



# Aspirations 2013

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A Literary Journal for  
Mercer County Area  
High School Students

published by  
Mercer County Community College  
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Spring 2013



*Aspirations 2013*, 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:

Barbara Hamilton	Mercer County Community College
Carol Bork	Mercer County Community College
Debbie Townsend	Hightstown High School
Dr. Bob O'Boyle	Hopewell Valley Central High School
Edyta Kuciapa	Mercer County Community College
Ellen Nenno	Nottingham High School
Francis Paixao	Mercer County Community College
Jacqueline Vogtman	Mercer County Community College
Joann Snook	Allentown High School
Kathy Foran	Nottingham High School
Mary Seitz	Hightstown High School
Michael Kownacky	Mercer County Community College
Nicole Homer	Mercer County Community College
Susan Cosma	Steinert High School
Ted Otten	Mercer County Community College
Theresa Solomon	Hopewell Valley Central High School

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 Patricia Donohue and Vice President of Academic Affairs Donald Generals for their support; to Edyta Kuciapa in Mercer's Publications Office for her work designing and laying out this journal; to Brad Kent for setting up and maintaining the *Aspirations* webpage; to Debbie Stotland and Mary Sikos for assisting in the preparation of entries for the judges; and especially 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 Robin Schore, the Dean of Liberal Arts, for his generous help to me and his coordination of all phases of this publication project. His ongoing commitment to this artistic and literary gallery continues to make it possible.

Nicole Homer  
Assistant Professor of English and Editor, *Aspirations 2013*  
Mercer County Community College

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### Cover Art



### Into Pieces

**Valerie Suto**

Nottingham High School

Grade 12

*Valerie has a passion for the arts and softball. She will continue to play softball and study in the arts in college. She plans on becoming a graphic design artist.*

**Robert Adams**

Trenton Catholic Academy  
Grade 12

*Robert does not write often; however, he enjoys crafting a piece when it is assigned. Robert intends to pursue a career in the field of Marine Biology. His goal is to reverse the anthropogenic effects that have compromised all marine ecosystems; moreover, he plans to spread awareness to preserve all biological flora and fauna.*

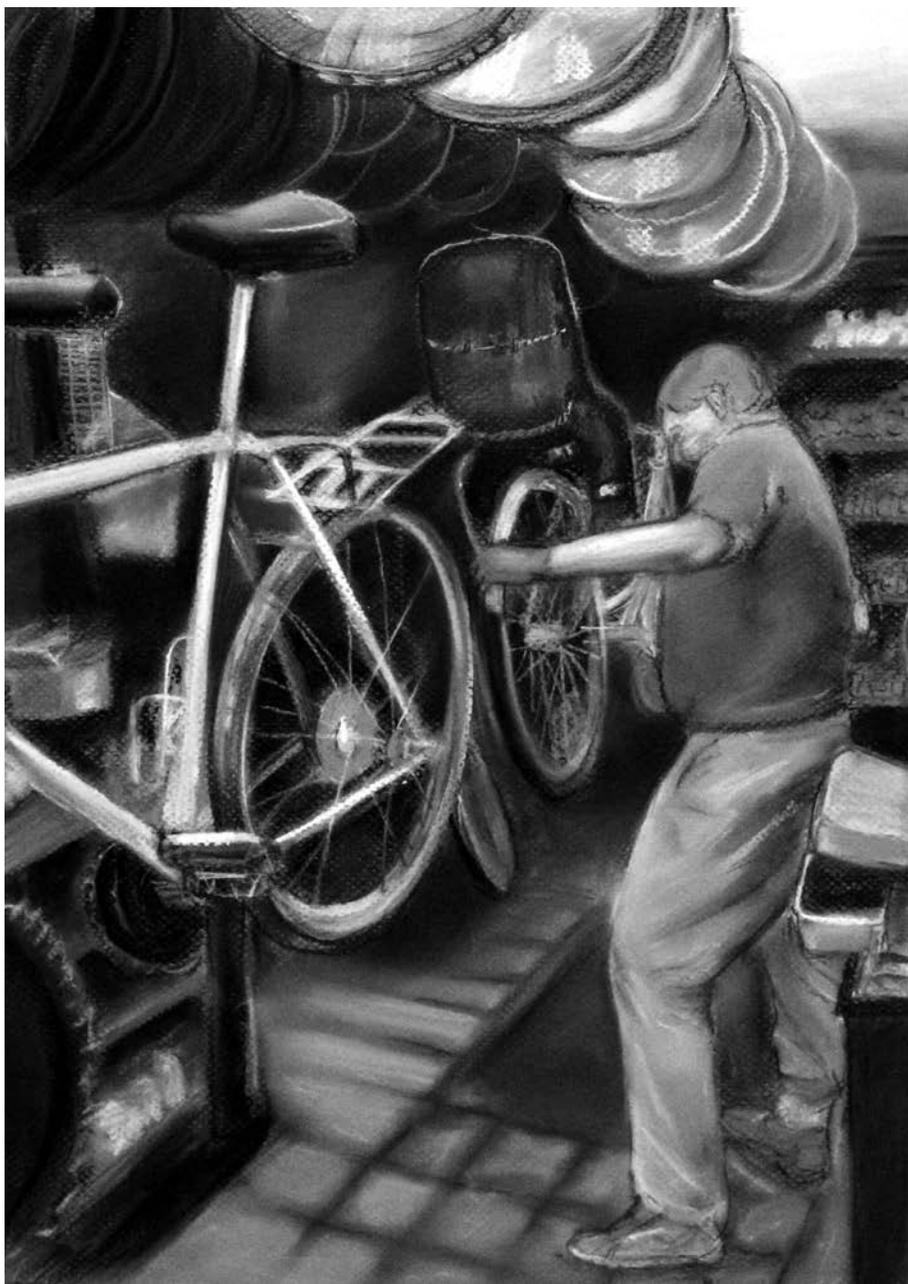
## Where is Waldo, Really?

As I reminisce about my days in elementary school, I recall how I would gather around a desk with my friends and be completely engrossed in the book, *Where's Waldo?* We would scan the pages to find Waldo knowing that the first among us to locate him would hold bragging rights. Now, as I consider the exhilaration I felt as I raced to find Waldo, I realize that perhaps I was missing a more important question: "What is Waldo?" We can often become fiercely focused on seeking various things that we fail to appreciate their essence. Yet, it is possible that an appreciation of *what* Waldo is provides the key to determining *where* Waldo is.

Waldo is our thirst for knowledge and the process of inquiry that leads us to find the truth. Waldo is the series of experiments a scientist conducts in the hopes of producing a groundbreaking finding or challenging a long held assumption. He is that cure for cancer that has not yet been found and that 'green' technology that will allow us to be better stewards of this planet. He is the critical questions we are not afraid to ask and the answers to those questions that lead to even more questions. Waldo is our inquisitiveness and our relentless pursuit of innovation. He is an ever-increasing standard that compels us to think deeper and challenges us to adapt.

Waldo is our ability to see the big picture but not lose sight of the smallest details. He is our courage to devise grand, new ideas without ignoring the fundamentals. He is the paradigm that is soon to be shifted and the worldview that will be redefined. Waldo is our willingness to explore new places and venture outside of our comfort zones. He is the reward that is reserved for the adventurous and the opportunities available for the open-minded. Waldo is our reminder that genius, beauty, and knowledge can be found anywhere. Our search for him is our appreciation of this very idea.

As I reflect upon Waldo's essence I have no doubt that Waldo can be found among my generation. My generation is noted for its curiosity and its insatiable desire for new information. It is a generation of thinkers who are intent upon learning, understanding, and growing. We recognize that while Waldo never changes, his context always does. We are a generation of exploration that fully embraces the uniqueness of this day and age. Where else would Waldo rather be?



## Bicycle Repairman

**Nicholas Lewis**

Hopewell Valley Central High School  
Grade 12

*Nicholas is a senior at Hopewell Valley Central High School. He enjoys the arts and sciences and travelling. Using photography he tries to discover and express the similarities between his interests.*

**Cassandra Bentivegna**

Lawrence High School  
Grade 11

*Cassandra enjoys writing poetry about real life. Most of her poems are based on her personal experiences and relationships. She also loves the band Queen.*

**BFFs**

Best Friends Forever  
Three little words  
That seldom are true.

Little kids  
Put all their trust  
In their friends.  
And then those friends  
Move.  
Away.  
Never to be seen again.

Or they stay  
And change.  
Becoming strangers at best  
And enemies at worst.

For a child  
To have one friend  
And to have that friend  
Leave  
Feels horrible.

Then it comes.

The name-calling.  
The funny faces.  
And the ignoring.

The bullying.

And it gets worse.

Snide comments.  
Rumors that  
Aren't true.  
Physical violence.

It *all* hurts.

A child grows up  
Thinking that something  
Is wrong with her.  
That she isn't good enough  
To have friends.  
She does all she can.  
Helping out others  
At the expense  
Of her happiness.  
Throwing herself  
Into schoolwork  
And taking out her anger,  
Sadness,  
Happiness,  
Envy,  
On an innocent  
Piece of paper.

Because she doesn't want  
To cause others the pain  
That she went through  
Because then,  
She's no better than the rest of them.

She has her first boyfriend  
And puts all her trust in him.  
And it happens again.  
Discomfort.  
Avoidance.  
Heartbreak.  
Alone.

But now she has other friends  
To help her get through it.  
But it will all happen again  
With completely new friends  
And a whole  
Other  
Guy.

BFFNL

Best Friends Forever Never Last

Cassandra Bentivegna

## Maturity

What's so great about being mature?  
You can't do anything fun anymore.

Everyone always says  
"Oh, you're so mature  
for your age."  
They say it like it's a good thing.

Can you still watch Disney movies?  
Can you have pillow fights?  
Splash around in the pool  
just because it's fun?

What's so great about being mature?

Does it earn you respect?  
Get you a job?  
JUST for being mature?

No.

When you're my age  
and mature  
you are alienated.

An outcast  
who is "too serious"

Sure you can fit in  
with the older crowd  
but you have no friends  
who are your age.

Your own sister  
blames you  
when you don't get mad  
at her,  
and hates you  
for loving her.

You feel bad  
because not everyone  
can understand  
This maturity  
makes you change  
until you agree  
with your peers.

You ARE too serious.  
Your thoughts too deep  
for others to comprehend

It is not morbidity  
which makes you think  
on death,  
nor is it a desire  
to die.

You simply wonder.  
Because you know  
how life is  
because of your gift  
and your curse.

Maturity.

## Curiosity

**Kyle Lang**  
Steinert High School  
Grade 11

*Kyle Lang is a 16 year old nature photographer.  
He is told by many people that his art shouldn't go unnoticed.*



**Daniel Brink**

Allentown High School  
Grade 12

*Daniel Brink is a senior at Allentown High School. He enjoys painting, playing guitar, and most importantly, writing. Whether it is poetry, a song, or simply a daily journal, writing has proved to be an essential part of Daniel's life.*

## Une Bonne Nuit

He drew a hot bath around Eight-Fifty-Two,  
Opened the window so the brisk air would create steam over the tub,  
Grabbed some lavender and rosemary incense and burned it,  
The smoke wrapped itself around every corner of the room.

He lit candles: tall and short, fat and skinny.  
Light engulfed the room and flickered against the walls as he turned off the lights.  
The stereo played softly in the background; smooth sounds of music,  
La Vie En Rose, Sweet Lorraine, Georgia On My Mind  
Melodies echoed through the moonlit room.

He held himself under the water,  
Coming up reborn with peace  
The Negativity,  
The Burdens,  
The Sickness,  
The Addiction,  
All washed out of every part of his ailing body,  
and into the tranquil, motionless water

The small puddles of soap lay gently upon the clear, but faded,  
surface of liquid,

Waves ripple from even the smallest movements of his seemingly still body,  
It reminds him that everything he does affects everything around him.

The bottom half of his body stayed warm,  
His upper half, however, was refreshingly brisk from the cool winter wind,  
A vessel split in two,  
But the mind was made up.  
He will be clean from this day forward.

The water drained,  
Nonetheless, the newfound energy filled the void in his mind,  
body and soul,  
He shook off the remnant water, chills and cravings for the false euphoria,  
He wrapped himself up tight in clean, white towels.

Isn't it something, he thought,  
How a 50 degree breeze calms you on hot summer's twilight,  
But, after you get out of water and into a warm empty room, it feels like knives?  
It's all perspective, he could assume.  
Or at least tonight, he did.

## Untitled

**Carlin Casimir**

Nottingham High School  
Grade 12

*Carlin has been drawing since the age of five as a hobby. He excels in all technical aspects of drawing. He hopes to pursue a career in animation.*



**Patricia Broe**

Allentown High School  
Grade 12

*Patricia Broe is trying to understand the world. Maybe she will know enough to change it one day. She plans to be a writer and lawyer.*

## Ham

Here. Take it.  
A fresh cut of my soul.  
A “hammydown”  
That isn’t ham at all.  
I guess it’s still meat.  
I won’t dictate how to consume it.  
With butter, with wine, with cyanide.  
Do with it what you will.  
It isn’t mine anymore.

Hand me down to the next, if you will.  
Dissect me, salt me, burn me.  
I won’t feel it.  
Don’t be gentle. That part of me is gone.  
It isn’t ham. (It’s bologna.)

It’s just an apple in my mouth I used  
To bite away the pain.  
I won’t squeal.  
If you carve at me again.  
(Bologna.)

**Evan Bruschini**

Steinert High School

Grade 11

*Evan Bruschini is a junior at Steinert High School. He hopes to finish at the top of his class and major in political science or law.*

## Memento

This summer, I gained a new-found appreciation for the world and its intrinsic beauty. Before, I often saw the world through a narrow window, either physically or metaphorically. I lived my life chained to an imagined view of paradise, causing me to miss out on a world that provides an endless number of methods of entertainment and seven billion interactive characters. Now, I not only appreciate the beauty of humanity, but also the beauty of the interconnectedness of the natural world. Now, I am not so worried about my destination; enjoying the journey is my primary goal.

I am lingering on a sandy Californian beach thousands of miles from home. The sun pulsates down on my tanned skin and the wind sweeps off the sea, tousling my hair and giving the air a salty taste. The two are engaged in a gentle skirmish over temperate matters. My phone's battery is nearing its death, a cold, unnatural death that lasts only as long as it takes me to find an electrical outlet. Without the usual digital aid to distract my idle mind, I become unhealthily interested in the thong of my left sandal. I have an hour before I need to get back in our sedan and continue our struggle up the Pacific Coast Highway.

I have time on my side, but not nearly enough time to waste waxing poetic about a thin strip of leather tucked between my first and second toes. I face inland, where a long road stretches from the sand at my feet and disappears far into the foothills. The ocean crashes to a halt behind me, with a force suggesting the entire swirling tempest of the Pacific Ocean has targeted me for some greater retribution.

Mementos, strewn across the shore, suggest that this is not the first time the waters have broken across the rocks at this point. Photographs and trinkets have nestled themselves among the rocks. The ink bleeds from an old newspaper, draped over a crag of slate and flapping in the wind. Each plank of driftwood, each dog-eared page of a book has a story. These nondescript chunks of wood could be remnants of ships lost at sea: Chinese junks from hundreds of years ago or Polynesian fishing vessels from another millennium. Even the grains of sand that sift between my bare toes were once great, towering masses of rock, and the beach on which I now stand once lay deep beneath the water.

At this moment, I realize that my troubles are insignificant in the swirl-

ing waters of history. We all hope to leave our memento here, but eventually they are all washed away to reveal the simple skeletons of what once meant the world to us.

The ocean tumbles over onto itself, equally exhausted by carrying the weight of history between continents. While sitting, I am in my own static bubble. My worries wash away with the tide.

A mile out to sea, I can see the shadows of towering islands. In my mind's eye, the colossuses take on a mythical persona. My sweltering plot of sand and these satellite islands become my personal Xanadu. The heavens and the shadowy islands seem to blend together against the backdrop of the blue sky.

I imagine a man, a more perfect version of myself, sitting on these islands, staring back at me. I peer out, seeking the faint semblance of a coastline. I imagine him having been far away, unreachably so, for many years. He and I stare at each other across this narrow strait.

Between us, the ocean teems with the promise of life. Jellyfish and dolphins and the faint possibility of a new world, waiting to be discovered, are all floating around aimlessly in an unincorporated jumble. Just beneath the

surface, life exists untouched and pure. I realize now that to reach a better version of myself, I have to take the plunge into the unknown waters. I can't struggle. The current will take me out to the person I was meant to be. Along the way, I can only relax and enjoy my surroundings.

I reach up, and from around my sunburned neck, I unclasp my necklace. It bears no special markings except for a small, hand-carved figure of a man, no bigger than the nail on my thumb. The figure holds no special significance or meaning. With two deft scoops of my hands, I dig out a grave for my memento. Just as quickly, I cover the necklace in sand. My dad leans on the car horn, signaling the resumption of our journey.

One day, I will return to the beach. My memento will no longer be there. It will be replaced by someone else's keepsake, just as I will have replaced myself. Just as the beach has swallowed up many treasures and stories over the years, so too will it erase my memento. I know now that no matter how I change, my past is my past and the future is yet to come; my die has been cast, and all I can do is enjoy the roll I have been given.

**Kristin Buenaventura**

Steinert High School

Grade 11

*Kristin Buenaventura is a junior at Steinert High School who fell in love with the written word at an early age. An editor for Steinert's art and literary magazine, Parallax, as well as a writer for The Spectrum, she is active in her writing community and enjoys reading in her free time. Kristin aspires to pursue a career in neuroscience and to continue her creative pursuits on the side. She thanks her parents for reading to her every day when she was little and the wonderful, incredibly insightful English teachers she's had throughout the years.*

## Probably Warmer

The first thing I thought but could not ask: Is it colder in your skin?  
Some lost kilojoules concealed beneath the pores I trace  
with a fingertip, moving to your hand  
to clasp it, curtly; you were  
terrible to all of us, claiming half-ownership.  
The bitter dementia or your hard personality,  
which one left you on your last night?  
Tracing the strands of my hair like they held some value to you,  
the little girl with pigtails is unrecognizable, and you truly start to panic and cry.  
Mistaking me for another, calling out that ridiculous nickname I detested,  
and you asked what happened to me.  
What happened to *me*,  
while you were on your deathbed, sinking into unconsciousness,  
and they told me to say goodbye.

Kristin Buenaventura

## Tangent Lines

You are more vulnerable and more like me than you will ever know,  
even if we are only tangent lines,  
passer-bys.

We study each other closely from a great distance,  
the red thread clutched tightly between our fingers.  
I wonder if I'm something you cannot figure out  
or simply a toy for your amusement.

I question whether my guesses on how others see me are increasing in their accuracy  
or becoming all the more distorted as time flies by.

Months go on. Trees abandon and regenerate leaves  
like a daily process  
but we are moving so slow it's like we're going backwards.

But I know for a fact that this is some form of progress.  
The equation soon to be abandoned,  
left safely unsolved and unanswered,  
a startling blank page.

The thoughts that will consume us from now on are not an easy equivalent. We stick to  
thinking them because we are afraid of writing it down.  
I gain courage from the anonymity of this canvas, the liquid plastic inside these tubes  
just fragments scraped from the insides of my skull  
and you rip that apart.  
Because there's no empathy given from someone who's too afraid to even see himself.

In my naivety I still believe something substantial is to come,  
and I pray that you'll allow it to happen.  
And if not, a tangent line is enough to tie us together.

**William Burke**

Lawrence High School  
Grade 12

*When not consuming Starbucks, William can be found backstage of Kelsey Theatre, singing with the Lawrence High Madrigal Choir, or practicing the Ukulele. William is a licensed Zumba instructor and certified Lifeguard. Next year, he plans to major in American Sign Language and Deaf Studies in college.*

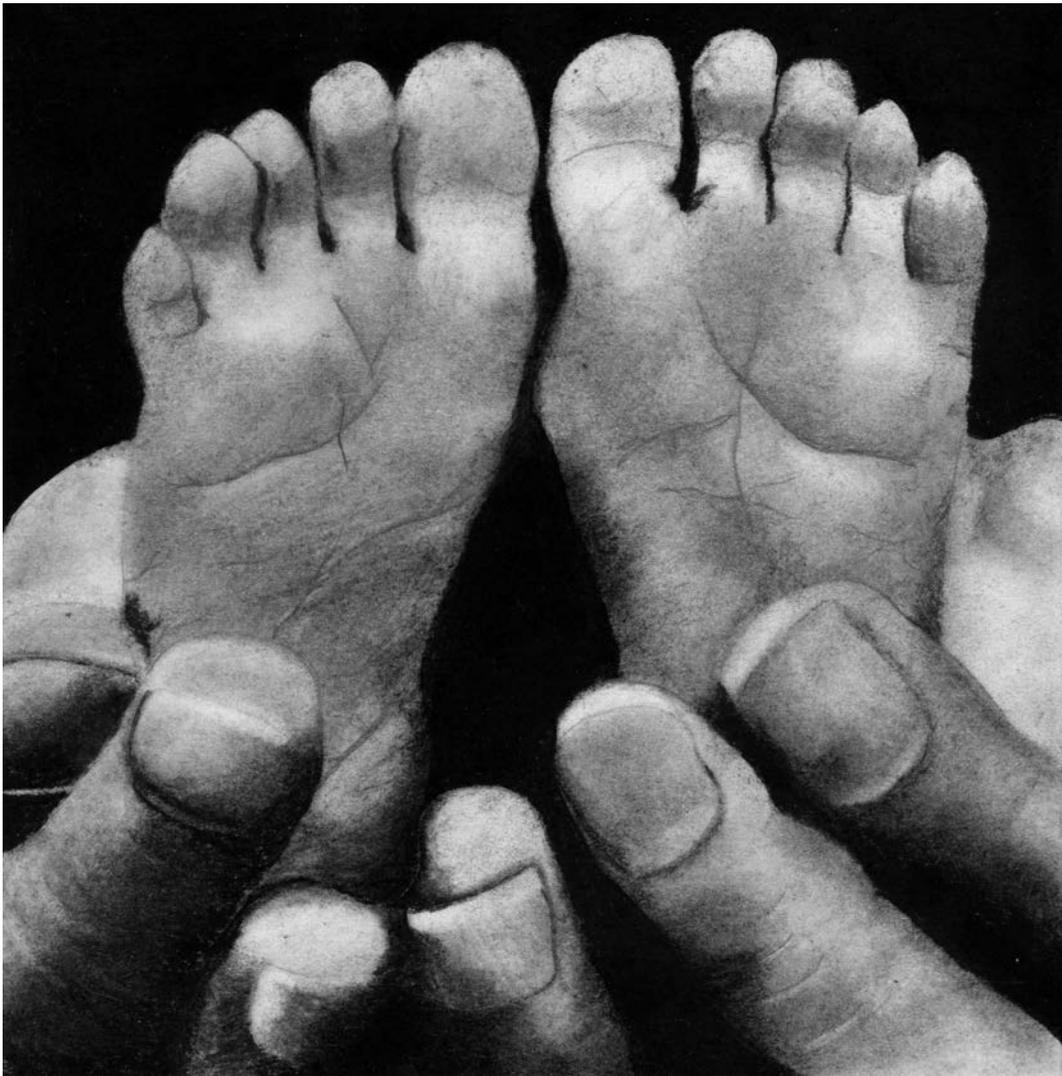
## Ode To My Big Toe

You come in many shapes and sizes,  
Like the veins upon my hands.  
Yet while you are so individual,  
You're a pain the same across the land.

