THE SCHOLASTIC ART & WRITING AWARDS

2016 NATIONAL CATALOG
An Extraordinary Year

The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards celebrate the visionary talents of creative students across America, providing them with opportunities for recognition, exhibition, publication, and scholarships. In 2016 we received nearly 320,000 submissions of original art and writing to the Awards—another record-breaking year—resulting in 85,000 awards at the regional level and 2,500 awards at the national level.

Yet it is not by numbers alone that we measure success at the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards. It is also through the individual stories that you share with us on a daily basis. From the teacher who recently wrote to say, “Thank you for making such a difference for my students. You have shaped their lives and the world they touch for the better,” to Robert Redford, who said, “I was 18 years old when I received my Scholastic Art Award for a sketch. The award affected me profoundly, and the recognition it provided at that time in my life was instrumental in my development as an artist.”

Over the program’s history, so many remarkable minds have found encouragement through the Awards, such as other creative luminaries Andy Warhol, Sylvia Plath, Joyce Carol Oates, John Baldessari, Frances Farmer, Cy Twombly, Ken Burns, and Lena Dunham.

It is with deep appreciation for the commitment of Affiliates, Alumni, jurors, educators, staff, and supporters that the Awards continue to succeed and support of the next generation of leaders in art, writing, design, science, government, teaching, and so many other fields.

We dedicate this year’s National Catalog particularly to the educators within the Scholastic Awards family—those who have given their time and talent, inside the classroom and outside of it, to nurture, encourage, and uplift the creative spirit in their students. Thank you.

Gregory R. Miller
Chairman of the Board
Alliance for Young Artists & Writers

Virginia McEnerney
Executive Director
Alliance for Young Artists & Writers

Gregory R. Miller

Virginia McEnerney
This year’s recipients join a group of notable Scholastic Art & Writing Awards alumni—all of whom received the Awards’ special recognition as teenagers. Many Award recipients pursue degrees and careers that focus on their art and writing, but countless others become inventors, innovators, scientists, public servants, entrepreneurs, and creative leaders across new and changing fields.

KEN BURNS
2016 Alumni Achievement Award Recipient

The New York Times called Ken Burns “the most accomplished documentary filmmaker of his generation.” Known for his use of archival footage and photographs in documentaries, Burns has produced films such as The Civil War (1990), Baseball (1994), Jazz (2001), The National Parks (2009), Prohibition (2011), and Jackie Robinson (2016). Burns’s documentaries have been nominated for two Academy Awards and have won Emmy Awards, among many other honors.

Burns received his Scholastic Art & Writing Awards Gold Key in 1971 for an autobiographical short story called “First Christmas in Ann Arbor.” Of his Scholastic Award, Burns has said that receiving it “was an important moment for me, one I’ve never forgotten.”

NOTABLE ALUMNI

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The Alliance for Young Artists & Writers gives special thanks to the educators who provided support, guidance, and encouragement to the National Medalists in the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards of 2016.

**GOLD MEDAL PORTFOLIO**

Khalid Ali  
George Washington Carver Center for Arts and Technology  
Towson, MD

Melissa Glosmanova  
Alexander W. Dreyfoos School of the Arts  
West Palm Beach, FL

Daria Sovorova  
George Washington Carver Center for Arts and Technology  
Towson, MD

Leah Stahl  
Stivers School for the Arts  
Dayton, OH

Matthew Varey  
Etobicoke School of the Arts  
Toronto, Canada

Lilly Widdle  
Lincoln High School  
Portland, OR

**SILVER MEDAL PORTFOLIO WITH DISTINCTION**

Ellen Abramson  
Design & Architecture Senior High School  
Miami, FL

Julie Anderson  
Stivers School for the Arts  
Dayton, OH

Alice Hancock  
Canterbury High School  
Fort Wayne, IN

Melissa Glosmanova  
Alexander W. Dreyfoos School of the Arts  
West Palm Beach, FL

Caroline Rosenstone  
ACES Educational Center for the Arts  
New Haven, CT

Deirdre Saunders  
Maret School  
Washington, D.C.

Diane Heath  
Stony Creek High School  
Richchester Hills, MI

Scott Armenta  
Alexander W. Dreyfoos School of the Arts  
West Palm Beach, FL

Carlos Benedict  
Janesville-Dawitt High School  
DeWitt, NY

Stacy Johnson  
Edmond North High School  
Edmond, OK

Alex Berg  
Hunter College High School  
New York, NY

Tracy Bielinsky  
Oyster River High School  
Durham, NH

Barbara Brown  
Lincoln High School  
Portland, OR

Linda Burke  
Needham High School  
Needham, MA

Dorene Fisher  
St. Anne’s-Belfield School  
Charlottesville, VA

Elizabeth Garvey  
Shady Side Academy Senior School  
Pittsburgh, PA

**BEST-IN-GRADE MEDAL**

Katie Agalett  
New Orleans Center for Creative Arts  
New Orleans, LA

Tracy Regan  
Hudson High School  
Hudson, OH

Caroline Rosenstone  
ACES Educational Center for the Arts  
New Haven, CT

Sharee Chapman  
Grant High School  
Portland, OR

**2016 EDUCATOR AWARDS**

The Alliance for Young Artists & Writers gives special thanks to the educators who provided support, guidance, and encouragement to the National Medalists in the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards of 2016.
AFFILIATE PARTNERS

The Alliance’s reach stems from our work with 101 Affiliate Partner organizations that administer 117 art and/or writing regions across the country. They are responsible for bringing the Awards to local communities, educators, and students. In addition to presenting the Awards at the regional level, Affiliates work closely with local funders and universities to provide scholarship opportunities for top recipients. With our Affiliates, we awarded 85,000 works this year with regional Gold Keys, Silver Keys, and Honorable Mentions.

It is because of our Affiliate Partners’ extraordinary dedication that the Scholastic Awards have been able to reach more participants and provide additional opportunities for creative teenagers across the country.

### NORTHEAST

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2016 SCHOLASTIC ART & WRITING AWARDS
## GOLD MEDAL PORTFOLIO AWARDS

Graduating seniors are invited to reach for our top award: a Gold Medal Portfolio in art and writing. Eight artists and eight writers receive the highest honor from the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards. Gold Medal Portfolios include a $10,000 scholarship for each student.

Visit [artandwriting.org/scholarshippartners](http://artandwriting.org/scholarshippartners) for a complete list of Scholarship Partners.

Visit [artandwriting.org/galleries](http://artandwriting.org/galleries) to search for recent Gold Medal Portfolio work.

### Award Recipients

#### ART PORTFOLIOS

- Leonardo Bacan
  - Miami, FL
- Abraham Cone
  - Chelsea, MI
- Razan Elbaba
  - Vienna, VA
- Zachary Endicott
  - St. Petersburg, FL
- Sophie Hullinger
  - West Palm Beach, FL
- Nyanna Johnson
  - Dayton, OH
- Fiona Jungmann
  - Andover, MA
- Conor Twohy
  - Towson, MD
- Rachel Page
  - Washington, D.C.
- Sydni Wells
  - Miami, FL
- Alex Zhang
  - Exeter, NH

#### WRITING PORTFOLIOS

- Shayla Grace Cabalan
  - Indianapolis, IN
- Adam Gowan
  - Toronto, Canada
- Allison Ilang
  - Holmdel, NJ
- Sophia Maurz
  - Portland, OR
- Ruohan Miao
  - Chandler, AZ
- Nyanna Johnson
  - Dayton, OH
- Fiona Jungmann
  - Andover, MA
- Conor Twohy
  - Towson, MD
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- Sydni Wells
  - Miami, FL
- Alex Zhang
  - Exeter, NH

Many writing selections have been excerpted. Go to [artandwriting.org/galleries](http://artandwriting.org/galleries) to read the works as they were submitted.
LEONARDO BACAN
Grade 12, Age 19, New World School of the Arts, Miami, FL. Carlos Gallostra and Jenny Gifford, Educators; Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Affiliate, The Maurice R. Robinson Fund Art Portfolio

into my Space (facing page), My Into Space (below)
Skeletons of the City

... My older cousins had gathered up in the doll room (I called it this because its walls were lined with an eerie collection of porcelain dolls encased in glass; not a single bit of wall was untouched by a doll. It was my least favorite room in the house. I felt like all of the dolls would erupt from their glass cages at once and rupture me. I’d seen a movie like that, once), playing cards. Further out into the hallway, I saw that my mother and a few of the other adults had huddled up in the tiny square kitchen, talking in hushed tones, eating. The lights had gone off, and the rooms were illuminated by candles and the occasional flashlight. My grandmother remained in her rocking chair, only this time, she sat in front of a window, stepping out into the downpour. I saw her feet hit the mud, however, I jerked back into reality, and grabbed her and the rooms were illuminated by candles and the occasional flashlight. My grandmother remained in her rocking chair, only this time, she sat in front of a window, stepping out into the downpour. I saw her feet hit the mud, however, I jerked back into reality, and grabbed her.

The sky had become lighter, but not in a good way; it was that ominous, golden-gray light that always came before and during terrible storms. I followed my grandmother down toward a group of naked children, who was steadying whom. I could hear our family calling from outside the tunnel, and the mouth of the tunnel came all too quickly. The rusty red gate was about to close in front of us. The current will carry them away, I thought. How are you this stupid? You only have one set of teeth. Back from the dentist, my father yells at me in Chinese: Eat, she commands. So you do. Weet weeks later, you return home with fries from the cafeteria at school. They are riveted like a dumpling’s skin, but golden yellow, crispy hardened unlike the celery that wilts in grandmother’s soup. She crushes them to dust between her palms, lets the ashes fall to the bottom of the trash. The pan on the stove lights a funeral pyre.
ABRAHAM CONE
Grade 12, Age 17, Chelsea High School, Chelsea, MI. Laura Naar and Georgina Rutherford, Educators; College for Creative Studies, Affiliate; Friends of the Alliance Art Portfolio

Help, (facing page), Pinned Part I, Bee, Decay (this page, clockwise from right)
RAZAN ELBABA
Grade 12, Age 17, Oakton High School, Vienna, VA. Susan Silva, Educator, Fairfax County Public Schools, Affiliate; Blick Art Materials & Utrecht Art Supply Art Portfolio

American Role Models (facing page), Real Eyes Realize Real Lies (right), Girl Talk (below)
ZACHARY ENDICOTT
Grade 12, Age 18, Gibbs High School, St. Petersburg, FL. Marty Loftus, Educator; Pinellas County Schools, Affiliate, Alliance Board of Directors Art Portfolio

Sanctuary (facing page), Viaduct (this page)
Olivia Moon.

POETRY

Olivia Moon is the seagull in all the guided meditation audiotapes, sitting on the mast that flies away at the end;
Olivia Moon is an olive-skinned almond-eyed hurricane in a world of crayon color labels like cerulean blue and goldenrod.
People feel like they can ask her things like where do you get your confidence? to which she will toss her hair;
Olivia Moon is physically unable to hear questions that are impossible to answer.
Olivia Moon was sent here from the sky gods, born from a smoking crater. She thinks she is the one whose heart was made out of the same love as mine—
For you whose voice I hear in Bible verses and for you
For you who I have waited nights (and years and lifetimes and pages for!),
I want to pluck the stars from the sky and place them on your tongue.
For you whose image is wrapped around me like blankets;
for you who I find in my calloused fingerprints, and for you who sees the world through people-colored lenses:
I want to scream to you this until I physically cannot, I want for the hallways of time to freeze for you and I to dance through them
I want to hear a new language of us spring from this cold pit of my stomach where I keep all my words and hear it say:
For you who have waited nights (and years and lifetimes and pages for!),
I want to pluck the stars from the sky and place them on your tongue.
For you whose voice I hear in Bible verses and for you whose heart was made out of the same love as mine—
For you who I see most clearly in this needle-fog of our hot desire pervading the kitchen,
remember that silk dress soiled with sweat,
back.

Poetry Dancing

POETRY

does anyone ever know what anyone else does?
those secret moments that make you lovable,
i imagine you are filled with them, and I love you.
as you dance through the wet grass, you wonder if the world dances with you, but you can never know that.
the unanswerable is a dock you push away from, and your boat disappears into the ocean.
all has slipped from you, and me, is slipping, and much of our performance is spent trying to get it back.
remember that silk dress soiled with sweat, our hot desire pervading the kitchen, lipstick and mascara dripping down the white mat of my face and you touching me there, smearing it a little.
your hair is impossibly knotted; my hands can’t work through it anymore.
we ate canned peaches and the cupboards creaked, you showed me all your grandmother’s jams—
p each-ginger, huckleberry, honey-cranberry-orange. i wanted to drown in my own saliva because in that moment my cup ran over into the low moon of abundance. it overflowed, and now is empty again.
SOPHIE HULLINGER
Grade 12, Age 18, Alexander W. Dreyfoos School of the Arts, West Palm Beach, FL.
Melissa Glosmanova, Educator; Educational Gallery Group [Eg2], Affiliate;
Alumni Council Art Portfolio

Individuality (facing page), Obsession (top), Idealism (bottom)
NYANNA JOHNSON
Grade 12, Age 17, Stivers School for the Arts, Dayton, OH. Paula Kraus and Leah Stahl, Educators; K12 Gallery & TEJaS, Affiliate; Lucy Evankow Photography Portfolio

Mirrored Self (Facing page), Dancer 2 of 5 (Top), The Knowing (Bottom)
FIONA JUNGMANN
Grade 12; Age 18; Andover High School; Andover, MA. Jessica Daviso, Educator; School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Affiliate, Roanna Fund Art Portfolio

Identity Thief Coat (facing page), Community (top, left and right), Quilted Bodice (bottom left), Structured Chiffon Bodice (bottom right)
Harvest Moon

POETRY

I wonder if she sees me pausing behind her, inspecting her candelabrum hands as they swirl the paste, another finger shedding down the oven door for the journey home. Last October, and the storm, my tongue a redwood wildfire streaming through the horizon of her face, as if she had not braved enough tempests in her life—because even children know that the sturdiest of foundations have a way of cracking. In Nanjing, she tells me of absolute, the shifting in her womb, autumn days when I pressed my ear into the withering ignition from within her belly. I picture my mother reliving the dankness of the hospital room, the red-rimmed doctors unrolling their words like cobweb, ready to snip off the spider-silk hope she held for the child in her arms—and I think of how my mother would not let me go, fearing that if my glutinous organs were released, they would never find her again. Next October, and my mother reliving the dankness from within her belly. I picture my tongue a redwood wildfire streaming through the horizon of her face, as if she had not braved enough tempests in her life—because even children know that the sturdiest of foundations have a way of cracking. In Nanjing, she tells me of absolute, the shifting in her womb, autumn days when I pressed my ear into the withering ignition from within her belly. I picture my mother reliving the dankness of the hospital room, the red-rimmed doctors unrolling their words like cobweb, ready to snip off the spider-silk hope she held for the child in her arms—and I think of how my mother would not let me go, fearing that if my glutinous organs were released, they would never find her again. Next October, and my mother will pass out the plates, will calmly collect and discard the pity of women with lanky boys on either side, and when she offers me my cake, we will both imagine that the extra lotus paste she sprinkles in my yuebing is her way of showing light, from the same hand she clasped my cold fingers with as she wound up her spider thread.
CONOR TWOHY, Towson, MD
Grade 12, Age 18, George Washington Carver Center for Arts and Technology
Khalid Ab, Joe Cypressi, and Daria Souvorova, Educators; Region-at-Large, Affiliate; Friends of the Alliance Art Portfolio

Skyscraper (facing page), Runaway
I will not be your 3:37 AM call, because she did not answer after seventeen rings. I do not leave your ghosts in my voicemail; it is nearly April and there are flowers sprouting in the graves you left behind.

I've stopped leaving my door unlocked—the keys have been changed, there are no shoes by the door; the doormat is gone, there are no welcomes to be had. The keys have been changed, I've stopped leaving my door unlocked—after seventeen rings.

Because she did not answer, so she waits for me in bed. But now she knows the car outside will never be yours, at footsteps that were never there, the dog used to howl every night, she was too tired getting told that men “wanted her ass” to put on some shorts today.

In 90 degree weather because she通过 cornrows but Nicki Minaj's “ghetto” braids. She leaves behind only the images that she has inspired and created. She herself is an aesthetic object, in her suicide she is completed as a work of art.

She is a feeling. We all carry this blackness within us, and the shock of a different sermon stung bloody in her room because of high heels and nightclubs. Her tragic flaw, if we can speak of her life in such terms, is something like self-loathing. The Goddess has a triple role—to give life, act as a muse, and to take it all away in death. Plath has given birth to her children, acted as her own muse, and now she is perfected in death, as she takes her children back inside her like the petals of a flower. She leaves behind only the images of a classical Greek sculpture of a Goddess, with a child at each breast. Then it becomes more organic, and she becomes a wilting flower, and her children return to her decaying body. Finally, we see her corpse from the distant perspective of the moon.

Plath's description of her death as “the illusion of a Greek necessity” implies that the necessity of her final act is merely an illusion. Greek tragic figures like Antigone and Ajax also committed suicide, but Plath clearly considers her motivations to be quite separate from those of these figures. Her actions are not dictated by fate or some universal law but rather her personal will to death, “Thanatos,” which pervades every aspect of her life. Her tragic flaw, if we can speak of her life in such terms, is something like self-loathing.

Plath points out that “the moon has nothing to be said about,” suggesting that her death has no significance in the cosmic scale. Why, then, should she remain alive, if her life is only misery?

In the poem, Plath portrays herself as the mythological figure of the Mother Goddess. In Joseph Campbell’s analysis, the Mother Goddess represents eternity, whereas the male God is engaged in the field of time. The Goddess has a triple role—to give life, act as a muse, and to take it all away in death. Plath has given birth to her children, acted as her own muse, and now she is perfected in death, as she takes her children back inside her like the petals of a flower. She leaves behind only the images that she has inspired and created. She herself is an aesthetic object, in her suicide she is completed as a work of art. One might speculate, with good reason, that the act of Plath’s suicide contributed significantly to the recognition she has received as a poet. Would we be studying her work in school had she not taken her life? This raises the question of how the artist's life affects the audience's perception of their work, and whether or not it should. This is a complex issue, especially when it comes to artists like Plath, who explore their lives openly and directly through art.

Her blacks crackle and drag. The closing statement of the poem, in its obscurity, is perhaps its most fascinating element. It is a simple but ambiguous statement, which employs synesthesia in its description of the sound produced by a color. These words can be interpreted any number of ways—perhaps the dragging of funeral robes, or curtains closing, or the shadow of the moon—but what it evokes most powerfully is a feeling. We all carry this blackness within us, and it “crackles and drags” as it slowly consumes us. This is the last line of her last poem, and the conclusion of the artwork that was her life.
2016 SPONSORED AWARDS

Dedicated and generous sponsors of the Scholastic Awards make it possible for us to provide additional recognition and scholarships for select students who receive Silver and Gold Medals.

We were pleased to add four brand-new sponsored-award opportunities for students this year—The Herblock Award for Editorial Cartoon, The RBC “Flaunt It” Award, the Neiman Marcus Award for Fashion, and the Neiman Marcus Award for Jewelry—and to continue our ongoing partnerships with Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Gedenk Movement, and the National Constitution Center.

The Herblock Award for Editorial Cartoon, sponsored by The Herb Block Foundation, celebrates the legacy of four-time Pulitzer Prize–winning political cartoonist Herblock. This Award provides $1,000 scholarships to three students.

2016 Herblock Award for Editorial Cartoon Recipients: Kaitlyn Quach, Ryan Sunada-Wong, Sherrill Zheng

The RBC “Flaunt It” Award, sponsored by RBC Capital Markets, encourages teens who possess any type of difference, whether blatant or invisible, to explore the theme “The things that make me different, make me, me.” This Award provides $1,000 scholarships to two students.

2016 RBC “Flaunt It” Award Recipients: Sydney Maddox, Peyton Vasquez

The Neiman Marcus Award for Fashion, sponsored by Neiman Marcus, provides a scholarship of $1,000 to a student for outstanding work in the Fashion category.

2016 Neiman Marcus Award for Fashion Award Recipient: Olivia Reavey

The Neiman Marcus Award for Jewelry, sponsored by Neiman Marcus, provides a scholarship of $1,000 to a student for outstanding work in the Jewelry category.

2016 Neiman Marcus Award for Jewelry Award Recipient: Zachary Gudziak

The Gedenk Award for Tolerance, sponsored by the Gedenk Movement, recognizes works of art or writing that reflect upon the lessons learned from the Holocaust and other genocides. This Award provides $1,000 scholarships to six students.

2016 Gedenk Award for Tolerance Award Recipients: Maribel Alverson, Erin Cho, Jasmine Cui, Aidan Foster, Daniel Wu, Lauren Wyman

The Creativity & Citizenship Award, in partnership with the National Constitution Center, encourages students to express their views on specific topics. This year the theme was Race in America. This Award provides $1,000 scholarships to three students.

2016 Creativity & Citizenship Award Recipients: Sierra Callwood, Leah Penn, Vasantha Sambamurti

The Best-in-Grade Award, sponsored by Bloomberg Philanthropies, provides an additional opportunity for students to have their work recognized amongst their peers. This Award provides $500 scholarships to twenty-four students.

See page 46 for a listing of the 2016 Best-in-Grade Award Recipients.
2016 HERBLOCK AWARD FOR EDITORIAL CARTOON

The Herb Block Foundation

SHERRILL ZHENG, Random Objects That Visualize the Chinese American Experience; Editorial Cartoon. Grade 12, Age 17, Perpich Center for Arts Education, Roseville, MN. Sandra Woodhull, Educator; Art Educators of Minnesota, Affiliate; Gold Medal, The Herblock Foundation Award

RYAN SUNADA-WONG, Another Day at the Office [above], Editorial Cartoon. Grade 10, Age 15, Millburn High School, Millburn, NJ. Kathleen Harte Gilsenan, Educator; Montclair Art Museum, Affiliate; Gold Medal, The Herblock Foundation Award

KAITLYN QUACH, Say Cheese! [below], Editorial Cartoon. Grade 10, Age 15, Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School, New York, NY. Carlos Nunez, Educator; NYC Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, Affiliate; Gold Medal, The Herblock Foundation Award

"C'mon! Don't be shy!"

"I DON'T LIKE THE WAY I'M BEING TREATED AT WORK..."
The Floppy Arm
PERSONAL ESSAY & MEMOIR

Well, if cancer wasn’t bad enough, now my arm won’t work. I just learned how to walk down stairs again, which was really hard when my feet would barely come off the floor before they dropped again. Neuropathy is the fancy word the oncologist called my diagnosis when I couldn’t run, descend stairs and ramps, tie my shoes, pick up coins, and even button my pants.

I’m trying to play this game with some friends where we have to do these tricks where I need both arms to work. It doesn’t matter how hard I try, my arm just will not work. FLOP! It falls on the table instead of holding the straw. Flop. Flop. Flop. We lose.

The people we are playing with are a part of my club. It’s a club no one wants to belong to because it is only for kids with cancer. I joined this club when I was diagnosed with stage IIB, intermediate risk, parameningeal, embryonal rhabdomyosarcoma. Rhabdo for short. We meet like this so that we all feel normal. Some of the kids don’t have eyes. Some are bald. Some don’t have legs. One of us is in a wheelchair. I have to wear tinted protective lenses at all times. That’s right. I wear sunglasses at night.

All the parents of cancer patients are worriers. I know I have to hide this arm thing because pretty soon all the moms will come to my rescue and annoy me by being overbearingly caring. Most kids probably want their parents to care about them when they are sick, but I have had my fair share.

When I go to school Monday, I really think that I fooled everyone. But I have this teacher, the kind who notices my arm right away and starts asking questions and doesn’t hesitate to call my mom and I find out that I have a doctor’s appointment.

Dr. Segura is the doctor who took care of me before cancer. He only knows me as Peyton and treats me like a regular kid. I’ve only seen him once since my cancer treatment was over because I was sick. The kind of sick that regular kids get. It felt good to be regular sick. Weird.

Dr. Segura comes in and does a bunch of testing. He pushes my legs and makes me point my toes. Then, he makes me shrug my shoulders. The right shoulder moves, but the left does not. No matter how hard I try, it just won’t move. It twitches. Just twitches.

The next day after school, I’m at the shoe store and smile at my mom after I find a pair of shoes that I really like. She freaks out and starts telling me to smile with both sides of my face. I smile as big as I can. She grabs her phone from her purse and dials the cancer center and starts wildly talking and crying and shouting at me to smile and telling me that if I’m kidding I’d better knock it off.

When we get to the hospital, the doctor thinks I’ve had a stroke, because when I smile, only one side of my face moves. Great. Just great. More things that don’t work.

The doctors check out my brain. It was still there and functioning, so I had to have a total body neurological MRI. The doctors couldn’t find a cause for all my symptoms. In their infinite wisdom, they diagnose me with depression.

It was a hard time for me and my family. In therapy, I had to do all kinds of things like climb stairs, pick up coins, write with my left hand, and touch my fingers to my thumb, which frustrated me because these things were easy before cancer.

All this happened until we went to a soccer game. My family sat in a suite with a short divider wall that I kept jumping over. My good arm would swing when I ran to leap over that hurdle, but my left arm would just flop next to my ribs. I was having a blast. Until I fell. Suddenly, my arm worked. Both my arms stretched out in front of me to break my fall. It was like a miracle. My mom looked at me and said, “Well, if I would have known that’s all it took, I would have shoved you down a long time ago.”

The doctors couldn’t figure out what caused the nerves not to function. I think it was because I needed to learn that when I fall, better things wait for me when I get back up.
OLIVIA REAVEY Birch Tree Coat (facing page) Fashion. Grade 12, Age 17, Hingham High School, Hingham, MA. Ryan Eschauzier, Educator; School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Affiliate; Gold Medal, Neiman Marcus Award for Fashion

ZACHARY GUIZIAK, Human Trap, Jewelry. Grade 12, Age 18, Detroit Country Day School: Upper School, Beverly Hills, MI. Jiro Masuda, Educator; College for Creative Studies, Affiliate; Gold Medal, Best-in-Grade Award, Neiman Marcus Award for Jewelry
Fear Itself

CRITICAL ESSAY

What is fear? We cannot look to a simplistic, “common sense” definition. Fear is best comprehended as a subconscious avoidance of perceived threats, a state of being in which threats are dismissed in varying ways, positive and negative. At its root, fear is anchored in an ancient biological response. Johnson, a reporter with Discover, explains, “[Fear causes us] to display defensive behavior in response to threatening stimuli . . . fear turns out to be one of the most essential techniques that natural selection stumbled across to increase the survival odds of organisms in an unpredictable environment . . . For people who have undergone serious trauma . . . memories of fear can sometimes play a dominant role in shaping personality.”

The sum of our everyday interactions, our personalities, are constructed within an environment of our fears, and therefore our fears underlie each tenet of our modern societies. Fear is thus a facet of a hunter-gatherer existence—a nod to the primal past of our species, from times where every shadow hid wolves, where every unknown was a danger. However, humanity is no longer facing hungry wolves or angry bears; the world around us is safer relative to our hunter-gatherer past. Our greatest resource competitors? Ourselves. Food has transformed into jobs, wealth, and success, while bears and wolves have transformed into Others.

The fear that once unified humanity against perilous nature has transformed into a wedge. As Lars Svendsen, professor of philosophy puts it: “A paradoxical trait of the culture of fear is that it emerges at a time when, by all accounts, we are living more securely than ever before in human history.”
Krishna

New families needed homes. That’s why the mechanical din of hammers, saws, and adjusted ladders had sndered the tranquil murmurings of the wind shaking the trees, and the birds saluting the sun. But it would all be over soon—that’s what her mother said.

Krishna had woken up at 4:30 in the morning, and she resented having done so. Today was her class field trip, and she really didn’t want to go. But she was twelve, and that was the age when you weren’t supposed to worry about anything. You weren’t supposed to worry about how to talk to other kids, or how to hold your sandwich when everyone watched you eat it. So she returned the permission slip.

She sat in the dry bathtub and eyed the silver faucet across from her. It should’ve been instinctual to turn the faucet on, to soak in clean water and flush the grime down the drain. But, this time, she felt all the dirt wouldn’t go. And she didn’t feel like getting up.

Abha had left her tweezers at the very edge of her dresser; an instance as good as a gift. Krishna held the appliance in her right hand, pinching it like a pair of chopsticks. She had rolled up her baggy pants to the knee, and started to uproot the dense black hair of her legs. She was unraveling a cloak.

It stung when she plucked, but she knew it was supposed to. “Beauty is pain.” “No gain without pain.” Everyone said it. In thirty minutes, she had cleared only a penny-sized patch of hair at the base of her knee. This should’ve felt like progress. She sank her head into her knees.

Ma never shaved in India. But they were in Asheville now.
2016 BEST-IN-GRADE AWARD RECIPIENTS

Bloomberg Philanthropies

Grade 7
Caroline Blumer
Scott Hanna
Reagan Murphy
Juliana Yu

Grade 8
Sadie Cowles
Erin Hong
Elizabeth Johns
Mercedes Langdon

Grade 9
Emma Lickey
Lindsey Williams
Karly Wolfcale
Alyssa Zhang

Grade 10
Maddy Daum
Aidan Forster
Ava Young
Lily Zhou

Grade 11
Sierra Callwood
Maya Eashwaran
Jihye Nam
James Tortorelli

Grade 12
Zachary Gudziak
Carol Nguyen
Audrey Spensley
Alex Zhang

SIERRA CALLWOOD, The Ties That Bind: An Attempt to Figure It Out (facing page), Mixed Media. Grade 11, Age 17, NSU University School, Ft. Lauderdale, FL. Melanie Cohen, Educator; Young at Art Museum, Affiliate; Gold Medal, American Visions Medal, Best-in-Grade Award, Creativity & Citizenship Award

ALYSSA ZHANG, Thinking (top left), Mixed Media. Grade 9, Age 15, Northview High School, Duluth, GA. Ling Li, Educator; Savannah College of Art and Design, Affiliate; Gold Medal, Best-in-Grade Award

SCOTT HANNA, Creepy Crawler (top right), Ceramics & Glass. Grade 7, Age 12, Detroit Country Day Middle School, Beverly Hills, MI. Aaron Kuehne, Educator; College for Creative Studies, Affiliate; Gold Medal, Best-in-Grade Award

REAGAN MURPHY, Meter Running (bottom), Mixed Media. Grade 7, Age 13, Jay Robinson Middle School, Charlotte, NC. Melissa Leftwich, Educator; Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools—Visual Arts Education Department, Affiliate; Gold Medal, Best-in-Grade Award
JAMES TORTORELLI, Hidden in the Pews Zine (top), Design. Grade 11, Age 17, Home School, Gaithersburg, MD.
Brian Bienek, Educator; Region-at-Large, Affiliate; Gold Medal, Best-in-Grade Award

Joe Medina, Educator; Region-at-Large, Affiliate; Gold Medal, Best-in-Grade Award

KARLY WOLFCALE, A Dream (facing page), Photography. Grade 9, Age 14, Homestead High School, Fort Wayne, IN.
Dominick Manco, Educator; Fort Wayne Museum of Art, Affiliate; Gold Medal, Best-in-Grade Award
ERIN HONG, Big Smile, Drawing & Illustration. Grade 8, Age 13, Home School, Holden, MA. Kyungah Lee, Educator; School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Affiliate; Gold Medal, Best-in-Grade Award

MERCEDES LANGDON, Graduation Day (facing page), Photography. Grade 8, Age 14, Springfield Ball Charter School, Springfield, IL. Maggie Perkins, Educator; Mid-Central Illinois Region, Affiliate; Gold Medal, Best-in-Grade Award

Maggie Perkins, Educator; Mid-Central Illinois Region, Affiliate; Gold Medal, Best-in-Grade Award
SADIE COWLES, Grade 8, Age 13, Frank H. Harrison Middle School, Yarmouth, ME. Charlotte Agui, Educator; Southern Maine Writing Project, Affliate; Gold Medal, Best-in-Grade Award

JHYE NAM, Grade 11, Age N/A, Skyline High School, Ann Arbor, MI. Patricia Jenkins, Educator; Bailey-Blank Center, Affliate; Gold Medal, Best-in-Grade Award

JHYE NAM

Hello, you’ve never met me.

But my name betrays me. It tells you everything you need to know, so take your pick: the 7-11 or the laundromat. Medical school or an engineering degree. My name is a bar code that bears my product description. My GPA, my monosyllabic last name, and my stick-straight dark hair. It’s a Choose Your Own Adventure of predetermined narratives.

You’re right. But you’ve never met me.

The teacher is at a loss with the wailing little boy who doesn’t look or talk like the rest of the toddlers. She calls the big kids’ teacher to find his sister. I walk to my brother, silently, wrap my arms around him, and reassure him in a language only we understand. I tell him it’s okay. I know it’s not okay.

The only word I know is jeans, but she’s not saying jeans. So I look out the window because, no matter which side of the globe I’m on, the blue sky is a constant.

My mom wants to plan a birthday party for me. She’s nervous and excited because she wants to do this right. She calls a party store to order balloons, but a brown-haired mess of a face she flicks madly through a dictionary. After she finally lowers the phone, she asks me what a zip code is. Just like that, she’s crying, and I’m hugging her. I’m old enough to know that it’s not about the dictionary or the balloons.

They tell me that I’m what’s called an alien. They tell me to say the Pledge of Allegiance. I’m not sure about America. I’m not sure about God. They don’t tell us that we’re allowed to be “not sure.”

There are words I want to know about, odd ones like “salmon” and “Wednesday,” that don’t play by the same constant. Sometimes, both at the same time.

Hello, I am wisdom. I am learning not to betray my name.

Hello, I am a similar person, but I believe the setting you grow up in and who you are surrounded by does have a big impact on the person you become.

We continued putting up posters. Each poster had two baby pictures of me, and last year’s school picture. We included information about where I was left, when I was born, and an agreement to keep all information confidential. After each poster went up, people assembled and started reading them. We guessed that by the end of the day, almost everyone in that village had seen the posters. The odds were looking good for finding my birth parents, but I was trying to keep from being too optimistic so that I wouldn’t let down. We were not sure how long the posters would last before wear and tear and wind and rain tore them down. Who knew if we would even get a call or if someone would step forward? We would just have to wait and see.

Six months later, after several calls and one DNA test, it was determined that my birth parents had not been found. I remember telling someone that if the DNA test wasn’t positive, that it would be devastating. But if the DNA test wasn’t positive, that it would be devastating, but it wasn’t. I was disappointed and upset that the situation had not turned out the way I wanted it to. I was also slightly relieved, because the potential father had been very sick. Meeting him might have been difficult because we both didn’t have access to affordable health care. He also might have had a genetic disease that could have been passed on to me.

We had known the whole time that the odds of finding birth parents were very slim in such a big country. I’m guessing that all of the people in my village and surrounding villages have seen my posters or heard about them by now. Hopefully someone will still step forward. Maybe they are worried that they will get in trouble for abandoning a child or for having more children than was allowed at the time. It’s also possible they moved, or maybe they even died. Regardless, I was able to hear two families’ stories, so I have a much clearer picture of what my story might have been. Even if nothing more happens, I have had a glimpse of how my life might have turned out had I grown up in a small village on the other side of the world, in China.

One in Eight Million

PERSONAL ESSAY & MEMOIR

Throughout this whole trip, we had been stared at unabashedly like we were exotic animals in town for the day. I did not like all of the attention and felt a bit uncomfortable. If I had stayed in this village, I probably would have known all of these people. In a village this small, I guessed that everyone knew each other. At another stop we put a poster up and then got back in the car to wait for Mr. Shen to return. We sat in the van and watched people come over in groups and look at the poster. They started gesturing toward the van, so Yuyao rolled down the windows. They peeked in and looked at the strange American family, my mom and sister with their blonde hair, my tall father with his head almost touching the roof of the car, and then Zhi and I, the Chinese adoptees with the foreign American family.

As we turned around the main parade of people to the four different entrances to the town, we saw shops that were overflowing with plastic chairs, hats, brooms, plastic bins, fans, baskets and all sorts of odds and ends. There were stands with watermelons and odd syllables for me.

“salmon” and “Wednesday,” that don’t play by the same odd syllables for me.

It was hard to picture myself living in such a small village. Life in China was missing. Is it all about having the most opportunities? Just because I lived in a different place does not mean that I wouldn’t be as content and loved by my family and friends in China as I am now in America. I would be a similar person, but I believe the setting you grow up in and who you are surrounded by does have a big impact on the person you become.

I would likely be poor, I would not have much, and I would most likely have had multiple brothers and sisters. My work in a factory in a nearby city. I would also have spent my entire life hiding like a dirty secret. We follow the template with relative ease, and it starts to feel like a chore.

My name is a bar code that bears my product description. My GPA, my monosyllabic last name, and my stick-straight dark hair. It’s a Choose Your Own Adventure of predetermined narratives.

We continued putting up posters. Each poster had two baby pictures of me, and last year’s school picture. We included information about where I was left, when I was born, and an agreement to keep all information confidential. After each poster went up, people assembled and started reading them. We guessed that by the end of the day, almost everyone in that village had seen the posters. The odds were looking good for finding my birth parents, but I was trying to keep from being too optimistic so that I wouldn’t let down. We were not sure how long the posters would last before wear and tear and wind and rain tore them down. Who knew if we would even get a call or if someone would step forward? We would just have to wait and see.

Six months later, after several calls and one DNA test, it was determined that my birth parents had not been found. I remember telling someone that if the DNA test wasn’t positive, that it would be devastating, but it wasn’t. I was disappointed and upset that the situation had not turned out the way I wanted it to. I was also slightly relieved, because the potential father had been very sick. Meeting him might have been difficult because we both didn’t have access to affordable health care. He also might have had a genetic disease that could have been passed on to me.

We had known the whole time that the odds of finding birth parents were very slim in such a big country. I’m guessing that all of the people in my village and surrounding villages have seen my posters or heard about them by now. Hopefully someone will still step forward. Maybe they are worried that they will get in trouble for abandoning a child or for having more children than was allowed at the time. It’s also possible they moved, or maybe they even died. Regardless, I was able to hear two families’ stories, so I have a much clearer picture of what my story might have been. Even if nothing more happens, I have had a glimpse of how my life might have turned out had I grown up in a small village on the other side of the world, in China.

America. Similarly, I would not have any of the opportunities that I have now. This is supposed to make me feel lucky, but to be honest, I would not have known what I was missing. Is it all about having the most opportunities? Just because I lived in a different place does not mean that I wouldn’t be as content and loved by my family and friends in China as I am now in America. I would be a similar person, but I believe the setting you grow up in and who you are surrounded by does have a big impact on the person you become.

It was hard to picture myself living in such a small village. When she finally lowers the phone, she asks me what a zip code is. Just like that, she’s crying, and I’m hugging her. I’m old enough to know that it’s not about the dictionary or the balloons.

They tell me that I’m what’s called an alien. They tell me to say the Pledge of Allegiance. I’m not sure about America. I’m not sure about God. They don’t tell us that we’re allowed to be “not sure.”

There are words I want to know about, odd ones like “salmon” and “Wednesday,” that don’t play by the same constant. Sometimes, both at the same time.

Hello, I am wisdom. I am learning not to betray my name.
Georgia on My Mind; American Dérive

POETRY

Georgia on My Mind

Just an old, sweet song—
Later we’ll wonder how we hadn’t noticed
the hills blooming open, goldenrod
scarring the scrub grass, gorgeous & hungry.
This was the summer my father bought
guppies by the pound, sheared the coats
off his sheep, knuckles memorizing the difference
between hot flesh & warm air. The babies cried,
soft nervous sounds soaked up by dirt, as if the whole
world could feed on their blistered feet.
My father slept on the kitchen floor with a baseball bat,
listening to Ray Charles claw his way through
AM radio waves, dawn dripping like honey
touches like sugar if you drink long enough,
I don’t answer. We flick coins
out the window to watch them bite
pavement and it reminds me
of the dogfights two years ago,
the spray of roses we’d heaped
on slumped spines. Now we flip
trough towns like television channels.
Children flock behind chain link,
scramble with their hands. Men smoke
on porches, embers losing light at their feet.
No buyers. The signs spring from grass
like milkweed in bloom.
We leave early to beat the traffic,
rushing to a city we’ve never seen. Still
American Dérivé
The road leads back to you.

American Dérive
We are hurtling down the highway like a fist
toward flesh. Tennessee peels itself
off its sheep, knuckles memorizing the difference
between hot flesh & warm air. The babies cried,
soft nervous sounds soaked up by dirt, as if the whole
world could feed on their blistered feet.
My father slept on the kitchen floor with a baseball bat,
listening to Ray Charles claw his way through
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rushing to a city we’ve never seen. Still

America on My Mind

Just an old, sweet song—
Later we’ll wonder how we hadn’t noticed
the hills blooming open, goldenrod
scarring the scrub grass, gorgeous & hungry.
This was the summer my father bought
guppies by the pound, sheared the coats
off his sheep, knuckles memorizing the difference
between hot flesh & warm air. The babies cried,
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America on My Mind

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trough towns like television channels.
Children flock behind chain link,
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on porches, embers losing light at their feet.
No buyers. The signs spring from grass
like milkweed in bloom.
We leave early to beat the traffic,
rushing to a city we’ve never seen. Still

Letters From a Girl

SHORT STORY

To the President of France
Nov. 14—
Dear Mr. President,
My grandmother loves to travel. You might not consider
that important, but it matters, because this year, she
went to Paris. She sent us a picture of herself on November
12, and we haven’t heard from her since. She usually
sends pictures every day, so you can see that this is very
concerning to my mother and me.

Would you please see that Dr. Linda Gates, Ph.D., is
sent to the return address on this envelope? My mother
tells me that presidents are the most responsible people
in the world, so I expect that you will be on top of this
assignment.

I would not be so audacious as to ask as a favor without
compensation. So you will find enclosed all five dollars of
my allowance money. Upon the safe return of my grand-
mother, you will receive another five. I assume this will
be sufficient salary.

Thank you for your help, sir.

—Nadine Rosamund

Nov. 20—
Dear Mr. President,
It has been a considerable amount of time since my last
letter, and although I acknowledge that your job is very
difficult, I also am not habitually patient. My grandmother
has still not appeared, nor has she sent word of her well-
being, which leads me to worry for her safety, although
not too much, because my mother has assured me that
our front door is always silent, the curtains al-
ways drawn. Maybe my parents believe that light will
hurt my eyes—yes, that must be it; our eyes are too ten-
der for daylight’s touch.

It also occurs to me that I have been insensitive. I haven’t asked you how you’ve been holding up. Are you all
right? Are your meals good? Do you sleep well? I imagine
your bed to be a magnificent thing, made of feathers and

Many writing selections have been excerpted.
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Death Follows

**SHORT STORY**

There were three children’s wards in St. Joseph’s Memorial Hospital, each with a large, faded painting of a president on its doors. There was Lincoln, for the little kids and the ones who were just staying overnight; Adams, for the kids who didn’t sleep in the hospital but were there perhaps every hour of the day; and Harrison, named after William Henry Harrison and the place for those of us who didn’t have rich parents who were willing to pay for a more private place to die. (In case you didn’t know, our namesake Bill died 32 days after his inauguration—right after a tour of piano lessons.)

Technically, I was supposed to have been moved out of the children’s wards when I turned twelve, but no one really knows how much longer I’m going to stick around. It’s kind of a waste to move me when I could die on you any second. Plus, I know the kids here, and most of them aren’t too bad. Our hanging out was mostly a fog of sleeping and pain medication, to be honest.

There was only one patient in Harrison who was my age, and that was Miguel. I knew barely anything about him—just that he had been stuck here for longer than I had, rarely spoke to any of us, and had just gotten the worst news.

I was there when they told him, late one evening when most people were sleeping. I was fiddling with the settings of my back brace, trying to find the position where the metal wasn’t digging into my skull, when the door creaked and Miguel’s aunt walked in. She visited him every so often, drawing the curtain around his bed with a grimace and a spritz of hand sanitizer. Miguel just barely tolerated her—not that he had much choice.

But this was no routine visit. She didn’t bring hand sanitizer, and Miguel’s eyes were wide with fear as she approached. I watched as she carefully placed a gentle palm on his head and ran her fingers through his hair. Her words were gentle and slow, but Miguel flinched with each syllable.

“The administration has approved my request for your intubation. Your operation will be in a week and I’ll be there for you.” He gasped in a shuddering breath, coughing out a slur of protest.

“I’m your guardian, Miguel, and this is the right choice. I won’t have any of this nonsense, you hear me?” She lifted her hand from his head as he glared at her, balling his hands into fists and whispering angry words in Spanish. “You know I don’t understand what you’re saying. Say it in English or not at all.” She turned toward the door and began to walk away. Miguel called out a rasping translation, and she spun around once more.

“Watch your tongue, young man!”

When she was gone, Miguel began to sob. Real sobs. Wracking cries of pain as he clutched his cannula and tried to wrench it from his neck, digging his fingernails into the cold plastic. I didn’t blame him. Intubation was basically a death sentence—you were going to die soon anyway, so why spend the last few months of your life with a pipe shoved down your throat, unable to talk or even move? His bowing was gut-wrenching but, having found the least-painful position possible, I fell asleep quickly.

Her words were gentle and slow, but Miguel flinched with each syllable.
When Told Not to Chronicle Eroticism—After Mary Szybist
POETRY

If I were a classical nude, the distance between my nipples would be the same as from my nipples to my belly button, the same distance from there to the split head of the pelvis. The body: quiet bone construct can be charted in the faults of its architecture.

When the eggs of a Japanese carp are endangered, the male will suck them into his mouth and hold them. His mouth, master imitator of womb, makes teeth from them. He spits them out like they are dead, finds a new mate. To begin in the middle he spits them out like they are dead.

Once, my mother and father slicked their bodies together, tried to see how far inside of each other they could get. Maybe my father put his fingers inside my mother’s mouth. They attempted to create one body from two. My father: root/glacier/bone. My mother: earth/ocean/socket.

Many writing selections have been excerpted. Go to artandwriting.org/galleries to read the works as they were submitted.
AISHAZHAN ABUOVA. Visions (facing page), Photography. Grade 9, Age 14, Professional Children’s School, New York, NY. Caroline Holder: Educator; NYC Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, Affiliate; Gold Medal

ALICIA AMBERSON. Underwater, Painting, Grade 12, Age 18, Saint Mary’s Hall, San Antonio, TX. Logan Blanco: Educator; SAY Sí, Affiliate; Gold Medal
Josie Burton, *Falling* (above), Digital Art. Grade 12, Age 17, Bishop Luers High School, Fort Wayne, IN. Kristen Billingsley, Educator; Fort Wayne Museum of Art, Affiliate; Gold Medal

Suzanne Brown, *And Life Goes On* (facing page), Painting. Grade 10, Age 15, Pine View School, Osprey, FL. Retsy Lauer, Educator; Pine View School, Affiliate; American Visions Medal
MARION AVILA, *The Man in the Mirror* (above), Drawing & Illustration. Grade 12, Age 17, Fayetteville-Manlius High School, Manlius, NY. Kathryn Gabriel, Educator; Central New York Art Council, Inc., Affiliate; Gold Medal

BRIAN BRITT, *Night Spins* (facing page, top), Photography. Grade 11, Age 17, West High School, Anchorage, AK. Mark Stewart, Educator; Young Emerging Artists, Inc., Affiliate; Silver Medal

CAROLINE CHIDESTER, *Tracks* (facing page, bottom), Photography. Grade 11, Age 17, Upper Arlington High School, Upper Arlington, OH. Scott Wittenburg, Educator; Columbus College of Art & Design, Affiliate; American Visions Medal
OLIVIA CAMBERN, ANA SOFIA CARVALHO, and GABRIELLE MARIE DARR. Sam’s Parade for Imaginary Friends (above). Film & Animation. Grade 12, Age 17, Lambert High School, Suwanee, GA. David Smith, Educator; Savannah College of Art and Design, Affiliate; Silver Medal

ALI BARTLETT. Luminescence (facing page). Painting. Grade 12, Age 17, Needham High School, Needham, MA. Linda Burke, Educator; School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Affiliate; Silver Medal with Distinction

David Smith, Educator; Savannah College of Art and Design, Affiliate; Silver Medal.
DAVID CARDOZA, Inside America’s Factory Farms (above), Printmaking, Grade 11, Age 17, Denver School of the Arts, Denver, CO. Deb Rosenbaum, Educator; Colorado Art Education Association, Affiliate; Gold Medal

NEVILLE CAULFIELD, When the Stars Fall Like Rain (below), Photography, Grade 12, Age 17, Oyster River High School, Durham, NH. Tracy Bilynsky, Educator; The New Hampshire Art Educators’ Association, Affiliate; Silver Medal with Distinction

ALEXANDRA CALVEY, Laundry Day (left), Jewelry, Grade 12, Age 17, Abington Heights High School, Clarks Summit, PA. Abigail Fenton, Educator; Marywood University, Affiliate; Gold Medal

HANNAH CHEN, Woman (left, bottom), Painting, Grade 9, Age 14, Hume Fogg High Academic Magnet, Nashville, TN. Shayna Snider, Educator; Cheekwood, Affiliate; Gold Medal

ANDREA CONLEY, Fish Out of Water (above), Drawing & Illustration, Grade 7, Age 12, Pin Oak Middle School, Bellaire, TX. Lindsey Slavin, Educator; Harris County Department of Education, Affiliate; Gold Medal
Catherine Chen, Jackie’s Journey (above), Art Portfolio. Grade 12, Age 17, Alexander W. Dreyfoos School of the Arts, West Palm Beach, FL. Melissa Gosmanova, Lacey Van Reeth, and Scott Armetta, Educators; Educational Gallery Group (EgG). Affiliate; Silver Medal with Distinction.

Sophie Choi, Treasured Memories (facing page, top), Painting. Grade 8, Age 13, Duluth Middle School, Duluth, GA. Yoonhee Chung, Educator; Savannah College of Art and Design, Affiliate; Gold Medal.

Makenzi Carlgren, Rosie and Ruth (facing page, bottom), Painting. Grade 12, Age 18, Salina High Central, Salina, KS. Larry Cullins, Educator; The Wichita Center for the Arts, Affiliate; Gold Medal.
Matthew Cranford, Ghoul in the Crowd (above), Mixed Media, Grade 12, Age 17, Atlantic Coast High School, Jacksonville, FL. Thom Buttner, Educator; Duval Art Teachers Association, Affiliate; Gold Medal

Emily Betts, Bathing Beauties (facing page, top), Photography. Grade 12, Age 18, Holy Innocents Episcopal School, Atlanta, GA. Alice Thompson, Educator; Savannah College of Art and Design, Affiliate; Gold Medal

Samantha Dewey, Figure From Memory (facing page, bottom), Sculpture, Grade 12, Age 17, The Baldwin School, Bryn Mawr, PA. Janice Wilke, Educator; Philadelphia Arts in Education Partnership, Affiliate; American Visions Medal
DE VON FELT, The Bathroom, Drawing & Illustration, Grade 11, Age 16, Alexander W. Dreyfoos School of the Arts, West Palm Beach, Fl. Scott Armetta, Educator; Educational Gallery Group (Eg2), Affiliate; Gold Medal

SYDNEY EVANS, I Hate Thanksgiving (top), Drawing & Illustration, Grade 11, Age 16, South County High, Lorton, VA. Justyne Fischer, Educator; Fairfax County Public Schools, Affiliate; Gold Medal

LAURA GEVEN, Voluptuous Vase (bottom), Ceramics & Glass, Grade 12, Age 17, Syracuse High School, Syracuse, KS. Jiyong Park, Educator; Western Kansas Scholastic Art Awards, Affiliate; Gold Medal
EMILY ELAM, Eyeglass. Printmaking, Grade 12, Age 18. Stivers School for the Arts, Dayton, OH. Julia Anderson and Elizabeth Whips, Educators; K12 Gallery & TEJAS, Affiliate; Silver Medal with Distinction.

TAMRA GOULD, PANDA (facing page). Photography, Grade 12, Age 18. Edmond North High School, Edmond, OK. Stacy Johnson, Educator; Tulsa Community College, Affiliate; Silver Medal with Distinction.
JARED FREEMAN, A Living Definition (top left), Mixed Media, Grade 10, Age 15, Detroit Country Day School, Upper School, Beverly Hills, MI. Susan Lucas, Educator, College for Creative Studies, Affiliate, Gold Medal

DIEGO HERRERA, the niqab hides nothing // glasses change the world (bottom left), Painting. Grade 12, Age 17, Bosque School, Albuquerque, NM. Sasha Custer, Educator, NMAEA, Affiliate; Gold Medal

JUAN CARDONA, Fence Variation: Monolithic Fence (top right) and Fence Variation: Sitting (bottom right), Sculpture. Grade 12, Age 18, Design & Architecture Senior High School, Miami, FL. Ellen Abramson and Tracy Regan, Educators; Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Affiliate; Silver Medal with Distinction

EVA HARN, Staircases, Printmaking. Grade 11, Age 16, Lake Ridge High School, Lake Oswego, OR. Shannon McBride, Educator; The Oregon Art Education Association, Affiliate; Gold Medal
SOPHIE LEVY, The Court (facing page, top), Painting, Grade 10, Age 15, Harvard-Westlake School, North Hollywood, CA. Claire Cochran, Educator; Region-at-Large, Affiliate; Gold Medal

BRADEN HOLLIS, Adolescence (facing page, bottom), Painting, Grade 12, Age 17, Los Angeles County High School for the Arts, Los Angeles, CA. Malaika Latty, Educator; Region-at-Large, Affiliate; Gold Medal

JOO SANG LEE, Blossoming Face Expressions, Printmaking, Grade 12, Age 18, WOW Art studio, Old Tappan, NJ. Taehyun Kang, Educator; Montclair Art Museum, Affiliate; Gold Medal
HYO JAE LEE, Patty Rice Field, Mixed Media, Grade 12, Age 17, Monte Vista Christian School, Watsonville, CA. Gee Won Yoon, Educator; Region-at-Large, Affiliate, Gold Medal

MALLORY LUNQUIST, Skinny Dipping, Drawing & Illustration, Grade 12, Age 17, Gibbs High School, St. Petersburg, FL. Marty Loftus, Educator; Pinellas County Schools, Affiliate, Gold Medal

CAITLIN HAISLIP, The Beauty in the Reflection, Drawing & Illustration, Grade 10, Age 16, Cosplay High School, Cosplay, OH. Antoine Pastor, Educator, Kent State University at Stark, Affiliate, Gold Medal

NATALIE MALLINOFF, Shelter for Snakes, Painting, Grade 11, Age 16, George Washington Carver Center for Arts and Technology, Towson, MD. Theresa Shovlin, Educator; Region-at-Large, Affiliate, Gold Medal

ANTOINE PASTOR, Educator; Kent State University at Stark, Affiliate

NATALIE MALLINOFF, Shelter for Snakes, Painting, Grade 11, Age 16, George Washington Carver Center for Arts and Technology, Towson, MD. Theresa Shovlin, Educator; Region-at-Large, Affiliate, Gold Medal
RUBY MILLER, ByProduct (above), Digital Art. Grade 12, Age 17, The Park School of Baltimore, Baltimore, MD. Carolyn Sutton, Educator; Region-at-Large, Affiliate; Silver Medal with Distinction

MARGARET MAY, New Shoes, Old Dog (facing page, top), Painting, Grade 12, Age 17, North Pole High School, North Pole, AK. Laurel Herbeck, Educator; Young Emerging Artists, Inc., Affiliate; Gold Medal

BRYAN MARCHENA, What Am I Doing (facing page, bottom), Photography. Grade 12, Age 17, Hume-Fogg High Academic Magnet, Nashville, TN. Shayna Snider, Educator; Cheekwood, Affiliate; Gold Medal
LAIZA MARTINEZ, The Flip (top), Photography. Grade 10, Age 15, Junior High School 52, Inwood, New York, NY. Tiffany Hagler-Geard, Educator; NYC Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, Affiliate; Silver Medal

GRACE MEINZER, Soldier Boy (facing page), Painting. Grade 8, Age 13, Girls’ School of Austin, Austin, TX. Nancy Hoover, Educator; St. Stephen’s Episcopal School, Affiliate; Gold Medal

RENA PETRUCELLI, Self Portrait Drawing (bottom), Drawing & Illustration. Grade 9, Age 15, Archbishop Hoban High School, Akron, OH. Micah Kraus, Educator; Kent State University at Stark, Affiliate; Gold Medal
AMEYA OKAMOTO, Black Lives, Digital Art. Grade 10, Age 15, Catlin Gabel School, Portland, OR. Chris Mateer, Educator; The Oregon Art Education Association, Affiliate; Gold Medal

JESSICA MARTINEZ, A Quarter for Three, Painting, Grade 12, Age 18, New World School of the Arts, Miami, FL. Aramis O’Rielly, Educator; Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Affiliate; Gold Medal
CALLA SCHUBERT, Winter Home. Drawing & Illustration. Grade 10, Age 15, Oakwood School, Morgan Hill, CA. Jude Saleet, Educator; Region-at-Large, Affiliate; Gold Medal.


YE LYNN OH, See-Through. Painting. Grade 12, Age 17, Gwinnett School of Math, Science and Technology, Lawrenceville, GA. Kwan Young Lee, Educator; Savannah College of Art and Design, Affiliate; Silver Medal with Distinction.

MIA STANTON, Lungs, Printmaking. Grade 9, Age 15, Pittsburgh CAPA 6–12, A Creative and Performing Arts Magnet, Pittsburgh, PA. Heather White, Educator; Pittsburgh Arts Region, Affiliate; Gold Medal

CHARLIE STEIER, Brother’s Portrait, Drawing & Illustration. Grade 9, Age 15, Creighton Preparatory School, Omaha, NE. Sarah Godfrey, Educator; Omaha Public Schools Art Department, Affiliate; Gold Medal

JOSEPH MEAD, Banana Boy: The Rise of Doctor Popsicle, Video Games. Grade 12, Age 17, St. Joseph High School, St. Joseph, MI. Matthew Culver, Educator; The South Bend Museum of Art, Affiliate; Silver Medal
TAVII TORONITZ, China Sea (top), Ceramics & Glass. Grade 12, Age 17, Stelly’s Secondary School, Central Saanich, Canada.
Stephen Strutynski, Educator; Region-at-Large, Affiliate; Gold Medal

BREANNA SULLIVAN, Urban Fungi (bottom), Drawing & Illustration. Grade 10, Age 15, Grand Forks Central High School, Grand Forks, ND. Nancy Greenwood, Educator; Plains Art Museum, Affiliate; American Visions Medal

BROOKLYNN THOMPSON, Oasis Against Helios, Painting. Grade 12, Age 17, Bethel Tate High School, Bethel, OH.
Tiffanie Witt, Educator; Art Academy of Cincinnati, Affiliate; Gold Medal

ROSALEA WILLIAMS, Ironing, Painting, Grade 11, Age 17, Pittsburgh CAPA 6-12 A Creative and Performing Arts Magnet, Pittsburgh, PA. Alberto Almarza, Educator; Pittsburgh Arts Region, Affiliate, Gold Medal.
Womanhood, Cornrows

POETRY

ALEAH ADAMS, Grade 12, Age 17, School of the Arts, Rochester, NY. Ashley Perez, Educator; Region-at-Large, Affiliate; Gold Medal

Womanhood
The string in between
Hangs limp from my open legs.
All of the world tugs.

Cornrows
Our slick braids join our scalps,
Lining our heads like streets do a city.
They pull at our edges,
Stringing out our roots.
They tug at our Ebonics,
Releasing our “y’alls” and “ain’ts”
Displaying our West Indian
Haitian
African tongues.
They yank at our jazz, at our hip-hop.
The syncopation seeping from seams our braids once
tried to sew up.
Iggy
Miley
Robin
Marshall
Kylie,
The fair-skinned hands puppeting our industry,
ripping our rhymes to shreds.
You want our sound?
You want our slang?
You want our stiff-napped locks?
Then step your two pale legs into our past, rooted on
3/5ths and segregation,
Shackled history that’s been nothing but inferior to the
lighter.
You want our fuller lips?
You want our soul?
You want our thicker curves?
Before trying to be a face for our music,
A face for our art,
Grease the tips of your fingers,
Oil your kinky scalps
And patch up your own cornrows.

HANNAH WESTBROOK, Tub. Photography. Grade 12, Age 18, Carlisle Area School District, Carlisle, PA. Jessie Fry, Educator; Commonwealth Connections Academy, Affiliate; Gold Medal

The Albatross

POETRY

REBECCA ALIFIMOFF, Grade 12, Age 17, Canterbury High School, Fort Wayne, IN. Alice Hancock, Educator; Fort Wayne Museum of Art, Affiliate; Gold Medal

Knee high, I wanted to be a pirate.
I wanted adventure, a tune rusted with years
always on my sea-breath lips.
A helm filling my hands with splinters.
Gold weighing the hull,
Midas’s palace looted.
The edge of the bay curved away
like a question mark, beckoning to the rocks.
Small worlds live there,
only alive at the mercy of the tides.
How to live with such long hiatuses between affection?
I begged an answer, fingers and knees slipping on the salt rocks.
The sea anemones waved.
The fish chased their tails in circles.

There is something of the ocean in my hands: They crave
a wreckage. I took to the water waiting for its wrath.
Hoping it would pull me down. Atmosphere upon atmosphere weighing my
chest.

But the sea knows
its own blood. One storm cannot kiss
another. Only swallow it whole.

Many writing selections have been excerpted. Go to artandwriting.org/galleries to read the works as they were submitted.
I bend down, and gripping the laces of my shoes tightly with my cold hands, tie them into a tight knot. When I look up, I see my dad staring at the trail map. His brown hair is barely visible through the glare of the afternoon sun. The cold air tickles my nose, by being too tired to keep up.

I feel a rush of warmth shoot through my frigid legs as we run together, I realized just how much he meant to me. I am hit with a new strength that fills every bone and muscle in my body. The gravel path gradually becomes matted grass, and before long we are out of the woods. As the overhanging branches give way, a beautiful sky comes into view. Orange, pink, and purple are swirled around the edges like watercolors, and a full moon sits in the center glowing a pale yellow.

We pace off each other and encourage each other as we run. This motion drives me forward, es give way, a beautiful sky comes into view. Orange, pink, and purple are swirled around the edges like watercolors, and a full moon sits in the center glowing a pale yellow. The gravel path gradually becomes matted grass, and before long we are out of the woods. As the overhanging branches give way, a beautiful sky comes into view. Orange, pink, and purple are swirled around the edges like watercolors, and a full moon sits in the center glowing a pale yellow.
... she typed into her holopad as
some of her favorite
postpunkgrindrockemetalcore
music blasted into her ears.

“My costume is a surprise,” K8 said. “What about you
Blanket?”
“I’m being me,” Blanket said. She sighed. “I left my wa-
ter simulator in my locker, and I feel like droppin dead
any moment. Wanna come with me?”
“Sure. Plus I heard we might get real water at the end
of the month since our G.O.A.T. test scores were the
highest in the tri-state area. No more atom or cell or
whatever deception today!” Nu babbled as they took
the walkway to F Hall.
K8 giggled. “Did you see those 2-D pictures of escala-
tors in Science yesterday? They’re like angled walkways.
It’s so stupid!” Nu laughed. “Yeah, almost as stupid as
stairs. Why climb when you can take a walkway or an
elevator?”
Blanket’s fingertap scanned her thumb, and the locker
opened.
“I gotta go, I want to be early to Debate. I’m discussing
whether the Great Restart was an actual Internet prob-
elm or that’s what the government wants us to think. I
mean really, how would the Internet be too full? It’s too
many horrible things that happened those years.
The corona satellite interferences of 2018, the fall of
Facebook and Twitter the spring and summer of 2017, the
extreme water shortage of ‘19, the One Direction Massa-
cre, the Great Restart, Donald whatever being elected,
the fall of the Deathwish and Paramore and Band Name Here
and...”
“Okay! I get it! Abnormie. You actually like that stuff?”
“Yes!” she said defensively.
“Okay! I get it! Abnormie. You actually like that stuff?”
“Yeah!”
“My costume is a surprise,” K8 said. “What about you
Blanket?”
“I don’t know, it just isn’t the same. It’s not as good
as Green Day and Ethnic-Aquatic Respiratory Crisis and
Panic! At the Disco and Stillborn Llama and Children
of the Deathwish and Paramore and Band Name Here
and...”
“Okay! I get it! Abnormie. You actually like that stuff?”
“Yeah!”
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“Okay! I get it! Abnormie. You actually like that stuff?”
“Yeah!”
“Okay! I get it! Abnormie. You actually like that stuff?”
“Yeah!”
“Okay! I get it! Abnormie. You actually like that stuff?
**But I Don’t Know America**

**SHORT STORY**

**BRYN BATTANI, Grade 9, Age 15, The Khabele School, Austin, TX.**

Lorena German, Educator, Region-at-Large, Affiliate: Gold Medal

The whole room turns to look at me in one swift motion. I feel forty eyes glued to my skin.

“My name is Halima, my age is twelve, my from is Afghanistan.”

I hear a few snickers from the corner of the room and I realize I have made another mistake. The teacher smiles from behind her glass eyes, and I sit down.

I pull on my braided hair and try to fix my skirt.

The teacher smiles from behind her glass eyes, and I sit down. I take everything in, I watch everyone in the room, I pull on my braided hair and try to fix my skirt.

“Wait, I’m so sorry, are you Muslim?”

I blink and then I freeze up in front of this girl, I have never seen this girl before. I don’t know who she is. “Are you Muslim?”

I think maybe sometimes I am making friends.

I see a pretty girl standing there, pointing at my sand-
wich. She has blonde hair and bright-green eyes with tiny freckles right underneath. Her clothes are clean and fit her nicely, and she wears pretty earrings like a movie star.

I nod toward the bowl, and I hand my card out as confidently as I can so they can see that my lunch is free and they don’t have to yell for the money from me. I hope they see the red sticker, the one that means no pork, please.

She thrusts my tray toward me, with a steaming bowl and a sandwich on pale bread.

I start to smile at the people passing by. I keep waiting, and because I’m looking for what to do, I start to smile at the people passing by. Some ignore me. Some return my smile, tentatively, unsure of the girl standing before them so empty-headed but with so much on her mind.

Some return my smile, tentatively, unsure of the girl standing before them so empty-headed but with so much on her mind.

Later, my teacher returns with another sandwich on the same pale bread. She shows me—no pork, just green leaves and cheese and steaming soup in a bowl.

I wink, and the people behind the counter speak Farsi with me.

I start to know America.

I told him that was silly, but all of us were scared. Nobody could find him. My little brother liked to sleep in his closet, where he said it wasn’t safe.

I told him that was silly, but all of us were scared. Nobody could find him.

My little brother liked to sleep in his closet, where he said it wasn’t safe.

But back then, it was 2014, and it was January, and it was Kabul . . .

My little brother liked to sleep in his closet, where he said it wasn’t safe.

I told him that was silly, but all of us were scared. Nobody could find him.

My little brother liked to sleep in his closet, where he said it wasn’t safe.

But back then, it was 2014, and it was January, and it was Kabul and we were Hazaras, and it wasn’t safe.

My brothers played every day, but people were fighting with guns. The Taliban was everywhere like dark clouds.

My little brother liked to sleep in his closet, where he said nobody could find him.

I told him that was silly, but all of us were scared.

**Now I’m here, and the teacher wants to know about my journey. Why did you leave? Who went with you? How did you get here?**

The thing the teacher doesn’t know is that my journey is only beginning.

The teacher wants me to write, what do I like about America?

America?

I just know school, Walmart and Publix. But I don’t know America.

I think maybe sometimes I am making friends.

My best friends are the ones who can speak Farsi with me.

We’re all a little nervous. I’m a little shy anyway.

The other girls in that class are closer with each other than with me, but I am getting to know them.

I like to take my time.

I have been to another one of my friend’s apartments and invited her to mine, and we have worked on school-work together.

Some of the other girls are kind, too. “Hey Halima!”

And, in the hallways, I still say hello to the pretty blonde girl from the cafeteria.

This empty-headed girl with so much on her mind has such joy in her heart.

I told my teacher once that I just know school, Walmart and Publix. But now I think that maybe

on some days I start to know America.
Who? PERSONAL ESSAY & MEMOIR

DANIEL BLOKH, Grade 9, Age 14, Alabama School of Fine Arts, Birmingham, AL. Iris Rinke-Hammer, Educator, Region-at-Large, Affiliate, Gold Medal

“When I discover who I am, I’ll be free.”—Ralph Ellison

The bottle tumbles, turns, ricochets across the room. “Billy and . . .” Cheering erupts from the crowd, all of us laughing and doing drum-rolls on the wooden floor. The bottle rolls once more, twice more, slows, and stops. “ . . . June!” An eruption of clapping fills the room, and I pray my parents don’t hear us upstairs. Both of the chosen players stand up, faces red, eyes glued to the floor. They walk to the center of the room. Everyone watches intently, snickering occasionally. After a few awkward seconds, they look up at each other, and Billy quickly pulls in for the kiss. What seems to be a peck, though, develops into something longer and more intimate. They hold it there for a few seconds, then a few more seconds, before finally separating, their eyes still locked.

“Alright, alright, get on with it,” someone says. The two pull away, blushing even harder, and quickly hurry back to their cliques. Jake puts his hand on the bottle. Once it’s quiet, Jake spins the bottle again. It rotates a few times quickly, slows down, and then points to . . . Me.

Oooing erupts from the crowd. I try to shift in my seat to make it seem like it fell on the freshman girl next to me instead, but it doesn’t work. Alright, I think to myself, there’s nothing I can do. Maybe if I hope hard enough, it’ll fall on someone who’d chicken out on the whole thing. “I hope it rolls on me again,” I say. Such a phenomenon resulted in the person having to kiss a mirror while everyone sings Celine Dion’s “My Heart Will Go On.” Somehow inside me, though, I’m really hoping I get to kiss someone—even if it’s not a person I’d enjoy kissing.

“Quiet down, everyone,” Jake says, launching the bottle into motion again. It’s weaker this time, rolling just a couple of times before falling on Jake himself. He shrugs and sighs slightly, getting up from his seat. I rise as well, meeting him in the center of the room. I can almost feel the pressure of the eyes around us, pushing us toward one another. But I try not to look around, focusing instead on how to approach this. I’ve “kissed” before, but never like this, never in the way people have done in the rounds before. How does one even do this? God, what if my parents walk in? No, don’t worry about that. Don’t back off, or they’ll laugh.

I can see him brace himself, lips unfolding reluctantly as I move toward him, our mouths reflections of each other. I lean in. He closes his eyes, and I press my lips against his. One day, when my parents are running late picking me up from school, I decide to try out our school’s “gender and sexuality forum.”

“It’s been a sort of myth for me, hanging around the edg- es of conversations between people I didn’t know, show- ing up in the morning announcements every few weeks. I never considered going until today. What better time is there? My parents are somewhere in the heap of traffic, and I’ve got plenty of time. So, I decide to walk to the student lounge, where the forum is taking place. I look through the window before I enter. There are a few familiar faces, people I’ve chatted with briefly in the past, but many of them seem entirely unfamiliar. Shrugging, I enter the room.

Immediately, everyone smiles. “Welcome!” someone says behind me, and I turn to see a tall blonde girl grin- ning broadly at me. “Take a seat.”

I look around. A kid with orange hair, who I somewhat recognize from my homeroom, waves me over next to him. I plop down. “Hooray!” the girl who greeted me says. “Someone new fi- nally came!” She turns to me. “Want to introduce yourself?”

“Uh . . . sure,” I say, feeling somewhat excited to speak. “I’m Daniel. Ninth grade.”

“Pronouns?” the girl says.

“Huh?” I ask.

“Do you prefer he, him, his, or she, her, hers, or—?”

“The first one,” I say. I feel as though I’ve messed up, and my cheeks flush a little.

“Okay, thanks,” she says, smiling. “It’s alright if you’re not sure. In fact, pronouns are our topic of the day.”

Throughout the rest of the meeting, we discuss many things; self-definition, respect, identity. I dive into the topics with the eagerness of someone who has just discov- ered a new world. I have the strange notion that if I pur- sue them enough, I may catch some of the answers that I’ve been looking for, subconsciously. The other people notice my excitement, and it seems to pump them up as well.

I leave the meeting bent on coming to the next one. I feel engaged, excited, lost in thought. And most of all, my head is brimming with one thing: questions.

Wear the jeans with the rip near the crotch—it’s not like anyone’s going to be staring down there anyway.

Anthem for the Single Teenager

PERSONAL ESSAY & MEMOIR

ALLISON BOYCE, Grade 12, Age 18, Desert Mountain High School, Scottsdale, AZ. Kevin Bash, Educator, Young Authors of Arizona, Affiliate, Gold Medal

“Last night I dreamt/ That somebody loved me/ No hope, no harm/ Just another false alarm.”—The Smiths

Wear the jeans with the rip near the crotch—it’s not like anyone’s going to be staring down there anyway. See her frown as she wonders if you’re turning into the black sheep of the family who will never get married or have children and will live alone, roaming the forest with a wolf pack.

When you listen to all the songs about heartbeats going wild, wonder if what they say could ever be true. Wonder if there really is someone out there who will help you carry your load of sadness and joy so that you can help carry theirs. Wonder if someday your tiny blob of an existence will mean the world to someone else. Wonder if you can be like Atlas for them (if you are strong enough to carry their world for them when they need you to).

Wait for your time. Wait for your turn to have the ex- citing story to tell at the lunch table about the boy you met at band camp over summer. Wait for the texting all night and the cheesey prom picture and the sweet delir- ium. Wait for what they say is coming soon, what should have happened already, what is supposed to find you when you least expect it. Wait, pretend you’re not waiting, feel the envy blow up inside you every time someone else finds it. Attach your successes and dreams to the arrival of this future Boy, wherever he is, who will finally make your life the teenage dream that everyone insists it needs to be (because otherwise, you’re not really living it right).

Get tired of that feeling following you around wherever you go (the feeling that your life is on pause, that these days you’re living while you’re single are irrelevant and somehow don’t count). Get tired of waiting. Start wonder- ing why you’re waiting when you could be doing some- thing else, something productive that will make you feel like you are a whole person (you are not incomplete, like a jigsaw puzzle; you are not searching for a missing half).

And then (when you realize what I have been waiting for you to see): toss your hair back and put on your ripped jeans. Feel this: unstoppable.
**Hoping for Disaster**

**CRITICAL ESSAY**

**AMY DONG**  Grade 12, Age 17, St. John’s School, Houston, TX

Linda Carwell, Educator, Harris County Department of Education, Affiliate; Gold Medal

Our pop culture professor proposes the following scenario: A television ad shows a young family driving up a mountain to their winter vacation home. The father sits comfortably at the wheel, and the mother is turned around in her seat, talking with the two children. What happens at the end of the commercial?

If you predicted something “bad” would happen, you would be wrong.

Our professor goes on to tell us that the ad ends in a family reunion at their vacation home. But why do we expect the worse in the first place? According to our teacher, it is because we are “programmed in our narratives to expect disasters.”

News that pertains to us is, more often than not, buried under a mountain of sensationalism. News outlets would rather drown us with disaster stories than let us swim through a sea of mundane events.

The pervasiveness of television has certainly contributed to our fascination with disasters. For decades, television has served as one of our main sources for “breaking news.” What makes this form of media so appealing, however, is not its objective presentation of facts but rather its sensationalized projection of reality. Television news has the power to convey—and sometimes even create—a sense of national significance. Large events, such as September 11, Hurricane Katrina, and the Boston Marathon bombings, always receive around-the-clock television coverage from cable news networks. These broadcast outlets entice us to participate in the chaos without forcing us to face the repercussions. We cling to catastrophe from the safety of our own homes.

The recent rise of social media only reinforces our culture of sensationalism. With the ability to present an unlimited amount of unfiltered information to such a large audience, social media now has the “power to define disaster.” In this context, then, media sites such as blogs, photo and video sharing platforms, and social networks do not merely convey information about disasters. Instead, to compete for our attention, they blow disasters into hyperbolic proportions, hoping that their exaggerated coverage of any isolated event will shock us into sharing their photos, tweeting their messages, and commenting on and liking their posts.

But with so many digital outlets constantly bombarding us with information, we can’t help but feel drawn to sensationalized media. We know we don’t need it, but we want it anyway to break up the incessant stream of white noise. Indeed, what we replay and share over and over again are not the stories related to our daily lives; they are the Vine videos that captured 6 seconds of the Boston Marathon bombings, the Facebook pictures that showed New Orleans in ruins after Hurricane Katrina, the dozens of news articles that detailed the graphic Ferguson shootings. By capturing our attention with exaggerated coverage of any isolated event will shock us into sharing their photos, tweeting their messages, and commenting on and liking their posts.

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me and Uncle Ben go bar-hopping in Brooklyn

**POETRY**

DAVID EHMCHE, Grade 12, Age 17, East High School, Sioux City; 5 Wendy Bryce, Educator, Belin-Blank Center, Affiliate; Gold Medal

So,

me and Uncle Ben are in this bar, right?

And he’s got that look in his eye

like we gon’ drink ourselves up a new backstory

I say—

Oh no.

Not this again.

I’ve known that Uncle B.

You the dirtiest of rice!

You cotton-picker gone corporate!

You Aunt-Jemima’s-homeboy-on-the-low

You recipe for self-sale!

Yo Uncle Ben,

You think you be able to drink ‘til your skin goes blind?

You can’t drink the caricature off your face!

You can’t drink their hands off your throat!

You think we ever be more than a noose!?

You think we ever be more than the dirt!?

Them folk ain’t neva’ gon’ forget who you really are.

He furrows his brow with a muted anger

I can see the cardboard box in his eyes

Nervously, I allow the whiskey

in my cup to enter my apologetic mouth.

With a newfound calmness, Uncle B. spits—

Stop.

Let that whiskey sit and stay a while.

Allow it to burn the blood

out the back of your throat.

Watch it build a home in your mouth.

Call it Harlem.

It will be the hardest thing

for you to swallow.

You see, you can’t keep speakin’

like you know black

and the price it goes for.

You don’t know what it is.

To die slow on the shelves of your enemy.

To fill they children’s bellies.

To have them profit off your pain.

You don’t know what I do.

You don’t know me.

Understanding my mistake, I put down my glass

The whiskey turns a deeper shade of brown

I attempt to vocalize an apology, but no sound comes out

Rice begins to fill my mouth

I call out—

Uncle Ilen, what does this mean?

A small grin appears on his ever-exploited face

Sympathetically, he says—

When them folk have gone

and come for your bones,

and they attempt

to write your legacy,

the only part of you

that they will remember

is me.

Many writing selections have been excerpted.
Go to artandwriting.org/galleries to read the works as they were submitted.
I can tell it will be morning soon, though I can’t describe what about the sky tells me this.

I hear the unwrapping of a condom somewhere far from me.

When Foster’s Freeze first opened, were the teenagers like they are now? There’s a sharp edge to being young. I’ve learned, but it never seems that way in movies about the 1950s. Foster’s Freeze seemed as simple as the ice cream it served. Then again, that could be nostalgia at work. It is entirely possible that all these stories I tell myself about where and when I live are really stories about every other place and every other time too. I guess that wouldn’t be the worst thing. Maybe that means, when I cry for myself, I am also crying for every other teenager who has ever lived to see an ice cream stand close. And maybe when those teenagers cry, their tears are as much for me as they are for them.

He groans, and I feel as grossed out by the sound as I was the first time I saw porn. What I’m doing, this act, is too personal to even talk about. I don’t get how boys can laugh or call it “fucking” like it doesn’t matter at all. I don’t understand why I can’t be like that too.

When I feel really low, I imagine I am Atlas holding the whole sky. I can almost feel my arms buckling beneath the weight, and I am crushed by the awareness that nothing I do can ever make the atmosphere any lighter. I am just one person, and there aren’t really any strangers out there in the world crying for me.

My eyes are squeezed shut, and I have listened to a whole chorus of other girls saying the first time isn’t all that great, but it still comes as a surprise when it happens to me. I bite down on my lip and try to float as far away from my body as I can go, as far away as I can ever be from the fact that I am a girl, and certain things are always going to be harder for girls. It ends pretty quickly, as I was also led to expect. He doesn’t kiss me, which is fine. I didn’t expect him to.

“He should hang out again soon,” he says.

“Right. Let’s do that.”

He stands and holds out a hand to help me up too. I shake my head. “I’m gonna sit here a little longer. You can go.”

He nods and takes a few steps but then turns back. “That wasn’t, like, your first time . . . right?”

I force a laugh from deep in my throat. “What? No. of course not. I’ll see you at school.”

He tosses my underwear to me before leaving. Nice, I think, now I have fewer pieces of clothing to find.

I pull myself, slowly, to my feet. The grass has left little imprints all over my legs and arms. I yawn, and it is strange to find myself yawning, a tiny ordinary motion in the midst of an event so immense.

I pull my shirt over my head, snap the buttons on my skirt. The moonlight is wavering above me, and I can tell it will be morning soon, though I can’t describe what about the sky tells me this. There is a light breeze brushing through the field, and it wraps around me and touches me everywhere at once.

As I wander my way out of the high school I don’t attend, I am aware of a pain sitting in my stomach. It is a pain that is hard and jagged and the exact opposite of that tiny touch of wind.

I should point out that I am someone who feels pain a lot. Usually, though, the pain is in my head. I can spend whole weeks walking around with a headache that isn’t a headache in the traditional sense, but is definitely an ache and definitely lives in my head. So I am used to hurting, and I am used to dealing with it.

But this pain is different. This pain residing where it matters most. This is not a pain I was born with, but one I caused all by myself. I am watching Foster’s Freeze close in my head.

And now I am going to cry. I am going to walk on the Menlo Park cement and cry, not for Foster’s Freeze or the sky, but for myself.
One morning we wake up to find that we have outgrown our hometowns overnight . . .
You know Quique hates it when you smile. You wince when he sees you.

Beyond the wide cafeteria window is an infinite stretch of pine trees. You and Quique are the golden arches, about to turn this car around and take both of your asses home. I don’t want to get involved, you say, smiling (why do you smile). You know Quique hates it when you smile. You wince when he sees you.

Conversation About Gender-Neutral Bathrooms Surges Through Staples

анiELло nнaнDEз-Sияs, grade 12, age 17, Muskegon High School, Muskegon, MI, Kirk Carlson, Educator, Kendall College of Art & Design of Ferris State University, Affiliate, Gold Medal

You and Quique land at a table full of boys with white ever be warm i will never be warm enough. cause or the cause’s cold or the cause’s cold’s cold will i

in Quique’s room. He, too, is shivering am i the cold’s

of pine trees. You and Quique are the golden arches, about

when he sees you.

His mother is here. He grabs his trumpet and you fol-

Someone . . . touched you, you ask. Why not, you ask.

The clouds have left, but the sky is black. You and

You left your sweater

leftover his cold’s cold will i ever be warm i will never be warm enough.

Everyone is white; you are cold. You left your sweater in Quique’s room. He, too, is shivering am i the cold’s

Everyone is white; you are cold. You left your sweater in Quique’s room. He, too, is shivering am i the cold’s

The clouds have left, but the sky is black. You and Quique, alone, your backs on white wall cement. His right hand taps his torn trumpet case; his left hand’s fi-

You and Quique stare.

The clouds have left, but the sky is black. You and Quique, alone, your backs on white wall cement. His right hand taps his torn trumpet case; his left hand’s fi-

He exits his classroom and positions himself in front of the female and male restrooms, where he is confronted with a decision that most students do not have to face every day. For transgender and non-binary students like Liam, deciding which bathroom to use is a

decision that is not so easy to make.

“Hey, he starts. His voice, familiar. You’ve tasted Quique’s hey a thousand times before.

Your sweater. You rest your head on the win-

dow—it jolts.

A young man stands in front of you. He’s wearing a leather jacket, black pants, and a black cap. He’s holding a microphone and he’s talking. You can hear his voice echoing through the room. You know Quique hates it when you smile. You wince when he sees you.

Quique’s mom, white and fat, smokes with the windows up—her cigarette in her right hand, the cheetah-print

The clouds have left, but the sky is black. You and Quique, alone, your backs on white wall cement. His right hand taps his torn trumpet case; his left hand’s fi-

It’s hard to say. I was . . . it was in first grade. Someone . . . touched you, you ask.

The clouds have left, but the sky is black. You and Quique, alone, your backs on white wall cement. His right hand taps his torn trumpet case; his left hand’s fi-

You sit. A white man approaches you, asks, Where

The clouds have left, but the sky is black. You and Quique, alone, your backs on white wall cement. His right hand taps his torn trumpet case; his left hand’s fi-

You rest your head on the wind-

There is something Quique must tell you . . .

Hey, he starts. His voice, familiar. You’ve tasted Quique’s hey a thousand times before.

Quietly, he asks you, “Where do you sit?”

You sit. A white man approaches you, asks, Where

I don’t want to get involved, you say, smiling (why do

You rest your head on the wind-

There is something Quique must tell you . . .

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I don’t want to get involved, you say, smiling (why do

You know Quique hates it when you smile. You wince when he sees you.

Beyond the wide cafeteria window is an infinite stretch of pine trees. You and Quique are the golden arches, about
to turn this car around and take both of your asses home. I don’t want to get involved, you say, smiling (why do you smile).

You know Quique hates it when you smile. You wince when he sees you.

The clouds have left, but the sky is black. You and Quique, alone, your backs on white wall cement. His right hand taps his torn trumpet case; his left hand’s fi-

You know Quique hates it when you smile. You wince when he sees you.
Spanish (what my father taught me about loving)

POETRY

ARACELY MEDINA, Grade 12, Age 17, Douglas Anderson School of the Arts, Jacksonville, Fl. Tiffany Molanson, Educator, Region-at-Large, Affiliate; Gold Medal

At the table I watched his trimmed black mustache wiggle as he spoke. His ranchera music, filling hallways and cars, I sat bleating with rhythm.

My father said chiles grew sweet on the mountains in Mexico, his vowels leafy cilantro, and onion the chunky pudding of avocado, or rather the coconut candy, he bought me striped green, white, and red.

Years later my father long moved out Spanish came out to a boy over dinner mi amor, mi corazón, over dinner came out to a boy Spanish

"The gift of loving a father. An irretrievable joy, and cherish it as a luxury he never had."

Hereditary (A Slam Poem)

POETRY

MALACHI JONES, Grade 10, Age 15, Charleston County School of the Arts, North Charleston, SC. Danielle DelTiberus, Educator, Region-at-Large, Affiliate; Gold Medal

I was born of a featherless heritage. Jones and Moorer men made themselves in this forced promise land even though their last name wasn’t really their own. Through the god forgotten dirt they grew success. The mouths of their children fed by their land and no one else’s. So I say, Give me land and I will multiply like my deceased great grandfathers. Give me work and I will provide like my deceased great grandfathers. Give me love and I will use it, waste it, seek out for more, produce a bastard kid, and continue life as if nothing happened like all the living male figures in my life.

Jerry, my burdened brother, you’re six now, so I think you should know that Grandpa lost vision in his right eye 8 years ago, but fast forward 4 more, add seven months, a 14-hour drive, a migration to the south with no second thought and here you are at 2 years old. Your dad gone, must’ve gotten lost in time. “Cold hearted,” but that’s simply the absence of heat. I’ll tell you where it went: through the ear, into Grandpa’s opaque iris every time we mention that man’s name. Jerry, he has managed to turn a blind eye. But learn to love him anyway and cherish it as a luxury he never had. The gift of loving a father. An irretrievable joy, ribbon-wrapped, six feet underground in a New York cemetery. And love your half-brother and sister because they have different mothers too. I promise you, I really do promise you that once you’ve known him long enough you’ll begin to think that infidelity is an addiction.

Probably stronger than meth, coke, the pills, heroin, love itself, and nicotine. Nicotine.

Nicotine took hold of my grandmother long before my father was born. She was the mutual friend that my grandparents shared. Through her, they met and love developed from the smoky remains. But who would’ve thought that tobacco can burn so thick that past lives can seem to burn away with it too. Conversations blossomed into something more, germinated with wedding bands, fertilized with a honeymoon, budding through late night kisses, and from the flower that was Dorothy Jones came a Thorne. That’s what she named him. A rose’s defense because all she could be at the moment was vulnerable Thorne not Hawthorne like his father, who didn’t seem to bother to disclose that his love life stretched much farther than the Bronx borough. His secret life he hid so thorough that it wasn’t until she was in labor that he decided to do her a favor to tell her that Hawthorne Jr. already existed. Like I said, he was just so thorough So my grandmother decided to “thorough” away the b-a-w. ’Cause only a thorn in the side hurts a woman more than knowing her lover; someone she was supposed to die for, was sneaking out of side doors taking late-night drives toward women that my grandmother to this day will still call whores. So it was after they cut the umbilical cord that Nicki became little sister of sorts to my father. A habitual smoker himself And I’m not going to lie, from the outside, he seems to have made wealth, but what am I? I’m not. Simply connected through affiliation. And he didn’t abandon me. He was honorable and told my mom the truth.
When my sister and I were born, our hearts beat like a sad song’s drum line.

“Yeah. I think I will too.”

When she was pregnant, my mom expected twins. She and my pa picked out the names—Addy and Alexi—bought us matching cribs and clothes, and told anyone who would listen about us.

When my sister and I were born, our hearts beat like a sad song’s drum line. We were flimsy paper held together and felt hot liquid down my cheeks. She wrapped me in her arms. “Baby, I’m so sorry.”

When I was sixteen, empty and suspended in my mourning, free falling in my grief, I destroyed every plate and bowl my mother owned. It was cruel, and I regretted it the minute I looked down at the remains of the pottery at my feet.

My mom burst into the kitchen. There was a frantic fear in her eyes.

“Look what you’ve done now,” said the ghost of my twin sister. She was hurting as much as I was, but she didn’t have the solid hands with which to hold the cutlery.

“My twin. Why did you let her leave me,” I demanded of my mother. I meant my grandmother, I meant Alexi. I didn’t know who I meant, just that I was lonely.

“When did you let her leave me,” I demanded of my mother. I meant my grandmother, I meant Alexi. I didn’t know who I meant, just that I was lonely.

“When did you say something.” That was cruel too. My mom was just a person. People don’t always know how to let secrets slip.

“Oh, baby.” I couldn’t tell why, why she wasn’t angry or upset about the damage I had done, not until I tasted salt and felt hot liquid down my cheeks. She wrapped me in her arms. “Baby, I’m so sorry.”

I snuck a look at my sister, and she looked wistful.

“When my mother was pregnant, she had wanted two daughters who were masters of time. My mother never talked about her, even as I held conversations with a girl named Alexi who they could not see.

When I was too young to measure my life in months, I didn’t work. After the funeral, my parents refused to talk about her, even as I held conversations with a girl named Alexi who they could not see.

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When my sister and I were born, our hearts beat like a sad song’s drum line.
When I first met Hassan, his body was a mural of blood and salt.

Sitting up in a cot, Hassan gave me his name and city. Aleppo. Sand cracked in his hair and checked his arms. Wind had stressed his skin into a mosaic of flaking sequins like dandelion seeds.

“Where is Rima?” he asked, pulling my shoulder. Rima, the little girl in the picture. Rima, with the splintered leg. Rima, lying in a desert grave, ribbons of sand claiming her as its own.

Hassan had been asleep for three days. During that time, his wounds had mellowed in their white linen. Sometimes I liked to imagine myself as a healing spirit, cool blue pruning from my fingertips. With Hassan it was different—he spoke a need I had never experienced before. Something about his limp chin and wise eyes drew from me to every point of offense, down to the smallest sliver dicing his thumb. I could think of nothing but making this boy whole again. But, no matter how I reaped my memories of medical school, I couldn’t sew together an answer to his question.

“Rima, sister?” I asked, biting my lip in shame at my tuneless Arabic.

“I speak English,” said Hassan. “Yes, she is my sister.”

“You sister, then,” I said, smoothing the crumpled lining on his bed. “I’m so sorry.”

“She is hurt?” Hassan asked. “She steps on a mine and I pull her away. But her leg is broken.”

“No, Hassan. Rima died.” Each word dropping like cold black pebbles.

After a moment of silence, when an impatient wind whirred between patients. On the end, a yellow curtain cut into the sores puckering his skin. I watched this happen into the smallest sliver dicing his thumb. I could think of nothing but making this boy whole again. But, no matter how I reaped my memories of medical school, I couldn’t sew together an answer to his question.

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Harris told me that Aleppo had seen terrible damage, holding up his phone to confirm his words. Snapshot after snapshot of paper and trash sailing through streets in a haunting ballet, bony children and amputated dogs hunting together through bombed apartment buildings, charred elbows, their toes chewed by worms. Run, I thought, thumbing through the pages of snarled lives, just run away.

I watched Hassan from the bed of an old woman, who grasped at my hair in her illusion and prayed to Allah for the fried sujuk and tabbouleh of her childhood. Hassan lay on his back, ripping fries of skin off his fingernails and laying them on his tongue. I held a cup of water to the woman’s chapped lips and moved on to Hassan. Though he didn’t move his eyes from the fabric of the ceiling, an apology kicked its way off his tongue.

“I am sorry for my anger,” he said formally. “Mama is not proud of me.”

“Where are your mother and father?” I asked, too eager. Hassan’s eyes dropped askew.

“She lives now with Rima.”

“And your Nana? Where is she?”

“Nana is not in my family. She is our woman of cooking and cleaning.”

“Not your mother?”

“Women are equal to men.” Love fanned in his eyes as he said, “Mama taught at school.”

“Papa was doctor, like you.” Hassan glanced up at me, just as the old woman started gasping again. For a moment, I could have sworn he was my youngest brother Parker, smirking with pride as he baptized his latest LEGO tower with a plastic orange flag. I pulled Hassan’s covers over his shoulders and turned to pound a wad of phegum, hard as a nut, from the woman’s lungs.

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After a moment of silence, when an impatient wind whipped over the tent, Hassan shut his eyes. Tears speared his palms, and he scratched at his scabby burns, ripping them away until they began to spurt blood. I watched in horror as he screamed, crushing his temples between his palms, gummy skin trailing from his nails. Unsure of where to begin calming him, I grasped his hands and felt them wavering to stay upright. I watched the walls rippling around us and felt an ice creaking in my heart that seemed to come from Hassan himself.
missing in action

POETRY

ELLiot HUESKE, Grade 9, Age 14, Charleston County School of the Arts, North Charleston, SC. Danielle DelTiberas, Educator; Region-at-Large, Affiliate; Gold Medal

in blurs of misty teal and neon light
a fingered cloud of ice and dusted dreams
had laced through bands of ultraviolet nights
and broken tightened borders at the seams.

she watched as stars descended; taking years,
like spit from glowing mouths of time and space
and satellites had wiped away her tears
with hands of glass and hair of iron lace.

and time away had shattered all her thoughts
of him returning with a beam of sun,
his eyes were dark but glowed with sixty watts
and time away had shattered all her thoughts
and satellites had wiped away her tears
she watched as stars descended; taking years,
and the faintest flutter
millions of mandibles,
of wings in your abdomen.

How to Love America

PERSONAL ESSAY & MEMOIR

ROWANA MILLER, Grade 10, Age 15, The Beacon School, New York, NY. Kathleen Williett, Educator; NYC Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, Affiliate; Gold Medal

You start with the Pledge of Allegiance. How else? You've known it since you were five, back when it was a collection of syllables rather than words, and you heard it as I Pledge Allegiance. You didn't know what a pledger was, but you said it anyway, because it came in over the loud-speaker in your kindergarten classroom and your teacher that year was soft like a gingerbread lady with an icing smile, and she told you the words were good and right.

Later, you learned the real words, and you chuckled at your childish stupidity. You were nine, or maybe ten, but a mature ten. You thought it then, and you still think it now, even as your memories contradict it. And once, you got to lead the Pledge. It wasn't about the words, though, even though they were more than syllables at that point. It was about the pride that came from knowing that all the voices in all the rooms were trying to match their mouth movements to yours. Really, it was a performance, and you were the star.

It wasn't about America.

America never shimmered in between the folds of your brain as you articulated the words that weren't just syllables anymore but might as well have been. Instead, America was outside of you. It was your cocoon and your coffin and you were complacent.

Soon enough, you started seeing America. You saw America in the fumes choked out by buses that dragged across Twenty-third Street and you saw America in the office buildings with plants on their windowsills that blocked you from seeing the people inside. You saw America in the flashing billboards in Times Square that always switched commercials as soon as you looked up at them, and you saw America in the parking lot outside your window that tore itself up and stacked its fragments into a hotel made up of puzzle pieces that didn't fit together.

And that's when you realized that America was consummate but that it was nothing. America was the sum of the Pledge and the destruction, and when you added the two extremes, you got zero. You knew that America was founded on the principle of liberty (liberty for straight, white men, at least)—that's what you learned in seventh grade—but that year, your teacher was the opposite of gingerbread, more like a stapler chomping through crisp pages, but a stapler is useful to those pages because it unites them, while you realized that what use does gingerbread have anyway?

You're writing this now, and you're rereading what you've gotten down so far and thinking that this doesn't look like how to love America. How to love America should be threaded with red and white and blue and be written like you're shouting empowerment into a megaphone. It shouldn't be casual acceptance that's really a disguise for unawareness and suspiciousness of the solidity that the Pledge promises. But that's where the critic peeking out of your ear is wrong. You love America because you hate the way America encased you in itself without informing you of its presence.

Because you love America by lamenting the interchangeable bags of white skin and false patriotism that are running for president in 2016. You love America by studying the loopholes in the Hazelwood Standard majority opinion and allowing a ribbon of criticism to spew from your throat. You love America by asking why has Silicon Valley been able to suffocate this country with bubble wrap, and why don't we realize that there is gunpowder in our tea, and why are some people large and distorted like you're seeing them through a curved magnifying glass but others are so small that we don't notice that the sun is bouncing off the lens and frying them.

You abhor the Americans who draw that our country is immaculate, even though their fingers wrap around guns that suck in all the life within fifty miles but are still, somehow, symbols of freedom. Honestly, you'd rather be one of the lives that gets sucked into the gun than be associated with those who carry it. So really, you love the idea of America, rather than the radioactive, plastic paradisement to those pages because it unites them, while you realized that the sum is bouncing off the lens and frying them.

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This is how to love America. Love America for what it could be rather than what it has become. Love America for the seedlings that are frozen, afraid to germinate, under soil that is the only barrier between them and the fire-blasting air. Love America for a quilt that danced through ink and parchment two hundred and fifty years ago in hope for a country in which revolution was cultivated rather than stifled. This is how to love America.
Cherry Lipbalm

POETRY

SUSANNAH OXLEY, Grade 11, Age 16, Boise High School, Boise, ID. Teri Weisensel, Educator; Boise State Writing Project, Affiliate; Gold Medal

Girls are friends, not lovers. A sentence uttered under a stranger's breath, as I hold my best friend's hand in the supermarket, age 7.

Words that eroded the lining of my skull and sank to the bottoms of my feet, glued themselves in my memory,

"Girls are friends, not lovers." I mutter to a boy in false vow as he spits hate to a rainbow bumpersticker claiming malevolence and threatening violence if "one of those" come near him, age 11.

"Girls are friends, not lovers." I try to bury the flowers blooming in my belly, smiling, as I taste her cherry lipbalm on the corners of my mouth, imprints of a dare, age 13.

"Girls are friends, not lovers." I remember the first time her eyes met mine, like safety, like "You're not alone." She speaks like the way honey is smooth, sweet, and spreads through my veins like a dormant virus.

"Girls are friends, not lovers." I douse the evil bred in my brain with freezing water, in the hopes to drown the demons that taught me to swim through a sea of hate quietly, without stirring waves. Reluctantly, I feel it leaving, as I learn the things I'm feeling are normal, good, even beautiful, age 14.

"Girls are friends, not lovers." A thought all but forgotten now, as your lips are on mine, a whole new covenant. When you open your mouth, everything turns to marmalade, my fists unclench, my skin softens.

I hear ghosts echoing strings of hate in the back of my mind, I hear them without listening, like background noise, bringing down the pillars above them.

The Epic of America

JOURNALISM

SHAIMA PARVEEN, Grade 12, Age 18, Livinston High School, Livingston, NJ. Jennifer Johnson, Educator; Region-at-Large, Affiliate; Gold Medal

On October 10, 2012, just after 11:00 p.m., sixteen-year-old Jose Antonio Elena Rodriguez lay dead on a sidewalk just across the Mexican-Arizona border, after he had been shot seven times in the back by U.S. Border Patrol agents who had spotted the boy crossing the border. Rodriguez’s death serves as a metaphor for the contemporary prevalence of misunderstanding directed at undocumented Mexican immigrants. While some of these border crossers may, in fact, be involved in illegal activities, most are law-abiding people simply seeking a better life for themselves and their families, and in spite of their honorable intentions, their motives are often misunderstood, causing many Americans to identify them as “illegal aliens” greedy for American profits and resources.

Primarily, while portraying undocumented Mexican immigrants as criminals, the majority of Americans misunderstand the intolerable living conditions these immigrants face in their homeland and resent their pursuit of the American Dream. In The Epic of America, James Truslow Adams states that the American dream is “that American immigrants is most common in the workplace, where undocumented immigrants are vulnerable to employers’ deportation threats. When recently asked about his experience, an undocumented immigrant explained the abuse he witnessed while working for the fast-food restaurant McDonald’s: “Behind closed doors, dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement” (Truslow, 214). His explanation is the motivation that drives increasing numbers of Mexicans to risk their lives to cross the border into the United States. Nonetheless, many Americans, particularly those in the border states, driven by prejudice and financial pressure, resent these immigrants’ attempts to enter the United States and take steps to expel them. In “Immigration,” an episode of the documentary series 30 Days, Frank George, a Minuteman passionate about ending illegal immigration, is forced to live with the González family, undocumented Mexican immigrants. George, himself originally an immigrant forced to leave Cuba because of political oppression, entered America legally. He believes “it is important to abide by the law” and fears that the influx of undocumented immigrants will eventually bring about the dissolution of America. Though George does not explicitly classify undocumented Mexican immigrants as criminals, he compares them to the terrorists of 9/11, implying that they pose a threat to the United States. George symbolizes the feelings of many Americans who fail to recognize that today’s Mexican immigrants are simply pursuing the same American dream that other immigrants have sought for generations. It is ironic that many of these protesters, like George, descend from immigrant families themselves. However, when asked if an individual’s family history affected his/her opinion of undocumented immigrants, 84.67% of those surveyed responded that it did, and 100% of those positive responses came from the descendants of immigrants, suggesting that an individual’s personal history in terms of immigration does have an impact on his/her perception of undocumented Mexican immigrants.

Secondarily, misunderstanding of undocumented immigrants often leads to extensive violence and conflict, which must end for the well-being of all Americans. According to the Department of Homeland Security, sixteen-year-old immigrant George dos not explicitly classify undocumented Mexican immigrants. When you open your mouth, everything turns to marmalade, my fists unclench, my skin softens.

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The television tells me that lips are for kissing.

LIPS

The television tells me that lips are for kissing. They’re attached to your mouth, which is meant for talking, but lips are unequivocally meant for kissing. They’re meant for mashing into a dashing prince’s as the music crescendos and the sunset bleeds gold all over the horizon. They’re meant for dirty smacks in your parent’s basement, crushing against a boy who may or may not be your boyfriend. They’re meant for a tender press between a husband and wife, dressed in frilly white and tuxedo black, while the crowd applauds and the light flares against the camera lens. What I don’t see is a surprise attack of wet and soft, where one girl leaves another lost, shocked in a gaping mouth state between disbelief and excitement. I don’t see two pairs of lips in the darkness of your best friend’s bedroom, knowing that if her door cracks open, if her parents step in, all will be lost. I don’t see two girls, parting at a bus stop, a quick press against each other before departing. I don’t see it, but that hardly means it doesn’t happen.

EYES

A girl I used to know wants blue eyes. She tells me this, gazing blazingly through swirling mocha and ebony. The color of bread crust. The color of chocolate. The color of burning wood.

I ask her why, and she scoffs.

“Why not?” she says. “Why would I want these? They’re the color of crap. All the prettiest girls have blue eyes.”

I nod my head, as if I agree, and keep my truth to myself. I can’t picture myself with pale-blue eyes. The darkness that blurs the idea of pupil and iris is perfect to me. It is the color of midnight. It’s the color of shadows. I shake my head after a while of silence, because it seems sad that I have this and she does not.

“You’re eyes are beautiful,” I tell her, and I mean it. She doesn’t believe me.
In the Summer, My Brother

SHORT STORY

JULIA WALTON

Grade 11, Age 16, Academy of Notre Dame de Namur, Villanova, PA

Norma DuCreme, Educator, Philadelphia Writing Project, Affiliates, Gold Medal

At lunch our dog walks into the kitchen and eats my broth- er’s fruit and then leaves. My brother feeds it to our dog himself. When our dog is done, my brother wipes thick spit from his hands and says our dog needs lunch more than he does. I say, but brother, I cut that fruit for you.

To slice an apple, hold the apple with its stem facing upright. Position your knife slightly away from the stem and slice downward to the cutting board. Do this on all sides of the apple. To make smaller slices, position the apple face-down and chop to any size desired. Give your brother the apple core. He will suck off the excess meat to get you your money’s worth.

In the summer, my brother plays soccer and baseball and hockey with a half-dozen neighborhood kids and an ever-present symphony of cicadas. Though heat presses in from all sides—I keep our kitchen stocked with three fans for some relief—my brother plays Horse until his shirt is soaked through and he smells like our dog. He goes out in the morning and plays until lunch; at lunch he comes into the kitchen and he eats his fruit.

At lunch I ask, “Why do you play so long out there?” I think, you used to sit with me on the porch in late afternoon. I think, you didn’t used to.

He props up his head with his hand. He will say, “It’s better than being here all the time.” He sighs. “It’s better than being here all the time.”

At lunch I ask, “Why do you play so long out there?” I ask as I place a fresh bowl of blueberries before him. He shrugs. “It’s what dad would have done.”

Later that summer, my brother punches my neighbor’s son in the face.

To cut a pineapple, place the pineapple on its side, and with a sharp chef’s knife, remove both the crown and the stem of the fruit. Place the pineapple upright, and begin removing the spiny outer skin. Be sure to follow the pineapple’s contours instead of chopping straight down—this will result in the most possible meat. The brown eye spots must be removed; cut a V-shaped groove along the diagonal line and discard each set of spots. Lay the skinned pineapple on its side again—cut into ring slices—cut the ring slices into chunks.

Feed the pineapple to your brother. He will be disgust- ed. It will be too sweet and it will coat his tongue with bumps he can’t get rid of.

To dice a papaya, lay the papaya on its side and chop it up in small chunks. To dice a papaya, lay the papaya on its side and chop it up in small chunks.

Some neighborhood had put nets there. My father would return from work to eat lemon water-ice and the kids would say, “Why couldn’t you have just let him borrow it?” I ask as I place a fresh bowl of blueberries before him.

To dice a papaya, lay the papaya on its side and chop off the top end. Slice the papaya lengthwise—it will smell funny to your brother, who cannot quite put words to any sensation. He will say the inside looks like a cantaloupe, besides the smooth black seeds. You will disagree a little bit—you’ve dealt with enough fruits this past year—then you will change your mind and say, well, you guess it doesn’t do after all. Hold the half-papaya firmly in one hand and scoop the seeds and sticky membrane into the trash- can. You will be absentee-minded, and forget there is no bag. Clean the trashcan. Put in a new bag. Your brother will help you. Slice the halves into halves, saw each section’s skin off, and dice the whole thing until your arms start to burn.

Eat the whole thing with your brother. He will have never tasted papaya before, but he will eat it.

My brother runs races with the neighbors’ kids, and after lunch I leave the kitchen to go and watch. It is hotter out there than in my three fans. The grass is sharp. It tickles my feet over my flip-flops. The kids make a line with baseball bats and hockey sticks and they lean down as the oldest says ready-set-go. I can see beads of sweat on my brother’s face—on his forehead, on the tip of his nose, on the line of his upper lip; his freckles seem darker than they once did. His brow furrows deep, and as they sprint away, his face holds the same expression.

Near the soccer-net finish line, a boy suddenly bumps into my brother.

“What the heck?” says my brother. He is angry. His brow sinks lower and he gets in the kid’s face, and the kid is the neighbor’s son who now owns our hockey stick.

“Look, it was an accident, okay? You were right in front of me!”

My brother scoffs. “What a lie—you think anyone’s gon- na believe that?”

My neighbor’s son boils. His chest puffs in indignation. His eyes open wider ever slightly, and his mouth presses together in a thin line. “Look, you don’t get to be a baby just because your dad died!”

My brother stands stock still for a moment, just a mo- ment. Then he recoils, and he punches my neighbor’s son in the face.

There is anarchy, for a little while. Other kids have to pull my brother and my neighbor’s son apart. My brother wipes away a stream of blood from his nose and strolls away. He walks past me. I turn to him. He avoids my eyes. He leaves.

To open up the heart of your brother, wait until just before twilight. As you’re chopping tomatoes for dinner, he will return from the day’s sport and sit at the table and cry. Finally, he will cry. He will take a deep breath, at first, then wrinkle his nose; the bottom of his lip will tremble, and he will cover his eyes with fists like a child. He is a child, as he has been all this time. He will wheeze. He will breathe hard and fast. His whole body will shake, and you will place down your kitchen knife and you will hold him.

Say to him, brother, it’s hard to live beneath thick cit- rus skin. Let me peel away your problems upon my cut- ting board, I will chop up your loneliness and lay it there on the kitchen table. I can’t swallow it whole, brother—I must do it piece by piece.

He will say to you, I miss him. Oh, God, I miss him. To your brother you will say, I know.

To your brother you will say, I miss you more.

My neighbor had a silver hockey stick, and loved conversation, and hated cranberries.
I sit in this threadbare mosque in the jungles of Java, one white-skinned Jewish girl in a sea of brown-skinned Muslim faces. It started as one cross-cultural encounter, the privileged, secular American girl from cosmopolitan Singapore versus pretty much the opposite. That gulf in experience and understanding is wide enough. Two extra words, Jewish and Muslim, expand it immeasurably.

I've already felt a tension in the pit of my stomach. The conflicted stares seemed to reflect a second-order knowledge. Now, as the teacher is clearly providing this further detail about me, and invites me to chant, the stares are just as strong, but are they as friendly?

A hesitant expression on the children's faces is one thing. Off to the corner, I notice the man introduced to me earlier as the imam of the mosque. His eyes shoot daggers at me. I imagine what lies behind his scowl—I embody the oppressor, I am the Six Day War, the West Bank settler with eight children and a pistol in my belt, the denier of the Prophet. He makes me fidget with the tassels of the scarf they wrapped around my head that suddenly feels much too tight.

Reluctance is cut short as I'm nudged to the front of the waiting crowd. I sing softly, "Vayeshev Abdonay el-Moso lemor." As the passage progresses, notes emerge more confidently. Ancient Hebrew wafts through the mosque like it naturally belongs. Fear recedes. Awareness of a greater opportunity rises. I feel shackles of history breaking, replaced by a moment of unity or at least respect. As they chant from the Koran in return, a true mark of genuine exchange, it seems as if a bridge is built.

Back in the steamy outside, I sit with two fifteen-year-old girls and the Dutch interpreter. Siddi and Emri are the big sisters I never had, beautiful ones as they remove their scarves and shake out flowing hair equal in length and color to mine. Each of us spends hours in study, loves science as much as any boy, and wants to work someday as a doctor in a place just like this. Two hours pass with no mention of marriage and family, just talk of our learning and our dreams of how to apply it. Three peas in a pod. The differences between us are at once fascinating and unimportant. They've never tasted pizza or a Coke, keys to being an American but not a person.

Returning to the hotel, my mother rushes to hug me. I don't exactly feel like I'm entering the lions' den, but I don't feel like a pebble in someone else's shoe. Fear recedes. Aware- ness of a greater opportunity rises. I feel shackles of history breaking, replaced by a moment of unity or at least respect. As they chant from the Koran in return, a true mark of genuine exchange, it seems as if a bridge is built.

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Many writing selections have been excerpted. Go to artandwriting.org/galleries to read the works as they were submitted.
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Sincerest thanks to the Empire State Building for recognizing the 2016 Scholastic Art & Writing awards’ national Medalists through a special lighting of the building on June 2, 2016.
“Every year we have great young people who take this pledge and go on to do some wonderful things. This is the beginning of something phenomenal for each and every one of you. And I am so excited for you… There is nothing you can’t do.”

First Lady Michelle Obama
Honorary Chairman
The President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities

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Five outstanding poets are chosen from Scholastic Art & Writing Awards National Poetry Medalists to serve as U.S. National Student Poets, the nation’s highest honor for youth poets presenting original work. These poets, whose work exhibits exceptional creativity, dedication to craft, and promise, serve for a year as youth poetry ambassadors, leading in readings and workshops at diverse locations and carrying out intensive community service projects.

This program is a partnership between the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and the Alliance for Young Artists & Writers. National Student Poets are selected by an esteemed jury of literary luminaries and leaders in education and the arts, and are appointed at the White House by First Lady Michelle Obama. For more information, go to artandwriting.org/NSPP.

(above) First Lady Michelle Obama hosts a poetry reading in honor of the 2015 National Student Poets (from left: Ana Lance, David Xiang, De’John Hardges, Chasity Hale, and Eileen Huang) in the Blue Room of the White House, October 8, 2015. (Photo by Patrick G. Ryan for the National Student Poets Program.)