

# Waves of Words



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## 2019/20 ANTHOLOGY

### A Message from the Burnaby Board of Education

We're pleased to present the 2019/20 Words Anthology, "Waves of Words." Unique to Burnaby Schools, the Words Writing Project has annually showcased the best in student poetry and prose since 1985.

In the Spring of 2020, as this year's anthology is sent to the printing press, across the country and around the world learning looks different because of COVID-19. Reading and writing remains essential to education, as it fosters creative thinking, inquiry, reflection, an appreciation for the written word, and a connection to the world beyond our own experience.

This anthology of original work – collected before COVID-19 impacted how we live, teach and learn – is both a celebration of student writing and a chance to explore the opportunity to become a published author.

Congratulations to the more than 100 students whose writing was selected for publication. All students from Kindergarten through Grade 12 had the opportunity to submit in either English or French. We are proud of all of their work. One should never underestimate the power of waves of words.



Gary  
Wong  
Chair



Jen  
Mezei  
Vice-Chair



Bill  
Brassington



Peter  
Cech



Christine  
Cunningham



Larry  
Hayes



Ryan  
Stewart



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# Waves of Words



WORDS Writing Project

2019/20 Anthology

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



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### How To Be A Fry

Arissa Hossain  
*Buckingham Elementary*

Lose your yolk sac  
Try to swim to the surface  
Take a big gulp of air  
Inflate your swim bladder  
Swim around freely  
Memorize where you were born  
Begin your journey downstream

### Colours

Mikayla Tan *Parkcrest Elementary*

Red is an apple  
Green is a leaf  
Blue is the sky  
Black is the night  
White are the clouds  
Purple are the plums  
Orange are the carrots  
I love Colours  
Do you?

### My Cute Fish

Winnie Chang  
*Taylor Park Elementary*

My cute little fish,  
I love it so much,  
Swimming all around  
the water when it's  
cool enough.  
Blub, blub, blub ...

### Halloween

Billy Gray *Aubrey Elementary*

Halloween  
Makes me scream  
Frightening shadows  
Wandering around  
Witches' broomsticks  
and Vampire sounds.

### Love Is

Lorelei Sargisson  
*Cascade Heights Elementary*

Love Is...  
Your puppy eyes,  
Your wet nose,  
I love you so,  
Your soft fur,  
Your floppy ears,  
Those things are so special,  
Your stubby tail,  
Your doggy breath,  
Those things are the best,  
But the thing I love the most is being with you  
quiet and alone.

To Charley  
Love Rory

### Quilt

Prisha Chopra  
*Clinton Elementary*

Quilt  
Warm Beautiful  
Wraps Around Softly  
Cozy Joyful Cheerful Cuddly  
Blanket



### Mes couleurs préférées

Sophie Doi

*École Brantford Elementary*

Dessiner sur le papier

C'est comme faire l'art dans la classe

C'est comme peindre avec les mains

C'est comme manger la crème glacée arc-en-ciel

C'est comme rêver dans mon lit

C'est magnifique!

### Snowboots

Evan Sihota

*Clinton Elementary*

Heavy Fuzzy

Soft Smooth Slushy

Playful Comfy Wet Tight

Winter

### Winter Memory

Juwon Kim

*Parkcrest Elementary*

In the quiet night

The heavy snow was falling

It was Christmas Eve



## The Happy Alien

Evangeline Siu *Brentwood Park Elementary*

Kevin is a dad. He is tall and he has black hair. Carolyn is a mom and she has blonde and black hair. Suddenly the sky had a yellow opening. Kevin heard a booming sound. He looked up and he saw a round meteor that was brown.

The meteor crashed loudly into the street. Everybody went outside to look at the meteor. All the cars got smoky. After the cars got smoky, the police picked up the meteor.

The police felt the meteor shake. The meteor cracked open and an alien came out! The alien had green skin, three eyes and he had an antenna with a circle on top of the antenna.

Evangeline is six years old and has black hair. Kalliope is seven years old and has purple and black hair. Kalliope said, "Yippee!" Kevin yelled, "COWABUNGA!"

Then the alien walked out and whispered, "What planet am I on?" They played tag with the nice, green alien. Then they all had a picnic. The kids and the alien ate apples, sandwiches and drumsticks.

There was a rocket in the meteor. The alien went inside his rocket and flew back to his home. Everybody lived happily ever after.

## Je suis la neige très, très froide

Sebastian Quan *École Brantford Elementary*

Je suis la neige. Je suis différente, petite et froide. Je suis opaque comme une maison de briques. Je peux fondre à l'eau très vite avec l'aide de Monsieur Soleil brillant. Mais ce que j'aime beaucoup faire est de couvrir les plantes en hiver. Je suis comme une couverture pour les plantes et ça aide les plantes beaucoup.

Quand je neige très fort les personnes ont peur de moi. Mais je sais que je dois être gentille aussi. Si je neige seulement un peu les personnes m'aiment parce qu'ils peuvent faire les bonshommes de neige dehors. Aussi ils peuvent faire les anges de neige. J'aime beaucoup regarder les personnes qui s'amuse avec moi.

Je suis douce comme un lapin dans la barbe à papa et blanche comme une serviette. Les personnes aiment me manger parce que je ne suis pas un bonbon mais je suis froide et blanche. Les personnes doivent porter des vêtements de neige et ensuite ils peuvent jouer avec moi. C'est moi la neige!



## Mr. Hungry

Cheryl Teo *Montecito Elementary*

Once upon a time, there was a man called Mr. Hungry. Can you guess why he's called Mr. Hungry? That's right! It's because no matter what time it is, Mr. Hungry is always hungry!

Every morning, Mr. Hungry wakes up, gets out of bed, brushes his teeth and gets dressed before having his breakfast. Now, most people have one to two slices of bread with some Nutella or peanut butter for breakfast, but not Mr. Hungry. In fact, Mr. Hungry actually eats 10 slices of toast, 10 slices of bread, 20 pancakes and 5 eggs! And even after eating all that food, Mr. Hungry says to himself, "Hmmm, I'm still very hungry!"

After breakfast, Mr. Hungry goes to work. Mr. Hungry is always thinking about food, even while working! It's lunchtime, and Mr. Hungry goes to a sushi restaurant for some sushi. Now, most people have a few pieces of sushi and a bowl of miso soup for lunch, but not Mr. Hungry. In fact, Mr. Hungry actually eats 50 pieces of sushi and drinks 10 bowls of soup! And even after eating all that food, Mr. Hungry says to himself, "Hmmm, I'm still very hungry!"

Mr. Hungry finishes his work in the evening and heads back home. As you can probably imagine, he's thinking about dinner! Mr. Hungry goes into the kitchen and prepares his dinner. Now, most people have a bowl of rice, a few pieces of chicken and some vegetables, but not Mr. Hungry. In fact, Mr. Hungry actually eats 80 bowls of rice, 5 chickens and 10 pizzas! And even after eating all that food, Mr. Hungry says to himself, "Hmmm, I'm still very hungry!"

Finally, Mr. Hungry goes to bed. Mr. Hungry dreams about food, and in his dream, he eats more pizza! The next morning, Mr. Hungry wakes up feeling really cold. He realizes that his blanket, which he covered himself with last night, has disappeared! Can you guess what happened to the blanket?

He ate it!

## At The Zoo

Zachary Xu *Inman Elementary*

One bright and sunny day, my family and I drove in our big white car to the zoo. At the zoo, me and my family saw monkeys and snakes and other cool creatures. In the afternoon, at the zoo, it got crowded. It got squishy and hot. We could not really see each other. So, we tried to call each other's names but it was too loud and noisy. I could hear people talking, yelling, and monkeys squeaking. We called each other on the phone to go outside of the zoo. We walked and walked until we got out of the zoo exit and we finally found each other outside of the zoo. Then, we happily went home in our big white car to eat lunch and do some math on the dining room table.

### Imagine a Place

Alivia Jensen *Aubrey Elementary*

Imagine a place where love would flow through everyone's heart and there was no hate.  
Imagine a place where you always felt happiness, not sadness.  
It would be a world with peace.  
Imagine a place where you never felt alone or scared, only love and happiness.  
Imagine a place!  
I am thankful to have a clean environment.  
I taste the yummy Thanksgiving dinner.  
I am thankful for my family.  
I feel the warm hugs from my family

### London Streets

Anthony Juo *Sperling Elementary*

London streets are filled with joy  
The kind that nothing can destroy  
Even on the darkest day  
Love and happiness are there to stay  
Boys and girls dance with glee  
In the warm and bright bustling streets  
It's a place where tourists will surely want to be  
With all its fun-filled history  
Their food and beverages are quite exquisite  
And the marching bands give a visit  
Big Ben keeps everything in time  
Each beat, each step is on one line  
Once the Queen wakes up to a bright shiny day  
She'll say, "In big old London you shall stay!"

### Tomorrow's Hallowe'en

Helen Lin *Buckingham Elementary*

Haunted houses  
Making jack-o-lanterns  
Wind howling  
Trickling rain  
Frankenstein laughing  
Giant cobwebs  
Creepy skulls  
Fright Night

### Snow

Bosco Huang *Clinton Elementary*

Snow  
Beautiful Cold  
Covering The Land  
I Feel Playful, Joyful  
Peaceful

### Ocean Sunset

Emma Tsai *Montecito Elementary*

Watching the ocean  
Glimmer and shine  
As I see the sunset  
Colours in line  
Sitting with my friends  
Was the best time

### Imagine a Place

Skyla Pheng-Truong *Aubrey Elementary*

Imagine a place where kindness was as free as a bird,  
soaring through the clear blue sky.  
Imagine a place where happiness would flow like river on  
a still quiet night where all the stars shine above you.  
Imagine a place where every selfless act someone did  
would spread as fast as a fire in a forest.  
Imagine a place!



### Dear Soccer

Matteo Iuzzolino     *Gilpin Elementary*

Dear soccer,  
Thank you for being my good friend.  
Thank you soccer for making my family more close.  
Since I was very small, I remember playing with my dad, cousins, and family. We played at my house, on the street, in my backyard, and anywhere you can kick a ball. We also played soccer video games and cheered for our favorite team on TV.  
Thank you soccer for letting me be part of a team.  
I remember I was so happy playing on my first team and getting my first jersey.  
I also remember playing against other teams. When I was older, I played teams from many different cities and different countries.  
Thank you soccer for making me have good feelings.  
I feel free when the wind blows past my face when I run at the ball.  
I feel relaxed when I can smell the grass on a cool soccer morning.  
I feel excited when I dream about winning world cups and being the best soccer player in the world.  
Thank you soccer for helping me make friends.  
I make friends when I play you at school.  
If it was not for you I would not know kids in other grades.  
When I play with my teammates, they start becoming my friends.  
Thank you soccer for teaching me.  
You teach me when I kick you, shoot you, dribble you, and pass you around the field.  
Your skills teach me about focus and discipline I need to play stronger.  
I learn about different countries and their teams when I complete your world cup sticker albums.  
Thank you soccer for giving me confidence.  
I am confident when your coaches tell me I am doing a good job.  
Thank you soccer for making me a leader.  
I am a leader when I help my dad coach my little brother's team.  
I am a leader when I give good advice to my teammates in games.  
Thank you soccer for all you have given me!  
Your good friend and teammate,  
Matteo

### Yellow

Sadie Joa Hannah- Lee     *Suncrest Elementary*

Yellow is as soft and fragile as a new born puppy,  
but can also be as rough and hard as a pinched lemon.  
Yellow tastes as fresh and sweet as a pineapple,  
but can also be as dry and subtle as an old mushy banana.  
Yellow looks as bright and glowing as the midnight sun,  
but can be as dark and dim as the morning sun.  
Yellow smells as salty and buttery as butter popcorn,  
but can be as flavorless and dry as dried banana chips.  
Yellow can sound as quiet and calm as a sleeping dog,  
but can also sound as high pitched and loud as a baby chick crying for their mom.

### What I Am

Alayna Leung  
*Cascade Heights Elementary*

They want to see a knight  
but I do not wear armour.  
They want to see a sailboat  
but I do not have sails.  
They want to see a flamingo  
but I am not pink.  
They want to see a ballet leg  
but I am not a ballerina.  
They want to see a crane  
but I am not a bird.  
They want to see a split  
but I am not a gymnast.  
They want to see a barracuda  
but I am not a fish.  
What I am is a synchronized swimmer  
and I can show them all that.

### My Friend

Breana Wretham  
*Stoney Creek Community School*

My friend  
Is like the ocean  
Tough like a shell  
Yet fragile, like coral.  
She is as pretty  
As a pearl.  
My friend  
Is like the ocean,  
So easy to stir up a storm,  
But also easy to calm.  
My friend  
Is like the ocean,  
And I'm a fish  
In her grasp.

### I am From ...

Aykta Sajan  
*Lakeview Elementary*

I am from mysterious and funny books  
from Dork Diaries and Shadows of the Forest  
I am from Hilda Street Park  
(swinging so high I could touch the sky)  
I am from fancy flowers  
Blooming every year  
I am from the strong smell of garlic and  
marshmallow hot chocolate  
From the stove being used almost every day  
I am from Tim Hortons and Starbucks  
Bagels and cake pops  
Under my bed is a card box  
Overflowing with birthday and holiday cards  
from family all over the world  
Never give up, no matter how hard the problem is

### Starlight Crystal

Stella Berry  
*Suncrest Elementary*

beautiful starstone  
navy with flecks of silver  
shimmering, dark quartz  
  
attractive young girl  
starstone pendant on her neck  
shining, expensive  
  
stone of ambition  
glittering dangerously  
waiting for new prey  
  
glimmering crystal  
fastened to a silver chain  
wishing to break free



### One Ambition

Sriroopa Vijayanarayanan  
*Buckingham Elementary*

As the waves flow up to my feet  
And as the sun sets really slow  
As the world tilts as I look up at the sky  
I look back on this very day 56 years ago.  
I sat with a girl I once called a friend  
Looking up at a starry night  
I told her my ambition was to be up with those stars  
And she said I wasn't thinking right.  
Now as I look with my great-grandchildren  
Back up at that starry night  
I knew that 56 years ago  
I actually did think right.  
I told my grandchildren the story  
Of the launch and liftoff into space  
And me staring into a completely new galaxy  
Floating in the middle of space.  
And my grandchildren exclaimed and asked me  
How I dodged those constant demoralizing comments  
And I said to them to always follow their dreams  
And think of these important learning moments.  
How proud I am of myself  
I cannot express in words  
That I followed my ambition right through the  
Toughest thrown at me by the world.

### Waterfalls in the Summer

Hannah Gao *Montecito Elementary*

Flowing waterfalls  
sunlight reaches to paint rainbows  
on a canvas of blue skies

A warm breeze blowing  
shadows dance in summer twilight  
the sound of rushing water

A glittering trail  
starlight reflects from a blue moon  
slivers from a fallen star

### I am From

Alex Chow *Lakeview Elementary*

I am from china vases,  
from books and cozy blankets.  
I am from awesome basketball games  
(joyful, hard  
I play with my brother)  
I am from the maple tree,  
The wooden gate.  
Whose broken wood boards I keep in my  
mind.  
I am from warmth and love  
From glasses both my parents own  
I am from candy and chocolate.  
From the Chow's and Lai's,  
I am from my super Nintendo,  
That my father owns.  
From life is unfair,  
With challenges.  
And ten obstacles I name.  
I am from juicy Udon and dumplings,  
From sticky rice and fried rice.  
From the stroke my grandfather had,  
From smoking.  
To the funeral my great-grandmother had  
stuck in my mind. I am from these moments,  
A time to think back.  
To drown completely in memories.  
To live and stand,  
With pride.

### Little Bird in The Nest

Brooklyn Bertling *Montecito Elementary*

Little bird in the nest,  
Why don't you have a short rest?  
Why don't you have a tiny sleep?  
Can you fly? Just take a leap!  
Oh, happy little kitty,  
I don't want to because I will end up in the city.  
If I have a sleep I will miss out on this beautiful  
day.  
It is snowing, so I cannot fly!

### Imagine a Place

Alex Loftus

*Aubrey Elementary*

Imagine a place where doors are always unlocked  
and everyone helps one another with open hearts.

Imagine a place where we are all free as a  
dragonfly in the night sky.

Imagine a place where ideas and thoughts are  
found like treasures under the sea.

Imagine a place!

### A Philosophy to Puzzle Over

Bronwyn Lee

*Brantford Elementary*

If no one will listen, what is the point of speaking?  
If no one will speak, what is the point of listening?  
An endless, circling pattern  
Forever going round and round

If no one would break it, there would be no sound!  
If everyone broke it, the noise would be deafening!  
My philosophy:  
Speak when no one else is speaking;  
Whisper once everyone else speaks with you.

### Guess Who I Am!

Megan Lam

*Chaffey-Burke Elementary*

Guess who I am.  
I am usually sleeping but sometimes awake  
and spitting out red and hot saliva.  
Guess who I am.  
When I breathe I breathe out ash that can be  
deadly.  
Guess who I am.  
I usually live underwater but I am sometimes  
on land.  
Guess who I am.  
When I live on land, people come and live on  
me until I wake up.  
Guess who I am.  
Some people live on me because of the good  
fertile soil that I made.  
I gave you lots of hints now GUESS!

I am a VOLCANO!

