



Vol. 31 2015-16

Stepping Stones

A Junior High
Literary & Art Magazine.

Park Ridge Middle School
2 Park Avenue
Park Ridge, New Jersey
07656

Stepping Stones

A Junior High Literary/Art Magazine 2016



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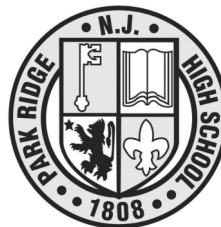
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Stepping Stones is a student run publication that showcases the creative writing and artistic talents of a variety of Park Ridge Middle School students. It is published once a year in June. All students of grades 7 & 8 are offered the opportunity to submit original works of literature and art to the editors until April of the publishing year.



COVER:

Illustration by Kailey DeGeorge, Gr. 8 using markers and colored pencils

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Literary Contest Winners

“Why fit in when you were born to stand out?”

~ Dr. Seuss



Students write poem’s inspired by Dr. Seuss

Elizabeth Paulino & Julianna Zhang

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A Diamond in the rough...

How does it feel being a diamond in the rough? Inspired by *Hamilton’s* “My Shot”, students create their own musical lyrics.

Julia Moran, Susie Rubenstein, Jack Disanza, Sophia Ardizzone, Gianna Whritenour

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ART!

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Owl Drawn by Jennifer Ciccaglione , Grade 7

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6 Word Memoirs

Writing a memoir, easy enough – but how about in only six words?

Janice Fineman, Ann Griffith, Sierra Halsband, Grace Madden, Gabrielle Martin, Emily Montanez

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STEPPING STONES STAFF

Learn about the students behind the scenes of Stepping Stones!

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ONE WORD!

The amount of power one word can hold is extraordinary. We asked our fellow students, “What one word defines you best?”

Various seventh & eighth grade students

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No Body Quite Like Me
by Elizabeth Paulino, Gr. 7

Students were asked to write a poem about a time when they realized that they were meant to “stand out”, OR a time when they felt like they were “lost in the rest of the crowd”.

Entries were due December 22, 2105. Winners were announced on January 19, 2016 via email.

**Being a speck of dust in this world is impossible
Everything is considered nothing
New friends you make every single day are nothing
Cliques of wannabes are all nothing
Flawless people are not so flawless
Why do people try if they know they ought to break away**

**To realize this might make you hopeless
To realize this might make you worried
To realize this might make you anxious
But this might also make you more**

**In a crowd of nobody/somebody's
Wanting to escape
The toxic smells fusing in my mind
Why am I here?
Individuals closing in on me
The air is getting thinner
And I'm only getting colder
These individuals all join into one voice
mesmerizing my mind**

**I can't escape the walls of madness
At that moment I knew that i was chosen to emerge from the rest**

**There is no path or object to hide behind so I say one word
One word that makes me stand out
One word that DOES make me better
One word that those nobody/ somebody's probably have never said in their lives
One word that changes my life and can change others too**

No.

**At that moment in that room I realize
There's nobody quite like me**



Stand Out
by Julianna Zhang, Gr. 7

**As I walk through my life
I know that everyone is staring at me
I know that they see me
I know that I look different
So I stare down
At the floor.**

**As I walk through the reality
I feel everyone's glares
I feel everyone shifting away from me
I feel everyone noticing me
So I try to cover my face
With my jacket.**

As I walk through the hallways of the outside world

Wait.

**I realize that everyone is also different
I realize that I *should* be different
I realize that maybe, just maybe, I shouldn't hide
So I uncover my face and stand up
Proud
And
Haughty**

The Tryout
By Anna McDermott, Gr. 7

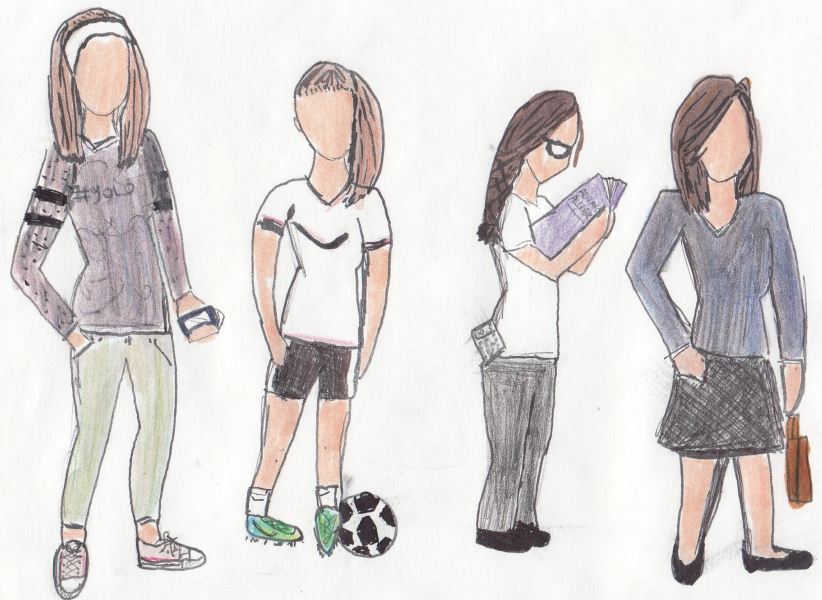
“W

hy fit in when you were born to stand out?” – Dr.

Seuss. This quote discusses a time in someone’s life where they just felt like everyone else, not standing out, or shining beneath the others. Everyone deserves their chance to shine. A case like this happened to me recently. It was

the first day of basketball practice. 23 girls were trying out, but only 15 would make it. There were a lot of really good basketball players trying out. I didn’t think I would make it.

Day 1 went well. I did okay with the drills, but not my best. I didn’t believe I was good enough to make the team. I knew I had to work harder. I could just make the team by going along doing what everyone else was doing.. I knew that,



WE CAN'T LET SOCIAL DIFFERENCES
APPEARANCES KILL WHAT ACTUALLY

Anna McDermott

with the drills we did, I had to do something special that proved that I should be on the team.

Day 2 did not go too well. I kept messing up. I didn't do what I initially set out to do that day. I wanted to come back better, and stronger than ever. However, that didn't exactly go as planned. I went home sure that I wasn't going to make the team. I was very upset with myself for not trying hard enough, and for making so many mistakes.

Day 3 went pretty good. I did the drills right, making no stupid errors. I felt a little more confident in myself. I could tell that I had impressed the coach. When the time came to find out who made the team, I was very nervous. I didn't believe I would make it. When I found out I did make it, I was thrilled. I learned that proving myself on day 3 of try-outs is what got me on the team. I knew it was my time to shine and work hard enough to make it. Through much hard work and perseverance, I was able to make it on the team. I knew I needed to do something amazing to stand out against the others and prove that I am worthy of making it. I felt like I was meant to stand out and prove to everyone that I am a good basketball player and I deserve to be on this team.



*Drawing by Ann Griffith, Gr. 8
drawn with COPIC markers*

*“Accepting Myself”
Taylor Whang, Gr. 7*

Sometimes you feel like you feel left out because what you do stands out. Maybe you want to blend in with the crowd and be like everyone else where no one thinks you’re different in any way. Well, you don’t want that. You want to be different in your own way because when people see things that remind them about you, they will think of you, even the smallest things. I have been through times that I have felt left out and I wanted to be just like my friends, but now I realize I like myself just the way I am.

When I was in first grade, I was a dancer, something that most people did as a three year old. I danced until I was seven and joined a different sport that I had a natural feel for. It was swimming. At the time I didn’t even know anyone in my whole entire school that swam.

Swimming isn’t the regular sport, it’s not like basketball, or softball, or soccer that everyone else did. I ended up joining swimming and quitting dance because I loved the water. I



Photo Credit: Sophia Ardizone, Gr. 8
Taken with Nikon Camera & Cropped with Photoshop

was very shy when I was younger, so it was hard making a new friend at swim. For a couple of weeks I was silent, I said nothing unless I was asked. Later on I actually had a bond with someone. We were the same exact age and our birthday was only ten days apart. She had been on the team about the same time as me because of her older sister. She knew so many people and she introduced me to all of them. It was weird thinking that I had friends outside of school.



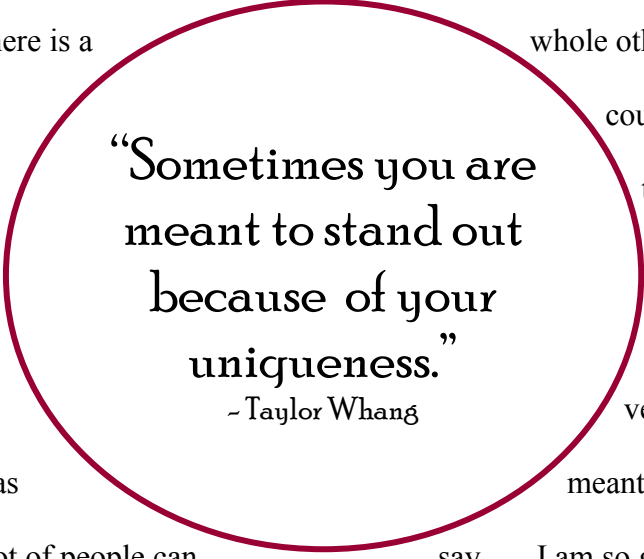
When people asked me what I did as a sport it was complicated explaining it as a seven year old because I didn't just take lessons at the YMCA. I actually competed against many other girls from many other clubs all over New York. It's not like basketball where there are two teams and you play as a team, swimming is an individual sport where you don't "win" or "lose" also in swim it's not a "game". All my friends play sports together, where one season they do basketball together, another volleyball together, another gymnastics classes together. For me, swim was all year around. It was hard because for a couple of years all of my friends were Girl Scouts and cheerleaders; I wanted to join them because everyone would talk about it and what happened that day at practice and if something funny happened. I was sometimes known as the "girl who swims". When I would get invited to birthday parties or go to my friends

house, it would revolve around my swim schedule because when I was ten I would practice 5 days

Accepting Myself Cont'd

a week and for sometimes up to 10 1/2 hours a week. At that point I wanted to do things with my friends and just be like everyone else. In the summer I would swim outside and have to wake up early every morning to swim. I had a huge bathing suit tan line and also raccoon eyes from the goggles. When I would go to school everyone would look wondering why my eye part has light circles around them.

