

EXPOSURES 2023

A LEE LANAU COUNTY STUDENT JOURNAL



EXPOSURES 2023

Welcome to this 35th issue of *EXPOSURES*! This is a collaborative project begun in 1988 to challenge Leelanau County students in grades 7-12 to express themselves through art and writing. It provides a showcase for their work.

Each year hundreds of poems, stories, photographs, paintings, drawings, and sketches are submitted for review. This year, 151 pieces were selected to best represent the heartfelt thoughts, dreams and hopes of Leelanau County students.

You can tell from the work inside these pages that our young people have a strong bond with the place where they are growing up. Leelanau County is a special place and we hope you enjoy the inside look at it from our students' perspectives.

It is a testament to the commitment of our teachers and fine arts devotees that we have been able to produce this publication every year for over three decades, during good times and bad.

We are grateful for the continuing support of the administrators and boards of education from Glen Lake, Leland, Northport, Suttons Bay, St. Mary's, Pathfinder, and the Leelanau School. We appreciate the help of Suttons Bay Public Schools, which serves as project fiduciary.

Ongoing contributions from many generous individuals and Genuine Leelanau, Suttons Bay Art Festival, Leland Educational Foundation, and the Suttons Bay-Bingham Fund and Leelanau Youth Advisory Council of the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation, are also gratefully acknowledged.

Special thanks go to the Friends Of Fine Arts (FOFA), the LIFT Teen Center and The Friendship Community Center in Suttons Bay for their support in hosting this year's show that presents *EXPOSURES* to the community, and to Andrew McFarlane, who generously hosts our website at www.leelanau.com/exposures.

On behalf of all the editors, school coordinators, writers and artists, we congratulate the students whose work is included within these pages. Enjoy their beautiful art, listen to their voices, applaud their imaginations and enjoy *EXPOSURES 2023*!

EXPOSURES is a collaborative project which depends upon the time and talents of many people in our community, including:

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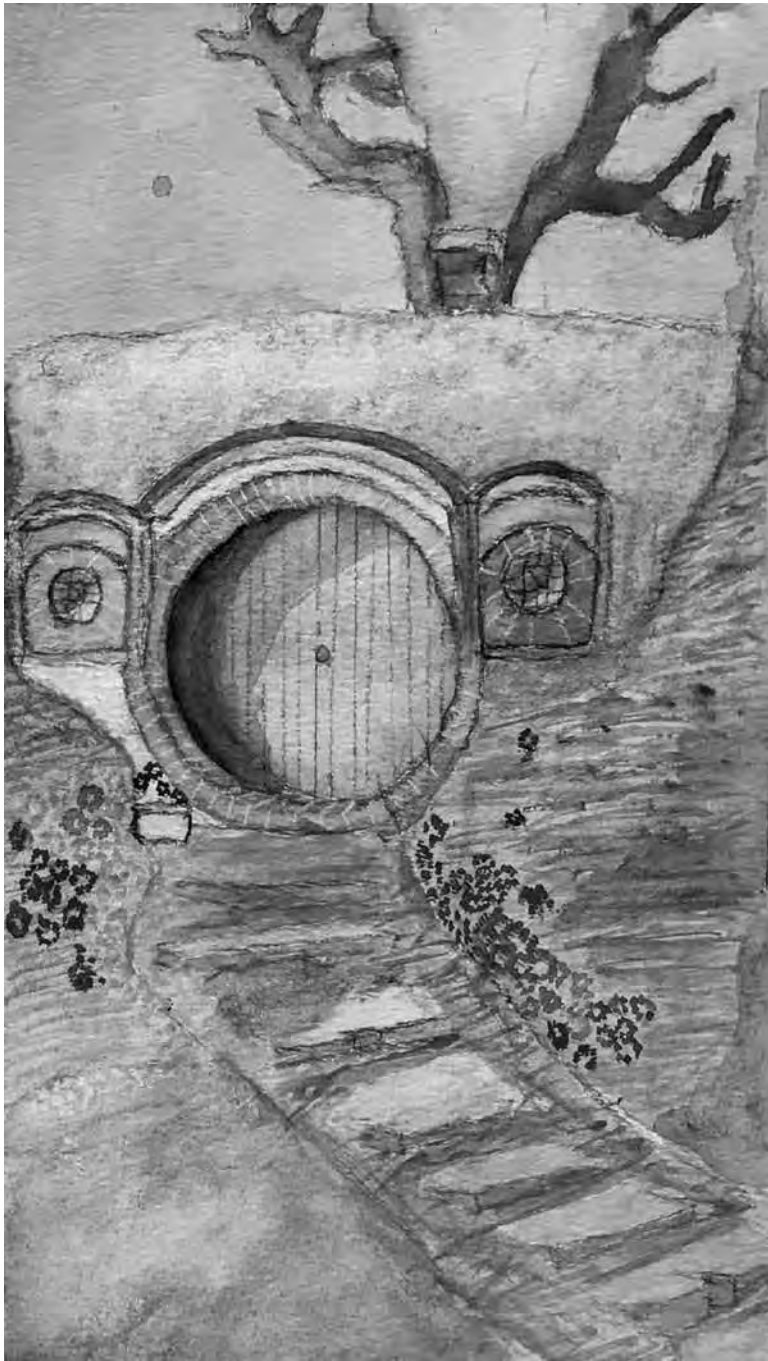
Leland Educational Foundation

Northport Arts Association

Suttons Bay Art Festival

Suttons Bay-Bingham Fund

Sally Viskochil



Alexander Bardenhagen, Grade 11

An Unknown Competition

Amina Raftery, Grade 7

Every Tuesday in the summer my neighbors
mow their grass.

They make it a competition
to see whose grass is greener or whose tree is the best
maintained

but in the winter they compete on which house's driveway
is the most shoveled and who has more
icicles and which grandchildren made the best
snowman

They even bring my house into this —
they will mow the grass in the summer
and shovel in the winter
for extra points



Camden Clifford, Grade 12



Elsie Purdy Teahen, Grade 7

Spring Happiness

Luke Young, Grade 9

Ecstatic is yellow
It sounds like the boing of a spring
It tastes like lemonade
It smells like sunflowers
Happiness feels like a sensory explosion



Davin Glidden, Grade 12



Ellie Howard, Grade 8



Jacqueline Hearne, Grade 10



Garrett Grant, Grade 8

My Skeeter

Alayna Ottenbacher, Grade 7

Skeeter
 My playful pup
 Young like spring grass
 Full to the brim with courage
 Quicker than the wind
 Her soft cuddly coat
 Like a towel for my tears
 I love you with all my heart
 My Skeeter



Claire Couturier, Grade 7

Understanding Death

Madelyn Atkinson, Grade 8

I didn't understand death until it happened. Death is something that leaves you numb with a feeling of questioning uncertainty. It leaves your mind in a state of fatigue (mostly from the crying) and forgetfulness. In a way, tiredness is protecting your mind from the constant state of depression.

I didn't know my Grandpa all that well. I knew that he was loved dearly by my mother and father.

My mother and father always used to say, "He is just a shell of the man he used to be." This always made my mother have a face of sadness and my father one of discomfort. He was what they said he was. My Grandpa had lost the part of him that was life. You don't know how lucky you are to have mobility until someone loses theirs. It is a very selfish thing if you think about it.

We only care for our own needs and often don't observe how lucky we really are. My Grandpa, when I was little, still had this tiny spark of life. He would make my sister and I this giant buffet with tons of food. Honestly, too much food. In a way, I would do anything to see him smile and put a plate of soggy biscuits and gravy in front of me again. Or perhaps to hear him whisper into my ear to get a chocolate bar. Just to hear his hoarse, coarse smoking voice would be something so special. But I will never... he is gone. He has been gone for years. Just a shell, like what my mother and father said.

I have watched this man, an oyster without its pearl, for years. Never really thinking my Grandpa would die. I was selfish. I would say to my mom "Grandpa has been dying for my whole life, why does it matter to me? He will just recover again." How conceited and ignorant can a person be?

Only four days after that, he got really bad. My mom went down to see him without me or my father because I complained about missing school and orchestra. I didn't care. In my mind, he would live through this most recent bout with death and go back to being a pond with no life. A still puddle of mud that not even the living could see as living.

My mother went down to Indiana, and he wasn't doing well. Days went by, and he wasn't eating or responding, but things weren't really changing. My mom was about to come home and get us, but then, just as I was closing my eyes and thinking, "I can't wait for my fall movie night," or "Dang it, what about practice?" everything changed. There was no space for "Maybe my grandpa is dead." I had my eyes squinting at the board, trying to see the marks of strongly smelling expo markers when my math teacher walked into the room with a serious yet calm face. She signaled to me through her glasses that something was wrong. Her finger pointed at me and wiggled for me to come. I stood up, paralyzed. "What did I do?" I asked myself. She led me outside and said that my grandpa was dying.

She said, "Your dad is going to pick you up soon." My brain ran into one of the biggest shocks in my life. A new thought came into my gray blue eyes that death is real and it was happening to someone I loved. I started crying. My heart felt like it was hanging by a string. My teacher embraced me and gave me a

warm hug. I cried into her shoulders, seeking safety from this horrible idea. An idea I knew would break the hearts of my mother and father. Dazed, I opened the door to the locker room and uncomfortably grabbed my stuff. I walked into my classroom and said, "My grandpa is dying." All of my classmates consoled me with worried faces and bear hugs. Then my father arrived, and seeing his face made me break into another set of tears. He told me that my grandpa has been hardly breathing and I will not get to see him alive by the time we get there. My father's face was shrouded in pain.

We got our stuff from the house and my dad had everything ready. I had never thought I would be driving through the countryside of Michigan when my grandpa died, but this is what happened. I never got to tell him I love you or thanks for everything. Then my sister who lives in Boston texted me saying he was gone. She had heard from my mom. My tears had already evaporated off my ruby red cheeks and a residue of salt had started to develop. But this news brought a new wave of sadness. My mother called, saying, "He went in peace." Her voice was shaky. I had heard my mother cry but this was something new, a cry that only one human can have for another. I sat there, not knowing what to say. My father's eyes were dripping slowly.

I decided to say, "I'm sorry." I don't know why that choice of words came out, but they did. I felt like I didn't understand this new pain. I was hurting, but I believe it was more because I loved my mother and father and I knew their pain was even greater than my own.

After we learned he was dead, my father and I went quiet. I watched outside the windows as the vibrant fall leaves passed.

"How come trees are so beautiful when they die," I wondered, "but when we die it is forlorn and dark?" As I pondered my thoughts of life and death, my father asked me to play 60s music.

He said, "Your grandpa used to take your mom and me on trips to Chicago and we would listen to 60s music." My father started to hum along to the song I played on the car's speakers. It was singing, "Bye, Bye Love," or something like that.

I grabbed his hand and said, "He died in peace," just like my mom had said.

I don't know exactly where people go when they die, but I believe that Grandpa is alive again.

That he is singing his favorite 60s music while making himself a great big plate of biscuits and gravy. I decided, in the end, to think of him not as a human dying, but as a tree slowly dropping its sweet autumn leaves around its saplings and dying beautifully to give life to the things below.

His life wasn't over, just continuing on in the people who loved him. I would rather remember him that way. Death may be sour, but in a way, it is beautiful. For my grandpa, it gave a life back that he had lost.



Naomi Driver, Grade 8



Molly Desmond, Grade 8



Riley Sahs, Grade 7

Lazy Lily

Lauren LaCross, Grade 7

Lily,
Your black and white fur
Looks like
A tuxedo

Oh, how do you
Look?
You look muy bonito!

Now finishing touches,
Lick all hair in place

You jump up on
The couch
And start to pace

Climb on my lap,
Be a good girl

Now stretch and yawn
Your teeth as white as a pearl

Second Try

Alex Stillwell, Grade 8

The void expands.
It consumes mountains,
The earth and the sky.

The clouds are black
And the brightness left
Escapes on horseback.

A soul lay on the coal-
Black land and her child
Clings to her breast.

The riders come
Narrow as spines and
They call to the child.

It bounds up and
Away from his pit
And his mother sprawls

Back to the mud.



Lexi Dezelski, Grade 12



Elise Vann, Grade 8



Avery McPhail, Grade 8

Untitled

Juan Garcia, Grade 9

Jumpy
Unorganized
Always off task
Noisy

Untitled

Grace Collins, Grade 12

The barren morning sky is bright with the sun's harsh shine.
The grass is damp from last night's shower,
With a chill traveling on an autumn breeze.
The frogs and the birds sing a sparkling duet,
With the leaves in the trees providing accompaniment.
But cars like thunder race past,
Slashing through nature's tranquil sigh,
The symphony overshadowed by man.
And the schoolyard fills with the sound of children's joy.
They leap through the field like grasshoppers,
Their feet swishing through the grass.
There is peace in the air.
There is quiet in the world.
All is well.

A Motivation or a Fear?

Sarah Bunek, Grade 11

A Motivation or a Fear?

The Past is set in Stone –
Confusion filled with how to gear
Worried present – alone

Hidden through are Hope and Excite
Each Day does sort itself –
The Brain's Cinema in the Night
Distraction for myself

Somewhere in me creates a Doubt
Trying to push through Stress –
Uncertainty is a Tenant –
Really – what is Success?

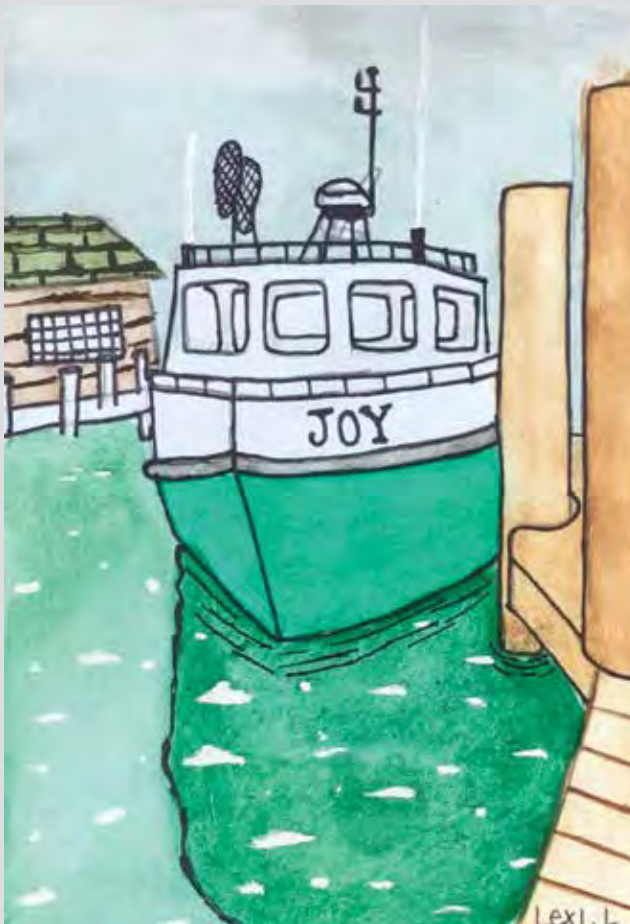
Fear put to sleep – remember this,
God's Will has no Defect –
With constant prayer – you cannot miss
Only He is perfect.



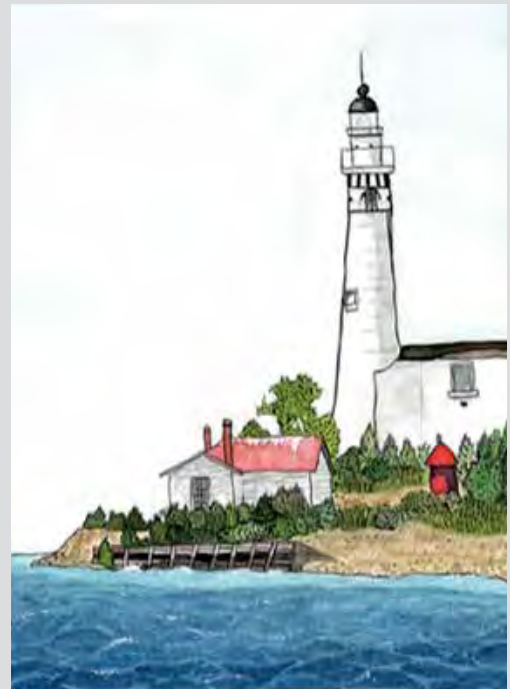
Alan Heckl, Grade 10



Lillian Connor, Grade 8



Alexis Luce, Grade 12



Grace Collins, Grade 12



Jessica Grant, Grade 10



Emma Perez, Grade 11



Emma Perez, Grade 11



Anna Mitchell, Grade 12



Bucky the Horse

Ella Frixen, Grade 7

Your face like the sun and the moon
Getting the best of both worlds
Like ice cream and French fries

Sweet
and
salty
yin
and
yang

Your face shows comfort and compassion
Protective and comforting
Like a fierce lion protecting his pride

Fast like a cheetah
Agile like a cat
Spinning around barrels on a dime

Your family are other breeds
But we are one and the same

Elsie Purdy Teahen, Grade 7

Quatrain

Lydia Diaz, Grade 9

Ears that stand tall
Soft and pink paw pads
Can catch themselves when they fall
Meows to nag



Isaac Schinella, Grade 7



Elizabeth Leggett, Grade 10



Sarah House, Grade 11



Caroline Hueni, Grade 12

My Honest Poem

inspired by Rudy Francisco

Kariesue Taghon, Grade 11

I was born September 1st,
As the summer of 2005 came to a close.

I've never understood football,
And I'm a sucker for a book with a love story.
I'm still learning that it's okay to fail,
And that making mistakes leads to growth.

I was born small.
I've always been the short girl,
The one people laugh at because I never grew.
My height is an embrace now, instead of an embarrassment.

I like SweeTarts.
I've been told I'm good at art.
I'm not... my circle looks like a square and my square looks like a triangle.

Secretly I get nervous every time I'm not sure how to do something.
My biggest fear is failing, and not being good at something.

I'm insecure about not being good enough.
I worry that I won't make it.

I know this sounds weird, but I cry a lot.
I cry when stuff gets hard,
I cry when my feelings are hurt because I was being too sensitive.
I cry when someone leaves.

I get attached to people too easily.
That scares me.
I am deathly afraid of losing someone that I care about.
Losing people can be hard, and it can hurt.
Being hurt is really what I am afraid of.

Hi, my name is Kariesue.
I enjoy running and reading.
I focus on being successful too much and forget to have fun sometimes.
I worry too much about schoolwork.

I know I'm not perfect.
I know that I don't have to be perfect.
I know that I shouldn't care what people think.

I have insecurities and imperfections,
I'm not never going to fail, sometimes it's hard to realize that.
Past all of this, I am trying to be better, and that's all that matters.

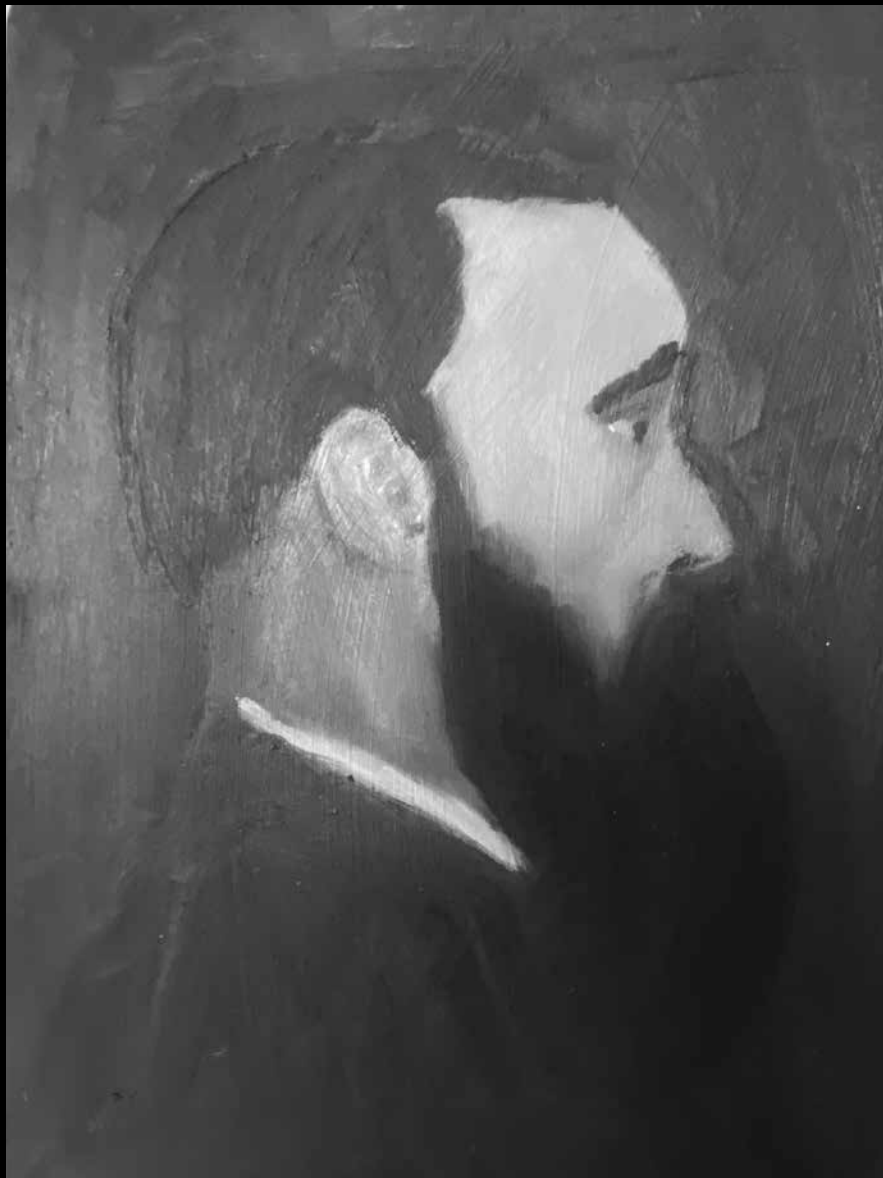


Jerry Schaub, Grade 11

Life

Kaylee Hanson, Grade 9

People come and go, never stay



Amina Raftery, Grade 7

Decisive Dad

DJ Mikowski, Grade 8

In May of 2022, many crazy things happened to me, but my dad was affected most at this time of our lives. My dad has fought through many hardships in life. Many things have led me to believe that my dad is my Michigan hero. My dad has sacrificed everything for me while going through a divorce, battling cancer, and working two jobs.

Last spring, my parents divorced. This was very hard for me to deal with, but this was even harder for my dad. My dad didn't have much when this happened. He was forced to move out and I couldn't see him very often. Then he had to move in with my grandma. Eventually, I ran away to go live with my dad and Grandma and I think that was the best decision I ever made.

A week after my parents divorced, my dad was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. I couldn't even fathom this information. It's so crazy I couldn't believe it. I can't imagine how my dad felt. At the time he thought he was going to die within a month. The

doctors told him the tumor could have been growing for over ten years. Thankfully, he found some great doctors that figured out that it was a rare form that could be cured with surgery. Of course, he was delighted, but he learned that it was a risky surgery. This made him uneasy but he still went through with the surgery and can tell the tale today.

My dad has never had very much money, but that doesn't stop him from buying me the things I need. He works two very tough jobs, one being a paper route driver which takes up about six hours during the night. The other job is a gutter installer. Sometimes he has to drive two hours to get to a job site and the amount of time it takes to complete a job is unbelievable. He gets almost no sleep but he doesn't care. He'd do anything to make sure I stay with him, and I am so very thankful that he is my dad.

My dad has fought through many challenges in life and these are just a few. I couldn't ask for a better hero or dad. He is the best person to ever be in my life and I love him with all my heart.



Naomi Driver, Grade 8



Shelby Plamondon, Grade 11

Untitled

Eric Pascual, Grade 11

My time is nigh, my time is now
But everything seems to be slowing down

I was the villain guarding the hourglass
Now I'm dying, regretting my past

Fall

Isaac Halloway, Grade 9

Fall is full of the sunning colors of orange.
The red orange of the glistening leaves.
The burst orange of fallen flags
and the safety orange of local hunters.
Slowly the leaves fall and shift to brown,
losing their delightful charm
to make way for the alluring pearl white snow.



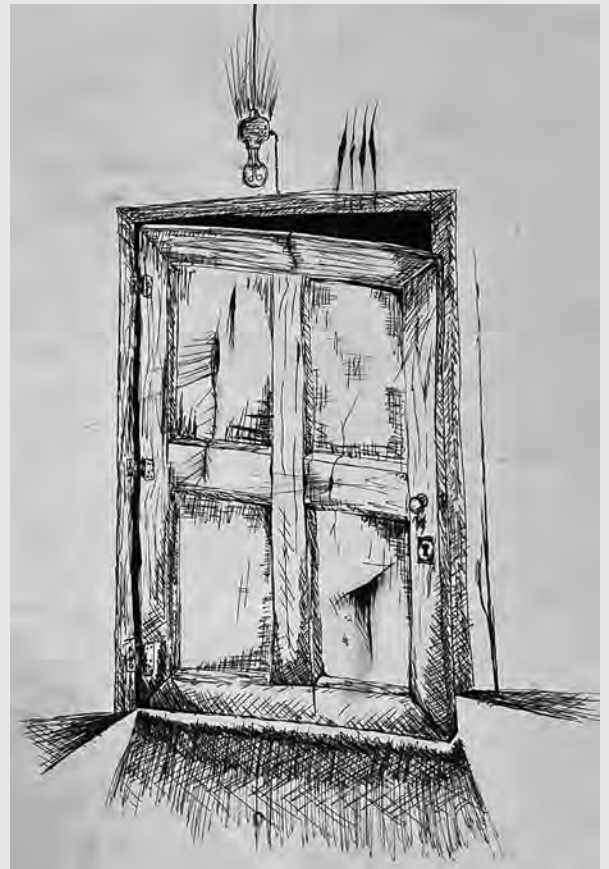
Samantha Tarsa, Grade 12



Seneca Reimer, Grade 7



Orion Clark, Grade 12



Corbin Robertson, Grade 10



Cooper Ritter, Grade 10

Snowy Owls

Savannah Hall, Grade 7

If I'm alone
I would need someone to comfort me
Snowy Owls are my pick
Snowy Owls are
Cute and fluffy as babies
In flight, they are barely heard
Fast, while searching for prey
As big as an oversized teddy bear
Beautiful animé eyes
Unique creatures
That make me smile



Orion Clark, Grade 12



Orion Clark, Grade 12

Saturday

Jade McGraw, Grade 7

It was Saturday.
I can't remember the date.
It wasn't important.
Funny it is
how I can't quite remember the words
that so clearly shaped my personality.

I remember the day of the week,
where I was and my initial thoughts.
It was Saturday, the best day of the week,
my favorite day.
Funny to think back at the thought

I was scared because now I have two Christmases.
But why is Saturday the easiest thing to remember?
I wasn't traumatized.
I didn't break down.
My world didn't end.
Because you know what came next?
Sunday.

Josie Gorcyca, Grade 12





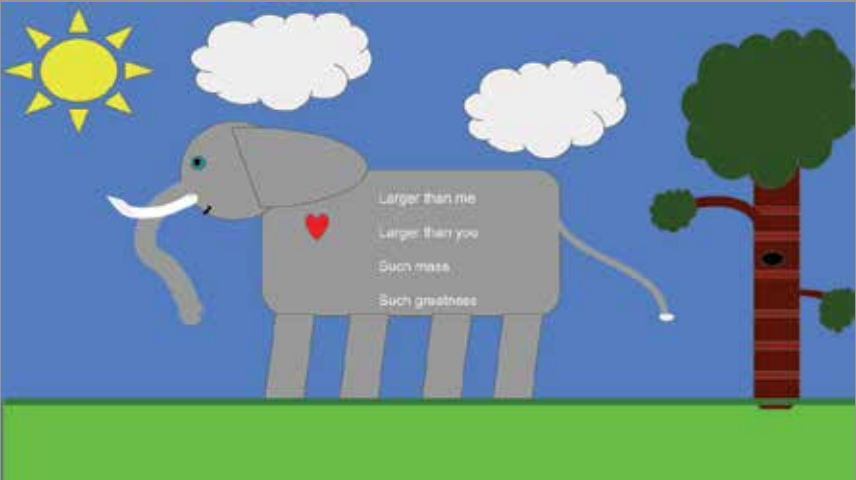
Isabel Simmons, Grade 8



Drew Dezeliski, Grade 12



Jace Kohler, Grade 7



Levi Wetmore, Grade 7

The Delights of Trick or Treating

Ava Popa, Grade 9

The sky descends into a darker indigo color as the night goes on and trick or treaters flood the leaf littered streets in the brisk night air. Costumed kids visit each decorated house like bees pollinating flowers, on a quest to acquire as much sweet, sugary candy to consume as possible.



Anna Mitchell, Grade 12

The Last Moment

Miles Wright, Grade 9

"It's cold out tonight," stated Damion, turning to his friend Slate.

"Haven't all nights been?" Slate whispered back, his breath creating a misty vapor that flowed through the air and into the darkness.

They were both tall, lengthy, and fifteen years of age. Slate was known as an Officer, a high rank considering how much younger he was compared to the many Officers that were in their twenties, or even older.

Damion paused and looked down at his surroundings. They were perched on the side of a wide hill, trees of all shapes and sizes growing up and down and around them, covering the slowly fading sky from their view like a blanket. Kids and teenagers rushed about below, exiting and entering small huts built of sticks and stones in a disorganized fashion. It really represented the circumstances that the residents were in.

Direfall was a strange town, but it definitely was not the strangest. After the Depredation, many juveniles were forced to move out and relocate from their old homes, mainly to woods and deep thickets where they couldn't be found by the ever-moving lights.

A ten-foot-tall makeshift wall made of carved sticks and logs jutted out of the ground like porcupine quills and surrounded the whole population of Direfall within. It helped bring positive attitudes to the many residents, as it made them feel like they were safely secluded in a safe bubble. But the reality of the Depredation was really the opposite: nowhere was safe, especially if you were found.

After a moment of silence, Slate turned towards Damion again. "Aren't you receiving your Trade tomorrow?"

Damion looked back to Slate, his green eyes penetrating the white and black landscape. "Yes, but I don't know what it is yet. I only hope that I don't become a Gatherer, like Andrew. That was a terrible mess."

Gatherers' jobs were to bring back necessary supplies to Direfall at daybreak. They would head out for the nearest desolate city, which was only a few miles away. Then they would search and collect packaged and canned foods, medical kits for the injured, building supplies in case of a collapse of a hut or section of the poorly-built wall, and anything else that they deemed worthy of carrying back to Direfall.

"Well, that leaves you with three other jobs, then. You might not like them..." Slate spoke up.

"Just because you're an Officer doesn't mean you have to bring up everything you know and I don't," Damion snapped. "You're trying to feel superior, like the other Officers. You want me to feel like you know everything."

Slate laughed. "But I don't know everything, Damion. I didn't know that the Depredation would happen. I didn't know that we all had to evacuate." His face slowly shifted to a solemn, sadder look. "I didn't know that our parents would be taken."

Damion looked down at the ground, his soggy and torn snow gear shifting in the powdery snow. "I'm sorry, I shouldn't have shouted. It was good for you to become an Officer, you know? At least you have a good attitude. Meanwhile I'll be stuck with something like a Scribe, or Medical Assistant, or Nightwatch."

Slate stood still, not moving, not speaking. Slowly, he strode

down the hill to his own house, covering his face with a hood. "It's getting too late for me to stay out. Good night, Damion. Good luck on the Trading."

"Good night, Slate."

Damion had been to his house multiple times, yet it wasn't even a house. It was a messy arrangement of logs that bent and curved in various ways, if there even was a word for that. A catastrophe. But no one's house was better in any way, shape, or form. Each looked as though a storm had passed through, then an earthquake, then a tsunami, and finally God's hands descended from the heavens and tangled everything into a large knot.

Such was the Depredation.

Suddenly, a low bellow rushed from one of the Nightwatch towers near Direfall's walls. A sighting of the lights. Every single citizen knew what was about to occur: a lockdown.

Damion stared at the sky. During the time he talked with Slate, the atmosphere had dimmed to almost pitch black, and five glowing pinpoints of bright, white luminescence penetrated the void above.

In a rush, Damion bolted down the hill towards his own muddled shack, and crawled in through the open doorway, locking the rotting, rickety wood door behind him. He crawled to his mattress and sat down, blowing out the lone candle that lit his entire one-room hovel.

The horn continued blowing, a deep, painful sound that ruptured the silence of the small town. Damion quietly prayed that it would all be over soon, that they'd all be safe.

The horn stopped abruptly, and Damion waited.

Screams erupted from a nearby house. A loud blast, shattering of wood, and shouts and sobbing from other children were all heard in the chaos. A long cry of victory from a creature that did not sound like it lived on Earth at all silenced the rest of the loud noises.

Direfall had finally been spotted.

Now they were being taken, taken to where their families and friends and animals were, a place no man or woman could ever escape or be free or live.

Damion sobbed, tears dripping from his face and soaking the mattress where he was seated.

"Please just end it quickly. Let me see my parents again," he whispered, hoping that God, or anyone, even the lights, would hear his pleas. "Let me be with them once more. Let me see their faces."

The light from outside his ramshackle house was brighter than the sun, and the door rattled.

"I want to see them!" screamed Damion.

The light that enveloped Direfall was blinding, even from miles away. But after a few minutes, it all faded away, and the darkness of the night consumed the hidden hills once again.

After the long night, a small band of Gatherers returned to the city's rubble. They had slept the night at the long-abandoned city, as they had not finished their job of collecting supplies, but when they saw the light's piercing glow, they had to investigate.

There were no houses, no walls, no people. What remained of

continued on next page

Respite

Molly Desmond, Grade 8

Direfall was broken sticks, fallen trees, and charred ground. But a single mattress in the middle of the clearing with a sobbing body on top of it remained. One of the Gatherers quickly rushed towards the bed and shook the figure. "Hey, HEY! What happened? Are you all right?"

Damion slowly lifted himself up from the mattress and looked around, silenced as though he had seen the worst.

"He's the only one left," another responded. "The only survivor."

Damion stared at the Gatherers, his green eyes turned to a hazy grey. "I'm the last one. They kept me here... but Direfall is no more," he said soberly, looking around at the destruction. "We need to head back, back to the cities. We're starting over."

The others didn't need to listen. They brought Damion to his feet and carried him away, into the new day's beaming radiance.

My hands too stiff to move
Snowflakes hit my hand
I watch while the intricate designs
leave droplets on my palm.
I look down to see red berries
hidden in the snow.

I smell the crisp air blowing in my face.

I trudge through the snow.

My legs grow tired trying to make it to dinner.

My warm smoky feast waits for me.

I imagine pulling my hands over
the steaming, blistering ham.

Defrosting the cold ice in my throat.



Isaac Bancroft, Grade 12

The Sidewalk

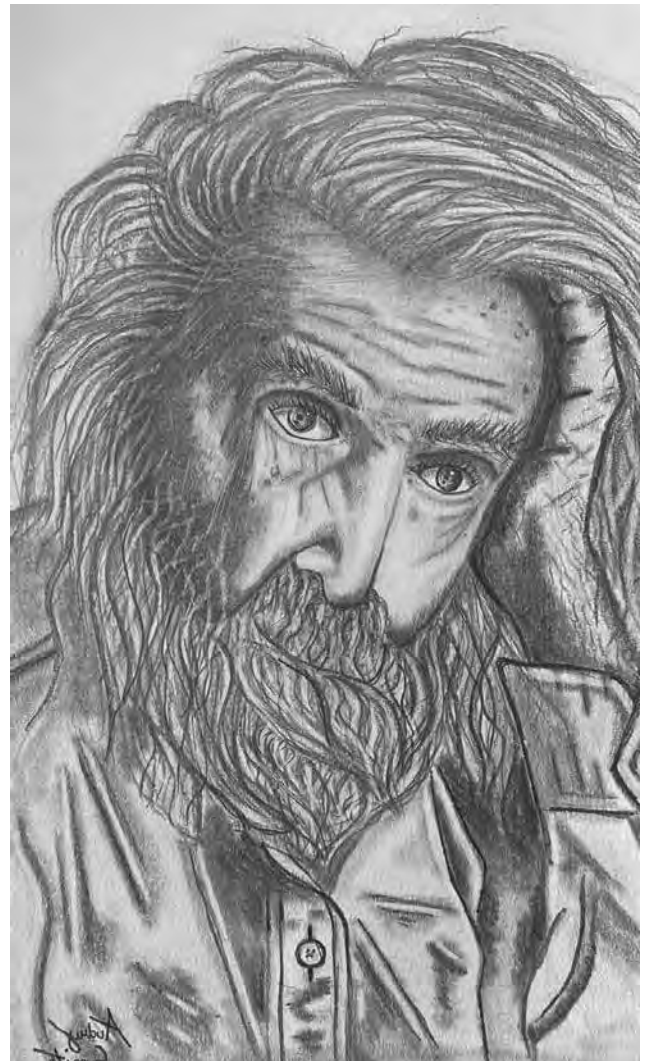
Maria Martin, Grade 7

Here we are.
People. All of us. So many. Billions and billions of us.
We are not pretty. We are not beautiful.
We do nothing. We compete and fight over things that are not even real, we are sick.
We are all broken. none of us are all right.
But every day we get up.
Every day we wake up and think to ourselves
Maybe today will be different.
Maybe today the sidewalk won't disappear.
We are inside ourselves and we can't come out; we are drowning.
Things are left unsaid, words unspoken; you suffocate in your silence. The more you
try the faster you fall and there is no sidewalk to walk on. It is gone.
You step forward.
The sidewalk disappears.

The clouds are heavy. They are low and threatening.
Walk faster. Keep your head down.
The thread snaps.
Maybe
Maybe tomorrow will be different.