### Invisible

Michelle Soo

*Brentwood Park Elementary*

Its not the fear of her that makes me silent.  
Its what I've given,  
So many of my pieces all in one.  
That I fear losing mama again,  
Yet she's already gone.  
Fading away like a shore on a lonely island.  
Hoping there will be arms to catch me,  
Every time I fall  
Break my hearts of the darkest nights.  
Is this who I am?  
That silent, delicate and invisible one.  
There is me.  
Imperfect but loving  
Self.



### My Magic Box

Constanza Levera *Suncrest Elementary*

I will put in my box ....

Unicorns that dance around like waves in the ocean, fly like a dove and twinkle like fairy lights.

I'll put fairies that chatter like Chihuahuas, sing like hummingbirds, dance like flamingoes and fly like raindrops in the sky.

They shimmer like fresh snow that has just fallen from the sky.

I'll put dragons that fly like fairies and have scales as smooth as stones and have wings as big as a Sequoia tree.

My box is made of....

Glass that you can see through and shimmers like stars in the night sky and the moon at midnight.

In my box I shall...

Fly like a dragon with scales as smooth as stones,

Sparkle like a unicorn

Sing like a fairy

and surf in the air with never ending books.

### Winter Tree

Chloe Shin *Brentwood Park Elementary*

There is a weak tree on windy land

Lonely and shivering cold

Dry, thin branches and leaves falling down as time pass

It was green and shiny under the sunshine

Friends came to play

Warm hugs with love

Full of happiness back then

When the tree was about to cry,

Snow came cozy and warm

Friends are back

Smiley snowman stands by

Until warm and green again

### I am Thankful

Taya Poon *Gilmore Community School*

I see the refreshing ocean.

I am thankful to live in a place that is safe.

I hear the birds chirping in the trees

I am thankful to be a child.

I smell the cool, crisp air.

I am thankful to have a clean environment.

I taste the yummy Thanksgiving dinner.

I am thankful for my family.

I feel the warm hugs from my family.

I am thankful for my home

## The Chill

Bowen Nelson

*Clinton Elementary*

As I ventured alone through the darkening woods, I noticed a movement in the shrubs. I ignored it.

'Must just be a raccoon or a rabbit', I suggested to myself.

I continued down the route I knew led home; I'd been down this beaten path about a hundred times before.

I heard it before I saw it. The startling noise of the rustling leaves. I investigated. I was surprised to find... nothing. Absolutely nothing, just a swift breeze along the back of my neck. It sent a shiver down my spine, and I suddenly felt chilled. Like it was the middle of winter, even though it was early July. My heart started to race and sweat formed on my brow.

I wanted to leave this horrifying place. It felt like the trees were growing and staring down on me, which did not feel comforting. It was haunting and would make anyone turn pale. I became paralyzed, and unable to close my eyes to avoid the nightmare before me. It felt like I was being controlled.

The hoot of an owl broke my spell, and I ran... fast. Faster than I ever had. Broken thoughts tumbled into my head. Scary... run... go... now... but some were different. Stay... calm... its ok... don't run... these words were stuck in my head. I shook them. But one word stayed. Home.

## Mother Earth

Cara Hoshizaki

*Clinton Elementary*

One day as I walked with my elder, I saw two little beavers. The beavers were from Mother Earth. I asked my father why Mother Earth is so important. "Because we- need to respect it. If we don't, our hearts will turn hard and cold."

We then saw men going to cut down some trees. My father said, "Look what they are doing!" My father and I ran and ran. It was too late. The men had cut down the trees. My father asked me, "Are you okay my flying bird?"

"Those men cut the arms off of Mother Earth," I said. "Yes, I see. Let's keep walking." "Okay," I said in a mumbling voice.

On the way, I saw beautiful iris, roses and lilacs. I smelled them. I saw my favourite bird. It was the teacher Eagle. I put my pointing finger up. Father put down my hand. "Why did you do that?" I asked. "It is rude to point to the Eagle," father replied.

My father and I went home to our longhouse. I talked to mother about how I had respect for Mother Earth. Mother was very happy. I talked about the men cutting the trees slowly down. I also talked about the flowers I saw. Father had a chance to talk too. Mother loved our adventure. Mother wished she could have been there. Mother is always with me in my heart. I love my family as much as Mother Earth.



## If I Were Trapped in a Snow Globe...

Celes Ritchie

*Gilmore Community School*

Once I went to a store and saw a very cool looking snow globe. If you look at it one way, you'll see a polar bear, the other way, a few penguins. I asked the store owner if it was for sale. He looked at me and smiled with an evil grin. He said it was \$1000 and that I had no choice but to buy it! It was so expensive that I wanted to refuse but I couldn't. It felt like the store owner had put a spell on me. Against my will, I bought it and went home. When I touched the snow globe at home, it suddenly sucked me in!

Inside the snow globe it was freezing! When I turned around I saw a tree and a lot of penguins, which suddenly ran away. I soon found what they ran away from and ran screaming myself. A polar bear was at my heels! Since I was in a snow globe, there weren't many places to run and hide, so I stopped and accepted my fate. I closed my eyes and waited for the polar bear to eat me. After a few moments I opened my eyes and saw the polar bear looking at me with cute googly eyes. Then he smiled and said "Hello."

A talking polar bear! Sweet! I quickly asked him if he knew how to get out of this treacherous snow globe. He didn't know. He told me that a man with an evil grin tricked him and the penguins and sucked them into the snow globe to become decorations. The polar bear said he had been trapped in here for a very long time and couldn't figure out how to get out.

I looked over at the tree and suddenly had an idea. I asked the polar bear to stand up tall, grab the top of the tree and bend it down to the ground.

"Now hold it there, please!" I said as I ran toward the penguins.

I grabbed a penguin and ran back to the tree. It seemed confused, but happy. I placed the penguin on the tip of the tree and on the count of three, the polar bear let go.

"WHEEEEEEEEEEEEE!!" yelled the penguin.

I guess penguins can actually fly, because that penguin flew straight through the glass of the snow globe, shattering it to bits. The polar bear, the penguins, the tree and I were all instantly restored to our proper sizes... In the middle of my living room!

"You know what?" I said to the polar bear. "I should go and get a refund from that evil, greedy store owner."

The polar bear smiled and licked his lips as we headed to the store.

The End.

## The Best Part of Me

Lucas Ji

*Aubrey Elementary*

The Best part of me is my genes because it gives me my diversity, knowledge, body, race and my personality. It is important to me because it forms my soul, my fear, my spirit, my pride, it also forms my strengths and weaknesses. It helps me to play soccer, understand my strengths and weaknesses so I can improve, be unique and think creatively. This part looks like me! It feels like looking at yourself and being happy about your body. It helps me to live and forms my D.N.A, it gives me my talent. Without this part I would not be the person I am now. In fact I would not be able to attend school, go on vacation or do the things I like. Lastly my genes create my unique body and creativity and that is why it is the best part of me.

**Afraid to Slide**

Ana Varajic

*Brentwood Park Elementary*

I gulped, watching kids of all ages sliding down a 20-foot-long hill. As the line moved forward my muscles stiffened, I clenched my sled tighter. A second after the kid in front of me went down it was my turn...

I wouldn't move, my feet were firmly attached to the ground after about 2 minutes of silence a girl my age yelled "GO DOWN!" she shot me an impatient look. I took a deep breath and gathered all my courage and, swung my little sled on to the snow. Next, I placed my left, then my right foot. And then pushed my self down the steep hill...

I was sliding down extremely fast. Snow was going in my face then as I crashed into something, I opened my eyes and realized it was over...

As I looked around, I noticed I was in the ditch. I got to my feet and climbed up one of my hands clenched my sled. I reached the top at last, beaming with happiness while wiping snow off my face and preparing to race up the hill to go slide down again.

**Dear Mother Earth**

Luka Vidovic

*Aubrey Elementary*

Dear Mother Earth,

You are special to me. Thank you for your soil that grows fruits. Thank you for the sun that warms us. You are flowing rivers filled with fish. You are our home that gives us shelter. Thank you for falling snow to play in. You are the water we drink. Thank you for the beautiful sky. I want to protect you, so we have you forever!

Yours truly,  
Luka

**Dear Mother Earth**

Marcus Tong

*Aubrey Elementary*

Dear Mother Earth,

You are very special to me. You are the whistling wind in autumn, the flowing rivers in spring, the hot sun in summer, and white snow in winter. You are the beaches I play in and the forests I hike. You are the sky that is home to the birds. I want to take care of you the way you take care of me. I want to protect you. I want to protect the animals who are my brothers and sisters. There is only one of you just like there is one of me. If we all do small things it will make a big difference. Thank you for being my home forever.

Yours truly,  
Marcus



## The Egg

Lisa Howes *Gilpin Elementary*

Sadie was trudging home with her head hanging down, feeling dejected. Today had been a terrible day. First, she had gotten a C- on the math quiz. Then she had fallen in the snow at recess and was soaked to the bone for the rest of the day.

While walking and feeling stressed about her poor result in math, she noticed something gleaming in the bushes. She thought it might be a jewel, but when she picked it up, she realized that it was an egg about the size of a football. It was bright blue like the sky but with shiny green spots. Sadie thought it might belong to a peacock, and since that was her favourite animal, she stuffed the egg into her overflowing backpack and carried it home.

When Sadie whipped opened her front door, she started to tell her mom about her discovery but WAIT!!! Her mom might contact the local zoo and not let Sadie keep the egg! Not wanting to draw attention to herself, Sadie sauntered over to the fireplace, and, as she was just about to add another log, the egg tumbled out of the bag that she had been too lazy to close, and fell into the roaring fire!

"Oh, NO!" Sadie screamed. Her mom came charging in like a raging bull. "What happened?" she exclaimed, looking worried. "Oh, nothing," Sadie lied. "I just noticed a mistake on my homework." Sadie's mom sighed and left the room.

When Sadie glanced back at the fireplace, she noticed that the egg was beginning to crack, like it was hatching! Whoa!! Then she saw a little nose poke out of the shell, only it wasn't a peacock's nose. It was all scaly, and, as the rest of the creature crawled out, Sadie realized it was a baby dragon! It was sky blue, with shiny green scales similar to the egg and had little wings. Then to add to Sadie's disbelief, the tiny dragon fluttered out the window like a dainty butterfly. Mesmerized, she watched the tiny dragon turn into a speck in the distance.

## In Marnie's Garden

Adora Chen *Marlborough Elementary*

The flowers were in bloom, and the grass grew tall. The small creek continued to stream down the garden, a guide for the mossy stone path. The trees were tall, though some were small, they all diverse in their own unique, beautiful way. The garden was green, but also vibrant and all colours of the rainbow at the same time, it was overwhelming, but settling. Peaceful, but oh so exciting! Butterflies fluttered around the vines, shrubs, leaves, flowers, bushes, and trees. It was a breath catching sight to behold, and it complimented the small old cottage in the forest perfectly. "I love it," Marnie whispered, watching a bee buzz around her plants. "It's..." she twirled as if it was a dream come true, her plain white gown flew up in a circle. "Just like home," she smiled to herself, ending her pirouette. She took a deep, soothing breath. "Just like home," she repeated.

## Operation Closet

Ella Shi *Suncrest Elementary*

Once upon a time, there was a closet. In the closet lived Hamper, Pants, Shirt, Underwear, Socks, Shoes, and Jacket.

"I am so bored," said Shoes one day. "All we do is plop down anywhere the humans put us and be thrown into Hamper!"

"I know!" replied Socks. "It's basically ploptity plopt! Wherever they throw you, there you are."

"What can we do about it?" Hamper asked.

"Let's escape!" Jacket yelled. "Let's embark on a mission to escape this moldy closet once and for all!"

"Shush!" Pants hissed.

"Well, what should we call the mission?" asked Shirt.

"How about 'the big foot!'" Socks blurted out before thinking.

"That's disgusting," said Shoes. "Yuck."

"Sorry," Socks said, sheepishly.

"I've been thinking about the name..." Pants said. "Operation Closet!" Pants yelled.

"I like it," said Hamper.

"Me too!" cried Socks.

"Me three!" Underwear agreed.

"Me four!" joined Shoes.

"It's the best!" complimented Shirt.

"So, it's Operation Closet, right Jacket?" Pants asked.

"Yup!" Jacket replied.

Just then, they heard huge, horrendous footsteps coming their way.

A kid named Cameron opened the closet door. "Eek!" Hamper screeched.

The kid snatched up Underwear, then Pants, then Socks and Shoes, Jacket too, And then, Shirt came. And they all fell into Hamper. After a TON of bumps down the stairs, they were thrown into the evil washing machine. It was the usual crazy roller coaster ride they hated.

"Watch out!" screamed Pants, diving for Socks.

"In coming!" Jacket warned falling on his back.

After the chaotic ride was done, they were all brought back up to the closet.

"Now, back to Operation Closet," Shoes said grinning.

"I have an idea!" cried Pants.

"What?" asked Hamper, Shoes and Underwear.

"Socks will sneak up to the top and spy on the humans. Shirt, you'll hide under the bed. Jacket will hide under the blanket so you can tell Shirt when it's time. Underwear can be a distractor in the bathroom. Hamper can stay in the closet and sneak out of the closet when we go out. Shoes will be at the door to watch from downstairs. And I will be hiding behind the giant leafy plant next to the bathroom."

"That's an incredible idea!" Shirt exclaimed.

So...

Socks scrambled up to the top of the closet. Shirt slid under the bed Jacket hid under the blanket. Underwear snuck quickly to the bathroom. Shoes raced to the door. Pants jumped behind the big leafy plant. And Hamper stayed in the closet acting natural. That's when... it was time.

Pants told Underwear to hide with him. Socks saw and gave his team the signal. They all joined and rushed to the big plant where Underwear and Pants were waiting. They saw Shoes nodding so they ran down the stairs.

"The door's open, hurry!" Whispered Shoes. They raced out.

"Freedom!" Cheered Socks.

No more moldy closets! Hamper declared.

Then they found a family and took great care of them. Even the washing machine was nice.



## Two Elephants

Kiana Sosa *Brentwood Park Elementary*

This story is about two elephants who were starving to death. One was the mom of the other.

“Mommy, there’s no food!” complained the small, cute, and grayish blue baby named Lou.

“We’re going to eat soon. I promise,” assured the big, loving and determined mom named Ellie. Ellie couldn’t promise that but she wanted Lou to be happy and she didn’t want Lou to lose all her hope. She already lost enough.

“I’m ravenous, Mommy!” whined Lou once again. “Give me food,” repeated Lou more softly. With that, they set off for food.

Then they ran into a big kind gorilla in the forest. “What are you doing wandering around in the monkey territory?” questioned the gorilla named Sam.

“We’re starving and looking for food,” explained Ellie. “We’re so starving we can’t even walk much longer,” added Lou.

Suddenly Sam had a pang of sympathy. He remembered how hard it was when he had the same problem. It was so hard. He couldn’t feed his beloved family.

“Well, I guess I can help you look,” offered Sam.

“Thank you,” said Ellie. “That’s very kind. You might have just saved me and Lou’s lives.” So with help, they looked for food. The word spread out through the forest before you could say cheesecake and soon everyone was helping. They found so much food they didn’t need to eat for weeks.

“Why did you do this for us?” asked Ellie with a confused expression on her face.

“Because you always help us get through tough times,” responded Sam. “That shows that you’re a good friend. We appreciate you and what you do for us,” admitted Sam.

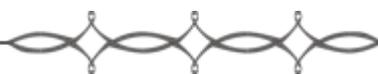
“It’s weird for everybody to look after each other in the wild but this can turn out to be something marvelous,” pondered Sam with the rest of the jungle animals.

“I bet it will!” agreed Lou excitedly. “Thank you, because you showed such kindness, I will share the scrumptious, soft, rich and nutritious food with you.”

Thank you, that’s very kind of you!” Everyone thanked in unison.

After that day, the jungle was stronger together and everyone was more kind. In the end, all the jungle animals got together to face lots of different challenges and danger together.

The most exciting things happen with a friend.



### Violin

Alee Moreno  
*Brantford Elementary*

As I start to play the tempo grows louder and louder  
My heart pounds faster and faster  
My fingers dance along the notes as agile as a swan  
My bow sways back and forth as the music changes.  
The Orchestra joins from behind me  
Cheers and claps burst from the audience  
The solo has arrived and the crowd absorbs the  
beautiful sound.  
They are led in a journey that leaves them in awe and  
wonder  
My arms feel heavy and my fingers become numb  
My heart aches as the performance comes to an end.  
The crowd explodes into a standing ovation  
The music has penetrated their souls  
They were left in silence, staring in awe.  
The curtain came down  
The room instantly became brighter  
As the sun begins to rise  
My room is filled with the music of the morning.  
As the winter air kisses my face  
The audience has disappeared  
And I am left there alone with my violin.

### Mother

Jerome Lee *Kitchener Elementary*

If I were the sun  
And you were the sky  
I'd never set  
I'd hover above  
The edge of the horizon  
Waiting for you to  
Shine your stars on me  
So I could become greater  
Than what I am  
For I am brighter  
When I'm with you

### Home

Giullia Vieira Molinari  
*South Slope Elementary*

Where is home?  
Home is where I'm  
snuggling with my mom  
Where I try to convince my  
dad to get Disney+  
Where I'm stealing my sister's makeup  
Where I'm binge watching Full and Fuller  
house, snuggled in bed  
Where I'm feeling comfortable to be  
who I am  
Where I can express my love for music  
Where I can dance my heart out  
Home is where my heart is  
Home has no address  
It has people  
That's all you need for home  
People and love

### I'm the Music

Cheryl Hsu *Brantford Elementary*

I'm the Melody,  
the guitars,  
and the drums.  
I'm the words,  
and the voice,  
roaring them in my ear.  
I'm the story  
And the rage it sings of,  
I will drown into the sound  
Wishing it to never stop.  
Music to me makes me feel like  
I can do no wrong.



