

DREHER HIGH SCHOOL

# WHISPER

LITERARY & ARTS MAGAZINE



**2024-  
2025**

**MAKING  
OUR  
MARKS**

# WHISPER

## Making Our Marks

***Making our marks* on the world means leaving a piece of ourselves behind— something that stands out and makes a difference.**

**For some, it's through art, where colors and shapes express feelings that words simply cannot. A painting or sculpture can tell a story, spark emotions, and inspire others to see the world in a new way.**

**When we create art, we share our unique perspective, allowing others to connect with our experiences and ideas.**

**In literature, *making our marks* can be found in the lines of a poem or prose. The words we write have the power to change thoughts and ignite passions. When we craft stories, we weave together dreams and realities, inviting readers to explore new worlds or reflect on their own. Whether it's a short story, an essay, or a heartfelt poem, our words can resonate deeply, influencing and encouraging others.**

**Ultimately, *making our marks* is about being true to ourselves and using our talents to create something that lasts— something that others can feel and remember.**

## Our Policy

**The Dreher High School Literary and Arts Magazine is a collection of literature and art submissions created by students at Dreher High School.**

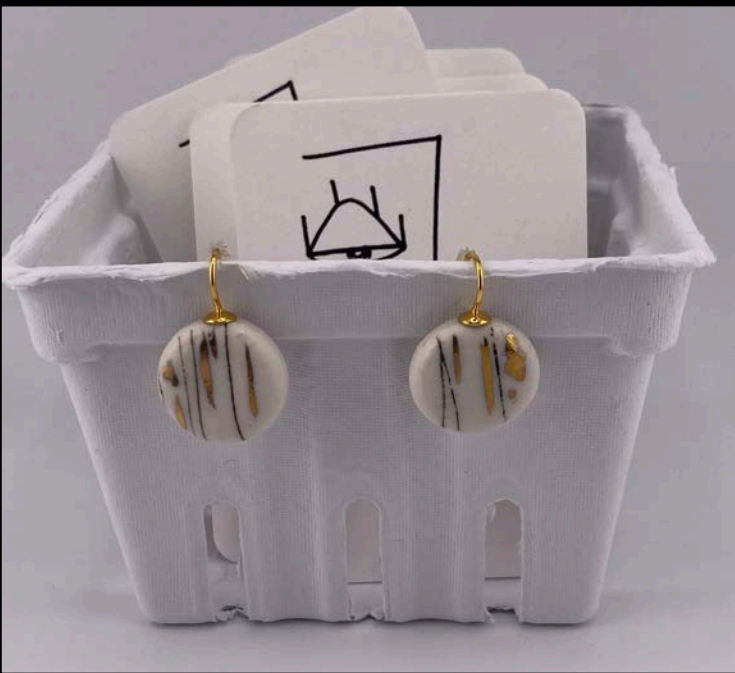
**The magazine editing team reserves the right to edit manuscripts for clarity, grammar, spelling, and content. All works submitted are original student works reviewed, selected, and edited by the magazine student editing team.**

**This literary magazine is a Dreher student creation.**

# DEDICATION



The 2024-2025 Whisper is dedicated to *Katie Pfrommer*, a current Dreher High School Art teacher. As the 2023-2024 Teacher of the Year, she has given so much to our community during her past 7 years of teaching at Dreher.



This magazine aims to embody the voice, style, and spirit of Dreher students. Recognizing the sensitive nature of personal experiences, some names have been altered or designated as 'anonymous' at the authors' request to ensure privacy and respect.

All work is student submitted.

Back Cover Art by Sophia Cimino, Quentin Hilley, London Jones, Aria Le, Noah Omura, Trina Sapphire, Taylor Smith, and Alyx Wodecki.



## *Table of Contents*

6.....	Artwork by Bella Paolino, Anne Varner, Gracie Robertson, & Ava Rodriguez
7.....	Be Yourself by A. Graeme
8.....	Who am I? by Tyrone Jeffcoat Artwork by Natalie Montague
9.....	In a Mirror by Kelly Green Standing my Ground by Andre' Smith Artwork by De'Asia Williams
10.....	Make Your Mark by Jeff King
11.....	Enounters by Anonymous
12.....	Clyde the Dragon by Anna Washington Artwork by Peyton Mooney
13.....	Facing my Nerves by Helen Jennings Artwork by Layla Struther
14.....	Cover Artwork by Peyton Mooney
15.....	Music by Heaton Dudick, Sydney Sanderson, & Emily Moore
16.....	Artwork by Gracie Robertson
17.....	We are Sisters by Chelsea Brown, Ar'Trice Green, Lucy Kisner-Dressen, & Madeline Geddes Always my Brother by Heaton Dudick
18.....	Artwork by Lilly Strickland Autumn's Grace by Karina Little Autumn's Breath by Josh Pool
19.....	Fall Retreat by Jada Evans
20-23.....	The Body at the Bottom of Bengal Bay by Eason Graham Photography by Caden Hayes, Sabina Stonestreet, Nova Wilmot, & Natalie Montague
24.....	Assorted Artwork by Rylin Hubbard
25.....	Artwork by Alana Porter, Abeni Bostick, Kenadie Peay, & Diana Svicarovich Christmas Glows by Amoni Berry



26.....	Artwork by Carolyn Coffee
27.....	The House by Nevaeh Peltzer
28-29.....	Beyond my Brother by Olivia Berzins
	Artwork by Carolyn Coffee, Kamdyn Cushman, Alana Porter, & Caden Hayes
30.....	Artwork by Sophie Martin
31.....	Coffee by Sabina Stonestreet
32.....	Artwork by Peyton Mooney
33.....	The Final Trial by Heaton Dudick
34.....	Assorted Artwork by Gracie Robinson
35.....	Why did you let me go? by Rubi Bouknight
36.....	Artwork by Beena Abdulssallam
37.....	AI, the Future? by Sarah Bryer
38.....	Artwork by Landon Moras & Hailey Davis
	Tik Tok by Addison Andrews, Elle Lockard, & Anna Price McCormick
	Don't Take My Phone by Beth Sims
39.....	Night Terrors by Bayron Serrano-Martinez
	Artwork by Vince Kolomoets
40-41.....	Haiku Corner by Various Poets
42-43.....	Poems by Caleb Jones and Hope Lamey
44.....	Artwork by Nova Wilmot
45.....	Poems by Emily Moore, Alora McAteer, & Sophie Clemente
46.....	Artwork by Sienna Buck & Quentin Hilley
47.....	Artwork by Caroline Winchester, Sophie Martin, & Mia Williams
48.....	Artwork by Ruby Merland, Bella Paolino, & Layla Strother
49.....	Artwork by Jenna Livingston, Kenna McLean, Bella Rosenfeld, & Caroline Winchester



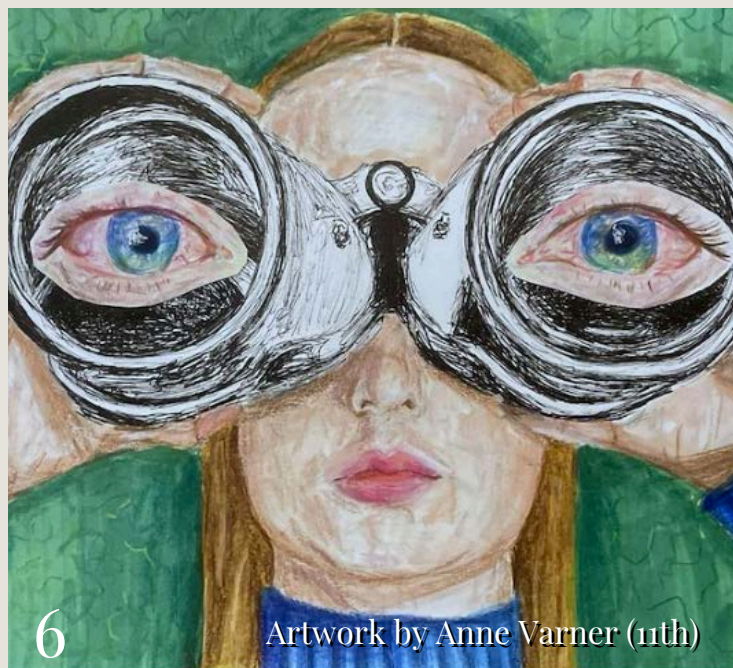
Artwork by Gracie Robertson (11th)



Artwork by Bella Paolino (12th)



Artwork by Ava Rodriguez(12th)



Artwork by Anne Varner (11th)



# *Being You*

By: Anonymous (12th)

The weight of expectation is heavier than anyone ever warns you. It starts small—like the clothes you're told to wear, the name you're forced to answer to, the color of your bedroom as a kid, the polite smiles you're expected to give. Then, it grows. Your parents map out your identity before you've even had the chance to discover it, the government tells you who you are before you've figured it out for yourself and society shoves you into a mold that you never agreed to.

