Genesis

York Preparatory School
2021-2022
Welcome

Welcome to Genesis, York Preparatory School’s 6th-12th grade literary and art magazine! We are very proud of our peers for having the courage to share their creativity with us, whether it be through art, poetry, or prose. Congratulations to them all. Due to pandemic-related disruptions, this year’s issue of Genesis is a double one, combining the works from this school year and the last. Some of the pieces come from York Prep graduates. This year’s issue has an outstanding selection of poetry that covers a vast range of topics, from “Home Sweet Home” (Ella Hickman, 11th grade), which speaks about racism and inequality, to “The Journey” (Jacob Palmer, 9th grade), which makes use of beautiful imagery to express his experience in Minecraft. This year’s collection of student work embodies the maturity, curiosity, and creativity of students at York Prep as well as the courage they express through their art and writing. We have thoroughly enjoyed putting final touches on this year’s issue especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. These captivating words and eye-catching art have served, simultaneously, as both a distraction from, and a powerful spotlight on, the current issues of the world. We hope you enjoy them as much as we do.

The Genesis staff is delighted to announce this year’s winning pieces:

Best Prose: “Home Can be Temporary” by Ana Burkard, 10th gr.


Best Photo: “Lantern Market Stall” by Owen Barbagallo, 10th gr.

Best Digital/Studio Artwork: “War is Over” by Daron Sklar, 11th gr.

We hope you enjoy this year’s issue of Genesis and we encourage you to share your own work with us next year!
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Breathe
By Kimberly Pineda, Grade 11

Waves crash against the sand on which you’re standing. They feel cool as they wash up on your feet. It almost makes you forget why you came here in the first place. It’s dark and the moon is high up in the sky, accompanied by millions of stars. As you stare up, you start to wonder what it feels like to know that you’re not alone, even if there’s a huge distance between each human being. As the waves crash on the shore, they no longer crash on your feet. The last people who were scattered along the beach are long gone. Now it is empty with nobody in sight. But had they looked closely enough before, they’d have seen a person hiding in the waves, slowly sinking as they lost the air in their lungs. If you look close enough, you’ll see they’re not really drowning, they’re finally coming up to breathe from sinking all of these years.
Growing Pains
By Kaia Seldman, Grade 12

This photograph depicts an unexpected bush of flowers struggling to grow in between rocks and sand. I thought it was interesting that it was somehow able to grow there, so I took a photo of it. When I first got my camera, I flew to L.A. to stay with my uncle. He is a director turned photographer. He took me hiking a lot on my stay there and on one of our hikes, I came across a flower bush on the side of a mountain. I knew I wanted an image of it but I had no idea how to use this camera, so I took a thousand pictures until I was able to get one that reflected the one in my head.

Waves
By Ruthie LaTona, Grade 10

Childhood is a long line
The end is not so close

We walk not so close
My last memory is blue

The ocean wave crashing a cobalt blue
It hits hard and leaves a scar

Like the feeling of hot sun on your back it scars
Rough but delicate hitting the rocks

My name engraved on a rock
Where I walked on my toes

The white sand on my toes
The sun dyeing my short hair

Gold dancing with the waves in my hair
Childhood is a short line; not too far
Walking the Hiking Road
By Trina Dempsey, Grade 10

In this photo a woman is walking down a trail with nature surrounding her. I took this picture in the mountains near Seattle, Washington, where the nature is astonishing. The woman in the photo acts as a focal point for a story that says that away from the cement of cities, a walk in nature can help us discover and explore our own inner nature. In this photo I was inspired by the sheer beauty of the scenery. Then I captured a woman walking down the trail path, which seemed to give the viewer a perspective of how vast the mountains are. To get my result, I waited until the woman walked right into the perfect spot in my photo.

A Word Left Unspoken
By Kimberly Pineda, Grade 11

A word left unspoken is like a knife stabbing deeper and deeper into the wound. She sits there as she contemplates whether she should speak, or if she should disregard the phantom pain of the knife. A word left unspoken is the same word that can change a lifetime. Does she want to feel responsible for being the cause of such a change? Or does she want to leave them on the path they are destined to follow? Lost in a forest as she looks for the right path to take, she’s lost and starts to shake. Thrashing and sobbing, she’s lost with no escape. There’s nothing I can do, she thinks, giving up completely. A word left unspoken is the word that will change her life. Left in a forest through all the scary nights, the unspoken words are not silent in the least. They are loud and screaming. Haunting and terrifying. LET ME OUT, LET ME OUT, they plead as they wail. Each day that passes the words become louder and louder, as she grows quieter and quieter. I can’t let you out, she says. It’s too much for them without a doubt. I’ll keep this in me and won’t let them know. You and I together, my beautiful daughter, because the word left unspoken, will ruin your father.
Isolation
By Kaia Seldman, Grade 12

This piece depicts what eleventh grade looked like for me. Sitting alone with my cat, at my desk, with only a absurd amount of Canvas notifications to keep me company. For Mr. Hartman’s class we needed to depict quarantine and I thought of no better way than to show exactly what my days consisted of. I took out my phone, took a reference photo of my desk and began sketching. I decided to make only an outline of my body because at the time I wasn’t really there. I was dealing with long COVID and everything I did was on autopilot. In fact I don’t actually remember much. All I remember is what this depicts; canvas notifications, my desk, my meds, and my cat.

Crystal Blue
By LJ Gordon, Grade 9

I stand proud on the rickety table
The rowdy audience captures my eyes
They walk
Their souls emit the familiar scent of rocky ocean blues
So deeply I care
For those who are already gone

The warmth in the crowded air is gone
Hard to believe I’ve gone from battlefield rampages to cleaning the elite’s dinner tables
The promise of blood and vengeance are the only reasons I care
You can see the life dwindling from my eyes
Those I serve beget an aura of crystal blue
Forwards, fearlessly, yet warily we walk

To death, revenge, justice, or spirit we walk
Our anger is not gone
It only festers in the skies endless blue
I am done waiting on grungy dinner table
I have my mother’s seeing eyes
The eyes that say: ‘I care’

I wish I could care
For those absent souls who refused the final walk
There is no sun left in their eyes
Their courage is gone
Now they wait on vacant tables
Lost in their patrons depressant blues

My brother’s eyes shine of lake water blue
For him, I desperately care
For him, I wait on tables
For him, I ignore the narrow plank I walk
For him, I accept my faith is gone
For him, I hide the grit in my eyes
Unstoppable courage beams in my eyes
The eyes of the crowd contain only droplets of blue
But their audacity is not yet gone
They must care
For the final walk
If not, they can wait on crowded tables

Unanswered Questions
By Emily Singh, Grade 10

I love the unanswered questions
The ones that form all the hypotheticals
The ones that there may never be an answer for
The ones that make us second guess the smallest of decisions
The ones that has our minds traveling in a loop for hours
The ones that make us question significance
The ones starting with “what if”

I love the way memories are triggered
By the verses of a song
By the lines of our new favorite book
By the small actions and conversations with our friends and family
By the movies and plays and shows rewatched again
By the mistakes we make the second time
By the nostalgic places of childhood

I love the mistakes I’ve made
When I didn't say anything
When I associated songs with people
When I put so much pressure on myself that I broke down
When I worked instead of finding time to heal
When I let myself give up
When I left
I love the amount of learning I’ve done
Learning throughout every tired day
Learning from questioning the unquestionable
Learning from hours spent working through my questions
Learning through forms of expression
Learning through listening, reading, seeing, and connecting
Learning from pain

It’s Her Fault, Isn’t It?
By Kaia Seldman, Grade 12

The sun came up on a Monday morning. 102-degree weather suffocated the residents of a young girl’s hometown. She awoke sweaty but optimistic; it was her first day of 7th grade and she couldn’t wait. She had been planning her 7th-grade first-day outfit for years and was so happy to shrug on her sparkly black tank-top and matching shorts. The clothes felt a bit tighter than she had remembered, but then again, she had grown a lot that summer, in more ways than one.

Her morning was rushed due to her blood being pumped full of adrenaline. She smiled from cheek to cheek as she skipped down the street. Today would be such a good day...

“Nice t-----s” a man yelled to her from across the street. She stopped, confused, and embarrassed as she slowly looked over at him.

“He had dark graying hair, and his eyes were glued to her chest. He looked to be the same age as her father.

“Aww where did your smile go pretty lady??” Tears of embarrassment streamed down her cheeks while a fear she had never felt before tore apart her intestines. What do I do? she asked herself. Her mother had told her to scream if a stranger tried to talk to her, but she couldn’t. She was frozen with fear.

All those news stories she had overheard about young
girls assaulted her little brain, leaving her a helpless kitten stuck up a tree. She never thought it could happen to her; she never thought it could happen to a 13-year-old minding their own business. This was her street. She was supposed to be safe here.

The wind brushed harshly against her cheeks, still wet with tears. She collapsed into her father’s comforting arms telling him what happened through sobs. He paused pushing her out of their hug, she smiled expecting one of his five-star pep talks. But all she got was four words. Four words that would take up permanent residence within her brain, taunting her for all of eternity.

“You should’ve covered up--”

She yanked away from him, in dismay, and ran to her room before he could finish. For her own, loving, father not taking her side could only mean one thing,

She had failed him.

I should have known! I’m such an idiot! Goddammit, I’m such an embarrassment! It was all my fault! I should have known this top was too tight! I should have known!

It was all her fault. Her fault. It was her and no one else’s fault that a man catcalled her. It was her and no one else’s fault that her young mind didn’t know the fear and embarrassment a tank top could bring her. It was her and no one else’s fault that she froze with fear. It was her and no one else’s fault that a man felt obligated to comment on her body.

It was all her fault...
Or at least society tells us it was...

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Darkness and Night
By Darcey Neale, Grade 6

After Alice Neel’s painting, “Night”

There it was all dark and mellow. I did not know when there would be light.

But there was light. I saw it all warm and bright. But what was there, I almost could not see it.

It was something for me. Perhaps a mystery.
Bathed in Sunlight
By Mikayla Pressley, Grade 12

I wanted to study how a strong light source can give a portrait a certain energy. In this piece, digital oil paints and a reference of a young woman were used. Though most of her form is engulfed in shadow, the light source allows the impression of her face to still shine through.

The Start
By Joseph Cruz, Grade 6

Before the Start
There was nothingness.
No sound. No feel.
Just Dark.
But then there was a spark,
A thought of not what is,
But a thought of what could.
Then the start was over,
But the creation was yet to start
Venom Flies
By Eva Baker, Grade 7

This art piece depicts two white feathered wings attached to the back of a white snake. The winged snake is curled in the middle of the road. I made this piece at home from my laptop. To be frank, I had no deeper meaning for this piece. I just loved the idea and wanted to challenge myself by merging this creature with the background. I wanted to capture a wild fantasy-like creature in a modern setting. My goal was to merge the two almost flawlessly. I started out with properly selecting the pieces for the creature and probably prepping them by cutting out parts I didn’t need. Then I began to focus on blending the creature and some of the shading. Finally I found a suitable background and placed it beneath. I had to be very patient with the process of properly removing pixels that didn’t look right without changing the original shape. It was more difficult for me to make the snake and the background look cohesive.

The Hunt
By Kaia Seldman, Grade 12

As I run through the woods, a feeling of belonging overcomes me. Filling my senses from the bottom up. I am truly alive.

The hunt is quite the event.

The highlight of the day, one might say.

I watch with bewildered eyes as the moon dances between the branches of trees.

The scent is engulfing. Must have more.

I can’t even remember why I am running, yet I feel an undeniable need to continue.

A chipmunk hides in the brush. The fear that surrounds this event is exhilarating.

The wind howls. My ears pull back. Why is a normally calming sound so...so frightful all of a sudden?

A howl of glee perhaps?

I feel fatigue creeping up my scratched-up paws yet my body keeps me running.

A lick of the lips.

Perhaps I will shut my eyes for a moment. Just a moment under this nice tree.

Never to wake again.
I remember waking up in the early morning, always being greeted by my mother’s signature hazelnut roast coffee. My nose had grown so accustomed to the bittersweet smell that I had begged her almost every day for a sip from her mug. I remember it being such an acrid drink that I’d mentally vomited, not understanding that in a few years I, too, would survive off of this pungent drink. My mother always had dark, curly hair. The type of hair that made men do double-takes as she crossed the streets of Manhattan, her hand in mine. Her laugh always circulated the room, filling everyone around her with joy. It was a loud and strung-out roar. She’d spent hours cleaning and perfecting our house, filling it with all things that made us feel happy and secure. I also remember it taking me several years to realize that the house my mother spent hours perfecting, was my temporary home.

Growing up in an urban city was always my dream. I would be able to walk everywhere with friends, take the subway on my own, or even look at the beautiful highrise architecture. We moved to a suburban city after spending three years of my life in Manhattan. The lifestyle was different here; people drove five miles to get to their closest McDonalds during the six o’clock peak rush hour. Suburban cities are less free for teens like me. I would need to purchase a car by sixteen so I could drive myself to the mall. My mother grew up in Manhattan. Born and raised city-slicker. What made her want to move out of the city? I wouldn’t be able to tell you. The house she bought was big; an old 1900-something brick Tudor building with a small circular window in the attic. It reminded me of a witch’s castle. The backyard was big enough to fit three other houses and then some. My dreams of growing up in an urban city were brought to a screeching halt at the mere age of three. Why did she want to move here? What was so special about this old, rickety house? My sister seemed to enjoy having a bigger room, she made sure to rub it in my face as much as possible. I’d say my room, at the time, was like Harry Potter’s bedroom; big enough to fit a bed and nightlight. “This could make do,” I told myself, not thinking about my friends who lived in tall, glistening skyscrapers. What was so special about this house that made my mother, a smart woman, want to pack up everything she once knew and leave? The backyard was pretty nice. The house had lots of windows which provided the perfect amount of sunlight for her many planets. But what made this suburban house stand out to her? I refused to believe this was my home; I couldn’t belong here... But nothing was holding me back either. Moving here made me miss living in the city even more but sometimes, just sometimes, I pictured the churchbells that played at five o’clock every evening were signs from God.

It had finally hit me; home to my mother was something new, different. She loved being brought out of her comfort zone, even if it meant bringing me along with her. My home is wherever my mother goes. My mother tried for so many years to make a vacant house my home that
finally, I warmed up to the thought of having a big backyard and stairs to walk up. Home is a place I can go to, something not so familiar to me. It’s never expected as I’m always searching for something different. This old house has seen me grow into the person I am today and I hope for a new place to call home very soon.

**Soldier Trees**

By Ava Parker, Grade 10

The trees stand like soldiers,
Guarding an inner mystery.
There’s no opening in these cavernous plants.
Why won’t you open up to me?
A Summer’s Sunset
By Wells Labbé, Grade 12

This photograph was taken over the summer at my family’s lake house in the Poconos. The sunsets up there can be truly unreal, and this was one of many examples that I caught on camera. The contrast between the shadows of the trees in the foreground and the pink and orange sunset was perfect for this photo. The sunsets in the Poconos are always great; sometimes there’s a really unique color combination. Some evenings the sunset can be a more purple and pink combination that stretches throughout the entire sky, and sometimes it can be a pinkish-red blend between the blue sky. This photograph strikes a unique tone between a cheery, pretty sunset and a dark and moody night photo and was just too good to pass up on.

Removable Discontinuity
By Zach Sternchos, Grade 11

You came from drifting nothing
You turned into something

Created a pleasant placidity
Where before was only dark

Born of a strange breath
Intense and sublime

Infinite compression
A star’s death

Night stopped and set
Ablaze around your empty eye

An ancient infinite newborn
A fixed point surrounded by flux

Do you remember what it was?
The existence that was voided

Are they distant, the memories?
The stars you assimilated into ink

You’re just a parasite
Eating the lives of the celestials

You long for the lives they have
Their births, their deaths, their truths
You are truthless
You are timeless

You are everything, yet
You are nothing

You’re a dot
One dimension

No time, no space
Only you

---

A spark of light and then it all began.
Trees started to grow.
Their roots start to unravel from their curled selves
And insert themselves into the ground.
A wild nose, peculiar to the world, fills the air.
Floods arise.
Humans emerge.
The dark embraces the light, and it becomes night.
Even in the dark, the sky is illuminated.
To be continued...
Cosmic Haze
By Alex DeHaas, Grade 11

Far out, at the edges of the galaxy,
where the worlds began to fray and
the light of the stars grew dim,
the pin prick cosmos, faded like the coals of a fire.

In this faded cosmos, on a fraying planet,
there lived a boy who made his home in a little shack.

With grayed hair and worn out eyes,
the boy went about his life.

Rising in the morning with the bleary coal sun,
the boy mechanically got up from his mostly rock bed,
heading out into the dusty fields
and spreading rusty water over his brown and black plants.

He had a pen of animals,
full of strange little pig-like creatures with too many legs.

His animals all stayed quiet when he fed them,
walking calmly to him as he poured them their slop.

Sometimes, when the boy put his hand to their heads,
they would become rock at his touch.

When the sun started to fall, the boy went out into the forest,
taking his dull axe to the hollow trees.

He collected whatever wood he could find,
trying to light his pale blue fire.

Sitting on the ground,
next to a fire that gave off no warmth,

the boy would watch as the pale moon rose
and cast a subtle illumination onto the world.

When the sun completely fell below the horizon,
the boy would look at the sky,

trying to pick out the stars from the haze of the cosmos
to discern exactly where and what they are.
It’s a dark and warm night in Harlem
the streets are empty,
but the buildings are filled with language.
I sat in an old rustic chair at four in the morning
with nothing to hold on to but my exposed legs.
My dad turned on the morning news, but it was
almost silent
“authority of Chinese city, Wuhan, plans to test all
11 million people”
We don’t dare say a word to each other
that was understood between us.
All I could hear was the Nutella spreading against the bread,
and before I knew it
he handed me my sandwich
put on his MTA shirt along with gloves and a mask
and closed the door behind him, to leave for work.