A door, a rock, a piece of glass  
Will simply have to do, for  
A simple stub is all you need  
To afflict me with such agony.

Females seem infatuated  
With the fact that you can change  
From pale to pink to orange or blue  
For no reason but to match their mood.

I do loathe you, Big Toe,  
Don't forget it for a second;  
But because you keep me standing upright,  
I write this Ode to you.



## The Magic of the Moment

**Nick DeMarie**  
Nottingham High School  
Grade 11

*Nick DeMarie is a creative, passionate, optimistic, and outgoing individual. He dreams of becoming a successful lawyer, politician, and philanthropist. He also desires to improve the quality of life for all Americans. He is determined to accomplish all of his goals and believes that one person can make a difference and everyone should try.*



## Ellen Page

**Kenneth Kaneshiro**  
Hightstown High School  
Grade 11

*He hopes that art may help  
him realize a purpose.*

**Marie Buschman**

Lawrence High School  
Grade 11

*Marie is an outgoing girl who loves meeting new people. She is very involved in school, participating in lots of extracurricular activities. She also enjoys playing soccer.*

## College

Seven letters, two syllables, one big decision,  
I try to process all the advice I've been given.  
Everyone has tactics and clues,  
They keep telling me which I should choose.  
It feels like everyone has a say,  
But I could end up any which way!

Taking a test and focusing on scores,  
Hearing information and going on tours.  
So much of me is in one big decision,  
I'm still figuring out how to do long division!  
My entire future is just one choice,  
Everyone's chiming in, shouldn't I have a voice?!  
There're so many factors, like money and grades,  
Will I go college even without straight As?

I guess all the pressure and stress can be good,  
It makes me work harder than I usually would.  
Although now it's all anxiety and tears,  
It will be worth it in the upcoming years.

Right now I'm just keeping my head above water,  
Like I'm on a balance beam without a spotter.  
All I can do is always perform my best,  
Then let my impressive resume do the rest.  
When this is over, I'll have extreme arthritis,  
Then I get to sit back and enjoy senioritis!

**Morven Chin**

West Windsor Plainsboro High School North  
Grade 11

*Morven Chin lived in Columbia, South Carolina before moving to New Jersey at the age of 5. He enjoys the arts very much, especially music which is his favorite. In his free time, Morven can often be found playing Football Manager 2013 and following his favorite soccer league, the Bundesliga.*

## A Game of Two Halves

I breathed a sigh of relief as the player miscued his strike and the ball looped harmlessly in the air and into my awaiting hands. An easy catch. And yet, while I scanned for open teammates, I felt it forced from my grasp. Aghast, I watched the ball trickle over the line and the opposing striker, who dared to interfere with a goalie's prerogative, engage in a celebration. The sharp tweet of a whistle seemed to substantiate my claims of a stone-wall foul, but my self-righteous smirk quickly gave way to a mouth agape as my worst fears were confirmed. My teammates duly surrounded the referee with protests and I was furious. *'There was a slight fumble.'* *'But I caught the ball, he can't do that!'* *'Sorry, I didn't see it.'* Everything that I had ever known about soccer would have to be thrown out. *This can't possibly be a goal! I was fouled!* And yet, the score-line, which read 1-0, never lied.

I fumed over the illegitimate goal and the countless free-kicks now being awarded to the opposition. *They are paying the referee. Yes, that's it.* My mind's raging conflict ensued and, one outburst chock full of expletives worthy of a red card later, I was still lost in my own heated reverie. Self-absorbed and ill-positioned, I continued to lament my misfortunes even as a shot flew over my half-hearted dive and settled in the back of my net once more. Two-Zero. Despair replaced indignation, and where my body language once conveyed anger, it now showed defeat. I had let my team down and, indeed, I was almost sent off in the process. The half-time whistle never sounded sweeter.

I walked over, tentatively expecting consolations from my coach that, yes, it was never a goal, and that the referee was indeed on the opposing side's payroll. *'That first half was trash. Whether or not you think the first goal was legitimate, it is what it is. We can win, but if we play like this, we will lose every time. We've come back from bigger deficits than this before.'* The last sentence stung: I had been on the team that once overturned a 3-1 game to win 4-3 in the dying minutes. I had been through this before; I had believed in our own abilities before, but now it was as if I had never experienced it at all.

Even as I licked my wounds inflicted by all the injustice and self-deprecation, I had no way of knowing it then, but the words were already beginning to take effect. The flights of the shots peppering my goal became clearer, my reflexes became sharper and my commands became more decisive. A couple of critical saves and three successive goals to tie the game were all it took to confirm what was beginning to take root again. Freed from the unnecessary weight of the unchangeable past, I could then play with the mental clarity and confidence that I needed. What resulted was a literal tie, but I had won a moral victory.

It was the proverbial game of two halves: one marred by unbridled frustration and the other characterized by the cool composure that is so critical to success. Sandwiched in the middle were the coach's harsh words that reminded me that, at every junction, I had a choice to make. The very decision of whether to allow frustration to prevail and keep chipping away at my own confidence and performance constitutes the fine difference between success and failure. Yes, I could continue to check my rearview mirror and rue my unnecessary mistakes, but then how could I keep my eyes on the road ahead? Luckily, in the end, it seemed as if I had made the right choice. If something as abstract as self-confidence can turn a game like this on its head, then deficits and leads, handicaps and advantages, are only distractions and the only thing dictating triumph must be lofty aspirations and the necessary belief to reach them. At the very least, if those words have taught me anything, it was that raw ability and talent necessary for success are always there, but belief and conviction are the unpredictable variables that only I could control.

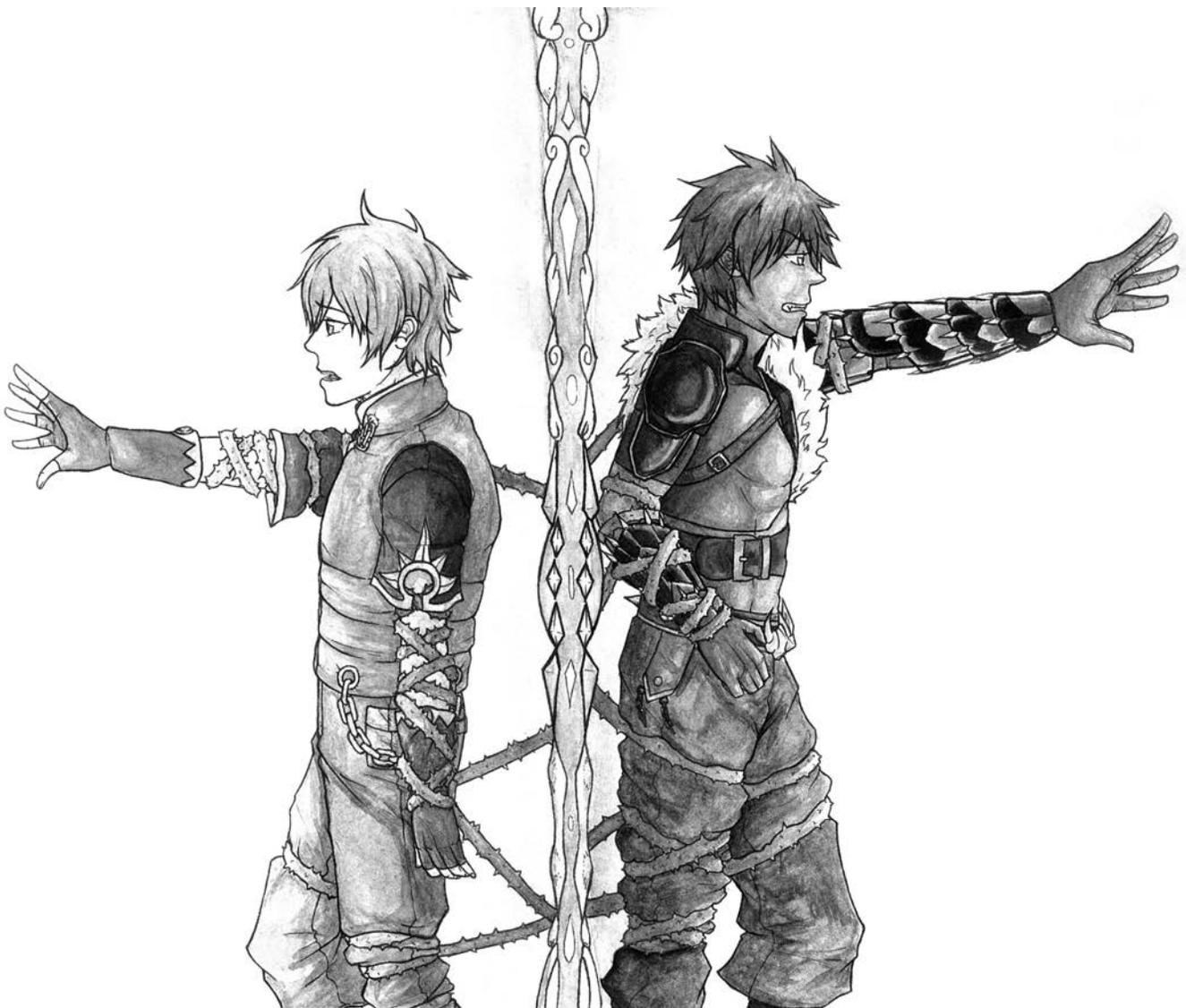
## Two Sides

**Kaitlyn Kern**

Hamilton West High School

Grade 12

*Kaitlyn is a creative girl and uses her artistic ability to show the worlds that she has created.  
In the future, she wishes to study art history and work as a museum curator.*



**Ariel Dell'Arena**

Steinert High School  
Grade 12

*Ariel Dell'Arena has enjoyed creating stories ever since quietly reenacting scenes from Harry Potter with her older sister while their parents thought they were sleeping. She is very passionate about equality amongst all people and so a lot of her writing is themed towards that subject, though she often gets carried away with other ideas. She believes, though, that the moments where you get carried away are some of the best in life.*

**Freedom**

Nort was the first to sit in one of the lumpy blue seats of the Greyhound Bus that had been rented for the day. He sat close to the aisle, hoping to save the window seat for his friend but it proved to be of no avail. Benny, probably the craziest patient that had gone on the trip to the park occupied the seat next to him. Rumor was he had been struck by lightning and hadn't been the same since; he never stopped smiling and his long hair stuck out on each side of his head like Einstein's dopey cousin. Nort would have grumbled, but as an observer of the mental hospital he had gotten used to being around odd people.

Benny sat down heavily next to him, exposing the gaps in his gums where his teeth had abandoned him, "Did I ever tell you about the stove I made?" Of course he had; it was all Benny ever spoke about. "I wrote all about it to Richard. Poor Richard, but I'd write him all sorts of stuff." Nort tried not to scoff, knowing 'Poor Richard' was just Benny himself.

Almost all of the seats had filled up at that point, so Nort turned his attention to the straggler patients and orderlies making their way onto the bus. TJ, the patient he'd grown closest to, jumped the steps on his way inside and skipped over to Nort. "Hey man, I thought you were saving me a seat."

"I was," Nort widened his eyes and nodded his head toward Benny. TJ let out an "ohhh," of understanding as Benny smiled at him.

"Did I ever tell you about the time I spent in France? Oh, they loved me in France!"

"Kick him out," TJ whispered conspiratorially in Nort's ear.

"C'mon, you know I can't do that to the guy, he can barely keep a thought together." He whispered back, Benny smiling dreamily at them all the while.

"I know, but the only seat left is next to Adam, and I can't stand that guy. We got exactly nothing in common, him always going on about the importance of big government. You know we don't get along."

"Sorry," Nort shrugged sympathetically.

"Plus I was up all night working on that Declaration and am dead-tired; I just don't feel like putting up with him." He sighed heavily, "I guess I need him to sign it anyway. I might as well get him to do that now, not that John left much room for anyone else to sign." With that he walked heavily towards the back of the bus where Adam was in a heated discussion with Abigail, the outspoken woman he was enamored with that was sitting in the seat behind his. It sounded like they were talking yet again about women's rights as compared to men's.

The last orderly made his way to the front seat reserved for him by the other orderly, undoing the top buttons of his dark crimson jacket as the heat of the bus engulfed him.

"It's the red coats! The red coats are coming!" The excitable patient, Paul, shouted from not too far behind Nort.

The orderly ignored the outburst, instead speaking to his coworker. "Everybody here?"

Nort stood up to speak to him easier from his aisle, which was three back from the men, "I just did a head count. Everyone's here except for Arnold, but we think he may have switched busses."

"Yeah? Thanks buddy, but we're gonna go ahead and double check, okay. I'm gonna need you to sit down again, can't have any residents standing while the bus is moving." His lips moved silently as he counted all the heads in their respective seats, after which he tapped the driver on the shoulder, saying, "Hey, man we're good to go."

“What about Arnold?” Nort called, tugging at his white smock, a nervous habit he’d developed since joining the patients.

The other red coat’s shoulders shook with laughter as he angled his head to look at Nort, “Arnold ain’t comin’ on the bus today. You were right about him switching sides.” Nort’s eyes widened to saucers, only causing the guard to laugh harder.

“George! George did you hear that?!” Nort called to George, who was sitting two seats behind him and to the left. George glanced at him but quickly turned his attention back to the conversation he’d been having with Betsy about which colors she should sew into her next banner. It was something of a project that most of the patients seemed to be in on. “George this is serious!” He called.

The amused guard had tears in his eyes as the other sat down next to him and smacked him on the shoulder. “Would you stop? He don’ know any better,” his face was serious in contrast to his partner’s.

“Sorry,” he responded through his smile, his laughter tapered off to a chuckle as the bus slowly rolled out to the parking lot and back to the hospital.

Nort deflated into his seat annoyed at George, Mr. Commander-in-Chief who always had something to say but needed to learn how to listen to other people’s problems too. It didn’t matter, really. Nort never liked Arnold much anyway, and he wasn’t as necessary to the cause as the others on the bus.

Benny continued to smile at Nort. “Did I ever tell you about the plan I made? The one for unity?” Nort smiled back at him, because he had told him about that plan. And despite how flighty Benny usually was, it was a good plan. The bus sped on and Nort directed his dark smirk at the authority up front, knowing freedom wasn’t as far away as they might think.



Ariel Dell'Arena

## The Man That You Leave Cookies For

“He sees you when you’re sleeping,  
He knows when you’re awake,”  
And if you’d known just what he’d seen,  
It’d be more than you could take.

He’s the tickle up your spine,  
The feel of eyes against your back,  
He’s the trepidation in your step,  
And the confidence you lack.

The thing is, you’ve never met him,  
And that alone should give you pause,  
But what’s worse to bear - if you’re prepared,  
He isn’t Santa Claus.

(left)

## Untitled

**Lauren Bullock**

Nottingham High School  
Grade 12

*Lauren likes to create art in her spare time  
because it releases stress. She loves picking  
up the pencil and letting her feelings out  
through art.*

Ariel Dell'Arena

## Qualification

Daniel sat in a rigid plastic chair in the crowded waiting room, rolling his shoulders forward to ease the painful twinge he felt in his left arm. The brightness of the white walls, ceiling, and floor rubbed uncomfortably at the backs of his eyes, lacking any kind of personality. Even the several dozen people that filled the seats were void of emotion. They all gazed blankly ahead at walls that were decorated only by the legion of clipboards that hung from them.

He turned to face the man sitting next to him, a tall, strong figure with a gruff brown beard and haphazard clothing. "Hi," he smiled, casually beginning a conversation, "What are you waiting for?"

"Same as you," The man replied, then stared back at the opposite wall. After a beat the man turned back to Daniel. "What are you waiting for?" he asked, with the expression of an infant trying to fathom the color of the sky.

"I-," What was he waiting for? "I don't know," Daniel replied honestly. What were they waiting for? And hadn't Daniel *just* been waiting for something? Morning mass, wasn't it? Yes, it was. He had waited all morning for the church pews to fill up, having been the first to arrive as usual. He took the silver cross that hung around his neck from a chain and pressed it to his lips cathartically; *why couldn't he remember where he was?*

The demeanor of the man next to him changed instantly from one of puzzlement to one of horror. "I- I think I killed him...I think I killed somebody. Oh, God! I killed him, didn't I?!" He was shouting, desperately begging a startled Daniel. Before Daniel could answer, his

name was called by a woman in white who led him out of the room. The man he had been sitting with continued to panic until another woman in white led him to a third room that grew off of the waiting area.

Daniel sat on the white bed provided in his room. The wax paper beneath him crackled loudly as he fidgeted, unsure of how to present himself. Holding a clipboard and a pen, the woman in white sat across from him on the only chair in the room, "Alright, I have your information but we are going to have to go over a few basic questions. First, your name?"

"Um, Daniel Paul Jackson," he proffered with the hesitance that accompanies nervousness.

"Your date and place of birth?"

"December 20th, 1944; Willmington, Delaware."

"Height and weight?"

"Five feet eight inches; I was last weighed at hundred and ninety eight pounds."

"On a scale of one to ten, about how healthy do you think you were before you came here?"

"Um, it's hard to say. A five, maybe? I have been feeling under the weather lately." The answers came to Daniel as needed, but any recent information was foggy and just out of his mental reach, only coming to when prompted. He scratched at the fine, light hairs on the back of his head as if sifting through for memories.

"Alright then. Have you ever been to jail or broken the law in any way?"

"No, I haven't."

"Do you consider yourself religious?"

"Yes," A series of pleasant memories flitted across his mind's eye. "I'm Christian," he added proudly as an afterthought, sliding his hands back and forth across his knees.

"Good, very good." She smiled softly at this, nodding her head, "What is your sexual orientation?"

"I am gay." The woman pursed her lips in response.

"What is your relationship status?"

"I've been in a committed relationship for the past 39 years."

"Are you married?"

"Recently, yes." A reminiscent grin grew on his face as he remembered *finally* getting married on a chilly afternoon in New York after decades of being engaged.

"Have you ever been adulterous?"

"No, I have not."

"And do you attend church?"

"Every Sunday."

She frowned at him. "If only that were enough. Mr. Jackson, I'm afraid I have some bad news. You do not qualify." She set the clipboard on her lap and looked apathetically up at Daniel.

"I...*what?*" Daniel asked, eyes going wide and his heart pounding painfully hard in his chest, though he could not explain his sudden terror. He only knew that not-qualifying meant very bad things.

"You do not qualify, for several reasons as a matter of fact." She added, lifting the clipboard up to her nose again and flipping through the pages. "Your homosexuality could have been overlooked if you had done something to amend it early on, but it says here you've

actively practiced it.” She glanced at his horrified face for a moment before her disapproving eyes dropped back to the paper. “Also this so called ‘marriage’ of yours was between two men?”

“You say that like I’ve done something wrong,” he fought back softly, streaks of sweat rubbing off on the thighs his dress pants from where his shaking hands slid back and forth with renewed speed. “I’ve always been gay; it’s how I was born. And Jim - Jim is the love of my life; marrying him was the best thing I’ve ever done,” He whimpered. She made no acknowledgement of his plea. “We have children together. We have a family; I just don’t understand.”

“Mhm,” she continued. “It also says here that the ‘marriage’ was consummated. Now, this *is* a requirement, but it says that yours was done so through sodomy which,” she chuckled, smiling and looking up at Daniel, “is a *big* no-no upstairs. I’m sorry but you do not qualify. If you’d just follow me through here...,” she stood up and led Daniel out of the room to an elevator with four downward facing, crimson chevrons painted across its closed doors. His legs followed mechanically while inside he was screaming in terror.

Across the room the man Daniel had spoken with was being led to an opposite elevator with an azure arrow on it that pointed toward the ceiling. Daniel’s entire body was shaking with fear. “What happened!?” He shouted across to the man.