Nicholas Shiner, Grade 12



Audrey Smith, Grade 12



Cathryn Mikowski, Grade 10

War Gone

Morley Yin, Grade 8

We lived past the war
The overalls and factories
Turn to pencil skirts and offices
Acrylics on the keyboards
Push till 5 o'clock

Summer concerts and Friday bars
Collecting volunteer hours
Setting tables
Leave the menu
At the Marriott

A jar of M&Ms
Keeps the lonely cubicle company
On TV the war isn't over
But it isn't here
Still the billboards count the toll in red
Through the passenger window

Hotel wifi
And Yelp was right
There'd be
A lifeless roach stuck to the fluorescent light
Right above the bed







Riley Sahs, Grade 7

My Home is My Island

Analie Greenwood, Grade 8

My home is an island
A place of privacy
Isolated from the public eye
A place to find peace
Somewhere safe and trusted
I know every crevice and cubby of my home
I know the best places to hide for a game of hide and seek
The place I can come to when I need to think
There's a place for when I'm hungry or cold
And it's filled with people that make me comfortable
This is a place where I can be my true self
Not filled with expectations of who I should be
It's familiar and filled with memories
Great memories of being happy
My home is my safe space
And my home is my island



Rebekah Miller, Grade 7



Morley Yin, Grade 8



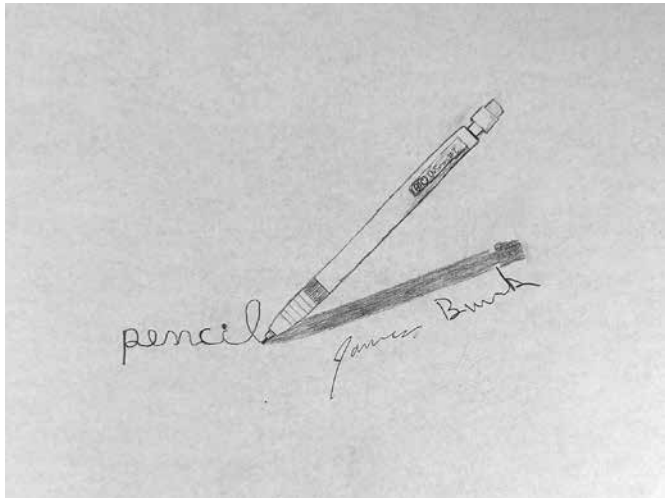
Emma Perez, Grade 11



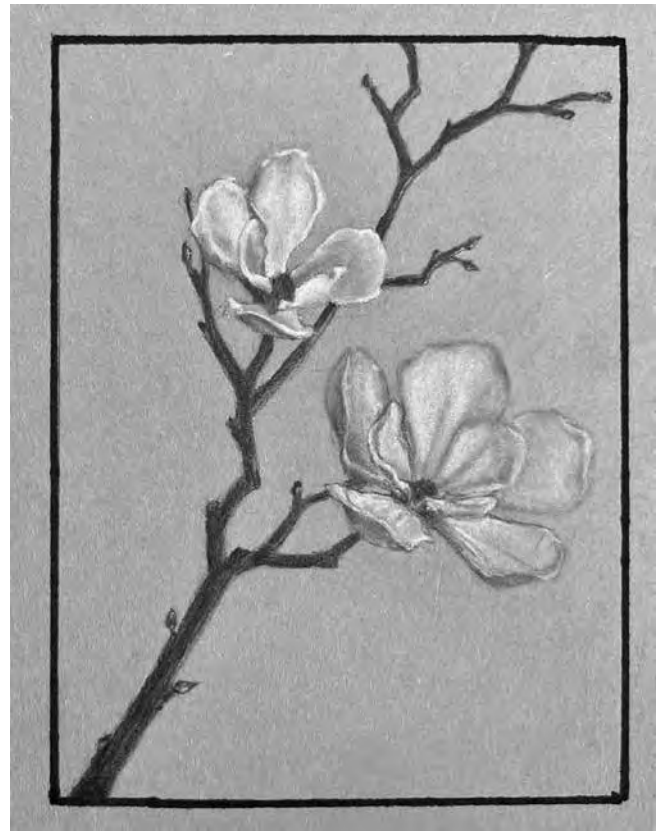
Emma Perez, Grade 11



Riz Peterson, Grade 10



James Bunek, Grade 8



Orion Clark, Grade 12



Devon Cunningham, Grade 11

No Nos and Nose Jobs

Judy Steffens, Grade 9

One thing that has always rattled me as someone with a medical condition that impairs their looks is how ignorant and rude some people can be. I know we live in a world where people are mean, but it's astonishing to see really how mean people can be. As someone who suffers from having a cleft lip and palate, which has everything to do with your face, nose, and even ears, the first thing people look at when they see you, I've learned to overcome the overwhelming obstacle of humans being humans.

Growing up I couldn't suck so I had to drink out of special bottles that were glass and super expensive, just to eat food. Because of some of my early surgeries, I had to wear these velcro, fleece arm wraps called "No Nos" to keep me from touching my face and ripping the stitches out of my fresh nose job. I was smart enough to make it into kindergarten but I had to be held back to Young Fives only because I couldn't speak properly. I had speech therapy for a few years of my young life before I was able to blab every word in the book. I was also severely colicky because of the many ear infections I had. One of the most disgusting things that still haunts me to this day is throwing up. Because of the cleft lip I have a hole in the roof of my mouth that connects to my nose. While it's a cool party trick to make a noise with my mouth, I'm scared out of my mind to get sick. Trigger warning! When I get sick it comes out of my nose and it is the most disgusting, unbearable feeling you won't ever know. I have now shielded myself from getting sick for over eight years.

In my whole 15 years of living, I have racked up a whopping ten surgeries. When I was younger I would purposely have them in the summer not only to keep them from not interfering with school but because I didn't want other kids at school to laugh at the stitches in my nose or on my face. I was super insecure about how I looked at just the age of eight. I didn't want kids to ask questions or point out anything about how I looked or what was wrong with my nose. That's the main reason I had them in the summer months. I had some other difficulties along the way. After my surgeries were complete I couldn't eat solid food for one-to-three weeks because of it messing up the work they had just done. I had to drink smoothies, eat applesauce, and basically have everything I needed to eat be turned into a liquid, which was disgusting. On a good note I had the best excuse to eat ice cream and popsicles everyday.

When most people think of surgery they think of TV shows and the crazy madness it is going into hospitals. I think of having my last full meal at 6:00 p.m. and having pre-surgery parties to ease the stress on me. I think of waking up at 5:00 the following day and getting my farm blanket and my surgery polar bear named "Poley." Some of my favorite memories are seeing my uncle who works in the medical field come see me on surgery days and having Poley by my side all the way into the O.R. Poley became such a "hospital famous" bear that he even got his own hospital band that he still has to this day wrapped around his nonexistent neck. Poley was there in my arms as I cried on the O.R. table right before I went out, and he was there when I woke up crying because my parents weren't in the room yet. He has been by my side for some of the most difficult parts of my life.

One of my biggest insecurities that I've just started to grow out of is my nose. I hated my nose for the longest time because I compared myself to every "normal" person. I saw their nose and

wondered why can't mine look nice like theirs or I wonder what my nose would look like if it were "normal". Just this past year I have really started to grasp the fact that I'm not normal, and that's totally okay. I'm never going to have the perfect nose or smile, so why let it drag me down everyday? I realize now that nobody actually made fun of the way my nose or smile looked, it was just me.

Going through all of these traumatic, unordinary things has given me confidence in myself as well as learning to be humble and respectful because you never know someone's history. I have this saying: Everything happens for a reason. The reason I had all of this medical stuff happen to me was so I could shine as a teenager growing into an adult. I am now an amazing athlete with big goals and dreams and I also share my knowledge of what I know about showing and how to win livestock shows to young kids all around my county. I still have so much trauma I'm trying to overcome everyday, but at the end of the day you need to learn to love yourself and be proud of who you are.



Zander St. Germain, Grade 8



Kayden Raphael, Grade 8

A Storm is Coming

Samuel Bell, Grade 7

The cloudy clouds
The rainy rain
It's amazing
Most people can't see that
Where people see destruction and death
I see vibrant colors of lightning and life
Without them there's no quiet before the storm
There's no green in the leaves
There's no clouds in the sky
There's no life on earth
A storm is coming and I can't wait



Kendra Couturier, Grade 11

The Face in the Mirror

Finn Kennedy, Grade 7

Fascinating, I look at the mirror
The features intertwined on my face
On my face intrudes the nose
A little squash sprouted up

The hazel eyes, the painted lips
The eyebrows, trying for
More but none will come
And sizzled out like dying fire

Between each eye there is
A bridge, connecting the little stump
The two nostrils like tunnels
Leading down into the depths of my face

