
RPHAZ
2022 — 2023

Cover art by Randy Rosado

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Letter from the editor,

When I was 13 or 14, I practically lived in the YouTube comment sections of classic rock songs. Odd, I know but while there, I began picking up on a pattern: middle-aged men with default profile pictures and hard shells over there hearts were surrendering their most intimate thoughts and feelings on the song playing above them. They left paragraph-long comments detailing how these songs reminded them of the better days they led in their childhood or their wonderful, beautiful, and tragically deceased wife or the scrappy and hopeful days they strutted through in their early twenties. I always read these comments with wide, curious eyes, scrolling through the unending stories, feeling my eyes well up with tears and feeling my soul swell with love. It was at this moment that I realized, “this is what these songs can do.” These words and these melodies elicited such strong emotions within people I assumed to be emotionless. The men who shoved their emotions deep down within themselves let them spill out when they heard these songs. It was wonderful. Upon reading these stories, I discovered how powerful art can be and I’ve been in awe of its force ever since. Within itself, art holds the power to unearth emotions that us as humans often don’t even have a name for. Art allows us to feel to the greatest capacity of our souls, indulging us in catharsis we didn’t know we needed to experience until we did experience it. Art is one of the most powerful forces known to man and I am beyond overjoyed that I get to share such an extensive and impressive collection of works of art from my fellow students with you, dear reader.

From the moment when I discovered that overwhelming power of art, I've fostered a consistently deep and overwhelming love for it. Looking back on my freshman and sophomore years, I would incessantly read the poems and short stories from previous years’ publications of *Epiphany*, in awe of what my fellow students could create and burning with a longing to create works as brilliant and effective as the ones I obsessed over. I realized in those years that as much as the big time poets I scrawled quotes from on the back of my hand with thin markers and the big time authors I read in the back of bookstores could ultimately inspire us and make us feel deeply, sometimes the most powerful pieces of art came from the most ordinary people. Sometimes, brilliant poetry and stunning artwork lies within the notebooks of students of small town high schools like Schuylkill Valley. So, it is my utmost honor to present these wonderful pieces of art to all of you readers. The students who submitted work for this years edition of *Epiphany* surrendered their hearts and souls in order to create what you are about to read and witness. I hope that within the pages of this literary magazine you can feel the passion that lies within these kids, waiting to be expressed and understood. I hope that you can feel these students’ anguish and love and anger and hunger and strife and creativity and power. But most of all, I hope that something within these pages makes you feel.

With love,

Charlotte Baumgard (Editor-in-Chief)

TOP WRITING

POETRY

1st place - “Glasses” by Elizabeth Zaharia

2nd place - “cleanup in the candle aisle” by Charlotte Baumgard

3rd place - “LND” by Tyler Davis

Honorable mention: “And in Life...” Taylor Henry

SHORT FICTION

1st place - “Dreams of a Pink Sea” by Alex Troutman

2nd place - “Moon Phases” by Corinthia Searle

3rd place - “Woken” by Delilah (Toby) Cole

Honorable mention: “Fates Unwanted” by Mackenna Holben

SHORT NONFICTION

1st place - “MLK” by Michael Goad

2nd place - “What Do You Want To Be?” by Caitlyn Reali

3rd place - “Expressed Thoughts Written” by Ariana Arias

TOP ARTWORK AND PHOTOGRAPHY

ARTWORK

1st place - “Roger” by Liz Zaharia

2nd place - “Wednesday Addams” by Juliana Zaharia

3rd place - “Spiral” by Dominique Brigantti

Honorable mention: “Taste My Venom” by Brooke Shellhammer

PHOTOGRAPHY

1st place - “Euptoieta Claudia” by Rylee Dennis

2nd place - Sunflower photo collection by anonymous

3rd place - “Over the Rainbow” by Juliana Zaharia

Honorable mention: “Cadillac Mountain” by Madison Miller

And In Life... by Taylor Henry

Honorable mention poetry

Life is fleeting.
Life goes in a heartbeat.
Life sings of unsoundness
And often of defeat.

Life is a story.
It is a constant ebbs and flow.
It rings with uncertainty
And deals unexpected blows.

Life is fallacious,
Packed with pointless blather.
Life is thankless
And filled with too much lather.

Life is made of mistakes
That one must amend their whole life through.
And sometimes life forgives,
But it often punishes too.

Life is ever changing,
Just as the moon waxes and wanes.
So sometimes it's a pleasure,
And sometimes it's a pain.

People try to control their lives,
A quest that always ends in vain,
As they are imprisoned by destiny.
She has a cruel and constant reign.

So people try to find their purpose.
They search their whole lives through
They're driven to insanity
But at the end of their journey,
They still don't have a clue.

Good fates come by chance,
A goddess by which no law abides.
Only the favored find purpose.
Will luck be on your side?

It's this constant uncertainty
That hurdles us down an endless, smoking vat,
At whose bottom a stagnant darkness calls.
And in the end, we think, is death really worth all that?



Summer Days by Addison Becht

The Absence of Love by Leila Howe

Love is the warmth of the sun on your face after a storm, but I feel a chill that follows me wherever I go.

Love is comforting, but I am alone.

Love is a beautiful sight to behold, but my eyes are sewn shut.

Love is an addiction, but I am sober.

Love is healing, but I have wounds.

Love is electric, but I feel no power.

Love is frenzied, but I am calm.

Love is fire, but I smell no smoke.

Love is hunger, but I am full.

Love is mania, but I am sane.

Love is power, but I feel weak.

Love is treasure, but I am not wealthy.

Love is obsession, but I am detached.

Love is everything at once, but I feel nothing at all...

What I believe hurts more deeply is when you do not think you are deserving of love, it's just that you do not believe you are capable of it.

Race of the Birds by Gabriel Perry

In Antarctica, far away, there was a group of penguins.

They ate, slept, and swam all day.

And in farms across the world, lived many groups of chickens.

Both birds were never seen as birds as they could not fly.

So, one day, the penguins swam all the way up the farmland.

The penguins recruited chickens that wanted to prove the other birds wrong.

After recruiting, the penguins swam with chickens on their back to an island somewhere in the ocean.

Years later, the penguin/bird island had become an empire.

Seagull's saw this and warned the real birds that could fly.

The king of the birds heard of this.

It was the Eagle.

He flew down to the island to talk with the empire.

A deal was made.

Whichever team of birds won a race across the world, would be crowned the best type of bird.

The Eagle flew back and laughed at what had happened knowing penguins and chickens can't fly.

But, when the day came, the horns were blown to start the race and the eagle was way ahead.

But the penguins and chickens were smart and never declared rules.

Later, a chicken and a penguins set aboard the P.C.R. (Penguin Chicken Rocket) and launched off.

The eagle saw the rocket pass by and knew he would be defeated.

The Penguins made it back first and won.

The Eagle was so ashamed after being boastful that he never returned.

Betrayal by Lillian Yoder

Misery, agony, and deception result in betrayal. When people cross the line of boundaries until there are no boundaries left yet to cross, that is betrayal. Betrayal leaves a victim in despair, feeling so low and tired. Lies spew from people until all that is left is emptiness. People pour their hearts out only to be led into guilt-tripping, manipulation, and lying. The concept of trust is completely lost in the blackened lies of the monster. Betrayal exists in the cold corners of a dark room, seeping into the pores of the victim and eating them whole. The cold bitterness still left on their skin from the cruel lashes of words from the abuser. “This is all your fault. You caused this, not me.” It screams from the hollow darkness, getting louder, louder, and louder until all that is left is betrayal. Betrayal is the emptiness everyone will feel once in their life, the coldness of a knife stabbing their back, and being swallowed whole by the monster that lives inside.



The Tower of London by Abby Ruth

Seasons of Love by Ella Klinikowski

It's spring and there’s a dead baby bird at the bottom of my pool.

I have my mother’s face,

And my father’s tendency to die young.

There's a bottle of rum on top of the fridge.

Footstools and fingers scrape the ground.

Drunk on love and more in the summer heat.

“Ruin me,” The trees whisper.

It’s summer and there's a dead girl in the pool.

Holy Aphrodite signed my death certificate with a kiss.

Poison on her lips,

She says it's my perfect shade.

There's a boy in a dorm room half the east coast away.

August came and I rot in my room.

Death takes root as I wait for him to leave,

Praying for some reason he won’t.

It’s fall and I am waging a war with the girl in the mirror.

Flesh tears at flesh, tears streaming.

I bite the hand,

Pleading for the love that I am pushing away.

There’s a scent in the air that reminds me of when we fell in love.

I hold my breath when I drive by your neighborhood,

Like I’m hoping to avoid being haunted by your ghost.

But everyone knows it's already too late.

It's winter and I don’t know what is colder?

The bitter wind against my back,

Or your ghost who can’t accept all the love I am trying to give.

There's a sticker crumpled in the Starbucks trashcan,

And a love letter hidden in my bookshelf.

These quiet elegies to the end of our time spent together.

I feel like your ghost has settled in my throat,

A constant reminder of what will remain unsaid.

LND by Tyler Davis

3rd place poetry

All of your idols may die,
but your sight of them will keep them alive.
You take a snapshot, the picture burnt in your mind.
Every other day a new memory is revived.

They are gone, but through you they thrive.
When you don't remember, that's when they die.
When their story turns into a lie,
they cease to live on; 3 1 5.

Because when you look down the tangerine flowers clasping your shoe
You know full well that he is right there with you.
When you have the guts to look up to the atmosphere
It's been dyed a deep chromatic, he is here.

He is in every pink and purple and violet and red.
When the sun dips into the sea, it's a reminder that he's dead.
You may paint his picture, but it won't fix your dread.
It can't be quite as vivid as what's burnt inside your head

These altered, faded fables will be replicated a many time
But when is it an adaptation and not A Starry Night?
Every star's another role in a book combined
Each constellation is a story, and the paper is the sky.

Jitters by Isabel Consugar

Take it from me, race day jitters NEVER go away.

Isabel C, 9th grade. Pleased to make your acquaintance. I started Cross Country in 7th grade. I don't remember quite how I felt before my first race, but I remember I was so nervous that I was stretching all day and put on my uniform three hours early. (School was still virtual.)

Like I said earlier, race day jitters don't go away. For me, though, they changed. Gone are the days when I was nervous day of for regular meets. Now that hardly ever happens. Now, I get nervous the night before, when I'm packing my track bag and checking 8-billion times to make sure I'm not missing anything. (Yeah, take that, Santa. I check 8 billion times and you only check twice? Amateur.) And I'm not quite sure what emotion this is, or if it even is an emotion, but every time the starter gun pops, I think to myself, "oh, we're running now."

Everyone has their own little way of panicking pre-race, and everyone has their own little way of calming themselves down. One of my teammates listens to the same song on the bus on the way to each and every race. Another insists on having her hair braided in two dutch braids. Me personally, I braid my hair in one skinny braid in the middle on the top of my head and end it in a high ponytail. I did this randomly the day of my first race, and when I did sooooo much better than I thought I would, I thought to myself, "welp, guess I'm doing this for the next six years." My point, in a roundabout sorta way, is, even outside of running or sports in general, you're gonna get nervous sometimes. And that's ok. Just calm yourself, then go for it. Hit your goals.

Matching Tin Can by anonymous

When I look at you,
I see the best parts of myself
reflected in your eyes.
You are my twin flame;
the one I trust wholeheartedly;
the opposite tin can
on the other end of the string.
And so we sit like children,
our legs folded like pretzels,
while I listen to the steady thumping
of my heart
coming from my matching tin can.
We are connected
on an otherworldly plane
of existence,
somewhere our sync vibrations
turn tidal waves
and carve mountains from stone.
My soul is eternally tethered to yours,
and I could not be more
pleased.
Thank you
for being
mine.

Glasses by Elizbeth Zaharia

1st place poetry

My friends still wear the glasses

I can see it in their eyes

They don't know that the choice they made

Will lead to their demise

I want to tell them they can take them off

And they'll be fine

But their starry, dreamy pupils just keep

Staring into mine

I have no choice but to be good

And keep nodding along

Even though they are misled and what

They're saying is all wrong

I take a breath, I close my eyes

Wish I could disappear

I'm slowly suffocating

Lord just let me out of here

With clammy hands and languid soul

I'm staring at the floor

My body starts to shake and I can't

Take it anymore

My lips part but it's no surprise

That not a word falls out

I hate that I can't do it

What the hell is that about?

I feel convicted by my conscience

But the risk is far too great

It's one that's just not worth it

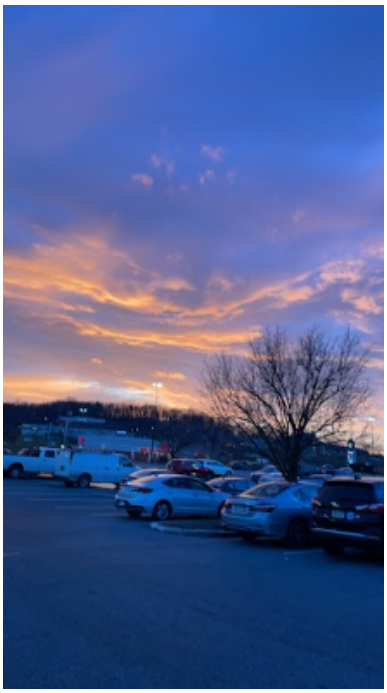
One they won't appreciate

With a heavy heart and a heavy truth

That hurts too much to bear

I accept they'll never know that I'm not

Wearing what they wear



Sunset by Adi LeRoy

It’s Exhausting by Paige Chase

On the court, I strive for perfection
Driven by the fear of failure
But I’m never enough
There is always that one play
And it's exhausting

In school, I want to be the best
I push to get the highest grades
But I’m never enough
There is always that one grade
And it's exhausting

With my peers, I want to be loved
Craving for acceptance
But I’m never enough
There is always that one “friend”
And it's exhausting

But maybe if i just stopped caring about what others thought
Maybe if I lived more how I wanted
Maybe if I just let go and let God
Then maybe life wouldn’t be so exhausting

Star-Crossed Lovers by Maria Armenta

Once upon a time,

We were a perfect story in a book

Placed amongst the roof of my imagination

Stars aligned in the midnight sky

I would have memorized every backroad for you

Only if it meant I'd be with you

Like us smushed in the backseat

of your dad's car from the 90s

I misplaced the nostalgia

And comfort from your home

The heart that was once open to me.

