

*The
Inferno
2017-2018*



*Allen Community College
Online Literary Magazine*

Editorial Board

Erin O’Keefe English Instructor
Creative Writing Club Sponsor
Inferno Sponsor

Contest Review Board

Cynthia Jacobson Vice President of Student Affairs
Erik Griffith English/Geography Instructor
Doug Joseph Math Instructor
Tracy Lee English Instructor
Laura Neeley Administrative Assistant to the Dean
for the Burlingame Campus

Front Cover Artwork

1st Place Art Contest Winner: *Caroline Gatschet*
Piece: “The Astronomer” (graphite pencil on paper)

Table of Contents

I. Contest Winning Submissions

Poetry Contest First Place Winner Frankenstein	Molly Henderson	4
Poetry Contest Second Place Winner Metamorphosis of Some Sorts	Antonio Smith	5
Poetry Contest Third Place Winner The Struggle	Nicholas Reynolds	6
Short Story Contest First Place Winner The Darkest Times	Megan Boehmer	7
Short Story Contest Second Place Winner The Path	Megan Blythe	10
Short Story Contest Third Place Winner Judas	Raul Sanchez	11
Open Form Contest First Place Winner If Guns Were Made of Crayons	A. Summer Javadi	14
Open Form Contest Second Place Winner Angel's Lullaby	Shiloah Hutsen	25
Open Form Contest Third Place Winner Why Can't They See	Caroline Gatschet	16
Untitled Photography	Tracie Nasca	17

II. Additional Writing Submissions

Rain	Mariah Taylor	18
The Day I Was Betrayed	Chasidy Miller	18
Letter to My Father	Rachael Kothe	19
Through My Eyes	Diane Garcia	19
The Girl I See	Ludreche Bouanga	20
Saltine Wafers	A. Summer Javadi	20
Eternal Life	Shiloah Hutsen	21
Two Countries and a Corporation	William Wall	23
The First Shot	Gage Ruark	26

1st Place Creative Writing Club Poetry Contest


Frankenstein by Molly Henderson

I am pieces of a whole
Constantly tearing myself apart
Trying to make someone interesting
Someone better

But the magnetism of my pieces
Reorder themselves
Reorder me

Back to the beginning
Pieces buzzing through my brain
Back before I changed

That electric touch
That would fuse my pieces together
Eludes me
And keeps me from myself



I am a freshman attending ACC. I live near the town of Elsmore and the small community influenced how I interact with people today. Steeped in tradition, I found a way to lead myself to bigger thoughts and changes. I am still changing, but this mentality will help when I start my teaching career.

I wrote *Frankenstein* during a tumultuous time of emotion. Things were happening in my life that didn't agree with my plan for my future, and writing this poem helped order my thoughts so I could work passed them.

2nd Place Creative Writing Club Poetry Contest

Metamorphosis of Some Sorts

By Antonio Smith

Morning comes but you have already left my presence
Eyes of Mine flutter but feel tired and heavy
The sunshine leaking inside the cream-colored room
Exploding like bits of Lemonade filled kisses
I jump out of bed and start to stretch my muscles
Strands of blonde hair cascading around my shoulders
Walking to my Vanity Mirror I think of last night and you
My waist wrapped in a blue silk sheet
the color of a vast ocean draped in the daylight
The reflection in the mirror revealing my pink lips and Rosy Cheeks
Myself and this mirror have never seen or felt this feeling before
Like a swarm of Butterflies have hatched inside me
Bringing nervousness and an excitement with them

If this is what being in love feels like then it's addicting
I'm Infested with a swarm of butterflies all because of you
I quickly glance at the candle I lit last night before you arrived
Candle diminished and the wick has finally reached its end
Smoke still coming out of it quickly
Filling the air with burnt lavender
Raising my hand above the smoke
I feel the hint of the past warmth
Echoing our passion last night perfectly
Pulling my hand away, I glanced around my room to see if you said goodbye
I see a folded note laying on the opposite nightstand where you laid your head
Dancing over to the note would be too much, so instead I ran to it
Opening the note My heart feels nervous but in a good way
You ask for another perfect night with me
My mind starts to race and I feel my face get flushed
Like the butterflies and I going through a metamorphosis of sorts

Antonio M. Smith was Born July,25,1994 and Raised in Topeka, Kansas by his loving parents who are now deceased and where he still lives to this day. He is an Allen County Community College Student majoring in English for his associates degree and one-day dreams to be a full fledge writer of novels. He loves to eat Chinese food and watch his favorite Soap operas and primetime TV shows (A lot of them Comic Book Shows).

3rd Place Creative Writing Club Poetry Contest

The Struggle by Nicholas Reynolds

We met in the Fall,
You asked me how my day was,
I responded with the truth,
Then so did you.

I was sad, I was alone, I mourned one not yet gone,
And you were there.
You shared your story, you opened your heart.
And I was there.

And I fell in love, and you did too.
We talked, we shared, we bonded.
Though we both had darkness on our hearts,
Together we had light.

I remember the early morning talks.
I remember the sunrises we shared.
I remember every word of praise,
Every single compliment.

You gave me support when I needed it,
You gave me love.
And I gave you love, and support, unconditional.
We were happy.

But one day it changed.
You drew back, a shadow fell between us.
You were hurt, you were scared, you lashed out.
I hurt, I cried, but always, I loved you.

If only one thing I said remains in your heart,
Even now, with all the pain,
With all the sorrow, please remember.
I love you.

My name is Nick Reynolds, I've been a student at Allen Community College for longer than I really care to admit. I'm a physics major, have a fondness for science and mathematics, and I like to write creatively.

1st Place Creative Writing Club Short Story Contest

The Darkest Times by Megan Boehmer

With Dumbledore by my side I could have been victorious. But alas, I have been defeated and left in this lonesome prison called Normangurd that I created with no way out. But who am I kidding? I could've brought the Wizarding World to a whole new level without him. I was so close. If I hadn't hesitated to defeat Dumbledore for old time's sake I could've won. Maybe I should slow down, and start from the beginning. My name is Gellert Grindelwald, and I believe it is time for my side of the story to be heard. However being locked up in a prison where no one can reach me, I have decided to write it all down on paper.