## Who Art Thou, Canada?

Joy Tienaho *Suncrest Elementary*

We are the people of Canada.  
Wild, strong, and free.

Canada is the ever-changing Aurora Borealis,  
We change our own nature like the changing colors in  
the sky.

We are the grieving of times past,  
Of apologies that can never be ended,  
A time for forgiving and repentance.  
That's why we wear the orange shirt,  
To remind us of our past,  
Horrible, unforgiving, cruel  
The future lies ahead,

Canada is a rushing river,  
Beauty in the midst of ruin.

We apologize, then forget  
But, do we really mean it?  
Perhaps not.

We have not lost all hope.  
The next generation must learn.  
So we do.

We learn all the beautiful things that Canada has to  
offer,  
So that we won't ruin it with war, tragedy, more.

Canada is a patchwork quilt of families and races,  
But over time we have learnt to be cruel.

Our words, our actions,  
Have undone everything we've hoped to preserve.  
Like love, passion, hope.  
We are renewing our past, inch by inch.  
We are robots, cold, hard, emotionless.

Canada is a numberless land,  
But in the past, we have been.  
Where residential schools ruled,  
Where people lost all hope.  
Where everyone was treated wrongly.  
We remember.

We learn.  
We hope.  
We are not a number anymore,  
Not ever.  
Not again.

We are the people of Canada.  
Wild, strong, and free.

## The Life of Fire

Lilian Shi *Gilpin Elementary*

The dry, textured wood gives birth to a flame of  
light,  
Wavering in the air, struggling to grow.  
She then blooms into a gorgeous flower,  
Erupting into mountains of heat and crackles.  
She growls as she flaps her wings, striving to grow,  
to learn,  
Throwing temper-tantrums when she couldn't fly.  
Then she dances like a ballerina, more or less calm,  
Like a cherry blossom tree swaying in the spring  
wind.

Bit by bit, the flames wither away,  
As if the cold, deadly winter takes over.  
The wood, once brown and fresh, turns grey and  
old,

Dimming the warmth of the beautiful phoenix.

Little by little, the light dwindles,  
Like a bird, locked in a cage.

Finally, the red, orange, and yellow, disperses,  
Transforming into smoke, rising in the air.

The grey, slithering snake then shrinks,  
And all that's left are pieces of broken firewood.

## Them

Renee Lei *Chaffey-Burke Elementary*

They are the great ones  
Not me.

They are the successful ones  
Not me.

They will leave their mark on the world,  
Prove themselves,  
Achieve amazing feats  
Not me.

Perhaps I was once able  
I could do it.

But not anymore.  
An empty shell  
Long succumbed to bitter regret  
I blamed it on fate,

Chance,  
Coincidence.  
But deep down,  
Under many layers,

I know,  
That it was me who made the mistake.

## War

Ranem Al Abbas      *Montecito Elementary*

From sunrise to sunset,  
The thoughts I get about heartless war make me upset.  
Killing and blood cause a lifetime regret.  
It's terrifying how war is something I've met.  
The people who saw a loved one's life getting taken away will have a picture in their minds, which they will never forget.  
A fictional hero putting this to an end, is someone we could never get.  
This world hasn't had a true champion switch war to peace, just yet.  
When will somebody get into action and be war's biggest threat?  
Just three letters, W, A and R, bring out deep emotions from our hearts.  
When one side acts selfish, is how all the devastation starts.  
We're the target, and wars' bullets are darts.  
If war ever stopped, I truly hope it never restarts.  
Tedious war was and is still happening today.  
It's a serious issue, not a game to play.  
When will we quit being the prey?  
Unfortunately, people in the war-zone have to accept the right, or wrong, then obey.  
We need to make a change because this is not okay.  
The people in power who are doing absolutely nothing helpful should stop acting like the victims!  
Where's justice?  
And where are all the systems?  
Hearts are broken,  
And we could see all the symptoms.  
Presidents have enough money for war, but can't feed the poor.  
Why all the chaos?  
Can we just please find a cure?  
We already have enough global issues, we want no more.  
Let's all unite and find the key to open this door.  
There's no acceptable answer to, "What is war actually for?"  
Governments cause war to steal other countries' resources, then talk about human rights to cover up their crimes.  
So many losses, tears, and unfairness, the victims won't forget those hard times.  
They hear bombs and explosions, instead of soft wind chimes.  
If you speak up, you'll be arrested or be gone "missing" the next day.  
Keep your mouth shut because you're threatened for whatever you say.  
Some victims are unable to leave for safety, but they also shouldn't stay.  
No jobs, no money, no shelter, and no food because they can't afford to pay.  
They've got no other choice but to pray.  
When presidents support war, then take in refugees, they're not doing a good deed.  
Why will someone be praised for causing someone else's need?  
Heroes don't plan their own problems to succeed.  
People didn't choose to be refugees, they just wanted to be freed.  
Our home, country, and freedom are never guaranteed.  
War, to the human mind, is pollution.  
If we all stand up for what's right, that could be a solution.  
A change begins with only one person, then everyone else's contribution.  
Let's all be a part of a peaceful mission and execution.



## Losing Hope

Amy Zhao *Suncrest Elementary*

Decades and decades ago, our planet was clean, pristine;  
Our bright, radiant sky would be filled with fluffy white clouds,  
Fish darted around the colorful coral, in the sparkling cerulean sea,  
Forest-dwelling animals inhabited the peaceful, undisturbed forests,  
Polar bears would hunt for seals to feed their young,  
Birds would migrate south in winter, north in summer, peacefully settling into their new homes.  
Turtles followed the shining white moon to find their homes deep in the sea,  
Trees would be everywhere, supplying us the oxygen all animalia's need.

Now?

We've stolen all those gorgeous features from ourselves;  
Air pollution covers up the once gorgeous blue sky,  
Noxious oil spills are everywhere, killing animals that inhabit the ocean.  
The nests of birds are destroyed while we cut down trees just to fulfill our insatiable greed for money.  
Plants are all withering, while cars zoom around more and more, filling the air with carbon dioxide.  
Ice caps, a polar bears' only way to hunt, are all melting away because of climate change.  
Turtles can't even see the luminous bright moon because of our blinding lights cover up the night sky.  
Birds crash into buildings whilst migrating to their winter homes and back,  
We have so much garbage, that we don't even have any more space for more landfills that already take up so much space.  
Over five billion species have gone extinct, most of them caused by the cruel actions of homosapiens,  
Invasive species are everywhere, ruining the food chain that keeps all the animals alive.

But maybe we could fix this;  
If all 7.6 billion, almost 8 billion humans that habit the earth work together, we could fix this problem we've brought upon ourselves.  
But the question is: Can we?  
So many people deny global warming and climate change,  
So many of us don't even care.  
And if we don't care can we still fix this?  
We don't care how we've been killing the earth,  
We don't care that the environment is dying,  
We don't even care how it affects us.  
How can we fix this if we don't even care?

## Cynical Life

Lukas Gonzalez *Morley Elementary*

Life is like gas station nachos, usually pretty crummy, but decent every once and a while.  
Homework is like a black hole, pulling and pulling until it's got you trapped.  
Procrastination is like a landslide, one pebble causing a catastrophe.  
This poem is like a van that says FREE CANDY, you can't believe any of the rubbish that comes from inside.

### Café

Alee Moreno  
*Brantford Elementary*

Finally, the call she was waiting for, "Fasten your seatbelts  
Approaching the Charles-de-Gaulle!"

Oh Paris!

She has been waiting all her life to meet you  
The Eiffel Tower, the Louvre, the Arch of Triumph were on  
the list

She envisions herself walking the same streets before  
Napoleon.

Life emerges early in the morning

The aroma of the bakery's escaping the chimneys seems  
to be

The alarm clock for all Parisians.

Oh Paris, everything about you is magical.

Like the Mona Lisa undisturbed by all the attention,  
she stood in front of the Palace of Versailles

Closing her eyes, she could feel the air blowing her hair  
and whispering

All the history of the France that the World knows.

A medieval era rushes through her veins while standing still  
In front of Notre Dame

Queens, Kings, and Emperors walked these majestic  
hallways

Testifying of an era of splendor that only few had access to.

The Cold Spring Breeze came rushing from the Sienna  
carrying the memories

Of a bohemian in a city that continues to revolutionize the  
mind of the dreamer

Paris a memory that will never be forgotten.

### Les ombres

Stella Martin  
*École Westridge Elementary*

Ensorcelantes  
Obsédantes, Imminentes  
Dissimulées par un voile de noirceur  
Avançant, S'entortillent  
Illusion

### Le vide

Isabelle Paris  
*École Westridge Elementary*

Un vide tourbillonnant de ténèbres  
impénétrables

La seule lumière venant d'étoiles lointaines

Un vide d'une force infinie.

Un lieu vaste et inexploré

Avec des mystères au-delà de notre  
imagination

Des planètes aux merveilles inédites  
Habitées ou inhabitées, personne ne le sait

Des bêtes prêtes à me manger

Ou une espèce d'extraterrestre,

Bien plus avancée que nous.

Un trou noir si puissant,

même la lumière y est aspirée

Rien pour me guider

Un lieu mystérieux

Où ceux qui se perdent resteront à jamais

Effacés de l'existence.

### L'amitié

Amery Gardiner  
*École Westridge Elementary*

Un coup de couteau dans le dos

La colère qui se précipite dans mon corps

Le sentiment d'être désespéré

Je tremble de peur sans m'arrêter

La tristesse prend le contrôle

Gêné quand tout le monde rigole de moi

Je me demande si l'intimidateur sait

Que je me sens triste et craintive

Mais lorsqu'un ami vient m'aider et

Qu'il essuie mes larmes, ça soulève mon  
esprit

Alors si vous me voyez sombre

Soyez l'ami qui me défend



### Le bonheur

Yehia Ayad *École Marlborough Elementary*

Le Bonheur est souvent autour de nous, mais nous ne le voyons pas. Ce sont les choses simples, comme un petit "Bonjour" du cœur qui créent des moments spéciaux. Le Bonheur est vraiment la joie qui propage et qui te donne les sentiments de vivre, comme un merle noir qui chante une douce mélodie vers l'horizon des mélanges des couleurs. Maintenant c'est le temps de propager le Bonheur.

### La poésie

Anjie Chen *École Brantford Elementary*

La poésie c'est...

Un arc-en-ciel avec des mots qui dansent,  
Ou une forêt avec les phrases qui chantent.  
C'est une devinette avec les rimes qu'on résout,  
Ou un jeu où tu dois créer une expression.  
C'est tes émotions qui explosent,  
Ou tes idées qui sautent.  
C'est ta planète idéale,  
Ou ton royaume imaginaire.  
C'est toi qui exprimes ton monde!



### I am From

Sophie Li *Brentwood Park*

I am from being the middle child  
two sisters that can sometimes get wild  
I can be the  
leader,  
the follower,  
the older one  
the younger one  
but  
I'm always stuck in the middle  
in between arguments from my sisters

and decisions that float

around my head

I am from a family of sisters  
only  
everyday  
surrounded by princess dolls  
playing make believe with my sisters  
playing dress up  
But  
to toughen us up  
mom put her girls in taekwondo  
four years straight  
of kicking  
and  
punching  
finally  
after a long test  
my blackbelt  
enjoying that sense of accomplishment inside  
me

I am from joy  
everyday  
I'm surrounded by joy and happiness  
family and friends  
always making me laugh and smile  
supporting me  
when I feel down  
or unhappy  
cheering me up

with their funny faces and jokes  
sometimes making me laugh so hard  
my stomach aches

I am from traveling  
Las Vegas with its bright lights along the strip  
paddle boarding in sunny Honolulu  
screaming with excitement  
on the rides at Disneyland,  
camping in the wilderness  
with family and friends  
laughing near the campfire,  
as we roast marshmallows and tell stories

I am from Chinese immigrants  
who came here to live a better life  
sponsored by the church with clothes  
but bullied for their Chinese accent  
and donated clothes  
faced challenges  
with no money  
and no english  
but I am taught the value of hard work  
and to never give up

I am from  
being my own person  
I have my own unique DNA  
my own identity  
there may be another Sophie Li out there  
but there is only one me



### If You're Not From The Wilderness

Vaughn Harris

*Brentwood Park Elementary*

If you're not from the wilderness  
You don't know true beauty  
You can't know true beauty  
The colors, creatures and elegant diversity of a coral reef  
The never-ending stretches of ocean, a gargantuan bowl of glamor, surprises and disbelief  
The hundreds of majestic mountains, looming overhead like grand white giants  
The simple beauty of an everyday tree, leaves swaying in peaceful, musical silence  
If you're not from the wilderness  
You don't know true beauty

If you're not from the wilderness  
You don't know fascination  
You can't know fascination  
The pure awe of gazing upon a huge graceful moose  
The simple wonder of witnessing endless white fields of goose  
The anticipation of exploring an exotic place  
A new wave of glee with every new exotic creature's face  
If you're not from the wilderness  
You don't know fascination

If you're not from the wilderness  
You don't know thrill  
You can't know thrill  
The audacious surge of joy when you climb a precarious rock  
The jolt of fascination when you observe magnificent exotic birds by the flock  
The sheer thrilling stimulation of ziplining over the boundless splendor of nature  
The dangerous elation of traversing the dazzling caves under a shifting glacier  
If you're not from the wilderness  
You don't know thrill

If you're not from the wilderness  
You don't know calm  
You can't know calm

The serene contentment of hiking through the peaceful, gorgeous wastes

The wind whispering and the sunset blazing with placid brilliance that I embrace

The soothing tranquility of beholding an infinite view from the top of a peak  
The everyday calming sound of a simple, harmonic, rushing creek  
If you're not from the wilderness  
You don't know calm

If you're not from the wilderness  
You don't know curiosity  
You can't know curiosity  
The grandeur of a giant orca, intriguing me to the core  
The engaging amusement of an odd creature, compelling me to learn more  
The frequent mundane weather, to me are enthralling patterns begging to be understood  
The odd daily appeals of a new kind of bug, and research that new critter I would

You see, If you're not from the wilderness  
You don't know me  
You can't know me  
The awe-inspiring experience of viewing the endless beautiful landscapes  
The fascinating thrill of encountering interesting creatures, of varying sizes, colors and shapes  
The unprecedented scenery and my thrilling experiences since I was a child  
The captivating natural allure of the wild  
If you're not from the wilderness  
You don't know me

## Mountains

Livia Preda *Marlborough Elementary*

The clouds blanket themselves around the bodies of these colossal stones. Snow as white as life rests upon the endless summits. Wind whistles and weaves itself around the rocky bases. Life thrives on these enormous hills of nursery, showing hospitality and power.

The crimson sun rises and sets behind these piles of rock, giving its prayers of hope and destiny. Not even the strongest eagles can soar to their tips. Not even the bravest man can climb to their edges, for these groups of spirit are stronger than any eagle, than any man, than any living creature willing to risk its soul. Not even the most violent wind can move these towering giants, for they have been moved by the most dangerous, the deadliest earthquakes ever witnessed. Shifting and sculpting, hundreds of years passing by, seemingly redundant, but changes occur as they form into their shapes.

Clouds of fog and mist curl up around the rugged tips as storms of rain, snow, hail, lightning and thunder howl like desperate wolves.

These powerful pillars thrown above us, watching us and protecting us from evil forces, reigning the heavens. Such mighty mountains, still full of mystery, hold never ending fantasy, never ending beauty and eternal life. Who knows what is still yet to be discovered, for the mountains possess our infinite curiosity. Let us treat them the right way.

## Nostradamus - The Eternal Ape

Ajay Nadar *Suncrest Elementary*

My name is Nostradamus. I am a gorilla with a remarkable story to tell you. This story starts in the jungles of Africa. It was surprisingly warm for winter, even in Africa. I was blissfully chewing on some leaves and playfighting with my friend Yola. Some of my troopmates were picking off ticks off each other. It was heaven.

That is, it was, until a loud noise rudely shook my territory! It was a truck carrying an unidentified species with long, slender, black weapons called guns. I had a bad feeling that these people were not going to be friendly. They climbed out of their truck when they saw me. I sounded the alarm call. They scurried out of the dense bushes in a wave of confusion. Turns out, this was not the best move when there were armed assailants 10m away from me. They brutally shot projectiles at my troop and they were falling all around me. They fought valiantly and died a silver back's death. While I was headed full speed into the bushes. I was only a few centimeters away! I was going to make it! Then, following another loud bang came an agonizing pain in my shoulder. I just made it into the bushes before I let out a cry of pain and blacked out.

