



**Voices
of Kansas**

A Journal of the Kansas Association of Teachers of English
Vol. 9, No. 2

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Cover Artist Statement from Anna Thomison, Editor's Choice Award Recipient for Artistic Expression:

I have been drawing and painting for years now, and it has become a huge part of my life. Art plays a big role in my family too, as my great grandparents were also painters. I pour my heart into each piece I create, and I wouldn't give it up for the world.

From the Editors:

That's a pretty powerful statement: "I pour my heart into each piece I create, and I wouldn't give it up for the world." I think many of our young Voices across the state of Kansas would feel the same, as do the many teachers and support reviewers that help to make this journal possible. It takes many volunteer hours between teachers willing to submit each piece individually, to the reviewers who go through each submission in order to provide some feedback. Some of us even sit for hours to try to learn a new version of a layout program (ahem). We pour our hearts into this process and experiment with some changes.

One change we are experimenting with this issue is to disburse the art throughout the journal. While normally the work would typically exist in its own section, we saw it as complimentary to many of the poetry and prose submissions we received, and this model fits with what we see in reputable journals across the professional writing community.

We also decided that there may be distinct stylistic differences between Creative Fiction and Literary Nonfiction. Although submissions were made under a single heading, whenever discernibly possible, we've placed things into two distinct sections.

We would like to thank all of our volunteers and all of our teachers. We'd also like to commend all of the wonderful creative work that's supported in Kansas classrooms. Several years ago, we decided to separate *Voies of Kansas* into two issues per year due to the high volume of submissions. This fall our submissions outpaced that decision—and we know there may be even more this spring. Keep up the good work, amazing colleagues.

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And Student Writers: This journal is made possible by your creative spirit and fire, and we absolutely love giving your Voices a chance to shine.

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The following pieces were selected for the **Editor's Choice Awards**. These exemplify the best of what Kansas has to offer—but there were many wonderful submissions during this cycle. Some finalists worthy of an **Honorable Mention**:

Ismael Saeed for “I Squish Spiders Alone,” “Frida and Them,” and “Selene, What Luminous Moon”

Aaliyah Hadley for “The Beauty of Aging”

Mercury Ta for the sheer volume of accepted works AND specifically for “There’s a whistling…”

Ivy Wallace for “Rhinoceros”

Isadora Wilson for “Harbor Sunset”

Addi Smith for “Self Portrait 1”

Shane Wilson for “Siren Poem”

Editor's Choice Awards

Artistic Express: Anna Thomison for *Swimming Fishes*

Creative Nonfiction: Whitney Carbmichael for “8 things on how to be normal”

Literary Fiction: Emile King Grow for “*Monday's Not Coming* Alternative Ending” adapted from Tiffany D. Jackson’s novel of the same name

Poetry: Dana Rodriquez for *Theme for IB English*

The Mission of *Voices of Kansas*

We are a digitally published journal sponsored by the Kansas Association of Teachers of English. We welcome manuscripts and

artwork in the categories of Perspectives & Literary Criticism, Artistic Expression, Poetry, and Creative Fiction & Non-Fiction from educators, student teachers, and students in grades 3-6 & 7-12. Our mission is for this journal to be a place for young writers to have a voice through both written and visual expression. Editor's choice entries are featured with lesson plans aligned to Common Core Standards for use by English-Language Arts teachers in the state of Kansas.

Review Board

Editors

April Pameticky — *Wichita East High School*
Nathan Whitman—*Derby High School*

Reviewers

Amanda Little
Claudia Esparza
Sarah Byarly
Shayn Guillemette
Deb McNemeed
Melanie Deters

Please send all submissions via the online submission form at <http://www.kansasenglish.org>. Voices of Kansas does not accept physical or hard-copy submissions.

Submission Guidelines

Submissions must be made by a KATE member via our online submission system. Submissions to Voices of Kansas are reviewed by editors and reviewers of the journal, and the editors share critiques and work with the authors advancing toward publication in the journal. We provide constructive feedback for all submissions. Voices of Kansas publishes in the spring, and all applicants receive an emailed copy of the journal. The present year's publication can be downloaded for free on the KATE website; however, previous volumes can be accessed via a KATE members-only archive.

Written Manuscripts

Literary Criticism, Poetry, Fiction & Non-fiction

- Prose: maximum of 1,000 words
- Poetry: maximum of 100 lines

- Typed (Times New Roman 12-point font)
- Double-spaced
- Number by page; conform (if applicable) to MLA or APA
- Save attached work as: (.doc/.docx) for Word, Rich Text Format (.rtf), or Google Doc format
- No identifying information should appear on the manuscript.

Artistic Expressions

Submit photographs of non-digitized art (pottery, etc.) and digital

art in one of the following formats:

- .jpg,
- .jpeg,
- .png

Please include a 100 word (maximum) written description of the piece.

Lost & Deleted Journal Copies

If you are a student who was published in a previous volume and have lost your copy of the journal, or if you were a teacher who had students published in a previous volume, please email us at voicesofkansas@gmail.com! We'll happily send you a new file.

Sincerely,
April Pameticky
Nathan Whitman

Literary Nonfiction

8 things on how to be normal

Whitney Carmichael

1. Like what everyone else likes don't care if you have another splash of color stay in the line of primary colors and beiges

2. Get a good grade, not a great a good, get a grade that's not too high but not much lower don't be lazy get up and study but don't study too much you hermit!! You gotta be a kid but you also have to be an adult cause life is tough so stop being immature. When did being a kid become a lottery where we have to see if we get the jackpot. When did school become a place where an inner child gets stepped on.

3. When I was old enough to know shapes, those shapes became a grocery line of bodies. Soon I was put into a category like the fruit carts you see at the store. When I got older, I turned from a seed to a fruit, a fruit that was forbidden like the fruit in the garden of Eden. My body was a temptation without my permission. I just kept growing but so did the stares. Sometimes I wish I never grew. Normal girls wear leggings and crop tops but some are told they can't fit the box cause it is not normal to show off your curves and fat when the goddess of beauty herself in sculptures had rolls herself. Yet that's not normal

* * *

4. Fall in love with the opposite gender that's the normal thing to do but why fall for the moon if I could also dive into the sea? The sea with her beautiful coral reefs and her comforting waves. Why did I have to be destined to the moon? Why can't I fall without knowing the identity? For me to be a trad-wife with soft spoken words , cooking skills, and only think about kids cause that all a woman is good for "It's a man's world after all" said every 1950s ad ever. Forget knowing that somewhere in your heart you loved someone knowing there was a storm because that love is not considered the norm. That love is like an abstract painting. That love is every statement that an audience responds with " silly little girl you are just confused." Normal little girls watch Disney princess movies with pretty dresses and fairy god mothers but also see the princess get the prince and wish for a " so this is love " moment themselves. How do I live in a world where the only moment my love is praised like happily ever after is if it was with a boy because when it is not.....its abnormal

5. The thing about that little girl is that she grew up in a normal standard home, in a normal neighborhood, in a normal set of pets, in a normal white fence, and in a normal standard of life but she was nothing but normal. She followed the lines with the colors and yet she was a Vincent van Gogh in her

mind painting her own sky but still was tied to the white fence. I wanted to be my mom's perfect daughter when i was little but the more did the more the thorns grew on the vines to which now i climb to get out of the grave she dug my hands bloody from climbing but i still want the art in me to be the out without the norms before i become the bullet in my Van Gogh.

6. Normal people wear the trend they walk it. Now don't get me wrong it is very good looking on people everyone can wear whatever they want. But could I add on could we just be truthful if people could wear what they want then don't throw judgment instead of roses. Clothing is a piece of fabric sewed and shaped to cover a body and if that clothing suited one gender only then put the pronouns on the tag. I love my outfits. I love the way I dress . I love to decorate my body like a Christmas tree with colors and accessories and know that I have no limit cause...

7. I'm not normal. I'll never be normal but normal is not what I look for. I don't even think normal exists anymore because when have you ever meet someone who was perfectly normal oh wait you haven't because normal is just a cover up word with many definitions all being that a person is scared to be or not to be of fear of the rabbit hole of judgment to which I am

alice but seen as the mad hatter. Yes I see your stares and yes I hear your comments to which I say in the most polite way.....F### off

8. This entire list is bullsh## all the shapes, clothing gender, love is all bullsh##. Normal as it turns out is a complete illusion, a made up word or at least how we use it. Society norms is a hand book for bullies. Society norms is an expectation or a comparison from most parents to their child. Society norms is whatever the basic religious moms say on Facebook like our world is being damaged thar we the “ abnormal “ are to blame and didn’t even lift a finger. People are people, we have devils and we have angels on both sides of this invisible war. Importantly, at the end of the day we are still human.

Lesson Plan for Editor's Choice
"8 Things on How to be Normal"
Using the List [ListCicle] approach
4th-12th, with appropriate Grade-Level Adaptations

***Editor's Note:** There's a sophisticated sartorial and sarcastic tone present in our exemplar. Some students will want to play with that element. Some students won't yet be ready for that level of nuance and irony. This lesson simply invokes the use of Lists.*

Objectives: Students will generate Listcicles to show what they know, reflect upon new knowledge, and generate ideas for further exploration in writing and discussion.

Essential Questions: How can generating lists help us organize our thinking?

Vocabulary / Terms to Know

Listcicle: Like 'google,' this term did not exist 20 years ago. But a **LISTCICLE** now refers to a common practice in journalism and blogging, that refers to organizing ideas by short bursts or paragraphs.

Bell Work / Opener:

Choose a Topic and Create a List

Remind students that it's not necessary at this time to write out more details: just choose a topic and generate a list.

- Things my mom says
- Items I carry in my backpack
- Places I want to visit someday
- Character traits of the main protagonist
- What makes a villain villainous

* * *

Explicit Instructions & Main Activities

The BellWork / Opener activity for this is actually quite adaptable for a variety of activities. Here we're going to show how it can lead into strong discussion and reflection.

Small Group Discussion

- 1) Divide students into groups of 3-4
- 2) Allow each group around 5-7 minutes to share and discuss the lists
- 3) Guide students into the following reflective questions:
 - A) What purpose do lists like this serve?
 - B) What purpose does YOUR list serve?
- 4) Once students have had a chance to discuss these elements, they can return to seats, preparing for individual reflection.

Assessment

Students will generate a ListCicle on this question:

What are 5 things You Know to be True about your Main Character?

Students must ALSO then add HOW they know with text evidence—> older students will find quotes from the text. At least 3 of their observations MUST be supported with evidence from the text.

Potential Enrichment:

- Watch Sarah Kay's TedTalk, "If I should have a daughter." In it, she references an easy assignment for her audience: 10 Things I know to be True. [https://www.ted.com/talks/sarah_kay_if_i_should_have_a_daughter?hasSummary=true&language=en]

- Do a 1 Pager that includes the ListCicle, Text Evidence, and 2-3 illustrations to add visual interest. Then do a gallery walk so that students can see what others produced.

Common Core State Standards

W4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W5 With some guidance and support from adults and peers, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.

W9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research

* * *

Meat is Meat

Whitney Carmichael

Early that day the weather turned, and the snow was melting into dirty water. Streaks of it ran down from the little shoulder high window that faced the backyard. Cars slushed on the street outside, where it was getting dark, and it was getting dark on the inside too.

“Did you get the meat from the store?” she yelled from the kitchen as she prepared for the dinner she was making for her in-laws' dinner party. Michelle was an excellent cook, and it was a hobby she loved. It was the second thing in her life that gave her meaning, the first being the people she took care of, even if some didn't care in return.

“What”

“The lamb, did you get it?”

“Nah,” he said as he took a sip from his beer on the couch, watching the evening news.

She gave a frustrated sigh, brushing her blonde hair away from her face putting it in a ponytail “did you at least get the corn for the side Tim? “ she said with such depth as she flexed her hands on the kitchen table.

“Nope,” he said.

“If you wanted it done, then could I have done it sooner?” he takes another sip, placing the bottle on the coffee table in

front of him.

She snapped from his word in a matter of seconds; she brushed the prepped food, the tools, everything on the table to the floor in a fit and hostile motion.

“Because I was at work to pay rent for this house and everything that we use while you sit on your lazy a** watching TV that I pay for!” she said as she rushed into the living room.

“Don't you swear at me you ungrateful b**** i was the one to marry your lonely a**” He gets off the couch holding his beer in one hand, his stained shirt draped over his obese belly as the tv adds on to the noise in the room.

“Oh for god sake, Timothy i would have preferred being alone because alone doesn't have a part time shift job at a fast food place to only waste it on liquor and gambling. Alone didn't make me a slave everyday while also being a nurse for kids. I don't even know what my real job is or when it ends!”

“Well maybe you should have thought about it sooner. This is the role you were born for. It is your birthright Michelle!” He screamed ,pushing her to the wall as she fell from being off balance. Michelle's head slamming to the wall causing her body to collapse on the floor.

Time slowed for a moment. The realization hit her as she looked at the man she married and realized this isn't the life she wanted, this isn't the man she wanted, this man was like a scrap of meat. A scrap of meat meant to be disposed of. Something that

is sloppy, raw, and wet. Something that is meant to be taken care of like pigs, fat pigs birthed to be slaughtered.

In that moment in the corner of her eye, a beer bottle lays before her feet

“Freedom,” she thought.

She grabbed the slim bottle top with fistful hands as she smashed the end on the coffee table. The liquid staining the sides of the table and the floor below.

The noise caused his angered mind into an alert state as he turned around just enough to see her come toward him in a matter like a wolf to its prey with eyes of red.

She run the sharp edge of the bottle deep in his neck and in a matter of seconds he was on the floor blood pouring from his neck and mouth in the crack of the wooden floor,

“Wow this is delicious” his mother said, as in the background a soft melody of jazz plays. The party was filled with lights and smiles that stretched on faces of alcohol fueled delight.

“I agree “ his father said.

“What’s your secret Michelle.”

“What did you do differently Michelle.”

“New meat” she said coldly “ I found the right meat for my recipe”

“ Where is Tim” his mother said as she starts to eat another bite

“He is with us ... in all of us,” Michelle said “it is his

birthright.”

* * *

My Heart in Human Form

Carlee Cody

When I met my baby sister Cailee for the first time, I was filled with happiness and love; however I didn't always feel that way. Meeting my baby sister was one of the greatest, and most eye-opening experiences for me. She, my dad, my stepmom, and my 3 younger brothers all live in Steubenville, Ohio. Even though Cailee is technically my half-sister since we only share a dad, that doesn't make her any less of a sibling to me.

When I first found out my stepmom was pregnant with a girl, I was honestly hurt. My parents had been drug addicts and were in and out of my life for as long as I could remember. I had always felt abandoned by them, and when I found out my dad was going to have another daughter that he could take care of like a dad is supposed to, it hurt my feelings in inexplicable ways. But when they moved to Ohio to get sober and put themselves back on the right path, I was so proud. When they got there, my dad started his business with his cousin; then shortly after that my stepmom became pregnant, and Cailee was born. I didn't get to meet her until she was a few months old because she was born in April, and I still had to finish out the school year before I could go visit them in Ohio. Although I was nervous to see her and my other family, I was excited.

When I finally got to meet her, I was instantly in love. I

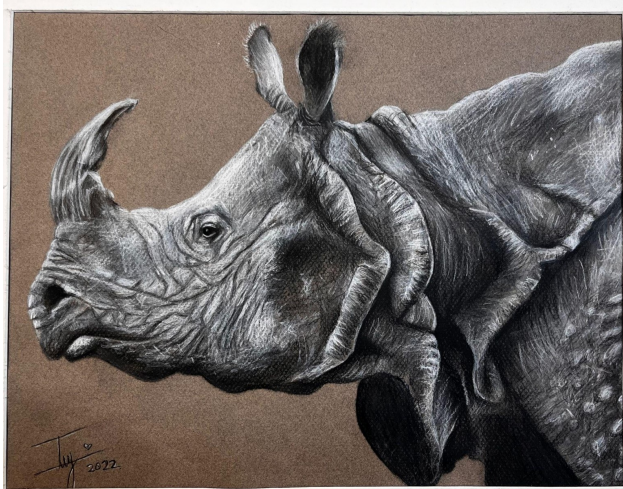
remember looking into her big, beautiful, blue eyes and seeing a part of myself. I loved listening to all the little coos and noises she would make. Every time she would let out a little sigh as she fell asleep, my heart would swell. I hugged and cuddled her for so long, smelling her lavender scented baby soap. I shed a few salty tears because of how much I loved her. Seeing her healed something in me that I didn't realize was affecting me so greatly.