As the years went by I ended up loving swimming, even at times I wanted to quit. Some of my best friends are from swim because we spent almost every single day with each other (even weekends). We go to parties and sleepovers with each other. Swimming is so unique where almost no one else does it at school. In third grade I realized that two other kids from the other side of town swim. There is a whole other community of swimmers all around the country. Many people in Bergen County swim that I never knew. A lot of my swim friends live in Bergen County and we are all 15 minutes away. I realized that I was made very special and I was very thankful that I was meant to be in the water. It is something that not a lot of people can say. I am so glad that I joined swim because I can manage my time and do my work quickly and efficiently, also I have the endurance and the core strength. Sometimes you are meant to stand out because of your uniqueness.



**“Sometimes you are
meant to stand out
because of your
uniqueness.”**

- Taylor Whang

The Perfect Christmas Gift *by Daniel Lio, Gr. 7*

Has something ever happened to you that made you stand out? Well, that happened to me, and this is how it happened.

The day started out very shaky, waking up and rolling out of bed on a Sunday in December. “Get up, and let’s go! We are going to be late for the chess tournament.” my mom yelled. I hated chess tournaments especially since it was on a Sunday. All you did was play four games and it took the whole entire day. But I was sort of looking forward to it, because I wanted to improve on my game.

“Checkmate” I said and I won the first game, nothing really exciting. So I went to my mom and told her I won. She was elated when she heard my brother Andrew and I won the first game.

“Checkmate” I said for the 3rd time that day. I was so excited and I thought that this day might turn out to be good. I walked out of the room and I was jumping up and down and I saw that my brother showed the same exact emotion as me, and I realized that we both won all 3 games so far. As we anxiously waited for our next game, I thought of what would happen if I won the tournament. I could impress my instructor.

When we finally got in my brother and I looked at each other and nodded, as a sign of that we both had confidence in each other. I was so nervous when we started the game.

After many traps had won the tournament! then ran outside with so one and they were so was better than me, I felt had improved. That is



and checks it was finally over. I properly said “good game,” much happiness. I hugged every-happy for me! 1st place! No one so accomplished and for sure I how I stood out.

*Photo Credit: Sophia Ardizone
Taken with Nikon & Cropped with
Photoshop*

Bundle of Joy

By Grace Madden, Gr. 8

Chills running up my arm
 jacket's on
 but yet,
 Shaking.
 Not from fear
 or the frost
 but from pure
 happiness.
 Wanting to cry
 But the tears will be happy
 The little paws don't move
 But his body jiggles
 It's black and white patches dancing
 His chest rises up
 and down.
 Ever.
 So.
 Slowly.
 The puppy makes a small sound
 that sounds more like a kitten.
 Yawning.
 Wanting to bundle him up and bring him inside
 but knowing that's not practical.
 he needs his mother.
 My sister looks at me
 and smiles
 cuddling her own puppy.
 I could stay forever
 but soon called in
 putting down my newfound friend
 nestled against his siblings.
 He moves a bit
 but then settles down.
 Waiting until his mother comes
 covering them like a blanket.

The Guard Dog
by Kailey DeGeorge, Gr. 8

Pumpkin,
 Sunshine lab with orange ears,
 Course fur covering a body of muscle.
 Fangs sharper than slate,
 Eyes shining with fire,
 Long tail raised in defiance.
 Pumpkin,
 Runs away into the dark forest,
 Like a bird,
 Escaping through an unlocked cage.
 Pumpkin,
 Growls at the cat,
 Who is a strange monster,
 Intent on destroying all canine qualities,
 And of stealing the human's affection.
 Pumpkin,
 The loudest dog on the street,
 Barks at everyone,
 Family,
 Friends,
 Fellow canines.
 Pumpkin,
 Whose barks are harsh sounds,
 Vibrating through the air,
 Intimidating trespassers,
 Lingering in ears,
 Being drilled into minds.
 Guard dog.



Photo Credit: Sophia Ardizone, Gr. 8
 Taken with a Nikon camera, Cropped
 with Photoshop



My hiding spot
-Robert Anzilotti

I sit on the cold hard stone that I set up as I sit
down
The smell of the unopened paint buckets makes
me feel safe
As I sit down I see my reflection
I close the and I see nothing but darkness
I feel peaceful
As I put on my headphones I feel safe
I turn on my phone and listen
It's dead silent
It's peaceful
I have many memories
I can hear my thoughts
I am happy
I am me
I am in my place

Photo Credit: Grace Madden, Gr. 8
Taken with an iPhone 6

The Cemetery
by Pauline Liu

The sun is shining
As it always has,
And as it always will

The air is warm
And the leaves are green
Finding life again after the winter

And the sky is blue,
An unbelievable shade of blue
The kind that can only be seen in nature
It is truly beautiful

And in the middle
Of this picturesque setting
There are gravestones
Lined up in perfect rows
Like soldiers before a battle

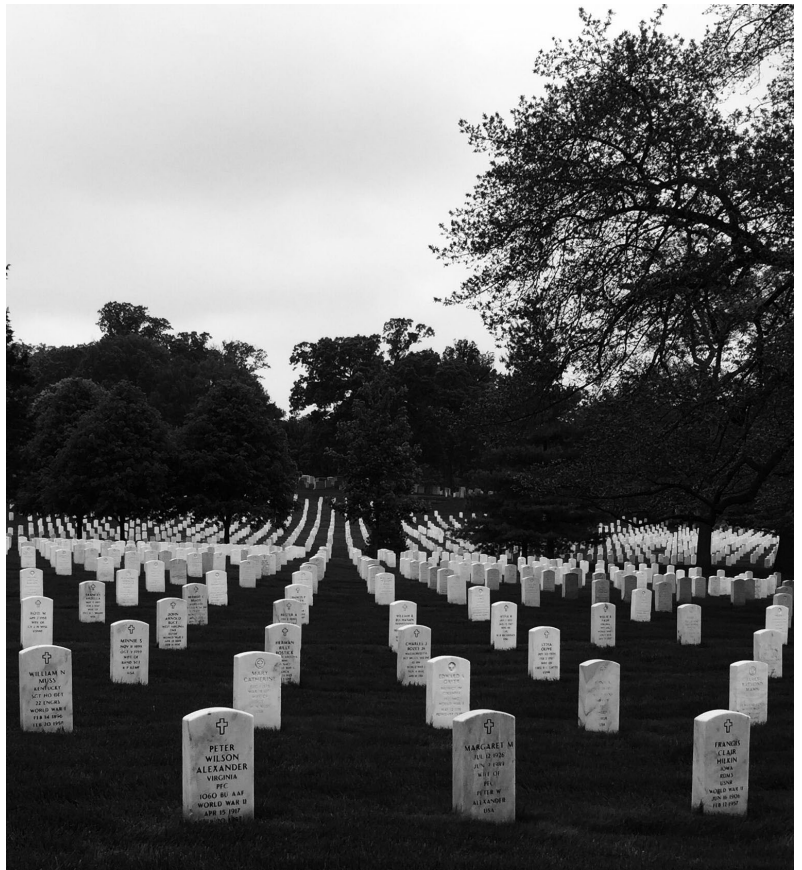
They are all almost identical
To the gravestone before me
There is no name
There is a body
But it is not one I know
Because the one I am mourning
She is an ocean away

But it makes no difference
If I visit her here, or there
She is gone
The body in the grave is just a body
I kneel by the grave
The grass biting at my knees
I run my fingers over the unmarked surface
The unnatural, smooth rock

I take a moment to absorb my surroundings
The ominous cawing of birds in the sky
The air rife with the scent of grass and dirt
And the brackish taste of tears in my mouth

I clutch the flowers in my hand
Their necks drooping, their color dulled
I drop the flowers on the ground
And nothing happens
No pouring rain, no howling wind
No sense of relief

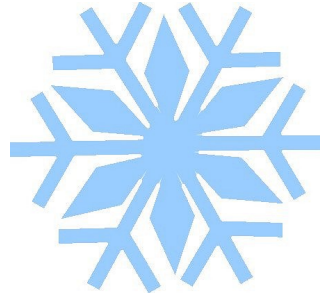
But I knew that would be the case
Because the dead don't need flowers
But we leave them anyway
We say goodbye to corpses
Because we couldn't say goodbye to people
We visit cemeteries to help ourselves
But it will never be enough



Arlington Cemetery, Arlington, V.A. / Photo Credit: Emily Montanez / Taken with an iPhone 6

Most Wonderful Time of the Year *Olivia Neilan, Gr. 8*

I sit in front of the fire
Holding my scorching hot cup of Hot Chocolate
Gently I wrap a fleece blanket around me
And it feels like a wave of warmth surrounding me
I think about my favorite time of the year
Christmas
Families coming together to celebrate
Warm sweaters, hats, and scarves made out of wool
The faces of children opening their gifts
With this feeling of excitement inside of them
And the breathtaking sight of snow covering the
ground like a blanket
Going for car rides around town at night
Just to see houses devoured in Christmas lights
Like a Christmas wonderland
Getting ready for bed
I blow out my Sugar Cookie-scented candle
During my dreams
Teenagers are sledding with their friends on a snow
day
Children cuddle up and watch a movie
As snow falls peacefully outside the door
Getting thousands of gifts
Dressing up in warm, cozy, clothes
But my favorite part
Is seeing the smiles on my family's faces
When we are all together



A Winter Wonderland *Gabrielle Martin, Gr. 8*

As Thanksgiving ends, and the holidays come around
winter calls with catchy holiday tunes.