The man smiled back at him, his shoulders lax with relief, as his elevator opened. “I did it in God’s name!” At that moment a hollow, tinny *ding* sounded from within Daniel’s elevator, which

opened spasmodically.

“No...No! Please!” Daniel begged the woman, his voice quivering more with each raised decibel. “Please! We were in love. I didn’t do anything wrong, I’m a devout Christian. I have a bible in my nightstand, I pray every night, I... we... this is a mistake! There must be something I can do!”

“Well,” The woman interjected offhandedly, falling back on her heels. “In your particular case you can repent for your sins. It’s a simple process really,” she perked up a bit, “Is this what you want to do? Yes?”

Daniel’s heart ached from the duration of its throbbing which hadn’t ceased. The woman took his silence for the affirmative. “Great, well just come with me. I’ll contact one of our on-call clergymen, and you’ll need holy water but that will be provided. All you have to do is renounce your ways and you’ll be absolved of your sins. Come with me.”

But Daniel did not follow the few short steps of the woman. His tears of panic had triggered a cluster of memories and they consumed him. He stood unmoving in the present, with two futures before him but unable to think of anything but his past.

He remembered the first time he’d met Jim, how they’d been on a double date with their respective girlfriends and how they’d spent the night laughing with each other until tears rolled down their cheeks instead of entertaining their dates. He remembered how when he proposed *he* was the one who cried, and how Jim teased him the entire night about how it wasn’t even legal, and about just how *gay*

the whole thing was. He remembered the tears that soaked his flannel shirt as he held a sobbing Jim after the biological mother took their five week old daughter away from them. Then the tears of joy they both shared when two years later they successfully adopted a set of twins. He remembered birthdays, concerts, graduations, more weddings, and the feel of tiny hands gripping his fingers when his first grandchild was brought into the world.

How could all of that be wrong? Growing up he’d denied who he was, but Jim gave him the courage to be honest with himself. Daniel had learned to accept himself within his often biased religion and in turn had been accepted by much of his religious community. Or so he had believed. Why would he have fallen in love with a man and created a beautiful family with a man if it was all one big sin? If it was all one big lie? It wasn’t a sin; it wasn’t a lie. He knew that.

He was scared...but he was proud of his life. With one last look around the room Daniel pressed the palm of his right hand against the warm cross tucked beneath his collar and stepped inside of the elevator. The doors shut on his quiet murmur of, “I have no regrets.”

The woman reached for the next clipboard hanging on the wall.

**Gabrielle Flake**

Allentown High School  
Grade 12

*Gabrielle Flake is an aspiring author and activist. Her interests include being an angry feminist on the internet, drinking honey-lemon tea while pretentiously reading the French existentialists, and playing ukulele for her cat, Lucy.*

## Of Nature

He moves like sunlight on patios,  
but touches like the moon,  
warm like bare skin in August,  
but ebbing ever too soon.

He laughs like a midsummer's tempest,  
but his smile's an Autumn breeze,  
he swears by the inconstant moon,  
but returns like the seasons to me.

There's something old and familiar,  
in the foothills of his spine,  
but like the ground from which I'm rooted,  
I know that he'll never be mine.

Because the man is a force of nature,  
belonging purely to things divine,  
like oceans and valleys and forests,  
like mountains will never be mine.



## Madness

**Valerie Suto**  
Nottingham High School  
Grade 12

*Valerie has a passion for the arts and softball. She will continue to play softball and study in the arts in college. She plans on becoming a graphic design artist.*

**Nicolette Garthe**  
Princeton High School  
Grade 9

*Nicolette is in ninth grade at Princeton High School. She has a passion for writing and loves to read whenever she can. Ever since she was a young girl, Nicolette enjoyed creating stories and writing about personal experiences.*

## My Former Best Friend

Do you remember when we used to be best friends?  
When we called ourselves peanut butter and jelly  
Because once we had met, we were inseparable?  
When we were two old ladies, who would talk about anything and everything,  
When we laughed at each other's jokes?

Do you remember when we told each other every single thing on our minds?  
When we were not afraid to unleash what we had hidden deep inside our caves of secrets?  
When we set those secrets free like birds that, once they had landed, never flew away, and  
were protected by trust?  
When we could count on each other for everything and became family?  
Well, I do.

You may not recall any of this, but I remember the friendship we used to have.  
I remember the day you stopped talking to me.  
I remember the day I called your name, but you strayed farther from my grasp.  
I remember the day I felt scared it might be over.  
I remember the day *your* light turned off, but *mine* didn't.  
No, I was still your best friend, and I remember what it felt like, those feelings people  
should never have to feel.

Feeling small in a big world with one less person by my side.  
Feeling confused because up until now the characters in my story had never left my book.  
Feeling a hole in my heart from the wonderful thing I had lost.  
Feeling a wave of sadness that turned into a river of tears,  
Then a stream,  
A lake,  
A pond,  
And soon, only a few puddles.

I escaped the wave, but puddles that remain remind me of my sadness, of what I had lost.  
Although I am older now,  
And although the wind has whisked me away to new places,  
And new characters enter my story,  
The small pools of sadness linger, and refuse to leave.

Now a few months have gone by.  
You appear to act oblivious,  
Remaining cordial and saying hello,  
But I know what it felt like to lose something close to me, a treasure.  
I remember.  
Do you?

**Melissa Geerlof**

Nottingham High School  
Grade 12

*Melissa is a driven young woman with a great passion for the performing arts. One thing that many people do not know about her is that she is also an avid writer. Both performing and writing inspire Melissa and work as a creative outlet.*

## Learn to Fly

Take my wings from me,  
For I've forgotten how to fly,  
It's getting hard to see,  
Through my tired, blurry eyes,  
It's tough to tell what's altruistic anymore,  
Now, I can't pick my fights,  
I can't stand this self-inflicted pain that keeps me up at night,  
How can I begin again?  
When can I be new?  
Is there a time when darkness ends,  
And happiness ensues?  
I'm keeping hope alive that time will heal this fragile heart,  
I know that I'll survive if at the end I get a brand new start,  
Why can't I look at life  
the way I did before?  
I miss seeing my paradise,  
Right outside every door,  
My wings are weak and so am I,  
But someday I will learn to fly.

**Adrianna Graziano**  
Steinert High School  
Grade 11

*Adrianna enjoys writing poetry, stories, and memoirs about how she experiences her world.  
Her current favorite poet is Andrea Gibson.*

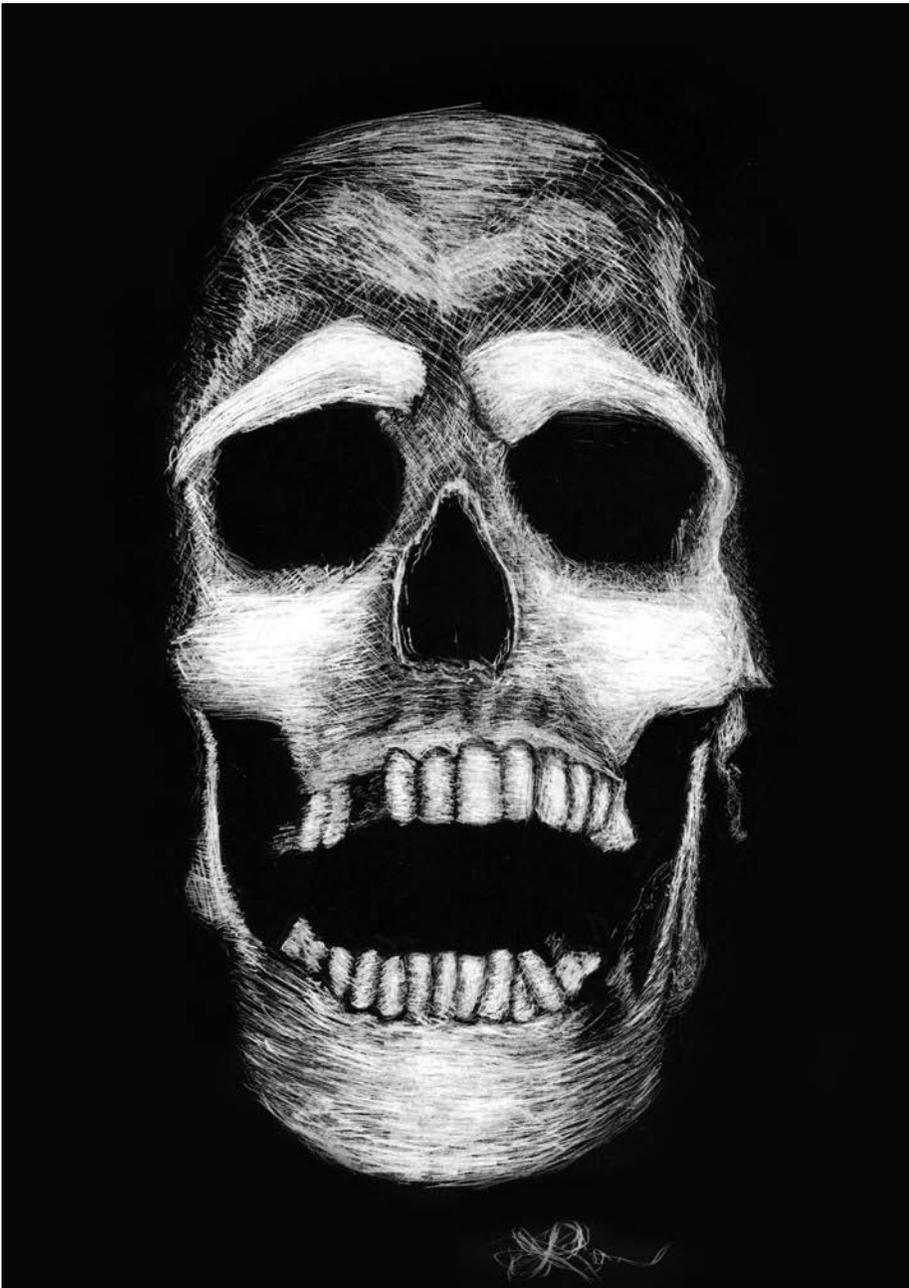
## Unplugged

The cord was unplugged.  
I felt stranded in the present,  
With no escape,  
Without connection.

I was lost  
In a world they say moves so quickly.  
But in my world,  
Everything was painfully slow.  
Time stood still  
If only for me.

Then, suddenly, there was no need to be plugged in.  
I was unplugged.  
And I was completely aware.  
Life went on.  
I went with it, participating.

The communication that started it all was relearned  
Face to face,  
Friend to friend,  
Person to person.  
The cord was still unplugged,  
But I was not.



## Life's a Beach

**Jessica Fremgen**  
Nottingham High School  
Grade 12

*Jessica, a very caring person, is a four year varsity softball player. She likes doing arts and crafts in her free time.*



## Madhir

**Madhir Vyas**

Hightstown High School

Grade 9

*Madhir Vyas is a 9th grade student that enjoys running, tennis, and football. He is on the cross-country, winter track, and tennis teams for his school. He likes to do well in school and plans to go into the medical field.*

Adrianna Graziano

## Untitled

As high school students, we are given about a three month break to do whatever we please: cruise down to the shore with our friends, bask outside in the glowing sun, or travel on vacations with our families. Although these days of relaxation soar by us quickly and, looking back, appear to be filled with hours of boredom, they have powerful impacts on our lives and outlooks. Every single day we use to take advantage of this free time is an event to be experienced, reflected on, and shared. This summer, I attended my first gay pride parade in New York City, and it altered my perspective of myself, my past, and what I make of the world around me.

The beginning of middle school is an exciting time of change for a pre-teen, from the new responsibility of a nine period day to the larger student body that you find yourself mixed in and not adapted to. The days of walking the halls with kindergarteners are in the past, but teachers still treat you as an adolescent and shelter you from the expectations and problems that high school students encounter. Middle school is supposed to be a transitional period – a time of trial and error, mild stress, and evolving maturity. For me, it was quite different.

On the first day of middle school, I realized I couldn't relate to everyone else. I couldn't pinpoint why - something inside of me just felt abnormal. At first, I spent mere moments pondering this new change in my disposition, but eventually, it consumed me. What was wrong with me? Why did I feel so different? These questions were ones that I refused to answer.

The idea of being gay was unfathomable. For years, the fact that I would be an outcast in my family and circle of friends taunted me and surrounded me with loneliness. I constantly worried about not being accepted, not being loved, and not loving myself. Being judged by my peers, my community, and strangers was something I felt like I couldn't handle by myself at a young age, so I began to confide in my closest friends and, ultimately, my parents and older sister. Their approval was overwhelming; the weight of my apprehension, fear, and uncertainty was lifted. However, despite all of the love I received, the desire to be understood and a part of a community still afflicted me. Therefore, my choice to attend Pride was based off of this need for alliance and kinship.

June 24th was a perfect summer day: the sun was shining, there was a gentle breeze, and virtually no clouds occupied the blue sky. As soon as we drove into the city, it was evident that New York City was prepared for the festive jubilee. Police officers had mapped out and appropriately blocked off the streets from bustling traffic, flocks of animated friends were delightfully skipping towards the beginning of the parade, and rainbow flags proudly hung outside of restaurants and other establishments in the summer sun. My excitement flourished through my core as my dad, two friends, and I squeezed into a tight, unoccupied spot amongst a crowd of others. Promptly, the parade began to filter through the streets. Floats for organizations, such as The Trevor Project, passed by, as did groups of army troops, firefighters, church members, drag queens, proud mothers and fathers, LGBT (an acronym for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender community) volunteers, and more. Music blared from speakers as every spectator cheered and clapped for the entertainment through squinted eyes from the radiant and sweltering hot sun. Laughter freely chimed through the crowd, infecting each person with carefree joy and silliness.

As tears filled my eyes, I captured the refreshing atmosphere and undeniable emotion of the celebration unfolding around me. In a world where LGBT people are denied rights and are shamed for who they are, there is a vast universe that preaches pride and unity. I glanced at the unfamiliar faces beside me, and asked myself how I could have ever felt alone or rejected. The people around me had probably felt emotions similar to mine. They may have had the same confusion, the same doubts, or the same fears. At some point, they were all searching for self-approval and love. Maybe they reached that point, or maybe they're still fighting that battle. Nevertheless, I realized I'm not alone in my journey. I never was.

It was like a bright, hopeful light had been turned on. I don't have to apologize to anyone for who I am anymore. I shouldn't obsess over the repugnant facial expression of a stranger when I hold my girlfriend's hand in public. Instead of concentrating on the hateful judgments of others, it's time to focus on the community I was brought into the day I went to Pride. Pride united us together; the unexpected bonds formed between strangers enjoying the parade strengthened us individually and as a whole. Collectively, we preached and celebrated self-worth and courage, but we were also rejoicing as individuals, reassuring ourselves that we deserve to possess self-confidence and respect.

Our outlooks on our lives and ourselves are constantly being shaped by our memories, actions, and experiences. Attending NYC Pride this year changed how I feel about myself. I'm no longer the ashamed, worried Adrianna that refused to accept herself and allowed the negative opinions of other people affect her. I view myself and notice everything now – my personality, my talents, my future goals. I don't allow my sexuality define me or my self-worth. There are discouraging days where I find it laborious to muster up the courage to confidently saunter out my front door and withstand the world's judgment, but they are outweighed by the days I stand straight up and love who I was, who I am, and who I will become.

**Ivy Gruninger**

Steinert High School  
Grade 12

*Ivy has always enjoyed writing as a hobby along with her interests in painting, photography and music. Writing is one of her favorite past times because it allows her to express her creativity.*

## A Stain

One hideous tan stain on my white comforter  
From when you spilt chocolate icing on it,  
A shoebox of crumpled letters pushed under my bed,  
A picture frame turned face down,  
A ring left on the floor, smashed into faded scarlet shag carpet,  
A mascara stained pillowcase,  
A phone that never rings,  
A broken heart.  
Alone in a my room with what you left behind,  
If only you had left a legacy as rich as honesty.  
If only everything was as easy to fix  
As buying a new white comforter.

**Ivy Gruninger**

## Fairy Tale

I've never worn a blue satin ball gown,  
Climbed down a cobble stone tower by my long golden hair,  
Seen a fiery dragon,  
Met my love in the center of an elegant ballroom,  
Or had him awake me from a deep sleep with a gentle kiss.  
I've never had a sadistic step mother,  
Befriended woodland animals with big gleaming eyes,  
Or been compared to roses or the purest of snow.  
I've never slipped on a sparkling crystal shoe,  
Or had a melodious musical number,  
Seemingly out of nowhere.  
I don't know much about fairy tales,  
But I still want to live happily ever after.

**Sean Gunther**

Hopewell Valley Central High School  
Grade 11

*A junior at Hopewell Valley Central High School, Sean is submitting to Aspirations for the second year in a row.*

## “Evan + Erin = ?”

Evan, an attractive yet equally hormonal white male, sends ten texts per week at a speed of 1200 characters per minute: he’s avoided carpal tunnel all but twice. Suppose Evan sends 100% of his ten texts to that cute girl Erin in the front of the class he’s oogled at for the past year. Half of these talk about their love of physics,  $1/6$  about their love of Harry Potter and  $1/3$  about, in a semi-flirty, clearly desperate kind of way, a future love between the two.

Assuming this is a normal week, Evan’s love interest takes an average of 18 hours to respond to each text, with at least half of his texts going unanswered. In the replies she does send, only 10% contain emoticons and no more than one per week contains a wink. As a renowned diva 11 months his senior, Erin is widely accepted to be an 8 on the hot scale, a 0 on the skank scale and a 76 on the desirability index. Factoring in the 89% chance this girl already likes him, what is the probability that Evan will grow a pair, put away his stupid phone, and actually talk to her like a normal human being?

**Rebecca Healy**

Trenton Catholic Academy  
Grade 12

*Rebecca enjoys writing because it allows her to express her emotions.  
Rebecca plans on attending college in the fall and majoring in Early Education.*

## 25 Steps to Writing an AP Essay

1. Take notes in class.
2. Go home and sit down at the computer promising yourself you will not procrastinate this time.
3. Go to the Internet to find the song that's stuck in your head to listen to while you work.
4. Realize that there is a Facebook feud currently going on between your best friend and your ex that you must comment on.
5. Comment on fight and start World War III.
6. Tweet about the epic fight and invite others to join in.
7. Log out of Facebook tired of arguing.
8. Go back to essay and write the proper heading.
9. Decide that you did enough work for one day and say you'll continue working tomorrow.
10. Wait three days then force yourself to get back to writing the essay.
11. Write the title of the essay.
12. Realize that you don't know if it needs quotation marks or to be italicized.
13. Call your best friend to find out the answer.
14. Discuss everything but your question.
15. Go back to your essay the night before it's due and force yourself to write it.
16. Write a rough draft.
17. Make sure to start your closing paragraph with "Thus, ..."
18. Edit and revise realizing you didn't use any scholarly words.
19. Decide to take a break.
20. Finish the essay.
21. Realize that your printer is out of ink.
22. Attempt to email your essay.
23. Discover your internet is down.
24. Wake up with your keyboard marks on your face and find you are late for school.
25. Go to school and realize that you don't have English class that day.



## Vantage Point

**Damani Piper**  
Hightstown High School  
Grade 12

*Damani Piper is an aspiring musician and songwriter. Damani also enjoys photography and making music videos. Damani wishes to go to college and major in either music or engineering.*



## The Wolves

**Selene Ramer**

Hopewell Valley Central High School  
Grade 10

*Selene Ramer takes art as an elective  
to express her thoughts and interests.*

**Katherine Huang**  
Princeton High School  
Grade 12

*No matter where she ends up going,  
Katherine hopes to continue writing  
creatively, to share the fusion of her  
observations and her imagination  
with others.*

## Just Another

I would write you  
just another love poem

about my arm through yours,  
tasting the sand with our toes  
as we watch a peachy sun  
plunge for its bath  
and giggle,  
our foreheads and noses touching...

or about warm blushing lips,  
or doves and fluttering hearts,  
or "What would I do without you?"  
and other whatnot;

but late as it is now  
my pencil cringes  
at these clichés  
between blue lines

so I retire  
to the piano's palette,  
painting my fingers  
through Chopin nocturnes

and when  
from miles away  
your crescent smile  
peers through the window

I shiver,  
no longer conscious  
of the breeze

## Missing You

**Katherine Huang**

"Don't look so depressed!"  
you laugh.  
"I'm still silly old me,  
aren't I?"  
Beneath your Ray-Bans,  
you smile the familiar dimples,  
and I almost believe you  
until the wells behind your glasses  
quiver slightly,  
drawing up your cheekbones,  
and I wonder  
why you need covers at dusk.

We sit on your front step,  
barefoot in jeans and tank tops  
like some ten years ago  
when we were six or seven,  
and just like before,  
you hook the loop of string  
on your finger, pulling away  
while I relay the knots up,  
reeling you in tightly  
to weave the bracelets  
lining our arms.

But what does it all  
even mean anymore,  
after you tell me  
of driving at midnight  
with your boyfriend  
drunk or needled,  
of your intrigues upstairs,  
of dance floors pulsing  
with sweat and lights?

What happened to the girl  
who cut our bangs at school,  
and dreamed on dandelions?

I'd pick one right now  
and blow away the gray hairs,  
wishing that nothing has changed,  
that nothing has to hide  
behind burnt coffee shades,

that in this last summer sunset,  
I need not miss you forever.

**Megan Hultberg**

Allentown High School  
Grade 11

*After reading Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice, Megan picked up a pen. Since then she has found a way to express herself and dreams of writing novels.*

## Forever Moon

The moon slowly rises, and the clouds, tinted by its cold light,

Leave the stars, hidden from sight.

And the trees extended in creepy, crooked angles,

Holds home to the eeriest of animals.

