

The background of the entire image is a complex, abstract pattern of red lines on a black background. The lines form a series of nested, jagged, zig-zagging shapes that resemble a maze or a stylized, multi-pointed star. The lines vary in thickness and orientation, creating a sense of depth and movement.

# MUSE

2023

VOL.8

# Muse

Volume 8

2023

Editors: Sophia Lopez & Maria Sirbu

Cover Art: Toby Altuna

Adviser: Rachel Dietz

# Acknowledgments

*Muse* is the literary magazine of Lamar Middle School and Fine Arts Academy in Austin, Texas. Student editors reviewed submissions using a blind submission process in which the authors' names were hidden.

In addition to a print edition, we published this volume online to make it more accessible to the wider community. Authors' last names were omitted to protect their privacy.

Special thanks to Sophia Lopez and Maria Sirbu for reviewing student submissions. Special thanks to Toby Altuna for the cover art. Thank you to the English Department for their support of this publication. Finally, special thanks to all the students who took the time to write and submit their pieces. Our magazine would not have been possible without their creativity and initiative.

Rachel Dietz  
Austin, Texas  
May 2023

Lamar Middle School  
& Fine Arts Academy  
6201 Wynona Ave.  
Austin, TX 78757

# Table of Contents

Canvas of Time	Jillian D.	5
A Tank's Purpose	Charlie S.	7
Paintings	Annika E.	8
Hypnotizing Beauty	Cheyenne C.	9
Hawaii	Eleanor S.	11
Goodbye, Goodbye	Posey B.	12
The Moon, the Earth, and the Stars	Greyson C.	13
Who I Am	Jill S.	14
My Time in the Sky	Miranda F.	15
Problems With the Painting	Sophia W.	17
River	Lucy C.	18
Broken	Kai G.-S.	20
All I Need	Genevieve C.	22
Shadows in the Light	Ivy A.	25
A Candle's Demise	Marina A.	26
Seasons: A Poem of Haikus	June P.-R.	27
Moonlit Melody	Charlotte C.	28
Snow Bunting	Sophia L.	29
For Life	Brooke Z.	30
Be Mindful of Children	Alina C.	32
Remember Their Names	Laelani C.	33
Abstracted and Funneled Hope	Charley S.	35
Muninn-song	Elinore E.	36
The Grass and the Ghost	Oliver K.	37
Ants	Wren G.	39
Song of the Sea	Susan W.	40
Why Does It Have to Be This Way?	Zoe B.	41
After Billy Collins' " <i>Litany</i> "	Maddie H.	43
Ignited	Maria S.	45
Colors of the Rainbow	Penny C.	47
Once Again I Attempt to Gain Something	Penny M.	49
Stuck	Olive G.	52
The Telephone Pole	Isabella R.	53

Goddess of the Moon	Magnolia L.	55
Serenity	Sydney F.	56
Why I Like Dandelions	Lilah L.	58
Sugar Walls	Mira C.	60
Desert Night	Lexie P.	62
Dawn Valley	Charlotte D.	63
No One Belongs	Victoria S.	64
Clean Break	Luci T.	65
I Prefer the Thought	Alessandra L.	69
The Bahamas Dream	Lulu Y.	71
Five Ways of Looking at a Coconut	Kaelyn J.	74
Instructions to the Artist	Anonymous	75
The Eye of the Storm	Emma S.	76

# Canvas of Time

By Jillian D.

I lift the  
canvas of time  
and place it on  
the easel of space

I start with  
deep reds of war  
and despair  
painting it  
over with strokes  
of yellow  
memories  
but the blue  
takes over  
for we live in  
a world of  
mystery

and I know  
that even  
though I can't  
see the happiest  
moments of my life  
stained in  
purple magenta clouds  
buried deep beneath  
dreary pigments  
of black  
and white

I know those moments  
are still there

blossoming  
somewhere deep  
on the canvas  
of time

# A Tank's Purpose

By Charlie S.

Some people in life give more than they receive  
They provide but get pushed down again once more  
They praise and love but get chopped down like a tree  
Or a soldier risking their life to a war  
Hoping eventually they will be free  
But life to a degree is not guaranteed

These people create the chain reaction of inspiration  
And produce ideas for others imagination  
And manufacture earth's improving innovation  
To subside from generic imitation  
Because every so often life's purpose is cruel  
But some are meant to be the tank for others fuel



# Paintings

By Annika E.

I look...

The clouds are fluffy bundles of cotton candy

Swans float on the diamond blue waters

A serene setting, calm and peaceful.

The galloping winds, dancing forests, singing birds;  
tweeting, chirping, humming, whistling.

The water waltzes and swings, a dance it has practiced  
since the beginning of time.

The view is remarkable, yet leaves the sightseer speechless.

An inconsequential cabin leans to the shore's edge.

All alone, yet surrounded with joy.

The colors swirl around, vermilion red, tangerine orange, cerulean blue.

The garden covers most of the lovely land around the pleasant refuge.

The property stretches for miles, past the bubbling brook,  
and the exuberant wood.

I could stay, and live in this tranquil place forever, undisturbed.

But I must go, for it is only a painting.

Only a masterpiece,

Only a dream.

# Hypnotizing Beauty

By Cheyenne C.

I was really mad  
A second ago  
I don't remember  
Why

Maybe it's because of  
That beautiful bridge  
That bends over a still moment  
Creek  
Like the arch of a  
Rainbow  
With beautiful vines  
Flowers all over  
Draped over the bridge  
Like a blanket draped  
Over a sleeping animal

Lily pads spread  
Out  
Like the stars in a galaxy

With a tree in the corner  
Centuries old  
With willows like  
Rainfall  
Calm enough to make  
Me forget why I was mad

Beautiful grass

The color of wintergreen

Making the homework my  
Sis ripped up useless  
And forgotten  
about.

# Hawaii

By Eleanor S.

Hawaii smells of flowers  
There's lava dripping from the volcano  
A fiddlehead fern in the gardens  
There's water all around you  
Above and below, to the left and to the right

My brother's a chicken  
Yes, yes he is  
He won't get in the water  
He thinks it's too cold

Oh the scent of flowers  
Sweet and sticky  
Fresh and floral  
The lava and volcano  
Out in the distance  
Chicken boy, he's my brother  
Water underneath you  
And water all around you

# Goodbye, Goodbye

By Posey B.