Snow gently dances onto the ground
and tiny snowflakes glisten against
a blanket of snow.

Contagious laughter spreads between friends
while ice skating on a frozen pond.
Parents can hear laughter amongst the snowy hills
while the children are sledding.

Snowmen and snow angels smile back at you
while driving through town.
Beautiful crystal icicles
seem to hang off of everything imaginable.

A winter wonderland warms the heart
and soul.
The taste of hot chocolate and marshmallows
while sitting with family near a toasty
fire is a great ending to a perfect winter day.

Imagery Poems

That Time of Day by Diego Lopez, Gr. 7

Its pitch dark and then bright
The light shining through glass hits you with a warm touch
You hear the movement of the world around you
 The chirping of birds
 The hum of engines
Your body groggy and tired
You demand for darkness again
You feel the softness behind you
Again the room slowly becomes darker
But a priority forces the light to come back
 The fresh air fills you
You taste bitterness in your mouth
As you lift yourself you feel weak
Soon you feel a strength returning to you and you stand up
 From below you feel pushed up
 You drift around
 You're up

Click, Clack by Claudia Pulvirenti, Gr. 7

Clack, Clack... as the train wheels go against the tracks
Ding... the door of the train opens to a place filled with people
Shoes hitting the ground to a familiar rhythm up the stairs
I walk up the subway stairs only to see the bright lights of New York City
The sound of different people's conversations goes in and out of my ears
The smell of pungent perfumes from various people hit my nose instantly.
I feel the cold wind rushing towards me as I walk by
 I squeeze my soft and fluffy coat for warmth
The bright colorful lights shine bright into my eyes
I can practically taste the food, as I smell it walking by
 This place is chaotic
I can feel my mixed emotions racing through me
 I am nervous
 I am excited
I am in **New York City.**

Music by Elizabeth Paulino, Gr. 7

Gripping onto the precious sounds of life
 Boom Boom Boom
Sounds of a bass drum echo through my head
 Boom Boom Boom
The crack of the snare beat bounces though
 every corner of my mind
 Boom Boom Boom
Cherishing every second of my terrible singing
The energy from the little buds in my ears nav-
 igates through me
I am alone but not lonely
 From LOUD to soft
The music knows exactly how I feel
 Boom Boom Boom
 I feel relaxed
I feel capable of anything
 I feel infinite
-

The Movie Theater by Thomas Hopper, Gr. 7

The smell of buttery popcorn hits you right as you enter
 Its so strong you can practically taste it
 The chairs feel soft like clouds
The screen looks blurry without the 3d glasses
You hear the popcorn crunching as you eat it
Then the screen flashes when the movie starts
 Everything suddenly goes quiet
 Clap...when the movie ends
The lights turn back on and the silence vanishes into thin air
 You can barely hear people talking about the movie as
 you walk
You hear other movies as you leave the theater
Then it all fades away when you leave like the
 credits after a movie
 Except not as boring

Background Photo Credit: Sophia Ardizone,
Taken with a Nikon Camera

Dribble, Dribble, Swish!

by Eli Engler, Gr. 8

Dribble, dribble, swish!

The game was coming to the finish

The taste victory down to their toes

The pungent smell of sweat in their nose

The wee point guard brings the ball up quickly

The point guard passes to the big center daftly

The ball dances in the air after their rival tips it

The small forward recovers and in the head he is hit

The ref tweets his whistle and calls: "Reach-in foul!"

The big crowd was furious, they yelled: "Flagrant foul!"

The shooting guard inbound the ball to the point guard

He crosses up his defender and he's down like a card

He sprints into the paint and floats the ball up and...

CLANK! The center is an ox; ball comes to his hand

The feeling of the rough and tough leathery ball

The sight of the cheering crowd, standing tall

He passes the ball up as the clock runs out

Seven, Six, Five, four, three "Timeout!"

"If you see an open man then dish"

Dribble, dribble, swish!

Where I Belong

by Michael Kuron, Gr. 7

The taste of watermelon quenches my thirst

As I stride towards the deep

The sand pinches my feet

As my feet produces soft impressions

I realize

This is where I need to be

This is where I need to stay

The sun, blanketed by the clouds

The wind, agitated, as I concede to the water

I relinquish in the serenity, let it wash over

me

It takes me to another place, it fulfills me

I let it complete me

The tranquil waves ebb toward the sea

That was their home

This, this is my home

The salt and its alluring aroma

Provokes my senses as I lay on my back

Drifting...

Drifting...

Drifting...

My Room

by Alicia Healy, Gr. 7

My safe haven,

My room,

I walk, step by step, into my cozy room

My furry rug prickles my toes like a cactus

I collapse into my bed as if I fall into a plush cloud of comfort

My fuzzy blanket swallows me up, covering every inch on my skin with a smooth and silky coating

As the sun peeps its way through my window, I watch sparkles and specks of dust float in a wavy sea through the air

A waft of distinctive perfume scent crawls up my nose

I remember; memories overflowing my mind with an assortment of dissimilar thoughts and memories

All of a sudden, I leave my happy place; I sink down, deeper and deeper like a drowning child in the ocean

PLOP, melancholy swiftly and rapidly lies on my body, as heavy as a boulder

A single tear slowly streams down my face to rest on my chin

It waits, and waits there until it drops to my neck

I try to push away the sadness and depression up, off my body

I close my eyes, and my mind starts flowing back in like a faucet again, accept with joyful, beautiful memories

The tremendous boulder comes off and I float back up, like a balloon in the sky, into my safe haven

I listen to hear the faint sound of birds chirping outside of my window

I realize I am sheltered again,

I realize I am at peace



Photo Credits Sophia Ardizone, Gr. 8
Taken with a Nikon camera

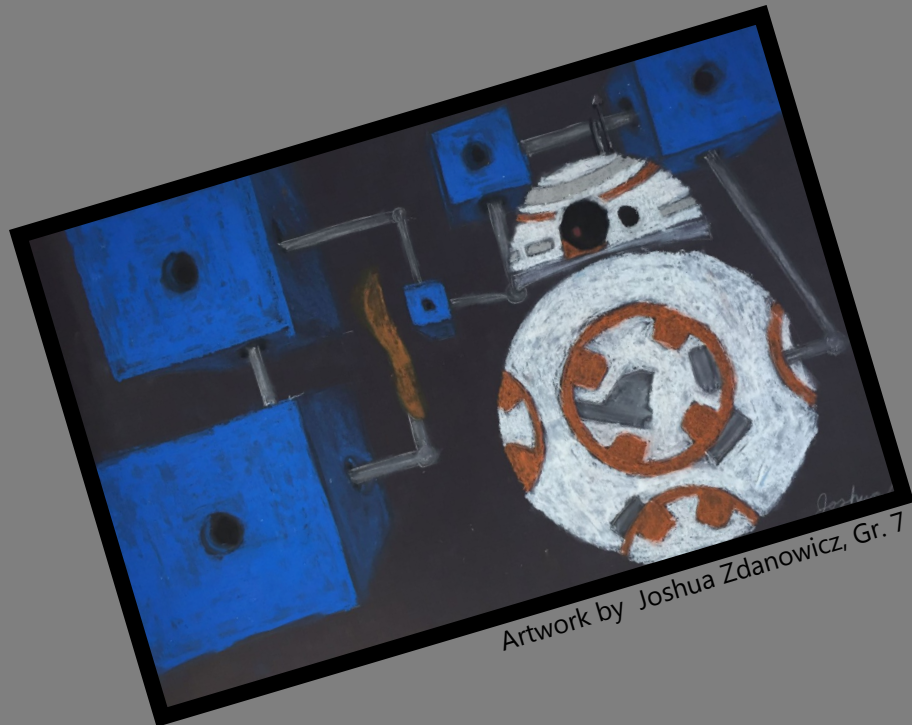
Opening Night
by Emily Montanez, Gr. 8

We all stand around the piano, warming up our vocal cords in the
Ocean Grove Youth Temple basement
"Ziga-mama-ziga-mama-ziga-mama, zing, zing, zing"
Up and down the keys of the piano
As we warm up, I glance up at the clock
Tick, tick, tick
It's getting closer and closer until we have to be backstage to put on a show
As the seconds pass, my anxiety keeps on
Growing,
Growing,
And growing
Even though I have nothing to be nervous about
We've been practicing for weeks on end
Had tech runs and dress rehearsal
I don't understand why I'm so nervous
I can hear my heart thumping in my ears
Thump,
Thump,
Thump
And then it's time
To go backstage
This is it
This is opening night
It's is time to go upstairs
And be multiple parts:
A cheerleader and schoolgirl in the opening song,
Penelope Ann in *Telephone Hour*,
A part of a snaking train,
And a dancer
I have practiced for a really long time
Perfecting each part
To meet the standards of the other actors
After all, I am one of the youngest
The dance choreographer is proud of me
And the five other girls I'm dancing with
For how hard we've worked and how amazing the dance looks
For me, it was easy,
But for others, it may be hard
But this is it,
This is opening night