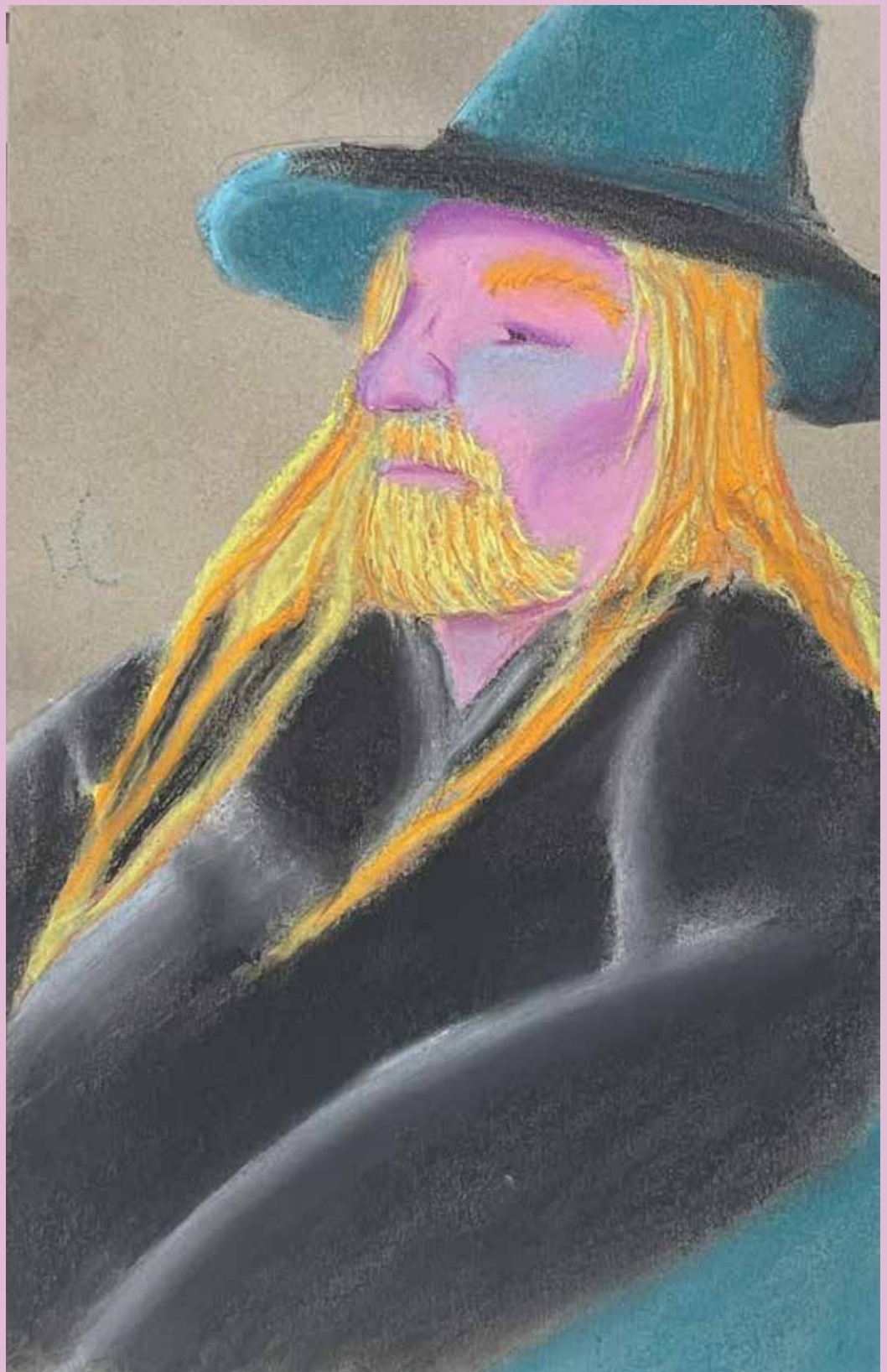
The eyelashes like black spiderwebs
Thinning out to a thread
Perhaps the spider of life weaved
This web, protecting my eyes
From the evil fire

As time goes on,
The features are taken again
Like clay being sculpted
As time goes on
And the only memory
Is the faded pictures

The Thing About Socks and Clocks

Amanda Tarsa, Grade 11

I like my socks,
Almost as much as my clocks.
But the thing
When uppeth I spring,
I shall not mistake my clocks for
my socks,
Lest I wish my feet to ring.



Laura Christianson, Grade 12



Amina Raftery, Grade 7

My Evolution

Seneca Reimer, Grade 7

Most of my happiest memories concern the forests of the Pacific Northwest, and one of the places I think of the most often and with the most longing is the forest just to the southwest of Mt. Rainier, Washington. My family and our close friends have stayed in cabins there numerous summers, each year brimming with intoxicating freedom and an incomparable feeling of magic around every bend. This is my account of an experience which took place on the base of the mountain, the first summer we visited.

The council of parents had spent the morning deep in discussion and had come to the conclusion that we would be taking a hike to a large river made up of glacier run-off. We drove a short distance, then arrived at a valley covered with rocks of all sizes. Through the center of this there roared a great gray-brown river, churning and careening with enough force to uproot trees, and easily sweep away a human, a car, or anything else which blocked its way. Across this colossal expanse of pure, primal power spanned a log. I have no doubt that, if I visited the place again, I would see that the log was much sturdier and far broader than my mind believes, and that the railing which protruded from

one side was only an added precaution. However, at the time, I painted myself a still withstanding mental image of a long, spindly pine tree, stripped of all its bark and lying flat across the two gravelly riverbanks, with the sturdy wood-and-metal railing the only thing keeping me from the churning waters below. I was exhilarated. I believe I was a bit afraid, but fear doesn't often leave a lasting impression on me. The moment which struck me most was when I was in the middle of the log looking down into the waters: suddenly, the river seemed to be alive, always racing itself, roaring and shouting and galloping madly like a child, bouncing off of rocks and exploring every nook and cranny it could find, but giving off the feeling of something much older, like it had seen many things long ago, and was now charging back into the world, the shaking off the persistent fatigue of glacierhood as it did so. I had been in awe of things in nature before this instance; a butterfly, ladybugs, the clouds, flowers, and other gentle, intricate things. But this was the first time I had truly experienced the overwhelming power and superiority of nature: the knowledge that it was not there for my enjoyment, that I was – and am – a temporary one of its creations, who could choose to either be a part of nature, or a simple passerby. Of course, I wanted to be included.

Superstitions

Gabriella Romzek, Grade 11

A superstition, in general, is the action of completing an activity or ritual in hopes of a higher universal power bestowing a certain outcome. For instance, in theatre, it is unlucky to name the play *Macbeth* because the first ever production of the play was cursed, just as Macbeth himself was from the very first act. Therefore, actors call it the Scottish play to avoid mishaps before or during a show. The history of transitions makes the theatre a tight-knit community amongst a plethora of social groupings because they all share in the experience and every little puzzle piece that goes into a beautiful piece of art: I know because I've been in the theatre community for the majority of my schooling.

Many people observe these acts of faith in a higher, magical power and look down upon them. They claim it foolish to resort to false hopes and to contribute to rituals that share no correlation with their desired fate. They say superstitions are cowardice wearing the mask of childish conviction. They call themselves realists: I call them pessimists, raining needles on our parade of bubbles. Superstitions, although unorthodox at times, are a survival tool, defense mechanism, and social bonding resource that allows many humans struggling in life to continue with the pursuits they love.

This supposed ridiculous waste of energy has actually proven to be a healthy stress reliever. Living on a constant high of anxiety-producing cortisol increases blood pressure, which damages heart functionality over time. Superstitions have been shown to decrease cortisol production, which boosts moods and raises the body's production of dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin. These hormones boost moods because faith in a power someone can't see gives the brain reassurance that it is doing *something* to stop bad things — the conscious possibility of negative outcomes is jet fuel for stress like throwing salt over your shoulder or knocking on wood. Even false hope is more beneficial to the brain and heart than no hope at all.

Throughout my childhood, I relied on superstitions to bring hope for what I wanted, like school snow day rituals where some people stuck with the traditional route and just wore their pajamas inside out (lame). Or others committed to the whole shebang of sleeping with spoons under pillows, wearing pajamas either or both inside out and backward, flushing ice cubes down the toilet, and more. Back then, I would perform the snow day ritual at least ten times a winter, call my best friend the next morning, and scream, "It worked!" if our parents ambled up the stairs as quietly as possible, inevitably creaking the steps, and told us we could sleep in. As I was already awake, I couldn't *possibly* go back to sleep, obviously, when a whole day was ahead! Even my grown, 40-something-year-old adult, intensely logical American Studies teacher used to wear the same socks for each high school basketball game because he insisted that they were the cause of his wins on the court. His mom despised it because he'd come home smelling like a rotting cabbage, but the fact that he had his lucky basketball socks made his high school sports experience more memorable. It's a funny, relatable story that lightens up the mood of the classroom every once in a while.

I've lived 100 yards from a graveyard since I was nine, so my best friend and I thought it exciting to hold our breath, close our eyes, and cover our ears so the ghosts wouldn't possess us! This funny memory bonds us because relationships are built on

memories. Even when she wasn't with me, I'd formed the habit, the muscle memory, of holding my breath and shutting my eyes when we passed a graveyard; unfortunately, I can't do it anymore because I drive myself everywhere, and I heard closing your eyes while driving isn't wise. Now, whenever I do pass one, I think of her and our silly times together when everyone else on the bus stared at us like we were weirdos because our faces were turning purple driving past a mile-long graveyard.

We often implement superstitions to step away from reality and build a space between ourselves and our fears. Whenever we blame a magical power in the universe for our mistakes or misfortune, or approach an obstacle with procedures, it is psychologically coping with instances that scare us instead of facing them. Though this is often looked down upon and perceived as cowardice, it is essential to continue through life and not be afraid. Otherwise, we wouldn't be able to achieve anything extraordinary. Many performers and artists have an agenda of lucky activities they complete before a show, like never lighting a trio of candles, saying "break a leg" instead of "good luck," or sleeping with their script under their pillow. Superstitions are the shove for many people to prise their foot out the door and accomplish great art, *greatness*; some need a little more faith, but that doesn't make them wrong or less than.