I had an amazing trip to Ohio that year. I spent as much time as possible with her, taking care of her any time I could. It didn't matter if it was changing diapers or feeding her: I wanted to do everything. I also had started to feel guilty for ever feeling negatively towards her birth. It was not Cailee's fault that my dad didn't have the means to take care of me when I was younger, and I quickly realized that it was my own unhealed trauma that made me feel that way. She was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen, and I was so thankful for her.

Whenever I left Ohio that year, I was sad but also felt fulfilled. I went home and bragged about her to everyone and showed them all the beautiful pictures I took of her, which I still do every time I come back. Through Cailee, I learned to forgive my dad for almost everything that happened in the past, because I know that he did his best with what he had at the time. She proved to me that people really can change, and I was at peace knowing that she gets to grow up with both parents in her life in a stable home. Knowing that she would get to live the normal life I

had always longed for, started to help me heal. I love my baby sister very much, and I would never trade her for anything. Meeting my baby sister for the first time was one of the most impactful and positively mind-altering events of my life.

Rhinoceros
Honorable Mention
Ivy Wallace



Artist Statement: For my entire life, art has been my passion. I am quite fond of realism, especially in animals. But my patience is limited, so my art contains many scribbles as you may see. It is part of my style, I like to say. My favorite medium is charcoal; I like the way I can control lights and darks on a toned paper. I hope I am able to successfully pursue my passion in my future so I can keep up what I enjoy.

* * *

From Plains to Mountains

Abby Jones

Fourteen hours, fifty minutes, 998.7 miles, all in a car with my siblings. Honestly, it seems pretty traumatizing just reading that. Well, I had to conjure up the patience for that long trek with probably the most boring scenery to watch out the window. Just a word of advice: don't stop in Grand Junction, Colorado, in the middle of June when it's sweltering hot. You'll get a bad headache.

I hadn't been back to Utah since I moved to Kansas when I was one, so I remembered nothing about it. My parents would tell stories about where we used to live and the old friends they had, but it was hard to put a face to a person I met when I was less than a year old. So, when I was told we were going to Utah, I got really excited. It was decided, my siblings and I would be attending a swim camp during our trip as well. For as long as I can remember I've wanted to swim at BYU, so I couldn't wait to get there, but first, I had to brave the car ride.

The trip started out alright, except for the occasional outburst from the youngest two, nothing too entertaining occurred. As it turned out, we are definite Kansans. None of us were very fond of the mountains, especially my sister, who was on edge the whole time, thinking we'd fall over the side and tumble to our deaths. She always seems to be catastrophizing. Anyway, getting into Provo wasn't the hard part; it was getting to the

campus through the insane amount of traffic that was difficult. We are definitely spoiled in Wichita, I'll tell you that.

As soon as I saw that stadium, I felt my pulse speed up. I couldn't wait to find out who my roommate was and see the dorms. My mom and I waited for what seemed like eternity in a long line that led into Lavell Edwards Stadium where I received my camp gear for the week. Afterward, we found our way to the dorms. I stayed in Helaman Halls, which I soon learned was perfectly placed in between the pool and dining hall, definitely on purpose knowing how much swimmers eat.

The first practice we had was actually really fun! I got to know the people that would be in my group and they were all super enjoyable. The majority of them were from California, Utah, or Arizona, typical places I figured most of them would live. Anyway, meeting the coaches was perhaps even more entertaining. My mom, having swam at BYU along with a couple coaches, was recognized almost immediately. It was quite funny to see them realize there were three more Jones' where she came from. All in all, it was an amazing reunion, even with a rough headache along the way.

Harbor Sunset
Honorable Mention
Isadora Wilson



Artist statement: I love art. Art is my favorite subject at ACHS. It drifts me away from the world I'm in, to the one I'm creating. Art will always hold a place in my heart that could never be replaced

The Cellist

Madyson Jones

As a kid, I used to obsess over the YouTube videos of people spilling all the secrets and easter eggs in the Disney rides and vlogs of their day in the parks. I used to envy those raffle winners on TV who won full trips to Disney cruises. But the night I watched the closing fireworks show, bawling my eyes out, was when I fully realized that this was that dream I dreamed of as a kid, the one my dad promised to fulfill.

The story begins in 6th grade. I started playing cello at school and thought it was the coolest thing ever. I progressed pretty quickly and played in solo festivals and all-city Orchestra, but I wasn't aware that this big piece of wood could take me across the US. And just like accidentally shining a flashlight in your eyes, I was entering my junior year! Crawford (my orchestra teacher) was holding the first meeting that would lead us to board a travel bus down to Florida. We would perform and spend the rest of the week hanging out with the richest mouse on the planet. Just the idea made me emotional, for my parents split when I was very young, so it was always Dad's on the weekends. My dad and I used to spend our weekends playing "Fireboy and Watergirl" on CoolMath and going to All-Star Sports. But one of the things that always came into conversation was that I wanted to go to Disney World, and he always promised to take me. But then he decided to

be an idiot, and he gave up the chance to take me there.

Jumping to spring break, after the 26-hour bus ride down to Florida, I couldn't believe it. There it was: the big castle decorated with 50-year celebrations. I was finally entering the land of overpriced water and 2 hour-long lines; the day couldn't have been better! I teared up every time I thought back to my childhood, I even talked to my dad that day and told him all about the mouse trap. It hurt to express my happiness, but he made it better by telling me how proud he was of me. He knew I rarely went out and wasn't one to venture out of my comfort zone so hearing him so overjoyed brightened the day.

But it wasn't till that evening, when I was sitting with my hot dog nuggets that the realization set in. The fireworks show started, and the castle turned into a big screen as it displayed all the characters going on adventures and the narrator congratulating you for making it all this way, for believing in magic. I realized that I've been holding back on so much because I held on to this childhood that my dad and I would be traveling the parks together. I didn't need to blame myself for what happened anymore, and this is what living really is: it's traveling across the US with my closest friends, getting motion sick and screaming on roller coasters, leaving my family, and having to make my own calls. As I watched Tinkerbell fly across the castle, I felt the chapter closing, like the firework's epic finish: accomplished and beautiful.

Vector

Evan Lessman

My academic mindset and vision have been formed by many factors throughout my life, but almost none of these opportunities would have been readily available to me without the work of my second-grade teacher, Ms. Nichols. For most of my life, I have held myself to a relatively high academic standard, and upholding this standard has benefited my life in many ways. It has given me a clear vision of my future - a direction - and access to all the tools I need to get there: magnitude. In other words, it's been my vector used to navigate life. This vector found its way into my life at 7 years old, when my teacher saw potential in me that no one else could.

A few weeks before the 2013-2014 school year, College Hill Elementary had an electrical fire causing extensive damage and a delayed start to the school year. As a hastily organized solution, we were relocated to Bryant Elementary, an unused school building 9 miles west, (with a slight bug problem). Despite the extra weeks of summer, these circumstances were a hindrance to my school experience. This change was evident in class, where I was often unengaged and misbehaving much more than in previous years. My teacher, Ms. Nichols, noticed this behavior, and for reasons unknown to me, was able to see the root of my problem: I wasn't being challenged. She then began occasionally

testing me on higher-level math and reading material, which I responded well to after some practice. This practice culminated with her testing me into the Gifted English program for my third-grade year. I passed, had many conferences, and watched my parents sign stacks of paperwork, and was soon one of six proud members of the humble Gifted ELA program at College Hill Elementary – which was conveniently run by Ms. Nichols herself.

Because of this opportunity, my focus shifted, and I gained a clear perspective of where my life would lead and where my priorities lie. This vector helped to propel me towards many experiences that have dictated my behaviors, my principles, and the people I surround myself with. Since third grade, I enrolled in the PIB and IB programs and have held my education to a high standard, allowing me to form bonds with good people with diverse perspectives and to be taught by quality educators with my best interests in mind.

Without Ms. Nichols' influence, I would still be Evan Lessman, and I have faith that I would have found my way to a situation similar to my current one, but I would be without my mental vector – forced to pave my own path with limited resources or a clear end goal. I truly believe that my rigorous educational environments have presented vital opportunities to me and my future, and I have been led to these environments by my vector, gifted to me by Ms. Laurel Nichols.

Tiger
Ivy Wallace



Artist Statement: For my entire life, art has been my passion. I am quite fond of realism, especially in animals. But my patience is limited, so my art contains many scribbles as you may see. It is part of my style I like to say. My favorite medium is charcoal; I like the way I can control lights and darks on a toned paper. I hope I am able to successfully pursue my passion in my future so I can keep up what I enjoy.

* * *

A Fiery Abyss Alasia Neloms

I lost everything. In less than an hour. I was working when I got the call: “Get home now!” It was about 8 o’clock at night. Most of it was inaudible since my aunt was hyperventilating. The only thing I understood after that was, “I don’t know if the cats made it.” After that I knew something was terribly wrong. I went 80 the entire way home just to see every single fire truck in the city of Wichita surrounding my house. *Where was everyone?* I thought to myself. The smell of smoke tainted the air as I searched for my family. I quickly found my siblings who were all sitting in my uncle’s car, distraught. *Where was my aunt?* I found her best friend walking down the street. She gave me a hug and we went to find my aunt. She was standing next to one of the fire trucks across the street. There were news reporters there, and the firemen were sawing into the house. “What happened?” is all I kept asking. No one knew the cause yet. We patiently waited while we watched all of our belongings burn to pieces. You never fully appreciate all that you have until it is gone.

After the firemen were done putting out the fire and the hotspots, we were not allowed on the property. My aunt went in anyway. She grabbed all of us kids’ birth certificates and social security cards because she did not trust anyone. The landlord took the key to our house and boarded up the doors. Afterwards, we

went and stayed at my aunt's best friend's house. That didn't last long. The very day after that, we stayed in a hotel and did not go to school because we did not have any clothes to wear. The landlord called us a couple of weeks later asking us to clean out the house, or we will be fined \$18,000. He gave us 2 days to clean out the house. This was the hardest part. Walking through a house you worked so hard to make a home, and its all just trashed. The ceiling was all over the floor; the walls beat in and black from nothing but smoke, and the terrible smell coming from the fridge from all the rotten food. I couldn't wait to get the house clean and never go back. My room was the hardest to clean as I lost my three beautiful cats. They deserved nothing but love and life. They were lying under my bed, the two babies sucking on mama's stomach, decomposing. It was the worst sight and the worst smell. I could barely clean my room out knowing I lost my babies.

We got the house cleaned out within the two day span he gave us. We have been staying in a hotel ever since. All of us looking out for each other more than before. Tragic events will make you realize that you should never be too busy to make time for your family. Anyone could have been lost in the fire; gladly, they weren't. During this event I've learned to values the things that I have because they could be gone in the blink of an eye.

View Changing Birthday

Johana Vargas

At that moment I was mad at myself for making the choice that I made, knew that I could only be mad at myself and no one else. I describe myself as a stubborn person. If I have a view or opinion, I rarely change it and stick to the decision I make. One of the times I changed my opinion was on my fifteenth birthday.

When my cousin turned 15, she invited me to her quinceañera. During the party, I saw how happy she was and enjoying and having the time of her life, and I was hit with regret. A few months before this, when I turned 15, my mom asked me if I was going to have a quinceañera, to which I said no. I thought something like this was nothing but a waste of money, and that no one was going to remember. The whole week after her party I kept thinking about this and decided to tell my mom how I felt. I told her that I regretted saying no to her, and that now I wanted a quinceañera. I saw her eyes light up, she told me with a big smile that she would start preparing as soon as possible. I spent the next few months getting everything ready; it was all very tiring and rushed but we were able to pull it off.

The day before the party, I was nervous for the day that was to come; the thought of my mom wanting me to have a quinceañera because she did not have the opportunity when she

was younger, as her parents were extremely poor, was running through my mind. She still wanted to live that moment even if it was through her daughter. That day everything was far from perfect, the priest was late for the mass and my mom forgot to do some last-minute details, but we figured everything out and, in the end, even had a laugh about it. During the party, I saw my mom happy; that made me happy too. That day I learned that not everything is about me and that sometimes I must go out of my way to make the people who care about me happy. I also learned that a quinceañera is not just a party, but a time to celebrate becoming a woman with the people who have seen you grow up. When I went to sleep that night, all I could think about was how much fun I had. I thought about all the great memories I made, and how I will never forget them. Even though most of the time I am happy with the choices I make, there are times when I realize I have not made the right one and regret it. I am glad that this time I was able to go back and fix the choice I made.

* * *

Playing Bakery/ The Road I didn't Expect

Sienna Trickett

At age 5, I was on a 992-mile drive with people I had only met a few times. I was on a road trip with my grandparents, traveling from my home in Arizona to be relocated to the Midwest where I would stay for the rest of my childhood.

The divorce of my parents was the most significant turning point of my early years. It happened at a considerably young age, so I didn't completely comprehend what had occurred until much later. However, even without a proper understanding of the event, it had an unimaginable impact, nonetheless. Now and then, I remember that it isn't "normal" not to have been raised by your parents, but despite this, I wouldn't trade my unconventional upbringing for the world. While I resented it initially, I can confidently say that I'm infinitely grateful that everything unfolded the way it did.

I had only met my grandparents a handful of times when they came to visit me and my parents, first in Hawaii when I was born, and another time or two when we moved to Arizona a few years later, but regardless, I was still quite fond of them. I was excited to go back to Kansas to live with them (we had lived there briefly when I was younger), but as time continued, I began putting pieces together, and the reality of my situation finally dawned on me. One fateful day, my dad informed me that he was

getting remarried and having a baby girl, solidifying my realization of how much my life would change. I was heartbroken even though I still didn't understand what this meant. I cried for hours upon hearing the news, even though I didn't understand what it meant or how it would impact my future. However, in the face of this groundbreaking news, my grandparents were there to console me and be a literal shoulder to cry on.

Since that night, my world felt like it had turned upside-down completely, and when I thought things couldn't get any worse, I was quickly proven wrong. Shortly after, my mom decided to go back to school, and although this was admirable, I rarely saw her for most of my childhood because of it. She worked all day and went to school at night, so she was seldom around when I was awake. I would often call her when she was out studying late at night to ask where she was and when she would come home. When she came home from long study sessions at the library to do more schoolwork at home, I would beg her to play or watch movies with me, to which she replied with rejection, and I began to resent her for it. Despite this, my grandparents were always willing to drop everything for me, whether I wanted to play bakery with my dolls, go for a walk, or go shopping across town.

As a young child, the absence of my parents in my life was indescribably challenging to process and overcome, but despite their lack of presence in my early life, I never found myself

lacking anything. Years later, I finally understood that my grandparents poured their hearts and souls into raising me to the best of their ability, caring for me like I was their own, and how my mom worked so hard to provide for me years down the road. While one door closed, another much better one opened, and it took me almost a decade to realize it. Although the divorce ruined my chances at a conventional childhood with two parents, siblings, and a family dog, it allowed me to be taken in and raised by some of the most generous and loving people I've ever met. I may not have grown up in a traditional household, but I grew up surrounded by limitless kindness, support, generosity, and love. Looking back, the divorce, something I thought to be a curse, was one of the most formative experiences of my life, opening my eyes to the selflessness of my family members and making me appreciate them beyond what words can express.

Welcome to High School—Ignore the Plague

Jeremiah WB

I never graduated 8th grade. After schools were closed, my life became a sea of emotion. Everything affected me, as there was so much space in my life for new things, and a desire to learn. Among everything that has happened, what really changed my life was my first day of high school.

On March 17 of 2020, schools were shutdown for the remainder of the school year due to the rapid spread of the Corona-Virus Pandemic. My last year of middle school was cut short; Instead of an graduating 8th grade, I was thrown out. Tossed away into a state-wide quarantine. As a kid still in 8th grade, I was oddly overjoyed. “I get to stay home! No more school!” was my mindset. I saw this whole thing as one big snow day: a vacation from a world tragedy.

Over the course of quarantine my parents struggled to keep us afloat. Earlier into my 8th grade year, my mom and my stepdad had divorced. My stepdad had worked a good job while my mom had stayed at home to care for us. She also worked in daycare to make a little money on the side. Obviously, neither of my parents were ready for quarantine and all it entailed. Feeding 4 children and yourself all 3 meals every day for the better portion of a year is not an easy task. Especially with my mom struggling to find a job since, previously, she hadn't really been employed for over 3

years.

As it came closer and closer to the beginning of the next school year, it was doubtful that school would begin as usual. School was instead dropped into our laps, bright light constantly shifting and shining through a screen on our counters and desks. This was my high school. No new friends, no real experience, and an overwhelming lack of motivation. Over the course of online school, I barely did anything at all. My grades constantly slipped. Privilege after privilege was taken from me until I could recover my sinking grades.

Near the end of freshman year, formal school was reinstated. I remember thinking: “Finally. high school.” But this was far from it. Everyone I saw was a fragment of themselves: a muggy mask tacked on to every face, muffling their voices and hiding their traits, hoods pulled up and cinched tight, hiding away their personality. None of it seemed real.

My First day of high school was 2-3 weeks into my sophomore year. Masks were lifted, the pandemic was nearing its end, things were going back to normal. Junior year I began to find myself among all the others. I grew into my own person and learned to love them. I started doing things for myself, things I enjoyed. I joined Madrigals choir, where I met so many new people and friends. I joined engineering to pursue my career. All the scattered pieces of myself were starting to work together to build something new. This was real high school. This was the real start

of “Me.”

New Year, New Neurological Disorder

Maycen Weaver

I remember being home alone with my siblings, sitting on the couch with my sister and watching Julie & the Phantoms on Netflix, when out of nowhere, I couldn't breathe. It wasn't like I was gasping for air; it was more like something forced me to hold my breath. I was 14, less than a month away from my 15th birthday. It was winter break, the year COVID-19 had pushed everyone online. I shook it off at first, thinking that maybe it was just a strange intrusive thought. I laughed and told my sister about it, but while I was trying to tell her, something started happening to me. A shiver started in my spine and then I lost control of my own body. I was twitching and jerking my head, popping my neck, and blowing out all the air in my lungs.

My sister watched me in fear and eventually she called my parents. The twitching and ticking progressed from neck jerks to violent swings. I hit whatever was in my reach with my full strength, and I really mean anything, including myself. I punched the back of my own head and kept trying to get the air out of me. I remember thinking that I felt like an untied balloon let go to fly away. It's strange, I never knew how to whistle before, but somewhere along the way, the aggressive exhales and inhaled turned into sharp whistles.

I was lucky to be with my sister when this all started. She

was diagnosed with Tourette's Syndrome when she was 8 after having tics since she was 3. She was 17 and knew enough about tic disorders to recognize what was going on, so she was able to communicate with me through all of it. We knew immediately that what was happening to me wasn't typical for people with Tourette's. Most diagnosed cases are caught by age 10, and a sudden onset of vocal and motor tics usually means something else, and usually don't last.

I got an appointment with a pediatric neurologist two weeks later. The first assumption was that I was following a TikTok trend of faked tic disorders. At the time, there was a significant increase in female teen patients with tic disorders and not all of them were legitimate. I can't say for sure that my neurologist believes me even now, but we moved on from there eventually. The next step for me was blood tests. It's rare, but sometimes an infection, like strep, can cause neurological symptoms, including tics, mood swings, and severe OCD. This is called PANDAS, which stands for Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders Associated with Streptococcal infections. After finding out that I do not have PANDAS, I was put on medication to help regulate my tics, but it wasn't until around my 16th birthday that I finally got a Tourette Syndrome diagnosis.

My diagnosis changed my life. I can't say that this was the most important event in my life, but it was life-altering. That night

watching TV with my sister was the beginning of an endless cycle of appointments and a collection of prescription medications with names too hard to pronounce. When school started up in person later that semester 2021, I was afraid to go back. I wasn't sure how this new disorder would react to the change in environment, so I kept myself in my room until my sophomore year. Almost 3 years later, I still have tics, but I'm more confident about being in public now.

Somber Song
Georgia Ward



Artist Statement: I love art and find it so relaxing and peaceful. I enjoy losing myself in my projects. Art is another way to communicate how I am feeling and emotions. It is peaceful.

The Game

Jackson Woodson

It was Friday, December 3, 2021, my heart was pounding, and my hands were shaking as I glanced through the tunnel, into the crowd of what seemed like thousands of people. It had been my dream since I started playing basketball to play in a varsity game. That is why when my basketball coach at the time told me I would be playing in the first game of the season against Andover Central, I was so excited. It was only my sophomore year, but it felt like I had been waiting forever for that moment. At the time I had no idea how the game would change my perspective moving on in my basketball journey.

During the days leading up to the game, I was the most excited I had ever been to play a basketball game, but I was also the most nervous I had ever been. Despite my nervousness, I felt like I was ready to play and contribute to the team; that was until I stepped onto the court for the pre-game warmups. At that moment I felt a level of anxiousness that I had never felt playing basketball before. I was so nervous I did not make a single shot in warmups, not even a layup. This was the moment that my confidence went down the drain. The game eventually started, and I was in my head the entire time I was watching the game.

By halftime, I noticed that I was the only player who had not been in the game, but I thought little of it because there was

still another half for me to play. We were down by about fifteen points at that point, but my hopes were still high. Halftime ended and I went back to the bench and as more time went on, I stayed on the bench and watched the lead get larger and larger. I would not touch the court until the fourth quarter with only two minutes left in the game. And even then, I would only play about three possessions until I was back on the bench.

Once the game finally ended, we had lost by twenty-plus points, and I had only played for a couple of minutes. After the game, I went home and went to sleep because we had practiced the next day. I put the game behind me and tried my best to prepare for the next game.

While the results of the game and my lack of playing time were saddening, I got over it eventually. It gave me something to work towards in the season and gave me a clear end goal to work for. It also helped me learn what it is like to play in a varsity game and what I needed to work on to reach my goal of contributing to the team. That challenging first varsity game became a source of motivation, guiding my path and providing valuable lessons on my basketball journey.

Literary Fiction

Buy Bryce's! Feynman Cox

James sauntered merrily down the hall and to the stairs, the smell of eggs and bacon guiding his journey. The sun shone brightly through the window, gently lighting the soft walls of his house. A shadow flitting across the stairwell window bemused him; it wasn't the time for birds.

A low boom. Then another, closer. A deafening explosion. James felt cuts all over his body. His spouse screamed for him and the kids. He nearly fell down the stairs from disorientation. The window had been shattered; shards of it now embedded deep in his flesh. The blaring of a siren grew louder, gradually replacing the ringing in his ears.

One of his kids grabbed his hand, leading him to the garage. The rest of the family piled into the car. Standard procedure. In the past they'd had more warning, getting to the bunker now might take too long. There was a closer one, Bryce's bunker, but James was loyal: in no world would he betray Henry's like that. As soon as the garage door was raised, he peeled out into the street and began racing towards safety. Patterns of shadows overhead continued to rain down destruction on the town.

James slammed on breaks. The bridge ahead had been hit, the river now an impassable canyon. His partner pleaded with him to just go to the nearest bunker. He didn't know any other ways to

cross. With a heavy heart, he turned around.

The deafening booms continued, but the road was uninterrupted. They made it to Bryce's bunker without issue. He parked the car, everyone prepared. On the count of three, they burst from the vehicle, dashing for the door, and they made it. They slowly walked down the metal stairs, cement walls rising on either side to swallow them. James stood back, eyeing the door suspiciously. His spouse, annoyed by the hesitation, walked forward and knocked. The sound resounded on the large circular door, which quickly opened. The metal screeched as it swung, Bryce's obviously didn't take care of their facilities.

They stepped into the packed room. It smelled of sweat, and he noticed the metallic scent of blood on himself. There was no room for sitting, and it didn't seem that any seating had been installed if there had been. The bunker was dark. James didn't think his cuts were bleeding too bad anymore. Either way, even if there was a doctor, it'd be too cramped for them to work. The concrete walls were lit by neon and television screens. The TVs played videos, tinny audio sounded from speakers in the room to accompany them. The media was intercut with the slogan, "Buy Bryce's, you can't beat our prices!" Ridiculous. James knew Henry's had the better prices and product. The screens played scenes. Women in bikinis sitting on a beach, or by a pool, or in a mansion, eating a burger with the Bryce's wrap. Shirtless men lifted weights with burgers by their side, or set down a burger to

pick up a jackhammer and get to work.

A dull thud above them occasionally jostled dust loose from the ceiling. They'd been here how long, an hour? Longer than normal at the very least. James was hungry now, he'd been forced to skip breakfast. Normally he enjoyed visiting the nearest Henry's Hotdogs joint, but Bryce's wasn't looking too bad. He now took the time to read the neon signs around the room. They all showed enticing deals: "Our ¼ pounder only 99¢ more than Henry's ⅓ pound burger; Free burger for every one you buy for the price of two; Free water with every purchase." These were all good bargains. James was a fiscal man, he knew and appreciated a good deal.

It was then he noticed yet another item: a board at the back. A fluorescent light hung over a series of plaques. Ingredients certified ethically sourced. 5/5 Score on all location health inspections. Best prices for the product. All conducted by the reputable Bryce's Restaurant Inspection group.

There hadn't been any noise from the surface for a long time now. The speakers in the room played a message stating that the outside was safe again. James and his family were the first to tentatively step out. The town was flattened, a skyline of rubble and rebar, their house was surely gone too. They'd have to go to the Bryce's the next town over.

Blood Bound Echoes

Jonas Cunningham

I woke up., jolted from my slumber by a peculiar crowing sound that pierced through the silence of my room. Confusion washed over me, and curiosity compelled me to investigate the source of this strange disturbance. The clock on my bedside table confirmed that it was well past midnight.

As I swung my legs over the edge of the bed, the cold touch of the floor sent a shiver down my spine. Hesitation gripped me briefly as I considered the perilous journey that awaited me. The stairs leading down were ancient and precarious, their dilapidated state threatening to give way beneath my weight. But my curiosity won over my fear, urging me to press forward.

With each careful step down the creaking staircase, a rush of wind enveloped me, tousling my hair and quickening my heartbeat. It felt as if some unseen force was propelling me forward, transporting me to a place unknown. And just like that, I found myself standing outside, disoriented and bewildered, with no recollection of how I had arrived there.

The sky above was a swirling canvas of dark clouds, moving with an unnerving speed that sent a chill down my spine. Amidst the unsettling silence, faint voices reached my ears, whispering comforting words, assuring me that everything would be alright. But their ethereal presence only heightened my unease,

leaving me feeling isolated and vulnerable.

Before I could fully grasp the situation, another gust of wind swept me away, and I was abruptly back in my room. The alarm clock blinked 12:08, but something was terribly wrong. Mud-stained footprints trailed from the doorway, leading to my bed. Panic surged through me as I scanned the room, searching for answers.

Driven by an inexplicable force, I approached my bedroom door, its hinges creaking in protest. With a mix of dread and anticipation, I pushed it open, only to be confronted by a horrifying sight. The stairs, once familiar, had transformed into a scene of macabre chaos. A disconcerting beeping noise filled the air, accompanied by crimson drops of blood dripping ominously from each step.

Fear paralyzed me as my trembling fingers closed around a bloodied knife that seemingly materialized in my hand. The metallic scent of blood filled my nostrils, and my eyes darted to the kitchen table, where my own lifeless body lay slumped over, a deep gash adorning my neck. A strange warmth enveloped me, buzzing against my skin, but it abruptly stopped at my neck, as if marking a boundary between life and death.

A dark and ominous voice whispered in my ear, declaring that there was too much blood. And with those haunting words, a torrent of crimson surged forth from my lifeless body, flooding the room with a nightmarish tide. Panic consumed me as I struggled to

comprehend the horrifying spectacle unfolding before my eyes.

In a disorienting shift, I found myself back in my bed, every inch of my body covered in a sticky layer of blood. The alarm clock now read 1:34 PM, yet the darkness outside my window persisted, shrouding my room in an unsettling gloom. Confusion and terror intertwined as I grappled with the inexplicable events that had befallen me.

Suddenly, the scene changed once more, and I found myself confined to a sterile hospital bed, restrained and hooked up to an IV. A nurse approached, her face etched with concern. She gently explained that I had been in a coma all this time, my fall down the treacherous stairs leaving me paralyzed from the neck down.

My mind swirled with a maelstrom of emotions—fear, disbelief, and a profound sense of loss. The boundaries between reality and nightmare blurred, leaving me questioning my sanity. As I lay there, trapped within the confines of my own broken body, I couldn't help but wonder if the harrowing experiences I had endured were mere figments of my imagination or a cruel manifestation of a twisted fate.

Within the depths of my paralyzed existence, I yearned for answers, for a glimmer of hope amidst the darkness that now consumed my life. Little did I know that the journey to unravel the mysteries of my shattered reality had only just begun.

Magic in Modern Life

Haley Hudson

You've all heard the stories. Tales of witches and werewolves, mermaids, sirens, and dragons, fairies and fae. All the fantastical creatures and myths you hear about at night- characters in a bedtime story. Well, I'm here to tell you: All the stories are true.

These beings and people used to roam freely. But over time, as society grew and they were forced into hiding, their magic died out, and they were forgotten. However, there is still a touch of their magic in all living things. You can sense it.

It can be seen in the way you obsess over astrological charts, taking the stars into account over everything.

Or how when the moon reaches a full shape you feel drawn to it. You feel stronger.

When you go to the pool, the ocean, or even the bath, and you feel the water along your skin. You just feel at home. Or how when you sing, everyone just listens, as if they're in a sort of trance.

When you feel connected to one or all elements: water, earth, air, and fire. Or when you're in tune with your empathy and emotion levels.

You can see the lineage of elves and fae in the too-angular point of an ear, or a mischievous nature with a gleam in the eye.

Or you love jewelry a little too much, always wearing anything shiny and bright on your person.

Some might say you're hot-headed like a dragon. That smoke comes from your ears, and you breathe fire.

Don't you wonder how we just happen to be here? 7 billion people, living on a planet just the right distance from the sun, constantly moving in orbit, within a single solar system, in a galaxy, floating in an abysmal space? How else could you explain it?

Magic's all around us, you see. And don't you know? All the stories are true.

Goddess
Allyson Hartman



Artist Statement: I've loved art since I was two. I basically came out of the womb with a pencil. Drawing for me is relaxing and helps me turn off my brain and tune out the world. After graduation, my goal is to go to college and study art and potentially go into art education.

* * *

A Battle Unfought

Neaeh Jacobs

The cathedral bells chimed, the tremulous citizens: quiet, “fearful” as one could say. Young children, elders, parents, all eyes among my powerful gaze. Silence loomed over them all. Not even the wind whispered. The clocks waving their long arms, pointing, ticking away.

Appearing from among the crown of silence, a girl, seemingly the age of 16, soot and dust covering her face. Quietly she made her way around the crowded cathedral, her steps echoing, breaking the desired silence. Delicately attending to the people’s wounds as the cathedral hummed with suspense, sadness, along with the smallest hint of anger. She attended my speech that night.

Once she concluded her work, she appeared next to me; her paces grew large as she approached. Her eyes fluttered as she blinked. The people in the cathedral rose to their feet almost like puppets on strings. She’d manipulated them, an inside tool. My best friend.

“Rise and let your new god gaze upon her mortal followers.”

As the people arose from their chairs, bowing like a smooth animation, paying respects to their new god, the clocks ticking seemed to get louder; the wind went from silence, to a

roaring groan. The wood in the Cathedral creaking under every human's feet. In a collective sound, all those standing put forth the words: "All hail her almighty gaze"

A single phrase began to grow, maturing into an ongoing chant. The brainwashed people of the village were like zombies. Mindless, brainless zombies! And it's all because of me... and my dearest friend. Every child, elderly, and parent, chanting as they looked up at me and my dear.

"You are all dismissed. You will do your god's bidding. Now file out!"

Though from among the crowd, a shout, a female's voice. One by one, every person glanced around the mindless crowd. A girl, one we thought we had gotten rid of. How tantalizing of us to believe we'd gotten rid of her. She knew what we were up to this entire time, and yet, despite knowing what we were, still tried to stop us. She's utterly irresponsible.