The wrought black ink,  
The sun was stitched over  
The stars, ever so ominous,  
That silk sings dirges

The sun was stitched over  
And you feel the moment of respite as  
That silk sings dirges  
In the melancholy sky

And you feel the moment of respite as  
Heavenly bodies will fall  
In the melancholy sky  
It all stays the same

The wrought black ink,  
Heavenly bodies will fall  
It all stays the same  
The stars, ever so ominous

# The Moon, the Earth, and the Stars

By Greyson C.

The glowing moon  
Slid across the sky  
A beacon of light  
As if in time lapse

The stars spun and revolved  
Like little marbles  
Being pulled on  
An invisible string

Mountains sat in the backdrop  
Still as a painting and  
Dark as a shadow  
Stretching across the horizon

Water splashed  
Gently falling down  
Small waterfalls  
With smooth rocks down below

Crickets stirred  
And the wind howled softly  
Peacefulness  
Was not at stake

When the wind slowed  
So did the night  
It had left  
Quick as it came

# Who I Am

By Jill S.

I am a writer,  
a dancer, a fighter  
I lift people up with my heart  
and not *just* my pencil

I jump through hoops of happiness  
and juggle bricks of sadness  
Some days,  
on *those* days

It happens  
But I write about it  
Dance about it  
Fight about it

Because that's who *I* am  
I am a writer,  
a dancer, a fighter  
I lift people up with my heart

and not *just* my dancing  
I toss bricks of emotions on paper  
And spin hula hoops made of sand around possibilities  
until I get there, until I make a five-year-long goal

come true  
I listen to people reading their stories  
and I put their voices together, plus mine  
to make one

# My Time in the Sky

By Miranda F.

In the midst of my mind  
My eyes unfocus fast  
And my brain whirs and winds  
And my cluttered little room seems vast

My body seems to lift  
And I begin to fly  
I hope I don't drift  
Who knows what's in the sky

From above I see the planes  
Their eyes seem so wide  
They look at me as if I'm insane  
When they speed off, I sigh

I pass by the birds  
Their wings soaring  
They break from their herd  
I begin to think them boring

Over the river, I pass  
The babbling brook in a rush  
It looks like a giant mass  
But so beautiful, I hope it never has to hush

I cross buildings shiny  
The sun glinting off the glass  
To the people in the buildings,  
I seem unimportant and tiny



But I smile widely as I pass

I soar through the clouds

Finally content

The sound of the wind is not too loud

But my happiness hits a dent

All of the citizens below shake their heads and frown

They shout but I can't hear them, even though they are loud

They pull me down

And shout in my face, "Get your head out of the clouds!"

# Problems With the Painting

By Sophia W.

What will I create, there are endless possibilities  
I choose to experiment with a swoosh, a swirl, a dab, a spot  
My brush runs across the canvas in one swift motion  
White is drowned in a swirl of colors and shades

What will I create, there are endless possibilities  
A portrait? A pot? Abstract shapes? Still life? Or none of the above?  
My brush runs across the canvas in one swift motion  
Thick, colorful paint drips down the edges of the frame, staining the rug

I'm still not quite satisfied with my picture  
White is drowned in a swirl of colors and shades  
Some yellow here, a little bit of black over there  
Is it a portrait? A pot? Abstract shapes? Still life? Or none of the above?

I choose to experiment with a swoosh, a swirl, a dab, a spot  
Some yellow here, a little bit of black there  
Thick, colorful paint drips down the edges of the frame, staining the rug  
I'm still not quite satisfied with my painting

# River

By Lucy C.

The emerald water rushes by  
Over the moss-covered rocks

Water slips over the edge of a boulder  
Creating a gorgeous waterfall  
Cascading  
Down  
Down  
Down  
It falls  
With a small crash

The long weeds sway in the breeze  
Humming a quiet song  
Dancing left and right  
Left and right

The pink and white flowers on the shore glow in the bright sunshine  
Their aromas mix with the fresh smell of the water  
They cover the land around them with beautiful colors  
And cheerful smells  
As if it had been showered in the little flowers

Bees and hummingbirds buzz from flower to flower  
Like airplanes flying from airport to airport  
Pollinating generations of flowers for years to come

In the water  
Little minnows

No longer than my pinkie  
Secretly nip at my feet  
Their little bodies shimmer as the sunlight dances on them

Above all of us the tree casts its warm, protective shadow on the river  
Keeping everyone safe inside  
Like a mother protecting her children

Every once in a while a bright green leaf will silently fly down to earth  
Creating a colorful bed of leaves  
On the brown forest floor

Along the river there's a winding dirt path  
That gives everyone a chance to see the magical view  
Sometimes people walk down it  
Taking a picture of the scene  
Every once in a while a deer bounds down the path  
To get a drink of water  
But most of the time it's quiet, leaving the river in peace

It's not silent  
But quiet  
Calm  
Peaceful

# Broken

By Kai G.-S.

Broken glass on a seashore  
Crashing waves on the beach  
I don't know where I'm from  
I don't know where I'm going

I think I broke again today  
Broken glass on a seashore  
So many pieces of me,  
I can't really tell anymore

The tides sweep in  
Pieces of me,  
They're drifting away  
Who am I?

Broken glass on a seashore  
So many cracks,  
I don't really know anymore  
I'm lost again.

I don't know where I come from  
I don't know where I am  
I don't know where I'm going  
Just broken glass on a seashore

Breaking and breaking again  
Cracks through my heart  
Shards in my mind  
Broken glass on a seashore

Mixing with sand  
Sinking down deep  
So much of me is lost.  
Broken glass on a seashore

Then finally she came  
She gathered my pieces  
She brought with her  
Broken glass in her home

She piled me across a wooden canvas  
She arranged me somehow beautiful  
So I'm not just broken glass anymore  
Art. I'm art. I'm beautiful.

I don't know where I come from  
I don't know where I'm going  
But I know where I am now  
And I'm not just broken glass anymore.

# All I Need

By Genevieve C.