Let's start when I was at Durmstrang, located in Scandinavia, the school of Dark Arts. It's funny to think that for a school that teaches the Dark Arts, they have a boundary for what is considered to be too dangerous. I immediately felt the connection to the Dark Arts and what I was trying to do was take my studies to a whole new level. So I began doing experiments, and all types of research, but before I could graduate they kicked me out. They claimed that what I was doing was twisted, dark, and too dangerous for my fellow classmates. Two of my old philosophies is that the weak must be destroyed, and only the strong must survive, or the weak must be ruled by the strong.

My main goal was to bring the muggles to their knees and bow down to the Wizarding World, since we are the superiors. I of course was, and still, am one of the strongest wizards in the world. I lead the revolution, so it would only make sense that I would become the leader of the new world. To remember that I came so close to making our presence known leaves a bitter taste in my mouth. But once again I am getting ahead of myself.

After I got expelled I decided to study history, lore, and powerful mysteries of magical artifacts, henceforth leading me to discover the Deathly Hallows legend. At once I felt a magical pull to find the famous artifacts and make them mine. The Elder Wand, the Resurrection Stone, and the Invisibility Cloak. In the summer of 1899 my quest for the three famous artifacts took me to my great-aunt Bathilda Bagshot's home. She welcomed me with open arms and no questions asked. I had a feeling that she knew that I had gotten expelled, and why. But because I was family she let me in.

Not very long after my arrival my great-aunt introduced me to the Dumbledores. A charming family most people would say. But the only one who really caught my eye was Albus Dumbledore. Sure he had a magical brother, Aberforth as well as a ill-sister, Ariana that would catch other people's eye, but for me it was Albus.. I knew that at once Albus had potential. I thought I needed him to help further my search. But after we parted ways as friends, I realized that I didn't need him. Our friendship was great, although short lived.

I thought that with Albus by my side we would be unstoppable together. I thought he shared the same dream as me. To bring the muggles down and recognize their superiors. After all what have they done for us? All the muggles did was persecute us for trying to help make their lives better. They don't deserve our help. Many of our kind died by their hands. Why should we continue to help those who don't want our help and instead persecute us? That's

what I pleaded to Albus. Albus felt the same after those muggle boys beat up and damaged Ariana.

After two months of dreaming about a new world where muggles noticed and feared us, while we ruled the world, our friendship ended. We were going to travel the world together, and train. But with Albus being the head of his family, and his sister Ariana being ill, that dream ended. Aberforth, Albus's brother, confronted him about how he was spending too much time with me and how he has neglected Ariana. In a fit of rage I put him underneath the Cruciatus Curse, which is a banned curse and still is the best spell to cause physical pain. Aberforth's eyes rolled into the back of his head. He was rolling around on the floor, completely oblivious to his surroundings. His mouth was open as if silently screaming. I felt wonderful torturing the boy who dared to take Albus away from me. Albus was mine. Albus stopped me, and right after that there was a fight between the three of us. Albus, Aberforth and I fought each other. Ariana tried to stop us but with her being ill, she was incapable of doing so. Due to her magic being unstable she was nowhere near the power to stop the three of us. Especially, Albus and I because we were the most powerful wizards there. To me the duel happened in slow motion, but for Albus and Aberforth the duel happened fast. In the midst of the duel Ariana got hit by a curse and died. Albus and Aberforth have no idea who casted the curse that killed her, but I do. I know exactly who killed her, and Albus suspected that I knew.

After Ariana died, I fled Godric's Hollow for fear of getting arrested and having my dream short lived. After I left I grieved. Not for Ariana's death, but for losing Albus. Our friendship was destroyed beyond repair. Neither Albus nor Aberforth tried to come after me. Albus turned a blind eye to me for a long time. He feared that if he followed and attempted to stop me, I would tell him who killed Ariana. He was right. I would've if he came after me sooner than when he did. For I grew so powerful that even he could no longer ignore my actions and was sent to stop me. But when we dueled, I knew that I wanted to find out who was truly stronger. Even more so because I had acquired the Elder Wand.

With the Elder Wand I began gathering followers who would love to share this new ideal world with me. Not long after, we started launching several attacks all across Europe. There were several mass murders, and we gained the attention of the wizarding authorities from around all the world. Even the muggles started to notice these as well. I was ecstatic. We were so close to risking exposure and war. The wizarding authorities were so enraged that they began a massive wizard hunt to track me down. There were constant reports in the *Daily Prophet* and the *New York Ghost*. I do give some credit to the Magical Congress of the United States of America President Seraphina Picquery came so close to capturing me, but nonetheless she failed altogether.

After that I heard rumors about a possible Obscurial in the United States. I knew that if I recruited this Obscurial I would become unstoppable. An Obscurial is a young witch or wizard who developed a dark parasitical magical force, known as Obscurus. As a result of their magical abilities being repressed through psychological or physical abuse. The Obscurus is so powerful because everytime the witch or wizard lost control, the dark magic would spontaneously burst out and destroy anything in its path. So I did what I thought was right, I kidnapped a man named Percival Graves who was an auror that hunted dark wizards, and impersonated him. The best thing about him was that he worked at the Magical Congress of the USA (MACUSA),

therefore giving me their unlimited resources without them knowing. I managed to track down the Obscurial to a small pathetic house in New York City that was against witchcraft . There I met a boy named Credence Barebone. At first I thought he was nothing but a Squib that could be used as a pawn in my quest to find the Obscurial. I convinced him into helping me by promising that I would save him from his adoptive mother, and teach him magic. Of course at the time I didn't think there was a possibility that he could learn magic. After that I had Credence take me to his sister Modesty Barebone, for I believed that she was the source of the Obscurus after hearing about the death of her stepmother. After I found Modesty I did what I thought I had to do. I thought I needed to drop what I considered to be dead weight. That dead weight was Credence. My betrayal of him pushed him to his emotional and mental breaking. He transformed into an Obscurus. It was then that I realized I was looking for the wrong person, and that my target was right in front of me.

I was surprised yet a bit overjoyed to know that the young man was the Obscurial. I thought it would be easy for me to persuade him to join me. After all I managed to do it once before right? I attempted to get him to join my ranks but I only angered him more. He began to go on a rampage and destroying the city. Finally after what felt like forever with the help of Newt and Tina, we almost calmed him down. I was almost finally able to bring the muggles or no-maj to their knees and rule them. I was so close to bringing the Wizarding World to a whole new level of respect and recognition by those scum that we help without any of their appreciation.