She emerged, freeing herself from the large crowd of citizens. She was a stubborn, loud, and irrational child, arrogant and obnoxious. However, despite how she first appeared, I must admit, she's quite wise, and very, very observant. She had known what we were up to before we even began. She had an unyielding voice, one that wouldn't stop no matter what she was told. Like an encore she'd ordered: "Put your reign to an end! Nobody wants you here. You're a barbarous dictator who yearns for nothing but power!"

My accomplice standing next to me watched, wondering what I would do next. What was necessary to fix this! A foolish mortal girl trying to insult me, and throw me off this high throne. My voice was bitter, my mouth was dry, and tasteless. I could see the wind moving, had I gotten nervous or worse ----- scared.

“You speak your words, though you as a child have no business getting into our plans, your foolishness is what will get you killed this dreary night!” My accomplice, forcefully put out her voice in anger. They both, now yelling in each other’s directions.

Why is she doing this now? What was so important about putting up a scene now? She was always so quiet even though she was a commander. Wait, something is off about her. That’s not her voice, nor her personality, who was this next to me..?

As I looked to my side, there, standing next to me, a puppet. This wasn’t my friend, this was a FRAUD. All my trust had disappeared, replaced by unbridled rage. The girl in the audience began to grin.

“Where is my friend, you lousy, pitiful rat?!” I shouted, commanding in a sense of fear and anger.

“Your friend is where she belongs. Away from you. You’re manipulative, selfish, and you yearn for power that you’d abuse whatever you could get your hands on to achieve, I saved her, your ‘excellency’. Now, I think it’s time for you to fall.”

The ground began to crumble from beneath my feet, a crash of wood. I looked around, the people who were standing

here before were gone. It was a trap, how could I have been so gullible?! I called this child a fool, but she's far more wise than a god, why is this so unfair!

With a booming roar, I set ourselves in an astral plane, shooting at the girl with sharp, swift spears.

~

Wait, why am I doing this? Because it's fair, maybe I am just a foolish child, but I can't watch my home get destroyed by a dictator with no sense of humanity nor true respect or leadership.

"I may be a kid, but I'm not as weak as you!"

I'd shout my woes toward my enemy, my voice had gotten quieter and the floor had fallen beneath me. We're in her domain now.. With every new step, I could feel myself getting light headed, my enemy stood only a few feet away.

My breathing was heavy as I looked across the domain. I could hear nothing, and I couldn't smell. I looked forward pushing my way towards her, not being able to hear, smell, breathe or touch anything, it was suffocating.

Beneath me, I saw the pitch black ground opening up from underneath my feet. I'd begun to fall, deep into the darkness of the void. I lost myself, and I lost the battle, with nothing to gain from it. I'd fallen, and failed my mission.

~

I'd laughed, watching the pitiful girl fall. No screaming, no crying, just dead silence. I felt no remorse for what I'd done. I

turned, exiting the domain, closing the door behind me. Nobody would stop me now.

“What did you do..?” My partner whispered behind me, in a quaking voice.

“Got rid of the pain in my side,” I said, grinning.

We Are Literally Invisible

Abby Jones

He watched through the dark rod iron fence as she watered those pretty pink flowers her mother dropped by yesterday. Although, the flowers weren't actually getting any water, since she's not alive anymore. He knew this of course, because he was dead too.

Jack watched as her quiet blue eyes stared down at the flowers below her. He could tell she was still new to this whole death thing. He wished he could go over and talk with her, but he knew that wasn't possible. The street that separated them was only a mere few feet across, but it seemed like an eternity for Jack.

Although, the street hadn't always been there.

Jack had first known a large field with only a few other neighbors to meet. Not much happened back then. There weren't really people his age to talk to, mostly old people. There was George, but he didn't come out much.

Jack wasn't the kind of person to hide away from things, much like when he was alive, so having to stay in that cemetery was rather exhausting. He would often play cards and listen to stories from the others who lived there. He didn't have too many to tell himself. He was only 19 after all. He liked to imagine what he would have done with his life if it had been longer.

Years passed, and new neighbors stopped coming, so did

visitors. A long fence was put up around the cemetery, making Jack feel more trapped than he already was. Plants were overgrown and trees grew tall and shady.

Then a street was paved outside the fence. Across from it, another cemetery. New, open, like Jack remembered the one he lived in at first. Jack liked watching that new neighborhood across the street, it was the most entertaining thing in a while. He would watch as visitors came to that cemetery with flowers and toys they would give to the tenants. It made Jack even more curious about what else was over there.

Then, one day, Jack noticed someone new. Directly across from him was a small bench underneath a tree. A young blonde girl about his age was sitting calmly by herself staring in the opposite direction at absolutely nothing.

Jack figured she must be new. It's always a shock the first few months; some never get used to it, honestly. A few moments passed and nothing happened. Jack's growing intrigue was making him anxious.

“Hello!” Jack yelled across the street. “What is your name?”

She didn't turn. Not even a flinch.

He sat there and waited. Watching as the nonexistent breeze softly moved her hair back and forth.

When she gets used to it maybe I'll ask again, Jack thought.

Each day Jack would come out in the morning to see what

his new found interest was doing. Some days she would sit on the ground under the small tree next to her bench. Others she would walk by looking at everyone's flowers.

Never speaking to anyone, nor making an effort to reply when someone spoke to her. Occasionally a small woman would come visit her, along with a little boy Jack assumed was about four. Both just stood and stared at her bench for a long while, before the woman sighed and said it was time to go.

“Bye Cora,” the little boy said before walking away.

“Cora.” whispered Jack. “That must be her name.”

Monday's Not Coming: Alternative Ending
Novel by Tiffany D. Jackson
Emile King Grow

I walk into school like any other normal Friday... it's not a normal day. Monday's not here and something tells me she isn't coming anytime soon. That feeling that something has happened to Monday worsens. I try to call, but the number is disconnected. I'm past worrying at this point.

After school, I decide to go to Monday's house to talk to Ms. Patti. I shouldn't even be doing something like this. Ma always says there is something not right about that house. I've never even been in Monday's house... but Monday is worth it.

I ride my bike all the way to Ed-Borough to Monday's house. As I walk up to the door, I get this gut feeling to sprint away as fast as I can, as if even looking at the place would hurt me. Although I'm terrified, I force myself to ring the bell. I hear footsteps hesitating to answer the door.

The door slightly opens, enough for Ms. Patti to see who it is, but not enough for the world to see what secrets hide behind the door.

"Hello!" I say brightly. I hide the voice inside screaming at me to get out of there.

"Hi Claudia," she says rudely. "What are you doing here?...Your mom doesn't like you over here... neither do I."

The smile fades quickly on my face. “I...uhh...just wanted to see if Monday would be coming to school soon?”

Her face went pale. “Uhm..” She started to mumble, remembering what she had told me times before. “She is with her dad. I’ve already told you that. Now I think you better leave before your mom finds out you’re here. Better yet, before I tell her.”

“Do you know when...she’ll be back.” If looks could kill, I’d be dead.

“Claudia, I’m telling you right now you better get off this porch.”

I almost fall backwards when she slams the door in my face. I get on my bike so quickly I almost fall over. I’m pedaling as fast as my feet can go.

I’m so relieved when I arrive home. I let out a sigh. As I change into my PJs, I keep replaying what happened in my head. Why would she not want me over there? Why did she get so afraid of my question?

The next day, Dad and I go to a diner for lunch. I open the door, and I suddenly get excited as I see April standing right in front of me. “Hey April!” I say joyfully .

She turns around and immediately her eyes widen. “Oh... hi Claudia... Mr. Coleman.” she says as she moves her eyes to the floor nervously.

“April, have you heard from Monday lately? Your mom

says she's at her dad's house."

She barely looks up at me and looks even more frightened. "No, I haven't." She says just as Tuesday, Monday's little sister, comes from the bathroom.

"Hi, Claudia! Are you coming over to play with Monday?" Tuesday says excitedly. "Monday has been in her room for a while, and she hasn't come out. I'm not allowed to go in there... if I ask mom, maybe you can come over and play with us!"

Silence.

April's jaw is on the floor. "She's just talking nonsense, don't worry... we better get going."

"Okay, bye April." Dad says with an emotionless expression on his face. He is just as shocked as I am. As April hurries through the door, Dad and I share a what-just-happened look. What is Tuesday talking about? Has Monday really been in her room?

I find myself sprinting out of the diner. I run all the way to Monday's. I am so out of breath. I'm on the porch with my hand ready to knock. I am officially out of my mind. But it doesn't matter. I knock on the door.

I flinch as the door opens wide. It's April. She looks stunned at the sight of me. Out of breath, sweating profusely, I put some words together. "Where is Monday?" I say it like a command. "I'm not leaving without an answer."

"Claudia..." April starts.

“April I need to come in,” I say.

“Look Claudia, you can’t be here. I’m really sorry.” She starts to close the door. I slam my fist on it, stopping it.

“April! Let me in,” I say as I try to open the door. April doesn’t even stop me. I walk right in, heading up the stairs.

“Claudia, my mom is going to be home soon. Monday is in that room upstairs. If my mom gets here while you’re here, you’ll never leave this house alive. You need to go get Monday right now and take her to your house. I’ll leave with Tuesday and go to the police station.” April finally finishes.

I hurry up the stairs, and walk up to Monday’s door barging in. I see Monday sitting on her bed. She is either half awake or half dead.

“Monday?” I say, tears coming.

Her eyes open wide. “Claudia!”

I cannot believe this. She struggles to get up. She is so thin. Has her mom been starving her? She has bruises covering her body.

“Monday. We need to get out of here right now.” I reach for her hand, and she immediately grabs it.

I hurry down the stairs with her behind me. April and Tuesday are ready by the front door.

“April, come to my house straight after you go to the police.”

“Okay.” She gives Monday a gentle hug. “I’ll see you

soon.”

Monday smiles.

Monday and I are running. Sprinting. I have no idea how Monday can move this fast. It’s definitely the fear. We take all the alleyways to make sure we avoid Ms. Patti.

We open the front door to my house to find Ma vacuuming the living room. Ma’s jaw drops. “Monday?” She says, her eyes wide.

“Hello.” Monday says, unsure of what to do.

“Oh my. Come in, come in, sit”. Ma gets her water and snacks as we explain everything that happened to Monday. When we were done, Ma was speechless.

Then I remembered Dad. “I left Dad at the diner. Where is he?” I ask Ma.

“He called here. He went to the police station to file a report against Ms. Patti.” Ma explains.

I look at Monday. She looks at me. I give her a great big hug. “Everything will be back to normal soon, Monday.” I say kindly.

She nods her head. “ I trust you.”

“How about some ice cream?” I say with a smile.

“Absolutely.”

Lesson Plan for Editor's Choice
"Monday's Not Coming: Alternative Ending"
Using Popular Fiction to inspire Microburst FanFiction

9th-10th

***Editor's Note:** There ARE some issues of copyright that should be made apparent to students. Whether the fandom is discussing Hogwarts or The Enterprise, those 'worlds' belong financially to the writers who created them. However, it can be incredibly useful to have students generate writing about worlds they frequent in their imaginations, especially in teaching elements of narrative writing like dialog and point of view.*

Objectives: Students will use a story and fictional world they are already familiar with to inspire new narrative writing

Essential Questions: Are there some fictional worlds that live beyond the writer? How can we use a world we didn't create to inspire new stories?

Vocabulary / Terms to Know

Microburst: 500-1000 words

Flash Fiction: 700-1500 words

Short Fiction: 1500-3000 words

Extended Short Fiction: 5000-8000 words

Novella: 10,000 -45,000 words

Bellwork/Opener

Quickwrite: Who is your favorite character to read about or to watch in a movie?

* * *

Explicit Instructions & Main Activities

Students will write their own Microburst story based on that favorite character from the Bellwork activity. The following instructions to students can be helpful:

A Microburst story is typically between 500-1000 words. While this may feel 'long' for an essay, 500 words is incredibly short when trying to build a story. You must really concentrate on getting your character through a moment in time. Typically these are a single scene.

Start by writing a 50-100 word description of the FanFiction World you've chosen to enter (what does your reader need to know to engage in this world: KEEP IT SIMPLE--we don't need to know EVERYTHING and if you've written more than 100 words, that's too much!)

Then start writing your scene! Be prepared to read your story aloud to your small group.

[Students can then be taken through a peer-review process OR simply polish things for a final draft to submit]

Assessment

There are so many moving pieces in good fiction. It's to focus in on just 1-2 narrative traits, like maintaining appropriate Point of View, or using dialog to reflect realistic conversation.

Closer

Story Circles: have student share their stories aloud with classmates.

Common Core State Standards

W.9-10.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

a. Engage the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation, establishing one or multiple points of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.

b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

c. Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole.

d. Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.

e. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

* * *

The Menu

Anthony Lam

EVICTION NOTICE. Those were the big bold words on the pile of letters of Easton's desk. He had been out of a job for a month. Things were getting tough. Sooner or later, he would have to move back in with his parents. He walked towards his fridge. It was empty.

It was a rainy fall night, and Easton didn't have an umbrella. He dashed through the raindrops as he was heading towards the local McDonald's. Suddenly, he noticed a mysterious restaurant next to the golden arches. All that was there was a blinking neon sign. It said: OPEN. The McDonald's was busier than usual, and Easton didn't want to wait long.

"It's worth a shot," said Easton as he entered the restaurant.

"Table for one?" asked the hostess.

"Uhm...yes. Table for one" Easton uttered.

The hostess led him towards his table. The restaurant was surprisingly packed, like a can of sardines.

"What would you like to order sir?" asked the hostess.

"Do you guys have a menu?" Easton responded, confused.

The hostess answered enthusiastically: "I'm glad you asked. We currently have a special deal where you can order anything you can imagine, and we guarantee that we will fulfill it.

If we do not, you will receive a grand payment of one million dollars.”

“Oh really?” questioned Easton.

A million dollars could cover him for the rest of his life. His order had to be impossible to make.

“I’ll have the head of an eagle,” said Easton.

“Right away, sir!”, shouted the hostess.

She left for the kitchen. Easton smirked knowing that she would have to come back with the money. An hour passed and the hostess came back. She placed the eagle’s head in front. Easton was astounded. How was this possible? Is this even legal?

“How much is this?” asked Easton.

“Two thousand dollars, sir,” stated the hostess.

“Put it on my card” said Easton, knowing all too well he couldn’t afford it.

“How long is this deal going on for?” he continued.

“Until we say so,” answered the hostess mysteriously.

That intrigued him. He came back the next day and ordered hippo skin fried in lion’s blood. Once again, they delivered. He came back again the next day.

“I’ll have one Komodo dragon hot dog.”

They had it.

“Rabbit’s feet soup.”

They had that too.

Easton was giving up. But then on his final attempt he

ordered a kraken quesadilla. The hostess came back with the million dollars.

“Really? You guys didn’t have kraken?” said Easton shockingly.

“No sir, we had kraken. We just ran out of tortillas,” the hostess said calmly.

“I’m glad you won, but we must now close our business. You’ve bankrupt us.”

This shocked Easton. He wanted the money, not to ruin the lives in this business. Something must be done. Quickly, he had a change of heart. He realized that there would be a better way.

“Keep the money” he said, “But I’d like a refund for all of my other orders; none of them had seasoning.”

Go Forward with Passion
Ava Mawuike



Artistic statement: As a varsity right-back, player Beckham Kantukule expresses a heightened level of intensity when lunging toward the ball to regain possession for the Derby Panthers.

I Squish Spiders Alone
Honorable Mention
Ismael Saeed

And he told me, “Everything the light touches is yours.” And I had not the guts to ask, “And this’ll all be mine?” because my mind does not fathom a home without him. It only took an afternoon to collapse the rules I had erected in my mind. It took a rattling bottle of Aspirin and blaring, echoing sirens. How had my rules been so trusted, so absolute, so steadfast, if they had been dissolved by things so minuscule? I wasn’t given time to ask questions, to wait anxiously for answers, because burden does not wait for understanding. It takes you viciously—it burns down your villages and brings your palace to your feet. The light does not touch the ruins deep in the forest, so I ask, why is this mine?

A nuclear family consists of a mother, a father, and two beautiful children. They spend dinners together laughing over burnt casserole and moments from school. Their father squishes spiders in the bathroom and locks the door before bed. I knew of this, once. I knew of mornings on Sundays and soccer games and recitals. I knew of a father whom I cried for when I found spiders scuttling across the floor. I knew of nagging reminders, “One day, you will be the man of the house,” and my habitual ability to disregard it. Our home was built on pillars of four and my pillar of the weakest stone. The burden would not be mine yet, for I am

too young, too inexperienced.

