

ASPIRATIONS 2016

Aspirations 2016

A Literary and Arts Journal for
Mercer County Area
High School Students

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Aspirations 2016, a literary magazine published by Mercer County Community College, is proud to celebrate and present the talents of area high school students. For decades, the literary and visual works collected in *Aspirations* have showcased students' hopes, dilemmas, questions, and insights. This year, once again, the creativity within these pages helps us see both the familiar with renewed attention and the unfamiliar with a satisfying sense of recognition.

A distinguished panel selected these works from hundreds of entries. For their discerning sensibilities and commitment to the students in this area, the following teachers and artists have earned the appreciation of this community:

Carol Bork	Mercer County Community College
Shana Burnett	Mercer County Community College
Bettina Caluori	Mercer County Community College
Michael Dalton	Mercer County Community College
Ellen Davila	Ewing High School
Ric Giantisco	Mercer County Community College
Barbara Hamilton	Mercer County Community College
Nicole Homer	Mercer County Community College
Lucas Kelly	Mercer County Community College
Ellen Nenno	Hamilton High School
Kerri O'Neill	Mercer County Community College
Francis Paixão	Mercer County Community College
Robin Schore	Mercer County Community College
Joann Snook	Allentown High School
Theresa Solomon	Hopewell Valley Central High School
Jacqueline Vogtman	Mercer County Community College

Still others have contributed to this publication in important ways. We would like to thank the parents, friends, family, and teachers who supported the development of our writers and artists. Thanks go to President Jianping Wang and Interim Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Richard Fulton for their support; to Francis Paixão in Mercer's Publications Office for his work designing and laying out this journal; to Brad Kent for setting up and maintaining the *Aspirations* webpage; to Jody Person and his students for their dramatic interpretations of the published works and especially to Shana Burnett for the dependable and effective way she managed submissions, contact with schools, and the many details of the selection, editing and proofing process. Finally, I want to thank Robin Schore, the Dean of Liberal Arts, for his generous help to me and his coordination of all phases of this publication project. His ongoing commitment to this artistic and literary gallery continues to make it possible.

Nicole Homer
Assistant Professor of English and Editor, *Aspirations 2016*
Mercer County Community College

Cover Art



Stallion Charging

Kyla Chasalow

Horses and art are the air Kyla Chasalow needs to breathe. She often combines them. Though a surrealist at heart, she enjoys exploring many different art movements and techniques.

Abigail Oliver

Abigail Oliver is a senior at Nottingham High School North. Though very involved both inside and outside of the classroom with performing arts, music, and community service, she always finds time to explore her passion for creative writing. Next year, Abby will be attending a small liberal arts college to study Pre-Law.

Elementals

One is fire, the other air.
Roaring and burning and destroying.
Breathing, howling, twirling.

They feed off of each other,
Depend on the other for survival.
At least, fire thinks.

Take the air, a fire dies.
Take the fire, air thrives.

Necessity is one sided.

He is water and she is fire.
The options are obvious.
Burns treated with water.
Squelch. Extinguished.

Or.

Oxygen from the water feeds the flames, and
she conquers.

The first solution is not invariably successful.

Water versus air is irrelevant.
A moment of conjunction before
Inevitable tangential separation.

Danger. Do not attempt.

Earth can burn and drown,
But not suffocate.
Earth can smother fire
But needs the liquid of life to survive.

Dependency and balance.

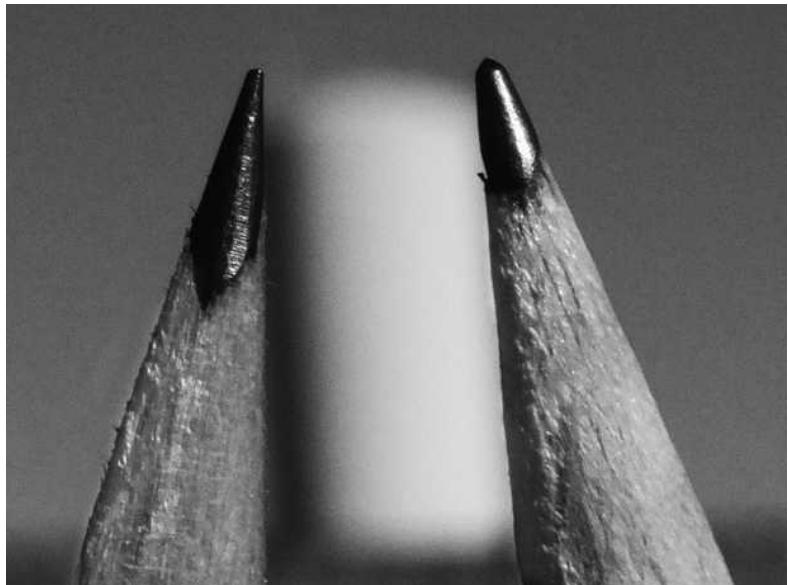
Distribution of power.

Elementary.

High as a Tower

Srihari Subramanian

Srihari Subramanian is a freshman from Hightstown High School. He loves both the outdoors and experimentation. In his free time, he likes to build things, such as matchbox rockets and skewer crossbows. He also loves to read books about realistic fiction.



Horror Show

Luciannys Camacho

Luciannys is a senior at Nottingham High School. She participates in the school's activities such as National Art Honor Society and set design. She plans to attend the School of Visual Arts in the fall in Computer Animation.



Aleena McIlvaine

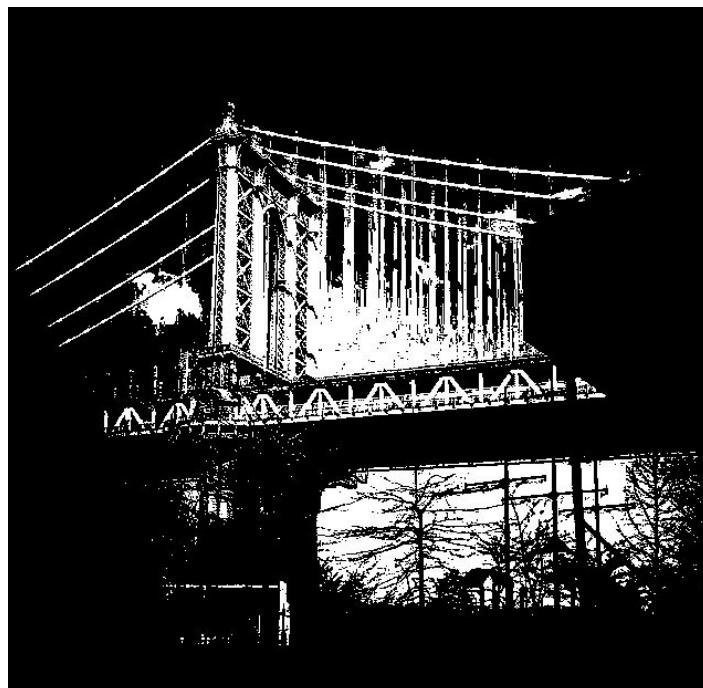
Aleena McIlvaine is a senior at Allentown High School. She enjoys writing of all kinds, cheerleading, and fashion. After graduation she plans to go to New York City to study fashion journalism.

Negative: A Poem of the Self

I'm not a positive person,
not really.
I don't know how to write unless I'm ranting,
crying,
or just thinking.
I don't write about myself,
I don't know how.
I like things about myself,
sure,
but they are few and far between.
Little things,
like my freckles,
or my fresh curls after a shower.
I look in the mirror and wonder
what do I have to do to look like the models in Fashion Week?
Too bad I'm 5'4,
with gapped teeth,
and not enough curves to save my life.
But I like being short,
it makes hugs better
and it's more fun to climb on counters anyway.
My gap is cute,
it's different,
I don't want it bonded anymore.
I do wake up on certain mornings really feelin' myself.
Those are the best days.

Darkness**Sarah Boate**

Sarah Boate enjoys her free time playing soccer. She plays on a travel soccer team and for the varsity soccer team at high school. She loves any type or style of art, as well as architecture. When she grows up she wants to be an interior designer.



Alexandra Corrington

Alexandra Corrington is a part of the graduating class of 2016 at Allentown High School. She is a member of her local youth ministry, an ambassador girl scout, and a passionate creative writer.

The Anthem of the Sitter

My eyes are tired
But they cannot close
I brew a third coffee

Five-thirty they jump out of their beds
I reluctantly spill out of mine
At the nagging request of tiny hands and smiling eyes

Two sippies I make
Orange juice they take
Spilling cereal on their way to the couch

Sofia the First
A pillow fort
We want to watch Mickey Mouse instead

Two crying babies later, I break up my third fight
Over plastic dolls and kitchen utensils
That I am too tired to put away

Running, running
Falling down the stairs
Finally too tired to stand

Forty seconds in the microwave each
The ba-bas, not the babies
Rubbing sleepy eyes all three of us

Pouring them and then myself back into bed
Dear God, I pray,
Please let them sleep until at least two

The day is not even halfway done
My energy gone
Still I will power through

Love, giggles, and playtime will keep me up

Alexandra Corrington

A Day in the Life

This is the sound
Of a television, too loud
Of the static on the blanket
Around your body
Tightly wound

This is the sound
Of focused silence
Of you staring at your nails
Willing them to dry
As I blow on the wet pink polish

This is the sound
Of dirty dishes in the sink
Of crashing glass
You quietly watch me sweep
Something that wasn't really your fault

This is the sound
Of "I love you, goodnight"
Of shared prayers
And fluttering, tired eyes
Thinking and dreaming of you until sunrise

This is the sound
Of Godmother
Of Goddaughter
And the sweet, never ending sound
Of love

Alexandra Corrington

Make Me Small

Eyes open but dim
The geography of morning
Tugs at her emotions
All the bad times and dark weather
Scuttle from room to room
Dodging her as she wills them to dissolve
Wills herself to dissolve
Grief comes over the horizon
In the morning
Welling up in her eyes
Fluttering in her long fingers
Brushing at hot stinging tears
Tumbling into her soul
All the memories
She shakes
However raw and wrecked
She must stumble on

Fall Leaves

Casey Fletcher

Casey is a 17 year old girl who loves softball and who dreams in her spare time.





Capture the Moon

Luciannys Camacho

Alexandra Raskin

Aside from writing, drawing, listening to music, and spending time with friends in the few hours of spare time granted to her within each month, Alex is an active member of both the swim and track teams at Hopewell. However, she would like to make it clear: she does NOT run (voluntarily). She just throws things. She isn't good at running.

C

Your light has left,
You promise me.
You have painted on your lips
That shadows have no name but yours,
That darkness is your skin,
That breath is gone,
That chest is empty,
That fire is burning out.
But your light has never left.
You are something sudden.
Reckless abandon,
Light through nighttime doorways, reassuring.
Some type of city outlines,
of horizon.
Of nighttime quiet,
Of patient strength.
You are every time that lightning stops the world in its tracks.
You are gravity and hurricanes, 11 o'clock starlight breeze, airport homecomings,
You are city nighttime, faux darkness,
Heavy rainstorms, quiet ache, the safety of blankets, the reassurance of the constellations.
Movement.
Wild, gorgeously unchained, distant.
You are God-sent,
You are warm, breathless, hands held,
Windows down at midnight,
Heavy moonlight,
Cotton candy sunsets and morning breeze.
You are porchlight coffee and crickets and lightning bug hands.
Sleepless storms and salt water darkness and fullness of heart,
Light cannot leave you,
Because your soul is light itself,
And you are good,
And you are strong.
And you are home.

Alexandra Raskin

June Blues

I am sitting thigh deep in June blues water, in June blues air and June blues hues.

All the fans are on,

Man-made hurricanes and cautious breakdowns, calculated downfall.

A cool summer night flows deeper than my bones and goosebumps rack my body like a second skin.

Everyone talks about it like it hasn't happened yet, but my world has already stopped spinning.

Everyone has their moment; the lurch. It knocks them clean off of their feet.

When they stand, the earth crumbles under them and the buildings sag and weep and their own brittle bones threaten to snap under the weight of the new world.

Gravity is a skewed beast; light drains out of the sky; everything is dark.

You told me I could find light anywhere, even here. It was just a matter of finding the perfect pin to poke holes in the black sky.

Remember, you said, there is a sun behind these shadows.

God.

If the whole world emptied itself out like a sand timer, time would stop the second you went down.

If the whole world was empty, if all I saw were foreign faces, people made of glass,

I would run until I found you,

Your face is the one I search for in crowds.

I am no stranger to unexplained sorrow, to missing pieces and crumbling towers,

To breathless abandon, hastily tied knots,

Tear stained cheekbones and smoldering embers.

I know this battlefield well.

I am a silhouette filled with abstract; I am nooses and tangled lights; I am a connoisseur of partial serenity.

Decay is laced through my fingertips and in between my teeth.

I am surrounded by dull ache and silent sadness.

It resonates in my bones and I wade deeper and deeper into it every night. I let its breath mix with mine and its mouth trace circles on my neck;

It is in between my hands and under my nails,

It circles around my thighs and up my spine.

Sometimes all I know is nothingness, and sometimes all I know is empty.

But there is something about this darkness that comforts me. I am alone and I am afraid, but I know this place. There are no new surprises in these shadows,

Only black and black and black.

On the outside, I am a statue, half painted with gold, flaked with dying embers.

Black smoke trickles from my nose down to my lips like a nosebleed and my eyes are glass.

On the inside, I am the fire. I am warring nations and battlefields yet to be quelled, masquerades and sacred temples and scarred faces.

Death is fragile and life is uncertain and the world is expansive and my words are so small they can't even paint stars in the sky.

How can I map out universes when I can't even color in the parts I can see?

But here's the thing,

My life, my light, my paint reservoir, proves too limited to even scratch at the corner of the night sky.

My words barely freckle the surface of your face and my fingertips can barely make ripples in this ocean.

We are cities built into mountainsides, and our clocks never stop ticking.

I am powerless. Restless, but powerless.

I want nothing more than to forget all about existing, but existing is all I have.

These cities stand, full, lights and hustle and bodies on bodies but I am so far removed that these places are no more than bones, reaching for an empty sky, and these people are no more than brittle skeleton faces.

Life is good, I am not-

But the world will not stop turning. Sunrises and sunsets will continue and the moon and sun will rise and fall,

And I, like the tides, will waver.

But balance will come.

Black as it may be, I always have the sky.

Pressing our fingers to the metal cables,
We sway.
From dusk to dawn we wait,
From ache to ache we stand,
On top of bridges we shiver,
Wind-threaded bodies melting into our own hands.

Death is not an easy option, I whisper,
Nor is life.

The wind carries my words away.
I am too weak to live, too weak to die.

Moonlight presses me up against a wall,
Throws its head back and howls,
And the sun leaves slowly,
Locks the porch door behind it and doesn't turn to wave.

I am wasting away.
You see this?
This is all too much.
You cannot blame me for tiring.
My body aches like the shadows and threatens to tear at the edges.
There are too many crumbling cities,
Too many faces that never turn back after goodbyes,
Too many outstretched fingers that meet only air.

We don't even know what we have.
We don't know until we are waist deep in dark water and the salt has washed away the sadness from the marrow of our bones.
Even then, we barely feel the freedom.

In this crowded room, they are all talking about faucets and flooring,
And I sit back, shoulder blades to the wall,
Thinking about sunsets and endings and erasure.
How we all go on,
We all go down,
We all sink.
It's just a matter of when.

I must keep fighting.
My heart is heavy with light, not shadows. I am learning let it flow from my heart like water and course through my veins.
I am a martyr in my own heart.
My eyes have died but they will live soon.
I believe in existing.
In living for the sake of being alive,
For the sake of standing and breathing and simply being.
Remember.
If you speak and your voice shakes, you are still speaking.
I cannot scream but I am learning to whisper again.
More people seem to listen that way.
I am no more than a wanderer.
But I am not the type of ghost content to wait in my grave.

Alexis Serrano

As senior year comes to an end, Alexis is realizing that her mom is more important than anything. Putting words together like a bouquet for her mentor is the least she can do for now.

My Mother

The people in my family are long chains of Rocky Mountains with hard exteriors that don't let feelings in but I? I am glaciers in the middle of global warming melting away tears, leaving puddles as footsteps...I am the crybaby of the family. For example, my mother's voice I imagine, is how loud god is since his voice is heard across the world. When she gets angry her voice goes from here to the moon making the moon explode, making the world, explode making MY world explode. Making eye contact with my mom when she's angry is like staring right into the sun. You cannot take shelter from the tornadoes rolling off her tongues or the thunder under her feet as she walks away. My mother has world disasters for blood cells. Unlike me my mother never cries, I think it's because she gave every inch of fragility she had inside to me so she could have the strength to raise me by herself, but mom I am so tired of being fragile because a house of glass can never protect anyone not even itself. I'm tired of being a whisper in the wind that can't make any leaves fall. I'm tired of my bones not being enough to be somebody else's home. While I sleep please take some fragility away from me I don't know if you can since it's hereditary but when I go to sleep peel my skin and peel and peel and keep peeling until you find it eating away my bones. I've never seen my mother cry but the other night the feeling of drowning woke me up. I felt empty and when I saw the house flooded in tears I thought I cried in my sleep again. That morning while my mom made breakfast the sunlight shined on her face and I swear she looked so....fragile.

Fashion Avenue**Serena Addo**

Serena Addo is a Sophomore at Hightstown High School. She enjoys taking photography class because of how much she is learning about camera modes and photoshop. Serena also enjoys playing guitar and hanging out with friends.



Alexis Trio fino

Alexis is a senior at Allentown High School who is interested in majoring in Psychology, her biggest passion. Literature and art, however, take up most of her time. She loves to write, read, and create art.

I'm Not One of Those Crazy Girls

I was in seventh grade when I first heard the word “schizophrenia.” I was watching Grey’s Anatomy because an actress I loved was in an episode. Her character’s name was Hayley May and she heard every noise her body made—her heart beating and her blood flowing and her fingers moving and her toes curling. Diagnosis: paranoid schizophrenic. Schizophrenia is a psychological disorder where a person can’t translate what’s real and what’s in her head, not what Hayley was experiencing. With schizophrenia, there is no line between what reality is and what concept was merely conjured by her own mind. It turns out in her case that the real issue was Superior Canal Dehiscence Syndrome, (a small hole in her inner ear).

For me, it was the lingering of the word, though. It was the way it sounded when I whispered it: loud and sharp despite my murmuring. Schizophrenia wanted to be noticed. Its starkness pleads for someone to reassure it of its sanity. It wants help, but it will never say that it needs help. Notice me.

“Skitz-oh-fren-e-ah. Skitz-oh-frin-e-ah.” Other form. “Skitz-o-fren-ec. Skitz-oh-frin-ick.” Then faster. “Skitzofrnic. Skitzafrnic. Skitzafrenic.”

Schizophrenic sounds like a word meant for the clinically unhealthy. Listen to its sharpness. Listen to its jagged edges. Listen to its stiff end. Schizophrenic. Listen to its vulnerability behind its harsh exterior. Listen to its begging not to be considered crazy. Listen to its pleading. Listen to its tears roll down to its clenched jaw. Listen to its hidden helplessness. Schizophrenic.

Some synonyms used for “schizophrenia” include “insanity” and “mental disorder.” Neither of these are accurate. Schizophrenia is so much more specific than just a mental disorder, for it is but a branch on the entire family tree of mental disorders. Schizophrenia is most definitely not insanity either; it drives people to insanity. It is a disease from within a person’s own mind. My mind is my enemy. I can’t trust it. I can’t trust anyone. Is any of this even real? This is all some game, isn’t it? Isn’t it? Stop it. Stop screeching. Stop scratching. Stop it. Turn it off. Stop. Stop it turn it off turn it off turn it off TURN IT OFF.

Schizophrenia is not as simple as just a mental disorder. It is a plague. It is a civil war. A schizophrenic is not insane for wanting the voices to leave. No word can encase the layers this word has to offer. No word can capture the feeling this word provokes. No word can explain the essence of someone struggling with perception like this word does. Originating in the early 1900’s, “schizophrenia” roughly translates to “split mind disorder” in Greek. The word bares exactly what it means: severed cognition, obscure thought, and disconnected awareness. There are no synonyms to what this word so accurately represents.

Schizophrenic. Schizophrenic. Schizophrenic. Quietly at first. Only loud enough to hum in your ears. Only loud enough to lightly scratch the side of your face. Only loud enough to make you doubt that you’re hearing something. Schizophrenic. Schizophrenic. Schizophrenic. It’s louder now. Loud enough that you know you heard it. Loud enough that other people had to have heard it. Loud enough to not be crazy. Schizophrenic. Schizophrenic. Schizophrenic. Oh my god it’s piercing. So loud that you feel the shrill right next to your ear. So loud that you wonder why no one looks alarmed. So loud that you doubt ever being sane. Schizophrenic. Schizophrenic. Schizophrenic. Make it stop oh my god my ears are bleeding and my brain is twisting in knots. Stop screeching. Stop scratching. Stop screeching. Stop scratching.

How Lonely the Moon Must Be

Jasmine Santalla

Jasmine finds comfort in feeling compassion for others. She understands the urgency of life and looks to fill every second with creativity and a good laugh. She hopes to spread her perspective through a career as a journalist and novelist.



Alexis Young

Alexis Young is a senior at Allentown High School. Alexis is currently enrolled in the Creative Writing class at her high school and hopes to continue writing throughout her college career.