But then the pompous President Picquery had to come and stick her nose in my business in at the wrong time. Without even batting an eye she had her aurors destroy one of the many keys that I could've used to become unstoppable. Using Credence would had helped me destroy many more cities and would bring the attention to the muggles. In anger I started attacking the President and her aurors. Imagine their surprise to have who they believed was one of their elite aurors start attacking them and then find out that that person was actually me impersonating him.


Oh I caused quite a big and beautiful scandal for that.

Losing my control and through my rage I started attacking them. I was very angry. After months of searching I had found the Obscurus and now she had destroyed it. Newt Scamander started attacking me and managed to stop me. He revealed who I was and they even arrested me, putting me in prison. But what prison did they think could hold me? I escaped not long after that and built my own prison for my enemies called Nurmengard. Nurmengard is located in the middle of the sea. I took Albus Dumbledore's saying "For the Greater Good" as my slogan and had it carved above the prison doors. I never thought that one day I would be imprisoned in my own prison.

After that glorious scandal with Scamander and the aurors, fate thought that it was time for Albus Dumbledore and I to finally meet once again. After all these years and going our separate ways, this was how we met back up again. Not as friends but as enemies. There was a raw emotion of pain, hurt, betrayal, and anger over losing him. As I stared at him, I realized he felt the same. I once again tried to plead to Albus to join me. To help me bring a new day that would help the Wizarding World get recognition from the muggles that we help and even dare to protect.

After all we were brothers. We had the same dreams, or so I thought. He once expressed his desire to make the muggles pay for making his sister ill and unstable. But even worse, he hated me and tried to blame me for the death of Ariana. However as our eyes met we both truly knew who killed her that day. Albus was the one who killed her. One of his curses had gone astray and hit her. Even though I still pleaded him to join me.

But he wouldn't listen. He defeated me and locked me up in the highest cell of my own tower. It was during my time that I regretted my actions. But I still wish the Wizarding World would get appreciation from the muggles. Was that too much to ask for? Why do we have to hide in the shadows like rats? Does no one else feel as chained as I do? I just want to be free and get the recognition we all deserve. Even just a little bit of gratitude.



Hi my name is Megan Boehmer and I really enjoy writing random stuff. Whether it be essays, short stories, novels, etc. Shoutout to all the people who have helped inspire me and put up with my crazy ideas!

2nd Place Creative Writing Club Short Story Contest

The Path by Megan K. Blythe

A path is laid out before us. Both old and new, the path and us. We walk easily side-by-side. This path is one that has been travelled for generations, and this would not be my first time my soles followed this trail. But it is yours.

I see you study the ever-changing same surroundings as this place takes your breath away. The colors meld together and seem to blur in my weary gaze, but your bright smile is clear as day.

Then you turn to me, and I meet your warm gaze.

"What?"

"You said you've been here before, is it still the same?" You ask me, curiosity burning your tongue. I study the path before us.

"No. Yes. A little of both." I shrug. "Does anything change anymore? Or do we tell ourselves it's all different?"

You frown in confusion. "Of course, things change, silly." You nudge my arm playfully and I smile. "It has been too long since I last saw you, old friend."

"Well, new friend, I'll tell you I haven't changed in decades." I nudge you back. "But, you seem to know a lot for one so young. Tell, have you changed?"

"... I don't really know." You look forward and your eyes travel years into the future. "I don't think I have, but do we even notice change?"

"No. Change is a myth." I shake my head. "Time is an illusion and all that hubbub." You snort, laughing boldly.

"You're so old." You stuff your hands into your pockets. "I feel like I'm changing now. Seeing new things does that to you, ya'know?"


I shrug. "Is it really new?"

"New to me, stupid." You roll your eyes at me. "Get with the times, old friend."

Your words sting, but I recall myself saying that all those years ago when I first walked this path with my own guide. I guess I am the stupid one. Then again, there is genuine wisdom in naivety. So, I stay quiet and leave you to stumble.

One day you'll be walking this path in my place, and you'll know then the truth of the world. Nothing and everything changes. As the way of life, and subsequently death. So new friend, good luck.

I come to a stop, the path disappearing before me, but you continue on. In the distance there is a form waiting for you, and I wonder if this is what it's like to love and to lose. I sigh and look at the forest, dark and dreary, calling me into its peaceful embrace. And I go.



Megan Blythe was born in Fort Scott, Kansas January 14, 1998 to Chip and Desirae Blythe. She graduated from Uniontown High School in May of 2016, then later attended Allen Community College as an Art Major with the intent to become an art therapist or art educator. She is still currently studying at ACC.

3rd

Place Creative Writing Club Short Story Contest

Judas by Raul Sanchez

I opened the door for her. Her unique fragrance left a faint trail where ever she walked. A trail that I knew too well, and it was a trail that led me to the impossible. Beauty in the tress, the marvelous animals that walked by and even the sun was worth the pain, just so I could admire the its perfect shape. Her trail I followed but never could I touch the things around them, I would try, how I tried. "Well aren't you going to come in?" Mireille said to me. "Oh yeah, of course," I replied entering the room. Mireille stood there smiling at me waiting for me to tell her where to go next being as polite as ever. She was a gift from God. From her head to her feet everything about her was just proof that God was the supreme artist. The way her small feet were so perfect in size and how they blessed the earth every time she walked. Her body resembled an hourglass except time made an exception and stopped for her. If I had to

pick her most gorgeous feature it would have to be her face. Her face could make any man, women, animal fall on their knees and express their love to a person they have never meet. Sweet red cheeks, perfect nose and full lips that all fit together like a puzzle to a create art. With perfect symmetry, a perfect shape her face was everything I was not.

I was short man, just a bit over weight. My feet would betray me at times due to their large size, I would catch myself tripping over them. My eyes were to close together, my nose was round, and my lips were busted. My dark skin was rough with scars and bruises, from my mom that never went away. My mom hated me, and I never met my father. My mom despised me because I was a boy and I reminded her of my dad. On Sundays, the days I wouldn't get hit she would make me wear a dress and make me put on a wig. She then hid the scars and bruises with makeup. In my time in church I learned a couple of things from God. I learned there is God and Bad. I learned everyone sins. I learned that God made everyone in his own image. A lot of things I just couldn't understand.