The hooting of an owl leaves wonder and horror in heavy hearts.

Scattered branches along the ground break, silencing the nocturnal sounds.

A chill passes through onlookers,

and a stab of pain through sunbathers.

Night children lift their heads,

and cold air soothes ones lungs.

And eyes,

white, clear, and bright...

Diamond rare,

Compete with

The Heartrending Moon.

Megan Hultberg

## Luna's Butterflies

Lush wings,

Created out of sable silk,

With lacy edges,

Trimmed in deep violet,

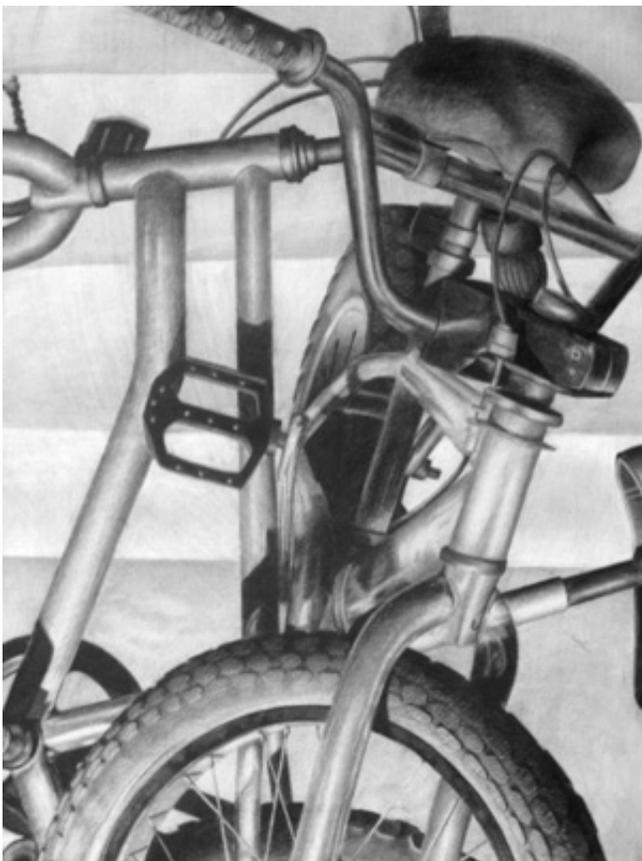
Soaked in dismal blue moon beams,

And heart shaped patterns weaved...

Their rhythmical beats create a dance in which,  
every heart quickly catches.

These regal butterflies become Luna's dust,

Sprinkling themselves upon the crimson earth



## Bike Study

**Michelle Miller**

Hopewell Valley Central High School

Grade 11

*Michelle loves art and has been doing it all throughout her academic career. She currently hopes to do something with her art in college along with majoring in physics.*

**Steven Husar**

Steinert High School

Grade 11

*Steven is an ambitious kid. His hobbies include running, reading, and computer programming. He plans to go to college and major in engineering.*

## Snowflake

I am a unique figure

I am fragile and delicate alone

But with others I am strong

With others like me I take on different shapes and forms

And am able to form people's childhoods

I obscure windshields and windows

And have caused school closings and work closings

Children adore me

But adults despise me

They shovel me off to the side

And scrape me off their windshields

I hold on to the children's love for me now

Because in years to come

They will be shoveling me too



## The Abyss

**Niki Khandelwal**  
Hightstown High School  
Grade 12

*Niki loves to run, listen to music and spend time with her friends and family. She laughs a lot and is happiest when making art.*

**Samantha Hynes**

Allentown High School

Grade 12

*Samantha's goal is to study medicine and become a pediatrician. However, she always had a knack for writing. She spends a lot of her time in the pool since as a competitive swimmer, which she will continue pursuing at Colgate University next fall.*

## The Forgotten Butterfly

Luminous colors flash. Smiles appear. A beautiful picture is painted. These positive reactions all occur because of one word: metamorphosis. The brain associates the word metamorphosis with graceful effects such as a repulsive caterpillar turning into a striking butterfly. But for me, it is the complete opposite. My grandma has undergone a metamorphosis. She morphed from the butterfly to the caterpillar. Metamorphosis paints a horrid picture in my mind. Dreary colors of grey and black overwhelm it, for I know that this metamorphosis is murdering my grandmother.

Five years ago, my grandmother was diagnosed with a mild case of Parkinson's disease. My family knew that her mild case would eventually turn into a severe one, but we turned our heads the other way, holding them high, not wanting to think of her destiny. Five years ago, my grandmother was entirely mentally aware, sharp as a tack, as they say. At 68 years of age, she was only slightly forgetful, but that was just old age settling in. My grandma was always the strongest, most powerful woman. She was the scariest, strictest grandma who would not let you leave the dinner table unless all of your vegetables were eaten, no matter how cold your food had become. But she was also the nicest, most warm-hearted woman who put everyone else first, even strangers. My grandma's daily life consisted of an early morning bike ride, church, community service, and taking care of her tender husband or anybody else in need. God was the most important factor in her life. Never, ever would she miss Sunday morning mass and she attended church daily. She prayed every night before bed and every morning after she woke up. Mother Mary was always her savior, praying to her every time she was caught in a predicament. My grandmother, whose name is also Mary, was loved by everyone who knew her. She made an impact on so many lives. She was the charismatic type who brought out the benevolence in even the most malicious of people.

Talking about my grandmother's attributes in the past is heartbreaking; for she is still alive and she still is Mary Greenway. But she, by all means, is not the same Mary Greenway anyone knew just two years ago. Every winter my grandparents would go to their condo in Florida to escape the cold. Last December (12/10), the day their plane departed for Florida will be my last true memory of my grandmother. Because that was the last time I saw her before "it" happened. The last time I saw her before she became that ugly caterpillar. That was the last time I saw her before she was morphed into something that stripped away her independence.

Today, her brain cannot connect the dots anymore. A simple task such as walking can no longer be accomplished without assistance. Who would ever think a person could forget how to walk? But my grandmother's disease has disconnected her brain so that she is unable to achieve daily tasks such as walking, sitting, standing and other ordinary daily activities that we take for granted.

Verbal actions are just as difficult as physical activities to overcome. Full sentences are not in her language anymore. Most of her sentences are jumbled, where my grandmother used to be able to tell the best stories that drew the entire room's attention. Nothing makes her laugh anymore, where she would always have a hardy laugh for even my most dim-witted jokes. Upset and whiny are her most common emotions, where my grandmother would never have self-pity, and would never, ever dare to complain.

Her daily hallucinations that started off as cute, miniature animals and graceful things have now turned into dark, hideous creatures that are beginning to scare her. Parkinson's is the most atrocious disease which tends to lead to Alzheimer's disease. My grandmother is starting to show signs of Alzheimer's, which is really upsetting. But the part that hurts me the most is that my little cousins will only know the repulsive caterpillar side of Grandma. Her younger grandchildren will never know the breath-taking Grandma I knew. My Grandma has taught me life lessons that no one else in the world would have been able to. She has influenced me to do right, and to care about my community and about God. She has influenced me to have faith forever. I am lucky enough to have such loving memories of my Grandmother as the beautiful, vibrant butterfly and it is these memories that will remain close to my heart.

**Thomas Ikeda**

Lawrence High School  
Grade 11

*Thomas Ikeda is a junior at Lawrence High School. His poem is about baseball and the feeling it creates as a great sport and a huge passion for him as well as many others.*

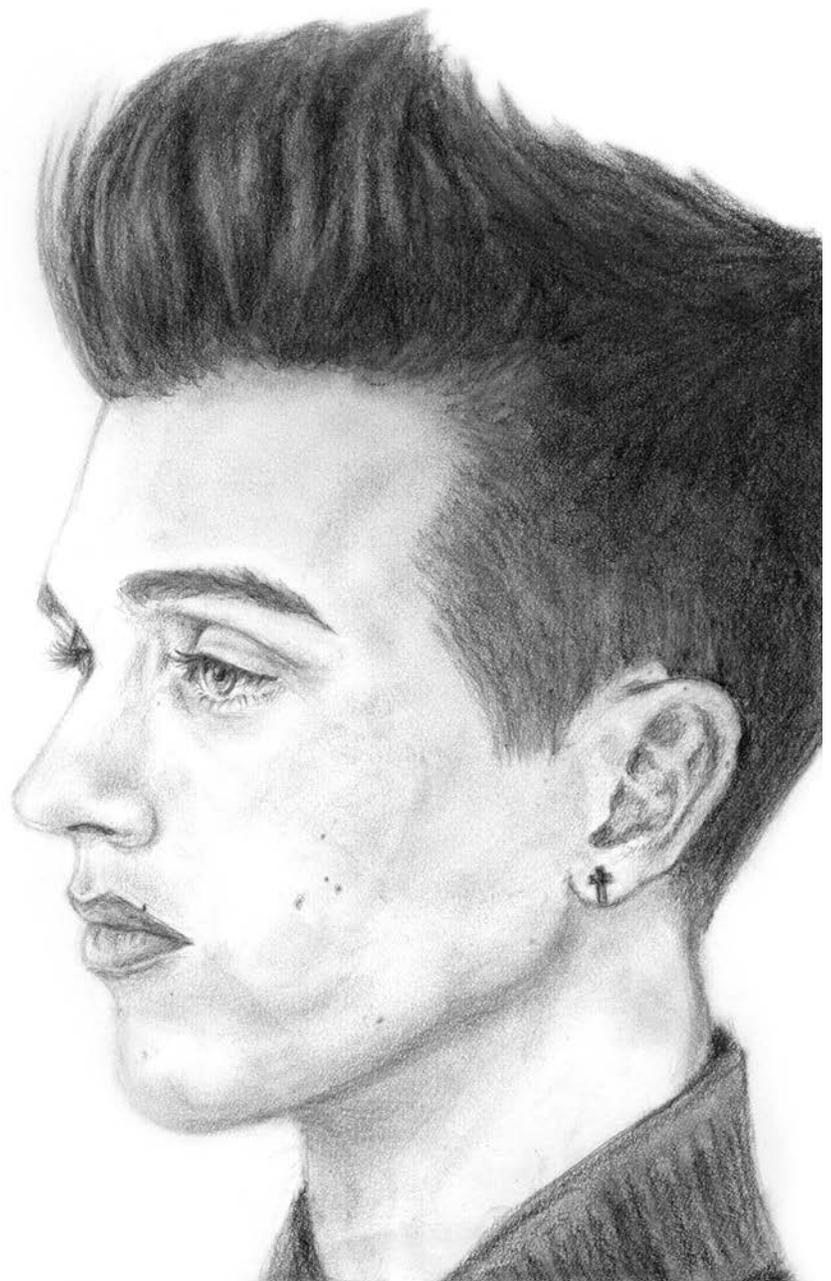
## Lawrence Baseball

I sit alone in the locker room, no music, no sound  
The game's in an hour, it's the final round  
New white tap on my bat and a ball in my glove  
The vent blows cool air on my head from above  
One game left for the trophy, one game left for it all  
It's time for the game, I begin my walk down the hall  
I look up in the crowd, I count the scouts one by one  
There's too many to count, I feel like a deer on the run  
Pre-game rituals begin, I take my eight swings  
I hear the sound of bats hitting balls, those distinctive pings  
The pressure is mounting, the umps have arrived  
Loud cheers from above, how could I have survived?  
It's time to play ball, my team takes the field  
While hitters choose carefully the bat which they wield  
I strike out the side, batters go down one, two, three  
And a feeling of power comes over me  
I'm in control of the game and it's mine to lose  
But that will not happen, the game is already old news  
The headline reads Lawrence tops Hamilton West  
And our story is written and we are the best

## King Hamblett

**Harkirat Kang**  
Hightstown High School  
Grade 10

*Harkirat is a 10th grade Honors student in Hightstown High School. She enjoys reading, writing, drawing, and being a part of creating anything.*



**Jeremy Kaish**

West Windsor Plainsboro High School North  
Grade 11

*Jeremy's writing is often inspired by his childhood experiences. His next essay will be 800 words, all about stoplights and what not to do at them.*

## A Fearful Frame of Mind

Menacing streaks of pink light came into view as I raised my head from the soft contours of my pillow. These undulating ripples of pinkness polluted the sea of golden sunlight that flowed through my bedroom windows. I rose quickly in startled confusion, hoping it was all a bad dream. But there they sat on my nightstand. In the light of day, the reality of yesterday was clearer and even scarier.

The previous afternoon, while giggling along to one of Thomas the Tank Engines adventures, I suddenly felt sleepy, and decided to lie down on the couch. When my cheek touched the cool surface of the cushion, I heard a tiny cracking noise. On the ground before me was a small piece of my glasses, like a little chocolate sprinkle crowning the top of an ice cream cone. Resting on my nose was the cockeyed frame of my glasses, broken beyond repair. In a state of shock and with tears in my eyes, I climbed the mountainous landform known as the staircase, and presented the damaged eyewear before my mommy.

Within a matter of hours, the problem had been resolved. Well, the grown-ups thought it was resolved. Since the optometrist did not have any boy frames that would fit my small-sized lenses, I had no choice but to wear a pair of frilly, pink glasses as I waited for the order of my macho, blue frames to arrive at the store. I viewed them in the same light as broccoli: with utter discontent. Unfortunately, it was either pink, or near blindness, so I had to choose the pink glasses.

At breakfast the next morning, my two banana Eggos sat like giant Legos in my stomach. Small inklings of pink-tinted fear began to creep up on me, like a spider crawling towards a victim trapped in its web. What kind of reaction would these new glasses produce? How long would it take for one of my kindergarten classmates to make fun of me? Everyone will be staring at me during circle time. There's no way the girly monstrosity on my face would escape attention. In those glasses, I felt as fragile as a block tower. Slowly, I could imagine the laughs, like dozens of Elmos guffawing all around me. My mommy and daddy continued to assure me that it would be fine, but I knew

better; kindergarten was a rough place. Some of the other kids were already six years old, while I was still a measly five.

Could I really face that?

Just then, my mommy tells me that it's time to go. Maybe I should tell her my tummy hurts so she'll let me stay home from school. Nah, she won't believe me. Maybe I should get black marker and cover up the pink. Nah, we have to return the glasses to the store. Ugh. I put on my shoes, and begin walking to Dutch Neck School. I walk in a sort of trance, hearing nothing but my pounding heartbeat, fixated on my impending humiliation. Before I know it, I reach the doors to the school. They are like the gates to Asgard, with nothing but dread behind them. Slowly they open, and I am hustled in.

I scamper through the halls with my head bowed, hoping to be unnoticed. I know that I'll inevitably have to look up, but prolonging it helps to ease my nerves. I'm still not sure if I can bear to face my classmates. Each step I take echoes off the walls, and reverberates back to my ears as jeering voices of my classmates. Finally I reach my classroom. This is it, I think. Let the mockery begin!

When everyone arrives, we begin our morning meeting. I could feel the brisk, questioning looks I was receiving from everyone around the periphery of our circle. All those judgmental eyes! Was I suddenly so different because of the pink-tinted aluminum on my face? Unexpectedly, the absurdity of it all became so clear. I knew what to do.

Without any warning, I rose to my feet and declared with all of my might, "I broke my glasses yesterday, and now I have these pink ones, and I like them!"

Suddenly, my friend Morgan shouted out as well, affirming "I like Jeremy's glasses too."

And, in that moment, everything became 20/20. Just as a chameleon is not changed when it turns from green to brown, I did not change when my glasses changed from blue to pink. There, in my kindergarten classroom, the blinding pink just melted away, and I could see clearly once again.

Jeremy Kaish

## So, Where is Waldo, Really?

This joyous exclamation can only mean one of two things. One, a distraught man in his boxers has finally killed the fly that's been buzzing around his head for a week, or two, a giddy seven year old has finally located the master of disguise, the epitome of deception, the champion of Hide and Go Seek: Waldo.

Not since Harry Houdini has another man managed to elude the watchful eyes of so many people. He hides behind the mailbox, he hides in front of the café, he hides right in the middle of the town square. And yet despite it all, no matter how obvious, we still find ourselves stumped when posed the simple question, where's Waldo?

Waldo should be easy to locate. With his giant, circular glasses and shirt and hat which are reminiscent of a barbershop pole, he should stand out like a flamingo in a colony of penguins. But still, we spend hours trying to locate the little trickster. It isn't even that he's cleverly hidden; normally he is hiding in plain sight, waving up at us with a smug little smile.

So maybe the difficulty in finding Waldo has nothing to do with Waldo at all. Perhaps it has something to do with us.

We are always looking for the big and obvious moments of our day. What we have trouble seeing are the tiny details that constantly add to the enjoyment of our lives. This is Waldo.

Waldo is a tiny but singular element of an otherwise normal scene. We may not always see him, yet he is always there. Waldo is those little extraordinary aspects of our day that we tend not to notice, the facets that make each day a little bit more enjoyable. He is the tickle of orange juice pulp as it meanders over the tongue, the whoosh of a Frisbee as it whirls through the air, the caress of a hot shower after a long day. There is nothing monumental or extraordinary about Waldo, but he makes life more enthralling.

Waldo is not illuminated by a neon sign, but with the right perspective, he burns just as bright. He is not acing the exam, landing the lead in the play, or winning the medal in the tournament. These are obvious thrills, which we instantly recognize. Rather, Waldo is flipping a pillow over to the cold side, smelling fresh cookies in the oven, laughing around the lunch table.

If we take the time to look around carefully, we will find that Waldo isn't hiding at all. He is walking right beside us, immersed in our life journey. In reality, we don't have to find Waldo. If we let him, Waldo will find us.

**Erin Kelly**

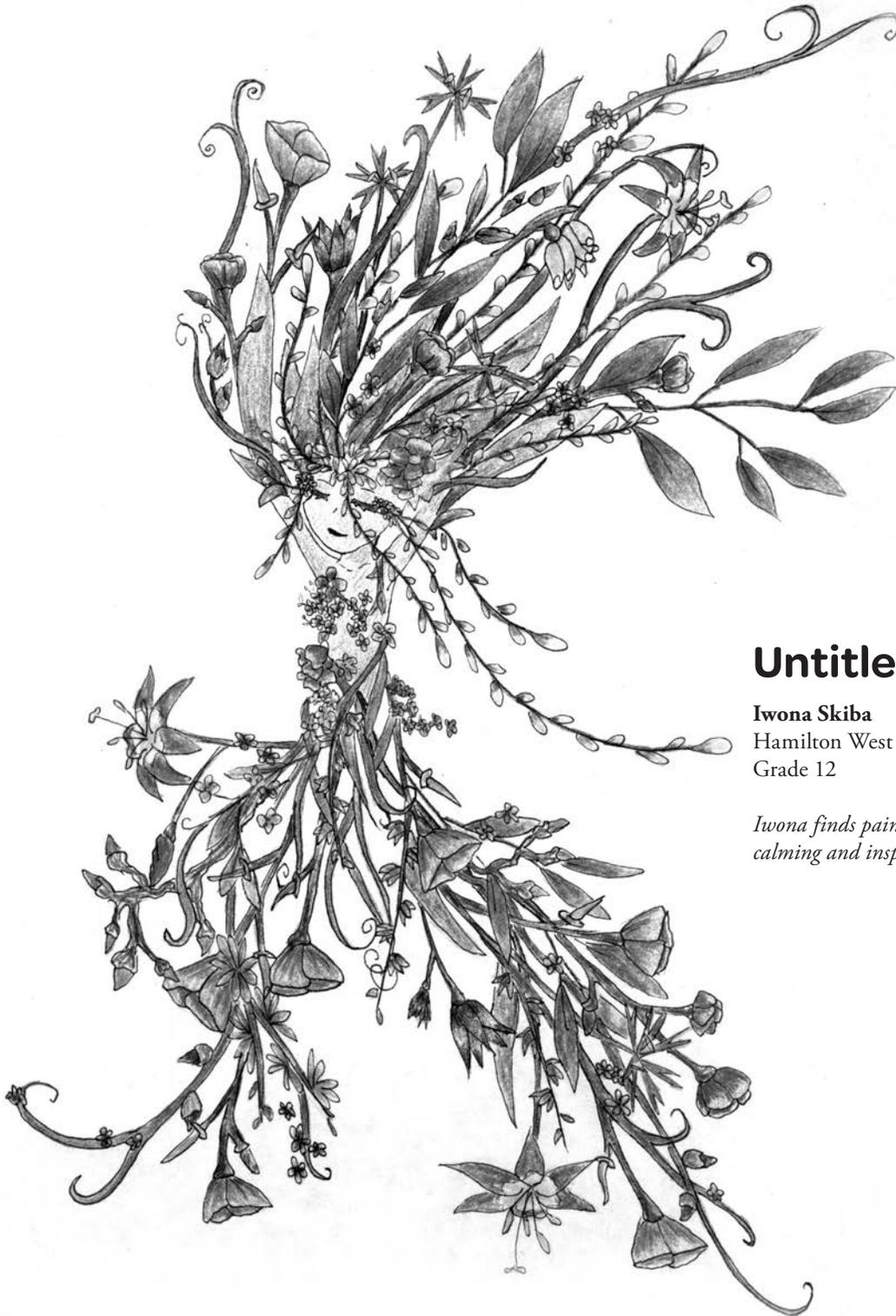
Hopewell Valley Central High School  
Grade 10

*Erin Kelly is a tenth grade student at Hopewell Valley Central High School. She enjoys playing the viola, plaid shirts, and squirrels. She writes to express ideas that cannot be expressed in any other form.*

## Classroom Map

Tucked in the  
Corner  
Of the white  
Board  
A paper with curling edges  
Proclaims in ink  
A map of the United States of America

A jigsaw  
Puzzle  
Of faded  
Colors  
Suspended in a blue abyss  
Cut by river veins  
Defined by boundaries



## Untitled

**Iwona Skiba**

Hamilton West High School  
Grade 12

*Iwona finds painting to be  
calming and inspirational.*

**Danielle Klehr**

Allentown High School  
Grade 12

*Danielle Klehr is a senior at Allentown High School and hopes to attend Georgetown University in the fall. She enjoys playing sports at Allentown, including tennis, basketball, and track & field. She aspires to study political science in college, but in the meantime enjoys participating in Mock Trial and Model United Nations.*

## To Be a Mover

“All mankind is divided into three classes: Those that are immovable, those that are movable, and those that move”.