One that you never asked for.

One that you'll never live up to.

But what if you don't fit into that mold? What if you'll never meet that expectation? What if the clothes they hand you suffocate you, and the name they call you feels like a cage, and the life they expect you to live isn't yours? And who you are isn't what you are?

It starts as a quiet rebellion. A whispered name in the mirror, one that finally feels right.

A set of clothes that makes you feel like yourself. A thought, dangerous and exhilarating:

What if I just said no? What if I was just who I wanted to be? What if I was just me.....

And then you try it.

And they laugh. My God do they laugh. They call it a phase- a tantrum. They tell you that one day you'll understand, one day you'll see that they were right all along. Like you don't know yourself better than them. Like at some moment you'll just magically give in, and you'll shrink back to fit their expectations, and you'll disappear into what they've always wanted.

So you push back harder. You raise your voice. You wear what feels right, say the name that belongs to you, stand firm even when they tell you not to. You refuse to be bent, reshaped, or silenced. And they hate it. Because nothing terrifies those in power more than a person who knows themselves and refuses to be controlled.

But the truth is, it's terrifying for you too. To stand alone. To fight against a tide that's been pushing people into line for generations.

It's easier to comply, to nod, to fake it.

But then, what's left of you?

Being yourself in a world that demands conformity is an act of rebellion. It's not just about fighting for the sake of it—it's survival. And not everyone will understand. Some will turn away, some will fight you, some will never forgive you for choosing your own path.

But the ones who matter? They'll see you. They'll find you. They'll help you.

And together, you'll carve out a space where you don't have to be anything but yourself.

Because being you is who you are meant to be.

And that? That's called freedom.



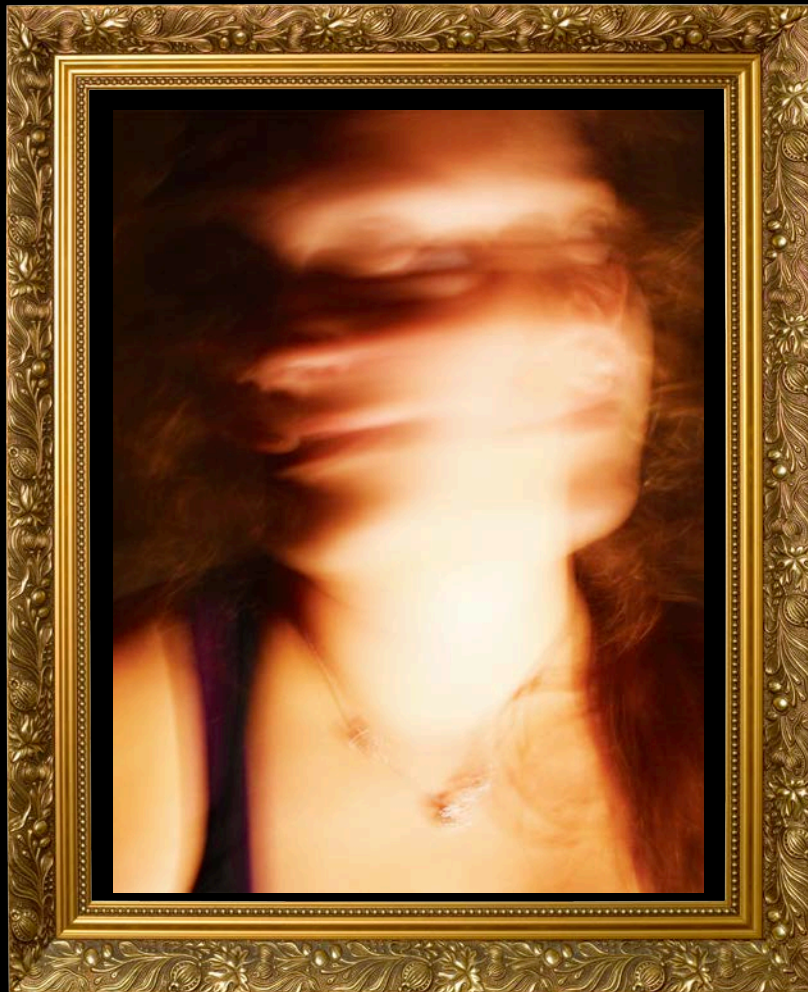
## *Who am I?*

By: Tyrone Jeffcoat (10th)

I am the dreamer, the voice in the night,  
A shadow of hope, reaching for light.  
With roots deep in struggle, I rise and I sway,  
In the rhythm of life, I dance and I play.

I'm the echo of laughter, from centuries of pain,  
A tapestry woven in sunshine and rain.  
So who am I, you ask? I am more than I seem,  
A story of courage, my ancestor's dream.

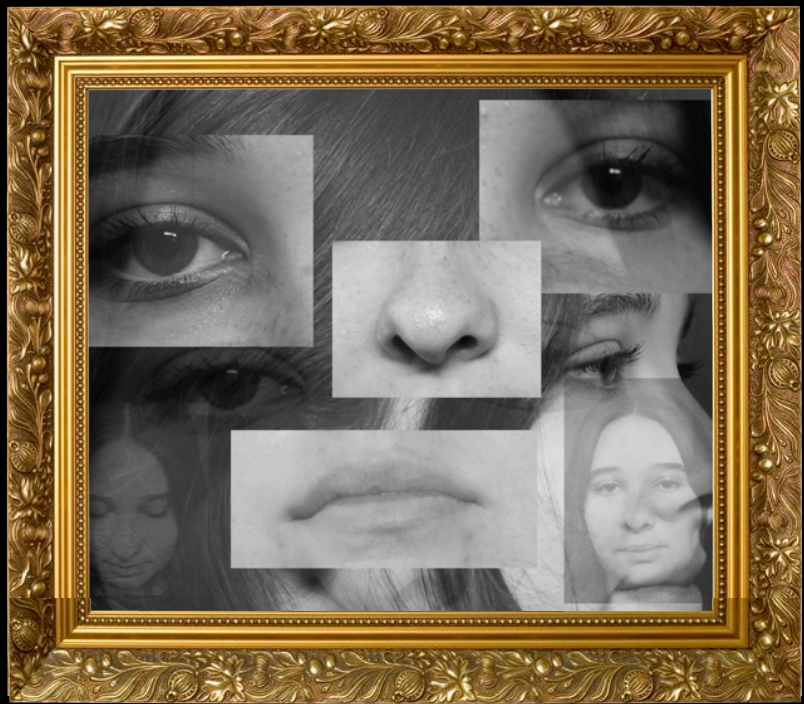
Faces of Emily By: Natalie Montague (11th)



## *In a Mirror*

By: Kelly Green (11th)

When I look,  
What do I see?  
In a mirror-  
Not cheerfully.  
“You’re so pretty!”  
My mother lies,  
The tears swell up,  
Behind my eyes.  
I know I try  
To be like them,  
Buy the fashion,  
Chase the men.  
Why do I care  
About their looks?  
Why has this jealousy  
Got me shook?  
I am more,  
I am myself.  
Not from power,  
Nor from wealth.  
My looks arn’t what  
I care about,  
But I am me,  
Without a doubt.  
Yet when I look,  
What do I see?  
In a mirror,  
Painfully.



Artwork By: De'Asia Williams (12)

## *Standing my Ground (Song Lyrics)*

By: Andre' Smith (9th)

### [Verse 1]

(Bm) I've walked this road, I've walked it alone,  
(A) Tried to fit in, but it don't feel like home.  
(Gmaj7) They begged me to change, but I'm the same,  
(D/F#) I'll stand my ground, I'll play my game.

### [Pre-Chorus]

(Bm) In a world of noise, I've found my voice,  
(A) Not afraid to stand, not afraid to rejoice.  
(Gmaj7) I won't hide, I won't pretend,  
(D/F#) I'll be me until the end.