Planet X

By Jenny Ciccaglione, Gr. 7

Feelings of anticipation and fear of the unknown that we faced ahead
Spread throughout the ship, contagious and inescapable as
We prepared to land on this mysterious planet
Nobody dared to whisper a word as the doors opened
The planet's exquisite beauty surrounded us as we stood silently
In awe of the unbelievable sights that lay before us
Cotton candy-colored clouds were hidden away amid the silky indigo atmosphere,
Luminous constellations, dreamy nebulas, and indescribable galaxies scattered amongst the setting sky.
As we treaded in the lilac grass, aimlessly wandering on this unfamiliar planet,
We came across a magnificent meadow of pastel roses and blooming lilies,
Each petal littered with iridescent raindrops, the faint petrichor lingering from the evening's downpour,
Glimmering waterfalls flowing into an unknowable abyss.
The sickeningly sweet floral aroma overcame us like a tsunami.
I could nearly taste the rose petals.
As the incandescent moon rose and the lavender sky began to fade into a deep nothingness,
I lied amongst the soft cerulean grass and rested my tired eyes,
The quiet hum of dragonflies lulling me into a deep slumber.



Artwork by Joshua Zdanowicz, Gr. 7

One Night to Remember

By Janice Fineman, Gr. 8

Ten, nine, eight
Artificial light leaves the arena
Left in the darkness of the night
Seven, six, five
17,500 breaths halt
No one dares
No one can
Four, three, two
It's silent, yet deafening
One
It's all surreal
The number burns
into the back of my eyelids
Zero
I can't hear my heart beat
Yet it is the only thing i can hear
Then it comes
The beat of the drums
Replacing the beat of my heart
All the screams become one
Stuck in a whirlpool of emotions
Confusion, excitement
Not knowing how to act
What to do
Or what to say
Waiting
for this moment to come
for so long
Adrenaline, nervousness
Reading about them
Listening to their music
Watching them through
the screen of my phone and
Laptop
Star-struck as the music fills me
Blasting in my ears
Shaking my body
not hearing myself
singing along
thousands of voices
cloud my head
all in sync
all singing
the same words
thinking of
the unreal feeling
but I am
exhilarated



The End

By Megan Kennedy, Gr. 7

I stand there stiff as a board in my black dress
Staring at the spot he now lays
The cold wind brushes by me
I feel my hair spinning in the wind
The strong smell of fresh cut grass wafts into my nose
I watch as a group of beautiful daisies dance in the ice-
cold wind
They make me realize that I am now alone
All alone
Birds chirp
Bees buzz
Then silence falls all at once
Bam...
My knees hit the ground
A single tear rolls down my face
Not understanding how this happened
Trying to wake up from this awful dream
But this is not a dream
A bitter taste hits me
The memories flood back into my mind
Realizing that this is my fault
His end
My end
Because of me



*Photo Credits Julia Moran, Gr. 8
Taken with an iPhone 6*



"Twisted Forest"

By Juliana Zhang Gr. 7

I run through the forest.
The wind is whooshing through my ears,
the wind pushing back my hair
as if it's a kite.
The laughing wind is biting my face,
pushing me back.
I hear hard crunches between my feet
and the leaves.

Blurs of green and brown rush past my eyes.
I close them as it fades like day to night,
now a black,
to prevent the flood of tears
from spilling over.

Hard and stubby
branches are whipping my face,
tangling with my hair,
the twigs poking my face.
The trees are cackling, laughing,
as they creak with the wind,
watching me.

The smell of crisp dirt
and broken leaves
rushes at my nose.
The dust being kicked up by my feet
swirls around my ankles.
I taste metallic
As I bite down hard on my lip

The leaves flutter to the ground,
dancing with the show
Of a simple, lonely
girl
running through the forest.

My Shadow *By Maura Mitchell Gr. 7*

Its a dark place, but its has the most light
A place that is evil, but its intentions are bright
Once you turn left, they are always right
And most of them disappear in the night
Most of them, not all, don't come with a price
This one is free and falls at moonlight
O decrease over and your friend is gone
But they will come again once it is dawn
He's right behind you and sneaks on the ground
He follows you home and has no sound
A mirror image, unique, I'm one of a kind
I wont leave you ill follow behind
We are like twins you see, connect at the feet
You will always be in front and I'm always beat
I don't know where they go, or how long they stay
But ill tell you one thing they play when you play

Laughing *By Kaitlin Katirachi, Gr. 8*

It's your weakness
The joke
It cracks you up
Everyone can see pleasure
Sprawl across your face
You feel it
Tickling like a feather on your skin
Tears of happiness spring from your eyes
As freely as a clear river
Your mind floats happily
A million miles
Away
Joy overwhelms the pain
Growing in your stomach
With the determination of a roaring flame
You can't help
Joy
Running crazily loose
Around the room
Surrounded by enlightenment
The best feeling on Earth
Laughing

Welcome to New York *By Carly Wittenberg, Gr. 8*

Bright lights and city skylines
Christmas music and tree lightings
The lights are blinding
But I don't mind
The sounds are deafening
But I don't care
Buildings tower above me
And make me feel like an ant
The sculptures speak to me
And bring color to my eyes
There is so much culture
And so much personality
Gray and white pigeons cover the ground
Like snow sticking to pavement
Sirens and chatters of people fill the air
There are so many voices
And so many thoughts
New experiences are being made
Dreams are being followed
Welcome to New York

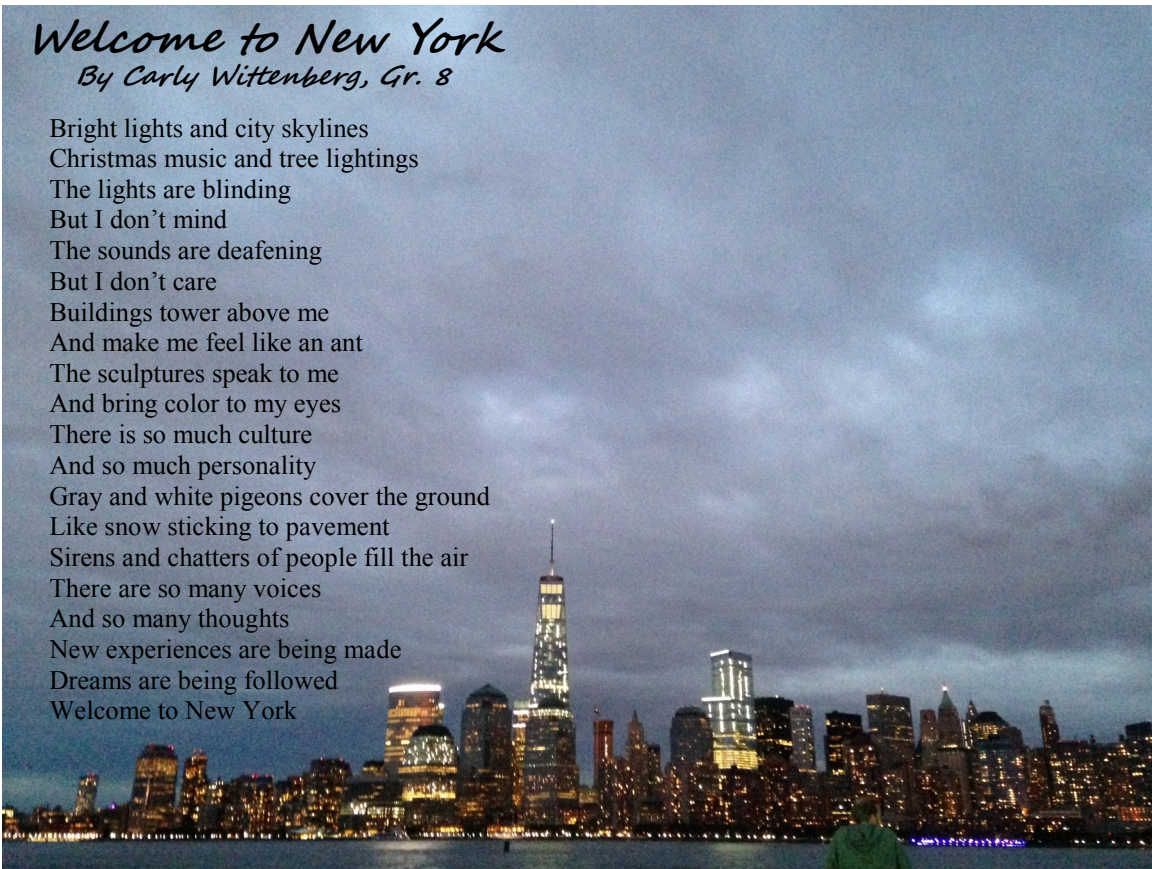


Photo Credit:
Emily Montanez,
Gr. 8
Taken with an
iPhone 5c

The Lake
By Olivia Church, Gr. 8

Feeling the warm summer air wrapping around my skin
Sun setting, shimmering on the sapphire expanse of water
Its reflection is a streak of golden fire
Feeling the sand tickling my toes and the breeze fluttering through the air