One may say that I am immovable. I find no issue with being the minority if I am passionate about a cause. In a similar immovable fashion, once my mind is set on accomplishing something, I am dogged until I reach my goal. It is difficult to defeat someone who never gives up. However, I avoid sharing the same fate as King Creon of Thebes, in the tragic tale of “Antigone,” who lost his son because of his own stubborn, inflexible nature both as a leader and as a father. He chose to ignore the pleas of his son and was deaf to reason. Going through life with plugged ears—censored to all other voices except the one inside his head—a person becomes immovably narrow-minded. A narrow mind leads a person on a very straight path to ignorance.

In this way, one may say that I am movable. Though not in the way a pawn is manipulated across a chess board—destined to do the bidding of the player in an effort to defeat his opponent. Although I am strong in my own convictions, they are susceptible to the opinions of others. As I meet new people and encounter different experiences, my former thoughts and opinions evolve as I absorb new ideas. I am not afraid to admit that I am wrong, that I do not know something or that someone else’s idea is better. As George Bernard Shaw once said, “Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything.” Though it is not enough to take in experiences and absorb idea—one must use everything they have gained from life so far to make a change.

Yet, to make a change, one has to move. Society’s objective stems from the rocks and bones primitive cave dwellers used to create tools. Pioneers settle, towns emerge, cities evolve. Scientists do research, hypothesize, test, and make discoveries. People in conflict settle their differences, make peace, and form lasting relationships. Progress is viewed as the result of positive efforts made to accomplish a goal—and these efforts are made by those who move. However there is risk in being a mover. Original thinkers have to chart their own course, and often against the flow of the current. There is a risk of getting lost, facing an insurmountable obstacle, or even drowning. But, if I stay true to myself and stand for what I believe in, while being accepting of the ideas of others, I can be successful. It is that belief that sparks movement. The human race is energized by the idea of moving forward, taking that next step in the right direction. It is the movers that lead the way. One may say that I am one of those who move.

**Juliana Lam**

Hamilton High School  
Grade 11

*Juliana strives to push boundaries and  
achieve more than she had even dreamt of.*

## Hyggeligt

It's three am, two hundred miles away from the nearest town and  
you can breathe easy.

Never mind that you're a thousand feet above sea level  
and haven't checked Facebook in days.

Whose party were you supposed to go to?

All this is forgotten

because

here

you

lay,

watching Phoenix soar free

while fair Andromeda remains in her chains.

A single star flits across the sky.

You gasp.

Cool October air chills your bones and sends a jolt  
to nerves, once frayed, now healed. Its so

*hyggeligt*

here, in the mountains, like snuggling with  
a book by the fire on a cold winter day.

But,

in the same way a book ends,  
stars give way to the morning sun, and

we head back to hectic lives, this

peaceful,

*hyggeligt,*

refreshing

moment...

fades...

into a memory...

## Pug

**Kyra Leszcynski**  
Nottingham High School  
Grade 12

*Kyra has taken art classes for three years in High School. She finds art to be a fun and interesting hobby.*



**Elizabeth Lanphear**

Hightstown High School  
Grade 10

*Elizabeth is often found at the track or tying on her pointe shoes and loves to keep both her mind and her body active. Her goals in life include international travel and existence in happiness.*

## All

All is lost  
For an ant of sizeable measure  
When the flood gates of the sky are broken  
Into stringy rivers

All is recovered  
To an aching and sapped seedling  
When precious sapphire drops  
Quench an arid thirst

All is won  
For the unborn polliwog  
When a newly swollen lagoon  
Provides a birthplace for fresh life



## The Elephant 1007

**Darrah Miller**  
Hightstown High School  
Grade 12

*Darrah likes spending time with friends and family. She also likes visiting museums and learning about art history. In the future she hopes to be a museum curator or art history teacher.*

Elizabeth Lanphear

## Nature's Gifts to Me

As a child growing into an adult, I am able to view the value of nature with a child's open eye and an adult's analytic gaze. The greatest gifts that nature has provided me with include a place where I can act as myself, an image of true beauty, and a restoring place.

When I am in and around the wonders of nature, I can be myself without the pressures of peers or trying to fit in. Nature doesn't care whether I am in my Sunday best or just jeans and a t-shirt. Without nature, realizing the shades of who I truly am would have been nearly impossible.

After glancing in magazines, I feel beauty is an impossible thing to attain; too many rules and complications to get there. But nature's incredible sights; boundless fields of tulips and valiant mountain tops show me true beauty. To be beautiful, you must be the best you can be by loving, caring, and just being.

The last gift nature has opened its hands to me is the gift of a place of peace. Whenever my head is hot with fury, heat like the rays of summer, nature is a salve, cooling my soul. So when I wake up and hear the callings of the Mourning Warbler and the House Finch, I bring that peace and harmony with me throughout the day and hold it in my being.

**Kara Leibowitz**

Allentown High School  
Grade 12

*Kara Leibowitz is a senior at Allentown High School. She is involved in her high school's political awareness club, and plans to study political science and business in college. She aspires to one day contribute to world peace through work with international embassies.*

**Rumor**

A single pollen  
Drifts into the human mind  
A rumor planted

**Rumor****Kaitlyn Kern**

Hamilon West High School  
Grade 12

*Kaitlyn is a creative girl and uses her artistic ability to show the worlds that she has created. In the future, she wishes to study art history and work as a museum curator.*



**Sabrina Li**

The Lawrenceville School  
Grade 9

*Ever since stapling together her first construction paper book in kindergarten, Sabrina Li knew that she wanted to be an author when she grew up. Whether it was in the weaving of tales, or the thrill of stripping down complexities of emotions into just a few simple phrases, writing was always a constant in Sabrina's life. It is a fact that human beings have a need to express themselves through their creations, and throughout her 15 years, Sabrina has not found a more satisfying or exhilarating release of expression than writing.*

## Birthdays

Growing up is like an onion: it comes in layers. Each year a new frail skin of red and brown envelops the golden core, creating a thicker blanket of experience and revelation. However, what everybody seems to forget after a while is that underneath all of those layers of brown, gauzy skin lies that same golden core. That core hasn't aged or grown from the time you were three to until the time your tenth birthday candle was extinguished moments ago. Whether you want to admit it or not, that five-year-old girl demanding kisses from her mother before heading off to school every morning, is still a part of you. She may be covered up in skins of brown and red but she always manages to show through the surface.

So when your best friend asks you that September morning, "What does it feel like to be ten?" you really don't know how to answer her. Just a few hours ago you were three again, picking a fight with your sister over who would get the last chocolate chip pancake. Before bed last night, you found yourself snuggled into your parents' covers as you let the oh so familiar tales of *Pippi Longstocking* and Jack and the Bean Stalk wash over you, the wave of two-year-old nostalgia more soothing than any milk-soaked chocolate chip cookie. Your eight-year-old self crept out of the shadows just an hour ago during recess, as you found yourself propelling higher and higher on the iron swing set just so that you could grasp the fluffy white masses dotting the skyline.

And before you know it, you're seated at your desk with a tower of icing and candles hovering over you. Your classmates are crowded around you and are breaking into a cacophonous rendition of "Happy Birthday." Spontaneously, your face breaks into a smile. And it's not because of the off-pitch voices ricocheting off the classroom walls or the glorious attention that comes with the sixteen pairs of eyes resting on you and only you, it's because you've been given the gift of sight, the irreplaceable ability of being able to see the layers and layers of diaphanous skin that encompass you and make you whole. You close your eyes as you suck in a breath, anticipating the moment when you can extinguish those ten candles in one clean swoop. But just as you're about to release the breath from your puckered lips, your classmates break into a chant. Boys and girls with the firelight reflected in their eyes, squeal in excited voices at you, "Are you one? Are you two? Are you three? Are you four? Are you five? Are you six? Are you seven? Are you eight? Are you nine? Are you ten?" And inside, you can't help but say yes to all of them.

You are turning ten today, but before you stepped out of your car that morning, you leaned up to give your mother a kiss goodbye.

## Black & White Clock

**Sofia Boughman**

Hightstown High School

Grade 12

*Sofia Boughman is a 12th grade student at Hightstown High School.*

*She plans on going to Mercer County Community College for the 2013-2014 school year.*



Sabrina Li

## Going “Home”

Before you even open your mouth, they know that you’re different. Whether it is in the way that you walk or the clothes that you wear, these people don’t have to digest the clumsy strings of Mandarin bubbling from your mouth to know that you’re different-- that you don’t belong. To a foreigner, you might appear to be one with the crowd, to pass off as someone’s daughter or long-lost cousin. For after all, you all share those same distinct features: shiny, limp black hair, brown almond eyes, and that envied ivory skin. But you can’t help think that this is where the similarities end, where the connection and kinship die.

To a foreigner, you’re just that stray square-shaped block that can be shoved through the wooden mold; however, what this foreigner might not realize at first glance is that your edges have gone round-- something that only a 7,500 mile transpacific rift can create. For years, you had gazed at your native counterpart across the Great Divide, like a child seeing itself in the mirror for the first time. And, unable for so long to reach behind the glass and touch the strangely familiar face you saw staring back, you filled in all that you did not know with all that you could imagine. But the moment you stepped off that plane, the glass was shattered, the connection broken, and all that you and your supposed Chinese brethren shared could only be summed up in shards of glass and shadowy imaginings that did not hold up in the light of real experience.

You blame it on your mother, and she blames it on you, for she sees, just like every mother sitting around the mahjong table, a daughter turned American, turned ignorant, and turning all mothers’ dreams into shadowy imaginings. She warned you of what would come of this trip. And in her thick Chinese accent, she insists that she just wanted the best of both worlds for you. Raising you in America, she had wanted you to gain the golden opportunity of being anybody you wanted to be, to rise above who you were born to be, but all the while keeping a Chinese mind, her mind. However, she, along with all Chinese mothers, was wrong— with their daughters being raised under American circumstances, it was inevitable that their minds had been raised American as well.

She tells you that mother and child are linked beyond mere genetics. The child is born from the mother’s body, the child has lived inside the mother’s body, therefore, their minds should be one as well. But when she found your mind deviating from hers, she would sit you down and spin one of her many metaphors. The one that she always went back to was that a child is like a young tree. The child must stand tall and listen to her mother planted next to her, for that is the only way to grow strong and straight. But if the child bends down to listen to other people, she will grow crooked and weak. Her leafy body will be forced to the ground with the first burst of wind. And then the child will

be like a weed, growing wild in any direction, spreading along the ground until someone pulls her out and throws her away. And what has she and all mothers gained in return for all of the long years of watering, and planting, and shading their young saplings from the light of reality, from America? The mother gets a daughter who grows impatient and embarrassed as her mother speaks in Chinese to her, who thinks her mother stupid and obstinate as she digests her clumsy strings of English. All that these Chinese mothers have gained from planting their seeds in American soil is a garden full of useless weeds, without any connecting hope to be passed on from generation to generation.

But against your mother’s better wishes, you bend down and listen to the flowers around you in your American garden. They tell you you’re different, that your petals don’t look right, that you don’t stand or grow the same way that they do. They are daffodils and daisies and you are a lotus. So, what do you do? You change. You cut your petals to look like theirs, you get a taller pot to have a height like theirs, you tint your skin to have a color like theirs. And in the end, what does your inner self yell at you, when your supposed transformation is complete and over? It says that you are no daffodil, that you are dandelion. You are a weed, an outsider, an unwanted nobody of a flower! You are still Chinese, and an inauthentic one at that. And by going to China, by replanting yourself in another garden, in another soil, where the flowers have petals just like yours, stems that stand just like yours, that grow just like yours, is your last hope for belonging.

So, the day you throw the airplane tickets in front of her wrinkly hands, she snatches them up by the tips of her fingernails and squints through her crinkled eyelids at the small black print. You watch her, as her eyes narrow and then bug out while she studies the characters. She shakes and shakes her finger at you and screams, “Weed! Weed! Weed!” at you in Mandarin. She says that the moment you step off that plane, all of the lotuses and plum blossoms with their ivory skins will pluck you out and send you flying back to New Jersey. As she paces around the room with the tickets clenched in her fists, she declares that you are too bent, that your stem has grown out beyond her shadow, that you have stepped out from behind the confines of the obedient Chinese daughter.

She reminds you of the untouched Mandarin books sitting at the back of your shelf, the red silk Chinese New Year dress that she had spent weeks picking out for you and days pressing—just for it to be thrown into the back of your closet. She uproots the memories of you stringing excuse after excuse just to get out of your Grandma’s fabled mahjong games and the many afternoon naps you took during Grandpa’s tales of the olden days. She says that it is all of these could-have- and should-have-dones that have ripped and shredded and chipped away at the already fray-



## Amphibious

**Kyle Lang**

Steinert High School

Grade 11

*Kyle Lang is a 16 year old nature photographer. He is told by many people that his art shouldn't go unnoticed.*

ing bond between you and your people. She says that it is you who has chopped away at your roots and has caused your own bark skin to fall down to an earthen floor. Her voice rises as she says that it is not enough to dream of a kinship, of a connection that can last a generation. For it takes no effort to dream; all you have to do is close your eyes!

And in a sense she is right. You *are* like a tree. The problem is, you are just not the tree that she wants you to be. Your soul is that tree, a soul that has its own mind, its own roots, its own ground to stand on. And you have an adage of your own that you must grow by: that a tree cannot stand without its roots. Right now, planted in the shade of your mother's branches and leaves, you can feel your roots craving space, a patch of soil that you can call your own. You need to replant this tree; you desperately need to find the soul that didn't grow in your backyard. You tell yourself that your seedling can only flourish when planted in the soil of China.

You are aware of the fact that the transpacific bond has been stretched and frayed, that it has become twisted and contorted, but through it all, you hope that the roots that had held you and your people together have remained strong. Inside your head you repeat, like a mantra, that wood doesn't bend; it doesn't give. But with every almond gaze that flickers your way as you walk down those cobble stone streets, you can feel an ax inside you chipping away at your trunk. You look different; you speak different. You make mistakes in etiquette, and you don't know the new traditions that have grown since your mother left. My supposed brethren, my reflection, won't have it. And believe it or not – you feel more foreign in China than you do in America. But isn't that the reason why you wanted to come to China in the first place? That is when you begin to feel your roots—those strong, resilient wooden feet—begin to give, to bend, to snap. And you force your eyes shut and force yourself to remain in that shadowy world, where it was enough just to share the same skin, hair, and eyes.

So when you step off the plane, the first thing you look at is the smog-shrouded sky line, then the pagodas lining the square, and then you quickly let your eyes drop to the grey cobble-stone street. You look at everything besides the millions of reflections staring right at you. You can't bring yourself to look through the cracked glass, to wallow in the feeling of your roots snapping right from under you, to feel your once-sturdy trunk-body begin to heave and hull. You can feel their stares, and you know that those brown, almond eyes can see that conspicuous crack just as much as you can.

You keep your eyes to the ground, as you feel a new question encompass you: to which mold do you belong? You're not a square like all of your fellow Chinese, or a circle like all of the Americans back home. You share the black hair and almond eyes of your brethren but inside you don't have bright blue eyes and blonde hair. What soil can you plant your roots in now? And this is why you blame your mother, not for bringing you away from your homeland or forcing you back into the shadows of obedience, but for planting the idea in your head that you could do anything. That you could be anything...

For you cannot be anything that you want to be, you can only be you. And right now, as you slowly raise your head and let yourself stare at all of the once-shadowy reflections, now in China, being yourself is the last person you want to be. All you have gotten out of this trip is a broken reflection and a wilting seedling, two things that at the moment you cannot figure how to revive.

So, as you keep walking down that cobble-stone street of what is supposedly your mother country, the land of your people, your "home", you can't help but be consoled by the idea that somewhere in America, a blonde girl with blue eyes and fair skin is stepping off a plane from China, and she can feel her roots snapping with the sunlight beating down hard.

**Cassandra Lieu**

Hopewell Central High School  
Grade 10

*Cassandra (Cassie) Lieu, enjoys the arts in general, whether it's literature or music. Her goals for the future are to learn to speak French and to improve her writing. Her hobbies include reading, playing the piano, taking walks, and hanging out with friends. She wants to continue writing and supporting her friends and family through both the good and the bad.*

## A Bus Ride Home

Exhausted high-schoolers,  
Energetic middle-schoolers  
Bunch into rows of tattered leather seats.  
Their seatbelts, three stripes on a brown canvas,  
Drape over behind them, upright and forgotten.

Some chat, laughing, their voices a chorus of cacophonous bells.  
Others silent, fingers dancing across keypads,  
While they watch the red-brick school fade into the distance.

A redhead bus driver sits at the front,  
Wearing wrinkles long years of hardship created.  
She is the only one wearing a safety-orange seatbelt  
And as a busy guide,  
The one who steers the yellow snake  
On the network of black concrete.  
Her companion, an ebony handbag,  
Plain with no ornaments,  
Dangles beside her on a darker lever.

It's a daily blessing  
And it's a daily annoyance.  
But just for a little while,  
Let the world pass by  
Without a care in the world.

**Rebecca Lopez**  
Steinert High School  
Grade 11

*Rebecca Lopez is an avid reader and writer. She hopes to one day work for a publishing agency as an editor and to publish her own novel.*

## Ode to Band Nerds

Cool metal beneath my fingers  
In the summer heat it's nice  
But in the cold, cruel winters  
Round keys turn hands to ice  
These shapes are so familiar  
A sensation I adore  
I lift the mouthpiece to my lips  
And down the notes will pour  
A sound as sweet as honey  
It could melt a heart of gold  
A light and silver tinkling  
So soft and yet still bold  
The thrill of a performance  
My blood begins to rush  
On stage or even on the field  
No musician gets enough  
In the spotlight with a solo  
Or marching a half-time show  
My flute, it means the world to me  
And frees the music in my soul



## Insanity

**Corrine Edler**  
Hightstown High School  
Grade 12

*Corrine enjoys reading and drawing manga style comics and hopes to one day get one of her ideas published. She aspires to one day be a successful veterinarian and help animals in need. Her favorite show is Adventure Time and she loves to eat sea food.*

**Christopher Love**

Princeton High School  
Grade 9

*Christopher "Chris" Love is an ambitious freshman who dreams of becoming a physicist.*

## Come Home Mint Leaf

O precious mint leaf  
Resting so delicately  
Upon my savory dessert  
But I do not consume you yet  
No I target what lies below you  
I set you aside to be the final taste  
The taste in my mouth  
As I leave the restaurant  
Then when your time has come  
The wind carries you away  
You flutter in the breeze  
And I never am able to taste you

O precious mint leaf  
Where have you gone  
Have you found someone else  
Someone who'll eat you first

O precious mint leaf  
Are you still safe out there in the world  
Have you come to lands where you are loved  
Where the people are friendly  
And cherish your flavor

O precious mint leaf  
Come home to me at last  
Do not make me leave this restaurant  
Not having tasted you  
Do not leave me to wallow  
In my self pity and melancholy

O precious mint leaf  
I love you precious mint leaf

**Barbara Marie MacGuigan**

Hopewell Valley Central High School  
Grade 10

*Barbara Marie is an aspiring author who writes poetry, short stories and plays. She enjoys reading and playing with her dogs as well as spending time with friends. She hopes to one day be a well-known author and live on a farm with animals and her family.*

## Sonnet For Our Time

Oh how today our music has become  
Heaps of ugly nothings filled with lewd intent!  
Making all poor children's ears fast go numb,  
When the lovely melodies have been spent

Only a few have yet survived through time  
And those by ancient minds repeated wildly  
In a constant stream of similar rhymes  
Make for a vulgarly dull society

My time has seen those with true gifts and themes  
Sitting in the tragic wayside unknown  
While those morphed to technological extremes  
Take all the glory 'til relieved of their false thrones

Few still prevail in this dark time for song  
Those lone brave souls who venture from the throng



## Psychedelic Confusion

**Luciannys Camacho**  
Nottingham High School  
Grade 9

*Luciannys creates art as a way to escape reality. It's a time to let loose for her. She was to go to the Art Institute for college in the future.*



## Intriguing Read

**Naomi Hudgins**  
Hightstown High School  
Grade 9

*Naomi loves her photo imaging class. Two of her favorite types of pictures to take and look at are portraits and nature shots. She gets her inspiration from the beauty of the world around her.*

Barbara Marie MacGuigan

## The Odd Couple

Cast:

Clark: An older waiter in his late twenties.

Darrell: A young waiter in his late teens.

Marie: A blind woman in her late sixties.

Harold: A deaf man in his early seventies.

Scene:

*An old man and a woman sit with their backs to each other at a lone table on the terrace of a café. A pair of waiters watch in interest. From time to time the man will check his watch and frown while the woman taps her cane against the ground in obvious boredom. This has been going on for half an hour now and the waiters begin to speculate.*

Clark: *watching the old man* What do you think he's waiting for?

Darrell: *shrugs and checks his phone as he speaks* I dunno, I guess they're, like, together or somethin'?