When adults embrace their inner child, it challenges them to step away from the stress of a responsible life where they have to be accountable, appropriate, and worrisome. Ren McCormack from *Footloose* recognizes how it's a parent's job to worry and that one day, he and his friends will have families, bills, and homes, and they'll have to worry, too. But the excessive pondering of the horrible outcomes of life can consume any adult. There is a time to worry, there is a time to mourn, and there is a time to be a kid again who believes that a pair of socks generates victories. It's time we accept these unorthodox stress relievers and embrace the inner faithful, in the subconscious "why not? I only live once."



Analie Greenwood, Grade 8



Lala

Eli Marshall, Grade 9

Lala

Small, loud

Dancing, laughing, freezing

Stealing all my clothes

Bestfriend

Cinquain

Kerry McNett, Grade 10

Drawing,

Artistic, expressful,

Therapeutic, stress-relieving, beautiful

Makes me feel calm

Art

Anna Mitchell, Grade 12

Teaching a Rose to Unwilt

Christine Eggert, Grade 12

Princess Primrose was perfectly happy stuck in her tower, thank you very much. The books were interesting, there was a full kitchen, and she could even draw pictures near the large stained glass window of two lovers. Never mind the fact that she had read every dusty book on the single shelf, had almost no recipes, and could only stare at the stupid stained glass window for hours. Her sketchbook had been filled in just two weeks.

But it wasn't all bleak in the Glen-Aff Woods, far from civilization. The dragon, who had introduced himself as Fjord, often spoke with her and every Wednesday, the fae, who called herself Lavender, would come to visit. Today was luckily Wednesday.

"Prim, you should probably get the stove ready," Fjord was peeking through the stained glass window.

"Oh, is Lavender on her way? Wait—I thought you couldn't see anything through that colorful monstrosity," she muttered as she slammed the necromancy book shut.

Fjord made a gurgling noise that he assured her is his laugh, "Your appearance? No, but your shape moves about the room. Though if you used your key and came out to see me, I would finally have a face to go with the name."

"Lavender stole my appearance; just look at her. Besides, you know as well as I do that I must stay in the tower."

It would have been easy to leave; the key was provided on the first day to show that Queen Ivy trusted her eldest daughter to not run away from her fate. Subsequently, Fjord and Lavender both tried their hardest to get her to leave the tower and her terrible fate. Her normal average fate. It was only terrible if she thought of it that way.

Just as the stove got to the correct temperature, a cloud of mist formed and Lavender stepped out. Instead of her usual grin, a solemn expression covered her face: "This is a letter from an escort party coming this way. It's an official note that says Prince Eldrin accepted the marriage proposal and that he wishes for a son."

The world shattered. Fjord must have been talking, but the world cut out, taking away the fragile detachment I used. I interrupted whoever was talking, "What do I do?" It was a fight to not let tears fall.

"Come with us," Lavender urged immediately. "They do not own your soul, you do not owe your parents anything." I shook my head so vehemently that Fjord could probably see the movement.

"The Queen broke her deal to you, no children," Fjord hummed thoughtfully.

"But the marriage—" Lavender grabbed my arm.

"The marriage contract is null. You said you were Ace, they agreed to no children, and they broke it. You're free. Please, Prim, while there's still time."

Lavender stared directly into my eyes; it strangely startled me. Every inch of her looks was like mine except for her eyes, which were the shade of lavender from which she derived her name. I briefly imagined her taking my place. I swallowed my guilt, fury, and fear and moved over to my dresser. Fjord cheered when I pulled out the key and Lavender guided me over to the door that led to the staircase and into the forest where Fjord grew up. Away from the messy business of marriage. Her body froze before she could put the key in the lock.

"I-I- can't. I don't know how."

"You do, you do. Come on, Prim, let's go." Lavender's glamor

started to fade as her impatience arose.

My body turned and I placed my face in the crook of her neck, "Please help me," I whispered.

She stood still.

"I'm not going to command you. But I'm not going to leave you either. Fjord, can you break the window?" Shattering glass was the only response needed.

I felt weightless when she picked me up and set me on the scaly back of Fjord. She gently pushed me into hugging his body and quickly used her power to keep a tight grip on his slippery back.

"We're going to fly just to a clearing beyond the tower, not far, just far enough that the escort party won't be able to find us. If you want to come back later we can take you but, please, Primrose, never ask me to use your soul again." Fjord took off, but I kept my eyes closed.

Later, when emotions settled and the fear subsided, Primrose took a look at the true nature of her best friends. A silver and blue dragon with long whiskers and an even longer body. A pretty fae who wore others' appearance like clothes. They took her back to her prison where she unlocked the door herself. Then she lived the rest of her days as the great artist of the Glen-Aff Woods, who sought no spouse or children, only her best friends when it was dinner party Wednesday.



Taylor Semple, Grade 12



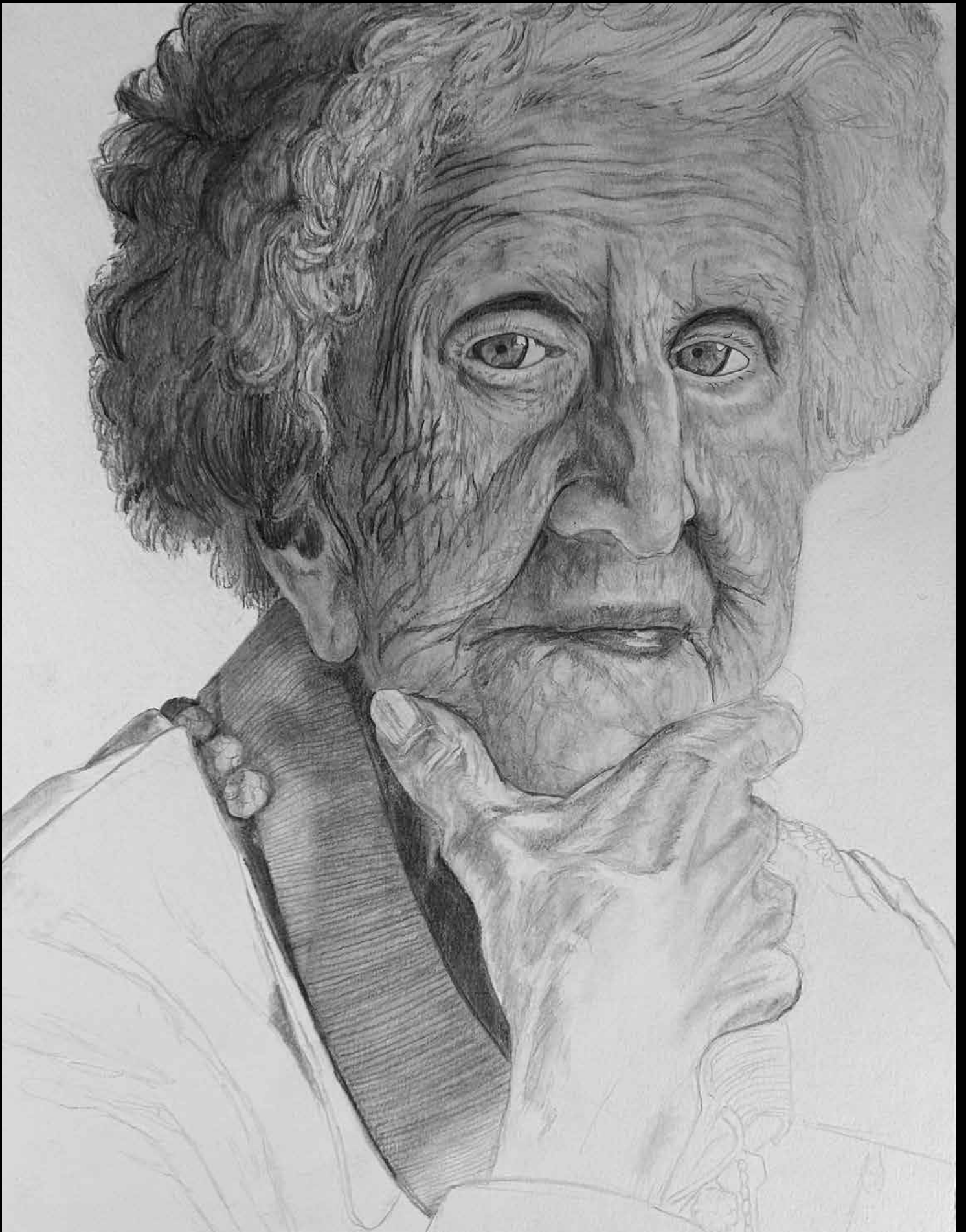
Natalie Albu, Grade 10



Luke Gallagher, Grade 11



Jacqueline Hearne, Grade 10



Samantha Tarsa, Grade 12



Daniel Resendiz-Nunez, Grade 12



Izabella Craker, Grade 11



Jabin Aguilar, Grade 11



Avery Kelley, Grade 8

Anxiety

Scotlyn McDonald, Grade 7

Anxiety feels like
 hyenas
 biting through your stomach,
 Anxiety feels like bees stinging you
 100 times in the heart,
 Anxiety feels like you wanting
 to hide inside of your turtle shell,
 Or to roll up in a ball like a hedgehog,
 Just to scream your guts out as loud as a lion,
 Or cry like you're a toddler having a tantrum,
 Or you punch something so hard and so much
 but you just can't anymore
 but
 Does it really ever end?



Ada Wetherbee, Grade 7



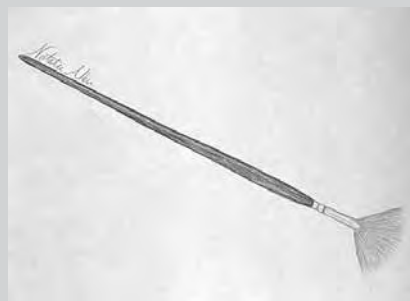
Berkleigh Carol, Grade 8



Jerry Schaub, Grade 11



Cameron Flees, Grade 11



Colors

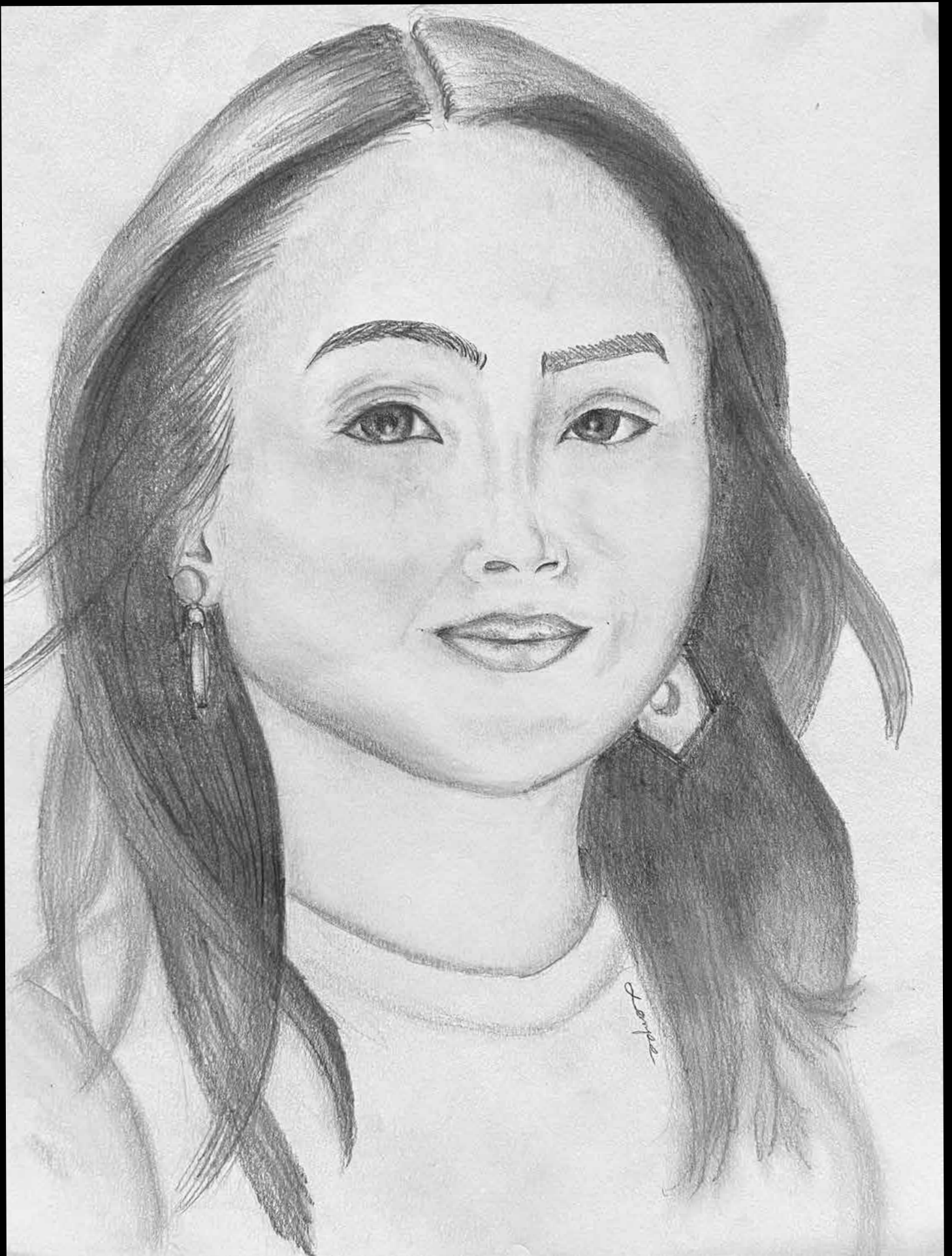
Milo J. Carpenter, Grade 7

I sit in bed, glaring at the blank white wall. Nothing happens. I sit like something will but it never does. I glance over at the clock as I hear: "Tick... Tick... Tick." It's noon.

I imagine all the millions of people doing so much, but I'm just here staring at a blank canvas. I'm empty. I have no color, no ideas, nothing.

I spot a couple tubes of paint and several paintbrushes in the corner of my room. Next to a big green plant, I drag myself over to them. I inspect the paint colors and brush shapes. I run over to the wall and shove everything out of my way. I flip the caps off and paint. The brush glides across the smooth surface of my blank wall. I draw a leaf, then another, then another, and another. I pick up the black bottle of paint and outline them. I feel a tiny light inside of my eyes light up. I grab the brown and draw a pot; its round edges, chips in the clay, all of it. I stand back and admire it. I tilt my head and smile.

I feel happy.



Willa Lampe, Grade 10



Muriel Korson, Grade 10

Struggle

Mariah Manzano, Grade 9

Sunsets are gorgeous
The beam of light hits you
Right into you
Up high and down low
Ground is all the same
Grass is green anyway
Life is too short to not realize
Everyone is under the same sunset



Campbell Lamb, Grade 8

Beauty

Clarice Bardenhagen, Grade 9

Waves upon the shore do lap
My shoes upon the break wall tap
Yachts along the harbor taunt
Riches wanted how they flaunt
Only a real treasure could capture our eye
And that is the Leland sunset sky
Fills my heart and all the while
Summertime beauty makes all smile

Free Verse

Ella Ingwersen, Grade 9

Silence
My lips glued together,
Your words never hurt me
Only changed me
It would be better
If things were left unsaid,
If I weren't so silent,
Would you understand?



Cameron Flees, Grade 11



Samantha Tarsa, Grade 12

Adrenaline

Liam McCaw, Grade 9

I am a flash, a bullet, a hurricane that cannot be stopped. I fly down the slope, spraying mud all over my shoes. Someone says eight hundred meters left, so I quickly let thoughts go into the depths of my mind. I can't think, my mind is a flurry of every pain and feeling. The pain that makes me stronger is the only thing left in my mind. With as much brainpower as it takes, I look over my shoulder and see the four hundred meter sign. I take one final breath and fly onto the finish, like a landing plane. I. Have. Finished.



Dean Hulett, Grade 10



Connor Coohon, Grade 12

Home

Zoe Hilton, Grade 9

Home is not only a place
It is also a feeling
It's where my family and friends are
And it's also the feeling they give me

Safety and comfort
And the wise words that influence me
Are the prime element that keeps me going
Without them, I would only have one home
But thanks to them,
I have many.



Alexander Bardenhagen, Grade 11



Mallory Lowe, Grade 11

Our Undoing

Peace Hawley Joppich, Grade 8

Early morning texts,
Chocolate,
Love yous and good nights,
Glances shared
Across a crowded room.

Texts left unanswered,
Words never returned,
You told me you couldn't.
But what I don't understand is:

Why did you tell me
We'd always be friends?
Why did you tell me
You loved me?
Words.
Our undoing.

Secrets untold.
One heart shadowed,
One heart shattered.
A boy and a girl.
One gone.
One silent.

Why the pain still shadows me,
Why the hurt still haunts me,
Like a ghost drifting.
Unable to untangle itself
From the heart it weighs down.

Texts left unanswered,
Words never returned.
Maybe I'll never understand you
But I'll never hate you.



Morley Yin, Grade 8



Berkleigh Carol, Grade 8



Nahwahquaw Laske, Grade 8



Audrey Smith, Grade 12



Avery McPhail, Grade 8



Reece LaPerriere, Grade 12

Thump-thump, Blaring Shriek, Thud, Rhythm

Lauren VanderWulp, Grade 12

Thump-thump, blaring shriek, thud, rhythm
In and out like the Wind
Flashing by – forever going
Empty, nothing too hard –

Empty, nothing too hard –
Never-ending Distance and Thought –
What to do, what to think –
When to stop, when to continue –

In and out like the Wind
Swishing to the Sound of Music –
Kink in the Breadbasket
Joy and Love in the young Ticker –

Flashing by – forever going
Waving Woodland – a sight –
Circle of Water, I can't miss –
Radiance in the sky



Mallory Lowe, Grade 11

Two Silver Disks, Small as an Eye

James Licht, Grade 11

Two silver Disks – small as an Eye –
Thin as a Coin – side by side
Gratifying plink – soft as Rye
Silver on Silver – glides

Beauty – light up Night
Bringer of Steel – swiftly
Deliverer brought to faint fright –
Silver Sparks, lend thy Light

Bring to be – resounding and free –
Smoke clear – revealing true
Yonder ground broken – shattered be –
Joyous might – through and through



Ruby McKenna, Grade 10



Tyler Peer, Grade 12



Tyler Peer, Grade 12



Elsie Purdy Teahen, Grade 7

We Know

Analie Greenwood, Grade 8

My father tells me every day "Please don't grow up"
Growing up, what every child wants to do
They want to be free and independent,
not having to listen to mommy's rules
They want to make choices, walk in world with their own ideas

My father tells me every day, "Please don't grow up"
Then I reply with, "I won't, Dad"
Both of us knowing I have to.

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The Song of Life

Mosie Weir, Grade 8

I sit there on my front porch listening
 I hear the sound of the flutist as he staggers
 down my street his melody intertwined
 with the rhythm around him
 the noise of the wind blowing through
 the ghost white birch trees
 And the sound of birds flying overhead
 The light tapping of bugs crawling on the ground
 The slight buzz in my head while I think
 All these sounds blending together to make a song
 The song of the house The song of the city
 the song of the world the song of life

