

SPRING 2022

# Young Southern Student Writers



**Grades 6-12 Prose & Poetry**

CREATED BY THE UTC ENGLISH DEPARTMENT IN  
PARTNERSHIP WITH THE SOUTHERN LIT ALLIANCE

## INTRODUCTION

It is a constant pleasure and privilege to be a part of the Young Southern Student Writers contest, an annual celebration of the literary arts. From interacting with our region's outstanding teachers and facilitating judging at UT-Chattanooga to assembling this collection of winning submissions, the contest is one of my favorite parts of the academic year! The work we do with here is done with an eye towards promoting literacy and the creative energy of emerging writers. The submissions that follow demonstrate exceptionally strong writing while also providing a glimpse into the wild imagination of young minds. Thank you to this year's writers and their teachers. You've given me much to think about, enjoy, and appreciate.

Thank you to Lynda Levan, the Executive Director of the Southern Lit Alliance, for her generosity and support of our area's outstanding young writers. The Southern Lit Alliance and the UTC English Department combine to promote and celebrate the region's literary arts. I am thankful for her collaboration in this contest.

I also want to thank the region's dedicated K-12 teachers who work tirelessly to instill the value of literature and creative writing in young hearts and minds. I am grateful for their efforts as they teach their students to enjoy the art and craft of writing. Without our elementary, middle grades, and high school English/Language Arts teachers along with parents and guardians, we would not have such fine work to celebrate here!

Thanks are also due to this year's contest judges. Every submission is read by a faculty member from the UTC English Department. Our faculty volunteer to serve in this capacity with pleasure. In fact, it is not uncommon to hear faculty sharing submissions that are especially funny, creative, or inspiring. It is another way we contribute to this wonderful city and region.

Finally, thank you to Sarah Cornett and Savannah Neely, two outstanding UTC undergraduate English majors. Sarah and Savannah worked tirelessly to facilitate judging, compile winning submissions, and create this year's digital booklet. They have spent countless hours managing the contest and have done so with patience, grace, and maturity. I am grateful for their hard work and commitment to this project.

Now, without further ado, I hope you'll read and enjoy!

Andrew D. McCarthy  
UC Foundation Associate Professor  
University of Tennessee-Chattanooga  
Chair, Young Southern Student Writers Contest

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# Sixth Grade Prose



## Bud, Not Buddy Epilogue

*I was practicing my saxophone than a sound that sounded like a squirrel screaming because it got stepped on.* I kept on trying but it on making the same noise.

I went downstairs to Steady Eddy to ask him what I was doing wrong but he was not there he was gone like a mice running away from a cook. All miss Thomas was sitting down like she just left an anvil. I ask her where is Steady Eddy she said he is practicing with the band.

I said, "Why did they not bring me"?

"They let you sleep in today," said, miss Thomas.

**Rule 127 of rule and thing to have a better and funner life and not a liar,**  
**if they did not bring you to band practice you better keep your socks on because something big going down".**

I said, "How long will it take for them to get back".

"Around an hour," said, Miss Thomas.

1 hour later "I felt like ten years went by because it felt so long," I said.

"Maybe I should go look for them," I said.

Miss Thomas said, "That would be an excellent idea".

So I went to the stage. It smelled like a dusty old shelf that hasn't been touch in a year.

They were practicing as hard as a rock.

Steady Eddy said, " what is up *sleepy labone*".

"Well I was wondering what I was doing wrong with my sax," said Bud.

I showed him like I was on stage and it was a rich kid's birthday.

"Oh, what you doing wrong is you are blowing the wrong way you had your lip super-wide out instead of squeezed," said steady eddy.

I try it and it worked. "Thank you so much," I said.

I said, "I learned that you have to squeeze your mouth like you are about to yell the word mother when playing the saxophone."

Xander August  
Normal Park Museum Magnet School  
Sara Clarich-Page

## The Rock Springs Buttress

My hands were like ice, stuck in the position I willed them to be in. However, still shaking, I reached for the final hold, hoisting myself up, using my legs to pull me up. My hands felt gravel and rock. I stood up, shaking ever so slightly. I walked up to the anchor. I felt relieved and excited. As I walked up, my foot found loose gravel, not ground. A sharp pang of panic slammed into my chest. No, it wasn't imaginary, it was the ground. I had slipped and was helplessly clawing at the ground, my heart thumping in my chest.

It was 9:00AM On a Sunday morning. I was riding in the back of my mom's jet-black car excited for the day. I have been training all year for this climb: The Rock Springs Buttress. It was a 600-foot cliff, jagged and all. The weather was perfect for the day, a blue sky with only a few wisps of clouds. My mom and I were roughly 5 minutes out from the Jackson Hole Mountain resort. I lived in Jackson Hole, Wyoming for about two years, though it felt like a month since I unwillingly moved from Crested Butte, Colorado. I knew my parents a done it for the best education and all that, but I had friends there, and moving was going to kill my connection to them. I had been in a trance of memories and excitement for so long that I didn't even realize When does sleek black car stopped, and my mom told me. "We're here!"

I greeted my climbing teacher with ease, as though we had done this for all our life, in truth, it felt like we did. We trudged up the hill to the gondola. I hadn't appreciated the beauty of this hulking beast of a ski lift. it was so beautiful, going 1000ft from the summit. We climbed in the gondola after exchanging gear. I took the 60 m rope, my harness, and the belay device, whereas she took all the gear for setting up an anchor. The gondola ride was simply a blur of images flicking by in my field of vision: rocks, snow, people, trees. Again, as if time was repeating itself, I didn't even realize we had made it.

Hours went by. I hadn't even realized. Well, all we did was follow cat track. Nothing special. Just as I thought we were getting closer, we came to a halt at a sharp, jagged cliff at the right-side of the cat track. I thought we would propel thinking. *"This is gonna be awesome! Repelling to start off? No way!"* It was now 2:00, It was a sunny and extremely hot day. My climbing coach and I hadn't repelled, we hiked around the cliff. The first crag climb was easy. Jagged rocks had plenty of hand holds which were very obvious. On the second crag, I had a little more difficulty. I was on a rope, but it was still scary thinking we were so high. The third, fourth, and fifth crags were all the same. I hadn't even realized we reached the summit of the rock!

My climbing teacher had to leave me off-rope for a few seconds. Unfortunately, this was a bad idea. She took me off belay. My legs were rigid like all my muscles had suddenly stopped working. I willed them to take more steps. One particular step, however, was loose gravel. I panicked, my heart swinging out of my chest. I panicked reaching for everything to grab onto. But there were no handholds up here. The cliff took all the handholds for itself. Fortunately, at the very edge, there was one. My lifesaver. I hoisted myself back up, and never, ever trusted gravel again.

I learned a few things from this story: to never trust gravel, or to always sit when off belay. But my main takeaway, after two years of reflecting, was, funnily enough, to never again not double check. What I mean is if you don't double check you are safe, or that you are ready for something, things could go wrong. So, all I have learned, double check! It's a simple

reminder yet it could help anyone if in a tough situation. Am I doing this right? Am I seated correctly? All you need to do is double check.

Reid Bailey  
Baylor School  
Regan Fazio

## The dogs dream come true

(The dog prospective aka Naomi) sadly I don't have a home. I live in a horrible animal shelter with people who don't care, they don't pick up my poo, they don't feed me, nor give me the medicine I need to keep me alive. But the good thing was I had some friendzys first, a mini goldendoodle named buddy and Bailey a golden retriever. I'm a golden doodle!!! Across the animal shelter is a farm. I made a fluffy cow friend too. He was as brown as a bear, even as fluffy as a teddy bear. His name was choccy. They come to see me at the window every day.

At a point in every day, we all go outside and run around the farm. That is one of the best things we ever do at the animal shelter. Today is the day when people come in to see if they want to adopt a dog. I never get chosen. But people do come to see me it makes me soooooo happy. I smile bigger than the grinch does. After a little bit, the crowd started to die down. We all slowly start to fall asleep. Our eyes open and close over again then we all pass... out... asleep.

Then the next day the workers came in at the crack of dawn all the dogs howling like wolves. I woke up slowly with the bright sun shining on my crate. I squinted my eyes. Today was another boring day but people were still coming. There was a guy that came to my window and smiled so big. He came in slowly to the shelter and pet me for 20 minutes. I've never felt so happy. Sadly, he left after a bit but I couldn't say how happy I was. The next day the same guy came and looked at me. The shining sparkle in his eyes was just so beautiful. He couldn't hear what he was really saying but he was talking to an animal shelter person. He came over and simply said, "You are mine little buddy." The next couple minutes he took me out of my cage and put a collar around my neck and a leash connected to my collar. He walked me over to a small beautiful shiny blue old truck.

After We had been driving for a bit we had arrived at a normal size brick house. He took me inside and showed me food and water, even some toys. I got kind of used to being there. His name is Jay. We went outside and played for a while. I noticed he kept saying one word when he looked at me or saw me. "Naomi," he said. I realized that's my name, that's MY name. We went to a fair, I smelt something so fresh and delicious it smelled like heaven "HOT DOGS." I ran like the wind and ate so many hot dogs. I went back trying not to act guilty. I saw a girl standing there near Jay. She was so pretty, with dirty blonde hair and hazel eyes. That night the girl had come home with us.

It had been about 2 months and Jay and Hannah had been dating a while. We went to dinner and we found jay's high school bully Camden he was trying to make jay mad by saying "Oh wow you got yourself your first girlfriend, How can you even afford a dog..." Jay got mad and punched him in the face. It went back and forth . I jumped in and tugged on camdens pants and we left. It turned towards night and I heard footsteps coming from outside sounding like bangs but they were trying to be quiet. I barked at Jay trying to wake him up but it was too late. I couldn't breathe. There was smoke filling the air. I barked and barked louder and louder. Jay finally woke up, more smoke filled the rooms of the house and Jay got up as quick as possible and went out of the room. There was fire on the walls and on the stairs. It spread as quickly as if it was a waterfall of fire. We went to wake up mom and grabbed a sheet as a rope and put it out

the window. Mom climbed first with me and the fire was about to take out Jay and he had only gone half way and jumped.

Then, I caught in the corner of my eye Camden running from the house. I ran as fast as if I were the flash. I leaped to him and tumbled him, he fell over, I bit him and the police came and got me off of him. Jay was in the ambulance and I was with mom. He had broken his leg. The doctor said it would heal up in 2 weeks. Hannah came as quickly as possible to see if Jay was ok. After 2 weeks Jay's leg had healed and Jay and Hannah had been planning their college. They had to leave for college in 1 month. They had to be long distance and they had to leave me for a little while as I watched Jay drive the beautiful eye-catching truck, I ran after him and got lost. I couldn't see him. I kept running trying to get back home. I couldn't find it. I ran out of energy and stopped. I went out in town for a while thinking Jay would find me but he didn't. I ran a bit further the next couple of days to see if I could find my way back home. I ran into a field of grass. I ran with the breeze of the cool air running through my ears and through my nose. I smelt fresh cut grass and fresh cow poop, I KNEW IT I FOUND IT!!! The farm next to Jay's house.

Then, I ran through the door and saw Jay running towards me with joy. "NAOMI" Jay said excitedly, "I thought I'd never see you again." Jay cried. I had started to feel a bit nauseous and my head was pounding like a heartbeat. My eyes were opening and closing. "Naomi? Naomi? You ok wake up..." Jay said, freaking out with a confused tone. All I heard was cars rushing past me and I squinted my eyes. I could hardly see but I was in a car and saw the shiny sun. We stopped and Jay carried me in to somewhere it was a vet. They said "She is so dehydrated and starving," "There's nothing we can do but put her down."

"What no... no...?" Jay said, crying out loud.

"It's for the best," the vet and mom said.

"But..." Jay said stuttering and crying with tears rolling down his face

Finally in conclusion, and so then it was that I lived happily in heaven. I had the best life there was more than just that but it sure was amazing. So always remember you are making a difference in someone's life. Like I did for Jay and he did for me.

Caroline Day  
Hixson Middle School  
John DeVore

## The Girl the Universe Forgot

There is a girl in my school. She...How do I put this? Well she is quiet and very shy more than the average person. She goes by the name Samantha Smith which I thought was a pretty average name at first. She keeps to herself and barely talks to anybody unless she is being forced, some jerks at our high school have been calling her "the mute". I hate this because she seems like a nice girl even though I can't come up with the courage to go talk to her. Every time I try to, I get cold feet and run away. If I haven't made it clear,I have a huge crush on her and I think I'm the only one since she doesn't talk to anybody.

One day I decided to follow her home. We took the same route for most of the walk back home. But halfway through we split and went on our ways. So I pretended to go my way and go home but then went back and followed her. She was taking a very weird route and she walked into a forest, which my town calls the "white forest". She walked in and went to this really bad and broken down house in the middle of the woods. She pulled out her key and went inside. I heard some stepping noises and decided to call it a day and went back home.

But when was in bed I couldn't get her out of my head. The next morning I woke up and got dressed for school. Surprisingly, Samatha wasn't at the bus stop where she usually was, waiting for the bus like I was. I found it a bit shocking but didn't think much of it. However, once I got to school she wasn't in her usual seat..When the professor was calling role he didn't call Samantha's name, so I told him that Samantha wasn't here.As soon as I said this, however, the whole class including the professor looked confused. "Who's that?" I was taken back by this. He said there was nobody by the name "Samantha Smith" in the class. I was very confused as well as surprised by this. After class, I ran to the principal's office in a hurry and asked about her, but she said the same thing: "There is no one by that name here". I was so desperate for somebody to recognize her name. I went around the school asking people if they knew her. Every single person I asked said the same thing: "I don't know her". I was so confused and nervous at the same time. "How does nobody remember her? Was she a figment of my imagination or something?"

But then I remembered that house in the woods she went to. I raced over there right after school. I followed the path and finally found the house. I went inside and there was nothing but trash everywhere.I looked around and it looked like somebody hadn't lived there for years. I looked some more but found nothing. I got out of there and went back home. I was confused. I was about to have a mental breakdown because of everything that had happened.

I woke up in the middle of the night and decided to go to the house again with my flashlight. I walked through the dark woods,hoping not to make any noise. I walked into the house, scared for what may be awaiting me. I opened the creaking door and walked inside the menacing house. I started walking around. I hadn't found anything. I was about to leave when I found this weird document. It looked like a hand-written letter.The letter said: "My name is Samantha Smith. I am writing this letter just in case I disappear or people forget about me. My family has already forgotten which is why I live here in this lonely little place in the middle of nowhere.Slowly people are starting to forget about me. It is as if the universe itself is forgetting I even exist, and everybody who lives in it is also forgetting who I am. If you somehow still

remember me, well, consider me impressed, but the reason I am writing this is for you to spread the word of this weird thing that is going on that nobody knows. Please do this before you also forget about me”.

I was scared and just confused overall. But I wasn't going to let it stop me. I ran home, got on my laptop, and started writing to every news station I could think of to try to complete Samantha's wish. I tried, but none of them picked up my story. I then decided to turn to social media. I shared this story to any platform I could think of. Finally, one post I made went viral and thousands, up to hundreds of thousands, of people saw. I was so happy that I finally was able to complete her wish. I was happy but at the same time sad because even though I managed to complete her wish, I never managed to tell her how I really felt because I was too much of a wimp to do anything. I just hope she is here with me in some way and that she knows just how I feel about her.

Eder Gaytan  
East Ridge Middle School  
Katherine Scott

## The Soil on Skinwalker Ranch

Ford was boarding the helicopter to go run scientific tests on SkinWalker ranch's soil. There had been multiple reports of people getting severely injured after digging on the ranch. *Eret said he'd meet me there after he got back from the hospital... Apparently Thomas's head got worse.* As soon as the helicopter flew above the fence, marking the ranch, the GPS on the helicopter cut out, and so did Ford's phone, as well as the pilot's. "This happens every time when we fly over the ranch. A lot of our equipment comes from an extremely expensive company to avoid this. Bryant Arnold, also known and preferred as 'Dragon' will meet you down there when we land on the helicopter pad," the pilot said, breaking the silence. Ford gave out a shudder but nodded. As soon as they landed a man carrying an AR covered his eyes and walked towards them. Ford jumped out of the helicopter and the man reached out a hand. "Hello, my name is Dragon, Erets on his way back," the man with the AR said. Ford shook his hand, staring at the AR.

Dragon must have noticed because he began talking again, "im head of security, we carry these because we don't know what's out here, and anything could happen, there have been dead animals found with no blood or on or near their carcass, as well as animal mutilations, UFO sightings, strange lights on the massa, shadow figures, and even a few sightings of possible Skinwalkers."

Dragon led him to the RCC, Ranch Command Center, and told him to have a seat so he could explain what they think happens when they dig. "Well, the first time a good friend of ours, Thomas, got on the property he decided to dig after we all told him not to. The next week he had a horrible meningitis. He went to the emergency room and the doctors told him his scalp separated from his skull. Ever since he has had issues with it. We all decided to dig again to find out what caused all the strange things on the ranch. Erik took him to the emergency room a few hours ago, he said they would be here in a few minutes. This is the soil we captured for you to work on."

He lifted his hand to reveal a small bottle with dirt in it. Ford reached out for it, and Dragon dropped it in his hands. He began examining the bottle. "The soil looks dried up... when did you guys dig? Before the rain?" Ford pointed outside where it was pouring. Dragon raised an eyebrow and looked at it, then outside. "That's strange, we directly started digging before it stopped raining to make it easier for the diggers, so unless Erik did something to it, I'm not sure how that happened."

The door swung open and Erik stormed in. He had brown hair, and looked angry. "I said we shouldn't have dug," Dragon said and looked away from Erik and whispered to Ford, "normally he isn't like this, I'd be a fool not to guess that he got in a bad mood because of Thomas."

"I'm ok!" a squeaky voice came from behind Erik. Everyone muttered things like, 'good' and, 'I'm relieved'. Erik waved at Ford with a warm smile, his angry expression changing. "Hi, Ford. I guess you've already met Dragon, our head of security, I'm Erik Bard, 2nd in command of this whole research. This is Thomas Winterton, head of research. Oh! And, he doesn't show up on the Ranch, but our lead is Brandon Fugal." Ford nodded and shook everyone's hands. *Will i end up meeting Mr. Fugal? I think it's strange I haven't met who i'm working for... and why doesn't he come here?* A few more people walked in, a man with an orange beard walked next to Dragon. "Hello Ford. I'm Kaleb Bench." Ford shook his hand.

“You guys arrived late, anyways, Kalebs on the security team, this is Travis S. Taylor, he’s been helpful with all our things, this is Jem Segale, she’s our former landowner, and animal shepherd.”

Everyone greeted each other and Kaleb and Thomas sat next to each other. Everyone exchanged glances, and Erik spoke first. “We need to continue digging, Ford is here to help run tests on the soil.” “No. we are not digging again,” Dragon said as he banged on the desk and made Jem jump. “Thomas, do you think we should dig again?” “Uh. Well, I don't think I'm one to come up with a decision, we should speak with Brandon about this,” Thomas cried, hating to be on the spot. “We already went half way, we need to finish. I say we dig,” Travis replied. “Travis, you are not in charge here! It's up to Brandon and Thomas! If Brandon says it's fine, it's fine and we will try it! and, of course, if Thomas is comfortable with it,” Dragon growled. Everyone nodded, no one ever opposed Dragon. He reached for his phone and called Brandon. They ended up deciding to dig after a while of debate, and Dragon tried to stop the conversation from even speaking of digging. The day of the digging came around, you could tell Dragon was on his best guard, the last time they dug only Thomas ended up hurt, maybe this time nobody would get hurt? Ford shivered as they drove down to HomeStead 1, the place they were going to dig. Once they arrived everyone helped set up the equipment.

They were about to start, but Ford noticed something strange. “Wait! Guys what is that?!” He shouted and jumped backwards. Everyone turned around and stared at the strange sight. The vet started towards it. *Is that a dead cow? Why can I see its skull?* He felt a hand on his shoulder and turned around. Erik was there. “That's a cow mutilation, trust me we won't find what did it anywhere near it,” he whispered. Ford nodded, still startled. Dragon and Kaleb walked closer as well. Then everyone did, leaving Ford alone. He began walking closer. “This cow didn't die from whatever attacked it. It died because of stress, it messed with his immune system,” the vet scowled. “This animal was just recorded alive this morning when we did the count!” Jem yelled, worried.

*When Dragon said the cow mutilations had no blood, or evidence of an animal he was right.* “No animal foot prints, how convenient. I knew we shouldn't have dug,” Dragon said, staring at the cow, disgusted. “Not now!” Erik replied.

Hannah Greer  
Hixson Middle School  
Lisa Todd

## Pearl harbor

What pulled the United States into World War II? That was Pearl Harbor. In this essay you will learn all about it and how it changed America forever!

Because of the trade embargo on Japan of American oil, a Japanese Admiral named Yamamoto wanted to put together an attack on the American military base, Pearl Harbor. During this time many people thought that Pearl Harbor was attack proof. One of the reasons that Pearl Harbor seemed attack proof is the Pacific Fleet was based there. People thought that the fleet would crush any attack within minutes. Another reason was that torpedoes could not be used there. Because the place where they kept the ships was fairly shallow and mud would get in their explosive power, the torpedoes would fail to explode. Also, Pearl Harbor was four thousand miles away from Japan. Attack ships and planes would easily be spotted far before they got there. Even though these reasons were all evidently true, the Japanese Navy gave Yamamoto the go-ahead to put his plan together. He and his team of Engineers came up with the smart idea of putting wooden fins on the torpedoes so that they would automatically face their targets as soon as they hit the water. With the torpedo problem solved they took on the problem of not being seen by spies. What they did is they put separate routes for each aircraft carrier. That way they would meet in the middle so they could go within flying range of Pearl Harbor. As for the part about the battleships the attack wouldn't come from ships themselves it would come from the air. The planes would drop bombs and fire machine guns off from their wings.

At 7:55 a.m. the American Marine band in Oklahoma had just started playing the national anthem. In the distance they saw planes flying. They thought that they were not Japanese, but were American Pilots test-driving their planes. As one of them got close in the middle of the national anthem, it started spraying them with machine gun bullets! Now they were sure it was a Japanese attack. The players lost their beat but they refused to stop in the middle of their national anthem! After they finished they ran for cover into the big cannons and started trying to fire back as they were being sprayed with machine gun bullets. Amazingly, all of them survived. One American general said "It was like sitting in a bullseye during rapid target fire practice."

Within 5 minutes most able-bodied men were at their stations with a weapon to fight back; they were not going to let the Japanese ground their military base without a fight. Two US planes were able to get into the air before the airfields were bombed. Men jumped in the smoking planes and ripped machine guns out of their wings. The Japanese captain in charge of the attack said that he was most surprised to see that the sailors were fighting back within 5 minutes of the attack.

Unfortunately, even with the quick reaction the USA soldiers were not able to save their warships. Torpedos flew through the water making gigantic holes in the ships. The USS Arizona never had any Torpedoes hit it because the torpedoes all missed their target on the Arizona. Then a high altitude Japanese bomber dropped a 1500 lb bomb that crashed through the armor on the upper deck and went through most of the ship. It exploded in the gunpowder room at the

bottom of the ship. Thousands of pounds of gunpowder exploded in a fireball that split Arizona in two.

The attack on Pearl Harbor is an important part of US history because it pulled them into World War II. Without the United States in the war, Germany, Japan and Italy would have won. The world would have been completely different.

Preston Hicks  
Hixson Middle School  
John DeVore

## Untitled

What is your favorite sport? Mine is riding horses, but some people think that horseback riding is not a sport like baseball, football, or tennis. I think it is because it takes physical effort, practice, and there is competition.

Riding horses takes physical effort, just like any other sport. First of all, you must take care of your horse: brushing, giving baths, cleaning stalls, watering, and feeding. All of that takes muscle - and we haven't even ridden yet! Riding takes a lot of muscle. You have to use your leg muscles to stay on and keep your horse moving. Your core muscles help you move with your horse so you don't bounce. Your arm muscles keep a fast horse from running. To get all of your muscles doing the right things at the right times, it takes a lot of practice.

Riding horses takes a lot of practice, just like any other sport. When you start riding, your body will have to adjust to sitting with your legs on each side of your horse: sitting upright with no back rest, letting your body move with your horse, and working with an animal that doesn't speak English. As you practice more, your body will develop more muscle to be able to do more things without being sore as much! Practicing will also help you do better in competitions.

There are horse riding competitions, just like in any other sport. In horseback riding, there are a bunch of different types of competitions, like eventing, dressage, hunter/jumpers, barrel racing, endurance riding, polo, obstacle challenges, drill team, and many more. Competing will test your skills, show you how well you're doing, and let you know what you need to work on. Plus, it's fun!

As you can see, these are several reasons why horseback riding is a sport. There are many more reasons why horseback riding is a sport. For instance, you can watch it on television and you can bet on it, (though I don't recommend that!) just like any other sport. I hope this is enough for people to acknowledge horseback riding as a sport. Now, go get your game on and find some riding lessons!

Renn Hills  
Hilger Higher Learning  
Shelley George

## The incredible landing.

It started off as a normal day for the Southwest company and captain, Mike Waters and first officer, Joey McGill. They were in the terminal building looking at the flight plan because they were going to fly from Orlando International airport to Nashville International airport. They were calculating the amount of fuel they would need for a trip since they wouldn't be in the air that long. They have to know the amount of passengers on the flight and the weight to make sure they weren't going over the limit.

Their plane had finally taxied to the gate so the pilots went to inspect the plane to make sure nothing was wrong. They were flying a Southwest airlines 737 700 which was one of the most popular planes during that time. As they taxied to the runway they realized something weird was going on with the engines, but they didn't think much of it. It seems that the engines wouldn't go to full power. As they got onto the runway, captain Mike Waters increased thrust and they were eventually in the air.

They started to ascend because they wanted to reach 30,000 feet for their cruising altitude. Once they got there, the first officer turned on the autopilot mode which means that the plane can now fly itself. The view was beautiful. The flight attendants now are serving food and drinks to people if they want them. Captain Mike Waters had steak and first officer Joey McGill had chicken. They aren't allowed to have the same food just in case they get food poisoning from one of the types of food. At this point they were about halfway into the trip. As they started to descend captain Mike Waters realized that one of the engines wasn't working properly so he put it into idle which is the lowest power an engine can go to prevent further damage.

The good thing is that the aircraft can still fly on one engine, but the captain now will have to manually fly the plane with his hand. With one engine it is a little harder to control the plane, because it always wants to bank a certain way or turn. After checking the radar, first officer Joey McGill realizes that there is a massive storm ahead of them and there is no way to navigate around it. They contact the Nashville control tower since they were in their airspace and the tower tells them to squawk 7700 which is an indicator to the control tower that they might need some assistance. The pilot tells the passengers that there will be a lot of turbulence coming up.

It becomes harder and harder to control the aircraft as they go into the storm. They finally got out of it unharmed, but quickly realized that they had lost their other engine, which was the one they were counting on to get to the airport. Since they were running out of options, Captain Waters checked his navigation system. It said that they were about 20 miles away from the airport, so they could at least have a chance to get down onto one of the runways in Nashville. The first officer switched on the apu otherwise known as the auxiliary power unit which was a small engine in the back of the plane mainly used for this certain reason.

They were on their final approach. The captain told all of the passengers to brace for impact since this should be a rough landing. Just ten seconds till touchdown and the pilots realized that their airspeed was too low. They ended up stalling on the runway. They bounced

once, then twice, finally stopping with only about two hundred feet of runway left. There was a sigh of relief in the cabin when the plane stopped and rescue vehicles started coming their way. Everyone ended up surviving and only a few had minor injuries thanks to the knowledge of the pilots and quick thinking.

Campbell Inman  
Hixson Middle School  
John Devore

## How the Timber Rattlesnake Got its Rattle

Oh best beloved, in the high and far off times, the Timber Rattlesnakes had no rattle. Almost everyday he would go to the old, very ancient, heavy sickening graveyard. He goes many times a week, he goes to visit his father, mother, brother, and sister. Thinking of how it was his fault that all of them died.

Just so, the next day the Timber Rattlesnake goes to music class. To try and get his mind off of everything. Just then the rattlesnake sees a rattle, old beads, that made the worst clatter sound ever, in the bin in the corner. He had an idea, hoping it would work.

So he ate the rattle whole. "Oh beloved, what a crazy idea." the Timber Rattlesnakes cousin, Jeff said. He is a crazy person though, he has millions of crazy ideas. Jeff is sometimes a little to Jeff for me! Jeff very much loves the place we live, loves the animals here. I just love everything type of guy.

He was always so blue, sad, mad, grumpy, and frustrated with himself. Cousins make everything better. Helps the Timber Rattlesnake get over the stupid things. Never would have thought when you saw Jeff you would think to ask him for advice. You would probably ask him for the nearest game type place.

Soon after, in the high and far off times, the Timber Rattlesnake went home to the lands of the Great Smoky Mountains. Where the Rattlesnake lives, it does have a lot of predators there but now thinking that the plan will work. So the snake is now trying to not think about it and trying to go on with the plan.

Just so, the Timber Rattlesnake was getting a little tired. But just then he slithering around and notices he had a... RATTLE! "It worked, it worked" he shouted.

Jeff came right as soon as he could and he started to say "OMG, OMG I can't believe this worked" They were all talking and slithering all around rattling the Timber Rattlesnakes rattle.

He then got tired after a while of slithering around all night. Jeff went home a little bit ago, "All I want to do is sleep." The Timber Rattlesnake said. So he then went on to sleep. But just after the Timber rattlesnake fell asleep, a hawk came and circled all around him. Just as the hawk got closer and closer the rattlesnake woke up. He then rattled his rattle and the hawk was so scared he went on with no breakfast. After that day happened, the Timber Rattlesnake was then known for being the fearful, brave, reliable and even loyal Timber Rattlesnake. With the rattle on its tail it's family will now never be harmed again.

McKinley Johnston  
Normal Park Museum Magnet School  
Sara Clarich-Page

## Dress codes have bad effects on students

Some people argue that dress codes are good for kids while most kids and science disagree. Now, you shouldn't let kids wear whatever they want, there should be some rules but kids should have the freedom of choosing what they would like to wear. Some people say dress codes are good. Polls taken across the country are showing that dress codes have more negative effects than positive. Dress codes are costly, affect mental health, decrease productivity rates, and stifle creativity and individuality.

### **Dress Codes Costly Effects**

A study taken by the University of York said COVID realities show that low-income families are struggling with the cost of uniforms. They have to balance uniform costs, food, rent, and heating. Dr. Geoff Page, a retired board of directors member for Peoria, Arizona said, "Every time schools opened back up again there were more parents that were worried about being able to afford uniforms." COVID coming around closed a lot of the charities that are helping these families pay for food and uniforms. Covid has also closed down a lot of their jobs and made the homeless rates go up.

One family explained that they have an income of \$556 a month and uniforms cost \$310. This is a clear struggle for them. Researchers are calling for people to make uniforms more affordable. There should be a nationwide guide for uniform price regulations. In the UK this situation is being discussed with the government. Uniforms are contributing to the number of kids out of school.

### **Dress codes affect on girls mental health**

A poll was taken by 402 students of Eaton Highschool, Colorado, and shows that 76% believe that a restrictive dress code leaves a negative impact on girls. Mariah Noonan an Eaton high school student said, "I think the way some teachers enforce dress code make girls think that boys want them only for their bodies." Ashtyn Black another Eaton high school student said, "It is unfortunate girls are shamed for their clothing in today's society. Boys are never dress coded for their short shorts, while girls are."

### **Dress codes affect productivity rates**

According to studies, 61% of people say working is more relaxed not in a uniform and 80% of people say the dress code doesn't do anything beneficial. The tight khakis that you make us wear don't let us feel relaxed, they make us feel trapped. Studies also show that people getting kicked out of the classroom because of not following dress code rules and needing to call home or change also lowers productivity rates. More relaxed work attire is becoming more and more popular. Dress codes are mattering less and less. People can do work at home in pajamas and can get just as much done if not more.

### **Dress codes are destroying individualism and creativity**

Kids in dress code all look the same and there is no option on what to wear other than khakis and polos. Kids express their individuality and creativity in what they wear. If they all wear clothes then people can't express their individuality and there are no options sparking creativity. These are essential for young kids and teens.

### **To sum it up**

Kids at this school think you should have no dress code or loosen it because it limits individuality and creativity, lowers productivity rates, has bad effects on girls' mental health, and is a problem for low-income families. If you lower the dress code regulations it would make our

school have a higher test average and more people will apply for our middle school. I and many other kids hope you will change your opinion on the school dress code.

**Sources**

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Aleks Martin  
Hixson Middle School  
John DeVore

## The Patient

“Have you had any of your episodes lately?” asked the doctor

“No. No, I have not.” I replied

“What about your hallucinations, any of those?”

“A lot.”

“About what?” He questioned.

“ I.. I don't know. It's so distorted and it's constantly moving so I can never really tell.”

“Well, does it make you feel a certain way?” He kept on

“It feels like there's something watching me. Like everything I do is being monitored.” I explained in the best way I could. A couple of minutes passed or just pure silence then all of a sudden the fire alarm went off and we rushed out of the room to see a raging fire climbing the walls in every direction. All I can do is try to run but I'll be burnt to death. A wave of fear hits me and all of my body is telling me to run but my mind says differently so I jolted forward then... BAM!

It's blank. That's all there is, just blank but then I see something. It looks like I'm back at my childhood home but I don't know how. This place burnt to the ground 15 years back. I got up and walked around the halls to check if anything or anyone was there. I turn the corner and hear my family talking around the dinner table. As I entered the room my mom asked me to wash the dishes, so I did but I didn't say anything because I'm not sure what's happening. I washed the dishes but I dropped a glass and when I bent down to pick it up everything went silent and I turned around to see no one at the dinner table and all but a little sound of buzzing. “Hello!” I shouted. No reply.

I go back through the halls searching for any trace of life but still nothing. I look at one door that sticks out because I never had that door in my home. I take a step towards the door and hear a creaking noise. As I grab the handle it gets louder and so does the buzzing and with a leap of faith I open the door to see a dark void of a room. As soon as I walk into the room all the noises stop and the door closes behind me, scaring the everloving crap out of me. A candle was very dimly lit on the other side of the room and due to that I could see some of it.

A couple seconds later I get a clear view of the room and see an empty bed frame and a carpet that was all torn up. I walk around the room and check for anything I can do to get out of it but I can't seem to find any doors, keys, or anything else. I look at the top left corner of the room to see a weird humanoid creature crawling on the ceiling looking directly at me. All of my feelings just turned to fear and I sprinted while it crawled at me. I got to the other side of the room and it was just me and that little candle so I grabbed it then got back to where that thing was and when I got over there, the thing knocked it out of my hand causing the house to go up in flames. The thing looked directly at me and let out a screech then gave me a big smile before it disappeared out of the thin air.

Everything was on fire by now and all I felt was that heat, that miserable, agonizing, painful heat. I wasn't shocked though. It felt peaceful and it made me feel alive in a sense. What's happening with me??? It's so bright that I think my eyes just might pop out. Somehow I

start to feel very cold and out of nowhere that fire becomes a very bright white light. I couldn't see anything but a blank canvas but with every blank canvas someone has to paint on it and with that in mind a room with padded walls and a window that for some reason I can't see the other side of, starts to become visible.

Finally, I get a clear view of this room but I don't quite get what it is but then it comes back to me and I realize. I run towards that window and start banging on it with all my might. I realize there's nothing I can do so I get down on the floor and bury my head into my hands and sit. They think I'm crazy. I didn't do anything but they didn't care, they just grabbed me after my house fire and called me crazy but i didn't do anything. I just knocked the candle over. "Hey, at least he seems better than he did before he blacked out." Says the Doctors staring at him through the window

John Pike  
Hixson Middle School  
Lisa Todd

## Epilogue

### **5 YEARS LATER**

**“Hey bud!”** Mr Jimmy yelled out from under the porch. “Can you hand me the wrench?”

“Sure!” I screamed out as well, and then **“ZOOP”** I was at the porch

“Here you go, and you didn’t have to make me run so doggone far, I was in my room.” I said a little red.

“Uh-Huh I get you. Could you get me the tube?” He asked again.

“Were you listening to a thing I said?”

“Nope”

Just as things were about to get fierce I heard Miss Thomas call me.

“You okay?” She said in a way where I could tell she was worried.

“Nope.” I said happily.

“Your first show is today, ARE you okay.”

“Yeah I already told you lady, I’m okay.” But what I really said was “Nope I’m okay”

“Well, Herman wanted you. So you should probably get going, you know how he can get.”

I hurried up the stairs and found Herman.E.Calloway.

“This is your day Bud.” He said as I just walked in there

“I know, I’m going to do Great. Even the band will be surprised at how good I am.” I said with a great grin.

“Eerrrrnnnn, Heeeeeeeee Heeeeeee Horrrrrr Nnnn!” Shucks, My Saxophone sure does make some weird sounds, But I still love it

### **RULES AND THINGS NUMBER 78**

**If music sounds kinda funky**

**You know you are good**

“GROWWWLLLLL!!!” What in the Great Depression was THAT, “GRRRRRRRRRRRRRR” Oh no it sounds like it's about to attack!

Wait, It's just my tummy. All phooey, I guess I haven't had food all morning. I don't want to starve to death on stage, I better get something to eat.

I left my room and went into the kitchen. But what I found was terrifying, NO FOOD! Aw man, I was really looking forward to some food.

“BUD! Time to go!” I heard The band hollar out

Guess I’ll just have to deal, it’s not like I need food anyways

When I got outside it felt like you could grab an egg and it would scramble on the pavement.

“...Bud...” Mr.Calloway said,

“Yes?”

“Would you please, get in the car, we've been waiting for the last 20 minutes.....”

“Yes sir”

We got to the stage and it HAD to be outside, right when we were unloading all of our things I swear I saw a vampire. I got closer to it and I realized two things. First, He wasn't a vampire, he was just a guy who looked like he could probably touch the stars. And second, this man looks so familiar. But then he took off.

"Wait!" I yelled out, "Wait up!" But he probably didn't hear me

"Bud!" I heard the band scream, "Bud, Stop!"

I could barely hear them, I was more focused on finding out who this person was.

I finally caught up to the man. He was in a very creepy and dark alleyway.

"Who are you?"

"Somebody you don't need to know." The man replied

**RULES AND THINGS NUMBER 32**  
**IF SOMEBODY SAYS YOU DON'T KNOW THEM,**  
**YOU PROBABLY DO**

But this man was so familiar, I was tempted to force my way to get a better look. When I got closer though, I could just hear the word about to slide up my throat and out my tongue.

"Bugs?!" I said very surprised, "Is that really you?"

I could see him nod under his hood and make a snort-grunt that sounded like "Uh-huh"

"How are you? You look like a monkey and a bear had a child."

"Hm" I heard him grunt again

"Why are you not talking so doggone much?" I asked really wanting to know

"Hrpg" I heard him grunt again

I kept trying to get him to talk for at least an hour and a half. I finally got him to tell me that he was forced to go to military school, it was apparently bad, that's why he doesn't talk much.

"So what else is going for yo-?"

"BOOM!"

I looked around to make sure it wasn't the government, But it turned out that it was the clock tower . "5:00" It says, wait.....My SHOW HAS STARTED

If I knew I was going to be this doggone late I would have never talked to him. He's my friend and all, but this show is my life. I knew I needed to hurry so I went: BOOP LOOP ZOOP. I ran as fast as I ever have in my life.

When I got back to the stage I could hear the band swingin, Miss Thomas Bleamin, and the whole crowd screaming. It was a great sight. I waited until their song was done and walked over to all of them,

"Bud, where'd you go?" Mr. Jimmy asked.

"That doesn't matter sir," I told him, "It only matters that I'm here now."

"Just get your Sax and hurry on the stage, we're about to start the next song."

Mr. Calloway said sternly.

When I finished getting my Saxophone I hurried on to the stage.

This was my moment to shine, I'm gonna make you proud Momma.

So me, The Dusky Devastators of the depression, Herman.E.Calloway,

and Miss Thomas played and played. It sounded like a mix between a, **CRASH BANG BOOM HEEE HORN**. But then you would also hear a, *ding dong wing yong ding dong*. But then with Miss Thomas's there, it sounded like, "Ladda dom dom he dee. Put it all together and it sounds like **BANG ding BOOM dong HORN wing CRASH!** "Ladda dee dom....." We played that for only about 10 minutes, but it felt like hours. When we were done everyone congratulated me "Good job Bud!" I could hear all the band members telling me. But what I really heard was my Momma telling me "Great job Bud, You finally bloomed."  
I didn't really hear her but It felt like that was just stuck in my head.  
I spent so much time and doggone work that I am just tired now

I wanna go back home, and take a nap.....

Ben Sallee  
Normal Park Museum Magnet School  
Sara Clarich-Page

## From Normandy To the paris. Liberating

It was June 6, 1944, we had just got on the LCVP boats or Higgins boats as some people know them by. On our way to the beach I was cleaning my M1 Garand. While I was cleaning, sargent asked me if I was scared, said no and sargent just laughed and said I should be. I hadn't learned anybody's names yet so I just called them by their rank but they didn't know mine so they didn't get onto me for it. When we were about 500 yards from the beach, sargent said "don't stick together, get low and avoid the MG 42 fire." Nobody and I mean nobody knew how hard that was going to be. When we got off the boats we could not go out the front of the boat because of MG fire coming from the German bunkers so we went off the sides of the boats into the water. On the beach about half of our men bunched up behind a truck and then we lost about half of our men to MG fire. After that everybody took sargent's advice quickly and scattered behind sand piles or crashed boats or hid in holes.

June 13, 1944, been a week since we got on this beach. Only have a few bunkers cleared, but we ain't complaining. The bunkers we've cleared out are where we're staying and strategizing. Sargent said that in an hour or two we would be hitting a bunker with communication equipment and that's why the Germans seem to have so many troops to counter our attacks. Now we are finding our way to get to the communication center, and well the Germans better be ready for hell because that's what we're givin em. Just got through the communications center in the bunker have more prisoners than we expected. We thought the Germans would actually put up a fight but they surrendered. Fine with me really didn't want to have to be in some bunker with about 60-100 Germans wanting me dead. With taking the communication we have been able to counter attack the Germans by getting their plans to take back the bunkers and well that has really helped us focus more on getting everybody healthy and ready to fight.

June 30, 1944, cleared about double the bunkers we had a few weeks ago. Also have moved more troops onto the beach and in bunkers, still though barely hanging on but we keep pushing germans are not getting as many reinforcements because we are hitting them quicker and harder, keeping the germans worried for another attack.

August 30, 1944, We have finally taken Normandy, over 2 months we have been fighting. Taking out bunkers left and right

Thomas Satton  
Hixson Middle School  
Lisa Todd

## The Antidote

### **(This is showing what is happening)**

CRASH!... “Ow...What happened,” Shaft said to herself, laying flat on cold grass. As she got up she looked around and didn’t see Freddy. “Freddy! Freddy! Where are you,” Yelled after finally getting up.

Freddy yelled back, “I’m over here! Follow my voice.” Freddy got up and looked around.

“Marco,” Shaft yelled.

“Polo,” Freddy yelled back. As he searched out in the distance he tried to unblur the figure of Shaft.

“What up bestie,” Shaft said to Freddy. Shaft walked around waiting to find a familiar face

“Nothin much, just trying to figure out where we are exactly,” Freddy replied. Shaft started walking away from Freddy, as if she was alone. She was very curious, and optimistic. She could always find a happy reason in a sad example. She was from Neptune, like Freddy, and now she had no idea where that was exactly. And this planet was rubbish. Nothing but ash around her.

“What exactly happened here,” Shaft asked a random stranger.

“You don’t know? The war made this place trash. Nothing but fire and cannons. We don’t know how much time we can stay,” The stranger replied.

Shaft walked away wondering why then she fell on grass and not ash? She ran after him. “Wait,” She yelled panting, “Then how did I fall on that green stuff?”

He replied excited, “Where, when, how? There isn’t any green to lay on. That must have been grass. Show me where you were.” As Shaft was walking over there she noticed how gray and sad it was around here. She thought to herself, ‘Where are we?’ As she pointed at the large patch of grass in the middle of the ash the man fell to his knees and examined the blue and glowing stuff on the grass then looked at her and asked. “Is this your blood? If it is, it made this grow in seconds!” He put the blue on the ash and in seconds a tree sprouted with grass all around it. “We need your blood with this, we probably need barley please. We have nowhere else to go but this planet.” He said to Shaft.

“How do you know I’m not from here?” Shaft questioned him.

“Because HUMANS don’t have blue glowy blood.” He replied.

“Oh...I guess I’m special then.” Shaft replied anxiously.

“Here,” he said, giving her a packet of money, “A gallon of blood for 1 billion dollars. This could save the Earth. If you agree, follow me. You need money here to survive.”

Shaft did as ordered. (1 HOUR LATER)

(NARRATIVE STARTS NOW)

“There, 2 gallons of blood. Is that enough?” Shaft questioned.

“Yes, but how can you give off that much, without as much as feeling weird?” He asked.

“Where I come from 10 gallons of blood is a pint for y’all.” She replied.

“Ok, well then can you help us make a plane to go around and make your blood rain like rain?”

He asked hopefully

“Ok, give me 10 minutes.” She said, “Ok?”

“Alright. I’ll be over there.” He replied walking over to the tree sitting on it, watching her mesmerized.

(1 Day LATER)

“I’m done!” She yelled gasping for air, “I didn’t take one break now. Do you have restrooms?”

“Yes, when I put your blood where they used to be it basically regenerated in seconds!” He yelled excitedly, “ There over there!” He pointed to the restrooms. While she was running to them he looked at this masterpiece. It was perfect. He got in and saw 10 or more gallons of blood in a ginormous tank. He read the instructions she left and took off.

“I knew he’d go and fly it.” She said to Freddy waking him up from sleep like no other. When he got up he just walked over to the bathrooms and stayed in there for hours. Probably making a toy. She walked over to the restrooms yelling for him to come out, “ Get out here FREDDY!!!” “OK, well I need to tell you something. When it’s Friday of next month we need to go or we’ll explode...” Freddy said fastly scrunching his eyes before she could do anything unexpected. “Ok, well do you have anything where we can stay here? I like it here much more than home?” She asked Freddy. But before he could reply a rain of glowing drops came down giving the ground color and life. Shaft looked around in awe. “ It’s so beautiful, we need to stay.” “Ok, I’ll try.” Freddy said, walking away thinking of ideas to save them. Shaft went running to wave to the man.

“Hey, I’ll be right there!” He yelled at her. When he finally came back he said, “ My name is; Chase , what's yours?”

“Shaft. Is the world alive now?” Shaft answered.

“Yes, thank you.” He blushed, “ Do you wanna and come see the rest of the world?”

“Sure!” She replied jumping in the plane. When he started it he began pressing destinations she never heard of before. She just put them in there from reading a highly detailed map she put into the computer. When she looked around she saw a figure that looked vaguely familiar in a weird way. It was her sister! She was as beautiful as Paris. (She just saw it.) “Stop, the plane! Lower it down where that figure that is moving very fast is!” She yelled

“OK, OK chill!” He said. Following her request orders.

“Nobody! Come here!” She yelled to her sister.

“No. Just NO.” Nobody said to her sister running away. “Btw, do you need that diamond... president? Actually, sorry I need it more.” She said laughing, running away, and looking at Chase.

“What’s a president?” Shaft asked.

“It’s the ruler of the country who keeps everyone in peace.” Chase answered.

“Ok well good for you!” Shaft replied excitedly! As Shaft went home she forgot that the anodite was on her bed and she put it in her pocket but she couldn’t feel it so she started to panic. Who could have taken it!? When she got back to where Freddy was she told him about it, “ I lost the antidote. Someone stole it or I lost it! Wait... Nobody took it! I saw a tube with her running away! Im so stupid!”

“Shaft, calm down, we still have time to get it back! She left a message to meet her in Chicago on a tower. We can still get it back. With your powers she can't beat you.” Freddy said with a sense of grace and kindness.

“Ok, ok. I’m just going to sleep.” Shaft replied tired and frustrated. “ How am I going to beat her! I don’t even have my wings yet and I need to train, but in a day?! I can't beat her; she has been missing for years! She must have trained for YEARS! I haven't discovered my powers like her at 3!” Shaft told herself walking to the tree she was first by. She climbed it and fell asleep swiftly...

It was the next day and Shaft had trained since the sun rose and until it was shining high in the sky, no breaks, and nobody helping her besides Freddy of course. They needed to keep this a secret. "Ten more minutes until we need to travel to Chicago, wherever that may be.

TWENTY MINUTES LATER

"It's been 20 minutes and she still has shown no sign of her coming at all! What if she comes out of nowhere and just hurts me?" Shaft said girly.

"Wow, today you're extra girly. Great!" Freddy said sarcastically.

"I heard someone was looking for me." Ms. Nobody said it was disappearing. POW! Shaft got hit at a lightning speed. She started picking up a brick and threw it at Shaft. Shaft dodged it like lightning. Then Shaft fell down all of a sudden, with no warning just BOOM. Then Ms. Nobody was no longer heard, just the swift wind brushing over Shaft. Looking dead as a fallen bird.

When she finally got conscious enough to hear Freddy talking to Chase.

"She got beaten hard, we need to find her power or we'll never get that antidote." Freddy said, concerned.

"We'll get it. I just need a DNA sample to see how close she is. Thank you for teaching me your ways. I now have the force." Chase said humorously.

THE NEXT DAY

"We need to get her powers back! She somehow lost it when she was 8." Chase said loudly to Freddy

"Shh she's sleeping!" Freddy shushed.

"OK, but we need to somehow get her motivation back." Chase explained. He walked over to the lab that Freddy built when she was asleep. He came back with her blood showing proof of his guess.

"I know. She lost it when her sister left and ran away. Apparently she came here. But now IDK how to fix this." Freddy explained.

Shaft got up and walked around to Freddy's lab. She looked at the board and the memories all fell back to her. Overcoming her mind in a wave. After 2 minutes she came back, now confident. She ran past Chase and Freddy and started trying to get reasons why she can do this, win, and at least try to get her evil sister back. When she walked back she had wings, the size of an Angels. She looked more beautiful than any model could be, so pure and vibrant. She ran to the ship and took off waiting for no one. Somehow Freddy jumped on the plane and teleported his way in.

When she got back to the tower she yelled, "I'm ready to fight you, witch!"

"I'm a villain not a witch, and why did you come here? Wanna get beat again... Little sis?"

Nobody said with the most evil grin that not even the Joker could beat her in a contest. She disappeared to become behind here and then... Shaft grabbed here and flipped here over. She transformed into an eagle and picked her up just to drop her again. She swooped, grabbed the antidote and ran. Little did she know that Freddy put the real antidote in her pocket and Nobody took the real one. She got back and looked at the antidote. It had a message saying.

"Sorry this one isn't the real one, bye" - Your worst, but fav. sis -Nobody, smiley face.

"I'M NOT YOUR SISTER... THAT WITCH!!!" Shaft yelled in some much anger that she saw red.

THE NEXT DAY<THE WARRRRRRRRRRRRRR>

"Shaft I know how mad you were but I made weapons. It took hours last night but I made them, here" Freddy said, handing the weapons to Shaft.

“Thank you, Freddy, wish me luck.” Shaft said running to the ship waving bye. Shaft went back to the tower and started walking around, waiting for the witch; her sister. “Come out and play!” Shaft yelled looking for Nobody.

“I guess we're doing this again huh?” Nobody said to Shaft, “ I guess you got my message?” Nobody said waving the antidote. Nobody disappeared and walked right in front of her. Appearing in flash. BOOM. Shaft got hit but lucky her the weapons helped. She swung the light sword and hit Nobody. She fell down to her knees. Shaft turned into a dragon blowing fire at nobody. Nobody disappeared and appeared on top of here.

“Giddy up, horsey, dragon!” Nobody laughed.

“Sure.” Shaft said grinning in her head. She flew out in the air over roads and turned back but as a bee. Nobody came falling down. Shaft became an Eagle, took the antidote and picked her up putting her on top of a tower. Shaft ran back to the ship, and flew back home. She came back running proud and handed the antidote to Freddy. He took it to his lab thanking Shaft and came out running...

“Shaft! I lost the antidote! We only have 1 more day! How are we going to find it! Look at this lab!” Freddy panicked.

“We will find it.. I hope more than the trees flying in the wind hoping for a better day. Or the plants screaming for water. Or how the fireworks CRACK for help...” Shaft said with a worry in her eyes.

“Wow, what happened to you? You in a deep moment?” Freddy asked, laughing.

Angel Scofield  
Hixson Middle School  
Lisa Todd

## Untitled

“But I-” Ben started.

“Shuddup,” She didn’t let him finish. “The idiots are blocking the entrance, let’s get in from the stage.” She walked past us and started heading towards the corner, leaving us to follow. Ben rolled his eyes and ran after her, and so did I.

When we caught up, we made our way to the other side. Ben reached out his hand to open the stage door, but I stopped him. Something caught my eye. “What is it?” He asked, turning around. I wasn’t facing him. I knelt to look at the closet door next to the stage door. It was locked, of course, but sticking out from the bottom of the door was a grey piece of cloth.

“It’s just a piece of trash, Abby,” Taylor yawned. “We’re gonna be late.”

“No, wait,” I said. I grabbed the cloth and pulled. It wouldn’t budge. I pulled harder. Nothing.

“Here let me try,” Ben offered, kneeling beside me and grasping the cloth. He tugged on it, and sure enough, it quickly came out. It was part of a jacket sleeve. A realization quickly hit me like a rock.

“That’s the janitor uniform’s sleeve!” I gasped. Ben and Taylor seemed to be as shocked as I. I brought it close to my face, examining it closely. The cloth seemed to be faded, ragged, and dirty, not to mention half-covered in dried blood.

“Okay, uh, crazy theory, but what if that’s James’s sleeve?” Taylor stuttered.

“Yeah, no duh,” Ben replied shakily. “Wait, Abby, don’t touch that, it’s probably disgusting!”

He reached to grab it from me.

“Hey, wait, this is valuable evidence!” I argued back.

“This is none of our business!” He knew I knew he was stronger than me, but that didn’t stop me from pulling. We tussled for a couple of seconds before he ripped it out of my hands and immediately tossed it over the barbed fence. A piece of paper fell out of the sleeve. Ben reached for that too, but Taylor stopped him. She was the strongest out of the three of us. “Taylor! Let go of me!” He growled.

Taylor shook her head. “Read it,” She prompted me. I nodded slowly and uncrumpled the paper. It was ripped and scrunched up, but I could read it. Written in black, faded ink, it said:

*losnaced  
5th street, SH*

“Losnaced...what the heck is that?” I murmured. I showed Ben and Taylor the note.

“We really shouldn’t get involved with this,” Ben said nervously. Taylor shrugged and began to say some probably sarcastic remarks, but then the bell rang.

“Let’s talk about this later,” I said, shoving the paper in my pocket. Taylor nodded and opened the stage door. We all ran inside to beat the second bell.

Sophia Stovall  
Center for Creative Arts  
Catherine Cox

## Betrayal

A propaganda is a natural is information misleading something like “the end is near”.Its a political statement but in the end we are still here and it's now tomorrow there being false.This story starts with a boy named Jeremy he is a tall skinny white male. He was a poor boy not well fed. He lived with his dad and his dad only. There had been word on the street that war was coming between China and America and that it would not be a bright time. People were freaking out saying the end was near and we will all die but James was prepared. He didn't believe them but he knew deep down inside that dying was better than the state he was in now.

One morning he woke up to a loud knock on the house door BANG BANG BANG it went. He answered it thinking it was some of his friends but turns out it was a soldier in all camo gear with a paper in his hands. He had been drafted into the army and exclaimed that a secured truck would pick him and other people up shortly. He was shocked and so was his dad. They were in a panicked state because he knew of the things that happened and not having his dad to be there with him was terrifying.” Do I need to bring anything” asked Jeremy timidly,” No, `` said the army man. He went outside for a minute to get a breather and saw his neighbor with his children on the porch sobbing.”What's wrong” Jeremy asked “I got drafted and I have to leave my children and wife and we are very poor and since I can't work while I'm gone we can't make enough money,” he says while weeping”

The next day,the trucks are leaving for a military camp to train the men before the war. The drill sergeant yells at the men violently to do 20 push-ups” WAKE UP MEN UP, DOWN, UP, DOWN” everyone groans in pain except for a small man named Charles he's dead silent only responding to the drill sergeant chants. Once it's time for breakfast the man sits next to Jeremy eating fast as though he was starved for at least 15 days.” you're hungry aren't you” Jeremy says surprised. He only nods as shovels the dried oatmeal into his mouth. The drills get even more harder as the days go on push-ups running 20 miles up a road and back somersaults, jumping jacks, suicides it was the worst. But the entire time Charles was silent, While all the other men groaned panted and mentally and physically struggled he wants. He decided to confront him about his silence and his urge to keep going. But the only thing he got out of it was and was an awkward stare and more dead silence. This went on until the final day of camp Where he finally spoke and said “i was born for war I don't care if I make it out alive or dead I served my country”.

It came the day of the war everyone was excited but also scared.Charlie was of course not showing any emotion to the event but Jeremy was scared dead he was so scared he was shaking. He thought he would die for sure and suddenly he froze there was a large bang. And a blast of heat hit the men everyone was screaming as the sergeant rushed a group of men to an evacuation route.China had launched their bombs close to the camp. Charlie grabbed Jeremy by the collar and ran wherever the Seargent was going. As sirens began to go off. Jeremy (still frozen) came to a pause in the running Charlie stopped.ZRMMM an airplane past over their head.”crap” Charlie said looking up at the sky. Jeremy finally unfroze and pushed Charlie out the while bloating for the sergeant. A vault was placed next to a mountain and all the men went running through the hole in the mountain “HURRY” the sergeant said. Right as he got to the

door it began to close “NO NO LET ME IN PLEASE”.VRMM another airplane went overhead he looked back at Charle he was still looking up at the sky frozen silent hopeless.

He called out for Charles name he just looked at him as another bomb dropped.BOOM, “The end is near” he said Charlie was a poor young man like Jeremy he was silent because he thought talking was a waste of time and we needed to spend our time wisely. You may think Charlie was a wise child but this ended up being his fate not communicating with those around him making friends experiencing memories. He just stared While Jeremy called out his name. While Jeremy was left to die betrayed by what he thought were his allies but. The propaganda deceived him and he couldn't do anything about it. Imagine being left alone to die outside of your savior to live by your family and friends now that's betrayal.

Ashton Thomas  
Hixson Middle School  
Lisa Todd

## THE ED.

Back in 2007 A new glitch came out, “The ED. Edeopriah. A disease that makes one of your eyes go white. I know, It's literally useless. OH! I almost forgot to mention who I am. Hi, My names Brazil Turnipseed. I'm 15. My birthday is MAY 22. 3 Days before the virus started.

If you didn't know I'm in 8th grade and I go to ESMR Middle school, I just moved from Colorado.

\*1 WEEK AGO\* “Honey theres something i need to tell you..” My father muttered. “Yes, Dad?” I said, Before I knew what was about to hit me. “Where going to move to Tennessee, Its for the better.” “WHAT?” I spit out my tea and slammed my hands on the dinner table. “Honey, our lives have been only getting worse sense your mother's incident.” If you didn't know..

My mother died 4 years ago trying to protect me from the dangers of the people, After my mom died we moved to the united states. Originally from Brazil. “YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND IM GOING TO LOOSE ALL MY FRIENDS, DAD.” I yelled before i ran off. “Honey! I'm sorry!” Is the last thing I heard from my father that night.

\*PRESENTS\* Anyway, I got up for school and showered. I was very depressed. My dad took me to school in his raggedy poor car. And on my way out all they boys & girls stared.

I walked down the halls and everyone was staring at my eye patch. The one on my eye to cover up my disgusting virus. I was embarrassed of course. I dropped my books in front of this boy.. But instead of picking them up I chose to run off.. Oh Deus! eu sou um tolo.”Oh god! I'm such an idiot. Said in my head but in Portuguese. I sat in the bathroom for a while and when I went out I ran straight to class.

I just sat in any chair, I didn't care if there were assigned seats or not, I needed to get out the spotlight. About 5 minutes later A blue eyed blonde came up to me and said... “Uhm, What are you doing? This is MY seat.” I slapped my head. And I apologized. She said, “Wait I recognize you.” My face lit up thinking she knew me from Brazil, Or Colorado.

“Your that weirdo from the hallway who dropped there books on my boyfriend.

Just so you know, Hes mine. Stay away from him.” “Sorry, Sorry.” I said while getting out of her seat. She stopped me and grabbed my hand, “Wait.” “What? Let go of my hand.” I said with a disturbed face. “Why do you have that weird eye patch on your face..

Kamaya Turner  
East Ridge Middle School  
Katherine Scott

## Stones that Connect

*"I could remember it as if it was yesterday. The flowers, the birds, the tree branches waving in the wind. It was like a fever dream. But it really was a long time ago, much longer ago. I was a kid, but still close to the age of fourteen. I was thirteen." He told the beginning of the story as people with cameras and notebooks all bunched up around the man. "May we hear the rest of the story for more information? If it's not a burden to you that is," one reporter asked raising their pen. "Of course. But get comfortable because it's quite a long story."*

*"Turn back to some time, my father was making me do something I didn't want to." the man started to begin telling. [PAST] "But father..! I already have a lot of friends. I don't need more to hang out with, plus she's a girl!" "Now, now Ambrose, she's quite a nice girl. Plus, don't you like girls?" Luca's father asked. "Yea, but-" "No buts! Now they'll be here in half an hour and I want you to show her around." And without anything else to say he walked off into the garden with supplies to tidy up the place. Ambrose sat impatiently waiting for their guests to arrive.*

Half an hour later the girl and her parents arrived to Ambrose's house and his dad greeted them. "Very nice to meet you all. Oh, right I almost forgot- Ambrose was going to show his new friend around right?" the father asked looking at Ambrose with his eyebrow raised. "Yes, father.." he sighed and then walking past the girl back outside of their cottage. "Come on," Ambrose said scratching his head. The girl followed behind nervous as ever. She walked slowly behind him, but fast enough to keep up with him. "So, whats your name?" Ambrose asked turning around to look at her, but walking backwards. "My name? Its Blythe, you?" Blythe asked giving a small smile. "Pretty. The name is Ambrose, my parents were a butthole with the whole name thing." He turned back around walking forward. "Yeah, my sisters name is Lilabelle and my brothers name is Albus. So I guess you could say the same with my parents." Blythe let out a small chuckle. "Guess we do have something in common then."

2 minutes later of walking they finally stop at a fort of some kind. Lanterns were hung and lit around the fort and pillows and cushions were scattered around, it was like a lounge area. Ambrose and Blythe sat down on some cushions and started to talk to each other more. "I just come here whenever I feel like escaping from the house." Ambrose said with a grin plastered across his face. "And your dad doesn't care?" "Nope. If i'm missing from the house then he knows where I am." He replied grabbing a jar of stones and gems and dumping them out to look at the ones hes collected. Blythe sat there looking down at all the stones he had. "Those are cool! Where'd you find them?" she asked him. "Just in this forest, took a while but i filled up the jar." Ambrose kept looking through them. "Wait a minute.. What are those two?" the girl asked pointing to two very beautiful gems next to each other. "Oh those. They're friendship germs. I haven't found any good friends to use them on yet." "But don't you have friends?" she asked with a look of confusion on her face. "I do! But they're special gems. The gems light up when it's with the right person. Like I said i haven't found the right one yet." Ambrose yawned lifting up his arms to stretch. The gems were in the shape of a star but separated. One was a ruby and the other was a sapphire. Blythe picked up the ruby and sapphire and one started started to glow very slowly, the sapphire. Ambrose sat there still as ever for a second and took the ruby out of her hand and the ruby started to glow as well. "No way-" he softly whispered under his breath

“Does this mean-” “Yea it does.” Ambrose cut Blythe off and then slowly started moving his hand with the gem towards her hand. He connected it with the other part of the star shaped gem and together both gems lit up brightly. “But how? We just met!” Blythe asked him with confusion again. “I dunno.” *[PRESENT]* “We had so much fun together, and yet I didn’t think we would.” Ambrose sighed softly holding the gem in his hand. “Then what happened sir?” “Well, forward to a couple more years when we were almost adults.” *[PAST]* “Jeez that old man really looked like he wanted to beat us to a pulp” Blythe chuckled sitting down on a chair and looked at Ambrose. “Yeah no kidding,” he agreed and sat down as well. “You think he’ll find us? I mean we are pretty out of the ordinary.” Blythe asked. Ambrose didn’t really know how to respond. He was a tall male with brunette hair and wore a red plaid shirt with a white T-Shirt underneath. He had elf ears and brown and blue eyes. Blythe on the other hand had a red-ish maroon hair color with elf ears as well. She had dark yellow eyes and a scar across her eye. She wore a brown sweatshirt with black pants and different colored converse. “Me? Not so much would expect me to be a troublemaker. As long as I hide the ears that is. You? Maybe would think so.”

*[PRESENT]* “So where is she now?” A reporter asked. Ambrose sat there still for a moment before looking up at all of the reporters. “Well, in a fight against some kids that were much more stronger than us had ended up beating us to a pulp and we both had to go to the nursing center. Blythe ended up going into a coma and never recovered. She died. But I survived.” Ambrose teared up a bit but then composed himself. “But I had the time of my life with her.” “And you are the only living elf to this day?” Somebody asked Ambrose. “Yes, that is correct. Unless there is some other elves that I am not aware of.”

Addison Williams  
Hixson Middle School  
Lisa Todd

# Seventh Grade Prose



## Prelude

It is the year 2124 and all human governments have become corrupt (more than it already was) and are trying to enslave us, for we are elementals. We have been in existence for over a century, at first, we were seen as powerful and all were scared of us, but then they tried and are still trying to get our power for themselves. I fear for them because they are messing with all of the forces in the world in pursuit to get those forces for themselves. For while we are peaceful for now we will not be forever, we are peaceful for now but that is only because of the elemental kingdoms, and the humans have almost figured out how to break through the defenses to get there. I fear that they will be destroyed by their own greed. They are our ancestors for we were human too.

-From the journal of Sevenus the Wise  
Grand ruler of the Kingdoms of Elements  
Holder of all Elements

## Chapter 1: The Visitors

There is a slave in the human worlds that has the power of the wild, his name is Justin, Justin Rayne, he is a slave to a plantation owner Justin is down in the fields accelerating the growth of the plants he is farming, for this is one of the abilities he has as an elemental, such power, if only he was trained to use it. "Hey Justin, get over here," shouted the plantation owner angrily. "I'm coming," Justin responded. "What is it master," he has to be respectful for he fears that he will be beaten.

"You were supposed to be extremely powerful, but I guess that the slave trader was wrong about that, you haven't reached my demands for food production yet!" The owner yelled, still angry.

"I'm so sorry sir," Justin said respectfully "I'm still working on that."

"Well you better work faster because that 200 tons of flour is due tomorrow!" said the owner

"But that is an unreasonable demand, even for a fully trained powerful elemental!" exclaimed Justin, forgetting to be respectful.

"Are you being disrespectful?" asked the owner "You know what the punishment for that is." He said while picking up a stick from the ground, he tests the stick to see if it can bend without braking. Then when he sees that it is strong and flexible he starts to brutally beat Justin for disrespect.

That evening was spent healing for Justin, which was very fast because people who have the element of nature can choose to rapidly regenerate, yet it still took hours to heal because of the damage done to him. He broke 3 ribs, 2 bones in his left leg, every bone in his right arm, both of his hands, and all of his teeth, this is not counting the innumerable bruises that were inflicted on him luckily all of those things can either be healed and grow back. He is at his house, if you can call it that, it was more of a small shack, with a hay bale as a bed and one window, which didn't even have glass in it. At this time, it is around 11:30 and he hears something outside, no, not something, someone.

"Are you sure this is the right place?" asked someone, who is he talking to?

"Yes, but I did think that it would be a little bit bigger," responded someone, I there were 2 people, at this time Justin is scared, there has been rumors that there are people who kidnap elemental slaves and do experiments on them.

"We should be quieter," One of the intruders said.

"Okay," responded the other one.

Justin looks out his window to see if he can see the intruders, he can't, it's too dark suddenly lights turn on from inside the main plantation house.

"Hey what are you 2 doing out there, go away!" The owner said, now Justin can see the intruders, one is around 5 and a half feet and has tan skin with green flecks and has short hair and is carrying, is that a bow? And has a quiver on their back packed full of arrows, he/she is wearing a forest green shirt and brown pants that don't have pockets. The other intruder is around 6 feet tall, is pale with light blue flecks and has blond long hair, and is wearing a light blue shirt and jeans with a scabbard at his waist. Is that a long sword he is carrying? Justin is very confused, no one uses weapons like that anymore, except for the elementals, these people are elementals! Justin goes outside after he figures out that they're elementals and then sees the Owner come, running out of the house with a laser pistol, how did he get that? those things cost 5,000,000,000 dollars counting the specialized batteries that are sold separately if it is low quality, suddenly he shoots at the elementals, light bursts out of the gun, and the one with the sword holds up his hand and the laser stops, now Justin is really confused, those lasers travel at 120,000,000,000,000 fps if it is low quality and in the high quality, which this pistol definitely isn't, the laser can travel around 1fpn, so even if you had the power of air you would need an extremely fast reaction time, The owner was just as surprised

"How did you do that?" the owner asked, confused, the elemental doesn't respond and just closes his hand and the laser beam disappears. As this happens the other elemental strings the bow that it was carrying and fires an arrow at the owner, it hits its target.

"Owwwww," said the owner who now had an arrow sticking out of his chest, barely missing his heart.

"We should go," said the elemental with the bow.

"Right," said the other elemental. "Where is the slave we are looking for?"

Timothy Andrews

Normal Park Museum Magnet

Sarah Andrews

## Untitled

During my fifth grade year for Christmas break I was having fun. My grandparents were coming over and we were having a good time and life seemed perfect. Later into Christmas break I was having to go to bed earlier and having to get ready for school. The days were getting closer till we had to go back to school. I was having fun but I was still missing my friends at school. Then BANG, it felt like Christmas break was over in a blink of an eye.

A few weeks went by and one day when we went to school my teacher said, "Next week we are going to have virtual classes and you will stay home and have school." I raised my hand and asked why. My teacher said, "There is a virus that is coming and is already in the USA, so we need to stay home and make sure we are safe." Most of the day we were packing things in our bag and taking things out of our lockers. After school was over my backpack felt like it weighed 100 pounds! Then I went home for the weekend. The weekend went by as fast as a lightning bolt, like usual.

Then on Monday I woke up and we tried to get on a Google meet. I was fortunate to be able to get on. Some of the students had bad internet and they could either not get on or it would be very laggy for them. If we ever had a problem with our school work we would have to contact the teacher somehow online. It was easy for me, but for some it was very hard. Some students didn't have their own devices like iPads, and were having to use their parents' devices. My parents work from home, but some people's parents would have to leave for work. Then if the kid had a problem with something on their iPad or laptop, they would not have their parents there to help them.

Even after school it was bad because we weren't able to go outside without wearing masks everywhere we went. Most of the stores were closed but the ones that were open had no supplies because everyone was stocking up on food and toilet paper. We weren't able to go outside and play with our friends in the neighborhood because everyone was afraid of catching the virus. Going out to eat with my family was no longer allowed because most restaurants were closed inside.

This whole time we had to be quarantined changed my view on how I live compared to other people. It made me realize how grateful I should be and it made me very thankful for everything that I have. God has given me a great life and I will thank him everyday. My experience in quarantine will change my world view forever.

Owen Baumgartner  
Silverdale Baptist Academy  
Beth Taylor

## My Name

My name is a special name: Finn, or Finnigan. The meaning of it is fair-haired or fair-headed. My name was chosen because both of my parents liked unique Irish names. I always thought that they had come up with Finnigan first and then shortened it, but they actually came up with Finn first and then had a choice to make the longer version, "Finnegin," or, the less common one, "Finnigan". They then decided that they wanted it spelled with an "I," and not an "E." For my middle name my parents wanted a strong, powerful name that was named after a city.

I like my name because it is unique. To me, it is like a salty shore; it is strong and brave. To me, my name tastes smooth but rigid at the same time. When I say it, it sounds like walking on a salty shore and relaxing after a long day. When other people say it, it sounds just like how it sounds when I say it.

My birthday is May 29, 2009, and the Chinese zodiac says I am a Gemini. Geminis possess a star quality that is unrivaled by others, the ability to sway opinions of others, charm, intelligence, and wit. They also are able to stay slim. My Chinese calendar birth animal for 2009 is the ox. The Chinese say that the ox is strong, reliable, fair. They inspire confidence in others and are also calm, patient, methodical and can be trusted. I feel like I share almost all of these characteristics from the zodiac and my birth animal.

I feel like my name is perfect for me and I would not change it.

Finn Beasley  
Baylor School  
Henry Blue

## Untitled

My soccer tournament took place on October 21, 2020. I was eleven years old and had been playing soccer for six years. If I work hard it usually pays off. It has helped me work hard in other places too.

I won the first and second games and it felt really great. I scored in almost all the games we played and I was really happy. Whenever we score we run to the corner flag and celebrate. Our celebration is that we huddle up and run back to our side.

We lost our third game and it felt pretty bad. The reason the Tennessee Soccer Club beat us was because they had stronger kicks and they were better at passing than us. They were not leading the entire game though. We were tied most of the game. While we were tied, I felt like we had a chance. They only won by one point in the end.

At the end of the tournament, we went to the finals and the team that beat us was there. We had hope that we could win. In the first half it was 2-2. In this game I played right wing. I even scored one goal as a right wing. We beat them by 3 points. The final score was two to five. It was a great game! It also felt really good to beat them.

Working hard hasn't just affected soccer; it also impacted my life. It made me a better person; it taught me how to be a hard worker and to not give up very easily. It also made me have more faith. The moral of the story is to always work hard.

Fin Bruesewitz  
Silverdale Baptist Academy  
Beth Taylor

## Untitled

Rushkit stepped outside of the nursery for the first time and he felt a strong blast of wind kick him back inside. Rushkit was a light brownish red with dark tan stripes. Even though Rushkit's mother usually kept a good eye on her kits she was sleeping well for now, and this would give the kits time to explore the camp. Their mother was a red tortoiseshell with amber eyes, although she could be quite grumpy and stubborn just like Reedkit. The reddish looking kit with brown spots was larger than the rest and pushed Rushkit off of him.

"Sorry Reedkit, I was making-"

"Shut up Rushkit, you failed at being a scout so you should watch and make sure Mother doesn't wake, or are you going to mess that up too?" Reedkit said harshly, and he showed off his teeth that were already starting to come in.

"But I wanna explore camp with you guys! It's still really early, and she won't be up-"  
Rushkit said in a squeaky voice.

"Rushkit can't you just shut up?" A light tan tortoiseshell snapped. Holding her tail up high as if to say that she was better.

"But it's not fair! It's not his fault he's this small!" A bit smaller of a she cat chirped up. She was brown with tan markings.

"Whatever Wyvernkit." Reedkit said as he flicked his fluffy tail in Wyvernkit's face.

"Hey! That's not nice!" Rushkit said, appearing to shrink when Reedkit got closer bearing his new fangs.

"Say that again, I dare you." Reedkit said with a snarl. Rushkit gulped.

"I-I said... That's not very nice!" Rushkit scowled at him. *Oh mousedung I'm screwed.* Rushkit thought letting out a small and quick breath. None of the kits dared to speak, not even Wyvernkit, who was always on Rushkit's side.

"Oh. Well then you better stop me from doing it again." Reedkit said with a mimicking tone. Rushkit's head dropped as he felt his fluff grow warm. Reedkit smiled and walked away chuckling as he and Softkit ran down the small hill, both of them tripping on the rock that jutted out of it.

"Ha! They deserved that. Are you ok Rushkit?" Wyvernkit asked, her voice tiny and small, just like her.

"I'm fine. I'll keep watch, you go and play." Rushkit said, nuzzling his soft sister's fur.

"Are you sure?"

"Yeah! You're far better at fighting so you should be able to give Reedkit some payback.

"Yeah! I'll come and get you if you look bored." Wyvernkit said before bouncing down, avoiding the rock and tacking Reedkit and playfully biting at his ear. The three of the kits played while Rushkit watched his mother. Her slow and normal breathing made him calm and slowly canceled out the sounds coming from behind him.

He saw a shadow swoop over him and Rushkit heard a loud screech from a bird. Rushkit looked up and saw a large hawk flying over the camp. It's bright orange tail feathers and dull brown body was the same brown as the dying leaves of fall. *What is that hawk doing?* He knew what a hawk was from the elder stories that Runningear had told them.

"Wyvenkit! Reedkit! Softkit!" Rushkit yelled hoping that they would see the hawk before it saw them. There was another loud screech and this time Reedkit had heard it.

“Hawk!” Reedkit squealed. “Run!” Reedkit pushed past his siblings and ran up the hill causing a lot of motion that the hawk saw.

“Wyvernkit!” Rushkit ran for his sister who the hawk was diving down for. But he had forgotten about the rock that was jutting out and he fell down falling onto his face. The bird went into a dive as it aimed at Wyvernkit. Rushkit felt hopeless as he tried to stand but only felt a loud snap. The cold wind blew harder and the many bushes surrounding the camp shook like they would in a harsh storm. It knocked the bird to the side, giving Wyvernkit the opening to run and escape. But she didn’t.

“What are you doing you mouse brain! Move!” Softkit yowled. Although she was a cold hearted kit she was protective of Wyvernkit, Wyvernkit was the smallest and was slightly disformed so no one ever picked on her. No matter how badly Reedkit wanted to. The kit’s yowling had woken a warrior who stood up from his resting place and saw the hawk hopping over to Wyvernkit. Rushkit turned to look at his mother who appeared to be waking up.

“Reedkit, go wake mother!” Softkit snapped, she was good at commanding things.

“No! You can’t make me do nothin’. I can do whatever I want, I’m the biggest and strongest.” Reedkit stuck out his tongue.

“Reedkit! Wyvernkit will die if we don’t get mother’s help!” Rushkit whimpered.

“So? I hope she dies, she’s a worthless bag of fur and what would she be able to do in the clan anyway? Be a medicine cat?” Reedkit scoffed when he finished. He hated medicine cats and loved the thought that his whole family never had a family member that was a medicine cat. The warrior leapt for the hawk, brown feathers and a speck of red flew past Rushkit’s head. There was a stench that screamed in his nose, it burned and was the worst possible stench that could ever be created. Worse than a pile mousebile. Rushkit felt things start to darken and a warm liquid fluttered down his soft young head. His vision became round and darker around the edges. He felt something pick him up, a heaving breath. Talon-like teeth gripped around his scruff as he was carried to a gaping hole in the earth. He felt a soft grass texture under his weak paw pads. He blinked once more before his eyes shut and he fell into a deep sleep.

Bo Cobb  
Center for Creative Arts  
Catherine Cox

## Untitled

I remember the day pretty well. My mom, dad, little brother and I were heading to my softball tournament on a cool Saturday morning. After a couple games; My family and I, along with my cousin, were heading to a restaurant to have lunch. On the way we saw two women who were selling baby puppies on the side of the road. My mom said that on the way back to the tournament we could stop to see them. Me and my cousin were so excited because we both knew that they were going to be so adorable.

While we ate, all me and my cousin could think about was how good the food was and the puppies. I couldn't bear any longer to see them, it was really nerve racking. All because my mom took so long to pay for the food. On the way back, I tried to think about what color and type they would be. I hoped they wouldn't be so much money so I could get one. I also thought about what I would name it and if it would be a girl or a boy, of course I wanted it to be a girl.

When we arrived at the stand. My cousin and I laughed in excitement. My mom told us that we would have to approach them calmly, so we wouldn't scare them. So my cousin and I quickly walked to the stand. When I had looked in the bin where the puppies were, I had seen the most adorable puppy I had ever seen in my life. I couldn't tell what type of puppy it was so I asked the lady that was selling them. She said, "They are Newborn Chihuahuas, you can hold one if you want". The one I saw was so adorable, I couldn't hold back on picking it up. It was tiny, soft, the fur was brown and it was timid with small floppy ears. Which makes sense because it was a newborn and hadn't yet grown. Turned out it was a girl!

My mom said we had to get back to the tournament before we were late. I was devastated because I had already begged to get her. But I had to move on. When we had finished the last game, my dad surprised me with the puppy I had picked out at the stand! I was so excited and of course my mom had put her in my glove to take her first picture.

A couple years later, she has grown up. She has been a very good dog, other than the times she had peed on the floor. But taking care of her has made me see that these types of things take a big responsibility. Especially when you have to feed them every day and night. But making sure that I do it is one of my top priorities, just like the other important things in my life.

Sarah Crossman  
Silverdale Baptist Academy  
Beth Taylor

## Untitled

Last Thanksgiving we found a house. My dad had gotten a job offer here in Chattanooga, at first we didn't think we would move since we built an amazing house, and had always lived in Villarica, GA. We were looking for a house for 6ish months When we decided that we just needed a house even if it meant not living on property anymore. We found a house in a neighborhood. We had always lived on property, so it was a big change just from Georgia to Tennessee. My dad told us, "Hopefully we will only live here for 2-3 years until we can get some property and build another house."

My parents didn't like how the public schools started teaching, so they also decided to put me and my sister in private school. We had decided that we would go and visit two schools, CCS and Silverdale. When we visited Silverdale we immediately knew we would apply there. We still went and visited CCS but didn't like it nearly as much. Our school has been something that has changed the way I looked at being a Christian, to have a relationship with God.

The first weekend after we moved was during Christmas, even though we were not here. The next week we were here and decided to go try out church at Silverdale North Ooltewah, and We really liked it. The first service we went to was about God testing our faith, that is when moving made since. It was God testing and growing my family's faith.

Before we moved I had always seen football as most everyone's favorite sport. Now I realized in other places people don't like football as much as I had thought everyone did. Also, it has made me feel a lot different in the sense that now we live in the mountains, and I'm not used to that.

Also, now I would say that I was spoiled living near one of the biggest cities in America. It has changed how we do things like buying shoes or going to the movie theater. Chattanooga is a smaller city to what I'm used to, my family doesn't have an endless amount of places to go buy shoes. There are also a lot less movie theaters.

In conclusion, moving is a change. I've changed a lot about my life, from the way I look at being a Christian to little things like going to buy shoes. I would have to say though, it has changed my life and world view in a positive way.

Brandt Denis  
Silverdale Baptist Academy  
Beth Taylor

## Untitled

Just as the coals on the fire got low, great grandma began to tell the story of our family heirloom. The heirloom passes down in our family and we get it out every Christmas! It stays in secrecy just like our bible, Christian religion, and our Christmas tree. You see, we live in North Korea where there are no Christian churches, bible classes, or even bibles. Anyone who practices the Christian religion would suffer harsh punishments. My family continues to stay strong to our religion in spite of the danger. Our love for Jesus fills our hearts and we know the importance of trusting in him even in hard circumstances. "My mother always used a dark rag to cover up the small tree we owned along with our bible, we would hide the rag and the objects under the bed where it was unnoticed" my great grandma says in an intriguing voice. She continues to tell the story just as she told it last year. It was Christmas eve, late at night when the neighbors were asleep. They got out the family bible and everyone would take turns reading and praying. It was tradition we gave thanks and understood the importance of the day Jesus was born. "I remember the exact verse I would read every year," my grandma says in an exciting tone. As a smile forms on her face she goes on to read the verse, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." She pauses then she says "next, I heard a knock on the door and it caused shivers to rush through my spine." I think to myself how scared she must have been. Her dad hid everything under the bed and threw the rag over it. As unknown individuals storm inside, her and her family stood in the corner denying they owned a bible or a tree knowing they would be persecuted if they found the truth. Anxiety rushes through the family as they watch the soldier stand just inches away from the bed. He looks in the classic hiding spots first the closet Next drawers, cabinets..then under the bed. To everyone's surprise it was not there. An exchange of eyes looked around the room in shock. The soldiers leave and my family sighs in relief but also suspension. Where is the bible? Without a word, we rush over to the bed and watch the bible reappear. It is as if it just went invisible! How could it be? Shortly after examining the situation we discovered that the rag could turn invisible. This was a Christmas miracle... a rag that could hide our bible and Christmas tree! What if this means we can read the bible outside the depths of our home with the invisibility rag over it? The family quickly realizes how much this will change. After a peaceful night's rest they decide to go to a family friend who was also Christian. When they came over the family happily introduced the new gadget. They all cover up under the invisibility cloak and celebrate Christmas in secret. This was the first time they got to celebrate Christmas with others. A warm feeling came over them because this was the first time they got to be together on Christmas day. The Christmas spirit flooded the house and a content safe feeling came into their hearts. This is the loving feeling of Christmas. Here they were for the first time being able to relax knowing they are safe on this special day.

Alice Eaker  
Chattanooga Christian School  
Robert Marshall

## My Name

In French, Joli means pretty. In everyday life, it is just my name. Beauty is not just your looks, and not even your actions, but how you display your character. This doesn't mean that you are necessarily a good person; it means that you are honest with what kind of person you are, and that you are trying to be the best you.

My name is different, but it fits right in with the rest of my family. Jake, Jenni, Jakob. Those are my mom's dad's and brother's names, so the unspoken rule when choosing my name, was it had to start with a J. My name couldn't be Jenni, Jill, or Juli because those names are already taken by my aunts. My parents went to Google and found Joli.

To my parents, Joli is like the first rainbow after a long storm, beautiful, smooth, and full of potential. Joli is a calm elegant word that glides off the roof of your mouth. When you say it you feel like you are in an old café with the smell of freshly brewed coffee floating in the air. Unlike my name, I am talkative, outgoing, and persistent like a puppy. My name can also be like a hot pink fur coat, bright, out there, and lots of people are in awe when they first see it. My name makes a statement.

Pisces is my zodiac sign, so I am considered emotionally sensitive, gracious, and emotionally aware. Pisces are among the most sympathetic of the zodiacs and will go to any length to ensure the happiness of others. I am all of these, especially emotionally aware and kind. If someone around me is having a bad day, I will try and fix it. Sometimes people use me because of this, but others admire me for it,

My name is like no other and I would never change it, it holds memory, meaning, and my personality. My name is my identity.

Joli Kellerhals  
Baylor School  
Henry Blue

## The Dreamer (first chapter)

I couldn't see anything. I had no idea where I was, or how I got there. I tried to stand up, but I couldn't. I tried to call out, but I couldn't speak. In fact, I couldn't move at all. I heard a shuffle in front of me. A light flickered on. It wasn't much light, and I couldn't tell where it was coming from, but it was just enough to see myself and the chair I was sitting in. I looked in front of me. I could almost make out a hooded figure in the distance, but I couldn't tell if it was real until it started walking towards me. I was absolutely terrified. The light went out, and I flailed around desperately. Wait- I could move! Why hadn't the hooded figure reached me yet? My eyes adjusted, and I found out why. I was dreaming. I got out of my bed and checked the time on my alarm clock. It was 6:30 in the morning. I walked into the kitchen, where my parents were. "Ken? Are you alright? You look like you've seen a ghost!" My mom asked, with a worried look on her face.

"Just a bad dream," I said in response.

I didn't feel like going into the details. My dad was hard at work on his laptop. He writes articles for this big-time news website- I think. He changes jobs every six months or so, so I'm never sure exactly what he's doing. My mom is a doctor at a pharmacy, and arranges flowers for weddings in her spare time. I never knew who my brother was. He got in a car accident before I was born. I'm told he was a great person, and always went out of his way to help people. It's a shame thing like that happen. A really great person tragically dies, while there are so many horrible people in the world. I checked my watch, and realized I was going to be late for school if I waited any longer.

I was halfway to school when I realized I never said goodbye to my parents before I left.

Whatever. I'd see them after school anyways.

School was boring as ever. I got lectured in social studies, accidentally knocked someone's project off a table in science, and math class droned on for way too long. On the way out of school, I heard a familiar voice behind me.

"Hey, Ken!" It was John. Me and John had been best friends since first grade, and have always been in the same classes since.

"Hey. What's up?" I said

"Not much. What did you think of that homework yesterday?"

"We had homework?"

"You didn't know?"

"I guess not."

"That's alright. Can I hang out at your house for a while? "

"As long as it's okay with my parents. I'll call them."

I grabbed my phone from my pocket and called my mom. No response. I called my dad. No response from him either. My parents always responded when I called. What if they were in trouble? John said something about me being pale. I was so focused on my parents that I couldn't hear exactly what he said.

"I guess that's a no on hanging out today?" John said

"Uh- Yeah. Sorry man."

"It's cool. I probably have chores to do anyways."

I ran faster than I had ever ran in my life. I nearly got hit by cars a couple times. I finally got home and fiddled with the key in my pocket. I jammed it into the lock on the door. I looked

around the living room. Nothing out of place. I ran to the kitchen. There was a small yellow note sitting on the table. It read: "No time to explain. Green book. Medicine cabinet. Band-aids. Bring zombie backpack. Love you. -mom and dad"

My heart skipped a beat. What happened to them? Were they okay? I had no idea. But I knew what they meant by green book. It was a book that my parents kept on top of their dresser. It was a large book with a lock and a big yellow gem set in the cover. It had no words on it and some odd rune-like shapes on the side. They always told me not to open it. But the band-aids and medicine cabinet? What was that supposed to mean? I went to my parents' bedroom and grabbed the book. I went to the medicine cabinet in the bathroom and grabbed the band-aids. I emptied out the box. Along with a bunch of Band-Aids, there was a key! It had the same weird runes on

it that the book had. I then went to my room to get my backpack. I had a backpack prepared in case something like a zombie apocalypse happened, filled with food and water and stuff like that. I threw it over my shoulder. I took a deep breath and inserted the key into the lock on the book. I twisted the key, and the lock opened with a click. I opened the book. I couldn't read anything before I was blinded by a flash of yellow light. Then everything went dark.

Liam Keown  
Normal Park Museum Magnet  
Sarah Andrews

## Untitled

When I was seven years old I was very immature (most people are at such a young age) I used to play around not caring what I did or said. Well one day that changed. It was the day before second grade graduation and me and my dad were going to ride our golf cart. He parked it on a hill because he needed to go and get something. I touched the gas pedal which released the brake and I started slowly rolling backwards down the hill. I screamed "Dad help me!" He jumped out of his truck and started running towards me. He yelled at me to jump off but I was too scared.

He ran forward and tried to pull it back up the hill which he couldn't do and he broke several of his ribs. We have these big boulders at the bottom of the hill and the golf cart hit the boulders and threw me into the air. I landed on the hot concrete with the golf cart on top of me. Next thing I knew I was unconscious and I heard my dad yelling at me to wake up. He was just strong enough to lift the golf cart up so I could crawl out.

I crawled out and you could see the bone in my ankle. My dad was crying and so was I. He rushed me to the hospital and my mom met us there. They rushed me into the emergency room, they took lots of X-rays but found nothing wrong with me. They bandaged me up and sent me home. A few days later I was throwing up blood. I was at my grandma's house with my mom which is two hours away from where I live. They rushed me to the emergency room and the hospital did nothing. They sent me by ambulance back to the first hospital which was a long drive.

Once they got me out of the ambulance they took me into a hospital room and I had to wait till the next morning for them to do surgery. They had to go through my mouth down to my stomach because I was internally bleeding. I had to stay in the hospital for a week, they even thought I would have to get a blood transfusion. They finally let me leave and I got to go home.

I learned so much from this experience. I have learned that I need to not play around because if you do you can get hurt. I have changed a lot since then and I still have the scar on my ankle. When I think about that experience now I realize that was foolish because I could've just jumped off but of course I was too scared. I'm glad that I have changed and I now make more rational decisions.

Katelyn Kitchings  
Silverdale Baptist Academy  
Beth Taylor

## The Lake That Never Ends

Below the constellations lay a patchwork of farm plots, rivers, mountain ranges, forests, and cities. Below the trees in the forest lay a lake. Below the lake there lay nothing. Of course, Montlake wasn't always bottomless. Many years ago, miners' children had splashed on the banks. They had sailed little boats fashioned from twigs across the rippling surface. On hot summer days, they would skip stones and go fishing, occasionally slipping beneath the surface to cool off, but they always came back up. As they grew older, so did the saplings surrounding the lake.

Instead of swimming in the cool water, new mothers washed clothes. Instead of twig sailboats, men chopped down trees to build canoes. Families sailed across the lake together in the summers, and in the winter the new children would throw snowballs and slide across the frozen lake. As the first children grew elderly and slowly passed, the lake became lonely, Desperate even. Again and again, it would have to witness the children who once splashed on its banks grow old and die. Of course, the lake didn't understand this. The lake would never die, and just supposed that the people wandered off one day. Slowly the winters grew longer, and the lake stayed frozen for many more months than it should have. Often, the surrounding trees were bare, and slowly the families moved away from the once beautiful lake. They moved out to new cities and traveled West. This made the lake even sadder. The children who swam in its ripples had long passed, and their children had grown too old to play on its banks.

The lake grew hollow. Its bottom stretched further away from its surface, and many of the animals who had once kept it company left for warmer, bigger, shallower lakes. Over time, the forest became empty. The lonesome lake believed there was no other hope, it would dry up with time, and the people who had remembered it would too. As the sun rose and set over and over and over people began to move back to the lake. They were different children, but they filled the lake with remorse and longing for the first children who had given it a purpose in the beginning. The first children had loved the lake as much as the lake loved them. Angered that it had to live while everyone around him disappeared back to the Earth, the lake became deeper still. It became jealous that the old children all moved away or passed away, but these new children got to live. The new children didn't play in the lake. They didn't skip its rocks. They occasionally swam, but most of the time they just sat around it, throwing their trash into its depths. The lake's anger continued to rise until it was practically overflowing.

These new children would never replace the first ones. It was this instant that the lake had an idea. It would tunnel deeper than it ever had before. It would push through the ground until it found the children. The first ones who splashed in its waters and played along the banks. So the lake went deeper and deeper. It searched in circles and the waters turned even darker. It searched for the children until it was driven mad, and finally returned home to find another population of children had discovered it once again. Furious and left with nothing, the lake had become bottomless, stretching on forever.

Decades later the lake is still bottomless. The trees that once stood on the banks had long since withered, leaving new ones in their places. The ancestors of the first children had long since died, and new families living in big houses were the only people who knew about the lake. No one ever came to splash in the cool water and not one stone was skipped. The world continued to spin but the lake would stay still. A silent narrative to everything that had

happened in those woods. Time would move forward, but not the lake. The lake would be there until the end of time, as endless as its bottom.

Kyla Kruchenski  
Chattanooga Christian School  
Robert Marshall

## Chapter one

six years ago

"Another body has been found today in Bellingham, Washington today." The news reporter broadcast from the TV. "This is the second one this week, officials are now going to put their statemen-" Mom walks into the living room from the kitchen and shuts off the TV. "I don't want that stuff tainting your brain, Violet." she says to me "It's not tainting my brain!" I bark back but she doesn't listen. "Whatever, she sighs, walking back into the kitchen, "either way I don't want you watching this stuff," she says waving her spatula around towards the TV. "You should come to eat breakfast before it gets cold instead." "Alright, mom I'll be there in a minute..." I call from the living room and continue to scribble down information about what I caught on the news. "I don't want you to ever get involved with that stuff," she tells me, "It's dangerous, and even though I know you're just curious about this, but remember, curiosity killed the cat." Suddenly, I was back in my small apartment, in a cold sweat, and in my eighteen-year-old body and not my twelve-year-old body. I rubbed my eyes and checked the time. 3:13 a.m. I toss over and try and fall back asleep. I can't, though. These dreams have kept flooding my consciousness while I'm sleeping ever since I've moved here two months ago. They started the same time the letters started. The letters. I keep trying to forget about them, even though they keep coming, week after week. I shut my eyes and turn around. I need to get at least three more hours of sleep, and I need to forget about the letters. I failed to forget about the letters. It's too bright, and it's too early. You would think with the seasons changing and the leaves fading different colors it wouldn't be so bright at 7:46 in the morning but I guess not. The city is alive and well, not stopping for the slightest thing. The letters are the only thing I can think clearly about. I shuffle through the pile of paper, each white envelope encasing a drawing that has been folded neatly in the plain piece of paper, waiting to be freed, each one in detailed pencil, different scenes, with different bodies. They all show somebody different. A man, a woman, another man, over and over again. The images keep flashing in my mind. I try and think about something else, the research paper I have due tonight, the fact I have to clean my messy apartment, okay, that's no better than thinking about the letters. I check my phone, today's Sunday. The letters always arrive on Sunday. I go to the couch and sit down, I can wait. The waiting gets tiring quickly though, and I strain my ears for the slightest knock at the door for hours. Finally, I hear the soft tap at the door and jump up, opening the door to find only the manager of the apartment complex, delivering the mail, as usual, no special messenger or potential person that could be sending me them. He hands me the letter and cracks some joke about me having a secret admirer or something but I don't end up paying enough attention to fully understand. These letters are starting to get to my head. I keep trying to tell myself to stay out of dangerous situations, even though this situation most likely isn't dangerous. It's probably someone that lives next door, too bored to deal with their own problems so they had to create some for me. So, if it's most likely nothing, why do I have this gut feeling that it's not?

Why do I feel like something is wrong? I tare open the white envelope that had nothing on it besides my address scribbled on it in blue ink, not even my name. I tried searching the web for any match with the handwriting be there were never any results. This time the drawing inside of the plain white envelope consisted of a man lying in an alley- surrounded by a pool of blood and

slumped against a dumpster... when I've been getting these letters, I never recognized where the body was, I studied the drawing from left to right and I've lived in this city my entire life, if the location in the drawing was somewhere here in this city, I would know. But something was different this time. The alley wasn't just an alley, it was the one close to my apartment. The small sign that dangled off in the corner in the drawing was the same sign of the small bar that somehow still stays open, even though nobody ever goes there. "I can't obsess over this." I mumbled to myself sternly. Whenever things like this happen, I always get obsessed. It's been happening ever since I was little- I was too curious my mom would say. So, I crumple the paper up and throw it in the trash. I shake my head, I need to stop worrying about this. I shuffle over to my desk, the only thing I need to worry about is this research paper that's over-do.

It's been two hours. This paper hasn't gotten anywhere. The thing is I haven't been able to concentrate. The image of the drawing is still fresh in my mind and I keep replaying it over and over again. I continue on my paper, think, think, think. I softly prod in my head. I decide to get up and take a break instead and walk over to the small seating area in my apartment that has my TV and a couple of chairs as well as my couch. I search for the remote and switch on the TV, flipping through the channels. After not finding anything interesting I go to the news channel. If only I hadn't landed on the news, if only I hadn't stopped working on my paper, if only I had stopped caring about the letters and thrown them away, none of this would have happened in the first place.

Alice McMahon  
Normal Park Museum Magnet  
Sarah Andrews

## My Name

“Gabriella” means to be loyal and strong; this meaning does suit me. I have never gone by Gabriella; I have always gone by Ella, and Ella means “goddess” in Hebrew or “young girl” in Spanish. I love my name, and I wouldn’t ever change it. I think it’s a great name and it really suits me and my personality.

The animal that I think of when I hear my name is a Golden Retriever because they look a little like me. I have blonde hair and a golden retriever has golden blond hair. And golden retrievers can be very hyper and I am very hyper. And they are very loyal to their owners. When people say my name it sounds like waves at an ocean, with a gentle breeze blowing. Perhaps this is one of the reasons I really love the beach. Whenever I hear my name, or I say it, it smells like the salt water to me.

My parents chose my name for me. They said they always loved it, and I can choose to be called either Gabriella, Ella, or Gaby.

I was born on July 24, so my zodiac sign is a Leo. A Leo’s personality is compassionate, big hearted-ness, energetic, funny and respect. I think all of these fit me.

My parents chose my name for me because they said it went very well with my last name and middle name, so they named me Gabriella. My mom gave me my middle name because it was her grandmothers name, and my mom loved her very much. My mom said she was funny and kind, but I never knew her. My mom said she was also a lot like me, she said she was funny, kind, strong, elegant, talented, and stubborn. That sounds a lot like me!

If I were to change my name I would choose charlotte, because I really love that name. Charlotte means “free.” But after all, I would stick with Gabriella... and love it.

Gabriella Maxine Monson-James  
Baylor School  
Suzanne Collins

## The Journeyman

“I really hate those Dragon Rumbles. They get us side money but that’s it.” The man mumbled this under his breath- his silk white glove under his chin; skin tight to his hand. As Rim, the six foot six muscle was getting his gut punched at by a five pound gauntlet. Dragon Rumbles, also known as just Drag Fights, is where two people strap five pound steel gauntlets to their fists and brawl it out. Sometimes people might go an added step in these brawls and add a substance called Dragon’s Fumes (usually to make the opponent yield). Most people don’t understand why, but the gist of what it does is that it makes you feel like your throat is burning. This is the reason Dragon Rumbles and Dragon’s Fumes have the word Dragon in front of them.

The man now casually looked around the tavern- most patrons avoiding eye contact with the men that could throw them around like ragdolls. The man now calmly let out an exhale, “ Rim, stop being a degenerate and aim for the head already... act like a pesticide to this pest.” Right as the man with silk gloves said this, he watched Rim get socked in the jawline by the gauntlet, almost wincing in pain, even though he wasn’t the one who got hit. Rim now rubbed his jaw- looking away and holding up his gauntlet to swat away punches; looking over to the man with silk gloves, “I know, I know. Calm down Aludarc.” Rim now reeled his left arm backward- tensing his muscles as he sent a nasty left haymaker through the other man’s guard- most likely breaking his nose.

Rim now raised his left fist as his gauntlets slid off his fists after combat. Alucard simply stood up and applauded the big guy. Everyone at the tavern held their breath though- they knew what was going to happen next. Rubbing their foreheads, some even just walking out now. Rim put his hand now over his liver as he let out a wheeze. Alucard started backing away, letting Rim take a breather as he went to the stalls near the left side of the tavern. Poor guy threw up for around an hour- Alucard having to help the unconscious man on the ground clean himself. Rim was a six-foot-six brawlic man, he was good looking with minor amounts of constantly shaved stubble and red eyes. He usually wore plate armor but since it’s restricted in this region he has to wear scale mail. Aludarc had his face hidden by a pure fullhead silk mask, he had mesh covers to hide his eyes and was slim in body shape. Usually wearing a velvet red cloak- a white button shirt and an amazing looking gorget. A black steel with a golden haze over it.

Rim, now concealed in the tavern stalls, was heard cleaning. Aludarc now explaining to the blonde that lost with a soothing voice. “ Well- you lost, you now have to clean the mess, knave.” The six-foot well-built blonde now did what Aludarc said. This was usually the rules in Drag Fights. Rim now came out of the stalls. Cleaning it by hand instead of waiting for the blonde. Rim walking past Alucard, joyfully letting out a hum.

Throwing whatever he had in his stomach for the past hour and Dragons Fumes. The substance that burns your throat. Rim with his grey skin and red eyes now walked in the tavern- Its doors shutting and swaying against the winds. “Well Alucard. We did good today, didn’t we? 100 Minors and 50 sills. All of good payout if you ask me.” Alucard now just looked over to Rim- his silk mask slowly moving. “I believe we did Rim.”

The two now readied their things from the tavern, the blonde still having to clean up any flipped furniture or stuff that was thrown up on. Rim now walked along with his backpack and Alucard with his food. Alucard hopping onto his horse- allowing the elegant and strong beauty to follow behind Rim’s horse. Rim’s horse wasn’t the strongest and kept simple- but even Alucard

mentioned it was way more trained than his horse. As the two road off, the tavern was left silent, crickets chirping and the wind howling.

Elijah Pickett  
East Ridge Middle School  
Elizabeth Pullen

### The Story of Mr. Fannon

Three months ago, I was given the opportunity to walk my neighbor's dog. Not much. I had seen the man in his wheelchair before, walking his big black labs. I went up there to walk a small dog named Lady. I did it for two months, and I had begun to enjoy going and seeing Mr. Fannon. He was always working on his computer at his desk, and always made time to discuss his hunting days. He used to hunt a lot. Until one day, he was up in a perch when he fell and BOOM. His legs have been paralyzed for 13 years; I think. He loved telling me about his skeletons and other stories about his awesome life. He grew up in Texas, went to seminary, was a pastor, and had two kids, Walker and Olivia. For his birthday, I gave him a rat skull strait from Hilger. The last time I saw him was on the 22 of October. He thought he had covid. The doctors misdiagnosed him and said he had pneumonia, but he had a blood clot in his lungs. If the doctors knew he had a blood clot, they may could have saved him. I was in his house hours before he died, only mere hours. I couldn't see him, because he was too sick, but I genuinely thought that he would be all right. He died on October 24, 2021. He was a true friend and will forever be remembered.

Campbell Scherer  
Hilger Higher Learning  
Shelley George

## My Name

My name means Hill Meadow. When I think of a meadow, I think of bright colors, flowers, long grass, and rolling hills; the first flash of summer sun on the gold-tinted hills. I believe the meaning of my name suits me well because I am very outgoing and enthusiastic like the colors of a meadow. My name is like meadow grass flowing in a summer breeze. I have always loved my name; it makes me feel like I could touch the sky. To me, it has always stood out in a way. I do not know many other people, if any, that have my name. I have always liked that my name makes me a little different.

My astrological sign is a Libra. Libras are obsessed with symmetry, and they have a special appreciation for art and beauty. My birthstone is an October opal. Opals have a bright array of colors inside, which fits my bright and bubbly personality. Because of my love for nature, I have a special appreciation for art and beauty. I am a perfectionist and love it when things are symmetrical. In the Chinese calendar, I was born in the year of the ox. The years of the ox are strong, reliable, fair, inspiring, calm, patient, and can be trusted. They can also be very opinionated. I can be very opinionated, but I am also reliable, patient, strong, and can be trusted.

My first name was an original name selected by my parents. My mother spent hours looking through baby name books until she found the perfect name. My middle name was a family name; I was named after my great-grandmother whose name is Helen. My middle name is a variation on that. My middle name is Eleanor. My great-grandmother is spunky and sweet. She had to drop out of school in 8th grade because of bad health. (Ironically, she is 103 and still alive today!). After she dropped out of school, she started to help her mom with laundry.

Brinley. When people say my name, it sounds like wind through new summer leaves. My parents wanted my name to be different, and I love it. Brinley Eleanor Smith. They wanted my name to sound pretty together and wanted each of their kids to have a family name. My middle name, Eleanor, means shining light. I love that I will always have some part of my great-grandmother to remember her by. I love my name and would not choose a new one even if I could. Hill Meadow Shining Light Smith.

Brinley Smith  
Baylor School  
Henry Blue

# Eighth Grade Prose



## The Night My Dreams' Lost Me

It was a Tuesday night, and my mom had told me to go to bed as she always did on a school night. I never really thought it was entirely possible to send your body into a deep sleep, and it didn't make sense to me because she had always stayed up late. I was also afraid of the night, not because of those scary monsters that would haunt me as a child and kept me up all night to their roaring creaks and squeals from behind my closet door but a new kind of monster. This monster would steal young children from their sleep and enjoy the terror of screaming parents, missing posters, police sirens, and fear. The fear would feed their need to take others joy. Maybe this monster felt empty inside and thought they could steal joy from others to make themselves feel better. Perhaps it was taught they were helping humanity by getting rid of all the awful people or the ones that reminded them of their enemies, demons, or monsters.

In my bed, covering myself in blankets, I remembered when I was little and had thought of my blanket as a shield protecting me from the terrors of the night. It became my comfort zone, like a safe place where nothing could drag me out of my dreams of another world, endless fields filled with sunflowers and a room full of glistening diamonds that would reflect the light in my eyes. I started hearing the croaking of seagulls as I dreamt of an endless beach paradise. The croaking of seagulls began to grow louder until their chatting overwhelmed the sound of the saltwater waves crashing into the sand. That's when I woke up and realized I wasn't alone and that the croaking of seagulls made the same noise on our almost antique wooden floors. It felt like I was frozen, and with just one breath and "it" would come for me.

Then I did what I usually do when I hear noises in the night. Try to make up excuses for the sound. I tried to make myself believe that this sound was just the air conditioning or that if it was our floors, it was my brother just getting a late-night snack. After all, he had done that before. When the sound came closer, in and out of each room, all I could do was close my eyes and pretend, pretend I was at that beach paradise where the sea was blue and full of life. This time my worry had found its way into my dreams. The sunny blue sky became a dark gray blur, and the saltwater waves became a tsunami of deadly creatures that soon surrounded me. There was no way out of the darkness. I tried to open my eyes, but there was too much salt for me to see clearly, and when I wanted to rub it out of my eyes, the pressure pushed my hands back. Only water filled my lungs as I tried to gasp for the last bits of air, making breathing almost impossible. There was only one thing the darkness forgot. The thick trash bag that resembled the sea had small holes, one big enough to breathe through. I couldn't stop the tears from falling down my face while I was quietly carried down the stairs so as not to wake anyone. Then the monster left through our back door.

Once I felt the cold winter air stroke my back and heard the sound of traffic on our busy road. I was tossed into a car as if they didn't care about being gentle anymore, like they thought I had lost my worth or value. The car began to move. I was so frightened and confused that it made me lose all hope. I began to think of reasons why they stole me. Maybe I didn't have enough struggles in my life, and they were jealous of that. I thought of the last thing I said to them, and being unable to remember saying that I loved them became my motivation. I began to think of ways to escape. I couldn't do much because they would Hear me, so I used my teeth to tear a big hole into the bag, then stretched my legs to have enough room inside of the bag to move my legs through the hole that I had made. Then I tried to squeeze my head through the top of the tied

bag so I could see. All I could see first was the black. It was probably my eyes adjusting to the darkness because it got a bit clearer each second. Then I felt around the car with my feet.

A square outline on the floorboard looked like the storage compartment my mom had in her car. She told me she used it to store the extra tire if hers went flat. I was hurrying towards the corner of the car when I felt us make our first stop. I saw streetlights and the roofs of homes. I tried to see if I knew where we were, but because trash bag remnants still wrapped my hands, It felt like a deadly creature wrapped its tentacles around my arms, pulling me down onto the ocean floor. I spent what felt like forever trying to get my arms out. I finally used my teeth to cut a slit in the bag and tore myself out.

My arms revealed a pattern of striped indents from the trash bag, and after a while, I could feel around without being numb. I finally lifted the square outline in the floorboard and was surprised to find a heavy black box that felt like a dumbbell on my young indented arms. When I lifted the top, my mouth dropped like I had seen something. I found a gun inside the hollowed-out hollowed-out aperture of the box, and beside it laid two small bullets. I had never seen a gun in real life before besides the ones I saw on our 3rd-grade field trip to the history museum. The gun was black, and the handle was cold. We stopped after driving miles. I picked up the weapon trusting that it had bullets in it already. I knew what I had to do. I could hear him walking down the left side of the car. And when he looked in, I shot him directly in the head. The monster I had spent my whole life hiding from was finally gone.

Bethany Anderson  
Silverdale Baptist Academy  
Jason Williams

## Untitled

I quickly turn around and find that Sephtis is standing right by the entrance. I am trapped, again. This always happens. Why?

“Do you like my little surprise? I keep all the mangy dog’s sacrifices here. And I’ll keep you too.” He utters as he steps forward.

“I am not your toy,” I said trembling.

“Who says your not?”

“I did,” I say trying to sound confident.

“You need not be afraid. You just need to know your place, peasant.” Sephtis declares.

All my life everyone has treated me like I am lower than them. I am fed up with it. I will not let him treat me like this anymore. There is so much anger in my mind right now it is clouding my vision. I hate everyone. All the forbidden thoughts are coming back to me but I do not dismiss them. I welcome them. I embrace them. I charge right at Sephtis. He is taken back but I do not stop there. I launch myself at him, bushing him up against the floor. Hitting him over and over again. Letting all of my anger out. I let my thoughts take over. I do not stop them anymore. But he does not bleed, he only laughs.

This makes me even angrier. So I hammer my hands into his scale. Over and over again I bash his head in on the stone until he bleeds. As soon as he sees the blood trickling down his face. He looks me dead in my eyes. He needs no words to tell me what he is going to do to me. I am paralyzed in fear once again. But it does not take long for my vexation to rap its hands around me again.

I will not let my fear get in the way anymore. I hate fear. The only valid emotion is rage and I will show them a new kind of rage. They will feel fear like a nerve before.

I quickly stumble up heading for my room, Sephtis right behind me. Sephtis is able to grab my long brown hair. Ripping some of it out in chunks. I shrill in pain yet I don’t stop running.

If I were to stop running for one second Sephtis would be able to pin me to the ground and kill me. I can not let that happen. As I approach my room I shove myself in, through the tiniest crack. Then slamming the door and locking it. Like that would do any good. I swiftly move towards the sword, hung up on the wall. Each step I take towards to sword I can hear the striking cries that it makes. Never the less I bite my tongue, moving closer, hoping the crys will just go away. Blood starts to drain from my nose but I am so close. I am only two steps away I can’t hear anything else but the howling. The howling is so loud I don’t even realize that Sephtis was right behind me. Despite that, I don’t stop moving forwards. I reach out and grab the sword.

I feel a sudden rush of power. Not noticing that everything around me is like a tornado. Wind spirals around me, keeping Sephtis from getting any closer to me. My silky ivy green dress blows up. My corset comes loose. I feel so free. The sword in my hand makes me feel so powerful. My long dark hair blows out of its lose brides. This is what power feels like. The lace around my bed comes undone and starts flying around the room. It’s like magic.

The wind comes to a slow stop. Yet a gentle breeze still lingers. Sephtis is furious. Before he can make his move I thrust myself forward. Taking my new sword and shoving it right through his tough tissue. Through right his heart. In one swift clean move, I brought the God of the Dark Moon to his knees. Still, I am not done. A god can live on with a simple injury like that. I

rapidly bring my sword up to my shoulders making a whistling sound as I do. Then with all my might, I briskly sever his head and body.

There is no more god of the Dark Moon but just as I was thinking that. Tons of little black dots start leaking from the wall. Like a flock of birds, they work as one trapping me in my room.

There is nowhere to go. The light slowly starts to fade. I am once again one with the darkness.

This time there are no voices, only mine. I hate it.

All of a sudden, the black dots start bonding together. I am confused about what is happening.

Once again I have no power. At the same time, I feel Sharpe stabbing pain all over my body.

The fused black dots are seeping into my skin. I scream in agony. The back of my head is pounding. I can feel my bones breaking then popping back together. My ribs are being

rearranged. The pain is unbearable. I scream and scream but nothing could make this stop. My

nails grow longer, coming to thorn sharp points at the end. I feel a bulge growing to the top of my head. This is the most agonizing pain I have ever been in. "Someone help me,"

I plead.

The bulge gets bigger and bigger. Eventually breaking through my skin. Curving once then coming to a knife-sharp point.

All the black dots have been absorbed into me. I collapse onto the ground. After catching my breath I look for Sephtis but he is nowhere to be found. The only thing left of him is his tattered clothes and his jewelry.

Silas Curtis

Center for Creative Arts

Catherine Cox

## Aeturnum

January 1972

We should have turned around miles ago, but Jameson insisted we kept driving. He was that sort of guy, stubborn and unrelenting. But even now in the pale moonlight, I could tell he was starting to second-guess himself. The analog clock in Jameson's orange and white 1970 Ford F-100 truck ticked midnight. I was squished between him and Levi, who had been asleep for an hour.

I leaned over to Jameson. "Are you sure about this? Let's pull over for the night."

"I don't think that's a good idea," Jameson breathed, green eyes peering into the misty forest ahead. Fog settled over the silent woodland road, making it more difficult to see with each passing moment. "This place doesn't feel right. Why didn't I turn back when we had the chance?"

That was a good question, but I had no answer. For some odd notion, he wouldn't let me convince him otherwise, but I had trusted his judgment.

"I'll do it. I'll pull over," Jameson said, trepidation trailing his voice. A quick trip to his grandfather's house had turned into an all-night ordeal. We were most indefinitely lost, but time itself seemed to tick by slowly. Levi showed no coherence; Jameson had nudged him slightly to tell him our next course of action, but he kept snoring.

Jameson killed the engine and put the truck into park. We were half in the road, half in a ditch. The fog's misty tendrils curled around the truck, cold settling into the single cab. My eyes closed, trying to catch rest, but nothing came. A pit of dread sat in my stomach, and cold tingled my senses. Goosebumps covered my body, and it felt like I was falling.

I awoke with a gasp. My heart seemed to gallop out of my chest, so much so that I could hear it in my ears. Jameson didn't look at me, his green eyes were staring into the haze before us.

"Juliet," he whispered, gently tugging on the sleeve of my flannel, "Let's get out of here. I don't feel safe. I thought I saw—"

Suddenly Levi was wide awake, his pupils dilated as he whirled around. "Where are we?"

"We're driving to my grandfather's house. I'm Jameson, that's Juliet. Don't you remember?" Jameson said, panic rising in his voice.

Levi's breathing slowed as he swallowed his fear. "I-I don't know why— but I just forgot—"

"It's okay, Levi," I reassured him in an even tone, "but let's keep driving. I think we can all agree we don't feel comfortable here."

I didn't have to tell Jameson twice. He flipped the ignition, and we all agreed to take the next turn, wherever it may be. We sat in suffocating silence, our only exchanges in hesitant glances and unspoken words, but I knew we were thinking the same thing: *Why was this trip taking so long?*

Of everything we had experienced that night, the hotel was the one place that felt right. It had an undeniable attraction to it, and we were drawn to it like a moth to a flame. When we saw the turn, we automatically pulled into the driveway.

Levi, in his typical reluctance, still argued we should stay in the truck, but we outvoted

him two to one. Jameson and I had agreed the quaint hotel held a sort of 1950s innocence that we craved twenty years later— so that’s where we stayed— Hotel Aeturnum. We opened the glass doors, and a bell above us rang, granting our arrival.

An elderly woman met my eyes, and her mouth tugged at the edges, a ghost of a smile long gone. “Welcome, dears. Can I get you a room?” She radiated a sense of melancholy sadness, and it rubbed off on me.

Jameson spoke up. “Yes, please. Two rooms if that’s possible.”

The woman nodded, filling out a piece of paper. “All I need is your full names and ages.”

“Levi Carter, sixteen.”

“Jameson Davis, eighteen.”

“Juliet Campbell, seventeen.”

The woman smiled sadly. “You’re all so young.” She gave us the paper and sent us on our way.

Jameson fumbled with his wallet, but the clerk refused the money. “It’s on the house tonight.” Jameson shrugged and thanked the woman.

We pushed through the revolving doors, and a breath caught in my throat. The hotel was an elaborate mansion, chandeliers dangling from the ceiling and a spiraling staircase wrapped around the wall to the right. It had an intoxicating aura, almost *too* inviting. I peered over my shoulder, only to see Jameson and Levi experiencing the same lucid daydream. We stumbled over to the elevator, which was new and modern.

“What floor are you on?” The bellhop asked quietly, avoiding our eyes.

“Twenty,” Jameson breathed, studying the wood paneling and details of the elevator as the bellhop pressed the button on our floor. It felt futuristic.

“What’s today’s date?” Levi asked, his mouth a grim line.

The bellhop furrowed his brow. “The fifteenth of January, 2022.”

Levi nodded, but Jameson and I stared in shock. It wasn’t 1972 anymore.

*How long had we driven?*

“But—” Jameson started, “How? There must be some mistake.”

The bellhop finally met our eyes. His skin had a gray tint, almost as if he was decaying. “You really don’t get it, do you kid?”

“No....?”

“You’re dead-- all of you. You were driving to Limbo on that road. Purgatory. It took you fifty years. Your souls became trapped in Hotel Aeturnum the moment you walked in.”

I drew a hand to my mouth with a gasp, and I felt Levi flinch.

Jameson remained stoic. “How do we get out of here?”

The bellhop smiled darkly. “*Alea iacta est.*” His flesh curled back, revealing bone as he translated his words. “The die is cast.”

Elizabeth Eller-Martin  
East Hamilton Middle School  
Mark Pace

## Untitled

1 I was sweating bullets. I was so nervous, it was time for the briefing with my friend Maverick "Lazar" Collins and we had just returned from the last mission in the south Vietnam front. My name was John "Ghost" Cranshaw and was 23 years old at the time. "Attention!" the corporal yelled "Report, Ghost?" I sighed.

2 I waited for a second... "Lost three men at the base in Murmansk ... One on the pacific." I almost couldn't stand the feeling of being the last surviving member in our unit. "Can you still go on with the mission?" asked the corporal. Before I could get the words out of my mouth Lazar said "Yes-sir." he always knew when he was needed and was the first soldier that I had ever met and made friends with. "Briefing over!" he yelled as we got up out of our chairs.

3 We were then on our way to Murmansk Oblast, the headquarters of the soviet union. He looked at me and said "We are the only spies, -- the only hope to see what they are hiding. About 6 hours later we were less than 2 miles away from their main base.. after we had been dropped off by the pilot of the Blackhawk ``Don't get yourselves killed out there." the pilot said jokingly. We made our way up to the base and spotted two Soviet close-range guards "On one." he whispered as he held up his hand counting down from three.

4 "Ahh...\*Crack\*..." simultaneously we took down the guards and moved with their keycards into the bottom of the base. "Keep quiet.." I said to him as we crouched up the stairwell of the base, my heart beating louder. We saw the ladder to the main control room after sweeping the area we saw a squad of men coming through the main room behind the ladder. We knew what to do "GET DOWN!" he yelled as he threw a frag into the room \*BOOM\* I looked away and when I looked back... all of them were dead, but they knew we were here.

5 We rushed up the ladder into the room to shut off the alarms and get the info \*BANG \*BANG \*BANG the sound of gunfire filled the air as we noticed about 6 people in the room \*Voosh\* a bullet nearly hits me but just hits the glass overlooking the main facility. After about 15 seconds the room went quiet as all of the men evacuated "Noo.." yelled Lazar as he killed one "Enemy KIA!" then we saw it. In a moment of realization, all the doors closed and gas filled the room "Grab the gas mask." I yelled and he did. He tossed it to me and I knew exactly what he was going to do and then..dread filled my heart.

6 He got the plans that were on the table and broke open the window "No.. you ca--" ...he pushed me with the plans out of the window, about a 20-foot fall as if everything was in slow motion as in my last glimpse of him I see him hit the open doors button and all the men rush in the room... I managed to land on a bush and break my fall. I went to the Blackhawk and got in "We have to go save him!..." I was interrupted by the pilot "look..the info is too important, along with this mission....I can't.. I'm sorry." as we flew away I felt a drop in my heart...he was gone. After a few hours, I arrived back at the base and gave them the information and the general said "Son..you just saved all of the worlds, Cuba has hundreds of ICBMs surrounding it and now we can work things out... and it has space information we didn't even know..." Thank you solder." my story is complete.

Thomas Owens  
East Ridge Middle School  
Audrey Laurell

# Ninth Grade Prose



## Untitled

Finally-it was all over: school, the awkward social interactions, and the annoying, smart-alek, yet, popular high school kids that failed all of their classes but somehow still maintained that impeccable pose of having their lives completely in order. It was finished. I arrived home after my last day of school and walked up the wooden steps to my bright, sunny, third-floor room. I sat down sluggishly in my squeaky desk chair, facing the window that had quite a nice view of the rest of the neighborhood. As I sat there, vaguely staring out the window, the first thing I felt was a great relief. I was grateful and happy that my life wasn't going to be practically assigned to me every week. This feeling was good, and for a moment, I felt free. No one was awaiting any specific task to be completed by my exhausted person. But, as the feelings of tranquility and peace in my life were always just a brief acquaintance, my mind soon fell back into the reality that now I was an adult with no plan whatsoever about what to become, or more importantly, who to become. The next thought made me smile as it was petty and ironic to think that maybe I would miss someone putting my life on a schedule for me. I had never planned nor even wanted to go to college as I was not interested in any economical skills that would provide financially for me or anyone I cared about. All those jokes about working at McDonald's when I grew up that me and my brothers used to make didn't seem like such a funny joke anymore. But I was never one to just not try, so that's exactly what I did- I applied for a full-time position at our local McDonald's to make at least some money. What I would use the money for was still a mystery- even to myself.

It was going well, working and all. I had been flippin' burgers for about a month, getting paid eleven bucks an hour, eight hours a day, seven days a week. I was working really hard at a goal I didn't really have, but I trusted that whatever God had planned for me, He would soon reveal, and I would use that money to get there. Also, considering my little Honda CBR 300 got almost seventy miles-to-the-gallon, my income was pretty much all profit. When I arrived home every night, I still couldn't help but think: "Will I buy a house with this money? Perhaps, go on a mission trip?" I had always loved the idea of traveling but a mission trip felt like too much accountability, at least in my mind. Through all my years of high school, from freshman to senior, I had always told myself I would travel- no specific place or amount of time. I would just go in the direction my eyes were looking and enjoy what life had to offer.

So, after working for a few more months, I quit my job with about \$7500 in my pocket. I went online and scrolled Market Place for hours until I found a 2018 Honda CBR 600 priced right at \$4000. I purchased the bright red vehicle with excitement and told my family that I was leaving for a while and when I got to where I was going, I would tell them where I was. My parents had always known me to talk about doing something like this, but I think they were still somewhat surprised, as I realized that maybe that hadn't actually expected me to do it. But they had always been supportive of me in everything I did and just told me they loved me, to be safe, and spend my money wisely. Then, I was off.

Once I had gotten on the wide, grey, open road, I randomly thought to myself that the reason I was doing this wasn't for the fun of it, it was to find myself. To have the chance to understand and think on what I wanted my life to become. It was then I knew I was doing the right thing. God knew that the people and constant comparisons of the lives around me was

getting in the way of me seeing that not everyone is the same, and that college or a well-paying job wasn't the only way to enjoy life and feel accomplished. It was that day a new fire was lit in my soul and I had the urge to just live, not for anyone or anything, but for God and myself. So, I decided to go West, towards Colorado, a place I had visited as a young teen and loved, and then eventually I would move on towards Alaska. I rode through small towns, large cities, up and around mountains, and on the long, vast highway. I grew to love and appreciate the small towns the most, as I enjoyed peering through the vivid simplicity of all the small buildings and people who knew not who I was, but only the familiarity of each other. It was a better start than I could have ever imagined the desired journey to be. This was definitely the first step to God's unique plan for my adult life.

Dane Saavedra  
Hilger Higher Learning  
Shelley George

## Fake Love

It all started on the first day of my Junior year. I walked into my first class of the day and there he was, Bryce Jennings. This wasn't just any boy, this was the boy I've been in love with since 2nd grade when he asked if he could borrow my pen. My daydreaming was cut short by the bell and Mr. Howard yelling, "Please take your seat class!" As I was walking to the only empty seat in the room, we made eye contact. Next thing I knew I had run into a desk so hard I think I had fractured my hip. Now his eyes weren't the only ones on me. It was the entire class giving me mocking and disappointed looks. I could feel the redness in my face starting to produce heat that ran through my body. I scrambled as fast as I could to my seat before the glares burned a hole in the back of my head. I sat a row away from Bryce and all I could do was daydream. He was way out of my league and other than him borrowing my pen ten years ago, I was a speck of dust in his world. Not heard or seen by anyone as popular as him. The bell rang and class was now dismissed.

Later that day I decided to get a ride home with my friend Lucy. We've been best friends since I can remember, her parents owned the beauty store right next to my parents book store and we all became kind of inseparable. As soon as I got in her car she asked, "How was school B?"

I responded with a sigh, "It was alright I guess."

"What's got you down, I saw you practically drooling over Bryce today during first period."

Lucy has always liked to tease me for obsessing over Bryce.

"I was not! I don't know, he will just never notice me unless I'm some good-looking cheerleader that will do his homework for him."

"Oh whatever, you could do so much better than Bryce. All he cares about is sports and his own reflection."

We arrived at my house and I got out of the car.

"Very funny Lucy, I will see you tomorrow."

"Not unless you are late from dreaming about prince charming!"

She drove off after that. I got home and went into my room. I started to think, maybe Lucy is right and I just need to move on. What would a boy like Bryce ever find in a girl like me? And then it hit me. If I changed my boring look, maybe he might notice me. I picked up my phone and texted Lucy, "Hey Luc, could you maybe snag some makeup from your parents store and come to my house. I need your help with something."

Lucy was probably at my house ten minutes after I sent that text. She brought a suitcase of makeup, and no I am not exaggerating when I say suitcase. I told her my plan about getting Bryce's attention. She was hesitant at first, but soon agreed to my plan and the process soon began. Lucy ended up spending the night and set up her "beauty station". The next morning, we got to work. She cranked up the heat on my curling iron, primed my face, and picked out my outfit. After about thirty minutes of Lucy having the best time of her life, my transformation was complete. Lucy stepped back to look at her masterpiece and I could tell she was overwhelmed. She had always seen me in my usual messy bun with sweatpants, but now I look like something straight out of a reality TV show. I heard Lucy mutter the words, "stunning" as she turned me around to face the mirror. I was in shock. First, at the amount of time it took and because I actually looked put together. We finally headed to school for the big reveal.

We pulled into the parking lot and a wave of nerves ran over me.  
“Are you sure you want to do this B?”  
It took me a while to respond, but I finally replied with, “I’m positive.”  
We descended into the school and I could already tell that all eyes were on me again, but not in a mean or negative way, but in a surprised way. I got to the door of my first class, and I could see Bryce talking with his friends. I took a deep breath in and told myself “you got this.” I walked in and it really did feel like an out-of-body experience. Like one of those scenes you see in the movies where the person walks in slo-mo. Bryce stared directly at me with his blue eyes I always got too scared to look into. He finally noticed me. I took my seat (without stumbling this time) and the bell rang. I could feel all the eyes peering at me, but I didn’t care, all I wanted was his attention. I had it, but little did I know that it wouldn’t last too long. I had the attention I desired, but all of a sudden pretty girl after pretty girl passed by Bryce. They didn’t even have to try to look good, they just did. I thought his eyes were still on me, but I was mistaken. I was just like every other girl that tried to fit the standard of beauty in Bryce’s eyes. An overwhelming feeling of regret ran through me. I asked to be excused and went into the bathroom. I cried, this was a mistake. I let a boy’s opinion get to me and I felt sick. I washed my makeup off, pulled my hair into a messy bun, threw a pair of sweats on, and walked back to class. I kept my head down until the bell rang.

Ella Theobold  
Chattanooga Christian School  
Joanna Gallagher

## The Dream

I had a dream. The dream I wished was true. I was swimming in space, and I could touch the stars. I walked across the moon and watched life on Earth from above. As I said, it was a dream and only a dream. I woke to the sound of my nurse bringing breakfast. Here goes another day, I thought to myself, a long, dull, risky day. My name is Russell Wood. I'm 14 years old and today is the ten-year mark of when I was diagnosed with cancer at the age of 4. Every day is like the one before. The only thing that keeps me motivated is my encouraging family, knowing God always takes care of me, and lastly, it's my creative and wild dreams. The only difference between days is that I can feel myself getting weaker and sicker.

I know my mom can see it. She tries to put on a strong face for me, her poor little son, but I hear her crying a lot. My favorite part of each day is that night when I can go to sleep and forget about my pain and dream about another life. I had another dream. I was in the forest camping, and I got to go fishing. I caught the biggest fish my dad had ever seen, then we watched the stars as we fell asleep. In my dream, I woke up on the beach and did all types of awesome surfing tricks. Then I fell asleep to the sound of crashing waves. My favorite part of the dream was when I woke. I was sitting there playing games with my family, we were all smiling, and I was petting a fluffy little puppy. Then it all ended. I woke up, and another day started. This time the doctor was there, and so was my mom. They didn't notice that I was awake, so I closed my eyes and listened to them. The only thing I heard was the doctor say that I don't have much longer to live. Then my mom started crying and fell on her knees, begging God not to take her son. I wasn't surprised at the news that I didn't have much longer. I'm not afraid to die, and I just don't want to. My only fear is that my family will be crushed when I do, and I don't want to hurt them. That is why I have been fighting for my life.

I know that whatever happens, God will protect me. Dreams are not always good. In fact, they can be awful, and last night was one of the worst. I dreamed that I was walking into school and everybody was afraid of me. They said I was contagious and made fun of me. Even the teachers weren't kind. They taught us how cancer always kills people and how I would die sooner or later. They said it would be one less kid to worry about if I died sooner. As I was walking through the halls, the kids laughed at me. Then I woke up sweating and with tears running down my cheeks. I was up the rest of the night thinking about this dream. I kept telling myself that if there was a chance, I could get better, that wouldn't happen, but evil thoughts and questions sat in my mind nagging me. I would rather die than be known as a contagious kid at school.

A month has passed, and my mom seems to be gaining hope in me again. Even the doctor says I have a chance. Since then, I haven't had any more nightmares. I dream of traveling, hanging out with friends, skateboarding, and other fun activities. I feel more excited and stronger by the day. I believe I'm going to make it through this. That is my dream. I want to go home and live like a normal kid. That dream came true. Today I'm 16 years old. I became cancer-free at age 15. Now, and I have a dog named Bandit. I love Skateboarding, and so far, we've traveled to Peru, Hawaii, and Australia. My new goal is to encourage kids like me who have cancer to trust God and have faith. This is my dream, to live the rest of my life for others who are about to lose theirs.

Brynlee Treece  
Hilger Higher Learning  
Shelley George

# Tenth Grade Prose



## My Peruvian Adventure

Klunk! My suitcase violently hit the floor as the airport worker slung it through the window into the tiny airport. Mom, Dad, and I squeeze our way through the crowd and find our luggage in the pile by the window. We had just arrived in Jauja, Peru, and I was already well aware that things were going to be extremely different in this third world country.

“Gracie!” I hear from outside the airport. I see little Myla’s big blue eyes and pigtails, and I am filled with pure joy. We greet her and her dad, Jeremy, and head to our home for the week, Huancayo, Peru. We arrive at the Davis’ home, and cry happy tears when we finally can hold our sweet Whitney, Adilyn, and Polly after being apart for so long.

“We have so much we wanna show you!” exclaims Adilyn. We spend the rest of that day just absorbing the laughter and the love that swells in their home. We absorb these things because a FaceTime call simply can’t give them to you.

Our first adventure takes place in a Peruvian market. There are vendors selling everything you can imagine. Everywhere you look you see color; pink, purple, blue, green. Everything is fairly normal until we approach a woman crouching in her hut. She is selling something different, some kind of food. We see the steam and smell something resembling meat. Jeremy speaks with the woman while we stand there and just smile as we can’t understand them.

“She is, um, she is selling guinea pig,” Jeremy finally tells us uncomfortably. My parents and I make awkward eye contact. Of course she wants us to try her “delicious guinea pig,” but we can’t imagine eating the American house pet. She goes to the back of her hut and presents to us a cooked guinea pig. It takes everything in me to keep my composure.

“Gracias,” we all say as we turn to walk away. Jeremy explains to the woman we simply aren’t hungry and she disappointedly accepts that excuse.

Our next adventure is one that could be challenging according to Jeremy. They want to take us on a drive to the top of one of their favorite mountains. Looking at these mountains from their valley below they appear as if they are smiling down at us inviting us to come and explore. The first obstacle we face is the fact that we as a group have 8 people and their car holds 5. Without hesitation, Adilyn and Myla head to the trunk of the small SUV.

“Are they gonna ride in the back?” my mom asks nervously.

“Yep, it’s really not a big deal here for the girls to ride out of car seats,” explains Whitney. Whitney gets in the car and sets Polly in her lap.

“Oh no, Polly is really just gonna ride in your lap?” my mom asks, seeming to already know the answer.

“Joy, this is how we live life here. Just roll with it, we have got it all under control.” Those are Whitney’s famous last words. Within 10 minutes of leaving the house the girls in the back are fighting. There is screaming, hitting, and grunting. Then Polly starts to cry. We pull over. Whitney throws Polly at Jeremy and rips the girls out of the backseat and reasons with them saying, “If you two will get along and be kind to one another in the car you can each have an oatmeal creme pie when we get home. Deal?” They agree and we return back to the car.

We drive until we are about three fourths up the mountain, and we start to see llamas. They slowly become more populous, until we are looking at hundreds of llamas. Llamas are my favorite animal and so I pleadingly ask, “Can we please stop the car? I just wanna see all of them!” So yet again, we stop. I get out and am immediately surrounded by llamas. We meet their

shepherd, a kind, humble Peruvian man. He tells us about his llamas and about himself. He lives in a wood hut on the mountain, and travels with his llamas. He has nothing, but speaks of his life with joy. He blesses us, and thanks us for our time. I take a million pictures and then we finish the drive.

At the top of the mountain is a beautiful lake that is filled by the melting of the snow capped mountains. The altitude is so high that our bodies immediately feel heavy, and each step we take my feet seem to get heavier. I soak in the crisp air and the different shades of green from the mountains surrounding me. The girls stand by my side, hugging my arms. This is a moment that I will remember forever, it is a moment full of love and beauty.

The sad day comes when it is time to leave. We tearfully say goodbye. It is so hard to leave them alone in this country we do not know, but they assure us that this is their home. We get in our taxi arranged by Jeremey. His trusted friend should be safely taking us to the airport. We drive a little ways then pull over and the “trusted friend” gets out and a new driver gets in, shuts the door, and begins to drive. We are all scared to death. He doesn’t say anything, and is taking us who knows where. Finally he speaks to us, and reveals he knows some English. We all begin to talk with him about what life is like in Huancayo and he asks us about America. We safely arrive at the airport, and I board the plane a different person than when I first got off the plane 7 days before. I have seen people live such joyous lives in a completely different way than I knew possible. I learned the value of cherishing what you have, and who you have no matter where you are.

Gracie Hogan  
Boyd Buchanan School  
Temple Davis

## I Love Him

Based on the true story of my grandparents, Abraham and Achama Joseph.

Pitter patter, pitter patter, said the Indian rain, getting louder and louder as the moments passed. She was coming from work, but of course, she had forgotten her umbrella. She thought to herself, why is it that I bring an umbrella when it isn't raining? She did not know what to do. She needed to get home before Papa came from work, but now she would have to wait until the rain passed, which seemed to be forever. That's when she saw him, actually not him, but an umbrella. His face was completely covered by his black, slightly bent umbrella. She went up to him and asked if she could borrow his umbrella. She looked into his eyes, and him into hers. I am glad I picked this umbrella, she thought. He looked into her eyes and saw how beautiful she was. They walked together through the downpour to her house. She had hoped no one had seen her with this stranger, but she hoped that she would see this stranger again. So did he.

"I didn't catch your name," he said.

"I am Anna, what is yours?"

"Abraham."

Anna opened the gate and went through the door of her house. There she was greeted by her many bothersome siblings.

"Who was that?" one said laughing, "forget the question, we all know the answer."

"It's Abe," said Anna's youngest sister, mockingly. Abraham was now pretty common amongst the siblings, as they have been secretly seeing each other for over a month now.

"One of these days," says Anna's oldest sister, "Papa is going to find out."

Right then he walked into the house. The head of the house.

"Have you got dinner ready yet? I am starving! Get me a glass of chai while you are at it."

"Yes, Papa," said the eldest sisters, responding quickly to the list of demands.

"Anna, wait a second. A lovely family that is well known around here has a son that is around your age. His family and him seem like a perfect fit for our family.

"Oh," Anna said unenthusiastically.

"He is actually coming over tomorrow."

"Papa! I told you not to play matchmaker for me!"

"Well if you can't find someone, it's up to me. We need to get you married soon."

The next day came sooner than Anna wished. Per her father's request, she put on her nicest clothes, just to meet another stranger.

"Here," said her older sister at the doorway to Anna's room. She was holding something that Anna had never seen before. "Mama gave it to me when I first met Thomas."

"Wow, it's beautiful," Anna murmured, breath taken by what she saw.

As her sister clasped the necklace, a tear formed in Anna's eye. "I miss her," Anna said as she now wiped the monsoon coming from her eyes.

"Me too," her sister whispered. After a moment her sister left Anna's room, leaving Anna with so many emotions.

Cloink.

Cloink.

Wait, what was that, Anna thought as she turned to where the noise was coming from. Almost getting hit by another pebble, she saw him. Not the stranger, but Abraham. She ran down the stairs as fast as her legs could go, almost getting whipped by her braid.

“Hey, what are you doing here,” Anna said, gasping for air.

“Ann--”

The loud sound of the car door being slammed shut, cut off Abraham.

“Here take the money, though you don’t deserve a penny, you needy fool.” The stranger came up to Anna, gave her a kiss on her hand, and said, “these taxi drivers only have one job!” Her father stepped out of the house.

“Ah I see you have met John,” said Anna’s father. Anna wasn’t listening, all she could think of or look at was Abraham. She wanted to be with him; she didn’t care who he was, or how much money he made, but Anna didn’t say a word. She followed her father and the stranger into the house.

Later that night a knock on the door awoke Anna’s father. The knock woke up Anna too, forcing her to watch through the crack of her bedroom door.

“Excuse me sir, but it looks like you forgot to grab today's paper.”

“It is late at night, why in the WORLD did you come to my house for today’s paper, who even are you?”

“Sorry sir, but I have needed to tell you something for the longest time, my name is Abraham Joseph and I am in love with your daughte--”

“Aren’t you that taxi driver, I doubt my Anna even knows you.”

The hysterical laughter and the disbelief that Anna saw on her father’s face made her want to burst out of her room and scream, Papa I AM IN LOVE WITH HIM, but she didn’t. Though she thought no one saw her, her father saw her and said firmly, showing no emotion,

“Absolutely not. Sorry, but Anna doesn’t even know you.”

I do Papa, he loves me; I want to be with him.

“Anna will marry who I think is best for her, someone who is like us, wealthy. Not some lowlife like you!”

Was it the fact that Abe showed up at her house that night? Was it the slight nudge one of her siblings gave her? Was it the look Abe had on his face? The reason why Anna did this, even Anna didn’t know. She did know that, at that moment, she felt imperious. Her heart was pounding, her blood was boiling, and her soul was irking, when she said,

“Stop Papa, I love him.”

As soon as she said those words, she could see a clear picture of her future. She saw herself beside Abraham for the rest of their lives. Them being the only guests at their wedding. Them living in a beautiful house, filled with beautiful children. In sickness and in health, she would be there for him, watching their love grow, until their very last breaths.

Hannah Joseph  
Boyd Buchanan School  
Temple Davis

## The Story of Jenna

When Jenna was five years old, she never cried when her lamp turned off. She was never afraid of what was rumored to be lurking in the dark and would giggle at the prospect. She was full of life. Her light shone to those around her. Being near her felt like the world around you was made of gold, and she warmed your heart to the point where it might just melt. She used to draw pictures and write letters, leaving them underneath her bunk beds, just in case the monster grew lonely. The monster always did. She was born grinning, and when she slept the corners of her mouth always found their way into the shape of a smirk. She was a child in the greatest sense, and had obtained a youthful glow that many thought would never last.

When Jenna turned thirteen years old, she cried on her birthday. She had enjoyed being a kid; she never wanted to leave it behind. She wrote fewer and fewer letters that year, much due to the prying of middle schoolers, the worst species of humanity. She still laughed loudly, and her positivity expounded beyond normal capacity, yet while she slumbered, her face would freeze in an expression of distaste. I missed her perpetual joy, but she was little, and those days never last, no matter how much we wished they would.

When she turned sixteen, the letters quit coming altogether. Instead, she wrote to a certain Jeremy who seemed to have taken her top priority. No matter what anyone told her, she was devoted to him. When Jenna fell, she fell hard.

“He’ll break your heart, Jen,” her mother would tell her, but Jenna was blind. She was distraught the day Jeremy let her go. She had forgotten who she was without him. She would find another Jeremy, another boy to fill her void, but he would most certainly never find another Jenna.

At the age eighteen she went off to college. She was extremely bright, my Jenna. She made so many friends. She found those new Jeremys I knew that she eventually would. She walked tall and recorded everything. This was the year she started writing her letters again, starting with the same phrase over and over,

“Dear Monster Under my Bed,

“I hope you aren’t too sad today,” and upon receiving those letters, the monster never was.

When Jenna turned twenty five, she moved to New York and opened up her own quaint bookstore. She had a way with customers that brought rainbows to the cloudiest of gray skies. She had a laugh so gleeful it was impossible not to join in. The store quickly became a symphony of well wishes and laughter. She wrote her letters more vigorously now than ever, letting the monster know what was going on in her life, checking in to see how they were doing. She would add pressed flowers, newspaper clippings, and doodles that always delighted the monster. She was good that way, the kind of good everyone dreams of being.

Jenna got married when she was thirty one, to a young professor with fluffy hair and a dopey grin. He had a smooth voice, like honey. The moment he opened his mouth Jenna knew that he was the one. They were madly in love and became each other's closest friend. The monster under the bed was so happy for Jenna, who had always deserved the world. When Jenna was forty years old, she bought a cat. She named him Marshmallow, a cheesy, silly name for a cheesy, silly woman’s cat. They were a beautiful family; Jenna, the professor, and Marshmallow. The monster under the bed was very pleased with the new addition because curious little Marshmallow always had time to play.

When she turned fifty-three, the professor was diagnosed with cancer. Jenna tried her best to drown out the pain with her books and music. She learned to knit and soon realized why old people are always depicted with yarn in their hands, because they were always the ones in need of a distraction. Jenna could not fall asleep most nights, and would write to the monster under the bed, telling them so. The monster didn't need the letters, they could just feel it. Jenna's husband died two months before her fifty-fourth birthday. Even Marshmallow cried. Jenna scribbled out a quick invitation to the funeral, sliding it under her bed, and the monster wept for the woman Jenna would be without her best friend.

And yet Jenna was strong, and by the time she was sixty, she was finally able to smile at their pictures together again. Her bookstore became her next true love, and for a hopeless romantic like Jenna, it was perfect. Marshmallow would perch upon her lap as she read in the moonlight and the monster could finally rejoice again, for my Jenna, full of life, had finally returned. Sadly, youth was never made to last, not the way a memory was.

Years passed, ten then twenty. Before long Marshmallow was gone too, and once again they were as they had begun, the monster under the bed and their devoted companion; sweet, giggling, Jenna. Jenna never did retire. She was born to live her years in a cavern of literature. She was ninety when she finally passed. She was never scared of dying. Jenna wasn't afraid of much. For many, life continued unfazed, and yet for her most devoted customers, her cluster of friends and family, it was the start of a sad long trek. Most of all, the monster under her bed suffered. They had seen her through the wide eyed nights of thunderstorms, parties, catastrophes, and romance. Through it all, the monster was her constant, the one to where her most dear letters were sent.

Jenna would be completely forgotten one day, but to me, that lonely little monster under her bed, she was the center of the universe.

Acadia Phillips  
Boyd Buchanan School  
Temple Davis

## The Fire Escape

The clock struck one in the afternoon. Colleen, a twenty-two-year-old sensible and plucky female newly living in the borough of the Bronx, zipped along E165th Street. She proceeded past a dry cleaning business, a West African grocery, a vintage clothing store, and a beauty supply shop. In the crispness of the chilly afternoon air, Colleen could faintly smell the aroma of the chocolate croissants that emanated from the bakery. She rushed along the broken sidewalks covered with autumn-colored leaves and occasional chalk drawings toward her second-floor walk-up tenement. Wishing she had brought her umbrella as she hopped over the cracks toward home, she began feeling fat raindrops land squarely on her head and then trickle down onto her naturally curly shoulder-length brunette hair. She briskly continued along the busy street, wearing a new navy-blue overcoat, a stylish brown bell-shaped cloche hat, and a familiar brown dress suit.

Immediately preceding her residence, there were no houses or businesses on the wide street, only a line of tall bricked apartment buildings on each side, all of them indistinguishable. They had small porches and pillars with four or five steps going up to their front doors, and it was evident that they had been very swanky residences at one time. Currently, the paint was flaking from the woodwork on their doors and windows, and the handsome white facades were cracked and blotchy from neglect. In a downstairs window that was brilliantly and prematurely illuminated by a street lamp, Colleen caught sight of a printed notice propped up against the glass enshrouded by velvety green curtains, which were hanging down on either side of the window. It read "Free Kittens". Amused, she chuckled to herself, imagining the sentence in the imperative mood suggesting the command "Free the Kittens!" as if the kittens were incarcerated and in need of emancipation. A vase of yellow chrysanthemums, tall and attractive, stood just underneath the notice. A large yellow banner advertising rooms for rent was affixed to the outside of the building just above her floor.

While hurrying home from work, Colleen did not even notice that some leaves had lingered on the trees, golden-red, and the shrubberies were still green. The wind, however, had changed overnight. The earth around the sidewalks was hard, brown, and bereft of grass. The air felt deadly cold, and the wind was a blade of ice on her cheeks.

Racing to her tenement with an impatience to escape the chilly weather and embrace the warmth provided by her archaic steam-heated radiator, Colleen bolted up the steps, opened the spring-loaded metal door, and dashed up the two flights of stairs to the sixth apartment. Inside, a reupholstered chocolate brown basket weave sofa sat in the living room. There was a bathroom tiled with light blue and beige flooring and a black and white tile-floored kitchen with a white 1950's refrigerator having a chrome door handle that pulls down to open. Outside the bedroom stood a fire escape filled with colorful potted gardens filled with flowers and herbs.

After placing yesterday's blackened cod into the oven, she felt an odd sensation that someone was gazing at her from the fire escape. A hurried glance proved this to be false. Her concerns grew until she had to take a closer look. Peering through all the bedroom windows provided a glimpse of something like a willowy shadow outside. As she observed, the figure appeared to jump out of view.

She darted across to the kitchen, only to find nothing. After consuming her meal, she thoroughly inspected the plasterboarded walled rooms and the gridded, metal-framed, industrial-style divided windows. She double-checked the deadbolt lock on the front door.

Hours later, Colleen discovered that she had run out of milk and would need to go out once more. After striding about halfway to the bodega, she realized that she had forgotten her coat. Freezing, the young woman sprinted back to her apartment. Inside, she believed she observed an outline of a person moving in the kitchen. Seconds later, she thought she saw a hand and an arm moving along the doorway into the kitchen. Abruptly, the figure withdrew.

She headed outside and descended the stairs. With its faded baby-blue awning and red neon window sign, the brightly-colored yellow bodega was just the place of refuge she sought. Rushing inside the store and running past hanging bunches of bananas and tropical drinks, sandwiches and chips, loose cigarettes, and toilet paper, with the sound of fast Spanish dance music and the smell of Cuban pork cooking, she rapidly moved across the pale blue tile-floored and tiny grocery area until she located and purchased the milk.

After a brief and dreadful walk home, Colleen determinedly but cautiously climbed the two flights of stairs that led to her door. The lights glowed and buzzed in the corridor. Slowly, she turned her key in the lock and pushed open her solid wood door. She feared that the electric power might cease working. A successful light switch flick signaled that it was safe to go to bed. After inspecting all the windows and doors once more, she settled under her pink rosebud-printed sheets and her thick, fluffy, quilted white blanket and then rolled over in the direction of the window. Close by, a dog barked repeatedly. Instantly, her eyes opened, and she was wide awake. A glance at the window displayed a flash of light from the suddenly stormy sky, which revealed a banner flapping violently in the wind and hanging from the floor above.

What tremendous relief Colleen felt! These were merely illusions in her mind. She sank deeply into her cool pillow and pulled up her bed sheet and her fluffy comforter slightly above her shoulders. Her sleepy blue eyes closed as she relaxed under the comfort and warmth of the bed covers. Just then, in the still, windless sky outside her bedroom window, unseen by Colleen, appeared a dark, shadowy figure that considerably resembled that of a human silhouette.

John Wood  
Hilger Higher Learning  
Shelley George

# Eleventh Grade Prose



## Jane Austen and a Dream to Write

Jane Austen has become one of the most well-known authors during the English Regency Era writing seven well known novels, such as *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Love and Freindship*, and more! After reading *Pride and Prejudice*, I fell in love with the beautiful balls, romantic storylines, and lifestyle of England during Austen's times. Overall, the main theme of Austen's life was that you only need a dream and a passion in front of you. In May Lamberton Becker's biography, *Presenting Miss Jane Austen*, Jane's story comes to life as a young girl in a high society.

Jane grew up as the youngest child from a large family. Her father, George Austen, who was known as "the handsome tutor", and mother, Cassandra Leigh, who was the beauty on her side of the family, were both reductant. All the Austen children inherited this trait, and a love for literature ran through the family. Jane would often get an idea, run upstairs, and jot it down on paper, only to be returned by giggling as she returned to the family. Once she had "the slightest idea" (a term used in her writings), she would wander off into a land where writing became quite natural to her, even though she would often misspell words (especially her *I*'s and *E*'s). In the title to her book, *Love and Freindship*, she misspelled the word *friendship*, and the title was never changed during the editing process.

As a small girl, she was sent off to boarding school with her sister Cassandra alongside their cousin Jane Cooper. There, Jane almost died from "putrid fever", and her cousin sent a letter back home warning the family of Jane's condition. Mrs. Cooper caught the illness after the girls were withdrawn, and she passed away. The Austen girls were then set to the Abbey School at Reading for a couple of years after Jane's recovery which became her inspiration for *Northanger Abbey*, and she remembered the school like a dream. She could recall rolling down the hill outside the Abbey on a beautiful sunny day just like any young girl would love doing.

All throughout adulthood Jane lived with Cassandra until her death where she would spend most of her time writing. As a young adult, a young man caught her eye, and the couple made a well match, but eventually he disappeared from Jane who never even knew his name. Since then, she never courted but became an old maid. Cassandra never married either, so it turned out quite well for the sisters to live together. Even as Jane grew older, she wrote some of the most well known novels of the English Regency Era evolving around a romance.

Her writings became quite popular, but she chose to remain anonymous with her titles stating, "From the author of *Pride and Prejudice*", and the titles of other novels she had written. This unknown author never lived a life of fame, but now she has become one of the most well-known authors from her time. She was perfectly happy with her desk, writing, imagination, and simple lifestyle that she had no desire to become famous. Her brother Henry encouraged her to share her name on her novels and made known who she was after her death.

Henry and Cassandra were two of Jane's largest supporters for her works. They both, especially Henry, loved to read her writings and wanted to get Jane's name out into the world. Growing up, Jane's writings were loved by the family, who went on to support her as an author. Charlotte Brontë, another well-known author at the time, was a skeptic of Jane's work, saying that it was boring due to a lack of action, unlike Brontë's polygamous Mr. Rochester from *Jane Eyre*. The reason could have been due to Austen's works being more well liked than Brontë's. The timeless classics of charming Mr. Darcy, quiet Anne Elliot, and naive Harriet Smith became

well known all throughout England and are loved all over the world today. Jane had a dream to write, and she didn't let reality hinder it.

Due to the simple lifestyle of Jane's world where reading was quite popular, her purpose in becoming a writer was not to become famous, but only to use it as a source of entertainment for her and those who read her novels. She had a dream to write, and she used her imagination all throughout her life. Jane Austen proved that you don't need to have a well known name, but only a dream in front of you.

Rebekah Church  
Hilger Higher Learning  
Shelley George

## Analysis of The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne

Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* is a story about hypocrisy. It features Hester Prynne as the protagonist. At the beginning of the book, Hester leaves prison where she was serving time for adultery. She's required to wear a scarlet 'A' on her chest for the rest of her life. Hester has a daughter, Pearl, who came as a result of her affair. Pearl's father, and the man Hester had an affair with is named Arthur Dimmesdale. He is someone who experiences a high degree of conscience and is absolutely debilitated with guilt. The aptly-named antagonist is Roger Chillingworth, who's also Hester's husband. He is the epitome of a psychic vampire because he's the type of person to give nothing yet expect everything. *The Scarlet Letter* explores characters who are given roles in society which don't fit their innate nature, and the sometimes unconventional ways they fulfill them.

Hester Prynne existed as a cautionary tale in the Puritan society she lived in. Due to her talents as a seamstress, many of the townspeople frequently came to her to sew things for every occasion except weddings. Despite this, none were willing to befriend or even accept Hester. When Arthur Dimmesdale confessed to his part of the crime, he received no such treatment because of his role in society, which was as a minister. Roger Chillingworth is easily the worst of the three due to his vindictiveness and selfishness, yet no one recognizes that because of his station in society. His sins aren't public and he doesn't have to wear them on his chest. Unlike Arthur Dimmesdale, and Roger Chillingworth, Hester never receives a chance to be respected because of her scarlet letter.

Hester Prynne copes with her sins, and her scarlet letter, as gracefully as humanly possible. Her alienation from society leads to her becoming quite phlegmatic despite the narrator alluding to her having a passionate nature which probably led to her having an affair. Her ostracization also led to her being very contemplative, and independent-minded. On the other hand, Arthur Dimmesdale cannot cope with his sins, likely due to the secrecy of them. His shame physically manifests in him having issues with his heart. This is escalated by him not being believed when he admits his wrongdoings. Roger Chillingworth feels no remorse for his wrongdoings, despite being intentionally cruel, unlike Hester and Arthur. As a result, Roger doesn't have much to cope with because of his lack of conscience. Out of the three, Hester dealt with her circumstances the best, even though hers were definitely the worst. She doesn't self-pity or self-loathe, but she also isn't callous about her sins, and learned everything from the situation that she could.

The Puritan society that Hester Prynne, Arthur Dimmesdale, and Roger Chillingworth lived in and the roles it assigned to them, enabled them all to be who they are, for better or for worse. Regardless of whether Hester deserved the treatment she received, she wouldn't have been as self-possessed and insightful if her experiences didn't shape her into being that way. Her flaw is being too loyal to Dimmesdale, which is barely a flaw. Arthur Dimmesdale, with his past at Oxford and his job as a minister, led to him having a heightened sense of empathy, but also a weak constitution. Roger Chillingworth led a life and had a past that allowed him to be uncompassionate, and ultimately self-serving.

Ultimately, the characters of *The Scarlet Letter* are more defined by the external circumstances rather than their character. Hester Prynne was a wicked sinner and no one questioned that due to her station in society, yet Arthur Dimmesdale's outward virtue somehow

shielded him from accountability. Whatever sense of ethics Roger Chillingworth may have had was corroded by his fixed pursuit of vengeance. In the end, Hester and Pearl leave Massachusetts for Europe. They were the only ones with the resolve and grace to remain somewhat unscathed.

Savannah Harold  
Hilger Higher Learning  
Shelley George

## The Scarlet Letter

In our society, we tend to view people under a partial light. We often think that there are degrees to sin, and that our sins aren't as vile as our neighbors. With this mindset we find others' sins more "worthy" of reproof. The Bible asks us, "Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye but do not consider the plank in your own eye?" In *The Scarlet Letter*, Nathaniel Hawthorne exposes the extensive hypocrisy in the Puritan society set in Salem, Massachusetts. Hawthorne takes two main characters- Hester Prynne and Master Dimmesdale- and uses the third-Pearl- as the connection between the two. Through the numerous conflicts, Hawthorne reveals how Hester Prynne, Pearl and Master Dimmesdale are each components of the dreaded scarlet letter.

Hester Prynne bears the "scar" of the Scarlet Letter. When we are first introduced to Hester Prynne we see her in prison holding a small babe close to her chest in an attempt to hide her scar. As Hester is almost paraded out of the prison to the scaffold where she stood for all to look upon, we can clearly see the man versus society conflict. Hester tried in vain to subside into her new and less significant life. While in prison she secretly met with her husband, Roger Chillingworth, where she was forced to keep another secret: their relation to each other. On one occasion Hester went to Governor Bellingham's house where she tried to advocate for the parenting of her daughter. The magistrates felt that because of Hester's sin she wasn't capable of raising a Christian child. Master Dimmesdale provided for her defense and we are given a small glimpse of the intimacy of the two characters. In the quiet and vastness of the forest, Master Dimmesdale and Hester were able to confide in one another; seeing they were the only ones who knew the true form of the other. Hester's true passions were revealed and she felt compelled to remove the scarlet letter from her bosom and start anew, but the child would not let her be free of her burden. Thus Hester Prynne bore the visible pain or "scar" of the scarlet letter.

Pearl is the tie that binds Master Dimmesdale and Hester Prynne. She is the person over whom much of the conflict is evoked. Ever since her entry into the world, her fate was sealed by the scarlet letter. She encompasses the "let" of the scarlet letter. She seems to plead, "Let me find my own definition so I can be free from this cage." She is the life of the scarlet letter. Pearl is a rather peculiar child, but she has unnatural beauty and insight far beyond her years. These aspects of her character made those in contact with her brand her as an evil imp or witch child. From the time that Pearl was a babe, the scarlet letter was a part of her life.

Whereas most children recognized their parents by their smell or the sound of their voices, Pearl identified hers by the letters-hidden and visible- that adorned their hearts. The characters in the book tended to have an abstract conflict with Pearl. Characters that have conflict with Hester and Master Dimmesdale are only in conflict because of Pearl's existence. The purity of the child caused her to notice the hypocrisy of her father long before his cowardly confession. Pearl's fascination with nature is a direct parallel to the rosebush displayed in front of the prison at the very beginning of the book. Its beauty is changed simply by the setting it blossomed into by no choice of its own.

Master Dimmesdale is the last component of the scarlet letter; the hidden scarlet letter. He is the "letter". Like words encased in a book, as long as the book remains closed, the words remain hidden. Master Dimmesdale is a prominent minister who all people look up to and regard as holy. If only they knew the other side. As the immense guilt weighed upon Master Dimmesdale's heart, it left him physically and emotionally ill. Dimmesdale invited a physician,

Roger Chillingworth, into his home. Through close observation of the minister, Roger Chillingworth realized that Dimmesdale was indeed the father of the child. After this revelation, Chillingworth let the devil use him and became a hidden tormentor under the disguise of a trusted friend. One night the guilt was so intense that Master Dimmesdale went into town and stood upon the scaffold where Hester and Pearl had stood seven years before. It was here that he confessed to a sleeping town that heard him not. It was here that, under the cover of darkness, he took Hester and Pearl upon the scaffold with him. This was false hope for his “family” for the confession did not come until later. Master Dimmesdale plays a double role as a protagonist and an antagonist. He is only a protagonist because of the presence of a character more evil than him-Roger Chillingworth. Dimmesdale exploited and disregarded the love that Hester Prynne had towards him that she would endure twice the burden of their sin for his sake. Beyond all this she warned him of the evil presence in his home while he awakened her passions of being free in private only to neglect in public. On the day of the election of the new governor, Master Dimmesdale was to give an election sermon. The guilt finally encompassed him and forced him to be honest about the scarlet letter and released him from the chains that Chillingworth had upon him. These were the last words that escaped the minister’s dying lips.

Although some might feel that the minister deserves accolade for his confession, this is not the case. For the years that he didn’t confess, the people’s fondness of him waxed more and more that they couldn’t accept what he was saying as true. Master Dimmesdale presented himself as being a man of great integrity, but hid from the congregation and himself the biggest lie. The Bible says, “The truth shall set you free” and it did set Dimmesdale free from the devil’s snare, but both Hester and Pearl lived with the consequences of the lies. Hester still bore the “scar”, Pearl still was not “let” free, and Master Dimmesdale still remained hidden underneath the letters on his gravestone. Each piece of the Scarlet letter suffered because of the lies and hypocrisy so prevalent in the book.

Kyah Miller  
Hilger Higher Learning  
Shelley George

# Twelfth Grade Prose



## How Darkness Affects Everyone

William Golding wrote "*Lord of the Flies*" in 1954, using some of his experience with darkness to create a story on how the darkness affects everyone. The point of the book is to expose how everyone can be changed by darkness and how they handle this. Golding gives three main groups of character, the leaders, the followers, and the underdogs, and how they all handle the darkness they face.

Ralph and Jack were the leaders. Both approached their leadership and new reality differently. They ultimately would get to the same point, losing sanity in the midst of the chaos, and when reality arrived, both came back to reality but were changed differently. Ralph was sensible and was a responsible leader, early on. He wanted to get home and the way he commanded the attention of the boys at the first meeting gained him leadership and approval from the others. However, when Jack, the lead hunter, began to cause rebellion and divisions amongst the boys, Ralph, and Piggy, everything began to fall apart. Jack was described as a dark figure and had an intensity about him. He caused division early on, when creating the hunters and not obeying his orders from Ralph. Jack continued on a path of rebellion until he was leading his own crew. He became so enthralled with wanting to kill. This started off with food and lead to murder. He became a savage in the midst of the chaos. Ralph kept his sanity and sensibility longer than Jack, although he did have times where he lost all sanity. The climax for Ralph was when he took part in killing Simon. His sanity would dwindle fast. He leaped and ran through the forest like an animal. He fought an inner conflict, he didn't lead well, but he still wanted to be the leader. He claimed his ranking till the end, even when he had lost it. At the end, Jack came back to reality and crying was his reaction. Ralph mourned everything he went through and all he lost. He had lived on the island with boys who were crazy, and had to try to manage them. He lost the conch, the boys he leaned on the most, and his innocence.

The followers are the boys that are around the same age as Jack and Ralph, some were a part of Jack's crew, and "The Littluns." They were all boys and wanted to be free and have fun. Most of the older boys went with Jack, to join in on the fun of hunting and the Littluns all did their own thing and stayed together. The older boys had more power and the Littluns were at the mercy of them. The Littluns had terrible dreams about the Beast and were scared. Roger, an older one, began to push the boundaries of his power when he threw rocks at Littluns and missed intentionally. He did this once more and missed intentionally again, but towards the end he launched the large rock at Piggy, which struck him and he died. Roger did not intend to miss this time. Maurice also showed dominance when he smashed the Littlun sand castle. The older ones grew more savage while on the island and participated in kills and murders. The Littluns were said to have gone off and fended for themselves and appeared when the Naval officer came. The darkness caused strife amongst the boys, becoming savages and willing to take anyone out. The followers were slowly fighting for leadership.

Simon, Piggy, and Sam and Eric were what gave hope and warmth to the book. Simon was a peacemaker who did as he was ordered to do. He obeyed Ralph. Simon was himself even before he died, trying to warn the others that the Beast did not really exist. He tried to protect them, even if that put him at risk. The darkness did affect Simon, though. He grew delirious and the Lord of the Flies taunted him and scared him. Piggy was knowledgeable, had morals, and was passionate. He was a huge crutch for Ralph, always being there and was able to stay focused on the goal. Towards the end, Ralph and Jack were getting caught up in the emotions of the

situation and they fought and taunted each other and Piggy was keeping composure and staying focused on why they were there. Several times he had to remind Ralph, the leader, what they were there for during the meeting with Jack. However, Piggy wasn't unscathed from the darkness. He participated in the death of Simon. Sam and Eric were the last little bits of hope Jack had left. They didn't cause much trouble, also did their jobs of watching the fire, and wanted to get home. They were captured and forced to join the savages and be under the leadership of Jack. They could see through Jack, see his evil. They resisted and were abused. They tried to protect and warn Ralph, however they were beaten so much that they revealed Ralph's whereabouts to Jack. They tried. They were affected by the darkness, as they became savage during the moment of Simon's death, but were able to come back to reality and acknowledge what had happened. In the end, they were more recipients of the product of the darkness. Simon, Piggy, and Sam and Eric were Ralph's crutches, he relied on them. Simon was his friend and his right-hand man. Piggy was keeping Ralph in the direction they needed to go. And Sam and Eric tried to help him, even at their own risk.

In the Lord of the Flies, there are good and bad guys, heroes and antagonists. Unfortunately, the areas were gray and the world was corrupted. Darkness has an effect on all. It affected the leaders in their own sanity, gave power to the followers that created problems and rebellion, and caused terrible things to happen to our underdogs. This is the sad reality of life that we all experience. However, there is a difference. We have a hope, these boys didn't. Darkness affected them all.

Lacey Shimoda  
Hilger Higher Learning  
Shelley George

# Sixth Grade Poetry



Roses are Red?

Roses are red?  
No, we need something different.  
Maybe something that isn't so dead?

We need something that isn't so trite!  
Maybe something that will make us happy?  
Or something that will give us a fright!

We could write and write.  
Until we could no longer.  
Maybe we should just stick to Roses are Red. Alright?

No, that's much too overused!  
Then what must we use?  
Something that will make people much more amused!

Ok, but what about Violets are blue?  
Should we erase that too?  
Yes, we need something much more true!

Ok, what about this one?  
Emeralds are green!  
No! That doesn't sound much fun!

Alright, I think I got it this time.  
Ok, let's hear it.

"A friend is someone.  
A friend is someone special.

A story that had just begun.  
A story that had just begun of a lifetime

Once that amazing story ends  
All you would want to do is wish for it to never end."

Great, she'll love it.

Julia Mae Blenden  
Silverdale Baptist Academy  
Lauren Burnette

## Summer

Summer to me is camp  
Camp smells like Lily pads  
that litter a lake  
The sunshine shining on my face  
The cabins smell like fresh wood  
and taste like peanut butter after lunch  
on a Saturday after a game of tether ball  
As soon as your hand smashes the ball  
and it flies up  
you know you will win

Charlotte Brock  
Baylor school  
Regan Fazio

## Lost in a Book

You get a book off the shelf  
Then go to bed with book in hand  
You read and read and can't stop  
You try to stay up all night

You feel like you're stuck in a maze with your eyes stuck gazed at a page  
You've gotten up but didn't stop  
I'm still reading, reading  
I'm reading and slipped on a rock  
It doesn't matter now get back up and read, read, read

I wander off into the woods  
I feel as if I'm in a winter wonderland  
This book has me going crazy  
Read, read, read so much to read  
Oh no! It's as if I'm getting tired  
No, no, no this just can't be! I'm not ready to stop this read  
I try to hold them open but it's as if I have brick on my eye lashes  
My eyes drift off the page  
And already reading has to wait for a new day

Every book tells a story about gloom or glory  
but either way you should read every day  
There's more and more to each page, so read your book once a day

Brooke Brown  
Silverdale Baptist Academy  
Lauren Burnette

## Life

Life is like a board game,  
Moving here and there.  
You win some, you lose some,  
It's never really fair.

Life is like a shaken coke can,  
Most times it can bust.  
Something so explosive,  
You can never really trust.

Life is like a fox,  
Slick and sly is he.  
He is very suspicious,  
That's all that we can see.

Life is like a fork in the road,  
You don't know which way to go.  
Right or wrong way,  
You never really know.

Life is like a nice warm house,  
To shelter me from you.  
Sometimes life can get harder,  
But we can live it through.

Charli Campano  
Silverdale Baptist Academy  
Lauren Burnette

## Where I'm From

I am from fancy dish soap.  
From hardware floors to bold carpets.  
I am from the welcoming home.  
Bright, big, and kind.  
I am from the big bulky plants.  
I am from grand Holidays and humble beginnings.  
From my father to my mother.  
I am from the constant cleaning and amazing food.  
From kindness and humbleness.  
I am from yelling and arguing.  
I am from wondrous walls of my home.  
To delicious turkey, and amazing dishes.  
From the hilarious Disney trips.  
To the loud dog.  
I am from the baby pictures that hang outside of my room.  
To the old photos of my grandfather.  
This is where I'm from.

Catherine Chappell  
Normal Park Museum Magnet School  
Sara Clarich-Page

## A Secret Hero

A secret hero a normal man  
for what he did I could not plan  
he came into my life  
when my heart was full of strife  
I was protective of my mom because I  
didn't want to see her cry

A secret hero a normal man  
for what he did I could not plan  
You came to my baseball games when no one else was there  
I finally saw a glimpse of someone else who cared  
At first I didn't like the thought of my mom dating someone new  
Little did I know it would be a great person like you

A secret hero a normal man  
For what he did I could not plan  
I used to have one parent until I met you  
I used to have one parent but now I have two  
You teach me to be a man  
And for that I will always be your number one fan.

A secret hero a normal man  
For what he did I could not plan  
Even though we met late  
all the times with you are great

River Downs  
Silverdale Baptist Academy  
Lauren Burnette

## The Auction

It's just another boring auction.  
Boring as waiting in line for a ride.  
Going once!  
Going twice!  
SOLD!  
Here comes another item, a property?  
It has green fields stretching on forever!  
It has a tree beaming with rays of sunshine!  
The tree even has a tire swing!  
"\$550!" I shouted.  
Going once!  
Going twice!  
SOLD!  
Now I have all the green property!  
I just need purple to win!  
Yes! I won!  
That round was an emotional rollercoaster!  
Monopoly is the best!  
Maybe we can play again some time?  
Maybe even with more players!

Oliver Frizzell  
Silverdale Baptist Academy  
Lauren Burnette

## My Favorite Spot

In the winter I see the growing grass  
Sticking out of the pearly white snow  
Ready for exciting snowball fights  
In the spring everything is regrowing  
from heavy rain drops  
weeds growing, flowers blooming,  
people resting calmly through their break  
In the summer it's hot, warm, even cool  
The hottest part of summer is the beaming golden sun  
that comes through the window  
after a good night's rest  
The warmest part of summer is the playful sand that you run through  
when you're enjoying time with family at the beach  
the coolest part of summer is the refreshing  
breeze of the calm wind after being in deepest bluest ocean  
In the fall we see many colors such as red, orange, and yellow  
the rainbow color leaves are tumbling to the ground  
during the fall I let go of screaming fear and enjoy laughing cheers

Christopher Gordon  
Baylor School  
Regan Fazio

## Enchanted Forest

There was a forest full of mist  
No one dared to enter  
It was empty, empty of humans that is  
There were more than just the forest plants  
There were special ants  
There were animals like no other  
Plants, fairies, mushrooms, Trolls, that are together  
All the mystical creatures  
And their beautiful features

Lori Guinther  
Hixson Middle School  
John DeVore

Untitled

The crisp morning sunshine warms my skin  
As the faint smell of chlorine touches my nose.

The clear cool water brings a refreshing chill  
While the coach yells out our next drill

With arms like paddles and legs like propellers  
We glide through the water from one end to the other

I try to ignore the burn in my legs  
To build my strength and speed up my pace.

Jack Higgins  
Hilger Higher Learning  
Shelley George

## POEM ABOUT INSECURITIES

He's so ugly.  
Thighs too big  
Eyes too far apart  
Hair is too hairy.  
I hate them in every way.  
I despise him every time I see him.  
He looks a little bit like me.  
No matter how hard I try to insult him  
The words end up affecting me.  
I wish I could just get them out of my head.  
But it's like they're a part of me.  
I go outside to get them off of my mind.  
I see a light blue sky with the sun on the side  
I can still only think of the man, helplessly on the grind.  
I wish they would leave me alone  
But I know they are not the one in control.

I go back inside  
And I'm immediately met with a surprise.  
I see him again  
And I almost gag.  
I wish I could just punch him.  
But then the mirror would shatter.

Kellen Hightower  
Center for Creative Arts  
Catherine Cox

Summer's Beginning

School is gone Summer has come  
It's time to swim not whim  
Work is done it's  
Time to have some fun  
Don't hide go on the slide

Jazmyne Holland  
Hixson Middle School  
Lisa Todd

Oh the Horror!

Oh the horror!  
Oh the pain!

Oh the detest!  
Oh the disdain!

This metal on my teeth is driving me insane!  
How it feels like they are wired to my brain.

For some days the pain can be all too real.  
When they rub against my gums the ache I feel.

But they allow me to show that I am a Seahawk fan.  
So I choose Silverdale colors for my brackets and bands.

My bites have to be small and changing how I eat is lame.  
But I am happy my appetite has remained the same.

When the dentist said no bubble gum, I was done.  
The restrictions and rules make having metal on my teeth no fun!

Four months have passed since I got them put on.  
And sixteen more months till they're completely gone.

Today my smile is different but I am excited to see  
When my teeth are straight, it will be worth it. Don't you agree?

In the end I am happy my parents paid so my teeth will look nice.  
I am thankful for all my parents do for me and their sacrifice.

Alexander Lucas  
Silverdale Baptist Academy  
Lauren Burnette

## Water

The water goes down the stream,  
Birds drink from the stream and play,  
Bears play and eat fish out the stream,  
Deer play and get food from the stream,  
Bugs drink water from the stream,  
People play at the stream and calm down,  
The water is going faster and faster down,  
Until it gets to the edge of town.

Sara Martin  
Hixson Middle School  
Lisa Todd

## Cycles

Writing is a giant pain.  
Everyday I try something else,  
But it's all in vain.  
Always going back and forth  
Trying to find something to add.  
Whatever I try I never use  
It always ends up making me mad.  
That's why I don't write things

Gabriel Palmer  
Hixson Middle School  
Lisa Todd

Color me

I am the color of me,  
Plain donuts a cake too,  
Granola and buttermilk too,  
Like hot sand on the beach,  
At least I think.  
Like hazelnut with oat milk  
Bananas and whip cream just make me  
Or an apple with whip cream.  
Sand makes me when with me.  
I am the color of me

Carlee Ritchey  
Hixson Middle School  
Lisa Todd

## The beach

Waking up in a hotel,  
To looking at the view outside,  
Breathing in the fresh air,  
Walking in the hot, sandy, sand,  
Feeling the cold salty ocean water,  
Being with my family and friends,  
Building sand castles,  
Swimming in the salty water,  
And going back inside the warm hotel,  
To eat pizza, and fall asleep  
Then repeat

Xavier Salazar  
Hixson middle school  
Lisa Todd

## The Aging Season

In fall,  
the leaves turn brown at a rapid pace,  
and the dying grass crunches under my feet.  
The birds chatter in circles,  
watching over the area.  
One other walker walks quietly around the track,  
staring the the path.  
I run,  
and the air, neither hot nor cold,  
does nothing to cushion me.  
A sudden chill fills the air,  
driving out the last bits of summer.

I stare at the abandon track,  
thinking about the winter's toll.  
The grass is fully dead and frosted with ice.  
No children have dared to brave the cold, sharp shards of air.  
Cars zoom by,  
not sparing at look at the once full track.  
Feet touch the ground,  
and ice breaks with every step.  
The cold cluster of air contrasts with my burning skin,  
and my breath clouds in front of me.  
I run,  
waiting for winter's claws to be removed from the air.

Spring has finally come again,  
and the grass is half green,  
and people are back.  
The squirrels sit and chatter on the grass,  
after making sure the coast is clear.  
Chatter fills the air as soft footsteps pad on.  
Children laugh and play at a nearby playground,  
and cars honk as the try to find parking spots.  
People weave in and out of each other,  
creating a dance.  
New flowers offer their scents as I speed through the laps.  
Bugs, birds, and bees embrace the warmth brought by the new season.

The summer heat beats down  
as children run around the track,  
let free in the summer wind.

People practice volleyball in the corner of the field;  
and soccer on the top.  
I run on the track,  
Feeling the worn rubber fall away under my feet.  
The sun burns down on me,  
and I run,  
feeling the heat pull sweat from my body.  
I finish my lap,  
collapsing onto the contrastingly cold concrete.  
I look at path,  
Feeling for the weathered track.

Dakota Sanders  
Baylor School  
Suzanne Collins

## Life

This is how it is  
You're young until you're not  
You love until you don't  
You try until you can  
You cry until you laugh  
But life goes on  
And everyone else still breathes  
No this  
Is how it is  
You look inside yourself  
You take the things you want  
You take your love  
Stab it into someone else's heart  
Even if it hurts them  
You will do it again  
That is life  
And that is how it is

Maggie Stewart  
Baylor School  
Regan Fazio

Untitled

Golf Takes Centuries to complete  
Clubs 10 feet long  
Golf balls the size of a crumb  
An hour later he swings  
Golf takes centuries to complete  
The golf carts chase the ball in slow motion  
Another hour to swing  
They have to pull out another 10-foot pole to putt  
They stand staring at the ball for hours  
They take many hours to swing  
Golf takes millions of years to complete

Cade Talley  
Baylor School  
Regan Fazio

## Fire

Fire is a raging destructive force  
Leaving behind beautiful forests all burned and scorched  
Fire is like a like a leader, lighting up the way  
Brining us from cavemen to modern day  
Fire is death, burning and sweeping through  
But helping land and life become anew  
Fire is a tool, a weapon, a power  
But if you don't wield it correctly  
It will be your last hour

Jacob Tessier  
Baylor School  
Regan Fazio

Dancing Butterfly

Tipper Tapper

Splash Splish

Her hair glistened in the moonlight

Eyes shimmering like a diamond

The slow echo of her voice filled the cave

Creatures from the neighboring forest hopped along to listen the to the sweet voice

The stars sparkles as they looked like smiles shining down on her

The moon giving its moonlight as a give for her beauty

She entertained the animals with her voice and delicate movements

Oh how beautiful she was

Her new titles was born that day

Instead of being the mysterious person she was

She was called, The Dancing Butterfly

Calista Suabntxhi Thao

Hixson Middle School

John DeVore

# Seventh Grade Poetry



### The Sweet Song of a Beautiful Lady

She always heard the sound of waves crashing against the wood,  
She always heard the sound of the seagulls' cry,  
She always heard the sound of the boat rocking in the waves,  
And one day she heard the sound of a beautiful song,  
The sweet song of a beautiful lady.  
The sound of this song was the most delightful,  
To this woman's ears,  
It sounded like fresh caramel apples,  
In the cool fall,  
The sweet song of a beautiful lady.  
She hurried her ship the endearing noise,  
All her worries swept behind her,  
What was a lass doing so far in the ocean?  
Singing such a lovely song?  
The sweet song of a beautiful lady  
As she neared the noise it had begun to stop,  
The woman peered over her ship,  
And requested who was out there,  
Then a creature emerged,  
Out from the deep, misty, waters,  
The sweet song of a beautiful lady  
The woman was swept off the ship,  
And dragged into the dark waters,  
Lured into by a wonderful melody,  
The ship lays abandoned in the ocean waters,  
The sweet song of a terrible siren

Paint Ambriz  
Normal Park Museum Magnet  
Sarah Andrews

### Persephone's Ash and Bone

She was innocent, an early story,  
The world was wide and open.  
She longed for storms and whirlpools  
But her mother had forbidden.

Then a man, a god, arrived,  
One made of fire and of ghosts.  
She ventured out to join him and  
They whispered till the sun arose.

He walked with darkness gathering.  
He felt not from this world.  
He asked if she would be his queen.  
She only said one word.

The maiden chose to leave that day  
Under the sun's watchful eye.  
Helios couldn't keep her secret -  
The sun can never lie.

And so she reigns the ash and bone  
By the side of her dark groom.  
Persephone, an older story,  
Alive where flowers can not bloom.

Maia Atkinson  
The Farm School  
Spring Kurtz

Untitled

Mirl the wiener dog, that I can see above the clouds,  
His ears soaring through the wind,  
Lively and happy, nothing can compare,  
Though old and stubborn, he is still my dog,  
When you're down he will always be there,  
Always leaving you a little smile,  
Even waiting at the door even if you don't care,  
But there is so much he can do,  
He can't wash dishes or fold clothes,  
But still my dog, always there when you don't care,  
Soon getting old and tired, wagging till the end,  
Hopping above the clouds where he will be,  
Forever happy, and he will always be there,  
My wiener dog,  
Mirl the squirrel.

Zachary Bailey  
Normal Park Museum Magnet  
Sarah Andrews

## Fill Up

Fill Up

let me fill your cup  
for mine is overflowing  
I see you've given yours away  
for a deficit is showing  
I see you wander aimlessly  
not sure of where you're going  
sowing seeds of the unknowing  
you've been growing  
so in your cup I pour kindness  
truth and love above all  
you've always been worthy  
you've always been worth it

Georgia Clemons  
East Ridge Middle School  
Candace Robinson

The Old Dog

In our neighborhood,  
my neighbor has a dog,  
A really old dog,  
Every day I come over and feed him,  
He doesn't have a name so I nicknamed him Charlie,  
One day when I went to feed him he was whining,  
But I then realized why,  
His owner was found lying on the bed not moving,  
I saw tears coming down the dog's eye,  
So I knew what I had to do,  
I quickly called the shelter,  
When they came, I whispered in the dog's ear,  
"Goodbye old friend."

Breanna Lane  
Center for Creative Arts  
Catherine Cox

## Conspiracy

Caesar, Caesar, don't you see  
The stinger of the bumblebee?  
The bumblebee is small and slight,  
He goes about all day and night  
Collecting pollen thus: unseen;  
And brings it back unto his Queen.  
But when the threat of danger lies  
Not true, not yet, before thine eyes  
And rustles down, deep inside  
The urge to strike,  
A muffled whine emerges thence  
And louder still  
Concealing not the frenzied will,  
Until it reaches other's ears  
To pierce the heart, to swallow tears,  
To unmistakably give vent to anger,  
Stored for many years,  
Inside the heart of one small bee,  
Who goes about, from tree to tree,  
Evaporates until it chokes  
The strongest heart, the bravest soul,  
The ready mind will give a toll  
When vengeance is played around.  
The bees all buzzed into a tree  
To discuss their secret treachery  
Upon the flesh of one strong man.  
The sword is flashed, the fires blaze,  
The secret plot is now begun,  
Its secret evil surely done,  
Against the flesh of one doomed man.  
The stingers are poised,  
The order is given,  
The clouds close downward in on one lost man,  
And a horde of bees,  
Bent on destroying the figurine,  
The pinpoint of our history.  
The blood is poured, the deed is done,  
As surely as it has begun, so has it ended.  
But a bee, when stinger used  
Must pay the price,  
A truly noble sacrifice,  
Made by every bee that day.  
Now the bees, all are dead,

Drowning in the blood  
Their own hands had shed.  
And all this happened on the Ides of March.  
So beware, beware the prophecy  
The soothsayer says to you.  
To you he says it, and it is true:  
Beware the Ides of March.

Charis Lea  
Ingleside Tutorial and Maple Key Tutorial  
Rachel Lonas

## A Winter's Night

The sky, an exquisite blend  
Of blue and yellow and pink.  
This lovely cloudless sunset;  
An ombre indecisive,  
The day ending in embers.

The purity of the birch  
Is striking against the sky,  
Turning gray as if with age.  
The white birch is intricate,  
The most magnificent tree

The huge mountains hover, poised,  
Over the valley, brooding.  
Majestically silent sires.  
They are ancient grandfathers,  
Of time, of weather, of life.

The twilight reveals, conceals  
It simultaneously.  
The end of the light, last words.  
The birth of darkness, dawning.

The            day's            last            breath,            completion.

Canaan Lonas  
Maple Key Tutoring  
Rachel Lonas

Gone, But Never Forgotten

Gone.

Is he really gone?

He is, but for how long?

Forever?

I will see him one day, maybe in a few

Years

Months

Days.

But I will forever remember the stories we shared

The jokes we had

The memories.

He was the greatest person to talk to

About anything.

And everything.

Nature

Dogs

Our lives.

I could pour out my soul, and he would support me every step of the way.

He was never related to us, but he felt like family.

But he can walk now

He is no longer sick

His soul is forever healed.

He is happy

And I can be too.

Campbell Scherer  
Hilger Higher Learning  
Shelley George

## Untitled

Three thousand two hundred sixty four  
One two  
Two three  
Three thousand two hundred sixty four  
Three four  
Four birds  
Three thousand two hundred sixty four  
Feathers are falling  
Three thousand two hundred sixty four  
Land in the dirt  
A melancholy song  
A unity of anguish  
The world's only gathers  
After the first shot  
Followed by a symphony  
some still remember  
Heroes and villains alike  
But to not have one  
means the other is lost  
Some have forgotten  
And some, pretermitted  
Three thousand two hundred sixty four  
Engraved in stone  
Three thousand two hundred sixty four  
Forever gone  
Why?

It's always a question  
The question of balance  
The question of why  
And the ringing answer of violence  
So many emotions  
Lost to the darkness  
Lost to the sea of opinions,  
Confusion,  
Soundless words,  
The naked eye only can see,  
And lies laced with venom  
But none can repent what has been done  
Terror is something we can't forget  
Change, you see,  
is an inexorable fate  
One predestined for us all

Dust and man together  
Some still remember  
Some still care  
Some still are angry  
Some still are scared  
Some are none of these,  
Vision broken  
by the distorted parasitic voice  
In their head  
Some are blissfully unaware  
And to wake to the reality,  
Is as shattering

As the glass on the highway  
And who are these Some?  
Who looks at the stars and thinks  
That is where my brother became a bird,  
A mighty eagle.  
Nothing can be undone  
That is the obvious,  
Ugly and disgusting  
truth  
And this is where my brother's feathers  
Lay to rest.  
Three thousand two hundred sixty-four,  
dead.  
And more will never forget.

Margo Windemuller  
Normal Park Museum Magnet  
Sarah Andrews

# Eighth Grade Poetry



## Poppi

His ball cap sat on top of his head always, along with the tan jacket that he always wore. The pride of his family was love as he spoke of his children. Happiness shone in his eyes as he observed his children growing up.

His firm hand shake welcomed each person he met and became gentle stroke with each child's heads he patted.

In the still of the night he watched over his family and waited for his children to come home each night.

As time went on, hope stood in the depth of his soul, praying he could see his family complete and their ambition well covered

The end was drawing near, he did not want pity, he wanted strength to caress his family with his last ounce of energy. His hope was coming to its end, he had done what his heart desired him to do.

As the days pass his memory lingers on in everyone's mind

His dream had been fulfilled and we just can't let go

There is a big gap left in our hearts and family a place we just can't fill but do we really want to fill it? Is it really meant to be filled?

Josie Attardo  
Silverdale Baptist Academy  
Jason Williams

### A Wish with Folds and Creases

The paper floated in her hands  
From a flat square on the table  
It leaped and jumped  
The quiet rasp of creasing paper- *shhhhst, shhhhsts,*  
Chirping in anticipation of what it will become.

The hands quickly shaped the wings, tail, and head  
A bird come into its final form  
She reaps the reward of her meticulous practice  
A neat, tiny, bird that glistened like a jewel  
And number 842 joined the glimmering flock.

Can you form a wish  
With folds and creases?  
Can you shape a wish with painted pulp?  
A thousand times the pattern repeats  
And a thousand times is worth the hope.

A thousand cranes  
Thrown from a mountain top  
A thousand bits of paper hope  
A mosaic, fluttering funnel  
Carrying a wish into the cloud

The girl sits as the cranes fall  
Floating on the gusts of air carrying them away  
They drift for seemingly hours  
Playing on the drafts of the wind

Light footsteps carry her  
Down the mountain  
Pigtails flying out behind  
Hope flickering her eyes  
For the wish carried by the wind

Josey Bankston  
Baylor School  
Henry Blue

Windbreaker

Apples dotted orange trees  
blots swayed in golden breeze  
light poured in through the leaves  
What would do without you?

Nature's candy, Nature's glory  
something not quite true in stories  
Shall I die? Should I live?  
The dire choice that's made by men

Not meant to be abused  
often lit without a fuse  
Starts not when you want it to  
takes a path which bruises you

Wry humor not obeys  
scorched within the sun's sharp rays  
Later watching sunlit bays  
What would do without you?

Benjamin Bertani  
Center for Creative Arts  
Catherine Cox

## Thoughts About Life

### Reality

Why is life changing  
Every single hour?  
It's the ones who have the bullets  
that have the real power.  
It doesn't matter what you say,  
It doesn't matter why you pay,  
It only matters that you do.

We fight with fire  
Until the world is ablaze.  
We fight for everything  
Until the end of our days.  
We call for unity,  
But the world is divided.  
We achieve nothing  
Until we're united.

But what do we achieve,  
Is it good or bad?  
And is it even worth it  
If there is nothing to be had?

Isabel Mullins  
Chattanooga Christian School  
Brittany Crawford

A Letter Left, Abandoned, Along a Decrepit Road for You, My Dear, To Read

Poetry—

You, to me, are  
& have forever been  
how words taste,  
how they think &  
smell & breathe.  
Inter-workings of  
mental machinery  
unraveled with ease.

Clipped into a  
leather-bound companion,  
Bonnie & Clyde with the  
fleeting honor of partnership.  
Thoughts inset in graphite  
surpassing memories  
lost through faltering grip.

Paper-pressed ink attempts  
justice at your words,  
polished glass & porcelain  
to match, yet naïve  
misunderstanding sprawls  
through your syllables  
and chords.

For you, love, as I now  
know, require only  
a desired complexity  
of thought & barren, ink-  
pressed lines.

You fill silences,  
patch absences,  
& pull taffy words  
from taut, chapped lips.  
Sweet & sour & wait,  
toss salt in the mix!  
As rosebuds grow  
to be trampled  
and saplings sprout  
to become warships.

Of cliff's edges & fallouts,  
you spin, from consonant  
and vowel combinations,  
hope, flickering through  
murky, hazy blackouts.

You are a home more than  
rickety paneling &  
shuddering shingles ever  
dream of being,  
like the raft cutting across  
choppy waters while  
maintaining place as the  
wreckage long since drowned,  
a lone & forgotten tether.

At first, to me,  
you appeared  
impenetrably tricky:  
a puzzle box  
I could not crack.

Now, your words glisten,  
oozing from fractured &  
honeyed lines and stanzas.  
They cleanse & blanket me,  
melancholy & golden to  
fill where my own speech  
may lack.

Now, my dear, I've lost  
myself in you — as was  
fate all this time —  
in realms of sugar-  
spun metaphors &  
towering hyperbole.

Now, it seems, I've found  
myself in you and  
there's no turning back.

--Aspen

Piper Ryan  
Baylor School  
Henry Blue

# Ninth Grade Poetry



## Safe

we stand to the left  
outside on the lawn  
my grandmother hugging me  
her head against mine  
I was younger then  
than I am now  
we are dressed up  
I am in a pink dress  
she in blue and white  
a pearl necklace dangles from my neck  
pearl studs from my ears  
that contrast with glasses too big  
for my pudgy face  
she forgot to put in earrings that day  
her ear peeking out from under her hair  
blonde like mine  
which is braided  
my eyes, blue, mirror hers  
the sky is bright  
this summer day has just begun  
nature bringing forth it's brightest colors  
as we smile  
a baby chick nestled gently under the wing  
of an older, wiser bird  
safe

Cylia Baggett  
Silverdale Baptist Academy  
Joy Fisk

## The Call

Dark and cold, black as night  
The wind howled, the trees shook  
A lonely girl waited fearfully for her parents to arrive  
Before they did, an awful noise came shouting  
Buzz it sang, buzz, buzz  
She ran to the kitchen, picked up the phone  
A voice from inside cried to her  
“Were almost home”  
The fear had left and all was good  
Her mom was in the neighborhood

Kendall Burnette  
Hilger Higher Learning  
Shelley George

May the Sound of Nature be Silent

A lifeless leaf flutters across before me  
Like a curious insect it continues to pester  
Until a subtle breeze carries it away  
To the deadly waters that dictate the land I approach

A step forwards, I feel the emptiness in the ground  
That submits and caves in below my weight  
Reach the poison of warmth that kills  
Whatever ends up clutched in its unrelenting grasp

The edge of my foot teases the coast  
As if I were tempting the very currents that power it to come closer  
I crouch down, study the barren ground  
Glance down at the ambusher, waiting for my misstep

My conscious stills, like the corpses of last season that envelop the ground  
The unsettling aroma of their vessels emanates from my environment  
I turn my heel towards my unmoving enemy, diminishing its hopes for prey  
And slam my fist into the closest tree

Completely still, sensing everything  
The gentle morning dew on each blade of grass, sparkling and immobile  
The bitterness of the subtle breeze which allies the basin of poison  
It taunts my very being, and mocks my racing mind

Falling to my knees, the dirt supporting and upholding me  
A shiver runs through my soul, the unease around me grows  
A lonely whisper escapes my lips  
“May the sound of nature be silent.”

Seth Chaffin  
Silverdale Baptist Academy  
Joy Fisk

## Brother

Brother

I remember the days when  
it was us three; all together.  
The smell of vanilla and coffee candles;  
the Mario characters we played as.  
The times we played together;  
The competitive streak we all had.  
Remember the last time we saw him?  
He walked out without a hug.  
Short brown hair fixed into a mess,  
Baggy clothes hung loosely on his body.  
The goodbyes went by quickly,  
The door shut without another word.  
The silence was so loud.  
It's been so long.

Cali Crouch

Silverdale Baptist Academy

Joy Fisk

## The Voice of the Wind

“Shhh,” the wind whispers, swirling through fluttering leaves,  
Like fluttering hearts swept by love.  
Leaves skip along,  
Those bright blood or sunflower-colored,  
And those that disguise themselves to the ground.  
Rocks under my feet, tottering my steps,  
Wrappers, straws, litter the dirt beneath me;  
Children scream, near fighting, but light also.  
“Shhh,” coos the wind, “enjoy my glory.”

Shh, shh, shh,  
Drag feet through the brown-confetti-scattered grass.  
Cold seeps into me, a quiver in my core;  
My nose breathes in the scent of the crisp, refreshing air, tossed by the wind,  
And yet it pricks my nostrils.  
The playful wind-river flows again,  
Sweeps wisps of hair to tickle my face;  
It skates along the surface of the liquid crystal stream, quilted into criss-cross patterns over  
stones.

My hand strokes a plump evergreen,  
Then vibrant, reptilian lettuce, like flawless wax plants.  
Incandescent flowers sway as the wind waltzes with them,  
A last dance before death.  
Shoes thump along as I come back to solid pavement.  
Above, a bird,  
A skillful sailor, hovers and totters along  
His aerial ocean, a stormy grey with white foam caps.  
“Hoosh,” quivers the wind past my ears,  
In a constant melody,  
Wrapping my head.

“Shhh, enjoy my glory.”

Jillian Kincer  
Silverdale Baptist Academy  
Joy Fisk

## The Great Old Pine

A great, old pine tree stands alone in the bone chilling wind  
He stands head and shoulders taller than any other  
He is afraid and alone, all in the freezing snow  
His needles are his only blanket from the cold  
An elk borrows underneath the pine's loving branches  
A small squirrel hides among his branches  
It has a shelter for many who are lost in the cold  
It is the only great pine to have survived so long  
It saw the native Americans pass barefoot  
And it is seeing hunters pass by in boots  
Many years has this lonely pine stood the test of time

Cadan Lindsay  
Hilger Higher Learning  
Shelley George

## Ripples in a Puddle

The cool crisp air whisks around me.  
A feeling so gentle, yet strangled with hostility  
Surrounds me so tenderly.

The cardinal sings its lovely song,  
A red bird begins to sing along  
To his melancholy melody.

The holly in the trees above  
Now stomped on the ground just like a bug.  
Once beautiful, now broken.  
Once cheerful, now shattered.

The rose bush has a gloomy glow,  
A kiss of the sun is all it knows.  
Barely surviving, yet always thriving -  
Like evergreens without their leaves.

The prick of a stick,  
May cause pain eternal,  
But never doubt one match is all it takes -  
To end the sour suffering.  
The echo in the mountain's rings  
Like yodeling or caroling -  
Forever,  
Forever,  
Forever.

Beautiful with blankets of green,  
The healthy grass beneath the trees  
Where it will never cease to gleam.

The scent of luscious flower blooms,  
Withering and closing soon.  
A look of scorn it seems to give -  
To those still blooming after spring.

Falling but not rising.  
Surviving yet not thriving.  
Even then, causing and affecting -  
Like ripples in a puddle.

Allie Nelms

Silverdale Baptist Academy  
Joy Fisk

## My Fictional Pet

If I could have any single pet  
One I could keep without being kept  
It would not be one that is widely known  
And would never stoop as low as to fetch a bone.

My pet is tall, my pet is fierce  
He has claws and spines that pierce  
He has feathers, he has wings  
His eyes are noble and virtuous as kings.

There may be a day that someone is on fire  
And I can assure you, my pet caused their pyre;  
Perhaps a song over hill has been sung  
He, with breath, has filled their lungs.

I can assure you he is not dangerous at all—  
Just look before you leap (and fall)  
If you hear a KABANG, look around!  
For he's large enough to break the ground.

But back to describing my pet in full!  
He loves to think of pranks to pull  
He is a creature of immense valor  
And may I add, perlino in pallor

My creature makes flames dance through the sky  
He also causes small children to cry  
I assure you, there is nothing he can't do  
Including breathing underwater in the great deep blue.

His claws are long as whole felled trees  
His wings reach down around his knees  
His teeth sing when he hunts his prey  
And he flies so far he could reach the Milky Way.

Now you have heard of the pet I desire  
(Cue the sound of trumpets and flute and lyre)  
And this creature is not a dragon, you see  
But instead, he's known as the Kinolamantee!

Sarah Beth Underwood  
Silverdale Baptist Academy  
Joy Fisk

### Riddle Poem

Crystalized like snow  
Enclosed in a cage until it is let out  
Sweet or salty  
However you like  
Prepared for you with delight  
The burning sensation lingers on your fingertips  
But the softness encloses you forever  
Your home away from home  
Too much could make you sick  
But it reminds you of the perfect summer day  
When the sun radiates its heat  
Your childhood will melt away

(Ice cream)

Kacie Wade  
Silverdale Baptist Academy  
Joy Fisk

# Tenth Grade Poetry



## Raise a Toast

Birthdays are a nice glass of lemonade  
Sweet, lovely, and best on a summer day  
Best when enjoyed with friends  
Pray that it never ends

But there's always that slight sour taste  
One more year, don't let it go to waste  
Some glasses are more sour than others  
Just wait for another year, and another, and another

It's mostly great and makes you smile  
Take a break, sit down for a while  
Spend time with the people you love most  
Enjoy a nice cold glass of lemonade and raise a toast

Brayden Kinlaw  
Silverdale Baptist Academy  
Taryn Humphries

## Falling

It's been a problem for so long  
The racial slurs, the side eyes, the persecution  
It has to stop

"I can't breathe," all the racism chokes me  
"I can't breath," the persecution makes me sick  
"I can't breath," he said, moments before he innocently died  
How can we fix it?

It may just be an opinion, but it is a problem  
A problem that keeps America falling  
Falling into a deeper hole it can't get out of  
Until it all stops

Jaiya Madison  
Boyd Buchanan School  
Temple Davis

## An Ocean of Influence

Waves,  
Crashing to and fro as the wind blows;  
Softer, louder, as they swirl to create the tide

As you stand on the shore  
feeling the waves crash over you,  
As the salty water takes you underneath

But we must remember.  
Who we are amongst the waves  
And where we stand

As you walk up and down  
To the right and the left,  
North and South  
To the East  
To the West.  
All directions, all waves, all paths  
Lead somewhere

Whether your path leads to the mountains, where the birds are calling,  
Or does your path lead you back to the calming, overwhelming shore,  
Or to the city, where the buildings are so tall,  
they seem to scrape the clouds off the bright blue sky.

But we must remember who we are and,  
Where we stand in this world

So many things around us, above us, below us  
But not just things, people, the people you interact with change you  
Whether it be for the better or worse; you are changed by the impact they have had in your life.

It's like those waves crashing over you, influencing you,  
Like seagulls who dive down to intimidate and mock you  
Those people, seagulls even the wind you can't control will impact you for better or worse;

But remember, as the wind drags you under the surface and the water submerges you,  
Do those waves, the things you can't control, make you who you are?  
Or do you stand tall amidst the obstacles in your knowledge, knowing who you are?

Because not only do people impact you,  
You impact them.

Be kind to those, don't be the waves, throwing them about,  
Tossing them to the seagulls, as if they don't matter

But instead, know who you are and where you stand in the world.  
Because your experience in it will be over before you know it.

Sarah Moyers  
Silverdale Baptist Academy  
Sarah Johnson

### Grateful Flower

If I was a flower on a rainy day  
I would hold my head high  
I would stretch my arms wide  
I would keep my back straight  
I would drink like a camel at a desert well  
If I was a flower on a sunny day  
I would lift my head to the sky  
I would relax my arms  
I would feel the sun along my back  
I would soak up the warmth like a snake napping on a rock.

Isaac Smith  
Hilger Higher Learning  
Shelley George

## The Court

Loud squeaks filled the gym  
As boys put the ball through the rim  
Fans scream and cheerleaders yell  
Who is winning, no one can tell  
The concession stand fills the gym with smells  
Of hot popcorn and salty pretzels  
Up and down the court, the orange ball flies  
The crowd's cheers and desperate cries  
The score stays painfully even  
This is the team they could all believe in  
The ball seemed to grin as it was passed around  
As cheerleaders screamed, "Get the rebound!"  
Buzzers blared and fouls were called  
The opposing team was slowly mauled  
Down the shiny smooth floor, a player ran  
With the treasure at his hand  
He jumped high, towards the hoop  
With the ball, stolen loot  
He shot for the net with all his might  
While in the air, taking flight  
On the cold bleachers, the crowd held their breath  
If the shot missed, it was the season's death  
The net swooshed and the crowd went wild  
The humble player only smiled  
Fans cheer and players grin  
They had just completed their big win  
The players lined up and hands were slapped  
The opposing team tried to keep their anger capped  
Out of the gym, people slowly trickle out  
The cold winter air seems to gleely shout  
The team has earned their newfound fame  
Oh how I love a good basketball game

Larissa Smith  
Silverdale Baptist Academy  
Taryn Humphries

## Push and Pull

I loved you the way the ocean loves the moon,  
Submitted to its undeniable pull  
Obeying its beauty  
In and out, the waves follow its glowing gaze.  
And yet,  
The moon does not feel for the ocean  
It does not move  
It is not swayed  
In the way it sways the ocean,  
The moon is cold in its ways  
With no love does it move the waves,  
As I have followed your magnetic pull  
Pushing and pulling at my head.  
And yet,  
You never gazed at me  
Never once have you glowed for me,  
Cold in your ways towards my unbreakable love,  
As the waves can never break the cycle of push and pull Neither can my heart.  
And yet, the moon turns its face to the sun  
And I am left with my ocean and you with your inability To light up the star  
You adore.  
So the cycle never breaks  
And we all  
Push and pull.

Ansley Waters  
Hilger Higher Learning  
Shelley George

## Stand Tall

Stand tall, broken tree  
It won't always hurt  
You won't always look at the taller branches  
Although the storms hover you  
Or may scare you beyond recover  
The strength of a tree is beyond others  
And the wind may blow you into different directions  
But hold your head high, broken tree  
Don't droop down like the weeping willow  
Don't lose your leaves, like the rest of them.

Lainey Young  
Silverdale Baptist Academy  
Sarah Johnson

# Eleventh Grade Poetry



## Fireworks

The park is about to close, and I feel just as empty as it.  
The scent of food and plastic  
Accompanies the blaring music heard so clearly now that most are gone.  
The remaining crowd turn their eager eyes to the sky for one last show of wonder:  
The fireworks display.  
My family joins them, but I hang back for a moment.  
Why, I don't know.  
The first light flashes and the echoing crack sounds, and yet I don't move an inch.  
Why?  
When I was little, I used to cover my ears and look away  
Until the thunderous boom had faded,  
And the blinding light had dissipated.  
When I grew a little, I used to stare up at the night sky in awe and fascination.  
I would anticipate the loud sound and fear nothing of it.  
But now?  
Now that I have lived a little, the fireworks draw no reaction from me.  
I am impervious to the novelty of fireworks.  
The mystery of it all has been solved.  
The beauty of it has dimmed.  
It's sad to think about.  
It's not just the fireworks that have been dampened.  
The entire amusement park no longer amuses me.  
I feel no happiness, no excitement from being here.  
No joy, no heartfelt amazement.  
This place was made to be an escape from the everyday life,  
But as long as I am living,  
There is no escape from the afflictions of life.  
Life is living, and living is life.  
If I am able to see the fireworks,  
I am able to think of the daily troubles I face.  
And for that reason,  
I do not 'Ooo' and 'Ahh' at the sight in the sky.  
The light always shows the darkness anyways.

Elisabeth Bennett  
Silverdale Baptist Academy  
Kyndall Squires

Maybe If I Told You

I wish I had told you the truth.  
Instead of smiling,  
Nodding my head  
Pretending like everything is fine.  
I wish my act was not as believable  
Yet isn't this what I wanted?  
To hide the hurt  
To deny the excessive emptiness

I wish I had told you that I was not okay.  
The countless times you asked,  
All i could say was  
"I'm good, I promise".  
Yet as we speak,  
The light within is closing like blinds  
I am now surrounded by the darkening night.

Maybe if I told you the truth  
You wouldn't be standing here today  
Hoping and wishing that the pain would just easily go away.

Tori Gibson  
Silverdale Baptist Academy  
Kyndall Squires

## Untitled

Boy

I saw her today  
My heart skipped a beat  
It seemed like forever  
I asked her how she was doing  
She asked me how I was doing  
I lied to her  
I told her I miss her  
I meant it  
I would pick her over any girl  
She deserves the best  
It hurt to look at her  
I am not over her  
I care for her so much  
I want her back  
I need her  
I miss the way we used to talk  
I don't want to get over her  
She made a funny joke  
I saw her gorgeous smile  
Why did she stop  
I would do anything for her  
I would do anything to go back  
I am lost without her  
I wish she new how broken I am  
Gosh I miss HER

Kenzie Hilger  
Hilger Higher Learning  
Shelley George

Girl

I saw him today  
I got butterflies  
I wonder if he still cares  
I told him I am doing well  
He said he was doing great  
He is much happier without me  
He does not mean it  
I don't believe him  
He has a new girl already  
He is the best  
He could not even look at me  
He is so over me  
He doesn't care anymore  
I wish I could get him back  
He hates me now  
It is so hard to talk to him now  
I just want to get over him and move on  
He did his smirk smile  
I quickly stopped smiling  
I can't catch feelings again  
He prob does not like me anymore  
He has prob forgotten all the memories  
I bet he's doing great without me  
He seems so happy  
He does not miss me

## The Catch

A tempting splash lands closely by  
A target appears, captivating my eye  
A bit cautious I find myself  
But I threw such ideas on the shelf

Approaching, it seemed long and quite round  
Closer I went, not making a sound  
Along the ground it hopped  
Dancing and prancing, it never stopped

Majority was green, yet speckled in red  
No sound was made, no words were said  
Closer I drew in a slight, magical trance  
Almost waiting for the right exact chance

At last I could stand it no more at all  
I grabbed it and took off, holding the haul  
Success and relief filled me inside  
But suddenly pain entered my mouth's side

A pulling and ripping ached my poor gate  
Stupidity flooded me, for I took the alluring bait  
Fighting I endured, but slowly I weakened  
Why was this happening, I had no simple reason

Through the water I leaped and tirelessly dived  
Finally I leaped again and was greatly surprised  
Instead of water to land on, it was solid ground  
I flipped and flopped all all around

To my disgust, there were three young alien  
I felt as though I were trapped inside a stadium  
They seemed happy and ceasing delight  
On the ground I could do nothing, nor put up a fight

Soon after torture, and much of being held  
I gasped for air, as though my gills were swelled

Then I seemed flying up in the sky  
Surely this is it, now I will die  
But instead of death, to my home I returned  
There is so much to tell, and much that I've learned

Jeremy Morris  
Hilger Higher Learning  
Shelley George

PTSD: A Soldier's Letter to His Younger Self

I wish I had told you  
How fast your childhood would be through  
That one day it would hit you  
Just as it's hit me too  
Like a tornado that tears through  
Or a bomb that BURSTS and BOOMS  
Oh, I wish I had told you  
That one day when the child is gone  
There would be something new  
Something you won't recognize  
But, Something that recognizes you  
I wish I had told you  
That life is a game of chess and every turn is your last move  
And that you will have nothing to lose and everything to prove  
I wish I had told you  
That the world is cold, but you have to be colder  
And not everyone's wiser just cause they're older  
And when the rain washes away the fallen soldiers  
Everyone will put their weight on your shoulders  
I wish I had told you  
That wars begin and they end  
But the pain doesn't go away  
The things you will see  
The things you will do  
Will haunt your dreams  
I wish I had told you  
That you will be respected  
But respect is a cup with no water  
And this is how you will feel  
I wish I had told you  
That you will be a man of steel  
With a heart of glass  
A man of many skills  
And yet still an empty mass  
I wish I had told you  
That after the horrors bestowed before you  
When the war is won  
When you go home  
You still feel like an empty house  
A lamb with no sheppard  
Or A guitar with no strings  
I wish I had told you  
That one day you'll sit in regret and it won't go away

Landon Oliver  
Silverdale Baptist Academy  
Kyndall Squires

A Sterile Room

The door flew open, my heart sank  
The sterile room repulsive  
I knew he layed, stiff as a plank  
With the grim scrubs shifted about

I recall the times before  
When he was well and whole  
Yet now he lay in his own gore  
As silent figures drift about

Reverberation of steel on steel  
Their clanging tormenting me eternally  
Nothing medicine can ever heal  
Akin to the scars of the man before me

The flashing lights were too late  
I knew as soon as it happened  
That he was gone, as was his fate  
No medical machination, nor special stitch could save

As the door flew open, I gave a small prayer  
And as my eyes open, I saw him revived by their care.

Justin Ray  
Silverdale Baptist Academy  
Kyndall Squires

Mr. Robork

Mr. Robork never smiled  
He never showed his teeth!  
His lips appeared like a thin line  
He hid what was beneath

His face showed no sign of laugh lines  
His eyes, a gloomy green  
His cheeks somehow looked always flushed  
Yet, he is not what he might seem

One day I saw him walk his dog  
A pinscher with steel eyes  
A sweet lady walked up to him  
And said, "Take my advice."

"Tell the neighborhood of your strife  
Of how your dear wife died  
And how you gave every last dime  
To try and heal your bride

"Then they'd finally understand  
Your calloused, saddened frown  
Is a veil that covers your golden heart  
That was broken and unwound."

And when I overheard all these things  
I felt all hate depart  
For dear Robork was not cruel  
He just had a broken heart

Chloe Rice  
Silverdale Baptist Academy  
Kyndall Squires

## The Headstone

Another tear falls on my weary shoulders  
I seem to have lost count  
Someone screams in anger  
Not knowing that they startled me

Just when I think I'll be alone  
Another sorrowful soul sits on me with a sigh  
"Why, why?" they ask to the sky  
While I listen to their grief

I see a mound of dirt being carried  
"One more," I think  
And a hundred more visitors  
A hundred more people wandering through these fields

I could recite letters or quotes  
From the one these people loved most  
I could tell you a million stories  
That I've heard over the years

I've heard poems, prayers, and unbearably long songs  
People stop by and talk to you as if you hear  
To lay flowers on the last place they saw you  
Like a child rushing to the playground  
Or be the first to get a cookie  
If only you knew how much you were loved

Summer Smith  
Silverdale Baptist Academy  
Kyndall Squires

## Newsies: Strike Action

In 1899 New York City echoed with voices,  
Voices trying to make choices,  
Choices that are hard,  
Wondering how to start,  
Wondering how to make money so they don't starve.

Pulitzer raised his prices  
He kept dicin'  
He kept slicin'  
Every day the newsboys were cryin'

Until one day  
Someone came,  
Someone who wasn't plain,  
Someone with a peculiar name.

His name was Kid Blink.  
He didn't miss a beat  
When he walked down the street.  
He didn't take a seat;  
He stood on his feet.

Now Pulitzer is cryin'  
And the weasels are dyin'  
Now the newsboys are smilin'

It's all because of him,  
He who started the strike.  
Kid blink is the guy  
Who saved the newsboys' lives!

Alyvia Wooten  
Hilger Higher Learning  
Shelley George

# Twelfth Grade Poetry



## Hope Was A Renewable Resource

And even though you never knew how  
to stick to any one of those “daily routines” you scrawled so carefully on the first page of every  
clean notebook  
when you were so sure that Santa Claus and self-reinvention were real  
and you didn’t cry when someone whispered that they weren’t  
because hope was a renewable resource  
even you couldn't help but learn routine  
because where “7 am: wake up, read bible” didn’t work  
you’d have no problem making it a daily habit to mourn the nights  
where you read two chapter books before midnight  
soaking in the pretty words and peppermint tea and never once thinking it a thing to  
romanticize  
since you hadn’t been taught yet that life was faster than you  
it’s not like you would have listened  
because hope was a renewable resource.

Anna Collis  
Silverdale Baptist Academy  
Taryn Humphries

Is this a Game?

Is this a game? Am I being played now?  
I am trapped in a sad, endless cycle  
Longing for a bond, I am not allowed.  
“Oh I’m fine”, even when I’m in denial.  
I’m jealous of others’ intimacy,  
Wishing I was not feeling this forlorn.  
I’m thinking “where are my fish in the sea?”  
My loneliness is my long, nagging thorn.  
This should not be a formidable task  
I guess I tend to make myself a twit  
“Am I doing something wrong here?” I ask  
Maybe I am not ready to commit  
My singleness could be for the better  
Though I hope it doesn’t last forever

Trinity Henry  
Silverdale Baptist Academy  
Taryn Humphries

## Personified Love

Does Love understand the weight we give its name  
As a constant term in our society, is it an emotion or a trend  
A break up with someone gives Love the blame  
And a restored friendship makes love transcend

We say we love food and it is our desire  
But we don't really mean Love, we just feel appreciation  
We say we love money so we work to acquire  
But in reality, Love is not the sensation

So what is True Love like the storybooks say  
Is it meeting Prince Charming with "Love at first sight"  
Or saying "happily ever after" and running away  
It is not staring and longing for the yonder green-light

No, Love is not inconsistent, it doesn't come and go  
Love is a constant, and when you find it, you'll know

Melanie Marcus  
Silverdale Baptist Academy  
Taryn Humphries

## Love Is Like Thunder

Love is like thunder  
You never know when it strikes  
When it finds its target  
It will hit you with all its might  
The results are quite shocking  
To say the least  
Considering the fact  
That it roars like a hungry beast  
Its roar can echo for miles  
Causing people's smiles to erupt  
You cannot run  
And you cannot duck  
Because no matter what you do  
You'll end up thunderstruck

Turner Millsaps  
Silverdale Baptist Academy  
Taryn Humphries

## Dear Young One

Dear Young One, run, laugh, and play..  
Run and laugh more than you believe you should.  
Be silly.  
Enjoy life.  
Don't worry if you won't be accepted by the world.  
You are accepted.

Dear Young One, keep imagining.  
Play make-believe.  
Believe big.  
Oh, reality is so harsh.  
Please imagine.

Dear Young One, when you fall, embrace the hurt and get back up.  
It's okay to cry and to hurt.  
What you do with the pain is the important thing.  
You can let that build you up or knock you down.  
Be Brave Dear Young One.  
Believe.

Dear Young One, everyone is not going to like you.  
And that's okay.  
Believe you are loved, because you are.  
You were made for a purpose.  
You are loved.

Dear Young One, you were wrong too.  
Don't be the victim.  
This will not serve you well.  
What did you do?  
And How can you change?  
You can't change others.  
Only yourself.

Dear Young One, it's okay to say goodbye.  
Goodbyes are hard.  
Mostly, you'll never want those words to be said.  
Other times, you wish it would have happened sooner.  
And some will be unexpected.  
Goodbyes are a segway to what's next.

Dear Young One, never say never.  
You will eat those words.

Trust beyond fact and feeling.  
Anything can happen.  
Trust everything has and is happening for a reason.

Dear Young One, embrace who you were made to be.  
There is no one else like you.  
You were made with purpose.  
Embrace the Dear One you are.

Dear Young One, try new and scary things.  
Face your fears.  
Chances are, you will actually like them.  
And it's okay if you don't, too.  
Do hard and scary things.

Dear Young One, create everything you can.  
Don't waste time on meaningless things.  
Spend time on things that will last.  
Push your limits and try.

Dear Young One, embrace where you are put.  
Time is short.  
What seems forever, isn't actually forever.  
Change is inevitable.  
Embrace the change.  
Embrace the seasons of life you are in.  
They are only seasons.  
Not forever.

Lacey Shimoda  
Hilger Higher Learning  
Shelley George