Clark: *Frowns thoughtfully, considering this.* Then why don't they talk to each other? I mean, the lady just came up behind him and sat. It seemed as though she knew where she was going.

Darrell: I dunno, people sure can be weird. Maybe they had a fight? *Looks down again, feeling his phone vibrate.*

Clark: *glances at Darrell's phone then returns his gaze back to the couple at the table.* Nah, the old bloke would've at least said something to her.

*The woman gets up and turns her chair around to face the old man's back. It makes a loud scraping sound but the man doesn't even flinch. She sits patiently and restarts tapping her cane.*

Clark: Should I see if she wants something?

Darrell: Sure, whatever.

Clark: Excuse me, madam?

*The woman turns her head in his direction and looks past him, unfocused.*

Marie: Yes?

Clark: Would you and your friend like something to drink?

Marie: Friend?

Clark: Oh, my apologies, the, ah, gentleman sitting with you.

Marie: What gentelma- Harold? Are you there?

*The woman waves her cane over the table, hitting the old man on the arm.*

Harold: umph! *Then, Loudly pronouncing each syllable carefully;*

Marie, 'zat you? *(He turns, finally seeing the woman behind him.)*

Marie, you blind old bat! Why didn't you tell me you was there!

Madam: Why didn't YOU tell ME! I'm not the deaf one you fool!

Harold: *Reading her lips and still speaking slowly* I didn't see you.

Madam: And I didn't hear YOU...

Both: *Pause for a moment then burst out laughing, embracing as a couple.*

Clark: *Looks from Marie to Harold then back to Darrell.* Guess that settles that. *He smiles and whips out his pad to take their orders.*

**Alicia Mitchko**  
 NottinghamHigh School  
 Grade 12

*Inspired by her love of reading and the encouragement of her friends and family members, Alicia truly enjoys writing. Alicia writes anything from limericks to short stories in her free time. She is currently the editor and chief of Nottingham High School's newspaper "The Star Status."*

## Among the Roosters

The gray grasses grow gold  
 In the early break of dawn.  
 That frigid frost and cold  
 Soon dissolves and is gone.  
 Then the mighty rooster, bold,  
 With his ruby breast stands tall.  
 "He works so hard," is what I'm told,  
 "To awaken each day and sound his call."  
 Meanwhile the hens sit in their hold,  
 Awake before the rooster's song,  
 Cluck-clucking, peck-pecking, their work to be sold,  
 How humbly they lay eggs all the day long.  
 Hard-working hens, I write for you,  
 For I am lost among the roosters too.



Alicia Mitchko

## My Wheelchair

My wheelchair is red with cheetah spots and zebra stripes.

Wheelchair ramps are not too uncommon, however it seems each ramp can only reach so far. My wheels start out rolling smoothly only to hit a snag, bumping into the first of a length of steps. The steps may appear small to those with no wheelchair at all, only slightly larger to those who can stand up and limp along. With help, I can grasp crutches and make my way.

My wheelchair has no wheels, no spokes nor seat nor back. Instead, two lenses, nearly a quarter inch thick, balance inside a plastic frame. I wear my wheelchair on my face, for my legs are not crippled, but my eyes are. According to doctors, this disability of mine is not an illness or injury, but a number.

504.

The doctors have yet to tell me what this number truly represents. Perhaps it is the number of times I must defend my special accommodations, the number of people who offer aid along my path, or the number of steps I must face before I reach my final destination. To me, the number is not a number, but the offering of a pair of crutches. Many seated in my disabled throne may reach for them and hold them up like a shield; however with the upmost dignity I rely upon them merely to support me along my path. With my contacts I can turn my wheelchair invisible and dim the harsh spotlight my disability shines upon me. The shadow that results lessens the awareness of my need for crutches to the extent that many people do not realize I ever used a wheelchair in the first place.

From there, reading is difficult. Words blur into gray lines and swirl about on the page before me or create a migraine- inducing strobe effect inches from my face. My depth- perception is near non-existent. I would sooner park my car a mile away than attempt to parallel park. Taking notes from the board is impossible. Words like to sentence- jump and leave me with a jumbled nonsense of facts.

However, I'll let you in on a little secret: I see just fine.

I can see every flicker of emotion upon a shielded face; watch the explosion of heated arguments and the subtle longing of lonely hearts. My eyes examine those around me, my mind able to store away every bit of information to be drawn upon at a later date. The constant effort I exert in order to exceed the expectations that generally stem from the number 504 has allowed me the unique ability not only to look, but to truly see.

Perhaps my sight is limited, but that which may appear to be a wheelchair is truly but another set of steps. After all, anyone can have a wheelchair. My wheelchair is red with cheetah spots and zebra stripes.

(left)

## Chinese Landscape

Grace Spencer

Hightstown High School

Grade 12

*The reason I create art is because it is the way I express my emotions and show the world what I see. All through my life, photography has showed me the beauty in everyday life that others overlook. I couldn't imagine my life without it. It has been my saving grace.*

Alicia Mitchko

## Soul

I feared the punishment given would be worse than death, and wondered if, then, God would want me to spare the girl by pleading for her to die. The thought tugged at me as I placed a hat on my head, as I mounted my mare, as I made my way down the road to the McGuinty Estate.

When I approached there was a steady trickle of men rounding the back of the mansion and I dismounted to follow them. The few Bostonians who had come to the occasion had made a semicircle around the barn, and though it seemed they all had something to say on the subject, there was heaviness like a blanket of snow over us all until finally Drew Marilee emerged with a sort of iron rod in his hand, twisting it around like a baseball stick. A hushed murmur fell over the crowd as the determined man opened the barn's kiln, adding air to the glowing embers inside and placing the rod into the heat of it. He coughed, beckoning for people to step back because of the sting of the smoke.

We seemed to wait forever, though the anticipation in the air was fearful, something I was dreading. I had a sickening feeling like I knew what he was going to be doing with that hot iron, and a sure feeling that I didn't really want to stay to find out.

Misses McGuinty spoke from behind us. We turned in unison.

"If you're here to observe I have no objections. However if you make but a sound or protest I will request you leave my property at once. This is my property, my husband's property, and I may do what I please with any and all of it." There was no reply. "Very well then." Misses McGuinty sniffed, and stepped through the path between us that opened up for her. She stood as a queen over her subjects and with a wave of her hand motioned for Marilee to bring the slave girl out.

It seemed she hadn't aged, trapped young in that house as she was in my memory. She was, however, thinner, frailer, like her body had given up a little. Her face, though, was just as it was those years ago when she stood atop a wooden crate to await her fate. Her face betrayed no fear, her eyes closed curtains, a veil to hid her from her hellish surroundings.

Were I in her place, I would not wish to see my fate either.

Her face was then pressed against a make-shift table, her right cheek turned upward, and her arms were forced behind her back and bound. All this time, her features were calm, stoic, like a great marble carving of some dark Grecian goddess was there in the girl's place. With a chuckle Marilee pulled the iron from the kiln, getting some sort of crude pleasure out of his duty. He flicked the hot iron, an ember escaping to the sky.

"It's a... S." One of the men next to me murmured. I gazed upon the letter before my eyes fell back to the girl, wondering what the letter stood for.

A few words came to mind. Spite. Spirit.

"You *snake* of a girl." The McGuinty wife curled the word and I realized she was going to be branded with her mistake. "Fooling me into thinking you were innocent meanwhile sneaking about with every brute slave you lay your eyes on!" It was bold of the woman to admit herself the fool, yet she was the one standing in the crowd with us, giving the order for Marilee to descend with his weapon, not the poor girl about to be thrust into agony.

I held my breath, waiting for a scream, a whimper, a wince, anything to suggest that she had felt such a pain that it looked to be, yet there was nothing but the steady hiss of the iron as it cooled on her skin. When I finally breathed the air was rancid,

curdling my stomach with the scent of cooked flesh, yet still I watched her, her eyelids strained, her jaw clenched, though she made not a sound. From my place in the crowd I could see her profile, her hands behind her in tight fists, so tight that I could see a bit of blood began to squeeze out of her hand from where her fingernails were surely dug into her palms.

At last her tormenter retired and I felt I would faint as I watched a man shove the slave girl to the ground, her molten cheek slamming against the sawdust-covered barn floor.

“Scream, damn you!” Misses McGuinty exclaimed, as if she had been waiting all this time for that moment of satisfaction when her enemy crumbled. “Cry!”

The slave girl lifted her head slightly, her eyes narrowed in on the McGuinty wife. There must have been some unspoken words between them for they were locked in this battle of gazes for but the briefest moments before McGuinty looked up at Marilee. “Well?” She questioned. He chuckled roughly then the man came closer to the girl, and with a swing of one of his great legs, kicked her squarely in the stomach. Her body flinched upward about half a foot before falling into a crumbled heap. The man kicked her again, sending her injured cheek skidding across the ground before she rolled over with the quietest of moans.

“Scream you insolent thing!” Misses McGuinty demanded, her voice screeching over the crowd of men. “I will make an example of you yet!” There were clothes being stripped from the slave’s body, men huddling around and laughing and as the food rose in my stomach I found my body begin to act on its own accord, standing up tall and pushing my way through the wall of other men. I stood in front of the slave girl, turning on them all.

“Stop.” I said firmly, and they quieted, knowing me for one with few words, all uncertain. I did not know to give a reason or more of a command, and the men seemed to be waiting for me to continue.

“Thank you Mister Ansel. I don’t know what I would have done if they destroyed my property any more then it’s already been tampered with.” Misses McGuinty finally said, shooing her supporters away. With a snap of her fingers, two other slave women came forth to collect the ragdoll of a girl and finally my eyes ripped away from her face, the men’s laughter ringing in my memory though the demons were slowly clearing. “I thank you again Mister Ansel. I don’t know what I would have done if they had killed her.” I barely heard the McGuinty wife speak, my head was spinning so, my stomach still a sea as she spoke, droning on and on about her property and her mansion back South.

“Apologies Missus McGuinty.” I spoke sheepishly. “Didn’t sleep much last night.” She nodded sympathetically and bid me farewell. Lost with my thoughts and my memories, I returned to my wife and my son, dreading the story I would soon be telling.

The story of the girl with S on her cheek.

It would be her cross to bear.

**Gabriella Morrone**

Allentown High School  
Grade 12

*Gabriella Morrone is a senior at Allentown High School who really enjoys her AP Literature Class. In addition to writing, her passions are music and politics. She plans to attend college next year to pursue a double major in Creative Writing and Political Science. In the future, she hopes to publish her novels and become a political speech writer.*

**Gender Blues**

Pink. Oh, how I despised that horrid color, but I could not seem to get away from it. I stared at the pink picture frame with repulsion. It was pink - not even a fierce hot pink - but a pale and feeble pink. My brother received a blue picture frame because he was a boy; it was a vivid and strong blue. Why did he get a blue frame? I flounced across the kitchen to where my mom stood; she would know why everyone always assumed that I liked pink. "Mommy," my curious voice spoke, "Why do people think that I like pink because I'm a girl?" My mom had instilled an independent mindset in both my brother and me, so she was proud that I was questioning society, but nevertheless there wasn't a satisfying answer to my question, "Honey, some people think that girls prefer pink and boys prefer blue." Well, obviously they were wrong. Their audacious assumption that frustrated my four-year-old mind was my introduction to gender stereotypes. However, I was little aware that it was only my first glimpse of a glass ceiling that has confined women for millenniums.

Perhaps this ceiling was first built by yin and yang. In Chinese philosophy yang is responsible for light, heat, and strength in the world - it is characterized as male. Contrarily, yin is responsible for the darkness, coldness, and weakness in the world - it is inevitably characterized as female. Perhaps it all began when vulnerable Eve ate the forbidden apple, cursing humans with original sin for

eternity, and ridding Earth of a paradise. Sure, blame the women for the complications in the world - it's not like they gave birth to us or anything (we'll never hear the end of that one from our mothers). And somewhere down the line, women did not make a good first impression with ancient Greek men who decided that all women were fire-breathing chimeras and therefore should be fastened beneath a translucent glass ceiling indefinitely. That was a little drastic considering that the Greek men claim that Zeus was on their side, fully equipped with lightning bolts, but I suppose they couldn't take any chances since women are so intimidating.

Gender stereotypes pounce before babies are even out of their cribs, potentially robbing them indefinitely of their individualism before they can even crawl. Children are born into a world where they are expected to play, dress, eat, talk, act, learn, and achieve success in certain ways based on their gender. Girls are expected to wear dresses and play with dolls while boys are expected to wear pants and play in the mud. And when a child breaks the stereotype it is labeled as a "phase." It is not odd to hear parents talk about their children like doctors talk about their diagnosed patients, "Oh, Jane is just going through a tomboy phase, she'll grow out of it." Parents are actually trying to convince themselves that there is nothing "wrong" with their children. They chide, "Now honey, you don't really want to get all sticky and messy in the muck - do

you?" In reality, however, there is nothing wrong with "Jane." Society has set such rigid standards of behavior that people believe their children are misbehaving if they aren't precisely acting as their gender stereotype expects them to. By reproofing their children this way, parents are passing the venom of gender stereotypes to the next generation, which is an injustice to society.

By the time the children are in elementary school, the venom seeps through their veins. Girls suddenly have "cooties" and boys suddenly become "gross." Girls shy away from the kickball during gym class, while boys pound it with all of their might. Boys excel in math and science, while girls are successful in literature. There are studies from the University College of London that prove there aren't intellectual differences between girls and boys.<sup>1</sup> Ironically, it does prove that men think they are smarter than they really are and women underestimate their intellect.

In secondary school, boys and girls begin to "crush on" each other, and along with that drama comes more stereotypes. The boy must ask the girl on a date, girls become obsessed with boys, and boys eat more. Just because a boy is, "a growing boy," doesn't mean that any girl should be ashamed to eat as much or more than him - not that I'm implying that I eat a lot (but I do! See? The gender stereotype makes me self-conscious about my eating habits!). Stereotypes unremittingly develop and progress as life does, and unless

hindered in its persistent path, it will follow us for centuries to come.

“All men are created equal.” Allow me to channel my inner Abigail Adams when I say that the previous statement should be written as, “All men and ‘ladies’ are created equal.” As unfortunate as it was not to be able to have the same rights as men, it is better that the Constitution is not fixed, so that we may remember how long and how much effort women before us put into protesting for our rights.

Although stereotypes allow everyone to know her place in society, they are dangerous. Stereotypes serve as a mold for people to “fit into society.” However, the stereotypes are all in our heads and they are keeping us from success! We should not allow them to prohibit us from truly living our lives. Together, my mom and I painted my frame blue - an intense blue. I learned that I cannot stop people from making assumptions based on gender stereotypes, but I can defy them. Women can continue to chisel at the glass ceiling, or they can bash it into a million pieces. It’s our call, but after millenniums of being trapped under this relentless barrier, I think it is about time that we breathe some fresh air.

<sup>1</sup> Raymond, John. “He’s Not as Smart as He Thinks.” *The Daily Beast*. The Newsweek/Daily Beast Co.LLC, 2012. Web. 10 May 2012. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2008/01/22/he-s-not-as-smart-as-he-thinks.html>



## Fabric Investigation

**Michelle Miller**

Hopewell Valley Central High School

Grade 11

*Michelle loves art and has been doing it all throughout her academic career. She currently hopes to do something with her art in college along with majoring in physics.*

## Avalanche

**Stephanie Retana**

Nottingham High School  
Grade 10

*Stephanie loves art and enjoys creating it as well as exploring the stories behind another artist work. She likes to create art work that attracts the critic's eye. She plans to become an art teacher/professor.*



**Cameron Mory**

Allentown High School  
Grade 12

*Cameron enjoys playing soccer or hanging out with his friends.  
He also likes to relax and read a good book.*

## The Field

The Field

The pitch will remember my name.

Ninety minutes of sweat and effort.

That's all I have to make my impression.

To the onlookers, the ball is king,

But to the field, my feet are alive.

I exist,

Blood, sweat, and tears,

From hours of hard work.

The fans may cheer me while I play,

But the field will remember me after everyone has gone home.

**Rachel Narozniak**

Allentown High School  
Grade 12

*A senior at Allentown High School, Rachel has always been interested in writing. Her poems and essays have been published in local newspapers, as well as her school's literary/art magazine, Impressions. Rachel intends to major in English and Spanish in college, and hopes to attend the University of Virginia.*

## The Age of Innocence

Patience was never a virtue I had perfected; however, I doubted that many seven-year-olds had mastered the art. Intrigued, I bounced anxiously on my tiptoes as my father dragged a massive cardboard box across the threshold of the kitchen. Could this be the new special edition Barbie Dream House? Or was it a shiny, scarlet bicycle? The potential that the box held was intoxicating. In a quick, fluid motion- though not swift enough for me- I watched as my father retrieved a knife, sliced through the cardboard exterior, and revealed a miniature piano. Abandoned were the candy-coated fantasies of Barbie Dream Houses and bicycles, as an unparalleled sense of awe saturated all forty-eight inches of my being.

Aware that he possessed an audience- albeit small- my father removed the piano from the sea of “packing peanuts” and pressed a series of buttons. Instantly, the harmony of Disney’s Aladdin’s *A Whole New World* emanated from the piano. I studied his fingers intently, observing his hands as they swooped artfully across the keys, diving to meet each note. Enchanted by the beauty of the music, I begged my father to “play it again!” at the end of each “performance.”

As time passed, the piano adopted the air of last year’s Cabbage Patch Kid. On rare occasions, however, my father’s interest in the instrument was renewed. It was on one of those lucky days that I noticed something I initially had missed. Though the Aladdin tune played, my father’s fingers did not touch the keys. Instead, they hovered above them, skimming the color-blocked surfaces. It was then that I realized that my father was not playing, and had never truly played the song himself. Rather, with the push of a button, he produced a pre-recorded version of the song I knew so well. This epiphany triggered two understandings. The first: my father was by no means a pianist. The second: I was far more gullible than I had believed myself to be.

How many times had I been duped by those around me? Was there really a monster hiding under my bed as my cousin told me? Would a watermelon begin to grow in my stomach if I ate just one seed, as my sister claimed? Unsuspecting and taken aback, I could not find the difference between fact and fabrication.

Children possess the priceless talent of listening without judging, coexisting without forming prejudices, and believing without suspecting. The mind of a child holds no vacancy for doubt. Conversely, upon maturation, sentiments of awe and innocence change. They do not diminish, but are instead heightened; the catalyst that once stimulated these feelings is not provoked with the same ease.

Age brings with it the gravity of responsibility. Too easily, this acquired seriousness causes the simple joys and whimsicalities of life to go unnoticed. However, as I have learned, bliss can be found simply by listening to music as it plays, without knowing who is playing it. As I grow, I am subsequently “trading in” that miniature piano for a grand one, all the while knowing that it is always okay to tinker with the miniature one...even if it “has the air of last year’s Cabbage Patch Kid.”



## Tiger Cub

**Chelsea Toscano**  
Nottingham High School  
Grade 11

*Chelsea creates art in a variety of media.  
She uses art as a getaway and to just relax.  
Chelsea also enjoys sports, especially soccer.*

Rachel Narozniak

## Wanderlust

Wanderlust is opportunity. It is the yearning simply to go, to leave without an anticipated return date, or determined destination. By formal definition, wanderlust is “the intense desire to travel about.” It is an overwhelming need to escape, traverse, and rove. The ten letters of the word “wanderlust” glide off the tip of the tongue blissfully, and are sharpened by the quiet hiss of the “s” that trails behind eight other letters, producing a sound similar to the whisper of the engine of the airplane that has not yet departed.

Wanderlust is raw desire. It is the stack of Condé Nast travel magazines worn at the seams from incessant browsing. It is the ever-growing list entitled “places to visit.” More importantly, it is the chance to begin again, to drift aimlessly and stumble upon the idea of self-recreation where it would be least expected.

In foreign lands, reputations are unknown, as are names. The remote nature of these places and the absence from the usual social circle is the outlet for the exploration of a person’s true self. There is the freedom to become a different person entirely, or to re-examine the depths of the soul. The discovery of self is not characterized by the study of a road map, but rather by a bent and twisted course drawn by the traveler. Ideally it should be beautiful, yet appropriately bumpy in design. Any path taken should reflect the deep yearning to meander. Travel, after all, would never be pursued if wanderlust were not so impatient or urging.

Wanderlust is liberation. With experience comes the understanding that the mind is the camera that captures the essence of any scene. Digital photographs and video footage rob any trip of sincere appreciation. The focus must not be on the still shots to be later printed and framed, but on the gnawing sense of wanderlust that caused the plunge into the unfamiliar. Travel is not defined by gimmicky T-shirts, postcards, and pictures; it is not preserved through the superficial capturing of moments. It is the remembrance — simply by memory — of the way a person felt when present in that place. For those who wonder if memory is enough to retain a vivid image, the only advice that can be given is: make the moment unforgettable.

A life devoid of such innate desire to see this world is one of complacency and monotony. Remaining in the same place without leaving at least once to explore the borders beyond home is a sin.

Every person is walking a different path, following a different road; however, paths may never widen and roads may never diverge if boundaries are not pushed. Horizons may be expanded only through new experiences and encounters.

Wanderlust calls to the traveler in everyone. It beckons and gestures impatiently to unfamiliar places that beg to be explored. Wanderlust is anxious and unrelenting. Wanderlust saves souls.

**Kayla Newman**

Allentown High School  
Grade 12

*Kayla Newman attends Allentown High School and plans to attend college this fall to study psychology and elementary education. She enjoys expressing her creativity through writing and dance.*

**Hope**

The biting cold slips down my back,  
She is clothed in vibrant yellows  
and twinkles like the morning sun.  
She walks a step in front of you  
offering encouragement along the way.  
She believes that all struggles in life  
will be made better.  
She is the light at the end of the tunnel,  
always cheering you on.  
She looks for the good in the world  
as she wipes away your tears.

