



ASPIRATIONS 2017

Aspirations 2017

A Literary and Arts Journal for
Mercer County Area
High School Students

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Aspirations 2017, a literary magazine published by Mercer County Community College, is proud to celebrate and present the talents of area high school students. For decades, the literary and visual works collected in Aspirations have showcased students' hopes, dilemmas, questions, and insights. This year, once again, the creativity within these pages helps us see both the familiar with renewed attention and the unfamiliar with a satisfying sense of recognition.

A distinguished panel selected these works from hundreds of entries. For their discerning sensibilities and commitment to the students in this area, the following teachers and artists have earned the appreciation of this community:

Carol Bork	Mercer County Community College
Shana Burnett	Mercer County Community College
Dan D'Arpa	Mercer County Community College
Ellen Davila	Ewing High School
Ric Giantisco	Mercer County Community College
Barbara Hamilton	Mercer County Community College
Nicole Homer	Mercer County Community College
Tina LaPlaca	Mercer County Community College
Kerri O'Neill	Mercer County Community College
Francis Paixão	Mercer County Community College
Theresa Solomon	Hopewell Valley Central High School
Roman Szolkowski	Hightstown High School
Jacqueline Vogtman	Mercer County Community College

Still others have contributed to this publication in important ways. We would like to thank the parents, friends, family, and teachers who supported the development of our writers and artists. Thanks go to President Jianping Wang and Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. David Edwards for their support; to Francis Paixão in Mercer's Publications Office for his work designing and laying out this journal; to Brad Kent for setting up and maintaining the Aspirations webpage; to Jody Gazenbeek-Person and his students for their dramatic interpretations of the published works; to Scott Hornick and his students for contributing their considerable musical talents to the awards gala; and to Shana Burnett for the dependable and effective way she managed submissions, contact with schools, and the many details of the selection, editing and proofing process. Finally, I want to thank Dr. Robert Kleinschmidt, the Dean of Liberal Arts, for his generous help to me and his coordination of all phases of this publication project. His commitment to the arts makes projects such as this one possible.

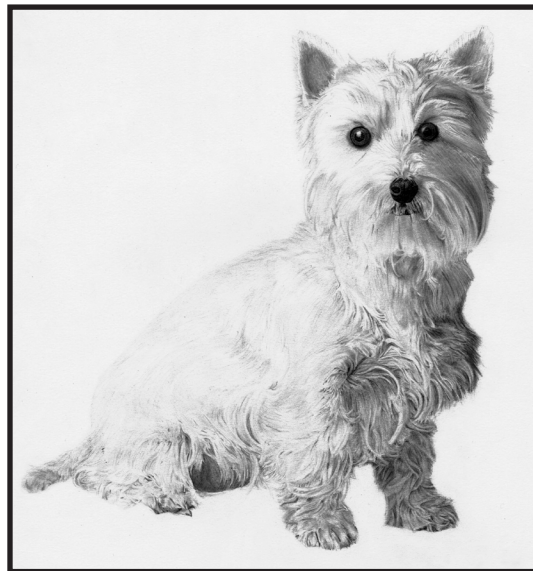
Nicole Homer
Assistant Professor of English and Editor, Aspirations 2017
Mercer County Community College



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Cover Art



Jasper

Stephanie Rosenthal

Stephanie has been drawing for as long as she can remember. It's her favorite thing to do during her free time and when she needs to clear her mind. She loves to try new artistic styles and mediums and to expand her creative horizon.

Lindsey Allen
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 10

Lindsey spends most of her time dancing. She also enjoys yoga and relaxing

The Forecast for Today

by morning the waters will ripple
so gentle and soft
the fallen leaves will float by like feathers
being blown in the wind
by noon bullets of water will fall from up above
the skies will be taken over by a malignant grey
the river will soar as if being pushed by the wings of an eagle
when the night comes all will be still
a peaceful pause at the end of the day
the moon will be a slick crescent on the river
dancing with a sparkle

Sorrow

Dana Klein
Hightstown High School
Grade 12

Dana is in love with realism as well as photography and is inspired by the talent of her peers.



Patrick Allex
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 10

Patrick's poem is a response to a prompt
given to him in English class

Beside the Lake

Few things make themselves known
in the dark of night by this lake,
yet here I am.

I hear the stern oak trees swaying
left to right, the wind blowing a tune as it
flows through the leaves.

I hear the pop and crackle
of the small stubborn fire
circled by smooth black stones.

I hear the lake water crawling
up the dirt shores and settling
along the moss-covered rocks.

I hear the crickets in the
background repeating verses of
chirps for all to hear.

I see only the bright orange of the
fire and the sparkling white in the
stars, all else is pure darkness.

My eyes tell me I'm alone
My ears say otherwise.

Bobbie Armstrong
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 12

Bobbie is a former child and current senior at Hopewell. She enjoys writing, sleeping, and sleeping.

My Bathroom Scale is Fake News

I never realized until recently, but my bathroom scale is fake news. I was completely unsuspecting of such trickery when I first stepped on the scale, but when I realized I didn't like the number I was seeing, I figured out what the real problem was.

The nerve my scale has to lie to me like that. Like a box of Crispy Kreme donuts would really do that much damage! The scary thing is, I have no idea how long my scale has been spouting these lies. The scale elite has gotten out of control, withholding the truth to make themselves look better. I don't care if I can't fit into my old jeans anymore, my scale is still fake news.

Some days, my scale isn't fake news. If I run the day before, drink a lot of water, and only eat half a package of bacon instead of the entire thing, the scale doesn't lie to me. Sadly, those days are few and far between. All too often, the number I see is completely fake and utterly ridiculous. I'm the one who bought the scale, and I can send its sorry scale butt back to Target in an instant.

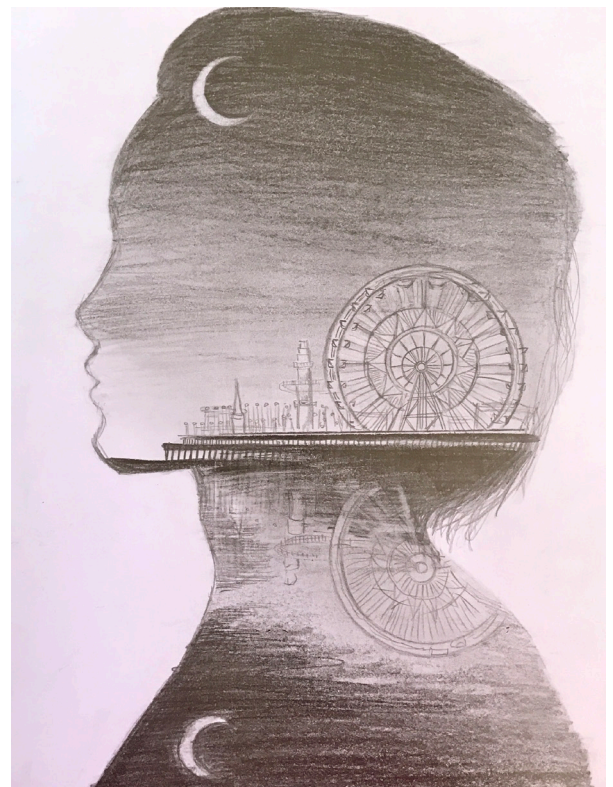
My bathroom scale being fake news has made me realize all the other things in my life that are fake news. When I'm running late for school, the clock always happens to be fake news. It really has terrible timing. Even the calorie count in a Coke can seem to escalate when I get thirsty. I hate that all these things in my life are lying to me. They just can't come to terms with the fact I'm smarter and better than they are, and they feel like they have to trick me.

When I want the truth, I read the news on Facebook. At this point, the things my slightly hippie cousin reposts is my only source of accurate news. I had no idea vaccines cause autism! I am glad that I have finally realized the error of my scale's ways. I do hope it will start telling the truth again because I tried to return it the other day and the cashier said I had to have a receipt. Now that, my friends, is truly an alternative fact.

Carnival

Sarah Maung
Hightstown High School
Grade 12

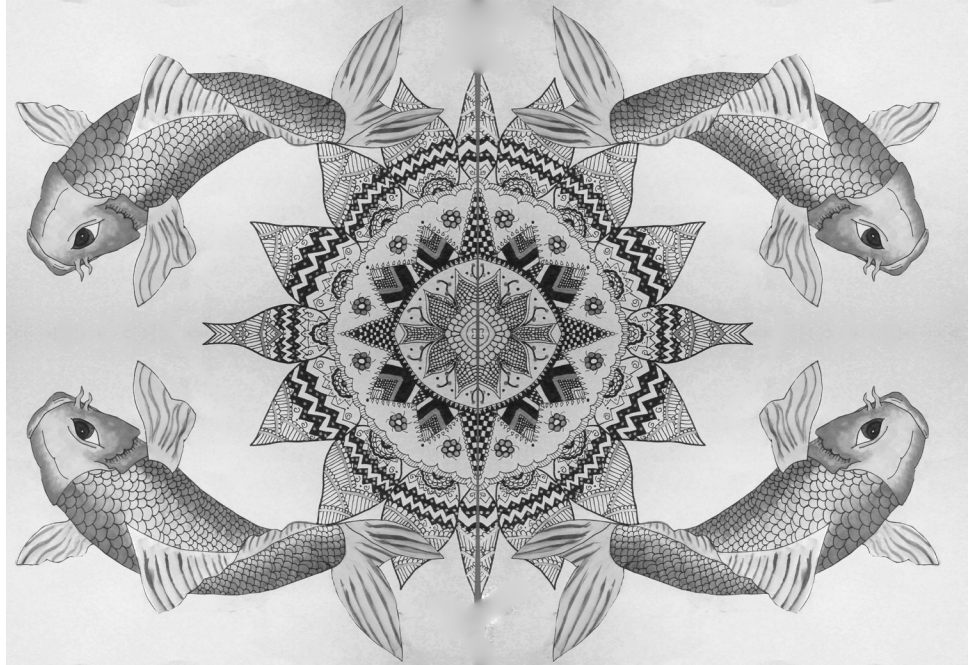
Sarah is a senior at Hightstown High School.



Coy in a pond of pattern

Alexis Daugett
Hightstown High School
Grade 10

Alexis loves learning how to use different techniques to create art. She also dyes her hair and tries to stand out. She does clubs like Robotics and Red Cross to help the community.



William Beck
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 10

William is a sophomore at Hopewell Valley High School

Beach Photoshoot

Full after eating a burger at the Sunset Pier

a new restaurant,

we drive up the New Jersey coast taking the scenic route home,

like usual. We pass by pine trees with orange beams

shining through the beachside forest.

We find the perfect spot

to unload the family and go see the calm coast.

Picture perfect, like post cards.

The sun reflected behind our backs so the murky green water waves shined amber.

I lined up on a dune with my brother and sister.

The picture wasn't perfect

I was laughing and turned out blurry,

my sister was fixing her hair,

and my brother was trying to push me.

But that was us.

William Beck
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 10

Will loves to play football and spend time with friends and family in the community.

The Meadow

After, "Flanders Field" by John McCrae

Down in the meadow behind the old farmer's house we
lay in the tall golden grass, where we lived,
where we we felt
the calm frisk breeze of dawn,
that tickled the sides of our faces. like a see-saw
the sun rose and the sun set
leaving its magisterial glow.

Liam Carey
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 10

Liam enjoys both visual and literal arts, often drawing in his free time. Liam also enjoys playing with his dog, Rooster.

A Flap In The Face

after "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a blackbird" by Wallace Stevens

I focus on the
stream of thoughts, now a flowing river,
rapidly moving, is
the reason i don't see the shadowy form moving.
Closer and closer the
shapeless figure comes, spreading it's wings like a blackbird,
with the familiar black feathers, i must
have flinched, and let out a monotone cry, and watched helplessly, the
feathers be-
gin to flap and reach out to me, and send my glasses flying.



Eye

Sarah Boate
Hightstown High School
Grade 12

Sarah is a senior and is interested in interior design. She hopes to go to design school and enjoys and sort of architecture.

Liam Carey
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 10

Fireworks

It left a barely visible trail
of quickly fading sparks and embers,
before suddenly bursting into life
with a definitive and deafening crack.
Color rippled throughout the sky.
One by one they shot up,
to crackle and pop, and explode
into effervescence,
like a pine cone, with seeds
shooting from it,
before vanishing into smoke
and fading
into the blackness
of the midnight sky.

Larissa Cheff
Allentown High School
Grade 12

Larissa will be attending Marist College in the fall and spending her freshman year in Florence, Italy. Larissa is passionate about writing and fashion. She hopes to make a career out of the two when she gets older.

Manipulate Me

Romanticize me like a pack of cigarettes.
Swallow pills & pretend they're pearls.
Starve not only to be pretty, but for artistic authority.
Decorate your razor so it will bring back happy memories.
Romanticize me because I'm no good.
Because we both know the surface is pretty but the inside is darker than the night.
Photoshop me like one of those girls that you say are pretty.
Kiss me like they do in the movies.
Hold me because my mind doesn't match my words.
Make me feel glamorous like New York.
But don't lie to me because we both know that's not good for the soul.
Romanticize the day she lost her virginity because her skirt was too short.
She was asking for it, they say.
So dim the lights & play some music.
Romanticize the night you had too much to drink.
Barely sixteen and your dad found out.
But I'm just as blurry as your vision.
& my thoughts are just as drunk as you.
I vomit glitter & I'm still not pretty enough for you.
I say what I am,
But am what I'm not.
Romanticize me because we fear the truth.
Because we will never admit to ugly being pretty.
Because Utopia is overrated
And being drowned out by the mask society wears gives us an "aesthetic."
Romanticize us because we're no good.

Neil Chopra
Lawrence High School
Grade 10

Neilenjoysrunningoutdoorsandisinter-
ested in the STEM field.

Growth

It starts with failure,
then learning and some changing,
and then growth occurs.

Owen Cortet
Hopewell Valley Central High
School
Grade 10

Owenlovesoccer,piano,andhaving
a fun time.



Explore

Megan Bertrand
Hightstown High School
Grade 11

Meganlikestobewithherfriendsandgdown
the shore.

The Beauty of Money

Money

gives the worthless worth. Money
can make something out of nothing.

The possibilities are endless.

The American Dream.

Work hard, they said.

And you will see, they said.

That the one percent is a reachable goal,
they never said.

