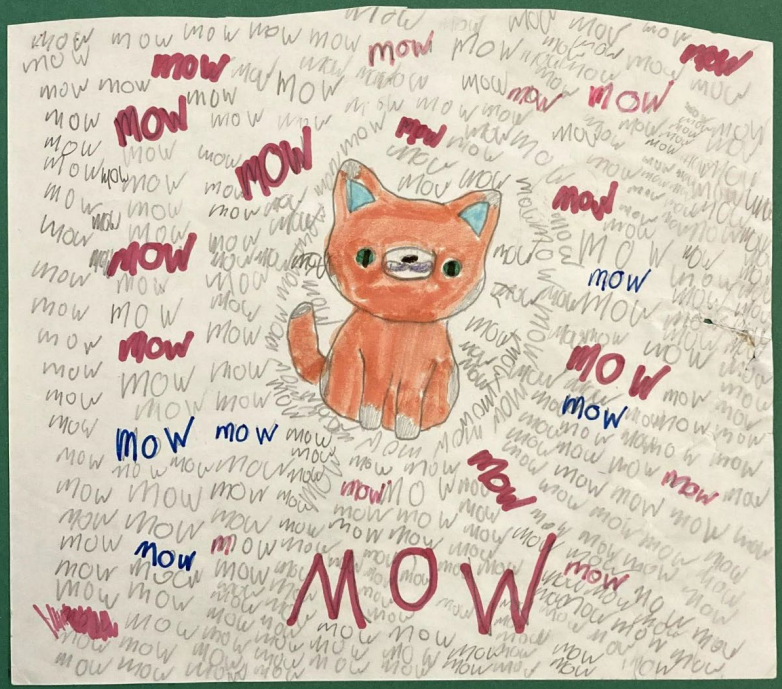
2022-2023 Reflections

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“Show Your Voice”

Harrison Elementary



Lilly Abed

I Love Cats

Harrison Elementary
Grade 5
Visual Arts



Natalia Arroyo

Kingdom Sunset

Harrison Elementary
Grade 5
Visual Arts



Edison Belsito

Moving On

Harrison Elementary
Grade 4
Photography



Dean Hamidah

Pumpkin in Space

Harrison Elementary
Grade 2
Visual Arts



KuKu Htoo

Water

Harrison Elementary
Grade 2
Visual Arts



Landyn Milenius

Landyn's Special Thing

Harrison Elementary
Grade 2
Visual Arts



Katie Ngo

Show Kindness

Harrison Elementary
Grade 5
Visual Arts



LiliAnna
Redman

A Cat

Harrison Elementary
Grade 2
Visual Arts



Hajira Safi

Everyone Has a Voice

Harrison Elementary
Grade 2
Visual Arts



Piper Shearn

Unicorn Paint

Harrison Elementary
Grade 1
Visual Arts



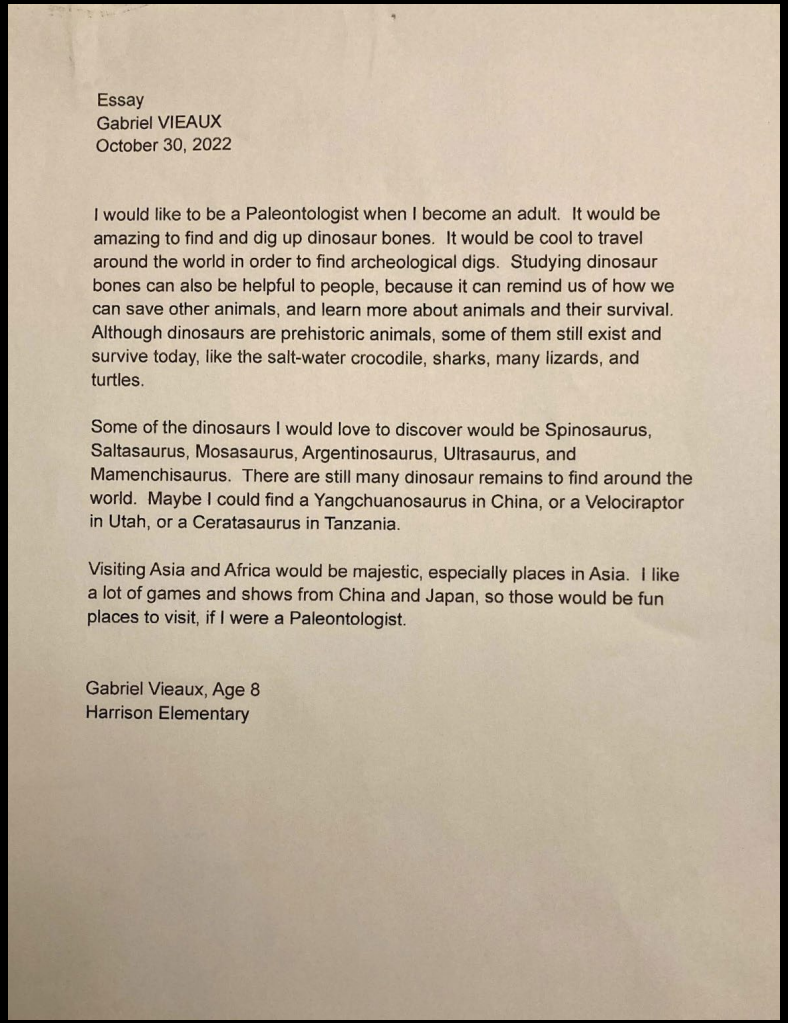
Evangelene Vieaux

Cute Things

Harrison Elementary

Grade 1

Visual Arts



Essay
Gabriel VIEAUX
October 30, 2022

I would like to be a Paleontologist when I become an adult. It would be amazing to find and dig up dinosaur bones. It would be cool to travel around the world in order to find archeological digs. Studying dinosaur bones can also be helpful to people, because it can remind us of how we can save other animals, and learn more about animals and their survival. Although dinosaurs are prehistoric animals, some of them still exist and survive today, like the salt-water crocodile, sharks, many lizards, and turtles.

Some of the dinosaurs I would love to discover would be Spinosaurus, Saltasaurus, Mosasaurus, Argentinosaurus, Ultrasaurus, and Mamenchisaurus. There are still many dinosaur remains to find around the world. Maybe I could find a Yangchuanosaurus in China, or a Velociraptor in Utah, or a Ceratasaurus in Tanzania.

Visiting Asia and Africa would be majestic, especially places in Asia. I like a lot of games and shows from China and Japan, so those would be fun places to visit, if I were a Paleontologist.

Gabriel Vieaux, Age 8
Harrison Elementary

Gabriel Vieaux

Future Paleontologist

Harrison Elementary
Grade 3
Literature

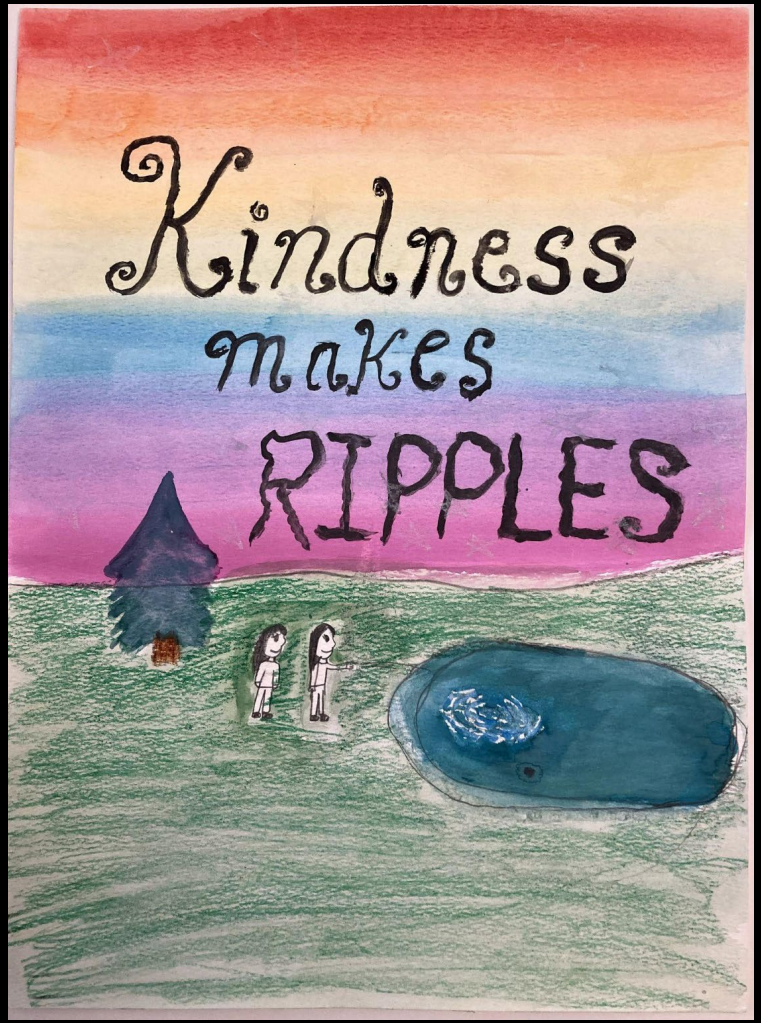
Grant Elementary



Mae Martin

Self-Portrait

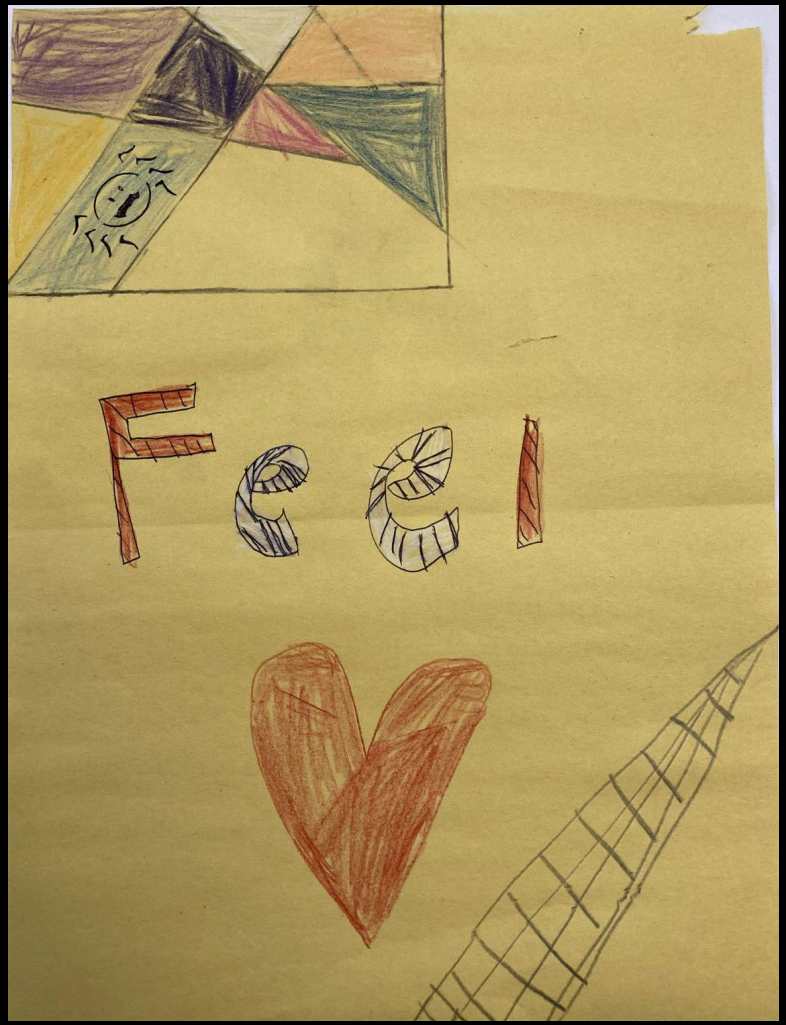
Grant Elementary
Kindergarten
Visual Arts



Antje Miller

Kindness Makes Ripples

Grant Elementary
Grade 3
Visual Arts



Melanie Rostocil

Feel

Grant Elementary
Grade 2
Visual Arts



Sebastian Tougouma

Penalty Shot!

Grant Elementary
Grade 5
Visual Arts

Lincoln Elementary



Genevieve Bauer

I Care

Lincoln Elementary
Grade 1
Visual Arts



Bodhi Betyak

Sounds of Kindness

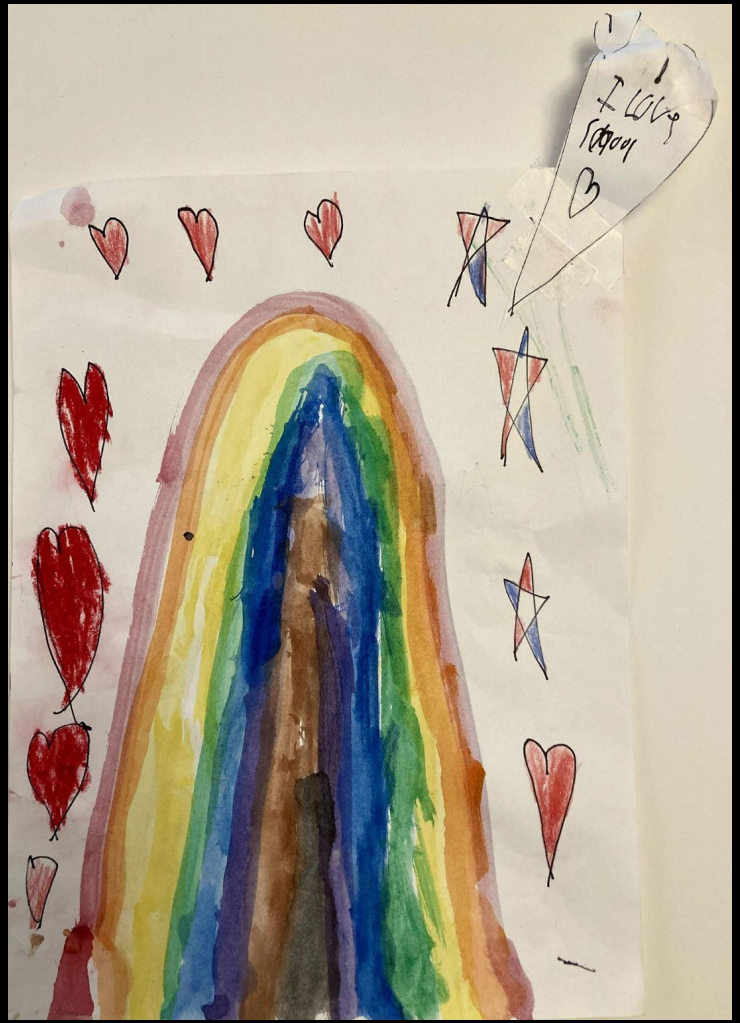
Lincoln Elementary
Grade 2
Visual Arts



Aria Callahan

Rainbow Frog

Lincoln Elementary
Grade 3
Visual Arts



Avery Grasso

The Lincoln Rainbow

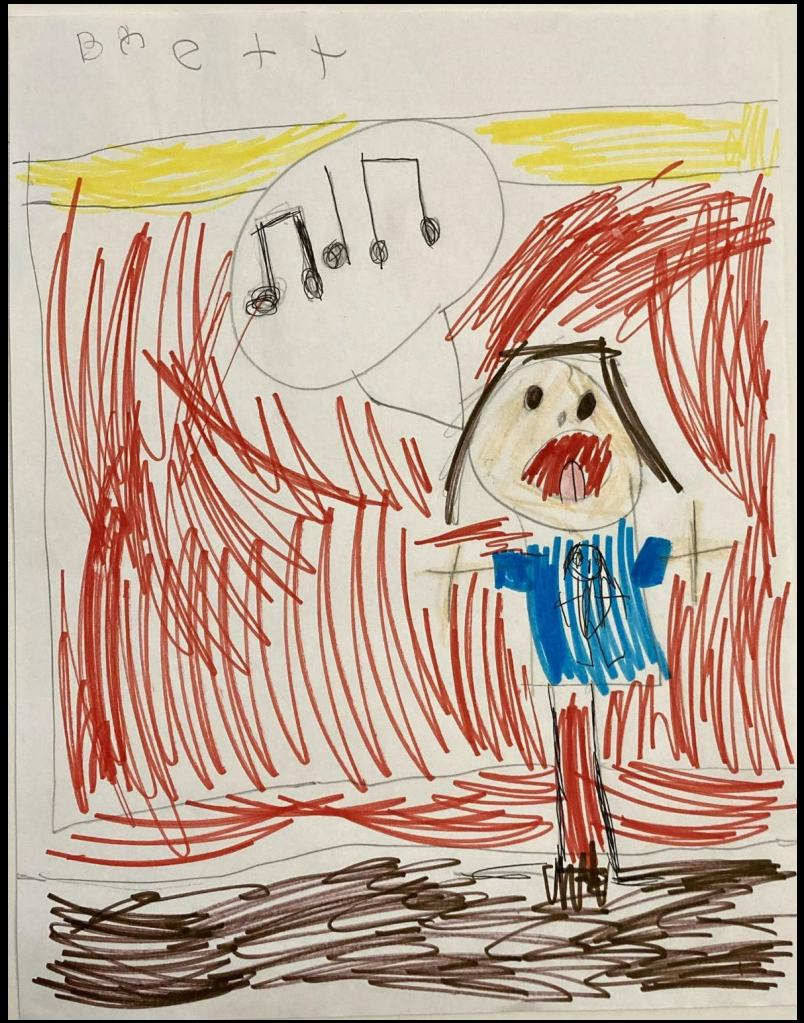
Lincoln Elementary
Grade 2
Visual Arts



Ashton Mack - Ewing

Into Space

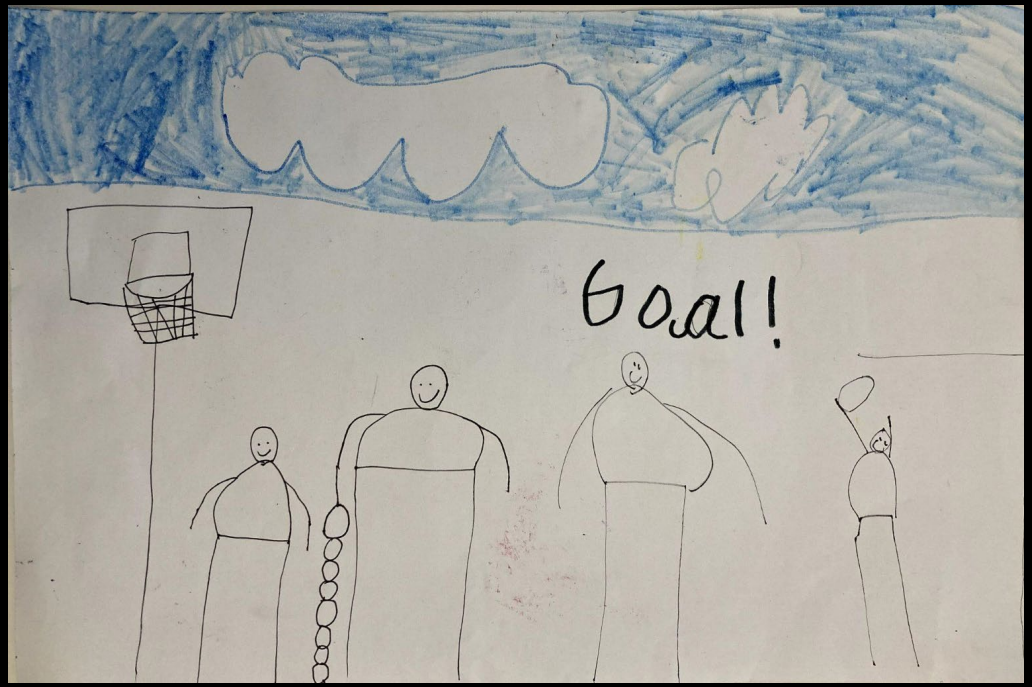
Lincoln Elementary
Grade 4
Visual Arts



Brett McCourt

Someone Singing

Lincoln Elementary
Kindergarten
Visual Arts



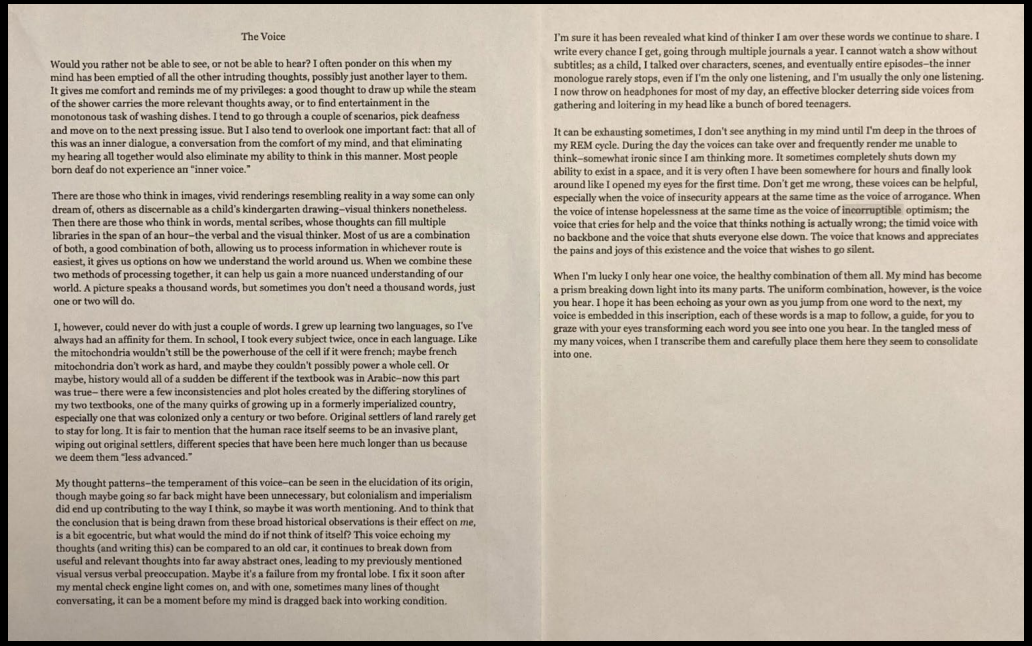
Simon Tougouma

Sport Time

Lincoln Elementary
Grade 3
Visual Arts

Lakewood High School

Leena Adams



The Voice

Would you rather not be able to see, or not be able to hear? I often ponder on this when my mind has been emptied of all the other intruding thoughts, possibly just another layer to them. It gives me comfort and reminds me of my privileges: a good thought to draw up while the steam of the shower carries the more relevant thoughts away, or to find entertainment in the monotonous task of washing dishes. I tend to go through a couple of scenarios, pick deafness and move on to the next pressing issue. But I also tend to overlook one important fact: that all of this was an inner dialogue, a conversation from the comfort of my mind, and that eliminating my hearing all together would also eliminate my ability to think in this manner. Most people born deaf do not experience an "inner voice."

There are those who think in images, vivid renderings resembling reality in a way some can only dream of, others as discernable as a child's kindergarten drawing–visual thinkers nonetheless. Then there are those who think in words, mental scribes, whose thoughts can fill multiple libraries in the span of an hour–the verbal and the visual thinker. Most of us are a combination of both, a good combination of both, allowing us to process information in whichever route is easiest, it gives us options on how we understand the world around us. When we combine these two methods of processing together, it can help us gain a more nuanced understanding of our world. A picture speaks a thousand words, but sometimes you don't need a thousand words, just one or two will do.

I, however, could never do with just a couple of words. I grew up learning two languages, so I've always had an affinity for them. In school, I took every subject twice, once in each language. Like the mitochondria wouldn't still be the powerhouse of the cell if it were french; maybe french mitochondria don't work as hard, and maybe they couldn't possibly power a whole cell. Or maybe, history would all of a sudden be different if the textbook was in Arabic–now this part was true– there were a few inconsistencies and plot holes created by the differing storylines of my two textbooks, one of the many quirks of growing up in a formerly imperialized country, especially one that was colonized only a century or two before. Original settlers of land rarely get to stay for long. It is fair to mention that the human race itself seems to be an invasive plant, wiping out original settlers, different species that have been here much longer than us because we deem them "less advanced."

My thought patterns–the temperament of this voice–can be seen in the elucidation of its origin, though maybe going so far back might have been unnecessary, but colonialism and imperialism did end up contributing to the way I think, so maybe it was worth mentioning. And to think that the conclusion that is being drawn from these broad historical observations is their effect on *me*, is a bit egocentric, but what would the mind do if not think of itself? This voice echoing my thoughts (and writing this) can be compared to an old car, it continues to break down from useful and relevant thoughts into far away abstract ones, leading to my previously mentioned visual versus verbal preoccupation. Maybe it's a failure from my frontal lobe. I fix it soon after my mental check engine light comes on, and with one, sometimes many lines of thought conversating, it can be a moment before my mind is dragged back into working condition.

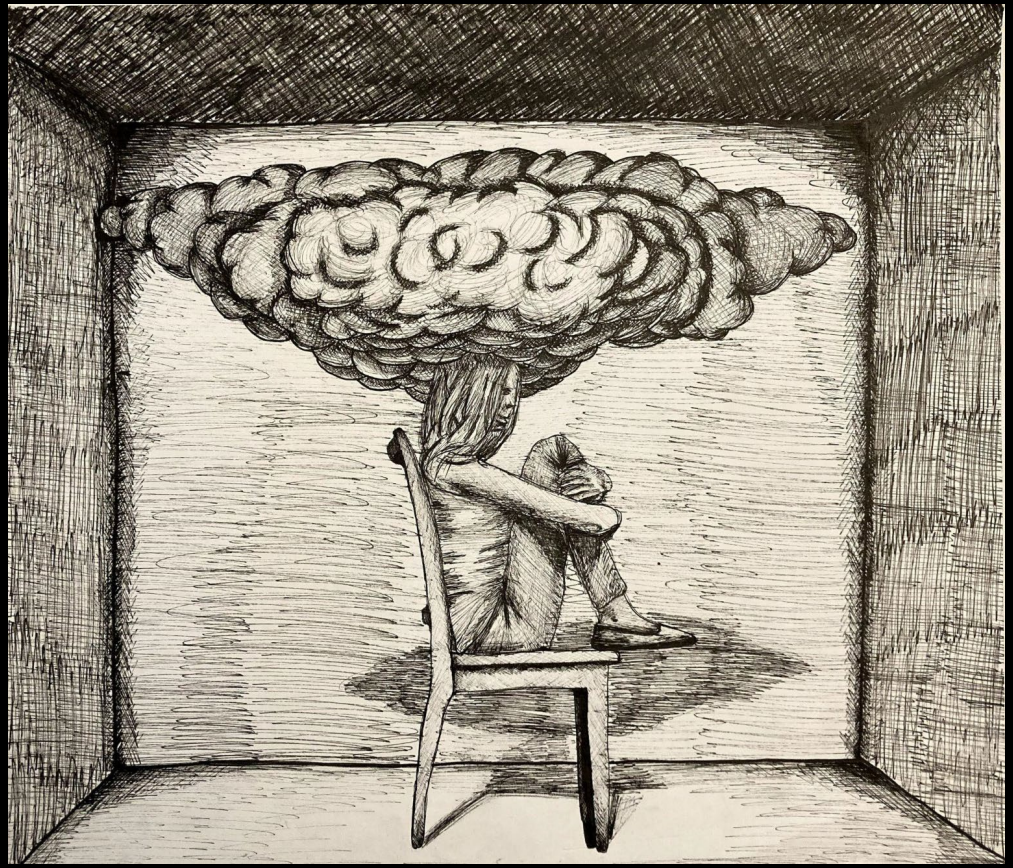
I'm sure it has been revealed what kind of thinker I am over these words we continue to share. I write every chance I get, going through multiple journals a year. I cannot watch a show without subtitles; as a child, I talked over characters, scenes, and eventually entire episodes–the inner monologue rarely stops, even if I'm the only one listening, and I'm usually the only one listening. I now throw on headphones for most of my day, an effective blocker deterring side voices from gathering and loitering in my head like a bunch of bored teenagers.

It can be exhausting sometimes, I don't see anything in my mind until I'm deep in the throes of my REM cycle. During the day the voices can take over and frequently render me unable to think–somewhat ironic since I am thinking more. It sometimes completely shuts down my ability to exist in a space, and it is very often I have been somewhere for hours and finally look around like I opened my eyes for the first time. Don't get me wrong, these voices can be helpful, especially when the voice of insecurity appears at the same time as the voice of arrogance. When the voice of intense hopelessness at the same time as the voice of incorruptible optimism; the voice that cries for help and the voice that thinks nothing is actually wrong; the timid voice with no backbone and the voice that shuts everyone else down. The voice that knows and appreciates the pains and joys of this existence and the voice that wishes to go silent.

When I'm lucky I only hear one voice, the healthy combination of them all. My mind has become a prism breaking down light into its many parts. The uniform combination, however, is the voice you hear. I hope it has been echoing as your own as you jump from one word to the next, my voice is embedded in this inscription, each of these words is a map to follow, a guide, for you to graze with your eyes transforming each word you see into one you hear. In the tangled mess of my many voices, when I transcribe them and carefully place them here they seem to consolidate into one.

The Voice

High School
Grade 11
Literature



Josette Ballon

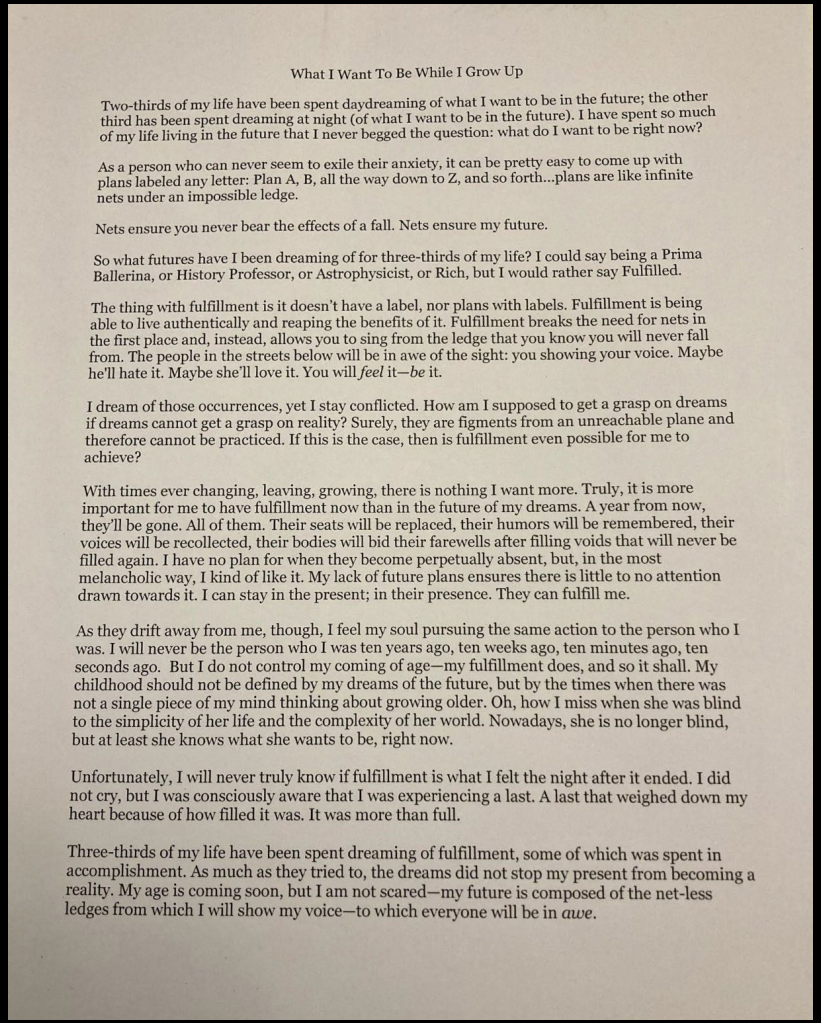
An Empty Room

High School
Grade 10
Visual Arts

Edie Barcelona

Juxtaposing Freedoms

High School
Grade 11
Dance Choreography



What I Want To Be While I Grow Up

Two-thirds of my life have been spent daydreaming of what I want to be in the future; the other third has been spent dreaming at night (of what I want to be in the future). I have spent so much of my life living in the future that I never begged the question: what do I want to be right now?

As a person who can never seem to exile their anxiety, it can be pretty easy to come up with plans labeled any letter: Plan A, B, all the way down to Z, and so forth...plans are like infinite nets under an impossible ledge.

Nets ensure you never bear the effects of a fall. Nets ensure my future.

So what futures have I been dreaming of for three-thirds of my life? I could say being a Prima Ballerina, or History Professor, or Astrophysicist, or Rich, but I would rather say Fulfilled.

The thing with fulfillment is it doesn't have a label, nor plans with labels. Fulfillment is being able to live authentically and reaping the benefits of it. Fulfillment breaks the need for nets in the first place and, instead, allows you to sing from the ledge that you know you will never fall from. The people in the streets below will be in awe of the sight: you showing your voice. Maybe he'll hate it. Maybe she'll love it. You will *feel* it—*be* it.

I dream of those occurrences, yet I stay conflicted. How am I supposed to get a grasp on dreams if dreams cannot get a grasp on reality? Surely, they are figments from an unreachable plane and therefore cannot be practiced. If this is the case, then is fulfillment even possible for me to achieve?

With times ever changing, leaving, growing, there is nothing I want more. Truly, it is more important for me to have fulfillment now than in the future of my dreams. A year from now, they'll be gone. All of them. Their seats will be replaced, their humors will be remembered, their voices will be recollected, their bodies will bid their farewells after filling voids that will never be filled again. I have no plan for when they become perpetually absent, but, in the most melancholic way, I kind of like it. My lack of future plans ensures there is little to no attention drawn towards it. I can stay in the present; in their presence. They can fulfill me.

As they drift away from me, though, I feel my soul pursuing the same action to the person who I was. I will never be the person who I was ten years ago, ten weeks ago, ten minutes ago, ten seconds ago. But I do not control my coming of age—my fulfillment does, and so it shall. My childhood should not be defined by my dreams of the future, but by the times when there was not a single piece of my mind thinking about growing older. Oh, how I miss when she was blind to the simplicity of her life and the complexity of her world. Nowadays, she is no longer blind, but at least she knows what she wants to be, right now.

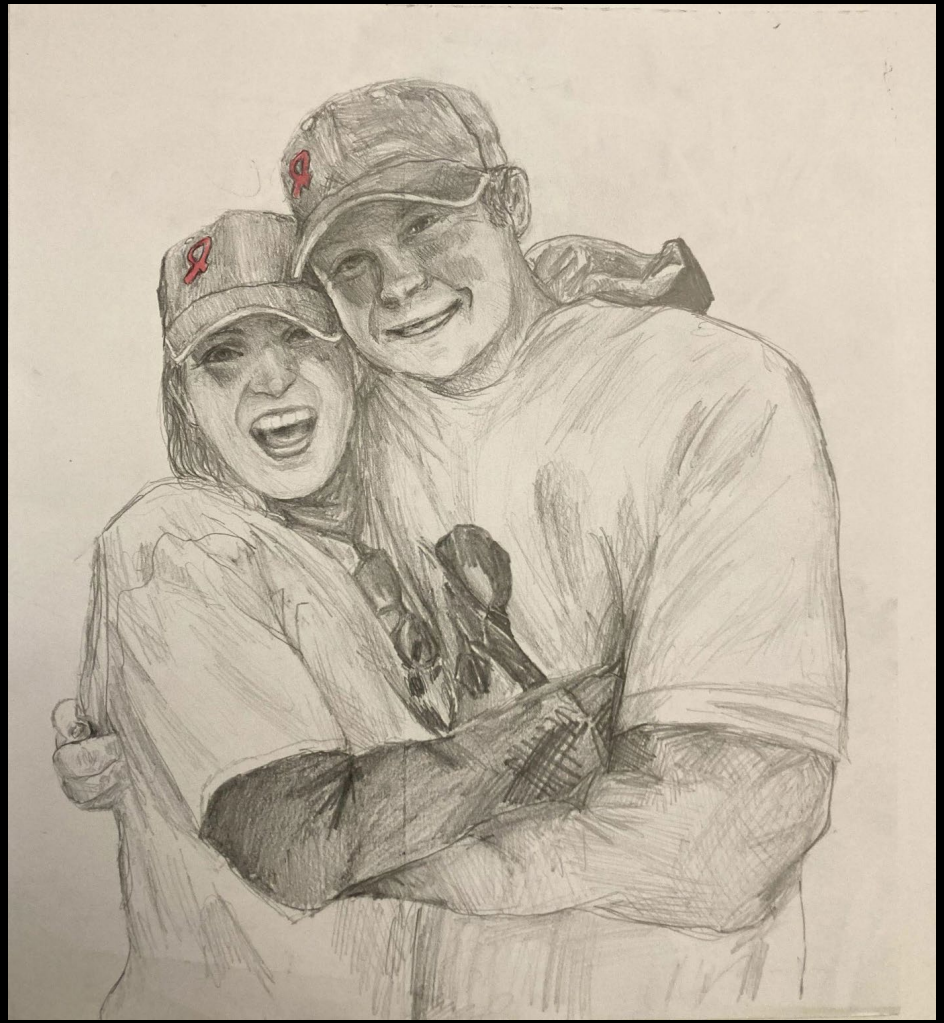
Unfortunately, I will never truly know if fulfillment is what I felt the night after it ended. I did not cry, but I was consciously aware that I was experiencing a last. A last that weighed down my heart because of how filled it was. It was more than full.

Three-thirds of my life have been spent dreaming of fulfillment, some of which was spent in accomplishment. As much as they tried to, the dreams did not stop my present from becoming a reality. My age is coming soon, but I am not scared—my future is composed of the net-less ledges from which I will show my voice—to which everyone will be in *awe*.

Edie Barcelona

What I Want To Be While I Grow Up

High School
Grade 11
Literature



Maggie Barmann

Unconditional

High School
Grade 10
Visual Arts



Olivia Brown

Self Sustenance

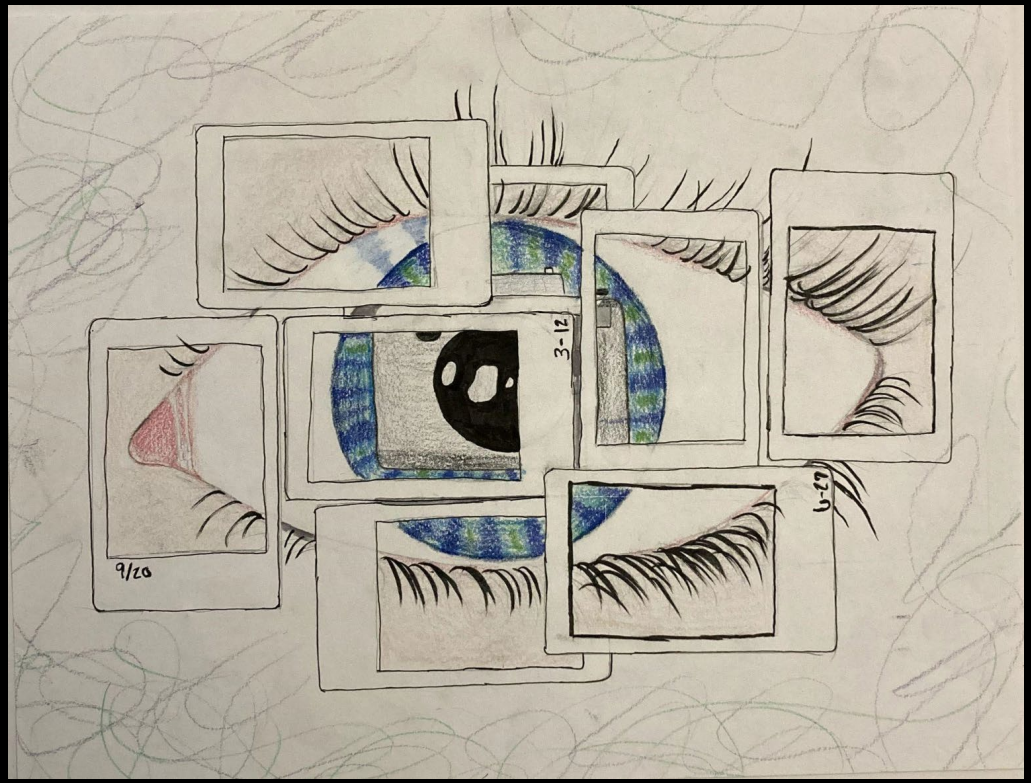
High School
Grade 10
Visual Arts



Sam Browning

Memory

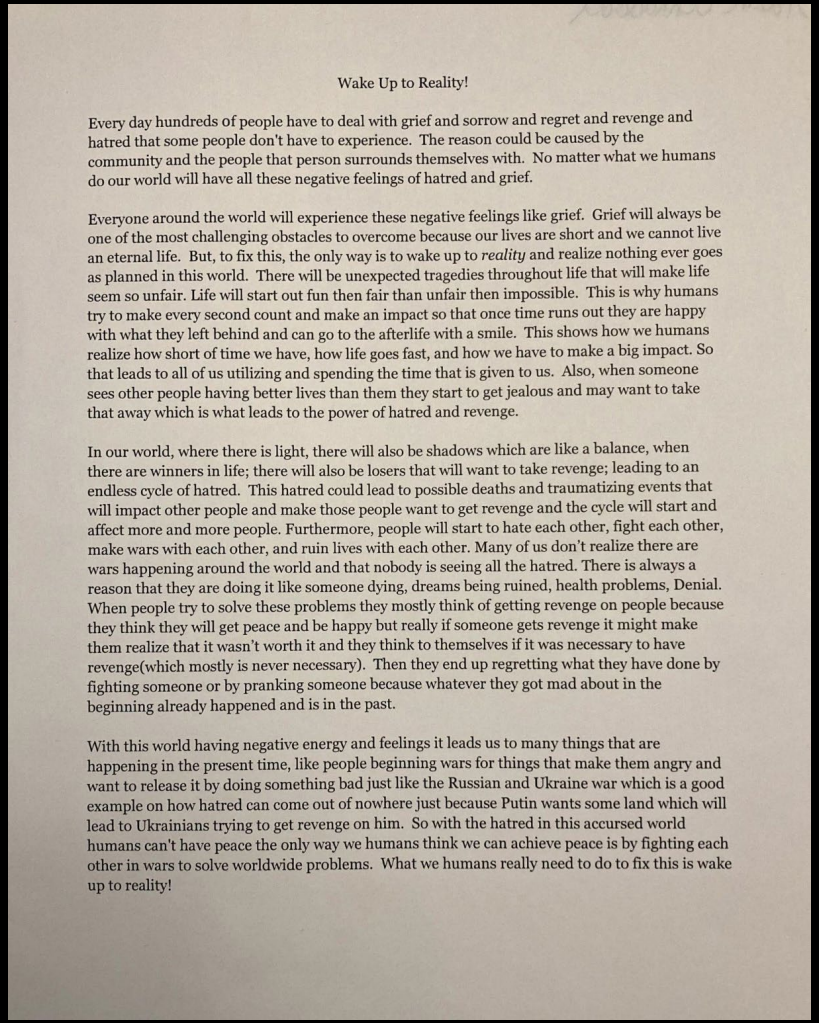
High School
Grade 11
Visual Arts



Kayen Bruce

The Camera of the Eye

High School
Grade 10
Visual Arts



Wake Up to Reality!

Every day hundreds of people have to deal with grief and sorrow and regret and revenge and hatred that some people don't have to experience. The reason could be caused by the community and the people that person surrounds themselves with. No matter what we humans do our world will have all these negative feelings of hatred and grief.

Everyone around the world will experience these negative feelings like grief. Grief will always be one of the most challenging obstacles to overcome because our lives are short and we cannot live an eternal life. But, to fix this, the only way is to wake up to *reality* and realize nothing ever goes as planned in this world. There will be unexpected tragedies throughout life that will make life seem so unfair. Life will start out fun then fair than unfair then impossible. This is why humans try to make every second count and make an impact so that once time runs out they are happy with what they left behind and can go to the afterlife with a smile. This shows how we humans realize how short of time we have, how life goes fast, and how we have to make a big impact. So that leads to all of us utilizing and spending the time that is given to us. Also, when someone sees other people having better lives than them they start to get jealous and may want to take that away which is what leads to the power of hatred and revenge.

In our world, where there is light, there will also be shadows which are like a balance, when there are winners in life; there will also be losers that will want to take revenge; leading to an endless cycle of hatred. This hatred could lead to possible deaths and traumatizing events that will impact other people and make those people want to get revenge and the cycle will start and affect more and more people. Furthermore, people will start to hate each other, fight each other, make wars with each other, and ruin lives with each other. Many of us don't realize there are wars happening around the world and that nobody is seeing all the hatred. There is always a reason that they are doing it like someone dying, dreams being ruined, health problems, Denial. When people try to solve these problems they mostly think of getting revenge on people because they think they will get peace and be happy but really if someone gets revenge it might make them realize that it wasn't worth it and they think to themselves if it was necessary to have revenge(which mostly is never necessary). Then they end up regretting what they have done by fighting someone or by pranking someone because whatever they got mad about in the beginning already happened and is in the past.

With this world having negative energy and feelings it leads us to many things that are happening in the present time, like people beginning wars for things that make them angry and want to release it by doing something bad just like the Russian and Ukraine war which is a good example on how hatred can come out of nowhere just because Putin wants some land which will lead to Ukrainians trying to get revenge on him. So with the hatred in this accursed world humans can't have peace the only way we humans think we can achieve peace is by fighting each other in wars to solve worldwide problems. What we humans really need to do to fix this is wake up to reality!

Adam Benaddou

Wake Up to Reality!

High School
Grade 10
Literature



Haley Benjamin

Better Off Unsaid

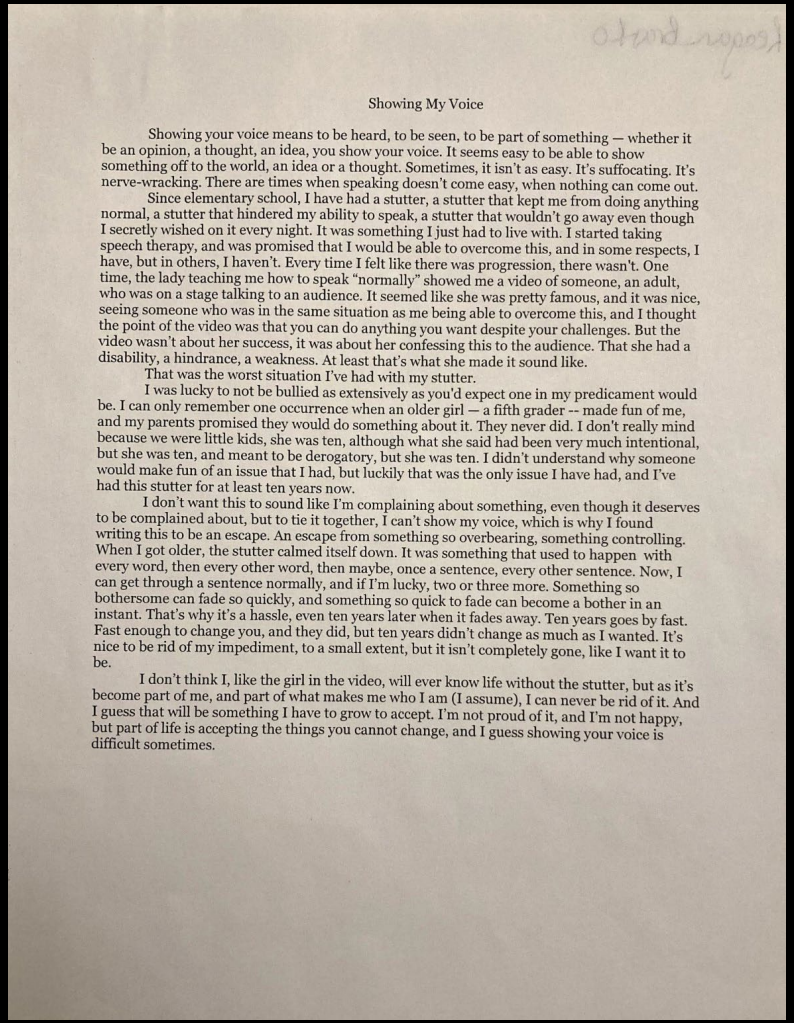
High School
Grade 11
Visual Arts



Lilly Benjamin

Show It, Because They Won't Hear It

High School
Grade 10
Visual Arts



Showing My Voice

Showing your voice means to be heard, to be seen, to be part of something — whether it be an opinion, a thought, an idea, you show your voice. It seems easy to be able to show something off to the world, an idea or a thought. Sometimes, it isn't as easy. It's suffocating. It's nerve-wracking. There are times when speaking doesn't come easy, when nothing can come out.

Since elementary school, I have had a stutter, a stutter that kept me from doing anything normal, a stutter that hindered my ability to speak, a stutter that wouldn't go away even though I secretly wished on it every night. It was something I just had to live with. I started taking speech therapy, and was promised that I would be able to overcome this, and in some respects, I have, but in others, I haven't. Every time I felt like there was progression, there wasn't. One time, the lady teaching me how to speak "normally" showed me a video of someone, an adult, who was on a stage talking to an audience. It seemed like she was pretty famous, and it was nice, seeing someone who was in the same situation as me being able to overcome this, and I thought the point of the video was that you can do anything you want despite your challenges. But the video wasn't about her success, it was about her confessing this to the audience. That she had a disability, a hindrance, a weakness. At least that's what she made it sound like.

That was the worst situation I've had with my stutter.

I was lucky to not be bullied as extensively as you'd expect one in my predicament would be. I can only remember one occurrence when an older girl — a fifth grader -- made fun of me, and my parents promised they would do something about it. They never did. I don't really mind because we were little kids, she was ten, although what she said had been very much intentional, but she was ten, and meant to be derogatory, but she was ten. I didn't understand why someone would make fun of an issue that I had, but luckily that was the only issue I have had, and I've had this stutter for at least ten years now.

I don't want this to sound like I'm complaining about something, even though it deserves to be complained about, but to tie it together, I can't show my voice, which is why I found writing this to be an escape. An escape from something so overbearing, something controlling. When I got older, the stutter calmed itself down. It was something that used to happen with every word, then every other word, then maybe, once a sentence, every other sentence. Now, I can get through a sentence normally, and if I'm lucky, two or three more. Something so bothersome can fade so quickly, and something so quick to fade can become a bother in an instant. That's why it's a hassle, even ten years later when it fades away. Ten years goes by fast. Fast enough to change you, and they did, but ten years didn't change as much as I wanted. It's nice to be rid of my impediment, to a small extent, but it isn't completely gone, like I want it to be.

I don't think I, like the girl in the video, will ever know life without the stutter, but as it's become part of me, and part of what makes me who I am (I assume), I can never be rid of it. And I guess that will be something I have to grow to accept. I'm not proud of it, and I'm not happy, but part of life is accepting the things you cannot change, and I guess showing your voice is difficult sometimes.

Reagan Bratko

Showing My Voice

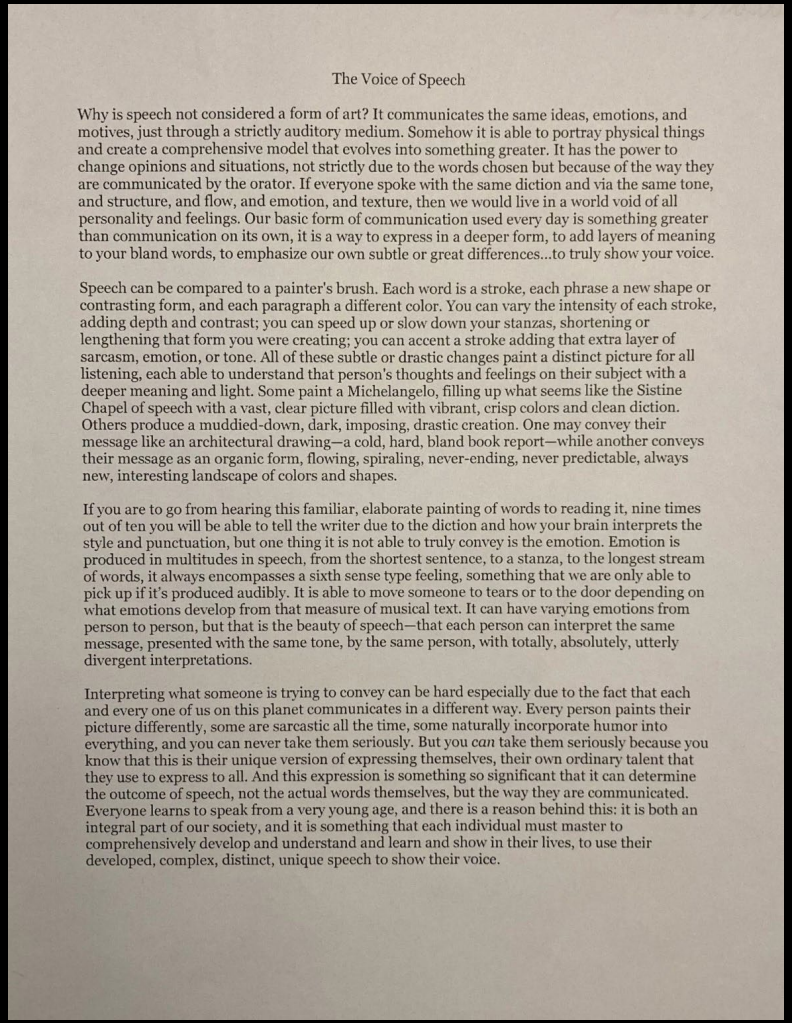
High School
Grade 11
Literature



Mackenzie Brown

In Water

High School
Grade 10
Visual Arts



The Voice of Speech

Why is speech not considered a form of art? It communicates the same ideas, emotions, and motives, just through a strictly auditory medium. Somehow it is able to portray physical things and create a comprehensive model that evolves into something greater. It has the power to change opinions and situations, not strictly due to the words chosen but because of the way they are communicated by the orator. If everyone spoke with the same diction and via the same tone, and structure, and flow, and emotion, and texture, then we would live in a world void of all personality and feelings. Our basic form of communication used every day is something greater than communication on its own, it is a way to express in a deeper form, to add layers of meaning to your bland words, to emphasize our own subtle or great differences...to truly show your voice.

Speech can be compared to a painter's brush. Each word is a stroke, each phrase a new shape or contrasting form, and each paragraph a different color. You can vary the intensity of each stroke, adding depth and contrast; you can speed up or slow down your stanzas, shortening or lengthening that form you were creating; you can accent a stroke adding that extra layer of sarcasm, emotion, or tone. All of these subtle or drastic changes paint a distinct picture for all listening, each able to understand that person's thoughts and feelings on their subject with a deeper meaning and light. Some paint a Michelangelo, filling up what seems like the Sistine Chapel of speech with a vast, clear picture filled with vibrant, crisp colors and clean diction. Others produce a muddied-down, dark, imposing, drastic creation. One may convey their message like an architectural drawing—a cold, hard, bland book report—while another conveys their message as an organic form, flowing, spiraling, never-ending, never predictable, always new, interesting landscape of colors and shapes.

If you are to go from hearing this familiar, elaborate painting of words to reading it, nine times out of ten you will be able to tell the writer due to the diction and how your brain interprets the style and punctuation, but one thing it is not able to truly convey is the emotion. Emotion is produced in multitudes in speech, from the shortest sentence, to a stanza, to the longest stream of words, it always encompasses a sixth sense type feeling, something that we are only able to pick up if it's produced audibly. It is able to move someone to tears or to the door depending on what emotions develop from that measure of musical text. It can have varying emotions from person to person, but that is the beauty of speech—that each person can interpret the same message, presented with the same tone, by the same person, with totally, absolutely, utterly divergent interpretations.

Interpreting what someone is trying to convey can be hard especially due to the fact that each and every one of us on this planet communicates in a different way. Every person paints their picture differently, some are sarcastic all the time, some naturally incorporate humor into everything, and you can never take them seriously. But you *can* take them seriously because you know that this is their unique version of expressing themselves, their own ordinary talent that they use to express to all. And this expression is something so significant that it can determine the outcome of speech, not the actual words themselves, but the way they are communicated. Everyone learns to speak from a very young age, and there is a reason behind this: it is both an integral part of our society, and it is something that each individual must master to comprehensively develop and understand and learn and show in their lives, to use their developed, complex, distinct, unique speech to show their voice.

Rowan Brown

The Voice of Speech

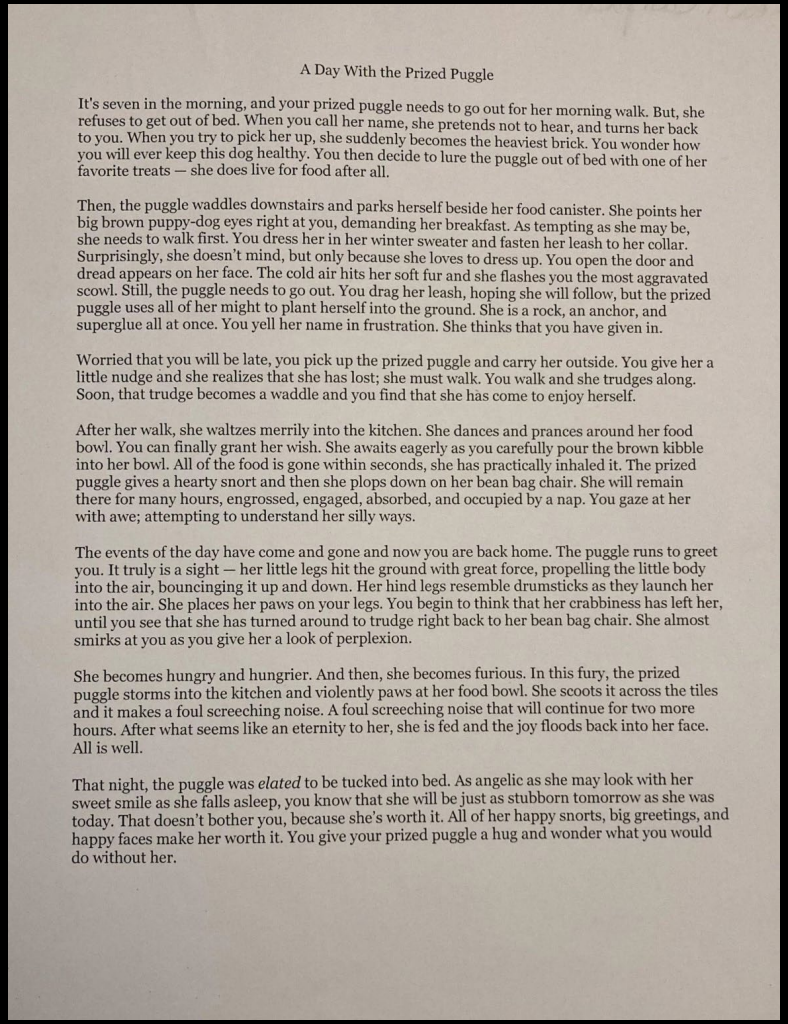
High School
Grade 11
Literature



Nikita Budway

Emotion

High School
Grade 10
Visual Arts



A Day With the Prized Puggle

It's seven in the morning, and your prized puggle needs to go out for her morning walk. But, she refuses to get out of bed. When you call her name, she pretends not to hear, and turns her back to you. When you try to pick her up, she suddenly becomes the heaviest brick. You wonder how you will ever keep this dog healthy. You then decide to lure the puggle out of bed with one of her favorite treats — she does live for food after all.

Then, the puggle waddles downstairs and parks herself beside her food canister. She points her big brown puppy-dog eyes right at you, demanding her breakfast. As tempting as she may be, she needs to walk first. You dress her in her winter sweater and fasten her leash to her collar. Surprisingly, she doesn't mind, but only because she loves to dress up. You open the door and dread appears on her face. The cold air hits her soft fur and she flashes you the most aggravated scowl. Still, the puggle needs to go out. You drag her leash, hoping she will follow, but the prized puggle uses all of her might to plant herself into the ground. She is a rock, an anchor, and superglue all at once. You yell her name in frustration. She thinks that you have given in.

Worried that you will be late, you pick up the prized puggle and carry her outside. You give her a little nudge and she realizes that she has lost; she must walk. You walk and she trudges along. Soon, that trudge becomes a waddle and you find that she has come to enjoy herself.

After her walk, she waltzes merrily into the kitchen. She dances and prances around her food bowl. You can finally grant her wish. She awaits eagerly as you carefully pour the brown kibble into her bowl. All of the food is gone within seconds, she has practically inhaled it. The prized puggle gives a hearty snort and then she plops down on her bean bag chair. She will remain there for many hours, engrossed, engaged, absorbed, and occupied by a nap. You gaze at her with awe; attempting to understand her silly ways.

The events of the day have come and gone and now you are back home. The puggle runs to greet you. It truly is a sight — her little legs hit the ground with great force, propelling the little body into the air, bouncinging it up and down. Her hind legs resemble drumsticks as they launch her into the air. She places her paws on your legs. You begin to think that her crabbiness has left her, until you see that she has turned around to trudge right back to her bean bag chair. She almost smirks at you as you give her a look of perplexion.

She becomes hungry and hungrier. And then, she becomes furious. In this fury, the prized puggle storms into the kitchen and violently paws at her food bowl. She scoots it across the tiles and it makes a foul screeching noise. A foul screeching noise that will continue for two more hours. After what seems like an eternity to her, she is fed and the joy floods back into her face. All is well.

That night, the puggle was *elated* to be tucked into bed. As angelic as she may look with her sweet smile as she falls asleep, you know that she will be just as stubborn tomorrow as she was today. That doesn't bother you, because she's worth it. All of her happy snorts, big greetings, and happy faces make her worth it. You give your prized puggle a hug and wonder what you would do without her.

Leah Campbell

A Day With the Prized Puggle

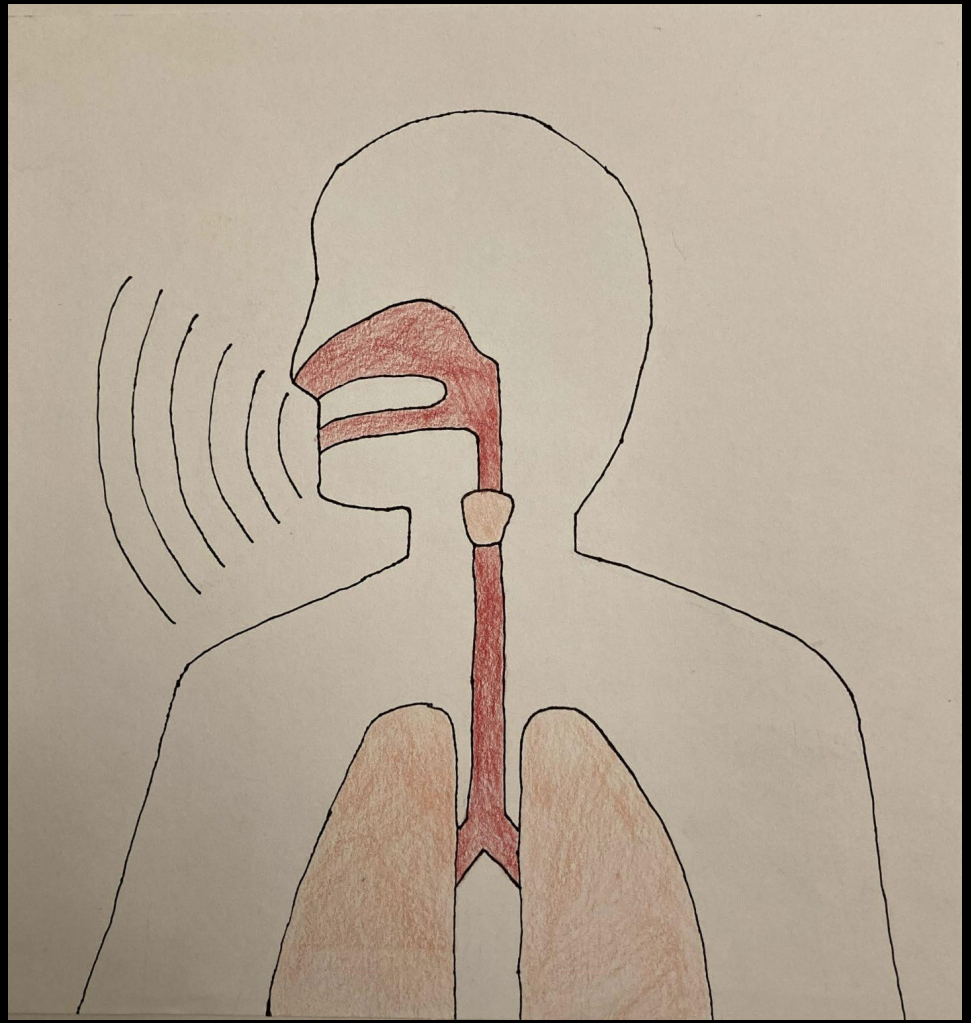
High School
Grade 11
Literature



Izabella Chambers-Decker

Transformation

High School
Grade 10
Visual Arts



Cameron Crouch

My Voice

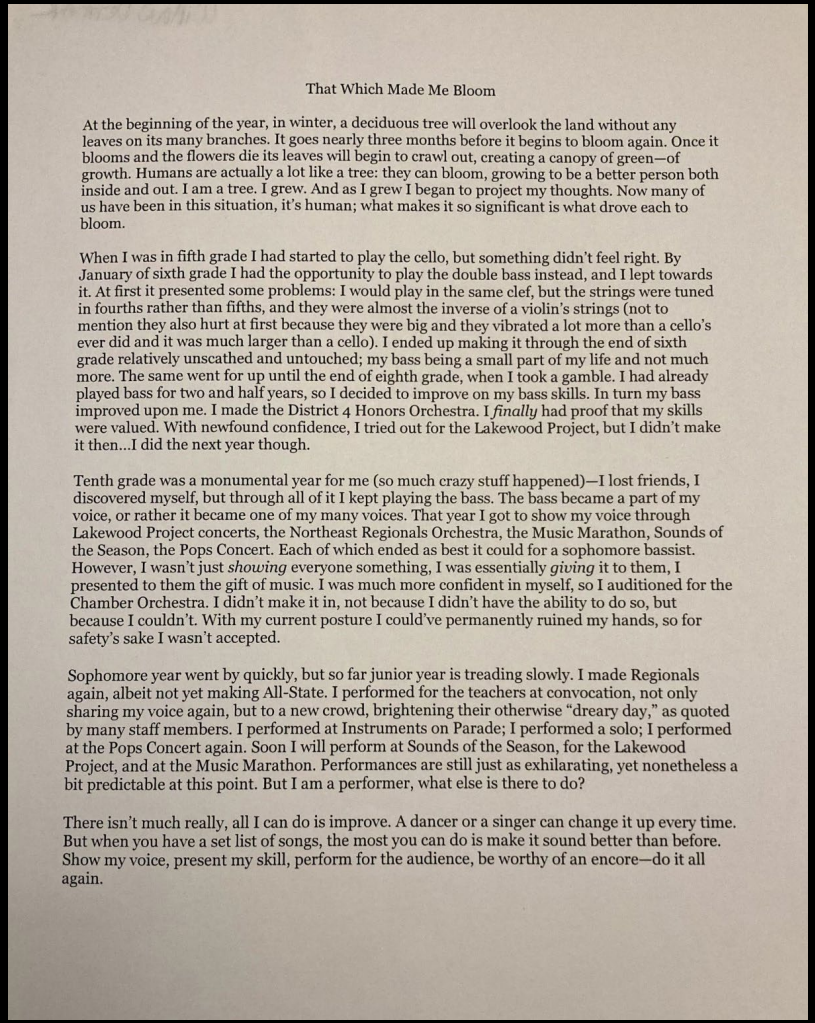
High School
Grade 11
Visual Arts



Eric Day

Nature Landscape

High School
Grade 10
Visual Arts



That Which Made Me Bloom

At the beginning of the year, in winter, a deciduous tree will overlook the land without any leaves on its many branches. It goes nearly three months before it begins to bloom again. Once it blooms and the flowers die its leaves will begin to crawl out, creating a canopy of green—of growth. Humans are actually a lot like a tree: they can bloom, growing to be a better person both inside and out. I am a tree. I grew. And as I grew I began to project my thoughts. Now many of us have been in this situation, it's human; what makes it so significant is what drove each to bloom.

When I was in fifth grade I had started to play the cello, but something didn't feel right. By January of sixth grade I had the opportunity to play the double bass instead, and I lept towards it. At first it presented some problems: I would play in the same clef, but the strings were tuned in fourths rather than fifths, and they were almost the inverse of a violin's strings (not to mention they also hurt at first because they were big and they vibrated a lot more than a cello's ever did and it was much larger than a cello). I ended up making it through the end of sixth grade relatively unscathed and untouched; my bass being a small part of my life and not much more. The same went for up until the end of eighth grade, when I took a gamble. I had already played bass for two and half years, so I decided to improve on my bass skills. In turn my bass improved upon me. I made the District 4 Honors Orchestra. I *finally* had proof that my skills were valued. With newfound confidence, I tried out for the Lakewood Project, but I didn't make it then...I did the next year though.

Tenth grade was a monumental year for me (so much crazy stuff happened)—I lost friends, I discovered myself, but through all of it I kept playing the bass. The bass became a part of my voice, or rather it became one of my many voices. That year I got to show my voice through Lakewood Project concerts, the Northeast Regionals Orchestra, the Music Marathon, Sounds of the Season, the Pops Concert. Each of which ended as best it could for a sophomore bassist. However, I wasn't just *showing* everyone something, I was essentially *giving* it to them, I presented to them the gift of music. I was much more confident in myself, so I auditioned for the Chamber Orchestra. I didn't make it in, not because I didn't have the ability to do so, but because I couldn't. With my current posture I could've permanently ruined my hands, so for safety's sake I wasn't accepted.

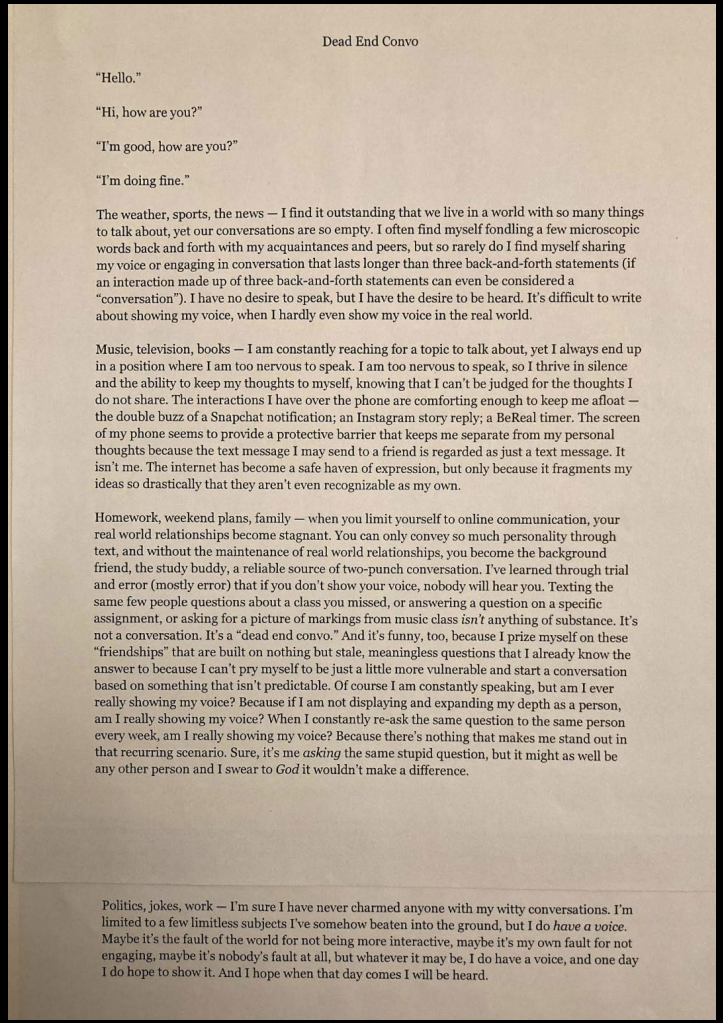
Sophomore year went by quickly, but so far junior year is treading slowly. I made Regionals again, albeit not yet making All-State. I performed for the teachers at convocation, not only sharing my voice again, but to a new crowd, brightening their otherwise "dreary day," as quoted by many staff members. I performed at Instruments on Parade; I performed a solo; I performed at the Pops Concert again. Soon I will perform at Sounds of the Season, for the Lakewood Project, and at the Music Marathon. Performances are still just as exhilarating, yet nonetheless a bit predictable at this point. But I am a performer, what else is there to do?

There isn't much really, all I can do is improve. A dancer or a singer can change it up every time. But when you have a set list of songs, the most you can do is make it sound better than before. Show my voice, present my skill, perform for the audience, be worthy of an encore—do it all again.

Willow Detmar

That Which Made Me Bloom

High School
Grade 11
Literature



Dead End Convo

"Hello."

"Hi, how are you?"

"I'm good, how are you?"

"I'm doing fine."

The weather, sports, the news — I find it outstanding that we live in a world with so many things to talk about, yet our conversations are so empty. I often find myself fondling a few microscopic words back and forth with my acquaintances and peers, but so rarely do I find myself sharing my voice or engaging in conversation that lasts longer than three back-and-forth statements (if an interaction made up of three back-and-forth statements can even be considered a "conversation"). I have no desire to speak, but I have the desire to be heard. It's difficult to write about showing my voice, when I hardly even show my voice in the real world.

Music, television, books — I am constantly reaching for a topic to talk about, yet I always end up in a position where I am too nervous to speak. I am too nervous to speak, so I thrive in silence and the ability to keep my thoughts to myself, knowing that I can't be judged for the thoughts I do not share. The interactions I have over the phone are comforting enough to keep me afloat — the double buzz of a Snapchat notification; an Instagram story reply; a BeReal timer. The screen of my phone seems to provide a protective barrier that keeps me separate from my personal thoughts because the text message I may send to a friend is regarded as just a text message. It isn't me. The internet has become a safe haven of expression, but only because it fragments my ideas so drastically that they aren't even recognizable as my own.

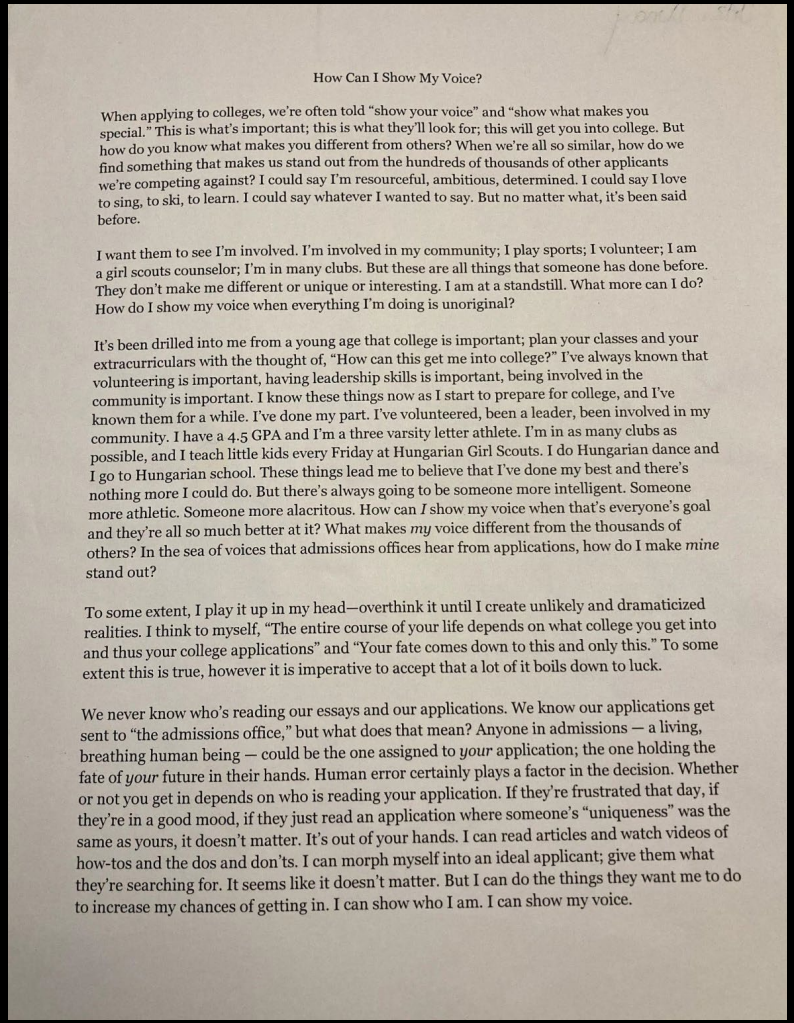
Homework, weekend plans, family — when you limit yourself to online communication, your real world relationships become stagnant. You can only convey so much personality through text, and without the maintenance of real world relationships, you become the background friend, the study buddy, a reliable source of two-punch conversation. I've learned through trial and error (mostly error) that if you don't show your voice, nobody will hear you. Texting the same few people questions about a class you missed, or answering a question on a specific assignment, or asking for a picture of markings from music class *isn't* anything of substance. It's not a conversation. It's a "dead end convo." And it's funny, too, because I prize myself on these "friendships" that are built on nothing but stale, meaningless questions that I already know the answer to because I can't pry myself to be just a little more vulnerable and start a conversation based on something that isn't predictable. Of course I am constantly speaking, but am I ever really showing my voice? Because if I am not displaying and expanding my depth as a person, am I really showing my voice? When I constantly re-ask the same question to the same person every week, am I really showing my voice? Because there's nothing that makes me stand out in that recurring scenario. Sure, it's me *asking* the same stupid question, but it might as well be any other person and I swear to *God* it wouldn't make a difference.

Politics, jokes, work — I'm sure I have never charmed anyone with my witty conversations. I'm limited to a few limitless subjects I've somehow beaten into the ground, but I do *have a voice*. Maybe it's the fault of the world for not being more interactive, maybe it's my own fault for not engaging, maybe it's nobody's fault at all, but whatever it may be, I do have a voice, and one day I do hope to show it. And I hope when that day comes I will be heard.

Olive Diemert

Dead End Convo

High School
Grade 11
Literature



How Can I Show My Voice?

When applying to colleges, we're often told "show your voice" and "show what makes you special." This is what's important; this is what they'll look for; this will get you into college. But how do you know what makes you different from others? When we're all so similar, how do we find something that makes us stand out from the hundreds of thousands of other applicants we're competing against? I could say I'm resourceful, ambitious, determined. I could say I love to sing, to ski, to learn. I could say whatever I wanted to say. But no matter what, it's been said before.

I want them to see I'm involved. I'm involved in my community; I play sports; I volunteer; I am a girl scouts counselor; I'm in many clubs. But these are all things that someone has done before. They don't make me different or unique or interesting. I am at a standstill. What more can I do? How do I show my voice when everything I'm doing is unoriginal?

It's been drilled into me from a young age that college is important; plan your classes and your extracurriculars with the thought of, "How can this get me into college?" I've always known that volunteering is important, having leadership skills is important, being involved in the community is important. I know these things now as I start to prepare for college, and I've known them for a while. I've done my part. I've volunteered, been a leader, been involved in my community. I have a 4.5 GPA and I'm a three varsity letter athlete. I'm in as many clubs as possible, and I teach little kids every Friday at Hungarian Girl Scouts. I do Hungarian dance and I go to Hungarian school. These things lead me to believe that I've done my best and there's nothing more I could do. But there's always going to be someone more intelligent. Someone more athletic. Someone more alacritous. How can *I* show my voice when that's everyone's goal and they're all so much better at it? What makes *my* voice different from the thousands of others? In the sea of voices that admissions offices hear from applications, how do I make *mine* stand out?

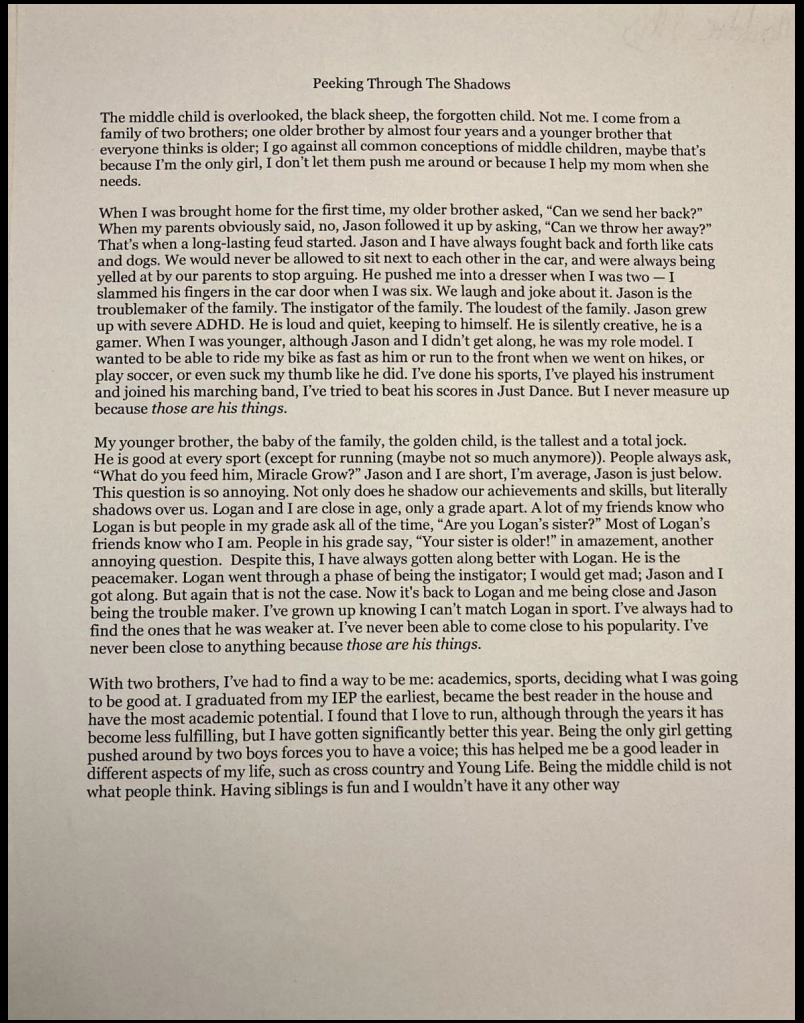
To some extent, I play it up in my head—overthink it until I create unlikely and dramaticized realities. I think to myself, "The entire course of your life depends on what college you get into and thus your college applications" and "Your fate comes down to this and only this." To some extent this is true, however it is imperative to accept that a lot of it boils down to luck.

We never know who's reading our essays and our applications. We know our applications get sent to "the admissions office," but what does that mean? Anyone in admissions — a living, breathing human being — could be the one assigned to *your* application; the one holding the fate of *your* future in their hands. Human error certainly plays a factor in the decision. Whether or not you get in depends on who is reading your application. If they're frustrated that day, if they're in a good mood, if they just read an application where someone's "uniqueness" was the same as yours, it doesn't matter. It's out of your hands. I can read articles and watch videos of how-tos and the dos and don'ts. I can morph myself into an ideal applicant; give them what they're searching for. It seems like it doesn't matter. But I can do the things they want me to do to increase my chances of getting in. I can show who I am. I can show my voice.

Jazi Dunay

How Can I Show My Voice?

High School
Grade 11
Literature



Peeking Through The Shadows

The middle child is overlooked, the black sheep, the forgotten child. Not me. I come from a family of two brothers; one older brother by almost four years and a younger brother that everyone thinks is older; I go against all common conceptions of middle children, maybe that's because I'm the only girl, I don't let them push me around or because I help my mom when she needs.

When I was brought home for the first time, my older brother asked, "Can we send her back?" When my parents obviously said, no, Jason followed it up by asking, "Can we throw her away?" That's when a long-lasting feud started. Jason and I have always fought back and forth like cats and dogs. We would never be allowed to sit next to each other in the car, and were always being yelled at by our parents to stop arguing. He pushed me into a dresser when I was two — I slammed his fingers in the car door when I was six. We laugh and joke about it. Jason is the troublemaker of the family. The instigator of the family. The loudest of the family. Jason grew up with severe ADHD. He is loud and quiet, keeping to himself. He is silently creative, he is a gamer. When I was younger, although Jason and I didn't get along, he was my role model. I wanted to be able to ride my bike as fast as him or run to the front when we went on hikes, or play soccer, or even suck my thumb like he did. I've done his sports, I've played his instrument and joined his marching band, I've tried to beat his scores in Just Dance. But I never measure up because *those are his things*.

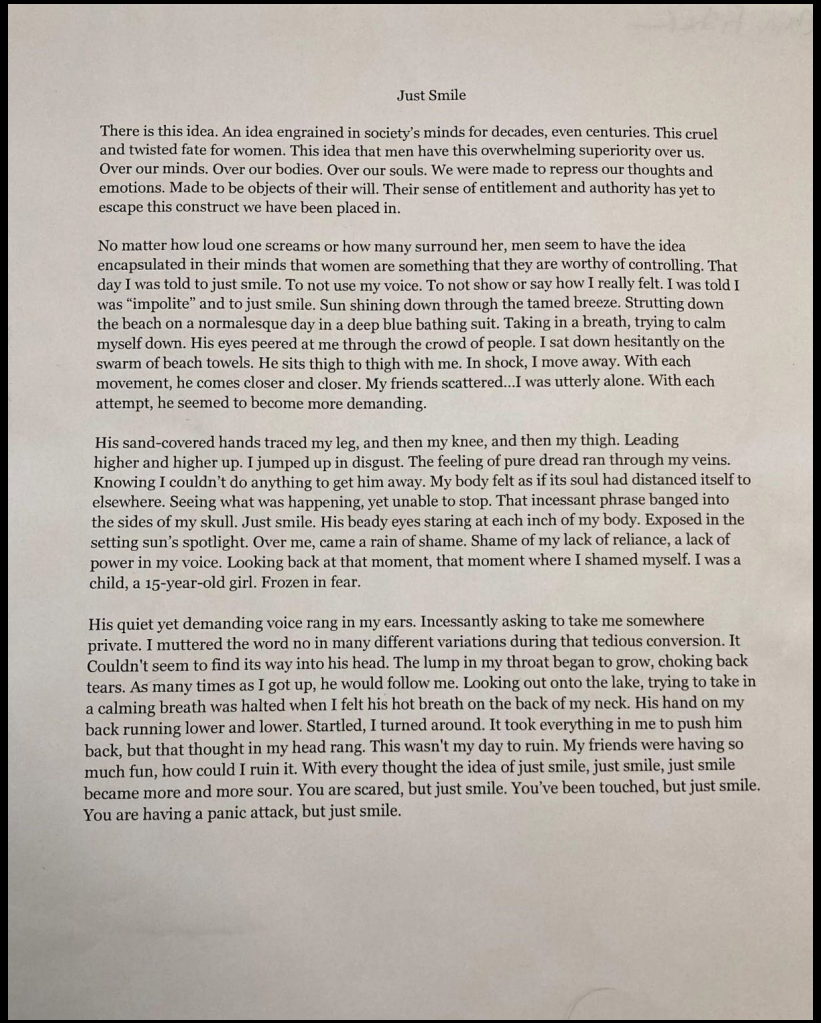
My younger brother, the baby of the family, the golden child, is the tallest and a total jock. He is good at every sport (except for running (maybe not so much anymore)). People always ask, "What do you feed him, Miracle Grow?" Jason and I are short, I'm average, Jason is just below. This question is so annoying. Not only does he shadow our achievements and skills, but literally shadows over us. Logan and I are close in age, only a grade apart. A lot of my friends know who Logan is but people in my grade ask all of the time, "Are you Logan's sister?" Most of Logan's friends know who I am. People in his grade say, "Your sister is older!" in amazement, another annoying question. Despite this, I have always gotten along better with Logan. He is the peacemaker. Logan went through a phase of being the instigator; I would get mad; Jason and I got along. But again that is not the case. Now it's back to Logan and me being close and Jason being the trouble maker. I've grown up knowing I can't match Logan in sport. I've always had to find the ones that he was weaker at. I've never been able to come close to his popularity. I've never been close to anything because *those are his things*.

With two brothers, I've had to find a way to be me: academics, sports, deciding what I was going to be good at. I graduated from my IEP the earliest, became the best reader in the house and have the most academic potential. I found that I love to run, although through the years it has become less fulfilling, but I have gotten significantly better this year. Being the only girl getting pushed around by two boys forces you to have a voice; this has helped me be a good leader in different aspects of my life, such as cross country and Young Life. Being the middle child is not what people think. Having siblings is fun and I wouldn't have it any other way

Maddie Ellis

Peeking Through the Shadows

High School
Grade 11
Literature



Just Smile

There is this idea. An idea engrained in society's minds for decades, even centuries. This cruel and twisted fate for women. This idea that men have this overwhelming superiority over us. Over our minds. Over our bodies. Over our souls. We were made to repress our thoughts and emotions. Made to be objects of their will. Their sense of entitlement and authority has yet to escape this construct we have been placed in.

No matter how loud one screams or how many surround her, men seem to have the idea encapsulated in their minds that women are something that they are worthy of controlling. That day I was told to just smile. To not use my voice. To not show or say how I really felt. I was told I was "impolite" and to just smile. Sun shining down through the tamed breeze. Strutting down the beach on a normalesque day in a deep blue bathing suit. Taking in a breath, trying to calm myself down. His eyes peered at me through the crowd of people. I sat down hesitantly on the swarm of beach towels. He sits thigh to thigh with me. In shock, I move away. With each movement, he comes closer and closer. My friends scattered...I was utterly alone. With each attempt, he seemed to become more demanding.

His sand-covered hands traced my leg, and then my knee, and then my thigh. Leading higher and higher up. I jumped up in disgust. The feeling of pure dread ran through my veins. Knowing I couldn't do anything to get him away. My body felt as if its soul had distanced itself to elsewhere. Seeing what was happening, yet unable to stop. That incessant phrase banged into the sides of my skull. Just smile. His beady eyes staring at each inch of my body. Exposed in the setting sun's spotlight. Over me, came a rain of shame. Shame of my lack of reliance, a lack of power in my voice. Looking back at that moment, that moment where I shamed myself. I was a child, a 15-year-old girl. Frozen in fear.

His quiet yet demanding voice rang in my ears. Incessantly asking to take me somewhere private. I muttered the word no in many different variations during that tedious conversion. It Couldn't seem to find its way into his head. The lump in my throat began to grow, choking back tears. As many times as I got up, he would follow me. Looking out onto the lake, trying to take in a calming breath was halted when I felt his hot breath on the back of my neck. His hand on my back running lower and lower. Startled, I turned around. It took everything in me to push him back, but that thought in my head rang. This wasn't my day to ruin. My friends were having so much fun, how could I ruin it. With every thought the idea of just smile, just smile, just smile became more and more sour. You are scared, but just smile. You've been touched, but just smile. You are having a panic attack, but just smile.

Cami Fisher

Just Smile

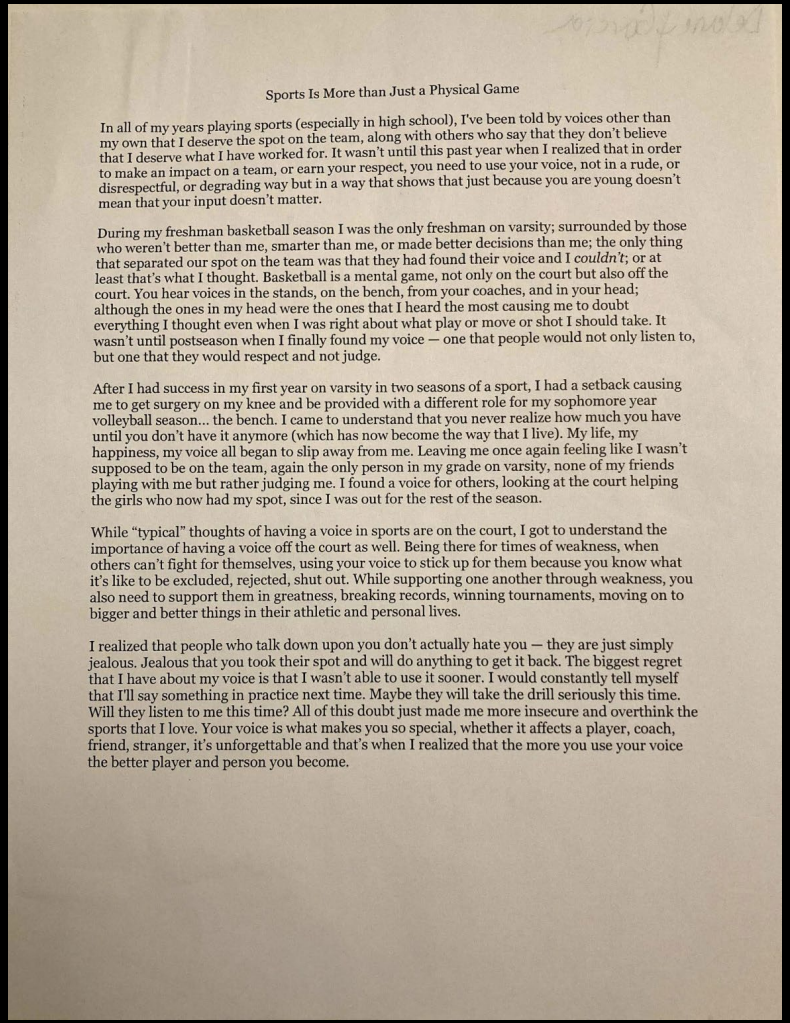
High School
Grade 11
Literature



Helen Fraunfelder

Rule By Her

High School
Grade 10
Visual Arts



Sports Is More than Just a Physical Game

In all of my years playing sports (especially in high school), I've been told by voices other than my own that I deserve the spot on the team, along with others who say that they don't believe that I deserve what I have worked for. It wasn't until this past year when I realized that in order to make an impact on a team, or earn your respect, you need to use your voice, not in a rude, or disrespectful, or degrading way but in a way that shows that just because you are young doesn't mean that your input doesn't matter.

During my freshman basketball season I was the only freshman on varsity; surrounded by those who weren't better than me, smarter than me, or made better decisions than me; the only thing that separated our spot on the team was that they had found their voice and I *couldn't*; or at least that's what I thought. Basketball is a mental game, not only on the court but also off the court. You hear voices in the stands, on the bench, from your coaches, and in your head; although the ones in my head were the ones that I heard the most causing me to doubt everything I thought even when I was right about what play or move or shot I should take. It wasn't until postseason when I finally found my voice — one that people would not only listen to, but one that they would respect and not judge.

After I had success in my first year on varsity in two seasons of a sport, I had a setback causing me to get surgery on my knee and be provided with a different role for my sophomore year volleyball season… the bench. I came to understand that you never realize how much you have until you don't have it anymore (which has now become the way that I live). My life, my happiness, my voice all began to slip away from me. Leaving me once again feeling like I wasn't supposed to be on the team, again the only person in my grade on varsity, none of my friends playing with me but rather judging me. I found a voice for others, looking at the court helping the girls who now had my spot, since I was out for the rest of the season.

While "typical" thoughts of having a voice in sports are on the court, I got to understand the importance of having a voice off the court as well. Being there for times of weakness, when others can't fight for themselves, using your voice to stick up for them because you know what it's like to be excluded, rejected, shut out. While supporting one another through weakness, you also need to support them in greatness, breaking records, winning tournaments, moving on to bigger and better things in their athletic and personal lives.

I realized that people who talk down upon you don't actually hate you — they are just simply jealous. Jealous that you took their spot and will do anything to get it back. The biggest regret that I have about my voice is that I wasn't able to use it sooner. I would constantly tell myself that I'll say something in practice next time. Maybe they will take the drill seriously this time. Will they listen to me this time? All of this doubt just made me more insecure and overthink the sports that I love. Your voice is what makes you so special, whether it affects a player, coach, friend, stranger, it's unforgettable and that's when I realized that the more you use your voice the better player and person you become.

Delaney Garcia

Sports Is More Than Just a Physical Game

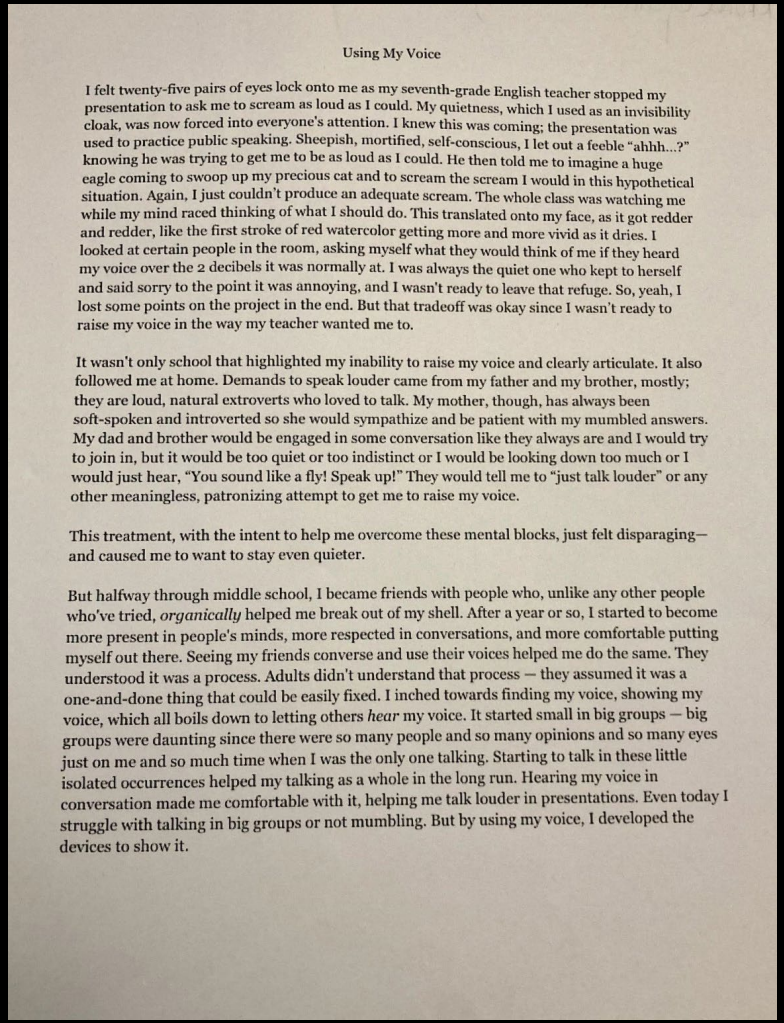
High School
Grade 11
Literature



Kaydence Ginnard

Transformation of Medusa

High School
Grade 12
Visual Arts



Using My Voice

I felt twenty-five pairs of eyes lock onto me as my seventh-grade English teacher stopped my presentation to ask me to scream as loud as I could. My quietness, which I used as an invisibility cloak, was now forced into everyone's attention. I knew this was coming; the presentation was used to practice public speaking. Sheepish, mortified, self-conscious, I let out a feeble "ahhh...?" knowing he was trying to get me to be as loud as I could. He then told me to imagine a huge eagle coming to swoop up my precious cat and to scream the scream I would in this hypothetical situation. Again, I just couldn't produce an adequate scream. The whole class was watching me while my mind raced thinking of what I should do. This translated onto my face, as it got redder and redder, like the first stroke of red watercolor getting more and more vivid as it dries. I looked at certain people in the room, asking myself what they would think of me if they heard my voice over the 2 decibels it was normally at. I was always the quiet one who kept to herself and said sorry to the point it was annoying, and I wasn't ready to leave that refuge. So, yeah, I lost some points on the project in the end. But that tradeoff was okay since I wasn't ready to raise my voice in the way my teacher wanted me to.

It wasn't only school that highlighted my inability to raise my voice and clearly articulate. It also followed me at home. Demands to speak louder came from my father and my brother, mostly; they are loud, natural extroverts who loved to talk. My mother, though, has always been soft-spoken and introverted so she would sympathize and be patient with my mumbled answers. My dad and brother would be engaged in some conversation like they always are and I would try to join in, but it would be too quiet or too indistinct or I would be looking down too much or I would just hear, "You sound like a fly! Speak up!" They would tell me to "just talk louder" or any other meaningless, patronizing attempt to get me to raise my voice.

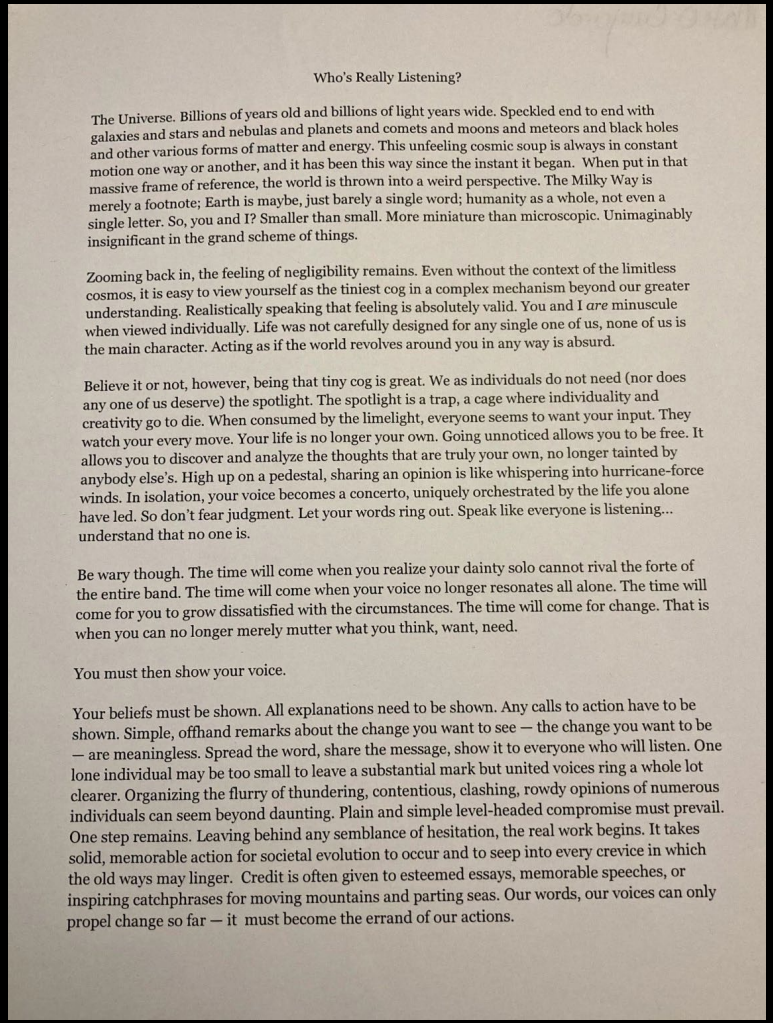
This treatment, with the intent to help me overcome these mental blocks, just felt disparaging—and caused me to want to stay even quieter.

But halfway through middle school, I became friends with people who, unlike any other people who've tried, *organically* helped me break out of my shell. After a year or so, I started to become more present in people's minds, more respected in conversations, and more comfortable putting myself out there. Seeing my friends converse and use their voices helped me do the same. They understood it was a process. Adults didn't understand that process — they assumed it was a one-and-done thing that could be easily fixed. I inched towards finding my voice, showing my voice, which all boils down to letting others *hear* my voice. It started small in big groups — big groups were daunting since there were so many people and so many opinions and so many eyes just on me and so much time when I was the only one talking. Starting to talk in these little isolated occurrences helped my talking as a whole in the long run. Hearing my voice in conversation made me comfortable with it, helping me talk louder in presentations. Even today I struggle with talking in big groups or not mumbling. But by using my voice, I developed the devices to show it.

Fiona Gjermeni

Using My Voice

High School
Grade 11
Literature



Who's Really Listening?

The Universe. Billions of years old and billions of light years wide. Speckled end to end with galaxies and stars and nebulas and planets and comets and moons and meteors and black holes and other various forms of matter and energy. This unfeeling cosmic soup is always in constant motion one way or another, and it has been this way since the instant it began. When put in that massive frame of reference, the world is thrown into a weird perspective. The Milky Way is merely a footnote; Earth is maybe, just barely a single word; humanity as a whole, not even a single letter. So, you and I? Smaller than small. More miniature than microscopic. Unimaginably insignificant in the grand scheme of things.

Zooming back in, the feeling of negligibility remains. Even without the context of the limitless cosmos, it is easy to view yourself as the tiniest cog in a complex mechanism beyond our greater understanding. Realistically speaking that feeling is absolutely valid. You and I *are* minuscule when viewed individually. Life was not carefully designed for any single one of us, none of us is the main character. Acting as if the world revolves around you in any way is absurd.

Believe it or not, however, being that tiny cog is great. We as individuals do not need (nor does any one of us deserve) the spotlight. The spotlight is a trap, a cage where individuality and creativity go to die. When consumed by the limelight, everyone seems to want your input. They watch your every move. Your life is no longer your own. Going unnoticed allows you to be free. It allows you to discover and analyze the thoughts that are truly your own, no longer tainted by anybody else's. High up on a pedestal, sharing an opinion is like whispering into hurricane-force winds. In isolation, your voice becomes a concerto, uniquely orchestrated by the life you alone have led. So don't fear judgment. Let your words ring out. Speak like everyone is listening… understand that no one is.

Be wary though. The time will come when you realize your dainty solo cannot rival the forte of the entire band. The time will come when your voice no longer resonates all alone. The time will come for you to grow dissatisfied with the circumstances. The time will come for change. That is when you can no longer merely mutter what you think, want, need.

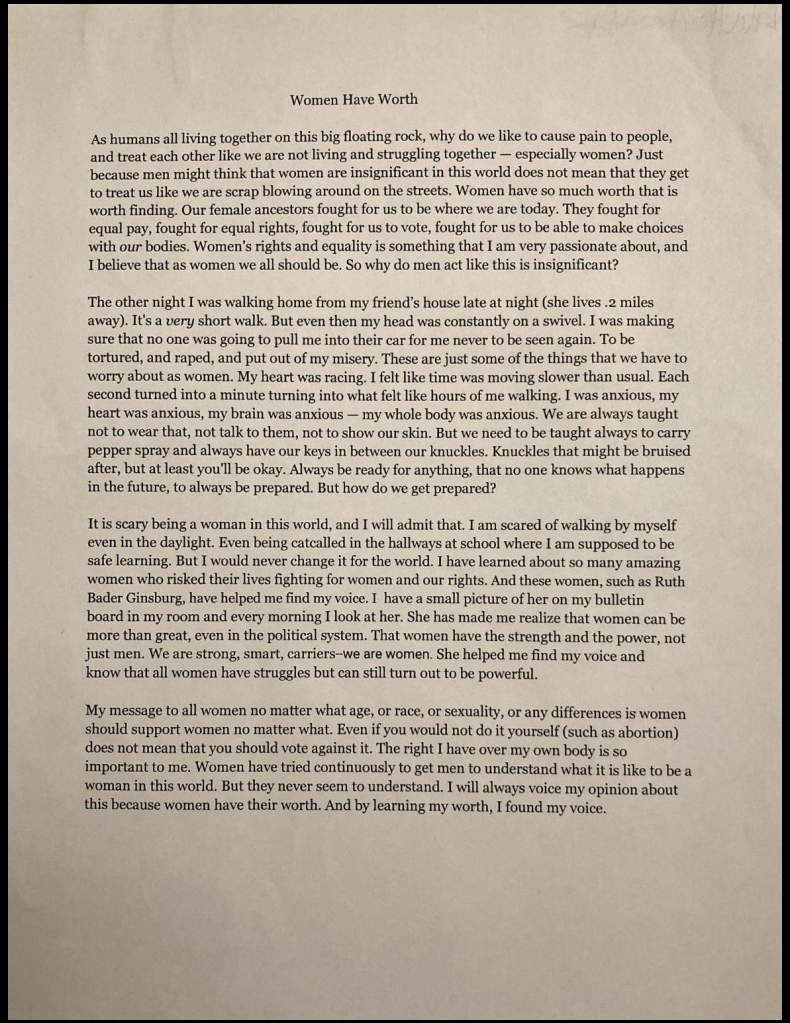
You must then show your voice.

Your beliefs must be shown. All explanations need to be shown. Any calls to action have to be shown. Simple, offhand remarks about the change you want to see — the change you want to be — are meaningless. Spread the word, share the message, show it to everyone who will listen. One lone individual may be too small to leave a substantial mark but united voices ring a whole lot clearer. Organizing the flurry of thundering, contentious, clashing, rowdy opinions of numerous individuals can seem beyond daunting. Plain and simple level-headed compromise must prevail. One step remains. Leaving behind any semblance of hesitation, the real work begins. It takes solid, memorable action for societal evolution to occur and to seep into every crevice in which the old ways may linger. Credit is often given to esteemed essays, memorable speeches, or inspiring catchphrases for moving mountains and parting seas. Our words, our voices can only propel change so far — it must become the errand of our actions.

Mateo Guajardo

Who's Really Listening?

High School
Grade 11
Literature



Women Have Worth

As humans all living together on this big floating rock, why do we like to cause pain to people, and treat each other like we are not living and struggling together — especially women? Just because men might think that women are insignificant in this world does not mean that they get to treat us like we are scrap blowing around on the streets. Women have so much worth that is worth finding. Our female ancestors fought for us to be where we are today. They fought for equal pay, fought for equal rights, fought for us to vote, fought for us to be able to make choices with *our* bodies. Women's rights and equality is something that I am very passionate about, and I believe that as women we all should be. So why do men act like this is insignificant?

The other night I was walking home from my friend's house late at night (she lives .2 miles away). It's a *very* short walk. But even then my head was constantly on a swivel. I was making sure that no one was going to pull me into their car for me never to be seen again. To be tortured, and raped, and put out of my misery. These are just some of the things that we have to worry about as women. My heart was racing. I felt like time was moving slower than usual. Each second turned into a minute turning into what felt like hours of me walking. I was anxious, my heart was anxious, my brain was anxious — my whole body was anxious. We are always taught not to wear that, not talk to them, not to show our skin. But we need to be taught always to carry pepper spray and always have our keys in between our knuckles. Knuckles that might be bruised after, but at least you'll be okay. Always be ready for anything, that no one knows what happens in the future, to always be prepared. But how do we get prepared?

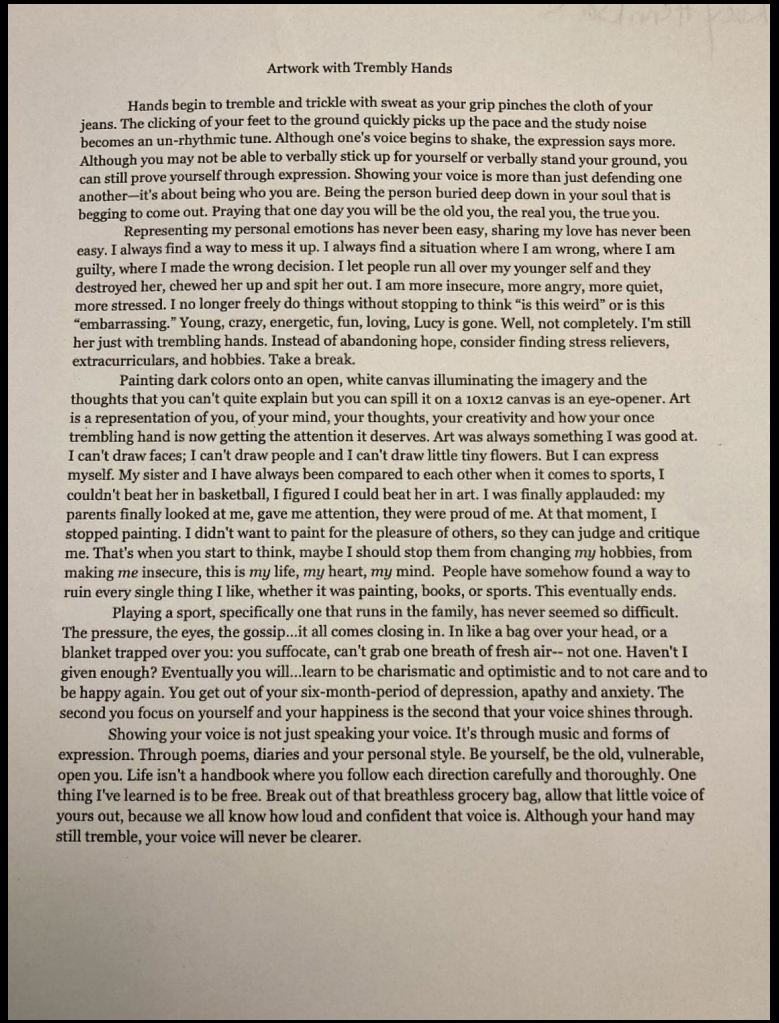
It is scary being a woman in this world, and I will admit that. I am scared of walking by myself even in the daylight. Even being catcalled in the hallways at school where I am supposed to be safe learning. But I would never change it for the world. I have learned about so many amazing women who risked their lives fighting for women and our rights. And these women, such as Ruth Bader Ginsburg, have helped me find my voice. I have a small picture of her on my bulletin board in my room and every morning I look at her. She has made me realize that women can be more than great, even in the political system. That women have the strength and the power, not just men. We are strong, smart, carriers--we are women. She helped me find my voice and know that all women have struggles but can still turn out to be powerful.

My message to all women no matter what age, or race, or sexuality, or any differences is women should support women no matter what. Even if you would not do it yourself (such as abortion) does not mean that you should vote against it. The right I have over my own body is so important to me. Women have tried continuously to get men to understand what it is like to be a woman in this world. But they never seem to understand. I will always voice my opinion about this because women have their worth. And by learning my worth, I found my voice.

Ella Hartranft

Women Have Worth

High School
Grade 11
Literature



Artwork with Trembly Hands

Hands begin to tremble and trickle with sweat as your grip pinches the cloth of your jeans. The clicking of your feet to the ground quickly picks up the pace and the study noise becomes an un-rhythmic tune. Although one's voice begins to shake, the expression says more. Although you may not be able to verbally stick up for yourself or verbally stand your ground, you can still prove yourself through expression. Showing your voice is more than just defending one another—it's about being who you are. Being the person buried deep down in your soul that is begging to come out. Praying that one day you will be the old you, the real you, the true you.

Representing my personal emotions has never been easy, sharing my love has never been easy. I always find a way to mess it up. I always find a situation where I am wrong, where I am guilty, where I made the wrong decision. I let people run all over my younger self and they destroyed her, chewed her up and spit her out. I am more insecure, more angry, more quiet, more stressed. I no longer freely do things without stopping to think "is this weird" or is this "embarrassing." Young, crazy, energetic, fun, loving, Lucy is gone. Well, not completely. I'm still her just with trembling hands. Instead of abandoning hope, consider finding stress relievers, extracurriculars, and hobbies. Take a break.

Painting dark colors onto an open, white canvas illuminating the imagery and the thoughts that you can't quite explain but you can spill it on a 10x12 canvas is an eye-opener. Art is a representation of you, of your mind, your thoughts, your creativity and how your once trembling hand is now getting the attention it deserves. Art was always something I was good at. I can't draw faces; I can't draw people and I can't draw little tiny flowers. But I can express myself. My sister and I have always been compared to each other when it comes to sports, I couldn't beat her in basketball, I figured I could beat her in art. I was finally applauded: my parents finally looked at me, gave me attention, they were proud of me. At that moment, I stopped painting. I didn't want to paint for the pleasure of others, so they can judge and critique me. That's when you start to think, maybe I should stop them from changing *my* hobbies, from making *me* insecure, this is *my* life, *my* heart, *my* mind. People have somehow found a way to ruin every single thing I like, whether it was painting, books, or sports. This eventually ends.

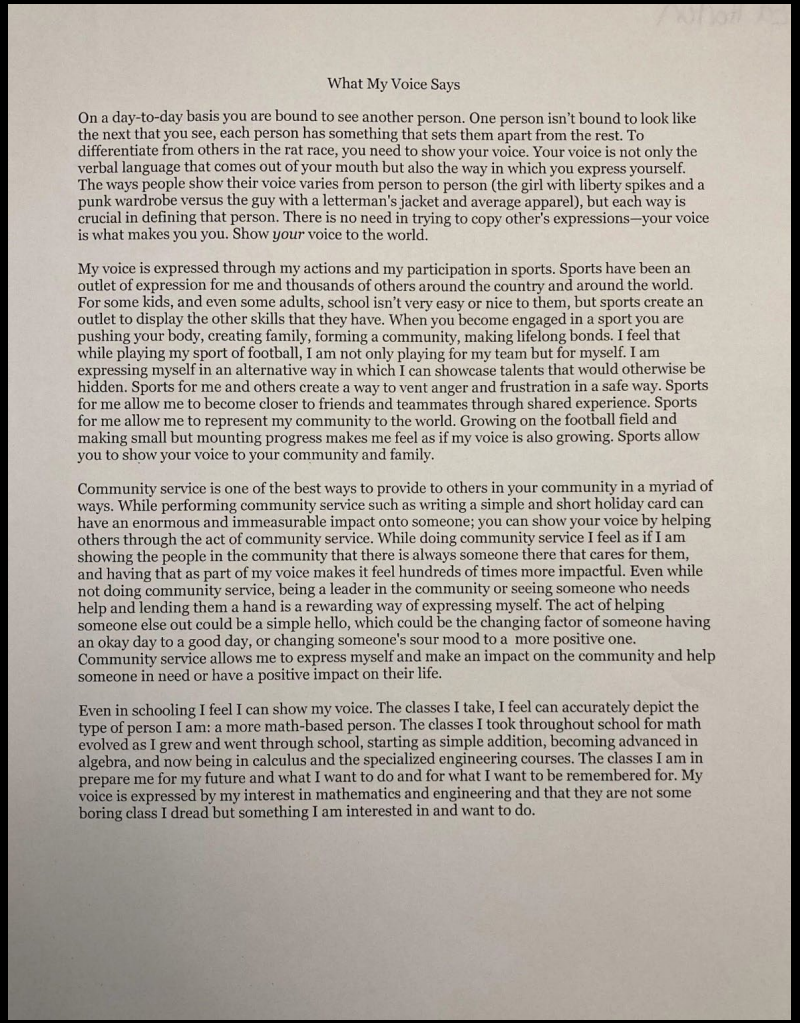
Playing a sport, specifically one that runs in the family, has never seemed so difficult. The pressure, the eyes, the gossip...it all comes closing in. In like a bag over your head, or a blanket trapped over you: you suffocate, can't grab one breath of fresh air-- not one. Haven't I given enough? Eventually you will...learn to be charismatic and optimistic and to not care and to be happy again. You get out of your six-month-period of depression, apathy and anxiety. The second you focus on yourself and your happiness is the second that your voice shines through.

Showing your voice is not just speaking your voice. It's through music and forms of expression. Through poems, diaries and your personal style. Be yourself, be the old, vulnerable, open you. Life isn't a handbook where you follow each direction carefully and thoroughly. One thing I've learned is to be free. Break out of that breathless grocery bag, allow that little voice of yours out, because we all know how loud and confident that voice is. Although your hand may still tremble, your voice will never be clearer.

Lucy Henrikson

Artwork with Trembly Hands

High School
Grade 11
Literature



What My Voice Says

On a day-to-day basis you are bound to see another person. One person isn't bound to look like the next that you see, each person has something that sets them apart from the rest. To differentiate from others in the rat race, you need to show your voice. Your voice is not only the verbal language that comes out of your mouth but also the way in which you express yourself. The ways people show their voice varies from person to person (the girl with liberty spikes and a punk wardrobe versus the guy with a letterman's jacket and average apparel), but each way is crucial in defining that person. There is no need in trying to copy other's expressions—your voice is what makes you you. Show *your* voice to the world.

My voice is expressed through my actions and my participation in sports. Sports have been an outlet of expression for me and thousands of others around the country and around the world. For some kids, and even some adults, school isn't very easy or nice to them, but sports create an outlet to display the other skills that they have. When you become engaged in a sport you are pushing your body, creating family, forming a community, making lifelong bonds. I feel that while playing my sport of football, I am not only playing for my team but for myself. I am expressing myself in an alternative way in which I can showcase talents that would otherwise be hidden. Sports for me and others create a way to vent anger and frustration in a safe way. Sports for me allow me to become closer to friends and teammates through shared experience. Sports for me allow me to represent my community to the world. Growing on the football field and making small but mounting progress makes me feel as if my voice is also growing. Sports allow you to show your voice to your community and family.

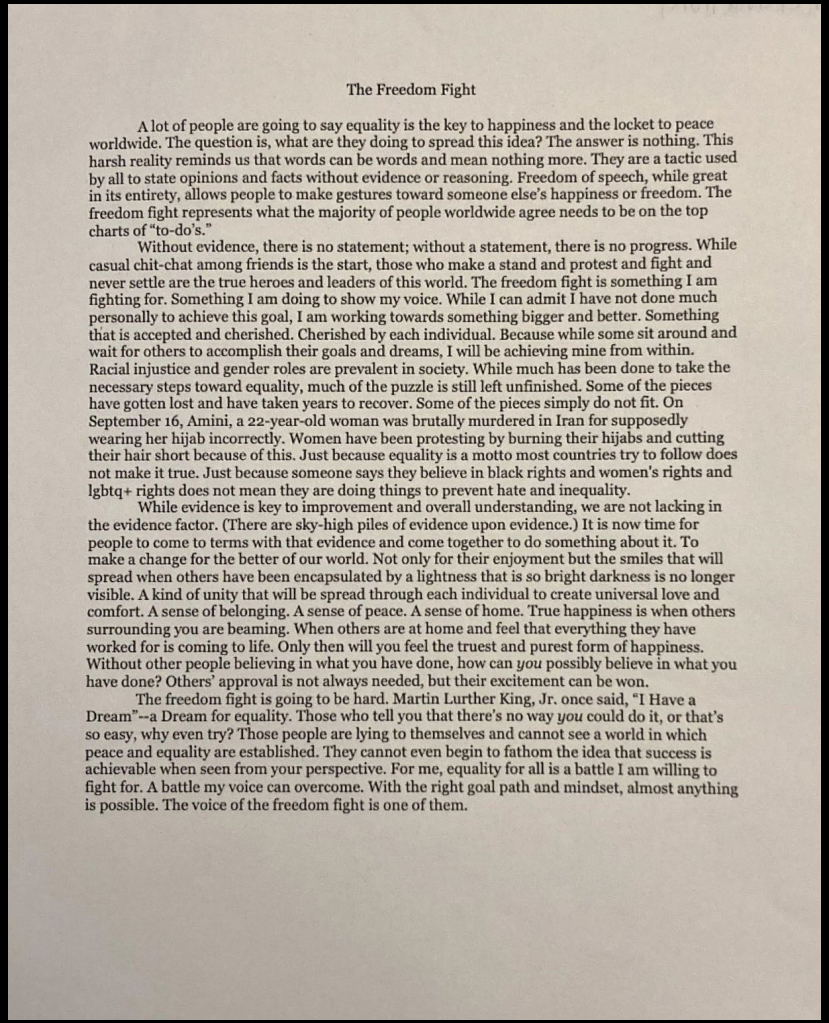
Community service is one of the best ways to provide to others in your community in a myriad of ways. While performing community service such as writing a simple and short holiday card can have an enormous and immeasurable impact onto someone; you can show your voice by helping others through the act of community service. While doing community service I feel as if I am showing the people in the community that there is always someone there that cares for them, and having that as part of my voice makes it feel hundreds of times more impactful. Even while not doing community service, being a leader in the community or seeing someone who needs help and lending them a hand is a rewarding way of expressing myself. The act of helping someone else out could be a simple hello, which could be the changing factor of someone having an okay day to a good day, or changing someone's sour mood to a more positive one. Community service allows me to express myself and make an impact on the community and help someone in need or have a positive impact on their life.

Even in schooling I feel I can show my voice. The classes I take, I feel can accurately depict the type of person I am: a more math-based person. The classes I took throughout school for math evolved as I grew and went through school, starting as simple addition, becoming advanced in algebra, and now being in calculus and the specialized engineering courses. The classes I am in prepare me for my future and what I want to do and for what I want to be remembered for. My voice is expressed by my interest in mathematics and engineering and that they are not some boring class I dread but something I am interested in and want to do.

Ed Horton

What My Voice Says

High School
Grade 11
Literature



The Freedom Fight

A lot of people are going to say equality is the key to happiness and the locket to peace worldwide. The question is, what are they doing to spread this idea? The answer is nothing. This harsh reality reminds us that words can be words and mean nothing more. They are a tactic used by all to state opinions and facts without evidence or reasoning. Freedom of speech, while great in its entirety, allows people to make gestures toward someone else's happiness or freedom. The freedom fight represents what the majority of people worldwide agree needs to be on the top charts of "to-do's."

Without evidence, there is no statement; without a statement, there is no progress. While casual chit-chat among friends is the start, those who make a stand and protest and fight and never settle are the true heroes and leaders of this world. The freedom fight is something I am fighting for. Something I am doing to show my voice. While I can admit I have not done much personally to achieve this goal, I am working towards something bigger and better. Something that is accepted and cherished. Cherished by each individual. Because while some sit around and wait for others to accomplish their goals and dreams, I will be achieving mine from within. Racial injustice and gender roles are prevalent in society. While much has been done to take the necessary steps toward equality, much of the puzzle is still left unfinished. Some of the pieces have gotten lost and have taken years to recover. Some of the pieces simply do not fit. On September 16, Amini, a 22-year-old woman was brutally murdered in Iran for supposedly wearing her hijab incorrectly. Women have been protesting by burning their hijabs and cutting their hair short because of this. Just because equality is a motto most countries try to follow does not make it true. Just because someone says they believe in black rights and women's rights and lgbtq+ rights does not mean they are doing things to prevent hate and inequality.

While evidence is key to improvement and overall understanding, we are not lacking in the evidence factor. (There are sky-high piles of evidence upon evidence.) It is now time for people to come to terms with that evidence and come together to do something about it. To make a change for the better of our world. Not only for their enjoyment but the smiles that will spread when others have been encapsulated by a lightness that is so bright darkness is no longer visible. A kind of unity that will be spread through each individual to create universal love and comfort. A sense of belonging. A sense of peace. A sense of home. True happiness is when others surrounding you are beaming. When others are at home and feel that everything they have worked for is coming to life. Only then will you feel the truest and purest form of happiness. Without other people believing in what you have done, how can *you* possibly believe in what you have done? Others' approval is not always needed, but their excitement can be won.

The freedom fight is going to be hard. Martin Lurther King, Jr. once said, "I Have a Dream"--a Dream for equality. Those who tell you that there's no way *you* could do it, or that's so easy, why even try? Those people are lying to themselves and cannot see a world in which peace and equality are established. They cannot even begin to fathom the idea that success is achievable when seen from your perspective. For me, equality for all is a battle I am willing to fight for. A battle my voice can overcome. With the right goal path and mindset, almost anything is possible. The voice of the freedom fight is one of them.

McKenna Hunt

The Freedom Flight

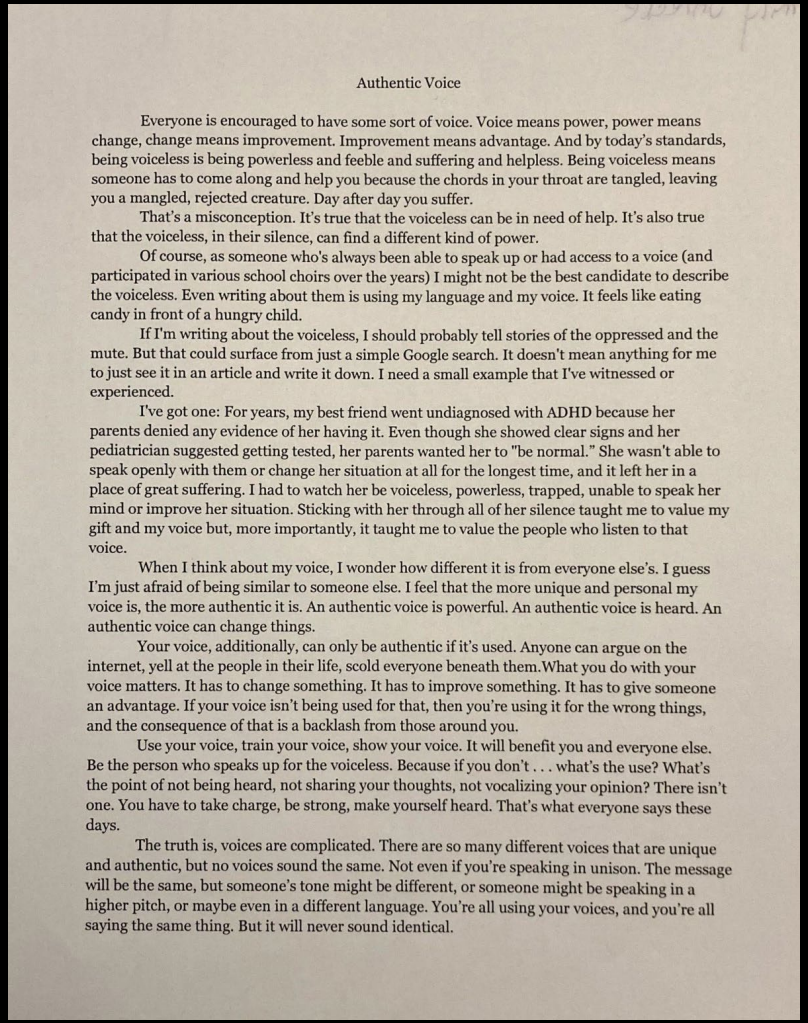
High School
Grade 11
Literature



Safa Jabarkhil

Free Flying

High School
Grade 11
Visual Arts



Authentic Voice

Everyone is encouraged to have some sort of voice. Voice means power, power means change, change means improvement. Improvement means advantage. And by today's standards, being voiceless is being powerless and feeble and suffering and helpless. Being voiceless means someone has to come along and help you because the chords in your throat are tangled, leaving you a mangled, rejected creature. Day after day you suffer.

That's a misconception. It's true that the voiceless can be in need of help. It's also true that the voiceless, in their silence, can find a different kind of power.

Of course, as someone who's always been able to speak up or had access to a voice (and participated in various school choirs over the years) I might not be the best candidate to describe the voiceless. Even writing about them is using my language and my voice. It feels like eating candy in front of a hungry child.

If I'm writing about the voiceless, I should probably tell stories of the oppressed and the mute. But that could surface from just a simple Google search. It doesn't mean anything for me to just see it in an article and write it down. I need a small example that I've witnessed or experienced.

I've got one: For years, my best friend went undiagnosed with ADHD because her parents denied any evidence of her having it. Even though she showed clear signs and her pediatrician suggested getting tested, her parents wanted her to "be normal." She wasn't able to speak openly with them or change her situation at all for the longest time, and it left her in a place of great suffering. I had to watch her be voiceless, powerless, trapped, unable to speak her mind or improve her situation. Sticking with her through all of her silence taught me to value my gift and my voice but, more importantly, it taught me to value the people who listen to that voice.

When I think about my voice, I wonder how different it is from everyone else's. I guess I'm just afraid of being similar to someone else. I feel that the more unique and personal my voice is, the more authentic it is. An authentic voice is powerful. An authentic voice is heard. An authentic voice can change things.

Your voice, additionally, can only be authentic if it's used. Anyone can argue on the internet, yell at the people in their life, scold everyone beneath them.What you do with your voice matters. It has to change something. It has to improve something. It has to give someone an advantage. If your voice isn't being used for that, then you're using it for the wrong things, and the consequence of that is a backlash from those around you.

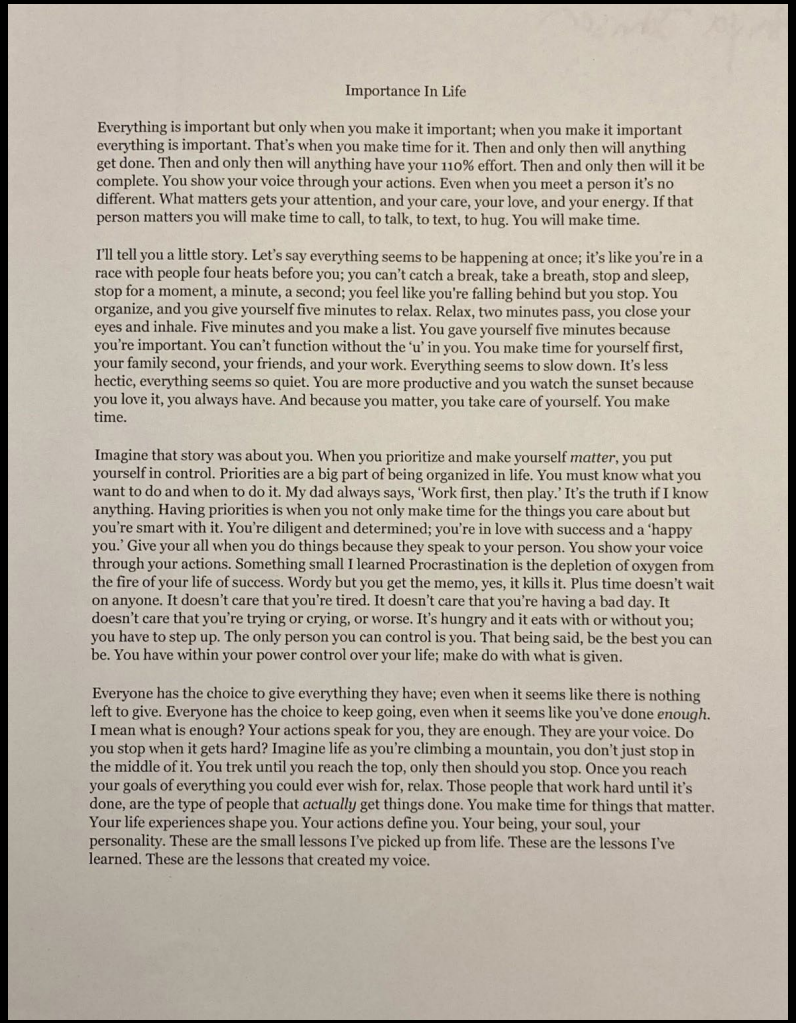
Use your voice, train your voice, show your voice. It will benefit you and everyone else. Be the person who speaks up for the voiceless. Because if you don't . . . what's the use? What's the point of not being heard, not sharing your thoughts, not vocalizing your opinion? There isn't one. You have to take charge, be strong, make yourself heard. That's what everyone says these days.

The truth is, voices are complicated. There are so many different voices that are unique and authentic, but no voices sound the same. Not even if you're speaking in unison. The message will be the same, but someone's tone might be different, or someone might be speaking in a higher pitch, or maybe even in a different language. You're all using your voices, and you're all saying the same thing. But it will never sound identical.

Emily Jarecke

Authentic Voice

High School
Grade 11
Literature



Importance In Life

Everything is important but only when you make it important; when you make it important everything is important. That's when you make time for it. Then and only then will anything get done. Then and only then will anything have your 110% effort. Then and only then will it be complete. You show your voice through your actions. Even when you meet a person it's no different. What matters gets your attention, and your care, your love, and your energy. If that person matters you will make time to call, to talk, to text, to hug. You will make time.

I'll tell you a little story. Let's say everything seems to be happening at once; it's like you're in a race with people four heats before you; you can't catch a break, take a breath, stop and sleep, stop for a moment, a minute, a second; you feel like you're falling behind but you stop. You organize, and you give yourself five minutes to relax. Relax, two minutes pass, you close your eyes and inhale. Five minutes and you make a list. You gave yourself five minutes because you're important. You can't function without the 'u' in you. You make time for yourself first, your family second, your friends, and your work. Everything seems to slow down. It's less hectic, everything seems so quiet. You are more productive and you watch the sunset because you love it, you always have. And because you matter, you take care of yourself. You make time.

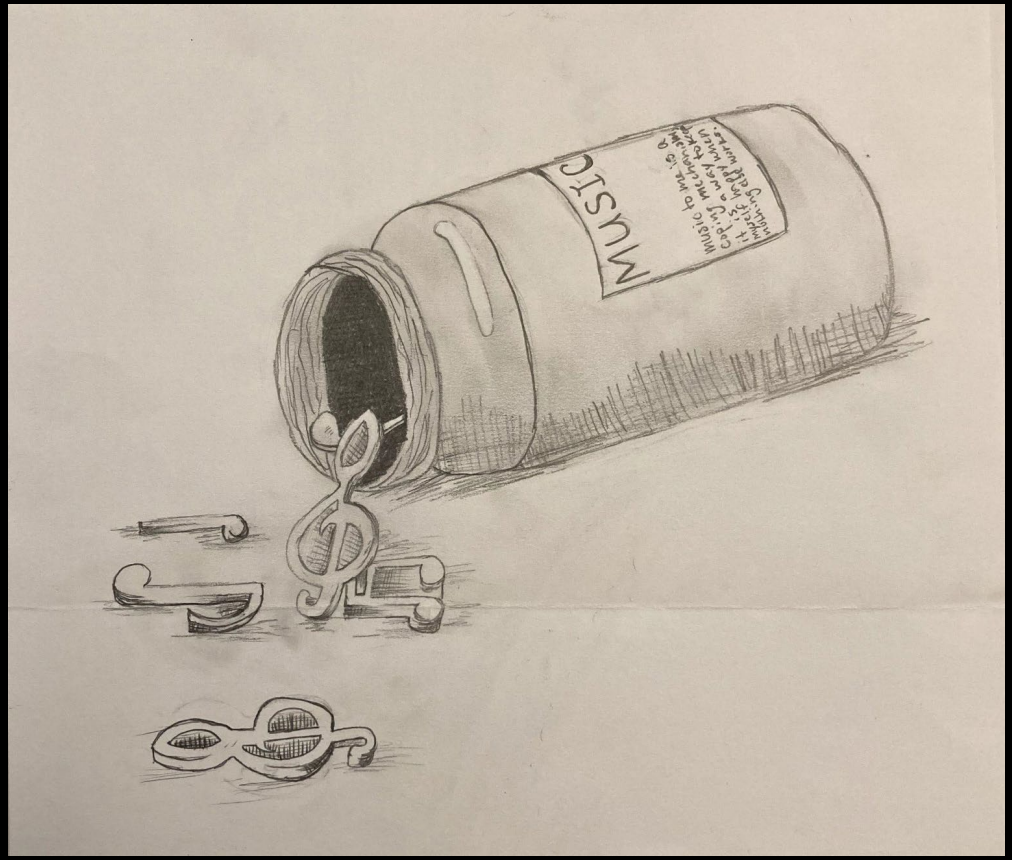
Imagine that story was about you. When you prioritize and make yourself *matter*, you put yourself in control. Priorities are a big part of being organized in life. You must know what you want to do and when to do it. My dad always says, 'Work first, then play.' It's the truth if I know anything. Having priorities is when you not only make time for the things you care about but you're smart with it. You're diligent and determined; you're in love with success and a 'happy you.' Give your all when you do things because they speak to your person. You show your voice through your actions. Something small I learned Procrastination is the depletion of oxygen from the fire of your life of success. Wordy but you get the memo, yes, it kills it. Plus time doesn't wait on anyone. It doesn't care that you're tired. It doesn't care that you're having a bad day. It doesn't care that you're trying or crying, or worse. It's hungry and it eats with or without you; you have to step up. The only person you can control is you. That being said, be the best you can be. You have within your power control over your life; make do with what is given.

Everyone has the choice to give everything they have; even when it seems like there is nothing left to give. Everyone has the choice to keep going, even when it seems like you've done *enough*. I mean what is enough? Your actions speak for you, they are enough. They are your voice. Do you stop when it gets hard? Imagine life as you're climbing a mountain, you don't just stop in the middle of it. You trek until you reach the top, only then should you stop. Once you reach your goals of everything you could ever wish for, relax. Those people that work hard until it's done, are the type of people that *actually* get things done. You make time for things that matter. Your life experiences shape you. Your actions define you. Your being, your soul, your personality. These are the small lessons I've picked up from life. These are the lessons I've learned. These are the lessons that created my voice.

Aniya Johnson

Importance in Life

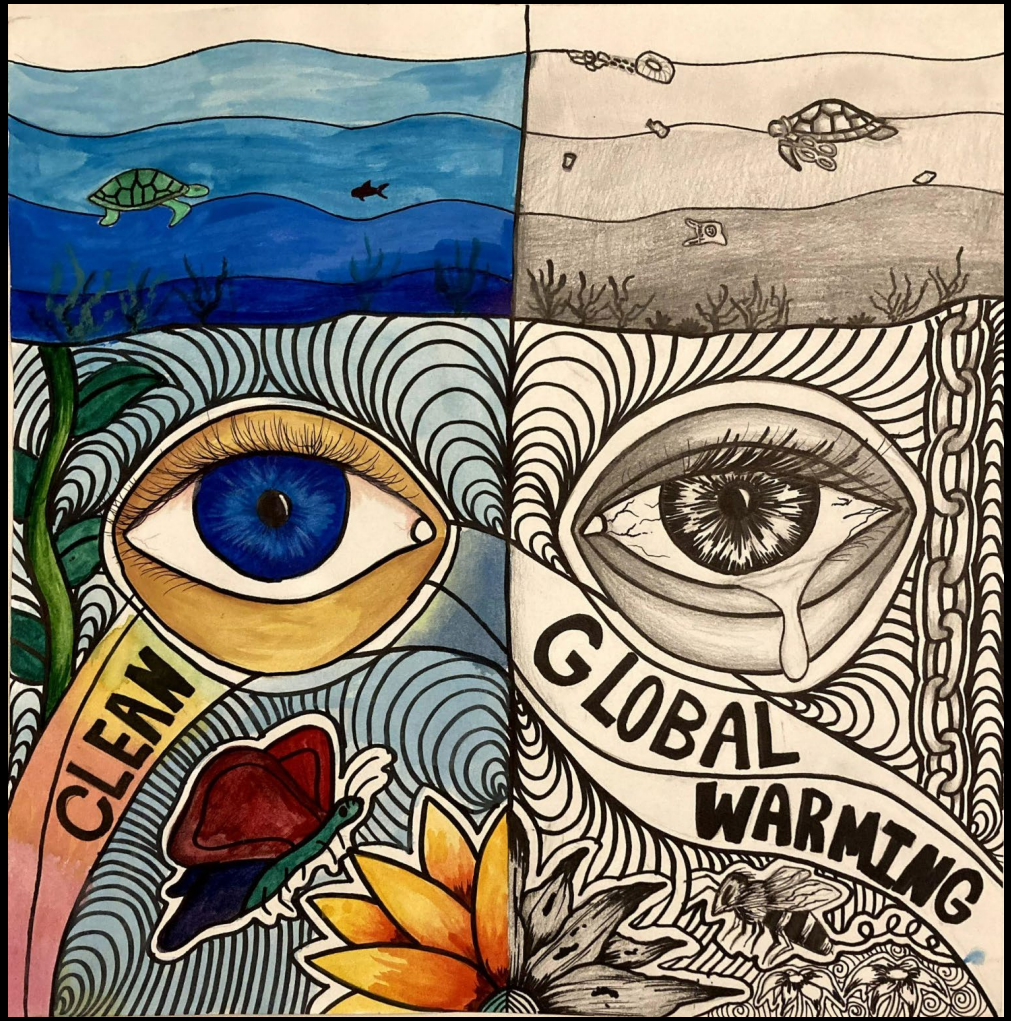
High School
Grade 11
Literature



Ryedan Jones

Untitled

High School
Grade 12
Visual Arts



Molly Keane

To See the Truth

High School
Grade 10
Visual Arts



Alexis Perry

Gooby

High School
Grade 10
Visual Arts



Sarah Kpaw

Star Crossed

High School
Grade 10
Visual Arts



Hsa Eh Kpru Wah

Show Your Voice

High School
Grade 10
Visual Arts



Halla Kutkut

Show Your Voice

High School
Grade 11
Visual Arts



Jacqueline Lyall

Sunset

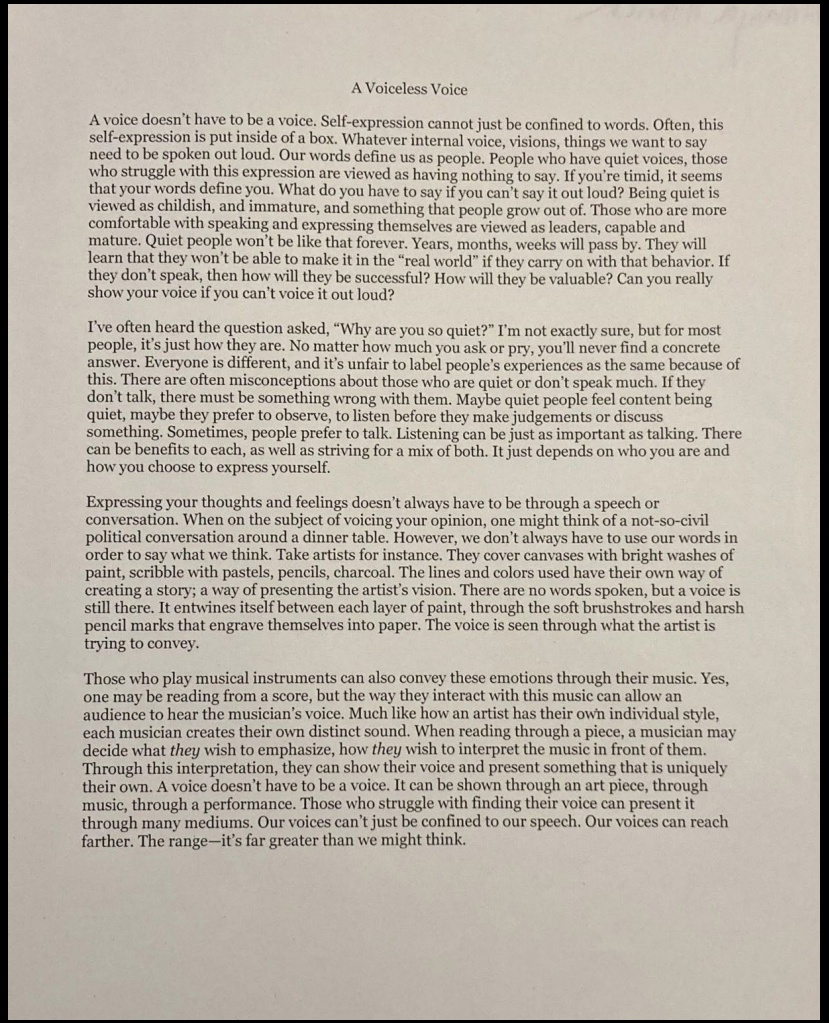
High School
Grade 10
Visual Arts



Madaline Magda - McKinney

Save Our Oceans

High School
Grade 11
Visual Arts



A Voiceless Voice

A voice doesn't have to be a voice. Self-expression cannot just be confined to words. Often, this self-expression is put inside of a box. Whatever internal voice, visions, things we want to say need to be spoken out loud. Our words define us as people. People who have quiet voices, those who struggle with this expression are viewed as having nothing to say. If you're timid, it seems that your words define you. What do you have to say if you can't say it out loud? Being quiet is viewed as childish, and immature, and something that people grow out of. Those who are more comfortable with speaking and expressing themselves are viewed as leaders, capable and mature. Quiet people won't be like that forever. Years, months, weeks will pass by. They will learn that they won't be able to make it in the "real world" if they carry on with that behavior. If they don't speak, then how will they be successful? How will they be valuable? Can you really show your voice if you can't voice it out loud?

I've often heard the question asked, "Why are you so quiet?" I'm not exactly sure, but for most people, it's just how they are. No matter how much you ask or pry, you'll never find a concrete answer. Everyone is different, and it's unfair to label people's experiences as the same because of this. There are often misconceptions about those who are quiet or don't speak much. If they don't talk, there must be something wrong with them. Maybe quiet people feel content being quiet, maybe they prefer to observe, to listen before they make judgements or discuss something. Sometimes, people prefer to talk. Listening can be just as important as talking. There can be benefits to each, as well as striving for a mix of both. It just depends on who you are and how you choose to express yourself.

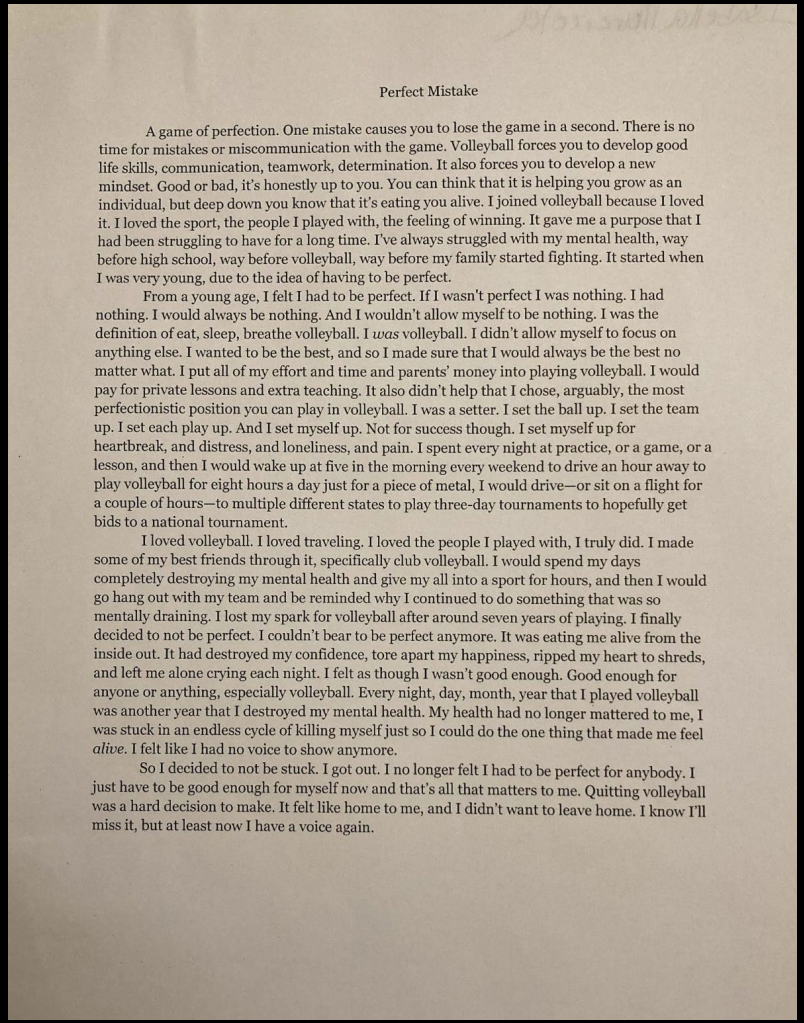
Expressing your thoughts and feelings doesn't always have to be through a speech or conversation. When on the subject of voicing your opinion, one might think of a not-so-civil political conversation around a dinner table. However, we don't always have to use our words in order to say what we think. Take artists for instance. They cover canvases with bright washes of paint, scribble with pastels, pencils, charcoal. The lines and colors used have their own way of creating a story; a way of presenting the artist's vision. There are no words spoken, but a voice is still there. It entwines itself between each layer of paint, through the soft brushstrokes and harsh pencil marks that engrave themselves into paper. The voice is seen through what the artist is trying to convey.

Those who play musical instruments can also convey these emotions through their music. Yes, one may be reading from a score, but the way they interact with this music can allow an audience to hear the musician's voice. Much like how an artist has their own individual style, each musician creates their own distinct sound. When reading through a piece, a musician may decide what *they* wish to emphasize, how *they* wish to interpret the music in front of them. Through this interpretation, they can show their voice and present something that is uniquely their own. A voice doesn't have to be a voice. It can be shown through an art piece, through music, through a performance. Those who struggle with finding their voice can present it through many mediums. Our voices can't just be confined to our speech. Our voices can reach farther. The range—it's far greater than we might think.

Amalija Marich

A Voiceless Voice

High School
Grade 11
Literature



Perfect Mistake

A game of perfection. One mistake causes you to lose the game in a second. There is no time for mistakes or miscommunication with the game. Volleyball forces you to develop good life skills, communication, teamwork, determination. It also forces you to develop a new mindset. Good or bad, it's honestly up to you. You can think that it is helping you grow as an individual, but deep down you know that it's eating you alive. I joined volleyball because I loved it. I loved the sport, the people I played with, the feeling of winning. It gave me a purpose that I had been struggling to have for a long time. I've always struggled with my mental health, way before high school, way before volleyball, way before my family started fighting. It started when I was very young, due to the idea of having to be perfect.

From a young age, I felt I had to be perfect. If I wasn't perfect I was nothing. I had nothing. I would always be nothing. And I wouldn't allow myself to be nothing. I was the definition of eat, sleep, breathe volleyball. I *was* volleyball. I didn't allow myself to focus on anything else. I wanted to be the best, and so I made sure that I would always be the best no matter what. I put all of my effort and time and parents' money into playing volleyball. I would pay for private lessons and extra teaching. It also didn't help that I chose, arguably, the most perfectionistic position you can play in volleyball. I was a setter. I set the ball up. I set the team up. I set each play up. And I set myself up. Not for success though. I set myself up for heartbreak, and distress, and loneliness, and pain. I spent every night at practice, or a game, or a lesson, and then I would wake up at five in the morning every weekend to drive an hour away to play volleyball for eight hours a day just for a piece of metal, I would drive—or sit on a flight for a couple of hours—to multiple different states to play three-day tournaments to hopefully get bids to a national tournament.

I loved volleyball. I loved traveling. I loved the people I played with, I truly did. I made some of my best friends through it, specifically club volleyball. I would spend my days completely destroying my mental health and give my all into a sport for hours, and then I would go hang out with my team and be reminded why I continued to do something that was so mentally draining. I lost my spark for volleyball after around seven years of playing. I finally decided to not be perfect. I couldn't bear to be perfect anymore. It was eating me alive from the inside out. It had destroyed my confidence, tore apart my happiness, ripped my heart to shreds, and left me alone crying each night. I felt as though I wasn't good enough. Good enough for anyone or anything, especially volleyball. Every night, day, month, year that I played volleyball was another year that I destroyed my mental health. My health had no longer mattered to me, I was stuck in an endless cycle of killing myself just so I could do the one thing that made me feel *alive*. I felt like I had no voice to show anymore.

So I decided to not be stuck. I got out. I no longer felt I had to be perfect for anybody. I just have to be good enough for myself now and that's all that matters to me. Quitting volleyball was a hard decision to make. It felt like home to me, and I didn't want to leave home. I know I'll miss it, but at least now I have a voice again.

Bella Marzicola

Perfect Mistake

High School
Grade 11
Literature



Anna Maurer

What Do You Think?

High School
Grade 10
Visual Arts



Millie Miller

Dark Depths

High School
Grade 11
Visual Arts



Mae Mohar

For the Sake of Tradition

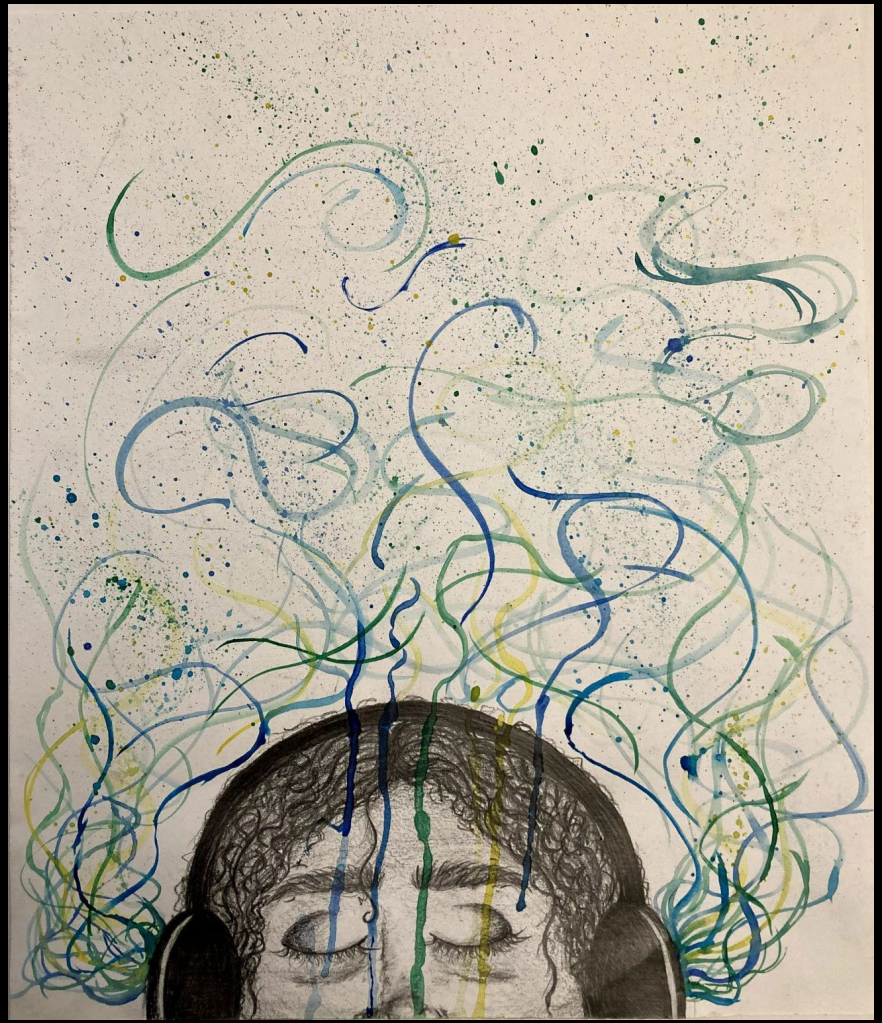
High School
Grade 10
Visual Arts



Milena Osborne

Lovely Forests

High School
Grade 10
Visual Arts



Marissa Parkison

Expression Through Music

High School
Grade 10
Visual Arts



Ler Lay Paw

At Peace

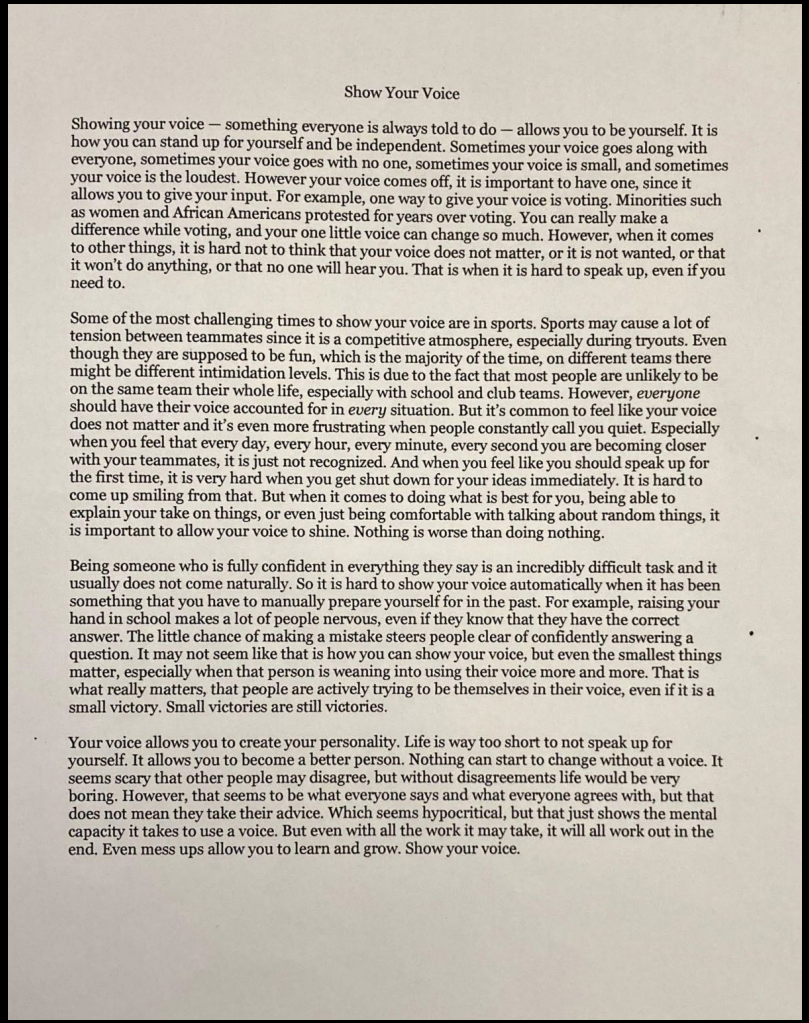
High School
Grade 10
Visual Arts



Thay Klu Plar

One At a Time

High School
Grade 10
Visual Arts



Show Your Voice

Showing your voice — something everyone is always told to do — allows you to be yourself. It is how you can stand up for yourself and be independent. Sometimes your voice goes along with everyone, sometimes your voice goes with no one, sometimes your voice is small, and sometimes your voice is the loudest. However your voice comes off, it is important to have one, since it allows you to give your input. For example, one way to give your voice is voting. Minorities such as women and African Americans protested for years over voting. You can really make a difference while voting, and your one little voice can change so much. However, when it comes to other things, it is hard not to think that your voice does not matter, or it is not wanted, or that it won't do anything, or that no one will hear you. That is when it is hard to speak up, even if you need to.

Some of the most challenging times to show your voice are in sports. Sports may cause a lot of tension between teammates since it is a competitive atmosphere, especially during tryouts. Even though they are supposed to be fun, which is the majority of the time, on different teams there might be different intimidation levels. This is due to the fact that most people are unlikely to be on the same team their whole life, especially with school and club teams. However, *everyone* should have their voice accounted for in *every* situation. But it's common to feel like your voice does not matter and it's even more frustrating when people constantly call you quiet. Especially when you feel that every day, every hour, every minute, every second you are becoming closer with your teammates, it is just not recognized. And when you feel like you should speak up for the first time, it is very hard when you get shut down for your ideas immediately. It is hard to come up smiling from that. But when it comes to doing what is best for you, being able to explain your take on things, or even just being comfortable with talking about random things, it is important to allow your voice to shine. Nothing is worse than doing nothing.

Being someone who is fully confident in everything they say is an incredibly difficult task and it usually does not come naturally. So it is hard to show your voice automatically when it has been something that you have to manually prepare yourself for in the past. For example, raising your hand in school makes a lot of people nervous, even if they know that they have the correct answer. The little chance of making a mistake steers people clear of confidently answering a question. It may not seem like that is how you can show your voice, but even the smallest things matter, especially when that person is weaning into using their voice more and more. That is what really matters, that people are actively trying to be themselves in their voice, even if it is a small victory. Small victories are still victories.

Your voice allows you to create your personality. Life is way too short to not speak up for yourself. It allows you to become a better person. Nothing can start to change without a voice. It seems scary that other people may disagree, but without disagreements life would be very boring. However, that seems to be what everyone says and what everyone agrees with, but that does not mean they take their advice. Which seems hypocritical, but that just shows the mental capacity it takes to use a voice. But even with all the work it may take, it will all work out in the end. Even mess ups allow you to learn and grow. Show your voice.

Emily Potoczak

Show Your Voice

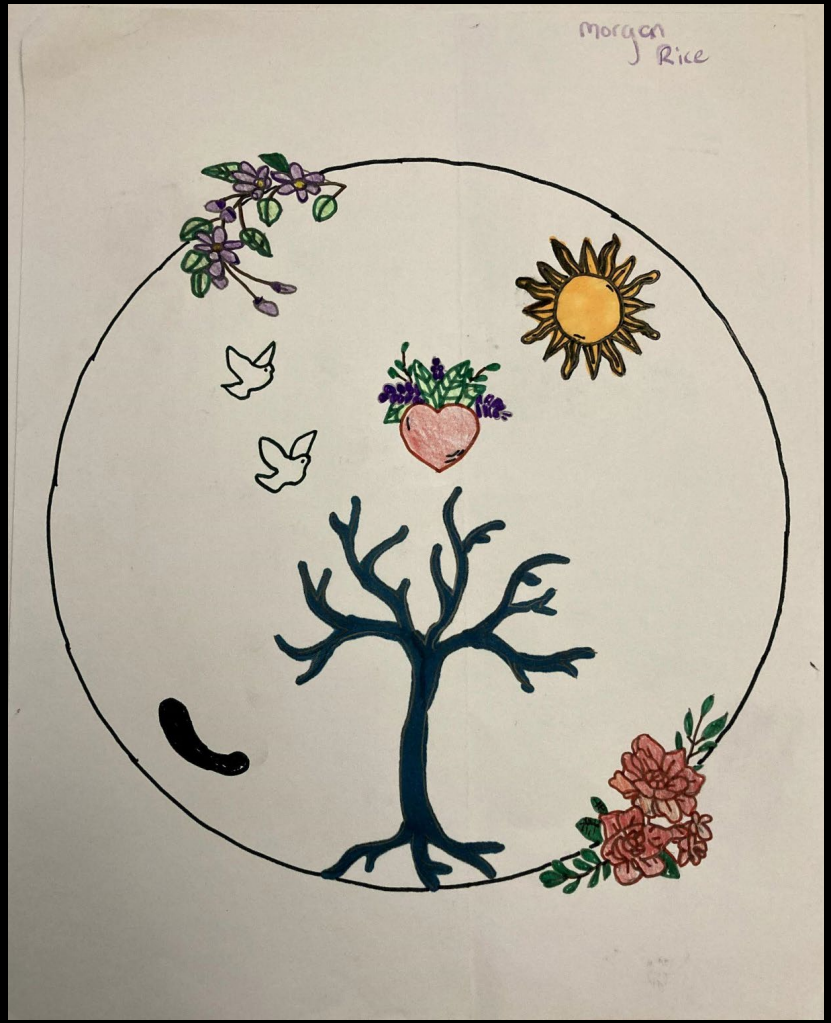
High School
Grade 11
Literature



Brynn Reali

The Art Within

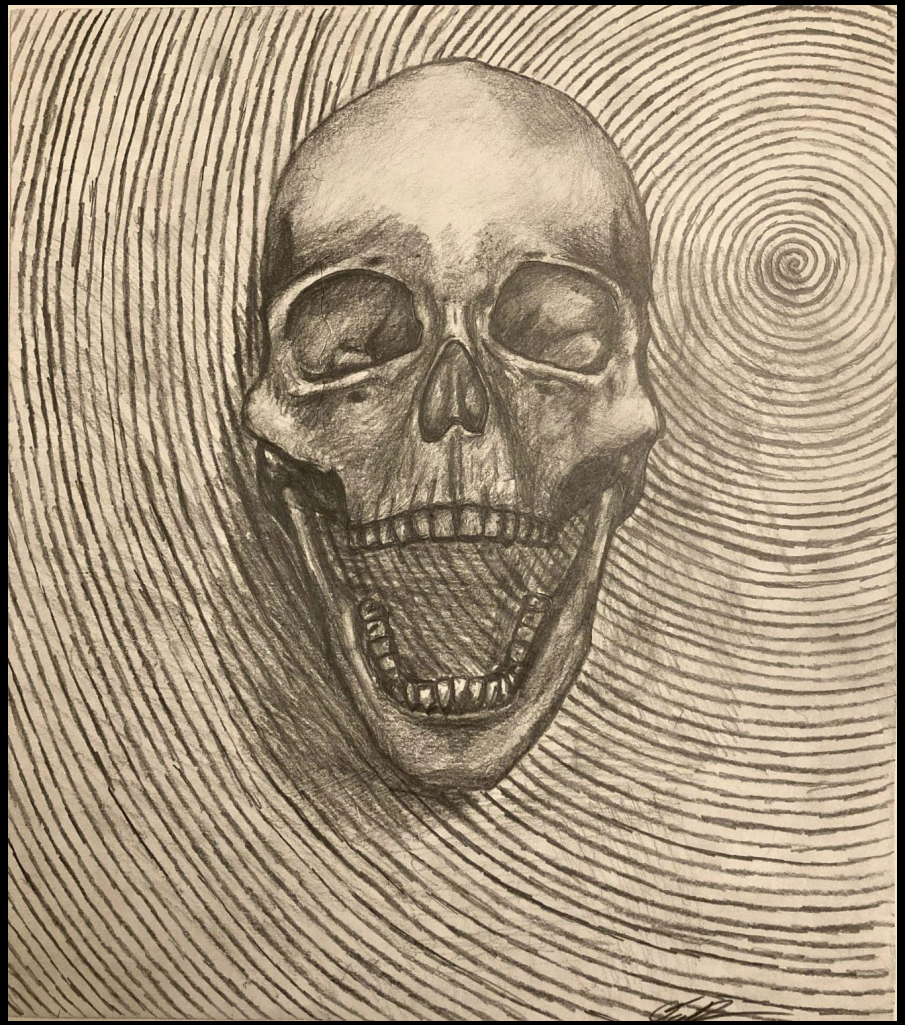
High School
Grade 11
Visual Arts



Morgan Rice

Tree of Life

High School
Grade 12
Visual Arts



Owen Ritchie

Life, Death, and Confusion

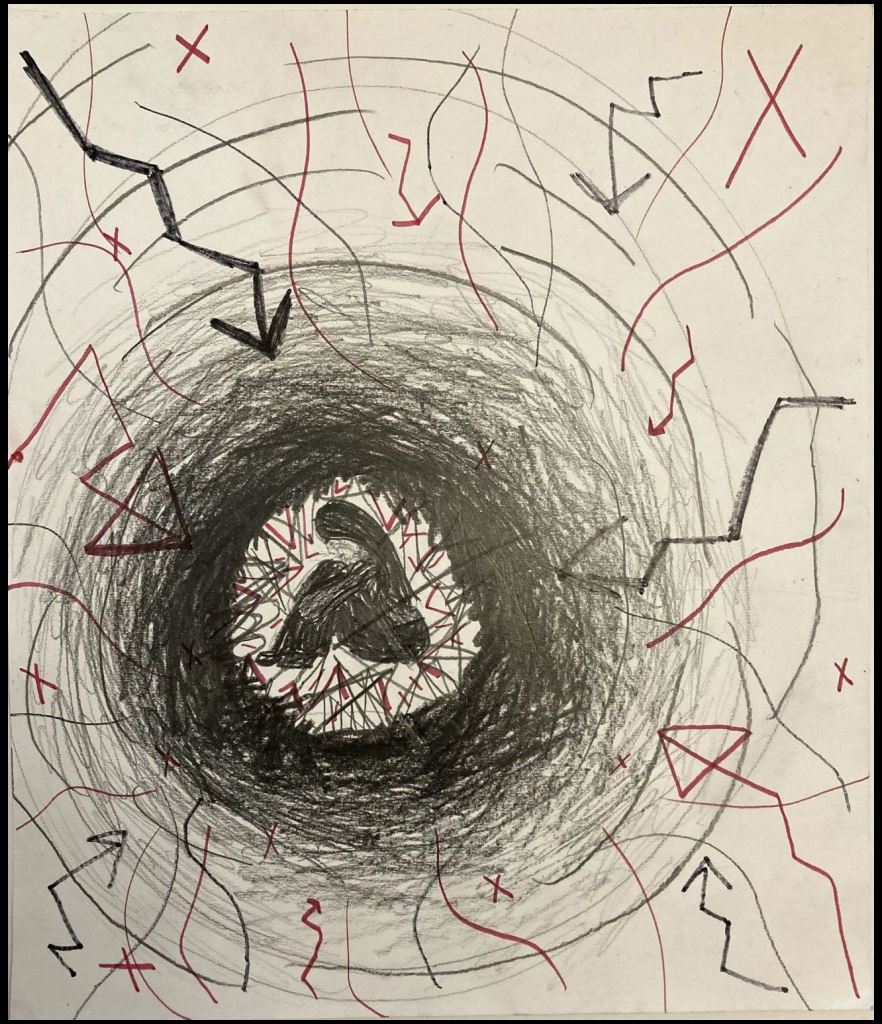
High School
Grade 10
Visual Arts



Ava Schmoldt

Stay Connected

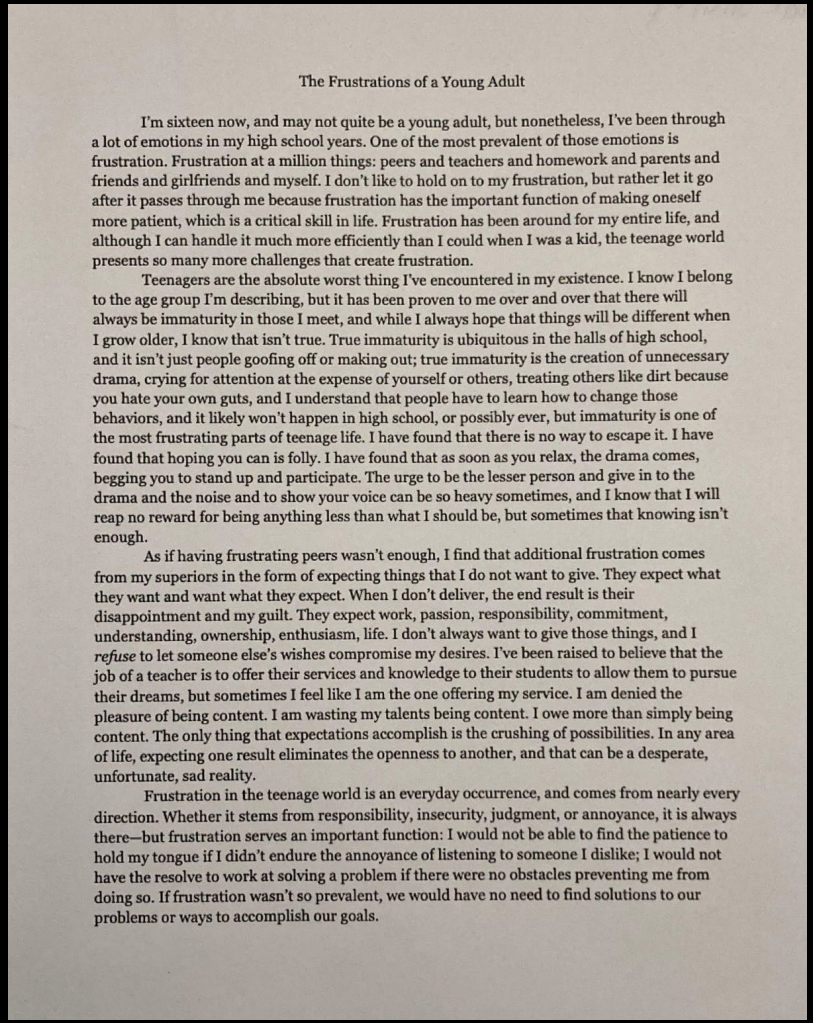
High School
Grade 10
Visual Arts



Elizabeth Schuldt

Feeling Small

High School
Grade 10
Visual Arts



The Frustrations of a Young Adult

I'm sixteen now, and may not quite be a young adult, but nonetheless, I've been through a lot of emotions in my high school years. One of the most prevalent of those emotions is frustration. Frustration at a million things: peers and teachers and homework and parents and friends and girlfriends and myself. I don't like to hold on to my frustration, but rather let it go after it passes through me because frustration has the important function of making oneself more patient, which is a critical skill in life. Frustration has been around for my entire life, and although I can handle it much more efficiently than I could when I was a kid, the teenage world presents so many more challenges that create frustration.

Teenagers are the absolute worst thing I've encountered in my existence. I know I belong to the age group I'm describing, but it has been proven to me over and over that there will always be immaturity in those I meet, and while I always hope that things will be different when I grow older, I know that isn't true. True immaturity is ubiquitous in the halls of high school, and it isn't just people goofing off or making out; true immaturity is the creation of unnecessary drama, crying for attention at the expense of yourself or others, treating others like dirt because you hate your own guts, and I understand that people have to learn how to change those behaviors, and it likely won't happen in high school, or possibly ever, but immaturity is one of the most frustrating parts of teenage life. I have found that there is no way to escape it. I have found that hoping you can is folly. I have found that as soon as you relax, the drama comes, begging you to stand up and participate. The urge to be the lesser person and give in to the drama and the noise and to show your voice can be so heavy sometimes, and I know that I will reap no reward for being anything less than what I should be, but sometimes that knowing isn't enough.

As if having frustrating peers wasn't enough, I find that additional frustration comes from my superiors in the form of expecting things that I do not want to give. They expect what they want and want what they expect. When I don't deliver, the end result is their disappointment and my guilt. They expect work, passion, responsibility, commitment, understanding, ownership, enthusiasm, life. I don't always want to give those things, and I *refuse* to let someone else's wishes compromise my desires. I've been raised to believe that the job of a teacher is to offer their services and knowledge to their students to allow them to pursue their dreams, but sometimes I feel like I am the one offering my service. I am denied the pleasure of being content. I am wasting my talents being content. I owe more than simply being content. The only thing that expectations accomplish is the crushing of possibilities. In any area of life, expecting one result eliminates the openness to another, and that can be a desperate, unfortunate, sad reality.

Frustration in the teenage world is an everyday occurrence, and comes from nearly every direction. Whether it stems from responsibility, insecurity, judgment, or annoyance, it is always there—but frustration serves an important function: I would not be able to find the patience to hold my tongue if I didn't endure the annoyance of listening to someone I dislike; I would not have the resolve to work at solving a problem if there were no obstacles preventing me from doing so. If frustration wasn't so prevalent, we would have no need to find solutions to our problems or ways to accomplish our goals.

Bode Smith

The Frustrations of a Young Adult

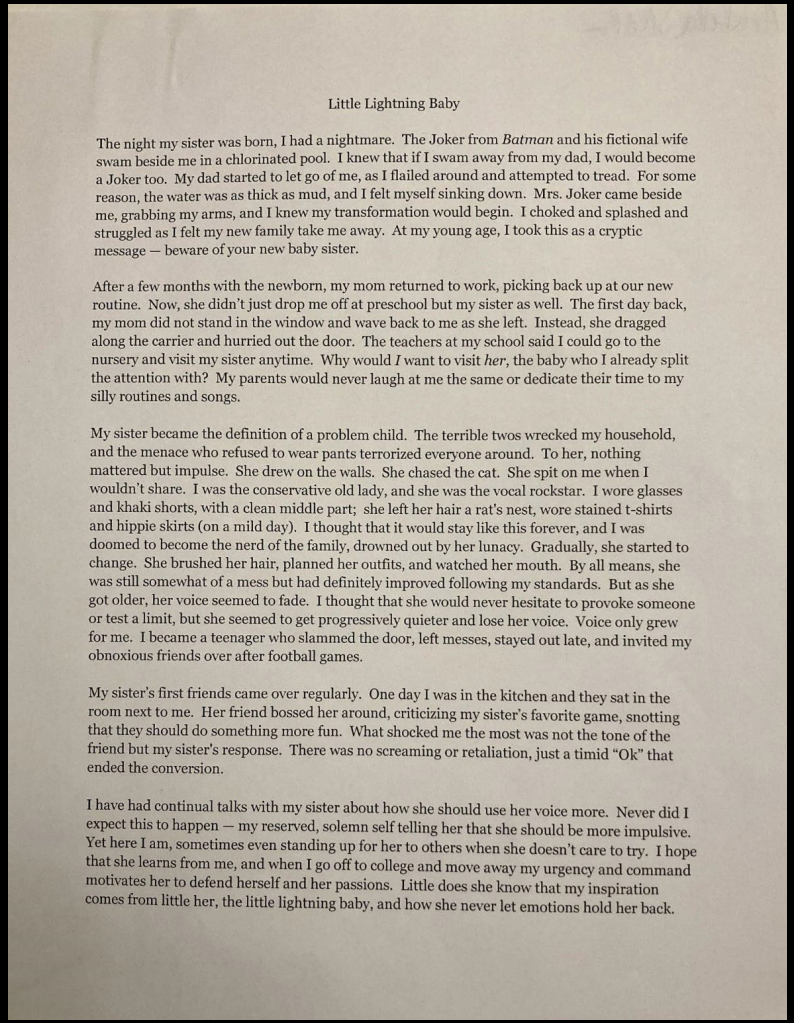
High School
Grade 11
Literature



Layla Smith

Home of Lakewood

High School
Grade 10
Visual Arts



Little Lightning Baby

The night my sister was born, I had a nightmare. The Joker from *Batman* and his fictional wife swam beside me in a chlorinated pool. I knew that if I swam away from my dad, I would become a Joker too. My dad started to let go of me, as I flailed around and attempted to tread. For some reason, the water was as thick as mud, and I felt myself sinking down. Mrs. Joker came beside me, grabbing my arms, and I knew my transformation would begin. I choked and splashed and struggled as I felt my new family take me away. At my young age, I took this as a cryptic message — beware of your new baby sister.

After a few months with the newborn, my mom returned to work, picking back up at our new routine. Now, she didn't just drop me off at preschool but my sister as well. The first day back, my mom did not stand in the window and wave back to me as she left. Instead, she dragged along the carrier and hurried out the door. The teachers at my school said I could go to the nursery and visit my sister anytime. Why would *I* want to visit *her*, the baby who I already split the attention with? My parents would never laugh at me the same or dedicate their time to my silly routines and songs.

My sister became the definition of a problem child. The terrible twos wrecked my household, and the menace who refused to wear pants terrorized everyone around. To her, nothing mattered but impulse. She drew on the walls. She chased the cat. She spit on me when I wouldn't share. I was the conservative old lady, and she was the vocal rockstar. I wore glasses and khaki shorts, with a clean middle part; she left her hair a rat's nest, wore stained t-shirts and hippie skirts (on a mild day). I thought that it would stay like this forever, and I was doomed to become the nerd of the family, drowned out by her lunacy. Gradually, she started to change. She brushed her hair, planned her outfits, and watched her mouth. By all means, she was still somewhat of a mess but had definitely improved following my standards. But as she got older, her voice seemed to fade. I thought that she would never hesitate to provoke someone or test a limit, but she seemed to get progressively quieter and lose her voice. Voice only grew for me. I became a teenager who slammed the door, left messes, stayed out late, and invited my obnoxious friends over after football games.

My sister's first friends came over regularly. One day I was in the kitchen and they sat in the room next to me. Her friend bossed her around, criticizing my sister's favorite game, snotting that they should do something more fun. What shocked me the most was not the tone of the friend but my sister's response. There was no screaming or retaliation, just a timid "Ok" that ended the conversion.

I have had continual talks with my sister about how she should use her voice more. Never did I expect this to happen — my reserved, solemn self telling her that she should be more impulsive. Yet here I am, sometimes even standing up for her to others when she doesn't care to try. I hope that she learns from me, and when I go off to college and move away my urgency and command motivates her to defend herself and her passions. Little does she know that my inspiration comes from little her, the little lightning baby, and how she never let emotions hold her back.

Arabella Spear

Little Lightning Baby

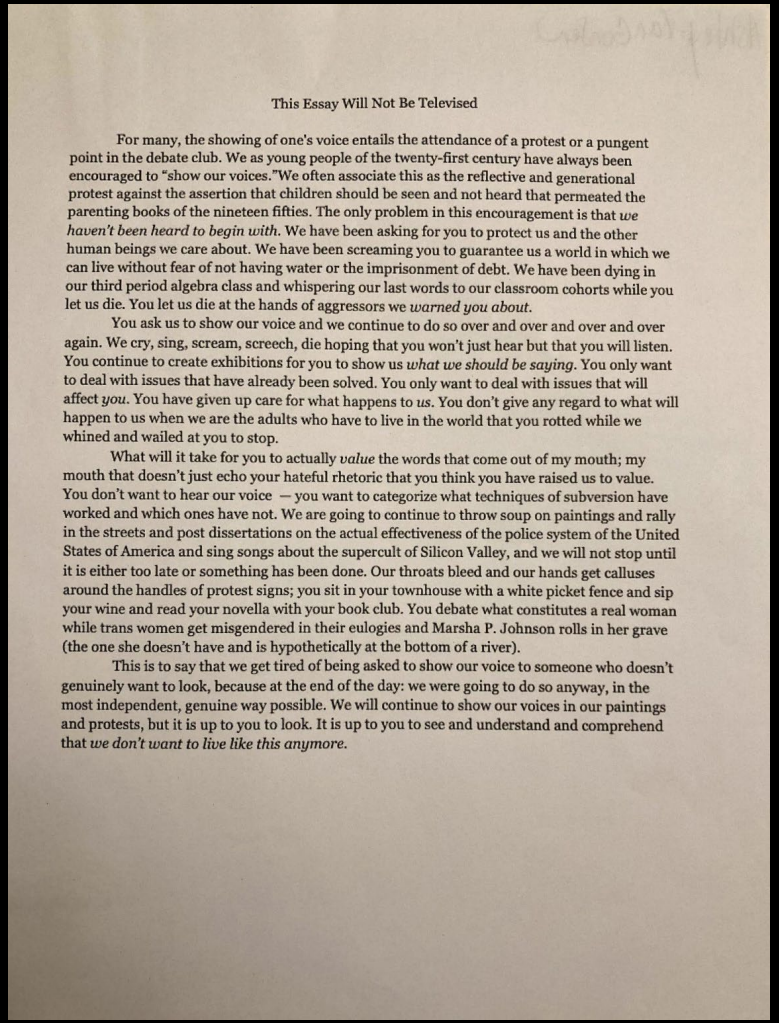
High School
Grade 11
Literature



Kiana Tousley

Sketchbook Spread

High School
Grade 10
Visual Arts



This Essay Will Not Be Televised

For many, the showing of one's voice entails the attendance of a protest or a pungent point in the debate club. We as young people of the twenty-first century have always been encouraged to "show our voices."We often associate this as the reflective and generational protest against the assertion that children should be seen and not heard that permeated the parenting books of the nineteen fifties. The only problem in this encouragement is that *we haven't been heard to begin with*. We have been asking for you to protect us and the other human beings we care about. We have been screaming you to guarantee us a world in which we can live without fear of not having water or the imprisonment of debt. We have been dying in our third period algebra class and whispering our last words to our classroom cohorts while you let us die. You let us die at the hands of aggressors we *warned you about*.

You ask us to show our voice and we continue to do so over and over and over and over again. We cry, sing, scream, screech, die hoping that you won't just hear but that you will listen. You continue to create exhibitions for you to show us *what we should be saying*. You only want to deal with issues that have already been solved. You only want to deal with issues that will affect *you*. You have given up care for what happens to *us*. You don't give any regard to what will happen to us when we are the adults who have to live in the world that you rotted while we whined and wailed at you to stop.

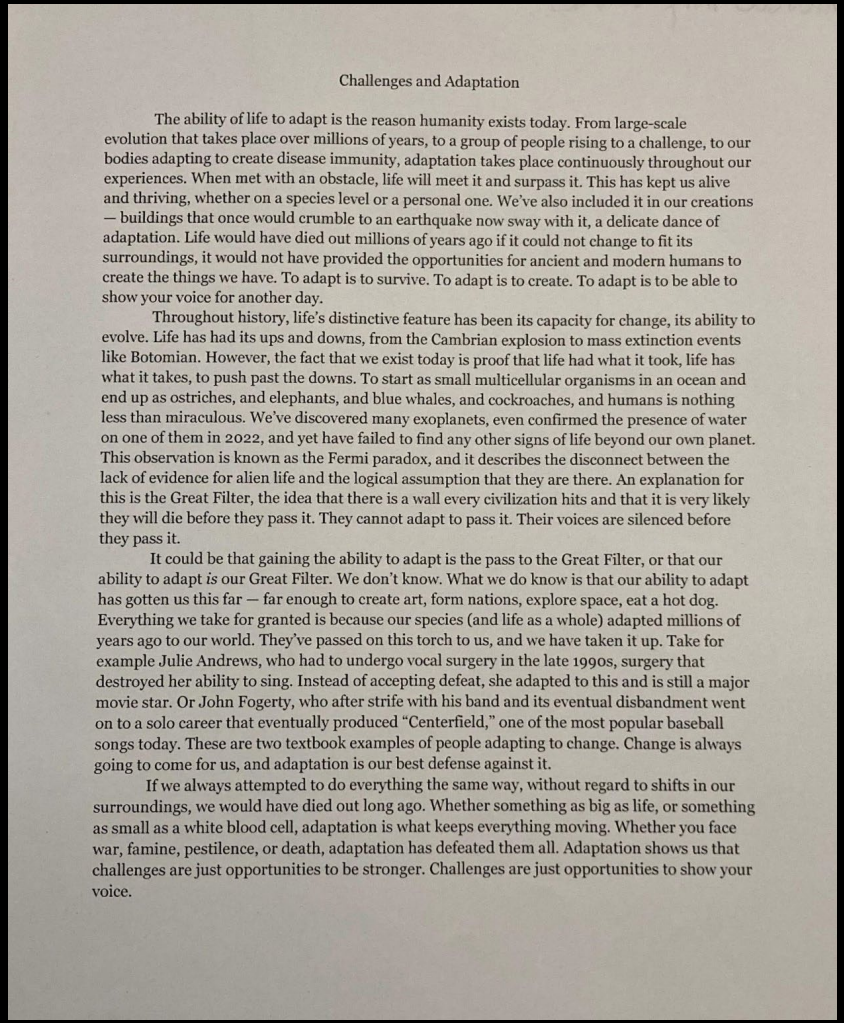
What will it take for you to actually *value* the words that come out of my mouth; my mouth that doesn't just echo your hateful rhetoric that you think you have raised us to value. You don't want to hear our voice — you want to categorize what techniques of subversion have worked and which ones have not. We are going to continue to throw soup on paintings and rally in the streets and post dissertations on the actual effectiveness of the police system of the United States of America and sing songs about the supercult of Silicon Valley, and we will not stop until it is either too late or something has been done. Our throats bleed and our hands get calluses around the handles of protest signs; you sit in your townhouse with a white picket fence and sip your wine and read your novella with your book club. You debate what constitutes a real woman while trans women get misgendered in their eulogies and Marsha P. Johnson rolls in her grave (the one she doesn't have and is hypothetically at the bottom of a river).

This is to say that we get tired of being asked to show our voice to someone who doesn't genuinely want to look, because at the end of the day: we were going to do so anyway, in the most independent, genuine way possible. We will continue to show our voices in our paintings and protests, but it is up to you to look. It is up to you to see and understand and comprehend that *we don't want to live like this anymore.*

Ashley Van Gunten

This Essay Will Not Be Televised

High School
Grade 11
Literature



Challenges and Adaptation

The ability of life to adapt is the reason humanity exists today. From large-scale evolution that takes place over millions of years, to a group of people rising to a challenge, to our bodies adapting to create disease immunity, adaptation takes place continuously throughout our experiences. When met with an obstacle, life will meet it and surpass it. This has kept us alive and thriving, whether on a species level or a personal one. We've also included it in our creations — buildings that once would crumble to an earthquake now sway with it, a delicate dance of adaptation. Life would have died out millions of years ago if it could not change to fit its surroundings, it would not have provided the opportunities for ancient and modern humans to create the things we have. To adapt is to survive. To adapt is to create. To adapt is to be able to show your voice for another day.

Throughout history, life's distinctive feature has been its capacity for change, its ability to evolve. Life has had its ups and downs, from the Cambrian explosion to mass extinction events like Botomian. However, the fact that we exist today is proof that life had what it took, life has what it takes, to push past the downs. To start as small multicellular organisms in an ocean and end up as ostriches, and elephants, and blue whales, and cockroaches, and humans is nothing less than miraculous. We've discovered many exoplanets, even confirmed the presence of water on one of them in 2022, and yet have failed to find any other signs of life beyond our own planet. This observation is known as the Fermi paradox, and it describes the disconnect between the lack of evidence for alien life and the logical assumption that they are there. An explanation for this is the Great Filter, the idea that there is a wall every civilization hits and that it is very likely they will die before they pass it. They cannot adapt to pass it. Their voices are silenced before they pass it.

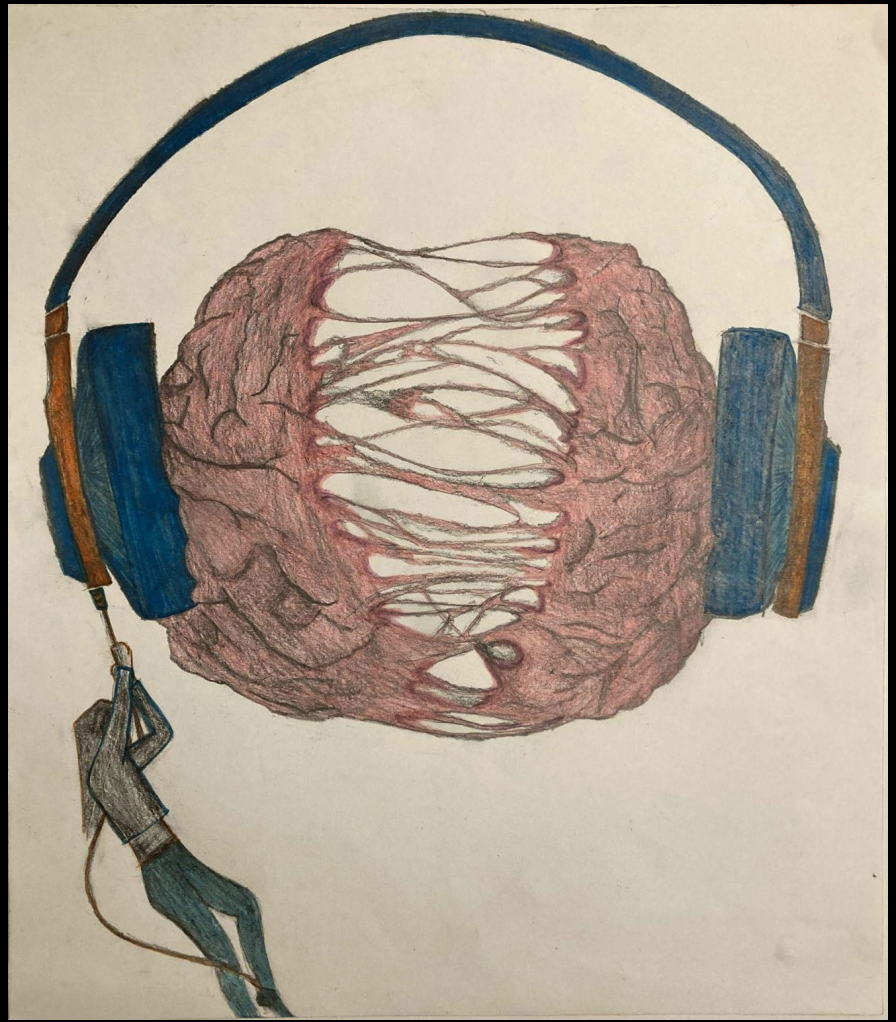
It could be that gaining the ability to adapt is the pass to the Great Filter, or that our ability to adapt *is* our Great Filter. We don't know. What we do know is that our ability to adapt has gotten us this far — far enough to create art, form nations, explore space, eat a hot dog. Everything we take for granted is because our species (and life as a whole) adapted millions of years ago to our world. They've passed on this torch to us, and we have taken it up. Take for example Julie Andrews, who had to undergo vocal surgery in the late 1990s, surgery that destroyed her ability to sing. Instead of accepting defeat, she adapted to this and is still a major movie star. Or John Fogerty, who after strife with his band and its eventual disbandment went on to a solo career that eventually produced "Centerfield," one of the most popular baseball songs today. These are two textbook examples of people adapting to change. Change is always going to come for us, and adaptation is our best defense against it.

If we always attempted to do everything the same way, without regard to shifts in our surroundings, we would have died out long ago. Whether something as big as life, or something as small as a white blood cell, adaptation is what keeps everything moving. Whether you face war, famine, pestilence, or death, adaptation has defeated them all. Adaptation shows us that challenges are just opportunities to be stronger. Challenges are just opportunities to show your voice.

Andrew Winters

Challenges and Adaptation

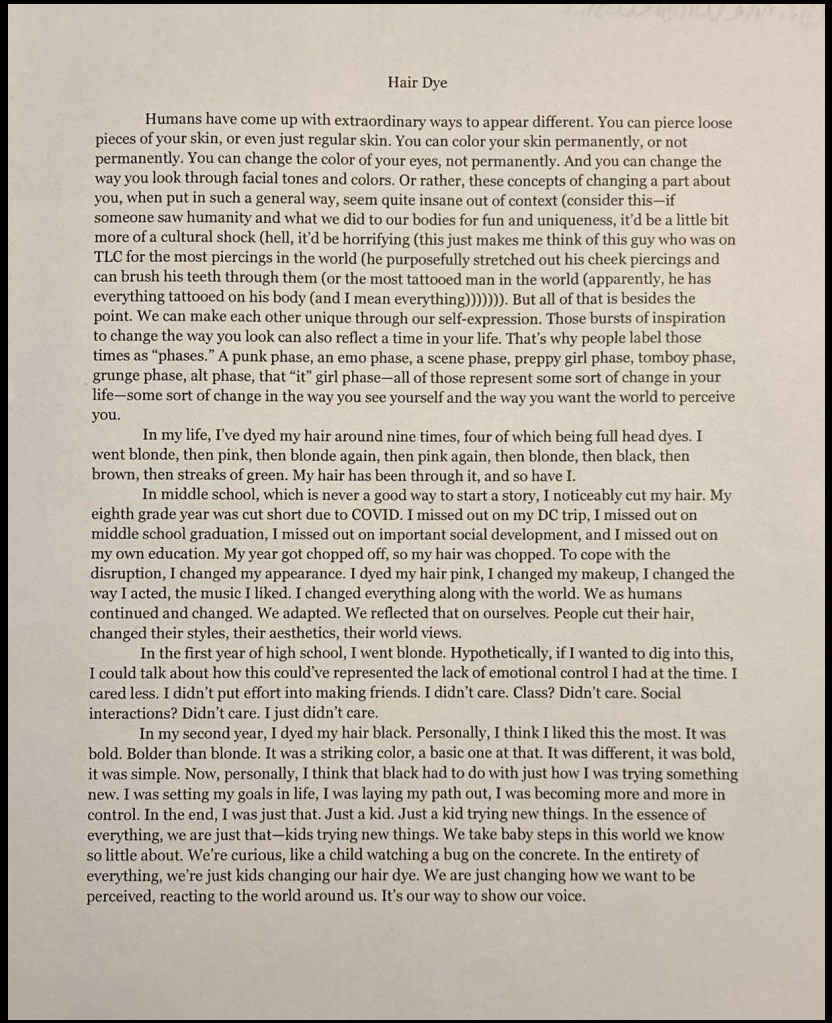
High School
Grade 11
Literature



Jianna Wise

Splitting Headache

High School
Grade 10
Visual Arts



Hair Dye

Humans have come up with extraordinary ways to appear different. You can pierce loose pieces of your skin, or even just regular skin. You can color your skin permanently, or not permanently. You can change the color of your eyes, not permanently. And you can change the way you look through facial tones and colors. Or rather, these concepts of changing a part about you, when put in such a general way, seem quite insane out of context (consider this—if someone saw humanity and what we did to our bodies for fun and uniqueness, it'd be a little bit more of a cultural shock (hell, it'd be horrifying (this just makes me think of this guy who was on TLC for the most piercings in the world (he purposefully stretched out his cheek piercings and can brush his teeth through them (or the most tattooed man in the world (apparently, he has everything tattooed on his body (and I mean everything))))))). But all of that is besides the point. We can make each other unique through our self-expression. Those bursts of inspiration to change the way you look can also reflect a time in your life. That's why people label those times as "phases." A punk phase, an emo phase, a scene phase, preppy girl phase, tomboy phase, grunge phase, alt phase, that "it" girl phase—all of those represent some sort of change in your life—some sort of change in the way you see yourself and the way you want the world to perceive you.

In my life, I've dyed my hair around nine times, four of which being full head dyes. I went blonde, then pink, then blonde again, then pink again, then blonde, then black, then brown, then streaks of green. My hair has been through it, and so have I.

In middle school, which is never a good way to start a story, I noticeably cut my hair. My eighth grade year was cut short due to COVID. I missed out on my DC trip, I missed out on middle school graduation, I missed out on important social development, and I missed out on my own education. My year got chopped off, so my hair was chopped. To cope with the disruption, I changed my appearance. I dyed my hair pink, I changed my makeup, I changed the way I acted, the music I liked. I changed everything along with the world. We as humans continued and changed. We adapted. We reflected that on ourselves. People cut their hair, changed their styles, their aesthetics, their world views.

In the first year of high school, I went blonde. Hypothetically, if I wanted to dig into this, I could talk about how this could've represented the lack of emotional control I had at the time. I cared less. I didn't put effort into making friends. I didn't care. Class? Didn't care. Social interactions? Didn't care. I just didn't care.

In my second year, I dyed my hair black. Personally, I think I liked this the most. It was bold. Bolder than blonde. It was a striking color, a basic one at that. It was different, it was bold, it was simple. Now, personally, I think that black had to do with just how I was trying something new. I was setting my goals in life, I was laying my path out, I was becoming more and more in control. In the end, I was just that. Just a kid. Just a kid trying new things. In the essence of everything, we are just that—kids trying new things. We take baby steps in this world we know so little about. We're curious, like a child watching a bug on the concrete. In the entirety of everything, we're just kids changing our hair dye. We are just changing how we want to be perceived, reacting to the world around us. It's our way to show our voice.

Corinne Wroblewski

Hair Dye

High School
Grade 11
Literature

Next year's theme is . . .

. . . *I Am Hopeful Because. . .*