Looking out over the glass-like sheet of water
Hearing the sounds of crickets beginning their nightly routine
Water lapping against the docks and empty rowboats creaking in the wind
Smelling the distant scent of barbeque drifting in the air
A hawk soaring around in the sky before coming to rest in a faraway tree

The vague outline of the silvery moon making its first appearance
Mosquitoes lazily drifting about
I can't think of anywhere I'd rather be
The evening is...
Peaceful,

Tranquil,

Calming

And I am content



Photo Credits: Sadie Noble, Gr. 8
Taken with a Samsung Galaxy 4

The Simplest Move of Them All

by Gabriel Fuchs, Gr. 8

Tied up, Park Ridge vs. Emerson, soccer rivalry
One minute left
Bright lights flashing, the crowd goes silent
Coach Nichols breaks the silence yelling... “go, we have to score”
Flying down glittering turf
Foot to foot
White and black blur
Skipping along
Slow enough for the eye to catch
Fast enough to be untouchable
Rainbow – flicking the ball off the heel of the foot, and allowing it to soar behind the back,
above the head, and having it land back on the toe, just like an elegant rainbow
One defender gone
Maradona – tapping the ball wide with the left foot and then dragging it forward with the right,
all while gracefully completing a 360-degree turn protecting the ball
Performed almost as perfectly as the soccer star it was named after
Two gone
Elastico – faking to the right with the outside of the right foot, only to dart left using the inside of the same foot,
a smooth motion too quick for the defender to anticipate
One defender left
The meg – a calm tap at the ball which glides right between the defender’s two unsuspecting legs
The simplest move of them all
And then
Goal!

**Hit or
Miss?**

The Court

by Vito Gerbino, Gr. 7

I hear the “*squeak, squeak*” of the shoes
The “*Swish*” of the net as I take the shot
The ball hits the floor with a loud “*bounce*”
I dribble through my legs and down the court
I am in my court. My side, and I make the play
I am exuberant as I watch the clock run down
I pass to my teammate as I cut to the basket
He fakes the pass and swings it
The sound of the ball moving echoes through the air
My teammate passes to me and I take the shot
“*Whack*” I get fouled in the arm for two shots.
We are down one point
As I take the shot I breathe in the cold air as it brushes my hot cheeks.
The court is as silent as a church as I look at the hoop
I take the shot “*Clack, Clack*” as it hits the rim
It goes in and we are tied.
I bounce the ball and breathe in
Its deathly quiet
I take the shot

The Baseball Field

by Nicholas Barros, Gr. 7

Crunch, Crunch... the sound of cleats walking on the infield dirt
Ding, the sound of the ball hitting the bat
The ball hits the leather of the glove
Dust explodes out into the air
The smell of freshly raked clay filled the air
I put on my batting gloves
The soft leather rubbed against my skin
I tasted my lemony saliva from my Gatorade as I swooshed it around my
mouth
I spat on my gloves to make them stick to my bat grip
They were so sticky, it felt like I had put maple syrup on my gloves.
I stepped up to plate with the sun beating down on me
I got in the box and got ready for the pitch
The ball looked like a bullet coming out of the pitcher's hand
I swung as hard as I could at the ball
I hit the ball so high it looked like it kissed the clouds
I ran to first base
Then I glanced toward center field to see the ball laying in the grass beyond
the fence
It was a home run
I huge smile took over my face as I ran around the bases
My teammates were gathered around home plate waiting to congratulate me
I stepped on home plate and got my bat
The baseball diamond is my home and baseball is my passion



*Photo Credit: Grace Madden, Gr. 8
Photo taken with an iPhone 6
At West Ridge Elementary*

Down the Shore
By Kira Mitchell, Gr. 8

Pulling into the rocky driveway
Excitement rushes through me
Leaving all my worries behind
The air smells different, fresher
Hopping out of the car, rocks hurting my feet
But I don't care

Inside, I don't even unpack
Hearing sounds of the waves lapping up on the tan sand across the street
My face lights up thinking of this like a kid getting a new toy
Running out the house to paradise as my mom shouts out
"Don't forget to put on sunscreen!"
But I don't listen
I'm lost in my own world

The warm soft sand creeps up through the toes as I walk
It is perfectly clean
Sand dunes built up so high
But I can still gaze over them to see the ocean

Throwing myself into the cold water
Here in Lavallette, it feels like home
Hours pass but it feels like seconds
I can't see my feet, the water isn't very clear

I never want to leave

The bright sun begins to set, and I figure it's time to go
Entering the house, I feel tired
Everyone is gazing at me
Looking down to see what's wrong I realize
I was illuminated
Bright red.

Guess I should have listened to my mom.

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The Beach

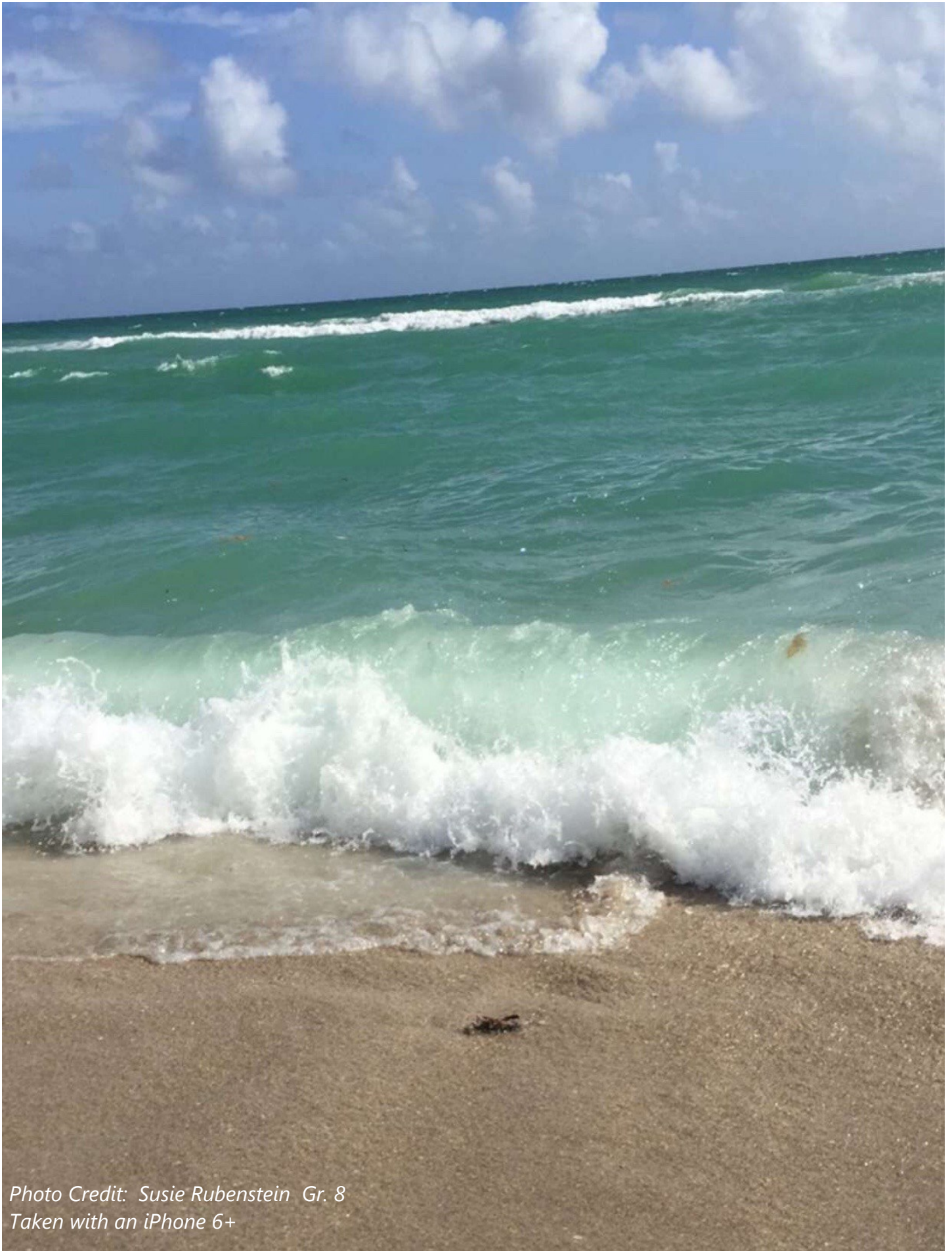
By Kelsey Urmanowicz, Gr. 7

Splash... as the waves hit the already wet sand
Woooh... as the wind blew past
Screams of Sea gulls were everywhere
The smell of salt water hits my nose
The hot sun was beating on my back
Wet salt water drips down my neck
Hot sand beneath my feet
Sandcastles are being built
The refreshing water wraps around me
I dive into the wave
The ringing of the ice cream truck fills the air
The kids hop out of their chairs
Running... to get on line
So many choices they can't decide
As the kids eat their ice cream it becomes slight
It's peaceful
It's relaxing
It's beautiful
It is the beach.