Venturing further and further,
bringing most of the wealth.

Just as it sounds, they leave the rest paperless.

Money controls the world.

It makes the world go round.

Wall Street,

controls the economy,

controls the cash,

controls debt,

controls us.

Wall Street,

the friction preventing the even flow of wealth.

Their power is limitless.

It has no end.

Our unnoted leaders feed off of you and me.

In jail they should, but will never be.

Camryn Cubberley
Lawrence High School
Grade 10

Camryn is a 16-year-old sophomore at Lawrence High School. When not in school, she spends many hours rehearsing for dance competitions.

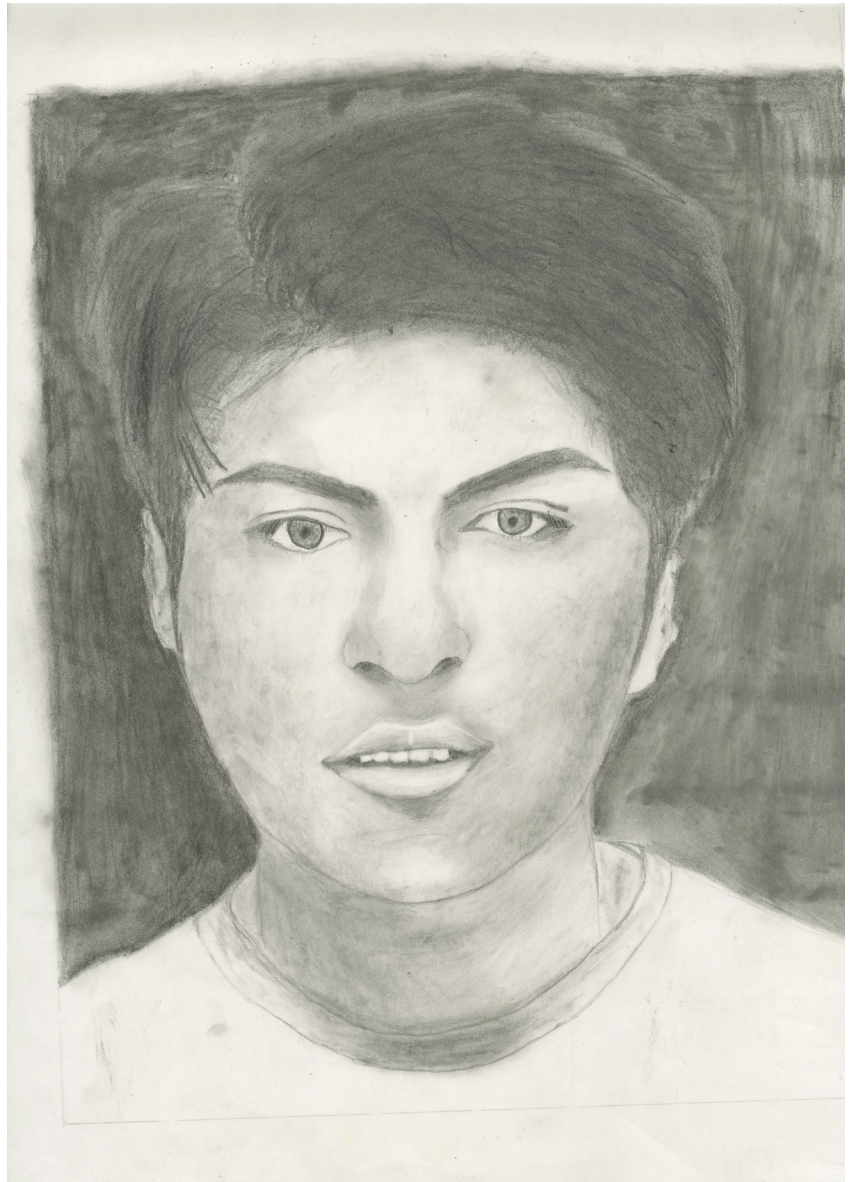
“X” Marks the Spot

Now I know,
that next time I should prepare for the blow.
Next time I know,
to draw a large “X” on my back.
So that the next person who comes around,
knows just where to stab me,
and neither one of us will be amazed
and yet again I am the only one to break down.
Now you know,
where to find the blow.

my face

Luis Tenecota
Hightstown High School
Grade 12

Luis is a senior who currently attends HHS. He is very funny and creative with his art work.



Ronit Deshpande
Lawrence High School
Grade 10

Ronit likes to play baseball and hang out with friends during his free time.

Finish Line

I reach the end line
my muscles ache, I am pain
but, I reach the end

Lorna Drexler
Allentown High School
Grade 12

Lorna has always enjoyed writing. Now a senior in high school, she plans on attending a four-year university for Biomedical Engineering. Her favorite poet is Seamus Heaney and she loves Joseph Heller's novel Catch 22.

Mr Roots

Inspired by G. E. Lyon's "Where I'm From"

I am from red leaves
From pumpkins on the porch
From chocolate on my cheek
The running on damp cold sidewalk
Leading up to the terrifying goblin
My brother pushing me
Shaking knees
I am from gasoline
From the smell of the garage
Yells over the rumbling
Popcorn falling on the race track
From the pickup truck
And the lemon
With the smell of leather
Sunlines on my shoulders
I am from summer labor
From scorching asphalt and grinding concrete
Sweltering days spent gouging the earth
Grinding the dirty air between my teeth
Stinging sweat in my eyes
Laughing in the chilly break room
Picking rough concrete clumps off my leather boots
I am from track and field
Hoagies wrapped in soggy paper

Screams from crowds to sprint
Grunts from power to throw
Slamming from feet to jump
I am from cold
Seeping through my window
My favorite way to sleep
Blankets piled on me
Morse code tapped on the wall next to mine
My sibling's bruised fingers in the morning
By Lorna Drexler

Walking With Shadows

Nia Thomas
Hightstown High School
Grade 9

Nia is interested in shadows.



Lorna Drexler
Allentown High School
Grade 12

Silver Dollar Diner

Black crack in a white coffee mug
Crescent of this morning's syrup
Wet coffee-stained rag
Wiping in circles
Red long nails, tips cracking
Knuckles stretching, hands wrinkling
Twelve booths
Five tables
Three men
One woman and her son
11 hours into the day
80s rock music
Fighting the 70s countertop
Stained-yellow counters
Red leather squeaking under the pressure
Man tips his hat to the lone waitress
Crumpled tip, a dollar bill flung into the puddle of water on the bar
He walks away on shiny business shoes
Leather shoes shine, on scuffed checkered tiles
The tiles where she once lay;
Where she once lay, A coffee mug stray from her limp hand
the young waitress screams
the balding cook runs to the phone on the wall
a young girl sits on the fresh leather watching
watching the mop circle
dissolving the blood
going around and around
one diner
one girl
two onlookers
three paramedics
one less mom
fifteen years later
black crack in a white coffee mug.

Alex Dumont
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 10

Alex is a sophomore at Hopewell Valley Central High School. He is a three season runner who enjoys music, meditation and being with friends.

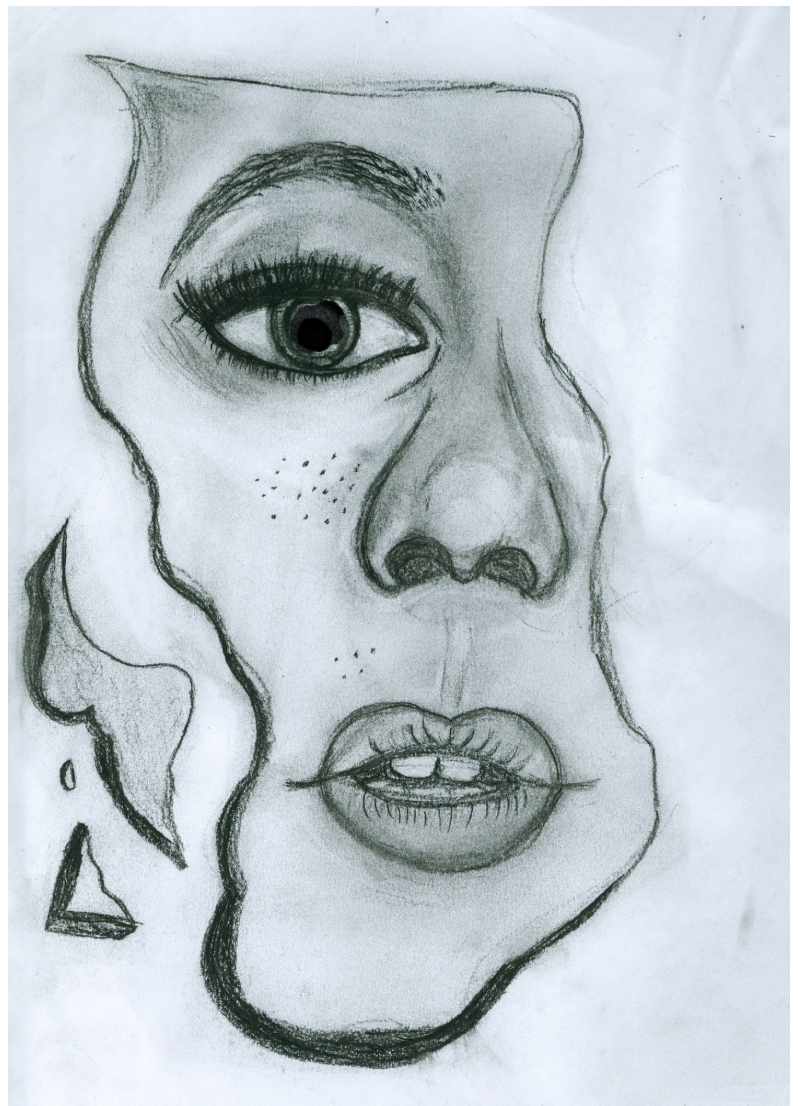
(Maluhia is Hawaiian for peacefulness) MAALuw-HHIY-ah

The road will darken, but the mood never will.
The loneliness creates a comradery.
Darkness raps on the window, offering you a melancholy pill.
But when orange light blurs to one,
Maluhia is restored.
When the music plays and the last song is sung,
Maluhia is restored.
Maluhia is the brightness of the night, the calming unknown
Maluhia is the late hour, the seducing drowsiness.
When moments turn to memories
Maluhia is a night drive.

The Phenomena of being Broken

Khrysta De Guzman
Hightstown High School
Grade 12

Khrysta sketched a face out. She decided to make it look like a continent.



Riley Finnegan
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 10

Riley wrote this poem on a December day thinking about the upcoming holiday break.

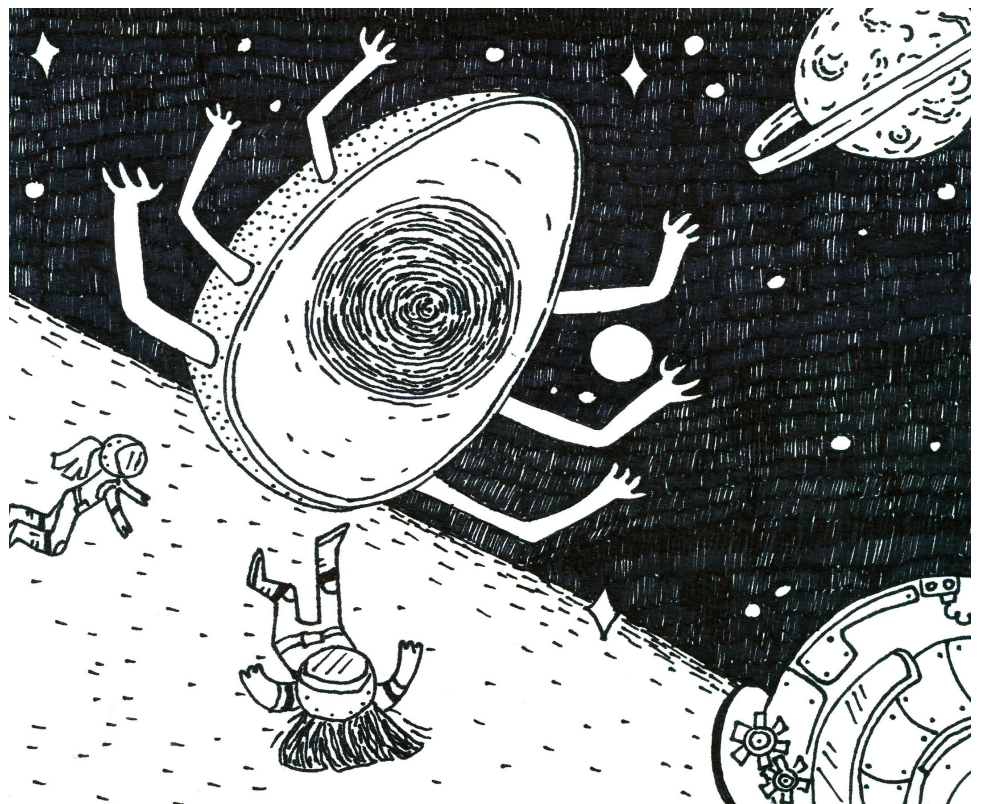
A Cold December Night

The candlelight slowly began to dim,
and soon, the only light
was the glow of the fireplace.
The smell of winter danced through the crisp air.
The shadow of a snow covered oak tree
lay across the carpet.
The only noise was the crack of the fire,
and the squeak of the rocking chair.
In the chair sat an elderly man
His beard, as white as the snow outside.
As he carefully lay back on his chair,
the delicate snowflakes began to fall outside.
The birds whistled as they snuggled on the branches.
The moonlight glistened on the freshly fallen snow.
The December night ended with an old man peacefully dreaming,
In his rocking chair.

Soft Core

Elizaveta Bogacheva
Hightstown High School
Grade 12

Elizaveta would like to make a living out of doing art and still have enough money for instant ramen.



Maura Freeland
Lawrence High School
Grade 10

Maura is a sixteen-year-old girl who goes to Lawrence High School. She is an active competing equestrian. She enjoys smelling things at Lush and volunteering at adoption days with the rescue where she got her dog and best friend, Rascal.

I Never Thought This Would Happen To Me

I never thought I would be the one they talk about
and hope I can't hear their whispers
The one who has to hide
Self-doubt had been unfamiliar until now
Am I sure?
But then I see her
And I am sure

Gabe Gutierrez
Lawrence High School
Grade 10

Gabe is a 16-year-old student at Lawrence High School. He is a part of his school's swim team.