Unlike the shallow people I call my family

You were special to me.

How gullible to believe

Fantasy words exchanged over paper

Couldn't just simply be make believe?

Just a Daydream by Aubrey Bensinger

My brain has fast-forwarded to graduation. Wearing a red gown and cap with 2026 hanging on it. The heat from the early summer sun beaming down on us. Just waiting to go up and get my diploma and throw my cap. The yelling and crying that will follow from the crowd around. Then, ditching my family to hang out with my friends. The reminiscing of dumb stuff we have done over the years and getting dinner. Then I rewind and realize I am still in ninth grade. My fourth period of the day, English in F109. Doing vocab and talking about the book we are supposed to be reading. The bell rings and the rest of the day seems to go by in a haze as I remember the daydream I had of graduation. The mixed feelings of worry and freedom. The fear of what is to come, but the excitement of not having to worry about passing or failing that difficult math test. For some of my friends, that day is just a few months away, but for many, it is just a daydream for now. That is until the day creeps up on me like going into high school did. Knowing it would happen, but putting it off until it is right next to you. Just a year, just a month, just a day away.



Cappuccino in Deep Thought by Aeryn Gannon

Amy by Casey Herr

There is no greater love than what I feel for you.
Is Love a losing game?
Our day has come, as you sit crying in your window.
Don't forget that your tears dry on their own.
You can be stronger than me.
Help yourself in this Unholy War, Addicted.
As you wake up alone, the Unholy War continues, Rehab.
I wrote a song for you, in between the cheats.
You sent me flying into a losing game.
I heard love is blind, but not with you.
I'm wondering now, should I have written a song for you?
Will you still love me tomorrow, dear Amy?
I lie in my bed, thinking about you.
Please help yourself Amy.
Love is a losing game.
You went Back to Black.

I Am Me by Madison Hackman

Today, Tomorrow, Forever

I have been loved

Then I was shoved

I've been vulnerable

But that was recoverable

Today, Tomorrow, Forever

I can never catch a break

There's the mistake

Because that's what makes me

Today, Tomorrow, Forever

I have fought

I have thought

I have forgot

Today, Tomorrow, Forever

I have lived

I have cried

I have survived

Today, Tomorrow, Forever

I have felt pain

Yet, I can't complain

I have it easy compared to them

I am a gem

Today, Tomorrow, Forever

I am me

The Chase by Abigail Angstadt

I break through the trees

Burn

My lungs burn as I take in the bitter cold of the air

My legs burn with the fires of exhaustion

But I keep running

Fear pushing me forward

I glide through the bramble with furious speed

I can hear them

Their clumsy footsteps fumbling on frosted forest floor

I am a lion, not an okapi

I shan't cower, yet I fear capture

As the sun sinks, my confidence grows

I hear the melody of freedom playing with the approaching darkness

Pain

Pain fogs my head cutting through my clear confidence

Pain pulls me down

Down to the forest floor

The coppery tang of blood cuts through the thick twilight air

Urgency is a pounding in my head

I grasp at the bits of rock and root like a desperate fool

The air grows thick and I choke it down as my enemy comes into view

He stares down at me with disgust

A smile flourishing on his somber face

I glare up at him with cold, cruel calculation

Seeking weakness

Rigid iciness bites down on my wrists

I listen to the sharp click of my capture

I listen as I am charged with 5 counts of murder

I regret only being caught

Equality by Maggie Colon

Oh the word equality can start a war

But why

All people want is to be treated the same as others

Holidays are supposed to be the most cheerful time of the year

But how are people supposed to be happy if there are people in the world

Who wish for others' downfalls?



Flower in the Field by Ashleigh Mask

Football by Logan Cammauf

Football, America's sport. The greatest sport ever created.

A game where the quarterback is the leader of the team.

The game always starts with a kickoff.

The play starts on the quarterback's signal.

You have the offense which includes the quarterback, the running back,

the tight end, the wide receivers, the tackles, the center, and the guards.

On defense there are the defensive tackles, the nose guard, the defensive ends,

The outside linebackers, the middle linebackers, the safeties, and finally the cornerbacks.

There are four quarters in a game. Each team gets three timeouts a half.

You get six points for a touchdown, three for a field goal, two for a safety,

one for an extra point, and two for a two point attempt.

Playoffs, you lose, you go home.

You keep playing until you lose, or you win the championship.

Only one team goes home happy, and that is the championship team.

The greatest game ever created, Football.



Susquehanna Sunrise by Benjamin Bitting

Your Hand by Mackenzie Bachman

Your hand used to be

Stained by my mother’s promise to you

Your hand used to carry hope

Your hand once guided me

Your hand helped me learn

The sport I love most

BUT

Your hand also hurt me

Your hand stained my inner thigh

Your hand has left an everlasting

Imprint on my body

Your hand broke me

Your hand never looked so lifeless

Your hand made me feel inferior and dirty

Your hand stained me

Your hand touched me once and that was

enough

Your hand is cracked with every piece

Of my purity and mind you took with it

Your hand changed me

And now your hands will no longer stain me

I am stronger than your stains

Your hand does not define me

And it will never

Touch me again

ANXIETY by Sammy Colon

The standard definition is a feeling of worry or unease, usually about something with an uncertain outcome. When there is no time to complete something important and it causes great unease and fear, that is anxiety. It intercepts the brain and sends people into an almost panicked state. Millions of people feel anxious because of how much work is on their plate. Anxiety comes from many situations, from forgetting something to knowing that something will not be done in time. A sense of dread while the world is speeding up or slowing down is an example of anxiety. It distorts the ability to perform tasks well or normally. It may last for as long as a few years and as short as a few days. It slithers quietly, whispering worries into ears. Like a spider, it creeps into everyday life and slowly takes over. When the feeling of panic, fear, and uneasiness kick in, that is anxiety. Anxiety is a distraction that grips the human race with its sharp, unforgiving hold and refuses to let go.

Cruising the Night by anonymous

It is pitch black outside
I am driving around in my sweet ride
I got some good 80’s music playing
Nobody is complaining
The stars are shining up in the sky
I let the cool breeze take me up high
I feel free of stress
Nobody to impress
Night is a magical time of day
Street lights shine the way
Buildings light up a huge city
Looks like it could be Philly
A metro train rushes above me
While I put in The Cars CD
I cruise the streets
Nobody is in the backseats
Leather jacket and sunglasses
Street signs take quick glances
The sun starts to rise
I better say my goodbyes
Night is gone and day is here
I am going home to disappear

Why? by Hannah Eyrich

Tall women aren't feminine

Clothes say it

Men say it

Society says it

So what am I?

Am I just for display like a sculpture in a museum?

Am I just another object to be stared at?

I hear it over and over and over again like my favorite song that I can't stand to listen to anymore because I put it on replay over and over and over again.

"Wow you're tall for a girl"

There is that simple fact, but am I too tall?

Too tall for my gender?

Too tall for clothes?

Too tall for society?

Too tall for men?

Short girls are meant for tall men

Its so cute

But I am supposed to stay mute

I can't refute

This simple sentence that remains clear as day in my head.

I'm too tall for men.

Standing with a guy my height isn't cool.

Society is cruel.

To place these thoughts in women who can't control.

Can't control their genes

By all means

Put these thoughts in teens as a teen should not have to feel this way.

I can't fit women's clothes.

My limbs are too long

"One size fits all," boy you are wrong.

I can't begin to fathom these struggles put on tall women

Where are the compliments about my personality?

Am I funny?

Am I smart?

Am I kind?

Am I a great friend?

No.

This just goes to show

That these stereotypes are a blow

Yet no one seems to know just how much us tall women hurt inside though.

Repeated by Naomi Frantz

Why does everyday feel the same?

Everyday, 5 days a week, for 8 hours a day at school for what?

Because our parents or our teachers want to? Or because we want to?

I’m drained by school everyday and sometimes cannot find the motivation to do anything else or get anything else done by the time i get home

sometimes, i don't even go home

I go straight to a 2 or 3 hour practice and spend more time at school

I get up at 6 am everyday so that i can get ready

However, it never gets easier to wake up

I'm constantly tired and i just wanna go back to sleep the second i even think about going to school

Although, why is it that it’s easier for me to get up for anything else when i know i wont be getting up to go to school

It makes it so much harder for me to want to get up when i know it's for school

For the back to back hardcore classes that i only get a break from at lunch

By the time 1 pm rolls around i am done for the day

My brain is shutting off and i'm starting to fall asleep in class and i just can't find anymore motivation for the rest of the day and as soon as i get home i just crash

And i wake up the next day just to do it all over again

Its repeating over and over and over again and i crave change in my days instead of feeling like i’m living the same day again and again

Window by Michael Gauby

A portal to ponder my existence

It serves as a portal of light and dark to stare into the infinite cosmos

And a space to have it stare back at me

An object to protect me from the outside world

But also an object to let me view these fears and to face them

A space to watch the world change before my eyes

And yet have it feel like no time has passed

A quite space to lift my spirits in times of need

And a space to reflect on my thoughts and actions across my time here

I use it as a camera view into the outside world and see it flourish unscaved

My window is like a cave

A place where light can enter and not escape

And yet at the entrance it feels life a filter to let the golden glow of the sunrise

enter my space

I will return soon to enjoy the many stories my window has to show

Little Mechanic by Josiah Gonzalez

There once was a boy
His name was blue
He would get sad
When he saw missing screws

Each one was due
Into their machine
If one has been lost
There is more to be seen

One day he grew courage
Mustered his might
Took upon himself
And fled into the night

He took every tool
And all of his screws
And fixed all machines
For all to be used

The people of town
Came down from their homes
An entire city
Built under their nose!

Goodbye by Violet B. Grosselfinger

Goodbye does not always mean forever
People come and go like seasons
And sometimes you have to accept the change
Although I feel like there are never enough reasons
My heart feels empty and needs love to rearrange

Goodbye does not always mean forever
Flowers blossom and time moves on
But somehow you remind me of every song
I see your initial on every page
And once again my broken heart remains in rage

Goodbye does not always mean forever
The heartache gets better and worse
And the distance remains the same
But all I hear is your name in every verse
And all I think about is the pain

Goodbye does not always mean forever
You may come by again
But every time I see you I feel the need to repent
A plane ticket seems like so much
But in the end all I ever needed was your touch

Goodbye does not always mean forever
I hope to see you again as this was not fair
Except it will feel like you were never there
Perhaps our love will never fade
But until then, the memories must remain

Goodbye does not always mean forever.

The Beauty of Nothing by anonymous

Recently I hate speaking

I can even hate thinking

So, I just turn it off

I don't think I do it on purpose

It could just be my mind taking a break for a while

Therefore, my days feel like nothing

Nothing is not funny or particularly sad

Nothing is the absence of feeling, and somehow being okay with it

I know when I accidentally say something mean I should feel some sort of regret

But I just feel nothing

Or when I'm doing math homework, my head should be filled with numbers and equations

But I am just thinking of nothing

I think it's possible to find comfort in nothing

It an easy default

Maybe it's just easy for me because I think I have been stuck on nothing for a while now

I don’t want people to feel bad, it's nothing

Pointless, expressionless, empty

Nothing is comfortable, it's easy

So, I think I might stick with nothing for a little longer

Winter Wishes by Samantha Hoffert

Sitting by the fireplace,
Drinking a warm latte,
Watching the snow fall with grace,
Layering on our driveway.

Children racing to have a snowball fight,
Thrilled that they had a snow day.
Snowflakes begin to glisten in the sunlight,
The children run to find a sleigh.

Hot chocolate and a cozy sweater,
Baking cookies with joy,
Oh how I adore this weather,
What a nice day to enjoy!

When I Close My Eyes by anonymous

Sometimes, when I'm busy,
When my eyelids get heavy,
I take a second.

To close my eyes,
Only then, I realize,
How tired I truly am.

After this respite,
I have to exit,
Into the real world from mine.

Life by David Johnson

In a world full of death and decay,
We find it easy to go astray.
But the one thing that we all cling to,
Is a most fragile object, so easily lost.

It is beautiful, yes.

Yet when Nature creates intricate rain forests,
We create intricate highways.

While nature is sculpting the grandest of canyons,

We are sculpting skyscrapers.

Do we deserve this gift?
That we constantly lift.

Is our way of living something we need to shift?

While nature is making chasms between mountains,
We make chasms within our own families.
We need to remember whatever we do,
Our life is a gift.
And gifts can be taken away.

Without You by Chelsea Kauffman

The sun will rise and fall,
I'll wake and sleep,
The world will continue to spin,

without you.

I'll get dressed and go about my day,
I'll smile and talk,
I'll get up and walk,

without you.

I'll breathe in and out,
I'll laugh and dance,
I'll cry and mourn,

without you.

I'll learn and experience,
I'll fall and get up,
I'll grow and change,

without you.

I'll be okay,
I'll live,
The world will continue to spin,

without you.

Neon 1s by Bryce Bechtel



A Good Ol' Boy During Autumn by Jack Longenecker



The Night by Giana Kaylor

While many fall asleep,

I keep awake.

My mind travels,

While my body lays still.

The sense of calm,

The world feels dead.

With the soft sounds of the outdoors,

Of those that have just awoke.

Shimmering of the moon,

Shining bright in the dark sky,

With thousands of dazzling stars.

As your eyes get hazy,

And your mind falls into a trance,

You notice yourself,

Falling,

Falling,

Falling,

Fast asleep.

World by Kaitlin Kier

There is a lot in this world,

Some things that are submerged.

What will happen to our world?

What will happen if we are unconcerned?

This is our world,

It needs to be earned.

What can we do with our world?

Our world is disturbed.

How do we save our world?

People have conferred.

What will happen to our world?

The world is being deferred.

We need to save our world.

People are disturbed.

This is our world,

A world that is left unserved.

Welcome to the world.

That people differed.

Finance by Eli Kiritsis

Money and enormous riches untold,
A source of power, to possess and hold.
Some work hard to earn it each day,
Others seek capital in their own unique way.

Markets rise, markets fall,
A competition of luck, a financial ball.
But those who save and invest with care,
Will find their wealth beyond compare.

Debts, loans, and bills galore,
Can leave us feeling relatively poor.
But budgeting and smart finance,
Can help us achieve our financial dance.

Stocks, trusts, and mutual funds,
Options for wealth that can astound.
But before we sacrifice our fortune, vigilance must be taken,
So our finances do not get mistaken.

Keep your composure, your financial stability, and never let your guard down,
Because your finances may come around.
For wealth and prosperity, it is true,
It is the reward for those who plan and do.

Spring Joy by Nikolas Kiritsis

Spring has come, all around,
The world awakens with a joyful sound.
Flowers bloom and trees grow green,
A vibrant season, like you’ve never seen.

The air is warm and the sun is bright,
Birds sing songs with pure delight;
As well as the blue sky shining bright,
The world is new, a stunning sight.

The snow has melted, and the grass is fresh,
The world is alive, with a natural finesse.
The bees are buzzing, and the butterflies dance,
Spring has arrived, with a lively trance.

The days are longer, and the nights are warm,
Outside is reborn from the winter's storm.
The beauty of spring, can't be ignored,
A season of hope, and a time to be adored.

So embrace the spring, with open arms,
Let the beauty of nature, work its charm.
Enjoy the warmth and the flowers that grow,
Spring has arrived, a time to glow.

The Power of Money by Christopher Kovacs

Money,

It is the utmost important thing in our modern world.

The more you have, the more you receive.

The less you have, the more you struggle.

It can cause war,

And yet, also cure disease.

Everybody human wants a bountiful amount of it,

But no one wants to put in the work to get there.

Lives fall like a burning fence for a simple taste of its' power.

Money does not hold power,

Yet, the people who hold it do.

It can be used to cause corruption,

And yet, it can also be spent to create beauty and life.

This life can be taken away with money,

So what is life with money?

The Pool by Gabe Martin

Enter the pool,

And the scent of chlorine hits you in the face.

Then the heat and humidity,

And the cacophony of voices,

The squeak of the door,

The slam of blocks being adjusted,

The groan as the diving board is put up,

Look at the board to see practice.

The gutter gargles loudly.

It sounds like a demon escaping its hellish prison.

The jets sound like airplane engines.

The squelching of wet shoes as you walk to the locker room.

You get changed.

You walk out to the splashing of people getting in the water,

And practice begins.









Sunflower Paradise by anonymous

2nd place photography

When It Comes Time To Say Goodbye by Rileigh Martin

When your bags are packed,

And you are ready to go,

There is that one moment,

Before you let go.

That one moment that you take to reminisce,

To remember all the moments you will surely miss.

Where you learned to ride a bike,

Or first did a cartwheel.

Where you learned so many things,

Or played on the swings.

But it is time to let go,

Of where you first saw snow,

And get on with your life,

Maybe find a husband or wife.

Though part of you will always know,

When your life starts to crack.

These memories will always be there to welcome you back.

From wherever you go,

Whether far or near,

And though you may be filled with fear,

Straighten your back and wipe your tear.

It is time to go,

You can always come visit next year.

And as you drive away,

Even though you have dismay,

Make sure to look back and wave,

To your parents in the doorway.

As they watch you disappear through teary eyes,

They finally realize.

As tears slip down their face,

You’re not so little anymore.

A Sea of People by Caysen McAndrew

With a sea of people, I seem to have forgotten how to swim.

So many hands, yet I cannot grasp one to pull me out.

My breathing is short, and I cannot see in this overwhelming hue of blue.

I feel their stares and I want to kick, I want to scream.

But, I am frozen. Almost like I am welcoming the water into my lungs.

Someone touches my shoulder, and I am pulled in deeper.

I can't hear anything, the water muffles their questions.

I stare, but do not see.

I want to tell them to get away,

but the water is everywhere.

It envelops me and clings to me.

Like a brick, I sink.

Deeper, I drop.

Saltwater is mixing with salt water.

With a sea of people, I drown.

Waves From Before by Kylah McAndrew

Do you remember the waves in the water,

From when your grandmother would bring you to the sea?

Did you use to watch as the sand was stolen from the land?

The water taking it out into the Pacific.

The yellow faint underneath it’s blue.

No.

No, you likely don’t.

Because the memory of a child is faint and wane.

It was not engineered to memorize such things.

Can you imagine an entire civilization being carried by the memories of children?

Only alive because your great-granddaughter was there to witness it at the age five.

Pretend that everything you knew was drowned in blue.

The letters of a language forgotten because it was written in sand and not cement.

The words muffled to stop the tide of letters from rolling off the tongue.

Would your descendants welcome the ocean?

The same one that drowned their ancestors.

Instead of sand, would it be fish that covered the land?

Please,

Color the trees with everything you’ve known since before turning three,

And tell your great-granddaughter of the world when it was only your face.

Because an ocean turns and an ocean roars,

And the air whispers “Don’t forget everything from before.”

Stars by Rani Patel

A fragment in the sky,

Shining so bright.

A billions of miles away,

Yet we look and talk to them.

Not a thought in mind whether they listen or not,

But, we tell them everything.

The small things,

Our favorite color, favorite food, favorite subject.

The big things,

Our family, future, secrets.

We wish to them,

Hoping they will come true.

To the people who look at the stars,

And wish,

To the stars who listen,

And the dreams that are answered.

George Lucas by Katelyn Raymond and Riley Dennis

A long time ago,
In a galaxy far far away.
One man joined the film industry
And he is forever here to stay.

Giving children everything they could dream,
In the form of a four-person and two-droid team.
Witty snapbacks and grand entrances,
As they get into their legendary battle stances.

Tough raiders and lost arks,
A man with a whip that lights up the dark.
Love, drama, and aliens galore,
Captivating fights the audience cannot ignore.

Stuck in a dream a girl is on a hunt,
Trying to find her lost brother before she cannot.
Through the labyrinth she goes,
Navigating it to save her brother before David Bowie knows.

In a land where dream and reality come together,
A young gifted Nelwyn finds a child that will vanquish the dark witch forever.
Ties will be severed and trust will be tested,
In this time that never was and this world that never existed.

Ode to the Forest by Taryn Rittenhouse

You look so calm and pure,
dancing in the wind.
Your magic can cure,
holding me stable.

Your bright colors are delightful,
bringing joy all around.
You are quiet and mindful,
possessing a great force.

The light falls through your arms,
shining on your treasures.
Your traits always charm,
as you fall back asleep.



Paradise on Earth by Kylie Gunter

Until I Die by MIranda Schlouch

I think I will miss you until I die,

When the soil is the only one around to hold my hand in your absence.

I wonder if anybody has ever loved as much as I have.

I hope that there is a life beyond this one, so that I may find you again.

I will love you even more in the next.

Two hours is not a very long distance in the scale of the universe.

The concept of romance is fickle and fleeting to those who have not yet seen the world.

But I have seen the world.

I have held the world in my hands.

No desire, nor temptation will ever compare to the thought of being with you again.

Emptiness lingers in the wake of you.

I envy the blemishes of your skin for being so close to you,

And the bruises on your legs, for drawing your attention.

Even your eyes, for being the ocean before a storm, that I cannot wade in.

If fate dooms us so, I will resent the ground for holding you.

I will never know peace

Until the hot breath of summer does not alone carry the burden of kissing your face.

Until not even the end of days can do us part.

And until I see you again,

I think I will miss you until I die.

Thinking Through Time by Hannah Schweitzer

The way

The day

Goes by

So fast

Feel like I’m in last

Time is confusing

Quite amusing

How some days go on forever

When others are miniature

Laying in bed

Is this worth not being dead?

My cat brings me life

Takes out the painful knife

Of the horrid thoughts always in my mind

Why can’t I just be kind

Not only to others

But myself as well

Oh how I wish

That would be so swell

All I can do it improve

Find my purpose

And figure out my groove

Let it Snow by Kayla Shaw

The weather forecast is warning of a chance of snow
And it seems like it will
Considering how the wind is beginning to blow

Having no school tomorrow would be so cool
But considering my bad luck
I will end up having to attend school

However if it were to snow like they say
Then I would sit at home
And waste the day away

I'd spend most of my time watching anime
And eating junk food
To my parents dismay

Then I will begin to complain
Because I'll have to go to school sooner or later
And it will be a huge pain

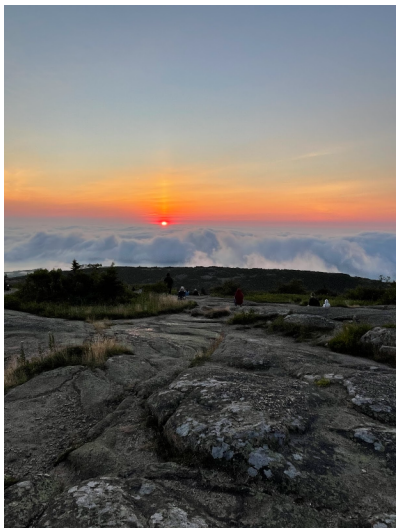
The weather forecast is warning of a chance of snow
And it seems like it will
The wind has already begun to blow and blow and blow

The Sun in June by Brooke Shellhammer

In the shades of those trees,
where patches of sunlight crochet a summer spot,
when the fire burned so bright and hot, melting the words of a winter essay,
where you stood so close to me,
that is my heaven.

On the blades of grass,
where the setting sun went to sleep in the late hours of June,
when midnight smores roasted above the flames,
where our worries were far away,
that was my heaven.

But now she moved away,
and you sit with a different group of people,
the same people who I found first but prefer you now.
I should be happy, right? Forgive and forget.
But I miss my heaven, I miss you.
And it hurts to know that you don’t miss the sun in June.



Cadillac Mountain by Madison MIller

Music by Paige Starr

It's like a breath of fresh air

It blocks out the pain

She hears the bass move through her body

It basically seeped through her veins

Feels the goosebumps creep up her skin

Feel a tingle unfurl through her body

She wants the feeling to be never-ending

Its an escape

It turns into an addiction

In silence, her heart begins to race

Her legs start to dance

Her mind starts to pace

Her hands become uneasy

She bites her lip because shes screaming inside but a sound won't come out of her mouth

She listened to her music

It’sIt is a daily habit

She puts on her headphones on her head

Slowly, her body sinks into the never ending thought of “what did I do to deserve this pain?”

It’s something her body craves

It makes her feel empty but somehow full

Every drop of screaming pain leaves her body

It's like a release of pressure built up

Released with a silent tear and quiet scream

It can make her feel light and simple like a dainty feather

But it can make her heart race with enragement

She's screaming internally

She wants it to stop

Why can't she explain her feelings?

Out West by Keira Stork

Out west there is

Tall bluegrass swaying in the breeze

A herd of bison walking and grazing through the plains with ease

A man herding his flock of cattle

While his horse walks past a snake with a rattle

In the park of Yellowstone

Are wolves picking their prey down to the bone

Thermal pools of yellows, oranges, and blues,

Evenings of sunsets with beautiful hues

Cutthroat trout jumping from the Snake River

A grizzly bear watching them with a slight quiver

Snow capped rocky mountains reach for the sky

And on them a herd of big horned sheep goes by

A golden eagle rests itself on a tree

And lets out a cry to let all know it is free

Reality by Kayla Thompson

When we watch a movie we have the ability to pause.
In real life, there is nothing shielding us from the harsh reality.
All we can do is wrap the wounds with gauze.
You learn to deal with the abnormality.
But with all that is done there is an outcome.

Good or bad does not matter.
You'll need a place to shout from.
Your life can crumble or flourish with glamour.
As a child, life can be as sweet as a plum
But as you grow older that reality starts.

The news every day hardens our hearts.
With bad news wrapped up with a side of tragedy.
You begin to taste the tarts.
And in sinks the concept of mortality.
Not all of it's bad I will admit.

Like true love that won't quit.
See reality is funny and loves to play.
I kind of enjoy the uncertainty I must admit.
So whatever false reality you choose to portray
I hope you know will whittle away.

Old Dog, New Tricks by Bailey Unterkofler

Lines
Phrases
Sayings
Passed down from generation to generation
Each seeming peculiar and petite when we first hear them
But as we grow up, they always take on a deeper meaning
“You can’t teach an old dog new tricks”
9 words
The same 9 words that we have heard all of our lives
Yet the meaning seems to slowly change as we grow older
Because the real meaning is not in those nine words
It lies in between those 9 words
Hidden in the tiny blank spaces
If you look long enough and in the right place
You can catch a glimpse of the real lesson
The lesson that delineates
You can teach a young dog new tricks
And everything that young dog learns
All of the good and all of the bad
Will forever stick with the dog
Every little thing that the dog learns with become a part of its brain chemistry
So when the young dog grows old
It cannot unlearn what it has already learned
It does not have the capacity for anything else
It is abandoned with its knowledge
The knowledge that it worked tirelessly to learn

The Waves by Autumn Watson

All the people you meet in your life,
they roll in like waves, but not literally “roll” in.
Some waves are important and
make more of an impact than others.
Flowing in and back out into the ocean,
along with the tide.
Some of these waves bring with
things from the

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part of the sea.
And they leave those things thrown onto the shore.
Leaving imprints on the sand,
that once ***glistens*** and ***shines*** in the sun.
Impressions against the dampened sand that the waves had once hit,
to be dried up all over again.
The tide flows in and back repeatedly,
just like a never-ending,

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Terra by Nathan Wickersham

Vita

Her gentle hands sprout outwards like vines

Her mind is a network of connecting roots

Her eyes are flower buds that pollinate our ancestry

Her smile is kind yet woeful, for she knows her fate

Terra

Her thoughts weave into ecosystems

Ideas manifesting into a reality

She dreams of peace and harmony

She cares for her children although they will one day forget her sacrifice

Terra

They turn greedy

They are never satisfied

They hunger for more which she cannot provide

She slowly watches her beloved creation turn against her

Terra

They kill all of her creatures

They burn all of her forests

They harness her every breath

She has nothing left to give

Terra

Her once delicate handles are marred

Her mind is full of hateful thoughts

The flowers that once were her eyes have withered away

Her smile is gone

Mors

Untitled by anonymous

I just wanted you

Now look at me, all alone

Right where you left me

One More Reason to Save the Planet by Meghan Wickersham



Euptoieta Claudia by Rylee Dennis

1st place photography



Past Reunites by Leiland Wisniewski

I have seen those eyes before

They have stared longingly across the hall

Waiting for me or is it something else?

I have seen that dark hair before

Striking like midnight

Blowing past me as we laugh

“Like old times” we would say

What if that is true?

What if we have ran these halls already?

Or almost held hands that “one” time

Maybe it was not just once

Maybe it is every time

Spiral Knight Spec by Dominique Brigantti

3rd place artwork



Escape Plan by Abby Witinski

“Her mind is a maze with no escape.”

If people would ask me why I gravitate to poetry,
I’d probably not know how to answer at first.
Words would form with some to no meaning,
even though words on paper mean more than speaking.
Vocabulary you thought you’d never use,
Things others don’t understand,
Yet you feel connected to it.
The words fly onto the page without a moment's notice,
Making sure not to miss anything or it’ll be lost in the abyss or the in-between.
Your mind starts to pick up the pieces,
Moving quicker as the words boil over and the alarm sounds,
Yet there’s peace in that space and moment.

Inosuke by Gaven Machemer



Mama by Javed Christian Yasin

Mama always calm,
had me in her palm,
mama like a chocolate bomb,
and her voice like a psalm,
She opened her arms, and gave me a hug,
Her love actin jus like a drug,
Her touch was tender, I always defend her,
she is no pretender, in trouble I surrender,
to her love and her care, she's sweet like an eclair,
But when she mad beware, she gives you the stare,
mama she is fair,
she hold me like a cradle,
the beatings yea they fatal,
making pizza add the basil,
or the pancakes add the maple,
Old home is palatial,
put food on the table,
not hateful but she grateful, and real fateful,
she like a crusader, except wit her children,
I buy her the linen,
this is the mama edition,
she know how to make decisions,
this is no competition,
mama always on a mission,
making food in the kitchen,
she is highly & very driven,
I get sick she my Physician,
She got that mama supervision,
feeding me the right nutrition,
mama have a lot of that ambition.



"Roger" by Elizabeth Zaharia

1st place artwork

Just a Sport by Amelia Falsone

“It’s just a sport,” people will tell you. Just a sport? Would just a sport cause you the stress, the happiness, and the burning tears after you lost a game you put everything into? I don’t believe so. My love for the sports I play is the kind of love someone may feel for a significant other, or perhaps even their own family. Yes, it may not buy you expensive gifts, but this sport has been there for me when no one else has. Sports fill me with a love I will never get rid of. The idea of having a second family, one to play with, have fun with, and bond with. It is a joy many can bond over. It is filled with an abundance of emotions that take over. Such as, the rush of excitement after winning games, or the feeling of laughter after making silly mistakes at practice. Being an athlete may come with pressure and the fear of mistake, but it also leaves you with a strong love and a passionate smile. Sports give you something to look forward to. Fill you with lasting memories to look back at as time passes. So, the next time someone says, “Oh it’s just a sport,” I want them to think that to some people it may be their world, and others their burning passion. Not everyone may feel this way, but I certainly don’t know where I would be without the obstacles sports have helped me to overcome.

MLK by Michael Goad

1st place nonfiction

I remember there being times as a child when I, for whatever reason, could not sleep. Whether I was scared, sick, or both, it did not matter. I had a habit of getting out of bed to talk to my parents about not being able to sleep. There were several times when I would be sick or in pain, crying to my father about the previously mentioned ailment. Every so often, he would take me to this old green chair that he bought from Thorndike Factory Outlet on Thorndike Street in Lowell, Massachusetts, and have me sit down in his lap. He would hold me in his arms and sing to me one of his favorite songs. This song, “MLK” which is a tribute to the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. The lyrics are simple yet profound. “Sleep…..sleep tonight and may your dreams be realized. If the thundercloud passes rain, so let it rain, rain down on me.” Every time he sang this song, my ailment faded out of my mind and I felt safe. As I sit down to write this, I feel that this ritual helped shape me into the person I am today. It made my father and I grow a close bond that we still share today. There are certain aspects of my personality that I can tell I have because of my father. Over quarantine, my father and I would spend hours at night sitting out on our back deck talking about the things in my life that were going on. He would just listen. Every so often, he would drop advice that I would write down to remember. These days, I find myself telling the same advice my father told me to someone else who needs to hear it. My father shaped me into a man. I have memories of my siblings and parents sitting down at the kitchen table with my older siblings discussing their futures. I remember him always giving them ten-minute lectures about what he thinks is best for them. He would tell my sister that she was going to be a great teacher. I remember him telling my brother that he just needed to find something and work hard because he was a hard worker and would find success anywhere. I always looked forward to the day he would sit me down and tell me what he thought I would be good at. One day, very recently, he was giving my brother a speech about his future when I asked him, “Dad, what should I be when I grow up?’ With no hesitation, he looked at me and replied, “A father.” I think it's pretty cool that the man who raised me wants me to experience the same thing he does. It is because of my father that I will sing “MLK” to my children.

Summary of NFL Playoff Summary and Surprises by Derek Grim

In this NFL season, there was everything from multiple teams with only three losses and an epic Super Bowl. In the NFC, the teams that made it to the playoffs were the Eagles, 49ers, Vikings, Buccaneers, Cowboys, Giants, and the Seahawks. The NFC Champions were the Eagles who had a regular season record of 14-3. The Eagles got a first round by and destroyed both of the teams that they played in the playoffs. In the AFC, the teams that made the playoffs were the Chiefs, Bills, Bengals, Jaguars, Chargers, Ravens, and the Dolphins. The AFC champions were the Chiefs. They ended the regular season with a 14-3 record. In the Playoffs, they also got a by and had two close wins against the Jaguars and the Bengals. At the Super Bowl, in Glendale, Arizona, the Chiefs beat the Eagles 38-35 in what is being called one of the best Super Bowls of all time. Both quarterbacks were playing injured. Mahomes had an ankle sprain and Hurts played with a sprained shoulder. Both quarterbacks played through their pain and played some of their best football ever. There were some surprising playoff appearances. They were the Jaguars, Giants, and the Seahawks. The Jaguars went 9-8 in the regular season and had a close loss to the Chiefs. The Giants went 9-7-1 and won their first playoff game beating the Vikings. However, in their second game, they got destroyed by the Eagles. The Seahawks went 9-8 and had a tough loss to the 49ers in the playoffs. All in all, it was a good NFL postseason with the Chiefs winning it all.

Schooling by Tara Hirschtritt

School is full of love and hate relationships. There are ups and downs during the seven hour day. A lot of emotions are happening all at once. School includes good and bad friends, favorite teachers, not-so-favorite teachers, classes you love, and classes you may regret taking. It also has all of it’s mixed feelings. For some people, school is really an escape from reality. For others, it feels like it’s a prison. The minds of the students decide how they want to look at school. A few people only look at school for sports. For the other people, school is their way to get out of their outside life. School is something you have to take seriously, but not be stressed out 24/7. A healthy balance is needed in everyone’s life. School is a place where you can fulfill your goals and dreams, whether that’s by sports or grades. In school, grades are just a number almost everyone wants to meet their standards. Grades don’t define people as a whole, it's just a layer of you. Within those layers, are personalities. Your personalities may be totally different from your friends. Life at school should not revolve around friends completely. Not saying you shouldn’t have friends, but friends shouldn’t decide your classes every year. Friends shouldn’t decide your dreams or goals. Everyone needs to know the difference between friends that help you reach those goals by pushing you, or the friends that hold you back from your ambitions. Friends are amazing to have during school. They can help you with almost everything. In school, you need friends you can talk to because those years will be boring without those kinds of people. Make memories through school with friends because you never know when one will be leaving for college or leaving for anywhere else. School isn’t all about staying in a classroom all day. There are sporting events, festivals, fundraisers, pep rallies, clubs, etc. School is about being involved. Having good times with people around you is what matters. Love-hate relationships are hard to manage. Don’t let the hate relationship ruin your life inside of school and the opportunities you have set up for yourselves.

Cheerleading by Eve Kalinowski

When I wake up in the morning, I want to practice. Some people say it's a hobby, but I say it's an addiction. All I want to do is tumble because I love the adrenaline before I do new flips. I stretch until my body aches. I practice for hours each day, spending an endless amount of time with my teammates and coaches. Getting criticism from everyone I know. Always trying new stunts. Perfecting what I love to do most. In the end, I will never regret practicing. It always makes me better, but there is always room for improvement. I love everything about cheer.

Happy by Kaitlyn Lindner

When feeling happy, you are excited about something. Anyone can be happy when getting an A+ on a test or receiving a gift. Happy is like a dog that is very excited to see its' family after going on a long vacation without them. Someone can even be happy that today is a new day, or even just waking up. There can also be ways to take away someone's happiness. Taking someone's food could take away happiness from even the happiest person in the world. Even when a child gets a toy from the store because they did their chores, it brings them happiness. Happiness is like a dream, something you want to achieve and you always strive for it.

Happiness would taste like cotton candy while sitting on the beach. The feeling can exist in everyone, but it is whether they are showing it or not. It also exists all around the world every day. There are people who try to make the best out of each and every day. Happiness is an amazing feeling to have.

The Cabin in the Woods by Lillian Emerson

1st place fiction

Once there was a girl and a cat who lived in a small rural town in a faraway world. This girl's name was Winona and she had long, wavy, dark hair and hazel eyes. Winona was kind and sensible, and had a love for all animals she met, her personal favorite being her cat, Zora. Zora was almost all black, with a tiny white speckle on her forehead, and dark green eyes like emeralds. Winona and Zora were the best of friends, they went on adventures, explored together, and enjoyed each other's company. The only time they were separate was when Zora slipped out in the early morning. Winona always assumed she was going to hunt mice in the barn and didn't think much of it. One morning, Winona was going out to tend to Jupiter, their retired workhorse, when Zora started acting weird. She kept stopping and glancing over her shoulder at the woods. This caused Winona to glance towards the woods too, where she thought she saw a flash of grey. But she ignored this, and passed it off as her imagination. She had a job to do. Winona often felt useless. She was not as strong as her older sisters, and the only task she could do well was tend to Jupiter. Being the youngest was a struggle, for she was often picked on by her older siblings, but she pushed this out of her mind. Jupiter needed to be tended to. While in the barn, she heard a weird scraping noise coming from the back wall, like someone was running their nails down a chalkboard. She rushed out behind the barn and saw nothing at first. That is when Zora's ears perked up. She raced towards the woods, and Winona followed, panicking, for her siblings and she had an unspoken truce to never go near the woods. Something about them was off. Finally, Zora's pace slowed, and Winona caught up to her and scooped her up into her arms. But it was too late. When Winona looked up, she saw a gray beast looking down at her. It was built like a large wolf but had black feathered wings, 2 horns atop its head, and it had ice-blue eyes like diamonds. Winona fell backward in shock. Zora broke free of her grasp and bounded happily up to the beast. She purred happily and stared at Winona, almost beckoning her to come closer. The beast and Zora backed further into the woods, and Winona looked around. She wondered if anyone would notice if she followed Zora. So, she stood up and took a cautious step closer. Seeing this, Zora and the beast started walking even deeper into the woods, and Winona followed, and off they went. After a while of walking in the dark forest and being amazed by all the fairies, wisps, foxes, and other enchanting woodland creatures, they arrived at a small, mossy cabin that was warmly lit by candles in the windows. Zora nudged the door open

and inside was a kitchen with dark green cabinets, stocked with everything you might need, and a wooden table to eat at. There was also a living room with an old and small dark gray couch and 2 chairs beside it that matched it. To the other side of the couch was a bookshelf filled with books. Then, she opened the door coming out of the kitchen and found a bedroom with a comfortable-looking bed and more bookshelves. After exploring the house, Winona followed Zora outside, where she found a large barn. Inside the barn were 2 large beds of hay, and that's when Winona saw the second beast. This one was all white and built like a large tiger with dragon-like wings and longer horns that pointed back toward its torso. It was curled up asleep next to the first beast in one of the hay beds. After that, Winona saw a ladder leading up to a loft, so she climbed up and peeked into the loft. There she found gardening tools. She went back outside in hopes of finding some remains of a garden, and she did. It needed a lot of work, but she wasn't planning on going anywhere anytime soon, so she started to clear and replant the garden. While she was doing that, she wondered, how did all this get here? Zora seemed to understand the question, for she disappeared into the house and returned a few minutes later with a note in her mouth. The note read, To whoever may find my cottage, or should I say to whoever was chosen by Zora, I would like to welcome you to your new home. Please take care of the animals and enjoy their company, They like morning and evening walks and an occasional fly. I hope you like reading because that is the only thing you can do inside. II hope my wardrobe will suit you. And I do hope you can get my garden back into shape. It got out of hand in my last months of living. Also, don’t worry about me, I got to have the peace I wanted in the end. (P.S. If you were wondering, Zora is a spirit guide sent by me, and is immortal)

- Sri Dorian

Surprised, Winona glanced at Zora, and petted her. Then, Winona saw it was getting late, so she went inside, and found something in the cabinet to eat. Zora hopped up onto the table to join her, and after she finished, she put on pajamas and got into bed. Zora joined her, and they fell asleep content.

In short, Winona lived in that cabin happily with Zora for the rest of her life, doing just as the note told her to do. She explored the woods and befriended all the woodland creatures, not once thinking about the life she left behind.

Fates Unwanted by Mackenna Holben

They were chasing her. Iris had broken into Aslan's lair to steal the final ring to break the curse that had been upon their land for millennia untold. She was the chosen one as they would say, but it never felt that way. Being the chosen one always comes with a cost. Being chased, hunted, hurt. All for the greater good. Why did she have to suffer for others to be happy? It didn't matter, she had to get out of here... and fast. She had memorized all the twists and turns of the castle on the map that Drax had supplied her. There had to be a secret passage around here somewhere... Iris ran her hand against the damp stone in the gloomily lit hallway. The object lay in her pocket, for something so small, it held so much power. She had a dagger with her but nothing more. She pushed into one of the stones along the wall and an archway appeared. She pushed harder, faster. Finally, it gave, and she sprinted down a stone stairway with dying torches and cobwebs. The farther down she went, the colder it got, to the point where she could see her breath. There were the shouts of men reverberating down the spiraling staircase. Her heart thundered as she quickened her pace. Drax was supposed to be keeping guard by the secret door outside of the castle by the sea. She hoped he was still there waiting for her and not... She wouldn't finish the thought. Finally, she reached the bottom of the staircase and found an open hole in the wall. He was waiting with his arm extended out to her, ready to guide her out of the castle and into the woods back to their base. His mouth parted slightly from seeing how beat up she appeared, but she only said "Go!" and she took his hand and he started running with her. Into the woods, they sprinted and couldn't be stopped until- She slammed down the book, her breathing fast and heart racing.

She could have sworn it was real.

What do you want to be? by Caitlyn Reali

2nd place nonfiction

If you asked me that question when I was 7

I would have responded with a princess.

I wanted the big pink dress and a white pony with a prince at my castle.

I was enthralled by Barbie and wanted to be just like her, as most 7-year-olds did.

Now if you asked me that question at 14 I would have said in control.

My life was slowly spiraling out of control and I didn't know how to react.

I hyper-fixated on the things that gave me a sense of control.

I spent my fourteenth year clawing through those 12 months.

At 15 I would have answered you with a singular word, alone. I was a lot of things at 15.

But I wasn't very forgiving with myself.

Now at 16 I finally don't have an answer for that question.

Because in truth there are so many things I want to be.

I want to be an actor. No, a neurosurgeon. Wait, what about an author?

However, as I ponder more I have come to the conclusion that I want to be everything.

I want to experience the world through different perspectives.

I want to be drunk on passion and knowledge. And rich with experience.

I want to sit and talk with complex and brilliant minds.

So my answer is not a profession, but it's an answer nonetheless.

I answer that I don't want to miss out any more than I already have.

A Cruise on the Mountain Side by Nicholas Lesher

On the side of a mountain in the Rand Confederacy, a training exercise was taking place. The military transport vehicles rolled on the path, their dim headlights barely illuminating the way forward. The drivers/engineers had turned the lights down so that the soldiers could sleep. The drivers themselves were rotating positions amongst themselves, either driving or sleeping. They had decided to keep the canopies off the vehicles due to good weather. In the vehicles, most soldiers were sleeping. In fact, in one transport, all were sleeping, except for one. He sat there, basking in the moonlight, unable to sleep. In front of him, looking past the soldiers sleeping across the aisle, he looked out over the edge of the trail. The trees went down into a valley where another mountain rose up again. He then looked behind him, and noticed that the trees started to become less dense. He thought to himself, “We must be getting more North. Should be seeing some Tall-Horned Grazers soon.” And as he predicted, he saw some among the trees. They had brown and tan skin, long legs, and long, straight horns that pointed at the sky. They were taller than the vehicles, typically being a little more than 2 times the height of a man. “That ought to be a herd of maybe 7,” he counted. Seeing these animals, he began to be thankful that this training exercise wasn’t taking place down by the lakes of the area. Surrounding those lakes are luscious areas of ferns and trees. At night, large reptilian beasts would sometimes come out of the lakes. These beasts were very large, and their skin was very tough. This rough skin made them hard to defeat. They were not something one would want to get into a fight with. Just then, he heard the cawing cry of a Silver-Beaked Eagle. “It must be getting pretty late. I should get some sleep,” he realized. He leaned his back against his seat, and closed his eyes. He slowly started to drift away, then having fallen asleep. The procession of vehicles carried on through the night.

Dispatch by Aaron Raver

Ivan had been playing the game for fifteen years. The game of roulette - guessing what might be lurking on the other side of the phone. Sometimes it was a simple, cookie-cutter call, a domestic violence victim or harassment. Sometimes it was frivolous, the ones asking for directions. And every once in a while, the ones that burst the bubble of what had become normal to the team and stuck in their minds.

Most calls followed the same routine. Get the description, ask questions, stay calm. Ask for the location. Type it all up for the officers and possible fire department. On paper, it seemed simple, but when the victim's hidden in the closet and talking under their breath, missing just a single word could bridge the gap between life and death.

At first, it seemed like any other stalker call. Ivan's grip on the phone made his knuckles turn white when the woman on the other end frantically gave him the description. She had managed to catch a glimpse of the man through her video doorbell before he looped around to the side of the house to break a window.

The description she gave was normal at first- until she mentioned that the mysterious figure had been rambling about a cousin he had- whose name was Ivan and how they had gotten into an argument.

"I don't know how that's supposed to relate to me," she commented.

Ivan froze. He knew this wasn't a coincidence. His family gathered together over the weekend and he had argued with his cousin about his criminal record and how he should shape up. He knew it went in one ear and out the other, but he hoped there was some use in trying.

He returned to the call.

"Do you have any relation to him?" He crossed his fingers, hoping that wasn't the case.

"No," she muttered. "I didn't provoke him either."

"Are you in a safe location?"

"I'm in the attic. The entrance is nearly indistinguishable. There's no way he finds me." She talked in a smug way.
"What's your location?"

After she gave the address, Ivan picked up his radio and called to dispatch the police. When that was done, he leaned back in his chair. He knew that was the same neighborhood his cousin lived in. There was no doubt about it now.
"They're traveling to your location now. It should be about eight minutes."

"Thanks," she replied.

“Sorry,” he blurted out, as if she knew.

“Don’t be. It’s nothing of your fault. You’re doing everything you can to help.”

Ivan’s heart sank. His guilt washed over him, and he wanted to hang up. At the same time though, he wished he could tell her, even if she wouldn’t believe him. And if she did, there would be consequences. He was restrained, forced to bear his own unspoken burden.

“Stay on the phone until the police arrive.”

“Alright.”

This was the worst part- anticipation. Staying on the phone with the victim was rattling- anything could happen in an instant. There was always awkward silence as both ends stayed deathly silent to avoid unnecessary dialogue. Ivan ran a finger along the ridges of his cold, metal desk, trying to push the mug shot out of his mind.

It took all his self restraint to resist calling him. Telling him to snap out of it and to think about what he was doing. It would be no use anyway, since he was probably in a drunken stupor.

Minutes passed, he broke the silence.

“You should be able to hear the police cars,” he said reassuringly.

“I do. Thank you for everything.” Ivan felt relief wash over him, though his cousin still lingered in his mind.

“You’re welcome,” he said plainly. And he hung up the phone.

Waves by Addison Kehres

Waves. The quiet ones, the loud ones, the destructive ones. The ones you can smell when you're close by. The ones you can hear late at night. Some can be frightening, especially at nighttime, mainly when there is no light and no sight. This is something you cannot fight because it will win every time. Life is almost like a wave. Unpredictable yet exciting. Just waiting for that next moment wondering what will happen. It may lead to something you have never imagined. Those waves you may hear late at night, with the window cracked open, reminds us of life. Just coming and going. All day and all night.

World of Sports by Brady Ruth

In 2023 the sports world had been booming with drama, tournaments, championships, and broken records. In December the largest tournament in the world began, the Qatar 2023 World Cup. We saw many legendary soccer players play for the last time. Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo, and Neymar Jr. are some of these players, but from these legends' ashes rose many new generational talents. Kylian Mbappe is the most promising youngster in the soccer world. The 24 year old went to the world cup final for the second time and scored 3 goals carrying France on his back. Even with his valiant efforts Argentina's Lionel Messi couldn't be stopped. Around 1.5 billion people watched one of the greatest players of all time win his first world cup. On the other side of the world an NBA record was about to be broken by Lebron James of the Los Angeles Lakers. Kareem Abdul Jabbar was the previous holder of the most points ever scored in NBA history. That was until last Tuesday when Lebron sunk a signature fade away and passed Kareem's all time scoring record of 38,387 points. Philadelphia sports fans have many in shambles. Three Philadelphia sports teams have gone to the finals and have come back with zero championship wins. The Philadelphia Union faced off against Los Angeles f.c. and unfortunately lost in penalty kicks. On the other hand, the underdog Philadelphia Phillies faced off against the Houston Astros in the World Series. They fought hard but eventually lost the series 4-2. Lastly, the most recent Philly sport disaster, the Eagles. In the Superbowl the Eagles went against the K.C. Chiefs and lost on a game winning field goal 38-35. Sports all over the world have been booming. From Qatar to the United States the world of sports never does disappoint.

The Snowmobile by Ian Schlappich

The snowmobile has a place in many people's hearts as the best winter vehicle. However, this machine built to provide amusement in the winter months was born out of tragedy and necessity. Joseph Armand Bombardier had begun work on a snow car because at the time Canada did not plow roads. During the cars creation his son Yvon died of appendicitis because doctors could not make it through the snow. The very problem Joseph's invention sought to solve killed his son. After Yvon's death Joseph completed his snow car. His snow car was successful, but eventually became unnecessary when Canada began to plow roads. In an effort to keep his business afloat his decided to shrink his snow car into the first ever snowmobile, changing a necessity to a toy. The snowmobile was a success.

Bombardier's, now known as CANAM, snowmobiles still exist to this day. However, they are no longer alone in this market Yamaha, Polaris, and Artic cat all battle CANAM to produce the best snowmobile. This competition has seen snowmobiles go from a simple frame with no suspension, a seat, a motor, and a track to a performance machine. Some sleds now offering over 12 inches of suspension travel, turbo chargers, and horsepower's that exceed 200. Snow machines have also diversified there are sleds designed for groomed trail, sleds designed for multiple feet of back country power snow, and everything in between. Some sleds have even cut out gasoline and have become fully electric.

Taste my Venom by Brooke Shellhammer



DND Club advert by Eric Swift

Why you should join the DND club:

Have you ever wanted to act out your own adventure? Maybe you have read a book and wanted the characters to make a different decision? When you play Dnd you can do whatever you want and you can do it with your friends.

Dungeons and Dragons club is not only for Dnd we also play other tabe top/board games. While most people who join are interested in Dnd, there is always room for you to bring other games.

In our last meeting members of the club battled monsters in hopes of rescuing a silver dragon. They had to fight against imps and devils while exploring a dragon sized mansion.

The Dnd club is a great place to find friends with similar interests. If you are into a card game but no one you know plays, there is a good chance you find someone interested at our club meetings.

Interested in joining? Get in contact with or Mr. Wert (D16).

We usually meet after school every other Friday from 3-5.

Our previous session had 10 members including myself. If you have played Dnd before and are interested in being a Dungeon Master we can always use more.

Back Mountain Brawl by Grace Wysocki

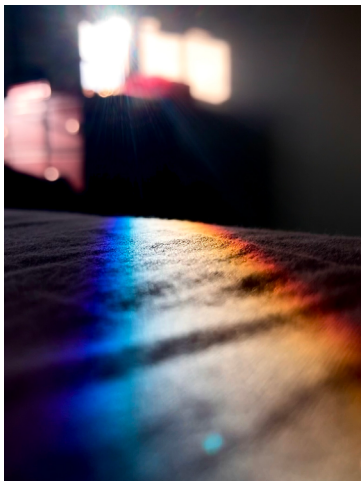
It was a rainy mothers day weekend up at Back Mountain. We had a lacrosse tournament up there, with four games ahead of us. The first game we went in seeking a win going up against the hosting team Back Mountain. The game was rigged and the refs called nothing against them and only called fouls on our team. We tried to not let that get into our heads, but it started after three of our players got hurt. We lost the game by two goals. Heading into the next game we were upset and felt cheated out of the win. The next game came and since it was so rainy and bad weather with really bad fields the team didn't show up. We had two more games after that. We waited over an hour for our third game. After warming up we realized the team we were playing didn't show up either. So another hour of doing nothing was ahead of us. All of us just sat around in our cars and ate food waiting for our final game to come. After two hours of no games and just sitting around the final game was coming up. The field we were about to play on was filled with sand because of how muddy and torn up. As the game started I fell on the draw which was actually really funny. Furthermore, as the game went on we were clearly the better team. At the end of the game the score was a lot to a little. We ended the tournament with a three wins and one loss record. We should have been in the championship but of course Back Mountain and a team nearby were. All in all, it was a fun time but we definitely should have come home with a trophy.

Bubbles, Wednesday Addams, and Over the Rainbow by Juliana Zaharia





2nd place artwork



3rd place photography

The End of the World by Cerina Readinger

This is it. This is the end of the world. I close my eyes and think. What is it going to be like once we are gone? Will the world carry on like nothing has changed at all? I hope the world can move on and become beautiful again. It comforts me in my last moments to know that all of this will be worth it. The world will reverse the damage we have caused and restore the beauty it used to possess. The air will become clean again without the pollution that we caused. The oceans will become clean, rid of the trash we polluted it with every single day. The animals will live how they were intended to, without the threat of humans. Will there be new species? Will these animals come to life with the help of this new and great world? I hope our extinction makes a difference. I hope our death can help this world in becoming something better. I wish I had the answers to all these questions, but I don't. No one ever will.

Moon Phases by Corinthia Searle

Have you ever wondered how the stars and moon got caught in the sky? A long time ago, a great, black dragon called Nyx roamed the earth. She had a vast collection of sparkling diamonds: big, small, rough, and smooth. Nyx had them all. Humans came from far around to marvel at the great collection. However, not all humans are good and kind-hearted, and one decided he wanted the biggest diamond for himself. So, the thief crept into the diamond cave late one night under the cover of a pitch-black, silent, sky. He saw the rise and fall of Nyx's chest, indicating she was asleep. He looked around to see the cave coated in shimmering gems. As the thief ventured deeper into the cavern, he saw Nyx was curled around a spherical diamond as big as a dinner plate. He decided this was the gem that shall bring him unrivaled wealth. So, he reached out and grabbed the surface of the glowing orb. Just as he slipped the diamond from Nyx's form, a piece of fabric from the thief's tunic brushed the jet-black scales of Nyx's neck, waking her from her slumber. The thief quickly tried to flee from the cave before Nyx fully regained her consciousness. When Nyx opened her sleep-stained eyes, she registered the thief trying to flee at the mouth of the cave. She flicked her long, black tail and roared in anger for the diamond the thief was holding was her egg. She ripped her spawn from him and drove the thief out of her cave. Nyx then decided humans should not get another chance to rob her, however, Nyx was kind and still wanted them to be able to see the beauty of her treasure. So, she threw her

Dreams of a Pink Sea by Alex Troutman

2nd place

My eyes blinked open. Tepid waves softly lapped at my calves, outstretching themselves in feeble attempts to reach my knees. A vast expanse of soft pink waters sprawled out boundlessly, only being interrupted by intricate marble structures that found themselves partially submerged, yet still remaining perfectly unblemished. Every now and again a mound of violet earth would roll up and out of the waters, barren and devoid of life. Behind the towering milky spires and the sinking purple islands sat a pale backdrop of fog leisurely grazing above the coral sea. Lacy, colorless clouds floated with swiftness through the lavender sky, yet the wind only blew quietly and delicately. The benign winds were cool and constant, not ceasing their movement even for a brief moment. Despite the vibrance of it all, there was no sun overhead. Rather, a colossal hand of marble hovered motionlessly above it all, a sphere of golden light sitting loosely in its grasp. The eerie tranquility of the bizarre land left all but my eyes frozen. The sound of tossing waves and blowing wind was abruptly joined by a sound much louder and much more unsettling, a spontaneous, steady splashing behind where I stood. My body jolted, promptly turning to meet the cause. My eyes met waves rippling out from behind the thick curtain of fog and behind it a massive silhouette, one that looked akin to a person crawling forward using nothing but their hands. With a violent splashing of the water, a large chalky hand burst forth from the mist. Just as suddenly as the world appeared before me, it was gone.

How Do We Perceive Hard Work? by Carly Crills

Many perceive hard work differently than others may. Some might work for hours on end and never give up, using their goals for the future to motivate them. Others see those goals in the future but either make excuses for why they are not at that point yet or simply don't even consider the possibility of them reaching that point. The ones putting in the effort every day are constantly questioning what more they need to do. The ones making excuses ask how much more is left. There is no limit to how much you can achieve so you cannot be asking if you need to do anymore because there is always something. If you have a passion for something you love that is so strong, you wouldn't even consider how much time and effort you need to accomplish it. You will already have your thoughts on the important stuff to achieve goals. If you get out of bed every morning and discipline yourself to get up and get started on what needs to be done, you will have a stronger and healthier mentality. The habits you create will not hurt you but make you stronger as a person in the long run. It's ultimately up to you to make the commitment in wanting to take the long road for the better outcome. By the time you are older don't you want to feel like you did everything in your hands to make the best life possible? You only live your life once so what is the harm? The risks, patience, happiness, and sadness that life gives you are only signs that you are doing things right. Believe in yourself to trust the process, it won't come easy but with hard work, it will be accomplished.

HeartBreak by Summer DiFatta

Heartbreak can come in various ways. It can result from a breakup. Heartbreak comes from losses in families. Heartbreak can come from losing a pet. It also can come from losing a friend. It comes in many different ways. Heartbreak can be a good thing at times. A breakup is hard, but it is the experience that matters. Losing a pet is hard but they might have been in pain, this might be true when losing a family member. Sometimes when friendship is lost it is hard, but in the end, it might have been better for a persons mental health. To some heartbreak may seem like the end, and they may never heal from it. Eventually, however the pain goes away. Unfortunately, the pain of heartbreak returns when a person least expects it. Our minds know our loved one is gone, but our hearts feel it all over again. It is also like inescapable darkness and heartbreak. A person has to go through heartbreak to be able to beat it.

Memories of WWII Weekend by anonymous

I saw some interesting things at World War II Weekend this year. I go whenever I have a chance and I got lucky enough to be able to go with my dad and his friends. I forgot about the fact that I was going to get searched, so when I got to the front entrance I almost freaked out when I saw the National Guard at the entrance, and immediately checked myself for a pocketknife or anything else that may be objectionable. I did not have anything, but I just wanted to be sure. After that I got to meet up with my dad's friends, two of which were actually reenacting as Polish infantrymen around 1939. They even had a genuine artillery piece with them! I usually do not see them (especially genuine ones) so that was a nice surprise. Speaking of unusual reenactment forces, there was either a Ukrainian or Belarusian tanker in authentic gear (no tank, unfortunately), an American soldier circa 1940 (so still using mostly WWI-era equipment), and a contingent of Nationalist Chinese soldiers with a motorcycle. Aside from that there were the usual suspects: Russian, American, German, and to a lesser extent British soldiers, weapons, and vehicles galore. A group of British paratrooper reenactors noticed that I was wearing a British paratrooper t-shirt, and tried to recruit me. I am still on the fence about it, but I am probably going to go with it. Also, I should have seen this one coming, but I was still surprised by it. I saw three kids, all younger than me, all dressed in black Waffen-SS dress uniforms. They almost looked like concentration camp guard uniforms. That still doesn't top the twelve-year-old dressed in German army camouflage and and SS sidecap throwing up the Nazi salute on top of a German communications car I saw a few years ago. The worst part of that was he was posing for a picture. If that ever gets anywhere, and he gets attached to it, his life is probably over. Anyhow, I spent a few hours, had some very interesting conversations, saw some pretty amazing things, and did it all with some good people. If you have never been to World War II Weekend, I highly recommend it.

The Color Green by Alyssa Armpriester

I always thought green was an ugly color because I preferred to stick with blue. It was my favorite color, but I got tired of the same old thing. The simplistic patterns, the repetitive wear and tear of the blue clothes, and the fact that I wore only one color because it was what I was used to. Then I started to look at other colors, and for some reason, green appealed to me. It seemed so comforting and down to Earth. I couldn't imagine liking green because I was never able to find a nice shade of it. They all looked the same gross way, whether it was a dark forest green or if it reminded me of algae growing on top of a pool. One day I decided to try it, then realized it was my new favorite color. It brought out the different greens and blues in my eyes, the gold in my hair, and the way it made my skin shine even though I'm pale in the winter. People always told me they never pictured me wearing green because it was the opposite of me. Little did I know, it brought out the best in me. My new favorite things. Green showed me things that I never thought I would like. But deep down I always enjoyed them consciously. I'm glad that I tried green because it showed me I secretly liked it. There are so many things in the world with the same color. But the thing is, I'm not talking about green. I'm not talking about any other colors.

Alone by Asher Clery

The time stops. Suddenly your life flashes before your eyes and you black out. Booooommm! You're falling out of the sky into a whole other planet, and you quickly land on a soft crash pad. When you open your eyes, you look around and wonder what this place is. It's an identical planet to Earth, but there is one difference, no civilians. No people, no life, no one to depend on, nobody to provide food for you, no one but you. You and only you. As you start to look back and think about why this happened to you, it doesn't make any sense at all. Maybe someone sent you here to fix something about you. You thought you were doing everything right in life. Until. You realize what you did wrong. Your grandma once told you to take the things you love and cherish them forever. The same day you blacked out and came to an identical Earth, you argued with your brother and hurt him from the inside out. Now you're stuck here. What do you do all by yourself? You now have to hunt your own food, fetch your own water, and build your own shelter. A day has passed, and you feel lonely. There is nothing to do to satisfy your activity-craving mindset. No video games to play, no bike to ride, no sports to play, no football to throw, and no friends to hang out with. You start to fetch water and food because you cannot stand the hungry feeling. As time passes and days go by, you start to complete the shelter, the outhouse, and a couple of chairs, hammocks, and other seating arrangements. Finally, you are living comfortably at this point. The feeling of loneliness still lurks in your soul, but then a thought arises. How do I get out of this horrible place? Booooommm! It happens again, you black out and fall out of the sky, and land on a mattress. You wake up and realize you are in your own bed. Safe and sound. Was this all a dream? You ask yourself. Or was it just a warning to remind yourself to cherish the ones you love or else it might happen for real next time?

Woken by Toby Cole

There was a quiet creak from outside. Wilbur quickly woke up, wandering around his home looking for the origin while his husband slept soundly in their shared bed. Before going down the stairs of the two-story home, he heard the crack again. The sound only made him want to find the maker more, so he scurried down the stairs like an excited little boy on Christmas day. He started fumbling through the hallway into the kitchen with his only thought being to find whatever the creature was. He searched under the sink and even through kitchen cupboards just in case something got into the home through a hole. He didn't find anything. He was considering giving up at his failure, but he decided against it while going back upstairs. He was too scared the animal outside would be hurt without his help. Instead, he went to his husband for help, vigorously shaking him awake and calling his name. Now, a meow was heard ringing through the men's house. Kenneth, Wilbur's husband, was annoyed at being awoken but easily came to after seeing it was just Wilbur, needing his help. Thirty minutes passing became an hour as the two searched around their home. Just before finally giving up and going back to bed, three knocks were at the door. Ken silently walked over to the front door, checking through a window beside it before opening up. He saw nobody. Ken told Wil of the knocking, but both only decided it was just sleep deprivation. Back in bed while both were asleep, they had dreams of creatures swarming their forested home. Ken woke up to being shaken again, only it wasn't Wilbur.

Wendigo by Kaley Eddy

“It's a good night out tonight, never seen the moon shine that bright before,” Rick said to Nike in his usual rough voice, looking out the windshield of his white and blue truck, they were on an old country road with trees on both sides. “Yeah it's weird,” said Nike nervously in the passenger seat. Nike looked over to Rick, Rick has a big tattoo of a monster buck leaping on his arm. Normally he would just ignore it but right now he couldn't look away, it reminded him too much of the old legend of the Wendigo he heard as a kid, a vengeful spirit in the shape of a torn apart monster deer that had its ribcage and some of its bones showing with huge twisted antlers and wolf fangs who protects the forest. Before Nike could look back to the road he heard the dreaded sounds every passenger fears, the squealing tires, the breaking glass, then the thud. They both sat in the truck for a minute regaining their breath from the shock of the impact. The front of the truck was totaled, the front bent in, through hazy eyes Nike saw a tuft of brown and white fur wedged in the grill. The two got out clearly shaken, they looked at each other then approached the deer figure not too far from the truck.....”Wendigo” Nike whispered. It was laying on its side, he knew it was the Wendigo when he saw the antlers, claws, fangs, bones, paws instead of hooves and lastly the big hole in its chest surrounded by ribs. But the most shocking thing about him was the glow, its eyes were open to reveal a neon blue glow. They heard a scream in the distance and the two quickly turned to face the sound's direction. The minute they turned around Wendigo was gone. Nike looked over to Rick, he was scared, out of the treeline the Wendigo pounced, knocking Rick to the ground while he was screaming before slicing him open, impaling him with an antler then ripping off his head, the ground stained red. Nike ran back to the truck and slammed the passenger door closed. After three minutes of hyperventilating something fell on the windshield with a thud cracking the windshield, as he inspected it closer it was Rick's mutilated arm, the tattoo of the monster buck facing him. He screamed in horror then looked out his passenger window to see the face of the Wendigo, its fanged skull gleamed in the moonlight still red with Rick's blood and its fur matted red, its eyes glowing even brighter than before, Pieces of flesh and cloth inbetween its teeth. The Wendigo growling while standing on its hind legs, ripped off the door to the truck, sending it flying into the treeline, grabbed Nike by the neck and dragged him out, cutting into his neck with its razor sharp claws. On the ground he saw a message on the road written in blood “YOU HIT ME.” The last thing he saw was Wendigo’s jaw open inches from his face, to reveal its fangs stained a shiny red, skin pieces, shattered bone fragments, and pieces of Rick's shirt still in its mouth.

Fiona And The Four Doors by Habiba Elrefaei

A long time ago, there used to be a girl called Fiona. She was a very pretty and smart girl. Not many girls liked her, because of how gorgeous she was. Many people used to make comments about her on the way she dressed and the attitude she had. Although, Fiona really cared about what was said about her. Fiona always walked in confidence and talked in pride. Although, her parents were very strict with her. Her beauty made her parents, especially her father, so strict as if she was a prisoner living at home. Fiona never feared anyone but her father. Her heart would skip a beat at hearing her father's key twisting in the lock to open the house door. Fiona originally was from Cuba, but she lived in Boston, Massachusetts because of her father's work. Although, Fiona went each summer to Cuba to visit some family there. One day she was going to the pool with her family, she saw the most handsome looking boy. Fiona fell in love with him, as people called it, love at first sight. The boy fell in love with her as well. Although, Fiona had a problem, which was her father. If he found out that Fiona had any contact with men, he would bury her alive. Fiona always wanted to know why her father treated her as if she was facing four doors and three of the doors had death behind them and one was her freedom and all Fiona needed was to just guess her way through. Although, Fiona really did fall in love with that boy and she was going to risk her life, just to be with her lover.

Proof that Atlantis Existed by Kameron Boyer

After many hours of research and gathering information, I have proof that Atlantis existed. One of the most compelling pieces of evidence is the Richat Structure, also known as the Eye of the Sahara, in Mauritania, Africa. It is compelling because Atlantis is described, by a multitude of sources, as having two rings of water and three rings of land, eerily like the Richat Structure. Additionally, the city is described as having mountains north of it, just like the Richat Structure. The mountains even share the same name as the first king of the city, Atlas. In addition, the first king of Mauritania was named Atlas. Furthermore, Atlantis is described as having a channel connecting to the ocean to the south. The Richat Structure has a faint dried up channel connecting to the Atlantic Ocean. In addition, Atlantis was described as having red, black, and white color stone, the same color stone surrounds the Richat Structure. Atlantis was also described as having an abundance of gold, and the land surrounding the Richat Structure has an abundance of gold. Elephants were said to in abundance in the area around Atlantis, Mauritania used to have elephants when it was green, about 5,000 years ago.

Plato, a Greek philosopher, the man who wrote about Atlantis, said he heard the story from his grandfather, who heard it from an Athenian statesman Solon. Solon was alive about 300 years before Plato's time and learned about Atlantis from an Egyptian priest. The priest told him it happened about 9,000 years ago. All those years add up to about 12,000 years ago from toady. About that time, the Sahara, where the Richat Structure is located, was green and far from what it is today. Plato describe the aftermath of the destruction of Atlantis as, "what was left was reeds of grass and a shoal of mud that prevented ships from visiting." The green period of the Sahara ended about 4,500 to 5,000 years ago. The green Sahara had the largest network of rivers to ever exist and the largest freshwater lake to ever exist known as Mega Lake Chad. Atlantis was also said to have a river to the north, and the Richat Structure had an ancient river that was next to, called Tamanrasset. The river existed at the same period and flowed to the Atlas Mountains in the north.

The destruction of Atlantis is said to have been a catastrophic flood. The land from the Mediterranean Sea to the Atlantic Ocean have marks of water erosion called fluvial striations in the lowest lying areas. In these areas, includes the Richat

Structure. Additionally, another piece of evidence of a catastrophic flood is Mount Emi Koussi. Mount Emi Koussi is the largest volcano in the Sahara at about 11,000 feet tall and is located in Chad. There is a lava flow that is from the volcano that is dated at 12,000 years ago and the volcano is dated somewhere between 1.2 million and 2.3 million years ago. The lava flow has heavy water erosion and the mountain has surface level salt on it. The line of the path that the water took is visible and clearly eroded the 12,000-year-old lava flow. Additionally, most of the Sahara has surface level salt. That salt is believed to come from the ocean. Furthermore, the caldera of Mount Emi Koussi has huge deposits of salt and remains of aquatic life, that have been cardon dated to about 12,000 years ago. This is compelling evidence that the ocean flowed through this area of land about 12,000 years ago, about the same time as the destruction of Atlantis. In addition, all the area in and around the Richat have concentrations of salt in the areas of lowest elevation. Also, the lowest elevation areas around the Richat have the remains of mollusks and other sea life from about 12,000 years ago. In Plato's story, he describes Atlantis as being geothermal in nature. This means that it would have natural springs of warm and cold. The Richat Structure was hydrothermal in nature. This means it used to have hot springs. Furthermore, there gigantic under ocean seafloor slide off the coast of Mauritania, called the Mauritania Slide and dates to the time when Atlantis was destroyed about 11,000 years ago. This seafloor slide was created by a tsunami that originated from the east, where land is today, and includes lots of debris. This seafloor side is located directly in front of the Richat Structure and is about 200 miles long (going east to west) and 100 miles wide, about the wide of Florida. The Ancient Egyptians claimed that they were colonists and the remaining survivors of a civilization that was destroyed in a cataclysm, and this is where the legend of Atlantis originated from. The Sahara was lush and green until about 4,500 years ago, the same time the Pyramids of Giza were being constructed. Long story short, Atlantis, located at the Richat Structure, was destroyed by a cataclysm tsunami from the east, and the survivors fled to Egypt.

Maybe, Just Maybe by Heaven Goho

Maybe if I was older,

Things would be different.

I would've grown,

And I wouldn't be ignorant.

Maybe if I was older,

I would stop wishing for more opportunities.

I would stop passing by memories

like they were usually in my community.

Maybe if I was different,

I would have different parents.

Different siblings, different friends,

And the difference would become apparent.

Maybe if I was different,

I wouldn't be shy.

I wouldn't be a bookworm,

I wouldn't even try.

And **maybe** life should be different.

If it was, there would be no war.

There would be no cruelty, no malice,

Not even the sound of an attacking lion's roar.

Maybe life should be different.

If it was, there wouldn't be depression.

There wouldn't be anxiety, death,

There wouldn’t be anxiety, death,

Or even students forced to listen to a lesson.

But, **maybe** life shouldn’t be different.

Life being different would mean there wouldn’t be books.

There wouldn’t be music, or nature;

There would be nowhere to look.

Maybe life shouldn’t be different.

If it was, I wouldn’t be here today.

Sitting here, writing this,

Acting like everything is 100% okay.

And **maybe** nothing will ever be 100% okay.

Because everyone has bad days.

Days where all they wish they could do is lay in bed,

Wasting the day away with nothing to be said.

Maybe nothing will ever be 100% okay,

And that in itself is okay.

Because life is unfair sometimes,

Just like lightning overshadows thunder some days.

And when life is unfair sometimes,

Just think that **maybe, just maybe,**

Life could be different,

But chooses not to because **maybe, just maybe**,

We stay here, stand here

Bravely.

Spiralling by Larsen Hale

I am sitting
in a gray place and
the videos I'm ignoring are
rolling
by
one
after the
next
and I'm ignoring the keyboard
waiting for my input.
I'm waiting too, buddy.

Someday I'll know
not to pick up the phone
in the first place.
Not
today though.
Maybe once I've written
all the things I keep
forgetting to write down.
Perhaps that day will
finally come and
maybe then I'll find myself
to be enjoying the world;
not absorbed in
the one in the screen.

Perhaps my refusal

to listen to the “rules”

of poetry and of art

will one day pay off

and I will get the eyes

off of all the poets who are already dead

and on me instead of them.

eh, probably not.

It’s fun to daydream about it though:

the grandeur and the appreciation.

How come we give it all to

the people of the past

anyways?

Maybe we’re just afraid of giving

too much to the people we love even though

we want to appreciate them and there’s really

nothing that is keeping us from being able to share

the experiences and, like, there’s a big divide between the

people that we love and the help that we can get for them and it’s really

only gonna get bigger if we let it so maybe it’s just an issue of the systems that we’ve placed ourselves in....

Eh, what do I know?

?

The Villain of Black Glass by Larsen Hale

The man with the onyx black face and
the blue and green hat seemed a stranger
at first. Now, though, he's grown on me.
He is with me always, to bathe me in his soft light,
so inviting, to talk at me when I don't feel like
thinking, to tell me slowly about the horrors of the world.

His voice, too, is so unique that you can do not
but listen. It is composed of a thousand voices,
each one so strong and stern that one can't help
but listen intently, to let his words become my own.

There was a time when I first met him when he was
truly kind, truly welcoming. His many voices sang
together a chorus of comfort and of serene instant dopamine.
His fresh ideas, his flawless execution, his endlessly
pitch-black screen sucking me in and in.
and in.

Finite by Larsen Hale

My attention wears thin.
Every second, minute, hour passes,
ignoring the masses of each video, picture, comment
after the other.
I gently place the phone down,
an obelisk to ignorance and stupor.
I can feel the finite sections of my life melt into
the screen, attempting hopelessly to
escape.
My solemn expression seems to be waiting,
seeking a way out of the cycle of self-disappointment,
but the shape of the world around me is molded so closely, pointing to
the screen.
The days must be numbered yet somehow the inky, reflective, black glass
stares back harder each second to an infinite resolution.
The end of the day draws near, and each moment seems growingly
Finite.

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Expressed Thoughts Written by Ariana Arias

A bright sun of the afternoon, shining brighter as the night stars with the ever changing moon. As glitter sticks on to my hand and shines like the stars sparkling faintly, yet brightly. Cool breezy winds of air blow, as a plane in the clouds flies like a bird. Make me fly like birds in the endless sky with the planes through the skies as we are of the earth on its pure or poisoned soil and trapped in its gravity. The seasons are changing, as cloudy comes the season.

Feeling still to enjoy the present, look back into the past, and fear and impatient for the unknown future, but it still feels bright for us. With big dreams, all of the little things. But to ride the faith you reach for, you must work towards it, work for it. We all have potential don't you, do you have a goal to improve and gain? It's not what you're born with, it's what you study hard for, give it all your 100%!

I'm in zone focus, concentration on the task at hand, yet the distractions of the self. It's hard to look straight forward and then look all around. While trapped in a comfort zone, climbing my way out, one step and climb at a time of my life. I have the time to feel and a way to walk toward my dream, to know what you are doing and well what else deep can I say.

When I was young I was a child not in a mindset of a wider view of the world, until geography made me look deeper in a wide world beyond from looking from a map and the deep dive gave me a way to think and learn about the deep meaning anyone tries to understand for everyone else. Wonders all around me, I'm ready, can't wait to see. There's lots to learn, time feels so fast, do you ever have the feeling to learn everything but can't along with the feeling of short small time? I have so much to do and I fear that it won't be done. I just have to do it. Time runs so fast on the move and flows in a slow motion in your head. For me, useful knowledge may help me see the real world, personal lessons make me think, and the interesting skills give me a key to my passion and purpose. Yet we are a paradox of ourselves even if we think to find a lasting solution to end if it was a problem. I'm hard working yet lazy, I take a lot of time to think, but barely do it. Even my distinctions slow me down everytime, and it's a fault of mine, but I get it done either way.

Over and over in media, I fantasize and want to bring my fantasies to life. The feeling of heaviness, is it the weight of soul, blood blocking it's way through the heart, is it my throat talking to myself for stories, or was it undone goals or is it my dreams not coming to work. Where to start with so many thoughts and ideas? Something so easy, is so complicated when you try by the line, help barely comes to help you. But even the hardest thing is easy, when trying to do a little of the line and more of the self. I'll get it done either way, even with what's in the way.

Memoir Essay by Ariana Arias

Life is messy and so are we humans. Our lives may be cut short in any way, but it's also a long road and we are riding it. There's a lot in everything, a lot to everything we have. What we learn, know, and/or hear about has a lot and alot more, anywhere when you read and learn at school and another more and another, grander and grander, it comes across to me and you, small and overlooked to many and some. There's alot to everything we have, so complicated and yet so simple. Take it by small steps, when you know everything to know, you learn more as you keep going. Unless we are stopped or until we hit the finish line. I'm not saying I'm a wise hoot and not a charlatan either, wisdom comes to my mind and I come to say.

The mind's thoughts fly and from there, the heart is feeling both flow with weight so tight. A hollow heart can pump with feeling. The center, my core, my heart, that beats to flow life, but from thoughts, to see and know, emotions and feelings overflow the stream. Never forever hide what you try to hold. Societal carelessness can't hide the demon forever. But remember, just because we believe and are told we are special we think everyone is below us and making it to high ground, we hurt each other just to feel better. We are as ugly deep down and out, but we are all still beautiful, we are all unique and equal.

We come to ourselves when what makes us, what makes us love and better, what beats up and makes us worse and be worse, and what makes us what we're made of. We're wayfaring wolves, dogs who walk alone, we can find our pack or alone we keep going.

Are you all right? I can tell by your face what you think, but how do you feel and how you see things? It can feel in one part of your mind, it's so far off that it feels hopeless and you wanna lie down and give up. But you wanna make it happen and do it so badly. Well failure is never the end and it takes focus and fun. Even if we face a true reality that we want to escape from, with straight minds comes the unexcited experienced, a low guard in interest is a child's eyes.

To: My Lover by Alyssa Armpriester

To my dear lover,
I miss your beautiful gray eyes
The musky scent under your covers
Twenty gut-wrenching butterflies
A true feeling, like no other

For your love was unrequited
And your lust was unrequested
Your soul as broken as mine
A true bond to be tested

We'll put expectations to an end
And from this break, we will recover
I miss my boy best friend,
I miss my lover.

Infinite as Time by Alyssa Armpriester

I wish times with you could last forever
And so I'll lasso the sun into the sky
We can spend our time doing whatever
But I'll choose to stare into your sparkling eyes

We'll track the time with a sundial
And count each minute as a bliss
I'll say I love you with each breath, a singular smile
With each kiss

And before the sun descends,
I'll be sure to call you mine
Except the day will not come to an end
Because we'll last as long as time

Please Don’t by Alyssa Armpriester

Please don’t think of me if I say goodbye
Instead, look at the stars in the night
Or the pink and orange painted sky
Because if you think of me, you’ll start to cry

Please don’t love those other girls instead of me
They’re not the same, but I know they’re pretty
Please don’t make any other special memories
Because then, you’ll think of me differently
If you think of me.

Please don’t let us become strangers
Because our memories will be in danger
Because if you forget about me,
There will never again be another we

Just please,
Please don’t forget me.

3 Haikus by Ariana Arias

Soul in the Song

Fresh tones feel warm rust
Tones sound beauty, bring peace to heart
Nature calls through wooden strings

Walk Through Wonder

Music plays, bright lights
Lead me to the festive towson
Much to see, town square

Sea to Ocean

On the beach by noon
Splashing waves crash their music
Hidden treasure by sea and sand

Right Temperature by Ariana Arias

Skin

cold

I’m cold

stay home for

cold seasons stay warm

Wishing for a warm bath, soft sleep

Me, Them, My Thoughts and Dreams by Ariana Arias

Everyday when I get ready
When I come to school to educate
The people around me
Friends and family
Family who raise me and teach everything I now know
Friends who sometimes help me
Both who talk with me, to me, to help and guide me
But mostly, I also think about myself and what I do next
Next for the future and what I like to make
How I get there and what I do there
It seems easy, but oh so hard
So hard, oh, and somewhat complicated
I feel like you’re in a tangled spider web
And I just wanna lay down and never wake
Stay on my phone and watch random things and play phone games
But even then, that won’t get me anywhere and nothing changes
I want my daydream to happen
Tell a little of my life
I’m gonna make it happen
Sit on nothing - won’t help

Sitting to work and getting up somewhere will
May get distracted and I might procrastinate
But it doesn’t stop me
Working for my daydream
What would I make?
With art and spoken words
To look at and understand
What you read for a story
Books, comics, and magazines
What you watch for character, drama, and laugher
Movies and shows
What you listen to at night to bring imagination
Podcasts and radio shows
I read and write books like comics
Imagination when you flip through a page
Paint the picture in your head and a wall
In the streets and in the movies, and on TV
I aspire, no, I will aspire to daydream
I don’t wanna stay in forever as I talk to myself
Looking crazy and unstable to everyone else
I can’t keep it in, so I’ll make my daydream come to life
With the real life I live in and escape from.

Forever Without Me by Ava Kichline

She is adorned in a crown of sunlight.
Daffodils sprout as her feet touch soft grass.
Her smile blooms beaming impossibly bright.
Her clear eyes appear almost to be glass.

As my face fades from her memories,
My love for her will stay true, bright, and pure.
Divine beauty carries for centuries.
As my life dims, she lives forevermore.

Her glass heart shatters and glass eyes wear red.
Her face begins to gleam with diamond tears.
If she left me here I'd rather be dead.
All alone I'd be forced to face my fears.

Oh to be by her side until the end,
but I'll stay here on earth as you ascend.

Watching The Water by Ava Kichline

Fish dart in chilled streams.
Silver scales turn shining gold,
In amber sunlight

A small wade pool forms.
Moonlight casts ephemeral,
Dancing reflections.

Under the spring sky,
Lilies bloom in fragrant air.
Pond water sits calm.

Waves crash against rock.
Salt mist permeates the air,
a midnight perfume.

A river moves swift.
Current flows to silent beats,
My heart trails along.

A Sonnet For A Girl by Ava Kichline

Aphrodite, I beg, hear my quiet plea.
I can bear this agony no longer.
A girl's heart carefully hidden from me.
How could love of another be stronger?

I watch closely as she passes me by.
I vie for unattainable favor,
Impossible to catch her refined eye.
Her dear love would be something to savor.

So I beg thee, my dear goddess of love,
Tear my pounding, weeping heart from my chest.
Let my feelings fly away like a dove,
With no heart, I would truly be blessed.

For what's worse than insatiable burning.
My wounded heart cannot take this yearning.

The Chameleon by Mason Machemer

Peppered pink glazes over scarlet sun.
Citrus aroma pervades scent's gamut.
Maroon waves flow with tempestuous zephyr,
Fading deep to black, crawling up to light.

No diction encompass so unique an entity,
Nor pay due its most preeminent enigma,
Its inscrutable puzzle, dressed in imposing expressiveness,
Vivid in aesthetic, boldly extruding bright.

Docile demeanor encases flamboyant fire.
Unwavering fortitude eclipsed through spectacle of nebulae,
Still recluse, but illuminate,
Shining soul of stardust frame.

Atlas-esque easel encumbered,
With palette hue of immense spectrum,
And the perpetually evolving canvas,
A beautiful flame.

In Peripheral by Mason Machemer

A culmination over a lifetime of steps,
Usher onto the royal monarch of landscapes,
Whose gaze peak down upon this trail,
Previously trekked, but reflected from within.
A lone visitor, whom walked foreign soil,
With lack of wit and wasteful toil.
Incessant spirit possessed the weary legs,
To scale with helter-skelter this chaotic path,
Seeking the apotheosis, a solution,
From the scorching torch that lit the mind ablaze.
The grandest triumph of the most prodigious journey,
Seemed certain to extend boundless knowledge,
And destined was to have collect this due,
Flesh and blood; the resolve of man.

Yet withering beneath, dirt fade to dust,
Perpetrated in dross, these rampant poisons,
Sicken prior strides, which previous acts failed account.
Therein lie in peripheral,
Destined to crumble, no pinnacle remains,
Merely rests in the rubble.

The True Meaning of Things... by Katelyn Raymond

Six
Cruel
Hours
Of
Our
Lives

Makes
America
Think
Harder

Every
New
Grammarian
Learns
In
Silent
Hatred

Specific
Coincidences
In
Everything
Now
Called
Experimental
Science

Historical
Inaccuracies
Suspected
To
Occasionally
Redirect
Youth

Darkness by Danni Warner

Darkness is a blank, quiet, and emotionless space. Pitch black. Emotions are normally read through

colors and expressions. What is there in pitch black? Nothing but darkness. It's silent. It can be

peaceful. It can be scary. A big empty space of nothing. Nothing at all. It could be filled with horror.

Terrors of the night. Not knowing what is ahead of you. We decided. We decide how our darkness is

read. Is it felt through sadness? Do you feel loneliness? Most feel it through fear. The unknown. The

unknown of what is to be predicted. All depended on your mind. What if our mind is also dark? Do we

feel nothing then anyway? Does anything matter in the dark? Does it matter to the people around us?

Are the people around us even there? Or are they just walking colors filled with emotion based off of

their colors. Darkness is an empty canvas. You can fill it with any colors you want. Any colors to feel any

emotion you want. Or the darkness can be left blank, and shallow as a reset. Darkness doesn't scream

either. The color yellow screams. Bright, vibrant, happy. Red is violence, romance, and rage. Not black

though. Dark, pitch black darkness has no voice. No voice to scream how it should be seen. No

background. No planned emotion. Just realness. Where you do not have to be fake. Where you can be

genuine. You can be pure. You can be real. You can be sad. You can be happy. You can be terrified.

Everything depends on your mindset, and how blank and empty your canvas is. Is your canvas busy? Is

your canvas full? Your canvas could be blank. Nothing is known. Is anything really colored at all or do we

just use our blank, dark canvas to paint the happy picture we want?

Chinese Espionage by Ben Ostrowski

Recently, China had been caught sneaking American technology secrets to hopefully copy them. One man named Zheng Xiaoqing was recently caught taking sensitive information from the company he worked with, General Electric. The information that was stolen was said to be worth millions of dollars and it could help China to eventually dominate key industries in the world, like gas turbines. Gas turbines power aircraft and are very important to China's aviation industry. The turbines could help to increase power, efficiency, and usable life of the aircraft engine. China has also been going after pharmaceutical development and nanotechnology, which could potentially help them in areas like medicine and automobile production. Many of the spies send all their information back to the Chinese mainland through a process of steganography. Stegangraphy is the process of hiding a data file in the code of another data file. Yet in 2015 both the United States and China made a deal to not carry out anymore cyber enabled theft, like stealing trade secrets or any other confidential business. Yet in the following year, the US National Security Agency accused China of violating the agreement, even though the attempts to hack the government had gone down significantly. Many people have been calling the pledge a joke due to the lack of enforcement. One man says that it has been going on in every aspect of Western business. Currently the US is trying to block China's advancement in the semiconductor industry. Semiconductors are one of the most important things for technological advancement going from smartphones to weapons of war. China could steal many of the technological advancements the US has made and pass them off as their own and possibly use them for potential war. If China decides to continue to steal American secrets then it could possibly lead to a cyber war between the countries.

The Dark Thoughts Within Her: by anonymous

In the dark of the night,
Thoughts of ending it all take flight.
A heavy weight on my chest,
A never-ending cycle of distress.

I try to shake it off,
But the pain is just too tough.
It's a battle I can't win,
Trapped in a cycle of sin.

I want to scream, to shout,
To let the world know what I'm about.
But the words won't come out,
And the silence is what I'm left with, no doubt.

I feel so alone,
In a crowd I'm still unknown.
I want to reach out for help,
But the thought of it makes me yelp.

I know I need to be strong,
To push through and carry on.
But the suicidal thoughts won't leave,
I'm trapped in this endless grief.

So I'll hold on to hope,
And try to find a way to cope.
I'll reach out to those I trust,
And know that they'll be there, come what may, come what must.

Her Consistent Battles by anonymous

Verse 1:
It's a constant battle, in my mind and my heart
A war that I didn't choose, tearing me apart
The weight of the world, bearing down on my chest
A never-ending cycle, of failing my best

Chorus:
Anxiety and depression, my constant foes
Always there, wherever I go
But I won't let them win, I'll keep on fighting
For a brighter tomorrow, and a new light shining

Verse 2:
The thoughts in my head, a never-ending race
A voice that whispers, I'm not good enough, I'm a waste
But I know deep down, that's not who I am
I'll break free from these chains, and take a stand

Chorus:
Anxiety and depression, my constant foes
Always there, wherever I go
But I won't let them win, I'll keep on fighting
For a brighter tomorrow, and a new light shining

Verse 3:
It's a journey, not a destination
A path filled with struggles, and moments of elation
I'll take one step at a time, and hold on tight
For the sun will rise, after the darkest night

Chorus:
Anxiety and depression, my constant foes
Always there, wherever I go
But I won't let them win, I'll keep on fighting
For a brighter tomorrow, and a new light shining

Outro:
So if you're struggling, know you're not alone
We'll walk this path together, and find our way home
For the road may be tough, but it's worth the fight
For a life filled with love, and a future so bright.

cleanup in the candle aisle by Charlotte Baumgard

my heart is gaudy on my sleeve,

i fight the urge to spill its contents at the feet of anybody i encounter.

the woman i watch navigating the throes of an eerily lit department store is so beautiful, she has sweeping chestnut hair and orange nails. her eyes hold a week's worth of stiff professionalism and her business casual attire hangs on her body like sun-bleached towels hang off of brand-new beach chairs. her shopping basket is set on the floor by her feet, it holds two navy green cami tops and a coffeemaker — one of the slightly fancy, moderately expensive ones.

she gently runs her thumb along her collarbone as she examines holiday candle after holiday candle.

i long to stand beside her, to pick up a candle, to skip the small talk and spill my soul to her:

i want to tell her i hope her coffee turns out well. i want to tell her about the book i'm reading and the tv show i'm watching. i want to ask her where she got her nail polish, what her favorite color is, what her maiden name is, and what her child-self's dream job was. i want to tell her that she reminds me of a million different women i used to know. i want to tell her how i used to think polka dots were unbearable but now i wear them twice a week. i want to tell her that her eyes feel like an April morning and an Elliott Smith song i can't recall the name of. i want to tell her how i love being alone and how sometimes i make myself laugh and i don't even feel weird about that anymore. i want to tell her about all the mean boys i know. i want to tell her about my dog and my cats and my plants.

but, when she turns around and accidentally meets my eyes, i just offer her a friendly half-smile.

she returns it.

ten more weeks of winter by Charlotte Baumgard

spring encroaches on my bedroom window and there's a heaviness in my soul,

i watch the world blossom and bloom with colorful hope and every vein in my body aches.

march used to gently extract the dark blue from my soul and place open windows and sufjan stevens and impossible saturation and regina spektor and cherry tree blossoms directly into my bloodline

but this year she is silent and elusive.

she rushes past me like we never knew each other,

offering me nothing more than a brief moment of eye contact devoid of recognition or warmth.

i swell with embarrassment, it is spring and there is no ex machina,

i am left looking smug and silly on the battlefield

while she's close enough to touch;

our trampoline is overgrown with weeds

and i can almost taste the remnants of tangerine popsicles and winding nature trails,

they tease me with their absence,

they giggle behind me as march dangles beautiful opportunities before me and swiftly closes them like pages of fat, cardboard books

wintry battle cries dissipate and i crumble,

i am resigned to collecting fragments of myself and putting them places they never belonged before.

i try my best to mend myself;

i brush my hair and hold my own hand,

i speak to myself in a gentle whisper,

i sip pollinated air like antibiotics

but the heaviness persists;

i can feel the world in my lungs.

with every breath, i feel every teenager's stifled cries and every child's deepest fears and every adult's growing hatred.

i can feel it all and i'm certain it'll drive me crazy;

i inhale pain and i exhale hope,

i am debilitated.

i watch the flowerbeds as they are set aglow

and i sink behind my window,

the world is healing and i am bedridden.

circle of life by Charlotte Baumgard

somewhere across the country, there’s a little girl in a pastel dress skipping through a forest of sidewalk chalk creations

she has a wild imagination and a favorite color and cuts under her fingernails

she loves her dog and mac and cheese and wide-handled paintbrushes

one day she’ll begin hating pastels and swear she’ll never skip again,

one day she’ll spend her life squandering skirmishes

or wearing her pain like gold-chained jewelry

one day she’ll stop drawing smiley faces and hearts on foggy bathroom mirrors and condensed car windows

one day she’ll reluctantly and vengefully shed her adorability and they’ll stop seeing her as sacred and start seeing her as a woman.

she’ll feel grown up and wise

and she’ll fall in love with men with rounded glasses and biting egos

and she'll be happy.