

Because

We have so

much to tell you



An Anthology of Creative Writing

by East Tech High School Students

Cleveland, Ohio

2026

Acknowledgements and Introduction

The work in this online anthology was written during a creative writing residency with **Lake Erie Ink: a writing space for youth** at **East Technical High School** in Cleveland, Ohio. This residency was supported by a grant from the **Thomas H. White Foundation**.

Over the course of several months, East Tech students wrote poems, stories, and short creative nonfiction.

Thank you to the Thomas H. White Foundation for their support.

We would also like to thank Cora German and Danielle Clement for their dedication and commitment to bringing creative writing opportunities to their students.

**Thomas H. White
Foundation** 



Table of Contents

Acknowledgements and Introduction	3
Alimasi A.	9
Because	9
Angela M-G.	9
I feel so hopeless	9
Ameer F.	10
To My Girlfriend	10
Amoz L	10
The War in Israel and Pakistan and the Racism with it	10
Anila H.	11
My Parents	11
Aniyah M.	11
I remain helpful	11
Anonymous	12
silenced and unheard	12
Autumn B.	13
Broken Chains	13
Cory W.	13
List Poem	13
Daion H.	14
My Name Poem	14
Damon M.	14
Who am I	14
Damon M.	15
Because	15
Damon M.	15
My Ode Poem	15
D'Andre S.	15
De'SeVona J.	16
Because	16
Dynasty F.	16
My forever gift	16
Jackniel G.	16
War	16
Jackniel G.	17
Bright	17
Emani W.	17
The ice is cold but the chair is rolling	17
Jaiden C.	18

Because	18
Jaiden C.	18
Cover Story #5	18
The Nation Gathers	18
Jamaia B.	19
Jannette W.	19
My Future	19
Jeffrey Canales A.	20
Creative Argument	20
Jeffrey M.	20
Jeremiah S.	21
Two Voice Poem: (Modern Time Encanto Addition)	21
Jeremiah S.	21
Declarative List Poem	22
Jeremiah W.	23
This Is My Name	23
Joselyn A.	24
The Immigrant and ICE Agent	24
Joselyn A.	25
In another world	25
Londereese C.	26
What I'm not, but am	26
Londereese C.	26
Name Poem	26
makayla e.	27
my core memory	27
A light has lost its shine	27
Makayla E.	28
Because i choose myself	28
Makayla E.	28
On The Day I Turned Sixteen	28
Mariam E.	29
To my dad	29
Matthew Josxiel P.	29
The Pain of Boxing	29
MICHAEL I.	30
I Am Grateful for What Gives Me Joy	30
Milan W.	30
My Love	30
Nataly E.	31
Hope	31

Nyjah A.	31
Because	31
Rickiyah H.	32
My Poem	32
Saanya W.	32
High school isn't for the weak	32
Sean G. II	33
Ekphrastic Poem	33
Sean G. II	33
Overheated	33
List poem (Sean G.)	33
Shenel A. C.	34
After the Loud Noises Came (An Ekphrastic Poem)	34
SHYANNE R.	34
To My Loud Friend	34
Tashara S.	35
Because	35
Tavelle S.	35
I got my name from my dad	35
Taylan G.	36
The Hardest Chapter	36
Threasa Lynn S.	37
Because I love this life	37
Tyrone W.	38
Who I Am	38
Xavier A.	38
My Memory Tool	38
Tymere	38
I Am...	38
Yayley F.	39
Silent Voices	39
Zaisean J.	39
I Want To Thank Poem	39
Zayon B.	40
why i became who i am today	40
Zharia C.	40
Stormy Night	40
Zy'Asia S.	41
Because	41
Zy'Hir G.	41
So I Rise and Remain	41

Alimasi A.

Because

Because of the girl God gave me
Because of my sister
Because of the business I started
Because of the new people I had met
Because of the new life I'm about to start
Because of the new car I'm about to get
Because of the new house
because of "the day I learned kindness is the only true definition of bright" 1
Because of the friends I got
Because of the day I open my own store
Because of the day I buy my mom her own car
Because of the day I see my sisters finish school
Because of the day life feels easy
Because of the day I'm done with school
I will keep fighting

1. from "Because" by Andrea Gibson

Angela M-G.

I feel so hopeless

I feel the most hopeless every beginning and ending of winter. During those times, I get awfully sick. My head aches like never before, accompanied by a constant dizzying feeling. My whole body feels very weak during these times, my throat gets so sore, and I can't breathe out of my nostrils. I have a hard time sleeping, and eating feels like a chore; everything starts to feel too hot but gets too cold when I am not wrapped up in covers..

With all of those things going on at once, I feel awfully hopeless. So, while trying all of my mother's teas to feel better and breathe using the steam from my hot cup, I came across a few that supposedly resembled the taste of orange, lemon, and mint.

Once I boiled my water, dipped my teabags, and took a sip, I was amazed at the taste. It was delicious, and before I knew it, that tea was slowly taking away all of the awful symptoms of my sickness. My nose cleared, my bones felt stronger, my energy came back, my throat didn't feel scratchy, and my messy clouded brain was cleared within a few sips. I won't ever feel hopeless in the beginning and end of winter again.

Ameer F.