CAUTION

I dove in the pool
but I should have read the sign
'Cause now I'm concussed

Against the Wall

Robertson Darko Jr.
Hightstown High School
Grade 9

Robertson is a major fan of basketball. He likes to play videogames, listening to music, being apart of track, and world studies class.





Hidden fire

Megan Lako
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 11

Megan is an aspiring artist, who has extreme ambition and is working hard to become a true artist. She spends her free time helping children with autism and working in an art studio.

Grace Hayden
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 10

Grace is a sophomore at Hopewell Valley Central High School. There, she is a member of both the Student Council and the Girls Varsity Swim Team.

Looking Down

Soaring above:

above the snowy peak of mt. everest,
above sand covered beaches and their rolling tides,
above the tree of a million branches-
where he had once climbed to the very top.

Flying through the black of night
with him and hundreds of others aboard,
a tin can just shy of the size of a football field
flashes a small light ahead.

And in the darkness of that night,
just 40,00 feet below,
that light shoots across the sky
like a shooting star in the night.

Dreams and

Hope and

Future.

Yet upon that shooting star,
he stares out the glass from above:
above the places of growth and opportunity,
above memories of peace,
above his accomplishments and his victories.
All he sees is the past.

Joyce Huang
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 11

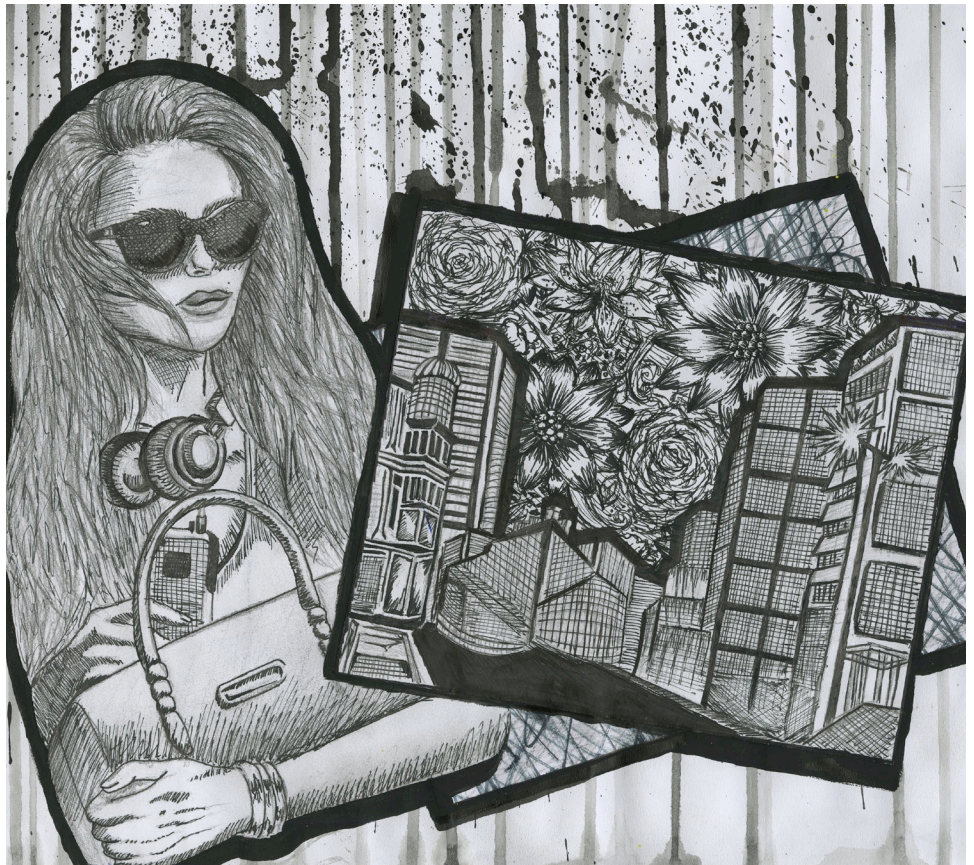
Joyce is a junior at Hopewell Valley Central High School. She enjoys taking pictures and listening to music.

Path

Each day passes by quickly,
the path splits into two, then three, then four,
I want to stop moving but I can't,
but the path divides into many more.
I wander onto a path,
I ask myself if I'm sure,
it feels lonely and empty,
but I tell myself to endure.
When times get hard,
many regrets block my vision,
I wish for an escape,
and a promise for a destination

Wishing on a passing car

Sarah Maung
Hightstown High School
Grade 12

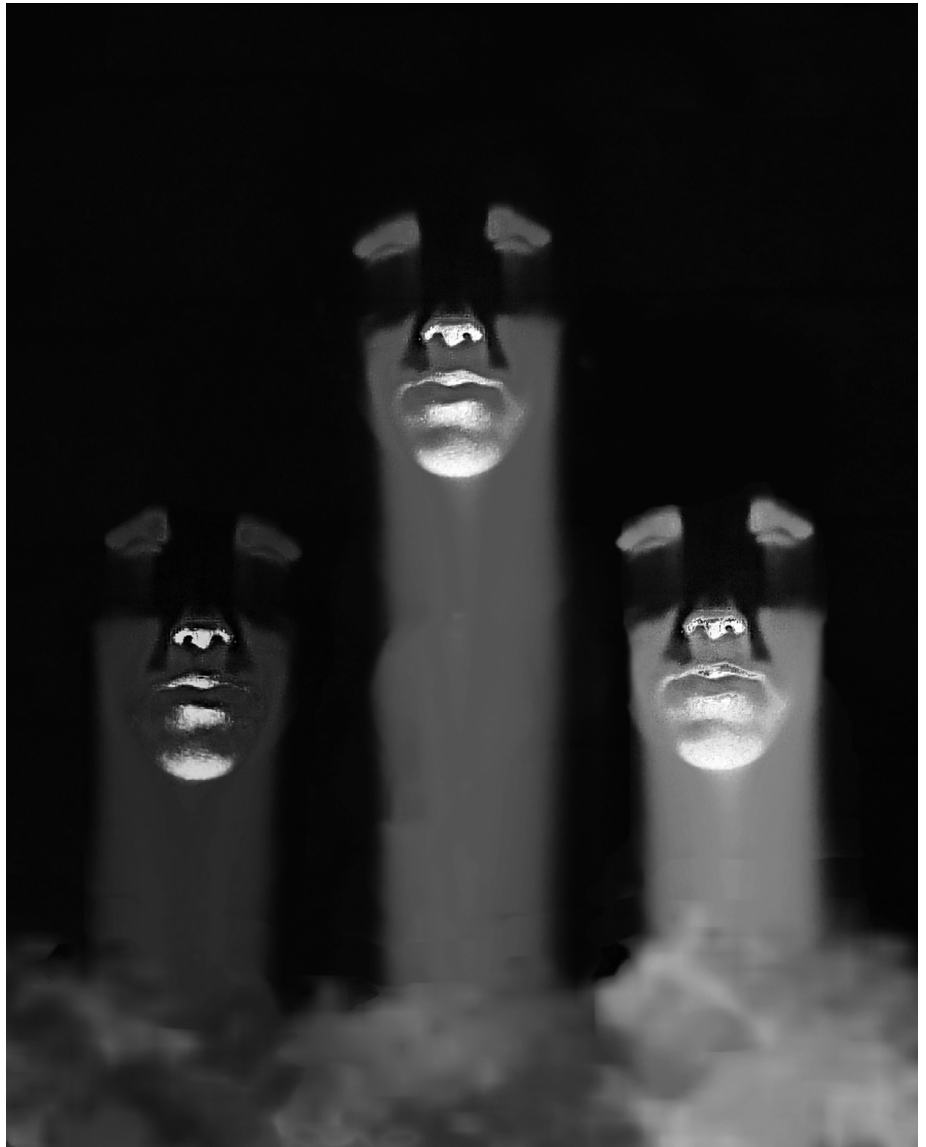


Roland Hunter
Hopewell Valley Central High school
Grade 10

Roland is a big cat person and was inspired to write "Like Planes" by his cats.

Like Planes

Roland Hunter
Like Planes
Four cats
Coming in
On a worn out path
Like planes
Coming in for a landing
On a runway
All the cats want
Is their food
Sometimes waiting
For hours on end
Like planes
Waiting for passengers
And when they've picked up
What they desire
They head off
Sometimes in the fog
Sometimes in the rain
Sometimes in the night
Like planes
Taking off for a flight



'Til Death do us Part

Sam Zappola
Hightstown High School
Grade 10

Grass green, sky blue. He is Sam, not you.

Anusha Kemburu
Hightstown High School
Grade 11

Anusha is currently 16 years old. She is an avid reader and writer, and hopes to pursue something between the two in the future.

The Moon & the Sun

She, she is the moon.

If you asked me for the exact reasons why, I couldn't possibly tell you.

Maybe it was the way she purposefully hid her face behind her bangs, in the way the moon hid a part of itself everyday—or the way she would shut out the world around her, with her headphones as her only escape, in the way the moon disappeared without a trace some days. Maybe it was how when she smiled or laughed, it was like a full moon—a bright, glowing full moon—and all the stars around her would slowly fall, with her not having a single clue.

So, if she was the moon, what could I possibly be?

How could I possibly even compare?

Would I be an insignificant star, lost in a sea of others just like her? One that was lost just as easily as it was found? That's what others had made me believe, just the way they had convinced my moon of the same too.

But my moon had told me that I am her sun. That when I am down, she will come up, to help me up. That when she is down, I will come up, to help her up. That we will move together in perfect synchronization, never missing a beat. Never missing a laugh, a smile, a dance, a song, an experience, a memory, a moment constantly moving, and constantly living.

And although we might not see each other as often as we'd like, we are always secretly in the shadows, watching the other light up in all the ways she was meant to be.

But those few minutes, few moments, that we share together within the same sky are perhaps the most beautiful of them all. That is when we forget, when we forget about our burns and craters, our flaws and mistakes, and revel in this glowing sky that we have somehow created together, created with our burns and craters, with our radiations and reflections and in that moment never have the Moon and the Sun been more happier, more content.

Never Forget the Real Heroes

Hailey Dye
Hightstown high school
Grade 10

Hailey enjoys Martial Arts and is a Black Belt in taekwondo. On the weekends she volunteers at an animal rescue and walks the dogs.



Kamen Kirov
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 10

Kamen is a 15 year old boy who spends most of his time at school and playing video games at home.

The End Of Autumn

I've forgotten where I was traveling to,
so i've decided to sit down on a mossy wayside rock and just watch,
and relish in the brisk autumn breeze, to hear the fallen red leavesâ€™ hiss.
Tall firs and evergreens lord over the dying woods-
suddenly the air turns frigid and hard, a cloud of my breath begins to fill
the still air, and like a chimney-top billowing smoke, the puff of breath rises up
to meet the grey-and-orange wisps above with
a warm embrace before the sky sends its first snow.

It's a Dead Man's Party

Shivam Patel
Hightstown High School
Grade 11

Shivam likes to play Cricket.



Grace Kully
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 11

Grace loves spending rainy days reading books and drinking tea. She volunteers at the local hospital, and helps raise orphaned lambs on her family's rescue farm. At school, she runs the American Sign Language Club and the Teens Against Tobacco Use Club.

A Girl Made of Everything Being Held Back with Nothing

Revathi Machan
Hightstown High School
Grade 10

Revathi believes that when you have two art pieces and Photoshop, great things can happen



Four O'clock

Hetta stared out the window solemnly, glaring daggers at the windy dirt path in her front yard. The rain would have wiped footprints into puddles, but there weren't any footprints to wipe away. She reached her bony fingers further around the tea mug. If the cup was hot, she didn't notice.

4:00, the note promised. He would be home at four o'clock.

The sound of feet in the kitchen made her jump, and after giving the path one last desperate stare, she started down the stairs. A young girl, no more than five, greeted her in the doorway. "Maman!" she cried with joy, oblivious to the heartache that was clawing at Hetta's insides. Patting the bundle of dark brown hair covering the girl's head, Hetta moved them towards the back of the house.

Lyle St. James had recently become a burly type of man, preoccupied with only his reading and his wood chopping. He smoked a pipe every chance that he could get, and preferred to wear his glasses so that they were nearly falling off his nose. His suspenders often bulged away from his protruding stomach. They hadn't had the money to buy him a new pair in quite a few years. "Hetta, my dear! Have you got the strength to make us some food tonight?" Hetta wrapped her right hand around her left arm and leaned into the wall. Her light blue nightgown was stained with tears and smelled from not being changed for a week. Black circles seemed permanently etched under her eyes. "I don't..." she started in raspy voice, but her thought trailed into tears, so she just shook her head no. "All right," Lyle huffed, placing both hands on his knees and pulling himself from his chair. "I'll try to come up with something. Want to help me Xenia, love?" The young girl jumped with excitement and grabbed her father's hand.

"Could we have rabbit, papa?" She stared up at him with hopeful, doe-like eyes, unaware that the rain had kept him from hunting for a few days now.

"Rabbit is for special occasions only!" Hetta shot her hand to her mouth and began to tremble, startled that the outburst was hers. Without an apology, she turned from the room and ran as far as her frail, bare feet could take her. The fire in the hearth choked on its few remaining embers, and then died slowly from the wind of her movement. Lyle shouldn't have hesitated to follow her, but he did. And then after a minute or two, maybe it was an hour, he bent down to Xenia's calm face and asked her to start finding some vegetables. Perhaps they could scrounge up enough for a soup. As devoted as ever, and only slightly shaken from her mother's yelling, Xenia agreed and began sorting through the ice box. "Don't worry about Xenia," Lyle said to Hetta when he found her at the top of the basement stairs. "She isn't upset that you yelled at her." Hetta's shoulders shot up when his deep voice filled the empty space.

"I'm not worried about Xenia," she sneered back. "She isn't the child that is missing. How dare you not be upset? How dare you not look for him?"

Lyle's heart sank as he looked on at his wife. "I'm sorry," he lied. It was the only thing he could do. "It's dark and rainy right now. Maybe I can go looking tomorrow. Would that be good?" Hetta blinked into nothingness for a few more minutes and then started to nod her head. That would be good. ***

The next morning, when Hetta didn't ascend the creaky wooden stairs to her son's deserted bedroom, Lyle knew that she was back. "How long was it this time?" she asked glancing down at her matted hair and unkept clothes. Memories of the episodes were strange to Lyle but stranger to her.

"A week," Lyle grunted. "But it wasn't your fault."

"And how long since he left?"

"Three year mark last Sunday. Hetta, it wasn't your fault."

"But the doctor said I would get better with time. He promised --"

"Hetta, anniversaries bring up the worst memories. It wasn't your fault."

"Stop saying that."

"The doctor said it's understandable to feel traumatized. That means it's not your fault."

"Well then why don't you go crazy sometimes too?" Lyle didn't answer. He didn't have to. They both remembered the day that their son left and never came back. They both remembered that it was, in fact, Hetta's fault.

Ayush Kumar
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 10

Ayush wrote this poem after Frost's poem. He took every word of the line from a sentence of "Stopping By Woods On A Snowy Evening" and made each word the beginning word of every sentence on his poem.

The Pelican Lullaby

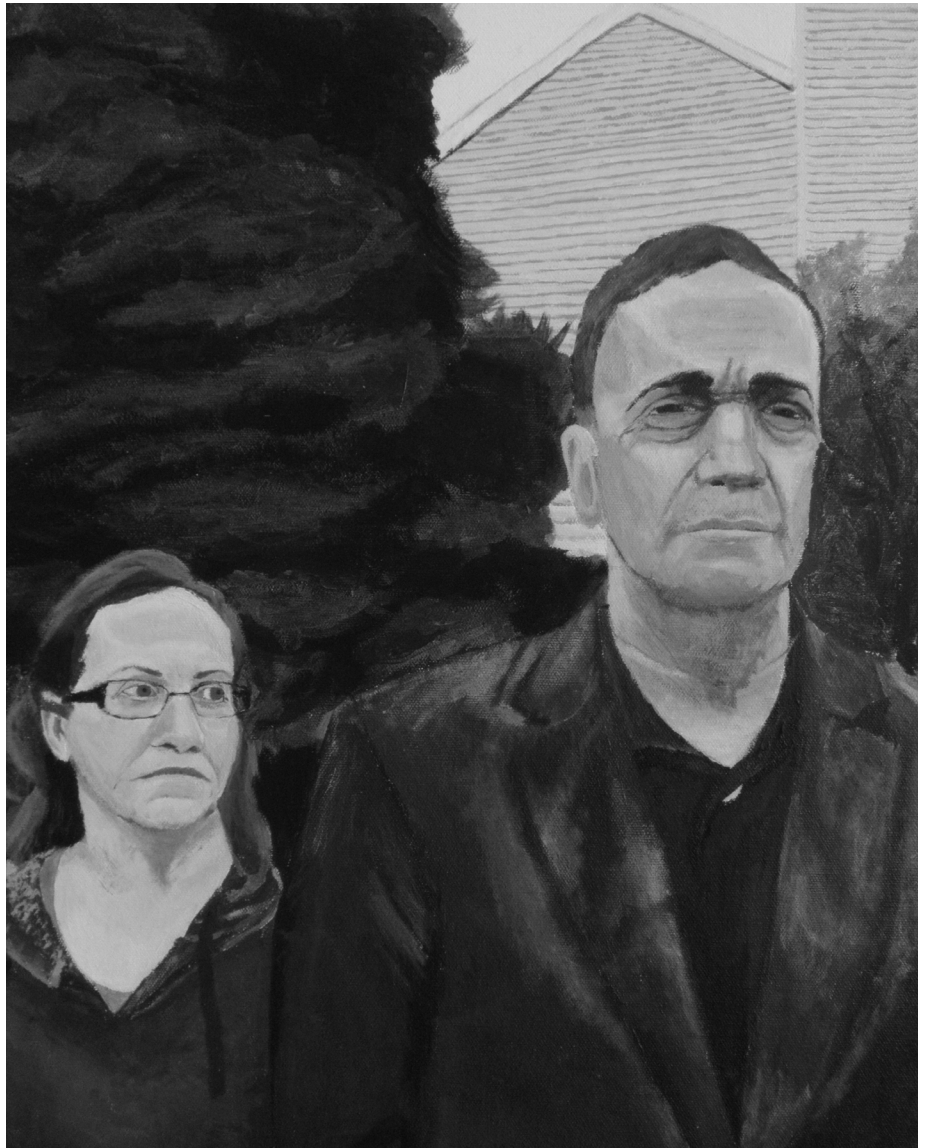
After "Stopping By Woods On A Snowy Evening" by Robert Frost

The fish come and
go, the pelicans sway miles
away. no specific destination to
reach, but just the thought to go.
no food to eat, before
We rot. My stomach smaller than a knot, I
spy with my pelican eye, the stars sound asleep.

Italian-American Gothic

Ryan Romola
Hightstown High School
Grade 12

Ryan, of East Windsor New Jersey, attends Hightstown Highschool and will be going to Mercer afterward.



Sophia Lo
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 11

Sophia is a junior. When she isn't studying, Sophia enjoys watching TV and reading. She is anxiously waiting for Season 2 of *The Good Place* and the next installment in the *A Song of Ice and Fire* series by George R. R. Martin.

The Principles of Physics

Yes, I know that force equals mass times acceleration-

It's just

I don't understand how to rearrange the equation for the problem.

Well, yes, I know how to solve for acceleration.

But how do I do it for an Atwood machine?

And what happens when friction comes into play?

Wait, did you just say there's two kinds of friction?

Static and kinetic?

Remaining calm, deep breath. I can do this.

Now, do I really need to be able to find the amount of time it takes for a projectile to

hit

the

ground?

If I ever see a projectile heading my way, I think I'm going to run.

But I suppose I could solve for the time, too.

Maybe.

Possibly.

On a good day.

But then do I really need to solve for the acceleration of distant planets?

I'm sure someone else can do it for me.

And momentum, which I know equals mass times velocity, but

I think I've lost

it all by now.

Maybe there's some angular momentum left?

Although once again, I'm not sure what that means.

I'll be fine just after this class, at least that's what I tell myself.

All that's left is the final exam-

May the Force be with me.

The Climb Up

Sammy Pietrinferno
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 10

Sammy is a passionate photographer and loves going out to random places to capture the right photo. She hopes to continue with photography throughout her whole life.



Nostalgia

After "Hope is the Thing with Feathers" by
Emily Dickinson

A bird sings
perched upon the
old oak tree, the melancholy tune
that I started humming without,
any recollection of the
Words.

Brooke Long
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 10

Brooke is bold, not just in her personality but also in her writing. Brooke loves to swim and play softball and volleyball in her free time, as well as hang out with her friends and family.

Daniel Luchansky
West Windsor-Plainsboro High School North
Grade 11

Daniel is a 16-year-old junior from High School North with a passion for the Spanish language. He enjoys reading and writing in Spanish, and co-teaches a Spanish 1 class at his school.

Romance de la pérdida de Obama

(una parodia moderna de «Romance de la pérdida de Alhama» por Anónimo)

Paseábase el rey negro — alrededor de su casa,
desde puerta del Senado — hasta la de la Cámara.
—¡Ay de mi Obama!—

E-mails le fueron venidas — Pennsylvania era ganada.
Los e-mails echó en lejía — y el celular destrozara,
—¡Ay de mi Obama!—

El teléfono lo cuelga — y el micrófono agarra;
por el internet arriba — subido se va al programa.
—¡Ay de mi Obama!—

Como en programa estuvo, — al mismo punto mandaba
que se toquen sus trompetas, — sus añafiles de plata.
—¡Ay de mi Obama!—

Y que las cajas de guerra — apriesa toquen el arma,
que lo oigan sus demócratas, — del estado California.
—¡Ay de mi Obama!—

Jóvenes que el son oyeron — que al sangriento Clinton llama,
uno a uno y dos a dos — juntado se ha gran protesta.
—¡Ay de mi Obama!—

Allí fabló un demócrata, — de esta manera fablara:
—¿Para qué nos llamas, rey, — para qué es esta llamada?
—¡Ay de mi Obama!—

—Habéis de saber, amigos, — una nueva desdichada:
deplorables del Donaldo — ganaron la Casa Blanca.
—¡Ay de mi Obama!—

Fabló allí un republicano — de barba crecida y cana:
—Bien se te emplea, buen rey, — buen rey, bien se te empleara.
—¡Ay de mi Obama!—

Trajiste los refugiados, — los terroristas ahora,
tú robaste los derechos, — la Constitución botada.
—¡Ay de mi Obama!—

Por eso mereces, rey, — una pena muy doblada:
que te pierdas el gobierno, — y construyan la muralla.
—¡Ay de mi Obama!—

Julia Ludwig
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 11

Julia "Fennell" Ludwig is a high school student with a passion for the arts, particularly painting but she also dabbles in literary art.

M.C. Escher

I stand in a world of color and laws,
where one falls down and the tree reaches up
on the merry go round, surrounded by children's haws,
I sit with my feet in the stirrups,
pondering.

A man in grey, black, and white
his face obscured by a simple black hat
catches my eye as he slips from the sun's light
as he heads towards a grey door, and near it he sat
Watching.

I felt my feet stir and I was no longer riding a wooden horse
around me, the colorful faire turned to grey
and the sound was coarse
finding myself at the door where I sway
waiting.

The man opens the door,
and though I do not see him, I know it to be him
the world on the other side is not mine anymore,
and as I take a step, I am pulled up, the world going dim
falling
or am I flying?

These men, white and faceless,
seem familiar, from some world undying,
and I turn to the man who wears the black hat and grey dress
faceless.

But as I turn to survey the scene laid before me as it falls to night,
In my right eye I do catch a fish turn to a simple dove,
And turning around to watch its simple flight

I see the man, now holding a glass ball, with a distorted man sitting within, and find
me to be in the world of

M.C. Escher

Avery Lytle
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 10

Avery is a Sophomore at Hopewell Valley Central High School. Her hobbies are fashion and writing.

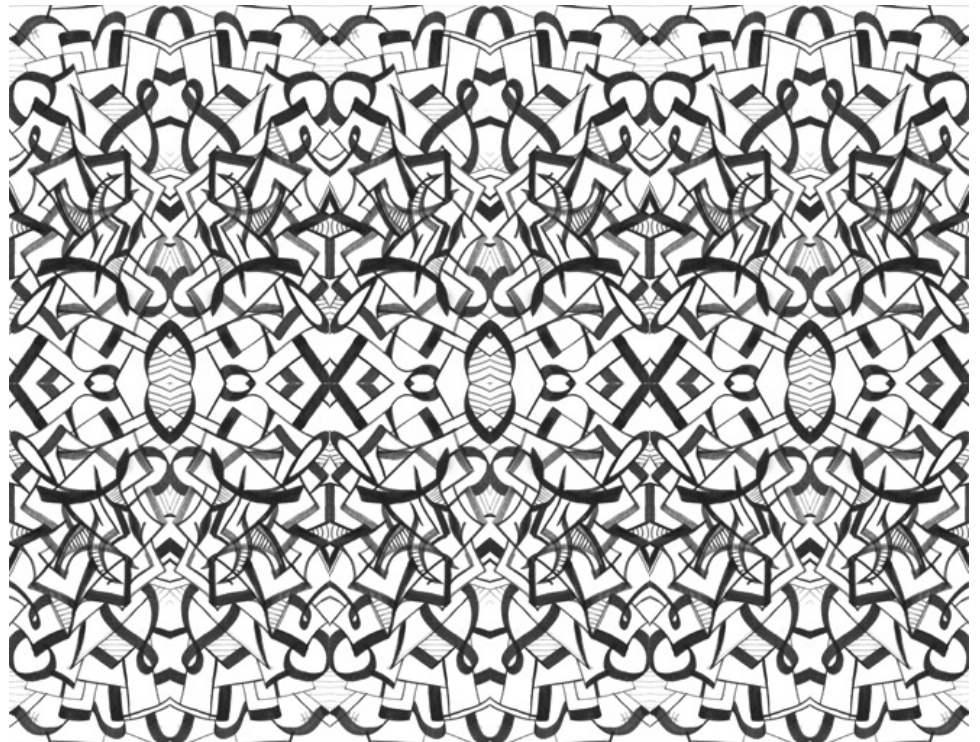
All Struggles Are Equal

People can't really see past themselves
The fog of their struggles cloud their minds
Whether big or small
The boy with the stubbed toe has the same pain as the
The girl who was abused
The girl who has a cold will complain as if
The world has ended while the boy who found he would expire within months tries to enjoy life
No one knows each other's hardships
Even when one tries they will never fully be able to
The boy with the stubbed toe doesn't understand
How the punch from a parent feels
The girl with a cold doesn't know what
Feeling death's icy grip is like
Some people with hopeful minds will try to look through the fogs of themselves
But one never really can
The experience is different for everyone
The human mind is different for everyone
Some stand strong
Others sing a saddened song
So even if you've been through the experience
You don't know the reactions of their independent minds
For this person's paper cut is as bad as one's demise

This started as a doodle

Carly Haug
Hightstown High School
Grade 11

Carly often finds herself creating abstract pieces, and then editing them through computer programs. She uses this technique because it allows her to achieve the mirror image she is reaching for, but cannot accomplish through paper and pencil alone.



Balancing Love

Bryan Emery
Hightstown High School
Grade 10

Bryan loves the arts. He enjoys making new pieces of work and performing on stage. Photography is new to Bryan, but he continues to improve as an artist.



Designer's Panda

Christopher Leal
Hightstown High School
Grade 9

Christopher really likes music so when the song "Panda" first came on it was automatically his favorite. Designer is one of Chris's favorite artists.



Georgios Maltabas
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 10

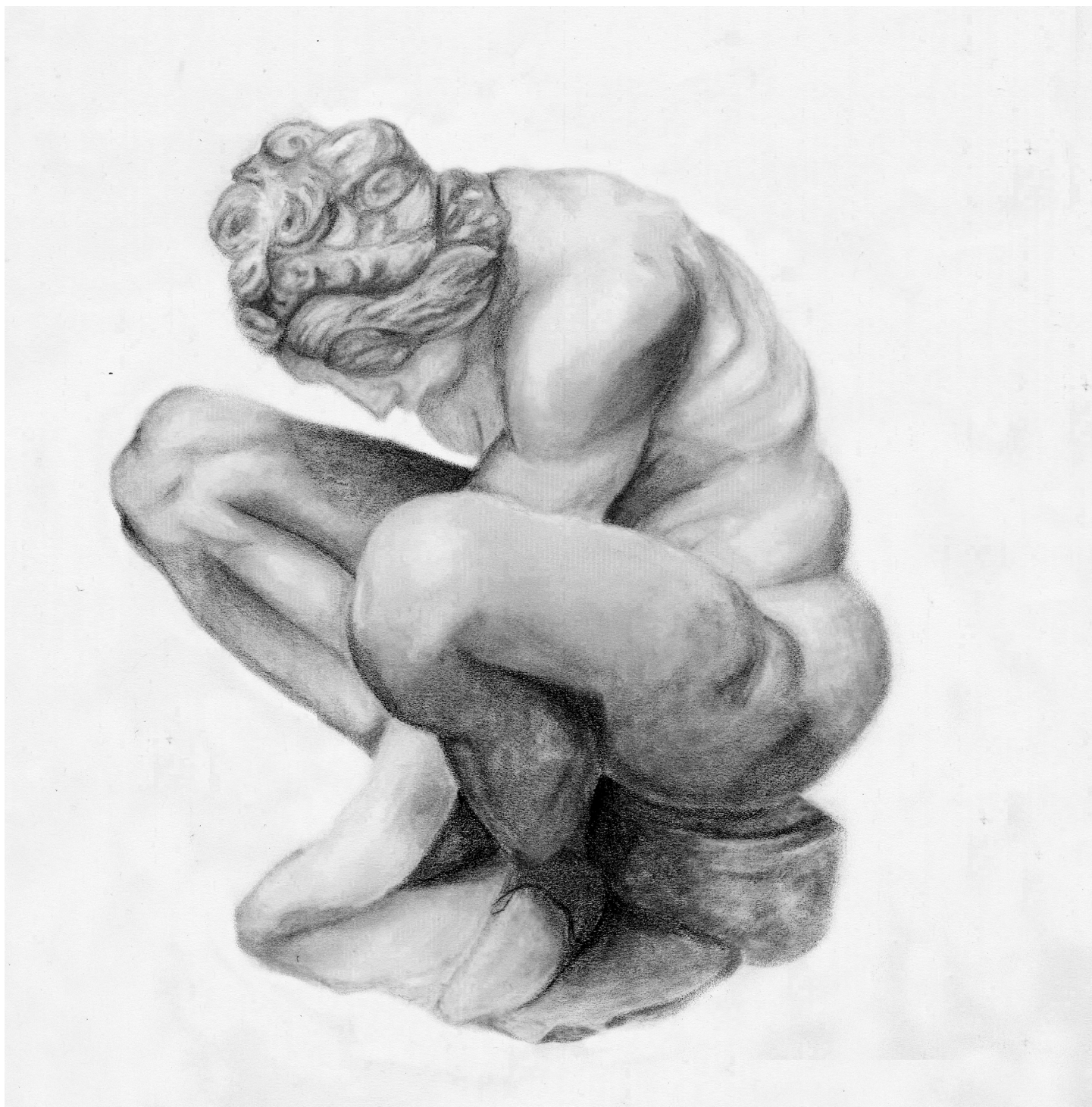
Georgios is a sarcastic comic who enjoys making people laugh, even if it's at his expense. He's perpetually tired, but enjoys listening to loud music.

Childish Memories

There once was a time
when "once upon a time"
meant a thriller where
you could do what others wouldn't dare
The storyteller your own knight in shining armor,
who tells you to one day tell your own stories.
There is a time
where independence will seem a crime,
where no matter how hard you try,
that storyteller will attempt to pry
your knight and their castle
turns into a prison and they, a guard.
There will be a time
where creaky knees and growing thyme
will reign supreme. but you go to this house,
this house of medicine and you'll find your guard.
They don't have a, baton or any bars to
keep you with. They'll ask for a story, what do you do?
There once was a time
when "once upon a time"
meant having to describe a thriller where
they could do what others wouldn't dare
and you tell them to one day tell their own stories.

The Crouching Boy

Dana Klein
Hightstown High School
Grade 12



Color My Mood

Kayleigh Morrison
Lawrence High School
Grade 12

Kayleigh is a senior at Lawrence High School, where she is enrolled in AP Studio Art. Kayleigh loves to draw and paint portraits and scenes from nature. When she is not doing art, Kayleigh enjoys playing the clarinet and Irish dancing.



Into The Light

Leslie Pineda
Hightstown High School
Grade 9

Leslie loves to take pictures. She also likes to do outside activities like soccer and basketball. Leslie likes to take pictures outside and explore the world.



Patrick Meara
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 11

Patrick is a junior at Hopewell Valley Central High School. He enjoys a variety of hobbies on the rare occasions when he does not have homework.

The Danish Prince

Such poor analogy the family tree
does make. My father was Hyperion,
My uncle is a snake. Thus, family
Biology is no criterion,
For if I'd blossomed from my father's limb
I would have grown along a certain course.
Instead, my every act or thought of him
Does seem to wilt at some uncertain source.
My father's word was good in life, but plague
can quickly spread. If I unsheathed my sword
I'd cut my uncle's rotten branch in vague
Return. For this, can I replace the Lord?
Beneath the shadow of our tree I'll lie
Until my uncle's guilt I certify.

The Life we Sang in Spring

I feel connections deeper than the stream
that runs between the stars in all their breadth.
In living life we form a merry team
and gaily follow one another's breaths
to endless meadows, green with tender spring.
We'll skip along and sing a merry tune
as flowers bloom beneath the song we sing
on into night to hum beneath the moon.
But while we sing the spring will halt and give
to winter's chill, as what was once a deep
and longing love may wilt and fail to live
the life we sang in spring when dreams did leap.
But chills or not the ice will not entomb.
My love will wait for spring again to bloom.

Patrick Meara
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 11

Just Go.

Himani Bajaj
Hightstown High School
Grade 12

Himani is a senior at Hightstown who enjoys drawing, photography, and hanging out with her friends. She also plays tennis and dances. She is pursuing a career in Physical Therapy and is very excited for her future.



Maya Nandy
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 11

Maya participates in a wide variety of clubs and activities to broaden her world view. She enjoys writing as a way to enlighten people of the world's wonders and disasters and as a way to convey her feelings. Maya is greatly supported by her parents who she gains her love of science from.

Bastille Day: Nice

Dark as space heavy as gold

crimson with anger

It flows.

Against the tide of humanity

mortality rose.

The constant flow pulsing

from the heart to the toes.

A barreling truck,

a cheering crowd,

the sound of a loaded gun resounds.

One, two, three, four

fall,

crushed by the tires of war.

Spilled on the pavement

running through our fingers

warm as home.

Conscious, unconscious,

dying, not dead,

fighting, living,

last breath blows.

On the dark streets strewn with metal pebbles

coated with lost lives, lost family, lost love,

the sparks of fire boom once more against the lifeless sky

as if to silence the racket of hatred,

as if to stifle the cries.

We hold on

to the last

wisp

of

Love.

Mason Orfe
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 10

Mason is a sophomore at Hopewell Valley Central High School. He enjoys drawing and painting in his freetime, and plays hockey and lacrosse for his school.

The Winter Lake

In the midnight moon,
the frozen water of the lake can be seen,
the lifeless trees reflecting off the ice,
the dead of winter visible in the icebound waves.
In the rising sun,
the white landscape of the icy waters can be viewed,
the first skaters of the day trickling down to the water's edge,
the sloping nearby hills filled with children.
Now, the buzz of the game soft at first,
men dancing around each other,
suspended in the air by cold blades,
the cacophony of sticks audible atop the snow covered peaks in the distance.
The men dance among one another until dusk.
In the setting sun,
the surface is again quiet,
the din of the game long since faded,
and, with the sun slipping below the distant treeline,
the lake is empty.

The Myth Is Still Alive

Kishan Patel
Hightstown High School
Grade 9

About this piece, Kishan says:
Myth never dies it stays alive for ever.



Christina Park
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 10

Christina is very outgoing, bubbly, and loves to make the people around her laugh. She loves and values her relationships with friends and family.

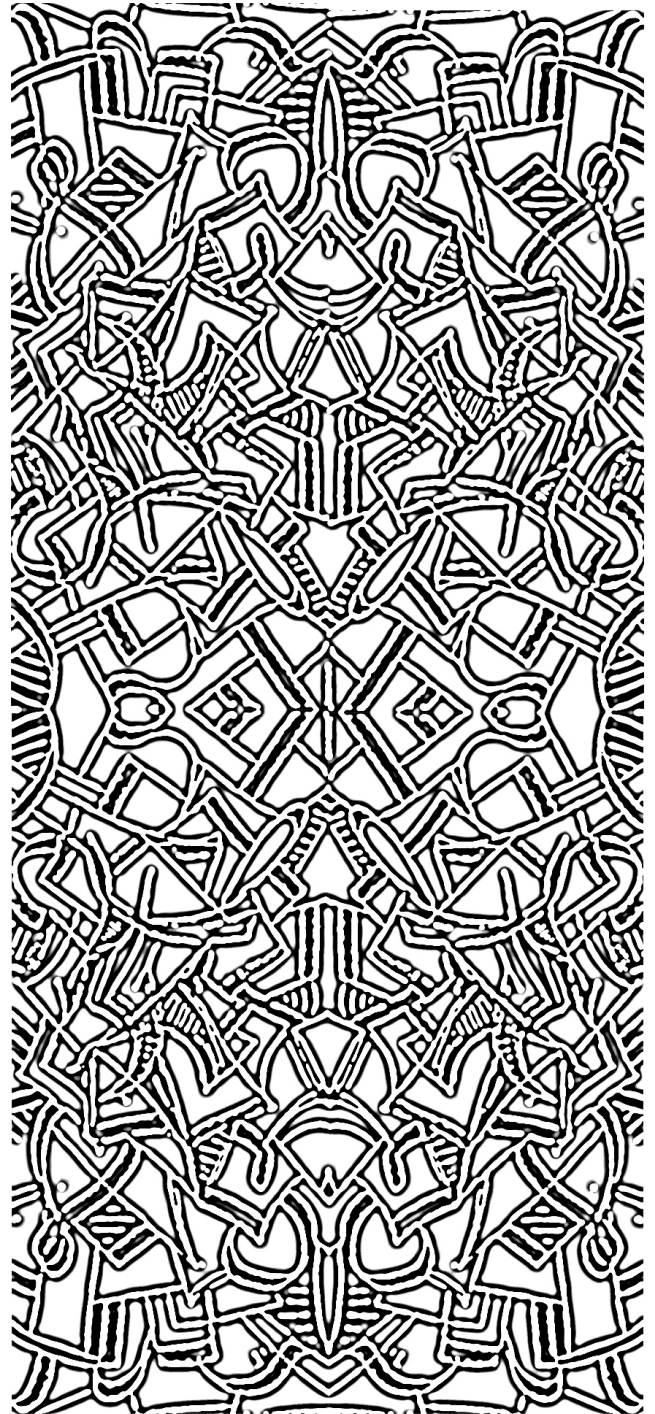
'We'

Sometimes I wonder
If I ever cross your mind,
because you surely are running across mine.
Sometimes I wonder
where we went wrong,
if we can pick up where we left off,
would it be the same?
Or are you now a stranger who knows all my secrets?
Sometimes I wonder
why we weren't meant to be,
because that one night in october
everything felt real.
Sitting outside, in your backyard,
you watched the stars while i watched
you, watched the mirrored fire in your eyes.
listened to the burning wood crack,
sparks flying between us.
At that moment,
I believed you were perfect
I believed we were perfect
but suddenly you put out the fire.
At this moment, now
I believe you were never perfect.
I believe we were never perfect,
just a hill going down.
and i believe
There was never a "we".

Hidden Faces

Carly Haug
Hightstown High School
Grade 11

Carly has always loved to draw, but has recently been finding herself doodling often. She sketches lines and shapes that overlap, often leading to creating an imagine within her artwork that she never intended for.

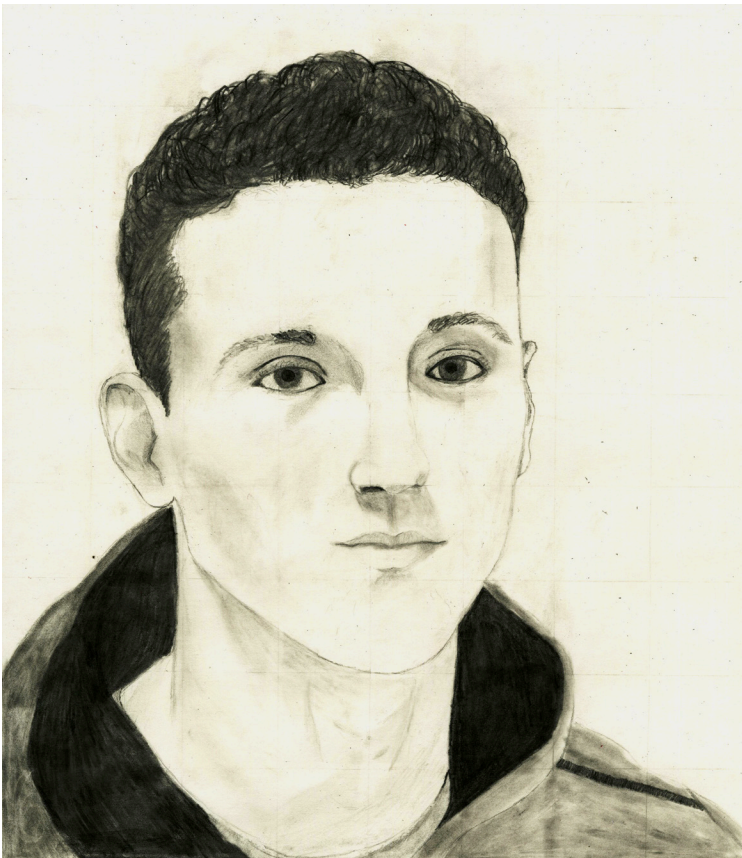


Miraj Patel
Lawrence High School
Grade 10

Miraj, 15, has a great sense of humor. He enjoys eating a lot of food.

The Sick Girl

Finally, it is the time to know
to figure out if we will have more snow.
We are all in wait
to see if spring will come late.
The cool, brisk air touches my face
as i wait in distaste.
The sun is high up in the sky.
Maybe the groundhog will turn a blind eye.
The time has come.
The groundhog emerged, looking like a thumb.
There is silence in the air
and around me, i hear a prayer.
The groundhog wanders off a little.
Which gives everyone the illusion that it'll
ALL BE FINE.
Suddenly it runs away in a straight line.



Just Me

Matt DeCristofaro
Hightstown High School
Grade 11

Matt loves drawing.

Rhea Pathak
Lawrence High School
Grade 10

RheaisasophomoreatLawrenceHighSchool.
Inherfreetime,sheenjoyswatchingmoviesand
drawing.

From My Polaroid Camera

the leaves scratch the ground
reds, yellows, oranges paint
a serene walkway
snow capped mountains and
icy gray skies are soft from
the hotel lobby
the sun's canvas glows
a subdued pink and orange
behind the soft clouds
a spray painted sheet
with gray lint says welcome to
the endless summer

Bright Lights

Daniela Cochancela
Hightstown High School
Grade 9

Danielatookphotoimagingbecauseshealways
hadaninterestinphotography.Shealsoenjoys
going to mall with her friends and family.



Ragav Raman
Lawrence High School
Grade 10

Ragav is a sophomore at Lawrence High School. He enjoys photography, travel, and playing the piano.

Paper Lanterns

Paper Lanterns

rise above me.

I watch as they radiate light and warmth,
and look back at myself, wondering why everyone is rising
while I remain below.

My colorful walls are obscured in the darkness.

They shiver as the wind rushes by.

I wonder why the wind belittles me, letting everyone else rise
while I remain alone inside.

Ah, at last, I befriend the flame. I let it in,
bringing me warmth and company,
saving me from my eternal solitude.

I look below as I begin to rise.

The wind welcomes me, pushing and pulling.

It takes me in, lets me glide.

The fire keeps me company and gives me warmth in the darkness,
as I continue to rise.

Eventually I catch up with the others.

they greet me

with light and warmth akin to mine.

But soon the wind betrays me.

it pushes too hard,

Disrupting the balance of the fire.

The warmth tilts too far and extinguishes
in my left wall.

The very thing that brought me such comfort
is what now causes such destruction.

I watch as my walls begin to burn and I cease to rise,
as I feel myself plummeting to the cold darkness.

Once again, I am alone.

Alexander Ratzman
Lawrence High School
Grade 10

Alex is involved with the marching band and other activities at Lawrence High School.

The Lighthouse

As we venture through the darkness
not knowing what is real or fake,
all alone we make decisions,
not wondering what truly is at stake.
This sticks within our mind as fact
uncontested and unopposed,
but when the light shines on the truth,
our mind has already firmly closed.
We reject this light that wants to guide us
safely to the shore,
and we choose to head deeper into our mind
and our alternative facts we are looking for.
Instead of accepting what we should see,
we blindly head into needless threat.
and as we crash upon the rocks,
we blame the ones we refused to accept.

The Crooked Mirror

Skyler Neely
Hightstown High School
Grade 10

Skyler is a sophomore at Hightstown High School.
They like drawing and playing video games.





Words Will Always Hurt Me

Dana Klein
Hightstown High School
Grade 12

Eliza Rosenthale
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 10

Eliza is a sophomore at Hopewell Valley Central High School. In her free time, she likes to people-watch, as well as sketch and write about them.

Marrying Myself

My voice is wedding bells
It is my turn to
Speak now
Walking myself down the aisle of life
My skin is the only blanket
I am certain I can crawl back under
With myself at the end of each day
I do take me
As the exquisite being that I am right now
Those incessant pinches of disgust as my sides
Will for now on be love pinches
I do take me
Scathing thoughts and all
For I'm going to tell myself "I love you"
So often that it will be the only thing that has a chance
To reverberate throughout my head
I do take me
Along with the fluttering words that hide in the darkness below my throat
I'm going to hold those words up to the sunlight
Until they glisten for all of the world to see
I am already whole and happy
I am the only one that I am certain will stay
So if you were to ask me if I love me I would say
I do

Self Worth

Elizaveta Bogacheva
Hightstown High School
Grade 12

Elizaveta would like to make a living out of doing art and still have enough money for instant ramen.



Skyler Rossi
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 12

Between her busy class schedule and riding her horse six days a week, Skyler somehow manages to fit in leisure writing and reading. She likes how words can transport you to another world or into someone else's head, and strives to have that same effect in her writing.

Stranded

Where'd you go?
You left me in the middle of the super market
While I was losing my mind.
My mind, my treacherous thoughts
They're only warped because of what he did,
By the way.
You know that.
I've told you that.
But you were never good at understanding.
How could a bottle of lemonade ice tea be a trigger?
Your gentle pats on the shoulder lack emotion of the smallest grain
and pierce my bony shoulder like ice.
You could at least pretend to care,
pretend to see the way my eyes cave in
as I unwillingly replay those moments,
those stinging words whose syllables dropped my soul,
my whole world, on the floor,
and left me stranded to pick up millions of pieces.
I wish you'd known me before that night,
that night my father woke me up
to tell me a drunken story which ended in a pulled trigger,
a piercing noise that still gives me insomnia.
I wish you'd known me before I woke up screaming,
before I was put in a recovery center twice,
before I sobbed on the floor of the juice aisle.
but you didn't.
And you didn't stay.

Grayson Russo
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 10

Grayson is a sophomore that enjoys hanging out with friends and playing all sorts of sports. He likes to have fun while taking all of his academics seriously.

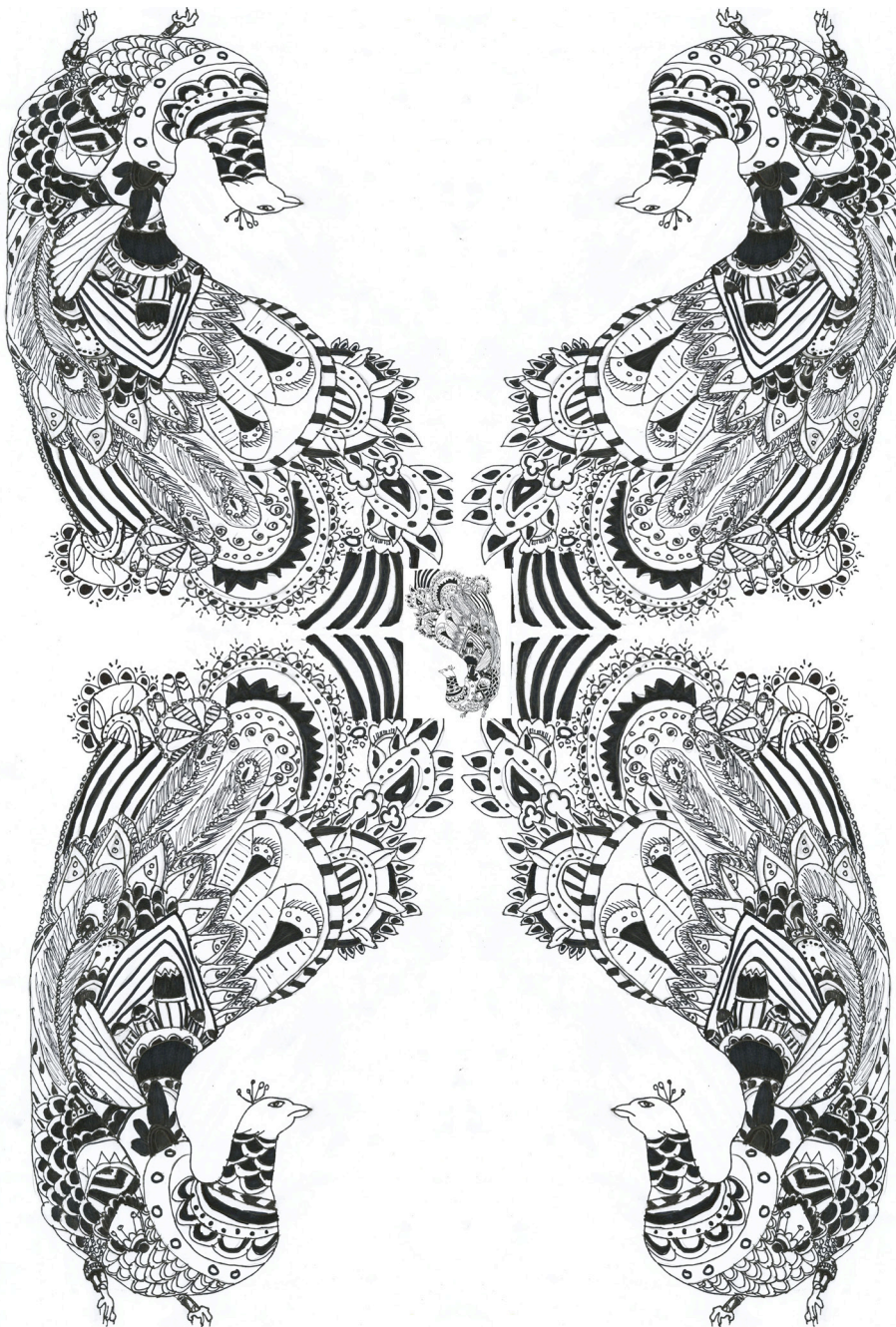
The Baseball

Freshly unwrapped
Gripped easily, lightly
The blinding white glistens
From the surface brightly
That fresh, organic leather smell
To the senses exquisite
Out on the field
A warm spring day visit
Flying through the air
Toward a certain beating
Hitting the ground
A turbulent greeting
Gathering bruises and blemishes
Over time, becoming weary
For beating after beating,
Age starts to show
Growing old with others,
Soaring out of the hand
That certain white has gone
What is left, is ever darkening
The seams give way
To the mess beneath
After so much time,
It's hard to breathe
To the bottom of the bucket
Skipped over in an instant

Patterned Peacocks

Bipendeep Kaur
Hightstown High School
Grade 10

Bipendeep is a lover of reading, painting and drawing.



Praying Mantis on Stone

Jean Steele
Lawrence High School
Grade 10

Jean is currently a sophomore at Lawrence High School. She is a hard-working student who enjoys writing and photography as hobbies.



Eye Believe

Skyler Neely
Hightstown High School
Grade 10

Skyler is a Sophomore at Hightstown High school. They procrastinate a lot by playing video games and drawing the same thing over and over again.



Sabrina Russo
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 10

Sabrina enjoys field hockey, art, and hanging out with friends and family.

Drifting Jellyfish

The sky turned navy as the storm brewed over the Atlantic,
Darkness haunts the depths of the dark ocean that she had grown to love,
Black clouds rolled in and thunder shattered the sky to pieces,
Crashing waves disrupt the abandoned peace of the pungent water
She could see them in the distance,
The ones she loved, the ones she had been yearning for so long,
They saw her too, eagerness and joy flood them
Memories of sunny days pass through their minds
Happier times, happier places
Longing, craving, needing each other,
Hours passing, getting closer, so close, almost there,
Waves churning above them and electricity filling the empty water
Drifting away, farther apart, unable to get closer,
She could barely see them, they could barely see her
Sadness, anger, hopelessness
The bitter storm passed, she was all alone again
Nothing to do, nothing to see, time passing
Darkness coming and going
Drifting beneath the waves

Locked

Rebecca Blustein
Hightstown High School
Grade 10

Rebecca enjoys creating, as well as observing, different types of art. She also enjoys doing various types of puzzles and playing computer games.



Icelandic Tones

Vann Adrian-Hage
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 11

Vann enjoys traveling and taking pictures. He also likes playing ice hockey and spending time with friends.



Isabelle Rybinski
Lawrence High School
Grade 10

Isabelle is a sophomore at Lawrence High School. In her free time she runs, fosters kittens, volunteers at local events. One of her favorite activities is coming to Ms. Tziarri's English class every day.

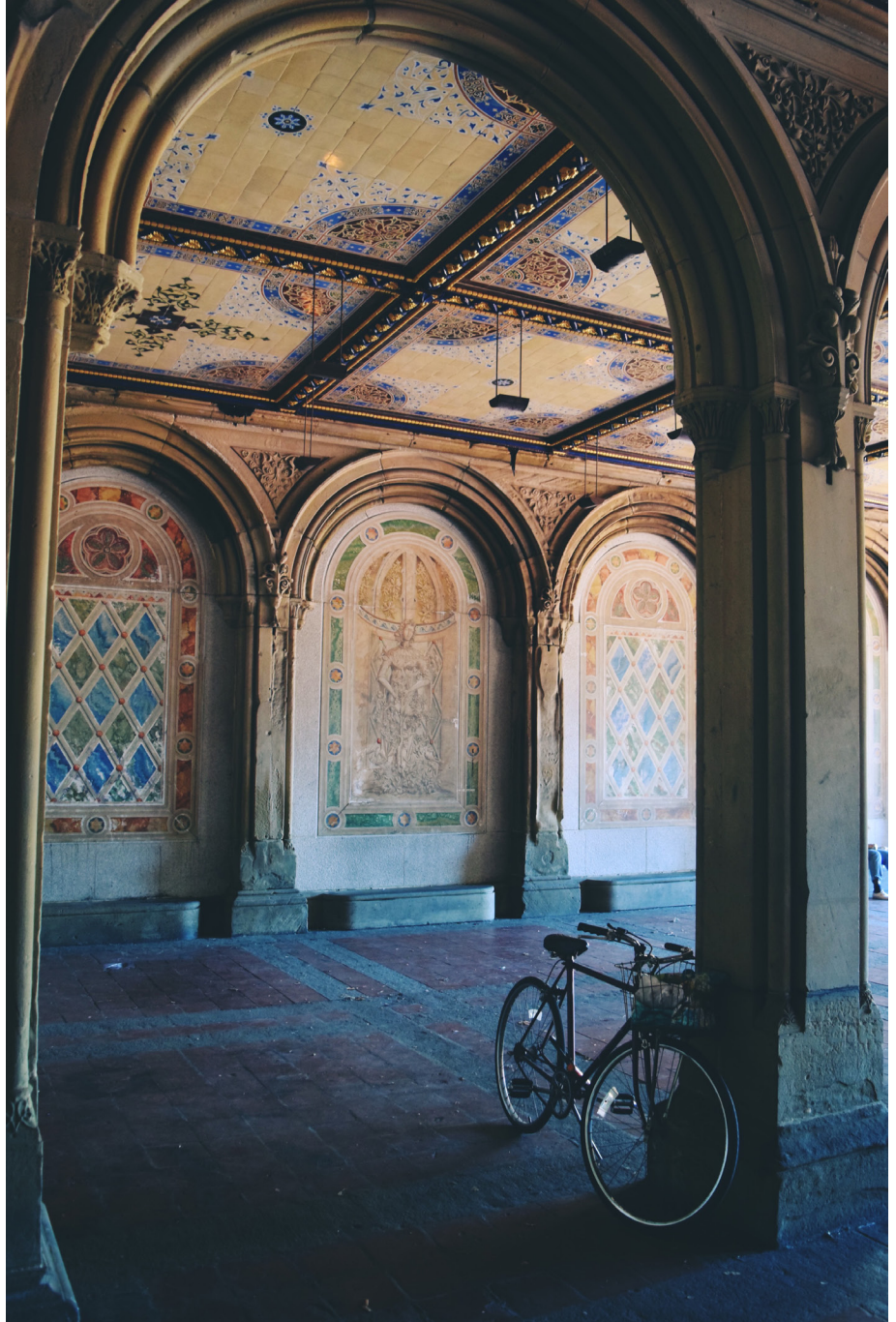
Finding Refuge

This land is your land too.
It is white land,
because we stole it.
So please,
come to our pilfered shores
and we will welcome you with open arms.
We do not have the right to deny entry
to land that wasn't ours in the first place.

Isabelle Rybinski
Lawrence High School
Grade 10

I Wonder Why

The thought seems extraordinary
to accept a refugee
Do they not realize?
One group
has already destroyed America.
Look back,
settled by who?
White men,
Christians
Plymouth, 1620
Escaping religious plights
finding refuge.
As Freedom could not be found,
they were welcomed,
built homes,
feasted,
gave thanks.
Except,
not so pleasant for long.
Spears met guns, disease
terrorized.
Pox all over brown skin.
Permanent oppression.
It's white man's land now.
So I wonder
why they are so scared
to welcome a brown child
when the real terrorists
of a lighter shade
already destroyed America



Unlocked

Vann Adrian-Hage
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 11

Isabelle Rybinski
Lawrence High School
Grade 10

To Protest

The founding fathers were all traitors.
Signing the document to declare independence,
they all committed treason in the eyes of the king,
so I give them thanks,
for my right to protest,
to protest things that I deem unfair,
for things that I consider
unjust
or quite simply
For things that I wish to change.
This country was founded on the ideals
of taking action to produce change.
So if we must create a more forward-thinking nation,
we have a lot of change to make.
And the first step to do so
is to raise our signs
raise our voices
peacefully gather
and use our rights that were fought for
by our treason-fairing fathers.
Don't worry,
because revolutions have been won before.



Waves

Jake Meneskie
Hightstown High School
Grade 9

Jake loves taking photographs in and out of school. He enjoys basketball, baseball, and collecting sneakers.

Andrew Sam
Lawrence High School
Grade 10

Andrew is a sophomore at Lawrence High School. He enjoys reading, writing, and playing music.

Weekends in Philly

Big, dark, trees,
a tangle of limbs
against the gray, overcast sky.

Cold white winds
lash against us like a whip.

And the road stretches out
before us:

dark trees give way to
dark grounds give way to
dark sky.

But gives way to a gleaming, golden sunset in the distance.

And to glittering red and white lights all around us.

And to a veil of golden-yellow rays descending from the sky.

In the distance sprout metallic stems, emitting their glow of orange light.

In the distance spans great scaffolds of metal and concrete.

In the distance appears white-washed mounds of history and civilization.

And in the distance rise slim, towering mountains, grand beacons of innovation and progress.

Discover

Mary Kate Hartnett
Hightstown High School
Grade 9

Mary Kate loves taking pictures of nature. She enjoys editing them as well and is taking a photo-imaging class in school.



Sean Santora
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 10

Sean likes lifting weights and bodybuilding.
All his heroes are Mr. Olympia's. He does
not understand art but feels its effects.

Summer After Eighth Grade

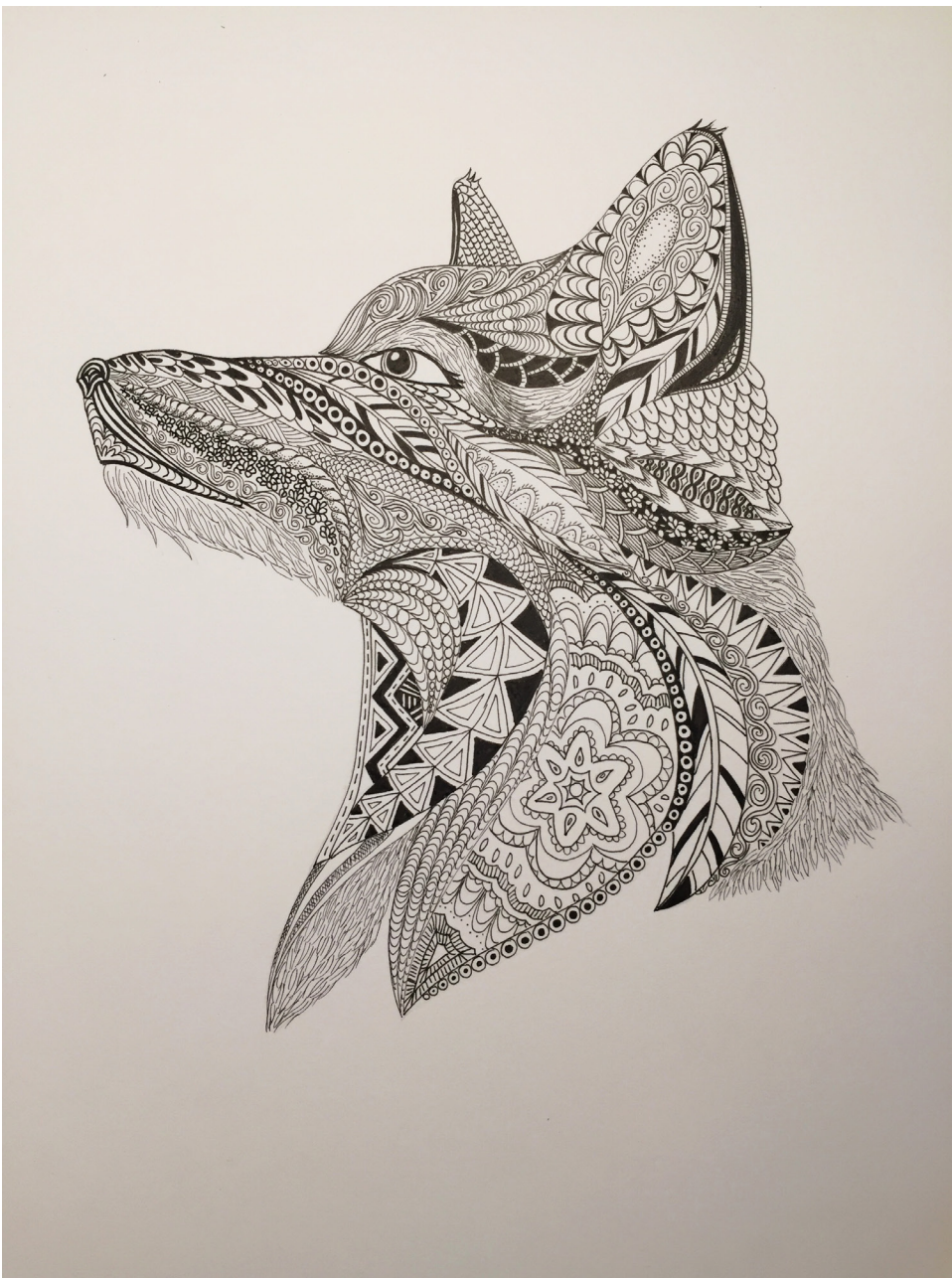
I stand at the gate
the kind that's a sideways A
shape between two decaying wooden posts.
I start to walk around to blood
flow to my quads, calves, and hamstrings.
see thorns still digging in my arms and skin,
skin broken blood drying in the summer sun.
Happened on the warm-up, easy two
miles Surrounded by tall trees and their warm
green Leaves feet pounding on packed
Dirt Before even one mile I tripped
up Ran right into a petrified thorn
Bush The blood already coagulated.
Trailing down from them I
pull the thorns Releasing drops of crimson
blood along with them ready to
begin stand facing the gravel
towpath. To my right the canal littered with
twigs. Light current creates small ripples in the murky
water. Geese camp out grouped
along the canal. A road splits
the gravel towpath leads to
The busy road to the right of the canal
already on The right almost forget
I'm doing drills, high knees, A skips
striders beginning the motions.
Heels pulled by hamstrings released to a
Midfoot strike use calves to push
off. On repeat like a new favorite song.
Line up facing the endless towpath.
Hands ready to start timers for the first
Rep hunkered down ready to
Explode out of our stance
3...2...Take a deep breath
Go!

Nia Sosa
Hightstown High School
Grade 11

Nia is a junior at Hightstown high school. In addition to writing, she enjoys traveling and laughing with family and friends.

Crepuscular

The beauty he fiddled
Singing the sweet song of the moon
Soar beneath the gods
To silence my bitter tongue
Heal the ache in my heart
Let my lips bleed at the crack of a smile
And lift the fog for my now clear eyes



Alpha

Kayleigh Morrison
Lawrence High School
Grade 12

Kayleigh is a senior at Lawrence High School, where she is enrolled in AP Studio Art. She loves to draw and paint portraits and scenes from nature. When she is not doing art, Kayleigh enjoys playing the clarinet and Irish dancing.



Nia Sosa
Hightstown High School
Grade 11

Angst

Elizaveta Bogacheva
Hightstown Highschool
Grade 12

The Unsound Mind

I demand a dance with the devil
For I am just as insane
Sweep me off my feet
And dance across the sheets
Let the moon shine our path
And the darkness hide our sins
Enfold me in your grace
Embrace me with your beauty
Together we love
And fill our hearts
With each other

William Titus
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 10

Will is a sophomore at Hopewell.

Ignorance

They look upon us as if we are helpless
as if we are foolish
as if we are an inconvenience
as if we are savages.

They look upon our villages as if they are disgusting
blemishes on the earth that
our ancestors have cultivated
for centuries.

They look upon our culture as if it is abhorrent
our traditions as if they are outdated
our clothes as if they are offensive
our religions as if they are archaic.

Yet they look not at the families
the friendships
the experiences
the purity

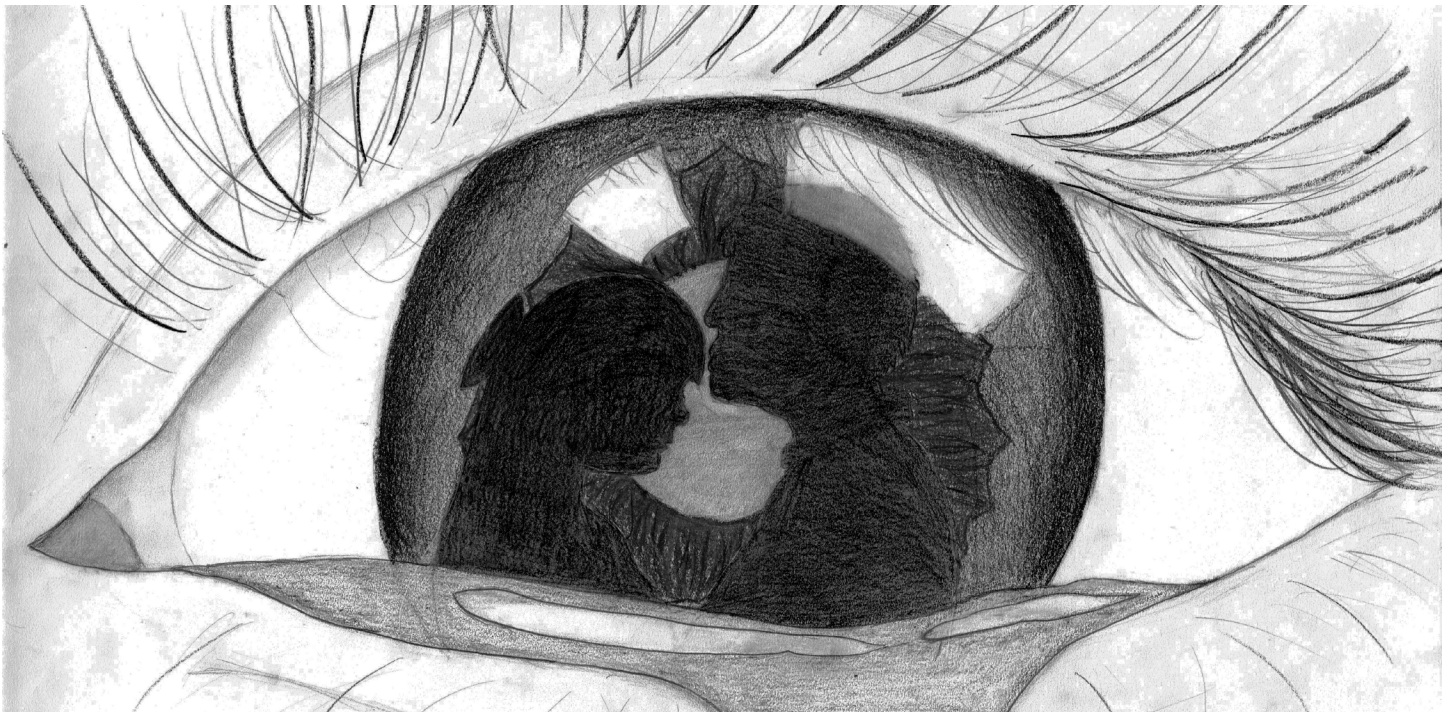
For which no man would trade
his life in Africa

For
a life in America.

In the Eye of A Broken Heart

Alexis Daugett
Hightstown High School
Grade 10

Alexis is an eager student who loves learning. She loves working in the community and doing after school activities. She likes to express herself by dyeing her hair and trying different fashion styles.



Stormy Sky

Jessica Gratkowski
Hightstown High School
Grade 9

Jessica is a hard worker and is determined to do her best. She likes meeting new people and spending time with her family.