The solitude of my own room is enough.  
Blue walls conceal my old green,  
Embarrassing pieces  
Tucked in the back of my closet,  
The memories along with them,  
Tucked in the back of my mind.

It's peaceful in there, now.  
Coincidentally,  
I can't focus anywhere else.

For one, my brother is never in my room,  
So I don't have to be distracted by his constant nonsense.  
Anyway, he's too preoccupied with his girlfriend,  
Or his video games.  
And he's invariably dropping names.  
I don't need him.  
I don't care,  
That he never wants to be around me.  
All I need is my room,  
My peace and quiet.

Furthermore,  
Looking through my window,  
I see my street.  
And past that street is another,  
And on that street there is a girl, who I used to know.  
I wish we were still friends.  
But she doesn't think about me,

I assume.  
I guess our friendship fizzled out,  
Not a boom.  
But why would I care?  
I'm fine by myself.  
All I need is my room,  
My serenity.

When I'm not in my room,  
I see my neighbors.  
The ones who don't need me anymore.  
I think they liked me more,  
before.  
Obviously, I don't need them as well.  
I don't want to babysit some kids,  
I don't wish they would knock on my door.  
Because I'm fine on my own.  
All I need is my room,  
My calm.

All I need is my room  
All I need is myself  
I GUESS I can survive  
Without whiny neighbors  
Or backstabbing friends  
I don't need my self-obsessed brother!  
I'm fine, I'm great.

I tell myself that this is true to no end.  
Because I'm independent.  
And I'm smart to cut out  
The worthless pieces,



But if all of this is true,  
Why does my room feel like  
My prison?

# Shadows in the Light

By Ivy A.

I yawn and gaze up at the dark beauty above me with its twinkling balls of white light. It calms me and I cuddle into my warm woven blanket. Before I know it, my mind slips far far away.....

My toes dig into soft, cool grass. The grass is a dark emerald green, the color of baby frogs. The sun shines down like a spotlight on my skin, reflecting on the crystal blue pond. The sky is a light baby blue, the color of giggles and laughter. Cotton candy clouds are twisted and entwined into the clear sky to make a beautiful quilt of nature. Vibrant birds sing in perfect harmony. I lean towards the flawless sound, but now that I listen closely it sounds more like pleas for help.

I shake the bad feeling off, and let my heart lead the way. I gracefully prance around the heavenly land before me, never looking back. The wind dances around me, delicately blowing my soft golden hair. I long to stay in this Perfect World where I can be someone. Where all there is are gorgeous lands and blissful joy.

A luscious sweet scent fills my nostrils, and I snap out of my daze of happiness. Ahead of me is a light pink tree, with ruby red apples just waiting to be eaten. I rush towards the tree, greedily snatching up the apple. I take a big bite, waiting for the tender, succulent taste to fill my mouth. Instead a dark red liquid encases my mouth and I let out a shriek when I realize it's blood. Horror turns into astonishment when I realize I've been tricked!

The blood streams down my body, and around me my perfect world starts melting into the place it really is. Charming trees twist and shape into long, dark thorny vines. They wrap themselves in a sphere around me, imprisoning me in a pitch black prison. The birds stop singing and the sound is replaced with an awful screeching like nails on a blackboard. I try to get out, for this is only a dream, but still I stay. I stay in my dark prison waiting for someone to rescue me.

# A Candle's Demise

By Marina A.

The flame burns  
It crackles and pops  
above me

It is my soul  
It gives me life  
and a consciousness

Yet slowly  
it kills me  
and eats away  
at my wax skin  
until nothing  
is left

## Seasons: A Poem of Haikus

By June P.-R.

Life full of promise  
Days and days of joy to come  
Nights everlasting

Summers full of bliss  
Days of cannonballs in pools  
Nights of firefly jars

Autumns full of shifts  
Days of cold, whispering winds  
Nights of bonfire flames

Winters full of peace  
Days of snowfall, bright like stars  
Nights of warm blankets

Springs full of new life  
Days of forever flowers  
Nights of croaking frogs

Years full of seasons  
Days of breathing out the old  
Nights of remembrance

# Moonlit Melody

By Charlotte C.

The moonlight glitters,  
A pond reflecting its glossy light,  
As it shimmers within the shadows.

The crickets chirp,  
A melody of nighttime darkness,  
Into the abyss of the sky.

The stars dance,  
A rhythm of faraway colors,  
Their joy lighting up the night.

The stream gurgles,  
Its foamy water like clouds in the sky,  
As it plays its deep notes of peace.

The sky a conductor,  
Leading each smaller being,  
As though they are a symphony.

The night performs,  
Each sound in its vast orchestra,  
Each dancer stepping to the beat,  
Each singer and their magical voice,  
As many watch on,  
And on,  
And on,

At the endless melody of night.

# Snow Bunting

By Sophia L.

sweetly melting snow  
was all the flightless bird had ever known  
abandoned in the mountains  
on ice beneath glaciers

the bird wept under the moon,  
while young children were sung lullabies  
of angelic and aerial swans  
sweeping through pages of age-old fairy tales

feathers nestled in sprigs of frosty pine,  
sweet and merciful  
were the cries of the swans  
that watched the snow bunting fall from its nest

the bird felt the weight of its wings as it fell,  
the fragility of every being on earth  
like ice breaking on a shore of mountains,  
echoing across the gateway to the wild

# For Life

By Brooke Z.

The lights suddenly dim, and the voices dim with them, as if they're connected somehow. The queen of Otrya walks onstage, the sound of her diamond-covered heels commanding silence over everything else. No one dares to even whisper as a spotlight comes up where she grabs the microphone, her hand emerging from an elaborate red dress that matches the gemstones on her crown. She is young--only in her twenties--yet power and authority trail her wherever she goes.

I glare at the queen, at the spectacle she's put on. She does this every year--the sparkles, the make-up, the perfect appearance. All to cover up what she really is: a tyrant, a torturer, a terrorist. And a coward. She does everything she can to keep absolute control over her country, making us afraid to disobey.

"In case you didn't know," she says with a smirk, her voice echoing through the auditorium, "I am Queen Salomea, your ruler." Her stare seems to encompass the entire auditorium and each individual person at the same time.

