



THE FREEDOM OF WORDS 2017/18 Anthology

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2017/18 Anthology

A Message from the Burnaby Board of Education

Unique to Burnaby Schools, the Words Writing Project has annually showcased the best in student writing since 1985. Its growth and continued success is a direct reflection of our dedicated teachers who nurture the writing talents of their students, supportive parents who encourage their children to do their very best, and generous community sponsors who are committed to supporting youth and literacy.

We are proud to present the 2017/18 Words Anthology, “The Freedom of Words.” The young writers responsible for the poetry and prose within these pages know what it is to express oneself freely. Their pieces are entertaining, sometimes personal, and often, decidedly direct. Congratulations to the 124 students whose writing was selected for publication. You make us proud. We encourage you to continue exercising your freedom to write and express yourself. One should never underestimate the power of words.



Ron
Burton
Chair



Baljinder
Narang
Vice-Chair



Meiling
Chia



Larry
Hayes



Harman
Pandher

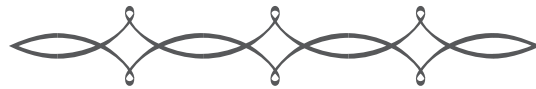


Gary
Wong



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The Freedom of Words



WORDS Writing Project 2017/18 Anthology

This is an anthology of selected works by students from Kindergarten to Grade 12.
Please review content to ensure it is appropriate for your child.



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To ensure the Burnaby School District does not contravene legal or copyright considerations, students published in this anthology and their parents/guardians have signed letters of authenticity to confirm that they are the actual author of the piece they submitted.

While every effort is made to showcase student work as true to the original form as possible, variations may have occurred during the layout process.

Rain

Ethan Wang *Buckingham Elementary*

Running and jumping in each puddle.

Always cold and really slippery.

I like to watch the water fall from the sky.

Never leaving my house without the coat.

I am From

Benjamin Heyd *Montecito Elementary*

I am from my Lego train.
I feel happy.

I am from my basement.
I feel good.

I am from Burnaby.
I feel safe.

I am from sushi.
I feel hungry.

I am from drawing.
I feel happy.

I am from my nanny's and poppy's house.
I feel happy.

Spring

Olivia Helland *Gilmore Community School*

Spring

Baby animals born among the flowers.

Fresh fruit wafting in the air.

A chickadee singing its spring song.

A bee's honey fresh from the hive.

Soggy grass between my toes.

Spring

Winter

Shalik Bhushan *Buckingham Elementary*

When winter starts

It feels

Nice to be in a cold fluffy white blanket

The winter air feels fresh

Every snowflake counts and I stand

Right where I want to



If I Had a Tiger

Julia Nam *Aubrey Elementary*

If I had a tiger
I would name her Ary.
She would play ball
And would play dominoes.
If I had a tiger
She would sleep on my bed
And would swim in the pool.
Ary would eat pigs
and make a den
And run really fast.
She would fly a little bit,
Play games with me
and if a thief comes to my house
she would catch him.
If I had a tiger
she would be my best friend
in the whole world.
Ary would always be good
and never eat people.
She would always cheer me up
when I'm sad
and never be angry with me.
If I had a tiger
we would always be together.

Seasons

Hailey Jang *Chaffey-Burke Elementary*

It is Winter:
The cold, freezing air nips my face,
making my face tingle numbly.

It is Summer:
The warm, steamy air burns my body
and scorches the silvery sand.

It is Spring:
The birds are sweetly chirping
while the lovely, multicoloured rainbow
sparkles in the warm, sunny air!

It is Fall:
The crunchy, colourful leaves
float gently down to the ground

Le flocon de neige tombe

Acacia Castellanos *Brantford Elementary*

Un flocon de neige est
Léger comme un gaz,
Fragile comme un papillon de nuit
Spécial comme ma fête
Il tombe comme la pluie
Puis il fond sur moi



Puppy, Kitty and Pony

Renee Wu *Inman Elementary*

Puppy barked at Kitty,
Who hissed right back.
Then Pony galloped over
Just to kick them on their backs –
“Thwack!”
Kitty got mad
And chased Pony all around the farm.
So, Pony chased poor Puppy
All around the barn.
Oh, these playful critters,
Always running ‘round.
Always have energy
And run until sundown!

The Airshow

Theodore Chung *Buckingham Elementary*

The first time
I went to the airshow,
I saw the Blue Angels
flying up high
in the air.
They did loop-de-loops
and drew lines
in the sky.
I was excited
to see them way
up high.

Invisible Man

Ryan Sokoloski *Brantford Elementary*

There is an invisible man
On an invisible coast
Building an invisible trap
For an invisible ghost
Who scared him the most
At breakfast
While eating some toast
The invisible ghost
Fell into the invisible trap
The invisible man
started to scream
No one saw anything
But heard a loud crash
KA-BA-BA-BAM!
The morning alarm
It must have been
An invisible dream

Salmon Poem

Oscar Liang *Buckingham Elementary*

Happy Alevins
Wiggling, squirming,
ready to hatch.
Celebrating freedom,
always moving,
Horray alevins!

It's Cold

Ella Garlick *Clinton Elementary*

Frost covers the windows! We sip warm cider. Snow covers the ground like a blanket and snowflakes flow down to the icy ground. Then we snuggle under a quilt of winter and ice. In the morning, I shiver as we creep outside, pushing away the snow in front of us. We reach the glowing fire pit! The fire sizzles as we roast our marshmallows. Yum, yum!

On our way back, my fingers freeze. They are sooo cold. I can't even move them, not even a little. Water drenches my hair and I am covered with slush from head to toe. I drag my feet through melting snow and across thin, shiny ice. When I get inside, I take a while to warm up but soon my friends and I are toasty warm.

Mon Ami Idéal

Ryan Sokoloski *Brantford Elementary*

Je vais vous montrer mon ami idéal. Il a les yeux bruns et beaucoup d'autre choses sur son visage comme des cheveux longs et noirs, une bouche souriante et des oreilles attentives. En plus il est bon en plusieurs choses à l'école. Il est bon en maths, bon à colorier, et bon à dessiner. Il est très intelligent. Et comme il est silencieux! Aussi il aime son école et des autre choses à son école comme son enseignante et ses ami. Mais il aime aussi la biblio et grands livres qui sont là. Il veut faire de son mieux en maths et en lecture de grands livres. Il peut faire beaucoup de choses à l'école comme bien colorier, bien dessiner, bien lire et lire de grands livres. Il veut vraiment plus d'amis. Il est un bon ami idéal.

La vie d'une piñata

Colin Simmons *Sperling Elementary*

Bonjour!

Just suis une piñata à une fête. Ju suis lié à un arbre. Les enfants veulent me frapper avec des bâtons.

On non!

Les enfants veulent aussi chercher des bobons. Ju ne suis pas très excité! Quand les enfants me frappent, je dis « aïe »!

Ce n'est pas idéal, être une piñata!



Stop Smoking

Eddie Chen *Taylor Park Elementary*

Never to come out
Your lungs if they could
Would scream and shout
And so they should.

Your teeth how yellow
Your teeth how bad
But somehow without one cigarette
You tend to feel sad.

It's more than a habit
It's an addiction
These are all facts,
I'm not speaking fiction.

Your body will rot,
Inside and you'll pout;
Nasty things will happen,
And you will soon find out.

So hear the warnings,
and listen to what I say,
Stop smoking now
Or you will regret it one day.

Silent

Alee Moreno *Brantford Elementary*

I remember your smile,
I remember your eyes,
But I have forgotten how you sound.
Your voice has been silent.

I went looking for answers,
There were none
Only your books remained.
Grandpa, where have you gone?

I couldn't stop time,
The clock continued ticking.
I was far, you were farther
Seasons come, and seasons go.

You are fading away.
It was spring when
Your voice became silent
Now I can't hear you anymore.

Un Jour de la Vie d'une Coccinelle

Bronwyn Lee *Brantford Elementary*

Je suis une coccinelle qui vole dans le ciel.
Ma journée est d'échapper les rouges-gorges,
Et de regarder les abeilles qui font le miel.
Je vole fleur à fleur entrain de collecter le pollen,
Et voler avec les guêpes.
Je me bataille avec les fourmis,
Et contre les papillons aussi.
Maintenant ma journée est fini,
Alors à demain mon ami!

How to be Vanesa

Vanesa Al-Abboudi

Buckingham Elementary

Be an animal lover
Do sports
Play X-Box1, have a phone
Swim and skate
Be hungry
Love your dog forever
Be loud
Love your family
Be helpful and caring
Laugh at the worst time
Be yourself
Wear army clothes
Be funny
Have a best friend
Don't mind gender
Love Canderle and Watson
Be impatient
Love gym
Try new activities
Love everyone

Mon Côté Fou!

Anjie Chen

Brantford Elementary

Mon côté fou est vraiment caché à l'école
Mais à la maison je suis vraiment folle,
Voici mon image imaginaire de mon côté fou
Dans mon imagination j'ai les ailes,
Mes ailes représentent que je veux vraiment voler,
La ballerine sur ma chemise représente que j'adore danser.
Les notes de musique au-dessus de ma tête représentent,
Que j'aime jouer le piano et chanter,
Mes oreilles de chants représentent que j'adore les animaux
de toutes sortes.
J'aime mon côté fou!

A Library

Jemimah Kakooza

Taylor Park Elementary

I see the wondrous amounts of books all around me.
I hear the deafening sound of quiet echoing everywhere.
I taste my craving for a new adventure.
I smell the amazing smell of a new novel.
I feel the greatness of holding a book between my fingers.



Quiet

Tristan Khayatian

Aubrey Elementary

There are many kinds of quiet.
Reading with my sister quiet.
Wonder quiet.
“Wow!” quiet.
Squirrels sleeping quiet.
Writing a book quiet.
Summer breeze quiet.
Maple leaves falling to the ground quiet.
Everyone in the city asleep quiet.

Ocean

Julia Palbiski

Cascade Heights Elementary

One of a kind
Creatures lurk in your depths
Everything in your waters fascinates me
Anemones sway with your current
Never ending beauty

Flowers

Michael Doerksen *Inman Elementary*

Orange flowers on a steep green hill of tall grass.
Blue, yellow and red flowers in a greenhouse.
Purple flowers in the shadow of a giant tree.
Big green flowers in a medium sized flower pot.
Flowers filling the grasslands with bees and butterflies.
Flowers everywhere.

Je suis un Animal – Haiku

Sofia Chin

Aubrey Elementary

Je glisse lentement.
Je laisse un chemin visqueux.
Les choses marchent sur moi.

Grandma's Chicken Chili

Daniel Fairey
Gilpin Elementary

I woke to a fantasy world
Full of fiery dragons
And mermaids combing their long hair,
Dwarves in tiny wagons,
Elves with their beautiful language,
Even Bilbo Baggins.

Beautiful dark enchantresses,
And old majestic kings,
Ginormous evil arachnids,
And unicorns with wings,
Werewolves with claws and pointed teeth,
Merchants selling weird things.

Good Lord! There were flying monkeys,
And a fish called Willy,
Trees that said the craziest lies,
Singing harps – what really??
Then I realized what had happened:
Grandma's chicken chili.

I Am

Aeris Chan
Capitol Hill Elementary

I am imaginative and creative
I wonder what kind of person I will be in five years
I hear success speaking clearly to me
I see myself achieving goals in the future
I want to become a fabulous artist and draw
beautiful pictures
I am imaginative and creative

I pretend that I am joyful but inside I feel alone
I feel proud when I achieve a goal
I touch the shining stars glistening in the darkness
I worry about people that have no homes and no food
I cry happily hearing someone's touching words
I am imaginative and creative

I understand people think differently
I say that everyone is beautiful in the world
I dream that I will become a very smart person
I try to make people happy when they feel down
I hope my family will be safe and live a peaceful life
I am imaginative and creative



Reborn

Sophie Zhao

Chaffey-Burke Elementary

It is autumn. The golden sun tries to penetrate every single leaf with its dazzling light. My friend Jules and I are sitting under a palm tree on the soft crumbly sand by the beach, silently mourning the loss of a close friend. Jules knows that this is the hardest time for me since I knew Catherine when we were three, and we had been very close all the time. I feel Jules is whispering something in my ear, but I don't hear it. A flash-back whizzes in front of my eyes. I see the white Ford, zooming toward Catherine and me as we chatter while walking. Suddenly Catherine disappears. Desperately I reach her, but it's too late, she's gone.

I felt a soft arm around me and that brought me back to reality. Jules's eyes are glazed over, sadness is welling in them. She nods at me and whispers again "Alyssa, be strong," she chokes out. Her words wash over me like a wave. I nod back with tears forming in my eyes. We stare at the bright red sun that is setting slowly. The bright sun reminds me of Catherine's fiery spirit never burning down nor fading away. I gaze at the sky hoping to see a shooting star, but instead I see a constellation of stars that seem to resemble Catherine's face. I pinch myself. I must be dreaming I think. It hurts. I gaze at the stars again, but I see words formed by the star this time "I AM HERE AND ALWAYS WITH YOU." I'm getting excited. "Look at the stars Jules!" I shout. She looks upward. "What is it?" comes her reply. I realized with a start that the message was for me only. Catherine's spirit surrounds me all over again just like the beautiful red sunset clouds. The sadness is gone from me. I feel like I am reborn.

Kisamon

Jocelyn Hoshizaki *Clinton Elementary*

On a cold winter's morning, Kisamon was in her bed. Then her father came and gestured to her. Kisamon was confused but she went. Her father led her out past the longhouse into the forest. Kisamon was only 6 and it was the season of Bare (Winter). Father led Kisamon to the creek. The cool breeze hit Kisamon's face. The comforting scent of cedar filled the air. Father said, "The fish are gone. They will come back in New Leaf (Spring)." Kisamon sad, "What kind of fish flow through the creek?" Sockeye salmon," said father.

Father gestured to Kisamon again. She followed. Again the ripple of the creek made Kisamon relax. They came to the cedar. "This is the tree of life. It provides lots of our nation," said father. Suddenly, Kisamon felt a soft and cool drop on her nose. "What's that?" Kisamon asked. Then she felt it again. Father laughed. "It's snow," he said. Then before Kisamon knew it, she got picked up by her father and they swept away home.

When they reached the long house, father looked up. So did Kisamon. "What are you looking at?" Kisamon asked. "You'll see," father said. "Our ancestors look down on us and make sure we respect nature and animals." By the time he was finished talking, it was snowing. Kisamon saw the snow as a gift from the ancestors. Kisamon walked past a totem pole. It was a greeting pole. Kisamon went into the long house. By the time they got in, it was so blizzardy that Kisamon could hardly see anything outside. The trees braced themselves for the storm. The blizzard raged while Kisamon was in her bed. Time to sleep she thought with her nation's ancestors watching over her.



Do You Think It's Easy Being a Barbie Doll?

Amina Maxom-Wiebe *Stoney Creek Community School*

So you think it's easy being a Barbie doll? Rubbish!!!! I wish us toys could choose what we want to be, I myself, if anyone cares I would choose to be a totally cool punk rocker! I just adore adventure and hate frilly pink dresses! But unfortunately kids and toy makers don't know that.

Which brings us to our first problem, everyone gets our personalities wrong, and the outfits are horrible! Everyone dresses Barbie dolls up in sequin-y lace-y ball gowns with glittering tiaras and shimmering accessories! Sometimes kids will even draw all over you and the result is some ugly full body tattoos that your poor doll does not want. I mean a nice fully body tattoo would be great but this is just scribbles!!!! The kids will even paint your hair making it look all weird and ugly. The only time we dolls like it is if a spikey punk hair dew with neon colour! Which I've only heard of it happening to about 32 dolls who I wish I could meet one of them and move into their place with one of their kids, cause I'm so jealous! But anyways I'm getting sidetracked!

Another problem is that the children will take off all of our clothes and think it's funny, well, all you are doing is putting an embarrassing situation for your poor doll secondly, we get pulled and prangled I seriously feel bad for those dolls who's head or body parts come off easily or dolls that easily break like china dolls, they need to be treated with proper respect!!!

Our next problem is that sometimes you get put into very uncomfortable positions, I mean we were meant to be flexible, but such as your knee stuffed in your ear!! How does that sound, huh? "Awful" you say? Well that's how your poor dolls feel!!

Another problem is pets. Dogs chew on you like chew toys, cats bat at you like a mouse on a string, hamsters and gerbils try to run you over and birds keep you up all night! (Not that we get much respect anyways.)

This is not the life you want to live, and you can see what your dolls have been through and what they have to put up with!! **SO PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE!!!** Do **NOT** treat your dolls roughly so dolls can just be happy plus future generations of dolls can be saved by this terrible fate and listening to this can spread the word to the world! So in conclusion it's not that easy being a Barbie doll is it?

Pourquoi l'océan est salé ?

Linus Scriven *Marlborough Elementary*

Il y a très longtemps, vivait un aigle très méchant qui s'appelait Boo. Boo aimait pousser les autres animaux, se moquait et jouait des tours à tout le monde. C'est pour ça que tous les autres animaux n'aimaient pas vraiment Boo.

Un jour, un corbeau a appelé tous les autres animaux pour une réunion. Le corbeau a fait un grand feu dans le milieu d'un cercle de grands cèdres et tous les animaux sont venus, même le plus vieux serpent de la forêt. Le corbeau a demandé : <<Qu'est-ce qu'on peut faire pour arrêter Boo d'être si méchant ?>> Un lynx a répondu : <<Il boit l'eau de l'océan chaque jour je crois ?>> <<Oui>> a répondu le vieux serpent. <<On peut peut-être mettre quelque chose dans l'eau pour chasser l'aigle ?>> suggère le serpent. <<On peut saler l'eau !>> a dit le corbeau. Alors tous les animaux sont allés chercher du sel dans la terre de la forêt. Le corbeau a versé de l'eau sur le feu et est aller chercher du sel lui aussi.

Trois jours plus tard, tous les animaux sont arrivés au bord de l'océan. Le lynx a dit à tous les oiseaux : <<Volez vers l'océan et verser votre sel dans l'eau et sur Boo qui est sur la roche!>> Les autres animaux ont juste versé le sel dans l'eau de l'océan. Boo s'est envolé et il est allé sur une autre roche. Comme il avait soif, il a bu de l'eau salée. Il est devenu malade et s'est envolé pour toujours. Tous les animaux étaient très heureux et depuis ce jour l'océan est salé.

In Their Eyes **Kiran Takhar** *Clinton Elementary*

In their eyes I am nothing. To them I am just a number with no name, no meaning, no purpose in life. I go to sleep at night dreaming of my family, hoping I will be able to see them again. I wake up in the morning only to find myself in a small cold bed with hundreds of other kids disappointed, just like me. I wish I was loved and called by my real name not a number. I wish I was home with the trees, animals, and my mum. I wish the people here would see me as a person that mattered, but I know that in their eyes I will always be nothing.



Their Story: Residential Schools

Emily Miki *Clinton Elementary*

Friends and family
 Love spreading purpose and hope
 Culture, language, tradition and knowledge
 Shared by stories and dances.

Supressed and broken
 Assimilation and discrimination
 Won over love
 Despised, humiliation and neglect
 Hope lost

Reconciliation, telling stories, learning about our past.
 Language, traditions, culture, and knowledge re-born
 Remember, honour, celebrate, acknowledge
 Survivors: Strong and Brave
 Fix our mistakes, apologies, learn

Tree Climber

Sarah Foltz *Sperling Elementary*

A chirp pierces the frosty air
 Unraveling the blanket of silence
 As it replenishes my spirit
 My serenity banishing former worries
 Transforming them into bliss
 How I wish it to be everlasting
 As my mother's voice drifts through the branches
 Silent farewells are gifted

Math

Edward Gao *Seaforth Elementary*

The Coefficient of my Happiness,
 The Square Root of my Madness.

My thoughts are quadratic,
 My analysis is enigmatic.

My intent is to perplex,
 I just need to solve for x.

Smoke and Mirrors

Jasmine Chan *Taylor Park Elementary*

A snake constricting you
 Let me infest your mind like swarming bees
 Trust me
 Feel the regret crawling up your back like a mouse
 I am the only thing you need
 Suffocating your senses
 Fight the urge to strike a match and set a forest ablaze
 Break free from the shackles of the dark prison
 Come to the light
 Make the blinding mist disappear
 I pray, I pray, I pray, you find a better way
 We can be beautiful

A Melody for the Deep Blue

Ruth Aaron *Brentwood Park Elementary*

A calm ocean,
Awaits a melody
 Will you play it?
With a violin in hand,
And your eyes on the cloud,
You play YOUR song,
 Without a doubt.
Seated on the tail of a gentle giant,
Let the ocean wash your nerves away,
And all around you,
 The waves dance and sway.
As you watch all the commotion,
You know now,
That it's your duty
 To Play for the Ocean.

Broken

Ella Hall *Sperling Elementary*

I'm a little bit broken
But that's O.K.
I'll still get by
From day to day.

I'm a little bit crooked
But that's all right
If you're surrounded by darkness
Just move to the light.

I'm a little bit cracked
So I can't be sold
But holes can be filled
With beautiful gold.

I'm a little bit broken
So no one's like me
If we were all perfect
Then where would we be.

Silence

Vanessa Wong *Confederation Park Elementary*

Silence.
It bangs on the walls and cries out for help. It's deafening and as loud as thunder.
Darkness.
It blankets me and starts to close in. I'm beginning to give up.
Then.
Somewhere in the distance, a light flickers, far, far away.
Hope.



From Far Away

Rosalie Chady *Forest Grove Elementary*

from far away
the people look small
but the Earth looks Big.

from far away
your Problems are too tiny
to be seen.

from far away
the colours turn pretty
the mud brown turns to Yellow
The grey turns to Blue
and the greens are so Bright.

from far away
you can't tell where your home is
but that's okay
because you want to leave it anyway.

from far away
your friends seem gone
and you hope
that they're just hiding.

from far away
you wonder
if it was a good Idea after all
to leave everything you knew
and find something totally
Different.

from far away
you wonder
if you should have stayed.

Sunday

Aaron Zhao *Chaffey-Burke Elementary*

On Monday,
Children starved to death.
On Tuesday,
Girls didn't receive an education.
On Wednesday,
The world warmed.
On Thursday,
Our brothers and sisters
were mocked at because of their skin.
On Friday,
Leaders threatened each other.
On Saturday,
The world's fruit dwindled.
But on Sunday,
Things changed.
We joined hands

||

Cathy Wang *Buckingham Elementary*

Is it iL?
Is it Li?
Is it LL?
Is it ii?
You know what?
I'm not using Arial ever again!

Toute Blanche

Margaret Kuts *Sperling Elementary*

La neige tombe toute doucement,
 Toute blanche, toute blanche
 Pas d'empreinte sur des kilomètres,
 Toute blanche, toute blanche
 Le vent hurle comme un loup affamé
 Chatouillant la neige,
 Toute blanche, toute blanche

Cher flocon de neige,
 Si léger et si parfait,
 Laisse-moi m'envoler avec toi...
 Laisse-moi, je t'en supplie!

Nous danserons autour de Pôle Nord
 Avec les lumières magnifiques de l'aurore
 Nous irons en Norvège
 Pour descendre dans les fjords
 Nous survolerons l'Égypte, la France
 Et, pourquoi pas, le désert de Sahara!

Sous nos yeux, la pleine lune prend forme,
 Sa luminosité riche nous enrobe
 Tout ce voyage est trop splendide,
 Trop magnifique pour être vrai...

Peut-être c'était qu'un rêve?

Main non, c'était vrai!
 Mes cheveux, ils sont encore mouillés,
 Grâce à la neige qui tombait,
 Toute doucement,
 Toute blanche, toute blanche

Confiance en soi

Annie Wu *Marlborough Elementary*

Quand je fais une faute,
 Je pense que c'est la fin du monde
 Quand j'attends mes résultats,
 Je pense que j'ai échoué
 Les voix négatives chuchotent
 "Qu'est-ce tu peux faire?"
 Tu es juste une enfant sans voix"
 Je regarde autour, puis à moi
 Est-ce que je suis vraiment une fille sans voix,
 Pas de pouvoir?
 Je réfléchis encore
 Non,
 Je suis une fille courageuse,
 Intelligente et j'ai une voix forte
 J'ai dit aux voix,
 "Je suis une fille capable de faire n'importe quoi!"
 Les commentaires négatifs ont disparu
 Je suis moi,
 Je peux le faire,
 Je peux réussir
 Car je suis capable de le faire!

The Thing in the Closet **Cassandra Ogalino** *Stride Avenue Community School*

Dark, stormy night
Spent in an old, dusty mansion.
People say it's haunted here.
Curiosity pesters a young couple.
The guy willingly goes in
while the girl feebly follows.
They walk in, their footsteps creaking
against the weak wooden floors.
Strange shadows creep around,
hiding in every nook and cranny.
A strong gust of wind brings chills
to their young bones.
The girl wants to leave,
She is scared
While the guy is brave.
Then there's sound,
Coming from the closet.
Was it the wind?
Was it a racoon?
He slowly opens the closet door.
Inside, it beholds a hideous creature!
Unexplainably ugly,
Its eyes red and evil with hunger,
and teeth sharp and bloody
from its previous meal:
A human corpse.
She screams,
High pitched and vulnerable.
The guy fights,
Strong,
Gallant.
The creature eats both of them, burps and shrugs.
At least he tried.

People ignore the thing.
They try to hide it,
We fear it.
But no matter what we do, it still strives.
We give it what it wants
Letting it grow stronger, bigger
until it no longer fits in the closet.
It will one day consume every single one of us,
until there is nothing left.
Our bland, meaningless souls deteriorating
inside its belly.
That thing is society
And we are feeding it what it expects:
Girls pretending to be frightened
when they want to fight.
Guys pretending to be fearless
when they are scared
This is the mold society has made for us.
And we shrug it off
Like pretending to be something we're not
For our entire life,
Is nothing.

Only the brave let it starve.

Deserted Wonderland

Amelie Love Medeiros Papantoniou
Taylor Park Elementary

Empty, helpless, deserted streets.
I watch the last crow fly high above me
Its wings turning a fiery purple in
The cold wind.
Stopping to admire the hollow trees,
the essence of their magic,
I notice one of the tall old buildings
That stretch far beyond my craning neck.
The lonely, yet lively world
Before the last light I can see is contently
switched off
I let go of the breath I didn't know I was holding,
ready to go.
I take a glimpse of the universe surrounding me,
holding me close.
I taste the fresh, thick,
realness of what is to come.
And with that I take off.
My eyes turning a bright fiery purple
As the cold wind hits me.

Mes Yeux

Lisa Lei *Marlborough Elementary*

Mes yeux voient ton beau sourire,
Tes yeux brillants, tes joues toutes douces,
Mais en dessous de ça, ton Cœur plein d'amour
Mes yeux peuvent voir ton courage, surtout
Tu penses que tu n'es pas capable,
Tu essaies d'être le meilleur,
Mais mes yeux ont prévu,
Que tu es déjà parfait, sans essayer,
Tout le monde est parfait, je peux voir
Très clairement, avec mes yeux

Arctic

Neill Villamente
Taylor Park Elementary

I walk in a vast, white world.
Hearing the crunch of snow under my feet.
A snowstorm suddenly whips up and I feel the blistering cold ice wind on my face.
I build an igloo to protect my frost bite ridden body.
I see the great creation I have made.
I crawl in, desperately and settle down smelling the freezing snow surrounding me.
I dig into my pocket and find my emergency cookies,
tasting the delicious chocolate chips.



If You're Not From My Time

Michael Rae *Brentwood Park Elementary*

If you're not from my time
 You don't know clean water
 You can't know clean water
 Your garbage laden lakes, filled to the brim,
 Of not your people's, but my people's sins
 Because we really did not care, our minds
 all afloat,

We gave you the plastic ocean,
 the garbage filled moat
 If you're not from my time
 You don't know clean water

If you're not from my time,
 You don't know glaciers
 You can't know glaciers
 These gigantic mountains of snow
 Some of them gone, before even I could know
 What they looked like at the height of their glory,
 But for now, that's a different story
 At least for now, some are still here,
 But in your time, they simply will not be there
 I can hear you are asking,
 "What caused them to leave?"
 And I'll tell you dear child, it's what we conceived
WE made your world hot and dry
WE are the reason no glaciers are standing by
 If you're not from my time
 You don't know the glaciers

If you're not from my time
 You don't know clean air
 You can't know clean air
 The breaths that you take, chocking your lungs
 Punishing you for the wrongs that **we've** done

Pollution, it is what mankind has made,
 Destruction, sickness, and suffering, all for a trade
 A trade of wealth, power, and fame
 All at the cost, of leaving everything changed
 If you're not from my time
 You don't know clean air

If you're not from my time
 I hope you don't know the sting of racism
 I pray you don't know the sting of racism
 Child of the future, I hope you've moved on
 From the pain and the suffering, that should be
 long gone
 I hope that your people have a new point of view
 No relationships broken, no bonds set askew
 Because of their skin, culture, belief
 I hope that you've changed, turned up a new leaf
 If you're not from my time
 I hope you don't know the sting of racism

So, child of the future
 Are you in shock?
 Your eyes filled with horror?
 Your face, gray as rock?
 And for that
 I apologize,
 For all we have done
 But your day must go on
 Just as the sun
 Even though we destroyed our Earth,
 With untameable lust
 I truly
 Most dearly,
 Hope that you forgive us

The Mercy of Forgiveness

Cadence Roy *Brentwood Elementary*

Darkness, slipping into the abyss,
Of nothing,
No one,
Nothing,
To call your own,
Light, kindness,
Someone with a heart of gold,
Trying to know you,
Understanding your pain,
The same pain,
That you feel every day,
Because you have no one
You are nothing in the eyes of society.

Darkness, slipping into the abyss,
But now,
There is something simple as this,
A hand,
Reaching out,
As lonely,
As you,
As insecure,
As you,
A chance,
One you never had before,
And maybe,
Just maybe,
This time they will understand
what you're fighting for.

Light, pouring out of the dark,
It may be small,
It may be futile,
But an act,
Of kindness,
Of love,
Can really be worthwhile,
And if you doubt yourself,
If you doubt another,
Just know,
You are important,
Although you never feel so,
You have meaning,
Though no one ever told you so.

Light, pouring out of the dark,
You have a chance,
Fallen in your lap,
So take it now,
And hold it now,
And hold it high,
Use it well,
For some have died,
To have this chance,
Some lost everything,
For this chance,
Be proud of who you are,
And with that pride,
You can accomplish anything.



Responsible Decisions

Daniel Zhang *Suncrest Elementary*

While other people can guide and help us go down a good path in life, in the end, all of your decisions and choices come down to your desire to accomplish a task and your motivation to do so. If you don't want to do something or have no motivation, naturally you won't be able to do it to the best of your ability. People are great at making excuses. We can find a dozen reasons to do something at the moment, but we can find a thousand why not to. However, by embodying the ability to motivate ourselves to push past any discomfort and work hard to accomplish the task at hand.

In my past few years of school, I had some troubles with time management. In reflection upon my actions then, I realized that it was just me being lazy and having a lack of motivation rather than having troubles with the material. In sixth grade, after having some guidance from my teacher and parents, I thought about how my current actions and habits would shape my future, and gradually, over the year, I gained a passion to improve and make good on my past mistakes because I didn't want to develop lasting bad habits that would impact my future and hinder my work as well as my life. I now always have a strong desire to put my full effort into my work in order to produce something that I am proud of. In doing so, I found all aspects of my life, both in and out of school, significantly improving.

When I was in sixth grade, I also stopped associating myself with certain people due to their negative influences. I made the wrong choices of whom I spent my free time with and in doing so, I found myself picking up bad habits in both my social and academic life. I believe that whom you associate yourself with has a great impact on your life, as you will both naturally and gradually pick up on each other's habits as time goes on. After making the choice to spend time with other people, again, my life improved in all aspects.

Reflection was one of my best tools. No one in their everyday life suddenly realizes something and completely changes things around for the better. All of this took time and effort and lots of thought being put into it as considering how you are doing at the moment and how everything affects your future shines a new light on how you think and act. Truly reflecting on your past actions can also give you great insight into what you should be doing now and in the future.

Motivation is the force that drives our success in everything which is why we should always have a desire to improve ourselves. As I once heard someone say, "You should be doing one of two things: improving yourself or enjoying yourself, everything else is a waste of time."

Wait for Me **Joli Lam** *Lakeview Elementary*

In the end there will only be one true friend, who will wait for you when you need them.

My name is Aria, and this is my story of trust, connection, and *time*.

In my lifetime, I have learned to never break promises no matter how tempting. One leak in a pipe could turn into a disaster. I'm 22 now and the main chapter of my life began when I broke my leg during a volleyball game. I was sent to the emergency room where I met a very peculiar girl. This happened back when I was 15 so she was about the same age as me and our hospital beds were in the same room.

She was so different from all the children at my school. She seemed very aware of her surroundings, and she showed big interest in vintage simple architecture. Her name is Eimi. She had heart cancer but yet she still smiled. After two days of being roommates, we quickly became best friends. Despite how unique she was, we had a lot in common. We enjoy teen magazines, music, fine arts, and so much more! I wish we could have met 10 years ago because our friendship didn't last very long.

Doctors often came into our room to give Eimi medication, and to take note of any changes in her body's systems. However, one day Eimi had a heart attack which damaged her even more. Her cancer then spread to her lungs and I overheard the doctors saying she wouldn't make it. I was devastated.

Why does cancer even exist? Any disease for that matter! Eimi progressively got worse each day. Her lungs hurt a lot so she insisted not to talk. We still passed notes to each other which made her smile. At this point I just wanted to make her happy before she left the world. The doctors would have given her surgery but her body was already so weak they didn't really have a chance of saving her. Her pain went on for about twelve more days. In those twelve days her family would visit her everyday so, we had less time to talk. There were only five days left for her to live and on the third to last day I had my leg surgery. I would be able to leave the next day with crutches but I insisted on staying with Eimi. Since I could walk now, I sat beside her bed a lot and we would just have little conversations through her notebook.

On her last day, her parents gave us fifteen minutes together alone. In those fifteen minutes we made two promises with each other. "Promise you'll never forget me?" Eimi wrote on her notebook, I nodded my head. "Wait for me." I whispered into her ear as the heartbeat monitor lines flatten down. I kept those promises for the next 3 years of my life. However, I slowly started to drift away from them as if the promises were never made. After about a month I have made new friends who partially filled that emptiness Eimi left me. But there were still holes in me that couldn't be filled in. My friends just didn't have that true connection like Eimi and I had. I guess no matter who you find in the world, they can only bring in so much for you. My new friends were very loose and carefree so I was kind of the remote control to the broken TV. They would be doing something silly and I would warn them about all the dangerous things that could happen from it. Of course, my friends said a quick: "Okay!" but didn't really take anything from my words. I wish they would've listened to me. I hung out with irresponsible people and it cost me my life.



We were driving back from a local carnival and we were having a lot of fun. We were taking selfies, and posting photos on social media. One of my friends Camille, was the one who drove us to the fair, and I was riding front passenger seat. When we came across an intersection, she quickly took a selfie with me. I remember telling her “Pay attention to the road Camille!” Of course she didn’t listen and just two seconds after I said that her camera flashed and she took a sharp turn right into another turning car. It was either fate or bad luck because the way she turned angled me to be the focal point of the car crash. The sad and most frustrating thing is that my friends, the people who I thought would be with me to the very end, didn’t even come to check if I was okay. They just ran away from the scene like cowards as I struggled to get out from the car. I cried as I realized this was the end. But it was at that moment when I realized, Eimi is waiting for me.

Once I remembered Eimi, a flash of celestial lights covered my vision. I blinked twice before seeing a hand reaching out to me. It was Eimi. She smiled and said “I waited for you.” I replied with: “I remembered you.” I placed and gripped my palm over her hand and hugged her. “We both kept our promises didn’t we?” Eimi laughed. I nodded my head. “I’ll never leave you at the back of my head again.” I replied smiling.

We held hands and walked toward the final door of life. I took a deep breath as Eimi and I pushed open the door and started to flee into the stardust waiting for us in the galaxy.

The World’s Music **Kathryn Mah** *Buckingham Elementary*

Walking to school on a stormy day, while the wind whips through the evergreen trees, I notice the patterns in the air. A murder of crow flies overhead, their claws mixing with each flap of their wings. The staccato of raindrops combines with the steady rhythm of my footsteps. This is the beat of a song, the song of my life. Each day is a new movement, the mood constantly changing. One day, brass and percussion rule, king and queen of a realm filled with melodic intensity. The music is bold and bright, each note flaring in a firestorm of sound. Another moment, woodwind accentuate the mournful tune of strings, reflecting the dreary atmosphere of the time. Many songs are reaching the peak of their excitement, while others are only beginning. A young child lives to the beat of a joyful, lively tune, while a construction worker’s lifestyle is depicted in his music. Somewhere in the world, a song beings as a newborn baby opens its eyes for the first time. Its hopeful melody brings tears to the eyes of new parents. Across the planet, another song ends, the final strains of sound resonating in the endless amphitheater of the earth. Its final refrains slowly fade until its sweet notes are only a faint memory. 7 billion melodies create cacophonous messes that reflect the emotions of the people who live alongside them, but somehow tunes often align, signalling empathy and compassion. The songs of the world continue to play as I walk to school on a stormy day.

Bricks in the Wall

Naomi Elwood *Kitchener Elementary*

It all started in grade 3. i remember lying on the green carpet of the toy room, crying. Mom came in and held me while i cried, and told me that everything was going to be okay. i said i was scared everything was changing: my best friend moved away, i had a new teacher and a new school building, and my home was being renovated. At the time, i thought that was all it was; i was simply afraid of change. Looking back, three years later, i know it is so much more complicated.

Having a million things to say, but never being able to share them. So many negative thoughts about myself, but i can't tell myself that they're wrong. Feeling like i'll be stuck like this forever. Feeling so upset to the point where i can't even cry anymore. Being so overwhelmed, that i can't move, or physically feel unwell. Getting frustrated out of nowhere. Having something small drive me crazy and leading me to getting even more upset. One upsetting thought leading to the next, and then to another, until my head is swarming with terrible thoughts that i can't swat away. Trying to shove my feelings away, or not knowing what to do with them, or just letting them simmer inside me. Having my feelings build up inside me until i want to scream, but i don't because i can't. Stubbornness, anxiety, stress, sadness, anger, exhaustion. Looking back at everything and crying about it. Feeling like i can't function, like i can't move, and all i can do is be sad. Crying when nobody is looking, crying when i'm alone, crying until i fall asleep. Crying and crying, and crying until there are no more tears, or until i know that i just have to stop.

i used to think someday everything will get better. i'll return to normal. But now i know that will never happen. i will always be like this.

This is my normal. i will always be like this, and i will just have to get used to it. i thought that one day, once It went away, i would become strong enough to talk about It, but i realize that day will never come, so i am doing it now. i am sharing It, even though i don't feel strong enough yet, because i'll never have the strength. i will have It forever. It may get better. It may get worse. i just have to keep learning, and accept It.

i say "It" because i don't even know what It is, or what to call It. All i know, is that i'm stuck with It, and i will just have to grow with It, and try to make It better. It is not going away anytime soon, but i just have to be okay with the fact that this is me, and this is my normal. It is what i'm going to learn from, and grow from, and cry from. Whatever It is, It's going to be here for awhile, and even though i'm not quite ok with It, It's still here.

There is not going to be a time where It melts away and everything is fine. It is me. i'm still upset about the fact that i'm like this, and i'm not okay with It. i still cry about It. i don't feel comfortable talking about It but i am because i never will so i might as well do it now.

FOOTNOTE

My description of "It" may sound bad, or concerning. i get help and support from my family, and i attend counseling. My description may sound bad but that's because i'm describing It, and It only. For a long time i felt like It was a huge part of me, but now that i have learned that this is only a small part of me. In a wall called me, it is only a couple of bricks; as it does not build me.

It does not define me.



The Raven

Niousha Ezati *Confederation Park Elementary*

The sun shone down dimly beneath the grey clouds, causing a chilly breeze to form in the sky, in which there flew a flock of ravens; and a small and fragile raven flew at the end, its beak hanging open strangely as it gasped for much needed breath.

Two ravens kept glancing back, keeping watch on the smaller raven. Their beady eyes were clouded with worry, and they cawed restlessly. The smaller raven, it seemed, had just learned to fly recently, and tried to call its parents back, but all it could do was choke even more that it already was.

The small raven suddenly felt weak and dizzy, and so started gasping even more for oxygen; but to no avail, for it could not close its beak, and lost a great amount of breath. Before it could gasp for a second breath, it realized that had been its last.

Wailing for the last time, a single tear fell from its beady black eyes, wetting its feathers slightly. Thinking about never seeing its family or to never feel the wind in its feathers ever again, caused pain to build up in its chest; and the raven struggled to keep flapping.

Body weakened from the lack of oxygen, the raven felt its wings give way and stop moving all at once. And so this fragile raven fell from the sky, its chest no longer heaving up and down as it made an impact to the ground, surrounded by tangled trees which towered over it, casting long and threatening shadows. That was the last it saw as its eyes became glassy and lifeless, its beak hanging open still. A drop of rain fell on its feathers, and then another, until rain poured from the sky as if it was weeping at this loss.

A few days passed after this accident, and a little boy happened to pass by, looking around until he noticed the group of large crows gathered on the naked trees. They seemed to be forming a small, tight circle, which then gathered around a black lump on the pavement. Curious, the boy quickly and silently made his way to the lump, and a few crows flapped their wings and cawed in alarm, but didn't do anything else. Now closer, the boy found that it was a baby raven; and when he looked closer, he noticed its beak hung open strangely. After he found out why that was, he felt himself let out a small gasp of disgust.

There hung a piece of plastic from its open beak, having choked the small raven to death.

The boy often came to visit this very spot and stare at the raven sorrowfully; for he knew this was because others had been careless about plastic and just thrown it away without thinking. The crows stopped coming a few days later, and so the boy sat beside it, and picked a nearby flower, only to lay it gently on its fallen body.

“Hail and Farewell,” he whispered.

An Eerie Night

Jayden Tsai *Brantford Elementary*

It's now night time, and I'm safely tucked into bed. And at the moment I'm just waiting for sleep to find me. It's probably past midnight, and I'm not sure what's happening to me..... Am I asleep? Am I awake? All I know is that it's really dark and gloomy in my room, and I'm feeling like I'm part of the undead.

I'm about to doze off when I hear a creak, and I'm suddenly filled with dread. Is it a monster? Is it a ghost? Or is it really all just pretend? The creaking gets louder, and now I can hear footsteps echoing throughout the darkness, and they sound like they're advancing towards me. An arrowhead punctures the wall behind me with a thud. I shriek, but I can only feebly raise my hands to protect myself, should I ever get assailed again...

In the blink of an eye, I'm instantly whisked away to another dreadful scene, where there's a dead end. And warheads are falling overhead, so there's no place to run to escape those deadly bombs. The sky is caliginous and dust is everywhere. It stings my eyes, so I shut them tight and hope that will prevent them from hurting. But I can't take the suspense of not knowing what's going to happen, so I open them again. A warhead explodes about 3 feet in front of me. As the impact of the bombs smashes me, I close my eyes, and slowly open them again... To find a glorious sight, with sunlight spewing through a bedroom, which looks like it belongs to a kid about my age.

But then I realize, isn't this MY own bedroom? I guess I fell asleep without knowing it, and all the insane things that were happening to me weren't real, and I'm really grateful for that. But wait. What's that sticking out of my blue bedroom wall, right above my head? It turns out to be an arrow, so it turns out my dreams can actually come true!! Gotta go. Another arrow is now embedded into my blue bedroom wall, and it's much closer to me this time...



Pop Up **Maya Carlsen** *Clinton Elementary*

"You have received a pop-up. Do you want to open it?" A message appeared on my screen. Pop-ups normally leave viruses so I clicked 'No'.

A few minutes later a message popped up again but this time it said, "It's a prize! Do you want it?" I clicked 'No' again. I quickly adjusted my glasses and clicked off my browser.

I closed my laptop and slumped on the couch. I dozed off, tired from my online adventure. A rapid, repeating, "ding" sound came from my laptop.

I opened my laptop. Pop-ups were overflowing my screen. I gasped in surprise. The pop-ups said, "Why aren't you opening the pop-up? Some pop-ups don't even ask for permission to access your laptop. Now, open the pop-up!" I felt a bit uneasy so I clicked off all the pop-ups and powered off the laptop.

I heard the laptop swing open and a low, dark, voice, whispered; "Open the pop up now. You have 5 hours." I felt frightened so I grabbed the laptop and ran out of my house to the local computer store.

I rushed immediately to the front desk. "Sir! You must fix this laptop! It won't stop bringing pop-ups. I also heard someone talk to me!" I screamed at the store employee.

"Calm down, Miss. I'm sure everything is alright," the store employee assured me. As the employee opened the screen his body swirled and twirled and then got swept away into the laptop. There was no trace of him at all.

"Did anyone see that?! My laptop ate that man!" I shouted. Everyone looked at me like I was crazy. I closed the laptop again and dashed off into the street and back into my car.

I went back home because I wanted to fix this without hurting anyone. I cautiously opened the laptop and I saw a man wearing a mask with messy, wavy, black hair.

"Hello, Sapphire," The masked man whispered. I froze for a moment because a stranger knew my name. "That pop up was specifically sent for you but you didn't click yes. The only option I have now is to sweep you in with everyone else," the man said.

Suddenly, I lose consciousness and I felt my body inch to the laptop. I opened my eyes to see a dark room with a door open. I saw the store employee trembling in the corner.

"Let's get out of here," the man babbled.

I walked over to a strange camera in the middle of the room. There was a weird, green button so I pressed it. The camera shot out a fluorescent light and I felt my body lift. As soon as I could open my eyes I saw the employee and I were in my living room.

"We're saved!" The employee shouted.

The man went out of my house and I threw the laptop away. No more internet for now. You never know what will happen.

The Darkness of Lights

Ella Ly

Lyndhurst Elementary

I reach my hand out for the light. It's dark out, but the moon is still bright. The moonlight skims my hand. I try to catch it, to keep it, but it runs away. I chase after it until I reach the city of lights, Vancouver. Lights are everywhere, traffic lights, headlights, and lamp post lights. I reach out for the lights, instead of skimming my hand, it presses down on my palm and fingers harshly. I pull my hand back and walk away.

I climb the hill, the one that views the city. I see lights, scattered everywhere. There is no darkness. The city lights reflect upon the sky covering the stars. It's too much light! The brilliant light of stars that our Universe has provided is being blanketed by our artificial lights.

I climb higher to see the moon. It runs from me. The sky grows brighter every step I take. The stars pop up, one by one. The sky shines purple, blue, and pink. I keep climbing until I'm above the clouds. A faded shape starts to come to my view. The Milky Way. The moon is rising, I am finally in the light. Millions of stars pop up highlighting the sky. I reach out for the brightest light. Instead of catching the light, I fall. I close my eyes silently. I hit something soft, fuzzy, like cotton candy. I open my eyes to see clouds. I stand, pieces of cloud fuzz all over my hair. I giggle like a toddler. I roll around in the clouds while the stars, the moon, and the Milky Way all watch over me.

I stop and lie down perfectly still, looking up at the sky. The stars really are beautiful. After embracing the bright lights, I look down around the clouds. The city looks like the stars on the ground. What do I choose? The life in the sky, or the place where I live. I look back up at the sky, it will all disappear in the morning. I take a glance below at the city of lights. This isn't right, down there is too bright, when here is just right. I ponder at the thought of humankind not being able to view this sight. We make lights to help us seem, but it hides the beauty of the night.



So You Think It's Easy Being a Book?

Serena Howard

Stoney Creek Community School

So you think it's easy being a book? Well, it's *really* not.

First of all, we books can be treated really rudely. Sometimes I try to imagine what it would be like to never be ripped or wet! If there was a kid who pulled your hair so hard it came out in chunks would *you* be happy?

Secondly, books, you know, used to be trees as well... and I personally liked being one. If you really think about it, would you find it enjoyable to be a tree just minding your own business, and then come along these two-legged creatures that chop you down (very painful) then, they bring you somewhere to get smashed and pulped into paper? I thought so. Sometimes you humans are very insensitive.

Next, do NOT close me too fast! When my words jiggle and pump it makes a "BANG!" sound, the book equivalent of a human scream, screech, or any high-pitched sound at full volume. Finally, NEVER turn my pages too fast. It will make me *very* touchy. Maybe I'll even try to bite you!

All in all, now you know the truth that being a book isn't easy.



What is Peace?

Adam Chen *Buckingham Elementary*

At school, my teacher gave me a worksheet.

The page has five questions.

What does peace look like?

What does peace smell like?

What does peace taste like?

What does peace sound like?

I stared at the questions with awe.

My mind filled with hundreds of questions.

How would I know what peace tastes like?

And also, I never tasted peace before.

Does it taste like chicken?

So I asked the teacher.

“How would I know what peace feels like and tastes like and also smells like...?”

“Think about your life now. We have peace here, but not everywhere on earth has peace or freedom.

So answer these questions like you are describing peace to those who don’t have it,” the teacher replied.

So I went back to my seat and thought about what life is like now.

I closed my eyes to think harder.

When I opened them, I saw people playing, laughing, and chatting.

I hear the chirping of birds and the leaves swaying from side to side.

I feel the fresh summer breeze blowing against my warm, sweaty hand.

I can taste a cool glass of lemonade soothing my rough, raw throat.

I can smell a delicious barbecue grilling on someone’s front lawn.

Suddenly, I heard my name shouted out by some kids playing hopscotch.

“What?” I questioned him.

My vision flashed and faded.

“Are you ok?” asked a familiar voice.

“Yes” I mumbled back.

I found myself in the classroom with my arms on my desk and my head between them.

I lifted my head and found my worksheet lying there.

I looked at my sheet.

And mumbled to myself.

“I think I got the answers.”



Not a Poem

Jessie He *Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

By the time I'm done my poetry,
You could have grown a trillion trees.
Or met some mermaids in a lake,
Because that's how much time I'll take.

My friend said rhyme comes naturally,
Like how trouble can always find me.
It's such hard work, I wish you knew,
Writing odes, free verse, and love poems, too.

How can I make the next line rhyme?
Aargh! This is taking so much time!
Poetry is so hard, as you have seen,
I wish I could write like Shel Silverstein.

Metaphor poems are too complex for me
Epic poems too, though I doubt you'll agree.
Can't we just write whatever we want?
Why do we have to stick to a font?

If writing a poem would save my life,
I would have no choice except to die.
Poetic devices are so troublesome,
To include them would be so bothersome.

Alliteration, assonance, and similes,
Are all so difficult to include for me.
So here are the reasons I want you to know,
How awful for me is writing a poem!

Colours Have Faded

Gareema Dhakal *Burnaby South Secondary*

Her eyes used to sparkle with colours.
ROYGBIV has now faded.
Pictures drawn with pencil
Have taken over the coloured paintings
she has created.

A light bulb that never turned off
Was who she used to be.
Well, the switch must be broken,
Because darkness is all that she can see.

The light and colours
That once filled her little body
Have forever faded
Because of society.

Society separates two sections.
Who you should be and the person you've
become so far
It seems as though it's telling you,
You shouldn't be who you are.

You are not good enough
Is what society thinks is important to teach.
By setting a bar that is too high
For any one of us to reach.

She jumps to try to grab it
But ends up falling instead,
Leaving her with a scar,
Mounted in her head.

She realizes she can't keep up,
With what society has in store.
Now the girl who once had colour to share
Doesn't have enough for herself anymore.

Encountering the Drum of Life

Lindsay Hofmann *Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

Bom...Bom...Bom...

Each soft, slow reverberate gently beat clasping my soul.
Cleansing my mind of dense caliginosity;
Finding my body at a state of serenity is the goal.
Powerful, meaningful strikes; sound the drum.

I notice the prominent heartbeat known of the Elders, the Creator,
The enriching pulse of the thriving land's wild life.
I listen intently to resonance which prospers greater,
Than my formerly clouded mind could imagine.

The intent of this simplistic song seeps into the birches,
Flows in unity with the Mighty Fraser,
Through my heart and ears; validates my searches.
I find pure concentration on the spirited drum's life evoking sound.

Steadiness of the firm beats arouse a feeling of fight;
Desire to spread my wings, and soar like the valiant eagle.
Tranquility forces gloom into the distance; now only faced with pure sunlight.
Erupting with awareness and gleam; I sense the courage the drum embodies.

My ancestors were not the first to thrive upon the land I call home.
Though I am now aware of the sturdy connecting, bridging me across rough waters,
Towards those who blossomed the Canada I love, and know.
I am forever grateful, and the lively heartbeat of the beating drum,
Will fly as the mighty eagle within me, and be shared among everyone.

Bom...Bom...Bom...

*Inspired by Ms. Gestrin's composition, "Our Native Land". This piece was taught (in Aboriginal oral tradition) to Burnaby Mountain's concert choir, and later shared with several elementary schools in the BMSS catchment. "Our Native Land" is about bridging First Nations' history and Canadian Society, and creating unity within our home we call Canada.



Childhood

Lily Nordgren *Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

Bare hands and feet
Against dewy green grass,
Are softly, gently parting the blades
To peer at blooms of white and gold,
Rising up triumphantly
From the dark floor in multitudes.

The yellow orb of day,
Shining down so comforting
Battling its grey cold enemies
Quietly and peacefully.

Great old warriors
Tall, short, skinny, all strong,
Finding foundations,
Providing shady roofs
Scattered in a thousand pieces.

Chattering beings
So carefree but so afraid
Flit around in their lofty homes,
And sing to one another
Like we all used to,
A community of colourful.

Little needles, brown and green
Layer the ground,
In a blanket that makes every step silent
As we run around the rough pillars,
Playing games we love and know by heart
But soon seem to forget.

A breeze like a guiding hand
Makes our cheeks grow rose red.
Laughter is carried up,
Echoing throughout the day
Blasting away the darkness.

Together we are all happy,
Together we can find the good,
Together we are all equal.

Hope

Andrew Chen
Burnaby South Secondary

When a starving mother
prays in the somber cold
begging that her child
will grasp the fountain of
life
and perhaps survive
only to see his riddled corpse
rotting in the midnight dawn.

When a naïve man
in the bleak trenches
of war
gives his final sacrifice
only to get
swept to heaven's door
and break into
the lost abyss
of
eternity.
I wonder:
Is there
still
hope?

Escape Audrey Allanson, Katherine Liu & Simrit Guram *Alpha Secondary*

This is my life
 With just one pill
 I don't need a knife
 I can take your life still
 A mask of shadows
 A failed disguise
 For I can see it
 In her eyes
 Searching
 For a break
 For a solution
 An escape
 From the world
 An alley we meet
 Her face is beautiful
 But she doesn't shine
 Instead she hides
 Scared of what might happen
 It's her first time

*First swallow
 First dose
 A noose placed
 But still a ghost*

Dissolving in my mouth
 Knowing that damage
 Has been done
 Regret
 Like a slap in the face
 And then I forget
Escape Escape Escape

*Hour after hour
 Day after day
 Sensing self-control
 Withering away*

The pain of before
 I will never miss it
 Always trade it
 For this irreplaceable bliss
 Forget the cold abyss
 And remember only this

Second time
 The alley was more familiar
 Second time
 Courage came easier

This could've been once

It's never just once

I want to reach out
 To save her from this path
 For a moment I feel I can

But my head goes down
 Knowing inside
 I can't fix my life
 And I can't fix hers

Second dose

*I'll be with you always
I'll be the support you never had*

*I'll be what you turn to
At the end of a long day*

*I'll be what you wake up to
I'll never go away*

*The veins become familiar
Bloodstream a normal path
I keep coming back
She's letting me attack*

I shouldn't have
But I did
Handed over too much
Enough to a life
I begin to wonder
Maybe there's an answer

*You're the fire
I'm just the fuel*

*You burned out
And I rose from your ashes*

Her door doesn't open
This can't be the end
This was the start

I can't do this anymore
But I hear it
Calling to me

*I am fentanyl
And I can be yours*

Was easier to swallow

Misunderstood
Always solo

A failed painting
Ready to be thrown out

Made of shattered glass
Cutting inside and out

Left
Right
Left
Right

Escape Escape Escape
Just one more step
Just one more dose

The end is near
I took a lot
I regret too much
The drug was too powerful

It chose my fate

I feel its control
Surging
Through my body and soul
I give in
To the pain
To the suffering
And let it take me
For with the pain
Comes pure bliss
If only for a moment
Escape Escape Escape

Like the Sunset **Chandhana Nambiar** *Burnaby North Secondary*

It was around 5 p.m. on a blissful Friday evening during spring. I was leaning on my favorite windowsill. It always seemed to bend for my back every time I sat there, even though I'm pretty sure it was perfectly straight. I could see my reflection on my neighbour's glass window, a 4-year-old girl with a bob cut wearing a striped tank top. My neighbour always opened every window in the house except for that one because of the insects that sat on the petals of the amaryllises she grew. Flowers that ranged from colours white as snow, to red as blood.

We grew vegetables instead of flowers and I despised that fact. Flowers were prettier compared to vegetables, but like my mother always said, "Never judge a book by its cover." I had no idea what it meant, but my father and brother always said it is always a wise move to agree with what my mom said. I had pity on myself every time I glanced at the vegetables, but the flowers that were only 10 metres away from me, were a divine art piece I could not take my eyes off. The colour of the flowers were like the sunset, white, yellow, orange, pink and red, slowly blending together. Evening was the best time to look at them as the blue sky stretched above.

My neighbour, Mrs. Harrison who grew the flowers, has been living in that same house since she got married. Now she is a grandmother that lives alone. Her husband and second son died during a car crash, which she and her twin sons barely made it through. Ever since that day she has grown those flowers in memory of her loved ones. Her children are well educated and live in London with their kids, who come to visit once a year. Mrs. Harrison has always had a special interest in me because she never had a daughter. She lets me water the plants and pluck a flower anytime I want to. She's a strong woman that dedicated her life to her twin sons. She is wrinkled and pale, with light blue eyes that are ancient, but fierce. Mrs. Harrison's voice did not even quiver as she told the accident to my parents, that's why my parents always told me and my brother that we should be strong like her, no matter what happens.

I got down from the windowsill over to the flowers and neatly plucked a red amaryllis. *Mrs. Harrison would be sleeping by now*, I thought. Suddenly, I was pushed and the next thing I knew, I was choking on the flower. My brother just came back from his karate class. When he saw the change of colour in my face, he picked up a hose and started spraying me in the face. That's what brothers are for. When I could breathe again, I was completely drenched. Then as usual, I chased him into the beautiful night as it got darker and darker.



Darkness **Hugo Zhou** *Burnaby North Secondary*

I was in complete darkness, crying silently in my bed. This was a vivid memory of when I was five, sleeping alone in my bed on an ominous and terrifying night. Since I was little, I had been afraid of darkness, because it can swallow everything. In the dark nothing is visible, and who knows what might be lurking around the corner?

It was my first experience sleeping alone.

“Good night, mom,” I said.

“Are you scared?”

“No,” I quickly replied, trying to sound brave.

“Alright. Good night. And have a good dream,” my mom whispered.

My mom closed the door and the sounds in the room became clearer. Rain was pounding on my window. I was tucked in my warm bed. Shadows were around the room, like ghosts or monsters. I was scared they might jump out of the darkness, so I stayed as still as I could. I lay like this for a long time, waiting for sleep to come. I regretted my decision to act brave earlier in the day and I should have taken my last chance to not sleep alone.

Fear made me pull my bed cover over my head. Even though it was darker, at least I’m safe in here, I thought. After some time, the heat became unbearable under the bed cover. I gathered my courage and pulled the bed cover down. A sudden light flashed and lit up the entire room, making the shadows more vivid. A thunderous booming sound followed, trembling my insides. I yelped and slipped into the bed cover faster than the blink of an eye.

My heart pounded so loud that it became the only thing I could hear. Terror flooded every inch of my body. I became tense. It was extremely hot in the bed cover, but I was as cold as stone. Thoughts flowed into my head like water bursting from a dam. I desperately wanted to scream, but I was scared that the twisted creature that my fear had created would grab me. Another muffled rumble shook the house. I turned to one side and hunched into a ball. Hot tears rolled down the side of my face. It was so uncomfortable, distressing, and frightening that I cried.

It was what seemed like an eternity until my breathing finally calmed. The distant sounds of rain diminished, and soon, I couldn’t hear anything except my own breathing. My head was sweltering. It was like there was a fire burning inside me. I didn’t care what awaited me outside. So I pulled the bed cover down in one motion. Cool and refreshing air greeted me. The tranquility of the room was surprising. After taking in a deep breath, I looked around the room. Somehow, it seemed mysterious. I wasn’t afraid anymore. I got off my bed and walked to the window. Pulling the blinds open, I exclaimed.

“Woooooow!” The bright moon was huge, with a few clouds in the sky. It was a spectacular view.

I climbed back in bed and closed my weary eyes. I guess there is light even in the darkness.

A Shattered Truth **Andrew “Anzhe” Chen** *Burnaby South Secondary*

Jet-black clouds charged towards the town. Buildings and homes, all annihilated in mere seconds. Within a few moments, you could only see barren plains with scattered wreckage, charred by the force of the explosion. The desperate screams of families, silenced by the sudden crackles from the rushing winds. That was my childhood. Constantly running away from the grip of death and terror. Ten years of grief, and now I will face the truth that fate left behind.

It was an unusually busy morning. Commuters crowded the boarding stations from right to left. Thousands of people endlessly walking like herds of majestic sheep. The trains, tainted with the color green, swept through the city skyscrapers, towards the rough wasteland in the East. It was not that long ago that famed technician Dr. Eric Friedrich invented the electronic monorail. It was able to use gravity and advanced A.I. to independently travel throughout Eurasia and the Pacific Regions in just a few hours. The ground breaking creation was extremely popular with labourers, skyrocketing profit and demand. However, I was travelling for an entirely different reason. My homeland, Elenberg, was left devastated by nuclear attacks during the Era of Great Turmoil. The area had recently been cleared by the government as “safe” to visit on a protected tour after years of cleaning up the atomic waste. At the time of the incidents, thousands of innocent civilians perished. I was hoping to revisit to see the state of the country and to fix my impending trauma. The inside of the monorail was respectable, nothing fancy. Waves of dark blue delicately wrapped the interior and there were seats with simple cushions. As I slowly entered the train, I took a seat beside an old gentleman of about 80 years of age.

His rugged voice was like the sound of stones scraping, “Young man, what brings you here today?” “Just here to reconcile with my old memories.” “So you’re one of the survivors?”

“I was visiting my cousins in Lochton. My family stayed. Saw everything from the hills. The screams still haunt me to this day.”

“God bless you son, Hope it gets better.”

The train slowly shook for a few seconds, and then in a flash, we were out of the station and facing Elenberg.

The horizon was now a mess of abundant nature and toxic waste. A pack of deer sprinted towards the forest, searching for what little food they could find. From the window, I could see that one had mutated a second head. It was hard to take it all in. The nightmares flooded back into my mind, reminding me of the agony. I had taken therapy, but none seemed to work or repair the damage.



We were beside the restoration site. Two construction workers were at work, wearing puffy coats to protect them from the radiation. They were loading something into a cart. From a closer glance, I could see the horrifying reality. Skeletons, burnt by the explosion, but preserved by nature. Rows and rows of bodies stacked with no end in sight, hidden in a pit. Images of my family came up. *Could that have been them?* It was too much to handle. Tears rolled down my cheek. The emotions took control of me. I ran towards the front of the train and opened the exit. I wanted to jump. I wanted this to be all over, to take the easy way out.

“Don’t do this. Don’t do this,” an empathetic voice yelled.

It was the old man. He looked at me with a heavily concerned gaze. But the pain was overwhelming, I was struggling for air...It felt like my body was moving by itself. I leaped towards the lake. *Everything will end.* The misery was the first to come. My skin was burning and I couldn’t breathe. Still blackness came next. There were no feelings afterwards.

I woke up. My sight was blinded by immense light. But from the flashing, I could make out a figure. He was raising his hand out to me. “Son, you’re here now.”

One Wrong Step **Daniel Hong** *Burnaby North Secondary*

Boom! The gun has fired and the race has begun. A full twelve-hundred meters filled with excitement and pressure. I'm racing for the front, pushing as hard as I can.

As I was skating to the front and passing people, I'm thinking about what was on other people's minds.

I thought, "Will he pass me?"

Or, "How am I going to pass this guy?"

Four laps have gone by, and I'm still leading. My coach was talking to me as I zoomed past her in the coach's box.

She's yelling, "Go faster, go faster! They're catching up on you!"

My legs are starting to wear out, and adrenaline is starting to fill into my body. I can hear the skater behind me whisper to himself, "Got to pass this kid, got to pass him!"

Then I thought, "On top of all my adrenaline, now I've got this kid who's giving me an even harder time with the intentions of trying to pass or cut me off."

One lap of tense moments later, I could see him in my peripheral vision, trying to pass me. So, I decided to pick up the pace. I'm going so fast, that I reached the point where I couldn't even feel my legs because they were so cold. It's like my legs were on autopilot and my mind had just decided to take a nap. I even tripped on my skates multiple times as I glided into the corner but I saved myself in the nick of time.

Miraculously, I'm now half-a-lap ahead of everyone. As I entered the final quarter, I felt so tired that I nearly hit one of the markers which told skaters where to go in the curve. Which nearly got me disqualified. The bell rang, and it was the final lap.

I'm saying to myself, "I'm going to make it! In first place!"

Shortly after, I noticed that my coach now looked a little concerned at me every time I passed her. I was wondering why.



“Is it because I made a wrong move that automatically got me disqualified?”

Or, “Are my skates too loose?”

I’m looking into the final corner, I’m over-confident. I tripped in the corner. I hit the ice and crashed into the soft two layer mats placed around the corner at a high rate of speed.

Everyone knew I wasn’t getting back up. I said...nothing. I was speechless. All the other skaters passed me just like that. From first place with an impressing lead to dead last. Then a million thoughts filled into my mind. The more important ones were,

“Should I finish the race? Or should I just sit here?”

I ignored the negative thoughts and crossed the finish line.

After I changed into my shoes, the examiner examined my fall and it wasn’t my fault. There was a big chip in the ice. After a long consultation with the officials, my coach and I, the officials let me keep the results.



Regret **Vincent Gao** *Burnaby North Secondary*

My grandfather always wrote a letter to me, every single week. I remember when I was young, and my mother and I would read the letters together. I used to love my grandfather, and waited patiently for the familiar manila envelope to appear on my doorstep every week. This feeling slowly changed. As I grew older, my love for my grandfather greatly diminished. I started tossing the letters at the very back of my closet, letting them stack up higher and higher. I soon learned that I would regret doing this.

It was a cloudy, grey day when my grandfather had his funeral. A sense of misery and grief filled the air. Many of his friends and family came, mourning for him, and comforting my parents and I. They all had that same expression on their faces: filled with sorrow and dismal. My mother squeezed my hand as four men, dressed in black, laid the coffin down gently. That day, I shed many tears, and experienced many emotions that I have never endured before.

I thought about the care and time my grandfather put into those letters. I pictured my grandfather on his wooden stool, with his large frame hunched over the desk and his yellow eyeglasses peering over the letter. He would pour his heart and soul into the letters, writing about his feelings and how much he missed me. I regretted neglecting my grandfather, and regretted not spending enough time with him. I regretted ignoring all the letters that have been building up in that cardboard box. I wished I could have cherished the time I would have had, with my grandfather.

When I came home that day, I knew what to do. I rushed to the back of my closet, taking out the box that stored all the letters my grandfather wrote to me. I blew away the dust that was building up on the surface, and carefully pried open the cover. As I cautiously opened each manila envelope, I struggled to read my grandfather's scraggly handwriting. Although I did not realise it, I sat there that afternoon, reading every single letter. My eyes filled with tears, and waves of memories came flooding back. I remember the times when my grandfather would always say "value the things that you possess, before you cannot value them anymore." I never understood the true meaning of this, until this very day.



La Clé **Troy Cheah** *Moscrop Secondary*

J'entends des pieds lourds qui montent les escaliers dans ma chambre. Mon père entre avec un grand sourire emplâtré sur son visage. « Mon fils! J'ai finalement découvert la clé portail à ma dimension alternative! » Je lève les yeux au ciel, exaspéré. « Cependant, mon fils, ne va pas le voir, et ne touche jamais la clé! JAMAIS. Il y aura des conséquences très graves. »

C'était après minuit. Je descendais les escaliers étroits, sur les bouts de mes pieds. Le seul bruit que j'entendais venait de mon souffle profond et rapide. J'entre par la porte entrouverte de son labo. Tout à coup, je la vois. Au centre du laboratoire immense, une petite clé, si hypnotique et captivante, que le monde semblait s'arrêter, et tout ce qui existait était cette toute petite clé. Je sens ma main, remplie d'envie ardente, se diriger vers la clé. Quand elle la touche, mon corps s'élève en spirale et tombe en chute libre dans l'obscurité.

Soudainement, je me réveille, trempé de sang. Des larmes froides tombent de mes yeux. Je vois un ciel sombre, rempli de nuages cumulo-nimbus, gris et denses. Je me pose sur la terre inconnue, rampante d'insectes. Je me rends compte que je ne me réveille pas en regardant de la télé. Ce que je vois, entends, touche et sens est vrai. Mon père n'avait pas tort.

Tout à coup, un grognement guttural s'est faufilé derrière moi. Terrifié, je tourne ma tête. Situé là, un petit lapin, blanc et mignon. Je tends mes bras, en croyant que c'est un signe d'espoir, de confort, d'amour. Le lapin est ici pour me rentrer chez moi, pour me sauver. En un clin d'œil, les yeux du lapin deviennent rouges. Il se transforme en un monstre que je n'aurais jamais imaginé. Des dents sanglantes, et extrêmement pointues. Une tête comme un extra-terrestre, pas de nez et trois déchirures où les yeux se posent. De la peau grise et ridée encapsule son corps énorme et grotesque. Nos visages ne sont que cinq centimètres à l'écart. Je sens une douleur dans ma poitrine, et le sang tiède qui jaillit partout. Je crie à tue-tête. Le monstre aspire mon âme, mon espoir, la vie de mon corps.

J'ai accepté ma fin, mon sort. Je vais mourir, tout seul dans cet abysse de mort. Je vais dormir ici, pour l'éternité. Je ne veux pas vivre non plus. Je me ferme les yeux en douleur atroce, en abandonnant ma vie.

Subitement, je vois une lumière brillante dirigé dans mes yeux! Est-ce que c'est le paradis ?? Soudainement, j'entends la voix de mon père. « Mon fils ! Tu as échoué mon test ! Qu'est-ce que je t'avais dit ?! »



i am From

Alexei Villareal

Byrne Creek Community School

i am from snippets of quotes
from my favourite books
where the boy's held captive
in imagination,
his mind buzzing with
vigor
and innocence.

i am from torn sheets of paper
with words
rewritten,
rephrased,
and erased
in hopes to find
perfect
strings of sentences
that take one's breath
away.

i am from small memories
glued together
by eloquent song lyrics
that leave
my heart
and
my soul
left to bare.

i am from excited thoughts
about the ordinary,
my dreaming eyes coloured
with picture perfect images
of everyday,
unappreciated things.

i am from dreams
and nightmares
so big
i can't fall asleep...

Poetic Devices

Jenica Pong

Burnaby Mountain Secondary

“Just write a poem”
The teacher makes it sound like a monotonous factory job.

I do not produce
similes like a photocopier scans pages
or as quickly as the American people
repelled Trump's government.
I don't understand how metaphors work,w

or how poems are socks;
how you enjoy the
warm,
cozy
comfort,

but you'd never knit yourself a pair.

I don't get the
murmur and
babble
of onomatopoeias.

Or the slow,
blue rapids of
vivid imagery and oxymorons.
The arrogant annoyance of acute alliteration,
Or even the ephemeral crime of
taking a lifetime to
master internal
rhyme.

The sluggish,
hideous,
deep,
black,
moaning

death of writing hyperboles does not please me.

MOTHER THERESA!

This poem is missing a masterful allusion! Most inapparently,

I struggle with adding the
perfect touch of
irony.



Music

Felicity Edwards*Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

Notes and melodies,
 Beats,
 Harmonies,
 So
 free.
 Made by instruments,
 Their voices
 sweet,
 sorrowful,
 cheerful,
 angry.
 Even made by the human voice,
 Crooning,
 Liling,
 Serenading,
 Screaming,
 Sobbing out a melody,
 bringing it to life
 with the tragic words of man.
 Words paired with their well-suited dance partner
 The melody
 Add harmonies and rhythm for
 More
 Impact.
 And you've written a song.
 Songs.
 Carrying our stories
 Our dialogues
 Advice
 Regrets.
 Farther than the eye can see
 Each is as different
 As a snowflake
 falling on a December afternoon.
 Every one telling a new tale.

Le hockey

Joel Elsaesser*Moscrop Secondary*

L'air froid
 calmant
 qui coule
 à travers
 les poumons
Le goût
 salée
 de la sueur
 liée
 au travail acharné
Le son
 satisfaisant
 des lames qui
 coupent
 la glace
Le rugissement
 encourageant
 de la foule qui
 crie
 la motivation
La nervosité
 de la possession
 de la rondelle
 collée
 sur le bâton
Les yeux
 fixés
 sur le beau coin
 supérieur
 du filet

Highway of Heroes **Hannah Cui** *Burnaby North Secondary*

The destination to our path is a figment of the imagination
Fear wrapped with desire
and a wanting of things we cannot understand
A terrible beauty springs from those who travel here
Sharp rib bones and emaciated backs trembling from a burden untalked of, unseen
Where frown lines viciously etched into angel faces speak of a
weary fatigue that juxtaposes their youth
Doubt and inner demons battle with childish hope and dreams
laid out raw, in the open
To be judged by others travelling the long winding roads
Twisting into shards of glass that hurl themselves back with a fierce vigor
The sounds pass in a blur, the memories do not
A monotonous landscape past and unyielding glass that stretches through time
Gaped mouths and distorted figures tell of roads
Gone but not forgotten

Blue Roses **Deborah Wang** *Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

I wandered between spreads of sand and restless roads one day.
Between the somber vast sea and buzzing little city, I walked
And wrote down what I saw and am about to convey.

Below a bed of winking winter stars
I saw a barren beach *dreaming* by the subdued sea.
Warped waves of the sea somberly sang a diminished song.

Ecstatic sounds of rapture bounced off ribbons of water
Reverberating off a back alleyway in the city yonder,
Oblivious to the requiem of the rushing rapids.

The smell of the city's dwindling early spring rain
Weaved its way into the swelling sea's suppressed sob,
And there arose a bittersweet breeze of reminiscent smells.

For a second
I stopped.
The bizarre sight of blue roses barred me from going on.



Fragmentary Self Esteem:
A Reverse Poem

Alison Lu

Burnaby North Secondary

I am a failure
And it is a lie that
I can be happy
Abide in the stinging shadows of self-imposed hatred
I refuse to believe the following line
“You’re beautiful.”

Outer appearances hold more value than personality
I don’t think that
People respect me as an individual
No.
They only care about looks

Inner beauty does not exist in this world
Do not be naive and think that
Such an incorruptible grace can endure in our society

“You’ve gotten fatter”
Believe what they tell you
Don’t
Love yourself

“**I am enough**”
Is a false statement because
I am, and never will be enough

(Now read in reverse)

Leaving

Ella White

Burnaby North Secondary

you don’t need to understand
it took so much of me
to go back
and retrace
every footstep
but i looked at
everything
and i came
to a possibility
that
it doesn’t have to matter
that
my body is like
citrus
and some people are like
dairy
that
we will not mix well
even if i try
to slice myself up
we cannot be friends
and
you don’t
need to understand

Quelque part aujourd'hui...

Julia Ramsey

Alpha Secondary

Quelque part aujourd'hui, les coups de feu peuvent être entendus à n'importe quelle heure de la journée.

Quelque part aujourd'hui, quelqu'un effondré goûte la saveur métallique du sang.

Quelque part aujourd'hui, quelqu'un a les entrailles qui brûlent avec agonie, juste après être tiré.

Quelque part aujourd'hui, il y a les cadavres éparpillés sur la terre.

Quelque part aujourd'hui, un enfant regarde la télévision et ressent la fin de son monde parfait.

Quelque part aujourd'hui, un adulte regarde la télévision et ne ressent rien.

Wonders

Joe Luu

Burnaby North Secondary

They ask
If you ever cross my mind anymore.

Sunset skies smile,
Smiles cold, memories crush.
Pastel canvases trap thoughts.

Dark rain, I smile,
Smiles sad, soaked sentinel.
Rain washes all tears.

Paint over the cracks,
Cracked walls, a heart broken white.
Colours of sunsets.

Do you ever cross my mind,
They ask.

You don't.



le crépuscule et l'aube

Austin Ma *Moscrop Secondary*

Au crépuscule, le ciel est la toile,
le soleil fait de la peinture
les teintes chaleureuses mélangent
c'est une harmonie naturelle.

Le long du rivage d'un lac,
les vagues calmes, une légère brise,
et l'odeur calmante du gazon
sont tellement sereines.

Au-delà du parc, les sons urbains,
l'autoroute, les trains, les sirènes
résonnaient divinement avec
les mélodies de la nature.

Les couleurs dans le ciel s'évaporent,
l'obscurité est imminente,
un rayon du clair de lune
danse sur la surface du lac.

À l'aube, les gouttes de rosée
sont les ornements de la nature
pures et innocentes
qui décorent les buissons.

Le soleil est paresseux,
la brume se dissimule
jusqu'à ce qu'il ait envie
de se réveiller.

L'atmosphère est calme, mais
les monologues des oiseaux
s'infiltrèrent timidement hors des arbres,
c'est la réconciliation de la nature.

Ce voile de tranquillité
ne durera pas longtemps,
il faut bien chérir chaque moment
du crépuscule et de l'aube.

Elle

(une lettre d'amour à n'importe qui)

Josemaria Teleg *Moscrop Secondary*

Les rencontres maladroites dans les couloirs
L'odorat de son parfum quand *elle* me passe
Sucré

Les milliers de mots cachés dans *son* visage
Compliqué
Son sourire éclatant
Chaleureux.

Le sentiment de soulagement qu'*elle* m'apporte
Quand elle me regarde d'une telle façon

Chaque moment, maintenant
Dominé par *elle*

Je peux voir mon monde dans ses yeux
Elle est tout ce que je veux

Je me perds constamment
Ma tête dans les nuages
Mon cœur qui bat
Les minutes comme des heures
Tic-toc tic-toc l'horloge me taquine
Mes yeux fixés sur

Cette *fil*le

Mes amis me demandent qu'est-ce qui se passe
Si seulement je pourrais dire pourquoi
Je pense, je pense si souvent
Ce n'est pas ma faute
Car c'est tout ce qui reste

Une pensée

Une pensée qui m'appartient seulement

Domage qu'*elle* n'existe pas.

Elle Marche

Shana Ip

Moscrop Secondary

Elle marche
Jour après jour après jour
un pas devant l'autre
Elle se tient
toujours courbée
peau bronzée par le soleil
brûlant
trapue
des yeux
puissants, perçants

Elle marche
le dos vouté
l'argent sur les épaules
les chaussures
pas suffisant pour ce
fardeau
Mais
Une femme qui compense

Elle marche
dans un pays
écrasé, oublié
dans un monde
ou personne ne l'aide
Mais elle marche
pour sa famille
une beauté charmante
Mais une vie brisée

Elle marche
la corde rugueuse
qui brûle
ses épaules
le bambou sur son dos
trop lourd
Mais elle est forte

Elle marche
l'air de la montagne
dans ces poumons
qui à la fois la bat
Mais elle continue
pour sa famille

Elle marche
parfois avec les autres
mais pour la plupart
Seule
avec ses pensées

Mais que sait-on
de cette femme
Forte
dans son pays brisé?



I am from (Identity) **Raihana Jawad** *Byrne Creek Community School*

I am from a land of people who dedicate their lives to their nation
protecting young children from bullets
and explosions

I am from a family of people
who move onward in life with the colors black, red, and green
painted in our hearts

I am from afghan dumplings
filled with sweet ground meat sautéed with golden onions
topped with chopped parsley
that melt in your mouth
like chocolate

I am from a childhood
of white sandals with red roses that squeaked
every time my parents would run after me
with a slipper in their hand

I am from a grandma
who is as calm as the evening water
who settles each situation with a nod of the head
and just goes with the flow

I am from a grandma
who keeps secrets locked in a treasure chest
and swallows the key

I am from walking away from opportunities
that expect me to share my thoughts
afraid my opinions are not important

I am from my parents and teachers
constantly telling me to share what I think
because there is no wrong answer

I am from realizing that people long to feel loved and accepted
and that a few words of sympathy
can bring a smile on someone's face
as bright as the sun

I am from positive opinions
and a future that still needs to be decided.

Fear

Soniya Huda

Cariboo Hill Secondary

Shame is a huntsman
And I am the deer
caught in its trap,
Forced into the serenity
Of a glass piece.

Trembling like a leaf
Falling out of an expired tree,
In the dead of winter
I am left outside to freeze.

Swallowed in fear,
Immersed in water,
Sinking to the ocean's bottom
Faster than an anchor plunging beneath.

A whirlwind of emotions
Spinning inside of me like a tornado
knocking me off my feet
like the first time I saw him.

The monsters are lurking under my bed,
Reminding me of all the things I didn't do.
Powerless, pointless, purposeless
I can't sleep at night just like the voices inside my head.



Angry Girl **Ella White** *Burnaby North Secondary*

i am
 a girl in braids, the most bitter candy you will taste, girl who cries so much
 that no one cares anymore. girl you promised you would never hate. girl too much for everyone,
 too little for herself.

I DON'T KNOW HOW TO MAKE YOU UNDERSTAND ANYMORE

you
 were the one who took everything away
 locked the doors, nothing gets in anymore, no nightmares, no hard feelings, no kneeling by the toilet.
 you -
 were the one who took everything away
 locked the doors, nothing gets in anymore, no dreams, no learning, no fighting back, no observation
 just you -
when did i say yes?

i used to think that love was
 two teenagers holding hands, simple, easy, consistent like the way leaves grow back after the cold.

i think
 i will know love when it walks in.
 truth or dare, *lie to me*. if you are the sun then i am the sky. it is okay for me to be angry
 i kept this for a year.

what will you keep?
theplaygroundandthetreesandthewalksandallthegoodthingsilost

you don't understand i could
 be soft, be quiet, girl born from rivers, from the soft sun in the evening,
 from the sway of trees on summer nights, from the most gentle words your tongue could speak.
 i could end this without me being angry, please, let me

i didn't notice you leaving
 until the first time
 i saw you make a decision, you stopped responding, stopped wanting to help
 out the door of my brain, you were gone, no more
 pretending to be bad so you could fix me, put a band aid on it, then rip it off again,
 no more talking, no more you.
 no more.

ANGRY GIRL BURNED TEN BRIDGES AND SLEW THREE DRAGONS FEEL MY
 HANDS I AM FINALLY WARM.

I am
 girl full of words, art, hands like butterflies' wings, legs like tree trunks, i win,
 everyday.

Daffodils For You **Erika Lieu** *Burnaby North Secondary*

Trees and cars zip past. The soft hum of a slightly open window breaks the silence in the car. I hold a small bouquet of daffodils I picked from our garden in the backyard. Daffodils are her favourites.

I notice the sky had cleared up, as I step out of the car. The rain had decided to halt for the first time in days. Flowers in hand, Mum and I make our way across the grassy field in silence.

It was August of 2012. Mum and I arranged to have lunch with Grandma. As the car pulled into the parking lot of the condo, Grandma already stood waiting patiently for us. I greeted and walked her to the car, handing her a picture of golden daffodils that I drew. “So beautiful!” she exclaimed. I beamed. I knew she would love them – they are her favourites, after all.

After lunch, Mum brought Grandma to the hospital for a follow up appointment regarding her health. We both noticed there was something a bit off. Her complexion seemed rather yellow, and she was complaining about some unusual back pains.

For the next few days, Grandma returned back to the hospital for more testing. One evening, a week later, Mum called me and my brother down to the living room. We found her seated beside Dad, and flashed us a sad smile as we sat down. I knew something wasn’t right. With difficulty, she delivered some terrible news. “Grandma has been diagnosed with an extremely rare form of cancer: stage four bile duct cancer. She has, according to the doctor, only three months to live.”

It took a moment for Mum’s words to really sink in. I was shocked. No. It can’t be, I thought. I didn’t want to believe it. How could this be happening? It was surely some sick joke, right? But with one glance at Mum’s tear-streaked face, I knew it was real. I ran to my Mum, and she held onto me as I sobbed into her shoulder. This was the day I finally understood what real confusion, fear, and helplessness felt like.

I tried to visit Grandma at the hospital as much as I possibly could. I drew her many pictures of daffodils, which she took graciously, and told me she loved. I could tell she was in immense pain, but Grandma knew to put on a brave face for me, and the rest of the family. She was going through so much, and I could tell she was getting weaker. The chemotherapy was making her hair fall out, and she looked thinner each time I visited. Grandma knew she was on the losing side of her fight against cancer. And yet, she was so strong. Grandma was a fighter. For all of us.

“Hello, Grandma,” I say to the headstone. I swallow the lump in my throat. Even though it has been five years, the memories are still fresh in my mind, and I feel a tear run down my cheek. Mum helps me place the daffodils in the vase beside her grave. “I brought you your favourites.”



Feu d'Artifice *Austin Ma Moscrop Secondary*

Depuis mon enfance, je suivais le chemin de la musique, et la musique m'accompagnait comme une amie qui ne partirait jamais. La musique est comme la mer, majestueuse et grandiose, et pourtant elle est tellement poétique et gracieuse. Les vagues de la musique ont le pouvoir d'inonder ton corps entier avec des sensations inexplicables, qui nous libère de toute l'agitation présente dans la vie. Dans deux jours, je sera sur scène au centre-ville pour partager avec le public la musique de Debussy, un de ses morceaux qui représente le plus de défis. C'est un morceau caractéristique de l'Impressionnisme qui stimule tous les sens; on voit les couleurs rayonnantes, des étincelles et des éclats. Il serait la première fois que je jouerais du piano devant une audience de centaines de gens à un concert professionnel à grande échelle.

Il y a un jour qui reste, et du matin jusqu'à la nuit, je me suis assis devant mon piano, dans le salon. Il était difficile à croire que dans quelques heures, je jouerais sur un piano trois fois la taille d'un piano à la queue normale, avec une qualité qui surpasse la perfection: le piano Steinway. C'était toujours le rêve de chaque musicien d'être capable de même toucher un piano Steinway. Je me suis souvenu des paroles d'un musicien fameux: pour atteindre le succès, il faut avoir un peu de souffrance. J'ai pratiqué tellement qu'à la fin du jour, je me sentais malade à l'estomac juste en regardant la partition.

Il y avait 4 heures qui restaient avant que le concert commence. Les boutons sur mon costume étaient très serrés, et il faisait froid dans les coulisses de la salle de concert. Les gens se précipitaient dans les couloirs comme des écureuils qui cherchaient la nourriture avant l'hiver. C'était presque le moment que j'attendais depuis des mois de répétitions, mais avec l'excitation, l'anxiété commençait à s'installer. Je suis devenu conscient du fait qu'il n'y avait pas une deuxième chance; une petite erreur pouvait gâcher la pièce entière. C'était la réalité sévère derrière les arts du spectacle que chaque artiste devait affronter.

Je marchais vers le piano, avec les faisceaux de lumière qui éclaircissaient le côté de mon visage. Sur la scène, je pouvais entendre chaque murmure et chuchotement du public; je préparais à jouer, et tout était silencieux. J'ai commencé. L'introduction tranquille et mystérieuse étouffait tous les autres sons dans la salle, mais le son des étincelles pouvait être entendu au loin. Les transitions vives étaient en pleine floraison; mes doigts dansaient avec une chorégraphie élaborée sur le clavier du piano. Les harmonies douces contrastaient merveilleusement avec les explosions passionnées de son, comme des éclairs de lumière. Au point culminant de la pièce, c'était comme si les feux d'artifice sortaient du piano, éclatant devant le public. Enfin, les glissades époustouflantes annonçaient la fin de ce spectacle pyrotechnique, et le morceau a terminé avec l'hymne national de la France. Il y avait un moment de silence douloureux, mais bientôt, le public applaudissait. C'était le goût du succès.

Poetry

Clare Hardjowasito

Burnaby Mountain Secondary

What is poetry?

A bundle of words scrambled into a puzzle?

For the reader to solve,

To ponder, untangle.

It seems every line must be deciphered.

Is it written in code?

Or just a foreign language?

Like a package,

All wrapped up,

Waiting, just waiting

To be unwrapped, unpacked.

The contents, once spilled are scattered.

Similes fly off the page as if winged,

Imagery pictured right, left, and centre.

What is the tone?

The meter?

The theme?

The meaning?

There's too many words jumbled up in my brain.

And as much as I love unwrapping presents,

For the life of me,

I.

Do not.

Understand.

Poetry.

With the Wind

Shu Lei Wu

Burnaby South Secondary

The clear blue sky shifts to grey.

It looks quite grim, even for a cold autumn day.

A feeling full of bitterness and chill fills the air,

The rain making the skyline instantly unclear.

Dispersed they fall, they flakes of orange, yellow and brown

All fluttering down.

The ground is a carpet of leaves,

All remnants of once-green trees.

A gust blows in and carries the leaves,

Making them twirl and dance with glee.

The wind howls, wild and free;

They bring back memories of a younger me.

I can hear the wind, hear it sing,

And smell the sweet scent with fall brings.

Traces of apple of pumpkin, that cannot compare,

All in the abundant aroma of the autumn air.

The wind blows on and the meadows flush,

The leaves fall down, all brilliant and lush.

The wind carries with it a sweet cool smell,

But most of all, a story to tell.



Because I Am

Sofia Allueva

Burnaby Mountain Secondary

They tell me,

what I wear defines who I am.
I am an object,
I am fragile,
there are streets I cannot roam at night,
and I am responsible for my safety,
I am less intelligent,
my capabilities are hindered,
I belong at home,
this world is not made for me,
I am lesser.
This is because I am a woman.

However, to this, I tell them,

yes, I am a woman,
the strongest you will meet,
I am determined,
I am powerful,
I am unique.

not allow society to blame me for the faults of others,
and I will not allow others like me to suffer along the way.
I will not allow myself to be controlled by anyone,
and although I've been told otherwise,
I will not sit still.
I will make my own choices,
unwavering and with passion,
I am a leader on my own,
and I will not feel lesser of myself,
simply because I have been told to do so.

I am a woman,
and my gender will define me only in positivity,
because I am proud to be female,
and despite what I am told,
I am proud to be me.

Everything

Yoojin Jung

Burnaby Mountain Secondary

Many things remind me of you
Rainy days, warm drinks, and starry nights
Days that were once filled with laughter and smiles
Are now just silent and hollow

Those harmless rainy days soon felt like thunder storms
The warm drinks have gone cold
The clear sky with stars filled with dark clouds.
Just like the day you left everything behind

I don't care if I lose everything
If I could see you again just once more
I wish I could see you in my dreams
Those memories, those happy memories

Maybe after time passes
I can forget everything
Or maybe in the next life
I can meet you once again

Just like before
I can't let go.

Your Name

Natasha Nigh*Byrne Creek Community School*

I remember the first time I saw you.
Wrapped in a light green blanket while you slept.
You were born.
You were my brother.
You were beautiful.

October 6, 2015.
Same birthday as my best friend, it was funny.
I wasn't always there.
I wasn't always connected.
I am sorry.

Over 2 years I caught glimpses
of watching you grow.
Though I know you had some troubles,
you weren't like the rest.
The problems you were born with
Were not your fault.
Only a genetic fate.

I remember the last time I saw you.
You looked as though you were sleeping.
I know this wasn't the case.
I know this is just what happens in life.
I know what loss feels like.

2 years was not enough time to tell you
how much I loved you.
Even though I know you couldn't speak quite yet.
I love you.
I love you.
I love you.

Its so hard sometimes.
I have heard people say.
That no one truly dies.
Unless you forget.
Their name.

A Mansion Full of Clatter

Boshra Moheq*Byrne Creek Community School*

Last night a friend,
Asked me how I was.

The sun was too far gone,
And so instead of my usual "fine,"
I replied I'm a mess, the biggest you'll find.

The friend asked what I meant,
And I didn't know how to respond.

I wasn't quite sure if,
We had a strong enough bond.

I wouldn't know where to begin,
Which wing of this mansion,
Was the closest to my skin.

I didn't know how to show her around,
Because there are times,
That even I can get lost and drown.

Sometimes this mansion of mine,
Is so big and terrifying.
Each room tends to be filled with,
Different pieces of who I am.

So, I decided to give her a quick tour,
I showed the signs on every other door.

I even opened one to show what was inside,
And I knew from then on,
That there is too much that I'd hide.

Not because I'm ashamed or because I would shatter
But so I could spare any who wonder
From this big mansion full of clatter.

Wildfire Rage

Troy Chong *Burnaby North Secondary*

Under the starlit sky on a sizzling summer's night
Wilted wild daisies reach with anguished thirst
Hopeful for rain mist to nourish their parched petals
While illuminating fireflies play in flight.

Scampering squirrels seek shelter in the woods
As other creatures look for refuge from the relentless heat
Among the decaying mushrooms and flaccid flora
Brittle branches of cedar and firs stand stressed from drought.

Nearby laughter echoes into the night
As drunken campers slur their words
After roasting their marshmallows to a burnt crisp
Dousing water carelessly on an open campfire.

They leave the forest in their battered truck
Trashing their beer cans through open windows
Waking the sleeping creatures with their blaring tunes
A reckless toss of a glowing cigarette into open air.

Soon within seconds...
A glow of red and orange sparks in the woods
With sizzling sounds and a booming crackle
The raging fire has no mercy
With a hungry willpower to ferociously spread.

Crying trees see their limbs fall
Helplessly to the burning ground of ashes
While frantic coyotes desperately flounder
With their high pitched curdling screams.

The wildfire has a burning desire to destroy
Consuming everything in its path
With shooting flames reaching incredible heights
A furious inferno with unrelenting, dangerous speeds.

In neighboring cities
Smoke and haze blanket the air
Humans need to cease their careless acts
To save us from all this needless despair.

Beauty Beyond Wisdom

Elianna Mah

Burnaby North Secondary

The wrinkles are
Crevices around her mouth
When she smiles,
Foretell the lifelong tales and trials
My grandmother has endured
Since she was my age.

Her hands
More worn than
The Alerian mountains,
The same hands she used
To harvest rice
From the field
To make a simple meal
For eight other eagers mouths.

Her hair graying at the roots;
Roots
Like a field of grass
Roots
To the tree of life
Of the next generation.

How,
I ask her,
Are you so wise?
Her eyes twinkle back at me:
Because my life has not been a bed of roses
There have been thorns and thistles
And withering weeds
But I have learned to see beauty
Through it all.

Trickling

James Huang *Burnaby South Secondary*

The warmth of your hand
brimming in my heart
The freezing rain
 Trickling
 And trickling
 Down,
Like that of the ocean's tears,
Soundless as it hits our heads

What is life, you asked
I paused, torn lips perched
It is an endless spiral of trials, I said,
Soft as a tiger's claw
Beautiful like a broken ballerina
Quiet of the crows' sorrowful cries

The curl after curl of tousled hair
The tranquil roar of grief
The rush of liquid on skin
The soaring pain upon metal
The red scraped on mud

A boulder thrust into your hands
Slipping and slipping with each pass
Because after all,
As soft
As beautiful
And as quietly,
I hand it over to your hands

You pondered,
Fingers on delicate lips,
You asked what it meant,
I did not answer
For it was in the rain,
Trickling
 And trickling
 Down,
Between our entwined faces

Followers

Rebekah Mercs
Burnaby South Secondary

She woke up every morning just to check her followers,
 Frantically refreshing to see if the figure had dropped,
She'd stalk her friends for hours checking their statistics,
All in an effort to ensure her number hadn't been topped,

She traveled all the way to Greece,
 Only to take a photo and leave,
Her 'perfect' life was never meant for her,
As her happiness came solely from the likes which she'd receive,

She filtered all her friendships,
 Dropping girls with speed,
She had only one requirement,
 They had to match her feed,

Her image of perfection was expensive to maintain,
She'd visit the salon each week to keep each hair in place,
 And if a nail ever chipped she'd go positively insane,
She applied her makeup so many times she couldn't wash it off her face,

While she appeared as smooth as porcelain,
 Inside she had been battered,
 Despite her many followers,
She had nobody to put back together what had been shattered.

L'océan humain

Ida Niksirat *Moscrop Secondary*

L'océan est vaste et plein d'opportunités
 De l'autre côté
 Il y a un monde où tous nos rêves peuvent se réaliser
 C'est ce que les immigrants et réfugiés disent à leurs enfants
 À leurs parents
 Pour faciliter la transition de 244 million
 C'est le nombre de gens à l'étranger

 Maintenant, détache-toi de la réalité

 Laisse les vagues de réfugiés passé
 Ils sont ici pour voler nos opportunités
 Ce n'est pas notre responsabilité de leur trouver de quoi à manger
 Ils sont ici pour tuer nos enfants
 Nos parents
 Il ne faut pas leur faire confiance
 Avec chaque bombe qu'on lance à l'autre côté
 Ça nous apporte plus de stabilité
 C'est vrai qu'avec leur déstabilisation
 Les ressources sont plus faciles à voler

 Maintenant, cherche la vérité

 Ce n'est pas les ressources qu'on manque
 C'est l'humanité
 Ce n'est pas de l'eau, c'est l'acceptation
 Ce n'est pas la nourriture, c'est l'empathie
 Ce n'est pas l'espace, c'est la compassion

 On nous a appris à oublier tout cela, et au lieu dire
 "Ce n'est pas ma responsabilité"
 Plus facile que dire
 "Je m'en fous"

You Again

Isabelle Quon

Burnaby Mountain Secondary

Funny how
 when I saw you
 you pretended that
 the memory of me wasn't
 stinging
 like a
 shrapnel wound in
 your thoughts
 as you were in mine.
 We locked each other's gaze
 a piercing,
 unrelenting amber,
 clear
 amongst the hazy muffle of
 the crowd.
 I opened my mouth
 to speak,
 to let your name
 tumble from
 my lips
 as it once had,
 easy,
 a lingering note of comfort
 for my weary throat.
 But your coldness
 tore my breath into
 shards, flitting,
 grazing the hollow edges
 of an
 empty memory.
 I was left in the wake
 of your departure,
 left only with blurry nostalgia,
 searching blindly
 again
 for another trace of
 you.

Black, An Inscrutable Rustle

Lindsay Chow *Moscrop Secondary*

Black,
 Just an inscrutable
 r u s t l e
 She becomes when the sky turns
 i n k y

The night is her dance floor
 her bony fingers
 Foxtrot across keyboards
 to the sound of whirring computers
 and the sinister melody of her one goal

Black,
 Just an inscrutable
 r u s t l e

she mutters to herself
 As a box appears
 "PASSWORD ATTEMPT FAILED"
 a few more clicks
 a few more tries
 "ACCESS GRANTED"

a menacing sm;)e
 she flashes
 As she takes a celebratory swig
 Of RedBull
 Ahhhh... ref res h ing
 when the lamp of day
 Is finally turned on
 she winces
 and hides in the shelter
 Of her bedsheets
 But when night f
 a
 l
 l
 s

The dance floor opens once again
 And she becomes
 an inscrutable
 r u s t l e

Unfortunate Timing

Taryn Sabot *Cariboo Hill Secondary*

I love you
 As much as I love
 Controlling my bladder
 When I'm at the movie theater
 And the film is a third of the way through
 Which is to say,
 I don't.

Either way, there are grimaces,
 And fist clenching involved.
 And whether it's the film or the interaction
 I can't wait for it to be over,
 So I can relieve myself of the pain it causes.
 Holding my pee inside
 My teeny tiny bladder,
 Brings me as much physical pain
 As your company.

Melancholy

Aaron Chow *Burnaby North Secondary*

Crows fly across the horizon
 Like black paint splattered across a blank canvas
 They mock my mistakes with their sharp calls
 My emotions come back to haunt me
 My lips laced shut, a tight corset
 I only remember fragments of the past
 Like bits and pieces of shattered glass
 That I try to gather
 But only cause my fingers to bleed
 Glimmers of light and regret
 A flickering candle
 That is blown out of my naïve child

Grey Madison Lantz *Burnaby North Secondary*

Stomach burning, Hazy Red rage.
 A sizzling, searing, Unfair, Unjust.
 Pulsing through me. Red,
 I am infesting the Earth, I am a confidant of sin,
 I am an unnatural mistake I am in love
 with a girl.
 My skin has shrunk two sizes to small,
 Worthless, Disgusting, Curled,
 My hands twitch incessantly,
 Terrible, Disappointing, Rotten,
 My guts simmer with Red,
 Ugly, Hopeless, Insane
 Seething anger, Blank stares.
 Bursting brain, Hollowed words.
 Screaming soul, Stuttering tongues.
 I say nothing. My words would be like screaming at the ocean for sinking ships,
 And being drowned in response.
 Their faces nonchalant, voices even, posture relaxed.
 "Fag" "Queer" "Dyke"
 I say nothing.
 The Red hurts, heart intolerable, mind weeping.
 Self I embrace the numbing Grey. Self
 disconnected from
 Shrouded in a heavy veil.
 Senses feel nothing,
 Eyes glazed and dull.
 It is better to feel empty,
 Than filled with Red. It is better to feel Grey,
 Than filled with dread.
 Because their words d r a g across my back,
 And my only defense
 Is to pretend the piercing pain
 Doesn't exist

Stuck

Naomi Huang *Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

An endless loop.
 Time moves so slow, I know what will happen.
 It happens every time.
 Blink.
 My friends smile at me, bright-eyed,
 Laughing loud, short of breath.
 Hands slapping knees, I am laughing too,
 it swells inside me like a luminous yellow.
 But what's so funny? Why are we laughing?
 They stop smiling, faces turn
 Hollow, ashen, colourless,
 Gray.
 All I see is Gray.
 Blink.
 Brush meets paper, lines flowing
 Page bursting with red, purple, pink,
 And that's how I feel too,
 purple with pride, pink with joy
 It is art, I think, but
 My creation stares back, unblinking,
 Taunting, dark eyes mocking me,
 Limbs elongating, nose shrinking,
 Colours blurring together, until
 All I see is Gray.
 Blink.
 I am at the beach, sun shining, waves glimmering.
 I feel the ocean spray on my toes,
 Taste the salt on my tongue as I smile.
 All I see is blue, blue, blue.
 The sky fills with clouds, no warning.
 Waves clash against the rocky shore.
 I lose sight of my feet within the fog.
 Where did the sun go?
 All I see is Gray, Gray, Gray.
 An endless loop.
 Time moves so slow, I know what will happen.
 It happens every time.
 But how do I escape?

Chrysanthemum Tea

Carolyn Chen
Burnaby Mountain Secondary

you are twelve when you tell your grandmother
 the country she has lived her entire life in
 that she holds in the palm of her hands
 and offers to you,
 in the form of moon cakes &
 dried chrysanthemum husks,
 has nothing to do with you.
 it does not belong to you
 the way you believe
 the white petals that cling
 to the lip of your mug,
 the tip of your tongue,
 as you sip too-steeped tea,
 your ill-prepared hands brewed,
 were too bitter to sit in tea.
 you are sixteen when you ask your grandmother
 to show you how she makes
 her sweet pan-fried *nian gao*;
 it takes four years
 for the over-steeped tea to slip
 into mellowed, amenable
 revision week familiarity.

Home

Skem'cis Phillips *Cariboo Hill Secondary*

I am from that familiar smell when you open an old book
From broken sofas
I am from wild fields to forested mountains
And mush 'n honey
I am from the pack
Born and raised by lone wolves
The most elite molded the way I am today
Giving me vast fitness comparable to that of a team of Olympic gold medalists
I am from warring tribes that taught me to be as wise as someone who lived for a millennia
I am from the greatest Kondor soaring high above heaven and nose diving straight into hell
I am from highly respected families who have the power to dismantle empires with the motion of a finger
I am from responsibility and integrity
I am from the side of love and passion
I'm from old style living to new modern life
I am from the ghostly reservation land whose silence is so loud it literally makes you insane
I am from the spirit in the dark of the corner that lurks not far behind
From exiles in this alone forever
From times made into memory by music and scent such as going through the country with my grandpa
blasting old tunes memories so precious they are held by my heart
I am from Nemiah Valley and Soda Creek who feast on moose and bears alike
I am from dimension hopping families who have seen inhuman things that no scientist would believe
to be even remotely true
I am from powerful bloodlines who have adapted to the icy temperatures and harsh landscape of
BC's interior
I am from the dusty old photobook of late family members who have since long moved on but are
in an even happier place than their miserable lives they were forced to live

Your Today

Breah Zaman *Cariboo Hill Secondary*

You've become so attached to your belongings,
Valuing possessions more than the people in
your life.
You've given more time to your phone than your
mother has given to you
And they say a mother's love is endless.
Admiring the beauty of nature, talking to your
neighbors, and helping each other have become
abstract-
Concepts that once existed but now seem silly.
The newest phones, the best cars, and designer
brands are the goal.
Who says money can't buy happiness, right?
A nine to five schedule leaves you super busy.
So much so that a quick hello or smile to a stranger
just doesn't seem possible.
Birth. School. Work. Retirement. Death.
That seems to be the cycle.
Hobbies are important; but not more than school.
Socializing is important; but not more than work.
But what's more important than death?
The fact that you're alive! Pack your bags and go
visit the Seven Wonders of the World.
Oh, but that would cost a fortune and leave a hole
in your wallet...
Right. So pack your dreams and throw them out
the window!
Besides, you've got bills to pay.
Bills. Everyone has to pay bills.
And the ones that can't?
They live on the streets.
Let's leave them alone. They don't matter anyway.
Your kids will be going off to college soon.
Are you going to support them? Give them money
for an education?

Or rather, feed the money-hungry business where
workloads are heavy, practical experiences are few,
and outcomes are insufficient
Being an adult is hard.
Harder than it used to be. Working at Thrifty's isn't
going to cut it.
You'll need a career. And you can't get a career
without an education.
Half your life will be spent in school- but that's just
the way it is.
Following your passion is a dangerous move to make.
Painting is your world-
You would hope that it puts food on the table.
But in the case that it doesn't?
Too bad.
There once was a time where love was all you needed.
Community relieved stress.
People came together on days other than just the
25th every December.
Kindness- it too once existed.
It's been said that not long ago, people gave up their
seats to others and held doors open for each other.
At the end of the day, busy people hurried home to
be with family,
Not to charge their iPhones.
Teens didn't make friends based off of Instagram
followers and friendships meant more than what
you wore.
Well... today,
Your money matters and people don't.
Human values, ethics, and morals like kindness
and respect are now obsolete.
The "you" is society.
Society is ignorant.
And ignorant is what we've become.

Irrational Numbers

Nikita Zhang *Burnaby North Secondary*

The bell for third period shrieked like panic.
Just like I would have, if anyone saw me
Duck into the bathroom, slide into a stall,
And open up a Google doc hidden in a maze of folders.
This document was the result of a habit that infected my grade nine year
Like an obnoxious tapeworm infects one's gut.
It contained every food item I ate,
And the precise number of calories I consumed every day.

One PE class, I was standing behind an apprehensive lineup of girls,
Staring a scale that loomed the end of our dirge.
From the scale, the pair of girls before me received the numbers 97 and 96.
Alright, cool, I thought.
Until I got the number 100.

I must have been the most annoying ninth grader
Because I constantly asked my friends if I were fat.
I mean, we'd have the exact same body type
And I'd still loathe the way I looked.
All bodies are gorgeous, I promise.
For some reason, I just decided that mine couldn't be.

Every sculpture of Aphrodite and painting of Venus
Were made in the image of ideal beauty, weren't they?
They were pretty plump, and yet they looked like normal people.
If you think I was the one being ridiculous,
Take a look at how humanity ditched glorifying a timeless body ideal
For one we had to deprive ourselves to achieve.



If I could take back hours of throwing internet searches down the drain,
 (OK, Google, how many days would it take to lose X pounds?)
 I'd tell myself something else.
 I really would.
 I'd look myself in the mirror, and remind myself
 That I could have been doing something so much more worthwhile with my time.
 Like exercising, gosh darn it.

"Be confident, be you," skinny girls in TV advertisements cooed.
 Were they telling us to love or hate ourselves?
 The models blew kisses at me, but I felt nowhere close to being loved.
 I felt like dieting never made more sense.

I listened to this speech by a model who said that
 Beautiful people still struggle, skinny can't buy happy, etc.
 Let me ask:
 How many more chronically calorie counting ninth graders is it going to take
 Until billboard models like her gained some freaking pounds?

Une longue route traîtresse se trouve devant moi

Adrian Minic *Cariboo Hill Secondary*

Une longue route traîtresse se trouve devant moi
 L'ange de la mort m'attend à la fin
 Et pourtant je continue comme il faut Comme on est tous obligés
 Et chaque nuit je me repose de cette route traîtresse sur laquelle on marche
 Mais je rêve, oh comment je rêve
 Je rêve des jours au début de cette route traîtresse
 Quand je chantais et dansais et jouais
 Quand il semblait que tout le monde faisait de même
 Je rêve des jours quand je pouvais grimper sur le dos de ma mère
 Et la laisser me porter, me supporter
 Mais je rêve aussi de ce qui m'attend demain
 Ou dans un mois, ou dans dix ans
 Les épreuves qui nous attendent tous
 Et chaque matin je me lève
 Trouvant que je suis encore là
 Luttant contre la bataille
 Priant qu'il n'y ait pas de Dieu
 Chaque matin je continue
 Je continue la longue route traîtresse qui se trouve devant moi

Monopoly

Alexandre Laroche

Cariboo Hill Secondary

Une journée froide triste et déprimante.
Pas une parcelle de ciel en vue.
Nous avons le pouvoir total, chacun d'entre nous.
Nous avons acheté des propriétés sans laisser de traces dans nos comptes.
Avec quelque chose d'aussi simple qu'une tournure de dé, nous pourrions envoyer des gens en prison.
Certains ont eu de la chance.
Capable de capitaliser sur l'immobilier et construire à leur désir.
D'autres ont perdu tout leur pouvoir avec une mauvaise décision.
Des accords commerciaux solides ont été formés.
Encore d'autres amitiés détruites.
Chaque mouvement détermine notre destin.
L'argent semblait illimité.
Jusqu'à ce qu'il soit parti.
L'argent était le pouvoir, le banquier supprime.
Cela reste vrai.
Avec un peu de chance,
Et un peu d'habileté, vous pouvez tout revendiquer,
Ou regardez tout votre empire tomber.
Voitures en métal et maisons en plastique,
Qui ne valaient pas le prix que vous avez payé
Disparu avec l'indécision.
Désolé, vous ne pouvez pas emprunter pour sortir d'un désordre.
Les amitiés perdues valaient-elles vraiment la peine?
Trop tard, aller en prison,
Ne passez pas GO, ne recueillir pas votre 200 \$.



Go Back *Angela Lin* *Burnaby South Secondary*

Go Back

I remembered.

Shouting. Screaming. Yelling.
The trigger of that nightmare.

Cries of tears and pain,
The mixture of gun powder and TNT,
Of Chinese bleeding for the railway.

The cliffs that smell
of burnt bodies and broken ones,
Overflows the temple of God.

As if the souls in hell had a voice,
Let me go, set me free.
You traitor.

What is our legacy?
Lies. Cries. Sighs.
The memories of once upon a time.
The happily ever after that never existed.
Only the blood, sweat and tears,
Continue forever, screaming on those rails.

As if the banging of nails,
The explosion of tunnels,
Were not enough.

Chinatown,

Where those people could never leave,
Forever stuck in
A cycle, a jail
Of fear and isolation.

The torture and pain continues,
Scarring our identity,
Trashing our dignity.
The Great Qing people,
Reduced to a band of slaves.

This is my recognition.
My realization of the past.
The discrimination in
the past, present and future.
This is, will, and always
Be my memory.

I remembered.

One day I spoke that language,
And heard them say,
“Go back to where you came from.”

The Day of Infestation **Evan Hammond** *Burnaby South Secondary*

It began in the river. An inky black oil running free from the confines of the currents that bound the rest of the water; the oil snaked around as if alive with a cruel intelligence, smothering entire schools of fish as if swatting a gnat, leaving their corpses strewn across the beaches for the scavengers to pick at. Anything that drank from the river would fall down dead; seemingly choking on their own breath, and whatever consumed the corpses would suffer a similar grizzly fate.

Next it was in the ground, the oil leaking out of the corpses of any animal that came into contact with it zigzagging in odd patterns towards the trunks of old oaks that had stood for thousands of years and reducing them to twisted, blackened husks of their former selves, only to leak dribbles of oil where sap and water had once run.

The forest has gone quiet, not a branch stirring in the breeze, rabbit in the brush, nor bird in the sky; only the oil remained to stain the world an inky black. Then slowly, every creature claimed by the oil rose as one; though they were not themselves, their skin an ashen gray, with jet black glossed over eyes. They turned their eyes toward any sign of life and slowly lurched towards their prey, no, their purpose. A hunter and his family had blockaded themselves in their home, four simple stone walls. Another had been left out to face the atrocities at their door, perhaps he had been too slow to make it to shelter, but it did not matter; as his pounding on the door and screams for aid gradually faded to the still silence of the darkened forest. The oil claimed his mind and body for itself.

The door lasted a few more hours until the hunter's wife, mad with anticipation, nerves, or even thirst, threw it open; she welcomed the dark as it was poured into every orifice available by the one they left behind, she joined the dark, shambling ranks with the ghost of ecstasy still ringing on her face. The hunter and his son huddled in the back of the house, in the corner farthest from the door; the father hastily pushing his son under their bed. He yelled in challenge and loosed arrow after arrow into the oncoming horde to no avail. When he struck them, they lost their shape and became puddles of oil, which took up its former purpose in sliding across the floor towards the hunter.

The horde had not even reached the hunter before he had been brought into the profane ranks of the dead, and slowly, each of the began to droop and melt into oil; filling the house, and dooming the son to the same fate as his father. The boy died crying for a father and mother that were already closer to him than he had ever known.



Farsighted *Hanna Song* *Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

On the green table carpeted with velvet, I peeled a deck of new playing cards and spread them into a perfect arch in front of a girl with blue hair. She quivered, despite having been confident half an hour ago when she arrived. In her hands she held four cards of low value. Beads of sweat trickled down her face as she reached for the middle card, pulling it out slowly from the arch. In a sharp motion, I gathered the rest of the cards into a quick, neat pile. The girl's hands trembled as she flipped her card over. Her face clouded as she dropped to her knees. I looked over at the card hanging limp in her hands.

A black joker stared cruelly from between her fingertips. Aside from the nine of spades she had managed to grasp, everything else about her life had been taken away from her by the ruthlessness of pure, bad luck. I prepared myself as the girl slowly stood. The worst part of this job was the people who would flip out on the "dealers" such as myself. Even though they were the ones to jump at the opportunity to change their lives, no one really wanted to gamble away all that they had. I cleared my throat as the girl stood, placing the card on the table and looking at me with threatening desperation.

"Ma'am could I please ask you to go to the room on your right?" I braced myself as I spoke as quietly as I could.

The girl slammed her hands on the table. "T-This isn't fair! I was told I could do this twice!"

I sighed, sweeping the black joker towards her. "The rules were clearly explained when you decided you wanted a different life. If you have concerns, you can check with any other staff member. They will tell you the same thing. In the meantime, there are others waiting behind you, so if you would most kindly--"

"NO!" The girl placed a hand on top of mine to stop it. "I-I can't just accept this! I-I don't want to do this after all." Flinging away the rest of her cards, she grasped at my hands, tears dampening the velvet cover of the table. "I want my old life back. Please. I want to go home. I don't want to be in the military. I don't want my parents to be divorced. Just let me go back!"

I gathered up her other cards as she watched helplessly.

"No, no, no, please, stop." The girl wailed as she buried her face into her hands.

I tucked the cards into an envelope and pressed it back into her grip. "We do not expect the people who come here to regret their decisions, but most do. Please cherish what you have in your second life." I sighed as I opened a pack of new cards, trying to sound as crisp as possible.

"Next in line please."

And It All Goes Black **Ebba Tubbin** *Burnaby South Secondary*

I put my bag on my back and look through my room. Nothing left, at least nothing I need. I walk over to the window by the desk and open it. The air is cold and there are no clouds in the sky; all I can see is a few stars. I look down.

“It’s only the second floor...” I think to myself.

I get ready to jump when I hear footsteps outside my door in the hallway.

“It’s now or never.”

“I jump before the door opens. I land hard on the ground. I slowly get up and start running, running into the dead forest. I hear screams behind me. Something about “get the dogs” and “find her.” I run faster than I ever have before.

As I start to cough, I put on my mask. The poisonous gases are getting worse every day. Thanks to the gases, the city is dead and, with it, its people. All because of them. All this destruction just because of them. Footsteps are coming closer and closer. I jump over the dead trees and stumps.

“Just a little further...”

I run and run and finally see the fence. It’s so close. As I run the last metres, I stumble on a branch.

“No...no...” I think.

I fall and hit the ground hard. As I try to get up, the guards catch up to me.

“No...I was so close...”

I finally get up and look around me. I’m completely surrounded.

“#23514. Stand down or we will not hesitate to shoot you,” the machine says.

I don’t want this. I just want to know how it feels to be free. I don’t want to go back to that place. I don’t want to go back to the lab, to all the experiments and torture. To that life with no light.

“You know we only want the best for you,” says another.

“Liar! You just want me for the experiments! I don’t mean anything to any of you!” I scream.

“Can’t you please just let me go?” I ask with a shaky voice, tears forming in my eyes.

“No,” is all they say.

I look down at the ground. If I go back, I’ll never feel what freedom feels like again, but if I don’t...

I’ve made up my mind. I already knew it would come to this. I knew that as soon as I jumped out through the window. I look at them one last time. They are closing in, still aiming their guns at me, ready for whatever happens. I sigh and a tear escapes down my cheek.

“This is it,” I say to myself as I turn and run for the fence. Just as I’m about to touch it, I hear the sound.

Bang. All I feel now is pain. Bang. They shoot one more time. I close my eyes as I fall to the ground.

“Ah...this is what freedom feels like...”

And it all goes black.

Mondays *Khayria Mansouri* *Burnaby South Secondary*

It is another Monday morning. The fajr adhan can be heard from afar, beckoning everyone to their morning prayers. Soon, the streets of Tripoli will be filled with cars; driving off to start their day. I begin to dress into my uniform; tugging on the stiff, grey fabric of the pants, then putting on the pink blouse and rolling the sleeves. The outfit is much too big for me, but I've come to accept the fit as a teenager who has yet to reach five feet. Finally, I shroud my hair in a pink hijab. Content with my appearance, I head to the kitchen. Immediately, the scent of garlic hits me, as well as mint and olive oil which smelt like breakfast. When I enter, the table has already been set, draped with a red tablecloth and set with hand-painted plates. I greet my aunt with a smile. My sister, Suroor, soon enters behind me and reaches for an olive on my plate. I attempt to swat her hand away but am too late as she pops it into her mouth. I scowl at her but only to be met with a smug smile. Finishing up, we head out as our uncle has offered to drive us. He starts the car, and we begin our ride to school. As we pass by Libya's palm trees and crowded cafes, my sister and I whisper gossip about a boyfriend that her friend isn't supposed to have.

As we arrive at the school, we both thank our uncle for the ride. When entering, a group of armed men run toward us. Terrified, I scream, grab my sister's hand and run to the nearest entrance. I run as fast as I can, scared that they'd shoot or take us. For it isn't odd when little girls go missing in Libya. Young girls are constantly being snatched in broad daylight, never to return. But I couldn't let that happen; so I run as fast as my legs can take me. Finally, we enter the school, I let out a gasp trying to catch my breath. My sister starts to pale. "It'll be okay," I lie. The school's administration tell us not to go out. From the window, I watch the armed men run after someone. He's in a red tracksuit and runs like his life depends on it; it does.

The armed men open fire, and chaos ensues. Children start to scream and run for the doors. Meanwhile, the administration stand around, ghostlike. I try to ask for a phone to contact my mother, but met with the order to go upstairs. Bringing Suroor with me, we head towards our classes. When I meet my friends, we discuss what might've happened with tear-stained cheeks. Most of them shrug and tell me this is the norm now, this is what I must get used to. The day goes on regularly. Classes resume, teachers teach, distressed students learn. This is their normal Monday.

Passion Fruit **Carolina Diogo** *Burnaby North Secondary*

“Hide the knife,” D. Rosa whispered to me, slighting her head to the right to indicate my waiting *avô*.¹

She took the passion fruits from my hands and cut them open. I sat next to my grandfather, and watched as the shell split open to release the sweet and tangy aroma.

As D. Rosa cut the last one, I glanced over my grandfather’s wispy white hair at the door, wondering when my mother would arrive. Realizing I would have to wait hours to be relieved from my position as caretaker, I stood up and fetched some spoons. Just two steps into my return, I heard my grandfather speak.

“*Estão envenenados*,”² the gravity in his voice shocked both me and the maid.

“Why would you say that S. Francisco? You know I would never,” D. Rosa swiftly replies. Her numerous years of experience with Parkinson’s disease having prepared her for situations such as these.

“*Não como*,”³ D. Rosa and I shared a look and I quickly caught up. No matter what she said, my avo would refuse to believe her, once again in a mistrustful mood. Understanding this, I walked over so that I was in his line of sight, picked up one of the pieces of the fruit and looked my grandfather straight in the eye.

“Look *avô*” Even I’m eating them,” I spooned out the contents into my mouth quickly, not noticing when a few slimy globs fell onto the table. “See. Nothing happened to me.”

I reached out with a passion fruit in hand and a spoon, but he deftly turned his hand away.

Ignoring the sting that followed his repudiation I tried once more, finishing the other half of the fruit. I smiled bright and gestured to the plate once more and said “Come on *avô*. You know you like them.”

“I already said I wasn’t eating, dammit.” Instead of grabbing a spoon like I’d hoped, my grandfather scooted his chair back as he attempted to get up. D. Rosa rushed over to assist him, but he swatted her away, his pride getting the better of him.

As I stepped in to hoist him up, my heart fell into my stomach. I was supposed to be the one he listened to, I was the one he trusted. In this snappy dismissal, I could clearly see the distance that was now between my grandfather and me, in between him and the person he once was. Although he stayed as stubborn as always, his lack of reasoning damaged the image I had preserved of him. My *avô*, with his startling white hair teaching me how to operate machines in his factory. Today, his crazed hair furthered the similarities between him and those once considered mentally unstable.

* * *

The next morning, as the light bled through the windows, I sat cutting open a passion fruit for myself. When I felt the light touch of my *avô*’s fingers on my hand, I knew that he wanted one too.

1. *Avô* – Grandfather

2. *Estão envenenados* – They’re poisoned (referencing the passion fruit)

3. *Não como* – I’m not eating it.



The Wings of Butterflies **Andrew Lieu** *Burnaby North Secondary*

It was an unlikely tale of friendship. We first met in a classroom four years ago. Some would call her brash and arrogant, but to me her demeanor suggested confidence mixed with awkwardness. Her words often accelerated to the point where she would run out of breath.

Through some twist of fate, we became close friends to the point where we were inseparable. We would discuss anything that our minds found interesting, until it fell to the subject of writing. One day I asked her to critique my symbolism assignment for my English class. I had always known my writing wasn't the best, and so I asked her for her opinion on my use of a butterfly in my writing. She sat down, and quickly began mentally breaking down every letter in search of my poetic secrets.

"It's not too bad, you know," she said matter-of-factly after finishing her reading. "But there's no confidence in your words. You need to make your words *mean something*. You can't put down words for the sake of putting down words: each individual letter, each word, they all play a crucial part. Spread your wings a bit, flaunt your colours. And when you do, you'll be able to fly."

I was confused, and before I could say anything, she grabbed a piece of paper and began writing in small, neat print. Her pen was a needle threading words, able to weave sentences into effortless paragraphs. "Think about it this way," she said while pointing at the sheet. "Butterflies possess many different colours, and that's what makes them so unique. All you have to do is relate to people like us. Their wings are like our eyes: windows to the soul."

She thought for a moment before speaking again. "It's just like music. You need to command the stage, be the master of your own melodies. People will only remember the brave and the bold. Be chromatic. Just relate that to writing — sprinkle your personality into it."

Through these moments, she became my mentor, pointing out grammatical errors, suggesting new phrases, or outright criticizing me for improper language. Yet she praised me, encouraging me to grow as a writer.

When our time was up, she flew off to pursue something greater. Even though her presence had waned, her influence still resided within me. She left behind the melodies for my symphony, now aching to be heard. She spread her wings and followed her own wind. Now it was time for me to do the same — my harmonies were painted on the wings of a butterfly.

Behind the Door **Shreya Bajracharya** *Byrne Creek Community School*

The girl in the mirror, who was once so familiar, looked like a stranger. She wore a red dress instead of a t-shirt and jeans. Her bare feet were now colored red with *alla*. Her hair was placed in a tight topknot, and eyes were outlined by dark *kohl* lines that reached her temples. On the center of her forehead was the painted third eye, staring back at me. The more I looked at her, the more I saw myself in her. She had the same smile and excited eyes as me. She moved her hand in a wave, as I moved mine, and touched her hair, as I touched mine.

“I look exactly like a *Kumari*!” I exclaimed, unable to break away from the enchantment.

The living goddess *Kumari*. The citizens of Nepal, and even the royal family, came to receive her blessing. She was highly respected and was lucky to be given this honor. That day, I resolved, I would be her.

My parents and I entered *Hakha Bahal* courtyard, with its wooden resting platforms, towering pagoda roof, and stone-paved grounds, which were buzzing with people surrounding a band playing traditional music.

The time had arrived for my test. It was midnight and my heart beat faster. In the courtyard, dark figures, hunched huge and covered in coarse black fur. My stomach twisted and I looked away; they were the bloody bodies of sacrificed buffalos.

We were taken to a large room away from our parents. I rubbed my hands along my arms, and my back shivered as the coordinators lined us up by the window.

“You will enter this door one at a time,” the bossy man told us. “This is the test to see who the next *Kumari* is going to be.”

The first girl was led to the dark door in the corner. She entered the room. Silence; and then an ear-piercing scream. She cried for her mother hysterically. The next girl, beside me, looked paralyzed with fear. She walked slowly towards the dark room. She hesitated before entering.

Within moments, she rushed out crying. My heart was beating in my throat like it was trying to crawl out of my body. I was next.

If I want to be a Kumari, this is what I have to do.

“Next girl, please,” the bossy man said.

I looked at him. The bossy man looked impatient. I shuffled toward the door.

My hands were clammy, and eyes teared up. *If I want to be Kumari, I have to do this*, I repeated to myself.

I entered the dark room and the light of the candle flickered on the small figures along the wall. I froze. My mouth felt dry, as I tried to scream for help. The small figures were the heads of the buffalos, still dripping with dark blood. I ran out of the room under the glittering gaze of the buffalos, their mouths open, ready to devour me.

I missed my parents’ hugs, and all I wanted was for them to come take me away from this place.

I collapsed with relief once I made it out of the door. Wet blobs of tears gushed from my eyes. Fear melted into regret and disappointment. I was not the *Kumari*.

A lady led me to another room where the *Kumari* was waiting.



She smiled at me, “Don’t be disappointed. Goddess *Taleju* only picks the girl who is brave enough to stay in that room without fear, and once you’re a *Kumari*, it’s not easy. You cannot play outside, can’t laugh loudly, and you have to stay sitting during long *pujas* every day.”

She wiped my tears and smiled compassionately. She hugged me before I left. I walked down the wooden stairs, taking in the starry night, and the *Kumari*’s words.

I won’t be a goddess, but I will be free.

Everything Walks Into a Bar **Zeh Daruwalla** *Burnaby South Secondary*

Nick was drying out the pint mugs, rubbing to the steady beat coming out of the jukebox. Flipping the towel over his shoulder, he glanced at his wristwatch. It was about 4pm and the pub would be filling up soon with the post-work rush. Fueled by the swagger of the Bee Gees, he wiped down the counter with flare. After all, at this time of day the pub was empty. Nick had owned the pub for years, and it was the common watering hole in Eureka Springs, considering it was the only pub in town. Nick in an attempt to be quirky named it Einstein’s Fine Wines, though he didn’t actually serve any wine, just an assortment of beers and other liquors. Though it was a common misconception that he did serve wine, this agitated Nick severely. Done with all the clean-up, Nick waited for the first customer. The bell above the door jingled as it swung open.

The dwarf walked into the bar, waddled over to the nearest bar stool and climbed up on it. He ordered a pint and went on to spew about the day’s events. As he poured the pint out from the tap, Nick nodded his head in response to the story. It was part of the job, a sizeable part that Nick couldn’t deny. In Eureka Springs, it seemed as though the citizens were more likely to come to him for confessional rather than the priest. All in all, he heard all the town had to offer. The bell jingled once again. It was the sound of business. The priest walked into the bar, and calmly sat down next to the dwarf. His usual decorum abandoned, the priest ordered a whiskey and slouched over, leaning on the counter. The dwarf and priest nodded in recognition of one another and exchanged greetings. Nick’s job always got easier when there was more than one person. All he had to do was keep the booze flowing, they would talk to each other, only requiring small interjections from Nick himself. The bell jingled once again.

The horse walked into the bar, clopped up beside the priest and neighed loudly. From under the bar, Nick pulled up a small metal trough and filled it with apple cider. The horse neighed in appreciation and joined the conversation with the priest and dwarf, blowing air rapidly out of its nostrils and occasionally whinnying. The pub had reached a lull point and Nick sat with the dwarf, priest, and horse while they talked about their troubles and then about the recent high school football game. Catching Nick off guard, the bell jingled. A working man walked in, tired from a long day at work. He ordered a glass of wine. Pumped into a furious frenzy, Nick exclaimed, “You think this is some kind of a joke! Get out of here!” It was just another day in Eureka Springs.

A House's Perspective **Madison Lantz** *Burnaby North Secondary*

In the beginning, I was empty. I consisted of four walls, two floors, and a shingled roof. I was a house, and nothing more, but I've seen so many things, and held so many people, that I've become a home.

I have sheltered a surplus of families with differences dividing them into categories I do not understand. These definitions blur when you see families when no one should be watching. The businessman's wife isn't smiling so brightly when her husband's too drunk to know if he's hitting her or their kids. Yet people always comment on how "perfect" their family is. And I have seen a mother so stressed with work and the daily tasks of life, weep with joy at her child's report card. She lets her son stay up late and watch the stars even though she has to wake up early the next morning. But she is overworked, and alone, so her family is "broken."

Humans need to understand everything. Perhaps that is why these labels are so forcefully thrust upon these families and are impossible to shed. Too many events have happened in between my walls that labels are useless in trying to comprehend them. There is always an exception. Their lives are too diverse to smooth out with a single adjective. Nothing is as flat and easy as one word can explain.

I'm telling you this because I wish I could understand. I wish I could pigeon hole people and families into perfectly shallow words so I could rationalize all of their actions. I cannot do that, and no one should. You need the whole story to be able to make judgements of that magnitude. I have the entire novel, and it is indescribable.

I have seen sleepovers with sobbing truths spilt at three AM. I have heard angry words screamed from the top of my stairs and had doors slammed with the raw powers of hatred. I have overheard whispers of reassurances and watched fathers hold their sons close until their spasms of panic pass into cries of exhaustion. I've been smeared with batters as meals were cooked in my kitchen. My walls have been doodled over by eager future artists. I have held births and deaths and witnessed every stage of life a person will grow through. Children measured themselves against my door frames with penciled ticks too soon coated over with fresh paint.

Now I am infested with termites, abandoned like a forgotten toy by an aging child. Outside, it is loud with the precise plans of construction. I see the wrecking ball that will tear me down and know that this is it. I am no longer a home to anyone, I am only a memory. As I face the end of my life, I wish to remind you that this is not solely "sad." An end is always more than "sad." An end is the birthplace of a new beginning, and I am excited for what that might be.



A Bowl of Cereal **Eric Liu** *Burnaby North Secondary*

Clink.

The sound of the spoon hitting the bottom of the bowl pierced through the cafeteria's pre-breakfast rush. Staring at the pristine 70's diner style checkered floor, inhaling the scent of scrambled eggs doomed to be overcooked, I let my mind wander back to the events of the last month...

I remembered the disastrous camping trip to PEI when a monstrous thunderstorm struck and flooded our flimsy tents. I remembered the hours spent with my roommates playing intense games of "water pong", until being sternly informed that "water sports" were prohibited inside our residence. I remembered the countless late nights spent brainstorming marketing ideas with my teammates, sustained only by the kick of spicy ramen and the rush of 99-cent Arizona, and the early mornings enjoyed with "the boys" in the brisk East Coast air. I would be leaving all that soon.

"Eric," said someone behind me. I immediately recognized the voice as my closest friend, McAuley. His eye bags resembled a raccoon's, and his hair looked as if ravaged by a tornado.

"It's time to go."

Wordlessly, I dumped out my bowl of milky mush, took one last fond glance at the cafeteria, and followed him out. It was the end of July, but clouds blotted out the sun and an eerie mist descended around us. As we strolled back to the residence, my mind was absent and McAuley's futile attempts at lifting the mood were met with "mhm"s and superficial grins. As we neared the residence, my heart sank as if dragged down by an anchor. Everyone with early flights like me was huddled around a weathered, yellow school bus, loading their luggage.

"Well, I guess this is it," choked McAuley.

"Yeah," I replied, tearing up. "Come visit sometime."

"I will. Don't you worry."

When I realized that him visiting from his home in Newfoundland would be nearly impossible, I burst into tears, falling into his familiar, comforting bear hug.

That moment was interrupted abruptly by the honking of the bus horn. After giving McAuley one last squeeze, I let go and entered the bus, where the musty air and squeaky seats of the bus only crushed my mood further. I tried to spot McAuley in the crowd around the bus, to give him one last wave, something, anything. But he was gone. As we sped away, I noticed the wind snap a fragile twig off an old oak tree.

A day later, sitting on my favourite bar stool in my kitchen, eating the same mushy cereal as earlier, another surge of heartbreak emerged as I quarreled with the thought of never seeing McAuley again. Then a picture on the counter caught my eye. It was McAuley's school photo, given to me before we departed. Staring at that picture, much like staring at the cafeteria floor the day before, I realized that I still possessed those memories. It didn't matter that we were 6000 kilometers apart.

I finished that bowl of cereal.

Mwanamke¹ **Adrienne Patterson** *Burnaby North Secondary*

I recall myself staring at the pile of clothes strewn out on my bed, frustrated that I was only able to take one carry-on bag on the plane. If only I knew how fortunate I was to step on that plane.

My head was banging on the side of the plastic window of the Land Rover as we soared down the streets of Arusha. Red bananas, papayas, sweet potatoes, and mangos lined the streets in buckets at the feet of elderly men with red table cloth robes. As we flew down the main road, the late afternoon sun shone down on us, the rush of the marketplace was slowly fading out and I could hear the liveliness of the town subside.

The obnoxious revving of motorbike taxis grew louder as our Land Rover pulled over to the curb just before a bike gang. The smell of gasoline and Coca-Cola immediately seeped through the metal panelling of our truck and I became aware that all eyes were on our foreign vehicle.

As I ignored the targeted hollering and whistles that came from the relaxed men on bikes, I clutched the sides of my seats, consciously aware that I was uncomfortable even in the protection of the massive, locked truck. I diverted my eyes up and down the lengths of the street and became aware that women were suspiciously absent. I could see a handful of male toddlers peeling their bananas on their front porches and several teenage boys juggling their leather soccer balls in the dirt. I could see nine bike gangs down the street, all young men chatting, as well as forty more withered, elderly men half asleep.

Not a woman in sight.

My observations were interrupted and dismantled as I saw a woman in a beautiful black and dark purple niqab² advancing down the street. Before I could take in the rarity of this sight, the reprehensible bikers forced the thoughts upon me with one vicious comment.

“Get back in the house mwanamke!”

As our tour guide continued to translate the numerous derogatory phrases being screamed at this woman, I was still fixated on the first comment. *Get back in her house? Why couldn't she leave her house?*

The sick feeling in my stomach grew as I felt ashamed to think about freely walking around my own neighbourhood, 14,000km away. The Land Rover's excessive engine started up and we roared away from the curb. I aggressively slid open the plastic window next to me and stuck my head out to turn and look at this brave woman. Her head hung low and her steps grew quicker as I squinted to see her unpleasant fate.

* * *

As I stumbled in to my room that I haven't seen in three weeks, I haul my carry-on bag on to my bed and I begin to grasp how grateful I am to be a Canadian 'mwanamke'. Although I did not add anything new to my suitcase, it feels outrageously heavier.

1. *Mwanamke*: woman in Swahili

2. *Niqab*: veil covering all of a woman, except her eyes



Généralions **Tavin Roe** *Cariboo Hill Secondary*

Le 6 juin 1944

Les ondes de la chaîne anglaise sont glaciales.
Les soldats tremblent dans la peur de ce que nous deviendrons.
Nous avons tous survécu jusqu'à présent, mais ceci est le vrai défi.
Comme nous approchons la rive, nos yeux ont peurs mais sont fiers.

Le 26 septembre 2007

Le Chinook se stabilise pour atterrir.
Notre régiment est correctement entraîné,
Mais l'entraînement ne peut pas entièrement nous protégés de la guerre.
Comme nous arrivons, nous acceptons notre destin.

Le 28 juin 1944

Mon esprit peut casser, mais pas maintenant.
Jusqu'à la fin de la guerre, mon esprit est une caisse en acier,
Mutilé dans une machine de guerre finement ouverte.
Contrôlé par le coeur du Canada.

Le 17 octobre 2007

Le soleil brûlant nous regarde.
La sueur sprinte le corps sous nos treillis.
Les enfants regardent de loin, confus,
Comme Kandahar assis effrayé sur nos épaules.

Le 8 mai 1945

Hier nous avons vaincu l'adversaire
Par le dévouement et le sacrifice à notre cause
Une cause pour assurer que notre pays reste vrai.
Une cause pour assurer l'avenir de ma famille et mon pays.

Le 19 février 2014

La mission du Canada en Afghanistan est terminée.
Nous avons fait de notre mieux pour améliorer le monde
Par le dévouement et le sacrifice à notre cause
Tout comme mon grand-père l'a fait sur Juno Beach il y a toutes ces années.

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“This artwork was created from a photograph of Burnaby taken from atop a hill. The image is meant to evoke a feeling of peace in a place of freedom. The words were taken from the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.”

*Cover Artist Nathan Belleau
Grade 12 Student at Byrne Creek Community School*

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