To My Girlfriend

This pink hat that you gave me
sits right here upon my head,
It is the softest thing, like a blanket spread.
It's pink and warm, a perfect color
But I love it most because it came from you.
Anything you give just makes my day,
It takes the stormy clouds away.
A simple gift, but it feels so special,
My favorite hat, my bright pink essential.

Amoz L

The War in Israel and Pakistan and the Racism with it

I think that the war between Israel and Pakistan needs to end. And also what needs to end is the racism America is having against these two countries. As Americans when we are the most divided country ever, I feel like we should never even have the nerve to be racist when our neighbors could be the complete opposite race. Famous rappers like Kanye West are encouraging Nazis, like from Hitler's Nazi Germany. And Americans are really racist to Indians/Pakistanis when they do the least amount of crime and provide stores for the poor. We should not bash Jews for stereotypes and not aid them in a war where kids are actively dying. I also think America should maybe back out of it and focus on our own country first. America is not perfect at all. And the fact that we're donating billions of dollars to aid a war when there are many homeless people. Some of these homeless people were actually really important. Some of these homeless people are veterans and doctors who are now homeless because we neglect them. My conclusion on the war is just to spread awareness and how I felt about this situation. I ultimately think we should stop aiding the war for now and focus on ourselves and focus on racism.

Anila H.

My Parents

Because they are there for me, they constantly show up.
Because they don't judge me, they try to listen and teach me right from wrong.
Because they are real parents, they make things happen, even when it's hard.
Because their advice is like a light, guiding me through the dark.
Because their love feels safe, I feel secure around them.
Because they support me even when they don't always understand me.
Because their presence makes hard days easier.
Because they don't give up on me.
Because they care about who I become, not just what I do.
Because they show me what love is supposed to look like.
Because they make our house feel like home.
Because I know I'm not alone with them.
Because of them, I learned to be the best version of myself..

I love my parents.

Aniyah M.

I remain helpful

Because my dreams are bigger than my fears.
Because silence has never solved anything.
Because growth will come with a struggle.
Because my mistakes don't define me, they teach me.
Because I watched my family fight for what they believe in.
Because the world can be unfair, but a change is possible.
Because my voice matters, if I want to be heard.
Because my quietness turns into a weakness.
Because my achievements are better than my mistakes.
Because my success will always be there
Because there's only one me.

I remain helpful.

Anonymous

silenced and unheard

Why should we stay quiet?

It's been 10 years..

Why should what a man...

I was a little girl..

No..

Your niece...

A boy.

I never got my happy ending over this.

Why should what a boy did to me stay in
the silence?

You did though...

Because if you were a man you wouldn't
have done it right?

You move cities..

Forgot all about it, huh?

Or maybe you would've.

You went to start a family...

Why do you look at my lips?

Forgetting that you even did it?

My body?

I look at you without hate..

My face?

Trust me when I say

Why does an eight-year-old little girl...

I feel it EVERY time..

Turn you on?

I'm afraid to say something..

Autumn B.

Broken Chains

Because he pulled me up from the cold wet grave,
Because he was always there when no one else was,
Because he was the sturdy cane that helped me stand when my legs went numb,
Because he alone put an end in the endless whispers of the night,
Because he showed me the truth in a world filled with lies,
Because he delivered me a purpose in a world without one,
Because he gave me this life and all the wonderful things in it,
Because the overwhelming peace I feel when he is with me,
Because he was the shepherd that followed after me even when I was the only one astray,
Because he is the light of the lighthouse that guides me through any storm,
Because being with him makes me feel like a new born baby being cradled in the arms of her parents.
Because he was the innocent man that paid the price to set me free,
I love Jesus.

Cory W.

List Poem

Why do I love this life?
I love this life because of the people in it,
Because they give me a sense of purpose and hope,
Because they get me motivated,
Because they make me feel ready for the day when I wake up,
Because they're the people who would pick me up when I fall,
Because they can put their trust in me and vice versa,
Because my opinion has weight when I speak to them,
Because I can go to them when I'm in a mental crisis,
Because they won't judge me like the world would,
Because the light I have will shine its brightest when I'm around those people I care about,
Because I know that I can let them in and open up to them,
Because they know and understand my character,
Because just like how a pod of whales cares for their young, they care for me the same way,
Because no matter what, they have my back and will always cherish me just like how I would cherish them,
Because they were there when I was going through hard times,
Because they experienced the same pain I did throughout my life,

Because they know the pain that comes with an open mind and a wise soul.

Daion H.

My Name Poem

This is the story of my name.

My name is Daion
People call me D
Don't call me Dayday
My name sounds like Deion
My name feels like confusion
My name brings happiness
My name dreams of love
My name is heard everywhere
My name is remembered by my loved family and friends

Damon M.

Who am I

I am an African American Male.
I am someone who looks ahead,
I am a hard worker, I am not an underachiever,
I am someone who wants to leave an impact on the world,
I am someone who is up for a challenge,
I am someone who fears failing in life,
I am someone who wants a better life,
I am someone who learns from his mistakes,
I am someone who does not give up,

I am funny,
I am someone who loves to laugh or make someone laugh,

I am my own person,
I am someone who does not let his surroundings determine his future,
I am someone who is mature and handles his business and do what needs to be done,
I am someone who finds a way out of no way,
I am someone who bounces back and lands on my feet,
I am someone who lets his mistakes turn into lessons.

Damon M.

Because

- Because of my family, I keep going and do not give up.
- Because of my education, I am intelligent and have a lot of knowledge.
- Because of God, we are different and unique in our own ways, which makes us who we are.
- Because the fear of failure is what keeps me driven and on my feet.
- Because of the President, this country is soon coming to an end.
- Because of the people I surround myself with, many people see the type of person I am, along with the person I am becoming.
- Because of the way I carry myself, I am becoming the young, intelligent man I am destined to be.
- Because of my mother, I work hard, am very self-disciplined, and want to do better than my family.
- Because of the light of life and success that is on 24/7

I am determined to win.

Damon M.

My Ode Poem

I want to thank my mother for giving me the gift of life.

You always give me good advice when I need it or don't need it.

Always hard on me because you want to see me do good and succeed in life.

You are my own mentor to teach me the keys of life.

Being my own pillow when I need a shoulder to cry on.

You always taught me to do the right thing and think before I act no matter the situation.

Mom, I love you

D'Andre S.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/11qnj6sFUnDBLY63sPGoAhnmc85EBVsALMHkLUuN8ge0/edit?usp=sharing>

De'SeVona J.

Because

Because of my family I keep going
Because of my grades I get gifts
Because of music I stay calm when I'm mad
Because of food I stay nice and healthy
Because of the way I'm feeling at 18
Because of having a home I stay grateful
Because of my laugh and Goofiness I stay with friends
Because of staying an honors roll student
Because of the death of my cousin
I remain hopeful and keep going in life.

Dynasty F.

My forever gift

It was a gift from my father, he got it from his mom so it's special to both of us. I always kept it with me and it reminded us so much of her to the point we got a whole new one made the same exact way and size. It was her ring she bought and loved dearly and she made sure to never lose it or even take it off. She gave it to him when he got old enough for him to fit it and actually take care of it instead of giving it to him just so he can lose it and not be mature about it.

It affects me in so many ways because of its history and from someone who I barely saw but every time I saw her she always told me about myself and what to do and what not to do. She wasn't strict but she told me wrong from right and said no to current things that didn't sit right with her. I wanted it so much because everybody had something from a loved one, but me. And she always called me a favorite. I was the only grandchild who stayed with her all weekend. I canceled plans to sit with her and we always took me outside to explore. Or I would leave and come right back because there was never nothing going wrong with her. She was not judgmental or mean at all, she loved her people dearly.

Jackniel G.

War

In land where shadows fall so deep, hearts long for the calm season, for the gentle sleep.
Through storms of conflict and war, voices rise, and the dreams of peace go beneath the skies.
May the understanding of peace and kindness grow where pain has been marked. A face shaped by tears and sadness, people don't have enemies they create out of jealousy and hatred, there isn't a reason to hate others for something. Because in the land that shadows did fall we dream of peace would heal us all with open arms and hearts.

Jackniel G.

Bright

The sun wakes up and starts to shine on the Earth's floor, the birds start to sing high and low, the sky turns blue and the clouds float by as the morning wakes up from the sleepy sky.

Emani W.

The ice is cold but the chair is rolling

Getting my first phone ever in life
I felt so much joy
Having my own phone means getting to do
What I want, whenever I want
I can see everything from my phone

Until my phone got lost

One day, I was with my family
In the early day, they planned to see me
They planned to take me somewhere
And I agreed to go with them

I left with them, and we were having a good time
We went to the pool, and I put my phone down on the table
Covered with my towel
And I left for like 1 hour or so

I came back after swimming, and my phone was gone
I looked everywhere for my phone
No one seen it –even when I asked security
And no one had any idea where it went
We even asked them to check the footage, and they
Said they couldn't, so my phone has been stolen, or I misplaced it

Jaiden C.

Because

Because of life
Because of family
Because of friends
Because of opportunities
Because of knowledge
Because of love
Because of passion
Because of memories
Because of faith
Because of failure
Because of me
I will keep fighting because if I don't, who will?

Jaiden C.

**Cover Story #5
The Nation Gathers**

A hall full of men and women
Signs everywhere to the right and to left of me
Barely places to fit in so many people
All for freedom
All for equality
A speech that is history and will always be remembered
This day will make change
This action shows the true heart of America
MLK advocating better than the feeling of Ice cream on a hot day
More than 250000 humans
This is something that's just bigger than a speech or a march;
this is for justice
Then, Now, Forever

Jamaia B.

Better Days Coming

I believe hard times help people grow.
Sometimes life can feel stressful and unfair.
There have been times in my life where things didn't go the way I wanted.
During those moments, I felt upset and confused.
But I learned that tough situations can teach you a lot.
It's like when it rains for a long time.
At first, everything feels gloomy.
But when the rain stops, a rainbow comes.
People are similar because struggles can make us stronger.
Hard moments can teach us how to be patient and independent.
They can help us understand life better.
Those experiences shape who we become.

Jannette W.

My Future

because I need to graduate from
because my family needs me
because I don't know if I will have children
because I don't know if I will be successful
because my English needs to get better
because I need to pass OST
because i want to go to college
because I want to live somewhere else
because I am still young
my future is unsure

Jeffrey Canales A.

Creative Argument

Imagine you are out enjoying your day with your family when out of nowhere you get charged by ICE Agents because you look Hispanic. They don't ask you questions or tell you why you are being stopped. They just come up to you and start harassing you and brutally detaining you because you look Hispanic.

People can have absolutely zero felonies, misdemeanors, or any type of charges, but because you have an accent, you speak Spanish they will treat you like the biggest criminal in the world. It is unbelievable how many videos there are of people getting harassed by ICE agents and some of the agents have a bigger accent than the person they are trying to detain.

The craziest part is that those agents will stop at nothing to get to you, they will use brute force and treat you like you're not human. They separate you from your family who you love and work so hard for.

Jeffrey M.

Because Poem

Because I want to experience new things in life, but I'm scared
Because I want to get better at something, but deep down, knowing I'm not good at it
Because I want to see happiness, but all I see is sadness
Because I have to hear all these remarks around me, and I slowly start realizing it's
kinda true
Because I need to do better with my newly found attitude and not be my old self
Because I lost my grandparents, and now I don't know how to express myself
Because I am not focused on one thing and have to do multiple things
Because I still see the fat kid when I look in the mirror
Because I work out and see and feel no changes
Because I want some of the things other people have or experience
I have experienced these things in the past, but they will stay with me
But I'm glad it's out of the way.

Jeremiah S.

Two Voice Poem: (Modern Time Encanto Addition)

My name is Maria

And my name is Mirabel

We are both twins

My life is more centered
around crime and violence,
but I still lie low from time to
time to hang out with my twin
sister.

And my life is more centered
around wanting to feel like I
belong in my magical familia.
But when I want to relieve
stress, I smoke with my twin
sister.

Both of us are shunned by
our family and the community
for being giftless, but we
enjoy the diversity of our
lives.

Mirabel is a lot more innocent
than I am, and our family
often considers her a “better
example,” but despite our
treatment, I’ll never stop
loving my twin sister, no
matter how differently we are
treated.

Maria gets into a lot more
trouble than I do, such as
“Gang Violence,” “Getting into
fights,” or “Fleeing the cops.”
I don’t know why, but even
our Abuela Alma gets
physical with her sometimes,
often without reason

Even though both of us are
treated differently, we still
bear no ill will to each other,
no matter who gets favored
more.

And if our own family can’t
love us the way we are.

Then we don’t need their love
or acceptance at all.

The love we twins have for
each other is more than
enough.

Jeremiah S.

Declarative List Poem

1. Because the lunch here is processed and there's no taste.
2. Because the staff at this school are really short-tempered and very irritating.
3. Because the principles at this school will suspend you for reasons that don't make any sense.
4. Because some of the kids at this school get away with stuff, and the security guards who favor them let them.
5. Because this building is slowly deteriorating, but I'm still forced to be here.
6. Because my dad thought that, since he graduated from this school, I should graduate from here too.
7. Because the grading system is out of whack in this building
8. Because some of the kids here annoy me with a burning passion.
9. And because this school lacks the necessary punishment that any other high school would execute.

Declaration Statement:

When you take into consideration
to comprehend my biased accumulation,
you'll understand my declaration
as to why East Technical High School is my least favorite school,
no matter what generation.

Jeremiah W.

This Is My Name

At birth my grandma knew what she wanted to name me
Jeremiah
Because when I was born and look into her eyes
She saw hope
That what Jeremiah means in the Bible
To bring hope to people who don't have it
In Jeremiah 31:25 it says
"I will give rest and strength to those who are weak and tired"
I didn't understand what that meant
Until the day I walked in my house and my family saw me
All of their faces lit up
Brighter than the sun
And they said, " Just seeing you makes us happy and bring us strength to go on"
I thank God for that
And I thank God for giving me a name that nobody messes up
Because you hear Jeremiah everywhere
In song and book, movie and church
Even in schools
Because no matter where you go
You will always hear my name
Jeremiah
Don't forget it

Joselyn A.

The Immigrant and ICE Agent

A Two Voice Poem

I am an immigrant. I am treated as an animal Because of how I immigrated. I work hard without complaints. I get paid so little but keep Going for my family, even if i Can't give my kids everything They want to have. I leave home with fear everyday. Fear of getting deported. Leaving my loved ones behind. At the deportation detention camps I'm all alone. I see their sympathy and Wonder if I'll ever see My family again. I'm treated poorly. I hope they stop with this Madness, I just wanna be Safe and sound. The system failed us. They realized it too late. They're too blind to see the truth. We're both just human. One with privilege And one with unfairness.	I am an ICE agent. I treat them like animals because They aren't from here. I work and still complain and get Paid well enough to give my kids What they want to have . I do whatever I want. I have no fear of being deported. I don't have to leave my loved Ones behind. I don't care one bit for these People in the deportation Detention centers. I'm at these detention camps And I'm starting to see how They are like me. I'm treating them poorly. I'm starting to see the truth That was in front of me the whole time. I was too blind To see it. I realized too late They're too blind to see the truth. We're both just human. One with privilege And one with unfairness.
--	--

Joselyn A.

In another world

You're supposed to leave
Animals with their families
Not separate them.

This isn't about animals.

In another world there is no racism.
No Blacks.
No Whites.
No Hispanics and Latinos.
No Asians.
Just people who help each other.

In another world there is no
Immigrants.
No aliens.
No undocumented.
Just people who live undivided.
In peace.

In some other world everyone is united.

No divided nations.

No superiority.

Just equality.

*"12 Now we see only reflections in a mirror, mere riddles, but then we shall be seeing face to face. Now I can know only imperfectly; but then I shall know just as fully as I am myself known.
13 As it is, these remain: faith, hope and love, the three of them; and the greatest of them is love."*

1 Corinthians 13:12-13

Londereese C.

What I'm not, but am

I'm not energetic
I'm exhausted
I don't know it all
I'm curious
I'm not boring
I'm funny
I'm not brave
I'm scared
I'm not black
I am brown
I'm not dumb
I am smart
I'm not loud
I'm quiet
I'm not LJ
Im Londereese

Londereese C.

Name Poem

Loving soul shining so bright
Outgoing and full of light
Neat and clean in every place
Dedicated eyes on a handsome face
Eager for the warmth you share
Radiant joy beyond compare
Elegant man who can lend a hand
Embracing the broken all across the land
Strong in spirit, kind and true
Every day is blessed with you
Courageous heart, so bold and free,
Honest as a soul can be.
Always lifting those around where
Peace and beauty, rarely found.
Passionately living life with grace
Love reflected in your face
Ever faithful, ever bright

makayla e.

my core memory

On the day, I turned sixteen
Family gathered and took time out of their day to celebrate me
As every family member arrives, the gift table piles up more
Up the driveway that leads into the backyard, which was turned into a waterpark
A bucket filled with different-colored water balloons
A grill that's breathing smoke with a hint of flavor
Color theme covers on tables with the number 16, one table has a custom-ordered pink ombre swirl pearl decor layered stacked cake
A round blue pool filled with water and floaties that could hold numerous people
A slide for the ground with water shooting up from the sides
And the vibration from the loud music blasting
Everyone was laughing and socializing with the music in the background. The sounds of water balloons popping and water splashing filled the air
The time came when it was time to sing the song that was only sung on a special day
Sixteen lighted candles with wax dripping down stood up on top of the frosting
Before it was my time to blow out the candles, I took one look around at everyone singing and felt loved and appreciated.
Forever i will cherish this moment.

makayla evans

A light has lost its shine

The world feels so blank and still since my grandma went into resting
Her smile, her voice, her presence now gone
Sleep is hard, the dreams are gray
I wish she was here, to chase them away
The days are long, the nights are deep
And as I go to sleep, a tear softly creeps

Little things, they make me cry
Trying to heal, a step at a time
I know it's ok to feel sad
But as days go by, my emotions are really bad
I miss my grandma more than words can say
But I'll find my strength, I hope someday

Makayla E.

Because i choose myself

Because i don't have the latest devices
Because i don't have a lot of money
Because i don't live in a luxury household
Because i don't own any type of designer clothes or shoes
Because i don't have multiple likings or followers on social media
Because i don't participate in criminal activities that could get me in trouble
Because i don't disrespect my parents
Because i don't follow after anyone
Because i don't go out partying and sneaking around
Because i don't drink or smoke
Because i don't associate with violence
Because i choose to be different and go the right direction to success

Each of you, as an individual, must pick your own goals. Listen to others, but do not become a blind follower. Thurgood Marshall

Makayla E.

On The Day I Turned Sixteen

On the day, I turned sixteen
Family gathered and took time out of their day to celebrate me
As every family member arrives, the gift table piles up more
Up the driveway that leads into the backyard is turned into a waterpark
A bucket filled with different color water balloons
A grill that's breathing smoke with a hint of flavor
Color theme covers on tables with the number 16,
One table has a custom ordered pink ombre swirl pearl decor layered stacked cake
A round blue pool is filled with water and floaties that could hold numerous people
A slide for the ground with water is shooting up from the sides
And the vibration from the loud music is blasting
Everyone is laughing and socializing with the music in the background. The sounds of water balloons popping and water splashing filled the air
The time came when it was time to sing the song that was only sung on a special day
Sixteen lighted candles with wax dripping down stood up on top of the frosting
Before it was my time to blow out the candles, I took one look around at everyone singing and felt loved and appreciated.
Forever I will cherish this moment.

Mariam E.

To my dad

Because of the happy times we shared,
because of the laughter that filled our days,
because of the things he taught me with kindness,
because of the memories we made, still here,
because he helped me up when I fell,
because of the love and wisdom he shared,
because he made every day special,
because he showed me how to live and be kind,
because the space he left is now filled with tears,
because memories bring both happy and sad times,
because he made me feel loved and important,
because I felt safe with him,
because of the things we'll never do together,
because he's gone and it's quiet now,
I miss you, Dad.

Matthew Josxiel P.