I told her to take a seat. It was date night and we were celebrating our sixth-year anniversary of being a couple. As a celebration I told her to come over and I would cook us a well-done meal with wine included. My apartment was small and was located in the outskirts of town so 4th of July came about once a week. I worked as bus driver and a dishwasher at a nearby restaurant. Mireille worked and studied at her college. She was studying to be a heart surgeon. On her free time, when we weren't hanging out she volunteer at the local hospital. On my free time, when I had some I would go hunting. A hobby I have learned to love over the years. She had had her whole life going with her, the only time people would judge her was when we would go on dates in public. People were confused on how such a vile man was with a Goddess. Everyone would be left at a loss, even me.


I stared at her face from across the table just admiring. She stared at my eyes waiting for me to say something. "What are we eating today?" she asked in her soft voice. "I'm cooking some lamb, have you ever had it?" I replied. She nodded her head side to side with and smiled. I hated when she smiled. Smiling creates wrinkles damaging her perfection. I never told her that though. I was too scared she would leave me. I still needed her for now.

We began eating. Half way finished I asked her, "Why are you with me, why do you love me?" "I just do, I love the way you make me laugh, I love that your faithful and I think you're really cute." She explained. I put up a fake smile agreeing to what she said. "What a liar," I thought, "I hate when she laughs because it damages her face, she knows that I've cheated on her before when I've been drunk, and she dares call me "cute" like I'm some kind of puppy." My mind began to race, with different thoughts coming at me from different directions until I remembered the wine. I told her that I left it in my car and that I'd be right back to go get it. As I opened my car I saw the wine but right next to it was some tranquilizer liquid from my hunting. I took them both with me. Back in my apartment I fixed up the drinks with my back towards her. To her drink I added the tranquilizer liquid. I handed her glass and we exchanged cheers. Mireille took a drink then moments later passed out. I cleared the table, laying across with her feet together and her arms stretched apart. Her face was so beautiful when she slept, a face she did nothing. I went over to a cabinet and pulled out a slick knife, I glanced at my reflection with it for the last time.

My right hand grabbed a full set of hair, my other hand traced around her forehead with my knife. I applied pleasure to my left hand, blood began to spat out. What a mess she made. I

continued through her cheeks then chin then back to the top. Some much blood. Carefully I cut around her eyes sockets. The blood was all over my face and hands at this point. A smile appeared on my face, I was almost done. My right hand started to peel her face out and my other cut any of the extra tissue that was still connected from underneath. What used to be Mireille stared at me with her eyes and teeth. My black clothes were soaked in blood, so I decided that I needed a change. I took off Mireille's white dress, then placed it on the couch. She lay there half naked with a faint pulse. I washed the face skin with gentle care and slowly placed it next to the dress. My eyes almost wept with joy. I put on the dress, a tight fit but still good. I grabbed the skin mask with both hands. Being the most careful I had ever been. The skin touched my face and it slowly covered what it could. I felt like beauty, the path Mireille would lead behind was now mine. I could touch everything, be anything, I was greater than the sun itself. God had no choice but to claim me as one of his master pieces now. What was once a mistake has now become his best creation, but God did not create what I have just become, I did. Have I surpassed the Man himself? I have.

This beauty cannot be selfishly kept a secret. It had to be shared with the world. I grabbed my car keys and as I head towards the door I saw a corpse. "Who was that?" I thought. A pool of blood filled what was the face. "She's is beautiful." I whimpered out. I laid on my knees gazed at the body. I began to cry. Tears rolled from my perfect face down to the blood bath on the floor. One by one my tears mixed together with the red river; I picked up some of that blood and washed the corpses feet with it. The tears stopped, and I got up. I headed towards the exit. I closed the door for myself.



I'm a student at Allen CC. I like to run. Don't get to spoked by my short story, I tried adding some symbolism so yeah just pay attention. I hope you guys like it, I'm just an amateur

1st Place Creative Writing Club Open Form Contest

If Guns Were Made of Crayons

by A. Summer Javadi

There is no warmth in metallic silver,
That granite gray leaves dead brown babies,
On garbage filled streets.

This hexadecimal syndrome,
Stuffs fresh, cut wax as trash-bagged wallflowers,
Their petals wilted,
They would have colored white within the lines of clouds,
But rain dropped skies full of bullets,
Left their playgrounds empty.

Their shrill laughter,
Echoes off beautified, tax dollar mosques.
Dancing baby angels play hopscotch near Crayola crayons,
No longer rolling from chilled, stubby fingers.

Do they build sand castles in the East?
Or does the ocean of oil knock down those walls?
Pulled in, by the tides of the men,
Whose glasses of Merlot stain bloodthirsty teeth.

Is that the color of red we see,
As we open our fresh, cut crayons,
On our first days of school?
I reckon not...

While they draw stick figures in the sands,
Americans draw constitutional guns in hand,
Wrapped in bloodshed red, dessert ghost white,
And flat-line, code blue.

And if guns were made of crayons,
I doubt humpty-dumpty's men,
Would care to color him in,
That white washed hue.

2nd Place Creative Writing Club Open Form Contest

Angel's Lullaby (Ballad) by Shiloah Hutsen

Today I remembered that old movie line
When I heard the church bell rings.
That every time it happens
An angel gets its wings.

But I also heard a whisper
That seemed only for me to hear.
It seemed to come from deep inside
And not heard with my ear.

Heaven is all around us
Seen most with innocent eyes.
Angels among us daily
To stop our silent cries.

They know our thoughts
They feel our pain.
Angels know our secrets
And the fears we cannot name.

Like a parent with a babe
They whisper and sigh.
Angels strive to stop our tears
By singing their lullaby.

Their song is of the future
Of things yet to come.
They also sing of victories

I am a poet, writer, and graduating student at Allen Community College holding a 4.0GPA and happily awaiting this May's commencement ceremony in the Anthropology and Sociology program where I will be continuing for a PhD in Anthropological African & Middle Eastern Studies. I have been the organizer for the Kansas City Midwestern region Poetry Groups and have worked for Poetry for Personal Power, a non-for-profit organization formed to assist mental health advocacy in the arts where I have housed poetry workshops and stand up poetry events for both adults and at-risk youth. I live in the Kansas City metropolitan area with my four children and fellow poet husband, Mort.

And the demons we move on from.

3rd Place Creative Writing Club Open Form Contest

Why Can't They See by Caroline Gatschet

"Your hair is so pretty"
"I love those shoes"
"Your makeup looks amazing"

I know they all mean well,
But is that really all they see?
Do I only consist of my appearance?
My body?
My clothes?

Why can't they see
My immense love for the stars and thunder
Because they make me feel less alone
My dislike of math
Because I do not think there is always an answer

Why can't they see
Me as both a freezing shard of ice
And a gleaming hot coal
Me as both a raging ocean
And a light raindrop on your skin

Why can't they see
My dreams
My intellect
My ambition
My strength

I'm a forty-year old freshman at Allen County (Burlingame Campus). Last summer I left a pretty good career as a Director of Operations for a restaurant franchise where I over-saw twelve locations in the Topeka area with over 150 employees. I have also been a semi-pro football player, or coach for almost 20 years. Now I am going to school to get an education degree with an emphasis on English in the pursuit of being a teacher and football coach for a middle or high-school.

I have been married for almost twelve years and I am the father of 3 beautiful children who remind me every day that there is a chance to do something right.

Why can't they see
Me?

2nd Place Creative Writing Club Art Contest

**Piece: Untitled (Photography)
by Tracie Nasca**



My name is Caroline Gatschet and I am a senior this year at Hayden High School in Topeka. I have a wide variety of interests including fishing, hunter jumper horseback riding, tennis, track, swimming, reading, and drawing. Following high school graduation, my plan is to attend Kansas State University and major in Bioscience or Biotechnology with the intent of continuing my education in veterinary school after earning my bachelor's degree. I have grown up around horses my whole life and am looking for a career where I am able to continue interacting with them and other large animals. Additionally, I am considering minoring in Art as it is a passion I wish to carry on in my future.



Additional Poetry Submissions

Rain by Mariah Taylor

Hear the tap tap sound, digging in your mind,
Trying to dig mindless wells in our mind,
Digging deeper than the ocean line
filled with hope that's what these monsters cling to most,

Yes, they leave not without a piece to add to their supply though,
With each thorn comes with a price,
Eventually faith will be the only thing we cling to
Homes become ghost towns,

It's easier to become a monster,
Then show your true inner beauty,
Rise above what is said, be humble and bright as the spanish sun.

The Day I was Betrayed by Chasidy Miller

I feel myself pushing against him
He won't let me up
His horrible, nasty lips on mine make me feel disgusting
Struggling I try so hard to push him off of me
He is holding me down too tightly
Slipping his tongue into my mouth he starts to touch me
I don't want this, his hand on my breast
Wishing this was all a dream I close my eyes and tune it out
When he is done with me I am left there, lying on the cold hard ground
Suddenly I realize I have to tell somebody
I run to the nearest house, banging on the door
Instead of helping, they ask me what I did to deserve it
The day I was betrayed was that day
And since then, I have vowed never to speak another word of it
As long as I live

Letter to My Father
by Rachael Kothe

It's been so long since I've written a word
My heart hammers in my chest as write
Tears fall in a torrent across my cheeks
Rage still burns in my soul for the disease that took you from me
What do I say when you aren't there to hear it
Why can I not scream
Why can I not shout
Sorrow's murky hands still strangle my voice
For now, you do not live in my world and since it has come apart at the seams
I know only that I long to be held in your arms again
For you to be real again in my eyes that I share with you
My madness takes a toll on my heart
My grief unbounded by time's constraints
Since how does one move on I imagine slowly
Memories are as fleeting as if to catch smoke in a bottle
Dreams are relieving the anguish I feel in waking
Harkening to your voice would be a grand feat
Immeasurable woe dissipates over the years
I will hope to see you again someday in afterlife of some kind somewhere, someday
I am glad to have been your daughter
Love Pumpkin

Through My Eyes
by Diane Garcia

You see a smile... I feel a frown;
there are up days, but been more downs...
That's how I see it through my eyes
You hear a laugh... I feel pain;
can't get lost now, no pain no gain...
That's how I see it through my eyes
Won't stop now, hold back the cries
I'm strong not weak, not one who dies
That's how I want you to see me through your eyes
Because that's how I see it through my eyes

The Girl I See
by Ludreche Bouanga

I see a girl
Beautiful as a perfect rose just starting to hatch
Pure as an angel
That shine bright as the sun on a hot summer day
With eyes that are bright as the moon on a dark night
She is a walking beauty day and night

I see a girl with a beautiful simile that brighten my day
That work harder and harder everyday to achieve success
She puts her heart in everything she does
She is so smart, so dedicated, so loving and caring
She is a fighter and a lover
She has a brain and knows how to use it

I also see a girl that I could be with and have something real
With infinite kindness and beauty
Everytime I see her I'm speechless
Makes me go to my happy place
That is worth it and she's every man dreams

Saltine Wafers
by A. Summer Javadi

We left off the shore at noon
Pressed together between pages
Like dried, violet Moors
The juicy, drip drops of olives
Green though they were
Smashed against shortened glass
Smelled of a Greek summer—

They took our serious glances
As allegory
Pumping panic into our mothers' graves
Like a formaldehyde chase
They scantily clothed themselves with freedom
Tradition folding their game
Bottle-bleached just the same

I'm sorry 'bout the whistling winters
Cut through veins like razor blade kisses
Their violent twilight
Painted strokes upon trees
With suffering shadowed affects
I'm not comfortable with Jesus
He took my last miracle whipped sandwich
And refuses to share
So, I decided to stop my Sunday brunches with him
And gave 'em back the saltine wafer
While moving on to my vegan phase.

Additional Writing Submissions

Eternal Life: A Story of Enclosed Putrification

By Shiloah Hutsen

All my life, I would tell people the reason I was fearless was because I would never die. I would explain that Heaven didn't want me, and Hell was afraid I would take over. Now I wonder if maybe I was right. I've jumped out of airplanes, freefallen off cliffs, raced dirt-bikes, rode bulls in the rodeo, and fought everybody who ever looked sideways in my direction. I've drunk in some of the dirtiest bars, smoked anything that could be smoked, and smoked some things that shouldn't be. I've eaten large amounts of red meat, the redder the better. I've cussed in churches and prayed in foxholes. I've been everywhere I've wanted to go, always pursuing the next adventure, even if it was in a place I wasn't invited to go. I've always been the loudest, brashest, most obnoxious man in the group. Tall enough to tower over most people with arms the size of the average man's legs. I've carried myself like a modern-day Paul Bunyan but without the redeeming qualities of work ethic or compassion.

I always thought that death would be the end of me and I would leave nothing left behind but a few "larger than life stories" told by a few acquaintances or by the police. Both groups of people who I used to run into from time to time. But I knew that I wouldn't leave anything lasting behind. I never really thought much about death, especially since I always lived

life “in the moment”. My concept of planning for the future involved buying condoms in the economy size boxes.

I’m still not sure what happened. I remember waking up in the middle of the night, in the arms of some nameless woman. She was just some chick that I met at a dive bar, who matched me shot for shot for a while. When she started stroking more than my ego, I agreed to give her a ride back to her house. I knew she was married but I didn’t give a shit. Her house was clean, and the men’s house-shoes inside the front door were too small to worry me much.

We were lying in bed together, with her passed out when I heard a small sound. A footstep coming down the hall. I thought about getting up, but instead reached over and started rubbing my hands up and down her back. She moaned slightly, just enough to be heard, not fully awake, but enough to suit my mood. The bedroom door was open, and I couldn’t make out anything in the shadows, but I knew her husband was standing there.

“You know, my mother never saw the irony in calling me a son-of-a-bitch,” I said, staring into the blackness, “And I never once questioned her judgment.” I have told that joke a bunch of times, but I’ve never told it and got so little reaction from my audience. This time there wasn’t so much as a chuckle. I kept rubbing on his wife, keeping my eyes open for the slightest movement or change in the dark. “Good wives are just bad girls that don’t get caught. I know this is awkward for you but imagine my position. Better yet, imagine the position I was in a couple of hours ago when I was still intoxicated enough to find your woman attractive. Now I’m glad I’m not a wolf and I don’t have to gnaw off my own arm off to get out of this trap.”

Still nothing from the doorway, but the still figure beside me was no longer asleep. “Arnold? It’s not what you think,” she started. There was a burst of fire and a loud explosion from the doorway, and I was splattered with something wet and warm. Before I could register the coppery smell of blood in the air, there was a second shot and everything went even darker than before.

I don’t remember much after that. No bright lights, no tunnels, nothing. There weren’t any angels singing to greet me. There were no demons either. Nothing, but a continuing blackness. I don’t remember a hospital, or a morgue. I don’t remember a funeral either. I don’t know when I became truly aware that something was wrong. I just know that I’m still here. It’s still darker than I can explain, but it’s not silent. Anything but that. I can hear the flesh beginning to drip as it breaks down from the bacteria. I can feel it running down my bones as the decay turns me essentially into soup. I can both hear and feel the maggots eating away at my being, as I can’t help but picture their little white bloated bodies. I would throw up, but I can’t. I’m just here. I’m sure I’m losing my mind, going more insane as time goes on. Considering how I was always nuttier than squirrel turds anyway, I’m not sure how much longer I can hold out before I just snap. But this immortality, if that’s what it is, is a fate worse than death.

Two Countries and a Corporation: Various Plans for Mars Colonization by William Wall

Humanity has always wanted to advance its self in all facets of technology. Whether it be automobiles, computers, or in the field of medicine, humanity has never backed down from a challenge. However, one challenge has continued to remain elusive. The dream of a colony on another planet. In this paper the focus will be on the planet Mars. This fascinating world has been for many governments the subject of much theory crafting for what would be needed to establish a Mars colony. This paper will cover three different plans for Mars colonization. Two countries designed plans the Soviet Union and the United States who engaged in the Space Race during the Cold War. An American corporation SpaceX, also has plans Mars colonization. Each of them has their own reasons for colonizing Mars.

Before a timeline of colonization is established, a brief overview of what is currently known about Mars is needed. Mars often nicknamed the Red Planet due to its color from space, is the fourth planet in our solar system(Burgess 1). It is orbited by two bodies: Phobos and Deimos(Burgess 15). Over the last 40 years, beginning with *Mariner 4* in 1965, humanity has learned much about the Red Planet(Burgess 22). On the subject of colonization, four important discoveries stand out. The first one is Mars's atmospheric composition. While an atmosphere had been known to scientists since the 1700s it was not until NASA's *Viking* landers that a composition was determined(Burgess 41). Unlike the earth's atmosphere, Mars is made up mostly of carbon dioxide(Burgess 41). The second discovery was presence of dust storms on Mars. These dust storms are possible because of Mars homogenized soil(Burgess 54). They could range from a local event to a planetary wide event(Burgess p54). Third, the existence of water on Mars in the polar ice caps could provide humanity with a potential source of water. Finally probes sent to Mars help to provide information regarding how long it takes to get to Mars. On average with current technology it takes approximal 166 days to travel non-stop to Mars(Redd). This means that a round trip would take over a year(Redd). Unfortunately, this only would work if Mars was always in a straight line from Earth. In reality, a round trip is impossible due to Mars having a near two-year long orbit in contrast to Earth's one year(Redd). Through observation, scientists have learned that the two planets orbits are at their closest every 29 months(Redd). This means that a colony would need to last nearly two and a half years in between trips. It would be a modern equivalent to early European colonies established on North America.

Perhaps to the surprise of some, Mars colonization was legitimately considered during the Space Race. After the success of the United States *Viking* missions, the USSR gain begin to make attempts to establish a Mars colony(Burgess 120). This was to capitalize on a withdrawal from Mars by the United States and to gain access to the near limitless resources in outer space(Burgess 120). The goal was to have a base on Mars by the 100th anniversary of the founding of the USSR(Burgess 120).

The plan was to be done in four phases(Burgess 128). The first phase during the 1990s would be to send probes to both test material and take high-quality photos of the surface to make a better map(Burgess 128). The second phase from the late 1990's to the 2010s would be to send a rover to mars to collect a sample and return it to the earth for study(Burgess 128).

