

VIRGE



THE VIRTUAL EDGE
FLYS LITERARY MAGAZINE

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ENCOURAGEMENT

STAFF ADVISOR – JENNI NEWTON



“Trail of the Water” by Madison Westbrook, Grade 11

Sweet Dreams

Christianne Joubert, Grade 9

I am dreaming,
Dreaming of a faraway place,
Where cotton candy grows on tress,
And the grass is made of sugar.

A castle sits on a rock candy hill that overlooks a forest of lollipops,
And past the castle and past the woods,
Is a sea made of only gumdrops.

And an evil dragon lives in a licorice cave past the candy wonderland,
He breathes his raging fire balls,
As he holds the candy queen captive.
I smite the dragon with my pixie stick sword,
And save the queen from peril.

The dream ends,
And I am back in my bed,
Ready for another adventure.

“The Golden Hills”

Akshita Madala, Grade 10

The sun peaked through the clouds and radiated light on the golden hills. I opened the shabby wooden door and stared motionless at the never-ending boundaries. The sparkling star in the sky seemed to awake the slightest joy in my numb heart. When the sun dawned on the spring time flowers, they blossomed with delight and the wild bees jealously hovered over them. The tall grass beside me swayed from side to side as it spoke to the whispering wind.

I sat in the middle of everything; it was the meadow that breathed life. Around me the wildlife carried on with their typical duties. The birds' frantic quest for food began as a few empty stomachs waited in their nest. The innocent rabbits hopped into their burrows and disappeared. The deer cautiously approached the stream never taking their eyes off of me. Even the tiniest animals seemed to play a part in their community.

In the middle of all this serenity, I hear the thunderous crash of the trees falling to the ground. I could not believe my ears and I could imagine what was happening. I knew that lumbering company would not stop. At that moment, I realized the stupidity and greed of humans, the ones that were seizing all the love in the world. It seemed like hours, as I listened to the everlasting screams of the trees. They did not stop chopping down the trees, they did not stop destroying all the homes of innocent animals and they did not stop murdering the golden hills.

The sparkling star in the sky became an evil ball of flame and bright blue sky transformed into gloomy, ominous clouds. All the wild life seemed to have disappeared or they could have ran away from the horror. The animals were innocent and they did nothing to those vicious humans, but those humans failed to recognize their deplorable mistake. I could do nothing but hope with dread in my heart.

As the sun reached the end of the sky, the last tree fell to the ground lifeless.



“Graveyard for Our Souls” by Madison Westbrook, Grade 11

EARTH

Martina, Grade 10

The earth,
so beautiful and comforting, it gives you balance.
Holds so many natural beauties.
It is like a big mother, to all its unique souls and personalities.
Sitting here just to think,
So focused I cannot even blink.
Coming across this only thought
that someone must be caught.
Doing such a thing, toward such beauty
Its starting to make me moody.

The World...

David Lawrence, Grade 11

The World is all as it should be
When it's just you and me
When I am by the river side
I am never better inside

The World is at it's best
When I'm in the forest
When I am underneath the biggest tree
I am never more happy

The World is my favorite place
When I'm in the mountain's white lace
When I'm in that jungle of rock and snow
My heart has a warmer glow

But the most amazing thing
Is that there's another thing
That place where all are dear
That place where friends grow near



"The Sun's Steed" sculpture by Alice Betancourt, Grade 12



"Mitternacht" by Alice Betancourt, Grade 12

Egyptian Prophecy

Carylanne Joubert, Grade 10

Two Egyptian Maus there shall be,
One named Cleopatra and the other Ptolemy.
They shall be black and grey and brown,
But neither shall ever wear Egypt's crown.
For Egypt is no longer ruled,
By the kings and queens of old who were so cruel.



“Lush” by Alice Betancourt, Grade 12

1400 Amsterdam Ave
Harlem, New York
12443

Dear Jamison,

Life in Harlem is all that it is cracked up to be! It's amazing to see free black men and women everywhere I turn. I wish you would have come here, my friend, because this is truly life at its best. This is going to be an unforgettable experience.

I have a roommate named Langston Hughes. He's a cool guy and he writes some pretty profound poetry. If you ask me, poetry is a load of nonsense. But if it makes him happy, so be it. Either way he's a sweet roommate.

I don't know if you've ever heard of W.E.B. Du Bois, but he's the leader of the NAACP, which stands for National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. It's a pretty big organization and is doing its best to help people like us out. Without him, I don't think Harlem would be half of what it is.

The best part about this place has got to be the Cotton Club. It's a nightclub I go to almost every night. Duke Ellington sings his soulful jazz music and we dance the Lindy Hop. The carefree nature of this artistic city is contagious!

I know you're not so sure about coming here because it would be a giant thing to move your whole family, but hear me out. There are so many reasons to leave the dirty south and so many to come here. Like, no more sharecropping if you leave there and better jobs here. There is no racial violence here and we even have voting rights. Your kids can even get a better education here in Harlem. And most importantly, you children won't have to grow up feeling out of place and different in those damn segregated regions of the south. Come here for a better future and for me.

Best wishes,

Toby



"My First Piece Since First Grade" by Charly Santagado, Grade 10

A Golden Realization

James McIntosh, Jr., Grade 12

Not very long ago, in a city with a beautiful balance between structures and nature, there lived the most brilliant scientist ever. His name was Arnold Kapowski, and he was not widely known. One of his greatest works was a machine that could give humans super powers. On the day that he had finished the machine, Arnold commenced to search for a volunteer on whom he could test the machine's capabilities. He found a man named Mike who seemed eager to volunteer, but he had his own secret selfish motives. Arnold promised Mike that if he volunteered, he could have any power he wished, if it were within the machine's capabilities to give it to him. Despite his brilliance, Arnold had not anticipated what Mike would request, the power to turn anything he touched into gold. Arnold had made a promise, so he reluctantly agreed. He did, however, attempt to get Mike to change his mind about which power he wanted and, when that did not work, to scare him out of wanting to volunteer. Arnold informed Mike of some terrible risks and gave him stacks of waivers to sign, which Mike hardly glanced through. Mike finally did get the chance to step into the machine and get the power to turn anything he touched, except for the clothes he currently wore at the time, into gold. Mike was so excited to have his power that he did not even stop to thank Arnold. Mike just ran right out of the building, turning every door he touched into gold.

Mike wanted popularity, as well as wealth. He went to some of the city's monuments to turn them into gold, and he also turned some rocks into gold, which he stored in his pockets, along the way. When he had turned the monuments into gold, word of Mike's deeds began to fly through the city. Some people loved him for what he had done, but others hated him. Mike loved the fame, but he soon found trouble. Everything he touched, even if he simply brushed past, turned into gold. He would push buttons on stoplights to change the crosswalk sign, but the stoplights turned into gold and would thus cease to function. This caused accidents. Animals Mike came into contact with would turn into gold. Usually, the only ones he did this to on purpose were neighborhood pets that he despised. Vehicles, park benches, trees, and people were some of the other things permanently turned into gold by Mike, most of which on accident. More people began to fear and hate him. And two things made his situation worse, his inability to eat, because any food he touched turned into inedible gold, and a confrontation by the mayor.

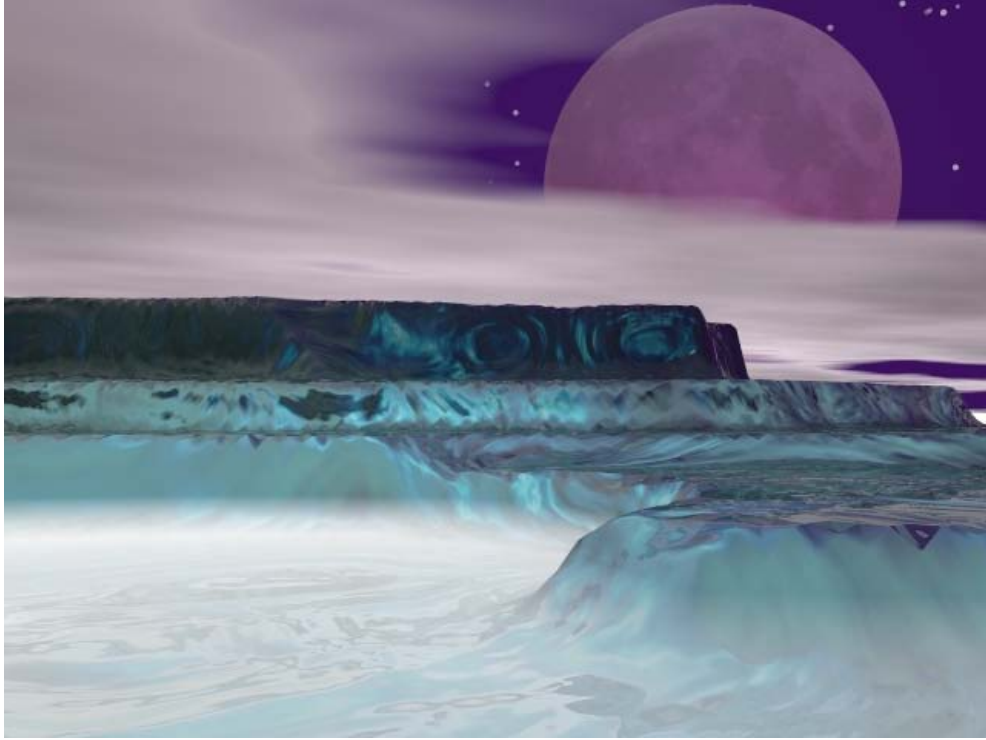
While Mike was slumped on a golden bench in a park, the mayor, with some armed body guards protecting him, came up to Mike, but not too close to him. When Mike saw the mayor, he immediately stood up and, despite his distress, held out his hand for the mayor to shake.

The mayor glanced at Mike's hand and asked, "Is this an assassination attempt?" This made Mike and the guards tense up. At first, Mike did not understand what the mayor meant, but then he remembered his power.

"Oh, no!" he exclaimed. "I was just so surprised by your appearance that I forgot about my power for a moment, that's all."

"Well," snorted the mayor. "After what you have done to some of the fine items and people of this city, including my nephew's cat, you've got some charges against you, including murder. I know that Arnold Kapowski did this to you, so run back to him and tell him that I said, 'Fix this, or else!'" With that, the mayor, with his guards, turned to leave. Mike was wishing to be normal again anyway, so he did as the mayor had ordered. Arnold swiftly finished building a machine that would reverse the effects of the other machine by removing Mike's power, but not by reconvert things or people who had been turned into gold. Mike stepped into the new machine, and Arnold powered it up.

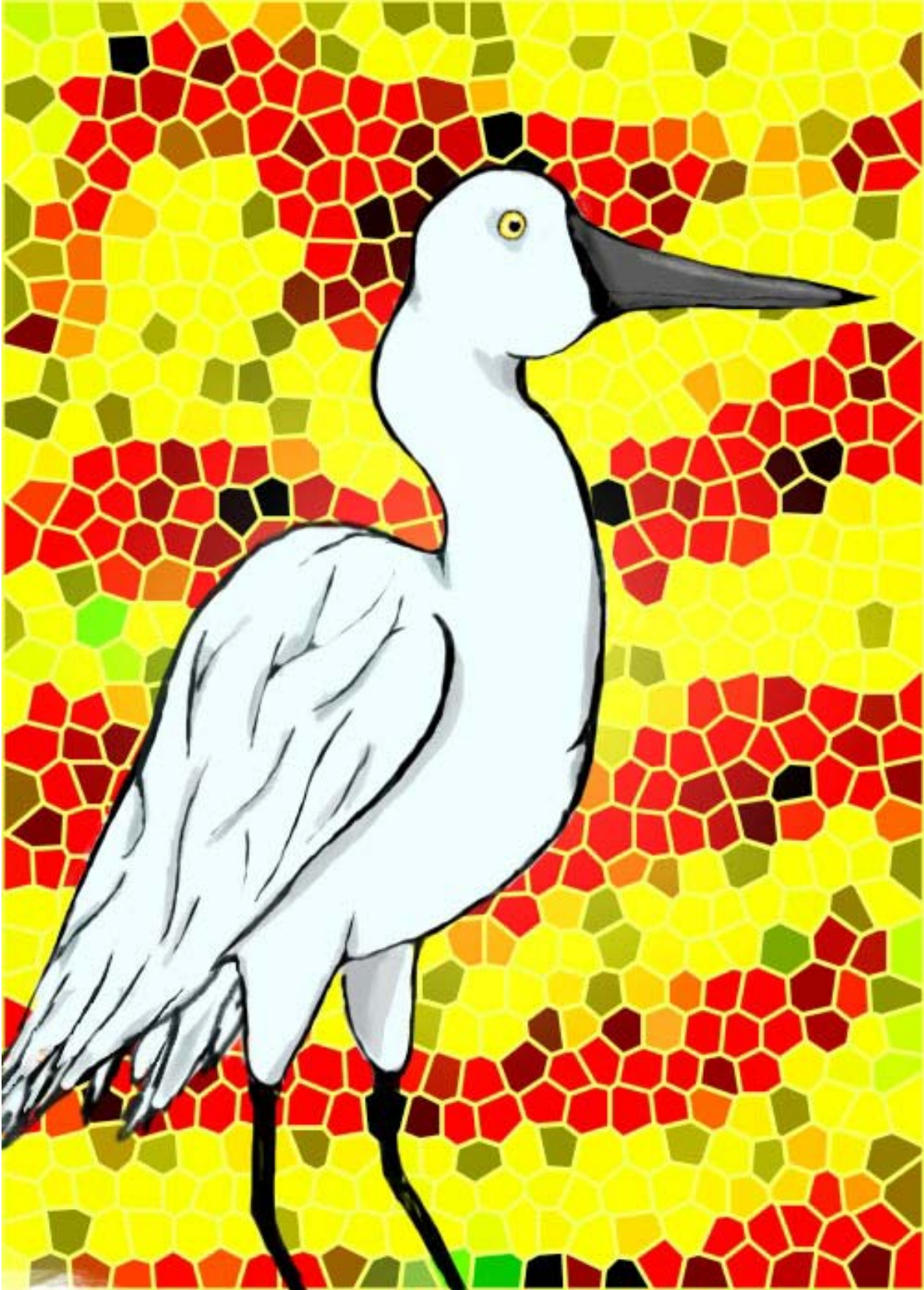
When the machine's process completed, Arnold informed Mike, "You currently still obtain your power, but it should wear off within the hour. I will attempt to invent something that will convert anything or anyone out of the golden state you have put them in." Mike, who was so enthralled to know that his power would soon be gone, hugged Arnold. Before Arnold could protest, he was solid gold. Mike was horrified by what he had done because he realized that Arnold could never build that invention to turn golden items and people back to normal, so those charges would remain against him. Many people claim that "all that glitters is gold," but it can be realized that gold is not always what is desirable.



"Nighttime Waterfall" by Timothy, Grade 12



"I See You" by Kirsten Harlow, Grade 12



"Egret" by Samantha Walden, Grade 10

The Mystery of Rosewill

Shelby Weeden, Grade 9

My name is Arena Laser and I am seventeen years old. This is the story of how I solved the mysterious murder of Rosewill Manor.

This murder happened a little over a year ago. The young girl killed was my best friend, Mina Gordon. She was only sixteen. The person who killed her was never discovered. I made it my personal mission to bring this person to justice.

It was a clear night when Mina's parents, Lillian and Christopher, held a fancy party at the Rosewill Manor. My family and I arrived a little late, seeing as my younger sister, Lidia, was hesitant to go. Everybody was talking loudly, so I took the opportunity to sneak away.

I found myself in Mina's room, where she was discovered by the house maid, stabbed through the heart. My fingers trailed across her bedspread, pillows, books, anything in her room. You see I have this ability to see what happened to someone by touching something they last touched. As my fingers glided across her dresser one of these visions hit me.

I saw Mina stumbling into her room, running from someone. She fell to the ground, her hand brushing the dresser before she made her way under her bed. This look into the past ended there.

I knelt down, tucking my red-tinted, dark brown hair behind my ear. I lifted the bed skirt and was automatically hit by the smell of something old, like a dusty book. Moving stuff around, I discovered an old journal. I carefully pulled it out, flipping through the yellowed pages. The signature at the bottom of each entry was Mina Lucy Rosewill, Mina's great grandmother, whom she was named after. One entry caught my eye.

"A caution to any person who lives in Rosewill: The cook, Gregory Shepland, has an evil mind. Never trust him or his family. They love pain and torture. Mina Lucy Rosewill."

I gasped. The cook right now was Gregory Shepland's great grandson, Marcus Shepland! I scanned through more of the journal hoping for another piece of information. I got my answer in a flashback.

I saw a man dragging Mina up the stairs to the attic. She screamed, but no one came to her aid.

I blinked, closing the journal and jumping to my feet. I peaked around the corner, sneaking across to the staircase that led to the attic. As my foot pressed against the old wooden steps, they creaked, adding that eerie feeling. I bit my lip and continued up.

In the attic I found a trail of blood drops. It was dried; obviously it had been here awhile. My fingers trailed across the dust covered shelves. I entered another flashback.

Mina was sitting up here reading her great grandmother's journal. The door cracked open and a man appeared. My friend started yelling, "No, no! Please not again!" as the man got closer. He reached down, a knife in his hand, and slit her wrist.

I blinked. The police had said nothing about her wrists being cut. My eyes narrowed. The report also didn't mention the drops of blood that trailed from the spot she was sitting by the window all the way to the door. My mind was made up. It had to be the cook, Marcus Shepland.

I turned around, almost screaming. The butler, Jeremiah, was standing there.

"Good grief, Mr. Jeremiah, you startled me half to death," I let out a long sigh.

"Miss Arena, why do you have Miss Mina's journal?" he asked.

"I was just looking through some old things. Anyway, I should get back to the party."

"I'm sorry. I cannot allow you to do that."

I became puzzled, "Why not?"

"Because you know far too much."

Jeremiah pulled out a knife. He swung at me, narrowly avoiding my shoulder. I fell to the ground, trying to dodge his attack. He still came after me. This time I screamed at the top of my lungs and ran down the stairs. I made it to the room that was just before the party area before I tripped.

My father burst into the room. He pinned Jeremiah to the ground while other shocked guests called 911. I explained to the officers that the butler had been the one that had killed Mina, he even confessed to it.

Later, looking through the old journal again I found an entry by my best friend, Mina, herself.

"Everyone should always remember one thing when it comes to a mystery: The butler always did it. Mina Alexis Gordon."



"Miss Gloria" by Molly, Grade 9



"You're on Fire" by Sarah Subrahmanyam, Grade 10

Zero

Shelby Weeden, Grade 9

In a hidden land called Zero, is where I lived. My name is Helena Knightville and I'm fifteen years old. This village is known as Zero because it was supposed to be uninhabitable. Long ago a volcano erupted, wiping out all who lived here. Or so everyone thought. The real story is that everyone who lived in Zero was saved by the powers of a girl named Elaina Knightville, who died while saving this place. That's right, my mother saved the village, and I inherited her powers.

I have the powers of telekinesis, generating force fields, and premonitions. But, there's more to me than that. I am also an excellent wielder of weapons and much, much more. Life in Zero was known to no one outside of the land. Everything was kept secret and nobody traveled through there. The volcanic rock that had molded itself throughout my village is why this place was uninhabitable, plus the giant active volcano scared people off.

This is how Zero truly met its demise.

I was walking to my training building, like every day, when the first outsider came.

My light blue eyes were on the ground, my wheat colored hair falling over my shoulder. I heard the footsteps, but I figured it was Gloria coming to see why I was late.

Until a voice called out, "Miss?"

My eyes automatically darted upwards. The person was clearly not from here. His clothes were those of the big city, Laken. The people of Laken always wore silk or satin, while we of Zero preferred cotton and denim. His attitude was also different. He seemed disgusted by our small village and had this look on his face that read, 'I am better than all of you.'

"May I help you?" I made my voice polite.

"Where am I, Miss?" the man's eyes kept darting around.

We were not allowed to mention Zero, so instead I said, "You are in a traveling town, sir."

"Will you help me get back to the main road?"

"Go back the way you came."

That voice wasn't mine. It belonged to my friend, William. He was always standing up for me. The outsider turned around and practically ran back to the main road.

Throughout that week fifteen more foreigners came into the village. They were always scared off, but we knew something was wrong.

Little did we know what was to come.

A week later the first attack came, by the same man who had been the first intruder. It happened while William and I were the only ones in the village. The others had made the monthly travel to Laken for food and other necessities.

William was standing behind me, helping me work on my abilities. He took a hold of my wrist, assisting me in guiding the water I was holding in the air with my telekinesis over to a pot. I tried it by myself, and then a sharp pain entered my right calf muscle. I glanced down, letting out a yelp when I saw the arrow sticking out of my leg.

“Ella! Duck!” William yelled, knocking me to the ground. A cloud of one thousand arrows soared above our heads.

I made my shield cover us. My breath came fast, “Why,” I said aloud. *Why was this happening? Nobody ever came after Zero*, I thought.

“There she is,” somebody yelled.

I let my shield collapse.

“Come with us, Helena Knightville.” the man with the silk tie said to me.

“Why,” I said again.

“Your powers are a treasure. Just like your mother’s were. She would never come with us though.”

William pulled his sword out, “Back away.”

I held up my hand, ready to use my powers. Five of the guys lunged at me, I pushed them away with my mind. William was soon overtaken by a man, I pushed my friend out of the way and kicked the guy in the gut. After about ten minutes, Mr. Silk Tie dude was the only one left. He got away before I could do anything.

A month later, the same thing happened again. Except this time we were ready, or so we thought. Zero had formed an army. William and I announced the signal and we charged. The Laken group never saw it coming. But it didn’t work.

My villagers were falling left and right. I couldn’t protect everyone at once. Soon, too soon, William and I were the only ones left. I was pinned down against a rock; William was slammed against a tree.

Mr. Silk Tie guy walked over to me and whispered, “Say your goodbyes.”

I was drug away while William was left to fight.

I never saw him or Zero again.



"Rainbow Springs State Park" by Timothy, Grade 12

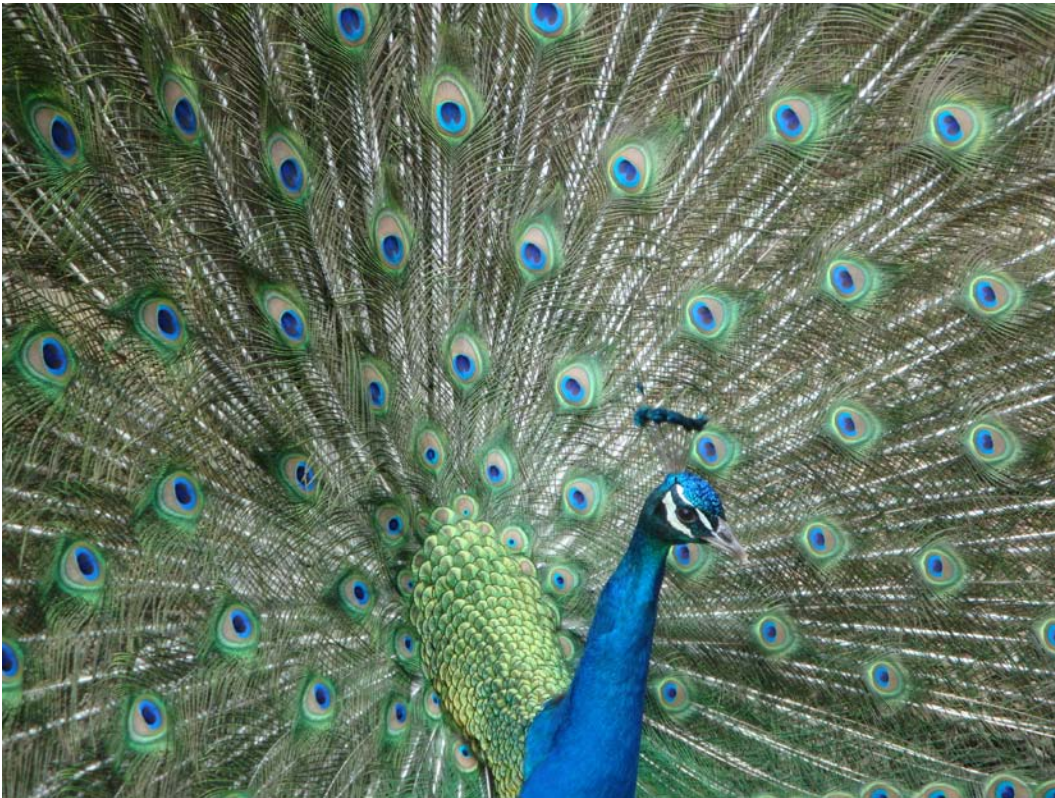


"Mighty Foe" by Sarah Subrahmanyam, Grade 10

Cold

Rebekah Doucette, Grade 12

Dreary. Dreary and brown.
The cold bites at my nose like a slap in the face. It stings.
Bare. Bare and brown.
The frozen, wet grass numbs sandal-shod feet and I shiver. Hard.
Wet. Wet and brown.
Water falls from the sky and soaks the earth. No snow. Never snow.
Dead. Dead and brown.
Plants, killed by frost and cold. Will they survive the coldest winter they've known?
Who can tell?
Cold. Cold and brown.
Trees, stripped of their dignity, shiver naked under a grey sky.
Why am I outside in this beastly cold?
Because it appeals.
And it calls.
And I heed that call.
Out in the cold.



"Peacock" by Pearly Pandya, Grade 9



"Kochou" by Savannah Coleman, Grade 12

Girls Cannot Be Perfect

Christianne Joubert, Grade 9

Everyone expects you to be perfect.
They expect you to do what you are told to do,
Do what needs to be done,
And still live your life the way you want to.

A cat with its furry coat can be perfect,
An apple with its shiny skin can be perfect,
A river with the rain kissing its waters can be perfect,
But a girl cannot.

Girls are different,
They have their own minds,
They have their own bodies,
And they have their own souls.

They think for themselves,
Just like a bird thinks if it wants to fly,
Or just like a bird thinks if it wants to sing.

It is hard to be perfect,
That is true,
It is as hard as when a grain of sand struggles to stay out of the rain.

Girls cannot be perfect,
That is because they can only be themselves,
Maybe that is what a perfect girl is.

Two Kitties

Carylanne Joubert, Grade 10

Two kitties lying,
Together in the window,
Both warmed by the sun.



“Hippie Chick” by Samantha Walden, Grade 10

Bottled Water: Did You Know?

Kaitlyn Karl, Grade 12

There has recently surfaced concern against an environmental hazard that could possibly be located throughout your house, work, school, and possibly even your car! Bottled water poses a roaring concern to the environment and can be depleted with your consent of change to a small consumer demand decision. The bottled water industry has bamboozled us into believing the misconceptions and the lies that brands such as Fiji and Aquafina are safer and healthier to drink other than tap water.

Bottled water is an entirely misleading product, just as misleading and fictional as those serene pictures on the front of the bottles. The Food and Drug Administration doesn't even bother to check up on these big time water corporations such as Fiji. The pictures on the front of the bottles of aqua waterfalls, beautiful wildlife and rivers do not measure up to where they are actually getting their water from. Seventy-five percent of it all comes from the tap, and after the Natural Resource Defense Council did a study, they found that one-third of tested bottled water violates their purity standards. The bottled water contained harmful contaminants such as arsenic and synthetic carcinogens.

The bottles themselves are harmful too. Leaving a new or refilled bottle of water in a car or in a confined area with temperatures over 100 degrees can and will cause a harmful man-made toxin to be released from the plastic and into the liquid you are drinking. If you look at the bottom of the bottle and see a PVC recyclable sign with a number three in it, chances are that your bottle is made with Oxide, Benzene, Vinyl and toxic dioxin plasticizers that can escape from the bottle and be released into the environment.

Bottled water can also affect the precious natural levels inside your body. Natural internal PH (power of hydrogen) acidity levels in a healthy human are around 6.5 to 7.0. Bottled water brands were tested and it was discovered, most of the water contained alkaline acidity levels up to 10.00 but roughly around 9.5. That is actually doing harm to your body, harm that can be prevented just from choosing to drink water out of a drinking fountain or tap instead.

This year alone, we have consumed over 260 million liters of bottled water with a skyrocketing total value of over \$10 billion. Knowing that most of these plastic containers are not recyclable and people make a decision not to recycle, our landfills are filling up with plastic and toxic chemicals. In America alone, over 47 million gallons of oil is needed to power water trucks to disperse and fill up empty

vending machines and supermarkets. Gas fumes from automotive vehicles release unnecessary carbon dioxide into our already depleting atmosphere. If America decided to ban most bottled water companies from distributing throughout the states, that alone would eliminate around 1 billion pounds of carbon dioxide.

This all seems overwhelming and slightly skeptical but there are still small steps that your school as a whole can do to aid in this crisis and help to prevent the harmful body and environmental changes that bottled water has brought upon us. I've recently noticed that high schools have at least 1 or 2 water fountains in each hallway. If I may suggest possibly putting in a water fountain in the cafeteria along with disposable paper cups so students can take water back to their seats instead of buying a bottle at lunch. The biggest step your school can do is to eliminate the sales of bottled water in the cafeteria and vending machines all together. If 100 students buy a bottle of water each lunch period, then a total of 400 empty bottles of water will be added into the landfill each day. Eliminating your school's weekly intake can help the environment.

Another fantastic idea is to hold a brief seminar for students to inform them of the dangers of bottled water. We only have one Earth, and one chance to keep her healthy. If students knew a simple way to help out the environment without having to sort through old garbage to recycle, I believe they would be more than happy to put money back into their pockets that they would be spending on water.

I myself would be more than happy to pass out "Going Green" brochures and to help inform students about being environmentally friendly. This school year should be dedicated to change. So why not start now? Start by helping to be more conscious to the toxins you put inside your body and to protect Earth.



“Country Cottage” by Brandon Kirk, Grade 6

Regret

Charly Santagado, Grade 10

Is regret as incessant as the sun's rays?
As impossible to exterminate as sweltering summer days?

Will it torment my soul until death do I part,
Persistently ripping to shreds mine own heart?

If such is the way of regret and remorse,
And life will drag on like a doleful lame horse,
I've no desire to keep on such a pitiful course.
Goodbye ~ goodbye vile regret and evil remorse.



"Lickity Split" by Alexis Acebo, Grade 11

A Conversation with Mark Twain

R.J. Adler, Grade 8

“Your oral presentations on Mark Twain are due tomorrow. I hope that you have been studying. Class dismissed,” said Mrs. Jamison.

I thought to myself, this is going to be easy! All I have to do is use my computer to find some information on this Mark Twain person, and then I can use the info as a reference to practice my presentation. By the time I got to my house though, a terrible thunderstorm hit. I went to my room, and tried to log in to my computer, but it wouldn't turn on! I decided to take a quick nap because when I woke up, the storm will have hopefully passed. Then I fell asleep.

When I awoke, I found an old man in a white suit, with white hair looking at my computer. He reminded me of the guy on those posters in the classroom. I realized that this guy was Mark Twain!

“Well, I'll be! I've never seen this sort of contraption before,” he exclaimed. I immediately knew that he had never seen a computer in his life. I was shocked and all that I could say was, “You're... You're... You're Mark Twain!”

“Well, my real name is Samuel Clemens, but you can call me Mark Twain. I was born in 1835 when Halley's Comet flew over Earth, and I died in 1910 when Halley's Comet was flying away from Earth.”

Then, I had an idea, “I have a presentation that I have to work on that is about you, can you help me please?”

“I can help you,” he replied. I know a place where you can get a lot of information on me: my home in Hartford, Connecticut. It has now been turned into a museum. I lived there for seventeen years” he said.

I was confused. “For one, Hartford is far away, and two...” Before I could finish my sentence, there was a flash, and then we were in the Reader's Room of the museum, and no one noticed us. It was as if we were invisible!

The place was amazing. As I went to sit down on one of the sofas to read *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Mark Twain said, “I wrote this and most of the other books that are in this room. Did you know that

some of the characters and events in this book were based on people and events in my life? I encourage you to read it whenever you get the chance. Please follow me to my living room.”

When we got there, he said, “I used to tell stories to my daughters about the items on that mantle over there, but there was a twist: Every time I told them a story it had to be different, but the items had to be mentioned in the same order as the last story.

Let me tell you a true story about these items. For instance, that painting over there is a painting of a cat in a ruffled collar that I received from my friend, and my wife’s brother , Charles Langdon.”

He then showed me a statue of a woman. “I bought this statue of a Greek goddess when I visited the Mediterranean in 1867.” He told me all about his travels in the Mediterranean.

“My brother, Orion, gave me that blue bottle during our trip to Salt Lake City, Utah. I picked up that conch shell during my trip to what is now Hawaii; it was originally called the Sandwich Islands. I bought this vase when I was living in San Francisco working as a journalist. This bronze plaque of me was made to pay tribute to me. I also bought this small harp during my journey across the Great Plains and the Rocky Mountains. That warrior painting is a memento that I purchased during my visit to the Mediterranean which, by the way, that trip was funded by the local newspaper that I worked for. I received this golden platter as a present from my mentor when I was his apprentice in printing. This second vase belonged to my dear mother; it was the last gift that my father, John Clemens, gave to her before he died of pneumonia in 1847. This pot was given to my wife, Olivia, by her mother as a wedding present. The painting of a young lady, which I call Emmeline, was given to me by an admirer of my work during one of my visits to Europe.”

He then said, “You probably don’t know what I mean by all of this, let me explain. I am telling you about these items because they will help you with your presentation.”

“That is cool. Thank you, Mr. Twain,” I said.

“If you need any more information, please visit this place again. Good-bye, and good luck with your presentation!” he said.

Before I could say anything, I was back in my room.

Everything that just happened must have been a dream and then I realized that I didn't need my computer after all. I put together my presentation.

The next day, when I was giving my presentation, I saw one of the posters of Mark Twain smile at me. Was it a dream after all?



"Eifel Tower" by Erin Smith, Grade 8



"You, Me and the Ball" by Alexis Acebo, Grade 11

THE DANCER

Erin Brandenburg, Grade 10

Red curtains and a wooden stage
Can spring such passion from its cage
The music starts the game begins
Though they know who will win.

A hall of people have come to see
All that she's acclaimed to be
The spotlight is a golden pool
That she alone has the right to rule.

Pink silk, satin shoes, costumes in so many hues,
Help her fly, set her free,
To become what she was born to be

The music dies, the curtains close,
And in this moment no one knows
That even though the dance is done
She will never turn and run,
From who she is and will always be

--A dancer



“Looking at the World Through a Fly's Eyes” by Alexis Acebo, Grade 11

It's a Question of Intolerance

Bryce Aschenbrenner, Grade 8

My little brother,
Will often smother,
Me with questions.

After two or three,
He starts to annoy me,
With questions.

I tell him to hush,
And I give him a push,
And I boil.

This isn't right,
For he thinks I'm bright,
I should be honored,
To be bothered,
With all his questions.

There Will Be Joy

Christianne Joubert, Grade 9

The sound of the larks in the trees,
Call softly on the breeze,
While all the time the bees,
Are hard at work.

The river that runs through this meadow,
Is surrounded by a hundred yellow,
Sunflowers and Daises.

The grass is soft and warm,
Heated by the sun's bright rays,
As I slowly drift away,
Into the beauty of this day.

There will be joy,
There will be hope,
And there will be love,
Because it is this thing that we call nature,
That brings us happiness.



"Lake Louise - Diamond of the Rockies" by Pearly Pandya, Grade 9



“Mountain Mansion” by Brandon Kirk, Grade 6

Sin of the Letter

Madison Westbrook, Grade 11

Letter of deceit,
of hate and lie.
The Devil’s letter,
God of the lie.
For why did you sin?
Was it for thy to be like the Devil?
Mischievous and bold...
The letter of darkness and humiliation.
For which they call The Scarlet.
Letter of the witches and liars.
Whose sins thrown into a flaming fire!
This letter you wear,
does the guilt condemn you to attach it to your clothes?
Or is it the shame you see when thinking of your past?
This letter “A” of Adultery...
Does it strike your conscience?
Or do you feel nothing of regret?

Whatever Happened to the Memory of Tracy Andrews

By Maria Moncaliano, Grade 9

I sat up and rubbed the back of my head. It hurt bad. I saw some lady sitting on an office chair. She smiled at me.

“Hi there, Tracy,” she said.

I glanced around. “Who are you talking to?” I asked, confused. “And where am I?” I winced as a fresh jolt of pain came from the back of my scalp. The smell of medicine and floor polish invaded my nostrils.

“What’s your name?” she asked, concerned.

I opened my mouth to speak but stopped short. A tingle of anxiety worked its way up my spine. A lump rose in my throat. I glanced around wildly.

“I-I don’t know,” I stammered. Tears welled in my eyes. *Who am I?* I told myself it was all just a dream. My mind raced as I searched my memory. *How did I get here? Where is here? What about my parents? Friends? Teachers?* And then the tears came. I couldn’t remember anything. I got this feeling of being lost and alone that I could only associate with being a little girl, lost in a shopping mall. This was the same feeling, but magnified so that every inch of my soul felt empty and hollow. I couldn’t even remember what day it was. It would be so ironic if this were Friday the 13th.

I swear I could see a light bulb light up over the lady’s head. She walked over to me and calmly explained where I was currently situated: the nurse’s office-- Clinton High School. She gently rubbed my back while she told me my name--Tracy Andrews—and my age-- 15. She spoke soothingly and I felt myself relax. The woman’s voice seemed to be the only real thing here. I calmed my breathing. I learned that my birthday was in three months and that I was a sophomore, and then the lady rose and stepped out of the room. In came a tall woman wearing a navy pantsuit, a variety of long necklaces, and many bracelets. She looked like a rich businesswoman. I could see the smallest hint of dried mascara on her cheek. She had been crying. The woman had hair the same dark brown as mine, as well as knockout blue eyes. *What color were my eyes?* She was very pretty. She sat down on a chair next to my cot and asked, “Honey, do you know who I am?”

I shook my head, too scared to speak. I breathed deeply to calm myself, and inhaled the fresh smell of daisies: the woman's perfume.

The woman looked like she might start crying again. I could see that she felt devastated. When she spoke, it was strained, as if she were trying not to burst into tears. "I'm your mother, Patricia Andrews. Your father, Milton Andrews, is at work. You can't remember anything?" I shook my head again. She wiped a tear from her eye. "Maybe Emily can help. She was there when you fell. Emily has been your best friend since kindergarten."

A girl came in. She had wavy blond hair and green eyes. Her eyes were red and puffy. I could hear a small sob come out of her mouth. She pressed her lips together tightly, as if she were trying to keep herself under control. "Tracy?" she asked. "Do you recognize me?" I shook my head. The girl's eyes saddened and she sniffled. "Oh, you poor thing!" she cried. She sat down on the cot, next to me. She spoke slowly, and pronounced each word carefully. She sat very still, as if afraid to move the cot. It was obvious that she thought that I could break into a million pieces at any moment. "I'm Emily, your best friend. While we were at cheerleading practice you fell off the top of the pyramid and hit your head. You're head cheerleader. I'm co-head cheerleader. I guess I could show you some of the cheers to see if you remember. You're also president of our class and the single most popular girl in school." She spoke the last sentence as if she were proud of me. I smiled. I felt like I could trust this girl.

"Thank you, Emily," said my mother.

Emily stood up and walked away. Another girl came in. Her face was streaked with tears. She sat down next to me and gave me a hug. I saw her nails and made a face. *She bites her nails*, I thought. *I hate that*. I blinked in surprise. *I do?* I closed my eyes and I was suddenly in a hallway. I saw a girl who resembled a younger version of Emily standing next to me, along with two others. One of the girls, the dark-haired one, was biting her nails. I heard myself speak.

"Ew!" I exclaimed. "I hate it when people bite their nails, it's so gross! Never do that again."

The girl glared at me. "You can't tell me what to do!" she snapped.

Emily frowned. She walked right up to the dark-haired girl. She looked angry. "That's it!" Emily said forcefully. "This is the last straw. You can't hang out with those of us in the popular crowd anymore.

You've changed, consider yourself officially kicked out!" I nodded in agreement. I suddenly got the feeling that this girl had done a lot of damage. The girl stuck her tongue out at me, said "whatever," and walked away. I opened my eyes. I looked at the girl sitting next to me. She was the dark-haired girl. Should I trust her?

"I'm Mia," she said, her voice full of sympathy. Then she whispered conspiratorially, "We've been best friends since, like, forever. I'm not a cheerleader, but we hang out a lot." I nodded and forced a smile. Something didn't feel quite right about this girl. I noticed the corner of her lip rise into a smirk. But it quickly flashed away. "I hope you feel better, Tracy," she said. I could see the sadness in her eyes. My face softened.

"You probably won't remember any of this, but, this week, you were helping me get this guy to like me," Mia continued. She pressed her hand to her mouth; she was trying not to cry. "He asked me out just before I heard the news of the accident." Tears were running down her cheeks. "Thank you so much, you're a great friend, especially since you and my new boyfriend are, like, bitter enemies. His name is Brian. You should steer clear of him, OK?"

Before I could answer a boy walked in. He looked about 16. He had light brown hair and brown eyes. I got the sudden feeling that I knew him. I felt like I really cared about him, even though I didn't know who he was. He looked worried. His hands were buried in his pockets. His eyes fell on Mia and he frowned.

"What are you doing here?" he asked suspiciously. I could tell that he was both surprised and angry. He obviously didn't like this girl.

"I-I'm just t-talking to Tracy," Mia looked as if she'd been caught stealing. She bit her lip, wrung her hands, and said meekly, "What are best friends for?"

The boy's eyes widened in shock and anger. He looked just about ready to scream. "Whoa, whoa, whoa," I said quickly, breaking up the impending battle. I turned to the boy and asked, "I'm sorry, but who are you?" I looked him up and down, as if inspecting something I didn't quite understand. The boy's face softened, all of his anger was replaced with worry and something else...guilt.

“My name is Brian,” he said softly. He looked down, as if he were ashamed of something he did. “I’m your boyfriend, and it’s my fault you fell off the top of the cheerleading pyramid.”

“But, wait,” I said, confused. I turned my attention towards Mia. “You said Brian was *your* boyfriend.” Brian and I glared at her menacingly. She could only stammer.

My mother stepped in, “Come along now, Mia, you have some explaining to do.” She grabbed Mia by the arm and took her out of the room. She closed the door behind her, leaving me and Brian alone.

“I’m sorry,” he said. He sounded so sad. He sat down on the chair next to my bed. He put his head in his hands. “Tracy, it was entirely my fault. A couple of guys dared me to kick the football over the pyramid. The ball would have hit you if you hadn’t swerved. Either way, you would have fallen. I’m really, really sorry.” I took his hand and told him that it was okay, it was just an accident.

After eliminating all of Mia’s lies, I now know that I’m head cheerleader, president of my class, have a great best friend, a mortal enemy, a super cute boyfriend, and am the most popular girl in my grade. I could get used to this. I opened my mouth to speak but was stopped short when I noticed that Brian’s face was really close to mine. I could smell his aftershave. It took me a second to realize that Brian was going to kiss me. He leaned in and we kissed. Then, it was like someone turned on the lights in a dark room to find the walls covered with millions of pictures...millions of stories. Everything came flooding back. I could remember my father’s face, the taste of my grandmother’s famous blueberry pie, the smell of my mother’s favorite perfume, the outfit I chose for my date with Brian tomorrow night.

I pulled away from Brian and whispered so softly that he could barely hear it, “I remember.”

He looked relieved. Then we kissed again.



"Night Surgeon" by Savannah Coleman, Grade12

Evergreen Expanse

David Lawrence, Grade 11

A far off at noon high
The Sun a bit shy

In and out of leaves
The Sun he weaves

Out of shadow
And into day-glow

Flies the blackbird
Mystically feathered

Time slows as feathers glisten
The lofty beckon

Black on Emerald
Begging to be marveled

The uncharted passage
Free of all bondage

Within an instant
They become absent

In thin air
They've gone elsewhere

To where none know
Impossible to foreknow

Wherever they be
Whatever the country

May they grace it magically
In The
Evergreen Expanse

10-14-10

♥♥♥ Simply Amazing

By: Sarah
Hamel

As I am in this desolate room,
Temptations try to pull me down,
Into an all-devouring doom.

But you stand me up again,
Your light shines in the dark,
Wiping away all the sin.

I feel the power when you breathe,
Like mighty, rushing winds,
You make me never want to leave.

And when I start to fall,
I know to scream your name,
You always hear my call.

God, you never let me go,
I'm bound to you forevermore,
Comfort and love you always show.

On the palm of your hand I rest,
While you fill me with security,
Oh God, with you, I'm so blessed.

I Wanted to Know

Maria Moncaliano, Grade 9

I must know, I kept reminding myself. It must be done. I'm the only one stopping myself. I quietly pushed on the door and held my breath as it clanked open. I peeked around the doorway and grinned. Only blackness. Dense blackness. Perfect. I brought out my flashlight and flicked it on. The click echoed down the empty hallway. I tiptoed silently. One, two, step, step, one, two, step, step, breathe. I reached his locker. *Please let Stacy be wrong*, I thought. I brought out a small slip of paper from my pocket. 22-47-28. I turned the dial and CLICK! Unlocked-yes! The locker door squeaked open. I winced, the sharp shrill ringing in my ears.

I took a deep breath. I could feel my heart pounding in my chest. I shut my eyes for a second, trying to remain calm. I shined my flashlight into the dark locker. Everything instantly illuminated. The dim light revealed three shelves strategically placed within the narrow locker. I moved the flashlight and illuminated the inside of the locker door. Pictures. I passed my light over a picture of myself. The words "Jenny and Chris 4-ever" took up the bottom of the picture, written with black Sharpie. I smiled and heaved a sigh of relief. So far, so good. The next picture depicted him and his football buddies carrying their trophy. The guys had their arms around each other. A lopsided grin conquered every face, as if sharing a good joke. I smiled.

I lowered the flashlight to reveal one final piece of paper stuck on Chris's locker door. A phone number written in pink. I stifled a gasp. My heart pounded and a sudden rage entered me. A cloud of heat lodged in my throat, my breath came in quick gasps. *No, it couldn't be...* I shook my head. I shined the flashlight around the locker. I started at the bottom shelf. Books. Normal. I moved them to one side to reveal an assortment of chewed-up pencils at the bottom of the locker as well as a tube of hair gel and some spare change.

I rolled my eyes. Hair gel, of course. That's how he keeps his hair so perfect all the time, even with gym and sports, he can always fix it. I moved to the second shelf and found Chris's gym bag. I hesitated for a moment, and then I picked it up and opened it. The second I opened the zipper the smell of sweat wafted up my nose. I gagged. My eyes watered. Holding my breath, I reached in...and brought out a damp t-shirt. I quickly dropped the t-shirt into the bag, not bothering to look for more stuff. I shoved the bag into the shelf and shined my flashlight onto the top shelf of the locker.

The top shelf hosted a worn out pair of sneakers. Seriously, they looked and smelled worse than an old gym sock covered in manure. I made a mental note to buy Chris new sneakers ASAP. I moved to close the locker when the light caught something metallic on the top shelf. I reached in and my hand closed around a small, square piece of metal. I brought it out and stared at it. It felt small and cold in my hands. A shiver ran down my spine and I rubbed my upper arms, trying to keep them warm. A small camera rested on my sweaty palm. I took a deep breath and gently pressed the ON button. The screen flickered to life. A white flash of light illuminated the screen and then the image of an open locker appeared.

I pressed MENU. I passed through various pictures of him and his friends. Then, I scrolled down to VIDEOS and RECENT. I found one labeled: TODD'S PRY 5.12.09. Three days ago. How come I never heard of it? I hesitated for a second, and then silently pressed the PLAY button. Party music filled the hallway. The camera vibrated with the thump of the beat. I saw Chris appear on the screen. He held a can of beer and wobbled as he walked. He laughed as he sat down on an old leather couch. He didn't seem to notice that someone shamelessly taped his every move. Suddenly a girl with blond hair appeared. She wore a short red dress and stiletto heels. My breathing quickened. She sat down next to Chris and crossed her legs. Then she flipped her hair and they started talking. She tried flirting with him, but Chris looked distracted. *Huge shocker*, I thought, sarcasm intended. She noticed that he wasn't paying attention, so she tilted his head towards hers. *No*. He grinned foolishly. The girl whispered something in his ear. He put his hand on her bare knee. I gasped. Then he turned his head sharply and kissed her.

I felt a sudden sadness. The whole universe held its breath as a huge crash signaled the very moment that my heart broke into a million pieces. In that one split second that the world stood still, a thousand words were said. Hot tears ran down my cheeks. I stood there, unmoving as I watched my boyfriend make out with another girl. No excuses, no cover stories. It happened. I saw it with my own eyes. I felt so hurt that I could physically feel a pain in my chest. I felt like someone was drilling a hole in my head. I tried to control myself. I turned off the camera and tossed it into the locker. I slammed the locker door shut in frustration. I hurled my flashlight into the nearest wastebasket, and then I slumped down onto the floor and cried. Needless to say, I sobbed bitterly. I hated Chris for cheating on me and hated how he didn't say anything. I hated how I trusted him, even though everyone told me I shouldn't. I hated how I was too in love to hate him. After a few minutes I got up from the floor. Then I walked down the hallway, to the front doors of the school. I took one last look down the empty hallway and sighed. I would never look at him the same way ever again.



“Center the Wave” by Katarina, Grade 9

WATER

Martina, Grade 10

Water, a dancer;
The freshness of nature,
makes you feel renewed after just one touch.
Water is the flow of life,
Unpredictable as me, with its personal changes and cycles,
always keeps you guessing.

Thanks, Mom

Maria Moncaliano, Grade 9

Tears stung my eyes. I rushed to the counter and, half sobbing, ordered a triple scoop brownie sundae. I know, I know, it's lame to pour out your feelings over a pound of ice cream and delicious brownie, but this merits an emergency. Well, there goes my diet. Now, I'll never get into a size 5. I heard the machines whirring in the back and took quick short gasps in sync with the click-clack of the keys as the pimply teenage employee rung up my order.

"Make it to-go," I managed to gasp as the scent of fresh strawberries hit my nostrils as a grown-up employee refilled the topping bar. I heard a jingle at the front door. It was 11:30 am. Soon, this place would be crowded with hungry customers.

"Cash or credit," droned the obviously bored cashier.

"Credit," I croaked. I wondered if the employees were trained in how to handle sobbing teenagers. I swung my purse off my shoulder and burst into tears as I realized that he had given it to me as a birthday present. I gazed scornfully at the beautiful red leather handbag with my initials engraved in curly flowing script. I made a mental note to trash it once I got home...but I loved it so much. I shook my head quickly, and, balancing the bag on the counter, I rifled through my stuff; lip gloss tube, empty, like my heart. The sunglasses I wore on our first date. The key chain with a mini-photo of us on the pier on Valentine's Day. A crumpled piece of paper with a stupid note on it that caused all of this misery. A set of car keys belonging to the car he helped me pick out. The special make-up kit I had put together specifically for our dates. An old perfume sample with his favorite cologne. It smelled like him. I remembered the day I helped him pick it out. I scowled. That loser. I wiped a tear away.

Wallet...wallet, where is my wallet? My hand closed around a small object. I slowly pulled it out and found myself staring at a very familiar gold locket. My mom had given it to me before she passed. It had my initials engraved on one side and a heart engraved on the other. I opened it. There was a picture of me and my mom. I gazed at eight-year-old me, laughing at the camera; I remembered my dad making a funny face. I sat on my mother's lap, her face red with laughter as I waved my arms in the air with mirth. I smiled at the memory. I glanced at the message engraved on the inside. It read:

“I will always be with you. With love, Mom.”

I started to cry again. I remembered the day she said those words to me. A line had started to grow behind me. But I could care less. It was the Saturday after my birthday. I had just turned twelve. My mother had been ill all week.

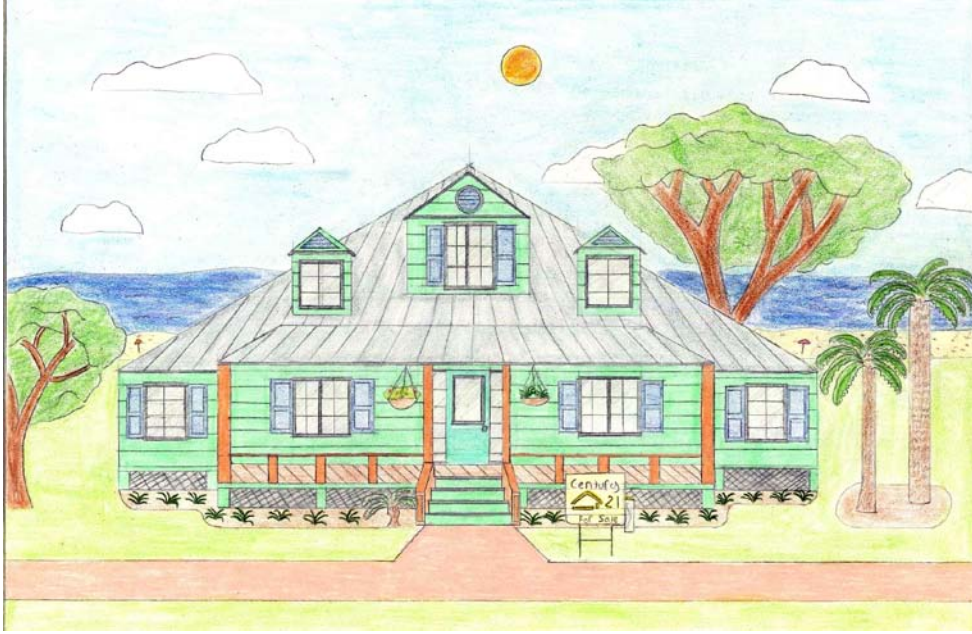
“Come here darling,” she had said. “I have an extra special surprise for you.” She held out the locket. “I may not always be around when you need me, and if I’m not, know I will always be looking down at you from the heavens. You are powerful, love. Don’t let anyone tear you down. I will always believe in you and I will always be with you. Take care, and always believe in yourself. Then, you will be able to get through anything.”

I had put on the locket and kissed her good night. One week later, she was gone. I never forgot those words. And I never will. I looked in my bag. My wallet was at the bottom, next to my cell phone. I had 12 messages from Tom—that lying cheater. I quickly dumped everything in my bag, except for the locket. I placed it around my neck and turned to the cashier.

“I’m sorry, but I won’t be buying today. Bye.” I smiled. Then I turned and walked to the front door. I heard the cashier say, “Next!” I had already been forgotten, although it wasn’t like he was paying much attention to me anyway. I opened the door and the little bell jingled, but I could hear my mother cheering me on from the heavens. Thanks, Mom.



“Surf ‘N’ Turf” by Ian Baker, Grade 11



"Tropical Paradise" by Brandon Kirk, Grade 6

Dare To Stand

David Lawrence, Grade 11

There are people all around
Many that abound

All trying to be someone
Not to be outdone

Such a show of masks
Lost in frivolous tasks

Dare to stand alone
Refusal to be a drone

Battle against the odds
Against approval nods

Show the world you
Make there no misconstrue

Stand for who you are
Bid them au revoir

With honesty you will be clad

For there is joy to be had

When you make a stand
In the manner of grand
Take a step into new light
Take leap onto a new flight

Subdue this world your own
Oust the old with not but passing tone

Fabricate a new order
There is no border

On what you could reach
Or ranks and marks to breech

To take this fight
to end in delight

This endless battle
will be your chattel

To yourself
To find yourself

Show your true colors.
Only then will you truly bloom

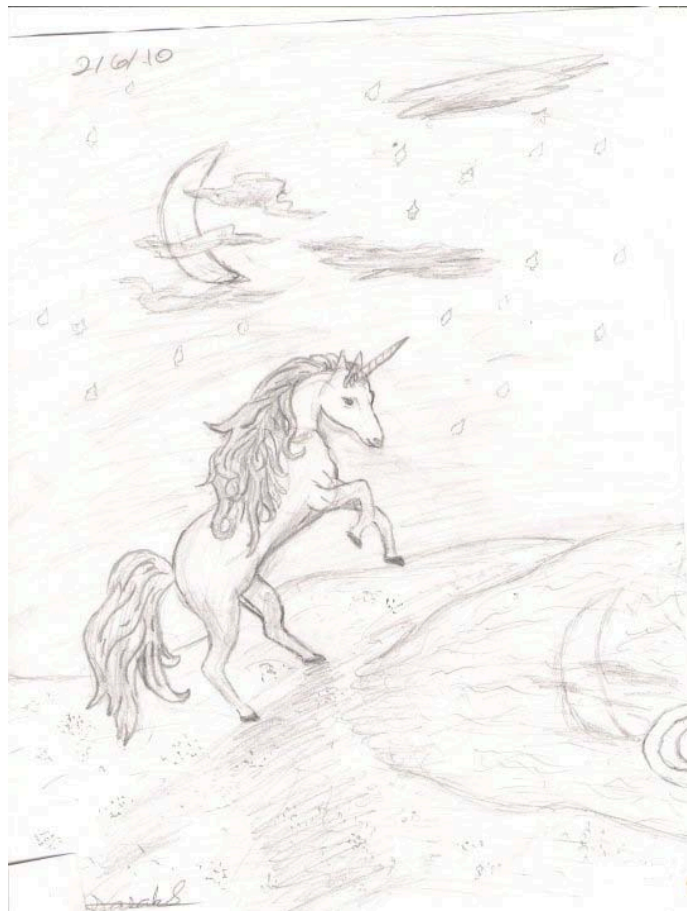
Dare to stand?



“King Kong” by Ian Baker, Grade 11



“SpongeBob” by Sarah Hamel, Grade 11



“Starlight” by Sarah Subrahmanyam, Grade 10

Essentials of Life

Carylanne Joubert, Grade 10

Truth shall guide me,

On the path that dreams take me,

And along the way:

Love shall guide me,

Hope shall feed and water me,

Faith shall shelter me from the storm.

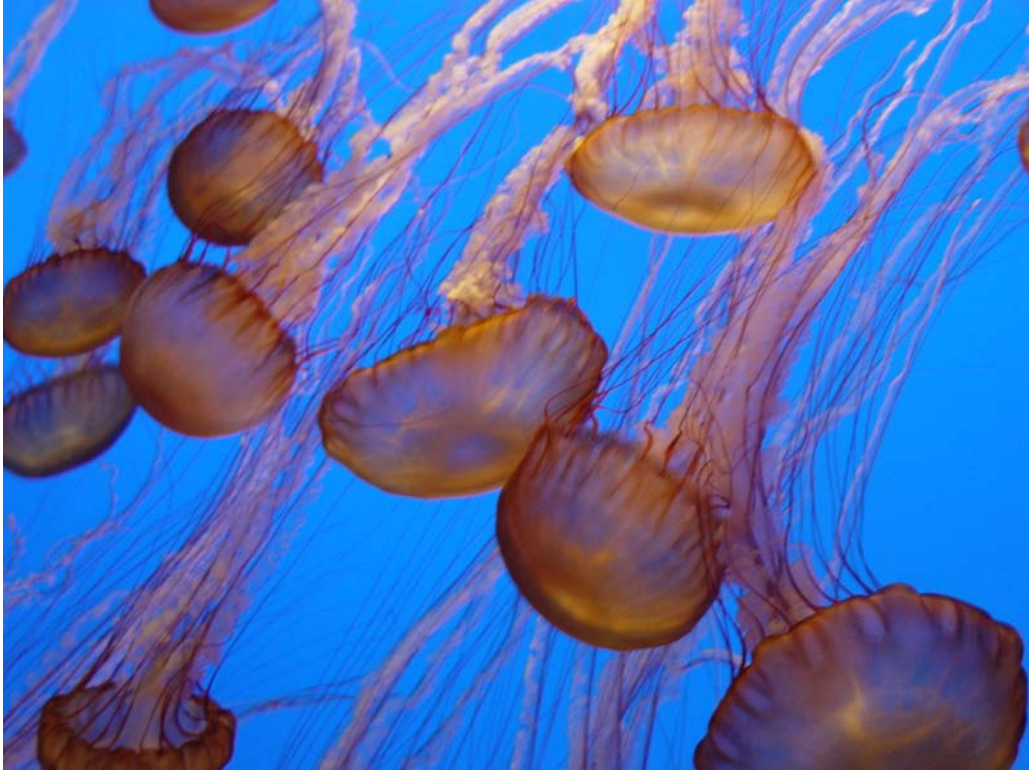
Laughter shall heal me,

Peace shall bring sleep to me,

And I shall have dreams that have no precise form.



"Disintegration" by Savannah Coleman, Grade 12



"Jellyfish" by Nicole Malanga, Grade 9

If The Moon Were Made Of Cheese

Kelsey Gulick, Grade 8

If the moon were made of cheese,

A thing that we please,

Then the moon would be eaten,

Such a thing would not be pleasing,

For the moon which we adore,

Would be no more.



"Shaft of Sunlight" by Nicole Malanga, Grade 9

In Control

Nicole Malanga, Grade 9

Sweaty palms grasp me tight and squeeze me so hard that I think that I am about to burst. I have the best job in the world. I have total job security and a great, reliable boss. I have been in this business for over 20 years. I have been through five presidential elections, ten Olympic games, and three days straight of 24-hour news coverage. People have always told me that I'm controlling... and I am. I'm a television remote control. Bob uses me every day. Even after all of his friends brought home their LED HD 3D TVs Bob has kept me in hand through thick and thin.

“GOOOAAAL!” Bob’s voice shatters my thoughts as he jumps up and pumps his fist. He throws me up in the air to run closer to the TV to scream at his team to move faster. I soar through the air, tapping the popcorn ceiling, and hurtling back towards Earth. I crash-land behind the sofa into a pile of dust. All around me, long-forgotten popcorn litters the floor and a neglected soda can waits sadly. I can hear Bob mumbling and taking apart sofa cushions as he unsuccessfully searches for me. It feels good to be loved.

Two hours later, and I’m comfortably suffocating under Bob’s bag of barbeque chips. Every so often, crumbs tumble down and cover me in their tangy scent. The lock in the front door clicks, and in walks Bob’s wife, Mary. I lean around an especially large crumb to see what Mary is presenting to Bob. She is proudly showcasing a plastic Best Buy bag. Uh-Oh... She beams and pulls out a large black box. From my hideout, I can see “Universal Remote” plastered on the front of the box. She says something about replacing that “dingy old remote.” My eyes tear up but I don’t know if it’s because I’m about to be replaced or the overpowering scent of barbeque chips.

The evening news has just ended and I am still stuffed between the sofa cushions. Mary and Bob are excitedly ripping open the enemy’s package. The big shot is a 4-inch full touch-screen color tablet with personalized settings. The instruction book is at least six inches thick with no words; only pictures and diagrams. Mary yawns and Bob suggests they get some rest. They slump off down the hallway, leaving the evil beast on the carpet. The lights shut off and I glare at the hunk of plastic on the floor. He has to go.

It takes me three hours but I crawl off the couch, across the floor and manage to flip the plastic wannabe onto his side. I think about what I am about to do. I close my eyes and reach over and yank out his batteries. In the morning, Bob will find his precious touch-screen remote broken. They can never replace me and they never will.

Some people say I’m controlling... and I am.

If Monday Were a Good Day

Amanda Young, Grade 7

If Monday were always good,
I would be tickled pink.
But the problem, you see,
Is that being good and Mondays don't link.

If there were a good Monday on the horizon,
All the children would laugh and play,
And fixed would be your Verizon.
What a good day, you would say.

The holes in your umbrella
Would all have stitches.
And fixed would be
All those other Monday glitches.

On your way to school,
You would walk down a flowered pathway.
No puddles, no bullies, and no holes in your clothes,
Would ever ruin your day.

Oh, if Monday were a good day,
All your dreams would be in reach.
If Monday were a good day,
then I'd be at the beach.



"Untitled" by Erin Smith, Grade 8



"Flick" by Ian Baker, Grade 11

Watch Your Way

Kelsey Gulick, Grade 8

It was unexplainable, a breath-taking experience, and most importantly, it happened to me.

The day started like any normal Saturday. Waking up, getting dressed, brushing my teeth (why am I explaining this?), and going out for the day. It was going to be a great day, we, my family and I, were going to window-shop in gift stores in a nearby town that attracted tourists. We shopped for a while, our window-shopping turning into actual buying. This story, however, starts in a small shop that sold candles and wind chimes.

I love this kind of store. I could smell candles and make the chimes go, "Ding!"

My sister walked over to an elderly lady next to me and said, "That's a cute dog. What's its name?" The lady wore a cream colored top and a flower print skirt. She had an equally flowery bag, and in it was a

fluffy white dog. The lady answered my sister, but I didn't hear a thing. I only saw the lady's stone gray eyes hammer down on me as a serpent-like voice crept into my head, "Watch your way!"

"Alyssa? Are you all right?" I heard my mother's voice.

As I opened my eyes, I found myself down on the ground, my hands clutching my ears. The lady with the dog, my mother, and my sister stood over me, looking worried. My Dad rushed over a moment later.

"What happened?" I asked as I picked myself up off the ground.

"That's what we'd like to know. You just fainted clutching your ears."

If that wasn't weird enough, the dog lady was now gone.

We walked out of the store into a hall with openings to other small shops that you could go to. As we walked toward the exit, I saw the dog lady again. She appeared to be looking at the cell phone in her hand but as we passed, our eyes met.

"Watch your way! Watch your way!" The voice urged louder than it had the first time.

Luckily, I didn't faint that time. I opened my eyes to find myself walking with my family still, but my hands were over my ears again.

We left the hall of stores and began to walk down the sidewalk. I was beginning to get worried about the voice I had been hearing as I saw the dog lady again. She was across the street from us, this time on her cell phone. She turned our direction.

"Watch your way! Watch your way! WATCH YOUR WAY!"

I don't know exactly what caused me to do what I did, but I turned around and pushed my family backwards, and leapt out of the way only half a second before an out of control pickup truck veered onto the sidewalk. Into the spot we had been in.

"BOOM!" The truck hit the wall of the building!

I felt a searing pain up my leg. I hadn't jumped far enough. Flames trickled up my leg. My eyes closed in a mixture of pain and horror as an ambulance raced toward the accident.

I woke up the next morning in a hospital bed. The burns on my leg were not too severe, but the truck driver was going to be here for a while.

A little bit later, the nurse let my family in. After we all got past the questions, "How are you?" and "How does your leg feel?" I asked a question hoping to answer something that had been on my mind. "Do you remember the lady in the candle shop with the dog?"

They looked at me curiously. "Who?"

It was the answer that I had hoped it wouldn't be. The dog lady had never been. What had I seen? What was the voice that I had heard? Would it happen again?

WATCH YOUR WAY!



"Natural Apple" by Katarina, Grade 9



"1920's" by Erin Smith, Grade 8

A Father of My Own

Rebekah Doucette, Grade 12

My name is Charles Lee Eastman, which is a horrible name for an eleven-year-old boy, if you ask me, so everyone calls me Charlie, which isn't much better, but better than Charles Lee. From what I'm told, my mom's name was Stephanie Hart, and she married my father, Jonathan Eastman. Mom lived for two hours after my birth, and together they named me before she died. Dad was so torn up about it; he packed his bags and left without a word. Dad's parents did not approve of his marriage so they don't even know that I'm alive. Mom's parents took me in and raised me until I was five. Then the accident happened.

My grandparents had left me at the babysitter's and had gone to a funeral. I was told that on the way home they were hit by a drunk driver. Part of me believes it, but the other part – my larger half, the one that has been hardened and callused by so many rejections – believes that they didn't want me anymore. Immediately, since there was no other family around, I was placed into the foster care system.

I've been taught from day one that no matter what happens to me, Jesus loves me, and He has a plan for me. I believe this with all my heart, but why have I had to go through seventeen foster homes and no one wants me? I keep praying for a family that will love me, a family that will adopt me, but I don't think it will happen. I'm getting too big; no one wants an eleven-year-old boy, they want a baby. All I want is a father that will play ball with me, a dad that will love me no matter if I break his lawn mower, a dad that won't hit me when he comes home drunk. That's all I ask. Is that really so hard?

Charlie had just been picked up by his social worker again. Battered, bruised and broken, he plastered his face against the window of the car and tried to hold his tears at bay. That family had seemed promising, and Charlie had been with them for a lot longer than any other family. Until, of course, his foster father had snapped, began drinking, and as a result became meaner than any other foster father he'd ever had before. Charlie's social worker, Mrs. Collins, held the steering wheel with a white-knuckled grip; she seemed to get angrier with every time something like this happened. Charlie knew she would take him in if she didn't already have nine kids.

They arrived at Mrs. Collins' home, pulled out the couch for Charlie to go to sleep. As soon as the house was quiet and everyone else was asleep, Charlie buried his face in his pillow and cried.

Three weeks and two foster homes later, Charlie was left with the Evans family. The Evans' had no children and wanted a little boy. Charlie was pleased to hear the middle-aged couple was Christian. Charlie, hopeful for the first time in a while, slowly opened up to the family that first night as they sat around the dinner table. If he could have heard the conversation in the master bedroom that night, he would have been surprised.

"Charlie is a sweet little boy," Mrs. Evans said as she brushed out her hair.

Mr. Evans nodded his head. "He's very scarred by all that has happened to him, though. It's a shame no one's wanted him yet."

"Have you thought that maybe that is because he is supposed to be our little boy?" Mrs. Evans asked hopefully. "I love him already. My heart was breaking as he told us of some of the homes he has been in."

"I would love to keep him," Mr. Evans replied. "But we have to wait and see. It's too soon to make a decision this big."

"I was thrilled to hear that he is a Christian."

"I think he was just as thrilled to hear the same about us," Mr. Evans said with a smile and opened his Bible. "We need to let God lead us. I read this just this morning Psalm 27, and verse 14 really stood out. It says, 'Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.'"

Eight months later, Charlie was still with the Evans'. It was summer vacation and Charlie had been asked to mow the lawn. As he mowed, he thought happily on how life had changed since living with the Evans'; how nice it felt to know they cared and loved him. As he thought he began to pay less attention to where he was going, and ran over a large rock, bending the lawn mower blades. Charlie was afraid. He knew he had done something bad; just how bad the damage was, he did not know, but he was afraid of what Mr. Evans would say to him. He put the mower away and went to his room without telling anyone what had happened.

That evening, when Mr. Evans came home from work, Charlie was not at the door to greet him. He found Charlie sitting on his bed, his clothes in a neat stack in his backpack. “Charlie, are you going somewhere,” he asked. He had seen the unfinished lawn and realized what had happened with the mower.

Charlie only shrugged.

“What’s wrong, son?”

“I broke the lawn mower, and now you’re probably going to send me away,” Charlie mumbled.

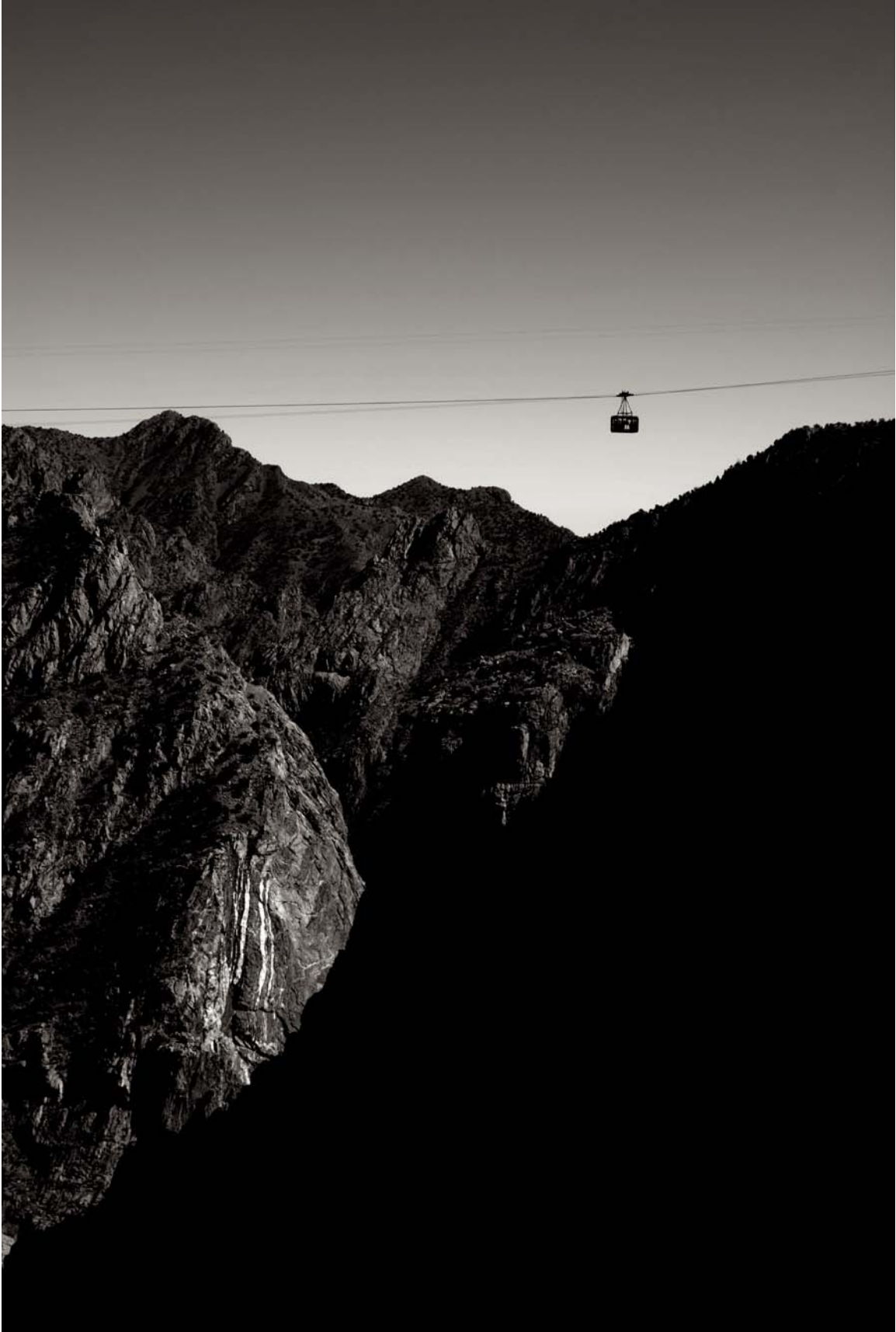
Heart breaking for the little boy, Mr. Evans put his arm around Charlie’s shoulder and shook his head.

“No, Charlie, not at all. Mrs. Evans and I love you, and the mower can be fixed. I wanted to tell you that I have been on the phone with my lawyer. We want to adopt you, Charlie.”

Charlie looked up, surprised. “Really? You want to adopt me?”

“Yes, we really want to adopt you. What do you say,” Mr. Evans asked, a huge smile on his face.

Charlie let out a whoop and threw his arms around Mr. Evans’ neck. He finally had a father of his own.



"Sky High" by Kirsten Harlow, Grade 12

A Lighthouse Tale

Rebekah Doucette, Grade 12

On an island not far from civilization, Gilbert Smith stood on the shore with his bride, Gabriella. Together they watched the foamy, gray waves beat against the rocks and the thick mist of fog swirl up from the water. A large storm was on its way.

“We need to go in. A storm’s coming,” Gilbert said.

“Yes. I should start supper, and you might want company.”

He squeezed her hand. “Have I ever told you that I love you?”

Gabriella smiled teasingly. “Once or twice a while ago. Not nearly enough.”

Gilbert laughed. “I’m sorry. But truly and honestly, I love you so much.”

“And I you,” Gabriella laughed.

Gilbert knew that Gabriella was lonely without other women around. Gabriella was a city girl. He’d met her when he was sent to a university. He was so lonely until they met and started courting. Soon they married and he took her home to his favorite spot on earth. Gabriella had sacrificed all to live with him, a poor lighthouse keeper, and he was grateful.

“I received a letter from my sister, Jane, today,” Gabriella said, interrupting his thoughts.

“How is she?”

“Well enough. She asked me to come and stay with her as the delivery draws near.” Gilbert knew she wanted to go. He didn’t want to lose her, yet why shouldn’t he let her?

“You may go. Have a good time,” Gilbert replied.

She smiled. “Oh thank you, Gil! I love you!”

He kissed her, and they walked out of the wind into the lighthouse.

Soon Gilbert took Gabriella to the town not far from where they lived, so she could take a ship to her sister’s home in the city. He forlornly placed a smile on his face and wished her a safe journey. Gabriella wrapped her arms around his neck.

“I love you. Don’t be lonely without me. I’ll be back before you know it.”

“Write me,” Gilbert whispered. “Be safe. I love you, and I’ll pray for you. Have a great time, and don’t forget to come back to me.”

Gabriella looked at him reproachfully. “Of course I’ll come back to you. Who do you think I am, anyway?”

Gilbert kissed her cheek. "I think that you're the best girl in the world, and I love you so much."

"Don't miss me too much, Darling." She said, her voice all choked up. "I love you, and I'll pray for you, too."

Then she boarded the ship and was gone.

Gilbert sat moodily on the shore for hours after the ship disappeared from view. He sighed; a few months, what a long time. Finally, as the sun was setting, Gilbert stood, trudged to his boat and paddled home.

The weeks passed slowly. Gabriella's letters were like a balm to Gilbert's soul; she was having a wonderful time. Finally, he got a letter announcing the arrival of the baby. "His name is Anthony Gilbert, after his father and his very patient uncle. Jane's so happy you let me come and I'm thrilled to meet my nephew. He's so sweet and small! You would love him."

Gilbert was pleased, but he was happier to hear that she would be coming home soon. A week after the arrival of the letter stating the baby's birth, Gilbert received another letter. "I'm coming home on the *Godspeed*. Did you miss me like I missed you? It's been so long; I cannot wait to see you again."

Gilbert let out a yell. "She's coming home!" he exclaimed to the sea. "The girl we've all been waiting for! Oh, bring her to me quickly!"

At last the day arrived! Gilbert watched and waited. After what felt like an eternity, he saw a ship in the horizon. But at the same time, a large gale blew up. Gilbert paced anxiously, lit the light, and prayed. He prayed as hard as he could, and watched with dismay as the ship was capsized by a wave.

"Dear God, there's no hope," he cried, and didn't recognize his own voice. The passengers had to have drowned; Gilbert saw no way out. "Lord, please! My wife! My darling bride! No!"

The storm continued to rage until morning. A haggard, older looking Gilbert walked the shore, praying that he wouldn't find Gabriella's body. When he didn't, he sailed to the city where Gabriella's sister lived and went straight to the shipmaster.

"Excuse me, sir." The man turned to glare at him and Gilbert trembled.

"Yeah? I don't got all day," he growled.

"The ship that crashed recently – what ship was it?"

"The *Godspeed*. No passengers lived."

Gilbert managed to ask. "May I see the list of passengers, please?"

The man rummaged around for a crumpled up piece of paper and handed it to Gilbert.

Gilbert searched the list for Gabriella's name. "Oh God, no..." he breathed when he saw it. He looked up; face ashen. "Was she on the ship," he asked.

“No, she – laws, boy! What’s yer deal?”

Gilbert had collapsed against the wall in tears. “Thank You, God. Thank You,” he cried out brokenly.

“She yer wife?”

Gilbert looked up and nodded. “Yes. Thank you for everything.”

The man snorted, but Gil was already gone. He ran to Jane’s house and banged on the door.

Jane answered his knock. “Gil! What a surprise!”

“Where’s Gabriella,” he asked.

“She’s ill –” Jane began.

“Where?”

“Upstairs, first room on the right.”

Gilbert took the stairs two at a time, and when he got to the door he knocked and let himself in.

Gabriella looked up, surprised. “Gilbert!”

“Gabriella!” Gilbert knelt by her side.

“How’d you get my letter so quickly?” she asked.

“I didn’t get a letter, I watched your ship crash and I was scared. I had no idea if you were dead or alive.”

“You had to see for yourself?”

“Of course. As soon as you’re well, we’ll go home.”

“I’d like that.”

“Me, too.” Gilbert said, a smile on his face as he bent to kiss his wife.



"Wedding Daze" by Kirsten Harlow, Grade 12

How (Not) to Lose Weight

Alexandra Curtis, Grade 11

“Do you need to lose weight fast? Do you want toned arms and legs? Do you want six-pack abs overnight? If so, try our product today, and we guarantee that you will lose 20 pounds in the first week!”

How many times have we heard this campaign? Suddenly, a new “miracle food” reduces weight, and a food that we have happily been eating for years becomes deadly. Then, a new product like a magical waistband slims and tones the belly in just one week. It sounds too good to be true! They usually are too good to be true, and hundreds of these miracle diets and products lurk around waiting for the next culprit to fall into their traps. Which products and diets actually work, and which ones will leave you and your body drained and flabbergasted?

The first of these, the “carbo-deprivo,” will help you lose weight fast by cutting all carbohydrates out of your diet. You heard right-no pasta, fruit, bread, oats, dessert, or anything else that contains carbohydrates. This diet allows you to eat all the bacon and butter you want, and you will still lose weight. Even though high fat and protein diets damage the intestinal track and clog arteries, this diet will “do wonders.” I know that the body demands complex carbohydrates in order to function properly; but the point of this diet is to lose weight fast, not to be healthy in the long run.

If this “carbo-deprivo” meal plan does not work for you, plenty of other processed meal plans can be yours at a click of a button. Nutrisystem, The Cookie Diet, Jenny Craig, and Atkins all allow you to eat sweets. How can you lose weight while eating sweets? That’s easy, the companies machine process the food to make them less-caloric. Take for example Nutrisystem’s macaroni and cheese, it could break a record by having over 40 ingredients. I’d definitely take their machined-processed meals made with ingredients I can’t even pronounce any day over my homemade, five-ingredient pasta.

If you would rather not have every single meal sent to you, and just have to buy one or two ingredients, then maybe these other all-or-nothing diets will make you happier. The first contestant, the cabbage soup diet, allows you to eat as much food as you want, as long as its just cabbage soup. Cabbage soup doesn’t sound good? No problem, you can lose just as much weight on the grapefruit diet. It’s super easy to keep track of your meals because the only thing you eat is grapefruit. You don’t like grapefruit? No problem, the purple food diet contains more variety because you can eat anything purple: grapes,

red onions, purple cabbage, and any other purple food you can think of. Surely it's a minor thing, however, that these one-ingredient diets can cause headaches, dizziness, nausea, and light-headedness. Also, if you don't follow them correctly you may find yourself gaining weight. Forget about the side effects! These diets will help you lose weight fast if you follow them to the letter.

Along with the all-or-nothing diets, plenty of diet "do's and don'ts" sayings can help prevent you from weight gain. For example, the chewing diet has its dieters thoroughly chew every bite forty times. This excessive chewing is supposed to help you burn more calories than you eat, and help you feel fuller faster. Never mind that it will take you a good hour or so to eat an apple, this diet emphasizes chewing foods until they become liquid. Doesn't liquid steak sound yummy? If you would rather not chew each bite you take, maybe the liquid diet better suits you. In the liquid diet, you have to drink everything, so whip out those blenders and start pureeing your dinner. A different diet that includes all liquids, called the lemonade-cleanse, requires dieters to drink a special concoction of lemon juice, water, maple syrup, and cayenne pepper. A couple weeks on this diet will have you lose up to twenty pounds! Sure it might sound like starvation, and all you may lose is water weight and muscle; but just think about the potential pounds lost. Another diet saying says that any food eaten past six in the evening will turn into fat. Yes, you heard right, it will turn into fat. This means that you are absolutely forbidden from stepping into your kitchen after six in the evening. This is what I call a senior retirement home curfew.

"Carbo-deprivo," all-or-nothing diets, or liquid diets may sound ridiculous, but isn't this the decade of nonsense? Eating healthy, wholesome foods might sound like a better approach to dieting; but according to the sales people on the television and computer, the best approach means restriction, starvation, and stress. Now that you've learned this, what restrictive diet will you choose: the one that makes you faint, or the one that drives you crazy?

My Pimple

Jennifer Kate, Grade 9

It sneaks up to my nose at night.

It makes an appearance in the morning.

It's big and red

Just like my cousin Vinny.

I try to cover it up

With my Nana's cheap make up,

But when I arrive at school

My pimple breaks through the thick foundation

With all of its might.

It is considerably rude

Since it draws the attention away from my sparkling eyes

Whenever Brad walks by.

But of course, my pimple not only draws attention from Brad

And the HOT guy next door,

It hogs the attention of all of my peers

And the creepy janitor as well.

Though, they seem to like my pimple

Since they laugh whenever it pokes out their way.

It is my new BFF for the day

Since all of my other friends are invited to sit with Brad today.

I wasn't invited.

I wonder why.

It turns out that my pimple and I really enjoy each other.

I can always see it out of the corner of my eye

Because it is attached to my face after all.

So I don't have to worry about it ditching me

When I pass odiferous winds.

It likes me as well

Since my face is a smooth chair

For it to sit on all day.

My pimple also gets me an "A" on my geography test
By helping me remember that the correct answer is Mt. Vesuvius.

When school dismisses at the end of the day

I go to my locker

Where my pimple is killed.

From a boy

Who doesn't see me next to his locker

As he opens it a little too forcefully.

And I am slammed in the face.

My pimple explodes everywhere.

And instead of saying sorry for killing my best friend

The boy says "EWWWWWWWWWWWW!"

The fluid remains of my sweet pimple stick onto my face.

Since I cannot bear starring at the remains of my murdered friend

I wipe it off with the napkin

That I saved in my lunchbox from lunch.

(I saved the napkin because my mom wrote an encouraging message to me explaining how someday my coordination skills in volley ball will improve as I grow. She also told me that if I suffer any more head injuries from getting bopped in the head with the volley ball, she would buy me the new "Lord of the Rings" DVD!! How awesome is that?! Now I will be the coolest kid in school!)

The only thing is that even with the "Lord of the Rings" DVD

I will probably be bumped back down to number two on the cool list,

Because I still won't have my pimple.

So, I spend the rest of the day feeling depressed.

But OMG! Wait! I think I see a new one popping up on my chin!

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OF OUR STUDENT WRITERS AND ARTISTS.

THANK YOU FOR SHARING YOUR WORK WITH FLVS!