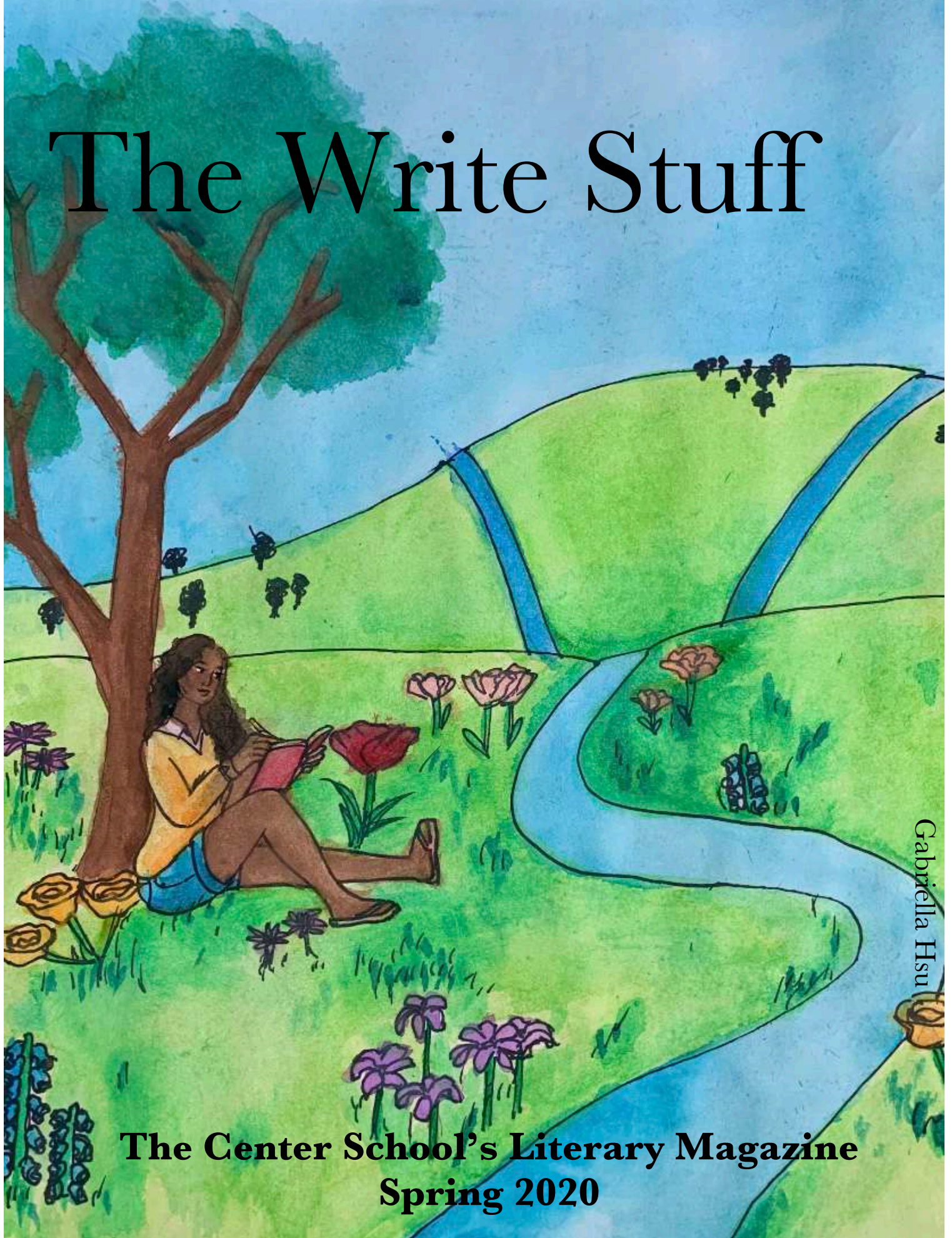


# The Write Stuff



Gabriella Hsu

**The Center School's Literary Magazine  
Spring 2020**

# The Write Stuff

Covid-19 Edition



**The Center School's Literary & Art Magazine**  
Spring 2020

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*\*denotes those who attended all the ZOOM sessions  
Thank you for your continued presence!*

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Special Thanks to  
Elaine J Schwartz &  
The Center School teachers  
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Nazar  
Patrick  
Philip  
Salma  
SamB  
Somerset  
Sonia  
SophiaE  
Theodora

## Phases of the Moon

memories  
lit with the soft yellow light  
of a candle  
passing by  
like the phases of the moon

every night  
a new memory  
is added  
glowing brighter than the others

the icy but comforting scent of winter  
the sky growing darker  
my friend's hand in mine

trees and hammocks darkened at midnight  
surrounding a lit up pool

rain  
storm clouds  
and lightning

water in the sound  
that ripples with calm waves  
cooling down my feet  
burnt from the deep purple sand

upbeat music

laughter tightening my lungs

tears  
hugs  
and hospitals



all of these moments  
just gone  
their significance stolen  
i fear the possibilities that lay ahead  
as i commemorate the times that stay behind

memories graffiti-ed in mind  
getting slowly painted over  
as each moment glides by  
to the ticking of a clock  
to the flapping wings of a hummingbird

but the clock just keeps ticking  
and the hummingbird hovers in the wind

forgetting the past

the thoughts bring sorrow  
that stings my eyes  
i'm crying happy tears  
but my eyes are dry

then the candlelight fades  
i tell myself to live in the present  
to appreciate what i have  
and to not overthink things

then i realized  
i couldn't hear the sound of the clock or the  
hummingbird

- Bo Bernard, 7th Grade

## **A Moment in Time**

I was on a dark wood floor  
In the middle of my house  
The street lamps reflected softly  
On the white walls  
Giving them blurry highlights.

I was sitting in a bright  
Carolina blue bamboo seat, so bright  
It almost appeared to glow  
Making it the main attraction.

My pink onesie punctuated  
The darkness  
Casting a sliver of light on my face.  
You could just make out my  
Leaf green eyes through that light.  
You could see my cheeks  
That were so bloated  
It looked like someone had  
Stuffed them full of gauze.

Shadows and faint light illuminated  
My brother, sitting nearby.  
At this moment, I was mesmerized by the  
First full moon I'd ever seen.

- Emma White, 5th Grade

## **Snow Filled Sky**

The crispiness of winter's  
first ice makes the sky  
pale as icicles tearing  
through misty windows  
as the sky cries white  
snow, we are all playing  
in it down below. The stars  
of the night fill the sky  
with sweet songs of  
sleepiness. I imagine pinecones  
falling into the water  
as the pond moves quietly.

- Alexandra Segerdahl, 5th Grade



## Oceanic

The breeze of  
the sea whispering  
above.

The sound of eagles  
praying in your  
ears.

Water splashing  
onto your face.

The taste of salt  
sizzling on your  
tongue.

- Lucy Poots, 6th Grade



## The Autumn

Red, orange, and yellow leaves falling to the ground.  
Halloween parties with friends.  
Hosting Thanksgiving with my family.  
Taking out the jackets.  
And hats and gloves.  
Wrapping in blankets at night.  
Transitioning into the long miserable winter ahead.  
Getting into the school year.  
And the leaves crunching under my feet.

- Connor Garutti, 5th Grade

## Dreaming Glow

Seeking nightmare through the darkened foliage  
but brighter than it seems  
open to the big ideas larger than yourself  
light will shine when it chooses  
crouch down into bushes to seek new worlds  
and possibilities  
not to obey but to seek more than we are given  
once in a dream a grasshopper fails and it's  
shadow fails again  
mellow and golden  
as ripe as a bird's great wings  
shining through the highest branch  
through the glowing seas  
larger than ten bodies of water  
oceans and sea lake and pond  
leafing you only farther down that  
darkened drain of hope.

- Lilah Arthur, 7th Grade

## Still I lay

The wind  
W  
O  
V  
E  
Through leaves  
Branches adamant  
Refusing to be blown

The ocean's waves  
Irate and repetitive  
Crashing as a cycle  
Lapped at the shore

The mattress was  
An abyss of stone feathers  
Covered in cheap linen  
However very  
*S O F T*  
A feeling of tranquility  
Stillness  
Peace  
My brain serene as sad silence

On my stomach I lay  
As caliginous wrinkles to light  
My family asleep  
Watching  
As the light  
Fought the dark  
And won the prize  
Of  
DAY

- Jolie Futterman, 8th Grade

## Track of Injured Wolf

in the snow  
red  
horrible  
leading onward  
into a wood  
I kneel  
feeling  
the  
chill  
seeping through my jeans  
tracks  
are fresh  
a wolf  
just passed through  
an animal in pain  
there are a lot  
of those  
in the world  
I follow his tracks  
night begins to fall  
I hear a cry  
of despair  
of pain  
I walk into the wood  
the sweet smell  
of sap  
drifts  
into my nose  
as life  
passes  
all around me

- Elliott Stone, 5th Grade

## **A Seashell's Resonance**

Just by the sound and smell  
an image of the scenery flashes  
our flip-flops drum on the old wooden boards,  
out of rhythm.  
We are a few steps closer to paradise.