The third phase would be manned missions to Mars(Burgess 128). The space craft used for this mission would be called *Mars-94/96*, the Russian equivalent of NASA's *Saturn* class rocket(Burgess 129). The final phase starting in 2025, was to have a permanent presence on Mars(Burgess 129). One of the USSR's most interesting ideas was the establishment of a fueling stations on Deimos(Burgess 128). This would allow for repairs and would cut down on the amount of fuel needed between legs. Unfortunately, the two *Phobos* landers that were the first part of the plan failed(Burgess 122). *Phobos 1* had a computer malfunction which resulted in the loss of the lander(Burgess 122). *Phobos 2* did make it into orbit around Phobos and took some pictures of the moon but was also lost due to a communications failure(Burgess 123-4). The fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 meant the end of the Soviet space program and any short-term plans for Mars. After this, Mars colonization was reduced to idle speculation. It would be over 20 years before NASA would reveal their plans for Mars.

While NASA was responsible for the Viking class of probes which took the first surface photos of the moon, NASA did not plan for a colony until 2015 when a report was published entitled *Journey to Mars*(Schierholz). NASA Mars plan consist of three phases: Earth Reliant, Proving Ground and Earth Independent(Schierholz). This plan came about to improve America's strength in the stars("Nasa's" 3).

Earth Reliant involves NASA beginning to move away from commercial and maintenance missions towards a focus on simply exploration and research("Nasa's" 15). It will also include research on this International Space Station("Nasa's" 14). Both areas lay the foundation for the next phase.

The next phase Proving Ground focuses on four different areas of preparation for a Mars colony(Schierholz). This phase also involves the creation of the Space Launch System which is the successor to the space shuttle("Nasa's" 18). The SLS will be used extensively in the next phases. First is Solar Electric Propulsion which despite not being very powerful is very fuel efficient("Nasa's" 20). This will allow NASA to send various high-mass items to Mars with much less propellant than conventional rocket fuels("Nasa's" 20). As with the Soviet plan, it also allows NASA to put down habitats before humans arrive. The second area is capturing an asteroid and putting it in a stable orbit around the Earth("Nasa's" 21). This would allow for astronauts to study an asteroid in person for the first time("Nasa's" 21). Finally, it would give corporate interests a way to test equipment for asteroid mining("Nasa's" 21).

The final part of the second phase is the construction of a deep space station("Nasa's" 21-2). This station will be used to study the short and long-term effects of living in deep space("Nasa's" 21-2). This in turn allows NASA to test various equipment to use on Mars("Nasa's" 21-2). NASA hopes that the research on the station will help both international and corporate allies construct their own stations after the end of the International Space Station("Nasa's" 21-2).

The final phase is called Earth Independent(Schierholz). This phase of the plan has the Mars 2020 rover("Nasa's" 24). The Mars 2020 rover mission is designed to investigate the planet for life and will likely be sent to a possible landing spot for a colony("Nasa's" 24-5). This will allow it to analyze life on Mars in great detail("Nasa's" 23). It will also have a device that will see if fuel can be synthesized from the Martian atmosphere("Nasa's" 24). Finally, the rover may return from Mars with samples for study("Nasa's" 23). The very end of the plan is having humans orbit Mars in the 2030's("Nasa's" 28). If this is the case however, one of NASAs

partners will be on Mars by the 2020s("Making Life Multiplanetary"). That partner is the American corporation SpaceX.

SpaceX's current plan is to have a cargo mission on Mars by 2022 and the first human crews by 2024("Making"). This will be achieved with the BFR an all-purpose rocket designed to replace all their other designs("Making"). Being a corporation, SpaceX is not as interested in the science as NASA but rather the profits that can be made on Mars. According to the CEO of SpaceX, Elon Musk, he would like the price of a one-way ticket to Mars to be about \$200k(Dashevsky 7). This is a significant reduction from now where commercial space flights are many millions of dollars(Dashevsky 5). For those who can not afford a ticket but would like to go, SpaceX would use an indentured servant system in which their ticket would be paid through work on Mars(Dashevsky 7). After paying off the ticket the person would be free to do what he or she pleases(Dashevsky 8). This idea was used back in the 1600s during the colonization of North America. Unlike the previous Mars plans mentioned in this paper, SpaceX is focusing simply on Mars colonization. This proposal, however could lead to a serious problem.

The problem is the speed that SpaceX's plan is being implemented. If SpaceX keep to their timetable, some scientists fear that human contamination could render the search for life on Mars impossible due to contamination from humans(Grossman 22). This issue has lead to a renewed debate of whether certain areas on Mars should be protected from arriving human colonists(Grossman 23). Other scientists however say that their experiments show that the chance of contamination on Mars is very low. Andrew Schuerger, an astrobiologist at the University of Florida tried hundreds of bacteria and fungi in a controlled environment which replicated the environment on Mars(Grossman 25). He found that only 31 bacteria and zero fungi grew in the conditions specified(Grossman 25). Unfortunately, he and other scientists can not replicate dust storms which would likely spread particles across the surface(Grossman 26). To investigate this phenomenon, the Committee on Space Research wants to build a network of weather stations on Mars to test theories(Grossman 26). However, due to the launch schedule for missions to Mars, these stations would not have much time for research due to SpaceX's predictions for when human colonists arrive(Grossman 26-7). Yet this fear goes both ways(Grossman 27). Humans have lived on earth since their creation many thousands of years ago. Going to Mars will likely expose colonists to new diseases. This lack of understanding in a rush to colonize could prove lethal to the first human colony.

As shown in this paper, the reasons for Mars colonization vary by organization. For the Soviet Union, the infinite resources and revenge against the United States in the Space Race fueled the plan for colonization. For NASA, the shifting to exploration rather than being a "jack of all trades" has allowed them to focus on research to benefit the US and give America an early start in an inevitably contested solar system. Finally, SpaceX sees an untamed wilderness, ready for humanity to tame. Some may scoff at the idea of an off-planet colony in the next 100 years. They may in fact be correct. One thing is for certain though, the dream of stepping foot on an alien world feels closer than it ever has before.