**Lockers****Alba Gamboa**

Hightstown High School  
Grade 9

*Alba is in 9th grade at Hightstown High School. She enjoys taking pictures and doing new things. She loves to read and the class she most enjoys is her photo imaging class.*



**Vaibhav Pahwa**

Lawrence High School  
Grade 11

*Vaibhav is an avid reader and tennis player hoping to make the most of his high school career.*

## All I see

All I see is C's  
I feel like I am drowning in a sea of C's  
When my parents came from the motherland  
They hoped for 3 letters--- M-I-T  
Instead I gave them 3--- I-T-T  
When I think of my grades  
All I can say is P-U  
And on the Horizon  
I see a D  
Which leads me to another 3 letters  
C-C-C



## The Dragon

**Kyle Lang**  
Steinert High School  
Grade 11

*Kyle Lang is a 16 year old nature photographer.  
He is told by many people that his art shouldn't go unnoticed.*

**Tricia Parent**

Nottingham High School  
Grade 11

*Tricia is a junior at Nottingham. She is in honors English. She enjoys the theatre, music, and making short films.*

## The Hazards of Love

I was afraid.  
I saw things children shouldn't.  
I remember the fights,  
I thought he'd hurt me too.  
And that's what has changed me.

I grew up  
Not knowing how to trust  
Or how to love.  
They are two things I will never comprehend.

But I am stronger now,  
Not so afraid.

I refuse to end up like her,  
Staying with a man just to fight off loneliness.  
I will be different.  
I will rewrite my destiny  
And I will learn the things they never taught me.  
I will be better.

**Noah Parishy**

Lawrence High School  
Grade 12

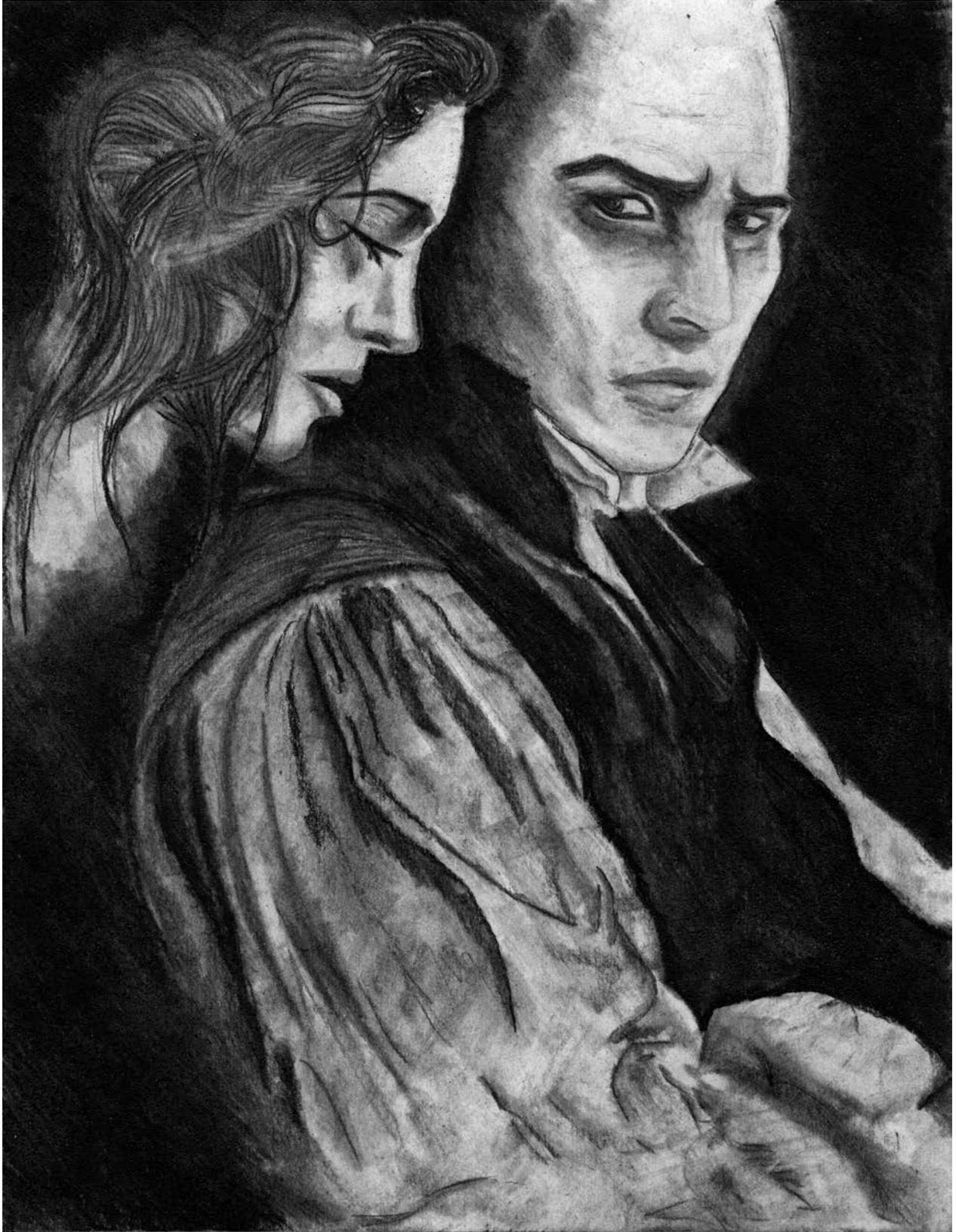
*Noah is a senior at Lawrence High School who enjoys playing drums and plans on going to college for business.*

## Ode To My Brain

Ode to my brain for without you I would be useless  
A blob of flesh not knowing who or what they are  
Unable to comprehend the fact that they cannot comprehend  
You give me inspiration, frustration, sadness, happiness and everything in between  
You are my personality, my lack of, you know me better than anyone I know

Although I don't remember the first few years of my life, you pulled me through  
You helped me tie my shoes for the first time, and taught me how to ride a bike  
You showed me how to read and got me through twelve years of school  
You taught me right from wrong, and left from right  
Ode to you for without you I would be useless

You have a funny way of forgetting things, especially when they matter most  
However, I can't criticize you without criticizing myself, for you and I are one the same  
If you really think about it what are we all other than a bunch of brains interacting  
through our human shells  
Ode to you for writing this poem  
Ode to you for without you I would be useless



**Geneva Pfefferkorn**

Allentown High School  
Grade 12

*Geneva Pfefferkorn is a senior at Allentown High School. She plans to attend college next year to major in English (Writing Arts), with a concentration in Creative Writing. She enjoys walking and hiking, being one with the Earth.*

**Aspects of Love**

Love:  
A wondrous feeling.

And yet, I'm lost  
In lust

For him.

He knows me  
And  
He doesn't know,  
But I do.

He told me.

I want him to mean it.

I want someone to.

And someone who won't hurt me.

All I want  
Is him.

Love:

A deathly trap.

And yet, I'm lost  
In love,  
In thought,  
In desire  
For her.  
To be near her.

She knows me  
But  
She doesn't know,  
And I do.  
I can't tell her.

I very much want to.

I would mean it.

I wouldn't hurt her.

I couldn't.

All I want  
Is her.

(left)

**Sweeny Todd****Mackenzie Mauro**

Hightstown High School  
Grade 11

*Mackenzie enjoys drawing and watching her creativity come through in her work.*

**Celaine Sackey**  
Princeton High School  
Grade 10

*Celaine is an outgoing person who loves to express her ideas on papers. She finds that is the easiest way for others to understand what makes her tick. She enjoys subjects such as biology, chemistry, history, and algebra but creative writing has always been a hobby that she wanted to improve on.*

*Imitation Poem*

## A letter to you, From Celaine Sackey

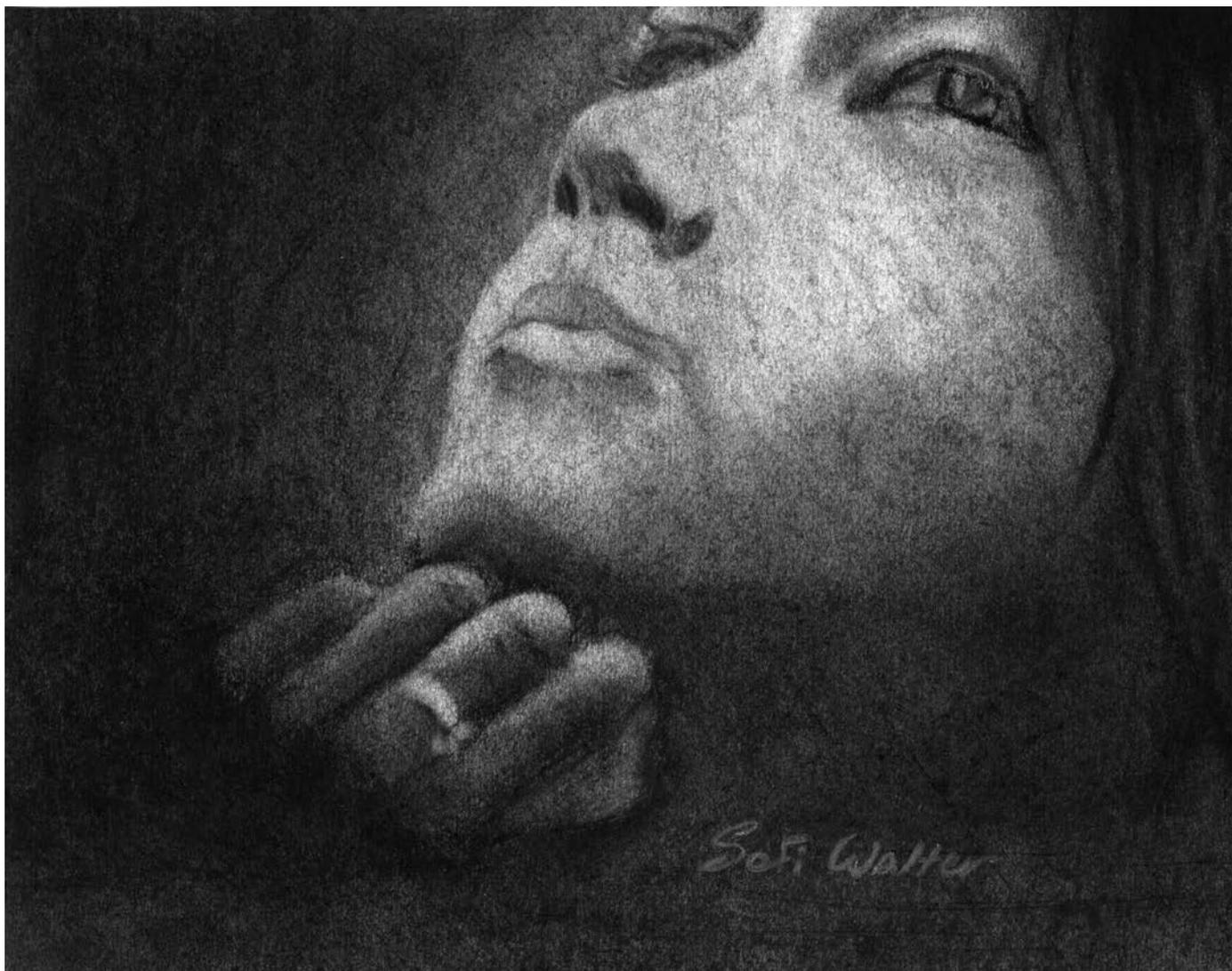
Maybe you have concrete in your mouth  
and when you talk, the concrete shoots out.  
Maybe that is why others are hurt when they talk to you.  
I know people have legs that fall asleep.  
If those people can't run free, their legs hurt more and more.  
Until finally they swing out their legs and they become bullets.  
Then they hit others, who never expected it.  
Maybe you think people's hearts are clay.  
And you can mold it and squeeze it as much as you want.  
Then when you get bored, you toss it somewhere.  
Then one day you accidentally find it,  
and that clay heart has turned into a rock hard ball.  
Yet my heart stayed soft when you said I was dirty,  
just because I like to run without shoes.  
I told you, I enjoyed feeling the vibrations streaming from the earth.  
That over seven billion on this earth are running too,  
feeling the vibrations, made from other's footsteps as well.  
My mother told me, one of the hardest things to do is to connect with others.  
So, I wonder if you are just still trying to find your own way of connecting.  
But you keep pressing harder on the heart instead of freeing your grip.  
All that concrete in your mouth must weigh you down.  
So you must have to pull others down with you,  
to try and slow you down.  
But you have to ignore their pleas to let go, so you to stay above.  
Though I feel, if you ask for others to pull you up,  
you and them will not fall through the ground.  
In fact, maybe they could hoist you above their heads,  
because we all know, the greatest warrior,  
can't beat a united army.  
So I have to ask,  
are you tired of fighting yet?  
Because the human body can only take so many punches.  
In fact boxers worry more about internal bleeding than any other injury.  
So how long have you been wounded where no one can see?  
My injuries from you healed a long time ago.  
Now when I see you, I don't put up my fist.  
I wave my hand to you and tell you, life can be dirty,  
and that it is other's job to clean it up.  
Maybe that is why humans live in groups.  
So call me anytime,  
because I have a mop.  
Sincerely, yours.

## Vogue

**Anastasia Jimenez**  
Hamilton West High School  
Grade 11

*Anastasia paints things that will catch the eye. She enjoys realism and is inspired by the music she listens to and the world around her.*





## Untitled

**Sofi Walter**

Hamilton West High School

Grade 12

*Sofi enjoys attempting to make her art appear as if it is jumping off the paper into the real world, she draws her inspiration from everything around her.*

**Alyssa Sargent**

Allentown High School  
Grade 11

*Alyssa Sargent enjoys creative writing and spending time with her family. She plays soccer and also does track, in which she hurdles and sprints. Alyssa writes because it allows her to create something entirely her own, entirely to her liking.*

## Leaf Fall

Fall has a beauty that cannot be captured by camera. In a picture there is no indication of a cool breeze, no wind chimes clinking softly in the background. Such a photograph would merely be a snapshot, fleeting and limited. It is a strange thing to imagine how easy it is to forget this splendor, even when standing in it. There is no second thought when running into the leaf-strewn grass—perhaps for a game of baseball, as I found myself doing with my two brothers one day—without sparing a moment to look at the cloudless sky.

The three of us had decided to play a quick game due to the perfect weather. Winter was approaching, and we took every chance we could to spend the remaining days outside. After setting out the bases, which were worn from use and streaked with dirt, we began playing. We switched positions evenly, taking our turns as pitchers, batters, and outfielders. I changed teams every inning in order to make the game fair. By a stroke of luck, I managed to make it to second base. With my younger brother pitching the spongy, pale yellow ball, my twin got up to bat.

I had never mastered the concentration necessary for baseball; often I found my mind wandering or my gaze fixed on a bird gliding over the treetops. For this particular game I felt especially distracted. I waited on the base, absentmindedly watching the pitches. A strong gust of wind knocked a dozen leaves away from their precarious perches, and one fluttered very near to me.

“Try to catch a leaf!” I called to my brothers, already stepping off second base. They skeptically abandoned the baseball equipment for a moment, and we moved near to the base of the tree. With our necks craned back as we waited for further wind, we listened to the warbling cries of birds and the hushed rustling

of foliage. The leaves fell like a loose smattering of raindrops, and the game quickly turned into a laughing, riotous competition, the three of us shoving one another out of the way for each new leaf. They were evasive, dodging our hands and twisting in unexpected patterns through the air. Tiny burgundy leaves, brown leaves shriveling and crumpled, tawny leaves with rough edges, they fell in endless shades.

We kept count of our catches, and during the lulls we tossed the yellow ball into the thick branches to shake away a new round of leaves. The goals of the game were simple. Managing to grab hold of one leaf in a round was lucky, while two was exceptional. Timing was essential: the leaves fell slowly, and if they dropped from one of the tree’s soaring boughs, they could be caught with ease.

My brothers called a return to the baseball game eventually, but I kept my eyes on the tree for some time. The sun caught on the leaves, which were outlined against the heavens in a delicate pattern, and turned the dark colors to life. The tongues of golden light filtered onto the grass, and I felt truly appreciative of the moment.

A photograph of that day might show the three of us, smiles frozen on the glossy paper, hands outstretched to a leaf fixed in the air. But the laughs cannot be heard, and the leaf is forever immobile—there is no way of knowing who caught it, if at all. A snapshot. The carefree expressions tell a small part of a story that was merely what it appeared to be on the surface. But deeper, it meant something much more.



## Cycles

**Hannah Solomon**

Hopewell Valley Central High School

Grade 12

*Hannah loves to push her creative boundaries through her art, music, and writing. In an attempt to disguise the incredible speed at which time is passing, Hannah plays violin, swims, lifeguards, and teaches swim lessons.*

**Hannah Solomon**

Hopewell Valley Central High School  
Grade 12

*Hannah loves to push her creative boundaries through her art, music, and writing. In an attempt to disguise the incredible speed at which time is passing, Hannah plays violin, swims, lifeguards, and teaches swim lessons.*

## Operation Striped Shirt

“There he is!”

Fingers point and eyes strain for a glimpse of red-and-white stripes, but as soon as it looks as though he'll finally be caught, a gaggle of teenagers or a fast-moving mob of tourists ensures that Waldo is nowhere to be found. This is just another day in the middle of one of the largest and most infamous manhunts in history: a twenty-five-year search for the man in the striped shirt, a character so notorious that even little children know his name. Waldo. Why do we look for him? No one really knows. Maybe he stole a loaf of bread and broke his parole. Whatever the case, we have all become Javert in pursuit of this mischievous Jean Valjean, and one thing is certain: we will not rest until we've found our culprit. As members of the top-secret government-run agency known as WINK (Waldo Investigative National Komitee), we would like to assure everyone that this situation has been highly investigated and is under control. We will keep you updated as to Waldo's whereabouts. Please call 1.800.555.FIND.WALDO to report a sighting.

October 31, Paris- a French rebel group has announced that they know the whereabouts of the rogue known as Waldo. Speculation has arisen that he is a spy, an insurgent sent out to collect highly classified information. Others state he is simply an innocent citizen caught in the wrong place at the wrong time. However, the question still stands: why are we after him in the first place? Should we be trying to protect him or ourselves? Is this another case of Jason-Bourne-like confusion, in which a government agent makes one wrong decision and spends years running from the Doctor Frankenstein that created him? Maybe we should call him in for a talk.

November 8, New York City, NY – BREAKING NEWS – A major power outage at FAO Schwarz has drawn attention to a fingerprint left on a fuse box. A shred of red-and-white striped fabric was also found caught in the hinges of the box. Apparently, a trickster intending to cause panic switched off power to the building but failed to account for the fact that he, too, would be caught in the dark. Most intriguingly, a match for the fingerprint has been found in the CIA's database. CIA Director David Petraeus was unavailable for comment on this issue. The name of the suspect has not been released. An anonymous source on the street outside the CIA's Office of Public Affairs in Washington, DC commented on the situation:

“Frankly, we're all mortified that someone from inside the agency would stoop to such levels. I'm sure there's been some sort of a mix-up; I wouldn't be surprised if foul play was involved.” (When asked for his sources, the man replied, “Twitter.”)

December 12, Langley, VA – Six WINK agents have been evicted from CIA headquarters after an attempt to hack the fingerprint database. The offending parties were found with screwdrivers, headlamps, and WINK security badges; they were escorted out of the building by armed security guards. Apparently, members of WINK do not have the level of clearance needed to even set foot in the lobby. As a spokesperson for WINK, in a classic case of corporate denial, I would like to state that the six individuals were acting on their own and that their conduct does not represent the thoughts, programs, or views of WINK.

January 1, Chicago, IL – BREAKING NEWS – We've just been notified by three University of Chicago students that the Waldo craze is a hoax. *Where's Waldo* is, in fact, a series of books for children; “Waldo” is the name of the character that wears a red-and-white striped sweater, round glasses, and a floppy red-and-white hat. Where's Waldo? He's on every page. It's the observer's job to find him in large crowds of people. NITWIT (the New Investigative Team for Waldo Interrogation Tactics, formerly WINK) is looking into the source of the false information. An unnamed informant has given us a tip that the program was started by the CIA to train children as would-be agents. More on this developing story when we find our cameraman.

**Amy Song**

Princeton High School  
Grade 9

*Amy Song is a ninth grade student at Princeton High School. She aspires to be a doctor when she grows up and writes in her free time.*

**A Fateful Ending**

*(Based on Homer's Odyssey – In the eyes of the priest Leodes)*

As the legendary bow made its way to the dirty old beggar, we all burst out into an ugly uproar through the palace. Even I, the well-mannered priest, could not help but to scoff at the beggar's actions. Suppliants' rights were sacred, but the bow belonged in the hands of a person of noble blood, such as ourselves. So we mocked the beggar mercilessly, yet the stranger paid no attention to our malicious words. The suppliant gazed longingly at the bow, like how a castaway finally sees his relatives for the first time in years, after numerous trials and obstacles, upon his day of return. He easily arched the bow, and strung the mighty structure, that had failed to yield to any of us before. As he plucked the string of the bow effortlessly, it sang out clear and sharp as a swallow's cry. Our faces paled with pure terror, as we watched the scene unravel before us. The stranger coolly retrieved an arrow lying inside the quiver, and positioned it on the notch of the bow. Drawing the bowstring back, his long fingers released the string to send an arrow sailing from the bow. The slender arrow flew cleanly through all twelve of the axes. I panicked; who was this feeble-looking man, who had deceived us with his soiled rags and wrinkled face? Was he one of the powerful immortals, sent to spy on our reckless ways that I so despised? Or was he a mere wanderer who had happened to have years of experience in archery? When Telemachus strode up

next to the stranger clad in tattered rags grasping a spear tightly, bathing in his own hard-earned glory, my heart froze over like how the morning frost envelops a blade of grass in cold weather. I clearly perceived the fatal sign in front of us.