Summer

By Lauren Kim, Gr. 7

Crash... the waves tumble onto the shore
The brisk wind swirls and wraps around my head like a scarf
The distinctive yet indescribable scent tingles my nose
Gritty sand coats my feet in a never-ending cycle as I walk
The taste of the salt makes my mouth beg for water
Birds cry in the distance
The surroundings comfort my agitated mind
It is the most stunning place I have ever seen
I feel relaxed
I feel free
This is summer



*Photo Credit: Susie Rubenstein Gr. 8
Taken with an iPhone 6+*

Hamilton Lyrics

In Musical Theatre class, students were introduced to lyrics from the hit musical *Hamilton*. Students were inspired to create their own “My Shot” lyrics emulating the author’s style.

Lyrics from Lin-Manual Miranda**

“My Shot”

I am not throwing away my shot

I am not throwing away my shot

Hey yo, I'm just like my country

I'm young, scrappy and hungry
And I'm not throwing away my shot

I'm 'a get a scholarship to King's College

I prob'ly shouldn't brag, but I amaze and astonish
The problem is I got a lot of brains but no polish

I gotta holler just to be heard
With every word, I drop knowledge

I'm a diamond in the rough, a shiny piece of coal

Tryin' to reach my goal. My power of speech, unimpeach-
able

Only nineteen but my mind is older
These New York City streets get colder, I shoulder
Ev'ry burden, ev'ry disadvantage

I have learned to manage,
I walk these streets famished
The plan is to fan this spark into a flame
But it's getting dark, so let me spell out the name

I am the
A-L-E-X-A-N-DE-R we are meant to be

Julia Moran
Grade 8
“My Game”

I am not giving up my game
I am not giving up my game
Hey yo, I'm just like my aim
Always staying within the frame
And I'm not giving up my game

I'ma get a scholarship to Notre Dame
I probly shouldn't brag, I astonish and amaze
Going down the court, as always, I blaze
I gotta go 'round my opponent to score
Being this good can be a bore

I'm a diamond in the rough, reaching for my goal
Tryin' to reach my goal, fulfilling my big role
Only 14 but my mind is older
These PR streets get colder, I shoulder
Ev'ry foul, evry injury

I have learned to play the game
I run these courts ecstatic
The plan is to win the championship
You need to remember me, I'll spell out my name
I am the J-U-L-I-A, think of my legacy...

****Lin-Manuel Miranda** is an American composer, lyricist, librettist, rapper, and actor, best known for creating and starring in the Broadway musicals *In the Heights* and *Hamilton*.

Miranda is currently performing on Broadway in the lead role of Alexander Hamilton in *Hamilton*, a new musical for which he wrote the book, music and lyrics.

- Wikipedia

*Photo Credit: Sophia Ardizone, Gr. 8
Taken with a Nikon Camera*

Susie Rubenstein
Grade 8
“My Pastability”

I am not throwing away my pastability
I am not throwing away my pastability
Hey yo, life is costly
I’m young, scrappy, and happy
And I’m not throwing away my pastability

I’m a get a scholarship to Johnson and Whales
I prob’ly shouldn’t brag, but I can cook up a storm
The problem is I think about cooking but not work
I gotta taste to see
With every meal, I fill stomachs

I’m an apple in the orchard, the small one
Tryin’ to reach my goal, My power of cooking, tasteful
Only 14 and I cook like a pro
These kitchens are hot, I cook
Ev’ry meal, ev’ry kitchen

I have learned to cook
I enter the kitchen hungry
I plan the meal and start the fire
But I’m getting full, so let me spell out the name
I am the
S-U-S-I-E, we are meant to be

Sophia Ardizone
Grade 8
“My Freedom”

I am not giving up my freedom
I am not throwing away my chance
Hey yo, I’m me, not you
I’m fierce, full of fighting spirit
I am not losing my mind

Going to school would be cool
But I want out of this place
It feels like I’m stuck and I can’t get out
Friend and enemies, secrets and lies
I want to be invisible

I have things to say
Don’t get in my way
Only 14, but my heart is made out of gold
I want to be heard
I have things to say
Don’t get in my way

I am a survivor
I’m strong and I’m smart
I want life to start
I am
S-O-P-H-I-A, remember the name!

Jack Disanza
Grade 7
“My Shot”

Not gonna blow my shot
Not gonna blow my shot
Just like the game
Gonna rise to the top of fame
Not gonna blow my shot

Going to astonish not abolish
I got the brains
And the bad things in life are just a bunch of stains
So I’m gonna take this chance
Never gonna prance

Gonna go to college
So you better acknowledge
That I’m going to the top
So you have to reserve my spot
Not to brag
But it is how I am

I’m gonna be successful
No fear of being stressful
It’s the end of the song
So let me get this straight
I’m gonna be successful no mater what they say!
I am the J-A-C-K!

Gianna Whritenour
Grade 7
“My Moment”

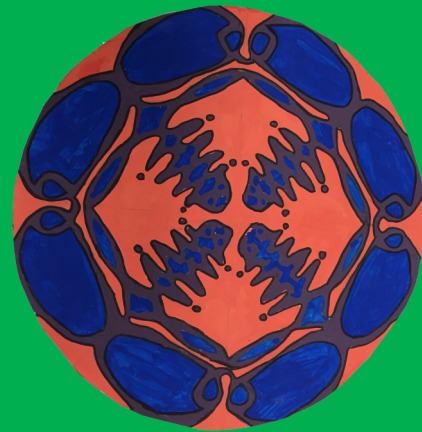
I’m not throwing away my moment
Hey yo, I’m not who you think I am
I’m young, sweet, and cooler than you
And this is my moment to be the best
I’m a get a scholarship to gymnastics university

I probably shouldn’t brag but I can flip
The problem is I can flip but can’t whip
I gotta drip with sweat to know I’m trying
With every step, I feel like flying
I’m a bird flipping in the sky

With my mind a blur, I glide off the ground...
With a double back sommy and the crowd goes wild.
Only 13, and I’m not a child
I style with my flaws, cuz you know my smile
With every claw I’m like a cat

But can’t you see this is so me,
I walk tall because I’m gonna be queen
My plan is to be seen, because I’m a teen
But it’s getting fresh cuz I’m a jumping bean
I am the G-I-A-N-N-A
I’m legit, can’t you see, I’m 13!

MANDALA ART GRADE 8



*Artwork Credits: Top to bottom,
left to right.*

John Penska, Gr. 8

Olivia Neilan, Gr. 8

Kaitlin Katirachi, Gr. 8

Janice Fineman, Gr. 8

BAD HAIR DAY GRADE 7



Artwork Credits: Top to bottom, left to right.:

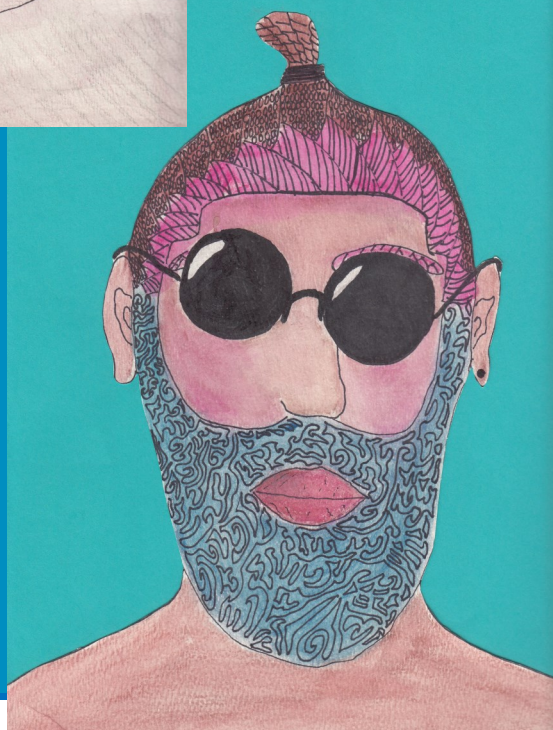
Liam Nocella, Gr. 7

Charlotte Nunberg, Gr. 7

Rachel Park, Gr. 7

Carly Unger, Gr. 7

Daniel Kim, Gr. 7



STAINED GLASS ART GRADE 7



*Stained Glass Art-work Credits:
(Top to bottom, left to right)*

- Leonel Ortega*
- Aidan Giambelluca*
- Carly Unger*
- Manali Sanyal*
- Rachel Park*
- Gianna DiGiacomo*
- Kyle Farrington*

PINWHEEL ART GRADE 8



*Pinwheel Art-work Credits:
(Top to bottom, left to right)*

Jimmy Kennedy

John Penska

Gabrielle Martin

Kyle Gallahue

Julia Moran

Lilly LaRocca



Lilly LaRocca

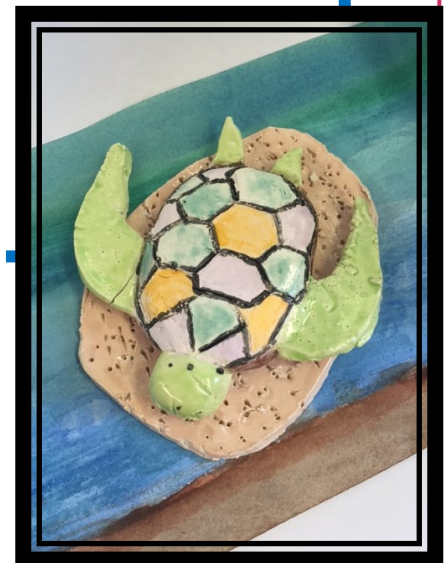


culpting an animal is a great way to learn the basics of sculpture, which involves preparing the clay, creating the form, adding texture, and hollowing out the figure. Students in Exploratory Art 8 classes chose an animal inspired by a photograph. The image serves as a reference for accurately replicating the shape and color. The entire process takes about two weeks—one week for sculpting and one week for glazing. After the pieces are finished and become “bone dry”, they are fired in the kiln. The pieces are removed, allowed to cool, and then glazed. Glaze is a form of liquid glass that is applied, like paint, to the surface of the animals. Glazes come in a variety of colors and textures which the students have chosen for their individual animals.