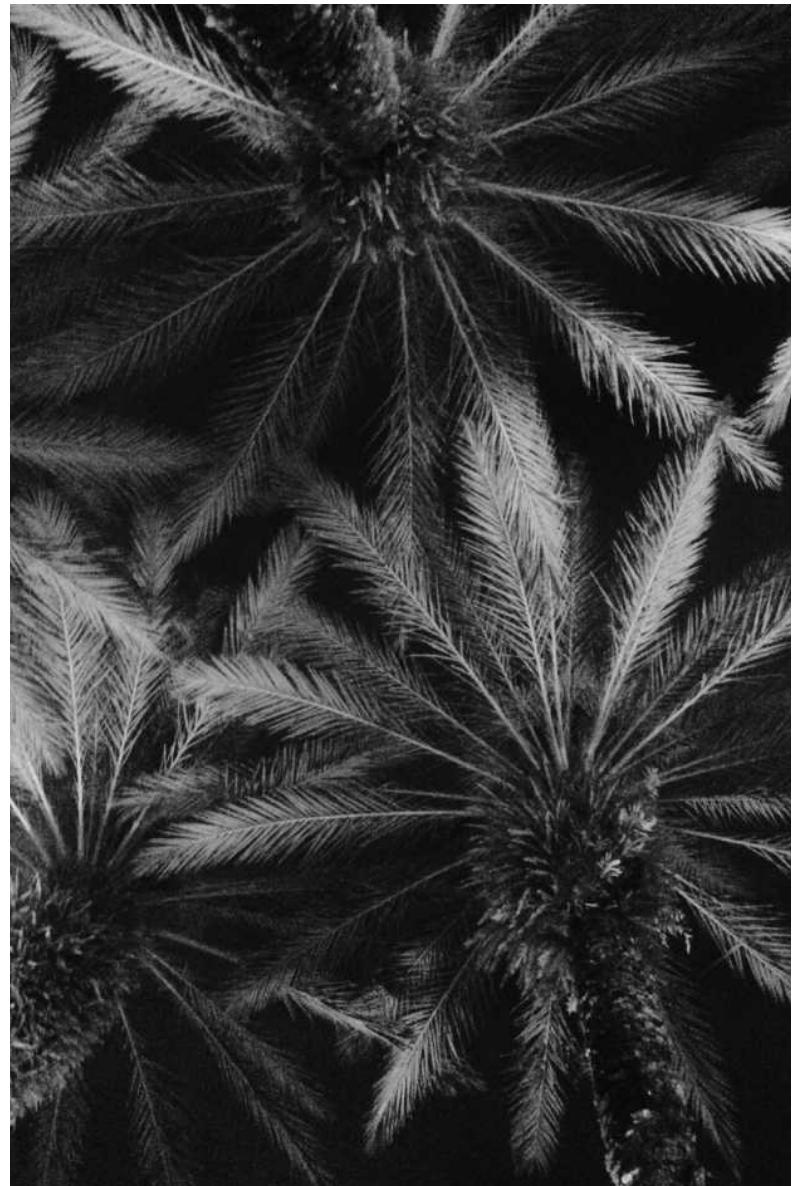
In Between

Between the beginning and the end
your mind floats with thoughts of the world
anchoring you to reality
The blue of a summer sky
burns brighter than any fire
Clouds replace the billowing smoke
as it rises above the world
Heavy white boulders turn soft as the day shifts
The night emerges with the moon
The day ends, only to begin again
and all that matters
is what's in between

World at the Palm of My Hand

Olivia Waaben

Olivia Waaben is a junior at Lawrence High School. Aside from being dedicated to her studies, she frequently enjoys participating in Operation Smile, Students Helping Honduras, DECA, Model United Nations, and other clubs and activities. She loves to volunteer and to travel and she hopes to one day make a difference in the world.



Ali Schragger

Ali is a sophomore at Hopewell Valley Central High School. She enjoys competitive dancing and hopes to continue her dancing career through college and into the professional world.

The Land of the Suburban Dads

Hesitant, I counted to ten
Until I opened the door to be trampled by dads,
Thousands of them

Blasting Bruce Springsteen in mini vans
Balding heads with dangling ray bans
Mid-calf white socks from Old Navy
Grilling chicken topped with gravy
Teenage athletes become red in their face,
as their dads yell at them while they run to second base
Jerky dance moves
and unsolicited puns
said in front of their friends,
purposely embarrassing their sons

“I’m confused, what’s with all the Dads?”
I asked one man with a shrug,
He laughed and replied,
“Hi confused, I’m Doug!”

Untitled #3732

Kayleigh Morrison

Kayleigh attends Lawrence High School. She loves drawing and photography.



Amanda Juan

Amanda Juan is a sophomore at Hopewell Valley Central High School. She is part of her school's marching band program, theatre program, and the Model UN club. Amanda aspires to work in the science and engineering field in the future.

什么是今天的中国女孩

(What It Means to be a Chinese Girl Today) by Amanda Juan

She remembers her first day of school

She remembers being five years old, ready to take on the world

She remembers pacing her way towards her classroom

She remembers her eyes brightening like the sun at the sight of her classmates

She remembers the eagerness that filled her entire being at the idea of learning

She remembers being the only little Asian girl in that classroom

She remembers not understanding what it meant to be a person of color

But that shouldn't matter

Because race isn't something that segregates us, right?

She remembers her middle school years

She remembers moving from friendship to friendship and house to house as if she were a migrant animal

She remembers finding her passion in the arts, spilling her entire soul into theatrical performances, enjoying the feeling of living another person's life for two hours at a time

She remembers the first time she was taunted for her race

She remembers being told, "How are you in theatre? Asian kids aren't in theatre."

She remembers believing what he said, realizing for the first time that there was a part of her that separated her from the other kids

She remembers building the courage to speak out

She remembers being told, "I thought she was making fun of my British accent," to which she felt obligated to apologize for something she never did

She remembers hating herself because she thought her race made her less beautiful

But that shouldn't matter

Because race isn't something that segregates us, right?

She remembers her high school years

She remembers the outcry resulting from racial profiling that plagues her nation

She remembers feeling infuriated, burning hot like the sun, injustice rolling off her tongue, leaving a bitter after taste

She remembers seeing injustice everywhere, left and right, nonstop

She remembers experiencing that injustice, yet again

She remembers being treated like an object, made to feel "exotic," made to feel like an alien, and worst of all

She remembers them doing nothing

She remembers them waiting until another person was victimized, made to feel like an alien

But that shouldn't matter

Because race and gender aren't things that segregates us, right?

She remembers her college years

She remembers the insecurity she felt, because she was one of the many Asian kids that composed the statistics, you know, the ones about how Asian students make up this percentage of the student population?

She remembers the static attitude she kept throughout her middle, high school, and college years, you know, the one where she thought she couldn't be beautiful?

She remembers fearing that she would relive her high school years, after all, there was no one guardian here to defend her if she were to be victimized

But that shouldn't matter

Because race and gender aren't things that segregates us, right?

She remembers her adult years

She remembers the attitude she kept throughout her life and decided to erase it, start over

She remembers learning to love and accept herself

She remembers not wishing or hoping, for her to be the opposite of her race, her gender

She remembers understanding what it meant to be a woman of color

But that shouldn't matter

Because race and gender aren't things that segregates us, right?



Untitled #3711

Kayleigh Morrison

Andie Heck

Andie Heck is an aggressively average sophomore student at Hopewell Valley High School. One day she hopes to pursue a career in the education field.

Unhinged

A simple closet door.
When her foot crosses the threshold,
present time ceases to exist.
Behind the simple closet door were her skeletons.
Everything she had already seen before,
and everything she had tried to forget.
Locked simple closet door
trapped in a perpetual past state,
until the door became unhinged
And so did she.

Anna Antal

Anna Antal is a student at Hopewell Valley Central High School. She is passionate about writing, music, and science. Anna hopes to spend her life discovering the many beauties of the world.

Death.

Cold and silent.

Life.

Tiny and full.

She hates death because it is eternal.

He despises life because it is short.

“Without hatred, love is still strong,”
she argues.

“Without darkness, there is no light,”
he insists.

Death

Death.

Lonely and deep.

Life.

Loud and vibrant.

She rushes through the years without thinking.

He drags out the days for fear of their loss.

“Life is more beautiful than death,”
she declares.

“Life is precious because of death,”
he decides.

King of NY**Luis Navarette**

Luis likes to play soccer and draw. He drew this because this rapper is one of his favorites.



Annalise Wulf

Annalise is currently a sophomore at Hopewell Valley Central High School. This year, she is starting a sign language club.

My First Rollercoaster

I'm spinning spinning around
and around
And the colors become a whirlwind.
I hear them all
The red shouting
The yellow laughing
The blue whispering gently
And I want the blue to find me
Because this rollercoaster won't stop
Spinningspinning around
and around.
The blue will save me from the motion.
It is an ocean,
Wave after wave crashes over me,
And it makes me close my eyes
Until all I can see is black.
Black is a different color
And I can't hear anything
And suddenly it is night.
Soon, my sister calls me.
She says the ride is over,
And I open my eyes
Expecting to hear to roaring silence again,
But everything is still.
I don't think I want to go again.



Lit Sky

Tammy Morocho

Tammy Morocho is a high school student that loves taking pictures of nature and being active outside. She is a hard worker that wants to do many things and succeed in life. She enjoys and hopes that people can see the work she puts into her pictures.

Anusha Kemburu

Anusha Kemburu spends her days writing and listening to music. In the future, she hopes to have the opportunity to write for magazine and newspaper companies, as well as on her own.

2015 Hashtags That Lent a Helping Hand

We are the millennial generation. It's automatically assumed that we are conceited, self-absorbed individuals who live their entire life on the Internet, in specific, on social media. We're known to snapchat moments, tweet emotions, instagram milestones... essentially, even strangers can know more about us than our friends.

But that's just what's assumed. Really, the millennial generation is so much more. We're strong, open-minded individuals who care about the world around us. With more connections to strangers around the world comes more empathy for their different problems and situations. This is seen especially through hashtags, which can become so popular that they are able to trend on twitter within minutes, but only when people have strong enough opinions on the events occurring around them.

In 2015, there were problems. That can be vouched for in numerous ways. But what wasn't expected was the way the youth of this world educated themselves on these issues, and supported those who needed it most. Social media has provided a platform for people to learn, to advocate, to spread love, and I think that that's what 2015 was really about.

When Paris was hit with terrorist attacks, once in January and the next in November, America was there for them, all the way. On Jan. 7, the newspaper company "Charlie Hebdo" was attacked by a group of Muslim extremists, and there were twelve deaths as a result. When news of this attack first hit the internet, the company was flooded with support, in fact, #JeSuisCharlie (#IAmCharlie) began. It was meant to encourage the company to continue using their freedom of speech, regardless of the consequences. Almost ten months after, Paris was hit again, this time by ISIS. Almost 130 innocent civilians were found dead, others with severe injuries, and all targeted unexpectedly at random locations. Yet once again, the Internet showed their support through #PrayforParis. Not only did these hashtags bring awareness to these current events, but they also showed an abundant amount of love towards the souls that were both hurt and lost.

When African Americans were being targeted by the police and others because of deep discrimination issues, people with all different kinds of backgrounds urged for people to stop creating these prejudices against each other. One of the beginnings to #BlackLivesMatter began in Ferguson, Missouri. On August 9, 2014, Michael Brown was shot and killed by police officer Darren Wilson. People were divided into two on this matter, but regardless of the public's opinion, Wilson was declared not guilty. Sometime after that incident, in Baltimore, Maryland, there was an outcry about what happened between Freddie Gray and the police. While in police custody, Gray had passed away from a spinal injury caused by an officer. There was huge civil unrest after this problem, and it led to state emergencies because police officers themselves were being targeted by the public. Two months later, in Charleston, South Carolina, a hate crime had been committed. On June 17, 2015, Dylann Roof had walked into a known Black church, armed, and had killed nine people, including the pastor. Soon after, he was arrested and found guilty in court. The African American community suffered a huge loss, all because of the color of their skin. #BlackLivesMatter is of great importance to what is happening in America, and emphasizes the idea of loving and treating people as human beings, regardless of their skin color, religion, or personal beliefs. The hashtag itself was able to create solidarity between those who shared similar opinions on the tragic deaths happening nationwide.

When the LGBTQ+ community felt that they were done a huge injustice by not being allowed to get married to the ones that they loved, people nationwide fought for their rights. James Obergefell had been committed to his late husband, John Arthur for many years, yet, had never gotten married. When Arthur's physical body was slowly deteriorating due to his condition of ALS, they had decided to finally get married in Maryland, where gay marriage was legal. However, when they returned to their home in Ohio, they found that it didn't recognize their marriage, because it was done in another state. It wasn't fair that after all that they had been through together, when Arthur would die, he would be listed as a "single" man. Ever since that realization, Obergefell never stopped fighting for the rights of same-sex couples. In the Supreme Court case of Obergefell v. Hodges, it was

ruled that gay marriage would officially be legalized in all 50 states of the United States of America on June 26, 2015. #LoveWins celebrated their victory openly, and many celebrities took part in this new era of open-mindedness. People such as Barack Obama had thanked James for his hard work on this case and for allowing millions of people around America to love and marry the person that they intended to. The hashtag was a way for people to finally celebrate their love and their life, and gave many the courage to come out.

When student Ahmed Mohamed had brought a homemade clock to school, it was automatically assumed to be a bomb by his teachers. Whether it was because of his race or not, the fact still stands, this 14 year old boy was arrested for wanting to share his creativity with his classmates and his teachers. This incident in Texas occurred on September 14, 2015, and Ahmed still faces bullying because of it. However, when this story reached the internet, #IStandWithAhmed began, and he began receiving tons of support that outweighed the hate he was getting from others. President Barack Obama himself invited Mohamed to the White House for a special event, and one foundation even offered him a scholarship to study at Qatar. Overall, without his exposure to online sources, Ahmed would not have been given the amount of support and love that he had gotten, nor the amazing opportunities that stemmed from this problem.

When a growing number of governors in the United States were slowly beginning to stop any programs that allowed for refugees to come to America after the Paris attacks, the Obama administration began #RefugeesWelcome. It was to promote the idea of letting Syrian refugees into the United States, and to forget about the problems, the fights, and the violence between them. So many children have unfortunately passed away on their way to the UK and to the US, and as citizens of the world, many believed that it was our job to aid them on their journey to freedom. #RefugeesWelcome has become one of the biggest hashtags in 2015, and has helped people further open their minds to aiding those in the world who need it.

Lastly, comes the biggest, most influential, and inspiring hashtag of them all, #The-Dress. It's meaning still stands as a precedent for everyone worldwide-it is not and will never be okay to judge something based on its color, because most of the time, it can be all that, and even more.

Anusha Kemburu

Anusha Kemburu spends her days writing and listening to music. In the future, she hopes to have the opportunity to write for magazine and newspaper companies, as well as on her own.

Our World

We live in a world of labels,
Full of meaningless words pulled out of thin air,
With insecurities that mask our true identity,
And misjudgments that shade our true opinions.

We live in a world in which appearance dictates likeability,
Where race determines who you should be as an individual,
Where size and shape determines how attractive you are as an individual,
And where gender determines your value as an individual.

We live in a world in which technology has taken over,
Where 100,000 Instagram followers is worth more than a mother's love,
Where creativity has been lost to the endless answers given by the Internet,
And where communications have gone from heartfelt letters to automated messages.

So in the end, is it right to believe that a world so flawed,
Seems so perfect in the eyes of the ones who created it all?

Illumination

Srihari Subramanian



Bobbie Armstrong

Bobbie enjoys reading, writing, and sleeping. In between, she enjoys hanging out with friends and watching Parks and Rec for the 15th time. Her parents wish she would get outside more often.

High School Student Applies to 3,000 Colleges, Rejected By All

HOPEWELL- 18 year old Senior Sarah Newman began the year optimistically. After devoting her entire summer vacation to filling out college applications, she had achieved her lifelong goal of applying to nearly every college in America, including numerous community colleges across the country that geographically she was not eligible to attend. Nevertheless, Sarah spent the hot summer toiling away in front of the computer in her air conditioned room, working towards her dream. By August, her complexion was that of a ghost and she was subsisting on a diet of Jif Extra Chunky Peanut Butter. When she returned to school to begin her final year, she was often asked what colleges she had applied to. "It was really hard to answer those questions," she recalls. "I would lose track around 100, and usually whoever I was talking to had fallen asleep by then."

In January of her Senior year, the letters and emails began pouring in from schools around the country. Due to the large volume of emails she received, her computer overheated and died, forcing her to resort to reading letters instead. The local post office appointed a special task force to work around the clock, delivering the letters to her home. Sarah quickly became alarmed when the first 300 were rejections. She would go on to discover that all 3,000 were in fact rejections, in spite of strong grades and stellar SAT scores. She does not consider this endeavor to be a disappointment however, as she now holds the world record for most days surviving on only peanut butter. After graduation, Sarah will be spending a year at home, working at the local grocery store and applying to colleges in Canada.

Falling Pegasus

Kyla Chasalow



Bryan Rodriguez

Bryan is passionate about art and literature. He likes to express his ideas through his work.

Wandering Sound

At sail... I
For so long will swim 'n' fall
Oh, so long Hopefully stand tall
Dawn with a sail so broad
Breaking dawn sailin' my way to you,
Drawn 'n' fawn you...
Of the luscious song I'll follow the wandering sounds
It heals Not afraid now
Feels Of the tales to come now
Oh so divine Oh, I'm feeling strong now
It's a gift from time Because I feel that
I've been sailing for so long In the end I'll
For so long find my love
Oh, so long He may send a note 'n' bottle
That I've started to think With a lil' smile
I'm not on the right boat Oh
where's the bottle 'n' note? My love
The seven seas Will stay strong
All have dreams I'll stay strong
Where is my love? listenin' for the wandering sound
Oh, my love? So I may come to you
whole and new
The weather rains forever All the way to you
The weather rains forever I'll sail to you
In the rough waters so somber through the thunder
Oh, holy waters through the lightning
where's the sound? I'll sail to you
The wandering sound? following the wandering sound
Of our beating hearts... the wandering sound...
Oh wandering sound Of our hearts.
Where are you now?
Out in the open waters
waters so somber
Where are you now?
In the waters so expensive now?

Capture

Sneha Patel

Sneha Patel is a sophomore at Hightstown High school. She enjoys reading novels, painting and sketching, as well as baking. She loves listening to music and prefers playing the electric guitar over the acoustic.



A Sneeze

Right now I have an itch in my nose
It's a tingle that reaches all the way to my toes
I feel it open my mouth and widen my eyes
It prickles my throat and tickles my sides
My muscles tense up as it crawls in my skin
It stiffens my arms and raises my chin
My joints go weak and my face turns red
The pressure and tension just build in my head
Back up, people! This might cause some harm!
a-a-a-ah-ahhhhhhhh...
*whew
Nevermind. False alarm.

Catherine Chen

Catherine who loves art, science, and math. She wrote these poems based on real life experiences and ideas. She hopes you enjoy reading them!

Thank you.”

Chandler Habig

Chandler Habig is a dedicated student that attends Hopewell High School. He is involved in many extracurricular activities including the varsity hockey team and golf team. He is a motivated student who writes with passion and expresses his thoughts.

The Boy's First Winter

From the steamy mosquito filled swamps of the Everglades, the boy's family had journeyed up within a stone's throw of the Canadian border to the town nestled in the ice covered Boundary Mountains.

What was this white stuff?

Everywhere. Blanketing the world.

He expected the cold, he expected it to be white, but he did not expect it to be so beautiful.

The cold white silence was new to him and created new areas of exploration.

He could think clearly now the constant sound of the birds and people were gone.

He was where he belonged, and it only took him sixteen years to get there.

Christa Laverty

Christa describes her inspiration for this poem as "A poem about a trip that changed YOUR life."

People Change

people change,
like a caterpillar to a butterfly,
some thought the caterpillar was beautiful,
but not everyone did.

those who loved the caterpillar admired him,
but they never knew when he would be gone,
they became so attached to his uniqueness,
they would be devastated when he leaves.

but out of nowhere he disappeared,
and some were worried and missed him,
and he came back a few weeks later,
recognizable but completely different.

those who loved him missed him dearly,
though he was right there,
he changed so much it's like he died,
but yet he's still alive.

they missed the old him so so much,
and they wouldn't accept his change,
but that just blocked them from realizing,
how truly beautiful the butterfly is.

**Dream About a Yin,
Using a Little Yang**

Daniel Teman

Daniel loves to draw abstract, mainly funky dream catchers and detailed medallions. He also loves to play lacrosse and be active around school.

Christopher Nadar

Chris is a sophomore at Hopewell Valley Central High School. He enjoys participating in various instrumental groups and playing a few instruments. In English class, he enjoys reading and expressing his ideas.

The Janitor

The broom crept above the dirt-covered sidewalk
as my old hands delicately held the handle in place,
pacing back and forth slowly.

The city was saturated with poverty, smoke, and violence.
But mostly people, who crowded up and down the streets,
avoiding contact with me at all cost.
Nobody went near the Buraku,
the untouchables.

They did not look at my tattered, filthy clothes.
Nor did they admire my old, lifeless, wrinkled skin.
I was nothing but a curse,
poisoned by place.

Until one small child fell from a building and broke his leg
Some stood and watched,
while others tried to mend the wound
but the men, women, and children didn't know what to do.

Tears filled the cracks of the sidewalk
and cries shattered the air,
because there were none left to help.
Except me.
So they stared right at me.

So I simply crouched beside the boy,
made a splint of two rigid, dark sticks,
wrapped his little, bent leg,
and sent him on his way.

I did not wear a lab coat.
I did not care.
I was outside the box.
They did not care.
They never thought I had anything they wanted,
except when they needed me.

Because I was right.
My filth.
My curse.
My place
None of it mattered,
and they had to listen to me.
Because I was right.

Courtney Agnello

Courtney Agnello is a 17 year old senior at Allentown High School. She is an avid reader who loves to write and she will be attending art school in NYC in the fall.