I woke up groggy. I saw another vehicle with some writing on it. It said, "World Wildlife Fund". I was confused. I didn't know why I felt so sleepy. It was early in the morning. Little did I know I had been blacked out for a day. I saw some humans carefully tying me to a bed made from wooden sticks. My left shoulder was throbbing like the sky had fallen on me. Wait. I said humans were tying me up, right? Time to turn on PANIC MODE! I thrashed and kicked like my life depended on it. They still won and forced me into their vile contraption. I was dejected, but not defeated. After this, I was put in an airplane. Suddenly, the machine I was in started shaking violently. I started screeching and bashing the ropes of my prison. The contraption then started FLYING! It was amazing. I could soar like a bird. I called for my mother to see me. Then, all the realizations came back to me. I had been shot and all my troop died. I had nowhere to go. I was just a puny gorilla with the whole world against me. I banged my head against the wall of my prison, and I sat down and wailed and grieved for my troop.

Once the ride was over, I got out of the contraption. I was walking down the ramp when a little hand helped me get down. He looked like Yola. It was a person though. That person was trying to help me. This is when I then realized; I am not alone.



## Yellow

Jerah Libut *Morley Elementary*

Yellow is seen as a positive, joyous, soothing colour. People feel some sort of satisfaction when seeing a colour they like. Yellow is also seen as an alert, a sign of panic or anxiety. Yellow can make people feel lucky, too! Yellow also portrays a sign of gold, a very expensive material. Yellow can make people feel energetic, like they need to run to get all their energy out. Yellow can also make you feel lost or scared. Sometimes, yellow makes you feel confused.

Yellow is the bright, radiant sun greeting you on hot summer days. Yellow is the bees, pollinating the eye-catching yellow tulips and sunflowers. Yellow is the huge yellow school bus waiting for kids to get in and dropping kids off. Yellow is the small ducks waddling around, following their mother. Yellow is the Yellow Tangs swimming around. Yellow is the yellow leaves during fall. Yellow is the radiant, yellow sun beans during the summer. Yellow is the bright clothes you wear during the summer.

Yellow sounds just like the bees buzzing around the colourful flowers. Yellow sounds like fresh pineapple being cut. When people like yellow, they sometimes imagine hearing calm music. Yellow sounds just like the big yellow school bus pulling up. Yellow sounds like the small ducks swimming in ponds and their feet brushing against the grass, as they follow their mom. Yellow sounds like the buttercups and tulips waving around in the hot summer breeze. Yellow sounds like a noise you strongly dislike, sending you into panic.

Yellow is the smell of the pollinated yellow flowers during the summer. Yellow is the smell of the sour lemons in lemonade. Yellow smells like the sweet mango popsicles you eat on hot days. Yellow smells like the fresh peaches you have on humid days. Yellow smells like the sweet yellow honey you use to get rid of a bad cold, or an itchy and sore throat.

Yellow tastes like fresh ices lemonade on hot days. Yellow tastes like tropical pineapples, fresh peaches and mangoes. Yellow also tastes like ripe bananas or extremely sour yellow lemons. Yellow tastes like pineapple flavoured popsicles in the cold freezer. Yellow tastes like the honey you put into boiling water. Yellow feels like the hot sun beans hitting your skin during the summer. Yellow sometimes makes you shake when you're scared or panicked. Yellow feels like the warm yellow tinted breeze when it's sunny. Yellow feels like the popsicle melting and dripping down your hand when the bright sun comes out. Yellow feels like the itchy bee stings you get during the summer. Yellow is a positive and negative colour.

## Conquering Fear

Ruth Jiang *Lyndhurst Elementary*

A mild gust of wind blew past me. Gentle coats of white covered the snow-capped peaks, and a ray of sun tinted the ground with gold. It was a breath-taking sight. But as I looked below me, a striking sensation of fear overtook me. It shot through my body like a lightning bolt. My legs felt weak and everything I saw was spinning. A traumatizing scene flashed through my head, I shivered at the thought of it. Gathering back my senses, I looked ahead. I saw trees swaying as if dancing in the wind and I heard the birds singing a welcoming tune. Maybe it is not as bad as I thought, I said to myself, in barely a whisper. I gained courage observing the things around me, but this time it felt different, as if someone was standing with me. Collecting all the courage hidden in me, I deliberately move towards the edge. I took in a deep breath and off I went.

## Returning a Favour

Krista Tollefsen     *Brentwood Park Elementary*

A piercing cry awoke me. I sat up quickly. What was that noise? Curious, I grabbed my backpack and walked out of my tent. It was still night and very dark. I took a flashlight out of my backpack and turned it on. It instantly lit up the way ahead.

There it was again, the cry I had just heard! Hearing the sound, I ran through towering trees ignoring the slight pain of bushes scratching at me.

I froze in place when I saw it, the creature that had made the sound. It was an enormous bird. Its whole body was layered with black feathers, except for the ends of its wings and tail, which were a glittering gold at its tips. The moon reflected off the bird's light gray beak. It stared intently at me with beautiful amber eyes. I noticed that the bird was draped over a net. Who would ever harm such a beautiful creature?

Without thinking I took out a knife in my bag. The bird wriggled back at the sight of the knife.

"Shhh," I whispered in a soothing voice. Slowly, I cut the ropes bound to the creature. The ropes loosened and the giant bird began to pull itself out. I watched as the creature rose and spread its wings out majestically.

The bird curiously moved its head towards me. Frightened, I froze and quickly slipped the knife back into my backpack. I gently reached out to brush the bird's head, but it quickly moved back.

Before I knew it, the bird expanded its wings and launched into the air, causing a gust of wind to knock me over. The bird flew away in a heartbeat.

Tired, I found my way back to my tent and drifted off to sleep.

The next morning, smoke filled my lungs. I instantly awoke. Scrambling out of the tent, I saw flames burn trees into crisps of smoke. My instincts kicked in and I bolted in the opposite direction. No! I was trapped and stuck at the end of a cliff. I am going to die!

When the blaze arrived to the point where I was boiling, I closed my eyes shut and jumped off the cliff, plummeting to my death. Suddenly, talons gripped onto my back and I was lifted into the air. I opened my eyes. I wasn't dead!

The talons released me to safe ground. I turned my head to see what had saved me. I was in disbelief. The bird gazed at me with its dazzling amber eyes. Then it took a great bow, and leaped into the air, flying northward, its feathers glowing in the sunlight.



## Our Changing Climate

Yiling Zhu *Douglas Road Elementary*

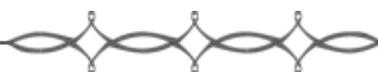
Did you know that our climate is changing? Every day, we depend on the climate and it is very important to us because there will be an impact if our climate conditions change. But did you ever wonder if we are treating it well enough? We are making a lot of changes to our climate today. These changes are very dangerous and will soon affect all living on this planet. This situation happening is climate change. Here are three ways humans contribute to climate change.

One of the biggest causes of climate change is air pollution. Harmful gases get released into the atmosphere through the exhaust pipes of cars and the chimneys of factories. These harmful gases are called greenhouses gases and the most polluting greenhouse gas is carbon dioxide, or CO<sub>2</sub> for short. CO<sub>2</sub> releases when fossil fuels, formed from the remains of living things of long ago, burn. They also release when animals exhale. CO<sub>2</sub>'s function is absorbing the sun's heat. CO<sub>2</sub> is making some habitats more extreme, and the extreme habitats are endangering species, like arctic polar bears.

Burning trees is another cause of climate change. It releases CO<sub>2</sub> and it also destroys trees. Trees are carbon dioxide consumers; they consume the CO<sub>2</sub> and release oxygen. If we didn't have trees, we wouldn't have oxygen to breathe. Trees produce oxygen for animals, and animals produce CO<sub>2</sub> for trees. Today we produce more CO<sub>2</sub> than before, with all the human activity going on. When we burn trees, the trees lose their role of taking CO<sub>2</sub> out of the atmosphere. Making it even worse, humans are adding more CO<sub>2</sub>. The Amazon is an example of a rain forest we are burning. We burn it for the benefit for harvesting, but it results in a waste of wood and a loss of species.

There's something else we produce a lot of everyday that is destructive to species: garbage. The garbage that is the most harmful is plastic. Garbage usually ends up in the landfills, buried underground, or poured into the ocean. The Great Pacific Garbage Patch is a dump located in the center of the Pacific Ocean. The ocean is a home to thousands of species. Garbage can not only cause illness and injury but can also cover some habitats that species depend on and bring death. An amazing 5.25 trillion scraps of garbage is in the ocean. The garbage in the dump can be the death of marine species. Plastic doesn't degrade, but it breaks down into tiny particles. Small fish eat the particles. Big fish can get entangled in big pieces of plastic such as fishing nets. An average Canadian creates almost 375 kg. of garbage per year; we throw it out, and it ends up in the ocean. We then buy more stuff that we don't need. We do so much for ourselves we forgot the impact on nature.

We need to make more valuable changes than bad choices to make this the pristine planet it ought to be. Though we don't have much time, we can still change, now! We can stop adding greenhouse gases to the atmosphere, destroying trees, and throwing garbage in the ocean. It is very important to have a healthy, clean planet so we can sustain and continue our lives. Save our planet and future!



## The Contrast of Elements

Kaitlyn LaBreche  
*Burnaby Central Secondary*

Heat courses through my skin  
on a hot summer's day,  
the relief of swimming  
cold and clear water  
Like a looking glass  
The deep blue swirling with satisfaction  
Peace and contentment  
In an indigo sky  
Grass springs through my toes  
Cold bitter air seeps through my skin  
On a chilly winter day,  
Hot cocoa grasped in my fingers warming my  
depths Like sitting by an invisible fire  
Time slows, snow falls  
Cool and desolate  
Wonder and awe  
In a cloudy sky  
Frost dots the quiet paths I walk  
Back to my home.

## J'ai dit un mensonge

Claire Guo *Burnaby North Secondary*

J'ai dit un mensonge  
Il est devenu une tornade qui me chasse  
Je cours et je cache  
Je crains le moment quand je casse  
Une tempête ou tout tente de s'enfuir  
Mais le mensonge est trop vite.  
Le mensonge se moque de moi  
Il me dit encore et encore de mon préjudice  
Une boule de neige qui grandit  
Avec chaque pas que je prends, sans lui batailler  
Mais une guerre avec un mensonge  
Sans doute, on va l'abandonner.  
Le moment après le mensonge est dit  
Jamais, vais-je l'attraper  
Il est invincible  
Je suis affaibli  
Une victime du crime  
Que moi, j'ai commis.

## From Now On

Kaitlyn LaBreche  
*Burnaby Central Secondary*

My eyes no longer see  
the fairy wings sprouting from my back  
Or the pixie dust that used to shower my head  
I was small, the world was big, joy was simple  
I am big now  
Somethings stay, most things go.  
When there was sun  
I danced on the green grass and sang to the sky  
Now there is rain  
Inside I listen quietly  
Pitter Patter  
Cold and wet  
As though life passed by  
Leaving a shadow in its place.  
In the bathtub  
A sparkly ocean  
With seaweed, fish and whales  
Resurface and see  
Pruney hands, tiled walls, ceramic tub  
Reality sinks  
Into my skin.

But do memories last?  
Like remnants of a star  
now there is only empty space



## The Grass Stains

Kira Takhar  
*Burnaby South Secondary*

it's engraved its way into the fabric  
it found a way to wiggle itself in  
it started off small  
just a small green dot  
but it grew.  
sinking the rest of its pigment  
into the fabric.  
and at first it wasn't a bother  
i just ignored it  
left it alone  
let it be.  
but then I realized what an eyesore it was  
it had poisoned the canvas.  
i let it intoxicate me  
but no matter how hard i tried to remove it  
it  
wouldn't  
budge  
I bleached it.  
soaked it.  
scrubbed it.  
but absolutely nothing had changed  
so i let it sit there  
I kept it in my rear view  
it stayed sitting in the corner of my eye.  
of my mind.  
but eventually i got sick of it.  
i got tired of it infecting me  
so i grabbed the knife  
and cut it out  
tearing every last inch of the green pigment.  
i thought that it would have completely gone  
that I would have been able to remove  
it All  
but now I'm left with this gaping hole.  
a reminder of what was once there.  
and I can't tell what's worse,  
the stain itself,  
or the scar it left behind.  
forever reminding me of what was once there.

## The Colour of Security

Nina Shibata  
*Alpha Secondary*

Blue is the colour of stability,  
the pillars of support, the steady path  
when you need it the most.

There are blue skies and blue jays  
Blue jays impatiently chirp in their nests  
for their mother under the far reaching heavens.  
The blue sky traps you in invisible barriers  
that imprison and leave you heavy with  
desperation.

Blue should be tranquil and orderly  
Yet it is stricken with grief and sorrow,  
the strain of anguish and the loss that  
curses our judgement

Blue feels like the vast blue sea,  
cold and lonely but peaceful, comforted  
by the soothing echoes of whales singing  
their harmonious song in the distance  
Blue is the colour of my lonesome shadow in the  
snow.  
Torment and suffering tears through my chest  
drowning me in misery

Blue should feel like calmness and serenity,  
feelings that give you comfort and composure  
but blue tastes like the salty tears of pain and  
sorrow  
filled with regret and mourning for the person  
you've just lost.

## You can't write a poem about sushi

Jayden Tsai

*Burnaby Central Secondary*

It's 12pm.  
Lunchtime.  
I push open the wooden bamboo door,  
And I'm instantly whisked into another world.  
The chain ornament on the wood jingles lightly,  
As if it's welcoming me.  
The aroma of raw fish, seaweed, and rice  
Hits me like a wave,  
As I'm being led to my table by my waitress.  
I feel the crisp plastic laminated menu in my hands,  
The pictures jumping out like a kangaroo, with more  
colours than a rainbow.  
I flip around the menu, eventually settling on salmon,  
tuna, and uni sashimi.  
I wait for a bit,  
Then my waitress comes over, her delicate hands  
holding A black and red-rimmed tray with my sashimi  
on it.  
I carefully pick up the soft, white-lined fish, and make  
it take a dive into the soy sauce dish.  
Slowly, I lift the fish towards my mouth and bite down.  
The soft, smooth-textured fish gets mashed in  
between my teeth,  
Slowly dissolving in my mouth, the salty taste of soy  
sauce  
Gradually seeping in and tickling my taste buds.  
Feeling satisfied, I take another piece  
And another-  
And another.  
Feeling full, I eventually walk towards the cash  
register, Pay for my meal,  
And walk out the bamboo door.  
Letting the chain sing softly behind me.

## Swinging From The Past

Sarah Taylor

*Burnaby Central Secondary*

A bright blue plastic swing may be horrid in your  
eyes,  
but to me it's something different  
To me it's a book of memories

Its flying so high you can't see the bottom  
My sister diving under and me trying to kick her

It's the first day of summer, and the last all in  
one  
It's a shield from water balloons  
or a jungle vine to swing on

My mighty steed  
My palace throne  
Its anything I wanted  
But now it's different Now it's a  
Plastic

Blue  
Swing  
With dirty yellow ropes  
That's horrible to look at.



## Dear Standards

Daphne Li *Burnaby North Secondary*

Dear Standards,

I may not live up to your expectations. I'm sorry, I'm trying. I stay up day and night to reach them, but there are just too many. All I can hear is your whispers taunting me to do this and do that, but I can't.

I seek success but only to make you happy, praying it will make your voices stop, but have it only come back stronger, hungry for more. I complete homework and study for tests to please you so that I would not reach strike "three". When you demand for my mark, I would lie. The shields I weave out of them would protect me as you shower me with disappointment and misery.

I've tried countless times for you to get out of my head, for you to leave me alone. What did I do to you? What is this constant torment for me to get better, why not just destroy me all at once? It is a lot faster, isn't it? You push me to strive for the best and to break through my limits, but I ask you, how?

How can I reach for the top when you use everything in your power to push me down day by day until I shrink into a nobody. Tell me how I can be the best when you're constantly a shadow, whispering about how I'm not good enough, and that I never will be.

You are nothing but selfish, taking my pain into your joy. Do you think I haven't realized? You chain me to the boundaries, never letting me out. Yet you still push me, knowing the chains are made out of steel. Day by day, I get weaker while you slowly take over my mind. I hate you. I hate how you make me not accept my imperfections. You make me want to change every single bit about myself. You make me hate myself for not the best. Every day, my mind drowns with your disgusting voices nagging me about being perfect and to be the best.

You've convinced me that this is to beat my competitors, to get awarded 1st place. That every time I succeed, I'm doing it for myself, for the benefits it'll bring me in the future. Though sometimes, I truly question who it is for, me or you? I've had enough. This endless game of yours will be over soon. I have found your disadvantages and I will use them against you when you least expect it. Haven't you been doing to same to me? If it wasn't for the last string of hope, I would not be here fighting back, ending this war that you've started. You've chosen the wrong person to fight against.

My victory may not happen in a snap, maybe not in months, maybe not even for years, but eventually with time, I will overcome you.

This is my life, my game to play. Not yours.