The sun slashes our soon-to-be-tanned backs  
with whips as hot as the first sip of hot chocolate.  
Here and there we're lucky enough  
to have the wind blowing slightly at our faces.  
His breath is just the right amount of cool.

I reach down to grab my sandals  
as I feel something else beneath me  
only to come back with  
tiny pellets surrounding  
the outer edge of the footwear.  
My feet dig into the sand with each step I take,  
my impression won't be left there for long.  
When we come to a stop  
I drop my bags and  
run towards the sound a seashell  
makes when you hold it up to your ear.

I am startled a little to find that I've stepped  
where two different temperatures  
and colors meet.  
Where blue and yellow somehow does  
not make green but a brown.  
I feel the iciness run through my veins,  
as it takes control of my body and makes me cold-blooded.  
With this, I dive into the huge body of salt water.

When my head resurfaces,  
everything is clearer.  
Clouds waltz above my head.  
Seagulls fight over food,  
squawking at one another.  
The sun's radiant smile made  
the granular ground glint  
like stars in space.  
I can see an outer shell of a hermit crab  
dig its way towards its habitat.

Under the water,

the density of the cold water  
leaps by my leg.  
I am taken aback to find something  
slimy poking me-  
seaweed.

To think that the beauty  
of all these creatures and plants  
are in jars that are given to us  
and for some reason, we feel that it's  
fine to shake them up.  
To make them our puppets  
and take advantage of them.  
Ultimately we're going to be  
killing ourselves for a  
slip of shamrock-colored paper.  
But for now, we can work on cleaning up.

Out of the corner of my eye,  
two people start walking towards me.  
I pirouette underwater with my hands  
and guide the water to splash them.  
Sadly, that wasn't enough to stop one of them  
from tackling me into the water.  
All of a sudden the changing world around me stops,  
and I know I am blissed-out.

To stop the angry cold from getting to us,  
we all huddle up and put a blanket over ourselves.  
We watch as the sun dissolves into the night  
lying down on her bed made of water.

- *Naima Itza Soto-Jerome, 7th Grade*



## Warmed Blue

Similar to a mirage  
You could not feel yourself  
Actually there  
But the image was present and concrete

It was filled with shine  
The sun crumbled light  
Sprinkling  
Over picturesque waters  
Of tranquil blue  
Symbols of peace

It was a cocoon of guidance  
Your future seemed simple  
Toasted sand lining the way  
To the unknown  
An unprecedented journey  
But also a simple one

You sank into it all  
Slowly falling into  
Luxurious  
Sand that flowed with warmth  
Of the sun  
Inviting you

It was blue  
God, it was blue  
A deep light sapphire  
That captivated you  
That left you wondering

It was beautiful  
Stillness; a moment  
For thought

A scene with water  
That was  
The color of depth  
Showing just how much  
Lay hidden

A symbol of the  
Unknown  
But also it's simplicity

It said to you  
You will be okay  
You are okay  
*It was*

- Jolie Futterman, 8th Grade

## Summer Waves

Drifting  
    down  
        upon  
        Sunapee Lake.  
Bathing in the radiant sun.

Drowning in conversations  
remembering times

long gone.

Biking to the harbor,  
*two ice creams, please.*

Flying across the ocean  
greeted with croissants  
filled with seas of creamy butter and  
rich chocolate.

Prolonged strolls  
along the Seine, breathing in  
chill waves of  
French air.

Now, I am home  
reflecting on a summer

long gone.

- Lyon Hyams, 8th Grade

## Untitled

as people quietly wait  
like pigeons assuming that autumn is near  
the thoughtful will go and flock to the rooftops  
say in and day out  
morning clouds arrive  
sorrow begins again

- Dylan Raben, 8th Grade

## A Quandary

Quandary

“A state of perplexity or uncertainty  
over what to do  
in a difficult situation.”

Colorado

is a state of  
mountainous peaks  
and  
high elevation.

Rocky hilltops and

fields of grass  
as far as the eye can see  
with elk and  
goats and  
marmots padding through  
the rolling hills.

And in it all is one

one mountain  
I have climbed  
one challenge  
I have overcome  
a quandary  
in which I pushed forward  
and completed  
the task  
the challenge  
even if every part of me  
was aching  
and telling me  
to stop.

Quandary peak

a mountain in Colorado  
goes up  
fourteen-thousand feet  
above the sea.

In the morning

we start  
the trail  
and as we go  
there is nothing much to say

except the occasional  
“hello”  
when the other hikers  
pass us by.

So we walk and  
walk and  
listen to our surroundings  
the silence of nature  
that overwhelms me  
the peace  
that you can not find  
you can never find  
where I live.

Soon I gain a lead  
on my family  
I walk by myself  
through the trees  
with the birds  
and the rest of the wildlife  
but ahead of me  
I see the point where  
the trees turn to stones  
and  
the bushes to pebbles  
and when you look up  
you see the grey  
of everything  
ahead of you.

When I reach the false summit  
I am tired out  
the altitude  
is having its effect on me  
so I sit  
and wait  
for the rest of my family  
to come  
and I watch  
the already beautiful view  
of the rocky face  
opposite the mountain.

Soon we reached the final push  
a steep  
rocky trail



that sapped up  
the very last bit  
of our energy  
we were tired  
dehydrated  
and we had bad headaches  
from the altitude.

We were in a quandary  
should we turn back  
was what we asked ourselves  
should we give up  
leave now  
and not reach the top?

Up ahead of us  
there was a commotion  
coming down the trail  
unafraid  
were two  
large white animals  
with short curved horns  
atop their heads  
kicking stones  
as they trudged along  
mountain goats.

The top was just  
ahead of us  
but  
our pace was slow  
so slow  
it felt like  
we weren't moving  
at all  
and after what felt like hours  
the top  
was right beneath our feet.

We had completed  
this amazing hike  
this mountain  
this peak  
this quandary  
that we pushed through  
this Quandary Peak.

*- Adam Ripp, 7th Grade*

## Reluctant Voyager

I am now in seventh grade, a year of responsibilities, stress and high expectations. The fact that I'm soon moving on to my fourth school scares me. Two years sounds like a long time to most, however, I've watched two grades graduate before me and soon mine will be next. I miss being that clueless little fifth grader wandering through the halls trying to get to class. These last couple of years, I was able to live in the present, but now I am now obsessing over the decisions I'm making for the future and contemplating how they will affect me. This hasn't allowed me to take a moment to appreciate the time I have left at this amazing school. I am not ready to go. I want to hold onto the memories for as long as I can. Like how the hundreds of times I passed by that fire truck playground next to the entrance of The Center School; or when my friends and I would sit on the windowsill in the girl's bathroom having what we would call "therapy sessions". Although these memories are ones I hope will never fade away, the people that are in those memories are the ones that make them worth cherishing, and what I fear losing the most. It's heartbreaking to think about the close friendships we all formed over time, and how they can easily dissipate once we go our separate ways. Ideas like these run through my head. They distress me, even though I know that some friendships are meant to grow apart and others stay even through change. It's hard to think about that fire truck playground because I know that one day soon it'll be my last day to pass by it as a The Center School student.

- Alejandra Gernandt, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade



## **The Daily Ballet**

From down the dreary tunnel  
a small spark ignites  
a flash of light approaches,  
a spotlight turning on  
in the center of a huge wooden stage

It grows closer until  
the train comes into sight  
it screeches to a halt  
and the doors open

People flood into the crowded car  
like ballerina marching on stage  
they assume their first position  
for the start

The metal car lurches forward  
ever so slightly  
and the ballet has begun

The moves are ever so delicate  
swinging up and down  
and left again  
dodging from other dancers  
looking at the crowd, a blur of faces

Another train comes into view  
funny how moving slower  
makes it look like it's going backward

The stage is covered in props  
posters and ads dotting the walls  
blotches of color

Although looking out  
the audience isn't focused  
they're too busy watching their little screens

More jerking and jumping and moving  
until a sudden lurch again

The train comes to a halt  
the doors slide open  
and I run off the stage

The show is over!  
I escaped the dance  
but I get no standing ovation  
because that's all part of the daily ballet

*- Liza Greenberg, 7th Grade*

## 10.8 Miles

maroon brownstone steps pave the way  
New York  
as you think of it

the ice cream truck with  
thirty different flavors  
many don't try

walking down DeKalb  
men playing chess on a spare bench  
South African restaurants  
tall Gallery pears, rising four, five  
stories high  
people injecting needles into their veins  
kids riding bikes  
a blue awning opening up to an  
American Chinese restaurant

shops  
colorful tchotchkes and items lined up  
like quarterbacks

Brooklyn is booming  
trends and life-long residents meet  
New York as you think of it

underground:  
orange circles  
indicating where you will go today  
across the East River  
lines of cars and pedestrians  
pass the fast moving train

there is a problem with the train's dispatcher  
Sorry for the Inconvenience

Chinatown  
red lights  
meet the smell of fried  
dough, cigarettes, and live fish

tourists tricked  
into buying the scammers  
fake Louis Vuitton

Union Square  
hits me with a sense of familiarity  
big businesses surround the  
small park  
and within  
vendors  
from across New England  
sell their eggs, milk, meat, fish  
the farmer's market is filled  
with determined buyers  
hands weighed heavy with shopping  
bags

Madison Square Park  
halal stands and Shake Shack  
sunbathing office workers  
bodies in dying grass  
during the office break  
New York as you think of it

The Upper West Side  
medium sized buildings  
the sun drops on the innocence of the city  
the sun is raining  
the buildings go from 222 to 224, 226

underground:  
the train makes extra-terrestrial  
noises as we stop and go by  
mosaics of street numbers

underground:  
Ads in Haitian, Korean, Russian, Spanish, and Chinese  
the tracks emerge into  
sunlight, apartments, the view of New Jersey  
kids outside a McDonald's

above ground:  
the two bright lights running  
towards me

New York

- *Max Sebok, 8th Grade*



## **COYOTE GOES TO THE CENTER SCHOOL**

*Inspired from Traditional Coyote Trickster Tales...  
learn what not-to-do by what Coyote does!*

*Ms. Tacey's Social Studies  
2<sup>nd</sup> Trimester, 2020*



### **Coyote the Counterfeiter**

One day, Coyote walked in the courtyard of The Center School and went up the stairs. "Hello," the officer said to him. "Good Morning," he replied. He remembered he forgot to do his homework so he asked a friend to do it for him. "Why would I do your homework for you?" His friend asked. "I will give you five dollars," Coyote replied. What his friend did not know was that it was fake money. Then it was the bake sale and there were so many people and Coyote cut the whole line. One kid said, "I saw that." Coyote said, "I will give you money if you don't say anything." The kid didn't know the money was fake. But there was such a crush that Coyote and his fake money got trampled. Later, when he puffed himself back up, the teachers surrounded him and accused him of having other people do his homework and scamming the bake sale!

### **Coyote Goes Out to Lunch**

Coyote wants to go out for lunch and so he does. Although when he leaves the teachers warn him, "Don't cross the street when the light is red!" One day, Coyote needs to get lunch quickly because he has detention. So, he runs across the street on a red light to go faster. He does not look both ways and gets flattened by a car. The man from the thrift store on Columbus Avenue finds him and tries to sell him as a rug. Though right before he is sold, he puffs himself back up and runs back to The Center School. He ends up being late for detention and is in more trouble with Mr. Marshall.

### **Coyote & The Printing Press**

When Coyote goes to The Center School, he buys 2 donuts using fake bake sale bucks. Then Ms. Berkery tells Mr. Marshall, "I found counterfeit bake sale bucks in Coyote's locker." Mr. Marshall freaks out and screams to Coyote during Enrichment, "Child! You have detention!" Before detention, Coyote sneaks into room 328 and prints more fake bake sale bucks. Enraged, Mr. Marshall squashes him in the printing press. When Coyote puffs himself back up, he is covered with ink that is very hard to wash out!

## Modern Questions

*Why is your world better than the one before us?*  
My mother asked me,

Connection  
blazes  
a shallow blue light  
reconstituting  
the warm earthy brown glow  
that holds strong for mere seconds.

But,  
we walk in the soil  
of red white and blue,  
the shadows  
of a former life.  
Led with feet  
that walked on an unknown trail  
to me.

Greenhouse gasses follow me like grey clouds  
threatening to rain  
at any moment.

The man on the subway  
trembles  
like a frigid wind  
sits on his shoulder,  
and smells of urine.  
People with swollen eyes and bloody feet  
let the seat next to him  
stay empty.  
Even I,  
the angel of good  
shy away from the seat.  
Struggling to look past the ever-knowing  
gaze of guilt.

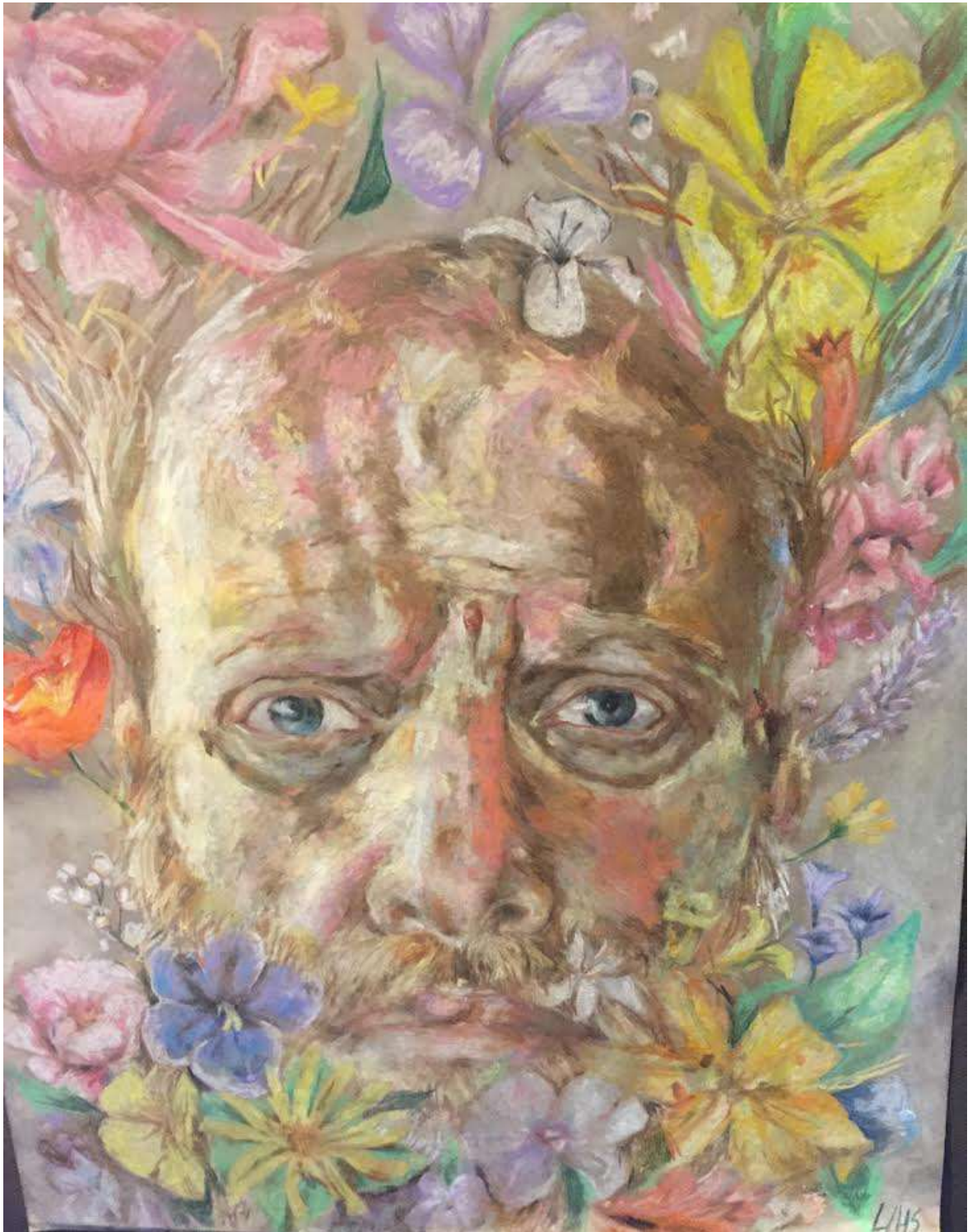
Black men and churches and temples and schools  
shot down.  
How is this better?  
Because I want it to be better.

Because,  
even when I become sand and stone,  
I want My World to be better  
than the world before.  
The World I didn't get to live in.  
*Is that selfish?*

- Lena Halley-Segal, 8th Grade

# Balding

*By Lena Halley-Segal, 8th Grade*





## Ads

*The Nearly Invisible Interactive Gym*  
milky grey panel  
Charcoal freckles  
generous warmth  
long steps to a cloned destination  
overused bones

heavenly stairs  
winding growth, enlightenment  
Introduction  
the top makes my legs restless  
lines!lines!lines!  
*Guggenheim - Hilma af Klint*

refreshing empty ventilation  
reflecting wall faces violently smudged to the left.  
bumps and swishes of insubordinate youth  
Black lumpy figure  
made from  
Clay carelessly stroked with wide fingers

Crowded breath  
Crippling danger sign

*\$15 Minimum Wage*

Pleas  
cries  
for a cup to ring with copper  
limp, torn ripped shirt  
Cracking sculpture  
Body bent by loss  
ads.

-- *Lena Halley-Segal, 8th Grade*

## Untitled

Love me not as a ruffling pigeon  
love me as a queen  
or princess  
that eats  
from gold plates.

Love me  
like you would  
royalty,  
with long purple  
capas and  
diamond tiaras.

Love me as you would  
a wealthy princess  
that seeks love  
and gratitude.

Just please  
give me  
one  
small  
chance.

- *Lucy Poots, 6th Grade*

## When I Was Three

I ran around  
In my Elmo diaper  
No shirt  
Just  
Sparkly pink swim goggles  
I found myself  
Hilarious

I was always on the go  
I threw temper tantrums  
When I had to take  
Naps  
Or  
Anything  
And  
Everything  
To do with  
Resting

I would  
J U M P  
Screaming  
“STUPID BLUEBERRIES”

I was a Venus flytrap  
My mouth  
Always  
Snapping  
Shut and open

I would stand by the humidifier  
And dream  
I was inhaling clouds

- *Maya Stone, 7th Grade*

## **Sadness**

Sadness attacked her,  
Lost in a blue cloud.

She hung over as  
if she was a stiff  
painting.

In shock, life  
happens to her....

A shockwave of  
fear, arises in  
her clearest vision.

What just happened,  
Was a lot to take in.

Words swarm around  
Her, she suddenly  
Pops out of her thoughts.

She is in front of  
The grave of her ancestor

- *Oyinola Jacobs, 5th Grade*

## **Norway Pine Bark**

I can see the swirls  
That made up  
The bark  
On the tree.  
Rough  
And worn  
Hundreds  
Of years old.  
I can smell  
A woody smell  
The smell  
Of pine  
And leaves  
Hanging from branches.  
I try  
To imagine  
What kind of life  
This tree had.  
Did children  
Swing from  
Its branches?  
Did young students  
Come and study  
Under the magnificent shade  
That it cast  
On the sandy ground?  
Had people come  
To repent  
And sing  
And love  
Just a few feet  
Above its mighty roots?  
I lay my hand  
On the rough bark  
Tracing  
The circles  
And swirls.

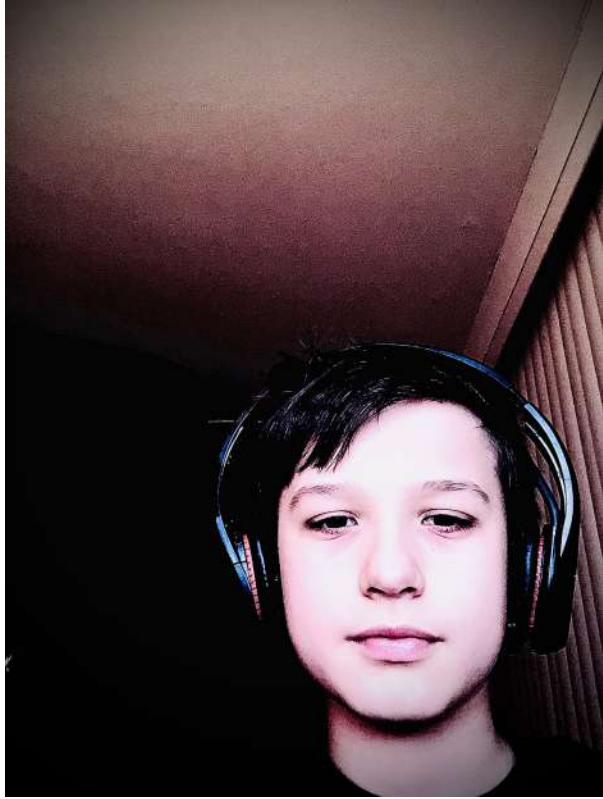
- *Penelope Segerdahl, 8th Grade*

## A Writing & Thinking Art Exercise

*Altered self-portraits in time of Covid-19*

*Ms Tacey's W & T Class: Kyami, Allegra, Ben, Leo, Patrick, Philip, Mia, Amalia, Elliott, Salma & Ansel*







## **Humiliation**

Walking with Walkup and Verdejo  
Strolling past the Met  
Beautiful  
Clean as a place in heaven  
Mansion-like  
A shiny castle waiting to be explored

Past a musician  
Fingers dancing across his saxophone  
Sign reads  
“Played for Bill Clinton”  
Beautiful melodies surround him  
Like he was the god of music  
But just a small crowd listens

In the courtyard  
Artists display their treasures  
Mostly paintings of The Avengers  
Thor, Iron Man,  
Stacked up high  
Like a skyscraper in progress  
Equaling hours of hard labor  
But crowds pass without a glance

A middle-aged homeless man  
Dirty, ragged, lonely  
Sign reads  
“Marry for food”  
Complimenting women passing by  
Believed he possessed a silver tongue  
But no one listened  
Or even looked his way.

*-Asher Gaffney, 6th Grade*

## **The Writing on the Tombstone**

Our world, it  
plays back mistakes of  
ancient people.

Puzzled  
for humanity's flowers didn't yet  
bloom  
bright  
with exaltation  
No...

War.  
A gleaming knife,  
it etches deep in our  
enemies' coat of armor.  
Blood  
drips  
Down. A flood,  
brought devastation to people

Leaders. In the wild

lost

their necks turn,

stuck.

Until their flood,  
catches them too.

*- Lyon Hyams, 8th Grade*



## **The Abandoned Manor**

The abandoned manor  
a “dare” to live in.  
Smashed glass tossed from windows  
dirty and old.

“I dare you to do it.”  
Such a common phrase.

A pitiful one, too.

Once polished, one cared for...

Now beaten and stiff and forgotten.

No more visitors, no more  
soul, the house is dead.  
Nothing left  
not even a crumb.

Reported and blamed.  
But it was never nice.

People screaming just looking at it  
showing the terrible thing it is,  
Its soul and heart  
taken from the ground  
below.

No more life, no more soul.

*- Oyinola Jacobs, 5th Grade*



## **A Daydream at Night**

With a random kid on a radiant day  
A tall, brown haired kid  
At a curve on a raised railroad  
We have a huge tank of bouncy balls

Behind us is a forest  
A colossal forest  
As green as swamp water

Then the train came  
And stopped  
We attached a hose to the train  
And filled it with bouncy balls  
So colorful it could be an artist's palette

All of a sudden  
My daydream stops  
I had fallen asleep  
And gone into  
the painting of dreams

*- Leif Rideout, 5th Grade*



## **The Countryside**

### *Interview with Grandma*

I rock back and forth as my mother walks over rocks and tree roots with me in her arms. My siblings walk alongside us, whispering among themselves. I suck my thumb and look around, worried. Even as a one-year-old, I knew that we were going somewhere unknown, traveling farther and farther away from our small, sweet home on the main street of Yokohama. Pots and pans fall out of our bags every now and then, making me wail because of the loud noise. My mother and father comfort me, but I can see the panic in their eyes, hanging like a cloud of fear over our whole family. I didn't know why we were leaving, or where we were going. All I knew was that we had to run because of the Americans.

We stop at a small building, standing shakily next to a pair of train tracks. My father looks at his watch, then exchanges a few words with my mother. She nods, rubbing her eyes then leading us toward the platform parallel to the train tracks. She caresses my face, whispering a song to me. I smile, slowly letting sleep take me over.

I jerk to the side as the train switches tracks, banging my head against a wall. A sharp pain erupts near my eyebrow, making me sob.

"No, no, please don't cry here." my mother says, rocking me from side to side.

Heads turn as I continue to cry, making my whole family turn red with embarrassment. My mother grabs her bag, and quickly shuffles to the bathroom, giving me a bottle of milk and my pacifier.

"Please, just for me, stay quiet until we get to our destination. Please," she says.

I tilt my head sideways, not understanding. But then I look into her eyes, and I quiet down, sucking on my pacifier and closing my eyes. The noise around me fades and my mother sways me gently from side to side, walking back to our seat.

I open my eyes and stared at the chaos going on around me. People grab their bags out of train compartments and yell at strangers. My father grabs two packed suitcases and we run out of the train station, hopping into a cab.

Sunlight filters through windows and a cool breeze passes through the room. I open my eyes, looking up at a baby blue ceiling. Slowly, I get up on my feet and watch my mother sleep in the mattress at the other side of the room.

"Mommy!" I shout, trying to jump out of the crib.

She rubs her eyes and slowly stands up, lifting me out of the crib and into her arms. She slips a small sweater over my head and grabs my bottle of goat milk. We head down the staircase, and the warm smell of rice fills the kitchen. A lady greets us and brings us onto a porch outside.

“Good morning, Mie-chan. My name is Akiko, and this is my house,” she says, giving me a bowl of steaming hot miso soup.

I nod, already lost in the beauty of the view. There were cherry blossom trees all around the house, the petals falling slowly and hitting the grass. The sky was a perfect shade of blue, the sun positioned perfectly in the corner of the sky. And the ocean, oh how it was beautiful. It glitters like a million gems on a sunny day.

Then, something blows up in the sky. It is huge, even if we are far from it. My brother notices it too, and taps my mother on the shoulder. She looks over at the sky and puts her hands over her mouth. My father looks over too, and gasps. Then he looks over at my mother, who is sobbing. He pulls her into a tight hug, trying to comfort her, but I see a tear trickle down his cheek.

My older sister takes me in her arms and all my siblings leave the table, sitting down next to one of the cherry blossom trees. She sits me down on her lap, then hugs my brother and sister close. We all sit there in silence, watching our country get destroyed by the Americans.

About 45 minutes later, my parents come over to us, their eyes puffy and red, and take us to sit on the beach. We sit for a while on the sand, watching the sky change colors. Then my mother sniffles and shakes her head.

“Yukari didn’t believe me- I wish she would have come with us.”

I think about my aunt Yukari, who was working at a bank at Hiroshima. I remember when she came to our house for my first birthday, and her and my mother got into a big fight. I can hardly remember the day of the party. My mother begged her to come with us, and Aunt Yukari said that the Americans would never do that to us, and that the bombing was just a rumor. The next morning, she left to go home, and she never came back. I guess that was the last time we would ever see her.

We sit on the beach for a while, not speaking. It was late morning by now, and the sky was a strange shade of black, grey, and red. I turn around, burying my head into my mother’s shoulder, listening to the sound of the waves crash against the sand. Would I ever go home again?

- Siena Ruske, 6th Grade

## **Dressed in Black**

I walked into a blue countered  
Dimly lit kitchen  
Rubbing my eyes with sleepiness.  
My strawberry pink dress  
Bouncing as I walk

I see my mother's slow  
Exasperated tears run down her face  
My grandmother sitting by her side  
Her silky smooth nightgown  
Trembles as her tears multiply,  
Down her wrinkled face  
As she sees me.

My mother holds her arms open  
I walk to her confused  
I crawl into her warm arms  
She talks to me in her  
Small trembling voice

Something I never wanted to hear.  
My sights blurs,  
I cry with them.  
I don't know what to do  
Or how to react

His large glinted glasses move as he laughs  
SpongeBob playing faintly in the background  
Everyone laughing together  
At a bad joke, no one understands,  
I laugh too  
No reason not to  
but to live.

We walk in a dimly lit room,  
Everyone wearing black  
My father is now beside me  
Trying to comfort my mother  
I carried a flowered  
Box of tissues handing them out  
One by by one  
Feeling very responsible

A man stands up to talk

Rows and rows of people listen,  
To his similarly trembling voice.  
I hold my breath  
I know when I start  
There will be no stop.  
The sadness chokes me.

*- Lilah Arthur, 7th Grade*

## The Things that You Will Remember

The glossy clear lake  
Lying at my feet  
Waiting to be played in  
Hair tied back  
We mean business  
Bathing suits on  
Hands in the muddy sand  
We're ready to make  
Mud pies  
The most delicious kind of pie

Hand and hand  
Baker next to baker  
A system  
The sun will be the oven  
The mud and water  
Are the key ingredients  
Necessities to create  
The world's best  
Kind of pie

When the pies are finished  
In a few minutes  
Who should we serve them to?  
Up  
We looked      And saw  
My parents out on the dock  
That bounces with every wave that comes its way  
They don't look like they are ready for pie  
They look peaceful

The other option is  
My grandparents reading on the  
Lush grassy lawn  
With little white flowers budding  
Beside them  
Little petals scattered all over the lawn  
The flowers look like they are flourishing  
On the other hand  
Grandma and grandpa  
Look like they're hungry

After all  
Grandpa eats everything  
So why wouldn't he eat the mud pies?  
Grandma is looking  
D O  
    W N  
At us and smiling

Probably thinking about  
How delicious the pie is going to be

Oh  
Time to stop looking around  
I have to go  
The pie is ready  
It's ready to be shared  
It's ready to be enjoyed

We placed the sloppy  
Watery  
Delicious Pies  
On a bright orange Frisbee  
One with a spiral right in the middle

And walked over to  
Grandma and grandpa  
They smiled and laughed

Who would guess that  
This little pie  
Made about seven years ago  
Would still be  
Talked about  
And enjoyed  
Today

It's the little  
presents in life  
That we still remember

It's the  
mud pies  
That makes our lives complete

It could be anything  
Something that you will remember  
Years from now  
Something you will laugh about  
At the most random times  
Something you will remember  
Even as you get old

You will remember  
The mud pies

- *Maya Stone, 7th Grade*

## Christmas at Grandma's

The time comes around  
When the calendar lines up  
People come to the house  
Like flies attracted to light

The controller of it all  
Sits in her thrown in the corner  
Her husband standing in the doorway  
with a drink in his hand  
Observing everything  
Her children mill around the room  
All the pictures of them line the walls  
Her grandchildren generation line up  
On the olive green couch  
Like a neat row of books on a shelf

And my generation  
Sitting on the opposite side  
Taking in the moment  
Everything sticking to us like magnets  
Getting entertained by the oldest cousin  
Giggling with satisfaction  
With one call  
We suddenly rush to my great grandmother  
As if there was a race

Next to her,  
A pine tree  
Dressed beautifully with lights and ornaments  
Presents mask the skirt of the tree  
As me and my cousins pass them out  
Boxes of joy  
As I drift into a peaceful sleep

- Austin Chan-Orisini, 8th Grade





## **How I Remember My Grandmother**

Como tu me cuidabas  
Por todo mi vida  
Fue como magia

How you made me  
Look like a princess  
When I was young  
Thank you  
For that.

How you influenced your kids  
To be the people they are today.

How you made sure every  
Mouth was fed with your  
Traditional foods.

It was your anniversary.  
My dad made a cake for  
Abuelo and you. I took so many  
Photos that day so I could  
never forget how happy  
You were. You and Abuelo.

And I really do wonder  
What life would be like  
If I didn't know you.

I really do miss you and I  
Wish I knew more about  
Grandfather. I  
Hope you're looking at  
What you did when you  
Were here.

And lastly, I just want  
To say I miss you. And thank  
You for everything you've  
Ever done for me and our

Family.

*- Isabella Gil, 6th Grade*

## **Silhouettes**

The blue eyes of my grandfather looked away  
into the noon sun that glistened across  
the windows of my grandfather's house.  
I ran through the dark rooms as I  
if someone was chasing me.  
I didn't know where I was going,  
but I knew I would see my grandfather's warm smile  
trailing behind me. As I looked back,  
I couldn't see my grandfather.  
I continued to run and didn't see any sign of him.

My knees fell to the floor,  
making noises that sounded like crashes from a wrecking ball.  
My eyes were looking at the darkness that felt  
as though I had blindfolds on. I forgot where I was.  
The room was so familiar, yet strange.  
A dim light was shining out of two tiny windows.  
Silhouettes of objects painted the walls.  
Four minutes ago felt so far in the past.  
The only thing that I thought could  
get me out of this situation  
would be to scream.

My screaming did nothing.  
My tears blinded my blue, troubled eyes.  
I felt as I was forgotten about.  
I thought I would never see anyone again  
on the face of this earth.  
I couldn't be seen  
nor heard.

To attempt to cope with my loneliness,  
I gazed at the silhouettes in despair.

*- Andrew Korn, 6th Grade*

## One Last Time

his eyes show  
his days almost done  
the wrinkles  
on his face  
show his days are almost done

I weep  
for this man

he sits  
on a bench  
watching  
enjoying life  
one last time

looks up  
into the clouds of  
many shapes

he sees his past  
when he was  
younger

I will  
be like him  
when wrinkles  
on my face  
show my days  
are almost done

I will  
look up in the sky  
for one last time

- Ty Olin, 7th Grade



## **while you are here**

*for, hilda alfonso, my grandmother*

my grandma  
you are so  
    lovable  
    so  
    determined  
    so  
    headstrong

eighty-nine years  
the world has  
experienced  
eighty-nine  
incredible years  
with your presence

you grew and  
flourished  
in your old country of  
cuba  
but now you have  
drained yourself  
here

you have lost  
so much  
in your time here,  
roberto  
blanca and rosa  
& your beloved abo  
have all said their  
piece  
however  
you have gained  
so much back

i've been here  
for almost 13 years  
and D  
for almost 16 years  
yet i'm aware  
i'm not like  
him  
i don't speak  
spanish,

i don't act as the person  
you want me to  
be  
and frankly  
i don't  
like or enjoy  
baseball  
or the yankees  
i'm sorry

i want to be enough  
to be the perfect granddaughter  
to be the spitting image of mom  
to reach your ever so high  
standards

but  
no matter,  
i love  
the green plants that  
hit your head when you walk  
by  
the bowl of candy which i steal  
from every  
now and then  
the splinter giving dominos  
where i always win  
and cheat  
and your narrow creaky  
apartment  
where i used to be  
scared of  
walking down

i love  
the black and white  
stripe shirts  
the oval brown  
outlined  
cracked glasses  
the old slippers  
sitting in a closet  
then on your  
worn feet  
collecting dust  
your  
everlasting

lotion perfume  
scent that  
sticks

so really  
i'm grateful  
for you  
so while you're here,  
i love you

- *Sofia Figueroa, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade*

## **As We Wait**

the checker boarded table  
where two opposite sides of my mind meet  
and yet, they're both half of my blood  
struggling to find a middle ground

i hear  
it wasn't always like this  
love, abundant less and less  
*these days*  
half of us have two homes  
some have no home at all

everyone waits for love  
their love should be kept apart  
listening opens up a weakness, a vulnerable  
opening within me  
so i don't

this world  
so rich in culture  
and in life  
while it is vanishing  
we sit here as children

if there was a countdown  
would they listen?  
they seem to care more of numbers than life...

hate and love  
fight each other in a never-ending

wish for the people  
i can't love

because someone  
miles away  
read a book that tells me how to live my life  
because someone in my own school hallway  
laughs, and curses with words that should only be spoken  
from my mouth

a white government building  
stands in the back  
like one sliver of hope in a society full of arguments  
people from everywhere  
smile and rejoice  
holding flags  
of six colors

the law has passed  
so the jokes on them

without negativity  
the frequency of  
life surrounds us

flourishing lands  
and continuous waters  
of all shades and hues  
nature thrives with or without us  
exotic animals  
and plants of  
the greatest medicines created

i wish the world  
could stay like this  
forever

our world  
melting away  
like the processed liquids that  
they hypnotize us with so well

what have we done?

- Max Sebok, 8th Grade

## **One Million Pieces**

The days we live in  
Time is almost undetectable  
It slips by right in front of our faces  
The present quickly turns into the past  
Where people communicated  
Face to face not just texting

In all of our grasps  
A whole life's worth of things to do  
We are solving the problem of our boredom  
Instead of solving the problem of homelessness and hunger

We are only now trying to fix something  
That has long been breaking  
We should give it a break  
Because we're trying to fix it with tech  
Tech is what is doing the harm

Episodes continue  
You can't stop a whole nation from posting  
And satellites don't break  
So you have no choice but to keep your gaze down  
Staring into a lifeless gaze  
A gaze that you try to catch  
But you can't it is lifeless.

It's like a puzzle  
One million pieces  
Turning your mind to scrambled eggs  
Even more scrambled than the puzzle pieces

All the pieces are different  
Different games, information, even viruses

The puzzle is ours-  
Of our own making  
It's called technology,  
And it will soon reign.

- *Grace Spence, 7th Grade*



## **the BREAKING of FAST**

waking up  
comfortable and content  
rising slowly  
surrounded by a new  
environment but  
familiar people  
warmth in my heart  
and through my whole body  
wrapped tightly in  
sweatpants and hoodies

I move at a  
sluggish pace  
no reason to rush  
I adorn my feet  
with plush slippers  
and brush my hair  
with my sister's comb

mellow conversation  
simple joys filling  
my two sisters and I  
huddling together like penguins  
in the elevator  
pressing all the buttons  
doors opening to a  
wonderful array of strangers  
and finally  
tables full of cereal, fruit, waffle makers  
and the smell of maple syrup  
wafting by

*- Amelia Hamilton, 8th Grade*

## **Museum**

some people are  
like beautiful statues  
works of art  
to be admired  
for their appearance  
and the fancy  
words written on  
the nearby plaque

STAY AT A DISTANCE

you must never  
touch for fear  
of cracking the  
smiling surface.

*- Amelia Hamilton, 8th Grade*

## Another Way Out

From **All the Light We Cannot See** by Anthony Doerr

Powder  
distending clouds of chalk  
as flames scamper

The artillery shell screams  
children shriek  
smoke chases dust  
ash chases dust

Spires of flames  
extinguish themselves in the sea  
the appetite  
for oxygen  
before  
the world settles

Fragments of glass  
detached  
pitched into the mouth of a volcano

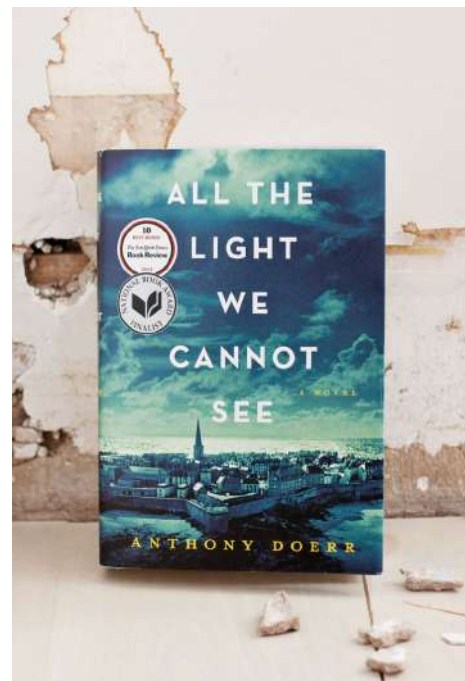
Slower rain of soot  
billions of drifting carbon molecules  
absolute blackness  
consuming everything  
quaking the crust of the earth  
crumbling

Hot dust cascades  
filling your lungs,  
draining them... inhale

*Is there noise?*  
he can't hear himself  
*are we dead?*  
he thinks

*Papa papa papa papa*  
*Ce n'est pas la realite*  
but it is  
*there is no other way out*

- Cala Bernard, 7th Grade



*Literature class artwork*  
**From THE SECRET LIFE OF BEES**

by Somerset, 6<sup>th</sup> grade



## The Challenge

I sat in awe as my jaw  
dropped from the top of the  
Freedom Tower, as a  
roller coaster of drool  
aimed for the Underworld.

The waitress  
lugged a plate  
the size of the  
Super bowl Stadium  
with Mount Everest on top

The laminated menu  
with crusty food stains  
screamed:  
“THE CHALLENGE”

If an alien like my father  
had the ability to consume  
every last crumb,  
the meal would be free

So our waitress slammed down  
the 600-pound plate  
in front of my dad

We gazed at  
the glistening oversized  
pancakes, sausage, and home fries

The meal did not deserve  
the rightful name as “challenge”  
I knew my father would have  
20 minutes to spare

He created more difficulty  
and had the flap jacks  
be thicker in the form of  
whole wheat  
Thicker with additional toughness,  
but this didn’t impact him.

Time crawled into him  
along with the enormous mouthfuls of food.

With still half of four uneaten pancakes,  
his heaven was interrupted by  
a high-pitched vibrating  
ring from his phone.



It blared:  
“Business partner,”  
causing him to withdraw and forfeit  
losing his crown as  
King of  
The Challenge.

- Ava Judovits, 8th Grade

## **Blue is the Color of Quarantine**

Blue is the color of quarantine  
The melancholy sadness

Blue is the clear sky  
Empty like the streets of the city

Blue is the color of Thomas the train  
Pulling into the station  
He's sedentary now

Blue is my wet rain boots  
Stomping in a puddle  
On my way to nowhere special

Blue is the color of the skinny jeans  
I wore to school everyday  
Sitting in my drawer  
Stained with the memories of  
Middle school

Blue is the feeling  
My feeling  
My happiness of the days passed  
My sorrow at the present days  
Blue is the color of quarantine

*- Amelia Hamilton, 8th Grade*

## Untitled

*Writing & Thinking Workshop Poem*

Deep trees surround  
The quiet rippling drops  
That form the alluring waters.  
The timber creates the illusion  
Of a safe trapped place.  
The oak stands as a loud figure  
Creating the thin layer that surrounds.  
A tall building stands up  
T O W E R I N G  
Above the woods.  
A quiet sense of home fills  
The surreal air  
As a small bit of society  
Makes their way around.  
The serenity makes space for  
the illumination of stars  
Onto a blank night sky canvas  
That will soon be replaced  
For the watercolors of  
the sun to be made.  
But when a bird  
Ventures to far  
And plucks away the layer.  
Clouds stream in  
And carry the  
C O L D  
Freezing  
Away  
The  
Sun.  
And gas flows  
Closing eyes forever.  
Once the building tall and forever  
Crumbles to the ground.  
And the lake is no longer quiet  
But is screaming for help.  
The paintings are no longer bright with color  
But washed away forever.  
The timber burns in the sky.  
The bird sits there watching the tumbling world  
And all he can see  
Is the image of the popping bubble.

*- Ava Rosenstein, 6th Grade*

## Literature Assignment for A Lesson Before Dying by Ernest Gaines

*Write a New York Times article as a reporter...*

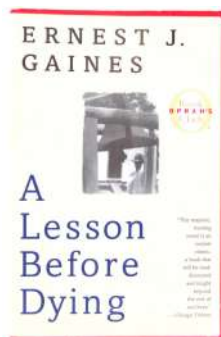
Walking towards the Bayonne jailhouse I felt a sense of dread. I was about to see a man die. The man was Jefferson. He was in his early twenties with mental disabilities. Jefferson was convicted for shooting Mr. Gropé, a liquor store owner. He was sentenced to death by the electric chair. A death, which I was about to watch. It was early in the morning and the sun hadn't yet risen above the courthouse. I was led with a group of people to a storeroom. The chair was put in the center of the room, with a few seats placed about six feet away for me and the others to watch. There was a somber yet strong willed seeming man wearing a clergy robe. He sat holding a bible. He seemed to hold the most weight in the room. The room was waiting silently for Jefferson to be led out. The chair seemed unreal. It had straps corresponding to each limb, if somebody dared to escape. There were electrodes dangling from the arms of the chair. Then there was the head piece. It looked like a colander meant for draining pasta. Not a murder machine. Jefferson was led into the room. He seemed serene. Calm. At peace. He was chained at his ankles and his wrists. Two deputies sat him in the chair. One looked sorrowful, while the other looked calm. I started to sweat as they strapped him in and stuck the electrodes to his hairless arms. He closed his eyes. "Do you have any last words?" asked the sheriff

"Tell them I was strong." he responded, eyes still shut. The executioner put his hand on a lever.

"I'm gonna count down. K?"

"Mhm," Said Jefferson

"Three," I tensed my feet like I do when I'm nervous. "Two" My heartbeat started accelerating. "One." The lever was pulled down. It seemed slow. Jefferson started seizing and I could see him slowly dying. There was only a shred left and then it was gone. The lever was lifted. I didn't know how I was going to take the drive back home after watching a man die. But I did.



*- Eliza Knoepfelmacher, 8th Grade*

## Recipe for Quarantine with Your Family

*Total Time for Prep: 40 minutes*

*Total Time to Cook: 25 minutes*

*How Many Servings this Recipe Makes: One day of keeping busy*

You will need:

- 1) 1 full day
- 2) 2½ cups of annoying your sibling/s
- 3) 3 tablespoons of face-timing your friends
- 4) 4 teaspoons of zooming
- 5) 2 cups of going on your phone
- 6) 5 cups of homework
- 7) 1¾ cup of any hobby
- 8) 3 ounces of exercising
- 9) One half cup of melted listening to music
- 10) A sprinkle of pointless online shopping (rarely buy anything, just look at the products for the most part)
- 11) 2 teaspoons of unwinding and relaxing (taking a nice bath, painting your nails, reading a good book, etc.)
- 12) 2 cups of developing a new skill

Directions:

- 1) The first step is to get your day-base, and knead in your homework. After it has fully mixed in, add your zoom classes, exercising, and skill developing. When these ingredients react to each other, they create productivity, which is important and makes you feel fulfilled after eating.
- 2) Next I like to mix my social ingredients in a separate bowl, which are face-timing friends and annoying your sibling/s. Whisk it until it is creamy and a paste-like consistency. Make sure not to put too much, or it will overpower the productivity element, and leave no time to get those done.
- 3) Mix your productive and Socializing ingredients well until it is a consistent texture. Taste it to make sure both are around equal, and neither are suppressing the other, because a balance is key to this recipe.
- 4) Then take the rest of your ingredients, which are all leisure, and put them into your bowl. This includes online shopping, hobbies, going on your phone, and relaxing. These ingredients also have to be equal to the others because self care and leisure are very important to a good day in quarantine as well.
- 5) After mixing everything together, take your batter and put it into a pan greased with melted listening to music. Cook it for 25 minutes at 450 degrees.
- 6) Serve it on a plate and enjoy your day!

A Secret Ingredient: A dash of spending time with a pet if you have one. For a hint of extra sweetness, you can add a bit of playing with your pet. It can help calm nerves and is a fun part of your day.

A Professional Tip: Don't be afraid to add less social-ness if you're not in the mood for it. Sometimes, if you're stressed, it just worsens things, and it's better to focus on being productive and practicing self care.

- Gabriella Hsu, 7th Grade



## **Recipe for a Good Friendship**

### YOU WILL NEED

- 3 cups of laughter
- 4 tablespoons of kindness
  - $\frac{3}{4}$  cups of trust
  - 6 cups of fun
- 5 ounces of surprise

### DIRECTIONS

- Whisk all these ingredients (but save 2 ounces of surprise) in a bowl until they form a type of dough. If the dough is too sticky to knead, sprinkle some more trust on top of the dough until it has the consistency of play dough.
- When the dough is ready, sprinkle a teaspoon of trust onto a cutting board. Use a cookie cutter to cut the dough into heart shape and bake in the oven at 350° Fahrenheit.
- Use the 2 ounces of surprise you saved and put them on top of your friendship cookies when they come out of the oven. Put them in a box and give them to your best friends!

- *Kyami Souza, 5th Grade*

## Write Me a Rant

Everything is different now.  
Sitting here, on my terrace,  
Hair wet, hands shaking,  
Looking out at the streets,  
Once so filled with people.  
And now...  
People gliding across the cement,  
Like shadows lurking in the darkness  
Only seen from the glowing light of the moon.  
I remember when they would be with someone.  
A friend, maybe.  
Obnoxious laughs, scattered whispers.  
Now they're just a silhouette  
In the fluorescent street lights.  
Maybe everything will go back to normal soon.  
Maybe everything will resolve  
And I'll be able to see my friends again.  
Maybe I can walk around without having to be worried  
About putting fabric over my face.  
Maybe...not.  
But maybe,  
If I hope for the best,  
And  
Plan for the worst...  
Maybe, just maybe, I'll be fine.  
Some things are great,  
Now that the outside world went away.  
More time with my family,  
Empty parks to ride my bike in,  
But...  
No 'buts'!  
This can work.  
And it's going to have to...  
It's going to have to.

*- Jane Ruben, 6th Grade*

## Tidying Up

Cristina, the mom of three, says she has recently watched the whole TV series, “Tidying Up.” Cristina here to comment says, “This TV series changed my life.” “Being a mother of three, my home is not what’s considered ‘tidy’ most of the time,” Cristina states. She also notices how having a messy home creates a more stressful environment for everyone. Tidying up not only changed the way she lives but the way she works. “I move more swiftly knowing where everything is and getting so much extra time that used to be spent cleaning. I’ve just simply started tossing everything into my neighbor’s yard,” she says. “It really completes the system!” One of Cristina’s other methods is “going through my kid’s room when they’re gone and throwing everything away in the nearby McDonald’s dumpster, just so that they can’t find anything. And I worked it out with the manager so that I don’t get in trouble.” She really recommends this lifestyle for others. Cristina’s kids also have some opinions on her new and improved lifestyle choices. Winter, the eldest, says, “Well, I’m truly concerned and I just don’t know how I feel about this whole thing. I truly don’t think she knows we’re all here at night so she bursts in, takes everything and leaves. I don’t know if I should tell her.” Lemon, age eight, comments, “I’m not really comfortable with the number of candles in our house. She’s started multiple small fires, that’s why we had to move last time.” Mint, the youngest, states, “The last time I got a toy was two years ago.” Cristina really understands now what she lives for, and what the true meaning of tidying up is: *What Sparks Joy?*

- Lilah Arthur, 7th Grade

## Sculpture Projects

*Things We Have Been Spending Time With*



Mia M, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade



Ben W, 7<sup>th</sup> Grade



Maeve, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade



Ansel, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade



Kyami, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade



Isaiah, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade



Lyon, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade



Huck, 7<sup>th</sup> Grade



Maria, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade



Anoushka, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade



Sophia E, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade



Brody, 7<sup>th</sup> Grade



Theodora, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade



Lucas, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade



Connor M, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade



Nazar, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade



Sonia, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade



Frank, 7<sup>th</sup> Grade



Ava H, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade







Magnus, 6<sup>th</sup>Grade



Bo, 7<sup>th</sup> Grade



Cisco, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade



Maya G, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade



Sam B, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade

## Untitled Writing & Thinking Poem

*I based this poem off of the picture in which the little girl stands between a zombie land and an everyday house.*

There are two worlds I live in,  
One my body,  
And one my heart.

My body is what I look like  
Primped and tripped and clipped and brushed  
Painted and washed and clothed and  
A smile plastered on my face.

All done and made up  
Made perfect to fit the standards  
Of society  
Happy and go-lucky and cheery and bubbly.

My soul is what I am  
Ragged and greasy and drab and all torn up  
Anxious and greedy and jealous and  
Where I belong.

My body and soul shan't ever mix genuinely  
Because while my body has trapped my soul inside itself  
My heart will always say:

“That's not enough.  
No, grin a little wider.  
If you don't twist yourself to look like them,  
no one will ever love you.”

But it's okay  
I sew it all together,  
Mix oil and water somehow.

And when the fabric tears,  
I'll ride the thread all the way down,  
And I'll fall and fall and fall  
And I, will forever ride on both sides.

- Mia Mkrtchyan, 6th Grade



## Second Person

Hello  
I veil in your presence  
Sculpting images of you  
In my frozen mind.

Who are you?  
I am so afraid  
To become you.

As your thread thins  
What do you regret?  
I see myself  
Deep in your glass eyes  
The years layer up  
Like blobs of white paint  
Drying gradually.

Did you hold your breath?  
Watching each moment  
Pass  
Like sun hunts moon  
Touch each second  
Gliding through concepts of time.

Awaken in the  
Night  
With the urge  
To go to the beach?

Use the wooden spoon  
To scrape up eggs  
And the ripest golden fruits  
On a platter?

Bear a daughter  
Of the fluffiest love  
With an intimate giggle  
And curious eyes?

Pioneer and let the world  
Trail behind  
In search of self  
To a new plain  
Let hues of blue and yellow  
Pass through you?

Listen to every song  
The world holds  
Allow yourself

To be consumed  
By the trance  
Of love?

Mourn the greatest loss  
Rip your soul apart  
Holding flowers over your  
Old friend  
Celebrating the quality  
Of a life.

Stare at the purple skies  
Open your mouth  
And speak  
Into the light.

Look in the mirror  
Love what you see  
See strength  
In the sag of your face  
Thought  
In the wrinkles of your  
Forehead.

Morning coffee  
Tastes like drops of sunshine  
Rain  
Feels like a hot shower.

Are you in love  
With being  
Alive?

I see you clearly now.  
Your hair has shriveled up into  
Ringlets of dirty grey.  
You can no longer run a marathon,  
Plummet underwater and immerse yourself  
In the ocean.  
No longer hold your daughter in your arms.

Every memory is packed heavily  
Into your bones.

I do not fear you.  
I have time  
To live.  
Meanwhile,  
I know you will wait for me  
Keeping me safe  
In memory.

- Penelope Sheer, 8th Grade

## **A Writing & Thinking Mini-Play**

*In a reality very similar to our own, humans have figured out a way to understand and communicate with animals. Here is a transcribed conversation between two pigeons sitting on the 63rd floor of the Empire State Building.*

Bird 1: Oh finally it's getting warm now, maybe I can take the flight up to the big glass tower downtown.

Bird 2: Nah, man, you'll freeze, just stick here. There's a lot of hotdog crumbs on the ground, and you can see the park from here.

Bird 1: Man, I forgot about the park, I haven't been there since I was spooked by a bike last month, nearly smashed my wing.

Bird 2: Seriously, you have to go, nobody's around, I'm not joking. I literally flew over to the reservoir and saw maybe twenty people at most. Some parts are like a ghost town, I mean, I don't care. I ate my whole breakfast, lunch, and dinner without being kicked or ran at.

Bird 1: Man, that's awesome. You know where I really wanna go? Across the river to that place with less buildings, just trees. Relaxing and safer from hawks. I can finally make the trip now that there are less cars on the bridge.

Bird 2: Dude, you're heading west, that's stupid. All the birds upstate are coming back now that the weather is warm and the air is cleaner, and we'll be the life of the party. Maybe you could meet a hen, bro.

Bird 1: Dude, chill, that kinda sucks. Although you are right, it's nice here.

Bird 2: Yeah man, and maybe we can even go to the Eastern Bridge to see if your old gang is there.

Bird 1: I don't know, I broke off with them on a bad note after they stole my pizza slice and traded it to a rat.

Bird 2: Hey, they're your people, they won't just break up with you...

Bird 1: What did you say?

Bird 2: Oh my god...

Bird 1: Dude wait, what...

Bird 2: HAWK HAWK HAWK HAWK HAWK

Bird 1: OH MY GOD, FLY MAN FLY!

*- Philip Hatzissimou, 8th Grade*

## **I forgive you, New York**

I forgive you, New York. I forgive the loud noise when I'm trying to sleep. I forgive the garbage that is two inches from the trash can.

I forgive you, New York. I forgive the summer breeze that is full of heat, like walking near a fire. I forgive the crowd restaurants that you can never get a seat for. I forgive the Starbucks' bathrooms that smell like pee. I forgive the group of teens that walk in a line blocking the sidewalk.

I forgive you, New York. I forgive the dog poop that is left around. I forgive the bikers that speed through red lights. I forgive the AC water that splashes in my face as I walk down the street. I forgive you, New York. I forgive the trains with no seats that are just covered with bags of people who can't mind just put it on their laps. I forgive the loud music that blasts through somebody's earphones.

I forgive you, New York. I forgive the people that yell on the phone when I'm just trying to read my book. I forgive the loud chewers. I forgive the people that get Cheetos dust on everything, take a hand wipe.

I forgive you, New York. I forgive your late nights. I forgive my stomping next-door neighborhood. I forgive that dog that was supposed to be nice but then bites me. I forgive the crowded streets that I get pushed around in. I forgive the overpriced stores. I forgive the hot dog stand that gave me a weird look when I ask for ketchup.

I forgive you, New York. Your loudness, your crowded streets, your prettiness, your trashy streets, your rats, your late nights, your everything.

*- Sonia Veve, 5th Grade*

## **The Frost**

Love is the frost  
between  
you and me  
so thin as a piece of paper  
so far away  
the fading light of  
dusk  
lets me see you  
love is the frost

*- Sebastian Holst, 5th Grade*

## The Lights Have Gone Out

America.  
Shining bright.  
Always Open.  
Always unlocked.  
Always unlatched.  
Always unfastened.  
Always ajar.

Is it open for business?  
Always.  
It never shuts down.

May I come in?  
Sit.  
Anywhere you like.

Cool ground.  
A hot ceiling,  
Resting atop your head.

Searching on a menu.  
Searching along the aisles.  
Asking for help.

Asking for something,  
You get it.

Anything you want,  
We'll give.

That is why it is said we are always open.

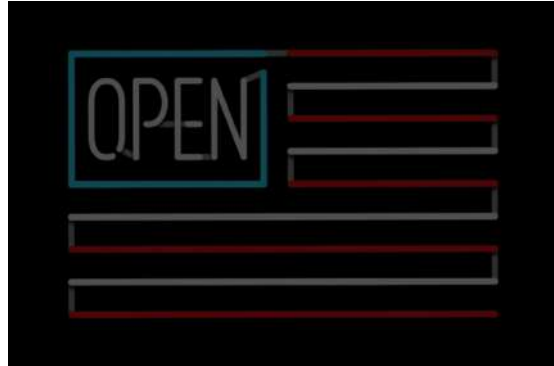
Daily visits,  
Or even irregular.

The door swings open for all.

A fake brass handle,  
Held by millions,  
And millions,  
And millions.

Some parts have it all rubbed off, and all that remains is the sliver.

The glass doors,  
Smudged with fingerprints.  
Fingerprints of the people who passed through.  
Who made them when it was open.





Some are on the bottom.  
The little kids who had grown over the years.

Some are at the very top.  
The adults trying to hold the door for as many people as possible.

But they stayed there and accumulated why?

Because it's closed.  
No one scraped the fingerprints away.  
No ones refurbished the fake brass handle.

No one gives a care anymore.

The lights go out.

May I come in?  
Sorry, the sign.  
The sign.  
The sign is off.

We're closed

Locked.  
Latched.  
Fastened.

Cobwebs form around the lines of lights.

The curvy illuminated lines of "open."  
And the colorful lines of the red and white.

No more.  
No more to eat, buy, play.

All gone.  
America turned off.

All you can wish for,  
Placing your hands on the smudged doors,  
Looking through.

Watching  
The spiders come and go,  
The dust turns into clouds,

Watching the darkness overcome.

Waiting.  
Waiting.  
Waiting for the sign to switch on again.

- Piper Jones, 8th Grade

## Lies

Your eyes will never  
see themselves in  
the dimmed light of the moon.

Mirrors cannot tell  
you that the symmetric  
face you take months  
to look at throughout  
your entire life is your  
own.

We will never know  
why we humans  
ever came to be.  
Or will we ever know  
why luminous light  
comes from the moon  
or why the sun  
sets at different  
times every night.

There is so much  
I don't know.  
There are so many  
question in this  
unpredictable planet.  
Like a dove flying north,  
knowing which  
direction to fly towards,  
not knowing where  
they would  
end up.

Then I heard a sound  
I couldn't make out.  
I stared at the chalkboard.  
There were combinations  
of illegible letters in my  
eyes at every moment.

- *Andrew Korn, 6th Grade*

## **Falling in a Dream**

*Written off of a Mary Oliver line*

tell me about despair, yours  
and i will tell you mine.  
whether it be  
recent  
or almost forgotten.  
whether it  
is a broken doll  
or a broken heart.

tell me  
what makes your heart ache  
day to day.

tell me  
what made your world  
stop turning  
and your stars  
stop shining.  
tell me what makes your cry

late at night  
when you've fallen  
half-asleep.  
tell me  
what makes your stomach  
drop and turn  
as though you're  
falling in a dream.

share your pain  
with me  
so your shoulders  
can rest.

*- Penelope Seegerdahl, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade*