

VARIATIONS

2016



VARIATIONS

Literary and Creative Arts Magazine

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North Allegheny Senior High School

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Policy and Selection Process

VARIATIONS Literary and Creative Arts Magazine is published annually by the North Allegheny Senior High School located at 10375 Perry Highway, Wexford, Pennsylvania 15090. The content of this magazine consists of text, artwork, and photographs submitted by juniors or seniors enrolled at North Allegheny Senior High School. The staff may choose up to six submissions from individual contributors. Cover art is not included in the limit. With the exception of artwork, the staff is not responsible for returning any submissions to the students. *VARIATIONS* is an after-school activity that meets once a month to evaluate pieces and discuss ideas; the staff is comprised of juniors and seniors attending North Allegheny Senior High School. *VARIATIONS* is not affiliated with any one section, group, or organization within the Senior High School.

All work submitted to *VARIATIONS* is judged fairly without bias on the part of the staff and without knowledge of the author's or artist's identity. Members of the staff are eligible to submit entries but do not participate in the evaluation of their own work, allowing all submissions to be judged impartially.

The Editorial and Literary Departments vote on the literary works submitted to the magazine. Entries are judged on literary content using generally accepted standards of evaluation. The staff reserves the right to edit the literary entries for punctuation, spelling, grammar, and syntax.

The Artistic Department selects works based on their intrinsic appeal and perceptible artistic proficiency. The staff strives to incorporate a variety of styles, subject matter, and genres as selections are made.

All submissions are uploaded electronically at this website:
www.northallegheny.org/Page/23923

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Preface

Olivia Kraus
Editor in Chief 2016

Last year I remember walking into *VARIATIONS'* first meeting of the year. I was there solely by the request of a few of my friends. At the time it seemed to be something new to do. Not once did I expect to be changed by the experience. At the time I thought it would be just another club. I was surprised to find a wonderland of talent and creativity. I have been involved with many clubs and organizations but none had sparked my creativity as much as *VARIATIONS* has.

As this year's Editor in Chief I have found a new appreciation for art. As I reviewed all the submissions, I was amazed and in some cases awestruck by the sheer beauty and skill in each poem, painting, picture, and paragraph created by my fellow students. *VARIATIONS* allows the students of North Allegheny to display their creative talents and to be proud of what they have accomplished. Pablo Picasso once said "The purpose of art is washing the dust of daily life off our souls." Art provides an escape from the humdrum of everyday life. A simple story can take you on an adventure. My eyes have been opened by the breadth of what my fellow students have created.

Working alongside the wonderful and creative individuals on our staff was one of the highlights of my senior year. Their dedication to the magazine shines through in the end product. From the start in October to the final read through in late April, they have put their hearts into this publication. I would like to thank them for all the time and hard work they have put into the magazine.

I hope you have as much fun and enjoyment flipping through the seasons of *VARIATIONS* as it was to make it.

Winter

Winter Wasteland

Photography
Nick Koehler



Go
Poetry
Ciara Cullen

The first thing to go is the green,
To be swiftly replaced by the red, orange, and gold.
The crimson drops that flutter from the arms of the trees,
Their orange and yellow companions that follow suit –
They too must go.

Because now it is winter,
The Time When Trees Are Bare,
The Season with No Color,
When nothing seems to live.
The Cold.

What is wrong with the Cold?
The Cold itself doesn't steal the Warmth.
It's simply all that remains when the Warmth leaves—
Because, yes, like the green and the red,
It too must go.

The trees' bare arms stir sadness in many,
But don't they remember the red? the green?
Don't they realize that the colors must come again?
The bare arms are hope for their return—
Yet they too must go.

For then comes the snow.

The snow, so white, so soft.
The snow, as it gently coats the once-bare arms.
The snow, glistening with the silver promises of
snowmen and snowballs and snow angels.
And the snow too will go.

Winter is fleeting,
Like the green, the red, the gold, the white.
Seasons themselves must go,
Seasons and years, decades and eternities.
For that is the definition of time: it goes.

Creating Light

Photography

Sam Marzula



Black and White

Poetry

Ali Full

And as I sat,
I wrote unpainted sentences,
black and white words
upon transparent paper.
The curved splashes of inky thoughts,
Stark against the creamy scrolls,
the protectors of invisible dreams,
hopes,
tears
that lay between the lines.
And while the porcelain pages will yellow
and curl
under the spell of time
and opinions of the ages will change
with the moon,
these words will remain in permanency.

Light and dark, two colors that are not colors at
all,
will fill the blank spaces,
reflecting and absorbing any reds,
blues,
pinks
that may try to sneak onto the contrasting surface
of my wizened book.

And as I sat,
I listened to the fragile sheets
covered in scribbles from past thinkers,
and they told me that there is no room
for the swirling emotions of purple,
green,
orange
within these eternal scrawls.
For color does not exist
when your thoughts are
Black and White.

Windowed In
Photography
Nick Koehler



Next Window Please

Poetry
Maura Sanguigni

Take a ticket
Please be patient
Someone will be with you shortly
Physical needs, please move left
Emotional, right.

For positive encouragement or affirmation,
You will need to wait until next Wednesday,
After the dosage is upped.

For agreement and support,
You must fill out the form provided.
Please be aware,
Turnaround time may be extensive.

For sympathy, empathy, or comfort,
Request must wait
For the heart to return from its wallow in self-pity.

Please note: all requests for physical affection,
Will be rejected.
However,
All requests for physical use or abuse
will be accepted.

Applications to fill the role of outside approval,
to mimic a sense of self-worth,
May be given in at the center window.

Please remain in an orderly line
And wait your turn.

Diamonds
Poetry
Cheyenne Cenk

When you spoke, your mouth became an oyster spilling out pearls onto the silk ribbon of sentences. Pearls of all shapes, sizes, and colors decorated your lips. When the ribbon became too heavy to hold, I tied it around your neck, and you hid it away. I did not understand why you would hide something so beautiful and rare. You told me of necklaces past broken and pearls ripped from tears. You tucked the jewelry away, told me I was special to see it. Every time I spoke with you, pearls were made. I could see them stuck behind your teeth, waiting to be added to the mesmerizing collection only I saw. When your necklace became too big to conceal, I offered my neck. A new necklace was spun, and I bore it with secret pride. When you stopped giving me pearls I knew. I begged for that pearl. Out fell the first of many black pearls. You let me hold it. I polished that black pearl with every tear in my heart. I did not notice the cracks through the water. No one does when grasping at pearls. Both of our necklaces grew heavy. Your ribbon began to slip, and I retied your silk until my fingers stained it red. When I began to collect black pearls of my own, you would not take them. I fashioned bracelets running the length of my wrists and concealed them with cloth. No one noticed the lumps they formed. I could carry my pearls. One day, you spoke your final ink-black pearl. I did not cry for fear of washing it away, of others finding it. You kept a belt of pearls, blacker and more dense, hidden under silk skirts so thick I could not see. I put on both necklaces. When she questioned their existence I laughed. I laughed because pain like that could not possibly bear lies. I laughed until I did not laugh again. I showed you the necklaces, and you no longer spoke pearls. Sand poured from your mouth as I tore off the strands of your cold dripping pearls, my own intertwined. With shaking hands I grasped at them covering the floor. Polishing and striking each one to prove it was real. Every one crumbled with the help of the lie they were born from. I flung them away, watched them fall into gutters--scrambling to recover them, to hope maybe one was true. Those pearls, I will never see again. I will never know. The pearls I did find were plastic, wood, only air itself--the chipping paint and cracked linoleum I should have seen from the beginning. Even my pearls, my pains, unbearable when spoken, turned to dust with your lies. I see you speak them to others now. I am tempted to beg for a chance to hold them again, to watch false beauty drip from your lips. I no longer wear pearls. Even the white ones have blackened with age and sin. Instead, I keep diamonds encrusted in my scars. Black diamonds, sewn into white silk skin.

Distortion
Colored Pencil, Pastel
Grace Jin



Hands

Photography and Multimedia Editing

Anastasia Baranova



Friends

Poetry

Lucie Waller

My friends have nooses around their necks
Standing on the edge of chairs in a pool of blood
Razors in one hand and pills in the other
I live in constant fear which one will jump next
My friends have smiles plastered on their faces
But their vacant eyes say otherwise, screaming for help
My friends show kindness even when they are suffering
Drowning in alcohol
Suffocating in smoke
High on sadness
Drunk on loneliness
Addicted to low self-esteem, inhaling pills like air
There's nothing to do but catch them when they jump
I can only hope the ropes that strangle them will break
I anxiously await as they pick their next weapon
My friends have scars on their wrists, their hearts, their minds
My friends are chained to their beds on tear-stained pillows
Chased by black shadows, followed by storm clouds
My friends are fighters
My friends are strong
My friends are brave
My friends are beautiful
My friends support me when they can barely support themselves
And on days when the sky is too dark for them to bear
I am there to support my friends.

Snowy Skyscraper
Photography
Ciara Cullen



The Ghosts of Pittsburgh Past

Poetry

Julia C. Maruca

if you find the right tv channel, you can still watch Mr. Rogers live. the set is visible in muted tones through his increasingly see-through face and sweater vest, but other than that it's just like you remember it from when you were a kid.

you've heard that way back when, men brought two shirts to work because before they got there the ash and soot from the city's heart would turn the white clothes black. on the first day of summer camp at the Science Center in fifth grade, something in you wanted to do the same. your mom was confused when she pulled a balled-up white shirt out of your backpack.

sometimes, when driving home from work in the winter, your father sees a flickering fire from where the mill used to be where Grandpa worked. "Must be the night shift," he mutters under his breath.

the night they finally tore down the last pieces of the Civic Arena, you swear you saw the spirits of an entire neighborhood (crushed in years long gone by a need for hockey and circuses) carrying bricks; a long procession of beaten-down men bearing the crumbling stones with which they intended to rebuild their homes.

and the night the Pirates broke their losing streak, your uncle (who was there) claimed that he saw two sets of fireworks--one from the game he attended, bursting joyously from piratical cannons, and one far off, where Exposition Park used to be. the next morning, fly balls wash up on the banks of the Allegheny like dead fish. (very happy dead fish, mind you.)

you learned about the Civil War munitions factory explosion at Arsenal Park in Lawrenceville as a kid and worried that your mother wouldn't let you play there anymore, because suddenly the park was full of lady ghosts drifting through the skies, aloft on hoop skirt parachutes. the teacher said it didn't happen that way, but you prefer to imagine them sailing free like petals on the wind.

occasionally, pinpoints of thrill-seeking light can be seen scaling the cliffs of Mount Washington. they're sure they'll make it up this time.

visiting Clayton mansion gives you a strong sense of unease, as if you're in a place where people of your sort shouldn't ever be. you adjust your collar and feel self-conscious of the scuffs on your shoes, despite the fact that no one is looking.

you grew up hearing about a roller coaster at the Point, long since torn down. sometimes you're certain you can hear the clicking and whirring of gears beneath the park paths, and you wonder if maybe that's why those fountain renovations took so long.

you give people directions based on what buildings existed ten, fifteen, twenty years ago, ones you never even knew. but that's alright because the signs of the past are hard to miss.

Tracks in the Snow

Photography

Becca Allen



5 Little Meadow Road

Descriptive Essay

Kendall Ochoa

Hidden behind endlessly flourishing green pines and amidst dozens of old oaks, my beautiful, safe haven lies in the heart of Wexford. Five Little Meadow Road. Nana's House. Our routine afternoon adventure. The place where my happiness and memories always thrived. The inevitable slam of the glass front door startled not only the strangers walking in, but everyone that should be used to it by now. As we slipped out of our shoes, the cold, orange tile chilled our bare feet. The old wooden floors creaked as we ran down the halls to new toys awaiting our arrival. Past the computer room, the cherry-red carpet caught the eye, and the sound of Papa's Ecuadorian music always played at full volume. The vanilla-scented living room candles regularly danced through the air even if they had not been lit in over a week. My cousins, Trystan and Maggie, engulfed me in welcoming arms. Nana's angelic voice embraced the three of us with promises of hot chocolate and marshmallows--another weekend ritual. With our bellies warm with cocoa, the tall door leading to the basement playroom remained the only obstacle getting in the way of our sugar rushes. The walls displayed a colossal map of the world that we gazed upon for hours searching for Wexford, consistently thinking we would stumble upon our home somewhere in the middle of the seemingly innumerable continents and oceans. Unfortunately, I now search for the remnants of such surreal endeavors just as I searched for Wexford on the map; the house, no longer hiding behind the sharp smelling woods, was recently sold to a wealthy dealership. Nothing and no one resides there but our irreplaceable memories.

Suffocation

Watercolor and Pen

Grace Jin



Pride and Prejudice and Zombies

Movie Review

Olivia Diulus

With a title as absurd as *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, nothing less than complete ridiculousness would be expected from Steers' film. Taken from Seth Grahame-Smith's own novel-adaptation of Jane Austen's classic, *Pride and Prejudice*, the film keeps surprising similarity to Austen's original plot line. Rather than a film satirizing or just outright slandering Austen's novel, the film is just what is stated in the title: *Pride and Prejudice*, with the added blood and gore of zombies.

Despite the presence of the undead, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* largely centers around the love story of Darcy and Lizzie, two warriors who struggle to overcome their own prejudices towards one another. With a clear presence of Austen's original message of love prevailing over any obstacles of snobbery or deceit, the film portrays the Bennett sisters as headstrong, powerful women who can fight alongside any man. Packed with jump scares, savage one-liners, and little snippets of comedy, the film is sure to be a crowd-pleaser to open-minded literary fanatics and horror-movie-goers alike. All in all, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* is exactly what it promises: the love story, characters, and rich plot of *Pride and Prejudice* mixed with the thrill of a modern-day zombie flick.

A Rose is a Rose is a Rose

Personal Essay

Amy Cunningham

The remote lies on the wooden coffee table adjacent to the black leather couch where I rest my slouched body. Still in fairly new condition, the remote's buttons remain visible with the exception of three: volume up, number four, and number three. Due to the repeated focus on these specific buttons, Fox News stays consistently audible from every room in the house. A disruption in the political commentary occurs as a familiar question is asked, "Do you know the definition of a kiss?" I promptly answer, "An anatomical juxtaposition of two orbicularis oris muscles in the state of contraction." From the time when I still thought a kiss entailed the embarrassing exchange of cooties, I knew the exact medical definition of this act of affection. I never searched it on the internet or read through a medical encyclopedia; I am merely the granddaughter of my Grandma Rose, who imbedded this definition into me. That exemplifies my grandma for you; she can make people laugh with her unfiltered comments while simultaneously making them feel unconditionally cared for due to her unwavering love. She is my happiness, my support, and my inspiration. I am who I am because of her.

Living exactly two miles apart allows us to have a strong presence in each other's life. We do not have a relationship where I see her every once in awhile and do not talk until the next planned get together. We have a relationship where the little days mean the most, like seeing her smiling face and white curls greet me on the covered porch as I run off the school bus into her tight embrace. We watch the news together; she accuses male anchors of wearing toupees and bluntly comments on the physical appearance of those broadcasted. We, her twenty-one grandchildren, smile brightly for family photos, as Grandma Rose exclaims, "Say sex!" to get a rise out of us. She makes those in her presence laugh until it hurts by singing, "Not too bashful not too bold, just the kind I like to hold, tra la la la la la" or by impersonating the flirtatious May West by reciting, "If you 'aint got nothing to do, and lots of time to do it in, come up and see me some time" as she shifts her body in a libidinous fashion. Without any effort, my grandma can make everyone around her smile and forget their worries.

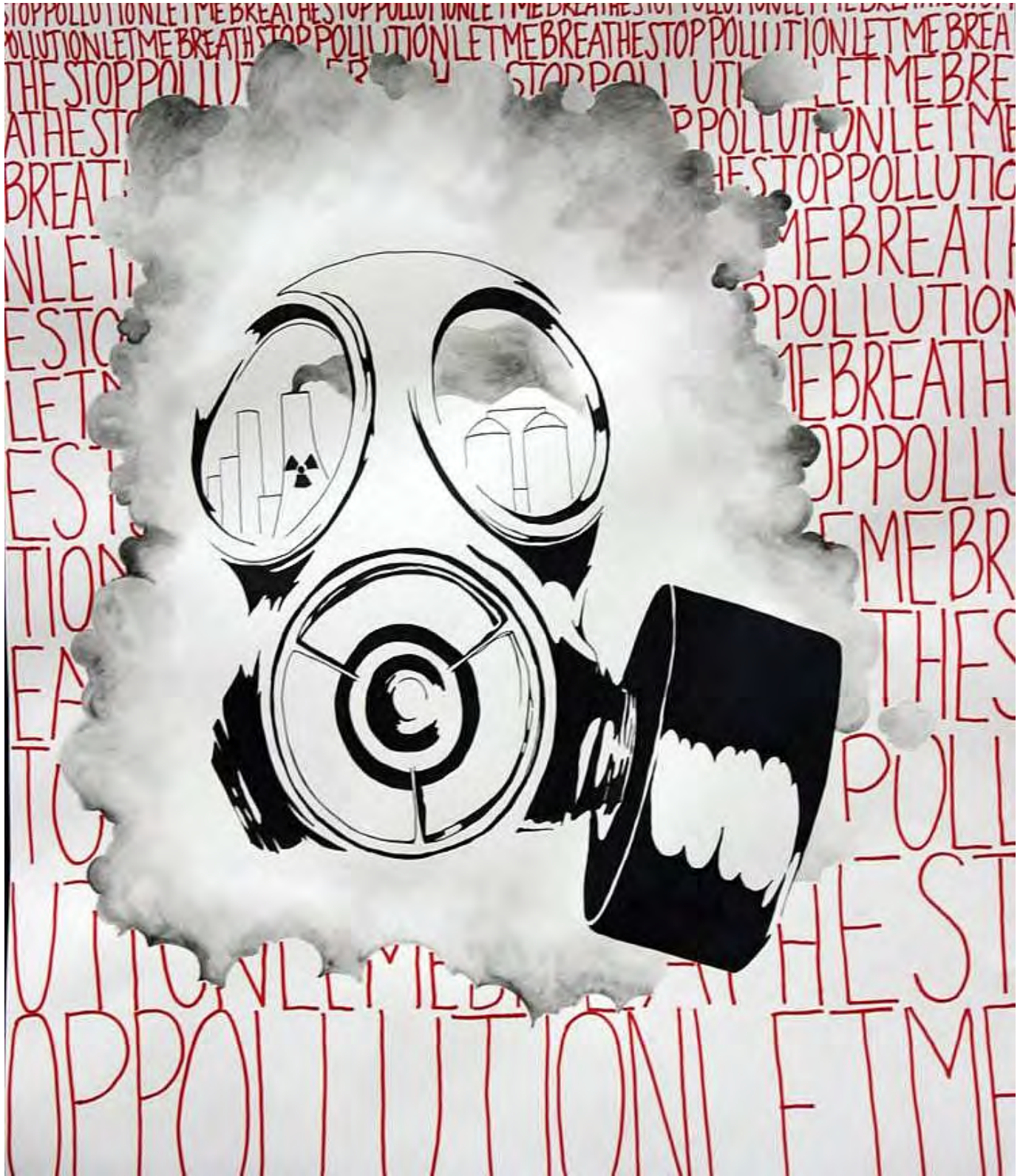
With age comes some added difficulties in everyday life; this holds true with my grandma at 87 years young, but for every added struggle comes a whole lot of humor. She has some trouble walking, so we purchased her a walker a few years back. Instead of placing all four legs on the ground, she lifts it up and just carries it before forcing the entire contraption over her head and chasing after you. Due to her dealing with asthma a large portion of her life, she will commonly comment on her wheezing. Whenever anyone suggests taking a walk outside or comments that she has to go to physical therapy she puts on an Oscar worthy show and exaggerates her wheeze while simultaneously crying out, "Help! Help! I'm wheezing and can't breathe!" No matter what gets thrown my grandma's way, her sense of humor does not falter for even a second.

I truly admire my grandma's ability to view the glass as half full despite dealing with memory loss, illness, and motor disability. She inspires me to always stay positive in the face of any hardship that comes my way. A good sense of humor can go a long way, not only in bettering one's own life but the lives of those around you. I can only pray that when I turn 87 years young, I can be half the woman that my grandma is today.

Rouge
Photography
Lucie Waller



Let Me Breathe
Watercolor and Ink
Casey Ferrara



A Recipe for Mass Murder

Poetry

Ciara Cullen

Ingredients:

- a pinch of intolerance
- a few teaspoons of hatred
- a sprinkle of creeping paranoia
- several heaping tablespoons of ignorance
- a few dashes of indifferent pragmatism
- one desperate need of a scapegoat
- a perfect balance of human fault and inhuman lack of conscience

Directions:

- combine any or all of these ingredients in a nation inhabited with a susceptible people:
 - one that is oppressed,
 - fearful,
 - hopeless,
 - lost.
- stew on a low, steady heat until the anger and hostility finally begin to boil,
 - the rage rumbling to a crescendo in the pot
- allow the people to do the rest; when provided with the right ingredients,
 - humans have the capacity
 - to commit horrendous acts of destruction,
 - silencing the song of a human life
 - with hardly the slightest tinge of remorse.
- one must also be aware of the antidote,
 - for nothing humans can do
 - can ever be so dark
 - that the light that exists in each of us
 - is eternally extinguished.

Yields:

- anywhere from a couple hundred to a couple million deaths

Human nature provides both the poison and the antidote;
The danger lies in the fickle tastes of the humans who stumble upon the recipe.

Shadows
Photography
Olivia Gill



Midnight Winter Memorial

Descriptive Essay
Jordan Seacord

In the confines of my home, I'd shield myself in the solemn estate of my room and observe the outside through a stained window. There reflected a monotone image. At one time, green fields and blue skies and all living creatures frolicked in wondrous livelihood, but it had all vanished, leaving nothing in its place; only white remained. Winter had shattered what life had once claimed kingdom to--the enriched land, and in the devastation of its wake lay a greater mystery unsought. With its arrival came a harsh mistress which bore an ethereal realm of stillness and snow. As a youth, never before had I witnessed the forest come alive at night. The creaking of wooden branches and the ring of our garden chimes against gusts of frigid winds orchestrate a symphony each night, playing a lullaby out of nature's sounds. No pace or cadence; only the tempo of the winds that bang my mother's chimes together and ring out the melody of my childhood. The greatest nights were when the moon would bloom into a full circle of shining light, paving silhouettes of trees onto the blank canvas of what was once my yard and dancing them across the snow like a ballroom, moving to the orchestra of winds. Its shadows became engulfed with unnatural life. They swayed. They danced. They found their way to my windows, and I became the observer to their splendor. They invited me to play, but I held vigilante in my wooden abode. I knew the sting of winter, and from my dwelling place, I gazed in amazement as both my spirit and the shadows followed the path of the wind.

A Punny Review of Star Wars: *The Force Awakens*

Movie Review

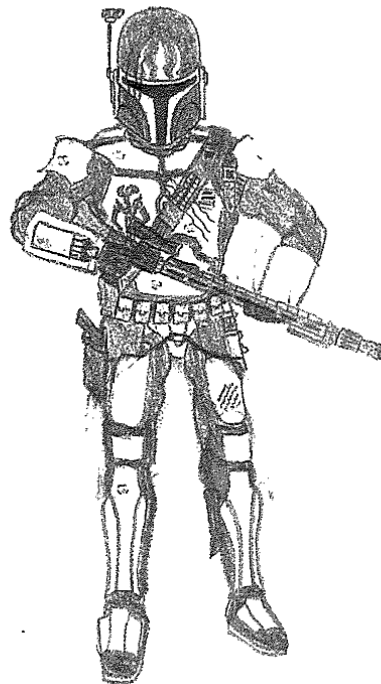
Lucie Waller

This is not a trap! Don't wookie; there are no spoilers in this review. But if you haven't seen the latest *Star Wars* movie yet, you should definitely see-3P0 this Obi-one. This movie has the droids you're looking for and then some. The force is strong in this sequel to the cult classic movie series. This story takes place thirty years after the original trilogy, a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away. Old fans will be pleased to see their favorite characters back in action as well as a brand new set of characters to fall in love with. New fans will be introduced to a universe unlike any they've ever experienced before. This first film of the new trilogy pays homage to its original in plot and storyline but with new twists, turns, and character developments. The experience is brought to life in R2-3D2, but you will be entertained no matter how you Luke at it. Die-hard fans will certainly not be disappointed like they were with the prequels. Any movie-goer will have a blast with this film. Could it be the movie of the Millennium (Falcon)? Who knows? But by the time you're Finn-ished, you'll BB-8 wanting more. You may even buy it on Blu-Rey. So grab your lightsabers, don't go Solo, and bring a friend. Leia blanket over yourselves (but don't be Greedo), and, unless you're a Stormtrooper, don't miss this movie!

Mandalorian

Graphite Drawing

Tristan West



The Eternal Solitude of the Restless Mind

Poetry

Maryann Brooks

Isolophilia (n.)

a strong affection for solitude; being alone

Finally

Abandoning all civilization

Fulfilling dreams of desolation

It's so quiet that my thoughts are more like Thunder
Rolling through empty caverns
And I can hear the crisp Break of each blade of grass
Collapsing underneath my weight

I left my shoes behind
Naked feet traipsing through the milky film
that Covers my last frontier
Each numbing step begging For another
until any sign of life is far out of reach

and now Here I stand
Devoid of all words
Rays of saturation shining through fluorescent leaves
beginning to illuminate my world Again

I'm standing borderline on the point of no return
will coming back hurt too much?
The piercing reality that others share This air with me?

and I can't stand the carpets of dimly lit homes
where my feet are forced to thaw
and I Am Suddenly aware of how frozen they were

A constant state of longing
I Will return
when I can
Those tundric plains are home to my restless mind

You ask, "Aren't you cold?" like it's a bad thing.

Man's Best Friend

Photography
Alyssa Zangaro



Irma
Script
MZ Tiv

INT. BEDROOM--NIGHT

IRMA, a shy German teenage girl in 1937 Nazi Germany, is asleep in her lower class bedroom. Her walls are vacant with the exception of a few bookcases. Nothing indicates it is a child's bedroom except for a single teddy bear near her bed. Irma keeps churning around in her sheets uncomfortably.

SCHOOL GIRLS (VO)

Irma Irma Grese Grese, ugly as a hairy beast! Irma
Irma Grese Grese, ugly as a hairy beast! Irma Irma...

The offstage bantering gets louder and louder until Irma finally wakes up screaming. Her kind, gentle mother, BERTA, bursts into her room running to comfort her child.

IRMA
Mama.

BERTA
What's wrong, meine rose?

Irma, disappointed in herself, does not respond.

BERTA
Again? Irma.

IRMA
I'm sorry Mama. It won't happen again.

Berta takes off a locket from her neck.

BERTA
This is deine Grobmutter, Adalinda. Her husband, deine Grobvater, died after just three years of marriage. She raised my three brothers and me all on her own. She might not be a grand beauty on the outside, but her strong soul was the most beautiful thing you can imagine, meine rose.

Berta puts the the locket around Irma's neck.

BERTA
You'll find your strength soon, Irma, I know it.

IRMA

Danke, Mama. It's beautiful.

Berta kisses Irma's forehead and exits.

INT. CLASSROOM--DAY

Irma enters her classroom still admiring her new locket.

HELENE, Irma's unfriendly classmate, notices Irma.

HELENE

Hey, beastly. A little necklace won't hide your ugly.

The entire class laughs while Irma just ignores her. The teacher, a middle aged woman, enters.

TEACHER

Hallo, studenten. Those of you in Bund Deutscher Madel can leave class for the organization's first meeting of this school year.

But first, let me pass back the tests from Monday.

The students form a line to receive their tests. Irma is the last person to get her test back. By then, most of the students have left except for a few students.

TEACHER

Irma, your grades are not getting any better. You promised me you would study this time.

IRMA

I tried, Frau Herrmann.

TEACHER

Are you going to the League of German Girls? I think you should stay here and study.

Irma looks out the door to see a group of girls smiling and laughing together.

IRMA

I'm sorry, Frau. I must go to the meeting.

TEACHER

Okay, I can't make you stay. Please just try a little harder, Irma. I don't like to see you fail.

Irma exits the classroom, completely ignoring her teacher and waves to the group of girls. Helene notices Irma.

HELENE

The little pig is coming? You know the mud sty is in the other direction. The Fuhrer wants to train girls, not hairy monsters.

The whole group of girls starts to chant, "Irma Irma Grese Grese, ugly as a hairy beast" again. Irma starts to walk away from the girls, but she looks at her locket again. With a burst of strength, Irma slaps Helene across the face. The girls stop chanting.

IRMA

Just wait and see how scary a beast can be, Hasslich Pferd!

Irma marches away as all the girls stare at her in shock.

INT. LIVING ROOM--NIGHT

Irma is near the dinner table aggressively practicing the marches she has learned. She uses a stick as a mock rifle. Irma's stern father, ALFRED, comes to the table and notices Irma practicing.

ALFRED

Irma, where did you learn that?

IRMA

I just noticed a few girls doing it in school, Papa.

Irma sneaks the stick back outside of the house.

ALFRED

Well, I don't like it. If you knew what it stood for, you wouldn't either.

IRMA

The Fuhrer is the future, Father.

ALFRED

Who told you that?

Berta enters through the kitchen.

BERTA

I made spaetzle!

Berta places the bowl of dinner between the daughter and father, ending their discussion.

IRMA

Mama, I have been thinking a lot about what you told me last night. The only thing holding me back is myself.

BERTA

I'm happy for you, dear. More water?

ALFRED

After dinner I'm going to get beer with some men from the office. More and more are disappearing every day.

BERTA

Okay, liebbling. Come home after.

IRMA

Can I go to my room? I'm not very hungry. My teacher gave us a lot of homework for tomorrow that I want to start.

BERTA

Sure, honey.

Irma exits. Shortly after Irma exits, Alfred kisses his wife and leaves the house. Once Irma starts practicing her marches again, she realizes she needs her stick to perform properly. She sneaks past her mom and gets her stick from outside the house. As she looks up, she sees her father, Alfred, kissing another woman. Irma, in shock, slowly walks back into her house and bumps into Berta.

BERTA

What's wrong, meine rose?

Irma rushes past her mother into her room. Berta looks out the door that Irma left open and locks eyes with Alfred. Alfred stops kissing the other woman and rushes toward his wife. Berta slams the door on Alfred's face.

BERTA

(to closed door)

Du hasslich schwein! Ich hasse dich. Sie sollten einen schrecklichen Tod jeden Tag fur die

BERTA (cont.)

Ewigkeit ze sterben!

IRMA

Stop, Mama! Stop!

Berta stops yelling and takes a seat. Irma goes to comfort her mother while Alfred is still outside.

BERTA

Did they teach you about Wollstonecraft in school?

IRMA

I don't think so, Mama.

BERTA

Of course they didn't. This woman saw the real limitations of females. And guess what? Every single one of them was made by the man. We are taught to strive for this unrealistic vision of beauty that occupies our minds for our whole lives. It's a distraction. A foul distraction. And in the end, we have no power and no hope because of our innocent ignorance. Irma, please, for your mother, never depend on a man. Depend on yourself and everything you can do. Never settle, Irma, meine rose. Don't be afraid to use your thorns.

INT. CLASSROOM--DAY

As Irma comes to class the next day, she notices a note on her desk.

HELENE

Is that from the Fuhrer?

IRMA

Yes, actually, it is. It has his signature.
The whole class swarms around Irma to look at the letter.

IRMA

They want me for training at Ravensbruck. I didn't even know girls could be guards.

HELENE

Are you going to do it?

IRMA

I don't know. Did you get a letter?

HELENE

No. Only you.

A bell rings.

TEACHER

Guten morgen, everyone. Please pass
your homework to the front of the class.

IRMA

What should I do?

HELENE

First of all, we are not friends. But you definitely are not
going to figure out your plan in here. You have to decide
if you are as dedicated to Hitler as he is to you.

IRMA

You're right.

Irma starts packing her things to leave the classroom.

TEACHER

What's wrong, Irma?

IRMA

Oh, sorry, Frau. I have to go home.

TEACHER

You can't just leave my classroom because you
want to. Where is your homework?

IRMA

I'm sorry my mutter needs me home and--

Irma starts to exit but the teacher grabs her arm.

TEACHER

Where's your homework, Irma.

IRMA

I have to go.

INT. LIVING ROOM--DAY

Irma enters.

IRMA

Mama, Mama! Look what I got in school!
Irma starts looking around the house for her mom.

IRMA
Mama?

IRMA
(offstage)
Mama! Oh God!

EXT. RAVENSBRUCK--DAY

Irma is standing in a line with other girls around her age. Every girl is wearing the same uniform and staring straight ahead. JOSEF, a relentless Nazi soldier, is marching around all of the girls, staring at each of them.

WOMEN PRISONERS
Night and day, night and day.
Praying it will end someday.
Cousins fighting, cousins dead.
Soon the dirt will taste like
bread...

LEISAL
Ruhig sein!

Suddenly, Irma bursts through the door. Irma is undoubtedly a highly ranked guard with her decorated uniform. However, she is still unmistakably feminine.

IRMA
Songs, huh? Well let's hear it.

Silence fills the room.

IRMA
Schweine. Get dressed.

Irma exits.

LEISAL
Sorry. I didn't see her soon enough.

PRISONER 1
That's okay, Leisal. Don't feel bad, sweet flower.
She would have heard us from Austria. I don't
know how she is everywhere at the same time.

All of the girls get up and start changing and putting on their shoes.

PRISONER 2

How old do you think she is? She looks very young.

PRISONER 3

Young but certainly not innocent. She's 19.

PRISONER 2

How do you know?

PRISONER 3

Believe it or not, we went to school together.

ALL PRISONERS

What?

PRISONER 3

Yes, a few years ago before they found my family. I don't think she remembers me though.

LEISAL

What was she like?

PRISONER 3

Quiet. Shy. The other girls used to make fun of her every day.

LEISAL

Make fun of her? I can't imagine that.

PRISONER 3

It's true. Then, when her mother died, our teacher told us she wouldn't be coming back to school. I thought it was because of her mother, but now I know it was for all this.

LEISAL

Did she treat you poorly back then as well?

PRISONER 3

No, not once. Even once I started to wear the yellow badge. All of the women start to leave their room.

PRISONER 3

And that locket she wears? She used to hold it whenever she was nervous.

INT. RAVENSBRUCK--DAY

All the women are standing in a clump awaiting orders from Irma. Irma sprays perfume on herself as she walks past each woman.

IRMA

Stand straighter. Now, five women need to pick up the bullet shells from yesterday.

Irma points to five women.

IRMA

Go to it. Find all of them. Now, Leisal. Step forward.

Leisal reluctantly steps forward from the group.

IRMA

Straighter, girl. Chin up. You know, Leisal, you have very nice, long hair. Do you brush it?

LEISAL

Yes, Frau Grese. Everyday.

IRMA

Everyday? That's amazing, Leisal, Do you like your hair?

LEISAL

Yes, Frau Grese. I do.

IRMA

You know something? I do, too. I like it very much. My hair is short and boring, right?

Leisal stares at Irma, confused about her question. Josef enters.

IRMA

You think your hair is nicer than mine, don't you, Leisal?

Irma takes a knife out of her pocket.

LEISAL

No, Frau Grese. I never said that.

IRMA

Do you know what you hair stands for, Leisal?

Irma brings the knife up to Leisal's face. As she continues to speak, she cuts off strands of Leisal's hair.

IRMA

Filth. Greed. Thievery. But I bet your husband loved it, right?

Irma pulls on Leisal's remaining long hair, causing Leisal to collapse in pain.

IRMA

But he sure didn't love you, shwein.

Irma cuts of the rest of Leisal's hair and throws it on the ground. Irma takes out a gun and shoots Leisal.

IRMA

If anyone else wants to show off their beauty like a filthy slut,
Go ahead. Leisal loved it. Put every hair brush, clip, and any other
beauty supply on my desk. Each of you should see yourselves
exactly how the rest of the world sees you. Forgotten.

All of the women leave, carrying Leisal with them. Irma puts
her gun back in its holster just as she did with the stick
when she was younger. Josef takes out the two glasses he held behind his back.

JOSEF

A toast?

IRMA

To what?

JOSEF

You decide.

IRMA

To thorns.

JOSEF

Thorns it is.

IRMA

Josef, I feel like this is where I belong.

JOSEF

I knew it would be. You worked the hardest in training, and now you deserve some recognition.

IRMA

I am stronger now than I could have ever imagined.
I got out of my own way to raise to the top. My mother
would be proud of me.

JOSEF

Ja, for a daughter of Hitler. Remember we are cleansing the world
for everyone; don't just think about yourself. And if you were a
son, you could have caused some real damage. Gute nacht, Fraulein.

Josef exits. Irma looks at her locket.

IRMA

Men can see in the light. Women
learned to see in the dark, herr.

INT. RAVENSBRUCK--NIGHT

A far more deserted room of women are all lying down, exhausted. Slowly, they all start humming
the song again, but much quieter and less enthusiastically.

PRISONER 2

It's not getting any better. You said if it didn't get
better by now, it never would.

PRISONER 3

Just pray. That's all we can do.

Irma bursts into the room with a whistle. Automatically,
every woman stands up and walks outside.

EXT. RAVENSBRUCK--DAY

IRMA

I have one question: What's the point?
All the women stare at each other confused.

IRMA

Why do you swines continue your lives? I know every
second is agony, pain, and suffering. What's the point?
This is your new life. This is home.

Irma hands Prisoner 2 her own gun.

IRMA

Do it. There is no point in moving on. It could all go away.

PRISONER 2

My father.

IRMA

What?

PRISONER 2

He told me to never give up.

Irma slaps Prisoner 2. Josef enters and takes the gun from Prisoner 2.

IRMA

Your father does not care about you. No man will never care about you. Why don't you stupid women understand this? Stop it stop it stop it!

Josef starts to escort the women away from Irma.

IRMA

No, they don't deserve it. Put each of them in the showers.

JOSEF

All of them?

IRMA

Yes.

JOSEF

You heard her! March!

All the women start to walk offstage, humming their song together.

JOSEF

The Beautiful Beast is trying to impress me, huh?

IRMA

Beast? I am no beast. How dare you dirty--

Irma is cut off by the sound of marching.

IRMA

Who is that?

ENGLISH GUARD

(offstage)

Hault!

INT. COURTROOM--DAY

Irma and Josef are arrested in a British courtroom. They sit silently while a judge is talking to a lawyer.

JUDGE

Irma, to the stand. Josef, please exit the courtroom.

A few guards escort Josef offstage while Irma sits at the stand.

JUDGE

Proceed with the questioning.

LAWYER

Irma, what year is it?

IRMA

1945.

LAWYER

Good. Can you tell us about your family?

IRMA

My mother killed herself. My father remarried.

LAWYER

When is the last time you talked to your father?

IRMA

I don't remember.

LAWYER

Irma, how many women did you kill?

Irma starts touching and looking at her locket.

LAWYER

Irma?

IRMA

I don't remember.

LAWYER

Okay, how about this question. How many women and children did you beat, torture, shoot, gas, and whip?

IRMA

I followed orders. Josef's orders.

LAWYER

Ladies and Gentleman, Irma is the Hyena of Auschwitz. Her sadistic acts of manipulation and torture were unbearable. This woman single-handedly killed many prisoners, most of which we will never hear about. This sick woman had turned the skin of three of her prisoners into a lamp shade.

IRMA

You can't prove that.

The lawyer continues, ignoring Irma's remark.

LAWYER

She felt nothing when she took a life. If anything, it brought her joy. Many survivors testify about her psychological ploys to gain more respect and authority. Where can such a devil come from?

As the lawyer is speaking, young girl voices are heard offstage, singing "Irma Irma Grese Grese, ugly as a hairy beast" increasingly louder until the lawyer's case can't be heard anymore. As the children's voices get louder, the spotlight is on Irma, still staring at her locket. Finally, the judge hits his gavel on his podium, causing Irma to finally look up. Light fades.

Collateral Damage
Mixed Media
Vanessa Anthony



Spring

Wings

Photography

Lucie Waller



Ein Gedicht für die Jahreszeiten (A Poem for the Seasons)

Translation
Megan Wadas

Ein Gedicht für die Jahreszeiten

A Poem for the Seasons

Die Blättern fliegen wie Vögel im Himmel
Der Wind weht durch mein Haar
Ich renne mit keinen Sorgen
Durch Wälder hin und her

The leaves fly like birds in the sky
The wind blows through my hair
I run with not a care
Through forests here and there

Oben den Bäumen das Abendlicht funkelt
Die Kühle ist Sicherheit
Schlaf kommt langsam, leise zu mir
Ich liege ruhig auf die Erde jetzt weiss

Above the trees the evening light glimmers
The cold is security
Sleep comes slowly, softly to me
I lay quietly on the earth now white

Wann ich aufwache
Die Welt ist sauber, tot
Der kalte Wald nimmt mir im Armen
Für ihn ist mein Herz immer rot

When I awake
The world is clean, dead
The cold forest embraces me
For him is my heart always red

Dann kommen die Tränen,
Ich weiß nicht warum
Mein Blut fließt jetzt, meine Gedanken fliegen
Hinauf und herunter herum

Then the tears come
I don't know why
My blood now flows, my thoughts fly
Up and down around

Ich weiß, hier kann nie Heim sein
Da gibt's etwas mehr zu tun
So stehe ich stark auf meine eigene Beine
Und renne ich weiter
Meine Füßen sind grün

I know, here can never be home
There's something more to do
So I stand strong on my own legs
And run once more
My feet are green

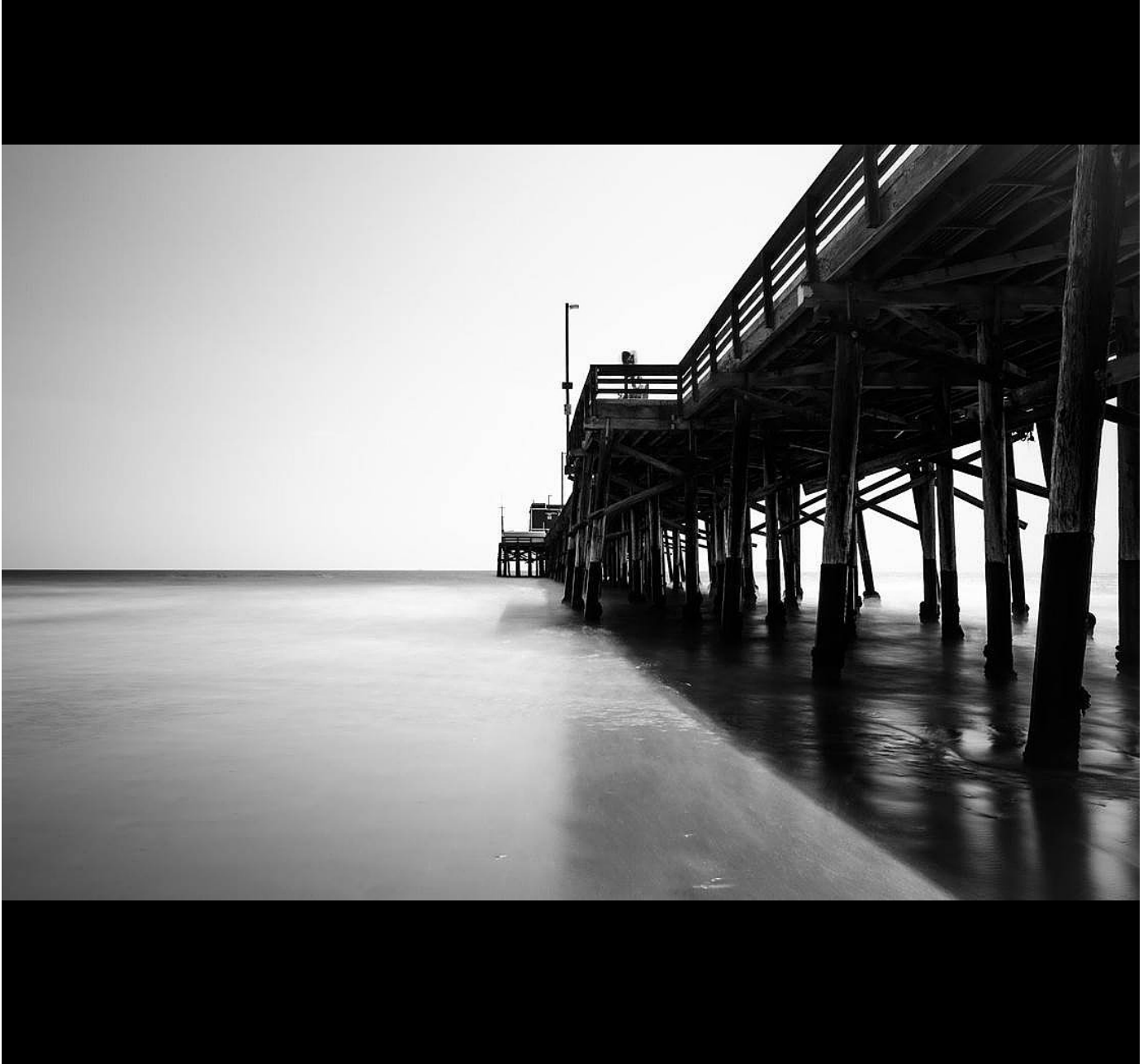
Die Pflanzen springen schnell
Von der fruchtbare Erde
Die jungen Sprossen unbeschreiblich schön
Sie folgen mir hier, sie folgen mir da
Ganz egal wie lang ich wandere

The plants spring quickly
From the fertile earth
The young sprouts indescribably beautiful
They follow me here, they follow me there
No matter where I wander
Everything now alive, everything now new

Alles nun lebendig, alles nun neu
Ich baue dir alles hier allein
Das beste Leben
Ist durch Natur
Die Welt einen Schatz, nur dein

I build everything here for you alone
The best life
Is through nature
The world a treasure, yours alone

Smooth View
Photography
Nick Koehler



whenever i may find her

Poetry

Kayla Romanelli

i believe i met her first in the winter, although i can't quite remember,
being much too young to absorb every detail of our encounter, i
imagine that it was in December, Christmas Eve, a
silent midnight, holy midnight.

dim lamplight, cinnamon sticks and potpourri, fire
cracking as i sit with Daddy and her on the living
room rug. worn out in the best of ways were both those
people and that dilapidated Persian throw.

those were the days of white Christmases and Santa Claus.
when life was lived on the threadbare soles of my tiny ballet slippers, on
the rusty old swing set that stood in my backyard. back when when our family
was unbroken, when Jesus Christ was more than just a statue in my church.

that winter was gray, but she was vermillion, and mulberry,
rosewood and auburn, she was the personification of rebirth,
the glorious transformation of a dreary winter to a vibrant summer, lit like
the sky in late June, winsome goldenrod, sun shining through a summer haze.

i am not a girlfriend; i am an artist, and spring is my heart's favorite season to paint, as
streams of melting snow watercolor the world in marvelous shades of lilac and mauve, alabaster,
honeysuckle, tangerine. Mom is everywhere in the spring. she is the honey bees and the dandelion
seeds, the sunshine and moonshine, not the hard stuff but the way it dapples across the budding
trees.

she is with me in the summer, and together we dive into lily-padded ponds through the golden light
of great Sequoias, sugar dripping from my chin, kissing wet lips and writing adventure
into every touch, into every breath. she is with me running through ocean foam
and giggling at kaleidoscope kites waltzing in an Aegean sky.

she is with me as my black dress pools around my feet after the funeral. somewhere, she is. eating
olives and arugula while standing in the kitchen, wearing lace and her old jewelry. drinking two
glasses of water, taking an aspirin, dancing with me slowly and gently in the living room. she holds
me. her hands smell like oranges, almond lotion, a touch of perfume, mine like pounds of sadness.

her laughter dapples across empty rooms, rings out above the lonely and monotonous hum of
fluorescent lights, the pitter-patter of rain, breaking the gentle diffidence of newborn romance
and ardor set free for the first time, the abyss of great loss, the sound of silence. i can feel her.
she is alive. on my mind, in my veins, upon my lips--nothing tastes quite as sweet.

Blindly Beautiful

Photography

Angelica Calle



The Diamond
Spoken Word Poetry
Samir Yellapragada

Everyday we put on masks
Everyday we dump glitter over the facts
To attract followers, listeners, and attention
Our real self is buried under an invention
We place the truth in a suspension, suspended by apprehension
Every decision we make and step we take has become fake
We do and say things to live up to expectations
Honesty and courage is what they say, but lies truly make up our nation
People's words have lost their meaning
People's expressions have lost their feeling
Words like "love" and "trust" are thrown around in common speak
Communication has become weak due to people that seek
Likes on a picture or a recommendation letter
People are not themselves and try to act like someone "better"
But performances are not eternal
Everything has just become so external
People are scared to find themselves; thus, the extinction of diaries and journals
We dip the coal in gold paint
To please others and silence the soul's complaints
We believe that who we pretend to be is who we are
And we try to use makeup to cover the scars
Our words are artificial
Our lives are superficial
Because we strive to be official
But all diamonds are inside coal
Coal that we cover in thin gold paint
Take off the mask and flake off the paint
The true jewel is inside
Don't cover it any longer and don't let it hide
Be the person who you really are
There's grace in complexity and beauty in the scars
Be real with one another and live like sisters and brothers
See through these distractions and give meaning to your actions
Live with loyalty and treat everyone like royalty
Don't stop, always proceed forward and continue
Remove the gold paint and find the genuine diamond within you

Paths
Photography
Megan Wadas



The Stone Job

Personal Essay

Matt Spangler

“So how long do ya’ think this is gonna take? A weekend, maybe two?”

“Longer, much longer,” my father simply replied as he recently announced that my brother and I would help him build a patio--a project he signed us up for unknowingly. Having minimal knowledge about masonry, I did not have a clue how long or hard this job would become. It did not seem too difficult: pick the stone, cut the stone, lay the stone, done. Simple.

Sitting in the back of the van, we pulled into the driveway of my new residence for many weekends to come. Walking to the backyard, I spot ten large pallets, each filled to maximum capacity with stones so large you could build a small house. However, they crowded around something more important: the space dedicated to the future patio. The nine hundred square foot monstrosity stared me down as I discovered just how hard this “weekend project” would become. Nonetheless, we got to work and began picking out stones, cutting them into the correct shape, and carefully laying them until perfectly level. After an hour, we moved on to the next one. Incredibly, only four stones were laid that day, far fewer than I had ever imagined. Who would have any idea laying one stone could take so long? After several hours, we had a special relationship with each stone, some relationships more positive than others. It was the best feeling when a stone would fall perfectly into place.

Equally, frustration would set in when another would break after two long hours of careful placement and judgment. However, the mundane and repetitive process eventually lead to progress by the end of the day.

The job became a constant in my life over that year and a half as other things had changed: I started high school; my brother left for college, and we even got a new dog. At first, I hated going to that patio every weekend, but eventually I grew to enjoy it. As the pieces went down, one by one, I started to see a vision of what would become. Although the work sometimes felt tedious, we had no room for error. If a rock did not fit quite right, we had to recut it. If a rock did not lay quite flush with the others, we had to re-level it. These kinds of mistakes may have seemed minimal, but overall, I realized how one stone affected the other. Should a rock be laid incorrectly, the rest would surely fail.

After those long hours, I began to realize this mentality is imperative not just with laying stone, but doing everything to the best of my ability and not taking shortcuts would benefit me throughout my life. It helped me to think about my choices and how they may affect other decisions. Eventually, I found myself procrastinating less often and studying more thoroughly, never wanting a bad grade to come back and hurt me later in the year.

Everyone should undergo a project such as masonry. It really makes one appreciate not just the work itself, but gives great insight and perspective on other aspects of life. Many times things seem easy at first glance, when in reality, they entail more forethought. In hindsight, I am glad my dad recruited me to lay that stone patio. Not only did I become closer with him and my brother, but truly learned a great art form in masonry and how one decision impacts another.

Looking Out
Photography
Nick Koehler



“Thou Shalt Not Steal”

Personal Essay

Chip Dougherty

They called me the four-year-old felon. It all began one Saturday when my family decided to go shopping. Loving to explore, I dashed off like a pack rat to see what treasures I could find as soon as we entered the store. Intrigued by one of the items, I shoved it in my pocket and immediately rushed off to show my brother my fantastic find. However, within about two seconds, my young mind forgot all about it. Still completely unaware of the item in my pocket, my family packed into our minivan and drove away from The Christian Book Store. Of all things to steal, I had stolen a Bible.

When we arrived home, I reached into my pocket looking for candy, but instead stumbled upon the Bible. Though not completely aware of what I had done, I knew I had taken something that did not belong to me. Not wanting to get in trouble, I decided to just place the Bible on the kitchen counter, thinking, “If I leave it alone, maybe it will disappear.” It did not. Suddenly, my father’s booming voice furiously ordered us all into the kitchen. He fumed, demanding to know who took the Bible from the store. Terrified, I kept absolutely silent. No one confessed. Consequently, my parents announced they would punish us all until someone came clean.

The punishments were ruthless. No television. No snacks. No friends over. After about a week, I neared breaking point. I contemplated confessing, but greatly feared the consequences. However, something truly amazing happened next. Though she had done no wrong, my sister humbly told us that she planned to confess so the punishments would end for all of us. Awed by her selflessness, I began to see the world through new eyes. I could not let her apologize for something I had done. My siblings had suffered because of my mistake. Even at such a young age, I came to an epiphany that takes many people a lifetime to figure out: I must take responsibility for my actions because what I do directly affects others.

So I confessed. My puerile mind imagining the worst, I expected to be locked in a cage and given only Brussels sprouts to eat. Instead—my parents threw a party. Overjoyed that I had learned a valuable life lesson, they celebrated that I had done the right thing. If I had known I would get cake, ice-cream, and a balloon for confessing, I would have done it immediately and saved everyone from a lot of agony. However, I would not have gained such insight.

Though somewhat of a trivial matter, this situation changed my outlook on life. I learned to take responsibility for my actions and to respect others. Today, I apply this to playing soccer. If I make a bad play, I own up to it. Likewise, if others mess up, I always support them and try to be the best teammate I can. Through seeing my siblings suffer, I learned to have compassion for others. Today, this has prompted me to participate in mission trips and other service projects to help others. Through confessing, I learned to be honest and to always strive to do the right thing. Just this year, on my way into school, I found twenty dollars on the ground. Instead of keeping it, I turned it in to the office, and later got laughed at by my friends for doing so. However, I stood firm in what I believed. Through my criminal actions early in life, I learned to aspire to live a life that would please God. Nowadays, instead of stealing the Bible, I read it. In fact, I am quite familiar with the verse “Thou shalt not steal.”

Fallen Angels
Photography
Gwen Lindberg



A Land of War, Yet My Place of Peace

Personal Essay

Gwen Lindberg

If you ask me where I feel truly at peace, I will say a warzone. If you ask me where I feel the happiest, I will say a country that is currently being torn apart by violence. I spent the best summer of my life in a land where terrorists launched 2,040 rockets over the course of fifteen days. I heard gunshots, explosions, and bomb sirens as violence ripped through a country built over the sacred foundations of three religions. I saw cease-fires broken, truces violated, and families torn apart. And yet, despite all that, if you ask me where my true home is, I will say Israel. I fell in love with a nation whose very existence has caused countless wars. The worst part--there is no end in sight. This conflict has gone on for thousands of years, and it will likely continue for generations to come.

Ninety percent of the people who live in Israel want peace, regardless of their religion or ethnicity. They simply want to be able to go about their lives, unrestricted by threats of violence. They want to return home in one piece that evening, instead of in a box. There are people on both sides of the equation, however, who refuse to entertain the validity of a ceasefire. Prevalent in both Jewish and Arab extremist factions is the belief that coexistence is not possible. They think the idea of a two-state solution is merely a dream that ignorant outsiders focus on in an attempt to force democratic viewpoints into a decidedly traditional and conservative region. Both sides are unrelenting, due to longstanding cultural values that contradict the proposed solution.

Is any sort of peace possible? I do not know. Nevertheless, I believe the first step is to begin nonviolent contact between Arabs and Israelis across the barrier that our predecessors built. The chance to learn about opposing viewpoints in a peaceful setting is almost nonexistent in the current climate; this cross-culture education is integral in establishing communication. We should give people the chance to understand the basic beliefs belonging to the opposite side. After all, education comes before respect, and with respect comes the possibility of peace.

I, as an American outsider, can see the contrasting ideas and can sometimes perceive why and how those ideas came to be. Teens living in the conflicted region are often so buried in the immediate violence that they are incapable of examining the intricacies within both religions that lead to the outer differences. These differences, while evident in most aspects of the two cultures, lead to violence only when the disciples choose war over peace. Nowhere in the Torah does it say, "Thou shalt not suffer an Arab to live," and neither is the reciprocate found in the Quran. These are violent tendencies that are inculcated from one generation to the next, and not taught by the religions themselves.

It is this history of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" that allows violence to beget violence. I believe, as Mahatma Gandhi once said, an eye for an eye makes the whole world blind. Blind with hatred, blind with rage, blind with intolerance, blind with ignorance. We can counter ignorance through education, and, thus, allow the recognition that both Jews and Arabs are people—people with different religions and cultures and traditions and values, but people just the same. At the heart of all these people is the wish for peace and prosperity, for safety and health, for happiness and wholesomeness.

My Israel is no longer a heartbroken land for a heartbroken people, as Mark Twain believed. It is now a bountiful, beautiful land, with room for people of all different races, religions, backgrounds, thoughts, feelings, and emotions. And though the differences can be overwhelming, I believe peace is in the essence of the place I love the most.

Serene Evening
Descriptive Essay
Kate Graham

Relaxing at the top of the cold concrete stairs, I breathe in the clean, rosy air and take in the scene below me. White and pink petals sprinkle the damp grass and cool asphalt, becoming almost luminescent in the dwindling light. Budding trees resemble skeletons, black against the mellow pink sky. A warm fluid breeze picks up, lifting my hair and my spirits. Spring has finally arrived. Little bats fly overhead, swooping and diving and flying freely in the vast, promising sky. As the last bird flutters home, a deep blue takes over the sky; bats come out, a single star appears. A great sense of calmness overcomes me. Do the bats feel it, too? The warm, comforting breeze comes back, lifting and swaying and filling the night with quiet movement. I look up at the moon, and it looks back at me with indelible eyes, eyes that carry the memory of eternity. Under the moon's watchful gaze, I grapple with my tangled hair and my feelings of awe and tranquility. More stars appear in the warm, ultramarine sky. How many stars are there? Maybe millions. Maybe billions. I grab hold of the peeling, rusty handrail, and forgotten memories grab hold of me. I remember picnics and bike rides and long walks and harsh winter runs, and I always end up at the top of these stairs, admiring the ever-changing view below me. Each year more cracks form in the pavement, more paint peels from the handrail, more trees grow in the forest beyond. But for now I lean back, gazing at the mellifluous sky and feel it flow and ebb around me like the soft tide of the ocean.

Leaves
Multimedia and Acrylic Painting
Alexis Kruth



Juggling the Past and Present

Flash Fiction

Zain Mehdi

I pulled on my vampire-pale gloves, white face-cover, blue shoe covers, blue headwear, and blue scrub pants and shirt. I love this neat, pure blue, light and soft; it is like baby blue. Baby blue.

“Sir, this patient has a tumor in the front of her head. Thus—”

“Yes, I know. We have to do the extended bifrontal craniotomy. Get the equipment.” I interrupted the physician, so I could get some time to think by myself; he left. What was I thinking? Right, baby blue. What if she slips and falls at home? Should I call her and ask if everything is alright? There are only two more weeks until he’s due.

“Dr. Davidson,” the medical school student said.

“Yes, Richard. What do you need?”

“I wanted to ask to see what I have to do?”

Hopefully this will get my mind off of things, “Well, you are going to stand or sit on the opposite side of the patient and watch as I direct you through this surgery. Do you have all of your equipment on?”

“Yes.” He patted his shirt, legs, hands, face, and head. “I have everything on,” he said as he beamed with pride and hopeful congratulations.

Unfortunately, he wasn’t perfect. I kicked my right foot in the air, brandishing my baby-blue shoe cover. Baby blue. The smile about to form on my lips vanished, and my thoughts drifted from the hospital, from Richard, from everything here.

He (we had confirmed it was a boy) had kicked for the first time exactly four months ago, January 14. We were sitting in our family room, watching a movie and eating ice cream, always ice cream—ice cream, ice cream, and more ice cream. Stupid hormones. We were watching *The Dark Knight Rises*, and whenever Bane first spoke in his deep, mechanical voice, the baby kicked. Kate yelped and laughed as she touched her bloated belly.

“He kicked,” she squealed with excitement; Bane spoke again. She jumped again, “He did it again.” She laughed with utmost delight; then I put my hand on her stomach and felt for his kick. There it was: the slightest push against my hand. We both laughed. I pulled the blanket back and laid my ear against her rounded stomach, waiting, waiting. Thud. It was the best moment of Kate’s pregnancy so far.

“Oops. Sorry, sir. I forgot the shoe covers.” Richard said, as my foot came down.

“Yup, can’t forget the shoe covers,” I said, as I drifted back to the cold, sterile room where the patient lay there unconscious. Time to operate. I love my job as a neurosurgeon, besides the neck pain and long hours of being away from Kate during her pregnancy; the brain has always been the organ of my utmost fascination. Now I have to concentrate; this person handed me her life, and she is asking me to correct the problems. I pulled up a chair, sat on it, and told Richard to come around to watch as I prepared to make an incision from the right ear to the left on the shaved-frontal head. The blaring lights cast a shadow of my head onto hers; after adjusting the light, I made the incision, explaining to Richard the steps that he needed to learn in order to become a neurosurgeon. After pulling down the flap of skin, dabbing away with a cotton ball at the blood that interfered with my cutting, I cut through part of the skull to gain access to the brain itself. Richard’s face cringed a bit at the sight of the eyeball that was just visible near the skin flap. Even though I had done many surgeries where both eyeballs were clearly visible, it did give me goose bumps, making the hair on the back of my neck stand up.

If patients saw what happened to them during a surgery, they would simply shrink away in fear and disgust because of the strange features behind our mask of skin. A mask...

Kate had almost given me a heart attack whenever she put on a brown, goblin mask and jumped out after I came out of the shower. She laughed at my facial expression for a good ten minutes before she could control herself. I have been trying to be kind to her during her pregnancy, and what does she do? She scares me half to death. But I got her back; I stood at the top of the stairwell, and poured ice cold water down her back as she walked into my trap. She simply constricted and shivered, cussing at me for doing that. Now it was my turn to crack up for ten minutes until I started crying. She stood there, staring up at me, with murderous rage. Eventually, however, she started to smile.

“Sir, isn’t your wife pregnant?” Richard suddenly asked, as I proceeded to guide the scalpel into the skull towards the tumor, barely visible at the bottom of the brain.

“Yes, and I am the most excited person in the world. A few more days, and I will be a dad.”

There was silence for the remaining six hours of the surgery, and after grueling hours of neck pain, stiffness, explanations, and forcing my brain not to wonder off, we neared the end. As I was finishing up, and the other people in the room and I worked together to reseal the face of the woman, I heard my phone buzz on the other side of the room.

“Dr. Davidson, your phone is buzzing,” a technician said, holding up the phone, with Kate’s name glowing on the screen.

“John, put it on speaker.” I said.

“Honey, my water broke.” Kate’s panting voice called out from the phone. I almost dropped the scalpel and felt my heart nearly stop; she continued, “The neighbors are taking me to the hospital. See you soon, honey.”

Shahida
Graphite Drawing
Zain Mehdi



Valeda
Descriptive Essay
Amanda Chrise

Particles of dust float among the rays of sunshine that flood through the aged barn. Cobwebs dangle from the ceiling and drape over walls that bear years of dirt. The aroma of sweet alfalfa hay fills the dry air. As I approach the stall labeled 28, a quiet yet constant munching and the occasional swish of a wiry tail fills my ears. The moment I reach the diamond wire door, the rustle of shavings comes from within followed by a soft nicker escaping a carefully carved face. Before unlatching the door, I pull a round peppermint from my pocket and uncrinkle its wrapper. As I hold it out to the creature before me, a warm, wet tongue greets me and leaves slimy slobber between my fingers. I carefully hold her velvety muzzle in my hands before planting a kiss between her runny nostrils. For a moment afterwards, I stand and inspect the eager mare before me. Her muscled body stands stone still on delicately defined legs. Her neck is upright with oily mane askew. She holds her head high as dark, glassy eyes gaze back at me. Her pointed ears swivel impatiently, and I reach out my hand to stroke her shimmering coat. My fingertips glide across the silky texture, and I can feel her twitch as buzzing flies collide with her skin. Turning to pick up her dirtied halter, she nods her head like an approving mother. I slip the tacky leather over her ears and clip the cold metal lead chain around her bony nose. I gently tug on the fraying rope, and her steel shoes meet the pavement and then the gravel with clacks and clangs. Walking down the beaten path on that fresh, spring day, I wonder if there was a better place to be except there with my horse.

Valeda
Photography
Amanda Chrise



Farm Life
Descriptive Essay
Rebekah Funk

Behind the rusted metal gate of the dull, red barn lies a lively, welcoming home to animals and people alike. The whispering sunlight shines through the open windows. Horses sneeze and chickens cluck and cackle and donkeys bray and cats meow. Birds chirp when they flutter from one oak rafter to the other. Horses line both sides of the aged, wooden structures, kicking their stall doors signaling eagerness to receive their rations of crunchy grain and prickly hay. The grains spring back in the feeding tray as they fall from the bag, causing the intense pawing noises of the cantankerous horses to cease. The water in the stalls slops around as the horses slurp the refreshing drink to wash down their delectable dinner. The squeaking of the opening stall doors is like that of a screaming baby. Shovels scrape the ground as the mucking of the stalls begin; the potent scent of manure melds with fresh air and sweet aromas of clover and timothy hay, awakening the taste buds. Metal clicks of the cross ties secure the horse into place when grooming time arrives. Thick coarse hairs of the horses clump in the curry brushes and eventually fall to the ground like tumbleweeds, as the strong breeze carries them through the air. A thick metal scrape uproots the adamant mud under their hooves. As the worn, thick saddle is placed on the tall, bare back, the smell of leather surrounds the wash stall. The metal bit of the bridle clacks into place between a rough pink tongue and smooth yellowing teeth. Dust clouds the air, itching riders' throats, as the forceful, thumping hooves trot around the arena. Let the riding adventure begin. Pure joy.

Early Morning

Photography

Sam Marzula



The Cottage

Descriptive Essay

Jessie Serody

I awake to the soft, golden sunbeams tickling my face as they stream through the infinite glass windows. A fan lazily twists around in the corner, and the comforting old, musky smell surrounds me. I stretch my limbs to their full capacity and kick off the heavy quilt blanket. The sweet smell of crackling bacon wafts toward me from the kitchen downstairs. I jostle my cousin and sister until they come to life, and then we race downstairs to fried tomatoes. The soft yet crisp fried fruit fills us. We wipe the slimy, left-over grease off our ruddy faces and hurriedly run to the river, sloshing through the leech-soaked weeds, racing with all our might to be the very first to immerse ourselves in the rill. The roar of a boat shoots past us, bopping us up and down in its seemingly giant waves. We laugh and splash and dance about in our water. When our hands and feet become wrinkled like old, dusty women, we gallop to shore and pretend we are stranded, and no one can help us. "Please!" we wail out feeling the growing grumble of the growl low in our tummies. We survive only on the muddy seaweed and river water and the occasional scuttling crawfish or slinking snake. It's a quiet day, and rescue seems far off. We feel the dryness cake our mouths and see stars in the blistering sun. We go on like that for a while until the huge bell rings and wakes us from our reverie. We slosh through the mud, wiggling toes on the way, to gobble up the frying potatoes and juicy chicken that dinner entails. Once the chores are done, I run down the big hill and set a fire. The sun says goodbye, and the stars illuminate a stage set for stories and games around the crackle and pop of the flames and the roasting of sticky, gooey, melted marshmallows. I sit and look around at the faces I love. I curl up in my mother's warm embrace and listen quietly to the conversation patter along until I see no more but the remnants of the perfect day in my perfect place behind my drooping eyelids.

Watergirl
Watercolor
Bethany Schaelchlin



Focus
Maxim
Gabby Herbert

If you take your eye off the prize,
Be prepared to meet your opponent's eyes.

62nd and Lex
Poetry
Kayla Romanelli

Lexington Avenue blanketed in a
shroud of late April showers,
New York's drab, dirty pavement
transformed into sheets of slick silver.

springtime, noonish, Mother and i seated
at our favorite table, in our favorite diner.
staring out of a second story window at
a sea of celerity and little black umbrellas.

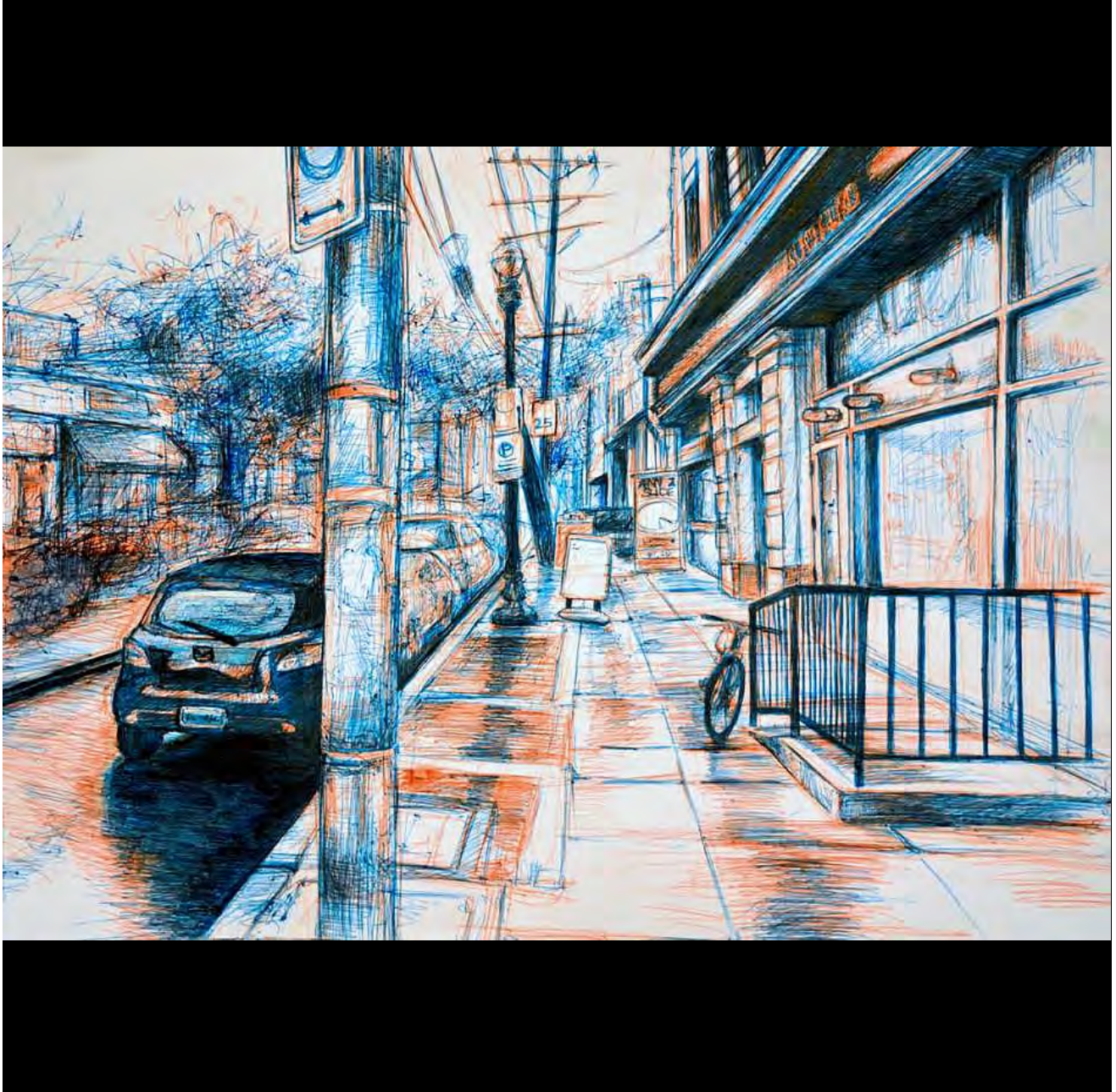
gray clouds, gray buildings, mist perspired
from hot asphalt, murky puddles and people
who sloshed through them as they sought
refuge from the weeping sky, all gray.

crowded streets full of chaos, void of life.
us, a dot, teeming with life in an empty restaurant.
thin tendrils of auburn hair clung to her face with
the rain's moisture, a droplet slid down her cheek.

she pushed past me, i could smell rainwater
and Angel perfume wafting from her body.
i tried to grasp it so that i might always have
her with me, but i couldn't seem to hold on.

i'm still trying to catch one last scent
of old perfume and rain.
still trying to remember how close the sky
felt from Mother's shoulders.

Craig Street
Ink
Elizabeth Wang



Where Women Belong

Acrylic
Grace Jin



Inner Peace Through Writing

Poetry

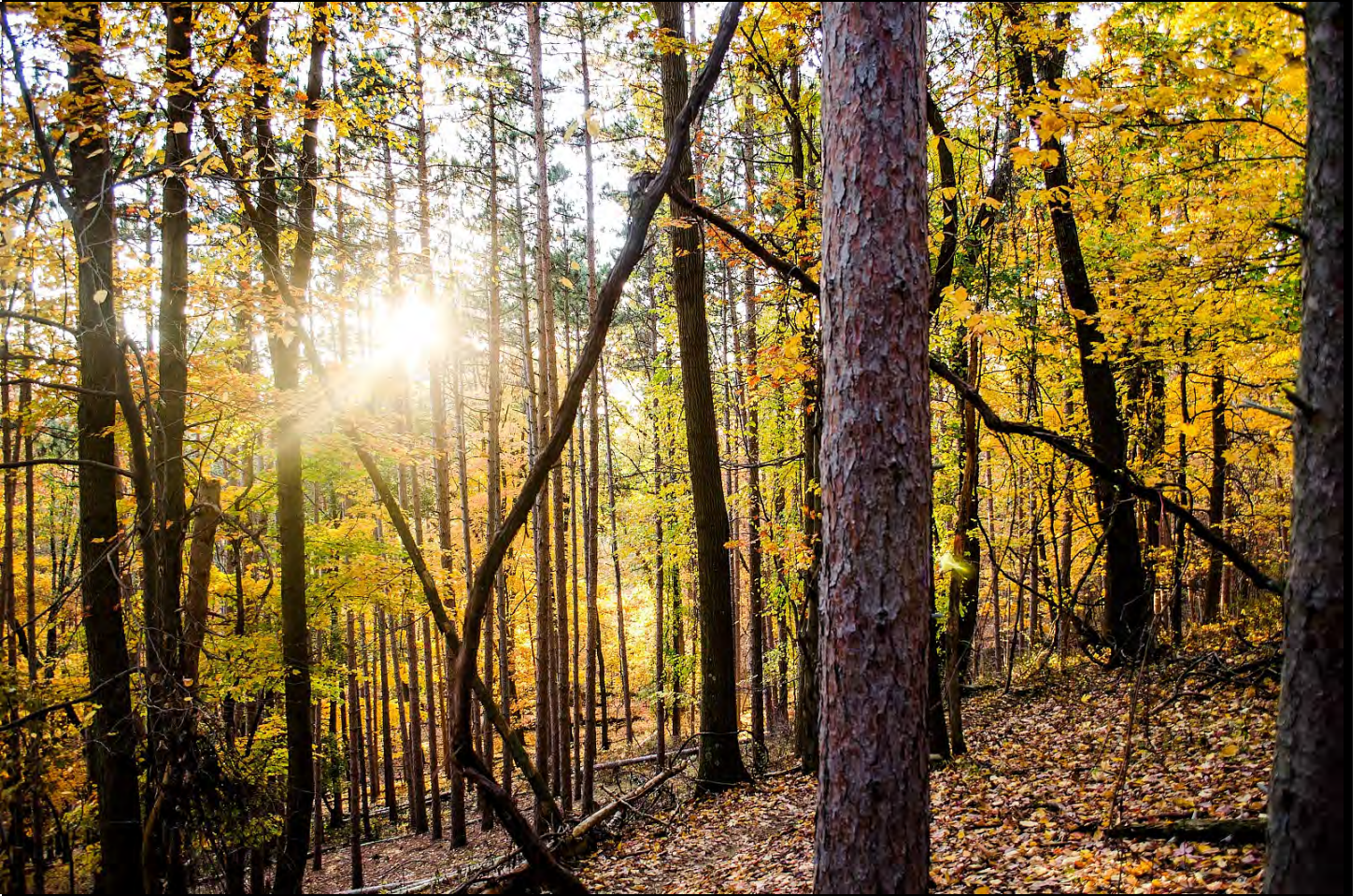
Jason Fultz

Living each day with intention.
This is my way of living.
Whether I am star-gazing,
Or doing something as simple as cooking.
It makes me feel alive.

Writing these poems is no different.
Giving me endless joy--
And you some insight,
Passing my knowledge onto you.

Through my words, you will hopefully find peace.
Because when you read these poems,
You give me mine.

Forest Flare
Photography
Nick Koehler



Into the Middle of Nowhere

Poetry

Nathan Clair

I'd like to take a journey into the middle of Nowhere
On a plane made of a concrete pad and a few rotten logs
Piloted by someone who isn't embarrassed by making engine noises with his lips
And who trusts that my imagination is enough to see that I am flying

When I arrive I'll take a nap to catch up on some jet lag
I'll use my new-found energy to build a magnificent hotel in the highest branches of the trees
And a train that goes from one end of Nowhere to the other
Then use it to pick up people who want to join me in this wonderland
I can be the conductor who isn't embarrassed by making choo-choo noises
And who knows that all my passengers are blown away by the view out of the imaginary
windows

When I return to Nowhere with my new companions
We'll build up anything we can imagine
From skyscrapers to car washes
Starting with nothing and stopping at nothing

Until 'Nowhere' is 'Somewhere'
And 'Somewhere' is 'There'
And 'There' is 'Here'
And 'Here' is real life because we've gotten lost in our imaginations

And when we are found by reality
We will pack up our bags and walk home
Tell our parents all about it with gleaming eyes
And then write about it years later
When we wish for that feeling one more time
That feeling of being lost
And not wanting to be found

Footwork
Photography
Nathaniel Chen

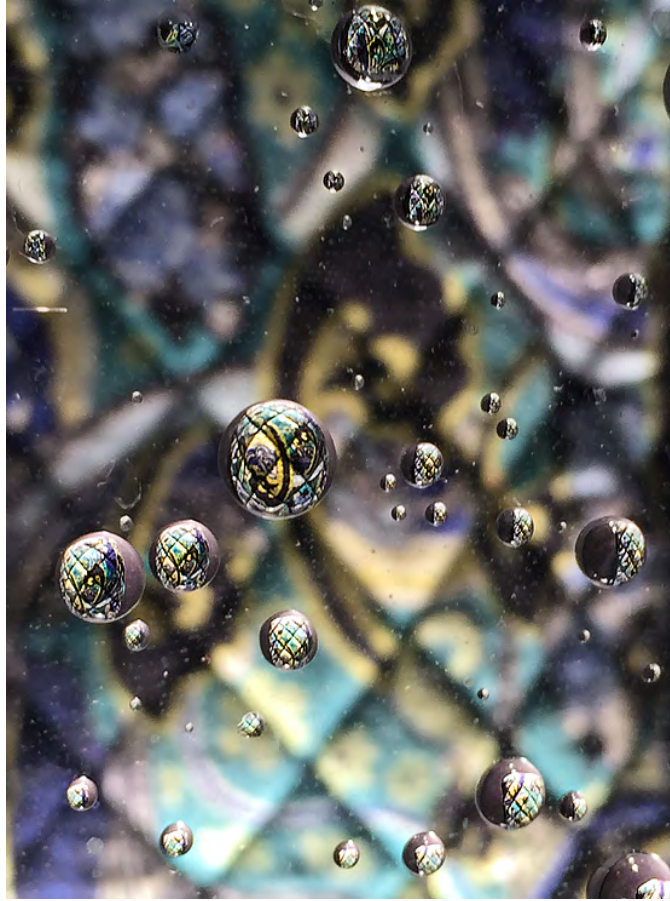


Certainly
Poetry
Stephanie Brendel

Certainly there's life after death.
I hear countless
Tales of
Ghosts and
Apparitions and
Strange encounters.
If so many are haunted,
Surely
There is some truth
In spirits.
Certainly there is life after death.
People pray daily
And live out their
Short lives

In pursuit of
A heavenly reward.
If so many trust in eternity,
Surely
There must be
A forever somewhere.
Certainly there is life after death.
Dear friend,
I simply have to believe there's
Something else
Out there.
For if I don't then
I'd have to accept that
Surely
I'll never see you again

Rain of Color
Photography
Anjelica Calle



Falling Rain
Poetry
Rachel Witsch

Down the rain falls, forever it streams;
What does this downpour do but fill our empty buckets with water
And paint kaleidoscopes with spilled gasoline?
Cascading waterfalls down windows long broken and umbrellas with holes,
Soaking hair and clothes heavy;
Our eyes are now full.
The storm compels every person to duck, to rush, and to hide,
From the torrent of water that's falling,
Inhaling the petrichor, the grass gleams, inside.
Our papers are now soggy, the writing's all smeared, we watch the words bleed, loom;
Imitating the rain bleeding from the gloom.
Flow, grow, begin, birth, derive,
This is what rain means, how we survive.
With this gray comes color; within the flowers it forever lies.
Down the rain falls, forever, from the sky.

Side Effects of Finals

Script

Anjelica Calle

Speaker: Walks to center stage. Hello. Bonjour. Gutentag. Konichiwa. Bienvenidos. Howdy. Thank you for coming out tonight. I'm sure most of you are here because you know a student attending North Allegheny. As you know, these students work hard and strive for good grades, but what you DON'T know is what happens behind the the classroom doors.

Student: Walks out on stage very calmly.

Speaker: Here we have a student who is currently studying for her finals.

Student: Smiles.

Speaker: Although she may look happy and emotionally stable, (Puts hand in front of student's face.) the inside is much colder. (Slides hand down face and student is now angry.)

Student: Reads school papers and shrugs.

Speaker: (Watches student.) Here we can observe the first of the many stages of finals. This stage consists of the student acting indifferently and nonchalantly about the fact that finals are in a week. Next is stage 2: Denial.

Student: Keeps repeating the word "no" louder and louder.

Speaker: Stage 3: Extreme anxiety.

Student: Starts rapidly pacing back and forth.

Speaker: Stage 4: Beat (Take time with saying the words.) Downright panic.

Student: Starts freaking out on the floor.

Speaker: And last but certainly not least, acceptance..... or death.

Student: Stops moving and lies on the floor still.

Speaker: (Walks over to student and lifts her face up.) Look at this face. Learn this face. Do not be this face!!!! (Drops student's head down.)

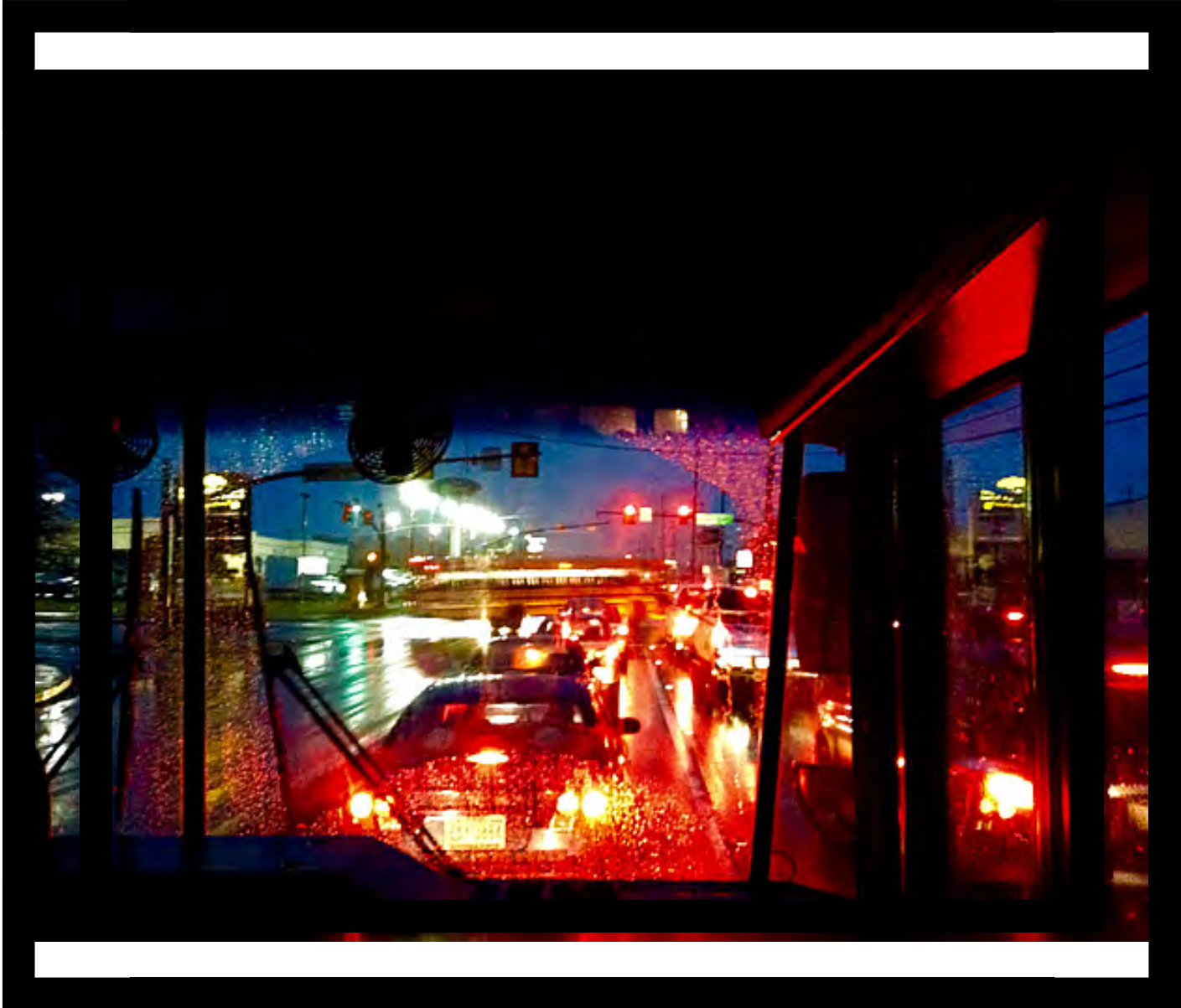
Speaker: (Walks in front of body observing the audience.) If you want to help these students have a better mental state, please call 1-800-SAVE-NOW. Just one phone call can save a high school student from the side effects of finals.

Student: Twitches.

Speaker: Thank you ladies and gentlemen. Walks off the stage.

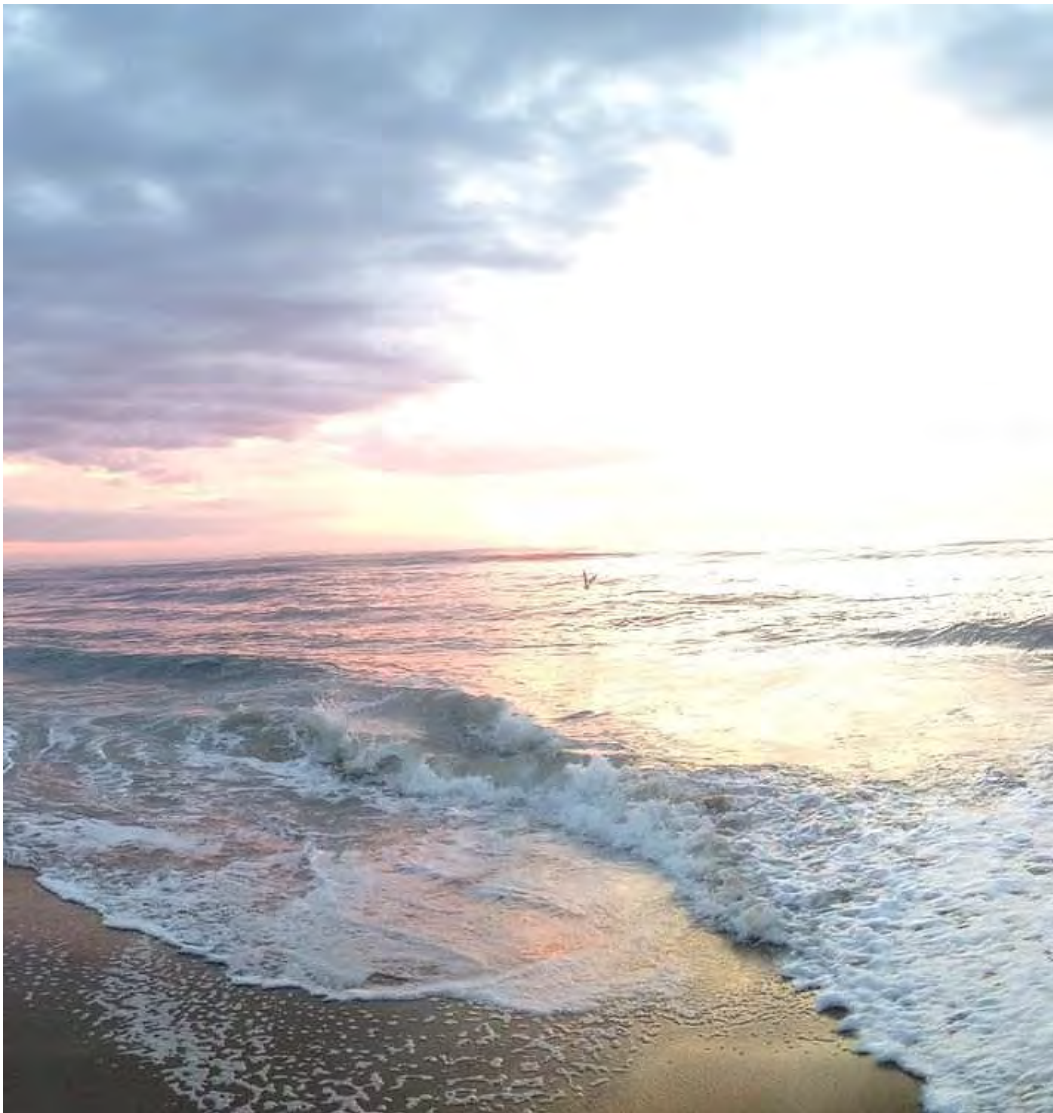
Random Person: Walks on stage and notices student on the floor. Shocked, smiles at the audience and drags student off stage.

NASH
Photography
Megan Wadas



Summer

Daybreak
Photography
Becca Allen



Longing Life at the Lake

Descriptive Essay

Rachel Gongaware

The starting sun slips over the horizon of the smiling mountains as it promises the commencement of a new dawn and the nostalgia of an old one. Standing on the rocky, withered, shore, looking out onto the glassy water, all is calm. The silent water has not been disturbed by the brutish boats since dusk. It laps lovingly at the line of life, rafts tied against the land. Visions of a simpler time flood in with the tide. Currently held back, captive, imprisoned, the shoreline becomes entangled by a wretched wire fence preventing further erosion. A dozen years ago, the disintegration of the land never became apparent. Previously, the shoreline jutted out freely an additional fifty feet. An ache to reconnect to the land prompts me to reach down and skip a smooth, soft, red clay rock. Which one is best? Perfect length, perfect width, perfect depth, perfect grip. An index finger slides instinctively over the top of the rock, and the thumb dutifully supports the bottom. Keep elbow in, and cock wrist, and pull back, and skip! Plop. The perfect stone sinks to the bottom with one lousy plop. Many moons ago, stones that skipped traveled into oblivion. For hours, tiny fingers wrapped around that perfect stone and competed in seeing whose stone traveled into eternity the farthest. But now, both childhood and that rock sank to the bottom of the lake. Reality creeps back as the aromatic smell of sizzling bacon, fluffy waffles, gooey syrup, and a crackling fire come into view. The smoky ashes getting poked around begin to rekindle themselves from last night's fire-roasted feast. Looking back towards the lake, life does not seem so loud so large or so lost.

August
Poetry
Anushka Shah

We would lie on the
Blue tiled kitchen floor
On nights
When the heat
Oppressive and heavy
Would sit on our shoulders,
Knees buckling.
The kitchen floor was far better,
A reviving coolness permeating
Through our thin pajamas.

She had eyes like
The fawn who nestled close
To his mother in that
Dewy clearing, in the
Middle of the forest.
Where we once spent an
Afternoon at the pond.
Skipping rocks, polished ones,
The size of my palm.

Lemon drop in her mouth,
She spoke of the ink that had bloomed
Indigo poppies on her cotton dress
Last Thursday, "Say, don't I smell
Of sun and dust today?" and a
Bathtub full of milk she would
Dream of tomorrow.
Cheeks flushed, eyes ablaze
She was intensely soft.

My own cheeks, were hollowing,
Intruded by a ridge of bone.
My hands,
The ones that plaited her
Wind-tousled strands
And clasped her
Away like Mama said
From things unseemly,
Were roughening.
The pad of my right thumb
And pointer finger
Thickened from
Gripping my only vice of
My inky voice
And destined arithmetic.
Numb vulnerability melting
Into the tiled floor.

Blindly tracing a school of minnows
On her knee, she opened her eyes
With a gasp at the vision above.
Sugared tongue, she gazed
At the plaster sky.

Just Smile
Oil Painting
Caroline Huang



Blooming
Photography
Lucie Waller



Full Bloom

Poetry
MZ Tiv

The game of maturity has worn away my youth.
The players do not harmonize with the sun anymore,
they sting all methods of purity with the bees.
My eyelids stay closed as my mind starts to open.
Wisdom has destroyed me by building me stronger.

An old favorite film is nothing but a modern distraction.
A Saturday night is never spent inside a church.
Grandpa's cheek defines fragility.

My young bones are far from weak.
They enter the ring with valor and sedulous disposition.
Adulthood may flout at my adolescence,
but I rise with ample training and resilience

Electric Feel
Photography
Nathaniel Chen



Neon Angel
Poetry
Anushka Shah

Do you remember the empty parking lot
In the vespertine light,
Where he sat,
Still as the skies above
On the white gridded blacktop
Still warm from the afternoon sun.
No one can make him sit,
A hummingbird
Bustling with nervous energy
Never at repose.

A Hand on his brow, eyes closed
Breathing in slowly,
Deeply
The sticky air that clings
To the inside of one's lungs.
The air was useless,
Alleviating not even
A minute of the past.

Home was past him,
A sham marked by a rag of a
Welcome mat that greeted
Whiskey bottles laced with
Black wrath,
Blue bruises,
And the white fear
That shoved one into
Corners, seldom loved.

Home was where
Empty were the cupboards.
Vacant as the eyes
Full of a manufactured malice
That he had long tried
To stop the production of.
Only to feel the heat
Of a scalding tsunami
That raged with red waves.

Home was where
Tears and pillowcases
Met at clandestine hours
And hurt was bandaged
With the white gauze
Once again.
Sleep marked by
Lines deepening with
Worry, she didn't look
Younger in her sleep
Anymore.

The convenience store sign
flickered on, stripping
His face of its mask.
Illuminating the pearls
Streaking down his cheeks,
Washing away the caustic
Words that marred his visage.
Luminous drops
Silvery and iridescent,
Trickled on to the asphalt.
Pure virtue and white hope
That lay like mercury.

He looked up,
Moths flocking to their
Blazing ends,
His eyes argent with
An unknown feeling.
Glory to the neon glow.

Reverie
Photography
Lucie Waller



McConnells Mill
Descriptive Essay
Bethany Schaelchlin

An endless, bright blue sky beckons the exploration of the wild outdoors, daring the world to open up as much as its own infinite expanse. Soft, lofty clouds drift peacefully above sweet smelling grass, those rich green highlights swaying gracefully in the wind. A small field leads to a tree line that introduces a dirt path wide enough for a foot race. The first trail descends into the gorge. Stone stairs wind drastically back and forth in diagonals, easing the steepness but lengthening the journey. Heart beat and footsteps match pace from the easy entrance to the dramatic exit. The paved road practically a mile below marks the beginning of the adventure. The old antique mill, a towering building enclosed by wood panels burnt by years of use, sits patiently waiting for each newcomer like a graceful piece of art whose purpose is to tell the viewers its story. Behind the massive mill, the source of the Slippery Rock Creek sends a swift current which whooshes down over the man-made waterfall before tackling the endless supply of rocks and boulders, each set in place by the hands of time and nature. Downstream, a bright red metal bridge hovers over the river. Left of the bridge, pleasantly tucked away, there awaits the entrance to the satisfyingly rugged trail. Once inside, the world of the woods enraptures every sense with the peaceful chaos of nature. Sounds often ignored unknowingly now resonate together to orchestrate bliss. Leaves rustling. Water spewing and spraying and humbly grumbling. Birds in every direction singing their own separate tunes. Blood pounding through my veins like a million rushing rivers assures me that I am not only alive but I am living.

Ascent
Photography
Anthony Antalis



The First Day of Summer After Graduation

Blog Entry
Taylor Heins

When I walk outside on that first morning of summer to get the mail or the paper, I feel the sun on my face and the warm breeze in my hair. As I step onto the grass, the dew dances on my toes and on every individual blade. Birds chirp and sing me their beautiful songs of the day. I let my pets roam, and I feel so conscious of everything around me. Nothing will change the mood, and nothing will get in the way of this perfect day. The kids next door play with a basketball, and people jog around the neighborhood. The incandescent blue of the sky blends with the blinding white of the clouds. No more desks, no more pencils, no more drama--just me and my best friends living the best time of our lives with no rush to finish anything else. School is over, and life is just beginning. This is a new chapter of my life, and I'm going to live the dream. As the day ends, pastel colors dance in the sky. I lie out under the stars and look at the glistening dots in the sky. Each star twinkles as much as a million flashlights in the sky. I go to sleep and wait for the next amazing day to come. I can't wait for the rest of my life.

On The Road
Photography
Nathaniel Chen



Wanderlust

Poetry

Christy McDermott

To get Lost would be quite a feat--
I wonder what's around,
My Home could be on any Street--
Just waiting to be Found.

For Home is not restricted to
One fixed and finite Space,
It's wherever your heart calls you--
It's any, every Place.

The Wanderer's Love

Poetry

Christy McDermott

I roam the streets with splendor and passion,
Whether by the hiccup and jump of the bus,
By the smooth soaring of the plane,
By the stops and gos of the car,
By the rattle of the train,
By the twists and turns and ups and downs of the bike,
My soul finds its way to a new city, new state, new way of life,
Like a message in a bottle, my story and I float with ease from place to place,
Drifting with the tides of my heart while calling any roof over my head home,
And never tiring of the trips I take,
For I hear the clear call of the world around me,
Her melodious songs and gentle harmonies that sing my name,
Asking that I break away and step outside,
Asking that I trek on and explore,
Because the wonders of the world cannot be found,
Unless I walk and look around.

The Gifts of Morning

Non-Fiction

Becca Allen

Adventure and splendor await as my calloused feet excitedly trek onto the sandy shore, directly in front of what is about to be one of the glorious wonders of the world: an oceanic sunrise. The chilled gusts of the sea brush my soft curls from my face and kiss my cheeks with cool affection, like a gentle, loving mother does to her children. Glancing straight ahead, my eyes gaze at the sky, which is beginning to pinken behind greyish-blue clouds that fade on their tops. The ocean falls with small waves with foamy tops onto the shore, and the soft sand rises up between my anxious toes. My eyes peek around and spot other sunrise enthusiasts, or at least those that choose to be today, who wait with me: quiet hipsters with cameras, joggers with their frolicking pups, older couples walking down the shoreline. Birds croon in the distance, sharing my excitement. Soon, the pink-colored ball of light, the sun, paints the sky around it with intense color, and as seconds pass, continues to paint the ocean directly in front of it with that same hue. Awe fills my eyes and my heart; all of the wonder of this fantastic view can be captured only by the camera of my eyes and saved in the archives in my memory. As the ball grows higher and larger, the light quickly fades to the brilliant pale gold it will carry out all day, while maintaining a foggy haze around it from the soft, lingering clouds. For one last second, the sun of promise and hope gleams on my eyes; with that same hope and promise in my heart, I turn and slowly stride away.

Nauset Beach

Photography

Nathaniel Chen



Playground

Photography

Ciara Cullen



Diamond Dreams

Descriptive Essay

Keegan Phillips

The cramped, concrete cave swarms with black-and-gold-clad teenagers buzzing around like bees in a hive. Buddies blowing sweet, sticky spheres of Double-Bubble and spitting the salty shells of sunflower seeds amidst the constant chatter and pinging of metal spikes tramping across the stone floor. Positioned atop his elevated clay perch, the ace maneuvers his fingers across the rough, raised stitches, contemplating the perfect pitch. After his knuckleball dances, floats, and flutters to its gentle landing in the catcher's soft leather glove, the sharp bark of the man in blue breaks the sweaty silence. The batter deciphers the encrypted commands of the coach's flashing fingers with one foot inside the box outlined in white chalk. Wiggling and wagging the smooth wooden stick, he stays loose, preparing for the heat or the hook released from the enemy hurler. With a crisp crack, the bat launches its target towards the lush green carpet beyond the infield. Fielders chase the projectile through the sun-drenched park, diving, leaping, pirouetting. Surrounded by the aromas of summer--hot buttery popcorn, freshly-cut grass, burgers and dogs on the grill, and tropical-scented sunscreen--the home crowd surges to its feet and watches the runner gallop around the bases as the line drive crashes into the steel fence. When he touches home and vaults into the outstretched arms of his jubilant teammates, the visitors slump in despair on the shiny aluminum bleachers as the frenzied fans explode into raucous cheers and rhythmic chants: "We are...NA!"

Ocean
Photography
Megan Wadas



Words
Poetry
Anushka Shah

Words are difficult, yet
The world needs its vessels.
Some are mere sailboats cast into the sea,
Short lived, brilliant in the thunderous waters.
Some are cargo ships, lengthy and loaded.
Some are great ships, thoughtful and poised with practice.
And some, are made out of paper,
With crisp edges carefully folded not yet embraced by the water.
They are unheard and silent, still at port.
Delicate, hopeful, easily crushed with even a brush of a hand.

And yet, I cannot even construct my boat to cast out.
My words stay in paper, because I struggle.
I do not know how to cast my words into large ships.
There is much luggage and cargo that I yearn to send to out
Into the water, but I do not know how.
So foreign are those words,
That I am constantly searching for.
Where are they, I wonder.

Is there a word for the feeling of sunlight streaming through
The sweet gum trees by Grandmother's house?
Papery, yellow stars grow on those trees,
That I like to catch when they fall,
Fluttering in the crisp air.

Is there a word for the feeling of stillness in movement?
The sweet stench of gasoline and human desire whizzing by,
But yet I stand in the midst, wretchedly inert
As waves of motion crash around me.
Blues, blacks, and greys, but no white. No emptiness.

Is there a word for how the sky, limitless can be cut?
By us insignificant humans, stringing telephone and power wires,
Creating black bold shapes, curving and linear.
Who said the sky couldn't be cut.

Is there a word for the feeling of holding life in your hands?
Spiny, spring green she sits on my hand, her long limbs in prayer,
How delicate she is, how magnificent she is,
Scooping her off from the grassy abode to admire.

I find myself surrounded by crumpled pieces of paper,
Angry and frustrated. Not a single sail or mast in sight,
Where are these words that I wish to cast into ships?

Daydream
Photography
Olivia Gill



Waldo
Fiction
Gwen Lindberg

Call me Shmiel.

Okay, let me get one thing straight. This was not my idea. I am not a writer; I am not an artist; I am not anything creative. I have lived an average life. I have never been special. My grades are decent; my free time is spent playing video games, and I daydream in school about things that will never happen. I will go to college in the fall, major in something normal, and become an ordinary man with an ordinary life. I will retire, spend my free time golfing and reminiscing my past while drinking lemonade on a porch somewhere sunny, and then I will die. My funeral will be attended by my family and a few friends. And in a hundred years, no one will remember me. That sounds pretty good to me.

At least, it did, until I told her, and she looked at me as if I was the crazy one.

She started to laugh. And laugh. And laugh. As if my dreams were pathetic. Maybe they are. But they made me happy. Through her laughter, she told me to start this off with a reference to *Moby Dick*. She loves Melville's works, especially the ones no one else seems to appreciate. She said "Shmiel" would be a good name for me, since it rings with the traditional disappointment of a Jewish grandfather. It is like she is disappointed for me, because I do not have the imagination to dream an exciting life.

She, on the other hand, dreams dreams worthy of any Renaissance painter or Victorian writer. Her head is always above the clouds as she muses over things that I have never considered. For example, the other day, she ran into my house, screaming my name as if her life depended on it. She accidentally stepped on my dog's tail as she whipped around a corner in her haste to find me. Suddenly, she froze. She stared at me with these huge, horrified eyes, and whispered, "What if our pets think we just like to kick them or hurt them when we accidentally run into them because they don't understand mistakes?" She turned and walked numbly out of my house, her urgency gone in her moment of panicked insight.

She is an enigma. Her thoughts are wildly tangled, chasing each other around in her brain until something makes everything slow down. These moments of stillness, of vulnerability, make me want to hug her as tightly as I can, and tell her the world is going to be alright.

She told me once that the first thing that comes out of someone's mouth is the way they were conditioned to think. What they say next defines who they are. I was lying on my bed, doing homework, as she sat on my desk, swinging her legs and folding all my notes into paper airplanes and cranes and a bunch of other unrecognizable animals. I was so preoccupied with what she had said, I didn't even yell at her for using my homework for her art shenanigans.

These things just kind of erupt out of her, as if she couldn't keep them inside for another second. Her life has never been average or plain or generic. She has always been extraordinary--she thinks differently. She never learned to crawl; she jumped straight to walking and spent several years with bruises on her forehead because she would run into things head first. She first touched a cello when she was four or five, and her dad hasn't been able to tear her away from one since. She listens only to classical music, and she prefers old records to electronics and earbuds.

A couple of hours ago, she burst into my room, dragged my computer off my lap, and put her hands on either side of my face. Eyes dancing with light and mischief and a thousand other things, she said, "Come on! I have an idea!" And though these words have precluded countless sticky situations, I still followed her out into the cold, snowy night.

She lead me outside, barely pausing to let me put on boots and a jacket. She pulled me up the hill in my backyard, through the woods, over the little creek, and into our meadow.

We discovered this meadow one summer when we were little. In the center is an oak tree, its massive trunk too wide for me and her to reach our arms around. She grabbed my hand and pulled me around our tree--the tree we named Waldo--going faster and faster until we tumbled into a pile of snow. Laughing, she said, "We have no idea who we are going to be. I could become a serial killer. You could become the world's next Thoreau and inspire a generation. But trying to map out every second? That's just a waste of time. And you will never be satisfied."

Then she shoved snow in my face and told me to get my monotonous butt up the tree before the sky fell in, and our destinies were lost forever.

We raced up the big oak in the center, trying to beat the other to the top. About a third of the way up, we felt like we were miles above the rest of the world. That was plenty high for me. But she wanted to keep going. I think she felt that if she could just climb high enough, she could reach the sky and fly away like the sparrows she used to whistle with every morning.

We had been trying to climb to the top of the tree for years. The first time we made it, about three years ago, the joy and triumph on her face made every single scratch and scrape worth the struggle. She stared into the horizon, and I looked with her, watching the clouds that seemed just out of reach. And I told her my truth: "This is the happiest I have ever been."

She turned to me, the light of the sun in her eyes, and said, "This will not be happiest you will ever be."

It was at the top of the oak, on this snowy winter's night, when she told me that she believed destinies can be challenged, but not changed. "Free will is an illusion, just like the rest of this world. You can do anything you want; yet your paths are already planned out for you. You can doubt everything's existence, except your own consciousness. You think, and, therefore, you are. I think, and, therefore, I am. That's it."

I stared at her, and she turned away to gaze up into the stars. I couldn't imagine what she found up there; I saw spheres of burning gas that will one day explode and cease to be, but she saw something else. She has always found comfort in the sky.

After an interminable time, I left her contemplating the stars and trudged back to my house to resume my futile attempt at creativity. I thought about how she seems to experience the world in technicolor, while I see only black and white. She jumps from one thought to another, seeing each in vivid detail, while I muddle through my life, satisfied with the bare design.

As I hung my jacket on the back of my chair, something small fell out of my pocket: a paper tree. I unfolded the tiny creation, careful not to rip the damp paper. Some of the ink smeared a little, but the three words were as clear as skies we had gazed upon.

Write about me.

You have asked me to write about a better world. Well, let me be honest. There is no better world than one with her in it. She challenges the unknown, embracing it instead of fearing it. She believes in contradictions: we choose our paths, yet they are chosen for us. She believes that religion is simply a way for humans to feel less alone in a universe we do not understand. She believes in tolerance, patience, and peace.

She loves unconditionally.

I wish I was more like her.

Red
Chalk Pastels
Bethany Schaelchlin



Queen
Maxim
Kelly Stewart

Be a queen to yourself;
Be a queen to others;
Be a queen to the world.

Home Away From Home

Poetry

Nathan Clair

The warm air on your skin, the toy-story sky above,
and the gravelly parking lot underfoot.
When life gets in the way of my living,
this is where I go to live.

That building on the hill has become a time capsule.
The musty smell from the damp carpets
and rotten wood framing;
the broken shards of glass on the shattered tile floor
and the graffiti-covered-graffiti;
all tell a story from the past
so long forgotten by the vandals who
ransacked the peaceful retreat so long ago.

The open space where a window once existed
has become a portal to the rest of isolation.
A sad example of a railroad bridge
and an unremarkable rope swing are somewhere out there.
The swing, dangling from an outreaching limb of an ancient tree,
provokes nostalgic thoughts about whom these stomping grounds
previously belonged to.

If the timing is right and the ears are keen,
a train whistle can be heard in the distance.
After a few patient minutes that whistle turns into a rumble,
then a roar,
then a click clack,
and then silence.

Suburbia Nights

Photography
Nathaniel Chen



Company
Photography
Olivia Gill



Summer in the Backyard

Descriptive Essay
Michael McGaw

The long months of winter crawl by slowly, as if weighed down with iron chains. Those eternally white times of death and snow turn the surrounding landscape into a barren, frozen wasteland comparable to the aftermath of some great Ice War. Nobody can wait for the indoor imprisonment to end, and by the time winter's long overdue finale appears over the horizon, people begin to stir restlessly. The temperatures rise from small ice-age, to bone-chilling frost, to pleasant chill, all the way onward to mixes of perfect warmth and sweltering fire. These times truly bring the yard to life, and seldom can one find a place with the ability to match its natural beauty. The summer and preceding spring have brought new invigoration to the swirling tendrils of neon flowering plants present all around the borders of the vast, expansive lush, green blades of grass and indescribably soft and fuzzy viridian moss. A rusty fireplace-ring, centered by a ring of stones coated in decades of ash like the sooty ghosts of fires past, sits waiting, sound in the promise of the long flame-filled nights to come as a new summer begins. Soon it will have its fill of aromatically smoking pine and maple logs whose crackling and snapping will provide reassuring warmth and almost mystical wonder to those who are around it. The thick, sweet chocolate, gooey, creamy marshmallow, and the honey-crunch of the graham cracker fill the mouth and bring back so many childhood memories at night. In the daytime, the relaxing serenades of caws, crows, and chirps from the birds fill the ears in the most pleasurable of ways. Is it wrong to want nothing more than to lie here among the thorn bushes, the birds, and the bugs?

Baljeet, Basketball, and MTV

Humor

Samir Yellapragada

I'm a big fan of surprises and twists--especially when they have to do with expectations. When people look at me they create this personality. This extremely uptight, innocent, math-loving, immigrant straight out of India. They see Raj from *The Big Bang Theory*. They see Ravi from that show *Jessie* on The Disney Channel. The kid that likes curry flavored ice cream. Yeah him. They see Baljeet from Phineas and Ferb. People have no idea how many of my conversations go something like this:

White person: So where are you from?

Me: I'm from Pittsburgh

White person: (laughs) No....like...where are you really from?

I was born in Boston. I don't deserve this crap.

Another thing that really contributed to my cause was my last name. People have no idea how hard first grade was for me. I'm that guy that runs out of boxes to write my name on for standardized tests and magazine sales surveys. My name wraps around the cup twice whenever I go to Starbucks. With all these factors pinning me down, I was a quiet kid. I needed to break the stereotypes. It was then I decided to do something so culturally unprecedented, something so different it would shatter all racial and cultural boundaries forever. I decided to play basketball.

At my first game I remember the coach took out a dry erase board. He whipped out a marker and drew a bunch of lines and arrows. He drew a big circle over my name. Then the hustle broke up, and the game started. Too scared to speak up, I frantically asked a fellow sweaty sixth grader what the circle meant. He said it meant I have to "set a pick."

"What the hell is a pick?" I asked him.

As the kid scurried to the other side he blurted, "It means you have to stop the other player from taking our ball."

"Stop the other player from taking our ball?" This has so many meanings and even more if you don't have any common sense. Our team member got possession of the ball. He dribbled the ball into the opponent's court. An opponent team member ran at our player with the malicious intent of taking possession of the ball. It was then I realized I needed to "set a pick." I ran at the kid and tackled him to the ground.

I don't really play basketball anymore.

When people ask, I tell them that the basketball association honorarily retired my number. Anyways, I realized I was more of a croquet, curling, or synchronized swimming kind of guy. I decided basketball was not the way to prove my uniqueness. I remember it was the first day of sixth grade. The first day of middle school. Halls reeked of chlorine from YMCA swimming pools, maintaining a delicate coexistence with the enormous amount of Axe. This was a time when everybody wanted to be Disney channel stars. This was a time when rebel meant drinking soda after 9:30 P.M. This was a time when hugging a girl meant you were ready to start a family. This was a time when failing a test meant a 90%. This was a time when conversations were dominated largely by plot points of *iCarly* episodes. This was middle school.

It was the first day, and I strolled into my homeroom. The room was filled with a bunch of unfamiliar faces. I instantly hated all of them. The teacher came out and said she wanted to do an icebreaker activity. "Tell us your name and a little bit about yourself." As people were going around saying their name and something usual like "I like to read" or "I like to play video games," I was in deep ponderance. I am a firm believer that there are moments in a person's life that can be labeled "life changing." This was one of those moments. All my life I had been suppressed by stereotypes and expectations. It was time to surprise people. It was time to show them the real me. When it was my turn, I got up in front of the class and said, "Hi...uh... one interesting thing about me is that I spit mad rhymes." The silence was screaming. The teacher's face shriveled up in absolute confusion. I sat back down.

The next day in school we got our textbooks, and classes officially started. The last period of the day was sixth grade math. The very field of math that made calculus look like kindergarten stuff, sixth grade math was a stressful experience for many. Apparently, sixth grade math has the highest college dropout rate out of any other college major. On the second day of school, we started fractions and the dreadful "solving for x." The teacher droned on for what seemed like forever. All I thought of was how I was going to go home and hop onto my couch and watch *Teen Nick* even though I was only twelve--you know--because I was a thug. I was going to watch so much *Degrassi* and *Ned's Declassified* before my parents came home. If I'm feeling especially rebellious I might even accidentally switch the channel to MTV. The next thing you know I might accidentally be watching *16 and Pregnant*. Accidentally that is. As the teacher rambled about continuous functions, I began to think of the show *16 and Pregnant*. That show actually taught me a lot about life--it showed me perspective. These girls are out here getting pregnant at the age of 16--I sure as hell won't get pregnant at the age of 16. But then I realized that wasn't a valid response because that's not anatomically possible for my gender, so I settled on the thought that I won't get anyone pregnant at the age of 16. Although I don't know about 17....(I'm kidding. That was a joke. Relax).

But I then pictured a vivid scene of my future, and it went something like this: It's 9:30 A.M., and it's sometime in mid-May. The weather outside is hot, muggy, and cloudy--the way it is just before it's going to rain. I am inside a dimly lit Starbucks sipping my hot chocolate. The person on the other side of the table is a tall, serious looking woman with horn-rimmed glasses. Her hair is tied up in a tight bun. This woman looks like the human embodiment of words and phrases like "strict" and "professional" and "high strung" and "the most fun I ever had was at Chuck-E-Cheese in seventh grade." This was my college interview for Harvard University.

She asks me multiple questions about my future and career goals. She asks me about GPA, SATs, life challenges, and why I prefer their college. The usual. And I look her straight in the sockets of her eyes and give her an extremely artificial answer. The usual. I seem to be killing the interview; I had all the qualities that she was looking for, and I seem a perfect fit. The woman looks up from her documents and says, “O.K. sir--you seem to be a perfect fit for Harvard University, but there are other students locally who have the same excellent credentials as you. I need to be able to separate you from them, so I am going to ask you one final question now that will be the decider. This final question will draw the line and make or break your admission to our university. Are you ready?” I fearfully nod my head. This was it. A choir of angels could be heard from the back; I see a soft beam of light from up ahead; the cosmos had separated; a new universe had been born; everything in my life has led me up to this point. To this moment. The woman looked at me, straight in the sockets of my eyes and asked,

“What’s a pick?”

Chugging Down Stripes

Ink

Elizabeth Wang



Being Super
Blog Entry
Mason Blanco

Almost everybody loves superheroes. Like Captain America, Spider-Man, Batman, Superman, Hulk, and so on. We love them because they're awesome. Superheroes may be fictional, but the lessons they teach us are not. Superheroes do help a lot of people in one way or another. They inspire us from childhood to do great things: to be kind, caring, helpful, respectful, and brave.

For example, did you know that the *Captain America* comic books were first written during World War II? Captain America was created in the year 1940 by a young American comic book artist and writer named Jack Kirby and his partner, Joe Simon. Kirby and Simon were both serving in World War II at the time, and one day Kirby said, "Hey Joe, our boys could use a little inspiration out there on the field. How about we write about a Super Soldier to punch old Adolf in the Jaw!" Simon replied, "Okay, Jack! I'll get the pens and papers." (Or something like that.)

Anyway, those comic books did inspire our American allies. Kirby claimed that he based *Captain America* off of what he saw in his fellow men and how they helped each other through the war. Every soldier wanted to be Captain America, and that's a fact. They wanted to fight for what's right, be super, and, yeah punch old Adolf Hitler in the jaw. And Bucky was created to inspire the children of that generation to be good. So, in a way Captain America did help us win World War II. And he's not the only one.

In my book, Jack Kirby and Joe Simon are Captain America, too, for giving us all hope--along with every other man, woman, and child who fought, died, or lived through World War II. We all have the ability to be a superhero, and in more ways than one. Everyday there are new opportunities for all of us to be super, and in the words of Stan Lee, "Nuff said!"

Aerial Perspective

Photography

Becca Allen



Ribs
Colored Pencil and Ink
Alexis Kruth



Ernest Alexander's Butterfly Emporium

Flash Fiction

Eliza Ross

Ernest Alexander had butterflies in his stomach.

Every time he'd open his mouth, Viceroy's and Karner Blues would float lazily out. And not only was it limited to just those two breeds, it was a lovely variety- from American Snout to Zebra Swallowtails.

Honestly, it was just a terrible inconvenience.

It had started at birth, as Ernest had been told. When baby Ernest had opened his mouth to cry, a single Painted Lady flapped out. The entire room froze. When Ernest opened his mouth for yet another cry, three more came. Immediately he was put under observation, and specialists were contacted from the corners of the globe. But all the doctors and all the specialists were quite puzzled. They couldn't figure out the source of the butterflies, and chalked it up to an unsolvable mystery.

So Mrs. and Mr. Alexander took the baby and all his butterflies home. Ernest grew, and before long he was joining the other children on the school bus. Unfortunately, the other kids didn't appreciate butterflies like Ernest did. Maybe it was just Ernest himself that they didn't appreciate. He was quite smaller than the other kids, none of whom had the special talent he did. The kids on the playground would squish his butterflies, if he talked. He couldn't bear to have anything ill happen to his treasures, so he just stayed silent.

The only class he would join in on was music, which was his favorite. But eventually he was forbidden to participate even music class. The last time he did, the whole room ended up looking like the annual Monarch migration to Mexico.

"How about you just stay silent?" Ernest's teacher had said, exasperated as she swatted away a Goliath Birdwing. Ernest was devastated. Later at dinner he tried to recount his tale of woe to his parents. But butterflies just flew out of his mouth, and his mother grew quite frustrated.

"Can't you please be quiet? These pests are getting in my mashed potatoes!"

Ernest finished his dinner in silence, then climbed up the stairs to his room. He shut the door unhappily and sighed. Upon his sigh, a Painted Lady gently floated out. It fluttered about the room, oblivious to Ernest's sorrow. Watching the butterfly, Ernest opened his mouth and began to laugh. Butterflies started to fill the room as his giggling grew. He chattered a bit, letting some Blue Morphos flit around the room. Then he wailed and screamed, watching the butterflies fill the room. Then he sang: ballads, operas, hymns, raps, and hip-hop. Ernest sang until his throat was sore.

Ernest asked his butterflies to take him away, and they happily obliged. If anyone bothered to look out the windows of their homes they would have seen a very small boy, being carried by a very large quantity of butterflies. The mass just kept growing and growing, because Ernest Alexander would not stay silent.

Surfer's Sunset

Photography

Nick Koehler



The Kayaking Perspective

Descriptive Essay

Chip Dougherty

Washed with liberation, the kayak slides into the enigmatic water, grotesque and cloudy on the surface, but magnificent to the watchful eye. With the lake's muddy bottom hidden by the shadowy water, it seems as though nothing lives beneath the murky surface. However, the freedom of life reveals itself to the keen ear with the soft chirp of crickets or the far off canticle of a crane. The foul stench of old bait and rotten fish hangs in the air. Though a perceptive nose notices the more subtle scents of blossoming flowers and fresh pine. A soft breeze fills the nose and mouth, carrying the taste of natural nectar and serenity. Trees that surround and enclose the bank may seem limiting and oppressive, yet an open heart understands that the trees reach their roots and stretch their lengthy limbs to encase and protect the silent sanctuary. Now in its natural habitat, the paddle morphs into graceful flippers, and the boat into the majestic dorsal fin. Hidden nooks, barely wide enough for the pirogue, lead to new and exciting worlds. Treasures await, pleading for discovery. As opposed to gold, silver, or Solomon's riches, they hold no monetary worth. A no longer functional fire extinguisher, red paint cracked and peeling. Numerous waterlogged tennis balls and soccer balls and softballs and baseballs. Brightly colored fishing bobbers. An old dirt-caked Frisbee with a brand no one has heard of. A tightly sealed decrepit aluminum can with contents unknown. Old fishing line tangled in branches like a perplexing spider web. Instead, these hidden gems, though cheap and useless on the surface, evoke a more complex value: renewal and adventure. Decay floats above the surface, but below the depths lies the sublime.

We Didn't Abolish Slavery. We Exported It.

Colored Pencil and Watercolor

Zain Mehdi



Restless Night

Poetry

Jason Fultz

Restlessness through the night
Staying up wondering
Wondering what the next day will bring.
Making the nights feel endless.
Making the next day feel worthless.
Crushing your very soul
To the point of no repair.
Giving you the will to give up
And just fall into despair
Wishing you were never there.

But this is not the end.
For you have much time in this world
To sleep, laugh, and live.
So look forward to the good things.
Don't dwell on the bad.
Remember the past is past
Live it like it is your last.

Hola, Papa
Photography
Becca Allen



Faith Through It all
Poetry
Brittney Reder

I find myself surrounded by people just like me,
Who believe in the Almighty, who believe that He is fully human and fully divine, who believe
in the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
People who pray and preach their beliefs.

I trust that He has a plan for me, and I cast my fear, stress, and anxiety on Him.

I've heard the stories of those that have continued to believe in Him,
Through the trials, through the pain, through the good, through the unexpected; their faith
continues to grow each and every day.

I want others to experience the love and strength that I have received, knowing that He is greater
than all.

He never fails to pull people from their darkest moments and make them strong and alive again,
The man who lost his job and is relying solely on faith to carry him through,
The widowed mom who is now left to care for her children alone,
The bullied kid who feels helpless and abandoned.

He continues to astound me every day with His unconditional love and mercy,
He fills me with pure joy, happiness, and acceptance for whom I genuinely am.

I owe my life to the One who has surrendered His own for mine, and everything I do is for Him.
One day when this earth has failed me, my only hope is that I will be accepted into God's kingdom,
where I will continue to live for eternity.

Exaggerated Light

Photography

Nick Koehler



The Road

Poetry

Maddy Snyder

Warm breezes envelop my face
As I glide effortlessly along the road
Worries vanish into the thick, summer air.
Night sets in and the stars emerge
Greeting me like old friends
Music blares.
My heartbeat slows
A wide grin etched across my face
Serenity.
Lyrics pour out of my mouth
Like a running faucet
Free.
Free from the barracks of my mind
That detain me
Electrified.
Noises fill the night sky
Chirping crickets, whispering winds, and a purring car engine
Exhale.
I soak up my surroundings
As I follow the road home.

Love Myself

Poetry

Gwen Lindberg

If I ask you what you love,
Your answers will roll right off your tongue.
You love your friends.
You love your family, you love to read, you love to write.
You love music, poetry, cats, cameras,
You love the stars that grace the heavens each night.
I wonder how long you could go on
Until you say
“I love myself.”
I soak up my surroundings
As I follow the road home

Purple

Watercolor Painting

Anna Baum



We Used to Ride Our Bikes

Poetry

Stephanie Brendel

We used to ride our bikes
around the cul de sac,
the wind in our faces
as we made wide arcs
a balancing act on two wheels.

We used to swing together
our feet yearning to be tickled by clouds.
You always jumped off your swing
and stuck the landing,
but I was too scared to leap.

We used to know each other,
making intricate worlds of chalk
and coloring our street.
But then one day it rained
and now, our picture is gone.

Wai Po (Grandmother in Chinese)

Oil Painting
Caroline Huang



Nai Nai (Grandmother in Chinese)

Oil Painting
Caroline Huang



Fall

Hiraeth
Oil Painting
Asha Dasari



I Came Here Every Day

Poetry

Zain Mehdi

I come here every day, the meadow, who tickles my crescent feet,—
a green, tickling wave with its bright fish.

I come here every day, the bunnies, who scurry at my feet,—
round, brown and sniffing around.

I come here every day, the bumblebees, who hum near my ears,—
black and yellow, humming wings, and serene movements.

I come here every day, the pond, who cools my camouflage,—
a mirror for the sky and me, a lens for those beneath.

I come here every day, the fish, who flee my muzzle that ripples,—
blubbing, bored of the redundant green and blue.

I come here every day, the woods, who protect and nurture,—
intertwined with many leaves, with many fruits, with many memories.

I come here every day, the birds, who rest on my own branches atop my head,—
eternally harmonious in the endless blue.

I come here every day, the deer, my kinsmen,—
mistaken for frail, truly powerful; with swift legs and strong trees atop their heads.

I come here no more, the deceptive frail, who took all.

They took the green, tickling meadow.

They took the round, brown, sniffing bunnies.

They took the black and yellow, humming bumblebees.

They took the reflective, transparent pond.

They took the bored, blubbing fish.

They took the protective, intertwined, retentive woods.

They took the immortally harmonious birds.

They took the swift, powerful deer.

They took my home.

Brother of the Fur Coat
Colored Pencil
Angella DiPasquale



Presence of Love
Six Word Story
Cecelia Groom

Old Couple.
Broken Heart.
Still Together.

Love
Six Word Story
Becca Boyd

First glance.
Question asked.
"I do."

Time To The End Of My World

Poetry

Maura Sanguigni

45 seconds.

45 seconds that I have to share
With Mom and Dad
That leaves me with less than
15 seconds to say Goodbye.
That is just enough time
For a hug, and six words.

Then I begin to cry.
Not because we won't speak
For the next 6 weeks
And not because you are leaving,
I know you'll come home
Again and Again.

I cry because
This is the last time I will see you
See the boy in cargo shorts,
And polo shirts.

When we're together again,
You'll be in white over grey,
Collecting medals,
Having signed your life away.

As I jump into your arms
(As I know I will many times,
As our moments together become few and far between)
Drowning in sobs and speaking through broken tears
I tell you
Please just always come home again.

The Greats
Oil Painting
Eliza Ross



Secure
Spoken Word Poetry
Samir Yellapragada

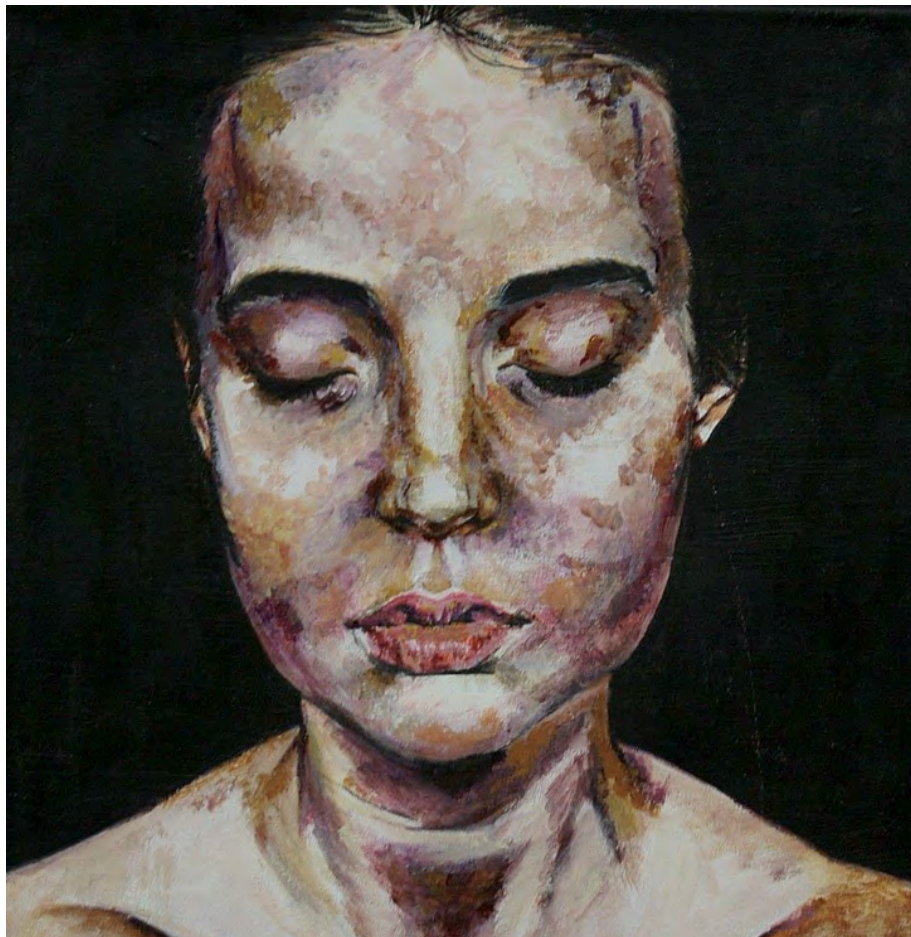
I went to an airport one day and I had to go through security
First they checked my bags and food for poisons and impurities
Then they made me take my shoes off and glanced at my turban
They probably think I'm a terrorist and I am eager to prove to them my suburban
Birth and roots; to show them my roots and place of origin
To prove to them I'm not a terrorist but an average kid from Oregon
I try but
I can never change what they think
A poem can't change the mindset of people whether it be written in pencil or ink
The messages of stereotypes and racism are forever engraved
The innocent mind kills its questions and is forever enslaved
By the people
100 times you can check my background
But my turban will never come down
As I'm standing in the line
I'm trying to find one person whose situation is worse than mine
But I can't
Everyone is staring at me because I look Arabic
If my heritage scares you that much, I apologize--it's inherited
You think I want to live this way?
People think I will blow up every building I enter
Some of the remarks I hear make me feel like I'm going to weep or throw up
It has become a problem to even show up
In public places--for my brothers to show their bearded faces
Without being subject to racist
Remarks and questions; everywhere we go we seem to give off impressions
Of absolute evil and destruction
Society isn't broken but it can't go wrong with construction
The problem isn't evil or hate because people are good
People are creations of God and God is great
The way he should be. The problem is fear.
A fear so great it manifests itself as a disgusting hate
That makes and shapes the fates of the next generation
Who enter our society with this anticipation
To never sit next to an Indian or Arab on an airplane

This is our slice of the American pie and we're told that this is a fair game
They say they give us the opportunity to rise but we don't take it
Well, my friend you have me standing here bare naked
In the middle of the airport; my articles of clothing politely "removed"
Just to soothe the white man standing to my right
Deprived of my rights as a citizen and human
I speak with an edge, foaming at the mouth and fuming
Every word cringes to the last as the past is recollected
The memory infected and infested with memories of prejudice and discrimination
In this nation built on pillars of freedom and expression
And every man's confession is valid
My skin is a vivacious brown not a bland pallid complexion
Let words we speak be guides and guide us in the correct direction
In this melting pot of cultures, let us the avoid these vultures
That feed off of us. Racism at the airport is a disease but there is a cure
My people stand here degraded and humiliated just to make yours feel secure.

Ali

Acrylic Painting

Bethany Schaelchlin



Blood Brothers

Personal Essay

Keegan Phillips

240...36...2400...800, 800, 800...the dream of every high school junior in America. Unfortunately, I did not achieve these scores myself, but I share DNA with someone who did—all in the first sitting. Anyone who says that perfection is unattainable obviously never met my brother Connor. The PSAT, ACT, SAT, and SAT Subject Test results represent only a small fraction of Connor's academic accomplishments: an A in every course he has ever taken, one of only eighty-eight perfect AP tests completed in the world in 2012, and a full ride to Duke University.

Many might view these achievements as casting an immense shadow over my academic career, but I never did. For me, Connor's triumphs simply constituted the context in which I grew up, and although I could not hope to equal them, I was determined to forge my own path by cultivating the boundless passion that defines me. The baby who never stopped rolling, tumbling, kicking, stretching, even before his birth, given the Gaelic name Keegan—"little fiery one." The child whose favorite gift was a library card, forming a foundation for a lifelong love of reading. The teenager who, rather than follow the conventional route of selecting AP US History to boost his GPA, instead chose to schedule four diverse semester-long courses of Honors history to satiate his love of the subject. The two-sport varsity athlete who refused to take any study halls to lighten his academic load, preferring to explore his interests by packing his schedule with engaging electives. The student who, after receiving a B in Honors Algebra 2, embraced the challenge of continuing on the advanced math track rather than dropping down to ensure an A.

Outside of the classroom, however, the roles reversed. I always excelled at sports, and although Connor did not share my athletic ability, he became an ardent fan and meticulous scorekeeper for my baseball and basketball teams. In this realm, I accumulated all of the accolades. The instinctive fielder who turned two unassisted triple plays before the age of twelve. The junior starter who received all-section recognition for two varsity sports in the largest classification of schools in the state. The tenacious competitor who sacrifices his body, diving for loose balls on the hardwood and line drives in the outfield. The student of the game who understands not only the strategy and nuances of the sport but also the responsibilities of each and every participant. The dejected player who is still first in line to shake hands after a devastating loss. The selfless teammate whose never-say-die attitude helped propel every squad he ever played on to a winning record. The vocal underclassman who led the senior-dominated basketball team to the conference title game. The dedicated athlete who, despite returning home at 1:30 A.M. following a crushing loss in the state basketball playoffs, arrived at school at 7:00 the next morning and began his baseball tryouts that afternoon, refusing the offer of his coach to take a few days off.

Regardless of the arena, academics or athletics, the relationship between Connor and me has never been one of competition, but rather one of mutual admiration. My brother and I were both born with natural abilities, but these gifts flourished only when ignited with passion. Connor's accomplishments do not overshadow my academic career so much as inspire my individual journey.

Best Friends
Graphite Drawing
Caroline Huang



Society's Man
Spoken Word Poetry
Samir Yellapragada

Society's man is an astounding creature
Intricately built with every convenient feature
Teacher to all and student to none
A valiant warrior as bright as the sun
Tough as nails and he never fails
To come out of every situation victorious
Eternally glorious
Just like the story is
Because he is a
Living legend that is
Never threatened 'cause he
Remains calm no matter the ordeal
Distancing himself from emotion and the capacity to feel
Towering at an empowering height of six feet tall
Whose bulging muscles are the envy of all
With perfect, wavy, flawless hair
A manly man who wrestles bears
But he's too suave to care
'Cause he's answering prayers
A football player
Bare of any weakness
Devoid of unnecessary uniqueness
He's this female magnet
To which all are attracted
The fact that he says what he wants and does what he wants
Because what he wants is always what he gets
Consider completed any goal that he sets
There is nothing he regrets
A natural hunter
Nature's wonder
Bold as thunder
Whose very presence all the women crave
With a thick manly beard that he never really shaves
He is tough, strong, commanding, and brave
His word is final; his disposition grave
A real man who will never shed tears
A real man who will never show his fears
A real man who will always beat his peers
Remains calm no matter the ordeal

Distancing himself from emotion and the capacity to feel
Remains calm no matter the ordeal
Distancing himself from emotion and the capacity to feel
Remains calm no matter the ordeal
Distancing himself from emotion and the capacity to feel
But if this is true, how
can he be real?
He represents a myth disguised as reality
Or rather a lie hidden in actuality
Society's man is a disgusting illusion
Conjuring nothing but shame and confusion
For otherwise confident young men
This improper model must be destroyed
Or insecurities will lead to steroids
He acts like someone he is not
The man he was taught to be
Is not who he thought to be
And definitely not who he ought to be
Damned elusive perfection
Men hide for protection under shells of themselves
Confidence reveals its cracks
The macho is there but it's the person that lacks

Evening

Photography

Nathaniel Chen



Music in the Street

Photography

Sam Marzula



The Dainty Diner

Descriptive Essay

Laura Sosovicka

Swirls of smoke twist and wriggle about the kitchen as they seep their way through the swinging door and out into the contagiously positive atmosphere of the ever so charming diner. Typical Sunday mornings consist of famished, stomach-growling customers of all ages craving a promising breakfast after reading the Bible at church. The OPEN sign hangs crookedly in the window; its bright, neon-green colors attract guests from across the street and beyond. Potted plants enlighten the hyper atmosphere of the diner, and reruns of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* remind customers that spring is just around the corner. Chatter arises aimlessly as old friends reunite, while simultaneously filling their noses with the thick, sweet scent of maple syrup. Sunshine seeps through the windows casting shadows upon hustling and bustling waitresses who maintain the stability of cuisine stacked high on their trays. Every now and then the sizzling of the grill echoes throughout the small establishment, reassuring children that their pancake will be created into a masterpiece. Greasy bacon. Giant crepes. Scrumptious pieces of golden toast smudged with creamy butter. Mouths in unbroken motion savoring every bite of the glorious food arranged on the plate, wishing it would last forever and a day. Fresh orange juice cyclones into a petite, China glass as it departs the pitcher. Silverware clinks, chairs screech along the tiled floors, food nourishing and replenishing empty stomachs. No need for boasting, but the line to get inside wraps around town like a maze. The diner is divine.

The Steady Mystique

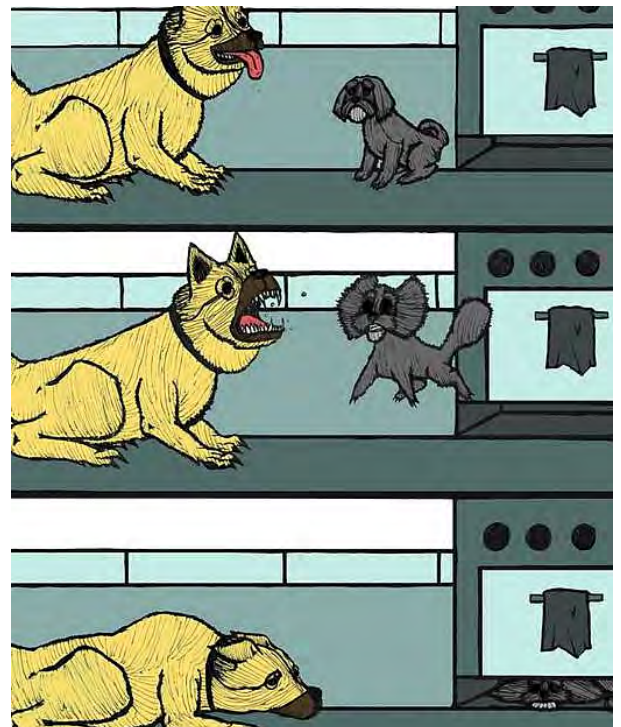
Descriptive Essay

Maddie Morrison

The stale, dry taste of crunchy Milk-Bone dog treats fills every crevice and corner of the open, grey-blue kitchen air. Thunder booms and rumbles unevenly across the wide, cold marble-tiled floor as incredibly massive, white-tipped toes appear around the farthest corner. Each toe holds a perfectly trimmed, well-groomed nail, ranging from yellow-tan to black in sharp color. Following the neat and tidy toes, huge, jet black paws lead to strong, lean legs and a sturdy framework, where every muscle ripples majestically behind a sleek, dark as night, cold-colored pelt. His shadowy coat glistens from his fresh, recent cleansing, and wafts of oatmeal aroma hang heavy in the moving air. Deep roasted chestnuts look up out of slightly saggy, droopy eye chambers. Everything clumsily yet gracefully hangs. His protracted, undocked ears. His dangling, floppy lips. His enormous tongue, as pink as a Laffy Taffy candy. At first glance, one might think of him as a slender panther, stalking regally through his protected territory. Behind him follows a chain of bones that finishes out in a curled over tip, imitating the shape of the letter "C." As a wet onyx nose reaches out to touch its master's newly changed clothing, he smells every material inside, from silk to polyester. He releases a low, booming bellow from deep inside his lungs, and his rib cage expands and contracts with the excitement of these new scents. Hands reach out to stroke the giant, velvet-like muzzle, soft as a horse's nose, leading up to the top of a flat, flapjack-like head. This huge, firm, strong, and gentle giant carries a bold and terrific name. Jaxon.

Two Dogs

Ink and Digital Editing
Leonardo Lupidi



Traveling on Unknown Lands

Blog Entry

Lea Zanon

Traveling is definitely one of the most awesome things in the world. The only word that you can say at this moment is discover. You just want to know all of the things about this country--the traditions, the customs, the habits, and the way of thinking. You see a view that you have never seen before, and it's exceptional. You look like a stranger in a territory known by others. Traveling is a new thing for the mind and the eyes.

Why travel? Some people ask this question, but it's not necessary. Traveling brings much more than we can imagine. Indeed, you change your routine, immerse yourself into the country by discovering their culture, meet others, and realize a dream. It's a feeling that you can't describe because you're scared, surprised, and even lonely sometimes. But all of these feelings can be caught up by the excitement.

I forget my real life and just enjoy the advantage of being in another country with another language and culture. Discover new foods, new music, new habits--all of these advantages in one trip. Effectively, the benefits of travel are to discover myself, to learn to do without the superfluous, to gain more self-confidence, and to create happy memories.

Voyager sur des terres inconnues

Translation

Lea Zanon

Voyager est définitivement l'une des choses les plus géniales au monde. Le seul mot que tu peux dire à ce moment est: découvrir. Tu veux connaître toutes les choses concernant ce pays--les traditions, les coutumes, les habitudes et les façons de penser. Tu vois un paysage que tu n'avais jamais vu auparavant, c'est exceptionnel. Tu ressembles à un étranger sur un territoire connu par d'autres. C'est une nouvelle chose pour l'esprit et les yeux.

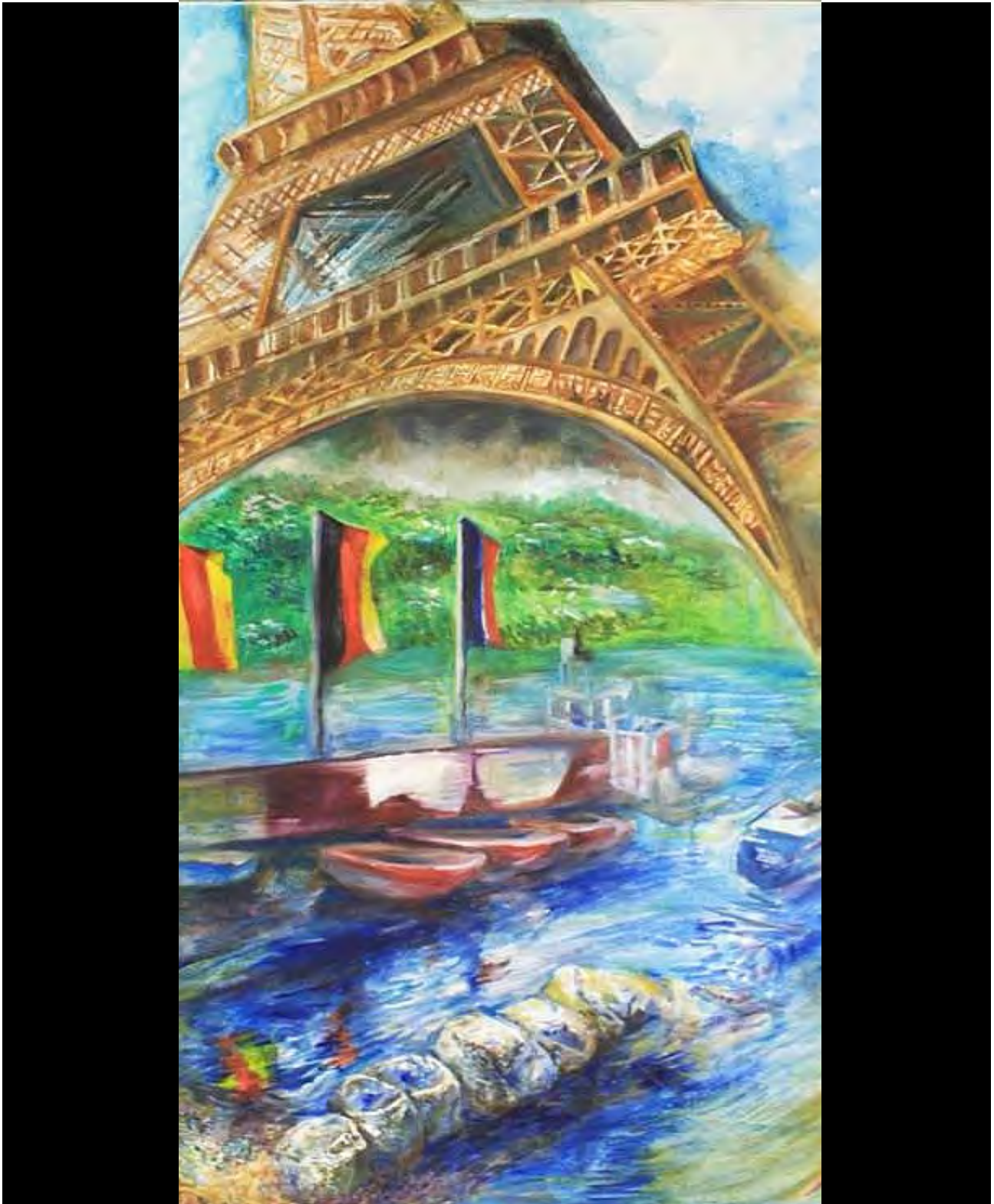
Pourquoi aller voyager? Certaines personnes posent cette question, mais cela n'est pas nécessaire. Voyager apporte beaucoup plus que ce que l'on peut penser. En effet, tu changes ta routine, tu t'intègres dans un nouveau pays en découvrant leurs cultures, tu fais des rencontres et réalise un rêve. C'est un sentiment que tu ne peux pas décrire parce que tu as peur, tu es surpris, ou tu peux te sentir seul quelques fois. Mais tous ces sentiments peuvent être rattrapés par l'excitation.

Oublier ma vraie vie et seulement profiter de l'avantage d'être dans un autre pays avec un autre langage et d'autres cultures. Découvrir de la nouvelle nourriture, des nouvelles musiques, des nouvelles habitudes. Tous ces avantages en un voyage. Effectivement, les bénéfices de voyager sont de- se découvrir soi-même, découvrir sans superflu, gagner de la confiance en soi, créer des souvenirs heureux.

My Favorite Places

Oil Painting

Kelly Kim



I am a Gamer
Personal Essay
Tristan West

My video games are a haven, universes filled with stories. Settling into my familiar chair, I immerse myself into the adventures of my games.

Arkham Asylum introduced me to the disturbing criminal mind. I made my way through the asylum, fighting to save Gotham from the malicious inmates of the island.

Halo led me into a war against the enemies of humanity. I fought the covenant and the F.L.O.O.D., protected humanity, and prevented galactic genocide.

Dead Space threw me headfirst into a ship overrun with the dead. With only myself to count on, I shot my way through the ship to survive.

Mass Effect took me to an uneasy galaxy, with all races wary of each other, in need of a soldier to stop the real threat. I united the galaxy and brought down the insidious Reapers.

Skyrim threw me into a plagued land in need of a hero. With the constant threat of bandits, assassins, war, monsters, and dragons, I saved Skyrim from all evil. I killed the evil vampire Harkon, the ancient mage Miraak, and the evil dragon Alduin.

Metal Gear showed me what it means to be a soldier. The story a rollercoaster of action, love, honor, and war. I worked against nature, enemies, even myself to adapt and overcome all obstacles thrown at me.

Assassin's Creed took me through time, exploring different periods in human history and revealing the killing that took place--the hidden blade an extension of my arm, the environment hiding me, my sword defending me from attackers.

Battlefield took me to war. The sound of guns and explosions ringing in my ears, the massive maps and weapon customizations, and the amazing online community generated a real war-like experience.

God of War let me take my revenge on the Gods. I fought my way to Olympus, killing all monsters and warriors the size of buildings who dared to oppose me, red vibrant blood spraying, my blades slashing my way to victory.

Minecraft gave me a canvas. Endless possibilities for endless creations, my imagination's limit the only barrier.

Dante's Inferno took me through hell, the fiery circles and their inhabitants struggling to end my crusade. Lucifer's minions proved no match for me and my scythe, and I faced Lucifer himself, a massive giant, and I defeated him.

And when it is time to log off, to say goodbye to my chair controller, I look forward to another day of saving all those worlds.

I Am a Gamer
Graphite Drawing
Tristan West

I prevented galactic genocide. Twice.



I beat Darth Vader and the Emperor, mastered both the Light and the Dark sides of the force, and started the Rebellion.



I descended the inferno, beat Lucifer, and saved my beloved Beatrice.



I took my vengeance on the gods and killed all who got in my way.



I saved my brother, War, and resurrected humanity.



I killed Alduin, Harkon, and Miraak, mastered the Way of the Voice, and saved Skyrim.



Birds
Colored Pencil Drawing
Madelyn Jack



Memorable 19th Century Poets

Critical Essay

Lillian Hsiao

Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman are two accomplished poets of the 19th century. But who is the more memorable one? Their differences can be shown in the styles of their poetry and personal behaviors. Walt Whitman is more outgoing and bold than Emily Dickinson ever was, and his personality reflects in his free-verse poetry. Likewise, Emily's quieter nature and lifestyle is expressed in her shorter, concise poems. Even though these two poets differ from each other, they have a similar scope of achievement in creating their own styles as well as developing individualistic personalities that establish their poems. Although Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman have similar personal traits that promote their poems, Dickinson's concise fixed form creates a subtlety that makes her the more memorable of the two.

Whitman's personal characteristics manifest themselves to make his work succeed through his themes, his personality, and his persistence. His personal beliefs present themselves as themes of his work. An example of a belief-based theme is universal equality. In the sixth entry of *Leaves of Grass*, he conveys his belief of universal equality by making grass the universal equalizer. In the poem he states that grass is "growing among black folks as among whites." Therefore, no matter what race, grass will grow and everyone will see them with their senses. This theme of equality allows his personal beliefs to differentiate himself from the majority opinion about the relationship between African Americans and Whites. Also, his personality is multi-sided. He can have "flair of a con man and the selfless dignity of a saint" or have "the sensibility of an artist and the carefree spirit of a hobo." His multi-sided personality helps him to create his freestyle poetry. His style of poetry, like him, is more than what it seems. It combines the style found in folk literature as well as making it sophisticated enough to be taken seriously. Lastly, Whitman's persistence is able to make his work succeed in the long run. Even though many people during his time are disgusted by his style, Whitman continues to advertise his *Leaves of Grass*. One way he does it is by sending samples. When he sends one of his samples to Emerson, he received an encouraging note to continue his work. Another way he advertises himself is through self-advertising and promoting his image. His persistence in making his work known allows others to know about his work. Through his beliefs, personality and persistence, he is able to differentiate himself from other poets of his time.

Similarly, Emily Dickinson's personality also manifests itself within her works and helps to differentiate herself from other fixed-formed poets of her time. Like Whitman, she has a set of beliefs that manifests itself within her works. An example can be found in her value of her faith. Raised as a religious person in a New England family, Dickinson's value of faith is profound. In one of her poems, "I never saw Moor," she emphasizes her faith by saying that even though she cannot see something physically like a moor, she knows heaven is real "As if the Checks were given." Also, her personality helps her to differentiate from the other poets. She is more reclusive than Whitman and generally never left the doorstep. However, Dickinson also hides an intellectually creative personality that can be seen only in her written poems. She is perceptive enough to form relationships between two objects and "make metaphors that embraced experiences beyond the limited compass of Amherst village life." Because of this intellectual side, Emily Dickinson is able to overcome her self-imposed restrictions through her perception that translates into her works.

Finally, her persistence is able to gain her audience. Although Emily Dickinson's attempt to make her works public is lacking, she uses other means to make sure her work is published. She hides her bundles of poems in mundane places where appreciative eyes will find them after her death. Her method of posthumous publication makes her works known to the public. Dickinson's personal traits translate into the success of her works much like Walt Whitman.

Walt Whitman's creation of freestyle allows him to surpass the restrictions of fixed form and make it more lyrical and felicitous through the usage of literary devices, cataloguing, and his drawn out length. Because freestyle needs to sound more like a poem than a simple paragraph, Whitman needs to use literary devices to make his poetry flow. An example of literary devices can be seen in his poem "Song of Myself" in line five. The line reads "I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass." In the words ease, observing, and grass, he uses consonance to emphasize the s sound. Also, in the words lean, ease, and spear, he uses assonance to emphasize the long e sound. This causes his entire poem to flow in a cadence that makes the phrase complete and whole. His usage of cataloguing also makes his poem more lyrical and serves the purpose to emphasize certain phrases. In "I hear America singing," Whitman is able to bring attention to the occupations that are present in America during his time through listing them. Finally, Walt Whitman's poem length allows his poems to flow like a song and typically ranges from twelve to sixteen lines long with some poems spanning many pages like "Leaves of Grass." His long poem length is attributed to his techniques of cataloguing and repetition. Both the cataloguing and the repetition allows not only the flow of the song but also further emphasizes his points he presents to support his ideas. However, to gain the flow and cadence in his free-verse poems, he has to be more extravagant in his usage of words in order to convey the quality. In effect, Whitman's style would then allow the weight of the meanings to be spread out throughout his poems.

In contrast, Emily Dickinson's style is more restricted and fixed in form compared to Walt Whitman. Her poems hold a rhyming scheme generally of abcb defe as shown in "I never saw Moor" and have a strict meter that alternates between stressed and unstressed syllables. Even with the restrictions she imposed, much like how she restricts her own life, she is able to present creative ways to express her ideas through her unconventional usages of dashes and capitalization. For example, in her poem "Much Madness," she brings out certain words through her capitalization. She capitalizes "Chain" to emphasize the consequences of nonconformity perceived by society and capitalizes "Majority" to represent people. The capitalization allows Dickinson to convey a subtle and deeper understanding than that of Whitman. Finally, Dickinson's brief, concise poems allow her messages to cut straight through. Each word she writes is meticulous and economical unlike Walt Whitman's flowing, boisterous poems. Also, her poems range from four to eight lines with some exceptions. In effect, her poems are heavier in weight in terms of thought and meaning compared to Walt Whitman's longer sweeping lines. With all of her styles, Dickinson's works require a deeper understanding to reach the subtler layers in her work than Walt Whitman and thus making her poems more memorable.

Despite the fact that both authors exhibit similar translations of their personalities into their poetry, Emily Dickinson is more memorable through her shorter, concise works. Even though Dickinson's voice in her poetry is not as boisterous as Whitman's voice, she makes it up through her intelligent diction that creates a subtle layer to her works. Because of the subtlety in her poems, it creates a need for careful involvement to interpret the meanings of her poems. This careful involvement helps her poems to speak memorably and effectively. Through her clever, heavy diction and her added subtle layers in her works, she is remembered and read by future generations.

Head of Stone

Photography
Gwen Lindberg



The Time Machine

Descriptive Essay
Lauren Randolph

Plunging into the musty darkness, anticipating the reunion of a lost treasure in the sea of abandoned hopes and dreams, the basement serves as a temporary spot to house the aspirations of yesterday. The deteriorated stairs guide nostalgic souls down into the eerie chasm, their creaking clamor stalking every stride. The display of rusting car parts accumulated in the corner compliment the faint aroma of oil and gasoline. A vintage pinball machine houses masses of cluttered clothing untouched for years, embedded with permanent wrinkles. Another doorway enters the home of 1970 Schwinn bicycles, purchased to chase a childhood dream. Timeworn guitar picks and an array of braided fishing rods accompany the stagnant velocipedes. Photographs of golden memories hover over the exhibit of generic American pastimes. Ancient, yellow-tinted newspaper articles canvas the aged, paint-peeling walls. A cracked dollhouse with antique dolls occupies the corner, their worn eyes and unkempt hair filled with dust and memories of years past. Frayed ropes and dirt bike helmets accumulate behind the stairs hiding with the lonely dust bunnies. Softball bats and worn gloves sit in a heap, untouched since the oldest daughter's final game. Rows of photo albums rest on the bookshelf, coated with a thin layer of dust and nostalgia. Foul-smelling sneakers and an outdated bowling bag take residency beside the memory-stained bookshelf, their odor pressed into the pages. Climbing up the stairs and not daring to glance back, the mysterious darkness creeps as the flimsy light goes out. No matter how hard my dad and I try, we cannot seem to throw out any of the relics that reside in the abyss we call our basement.

Not-So-Tiny-Tim and Me

Personal Essay

Madeline Badaczewski

A high-pitched and plaintive cry, “Hmmmmm nee nee neeeee” echoes, and the dishes in the china cabinet rattle against each other as a four hundred pound man waddles through the dining room. With a shiny, bald spot and only eight teeth, Tim tramps into the kitchen agitated and confused as to who these people are, where he is, when he will leave, and what to do now. Proceeding to the kitchen table and plopping down in the seat that will soon take the name, “Tim’s chair” next to the already claimed “Mom’s chair,” he begins surveying the situation with as much confusion as I. Little did I know that this four hundred pound, nearly mute man would teach me more about how to treat people than anyone else.

Tim Tullis, now a much healthier 226 pounds, is an autistic man who came to live with my family in 2004 when I was only six years old. His dad had become fearfully ill, and his mother had already passed away, so on that winter day, Tim found himself with no place to go. My mom, a respite caretaker, stepped in as she has for many others and provided Tim with a safe, stable place to begin life without his father, and through various decisions following that day, he has remained with us ever since. When he first arrived, he had never been away from his dad for more than a few days, and he refused to take his shoes off because he did not understand that his dad could no longer take care of him. Scared and confused, Tim wandered around the house saying, “Daddy, daddy,” yearning to return to familiar surroundings. After a few days, his nervous energy remained, but the fear did not. Tim slowly began to accept my family and me. He would smile at me, share his popcorn with me, and let me sit in his recliner with him. Despite his size, I realized Tim was a gentle man, and perhaps this is why we became friends.

A particular daily ritual summarizes our relationship. In 2004 the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette* featured a photo of Tim and me on the front page with an accompanying article recounting what he had gone through and how he handled his transition. In it, I hold his hands to say grace before dinner; although Tim looked agitated, I looked composed in a way that belied my youth. In this way, I hoped to let Tim know he was part of the family. Although I was six and weighed in at forty-five pounds, I was never afraid of Tim because of the way his huge hands would delicately rest in mine at this dinnertime prayer. Even then, I understood that going to a new place to stay for the rest of your life would be terrifying, especially for someone with autism and a lack of social skills.

As I have grown older, many of the lessons I have learned from Tim are relevant to daily life. He taught me to care for someone in a genuine, self-giving way. He showed me that sharing what little one has and exuding kindness could go a long way, not only for the person receiving, but also the person giving. I do not think Tim understood or will ever fully understand what he has done for my family and me, but his impact is meaningful in these and other ways. Now, when I see someone getting picked on in school, I have the courage to stand up to the bully. When I see homeless people on the street, I do not simply give them a few dollars, but I talk to them because Tim taught me that comfort and understanding are what they may need most. He taught me how to trust the soul of someone, rather than the look or limits of him.

And the Sea
Oil Painting
Eliza Ross



Before the Stars Burn Out

Flash Fiction

Kayla Romanelli

The stadium is teeming with kids, mostly seniors, sprawled out across the sweaty asphalt, leaning through the fence's metal bars, crowding the angry security guard blocking the gate, and I am one of them.

We've been waiting for the better part of an hour, waiting for the football game delay to be lifted and the gates opened. Brooding clouds cloak the sky in a shroud both threatening and invigorating, both wretched and divine. A storm is coming. Electricity surges through our veins, our hearts hammer, our voices rise in our throats. This is our fight song, our rain dance, our cry to the storms.

The gate opens. A thunderous roar erupts through the crowd. We run. With arms outstretched and hearts aflame, we run. The clouds burst, and we are soon inundated with wonder and rainwater, yet we continue to run, and each step feels lighter than the last, and each step fills our hearts more and more.

We are young and starving for dreams, a generation of kids getting lost in the moonlight searching for them, cut them out from adventure magazines, old newspapers, books from English classes taught by teachers that don't understand them and throw them to the stars; we bury the scissors somewhere never to be found and tape our lips because we're afraid of another kind of hunger. We're young, and even if the pitch black is too much to bear, the pouring rain is not. We build a boat and organize our own crusade, sopping hair streaming behind us, hope blessing the road. Hiding is not an option. The lightning beckons us, and we become its messengers, our mouths full of thunder and our brittle bones shaking with the roar of the sea. We are the oldest we have ever been, the youngest we will ever be again, and more alive than we have ever felt before, and I am just now realizing that nothing else matters.

Life isn't about having all of the answers. When things get hard, sometimes we just need to be reminded to slow down, to step in the dew of the morning grass, and let it kiss our bare feet, and remember what it's like to feel something, to sip on our coffee with a little too much sugar, or no sugar at all, and forgive ourselves, to dance in the rain and be reborn. Maybe we've only got five years until we're twenty-something, yet our hearts still falter when you ask us about where we are going in life. Maybe we've only got five years until we're twenty-something, yet our hands still shake when you ask us about love. But maybe none of "what matters," matters--the tests we failed and the boys and girls that never liked us back, the jobs we didn't get, *and the boys and girls that never liked us back...*the bad drivers, the bullies, the broken faucets and the pens with faded ink, the gendered magazines and the bank accounts decorated with only thirty-one dollars and seventeen cents. Maybe what matters is us, new freckles and shy smiles, cats stretching on beds and fresh rain in April, days when the orange peel comes off in one piece, days when Momma makes dinner, days that are just good because nothing bad happens. When did we forget to love everything? How could we have forgotten? Life is about this. It's about now.

I am standing on a bleacher in a high school football stadium. It is so loud that I am screaming at the top of my lungs, and I still cannot hear my own voice, lost in the sea of youth and freedom and sweaty bodies pressed against my own. I do not mind. The stands are teeming with life, the bleachers shudder with the thousand kids jumping up and down. We are a force of nature, a storm, and I am a part of it. I am alive and thriving and surrounded by the people I have known my whole life, and maybe in a year we will never see one another again, and maybe we will never be this together and this alive ever again, but we are now, and that is all that matters. We are nothing but endless, full of truth, housing overgrown gardens in our minds and souls. And later tonight we'll lay in bed and try to calm our heartbeats down, but it'll take a long time for us to feel again the way we felt when we woke up this morning because we are electric; we're atomic bonds and infinity and beyond and miles and miles of ocean; we're bed sheets and warm sweaters and good morning's desperate wish for a smile. This is us. We break and we break like glass against concrete and the boundaries we say we'll never cross and the adrenaline we get from never listening to our parents. Sometimes this life is more terrifying than we can imagine, but we are stars and never ending poetry and blank pages waiting to be filled up with scribbles and doodles of wildflowers and whatever else is stored in our funny little minds, and we are alive, and we are human, and one day we'll be burning stars, but right now it's a wonderful thing to have something this real.

Kayla

Photography

Jenny Herrle



VARIATIONS Staff Biographies

Rebecca Avigad--This is Becca's first year with *VARIATIONS* magazine, and she is so happy to be part of the team. Becca loves to write and read, especially fiction, and as part of the literary committee this year, she enjoyed reading works from many talented individuals. She was blown away by the creativity of all the submissions this year, and she hopes that everyone enjoys *VARIATIONS* as much as she did!

Sean Braithwaite-- Sean is very excited to be part of the 2016 *VARIATIONS* magazine. Being one of the literary editors, he has enjoyed reading the many excellent pieces of writing that were submitted throughout the school year. Sean has a passion for writing and is thrilled to work with a team who shares that passion as well. He is extremely impressed at the level of talent his peers have for creating different works of art, and he cannot wait for *VARIATIONS* to be published. Sean hopes you will take the time to read every page and appreciate every visual work as he believes everyone has a story that needs to be heard.

Stephanie Brendel--This is Stephanie's second year on the *VARIATIONS* staff, and she has loved being a part of such a passionate community of writers and artists. Through being on the layout team, Stephanie has learned so much about the way that a magazine is created (and how tasking a job merely formatting it can be!) She hopes that you enjoy reading and viewing all of the amazing works of art created by the North Allegheny student body.

Nathaniel Chen--Nathaniel wasn't really sure what to expect when he joined *VARIATIONS*. He had always been interested in the arts and writing, but he didn't know how a literary magazine like *VARIATIONS* worked. Over time, Nathaniel has come to appreciate the work in making *VARIATIONS* and what it stands for. From viewing the submissions to taking photos for the magazine, Nathaniel is amazed with the immense, hidden talent within NASH, and he is happy to experience it through *VARIATIONS*.

Nathan Clair--This is Nathan's first year as a *VARIATIONS* staff member. After seeing last year's magazine, he knew he wanted to be involved during his senior year of high school. He is impressed with how many great writers there are at NASH. He enjoys writing poetry and has two of his own works published in the magazine. He is very excited to have a role in creating such an amazing literary magazine.

Ciara Cullen--Ciara is thrilled to be part of the *VARIATIONS* staff this year. She enjoys having the opportunity to see the incredible talent in our school showcased in the magazine. She has always loved to read and write, and she enjoys seeing the literary and artistic work of her peers who share this passion. She hopes that everyone who picks up a copy of *VARIATIONS* is as amazed as she is by the creativity and artistry of the students of North Allegheny.

Variations Staff Biographies

Olivia Diulus--Her first year on the staff of *VARIATIONS*, Olivia has enjoyed seeing the talents of NASH student artists and writers shine. In addition to being a staff member of *VARIATIONS*, Olivia is a member on the Speech and Debate team and has had the privilege of working as co-editor of *The North Star*, North Allegheny's student-run newspaper. In her free time, Olivia also loves to write, and she always has her nose in a book. She hopes you enjoy perusing this compilation of amazing work from the NASH student body!

Gabby Herbert--This is Gabby's first year being a part of the *VARIATIONS* staff. She enjoys being able to see all the work that goes on behind the scenes of the magazine. Gabby is always amazed by the artistic talents and abilities of her peers. She loves being able to be a part of a club that has the ability to showcase these talented individuals who may not always get the recognition they deserve.

Rena Israel-- Rena, a member of *VARIATIONS* artistic selection team, is excited about her first year on the *VARIATIONS* staff. She loves scanning through all the submitted artwork and bringing forth talented artists to get the recognition they deserve.

Laura Jeon-- As part of the layout team, Laura is excited to read and appreciate all of the literary and artistic work from the talented people of North Allegheny. She enjoys organizing and decorating, so being a layout team member for *VARIATIONS* was the perfect choice for her. She has seen numerous students find their own ways of expressing their feelings and thoughts through their works, and *VARIATIONS* works flawlessly for those students, letting their work be published. Her experience with *VARIATIONS* always inspires her, and she believes it brings happiness to everyone involved, including herself.

Grace Jin-- Grace is ecstatic to join the *VARIATIONS* artistic team for the second year. She has always yearned for a platform to share students' voices, and *VARIATIONS* was the perfect spotlight for the diverse talents at NASH. She is excited to read writing that makes her think, select artwork that takes her breath away, and continue her appreciation for the arts in college.

Kathleen Kenna-- Kathleen, one of the creative editors, is thrilled to be working on *VARIATIONS* for the second year. She has always enjoyed creating, and she thinks the amount of talent at North Allegheny is amazing. She believes that *VARIATIONS* is a great part of the school and loves to see how her fellow students express themselves through writing or artwork. She is excited to help get some of the great work from North Allegheny students published.

Olivia Krause-- Olivia is excited for another year with *VARIATIONS*. She loves the opportunity to see all the amazing talent of her peers and help share that talent with the world. As Editor in Chief, she has taken a more hands-on role and has loved every moment of it. Olivia has acquired a new appreciation for the arts through her time with the magazine and hopes to continue doing so in the future.

Variations Staff Biographies

Rebecca Lee-- Rebecca has always wanted to be part of the *VARIATIONS* team but has only taken the initiative to join this year as a senior. She has sincerely enjoyed this experience and the ability to surround herself with literary and artistic talent. As someone who loves the arts, she is especially appreciative of *VARIATIONS* and the opportunity it presents to allow the North Allegheny student body a way of displaying works that reflect an individual's depth and effort, of which evidence is sometimes hard to find. She is proud to say that she has been part of the effort in putting *VARIATIONS* together and will fondly remember this experience after she graduates.

Sarah Losco-- Sarah, one of the literary editors, is very proud to present this year's *VARIATIONS* literary magazine. With a passion for literature and creative writing, she is thrilled to have had the opportunity to celebrate and showcase the work of the phenomenal writers and creative minds of North Allegheny. She believes self-expression in the form presented in *VARIATIONS* is one of the most captivating and precious of all human capabilities. To quote her favorite Emily Dickinson poem, "A word is dead/ when it is said,/ some say./ I say it just/ begins to live/ that day."

Gwen Lindberg-- Gwen has enjoyed her role in the editorial department for *VARIATIONS*; it has allowed her to explore and admire the creativity found among the students of NASH. She has six pieces published in this year's edition. Among her other literary and artistic accomplishments are five honorable mentions, two silver keys, and one gold key from the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards; a first place in Write Local's Better World Writing Contest; co-editor in chief for the 2015-2016 NASH Yearbook; and a Student Excellence Award in photography. She believes that *VARIATIONS* offers a unique opportunity for students to express their individuality without the pressure of formal contests. In her travels abroad through her college global studies program, she will look back on her time with the *VARIATIONS* staff and appreciate the inspiration she discovered to help others voice their experiences in creative ways.

Jasmine Mahajan-- Jasmine joined *VARIATIONS* because she has a deep interest in reading literature and viewing beautiful, creative artwork. She also enjoys the process of putting the actual collections of work together; thus, she joined the layout team. Through *VARIATIONS*, Jasmine has realized the immense amount of talent present in the NASH student body. She loves the idea of spreading the works of these artistic individuals through the *VARIATIONS* magazine. Jasmine hopes you enjoy the magazine!

Julia Maruca-- Julia joined the *VARIATIONS* staff not only to promote creative activities at NASH, but to meet more creative people like herself. She enjoys writing for fun and for contests, and her piece "The Ghosts of Pittsburgh Past," which won a Silver Key in the regional Scholastic Art and Writing competition, is included in *VARIATIONS* this year. Julia is also interested in journalism. She works on the staff of the North Allegheny *North Star* magazine and will be co-editor of the *North Star* next year. She also volunteers with the Marshall Elementary School Newspaper Club. In another creative capacity, Julia plays clarinet and saxophone and is part of the marching band. She looks forward to working on *VARIATIONS* next year!

Variations Staff Biographies

Eliza Ross--Eliza is ecstatic to be working as one of *VARIATIONS'* artistic editors. Art has always been an important part of Eliza's life, from coloring on walls with crayons to visiting New York City to look at Van Gogh paintings. It has been an immense pleasure to look at the incredible pieces done by students. Eliza has had a wonderful experience this year, and she looks forward to next year's magazine.

Alyssa Snavelly-- From an early age, Alyssa has enjoyed all kinds of artistic pursuits. She joined *VARIATIONS* as a way to showcase amazing art rather than create it. A junior, this is her first year working for *VARIATIONS* as part of the layout department. In her free time she enjoys painting and creating all different types of art.

Maia Sowers--Maia is thrilled to be on the *VARIATIONS* staff for a second year. She enjoys reading and writing on her own and always loves to see what her peers write. While she spends most of her time on a tennis court or doing homework, she always goes back to writing in her free time. She believes *VARIATIONS* is a great opportunity for students to express their creativity and talents, and she has loved being on the staff for the past two years.

MZ Tiv--MZ is psyched to be a part of the literary team for *VARIATIONS*. Along with writing and editing her own work, MZ thoroughly enjoys eating obscene amounts of vegan pizza and Oreos to maintain her healthy lifestyle. Besides *VARIATIONS*, MZ also writes for *Crybaby* and *Unich*, two independent monthly magazines written and edited by international teens. She believes promoting the amazing talents of artists is vital in order to showcase the creative capabilities of a community. MZ is glad she decided to join *VARIATIONS*, since the array of imaginative pieces brings out the unique voices of North Allegheny.

Jack You--Jack You is currently a senior on the *VARIATIONS'* editorial board. He enjoys reviewing all of the literary submissions submitted by the study body and thanks everyone for their hard work and creativity. Throughout his time with *VARIATIONS*, Jack has developed a greater appreciation for the selection process of literary pieces. He urges everyone to keep up the good work, and wishes all the best for *VARIATIONS* next year!

Lucie Waller-- Lucie Waller is excited to be on the *VARIATIONS* staff for the first time this year. In her free time she enjoys taking pictures and has some of them in this year's magazine. She loves seeing all the literature and the photography students have sent in. She is continually amazed by how much talent is within this school and cannot wait for everyone else to see it too.

Molly Zunski--Molly has had a wonderful time in her second year as a staff member for *VARIATIONS*. She always looks forward to reading what the students of NASH are writing, and she loves to hear everything they have to say. She is thrilled to see that there are so many talented artists at NA and that *VARIATIONS* can be a place for their work to thrive. Molly can't wait to see what the future holds for her in the creative world, thanks to the preparation *VARIATIONS* has offered her.

Colophon

Designers

Layout Department
Literary Editors
Artistic Editors
VARIATIONS Staff

Design Program

Canva

Printing Service

Xerox Equipment & Copy Center
200 Hillvue Lane
Pittsburgh, PA 15237

Paper Stock and Printing

Text: 8.5 x 11, Color Expressions 24 lb.
Cover: Hammermill Photo White, 80lb, perfect bound
300 Copies printed

Finance and Operation

Fundraising by *VARIATIONS* staff

Typography and Fonts

Source Serif Pro 56 titles
Source Serif Pro 12 headings
Source Serif Pro 10 text
Source Serif Pro 8 folio



