A. stirring a cauldron. P.A. looks like a wizard; really ugly; not at all princelike. Sir James takes off down the hall to tell the King.)  
Sir James: I saw Prince Allen stirring a couldron and he didn't look like himself, he looked like a wizard.  
King: Poppycock. You're lying. These are all fibs. How dare you say something about a man like him. He is royalty. You are just jealous.  
Sir James: I am not jealous. I saw it with my own two eyes.  
King: I shall have you escorted out if you do not stop. You had a hallucination, that is all. Please leave my chambers.  
Sir James: I am sorry your majesty. You are right. My eyes must have been playing a trick on me.

## Act 7

The Princess's room.

P.P.: I guess this Prince Allen is nice. He seems to be kind. He looks nice. Although I am still just 13. Getting married at this age. Oy. Maybe I should run away. Yes, that's it. I'll run away where no one can find me. I'll come back in a couple of years. That way I'll be old enough to get married then. (She jumps out her window and starts running. She looks back) Bye, bye Palace. (She bumps into Sir James—he escorts her back to the palace.) I'll never escape...(sighs)

Act 8

True Love, or not...

P.P.: (walking down the hall by Prince Allan's door. She goes to knock on the door, and it opens a crack. She sees him grinding powder.)

P.A.: Abracadabra, hocus pocus, lovely, lovely, lovely. (He looks very different than when P.P. first met him; much uglier and older.)

P.P.: (runs away from P.A.'s room to tell her father what she has seen.) Oh, Father, Prince Allen is a wizard, not a prince!

King: There must be a plague going around causing hallucinations. Just this morning Sir James thought he saw the same thing.

P.P.: (runs to tell Sir James) Sir James, I saw Prince Allan, and he is not a prince. We should go confront him, now.

Sir James: Good idea. Let's go right now. (When they get to the room, Sir James pulls out his sword and bangs the door down.)

P.A.: Aha, so you found out my secret. But now you shall love me, Princess Pinkie. (He throws his magic dust at her. Princess Pinkie jumps to the ground and the powder hits Sir James instead.)

Sir James: (begins to sneeze, then) Oh, Allan-poo, how much I love thee. Come now and kiss me.

P.P.: (stands up and goes to the door singing) Allan and James sitting in a tree, k-i-s-s-i-n-g...

P.A.: I'll get you for this! (runs out the door after her.)

Sir James: Oh Allen-poo, come back to me.

P.P.: (runs into her father's chamber) Tell me that is not a wizard, now.

P.A.: I have captured...(then sees the King)

King: Guards—seize this man!

Sir James: (comes crashing into the king's chambers then stops, shakes his head and looks around, confused) Where am I? (he points to the wizard) You! How did we get here?

P.P.: Why did the magic powder wear off?

P.A.: Well, you see, it's not supposed to be used on a man. I made it like that so in case I happened to miss you with the powder, it wouldn't make a man fall permanently in love with me.

King: Guards, take him away.

P.A.: (grows to an enormous size) I shall be ruler of this land if it's the last thing I do.

Sir James: Not if I have anything to do with it. (he pulls out his sword

and yells as he charges Prince Allan. He stabs him in the leg with his mini sword.)  
P.A.: (looking annoyed) Ow, that really hurt.  
P.P.: (pulls a magic wand from her robe.) Abracadabra, hippity hop, bunny rabbit, bunny rabbit, hop, hop, hop.  
P.A.: (shrinking smaller and smaller) What's happening to me...(until there is only a pile of his robes left on the ground. Out of the pile hops a little bunny rabbit, who later becomes Princess Pinkie's pet. Everyone looks at Princess Pinkie, astonished.)  
P.P.: Surprise!  
Sir James: Speaking of surprises, I am not really only a knight. I am a prince. Prince James of Gelderland.

### Act 9

The End.

Prince James and Princess Pinkie got married. Princess Pinkie changed her name to Princes Bluey but went by Elizabeth. They lived happily ever after with their pet bunny, Wizard.

Bunny REVENGE WILL BE MINE! (as the scene fades away.)

**Jacob Amaya**  
Grade 4  
Whiting Lane  
Elementary  
School  
West Hartford

## A Lonely Star

The wind is blowing.  
A violin is playing  
a song. You can  
feel wet ground  
and nooks and crannies  
here and there.  
A puff of dust is up and about  
wafting, wandering,  
and blowing  
all around.  
A little star appears  
on a sturdy  
stone wall.  
It sits and sits

waiting to be noticed  
for some time.  
Suddenly comes along  
a young boy  
who sees it, admires it,  
and is now filled with joy.  
A boy with a fragile heart  
has now made a new friend,  
and all he can do  
is hope that he will see the star  
again.

## Dinner at the Hummly Cafe

The Hummly Cafe was one of the finest restaurants in town. It was also one of the busiest. If you went there at lunchtime you would have to wait for a very long time before being seated, even though the cafe could seat 275 people. Although it took so long to be seated, nobody complained. The delectable food was well worth the wait. So you can believe how crowded the waiting room was. When you weren't so cramped that you were stuck between other people, you were usually half way up the street because the line was so long. Tons of people had parties at the Cafe. Some parties were casual and some were formal. Some people came to the cafe just to buy a sandwich or a basket of fries and some people came to buy a fancy meal like fettucini alfredo.

One day Lucille and Herby were sitting in their living room. Lucille was reading a book about music and Herby was reading the sports section of the newspaper. He saw a picture of a baseball and a cheese sandwich. Underneath the picture it read: Baseball game delayed on account of a mom bringing tasty sandwiches from the Hummly Cafe. "Lucy, for dinner tonight, let's go to the Hummly Cafe," Herby said. "Okay," Lucille answered. So they did.

That night Herby and Lucille went to the Hummly Cafe. On the way, they suddenly heard a hissing noise. Then the car just stopped. Herby got out of the car to see what happened. "Oh gee. You wouldn't believe it! We have a flat tire because of a real fork in the road!" Since they didn't have a spare tire, Lucille called Triple A on her new leopard print cell phone. After their tire had been fixed, they drove to the cafe and got on line.

It took a very long time to get into the restaurant, especially since it was Saturday night. When they finally were seated, the waiter brought them their menus. All the food on the menu looked very tasty. Herby looked over at a nearby table. "Lucy, that is my golfing partner, John, who is impatient and is

**Tess Maggio**  
Grade 4  
Hurlbutt  
Elementary  
School  
Weston

allergic to dairy, tomatoes, and pepperoni.” Herby and Lucille listened to what John was saying to his wife. “Gloria, do you realize that we’ve been waiting here for 45 minutes and still our waiter hasn’t come to take our orders? This is outrageous!” When John saw the waiter coming, he put his head on the table pretending to be faint from hunger. “Uh, what would you like sir?” the waiter said when he arrived. John happily sat up. “My wife and I would like the everything pizza, just no cheese, no sauce, and no pepperoni.” The waiter just stared, jotted down the orders, and walked into the kitchen.

“I’ll have the cheeseburger with fries,” said Herby to the waiter when he arrived. “And for you, Madame?” said the waiter. “I’ll have your rotini in your homemade chunky tomato sauce,” said Lucille.

There were tons of waiters and waitresses running back and forth. One hour later, Lucille and Herby’s waiter came running through the crowd carrying their food. Unfortunately, John and Gloria’s waiter was rushing out with the pizza at the same time. The waiters didn’t look where they were going and collided! Food went flying! The cheeseburger spun out of control and the fries appeared to be dancing around it as the meal crashed to the ground. Meanwhile, the pasta was falling on people’s heads and the sauce splattering down on the crowd. The everything pizza flew like a Frisbee around the restaurant. “EEK!” the people shouted, especially the very dressed up people. Other waiters were running over with towels, some wiping people off, others wiping food off the floor, tables, chairs, and even the ceiling. What a commotion!

Nobody had noticed that Herby and Lucille had quietly escaped this mess and had driven to a nearby diner and were happily munching hot dogs and cheeseburgers. As they were ordering their dessert, brownies, and ice cream, Herby picked up the same newspaper that he had been reading earlier in the day and looked at the cheese sandwich and baseball picture. Underneath the picture there was a caption that read: Because of this delay we will be having another game tomorrow afternoon. Herby said to Lucille, “Let’s go to the game tomorrow and hope that the moms bring more good food.”

Elizabeth  
Kilbride  
Grade 4  
South School  
New Canaan

## The Eye of a Hawk and Heart of a Girl

I peeked my black braids out of my family’s hogan, a building made of sticks, rocks and mud. The hogan’s entry way, which was facing east, was now blazing with the rising sun. As I crawled out of the hut, I found mother fixing tortillas and mutton stew for the family’s morning meal.

“Morning,” I greeted her. She returned my greeting with a nod of her head. Mother never talked much. “I am going out to gather,” I explained. Mother only smiled. She knew my games. I would have to make some new tricks.

I ran out into the fields, but, of course, I was not going to gather prickly pears, peaches, herbs, spices, or pinon nuts (seeds that grow on pine trees). I had no interest in tending my mother's vegetables, corn, or wheat either. My biil, which was a long shawl-like garment women wore, swished as I skipped. First, I went in the direction of the field, and then took a short cut through the woods to a cliff.

Then I called out, "Caw!" in a rasping voice. On the other side of the canyon, on a dead tree, a red-tailed hawk lifted up off his perch, made a great circle in the sky, tipped his left wing, gave one powerful stroke and glided toward me. It "cawed" back to me.

Unlike everyone in my tribe, I could speak any bird language, although tribe members worshipped the hawk only. He is our messenger, protector, and visionary of the sky. Many nights, my family stayed up and told stories of our wondrous hawk or danced around a huge fire with nearby tribe members to worship him. My favorite bird to call was the red tailed hawk, which was now hovering over me. Its sharp talons were tucked underneath its sleek white feathered underbody.

"Caw," the loudest call yet echoed through the walls of the Grand Canyon. Then with my sharp ears I picked up another voice, a human voice. I looked up. The hawk had heard it too and was looking at me for advice. If my family found out that I speak to birds, oh, it'd be a disaster. I gave an urgent call up and bounded into the pine forest.

That night nearby villagers gathered around a huge camp fire. I watched as father and other men danced in hawk costumes with feathers and a beak. They ducked down and straightened, never going all the way up. Then they stretched out their arms, ran around the fire and bowed down before the fire, crying out some Indian words I didn't know.

A week later I ran out of the hogan. I planned to go to the Canyon. I got to the cliff only to find a hawk as breathless as I was.

The hawk then called down to me in a rustic, rasping voice "Circling-my-land-destruction-in-nearby-pueblos-white-people-fast-on-horse-lots-weapons." "How's Little Wander?" I asked not sure if I wanted to know the answer or not. She was my closest friend and the only one that truly understood freedom and wanted it. Her people had taught us many things, like to weave because deer skin got too hot.

The hawk looked down at me. Although birds never cry, you could almost see a tear in his eye. "Dead," was all he said for a while. After he got his breath back, he stuttered in an urgent voice "Worst part, coming this way."

"What am I going to do? You aren't much help because I am the only one that can speak hawk. I just have to tell everyone." I cried.

"I'll be a diversion," he circled above me and flew off. I suddenly grasped what he had said. He was going to sacrifice himself. He was going to make the whites kill him. Maybe he'll survive, I thought. "No," I cried.

I galloped back to the hogan. There were many hogans that I needed to get to and they were far apart. I ran first to my hogan, then to ones nearby. As I ran I heard shots, loud "bangs" and "whams." It was hard to run with such a heavy heart. As I ran to the last hogan, I heard another "wham" and then a gentle thud. They'd gotten him. He was dead.

I had a cramp from running so far and fast as I did, and I did a half skip half hop thing with the last family to escape down the mountain. A voice called to me. I looked up, tears streaming down my face. Against the sky was a beautiful cloud-like figure, a hawk, dead and alive at the same time. The voice of it cried out “I’m proud of you, don’t cry because you and I will always be together in our hearts.” At that moment I felt my heart break.

Then the spirit rose higher in the air and disappeared. But a feather drifted down. I smiled through my tears and then cut a strand of my hair and threw it up. The wind carried it. I watched it as it did.

A loud bang sounded. I frantically climbed down the steep mountain side. An army of white men soon appeared at the top of the cliff. I gasped; it hadn’t been what I expected. It was worse. They had weapons of which I had never seen and were wearing metal. A loud bang sounded from a metal thing a man was holding. Then the man nodded and rode away. He accepted us.

**Melanie Badin**  
Grade 4  
John Lyman  
School  
Middlefield

## Creatures

Creatures are slimy. They’re gooey and wet.  
They deserve to be caught in a big, huge, brown net.  
When they swim around free, they mess up everything.  
They broke my whole house, even my wedding ring.  
Because they did that, there is nothing I own.  
I’m sitting in a box now writing this poem.  
My body’s all squished, this is not very fun.  
But I don’t have a choice, those creatures, they won.  
When people walk by me, they stare in disgust  
At the dirty, wet mud-covered guy in the dust.  
It hurts my feelings much more than you think  
To be a guy that was bitten by more than one mink.  
I’m falling asleep, but there’s no place to rest.  
My eyes are now drooping. I’m terribly stressed,  
But I’ll finish this poem if it’s the last thing I do.  
My goal’s to please people, especially you.  
Those creatures are surrounding, ready to fight,  
But I’m brave and I’m strong cause I stayed up all night.  
I’m now getting trampled. Oh, please, help me NOW!  
It’s really real painful, oh ouch! My eyebrow!  
They’re hauling me away in the dim summer light.  
This poem is finished, I’m sorry! Good night!



## Changing Seasons

Autumn...Autumn...Autumn is finally here.  
The leaves— red, orange, yellow and brown—swirl around  
The misty fresh air, like a colorful tornado,  
Lifting their crinkly faces to the sky.

It is so chilly, my warm breath forms ice crystals  
As I trudge through the woods.  
Suddenly, the weather turns colder, and the days are shorter.  
It is no longer autumn.

Now when I walk, the snow laps over my Timberland boots  
As water across ocean creatures.  
And when my breath comes out of my mouth,  
It looks like fog.

Along...Along...Along pass the seasons,  
And it is again time for the arrival of fall.  
How do I know?  
The changing weather of summer is colder now,  
And the temperatures dip down below.

## A Caribou Winter

It all began in the winter of 1983. My herd of caribou started to run ahead of me, leaving me behind. I trotted on, hoping they would wait. Well, I hoped wrong. They abandoned me.

Was it because of my age, or because I wasn't very fast? Sometimes the young adults complained that we had too many old caribou in our herd, but I didn't think I was part of their problem. The other thing was, I was a bull; they didn't mind cows of any age.

A couple of hours later, a wolf howled, startling me into a run. It was a hunt call, which meant I was within smelling range. But then, on my other side, I heard that same howl. I turned around to run away, only to meet snarling jaws. The wolves had tricked me. But luckily, I had been in this situation before. I reared and pounded my hooves, and the wolves backed off. I dashed through the opening they left and ran until I could run no more. Oh, luck of luck that I stopped in that spot! The grass and lichen grew high enough that they poked through the heavily packed snow.

**Carlos  
Guadalupe**  
Grade 4  
Davis Street  
Interdistrict  
Magnet School  
New Haven

**Katie  
Cusumano**  
Grade 5  
Ox Ridge  
School  
Darien

After eating for a while, I decided to give up any hope I had had of the herd coming back for me. I trotted along, deciding to migrate south by myself. But then, something happened that made me get stuck in the north. The next day, a blizzard that would snow me in for weeks started.

I heard the wind roaring outside of the cave I had found. I trotted deeper into the cave, my hooves clicking against the stone floor. Suddenly, the cave widened and the ceiling heightened. I stopped, and listened, but all I heard was the “plink! plink!” of water from the icicles falling in to the pond at my feet, and my hoof beats echoing around the cavern. I stuck my tongue in the water, to see if it was good (which it was), and I started to gulp down the water, because I was thirsty after my travel to the cave.

Suddenly, I heard a splash and a fish’s tail poked out of the water. I pricked my ears. That was funny, I thought. The water was clear—I could see the bottom. There were no fish in it that I could see.

I backed away from the pool. There was something very wrong with it. A fish, brightly decorated in orange and red, swam forward. I had never seen anything like it in my life, and I had seen a lot of fish. Its tail split halfway, so it appeared to have two tails. It looked almost like it had glued a butterfly to its tail. I walked forward again. I stomped my hooves in the water and it swam into some reed I hadn’t noticed.

I slept in the cave that night. The storm continued on for the rest of the month, and it seemed like it would never stop.

One morning I awoke with a start. A loud thumping came from the cave mouth, but it wasn’t there. It was blocked. I pierced the thick wall of snow with my antlers and pounded it with my feet, but to no avail. I was snowed in. I was stuck until spring.

“Is this how a moose lives?” I wondered aloud to myself. “All lonely, without anyone else, all the time?”

Over the next few days, I learned more about the fish. He was timid and shy, but once he came to know me, I didn’t feel as lonely.

I decided, since I would be there for a while, to explore the cave. I carefully edged around the pool, stepping into it only when absolutely necessary, as to not hurt the unusual fish I had befriended.

I learned that the cave extended much farther than the pool. I came to another large cavern, but this one had a floor and walls covered in the plants that I call food. It was as if this cave had been created for caribou. I nibbled on some lichens, because the food in the water cavern was sparse and it was just water reed. Although the water reeds were actually pretty good, I had missed my old food.

Finally, some time in May, the snow began to thaw. I pawed at the thin layer, broke it, said goodbye to my fish, and ran off, hoping my herd might have gotten back already. No such luck.

Oh, beautiful sunshine! I rolled around in the grass. It tickled my back as the breeze did my face.

Suddenly, antlers appeared over the horizon. I perked my ears, because I couldn’t tell if they were caribou or not from this distance. I heard the pounding

of hooves and then my heart fell. The head was a moose's, not a caribou's. I ran across the tundra to greet him, thinking he might know something about my herd.

It turned out that he did. They were headed north and were making good progress. I jumped with joy. My herd was headed this way. I thanked the moose and then asked what he was looking for. He said his mate was ready to drop her calf, but she didn't want the wolves to get it. I told him about the cave and asked if he wanted to use it. He said it would be great, and I warned him not to step in the pond if he could help it, because of my fish. He ran off to get his mate.

An hour later the pair of moose returned. My friend (his name was Thicket) asked me where the cave was, so I led him to it. His mate trotted straight into it, and Thicket followed, thanking me as he went. I heard a small splash and knew they had reached the pond. They liked it. I ran off.

A week later, I heard a buzzing sound, and mosquitoes clouded the sky. Oh, no, no, no. The mosquito infestation had begun. Over the next few days, the mosquitoes nested in my fur and bit me until I bled. The bites soon became infected, but I had no tail, so I couldn't swat the mosquitoes away. This torture went on for a whole week, when the mosquitoes finally left. The grass still had some frost on it, so I rolled around to soothe my bites.

Two days later, five pairs of antlers appears over the horizon, then three, then four more. As the animals' heads appeared, I realized they were caribou! I rushed out to meet them. Their eyes widened as I came into their view. Our herd leader asked, "Willow? Is that you?" I said, "yes." I asked them why they had abandoned me. They said they had thought I was too old and weak to survive the winter, but they were really sorry because I had survived a northern winter.

"How did you do it?" our herd leader asked. "I couldn't have done it!"

"Well," I answered, "I found a cave. I wouldn't have been able to do it if I hadn't been snowed in. That kept me from going outside, where I might have bogged down and been eaten by a wolf."

"Another question," our herd leader said. "Weren't you lonely?"

"I met a nice little fish in a pond. I wasn't lonely."

I rejoined the herd, and together we frolicked in the grass and nibbled on the lichens. I was never again abandoned.

**Erin C. White**  
Grade 5  
Hampton  
Elementary  
Hampton

## A Tribute to Authors

Some of my favorites be  
*Star in the Storm*  
And *The Giving Tree*.  
I LOVE *No Flying in the House*  
And *The Mouse and the Motorcycle*.  
Dr. Seuss is quite cute,  
And Shakespeare is cunning.  
The list is quite long,  
The length is really stunning.  
Charles Dickens has style,  
Roald Dahl has *such* flair  
That benefits readers  
From here to there.  
The guards are all reading  
At Buckingham Palace,  
Christopher Robin went down  
With Alice.  
Readers find happiness  
When writers show flair.  
The books tease.  
Come on, try me.  
Try me if you dare!

**Caroline  
McLennan**  
Grade 5  
Old Greenwich  
School  
Old Greenwich

## Poetry

A deep chamber sucks me in  
Swirling patterns blind me  
Yet I am happy  
Soft music plays in the background, and I am thrown into a world of peace  
A brook meanders just like my mind as my thoughts appear on a page  
Silent peace and gentle winds will lull me to my slumber  
And when I wake, the moonlight breaks for I am back  
Slammed into a world of order  
Everyday the same  
No peace

No simple pleasures that leave you wondering just how they make you smile  
I am out of my world and have to share another with others  
As I live my life again

This is poetry  
When you are in the meadow that is a poem nothing seems to matter  
You have no age  
No skin color  
No sin  
Just subtle loving truth  
The world in which you live and the troubles that come with the miracle of life  
melt away  
Simple yet beautiful thoughts dribble onto paper  
And the simplest things seem like miracles  
Then as your ideas run out  
You begin to be pulled away from the paradise  
Then violently spat out  
Back onto earth  
To live complexly  
And think orderly  
Until you venture into the paradise again  
Where you live carelessly  
And think simply  
For poetry has no boundaries  
No one pulling you back  
Or saying no  
Just your mind, imagination, and life  
And a poem waiting to unfold

## **Room With Much Sun**

A rainbow of colors flows beneath my armchair  
in the room with much sun.  
Reds and blues range beyond your wildest dreams,  
and tassels hang over the edge, limp and still.  
Its soft fuzzy feeling makes me tingle everywhere.  
My rainbow of colors in the room with much sun  
is extraordinary.

**Julie Blum**  
Grade 5  
Daisy  
Ingraham  
School  
Westbrook

The eyes with much fire stare in at me.  
Flickering light blinds every creature capable of seeing it,  
and deadly claws flick angrily to and fro as it howls in rage.  
When I get so much as a glimpse of it, I shiver and hide.  
I retreat to my room with much sun,  
and all my fears and dreads are cured by the soft warmth  
of the rainbow of colors touching me.

As my marble eyes gaze out on to the land with much beauty,  
I notice something horrifying in the depths of the green field.  
As the man with a hideous mask walks slowly in rows,  
he spreads puffs of white poison,  
and a quivering moth falls to the ground, never to excite me again.  
A choking dust blankets the grass, and a putrid stench hovers  
like a hawk searching for its prey.  
I escape to my room with much sun,  
and the comfort of my armchair is like a breath of fresh air.

On a day with much sorrow and tears, the strange talking box  
with the glass front explodes with sound, and I perk my ears and watch.  
Piercing screams emit from a flashing figure wailing in misery.  
Shapes frantically race this way and that, trying to hide  
from the flames bursting like fireworks around them.  
Constant blasts of noise sting my ears, and I turn away.  
I withdraw to my room with much sun,  
and my rainbow of colors soothes me and brings me peace.

No fiery eyes.  
No horrible smells.  
No blaring sounds.  
I curl up with my extraordinary rainbow of colors  
in my room with much sun,  
and softly purr.

## You're You for a Reason

You aren't you just because,  
You're you for a reason.  
And every one's different,  
Just like all of the seasons.

You're you for a reason,  
You're not someone else,  
And you're very much different  
From everyone else.

And different's not bad,  
Although some may think,  
And just 'cause you're different,  
It does not mean you stink.

You were always meant to be you,  
Individual, a season,  
And we're all good at something  
'Cause you're you for a reason.

## The Life of a Card

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

SCENE 1, THE CARD SHOP

Narrator: Once upon a time, a very long time ago, in France, a new trend started. This fairly new trend, was playing cards. Each playing card, though you may not know it, has a life...

Cardmaker: (*bent over desk, then stands up as he says his line*) Ah! Another deck of these new playing cards made. (*picks up cards, then walks to other side of stage*) If only every card made had a life, a speaking voice. They could talk to me, and then I would have many friends living with me-over 300! But they wouldn't be much trouble, being so small and all...(goes offstage)

Narrator: Little did the cardmaker know, a star had been near, heard his wish and granted it.

Claire  
Hosinski  
Grade 5  
Davenport  
Ridge  
Elementary  
School  
Stamford

Allison Benko  
Grade 5  
Mill Hill  
School  
Southport

King of Hearts: (yawning) Wow! That was a very long nap-time.

Queen of Hearts: Shut up! If no one ever liked your jokes before, then why would anyone like them now?

King of Hearts: Ya know, there's a pretty nice death penalty for queens who talk back to their kings!

Queen of Hearts: Ugh!

Queen of Diamonds: You aren't fit to be the "Heart" family. You are as heartless as a two of clubs!

2 of Clubs!: Hey!

Queen of Hearts: I'm so sorry I snapped at you, sweetie-pie.

King of Hearts: No, no, no. It was I who was being foolish, my little sugar-coated-candy-dipped-sweetie-cake.

Queen of Hearts: Oh, you're so romantic and good to me, you syrup-coated-piece of candy.

King of Spades: Ah be quiet! My wife and I can't dig with you two being all "mushy-gushy little love birdies! Ooooooo!

King of Diamonds: You really shouldn't have such a lowly hobby of digging. You should find something better to do with your time.

Queen of Clubs: Yeah! You could join one of my clubs! We have the ski club, the chess club, club soda...anything ya like!

King of Spades: But I love my spade! I'm planning on entering a digging contest with it and trying for a new world record. It has never failed me!

Joker 1: (*moping around, depressed*) I bet no one cares what club we would like to be in.

Joker 2: (*agreeing with first joker, nodding*) No one cares about jokers.

2 of Clubs: More than they do about a 2 of clubs.

Ace of Spades: Well at least we all have family and friends.

All Cards: (*agreeing, saying various things such as*) Yeah. He's right. We do have each other. Etc.



SCENE 2, THE CARD SHOP NEXT MORNING

Uncle Boris: How much for that deck of cards right there? (*taking out money*)

Cardmaker: Hows about 10 cents?

Uncle Boris: Done. I just hope Tabitha and Scott like them. They're my niece and nephew. They're twins and their birthday is coming up. They will be 10 in a week. Do children that age like playing cards?

Cardmaker: Certainly. (*customer pays him 10 cents*) Have a good day.

Uncle Boris: You also. Oh, and can you wrap them for me? (*cardmaker nods*) I'll be back for them in 15 minutes. (*walks offstage*)

King of Hearts: (*looking around*) What happened? Is nap-time over?

Queen of Hearts: You're as stupid as the 2 of Clubs! There never was, is, or will be a nap-time!

2 of Clubs: You're mean. And you can't boss me around and call me names.

Queen of Hearts: Shut up, stupido!

2 of Clubs: Okay.

Queen of Hearts: I didn't mean to yell at you, sweet-ums.

King of Hearts: Nor did I, my sugar-coated jelly donut covered in...

All: Quiet!

Ace of Spades: It's true. I think we're being wrapped right now. I don't think the cardmaker can hear us either.

2 of Clubs: Of all the horrible things! What will happen to us?

Joker 1: Will our new owners rip up the jokers?

King of Spades: What will happen to my digging?

Queen of Clubs: Will I still have millions of clubs?

Queen of Diamonds: My diamonds! What will happen to my diamonds?

Ace of Spades: None of us knows for sure. But in the meantime, we'd best wait;

there's no other way to find out. (*Uncle Boris pulls them offstage*)

### SCENE 3, THE PLAYROOM

Uncle Boris: Happy Birthday kids!

Tabitha and Scott: (*running over to him*) Uncle Boris!

Uncle Boris: How are you two?

Tabitha: Oh, we're fine.

Scott: Have you brought our present?

Uncle Boris: Oh, you don't care about me. You only care about the gifts I bring!  
(*he laughs*) Ah! I think I have something stowed away in these here pockets!  
(*takes cards out of pocket and gives to them*)

Tabitha: Oh, Uncle Boris! They're beautiful!

Uncle Boris: You have fun, kids. I have to talk to your parents. (*walks offstage*)

Scott: Let's play with them right now! (*grabs cards from Tabitha*) How about a game of gin rummy?

Tabitha: No, I want to play blackjack. (*grabs cards from Scott*)

Scott: Rummy!

Tabitha: Blackjack!

Scott: Rummy!

Tabitha: Blackjack!

2 of Clubs: We can decide for ourselves what to play! (*children wide-eyed with excitement*)

Scott: Tabitha, the cards are talking!

Tabitha: I see that, Scott. Let me look at them. (*takes cards*) They're amazing!

Scott: We should introduce ourselves.

Tabitha: Of course!

Scott: I'm Scott Green, and this is my baby sister, Tabitha.

Tabitha: Hey! I'm only a minute younger than you!

Scott: So what? I'm still older.

Queen of Diamonds: You two sound just like the king and queen of hearts!

King of Hearts: You can't talk about my little hunny-bunny that way!

Queen of Hearts: Or my little sweet candy pie covered in cream like that either.

Scott: I have no idea what you're talking about, Miss Queen of Diamonds, Ma'am.

Tabitha: Gee, not only did we get cards that talk, we got ones that are obnoxious too!

#### SCENE 4, THE CORNER WHERE THE CARDS LIVE

Tabitha: Hey, Scott! Let's play a card game with our new deck of talking cards!

Scott: Okay! Hey guys, what do you want to play?

Joker 1: Jokers!

King of Hearts: Oh, I love that game!

Scott: How do you play?

Joker 2: Well, it's very simple once you get used to it. You face all the cards down. Then you pick up cards, one by one. If you pick up a joker, you get 150 points! If you pick up a king, queen, jack, 10, or a 2 of clubs, you lose. Any of the other cards, you get 2 points. The first person to get to 200 points wins, or you win if the other people lose.

Scott: I understand! At least, I think I do. *(takes out cards face down, then counts them, while he is doing this, other conversation takes place)*

King of Diamonds: I don't want to be face down! Getting my diamonds dirty? In a silly game? Why can't we play a cleaner game, like poker?

2 of Clubs: And I suppose I have to be a losing card? Everyone just hates me, I know it.

Scott: I understand! At least, I think I do. *(takes out cards face down, then*

*counts them, while he is doing this, other conversation takes place)*

King of Diamonds: I don't want to be face down! Getting my diamonds dirty? In a silly game? Why can't we play a cleaner game, like poker?

2 of Clubs: And I suppose I have to be a losing card? Everyone just hates me, I know it.

Scott: Wait! Oh no, oh no, oh no! This is horrible!

Tabitha: What! What happened? Did you do something stupid, like losing one of our talking cards?

Scott: (blushing) Welll.....Ummmmm.....Uhhhh....y-y-yeah?

Tabitha: You did? YOU STUPID BOY!!! HOW COULD YOU? (*shakes him on shoulders*)

Joker 1: I knew we couldn't trust them!

Joker 2: Get them! (*all cards that are on stage except the Ace of Spades, and Tabitha, start attacking Scott*)

Ace of Spades: What good will it do if you kill Scott? (*Scott nods ferociously*) You can kill him after we've found the card he lost. (*Scott looks horrified*) First we have to take roll call to see who's missing. Everybody, fall in! (*all cards except Queen of Hearts come on stage*)

Tabitha: I'd be happy to take attendance! My teacher never lets me for some reason...Well, let's see. I know for a fact that the 2 of clubs, the Jokers, and the King of Diamonds are here. What about the Queen of Diamonds?

Queen of Diamonds: Present!

Tabitha: Great! King of Spades?

King of Spades: I'm here! Just don't bother me again, I'm trying to break a digging record.

Tabitha: Um, okay then. Queen of Clubs, are you here?

Queen of Clubs: Yes, I'm here. And so are all of my clubs. Would you like to join one?

Tabitha: Maybe some other time. King of Hearts?

King of Hearts: Oh, yes, don't worry about me. But....WHERE DID MY CUD-DLY-POO GO?

Scott: That must mean the Queen of Hearts is missing!

King of Hearts: NOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!

Scott: We'll have to search everywhere. We have to find her. I won't be able to go to sleep with that racket the King of Hearts is making.

#### SCENE 5, THE OTHER SIDE OF THE PLAYROOM

Narrator: The cards decided to make a plan. They made the Ace of Spades the general. The King of Spades would dig for diamonds in the diamond mines, then give them to the King and Queen of Diamonds. The King and Queen of Diamonds would go to pawn shops, and pawn the jewellery. Then, they would give the money to the Queen of Clubs, who would ask around in her clubs, and bribe people for information about where the Queen of Hearts could be. The Jokers helped her. The King of Hearts turned out to be very useless and annoying as a matter of fact....

King of Hearts: Oh, oh, oh, where could she be? I want my little lambsie-doodles! Whaaa!!!!

Tabitha: Scott, I'm starting to see why we have to find her today.

Scott: Yeah, I'll fix that. (*walk over to King of Spades*) Shut up! We're trying as hard as we can, and we can't work with you howling like that. If you want to be useful, either sit around quietly or help the others.

King of Hearts: (*muttering so the rest don't hear*) Well, someone has to mourn the loss of our dear Queen.

Tabitha: What was that?

King of Hearts: Oh, uhhh, nothing. Nothing at all.

Jokers: We've done it! We're heroes! Hooray! People have got to care about us now! Yippeeee!!!

Ace of Spades: What happened? Why are you so happy?

Joker 1: You see, we received information from the bartender in a club that we were bribing people in...

Joker 2: He said that he had seen her only a few hours ago— he'll never guess

where, or what she's doing, will he?

Joker 1: Definatly not.

Ace of Spades: Where is she? What is she doing? (*waits a moment's pause, jokers grinning widely, mouths shut*) If you're not going to tell us, then you might as well be fired from this army.

Joker 2: All right! No need to get snappish!

Joker 1: Hey that reminds me of Professor Snape in Harry Potter! I wonder how that little wizard is doing....

Joker 2: I heard the fifth book just came out six months ago.

Joker 1: Really?

Ace of Spades: Just tell us already!

Joker 2: Well, she is in our house.

All: What!!!

Ace of Spades: We'll go at once! I'll tell everyone to stop what they're doing straight away....

#### SCENE 6, THE CORNER WHERE THE CARDS LIVE

King of Hearts: Oh, my little chocolate-dipped kitty! Why did you hide from us? I missed you so much! I thought about you all during nap-time....(*snore from the Queen of Spades*)

Ace of Spades: What is wrong with her?

2 of Clubs: Well, she must be very tired.

Ace of Spades: No, duh!

Scott: Everybody, we have to wake her up.

Tabitha: Yeah, let's all yell really loudly—that should do the trick.

All: 1,2,3, (*all yell really, really, really loudly*)

Queen of Hearts: What'd I miss?

Scott: Half the week! You've been sleeping forever...and we didn't know where you were—we had to find you, and you turned out to be right here.

Queen of Hearts: Really? (yawn) I feel great! I've slept longer than I have ever since I married that idiot who likes that disgusting game Jokers. I HATE being a losing card and getting DIRTY. I went to a club for a few drinks and poured out my sorrows to the bartender until I felt so distressed and melancholy that he called me a cab to take me home. But I'm much better now.

King of Hearts: You mean you didn't miss me?

Queen of Hearts: How can I when you're asleep? But I'm sure I would have missed you terribly if I had been conscious sweetheart. I love you so much....

King of Hearts: Oh, I'm so happy the Jokers (Jokers smile broadly upon hearing themselves praised) found you, my pumpkin pie, all covered with whipped cream...I promise never to tell anyone my opinion about anything again without asking you what it is first.

Scott and Tabitha: And we promise to make sure all of you want to play that game before deciding what game to play.

Queen of Diamonds: Oh, what a perfect, happy ending.

Narrator: And it was. Everyone was happy at the moment, and no one could think of any reason not to be. It was perfect.

## Free

Free is waking at the crack of dawn,  
Just to watch the sun rise,  
To run outside without a jacket,  
And dance in dewy grass.  
Free is dipping your bare toes in a babbling creek.  
Or racing with a river,  
To lie in the soft grass and stare at the clouds,  
Before drifting into a dreamless sleep.  
Free is having the sun wake you with soft warm rays.  
And stretching as you rise.  
Free is walking into the forest  
Without the animals growing silent

**Lauren  
Pollack**  
Grade 6  
Latimer Lane  
School  
Weatogue

To snatch an apple from a tree for lunch  
And share it with a rabbit  
To chatter with a chipmunk,  
And giggle with the wind,  
Then cartwheel through the meadow,  
Picking flowers to tuck in your hair.  
Free is rolling down grassy hills  
And smiling at the edge of a pond  
While conversing with the tree frogs  
To skip in the twilight  
Then wave goodbye to the sun  
To stay in the darkness just long enough  
To say hello to the rising moon  
To reach up to try to catch a star  
For you can claim your wish  
Then to whisper into the darkness...  
“I wish to always live free.”

Zachary  
Puglia  
Grade 6  
New Fairfield  
Middle School  
New Fairfield

## Once Upon a Dump

A fly's version of a fairy tale

A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away there was a dump. A dump where there were ice-cream containers with tons of leftover ice-cream. Milk cartons became moldy in seconds, and flies could get enough of everything.

Rivers of pulpless orange juice flowed, and giant mountains towered above the soda can villages. Forests of fish and chicken bone and swamps of murky barbeque sauce covered the landscape. Castles were made of hard materials such as gristle and steak bone built on the ground of disposed food, wrappers and containers.

The palace was the most fantastic of all. It was constructed of the dirtiest diapers in all the land with foil duller than sandpaper lining the walls. Guarding the walls were towers fabricated of the dullest cans.

King Alfie was a short, thin house fly with small wings, only five legs and just one antennae. Queen Candy, on the other hand, was a tall, strong horsefly with huge wings and six powerful legs. The king managed the kingdom terribly and knew hardly anything about what went on in the kingdom. In fact, if it weren't for the queen, the kingdom would have been a place of crime and chaos.

Queen Candy spent lots of time dirtying the palace and sculpting flies out of cheese. Only counting his honey would please the king. King Alfie spent a lot of time arguing with Queen Candy about how they should run the kingdom. The



king wanted to hoard all the money, which would result in a poor kingdom, whereas the queen wanted to run it in a more just way. Queen Candy obviously won all of these arguments.

Princess Dotty was a thin fly with long antennae and big, orange eyes. Dotty had short legs and small wings, and she had a huge proboscis. Princess Dotty had been raised in total luxury with nothing at all that was clean. The princess was spoiled with all the parasites she wanted and had a comfy bed with an overhead canopy. She had a huge maggot doll house and dozens of maggot dolls with all sorts of accessories, Little Dotty even had a pet flea. She hoped to someday destroy the incinerator that was constantly devouring the kingdom.

One day, the king came into the princess' room and said, "It is time you get married. You are getting too old to be a flylet, so you must start a family." Then the king left the room. Princess Dotty was shocked and excited. In the past she had never been able to socialize with princes from other kingdoms. Running around the room trying to find something to wear, she asked herself, "Should I wear two gold pairs of shoes and one red or one gold and two red?" As the princess struggled with her decision, Alfie came bursting in and announced that princes from the north, north-northeast, the northeast, and east-northeast would be coming. Then King Alfie told the princess that in order to win her hand in marriage, the princes would have to kill the incinerator, a huge, fire-breathing creature that burned parts of the kingdom. "I shall send out invitations," the king stated, "immediately." Then he left.

When the day came for the princess to arrive at the palace, the princess was anxiously watching for the contestants. The first prince, named Terry came on a large black spider named Tyrant. Terry was short and had little hair. The second prince, Prince Garth, (named after Dana Carvey's role in *Wayne's World* and *Wayne's World 2*) came on a huge praying mantis named Greenie. Garth had a bow and was interested in archery. Prince Tony came on a massive scorpion named Titan. Tony was big and strong but had a lower IQ than Titan. The last prince, Prince Floyd, came on a small female stag beetle named Friendly. Floyd was handsome and tall, cunning and swift, smart and friendly, but he acted like he was sad and lonely (because he was).

The king briefed the princess and sent them on their mission.

Prince Terry reached the incinerator and began to climb it, but he was attacked and eaten by a bird. Prince Garth didn't get as far as the first. Sadly a human child caught him while he was going across the parking lot towards the incinerator. Prince Tony was more successful than Terry and Garth. He actually got inside the "sleeping" incinerator, but it "woke up" and burned him to a crunchy crisp. Prince Floyd cunningly waited for cover of darkness before going in on Friendly. Floyd stayed in the shadows as he crept slowly in to the "sleeping" incinerator. Once inside the incinerator the prince sprung into action. He had Friendly cut all the wires he came across. He then opened a 50-gallon barrel of gasoline and left a trail from the incinerator igniter to the open top of the gas barrel. Prince Floyd hastily got back onto Friendly and flew back toward the palace. As Floyd flew back to the palace, he heard a deafening

“BOOM,” which he knew was the incinerator exploding and “dying” in agony.

Back at the palace Floyd landed on the princess’s balcony and opened the door to her room. He shook her violently to wake her up (she was a heavy sleeper) and announced, “I’ve pulled it off!”

The next day was the royal wedding. Hundreds of thousands of flies came for the event and to celebrate the death of the incinerator.

### Epilogue

The prince and princess had six maggots and lived happily ever after...  
until they got nailed by a fly swatter.

## Child’s Balloon

The sticky fingers of the  
toddler slip on the string.  
He cries out and lunges  
to reclaim his grasp  
on the balloon.  
But too late.  
It is already swirling  
above the child’s reach.  
Disappointed, he returns his gaze to the stomping  
and bellowing elephants  
below him.  
Meanwhile, the balloon  
soars ever closer to the  
clouds and the heavens beyond  
them.  
Like a moth drawn to the flame,  
it jerks and spins in dizzying circles  
toward the blazing, white-hot sun.  
But then, just like so many times  
before, there was a sudden POP,  
and the balloon was no more.  
Slowly, the remnants of the once  
bouncing and flying child’s toy floated  
back to earth.

Sage Bierman  
Grade 6  
Gallup Hill  
School  
Ledyard

## When Darkness is Blinding

Zoe Mendal  
Grade 6  
Sedgwick  
Middle School  
West Hartford

Muffled screeches spidered their way to my cot and forced my drooping eyelids open. A soft shuffle pierced the cold silence. I had to face it. I was awakened once more. The dark room and the soft innocent sighs of sleep comforted me somehow. Then it came. The cold clammy hand made brief contact with my sagging shoulder. I felt my startled stomach leave its place and enter my throat, but then a gentle noise broke through the darkness,

“Shh,” an assuring voice almost pleaded.

Her word waltzed in one ear and out the other as my head hit the awaiting pillow. My damp hair stuck to the side of my face, a cool breeze chilled me down to my toes, and the slight flavor of salty sweat on my tongue...I was jerked upward again. Suddenly, a click...a flash...the cabin walls cast shadows on my fellow companion's face. Cool night air filtered through my nostrils as her eyes studied my face. A thin face, darkened by the room reflected my weary gaze. She was pale with a twisted mouth and sandy, snarled, damp hair. I studied the desperate gray eyes, and I knew I was obligated to accompany her on her short journey.

Tiny peeper toads squeaked out their midnight song, and clucking birds hummed in the dense forest as I tucked my frozen, sockless feet into worn, grubby shoes. It felt as though I had stuck my feet into an icebox as I stood up. My regrets were many.

It was a frigid July night at Timber Trails Camp, all the way in Tolland, Massachusetts, and the campers around us were sleeping, warm and undisturbed under their covers, where I longed to be. A breeze blew my wet hair, sending chills to escape down my spine.

We stepped gingerly, so as not to wake the other three sleepers. Our eyes had adjusted, and we could faintly see empty, untidy cots that formed a maze around us. Clothes scented with sweat and lake water hung from the low ceiling's rafters. A grimy towel awaited our party of two as we approached the door. Sophia lurched forward and time froze! Nothing that could be seen, heard, felt, or smelled. The senses were gone as chaos erupted around us. Sophia, unaware of the hanging rag, pressed onward to the door, but was interrupted as the black, dusty towel collapsed over her. She stumbled through the room creating a discordant sound in the black, tranquil night.

Sightless from the towel, she collided with the door. Her legs gave way, and she descended toward the ground. A flash of orange and green pants and golden hair illustrated the fall. The door seemed to jump in the way, and as it crossed her path, Sophia rammed into it. I was frozen with confusion, but the silence and darkness still managed to creep closer.

I guess I just feared for the worst, but when her eyes lifted and stared into mine, the long-lost sparkle returning to them, a quiet giggle lifted my heart.

## Scooter: A Hamster's Tale

Scooter awoke suddenly and sniffed the cool morning breeze coming in through the bars of her cage. A loud tapping sound was coming closer and closer to where Scooter, Mama, and her brothers lay. Yawning and stretching, she got up, shivering, as she crawled toward the cage bars, away from the warmth of her mother's body, to investigate what the loud sound was. As she walked along her crinkly pine bedding, a young man wearing a blue apron with the letters "HELLO MY NAME IS DON. WELCOME TO LEE'S PETS AND MORE!" on it and holding a large tank came walking toward Scooter. The young man stopped, opened up the cage, and reached one large, gloved hand in to try to grab for Scooter's brothers. With her little heart beating, Scooter scampered across the cage, cold and afraid, and snuggled up next to Mama, where the two of them began to cry.

Six little male hamsters were taken from the cage that day. "Why, Mama, why must they take my brothers away?" Scooter asked. "That's just the way it has to be sometimes, baby," her mother answered, "That's just the way it has to be."

As the days passed, memories of her brothers began to fade away, and Scooter began to adjust to her new life with Mama. In the following weeks, Mama and Scooter spent their time frolicking around the cage, playing games, nibbling on yummy sunflower seeds, and taking nice, long naps. "Yes," thought Scooter, "This is the life!"

One day, as Scooter was washing her cinnamon-colored fur with her pink and white paws, she looked up to see a large set of curious black eyes staring at her through the cage. Suddenly, the cage door opened, and a large brown hand reached in, and started grabbing at her. Scooter dashed around the cage yelling, "Help, Mama! Help!" but nothing could be done, because, at that instant the big brown hand grabbed her and plopped her into a cardboard container. Scooter ran from one end of the pet carrier to another, scratching at the corners and frantically trying to find a way out. Through the holes in the container, she could see her mother leaning against the side of the cage, a tear running down her cheek, and whispering "I love you." Scooter tried to reply to her mother, but her weak voice was lost in the noise of the pet store. Cold, lonely, and tired, she laid down on the bottom of the carrier and fell asleep.

When Scooter awoke, she found herself nestled in a mound of cottony soft bedding inside a colorful cage filled with many interesting things. Scooter was admiring her brand new food dish, when from behind her she heard a sweet, kind voice say, "Hi, little one, how do you like your new home? My name is Mica Scott! I'm your new owner!" Surprised, Scooter turned around to see a young, seven-year-old girl, with short, wavy black hair, and those same big black eyes staring at her. By looking at those eyes. Scooter began to remember the events of the previous night. Even though Scooter missed her mother, she happily accepted the company of her new friend. Eagerly, she scampered toward the door, and waited for Mica to open it so she could snuggle in her new mother's arms, just like she would snuggle next to Mama.

Scooter soon became very comfortable in her new surroundings, and enjoyed living with Mica and her family in their apartment, which happened to be over Lee's Pets and More. Every day, Mica and Scooter would pass the time by playing, snuggling together, taking naps, and sometimes, Mica would even put Scooter in her Run-About-Ball! This allowed Scooter to run through the house, over soft, fluffy blue carpets, over hard wood floors, past the slate fireplace and blue flowered sofa in the family room, and even under Mica's towering canopy bed. Mica would also feed Scooter many new and interesting foods. Scooter always loved getting her favorite diet of sunflower and thistle seeds, but she also enjoyed the fresh foods like grapes, carrots, lettuce, and melon that Mica gave her. Once a week, Scooter couldn't resist eating those big tasty yogurt drops as a treat, but she wasn't so sure that she liked the alfalfa cubes that she had to eat to stay strong and healthy.

While living with Mica, Scooter also met some new friends. Her favorite friend was the clownfish named Sam who lived in the fish bowl next to her cage. Sometimes when Mica was asleep at night, Scooter would get lonely, so she would talk to good old Sam until she fell asleep. Scooter also met Mica's pet cat, Jester, whose company Scooter also enjoyed, but whenever she was around the grey tiger striped tabby cat, she always felt uncomfortable. Something about Jester just didn't seem right. Even though Scooter loved her new life with Mica, she still hoped for the day that she would be able to see, and live with her mother again.

One dark, stormy night, Mica placed Scooter in her Run-About-Ball so she could roll around as her family was eating dinner. As Scooter traveled through the house, she rolled under the dining room table, past Jester the cat, and over to an open doorway. Scooter tried to see what lay before her, but all she could see was darkness. Carefully, she began to roll toward the open doorway gaining speed as she went, but just when she expected to roll straight across onto a new floor, she began to crash, and fall down a long set of wooden stairs. Following her, and softly laughing to himself, was Jester the cat. "YES!" he thought, "This is my chance to get rid of that annoying little pet!" Slowly, Jester began to move closer, and closer, and closer, to the bottom of the stairs, waiting for the right time to make his move.

Down, down, down, Scooter went, bumping along as she traveled. Finally, she reached the bottom of the stairs, crashing into a door, and cracking open her Run-About-Ball as she landed. Slightly dizzy, Scooter climbed through the crack in her ball, wobbled over to the door and listened carefully. What were those sounds? They seemed so familiar! "Yes," Scooter whispered to herself gaining excitement. "That's Polly the Parrot squawking! And that's Perky the Puppy barking! And that's Kali the Kitten mewing!! YES!! Could it be true? I have found Lee's Pets and More! For all of these months, I have been SO close to it, and never even realized it! Now I can find Mama!" Looking down at the door, Scooter realized that when she rammed into it on her way down, she had made a little crack in the wood. Using her teeth, Scooter chewed the crack into a small hole and squeezed her body through.

As she walked through the familiar cold, tile hallways Scooter finally

came to the hamster section. Cage One, Two, Three, Four, and Five. Here it was! Scooter peered in through the cage bars. There she was! “Mama!” Scooter yelled out, but Mama didn’t answer. Mama was too busy playing and snuggling with her new baby hamsters. Sadly, Scooter made her way through the hole and to the back staircase, quietly crying to herself. “I don’t understand,” Scooter whispered. “I don’t understand.” Suddenly, from above her Scooter heard a familiar crackling, and two greedy yellow eyes staring back at her. “Jester!” Scooter shrieked.

Meanwhile, after dinner, Mica went to the living room to look for Scooter. “Hmm. That’s strange,” she thought. “I could have sworn that I left her here so she could roll around.” Puzzled, Mica went to ask her parents if they had seen the hamster. “No dear, we haven’t,” answered her mother, “but we’ll help you look for her.” For the next half an hour, Mica and her family searched for the small creature, but she was no where to be found. Sitting down on the sofa, Mica tried to think of all of the places she had looked already—kitchen, living room, bedrooms, closets, pantry, bathroom, laundry room and then it hit her. The only other place to look was the back staircase.

Scooter closed her eyes, shaking and waiting for Jester to pounce on her. Instead, she felt warm, comforting hands go around her body and lift her up. “Shoo! Shoo!” Scooter heard Mica calling. Ashamed and annoyed, Jester leaped out his kitty door and into the dark, cold night. Holding Scooter against her body, Mica began to sing to her, and cradle her back and forth. Feeling safe, Scooter looked up into those big dark eyes, knowing that this is where she belonged. She was Mica’s little one now—Mica’s little Scooter.

Lucy Walker  
Grade 6  
Lyme/Old  
Lyme Middle  
School  
Old Lyme

## Autobiography

I was born a shy person. Making relationships with people has never been easy for me. That is why I have art. Art is the glue in my life, connecting me with others and keeping our relationships from falling apart. No matter where the road will take me, art, in all of its forms, will help me to make important connections with people in my life.

One of the earliest examples in my life of using art to connect with others is making presents. When I was almost three, new to the English language, I created books to give to my relatives for Christmas. First, I drew pictures on paper of what each story would be about. I recited my ideas to my dad who typed them on our computer. Once printed on the paper with my drawings, I stapled each story together. Then I gave each book to my relatives as Christmas presents. Since then, I always make my own Christmas and birthday presents for relatives. For my Aunt Louise, I sculpted thick purple beads. Once shaped, I strung them on a wide, leather string to create a necklace. For my dad, I wove a



yarn pencil holder. For one of my grandmothers, I hand-sewed a doll. For my other grandmother, I decorated a flowerpot with rich blue and green paints. I used bright orange clay to create a petite, decorative pot for my mom. Making presents for my family is my way of showing that I care for them. When I give them my art, I am giving them a piece of who I am. Because of this, my relationship with them becomes stronger.

Art has also helped me to make friendships. A few of the most difficult days of my life were when I first started kindergarten. I knew no one at my school. Without a friend, I was lonely and confused. Then, on the third day of school, I met Emily, a girl who became one of the closest friends I'll ever have. We spent countless hours painting and drawing animals. I remember writing and illustrating funny, imaginative stories with her. Art was what brought the two of us together. It was something that we both loved to create. Without art, Emily and I could not have become such close friends.

Piano is another form of art that has created a better relationship between others and myself. I began learning to play piano from my uncle, Chris. At first, my piano career was a bit rough. I had a hard time understanding which notes to play. But Chris was easy-going and helped me to become more comfortable creating music. After lots of practice, I was able to play duets with Chris. A duet is written in two parts. When played together, the parts harmonize and create beautiful music. Not only were duets pleasurable to play and entertaining to listen to, but they also connected Chris and I in a way that we had never been connected before: by teamwork. Without the two of us playing, the duet would be incomplete. When my family moved to a new town and I began learning piano from another teacher, I connected with her through playing duets in the same way that I did with Chris. Soon, she became not only my teacher, but also my good friend. Since this time, I have used the piano to build relationships with other people as well, including my grandfather, who cannot read music but simply plays chords by ear, and my mom, who studied piano as a girl like I do.

"Animal Land" is a collection of many arts that has built the bond between Nick, my younger brother by two years, and me. Our stuffed animals inhabit this miniature, realistic world. Most of the citizens of Animal Land have been bought at stores, but Nick and I have hand-made just about everything else you'll see there. We have constructed houses from cardboard boxes, sewn clothes, glued cotton balls together to form minuscule dogs and cats, and built outdoor campgrounds for the animals. We have written newspapers and magazines about Animal Land that our relatives have actually subscribed to. Believe it or not, Nick and I have organized a stuffed animal school and summer camps as well, setting up entire curriculums for them to learn from. Baseball and hockey are only a few of the many sports Animal Land citizens participate in. Each stuffed animal has been given a special, unique personality. Johnny, my stuffed bear, loves to eat and is very outgoing towards other animals. Fluffy, Nick's bear, is always brewing a plan to cause trouble. Lastly, we have created Metropolitan, an elephant, who works many hours to excel in school and sports. Animal Land is something Nick and I do together for hours at a time. It gives us something to talk about, laugh about, and share.

The “Village” built in the woods near my house is yet another form of art that helps me relate to my neighbors who are close to me in age. Basically, the Village is a bigger, natural version of Animal Land. It consists of a cluster of life-sized teepees and lean-tos that my neighbors and I have built from sticks. The Village is nestled in the valley that separates our houses. The idea of making it came to my mind on a sunny spring morning, two years ago, when I was exploring that area of land. Assembling something uniquely our own, away from our parents, has united me and my neighbors. By building together, we have created a special bond.

My journal, which helps me in a very different way than music and construction have, is perhaps one of the most important artistic parts of my life. I started using it when I began Middle School. My life had become extremely complicated and confusing. I found that I had too many thoughts to store in my head. My journal is simply a book of blank lined paper, where I deposit my thoughts through writing and drawing. I use it when I am feeling discouraged, confused, or even confident. Because of my journal, I can focus on my thoughts better and realize what I am thinking and feeling. This pushes me through difficult problems. It helps identify who I am, and through it, I have become better acquainted with myself.

For ages, people have tried to answer the question, “What is art?” Artists have answered it differently. To me, art is any kind of creation. Art could be a building, a drawing, or a piece of writing or music. However, art gives me something more than a finished construction to admire. It provides me with good friends, close family members, and even helps me to explore my soul and discover my true personality. I hope that as I travel on my journey through life, art will continue to help me as it already had and may mean more to me over time.

**Sam Chase**  
Grade 6  
Sedgwick  
Middle School  
West Hartford

## **Snow Leopard**

Dawn, the moment when time itself seems to stand still,  
When the whole world teeters on the edge of possibility,  
A leopard, looking like a blizzard in the deepest depths of winter,  
awakens.

Its furry gray coat reflects the pale mist of sunlight crawling  
through the highlands.

He is up prowling around, scanning for the slightest clue that he  
is not alone.

He finds a small deer eating its share of berries off a tree  
and is still,

so still that the only sound is the rustle of a tree being  
purged of its berries.



The deer can smell the ferocity of something in the forest  
behind him.  
It runs.  
Suddenly the snow leopard pounces  
and is quickly devouring his meal.  
He feels triumphant,  
so triumphant his good feeling spreads  
and pervades everything surrounding him.  
He finishes his meal and creeps along,  
attacking some mice to gain energy and confidence,  
as if daring anything to attack this mighty beast of the highlands  
It is night now,  
and this wondrous creature lies down to get some sleep  
before starting another day  
as the superior  
snow leopard.

## Poetry

The blonde sand settles, upon the moon rise;  
dark with shadows, the soft soil lies.  
White waves churn and give their midnight yawn,  
Gently rolling on into dawn.  
The stars appear and gaze tenderly down.  
Wise old scholars, the ocean their town.  
The Fisherman's rowboat rocks in the bay,  
Soon to settle in the soft morning gray.  
Seagulls float swiftly, far overhead.  
Their cloud colored wings, proudly they spread.  
The sun has appeared. Its rays easily reach  
the beautiful essence of the sandy white beach.

**Danielle  
Charette**  
Grade 6  
Memorial  
Middle School  
Middlefield

**Katie Ronan**  
Grade 7  
Sedgwick  
Middle School  
West Hartford

## **The Drum Machine with Heart and Soul**

In the corner he sits, the heartbeat of the restaurant. My dad is perched on his drum stool behind his wall of drums. His sticks are snug in his hands. He is the drum machine in the corner, but he is unlike any other drum machine. This drum machine puts all its heart and soul into every performance.

He chews a small piece of gum that has long since lost its flavor. Without this piece of gum, he would not be able to play. His feet come down on the bass drum and high hat pedals at just the right times. Imprinted on the soles of the shoes that he has worn so many times while drumming, you can see the “Speed King” logo of the bass and tom-tom pedals.

When he plays, my dad creates a thunderstorm all his own. The snare is the crack of lightning just above your head. The ride cymbal is the sudden sheet of rain. The tom-toms are the swish of water going down the gutter. The high hat cymbal is the constant pitter-patter of rain on the roof. Last, but not least, the bass drum is the loud roar of thunder...the booming roll of thunder that makes the whole house shake.

Now the storm swirls in his head. At this moment, it’s just him and the drum set; nothing else matters. Nothing will bring him back to the real world except for maybe that great bass solo. He is not just playing the beat; he is the beat!

The band is riding on his shoulders. If he loses a beat or gets lost, the whole band will mess up. But that won’t happen; if he slips, he will make it sound as if he meant to do it.

Now it is time for his solo. He goes all out, hitting each drum at the perfect time. The room fills with the swelling sound of the drums. My dad loses himself in the music. He finishes the solo with a roll and crash on the ride cymbal.

The song goes on, and he is back to being the heart beat. When the song ends, Tony Allen, the lead singer of the band, announces the names of the musicians. My dad, still thinking about how he could have made the solo even better, suddenly hears his name. “And our drummer,” Tony says, “Joe Ronan!”

The audience goes wild; applause fills the room with a different kind of music, a different kind of loud roar. This is when it all pays off.

**James Viega**  
Grade 7  
Longview  
Middle School  
Ellington

## **A River of Emotion**

*There is a hard time in everyone’s life that seems as if things will never get better. But, trust me, sooner or later, it will. My name is Johnny Chambers, and, at the age of 13, I overcame a hard time in my life, one that helped me come of age.*

It was the year 1961, in the small, mystical town of Castle Port. It was on the eve of autumn, the leaves turning from an iridescent green, to deep reds and

browns. It should have been an epic of marvel and wonder for me, because I just entered junior high; but life couldn't have been going any worse. My mother had been killed in a deadly car accident, and my family had been left devastated and shocked. My father barely talked or ate, and my older brother Chris couldn't come back to his senses. I was the only one who seemed to stay focused. Although, I don't think I would have made it if it wasn't for my best friend Eddie Hogan. We made a great team along with two other friends Al Duchance, and Ben Smith.

I meekly woke up just as the clock turned to six. I put on a pair of ripped jeans and a red striped shirt and stumbled downstairs. As I was walking down the hall, I took a look at myself in a mirror. I had dark brown hair brushed over to the side, and deep blue eyes, which my mom always used to say the girls would go crazy over. The thought of my mother abruptly brought pictures and memories to my mind, which I quickly shook out.

As I walked into the kitchen I saw my dad sitting alone at the table, for my brother Chris had already left. As I looked into his eyes I could see the deep sadness, and judging by the sullen circles under his eyes, I could see he had yet another sleepless night.

"Good morning," I said quietly.

"Good morning," he grumbled back.

I was watching him bite his nails, a habit he had taken up after my mother died. I started to drink a glass of milk but heard the bus pull up and nimbly ran out the door.

As I boarded the bus, I spotted my best friend Eddie, casually wearing a white T-shirt, and a pair of torn jeans (this was a way to show that you weren't a guy to mess with). Also with him was another member of our group, Al Duchance.

"Hey Johnny," Al said in a mocking tone.

Al was the crazy kind of guy in our group, who would take just about any dare. He wore thick horn-rimmed glasses, and hair that went over his eyes.

I took a seat next to Eddie, and he greeted me in the tough, yet self-assured voice he had. Eddie came from a bad family. His father had a drinking problem, and his brother in a gang was in a gang that was known for making trouble. People were oblivious to him, presuming he was going to turn out the same way.

The bus came to an abrupt halt, and we heard someone stumble onto the bus and then trip over a step.

"Ben," all of them said without a doubt.

And sure enough, up popped Ben Smith. Ben was the goofy one in our group; nonetheless, he was a coward. He was overweight and had short buzzed hair.

"Hey guys," said Eddie, "you know that house over on Northwood road?"

Of course we did. It was the "Haunted House" of Castle Port. It was really only an old house, dozens of stray cats used as a shelter.

"Well," continued Eddie excitedly, "since tomorrow starts a long weekend, what'd you say we all go there and explore the house?"

The thought left us silent for a while, but Al and I quickly made up our minds.

“We’re in!” we both said.

“I don’t know you guys, we might get killed,” whimpered Ben.

“Aw, c’mon Ben,” teased Al.

Eddie got Ben in a headlock, which Ben hated.

“Alright! Alright!” said Ben mercifully.

“Yeah!” we all exclaimed together.

“We can tell our parents we are camping over each others’ houses, and we’ll be all set up until tomorrow at dinner!” I told them.

The bus pulled into the parking lot of school, and we anxiously flew by, with the thought of our adventure swirling through our heads.

Once I got home, I started getting ready. I grabbed my canteen, my sleeping bag, and I shrewdly snuck some hamburger meat out of the refrigerator. I told my dad that I was sleeping over at Eddie’s house, but I don’t think he paid much attention to what I said.

I met up with Eddie, Ben, and Al at the edge of the woods. They all looked prepared, except for Ben, whose face was as white as a ghost.

“Well, let’s go,” said Al.

We walked through the woods silently, ignoring the mosquitoes buzzing in our faces.

Finally, Eddie and I started to talk.

“I wish people always wouldn’t think of me the way they do,” sobbed Eddie in a tone that I never heard him use before. It actually made me pity him.

“I’m not a bad kid,” he continued, “I never do anything to anyone, but they always blame me. I always get in trouble for things I don’t do!” He was really getting angry.

I put my arm around him to try to comfort him, and it seemed to calm him down.

“It’s okay,” I said, “you’re probably going through a tougher time than me.”

We noiselessly continued walking on, listening to the calming sounds nature had to offer to us.

Finally, it became night, and we settled down in an open area. Eddie took out a match and lit a fire, while I got out the hamburger meat for our dinner. I have to admit, it was the best meal I’ve ever had since my mother passed on.

We talked well into the night, and then finally decided to rest for a while. We each took turns keeping guard of the campsite. I slept peacefully through Eddie and Al’s watch, but once they woke up Ben, it was a different story; he would let out a shriek every time he heard an animal noise, which kept us all up.

Finally, it was my turn. I wept soundlessly through my watch, feeling all the pain I’ve had since my mother passed on, constantly hearing her voice, seeing mental pictures of her in my head.

I just started to fall back to sleep, when the sun rose up. I got up, and gently woke everyone up.

We started walking along until we came to the Lonely River, named for its calming waters. We knew just beyond this point was Northwood Road, where we

would find the house.

We waded through the river and excitedly walked a quarter of a mile down Northwood road.

“There it is! I see it!” shrieked Ben.

There it was. The roof was sagging in, and there was mold all over the house. But, the thing that scared us most was the macabre silhouette hanging over the house.

“I’ll lead the way,” Eddie said boldly.

Eddie went to open the door, and when he did, the rusted hinges gave way, and the door fell forward. We all laughed nervously.

We entered the house and it was dark. Darkness I’ve never seen, even to this day.

“I think I just stepped on a cat,” whimpered Ben.

“Who’s there!” said a high shrill voice.

We were all frozen dead in our tracks.

Out of the darkness appeared an elderly woman; so skinny it looked as if she could easily snap in half. She had silver hair, which reflected the morning sunshine.

“What are you kids doing in my house,” said the shrill voice that sounded like fingernails dragging across a chalkboard.

“W-we just w-wanted to explore t-the house, w-we sincerely d-didn’t know you lived h-here, ma’am,” replied Ben.

For a second we had no idea what she was going to do, but to our surprise, she grinned.

“Come, sit down,” she told us.

We followed her orders, just as if we were in the military.

“We really didn’t mean to bother you ma’am, we’re real sorry,” said Eddie apologetically.

“Well, aren’t you a very polite young man,” she said to him.

I could see a small smile on his face, for that was probably the first time anyone ever told him that.

“Don’t worry about it,” she said, “when I was little I used to love having adventures too. Anyway, I enjoy the company. You young men are the first people I’ve talked to in years.”

As we sat and listened to her talk about her life and her adventures, I found myself very comfortable in her company. She was very wise and compassionate. I felt a closeness to her that I couldn’t explain; like she was my grandmother, someone that I needed in my life.

“Well, I think we should get going now,” I said after about an hour of reminiscing.

“Yeah, our parents might get worried if we’re gone too long,” added Ben.

“Okay,” she replied, “but come and visit me again.”

“We will,” promised Al.

We walked out of the house, dumbstruck.

“Well,” I said “I think we made a new friend today.”

“Yeah,” everyone agreed.

Meeting Mrs. Stevens filled a void in my life. She helped me grow up and face my fears. I learned to move on, and figured out that you can't change the past.

Eddie put his arm around me, and we all walked off into the warm autumn forest.

*Eddie and I continue to be best friends even to this day. It turns out Mrs. Stevens lost her husband in World War I, and remained alone, until we became part of her life. We continued to visit her until she passed away at the age of 103. She changed my life for the better, something I feel I could never repay her for.*

**Adam  
Archambault**  
Grade 7  
Scotts Ridge  
Middle School  
Ridgefield

## Scars

It was a clear, bright June day, and we had been in our new house for almost half a year. I already knew the neighborhood, and I also knew that it had some awesome biking areas, a nicety not enjoyed at my past residence. I was enjoying a pleasurable ride down Victor Drive, and my friend Joe happened to be about.

We decided to play a little game of let's go up and down the lips of people's driveways until they get mad and tell us to bug off. Their neatly manicured, brilliant green lawns tempted us next, but these people were so obsessed with their yards that they would have attacked us with large gardening shovels. We then took to wheel-burning-by-braking-really-fast, and the sweet aroma of scorched tire filled the warm air. When we got bored again, we started racing up and down the dogleg cul-de-sac. This was a fine idea but large patches of sinister, dried-dirt-gray gravel, the death to bikers, were all over from the recent rain. It was one of these patches that did me in. I was coming back on the final lap, when I heard "CRUNCH, crunch, crunch, CRUNCH!!!" Not good. I tried braking, but all that achieved was getting me five feet in the air...Horizontally!!! I was flying! The tarred, scuffed pavement was far below me and...I had brought the bike with me. Peachy. Just ducky. I was falling to a gravel-filled patch of doom, with a 20-pound bike on top of me. I braced for impact, felt my heart beating extremely fast, and, in that one moment, time slowed and let me reflect on how much this was going to hurt. How nice.

And then I landed. A huge wave of pain and shock coursed through me as I hit the pavement. Gravel embedded itself into my side as blood trickled off me, and the bike crushed me into the ground in my weakened state. A horrible, ear-piercing shriek startled me until my dazed mind realized that it was mine. Joe took one look at me and then raced off to get my dad. By then I had stopped denying the pain and lay there pitifully moaning. My dad came and dragged off the bike, so I could sit up. I was relatively lucky. My helmet had preserved my head, the chain of the bike had only scraped up my leg through my torn jeans, and I had pebbles halfway into my skin. The worst was two large pebbles, stuck in

two different spots in my knee, the bigger of which had fallen out, soaked in my blood, hollowing out a gash two centimeters wide and almost as deep! Nothing was broken, so I slowly hobbled back home to recuperate for a week or two. I still have those scars. Now, I prefer rollerblades and kneepads!

## Snow

Mother Nature is tucked into bed  
With a glacial eggshell-white quilt  
That shimmers with the radiance  
Of a narcissistic moon  
Gazing at itself  
In a pool of rippled water.  
Her quilt covers every imaginable surface  
Like an untamed patch  
Of glistening bleached wild flowers  
Obscuring all her imperfections.  
Ornate and intricate snowflakes  
Take a leisurely stroll down from the heavens  
To kiss her goodnight.  
The world is silent.  
No one dares wake her up  
From her peaceful slumber.

## Fifty Feet Up

“Keep going; it’s easy!”  
they yell to me  
from fifty feet below.  
How would they know  
when they’re not up here,  
dangling from slim ropes  
high above the campground,  
feeling the rapid beat of my heart  
or the shake of my anxious legs?

**Devin  
Karbowicz**  
Grade 7  
Avon Middle  
School  
Avon

**Ashley Larkin**  
Grade 7  
RHAM Middle  
School  
Hebron



None of them are harnessed in,  
feeling the pinch of the carabineer  
like an angry snake,  
nipping at their hips.  
Their palms aren't turning white  
from gripping ropes  
and clenching fingers.  
Their stomachs aren't fluttering with butterflies  
as they climb their way up,  
supported only by thin ropes.  
They are not where I am.

But all the while,  
that one encouraging yell  
is enough to push me  
to grip even tighter,  
to forget my trembling arms  
and weary legs.  
That one shout drives me enough  
to climb even higher  
and reach the top.

And as I finally step  
on that fifty-foot-high platform,  
my heart explodes with pride.  
I have conquered my fears;  
doubted and succeeded.  
And then...  
in the midst of all my joy,  
I turn around excitedly,  
and freeze as I look down.

## **Granddaddy Blue Skies**

The walls were bare. The shelves were empty. Huge brown boxes stood imperiously in every corner of every room, stacked so high it was a wonder they didn't teeter and crash to the ground, scattering their contents everywhere.

Corrine Chehrish wandered aimlessly among the boxes, shrinking away from their dominance.

"Don't go far; we may need your help soon," Corinne's mother warned, turning away with a sheet of labels and a big, ugly, black permanent marker.

**Carolyn  
Conant**  
Grade 7  
Whisconier  
Middle School  
Brookfield



Corinne turned and leaned onto the counter, propping her head up with one palm. She sadly studied the many pictures crammed along the countertop, the only things left in the once cheerful and busy kitchen.

There were pictures of Corrine and her brothers in every size and frame imaginable. Black and white pictures, colored pictures, close-ups, brown frames, metal frames, handmade frames. Pictures preserving fourteen years of Corrine's memories, capturing the joy of nearly one and half blissful, wonderful, bittersweet decades spent almost entirely with...him. But it was too painful to think about him now. It had only been five weeks, after all.

Corrine's listless eyes passed over each memory, caressing their emotions and yearning to be a part of the world she had known as a child.

Her gaze settled on a picture of him. His few remaining wisps of white hair were blowing gently in the wind, his strong hands tucked casually into his pockets. But his eyes, his eyes were what made him special. The twinkling intelligence and impish pleasure, a pure, good-hearted cunning glitter of loving adoration for life and all its aspects. Peering into his blue, blue eyes, you got the feeling that he knew something terrifically humorous, but you knew he wouldn't tell you, and he would just chuckle at your squirming impatience.

She looked at the six orange numbers in the bottom corner. The picture had been taken last year, only two months before they found out.

Corrine, her heart twisting and wringing itself into a bloody, sobbing mass, reached out and gently let her finger trail along his face, a face she would never touch again save in her dreams.

The soft scuff of a shoe on the floor tiles viciously yanked Corrine out of her heart-broken reverie. She jerked her hand back from his picture and whirled around, her startled eyes meeting that of her oldest brother, Deacon's.

"Hey," he said uncomfortably.

"Hi," Corrine answered, averting her eyes.

In the stiff silence that ensued from their monosyllabic conversation, Corrine wondered what had happened to make her and Deacon act this way around each other. They had been best friends up until when Deacon went away to college last year, performing nervy exploits into the dark forest behind the pond, challenging each other at every possible moment, each daring the other to do better.

"Well," Deacon said finally. "I'd better go help Mom with the, um, packing."

"Yes," Corrine mumbled. "You'd better..."

Deacon started to turn, but paused, and seemed to be fighting for words. Corinne waited, but at last Deacon just walked away.

\* \* \* \* \*

"C'mon, Cory," Deacon taunted, careening around the side of the house. "Can't you run any faster?" He flashed an arrogant grin over his shoulder at his sister, racing along the grass.

Six-year-old Corrine gritted her teeth and pumped her arms and legs even

harder, sprinting along behind her brother. Inch by inch, she started to catch up. Soon she was close on his heels, sucking in air like a vacuum cleaner discovering an old pile of dust under the rug.

Her brother looked over his shoulder again, to see how far behind Cory was. His eyes widened when he saw instead how close she was.

Deacon veered around a pile of wood and leaped over a small bush, Cory sticking to his back like his shadow.

Oh, no! Cory thought when she saw their designated finish line ahead. She screwed up her face and urged her screaming lungs and aching muscles faster, faster, always faster.

Deacon, for his part, was also running harder than ever. He was twenty bounds away from the finish line, nineteen bounds away, seventeen bounds away, fifteen...

Knowing that she couldn't win, but desperately trying to keep dignity in her pocket, Cory launched herself at Deacon and brought him tumbling to the ground, her arms wrapped around his knees.

"Hey!" Deacon yelled, enraged. Cory lay on her back, laughing. Deacon sat up and scowled, but soon his sister's merriment spread to him as well, and he couldn't help but grin.

"I did win, you know," he added boastfully.

"Only cuz yur five years bigger than me," Cory replied cheerfully.

"You run like a girl," Deacon said, trying to sound scornful. Cory instantly sat up and glared at him. She punched him in the arm, and presently the siblings were involved in a playful scuffle, pushing, punching, and prodding each other.

Suddenly a shadow fell over the pair, and the two youngsters looked up, shading their eyes against the sun, to see their grandfather standing over them.

"Granddaddy!" Cory chirped happily.

"What are you rascals doing?" Granddaddy asked, pretending to frown at them.

"I'm tickling Cory!" Deacon shouted, launching himself at his sister, who had been momentarily distracted.

The shrieks and giggles that reached Granddaddy's ears were so filled with ecstasy and pure joy and innocence and good, old-fashioned fun that he simply could not resist any longer. He immediately got down on his hands and knees and joined in on the brawl, tickling as devilishly as any active five-year-old.

Together, flushed and exultant, the three rolled giggling over the finish line.

\* \* \* \* \*

Inhaling the fresh autumn air, Corrine trotted down the steps to the beach. She had lived only about one hundred meters away from the lake's edge, and she had a giant sandbox that she called her beach.

Quietly Corrine walked out onto the gently swaying dock, the skin on her feet flinching away from its frostbitten metal.

She stood on the very end of the dock, looking out on a scene which had so many times before met her eyes. But now everything looked different. Everything was more precious and beautiful than before.

She had spent so much of her life in this lake. Especially with him. All day together, out in the sun.

The sun.

That was why he was no longer here. Why Corrine was standing on the edge of his dock, alone.

Corrine thought of the old saying, “You never know how much you value something in life until it’s gone.” Wasn’t that true. There was the story of her life, wrapped up in a nutshell.

The lake was calm today, despite the fierce breeze that whistled and zoomed through the air. It was cooler now, being near to sunset.

Corrine stared at the lake, at the little waves that bobbed up and down. At its depthless shades of green and blue. At the calm roll of the water that she had dove into so many times before.

Swiftly she knelt down, extending her bare feet over the edge. Without hesitating, she dipped her feet into that brilliant, blissful water and swished them back and forth, ignoring the bitter bite of the cold.

Corrine lay on her back, still letting her feet trail in the lake.

She looked at the sky.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Granddaddy, Granddaddy!” Cory shrieked merrily. Granddaddy raced along the dock, causing it to produce protesting groans and creaks. At the end of the dock, Granddaddy leaped into the air and tucked his knees up to his chest, wrapping his arms around his legs.

Cory and Deacon screamed, frantically trying to dive out of the way. But Granddaddy was quicker; he exploded into the water. Cory and Deacon were swamped by a huge wave.

Giggling uncontrollably, the two surfaced again and looked around for Granddaddy. They didn’t see him. All was still in the water.

“Granddaddy?” Deacon called out, not unworriedly.

“BOO!” Granddaddy growled, leaping out from under the dock. Immediately he started splashing torrents of water on his grandchildren.

Merry once more, the kids joined in just as enthusiastically.

After ten minutes or so of fierce battles, the three sat down on the lake floor, being very near the beach. They were all happily exhausted. Their cheeks glowed with health and their eyes sparkled.

“Granddaddy, let’s play the hole game!” Cory said suddenly, paddling over to Granddaddy.

“All righty, Cory-girl,” Granddaddy said. He put Cory on his back and walked out into the deeper water, where only he could stand.

He counted to three and then ducked his head under the water, Cory scrambling to sit on his shoulders.

Granddaddy came up again and the hole game began. He would take a few unsteady steps, murmuring uncertainly all along the way, and then he would step into a “hole” and suddenly duck under the surface. Cory would shriek as she was quickly sucked downwards, but usually Granddaddy only got her wet up to her neck. Each time Granddaddy fell into a hole, Cory would squeeze her eyes shut and bellow, clapping her hands over Granddaddy’s eyes to get a better grip.

The strange pair splashed around tumbling into holes for quite a while before Granddaddy paused for a rest. Cory leaned forward on his shoulders, resting her elbows on the top of his balding head.

“Look, Granddaddy,” she said, pointing at the sky. “The sun is setting! Isn’t it pretty?”

Granddaddy looked up and agreed that it was a very beautiful sunset. Then, with a nimble bending of his knees, he dunked Cory all the way under the water. Even her head went under. Surprised, Cory let go of Granddaddy’s head and toppled backwards as he rose again.

“Help, Granddaddy!” Cory spluttered, treading water.

Granddaddy smiled at her. “Don’t you know, Cory-girl, that every hole you fall into,” he said, “you have to climb out of by yourself?” But he extended a hand to her anyhow.

\* \* \* \* \*

Quietly Corrine walked around the corner of the house. Shooting a precautionary look about her, she climbed onto the green metal electrical box and leaped easily up to the roof.

Hunching over, she scurried up the side of the roof and stopped only when she had reached the very peak.

She hunkered down, wrapping her arms around her knees and drawing them close to her body.

Corrine gazed at the rugged hillside, obscured and decorated by the tall pine trees that grew every inch of the way up it.

Where the terrain let off and the sky was born, a milky haze was settling over the sun, which was slowly crawling down to meet the trees.

Corrine gazed at the rugged hillside, obscured and decorated by the tall pine trees that grew every inch of the way up it.

Where the terrain let off and the sky was born, a milky haze was settling over the sun, which was slowly crawling down to meet the trees.

Corrine took a deep breath. She loved sunsets. They always calmed her.

A part of her recognized guiltily that she hadn’t helped her four brothers and her mom move his stuff out at all, but she just couldn’t bring herself to do it.

Uneasily she tried to look at something that didn’t provoke such painful memories, but everything existing haunted her.

She fought against the surge of memories that threatened to spill out of the little box she had locked them up in.

The box wobbled and teetered, then the lock burst and the lid was thrown open.

It all started last year, in September. A month Corinne would always remember. She came home from school one day to find her parents sitting at the kitchen table, their faces worried.

“Hiya, Dad,” Cory had said, dropping her backpack onto the floor. “What’s wrong?”

Dad slowly turned to her. “Well, sweetie,” he replied slowly, “I’m afraid I have some bad news. Granddaddy has skin cancer.”

Cory’s blood froze and her heart stopped beating. Cancer? But—cancer killed people!

When she had recovered sufficiently for her parents to tell her more, she learned that he had developed skin cancer from not wearing sun tan lotion when he played outside on the lake all day, all summer, with his grandchildren.

Over the next four months, Granddaddy underwent many treatments, and they thought he was getting better. But soon he started moving around with more and more difficulty. One morning when he woke up, they discovered that he couldn’t talk.

The next week, Granddaddy was in a serious condition. He was confined to his bed all day long, and one or the other of Cory’s parents was with him constantly.

Cory and Deacon were devastated. Granddaddy’s skin cancer had spread to his brain. They knew they didn’t have much time with him left.

For three weeks, the siblings agonized over their grandfather. Three weeks of fervent prayers and lingering hopes. Their days and nights were spent in torment, knowing that someone they loved dearly was dying, knowing that they couldn’t stop it, and wondering when it would actually happen.

Late one night Cory was shaken awake by her father. His face was pale and drawn. He told Cory that this was the end.

Like a robot, Cory dressed. Her dad drove her to Granddaddy’s house, and Cory immediately slipped inside his room.

There was Granddaddy, lying in the bed that would be his final resting place. Softly Cory walked over to the bed, leaning over her grandfather.

“Granddaddy?” she said quietly, desperately trying to keep her voice from breaking.

With one of those little sighs that were all Granddaddy could make now, he turned over to face Cory. There he was, the treasure of her heart, her lifelong companion, her knight in shining armor. Granddaddy couldn’t die; this was all a cruel joke. Granddaddy lived forever.

Cory stared at the face that she had so long trusted and loved, a face now transformed. Granddaddy was thin and wrinkled, and he had lost the little hair he had left due to chemotherapy.

But his eyes, his eyes were still the same. The same depthless, pure, brilliant blue that haunted her dreams. The same intelligence and love etched in their centers.

“It’s good to see you again, Granddaddy,” Cory said, placing her hand on

his cheek. He was too warm, too full of life to be dying. At a loss for words, Cory tried to pour out her soul into Granddaddy's mind. An enormous, painful lump was rising in her throat, stifling her, choking her.

Once again Cory looked into his eyes. She knew, suddenly, that he understood what she couldn't say out loud.

With one last loving search of her face, Granddaddy allowed his eyelids to droop over those ineffably magical eyes for the last time.

All because he hadn't taken the time to put on sun tan lotion before he played with his loved ones.

\* \* \* \* \*

That was in February. Now it is March.

Now they were packing up all of his stuff and selling his house. Selling all of her memories and happy moments as a carefree kid.

Corrine rocked back and forth where she sat, her grief consuming her. Oh Granddaddy, Granddaddy. Why did you have to go? Corrine still couldn't comprehend that she would never again sit on Granddaddy's lap, or have tickling matches, or show him something she made, or play the hole game.

She didn't notice the footsteps behind her.

Quietly Deacon sat down next to her. Hastily Corrine tried to smother her sobs, wiping away her tears.

She had thought that she spent all of the tears during the three weeks when Granddaddy was sick.

"Hey," said Deacon softly.

"Hi," she choked out.

"I thought you would be up here," Deacon said, stretching himself out on his back.

There was silence for a while. Then, "I think about him a lot, too,"

Corrine stared at her brother. He had never talked about what happened.

Deacon turned his head towards her. "I miss him so much," he said.

At this Corrine succumbed to her tears and wept her heart out, leaning her head on Deacon's shoulder and letting out all the emotions she had fought so hard to keep away for the past month.

"Why did Granddaddy have to die?" she cried, terrible spasms racking through her.

Deacon rubbed her back and patted her shoulder until her sobs turned into little snuffles.

They lay next to each other on the roof.

As they watched, the sun cast brilliant streaks of pink, purple, and gray across the sky, the colors mixing and interweaving.

Presently the sun gave over to its rest and sank below the hillside, winking its farewell.

Deacon stood up and took a few steps back down the roof.

He stopped and turned. He looked up at her, smiling a little.

"C'mon, Cory," he said. "Can't you run any faster?"



Smiling back at him, Cory stood also and placed her hand in his.

The brother and sister stayed that way for a heartbeat, taking one last look at the new cape cloaking the atmosphere.

The sky was a familiar shade of blue.

#### Author's Note

When I was eleven, my grandfather, Dat, was diagnosed with skin cancer. He got it from playing out on his beach all summer with us, his grandchildren. Five months later, he started showing gradual signs of declining health; he had more trouble hearing, was slower at walking, and sometimes he had problems talking to us. A month later, shortly after my twelfth family birthday party, Dat was confined to his bed at all times. My parents and my aunts and uncles, and my new grandmother, whom Dat had married only three or four months before getting cancer, took turns watching over him. Late one night in February, my dad shook me and my brother and sister awake, and asked us if we wanted to go see Dat for the last time. I stayed at home. I wanted to remember Dat as the witty, energetic, charming man he used to be.

I wrote this story sometime the next month, wanting to tell the world how special Dat was and how much he meant to all of us. Most of the events in this story are true. We did play the hole game, we did have water fights, we did climb on Dat's roof, I did have a hideout in his basement, and he did rig up a light bulb in there for me.

And Dat did have blue eyes.

## The Heart of the Forest

Summer, Sapwood Forest, Kingdom of Sermia:

The light filtered down through the leaves, soft and green. A gentle breeze swayed the treetops to and fro, and patches of sun danced on the ground. The sky peeked through the branches, bright blue and clear, the color of a blue jay's feather. A chipmunk stuffed its cheeks full of brown button shrooms from a decaying log. Birds flew overhead, shrilly calling to one another. Birches and maples were interspersed with tall, dark pines, and silver beeches spread their roots over moss-covered rocks. Indian pipes and red lady's pushed their head's up through the loam. Vines of wisteria wound their way through the canopy, the deep purple and lavender offsetting the vividly green leaves. A footpath wound its way through the forest, circling around large trees and bramble thickets. It was fairly well used, but the forest was ever encroaching on the packed earth.

Skylark saw none of this. Her sight was blurred by the water pooling under her eyes, threatening to spill down her cheeks. Even if her eyes were not

**Rebecca**

**Borton**

Grade 7

John Winthrop

Junior High

Deep River

watering, she would not have seen the serene image of the woods; her heart was too heavy; her mind too full. Skylark's bare feet pounded along the path, the occasional twig snapping beneath them. She could hear the rhythmic thumping of her feet, her heart pounding double-time in her chest. *Like the hare drums Bittersweet played at Summer Solstice*, she remembered. *Life was so simple then*. Her mouth felt dry and stale, and her breathing was becoming haggard. Beads of sweat rolled down her body, leaving wet trails on her tan skin. She could feel her coarsely made plant-fiber tunic clinging to her. It was curiously soft and light, a trademark of the Tree People, as they were called. *Her people*, she thought. Skylark's dark brown hair normally hung down her back, wisps falling in her eyes, but now it was shipping behind her and flying in her face. She could feel every muscle in her body straining; her legs ached, crying out for rest. She clenched her teeth *NO! I must keep going! Faster!* With this thought, she forced her body on. Skylark was in good shape—she was known for her speed, but she was still human.

Her legs finally gave out. Her body couldn't take the beating; she had been running for hours. She collapsed on the dirt, sobs racking her thin frame. Tears of frustration streamed down her dirty face, running into her parched mouth. She could taste the salt. *I failed. I couldn't do it. No. I can't fail. I must...get...there! Don't let yourself down, Sky!* The salty taste revived her, her fingernails scraped the earth, and she forced herself to look up. Skylark stared in disbelief: she stared at a huge, lichen-covered boulder. *I made it*. With that, she passed out.

\* \* \*

A little, ruddy-brown bird hopped forward, curious. He stared at the figure lying on the ground, and turned his head as if in question. *What is this? What is this?*, he wondered. He hopped forward once again, trying to get a better view, but wary of the unknown object. The figure did not move, so, braver this time, he hopped right up to it, his little clawed feet scraping the path. His black, intelligent eyes bright, he surveyed the figure. *A two-legs. And a young one at that. I wonder what it is doing so deep in Sapwood forest?* Its hand was lying open on the ground, palm turned upwards. The bird hopped over to it, and, interested, pecked the thumb, once, twice, three times. *Maybe it is good to eat?* All it tasted was the saltiness of sweat. *No. Not good for eats.*

\* \* \*

Skylark felt as if something was pulling at her inside her head. Something was tugging her back from the darkness that had enveloped her mind. She became dimly aware of her cheek resting against the cool dirt, and her aching legs reminded her of what she had just done. As she became conscious once more, she remembered where she was. *The Thinking Rock. I made it. What brought me back?* She stirred, using what seemed like an unreasonably large amount of effort to crack open her eyes. *How long was I out?* she wondered. She waited for her



eyes to focus. When they did, she saw a little, ruddy-colored bird. *Ahh. You must have brought me back. Thank you, friend.*

\* \* \*

The figure stirred, and the bird hopped back in alarm. Its eyes opened, and, when they did, he could see that they posed no threat. He seemed strangely drawn to them, as if they understood him. *Why does this two-legs thank me with its eyes?* He hopped toward her, tipping his head in question.

\* \* \*

Skylark slowly pushed herself into an upright position, so not to startle the bird. *Tree People have always been taught to appreciate and respect the forest and all its life....there must be something I can do to show my thanks...if it hadn't brought me back who knows how long I'd be unconscious! Oh! I know—I still have some wild barley,* she thought. Reaching into the dark brown sash in which she had wrapped the handful of barley, she scooped it up and held it out to the little bird. “Here. Take it with my thanks. We should be friends, you and I.” She quietly told the bird.

\* \* \*

*The two-legs is offering me something. But why? It is not like a two-legs to do! I wonder what is it holding?* Carefully, he hopped forward. When he looked into the outstretched hands, he saw it was barley. *Grain! It makes very good eats!* He greedily began to eat.

\* \* \*

“See. I told you we would be friends.” Skylark whispered. Slowly, she reached out a finger and gently stroked the bird’s neck. The feathers were incredibly soft. The bird closed its eyes. “What shall I call you, little one? You probably already have a name, but I need to have something to call you by.” Thinking hard, she bit her lip. “I know—I shall call you Russet! Like your feathers! What do you think about that?” Russet, as we must now call him, chirped his agreement.

\* \* \*

*“Legend tells us of the Thinking Rock, a massive boulder in the very heart of Sapwood Forest. It is said that those who make the journey deep into the forest and find the Rock are bestowed with the knowledge to answer their question. Not the ‘Will it rain tomorrow?’ kind, the kind buried deep inside, the ones that matter. A walk in the woods does not seem like much, especially Sapwood. You must take your first step on your journey as the first ray of the sun touches the earth.*

*The Thinking Rock chooses who finds it, you see. If it doesn't think the seeker is worthy of its knowledge, it won't let them find it. They will remain lost in the forest forever. It is the Heart of the Forest, and it controls all that happens within its borders.*" Skylark remembered what her Grandmother had told her. She smiled one of those secret smiles. She had found the Thinking Rock. Again.

When she was small, she had become lost in the woods. She had been terrified. Somehow, she ended up at the Rock, though she hadn't known it then. As soon as she touched the rock, she had felt calm, safe. She found her way back to the tribe.

\* \* \*

Here she was. Standing in front of the Heart of Sapwood Forest, with a bird perched on her shoulder. Slowly, steadily, she made her way towards the Rock. Her legs were a painful reminder of her run. She spread her fingers out over the rough side of the boulder, as if she was soaking up something from the Rock. Maybe she was. Skylark felt her mind clear, and everything came into sharp focus. She instinctively climbed up the rock, her hands finding handholds that she hadn't known were there. Finally, she reached the top, and sat cross-legged. She sat perfectly still, her back straight. Waves of calm rolled through her, the Thinking Rock seemed to absorb her troubles. Deep in her mind, she could feel the Heart of the Forest pouring its energy into her, assuring and strong. All was clear; everything made sense and was understood. It showed her where the knowledge she needed was. In her. It told her that she had power to find the answer. This knowledge swelled inside her, growing until it severed the link between her and the Thinking Rock. Skylark's eyes snapped open as she came out of the trance.

She looked at Russet, and smiled because she knew she had the answer.

## Blue Beads

The Lady Elizabeth Narton stared gloomily out into the streets of Devonshire, England, through her carriage window. She was around fifty, with brown eyes and hair that had once been auburn but was fading to gray. Her well-made and expensive clothes marked her as the wife of one of the minor nobility. In the town outside, a late January fall of snow was hard at work covering everything in an icy goosedown quilt. It was two weeks since Christmas, but only three days since Lady Elizabeth had argued with her daughter, Corinthia. This one was much different from the past quarrels they had had, because it culminated so drastically. Lady Elizabeth began to look back on the events that had passed...

"Mother, I have wonderful news!" exclaimed Corinthia, bounding down the stairs and almost tripping over the hem of her long blue dress. Lady Elizabeth

Russell  
Parnon  
Grade 7  
Middlesex  
Middle School  
Darien

sighed. She glanced out the window at the grounds of the Narton Estate. Corinthia is so energetic and carefree, thought Lady Elizabeth. But she's twenty-one! She ought to take the idea of marriage a little more seriously.

But out loud she said, "Well, Corinthia dear, you can tell me all about it in the carriage. We're paying a visit to Lord Ellersby today, and we don't want to be late."

"Why?" asked Corinthia nervously. She was highly aware that the time had come for her to be married, and the gleam in her mother's eye that had shone since two days after Christmas had made her uneasy.

"Well, dear," waffled Lady Elizabeth, who seemed reluctant to answer, "his son, Arthur Ellersby, er, well he's such a good-looking boy. He's, erm, also got quite a large amount of money, you know, and, er, he's single--"

"No, mother," interrupted Corinthia. "I see what you are doing. You are trying to set me up with that no-talent do-nothing. Well, I won't stand for it. Besides, I've already chosen someone to marry. Someone whom I actually love. That was what I was going to tell you."

"Well, who is it?" inquired Lady Elizabeth, pleased. In the long run, this would make it easier for her. But Lady Elizabeth, being a clever old fox, knew that something was fishy. She just couldn't put her finger on it.

"Yes, indeed I have," continued Corinthia. "I have chosen Richard Selvet as my husband." Lady Elizabeth's jaw dropped and her eyes widened in disbelief. This was not proper at all.

"But Corinthia, Richard is only the storekeeper's son. Whatever do you see in him?"

So it had begun. It continued as Lady Elizabeth listed all of Richard's flaws in an effort to dissuade her, and Corinthia announced all of his good points, which outnumbered the bad. Lady Elizabeth abandoned all attempts at subtlety and forbade the marriage outright. Corinthia shouted back that she would marry Richard or die. Finally, Lady Elizabeth flew into a fury and shrieked that unless Corinthia did as she was told, disgrace would fall upon the Narton family, and she would be disowned and cut from the will. Corinthia screamed that she didn't care, packed up her bags and left to live with the Selvets. Oh, my darling daughter, thought the now-grieving Lady Elizabeth. What have I done to you?

Her musings were interrupted by a flash of blue from one of the passing shop windows. Signaling to the carriage driver to retrace their steps, she gazed expectantly out until she saw the same flash of blue. She motioned the driver to stop and wait, then climbed out and entered the shop.

Inside it was musty and dim, but warm. All kinds of jewelry hung from the ceiling, the walls, and were stacked on the many shelves. But the one necklace that had caught Lady Elizabeth's attention was resting on a black velvet model of a neck. It consisted of blue glass beads strung together on a strange cord made out of something that looked like grass. Lady Elizabeth stared at it, entranced by its beauty. She moved closer..

"May I help you?" a voice suddenly asked. Lady Elizabeth spun around and came face to face with a man around sixty. He had a thick black mane of hair with large streaks of gray. His clothes were typical of the ordinary townsfolk, but

his eyes were his strangest feature. They were a blue so dark as to be almost black, and they looked as if they had seen things beyond the comprehension of normal people.

“Why, yes,” said Lady Elizabeth hastily to cover up her surprise. “I was admiring this lovely piece here, and I wish to know how much it costs.”

“This one is not for sale,” the strange shopkeeper said. “Many have asked about it, but all have been turned away.”

Lady Elizabeth frowned, perplexed. “Why is this so?” she inquired, a bit annoyed as well.

The man looked at her. “Because it is cursed,” he answered in a senatorial tone that seemed to echo around the narrow confines of the shop. “Many years ago, it was stolen from the tomb of an Egyptian pharaoh’s wife. Legend said that her spirit cursed every item that was taken, and every one of this necklace’s owners has died a horrible death. Do not wish to possess it, or you shall meet the same fate.”

Lady Elizabeth waved her hand impatiently. “Bah! Mock me not with these tales of curses and spirits. There are no such things. Now, my good man, tell me the price and be quick about it. I haven’t got all day.”

“It is not for sale,” the man repeated. He paused for a moment, thinking. Then he said, “Today, it is a gift.” He swiftly lifted the necklace from its pedestal and handed it to Lady Elizabeth with a flourish. “It is yours, my lady, if you desire it so. For my part, I have grown sick of seeing it. But I must deliver to you this last warning: do not offend the spirit.” Lady Elizabeth curtsied, visibly shaken, and exited the shop. The man watched her climb into the carriage and drive off into the swirling snow.

Over the next few days, Lady Elizabeth wore the necklace quite frequently. She was enamored with it, often wearing it all day. Her husband, the Lord John Narton, politely remarked that she looked very nice and then returned to his political studies. Nothing ever much impressed Lord Narton.

One day, as Lady Elizabeth was walking down the hall on the way to dinner, she saw a beetle crawling along the floor. She squished it with the sole of her shoe, ate dinner, and forgot about it. But the next day, she saw two more beetles scurrying about in the corner atop a small pile of white sand. She summoned the servants to clean it up, and then entered her husband’s study. “Have you noticed any beetles or sand in odd places, dear?” she asked loudly, so as to get his attention.

“No,” answered her husband, peering owlishly up at her from a large, dusty tome entitled The Prince. “Well, actually I did see a trail of sand across the doorway to this room. I didn’t pay it any mind, though. You walked through it as you came in,” he added, vaguely waving a hand toward Lady Elizabeth’s feet.

A chill feeling came over Lady Elizabeth, and she remembered the warning of the shopkeeper, “...it is cursed.” Her hand moved to the necklace as she remembered that Egypt, the land of the pharaoh’s wife, was a desert country with lots of sand and little blue beetles the natives called *scarabs*. That would explain...no, it couldn’t be. It simply could not rationally be possible. I will just keep on wearing the necklace and see what else happens, thought Lady Elizabeth

defiantly.

The plague of beetles continued. Lady Elizabeth spotted two on the ceiling and five on the dining table. Lord John glimpsed three crawling out of one of his books, and four mooching about on his desk. The servants saw nine in the pantry as they cooked the meals. And the sand kept turning up as well. The maids and the butler demanded overtime pay because of the amount of times they had to clean it up from the corners and sweep it away from the doorways. Finally Lady Elizabeth nagged Lord John enough so that he contracted the services of the exterminator. Everyone left the house so that he could work in peace. After two agonizing hours of standing in the freezing snow, Lady Elizabeth marched inside to find the exterminator shaking his head sadly.

“Them ding-danged buggers won’t stay dead,” he related wearily. “I been chasin’ ’em around the house forever, musta sprayed each one of ’em at least four times. They just keep on runnin’. I kept slidin on a lot o’ sand, as well, dunno where it came from. I’m sorry, yer ladyship, but I can’t do it. It’s too big a job.” And with that, he walked out of the house and drove away in his wagon.

Now Lady Elizabeth began to get really worried. Her sleep was haunted by fearful nightmares in which a faceless phantom floated over a sand dune, with scarabs crawling everywhere. She didn’t eat well anymore, and she jumped at every shadow. Then one day, the sand and the scarabs failed to appear. The Nartons and the staff looked everywhere, but not a single grain of sand or the merest sliver of a beetle shell was to be found. That day, a celebration was held in the Narton home. All the servants were given the day off, and Lady Elizabeth cooked a sumptuous meal. After consuming it ravenously with her husband, Lady Elizabeth turned in early. She kept the necklace on, for some strange reason. It just felt right.

Late that night, Lady Elizabeth woke suddenly. She listened carefully, for some small noise had awakened her. Silence...then a soft squeaking from the doorway. Oh, thought Lady Elizabeth, it’s just a draft blowing the door, and that’s what I heard. She turned over sleepily and was just about to go to sleep again, when another squeak sounded nearer to the bed. Terrified, Lady Elizabeth threw the covers over her head and cowered beneath them.

“Lady Elizabeth Narton!” roared a deep female voice. The sheets were yanked from her prone body and Lady Elizabeth looked up in terror. At the foot of the bed hovered a glowing apparition. It was twice the height of a normal woman, for female it was, and it wore a crown adorned with cow horns that supported a disk between them. It wore a sheer veil over its face, and the rest of its body was swathed in a strange combination of rotting bandages and ancient silk robes.

“What do you want?” asked Lady Elizabeth, sobbing in fear.

“You have defiled my beautiful necklace,” answered the phantasm. “You have attempted to kill my scarab servants. And you have committed crimes against your own flesh and blood! Your heart shall be weighed against the feather of Ma’at by Anubis, the jackal-headed one. Now go to trial!”

Lady Elizabeth felt her breath becoming short. The necklace was glowing blue as she slowly asphyxiated. She was dizzy, the room spinning and fading

away. As a last attempt to save herself, she raised her hand weakly to try to hit the ghost. But her fingers passed through it, and she slumped back on the bed as the scene faded away.

Everyone in town attended the funeral. Lord John, the Ellersbys, the servants, the townsfolk, and even Corinthia and the Selvets. Corinthia and Lord John sobbed in each other's arms as Corinthia lamented that the last words she had said to her mother had been in anger. Lord John cried that he had not paid enough attention to his beloved wife, and then the two started wailing all over again, in spite of the comforting attentions of the Selvets and sundry townsfolk. The doctor had performed a thorough autopsy on the cadaver, and had diagnosed the cause of Elizabeth's death to be strangulation by her own necklace. How sad, how unfortunate, everyone sighed as they moved past the coffin. There was a tear in every eye as the coffin was lowered into the grave and the priest said the prayer for the dead.

One eye was yet dry. It was that of a woman draped in many silk garments, all of them old and worn. Here and there a bandage poked through, and on her head was a crown that consisted of two cow horns supporting a disk. She stood behind a broad tree, so no one noticed her. A veil covered her face, and it moved as she recited a prayer for the dead in her own language, one that would chill the blood of any who overheard. A small blue beetle crawled out from beneath a bandage on her shoulder, and her hand moved up to caress it lovingly. When she finished her prayer, she stood tall, and disappeared. No one saw her go.

**Keegan Healy**  
Grade 7  
Talcott  
Academy of  
Science and  
Mathematics  
Avon

## The Swing

### The Swing

A story in 4 prose/poems  
(a completely true story of the first swing on the vine)

#### 1: The Step

I step up onto the platform.  
The thrilling tension builds on the night air  
and hums in my head like an aggravated wasp.

#### 2: The Vine

The Vine waits before me,  
hanging in the wooded hollow like a Mage's rod,  
emmanating a sort of subtle and unknown power.



I grip it and the thrill dissolves into the air,  
replaced by an ancient, instinctual fear.  
I picture myself being stabbed on a tree limb, crashing,  
slipping, everything that can go wrong occurring.  
But the energy locked in the air burns through the walls in my  
mind and a shiver runs down the back of my neck.

### 3: The Swing

I jump up about eight inches and fearfully cling to the end of  
the Vine to hold myself up. I pass over the tree roots, my  
speed growing, and I race through the two trees. As they rush  
past, the strings of fear are ripped from my head and replaced  
by a cloud of contentment. My mind clear, I soar across the  
hollow, loosening my grip and imagining myself as a bird.  
I begin to rise, sailing towards the tip of my swing. I look back at  
the ground, some twenty feet down, and I am unable to take  
my eyes off it as it looms closer.

### 4: The landing

I release my feet, and flail against gravity to no avail. My feet hit  
the ground and I feel my legs buckling. I release my hands and  
shut my eyes to block out the dust. I skid a few feet, and roll  
over onto my back. I open my eyes and the thrill shoots out of  
my head to wait in a tree to slide down the Vine onto the next  
person to swing. I sigh and become conscious of the sound of  
my friends laughing.

## God's Psychiatrist

God's psychiatrist was tired,  
He had heard too much for one day.  
His head pounded and he felt slightly nauseous.  
He was positive his hair was turning gray.

His clients were numerous.  
The Easter Bunny came and mourned over a much needed holiday.  
Cupid had run out of love arrows  
And Santa's elves were protesting because they weren't getting minimum pay.

**Hannah  
Stewart**  
Grade 8  
Pawcatuck  
Middle School  
Pawcatuck

But the room was silent now.  
The only sound was Gabrielle's horn,  
A sound so rich and deep,  
The psychiastrist felt a new migrane being born.

"Why can't I get a moment of peace!?"  
The psychiatrist cried in dismay.  
"This is heaven after all,  
There has got to be a way!"

But no sooner had he finished his thought,  
Then in walked the head honcho of the crew.  
And as he sat down in the chair,  
The psychiatrist's exhaustion grew.

"Now listen here Mr. Heart,"  
Said God in a nervous tone.  
"I have so many problems,  
I'm soaked right to the bone."

"There are so many people to sort out,  
I have no time for fun,  
And most unfortunate of all,  
I must finish before the day is done."

Mr. Heart looked at his watch  
And let out a big groan.  
He glanced over at the nervous God,  
And with that he picked up the phone.

"I'm sending you to a specialist,"  
Mr. Heart explained.  
"You have far too much stress,  
So a new psychiatrist you have gained."

God seemed troubled at this concept.  
Mr. Heart was still quite tired.  
"Mr. Heart, you are crazier than I am,  
And therefore you are fired!"

So this concludes the story,  
Of Mr. Heart, our very dear friend.  
The story after heaven is very fascinating,  
But too bad this is the end.



## The Spurlen Effect

A bumblebee hummed in the corner of the room, beating its wings so fast they disappeared into a transparent blur. The sound made was a faint buzz, penetrating the muggy air of the sun-filled den. The bee hovered close to a picture of two girls and a smiling woman, as if inspecting it. When it was finished with its viewing, the bee lazily drifted over to the opposite side of the room. It dodged stacks of tattered books and plants that could barely squeeze into their age-old pots, and it found itself suspended over the smiling woman from the picture.

As the yellow-striped insect waited there, it gazed down upon the lady. Mrs. Welsh sat in a pink flowered armchair with worn-out arms and a lumpy back that suggested it had lived through ancient times. She was obviously the same woman as in the picture, but she had aged radically. Her hair was the white of the world after the first snowfall, and although it had once had a bouncy appearance, it now looked tired and limp. The rosy glow on her cheeks had been depleted from her skin years ago, leaving only pale wrinkles. The twinkle in her eyes had been extinguished by time, and the huge white-toothed smile had been contorted into a look of agony.

The bee watched Mrs. Welsh sit there with her hands clamped around her head. Suddenly, as the bee drifted closer, the old woman gave a small cry of pain, like an injured animal, and squeezed her eyes shut. The bee could not determine what was causing her pain, but it was obvious that she was in a state of misery.

Mrs. Welsh felt as if her head contained a furious volcano, threatening to erupt at any moment. Even the slightest movement, sound, or change in the small room in which she sat caused an awful feeling beyond words. She sat, as still as a corpse, waiting for the distress to pass, waiting for the mad drummer within her skull to cease its angry thudding.

All of a sudden, a horrible buzzing noise engulfed her head in a pain like no other. The noise was as loud as a nearby gunshot, but sounded like a fire alarm. The explosive sound set off the Mt. Vesuvius in her head, and she could feel the eruption vibrating her brain. Every time her head throbbed, it felt as if an angry tidal wave was crashing against the inside of her skull. It hurt to an unthinkable extent, the thunderous blast torturing her feeble body.

She sat there, helpless and pathetic, for what seemed like ages, until the huge swells of throbbing ebbed and the extreme pain was gone. She opened her eyes slowly, as if to make sure the bright sun would not re-awaken the volcano. The moment she regained sight, she discovered what had made the torturous sound. There, a foot away from the bridge of her nose, flew a small yellow bumblebee, dangling from an invisible thread. This small creature had poisoned the air around her with noise, triggering Mrs. Welsh's most hated enemy, her monstrous recurring migranes.

Mrs. Welsh had grown accustomed to these migranes, if they were even that. She did not think they were the same headaches others suffered from because she had never heard of so much extreme pain caused by such little things, like the buzz of a bumblebee. Her son-in-law, Alan, who was a doctor, had

Emma Fidel  
Grade 8  
John Winthrop  
Junior High  
School  
Deep River

recommended pill after pill after pill to try to stop the torment she suffered, but nothing had worked. She was at the point where she would try anything to rid herself of the ferocious monster.

\* \* \*

It was while she was watching her favorite soap opera that the commercial came on. As soon as it started, Mrs. Welsh couldn't help but be interested. Maybe it was the advertiser's thick and inviting Scottish burr that drew her in, or maybe it was the way that he seemed to know exactly how she felt about her headaches, but as soon as the man with the vibrant green hat and big brown, watery eyes started talking, Mrs. Welsh found herself mesmerized. "Do you suffer from horrible, unwanted headaches?" he started. "Don't you hate them more than anything? Don't you feel as if you would do anything to make your migraines cease to exist? Everyone here at PharmiMed knows exactly how you feel. We want to get rid of your headaches as much as you do, and we are here to help."

The funny man fascinated Mrs. Welsh. He was so unlike any other person she had ever known. He seemed very strange to Mrs. Welsh, but she couldn't determine why. He almost seemed to give off a magical glow of happiness, which, she thought, could have been her reason for thinking him odd. She stared at the television screen, begging to be fed more about how PharmiMed was going to help her. The Scottish man continued his speech, "We at Pharmi Med have devised a miraculous medicine that is nothing like any drug before it. This medicine that we call Spurlen will make your head feel better than ever. It has been scientifically proven to stop all different kinds of headaches. Whether your pain is all over, or in one specific spot, Spurlen will help. Whether the migraine makes your head throb, or it is blinding pain shooting through your head, Spurlen will help. We guarantee that it will help your head no matter what type of headache you have. Spurlen will do you wonders; you will feel young and happy again after your headaches are gone! So call us now at 1-800-PHRM-MED today to fight back against your awful headaches!" Mrs. Welsh immediately picked up the phone and dialed 1-800-PHRM-MED. Spurlen was the answer to her prayers.

\* \* \*

It came in a brown cardboard box two days later. Mrs. Welsh hobbled down her driveway slowly and carefully so that the arthritis in her left knee wouldn't hurt too badly. As she reached her mailbox, she felt her old, worn-out heart began to beat a little faster. She didn't know what it was about the medicine she had ordered, but just the thought of it made her happy. She opened the rusty green mailbox and to her delight reached in to find the box. She stood there, staring at the box, wishing with all of her soul that it would work, wishing harder than she ever had before that Spurlen would kill the unwanted monster in her head.

As soon as Mrs. Welsh entered her house, she poured herself a glass of

water and took two pills. She sat down and turned on the television, waiting for Spurlen to work its magic. The old lady sat for an hour, just waiting for a feeling of change, but nothing happened. As she watched a bee buzz back and forth across the room, she wondered when she would feel younger, as the Scottish man had said. She watched the bee swoop around the room, humming quietly. “I wish that horrid bee would stop buzzing around,” she thought to herself. “The noise is so obnoxious, just like that stupid bumble bee that gave me my headache...” And as she thought about it, she realized that the bee that now was just annoying her had once been the bee that tormented her head. The pill must have worked.

Slowly, a magnificent smile of joy spread across the old lady’s face, a face that had not smiled since the day that her husband died, a face that had not shown joy for years, that had been blank and pale for longer than anyone could remember. That same face was once again flushed and gleaming with happiness. She had finally stopped her headaches from attacking. With this thought she found herself humming a tune from her favorite movie, a movie she had not seen in seventeen years. She felt younger, better, happier than ever, just like the funny Scottish man said she would. And all because of Spurlen.

She woke up the next morning and didn’t have trouble standing up at first, like she usually did because of her knee. She used the old, noisy blender and she felt no pain in her head. She went for a walk in a park that she hadn’t visited in twenty-three years. Mrs. Welsh felt marvelous. She was so overjoyed by feeling so much better that she couldn’t help but display a smile wherever she went. She felt like someone who had just won the lottery, like things could not get any better. Even her family, when they came over, noticed a difference in her. “Mom, what happened to you?” said Mrs. Welsh’s daughter, Anna. “You are acting so different. But, I mean, good different.” Mrs. Welsh just smiled and said she got rid of her headaches and felt great.

\* \* \*

Two weeks went by, and Spurlen continued to work its magic. Mrs. Welsh had no complaints. She loved her new Spurlen-improved self. Then, on about the sixteenth day of using Spurlen, the telephone rang. “Hello, Betty Welsh speaking. How may I help you?” Mrs. Welsh chirped happily. “Mrs. Welsh!” said a man with a very strong Scottish accent. Now the man continued, talking extremely quickly, “Mrs. Welsh, I am calling on behalf of PharmiMed. We understand that you are one of our clients. You have been using Spurlen for two weeks now, correct?” “Oh yes! It’s just...” The man didn’t even let her answer his question, he just kept on talking, as if he was in a hurry to finish. “We apologize profusely that Spurlen hasn’t worked. We don’t understand why. In our lab tests it worked nine out of every ten tries. Now we have received 285,000 calls about Spurlen not doing anything. We apologize profusely. We cannot give you a refund, but as soon as we fix Spurlen, we will send you a revised version. Thank you for your understanding. Goodbye!”

Mrs. Welsh stood by with her phone still to her ear. She looked like a child who could not even begin to solve an extremely hard math problem—

dazzled. She thought to herself, trying to find an explanation for what had happened to her. "If Spurlen didn't make me feel so much better, what did?"

**Allison  
Dziuba**  
Grade 8  
East Ridge  
Middle School  
Ridgefield

## Inspiration

Please forgive me for I have not completed my English assignment.  
I've struggled for hours trying to pin down my evasive soul,  
But I came up empty, my net devoid of fish.  
So I tested the heavens, the seasons, the earth and those synonymous with natural beauty,  
But I couldn't find the cradling, warm hues of dawn all that compelling.  
Sonnet, cinquain, ottava rima, HIKE!  
It all spirals round my head like a constantly revolving door,  
And now there's nothing left but motion sickness.  
I've sat and pondered, looking studiously thoughtful,  
Producing such profound statements as "When's dinner?"  
Peevishly, I succumbed to my evident failure.  
Inspiration caressed my toes like playfully lapping waves,  
Only to disappear when the tide went out.  
But now, instead of seeking my poetry,  
It has discovered me, and I'm enthralled by its mystery, enveloped in its potency,  
And under its spell.

**Sheila  
Sennett**  
Grade 8  
Sedgewick  
Middle School  
West Hartford

## Blueness

It seems  
That all things reach toward the sky  
Toward the blue  
From the trees to the mountains  
But humans most of all.  
We all reach  
Toward the blue sky  
Building high  
Then higher still  
Both the child

With her wooden blocks  
And the tycoon  
With his glittering skyscrapers  
Build toward the blueness  
So far above  
As if a sliver of sky would grant them  
All the happiness they ever wanted.

We all stand  
Atop our creations  
We stretch our hands to the sky  
And think  
For just a moment  
The blue is within our reach,  
Then we close our hands  
On nothing.

We feel empty  
For just a moment  
As empty as our hands without the blueness  
Then we shake our heads  
And set to building once again,  
Striving to reach  
The endless blueness of the sky.

## Friday the 13th

Hi, my name is Joe Ave. I am 13 years old and in 8th grade in Devilsville Middle School. I am as thin as a wire and short as a...well, I'm really short—okay? I'm the smartest kid in the school, and I look like your normal stereotypical nerd. I have big glasses, braces and a red afro. It was about December last year when a kid called Max and his gang of bully friends started picking on me. I'm not safe anywhere. So just last Monday I got myself into a major, big time problem that almost got me into a lot of pain. Here's the story.

I was really grumpy when I woke up that morning because I had stayed up all night watching a science documentary on dung beetles (which wasn't that good), and when I woke up this morning, I was mad as the devil. School didn't really help my attitude much either. I had just started putting the combo into my locker when Max (that's the bully, remember?) slammed my locker shut. Rather

**Eric Fitting**  
Grade 8  
RHAM Middle  
School  
Hebron

than characteristically just putting in the combo again, I foolishly ran in front of him and socked him in the nose. Now, although I really can't punch hard at all, I could tell this one was one of the occasional ones that found its mark. He growled, obviously irritated and in a little pain, "I'm going to get you this Friday, and on that day you'll be sorry you were ever born." And with that remark he stalked away.

And it was all down hill from there. My home room teacher, Mrs. Alazlapamew, kept her one-detention a day rule by giving me a detention for not doing work when I was supposed to be, because I had finished it all the night before! And then all my other teachers loaded on the homework with a side of fresh essays for the next week. Then the bad luck struck again when I was walking home, and it started drizzling and raining and snowing and sleeting and hailing while I walked slowly up my long driveway, shoulders slumped against the sharp November cold. Finally, when I got home, my mom grounded me for getting the stinking detention. I had to stay in my room and do my homework. Man-oh-man, what a day!

Then, came Tuesday. Max and his buddies made a point of standing outside my next class, slicing their fingers across their throats and making dying noises when I came near enough to see them. Max started shoving me into the hard white locker-lined walls and pulling the posters on them down onto me. By the middle of the day all of my anger from the previous day had vanished and was replaced with a cold hard dreading of this Friday. I finally decided to talk to my parents about the problem when I got home. The weather still hadn't improved. By the time I got home, I was wet to the bone and freezing cold. I made myself a cup of rich creamy cocoa. In the five minutes that I was drinking it, all my fears and problems seemed to seep away into the glass of cocoa. I got down to the pile of homework I had and started on the reports I had to do for next Monday.

That night at dinner I brought up the topic of being bullied. I said, "Mom, Dad," I hesitated for a second, thinking about how to say it, then squeaked hurriedly, "I'm being bullied by the kids at school, and they said that they were going to beat me up in school on Friday."

"What did you say?" my parents both asked simultaneously. At least I had their attention.

"I said, I'm being bullied by the kids at school. They said that they were going to beat me up in school on Friday," I repeated more slowly this time. I saw Mom and Dad exchange worried glances.

Mom then said as if she was explaining something simple to a very young child, "Honey, they didn't mean that they were actually going to hurt you; they were only threatening you."

Yes, your mother is right, son," said Dad with just a hint of finality in his voice showing that the topic was closed. "Now could you please pass the pie?"

I remember going over the brief conversation in my head thousands of times in my head that night wondering if they thought I would buy that crud. It was ridiculous! I was going to be beaten up in three days or less with a money-back guarantee, and they thought Max was only joking! They must be nuts! After a while I drifted slowly off into a fitful sleep.



When I woke up in the morning, a plan popped into my head just as I woke up. It was so simple, I was surprised I hadn't thought of it before; all I had to do was talk to Mrs. Alazlapamew! She would take care of the problem.

I formulated how I would say it while I walked down the white washed corridors crowded with other kids going to their lockers. I would get to homeroom; they would do the pledge; I would go to Mrs. Alazlapamew; tell her my problem, and she would take care of Max. It was that simple. So I arrived in homeroom as planned (with Max making slices across his throat with his finger) and waited for the pledge. "Please rise for the pledge of allegiance to the flag, followed by a moment of silent meditation," came the fuzzy voice over the loud-speaker. So the whole class recited the pledge, and then I went over to the teacher. I told her that Max planned to hurt me severely on Friday. The teacher said, "I'll take care of it; don't worry about a thing, Joe." Five minutes later, I looked up from my math homework and saw the teacher take Max aside. "This is going to be great," I thought, "she will give him five detentions and send him to in-school suspension for the rest of the day for threatening me."

But what actually happened was this: The teacher told Max he should not be threatening other students, and if anyone reported it again, he would get a detention. That's it—no detention, no suspension, and no big trouble? Just don't threaten kids again or you will get a detention? I got a detention for just not doing work, but he gets just a warning for threatening to beat up kids? Needless to say, I was furious! And like Tuesday, Wednesday didn't get any better either. After class, Max said he was going to beat me up twice as hard for telling on him. The teachers continued to pile on the homework, my detention was on Friday (if I lived that long...), the essays were due in just five days, and the relentless, sunless, gray November drizzle continued.

I struck out with my parents, and then I struck out with the teacher. Who was left to help me? The only thing I could think to do was to wear extra clothing for padding that day, and figure out some way to run or to block the punches. Both seemed impossible. I wasn't very good in gym class, and I had no martial arts training what-so-ever. Thursday came and went uneventfully. It simply crept by while I dreaded Friday. It was the longest day and night I've ever had.

Finally, Friday came. Max passed me in the halls purposefully. He said I was going to die at noon. I was very scared by then and had no idea what to do. I thought helplessly that there was nothing I could do. I hoped I wouldn't lose any teeth, and that I wouldn't embarrass myself too much.

Max was waiting for me right outside the classroom door when the bell rang. His gang circled around me, stoked for a fight. He and I, in the middle, with me very scared, and his muscles bulging with veins popping out, ready to strike at any moment. He took a step forward, and before I knew it, he was swinging punches at me left and right. I was just trying to get out of the way, when my shoe caught on the linoleum, and I started to topple. I flailed my arms trying to catch my balance, and suddenly, my right fist connected (rather solidly) with Max's jaw! The blow was enough to keep me upright, but Max sank to the floor. As soon as I realized this I jumped up on top of him and started hammering away at his face as hard as I could. Unfortunately the additional blows did

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## The Sun's Seasons

nothing as Max was out cold and had a nasty bump on his cheek. By the time I was finished getting all my anger out Max's crowd had run off like little puppies with their tails between their legs. I left to go to the next class I had, but later that day I regretted my actions when I was sent to the principal's office and had to explain my situation carefully like a soldier would cross a minefield, but I talked my way smoothly out of the problem. In addition, courtesy of my smooth talking, I managed to score Max a detention in the office.

Max and his friends never gave me any more trouble in school. I guess I just got lucky. Mrs. Alazlapamew was so upset about Max that she canceled my detention. Friday the 13th doesn't seem like such an unlucky day after all.

The moon had just lowered himself from the night sky, readying for his nap and handing the watch over to his older brother, the sun. The sun rose and looked sleepily out at the world, stifling a yawn. He stretched giving a brilliant red and pink sunrise, which slowly faded to the usual post-dawn sky.

The sun was bored of watching over the world. There was never anyone to talk to and nothing new to look upon. He had tried talking to the flittery clouds, but they just giggled and floated on by. The birds didn't fly anywhere near close enough, and the other stars were sound asleep. To make matters worse, the land below was always brown. No other color, just plain brown. It annoyed him to no end. All day he thought of ways to solve his problem. After giving his award-winning sunset to the world, and sinking out of sight, he floated up and up and up until he reached his mother and father, the Great Stars.

"Mother, Father, I need your help. The Earth is so boring that I feel I might die if I have to spend one more day looking at its ugly land."

"Well, and indeed to goodness if that isn't horrible," chuckled his mother. Clearing her throat she added, "But don't worry for I do believe I have a solution." She leaned over and whispered something to the father star. He slowly nodded his head in approval. "Now dear, do stand back because it will get hot." And with that, the Great Stars sweated and strained, finally causing the reaction they had hoped for. Small white flames, about 100 in number flew a few feet from their bodies. Each flame slowly formed a head and other body parts, while the sun just stared in wide-eyed amazement. The finished product looked somewhat like a two-inch tall human, not including the small, pointed ears.

Softly the Sun asked, "What are they?"

"These, my son, are to be your helpers. Now go quickly, for your time here is almost up." And with that the sun floated back to earth, all 100 helpers in tow.



The sun made it back just in time, leaving the helpers to play with the moon for the day. All through the day, the sun fidgeted, anxious to go and talk to the people.

As the dusk neared, the Sun slipped away unnoticed, under the cover of the clouds. His helpers were waiting for him when he returned. "Hello. We are the children of the universe," chimed the people in unison.

"Can you help me? The Earth is so incredibly boring and there's nothing I can do to change it," stated the Sun.

"Indeed we can," answered one little person. "We," he said, pointing to all who wore dark green tunics, "Are wood nymphs. We represent cool spring days, merry little showers that bring beautiful flowers and new life," he finished. The wood nymph stepped back into the crowd, and let someone in a light blue tunic speak.

"We," he said, pointing to all like him, "Are summer elves. We represent hot days, delightful gardens, and active fields, forests and glades." He backed up and was replaced by one wearing a shimmering white tunic.

"We," he said, motioning to all clad in the shining material, "Are ice fairies. We are the creators of each separate snowflake, and the slick ice which covers all the lakes and ponds," he said in a pleasant, tinkling voice. The last speaker was slightly heavier than the rest and wore a fawn-brown tunic.

"We," he said, pointing to all that remained, "Are the dwarves. We are the bringers of blustery weather and brightly colored leaves." The Sun, who had listened intently, was overjoyed.

For the rest of the night, the sun and the people divided the Earth's time into four seasons, each representing one group. The wood nymphs named their winter. And lastly, the dwarves named their fall.

From then on, the Sun watched the world with joy, as the nymphs painted the world back into color and the elves tickled the blossoms open. He spent hours watching the ice fairies skate away, turning water to ice and delicately crafting each flake of snow. And in fall, when the days grew shorter and cold weather set in, he was content to watch the dwarves bustle about, changing each and every leaf to a shade of red, orange or yellow. For once in his life, the Sun was happy.

## **The Daughter of the Earth**

Mother Earth awoke, deep in darkness, on a day so long gone it has passed beyond recall. She poured awareness into her arms of space and drew the demi-gods to her. First to come was Om, the water, which gave her a body physical form. For this reason, it has always been her favored element. Next came Dra, the stone, through which her blood, Lava, flowed. The rocks formed bones that grew until they burst into the blackness. Ea, the plants, came to grace these rocky

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outcroppings with a green tapestry of life. These first growths soon died because there was naught but a void above their little islands. So Siewa, the sky, surrounded the blue orb with air. And still the plants did not grow. Above and around the sky, the void became the purple dome we know it as today, and soon little blooms of stars were kindled in the heavens. A faint light washed the earth, allowing the Great Mother to see, and not just understand. She marveled at the beauty of her own creation.

“If only I had more light to see by!” She sighed wearily, for the summoning of these demigod-elements required a great effort. With a last surge of power she drew two of the new stars towards her little earth. When, finally, she fell into a deep sleep, the lights of Maneth and Sameth shone bright overhead. Today we know them as the Moon and Sun, the twin elements.

Sameth had a mischievous nature, and while Mother Earth rested, it infected her globe with its flames. This dark new brother, named Chaos, did not possess the golden heart of his older sibling and set about to burn the World. The forests crackled and the water steamed, and it was to this din that Mother Earth came to full awareness. She had dreamed of this and was filled with a sadness without pain. It was awareness of her fate. Her role would now be to balance destruction and creation.

Yet while Mother Earth minded her new burden, the flowers and gardens went to waste. She needed a helper to assist her with such minor tasks. So the Great Mother took a small portion of each Element and created a being. Out of the warm sea, the Earth’s womb, rose a rock covered with green life. Sameth shone its rays too brightly on this little island, and soon Chaos began to char the growths. So Siewa sent a northern wind to extinguish the flames. From the harmonious collaboration of these earthly Elements was born a slender figure. Her tresses were the mahogany of trees, her eyes changed like the oceans and danced like fire. Her skin was new peach blossoms opening on a dewy morning. She was clad in a gown of opals, for that is what happens when the Elements combine. From the sea around the Firstborn came the voice of the Earth.

“You are my daughter and myself in one. Be not afraid.”

So the little maiden ran through the woods and tended the trees and rocks. She sat and listened, in quiet reverie, to the concert of the nature around her. The steady heartbeat of the waves and the breath of the wind became known to her. She fashioned a name for herself, Demethai, and spoke it aloud to the sand as she cleared a beach of blackened wood. The branch snagged her dress, and an opal from it softly slithered to the ground. As she bent to pick it up, an idea began to form in her mind. Abandoning the stick, she swiftly ran to the top of the highest peak.

“Great Mother and Creator, I have found a way for your demigods to honor you as I do.”

“Command them as you will child, for I have great things to attend to.” This said, the voice was gone and Demethai was alone on the mountain. Kneeling on the ground, she spoke directly to the rock.

“Dra, in your great depths my mother’s blood flows. I ask of you a favor. Please host, in your great underground caverns, my project.”

The stone answered by groaning as it created tunnels so she could better reach the caves. Then, bending to kiss the stone, she thanked it and went on her way.

She then sang a note so pure that the wind rushed to her side to listen.

“Great Siea, you have taught me many things. I ask you to fill the caverns with a solid form of yourself, a lasting shadow. There was silence as the sky considered. The waves almost stilled, and no sigh was heard from the trees. Then, a sudden blast hurled her to the ground. She heard wild echoing as the wind forced itself into the caves. Just as suddenly, it surged back in to fill the void that had left the girl gasping for air. Something marvelous had happened. The caves were filled with clear stone! A solid form of the wind, as Demethai had asked.

In her next breath, she called upon the sun to color this material. Immediately, gold coursed through the clear stone like veins.

The Firstborn watched the gold sparkle until night fell. Then, a new light was in the sky “Maneth, can you do for me as your brother has done?” So silver flowed alongside the gold. Seeing what the Moon had done, the sky colored some of the stone a dark hue to match its own coloration. The stars, too, debated amongst themselves until they decided upon a gift to bestow upon the Earth. In a few places, the clear stone suddenly grew bright as if they had little stars within them. These were the first diamonds.

When Demethai arose the next morning, she resolved to gain tribute from the last three elements. Following a shallow tunnel, she entered one of the caverns. Although there was gold, silver, diamonds, and indigo stone, great expanses were still featureless. Summoning an impossible strength, she rolled three boulders of the clear stone above ground.

First she went to the heart of the forest.

“Ea, you have been my home and my guardian since I was born. Please grant this stone the color of your majestic bowers in the sunlight.” When she opened her eyes from this prayer, the first boulder was a huge emerald. The trees, ancient sentries of Ea, also gave her a gift. Whenever they were parted from a branch, or were injured by force, they wept tears of sap through the wounds. These became the amber droplets that are so highly prized today. She embraced the tree that informed her of this gift, and then pushed on towards the sea.

Rolling the boulders down to the crashing waves was easier than bringing them into the forest, but she was still glad to join the second boulder in the brine that was also her birthplace. By the time she was done splashing about in the foam, the rock had absorbed the color of the sea and was the deepest, richest sapphire the world will ever know. She thanked the water and then explained Ea’s double generosity. Not wanting to be outdone by another element, Om save the gift of coral, whose branchlike arms could be fashioned into marvelous adornments. The current suddenly picked up and brought Demethai and her sapphire back to shore.

Putting the Emerald and the last boulder in line, she came to a land that was always being burnt and broken by flame. She looked about in sad dismay at this ruin of a land. Suddenly, Chaos was by her side. An awful stench filled the

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Masuk High  
School  
Monroe

air as her hair singed from this nearness. Pushing farther off so as not to burn her, the element spoke in a roar of flame.

“I am not pure evil, as you might think. Such a thing does not exist. You see, there cannot be new birth without death. Here, I shall prove it to you.”

The girl leaped back as flames consumed the third boulder. When they withdrew, she was amazed not only to see bright rubies, but also citrine, garnet, topaz, and all other stones that borrow their color from flames. In an awed whisper, she spoke her thanks and hurried back to the caves. With the sapphire, emerald, and red stones all in place, she waited for Mother Earth.

“What you have done child, is a beautiful gift. You may have any thing you ask for.”

“I often grow lonely here, “ Demethai said. But that is another story.

## **The Storyteller’s Apprentice**

Deep in the Desert of Fire, hidden beneath the red-gold sand, life flourishes.

A reclusive tribe of mysterious people lives there, underground, underneath the ever-changing sea of dunes. Few have ever seen them. They are, in fact, thought to be purely mythical in some far-off corners of the world.

But these people truly do exist. How they survive in their subterranean life, none can say, but one thing is known for certain about these people: they thrive on stories.

Every night, after the scorching desert sun has set, every last man, woman, and child gather in the largest cavern in the realm to hear a story told by one of the old masters.

You see, storytelling here is not simply a child’s way to pass time. No, in this life, storytelling is a sacred art, taught to only a select few, chosen by the Council of Storytellers. Teaching the new disciple takes years, for before they are allowed to take up their mentor’s position, the student must learn every single story by rote. Each and every tale told in this sacred cavern has remained the same for hundreds of years. When a story is retold for the thousandth, the ten thousandth, the five hundred thousandth time, it is still exactly the same as it was when it first left the mouth of its original teller.

The pupil’s task, before he can become a real storyteller, is to tell a tale in front of the assembled tribe. If he weaves a flawless web around the tribe, then the Council awards him the title of Storyteller. If even one word is altered, it means death.

Tonight was the night of one boy’s reckoning. He sat fidgeting in a chair

hewn from the living rock as the tribe assembled in the cavern. His heart pounded as the Council filed in, taking their seat behind the stone bench. The Council was made up of five members, each of them ancient beyond recall. All were renowned as masters of their craft. Formidable figures they were, each with a gaze that could shatter stone. In unison, they all turned their heads towards the boy and his teacher, seated beside him. The teacher stood up, and the boy followed him, and together they walked to the center of the round platform that the stories were told on.

“Tonight,” said the master. “Tonight is the night where my place is taken by this boy. I know that you will find him more than acceptable.” And with that, the master left.

The boy was terrified. He knew very well that his life was on the line, and of course he was nervous for simply speaking to the people. For a moment he lost all his strength; the boy’s knees buckled and he thought that he might pass out, which would mean his demise. But he simply took a deep breath, and kept a clear head, and soon the jitters and nervousness were washed away by calm.

“Tonight,” said the master. “Tonight is the night where my place is taken by this boy. I know that you will find him more than acceptable.” And with that, the master left.

“Tonight,” he said, “I will tell the story of the lost kingdom of Angural.” He was met with thunderous applause from the masses.

“Millenia ago, right above this very cavern, in this very desert, the kingdom of Angural stood. Angural was a prosperous land, and a name synonymous with peace, and love, and harmony. Everyone lived together in a perfect world.

“The whole of the kingdom was surrounded by an impenetrable wall, thirty feet thick and built of sturdy stones wrenched from the earth. In these days, the wall was used to keep out the unwanted, and armies from rival nations would simply bounce off the wall like water on rocks.

“Just inside the wall lay the farms, and just after that lay the marketplace and city, and in the exact center of everything, the fine palace of the King stood.

“The palace was made out of pure white stone, with enormous towers surrounding a central citadel. In this great place, the King lived and ruled, and the entire Royal Family lived in the castle, along with all of the King’s closest advisors and his servants. The King ruled justly and fairly, and Angural was famous for not having any rebellions or civil uprisings. Indeed, all seemed well in the world, at least as far as Angural’s boundaries went.

“But Jhonan, the King’s closest advisor, was not happy. As is the wont of closest advisors, Jhonan desired power over all else. He did not want to simply be the advisor to the king of the most prosperous kingdom in the land, oh, no. Jhonan had to be the King himself.

“And one night, when he could no longer stand it, Jhonan took an evil dagger and weaved its crooked and cruel blade with dark magic. The advisor then went from room to room, slitting the throats of the Royal Family along the

way, and slaughtering the rest of the King's advisors the same way. After the evil deed was done, Jhonan went back to his own room and feigned slumber, waiting for the dawn.

"In the morning, all were found to be dead, save Jhonan, and, according to the law of the land, he was now King.

"As good and just as the old King had been, Jhonan was equally cruel and malicious. He stopped all trade in the city, and tore down all buildings save his own palace, which he forced all of the new serfs to make all the more splendid. Jhonan killed all who opposed him with the same dagger that spilled blood of the Royal Family, and each time he killed he gained more strength. Soon, the streets were rivers of blood, and the stone of the great Citadel that had once been such a pure white were now blood red.

"But above ground, Jhonan continued his tyrannical rule for centuries. The secret to his long life lay in the dagger. If he was ever separated from it, Jhonan would crumble into the dust that he truly was, but as long as he kept feeding it with fresh blood, the dagger kept him alive and young.

"Throughout all of these hundreds of years, Jhonan would crumble into the dust that he truly was, but as long as he kept feeding it with fresh blood, the dagger kept him alive and young.

"Throughout all of these hundreds of years, Jhonan kept his slaves hard at work with pointless endeavors. He had them simply moving huge boulders from one end of Angural to the other, or perhaps digging a moat around his huge blood-red palace. Whenever a serf would stop, they would simply be flogged until they got up and began again. And if they didn't, then the poor soul would die.

"That, together with the constant sacrifices, thinned down the population considerably. Soon the slaves of Angural were few in number, but the ones who remained were strong. But the few who were left looked nothing like the fair people who had lived before. They had been transformed by the relentless work and permeation of dark magic in the land.

"The Angurls had become short, tough things, made out of hard bone and tough sinew to deal with the backbreaking work. Their skin had turned dark and leathery, so the sun did not harm the Angurls. To cope with the lack of clothing and shelter, thick hair had begun to grow all over their bodies from head to toe. Teeth that had once been white and rounded were now sharp, savage things, which were perfect for rending flesh from bone. Because the food was scarce, all too often they were used for just that purpose on one of the more sickly Angurls.

"Another hundred years passed, and the Angurls numbered only a few dozen. But Jhonan still ruled with his iron fist and twisted knife. Though the Angurls were nowhere near smart, they did of course realize that in the end, either they would die or Jhonan would. And because the primary instinct of the Angurls is for survival, they chose Jhonan.

"And so the castle was stormed one day, and four dozen Angurls destroyed the entire guard of Jhonan, and were soon inside the tyrannical king's most sacred chamber: that which he performed sacrifices in.

"Every visible surface was covered in blood, and there was a dried layer of the stuff at least four inches thick on the floor. Carcasses lay strewn haphazardly



on the floor, and some were nailed to the wall. Jhonan stood in front of the great stone altar, sword in hand, ready to destroy the rebelling Angurls.

“For a short while, time stood still. The Angurls simply looked across the room at Jhonan, and he at them. And then finally, with a bloodthirsty snarl, the chief Angurl charged forward, wielding a stolen blade.

“The duel that followed between himself and Jhonan was nothing short of epic. It was filled with near misses, and both were always on the brink of destroying the other. Finally, the Angurl chief gained the upper hand, and pinned Jhonan to his own altar.

“The advisor simply laughed over the crossed blades. His hand darted down to the sheath at his waist, and the evil dagger shone for the brief moment it was in the air. But before anyone saw, it had been plunged into Jhonan’s heart up to the hilt.

“The Angurl howled with rage at being deprived of his kill. He pulled the blade from Jhonan’s chest and saw the body crumble into dust, which left nothing but a dark mark in the puddles of blood, which hissed as it slowly began to eat its way into the stone. With another scream, the savage beast plunged the dagger into the stone of the altar, utterly destroying it in a shower of sparks.

“Then the Chieftain turned away from the broken shards of metal and said simply, ‘Destroy everything,’ in the deep, throaty language that was now spoken by the Angurls.

“Before a fortnight had passed, the palace of Jhonan and all that remained of the kingdom of Angural was destroyed, and the Angurls set off through the desert, leaving a wake of destruction in their path. For in those long years of slavery, the Angurls had forgotten how to love and the ways of peace. Now their only way of life was in war, and strife, and violence.

“And that is why the Angurls still pillage and plunder the worlds above us today.”

The boy finished. He stood tall and looked to the Council, who would now pass their judgement.

The five men stood up together in one motion. They all walked to the front of the platform, eerily in sync with one another. And in unison, they got down on one knee and bowed their heads in front of the boy.

The tribe’s reaction was indescribable. Noises echoed through the cavern, the clapping of hands and the pounding of feet being only a few of the plethora of sounds. The boy grinned hugely, and he bowed before the Council in a gesture of thanks. Before the applause stopped, the boy felt a hand on his shoulder. He looked up to see his master.

“You have done well, my child,” the old man said. “It is time for me to go, and for you to take up my mantle.” He unclasped the ceremonial cloak that he wore, and put it over the boy’s shoulders. “Treasure the gift that you have been given and look in every new generation for the one that you will pass it on to.” The master smiled. “Fare thee well,” he said, and walked off into a small cave below the platform, never to return.

The boy watched with a touch of sadness as he remembered the long years they had spent together as teacher and student. It had been difficult task to learn all of the stories, but the master had been both a patient and compassionate teacher. Still, he smiled, for he knew that that was the way it must be. For when storytellers pass on their gift, they too must pass on. Where they went, none knew the answer. But the boy was not so eager to find out.

He was, after all, still just a boy.

Annie Reece  
Grade 9  
Ledyard High  
School  
Ledyard

## The Day I Lost Faith in the System

Our story takes place in mid-1990's St. Paul, Minnesota. Democracy is thriving, the cost of living rising steadily, and somewhere in a large brick building with green tile floors I am in second grade.

It's lunchtime and my best friend, Ariel, and I are playing a clapping game called "Miss Sue." Blaise Poupore is sitting next to us. Blaise hates us. Blaise is evil. The lyrics we sing are both meaningful and exciting, and we belt them proudly to the rhythm of our synchronized hand collisions: "The boys are in the bathroom zipping up their...flies are in the meadow..." Coincidentally, Blaise is a boy. He doesn't take offense to these lyrics; however, this is precisely the opposite of what he tells our teacher, Mrs. Kozachoke. Mrs. Kozachoke is a moody blonde-haired woman whose name was on our spelling list for three months. We fear her.

Suddenly, a divine force in the form of a disgruntled lunch monitor extracts us from our seats. It seems strange that she could manage the two of us at once, but I'd heard about people being able to lift up cars and such when the spirit moved them, even when they weren't particularly strong, and I figured it was something like that. The woman Hulk is moving pretty fast now, and soon we're not in the lunchroom anymore.

By the time we get tossed into our classroom, Ariel and I have decided that, for our own good, we honestly don't know what the problem is and, therefore, are completely innocent. Mrs. K., who, upon our entrance, beckons us to a pair of graffiti decorated desks, quickly fills us in. All our thoughts turn back to our game, our beautiful, comically relieved clapping game. Apparently, she sees neither the humor nor beauty in certain zipper-insect references. She has more



than a few words to say to us, but thanks to my conveniently short attention span, I hear a few of them; my desk is far more interesting. Since it isn't one of the cool ones with the lift-up tops, I can see inside, and I am amused at what I see...I knew Greta had a thing for Tom. I'm just trying to picture how I might use this new information to my benefit when my ears perk up. I have just heard the name of Satan, and that is name is Blaise. It seems he forgot to mention to Ariel and me that he asked us repeatedly to stop singing, but wasted no time informing Mrs. Kozachoke.

Somewhere in my chest, fireworks start to shoot off. He's a liar, and I can't wait to roast his little tattle-tail. I give Mrs. K. the whole story, making sure to accentuate Blaise's hateful soul. After I've finished, I drift off for just a minute, and I think about all the different ways she might go about punishing him. I wonder if she'll let me watch. But before I'm able to ask her I catch a glimpse of her face and shrink about five inches.

I decide that she must not have heard what I told her. I ask. She did. God help us all. She tells us this is not about Blaise. I disagree. Apparently, my mouth is very smart today. Hers must be too; it won't stop moving. Would we sing that song in front of our parents? I look at Ariel and we ponder this for a moment...Yes, we would. This is the wrong answer.

We are, as a very wise fifth grader once wrote on my desk, completely screwed. Our punishment is such to make a grown man scream; we are going to write a letter about how disrespectful we were to Blaise, the male population in its entirety, humanity, Mother Nature, and of course, God. We are going to read it to the entire class. Penmanship does count, and at this point I'm pretty sure that I'm going to hell.

Right then, as any doubts I may have had about requiring future therapy go out the window, I begin to cry. I should mention that crying is an art that, by this time, I have perfected. Years from now I will be labeled as "sensitive," but for now I am content with the perks of being a crybaby. Mrs. K. looks frightened and confused. I am well aware that I'm her favorite student and, to put it bluntly, she can't afford to lose my admiration. She has the reputation of a paranoid scorpion. She rushes over and tells me, in no uncertain terms, that there will be no apology writing today. In a complete turn of events, I have become the conqueror. From that moment on, I fear neither Blaise, nor Mrs. K., nor scorpions, and I know that I am the better for it.

**Stacey Busher**  
Grade 9  
Branford High  
School  
Branford

## **Time**

Sitting in class  
Writing notes to each other  
Nothing else to do but twiddle your thumbs  
Many sleep, many doodle  
But not I.  
Writing poems is all I can do  
Thinking time is slowing down.  
As it goes by faster,  
Everything heard goes right out the other ear.  
Listening to stories told by the teacher,  
Wondering when it will end,  
Watching the clock like a hawk,  
Every minute that goes by feels like an hour.  
Then finally something happens.  
It is all over.  
Sometimes it feels like you want to leave,  
But you don't.  
Then at that last moment you realize  
You can't go back to listen.

**Leslie Kodet**  
Grade 9  
Simsbury High  
School  
Simsbury

## **Down Through Old Quebec**

Through the air tight doors  
Like the top of an F-16,  
Straight into the back  
Look down  
Out the glass wall,  
That seems you could just walk right through  
  
Other people join you  
Now  
The air tight doors hiss  
As they shut  
Now  
You can smell the woman next to you,  
Like she'd been standing in exhaust all day

A jerk  
Down the steep tracks  
You see its brother bringing people up  
Through the glass wall,  
The ride smooths,  
The butterflies leave your stomach  
Slower now,  
A steady pace.

Le Chateau hides behind the trees,  
And bright copper roof emerges  
Roads full of shops,  
Come out from their hiding game

Your transportation jerks on the tracks again  
Your hand holds the chilled glass wall  
For balance,  
You turn around and look up  
At the steep mountain,  
You've just descended

You step off the outdoors elevator,  
And into the gift shop.  
Congratulations!  
You have successfully made the two-minute voyage  
From  
The upper village  
To  
The lower village.

## **Divine Tragedy**

### The End of the Beginning

Can I be heard in this place?  
The clock has struck one and I'm about to take my leave.  
The crowd sits watching as I slowly turn away.  
No one knows of what I speak, but it's plain to see.  
Welcome to the divine tragedy.

**Harry Tokarz**  
Grade 9  
Hamden Hall  
Country Day  
School  
Hamden

But no one comes to celebrate me.  
No one writes a blind elegy.  
Why not? I really wish to know it.  
It's a dirty business trying to show it  
All the time.

He who sups on silver plates may know of where I'm at.  
It makes me mad how I had to remain in that dark closet  
For one day too long.  
But a sweet faced angel descended on me.  
She looked sadly aware of that which awaited us.  
I met her stare and was at once consumed by lust.

### Reassurance

I met the Man before his throne of ivory and emerald.  
Why was I questioned so?  
But why was it so surprizing when he asked where I wanted to go.

I said that I wished to remain in the best place there is.  
Go forth from here, for all is not seen as it should be.  
First let us view your life.

### A Knowledgeable Critic

Let him know your dysfunctions, your pains and your lies.  
Let him speak to your teacher, and take his advice.  
But don't you dare tell him of the knife you stabbed your best friend with.  
Obliquely aligned are you in this function.  
Straddling no one, you come to the stairs.  
Messing with your hair that's perfectly done.  
Cheating the policement, who know where you run.

So run with me away from here.  
Meet the match and call the tune.  
The hour of judgement draws too near  
My waking hour—it comes too soon.

### Wishful Thinking

So it was said.  
The director of the great Play pronounced me alive.  
I thanked him kindly and smiled blindly as my journey continued on.

On the stage of living, you are undressed.  
It's really a shame the stress you take in preparing your best.  
There will be no rehearsal for you and I.  
We're without remorse so let's not try.

It's wishful thinking to be involved in the greatest lie of them all.  
When its time for your close-up, will the camera be too far away?  
With your insurance papers fanning you, should you heed the call?  
Maybe you should stop this mockery and take back your place on the football  
team that makes the grade today.

### Realization

So you were struck by a bad chord.  
Join the chorus and write the score  
To the satanic inquiry  
OF YOU.

Sing the hymn when no one is watching.  
Shout a Psalm when nobody cares.  
Read the manuscript aloud.  
Run from the fight and take the dare.

The divinity is yours to keep  
Receive it with trust and dignity  
So how would you like to be in the tragedy?  
How does it feel to write your own?  
Take the spotlight and be the Show.

### End

No one knows of what I speak, but it's really quite plain to see.  
Welcome to the all worthy divine tragedy.

## **A Demonstration**

Leze Gjondrekaj walked up to the patio of their small home in the village of Obot. The sun's rays had barely warmed the air, and everything lay in a sullen frost. They had a small, one floor, whitewashed house with a tile roof that needed replacing in several places. On the small land they had, they grew some grapes, which created a beautiful, green canopy over the patio in the summer, but

**Ledina Gocaj**  
Grade 9  
Simsbury High  
School  
Simsbury

had now withered into dead vines. The patio was lined with pots of red flowers (that had seen better days) that their mother had loved. Even the flowers seemed to be in mourning; her mother had cherished those flowers. She was thinking about how different it was before her mother died eight years ago. They hadn't expected her to die; they were expecting the arrival of a new baby, Dana. Not in a million years had they expected their beloved mother to pass on right after she gave birth to Dana.

Obot was a small village, so small the communist government of Albania rarely bothered it. Leze was only eleven, but had already taken over household responsibilities such as getting the milk every morning. They didn't have a cow anymore; they didn't have any of their animals. Once the communists took over, they took everyone's animals and land: the communists didn't believe in private property. The only way the villagers knew how to survive was through their crops and animals. Each family then had to wake up as early as possible to go to the store where you were given your ration of milk, three ounces a day per family. If you went later on in the day, there wouldn't be any milk left. Many families had been reduced to poverty because of this new regime. The Gjondrekaj family, however, wasn't doing badly in comparison to others.

Dana's sister walked to her bedroom where little Dana and Pjeter still lay asleep. "Pjeter, Dana, wake up," she scolded them for not waking, "I've made breakfast ready."

"Where's Daddy? Is he eating with us?" Dana whispered in her sleepy but inquiring voice. She knew so little, but she was only eight. She didn't realize her father had to wake earlier than all of them and work. They all loved their father. He was all they had left, and he did a wonderful job of raising them.

A sudden staccato knocking came at the door. They knew it wasn't a neighbor. Neighbors would call their names, or just walk in. They could tell who ever had knocked wasn't a family friend. Leze, being the oldest, answered. Dana watched from the kitchen, as her sister talked to big men in sharp, green uniforms. Their presence was menacing. Dana hadn't seen people like them before. She didn't realize that they were from the government, which in those times was never a good thing. Even if she knew what government was, she wouldn't understand it. The government was supposed to protect people, help them, help them to live. They asked for her father. Leze pointed somewhere and the men left.

"Who are they? What do they want? Were they lost? Why do they want Daddy?" Dana continued, "I bet they want to talk to him. Everyone likes talking to Daddy." The children scampered outside to watch the men, hiding behind the railings of the patio so that they wouldn't be seen. The men walked up to their father, who was just across the street, helping a neighbor put a tarp over some stacks of hay, in preparation for the coming storm. Although they were menacing, their father stood so tall. Some said he was too proud for just a villager. Others said he was proud because he was a villager. No matter what anyone said, however, it was agreed that he was one of the kindest and most important men in the village.

"Pjeter, take your sisters inside." Their father had seen them. They ran inside, but didn't notice that little Dana stayed behind. Although she didn't know

much, she began to get scared. The men weren't being nice to her daddy. At the same time, more men in green uniforms came with other village men she recognized. She could see the worried eyes of the families that had gathered outside. She also began to notice the fear in the eyes of the men. The men and her father knew what this was about; they knew the type of regime they lived under. The fear quickly mounting in Dana's father was not for himself, but for his children. His children were his life; it was for them that he did everything.

"Men, if you dare call yourselves so, you have betrayed your country. You are harboring the Nazis. You know that they are our enemies and what crimes they have committed against human kind. You know this is wrong, so then why do you make us do this?" said the man in the green uniform. The same man then whispered something to the other men in uniform. Dana, for the first time, clearly saw their faces. Some were very young; others looked just as scared as the village men did. It was likely that many of them had families with small children, many were forced into their jobs. Others, however, weren't, like the one that was giving out orders.

The uniformed men shoved Dana's father and the rest of the villagers against the white wall of one of the nearby houses. They had now moved away, and Dana couldn't hear much. They lined them up against the wall and spaced them out evenly. Dana couldn't see what the men in uniform were doing because they had their backs turned to her. Yet she saw her father's eyes searching the sky, but for what? It almost seemed like he was searching for a miracle, for the God that he had so devoutly believed in to intervene at the last moment. Soon his gaze met Dana's, and he passed on a silent message of love that she would never forget.

At the same moment, rounds of deafening, piercing blasts made Dana close her eyes and cover her ears. She opened her eyes to see her father and the rest of the men slumped on the ground. The white wall was now stained with crimson red, stained with the blood of her father, the blood of the innocent.

Tears began pouring from her no-longer-innocent eyes. She froze up and wanted to die herself. She then realized what government was, at least what her government was; however, she would never come to understand why. What reason did they have for doing this? Her father and the rest weren't harboring Nazis. The small village had no idea what Nazis were, besides knowing that they were different people from a different country. They were all victims of the corruption of man, corrupted enough to kill even the most defenseless villager just as a demonstration, a tragic demonstration showing their power.

## Todd and My Left Foot

I will always remember the day that Todd Andy rolled into my life. Or rolled into my foot, take your pick. See, I was just about to get onto the bus, except that a large, tan lump had hurdled off the stairs and into me before I had a chance to get in. The boy was looking up for a moment but then groaned and laid his head back exasperatedly. Although he was upside-down and crumpled, I could tell right away that he was the most gorgeous thing I had ever seen.

I know guys aren't supposed to be a vision of beauty, but this one was. Todd was not cute or hot; he was beautiful. I almost didn't feel worthy to have such a specimen lain over my ankle. I pulled my foot out from under him and heard a thump. He quickly picked his head up, rubbing the back of it, making his silky hair look like he had just been blown out of a tornado. The bus driver watched curiously, even though she should have been helping him up, or maybe even bowing in his presence. I felt like I needed to do something, so awkwardly, I reached my hand out to him. He looked at it confusedly, and said "This is no time or position for introductions." Then he rubbed his eyes and got up on his elbows. "Oh, you want to help me up? That's right nice of you." Right nice of you...not without someone pointing it out, but Todd could have substituted every other line of the National Anthem with Swahili and I wouldn't have noticed or cared.

He grabbed my hand and I hoisted him to his feet. As he dusted himself off, I couldn't help but stare in awe. I had really never seen someone like him. The American Hottie is supposed to be blonde-haired and blue eyed and built like a young Bradd Pitt, and Todd was definately not in this category. He had brown hair that glinted in the sun when he turned, and fell nicely around his ears, which were small and one had an earring. You could tell that he cared about his hair, because it was brushed, but not weighted with gel, like most of the guys in high school. The earring he was sporting wasn't an atrocious spiked earring or anything gaudy like that. It was in his left, ear, and I thanked whoever it was "up there" that he was straight. His chin was strong and jutted out just the right way to make his face even with the rest of him. His nose matched his chin, but was not an offensively large size or anything. He turned from brushing sand off his face and looked at me. His eyes were the color of warm golden honey on a summer day. I felt myself becoming lost in his gaze, swimming in the light and warmth of him. "Thanks," he said. What a smooth talker. What do you say to the most beautiful thing on earth after you helped them up? No problem? Don't mention it? I couldn't think of anything so I didn't say anything. He probably thought I was some strangely focused mute or something.

"Hello..." he said, waving his hand in front of my face. Instantly I was slammed back into the real world, and realized there was a line behind me to get on the bus. The bus that had spat at me the one thing I would ever think I loved in this world. The big, ugly, yellow school bus that had somehow produced this piece of heaven right before my eyes. I stepped aside to let people on. This bus was special, and did not deserve to be kept waiting. Todd scratched his head. Speaking slowly to me (to me!), he asked, "Did...I...hurt...your...foot?" I glanced



down. Oh yeah, that's what those things were called. My left one now deserved a more blessed name than "my left foot." After all, a god had just fallen on it. "I'm fine, thanks." I blurted. I wanted to cover my mouth and smack my head against a wall, but instead, I tried to make it look cool. He nodded and smiled. Oh my goodness gracious, what a smile! I would have fainted, had he not grabbed my shoulder to stable me. Dear Lord, now he had purposefully touched me! At this point, I tried to faint, for this was way too good to be true. I felt myself dissolving in his grasp, desperately feeling as if I shrank away, I wouldn't have to be disappointed when he moved away from me. He let go of my shoulder, and I let go of the breath I had been holding in for the past few minutes. He heard me exhale, and said, "Girl, are you okay?" That's good, I thought, he knows I'm a girl. "I'm fine, thanks." Again with that stupid line! Argh! What's the matter with me? Oh yeah, I forgot, I'm dead and I've gone to heaven, that's why there is an angel standing a foot away from me. There was no other logical explanation for something so great to be happening to someone like me.

"I'm Todd Andy," he said, holding out his hand. "I'm, um, Jules, I think," I stammered, shaking his hand limply. To him, I must have felt like a wet slug, his hand was so strong and tan and everything mine was not. "Okay, Jules-you-think, do you think you could tell me where the office is? I'm coming from Westville to check out my transfer credits, you know, see if everything will check out right when I check in tomorrow." I feebly raised my hand, pointing to the main door of the school. "First door on your right," I whispered. He leaned in close to hear me, and I could smell his breath. It smelled like mint, but he had nothing in his mouth to make it smell so good. He smiled and winked at me, then headed toward where I had pointed. "Hey, I guess I'll catch you around some-time, eh, Jules-I-think!" he shouted back to me.

I gazed after him for a moment, and then hurried onto the bus, thinking the faster I left school, the sooner I could get back to it the next day to see Todd Andy. I sat down in the seat towards the front of the bus and crossed my legs. On my left shoe, I saw a speck of white, and looking closer, determined that it was gum. Todd's missing mint gum. I let out an audibly loving sigh, shrunk back in my seat, and praised Todd and my left foot.

## Suburban Martyr

I put my cigarette out on your white picket fence  
Stumble through our suburbia  
To bum another cigarette off the surgeon general  
At the local convent store  
We find ourselves at a mall somewhere up-town  
The parking lot smells like gasoline and cold

**Kate Hagner**  
Grade 10  
Conard High  
School  
West Hartford

The mall smells like wealth and regrets  
You ask me to sit on your lap  
We kiss in Santa's tacky chair  
But Christmas is far away  
We watch a girl with poking ribs  
Throw away some French fries  
Barely touched  
She stumbles away on her high heel stilts  
To go find the new winter coat  
That the magazines hail as the latest trend  
Last year's fad was thrown away  
As she walked in  
A little boy wails near the entrance  
His sobs echo throughout the mall's dominion  
"Maybe a toy or something" you say  
Or maybe it is his mother's slap  
On his hand  
For pointing at the homeless man  
Lying outside  
Guarding the entrance  
It's too cold to sleep out there  
But he still has a toothless grin  
As he digs some greasy french fries and a pink winter coat out of the trash can  
The coat is too small  
And it smells like the overpowering perfume section of a department store  
But I don't think he really cares  
This winter is going to be a bitter one

**Aviva  
Grossman**  
Grade 10  
Greenwich  
Academy  
Greenwich

## **Studio**

Two nights I spent  
Sleeping, nestled against  
My art history text  
And a paint-splattered  
Blanket borrowed from  
A half-finished still life.

I sat two nights  
Atop a white-washed stool  
Almost weeping when I saw

The sunset (I washed my  
Palette, polluting  
The sky with soft paint-clouds).

Mornings, in awe,  
I awoke to the light  
Of clean brushes waiting—  
Haloed energy,  
Studio sunrise—  
A new idea streams through open curtains

## What is Time

The sun suspends naked silhouettes  
on sidewalks, hovering over everyone,  
stretching her thin fingers down to earth,  
picking up bits and pieces  
of crumbled conversation and scattering  
them between cracks in the street.

I come here on Tuesday mornings  
to sip tea and erase stale memories.  
I've seen the same cellophane complexions  
drift by, faces to remember,  
more things I'll eventually want to forget.

I start to count the cars passing by  
and suddenly feel as if there's  
a gun to my head.  
"The sidewalks are breaking," you say.  
I rest my tongue against my teeth  
and my hands grow very, very still.

**Christen  
Ilacqua**  
Grade 10  
Guilford High  
School  
Guilford

Aly Storm  
Grade 10  
Lyme-Old  
Lyme High  
School  
Old Lyme

## Stained Silver

tears stained translucent  
eyeliner black,  
as they slide and meet with bare skin

room dimmed to  
fog grey,  
staining silver dreams

empty mugs & scattered papers containing rejected poems  
serve as a lonely solace

Jonathan  
Ashby  
Grade 10  
Manchester  
High School  
Manchester

## Alone

Daily Herald  
Sunday, October 7, 1995  
Young Man Takes Life  
By Alexander Barrat

*Marcus Germaine, 14, bled to death on Thursday, October 3. It appeared that he slit his wrists with a steak knife. "I don't have any idea why a boy with his talent and potential would do such a thing like this," commented his mother, Lucia, "He had the entire world going for him." While police are still unsure as to the reason for his suicide, many people believe that it was due to his father's disappearance last month. A devout Christian, any other reasoning would be most likely out of the question...*

Jack Johnson crumpled the newspaper into a tight ball and tossed it into the garbage, trying to suppress his laughter. *Jeez, that dork is always getting the city's attention, even after he's dead. His crazy dad was the same way.* Marcus's father, along with a dozen other "great minds"—folks who have no life besides their work—had recently been a victim of a string of mysterious disappearances, and Jack felt it was for the best. After all, what good did a man do on the couch with a bottle of Budweiser in his hand? *Even Ringmaster deserves better than that,* Jack had to admit. The "ringmaster" got his name for the association with the "Freaks," what he liked to call the potheads, Goths, and computer geeks. Marcus would befriend anyone who couldn't help himself or herself, or who had a chance to change.

The wake for the little dweeb was going on, and Jack was only going so he could laugh at his sister, Marie. As he went outside, he took a look to admire himself in the mirror, and he saw a tall boy with massive muscles bulging at the

seams of his t-shirt. Satisfied, he waited at the bus stop, while contemplating whether or not to screw it all and go home. There were a million and one different things he would rather be doing than going to mourn some dead guy, like watch the—he must be bored out of his mind—basketball game that was on. While he loved sports of all kinds, basketball was not one of his preferred ones. There was not enough roughness in it for him. Personally, football was his game of choice. He would rather insult his sister into oblivion, though, so he boarded the bus for the wake.

On the ride there, the jock tried to figure out what his little sister saw in Marcus. The kid was short, pale, and had more body mass in his head than the rest of his body put together. Ever since she found out about his death, Marie had locked herself in her room, not coming out until this morning, nearly three days later. It was obvious when she finally came out, though, that she had spent the entire few days bawling her eyes out. Her eyes were puffy, red, and there were small, dark trickles visible on her cheeks. He, on the other hand, was glad the little ingrate was gone, since the Ringmaster seemed to hate him with a passion. What had he ever done to that kid? The bus rolled to a stop a handful of blocks away from the church. This was Jack's final chance to blow it off and head back home; however, his mother threatened to talk his coach into taking him off the football team—she did it last year—so he persuaded himself to go, if only for that reason. A wind seemed to blow him towards it, so Jack walked over to the church, shoulders slumped.

\* \* \*

*Whirr! Marie spun the chamber of the revolver, pushing it back in with a resounding clang. Hand trembling, she placed the barrel against her temple. Praying silently, she pulled the trigger. Click! Marie closed her eyes, waiting for the end to come. It never did. Sobbing madly, she pulled out the chamber and spun it again. She hoped the bullet would be in the right spot this time, so she could leave this land of turmoil.*

*“Marie?” Her eyes went wide with shock. Panicked, she dropped the gun and kicked it under her bed. She spun to see Marcus, looking with fright at the bullets on the floor. “My God,” he said, running to her side. That had been three years ago...*

\* \* \*

Marie Johnson was sitting down at a bench inside of the chapel, tears running uncontrollably down her cheeks. Having been adopted at the age of three, she had no memory whatsoever of her life before the Johnson's. Because of this, she was unable to truly get to know her abusive brother and single mom. Mrs. Jenn Johnson had been deeply in love with a man—not unlike Marie and Marcus—but had been abandoned when her love realized she was pregnant with Jack. Jack Johnson was out to destroy his adoptive sister, and hated anyone whom he felt beneath him. That was a lot of people! Now fourteen, with her birthday coming up in four days, she had lost the one person that she was ever attached to in her life. Marie didn't know why, but she and Marcus had been friends since first grade, and they became close friends since the incident.

They had just made a promise to go to senior prom together in three years. She saw her brother enter the chapel, and felt another wave of tears flicker to her normally enchanting hazel eyes.

Over the years, Marie had seemed to develop some sort of immunity to the mental and psychological abuse that her brother dealt her. Marie had taught herself to stay on guard and never show any weakness to anyone, not even Marcus. Because of this, her peers deemed her an outcast, primarily because they perceived her to be an emotionless shell. *Well, that shell just shattered.* The moment, five days ago, that caused this still haunted her dreams. She had just come into the house with Marcus, and she saw Jack storming downstairs, with a paper—his report card—in his hands. Looking at Marie, then Marcus, Jack crumpled the paper and promptly slapped her in the face. At that moment, she just broke down into tears on the wood floor. Through her tears, she could still make out Jack yelling, “Get out of this house, excuse of a human!” *for Jack, that’s almost intelligent.* A smile almost came to her face as she thought of her “brother” being smart. She had seen Marcus turn tail and leave, his cheerful face darkened. As Jack walked over to her, probably to laugh at her, Marie ran into the bathroom, fearful for what will happen if they met eyes in her present state of mind.

Having done a quick, half-baked prayer, Jack nonchalantly took a seat by the door. Hopefully, Mrs. Germaine was ready to drive them home soon—Mom’s car was still in the shop—since sitting still, doing nothing was not one of his more defining traits. The Packers were playing tonight, and he would rather die than miss it. As the two ladies walked over to him, a chubby officer, one of the people investigating Ringmaster’s murder, came over to where they were. He whispered something in Mrs. Germaine’s ear while handing her a small book. *You have got to be kidding me! What kind of an idiot actually owns a diary!* Jack could barely contain himself. *The Diary of a Ringmaster...* the student paper would eat it up, the boy realized, always looking for a way to earn more status at school. Reading an entry, Mrs. Germaine’s eyes widened as her face slowly drained of all color. Mrs. Johnson spoke. “Jack, meet us in the car. We’ll be out shortly.” As Jack left, he caught a glimpse of Mrs. Germaine letting the diary slip from her trembling fingers.

Mere moments after her brother’s departure, Marie came out of the restroom, sniffing slightly. Her composure was as back to normal as it would be at this time. Her brother had hurt her deeply before, physically and spiritually, and she would never let it happen again. Walking back to her seat, she spotted a diary lying on the floor. Her heart seemed to freeze for a second as she looked at the inside cover; it was Marcus’s. Fighting the impulse to break down again, she sat down and began to read, unaware of the squeal of tires outside. Completely absorbed in her reading, she was oblivious to all but the deepest, darkest secrets of the one person she had ever cared for.

\* \* \*

As Mrs. Germaine sped out of the parking lot, Jack faintly realized that Marie was not with them. Although he would never say it out loud, he hoped the little brat did just what her lover did. Lucia accelerated even more, breaking 80 M.P.H. on the 40 M.P.H. roads. “Lucia, do you think you should be driving this fast? You could cause an accident.” “Oh, like it matters.” Mrs. Germaine snapped at her. Mrs. Jonson flinched slightly. “It’s not like any of us matter now anyways.” What the < censor > are you talking about? Jack retaliated. “I have my whole life still ahead of me!” Turning to face him, the angry mother shrieked, “Oh and my son didn’t!” “What?” he yelled back, unsure as to what she could possibly be talking about. “What do you mean, “what? Are you saying that my son didn’t deserve to live?” She stopped for a second, giving time for Mrs. Johnson to intervene. “Lucia! Calm down! You could seriously cause an accident!” Unaffected by the comment, Mrs. Germaine continued her assault on Jack, over an ear-piercing foghorn. “You want to know WHY I’m this angry? You’re the reason my son did what he did! I—if you hadn’t abused your sister—” “—Oh my God!!!” screamed Mrs. Johnson. “Look out, Lucia!” Facing forward, Jack saw an eighteen-wheeler coming straight at their station wagon. Instinctively swerving out of the way, Mrs. Germaine revved the engine, as if challenging anyone else to come at her. The jock realized he wouldn’t be seeing that Packers game after all. They were lucky once. It wouldn’t happen a second time.

\* \* \*

“October 1. I’ve had it with the way Marie’s brother treats me like something he would find on the bottom of his shoe,” the girl read to herself,” and he’s even worse to her. I’ve never seen anyone, not even the ‘crazy’ friends I hang out with, hit their own relative in the face.” Marie took a breath, feeling yet another spark of hatred towards Jack, and continued. “It seems like I’ve failed in my job to turn people as far away from sin as they can. God has thrown another curveball my way, in the form of Jack, and I’ve struck out for the last time. This world doesn’t have any purpose for failures like me. I don’t want to go to hell, I’ve done nothing wrong, and I helped those in need, like Marie. But killing myself would send me straight there, wouldn’t it? That’s breaking one of the Ten Commandments: *Thou shalt not kill.*” *How ironic*, Marie thought, *able to save everyone but himself.* My pastor, though, told us that once you’ve been saved for your first time, you’re set for heaven, no matter what you do. I hope he’s right, for I don’t really want to spend an eternity with that fiend.” Tears fell onto the paper, soaking the word “Hell” as Marie wept openly. The place was warm, but Marie couldn’t stop shivering all of a sudden. Before her tears hit the paper again, they froze into droplets that would have been beautiful in any other situation. It was just the wrong place, wrong time, and the wrong person.

Marcus’s diary clutched firmly to her chest, Marie desperately needed to show this entry to someone: Mrs. Germaine, her mother, *anybody*. However, in doing this she came to a startling revelation. Besides the pastor and Marcus’s body, she was the only one inside the building. “I’m all alone,” Marie whispered to herself, at that moment completely unaware of how true her words were. An



hour later, as the same cop that gave Lucia the diary tried to tell her what happened, she seemed to be living in a completely different, parallel universe. Tears fell for Marcus, Mrs. Germaine, and Mom. Even Jack deserved some mourning, no matter how much she hated the <explicit word of choice>. Leaving the church, darkness engulfed her body, mind, and soul as she walked into the cool October night.

#### The Next Day

The paperboy, completely oblivious to what had happened the previous night, continued to deliver the newspapers. Just like always, the boy dumped one of them on both of the now deserted, darkened houses. The headline read:

#### Deadly Crash Kills Three People

By Alexander Barrat

*Not more than a week after the death of her son, Marcus, Mrs. Lucia Germaine, along with two other people, died in a jackknife with an eighteen-wheeler at 10:20, October 7. In addition, Marie Johnson has been missing since 10:30 of the same evening, having fled after hearing the news...*

Marie held the paper in her hand for a moment, contemplating whether or not to keep it, before she tossed the newspaper into the garbage can. Tightening the straps of her backpack, which was filled with food and clothes, the girl walked into the subway. She was determined to leave this life behind for good. *Marie Johnson is dead*, she thought to herself as she took a seat, *She died when Marcus did. I'm Marie...Michaels now*. The doors closed behind her as the subway whisked her away from a life of sorrow and pain, and hopefully on to a better place.

## She's Weird, but She's My Sister

Not everyone is blessed with having a sibling. Granted, they can get into your personal belongings, ransack your room and be down right annoying, but somehow siblings manage to brighten up your day. I have one sibling who truly knows how to cheer up a rainy day.

Her room alone tells so much. Her door is draped with a bead curtain that glows in the dark of night. When you walk through, they rattle like loose change in your pocket. No matter where my sister is in the house, she always knows someone has entered her room. She can usually tell by the sound of the beads if it is just our dog (who likes to sleep under her bed only) or if it's a person who'd better have a good reason for going in.

Once in her room, bare feet would touch a worn out gray carpet, and one can sometimes see a clear path that has been walked many a time. Your eyes would travel immediately to the vibrant purple walls with a cat border on which

Allison Kelly  
Grade 10  
Woodstock  
Academy  
Woodstock



kittens play. On any given day, clothes and papers litter the floor in an ordered chaos. An unmade bed sits in the corner silently waiting for its occupant. The array of stuffed animals sometimes makes it difficult for my sister to be found once she's in amongst them. The walls are plastered with cat posters, peace signs, a "punch buggy," and glow in the dark circles of smiley faces. My favorite poster is the one she has of a kitten lying in a hammock which simply reads: "Wake me up in time for the weekend." My mom claims Meghan is left over from the 1960's, and from what I see of that era, I'd have to say she is right.

For Meghan's disposition is a cheerful one, like those in the '60's possessed. She has a carefree attitude, and oftentimes she can be found dancing in her room as if she is a superstar. When I try to tell her she looks like an elephant with no grace at all and that she has no characteristics of a swan, my sister just smiles and says, "Swans may be graceful but they can't balance four big, heavy legs on one tiny ball." Then she'll go back to dancing as if I had never come in. At those times, I roll my eyes and mutter one of her many nicknames under my breath.

My sister has many nicknames. Among them are "Shorty," "Scream," "Meg," and my mom's version "Meglet." I personally call her "Kid." I don't know why but I do, and Meghan doesn't seem to mind. Believe me, if she does mind, her razor sharp tongue will cut you like a knife; however, her tongue isn't the only thing that is sharp.

Her hair is sharp but in a different sense. According to her, it is her only good asset. Technically, it's strawberry blonde, but my family tells her she is like a chameleon. One day, her hair can be very blonde looking. The next day, it will look a darker shade of blonde, like dirty blonde (maybe it is dirty on those days). Always her hair has rusty, red highlights that could only belong to a true red head. Meghan's face is round with high cheekbones. Unlike me, she never needs to add color to her face as her cheeks are always red like a rose. Blue eyes sit high in her face giving her a small forehead. This allows her to look good with or without bangs. A sturdy neck holds up her head, and it sits atop round shoulders that match her round face. She has a muscular build with wide feet that end with stubby, short toes.

She covers her body in a mixture of today's latest trends and '60's remixes. Sometimes, she looks like she's ready to go to a peace rally instead of school. What's good about this is she usually doesn't care too much about what others think or say. As long as she's clean, neat and it's comfortable, then she'll be happy. In her mind, clothes really don't make a person. You can see Meghan in the most outrageous looking shoes! She always seems to pick out the brightest, funkier and strangest looking outfits. Thankfully, my mom's good sense usually brings about a compromise. She ends up with normal looking sneakers and is allowed to get the strange ones on sale to be used for playing around and for her annual Thanksgiving Day Turkey Dip. She's the only one I know who would willingly run into an ice covered lake when it's only 30 degrees outside and the water temperature is about the same and call that "fun!" She comes out, and she's all blue but still smiling like a cat that just ate the family's pet fish. "I didn't even notice the ice," she says and trudges back to the car.

She may not have noticed the ice, but usually my sister is very observant. I often tell her she'd make a good detective when she gets older. She reminds me of Sherlock Holmes when she is trying to puzzle something out. No matter how hard I try, I can't get anything past her. She always knows if I'm trying to keep something from her, and most of the time, she figures it out even without giving me hints or clues. Because of her observation skills, Meghan is always reminding me why she is the little sister. She claims I wouldn't make a good one at all.

Meghan sometimes threatens my mom that she will be going to Clown College after high school. This may not even be a bad choice for her, although it doesn't sound like she has very high goals set for herself. She does have a way of making people laugh when they don't want to, and she does seem to know what to say to people to help lighten their load. She is a lover of animals and says if Clown College doesn't work out, she can always try working at a zoo. Meghan is humorous and entertaining. She will only think about watching animals or old people-nothing in between. On the rare occasion that she is left to play with younger children, she does a great job but tires of it easily. I'm sure that whatever Meghan finally chooses and wherever Meghan finally ends up, the people or animals will be the luckiest ones around.

Another one of my sister's better qualities is her iron will. If you set a challenge in front of her, she will conquer it. One time, when she was going for her black belt, our Master was being very hard on her. Many nights, she would come home crying and wanted to give up. After talking to her and telling her how close she was, you could see the little fire spark in those blue eyes, and you knew she wouldn't back down until the prize was won. I think even the Master was shocked when she delivered an almost flawless musical form.

Meghan has a love for life that is rare these days. She enjoys just being a kid and is in no hurry to grow up. Her lively personality makes her fun to hang out with, and you know you are always going to have an interesting time. Having a sibling to laugh with, cry with, fight with and have as your lifelong friend?

## My First Season

"Hey, wanna have a catch?" Dad asks me one lazy Sunday afternoon.

"Sure, I guess." I take my nose out of my book and look out the window. It is a beautiful spring day. We grab our gloves and jog to the park where we stand a good distance apart-too far apart to talk, but that's okay. Having a catch doesn't require conversation.

I remember the first time I had a catch with my Dad. I was eight and had just gotten my first baseball glove. The glove was too big and I was afraid of the ball, but I loved the smell of the leather glove and the way the ball sounded when I caught it. We didn't play that long —maybe twenty minutes, but having a catch

Sarah  
Gardiner  
Grade 10  
Manchester  
High School  
Manchester

with his daughter for the first time really meant something to my father.

I joined my first softball team a short while after that. We were the worst in the league, but I loved it anyway. Dad made it to all of my games. I remember getting my first hit after practicing with Dad for weeks. With any sort of decent fielders I wouldn't have made it half-way to first base, but the easy grounder rolled right between the second baseman's legs and I ran over first base feeling like I'd just hit a grand slam. I loved base running because it felt more like a mind-game than anything else. I loved stealing bases because it felt as though I had somehow outsmarted the infielders. My favorite positions were shortstop and first base. I was horrible at both of them, but I didn't realize it then. I was too caught up in the joy of playing.

That first year I didn't even mind warming the bench (which I did occasionally). I spent the down time learning cheers. I loved the bad grammar in them. They made me feel tough—almost like a tomboy. I think the real reason I loved those cheers so much was because they really made me feel like a part of a team. This was something I had never before experienced—belonging—fitting in. I enjoyed every minute of it.

More than anything, I loved the end of a good game. I would walk back to the car physically tired but still high on adrenaline. I'd go over the finer points of the game with Dad on our way home or to the ice-cream parlor. At home, when it was time to change out of my uniform I was elated if I had a grass stain on my pants or a lot of mud on my cleats. Getting dirty was a relatively new experience for me because I'd spent most of my childhood reading or prancing around in my mom's old dresses and having tea parties. Each grass stain was proof of how hard I had worked. They were as good as medals in my eyes.

My newfound love of baseball also made me an avid follower of the Boston Red Sox. I watched games with my Dad and, through his teachings, learned that it was acceptable to tell Yankees fans that they stink. I made bets with adult baseball fans on the outcome of Red Sox–Yankee's games every chance I got. Somehow they never made me pay up when I lost. When the Red Sox won I gloated over their victory as if I had been the one to score the game winning run. Through the season ended in tragedy (we did not even make it to the playoffs) I was not discouraged. I set all my hopes on next season and continued to make fun of the Yankee's fans in the meantime.

I finished that first season of baseball a different person. I liked being part of a team and making new friends. But, most of all, I liked knowing that I had the capacity to accomplish things I never dreamed I could.

None of the seasons of baseball I have ever played since then can compare to that first one. While I stayed content to view the sport as only a game my teammates grew more competitive with each passing year. In my freshman year of high school I didn't go out for a team at all when spring rolled around. One of my friends still thinks that a particularly harsh coach has "ruined baseball" for me. She doesn't understand that you could never ruin baseball. It is a timeless sport that I will always love.

I still watch Red Sox games and play catch with my Dad. We get our

hearts broken at the end of every season, but it doesn't faze us. Half the fun of baseball is being able to look forward to next year. While you wait you can just make fun of the Yankees fans.

Now the sun is setting and twilight is gathering.

"Ready to go in, Dad?" I ask, wishing I had brought out a sweatshirt.

"Sure." We walk back to the house in companionable silence. "Thanks for playing catch with me," he says.

"No Dad," I say, thinking of my first season and how much fun I had, "Thank you."

**Alexander  
Chabla**  
Grade 10  
Hamden Hall  
Country Day  
School  
Hamden

## The Beach

The crisp ocean wind batters my face with an unparalleled valor, forcing my hair back from underneath my hood. It wraps itself around every fold in my jacket, leaving no part of my body untouched. The wind wisps wildly, dancing along the water, spraying me with the salty sea fizz as it passes. Out on the horizon, whitecaps glitter in the morning sun as the light bounces off the water briefly blinding my view. Sailboats slice through the icy water, speedily making their way to the port, propelled by the force of the wind on the tarnished and worn sails. If one looks closely, one will see dolphins swimming beside the boats, jumping from time to time, racing the boats to an unmarked finish line. Their playfulness and innocence is like that of a child: not caring, not listening, and paying no attention to the warnings of the world around them. Like my little brother running along beside me, the dolphins wander at will, entertaining themselves with their freedom, and eventually finding their way home.

The morning sun begins to make its way across the sky; the clouds billow and then fade as the wind carries them off across the ocean. As the sun reaches its post in the center of a cloudless sky, we reach a cluster of boulders that just out into the water. These clumps of granite are worn with years of pounding waves, their red-brown hue striking the subtle greens and blues of the ocean. They are the grandfathers of the beach, unbroken by the trials of time and swelling with stories of the sea. A lighthouse once stood here, its solid beam of light parading through the darkness of the night with swift flashes that could penetrate the thickest fog. It beacons not only to the ships but also to the town's young people, who would gather here on weekend nights. The rocks held these youngsters' fates, their histories made up of first kisses, first loves, and first times. A "Forever" etched into the rock would eventually fade into a capsule of forgotten time, as would the names we left freshly carved on those rocks.

We walked up to the shore to the sandier area of the beach, where we sat

finishing our lunch. Our laughter echoed in the distance, carried by the wind, fading in with the sounds of the sea. A foghorn blew as a puffin marched down from its nest, entering the water with a royal splash. Out on the water, a seal and her pup sunned on a cluster of rocks, their barks answered by the crabs that scuttled over our toes. My sister's sandcastle stood tall on the shore, its turrets covered with colored shells, its moat filling with water as the tide rises. Soon the castle fell into the sea and was enveloped by the icy waters.

The water rose with an imposing force, our seats in the sand were soon underwater, and we retreated to the edge of the waterline where the sea-grass and rose bushes thrived. The pearl-white flowers were as beautiful as they were painful, my mother's hands scarred for the remainder of that summer vacation. The vibrant basket of flowers was well paid for - the bloodied sand a testimony to that. As we walked through the tall saltwater grass, the sun began to sink, an orange light cascaded onto the beach, striking our faces so that it gave us a divine sense, an aura that would be found nowhere else. The wind whisked the tall grass as we made our way from the beach, and the further we went, the weaker it got. I looked back on to the beach as we settled into our car; it had quieted, the water was calm again, the jaded rocks still standing robust in the starlight. A single dolphin broke the still, sending ripples across the water and down my spine.

The beach was solace, and at last, I had found it.

## Somnium

It was summer now, the infinitely high sky lustily projected an aura of calm over the wind-blown grasses of the quiet neighborhood. The rows of houses flanking the recently paved black road stood erect, absorbing the deafening glare of the dun beating down out of the hazy heavens that mercilissly flaunted its treacherous beams. Peter stepped out of his house, a brick two-story structure with a low slung roof that protruded over the small, yellowing yard of grass. Lightly jumping down the cracking concrete steps his dark brown locks bounced in rhythm with his steps while his eyes darted around his sockets, glancing at the entire street-scape in front of him. This road was empty: the only movement was the slight rustle of some browning leaves in the sparsely placed trees that lined the road, while the only sound was the occasional bird cry or roar of a car engine that permeated his ears from a few blocks away. It was late summer, August in all of its glory, the declining beauty of the season that was about to fade away into the full death of fall, yet a few last breaths of life escaped the corpse of the still warm summer day. Peter seemed to sense the lifelessness of the moment, the absolute dearth of living spirit that was contained within the hazy dust of the burning sun.

His mother watched him leave, hidden behind the fading curtain in the

**Brian  
Simalchik**  
Grade 10  
Danbury High  
School  
Danbury



large front window: she watched him run across the road and head down the sidewalk, completely immersed in the excitement of joining his friends for an afternoon at the local park, one last attempt to rekindle the fading spirit of summer. His mother watched until his small body bounced out of sight; then she stepped back into the dark and gloomy recesses of the house and exhaled a large and wretched sigh. She had told him to go play in the park, to go enjoy a moment of true life with his friends, and of course he complied. Her heart was full of grief; its large vestibule was overflowing with remorse and sorrow. He had to leave the house. She told herself he had to leave, or else she would never be able to rid herself of her horrible husband. She was already packed and ready to part with her family and home; she had taken her last look at her son.

She was unable to make the quick and venerable flight from the house, the desirable exit from the repression of her marriage that was so mightily ingrained in her mind. She was a hero, a suppressed woman who had to escape from the nefarious clutches of her evil husband, the man who hated her, controlled her and despised her. These thoughts flashed through her mind as she stood trembling in the ancient front room: the parched light from the window seeped through the porous fabric of the dusty drape and created a striking outline on the floor in front of her tired, worn feet. Her body sagged under the weight of her conflicting thoughts and she staggered to the dry leather of the supporting sofa to sort and configure her mind. As she sat still, as if a statue of time, the desperate light of the dying sun grew greater through her window, and trapped dust danced inside the prism of light. All the while, through the falling minutes, the tortured woman sat still, her thoughts swirling through her mind as she debated the much anticipated escape from her present life to a new and safe life away from her current dictator.

Outside, the sun sank lower out of the rich yellow sky and prepared to meet the steady and strong earthen barrier: inside the woman paced about the unblemished kitchen floor, her hurried steps reflecting her unsure state of mind. While she ambled about the dark kitchen, concealed from the sun by the thin metal strips of the graying blinds, her ears arose at the sound of a car, a car that was very close by, or even in her driveway. A blind panic raptly overtook her wretched body: if it was her husband, she thought, he would surely beat her if he saw her neatly stuffed suitcase in the upstairs hall. All her rational instinct fled her tortuous mind and she panicked. Her large blue eyes darted around the kitchen then her legs carried her upstairs. She shook, visibly quivered as she ran up the beige plush stairs to her large bedroom and slammed the wooden door. Her breath was uneven and jagged, shivering and breathing with a fear strong enough to completely overtake her body. Why was he home, she thought, why?

“Why!” she wailed, surprised at the clarity and power her voice had, “Why!” She wailed and sank her head into her calloused hands, the two blue eyes letting forth a surge of tears, her mouth whimpering in a child-like fright. But as she cried, alone in her golden-light basked room, she did not hear the front door open, or hear the man’s footsteps on the dark red tile, or hear the rustling of his black coat, or hear his dreadful voice, booming with every syllable. There was silence where she was expecting sound; there was nothing where she was expect

ing something dreadful.

Her sadness dried up in an instant. An amazing euphoria suspended her body, and she clapped her hands together in delight! He wasn't home! What joy, the ecstasy of the secret was still sustained! Oh, a thousand happy feelings pulled her up and out of the room, down the stairs in a whirlwind of bliss! She could leave him!

"The fool!" she yelled, cackling with brevity, "The eternal idiot, that foolish boor; he will come home today," she paused to lick her lips, "and find...nobody!" With that simple statement her voice jumped and so did her small, plump body, "And he will have to take care of Peter, and he will have to be alone, and he will feel what I feel: pain, suffering, sadness, all from him, all because of him, him, him, him!" and she collapsed, in tears once more, at the bottom of the stairs. But these tears rapidly evaporated, for her joy far surpassed any former hardships she had experienced.

Wiping her face with her loose-fitting shirt, she ran back upstairs and grabbed her heavy suitcase. Looking around once more at her bedroom, she descended the stairs and rushed out the front door. She squinted in the magnificent red streaks of the setting sun, which filtered across the now concrete-gray sky. Stowing the suitcase in the backseat of her black jeep, she caught her reflection in the tinted-glass window: her hair, thin and black, was loose and scraggly; her skin was pale and wrinkly with age, but she turned away from the reflection with a dejected grimace that clearly showed signs of sadness. Not everything would be perfect in her new life, she told herself; but it would be better than her current one. Suddenly her mind snapped back into its suspended state of joy, and she gleefully slammed the back door and climbed into the front seat. Loudly laughing, she stuck her key into the ignition and turned it roughly, clearly anticipating a loud roar from the engine. When the rough noise reached her ears she shouted with delight and quickly slammed her door. Her flight was about to commence, her honorable escape from the clutches of evil was about to begin; she was Moses, leaving the repressing hands of a horrible dictator. She was courageous, she was tough, she was righteous!

And yet, as she sat there with the car engine idling and the giant blue eyes on her face glaring down at her tensed hands gripped around the steering wheel, she felt a twang of guilt. Just a small bud of guilt that was hidden within the deep recesses of her heart, a feeling that she wanted to see her son one last time—to run her hand through his razor-sharp bangs, to hold his small, soft hands, to look into his deep-set brown eyes and hear his mellow voice say one more word. That was what she wanted.

"No, no, no, no, no!" she yelled with anger in her voice, "No! I have to get out, I have to leave..." but her voice trailed off as she thought of her son. The bud of guilt in her heart bloomed into a flower of love, and she turned the rumbling engine off. The quietness nudged her into the house, out of the setting sun, where she sank into the sofa in the front room. Her mind started churning, started remembering her husband would be home, started remembering she didn't want to see him, started thinking of how she would not have to look into his foolish eyes or hear his horrible voice. Meanwhile, the sun disappeared underneath the



soil of the earth and night exploded in the sky. The blue of day faded into the soothing black of night. The sound of cars driving, holding husbands and wives coming home from work filled her ears and lights started popping on outside from the surrounding houses. A drop of rain fell from the sky, then suddenly a shower of water cascaded out of the translucent heavens. The effervescent splashes on the roof soothed the woman until she stood, a content and knowledgeable smile locked on her face, and she ambled into the powder room off the kitchen to wash her sweaty palms. With the rain came life, with life came peace and happiness washing through her mind and soul, cleansing her thoughts as the rain cleansed the earth.

When her husband arrived home after picking up Peter at the park, he walked into a brightly lighted house with the smell of dinner cooking from the inviting kitchen. Peter scampered to his room up the stairs, while the man walked to the kitchen and caught sight of his wife. She turned and looked into his friendly brown eyes, while his pleasant face scrunched into a smile. She saw compassion and love in his face; she saw happiness and kindness deep inside those big brown eyes. She smiled at him with a haughty smile, a falsified smile, returning his eternal worship with eternal malice.

"I'm glad you're home," she murmured, with a strange glint of vice in her eye, "I'm glad you're home." He quietly groaned, then cried out, then fell on the floor, the dark wooden handle of a steak knife protruding from his arched back, lines of blood soaking into his black suit jacket. The woman bent over her husband and pulled out the bloody knife, twisting it to ensure the perforated edges ripped the skin and cracked the bone, while the man gasped his last painful breath. Holding it in her hand, she laughed, a high and piercing tone of malevolence that punctured the soul and darkened the heart.

"Oh, Peter!" she cried, "Come downstairs, sweetie!" The young boy heard his mother's voice and left his small bedroom. He jumped down the plush stairs, two at a time, and landed in the kitchen where his mother stood, blocking his view of the room. She embraced him wholeheartedly, while out in the unforgiving night the mournful moon rose out of its earthen chamber and embraced the stars.

End

Note: Somnium is Latin for daydream, fancy, or fantasy.

## Ultimatum

Delusion solution  
mind pollution  
steel resolution  
ultimate conclusion  
self-execution.  
Pilgrimage to Hell  
none to tell  
sanity fell  
tensions swell  
in solitude dwell.  
Curse and swear  
“Life unfair”  
silent prayer  
vacant stare  
out of air  
Cast aside  
attention denied  
comments snide  
words misguide  
people lied  
reality defied  
shattered pride.  
Truth agitates  
despair accelerates  
hostile mental state  
opens the flood gate  
ugly twist of fate.  
God’s tender lamb  
doesn’t give a damn  
mortality’s a sham.  
Sick comprehension  
downward ascension  
spiraling tension.  
Scantly more than a shell  
merely a soul to sell  
internal plight to quell  
a final farewell.  
An anguish to subside  
servile to the tide  
cyanide  
suicide.

**Leara Jones**  
Grade 11  
Cooperative  
Arts and  
Humanities  
School  
New Haven

## Bob's Adventure

Once upon a time, in a land far away, lived a tinfoil being named Bob. It is unsure, even to this day, whether Bob was male or female. While her name suggests masculinity, his clothing and hairstyle were always very feminine. Bob generally wore skirts and blouses, and had long flowing hair.

It was a Monday like any other; Bob awoke antemeridian, showered and dressed, ate breakfast and went out into the world to find an adventure. Ever since the existence of life, Bob's antecedents were always after adventure, but sadly, they never found it. Bob looked for adventure bimonthly, but never found it until this Monday.

Bob, a semiskilled walker, walked along the path he walked everyday, but today something was new. As Bob walked, she tripped over a giant green shoe and fell unconscious. After getting up, the semiconscious tinfoil being pondered about the shoe. Where did it come from? Who did it belong to? Who, or what, could ever have such huge feet? After thinking about and staring at the shoe for a long while, Bob picked it up and looked inside. He didn't see anything, but decided to turn it over and shake it to be sure she wasn't missing anything. While shaking the shoe, out fell a piece of paper and a stuffed toy. Bob was intrigued.

Bob picked up the paper and found that someone had written an antedated note that read:

Finder of this shoe: Keep the shoe, for it is magic. The stuffed toy can come to life and grant you onewish.

Sincerely,

The former owner of this shoe

Postscript: Beware, wish wisely or the stuffed toy will eat you.

Though a little scared at the threat of a stuffed toy ending his life, Bob was too curious to not make a wish. "Besides," she thought, "that whole 'stuffed toy eating me' thing was probably a joke." Bob had decided to make a wish; he just didn't know what to wish for.

"Uhhh, hello?" Bob said to the stuffed toy, trying to get it to speak. The stuffed toy opened its eyes and smiled pleasantly. "What's a good wish? You know, the kind that won't get me eaten," Bob inquired. The stuffed toy silently shook its head to imply that it wouldn't answer.

After a bicentennial of thinking, Bob decided on a wish. "I wish I could fly!" The stuffed toy nodded, Bob transformed into a bird and took off into flight.

Bob soared in the sky all postmeridian and then landed to tell the stuffed toy how cool flight was. But when Bob landed, the stuffed toy had an odd look on its face, almost an evil smile. Bob nervously asked, "What's up?" The stuffed toy walked over to him and said "Birds are yummy." And with that gobbled Bob up.

The stuffed toy grabbed the notepaper and walked over to the shoe. Before hopping in, it muttered, "Should've wished for world peace."

The End

## True Masterpiece

Sunlight trickles down the walls  
Forming puddles on my Grandmother's quilt  
It soaks my hair and  
Drips into the corners of my eyes  
I wipe it away, but find myself surrendering  
To the beckon of my senses

My sea green curtains  
Reveal a stainless world  
A cream-colored underglow  
Dusted with a thousand glittering diamonds  
And in this instant my breath is stolen  
By the unseen Artist of a true masterpiece

My own private watchtower  
Has been laced by God's breath  
The glass window decorated while I slept  
By hands so delicate and so precise  
That only a skilled Painter  
Could call them His own

Huge feathery snowflakes  
Dance among the sleeping trees  
Until they are stitched one by one  
Into the earth's blanket  
Their fate just one step in a flawless design  
Merely sketch-work to the final draft

I pull my grandmother's quilt up to my chin  
Paying little attention to the puddles of  
Sunlight that spill onto the carpet  
And as the earth sleeps  
Wrapped tightly in its blanket  
So shall I

**Ellen Brown**  
Grade 11  
Granby  
Memorial High  
School  
Granby

## Storm Season

Jack Marn teetered on the threshold of his kitchen and his consciousness. Last night had been one of disturbing dreams, powerful arms had seized him, pulling cruelly out of a white room where he'd been perfectly comfortable, thank you very much. And now, his eyes falling closed drunkenly, their grasp again pressed into his flesh.

A small radio perched on the windowsill filled the room with a jagged whisper. It floated through Jack's head aimlessly before settling momentarily, leaving a single word.

"Storm." Said Jack. He crossed the room and turned off the radio.

Jack Marn was brewing a pot of weak coffee. Outside, the sun was breaking the horizon. A light wind rose from the bay and drifted across grassy lawns, stirred the dust on deserted streets and escaped into the wooded hills that severed Cold Bay from the world at large.

Cold Bay was a patch of white clapboard buildings pieced together haphazardly by the rhythm of the shipping trade until now a view from the tallest hill showed what seemed to be all the salt in the ocean in a massive crystalline deposit on the shore. With little people running to and fro, carving lives out of the unyielding mineral.

And one speck separated from the herd. Sitting on a shallow inlet ringed with rocks and stunted pines. Its sea-facing side rose in the morning. And inside, Jack Marn stood at his kitchen counter, drank his coffee from the pot, and meditated on the word "storm."

Here? He bent his head slightly to watch the lightening sky. It was clear save for a few shreds of cloud. It must have been, he decided, a report for some distant place. A place that had, he thought as the hills filled his vision, nothing to do with him at all.

A cockroach scuttled across the counter top, he brought the empty coffee pot down on top of it. It ran in futile circles then, finding itself trapped, sat motionless in the center. The house had a pest problem, roaches, mice in the winter. Marn had never thought to exterminate them. But instead filled his house with hundreds of trinkets, rich rugs, vases, "fine" china and anything else that suggested class. As if the vermin, finding themselves in a house that looked like it would have none, would disappear. He tapped the coffee pot, sending the roach scabbling at the glass. He watched for a minute and realized that it was late, he turned to the door, leaving the roach trapped behind him. It was time for school.

He wove his car gingerly through the narrow Cold Bay streets. The last vestiges of his dream bubbled to the surface for a moment before retreating back into darkness. The stores were open much earlier than usual and a few townspeople were already going in and out. Marn watched with passing curiosity as he drove by, it seemed strange, but the entire place seemed strange to him. He had come from where there were no hills and no sea, where the sky was bounded only by the earth and the earth was bounded by nothing. He had been only passing through here, Cold Bay seemed only a place to pass through. But he had stayed "for a night or two." And woken up ten years later and still a stranger.

He flexed his fingers around the wheel and breathed deeply. The road was passing through groves of spindly maples and pine. He veered the car to a small side road and the trees thinned, then cleared altogether in front of the school.

Cold Bay High School was on a tall hill separated from town by a short stretch of forest. The main building was a white, prim structure with black eaves. Like almost all the buildings in town it had not been built for its current purpose, modern additions had been added over the years. First surrounding and then overwhelming and then trapping the antiqued original with brick and steel. Marn brought his car around to the back and parked, pausing for a moment to run his fingers through his hair and check the sky.

Inside the school it was dim. Brick walls sucked away any brightness that chanced inside giving the place the atmosphere of a cave. Small bullet-shaped lamps encased in cages jutted from the ceiling at regular intervals, spreading weak yellow light. Marn's footsteps made muffled thuds on the deep blue carpet.

A display case broke the monotony. Marn stopped before it, inside was a single trophy:

CONGRATULATIONS  
Cold Bay girls volleyball all-stars

The date was illegible. But judging by the hair cuts of the well-scrubbed girls in the nearby photograph it had been some time ago. Marn stared at the golden cup, so inadequate in the vast case, and moved on.

Around the corner, a few of the more nauseatingly eager students had already arrived. He thought for a second of turning around for another hallway, but it was too late. A tall, blonde and athletic boy concerned him.

"Hey, Mister Marn," he flashed perfect teeth. Marn's gritted his own.

"Hello."

"So, what are we doing today?" He bobbed his head like a sea bird.

What were they doing today? He thought back frantically to last night, to his plans. Finally, it came to him.

"Richard the Second." A pause, the boy was silent. "Shakespeare." The boy's face brightened.

"Oooh, right. He's, like, one of my favorites."

"I'm glad."

"Did you hear about the storm?"

Marn came to attention, the word drifted around again, storm.

"Something."

"Supposed to be big. Hope I don't get caught in it!" He forced a small laugh. "Already hit bad in the south."

"I'll keep it in mind."

Marn excused himself to his room and locked the door. He sat edgily in his creaking brown office chair tapping his fingers together absently. He was staring out the window at the clear sky when the bell sounded and his first students filled his room.

It was a freshman class. Steinbeck, Miller. He lectured as they shifted restlessly and glanced out the window. Their chatter was all about the storm, stories from the south filtered in on the voices of pocket radios. Flooding, wind

restlessly and glanced out the window. Their chatter was all about the storm, stories from the south filtered in on the voices of pocket radios. Flooding, wind like the wrath of god, one family tearfully said that “everything they had” had been swept away.

Marn ate his lunch alone in his room, tapping his foot rapidly on the floor and staring at the chipped yellow paint covering the brick in his room. He picked up a book and paged through it absently. He walked through the authoritarian lines of desks. Before long he was at the window, straining his eyes from the hill towards the ocean.

The window was long and low, hung with glass impregnated with a mesh of wire. Slowly, he brought his face closer to the glass. The wire became enormous grey bars crosshatching his view. Squinting and grimacing, he made out the thin stripe of the sea, an ink stain on the horizon. And above it, a line of pure black marred the brilliant blue sky.

This period was free to him. He dozed in his chair and dreamed. He was on a beach, and was driven for some unclear but compelling reason to carry the sand into a large box. He had a bucket to help him, but it could not hold a thing. He dug with his hands but the grains slipped away into the breeze. A woman came to him then, she showed him how to clear away all the sand. His task became easy and enjoyable then, he could not see her, but he was sure she was his mother.

When he woke a light rain had begun to fall outside, the sky had darkened to a uniform grey. He thought of the cockroach.

The blond boys' class shuffled in after noon. He spoke automatically, Shakespeare reverberated leadenly around the claustrophobic room.

He thought of the storm. The words of the southern family echoed through his head: “Everything we had, everything we had worked our whole lives for, washed away. Just. Like. That.” Followed by the buffeting of wind on a microphone, then silence.

The archaic public address system crackled for a moment, then came to life. Due to the, ah, inclement weather all students and faculty were to be released at once.

Jack Marn edged his way back into Cold Bay. The rain beat a tattoo on the roof of his car, coming down so hard his windshield was useless. He rolled down the front window and hung his head into the storm.

It took him three times as long to reach downtown, the streets were full of police in orange ponchos and, he noticed with alarm, sandbags. As he drove the wind rocked his car on its springs. In the distance, red lights blocked his path as he inched closer a formidable road block materialized from the rain's grey curtains. A stern-jawed policeman told him that, sorry, absolutely no vehicles were being allowed this close to shore. A shattering thunderclap punctuated his words.

Marn pulled his head back into his car. The rain kept him from making out anything more than a few feet away and the thunder made his ears sing. Slowly, he crawled from the passenger side. The rain whipped at him and the wind snapped his coat like a flag. He made his way around the road block, avoiding the officers he staggered drunkenly forward. He ran down his road past



the frail pines that bowed to the storm.

The outline of his house hovered ahead of him like a mirage. The waves surged explosively over the inlet's rocks and lapped at its foundations.

He fell into the door and flung it open. The lights had long gone, and the rain came in bullets through the broken windows.

Why had he come back here? His things lay around him, he began to gather them in his arms when the Southerners voice filled his head.

Everything we've ever had, washed away.

He let his things fall and ran through the open door just as the whole house gave a final shudder and cracked.

He ran down the rocky beach in blind panic. The rain dragged his hair into his eyes, he could feel the percussion of the waves. The wet rocks gave under him, he rolled towards the sea, ending up on his back just as the sea rose up and took him.

Jack Marn turned end over end in a grey ether. The sound of the wind and rain were muted, a dull rushing filled his ears. He felt his fingers brush the bottom of the inlet. He felt the impact as the sea brought his head to a smooth rock. He saw the sea grow black.

\* \* \*

Jack Marn woke to the taste of salt and copper. The world began like the tiny dot on a television screen and grew to fill his vision. He was lying on his side, his face was covered in sand and his eyes stung. With great effort he pulled himself somewhat upright, there was a trail of blood leading from where his mouth had been towards the sea. There was a throbbing in his jaw, he touched it tenderly and decided it was broken. He stood unsteadily, the sun was bright and warm, the sea was as smooth as glass.

He moved in a daze to the ruins of his house. It had been cracked open like an egg. And everything lay scattered. He saw the fragments of his coffee pot, he picked up a piece of a small china dish, turned it over, and let it fall again. His rich rug hung from a nearby tree.

Washed away.

He made his way through puddles and piles of sand bags to town. Everywhere trees lay as if they had been ripped out of the earth by a giant hand. Bits of buildings littered the grass and brush.

Downtown was a battlefield of broken glass and water. A single soldier stood guard over nothing in particular in the center of an intersection, Marn approached him, and when he saw Marn he ran to his side.

"Are you alright, sir?" He was much younger than Marn had thought.

"Fine." His speech was garbled. The soldier looked at his jaw.

"Your jaw is broken."

"Where is everyone?" Marn ignored his comment.

"They evacuated out to the outskirts of town, but finally it was so bad we had to force them over the hills." The soldier paused. "They didn't want to go." He added awkwardly.

“They’re like that.”

“Where do you live?”

Marn told him.

The soldier whistled under his breath. “Jesus, you must’ve been hit hard. Did you lose anything?”

Marn was walking away, he stopped and looked around the ruins of Cold Bay. He kicked at a streetlight that lay in the road. The air smelled clean, green leaves floated in the stagnant flood water. Everywhere there was the sound of dripping, but the sun was quickly drying everything out. A gentle breeze rolled off the sea, through the town, and out into the hills.

“No,” Marn answered “not too much.”

## Moonlight Sonata

**Mirel B.  
Ketchiff**  
Grade 11  
Avon High  
School  
Avon

I think I was always aware of her fear of doctors. It showed itself in the way I always had to go with her to her appointments, the way I had to go into the cold, sterile rooms with her and talk to her and listen for her so she wouldn’t have to pay attention to what the doctor was doing. The way I had to answer the questions that the doctor asked her, because she was preoccupied with blocking the whole experience out.

This particular doctor seemed even worse to her than the regular ones did. We had been to see him once before, and now we were back for the final visit to hear the results they had acquired after sucking the last bits of blood from us to run through a series of machines. The room seemed comfortable enough when I first went in, but when I saw its reflection in her eyes it seemed too white, too cold, blinding. There were no windows, no posters or pictures, nothing but the doctor’s cold instruments and the memory of paper dresses and thousands of backs rippling against the cold touch of hundreds of stethoscopes. Nothing but elated hopes and broken dreams. I looked back around the room with my own eyes and warmed up immediately.

Sitting on the table with me standing beside her, I looked back into her eyes and talked to her. Her eyes that were so innocently blue, her eyes that begged for the slightest ray of sun to set them on fire. I loved to look at them, back then.

The doctor came in, the news already etched out all over his somber face, with his clipboard and his long white coat. She started talking to me, faster, turning her head farther into me so she couldn’t see him. She reminded me of a child who was mad at her parents, so when they came into the room she exaggeratedly ignored them, stabbing her disrespect harshly in their faces.

I think I knew what the answer would be to the tests long before the doctor came in, long before we even went to see him. I think I knew the what and the who and the why. At first I believed that she knew all of that, too, but as time went on I saw that it really was a shock for her. When she didn’t want to know

something, she mostly didn't.

He set his clipboard down in front of him and looked at us, first into my eyes, and then into her eyes. Or at least he tried to look into her eyes. I looked back at him, but she kept looking at me, talking to me silently. He actually looked kindly, in that doughy way that favorite uncles often seem to take on. If the way she was shaking was any indication, she was terrified of him.

A slight shake of the head was all that he gave us. There was a lecture after it, I remember, a long one about adoption and pills and things, but I was looking at her. She, of course, hadn't seen him shake his head. After I turned away from the doctor I looked at her. The hope was shining out of her eyes so brightly I had to look at my feet. It was my shoes that I really told, and it wasn't until after I heard her gasp that I could look up at her. I saw it happen, right behind her eyes. Everything about her darkened, just for a second. It made me shiver as I saw what happened behind her eyes. The look, the darkening, only existed a moment in her face, and was immediately followed by a longing, a longing so strong it knocked my breath away, a longing that I misinterpreted at the time, a longing that I would come to fear and loathe.

She was spinning fast, her feet lightly turning over the gray pavement, looking like she was going to lift off at any moment. I watched her, leaning back against a car, watching the spring breeze caress her face.

"Come here," I called to her, and she stopped spinning. When she walked over she was reeling slightly from dizziness, her eyes wild. Her skirt was slipping down slightly over one hip and her tank top was falling off her shoulder. She had taken to bringing a change of clothes with her, and as soon as we were alone, after work, she would change out of the modest, schoolmarm-ish dresses into more comfortable things, more childish things. "Closer." She came closer, smiling, steadier now. I encircled her waist with my hands and looked into her new eyes. Her hair was messed up, stringy, falling into her face. I brushed a piece of it away from her eyes and breathed her in.

"How come you're always fooling around?" I was referring to the spinning. She was stunning, always breaking away and running off, shoeless, to look and hear and taste and smell. Sometimes she would drag me after her and I would stumble along, feeling foolish. Sometimes she would go off alone and I'd just watch her. She was a beautiful thing to watch.

Her eyes laughed at me, and the words burbled out of her mouth, spilling over her lips and dribbling down her chin. "Because!" She laughed out loud. "Because! I can do anything!" Then she broke away from my hands and twirled away again, her skirt flying up to reveal plain cotton underwear. She stopped twirling and ran across the parking lot, over to where the trees grew. I chased after her, my feet falling heavily on the ground, nothing poetic about my movements.

"Come back!" I ran to catch up with her, and she circled around me. I just wanted to take her in my arms again. I took off my blazer and laid it over a car and rolled up my sleeves.

She tilted her head. "Unbotton it." I looked at her, hopeful. "You're sweating, wouldn't you be cooler with it off?"

I shook my head, concentrating on rolling my sleeves back. "Come here," I said, reaching to her, but she was off, spinning with her arms out. I caught her this time, by the arm, and pulled her close to me roughly. She looked into my eyes excitedly, her breath catching in her throat. Then she squealed and fought loose and ran away. I heard her feet slap against the pavement and didn't go after her.

I heard the feet stop, I heard her gasp, but I didn't look for a few more minutes. I craned my neck, training my eyes over the sea of cars until I found her. She was just standing there, holding a leaf close to her chest, breathing in its scent. Her hair was wild, glinting in the sun. I walked slowly towards her, and held her waist again.

"What is it?"

She held the leaf out. It was just red, the edges tinted with brown. It was dying.

"Yes?"

"They smell just like cinnamon, don't they?"

I breathed in and smelled nothing except for a dying leaf. "Yes. They smell just exactly like cinnamon." She smiled into my chest and let me hold her longer.

"When are you going to stop acting like a kid?"

She pulled back, looking up at me. "I'm always going to act like this. This is..." for a second she paused, and looked at herself, her eyes tracing her figure. "It." She moved, walking backwards away from me. "And it is me."

"Mmmm..." I pulled her back, breathing her hair. It smelled warm, from the sun.

"Always!" She laughed and pulled away again, spinning. "You're not. You're not, but I am!"

I looked at her critically. "You already aren't a child, you know that."

"I am!" she shouted into the rooftops, whirling.

I looked at her skeptically. "A child who can bear other children?"

She stopped mid-whirl and looked at me, her mouth forming a perfect O. "I can't bear children." Her laugh echoed around the parking lot, tinkling off the cars, her eyes never leaving mine. "Remember?" she asked slowly, pausing for a second, finally not moving at all, looking at me intently with all the old lines creasing her face and all the old thoughts rushing back into her mind. "A child can't bear children!" she called out to no one in particular, and off she was again, running in directions I couldn't map, while I followed slowly, holding her whenever she was still long enough. Her waist felt so good, so small, in my solid hands. Often I thought her to be imaginary.

The phone call remains fragmented in my mind. "Collecting rocks," "riverbank crumbling," "heavy rains this year," "slipped," "dragged in," "near as we can tell," "couldn't swim," "...Gone."

The rest is a blur, a cyclone of images and voices. All that I have are glimpses of people, bits of hair or shoulders, the light slanting in the window in a peculiar way. That's all that remains.

I do have one clear memory. The dust of the room was captured, still and

floating, in a frame of light that was slanting into the room. I was talking to someone, some people. I was facing the window and they were talking to me softly, a hand resting lightly on my shoulder.

“Usually we drape the adults in black silk, sir. And only the children in white.”

“Use white.” I looked out towards the light filtering through the window. I figured that she had been draped in black for long enough.

“White.”

## A Tainted Blessing

“Please move away from the waterslide,” blasted the lifeguard on her megaphone. The second I heard this I knew that something wasn’t right. I paddled over in the water to where the waterslide emptied into the small, deep pool. There was my sister happily splashing in the small current that developed under the slide. I stroked over to her and started to pull her away. All the while the lifeguard kept blasting on her megaphone.

Kimberly had drawn quite a crowd this time. It consisted mostly of young mothers whose children were waiting at the top of the slide in their cute little pink, Minnie Mouse bathing suits. They all seemed disappointed that their sliding had been delayed. The mothers gave off an aura of anger.

One mother yelled over to me as I was pulling Kim away, “Can’t she hear? Can’t she understand the life guard?” Becoming infuriated at the ignorance of some people I resorted to the same explanation that I give to everyone who wonders about my sister.

“She’s autistic,” I screamed.

“What?” the woman shouted back at equal volume.

“She can’t talk,” I said, simplifying the explanation as I do every time someone asks.

“Oh.” The woman shrank away like a scolded child, ashamed that she had hit such a touchy nerve.

Tears came to my eyes as I pulled Kim by her forearm, away from the scene. My parents came over to ask me what was wrong. I explained the situation to them and watched as Kimberly, who was five at the time, floated next to me on her back, her stomach protruding into the air. They advised, “Don’t feel bad, some people just don’t understand.” I was just seven. Their advice has never been easy. It still isn’t.

Having a sister with the mind of a two-year old in a thirteen-year-old-body is a challenge. She doesn’t really have any outward signs of autism to strangers. Her eyes give off an air of such awareness that often people are surprised to learn of her autism.