### [Chorus]

(F#m7) I'll be me when no one's around,  
(Bm7) In my own skin, I'll stand my ground.  
(E7) I'll shine when the lights fade out,  
(Amaj7) Even when no one else believes it now.

### [Bridge]

(Em7) And if I'm the only one who sees,  
(A) I'll hold my heart and set it free.  
(Cadd9) I'll dance alone if that's my way,  
(D/F#) But I'll be me, come what may.

### [Outro]

(Bm) So I'll be me, no fear, with sight,  
(A) I'll stand tall and I'll keep the fight.  
(Gmaj7) When nobody else can see the light,  
(D/F#) I'll be me, and I'll be alright.  
(D/F#) And God I hope that I am (G) right.

# Make Your Mark

By: Jeff King (10th)

In blue-hued rooms  
where learning swells,  
A symphony of dreams takes flight;  
To be yourself, a tale that tells,  
In every heartbeat- pure delight.

Embrace the quirks that set you free,  
Each flaw a brushstroke on your soul;  
When true, your light will boldly be,  
And through your art,  
you find your role.

As you traverse unwritten scenes,  
Let your spirit go forth and shine;  
Each step you take, a chance to glean,  
Your story is only yours to find.

Though being you may seem a fright,  
In this grand journey, trust your arc;  
For deep within, your heart ignites,  
And through your life,  
you *make your mark*.





# The Encounters

By: Anonymous

I met myself on a Monday  
Too busy to percieve much more than what outlaid.  
I met myself on a Tuesday  
But she looked drastically different than yesterday.  
I met myself on a Wednesday  
She looked far too empty.  
I met myself on a Thursday  
But she looked too surly.  
I met myself on a Friday  
Now she looked kindly.  
I met myself on a Saturday  
But she looked panicky.  
I met myself on a Sunday  
No matter when we met,  
She was never satisfactory.

# Clyde the Dragon

By: Anna Washington (10th)

There once was a dragon named Clyde,  
Who was sweet and caring inside.  
He hated to roar,  
And loved to explore,  
But always forgot where to glide.

One day, a young knight named Dave,  
Tried to be bold and swore to be brave.  
He shouted, "Lets fight!"  
But Clyde took flight,  
And poor Dave got lost in a cave.

So our dragon went home, and Dave too,  
And he soared in the skies, wild and blue.  
But one day he fell,  
And with a thunderous yell,  
Our Clyde was dead (it's all true.)

# *Facing My Nerves*

by: Helen Jennings (10th)

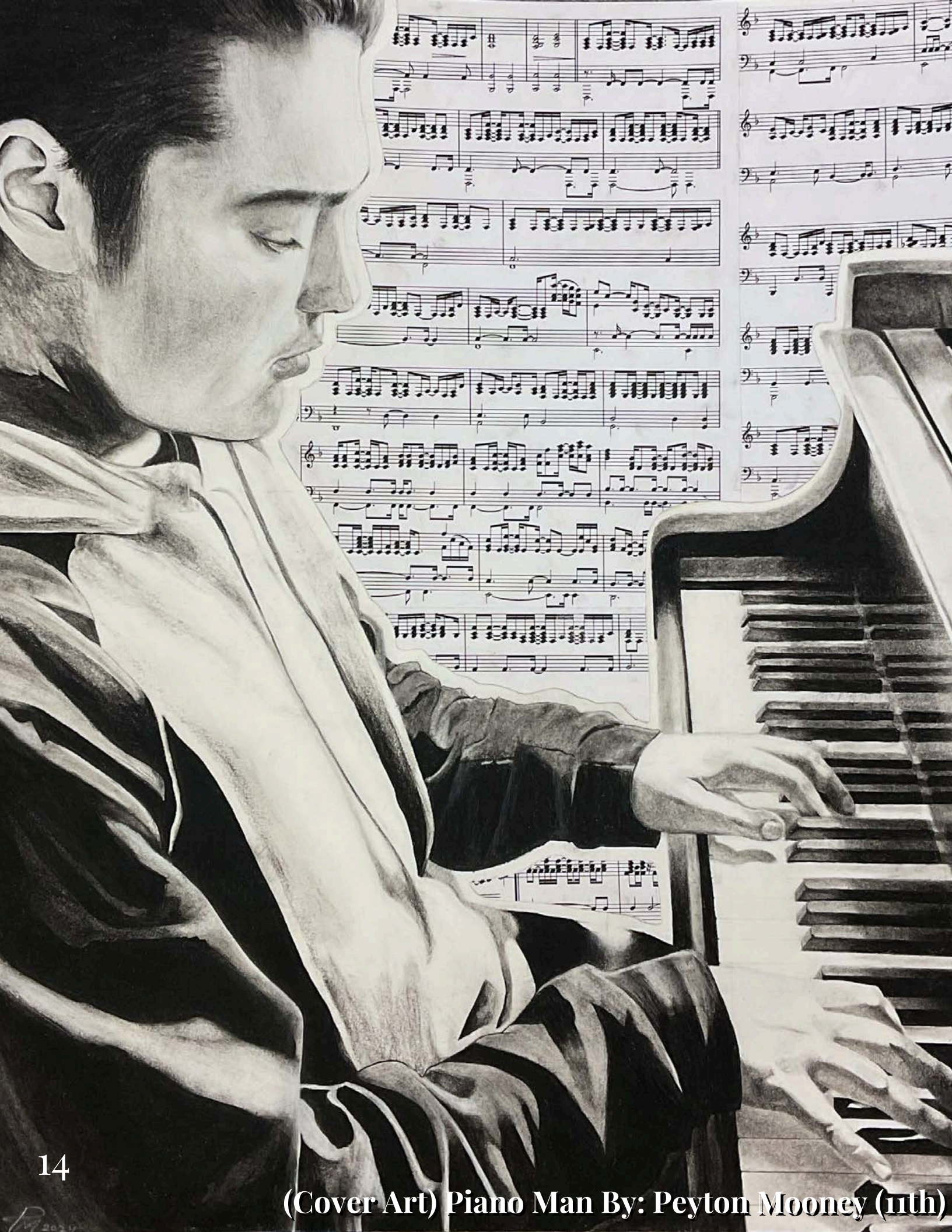
Lena stood at the edge of the stage, her hands trembling as they gripped the sides of the microphone stand. The theater was dim, but she could feel the eyes of the audience, even though she couldn't see their faces. The silence pressed against her, thick and suffocating. Her heart raced, a drumbeat that seemed to echo louder than any words she could form. She had rehearsed the speech a thousand times in her head, each word and gesture flowing with practiced ease. But now, standing here in front of everyone, the nerves twisted her stomach into knots. The voice inside her whispered doubts—  
What if she forgot everything? What if nobody liked her performance?  
What if she failed? What if.....

With a deep breath, Lena forced herself to look up, searching for something familiar in the darkness. There, in the front row, she caught a glimpse of her mother's eyes, such kind eyes, and next to them, her father's proud smile. Slowly, the tension in her chest began to loosen- she wasn't alone. With each passing second, the nerves began to subside, replaced by a quiet resolve. Lena stepped forward, the microphone warm in her hand, and as the first words left her lips, she realized that the nerves she had felt were not enemies to be feared, but signs that she was alive.

Now, she stood stong. Ready to give everything she had to this moment.

**Butterflies By: Layla Struther (12th)**







# *Music*

By: Heaton Dudick (12th),  
Sydney Sanderson, and Emily Moore (11th)

Before I even touch these keys,  
The sound prepares to flow from me.  
As if love, forever constant,  
Yet always changing.  
Notes and noise, sounds rearranging.

Like waves that dance upon the shore,  
Each melody unlocks a door.  
A timeless rhythm, ever present,  
Yet never staying.  
Through heart and soul, music reigning.

Until at last the song takes flight,  
Pure harmony in a sacred night.  
A perfect moment, softly fading,  
Yet still remaining.  
In these keys, piano playing.









An abstract painting of a bird, possibly a penguin, with a black head and orange beak, set against a background of white, grey, and blue brushstrokes.

## ***We are Sisters***

By: Chelsea Brown, Ar'Trice Green,  
Lucy Kisner-Dressen, and Madeline Geddes (11th)

Annoying me daily, and always near;  
Knowing my secrets, but drying each tear.  
Through storms and strife, here to stay,  
A friend for life, come what may.  
More than blood, more than a friend,  
A bond that lasts until the end.  
In her I find my strength, my guide—  
My sister, forever, by my side.

## ***Always my Brother***

By: Heaton Dudick (12th)

Siblings, it's what we are.  
Can't stand each other, near or far.  
I know not of why you fly  
To distant lands where you cry.  
Studious, you claim to be,  
Yet I see only your spilt tea.  
You and I,  
Yeah, we're harsh on each other,  
But the love remains,  
For you are my brother.  
Ok, I guess we can be friends,  
Let's see each other to the end.



### *Autumn's Grace*

By: Karina Little (10th)

Leaves descend  
in autumn's grace,  
Gentle whispers  
fill in the space.

Golden hues  
on a crisp air ride,  
Natures beauty,  
far and wide.

Twisting and turning,  
they softly fall,  
Blanketing the earth,  
a vibrant shawl.

The season's end,  
a fleeting sight,  
Autumn's grace  
in morning light.



Artwork by Lily Strickland (10th)

### *Autumn's Breath*

By: Josh Pool (10th)

Leaves crumble to earth,  
Whispers of a fading world.  
The chill fills the bones.

Branches stretch like veins,  
Shadows grow as time slows down.  
Night creeps over day.

Decay fills the air,  
Silence falls across the dusk.  
Autumn's breath is still.

# ***Fall Retreat***

By: Jada Evans (11th)

Fall, no, not like the weather

More like the movement of changed leaves from a tree  
The free fall from society and the world into a void of peace  
Swaying side to side like the leaf that falls onto the street  
Only to fall back and feel the grass beneath my feet.

And the crisp sweet air in my mellow retreat,  
To be heard, not seen, like the birds chirping endlessly.

Fall, yes like the weather and how beautiful it can be.  
Pumpkins, candy corn, and kids ready to say, "Trick or Treat!"  
Ghouls, skeletons, even a scary clown,  
but so soon Christmas will be around.

Fall is sweet and a neutral supreme,  
Falling back is the eagerness for a positive sanity  
Something that should be highlighted,  
And bolded in this world's society.

It should make us alert,  
Just how alarms wake us up-  
To step out into this mild breeze

Fall back, but keep it neat and sweet.  
Fall, my mellow retreat.



# *The Body At the Bottom of Bengal Bay*

By: Eason Graham (9th)

Aristotle and I found the body at the bottom of Bengal Bay. The faceless corpse stared at me somehow. It seemed oddly reminiscent of the man I see in the mirror, if that's even a man at all. Lots of people think so, but the loud ones beg to differ. The body seemed to know that. I wondered how the body had gotten there since it was nowhere near the shore or any vehicle. But, then again, I'm here too.

Bengal Bay had been infertile and dehydrated since the day I was born. I think that might have something to say about me. The town is too small to be seen on maps and is hundreds of miles away from a highway. Nobody has ever questioned the desertification of the town because the atmosphere is barren, much like the bay. Ever since I can remember, this town has been stripped of color, as if someone bleached the sky and put everything else in grayscale. Clouds regularly envelope the sky, maybe too regularly, but the rains never came.

The parched bay was still, apart from Aristotle surveying the body. Aristotle was an intelligent man when I knew him. Unlike many people of his stature, he actually provided to those who served him. He paid his cleaners and chefs well, against his father's wishes. We were studying classics at the university together when I met him. Both of his parents were enraged by the fact that he was studying language and not something that would make the family richer, but that's how Aristotle was- or is.



The body was still and unmoving when he crouched down to softly close the unpresent eyes of the cadaver. Sirens rang out in the distance, creeping closer every moment. The entire bay sat solemnly, waiting for the police.

Before the police arrived, Aristotle and I tried to pick the body up. It was heavier than it looked, but with a weight that felt familiar. The face the body was making at me reminded me of myself. It seemed to know that. The police conversed with Aristotle, saying nothing to me, almost as if I was the Invisible Man. Since no one as young as the body ever seemed to have died in this town, an investigation had to be launched into the death, requiring the seldom used skills of the town's coroner.

The problem with the town was that it had no morgue, and so the police told Aristotle that the coroner would examine the corpse in his home. Bengal Bay was a poor town, and Aristotle was the exception to that. Coming from a family of well-known aristocrats, it was widely known that he was better off than the rest of us. I'm certain that worse things than an autopsy had occurred in Aristotle's house over the years.

Aristotle knelt down to seemingly mourn the body, as if he knew who it was. I didn't have time to ask as the officer had brought out the body bag to swallow the lifeless frame.

Watching the remains get lifted, I felt a certain tightness against my skin. My nose struggled to breathe, as if inhaling the air in a sauna. We loaded up the body in the back of Aristotle's car since it was only vehicle large enough at the moment.

We drove off into the wilderness, the forest screaming my name.

In the car, Aristotle hummed. He drove swiftly and without care, my seatbelt still unbuckled.

Noticing my discomfort, he glanced at me and began to murmur.

"Homer..." he paused, "I didn't know anything about this you know."

"Anything about what?" I asked.

"You're so peaceful now. You could have just spoken to someone about what you were thinking. Well, I guess you could've spoken to me. Nobody else will talk to you anyways," he mentioned slyly. He omitted the fact that throughout my life I had been isolated. I felt like I was on a deserted island in crowds. People were scared to be friends with me out of fear that I would immediately fall in love with them. As if it takes me less than them to love for some reason. Too scared to be close with me, they never wanted to hang out with me. Only Aristotle.

I waited, turning my head at him in horror. Did he think I killed this person? I opened my lips to refute his slander, and nothing emerged. Stoically, Aristotle continued driving. The roaring silence of the car consumed me. It felt like there was nothing in my chest. The body shook in the back of the car as we drove over the roots of the forest, my head filled with the screaming of its lifeless thoughts. If only this stupid town had an ambulance.

We carried the body inside the house, and the coroner met us there. She was young, but different from me. As we opened the bag, I felt the light shine on my frigid skin like a flame in the darkness. I looked at Aristotle. He was staring at the corpse and the coroner with wide eyes. A moment later, he released his tears, and they made a river, flowing down his face. I didn't know that he knew who the body was until that moment.

The lifeless face looked confused while the coroner cut it open in the dining room. I felt each laceration cutting across me. I couldn't help but think I knew the deceased person. The body seemed to know of the wars inside my head. It seemed to know the great hatred and rage, of all my incompetence and simplicities. The body seemed to have the same mental cage I'd trapped myself in. It glared up at me as if it worried about dying as well, wondered if dying meant that its life meant nothing.



That reminded me of the time Aristotle had said to me when he took me to the cliffsides outside of town, "Show me your doubts about dying." I had no response. Sitting

there silently, waiting for something to take action for me. The body appeared to have the same doubt of death in its lips that I did then. The coroner cut open the skull. My head began to ache. I looked down, and the pain returned, embellishing every second. The coroner poked and prodded as if she had just discovered a new species. I felt it all.

In that moment of pain, I looked down at the corpse, its hair was drenched and rancid, yet there was no water in Bengal Bay. I looked to the windows, and thunder ripped outside. Suddenly, for the first time since I could remember, the clouds unzipped, dropping rain in the desert and creating pools throughout the landscape.

Aristotle noticed the rain and began to weep harder. I didn't remember having ever seen him cry before that moment.

The coroner sliced open the cadaver's hand. Every artery in my hand suddenly burst, leaving a lake of blood on the floor around me. I rushed to a mirror and instead of my face, I stared endlessly at the wall behind me. I confusedly turned around to see what I thought was the actual wall. In a daze, I turned, seeing the the wall through the mirror again. I spun like a dancer searching for my reflection.



In the same moment, Aristotle excused himself from his dining room turned morgue and walked down the hallway towards his bedroom. He showed no hint of slowing as he approached me. It was in that moment that he passed completely through me. The phenomenon I experienced can only be described as your entire being crumbling in on itself. My existence, my reflection, my self; all an illusion.



My vision of the future was beginning to end. The coroner takes away the senile, faceless man. Its eyes look like mine.

She slams the door behind her, and I hear someone screaming my name outside, so I sprint to the door, and pass right through it.

I am instantly transported back to the familiar spot atop Bengal Bay, but nothing rests at the bottom of it. Aristotle appears without a sound, placing his hands on my shoulders, boxing me in. I try to pull away vigorously, squinting my eyes at him.

I stammer around confusedly, searching for all I had seen in my vision. I begin to believe that I am suffering from a bout of schizophrenia, which wouldn't be too out of character for me.