## You're in a Car With a Beautiful Girl

Abby Torrao

*Burnaby North Secondary*

you're in love with her. you're so in love with her, it makes your heart ache to think about how she doesn't love you back. the way your mind fills with galaxies she's created and she'll never know.  
you're in the with the girl who will only chew grape bubblegum, who puts mayo on her burgers instead of ketchup like everyone else.

she's a million mysteries wrapped up in a neat little package with chalk on her knees and smudged mascara around her tired eyes and you're in love with every single one.  
her cherry perfume fills up the little spaces between you and her, but somehow, it will never be enough to cover all the bruises she leaves.  
you love her. she doesn't love you.  
every 'i love you' that floats from her cotton candy lips followed by honey laughter is a lie.  
but it leaves a bitter aftertaste.

because she'll never love you the way you love her, if she ever loved you at all.  
but you're too caught up in her glittering eyes and soft smile. too caught up to notice that she's never loved you and that she's only ever said so when she had drank too much, let the poison fill up her body and make her feel warm inside. and then she stares into space and giggles out words that should taste like the cherry pie with whipped cream at the diner. instead, it tastes like stale black licorice sticks that can be found at the back of a dusty cupboard, like lies and dirty secrets.  
"i love you"

she whispers into the starry night as the moon shines down through the windows of your car, just loud enough to be heard over the radio but if you hadn't been listening, you wouldn't have heard it.  
she never loved you. she's lying when she says she does. she thinks that love with fill the void that holds sadness and pain, that someone's love can get rid of it, make it all better.

she doesn't love you. she just wants something beautiful to take her by the hand and lead her down the road called life. but you can't give her that. but you can't let go, so you cling tighter to the girl next door and hope that all these midnight nightmares will be replaced by daytime dreams.  
but is hasn't, and your candyland fantasy is coming to an end, quicker than you had ever thought.  
all good things must end, but she's the best thing that's ever happened to you, but you can't let go, you don't want to let you.

but with those three words, hope fills you up like pacific waves crashing on a sandy beach and filling all the craters left by little kids from playing games.  
that's all it is: a game. a game guided by self destruct and blindness, and people fooled by love and pain, by pink lip gloss and grape bubblegum.  
it's a game played by broken angels with no wings that just need a way to be okay and find a way home.  
find a way home without you.  
she doesn't love you, she never has.  
and you know that now. all you can do is let her go.  
no matter how much it hurts.



**Unnoticed**Ella Go *Alpha Secondary*

Sparseness in the garden,  
growing the merest of flowers.  
Brilliant violet asters,  
blooming.  
Vibrant red roses,  
blossoming.  
Calm white carnations,  
flourishing.  
Whimsical common daisies,  
the outliers  
in the corner.

Passersby observe  
the simplicity,  
unquestioning.  
Veiled by its loveliness,  
the sparseness in the garden  
goes unnoticed.

**Winter**Sidney Fan *Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

The soft wool lining of my jacket pockets  
The faint sound of music playing through my earbuds  
The bright ball of ice in the sky, a comet  
The dying flowers on the ground, the flower buds

The crunch of dead leaves under my foot  
Exhaling a puff of fog from my breath,  
The plants shiver with cold

The breeze that tugged at the trees  
The thick blanket of silence that fell over the world  
The forest, still in a deep freeze  
The thin branches, reaching up to the grey sky,  
curled

Leaving imperfections with my foot,  
The white world in front of me, stripping me of my  
breath  
Making me savor this sight like a fool with his gold

**Backyard Theatre**Ella Hall *Alpha Secondary*

a mournful leaf twirls a ballet  
to the tune that the sunset plays.  
a solo of grief  
it's the end of an era  
Sweet summer has died.

indignant wind blasts the trees  
a wild demanding director,  
He flurries through the cast  
rustling them into place  
a new act is about to begin.

other browning leaves take the stage  
no longer alone,  
the sole leaf accelerates her pace  
our actors gracefully slide up  
and down the slopes and cliffs  
That the wind creates

Unified, yet individuals  
They no longer dance,  
they tell a story.

weaving a tale  
painting calligraphy  
beautiful scripts  
In an unknown arcane tongue  
a language lost to us  
centuries ago

The wind pushes for the finale  
Frantic fluttering, a rush to the climax  
A wild and exhilarating show

My heart applauds  
If only you could have witnessed  
If only you could have seen!  
The wild production,  
breathtaking performance  
Of absolute perfection

### My Life is an Act

Mackenzie St. Marie  
*Burnaby South Secondary*

All my life's an act,  
And all my smiles and laughs merely masks.  
I play many parts and many characters,  
But only three may be labelled by me.  
When the chime of my phone sings seven a.m.  
I prepare for Act One;  
The hardy student  
She is studious and at the top of her class,  
But never leaves a peer behind.  
Lending a helping hand to her bullies, like a mouse  
feeding its own capture  
Next, the school bell chimes three o'clock.  
It is time for Act Two,  
time to crawl into my slippers,  
wrapped in a blanket of anguish protection.  
I sit criss-cross on a sofa of black purity,  
Raving about the weeks events to the blonde haired  
therapist.  
This is one of my favourite characters but not many  
care for her.  
Like a third world country, her calls for help are  
ignored,  
She is the resilient depressed patient.  
Finally, I rush for Act three,  
Into my glasses and bitter faced mask.  
I tiptoe into my eldest brothers house and greet each  
individual,  
Feeding the cat and tickling the baby.  
I place my coat on the cold rack and my bag by the  
television stand.  
I listen to the squeals of recovering addiction and new  
parents,  
The shrills of the youngest brother as he confides in  
me,  
His only friend he can trust.  
The night settles down, darkness eats up the sky,  
Leaving me, lying on the couch.  
This character,  
I call her,  
The developing caretaker.

### Monster in the Dark

Arwen Loh  
*Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

I'm the monster in your closet  
I'm the one beneath your bed  
I'm the horror in the dark  
With large eyes glowing red

The more you think of me  
The bigger I will be  
I am the beginning of every fear  
From every corner  
I lurk and leer

Your heart speeds up  
You try to hide  
It does no good  
I'm there inside  
I'm always here  
There's no escape  
With dripping fangs  
And mouth agape

You've one last chance  
But I'm so close  
I have a weakness  
One flicker of hope  
Just one step more  
And you're a ghost  
Will you find the escape?  
Or are you toast?



### Hope

Audrey Allanson  
*Alpha Secondary*

My heart is so full this quiet morning.  
It wants to leak out my chest, the hope. Yes, hope, that's the word—  
It fills every cavity between my ribs, every vein under my skin.  
But one area holds it the most—pooling like warm milk— is my heart.  
I feel it, literally.  
All sweet cozy, yet ready, wild, pent up and bursting.  
I am certain they can feel it, upstairs, as they wake up to a rainy morning I have been living in for the past hour.  
The hope, it radiates, can they sense it? They must.  
For me to feel so full, some of it must spill of the rim, trickle into the air.  
I wonder this...but regardless I am in bliss.  
New eyes, new words, new hope.  
The type only found in quiet birds, perfect song, in dawn and the steam rising from chamomile tea.  
It's freeing, flying sky high, this feeling.  
If it ever hits you — this freight train of force.  
Don't you dare let it go.  
Turn it into words across a page or songs sung to lucky ears.  
Swish paint around a canvas or twist movements more fluid than a stream.  
That's beauty, this feeling.  
It's inspiration, motivation, positive vibes, the whole package.  
Treasure it. Swaddle it in silk. Kiss it to sleep each night.  
Whatever it takes hold on tight.  
But above all—  
Welcome it always, with an open embrace.

### Imperfections

Hannah Limbo  
*Cariboo Hill Secondary*

Bruised knees  
white scars  
fat stomach  
acne on my forehead

Braced teeth  
short fingernails  
arm and leg hair  
mustache or not

Split ends blackheads  
glasses or not  
dark circles

The condition of being imperfect?  
I don't think so.

I love myself  
the way I am  
I don't need to change.

To me,  
my imperfections  
are what make me,  
me.

My imperfections  
are perfect  
to me

## Le lion et l'écureuil

Anahita Niksirat *École Moscrop Secondaire*

Le Lion était toujours confiant  
 Ce qu'il voulait, il prenait  
 Il aimait regarder ses richesses, la preuve de sa  
 puissance  
 Et la famine atroce qu'il causait ne le dérangeait pas  
 L'Écureuil cherchait quelque chose à manger,  
 même la plus petite noix suffirait  
 Mais la plus petite noix et les baies pourries  
 appartenaient aussi au lion tyrannique  
 L'Écureuil, dans sa colère a dit  
 Savez-vous ce que tu fais?  
 Quand tu prends tout  
 Voyez-vous la famine?  
 Quand vous regardez vos richesses, votre terre  
 Vous souvenez-vous des animaux qui vivaient  
 autrefois où vous vous promenez?  
 Le Lion a laissé échapper un rire rugissant  
 Il a regardé moqueusement l'écureuil fragile  
 Et leva sa patte, colossale et forte  
 Pour frapper l'Écureuil frêle  
 Les animaux observaient silencieusement  
 L'Écureuil se fatiguait  
 La faim, le froid, il l'endurait  
 Il devenait fragile et faible  
 Il était désespéré  
 Son corps maigre, sa survie, son seul pensé  
 Prendre quelques petites choses  
 Le lion ne remarquerait même pas  
 C'était son plan  
 Il a pris un gland et deux baies  
 Il était prêt à s'échapper  
 Mais ce jour-là, sa chance était faible  
 Et bientôt, il aurait  
 Une gorge tranchée  
 Les animaux observaient silencieusement  
 L'arrivée des glaces hivernales  
 Marquait la fin de la faim des animaux  
 Et la fin de leurs jours aussi  
 Silencieux, ils resteraient pour toujours  
 Et quel besoin y a-t-il à demander  
 C'est la faute de qui?

## Homeland

Rosalie Chady *Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

She never thought highly of the place,  
 with its yellow grass and skinny trees.  
 But she grew to love it.  
 All it took was its lakes,  
 its dirt paths,  
 its lavender wildflowers,  
 a day cycling between its sunny fields.  
 She listened to the words people spoke,  
 the slang that slid through their sentences  
 and pictured it matching up with their letters.  
 She drew comfort from their words,  
 let them settle around her.  
 Maybe the memories were made golden by what she  
 wanted them to be,  
 but she could have sworn the sun was so warm and  
 yellow.  
 This place, unlike others, was still caught up in its  
 memories.  
 It preserved its old ideas in lace curtains hanging on  
 windows  
 and brick houses quietly crumbling from the weight of  
 the past.  
 It remembered much.  
 Sometimes it scared her,  
 knowing that soon enough this would be gone.  
 Many people desperately wanted it to be bright with  
 steel and new, and did so,  
 the new empty malls neighbours with the old stucco  
 housing.  
 It looked like it was pretending to develop;  
 its imaginary friends the modern architecture  
 and its reality the dusty roads leading to grey buildings.  
 But still she loved it,  
 she loved the bakeries with jam biscuits in icing sugar,  
 the abandoned train stations,  
 the cold medieval castles scattered around were  
 perfect for a little girl dreaming  
 of princesses.  
 And she loves the towns with red shingle roofs and  
 white Catholic churches,  
 the blue jewel beetles crawling through birch tree  
 forests,  
 the apricot trees and the cherry trees and the rose  
 bushes in her grandmother's garden.  
 She won't let herself forget the things she loves,  
 because though the nostalgia hurts she won't let it go.



## Le geai bleu et les corbeaux

Zoey Qiu *École Moscrop Secondaire*

Dans une forêt lointaine,  
Était une foule toute noire.  
Et de la montagne,  
Vint un geai bleu sans pouvoir.  
Il portait un sourire,  
Mais peu savait-il,  
Qu'il sera difficile à même rire  
Dans cette forêt hostile.

Quand il arriva,  
Tout le monde le regardait.  
À cause de la couleur de ses plumes,  
Tout le monde pensait qu'il portait un costume.  
Le geai bleu avait naturellement des plumes  
bleues  
Et se démarquait des autres oiseaux.  
Tous les autres oiseaux étaient noirs ombreux;  
Ils étaient les corbeaux.

Durant les diners,  
Le geai bleu était toujours isolé.  
Peu importe où il allait,  
Les corbeaux parlaient.  
Le geai bleu se rapprocha,  
"Pourquoi est-ce que vous m'ignorez?  
Est-ce que c'est ma voix?  
Ou bien, que j'ai beaucoup de poids?  
Dites-moi s'il vous plaît.  
Je peux toujours changer."  
Le geai bleu était désespéré;  
Il voulait simplement être aimé.

Les corbeaux le regardaient de l'haut,  
"Tes plumes sont tellement laides,  
Tu ne seras jamais aussi beau,  
Même avec beaucoup d'aide.  
Tes plumes, elles sont différentes,  
Alors, tu n'es pas bienvenue ici chez nous."  
Le geai bleu regarda autour,  
Il était en effet, différent.  
Il devenait gêné et se sentait perdu,  
Parce que les corbeaux lui moquaient toujours.  
Il détestait ce sentiment d'être exclu,

Si seulement ses plumes deviendraient noires  
un jour.

Un jour, le geai bleu découvrit la peinture noire.  
La peinture lui donna une idée:  
S'il peignait ses plumes noires,  
Les corbeaux iraient l'inclure et l'accepter.  
Le lendemain, les plumes du geai bleu étaient  
noires.  
Il ressemblait à tous les autres corbeaux,  
Et les corbeaux lui racontaient leurs histoires.  
Mais, pour le geai bleu, ce sentiment faisait  
plus mal qu'un couteau.

Il ne s'attendait pas que la peinture était  
dangereuse pour les oiseaux,  
Parce que c'était toxique pour leurs cerveaux.  
Un soir calme, le geai bleu dormait,  
Mais il ne se jamais réveilla.

Il commença à pleuvoir,  
Et la pluie lava la peinture de ses plumes.  
Mais pas seulement les plumes du geai bleu,  
Les plumes des "corbeaux" montraient les  
couleurs de fraises et de prunes.  
Et tous ces "corbeaux" ont aussi reçu un  
requiem,  
Car ils choisirent le même chemin que le geai  
bleu.  
Au lieu d'être unique et de vivre pour eux  
mêmes,  
Ils choisirent de vivre pour l'admiration et  
l'acceptation frauduleux.

## Les blessures

Catherine Bobrovskaya

*École Moscrop Secondaire*

tu n'as peut-être pas été mon premier amour  
mais c'est toi qui as fait  
mes chagrins les plus profonds s'enfuir  
m'a donné envie d'apprécier le lever du soleil  
sans toi, je ne serais rien d'autre que des morceaux cassés  
j'ai cru qu'on surpasserait les portes du paradis ensemble  
jusqu'à ce que

je me suis retrouvé noyé dans mes propres larmes  
en goûtant la salinité de vos mots  
le verre s'est brisé en mille morceaux  
tout comme la douleur insupportable et palpitante que mon cœur ressentait  
comme les ténèbres  
m'ont avalé tout entier  
ne laissant rien d'autre que deux délicates colombes  
blessées et dispersées  
devant le feu ardent qui t'a un jour apporté la chaleur  
mais m'a réduit en cendres



**L'audition**

Izzie Farlette

*École Moscrop Secondaire*

« Prochaine: Mademoiselle Adélaïde Rousselle. » Adélaïde s'est rapidement mise debout et a lissé sa jupe en tulle. « Ici! » « Entrez. » dit l'homme sévère. Elle a pris une grande inspiration et a traversé la salle d'attente silencieuse. Elle a poussé les grandes portes imposantes ornées et est entrée dans une salle spacieuse. Ça sentait du bois dur nouvellement ciré et du talc. Il y avait les miroirs de haut en bas sur le mur à gauche et une barre au-dessous de grandes fenêtres dignes sur le mur en face d'elle. Elle pouvait entendre le tourbillon de la vie quotidienne dans la rue dehors. Le mur à droite était d'un jaune pâle avec une table en avant avec quatre personnes assises. La poussière dansait dans les rayons de lumière entrant par la fenêtre. Elle regardait les deux hommes et deux femmes devant elle qui allaient décider son futur. Les femmes étaient si élégantes et Adélaïde se sentait soudainement très consciente de ses vieux justaucorps et chaussons de danse.

Elle marchait au centre de la salle et s'est placée au milieu. « Alors, Adélaïde Rousselle, » a dit Lise Delacroix, la femme au centre, en lisant de ses papiers « Ne perdrons pas du temps. Dis-nous, pourquoi aimes-tu le ballet? Qu'est-ce que c'est qui t'attire? » Le cœur d'Adélaïde commençait à battre plus fortement, elle n'a jamais pensé à ça. « Je pense... je pense que c'est... pour... Honnêtement, je ne sais pas. » Les juges fronçaient leurs sourcils et Adélaïde se sentait comme le monde allait l'écraser. « D'accord, tu peux commencer à danser quand tu es prête. » a dit Mme Delacroix en retournant ses yeux à ses feuilles.

Adélaïde s'est mise en position et la musique commençait. Elle a fermé les yeux et a laissé la musique couler dans ses veines. Elle levait un bras et commençait à bouger. Tout d'un coup, elle oubliait tous ses soucis de si elle allait être acceptée à cette école de ballet prestigieuse et elle se sentait vivante. Comme un papillon elle semblait être en apesanteur. Ses muscles travaillaient si fort, mais elle ne fallait pas penser, son corps savait quoi faire. Avec le rythme elle pliait, sautait et pirouettait comme une gazelle et avant qu'elle l'a réalisé, la chanson avait fini. En tant qu'elle se tenait là en position finale, elle sentait la sueur couler sur son dos et remarquait que la salle semblait beaucoup moins intimidante qu'avant. Adélaïde s'est relevée et s'est tournée vers les juges. C'était en ce moment où elle regardait les visages des personnes qui venaient de la regarder danser qu'elle s'est rendue compte pourquoi elle aimait danser. « C'est la joie! » dit-elle. « Pardon? » a répondu Mme Delacroix. « Je danse pour la joie. Pour être joyeuse et apporter du bonheur aux autres. Pour me sentir comme je peux voler à la lune et marcher sur les nuages. Pour sentir la vie autour de moi. Ça c'est pourquoi je danse. »



**Beast**

Lily Nordgren

*Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

Rain poured down, collecting in lakes around my green boots as I stood in front of the playground. The woodchips smelled musty as they soaked, and the red plastic swings sagged under puddled water. My eyes were closed as I willed the playground to be deserted, just a lonely scene in a schoolyard. But as always, when I opened them, Beast was there, crouched at the foot of the slide in all its matted fur, menacing glare glory. It was all I could do not to run away, but I scraped together what childlike courage I had. Beast had to go. I matched its fierceness with boldness and stared Beast down. It paused, gauging my resolve, and pounced into the ocean of woodchips. I forgot my determined resolution and sprinted through the school gate, down the street, up the stairs, and into my aunt's lap. Surrounded by her warmth, listening to her fingers type mechanically into her glowing laptop, the eyes waiting for me outside the kitchen window seemed funny, ridiculous even. The smell of baking pervaded, and flour dusted my aunt's sweatshirt.

"What's up, Wren?" My aunt stopped tapping for a second to hug me closer.

"My feet got wet. Did you make something?"

"Yup. Chocolate cake. It's on the counter – take off your boots!" she added as I slid off her lap and skipped into the kitchen, sticking my tongue out at Beast and cutting myself a slice. Bounding up the stairs, I grabbed a book from the library pile and put the cake down before settling in an armchair. Beast was poised on a tree branch outside, watching me in the yellow light of our little house. I moved my gaze onto the pages and started reading, swallowing forkfuls of cake as I went. This book was from the grown-up section of the library, one of the few times when I had ventured out from the children's area. I liked reading the same stories as my aunt, but there was still so much left to understand about the world beyond the children's library. The afternoon passed in this oft-repeated way, my aunt's presence confirmed by her typing fingers as I sat upstairs reading. Beast was always nearby, unwelcome but prolonged company.

It was stormy but dry outside when I opened the window and faced the whipping wind. Beast had stayed by me, on the branch, looking alone and uncertain of its purpose. I figured that Beast had been nearby for so many years and had not hurt me. Maybe, possibly, Beast was not as threatening as I had perceived it to be.

"Are you cold?" My voice, shaky and immature, was nearly lost in the sounds of the world. Beast made no reply, but stared at me expectantly. I moved aside from the open window, inviting this monster inside. Beast climbed carefully through and sat beside my chair, curling itself so its tail hid one eye. I closed the window, got my book, and sat down to read.

**The Old Man**Elinor Yeo *Cariboo Hill Secondary*

Once there lived an old man, his hair long and greyed with age, his eyes dim from so many years alone. If you could watch him going through his daily life, you would see how he sometimes sits and thinks of all the memories he could have had. He imagines the sand in between his toes and the wind in his hair, the sound of the waves crashing against the rocks, the noise erasing all his thoughts. He longs for the warm summer days, playing tic-tac-toe on the sidewalk and the steamy hot chocolate that burns his throat when it starts to snow. He yearns to read by the fireplace until he falls asleep and climbing trees in the fall. He imagines the sound of rain hitting the windows, the droplets racing each other down. He thinks of splashing in puddles with bright yellow boots and playing in the garden until dusk. He imagines the taste of freshly picked carrots and a warm hug to come back to. He longs to eat dinner with a family and dancing until his feet hurt. He thinks of eating ice cream too fast and getting a brain freeze and drinking soup so quickly that he burns his tongue. He imagines the smell of freshly picked roses and the cool, smooth water of calm creeks. The rain starts to pour, and the night gets cold he thinks of the clouds in the sky, and the sunsets he missed. As he closes his eyes one last time, he thinks of all the memories he could have had.



**Mindless**Kevin Li *Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

My death is certain.

My family is plagued by a familial neurodegenerative disease.

Hereditary, untreatable, and terminal. I have been cursed since birth; this checkup is merely a confirmation. I stare at my reflection on the dark monitor panel, I look pathetic in a hospital gown next to my neurologist. The screen flashes on with MRI images. Probably mine, despite being less severe than my expectations.

"This is your cranial MRI," the neurologist states, "there are holes all over the brain tissue, sort of like a sponge. We thought you had glioblastoma near your hippocampus, however that isn't the case."

Glioblastoma. The word sounds eerily familiar, a memory begins to emerge in my mind...

A girl stood in the distance; her parents beside her implored the head oncologist to save their dying daughter.

"I'll be fine," the girl assured her sobbing parents, "I'll beat this glioblastoma thing in no time, so stop worrying!"

I lose my thoughts as the neurologist continues, "Your dementia will become progressively debilitating as your brain further deteriorates."

The prognosis is as I expected, I'd estimate two more months before my life comes to a meaningless, abrupt end.

I give the neurologist a polite nod before exiting the room.

The sterile corridors are as empty as ever, I could hear my footsteps echoing down the building as I walk to my ward. Across from me are the operating rooms; another memory engulfs my mind...

The same girl from before appeared in front of me, she looked pale and feeble.

"See you soon!" she beamed, "Stay positive while I'm gone!"

Her gleaming eyes were fixed upon me, the slight grin remained on her face as a pair of nurses pushed her gurney through the sliding doors.

"Stay positive!" she repeated, then disappeared into the operating room.

Who is she?

Inside my hospital ward lies two beds. I unlatch the window for a gush of fresh air, catching a glimpse of the crescent moon. The sight prompts a vivid memory, I could suddenly recall that evening...

The girl, bedridden, with tubes inserted all over her body. Bottles of intravenous fluid dripped down the tubes. Still, she had the same grin, the same cheerful aura, the same naïve optimism.

"You should smile more," she murmured, then drew in a sharp, painful breath.

"You're going to die soon, and so am I, quit being so cheerful," I responded flatly.

"They're going to operate on my brain again tomorrow, the surgeon said that the outcome is promising," she replied, "You should stop being so gloomy and cheer up!"

She irritated me so much that I snapped back at her, "You don't understand! You don't understand the despair! The agony! You're just some happy-go-lucky girl!"

She simply smiled back; a slight, gentle smile. The crescent moon dimly illuminated the room as we lay in silence.

I glance towards the vacant bed; a hint of melancholy descends upon me. I sense tears rolling down my cheeks, for reasons I cannot comprehend.

## The Star That Could Shine

Marie Galilo *Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

Over a billion years has passed, and nothing has changed for me since I was born 5 billion years ago. I was small and insignificant. A flickering speck in the sky, swallowed up by the darkness that enfolded me. I glanced shyly at Moon, whom I admired. I liked how bright he shone, a shining ball of ghostly white like a midnight sun. He stood proudly in the sky. I shrank, hiding from the darkness. I couldn't bear to look at that endless black sky anymore. I couldn't find my purpose to be in the world, and felt that no one would notice if I disappeared.

"Isn't it such a lovely night?" asked Moon.

"I suppose it looks the same as any other night."

"Oh, is that so?" Moon laughed. "You see, Star, every night is beautiful, in its own different way. No night is the same."

"But every night is the same for me," I said, as I shifted uncomfortably in the moonlight.

"I'm just a single star in this vast sky."

"Does it make you feel small?" Moon asked in a tone that I hadn't heard before. His voice was knowing, as if he knew exactly how I felt. I turned to face him. "

Yes."

Moon nodded. "I once knew that feeling." I was taken by surprise. "I used to feel so small, next to all of you," he said. "One moon next to thousands of stars. But I learned that being different is what made me special." The moon once felt swallowed by the stars as I did with the night sky.

"But how do I stand out?" I asked. Moon stared at me blankly.

"But you already do, Star!" He laughed so hard that he knocked into me, pushing me so I went flying down to the ground. I landed with a thud on the green grass, next to the boy who had been watching the sky. "It's a star!" he gasped. He looked at me, then back at the sky. "It's gone," he said.

"What is gone?" I asked in confusion. The boy seemed sad.

"The third star in Orion's belt," he sighed. "In the what?" I asked. He gave me the same blank stare; the same one Moon had given me.

"You see, up there is Orion's belt, made up of three stars," he traced his finger across the sky.

"People like to look up at Orion's belt, and admire the stars. A constellation."

"But there are only two stars," I said. He retraced his finger across the sky.

"The third star is you," he said.

"You mean, I'm part of that group of stars that people look up to?" I asked in excitement. The boy laughed. "Yes, including me." Filled with joy, I shot back up into the sky.

"You seem glad," the star next to me said.

"We are part of something much more than we ever knew." And with that, I shone the brightest that I could, for I could shine.



## Alpha

Sophie Yang

*Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

Dawn comes screeching in. The sun rises in a cacophony of heat and burning light, wash-ing over the desert and swallowing the shadows. Almost as a reminder: the desert is cruel. The desert is merciless.

A rustle as she leads them through the weeds. A meerkat gazes out into the wide, open field with experienced eyes. In the tall, yellowed weeds, there's a stir. A prey. Finally. The sea-son hasn't been kind to them, the heat has forced their prey to go into hiding. Every day, the hun-gry mouths only increased. Hunger, is how a pack falls.

"Mother?" a daughter asks Tanah. The others look at her, too. Eagerness in every line of their bodies. Mother, leader, alpha. The survival of the clan is her responsibility. Tanah pounces.

Food synonymous with life and survival in the desert. "I have brought food," Tanah says, and the pack relaxes.

"Food, food!" the pups chime brightly, pouncing onto the prey in a mass of tiny, wiggling furry bodies, sniffing noses and precociously big eyes. Maha, her smallest daughter, struggles to reach the food. She almost manages, only to be knocked down by a larger pup. One of Tanah's many grandsons. Daughters are worth far, far more. They are so precious because it's not one of her sons who will become her heir. It's to a daughters that she will one day pass on the leadership of the pack—

Tanah lunges. It takes a single moment of struggle and flailing limbs. The pup's skull is both hard and brittle beneath her. A red stain on her paws. Maha gets first bite. The other pups rush after he, eyes bright in their hunger.

"Mother?" Zaha asks, her voice small and her eyes wary. She knows what's happening, it was a long time coming. She stands tall, at eye level with Tanah... How small she was, once upon a time, a daughter from her first litter. Tanah still remembers nursing them: one, two... Five little girls. Now there is only Zaha left.

"We can do this the easy way or the hard way," Tanah says. "Your choice."

"Mother, let's find another way," Zaha begs, crouching down to plea. It only accentuates the bulge of her belly. Tanah has no mercy to give. Zaha's pups mean more hungry mouths: more mouths mean starving for Tanah's own pups.

Tanah dives for her, Zaha swipes back. But she is no match for Tanah, who is fiercer, more experienced and has no pups to protect. In no time, Tanah pins her down on the dusty sand. Zaha trembles, eyes wet and bright. The coo of Tanah's first pups on her breast, the startling joy in their eyes—

"You have until dusk to leave," Tanah says. "If I find you, I will kill you."

Zaha scrambles away, running through the hazy sand beneath the gaze of the sun. She was once so small—

Tanah is a mother, daughter and sister.  
But she is an alpha first and foremost.

**Chère Joséphine**

Cheryl Chen

*École Moscrop Secondaire*

le 16 octobre, 1939

Chère Joséphine,

Tu es mon phare dans mes moments les plus sombres et j'ai besoin de toi pour me guider à travers la tempête. Tu as toujours été à côté de moi, en m'ancrant au rivage quand tout ce que je voulais faire était de m'éloigner dans l'oubli. Les huit dernières années que nous nous sommes connus m'ont transformé en un homme plus fort. Sans la force et le confort que tu m'apportes au quotidien, je me serais sûrement effondré après les événements d'aujourd'hui. Oh, comme c'était décourageant de recevoir les nouvelles que j'ai reçues ce matin. Je vais vous raconter l'histoire.

Ce matin, je me suis réveillé avec une épaule douloureuse, mais je ne sais pas pourquoi. Quand j'ai quitté mon lit, j'ai aperçu mon reflet dans le miroir et j'ai été choqué de voir l'état dans lequel j'étais. Mes cheveux avaient été balayés sans grâce vers la gauche, tandis que mon pyjama s'était déplacé rigidement vers la droite. Mon apparence était aussi chaotique qu'un puzzle non résolu, ma chérie! Plusieurs nuages menaçants parsemaient la vue de ma fenêtre et obscurcissaient ma vue de Londres au loin. Quelle journée cela aurait été de visiter le centre-ville! Basile et moi avions prévu de rendre visite à notre ancien ami de travail pour déjeuner dans un club de jazz au bord de la Tamise, mais le temps bouleversant nous avait obligés à le remettre à plus tard. Je n'ai pas la moindre idée de la date à laquelle nous reportons.

Mais c'est quoi tout ça? Je ne voulais pas radoter pour une éternité comme ça. Joséphine, nous n'avons pas parlé depuis longtemps. Pas par téléphone, pas par lettres, et certainement pas en face à face, et je suppose qu'il n'y a personne à blâmer que moi-même. Joséphine, j'ai reçu une lettre par la poste après le petit déjeuner ce matin avec Basile, et j'ai senti que j'avais dû t'écrire immédiatement. Je vais m'en aller, et il pourrait briser ton cœur de savoir pourquoi, bien que je ne sois pas trop arrogant pour penser que l'état de ton cœur est toujours déterminé par mes actions. Mon pays a besoin de moi et je lui donnerai ma vie, comme je l'aurais dû te donner.

Joséphine, je suis désolé pour la douleur que je t'ai causée en te quittant et en déménageant à Londres. Je suis désolé de ne pas t'avoir contacté pour si longtemps après mon déménagement. Dis-moi que tu me pardonneras avant de partir. Joséphine, je t'aime.

Au revoir.

Cordialement,

Antoine Desjardins



### What If

Veronica Zheng  
*Burnaby Central Secondary*

Why do I feel ashamed?  
Guilty?  
Why do I feel the need to say sorry?  
Why did he do that and why do I feel weaker because of it?  
Why?  
He told me to smile.  
He commanded me to smile.  
And all I could do is sputter out a mere, "What?"

He looked away disappointed and displeased.  
The thought of him lifting up the corners of his lips burned into my mainframe.  
His pointed finger inches away from my face.

Why should I smile for you?  
Why should I bend my will to fit your needs?  
Should I get down on my knees and shine your shoes too?  
Don't tell me to smile.  
Don't tell me to give you something you don't deserve.  
My smile is not for you to keep in your pocket.  
It is not for you to engrave inside your head.

What if I had smiled?  
Would you have been happy then? Pleased with yourself?  
What if I had stood up for myself?  
Would it stop him from doing this to any girl ever again?  
What if he had enforced it? Went on longer than he did?  
Would we be in court? Fighting for my pride?

Would anything I could've done made any sort of difference?

These thoughts linger in my brain,  
much, much longer than they should've  
Floating down the endless casam of what ifs.  
Suffocating.  
Choked by my own anxiety.  
Treading the fine line between anger and sadness.

Don't tell me to smile.

### Dream of Her

Yuki Zhao  
*Burnaby North Secondary*

I had that dream again  
of almost reaching her  
a hand on her arm  
pulling her closer  
clouded eyes gazing into mine  
grasping at nothing but bubbles

I remember  
a pale blue wooden fence  
technicolor shadows dancing  
soft giggles  
and  
a glowing smile

Every time I call out to her  
Silence answers.

ethereal bubbles fill the air  
sparkling with a million colors  
gently suspended in the air

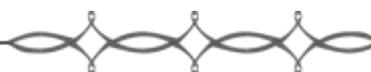
Indigo, Emerald, Gold, Ruby  
Colors and objects swirl around me  
The dances my  
sun across vision

Please  
Please  
Please

I see nothing  
I hear nothing

but

bubbles drifting free



**Tinted Blue**Sophia English *Burnaby North Secondary*

Kaleidoscope minds, burst open  
Spilling it's ravaging waves and thundering storms.  
Sparks fly, bouncing erratically in a beautiful cacophony  
Of technicolour alarms, forcing their grip onto me.

Your shushed comments race and spiral in my mind.  
They jump from screen to screen leaving traces  
Of spiral prints owned by those who call me a friend.  
Behind the smudged fingerprints and glass case,  
Lies our battlefield.

A war of send and receive,  
And blue lighted tears which gently splash,  
and wash over comment sections and screenshotted  
texts.  
We aren't children anymore.

**It had rained**James Wang *Burnaby North Secondary*

I remember the first time I saw you.  
Armed with just your bright smile,  
You stood fearlessly against the downpour.  
On that day,  
It had rained.

I remember the first time we talked.  
Captivated by your stories,  
I spent the entire day listening to your voice.  
On that day,  
It had rained.

I remember the first time we played together.  
Protected by nothing but our laughter,  
We jumped into puddles of mud.  
On that day,  
It had rained.  
I remember the last day we saw each other.  
Underneath the cloudless, azure sky,  
Your smile shone like the summer sun.  
The same smile you showed me the day we first met.  
On that day,  
Inside of heart,  
It had rained

**Where I'm From**Selwyn Gu *Burnaby North Secondary*

I am from my grandparents' porch,  
where no wood squeaks below my feet,  
and no grass greens my view  
An asphalt roof, smog looming,  
the hubbub of mahjong bubbling up through a  
drainage hole  
Certainly no paradise,  
but to me the difference is naught;  
my memories do blind me

I am from a garden in the concrete jungle,  
where vines of bitter gourd snake up walls,  
as if strangling them for sustenance  
Mixed with honey in a stir-fry,  
the fruits sprout melancholy,  
the nostalgia of my childhood  
Like the ants crawling among the leaves,  
I struggle through the midday sun,  
and look back to when things were better

I am from that old terrace,  
an asylum stranded in the past,  
washed away with the sands of time  
Bewildered, needy, I reach out to grasp what's  
left  
as the tide seeps through my fingers  
I am from my fondest memories, long gone,  
but now I stare into the blinding sunlight of  
tomorrow



## The Flower Picking Boy

Maggie Lu *Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

A boy wandered into a meadow of flowers  
Filled with blooming blossoms of the  
Loveliest hues he had ever imagined.  
The boy sought to find and pick the best, the  
Finest and the most beautiful in all the field.  
He searched, scoured, and sifted through,  
Until he cast his eyes on a flourishing  
Chrysanthemum, beaming under morning sunlight,  
Like a blushing maiden, flushed with rosy glow,  
A gleaming gem among the stones.  
As he reached for it, he hesitated, and wondered if  
Perhaps he would come upon another,  
One that was even more wonderful than the first.  
And so he continued on his quest,  
Looking high and low, near and far,  
While the sun began to set from above.  
Yet, none were ever quite as lovely  
As the chrysanthemum from before.  
So the boy turned around to retrieve it,  
Tracing back his steps to where it was found.  
But something was not right.  
He was greeted with a severed stem,  
Swaying headless in the wind.  
And he was heartbroken, for it appeared  
To have already been picked  
By someone else.  
And that night, the boy returned home  
Empty-handed.

## Kleptomania

Joe Luu *Burnaby North Secondary*

who doesn't love happiness?  
i wouldn't say it's greed,  
nor that i lack enough of it;  
it's more so that its just so,  
so easy to take.

after all,  
i love his tears  
that cannot quench my thirst.  
the saline solution dripping sand,  
tracing my throat,  
the neck of an hourglass.

and i love his cries,  
flooding music into my ears,  
reverberating through every crevice in my brain,  
the dwindling sanity bleeding  
his heart,  
dry.

and i love him,  
for the pain i am able to extort.  
it seeps into my veins,  
a catalyst blooming white lilies  
from my blood,  
tainted black with his bruises.

and when you hear these things,  
you'll look at me funny,  
and ask if i really love him.  
and i'll return your gaze with

"of course,  
i love him,  
because above all else,  
i love me."

## Home

Arianne Quon

*Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

Sunny days and sad nights,  
 Rainy mornings and clear skies.  
 I look out my window and watch the clouds pass by.  
 I remember  
 The way sunshine burned my head  
 Hot enough to cook an egg  
 When I frolicked in the fields  
 In front of my small blue house.  
 I remember  
 Boxes filled with memories,  
 Brimming with old stuffies and pictures  
 Of smiling children and happy parents,  
 Without a care in the world.  
 I remember  
 The sound of scratching in the wall beside me  
 The rats greeting me,  
 As I scribbled my homework from my grandmother's  
 basement.  
 Just wanting to be  
 Anywhere but there.  
 I remember  
 The scent of my new house,  
 Woody spirits floating up my nose.  
 The unfamiliar stairs and banister and rooms  
 wrapping through the space,  
 One that would soon evolve into  
 Home.

## Restroom Facilities

Nathan Jin *Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

A misty faculty shrouded in haze  
 Noxious fumes cloud my tentative gaze  
 I look to my left and I look to my right  
 Feeling uncovered, exposed in the light

Because there is a distinct lack of dividers  
 And everyday a new debacle transpires

Slick spills litter the festering ground  
 Not a single trace of cleanliness to be found  
 Trapping its denizens in an aura of depravity  
 Polluting the building like a rotten cavity

## The Tough Tooth

Donald Lin

*Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

I am a pearly white tooth.  
 At first glance, you may think that I am small and  
 inferior,  
 But, eventually, you'll encounter my enormous  
 enamel exterior.  
 Like "Dwayne the Rock Johnson," sturdy and strong,  
 While also being bright and beautiful like a song.  
 However, if you care to think of me more than a  
 simple player,  
 Then I may lead you to my soft dentin layer.  
 Once there, you will find that like the youth,  
 I am a really sweet tooth.  
 Denture even further in the blind,  
 Then one may find.  
 The place hardest to enter,  
 The pulp center.  
 As it is the thing that gives the tooth feelings,  
 And also handles all of my dealings.  
 I may always be seen on guard,  
 Since taking me down is not that hard.  
 So I always have to be weary  
 As things always seem to be eerie.  
 After all, it only takes a simple trap,  
 A snap,  
 A crunch,  
 To bring the end of lunch.  
 Signalling that once too many goodies are  
 consumed, I am absolutely doomed.  
 But don't be dismayed!  
 All it takes is one quick brush to aid,  
 Alongside some attention,  
 And some comprehension,  
 To prevent cavities from forming  
 And negative outcomes from swarming.  
 Finding someone may be rare,  
 But once you care I will become your most important  
 ally.  
 Helping you eliminate everything that comes by.  
 After all, it is my only crowning truth,  
 As a pearly white tooth.



## A Mirror's Perspective

Divya Parikh *Burnaby North Secondary*

I have seen you grow since you were a little girl.  
I have seen your mother tie your hair, your dad tell you to wipe the water around the sink and your brother try to make you laugh while you brush your teeth.  
I have seen the days where only your eyes could see me, and the good old days when looks didn't matter.  
I have seen you blossom into the beautiful young woman you are.  
The shaped eyebrows, tinted lips, and almond eyes just like your mothers'.  
I have seen you frantically dress up for dinners, applying foundation and shimmery gold eyeshadow to look alive and conceal the acne and dark circles, on your skin.  
Although sometimes blurred, I see the shower concerts and imagined scenarios you act out behind the safety of the closed bathroom door.  
I have stared back at your groggy eyes at six in the morning, as you regret your decision to ever apply for AP Capstone.  
I have seen your late-night jams, mirroring your bouncing movements to the music roaring through your ears.  
I have seen the silent tears run down your cheeks and cried with you in your moments alone.  
I have been there for you, to remind you of who you are, but there's something I wish I could say to you.  
I only show you what's on the outside, the simple synopsis of who you are, much like the cover of a book.  
Yes, I may show the dark circles under your eyes, but I don't show the late nights you've spent working to explain them.  
I may show the mascara or concealer you wear, but I don't show you why that day, in particular, you decided to wear it.  
Basically, my point is, is that I only show you what people see from the outside,  
I don't show your full story.  
I don't show your personality or your relationship with your family.  
I don't show the laughs you've shared with your friends or the immense amount of love you feel for them.  
I don't show the adventures you've endured or the stress you feel.  
I am simply the cover of your story.  
And that, my dear, isn't finished; on the contrary, it has only just begun.

## Banana Split Identity

Hannah Cui *Burnaby North Secondary*

I am not a "banana"  
Yellow outside, white inside.  
More like the unnerving stillness of calm waters quiet, obedient  
unbothered by pointed rhetorical that sink deep: "Where are you really from?"  
"if you're Chinese, why are you so different?"  
Asked "do you understand English? Chinese?" (Having spoken both languages all my life)  
As if one person can only have one thing and an entire race and culture could be shrunk down,  
compressed,  
described in three words, then tossed aside.  
Wondering when I stopped being angry  
and  
when it became okay.

## Artificial Heavens

Chloe Kuo *Burnaby South Secondary*

To my younger, travelling self,

I know that you admired the parakeets in the house of your friend. Covered by a feathered robe with black markings around their mantles, their azure chests rose and fell as they sang for you. Their eyes, like polish obsidian, reflected how much you were intrigued by them.

You have had a hawk standing on you and a snake slithering around your neck. But the golden talons only gripped your hat lightly, and the emerald scales only brushed over you gently. You smiled. The camera blinked.

You rode the elephants as they parted through the umber branches, leaving their marks in the guest books of the forest. You clapped when the red, yellow, blue trilled off of the paintbrushes at the end of their wrinkled trunks.

Koalas rested on your tiny shoulder. Their gray paws hugged your arm, and you hugged back. Their brown eyes scanned you wisely, and they chewed thoughtfully on the eucalyptus you gave them.

You have examined every detail of their feathers, scales, and fur closely and loved them. You thought your heaven would have them in it. But I want you to take a step back.

I know that you probably saw the bars in front of the parakeets. But did you hear their cry for freedom to spread their wings in their undersized cage? Did you know that their voices will never soar freely?

You will begin to notice the rusted chain on the hawk's leg and the tape on the snake's mouth. You will realize that those things were not supposed to be there. Reaching you was the farthest they will go in their remaining years.

You will learn that elephants' backs cannot sustain the weight of the bamboo chairs you sat on, and they did not know how to paint by nature. But they were too benevolent to overthrow the kings and queens that rode them every day.

The koalas were away from the predators that dance on the soil of the forest at night. But with that, they lost the chance to kiss the sky on the top of the eucalyptus trees. The chatters of people and the clicking of the cameras were the sounds of their new nature.

You will understand these later and want to forget them. But remembering is how you will learn to pull away from these artificial heavens. Remembering their feathers, scales, and fur, trapped in prisons, is how everyone will learn.

Hoping that you will understand soon,  
Your older self who learned from you.



## Arachnophobia

William Zhang

*Burnaby North Secondary*

My biggest fear in life is spiders, because of you.

You, a stain upon my life that leached upon my innocence. You, a beast that preyed upon others. You are a spider.

Your beautiful web of luxury and allure captivated the hearts of all. Your fragile creation drowned in morning dew, glistening in the sun. You stood in the center, bold black upon mild white. A figure in the spotlight who transfixed all gaze upon themselves. Yet you spoke with a delicate tone, as if you were to hide yourself from the world and I was the only one that mattered. You promised relief and freedom, but delivered pain and entrapment. The sweet torment you offered, distant and impossible, all except to me. Your lingering network riddled with the smell of greed and fervor that only I could smell stood everpresent, haunting me. While many observed your interlacing artwork with jealousy, I knew you spun your tantalizing web just to enslave my anguish. As you intertwined our emotions — your vengeful zeal and my secluded sorrow — you feasted upon the concoction sadistically, savouring the suffering.

I felt your unnerving presence as you crawled beneath my skin, your soul spawning a thousand tiny pieces within me. Each speck devoured me as I laid paralyzed. My vision red from blood and anger, my mind blue from death and sadness. But you were always there, beside me, comforting me as I resisted your embrace. I stared at you in these moments: a ravenous smile bearing your fangs as you patiently waited until I was exhausted, your monstrous eyes, a cold black void. The impartial thread blurred my vision and shackled my body, warm to the touch, absorbing my heart as I melted away and was consumed by you.

I remember when you were 10, how you would come visit me. Your eyes peering through the window of my soul. I would hear a tapping, rattling and shaking my shelter that protected me, yet no matter how hard I wished for you to leave, you would enter. You came bearing your sadistic gift: a torrent of malice. Each chord, each sound, echoed throughout the hollow home. I trembled at the lingering tone that assaulted me, praying for the cacophony to end. yet in those moments, I was enchanted by your disgusting beauty.

You're made like stained glass, each crack defining who you are. Imperfection stolen by you to fuel your suffering. You traverse with false confidence, the great pretender fooling all. Yet you are always in pain, feeling your pulse slowing as your own venom takes a hold of you. Your life flees as you consume the emotions of others, yet you pretend you will survive.

I realize now, your existence disturbs me, but your disappearance terrifies me.

## No Rush

Samantha Ma

*Burnaby North Secondary*

Our footsteps perfectly synchronized as we walked together, hand in hand. You may have been taking smaller steps to cater to me but it made me feel like a big girl, not needing to walk in doubletime to compensate for my short legs. I remember carefully stepping on each red cobblestone, leaping over any of the grey, a mismatched game of hopscotch. It was our ritual, the after school trip to Save on Foods on a quest for wedges before setting off to our final destination. I would bound from each white line of the crosswalk to the next, hurrying you along. “快啲啊麻麻 1 we’re gonna miss it, 倒啦！倒啦!2” referring to the big water wheel that spun in the park space behind your apartment.

It was always a race between me and time. On a lucky day, I’d arrive a minute early and be able to see the last drops drip, holding my breath not daring to blink as the bucket would tilt and the water fall. If I was unlucky I’d have to wait twenty-nine minutes more, sitting on the silver bench with you munching on my wedges, watching with the same anticipation. It didn’t matter to me either way. It added an element of surprise if we didn’t arrive right before or after the pour. I’d try to estimate the amount of time it would take based on how far the bucket was tilted. I’d always ask you to impart your wisdom “麻麻你覺得要幾耐啊?3” and you’d most often reply with “我哋有好多時間 4” I always wondered what you meant by this indirect answer.

It took me so long to find my answer. I didn’t have it when I moved schools and our after-school routine ended. Nor did I obtain any enlightenment going through each level of education and passing of each birthday. Not even when I outgrew you inch by inch. Oddly enough, I found it at the stoplight. When we stood together me supporting your weight, you now holding on tightly to me. When the walking sign flashed we stepped off the curb, we continued to walk as the red hand appeared, as the countdown started and ended from ten to one. “慢慢行,我哋有好多時間 5” I said, and we did. In that moment where I wasn’t jumping from one white line to another or in a rush, we had all the time in the world.

Now that I think back on it, I don’t think I had wanted a specific number of minutes and seconds. But if I could go back and tell six year old me a time I would say nine years. The amount of time you patiently waited for me to come to a realization. The answer I was looking for all along was the one you gave me. You’ve been raising me with love and in me you’ve instilled patience. Thanks Grandma.

- 
- 1 快啲啊麻麻 - Hurry up Grandma (paternal)
  - 2 倒啦！倒啦! - It’s gonna pour! It’s gonna pour!
  - 3 麻麻你覺得要幾耐啊?- Grandma how long do you think it will take?
  - 4 我哋有好多時間 - We have lots of time
  - 5 慢慢行我哋有好多時間 - Walk slowly, we have lots of time



## Puzzle

Samantha Ma

*Burnaby North Secondary*

“Say bye to your 公公 1, we’ve gotta leave now.” I pause mid-step to take a last look at the tomb and the foreign chinese characters carved in stone feeling confused. There, lying under the ground is my grandpa. Should I be feeling happy that I have seen him or disappointed to leave...Is it wrong to feel nothing at all? Why do you feel so unfamiliar now? I ask myself as I try to find that disconnect, my memories lost in translation into reality.

I remember as a child envisioning what you’d look like hard at work, eyebrows slightly furrowed, determined eyes just like my mom’s. I remember imagining what your chuckle would sound like, how you would ruffle my hair and pat me on the back in pride. I had built you up in my mind, completed the puzzle each precious piece of information I had collected from stories.

I witnessed the shock and the grief that others would feel after losing their grandparents. I was almost jealous of their ability to experience that moment because it meant at least that they had created memories together. I didn’t have the opportunity to experience that but I do have memories, you existed in my world though we never met.

Mom would put out some tea, fruit, cake and lit incense as offerings, she’d yell down the hall for me to “嚟拜一拜公公 2” and pay my respects. When I was small I would repeat after mom word for word, careful to pronounce each correctly. I was afraid that I would present myself as unfilial and wanted to speak Cantonese to you to the best of my ability.

Now that I am older, I know to kneel down, hands clasped together tightly, praying to you in my head. Having our own mini conversation, I never fail to always start with “公公我係文文呀 3” just in case you don’t recognize me and end with “公公 4 can you please protect and watch over us?” though I believe that you always have.

You were present all throughout my life. So why did I feel at such a loss looking at pictures where I could clearly identify the characteristics my mom, my aunts and uncles possess all in one person? In the grayscale photos I could recognize everyone, erased were their lines of age replaced with an air of youth and radiance. But you don’t look like I imagined, your face and identity a strange concept my mind tries to decipher. Now even worse, I have to comprehend that this sun-heated slab of rock at the mercy of the wind, rain, and seasons is you. My foot touches down onto the ground. This is another piece of the puzzle, I just have to find out where it fits.

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1 公公 – Grandpa

2 嚟拜一拜公公 - Come pray to Grandpa

3 公公我係文文呀 - Grandpa it’s me Sam

4 公公 - Grandpa

## The Blue Box

Gina Zhang *Burnaby North Secondary*

The large, blue toy box that sat in the corner of my room was always one that brought me joy as a child. It was filled with plastic dolls, lego bricks, and bits of dried clay that provided hours of blissful distraction.

For me however, the blue box did not only hold my playthings. Each time that five-year-old me opened the lid, stories curated by my imagination would burst out with vigor. The blue box was a magical, mystical portal leading into a world of purple skies and cotton candy clouds.

The dolls I found weren't just made of plastic, they had names and their own stories. They would dance and come to life when I held them to play. Those lego bricks were bricks of a castle that was ruled by the Queen of Gumdrops, only unfortunately, her palace was destroyed by an evil, green witch. The dried clay was feed for my unicorns, but only the pink chunks as the other colours would give them indigestion.

That blue box held more than just my toys. The roots of my imagination were embedded in this box. But sadly, as the years passed by, it slowly lost its magic.

The dolls were the first to leave when I accidentally left them on the playground after a day of show-and-tell. My mother, who had endured the pain of stepping on lego bricks one too many times, finally had enough and gave the sets of tiny blocks to my younger cousins. As for the dried clay, bits and pieces began to mysteriously disappear every time my dad brought out the vacuum cleaner.

As for myself, I too began to forget my imaginary world. Playtime transformed into piano practice and time for my fairy tales waned as school started to consume my life. By seventh grade, my life had erased any memory of the blue box, replacing them instead with math equations and scientific concepts.

The last time I was reunited with my blue box was the passing summer. With an enormous moving truck parked in the driveway, my dad and I had just loaded the last of the packed boxes into the trunk. Just as I was about to close the hatch, a tinge of blue caught my eye.

Blowing off a layer of dust, the vibrant blue colour brought me back to the depths of my cheerful childhood. I was immersed in a moment of ecstatic nostalgia as I lifted the plastic lid up in excitement, expecting to be transported into my world of happy endings.

Only, the world was gone, replaced by musky winter sweaters and faded jeans. Immensely disappointed, I slammed the lid shut, sealing away what seemed to be the remnants of my youth.

Coming to the realization that a chapter of my life was behind me was almost unbearable. My perfect world no longer existed, and my childhood was gone. It was then I discovered the first step of becoming an adult, letting go of the past.



4:00 pm

Avneet Minhas

Burnaby North Secondary

My phone reads 4:00 pm, I proceed to jingle my keys in an attempt to unlock my front door. The gloomy grey clouds feel as if they are hovering right over my head. The sound of the raindrops hitting the cold concrete, which seems to be all I can focus on. The keys fall to the ground, and at this moment, pushes me off the edge. Fueling with rage and anger, this day couldn't possibly get worse. I push open the door, walk inside, glance over to my right, and think...

Yet another long day at school, as I continue to drag my backpack behind me, I'm still anxiously waiting to go home and see my grandma.

"Hi, Badima! I'm home" I shout as I amble into my warm home.

Weirdly, she's nowhere to be seen, as she always patiently waits for me by the door. I look around in confusion and decide to go into her room. There she is, sitting on her bed, with a rather disgruntled look on her face.

"What's wrong?" I say as she sits in silence.

"You're late," she mutters.

I look over at the clock and notice the time, 4:00 pm. *I am late.* She knows that I was supposed to be home 30 minutes ago.

"I had a bad day, and missed the bus," I whisper while holding back tears.

I do not want to bother her with my problems, but as I try to leave and go to my room, she stops me.

"You missed the bus? Big deal! You know that it's not gonna matter tomorrow, so why cry about it today?" she says, patting my head in comfort.

She was right. I know that it doesn't matter, but for some reason, I can't drop it. I tell her I feel better in hopes that she lets me off the hook, but she knows me too well. She knows something is wrong, just like always.

"What if you look at it this way?" she begins.

"Every bad day you have, makes you appreciate the good days way more," she says as she wipes away my tears.

I sit on her carpeted floor, reflecting on the wisdom she bestowed upon me, realizing that all of my little problems aren't that bad after all. Though I decide not to tell her what happened today, suddenly it doesn't even matter.

"Thanks, Badima, you always know the right thing to say," whispering into her chest as she warms me with her embrace...

I wish it could be like this forever...

I see my Grandma's hollow, empty room. "Every bad day you have, makes you appreciate the good days way more," and somehow, in some way, the hollow empty room makes my heart feel full.

## Starlit Stories

Claire Scrimini

*Burnaby North Secondary*

As a child, whenever I was unhappy, my dad would take me to Burnaby Mountain. He would drive up the muddy road to our special place. We would lay in the grass and stare up at the stars in silence until I was ready to talk. I am so grateful to have a dad like him. Yet I marvel at the thought of his parents, my grandparents. What were they like?

"What was it like when you were my age?" I would say. He's told me about how he used boxes as a barrier to block his siblings view during arguments. He's told me about the large spiders he'd find outside his window. But hardly anything about his parents. I realized I knew very little about them and that he didn't want to talk about it.

I bottled up my questions for years, not wanting to make him uncomfortable. After all, he shouldn't have to explain anything he doesn't want to. With that mindset, it had been a while since I thought about it, until one day at work.

"Teacher, I have a question," says one of my ESL campers.

"Yes?" I say, assuming it is about the lesson.

"What are you?" he says.

"Do you mean what is my background?" I ask unsure.

"I am Korean, what are you?" he says.

"Ah yes! I am half Chinese and half French Canadian" I explain. He is fascinated by this and we chat about it for a while. He asks me questions like: "what do you eat" and "what is your family like?" I provide answers like "we eat poutine" and "they are kind". But, I too begin to wonder and the specifics. The boy presses for more information. But I don't have the answers. I have all the same questions.

I ponder this for the remainder of the day. Questions flood my mind, with answers nowhere to be found. I return home and spend the night drowning in my thoughts. I have been ignorant of my lack of information, so focused on the small bits that I did. Every year, the anniversary of my grandparent's marriage, birthdays and deaths pass, yet they are never given a thought from me, their granddaughter, simply because I don't know to. My background and my grandparents mean a lot to me. I want stories about them and our culture... I want to feel like I understand that side of me and like I know them. The emotions that I shoved down and ignored for all these years return. Tears flow down my face. The more I think, the more questions I have.

I don't want to make my dad uneasy. But I want to know more. After lots of deliberation, I muster up the courage to ask my dad. I drive us up to our special place on the mountain and we stare at the stars. I break the silence.

"Dad? I'd like to know more about my grandparents and my background."



## Another Day

Jennifer Wang

*Burnaby North Secondary*

I wake up to the echo of a ringing silence. My eyes struggle to focus on the blank canvas ceiling of my room. The misty morning fog of the outside illuminates through my glass windows, painting my white walls with a familiar ocean blue. I continue to lie in bed and engulf my head with the pillow, warming my face with every breath I take until I need a gasp of air. It was as if I was drowning, a heavy weight in my throat sinking down to my stomach, pinning my body to the bed. The Monday breeze fills my empty room, piercing through the blankets and onto my skin. I become numb and my mind begins to wander to a much simpler time.

I rest my head on the kitchen table, waiting for my mother to finish making her homemade dumplings. It is Chinese New Years and she has been prepping it for our kindergarten potluck. The fresh aroma of the seasoned cilantro and pork overwhelm my nose, leaving me afloat. I kick my feet in the air as I hear her turn off the stove, whilst the lids and plates clatter. I lift my chin up as she carries the finished dish out, prompting myself to ask if I could have just one bite.

“Ok, but just one.” She chuckles. My mom grabs a pair of chopsticks and feeds me a dumpling. As I bite down, the soup from inside scorches the surface of my tongue. I open my mouth to puff out the steam until the dumpling was cool enough to chew again. The warmth from the dumpling as I begin to swallow descends down into my stomach, enveloping me on a warm Summer’s day. The savoury richness lingers within me as the jabbing stings on the roof of my mouth entices me to eat more. My mom looks at me with a twinkle in her eyes.

“I’ll make more tomorrow for just the two of us.” My heart jumps in exhilaration, controlling my impatient little feet as they swing back and forth awaiting for the next day.

“Yay! Dumpling Day!” I exclaim. I hop off the stool as my mom holds my hand, and we walk towards the garage in which her car is parked.

I open my eyes to the deafening screech of my alarm. I groan as I try to snooze it, my body refusing to get up. “7:30 AM” it says in bold red. As I place my bare foot onto the surface of the nipping raw floor, I immediately jolt back into my blankets for comfort. However, I gradually get out of bed to change and get ready so that I could walk to school. As I step down the creaking stairs, I look towards my empty and expressionless kitchen.

“No time for breakfast again I guess,” I thought to myself. I put open the door to a gust of frost wind. After all, it’s just another day.

## Gratefulness

Tran Thien Kim Nguyen *Burnaby North Secondary*

Summer was the favourite season of mine, the time of my family. Slowly, I skateboarded to the beach under the brilliant rays of the warm sun that were embraced by the immense sky. The shape of the blue sky highlighted the bright yellow of the sun. It not only granted me the vibrant colours of the summer but also warm feelings. The sea gradually appeared in front of my eyes as I could smell the familiar scent. Immersed in seawater, I relaxed and enjoyed its lullaby and gentle waves. It was like the way my mother sang me to sleep with her sweet silvery voice and her bony hand softly touching my back and my head. Suddenly, I captured the smiles on my parents' faces, happiness filled me. Five days passed fast, and those days were the most treasured because they were only available briefly each year. My parents worked every day without vacations because they cared about my future but did not forget to care about me in the present. Diving in the ocean, I was full of admiration by its magnificence and plentifulness. Day by day, little by little, it made me feel blessed.

### SỰ BIẾT ƠN

Mùa hè là mùa yêu thích của tôi, thời gian của gia đình tôi. Chầm chậm, tôi trượt ván đến bãi biển dưới những tia nắng rực rỡ của mặt trời ấm áp được bao bọc bởi bầu trời mênh mông. Hình dạng của bầu trời xanh lam nổi bật màu vàng sáng của mặt trời. Nó không chỉ mang lại cho tôi những màu sắc rực rỡ của mùa hè mà còn mang lại cảm giác ấm áp. Biển dần xuất hiện trước mắt tôi khi tôi có thể ngửi thấy mùi hương quen thuộc. Đắm mình trong nước biển, tôi thư giãn và tận hưởng những bài hát ru và những làn sóng nhẹ nhàng của nó. Nó giống như cách mẹ tôi hát cho tôi ngủ với giọng hát ngọt ngào trong trẻo và bàn tay xương xẩu nhẹ nhàng chạm vào lưng và đầu tôi. Đột nhiên, tôi bắt gặp những nụ cười trên khuôn mặt của bố mẹ tôi, niềm hạnh phúc tràn ngập tôi. Năm ngày trôi qua thật nhanh, và những ngày đó là quý giá nhất vì chúng chỉ có trong một thời gian ngắn mỗi năm. Bố mẹ tôi làm việc mỗi ngày mà không có kỳ nghỉ vì họ quan tâm đến tương lai của tôi nhưng không quên quan tâm đến tôi ở hiện tại. Lặn trong đại dương, tôi đầy thích thú bởi sự tráng lệ và phong phú của nó. Ngày qua ngày, từng chút một, nó làm tôi cảm thấy biết ơn.



**I am Not a Liar**Ella White *Burnaby North Secondary*

dear stranger,

do you even know about me?

do you know, one day i woke up and he was gone with you? just the night before, i was asleep in his lap. his hands were in my hair, everywhere. undoing me, and undoing me and erasing me. just the night before, he told me he loved me.

if he touched me again, would i disappear for good? no. not again.

dear stranger,

see, he has this game we play where power equals love. do you know he will use you and use you until you are a girl made of paper? and paper girl, he owns a pair of scissors.

he told me it's all my fault. he told me that he got over me 'so fast,' because i'm just 'pathetic, really.' tell me how you are to blame a person for caring. tell me how you are to blame a person for hurting when someone leaves. sometimes, when he swore at me, i thought he could love me. i know those words so well. i used to nurture the thought of them.

dear stranger,

i know him so well. he will shower you with gifts and compliments and comparison. he will dance with you in the kitchen. he told me he hated nose rings and liked black hair. and he might tell you he loves your piercing and likes it blond now. you and i, we would never know who he was lying to.

he loved fried rice with fried eggs cooked all the way through, orange pekoe tea, lego. i touched the back of his neck and he shivered. we walked through the creek behind our houses almost every day. i put my chin in that dent in his chest and he jerked back. when we sat outside in the summer, i sat on the side with the spiders. i memorized his hands.

dear stranger,

i looked into the eyes of what used to be the sun, and the arctic ocean jumped back at me, spraying me with all of its nothing.

i returned the coldness.

dear stranger,

you are the person you never thought you'd be. i've never been so good. caring doesn't make you weak. loving the wrong people doesn't make you weak. being angry doesn't make you strong.

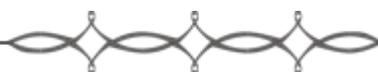
but i will never forgive. i don't have to be angry to do that.

dear stranger,

he can hate me. he can make you hate me. and there is no difference between the two. but it doesn't make either of you strong.

and sometimes, i'm stuck remembering the things i've done, the way his hands could have killed me. i just want to save you. because in this world, men pit us against each other. if we are so busy competing against each other, we will never look at them.

so i look at him.



## Catharsis

Sherrill Li *Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

Trudging through the sunlit desire path of an otherwise dense, darkened forest, my spirit lingered on a fine line between deliberate and automatic. I yearned to see another living creature, rather than imagine the birds that sang with abandon, far from the reaches of my swimming gaze.

The intervals of my trek lengthened. Feet screaming for a rest, I stumbled on, wondering when I'll collapse into disrepair. Perhaps I continued moving just to find a suitable place for my body to rest forever, thoughts of survival discarded. I would've faded away had my winding path not opened up to this strange dome embedded in the earth.

Their voice rang through the forest clearing, muffled sunny tone distorted as though underwater. My heart pulsed again when I registered a sadness trickling into my veins.

"Come, come sit with me awhile."

Before I could consider, my legs trembled and gave out beneath me, leaving me face-to-face with the entity that held a momentary command on my physicality. Enough time had passed after the dome's request for me to question the soundness of my hearing, but the exhaustion now grappled me like a vice, so I couldn't leave even if I desired to.

"You must have been lonely, wandering here so long." Although the dome's voice crackled in its tinniness, its tenderness dug deep under my skin, lifting my hairs and moistening my eyes.

I nodded, unsure if I'd be seen. Another pause.

Simplistic lines carved into the dome's worn bronze surface resembled smiling eyes. I became so deprived that even this metal scrap, moss-quilted, was an old friend.

"Stay a while, regain yourself, I will keep you company."

The dome shared with me their plethora of knowledge in a way I could only dream of recreating. In their soil, they recited histories of human rejoice and tragedy with such comfortable flair I couldn't deduce whether it was all mythos or truth. I wondered briefly if there were others already aware and appreciative of this storytelling.

As my mind flooded with names and ideas, the spell of that rhythmic voice lowered me into unconsciousness.

I slept blanketed in soothing nothingness for maybe hours to days; the dome told me nothing about the passage of time when I roused feeling reborn.

"Who are you?" I asked with long-forgotten clarity.

The dome's voice was hardly a murmur, different from the power it held over me earlier, and I found myself missing it. "That doesn't matter anymore."

I was given details about a settlement nearby; if I continue this path, I was sure to encounter it and be met with more humanity in one place than I've ever seen before. The dome told me there would be other intelligent machines like them as well, though they never explained how they had been stranded here, alone. The weight of all the despair I've collected in my hazy memory of living was relinquished from my chest, though I suspect it'd been for my lichened friend's sake.

With a satisfied fizzle of static, the dome fell into a deep repose.



## Too Deep to Turn Back

Amneet Nagra *Burnaby North Secondary*

2 Chlorines plus 3 Hydrogens- my thoughts were interrupted by the echo of my mother's heavy footsteps.

"Grab your stuff we're heading to Grandma's," she croaked. There was a slight shimmer in her hazel eyes.

"No way! I have a Chemistry test tomorrow, and I'm nowhere near done studying. Just go with Papa. Besides, I saw her yesterday."

"It wasn't a question! I'll see you in the car."

I frantically zipped up my pencil case, threw my notebooks into a bag, and bolted towards the vehicle.

The wooden door swung open, the house was filled with the laughter of my loving family and the smell of fresh deep-fried Indian cuisine. However, I needed to study. I kicked off my scuffed shoes, and like always, I immediately turned left to grab the smudged silver door handle; entering my Grandma's room.

*I had no time to waste.*

My Grandma was not like yours. I can't remember the last time she got up and gave me a hug, took me to the park, or served me a scrumptious three-course meal. My Grandma has always been in her bed, surrounded by everything and anything leopard-printed, and her beloved chai.

I closed the door. This was not my Grandma's room anymore. No chai, no leopard print in sight. The room felt empty, but it was just an illusion. It was crowded, aunts, uncles, and strangers all perched around her. They greeted me with various head nods, and warm hugs. I approached her bedside as she slept peacefully, gave her a sufficient hug, and then left the room.

I sat on the fuzzy grey carpet, with a mouth-watering samosa in hand. Everything felt normal, I was eating, surrounded by my cousins cracking jokes, just like always. Licking the edges of my plate clean, it was time to study. I laid out my notes, stuck in my headphones, and started to balance the pointless equations. I remained clueless of my surroundings until I heard my Grandpa's voice. It wasn't as sturdy as it usually was, a slight tremble in-between his words.

"Hey Choll! [1] Come here."

My brother gazed into my puzzled eyes, I shrugged. The walk to Grandma's bedroom was quiet. There was nobody in the kitchen, or living room anymore. With a turn of the door handle, my life was no longer the same.

The tiny room was dead silent, only the sound of her weak breathing. *Something was wrong. Something I didn't understand?* Or something I didn't want to understand? My mother, with tears streaming down her cheeks, motioned me to sit next to her. I received stares of pity as I tiptoed over to her. Wide-eyed, I couldn't believe what I was seeing, her pale skin, her body frail. This wasn't my Grandma. Everyone had a hand touching her, if she couldn't see us. My mother took my limp hand and placed it on my Grandma's cold shoulder. I could feel her last breaths, and just like that, I was out of time.

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[1] Chol translates to rice in Punjabi, that's what he calls his many grandchildren.

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