This piece depicts a figure in isolation with a mask pulled down to her chin. Behind her is the visual representation of the coronavirus pandemic as we’ve come to know it. This drawing was made with digital charcoal pencils.
Maratha was sick with chickenpox. That was the fact spread around by Beatrice to Emily in study hall, who told it to Beau and Samantha at lunch in a whisper. In turn, they told it to Olivia at study hall, who told it to Heather in the girl’s bathroom. Heather misheard and thought Maratha ended up in the hospital, so that’s what she told her boyfriend, Max, who told his brother, Trevor, who loved to gossip. Trevor told Hugo that Maratha got the chickenpox from the infamous, strange, old, decrepit man who lived on Savoy Street, just for fun. Hugo told Jack that version in the boy’s locker room, who told John a few minutes later, who then became sure the decrepit man had kidnapped her. John told Sophie after school, who told Richard the next day, and although he didn’t really care, he told a different Beatrice anyway. She added on to the kidnapping story that the old man had taken Maratha to his shed in his backyard, where he kept his saws. This update was spread to Sally in homeroom, who quickly informed Russell, who told it to Eli two desks down. By that point, the story of how the kidnapping happened amassed slowly. The story was that Maratha was given a mysterious envelope with the old man’s address and so she went there and was kidnapped. Eli told Frank via text, who told Trenton in detention, who told Felix after he escaped detention two hours early. He told Garfield (who was named after his great-great-grandfather the President, not the cat) that the old man had attacked Maratha in the shed and that was why she was in the hospital. So Garfield told Daniel, who believed every word he was told, who told Molly while shoplifting. Molly had heard a different version of the story, so when she told Sam, the story merged again from where it split off into two separate versions back at Trevor. The new story was that the old man had sawed off Maratha’s arm in the shed and given her a shot of chickenpox and measles. Sam told this convoluted story to Isabella and when she told Liam, she added, in an effort to clear it up slightly, that the man had thrown Maratha into the street in the neighboring town and that’s how she was found again and sent to the hospital. Liam told Kyle in science class who told Antonio and by then it was Monday, and Maratha had returned to school, armful and completely fine. Then, they all felt confused. Why was she fine? Didn’t she lose her arm? The stories must have all been exaggerated. But no matter, cause did you hear about Leo and his new car?
I made this print with linoleum that I carved out and painted. My art depicts a small skyline printed many times side by side and upside down in different colors. I selected this medium because it would look the exact same way every time I printed it instead of it looking different. I started sketching out what I wanted to carve into linoleum, then I carved it. Afterwards, I rolled the paint onto the linoleum and pressed it onto a piece of paper. Right after, I became inspired to create more of the same print in different colors and press the same thing upside down. To get my desired result, I had to have a very steady hand and wash the linoleum every time in between prints.
**I Can See Ghosts**  
*By Nia Moore, Graduated*

the grey siberian sits at the edge of my bed on top of the blanket collecting lint, and puts one paw in front of the other tediously. i can’t help, but to imagine her steps as carefully thought out choreography when i dream, i see her on a large windowsill far away from this godforsaken country when she dreams, she sees me on a wooden swing the epitome of attractive creating each other’s perfect alternative in a world of dreams; not now, not current, manifesting, but never becoming

**Ouch**  
*By Kaia Seldman, Grade 12*

Coughing up nothing.  
“You will get better, whether that means you die or you survive you will get better”

A little sister’s eyes watering.  
She doesn’t want to lose her sister.

A pained mother with her head to her daughter’s chest.  
“I just want to hear you breathe...just let me hear you breathe”

A father in denial.  
“She has no underlying conditions! She can’t be that sick. It’s just not possible!”

Sleep is a luxury.  
“What if I don’t wake up”

She sleeps.  
“Kaia?”

“Kaia!!”

“Kaia, please!!”

Her eyes open.  
Why is she on the floor?

A doctor with fear in her eyes.  
“They say giving patients steroids will make it worse but...”

Doctor pauses.  
Doctor is unsure.

“Take this and this and this one 4 times a day.”

Doctor saves her life.  
“Here is my number, please stay in contact.”
She will stay in contact.

Is there a god?
   “Please God let me live. Please. I’m not ready yet and they all look so scared…”
She speaks on behalf of others.
   It’s not like she could feel anything.
   A will is written.
   She is too tired to fear.

Breathing?
   Stop. Don’t say that word.
   Don’t remind her of what she fails to do.
She lives.
   “This doesn’t feel like living.”
   A broken body attached to a fearful soul.
   “Will it ever get better?”

A rumor spreads.
   “I swear I’m not being dramatic.”
   “I can’t deal with this.”

Residual symptoms.
   Lung pain, shortness of breath, headaches, extreme fatigue, brain fog...

Brain fog knocks on her door.
   “Who are you?”
   She forgets her sister, her boyfriend, her best friend, herself...
   “She looks just like the girl in the mirror...she said she loved me”
   “how do I know her?”

She needs more oxygen.

No, she needs good grades.
She needs to.....

She needs to ....
If we want to fix this she needs to ....

She is tired.
   Sleeping is a luxury.
   Sleeping is a nightmare.

Leave her alone.
   She isn’t sick anymore.
   She is ill.
   She is broken.
   She doesn’t need your help.

A light sob.
   “Mom, it hurts so bad!”
   A shriek.
   She screams into her pillow.
   She has to hide.
   She doesn’t want to see their fearful faces.
   Not again.

A tear falls hitting the floor.
   Hitting a spot.
   The spot.
   The spot her blood fell when they poked her.
   The spot the EMTs saved her life in.
   The spot she almost died in.
   The spot she...
   The spot she doesn’t want to think about.

Leave her alone.
   She is in pain.
   She is strong enough to defeat her pain.
   She promises.

Leave her alone.
   She doesn’t want to think about it
   Ouch.
   That hurt.
**Just a Normal Day**  
By Ameli Okada, Grade 10

I woke up. My alarm went off. It’s 8:35 am.
I look outside from my window; I see people carrying the usual oxygen tank and gas mask.

That was normal.

I saw my mom watching the daily news and my dad checking the air quality for today.
I ate breakfast today, which was canned soup and a bagel.
It tasted old and bitter.
I went through my phone.
I scrolled through Instagram.
I saw my friends posting their lost ones and edited pictures of the sky.

That was normal.

I got ready; I put on my clothes and the usual sparkly gas mask
I was gifted by my friend.
I opened the door.
I saw the usual gray sky and the polluted air.

That was normal.

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**The Sound of Loneliness**  
By Ian Szigethy, Grade 11

Deafening. He hears nothing, yet he hears everything.
Nothing. But so much. The silence reverberates.
Interrogates. Restates.

Bored. That is the reason for the rhymes. Or are they truths?
Given from something within?

Is it the lack of comfort with his basic emotions that makes them acts of boredom? Or are his feelings too primitive, too little, to be put on the page?

This is what silence does. Makes him question. The silence. It’s so loud.
From Burned Land to Scorched Earth
By Romeo Bongiovi, Grade 12

Two sides fight for what no one is fully sure. There is a red cross on the doors of those who are scared.

+ 

Children being taught to shoot because they need to. Their last moments of childhood need to be savored. I watch from my chair unsure, unwavering, for a war is coming and good is unfavored.

+ 

Who will win is already decided. From what I get, there's no point in fighting, so lay down and breathe your final breath. War is coming, and with it, death.

+ 

Fear lies around the topic of it all. Will we rise up or will we fall? The world is at stake. I'm paranoid and slowly sinking into the void.

+ 

Will flowers bloom after bombs are dropped? Will hearts beat or will they stop? The end of days; a new tomorrow. It hurts the world with pain and sorrow.

On the Eighth Day, God was Bored
By Zach Sternchos, Grade 11

You that walk upon my dirt
How much I hope you will eat the fruit,
I want to play with my children,
but they are not yet awake.

Released from its captor's hands,
I let it slither loose.
Let my children finally scream,
For they are better to me in distress,
A life that is awake.

Go tempt the children,
make them fall
For this eighth day I'm bored
and want to watch
my children's eyes unglaze.

I want to watch my children's hate
I want to see them crush
their loved ones,
for that bloodlust
I forced upon them
will be the highest tier
of entertainment.
I want their praises,
while they cry.

You're welcome.
I selected Photoshop as my medium for this collage because it allowed me to doctor and warp my images as needed. I made this piece during digital art with Ms. Spencer. This piece is a surrealist commentary on how we fight mother nature instead of embracing and working with her.

I was inspired by vintage magazines and photos depicting space. I wanted to capture the different viewpoints people have about climate change with this collage: Some people are fighting, some are accepting, and some are surrendering.
East
By Ruthie LaTona, Grade 10

All night I dreamed of home
And the pineapple bush on the corner
That he told me to look out for if I wandered
And the star cluster above my head
That I watched by the dune
And the skies that me and M watched
That appeared a night in July
And the smell of his army blankets
That we brought outside
And the waves that crashed us to sleep
That will forever be my white noise
And the smell of lavender
That makes me want to cry
And the sketch he drew in ’67
That makes her miss his voice
But long ago was long ago
And all night we’ll dream of home

Endings
By Owen Barbagallo, Grade 10

Endings are the worst. I mean, you start on a story, you get to the middle, and suddenly you’re like, this is gonna be great, and then you get to the ending and it’s, What do I do now? How do I end this? It’s always like that. I’ve never written a satisfying ending.

One time, I was writing this story about a girl who meets a boy and falls in love. But the boy doesn’t know who she is and thinks she might murder his whole family and kidnap him. So she does, except she gets caught because she’s nineteen and security cameras are freaking everywhere. At which point, she is taken in by the police and put into jail. But then is that how I end it? Does she ever see the boy she loves again? Does she ever learn the error of her ways? Should I kill her off, or should she get a redemption arc, or does it just end there? I don’t know how a single book is written with an ending because they’re so difficult to write.

Another time when I was heading home, I saw this poor squirrel being chased by a dog and I wondered how the situation would end. Does the squirrel make it out alive or will it be killed? (Why is there so much death mentioned?) Is the dog intent on killing the squirrel or is he just having fun? I’ll never know. I feel like I never really see endings. Everything wraps up perfectly with a nice little bow and a happily ever after. And that starts me wondering. Are there really endings at all? Is an ending real or is it just an artificial stopping point? Do things really ever end? This piece needs to end eventually and I have no clue how to do it. Well, I guess that’s kind of a good ending.
Simple Children
By LJ Gordon, Grade 9

The day that the last leaves fall
I will sing a prayer
Not a prayer calling for help
Not a prayer begging for mercy
Not a prayer asking for forgiveness
Just a simple prayer
Not to a God
Not to a saint
Not to a sinner
I sing my simple prayer to myself
I know that I can hear such a simple prayer
because I am a simple person
I am not a prophet
A soldier
A king
Or a queen
I am a child
And children are very simple
We still bicker and bully on the playground
Even though one day each and every one of us will have to
Work together,
We cry over scraped knees and needles,
Even though we soon will feel the greatest pains,
We know little about our broken world
Even though it is our job to fix it
We children are simple people
Our minds are simple
Our prayers are simple
And our world is weak
But us simple children
Have very simple answers to the world’s threats
Opened eyes
Opened ears
And acceptance
It’s as simple as that

Jazzy Road
By Trina Dempsey, Grade 10

This photo is depicting shadows of friends of mine on the ground with beautiful artwork in the back. I took it downtown near the Oculus or near the World Trade Center. What I’m trying to say with this photo is that shadows also show emotions. What inspired me to create this photo were the shadows on the ground and how expressive they looked. My process was to take the photo before we left. What I did to get the desired result was to make sure everyone moved around enough so it was clear to get the photo.
Layers of Love
By Ming Robinson, Graduated

This piece was created because my friend Rehannah Baksh interviewed me for an oral documentary project called “Hand-Made Hands,” where she asked me to reflect and draw something that resonated with me after the interview. The drawing is of my hand in the ASL sign for “I love you.” It is also drawn out with the words “I love you” written and shaped uniquely. In the interview, we talked about loving yourself. So since it was a project about artists’ hands and I was taking ASL for my language, I wanted to incorporate the ASL sign for “I love you.” I took a picture of my hand to map out the highlights and shadows and then started writing “I love you” at the tip of the pinky. Using various pencils, I wrote “I love you” in different shades so the highlights and shadows would pop out.

Radiant
By Ava Parker, Grade 10

In the darkness of my room, a beautiful light looms.

The pearl of a moon, silk like cream, throughout the night gleams.

It causes me profuse joy to gaze at that wondrous creature and its astral, lustrous friends.

It reminds you to appreciate these honeyed moments that you wish you could have whenever times are hazy.

Though it’s pitch black at night, to me the sky is radiant.
This photo depicts a woman at the 59th St. Winter Market selling lanterns. I selected this medium because I saw this image and I thought it would make a great photo, which it did. I think it looks very cool and is aesthetically pleasing.

When I left school one winter afternoon, I decided I wanted to walk home. As I wandered around the 59th St. Winter Market, I saw this booth and asked the lady if I could take a picture of her surrounded by all the colorful lanterns. She agreed and the result was this magical photo.
Mine and Mine Only
By Olivia Terrell, Grade 9

I love the way my room is decorated like the way city buildings are ordered.
I love the soft silk pillows neatly placed on my bed.
I love the grand bookshelf that takes up a corner of my room.
I love the light blue decorating my smooth walls.
I love the big fluffy cat my mom claimed she bought for the “family.”
I love the collection of quality clothing stacked near my bedside table.
But not the stupid ripped shoes shoved away in the back of my closet.

Not the old Gap sweater I wore that one time in first grade,
Not the shattered snow globe I got as a souvenir on our way back from Canada.
Not the memories of the black and white striped wallpaper I had as a child.
I hate the way it was decorated like an abandoned town:
dark, ugly, childish
I’ve grown, without knowing the price.

Inside Out
By Everett Glasser, Grade 7
**Feathered Skeleton**  
By Mairead Butler, Grade 10

*Pencil and Watercolor*

The artwork depicts an outline of my figure with my skeleton drawn inside. I made this drawing for an assignment for art class. I normally don’t use watercolors, but Mr. Hartman insisted. The feathers in the piece have every name I have gone by - online, nicknames, etc. - on them in a rune system I created. I started by tracing my outline, as well as my hair. I studied a skeleton in order to get the proportions and details correct, then I began shading. I washed the outside of the figure in watercolor, and drew the feathers and geometric shapes. The feathers are colored in watercolor, and I used colored pencils for the shapes.

**I Loathe Shakespeare**  
By Ella Gometz, Grade 10

The loathing I carry for Shakespeare’s writing;  
It makes me want to throw poems at the wall.  
My fingernails hurt from nervous biting.  
I wish it could be beautiful like fall.

When I read his words I become confused.  
Reading his words alone is like a puzzle.  
Grasping his sonnets like puking up food.  
Romeo and Juliet t’was a struggle.

I could learn how to do sign language  
I could be practicing verbs in Spanish.  
Shakespeare is a large overwhelming package.  
Knowing sonnets is futile and foolish.

Yet I have to learn and know the writing.  
It’s a part of life and not exciting.
Dear H
By Nia Moore, Graduated

I’ve missed you so so much. It pains me to not see you everyday. The walls have become your replacement. If I could hug the wall, I would. If walls could talk, what would yours tell you? My walls can definitely talk. They remind me of your voice. Pink, but hints of purple peeking out. Holes covered with plaster. A voice that could soothe any individual but needs someone to soothe it. I’d hug the wall if I could. I’d tell it everything is gonna be alright. Everything will be alright. I don’t always succeed. The more I look at it, the more purple I see. The wall wants to scream. The wall wants to curse at the world. So, I let it.

Dear Friend
By Andrew LaVallee, Grade 11

When I come home at the end of the day, I wish the day could begin anew; I wish I could still be laughing with you. I dread the hour we go our separate ways.

For you, I have one simple request:
To be with you now, is that too much?
When I’m alone with my thoughts I am crushed. I’m afraid to bother you, so I’ll just let you rest.

I want to be near you all the time.
That’s unrealistic, I know,
But please, friend don’t go.
When you’re away, I confess, I don’t feel fine.

You’re my distraction from all this grey.
I wish I wasn’t this dependent,
But when I’m alone I want to end it.
I beg of you friend, please save me and stay.

Would it be fitting to give you a rose or a dove?
I truly apologize if I come on strong,
But can you look me in the eyes and tell me I’m wrong?
I think, just maybe, this could be love.
Mother
By Kaia Seldman, Grade 12

My mom and I were touring Vassar College when we came across this painting in their art museum. I told my mom to stand in front of it, facing it, because I thought her hair matched the hair of the girl in the painting exactly. I LOVE taking pictures of my mom and my sister. I had a constant eye out for any way I could photograph something interesting with my mom. And BAM! When we stopped at a piece of art that looked uncannily similar to her, I framed the scene in my mind and took the photo.

Thank You Mom
By Sebastian Ramirez, Grade 12

What have I ever done for my mother?
I can’t recall the last time I gave her a present,
Or hugged her like a child would their first pet.
When was the last time I thanked her for being my mom?

I think it’s the difficulty of seeing her work,
Whooshing past one dirty room to the next,
for coming back from school is like entering an art exhibit.

Sizzling pans, roaring ovens, juiced cutting boards, and packed sinks.
The lab of a methodic genius preparing a tasty concoction.
All disappears in a flash, leaving a warm plate of unconditional love.

I can’t look at that plate without judging myself.
Helplessly trying to think of ways to gesture my feelings.
Mustering muttered thank yous, and half-assed hugs,
I’m left stuttering in front of an audience of my thoughts.
My Albanian Heritage
By Ron Kullashi, Grade 9

I got a lot of things from my family.
From my Mom,
She gave me my curly hair,
My freckles,
The habit of raising my voice,
Even though I’m not angry.

From my Grandpa,
My personality.
He was always
Kind,
Outgoing,
And caring.
He always cared for his family,
Loved all his kids and worked hard
To provide.

From my Dad,
My work ethic.
The attitude that doing nothing is
Never an option.
Even when there is nothing to do,
Find a way to be productive.

From my Brothers,
I am given advice,
Ways to correct mistakes they
Made when they were my age,
Almost like a blueprint!
As my oldest brother says,
“Listen to us, we know best.”

The Ritual of Cutting Hair
By Orpheus Robb, Grade 12

Once or twice a month
Even though I say that I am growing it out
I cut it off
Perfect little ringlets cover the bathroom floor for days
Drift softly on the air conditioner breeze down the hall
I brush them off my shoulders as I paint my face
Pulling myself away from the memory of the first time
Alone on my bathroom floor with red hot shame and burning tears
I spent two more years hating who I was
I spent two more years alone on my bathroom floor
But the first time I cut my hair was the last time I felt shame.
Two Inches
By Talya Sky Plush, Grade 12

The long brown strands curled in ringlets and waves were seemingly the most beautiful thing in the eyes of my father. Every haircut from an inch to the smallest trim pained him. I was never allowed to get more than two inches till I begged and begged for more. He would close his eyes as I would open the door, fearful of seeing my curls sprung up to my shoulders. At the sight of me, his face would break out into a smile and chuckle screaming “The painnnnn!” He would deem the smallest inch a drastic change and talk about how my hair should grow to sweep the floor. The same went for my brother, my mom, and my small white dog. No hair was to be cut and the same rule of two inches applied to each of us. It’s taken me some time to understand why hair, everyone’s hair, including his long curly ponytail, was so important. Hair to him signified strength, its ability to grow and maintain health when he felt weak. Hair signified our bond, each curl similar in pattern and color. Hair signified control and hair remained his own. While with every cut my appearance may change, no matter the uncontrollable things thrown his way, his hair remained his own. No matter the amount of hair that leaves my head, my story behind it will always remain.

Apple Poem
By Ella Hickman, Grade 11
After the film “Pieces of a Woman”

Oh how I miss you
the apples that grew from your skull
the hope that gleamed from your soft eyes
Oh how I miss you
I’ve begun fostering apple seeds
in hope of finding you
you are still lost
drowning in pools of vague regret and grief
Oh how I miss you
your blue body
silent cry
won’t you come back to me?
Baby?
My baby?
Grow from the apple tree and fall near me
baby
my baby
I loved you infinitely
I love you indescribably
Oh how I miss you
Unidentified
By Ming Robinson, Graduated

This is a self-portrait using multiple sizes and colors from magazine pages. I wanted to do some sort of collage because during quarantine I started collaging and enjoyed the process. I went through magazine pages to find solid colors to make this image. It was harder than I had anticipated because I could not find the right colors to make my skin tones and the highlights of my face.

Mixed Media

i am thin
By Eliza Eckstein, Graduated

i am thin
i sway with the trees
a breeze will topple me over

i can hide behind thin
i have been given a huge blanket
that i can wrap around myself
bikinis and small belly

people used to call me string bean
people would take my wrists and
wrap their large hands around mine
engulfing my body

i cannot be with boys
because i feel like their bodies eat me alive
their hands grabbing me like a spoiled child
when i am with boys
there is nowhere i can hide

suffocating in the daytime
i sometimes feel like i am suffocating in my own body
but that feels ridiculous
because i have nothing to hide behind

my feelings too broad for my own body
like stuffing a suitcase for an endless vacation
how can i hold it all in
when i am so thin
Crossing the River
By Owen Barbagallo, Grade 10

This is a photograph of a lady looking at her phone while passing under the Brooklyn Bridge on a ferry ride downtown. Perhaps she was born here or perhaps she immigrated to New York from another country. When I took this photo, I intended to represent the richness of America’s immigration history. I saw this photo opportunity when taking the ferry last July. I was fortunate to get a very clean and crisp photo and the pink really works well against the blue of the photo, so I’m very happy with it.

I Listen
By Sophia Martinez, Grade 9

I am full; a drop of gold sliding down my throat
She hugs me from behind an idea between her teeth; a seed

Guilt; it flourishes with alarming ferocity
Spreading like a cancer, hiding behind a facade of health

They fuel, they consume, they nosh
They are happy, they are golden, they are full

“They are undeserving” she whispers in my ear
Holding my head in between her hands

“You are better” she says
Kissing my nose and stroking my hair

My reflection; my image
Distorted, Warped, Flawed

“Ugly” she says pitifully, remorsefully
“But in your control” she murmurs, holding me close

Cold and glorious in the unforgiving heat
It slides down their wrists, down to their elbows

They are glowing, they are happy, they are full
“They are weak” she says turning my head away

“You are stronger” she says, fixing my collar
Agitated; eyeing them with fear and loathing
The stars are beautiful; shining in ignorant ecstasy
Free from the binds of a reflection; Natural, Beautiful

The flower on my windowsill stretches its limbs confidently
Oblivious to opinion; Free, Natural, Beautiful

“You are not like them” she says
“You are not natural, you are not beautiful”

And I listen; intoxicated by her voice; poisoned
And I suffer; hateful, wallowing in self-pity

Unhappy, drained, but insatiable
Longing for her approval, her happiness

Forever reaching for the feeling of satisfaction
For the euphoria she promised me

An endless cycle
I listen, I suffer, I wish

The veneer of reciprocity and friendliness starts to fade
Revealing a bully: condescending, patronizing, mean

And I suffer
But still I listen

And I follow

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A Phone With Appeal
By Emily Zaretsky, Grade 11

In art class, I was assigned to create a “foodle,” which is a doodle of a food product that is also a visual pun. I made this piece in my apartment during COVID when I was in quarantine. My intention for this piece was to reveal that not everything is what it seems. As soon as I decided on using a banana for my “foodle,” I immediately thought of rotary phones. I remembered vintage rotary phones I had seen in a museum exhibit and based my drawing off of those.
A Number I Like
By Alex DeHaas, Grade 11

Four.
Seems to be bad luck.

Maybe.

Basically green.
Possibly a flower.
Or weed?

A plant.

This plant is good luck.
But not the number.
The number is bad luck.

Mandarin says so.
It’s written right there.

Four is death.
Or the thirteen of China.

Coincidentally, I was born on a four.
Luckily, I didn’t “death”.
I’m pretty alive.

For me, four is a good memory.
Like thirteen is to China.
It’s harmless.

Satisfying for no reason.
It’s nice to feel.

Four is probably the best pattern.
It’s like a square circle.

Maybe I’m thinking about this all wrong.

Dark and Silent
By Emma Centeno, Grade 10

Dark and silent. That’s what Johnathan thought the sound of loneliness was like. Except Johnathan was a very different kid than all the rest. He liked to read instead of playing with all the other children, he liked the color black and when it was dark outside, and he hated the fact that everyone knew he was different. He would cry to his mother about how he couldn’t hear the sounds of the river, or when the leaves were rustling within the trees, or especially when anyone talked to him. Although he couldn’t understand, he would always think about how things might sound in his mind. He was always curious about what his mom or dad sounded like, or what his dog’s barking sounded like, or what the sound of the train passing by his house was like. But no. He just heard the sound of loneliness, which in his head was very dark, sad, and silent.
Tulips
By Ming Robinson, Graduated

This piece was the first image of a series I drew for my art class assigned when we were remote for school. The assignment was to draw a perspective drawing and morph that drawing into something else. I drew tulips to morph into two giraffes. My mom loves tulips and would buy some for herself and would leave one or two in my room in a small vase. I wanted to try a different type of shading technique so I did cross hatching for this piece.

Morphing Perspective
By Ming Robinson, Graduated

This piece was the second image in a series I drew for my art class assigned when we were remote for school. The assignment was to draw a perspective drawing and morph that drawing into something else. I drew tulips to morph into two giraffes. It was difficult since it was a morphing project which meant some parts had to be in the same place on the separate pieces of paper. In order to get the right effect, I used another piece of paper with graphite on it on the page of the page I was drawing on, so that when I went over the parts that needed to be the same, it would print out a rough light line I could follow to continue my drawing on the next page.
New York Story
By Nina Gomez, Grade 12

The gust of wind from the passing A train blew away the greasy napkins holding my pastelito con queso that my grandma had brought to me from the deli. I looked at my little brother and smiled, as we both immediately left the grasp of our grandmother and jetted towards the flying napkin to see who could catch it first. The white grease-stained napkin danced beside the steel beast effortlessly and free. I could hear the worried calls and angry threats from my grandmother in the distance. “Mira, mueve tu culo aquí ahora o me dice tu mama”! My brother and I kept running and laughing and didn’t look back. I wanted to be as free as the napkin and as fast as the train. As the train came to a slow halt, the greasy napkin had only touched my fingertips before I tripped over a crack on the blackened dirty platform. I heard the dingy metal doors open followed by a sea of people rushing out, giving no regard to the little girl laid out on the floor with a napkin and tears in her eyes. This is where I learned some of my biggest lessons as a New Yorker. Lesson one, don’t run on the train tracks and two move out the way because people have places to be.

I was born and raised in Washington Heights in uptown Manhattan, full of colorful rundown buildings, the smell of fresh spray paint and dembow blasting from the cracked open windows from the broken-down Honda posted on the corner of the block. The smell of burnt mint hookah charcoal mixes in the air with the smell of the spray paint we used to tag up the side of my grandmother’s building. Mothers, fathers, kids, aunties and uncles all outside dancing to the rhythm of the music all day and night no matter the weather. “Oye pase me la hookah y sube la música.” Love seeped out of every crack of this neighborhood, the same love that I believe created me.

My mother and father both grew up in Washington Heights. My mom grew up on 160th in Broadway on the block where the huge graffiti ghost my friends and I made stamped the side of my grandma’s building. My father grew up on 173rd on Broadway right above “Jim’s Famous One Dollar Pizza.” Countless nights were spent on the stoop of Jim’s eating a warm slice of pepperoni pizza with my grandfather as we waited for my father to pick me up after his overtime shift at work. My parents were very young when they had me and were well known throughout the neighborhood, which meant growing up, I felt like a “hood princess.” Every corner I turned everyone knew my name; I felt invincible and always protected by the city.

Now that I’ve gotten older, my love for the city has changed. The flaws and imperfections began to shine brighter through the illusions of its beauty. I wondered why my mom always made me promise to do well in school so I could go to college and get as far away from here as possible. It confused me why someone would want to let any of this go. But after a while, I think I finally understood: “I don’t want you to be stuck here like the rest of us; my biggest regret is not leaving,” she told me. That had changed everything for me. Soon, the spicy smell of hookah and graffiti didn’t excite me any more, and the same loving faces I had seen when I was young became dull and conveyed the very message my mom was warning me about: “You can do better than this. I want you to have better than this” she said. I hated the way she spoke about our home and I hated the way that it was working. The city I once thought of as my superhero and protector is now my biggest threat, and the one thing I am now trying to escape from.
White Overcoat
By Owen Barbagallo, Grade 10

This is a photograph of 42nd St. looking west in the snow. Because of the snowstorm, you cannot see the street past Park Avenue and this gives the buildings a gray look and an overall ephemeral quality. I was exploring New York in a snowstorm and came upon this view at 42nd St. and First Avenue. It was really amazing to see 42nd St. fade out at the Chrysler Building, so I quickly took a photo despite my very low battery.

Paper Towns
By Sophia Martinez, Grade 9

Paper people living in paper houses
Paper roads with paper cars

Paper airplanes on paper skies
Paper birds in paper parks

Paper kids go to paper school
Paper parents go to paper jobs

Paper markets sell paper food
Paper trains on paper railroads

Paper-thin hearts, paper-thin brains
Paper blood coursing through paper veins

Paper souls, paper minds
Permanently fixed to their paper pains

A deluge of opaque white
Delicately folded, carelessly strewn

Its lifeless animation
Its somber effervescence

Teetering on the brink of existence
A phantom in its wake

Forlorn masters of deceit
Its paper joy sings in perpetual stillness

The ghost of its last paper laugh
Still etched upon its paper face
Reaching Out
By Mikayla Pressley, Grade 12

This piece depicts a woman reaching out to a larger-than-life hand emerging from a waterfall. The assignment was to place a scaled-up object into an environment and have it interact with its surroundings. I wanted to capture a sort of cross-over between fantastic and mundane circumstances.

New York Essay
By Isabel Veyssi, Graduated

New York is a place where people define the city as magical and life-changing. It’s a place where people go to have their lives changed and to experience things they might have never experienced before. Everyone has at least one thing that they want to do in New York that is on their bucket list. For me, that was somewhat the same. I remember coming into the city from Boston to visit my grandmother and my aunt. The mixed smell of sewage and laundry and the hustle and bustle of the city fascinated me. Seeing kids walking through Central Park with their parents, holding Vanilla Bean Frappuccinos as if having it was a daily treat. This was a new experience for me; Boston was never as exciting as New York. Boston gave me a feeling of comfort because it was very much a small town, but New York gave me a sense of wonder and gave me comfort in seeing a variety of people instead of a typical New Englander.

Visiting the city would consist of spending time with my family, having picnics with family friends we hadn’t seen since the last time we visited, and going to play at the hippo park. When I visited New York, it made me feel like this was home; most of my fondest memories of my childhood live here... We were running late to go somewhere, and as we left my aunt’s house, the dogs barking and crying caught our attention. Seeing these dogs as a kid obviously made me want to go up to them. It was an outdoor rescue on the street trying to get people to adopt dogs. A medium sized Schnauzer Terrier Mix caught our eyes. Petting his fur and moving on, I thought that was the end of it, but it wasn’t. My mom went back later on to get him. That is one of my fondest memories, but that was the last time I visited New York as a visitor.

The city was always a special place; there were no flaws, until I moved here. The minute we drove past the sign on the highway that said “Welcome to New York,” I knew something was different. I hated New York and I did not want to be associated with it at all. I wanted to go home, back to Boston, I
had this feeling that I didn’t belong in New York even though I hadn’t felt that way before. Naturally, being the stubborn person that I am, I decided to wear every Boston related sport or non sports paraphernalia that I had, every day. Of course this was not the smartest idea because this is New York and everyone knows that when it comes to sports, New York and Boston do not get along. Due to the constant talk about everyone’s dislike of the Red Sox and the Patriots, I decided to tone it down. “How could you hate New York?,” “Why do you dislike it?,” people would ask, but I couldn’t put my finger on an exact reason. I was actually enjoying everyday life, going to school, seeing my friends, and having that access of being able to walk anywhere without having to drive to get to my destination. Maybe it was the change in routine that made me dislike it. Being woken up by pigeons mating on my air conditioner and having to wake up in a room that didn’t feel like my own was strange. I was getting used to it, but it still felt weird to me. Not being able to go to the same park to rollerblade or skateboard with my friends was a change. No one that I knew in New York seemed to be interested in those things, so my time was instead spent playing video games with Thany, who I knew before I moved to New York. In the moment, I felt isolated and different, but that soon changed. Thinking about that now, everyone in New York somewhat feels alone even when they are in a big crowd. Being alone here is not a bad thing. I would consider it to be calming or even reassuring.

Walking past the hippo park across the street from my grandmother’s apartment building, where I now live, and hearing the screams and laughter of kids playing where I once played, reminds me of a time before I lived in New York. As I continue to walk I get distracted thinking about what life could have been if I stayed in Boston. The fall afternoon air and the smoky smell of fire burning with the sweet smell of the Nuts 4 Nuts cart hits me. At that same moment, I realized I was better off in New York than in Boston.

All New Yorkers identify with some type of culture and many people like to share this with others. New York is unique in that there are thousands and thousands of people who are eager to share history, tales, meals and even their homes with others. In these differences we all live with each other and have some sort of link bringing us together. I can walk on the street and see different people from different places. I hear the languages and topics of contrasting individuals. The Mandarin and the Spanish sound so different, yet both languages somehow come together to share something. I smell and taste the foods that many people find comfort in. The strong scent of dumplings cooking from Chinatown contrasts the distinct smell of the New York slice. Smelling a wet rag at a restaurant, or the familiar smell of a dingy cab are both scents that most people don’t want to experience, but somehow I find comfort in them. The quintessential New York smells that you can’t smell anywhere else are all mixing together to create one unforgettable scent that is always changing good or bad.

The cursing of the everyday New Yorker clashes with the sound of the happy tourists feeding the squirrels. The feeling of annoyance when someone is taking up the whole sidewalk or walking too slow. Passing them helps you get to places faster. Seeing people running in the street to their destination, or trying to hail a taxi, or even make their train, I am reminded that New York is one of the only places in the world where it is fast paced. It makes me think, “There are not enough hours in a day. There is no time.” I get caught up in always doing the next thing or always being busy and other New Yorker’s do too, that it may not look like we are happy. To an outsider, it may seem that people here don’t really take the time to relax or to enjoy life, but this craziness is a New York way of enjoying life. It is “the city that never sleeps” and that is the truth. All of these things have shaped me into who I am and that is why living in New York is such an important part of my life. New York helps me write my story and because New York is always evolving and changing, and so am I.
The Beauty of Ugliness  
By Hallie Pomerantz, Grade 11

A lot of people would typically jump over this muddy, grayish-looking puddle. They would probably try and avoid it because it looks dirty and gross. But as I was passing East 60th Street, I noticed the reflection in the puddle. Most puddles are too muddy to have any reflection, but this one had the perfect reflection of the gray sky and the gray buildings. The image was clear and looked like a mirror reflecting the photos of the cloudy day. I found this puddle to be beautiful. My artistic process as a photographer is all about what the human eye can see if we pay attention, since people frequently ignore the details and walk past an object.

Sunday Mornings  
By Safeerah Moteen, Graduated

every sunday morning, i awoke to the smell of ginger paste and garam masala
i strolled to my kitchen to find my mother standing over our granite countertops that she admired so much
i could hear the sizzling sound of the diced onion hitting the silver pot mixed with fresh green chili peppers and garlic
she answered the phone excited to hear someone else’s voice
the phone rested on her shoulder as she talked about the latest gossip
the routine came naturally to my mother so nothing burned
her talking filled the room with laughter and joy
suddenly everything came to a dead silence
my mother quickly glanced over at me
she said she didn't recognize her daughter anymore
The Lawn
By Jenna Saevitzon, Graduated

You carried me on your back the whole way there and didn’t complain once. I probably wasn’t that heavy, but still, you didn’t say a word. You walked excitedly across the soft, cool grass and threw me across your shoulder. As you tackled me to the ground, I tried to fight back, but there was no use. To me, you were the strongest person I knew. You were undefeatable and unattainable. No matter how hard I would try, I would never be able to reach you. But that’s not what mattered at this moment. The only thing that mattered was being with you, even if I didn’t realize it at the time. We played for hours, throwing and catching, chasing and tackling. We would stay until the sun went down behind the buildings, and the air got cooler. We stayed until we were the only ones left on the lawn, trying to capture the day until we couldn’t anymore. I looked up to you in ways you can’t even imagine. Whatever you would do, I would try to do. You told me you would never leave my side. Time felt infinite when we were together, but now I look back and realize it was nothing but limited.

Seventeen
By Jenna Saevitzon, Graduated

Soak up all the sun you can and only sleep when the sun sets. Eat sugar and sip soda. Be sophisticated but never forget to be silly. Be sympathetic to your siblings, they only want to see you succeed. Shower yourself in self love. Never settle for anything less than what you deserve. Start and never stop seeing your self worth. Find your strength in the struggle and save your skepticisms. Surpass society’s expectations. Be your own superhero. Never surrender and never stop surviving. Skip on the sidewalk, sing your favorite songs, smell the sunflowers, stargaze beneath the sky, and swim in the sea. And when the seasons change, continue to live like there is no sickness in sight. Live like we should at seventeen.
A Lot of Lines
By Alexander McGee, Grade 9

My art piece is called “A Lot of Lines” and it is a drawing with watercolor. It depicts detailed lines and colors which create a lively and glowing image. It is abstract in that the lines are layered, which gives an illusion of texture in the artwork. This piece makes a statement about different colors and possibilities in our lives.

In creating this piece, I started drawing with random lines on watercolor paper with a pen. I then honed in on a section of the painting, enlarged it, and created a bigger representation of that square’s graphics to create more depth to my painting. After I outlined and painted, I then went over each section with colored pencils to add my final details. Overall, I wanted to create a sort of 3-D illusion.

The World Offers Itself to Your Imagination
By Maxine Sganga, Grade 11

It is your oyster

1 in every 10,000 oysters possess a glistening round pearl

You say to me for each tear that may fall from my eyes
There’s a smile awaiting the opportunity to tug at my lips

You wish for me to see the world
To appreciate all of its colors and quirks

You want me to see shapes within the clouds

And appreciate the sun as it sets reminding us that there will
Always be tomorrow

I promise to you that by the end of my journey,
I will have swam in so much water that finding a glistening Round pearl will be inevitable
Vibrant Photoshoot
By William Van Der Rhoer, Grade 12

I captured this photo on the side of a moving billboard through the window of a car during a storm. The drops of rain distorted the fashion model which encouraged me to take the photo. I believe the message behind this is that there are so many different ways one can perceive fashion, just as there are so many ways for one to express themselves. The imperfection in a photo, such as the rain drops, is what makes it unique. The rain drops and dark lighting inspired me to capture this image.

Picture Perfect
By Kimberly Pineda, Grade 11

As the pink flower petals dance through the wind on this warm day in May, everything seems so right. We had both said we wanted to wait until we were further along in our careers. Just yesterday he officially became an attending neurosurgeon, and my veterinary clinic is in better shape than it has ever been.

I walk through the park where it all began. It was never the prettiest, nor the quietest, but today the grass is greener and the air is so smooth and refreshing. I start to wonder if he is even going to come. It was almost an hour ago that he texted me saying he was on his way. I quickly snap out of my thoughts as I hear sirens blaring near the entrance of the park. Wow they really are loud, aren’t they? I keep walking through the park as the memories of our relationship course through my head.

We stumbled into each other on a day just like today. We were jogging and enjoying the outside when he dropped his medical ID, I tapped him, and started talking to him. It was here we had our first date because our other plan went wrong. It was just a simple moonlight walk but it was everything I’ve ever wanted. I walk a little further and find the place he proposed to me. It was cold and snow had covered everything in sight, but to me, it was the perfect winter wonderland. I jumped on him as I said yes while we both tumbled onto the ground. We rose as snow flurried all around us.

I was so lost in my thoughts that I didn’t even notice when they started running rampant. I began to imagine our future and could almost see it. Our family walked through the
park. Our newborn baby was sleeping in the stroller as our two older children ran around the lawn chasing each other while we held each other’s hands and enjoyed the sound of blissful laughter. What a pretty picture.

I was so lost in that world that I was eagerly awaiting, I didn’t realize the sirens had stopped blaring and that my phone was ringing. AAA Hospital? That’s where he works. He probably got held up and is letting me know. Weird he wasn’t using his cellphone. I pick up the phone and hear sobs coming from the other end. They muffle everything, so I can only make out the words everything we could do. I sit down, the weight in my legs is unbearable. I try to console the woman on the other end of the phone. I recognize her voice from the times I visited my husband at his job. It’s Mary, one of my husband’s best friends, someone he went through most of his career with. If she wasn’t lesbian I would’ve been very overprotective, I remember thinking. Once her sobs calm down, she starts speaking again and that’s when it happened, that’s when I heard her say: Your husband got in a car accident right near the park. He suffered major internal injuries and had a massive brain bleed. We did everything we could, but he didn’t make it.

I want to cry, I want to be mad at him for leaving me, but the only thing going through my mind are her words until it clicks. Those sirens outside of the park were for my husband. I start to shake and shake, I need to let something out. My mouth opens, I think she must’ve expected me to start crying, so I’m sure I surprise her when instead I said, I’m pregnant. From the other end of the call, her sobs become louder and more erratic, as I fall to my knees more helpless and desperate than ever. That future we would’ve had was robbed from us in that instant. Who would’ve known that on that day, as the pink flower petals danced through the wind and when everything seemed so right, my love would be taken away from me? It was all perfect, but nothing is ever perfect. This life which had once been the greatest gift I could have ever dreamed of has now become my own nightmare. Now let me paint a different picture. On this cold rainy night, on the edge of the highest bridge in town, sits a young lady who has uttered her last apology to her daughter for stealing the future she might have, says her last goodbye to the world which brought her joy only to rip it away, and disappears into the vast dark night.
The Visible Perception of Invisible Barriers
By Valeriya Vinnichenko, Grade 11

They are: young beings—inexperienced with humanity—who suffer ultimately for their own weaknesses
They speak: no patience held, brag of their minor pain, idolize biased ignorance, cultivate naïve arrogance
They listen: though through filtered ears, prey upon to devour; “Foul!” to Ancestor History in Hordes
They cry: ‘Inequality!’ without any recognition of the dogmatic voices of their hysterical laughter
They yet remain dormant
I grow: mad with the imprudent misconceptions and pitiful misunderstandings
I grow: impatient of the self-proclaimed accomplished comprehension
I grow: silent at the quick talk and natural interruptions
I grow: terrified of assimilating with the suffering
I become accustomed yet

They are: elders—experienced beings—perplexed with the mind possible to the young who grief silly
They control: for the longest of times, a power over us who seek examples of some possible future
They hold: life not possibly understood by us; silent gazes, pressing towards the unclarified
They perceive: us young, forever void of being grown as destined for the different
They reminisce: keep to individual standards with narrowed mental realms
I perceive: their confidence desirably, their intelligence zealously—fearfully—
I perceive: their indifference as maturity, mocking for my worries
I endure: self-assault, self-challenge for the price of my sanity
I endure: own hindrance after being rebuked exceedingly
I wonder certainly if I could split eventually

They—I: have too many differences that manage to make magical images

Unexpected Cityscape
By William Van Der Rhoer, Grade 12

Unexpected Cityscape offers a bird’s eye view of the city of New York. My photo illustrates the vastness of the city plastered on the window of a passing van on Columbus Avenue. It reminds us that at any point in time we are standing only on a tiny spot in the midst of a metropolis, or in the world. I stopped in my tracks at a stoplight when I saw this van. I wanted to create a unique contrast for the viewer through the bird’s eye view of the city versus the location in which it was taken.
Flaming Fox
By Kaia Seldman, Grade 12

I took this photo when I was visiting my dad in the Hamptons. I was bored, so I went to visit a friend and we made a little fire in her backyard. I had never taken a picture of fire before, so I started experimenting with my camera and before I knew it, I ended up with 50 pictures of fire. I edited all of them and found this one, which reminded me of a fox.

Ours: the Experience of Self-Loathing
By Andrew LaVallee, Grade 11

A poem is an identity crisis, or a question: what will I become? Bogged down in self-referential madness, an impressive vernacular inconsequential.
The four horsemen of the apocalypse: guns, blades, flames, and introspection,
so let us do away with the convoluted mess, and I’ll tell you a story.

Once upon a time, long ago, I had everything. Well, I had something.
What I had hardly matters, none of it remains.
I left my somethings behind in the journey towards derealization.
I let my somethings slip from my grip. I didn’t weep when they shattered
like glass on pavement. Tears don’t flow past the dam built behind strained eyes.
Why cry when there are no winners in this doomed reality?
I could be a choking victim or a cancer patient, heartbeat fading in decay.
The concerts seen in my youth, the fist took a chip from my tooth.
The bands I rocked on my cassettes now take chunks of flesh bit by bit. Bitten by the fangs of Stza and Nietzsche.
The truth can ruin a life, but don’t make silver-tongued excuses.
It’s better to be ruined than to be a liar, so I take my place upon the funeral pyre.

I’ve taken a tumble down my rabbit hole. I’ve skated down and along my downward spiral. What did I find? What is here for us at the bottom? Nothing; it’s not much of a surprise to me or to you, I hope. Low expectations is how we manage to cope. The fall will never be part of a grander scheme. Rhyme or reason in this world, an act of treason. All that’s left for us is a dirty old pit, I swear. Walls too imposing to scale and too stubborn to break. My prison is one formed of stone, gravity, and self-pity. I gouge my eyes; I refuse to bear witness. To place blame I am incapable, but this rocky pit is inescapable.

Thirteen days down here; a stomach so shrunk. I had no standout vices; I wasn’t a drunk, or a pill-popper, or a junkie, or a gambler. Cut now by jagged stones, though I never took thirteen lines up my nose. I cannot make sense of why I’ve been put down in this place, but now it’s out of my control, and it’s been too long. I waited.

I neglected my wife, my life, and all that I hated. If nothing matters, why do I miss anything? I miss the sky and the power to do what I want. I miss the teachings of Marx and Kant. I am powerless. I live down at rock bottom; I gave up on getting out. I miss the world, I miss responsibility. I’m afraid I no longer have the ability.

Thus concludes my tale of sorrow and woe. Sighs of relief at the end of my show. “Why do you rhyme now and not before?” I’m not sure, but I refuse to write any more.
Self Love  
By Smith Pingree, Grade 11

This piece is of my little brother Lucien, or Lu, in the fall of 2020 outside of The Museum of Modern Art. He was obviously entertained by his reflection in the glass, a bit egotistical if you’d ask me, but I took the opportunity to photograph this “mirror.” I’ve been interested, for a while, with reflective photography and shots taken close to a surface such as this. Art speaks with a defter voice by itself. For you to hear this voice, I’d say: Look fully at the art and view the object as you see it.

The Journey  
By Jacob Palmer, Grade 9

The ticks go by, counting every second like the last. Will you ever be alone? I don’t think so.

It is about to begin this new journey of wonders. Everyone wants you dead, but does not know who you are.

It begins, where to go in the vast world. Is there any good, or is there evil?

No time to think, or you will be dead. Think or die.

What now? Where to? It seems endless.

Plains, all there is for miles: Grass and trees.

A lonely little house, Possibly for a warm welcome.

Possibly some rest, From everything you think about.

Suddenly, a twist on the door. What must I do? Flee or fight. No choices now!

Flee to be free, Only you and freedom.
The choices are unlimited
To where the forest strengths for miles.

The mountains shine in the snow.
The desert strives in heat.

And the choice is you,
In the world.

A town comes out of the fog:
Small and cozy.

Maybe a rest to regroup,
Or a ticket to the unknown.

What is this place?
A Minecraft world for sure.

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Home Sweet Home
By Ella Hickman, Grade 11

All these black bodies
You can find them on TV
Under some white man's knee
You will see the blood we bleed

All these black hearts
Strong and breaking
They've stopped beating in your hands
We can't call the policeman

All these black souls
Nowhere to go
They drift out of our cold and scary black bodies,
like smoke
Only then are we safe
Only then are we home
All these black bodies only one place to go
A Familiar Discomfort
By Andrew LaVallee, Grade 11

The weight of my eyelids
that have been placed upon my shoulders.
The fact that you are better than me
and the knowledge that it’s true.
The screams for revolution
and the headache that dawn delivers.
The razor sharp glass shards
that rip apart my tendons.
Those cloudy white cells in the blood
and all the diseases I avoid.
The army of Williamsburg hipsters
and the change that they tip me.
My laptop’s internet connection
means I’ve got no excuses.
The moving boxes in the bedroom
that stay there for six short years.
All of the summer funerals
and all of your condolences.

Pointe Shoes
By Erika Lampe, Grade 11

She sat with white tights on a cold rubber floor
Wanted no one to see her, so she sat by the door
Clinging onto the last thing that could make her feel,
She tied a satin ribbon around her heel

With burning hamstrings, she struggled to stand
Punching the fat on her thighs with her hand
And every day, she wished she never ate
As her toes nearly broke under the pressure of her weight

But when the music started, she became one with the wind
Carried by the hope that she would be thinned
She fell in love with the music filling her ears
The entrancing melodies that erased her fears

Yet, looking in the mirror, she saw a monster
A picture of the confidence that her passion cost her
She loved dancing, even though it was killing her
Hence the feeling of freedom with which it was filling her

At eleven years old, she learned from her teacher,
That if she was fat, no one would preach her
So she kept on dancing on the tips of her toes
Though she longed for the comfort of being wrapped in baggy clothes

Because of her stress, she overate
But she wanted dance to be her fate
Since the sounds of her pointe shoes ringing on the floor
Were the sounds she dreamed to hear since she was four
Invisible and Invincible
By Jenna Saevitzon, Graduated

Almost a Fairytale
By Ruthie La Tona, Grade 10

My hair was red and my eyes were green
Perfect match for an Irish gene
The only inheritance left from long lost ancestors
I am somehow Irish, somehow not
My blood is traced with European faith
Cliffs and wind roar through my heart
And the sea and salt run through my veins
Hidden under the ballad of the harp
Is the part that is missing

I am from the tiniest of towns
With the narrowest roads
From the birds that fly
Above the emerald cliffs
Below the skylark sky

*a Cento poem from “Brokeback Mountain” by Annie Proulx
Why Do you Look at Only the Consequence and Say The Stairway Doesn’t Matter?
By Valeriya Vinnichenko, Grade 11

It is me who kindly tells you my capabilities which at the end you chose to mock.
You stare, you laugh, and I believe in all those liabilities.
All the sleepless nights and all the poor nutrition should make you stop the talk.
In the end, it is I who will disprove all your harsh hostilities.

At last, you idolize with all your hungry minds and jealous eyes,
sitting in your shadows still.
You never heard my cries
And all the battles I had until.
So now I stand with all my allies while you begin to revise.

Patience child, it doesn’t happen overnight,
Humbleness along Humility might help.
The hour of midnight
forget all that you felt,
and maybe then you’ll have a good fight.

Digital Commute
By Owen Barbagallo, Grade 10

This photo is of four women sitting on the subway on their phones. They are entering 50th Street and are located in an R32 car (the model of which is no longer in service). In this photo, I am trying to depict our addiction to cell phones, as a way to pass boring time, everyone put themselves in online-land rather than watch the scenery going by. I saw this scene in front of me and I thought it would make a good picture, so I got out my phone and took it.
A Crowded Train
By Safeerah Moteen, Graduated

it started with a packed train during rush hour
i sat there staring at my flashy red and yellow shoes
trying to avoid eye contact with a stranger
putting my head phones in, i heard the soft mellow music
playing in each ear

four people walked in at the third stop
ready to disturb our day with their “talent”
simultaneously everyone rolled their eyes hoping that the train
will go faster
but they continued laughing as the people sat back and
criticized

each person standing next to one another but only hoping they
don’t get their toes stepped on
there was a look of urgency in their faces
a child screamed in the background while a mom was doing
her best
but there was no room for empathy

they were just boys just being boys
jolting and high-fiving each other after every song
deafening rap music playing in the background
and not a care in the world

The Play of a Double-Sided Coin
By Kimberly Pineda, Grade 11

It’s 10 a.m. on a Monday morning in June and the entire student body is seated in the gym with all the teachers facing them. Everyone cheers as each person goes up on stage to accept their prize. English, math, science, and history. Each person is recognized for the subject in which they excelled. So what about me? All my friends stand up to go accept their awards and I am left to wonder, what am I good at? I’m not particularly good at public speaking, so I don’t like reading aloud in English. Math stresses me out, so I don’t give it any effort. Science and history are just not my style in the slightest. So, what is? Suddenly through the haze, I hear my voice called. Please come up to the stage and accept your award, an eerily monotonous, robotic voice repeats my name a few times. All the awards have already been handed out, so what could it possibly be? And the award of Best Actress goes to ____.

Best Actress? Me? But I don’t even act. Yes, you do, I hear the robotic voice say, reading my thoughts. I do? I ask back, the first time I have uttered a phrase all day. Every day, it continues. When you get up from bed and start to change for the day, that’s when the curtains are drawn and the play begins. When you’re curled up on your bed, holding yourself back from feeling any kind of physical comfort, bawling your eyes out in the morning, and then you get up and allow yourself to be used by people who need to express their feelings. You’re in the greatest play of all time. The play of a double-sided coin.
A Response to: “Young, Dumb, and Broke”
By Emily Singh, Grade 10

I wasn't thinking of you
I haven't thought of you all
Quarter
Past three as school just ended
Waiting to clear your soul of
Everything
That you couldn't give me
That you wish
You could
Never saw when I had hit my lows
Because it's like you to be so
Distracted
But claiming to be invested
Then again you've always known what
We were
“Young, Dumb, And Broke”

A Taste of Sovereignty
By Nia Moore, Graduated

For once in my life
I've forgotten what it feels like to be fascinated.
No one is frustrated with me.
I guess that means my feet are following the right path.
What does it feel like having been forgotten?
That's what's really happening after all.
Fretting over what should be natural
Contained, but fragile.
Through a Crack in the Door
By Emily Singh, Grade 10

Through a crack in the door they spoke. They knew each other’s names, but they didn’t know each other’s faces. On the right side, there’s Stella. She knows a few things about the boy she talks to through the crack in the door. First, he comes every day thirty minutes before school starts to talk to her, but always leaves before she does. Second, he is a guy. And finally, he’s also twelve. Every morning, she talks to him about life and how school is going. She confides in him and tells him more than she’s told her close friends. Stella loves talking to him. It’s a way to communicate freely and not worry about her secrets being spilled. They’re two friends through a crack in a door and complete strangers in real life. Scary, but calming at the same time.

They’ve been friends for years. His name is Anton. He knows a lot about Stella. He pieced together the stories he heard and discovered who her stories match up with. There is one thing he knows for sure, he will never miss an opportunity to talk to her, just as long as she doesn’t know who he is yet. He’s said that for four years straight. Four years of hiding your identity from someone who is much closer than they think. It’s hard, but he had to. What if she didn’t like who he was in person? What if the one true friend he’s made left him as soon as she found out who he was in person?

And so they grow up, just talking to each other through a crack in the door. One unspoken rule, don’t ask who the other is. They go to the same school and they’re in all the same classes. Haven’t spoken a word to each other in school, not even once. It’s been eight years and not one word. They know all about each other, through a crack in the door. It’s been a while since Anton came to see Stella. Still no clue who he is,
Wine  
By Sophia Martinez, Grade 9

The esters, tannins, and acids of the grapes unite in a fatalistic harmony
as the weather comes to play
The olden question arrives
Shall we harvest them now?
Let the sun coat the vineyard with one last sweet breath?
Or let dismal weather ravage the crops in one blow?
Nevertheless, time is of the essence,
and the grapes must be picked, to be scrutinized and bunched.
Metal limbs strip them of their stems as they are stomped into must.
Their seeds and skins exposed, naked, but undamaged, unknowing.
They are pressed of their blood revealing a tantalizing juice,
reminiscent of life, of sustenance.
Their life, their sustenance, changed as they are transferred to stainless steel tanks or oak barrels,
set to undergo the disconcerting process of change, of transformation, of fermentation.
Unable to breathe with the suffocating occurrence of yeast.
They turn from sugar to alcohol, from innocence to maturity,
Cleansed of impurities, they sit in oak, hand in hand with time,
Growing even more appealing, lively, enthralling, terrible, and beautiful.
The delectable sweetness, the stirring acidity enchants the senses
and pervades the mind.
Bold and beguiling, it calls on feelings of joy and vivacity and hope.
Till the cup has overflown, and life without restraint, leaves one confused and alone.
The Bath
By Mikayla Pressley, Grade 12

This piece was done as a color and reflection study. Digital watercolors were used intentionally to give the piece a “muddy” feeling.

Plate and Cutlery
By Alex DeHaas, Grade 11

The thing that I take to my mouth.
A vessel. The accumulation of the earth,
Broken, melted, shaped.
Impurity makes us whole.
The past is our food, the past doesn’t change.
Lips close on conversation.

What is a vessel but a transport?

I’m glad you made this possible.
My hands are in motion.
The clink of the plate fills me.
Detritus is a good thing, proof of use.
Usage is food that’s gone.
The time we spend,
Warming our hands.
Together we are clean.
It’s good to talk to you.
My mouth, my hands, are full.
My plate is empty,
But I am not.
Oh! Future!
By Valeriya Vinnichenko, Grade 11

Let us reconcile of our growth—
So do you forget the foolish as predicted;
So do you intentionally bury me in trouble;
So do you too cry at what lay in front of you?
May you never be found erased from peace or chaos.

Will you willingly respond to me—
Once you understand the desire of my yearning for you;
Once you take notice of how I seek an intimacy with you;
Once you clearly see how much the past suffered at your existence?
May you never form a reply to the ignorant cries of creatures as such.

Have you mended the hatred that holds disapproval—
Do you see or yet stay blind of the world around you;
Do you sense the truth after walking toward the invisible;
Do you still bear animosity toward those who are with no help?
May you never get to find answers to the problems of your own time.

Are you truly a mere illusion—?
As I keep wishing for you I acknowledge your inexistence;
As I continue to withhold all my potential and wait for you;
As I still believe the inner to possess longing for you, yet without act;
May I never be the reason behind you taking action for survival without choice.
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