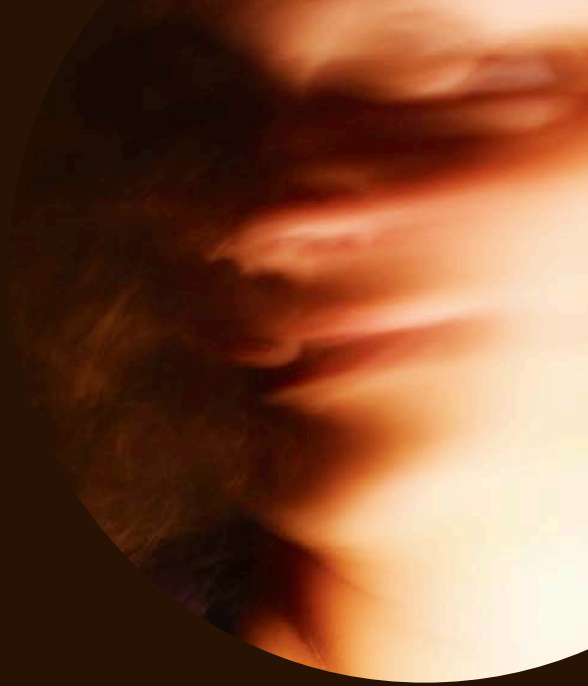
I run towards the cliffside of the bay, attempting to see the body. Where did it go? It was down there earlier. Where are the police?

"Homer...." Aristotle sadly calls out, as if he knows I won't respond.

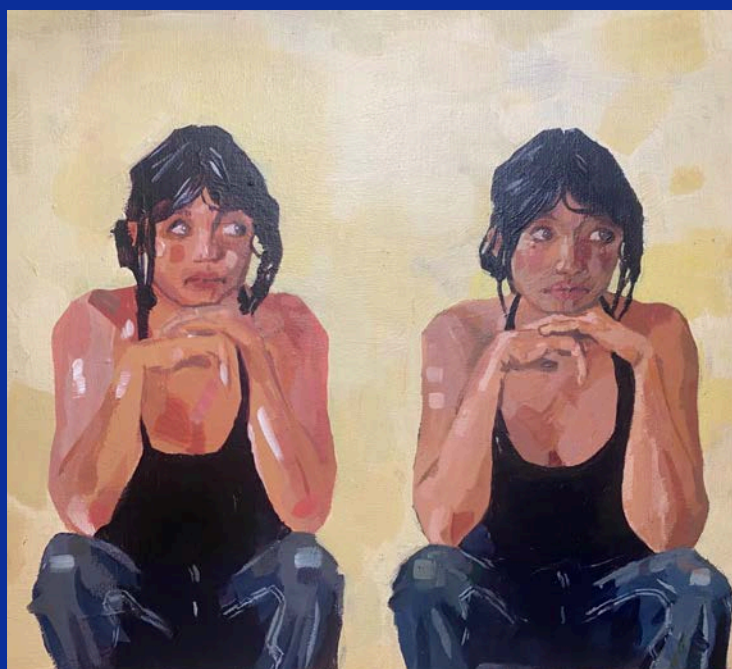
I keep searching. The wind rushes past me. I speed up. Faster, ignoring Aristotle's trailing voice. I run. Full sprint now.

I reach the edge of the cliff atop the other end of the bay. The drop to the bottom approaches. I trip over the railing, falling straight to the dry desert below, head first. As my face smashes, all my features are eliminated.

The world goes black, I begin to understand.











Artwork by Kenadie Peay (10th)



Artwork by Alana Porter (11th)



Artwork by Abeni Bostick (9th)



Artwork by Diana Svicarovich (9th)

In cozy halls where love ignites,  
Families gather beneath the twinkling lights,  
Christmas magic fills the air so bright.  
Hearts intertwine in the gleaming night.  
Together we stand, the moon in flight,  
Guiding each other through the sight,  
Family's welcome a gift so right,  
In Christmas glows, our spirits alight.

*Christmas Glows*  
By: Amoni Berry (12th)







## *The House by: Neveah Peltzer (11th)*

Deep in the woods, hidden beneath layers of twisted branches and overgrown trees, there is a house that no one dares to enter. It has been rotting away longer than anyone can recall, with its weathered wood sinking into the earth, as if it is being swallowed by the forest. And there it sits. And waits.

The windows are cracked, and the door hangs crooked on its hinges, but the worst part, according to those who've crossed its path, is the feeling. It's said that when you stand near it, you can feel the whispers—so soft at first that you think it was the wind. But then, if you listen too long, the whispers turn into low, frantic voices, begging for help, and pleading for something—or someone—to come inside.

Thankfully, no one ever has. Atleast not yet.

But then, one fateful night, everything changed. It was during the 'storm of the century,' according to the news, when the car full of students traveling home from the big game made their way through the woods to avoid the traffic on the main road. They drove through the thick trees, not sure if their shortcut would even work, but still drawn to the house by a strange pull they couldn't explain. And then, the car stopped. The passengers stepped out. The leaves beneath their feet began to crunch. The house drew closer.

As they stepped across the threshold, the air grew oppressively still. Inside, the walls seemed to breathe, their timbers shifting in unnatural ways.

The fog was heavy with the scent of damp earth and decay, with roots pushing up through the floorboards, and vines hanging from the ceiling like a decrepit chandelier.

With each step further into the house, every part of their bodies begged to leave, but they kept moving deeper in. Their hearts pounded as the whispers grew louder, sharper, stronger, until all they could hear was screaming.

But whose screaming? The sound refused to stop.

They clinched their ears, fighting every urge to move forward, but their feet refused to turn. The door, now an unreachable distance behind them, felt more like a dream than a real object. And something was watching, waiting, just beyond the dark corners of the room.

Beckoning them in, and welcoming them to.....

*THE END.*



# *Beyond My Brother*

By: Olivia Berzins (9th)

November 18th, a night I could never forget, even if I were to get brainwashed. I am out on our family pond watching the sunset. Tonight, the sun captures a gorgeous yellowy-orange ambiance. There is a cold chill that makes me rosy and a breeze just strong enough to sway the movement of the hammock I am sitting on. This hammock used to be ours-my brother and me. We would come out to the pond every Thursday after school to skip rocks and watch the sun go down. This Thursday is a bit different though. My brother isn't out here with me. He hasn't been out here with me since our mom died a few months ago. I usually don't even see him at all, I mean I see him at school sometimes, but he won't even look at me. It's because I look too much like my mom. He can't see me without seeing her - dead - all over again.

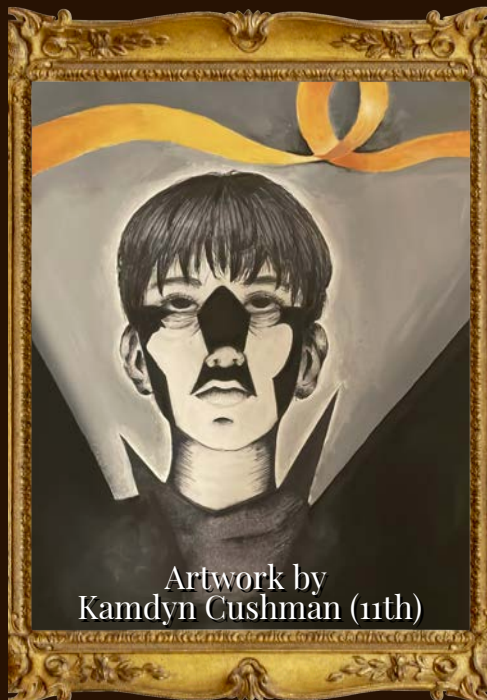
As soon as I know it, my vision is blurry, and my eyes are wet. It's dark now, so I should be going inside. I wipe the tears from my sunken eyes and start towards my house. Before I can take a step I hear the most spine chilling scream I have ever heard echoing from across the pond. I follow the sound of the scream with my eyes, and they lock with my brother's. The same brother that would share the hammock with me on past Thursday's. My best friend since birth.

I finally break eye contact because my sight is drawn to the shiny silver axe hanging over his shoulder. It is dripping with blood. Blood as red and as pure as a cherry in the summertime. I've already seen too large of a terror that I can barely force myself to look down at his feet. It was a human. Immediate regret comes rushing from my body leaving me pale and motionless. My brother, my best friend just killed someone, and I witnessed it. What am I supposed to do now? I don't know what to do, but I know I can't stay there any longer, so I run.

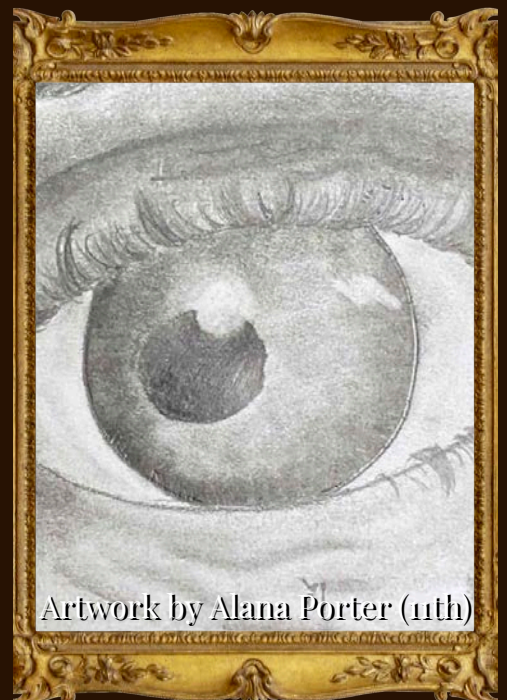
I run for block, maybe even miles, until I physically cannot anymore. I'm sobbing, I'm weak, I'm helpless. I can't comprehend what I just watched. I must be dreaming. There is no way that this is happening.



Artwork by Carolyn Coffey (11th)



Artwork by  
Kamdyn Cushman (11th)



Artwork by Alana Porter (11th)

When I finally catch my breath, I begin to walk home. It's a very long walk, and I can't stop thinking about how this is just so beyond my brother. How could he do this? The person I was inseparable with. How could he do this? How could he make someone die? How could he see anyone's dying face after what we had to see with our mom?

I eventually reach my front door after what feels like an eternity of walking and reach out to the doorknob. "What am I supposed to do? What do I even say?" I say under my breath. When I get inside I tremble into the kitchen, trying to make myself look as if I had not just seen my brother kill someone, and I am welcomed by the sound and smell of the coffee machine.

"Hey M! Where were you? It's awfully late!" exclaims my grandma, Tippy.

"Hey TipTip, I'm sorry, I should've called. I was just out getting a milkshake." *Lie.*

"That's okay, babe," she responds.

I grab myself a mug and pour coffee into it.

"Hey Mia, will you do me a favor? Will you bring this cup of coffee up to your brother whenever you head to bed?"

I almost choke when I hear her say that.

"I'm sorry what?" I say frantically trying to assess what I had heard.

"Bring this cup of coffee up to Jackson when you go up will ya?" She asks once again.

I gasp, "Wait. He is home?"

"Yeah? He got home about twenty minutes before you did. He came in here and we talked for a few minutes, but then he went to his room to play fortnite? I'm not sure what he said, it was some type of videogame though."

"And you are positive it was Jackson?" I ask, now starting to get antsy.

"Well of course! I know my own grandson."

"Grandma, we aren't safe here."

I get up from my chair and head over to the landline by the fridge and dial 911.

"Mia! What is going on?" My grandma questions. "You're worrying me!"

"Grandma. If you are positive that that was Jackson, then there is a murderer in this house. We are not safe."



Photography by Caden Hayes (11th)







# Coffee

By: Sabina Stonestreet (11th)

Bitter, dark roast, sweet, or light.  
Hazelnut, vanilla, chocolate, peppermint,  
Caramel, butter pecan, pumpkin spice,  
White chocolate raspberry.  
Delicious seasonal creamers.

You can get it cold, but some like it hot.  
Two packets to five packets.  
Oat, soy, almond, regular milk.  
Splenda, sugar, whipped-cream, or plain.  
Whatever you prefer-  
it's always delicious, and never the same.









# *The Final Trial* By: Heaton Dudick (12th)

There was once a warrior, renowned for his skill and rage in battle. At the end of his life, as was tradition for warriors of his culture, he was tasked with choosing a successor—a child to carry on his legacy. From the Imperium, a select few were chosen, and the old warrior picked a boy named Titus.

Different from his peers, Titus was consumed by rage and pain, and he had never known fear.

What could a soul like that be capable of?

These children, broken over decades of brutal conditioning, were forged through the suppression of weakness and apprehension, replaced instead with loyalty and unwavering faith. Few survived the challenges, and even fewer made it through the entirety of their training.

But those who did were more than capable of destroying entire worlds. Titus, unlike the others, had never known fear; his heart was only filled with rage and anguish—an ideal foundation for the perfect warrior.

After years of grueling training, the remaining cadets were given a final trial—an ultimatum that would prove their worth to the Emperor and secure their place in the chapter, the Ultramarines. To Titus, the Ultramarines gave him the final challenge, to venture into the heretical forest of a Daemon World, where he was to destroy a cursed tree, turning it into a pyre of the Imperium's will.

Each of the cadets were allowed a weapon of choice, one they were most comfortable with. Titus chose his chainsword, along with explosives to destroy the tree. He entered the forest, moving unseen, but as he stepped deeper into the shadows, the temptations of Chaos began to claw at him. He knew nothing of such paths—he was only a machine.

After hours of traversing the twisted woods, he arrived at the heart of the forest and found the tree. He didn't question why he must destroy it—he knew only that it was his mission, and he feared nothing. Without hesitation, he placed the explosive at its base and set the timer.

But then, Chaos struck from behind. An amalgamation of the Warp—a twisted beast of nightmares—emerged to challenge him. Titus fought back without a shred of doubt, his rage and pain fueling his every strike. The creature's erratic movements threw him off balance, but the explosive detonated, propelling him toward the beast. In the confusion, it slashed at him, cutting off his ear.

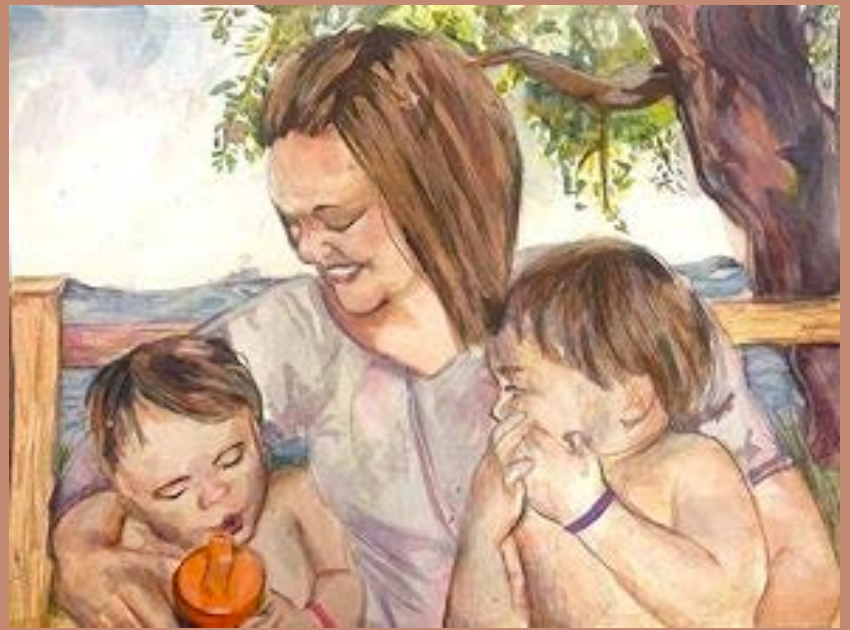
The beast hesitated, thrown off by the explosion's force. Seizing the moment, Titus revved his chainsword, the weapon roaring to life as its teeth tore through the air. With brutal precision, he cut the creature down, the beast collapsing before him in death. The mission accomplished.

Though his task was complete, and his soul remained unshaken, Titus' heart was still heavy with rage and pain. Should he feel a sense of accomplishment? After all he had worked for and done?

His whole life had culminated at this point, and yet, he still felt hungry for more.

The ultimate warrior. What could a soul like that be capable of?





Artwork by Gracie Robinson (11th)



***Why did you let me go?***  
**By: Rubi Bouknight (11th)**

I stay awake at night thinking of you.  
I stay awake at night wondering if you're thinking of me too.

I wonder if I stayed, would I be alive?  
I wonder if I stayed, would I live to forty-five?  
If I stayed, would I have gotten an education?  
If I stayed, would I have needed to get donations?

How would you know if my new home was even any good?  
How would you know if my new home even understood?

Could you know if I was safe?  
Could you know if they were fake?  
I understand you couldn't take care of me financially.  
I understand that you could not raise a family.  
I'll never know how hard it was for you to give me up.  
And I will never know if you were down in the dumps.

Because of you, I have something some kids out there do not.  
Because of you, one day, I can become an astronaut.  
I wish you were there when I graduated-  
Kindergarten, elementary, and middle.  
I wish you were there when I became not so little.  
I did not know it was possible to miss someone I've never met.  
I did not know it was possible for me to get this upset.  
Even though you were not there to put me to sleep.  
Even though you were not there when I learned to drive a Jeep.

I still love you more than ever.  
I still love you even if we are not together.  
I still miss you even though I have never met you.  
I still miss you even if I had left at age two.

If I ever met you, I wouldn't need to tell you my confessions.  
If I ever met you, I would only need to ask you two questions.

My first question- Do you see how much I've grown?  
My second- *Why did you let me go?*





# *AI-The Future?*

## **By: Sarah Bryer (9th)**

Artificial Intelligence, known as AI, has the potential to change many parts of our lives, bringing both good and bad with it, depending on how we use it and if we are aware of its flaws.

One of the biggest benefits of AI is how it can quickly handle and analyze huge amounts of data, helping people make better decisions in areas like healthcare, finance, and education. For example, AI can look at a patient's medical history and suggest the best treatment options, helping doctors give personalized care. Additionally, AI can take over boring tasks, which lets workers focus on more interesting and creative projects. Teachers can even use AI to enhance their classroom teaching and spend more time on education, and less time on writing lesson plans or rubrics. This not only makes people more productive but also encourages them better at their jobs overall.

On the other hand, AI also has its downsides that we should worry about. One major concern is that it could lead to job loss because machines might replace humans. This could create problems for people who depend on mundane jobs that AI could easier take over. There are also ethical issues with AI, especially around privacy and surveillance. For instance, if AI is used to monitor people, it raises questions about who is responsible for its actions and whether it might unfairly target certain groups. Finally, AI isn't perfect and depending on it could set us up for failure in the end.

AI is a tool, and like any tool, we shouldn't put all our trust in it. Afterall, a hammer can't be used to fix a leaking refrigerator; likewise, AI can't be used to solve every problem we have. As we keep using AI in our everyday lives, it's important to find a balance between enjoying its benefits and being aware of the possible problems it can cause, because we are ultimately responsible for its outcome, not the computer.



### *Tik Tok*

By: Addison Andrews, Elle Lockard,  
and Anna Price McCormick (11th)

#### Tik Tok

I stay in bed instead of walk.  
Addicted 'til I cease to talk.

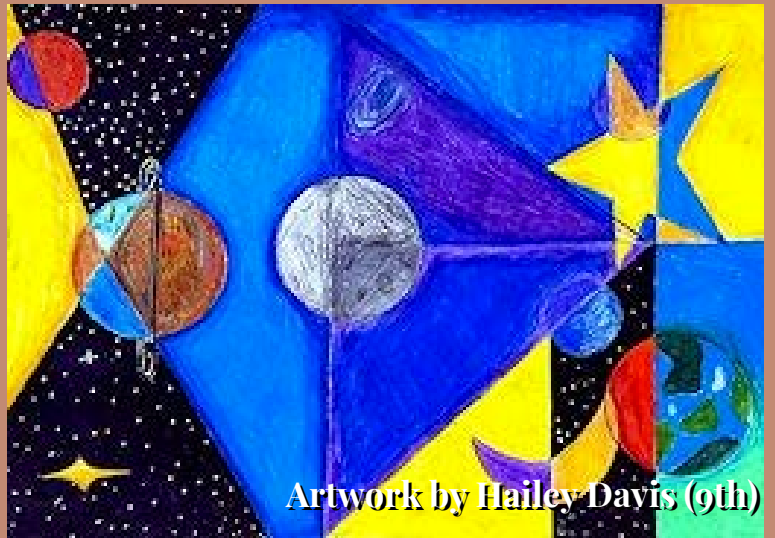
#### Videos

Make me laugh  
As I feel my brain cells half.

Endless scrolling  
Dancing friends  
Music, memories,  
Come to an end.

#### Tik Tok Ban

Why must it be?  
Tik Tok, won't you stay with me?



### *Don't Take my Phone*

By: Beth Sims (12th)

Don't take my phone, I'll put it away,  
Why can't I get it out today?  
I will not weep, I will not cry,  
I want my phone, oh me, oh my!

Without my games, I feel so lost,  
No texting friends, what a cost!  
In class, no phone, oh what a trial,  
Never knowing what has gone viral.

The clock ticks by, too slow it seems,  
I need a plan; I need a scheme.  
"One little peek," I say with a grin,  
What am I thinking, I'll never win!

Three more hours, what will I do?  
Oh when can this day be through?  
Soon, however, I'll break free!  
I'll get my phone back! Finally!



## *Night Terrors*

By: Bayron Serrano-Martinez (11th)

Creepy dolls upon a shelf,  
Weeping angels creeping in.  
Shadows dancing on the wall,  
Scary clowns bare their grin.

Hairy spiders beneath a web,  
Ghost float across the night,  
Snakes slither down the road,  
Nightmares gathering in my sight.

Skeletons shake their eirry bones,  
Witches cackle through the air.  
The moonlight fails to cast a glow,  
Enraging me with all despair.

Yet in the heart of all this fear,  
A spark of courage stongly grows,  
For even in the darkest tales,  
The light of hope forever glows.



Artwork by Vince Kolomotes (12th)



***Tiny Paws***

**By: Zoreya Austin (12th)**

Tiny paws patter  
Eyes shine with boundless wonder  
Joy wrapped in soft fur.

***Glass***

**By: Heaton Dudick (12th)**

Unwavering waves,  
Observation of beauty.  
Shimmering of glass.

***Haiku Corner***

***By: Lily Burke (12th)***

***A place to relax,  
Whispers of peace in stillness,  
Breath slows, thoughts take rest.***

***Color of Roses***

**By: Caleb Jones (11th)**

Roses, signs of love.  
Red, pink, yellow, violet  
Beauty in the world.

***Soil Shared***

**By: Emma Becker (11th)**

Hands shape earth with care,  
Soft clay whispers under touch,  
Art from soil shared.

***Beauty Springs Forth***

**By: Hope Lamey (10th)**

In the heart of spring,  
Blossoms dance in gentle breeze,  
Nature's beauty sings.

***Mountains***

**By: Sean Snapper (10th)**

The mountain stands tall,  
Ready to watch over us.  
Rise, grow, and be you.

***Oceanic Breeze***

**By: Trey Clarkson (12th)**

Oceanic breeze,  
Flowing though my finger tips.  
The water- cooling.

***River Stream***

**By: Ericka Jones (9th)**

Rushing waters flow  
Over time-worn crystal stones  
Nature's endless song

***Be Yourself***

**By: Chanel Jones (10th)**

**Why must you comply?  
And do what you are asked to?  
Be yourself! Be you!**

***USA***

**By: Jack Smith (9th)**

**Oh say can you see?  
By the dawn's early light- wait!  
A U.S. haiku!**

***Photography***

**By: Caden Hayes (11th)**

**Photographs on film  
Pictures worth a thousand words  
Memories though light.**

***The Kindness Club***

**By: Demi Morgan (11th)**

**Kindness fills the world.  
And we are all here for it.  
Helping those in need.**

***Tacos***

**By: Vince Kolomoets (12th)**

**Filled with meat and cheese.  
Soft, hard, or quesodilla.  
It's Taco Tuesday.**

***Nature's Enemy***

**By: Byron Serrano-Martinez (10th)**

**They crawl on my leg.  
Don't bite me! You're a jerk face.  
Ants. Nature's worst pest.**

***You Got Jokes***

**By: Maria Clark (11th)**

**Knock, knock—who is there?  
Lettuce in, it's chilly out!  
Hey, that's pretty good.**

***My Cat***

**By: Sarah Clark (9th)**

**Jumping up on me,  
Annoying, yes, but always sweet.  
My cat- purr, purr, purr.**

***Crying***

**By: Caleb Evans (12th)**

**Wind blows through my eyes  
They fill with wet bubbling tears  
That stream down my cheek.**









## *Why Does Sound Exist?*

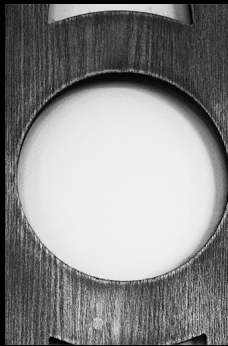
By: Caleb Jones (11th)

Why does sound exist, I often wonder,  
In the quiet moments it feels like thunder.

Annoying noise that fills the air,  
Rattling nerves, beyond compare.

The honk of horns, the clatter of feet,  
The endless chatter down the street.  
Why must it persist, this ceaseless sin,  
Invading thoughts, creeping in?

Yet, without sound, silence would reign,  
A void so vast, it drives us insane.  
So we endure the noise, the roar,  
For in its existence, life's essence, explored.



## *Unending Cacaphony*

By: Hope Lamey (10th)

The clatter, the clamor, the crash, and the boom,

A horn that is honking, a shout in the air,

The loud sound of wind that tangles your hair.

A siren that wails through the dead of the night

A dog that won't stop with its bark pure of spite.

The click-clack of typing, the crash of a plate

The screech of a door that can't hesitate.

Oh, silence I beg you to soften the air.

My thoughts are drowning in noise everywhere.

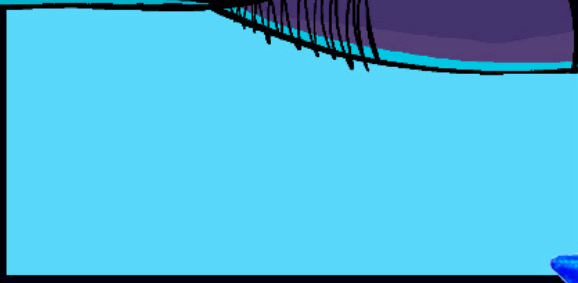
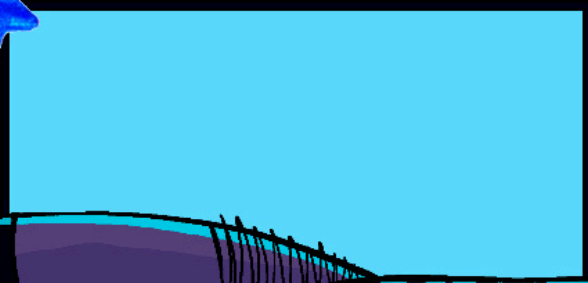
Each sound is a storm, each echo- a shout,

A world full of noise, I can never drown out.





YOU CAN WRAP YOUR ARMS  
SO TIGHT RIGHT ROUND MY  
SHOULDERS



Artwork by N Wilmot (10th)



### *Heavenly Paths*

By: Emily Moore (11th)

Stars in the sky,  
Shine through the night.  
Showing the path  
of a beautiful sight.

Lying down,  
The world spins past.  
Filling my heart.  
A love that lasts.

### *Star Light*

By: Alora McAteer (10th)

Stars twinkle in the dark sky,  
Lighting up the night,  
Shining bright and high.

Stars sparkle in the night,  
Shining down from above,  
Filling the sky with light.

### *Stars of Velvet*

By: Sophie Clemente (9th)

Stars of Velvet, Stars in Flight,  
In the blackened cloak of night.  
You shimmer in a cosmic spree,  
Unfurl your tales and fly by free.

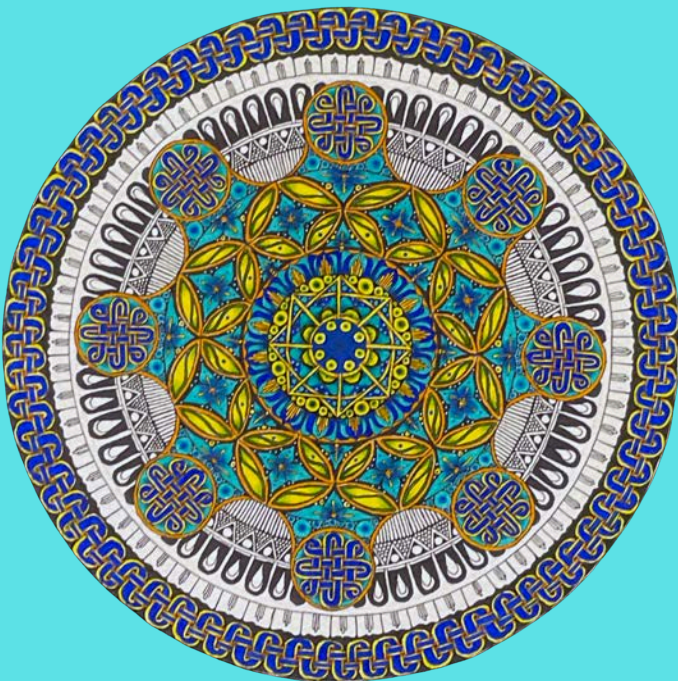
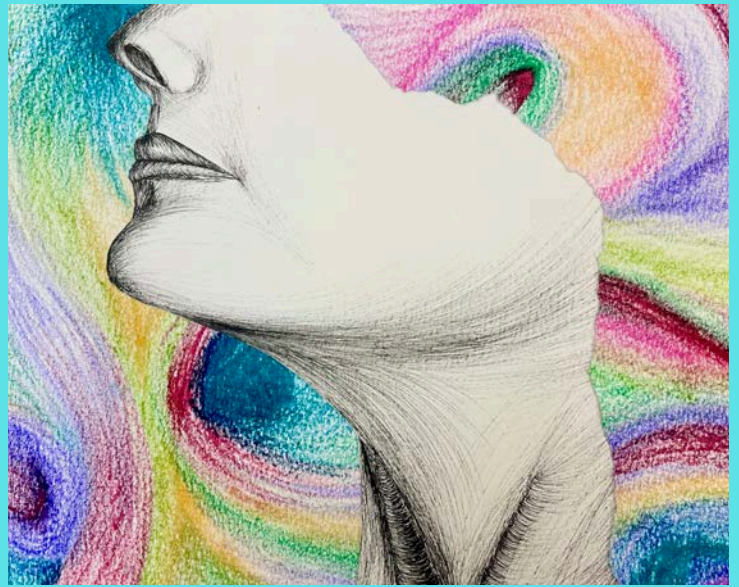
Bright whispers through the boundless dark,  
Your stories beckon, beauty stark.  
Oh, to be like stars in the eternal sky,  
A blaze of wonder as the Earth goes by.

To shine with purpose and cease to expire,  
A beacon in the dark, like an endless fire.

Stars of Velvet, Stars in Flight,  
In the blackened cloak of night.











**Artwork by Caroline Winchester, Sophie Martin, and Mia Williams (12th)**





Artwork by Ruby Merland (12th)



Artwork by Ruby Merland (12th)



Artwork by Bella Paolino(12th)







Artwork by Jenna Livingston (10th)



Artwork by Caroline Winchester (12th)



Artwork by Kenna McLean (10th)



Artwork by Bella Rosenfeld (10th)

# Making our Marks

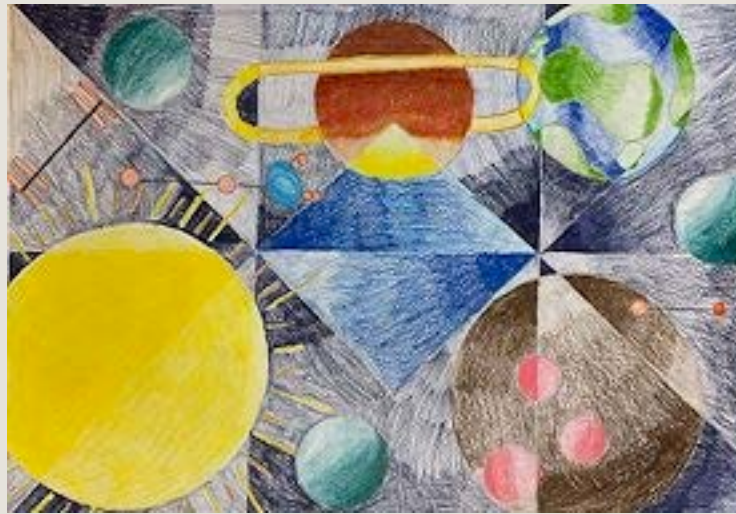
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