Only those arrogant men around me could not foresee our inevitable doom.

"What madness is this! A mere beggar can string the bow, but we cannot?"

"Lord Antinous' plan to grease the bow did work after all!" A man next to me exclaimed.

Immediately, our greedy and ill-bred leader, Antinous, was the first to die. Before anybody could move or speak, the man of action lifted his bow and shot an arrow. The arrow found its grisly mark in the center of Antinous' throat. With a bloody gargle and gasp, the man's crumpled body tumbled over, knocking over the dining table where we would gorge ourselves with food and wine at dinner. Ha! An arrow through throat would definitely shut the noisy fellow up for good! The dimwitted men around me only wheeled on the stranger, cursing him for killing their leader. I shook my head at their ignorance. With a great shout, Odysseus finally revealed his true identity to the suitors who clearly did not suspect anything before. I, the wise seer Leodes, had already anticipated this moment. Gathering the ends of my long robe, I shoved my way through the white-faced suitors, and made my way

to the back of the large crowd. Looking behind my shoulder to make sure that no man was looking, I quickly scrambled under a wine table that was covered by a white cloth. I shifted my legs so that they were tucked comfortably under my body. Arching my back, I peered through a small slit in the table cloth to observe the events unfolding in front of me.

Eurymachus, that blind fool, tried to placate the god-like Odysseus. I faintly heard Eurymachus speak about replenishing all that we ate and drank inside the king's halls. I snickered in amusement; as if Odysseus would forgive them for courting his alluring wife. As I had envisioned, Odysseus continued to glare and seethe at the men. The chattering of the frightened suitors distorted my hearing, but I saw Eurymachus turn back to the suitors. The battle began when Eurymachus raised his fist to rile the suitors. In an instant, an arrow became lodged in Eurymachus' liver. A slow and painful demise was what the man deserved.

Amphinomus was the next to fall. He charged the king with a sharp sword in his hand, but was stopped when, surprisingly, young Telemachus stabbed him between his shoulders from behind. I looked away, shaking my head in pity. Amphinomus was a bright boy, who had a promising future. I often found enjoyment in making small conversations with him. He was one of the few men among us who had sense from right or wrong.

Although why he was associated with them, I was not sure. In fact, sometimes I wondered why I gotten myself involved with these swaggering suitors. Was it the captivating lure of the lovely-haired Penelope? Or was it the enticement of all of the wealth and food in the palace? Whatever my reasons were, I still differentiated my motives and actions from the other suitors.

I was forced out of my own thoughts when I saw the goatherder Melanthius rush by me. By the direction he was headed in, it seemed as if he was rushing to the storeroom where all of the palace's weapons and armor were stored. I wrinkled my nose in disgust for his actions. I never really liked that man. While all the other men absolutely adored the fact that he was there to cater to their every need, I always thought that he was too nice, too unpredictable, and too capable of changing loyalties in the blink of an eye. Men like him warranted a ghastly and miserable ending.

However, our numbers were slowly being reduced to nothing. As I witnessed more and more of the suitors being cut down ruthlessly by king Odysseus and his comrades, my mind almost burst with anxiety and fear. Should I come out under from the table and throw my arms around the Odysseus' knees to beg for mercy? Or should I stand back to negotiate calmly with the king? Remembering Eurymachus' futile attempt to pacify the king, I

chose to beg for my life.

Lifting the ends of the cloth and crawling out from under the table, I flung myself at Odysseus, and wrapped my arms around his muscular knees. I described to the mastermind of war, how I had never touched or harassed a single woman in his household, unlike the other men who slept around with the maids. I even included how I had tried to restrain the other lustful suitors from doing so. Although this was not entirely true, I prayed that with these words, Odysseus would have taken pity on me. However, Odysseus was not swayed, as he remained silent in fury.

"But I was just their prophet – my hands are clean – and I'm to die their death!" I pleaded desperately, but to of no avail.

The murderous gleam remained in Odysseus' eyes. With a piercing stare, the king accused me of courting his wife, and claimed that I had prayed that he would never return to his native land. My heart pounded like how a desperate warrior frantically knocks on the wooden door of a peasant's house on a rainy day, in need of food and water, because he has been deserted by his comrades. And so how fast my heart pulsed, terrified and aghast that Odysseus, as noble and kind as people described him to be, would not spare me.

The great tactician snatched a heavy bronze sword from the ground that I

recognized to be Agelaus'. With a deafening yell, he slashed down at my neck. I squeezed my eyes shut, and braced myself for the strike. In my head, I wondered how my fate could have been different if I chose to separate myself from the suitors. I would have lived a long and prosperous life, and died a peaceful and noble death. Perhaps in another life, I could redeem myself. Accepting my gruesome death, I kept my eyes closed and waited to join my loved ones in the Underworld. The blade of the sword hacked me square across the neck, and I was met with a blinding pain throughout my body. The pain soon faded away, and a serene darkness shrouded my sight. Odysseus was still merciful to me; at least my death was quick. We the suitors, who had depleted Odysseus' kingdom of all of its previous glory, deserved to die. Zeus, the one who marshals the thunder, had decreed our deaths from the very beginning. Justice was served.

**Mikayla Storey**

Allentown High School  
Grade 12

*Mikayla is a student that works hard in and out of the classroom. While taking AP and honors classes, she has also done a variety of extracurricular activities including youth group, youth group band, student council, the musical and coaching cheerleading. She hopes that one day she will be able to publish a novel.*

## Fear

Fear.  
Cold sweat creeps up,  
My hands begin to shake.  
My stomach is in knots,  
Everything's at stake.  
Scared.  
My pulse quickens,  
It's hard to catch my breath.  
The darkness approaches,  
I feel scared to death.  
Afraid.  
Not sure what's around the corner.  
What lurks beneath the bed?  
Nothing can be worse,  
Than the monsters in my head.

(right)

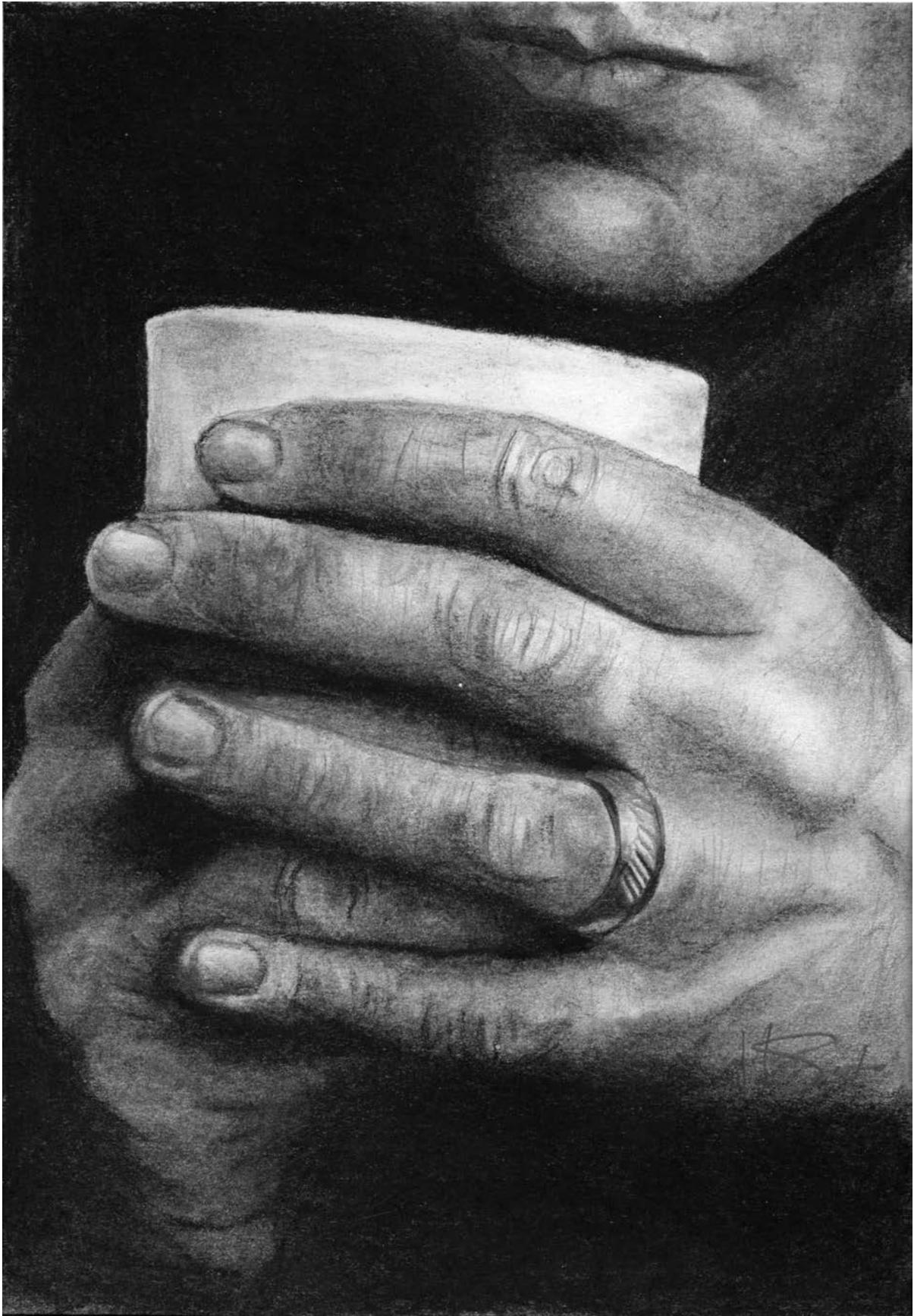
## Eye of the Cheetah

**Bridget Doolittle**

Nottingham High School  
Grade 12

*Bridget loves creating art, both visual and literary. She is very involved in her school as a member of many clubs, organizations, and sports teams. Though she does not plan on taking up an artistic career, she will definitely involve the arts in her everyday life.*





**Isabella Tupaj**

Lawrence High School  
Grade 11

*Isabella, in her free time, likes to listen to music and be creative. This process helps her relax.*

## The World Inside Me

Emotions moving left and right  
I hold them close  
And pull them tight  
I try to find which way to go  
But even my head can't help me so  
Sometimes it's cold deep inside here  
Feeling connected with all my fears  
They pull me down to the darkest place  
But then I realize there is nothing to waste  
Take a breath and relax the mind  
Because I know everything will align  
There's a burst within me so  
It straightens my spine and lets me go  
With a smile on my face bigger than the sky  
It whispers to me  
Everything will be just fine.

(left)

## Content

**Valerie Suto**

Nottingham High School  
Grade 12

*Valerie has a passion for the arts and softball. She will continue to play softball and study in the arts in college. She plans on becoming a graphic design artist.*

**Gabrielle Wickizer**

Hightstown High School  
Grade 10

*Gabrielle “Gaby” Wickizer, a sophomore at Hightstown High School, is a very active student both in and out of school. She enjoys being vice president of her grade and being a part of student government, drama club, and mock trial. With ambitions to get her doctorate, Gaby realizes the long road ahead and welcomes the challenge.*

## A Place as Bright as You

I couldn’t keep the smile off my face as I watched my twenty two year old brother dance around his newly emptied room singing – well, trying to sing – Adele’s Rolling in the Deep, with my twenty year old sister singing back up. They sang and danced, trying to get me to let loose and join along. It took my sister’s forceful yank to get me to give into their silly ways and embrace the winds of change.

The age difference between my siblings and me – seven and five years – has led to my rapid maturity and a feeling of always needing to keep up with the group. When I was younger, between karate and ballet, it was homework and the news. Between softball practice and Girl Scouts, were my brother and sister’s awards nights. I seemed to always be running to keep up and hold my own in my family – a unique thing to have to do as a six or seven year old.

Last spring, my brother permanently moved out of our family’s home to move into an apartment in Hoboken – the place to be for a “young urban professional.” His room sat pristine for months like my mother’s shrine to him. Every time I entered his room – which I tried not to do often – I was reminded by the certificates and the diplomas on the walls, what he had done and what I had to live up to.

That was until one day when my mom came to talk to me about moving into my brother’s old room. Many would say yes to this offer in a heartbeat – the chance to moving into a larger room with new paint and furniture. I didn’t. I mulled over the idea of whether I wanted to move into my brother’s room, whether I wanted to step into his shoes, whether I wanted to accept this whirlwind of change as my life.

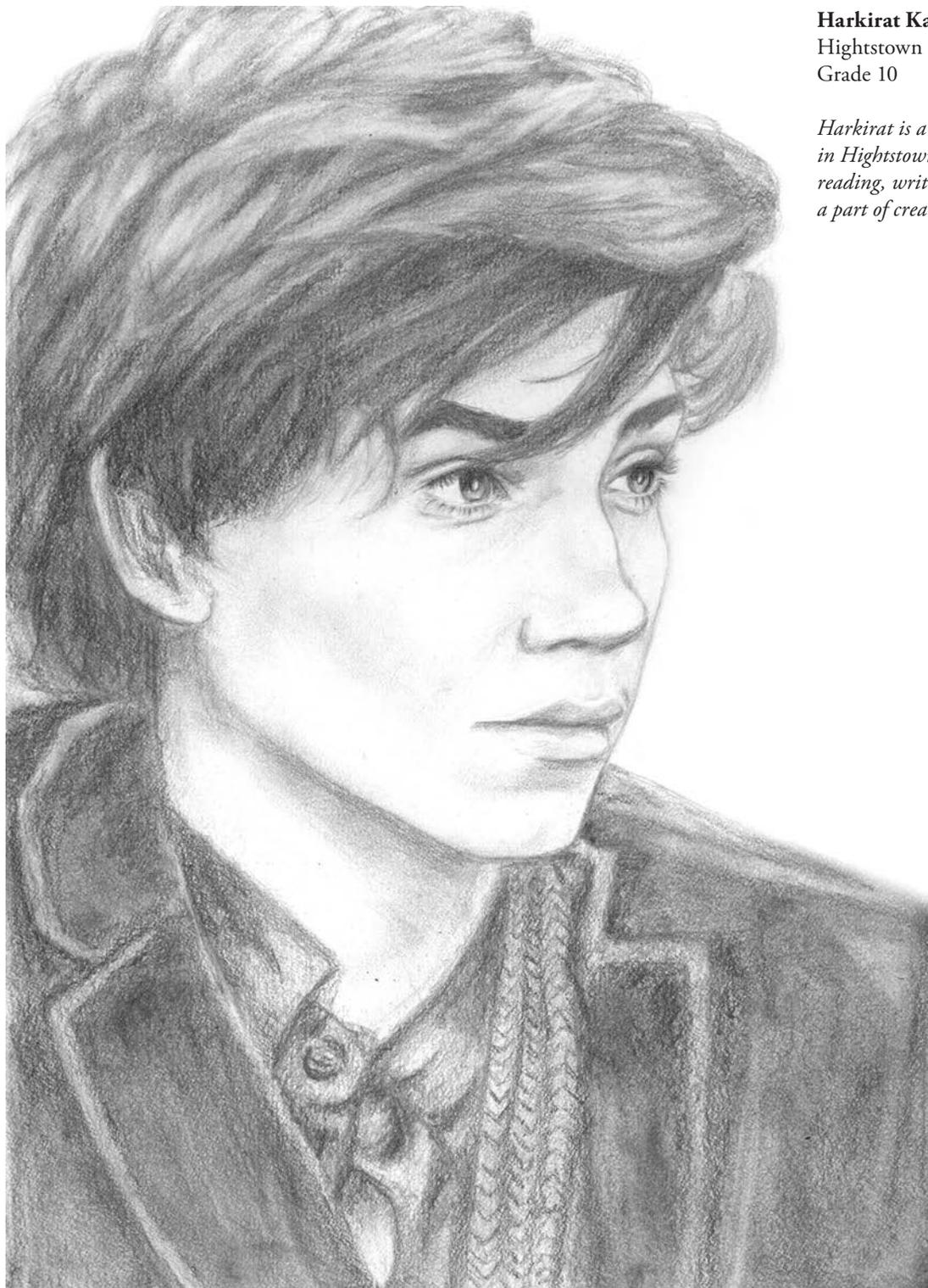
I took a month to make my decision, and, in truth, I did not make it alone. One night as I sat in my room doing homework, I got a text message from my brother. I was stumped upon opening it: all it was a picture of Time Square alive at night. Clarification came moments later in the form of another text. It read, “This is what you work for.” In that moment – as cheesy as it may sound – I knew what I wanted. I wanted that life – the big city, success, freedom – but I wanted it my way. I didn’t want to assume my brother’s identity – or my sister’s for that matter. I wanted to shine as myself and have my own life that wasn’t the mature façade I put up.

So I decided to move rooms and overhaul what was. I changed the dreary blue walls to bright orange ones in an attempt to revive that room and make it my own: to make a place where I could be me. I wanted to create a place that I could step into and not be reminded of what was

expected of me or what I had to live up to, but who I am and what I am: a sixteen year old girl.

I believe in a bright orange painted room – or yellow, or red, or blue, any color of your liking. I believe in a space where you can be free and let loose. I believe in a place to dance around and sing at the top of your lungs with no care in the world. A space to decorate with quotes like “Life is a great big canvas and you should throw all the paint you can at it,” and “Be the change you wish to see in the world,” just to make you smile. A space to embrace being young.

Nowadays, the marks of his furniture are still there but they are a shadow of what they used to be. The new taking over the old has become the ever present theme of my life and I am better for it. Becoming my own self and embracing my uniqueness is now what is shaping my life: just the way I like it.



## Union George

**Harkirat Kang**  
Hightstown High School  
Grade 10

*Harkirat is a 10th grade Honors student in Hightstown High School. She enjoys reading, writing, drawing, and being a part of creating anything.*

**Nicole Wright**

Allentown High School  
Grade 12

*Nicole Wright enjoys writing short stories and reading novels. She has always expressed a joy for writing. In her spare time, Nicole enjoys attending black powder muzzle loading competitions.*

## And the Best Actress Is...

The dust rises  
like a stampede of wild horses  
rushing, trying to escape danger

The dust acts  
like a fog making it difficult  
to see the source of the storm

The dust is suffocating  
like the heavy smoke of a fire  
entrapping a frightened child

The dust mimics all these things  
like an experienced actress  
performing in a play

(right)

## Ellen Page

**Kenneth Kaneshiro**  
Hightstown High School  
Grade 11

*He hopes that art may help  
him realize a purpose.*





## Tangled

**Hannah Solomon**

Hopewell Valley Central High School  
Grade 12

*Hannah loves to push her creative boundaries through her art, music, and writing. In an attempt to disguise the incredible speed at which time is passing, Hannah plays violin, swims, lifeguards, and teaches swim lessons.*

Nicole Wright

## Scatter

Scatter  
The round stone eye,  
The smudge of trees,  
    On the horizon  
The end of beginnings,  
The end of clouds,  
The end of difficult words,  
    That anchor the hand to the paper  
Begin again,  
And again,  
    The right to burn,  
The right to live,  
The flat paper in your hands,  
You choose,  
    To begin or end  
Begin again,  
Learn your thoughts,  
Train your mind,  
Always feeling scattered.

**Zaynab Zaman**

Princeton High School

Grade 11

*Zaynab aspires to become a writer, and major in Journalism in college. Although she never liked poetry, her class requirements to write it have allowed her to find comfort in it.*

### 3 Selves

**Past**

Tall girls pass me  
shiny high heels clicking on the hard floor  
Short skirts sway in the breeze  
delicate shirts add elegance to their frames as  
Colorful scarves drape over their necks  
Long earrings move as they throw their heads back, laughing at private jokes.  
Their lips and cheeks sparkle in the sunlight.  
They close their eyes, and for a split second, a mixture of blues and greens and purples appear.  
I watch in wonder as they walk by me, surrounded by others of their kind.  
They smile down at me, seeing a little girl holding her mother's hand on a crowded street.  
I ache to be a part of them, to be just like these sublime, alien people.  
They are perfect.

**Present**

My shelf, once filled with princess band-aids and Barbie dolls,  
now holds eyeliners and earrings, sparkling in the light.  
My closet no longer holds dozens of puffy party dresses,  
instead harboring artfully faded jeans, filmy scarves and fashionable sweaters.  
This is my life.

**Future**

She walks along 5th avenue, heels clacking on the pavement.  
Her eyes are subtly made up, and her vibrant green dress is falls over her shoulders and waist,  
cutting her figure elegantly.  
Passer-bys guess she is in her mid-twenties, watching as she pulls out an article she has yet to edit.  
Her every motion is graceful as she reaches into her purse, jostling her delicate scarf and leather jacket to select a pen.  
She stops in front of a glass building, moving her angular face to take one last look around.  
She steps in the publishing firm, letting the door close behind her.  
Who is she?  
Me.



## Girl with a Key

**Frank Tuzzolino**  
Hightstown High School  
Grade 11

*Frank has a different perspective of the world. He loves the beauty of nature and all the earth contains and even beyond that.*



## Eye

**Anna Villante**  
Hightstown High School  
Grade 9

*Anna loves taking pictures of eyes, there is just something about each eye that tells a story, or is unique in its own way. Anna would like to pursue a career in cosmetology in a few years, but art is something she would want to fall back on if that did not work out.*