Someone shifts behind me, and I turn around to see a small child, naively attempting to get a better view.

*Foolish, I think. It's not like the queen is some sort of divine being. She causes all of our problems.*

The queen gets right to the point. "This year, there will be some changes. We all know the feeling of joy and merriment that occurs at this time every year, but after doing the plays for almost my entire life, I have become bored. You have failed to entertain me. I am going to fix that."

Fear spikes up in my chest. The queen's "improvements" are never good things, usually involving some new painful way to punish us if we get out of line. But what would the queen want to change about the play?

“I know that, in the past, no one has died as a direct result from the play or script. But that’s simply not cutting it anymore. Starting now, whatever dumb rule has prevented you from dying is hereby abolished.”

The audience can’t contain the gasps of horror that emerge from their mouths. I grab 183’s arm and cling on to it. They do the same.

“Another piece of news,” the queen says cheerily--she seems to be genuinely enjoying herself--“is that Otrya’s population is currently at 351. That means that one of you will be exiled and escorted to Scuttle Village, where you will stay for the remainder of your life.”

Another gasp among the crowd. No one has been exiled in years. Queen Salomea’s smirk grows at our reaction.

“I will announce that last. But before we begin, I would like to say a little something to our 15-year-olds.”

With that, the queen detaches the microphone from its stand and walks to the edge of the stage. She now looms over the front row, and I can see the sharpness of her features. She looks even more dangerous up close.

The microphone carries her voice to the whole room, but her words are directed at us. They are the same words she says every year. “Today, each of you will be assigned a job. Some of you will help our economy. Some of you will work for the government. Some of you will just be citizens. Some of you will be cast in the play. Whatever your job is, it is your duty to your country to uphold it and commit to it...

“For life.”



# Be Mindful of Children

By Alina C.

Be mindful of children  
For they have much to give  
little to keep  
The adults in their lives  
little to give  
much to keep

There is only a moment  
A middle moment  
A single moment  
Where the two sums become equal  
Become whole

In that  
moment  
they are still  
just a child  
With much to give  
much to keep

Be mindful of children  
They will give it all  
to you  
But when that single  
moment  
That middle, beautiful, painful, horrendous  
moment  
Is gone  
They will keep it all for themselves

## Remember Their Names

By Laelani C.

When I see that blue uniform all I can think of is  
the man with a knee on his neck  
The woman who believed her house was being  
broken into while she slept  
The mother who has cried  
Ever since her son died  
Taken from her by someone who was supposed to  
Serve and protect  
Know their names  
Don't let them be forgotten  
The second we allow ourselves to forget  
is the moment it all becomes forfeit  
The people in blue, that are supposed to protect you  
who only harmed you  
and hid the truth  
Fighting in the streets  
People screaming  
The people we need most, keep retreating  
People with signs trying to stop the crimes  
Crimes committed by those who are supposed to prevent  
To serve and protect  
Faithfully execute their duties  
All they did was execute our people brutally  
All because of the color of their skin  
It doesn't matter what lies within  
All people will see is your skin  
King said it best, "I have a dream"  
Well *I* have a dream that one day we can live in a world  
Where kids don't wish their skin is cream  
MLK fought and fought

but how would he feel  
If he knew that all this school has taught  
Is a one-sided story  
A one-sided history  
A pale version that only shows one side of the truth  
White  
That's the side we're taught is right  
So remember their names  
Burn them into the back of your brains  
Write them into the history books  
Teach your children what's right  
If the schools won't teach it, teach yourself  
Read a book  
Don't just burn it  
or leave it on a shelf  
Never forget the fight they fought.  
Remember, the people we lost  
Remember, that they were in chains  
But most importantly, remember their names.

# Abstracted and Funneled Hope

By Charley S.

According to fact

hope is abstract.

It improves quality of life

though like a double-edged knife.

Hope can provide joy

though when proven a decoy,

Can be heartaching.

Simply as painful as a back breaking.

Hope is a light, at the end of the tunnel

necessary when feeling like falling through a funnel.

# Muninn-song

By Elinore E.

How am I to hold the good in the palm of my hand  
Memories are jumbled in shades of red and grey  
How am I to hold back the darkness  
How am I to keep the light at bay  
Where am I to go when the cold strikes  
When am I to sing if not at silence's dawn  
Who am I to be if I wish to please you  
How am I to know where I'm to go  
Fear is iron chains, is muddied water  
How am I to think beyond the darkness  
How am I to know which way is up  
The cold comes early, bubbles all the way down  
Lost and cold and darkened  
Mad girl's memories, trapped in white walls  
Metronome, anchor me, strike a steady beat  
One, two, three, one, two, three, one  
Remember the sun but it's dark now  
Remember the song but it's cold  
I had almost believed in god  
I was frozen, the melody was fading  
It anchored my eyes to the ceiling  
Which was painted in purple and green light  
The rest of the cathedral was dark  
I could almost feel a scream building in my mind  
I could almost hear it burst from centrestage  
You were there before the rhythm swept you away

# The Grass and the Ghost

By Oliver K.

The road glistened in the headlights, otherwise surrounded by the void of the night.

The sky was darker than black coffee on a moonless night. Clive feels the warmth of the truck enveloping him like a blanket. His eyelids became heavier as the road in front of him looked endless.

“I shouldn’t have touched that grass...” he muttered to himself. He picked his head up, and looked out the window to check if any state trooper cars had passed him. The drive out of Texas is a long and tiresome one.

“The rules here are a joke...” His eyes drifted to the passengers’ seat next to him, its seat belt tightened as much as it could go, but still not secure enough.

The road glistened in the headlights, otherwise surrounded by the void of the night. Jessica sits hunched over the steering wheel, grinding her teeth. Juanito leaned back next to her, wistfully staring out the window.

“I just don’t understand...” Juanito said, breaking the silence between them.

“Don’t start this again!” Jessica groaned.

“I’ve told them that I’ve been seeing a woman, and they won’t believe me.”

“But what would they think of you? Then what?”

“I don’t care what they think about me! I’m sure they’d love you, Even though...”

“What? Even though I’m dead? Just say it!” Jessica cried, losing any cool she had left.