Lauren Nicolich

- Taline Gebhardt , Art Teacher



Julia Moran



Kyle Gallahue

Carly Wittenberg



Grace Madden



Janice Fineman



Allie McNamara

**CERAMICS
& CLAY
GR.8**



Alexis von der Lieth



Olivia Church

CUBISM PORTRAITS GRADE 8



Ethan Giacomelli, Gr. 8



Lindsay Davis, Gr. 8



Spencer Ghiraldini, Gr. 8



Ryan Buckner, Gr. 8

PHOTOGRAPHY

Photo Credit: Sadie Noble, Gr. 8
Take with a Samsung Galaxy 4



Photo Credit: Sadie Noble, Gr. 8
Take with a Samsung Galaxy 4



Photo Credit: Kailey DeGeorge, Gr. 8
Take with an iPhone 5c



Photo Credit: Sadie Noble, Gr. 8
Take with a Samsung Galaxy 4

Life is like...

“...a Car Ride”

Hayden Bloch, Gr. 7

Life is like a car ride. Life can change unexpectedly the one moment you are going up hill having a good day, then you go downhill... when you get a call saying your mom is in the hospital. You could be in the fast lane, moving a mile a second, then all of a sudden traffic, a blockage in your life. Someone you know or love passes away and it takes you a while to get used to it just like how traffic takes time and then eventually it fades. Life can be a joyful, clear stretch of road for miles on a sunny day.

“...a Rock Wall”

Ryan Borgersen, Gr. 7

When you are first born into this world you are confused. You know that you were brought here to make an impact on others as well as yourself. You know that you have to work your way up from no one to someone. And that you can only do it in a lifetime. Yes at some stages in life you can be doing very well while other times you are doing terrible and struggling. You need to work your hardest to get to the top and once you do that you will set a new goal and challenge yourself again to see if you can become the person that you want to be.



“...a Jigsaw Puzzle”
Athanasios Peppard, Gr. 7

Life is a jigsaw puzzle. You never know what piece goes where at once. You don't have the picture on the front of the box to know what it's supposed to look like. You have to go step by step to solve. You may also be missing pieces, which you may have to searching for. You also break a few, so you will have to fix them. When the puzzle is over, you will exhausted from all that work. And then you will very happy and ready to go do another puzzle, and the process will repeat again, just some parts will be different.

“...an Airplane”
Eli Engler, Gr. 7

Life is an airplane flight. Once the plane leaves the runway, there is no going back. In life, there are no pauses because no matter what, you just have to keep going. As a child, you are on the runway. You are getting used to your surroundings, safety procedures, and getting to know the people around you. Once you become a teenager, your airplane is ascending. All of a sudden, you are thrown out of your comfort zone into a whole new experience. You face new adversities and challenges, but you always get through with it. After the ascent comes the turbulence. Turbulence is like going to college. It gives you the tools to deal with the challenges of becoming an adult. Your first job offer brings a stretch of steady flight. Finally, the last stage of an airplane flight is the descent, your retirement. When you land safely, you can only be thankful that your plane didn't crash and look back at the view.

“...Art”
Jack Long, Gr. 7

Life is like art. Sometimes you follow the instructions. Sometimes in life you can't always be the leader, you have to follow the instructions and trust other people in what they are doing or saying. Or sometimes you can be creative and do things on your own. Most of the time in life you will have to make some easy and some hard decisions just like deciding where you should draw that next line on your paper. You also have to take steps in your drawing. If you rush it won't be as good just like if you rush through life you won't have a chance to enjoy it.

What **Standing**

Out Means to me...

There is nothing wrong with being different than everybody else. When you are different than anybody else, you can't be blamed for copying someone.

- Jordan Spagnola, Gr.7

Standing out means to be different from other people. It's not easy to stand out because everyone thinks it's better to hide your feelings. It's really not because why hide yourself when you have the chance to be yourself and show people who you really are?

- Caitlin Gallahue, Gr.7

"It wouldn't bother me being a blue ornament, and the others all being red."

- Jordan Spagnola, Gr.7



Graphic design by
Jordan Spagnola, Gr.7

To stand out, you need to just be yourself and don't care about what other people think about you. You are your own person and you shouldn't let other people change that. I realized I should stand out when I knew how clever I became and how quickly I could make jokes

-Ryan Spies, Gr.7

A time when I stood out was one day in class when we had a hard problem in math and nobody knew the problem. The only one who knew the problem was me. I just wanted to fit in with everyone else and not be the brains.

After that day I realized that, was the time that I should have stood out among all the rest of the kids. I knew from that day on that if there is something that I know and others don't it is my time to stand out.

- Brendan Hughes, Gr. 7

My team walked off the field, not celebrating the recent victory, but just talking about what we were going to do tomorrow. It was a great victory, and I was proud. I looked around, and lifted my helmet in triumph. My friends looked at me at first, questioning me. They finally smiled and realized we were victorious. I needed to stand out in order to show my team that we had a shot at the title, and after I did so they were confident that we would win. I helped my team by doing something so simple.

- Nicholas Gurski, Gr. 7

A time I realized I was meant to stand out was when I was in a baseball game I stepped up to the plate, filled with nervousness

I was against the best pitcher, and he threw very fast

It was the last inning, and we were down by two

There were two men on base; a hit could tie the game

I realized that this at-bat was meant for me to do something big

I swung the bat at the pitch that blazed by

To my surprise, I hit it very well, right up the middle of the field

The man on second was coming home

The throw could have beat him, but he was *just* safe

The game was now tied, and I was on second base

I jumped with joy as realized

I shined in the moment that was meant for me!

- Daniel Flaherty, Gr. 7

SIX WORD MEMOIRS



CAPTURING BEGINNING SKY AMONG CRASHING WAVES.

-PHOTO & MEMOIR BY SIERRA HALSBAND

EIGHTH GRADE ENGLISH STUDENTS HAD TO COMPOSE A MEANINGFUL MEMOIR WITH THE CHALLENGE OF ONLY USING 6 WORDS AND TELLING A STORY WITHIN IT.



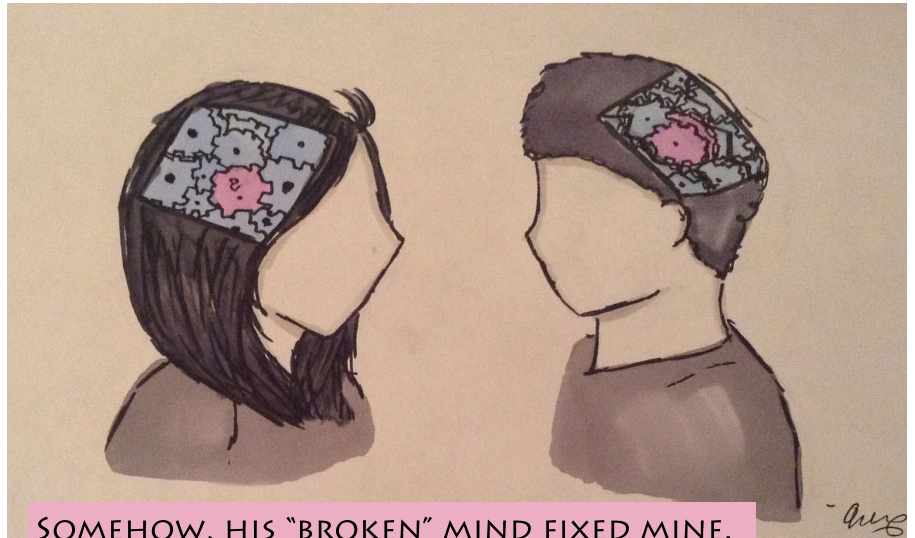
ICY WATERS, CAPTIVATING VIEWS, WONDERFUL MEMORIES.