My father became sick but a few weeks ago. I do not tell people of this; I put a ruse that my house has four and that I have Sunday breakfast and Friday dinners. I do not mention I am now burdened, that I must lock the doors before bed and bring my wrath down on spiders in the bathroom. They assume I go home to laugh over casserole and that my house is warm. I spend nights in dark sterile rooms, with chairs that aren't made for sleeping. I greet people who bring food, and water, and who tell me, "Is there anything I can help with?" They speak to me as if I support the house on my own, as if I am all four pillars. I don't respond, because there is nothing they can help with. They can't lock the doors for me, they can't check the mail and take out the trash. I feel furious at times, even though I knew they had no intention to be cruel. What could you help with? Do your bottles of water hold up a home? Do they replace crumbling pillars? Bring him back to health, release my burden because I am not ready.

The worst part is the fact I lost him without knowing him. For a brief moment, I only knew him slumped in hospital beds. I only knew him tied up by tubes and machines. I don't know why I had treated him so cruelly, as if his ability to hold up the home meant he could hold my pain as well. The fact he worked so hard became normal, and I blame myself every day for allowing it to be. But hadn't I worked hard? I have been praised for the fact I called the ambulance and saved his life. I am young, so it is

credible, but does youth mean selfishness? For a moment in my life, my father answered all my questions, why dolphins swam in the ocean and how to multiply sixty-five and forty-two. I ask these questions like he is there to answer them. I don't know why. I am not ready for these burdens.

Burden does not wait for understanding, nonetheless. I have been bestowed it, like I kneeled before the queen and felt the blade tap both my shoulders. I was gifted it, like ripping off wrapping paper and digging my fingers into boxes. I feel it is not either, because it is not joyous to hold my father up by his arms and watch his steps as I take him down the stairs. It is not joyous to remember to leave the trash can out at the curb. It is not joyous to remember the day it happened. To be led into the room where he lies, like I needed permission to see my own father. To grasp his hand as he is interrogated by a legion of questions, How are you? Did it go well? It is not joyous, no matter how much help I am given, to hear him ignore all her questions and look at me, and through a tied-up throat, mutter "You are the man of the house now." I was subjected, I was given no say. I cannot ask if "This'll all be mine?" because it is, and I cannot return it.

The One, The Only

Shane Wilson

Beyond dreary streets and hostile ground, thousands of people lined up to exchange their daily monotony for the shimmering danger of the Cirque de Avalon. Red, blue, and gold lights swarmed both the stage and the spectators, and the blistering hum of noise expanded to fill every corner of the tent.

Behind the curtain, an assistant handed the ringleader his top hat. “You’re on in five, Myrddin.”

Myrddin inhaled deeply, then shoved his way into the cacophony with a flourish.

“Ladies, gentlemen, and assorted genders!” he boomed, the mic magnifying his voice grandly over the exhilarated shrieks.

“Please welcome the one, the only— *Daredevil Thunderbolt!*”

The spotlights swept the cheering throng before landing on a platform suspended several feet in the air. The star himself stood on the plank, arms spread wide, then leaped for the next dangling beam. The moment his feet left the platform, the audience broke into fevered applause.

Thunderbolt twisted midair, catching a third trapeze with his feet and rolling upside down. His momentum carried him cleanly to the next obstacle, a huge ring spaced far away from the

others. He pushed off from the trapeze and dived through the ring, adding a somersault for good measure.

Cameras flashed as the news reporters hurried to mark down every detail of the event. “He’s amazing!” one called. “Absolutely astonishing!”

“Wherever did you find him?” another reporter added eagerly.

Myrddin beamed. “There’s no one else like him, that’s for sure. But stay for the aftershow and I’ll answer all your questions!”

The onlookers clapped once more as Thunderbolt landed on the other side of the stage and began his second routine.

Myrddin couldn’t help but feel ecstatic. He already knew this night would be one of the better nights: The spectators gasped and cheered in all the right places; no kids had been caught stealing popcorn or shoes. They’d already earned quite a few bucks from the admission fees, and it looked like more were ready to pay extra just to meet the legendary star of the show.

The audience gasped again, and Myrddin looked up as everyone else did, a huge mass of movement around the ring.

All eyes were on Thunderbolt, about to perform a triple-flip on the highest bar yet, which was why, in the disorienting echo chamber of the circus tent, Myrddin never knew who was the first to see him fall.

Thunderbolt met the arc of his flip. He stretched out a hand, reaching for the bar...

And missed.

There was a flurry of motion from the crowd, but Myrddin barely noticed. As though in slow-motion, the entire tent watched Thunderbolt slip past the bar by an inch and instead start to fall, faster and faster until he was practically a blur. Even with the speed, Myrddin saw every tense muscle, every inch of desperation as the greatest trapeze artist in the world fought to save himself from gravity.

Until he hit the ground with a dull crack.

A hush fell over the crowd.

They all stared at Daredevil Thunderbolt. At last, someone said, “He’s dead.”

Myrddin glanced up at the onlookers. “Yes,” he muttered, but his words were still amplified, ringing around the space. He unclipped his mic and called in his own unenhanced voice, “Everyone leave the tent, now. Show’s over.”

Rustling started up from the bleachers as audience members stood up and the group massed by the tent entrances.

Myrddin sighed, then gestured for an assistant. A short boy gripping a stack of notecards rushed to his side. Tom, if he remembered right.

“What can I do for you?” Tom asked. His voice squeaked on the last word, and he cleared his throat before amending hurriedly, “What can I do for you, sir?”

“Send for the cleanup crew,” Myrddin said. “And tell

Doctor Jay her ‘new and improved’ formula didn’t work. Decay started even earlier than the last time.”

Tom nodded, adding a detail to the first notecard. “What should we tell the press?”

Myrddin gave an exasperated groan. “Give them the same story we always do; an oil leak in the ground. Jeez, it’s like you’re new or something.”

“I started two days ago,” said Tom. Maybe his name was Tim. Maybe Tom was the guy Myrddin fired two weeks ago for allowing a lion to eat him.

“Just get it done. We can cancel the rest of the shows for the week, but long as we want money coming in, the new Thunderbolt better be up and running by next week.”

Tom-Tim bobbed his head again. When he didn’t receive any more instructions, he tucked his notecards into a pocket and awkwardly shuffled away to make the calls.

Myrddin heaved another sigh. He wasn’t paid enough to deal with interns or dead bodies. Maybe he could get Fay to take over as ringleader next month.



Beyond dreary streets and hostile ground, hundreds of people lined up to exchange their daily monotony for the shimmering danger of the Cirque de Avalon. Red, blue, and gold

lights swarmed both the stage and the spectators, and the blistering hum of noise expanded to fill every corner of the tent.

Myrddin once again set his hat upon his head, took a deep breath, and stepped into the spotlight.

“Ladies, gentlemen, and assorted genders!” he intoned.

“Behold— the one and only Daredevil Thunderbolt!”

Poetry

Nature Brings Art Moni Dahn

“The spring and emerald green grasses growing along the banks fill the space around and over the pond, and they blend into a screen of trees beyond that enclose the scene.”-Claude Monet

As calm as the stillness of the pond's motion. As serene that fills the painter emotions.

The atmosphere is refreshing that calls distant memories from the past.

But this moment could last.

With the tip of the paintbrush that gently stokes the canvas that will capture the moment so it could remain forever.

To the emerald-colored trees, the grasses that stands tall, the reflective pond, and the turquoise footbridge. All should be a moment to capture and remembered through a stroke of a brush. The brush moves driftly that mimics the quiet waves of the pond and the trees that reflect within it.

With a soft color, to shade in the pearl-white lilies and the flourishing plants that grow alongside of the pond.

This is the beauty of nature.

A beauty to remember.

Vengeful

Kaz Esquivel

Editor's Note: In order to honor the original design element of this two-voice (and sometimes three-voice poem, we have used a JPG file version, which may create a hint of text blurring for our reader)

Solid dull colors that match her face	but can you truly blame her for what she did
Seeming as if she never felt an embrace	after all she went through so much as a kid
Eyes speaking what the heart cannot	
As if staying quiet is what she was taught	Devastating how she was unfortunate
Holding on to something that causes danger	and now she lives with scars that are permanent
To a cruel world that changed her	She can only look back at who she could've been
	and continue to live with who she now is within
How could a woman who is about to cause cruelty	
Still stand and give off so much beauty	
the woman who was once vulnerable and soft	
Is now the woman with hatred who's lost	
Experiencing what she has been through	
Being alone with nobody to turn to	
Her actions will cause her to be punished and sent away	
but where's her justice from the ones who made her this way	

The Point of View on the Streets
Carson Fields

I can still see it now behind the smoke,
a crumbling giant towering above the masses,
creaking as terribly as the flames around the building

or the sirens in the distance

or the roar of second plane soaring through the sky

too low for its good.

Welded Flowers
Kelsey Stevens



Artist Statement: I love art because it gives me a chance to experiment new media and create anything that comes to my head. This is a welding piece that I did. I am looking at a career in welding, so I like that I can use that as a form of art as well.

* * *

The Beauty of Aging

Honorable Mention

Aaliyah Hadley

“Age is not lost youth, but a new stage of opportunity
and growth” - Betty Freedom

The elderly woman stands before me,
Her expression mysteriously blank.
Wrinkles wrap her eyes carefully,
Meticulously.
A river of lines flow across her forehead with grace.
Aging is beautiful.

Silver swirls frame her face, presenting her beauty.
For she is a work of art.
Shades of gray and black working together in harmony,
Like an ocean's waves.
Flawlessly crafted.
Aging is beautiful.

The elderly woman stands before me,
Her wrinkles, the lines of a tree stump.
Depicting her story:
Laughter, tears, smiles, kisses,
Life.
Life is beautiful.

Those silver swirls,
Revealing her journey.
Love, fear, heartbreak, stress, depression.
Her hair a trophy,
For she lived and is living.
Life is beautiful.

* * *

I admire the elderly woman living before me.
Delicately.
Carefully.
Perfectly created by God.
Aging is a blessing,
And it is beautiful.

Inspired by: Portrait of My Grandmother – Archibald J. Motley Jr.

Untouched Caylee Headings

I wish that was something I could call myself. But it's not.

I wish I was the girl who is known as pure and kind. But I'm not.

I'm the girl who answered his text at 11 o'clock at night. I'm that girl that convinced myself that he loved me.

That hazel-eyed boy...

He loved the idea of me, but he didn't love my heart or even care about what my sister's name was.

And if that's love I don't want it.

I tried to push that to the back of my head.

I tried to erase it as if it didn't happen.

But it did.

And it rings in my ears every day as people talk

It rings in his ears too.

The blue-eyed boy...

He loves me, but he doesn't just love me for the outside image.

He loves my heart, he loves long talks and family time.

But he knows the truth.

He knows he is not the first but I pray he is the last.

I know it doesn't leave his mind knowing my past, but I hope he can see more.

Why? I ask myself.

Why?

Why would you choose Hazel when Blue was there the whole time?

How Caylee Headings

I sit in silence and wonder

How?

How someone with such a beautiful soul
could love someone like me

How someone with eyes as blue as the ocean
could settle for brown

How someone who could be with seniors
could settle for a sophomore

How someone who not only loves, but loves unconditionally
could still love after hurting once

How?

How could someone hurt a heart like yours

How?

Why?

Why did I hurt a heart like yours?

Why did you choose to stick around?

Why did you give me another chance?

Why didn't you go to her?

She wanted you

And why do you still love me?

All the questions I will never ask

But all these questions I ask myself

I just wonder how

could a heart like yours love a heart like mine?

Block 8

Caylee Headings

Math

1 word 4 letters

Math

When I know this is my next class, I want to run

I want to crawl into a ball and hide

I want to avoid it

And I want to bawl

I hate math this year

I hear words that are a different language to me.

Math

I see that grade

I see that failure

Then I see it

I see that paper

But not my paper

I see that 100% paper laying on her desk

Why?

Why couldn't I be like the smart girl right behind me?

Why does she grasp onto those words as if she's heard them her whole life?

She grasps onto that formula as if she's written it down a billion

times

How?

How does she do it?

Does she do it with ease?

Cause she seems to

Does she like that class?

Math

I stress at the thought of this class

I stress at the thought of that word

I stress at the sight of all of those papers I have to turn in
tomorrow

I wonder if math stresses her too

Math

1 word 4 letters

Math

Thats my block 8

Earth
Cean Herron

Earth, a stone kicked through space by invisible cosmic winds,
A beautiful blue marble covered in flows of white,
The only place in the universe where life is able to thrive,
A cradle of humanity that we will soon outgrow.

Distance Makes the Heart Grow Fonder
Haley Hudson

They say distance makes the heart grow fonder, but
leaving you?

That's like if Icarus had stayed on the ground, and
never took flight;

or if Atlas let the weight of the world
crush him;

like if Van Gogh didn't lose his ear, but
his hands, and
never picked up a paintbrush again.

They say distance makes the heart grow fonder, but
my heart is not growing because
my heart is not beating.

How can it beat
when it is still in your hands but
our lips cannot touch?

How can it beat
when it goes with you as
you walk away?

How can it beat
when it is no longer mine?

But,
was it ever really?

They say distance makes the heart grow fonder.
For the sake of my heart,
I hope they did not lie.

The Haunted House

Haley Hudson

your home is a haunted house. that old trailer home that I went to nearly every day that summer. I still remember it like a vivid dream. still know the layout like the back of my hand. still remember the park across the street, how the metal would burn my fingers beneath the scorching summer sun.

I heard once that haunted houses are just memories that you can't relive.

I miss the times we had, the laughs we shared, the memories we made. but I would rather that house remain haunted and inhabitable, than to ever endure what I did again.

that house wasn't always haunted. you made it that way. when you birthed the nightmares and terrors that night.

its like everything you did, everything that happened, happened to someone else. that i had heard the stories of that night enough times to create the memories in my head.

but it all happened to me, a little girl, who used to think her small Kansas town was so big. who would dream of singing and writing, but who now only sings songs of melancholy and writes poems like this one.

i still remember everything, though it has been years. i remember your eyes, the sound of your voice. i remember your hands. i remember how i woke up afraid. i remember how it hurt. how i did nothing.

yes, i remember everything.
for these are the memories that haunt my brain, and i was the

death that haunts yours.

Self Portrait
Honorable Mention
Addi Smith



Artist Statement: I've won a few gold keys, a Silver Marriott, and as of last August, an official published artist. Following graduation I hope to go to a college specializing in art to reach my end goal of becoming an illustrator!

Like Atlas
Haley Hudson

like Atlas
you carry the world
on your shoulders.
with your back breaking,
and your knees trembling,
allow me
to bear the weight.
so that you may finally learn
to stand.

I loved you
Haley Hudson

I loved you
like Icarus loved
the Sun.
I was pulled to you,
entranced by your light.
And like Icarus,
I fell.
But I would not
change a thing,
for the greatest
tragedy,
would be to have never
been burned at all.

Come and Go

Abby Jones

Singing through the trees,
The wind gives a lovely breeze.
We had waited oh so long
For weather like this to come along.

The wonderful, sweet-smelling honeysuckle
Mixed with purple daffodils makes my knees buckle.
I hope this lovely aroma stays forever,
But I know, this could change whenever.

The heat soon begins to rise.
Much sooner than I'd like to my surprise.
Flowers wilt and wither away,
Petals too stiff to swoop and sway.

The sun beats down on the grass.
Green color turns to brass.
Such longing for water,
Though there is no need to bother.

For the Summer heat will come and go,
As well as people going to and fro.
So be patient, it will soon be back,
And that short, sweet Spring will have nothing to lack.

Mother I Love You the Most
Winter Jones

“On Earth there is no heaven but there are pieces
of it” - Julia Renard

I never get to see you but when I do, I am happy.
You are the Mother I fear the most,
Yet when I die, I want to die with you by my side.
And I Love you even if you might not love me back.

You're upset for matters I do not think to understand:
Freezing me Numb with your Cold shoulder.
Burn me under your Blazing Eye,
Sabotage my Sunny days with your Grieving rain.
And Drown me under the folds of your blue Thrashing Gown.

I cannot Escape your Wrath,
And I don't think I Will.
You are Everywhere,
And I want to be there Right by your side.
Despite your Rage I will Cling to you
And Find Beauty in the harshness of your Heart.
Because I Know you even when I know Nothing at all

The Potted Plants

Erika Leal

"A bird in a cage is safe but God didn't create
birds for that." -Paulo Coelho

A jungle of an abandoned apartment lays in silence
Potted plants scattered about thrive in the anarchy
Twisting and curling along the floor and walls
The plants quickly outgrew their pots

They grew and grew, never slowing down
Grew and grew and grew
The sun's light hardly shines through the wall of leaves
The plants fight for the rays of sun
As their roots squeeze together
Like birds shoved into a cage

The weakest had begun to rot
Left drowning in the cold darkness
The strongest breathe in the final breath of the fallen
Ignorant of their own shriveling roots
Suffocating in the dark sea like Icarus

They grew and grew and flew until they burned

Slowly the jungle of life had become a cemetery

The apartment now lays silent

Abandoned once more

The Parent Tree Amarily Madrid

The roots of the tree claw at me
They tie around my knuckles until they bleed
The red drips on my skin fiercely
Mockingly, reminding me
The roots have unexplainable thorns that
Prick me like needles when I move to leave
My body is angry and tense from the fights
When dawn falls it fails to respond
Like snow I melt back into the bark

Far Away
Jordan Mitchell

“What you don’t need is just as important as what
you do need” – Romare Bearden

Far

That’s the only emotion that I can identify as I sit
As I watch, as I wait
Joy like a balloon I’ve let go of, floating far into the sky
The still breeze barely brings me a comfort
As I sit in my opaque somber – I wonder

Wonder

As I look down at my anguished father, all I see is pain
I turn back to the still living room as his face, as cold as a winter’s
day, met mine
He wants to be alone, I thought, they both do
I wondered what my mother would say, I wondered if she wanted
to stay
As the sky watches over us, I wish

Wish

‘I wished things didn’t have to end this way’
Thoughts came and went as I drove through the long, but
forgiving path of nature
I wish life were a record player, going back and forth whenever we
liked
My life has started a new, as hopeful as wishing upon a star
I don’t know where I must go, but I know it shall be far

Oh, What A Joy

Aubrey Murphy

Editor's Note: In order to honor the original design element of this two-voice (and sometimes three-voice poem, we have used a JPG file version, which may create a hint of text blurring for our reader)

"Mother's love is peace. It need not be acquired, it need not be deserved."

-Eric Fromm

Flowers dance on her dress,
Her smile colors my thoughts.
Oh, what a joy
To be loved!

Her love is tender,
And soft—
a blanket protecting me
from the darkest moments.

I am a cloud,
Hanging in the sky.
Her sky.
Cool.
Calm.
Comfortable.
Oh, what a joy!

Her arms envelope me
Like koalas hugging the trees.
Her love surrounds me
Like a hive swarmed by bees.

The beat of her heart
Beats into me.

Thump thump.

Thump thump.

It's the beat to the drum
that guides my life.
Oh, what a joy!

I want to hold this moment,
Never let go.

What will I ever do without her?
Oh, what a joy
To be loved!

I Was Born
Kali Robison

I was born from my mother's womb, a red faced, fist-throwing
baby

Whose first words were Mama, Papa or uncertain gibberish
only babies understood

I was born with eyes that never stayed one color

It could be straight-from-the-oceans blue
Or the green, from the greenest leaf in the greenest forest

Or something in-between

I was born with my mama's sharp tongue

So sharp it could leave anyone running like a chicken with its
head cut off!

I was born with confusion

Do I know myself?

Do others know me?

Do others know that I know that they know that I don't
know myself?

I was born with answers

One plus one is 3

2 times five is six

No one but me Knows me!

I was born a Biffle

Raised a Gammon

I am a Robison

A name given by someone who didn't want me

I am a Biffle

A Name given with love, care, and a whole lot of attitudes

Theme for IB English
Dana Rodriguez

The instructor said:

*Go home and write
A page tonight.
And let that page come out of you
Then it will be true*

I wonder if “*it*” is actually true?
I used to be the shortest girl
in all my classes
I used to be the tiny girl
whose voice had more impact
than most grown-ups in the room
I used to be the little girl
you would get compared to
and a voice in the background telling you
how much better I was than you
and how ashamed you should be about that
I used to feel like a big girl
I used to lose sleep at night
because I was too busy dreaming
about the things I would do,
All the success I would have
once I was actually a “big girl”

Who am I now?
Definitely not who I thought I would be
Nor who I was.
I am not the girl who loves math anymore
I am not the girl who hated English with all of her soul

I am not the girl who would rather starve herself than stop playing
or talking

I am not the girl who drinks water until I need to stop because I
couldn't breathe after some game

So, Who am I now?

The room has changed now; it is not full of people anymore

So I have to remember not to act as if it was

Why?

Because I'm not a little girl anymore

The white room that's not pink anymore

reminds me of that

The make-up sitting in my closet

reminds me of that

The look through the window of my car instead of my dad's

reminds me of that

The way I have to wake up and walk home

instead of having my dad carrying me asleep inside the house

reminds me of that

Douglas instead of 13th

reminds me of that

The 7 or sometimes 8 classes full of kids whose names I don't
remember,

The white and blue walls,

The 2000+ students,

Reveries,

The landing,

The commons,

The gym is full of weights instead of basketballs,

And of course,

My parents' gray hairs remind me of that

every single morning

as soon as I wake up.

When you are the one with the voice that compares to others and

is ashamed

It's not easy to learn everybody's names in the classroom anymore

To speak in front of the whole class

To pass a test without studying

To be brave

To cry

Now all of my friends are smarter than me

Prettier

Taller

Fitter

Stronger

"It" is not true

I am not true

"It" is not easy anymore

"It" is now the most stressful thing ever

"It" is not quietly looking at me anymore

What is "it"?

That's the thing I am most afraid of

I do not know what "it" is

And I do not want to find out

Not before I learn who I am

To my instructor:

Enjoy every single day of your life

Every day of your daughters' life

Because once you push them to "grow up",

To calm down,

To talk to others,

Because it is just respectful to do so,

There is no way back

And you will miss their callow and bombastic talks

You will miss their trust like my mom misses mine

And they will miss having someone to trust like I miss having my

mom to trust

You will miss your little girls like my mom misses me

Like I miss me

The old me

The real me.

Lesson Plan for Editor’s Choice
Theme for IB English
6th-10th, with appropriate Grade-Level Adaptations

Objectives: Students will explore elements of poetry with a focus on the work of Langston Hughes and in particular: “Theme for English B” <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47880/theme-for-english-b>

Essential Questions: What has changed... and what has *not* changed about school?

Vocabulary / Terms to Know

These should be determined by the instructor. However, a few of the following techniques appear in Hughes’ “Theme for English B”

- Questioning
- Repetition
- Alliteration
- Dashes and parenthetical asides
- Imagery, concrete and abstract

Bell Work / Opener

Have students read “Theme for English B” and “Theme for IB English”

Explicit Instructions & Main Activities

Annotation and/or Marking the Text is an excellent way to take note of things from the text [See *Notice & Note* for further recommendations for annotation]. Students can pair

up to do this, or complete this individually with an opportunity to discuss what they noticed, either small group or whole class.

If they were to make their own reflection, here are some potential starter questions:

- Who are you today? How is that different from who you were yesterday... or last year?
- Who would you like to be tomorrow? 10 years from now?
- Where are you from?
- What are some invisible expectations of this classroom? From your teacher? From your peers?

Assessment

Have students write their own poem modeled from Hughes.

Closer

Langston Hughes believed firmly that poetry should get a chance to be read aloud! In small groups or whole class, let students share their work.

Common Core State Standards

RL.9-10.6 Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature. To address this standard, students could

RL.9-10.12 Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings. a. Interpret figures of speech in context and analyze their role in the text. b. Analyze nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations.

RL.9-10.13 Read and comprehend high quality dramas, prose, and poetry of appropriate quantitative and

qualitative complexity for Grades 9-10.

W.11-12.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences. a. Engage the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation, establishing one or multiple points of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events. b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

Frida, and Them
Honorable Mention

Ismael Saeed

“I love you more than my own skin and even
though you don’t love me the same way, you love me
anyways, don’t you?” - Frida Kahlo

Oh, Diego

The Tehuana woman stands before you,
satins and fabrics billowing from her head
to her chest and
pooling at her feet,
flowing

He flows through me,
between us is the universe
The painter,
perched above to see the world before her,
flowing through the canyons of my
mind and
the ribs of her dress
an untamed river

It flows from me,
roots of my faith
dancing through my thoughts,
weaving forth as a web
I traverse it effortlessly,
yet he is its victim

Oh Diego,
and me,
and her,

and them,
and me
My Diego,
return from the webs
and I will cut you free

Works Cited

Kahlo, F. (1943). *Diego On My Mind*. North Carolina Museum of Art. NCMA Learn. North Carolina Museum of Art. Retrieved October 27, 2023, from <https://learn.ncartmuseum.org/artwork/diego-on-my-mind-self-portrait-as-tehuana/>.

Selene, What Luminous Moon
Honorable Mention
Ismael Saeed

“Blessed is the One Who has placed constellations in the sky,
as well as a radiant lamp and a luminous moon”
-The Qu’ran, 25:61

This country is not mine
And its people do not walk its lands
Oh Moon, oh mother
To kneel at its pearl altar
And pray
For a day in the glimpse of the Moon

Silver-bodied, she sings for her worshippers
She has given them light and love
And they pray for they have nothing
This country is silent
On Moon, oh mother!
They are devout and devoid
They have burned your temple and scorched your feet
She perches at her post, unmoving
With a council of a thousand burning candles
Prophet of the Sea and time
Her legion has washed damnation from this country
She demands no respect
And yet
She sings

Oh love, dear love
If this is your last moment
I hope to gift your body

To my sisters up above
Oh love, this is how
I want to leave

I want to leave
in a sullen pale night
Following aimlessly to the scarlet sea
and feel a rumbling beneath me
as the ocean opens up to my qualms
They call to mine,
Oh damned, oh bastard of Her!
Take us with you, let us shine down here with you

In the glimpse of the mirror
She burns in the field below
Taken by the voracious bandit
To go without sight
Her body has robbed me, Blind—
I have become
And I look below
To this country of mine
They know nothing of this drowned maiden
They know nothing of my possessions
To own is to be loved
But I own nothing but love

The Salt Burns My Wounds
Ismael Saeed

My maeh គឿ left her home
before she was four / There is an innate
burden from the ocean,
when you outstretch your hands
into the rain
expecting it to
run
through your
fingers
and the sea crashes onto you;
The salt burns my wounds

She learned to traverse
the Mekong
A beast
swallowed her / It swooped down
unbeknownst to my maehnya (គឿវិហ័ម)
It ate her
whole,
and there — I was born
in the belly of the Nāga

She was wed
by twenty-seven / The creature lives
within me
I demand an army
In my moments of silence,
I stand
at the shore
I look out beyond
her wits, and it speaks to me

My father must not know

It must be known
she was my maeh
before she was a soldier
Deep within
the crashing waves,
I am pulled by the
forces of weather and faith
I am a man of
clay, born from
the rib of the beast
My maeh tells me,
my roots are stronger
than my branches
She does not know her word for tree
She left before she was four
I am spoken the word
of the ocean, an amalgamation of
swirling rains and rivers
The ocean is
not pure
but it is powerful
I hope that is enough

The currents have trained her
She wrestled the beast and
carved her hand and
ground her feet
and she pulled her maimed limbs
from within
and I was there / I was born
from her loss / With the remainder of her hand,
she covered my ears
for the ocean was too loud,
too brash

I was raised
above
the raging river, and all I heard
was my mother

khob chai da
ຂອບໃຈ

GONE

Litzy Suarez

A duplex poem in the style of Jericho Brown

The raindrops tapping against the glass
As the sky fills up with dark and heavy clouds

As the rooms fills with dark and heavy clouds
Smoke filling my room, the knocks on the door start

The knocking on my door turned to banging
As the door was pushed down

The door lying on the floor, just as I
In and out of it

In and out of my room, to the living room
From the living room, to the ER

Family grieving and weeping
Even though I'm not really gone;

The clouds get heavier and darker
The raindrops tapping against the glass

Today I Will Be Seventeen Mercury Ta

Today I will be seventeen

I still don't know

What I should mean

An empty house

No parents home

I think I just

Obtained a glimpse

Of what life will be

When I move out

And once I do, I'll...

Play my music way too loud

Take a drive out far from town

Dive with sharks and scrape my knees

Eat ice cream while watching movies

Adopt three cats to be my friends

Taking the step to make amends

Reconnect with my sense of dread

Think over the fact that I'm not dead

Buy cute clothes for bookshop dates

An overpriced latte I'll later hate

A small sigh escapes as I admire
Lives of strangers criss cross like wires
It's so peaceful holding love in my arms
I'm still figuring out how to not harm
Myself, I prefer the quiet of falling asleep
I used to think staying up late was life's peak
I'm a messy mosaic, stumbling into seventeen

I have started the plan that'll define my worth
Decisions are no longer inconsequential
The morals I choose to adopt are crucial
Do I really need all these friends in my circle?
Should I be this worried about the financial?
What about the sides defined political?
Is there still room left in me to be whimsical?
Not being heavy-hearted is a concept mythical
I'm a disgrace spiritually, wore out the physical
Now I'm again convinced I overdramatize the strife
Everything in life happens at seventeen

There is still a soft high-pitched voice
Stuck in the back of my conscious
She still asks innocent questions
Why do mom and dad fight so much?

Why did he say the things he did?
I tell her we'll just have to be okay
It's brusque and snappish and mean
I regret it immediately
Because after all these years
I haven't let go of younger me
I have to learn to co-exist
Hold her hand and teach her how to be
Be mature enough to reconcile because
Today, I will be seventeen

There's A Whistling Before the Bullet Hits / There's An
 Aftermath No One Can Miss
 Honorable Mention
 Mercury Ta

Editor's Note: In order to honor the original design element of this two-voice (and sometimes three-voice poem, we have used a JPG file version, which may create a hint of text blurring for our reader)

<p>I found him hidden in the dark. After I'd made myself alive in light</p> <p>I could tell that he was rooted deep, dreaming solely of a rundown town</p> <p>The quiet offered him a place for that</p> <p>So I took his hand in mine</p> <p>He doesn't speak with chords</p> <p>Uses stained glass windows</p> <p>Images in his mind's eyes</p> <p>Afraid to tell so he will show</p> <p>A lifestyle for preservation</p> <p>I will bring us to ruination</p> <p>Adrenaline pumps a roar of blood to my ears</p> <p>Gladiate for ear shattering praise from a sea of empty faces</p> <p>How finite I am, so I swore to</p>	<p>Together we lit the wick and set off a wildfire. Our atoms hum and vibrate in a soundly compromise.</p> <p>Embracing, repressing our sickly human vice</p> <p>Knees weak</p> <p>Wide awake</p> <p>Our hands shake</p> <p>A ringing shot, soundly made in the heat of the moment</p> <p>The silence</p>	<p>It was easier to sprout the truth in silence. To reverberate in the background bassline. I murmur musings about her pride. She flinches, retaliates. An affront about my touch of ice, my need to remain stone. I look away, a way I've always known</p> <p>All that she is in her cacophonous glory</p> <p>A charismatic symphony in all the wrong ways</p> <p>Captivating all nearby with lilted remarks</p> <p>Only such loneliness can tinge the air with salt</p> <p>Self-made immortality</p> <p>Stretching on and on and on</p> <p>Waiting to tell you you're at fault</p> <p>Is it shrewd to hold back? Or cowardice. No answers (once again)</p> <p>Nothing matters when</p>
--	---	--

never indulge in fear	Follows like a death march	nothing I do keeps me gone
Unsatisfied with just one	All for an honest fool's broken heart	
One victory, one spotlight		Enveloping them in my arms
I'll search for more in every lifetime		A personal protective tomb that only can harm
Marvel at the artwork		
Spontaneously created to prove my worst		

The Bartender Mercury Ta

This piece is dedicated to my friend Christian Thomas Foyil. Born March 13th, 1986, he passed on October 14th 2023. He worked at the bar in our local theater, and would always let me hang out there and watch the shows too when things weren't too busy. He loved the Chiefs team, doing impressions, and especially animals. Despite how some might perceive him due to his appearance, he was one of the gentlest people I knew.

I can still picture it clear
The white bar rag in your pocket
You're giving us fist bumps on the clock
It was just yesterday that you were here
You're so brightly alive in my mind
I can't see what's left in a casket

You were going into treatment soon
She was helping you through it
We all whisper and wonder
A year long silence and blind eyes
I've never been in a room so somber
Would it have been better to keep living that lie?

You'd stay behind every night
To make sure Kylee and I got home
I didn't know it then
But September 30th would be the last time
I'd ever say goodbye
If I'd known I'd leave you behind
Maybe I would've lingered a while longer

You're not. You can't be a memory

I'll clock in and see you soon
Complaining about a stupid customer
Or about how many drinks behind you are
We'll trade exasperated looks
Make useless commentary
You'd count the tips as i clean tables
We'd end the day like old time crooks
Give our goodbyes and see you later's
The news had shifted, now nothing's stable

I'm ashamed to give you nothing
I'm sorry i couldn't cry
I heard the news and simply sat
I took it in like a blank slate
I had nothing, no shock, or even tears
I'll catch back up when it's too late

It's been two days
1:05, my sunken cheeks
I knew that you are gone
So why did it take so long?
If you were here, you'd simply laugh
Make a stupid joke as you pat me on the back
Tell me, "That's damn right. no crying on the job."
I don't feel brave or strong
The way I handle grief feels wrong

Sunday's show was canceled
The sky seemed like it'd rained
I'd like to think the building misses you
That's why they told us to stay home
Not because money's getting strained
I see your messages still on my phone
Took everything i had to finally clear it
No use conversing while all alone

* * *

The funeral service was short lived
You're probably laughing at the plucky vocalist
Screaming the songs like his life depends on it
The reverend struggled to say the curse words
I bet you'd laugh your ass off if you heard
They're telling stories of your teenage years
Driving stolen cars and running from the cops
But your father only worries if you'll see God
Your final wishes ask for him to not give up on you
And now I wonder how he still has a solid jaw

You were unapologetically flawed
Loud and expressive and such a worrier
No shift went by without a smile or dumb tease
Thank you for restoring in me that ability
I know it's reused and we all want something new
But you really did make it feel like a family

I write all of this laying down
Reality plagues me when there's no sound
Wherever you've gone to
I hope it's a better place now
You'll be one of the many i'll make proud
Don't wait too long, let us stay friends
Because someday i'll be around
To say hello to you again

Pilot Episode Mercury Ta

New town, new strangers, new face
Everyone feels like they've got eyes on you
Not a single misstep goes unnoticed
No tone changes goes untraced
At least that's how it seems

First impressions sink their teeth in deep
Summer depression snakes around our feet
Tumble down landing, I can't see the ending

In my imagination, we're shaded by the trees
Our backs to the weathered bark, eyes fixated on the sky
No one else is around to disturb the peace
The songbirds have settled amongst the bumblebees
You're spilling your worries freely
My head is tilted, choosing words as carefully as I can
We're kindred spirits

I've pinned your sacred envelope in the crevices
In the hidden reserves only for you and me
Trailing my fingers over each curvature of swooping letters
Until I can recite those words in my sleep

Patience
Mercury Ta

I'm waiting at a fast running creek
Where the minnows swim and the wind sings its song of sorrow
The traveler is dreaming beneath the trees

I turned to them, curious
In their hand, a leaf is repeatedly twisted back and forth
Frantic like the wings of a hummingbird

Still as they may be, the worlds
They're creating and destroying in their mind will never cease
I wish them luck on their journey

But now it's them that turns to me
Assessing my still outline and searching for an answer
Satisfied, they settle back into stillness

My Green-Eyed Dear
Mercury Ta

The sun had set
Her eyes faced west
I raced to her, shedding my fears
For there she stood, my green-eyed dear

This should not be
I was just the admiral's daughter
And she was born to royalty
If we were found, then us they'd slaughter

We galloped north
Followed Polaris
Our trusted steed leaves dust galore
Heavy hoof steps trailing us

I dared to look behind
And my blood ran cold
I must be out of my mind
Who could dare be so bold?

Oh my green-eyed dear
For once her once crystal eyes showed fear

Our plans were made in darkness
By the faint glow of the candle
Which heathen betrayed us?
This is nothing I cannot handle

Follow the star my love, don't stop for none
For no man, nor beast

Until the task is done
I must attend my burial feast

My hands closed around the blade
I took a leap of faith, trusting our stallion
Now for my sins I shall pay
I took a leap of faith to face the battalion

I will protect my savior
Until the day I die
Here I stand, in my hand my saber
She saw through it all, my past and lies

My other half, my only Clementine
You sinful pawns will fall beneath
This silver sword of mine
Cutting, killing, bleeding, just breathe

I hardly noticed the cuts
the pain that echoed and stabbed
The ground began to slowly reek of rust
That dirty man his head I shall have

The bodies surround me
And taint the air with death
But among them I did not see
The tyrant king's last breaths

He owned me once, never again
I killed in his name
But I'm not the person I was back then
She helped me break away from his little games

My vision's blurred
The world's fading to black
I hope she rests assured

I will always have her back

I lay among the fallen
My breath a mere illusion
Gone is my adrenaline
This rotten world of misconceptions

I see the first rays of the morning sun
I let my life slip away from this body of mine
I've made many wishes, but this final one
Is to see her one last time

Goodbye Tastes Divine Mercury Ta

The thing about falling out of love is
It wasn't supposed to happen this way
Once upon a time, I saw you as the sun
For a second there, I wanted you to be the one
Even on your eclipse days, I'd stay
The moon will have to move
And the clouds will drift away someday
I will write to you everyday
Waited and listen, gave you my all
Catch your tears before they had the chance to fall
Months later and I'm still staring at a starless sky

I didn't think this would be how I'd have
To spend the rest of my life
Getting over you
I figured I'd at least leave with
A fragment of the loving feeling unscathed

You want to call my lips yours
Just as long as we're in the dark
Talking to me when dusk creeps in
Leaving me grasping at your attention
With our faces hidden, their whispers gone
That's when you're ok with leading me on
Always on your time
Your terms and conditions
With the perfect excuses, saccharine words
How easy it is to add a suited lie
And you know I'd lay it all on the line
What will you do when it'll be the last time?

* * *

The only version of you that loves me fully
Exists in my shallow sleep
A fitful slumber from the rivers I weep
Argue all you'd like and insist I am wrong
But just because you spin a thousand melodies
Doesn't mean they resonate as a song

Those eyes I look into
Hold no promises for the future
They are restless and afraid
Those arms that held me once
Are the same to push me away
How hard is it to type out three words
To let me know you're busy
Instead of second guessing my importance
Put a bullet through my brain
Extend the cracks in my treacherous heart
Left my messages hanging
You go on pretending everything is fine
As if I wouldn't pick up on your ignorance
I would say goodnight, I love you
You say nothing in return
"Maybe you'd already fallen asleep."
I would say, the first fifteen hundred times
Am I really just that easy to forget?

Don't blame me, curse my name instead
You can't say I don't have my reasons
For wishing you the best before my goodbye
You always love me when it was too late
And want me back when the air tastes of hate
I've had enough of your self centered fights

Today I'm finally breathing easy
My friends look and can actually see me
Now I hang up pictures of us together

Instead of being hung up over you
You're no longer a lingering storm cloud
Overcasting all my happiness with your bitter days
I've found a way to stand up proud
I never needed to look to you for praise
Putting all my achievements your way
All of that work from my own hands made
Free from fractious frauds
Finally flying far
No one to paint me at fault

Fortune Favors Mercury Ta

Adam threw his deflecting wrenches in my plans
One too many times
Eve picked the all the golden apples from my trees
Says she can do whatever she please
So I took to taking tactics from Lilith
Earned myself another holographic amulet
Around my neck hangs the Lovers
She claims he'd never hurt her

It's too uncouth for me, this brokedown living room
With the butterflies lined around my eyes
I'll board the nearest train from Eden, get off at Babylon
I still see them for what they are beneath the centuries
I hear them calling my name in equal reverence

Shifting of cheap plastic takes me back to my corner booth
Through my headphones I hear the hustle and bustle of the city
A poster on the walls of another old timey sensation
Promoting the American Dream

The fine print written in invisible ink surpassed many
I've already learned the tricks to keep my tightrope balance

“Check into the hotel across the street
It's where the American gods do meet and greets
Please keep in mind to follow the requirements
Wear your Sunday best, you must dress to impress
Sign past the terms and conditions
There's no place in paradise for questions.”

I scoff at their agreements

The stage of men will not take up my life
Dying in the spotlight of their prison coliseums
is not the narrative I choose

Firefly Jar Mercury Ta

Paint from the atlases we memorized have layered themselves on
my hands
And the topography beneath my eyes are eroded by a residue near
the sands

There's an aching in my bones that I can't seem to shake
Brambles extend their limbs to me with the offer of a remake

Fireflies in mason jars can't help their lighthouse mannerisms
For you, I still would've plunged headfirst, blinded towards any
chasm

Coffee rings sow every unresolved sorrow in the crevices of a
mahogany table
Caught our refuge amidst the reinvention storm in a room that
smelled faintly of maple

Film reels in your vintage camera race against the quicksand
hourglass
Capturing every glint and glimmer stolen in your youth at the
overpass

Giraffe

Ivy Wallace



Artist Statement: For my entire life, art has been my passion. I am quite fond of realism, especially in animals. But my patience is limited, so my art contains many scribbles as you may see. It is part of my style, I like to say. My favorite medium is charcoal; I like the way I can control lights and darks on a toned paper. I hope I am able to successfully pursue my passion in my future so I can keep up what I enjoy.

Childhood Hands Mercury Ta

Once upon a time, I first learnt what it meant to have a best friend
Everyone else had someone else and I said I was happy by myself
You were the leaves caught up in the final August breeze
Taking me by the hand without a second thought
Never have I ever accepted the swan dive off the clouds
Into the red carpet classroom where we'd always talk
That was the start of our secret history
Slow and steady wins the race
I still remember the dimples on your face
Swinging as high as we can, playing pretend
Thinking we were so damn brave for letting go
Untouchable in our childhood naivety
The second grade summer taught us a lesson the hard way
All good things must come to an end
I thought I wouldn't ever see you again
I searched every corner in a crowded room
Half turning to the side with a joke at the ready
Only to find you weren't there to hold me steady
When we'd start losing it before I was even halfway done
Moving on fully meant admitting surrender
I dug in my heels at the thought of joining the empires

Nine years later and I want to say I'm doing fine
It wasn't the full truth until I ran into you
Days we've spent came back in flashes of green
The rust on the invisible wire between our fingers
Ebbd away, replaced by a soft satin seam

Murder Under the Moon
Taylen Terrell

I hear him scream,
Even in the darkness,
A murderer under the moon
Sharpening his blade,
Sounding as scary
As falling off a cliff
Or a drunk dad with a belt
Left alone
Or the barking of a dog running toward me.

Something I Love

Jacqueline Tran

Editor's Note: In order to honor the original design element of this two-voice (and sometimes three-voice poem, we have used a JPG file version, which may create a hint of text blurring for our reader)

"There is no such thing as lack of time, only unclear priorities and lack of motivation. It is better to abandon a project than to work on it half-heartedly for a protracted period of time." – Gudjon Bergmann

To many, it is a flawless piece of art;
Something to be played,
and something to be loved.
It is a wooden world of wandering fantasy,
and yet to me, it has never been more
than just a piece of wood.

The way the strings dig into my fingers,
like teeth sinking into flesh.
My grip on the bow, unsteady and wavering,
a boat adrift on the ocean currents.
Surely, these are things I will grow to love.

The Old Violin, William Harnett

Practice, practice, practice.
Play, play, play.
If I keep going,
if I keep trying,
surely, this will become something I love.

Fur Baby a series 1-4
Blair Mayginnes



* * *







Artist Statement: I have always had a passion for art but in the past year, I have recently discovered a specific love for drawing animal portraits. From experience, I know how much people adore their pets. There is something I find so beautiful about replicating someone's furry friend, so I recently started doing custom commissions. Being able to be a part of a memorial or just an honorable piece is what makes the hours of work that go into each of my portraits worth it.

Guerrilla Girl Val Vela

Being one of those guerrillas seems hard but it's open.
We are here, not to fear but to embrace ourselves as women.
More than what others see us as.
We should not be seen naked to mean something.
Now here I am lying with my mask on.
Do they still like me?
Do I still stand out? I like to be different.
I enjoy knowing I can put something out there that will change
lives.
I want to become a change.
I am a Guerrilla girl.

Guerrilla Girls (artist) founded 1985

Humanity's Dream

Casey Wilson

"All that we see or seem is but a dream within a dream." — Edgar Allan Poe

Humanity's Dream.

It is a shared dream, a soliloquy of our minds.

A dream we can't wake from that desperately needs succor.

It is a geas placed upon us by ourselves.

Humanity's Dream.

It is the expanse of the universe and the speck of dust that floats through the wind.

It is the flowing water of a rushing river.

It is the sorrow of a mother who has lost her child.

It is an anchor that binds us to this world.

Humanity Dreams.

And to dream is to be.

And to be is to conceive.

And to conceive is to dream.

We are but a dream within a dream.

"A Sleeping Girl" – Pietro Rotari

Race to Heaven

Ava Petrask



Artist Statement: I created this piece to represent my journey to Heaven. While I am racing to heaven, I have the saints cheering me on. In my piece, I portrayed saints that inspire me: St. Joan of Arc, St. Teresa of Calcutta, and the Blessed Virgin Mary. I used a pencil, a variety of sharpies, and a yellow colored pencil

Siren Poem
a haiku series
Honorable Mention
Shane Wilson

We set sail at dawn.
Sea birds soar over our heads
As mist steers us north.

The world falls away.
Life is meaningless except
The cold breeze at sea.

The water is warm,
Though I don't know how they know.
They never touched it.

My crew's very strange.
We're all searching for something.
I wish I knew what.

Our poor families.
Our towns don't know we are gone.
Wonder if mine does.

The ocean's devoid.
Not just of life, but of sound.
Maybe the myth's true.

I spoke of myths then.
Foolish. It's not real, of course.
Sirens are not real.

Nick warns of danger.

Says he smells it on the air.
I hope he's lying.

The moon paints the deck.
It's been weeks now since we left.
Can't stargaze with them. . .

Rowdy bunch, these are.
Drinking and laughing too loud.
I'm not old enough.

We move to our beds;
Finally, after that noise,
I can get some sleep.

I can't get to sleep.
No matter how much I try,
Something's pulling me.

Jack said they weren't real.
Although if he is right, then
Why do I hear song?

We all walk upstairs
Into the cold, dark midnight.
They're more scared than me.

Cap's said it's okay.
The rest of them don't believe.
I see in their eyes.

The song gets louder.
We look around for the source.
That's when I see her.

She looks like my mom,

And my dad, and my best friend.
Everyone I lost.

For a time, I think
Sean shouldn't be affected.
He wouldn't love her.

Then I realize
Siren magic can be more
Than women's beauty.

It is about loss,
Our darkest, innermost pain.
And that's what she does.

I'm in agony.
Wrought with guilt, shaking with grief.
I won't think of them.

One thought echoes here,
Nearly breaks me down again.
She knows what it is.

Why did I listen?
Her voice was like an angel
Calling me to her.

Why did I listen?
Because I was desperate
To be proven right.

Why did I listen?
She opens her mind to me;
Her parting words ring. . .

This world is a shell,

*A shell of what it could be.
You know more than most.*

*Fix the land and seas.
Fix it, and I'll listen to
The songs of true hope.*

*Perspectives &
Literary Criticism*

Our Strength and Sincerity

Viviana Aparicio-Gutierrez

As a proud citizen of America, I think of our country as strong and sincere. I consider America as this because of our amazing veterans and those serving in the military. Everyday there are people who risk their lives for ours. Our military is fueled by love for our country and others. Many times, our military goes overseas to a different country to help others. Also, whenever our citizens are desperate and in need, we can always count on our military. Because of the sincerity and strength of our military, I am inspired by America.

My country's military is devoted to protecting everyone in America and those who need help outside of America. Sometimes I see videos on the internet about the military or veterans that show two different sides to the military. One side being the hard work and risks someone must take when going to war for our beautiful country. The other side being the horrors and aftermath of war. I see people having PTSD, having horrible injuries, and losing loved ones. I see veterans that seriously believe they are in war when they are actually in a grocery store parking lot. I see veterans in wheelchairs with an honorable story behind it. I see someone that is at war being shot by a rifle and being protected from it by their helmet. Seeing these videos makes me also want to do something for my country instead of sitting around in the

dark of my room. The beautiful and courageous veterans and current military members inspire me more than anything else. Having this inspiration makes me want to protect and serve for the things I love and care for. As I grow as an eighth grader, I realize that I can do more to help people. I can pick up trash from the streets. I can be kinder to people, and I can even spend time giving food and necessities to the poor. By doing these things I also serve for my country just like the military.

In short, my country has devoted protectors that inspire me to do more for my country. The American military encourages and pushes me to be brave and loving to all. My army gives up their life for others and protects them. One day, in the future, I hope I'll be able to do something for my country just as the military does. I most likely won't be able to go to war anytime soon. However, I can still aspire to give my life for those in need.

The Bare Necessities of Survival: An Analysis Hudson Axtell

Oxford Definitions defines survival as “the state or fact of continuing to live or exist, typically in spite of an accident, ordeal, or difficult circumstances.” Contradictory to this definition, survival is much more nuanced than this. It can come in a multitude of forms, and it isn’t always just continuing with life; other times, survival is fighting back against a stimulus avidly attacking the comfortability of life. Survival is perhaps one of the most intriguing and vital aspects of human life, but what it takes to survive is widely debatable and can be argued in many different ways. In most scenarios, survival takes patience, perseverance, self-sufficiency, and emotional maturity and flexibility. All qualities that are indispensable to survival but generally difficult to come by.

Three stories make an exemplary presentation of survival using all of these aspects, but it is also found in multiple other bodies of literature about survival. One of these stories is “The Most Dangerous Game” by Richard Connell. In this story, a hunter named Sanger Rainsford becomes stranded on an island where he finds a wealthy hunter named General Zaroff who takes hunting beyond the moral constructs of humanity by hunting humans for sport. Rainsford is eventually pursued by Zaroff and has to fend for himself while he is tracked by the highly talented hunter. The

hunt eventually whittles down to a final battle where Rainsford wins.

Looking generally in the story, Zaroff is much better at hunting than Rainsford, yet he still defeats Zaroff and, ultimately, survives the outing using the previous five attributes. The effective use of these is found many times throughout the story, but an excerpt that sufficiently displays the application of these features and their positive effects is as follows: “They [Zaroff and Ivan] would be on him [Rainsford] any minute now... He thought of a native trick he had learned in Uganda...General Zaroff was still on his feet. But Ivan was not. The knife [trap]... had not wholly failed” (Connell 37). This quote displays the quick wit and resourcefulness of Rainsford by his ability to think of and make a trap easily. Rainsford has talented craftiness, presenting his ability to self-sustain himself and a specific patience from waiting for someone to walk into the trap. Clearly, Rainsford has the proficiency to adapt to emotionally distressing situations, as Zaroff threatened his life. After days of Zaroff’s wrath, he continued to fight for his life, showing determination and perseverance. Not only this, but Rainsford continued to keep the defensive position until it was the right time to attack.

The second story that makes a stunning presentation of these features and their importance to survival is “The Voyage of the James Caird” by Caroline Alexander. A retelling of the true story in 1914, a small group of sailors runs into many conflicts

when attempting to get to South Georgia Island. The winds, rain, and cold are incredibly overwhelming for the crew and the ship when it gets stuck in the ice surrounding them. They eventually reach their destination, but not without the aforementioned characteristics. In the story, the small crew works together cohesively and uses their skills and traits for survival to achieve greatness. An exceptional summary of the excellence of the James Caird crew is on pages 189 and 190, “They [the crew] had been mindful of their seamanship under the most severe circumstances a sailor would ever face... they had exhibited the grace of expertise under ungodly pressure,” (Alexander). This quote perfectly illustrates the traits apparent in what it takes to survive. The crew on the James Caird never gave up, showing they had perseverance and determination. They had patience when the ice had frozen the boat in place, did not mentally crumble under pressure (save one on the ship), and could do their own respective roles on the boat and connect them with other crew members, forming open communication, which all finally led to reaching safe land.

The final story, definitely not the least of the three, is “The Seventh Man” by Harumi Murakami. This story is one of survivor guilt and PTSD when a man referred to as the Seventh Man tells a story from his childhood. He was best friends with a boy named K., but a deadly tsunami swept him away and killed him while the Seventh Man was nearby. He blames himself for K.’s death by thinking he could have saved him, which

taunts him for the rest of his life until he returns to his hometown and reconciles with his feelings. The Seventh Man was barely trudging along with his life after the catastrophic event. Still, using his own emotional intelligence, he realizes he needed to let go of the old emotions that continue to fester inside him. As stated by Murakami, “Forty long years collapsed like a dilapidated house... There was no longer anything for me to fear” (Murakami 144). Throughout his life, the Seventh Man continues and perseveres through the pain of his past while also knowing when it was time to face it, showing self-awareness and emotional maturity within him. Without these traits, life would have been much more painful than it was for the traumatized man.

Revisiting the definition Oxford made for survival (“the state or fact of continuing to live or exist, typically in spite of an accident, ordeal, or difficult circumstances”), it is somewhat imprecise in its language; it doesn’t address the multifacetedness of survival, and the multiple different circumstances where survival can mean something different, as found in Murakami’s “The Seventh Man.” Instead, defining survival as the ability to withstand or fight back against stress, which intervenes with a comfortable way of living, is much more fitting.

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What Does It Take to Survive? Madeleine Kaufman

“Now is no time to think of what you do not have. Think of what you can do with what there is” (Hemingway 110). This line, taken from Ernest Hemingway’s *The Old Man and the Sea*, perfectly captures what one must do to survive. In many life-or-death situations, all people have to work with is the materials at hand, knowledge of their circumstances, and the will to push through. For this reason, survival takes motivation, resourcefulness, and preparedness for unlikely events.

One important aspect of survival is finding motivation. Without strong motivators, people find no reason to continue living. For example, in Ernest Hemingway’s *The Old Man and the Sea*, Santiago is motivated by pride. At the start of the novel, Manolin tells Santiago ““the best fisherman is you”” (Hemingway 23). While Santiago shrugs this off, claiming others are better, he secretly wants to live up to Manolin’s belief. Later in the novel, after seeing the marlin’s size, Santiago says ““I’ll kill him, though... I told the boy I was a strange old man... Now I must prove it”” (Hemingway 66). Throughout the following days, Santiago remembers to eat, knowing that this will keep up his strength. Before, Santiago lacked a motivator, relying on Manolin to care for him (Hemingway 19). However, the validation he believes he will experience by catching the marlin propels him forward, and he

eats because it will keep his strength up.

Similarly, in *Station Eleven* by Emily St. John Mandel, the Traveling Symphony finds a reason to live in performing. Survival alone is not sufficient (hence their motto), so they move from place to place, performing famous plays like *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. While this may seem counterintuitive, as performing has no bearing on survival, and traveling is more dangerous than settling down, it aligns with the notion that people require more than basic survival. Without reason or motivation to live, survival ceases to be a priority and can no longer be maintained.

Resourcefulness is also key to survival. Take a look at Caroline Alexander's "The Voyage of the James Caird." In this text, the lifeboat's canvas decking is held up by "short nails McNish had extracted from packing cases" (Alexander 182). For the next seventeen days, this canvas is all that shields the crew from the elements. Had McNish not shown resourcefulness, there would have been nothing to hold the canvas, and the crew would have been more vulnerable. Likewise, in "The Most Dangerous Game" by Richard Connell, resourcefulness plays a role in Rainsford's survival. During the three-day hunt, Rainsford uses skills learned on various hunting trips to slow Zaroff down. For example, on the first day, Rainsford constructs a Malay mancatcher, which causes a dead tree to fall and injure Zaroff's shoulder (Connell 35). He also digs a Burmese tiger pit, which claims Zaroff's hunting dog, and uses a Ugandan knife trick to kill

Ivan (Connell 36-37). It is partly due to these setbacks that Rainsford survives.

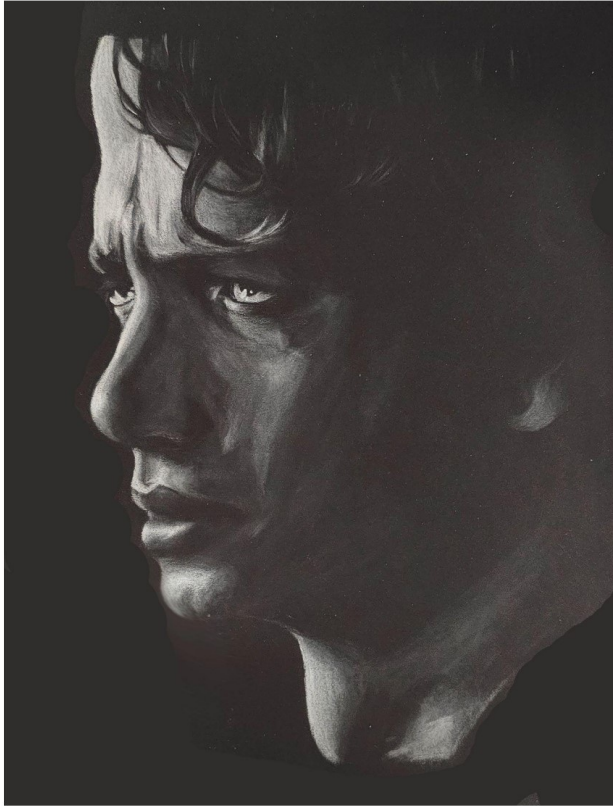
Finally, survival takes preparing for unlikely situations. This idea is best illustrated in Richard Connell's "The Most Dangerous Game." On the first evening of the hunt, Zaroff finds Rainsford and decides to leave him for another day's fun (Connell 33-34). Blinded by confidence, Zaroff does not consider the possibility that Rainsford might win. As a result, he is unprepared to defend himself when Rainsford shows up in the *château*. Ultimately, this lack of foresight costs Zaroff his life.

In summary, one must find motivation, be resourceful, and prepare for the unexpected if they are to survive. In each text, characters use these strategies to overcome obstacles. For instance, the *Traveling Symphony* finds the motivation to live in performing, whereas Santiago finds it in the need for validation. In "The Most Dangerous Game," Rainsford shows resourcefulness by using various hunting skills to outlast Zaroff. McNish shows as much by repurposing old nails, which support the boat's canvas decking. Finally, the importance of preparedness is shown through Zaroff's death. Contrary to Zaroff's belief, Rainsford does win, and Zaroff is caught off guard by his appearance in the *château*. Overall, though each situation varies, these three qualities—motivation, resourcefulness, and preparedness—must be present in order to survive.

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Sad Man
Annabelle Mutinda



Artist Statement: I've been drawing near constantly since 7th grade. I draw as a nice moment to focus and relax. I usually draw pencil sketches or digital renders, so white charcoal was a departure from the norm for me. I'm always looking to improve my art, though, so I'm more than happy to try something new.

Eugenics in America: The Road to Good Intentions

Madison Nichols

Francis Galton, as per Galton.org, once wrote: “What nature does blindly, slowly and ruthlessly, man may do providently, quickly, and kindly. As it lies within his power, so it becomes his duty to work in that direction.” These words, dubbed revolutionary for their time, would soon pave the way for a simultaneously controversial and catastrophic movement dubbed eugenics. To some, the systematic sterilization and euthanization of those deemed unfit to carry out their lineage served as the answer to society’s plights; to others, eugenics is pseudoscience injected with prejudice. It ominously loomed in the shadows of what was otherwise a progressive era; one that brought Americans peace, prosperity, and progress as a byproduct of the early 19th century’s Industrial Revolution. Contemporary American society swept eugenics and its history under the rug; therefore, it is crucial people are educated as to the origins of eugenics, its influence upon America’s three spheres of social activity, and why it continues to bear significance over 100 years after its establishment.

Firstly, the study of eugenics, a Greek term meaning “well-born,” arose in 1883 by virtue of a British polymath named Sir Francis Galton. Starting relatively tame with positive eugenics, or the encouraged breeding of ideal human candidates, things would

escalate in favor of negative eugenics that vitalized the prohibition of “unideal” candidates from procreation. As Dr Howard Markel, the director of the Center for the History of Medicine, states in his article, “. . .the blind, deaf, mentally ill and “crippled” orphans, unwed mothers...” and much more were relentlessly discriminated against.” By and large, wealthy white men in powerful positions determined the list of people who did not deserve the right to procreation. This was problematic. On the surface level, it would appear that eugenics exclusively bore consequences for individual victims; however, America as a country paid the price as well.

Secondly, per Rudolf Steiner, an Austrian philosopher, America and its society can be broken up into three, easily digestible pieces: political, economic, and cultural spheres. To begin, within the United States, the enforcement of eugenics was “through coercive and legitimate power” of the state governments wherein they mandated forced lobotomies and sterilization of those deemed unfit to carry out their lineage (Penn State). At its peak, political leaders at every level of government embraced and advocated for eugenics on behalf of scientists, thus propelling the movement forward. As Cera Lawrence, holder of a master of science degree, asserts in her article, “[Galton’s] contributions to the ideas of human breeding for social improvement were profoundly influential on biologists, social activists, and psychologists until World War II”(). Millions, especially those of higher social standing, maintained blind trust in Galton as a result

of his widespread influence and supposed credibility as an established scientist. It would be a similar phenomenon that led to misconceptions regarding the relationship between vaccines and autism by virtue of Dr. Andrew Wakefield's 1998 paper on the measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine (Children's Hospital of Philadelphia). Moving forward, on an economic level in the early 1900s, America was just transitioning into the Progressive Era and reformers found themselves crushed under the weight of various problems arising from immigration, poverty, epidemics, political corruption, industrialization, and urbanization. Amid increased vulnerability, chaos, and desperation for solutions, advertising eugenics as a feasible, gradual, and scientifically-backed remedy to all of these matters proved the ideal segue into receiving minimal to zero public pushback. Finally, the effect of eugenics on cultural spheres were profound; in fact, Hitler's Holocaust dedicated enormous amounts of time and resources towards the systematic murder and suppression of Jewish people based on their religious beliefs and their ongoing strife with Evangelical Christians; dating back to Augustine, a philosopher who believed Jews were the murders of Jesus (Judaken). In light of recent scientific discoveries involving genetics, the political, economic, and cultural ramifications of eugenics remain a relevant and necessary subject matter today.

Lastly, more than 100 years after the initial introduction of eugenics, humanity is still feeling the aftermath of the conflict left in its wake. While the term "eugenics" bolsters a deplorable

historical connotation responsible for leaving a permanently vulgar taste in society's mouth, some believe the implementation of eugenics sans Nazi-style breeding, sterilization, and euthanization is viable. Proponents of eugenics argue that it can be a beneficial and even groundbreaking process if used to reduce and eliminate genetic diseases or improve human health whilst excluding forms of coercion and discrimination. If we as a society are obligated to secure a strong future for generations to come, one has to wonder if the key to lessening potential suffering can be found within genetic medicine, enhancement, and modification. Many believe that dabbling in this technology is an uncalled-for attempt at playing God and defying nature, while others believe it would be wasteful to ignore its life-saving abilities. It is merely a matter of whether we can learn to distinguish the ethically deplorable cruelties committed in the past from the justifications, forms, aims, and likely consequences of the scientific breakthroughs of the present. In light of the controversy surrounding the evitable exploration of the genetic frontier, compromise will be difficult, if not impossible; however, if we are someday able to come to a consensus, mankind will of reached a turning point in history.

In an era rife with contradiction and ambiguity at every turn, where science, nature, and philosophy clash on a regular basis and related global tension is at its highest, one thing is for certain: Francis Galton's teachings--whether they be about the supposed inherent cruelty of nature, or the innate benignity of humanity--will forever leave behind a permanent scar on society. It

is up to contemporary American society to honor the voices of those once silenced by Galton by acknowledging the origins of eugenics, its influence upon America's three spheres of social activity, and understanding how eugenics's consequences can be translated into the 21st century. We owe it to ourselves, the thousands who suffered at the hands of past ignorance, and future generations to come.

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