Juanito sighed, and went back to looking out the window. Jessica turned on cruise control, cursing the finger that was able to press the

button, as silent oceans pooled in her eyes. The power that Jessica thought would surely ruin his life.

The road glistened in the headlights, otherwise surrounded by the void of the night. The headlights of a truck, carrying a man going against the law, and a city's prized blade of green, and headlights of a self-driving car, with a man looking out the passenger seat window.

With the force of a thousand thunderstorms and a god, the two metal beasts collide; a supernova on the lone road along an expansive field.

# Ants

By Wren G.

I admire ants  
They're cooperative  
Working together  
For the queen is their goal



I adore ants  
They're organized  
Creating complex networks  
of tunnels and holes



I envy ants  
They're perseverant  
Withstanding things  
Five thousand times their weight



Cooperative, Organized, Perseverant  
And other traits  
Things to which humans  
Could never relate



# Song of the Sea

By Susan W.

The sea is whispering on the edges of the sandy shore, running its smooth fingers along the sand. Waves tumble from the ever-stretching sea, and they sing a quiet song. The kind of song that lulls you to sleep. A song from the first creatures to roam the sandy ocean floor. A song that echoes through the mountains and treetops. And this song flows around a small boat, made only of wood. It is tied to a pole with a thick rope, black mold climbing up its strings. The boat floats on the song and the sea, gently tapping the dock's edge.

The sun pulls itself towards the far corner of the sea. Shades of pinks and orange settle across the clouds and take over the blue sky. A seagull lands on the sand, interrupting the song with a shriek that echoes through the small dunes. It looks across the waters at the pink skies, admiring the beauty for just a moment. Only a second before it flies off, not leaving even a footprint in the white sand.

Blues and greens swirl and mix leaving the sea a beautiful teal. White foam froths at the tip of the waves, and leaves bubbles sitting on the shore. Seaweed swims about in the water. It gets dragged onto the shore but pushes off, wanting to play.

A pile of smooth, dark, stones sits just feet away from the dock. A girl is sitting, looking at the empty beach. She turns her head to see the last minutes of the sun, the moon already climbing into the sky.

Her bare feet feel the smooth edges of the rocks. Wisps of long, dark hair fly in the soft breeze. The cool of night flows all around her. Her dark brown eyes seem calm, knowing the beauty of the ocean. Salt and sand is scattered on her tan skin. The smell of the sea in her hair. A seagull calls from the distance, the gentle tapping of boat to dock, and the quiet song of the sea.

It is her and the sea. Just her and the endless, blue, sea.

# Why Does It Have to Be This Way?

By Zoe B.

Tears are like raindrops in the slightest way  
They run  
They prance down from above like clouds towering over a skyscraper on  
a not-so sunny day  
They look simple and small, weak  
Like how everything else is  
But it's different this time  
I feel it

Time is like space  
And space is like time  
I've heard some things..  
When time opens up her arms and welcomes space into her tough grasp  
everything combusts, and clamps, creating stars  
For one moment everything stays how it's supposed to be..  
Bang!  
Planets, universes, life, love, worlds, people, problems, and eventually  
Destruction  
You've brought this on yourself

Creation carries the boat of humans  
Dead and alive  
They run with flags in their hands  
War, and death is what has come upon us.  
The creation of us has caused nothing but imbalance  
They watch over us and shake their heads and scowl  
We know we've done everything wrong, but no one can start over  
Some of us believe it's all a test  
They're right

Material is the dawn  
The dawn of life and living  
The thing that keeps us running even if we're not  
The thing that keeps us alive longer than we're supposed to  
Is it all worth it in the end?

Running fast away from something you don't know  
Moral opposites  
Life to living  
Death to dying  
Opposites in context, but what about deeper meaning?  
Eventually everything means the same thing  
You just don't realize it  
Like the world turning,  
you don't know when your life is upside down  
Twisting, turning  
Bang!  
When you least expect it

The clouds know everything you've ever done  
The lies  
The truths  
The wrongs  
The right  
The secrets told  
The secrets heard  
And even  
The words and the wonderings  
Finally we're all here together  
Bang!

Why does it have to be this way?

## After Billy Collins' "*Litany*"

By Maddie H.

You are the needle and the thread  
the sort of pain in my head  
You are the apple in the kitchen  
and the knight on a mission  
You are a dove  
and you're my glove

However, you are not the bench by the lake  
the silently slithering snake  
And you are definitely not the quiet spring  
there is just *no way* you're the mountains in Tennessee

It's possible that you're the frog in the swamp  
maybe even a mop  
But you aren't even *close*  
to the silent beauty of ice

A quick look in the mirror will show  
that you are neither the autumn leaves  
for you are a disease

It might interest you to know  
of the many beauties of nature  
that *I* am the sound of rain  
but I'm also the lightning in your face

I also happen to be the Northern Lights  
the stars in the night sky  
and the warm cup of Chai

I am also the gently swinging swing  
and all the beautiful things  
(plus the peppermint tea)  
But don't worry, I'm not the needle and the thread  
You are still the needle and the thread  
And—not surprisingly—the pain in my head

# Ignited

By Maria S.

Soft and sweet and glorious  
When I'd come home to you  
Intoxicated,  
By your essence of life  
Struck by joy

Clinging to your love  
A feeling of ecstasy,  
When our eyes met  
And people would look to see *us*  
Not you and me

Despondent and tortured and heartsick  
For months after you fled  
Shielding my heart  
From a dim reality

Scorching and furious and destructive  
Were the crimson flames  
That licked away  
At your most prized possessions  
My tears sizzled,  
Across my face

My inferno  
Burned my resentment  
Onto you

And the euphoria

That twinged in my body  
As I stood in the eye of the storm  
Blinded me  
And choked me

My smile seared into your mind  
And the rest of me melted into your floor

My fire couldn't burn  
In your heart  
So it burned  
In your house

# Colors of the Rainbow

By Penny C.

Red, angry  
fearful of the world  
strong, confident on the outside  
confused on the inside

Orange, not enough  
striving for perfection  
no one loves her  
unsatisfied

Yellow, brilliant  
tries to please everyone  
but never can

Green, shy  
hiding her courage in the dark of night  
forgotten

Blue, popular  
beautiful gorgeous pretty  
never alone  
but lonely

Purple, majestic  
noble until you get to know her  
trusts few  
has many hidden layers

Pink, unoriginal



reflects the people around her  
    hot pink around spunky people  
        soft pink around chill people  
she doesn't know    how to be herself

# Once Again I Attempt to Gain Something

By Penny M.