- PHOTO DIRECTED & MEMOIR BY GRACE MADDEN



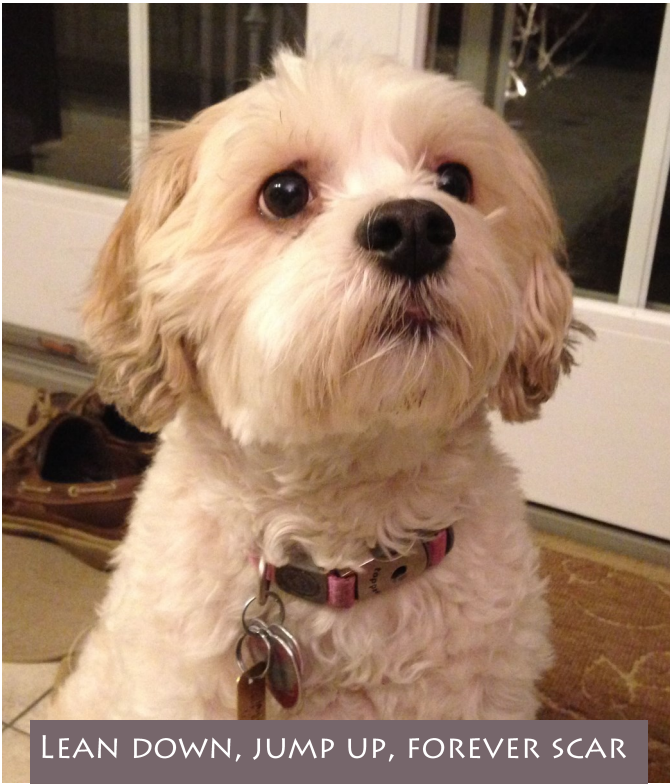
ONE CAKE, DANCING, 71 YEARS ALIKE

-PHOTO & MEMOIR BY JANICE FINEMAN



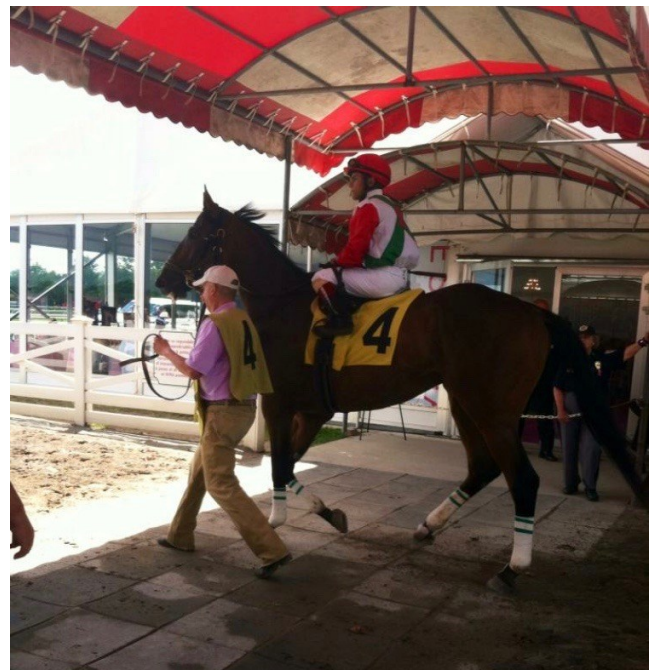
SOMEHOW, HIS "BROKEN" MIND FIXED MINE.

- DRAWING & MEMOIR BY ANN GRIFFITH
DRAWN WITH COPIC MARKERS



LEAN DOWN, JUMP UP, FOREVER SCAR

-PHOTO & MEMOIR EMILY MONTANEZ



GRANDFATHER'S DARK HORSE, HOMESTRETCH TO FINISH.

-PHOTO & MEMOIR BY
GABRIELLE MARTIN

Stepping Stones Staff

Sonya Ardizone is an 8th grader who was drawn to Stepping Stones because she has a passion for photography and wants to share her love of it. She hopes people enjoy the photos she has contributed.

Kailey DeGeorge is an 8th grade student who loves drawing, writing, and all things creative. Those interests are what motivated her to join Stepping Stones. She hopes her creativity inspires others.

Ann Griffith is an 8th grade student with a large vocabulary, a passion for drawing people and has a way of making words deep and poetic. She decided to join Stepping Stones for the opportunity to get her work seen by the public in hopes that others will relate to her art and to have a chance to see others' works.

Lilly LaRocca is an 8th grader who enjoys drawing and photography. Her decision to join Stepping Stones was fueled by her interest in submitting art, photos, and creative writing pieces. She hopes that her part in Stepping Stones encourages others to submit their creative pieces.

Grace Madden is an 8th grader who enjoys writing, drawing, and photography. She joined Stepping Stones not only to share her work, but also to share others' work.

Emily Montanez is an 8th grader. The reason that she was drawn to Stepping Stones was her love and passion for writing. She hopes that it will inspire others to write. She would love to write a book one day. For now, she has decided to stick to poetry and short stories. She hopes that everyone will enjoy Stepping Stones.

Sadie Noble is an 8th grade student who enjoys creative writing and photography. She decided to join Stepping Stones because she was interested in editing and writing for the magazine. She hopes her work inspires the creativity in others.

Caren Rodriguez is an 8th grade student at Park Ridge High School. Caren has a passion for photography. Caren wants to become a professional photographer when she grows up or something similar to photography.

Alicia Xelhua Martinez is an 8th grade student who has a passion for art and creating Henna designs. She decided to join Stepping Stones because she had a desire to share her artwork.



Pictured from top to bottom, left to right: Grace Madden, Sadie Noble, Kailey DeGeorge, Emily Montanez, Ann Griffith, Caren Rodriguez, Not Pictured: Sophia Ardizone, Lilly La Rocca, Alicia Xelhua

Note From the Advisors:

We would like to give a special thanks to all the students who helped in the production of the *Stepping Stones* Literary Magazine and the students whose work was selected to be published. At the beginning of the school year, all 7th and 8th graders were offered the opportunity of joining the staff of *Stepping Stones*. We greatly appreciate these students for volunteering their time by attending meetings and editing/composing different art forms for this creative publication. We would also like to thank the teachers of Park Ridge Middle School for encouraging these original productions of art in their classroom. Without your help and support, our magazine would not be possible.

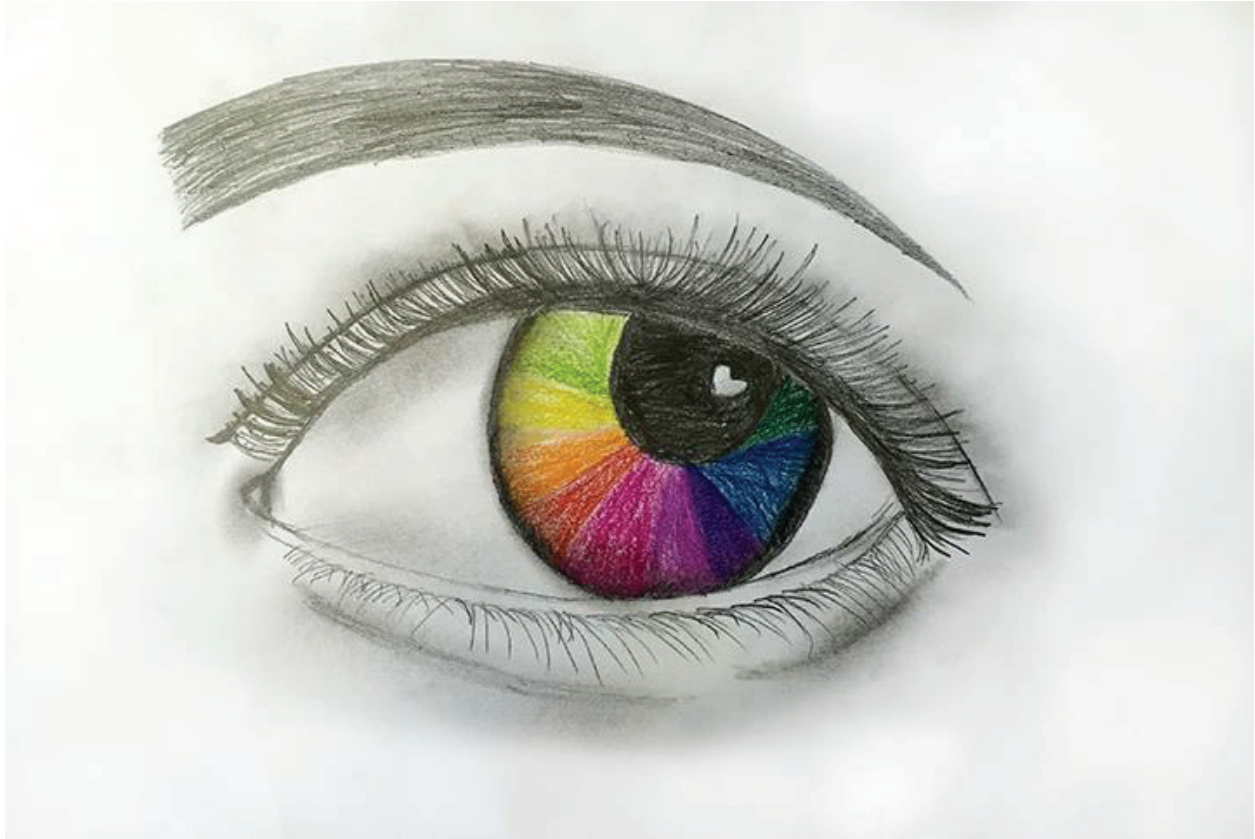
Mrs. Borsinger & Mrs. McCann

In a world filled with words, sentences, meanings and explanations, speaking or defining something with brevity is an almost impossible task, but the amount of power one word can hold is
EXTRODINARY!

Our staff asked , “What one word defines you best?”



Created by Grace Madden through
Word Tagul Clouds
<https://tagul.com/login?next=/my-clouds>



*Drawing by Alicia Xehlua, Gr. 8
Drawn with lead pencil and colored pencils*

Our eyes, our eyes.
Windows to the soul, the only things that don't lie.
They show us the beauty of the world;
the originality of the ones around us;
all of the beautiful things we can accomplish.
All of these can astound us.
—Ann Griffith, Gr. 8