An Odd Kind Of Friendship

Bryan Rodriguez
Hightstown High School
Grade 12

Bryan is an ambitious senior who wishes to live his dreams of creating stories that entertain and impact the world. His mind is a train of creativity and some odd-flam-boyant mess of imagination.



Hannah Tran
Hightstown High School
Grade 11

Hannah likes photography, writing, music, and a combination of all three in the form of memes. Hannah is a committed third wheel and, since last year, is still in a close relationship with the axle.

The Murder

The murder came at night.

Cloud of black, striking moonlit shadow

and it was also very loud.

You don't have to worry about it being loud out here though.

Unlike in suburbia, I don't have any neighbors to call the police on me when the crop harvester makes too much noise.

The quiet swallows it up and blankets the land in a false sense of peace.

Except for tonight, where the sound manages to drag itself in from the fields to wake me up.

It was quite a casual affair.

Jacket over my PJs,

Work boots at the door,

A shovel from the shed.

I followed the path cutting through the fields as a guide towards the sound, and entered into the corn.

When I finally saw them, I swung the shovel, the uproar buffeting me with wind and wings and the murder of crows flew away.

The night seemed to breathe in and sigh.

The stars were bright and filled me with wanderlust; the fields were much cooler now.

The moon cut a hole in the sky where light could still pour through and it gave me a sense of clarity

And the realization came as a frigid wave

that crows

aren't nocturnal.

The murder came at night.

Stalking between the stalks,

It was a sweet rustling sound like a mouse foraging for food.

It was a whisper behind my ear, hidden by a moonlight shadow.

And It was also very

Quiet.



One Step at a Time

Tyenah Rivera
Hightstown High School
Grade 12

Ty is a senior at hightstown. She is currently going to Mercer for photography in a dual enrollment program. Ty loves to take pictures and write, that's why she is striving to become a photojournalist.

Sarah Voorhees
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 12

Sarah is an enthusiastic supporter of the Oxford comma and hopes that her readers don't mind flowery adjectives. She's unreasonably fascinated by strange words. Like "cattywampus."

The Tower Under the Moon

Every day is a wishbone to her, each morning spent hoping and praying for a break -- a snap -- that will set her evening free. Her name is Aurora, which she guesses is a testament to the sky that unfolds above her with each new dawn.

Her name is the only memory of the woman who built the tower. As she scrapes her gaze down the tower's side, she imagines her mother's fingers, bloody, bruised and traced with cuts, clawing at each stone, heaving them up onto the framework. It must have taken her years. It must have been hard work. Dirty work. Her mother must have been devoted. And forgetful.

Aurora spends most of her time sketching her mother. Every morning, it's a new face. Every day, there are new deductions, gaps filled with sheer imagination. Hers sketches adorn the eastern wall of the tower. She loves each face and its corresponding story of love and loss.

Aurora daydreams about a time before her tower. She imagines a woman, fair-haired and pale in the white wash of moonlight. In her daydreams, her mother sings to her. With a lilting voice, she beseeches Aurora to close her eyes and go to a happy place. And Aurora imagines her happy place, a cloud-piercing tower with rose vines gripping its stony sides. It is a place removed, where she never has to hide her face from prying eyes.

Aurora does not remember the tears in her mother's eyes as she laid down her daughter, only eight then, in a bed of soft ivory sheets. She does not remember the chill that crept down her mother's spine when she saw Aurora's black eyes crack open just as she slid the final stone into the doorway, trapping Aurora forever.

Tonight Aurora tiptoes on a stack of boxes, carefully arranged, and peers out her tiny window. The moon hangs heavy in the inky blue. Its light throws a menacing shadow behind Aurora's changing figure.

Her body arcs in response to the moon's faded glow, becoming sharp and angular where it was once soft and rounded. Her teeth elongate and sharpen maliciously. Aurora watches, expressionless, as her pale hair shortens and spreads to cover her thin, muscled figure. Her eyes blacken as she turns her merciless stare toward the moon, dangling above. A howl rips through the darkness. She is awake.

Kyleya White
Ewing High School
Grade 11

Kyleya loves writing stories and poems. She has a new found hobby for sewing and is interested in pursuing a career in cosmetology.

Night 'n Day Madness

An eye for an eye.

A finger for a finger.

Blood spills for more blood.

An angel scorned for love and a devil blessed for bad intentions.

Children lost in limbo, waiting for a pseudo knight in shining armor.

All is lost for those cursed for true love.

May the blessed die and the evil prosper.



Earth

Aaron Stack
Hightstown High School
Grade 9

Aaron loves hanging out with friends. He also enjoys going to the gym, eating food, and going outside.

Gill Woody
Lawrence High School
Grade 10

Gill has a strong passion for academics. He enjoys playing on the golf team, participating in the Math League, and the pit orchestra with high school.

One Field, Two Sheep

A white sheep grazes in the field,
watching as the dry summer winds blow,
faster than the grass could ever hope to grow,
yet the white sheep still grazes.

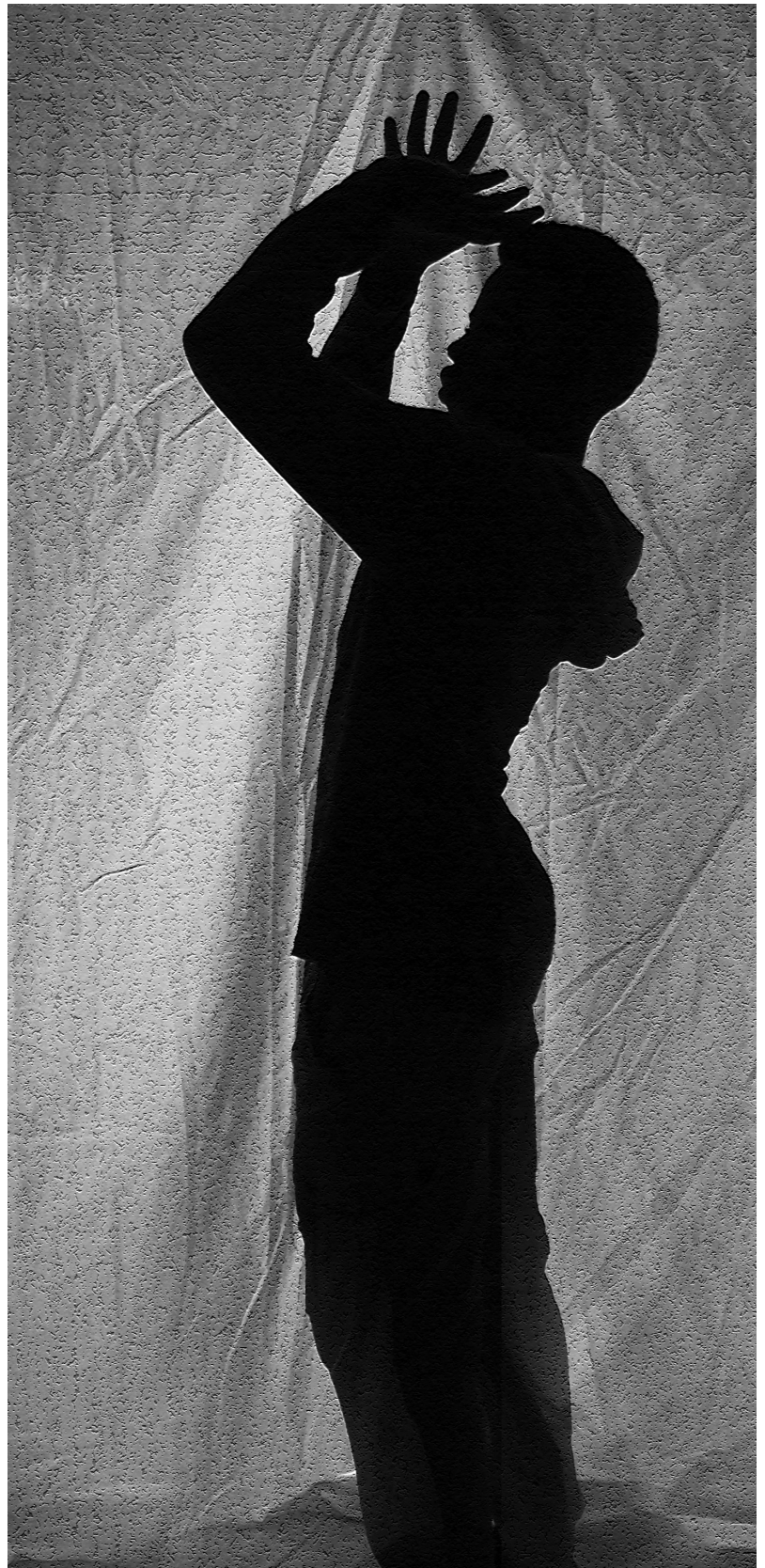
A black sheep grazes in the field,
watching as the clouds form from afar,
covering up the most beautiful night star,
yet the black sheep still grazes.

The two sheep mingle with each other,
circling the field in search of a place to rest,
considering no single solitary place the best
than with each other.

Focus

Grace O'Leary
Hightstown High School
Grade 9

Grace is athletic. She enjoys playing soccer for her High School Varsity team.



Zixuan Zhao
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 10

Zixuan is a sophomore at Hopewell Valley High School.

Shadow

After Wallace Stevens "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird"

Some people say I am the enemy of the
Light, the most loyal son of the blackbird.
I lingered on edges of the cliffs, whirled
with the sky in the winter, hid spring in
my arms. In fact I am the
most faithful follower of light. In autumn
she colored the maple, I was her guard. We chased winds
to bring back summer, presented it
to the crickets. Light was
the reason for my life. We have never been a-
part. We have never been together. The small
glimmer in my mind is not part
of me. I imitate the movements of
everything, accept the replacements of the
time. I am an insignificant character of pantomime.



Flashy

Jake Meneskie
Hightstown High School
Grade 9

Jake loves taking photographs in and out of school. He enjoys basketball, baseball, and collecting sneakers.



Hennaphant

Sarah Maung
Hightstown High School
Grade 12

Ryan Zimmerman
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 11

Ryan is a junior at Hopewell Valley Central High School, in Pennington, New Jersey. He is enrolled in an AP Language and Composition class, for which he wrote this essay.

Drowning

I remember first learning to swim, by accident, in New Hampshire. I was two, out in my red wooden canoe with my dad, fishing. We were in a small cove, when the big red speed boat with living quarters, obviously not meant for a small lake, came screeching by, sending a lot of wake right at us. The boat flipped. I fell in, panicked, flailing my arms and shrieking for help. I stretched my legs out, trying to reach for ground, when I realized I could stand.

A lot of people look back on their childhoods and think, I wish I could go back in time and stay there. I can attest to that.

My dad, mom, older brother Brady, and I used to go up to New Hampshire, where my mom's parents own a house in a cove on Highland Lake. We went up almost every other weekend to the secluded house, which didn't have cable, cell service or wifi. They have a white pontoon boat, that we refer to as "The Loon Chaser", and a speed boat that we use to tube and ski. We swam to Blueberry Island, where we collected blueberries in a plastic blue cup which we brought home for pancakes. When we heard the seaplane coming, my dad, mom and I sat out on the dock and watched it land in the middle of the lake. It was a tradition and a goal of ours to see the seaplane land and take off every time we were there. Sometimes it happened and sometimes it didn't, but we always tried.

We often hiked up Pitcher Mountain to the watchtower, and had to climb a huge ladder to get in, which was something that I couldn't do unless the tower worker came down to help me. One time, I found a frog on the way down, brought him home, and named him Pitcher. We had him for almost a year before he died. On Sunday mornings, we took the boat to the Marina for a breakfast of chocolate chip waffles and chocolate milk, where we talked, watched for birds, and of course, looked out for the seaplane.

After my little brother and sister were born, we began to go up to New Hampshire as a bigger family. Suddenly, the already long and boring car ride was now also filled with my siblings crying and whining. They constantly made us pull over at rest stops to use the bathroom, making the dreadful six hour road trip even longer and worse. Each year, in the final leg of our trip, we pulled down the long, windy, unpaved road to the house. My dogs always sat, panting in the back, waiting patiently to get out of the car. We opened the sliding minivan doors, and Jeter, my flat coated retriever, sprinted down to the edge of the dock and jumped into the water. My pug, Tino, on the other hand, moseyed down to the water and slurped it up. My siblings and I raced down to our grandparents like getting to the door first was a serious competition, while my parents unpacked the car. Our vacation began on this note every year. And every year the activities we did: watching for the seaplane, going to the marina, swimming with the dogs, etc. remained unchanging. But, for the good and the bad, families have to change overtime.

It was 2008 when my parents split. I was eight years old, my older brother was ten, and my little brother and sister were four. That year, we didn't go to the lake. As such a young kid, I wasn't able to understand what divorce meant, or how it would affect our lives. I figured traditions would stay the same, but I was wrong. When my mom and siblings and I go to the lake now, we still go to the marina, and race to greet our grandparents, but we never watch for the seaplane, or go to Pitcher Mountain, or watch our dogs run down to the water ready to get drenched, and Jeter has since passed away. Now, we still water ski and tube, but any physical activity my siblings and I want to do, we have to do alone, because my mom and grandparents are not into hiking, or exploring. Not having my dad there has a huge impact on our experiences. Even though it is still very fun, it is just different. When my parents got divorced, I felt as if I was drowning, and unable to stand, but I found that eventually, you stretch and realize you were able to stand the whole time.



Fall on Campus

Caroline Levine
Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 11

Caroline is a junior at Hopewell Valley Central High School. In her free time, she enjoys spending time with her family, playing lacrosse and field hockey, and relaxing at the beach.



Lock to the World

Aayush Gupta
Highstown High School
Grade 9

Aayush is a freshman at Highstown High School and is taking a photography class. Aayush is rather an energetic student and is motivated to traverse the world in order to capture the beautiful aspects of life.



Down

Sophie Casciano
Highstown High School
Grade 10

Sophie loves black and white photography. She also enjoys taking photos of spectacular views. She loves fashion and learning about the business aspect of it as well. Sophie is part of a dance team which she also loves.

Bird in the Sky

Alexandria Schlaifer
Hightstown High School
Grade 11

Alexandria enjoys going shopping on her
freetime. She is a cheerleader on the schools
team and her favorite color is pink.



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