**Lindsay  
Carini**  
Grade 11  
Mercy High  
School  
Middletown

A little boy named Garret, the son of my father's friend, once attempted to socialize with my sister.

"Hi, Kim, my name is Garret. Kim? Can you hear me, Kim? What are you watching on TV?"

"Garret, Kim doesn't understand what you are saying to her," I told him, feeling a lump in my throat, and tears in my eyes.

"Oh. Is she special like my friend's sister? She has Bown's syndrome."

"I think you mean Down's syndrome. Kim is autistic."

"She's artistic?"

"No, Garret. She has autism," I said, as his innocent curiosity slowly ate away at my insides.

Kim often embarrasses me. If she is unhappy she screams loudly and shrilly in any setting from restaurants to libraries. When she was about eight, she would run through our town library wildly while laughing. She often tried to climb the shelves to get to the books that she wanted. The librarians, unable to understand her behavior, often scolded her, only to realize that she didn't understand a word of their lecture. I had to defend my sister often in these instances. In front of a group of staring people, it was humiliating to explain Kim's disability with my eyes brimming with tears.

I remember countless times when at least one of my parents had to leave my performances because Kimberly began to cry in the middle. When I was in my seventh grade play *Annie*, I was extremely excited to be playing Grace. Starting the second act, as I sang the song "You're Gonna Like it here," I heard Kim scream in anger. The batteries in her CD player, the one apparatus that allows us to bring Kim to different places, had died. My dad was forced to leave in the middle of the song. At the time I was extremely disappointed, but I have learned to develop an unselfish understanding that sometimes the needs of others take precedence over the needs of ourselves.

Kim lives in her own world. It feels as if I'll never reach her. I often wonder what's going on in her mind. Just by looking into her eyes, I can tell that she is thinking in there, in a world that I sometimes wish to visit. While I watch her fixing complex computer problems that baffle everyone else in the family I wonder, how does she do that? My dad and I once spent hours trying to fix our old Apple computer, which had stalled, indefinitely. We were expecting hundreds of dollars in repair fees or a pile of scrap metal. A while after we left the computer alone, we returned to find Kimberly, sitting in front of what we had thought was hopeless, playing a game. She amazes me every day with similar wordless deeds.

Although I do not fully understand my sister's world of brilliance, and although I have faced many disruptions because of her, I find Kim to be a blessing who has developed my patience, compassion, and sense of responsibility.

# My Cuba

My Cuba is driving  
On open highways and winding mountain roads  
Past crowds of hitchhikers  
Huddled together under the overpass  
Escaping downpours  
And noticing fence posts have sprouted leaves.

It is walks  
Through Havana Vieja  
Where I'm followed by a trail of Cat calls, whistles, and air kisses  
From Cuban gentlemen  
Or watching colors die on the Malecon  
While being questioned  
About the great city of Nueva York  
By a man with one arm.

My Cuba is the bumpy ride  
We hitched on a farmer's oxcart  
And my fascination with  
How green the green is  
And how blue the blue  
As we pass over another rolling hill.

It's in the side streets  
Chunks missing from the road  
And little boys kneeling on the curb  
Watching marbles trace paths through the dust  
While national pride drips from the rooftops  
Paper flags and Viva Fidel.

My Cuba is in the smoke that billows  
And curls around the old woman  
With pink vinyl gloves and hot orange pants  
Taking a break at the cigar factory  
One of her masterpieces  
Hanging from her teeth.

I see it in the sparkling eyes  
Of a six-year-old boy  
Playing baseball with his father,  
A neon green bat gripped tight under his chin  
And near it in the song  
Sung by a man in mesh

Lillian Jenks  
Grade 11  
Greenwich  
Academy  
Greenwich



Sweeping dust off an empty street.  
My Cuba smells like sunscreen  
And salt and mango juice  
That dribbles down your chin  
And makes you smile.  
It is coated with Chipped baby pink nail polish,  
Sticky with humidity,  
And sweaty with the toil of Millions of dreams being lived out  
And dying slowly at the same time.

Sean Edington  
Grade 11  
Edwin O.  
Smith High  
School  
Storrs

## On the Irony of Unbalanced Social Ratios

Let me tell you something, my man.  
I've been there, done that,  
Danced with the devil in the pale moon light,  
Embraced her body, held close her thoughts  
Swum with her, drowned in the waves of prospect  
Stood by her, burned in the flames of ardor.

I've frozen moments listened,  
With a desperate concentration and hinged existence,  
To the whispers of my bosom, and been  
Led astray by my inner most precepts  
While the course neglected stood, constant, crying out  
With a silent appeal and painful self-efficacy.

I've adumbrated time in my mind,  
The plane upon which our world conspires,  
Calculated, rationalized, and reasoned.  
When the only response yielded  
By hours of thought and millennia of progress is:  
"You cannot win."

And, of course, the vexing counsel  
That promises solution, but removes it from reason  
That fuels addictive emotional expatiation  
The counsel that always is there, when you know  
You're wrong, can't figure what's right,  
Your only expression a resigned "Yeah."

Your fervent hopes, fondest wishes, deepest desires  
Toll unremittingly, plaguing you,  
Claw skyward from the deepest of origins,  
Tormenting, maddening, and infuriatingly invariable.  
They see clear through your vaporous fronts,  
Pierce you with their saffron-rimmed sadness.

But the grip on composure, on judgement  
Must not falter, must remain knuckle-white.  
For within your psyche is that one, or those several,  
Portraits of bliss, those snapshots of harmony  
That, never wavering, play at the corners of your mouth, and that  
One day will be.

## Autopsy

This is the place where the earth tossed up  
her bosom, heavy and heaving with age,  
and brought forth ancient relics that came  
with her last breath: bone encased in bone,  
metamorphic rock, petrified wood and graphite,  
the wings of Zeus and war trident of Poseidon—  
she had no use for them anyway.  
Five in my crew, like ten thousand hands,  
chipping and sanding and sifting away  
her crimson body; it escapes the tip  
of a cold metal hammer as thick red powder  
and hangs in the air to fill our lungs like blood.  
I work at her mouth, thin-lipped,  
that once regurgitated orange fluid angrily,  
and killed sleeping villages without warning.  
It now gapes empty; she has grown tired  
of breathing. Stone splinters beneath the blow  
of my pick-ax, yielding only more stone,  
and the *ping* of metal horrifies. That mouth hangs open,  
void of the silent gasps that come with death,  
and her blood coagulates in the dried skin on my knees  
and calloused hands, swollen and soiled.  
Two men stand over my shoulder, snapping  
expensive cameras at our lifeless victim

Noelle Rose  
Grade 12  
Joseph A.  
Foran High  
School  
Milford

while balancing black bags slung over their backs  
harboring lethal devices; hoes, shovels, rakes  
used like a doctor's tools. This is what we live for:  
Removing her most essential parts,  
And leaving her with nothing.

**Tess Bird**  
Grade 12  
Lewis S. Mills  
High School  
Burlington

## Childhood

You,  
My mother,  
Were once young.

You must have imagined  
Days spent in the woods,  
Laurel redefined  
as little houses,  
Salads made  
With thyme and  
Sage;  
Owls calling,  
For the night to fall,  
Like watermelon seeds.

And your mother  
Must have been young,  
Plucked daisies  
Shaped dolls  
Let boats into the river.

And her mother,  
Might have played princess,  
And nibbled berries  
And with juice-stained lips,  
Said goodnight  
To the moon.

And my cousin and I  
Are balancing roses  
On our fingertips

While wanting  
Our laurel houses  
Glass bottles clusters  
And crowns of queens  
To filter back into our hands.

## Confessions of a Notebook

I'll try to sum you up in short phrases because your Youness overwhelms me. I have plenty of fresh paper and a great deal of ink but not nearly enough words to fumble around with to get you through to me.

Pen posed millimeters above a hanging indent, waiting for my motor skills to come to terms with your eyes. Everyone, at some point or another, writes sappy, sloppy poems regarding the eyes of their lovers. I've had my say with those. You aren't my lover, and honestly, it's not your eyes, smile, hair that's making my veins itch for mercy.

It's your font.

Saliva smooth pixels lay out before me like exposed sunbathing beach beauties, obviously not virginal in their presence but still teasing, tantalizing. A massive pixel orgy becomes a letter, perhaps a vowel. When enough of these heaps, these mounds of light dots occur, your words, natural as breathing, stretch out just to make me smile.

To think that your very fingers swat keys to transmit these macro beams of happiness makes me start to warm the ink that's now rapidly curling on the page, illustrating my font's desire.

If keyboards were animate, yours would smile real wide, shuga.

I remember your fingers well, recall thinking you'd make a great drummer, make a great sandwich, make a well-behaved woman moan under your light caresses someday. Your font makes me moan, someday. Traces of memories piece together on those days, and if I'm lucky I'll remember the shape of your ears, the tint of your teeth, the baking-soda-exfoliated softness I imagine your skin is.

Even when those days have exhausted themselves, I'll always taste your succulent font with my eyes and fill lustful sleep with grainy dreams of curving consants and imagine the ticketa-ticka-tick your keystrokes make. I think I'm falling for you and your Times New Roman goodness.

Twelve point font, shuga.

Don't delete a thing.

**Jamie Bassell**  
Grade 12  
Bloomfield  
High School  
Bloomfield

## I am

(To be read as a monologue or soliloquy, while the character writes)

I am a genius, a scientific genius. I can calculate theories and develop postulates, make rules, and produce ideas.

I am a singer, the best singer that ever lived. I can master all octaves and hold all notes, hit each key of each measure attained, and still, year after year, make people want to hear me, again and again. With this craft, I produce ideas.

I am an artist, an artist with numberless and nameless masterpieces. I can make the viewer feel the warm brown sand of the beach or the lover's embrace upon it even smell the hot apple pie cooling on the small stove in the cottage. I am able to make the spectator hear the cries of the audience in my ball game painting and with all of this, I produce ideas.

I am a carpenter, a well-respected, well-renowned carpenter. My hands are my tools and because of them, I can make wooden places to house chirping birds and a table on which a family will enjoy one of the few things they really need: a home-cooked meal (not makeup, clothes, or jewelry). But before my hands become my tools, my ideas hold true rank.

I am a fashion designer, a brave and creative one at that. I make clothes that trigger such comments as "look at that" and "oh my gosh, who made that one-it's so unique?" And many torn, crumpled, and thrown sheets of paper lie around my room just before a show, festering with all the creations that just weren't "perfect enough." But I can make a perfect creation; really, it lies in my ideas.

I am a professional swimmer; no one can beat my time. When my sleek body hits the water, each part of me knows its task. My head goes under, arms back and forth with my legs, and my score is involuntary—the last thing on my mind. I thank my mind, my ideas for initiating my very first meeting with the thing I grow closer and closer to in happiness and understanding each day—the water.

I am a teacher, an improving, exciting teacher. Each day I try to make a difference in a child's life. Each day I try, I try to put myself in the shoes of the youth, try to be compassionate and understanding while not too lenient or lax. And each day is a day I learn something new about childhood that I can, the next day, bring into the classroom, an emergence of new ideas.

But if you must know, first and foremost, I am a student, a young girl by the age of 17. I go to school and try very hard. I have a love for math and music, I sing at all the school functions. I also love painting and creating things with my hands, even wood. I am a victim of shopping and love clothes, and the pool in my backyard is constantly occupied by yours truly (the "professional" swimmer). I also teach children. There are many younger children in my family and in the neighborhood that I love to shed the light on and take under my wing.

So I may not be famous or well respected for a specific craft or even professional, but who's to say I can't be? We all, all people in the world share atoms; as I cough, my molecules can be transported to my mother. Or they can

even be taken out into the air and then picked up by a squirrel; but to focus on the more intellectual and accomplished captors of my molecules—perhaps today I have the atoms of Albert Einstein or Winston Churchill or the beauty molecules of Marilyn Monroe. Who knows? But I do know that the understanding of such a biological phenomenon makes me strive for success because deep down we all share the same ideas...we just go about them in different ways.

And each time I have a great idea, I share it. There's no time for me to talk about who's with who and who's wearing what or doing what. I've got way too many ideas to talk about. Like, how do you balance that equation? What do you think of that painting? Want to make a birdhouse or go to a fashion show? Anyone up for a swim or do you have to finish your homework?

Ideas spread like wildflowers: once you've got one, there's bound to be more lurking in that result will produce an entire field. Everyone indeed has ideas, so why am I the only one writing them down?

## **Alakazamakazoo**

My redheaded teacher was reading a large picture book to her Indian-style seated class when he walked through the doorway. I found myself staring at him, blocking out the teacher's bright repetitions of "boy" and "house" and the colorful images of turtles and fish. He moved bravely into the room in his white Keds sneakers (although now I think he must have walked in bashfully, shuffling his feet) accompanied by the principal dressed in a dapper gray suit. I didn't notice the tall man looming over him.

The teacher looked up from the turtles, her blue eyes smiling. "This is Joey," the principal said with a voice I imagined God would have, "he just moved here from Montana." Small young faces contorted in confusion all around me on the green tile floor while I sat Indian style, my large eyes taking in the gleam of the Montana boy's platinum hair against the iridescence of fluorescent school lights and the perfect balance of the red backpack on his shoulders. He stood, like a perfect boy in a picture book, while something fluttered against my insides like eyelashes.

That day, at a desk in the back of the finger-painting-adorned classroom, the blonde boy formed the letters of his name carefully with a fat red marker on a nametag as the rest of the class slipped on their pink and blue coats for recess and giggled the word "moon-tana" over and over. From across the long green room, I admired the curve of his red "J" and the way his tiny fingers cradled the marker so delicately. Bright blonde wisps hung in front of his face, and I was filled with the sudden urge to cut those luscious bangs off and secretly slip them into one of the bug-catching jars my teacher hoarded on her desk. But I wouldn't know what

**Noelle Rose**  
Grade 12  
Joseph A.  
Foran High  
School  
Milford

kind of bug to call it, and I didn't know how to walk with the scissors facing pointy side down yet. Sheepishly, I shuffled over to the coat rack, plucked my bright pink Barbie coat off its hanger, and lined up with the rest of the class in front of the opened door to go outside. "J" finally left his fat red marker on the desk and ran to join the neat line of children, slipping his right arm through the left sleeve of his jacket.

On the playground, littered with red and gold leaves the size of my hand, his red-sleeved arm brushed against me during a fierce game of dodge ball. In this moment, my motherly hold on the purple rubber ball loosened, and the creepy-crawly feeling returned to my stomach. In a throbbing crowd of pink and blue arms and legs jostling for the purple ball I'd carelessly let fall, I hugged myself tight, vowing to never let my mother put my Barbie coat through the wash ever again.

The next day, when my class gathered again on the green floor, legs crossed in Indian style, my redheaded teacher told us we were putting on a Halloween pageant the next week, and that we all should dress in costume. The obedient Indian-style group suddenly became a group of toothless grins and flailing arms. The teacher put a slim finger to her lips and asked if everyone could say what they were going to be with their inside voice, and so came a slur of typical responses: princess, Tinker-Bell, bride, ghost, witch, black cat, "Freakanstain." When my turn came, I timidly replied "Cinderella" and twirled my brown hair between chubby fingers. Then from a silent corner of the green tile floor, the voice of "J" rolled across the room, and I felt the legs of ladybugs tickle in my stomach once again as the two beautiful words permeated every corner of the room. "Ninja Turtle." His quiet eyes played across the green tile floor, sparkling, and I couldn't wait until Halloween.

The day of Halloween, my mother made my hair tall and immaculate like a tower on top of my head, and carefully bobby-pinned the white, glittery crown in the right place. She fluffed the tulle of my long blue dress and helped me into a pair of ballet shoes, spray-painted silver. She drove me to school in a great pumpkin carriage (a gray Dodge Caravan) clattering her fingernails against the steering wheel and instructing me not to lose a silver shoe like the real Cinderella. Buckled in tight in the backseat, I counted the red and gold leaves that flew by the window as the beautiful words "Ninja Turtle" replayed in my head and the fluttery feeling returned to my stomach.

In the green tile room, stifled by humming camcorders and smiling parents clad in black and orange Halloween sweaters, the redheaded teacher put me next to the Ninja Turtle for the pageant. I, the princess, finally got the chance to stand next to my Prince Charming. Shyly, I glanced over at him through the heavy mascara that sat in clumps on my eyelashes. Blonde hair crept out of the place where his forehead was under the bulky nylon costume, and blue eyes caught the gleam of the florescent lights from behind a green mask. He lifted a bulky green arm and waved fiercely to his parents, beaming from their folding chairs and dressed in matching black sweaters with "Boo" printed on them. My stomach felt prickly again as the teacher, dressed neatly in a black dress and tall coned hat, slid behind the small piano in the corner of the green room and ran her fingers over



the white keys flawlessly. Fourteen smiling faces, caked with fake red blood and adorned with stick-on zits, began to crone off-key the song we had practiced all week.

“Fingernails, lunch pails, apple cores too, stir them in my witches’ brew, I got magic, Alakazamaka...ZOO!” (Lyrics from “Witches Brew” by Hap Palmer).

The “zoo” was not the same as we had practiced it, for in that instant a large, hot weight landed on my small foot, sending pain through my five tiny toes. The Ninja Turtle, enthusiastically singing the verse about dead leaves and rotten eggs, paid no attention as the shiny silver paint of my glass slipper crumbled under his perfectly clean white Keds sneaker. Rather, he continued to shake his green hands furiously at his smiling parents while the blue princess bounced up and down, cradling one foot, tears spilling from her eyes. Alakazamakazoo, the ball was over.

On the way home from the ball in the pumpkin carriage, I held my glass slipper, ruined from the chomp of an ugly Keds sneaker, and told the nail-drumming driver that my Barbie coat was in need of a good wash.

## Reflection of a Paper Clip

The paperclip. It’s so simple, yet such a wonder of metal. It’s useful. It holds stacks of paper together, and can be used more than once. Good stuff.

My fondest memory of the paperclip is second grade. It was cool back then to have retainers and braces, so many of my classmates and I bent paper clips to fit our mouths, our teeth. Sure, it hurt when the metal punctured the inside of our cheek, but gosh, we looked so darn cool. I remember the feeling of second grade.

I was so carefree, so lovely. I wish all years of school were like second grade, you worked on projects for your parents for Father’s day and Mother’s day. However, you did the normal, daily oral language, the phonics book, occasionally worked out a few word and math problems, but you worked on projects for parents, and art. It was a creative time of life. That elementary school, second grade life. It just doesn’t get better than that.

In second grade, at Dr. Charles E. Murphy School, around Mother’s Day, we had a Mother’s Day Tea Party. Mrs. Synodi gave us plenty of time to prepare. We wrote why our mother should be Mom of the Year. We drew pictures of our mothers on the front of a photocopied *Time Magazine* cover. I made my mom cry. It just brings back so many memories. I love my mom with all my heart, and I touched her. My mom never came to school in the middle of the school day. She just didn’t have time. She had so much work and could barely ever get out of it. I remember when we had chorus performances, and class plays, I’d look out in the audience and my mom was never there in the cafeteria. She was never there

Casey  
Harrington  
Grade 12  
Montville High  
School  
Oakdale

for any of the award ceremonies, even though I never got any awards, but I remember how much it hurt. And I remember how she showed up that day, for the Mother's Day Tea Party, in second grade in Mrs. Synodi's class. Tears welled up in her eyes when I talked about her in front of all the mothers and the entire class, and she kept the *Time Magazine* and the write-up that I wrote about how amazing of a Mom she was. She still has it. She keeps it in the hutch in the dining room. I wonder if she ever takes it out to read it. I'd like to read it one day. Maybe on Mother's Day, to make her day special.

In second grade, I had this huge crush on John Sorrentino. Gosh, he was a hunk back then, but no boys ever liked me back. I had cooties of course; I was that chubby girl that no one really had a desire for. I mean, I was as outgoing and funny as a second grade, giddy girl can be, but you know, I wasn't anything to really look at. I had all these crushes on the cutest boys, but none of them ever gave me the chance. It was heartbreaking, you know that feeling when you're all giddy and you think you love someone when you're seven years old. I was that hopeless romantic. I never got the guy though. That's the let down to the story; I never got the guy. I don't know if boys will ever change.

I tried to change myself though. I've been chubby my whole entire life, maybe even fat. I tried to lose weight, and sure I lost some, but still, no boys in my life. I think I'm pretty, but I have so many more qualities that I think people disregard and that often hurts me. It's hurt me my entire life. I got bullied all throughout my elementary and middle school days. I still think of it today, and that sharp pain comes back. It's not a physical pain, an emotional one, and the kind of pain that hurts even more. I wouldn't say I had a bad childhood because all in all I was happy with myself, but I didn't like the way the "cool" kids treated me. I tried to fit in, but I never got there. I never got in the "cool girl clique." At this point in my life, I'm thankful. I looked at those kids like they were some kind of gods. They weren't. They still aren't. There are more things in life, more important things, than the way you look and what kind of clothes you wear. I've finished that chapter of my life. Finally.

Second grade was a good time in my life. I often wonder if John Sorrentino remembers my crush on him or if other people have noticed how I'm not the chunky girl anymore and I've changed. I think my Mom and I are close today because we know how much we love each other and by losing my Dad, we love each other even more. I get upset when I don't get to tell my Mom goodbye and that I love her. Sometimes, she leaves for work, while I'm in the shower, and I get upset when she doesn't come knock on the bathroom door and say bye. I tell her I love her every time we depart from each other because I'll never know when that last time is. She knows I love her, but I want her to really know, really remember. It all goes back to that piece of scientifically bent metal. The paperclip holds life together. Even the slightest things can bring back good and not-so-good memories back into your mind. For me, the paperclip reminds me of the joys and sadness of second grade. I wouldn't change a thing.

## Oh

Last night  
in the cool July paradox of a dog day,  
we walked between fields—  
hair damp from swimming in neighborhood pools where names of haunt children  
are written in cement.  
This is the last summer for bug-lights-underwear-glasses-aqua-marine-colored-  
floats  
The lining is cracking and other pools are being dug.  
It's the summer of so many last things.

Chunks of asphalt kicked up  
between toes and purple foam flip flops  
Jimmy who smokes pot now, followed us home  
and we talked with silence that said  
oh.  
Our feet hit the ground and minds wandered, hurried the  
girl-women we are.

The fields were bewitched last night  
even the sky who has seen the lot agreed.  
Tree silhouettes  
fireflies blinking like so many stars  
tall grass tickling the backs of my thighs—  
stars like so many fireflies—  
where we looked up, and again said  
oh.

It's the summer of so many things.

## Long Lost

As an un-religious person,  
I put you in my prayers tonight.

I remember how you used to call me  
your number-one son.

Opening a drawer of scattered memories:  
photographs, postcards, and letters,

**Melanie  
Tongren**  
Grade 12  
Granby  
Memorial High  
School  
Granby

**Daniel  
Kennedy**  
Grade 12  
Old Saybrook  
High School  
Old Saybrook

an old Polaroid picture of you was on top.  
Smudged with fingerprints,  
you stood before a yellow sky.

You wore big sunglasses,  
and a grin.  
I think it was around 1992.

But now I'm growing up without a mother.  
Because you weren't there for me,  
or anyone.

Sitting on my bed,  
adding more fingerprint smears to your picture,  
it took a lot of strength to call you.  
A recording said something about  
OUT OF SERVICE  
and my stomach churned.

The last time I saw you,  
you never left me with an address  
or a sincere goodbye.

So that now, all I have is this picture,  
of you and a yellow sky,  
your name,  
and even that sounds hollow when I say it aloud.

**Shenelle  
Kuhlor**  
Grade 12  
Harding High  
Bridgeport

## **The Threads of Life**

Why can't she just place the thread in the eye of the needle?  
Doesn't she know that she has a job to finish?  
She sits sullenly still studying.  
Will boring books full of hundreds of pages to get her through?  
I don't understand her. I watch with a wide open eye, I try.

But why can't she just place the thread in the eye of the needle?  
It's not that hard.  
My eye captures a girl so obscure

She looks as if she seen a global catastrophe.  
Her life has been harder than the forceful impact of a trillion stones.

She must place the thread in the eye of the needle!  
Time is running out like the last minutes of an important sports game.  
The scar on her chest serves as a scarlet letter.  
She blames herself.  
Her face becomes a flowing waterfall of memories at night.

She must place the thread in the eye of the needle immediately!  
For the sake of brevity,  
Whether insane or gone, only a doctor can tell  
What is she starting at, doesn't she recognize her own face?  
Before it's too late, she has a reunion;

Why can't I put the thread in the eye of the needle?  
I lack indolence and remain consistent.  
I hold all water.  
My melancholic mind meanders.  
Please don't close the book, for I am not done reading

Can you please place my thread in the eye of the needle?  
I can't see while my eyes are weeping.  
I can't focus, my mind wanders off dreaming.  
The eye is too small, and my world too big.  
Why didn't my book give me a solution to this?

I now know why she couldn't place the thread in the eye of the needle,  
For the thread was in the eye of the needle already.  
She knows nothing but hardships, can she ever be happy?  
Her stitching was done, her struggles have been over.  
Will she ever wake up and realize that her thread has already been placed in the  
eye of  
the needle?

## Honorable Mentions

Michael Sheets	North Stratfield Elementary School
Tess Cheney	North Stratfield Elementary School
Morgan Winters	Hawley School
Jacqueline David	Parker Memorial School
Alexis Quattrini	Daisy Ingraham School
Jennifer Johnson	Ledyard Center School
Stephanie Rodriguez	Alfred W. Hanmer Elementary School
Madeline Stocker	Whiting Lane Elementary School
Taylor Ledgerwood	Harbor School
Elyssa Ganser	Holmes School
Elizabeth Sangree	Mansfield Middle School
Shannon Cowles	Wapping Elementary School
Kai Haaland	Salisbury Central School
Sonia Skoularikis	Thompson Brook School
Neal Carr	Latimer Lane Elementary School
Martina Crouch	Broadview Middle School
Meg O'Connor	Emerson Williams Elementary School
Clancey Adams	Squadron Line School
Chelsey Helling	Scotts Ridge Middle School
Kevin Anthony	Salem School
Meredithe Talibon	Broadview Middle School
Benjamin Clark	Simsbury High School
Jennifer Potanka	Simsbury High School
Amanda Fazzio	Berlin High School
Noah Mishkin	Branford High School
Hanju Roe	North Haven High School
Josh Seidman	Westbrook High School
Aprii Fuller	Cooperative Arts and Humanities High School
Dan Young	RHAM High School
Daniel Yuan	Northwestern Regional #7
Adam Kaufman	Watertown High School

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Paula C. Brisson	Scotland Elementary School
Joan Degan	North Street School
Laureen Mody	Osborn Hill Elementary
& Rebecca Wicke	Osborn Hill Elementary
Laureen Mody	Osborn Hill Elementary
& Pam Williams	Osborn Hill Elementary
Joyce Grassl	Daisy Ingraham Elementary School
Debra Meyers	Bethlehem Elementary School
Diana Burns	Daisy Ingraham Elementary School
Maureen Overcash	Natchaug Elementary School
Laureen Mody	Osborn Hill Elementary
& Kristin Rollings	Osborn Hill Elementary
Loreen Gualtieri	Western School
Laureen Mody	Osborn Hill Elementary
& Rebecca Wicke	Osborn Hill Elementary
& Wendy Elmore	Osborn Hill Elementary
Meghan R. Kane	North Street School
Debra Meyers	Bethlehem Elementary School
Ed Wolf	Middle Gate School
Judy Johnson	J. P. Vincent School
Meeghan Coffey	Highland Elementary School
Jodi Sascewicz	Eric G. Norfeldt School
Jennifer Law	Salisbury Central School
Jill Elder Winningham	Old Greenwich Elementary School
Sharon Franz	Spaulding School
Beverly Coyle	East School
Sara Thurber	Pomfret Community School
Leslie Pearson	Julian Curtiss School
Robert Buyea	Bethany Community School
K. Michelle Garbart	The East Hartford-Glastonbury Magnet School
Gloria Torres	Whiting Lane Elementary School
Shelby Schlotter	Hurlburt Elementary School
Erica Lemcke	South School
Gail Freeman	John Lyman School
Kris Bosari	Davis St. Interdistrict Magnet School
& Rose Elzey	Davis St. Interdistrict Magnet School
John Latona	Ox Ridge School
Polly B. Nodden	Hampton Elementary
Sarah Bell	Old Greenwich School
Nancy Wengefeld	Daisy Ingraham School
Pamela Woodside	Davenport Ridge Elementary School



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Charlene Kilcomons	Latimer Lane School
Sondra Olureri	New Fairfield Middle School
Tara Armstrong	Gallup Hill School
Thomas Hine	Sedgwick Middle School
Kristi Williams	Wheeler High/Middle School
Marc Vendetti	Lyme/Old Lyme Middle School
Thomas Hine	Sedgwick Middle School
Marie H. Dunn	Memorial Middle School
Ginny Connors	Sedgwick Middle School
Alison Padegimas	Longview Middle School
Ann Johnson	Scotts Ridge Middle School
Nancy Methot	Avon Middle School
Susan Zarbo	RHAM Middle School
Pamela Rogalin	Whisconier Middle School
Patricia Sullivan	John Winthrop Junior High
Amy Scott	Middlesex Middle School
Neriman Solim	Talcott Mountain Academy of Science & Mathematics
Ginny Biting	Pawcatuck Middle School
Cathy Holmes	John Winthrop Jr. High
Ellen Visnyei	East Ridge Middle School
Emily Genser	Sedgwick Middle School
Linda C. Peters	RHAM Middle School
Linda Krapf	New Fairfield Middle School
Eric H. Gottfried	Memorial Middle School
Michelle Caruso	Masuk High School
Charles Ewers	Ledyard High School
Kathy Schwanfelder	Branford High School
Paula Robinson	Simsbury High School
Robert Piazza	Hamden Hall Country Day School
Paula Robinson	Simsbury High School
Susan Murphy	Old Saybrook Senior High School
Candy Price	Conard High School
Jeff Schwartz	Greenwich Academy
Myra Slocum	Guilford High School
Charles Wolfe	Lyme-Old Lyme High School
Kelly Cecchini	Manchester High School
Jamie Swift	Woodstock Academy
Kelly Cecchini	Manchester High School
Medria Blue	Hamden Hall Country Day School

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Judith Katz	Cooperative Arts & Humanities
Maggie Kline	Rockville High School
Linda A. Touchette	Granby Memorial High School
Margret Meehan	Valley Regional High School
Andrew Dorr	Avon High School
Leslie Chausse	Mercy High School
Jeff Schwartz	Greenwich Academy
Mark Heafey	Edwin O. Smith High School
Myra Jadric Slocum	Guilford High School
Jessica Bialobrzska	Lewis S. Mills High School
Suranto Stark	Bloomfield High School
Katherine Nolan	John F. Kennedy High School
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Penny Baril	Montville High School
Arline Baron	Granby Memorial High School
Jeanne Proctor	Old Saybrook High School
Lamana Caren	Harding High School

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