Works Cited

- Burgess, Eric. *Return to the Red Planet*. New York: Columbia.up 1990. Print
- Dashevsky, Evan. "Space for Sale: How the Private Space Industry Will Reinvent Economics, Exploration, and Humanity." *PC Magazine*. Aug. 2017. 77-88. *EBSCOhost* Web. 8 Apr. 2018
- Grossman, Lisa. "Mucking up Mars" *Science News*. 20 Jan. 2018. 22-7. *EBSCOhost* Web. 8 Apr. 2018
- NASA's Journey to Mars: - Pioneering Next Steps in Space Exploration*. NASA Oct. 2015. Web. 25 Apr. 2018 <https://www.nasa.gov/sites/default/files/atoms/files/journey-to-mars-next-steps-20151008_508.pdf>.
- Making Life Multiplanetary SpaceX. Web 25 Apr. 2018. <<http://www.spacex.com/mars>>.
- Redd, Nola Taylor "How Long Does It Take to Get to Mars?" *Spaceflight Space.com* 2018 Web 8 Apr 2018. <<https://www.space.com/24701-how-long-does-it-take-to-get-to-mars.html>>.
- Schierholz, Stephanie. "NASA Releases Plan Outlining Next Steps in the Journey to Mars." *NASA*. 6 Aug. 2017. Web 25 Apr. 2018 <<https://www.nasa.gov/press-release/nasa-releases-plan-outlining-next-steps-in-the-journey-to-mars>>.

The First Shot by Gage Ruark

Now the emotion of being nervous is something everyone feels during their lives, being nervous has been something i've experienced a lot more than I'd like to say. There's plenty of times this feeling has hit, and to no one's surprise it's almost always during the worst times. I've always loved basketball, watching, playing, refereeing, all of it. Coming into high school was when basketball became a big part of me. Playing the sport taught me a lot, one of those things being that when you mess up people will laugh. Now as bad as it sounds, we all know it's true.

It was my sophomore year and we were on our way to Humboldt to play in the Humboldt Tournament like we do every year. As a sophomore I started JV and suited up for Varsity, but never really played. This was about to change. I played my two quarters of JV, then headed over to warm up with Varsity. After the buzzer sounded and we headed to our benches, me and my other sophomore friends who played sat in our designated spots and got comfortable because it was about to be a long night of sitting and cheering.

After what seemed like an hour of folding towels and yelling words of encouragement for the students who were actually getting playing time, it was finally half time and we were up by a good amount. Once coach was done talking us up in the locker room we headed back to the floor, well in my case the bench, and got ready for another two quarters of play.

Now it was about half way through the third quarter when coach decided to pull the normal players and put in the sophomores who were folding towels and squirting each other

with their water bottles on the bench. Myself included. Coach rattled off five names, and when I heard mine my stomach dropped. I wasn't ready, I can't keep up with these seniors. As we walked to the scores table, all of us looked at each other and couldn't help but let out a little nervous chuckle.

We must have looked like the goofiest group of kids walking out onto the court, but we felt big and bad. Once we got the ball on offense coach yelled out the play that he wanted us to run, and after a few seconds of trying to remember the plays we finally got set up right and started passing the ball around the three point line.

A pass came right to me where I was open for a three pointer, but me being the nervous little sophomore passed it right back to my teammate because there was no way in hell I was taking a shot in my first Varsity game. However I did think to myself, "If I get the ball again you have to shoot it." And sure enough, the ball swung around the perimeter, and somehow land back in my hands.

So I did what said I was going to do and shot the ball, a three pointer, thrown up in the air. I couldn't help but stand there and watch as the ball floated towards the rim. It got closer and closer to the rim and I closed my eyes and prayed it went in. Still with my eyes closed I heard a CLUNK, followed by ahh's and laughter from the crowd. As I opened my eyes I saw the ball stuck between the rim and the backboard, perfectly wedged in there. I looked around and bursted into laughter just like the crowd.

Just my luck, as if I was already nervous enough, I shoot a shot and it gets stuck. Like seriously what are the chances. I was so embarrassed. The first shot was one for the books, and one I will always remember. I mean you know what they say, "Shooters shoot, but they don't always score."

Now the emotion of being nervous is something everyone feels during their lives, being nervous has been something i've experienced a lot more than I'd like to say. There's plenty of times this feeling has hit, and to no one's surprise it's almost always during the worst times. I've always loved basketball, watching, playing, refereeing, all of it. Coming into high school was when basketball became a big part of me. Playing the sport taught me a lot, one of those things being that when you mess up people will laugh. Now as bad as it sounds, we all know it's true.

It was my sophomore year and we were on our way to Humboldt to play in the Humboldt Tournament like we do every year. As a sophomore I started JV and suited up for Varsity, but never really played. This was about to change. I played my two quarters of JV, then headed over to warm up with Varsity. After the buzzer sounded and we headed to our benches, me and my other sophomore friends who played sat in our designated spots and got comfortable because it was about to be a long night of sitting and cheering.

After what seemed like an hour of folding towels and yelling words of encouragement for the students who were actually getting playing time, it was finally half time and we were up by a good amount. Once coach was done talking us up in the locker room we headed back to the floor, well in my case the bench, and got ready for another two quarters of play.

Now it was about half way through the third quarter when coach decided to pull the normal players and put in the sophomores who were folding towels and squirting each other with their water bottles on the bench. Myself included. Coach rattled off five names, and when I heard mine my stomach dropped. I wasn't ready, I can't keep up with these seniors. As we

walked to the scores table, all of us looked at each other and couldn't help but let out a little nervous chuckle.

We must have looked like the goofiest group of kids walking out onto the court, but we felt big and bad. Once we got the ball on offense coach yelled out the play that he wanted us to run, and after a few seconds of trying to remember the plays we finally got set up right and started passing the ball around the three point line.

A pass came right to me where I was open for a three pointer, but me being the nervous little sophomore passed it right back to my teammate because there was no way in hell I was taking a shot in my first Varsity game. However I did think to myself, "If I get the ball again you have to shoot it." And sure enough, the ball swung around the perimeter, and somehow land back in my hands.

So I did what said I was going to do and shot the ball, a three pointer, thrown up in the air. I couldn't help but stand there and watch as the ball floated towards the rim. It got closer and closer to the rim and I closed my eyes and prayed it went in. Still with my eyes closed I heard a CLUNK, followed by ahh's and laughter from the crowd. As I opened my eyes I saw the ball stuck between the rim and the backboard, perfectly wedged in there. I looked around and bursted into laughter just like the crowd.

Just my luck, as if I was already nervous enough, I shoot a shot and it gets stuck. Like seriously what are the chances. I was so embarrassed. The first shot was one for the books, and one I will always remember. I mean you know what they say, "Shooters shoot, but they don't always score."

Back Cover Artwork

2nd Place Art Contest Winner: *Tracie Nasca*

Piece: "Untitled" (photography)



The *Inferno* Literary Magazine
Is sponsored by:

