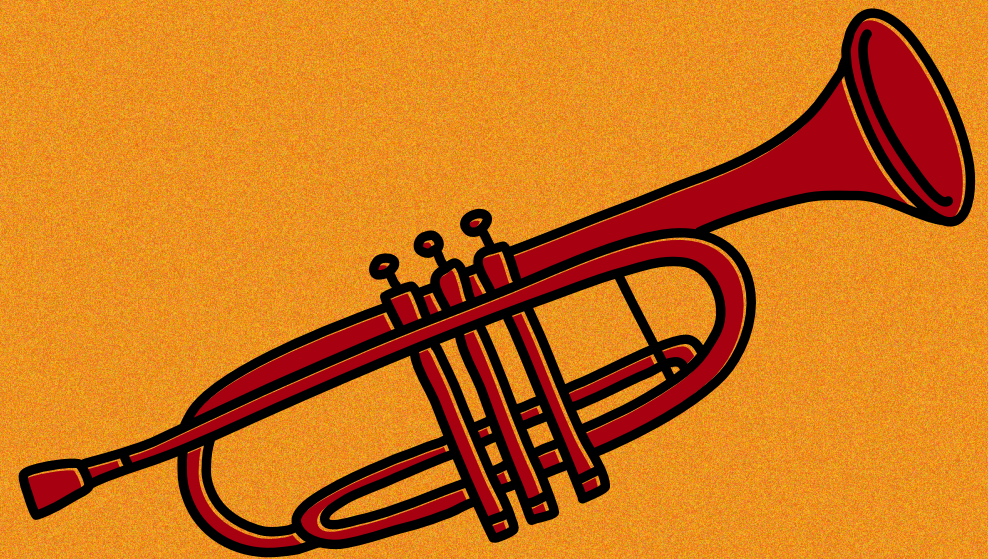


AND WE CREATED WORLDS

The mission of Lighthouse Writers Workshop is to provide the highest caliber of artistic education, support, and community for writers and readers of all ages in the Rocky Mountain Region and beyond. We strive to ensure that literature maintains its proper prominence in the culture, and that individuals achieve their fullest potential as artists and human beings.

The Young Writers Program at Lighthouse connects children and teens to literature, new friends, and a writing community. Our workshops, whether at Lighthouse or at one of our dozens of partnering sites, are taught by published and award-winning authors and are designed to foster creativity and self-expression and to empower youth to find their voices through creative writing.

This is the program's eleventh published anthology.



LIGHTHOUSE YOUNG WRITERS ANTHOLOGY 11.0
2020

And We Created Worlds

Editor

Assistant Editor

**A LIGHTHOUSE WRITERS WORKSHOP
YOUNG WRITERS ANTHOLOGY
VOLUME 11**

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ISABELLA ARMSWORTH

5TH GRADE • MYTHOLOGY SUMMER WRITING CAMP

The Daughter, the Father, and the Altar

My father had warned me about this, though I am still shaken when I think of the day when he abandoned me. He was willing to kill to save himself. Well, look how that turned out. Now I am up in the heavens looking down at the world that was once my precious home. Now it is a wreckage. I am one with the stars because of what he did to me, my life, and my heart. This is the story of me, my civilization, and my father's death.

It was a normal day. I was walking along the dusty streets when my mother came rushing towards me, tears streaming down her cheeks.

"Daughter, your father has news," she said, trying to hold back the pain in her voice.

I walked to our cabin, and my father was waiting at the door. He looked serious and fearful, aspects of my father I did not usually see in his hazel eyes. He opened the door, and I went to his room. He entered the room and sat down nervously, unlike his placid self.

"The water is low, the crops are bad, and a ritual killing must be made. Prisoner blood will not work this time. You are the one we have chosen."

Everything froze; my brain was protecting me from the truth. Suddenly, I could not push down my emotions, and anger exploded out of me. Fury ran through my veins. I glared into his wrinkled, fake-sad face, with all of the hate I could muster. I ran out of the house to the Altar of Blood, where people are killed to appease the Sepelio. The many names of the people who have been sacrificed there are written on the stone in their own dried blood. Only four names were legible, because the names were layered on top of each other. I realized with a grimace that, in a week, my name would be there, too.

The names were Meric Salc, Nori Flame, Deric Alcog, and Lea Ipo.

My father had sacrificed his mother (Lea Ipo) for no reason, except

the hope that he would never be punished. The other names were prisoners. Wanting to escape from my dread and be isolated from my father, I went to my cave in the depths of a canyon. Few go there because of the steep climb down. I walked upstream to where they throw the hearts of the ones they sacrifice to the Sepelio. The Sepelio was the reason my grandma was dead. I would never feel pity for him.

“I am one of the few who does not believe in the Sepelio,” I said to the stream. I held my breath and dove. I saw blood red sand and almost choked with horror and grief. I came up to the surface, my salty tears mixing with the freshwater. I trudged back to the village sopping wet. I thought that I should have a word with the priest. I went to the cabin of worship and looked the shuddering priest straight in the eyes.

“Are you really going to chop me up?”

“I am afraid so.”

“Yes, you look afraid.”

“I did not mean it like that.”

“Well, it is not my fault that you will be punished for all of your crimes.”

“I will serve the chief until my dying days.”

I slapped him and rushed to my father’s home. The days that followed rushed past very strangely. All I could see were people looking, staring, pleading, hoping. Some hoped not to be punished, others hoped that I could live. But I knew the truth; the end was coming.

When the day came, I laid down on the altar quietly, knowing the end had come at last. Strangely, I felt that this was my fate. I did not care if I died or not. Looking up at the temple, I knew that it was time for my proclamation. At that moment, I did not care about pain or hate or sadness. I felt nothing but calm. I listened to the birdsong that made a trio with the drops of rain and the buzzing insects. I knew what to say and feel and act. I felt that the truth must be shared with the world, and so I spoke my words: true words straight from my heart. I knew that my father did not and would not care anything about others if it did not benefit him.

“Father has killed for no reason. He killed countless, including his mother, even though the Sepelio is not real. I want my last words in this world to make you remember the daughter, the father, and

the altar's story. Love will win every time against evil. You will remember me. Let me rest in peace," I said to my civilization. Some people took my words to heart, others were infuriated.

The dagger comes down. Pain, all I can feel. Blood, all I can see. Let me die. Pain, pain, pain.

Suddenly, I felt myself rise into the stars, where I could look down at the world in peace. All my pain and sadness were gone; they had vanished completely. I watched sadly as my town, father, priest, and civilization were torn to pieces by the Sepelio. The Sepelio was our destroyer, after all. I became what you know as Ursa Minor; my grandmother is Ursa Major. I now live in the tranquility of the stars and sky. I am one with the stars, like my grandmother used to tell me. I am reunited with my grandmother in the blissful, bittersweet silence and calm of my world.

ROSE ARMSWORTH

7TH GRADE • MYTHOLOGY SUMMER WRITING CAMP

The Myth of Set and Osiris

I'm the good guy. Seriously! —The REAL myth of the awesome god, Set, and his evil brother, Osiris.

Told by Set

Your schools get it all wrong. They make it seem like I'm a bad guy. That's ridiculous. Me? Evil? No way. Whoever got that idea is ridiculous. I loyally served Ra for millenia, traveling with him and protecting him each night as he voyaged to battle Apophis. Who ensured that the sun would rise every morning? Me. Does that matter to anyone? No. I'm just "mean old Set, who evilly killed his brother, Osiris." Then the Greeks came along and associated me with Typhon. Don't even get me started on the Greeks. Big bullies. Athena always nags me about how stupid I am. Dionysus insists on throwing better parties than me. Zeus is always trying to overthrow me and rule Egypt himself. Why? He gets Greece and Rome, and all I get is measly old Egypt.

Anyway, my image changed from that of a hero to chaos. UGH!!! You mortals got it all wrong! I did you a favor by killing Osiris. Seriously! Don't believe me? Well, here's the whole story.

Osiris had been ruling Egypt for several years, but it was clear to me he was doing a terrible job. I mean, everything he decided to do was bad!

Seriously! Every choice he made was a bad one!

And, no, I was not just mad at him for kicking me. Or making a fool of me in front of the council of gods. Or for having an affair with my wife, Nephthys.

No! I was completely motivated by wanting to make Egypt a better place! So, I decided to take action. Osiris had to go. I came up with a scheme a kind and generous way to remove Osiris from the throne.

I had a beautiful casket made, tailored to Osiris's measurements. Honestly, it would have been a treat to die in it! Then I threw a

grand party to celebrate his downfall and, after the banquet, told all my guests that I had a surprise for them.

I had one of my servants bring out the chest, and told everyone that whomever fit perfectly inside the casket could take it home. It was so beautiful everyone wanted to try to fit. No one could fit inside. Except Osiris. The second he was inside, I painfully shut the lid on him and threw the casket into the Nile. Osiris always loved the Nile. He should have been happy to die there.

Then, once Osiris was disposed of, I took the throne of Egypt. Some sources will tell you I was a “Chaotic and Unpredictable Monarch” or that I “Brought storms and droughts.” Some people even say I “Turned people against each other!”

Ridiculous! Why would I do such a thing?

I was an excellent ruler. Unfortunately, Isis was a tiny bit mad that I killed her husband. She searched the entire world for his body, and eventually found it in a city called Byblos. You see, while I’d been running the Hunger Games being the excellent ruler of Egypt, Osiris’s coffin had washed up on shore and turned into a tree. The king of Byblos could sense the tree’s power, and he had it brought to his palace. Isis convinced him to give her the tree, and she retrieved Osiris’s body.

She hid him in a swamp and went looking for a way to revive him. Now, I couldn’t just sit there and let Osiris be reinstated as a terrible king. So, I chopped up Osiris’s body, and hid the pieces in the 43 nomes. Isis found all but one. The last piece of Osiris had been swallowed by a fish.

Without all of the pieces of Osiris’s body, he could never be fully brought back to life. Partially alive, Osiris couldn’t remain in the mortal world, so he became ruler of the dead. With him out of the way, I kept the throne. I could continue to be a just ruler of Egypt for as long as I saw fit.

Little did I know that his son, Horus, would soon come and try to take the throne back...

MARTINA BECERRIL

7TH GRADE • THE HAUNTED BOOK WORKSHOP

The Olympian Ghost

Adira loves to swim. She feels as though she is free anytime her feet touch the water. Adira likes to swim so much that she's on her school's swim team. Adira likes to go to her neighborhood's pool to practice for tournaments. She usually goes to the kid's pool but today she wanted to be daring. She went to the lap pool where legend says a girl haunts the pool. So Adira shrugged off her fear, grabbed her gear and dived into the pool. The water felt strangely warm, not cold like other pools do. As Adira began to swim a POP noise sounded and a ghost girl was in the pool too.

The ghost looked harmless with her long black hair and white bathrobe. Curiously, the ghost girl emitted this strong silvery glow around her, not white like most ghosts do in stories or movies. The ghost girl narrowed her eyes: "Well, you came to my pool, now show me your skills," she said. Adira, who did not like trouble, responded, "All right I will." Adira took a deep breath and began to swim free-style. She finished and reached the wall. She turned to look at the ghost girl. "Well, you are a good swimmer, I have to admit. I will give you an option. Pass this swimming test and I will reward you, OR I will kill you if you fail and do not agree to do this test," the ghost girl said. Adira frowned, wondering how a ghost could kill her, but quickly stopped when the ghost girl yelled "GO!"

Adira swam freestyle, butterfly, dolphin, sidestroke and breast-stroke—pretty much all the strokes in swimming. She finished with a gasp. The ghost girl floated over wearing a grin on her face. "Congrats, you passed and deserve an award!" The ghost girl reached into her pocket and fished out a beautiful gold necklace with a swimming girl on it. "This necklace has the power to help you win every swimming tournament. It helped me when I was alive. But I give it to you now."

Adira thankfully accepted the necklace and clasped it on her neck. "Thank you, um, what is your name?" Adira stuttered. The ghost girl

smiled saying, “That is the mystery,” and vanished with a WHOOSH! Adira climbed out of the pool and went back home thinking about the ghost girl until the day of her tournament. Her coach asked for a word with her and said “That necklace you are wearing was the necklace of Ladislav, our best Olympic Champion. But she passed away.” “Oh, I, um, bought this from an antique store,” lied Adira. “Well good luck,” her coach said, walking away. “Ladislav! That was the ghost girl I met at the pool!” thought Adira. The most famous Polish Olympic swimmer!

LADISLAV!

KATIE BERGSIEKER

7TH GRADE • FOR THE GIRLS SUMMER CAMP

Bruises

Bruises. You can't always see them, but they are always there.

I have many from various people and things. Soccer, gymnastics. Falling down, getting into fights. Bruises on my heart left by friends who ignore me. But the biggest reason why I have the majority of my bruises is Dad.

I should start from the beginning. My name is Ruth Holland. I am an only child and live with my mom and dad. I think that I love them, although I'm not sure. My mom is nice, but she really doesn't have strong opinions about anything. This is the exact opposite of my dad, who has an opinion about everything. And his opinion is usually a bad one. I'll explain later.

Of course, being an anti-feminist, my dad wants me to follow his footsteps and be an anti-feminist as well. I know that anti-feminism isn't right. When I tell my dad to quit his hateful remarks, his face turns amethyst purple. His eyes start to bulge out of his head.

One time when I was five years old, Dad was whispering these horrible things about women into my ear as we walked by thousands of them. "Dad," I said, "Those things aren't true! Women are just as good as men!" His eyes bulged out of his head. His face grew purple and more purple. And then he marched us home, away from the women.

Back at home, he grabbed a chunk of my hair and yanked it out of its roots. "Say that again, Ruth, and you will be facing consequences that will hurt you."

I gasped and looked imploringly at my mom.

"He wants to hurt me," I said, shocked. She shrugged.

Did she even care about my life? I stormed off. At the end of it all, I heard Mom say, "Ronald, that's not nice. But it's okay for now," and then walk out of the room to resume binge-watching YouTube.

I try to forget that. I focus myself on being the best person, today. Right now, the sun is shining like a big, yellow grapefruit in a peony blue sky. I quickly pull on my favorite green shirt because I have

a feeling that it is going to be a great day. I start humming and am prepared to come downstairs for breakfast.

I am interrupted when my door flies open. It's Dad. He hands me a whiteboard. "Write: 'This is what an anti-feminist looks like' on that," he says gruffly. No "good morning" for his only daughter, either, I must point out.

I don't want to argue with him, so I succumb and write those words. I have to admit that I have a slight hope that Dad will tell me to throw out the sign and say that he is a feminist after all.

Dad studies the sign. "Add a smiley face," he says in his gruff growl. I do as instructed. "Come with me," he insists, and I follow, half-paralyzed in fear.

We pass by Mom in the kitchen, feet propped up on the table while sipping her coffee. She ignores us, like usual.

Dad walks outside and turns left, beckoning me to follow. "Stand here," he says, pointing to a cement wall right between our house and Gardenia Street, the busiest street here in New York. The spot he has picked is exposed just enough that cars driving by can see someone standing there, and people in the neighborhood houses surrounding the street can as well.

Dad hands me the anti-feminist sign. "Hold this lovely sign up to your chest. Smile! Perfect."

I am now struck with a realization of such magnitude that the world dangerously sways. Dad wants *me* to hold a sign stating that *I* am an anti-feminist. He wants me to hold a sign full of lies.

"You'll stay there holding that sign for three hours," he says.

Seconds and then minutes pass, with me still holding that horrid sign. The paparazzi come and snap a gazillion photos of me. Friends gape at me. All this time I have to stand with a counterfeit smile on my face.

Finally, it's too much. I run back to our house. Dad, yelling, follows.

"You haven't even done three hours, yet, stupid girl!" he cries, whacking me with his belt.

I escape and run up to my room, gently pressing on the bruise that has embedded itself into my back. It will go away. But the bruise, the tear, in my heart that Dad implanted will never, ever, fade.

KATE BESTALL

10TH GRADE • HIGH SCHOOL SUMMER WRITING INTENSIVE

Bleeding Stars

When I woke up, I opened my eyes to dust and rubble. I blinked a few times, both to see better and to make sure I wasn't still dreaming. I tried to raise my head, but it wasn't long before I laid back down again. Great stars, *everything* hurt.

"Oh, good," a voice said softly. "You're finally awake."

I turned very carefully to look at the person talking, wincing as a jolt of pain went through my body. "What?"

The voice turned out to be the mysterious girl from earlier. She was sitting next to me, biting her lip as if she was considering what to say. "I'm sorry," she said at last. "Do you remember what happened?"

"Not really," I said hoarsely.

She nodded, as if she'd expected that answer. "There was... a rebel attack. An explosion." Her voice was much gentler than it had been earlier.

"The rebels never attack this far north," I said quietly. Even though, clearly, they had. "And not so soon after the last one."

"I'm sorry," Mysterious Girl said again.

"Where's my sister?" I asked, alarmed. "Lyra. Looks a lot like me, but about a foot shorter with brown hair." I looked at Mysterious Girl hopefully, but the look in her eyes told me everything I didn't want to see.

"She—" Mysterious Girl paused. "She was taken by the rebels."

"No," I said. "No. That doesn't make sense." My world was crashing down right in front of me— quite literally. "Why would the rebels take her? She's a child."

Mysterious Girl looked at me sympathetically. I wanted to rake my nails down her face for that look. Maybe that wouldn't help Lyra, but it would sure as hell make me feel a little better. "Yes," she said quietly. "She is a child. And she is very powerful."

I stiffened. "No. Lyra's not powerful— she's great at so many things, of course, and she's such a good pianist, but she— she's not

magical.” I spat the word out like it was poison. To my lips, and to everyone in the villages nearby, that word *was* as good as poison.

Mysterious Girl had yet another look of pity on her face. “Do you remember what happened to Selene?”

I blinked. *Everyone* remembered what happened to Selene. That had been one of the first attacks anywhere close to here. “Oh.”

She nodded. “They took your sister.” She pressed her lips together. “I’m sorry. I wish I could’ve stopped it.”

“You *should’ve* stopped it,” I said. The words were harsh, but they fell out of my mouth before I could stop them. It wasn’t fair to her to say that. After all, she *had* tried to warn me. I was the one who hadn’t listened. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean that.”

Mysterious Girl nodded, but she still looked hurt. “We need to get out of here.” She held out her hand for me.

I glanced at her hand and then her face, considering whether or not to trust her. It didn’t seem I had much of a choice. “What I *need* is my sister,” I said.

“I know,” she said. “I know. But right now, I’m all you’ve got.”

I nodded, then took her hand. She helped me up. I stood (rather unsteadily) on my feet, but at least I was standing.

“The rebels will come back,” Mysterious Girl said simply. “To clear out everything from here. We need to be gone when they do.”

“Where are we going?”

“A safe place,” Mysterious Girl answered, smiling slightly. It was the first time I’d seen her smile.

“Is my sister—is she going to be okay?” I asked. I didn’t really want to hear the answer.

Mysterious Girl bit her lip. “Maybe. If she’s lucky, they’ll decide that she’s not powerful enough and leave her at whatever village they happen to stop by.”

“And if she’s not?” I held my breath.

Mysterious Girl turned away from me. “If she’s not,” she said, quietly, deliberately, “then she’ll end up fighting for them. And there’s no way of getting her back then.”

I swallowed, trying to ignore that last part. “But if she is lucky—then is there any way I could find her?”

Mysterious Girl frowned. “Maybe. Probably not, though. And

she has a very small chance of being lucky.”

I nodded. It didn't matter. No matter what it took, I was going to get my sister back.

“Are you ready?”

“Yeah,” I said, looking around at the broken remains of what had been my home. “Yeah, I'm ready.”

ISABELLA CARTER

8TH GRADE • SHORT STORY CLUB SUMMER CAMP

The Empty Desk

It had only been a month, yet it felt so much longer. The students no longer talked; they just sat in a vacant silence, eyes staring unseeing at their black computer screens.

The door whooshed open and the children, without so much as a whisper, turned their heads to the doorway as one. The unexpected visitor was dressed in a worn-out black t-shirt, faded jeans, and Nike sneakers. He had on a maroon baseball cap that read “Washington Capitals” in flowing blue script. He was tall, much taller than the teacher that was the cause of the students’ dead souls. He had a lively smile and electric blue eyes. There was a collective inhale, the first noise any kid had made since his arrival, as the robotic students remembered the last teacher had similarly dazzling eyes. The guest plopped his colossal maroon bag on the carpet next to the teacher’s desk and relaxed in the plush chair, crossing his legs comfortably as he scanned the sea of detached expressions. When he spoke, it was with a deep, booming voice.

“Well, then. My name is Mr. Ruson. I will be your temporary teacher, and I previously worked for the Bristow Chronicles. That was before that dirty job-stealing Rylee came and whisked my job away,” he added in a sinister mutter.

“It has come to my attention that this classroom is a new article waiting to be copied down. Because of your, ah, unique story, my article will become nationally famous. It’ll be my prize-winning scoop—so phenomenal that the Chronicles will be on their knees, pleading with me to come back. And *you* lucky kids will have teachers lining up at your door, begging to teach you. So, now I’ll interview one of you, and once I’m done, a new teacher will come, and you can go back to learning! Deal?”

At the prospect of a new teacher, the students’ faces immediately lit up with joy. It was the most emotion shown on any of their faces since The Incident. There was an overwhelming chorus of agreement

and Ruson's face split into a thrilled grin. He pulled out a dark blue notebook and a black ballpoint pen and flipped the notebook past many full pages of cramped writing to a blank page.

"So, who wants to go first?" A small whoosh of air accompanied all the student's hands shooting up. Ruson's smile broadened, but it faltered when they all started talking as one in a monotonous voice.

"It was a regular day. Our old teacher, Mrs. Sough was the only difference. When we walked in, she was talking into her phone with worry etched into her face." The students paused, lost in thought, causing Ruson to glance up from his writing with the faintest trace of concern.

"When she heard us coming in, she fixed a cheery smile on her face, but her eyes were still full of worry. She hung up abruptly, and class continued as usual. No one thought anything more of it.

"It was at about 11:00, straight after lunch when it happened. The first of us entered our classroom and our blood ran cold—" A few students shivered in fright, but they spoke through their terror. "Mrs. Sough was bleeding uncontrollably on the floor, her face a ragged mess of blood and flesh. And crouched beside her, with a maniacal grin on her face, was Lucille Major." The students stopped and Ruson looked up from his frantic scrawling. He saw fear in the student's eyes, but what demanded his attention was a girl with long blond hair gliding swiftly down the aisle of desks to Ruson. She had a frenzied grin on her smooth, pale face. Ruson realized his fate too late and scrambled to his feet, knocking over the desk in his rush to the door.

But in his path was another kid. The student, built like a football player, trembled with terror but stood firmly in front of the door. The kid's bottom lip quivered as he mouthed *I'm sorry* to Ruson.

The ghost of a shriek escaped Ruson's lips before the inhuman girl descended upon him. The kid let one tear slide down his cheek silently before quietly shuffling to his seat.

Lucille looked up with horrible satisfaction, surveying the class. Everyone cast their eyes downward, hiding their overwhelming horror. "John. Lydia. Help me clean up." John's eyes were the only sign of how repulsed he was as he scurried to drag Mr. Ruson's dead body into the closet, piling it atop a mound of bloody bodies, including poor Mia Lynson, once his classmate, who was murdered to scare

the students into silence about The Incident. Lydia heaved the desk upright with shaking arms, straightening the pens and cups atop.

“Just in time!” Lucille crowed triumphantly as they heard the telltale clack of a new victim’s heels down the hallway. John, Lydia, and Lucille scrambled to their seats as a new teacher stepped in from the hallway.

“Well, then. My name is Ms. Fall, and it has come to my attention that this classroom is in need of a teacher. I will be your temporary teacher, and I previously worked for Bristow High. That was before that dirty job-stealing Brendan came and whisked my job away,” she added in a sinister mutter.

JONAH CHANG

3RD GRADE • MAKE YOUR WORDS SING FROG POETRY • GREEN GABLES ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Glass Frog

Glass frogs are transparent.
Lizards wish they could be you
Amazing adaptation
Small, silent and still
Small eggs are cool.

Fun frog.
Rainforest canopy
Oh, how I wish I could see you
Glass frogs are cool!

LILIA DECKER

5TH GRADE • PROSE, POETRY, & FLASH FICTION WORKSHOP

The Forest

In a forest with a gentle breeze, watch leaves flutter as they twirl and whirl to the wind's silent song. When they dance you can never look away. As the sun shimmers across your skin and the leaves sing to the sun and sky, you are filled with eternal warmth. Soon the trees decide to join the fun, the limbs swaying gracefully in the breeze. Flowers from Acanthuses to Lunarias to Zinnias join in, their fragrant smells flood your senses. You are being wrapped in a thick, heavy blanket, making your eyelids heavy, your mind and body entranced as you watch the forest dance. Soon the bushes and ferns join in. Their leaves and needles glisten like emeralds. You sense animals gathering around the clearing which holds endless beauty, but you pay them no mind and they don't pay you any either. When all the beings in the forest come, there is a moment of perfect silence throughout the world as the plants strum their final chord. Finally the dance is over and you long for more. You say, "Alas, the time has come I must head home." And with that you set home, gathering your senses as you walk away. You take one last look as the plants clean up for the day.

MAEVE EKLUND

8TH GRADE • MIDDLE SCHOOL SUMMER WRITING INTENSIVE

Here Is What I Remember

Here is what I remember:

I was out on a warm summer evening
At my grandparent's homestead
When someone mentioned sleeping
Beneath the stars.
That night we laid there
Admiring their simple beauty.
A cool breeze brushed by my face.
I shivered.
It was then that I became aware
Of the darkness that surrounded us.
I was terrified by the things I couldn't see.
I flinched at every small noise or movement.
I stared back at the stars,
As if reaching out to them,
Hoping that they could save me with their light.
As the darkness swallowed me whole
The stars tried to kiss away my tears,
But I,
Still young and afraid,
Ran inside
To the house
That seemed to be waiting with open arms.

I slept inside that night
Wondering what it must have been like to be brave,
Realizing it wasn't about being brave,
But about enjoying the things
Like simple stars and
Cold fall nights and
Seeing past the darkness.

The Boat (Excerpt)

Annie boarded the boat and heard the old boards on the splintered dock creak. A man was sitting on the other side of the boat. Waiting. The mist made his features indistinguishable. The boat swayed, and Annie stumbled, struggling to keep her balance. She looked out at the murky water of the lake. There was something eerie about the moment, something that made Annie want to shout, but instead, she just sat down. The damp seat gave Annie a chill.

The lake water lapped at the boat. The quiet sound was peaceful and calming, yet something about the thick, humid air around her, and the dark, invisible things lurking below the surface, made Annie shiver. She looked back at the man, who had begun to paddle forcefully against the seemingly insignificant waves. The paddle came crashing down, making the water swirl and splash. The man grunted as he paddled. There was an awkward silence between the two.

He paddled and paddled, until finally, Annie could see a small light on the horizon. It lit up only a small space, but as they got closer, Annie saw a lighted buoy bobbing up and down in the waves. The smell of lantern oil struck her as they came to a stop. The smell and brightness of the light overpowered all of Annie's senses. She felt the boat sway, and stuck her hand out for support. The man on the other side of the boat was reaching over to the light, squinting as his face got closer and closer to it. Annie saw his wrinkled face. It was scarred and covered in freckles. As Annie gazed at this old man, she noticed the melancholy look in his blue, dull eyes. The man reached out a veiny, yet steady hand. Annie noticed the paleness of his arm. He looked almost sickly, sitting there, his body facing toward the beaming light. And suddenly, everything went dark.

Annie jumped at the sudden darkness. As she frantically glanced around her, she saw nothing but pitch black. The world had gone from so vivid and bright, to black as ink. All the light had been drained from the buoy. The boat rocked in the waves as Annie waited. She felt a tingling sensation as she searched for something in the darkness.

She didn't know what. Maybe light. Maybe the ore. Maybe the buoy.
Maybe her grandfather's kind, loving, yet forlorn face.

LYDIA FREY

11TH GRADE • HIGH SCHOOL SUMMER WRITING INTENSIVE

Short Poems

Realization

I hate 8th graders
I think that's mostly because
I hate myself

King Soopers at 8:44

I met God last night
Outside the store, he wore red
And played the trumpet

Time Machine

Cable news you say?
I am from 1490
Never heard of it

Other People

Do not perceive me
I understand few, know none
I do not exist

Relatable

Bitches will be like
Time to block out middle school
It's me, I'm bitches

Self Promotion

I'm bad at most things
And terrible at others
Including Haikus

High School Theater

“Not memorized”
“Sloppy” our director yells
It's opening night

ANGELO GOMEZ

11TH GRADE • CREATIVE WRITING LAB • THORNTON HIGH SCHOOL

Food Bank Short Story

He looked young, younger than me, probably a freshman, dragged along to this place to please his mother's God or simply his mother. I don't know why, but I don't want to be on his resumé. I don't want to be the reason he gets into college, making up for his insufficient grades. I hate to make assumptions, but here he is with his iPhone and his luxuries and—his privilege. He is doing the right thing, what he should do, but now he holds a position of power and I—none. Why must they gawk? Or, maybe they don't; maybe they just pity me as they throw scraps at a zoo animal—me—helpless, plagued by the simple fact that *beggars can't be choosers*. I know this. I know it well that I may not seem ungrateful, that I will forever be indebted to someone whose mother forced him to help the animals. He probably scowled and grunted and groaned his way here.

He won't make eye contact with me. He knows that I'm older than him, that I'm probably a senior, but he probably thinks that he knows my grades. I hide behind his fear, my only defense mechanism to shame.

The line is long and desperate and the heat is unforgiving. It is wintertime but it does not stop the world from pushing the limits of our discomfort. There will be a winner here and a loser here. Some will make it through the week and those at the back, well, they'll find somewhere else. Hopefully. Hopefully, not for me. Us.

Some will have to go home and say the words. Most are parents as representatives for their families. Others are children, about my age. I feel most for them; I imagine them trying to figure out what to do with their hands when they return home with nothing in them. Then, they say the words, that there is nothing, nothing to stop their little siblings from crying about their hunger.

Both locks to the door slowly unhinge as if a sea of tears were preparing to enter. She enters, not with the same proud walk of a mother, but her eyes stay on the floor and her neck curved. My sib-

lings and I ask for no explanation; we know. We know that we will be sharing a can of beans tonight, that each of us will try to take a little less, claiming to not be hungry.

“I’m fine. I ate some snacks at work,” my mother alleges.

“It’s ok, I ate a lot at school,” I claim.

It is a chess game of lies. The loser satiates their hunger. This time my mother wins, holding on to what little pride she has left as a mother. And for me, my beans begin to taste like sand in my mouth knowing that my mother would go to bed hungry. She walks into her room, calmly closing the door. And then, a thud. Knees striking the floor. Chokes. Sobs.

We inch forward through the line, dragging the thin bottoms of our shoes across the floor. We feel the floor moving in the opposite direction, unfortunately similar to the treadmill-like nature of the world. It is early and the competition is tight. Soon, the waiting room is made available to us. We take a seat and see two young children. There are toys spread across the floor, available to the children, and here the two play. Most amazingly: they are sharing these toys in sharp contrast to the aura of the room. They share a toy that teaches math. They count and order the numbered shapes, not yet branded by their circumstances, unconscious of their glaringly unfortunate situation. But, most notably, they share, not yet submerged by the frustrations that they will inevitably drown them.

Occasionally, those in the room dare to redirect their gaze from the floor. My eyes meet with a boy’s across the room. In that moment, I see his pain, his hunger, and his desperation. I know that he will go home and search for something to draw his mind away from this place.

He shamefully escaped his mother’s vehicle, getting one last look at his mother’s bruises which took the shape of his own knuckles, just bigger, the same way that his eyes took the same color as his father’s and his skin shared the color of the drug dealer’s across the street. *What else is there* he thought quietly. Maybe if he had sustained this thought he could escape what was to come. Instead, he exited the van, vulnerable.

The boy meets another—his friend. His friend seems different; he has something on his mind, or, in his mind, like a bug, crawling through his mind, numbing him. He is disconnected from his

pain—his economic plight. They meet their other friends gathered around a circle. There was some commotion, something new. It was no scientific discovery or a new book released. He submerges himself towards the center of the group. He reaches the middle and the world stops and there it is—an orange bottle. The sounds of his friends fade to the background and eyes become fixed on the bottle. He hears only the crack of the bottle opening as air escapes it, as air escapes his own lungs. A round tab flies from the bottle, never slipping his gaze. “OC” it reads; that would be all he reads at school for a long time. This bug would let him forget what was happening in his life. It would artificially raise his chin and let his head hang high. He had become all he had known.

I fight my own thoughts that somehow I am better than those in this room, that I’m different, that maybe I deserve this food a little more because I am going somewhere. Because I had not become submerged. I survived. By some miracle, the library found me first. But, from this quiet place I would find their stories and see their struggles and this belief could not persist. Not better, but luckier.

The room smells putrid. I must decide whether I would like to believe that it is a result of old food or the result of people around me. I decided to let it be them because I would not have to take them home or eat them. Hopefully. The look in the volunteer boy’s eyes suggests that maybe he isn’t as sure that we won’t eat each other or him. But this is what they all think.

We finally make it to the front of the line and receive a few old cans of beans. We decline the fruits because they look like lumps of coal. The woman who meets us at the front of the line is older. Behind her southern accent I find a demeaning tone. The people here are suspicious and thorough; they examine whether we grabbed too much.

“Do you speak English?” she barks at us as if we would understand better if we didn’t. I stick out my chest and respond that I do. As I progress through the line, a boy arrives at the woman’s feet. She barks the same thing at his mother. She looks at her son, her translator.

“No,” he says as his head hangs a little lower, not responding to his mother. He simply hands the woman his bag of cans. The woman scowls. She checks his bag as if she were a customs agent. They hand

her their paperwork and she suspiciously examines their right to food, to survival. She examines their living situation, their names, angry at her inability to pronounce them.

The woman is far from representative of the rest of the volunteers. Most of the others meet us with cheerful eyes. Some get it, others simply hide their assumptions; they mean well.

LEONARDO GOMEZ

12TH GRADE • CREATIVE WRITING LAB • THORNTON HIGH SCHOOL

Untitled

Leo sat silently at his table, intently watching the surrounding movements. There were the usual crowds of men loudly laughing, singing, and conversing with each other after a long day. The room was dimly lit; the small candle flames flickering from the passing customers, casting dancing shadows in between and around the row of old wooden tables.

He slowly rested his head on the table. The darkness drowned out all light beneath his eyelids and the indistinct chatter from around him amplified, distressing him. He tried to focus, eliminating every sound one by one; the horrid laughter, malevolent whispers, and unsteady footfall all muffled under his concentration, leaving only the echoing hum of colliding cups, the splatter of dripping ale, and the wind against the candle flames.

Leo inhaled, but the scent that reached his nose suffocated him, stinking of sweat and manure (unfortunately common to these establishments). He exhaled deeply, quietly grunting. He clasped his right hand around the scabbard of his sword, gently rubbing his fingers along its intricate designs, picturing them in his mind.

Suddenly, the previously foul scent was drowned out by another. It, however, smelled sweet and pure, but from a farther distance than anyone in the tavern. His ears suddenly rang from the abrupt sound of the door bursting open.

Leo's forehead pressed hard against the edge of his table, the pain still surging in his skull. The scent intensified as its source approached Leo's location, but passed over him as quickly as it had arrived. The ringing ceased and left a severe throbbing.

Leo raised his head and turned to observe the source of that strange smell. A group of three cloaked figures walked by, guiding a fourth person to an empty table. He observed the three hooded members, appearing in clean and unscathed clothing. They sat silently, keeping their heads down amongst the surrounding customers in their own

muddy, faded, and torn cloaks and boots.

Each member took turns slightly moving their heads back and forth. They were talking. Leo shut his eyes and let the sounds fill into his ears. Again, eliminating each sound to focus on the mysterious arrivals.

“Are you sure stopping here is a good idea?” one questioned.

“No. But the horses need to rest, and the human won’t last much longer without food,” another sternly replied. All further questioning ceased after her response.

Leo released his focus on the group and lifted his head up to inspect the room. He rose from his seat and stepped away from the table, slowly walking away toward the surrounding walls. He continued along the side, proceeding with his examination of the crowd. As he passed the corner of the room, a shape emerged from the shadows. A man, waiting, clutching the hilt of a sword at his side.

Leo stepped outside, into the fresh air and dark blue of the night. He no longer smelled the harsh scent of the crowd, but the strange new scent lingered. A cool breeze passed by, rustling the surrounding forest trees.

Leo walked farther away from the tavern, which sat just off the adjacent road. He continued forward until he found a solid patch of ground and knelt down. Placing the palm of his hand on the surface, he felt an immense vibration surge through his arm. He immediately lifted himself upright, letting out a long sigh. Someone was coming.

“Dammit!” he quietly exclaimed.

Leo’s attention was suddenly interrupted by the faint sound of a sword unsheathing from behind him. An angry commotion rang throughout the air. It had begun, cueing Leo’s quick retreat from the area. Still focused on the sounds within the tavern, Leo heard things quiet down.

“Back off! I said back!”

“There’s no need for you to lose your life for this filth. Just give him here and I promise we’ll be kinder to you.”

At this point Leo had already retrieved his horse, guiding it alongside himself toward the road. There was nothing more he could do. It was not his place to get involved in others’ quarrels. It is what it is, he thought.

“Go to hell. I have a duty to protect this man at all costs,” she replied.

Leo froze in his steps. Those words echoed in his mind. Just leave. Think, just leave. Leo's thoughts screamed in his mind at himself, or her, or both. Yet he still found himself transfixed. The woman's scent began to dissipate under that of the surrounding crowd.

Leo returned to the shelter of the tavern, intently watching the confrontation with the now unhooded woman and one of her companions; the other member was apparently already slain. She held the man they had guided in safely behind her. As the ruffians enclosed around her, she stood unusually strong, unwilling to back down. The woman now stood revealed in the light, wearing, again, clean and new garments. Her long brown hair hung over her shoulders and slightly across her face.

The woman's eyes scanned over the approaching men, preparing, anticipating their strike. Her attention was diverted, noticing Leo standing in the background, just watching among a sea of joyful onlookers. Their gazes locked, leaving Leo stumbling back in fear. His chest pounded and his ears suddenly rang with the sound of drawing swords.

Leo quietly cursed to himself before compulsively drawing his own weapon, swinging his arms to the right and then shifting his weight back over. In an instant two heads dropped under Leo's blade, spewing out blood from both bodies. The room silenced as the man fell and Leo turned to the others.

"I'm warning you once. Leave now," he announced.

The group advanced forward. Under the dim candlelight, shadows danced around each other across the floor, merging and separating simultaneously, sundering one another. By the end, only Leo, the woman, and one attacker remained. The last sprinted toward the door, but Leo flung his arm forward, releasing a ball of fire. The man's body exploded, spraying blood across the room.

"I'd leave soon if I were you. There are more of them coming this way, down the road," he said.

Leo sheathed his sword and walked away from the slaughter. He exited the tavern, turning toward the row of tied up horses, but stopped for a moment in front of a large bucket of clear water. Kneeling down, he dipped his hands in. The water's clarity became tainted with the slow creeping blood across its surface. Leo took a

deep breath and hung his head. A stinging pain shot through his skull, growing in his mind. Spreading, as the water grew darker and darker.

Leo grabbed the reins of his horse and sat down at the edge of the tavern porch. The horse's snout came down and gently rubbed against his head. He softly chuckled, reaching his hand up to stroke his horse.

The woman slowly approached Leo from behind, forcefully guiding her prisoner. She stepped down into the mud and stopped in front of him. He looked up to meet her gaze with a sad and exhausted expression.

"Why did you help me?" she asked.

"You didn't deserve to die," he softly answered, "Go."

Leo stood up, mounted and guided his horse toward the road. He waited at the edge as the woman rode up with the other man. She ran her fingers through her hair, pushing it back out of her face and revealing her pointed ears. The two rode off up the road, leaving the tavern and Leo behind.

He tilted his head up, deeply inhaling the cool breeze. The scent still remained, stronger, drowning out everything around him. His body relaxed. He then spurred his horse forward, trotting along the road under the bright moonlight.

ERINA IMANAKA

7TH GRADE • MIDDLE SCHOOL SUMMER WRITING INTENSIVE

The Time I Faced My Fears

“Was I really doing this?” I asked myself as I rose higher and higher. The car of the roller coaster slowly and smoothly chugged up, giving me plenty of time to worry.

I was at the Boardwalk. Whenever I came here, I usually stuck to the little kids’ section, riding on tiny trains, cars, and roller coasters. Most of the time, the kid next to me was about 5. I was 12. I tried not to care as my little sister, who was seven, rode on rides meant for my age. She laughed and screamed with my friends as she dipped down, swooped up, and sometimes even went upside down.

I, on the other hand, was screaming as we gradually came down a mini slope. Even the 5-year-olds were looking blank-faced and bored as they rode.

But now, I was sitting next to my sister in a car on top of the bright yellow and blue rails. My thoughts turned to how high up I was and how frightening it would be to fall from this height. My stomach churned when I even thought of it, and now, I was really doing it. The feeling of falling and being so high up was enough to give me nightmares. I watched as people turned into flies, cars turned into tiny toys, and the parking lot turned into a tic tac toe board. I felt a stab of regret as the huge dip came into view. How could my sister talk me into this? As I pondered the question, the earlier conversation floated back to my mind.

“Pleaase! This is the only ride that needs a chaperone to ride with me. Daddy and Mommy said no, so can you? It will be fun!”

I said no many, many times as my sister tried to convince me on how fun it will be. Finally, when she mentioned the fact that it would cost \$30 to get a chaperone, which I was paying for, I gave in, not liking the sound of having to pay an extra \$30 when I already had tickets. But now, as the deadly, nearly vertical dip came into view, I started to wish that we just gotten a chaperone instead.

“It’s fine!” my little sister said, reading my thoughts. Or maybe

the frozen look of horror on my face. “It’s only the tiny dip that’s a little scary. The rest is super fun!”

Tiny! I thought. The dip was huge! And the rest of it, just looking at all of the twisting and turning made me dizzy. I stubbornly shook my head.

“How is that tiny?” I questioned my sister. “ I don’t know how you—”

That was as far as I got, because in a moment, I was falling. My heart felt like it fell out of my body. I watched as the sky got farther and farther as I zoomed down. I clung onto my harness, trying not to hyperventilate, as my sister waved her hands around squealing, “This is awesome!!”

I was so shocked that even though my mind was screaming, my mouth refused to open. But luckily after a few seconds, it was done. Just as I breathed out a sigh of relief, I was shot up in the air again, then plummeted down, twisted, turned, and looped around again and again. My head felt like it was going to explode. All the movement was a blur as I zoomed around. I could barely even breathe. In short, I was absolutely terrified.

After a very long, agonizing minute, the car of the roller coaster finally came to a stop. I braced myself for another sudden move, but it was really over this time. I slumped my shoulders as I congratulated myself for surviving. My sister was talking a mile a minute on how exciting the ride was.

“Oh my gosh! That was the best ride ever! I told you it was fun. Actually, that was the best thing I ever did! I could be on this ride for the rest of my life, and never be bored!”

I was too relieved to understand what she was saying. I just sat there, trying to process what just happened. A part of me was thankful that it was all over, but another part of me wanted to go again. It didn’t make any sense, especially considering how terrified I was, but it was there. I started to reconsider my thoughts. Maybe, I did have a little fun, bouncing up and down the rails with the smaller twists and turns. Maybe the view, instead of being terrifying like I saw it, was actually quite spectacular, the way I could see for miles and miles. And maybe the surge of sudden energy, the racing heart rate, and the feeling of my heart falling out of my body felt – not

good, but manageable. In fact, now that I thought about it, I had enjoyed the ride, although I had definitely not while I was actually on the ride. Now, I even felt a thrill of excitement when I imagined the roller coaster.

As we climbed out of the car, I grinned at my sister and said, “Would you mind going again?”

ELSA JOHNSON

8TH GRADE • WRITING FOR HAPPINESS & STRESS RELIEF SUMMER CAMP

The Mental Adventurer

and
courage comes from a heart.

“shadows that echo the sunrise”

suddenly i’m falling
nothing but air
and there’s no breath left inside.

i’m lost in a maze of indecision.

sounds of nothing.
sounds of silence.

not sure where the limit is.
i can’t breathe deeply.
clear sky.

a bruised heart
trembling fingers
flashes of light in my vision

a blank mind,
an empty body
blackness—

patches of ice
of mist
of snow
surround me.

a dead end in a maze
lost among clouds
nobody answers a door that i didn't knock.
somehow, it makes me feel worse.

deception will guide your path.
wisdom has left you
illusions will guide you.

can't remember.
something's gone.
who am i?

“You have to make a choice
To take a chance
Or else your life will never change.”

just a ground beneath my feet,
and a beautiful sky above my head.
free

it's what matters the most,
that really only matters.

your eyes are the only thing I see
hidden, but as clear and clean
as moonlight and sunlight
blending together.

and
courage comes from a heart.

CROSBIE LACASSE

7TH GRADE • JUNE ONLINE WRITING STUDIO • HILL MIDDLE SCHOOL

Puss & Boots (Excerpt)

Once upon a time, there was a kingdom far, far away. It was a majestic kingdom, more magnificent and wealthier than all of the neighboring kingdoms. It was ruled by a very rich king known as King Aragorn, and, of course, his beautiful and clever wife, Queen Alexandra. It was not long into their reign that the Queen had her first baby. He was a handsome child, though he was constantly crying, and no toy scepter nor golden plaything could satisfy him. Less than a year after he was born, Alexandra gave birth to a second child, one with hair as gold as the sun and eyes as blue as the ocean. Servants and officials alike were always making remarks on the child's impeccable looks.

Then, as the eldest child, Arthur, and his slightly younger brother, Charles, were nearing the age of five, one more child was born. He was not as handsome as Charles, nor did he have as high, classy standards as Arthur. Instead he was a smiling baby boy with his mother's kind eyes and his father's wavy locks. For this child, the king and queen chose the name Felix, which they thought would be suiting since it meant *happy*.

A few years later, the three brothers turned out to be as vastly different as they had started. Arthur was a very arrogant, bold child, and already he found pleasure in visiting the royal treasury to look at the riches he would one day inherit, or peek into a council meeting to catch a glimpse of the people he would soon have complete command over. Charles, meanwhile, loved to attend all of the royal festivities. While it could have been because he thought them fun, it was far more likely that he simply enjoyed the comments on his "outrageous charm" and "breathtakingly attractive appearance". Then there was Felix. Unlike his brothers, Felix enjoyed playing in the village square and going on walks with his mother around the palace.

Unfortunately, a tragic event soon wandered along to spoil their lovely lifestyle. After all, it is Sorrow's favorite thing to encroach upon the lives of particularly fortunate souls, such as the three brothers.

One cool midsummer night, the king was preparing for bed in his chambers when he froze. He turned to his wife, but he said nothing. The next thing anyone knew, he was crumpled on the floor, his eyes glazed over. The palace medic diagnosed him with heart troubles.

There was some speculation that it was the queen's work, that she had murdered her husband so she could take the kingdom for herself. The brothers, of course, knew such rumors were just that: rumors. For starters, guards and servants had been in the room, and they had seen no foul play whatsoever. But more than that, Arthur, Charles, and Felix knew that their mother was a kind woman, and she had loved her husband very much. That certainly is not to say that the king's untimely death didn't bother them.

They all wished that he were still there to guide them through their own hectic lives, Felix more than anyone. He had had a very close relationship to his father, and now that the years were blurring by without the beloved king, well, Felix felt extraordinarily lost. By now the boys were already in their late teenage years, and their mother had decided that, since her hair was graying and her mind was fogging, it was about time the boys paved their own ways in life.

She handed over her crown to Arthur, since he was the firstborn and she certainly wasn't fit to rule any longer. Arthur immediately declared that he did not want his brothers living with him and "mooching off his inheritance", and since he was now king there was nothing anyone could say otherwise. Their mother, however, did not want her other two children to be left without anything to help them in their new lives, so she gave Charles a fair portion of the palace's wealth (or at least, as much money as she could manage obtaining without Arthur throwing a fit) and sent him off with a kiss on the head. To Felix, whom she had always been particularly fond of, she gave a much smaller pouch of coins and her favorite cat, Puss. Then he too set off.

The first thing Felix did (once he was able) was to buy a house. He couldn't afford much, so he purchased a small but cozy cottage on the outskirts of the kingdom. It had one bedroom, a bathroom, a kitchen, and a low-ceilinged living space. He set up a bed for Puss in the corner of his bedroom, along with a bowl of water and a pail of food. Then he went about looking for a job.

The first night he came back disappointed and without any job offers, and he laid down on the sofa and cried out, “This is hopeless! I wish Arthur hadn’t been so greedy and had left me just a bit more money, and I wish mother had retained a bit more of her sharpness so she could have convinced Arthur to leave me with more than *this!*”

Puss strode up to him, her white fur gleaming in the artificial lighting. “Do not fret, Master, I am sure that we will someday obtain more riches than either of your brothers, if that is what you desire.”

Felix recoiled, for he had been unaware that cats could speak. It didn’t take long to him to get used to the idea, though, and soon Felix had gotten a job as a newspaper boy and had formed a bond with Puss.

One night he came home from his job tired and out of breath and laid down on the sofa with Puss, as he so often did nowadays. He switched on the news on the radio and reclined back. As majestic as some parts of the kingdom may have been, the part where Puss and Felix were currently residing was far more of a patched-together place, and the recorded voice was scratchy and hard to understand.

Felix turned up the volume.

NORA LULOFF

6TH GRADE • WORK ON YOUR NOVEL SUMMER CAMP

Zara

Math. Math. Math. I repeated this to myself. *Stipes. Math. Now.* The bell rang, and I hadn't moved. I'd gone into the girl's bathroom near chemistry. *Math. Now.* I couldn't seem to move. What was I going to do? I mean, I couldn't just forget what he'd said, but I needed to get to class. I got up, and slowly walked towards the door, shame filling all of me. *What if he was right? What if no one was ever going to love me? Was I just too ugly to look at? Unlovable.* I couldn't forget the way he said that, like it was just a joke. *Unlovable.* I thought. *Am I unlovable?* I shook my head. *Remember the song. Remember the song.*

"She don't see," I whimpered. I cry when I try to sing when I'm upset. "The light that's shining," I continued. I was on the verge of tears. "Deeper than the eye c-c-c-ca-can find i-it..." I trailed off, fighting back tears. It was just a song I reminded myself.

I got out of the door and turned left. I was about halfway down the hallway, when I realized I was going the wrong way. Math was in the opposite direction. I was about to turn around, when I noticed where I was. On my right was the counselor's office. I stood in front of the door, staring at it. I watched my reflection in the dark glass. Bushy brown hair, chocolate brown skin I noticed. I realized my face had a few lonely pimples. My lanky arms hung down by my sides. My mouth was small, and my nose huge. And my eyes were—*Stop.* I told myself, *You are beautiful. They may call you ugly, but that doesn't mean you aren't beautiful.* I smiled. I was about to reach for the handle of the door, when I heard footsteps on my left, by the office. I froze. Was someone going to catch me out of class? I just realized that I was ditching. I wiped the tear stains off my face and tried the knob. It was locked. Shoot. The counselor wasn't in. I looked around and noticed a sticky note that had fallen on the ground: *Sorry, in a meeting. Be back in fourth period.* Shoot. Of all the times this could happen it happened now. The footsteps continued, but my heart beat much faster. Then the footsteps stopped abruptly, and I heard a voice.

Olivia.

I swear I tried, but I couldn't stop the tears from streaming down my face. The only thing I could do was keep from crying out. I walked towards the stairs, anger filling me. Who was she to say such a thing? I felt so terrible about myself. Was I really that ugly? Was being ugly all there was to me? I slumped against the wall, clouds of sadness feeding off my tears. Why was she saying those things? What in the world could've possessed someone to say something like that? The tears gradually came to a stop. I looked up at the clock in the hallway. We were 5 minutes into the period. My heart pounding, I began to get up, but Julie's words repeated in my head. *'Her nose is out of place, and her ears are huge. Oh, and those lanky arms.'* Was how I looked really that important? I mean, I knew that being popular meant looking pretty, but is that the only thing that's important? Am I only the beauty that I lack? I put my hands up to my face and felt around. My hands caressed the bridge of my nose, sliding from by my forehead and down to my nostrils. I just stood there, feeling around my face. I touched my ears and felt around what I suppose was the circumference. They were big.

JOSEPHINE LYDA

4TH GRADE • SUMMER ONLINE WRITING STUDIO

Dreams

My eyes droop, I need my rest
It's time for bed and I climb under
my soft flowery quilt
The dreams float into my head
just like fluffy clouds.
A fairy land,
filled with magic.
Observe:
fluffy pink clouds,
gently floating upwards.
Their bases are soft
wispy like cotton.
Birds and butterflies and
beautiful little transformations
appear before my eyes.
First feathery winged things,
and then, misty cityscapes'
lights dance before my eyes
as I fall
fall into darkness
groping helplessly at nothing
I see war
blood soaks the field
I cover my eyes,
diving out of the way of a spinning bullet
I land on the bloody grass
but it is soft,
like a flower.
I think I have returned to the fairyland,
but open my eyes to my flowery quilt.
And then I am called to breakfast.

AUDREY MALIA

2ND GRADE • DELICIOUS FOOD POETRY WORKSHOP

Life After Adoption

I sit silently in my kennel asleep next to my sister. They call me Sister. When a family arrives, they decide to call me Hazel and adopt me. Then they buy me and take me home. When I get there, they put me in the backyard, and I wake up and run around the place. I stop and realize where I am. I sniff. I smell soil and grass. I take a bite. It is sweet and sour at the same time! All over again, I go through my life. It is better than everything else. I like this new house. I might stay a while.

Two weeks later...

The doorbell rings. *Visitors!* I bark. *Visitors!* I say again and again. Finally! They open the door, new people come in. Quickly, I hurry to sniff their butts and meet them. My tail wags like a whip as it hits the wall. My tail stops wagging, and I start licking them. They pet me and hug me. Then, I smell dog hair and slobber and I feel comfortable again. Soon I am ignored, so I get a sock from a room and walk out. The attention goes to me again, just like I had planned. Then, TADA! I am loved.

One week later...

My heart is beating like thunder. My paws hit the ground like a wrecking ball. My tongue is hanging out like a fishing line. I'm going on a walk today. My owner Audrey is running next to me. I am having fun. This is the best day of my life. My owner Mommy is happy when I arrive home. I love this new home, I mean not home, walk! I play all day at home. It is awesome here.

Early next morning, I wake up and I bark, *Walk!* over and over again. Finally, they wake up and take me on a walk. In the middle of the walk, I see a dog. Then, suddenly, I am lost at sea in a dog fight. "Hazel! Hazel!" I hear, calling from across the street. *Sorry, I'm busy!* I bark back to my owner Daddy.

BANKS MALIA

5TH GRADE • POETRY WORKSHOP • SOUTHMOOR ELEMENTARY

Day to Night

Hot,
A beacon,
For life on earth.
Like a crackling fire
In a hearth, on a winter day
Gives life, though also death, rebirth
Getting cold, fire smothering,
Frostbite, winter snow,
Lunar eclipse
Black void
Starry
Moon

HENRY MORAJA

12TH GRADE • HIGH SCHOOL SUMMER WRITING INTENSIVE

The Bus Stop

He seems taller, but that might just be the confident stillness of his shoulders. His hair is cut short and precise along the lines of his face. He's almost unrecognizable, but I'd know from anywhere the way I sit on public transit with my shoulder against the window, the same way I've sat since I was seven on the Lightrail for the first time. The man in front of me is me, despite it all.

He looks up and sees me, half-frozen, staring at him. He pulls out one earbud, and I see he still has the same ones I'm carrying now, only held together with more duct tape. A flicker of emotion crosses his face: shock, confusion, and, finally, curious acceptance. He pats the seat next to him, and I sit down.

I know it should feel strange or wrong, but it doesn't. Somehow I feel I've always been on this bus, waiting for him, waiting for this. So much has changed, but the freckles on our hands are still identical. I watch him tap his fingers against his thigh in the same way I do when I get nervous. His nails are painted a dark, shining blue.

We sit without speaking, eyes fixed on the empty bus interior, the suburban streets of our hometown blurring around us. As we pass the library where we spent countless hours in the summer, the bowling alley where we wasted too much money on fried pickles, the park where we had our first real kiss, he shakes his head and laughs just loud enough for me to hear him.

"It's so weird to be back," he says at last, "even just passing through. I can't believe how much I've forgotten."

I look over at him and take in the gentle swoop of his hair, the heavy overcoat, and dark gray turtleneck he doesn't appear to be sweating in despite the oppressive heat. Underneath his dark pants, I catch a glimpse of our rainbow socks, the ones I haven't yet gathered the courage to wear in public. Compared to my stained cargo shorts and Pokemon T-shirt I've had since middle school, he looks so... mature. Alive. I can't seem to find the proper words for it.

I redirect my attention to his face, my face, my face the way I always wanted it to look, and I have to bite back a sob. He is looking at me too, and his mouth crumples into a frown for just a moment before he puts his arm around me and hugs me to his chest. If anyone else was on this bus, I would be mortified. But it's just me.

"It's okay," he says. "You're okay." His voice is so deep, deeper than I ever thought I could sound. "It's not all perfect. My top surgery's been pushed back a whole month, and I've got roommates. We were right back then; I hate having roommates."

I manage a snorting laugh. "But you're so far ahead!"

"I know. I've been really lucky." His gaze is a million miles away. "Things will get harder for you, for us, but they're still better than they've ever been, and that's enough."

"How did you know to find me?"

He shrugs. "I don't want to give the universe too much credit, but it does work in mysterious ways. It's like that Kafka quote about love always coming back in a different form, you know?"

"God, you're pretentious."

He flashes me a teasing smile. I notice the stubble on his chin and want to cry again but, before I can ask him anything else, the bus begins to slow to a stop. He grabs his bag from the floor and pats me, awkwardly, endearingly, on the shoulder. "Listen, this is my stop, but remember this, okay? Remember how much better things get. Remember that I love you."

I nod and let him stand. I watch him and his overcoat brush to the front of the empty bus. He turns, just slightly, to give me a wave goodbye before stepping off into the blinding sunlight.

LILY NOBEL

10TH GRADE • HIGH SCHOOL SUMMER WRITING INTENSIVE

Untitled

Standing above him, seven feet tall at least, was a person with brushed copper brown skin, a mess of dark curls hanging just past their chin, and the brightest pink lipstick Daniel had ever seen. I, dear reader, can tell you the shade was #fc03e8 precisely, if you care to experience it yourself, but I warn it is slightly painful to gaze upon.

“Who are you?” Daniel slurred, trying to keep his balance.

“I’m God or part of God, maybe? Anyway, you can call me God, and any pronouns work just fine.” God wiggled their glittery acrylic nails.

“Part of...God?”

“That’s all, baby, no stress.”

“Can you...prove it?”

“Well, I did make you walk over here, which is something, yeah?”

“I don’t even believe in God,” Daniel whispered to himself. “I don’t even believe in God.” The spinning in his head was starting to lessen.

“Not much I can do about that,” they shrugged.

“You don’t look how I expected...”

God laughed long and hard, the sound jagged and echoing, enveloping Daniel. The whole room seemed to shift before his eyes; the ceilings became higher, lights subtly sinking from a purple tint to a pink one, the checkered tiles on the floor shuffling and rearranging themselves. He blinked, and it all seemed to sink in, this whole new pattern of reality, as if this was how it had been all along. “I don’t look how you expected.’ You have no idea how many men I’ve heard that from. No, I don’t have a toga, or a beard, and I’m not all that tall. None of that really matched the vibe I wanted, ya know?” Daniel did not know, not in the least, but nodded along anyway.

MEILI NOVACHEK

12TH GRADE • POETRY & SCREEN WRITING WORKSHOPS PAIRED WITH AN ACADEMIC SUPPORT
CLASS • BROOMFIELD HIGH SCHOOL

Seeing Blind

I cannot see
For myself don't tell me
I have sight
Because by now
I am blind
I won't deceive myself by telling
I am worth more than eyes
I will tell myself
That I am a depressed blind being
And no one will convince me
I can see
Because in the end
I'm not worth glasses
I do not believe my eyes
Because when I reflect in the end
Am I truly blind?

(Now read from the bottom up)

ELLA PETERSEN7TH GRADE • MIDDLE SCHOOL SUMMER WRITING INTENSIVE**How It Used To Be**

*This place wasn't always like this.
Where smoke filled the air to the point of being unable to breathe.
With cheap furniture everywhere.
And trash covering the floors.
It used to be my home.*

*Everything was great.
I had parents who I loved so much.
And my room.
Neon paint on the walls as a running joke.
My artwork everywhere.*

*Then there was an accident.
And suddenly I can't leave.
And all my belongings are moved away.
Now this creature lives here
And everything changes.*

*Now I want nothing more than to leave.
This horrible place isn't the same.
Please let me go.*

ETHAN RAUSCHKOLB

11TH GRADE • HIGH SCHOOL SUMMER WRITING INTENSIVE

Oscar (Excerpt)

Ashley woke up to the sound of her alarm at exactly 7:09 am. Still groggy, she turned her head to glance at the flowers on her bedside table. They had been dropped off mysteriously the day before, no note attached. They were fairly cheap flowers, most likely not going to last another day, but they had a pleasant smell about them. It was the smell of the flowers, the sweet aroma of cheap love, that made her get out of bed.

Swinging her legs over the bed, she smiled when she saw the elephants on her pajamas. The pajamas had been a gift from her younger sister, who had always loved elephants and was constantly trying to shove her love for the elephant down other people's throats. They were comfortable, a soft cotton blend with a tag that didn't itch too much. In an effort to wake herself up, Ashley made a beeline for the shower. She enjoyed the feeling of the hot water running down her back in the morning, especially when she had stayed up reading the night before. She had just finished a great book, a historical fiction about the Roman Empire. Smiling, Ashley turned the shower on and waited for the bathroom to get steamy.

Exiting the shower, Ashley went to the closet to get her slippers. The closet door was open just a crack, and as Ashley got closer she could tell something was wrong. Opening the door slightly wider, Ashley peered into the darkness. Turning the closet light on, Ashley looked around for her slippers. They weren't there. She knew her dog sometimes enjoyed stealing her shoes, so she closed the closet door and called his name.

"Oscar!" she yelled, her voice ringing around the empty apartment. "What did you do to my slippers?!"

Ashley waited for a response, patiently expecting the sound of her pit bull trotting into her room, his head hanging down in shame. But there was only silence.

"Oscar?" she tried again.

Nothing. Worry creeping into her voice, Ashley tried one more time.

“Oscar? Come here, boy!”

Once again, she was met with silence. Quietly, Ashley walked out of the room and began wandering her barren apartment, calling out her dog’s name every couple of steps.

It was only once she got to the kitchen that her stomach dropped. There, lying on the ground motionless, was her dog. Tears starting to form in her eyes, she quickly rushed over and dropped to her knees.

“Oscar? Oscar?” she said frantically, gently shaking the dog as if to stir it from a great slumber. “Come on boy, wake up!”

Grabbing her phone, she dialed the veterinarian. Hands shaking, she put her dog’s head into her lap and frantically waited for the line to pick up.

“Hello?” came the bored voice.

“Hi, yes, my dog— he’s— something’s not right,” came Ashley’s frantic response.

“Can you tell me what’s wrong, ma’am?”

“My dog, he’s not breathing. I-I found him just lying on my kitchen floor.”

“Your dog may have eaten something poisonous. Try to remain calm. If you bring him in, we’ll pump his stomach.”

“Thank you so much,” Ashley said, tears meshing with her words, but the lady had already hung up the phone.

It was raining on the way to the hospital, the sad kind of rain. The kind of rain that feels like tears. The kind of rain that gets you wet no matter how many raincoats you’re wearing. The kind of rain that darkens the world, and the kind of rain that comes down when a dog dies.

Ashley, almost in a full out sprint, rushed into the veterinarian’s office gasping for breath and holding Oscar in her arms. Looking like a wild animal, she was ushered through a door, down a hallway, and into a small room. The room smelled like a doctor’s office, clean and sterile with a faint hint of metal. Ashley couldn’t determine what were tears and what were raindrops as she set her poor dog down on the table. Within seconds, a doctor entered the small room. The man was short and stocky with a receding hairline, but nonetheless, he

gave off an air of excellence. Pulling on his light blue surgeon gloves, the doctor placed his hand on the dog's neck. Gently prodding, he tried to find a pulse. Ashley watched the doctor's face grow serious and his hands drop to his side. Sensing what he was thinking, Ashley let out a cry of despair. Sinking into the uncomfortable seat behind her, Ashley couldn't control herself as tears flowed down her face like a river, as her cheeks flushed, and as phlegm slid into her throat. Eventually, she managed to pull herself together just enough to speak.

"There must be something you can do," Ashley said, choking back tears.

"I'm sorry, ma'am, I really am," the doctor said solemnly.

"He can't be dead," Ashley whispered into her hands, trying to convince herself more than anything.

Most people would decide to take the day off after a traumatic experience, but Ashley found the most comfort when she was at work. Surrounded by books, Ashley always felt calmer in the cozy, dimly lit bookstore where she worked. The store had been run by a sweet old woman and her husband for over a decade, but they had recently decided to travel more, crossing off their bucket list one exotic destination after another. This left Ashley with the dream job, manager of an old bookstore with no other employees and hours of free time to sit back and read. It was in this bookstore, alone, surrounded by walls upon walls of far off places to get lost in, where Ashley wanted to be.

Unlocking the front door, she walked inside, the hinges creaking ever so slightly. Without the lights on, the sunlight from the street bounced in through the window, illuminating the dust floating in the air.

Picking up a few books that she had forgotten to put back the day before, a soft melody began to play in the store. The sound was coming from a special clock that hung just right of the doorway. A huge wooden masterpiece, it was the pride and joy of the old couple who owned the place. They had bought the clock in Europe a few years back on one of their first trips abroad. The clock was huge, not quite big enough to stand upright, but not small enough to hang on the wall. Unfortunately, the old woman had insisted that the clock be hung up, claiming that no clock that beautiful should ever have

to touch the floor. As much of a pain as it was to maintain, it was truly a beautiful piece of craftsmanship. But the most spectacular thing about the clock was that it played a different melody for each hour of the day. Twelve o'clock's melody was Ashley's favorite, but as the melody for 9:00 sang past the rows of books, Ashley couldn't help but hum along.

The insistent squawking from the bells on the front door alerted Ashley to a customer while simultaneously pulling her out of the trance.

"Hey Ash!" Ryan practically yelled. "How you doing?"

"Hey Ryan," Ashley replied. "I've actually had kind of a rough day."

"My dog died too, last year," Ryan said, reaching out for an embrace that Ashley carefully sidestepped.

"I'm sorry to hear that," Ashley said, trying to halt the tears that were forming at the raw memory of Oscar's death.

"I, uh, brought you flowers. They were left over from yesterday's sale. I hope you don't mind."

"No, no, it's very sweet of you," Ashley said, taking the flowers from him.

"My pleasure," Ryan said, faking a bow.

"Um," Ashley said. "Look, I'm not really in the mood to talk."

"Right, of course. If you need anything, I'm here to help. I'm, uh, always here for you." "Thanks," Ashley said, ushering Ryan towards the door, trying to stay just out of reach. "Feel free to stop by any time," Ryan said as he was practically pushed out of the store. "Whatever you say," Ashley said, thankful that she had been able to hold herself together long enough to push Ryan out.

But as she turned around, Ashley took a sharp breath in as the impact of Oscar's death began to materialize once again. And as she sat on the floor crying, her chest heaving up and down with the shallow breaths of sorrow mixed with heavy tears, the clock began playing again.

The Destroyed Flocker

CHAPTER I

One day King Hetheus was sweeping the floors when he heard a “GRRACH” noise.

Huh? King Hetheus thought. Only Bolos makes that sound when he is angry.

Oh! I forgot to give him food.

King Hetheus headed towards the room that Bolos was supposed to be in.

Bolos sprang out from the closet when King Hetheus opened the door. Bolos’ shiny claws shone in the sunlight, from the open window.

“Oh, it’s just... you,” he said in disappointment.

King Hetheus laughed.

“A snake tried to steal me,” said Bolos, who was not laughing.

“Really? That’s ok. You are fine now,” said King Hetheus, putting on a frown.

He petted Bolos and gave him some food.

“Let’s go see your grandma,” King Hetheus said.

A grin washed away Bolos’ frown. Bolos ran as fast as he could down the stairs.

“Wait for me!” called King Hetheus. Both of them zoomed out of the door, up Main Street, down Park Place, past the park, down Floop, up Housen and up to Bolos’ grandma’s house.

Bolos knocked on his grandma’s door. No answer. After five more knocks, and no answer, Bolos and King Hetheus were thinking the same thing: Why was Grandma not answering? She was always home.

Why was there nobody inside to open the door? Was it possible that Grandma was... gone?

After a few more knocks, Bolos said, “Grandma always leaves a window open, even on the coldest days. I could climb in and make sure she is ok.” He pointed to a small round window. Before King

Hetheus could answer, Bolos had climbed through the open window. “If I call ‘help,’ then come rescue me,” Bolos added. “Duh?” thought King Hetheus.

Bolos carefully walked around inside the house.

Just when Bolos was coming back out, a hissing sound rang: “I have been waiting for you, Bolos!” It was a queer, hard, bad sound. It was coming from the closet.

Bolos slowly turned around and opened the closet door, only to find his grandma lying dead on the floor. The voice was a monster. It was the biggest... SNAKE! The snake was drinking Grandma’s blood. “Ok, well... I found Grandma,” he thought, picking up Grandma’s bloody glasses. “Help!” Bolos called, his call echoing in the mostly empty house.

As soon as King Hetheus heard the “HELP!” he pulled his sword out of his latch.

He gave a tiny gulp and entered through the window. He heard the snake’s hiss and headed left.

He crept up behind the snake.

“No one’s going to help you but me, Bolos,” he heard the snake saying. “If you come to the dark side then you can become powerful... like ME!” the snake hissed.

King Hetheus was about to slice the snake with his sword when he stopped. He lowered his sword. King Hetheus knew that sound.

“G-g-grandpa Logger? Is that y-y-you?” King Hetheus asked, in a rather shaky voice, scared that he asked it. Slowly the snake transformed into a very old, old man.

“I thought someone would never say my name again,” he said happily. “Flocker put a spell on me. Only if someone said my name, would I stop being controlled by him,” he added.

“Oh, oh no! What happened here?” he said sadly as he saw his wife dead on the floor.

“Oh, you killed her when you were in snake form. And, by the way, who is Flocker?” asked King Hetheus.

“Flocker? He is a mean guy. Only the red amulet can defeat him. No one has ever found the red amulet. The red amulet only shows to the right person,” Grandpa said.

Bolos looked at King Hetheus. “Well, anyway. Goodbye,” King

Hetheus said.

When they got home, Bolos got in bed. King Hetheus did too.

But King Hetheus didn't feel right. He tossed. He turned. He still did not feel right.

Then he fell down. His bed was a hole! He called, "Help!"

Bolos heard him and rushed to his room. And then Bolos jumped into the bed/hole too.

CHAPTER 2

"Aaaah!" they both yelled.

The pit was dark except for a gleaming light at the bottom.

Strangely, King Hetheus' night light turned into a flashlight, so that was another light.

There were all kinds of weird stuff on the walls, on the shelves.

They fell and fell and fell and fell and fell and fell and

fell and fell and fell and fell and fell and fell and fell and fell and fell and fell and fell and fell and fell and fell and fell and fell and fell.

Down, down, down.

Until... Bonk.

King Hetheus fell on the floor. Soon Bolos did too.

"Look! There are three doors! I suppose we are supposed to go into one," Bolos pointed out. Two of the doors had mist covering them.

Bolos was going to walk through one when King Hetheus shouted, "Bolos, what are you—crazy? Don't you see? That powerful mist is dangerous! Do not try and play with it!"

"Then we go into the one without the mist, huh? It looks like a spooky forest in there!" shot back Bolos.

King Hetheus shrugged. "Well, suit yourself. You will probably die out here anyway."

Then he headed into the non-mist cave hole.

Bolos gulped then followed him.

The cave was dark, also scary, and also had a light at the end. King Hetheus didn't care.

Finally, they got to the end. Now King Hetheus was scared. Bolos and King Hetheus held hands and stepped into the light.

They saw something awesome, amazing! There was a valley with...

unicorns! Pegasus! Flowers, elves, and dragons. The sun was shining bright.

Just then an elf came up to them and then said, "Hello my name is Megdock the elf. The world took you here. So you could get the red amulet. I will take you there Mister," the elf babbled.

"Please say that again... slower," said King Hethus.

"My name is Megdock the elf. The world took you here. So you could get the red amulet. I will take you there, Mister," Megdock said slower.

Bolos and King Hethus looked at each other. They slowly followed Megdock.

A black door appeared after some walking.

They were both out of breath. Megdock clearly did not notice.

She did some weird thing with her hands. The door cracked open. Creeeeek.

Inside, there was a bin...With an amulet on it!

The amulet had a red "H" on it that was made out of real diamonds. The amulet was on a chain that was made out of real gold. The amulet sparkled in the sun.

King Hethus touched the "H" on the amulet and slowly took the amulet off the bin.

He looked at Megdock. Megdock smiled and nodded.

King Hethus put the amulet on. The amulet showed bright orange.

Suddenly, all three of them were not in the same place.

GULP.

To be continued...

MINNA S. REILLY

5TH GRADE • BOOKWORMS UNITE SUMMER CAMP

**Fanfiction Short Stories Based on
Ruby in the Sky by Jeanne Zulick Ferrulo**

Ellen's point of view:

Sometimes I wish I could curl up into a crumpled-up piece of paper. Everyone knows me as Dakota's sidekick, or minion, but I am tired of being "the girl who is superglued to Dakota's side." I really wish I had the bravery to stand up for myself, and others, too. I have been best friends with Dakota since first grade. Back then, she was nicer, and always complimented people. I suspect that her mean streak came when her parents got divorced in third grade. We don't talk about it, but I heard that her father, the mayor, kicked her mom out of the house and that in March of third grade, when Dakota was out for a week with "bronchitis," it was really a case of "I'm-so-sad-and-mad-I'm-not-going-to-school-itis." I am supposed to have a sleepover at Dakota's house tonight, but I think I'll tell Dakota that I can't cause of a family thing. I just want to be myself (not who Dakota wants me to be).

Mr. Andrew's point of view:

Every year, there's a shy student in my class, there's a mean student and their minion, and there's a student who is quite smart. But this year, the mean girl—in this case, Dakota—is not just an annoying girl who occasionally tosses some rude comments. She is downright mean. Today is Thursday, and I have decided to take things into my own hands. First, I'll talk to Dakota, and then to her minion, Ellen. During independent reading, I tapped Dakota on the shoulder and motioned for her to come with me. We walked into the hallway, and I won't bore you with all the details, but this should sum it up: "There is a No-Bullying Policy at our school. Stop it now. You have no right to judge people and say rude things about them." She batted her eyelashes at me. "Ummm, rude much? Fiiiine," she answered. I sighed, and next I tapped Ellen.

Dakota's point of view:

Mr. Andrew, like, totally just chewed me out. Like, it takes me back to third grade when my dad chewed my mom out. Ugh, I hate thinking about that. I responded how anyone would.

I was like, “Ummm, rude much? Fiiine.” Then he tapped Ellen’s shoulder. I couldn’t tell what he was saying, but he, like, is such an evil hypnotist freak, cause when Ellen came out, I gestured for her to come over so we could gossip and she, like, glared at me and turned away. I eventually cornered her during end-of-day pick-up. “What has gotten into you, Elle?! You’ve been ignoring me all daa-aay!?” She looked at her shoes and said, “I don’t wanna be friends with a bully,” and walked over to Ahmad and Ruby, the losers. I saw her mouth the word “Sorry.” Ugh, so what if I lost my BFF. I don’t wanna be friends with a loser anyway. (Sob, sob, sob.)

Ahmad's point of view:

I am glad I met Ruby. Even if she wasn’t kind at first, she ended up being a great friend. This afternoon, me and her were talking and were about to start walking to Rucki’s for an after school snack when Ellen walked up to us. Me and Ruby raised our eyebrows at each other. We braced ourselves for rude comments, but . . . none came. Ellen tucked a strand of her bright red hair behind her ear, and said: “Look, guys, I am really sorry that I was mean to you with Dakota. I hated it, and I truly am sorry. I understand you might not forgive me, but I would really love to be friends with you guys.” She gave us a shy smile. “It’s clear that you two are the true cool kids.” Me and Ruby’s mouths hung open. Ellen, apologizing??? Even though she had been mean to me, I was an accepting person. I thought she could be our friend. I gave Ruby a “Can-I-say-yes?” kind of look. She nodded. “Sure, Ellen,” I said kindly. “Do you want to come to Rucki’s with us?” She smiled. “You betcha!”

Frank Chatty's point of view:

Curse that lady. Little Miss Dahlia thinks she can go traipsing ’round my diner. No can do, Bratty Miss Dahlia. I shove her. It’s normal. I shoved other waitresses like Pam and Nellie, but they did nothin’. Well, that’s not the case here with the new girl. She goes straight to

the cops and reports me in. Well, I've got a few tricks up my sleeve, brat. I dial the mayor, my old friend Thomas' number. He answers on the fourth ring. I tell him my plan, and he assures me that he'll back me up at the trial. I get a neck pillow at CVS, and practice my I'm-in-pain look. I'm an old pal of the officer who arrested her, and I am good to go. Well, 'least that's what I thought. Those dang waitresses saw the whole thing, and I've shoved 'em before. So, yep, I am currently in a rickety ol' jail cell and I am hatin' it. But deep down, I know I got what I deserved.

Annie's point of view:

I don't always have a special bond with my clients, but when I met Dahlia, I knew this relationship would be special. I like to help people. I have ever since I was a little kid. When Dahlia was going to go to jail for 20 days, I just couldn't allow it. So, I pulled some strings. First, I contacted my college roommate, AKA Nellie Burkins, a waitress at Frank's diner. I told her the situation, and I begged her to speak up. She gathered two other waitresses, and I brought them to court. They told the judge everything, and Dahlia got released and they put Chatty in jail. Serves him right. Nothing could replace the smiles of Dahlia and Ruby when she got released. I patted my lucky suit jacket. I was glad Ruby found her stage-fright-preventing item. I felt bad for the girl. Her dad not alive, her only parent getting arrested! But, after everything, I'd say it was a Happily Ever After.

The End

SAGAR SHABBIR

12TH GRADE • HIGH SCHOOL SUMMER WRITING INTENSIVE

In This World of 200 Countries

Welcome to the world,
Formed billions of years ago

Once you explore
You might have to learn to ignore—

You will find lots of people
Under the steeples

Some may be feeble
Others, illegal.

Some will be gleeful,
others will hurt you like a needle.

Some are affluent
others, half-ruined.

In this world of 200 countries.
One could go hungry,
while other is in industry,

A place where some majorities enjoy
Treating others like a toy.

If we try to address
How much time do we have left?

Is it time for us to dissolve,
And for another generation to evolve?

IRENA TIDWELL

3RD GRADE • MAKE YOUR WORDS SING FROG POETRY • GREEN GABLES ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Glass Frogs

Glass frogs lay small eggs

Little body

Amazing transparent body

So hard to see

So I wish I could I could see you

Fun name

Really makes me excited

Oh I wish I could see you someday

Great at blending in to be safe from predators

LAUREN WHITMER

10TH GRADE • CREATIVE WRITING LAB • BROOMFIELD HIGH SCHOOL

Multiple Pieces*Juliet*

Juliet is a daydream floating in the air
A feather that turns into a beautiful flower
She's sweet like a gumdrop
She's high in the sky like a rainbow with all of its colors inside
Adventures are in her own clueless mind, she goes out of it anytime
She picks up the petals saying that "I'm in love with Romeo it will be forever"
She's a magic potion that's brighter than a shooting star
Her eyes sparkle through the night just like kingdom lights are so bright
Her voice is like a soft dove floating in the air
Her heart is so delicate she is so fair

My dog

My dog is a flower with lots of energy
She fills the air up with a smile like a child getting candy
She loves people, she loves kids and she loves me
She gives people happiness with a big hug
She's scared of the vacuum like a child giving a speech
She loves to be in the cold, wet, deep snow
She loves to play with her big, hard, white bone
She loves to bark at the doorbell when it rings across the house
My dog is sweet like candy with lots of flavors
My dog is a mystery when she barks but I still love her when she doesn't listen

Where was he?

His legs were stiff and his body was shaking. He's in a dream. He can see his friends waking up, starting their day and watching them sleep in the lonely dark and starting up again, but where was he? All of the monsters that he was afraid of were sinking into his brain, crawling up to him but he couldn't breathe. At last, he was in a dream but could not breathe. He's dead but his mind is still awake from those bad dreams.

The way I loved you

We were in the back seat in a cab, neon lights flung right over us in
the back
The smell of autumn fell into the night in this mysterious small
town of yours
We were playing cards in the back of your apartment
You touched my hand
I ran off and left your apartment at midnight
Neon lights were in the back of the club you picked up the phone
you ran home I followed you home in the cold one night
I loved you and the way I loved you was like writing down
something you didn't know

Rachel McAdams (The Notebook)

White snow pale face stuck in a daydream like always
Dresses on the floor makeup on her face she's spinning like a
princess waiting for someone to catch her at her window
The look on her face will say I will never let go of your hand even
on those bad days when
people are pushing you in the daylight
She falls in love in simple ways and she'll say
I'm not gonna remember that night when you held my hand and
we started to dance in the middle of the street and yesterday was like
a dream when you started to spin me around, so tell
me again

CHRISTOPHER YOUNGDAHL

5TH GRADE • PROSE, POETRY, & FLASH FICTION WORKSHOP

Breeze fills my hair

Breeze fills my hair
The sun bears down on me
I rise from the world and hide at the high altitudes of nature
Birds chirp
Pines sway like tall flailing men
Warmth drops as coldness rises
As night falls like a cat
Trapping anyone it can
Clouds ramble on
As buildings disappear
Until there is nothing left

A Different Kind of Sleep

I rose higher and higher until the town faded out of sight. I had been hiking on this trail for hours. I was just about to get to a peak when the trail disappointed me. It ended.

Trees and bushes tangled in front of me. Desperate to get to the top, I pushed my way through the bushes until I came to a clearing.

Then, I realized that I had gone too far and now, I was lost. All of a sudden, I wasn't as excited about getting to the mountain peak. The sun was setting, and I needed to get out of the mountains quickly. But how was I going to get back to the trail? I wasn't paying close enough attention to my surroundings to know how to get back to the trail.

All of my attention was turned away from that though when a rustle of leaves and a high-pitched shriek of something sounded. Pounding shook the ground. The rumbling came closer and out from the shrubs came a.....*Squirrel?*

"You must be cold," the squirrel chattered. "Let me take you to my friend, the possum."

I thought about my family. They were probably worried. But the sun was already below the horizon and the temperature was dropping rapidly. Then a gust of icy wind came, which helped me to make up my mind. "Okay," I said. "I'll go."

When I first saw their "home" I was surprised and thought they were kidding when they asked me to come in. It was simply a large nest on the ground, made up of an old fallen redwood tree, a few logs, leaves and a collection of forest debris.

"Ummm...is this where you would like me to sleep?" I asked. The squirrel looked down sadly. "Oh, I *meant* that I...ummm, I love your house."

"It's going to be nighttime soon," the squirrel said. "I have some acorns and a dead rat roasting over the fire for you."

"You have what?" I interrupted.

"One of my friends," the squirrel said ignoring me, "will be out soon."

“He’s a possum.”

“He’ll give you dinner; I have to go to sleep.”

The squirrel’s idea of sleep wasn’t exactly what I expected. Apparently, according to the possum, the squirrel slept with other squirrels who loved to play. After I ate the rat and three acorns, which tasted terrible, I headed to “bed.” Since the house was basically inside a fallen tree, I slept on the ground. But not much sleep was to be had. The night was filled with piercing screams. Little did I know that squirrels shriek and scream with excitement when they wake up to play at night. And they play... *a lot*.

HANNAH ZHANG

10TH GRADE • HIGH SCHOOL SUMMER WRITING INTENSIVE

Dear Future Me

Date: 07/30/2020

Dear Future Me,

Here's a fun fact: More than eighty percent of our ocean is unexplored. Of course, the ocean covers more than 70 percent of the planet's surface, so it's reasonable that so little has been discovered. Not only that, but deep under the ocean, it's dangerous. You'll get crushed by the water pressure if you go too deep without the right equipment, so staying on land seems like a safe bet to me.

But if everyone is an ocean, how many people have reached the bottom? One in a million? How many people have soaked up the CO₂ around them, locking away every single painful memory forever? How many have completely dried up, with not a single drop of water left?

As an ocean myself, I've just barely skimmed the water. I remember the first time I made a promise to us. I would try my best at everything, and our life would be perfect, but I remember letting you down, time and time again, and I'm sorry, but I want you to know that I'm trying really hard. I promise.

Where are you? Are you happy? Did you find what you were looking for? Maybe you built a fancy submarine that can reach the bottom of our ocean. Did you uncover our secrets? Things we wanted to keep locked away? Do you remember that time when we were six, and that big blue monster showed up in our room? Remember how it was looking through all our cabinets and drawers? Well, I don't recall seeing it leave. Could it be our guardian angel, or just another dream we had? I don't know why it came for us. Did you figure it out?

Here's another question I have for you: Did you know that trauma can be passed down generation to generation? Well, of course you know. You've probably known for a long time. You know how we've always been afraid of the dark? Maybe that's where it came from.

I know I'm asking a lot, but I also have a few things to tell you. I've been doing better lately. I've been writing a lot more, but I still have so many questions. If I told you something, would you be mad at me? Well, here goes. I'm scared of the ocean. I'm scared of the darkness deep down and the

creatures that can bite at me. I'm afraid if I reach the bottom, I'll never see the beaming rays of the sun again or feel the warm breeze by our house that smells of lemons. But that's okay, because I'll learn to be strong. Hopefully.

Lastly, I have some advice for you. There's more to everyone than what meets the eye. Everyone has their own problems. If people were born perfect, we wouldn't have violence and greed and jealousy. Keep that in mind, and don't forget it.

I trust you.

Take care,

Hannah

P.S. I hope you're swimming with the dolphins right now.

KIEFER ZIEGLER

7TH GRADE • MIDDLE SCHOOL SUMMER WRITING INTENSIVE

The Ones of the Spire

A glimmer of sunlight danced along the horizon; it was the start of another day. A tower stood tall in the middle of a forest; the light shone through every crack in the spire's walls. Two children, Nicco and Luda, had made the spire into their home. Nicco found, in the treasure trove that was the spire, a shield. This was no ordinary shield. If you pulled on the handle of it, plates would shoot out of it and it would become even larger. Luda on the other hand had a sword. In the time that they'd known the spire as their home, they had nearly lost their lives twice: once, when a bridge gave way whilst Nicco was attempting to cross it, and another when they had a run-in with ancient automatons. They had a humanoid body with spider-like arms, and for a head they had what seemed like a giant antenna with what appeared to be a bird's head poking out of the bottom. They spotted more automatons, and all of the automatons they found were immobile. Nicco and Luda loved exploring. Every time they did so, they found a new curiosity. They found a large crack in one of the spire's walls. After climbing in, they found themselves on some stone rafters. Suddenly, a door far below them opened, and five heavily armored men came through.

The men wore shiny steel armor, with vaguely bird-like helmets and sharp upside-down horns on either side of their helmet, and they all had shackles around their ankles. The one in front picked up Luda's sword and began studying it. It had her signature all over it. They passed without a word.

"Why do they hate you so much?" Nicco asked. "They don't hate me," Luda answered. "They just want me. They think I can fly, but I can't, not in the way they want me to. I'm not a bird, more like a jellyfish." The two sat there in silence for a while before pressing on. Eventually, they came upon a bridge where many soldiers were marching in a single file line. When all of the soldiers crossed the bridge, Nicco turned to Luda and said, "Let's see where they're

going.” These were different soldiers than the ones they had just encountered. Once the soldiers had passed, Nicco and Luda climbed down a ladder and onto the bridge, then walked down a very long tunnel. Eventually, they reached a huge door. “Ready?” said Luda. Nicco nodded. Together they pushed the door open and were met with a dozen soldiers surrounding a glowing blue fountain. This is where they made their slaves. They were about to ready themselves for a battle, when suddenly, a soldier lifted two fingers, and they were both lifted into the air. This soldier was different than the ones they had previously encountered. He wore the same armor, had the same shackle around his ankle, but instead of the sharp, fake-looking horns, he possessed more realistic ones. They started trembling, and then their vision went black. Nicco awoke in a cage hanging from the ceiling by a chain. He couldn’t escape.

After what felt like hours, a soldier walked into the room and pulled a lever, which dropped the cage from the ceiling. He began dragging Nicco away. Nicco thought this was his end, until he started dragging him across a bridge. Nicco began heaving himself against one side of the cage until it fell off the edge. Nicco broke through one bridge and landed on another. This broke the cage he was trapped in and he managed to escape. He didn’t know what the soldiers were planning, or what they were doing to Luda, but if he was going to stop them, he had better move fast.

If they were anywhere, they must have been at the top of the spire. On his way there, he had found a chest full of his and Luda’s supplies. After about an hour, he found a bridge that led to the center of the tower. In the center of the tower, there was a spiral staircase that led up to the top. Nicco walked through the doorway and climbed up a very steep flight of stairs. Each step was about a foot tall. When he reached the top, he realized that the door was quite large. Nicco pushed the door open into a dark room and was promptly grabbed by two soldiers. The soldiers didn’t take him anywhere. They just stood at one side of the room making sure he couldn’t run. In the center of the room, there was a blue glowing fountain, although much smaller than the one he had seen previously. In front of the fountain, there was a stone cylinder that had a slide in the top, and on the edge of the fountain, there was a white glowing longsword. Whenever

Nicco looked directly at the sword, he had an inexplicable urge to “hurt as many people as possible.” Eventually, the different looking soldier walked through the oversized door. “You may call me Shinji Takomoru,” he said. “Your friend is where she belongs. Everything belongs to something, and I believe this sword belongs to me...” And with that, Shinji lifted one hand, and the sword slowly floated into his grasp. When he had ahold of the sword, he looked up at the ceiling, transfixed and terrified at the same time, as if something were looking down at him. Then, Shinji’s head went limp as he whispered, “I now know...” He began staring at the blade and studying it. “This is world.” Shinji walked on top of the fountain, stabbed his sword into the cylinder, and began turning it like a key. The room lit up, glowing blue wires were illuminated, and an orb appeared above the sword. Shinji paused for a moment, like he was about to say something, and then, “zzzzTZPOW!” Shinji was knocked against the wall by a beam that came from the orb. Black blood spilled all over the floor. The soldiers let go of Nicco and began yelling. Nicco charged through the door and started running down the steps. While he was running down the steps, he noticed the wires were leading down.

Towers had risen out of the spire. The towers had luminous orbs mounted on top of them, and they were shooting beams at the soldiers. Occasionally, Nicco would see a flash of light out of the corner of his eye. The automatons had also awakened as well, but instead of pipes tethering them to the ground, they had tails with very sharp rods at the end of them. Like idiots, they had played around with something they didn’t understand, and now they were paying the price. Nicco thought that he could follow the wires to the core of the spire, and destroy whatever energy source it had, but first he had to find Luda. They were probably trying to turn her into a slave, so he had to retrace his steps back to the slave room. He pressed on. He climbed down the ladder and ran down the bridge that they found the soldiers marching on hours earlier. He reached the door at the end, and walked into the slave room, and there she was, standing there in the middle of the room. It was Luda, but her robes were stained with black, and a void obscured her face. She was a slave again. He grabbed her by the arm and started following the wires to the core. On their way to wherever the wires led, they reached a

massive golden door. He pushed it open with all his might, and he found himself staring at a magnificent silver orb. It was inside a giant glass tube which was large and bulbous at the top but grew thinner at the bottom of the glass. It rested upon an iron foundation. Nicco stepped forward and stabbed the sword right through the glass, into the orb. It began growing, then receded. Then, in a brilliant flash of light, it turned to stone. The spire began trembling. It was falling apart, brick by brick. The only thing Nicco could do now was find an exit. When he finally reached one, Nicco grabbed Luda by the arm, and wandered into the distance, hoping to find a shaman or priestess out there who could reverse the spell on Luda.

About the Authors

Isabella Armsworth is a 5th grader in Knoxville, Tennessee. She loves math, reading, and writing. She enjoys books such as *Aru Shah*, *The Serpent's Secret*, *Harry Potter*, and *The One and Only Ivan*.

Rose Armsworth is a 7th grader in Knoxville, TN. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, she took Lighthouse camps online. She likes math, writing, and reading. Some of her favorite books are *Harry Potter*, *Percy Jackson*, *The Hunger Games*, and *The Selection*.

Martina Becerril is 12 years old and lives in Miami, Florida. She likes to read, draw anime, and travel. She attends Silver Trail Middle School. Her favorite subjects are Language Arts and World History. She has two accomplishments: she passed her Internet Core Competency, and she passed her first French Level. She is currently taking her second level of French.

Kate Bergsieker loves writing and baking! Her piece of writing called "Bruises" is based off of a picture; the prompt was to write a story based on the picture without making stereotypical judgment. Kate had a lot of fun writing this and incorporating backstories to go beyond the stereotypes when you see someone.

Kate Bestall is a 15-year-old writer who lives in Evergreen, Colorado. She likes writing fiction and poetry. She enjoys music, dance, and the beauty of literature, as well as playing with her cat.

Isabella Carter is a 13-year-old younger sister to two cruel older sisters. She spends most of her day sleeping, avoiding murder, and calling her sister a reindeer. She is a pro at wii tennis and awkward conversations.

Jonah Chang is in the 3rd grade and plays Minecraft. He thinks it is so fun.

Lilia Decker likes to experiment with all genres of writing, just whatever comes her to mind. She plays club volleyball competitively,

and she likes to be athletic. The Lighthouse workshops help her be more creative. They have made her a better writer, and they help her express herself more.

Maeve Eklund is 14 years old and will be attending Denver School of the Arts for Creative Writing in the fall. Besides writing, she likes to be outside and draw and play with her dog, Sampson.

Lydia Frey is a bundle of sweetened coffee, anxiety, and pop culture references cleverly disguised as a 15-year-old high school junior living in Colorado. She enjoys writing short stories and poems and reading all genres of manga. She has, surprisingly, not dyed her hair pink or tried real ramen yet, but we all know she will eventually.

After experiencing homelessness and poverty, Angelo Gomez became fascinated by perspective and story as a powerful tool of empathy. He believes that perspective is vital to discourse and dialogue has the power to change lives.

Leonardo Gomez is a Colorado native currently in his senior year of high school. Writing has been a unique way for him to express himself creatively and emotionally. The themes throughout his writing are very personal and self-reflecting, dealing with characters overcoming internal conflicts hidden under external circumstances. Leonardo's hope is to continue his writing in the future to release his full storytelling capabilities.

Erina Imanaka is a 12-year-old writer from California. She enjoys writing fantasy books or realistic fiction short stories. When she is not writing, she enjoys crafting, reading, and exercising.

Elsa Johnson loves books, writing, poetry, chocolate, and new pencils!

As an author, Crosbie LaCasse is still dabbling in a lot of different writing forms and discovering which ones she likes best. She is currently focusing on more "abstract" or surrealist poetry, as well as fictional short stories. Some of Crosbie's other hobbies include (but

certainly ARE NOT limited to) reading, soccer, piano, and baking. Just this year, Crosbie got into Denver School of the Arts for creative writing, so she will be spending this year (and hopefully future years, too!) there. Previously, she attended Hill Middle School.

Nora Luloff lives in Seattle with her brothers, her parents, and her dog. She enjoys many sports and writes in her free time. Nora prefers to write realistic fiction but enjoys writing all types of fiction.

Josephine Lyda lives in North Denver with her parents, younger brother, and dog, Freddy. When she is not writing, JoJo likes discovering new foods, playing outdoors, and playing music.

Audrey Malia is in 3rd grade at Southmoor Elementary.

Banks Malia is in 5th grade at Southmoor Elementary.

Henry Moraja is a senior at Englewood High School. He has been writing for six years and hopes to pursue a career in the realm of literature. In his free time, he enjoys reading, collecting pens, and ordering packs of stickers online.

Lily Claire Quail Nobel is a fifteen-year-old Aspiring Author with capital A's and human in all lowercase. They gravitate towards writing existential horror, surreal fiction, and stories about love, but dabble in self-indulgent poetry and descriptive prose. They can often be found desperately lost in an ancient cave system, or somewhere else fun to look at and deeply menacing.

Meili Novachek uses writing as a coping skill when times get rough. She is also involved in choir and music. Both are ways to express her feelings when challenges present themselves. Meili also really enjoys school. She works with the Intensive Learning Center and helps the students connect to the world. She is able to connect to them because she has challenges of her own and can relate to them on a personal level. Meili also enjoys Language Arts because she gets to express herself through writing. Outside of school, she hangs with

her family, and works at the Butterfly Pavilion in Westminster. Her favorite job while working is talking, interacting and engaging guests with the invertebrates.

Ella Peterson is...

Optimistic, joyful, creative, and weird

The daughter of Chris and Shana

Lover of cats, art of all kinds, and organization.

Ella is a person,

Who feels like no one is a bad person inside, is nice, and can be better

Who needs caring friends, people who support her, and happiness in the world

Who tries her best to spread happiness to everyone, a smile, and jokes

Who fears all bugs, sharp objects, and the deep sea

Who would like to see peace and love on the planet Earth.

Ethan Rauschkolb is 16 years old and attends Niwot High School. He is heavily involved with the theater program and would like to become a screenwriter. Ethan has been writing since elementary school, but says his stories have only become sort of okay since starting high school.

Asha Rehman is 8 years old. She is from Brooklyn, New York. She likes writing lots and lots of stories and she loves reading.

Minna S. Reilly is a fifth-grade student who lives in Connecticut. She loves to read, write, and draw, and is an aspiring professional author. She loves the water, and though she doesn't have one, if she could pick a pet, it would most certainly be a hamster.

Sagar Shabbir is a high school student from Azad Kashmir, Pakistan. Sagar loves to take pictures and write fictional stories.

Irena Tidwell is a third grader in Mr. Turner's class at Green Gables Elementary School.

Lauren Whitmer is a 10th grade student at Broomfield High School. She loves to write and be creative.

Christopher Youngdahl is a 10-year-old boy who was born in China. He now lives in Santa Barbara, California with his adoptive parents and 2 dogs. Christopher likes to write fiction. He enjoys reading and playing sports like basketball, baseball and swimming. His family likes to travel. About three times a year, he and his family go to places with warm water like Georgia. They also travel to New Jersey to visit family there for holidays and to swim in their pool.

Hannah Zhang is a 15-year-old writer from Arizona. She enjoys writing poetry, fiction, and personal essays. She loves drinking tea in the morning, playing with her dogs, and sitting in the sun. She enjoys reading all kinds of novels, but mostly leans towards adventure and fantasy.

Kiefer Ziegler lives in Enola, Pennsylvania. He enjoys creative writing, drawing, and other creative pursuits. He believes that visions inspire people and stories feed people.