Once again I attempt to gain something  
From the rolling fields and turbulent oceans  
Yet my hands come up empty once again,  
So I simply try to entertain myself

Once again I find myself wishing  
For an echo chamber  
To surround myself with  
Yet I remain in the company of others

Once again I attempt to convince myself and them  
That I am Right,  
But once again confronted  
With a doubting face that assumes its own superiority

Once again I try to shape a use  
For the world over which I rule,  
Only to find myself  
Tearing down an ornate building.

Once again I wonder if  
I will ever gain anything  
From the world that  
Protrudes from my thalamus

Once again I attempt to gain something  
Some sort of respect from my peers and superiors  
But I still can't seem to bring myself  
To make real art

Once again I find myself  
Wishing for a dark room  
With a bed  
Where I can sleep for as long as I want

Once again I wonder  
If all of this wouldn't exist  
If I found a passion in 4018s and B-17s  
Like the blooming flower girl does

Once again I attempt to gain something  
By honing a brass talent that I'm not sure even exists  
While hiding my brightly-colored feelings  
Under "good enough"

Once again I ponder  
Rhapsodies and Revivals  
And Sciences and Bursts  
And what the difference between them really was

Once again I attempt to gain something  
Respect, maybe, or admiration  
A validation for my useless  
Knowledge of instruments and talent for lyrics

And maybe I *am* insane  
But why should that be of any worry?  
Why shouldn't my laughter echo through the house?  
And if they think so, why don't they just spit it out?

Meticulously inserting words  
Syllables, one after the other

The screen's light hitting my eyes  
Is this as trivial and eye-rolling as it seems?

And maybe if they can't  
Say anything about it  
If they're faking this acceptance  
Maybe they're all cowards

Once again I attempt to gain something  
From such stupid things  
Thinking perhaps I would be smarter  
If I left the world I love behind

Once again I wonder if  
Those people know they aren't  
Better on a faulty basis like that  
But, of course, they'd rather doubt

Once again, I remind myself  
That there are thousands of others  
Not just the circle  
In which I seem the anomaly

Once again I try to gain something  
From the rolling fields and turbulent oceans  
What began as simply trying to entertain myself  
Will continue to work in odd ways

# Stuck

By Olive G.

The bottom of the cave floor dug into Liddy's stomach. She wheezed in terror, imagining having to die of thirst and exhaustion. She tried to lift her head, but all her muscles had been in the same position, trapped between the cave floor and roof. Her spelunking partner Emma had gone for help. But Liddy hadn't heard from her, not even a shout echoing off the cave walls. The silence was deafening. Had Naynay gotten stuck? Was she as stuck as Liddy?

Suddenly Liddy felt a sharp pain as if something was digging into her ankle. "Emma? Did you get help?" Instead, she felt hard breathing on her arm, but her sore head was twisted away from the source. She heard a deep inhale, and then... the worst pain she ever had experienced. She shrieked and squirmed, but the terrifyingly sturdy rock kept her trapped as ever. She put her arms out in an attempt to pull herself forward, but instead of two strong arms ready to fight a bloody stump met her eyes. The pain shot through her body, immobilizing her and making her dizzy.

The same pain met her right foot, and she called out for Emma. But Liddy's attacker inched forward. "There's no one to hear you scream, Lids." As Liddy started to black out, she realized something horrible. No one was coming to help her, because only Emma called her Lids.

# The Telephone Pole

By Isabella R.

As I walk by  
The community hall  
I see the telephone pole standing tall  
With all its pride and glory

The telephone pole  
From 1940  
Shoots up from the ground  
And into the sky

The giant pillar  
By town hall  
A symbol of strength  
And hope to all

The wood is splitting  
Yet held together  
With promise and opportunities  
Forgotten by the community

People walk by  
And wonder  
why an old pole stands  
So tall in the sky

No one really knows  
But it's a center of calm  
A place of realization  
Free of worries and alarm

Back in 1950  
All the girls hung around  
While the guys watched them  
Sitting in their nifty little cars

It was the one stable place  
Where it never changed  
A place that was sturdy  
Even when the world was not

The children would run around  
Taping drawings to the pole  
Old ladies taking afternoon strolls  
While the families get ready for dinner

Now it just sits there  
Forgotten to the past  
But the children still play there  
As the old stories are told

Many people say  
That history holds it together  
But I say  
It's just the duct tape

# Goddess of the Moon

By Magnolia L.

The darkness of the sun glimmers softly  
From behind she peers, the goddess o' moon  
Hills and valleys she prances happily  
She is on her way to see you soon  
Someday she will meet him the god o' sun  
Her fair dad pulls the sun high and low  
She remembers the day she was shun  
Will he take her in? When he told her to "go"  
She weeps to sleep a sad sorrow  
She hopes to see him before she grows old  
She wanted to see him on good morrow  
She wished to travel on but she was cold  
She arrives and begs for forgiveness  
She pleaded and begged but was dismissed



# Serenity

By Sydney F.

Where the sunlight glimmer reaches  
across lands and oceans to be there for you.  
when the flow of the day is melancholy but unknown why  
nothing continues but why are you able to connect everything.

The place of peace, the place of calm  
Serenity is something more than a feeling  
It is a melody of the everlasting song I hear in my head  
when everything is quiet.  
The sweet smells of coconut and lily,  
the light that you see in the morning that escapes you at night.  
The beauty of serenity is more than a thing that you see or one feeling  
but the air lifting you and the foam of the ocean spray  
as you look back on the melancholy memories.

More than emotion,  
just beyond understanding.  
The thought that there could be more than just living, more than just life.  
Almost a memory, questions of Déjà vu  
The aftereffects stay for a fleeting moment as they drip away too soon to  
get a glimpse of understanding.  
Fire burns its brightest and the embers glow burns for less time than  
knowing but leaves an everlasting impression.  
It is an intuition that we receive when we are born fragments we see, feel,  
breathe, but never have enough time to piece together.  
A tightening in your heart that loosens when you smile.  
The song, the crow of a bird that gives you a sense that it is going back to  
our shared home Serenity in an entity, a place, a feeling, a belonging  
Nothing fully describes the depths of the sense,

the knowledge that we lack of why we feel, the flooding of our senses,  
and the inevitable, unattainable place  
serenity.

# Why I Like Dandelions

By Lilah L.

Because they begin from tiny bits of nothing  
Popping up anywhere and everywhere  
Because they are like little suns in the shade  
Shining bright in the glare of the day  
Because they are the prettiest perennial I've ever seen  
Because they are a lion's mane

And they sunbathe in the day and curl up to rest at night  
Sleeping peacefully within the moonbeams  
While foxes slink by and hoots of owls faintly echo through the air

Birds chirping in the early crisp spring morning  
The moon is dying, ceasing to be seen

Delicate dainty wildflowers shoot up  
out of the damp dewed morning ground  
They are skyscrapers, towering over the grassy floor like royalty  
Little did they know they would be seeds once again,  
in a new essence

When the moon rises from its grave  
Time is not on their side

Mellow *swish swish swishing* of the dandelion's leaves in the wind  
As if nothing could stop them from enjoying *life*  
When kids on bikes stop to say, *wait until it becomes a wish!*  
Because nothing lasts forever  
Night will change them again  
The simple beauty of the marigold yellow fades,

into shaggy porcupine soft spikes

The strong wind that the flower once enjoyed, grows strong

Poking and prodding at the thin translucent wishes

Because it will be born anew

Because nothing lasts, but *can* grow back

# Sugar Walls

By Mira C.

I live in a castle made of noise, It  
trickles off your tongue in  
slow, waves of sticky maple syrup, always  
stuck in the back of my throat, I  
try to pull out the magician's scarfs, get  
the sugar sweet out, but  
it's all that they'll feed  
you here

the sound of the castle tilts to the east, crackling  
like bark on an aging willow, gazing down  
on the turn of a *new* country, where  
people dance in dresses made  
of blown sugar, dancing  
without care as ants come and  
*tch, tch, ch*, til the sugar has been  
pulverized into the longing for  
something unreachable

the castle is a place of voice where  
I can't speak,  
the castle is where voices of old, with  
sugar-coated retainers, come  
to trickle down  
your throat like molasses,  
the castle doesn't like new voices, who  
don't wish their teeth to rot away, and be replaced by  
endless chattering

now unwrapped translucent sugar walls,  
clear as crystal,  
made of foolish trust, that  
latches on like a leach, all  
exposed as I walk down halls  
gazing out not just windows but walls,  
watching a  
replicating sequence

In this way, the castle runs, with  
bones and bricks held together by  
sticking sugar glue, grinding together in  
a deftly old tune, that sounds  
vile and sticky and refuses to change,  
it is a safe haven for sweet enthusiasts who refuse to  
try spice

# Desert Night

By Lexie P.

The wide, metal steering wheel hums with a heartbeat under his calloused hands. Warm air wafts out of the heater on the dash, carrying a soft country tune with it. The pair of yellow lights above him flicker like a record with a scratch.

The dark desert road ahead mocks him with its cold silence. Everything sleeps, everything rests at this hour. Why wouldn't they? Only the occasional owl and (of course) Clive dares to disobey the dark's will.

His eyes glaze over and he turns up the volume on the radio. These big trucks can do some serious damage, and therefore need the best stayer-uppers the world has to offer.

Unfortunately for the people on the road this desert night, everyone makes mistakes. And Clive is most certainly not an exception.

## Dawn Valley

By Charlotte D.

Where the tall mountains rise, like giants scraping the sky  
And the river surrounded by pines giggles and plays on its way to the sea  
Where the birds circle high, their shrieks are torn away by the wind

There's a secret in the breeze, it whispers soft sounds in your ears  
It reminds me of the jagged cliffs that are knives into the sky  
The dawn skies glow with the light of a thousand suns  
And cast shadows over the world

The hills green and dancing, twirling through a valley  
Their parents, the mountains, watch them play  
with a proud smile on their faces  
The glowing stars like purple palaces made of grape candy  
All this beauty while the world sleeps.



# No One Belongs

By Victoria S.

*after Mary Oliver*

Who made jealousy?  
Who made popularity, and jerks?  
Who made right vs. wrong?  
Who made that one, who always makes you feel bad  
This person, I mean— The one  
Who's passing out notes all around campus,  
The one who always makes the small people feel little,  
Who is making comments and jokes,  
Who is talking bad about their so-called "FRIENDS",  
Now they ruin your reputation  
Now they wonder why some people hate them  
I don't know exactly what a true friend is  
I don't know how to shift their mindset  
How to give advice,  
How to change the perspective,  
How to not let it hurt me,  
Which is why our world is this way.  
Tell me, why do I feel unwanted?  
Doesn't everyone have a place in this world?  
Tell me, why do people feel the need to push others down to bring  
themselves up?

# Clean Break

By Luci T.

When I walk into class the first thing I notice  
is that we're wearing the same jacket.  
Except mine is a dusty rose and  
yours is an all-too-familiar blue.  
You complained for six years about our uniform  
But now, just looking at you I can hear the *swish* of tartan against my  
skin and feel the itchy, maddening weight of wool on my shoulders.

I wonder if you remember  
When you and I and Lyli  
Got matching outfits  
And we thought we were the coolest  
Even though Gap cut-offs and sparkly Vans  
Was, in retrospect, not the best look.

You wear diamond studs every day now.  
I remember you bragging for ages about how you were getting diamond  
earrings when you turned twelve.  
It's funny how sure I was I'd be there.

I tried to tell you it wasn't my fault  
With wet eyes and blotchy skin and  
A voice that broke with the weight  
of how much I meant it, still maybe you  
Saw what was fighting under my words  
Saw what I so desperately wanted to say  
That, even more than I wanted to not be in the  
wrong with you  
I wanted to prove

That I never was in the wrong, to begin with.

I said “don’t let this pull us apart”

I meant “Is *this* what pulls us apart?”

I said “If only you had told me”

I meant “You should have told me”

I said “I had nothing to do with it”

I meant “You had nothing to do with it either.”

I said “I would never hurt you”

I meant “Not like you hurt me”

You said you didn’t believe me

But I think you just didn’t want to.

My memories remind me

of how funny you are.

How sharp.

I didn’t remember how bitter.

They say turn lemons into lemonade

But that was never my problem

You *were* my lemonade

Perfectly sweet,

intensely bright,

And eye-wateringly sour.

It’s crazy how much time I spent with you

The hours in your backyard talking about

Everything and nothing.

The ballet class we quit when

I got better than you

The stupid power plays that never really

Made any sense to me

But I went along with anyway.  
Do I want that time back?  
Would I be a different person without  
That time?  
Would I be a different person without you?

I want to be done with you  
My slate wiped clean  
But I have a feeling,  
I'm never going to get that clean break.

It's the little things you can't let go of.  
No matter how hard you try.  
I remember your birthday and your favorite  
color and your old crushes.

I remember what candies you liked  
And how much your mom annoyed you  
And that once, when you were sick  
You read the whole Harry Potter series  
In a week.

I wonder if I'm the only person that knows that.  
I hope, for your sake not.

You were never very good at letting people in.

I'm not trying to be mean here,  
I'm not trying to be sentimental or accusatory  
Or bitter, or sweet.  
This isn't  
Hello or  
I hate you or

I miss you or  
It's your fault or  
I wish you were here  
It's just goodbye.

# I Prefer the Thought

By Alessandra L.

I prefer being manipulative  
to being manipulated  
I prefer the thought of my life ending  
than the thought of what I'll do in my life  
I prefer sadness  
over fear.

I prefer being a smart nobody  
to being a dumb somebody  
I prefer having nothing but being loved  
than having everything I wanted and being hated  
I prefer being lost  
to being found.

I prefer giving up  
Than never having tried  
I prefer being disciplined  
to being spoiled  
I prefer the truth  
over the better lie.

I prefer a lion heart  
over a fox heart  
I prefer to die because of a wound to the heart  
than to die because of a wound to the mind  
I prefer to lucid dream  
Than to not dream at all

I bend over a bit and begin to fall

Dreams can be scarier than nightmares if  
they hold something you fear  
I believe in who I trust,  
but who I trust are never near.

# The Bahamas Dream

By Lulu Y.

Sipping out of a coconut  
Watching shells wash up on the shore  
The sun is slowly setting  
There's nothing I could want more

The sky looks like a painting  
It's a mixture of pinks purples and blues  
The sun sitting on the horizon  
A beautiful golden hue

I walk along the soft sand  
In my flip flops and pajamas  
All I hear are the waves crashing  
I love it in the Bahamas

Returned to my cozy beach house  
A shower to wash away all the salt  
Everything is so calm here  
All my worries coming to a halt

The day after brings even more joy  
I now have freckled rosy cheeks  
I'm staying for a whole month  
But still counting the weeks

As I'm lying in the hot sand  
It smells like salt and flowers  
It sounds like the inside of a shell  
I see all the lifeguards in towers



Riding my bike down the beach  
The palm trees towering over me  
My swimsuit brighter than the sun  
And my hair is blowing free

The bike ride felt like forever  
But as I look in the surf shop  
I feel like I'm living a movie  
And the feeling is nonstop

As I walk along the sand  
I spot an orange baby crab  
She's is super cute and sweet  
But I know it's bad to grab

I woke up extra early for the sunrise  
For today is my last day  
I better start packing soon  
But I wish I could stay

I walk in with my luggage  
The airport is crisp and cold  
I'm early for my flight  
So I just waited and strolled

Squished into the window seat  
Surrounded by people I don't know  
I relax and put in my airpods  
And I watch my favorite show

Now I'm back in my hometown  
The sun is scorching hot

And the air is sticky and humid  
That is something I forgot

I don't live near any beaches  
So no more soft sand and salty water  
I'm thinking of the baby crab  
I wish I could have brought her

But I wake up suddenly  
Realizing it was all a dream  
I'm still on my vacation  
The sun is shining with a gleam

I look out my sit in window  
And hop out of the big bed  
Today is going to be a good day  
I can feel it in my head

I look up at the blue sky  
Clashing with the cyan ocean  
The sun is glistening above me  
And the clouds catch motion

# Five Ways of Looking at a Coconut

By Kaelyn J.

*after Wallace Stevens*

A sweet and  
refreshing  
foggy water  
for your coffee.

A hairy bowling ball  
waiting to fall  
out of its tree  
and give you  
a concussion

A scared coconut  
holding on for dear life  
but it falls, iCrack!  
on your head

An iconic coconut cup  
with a straw  
that you always see  
in beach scenes  
at the movie theater

Some cut-up coconut candy  
crushed a million times  
as hard as a hydraulic press

# Instructions to the Artist

By Anonymous

*after Billy Collins*

I wish my hair pin-straight,  
ready for a Mary Janes entrée or a cardigan dessert.

Please be so kind as to play music while you work.  
I recommend something that makes your toes tap and your ears sing,  
but if you're a Beethoven guy, so be it.

My face should be painted with a big brush.  
Details don't matter, as long as it's smooth.  
Feel free to skip it entirely, actually.  
And make sure to add my crooked, girl-next-door smile.  
Just how they like it.

The body would be mouselike and lanky,  
but give me my father's jacket and no one will know.

The background I leave up to you.  
Let it be a foggy fall morning or a moonlit evening,  
just tell the sun to grab his coat and come another day.

Also, please hide my mother's name in my hair.  
I am a mosaic made of pieces of my family,  
so please include my brother.  
He would like to be in the background.

Some final recommendations:  
Please add me chewing gum.  
I can blow bubbles and take great pride in it.

# The Eye of the Storm

By Emma S.

There's something so blissful in the center of the storm  
You can hear it all.  
The rubber grumbles on the warm asphalt,  
Tires racing behind you.

But right here,  
Right now,

It doesn't matter.

And it doesn't matter,  
when you ride in the middle of the road.  
Or when you lose your grip on the handlebars

Because for a moment,  
*Just one moment,*

You can feel yourself begin to fly.