The Pain of Boxing

Because I am a boxer,
Because of the pain and struggle to become the best,
Because of the fear of loss,
Because I saw myself in others that I swore would never happen,
Because of the mistakes,
Because of the tears drawn in secret,
Because of the blood and sweat shed,
Because of the endured harshness of the world,
Because my eyes strive to seek for something that might be impossible,
Because of my brothers who were separated from me,
Because of the music that allows me to continue,
Because of the thoughts that never disappear from my head,
Because of words that never appear when needed,
Because of the wish to return to the past and change things,
I am confused about where I fit in this life.

MICHAEL I.

I Am Grateful for What Gives Me Joy

I'm celebrating my family
I'm celebrating my mom
I want to thank my mom
for giving me a lot of things
like my bed
a roof over my head
rides home or to school
and buying me food

I'm celebrating my people
the people who bring me joy
are my mom
my cousins
my brother
my dad
and my friends.

I'm celebrating places I like and things I like to do
places that bring me joy are
places I go on my birthday, like The Main Event, Skyzone, or going skating

Milan W.

My Love

Because of the way we can relate
Because of the snacks we share
Because of the gossiping we do
Because of the love and affection we share
Because of the protection I feel
Because of how I can bawl my eyes out and just feel nothing but comfort
Because I can wake him up at 3 in the morning, and he'll stay up with me until I fall asleep again
Because of how he makes sure I'm okay no matter what
Because when my family makes me feel like a dump, I can go to him
Because our love is unconditional, no matter who says what and who does/doesn't "like" or
"want" us to be together
I love my boyfriend 🥰

Nataly E.

Hope

There is a place where everything sinks,
where the cold wind is the only laugh,
where it will be remembered that fire
can also be called. Her soul was dying,
but her words have lifted it up.

You are not alone

Don't feel alone.

Shine, even though your surroundings don't allow it,
even though an abandoned fire
tries to extinguish your light.

The fire thought it had won,
but in the rubble and the silence,
there was a flower.

Not just any flower,
but one that decides
that this will not be its end,
clinging to life
with hope
of one more day.

Nyjah A.

Because

Because I wake up every morning
Because I live a thankful life
Because I don't have to worry about many things
Because I get an education to graduate
Because I have a comfortable bed
Because I have food on the table every day
Because I have a roof over my head
Because I have clean clothes
Because I have at least one caring parent
Because I have shoes to go on my feet
Because I can keep my hair done
Because I have good hygiene products

I love this life

Rickiyah H.

My Poem

Because if you are feeling down
Because it may not be easy to talk about
Because there's always somebody who's struggling worse than you
Because it may not be what you want
Because it's what God has planned for you
Because, and always remember, you can turn to God
Because I know it can be hard
Because I know it can also be tiring
Because you can never give up
Because it won't always be bad for long
Because God is right by your side
Because God is good all the time

Saanya W.

High school isn't for the weak

Because Saanya is a shy person, everyone thinks she's scared to speak up for herself
Because Saanya is the quiet friend, everyone thinks she's the sneaky friend
Because Saanya is skinny, everyone thinks she doesn't eat
Because Saanya makes some bad decisions, they think Saanya hangs around the wrong crowd
Because Saanya cares about herself and speaks up for herself, they think she's crazy
Because Saanya is different, they think they should treat her differently as well
Because Saanya told you about her trauma doesn't mean you use it against her
Because Saanya is not friends with you anymore doesn't mean you throw dirt on her name
Because Saanya loves you, that doesn't mean you betray her
Because Saanya doesn't come to your class, that doesn't mean she doesn't like you
Because Saanya hates school doesn't mean she's not going to graduate
I will remain hopeful

Sean G. II

Ekphrastic Poem

Many homes lost in this tragedy
People forced to leave so many memories behind
All hope may seem to be lost in this tragedy
But there will always be something bright that glows in the dark
From the remains of what the flames had consumed
And the ashes of the crying buildings there is color
This bright pink and red that pulls some hope back from this darkness
Hope that one day things will change and look as pretty as they use to
Hope that all the families will be able to bounce back from such disaster
Hope that the land will return with its beautiful green color from all the plant
Hope that everything that was lost will come back better then when it was destroyed
Let this small sign of life be a new beginning form this disaster

Sean G. II

Overheated

A time where I felt hopeless was when my game had overheated. It was a hot summer day. I had been up three straight nights, and I was currently playing the game. Then I started to hear my games fan hum to life. Soon it would cut straight off, and I sat there wondering what was wrong. I kept trying to cut it on, but it just wouldn't and then I felt a wave of depression hit me but soon I remembered I could bring it back to life. I waited till it was a stormy night and began to start working. I had opened my game up completely and proceeded to start performing surgery. Eventually I took it up to the roof and waited till it was struck by lightning and the fan started to spin back to life I started to laugh maniacally celebrating my success while say "ITS ALIVE!"

List poem (Sean G.)

Because I love the sound of the squeaky floor
Because of the professionals I look up to
Because I love the sport
Because of the marks I have, it shows hard work
Because of the amazing sound of me hitting the ball
Because of the cheers I get when saving the ball
Because of my teammates, I push myself
Because I love watching the sport
Because Someone told me not to quit
Because of my coach, I have another family
Because of me and my brother's friendly competition
Because of the trophies I have, that bring me motivation
Because all of these reasons
I love to watch and play volleyball

Shenel A. C.

After the Loud Noises Came (An Ekphrastic Poem)

My shoulders feel heavy
My hands are cold
My feet hurt
but I didn't care
I'm tired

My sister is sleeping next to me
I want her close to me
I'm afraid they will take her away
I held her tight all day

Why did the loud noises come?
Why is our house gone?
Where is Mommy?
Where is Daddy?
I don't understand.

SHYANNE R.

To My Loud Friend

I want to thank my loud friend for allowing me to see life from their point of view
A view filled with laughter and the courage of a lion
Who might bite off your head if you hurt the ones they love
They create joy when it gets hard to smile
From the study halls with anything but test prep

To telling me a little too much about a failed relationship that they could never forgive again
So yes it took some time for me to understand a person whose whole world is so selfless
that an action must be taken at that moment or they could never live it down

I envy this non-over thinker who lets others look at all the pretty fish in their crystal clear pond
That at first glance you might see the sandy bottom but the refracting light blinds you
For From what seems like sand soon turns into something deeper and darker
That I can only see what makes you like everyone else
It's the feeling after everyone gets done fish and swims in your pond soon stops leaving you
filled with emptiness
However just as you taught me to be selfless and to have the courage to fight
So let me say thank you by helping you grow yourself into more than just a pond that gets taken
from
To a lake filled with fish that can bite back or a willow tree that gives you advice on the most
troubling questions that this world can offer.

Tashara S.

Because

I'll write this poem, 'cause you're who I am.
Because you steal my snacks when I'm not looking,
I'll also write about all the fun we're partaking.
Because you know my secrets, the silly and deep,
I'll share some good thoughts while you're asleep!
Because you annoy me till I want to scream,
I'll also remember every shared dream.
Because we laugh at jokes nobody else gets,
I'll write down those moments, no regrets!

Tavelle S.

I got my name from my dad

When i look my name up online, it says my name is a table or a board
But my name is more important than that because my dad gave me his name to make him
proud
But if you don't like it, I don't care about what people think about me
or my name, because I love my name
If you're not saying my name the right way, don't say it at all
Or if you have a problem with me, stay away
Because I don't like the hate or fake, because i like my name like a piece of cake
When i go outside, everybody screams my name because i got fame
I say my name loudly because I'm not ashamed
Because when I'm on the court, everybody is saying my name

Taylan G.

The Hardest Chapter

One of the most hopeless moments I remember happened a couple weeks before November 28th, 2025, during basketball tryouts at school. Basketball has always been my dream. Ever since I was little, I imagined myself playing in the NBA one day. Every time I stepped on a court I felt like that dream was getting closer. But that week during tryouts, it suddenly felt like everything I had worked for my whole life was about to disappear.

The gym was loud with the sound of sneakers squeaking and basketballs bouncing. I was injured before tryouts even started. My knee was messed up and I was wearing a knee brace just to protect it, and I was clearly limping. But I still showed up because basketball means everything to me. Even though I could barely run or jump, I was hustling harder than anyone on the court. I was getting rebounds, playing strong defense, and giving effort on every single play. Most of the guards weren't even passing the ball, even when I was wide open in the paint. After a while I stopped standing down low and started setting screens on the perimeter to help my teammates get open. Even injured, I was trying to do everything I could to help.

The second day of tryouts didn't happen right away because something came up, so it continued another day later. That day the team was supposed to be doing push-ups. I tried, but my shoulder is messed up and I physically couldn't do them. I told the assistant coach that my shoulder was injured, but he didn't care. He just looked at me and told me to get out of the gym. Just like that. No explanation. No second chance.

Walking out of the gym was one of the most embarrassing moments of my life. The sound of practice was still going on behind me while I walked out the doors. My heart was racing and my mind kept repeating the same thought: this might be the end of everything. This was my senior year, my last real chance to prove myself. I barely got to play my sophomore or junior year, and now this opportunity was gone too. On top of that, I already knew my grades weren't good enough for most colleges. I didn't have money for camps or showcases where coaches could see me. It felt like the dream I had worked for since I was a kid was slipping away.

Later that night I was sitting alone in my room, staring at the ceiling and thinking about everything. I kept thinking about how close things once felt. That summer I had been at another school where I actually had a real chance to play and get noticed by Division I coaches. Their schedule was tougher and they played against top teams where scouts were known to show up. I felt like my future was right there. But at the last minute my mom said I couldn't stay there, so I had to go back to the school where I was now. Sitting there in the dark, I felt completely powerless, like my whole basketball career was ending before it even really started.

Then something strange happened.

As I sat there, my room suddenly felt quiet, almost like time had slowed down. My phone screen lit up by itself on the desk even though I hadn't touched it. A video started playing. At first I thought it was just some random clip, but then I realized something that made my heart stop.

The player on the screen looked exactly like me.

He was older, stronger, and wearing a professional basketball jersey in a huge arena filled with fans. The crowd was roaring after he dunked the ball. The commentators were shouting his name. I leaned closer to the phone, confused. Then the player turned toward the camera and spoke.

“Right now you think it’s over,” he said. “But this is the moment that decides everything.”

The video showed clips of long nights in the gym, hours studying to fix grades, and games at smaller colleges where he dominated the court. It showed him getting stronger, proving people wrong, and eventually walking onto an NBA court. Then the screen suddenly went black.

For a long time I just sat there staring at the phone. And I heard from a distance “With the first pick in the 2028 NBA Draft, the Los Angeles Lakers select Taylan Gathings, forward, from Duke University.” Then I woke up. It was just a dream.

That’s when I realized something. Maybe the path wasn’t going to be the one I imagined. Maybe I wouldn’t go straight to a big Division I school. Maybe I’d have to go to junior college or a smaller program first. But the dream wasn’t actually over unless I decided to quit.

That night I stopped feeling like everything was finished. Instead, it felt like I had just reached the hardest chapter of the story.

And I decided I wasn’t done writing it yet.

Threasa Lynn S.

Because I love this life

Because the rain wouldn’t stop,
I learned how to speak in silence
Because the sky was wide,
I felt tiny like a whisper, that never answered back
Because you said goodbye,
It echoes your footsteps when things get quiet
Because I was afraid, I stayed,
Because I stayed, I changed
Because I love this life, I will forgive it for hurting me
I will choose it again after it falls
Because I remain hopeful, I gather the broken pieces
Not everything that has been shattered is lost

Because I keep fighting, I carry scars I don’t explain

Tyrone W.

Who I Am

I was born in Ohio,
my birthday is February 1st,
I am 17 years old
I am five foot five
I have one sibling on my mom's side
And one sibling on my dad's side
I dozed off in class
I like to sleep a lot
I love to play with my sister and play board games.
I like to play basketball
I like going to visit my dad
And I like to watch movies.
I'm a generally nice person

Xavier A.

My Memory Tool

My flute is a memory tool that lets me go back
Its memories are still engraved in the songs I play
The touch has a feel of a light feather when you play it
It has an addicting type of material that goes perfectly with my memory tool.
Even though many of the songs that I have played are lost

The noise it makes when you blow into it is worth it to play again.

Tymere

I Am...

I am a beast
I am smart
I am tall
I am black
I am creative
I am unique
I am worth it

Yayley F.

Silent Voices

We were promised love and peace, but it feels more like envy and despair. We build buildings just for you to tear them down, we eat at broken tables and chairs, wondering where and how it all went wrong. I look around at what seemed to be my home, all crumbled and decayed, but everyone else believes that this is a game. I cry out loud, I scream for help, but everyone else only thinks about themselves. I pray and pray that one day this will all go away, and I will see the sun shine its way because I promised myself another day.

Zaisean J.

I Want To Thank Poem

I wanted to thank my mom for giving me life
because she's been there since day one
she always has my back,
I care for her and she cares for me,
i can ask her for something and she'll get it
sometimes,
she supports me when I need it or need help,
She's the beautiful person in the world,
She is my number one favorite person in the world,
I've got her back and she's got mine,
i'll do anything to save her, help her, be there
I'll do anything for my mom
I'll die for my mom,
She's the best mom I can ask for, the best I could ever have,
And I respect her all the time,
I'm happy that's she always going to love me and I'm always going to love her,
And when I graduate and get my life together I'm going to give my mom the whole world
I love you Mom.

Zayon B.

why i became who i am today

Because of motivation, I strive to do better
Because of determination, I fly to try and reach my goal,
Because of my family, I haven't given up,
Because of my teachers, I grow smarter,
Because of discipline, I'm respectful,
Because of my mom, I learned discipline,
Because of my friends and family, I smile,
Because of loss, I'm sad,
Because of loss, I am pushed forward

Zharia C.

Stormy Night

All alone in my dark room listening to rain sing
Who can ever sleep with such blustery sounds
Tapping and rattlings on the outside doors
Icy pellets beating against window panes
Strange sounds that I often never heard before
Tree branches beating on the house
Heavy snow drifts forming on every street corner
Winds blowing with all their might
Rain and snow intensely fall through the darkest hours

Leaves whirling through areas that were miles apart
When a welcome relief comes down to a dawn
The worries of a stormy night will soon depart
Passing the shadows of each crystal windowpane
The sound of storms and rain were about to wane.

When it came down to a dawn, all I had to do was remain calm
How long was the storm
Moving rapidly, quickly its gone
Now I sat by my window listening to the birds chirp
What a beautiful storm

Zy'Asia S.

Because

Because I want to make my mother proud.
Because I want to set a good example for my little sisters.
Because I want to be someone great in the world.
Because I want to take care of my family.
Because I work for what I want.
Because even though it's hard, I have people who are looking up to me.
Because my parents need me, it's hard being the oldest.
Because I know God has my back.
Because I know it's gonna get better.
I won't give up.

Zy'Hir G.

So I Rise and Remain

Because of the hard work I put into basketball, Flag football, and school work,
Because of the way I walk in and make everyone laugh and put smiles on their faces to light up their day,
Because I'm the sun when lots of people are feeling down,
Because of the way me and my friends laugh,
and I add that extra snort to the laugh to make it funnier,
Because I can be myself whenever, wherever, around any and everybody,
Because of how happy I really was when I was younger,
Because of the sounds of the noises, kids, cars, trees, and how much fun I used to have when I was a kid,
Because of the songs,
Because of the smile I keep on my face,
Because I love my family and close friends,
I try my hardest to be there for everyone to make everyone happy,
So I rise and remain.