A Poem for Two Voices

Summer	Winter
Long days, winding down to	The Sun is
Long nights	Asleep
The Sun is	Cold air,
Awake	A frozen darkness
Fall	turning our soft bodies
“I’m waking up”	into statues
Wind	Spring
carrying a chill on its back	Petite pink petals
Taking the warm light with it	Blooming only once a year
We cover our noses, fingers, and toes	like quiet hearts
Hiding from the Lady Autumn	that whisper softly
The Sun is	“I’m waking up”
Tired	The Sun is
	Rising

Cinderellie Cinderellie

Build a temple in the hearts of people,
That hate and discourage.

Give them something to believe in
Show them that love and kindness
Can take you far.

Confidence structures leaders
Lead them into a new world
Help them see their potential

Make them remember you.
Be their legacy of truth,
Build a temple in the hearts
Of people.

Rusted Wheels

Alexa Ferst

Alexa Ferst is a junior at Hightstown high school who plays field hockey and plans to major in interior architecture when she goes to college. She enjoys taking photos of geometric shapes and architecture. A life goal she has is to travel the world to examine different styles of architecture.



David Yu

David Yu is a junior at Hopewell Valley Central High School. As the poem suggests, he is constantly struggling with that god-damn laptop of his.

My Goddamn Laptop

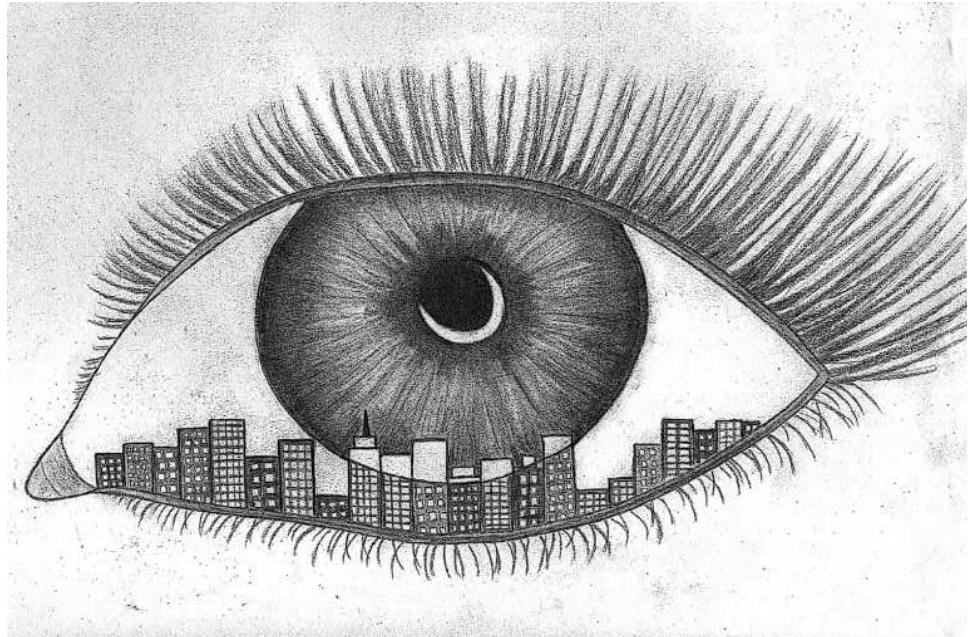
Sitting alone in the corner
Of a trashed-up room
Is my goddamn laptop
Opened up to that blue desktop screen
That awful, blinding light
And choices and choices all over the place
Make one wrong step and time's just gone to waste
A minute, and hour, who knows? A whole day?
But trying my best to keep hold of my mind
I hate it, but oh well
It'll be better in the end
I tell myself in my crumpled up head
But who wants to do something they hate?
That goddamn laptop just might be
The answer to my prayers.
But that goddamn laptop just loves to
Get in my way.
No matter how much I fight or kick.
That goddamn laptop's just gonna
Drag me back to hell or some unworldly place
Still, I love that goddamn laptop.
I need it for everything I do.
But for everything it takes away
Is it really worth the trouble?
Someday I just might find that goddamn laptop
The bait waiting in a bear trap
I'll tell myself that I can do it one more time
I can't walk away just yet.
I tell myself I need that goddamn laptop
Suck it up, just clear your mind
And jump straight in...
What did I think would happen?
Just magically fly over and snatch my dreams?
I managed to pry open those iron teeth
Clamped onto my ankles, digging in
I'm bleeding out on the floor again
But I have to get up.
And try again.
Just hoping that I can do it
This time.
But I never can.
And it's all that goddamn laptop's fault

Then again
Maybe it's just me after all
Being an idiot without thinking at all
Like everyone's been telling me
Instead of that
Goddamn Laptop

Eye of the City

Jasmine Abraham

Jasmine is a junior at Hightstown High School. She has always had a small passion for art and design, and loves to create small paintings for her family and friends.



Eliza Wirkjowski

Eliza Wirkjowski is 16. She enjoys painting and drawing in her free time, and is extremely passionate at playing piano. She especially enjoys listening to music, preferably classical or anything with piano.

‘fore composition C

scarlet fluids spew from the radiator;
there have been few
across the hall
room 102

a wilting hyacinth with a detonator;
we don't foresee

--
room 103

--
we will ignore

--
room 104

--
--
--
soon out the door

Erhu

an old Chinese tune
played by a very old man,
on his fine erhu
with swift calloused hands

on its long slender neck
his old fingers fly
only two strings attached
his bamboo bow glides
a hexagonal body
made of snakeskin hide

slow and melodic
gentle, but sad
you sing out the sufferings
our people has had
you mimick the voices
and cries of despair
great sadness within
still hangs in the air

suffering, yet hopeful
for a new life to embrace
your words forever touched
change falls in the case

Emily Mah

Emily is student at Lawrence High. She enjoys reading, playing music, and sketching in her free time.

Star Trails

Pawel Bednarski

Pawel enjoys taking long exposure photographs. A longer exposure allows him to create a stream of stars and photographs at night.



The Golden City

Anjali Agarwal

Anjali is a high school junior who enjoys reading, writing, and photography, along with competing in science and business competitions.



Ethan Wild

Ethan Wild was born on August 8th, 2000. He has written for fun for the past four years, but this is the first competition he has submitted one of his works to.

All My Faults

I used to look at myself in the mirror
 the first things that stood out
 the little bumps, the small black dots
 the speckles of self doubt
 then one day a friend said to me
 "I see you're quite ashamed"
 she rolled up both her sleeves and whispered
 "my flaws have all been tamed"
 along her arms and hands and wrists
 in iridescent lines
 were gems the size of marbles
 each a different kind
 she handed me a small tin box
 that rattled when it shook
 within the box were extra gems
 they had a dazzling look
 I took some slowly from the box
 ruby, jade, and quartz
 I held them up, and like velcro
 they stuck to moles and warts
 with open glee, I grabbed the box
 despite her pleas to halt
 and made places of beauty
 where there had been all my faults
 a twisted ear, some loosened lips
 a head that's much too small

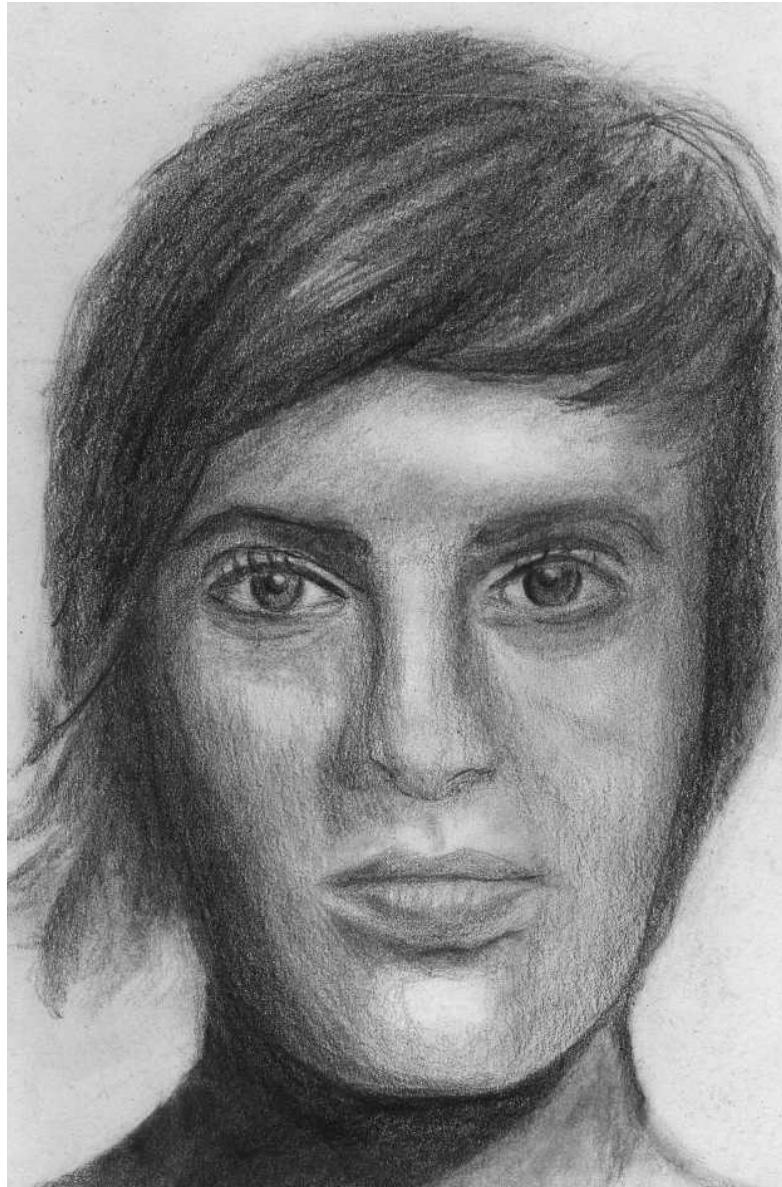
soon people stopped and stare at me
 as I walked through the halls
 "who's that girl, adorned with jewels
 in reds and greens and blues"
 wherever I went I became known
 for all my different hues
 and so I piled on more and more
 to eyes and nose and face
 till none of me was left exposed
 with gemstones in their place
 as I shuffled through the halls
 the gems would bump and grind
 I felt them chafing against my skin
 I thought I didn't mind
 Eventually the chafing stopped
 along with all sensation
 I was no longer who I was
 but a glittering incarnation
 Though the beauty all around me
 made me twinkle like the stars
 beneath it, though i did not know,
 were forming deeper scars
 Until one day the crushing weight
 finally took its toll
 I collapsed under the pressure
 I had lost all control

with all the strength that I had left
 I raised a rocky arm
 and dug through the gems on my
 chest
 that's when I realized the harm
 of covering one's self with jewels
 my beauty was their theft
 I shoveled deeper through myself
 but there was nothing left
 the ones who knew thought "serves
 her right"
 though aloud they showed respect
 "it is truly unfortunate"
 "but what did she expect"
 the ones who didn't know, they said
 "oh what a massive waste"
 "a girl with oh so many jewels"
 "it fills me with distaste"
 either way, it seemed a shame
 I'd make that awful hole
 a tomb adorned with shining gems
 but not a scrap of soul

Facing the Face

John Mikaeal

Throughout many years, John wanted to realistically draw a face. Using pencil and time, he finally draws a face.



Gianna Russo

Gianna Russo is a senior in high school at Allentown. She hopes to pursue a law degree at the University of Alabama next year.

High School

Wandering through the halls

Listening

But not participating

Talk of sex and drugs

Come in and out of mouths

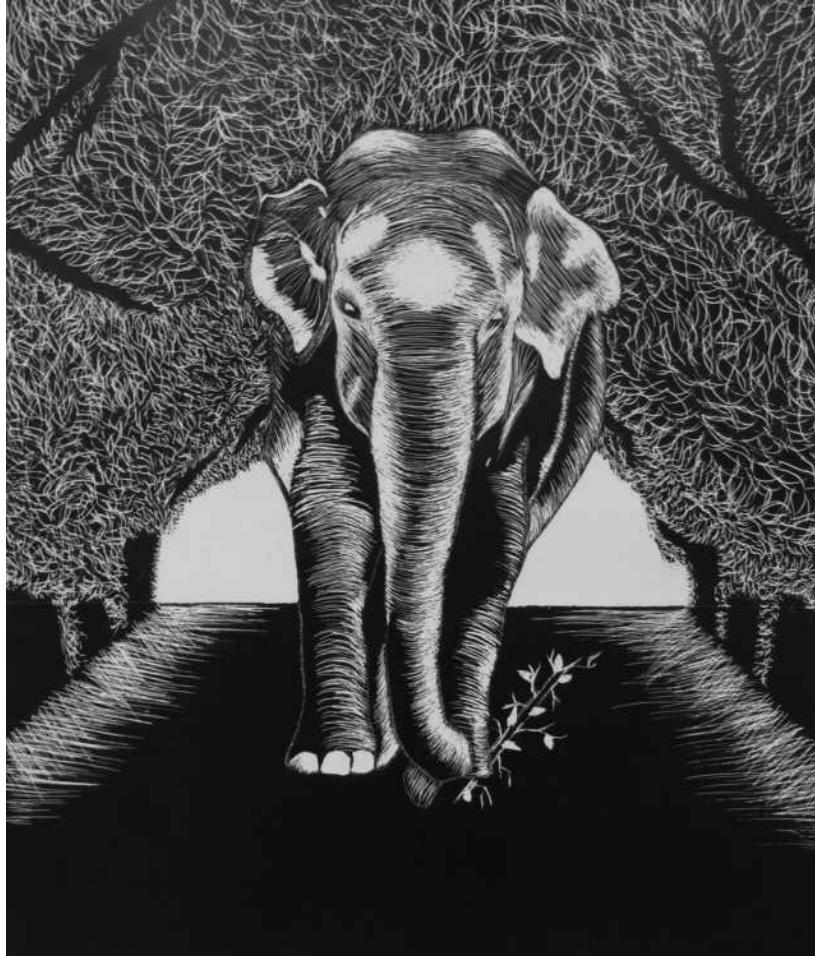
Parties galore

Someone's passed out
on the floor

Seniors convince freshman
it will be fun

You don't know what
road to pick
College road or
College Avenue

We are too old
for sweet 16's
But too young
to sit with the adults
and talk about politics
We are somewhere
in between

**Unique Asian Elephant****Morgan Sebasto**

Morgan, 17, enjoys reading, drawing, and painting.

Gregory Silagy

Greg, 15, likes to read and to play video games. He plays soccer also. This is his first year in public school.

Excerpt of Dweller's Exodus

The elders in the bunker say "bunker life" is hard, but me, being born in a bunker, I don't really notice. My mother has always told me about life outside the bunker and how the world above turned to anarchy. The overseer doesn't like people talking about it, but my mother did anyway. She told me about sunny, warm days; and cold rainy nights. She told me about everyday life. She told me about how perilous it has all become. Waking up early to go to work and staying up late to watch movies. But most of all, she told me about my father. From the way he made her laugh to the way he spoke and walked. His dark red hair like mine and his sky blue eyes. She has told me all these things over and over until now.

Now that I'll be 18 in a few weeks she has been worried about my job placement. They aren't hard jobs so I won't mind doing them. What I do mind is school. Six hours of sitting in a dark, damp room while the teacher drones on about what's on the projector is not exactly enjoyable, but in a few weeks time I won't have to be there anymore. My friend, Juli and I are both excited for the job selection. She wants to be a teacher and (somehow she enjoyed those six hours a day). I'm not exactly sure what I want to get picked for but as long as it's nothing like teacher or bunker door manager or something like that.

Today started like any other day. I woke up and made my way towards the classrooms. On my way I met up with Juli. "Good morning" she said with a smile. I responded with a grunt, I was exhausted from staying up all night studying for our exams. She picked up on my mood right away. We had been friends for a long time, she knew when I wasn't in the mood to talk. Once we got to our classroom and took our seats, we were met by some very interesting news from our teacher. "Okay class, today we will not be taking our exams." This was something I was happy to hear but he had more to say. "Instead you will be...uh...be taking the ADPA. The Advanced Duty Placing Assessment." He said this uneasily, as though he had just found this out this morning. After a moment of silence he handed out slips of paper to the class. It had about five questions on it. I blew through it, all it was was questions like "what would you do in this situation." Ten minutes later he collected the papers and said "that's all for today...you all...you all may be excused." Something was definitely up, but at this point I didn't care. After all the stress of studying last night I finally got to relax for the day. I looked over at Juli. I must have had a stupid grin on my face because she cracked a smile too, but she still looked uneasy. The class filed out of the classroom. Squeezing out of the door I got pushed around quite a bit. I wasn't everyone's favorite dweller due to the fact my mother had stirred up some controversy in the bunker. That wasn't a problem for them now though. She has been sick in the medical bay for a month now. Once Juli and I broke away the crow we decided to head to the cafe for an early lunch.

Everyone must have had the same idea because it was crowded, at least it was crowded for the bunker. Not many people live in the bunker so it's never really crowded. We made our way to the corner booth and took a seat. "What do you think was up in class today?" said Juli, still confused about earlier. I feigned confusion, "I'm not exactly sure. Do you think it has something to do with the overseer?" The overseer of the bunker had been making some momentous changes to the bunker in the last few months. "I don't know," she replied, "maybe." She was interrupted when a ghastly man in a black suit came over to our table. He wasn't our waiter. "I'm looking for Ron Staples." He said in a rasping voice. "That's me." I replied. "Come with me." I shot Juli a nervous look. She

looked just as confused as me. I stood up and followed the man out the door.

As we ventured down the long hallways of the asylum, my speed was hampered by my thoughts. I moved down the hall thing where we could be headed. Then I knew, as we turned a corner, I knew we were heading to the medical bay. Fear filled my mind. Was something wrong with my mother? As we approached her room I hesitated, the large door and red lights seemed to taunt me to come inside but what was wrong? The man I had followed there opened the door for me, and then I saw her. She was laying there almost completely stagnant. I moved farther into the room and then she noticed me. She tried to sit up and the nurse across the room moved to her side. I moved over to the other side of the bed and my mother and I locked eyes for a moment and she grabbed my hand. "I think it's time we go now" said the man in the black suit as he opened the door, but I didn't move until he grabbed my arm and pulled me out. Juli was out there waiting for me. It seems she had followed up down there. We didn't say anything, we both knew what was happening. She pulled me into a hug. When she let go she said, "Come on, let's get out of here." "I'll stay, I'll catch up with you later though", I replied. I sat outside my mother's room for what felt like hours until the nurse came out and told me she was gone. I didn't sleep well for the next few days, and for the first time, I felt alone in the bunker.

Juli and I were sitting in the cafe. Since schooling was over we had some time to relax. "I still don't get it", she said randomly. "Get what?" I replied. "Why didn't we have our exams? All we had is that little test." "Why are you complaining?"

"I'm not, it's just weird."

"Well, why don't you ask the overseer?" I said sarcastically.

"Why don't you?"

"What? No."

"I dare you."

"Nope."

"Come on, I dared you."

I thought for a second. I guess I was a little curious. "Fine.", I said getting out of my seat. She was laughing as I walked out the door.

As I was walking toward the overseer's office door it slid open for me. I got a look inside. It was only about the size of a cubicle. "Oh, hello Ron, I've been expecting you." I heard a voice say from inside the room. I stepped in the room. "Excuse me?" I said. "I was expecting to see you to talk to me." "About what, sir?" "Well, about your mother." I froze I had spent the last month grieving over her. I didn't want to talk about it but he was the overseer. "What...what about her?" I said. The speaker usually followed through with his word and was credible but I hesitated. "About her death" he said candidly.

"What about it, sir?"

"Well, it's no secret your mother was a...controversial figure in our bunker."

"What are you saying?"

"I'm saying this might have played a part in her death."

"What? No, she...she was sick." He didn't seem to hear what I said.

"She was a risk to our facility. Her death was necessary, it was...well, it was fated from the beginning." Anger began to build up inside me. "Are you saying you had her killed?!" I started toward him, but suddenly he pulled out a gun and pointed it at me. "I'm aware of the things she told you and I'm sorry to say that you too are a risk." I saw his finger twitch towards the trigger and I slammed my palm into his wrist as he fired and the shot hit the door frame. I raised my leg and kicked him in the stomach. I flew back and hit the intricate panels on the console behind him. He crumbled to the ground and I scooped up his gun and ran out of the room before he could recover. The door slid shut behind me.

I ran down the hallway. What did I just do? My thoughts were interrupted when I nearly ran into Juli. "Well, it took you long enough. What did he say?" She stopped once she got a good look at me. She saw the gun in my hand and the look on my face. I was sweating. "What did you do?!"

"It was the overseer! He pulled a gun on me!" I said.

"So you killed him?!"

"No! It just..."

"Look, I don't care what you did, but security will be coming for you."

"We've got to get out of here!"

"Not we, you. I...I can't leave..." She had a family here. I couldn't make her leave that. "Fine, how do I get out of here?" I said. "Follow me" she said signaling me to follow. So we ran down the long corridor, knowing that at any time we could be confronted by men with guns. I was worried that they'd catch me with Juli. I didn't want them to think she was my accomplice, she was just in the wrong place at the wrong time. Nonetheless, we made it to the bunker door. "Here we are" she said, looking at the bunker number on the apex of the bunker door. I was looking over at her. "I guess this is it" I said. "I guess so" she said back. I didn't know what to say. We had known each other for so long. "I better see you again" she said, breaking the silence. "You will" I said back. "Try not to die out there."

"I'll see you Juli" I said smiling.

"Bye Ron." She walked off, back into the corridors of the bunker.

I turned my brazen attention to the door that led to the realm outside. I walked over to the control panel for the vault door. I tucked my pistol into the back of my pants. The small green screen on the panel was used for opening the door. It scanned I.D.s to open. I pulled out my I.D. and swiped it across the screen. The screen lit up and a panel covering a button popped open. They hadn't locked me out yet. I looked over at the door. I was finally leaving the bunker. I'd never stopped to consider what the world outside would be like. All I had to go on was what my mother had told me. I pressed the button. The red lights above the door went off and I heard a loud buzzing noise along with the grinding of the bunker door opening. "This way!" I heard someone yell from down the hall. Light flooded in from the open door. I ran to the door, looked back into the bunker and walked out. The bunker door shut behind me.

Downtown

Caroline Cano

Caroline Cano is a sophomore at Hightstown high school and is on the varsity cheer team. She enjoys spending time with her younger sisters and hanging out with friends. Caroline plans on going to college to become a clinical psychologist and help young adults with their mental health problems.



Hannah Morin

Hannah Morin is a senior at Hopewell Valley Central High School. She enjoys reading, writing, building robots, and having useless conversations with her cat.

Cents and Centsability

In a multistep process, the nonprofit “Women on 20s” has been crowdsourcing votes for the female face of the twenty-dollar bill. Their goal is to petition the federal government to circulate a twenty with the chosen woman on it in time for the 100th anniversary of the 19th amendment in 2020. A woman’s place, they declare, is on the twenty.

Unfortunately, this simply doesn’t make cents. Money is for Men. We all know that a woman’s true place is in the kitchen. All these numbers—the 20th amendment, 2020, twenty-dollar bills—must have confused their mathematically challenged brains. Isn’t it men who pay the bills? Run Wall Street? Head companies? Get elected to government? Women never do these things. Besides, the United States has never had a female President. While other honored men like Benjamin Franklin and Alexander Hamilton were never president, Franklin’s illegitimate children and Hamilton’s lethal duel proved they were manly enough for products geared towards men. Having a woman on the twenty would a defacement of currency and would break the law. We couldn’t simply put a woman on a green twenty-dollar bill. That would be an insult to femininity and women everywhere. It needs to be pink. But upholding traditional family values this way would be a malice mutilation of our currency. More importantly, putting a woman on the 20 would reduce it to 77% of its original value. How are men supposed respect a pink \$15.50 bill with a woman on it?

In contrast, Andrew Jackson, the current oval headed occupant of the twenty, beat the British in the battle of New Orleans after the war of 1812 was over, founded the Democratic party, and was a racist. This honorable man showed the world that the United States answers to no one—not even the Supreme Court—when he continued to enforce the Indian Removal act, and caused the death of thousands of Indians on the Trail of Tears. His Kitchen Cabinet also made Andrew Jackson one of the most progressive presidents of the 19th century. Sure it was unofficial and all male, but it was the first place in government where women had the opportunity to feel at home. It is not ironic that a fervent opponent of the central banking system and paper currency is on a federal bank note. It’s progressive. America honors its presidents whether they like it or not.

What woman could compete? The best Women on 20s could come up with is a list of bossy women who did some stuff from their kitchens. As the four-term labor secretary of FDR, all Francis Perkins did was champion legislation that created unemployment benefits, pensions, welfare, minimum wages, and overtime pay. Andrew Jackson is clearly superior. The other women are equally unaccomplished. Clara Barton founded the Red Cross, some insignificant Christian cult. Rachel Carson wrote a horror novel about something irrelevant like the environment or birds. Rosa Parks sat somewhere for a while and didn’t get up. The other eleven are forgettable. None of these women forced political change. They didn’t inspire or help any one. They didn’t settle their arguments with guns or have children out of wedlock. They didn’t contribute to the United States financial system, and it’s not like our Federal Reserve is really run by a woman today. She’s actually just a robot made to look like a woman, and we all know that robots are guy things. Such is the problem with putting a woman on the twenty.

But, women need currency too. They need to buy sandwich ingredients, beauty products, clothes and shoes to stimulate the economy. Luckily, since we can’t have a woman our real money, Tupperware and Playtex have recently come together to create the next best thing: Womoney, the noteworthy edition to their long line of female products. Available in 50 shades of pink, this female friendly paper currency is super absorbent and smells of sweet lilacs—great additions to any kitchen. These 1, 5, 10, 20, and 50 dollar bills have been resized for delicate female hands and feature the new and improved Latin slogan “nemo e culina”, which translates to “out of the kitchen none” and is sure to resonate with women everywhere. Furthermore, Womoney features actual influential women like Michelle Bachman, Kim Kardashian, Miss America 2014 and even the antifeminist Phyllis Schlafly—all photoshopped of course. Naturally, the higher the bill’s worth, the prettier the woman. Girls of the next generation are sure to look up to these role models and see their true value to society. Womoney, just for her, takes away the need for a woman on the twenty. But then again, what do I know, I’m a woman, and women aren’t good with money.



Spiral Up

Hannah Robertson

Hannah writes and explores photography to discover abstract and creative concepts that are often overlooked in our everyday lives. She loves to play soccer, spend time with her family, and help others in need.



Parrot

Stephanie Luo

Stephanie is a student at Lawrence High School. She enjoys drawing and painting. Flora and fauna is all around us she decided to capture it.

Hannah Morin

Dear Mister Moth

Dear Mister Moth in my bathroom
Is it okay if I call you a mister?
Even though you're septic-tank-brown
And larger than a serving spoon,
you seem like a gentleman to me,
or
a gentle woman...moth.
We can be civil, can't we?

So you see,
esteemed mister
— sorry majestic—
moth,
I regretfully inform you that
my bathroom, while green,
moist,
and smelling more outdoorsy than I'd like
is indeed inside MY home,
not yours.

It's not that I don't appreciate your muddy camouflage and almost
cute little legs
or that I have nightmares of finding you
in my mouth.
It's just that everything about you,
your frolicking,
your obsession with blinding light,
and especially
especially,
the soft CRUNCH your exoskeleton
would make
if I squished you
(accidently of course)
makes me scuttle in my skin.
And I want to
—respectfully—
retreat beneath a blanket.

So please kind sir
or madam
this breaking and entering
has gone too far.
I must urge you now to
walk—DO NOT FLY—
calmly
out the door
down the stairs
and through the kitchen to the back door
where someone (else) can escort you home.

Hannah Morin

My Father's Family

My father's family is big and littered with too many cousins and too many names. There's Aunt Edna who still sends us hats that are too small, Chris with the dreadlocks, and John who started that strange church. There's Sarah and Susan and Linda and Lilly and too many names we don't say enough.

My father has a brother, Adam. He sends us birthday cards with cash to match our age. The cards are signed in the thick clean capitals of a sharpie, from Adam and Emma—and Oscar and Picasso and Boris, their cats. His wife does it all. She sends good wishes that are like a vinyl record turning out slow crackling jazz.

We haven't seen my uncle in years.

My grandfather spotted him at a family funeral, my father says at dinner. Adam was late and sat in the back then tried to scurry away the moment the service ended. Grandpa followed, dragging his toes in a stiff dance towards the door. From the top of the steps he called to his eldest son, I miss you. Come back.

Adam just kept walking.

Sometimes Adam doesn't get out of bed my parents say. Sometimes he doesn't take his pills. Sometimes he just doesn't talk to the family for years. I stare at them with more questions but that is all they say. They get up and head to bed, leaving dinner's dishes where they lay. It takes a funeral for us to see Adam again.

My grandfather was just getting out of the car they said. The tin jackrabbit that stands a little tall. He pushed just a little too hard on the door, clutched his ipad a little too close and as he tumbled and didn't put his hands out.

Why didn't you put your hands out?

My grandmother phones us like she does every night but this time the rings stop short and my father sprints up the basement steps and his chest is expanding and contracting like an oversized heart in the heat of a marathon.

He grabs my sister and runs out the door. You stay here they say. Stay with your mother. I sit on the bottom step with my hands in my head and stare at our white front door as my mother calmly calls 911. How is she so calm?

We get there and my grandfather is lying in the driveway and my grandmother is crying and my mother is holding her hands and whispering into her hair and my sister is inside getting blankets and my father is holding the hand of the strongest man he used to ever think existed. But now the hand is pale with the shadows of veins and his gold ring glimmers in the street lamps as it trembles.

His head lies on the end of driveway, still a little lopsided from the tongs they used to pull him from his mother as a baby. All I see is the gray fuzz of the side of his beard and the oversized white whips of hair jutting from his scalp, reaching towards the sky...the ground. Cherry cough syrup drips from his nose and slides into the puddle right before the driveway meets the sidewalk. I'm rocking back and forth on my knees when the ambulance comes and packs him and goes. They leave the puddle, red as a rose.

They make me go to school the next day and the hallway is full of fog and my knees are still weak from the night before. I staple a smile to my face, afraid of the voice that will shrug and say, it's just your grandpa. Those things go away.

My Grandfather lies in a hospital room unable to wake. They take out the tubes and he just snores a rippling roar, like he used to when he would take naps on the floor in front of the TV. We laugh at this ancient sleeping beauty, but his prince will never come, so we laugh until we cry. It hits me then, the tsunami, so the ocean oozes from my eyes. I didn't get to say goodbye.

My father cries at his funeral, face scrunched, trying to squish all the feelings into a box and bury it somewhere. The church rings with stories of his father's strong hands and he describes the Viking of a man his father was. This man was different than the one that we knew, who was hunched from cracked ribs and a re-stitched heart, whose walker walked for him, who was quiet, excluding his monstrous ears, and who always stopped to make obnoxious, silly faces. Different still from the man we poured into the ground.

People said it was a blessing.

My uncle attends the funeral too and says little. Acid tears gush down his face and hiss into his skin as he pours his father into the ground to rest.

Did he know he was missed?

Did he get to say goodbye?

Mono Drama

Luciannys Camacho



Unlocked

Jarell Johnson

Jarell is a senior at Hightstown High School and is expecting to graduate in June. He enjoys writing poetry, short stories, as well as an occasional script. He is excited to attend a college for a major in Astronomy.



Hannah Thompson

Hannah is a student at Lawrence High School.

Good For the World

Emotion is inexplicable
not necessarily applicable
to everyday lives
in which people strive
to do something good for the world.

And ever so unnecessarily
Quite possibly arbitrarily
we like to fight
to hold on to a right
to do something good for the world.

But maybe if all of us took a step back
And looked at the problems all too tough to crack
Well what if I see
That the problem is me?
That logic and distance
Are really the key
Then that's how we show
That we really do know
How to do something good for the world.

Up and Over

John Ely

John Ely is a sophomore at Hightstown high school and plays lacrosse and runs cross country. He enjoys taking photographs of sports and nature and plans to major in marine biology in college. In his free time, he enjoys fishing, snowboarding and running in addition to taking pictures.



Hannah Tran

“Firebird”

Sometimes
Fall is a sometimes season

Sometimes you can walk around in wonder at the changing trees, and sometimes you just stare in wonder at the rain
Through your foggy window
Sometimes fall is a triumphant cry of beauty, the last words of summer before it fades into winter.
Sometimes it just fades.

As a person who finds change difficult, fall should be my least favorite season.
That awkward time of year when it's sweater weather in the morning and eighty degrees in the afternoon,
The aging sky that turns from baby blue and cotton balls to gray sheets and flattened stuffing.

The fire that spreads from tree to tree
Golden teardrops running down the arms of a willow
The shuddering pumpkin leaves of an oak
Scarlet hands that brush the top of my head as I pass under a maple.

Although the season is fading into white and grey, and the noise becomes a dull, whispering wind,
I draw my energy from the silence so loud and the people so bright against a canvas so striking.

And let's not forget
Because the point of fall is to remember from before you fell
And let's not
Forget
All falls don't end in tragedy.

Tahrir Square

Yousef Mousa

Yousef Mousa is a junior in High School. He was born in Cairo, Egypt but moved here when he was 1. In his daily life he strives to be successful.



Highlights

Joe Carlisi

Joe Carlisi is an inspiring young man that attends to Hightstown Highschool. He dreams of one day becoming an artist.



Hunter DiCicco

Hunter Stephen DiCicco is a seventeen year-old senior at Allentown High School.

how to keep a marriage you do not want

they write for bread,
and i am oh so privileged
to write for my head instead.

i am on the opposite
of inside that quaint drifting nomad's home
wanting to feel a knob in my hand
knowing they're on the other side
and that they'll teach me a thing or two
about the pen as a sword and ludlow beer
and all the times their fat, fluffy poems
hopped just far enough to earn nothing.

i'd learn about colored lights and
where wild children count corn pennies
and i'd do it
if i could write my way out of this -
straitjacket.
like they did.

Hunter DiCicco

my people live NO MORE

my dead came in hordes
like blades of the southern grass.
their ashen abused skin tight on their bones...
i froze my longsword up on a mantle
to honor them.
i lit every torch to warm their ghosts
and slept with ivy rounding my bedposts.
that night they came - shed their coats
like slag off of steel
and joined me to climb the peaks
in my rest.

we will venture in sheep's wool,
for where we go i will not need my crown
anymore.



Endless Arches

Alexa Ferst

Jaclyn Bellini

Jaclyn Bellini is a senior at Allentown High School. Her passions include writing, acting, and psychology. She hopes to be an editor for a large publishing company one day.

Misunderstandings

My girl asked me if we could live in a submarine.

I asked, "Don't you like it up here, where the air is easy to breathe?"

She plastered a smile on and nodded her head.

And so she understood.

My girl asked if we could sing to the frogs.

I asked, "Wouldn't you rather sing to the birds, the ones with melodies so sweet?"

She swallowed her song and set it aside.

And so she understood.

My girl asked me to pose for a portrait she would trace on the sidewalk.

I asked, "Shouldn't you save your work on a canvas, dear? So that it lasts forever?"

She picked up her chalk and walked in the house.

And so she understood.

I came home one day to a note on the dresser.

"All must not need to make sense.

I am sorry you could not take the journeys with me."

Outside the window, I saw my face on the cement.

A few days later I heard a tune near the swamp.

And a decade after I saw her under the sea.

I should have understood.

Jasmine A. Santalla

How Lonely the Moon Must Be

How lonely the moon must be
A constant outsider
But how knowledgeable
Always watching
All the secrets it must know

How wise and experienced
As old as the earth itself
Taking every hit
A new crater, a new scar
I wonder why those stars don't like him

How peaceful
No wanderers to be bothered by
I hope he's not afraid of the dark
Because how horrifying

To only live in the dark
And maybe that's why we turn
He doesn't want the sun to endure the dark
He gives himself up
How selfless of him

How privileged he is
All the places he must see
All the wonders of the world
With the best view

How helpless he must feel
Watching all of the mayhem and chaos unravel
Just out of reach

How painful it must be
To be knowledgeable, wise, experienced, privileged, and at peace
But at the same time
To be lonely, horrified, helpless
And irrevocably out of control



Wolf

Rachel Kochis

Rachel is 15 years old and really into art of all forms. She loves trying new mediums to work with. One of her favorite art forms is photography and she am considering a career in it.

Julia Faranetta

Julia Faranetta is a 10th grader at Lawrence High School. In her free time she enjoys playing soccer, drawing, and painting. Julia loves spending time with her friends and family.

Sun and Earth

In the beginning
there was nothing but darkness
because Sun was cool
and Earth was barren.
Together they inhabited Earth
with a creature they called People.
But the creature was sickly, tiny and frail.
So Sun became hot
and Earth became populated.

As time passed
Sun longed to be close to Earth
and Earth yearned to be nearer to Sun.
But when Earth watched People
climbing her mountains
and roaming her fields
she endured the loneliness;
both, pledging to protect
the simple, ungrateful People.

Julianne D'Avirro

Julianne is a sophomore at Hopewell Valley Central High School. She has dabbled in poetry as well as creative writing. Currently Julianne is working on expanding her horizons and looks forward to experiencing the world around her to the fullest.

Color of Jealous

It is, the ugly color of jealous.
 It is not the calm green.
 It is not the sad blue,
 or the angry red.
 It is definitely far from the cheerful yellow,
 the elegant purple,
 and the innocent white.
 It goes around leaving behind traces of its ugly unwanted self.
 It is not a sparkling silver,
 nor a glistening gold,
 nor a dull gray,
 not even a full black.
 It is nowhere near the multi-colored zealous.
 It is merely just the ugly unnamed color, the color of jealous

City Skyline

Andrew Baickner

Andrew Baicker, senior at Lawrence High School. Photographer of 3 years and currently taking AP studio art.



Blooming

Jordyn Finkler

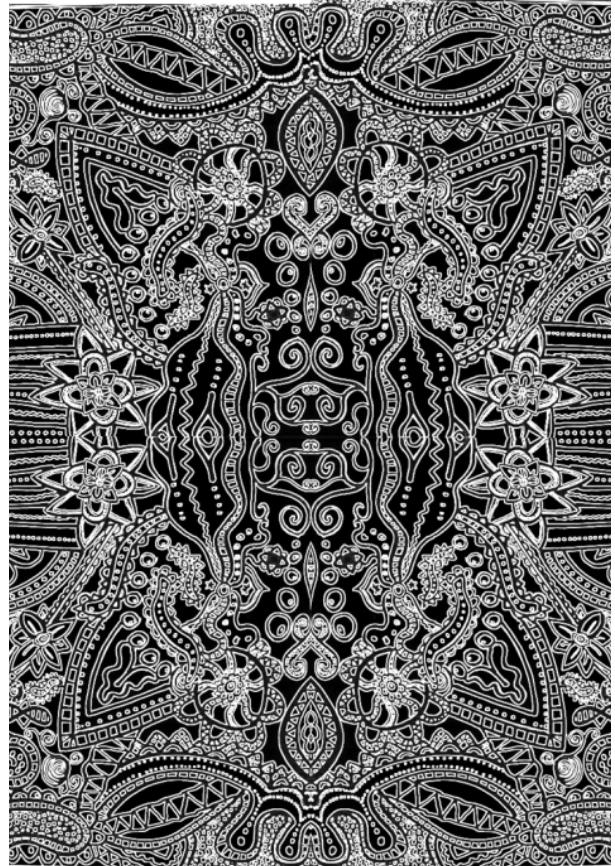
In Jordyn Finkler's free time she enjoys taking pictures. Also Jordyn loves cheerleading, traveling and hanging out with friends. She is also on her school cheerleading team and involved in the Red Cross Club.



Fireworks

AJ Pandina

A.J. is a sophomore at Hightstown High school and has been drawing since he could hold a pencil. He is a dedicated student that also runs track and cross country and participates in Student Council.



Kaitlyn Stingel

Kaitlyn is a junior at Hopewell Valley. She writes and makes art as a way of self-reflection and to express her thoughts.

I See You

I see you.
Even though you want to melt into the walls,
Be a blurred speck on an already crowded canvas.
I don't know whether you hate everyone else
Or you hate yourself,
Enough to hide behind invisible barriers and chapped hands.
You turn away, shifting your gaze to your rigid nails.
Either out of genuine indifference
Or because your stomach drops every time
Someone tries to make eye contact.
Maybe you fear you'll scare them away with your inclined interest,
Or that they'll leave out of sheer disappointment.
And you'll be left picking at dead skin
And a timid smile.
When someone does walk away from you,
Maybe unexpectedly,
You feel like you could just shrink into yourself.
So concerned that all eyes are on you
And what you call your failure.
You're so afraid of rejection
That you have cut off anything
That could potentially lead to heartache.
Sure you can survive,
But you won't be able to live.
There are people who want to know you.
I want to know you.
I want you to have someone to confide in.
Tell me why you wear that stone around your neck.
Tell me what you want to change about yourself.
Tell me what you like about yourself.
Tell me what makes you smile.
Or don't, I can figure that one out on my own.
Tell me your craziest fantasies.
Tell me everything you're afraid to say out loud.
I'll be here with you.
If you think this comes naturally to me,
You are just dead wrong.
I'm just as petrified as you are.
But I'm willing to try.
Because,
I see you.



Ture Alaskan Beauty

Aanchal Aich

Aanchal is a junior in high school. Aanchel considers himself to be creative, optimistic, and motivated. Aanchel has always been interested in the beauty of the natural world-it never ceases to fascinate Aanchel how, no matter how grand and extravagant something man made can be, natural marvels always seem to come across as the most magnificent.

Katie Genovesi

Katie is a sophomore at Hopewell who enjoys swimming, the beach, and her beloved German Shepherd, Tucker.

The Gender of a Dandelion

He loves me, he loves me not
Hair like a lion's mane, lush and golden
He loves me, he loves me not
His chiseled, unshaven jaw is godly in nature
He loves me, he loves me not
All the other girls love his lean muscles
He loves me, he loves me not
His broad shoulders
His piercing blue eyes
His... well I stop eavesdropping at this point

She loves me, she loves me not
Her enchanting platinum locks frame an angelic face
She loves me, she loves me not
Her smile is heart stopping, breath taking, jaw dropping
Well, my jaw drops, hers is the epitome of perfection

She loves me, She loves me not
Her cute baby blue nails would look magnificent interlocked
with my emerald ones
She loves me, She loves me not
The swell of her breast leaves me breathless
She loves me, She loves me not
Her legs that stretch on and on, creating my horizon
She loves me, She loves me not
I wore a pretty dress today, but it paled in comparison to her
boyfriend's tux
She loves me, She loves me not

She loves me not
She loves me not
She loves me not
She loves him

Katie Psichel

Katie plays the flute and the piccolo for the band and marching band. She would like to be a Disney Imagineer when she grows up.

**The World**

The world is a big, cold scary place
That everyone must face one day
But don't forget its love and grace

Every day is a crazy race
Working hard just to get your pay
The world is a big, cold scary place

A newly-wed wife dressed in lace
It's two against the world that way
But don't forget its love and grace

A murder done without a trace
The guilty one just got away
The world is a big, cold scary place

A child in his mom's embrace
Hiding from the world's cruel displays
But don't forget its love and grace

One look at any person's face
Shows all the stress they won't portray
The world is a big, cold scary place
But don't forget its love and grace.

Summer Vibes**Julianna Quigg**

Julianna loves to take pictures and her favorite kind of photos are of nature. In her free time she likes to do gymnastics, play lacrosse and hang out with friends and family.

Ketaki Gujar

Ketaki Gujar is a senior at Hopewell Valley Central High School. She is slightly neurotic, very opinionated, and generally happy.

Amazing

“How can you be so superstitious?”

The question was the ring of a gong, shattering the comfortable silence in the room. My mom glanced up, eyebrows raised. She had been consulting her horoscope and planning events for days deemed auspicious since my childhood, and I had only ever scoffed and rolled my eyes in response. Now, I squared my shoulders, determined for an explanation. I had just read an article on why horoscopes were scams, and I wanted to know why my mother, a physician, an intelligent woman of science, was superstitious.

“I mean, there’s no evidence that superstition is credible, right?”

My dad walked in as I continued my line of questioning, and he responded.

“Well, neither is faith, but we’re all Hindus, aren’t we? We all still believe in a higher power.”

I shifted uncomfortably, not ready to tell them that I’d be questioning that very concept recently. Until I figured out my own personal beliefs, I didn’t want to upset them with the knowledge that I was questioning theirs. That conversation could wait. Eyes averted, I redirected this one.

“Sure, but these horoscope websites are untrustworthy. Anybody can make these websites and write anything they want!”

My mom tilted her head, eyes thoughtful. Finally, she responded.

“Ketaki, you’re going to see amazing things in life. I’ve had patients who are on their deathbeds, in really bad shape, hold on for months so that they can say goodbye to family members who need time to get to the hospital. I’ve seen your brother’s taekwondo master lie on a bed of nails. Yes, you can come up with all kinds of scientific reasons for why my patients could hold on for months. Yes, you can talk about pressure distribution with the bed of nails. But behind all of these things, there’s a devotion that transcends fact, that makes life amazing.”

The silence returned to the room, but it wasn’t comfortable now. I gaped at my mother, who raised her eyebrows at me again before striding into the kitchen. Then, I looked at my father, who was typing rapidly on his computer. The light from the screen illuminated his face. His lips were tilted up.

I had been expecting a defensive retort from my mother. I had been expecting her to shake her head and bemoan my lack of understanding. I had not expected her to craft such a heartfelt response. I had not expected to leave the conversation with my perspective changed.

My curiosity has not only led me to ask my mother probing questions but has also led me to love science, which strives to explain every mystery of the universe and temporarily quenches my thirst for knowledge after each new scientific connection I make. But there are many mysteries that science can’t solve right now, some that science can’t solve ever, like whether God is real.

My mother reminded me of this. I would make the same decision to question her beliefs again because the result was eye opening. She reminded the rational girl that the world is irrational. Even though I won’t be looking at my horoscope anytime soon, she reminded me that others’ beliefs are no less valid than my own. She made me excited to witness odd, unexplainable, amazing things, to witness the devotion that transcends fact, and to witness what exactly makes life amazing.



Why do I Keep my Old Pair of Glasses?

Jasmine Santalla



Good Vibes

Shivani Pandya

Shivani Pandya is a student at Hightstown High School. She enjoys drawing in her free time while listening to music. Sometimes, she will sift through old magazines or pictures for some inspiration while drawing.



A Bunny in the Dark

Alexa Rebillon

Alex is a 17 year old student who enjoys art, music, and finding ways to express herself.

Ketaki Gujar

Subjects, Not Objects

Few memories linger from my last trip to India, over a decade ago: the clip-clop of a horse-drawn carriage as it jaunts around a block in Bandra East, the hum of a rickshaw, lithely skirting through traffic, the vibrant patterns of the women's cotton saris, which flutter lightly as the women bargain fiercely with shop owners. These leave a warm feeling in my gut, but this feeling is often tamped down when I read about the pervasive degradation and devaluation of women in the country.

The world reeled after a young woman was brutally and fatally gang-raped on a bus in Delhi. This incident (sadly one of many) highlights the struggle that women face from the time, and sometimes even before, they are born in India. For the families that adhere to older customs, to the dowry system that persists like a scar, women are wealth. They are gold, livestock, whatever else a family can give for their dowry. Men are the receivers of this wealth, and therefore highly prized. Some families, when they find out that they are expecting a girl, immediately abort the fetus. Others, upon delivering girls, throw their children into the trash. Some more kindly leave their babies on the doorsteps of overcrowded and underfunded orphanages.

Few are able or willing to pay a dowry, but most are able or willing to receive one. Ironically, the population has leapt to favor boys, who aren't assigned dowries. Recently, men in rural areas have been struggling to find wives. Rightly, the discrimination against women has left everyone dowry-less.

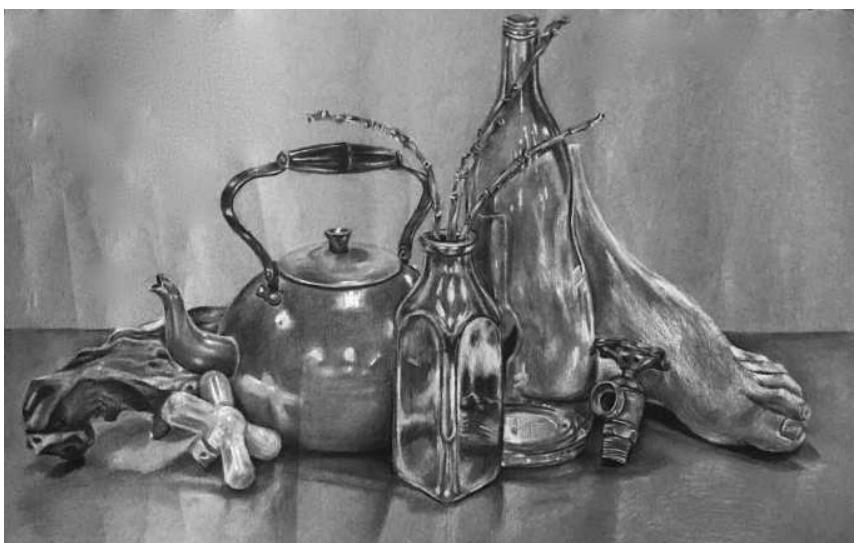
These accounts of discrimination, the realization that women are regarded as property frightens me. That could be me.

My parents immigrated to a liberal bastion in America, a place overflowing with opportunities to blossom under the sun of knowledge with nourishment from the rain of encouragement. But if my parents hadn't moved, I may not have had the latter. Stuck between greed's push and poverty's pull in Indian society, I may not have been independent. My life would go on under constant cloud cover.

It isn't that women don't have opportunities in India. Indira Gandhi was India's first female prime minister, occupying the role before the United States even had a female run for president. Yet, especially in more traditional areas, the attitude of society towards women is disdainful, contemptuous. Women in these areas serve little purpose besides casting a great burden of debt on one family and offering a great gift of wealth to another.

For this to change, the dowry system, weakly outlawed, must be officially abolished, and this must be enforced. Hopefully, the nation is accelerating towards this trend thanks to the fact that fewer women who warrant dowries are being born. If women in India aren't seen as ways of gaining and losing wealth that the developing nation craves, they will no longer be objects shuttled about and tossed aside, beaten and raped. To achieve this, the education system needs restructuring. Women in areas that still propagate the dowry system should have access to learning that nurtures equality, freedom, and resilience, learning that inspires them to protest the injustices they suffer. In the meantime, the world at large must be made aware of such objectifying practices and rise up in arms on behalf of the women who deserve more.

Since women are people, they should be granted the same status as all other people. They should have access to a thorough and excellent education. They should earn, not symbolize wealth. Their worth and complexity as human beings, their identities as subjects, not objects, should shine under a bright sun and a gentle rain, under a rainbow.



Still Life

Kanon Shambora

Kanon enjoys running track and cross country, and is in the school jazz band. She is currently taking Fine Arts 2, and she hopes to pursue art in the future.

Kieran Humphries

Kieran Humphreys attends Lawrence High School. Kieran wrote this poem on the restriction of love around the world.

Love Is

The Bible says love is patient, love is kind.
Well,
The pastor says if you're gay, you ought to be confined.
Do tell,
It's just a phase, you'll grow out of that state of mind.
Hell,
Come to service Sunday, leave your sins behind.

The Scout Oath says to help others at all all times,
be physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.
But,
My Scoutmaster beat me with a metal grate.
What?,
He said, why'd you ask Tom out on a date?
Shut,
After I flatten your head you best believe you're gonna be straight.

The Declaration of Independence says all men are created equal,
and all men have the right to Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of.
No,
When you're gay, from the world, you only get the boot of.
So,
Don't be yourself, sadness and depression is the root of.
Know,
Acceptance, love, life, is the only thing you're in pursuit of.

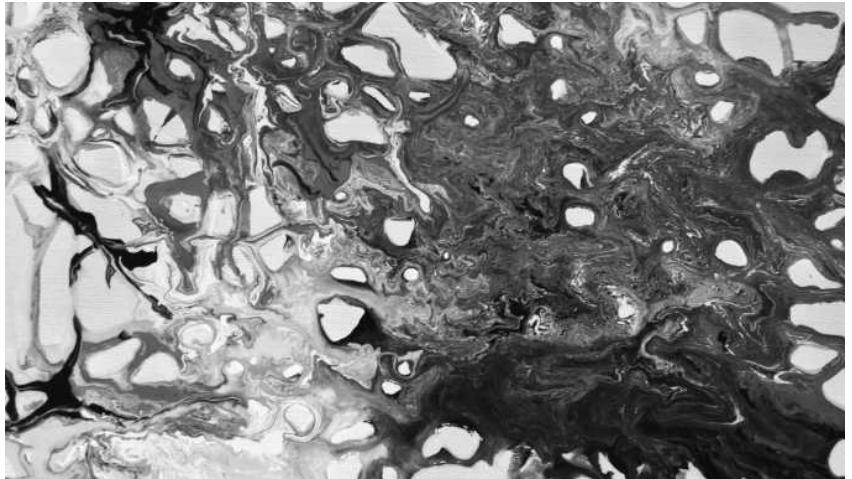
America the brave, doesn't have the balls to stand up
America the free, doesn't have the men to man up
To take a stand and say,
Love is you
Love is me
Love is whatever it wants to be
Love does not judge
Love does not hate
Love doesn't stand around and wait
Love is not for you to say
Love is not for me to say
That it's just a man and a woman
And leave it at that, No,
Love is the same for all of us
Love is all of us
If you forget what you were taught,
What others around you thought
You see,
It's
All
Just

Love

The
Same
Love

Color Labyrinth

Jack Pagliante



Kristen Heinzel

Kristen Heinzel is a Junior at Hopewell Valley High School. She enjoys swimming, rowing, and playing the guitar.

Yellow Glasses

I remember staring at his big 1980's glasses as they sat on the windowsill when I was just a little girl. I was visiting my grandfather at his quaint little house with my family and he was looking through his binoculars and describing the birds flying outside. Somehow, the sound of his thick german accent explaining the difference in the calls between a Robin and a Goldfinch was not interesting to seven-year-old me. Instead, I sat wondering how terrible his eyesight could possibly be, as his glasses had the thickest lens I had ever seen. They were extremely large with dark yellow frames and lens that were always perfectly polished. He always wore them pushed too far up his nose, and they were always tilted a little too far to the left.

His glasses were like him. They were big and goofy. They demanded your attention and were always the first things you noticed. He wore them everywhere and he rarely took them off.

His glasses were a part of him. Even in the earliest photographs I could find of him, he was always wearing these ridiculous big glasses with the thick frames around them. I rarely saw him without his glasses, and my family always joked about how we were going to replace them with a more fashionable style one day because we knew he never would.

We used to visit him all the time in his little house in a small neighborhood of modest homes. I always brought Girl Scout Shortbread cookies, and we would eat them with freshly brewed black tea. I remember his magnified eyes as they shone through his glasses, watching me tell my ridiculous jokes, and letting out his bellowing laugh.

As he grew older and became incapable of walking and caring for himself, he moved to a nursing home. His little apartment at his house was still very reflective of him. He had German Hummel figurines set up around his living room, a big picture of the silhouettes of his seven children, a little black-and-white TV that would play quietly in the background, and photographs scattered everywhere of his family. He was always sleeping in bed and snoring very loudly when we would go to visit him, but when my dad would gently shake him awake, he would thunder out "Hallo Pauly!" and slide on those same thick yellow glasses.

One day when we were visiting him, after he had grown significantly weaker and spent most of his time in bed, my father noticed that the the right ear piece on his glasses was missing. My Opa let out his warming laugh and explained, "Naja, I sat on them yesterday." We all laughed together for a long time. In the midst of a time of

uncertainty about his health, when my dad and his siblings had all gathered to discuss his death, he was anything but anxious. Instead, he reminded us that he was still the same.

Then he began to grow sicker and sicker, and he was eventually moved to a more intensive care room. We visited him less frequently then. His Alzheimer's grew worse, and when I watched his sunken eyes through his glasses, I knew that they did not recognize me. He did not laugh anymore, all of his treasured possessions had been moved out and replaced with lights and tubes, and he could barely speak. When everything about him had completely changed, it was his big glasses that reminded me that he was the same person who I had grown up knowing and loving. Every time the nursing home called my house, we feared it was "the call." But, he was always still pushing.

Eventually, he slept so much and had grown so weak that he didn't wear them anymore. I remember sitting next to his bed, holding his gigantic, warm hand as it clutched mine. I was listening to the uneven rhythm of his breathing and staring at his thin face.

His glasses were slowly decaying, and they weren't the same big polished glasses that I had always remembered. They sat collecting dust next to his bed.

They weren't the same as I had remembered them. But, they were still the same glasses. He was still my grandfather.

Finding Truth

Callegari Santiago

*Some take pictures, others draw. Santiago
hopes you will find your book of truths, as
they have through drawing.*



Madalyn Brummel

Madalyn is very passionate about reading and writing. She also enjoys ballet, singing, and playing the piano.

The Enigmatic Sea

I set down a volume of The Three Brothers Grimm,
And sneak off
To the enigmatic place
Where the light, wet sand
Meets the clear, blue ocean.
I admit that I am wary of the ocean,
As it is such a powerful force of nature,
But it poses such a great mystery to me that I dare to confront it.
I am confident that it will not reveal
Its dark side in the presence of the crowd on the beach.
And, if it does, surely the witnesses on this beach will transform to
rescuers.

Tentatively, I allow the cool water,
Which now appears closer to black than to blue,
To lap my pink toes.
I travel farther,
Until the water,
Which is now ice cold,
Meets the rose pendant hanging from my necklace.

Suddenly,
I am completely submerged.
I attempt to extricate myself
From the iron grip of the ocean,
But find
That I am unable to do so.
It continues to pull me
Deeper,
Deeper,
Deeper,
Ignoring my squirms of protest.
I attempt to cry out,
But the salty water clogs my throat,
Silencing me.
I do not worry;
Surely all the people on the beach will come to my aid very soon.

Drizzle

Gillian Bender

Gillian Bender is a sophomore in high school, who enjoys to read and watch anime. She is apart of her school's marching band, specifically colorguard. She strives to be a publisher when she finishes college.



Marissa Beyer

Marissa enjoys baking, going to the beach, and traveling Earth. She also loves to write poetry. One day, she hopes to graduate high school, visit Scandinavia, and have a career.

Who Will Feed My Family?

I don't care if it's illegal
But I care that my wife and children don't starve

I don't care if I'm paid five dollars per hour
But I care that my family receives the cash I sent

I don't care if I have to eat off of McDonald's dollar menu
But I care that my children don't go to bed hungry

I don't care if I have to sleep in a tiny room with six other men
But I care that my wife can pay next month's rent

I don't care if I have to work 14 hours each day
But I care that my children understand why I left

I don't care if I'm unwanted here
But I care that I stay here
Because if I am caught
Who will feed my family?

Maximillian Brass

Max enjoys sports such as Baseball and Football, playing on both of his high school teams at Hopewell Valley. He has a passion for learning and hopes to continue to write and share his work in the future.

A Mispercieved Notion

A sandstorm,
this is what they're going through.
The sun's rays
beat down
on their clothed bodies
as they are engulfed in a whirlwind of chaos,
hostility,
war,
swallowed by the millions of
sand particles that surround them.

Just as the coarse dust
begins to fade away,
settle,
it is once again
whisked into a mad tornado,
a tyrant of fear,
confusion,
guns,
bullets,
endless bodies.

It is as if
this is a bad dream
that has personally been
engraved in their minds
forever.

Hatred
fills the room
as they mourn the loss
of loved ones
they will never get back,
a distant memory
now in the past,
a life short lived.

They move with urgency,
they have to get out,
flee this endless torture,
brainwashing.

They embark on
a new journey,
an unfamiliar road awaits them
as they pray solemnly
with the hope
that they will be the one's
to pave the way for
a new life,
a better future.

Forced to seek asylum
in a foreign nation,
an unfamiliar world,
unrecognizable place.

Lied to,
betrayed by,
fingerprinted,
tagged like wild animals,
they live in tent cities,
rows upon rows,
miles of endless desert sand.

Filth,
famine,
hunger,
and disease
surround each and every one of them
as they await
the opening of the golden gates,
a new flag,
a new life,
a misperceived notion by many.

Mei Costa

Mei Li Costa is a tenth grade student at Lawrence High School. She is fifteen years old and does not often write poetry, but is excited to share her work. She is a not a naturally artistic person, but comes from an extremely artistic family.

Puppet

Arms—limp,
Legs—motionless,
Mind—powerless.

Fake smile,
paint still drying.

Lights flood—
Music blares—

My body springs into meaningless motions,
Pulled, yanked, dragged,
This way, that way,
Anything they want from me.

Movements commanded by one,
The one who holds my strings,
and with little movements—
Creates my entire life.

Music,
helping to command my movements.
Until—
the darkness returns,
my strings are dropped,
my body falls to the floor again.

Arms—limp,
Legs—motionless,
Mind—powerless.

Fake smile,
paint still drying.

Aeris

Gillian Bender

Melissa Mikalsen

Melissa is in 10th grade at Hopewell Valley Central High School. She enjoys reading, writing, and her favorite class is Science. She hopes to pursue a career in Science one day.

The Earth in the Snow

Pale flakes dance to Earth,
softly gracing the frozen ground.
A pure cloak of white hides her face.
Leaving a cold scar on the surface.
Frozen in its own beauty,
the World stops to watch.

Michal Kazmierczak

Michael is a Sophomore at Lawrence High School, and is enrolled in English II Honors. A few years ago, Michael wanted to become a writer.

Watch Yourself

Watch yourself if it's your vices you wish to cure,
because virtue is never truly safe and purely pure.

Watch yourself when you feel devotion,
because you might collapse from motion.

Watch yourself when for something you care,
because it can often be hard to feel for a pair.

Watch yourself when of yourself you are proud,
because challenge might be found anywhere around.

Watch yourself when you desire to strike,
because your mind isn't always blank white.

Watch yourself when money you spend,
because it can mean more to defend.

Watch yourself when you're feeling strong or courageous,
because your estimations might turn outrageous.

Watch yourself when you want to forgive,
because you might let vice grow and live.

Watch yourself when you wish to refine your ways and style,
because a piece of clothing should likely never measure a mile.

But, don't bother watching yourself when you are in love,
because you'll probably forget almost everything above.

Untitled #1302**Eva Frank**

Eva Frank, is 16 and attends Lawrence High School. The one thing Eva loves most is traveling, and her trip to Paris was one of the most amazing experiences of her life, which is why she chose to share these pictures.



Patrick Meara

Patrick Meara is currently a Sophomore at Hopewell Valley Central High School. When not doing school work, he loves to read and his favorite books include Slaughterhouse Five, Of Mice and Men, and Station Eleven, among many more.

Practice Makes Perfect

"That's 30 bucks to your tab, kid," The squat bartender snarled at Jack as he roughly slid three mugs of beer across the rather unkempt bar.

"30 bucks?" Jack protested with a look of shock, "But this only cost 15 last week."

"Sale's over. Now scram, you're holding up the line," the bartender said turning away as he chomped on chewing tobacco, indifferent to the line of brown drool running down his face.

"Wipe your damn mouth," Jack muttered as he started to gather his drinks.

The bartender whipped around with a murderous look in his eyes. "What did you just say?"

"I didn't say anything," Jack said, defensively.

"I heard what he said," a shaggy barfly said from his stool next to Jack. "He told you to wipe your damn mouth."

"Oh, is that it?" the bartender said his beady eyes fixed on Jack, teeth gritted. "This baby-faced whimp is going to tell me how I oughtta look? What happened to respecting your elders?" He shouted this last bit out to everyone in the bar.

"Sir, I meant no offence," Jack said, calmly.

"Well, I don't see you taking it back" The bartender shouted. "I'll tell you what, kid, my shift's over in ten minutes. Meet me outside, and we'll see if you still won't take it back once I'm done with you." The bar was dead silent for a second after the bartender had finished, until a voice piped up from the back. "You just made a big mistake, bro," The voice made Jack's stomach turn. It was Mike, one of Jack's drinking buddies. "You just challenged the best damn Muay Thai fighter I know."

Jack's jaw tightened a little as the bartender slowly moved his death glare away from Jack and towards the booth where Mike was sitting with Jeff, another guy from the Martial Arts school. "Moo-ai tie?" The Bartender snorted, mangling the word "What type of beta-male crap is that?"

"Only an aggressive martial art taught to MMA fighters. You know, that type of beta-male crap," Mike responded with a smirk.

"And he's the best?" The bartender said with a cocked eyebrow and a smirk.

"Damn straight," Jeff added, unhelpfully. "He's better than some of the instructors. Hell, I probably would have quit if it weren't for Jack."

"So," Jack jumped in, maybe a bit too quickly, "Still want to fight me?" He hoped no one could see that he was shaking a little as he folded his arms across his chest.

"Well, Mister. Moo-ai Tie," the bartender drawled, still smirking. "I might not have any of your fancy 'training,' but I ain't afraid of no bar fights, so meet me behind the bar in 5 minutes," Hearing this, the bar cheered.

With that, Jack nodded stiffly and walked back to his friends at the booth. He set the drinks down and walked towards the back door, chin raised a little and chest out, he heard his friends rush to follow him. The second that they were all in the alley behind the bar, he dropped his posture and turned on his friends. "What the hell were you guys thinking?"

"What's the matter, Jack?" Mike smiled, "Afraid you're going to beat the old guy too bad?"

"No, it's not that," Jack muttered, running his hands through his brown hair. "It's just," He paused, planning the best way to say what he wanted to say. "I just haven't sparred much." In truth, he'd never sparred. He had perfect form, but he never did anything with it. No sparring, no tournaments. He just honed and refined skills he was taught in class. He'd thought about fighting before, but every time he considered it, he really just came back to something that was wrong with his form. One more thing to work out and then he could try sparring.

"Ah, that won't matter," Jeff scoffed. "I don't spar much, but I'm pretty sure that I could kick that blow hard. Just push him. I bet the top heavy geezer would just fall over."

Jack was about to say something when the door creaked open behind them. "Party time, boys," A gruff voice called from behind them.

Jack turned and looked at the squat, beady-eyed man in front of him. The bartender spat out his tobacco and circled Jack. "Well," He said, glaring, "What're we waiting for, the cops?"

Sighing, Jack shrugged off his jacket. He paused as he heard the commotion behind him. He turned, and saw that more people from the bar had come out and were watching the two men eagerly.

"You can do it, Jack!" Mike called a few steps back, "Just like practice!"

"Alright," Jack said to himself, "Just like practice."

Facing the bartender, he got into an almost perfect stance and began to shuffle his feet, tensing waiting for his opponent to make the first move. The bartender made the first move, he threw a wide punch, which Jack blocked and fired a jab over the bar tender's shoulder. No contact. Just like practice.

"Shit," Jack said to himself as he dropped his guard long enough for the bartender to land a crude punch straight to his face.

Jack staggered backwards. He could feel blood running from his broken nose. Before he hit the ground, his friends caught him while they cheered him on with the crowd.

Shaking himself off, Jack got up. He threw two more punches, both of which wound up over the bartender's shoulder. A third punch connected, but only because the bartender dodged into it. Seizing the opportunity, Jack kicked the man's side, hard. The bartender keeled over, groaning. Quickly, Jack shuffled a little to the side of the bartender and threw two punches. Instead of going over the other man's shoulder, they connected and knocked the bartender out cold.

Jack sighed. As the adrenaline faded, he began to feel a little unsteady, but he didn't fall. He picked up his jacket, smiling a little as his friends congratulated him. Both of them talking at once about how cool he was, and the way that he tricked the guy by intentionally missing his punches and taking a hit straight to the face.

Jack just smiled and shook his head. He let his friends do most of the talking as they walked back into the bar, away from the crowd, which was now swarming around the bartender. When he finally got a chance to speak, all he said was, "I need to do this more often."

Rocky Beach

David Lee

David spends most of his time playing video games and doing sports. In his free time he likes to talk to friends and play football.



Reinah Bauer

Reinah likes to write, read, play the violin, do the New York Times crossword puzzle, sing along to the radio, and go on adventures. She would like to pursue psychology, learn lots and lots, and otherwise keep on keepin' on. She hopes you enjoy this magazine, because she bets that it is full of heart.

It's Been 15 Years

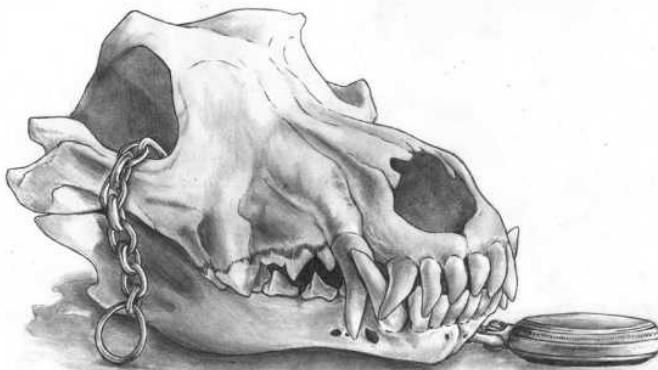
You, you say that you love me.
You big, brazenly tattooed child
Kicking up dust before dawn on your way to the rigs
With your four huntin' kids at home in OK
Their names all starting with the letter D, how sweet,
You probably picked up smoking, too.

We went to see The Santa Clause II
When I was just three, and my hair was still curly
We bounced late on the hotel bed and watched TV
I ate too much candy, and you fell asleep.

But you, you say that you love me.
I hate your crunchy voice, because it tells me that I am its queen.
I bet you think The Wizard of Oz is still my favorite movie,
You shadow-man, your gaze beating down the nape of my neck.
Are you a circling hawk in the sky?
Just a regular guy?

When I wrote you that letter, I tossed a picture in too,
Of some sprinkled vanilla ice cream, and the two of us eating it
I looked at you like you were the moonlight and I was a freshly hatched sea turtle
Why the hell was I looking at you like that?

Stop it, don't say that you love me.
You are smearing those words all around in my face
My mind's turbulence whips the memory of your long black hair
And my own long black mind seizes up to your song
Seizes, seizes, and stop it, don't say it.
Seizes, don't say it.



Inevitability

Jillian Lagendoef

Jillian is a ninth-grade student who enjoys drawing realistic animals, especially wolves. She aspires to pursue art as a career.

Reinah Bauer

Tell me About Yourself

Well I love winter most of all
 Because when I was young,
 I could not help but scratch
 The mosquito bites up and down my ankles.
 Yellow would be my favorite color,
 Larynx humming, healthy glow, yellow
 But it is soiled too often by turn signals and cross walks
 And my grandmother's cold lace curtains.

My tough-stomached grandpa,
 Who lives in little Virginia's rolling belly
 Used to have a rusty dog,
 And a talking cockatoo in his kitchen.
 And they would pucker and bleed,
 And my mother would grunt and scream,
 And I would just watch my legs and sit real quiet
 On the crispy yellow lawn.
 It squashes down the back of my throat
 -I'm choking on the devil's eyes-
 Yellow are the feathers of the bird plucked by wind
 I guess I'll have to settle for red.

Morning. Red dog comes in. Bird goes out.
 But once he forgot to undo it all
 A tabby got the bird, and he didn't see his dog
 in the leaves on the way down the driveway.
 I looked at her like,
 "Please just let me be"
 There are no mosquitos now,
 No such thing as water or winter kisses.
 I don't know where they've gone, but they'll be back.
 I bet I could have smelled it all coming



Paradise

Julianna Quigg

Sound Barrier Breaker

Sarah Maung

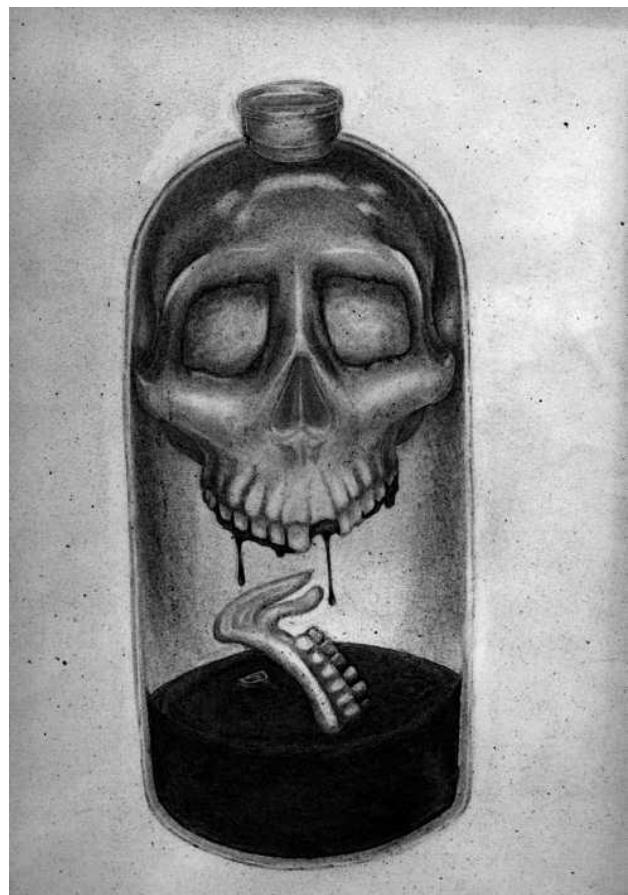
Sarah is just another impulsive and passionate teenager with numerous mediums and time looking for opportunities to put her work into use.



Captivated Death

Iaisha Manning

I am Alisa Fatima, shia muslim girl in her senior high school who in her recreational time dabbles with all different art forms. During my early teens, i moved back to Pakistan for two years and was exposed to different styles of art accustomed to the Pakistani lifestyle. Somehow, my Pakistani roots seep into my art.



Renata Stankowski

Renata Stankowska is a Ewing High Junior. She is an aspiring writer who hopes to find herself amongst the many inspiring writers out there.

Who Am I?

I am

... Renata, meant to be Adam, but to everyone's surprise came to be a girl with untamed curls and unexpected eating patterns.
... A daughter, to two spontaneous parents who took a journey across the globe for my happiness and success.
.... A sister, to my best friend. From biting backs and pulling hair to tight hugs and tearful goodbyes. A bond never broken, and only strengthened by the family blood ties.
.... A friend to all my brothers and sisters, because family doesn't stop at your pedigree, my heredity didn't stop me from having multiple families.
... A Polak. And of that, one of a kind. Beyond the stereotypes, beyond the borders, beyond the immigrant lives and misfortunes a white and red flag will always fill my heart.
... Curious. Simple answers never satisfy a hungry mind, seeking to know more is like providing vision for the blind.
... Searching. Searching for answers, meanings, motivations, beliefs, searching for myself and my pride.
... Chill. No need to be bubbling over petty issues that will blow over within time. The goal is to stay chill, don't let people see they got you down.
... Caring. We all need a little push, a little smirk for the day. Caring can go a long way with a simple hello or checking in if someone's ok.
... Free. A growing human, with ambitions, goals, and mindset of its own. I'm a wanderer and if I'm walking solo at least I'm always free to go anywhere I want to go.
... To be continued.

Broken Branches

Justin Dailey

Justin Dailey is a freshman at his local high school. He plays sports such as football and lacrosse. He is in a photo imaging class and enjoys taking pictures in his free time.



Ruth Wyckoff

Ruth is a junior in high school. She is easily excited, particularly by Harry Potter, food, and creative expression. She hopes to publish more in the future.

Why I Smile in the Morning

The charcoal trees,
Flattened against the rest of the universe,
Like the veins of a leaf.

The changing seasons.

The faces of the children I baby sit,
Their giggles and the sound of their feet
In their footie pajamas,
Scampering to bed before I catch them up again.

Chocolate, and other ambrosias.

All the windows in the world that beg to be opened.
I want to scream through them
“I am alive!”

And feel the night--the moon and the stars and the darkness--
Scream back to me silently

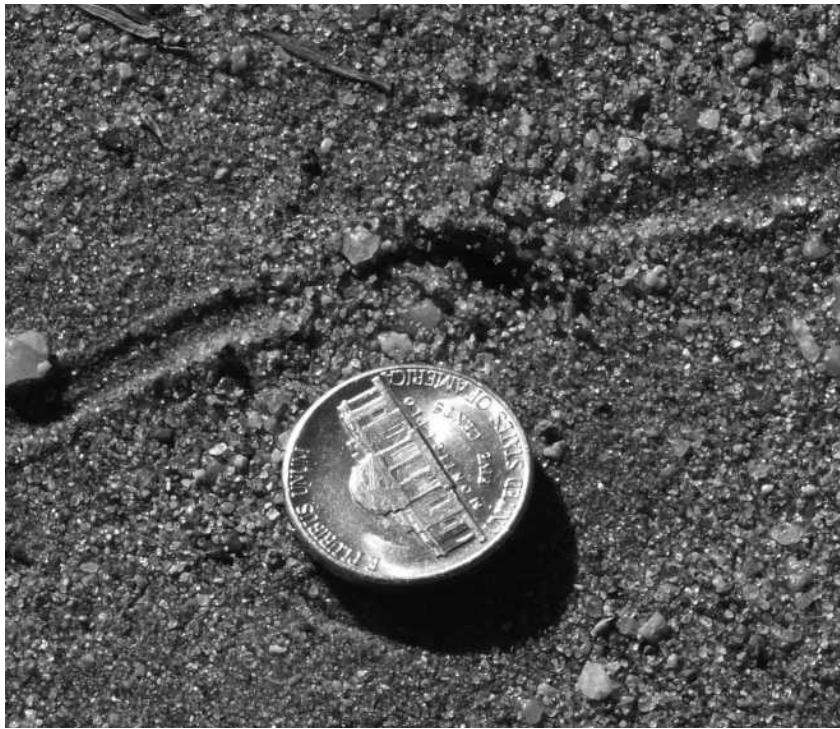
The sounds of laughter.

The excitement for everything that doesn't exist,
But might, someday.

The books that will keep me up all night.
The songs that will be stuck in my head.
The people who will love me when I'm angry,

The bite of air in my lungs.

The fact that the world will never run out of stories
Because every person I pass on the street has a life filled with tragedy and mystery and love.
That every name I've read represents a magical mess of memories that will never be shared.
That every smile I see is proof of a miracle.



Nickel

Jeremy Fonseca

Jeremy is a 10th grader from Hightstown High school. In his free time he likes to play video games. He also likes to read in his free time.

Ryne Blagg

Ryne Blagg is an enthusiastic student and dreams about attending college. He also enjoys participating in sports, such as swimming and soccer.

The Price of War

Choon Lee is a successful business man living in the midwest. Every day he sits at his wooden desk and reads the newspaper, except he doesn't read the New York Times or the Wall Street Journal, he reads The Korea JoongAng Daily. He could sit in his torn leather chair, surrounded by the golden carpeted walls and not look up once. On the desk are stacks of papers, and bills, and instructions, and reports, yet he leaves just enough room for the daily newspaper. Choon Lee is from South Korea, and the Korean newspaper is the only thing that reminds him of what he left behind.

Choon was born in 1938 on the southern side of an unimportant island that had been annexed into the Japanese Empire during World War II. It was a harbor town that provided food for most of the island's inhabitants. He remembers watching the short wooden and metal canoes depart from the harbor like a parade marching into the rising sun. A bundle of netting trailed out from behind all the boats, fishing rods pointed into the air. Every day the canoes would leave the harbor. Some would never return. That was the risk you took if you wanted to feed your village.

When Choon turned five, the harbor was decimated by the war. He was one of the first ones to hear the planes. With the other villagers, Choon ran to the water and waited for the fires to burn out. Nothing could survive the fires that the allies unleashed on the poor harbor. Piles of smoking rubble built up on the side of the road. The houses crumbled and burnt. Like nothing had happened, his family packed up their remaining belongings and left. Like so many others, they were left with no home, just each other.

Two weeks before the end of the war, in 1945, Choon arrived in Samchunpo Korea. Immediately after his family found a house to live in, they signed Choon up for school. It is there that he was introduced to the importance of discipline and respect. The Samchunpo Grammar school had two stories and it was shaped like a horse shoe. Hundreds of kids attended classes there every day. Choon sat through these classes with a notebook in front of him, or when he filled out the notebook, loose leaf paper. He took notes and wrote down what the teacher said, and then went home and studied the notes. He always sat in the front of the class and his favorite subject was history.

"These were the happiest days of my childhood because five years later the Korean War started," said Choon Lee about the time he spent in Sanchunpo.

Choon hadn't even graduated grammar school when Sanchunpo was bombed by the North. Like the small fishing village, Sanchunpo was decimated and the school was destroyed. His family packed up again and they moved as far away from the fighting as they could.

This time, he moved to Pusong: a small countryside village surrounded by green rolling hills and rice farms. There, he attended and graduated from high school. There, he also learned martial arts. The martial arts lessons he took were inspirational and demanding. For seven years he studied Tae Kwon Do. He earned his ninth degree black belt, and he developed an interest in teaching. But he put his life on hold. The effects of the Korean War had reached his family again. The economy severely inflated and his parents had to spend every penny they made on food and clothes so that they could survive. He didn't want to be a burden, so he left his family when he turned 18.

Choon joined the South Korean military where his only job was to peel potatoes for dinner. He was too young to fight. He quickly learned that the military didn't suit him and after serving his mandatory three year service, he left. Wanting to make a living, he moved West.

From Korea, Choon moved to Dillingen Germany where he worked for the American government. They paid him to rebuild houses that were destroyed during World War II. Two days after he arrived, Choon applied for a visa and he also started renting an apartment. The apartment was two rooms, a combination of a bedroom and a kitchen, and a bathroom. The worst part was trying to keep the bugs out of the apartment. Choon waited two and a half years before the American Embassy approved him for a visa. He was 23 when it arrived at his apartment. He gathered his belongings, a suitcase full, and he departed for Chicago.

He spent two years in Chicago as a Judo teacher. He worked long enough to make enough money to open his own company. In 1963, he drove to Kansas and found the perfect location in Shawnee Mission. Sadly, that year he heard from his sister that his parents had died from natural causes and his brother had died in the Vietnam War. He hadn't talked to his parents since he was 18 years old, and he would never get to talk to them again. He put his dreams on hold again.

In 1972 Choon met Mary Jane and moved in with her. She had four kids with another man, yet Choon learned to love them like they were his own. Choon adopted the kids, and in 1973 opened his first company, Choon Lee's Academy. Over the next nine years he opened three more academies and made a small fortune.

Business management is hard, but he was successful. Now he's in the process of selling his last acadamy, but he's having a hard time giving it up. Every day he gets The Korea JoongAng Daily and he relives his childhood. He never wants to forget where he came from and how he got to where he is today. His academy is part of his history, and he can't give that up.



Ariel

Shivani Pandya



Cover Girl

Tyler Smith

Tyler likes to try new things and break out of her comfort zone with just drawing, so she tried her first magazine collage made of different parts of faces from different people. This took so much time with carrying magazines to school and back than she expected!

Sabrina Nguyen

Sabrina Nguyen is a senior at Allentown High School. On top of her usual classes, she participates in four of the honor societies the school provides, other extra curricular clubs, take extra dance classes outside of school, as well as work part time in retail. She is hoping that being able to manage all my activities will help prepare her to be successful in college and in the future.

Separation

How do you feel looking from the outside in?
Do you see the sky contrast the trees?
Do you feel the wind chase the leaves?
Do you hear the birds whistle and sing?
Do you smell the flowers of the spring?
How do you feel looking from the outside in?

How do you feel looking from the inside out?
Do you see your reflection in the window pane?
Do you feel the chill that leaves a stain?
Do you hear the silence of muffled sounds?
Do you smell the air being cycled around?
How do you feel looking from the inside out?

Saffy Winton

Saffy Winton has four best friends, and two of them are cats. She loves the punishments in Greek mythology, and often feels like the worst punishment of all is feeling stuck in life. She is exited for college, and exited about all of the kittens that she is going to pet in the future.

The Couch

I'm not sure how it got there- maybe the field wasn't always a field and it seemed like a logical place, maybe someone just decided to drag it to the forest's edge for fun, or maybe someone actually wanted to use it. I guess I'll never know. But whoever put the three-seated pure white pleather couch in an overgrown, tangled knot of shrubs and uncut grass never could have expected how important that couch would be. No one could have known.

I spent a lot of my early high school years in my own company, roaming the nearby forests and fields, tracing streams and bulldozing paths with nothing but an old pair of converse and a really good playlist on my iPod. I climbed silos, chased geese, walked across frozen ponds, and, of course, discovered someone's discarded furniture. It overlooked a field that was nestled between two patches of forest. The couch had probably been there for years: it was covered in leaves and dirt and a color wheel of mold. Armed with bleach, some rags, various citrus-scented cleaning products, and more bleach, I gave it new life. When the citrus fumes became overwhelming, I sunk into my masterpiece and watched as the sun began to sneak away and fireflies rose from the tall, brittle grass. It was my secret place, but I'm terrible at keeping things to myself.

"I've got something to show you," I insisted.

"As long as you're there I don't care what it is"

It was love at first sight- the boy and the couch, I mean. As soon he pushed the last blades of tall grass aside and stepped in front of the couch he fell in love with the idea of misfit furniture in a forgotten field. I guess it's a teenager thing.

We met many times at the couch in the field, and sat for hours talking and sharing music and letting our skin bake in the early summer sun. By the time those days were memories, I had 3 more playlists on my iPod, the kind of tan that most girls spend their entire Florida vacation trying to achieve, and a sense of belonging with my forgotten couch and misfit boy. These are the memories nostalgia sinks its talons into.

The last time he spoke to me, we were sitting on our couch enjoying one of the last warm nights of the year. Our conversation drifted into the stars and crickets replaced our words.

He gave me an almost kiss. It was the kind where our foreheads rested together and he had a hand cradling my jaw. I could feel his bottom lip graze mine, but we didn't press our lips together. We shared our breaths, feeling each other's presence. It was a potential kiss. The kind where he ran his hand through my hair to move it out of the way and so he had something to hold on to in case he floated away. We would float away together.

I visited the couch almost a year later. Mold and leaves dirtied its formerly white pleather cushions. Anyone who didn't know what it was might think it had been there for years. Maybe they'll clean it off and make it their own. I hope they use lots of bleach. I hope they fall in love and write beautiful things about their couch in the field. I hope their warm nights never end.

Saffy Winton

Falling in Love in Public Places

His leg is touching mine. I'm sure it's because the grey swarm of run down rush hour adults clog the subway car and he's forced closer to me by the lady who doesn't realize that keeping her shopping bag on the seat next to her is rude and a waste of precious space. But I'm also sure it's because when he drifted into this car he knew that he had to be near me. I'm sure that he's just as aware as I am of how intimate our knees are right now. That he can feel each molecule of fabric in our jeans compress. That he can feel the heat from my leg pour over his and it's the only thing keeping him warm in this chilly underground tunnel. I've never met him before, and aside from the calculated sideways glances I sneak, I can only seen his face reflected in the window across from us. But I've seen enough. I am in love.

I'm glad you wore these clean jeans instead of the tattered, paint-covered pants that I know you have. When you woke up this morning I think you knew you'd be meeting your soul mate and wanted to look your best. You have a crescent moon cut on your nose, which means you were clawing at your face in your sleep. You were probably having a nightmare. I bet you're afraid of something silly like spiders or taxes. Don't worry, I'll handle our finances when we get married. The left side of your hair runs wild like uncut grass. It's probably because you didn't get much sleep, because of the nightmares. You've been having them ever since you broke up with your girlfriend. I bet her name was something evil like Mackenzie. I've never met a nice Mackenzie. But if she hadn't fallen in love with your ex-best friend, you would be at her family beach house right now and not next to your one true love. I know you're mourning the loss of the beach house more than the loss of her. I bet you're the kind of guy who buries his feet in the sand and lets the tide creep up his ankles. You like the way the salt water tickles your skin and then sheepishly retreats. You like to flirt with the waves.

The lady with the shopping bag gets off at Canal Street, but you don't expand into the space she left behind. Your leg still touches mine. This is intentional, I'm sure of it. A trickle of people fill in the empty spaces in the car, which is strange because they appear empty themselves, completely and entirely absorbed into their own universe. Unaware. The girl next to you has headphones on and is playing Candy Crush on her phone. The child next to her is also playing Candy Crush. A man in a suit next to them pretends to be doing something important, but we all know he's playing Candy Crush. But you are not. It's almost as if you knew that you had to stay conscious on the subway just for this day, this moment, this leg touch. You had to be alive. Aware. You could be looking at the green tint of my finger and wondering what used to be there. You could be trying to figure out my ring size for when you propose. You could be just as in love as I am, just as wildly and hopelessly infatuated. Or you could be playing Candy Crush in your head.

I missed my stop. I wonder what you're doing so deep in Brooklyn. Maybe you missed your stop too, because you couldn't bear to tear your leg away from mine. Or maybe you think you'll get off at the same stop as me so we can go out for coffee, a movie, and then a wedding. Or maybe you just live deep in Brooklyn.

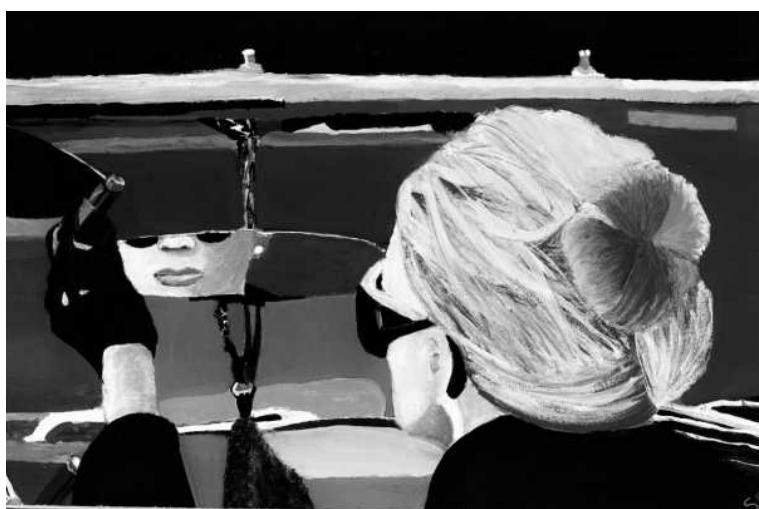
Winthrop Street.

The conductor announces the stop in a voice that's only comparable to thousands of bees complaining about the monotony of their lives. I bet you're the kind of person who believes bees can have existential crises. I bet you believe in love at first sight.

And then you get up, and we lock eyes for a second.

I'm sure it's because I am sitting right next to the exit and you are looking towards the doors until they open. But I'm also sure it's because you need to see me, to know me, to remember me. I do not know you, but I do know this. I am in love with you. I am stuck deep in Brooklyn with a cold leg and the crushing realization that I will never see you again. But I am in love with you.

I put on my headphones, open Candy Crush, and ride the now empty subway car to the end of the line.



Morning Routines

Shivani Pandya

Allaire

Ronin O'Connor

Ronin O'Connor likes to take pictures of animals and nature. He enjoys watching hockey, spending time with friends, and taking his two dogs on walks in different places and on different trails.



Saffy Winton

Tiny Moving Parts

When he's nervous he twists his left heel side to side while pressing his toes into the ground, like an indecisive pendulum doomed to sway forever. His left shoes always get holes in the soles and in the winter snow creeps into his socks and freezes his toes.

When he's interested he doesn't blink until his eyes water, as if the second his eyes close he'll miss the most important part. If the topic is something particularly interesting, like history or rollercoasters, he'll stare so long that tears will inch their way out of the shelter of his eyelids. This embarrasses him. He doesn't like to show emotion.

When he's angry he rotates his hips sideways, like a runner about to burst into a sprint. His hips are ready to lunge even before his hands can form fists.

When he's thinking he spins the chipped black ring that he wears on his index finger around and around. The ring has no beginning or end, and if you asked him he'd tell you his thoughts blend together the same way.

When he's happy he touches his mouth, as if he's checking to see if he actually is smiling. As if he's making a poor attempt to hide the betrayal of the corner of his lips.

When he's scared he softly exhales all the air from his lungs like he's trying to pull his ribs closer into his body to protect his heart. He compacts his lungs to take up less space, so there is less of him that can hurt.

When he's sad he uses his pointer finger to try to peel away at the skin on his thumbs. Raw pink skin surrounds his nails. He moisturizes his hands every day, and still doesn't know how they got so rough.

When he's content he sits down and crosses his legs, left foot on top so he doesn't get dirt in the hole in his shoe. He talks about things he loves like in the winter when snow covers telephone wires and the entire town looks like it's decorated with white streamers. He talks about things he hates like when you're next in line to ride a rollercoaster that you've been waiting to ride for hours and the ride breaks down and the entire crowd lets out a perfectly synchronized groan. He talks about how in order to survive he had to learn not to show any emotions. Maybe his isn't as good as he thought.



Untitled

Jason Morgan

Jason loves being outside, nature has so many different aspects. And he loves capturing these sides with pictures.



An Owl in Study

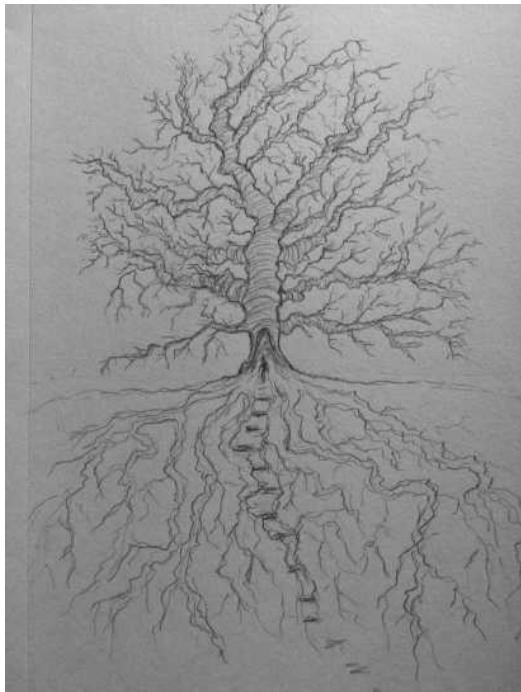
Revathi Machan

Crossing Fingers

Hannah Tran

Hannah is addicted to anime, dragons, writing, and friends. Xe is genderfluid, a third/fifth wheel of many, and is in a committed relationship with the axel.





Door in Tree

Jack Pagliante



Shapes for Amusement

Brandon Guios

My name is Brandon I enjoy drawing a lot. However this piece I made was all made by stencils. I have no artistic ability at all.

Sarah Voorhees

Sarah is a junior in high school. She loves reading, writing, and the Oxford comma.

Anna in the Clouds

Anna stands on a haystack in the middle of a shiny gold field. Her audience today is her sister, Tori, and me. Anna is laughing at something she said when suddenly she stops.

“Dare me to jump off?” she coos. The top of the haystack towers over me mockingly. It took all three of us to get Anna to the top. Tori and I are shaking our heads and offering to help her down, but Anna is laughing her lilting bell of a laugh and saying she wants to try.

“You’ll break your neck,” I whisper as fear slowly crawls into the pit of my stomach and quickens my heart. Anna can always speed up your heart. She’s a human adrenaline rush.

She’s reaching up to swirl her fingers in the dewy cotton ball clouds. Her blonde hair is the same color as the shiny hay and it twists in the crisp air. Her wide, sea-green eyes and wild hair give her a look of madness. She closes her eyes and stretches out her arms on either side of her like a bird unfurling its wings, as if she’s planning to coast to the ground and land gently on her feet.

We are silent. Once Anna makes up her mind, you can’t change it. Maybe that’s why she always has an audience. Because watching her is like watching a movie; you can’t change the outcome so you can’t be held responsible for the consequences.

Anna takes a quick breath—a sound like the flap of a wing—and jumps into the air. Time slows to a crawl as she drifts to the ground. She looks like a falling angel, all gold and green and pale. Then she hits the ground, crashing down like a piece of china.

Everything that goes up must come down. Anna came down hard today.

Shea Patel

Shea is a senior in High School. She enjoys going for runs and sleeping as well as drawing and reading. Shea loves to dance.

I am From

I Am From
I am from ice cream trucks,
from bus stops and waking up early,
to getting stung by bees
and going trickortreating.
I am from moving to two new schools
to drawing and painting,
from getting lost in the mall
to holding my mom's hand.
I am from hospital visits
to needles and tears,
from taking my brother to the park
and pushing him on the swings.
I am from falling on ice
to learning how to skate,
from pancakes in the morning
to receiving sad news.
I am from chocolate,
from sandwiches,
to pizza pockets.
I am from the morning sunset
to sleeping late at night.
I am from gazing at the clouds,
to rolling down hills,
from climbing trees,
to going zip lining.
I am from all those memories
with new ones yet to come,
from tiny little particles in the air
and stars in the sky,
from when the sun sets at dusk,
that's where I'm from.

Splitting White

Jack Pagliante



Skyler Rossi

Skyler Rossi is a junior at Hopewell Valley Central High School. She likes to spend her time riding her horse and writing short stories.

Don't You See Me?

Blurry memories of purple tricycles,
Striped birthday candles,
Oreo cookies on Sunday nights,
And dragon illustrations on crisp pages
Invade my dreams once I fall asleep.

The scent of vanilla and thyme
Radiating off your cotton blouse
Stayed etched in my memory
Long after I lost the image of your face.

Lisa said you were lovely.
Your delicate nose framed gracefully
Below your cerulean eyes.
She was twelve when you left---
I, only nine.

But I still remember the delicate notes
That floated off your valentine lips
As you sang a sweet lullaby at the base of our bunk bed.
I remember the soft dew moistening my ankles
As we ran barefoot on the damp grass
After the snow had said its last goodbye.
I remember your blue church dress,
The one that I loved to hide under
When I first learned to walk.

But, I also remember
The yelling,
The crying,
The smashing,
And the regret.
The lessons from Dad
On how to tell whether you were in a happy mood
Or an evil one;
When to bring up news,
And when to keep quiet.

I remember waiting four weeks
Before showing you my macaroni Starry Night,
Only to have you to rip it up in front of me.

I remember the good days,
But I also remember the bad.
The nights you were kicked out,
And the nights I fell asleep in your arms.

Do you stay awake at night
Playing back all these memories,
Not knowing how to remember me?
Or have you forgotten about my chubby cheeks,
My heart shaped freckle on my shoulder,
And my tiger-striped eyes?

Do you sit by the phone each morning
Trying to muster up the courage to dial
The ten-digit number stuck to the refrigerator?
Or have you forgotten the numbers
I sang every day after I got my first phone?

Because it is a daily struggle for me.

Yet, seventeen years have passed,
And all that remains of you is distant stop motion scenes
And a store bought birthday card every December 3.

Sophia Lo

Sophia Lo is a sophomore at Hopewell Valley Central High School. She loves music and fantasy novels and has a slight obsession with George R.R. Martin's series, A Song of Ice and Fire.

The Symphony

The silent air is broken—
By the soft trill of the flutes which flutter
Like the beating of a butterfly's wings.
Decorated with silver.

Suddenly,
With a sweeping motion of my hands,
The brass roars to life with a triumphant battle cry.

CRASH! The cymbals clang with a vigour;
the roll of the timpani is the thunderous wrath of Zeus
Quelled by Apollo's gentle lyres.

The strings follow
The conductor's cue
Quietly plucking at their strings until fading away
Into nearly nothing. Pianissimo.

With a swift motion, the melody begins once more.
Layers of vibrant sound encompass the hall
Filling it with rich, warm tones pulsating with life.

The heartbeat of the audience quickens with the tempo
Melodious praise triumphs until
the final note rings pure.

Can't Help Falling In... With You

Sarah Maung





Midnight

Fabiana Arce

Fabiana Arce studies at Hightstown High school. She likes to take pictures of sunsets, and photoshop them. She's a dedicated girl who studies hard. She loves going to the movies with her friends and family, singing, and dancing.

Sophia Lo

The Woes of Death

Death.

When my name is heard, fear strikes the hearts of man.

Death.

When my name is called, feet go off running into the other direction.

“Because how can he compare to his cousin, Life?” they ask,
“He is loss; he is the unknown”.

But they do not know me.

Perhaps I bring peace, perhaps I bring rest.

They have only met Life, and Life is cruel.

Life values some and leaves others to themselves-
It favors the strong and neglects the weak.

Life throws out its unwanted and leaves them to
I, with my dark mask.

Life is treacherous, dangerous, so you say that I am lurking around every corner.

But it is only to save you from the clutches which Life holds you in.

Life is the head of a coalition, where Disease, Hatred, Strife, seek to torture mankind.

And who is to bring you to sweet relief and rest
To bring you to the next step after Life?
It is me, Death.

To reunite you with those whom you love,
To bring you away from Life and into the next.

Who can say what the Underworld holds?
Perhaps it is Elysium and great joy behind my oak doors.
I welcome you with open arms.

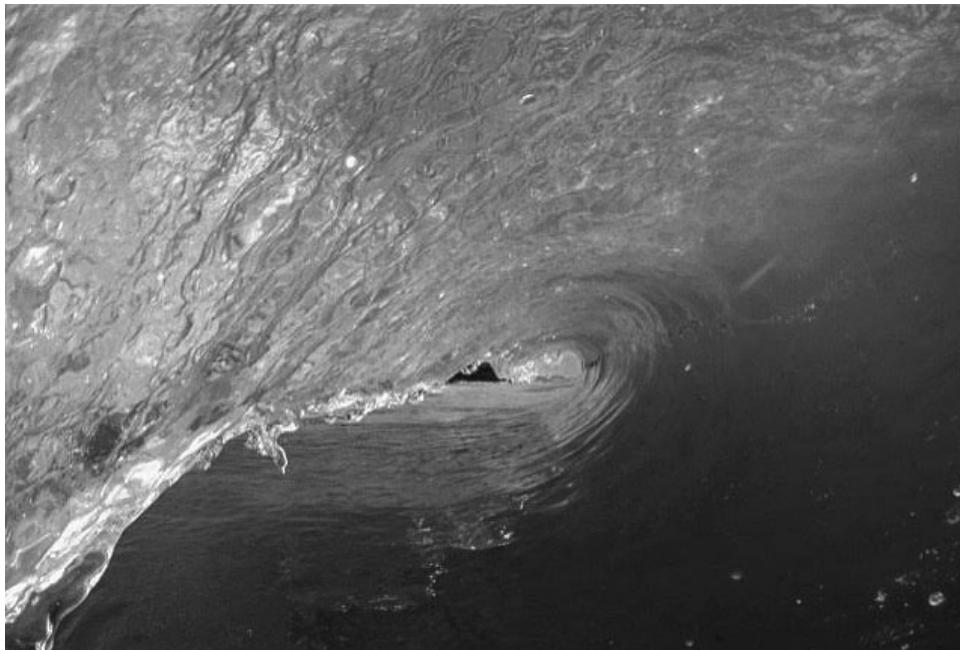
So when you feel my cold, dark shadow whispering to you,
Do not fear; I bear no ill will.
It is only me.

Fish Life

Rebecca Genek

Rebecca loves to take underwater pictures with her GoPro camera, spend time with her family, and likes to visit the beach.





Sophia Slutsky

Sophia enjoys reading everything from nonfiction works, including those of Charles Darwin, to the poetry of John Donne. She loves practicing with her marching band, Red Scare, and is an active member of my high school's Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Club.

Common Knowledge

A faded, blue home,
indistinguishable from those on either side.

An ordinary, two-story build
and a yellowish-green, outgrown lawn
ending abruptly.

In a cracked sidewalk.

Eleven months of the year,
it reveals nothing of its inhabitants.

In December,
the absence of
brightly-lit ornaments
on our side of the sparkling street
gives us away.

A large glass window
that s t r e t c h e s
over the length of our front room.

Eight days and eight nights,
window panes full of
delicate golden menorahs
topped with glowing candles
and colorful plastic dreidels
inscribed with hebrew letters
give us away.

A narrow metal box hanging
on the door frame,
dark

and cold against chipping white wood.
It houses the mezuzah,
a scroll reading the Shema,
connecting my house with every other Jewish house

Peekin Through

John Ely

in Lawrenceville,
in America,
in Israel.
Its silent prayer
gives us away.

A small Star of David,
resting on my collar bone
on a silver chain,
as thin as paper,
as strong as diamond.
I give myself away.

Flower

Stephanie Luo



Dawn

Katheryn Quezada

Katheryn enjoys binge watching Netflix, napping and reading in her free time. She loves taking pictures of anything that catches her eye.



Hannah Tran

Hannah is addicted to anime, dragons, writing, and friends. Xe is genderfluid, a third/fifth wheel of many, and is in a committed relationship with the axel.

Pronouns

Type

Enter

Scroll

Click,

Scroll more,

Click more,

A seemingly fruitless search that gives me one answer and creates many other questions,
Million other thoughts.

That sucks for those people

I wish there was something I could do.

But languages are stubborn.

They will live until the last person speaking them dies

They will not change unless the people speaking them change as well.

Ancient and slowly transforming

They are like rocks

And I'm stuck between a rock and a hard place.

Institutionalize - establish (something, typically a practice or activity) as a convention or norm in an organization or culture.

A typical foreign language class consists of a lesson for the first half and writing work for the second.

A certain prompt: What were you like when you were young? (¿Cómo eras cuando eras joven?)

Niño and niña mean 'boy' and 'girl' in Spanish, and connotes little children especially.

What if you were never a little boy?

A little girl?

Both?

Neither?

What if who you are can change in a couple of hours, or days?

This flexibility, this freedom of person

It's got me in another prison.

A subconscious institution.

Where we're taught that it's incorrect to use neither niño, or niña.

Where, if I wrote niño, I would be marked wrong.

Because I look like a girl.

Valerie Santanello

Valerie Santanello is part of the graduating class of 2016 at Allentown High School. She aspires to enter the field of cosmetology.

Components of Living

Blue lakes and green trees can inspire you in difficult times.
Smudging out the end will not make it disappear, but can assist in the creation of a new beginning.
Look to the moon when words cannot express a mind that is more full than heavy hands.
There is no guarantee that rain will weather a jagged stone into a perfectly round one.
A summer of yellow will not help you to see past the gray snow clouds of a dead and silent winter.
Be aware of the anchors that root you to simple sentences and lifeless views.
Look to the blue lakes and green trees again.



Water Bottle

Ellen Pietsch

Ellen is 14 and loves art--I eats, sleeps and breathes art! She enjoys music and writing. When she makes my art work, she likes having a story behind it to make it more interesting.

Dinathus

Brittany Schmidt

Brittany attends HHS and is in 9th grade. She comes from a big, loving family that she dedicates her time to. She loves spending time with her family because they're her best friends. She also loves hanging out with her friends.



Dark Nature

Daniel Wassef

Vann Adrian

Vann is a 10th grader from Hopewell Valley Central High School. She plays ice hockey and tennis.

Song of Myself

I celebrate myself and sing myself,
During the dead of night, I dream as do you,
Of moonstruck fantasies and illusions.

I wander aimlessly into my soul
As I delve into the nocturnal universe of my own creation.

I lay tranquil in my warm bed,
Awaiting the return of the inevitable knockout,
Wondering when I will be sedated for the night.

Then it rolls over me, like a wave of relief,
And transports me to another dimension,
Where my imagination can run wild.

While sleeping, all seems to cease,
But the heart continues to pump, the body continues to work,
As does the world, in the dark of night,
Continues to pump under the moonlight.

Vann Adrian-Hage, diligent, resolved, stubborn,
Carnivorous, even-keeled like a sturdy boat,
From the quiet town of Pennington.

Through me, many opinionated voices,
Voices of rebellious children and crude teenagers,
Voices of venerable philosophers and of my own soul.

I believe in the power of a good night's sleep,
The ability to recharge a dead battery,
The ability to start a new day fresh,
The ability to be reawakened into a new life.

I sound my lethargic hum over the dreamlands of the world
In the form of an undulating morning fog,
I bequeath myself to the subconsciousness that envelops the mind.

If you want to search for me, close your eyes and slip under the curtain
Into the universe of your own creation.

Night

Tyenah Rivera

Tyenah has always loved art. She has come to really love photography and is going to go to collage for photography. She loves to take pictures of animals.



Veena Prakriya*Veena would like to say hello to her friends*

Chaplin

Looking

I was walking back from French class the first time I fell in love
-With honey brown eyes
Ribbons of hair hanging loose, tracing the curve of her spine
Freckles crossing her nose, trickling down her shoulders
Hands heavy with silver rings caught on every ray of florescent hallway light
And I understood how to dream about someone

I accidentally ran a red light the last time I fell in love
With thin translucent hair, white from the moonlight
Wrinkles moving like river ripples, spreading across his face
His stormy-ocean eyes looking like they'd been sketched in,
His body bent in like a question mark
And for the first time I could see myself growing old with someone

I sat up straight in the park and immediately fell in love
-He traipsed across the landscape
With heavy eyelids and curly hair- the color of sleepless nights
Hot smoke dripped from his lips, blue hands gripping On The Road
And all of a sudden, oxygen wasn't enough

I fell in deep and passionate love riding the subway
His beaten cargo pants clung to the puke-gray plastic chairs
His long and skinny fingers gripped any and every bar in the vicinity
His bloody words whispered over and over "stop reading my mind"
And I would never have to eat again

I was dancing in my underwear and bleeding from the knuckles when I fell in love
-I saw her through the gates though I never actually saw her
G. White, 1956-1974, Forever Beautiful,
Forever pale and dressed in clean white cotton and forever mine
And for a moment she was the world, and for a moment I was white and cotton

My knees gave out and I fell to the ground in love
There was blood on my palms and my bones were displaced,
But he was relentless, tall shoulders and long hands
Short temper and small minded, clearly looking for someone else
And I would the nothingness
Search
And search
And search

One World Trade

Anjali Agarwal

Veronica Gottilla

Veronica Gottilla is a senior at Allentown High School. She has always found herself writing stories and poems in her spare time. However, this is the first time she has ever shown her work to people, other than her teachers.

Anthem to a Girl

I am a contradiction
I want it all
And I want nothing
I want it hot
And I want it cold
I am tired
And I am full of energy

I am a contradiction
I am fragile
And I am strong
I am vulnerable
And I am guarded
I am emotional
And I am indifferent

I am a contradiction
I am jubilant
And I am melancholy
I want love
And I want to be alone
I am sure of myself
And I am insecure

I am a contradiction
I am consistent
And I am sporadic
Do not try to keep up
I am too much

I am me
I am a jumble of oxymorons
I am illogical
I love it
And I hate it
Contradictions are confusing
I am not easy
But that's okay

I don't need to make sense
I don't always want to make sense
I am a contradiction
But maybe, just maybe
One day someone will figure me out...

Fall 2015 Leaves

Jonathan Powell

Johnathan is 17 years old, and enjoys sports, video games, food, and music. He plans to be an anesthesiologist when he is older.



Maitlyn Lang

Maitlyn Lang attends Lawrence High School, in the tenth grade. She enjoys spending time with friends and family, and traveling the world.

The Mask

They didn't know
She wore it.
They never knew
She bore it.
The mask
Kept her safe.
From those
Who would hate
The reason she had
To adore it.

Julia Faranetta

Ocean

I stand just beyond
its sly, greedy reach,
and have no desire to
stand a little closer.

It thrashes and roars
at my stubborn stand-off,
spraying mist on my cheek
and a salty breeze through my hair,
enticing my senses
and drawing me in
so that I can't help but
stand a little closer.

It reaches for my ankles,
dragging me forward
so that I now
stand a little closer.

With every rising wave I
feel its breathtaking power.
A gentle breeze whispers
a calling in my ear,
saying "come
stand a little closer."

I feel its frozen hands wrap
around my bare waist.
Like an awkward embrace
it pulls me nearer to
the building wave, that
devours me whole,
as it whispers in mockery
a chant saying,
"just a little closer"

Bear Mountain

Yihui Wu

*She is a student that enjoys arts and crafts.
She also enjoys travelling. This picture
shows a mixture of oriental and occidental
painting styles in acrylic.*





Giraffe

Stephanie Luo

Photography

Ryan Koerner

Ryan enjoys playing football and hanging with his friends.



Ian Nielsen

Ian is a senior from Allentown High School that never really liked writing, but has recently been getting into creative writing. Ian will be going to Rowan University for computer engineering next fall.

Me

Ian Nielsen
Allentown High School
Grade 12

Listening to lips move
Not seeing the words
I just can't wait
To say my piece,
About me

And when I'm done talking
I'm bored again
Waiting for a turn again,
For me, me

And as I go again to speak
I look and see
That in their eyes,
I just can't wait
For me, me, me.

Graziella Micklovic

Graziella Micklovic is a senior at Allen- town High School who hopes to continue on the path of writing when she goes to college in New York next year. Poetry has always allowed her to express the otherwise inexpressible feelings her teenage angst conjures up. She has fallen in love with language and all its possibilities, and will never understand kids who hate reading or writing. They have no idea of all the adventures they're missing out on.

((A pair of Haiku))

#1.

Cape May: salty and sweet dreams
Sand squishing, breeze drifting-
My grandmother blows me a kiss.

#2.

Throw my stars
Sprinkle blank canvases of sky
Constellations in me are out



Graffiti

Kelly Marrone

Here, Kelly shows a man working on his street work. She chose to pick graffiti words relating to art.

Hometown Sunset

Natalia Sasaguay

Natalia Sasaguay is a freshman at Hightstown Highschool. She enjoys spending time with her close friends and likes to listen to music. In the summer she likes going to Ecuador to spend time with cousins and likes to play soccer with them.



Innocence

Eliza Castro

Eliza enjoys taking pictures, in order to capture those perfect moments. She also enjoys reading and music, and plans on following a career in the science field.



Dylan Gurgurich

Dylan Gurgurich is a senior at Nottingham, and enjoys performing music. He also likes to view life in a positive and whimsical light. He hopes you do too!

Valediction of Worry

Hold dear moments birthed
Of quarry, sea,
Of forest and flame

Vanquish qualms of the mind
Through calm, resounding winds
Cast of Her hearty lungs

Never shake loose the leaves
She has bestowed on the mind
As a tree does in autumn

No, let flourish
The ideas brought forth
Through an ethereal touch

Never let them sway,
And never let them fall.



Horse in Motion

Kyla Chasalow

Spin Cycle

John Ely



Sarah Ouslander

Sarah Ouslander is a sophomore who attends Hopewell Valley Central High School. She loves playing basketball and soccer. She also enjoys both reading and writing poetry.

Shelter Dog

I wait behind bars,
a cramped, cement cell
Joined by a crowd of cold, wet noses
trying to sniff out a life beyond here.

I wait behind bars,
circling, pacing, carving out space
Rattled by desperate barks of fellow prisoners
pleading their case for early release.

I wait behind bars,
wagging my tail at passersby
Begging to be realized as
the faithful friend they've yet to meet.

I wait behind bars,
Remembering how it used to be
Dreaming about another chance
Hoping for rescue from this shelter's storm.

I wait.

Untitled #1300

Eva Frank



Magical

Angie Chang

Angie is a senior at Hightstown High School. She plays lacrosse on the school team and enjoys drawing in her free time. She plans to go to college next year and major in fashion merchandising, with a minor in international business.



Glow in the Darkroom

Cherry Agdalmessih

This is her stress reliever. When she is angry or upset she draws. She enjoys it and thinks maybe she can pursue a career in architecture. Drawing is fun and helps her express herself.



Hannah Tran

“The Memoir of a Patient In 25 Words”

“So I’m gonna write this story about some guy who breaks out of here, based on real events.”

“Patient 77, report to transportation.”
“Show time.”

Anna Antal

Lost

It felt surreal. Frantic, raging stars threatened to burst within me as my heart thundered in anxiety. My fingers clenched painfully around the straps on my backpack.

“Okay,” I murmured softly, forcing myself to breath slowly, “Gym. I have gym first.” I stood indecisively in front of the school’s rusty, old metal gate. Small groups of children pushed impatiently passed me, inadvertently mocking my hesitance with their carefree boldness. I started forward, embarrassed that I had called attention to my ignorance. Harsh gravel shifted under my feet as I took one tentative step after another. After a bit of aimless wandering that I struggled to disguise as selfassured, I spotted a pair of girls with gym bags strung loosely on their backs. Relieved, I shifted course as inconspicuously as possible, stubbornly ignoring the chance that they had gym later in the day.

I noted with some comfort that they entered a crumbling building separate from the rest of the school. I followed nervously, merging into the growing crowd as I trudged down the dirt path, climbed up the stairs, and shoved through the glass doors. Immediately, I faced a wall of dirty, yellow lockers and an equally unattractive decision.

“Left or right, left or right, left or right?” I repeated hurriedly under my breath. With no other hint for direction I turned left, blindly trailing after the majority.

I roamed the gray halls desperately, searching intently for anyone I recognized from the previous day’s orientation. One unfamiliar hallway led to the next. To my eyes, they were all identical. I considered admitting my inexperience and pleading for directions, but I didn’t have the courage to speak up. Gradually, the strident crowd that surrounded me dissolved and I heard the first bell’s shrill sound resonate through the hall.

“No, no, no, no,” I whined weakly, my voice breaking. “Not on my first day! I can’t be late.”

“Excuse me?” a deep voice demanded. Surprised, I jerked my head to the side to see a tall, frowning man looking at me expectantly. He was in the room beside me, sitting in a black office chair with his arms crossed and his legs planted aggressively on the floor.

“Yes?” I asked, doing my best to look nonchalant.

“What are you doing?” he asked. The back of my throat began to burn as I spoke.
“I’m looking for my gym class.”

“You have gym first period?” he questioned, his tone condescending. “Are you sure?”

“Yes,” I replied, instantly doubting myself. He raised his eyebrows in question and waited for me to continue. I stayed silent, hovering in the doorway. He let out an irritable sigh.

“What class are you in?” I could tell he was becoming increasingly frustrated with me.

“6.D.” The man turned around to look through a notebook lying on the desk behind him. My vision started to blur. When he met my eyes, I knew that he noticed my unshed tears shining on the surface.

“Your class has gym second period,” he informed me, his tone harsh. I felt humiliated.

“Oh,” I muttered weakly. “I should go then. Thank you,” I choked out, turning abruptly away without waiting for his reply.

No longer under his judgemental gaze, I rubbed my eyes forcefully, urging the tears to disappear. Then, I ripped my backpack open and took out my planner.

“Friday first period... biology room 110.” Huffing in frustration at my negligence, I headed briskly back towards the main building.

“Okay, okay, this is the first floor. Let’s see. Room 102, 104, 106, 108, 112.” I

spoke quietly as I passed the classrooms. I paused in front of 112 and looked around, confused. None of the doors were labeled 110. A wave of dread passed through me, almost setting off my tears once again. "Why is this happening?" I stood helplessly, stranded in the empty hallway.

At the far end of the hallway, I saw an elderly teacher. Unwilling to make the same cowardly mistake, I walked quickly towards him.

"Excuse me, sir, where is room 110?" I asked hopefully, craving a resolution to my problems. He turned towards my voice and eyed me disapprovingly.

"Did you look between 109 and 111?" he asked me coolly. I gawked at the man in disbelief.

"I guess, I guess not," I stammered, disoriented. He granted me a smug nod before continuing his way down the corridor.

As my hopelessness grew, so did my anger. Out of ideas, I strolled through the hall, glaring pointedly at each door that wasn't 110.

"117, 118, 119," I stated heatedly, furious with the cruelty of the world. Suddenly, I stopped. There stood room 110, reasonably placed between rooms 119 and 120.

"Liar," I whispered vehemently, before taking a calming breath and opening the door.

Sweater Creek

Daniel Wassef



Shadows in Perspective

Courtney Agnello

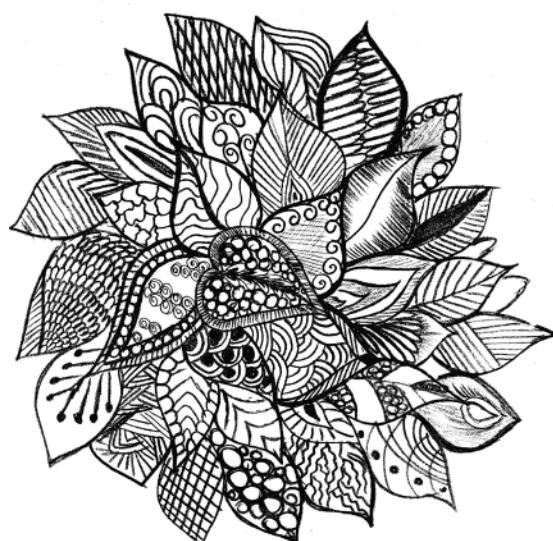
Courtney Agnello is a seventeen year old senior at Allentown High School. She has been drawing, painting and photographing everything for as long as she can remember, her favorite mediums are watercolor and photography. Courtney will be attending art school in NYC in the fall.



Dreary Forest

Revathi Machan

First time working with charcoal. I made quite a mess but it was really fun to use it except for the fact that it got all over my clothes.



The Flowers

Suha Shaikh

Julianna Lubbe

Julianna is passionate about many things including ice cream, her cat Fro, English, science, and pursuing a career in nursing.

A Brief Thought About Snowflakes

There is something to be said
About frost bitten toes
And being away from people for a little while
Sitting inside a car while snow is falling outside
Feet resting on the dashboard, while my thoughts take me elsewhere
Wondering if each snowflake has a purpose
Or if it is just to be lost in the masses
Eventually turning into ice or a black slush that signals the coming of spring
And when the spring does come
All sunshine and warmth and flowers and growth
The snowflakes
Tiny specks in the universe
Are not to be forgotten

Make a Wish

Carly Solomon

In her spare time Carly loves taking photo worthy pictures. Nature is one of her favorite things to take pictures of.



Thomas Farrell

Thomas Farrell is a quiet guy and a decent writer. He's laid back and enjoys life.

The Storm

Pitter-patter, pitter-patter,
 Without warning, little tears start to fall from the sky,
 A small boy notices when one falls on his thigh,
 As the people still snore, the storm starts to roar,
 A group of children huddle playing in a shallow puddle,
 The children come in wet, making the parents upset,
 The children had their fun, but the storm is not done,

The storm creates a sea, and birds retreat to their tree,
 As the sun is cloaked the plants get soaked,
 A coat would be nice for the captain of a boat,
 The weather predicted that the storm would be light,
 but this one has put up a fight,
 The storm was a blast, but it will not last,

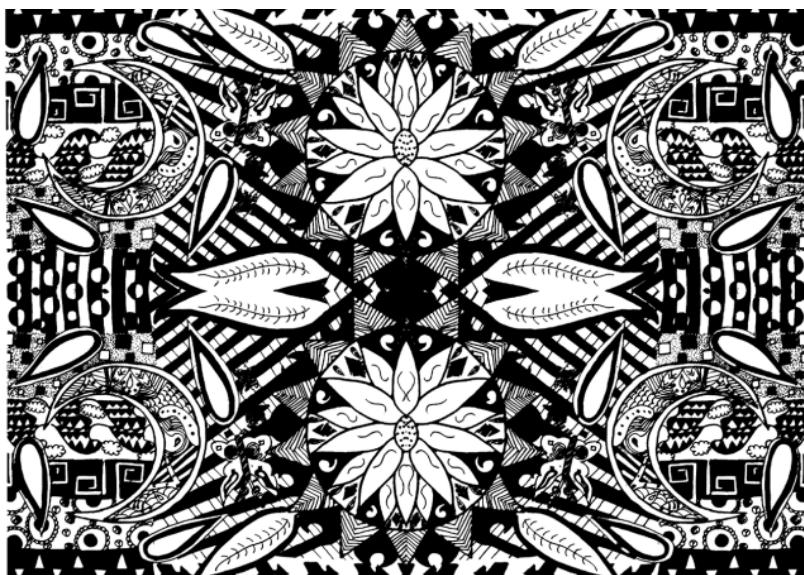
The storm starts to tire while the children lay by the fire,
 The storm still dies, as the sky stops its cries,
 A rainbow appears and the birds lose their fear,
 The little tears have almost disappeared,
 Pitter-patter, pitter-patter.



Recovery

Elizaveta Bogachev

I like drawing. Drawing is more fun than chopping wood.



Odyssey of a Blossom

Nicole Guzman

My name is Nicole Guzman. I am a student in Highstown Highschool. Art is my escape way of reality. Its there when I need a break from the world or when I just want to relax. It has grown on me and I am very fond of it.



Strangers

Courtney Agnello



Life Through the Looking Glass

Iaisha Manning

Stressing over every detail, Iaisha defines herself through her art. Every line, every mistake makes her... her. Looking through her art is like looking through her eyes, you see what she sees. In her near future, art and the love and care of animals is what she sees for herself.

marilyn monroe

Erica Naulaguardi



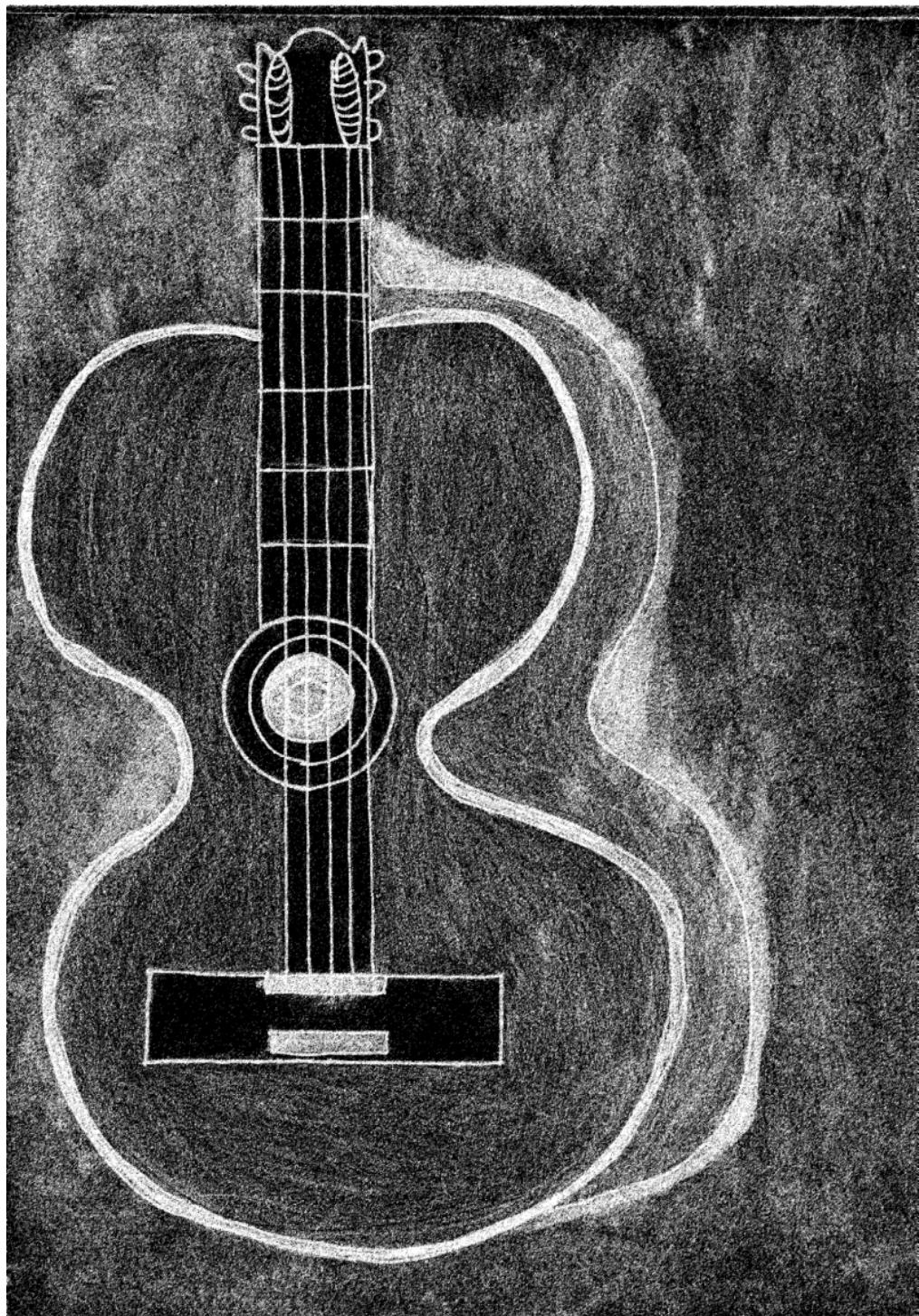
The Disintegration of Reality

Alisa Fatima

I am Alisa Fatima, shia muslim girl in her senior high school who in her recreational time dabbles with all different art forms. During my early teens, i moved back to Pakistan for two years and was exposed to different styles of art accustomed to the Pakistani lifestyle. Somehow, my Pakistani roots seep into my art.

pepe de watagatapituberr

Keidy Herrera



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