

Imaginary Gardens



Imaginary Gardens
Arlington Catholic's Art and Literary Magazine

The Winter 2017 edition includes work by:

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“Imaginary Gardens”

by Michaela Bialock

Imagine a garden—full of plants and bushes and all the flowers of which you could ever think. There is a different aspect of nature everywhere you look. Now imagine the amount of work that went into building up that exquisite garden. Simply put, the answer is probably: “a lot.” And if you aspire to have good writing, the amount of work you must do entails the same answer. The basis of any garden is its soil; in the garden of writing, the soil is the genre and occasion of your piece. What type of work are you writing, and for whom are you writing it? In the soil, you must plant the seeds that are your literacy, the fundamental elements of writing you learned in your early childhood. The first level of the garden to grow from there is the grass that is diction, the word choice you have to make, which is sometimes merely the first word that comes to your mind but other times is the word for which you have to search for hours. Upon the grass grows the countless flowers that embody the true beauty of the garden; in the case of writing the flowers are your imagery, your ability to create the sight, smell, and texture of a flower within your reader’s mind using only words. A garden, despite its boundless allure, must also have structure and protection, a fence to both contain the garden and protect it from any outside predators. Your syntax is the fence that provides structure to your writing and protects it from fragments, run-ons, and all around recklessness. Again, the amount of work you have to do to maintain this garden is a lot. Just as you have to water plants and pull out their weeds to cultivate a garden, you must practice and revise your writing to cultivate your craft.

“Back to Books”

by Sophia Struzziero

I can still recall the outline of the light green cushion that sat upon that window seat. I was lucky enough to have my very own built in window seat in my childhood bedroom. It overlooked the neighborhood at the front of my house and was a cozy, sacred spot for one particular thing: reading. Moving into my big girl bedroom when I was three, I could barely remember a time without my window seat. The white plaster bookcase was placed ever so conveniently next to my hideaway. Of course the genres and difficulty levels of the books nestled in between those shelves changed as I grew older. But one thing remained the same, the books never left me. Reading was my thing.

Countless hours were spent on that seat. My love for reading began when I received my very first book from my father, *Double Pink* by Kate Feiffer. Pink had been my color so just the sight of the book caught my attention. Each Sunday when I went to my grandmother’s house for gravy and meatballs, my Aunt Judy would sit with me and teach me to read. I was only three so she had to be very patient with me. I didn’t like the books that my Pre-K teacher gave me to read because there were no words on the pages just pictures. *Double Pink* had words in it and there was nothing I wanted more than to read that book to my teacher, friends, and classmates. Slowly, my aunt taught me more and more of the book each Sunday and I would go home, snuggle up on my window seat, and practice reading my book while all the neighborhood kids played outside. Nothing has ever brought me such a great feeling of success than when I first read the entire book by myself, to my Aunt Judy of course. By this time I was in kindergarten and my reading was expanding as my education level was becoming more advanced. Each week, my aunt would give me a brand new book to go home and practice. Every time I mastered one I signed up to read to the class. My teacher, Mrs. Hunt, was astonished at how quickly I was picking up reading compared to the other students my age. While they were still deciphering picture books, I had already checked out every book available in the *Magic Tree House* series of novels at my school library. Wherever I went, my book came with me. Just in case, I had even a moment to spare.

By the first grade, I had read so many novels that my teacher ran out of prizes to give me so I received a brick on the school building with my name engraved on it. By the second grade, I was reading so much that my parents got called in for a meeting to make sure that everything was

okay. They laughed and said I was fine and that I just looked forward to reading every day. By the third grade, I had finished the entire Harry Potter series. My classmates didn't believe that I knew what I was reading and thought that I had just watched the movies. By the fourth grade, I had won reader of the week so many times that I got thrown out of the contest for reading too many books. I read at lunch, at snack, and after every assignment I needed to finish was completed. Around this time in middle school, my teachers began introducing us to writing techniques. We started off by writing our own Greek myths and fictional stories. I enjoyed this so much because I felt like the author of one of my books I had been reading. My friends complained about each essay we had to write because they didn't know where to begin. However, I enjoyed them. I always had a fresh idea from whatever book I was reading and was ready to write. As middle school ended, my writing progressed as I practiced my essay for applying to high schools. I spent most of my days scribbling away upon my window seat drafting an essay about myself. Writer's block came to me very often and sometimes made me frustrated enough to toss the entire paper aside. The more I wrote the less I liked it. Reading was more my thing. So while drafting that high school essay, I continued to read. I read love stories, action series, nonfiction books, and just about anything else. By the end of the eighth grade, I had won an award for reading the most books possible in one school year at an invaluable total of 84 books.

I didn't realize the impact reading had on me until I got to high school. Reading all of those years had actually made me smarter. I was more eager to learn and stay attentive in the classroom. But as freshmen year rolled into sophomore year, my independent reading stopped. I focused more on deadlines, due dates, and prom dates than I did to my beloved bookshelf. When I moved from my childhood home, the last thing on my mind was my window seat. Now three years later, I miss that light green safe haven more than anything. I have realized how less interested in learning I have been because I haven't been reading. Last week, I visited my aunt Judy and she asked me what I was reading. I had no answer to give to her. When I got home, I went upstairs to the old bookshelf and picked up Double Pink. I decided it was time to start reading again for my own enjoyment rather than for the purpose of my GPA.

“My Knack for Writing”

by Alexandra DeFabritis

When I was in middle school, I discovered my love for writing. Specifically, in eighth grade, we were given an assignment in English class — we had to change the ending to one of our favorite books. At the time, I was reading the Harry Potter books, which since then, I hadn’t gotten a chance to pick up again. I had just finished the third book when she assigned this task, and so, I thought, Why don’t I change the ending to this book? And I did, I added my own character. I named her Alexa, which is coincidentally a shortened version of my own name, Alexandra.

We had to peer edit our friends’ papers. I ended up switching papers with by far the smartest student in my grade. He was a great writer, he was amazing at math, he was the perfect student. I remember that he had chosen to respond to *The Hobbit*. He, of course, had read all seven Harry Potter books, multiple times. My narrative was thirteen pages long, double-spaced, with Times New Roman font. I ended up using different points of view, and changing the story’s ending completely. When this star student read my paper, he didn’t find any mistakes. In fact, his only comment was that I should have written more, for I ended on a pretty big cliffhanger. That made me realize that, perhaps, I had a knack for writing. Since then, whenever I am assigned a writing assignment in English class, I get excited and nostalgic.

Back in eighth grade, 13 pages was pretty long. Nevertheless, my teacher asked me to read it in front of the class. After standing before the class for what felt like hours, feverishly reading my narrative and routinely looking up at my audience to make sure that they were engaged, I got to the cliffhanger. Once I read the last line of my paper, I distinctly remember the thrill, the heart rush, that I felt when I looked up to see every member of my class, including my teacher, with their eyes glued to me. It seemed as though they were urging me to go on, begging me to find some resolution to my characters dilemma.

Since eighth grade, I haven’t gotten any other assignment like that. Nevertheless, here I am, writing nostalgically about that fictional writing assignment. There is something that can only be described as magnificent about writing. I find it utterly amazing that, by writing a few words on a page, one can transport an audience to a different world. By just writing a few

random words in the correct order, you can make your audience feel so many different emotions, ranging from happy to sad to angry to nostalgic.

Writing has helped me gain confidence in myself. When I was a little girl, confidence was never an issue for me. I was that baby in the supermarket that would yell to my mother to turn around because somebody didn't wave at me. I was often called upon in class to answer questions and to read after raising my hand so high that my muscles were straining. I feel that there is some sort of friendship between writing and me. Writing has helped me in so many different ways, and so I can't even begin to imagine my life without writing in it. I love to write anything, whether it's a poem, a narrative, or even, dare I say it, a boring research paper. Writing doesn't just transport people to different worlds — it can be an escape.

Around the same time that I discovered my knack for writing, I was having friend problems. Writing down my thoughts on anything, whether it was how hot the school was or how good my lunch was, allowed me to momentarily escape from these issues. Reading had the same effect on me. I started to read more books in eighth grade as well. I found it more mind blowing that I could write a story that could take people and myself included to a different world than reading somebody else's new world.

I loved reading, I still do. Reading is less work on my end, and some of the storylines and fictional worlds that authors come up with are truly inspiring. Reading the Percy Jackson books, the fictional story about teenage Greek demigods, was also one of my temporary escapes. I have read every single book regarding mythology by Rick Riordan, simply because I loved these books so much. Not only are these books slightly educational, giving me information on the mythological theocracies of the Greeks, Romans, and Norse, but they were fun to read. The way that this author who wrote the books, which at the time was directed towards my age group, allowed me to relate to the characters and understand what was going on was amazing. I aspire to be that good of a writer someday.

Though I have never written my own book, I've certainly written many papers and short stories. I find the magnificence of escaping in the words to be not only relaxing, but suspenseful. To most, this middle school writing assignment is probably long forgotten, but I have a strong feeling that I'll never forget it.

The following pieces are part of a collection inspired by a passage from the novel *The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien:

“The Things She Carried”

by Mari Ball

She carried lip gloss and high heels and a gold clutch. She carried her cellphone, old receipts, money, keys, elastics, bobby pins, perfume, chapstick, trident gum, a hairbrush, jewelry, an extra shirt, a charger, mirror, fingernail filer, red lipstick, and much more. Twice a week, when ballet classes occurred, she carried her pink tutu and size 6 ballet shoes worn in from months of practice. She carried the pain of never being enough, not like her sister. Her sister carried a high GPA. Her mother carried an air of importance. Her father carried the heart of a rich man that wouldn't give a dollar to charity. Her brother carried five football division I scholarships. Some things they carried in common. Taking turns, they carried the family's name in public places, from school to work to town. They shared the weight of imperfection. They took up what other family members could no longer uphold. Often, she carried them, the hurting and insulted. She carried pain. She carried broken toes, bruised knees, slapped wrists, skinned elbows, and a hurting back. She carried heart-ache. She carried a bruised ego and a sense of worthlessness and mistrust and a broken heart and a lonely smile. She carried herself— her heart, soul, mind— a broken place that made her days long and nights lonely. She carried the weight of the world. The whole future, she carried it, the scholarships, the expectations, the goals, all of it, she carried anxiety. She moved like a broken toy. By daylight she wore a fake smile, at night tears soaked her pillowcase, but it was not a visible battle, it was just an internal struggle, day to day, without a change, nothing won or lost. She carried on for the sake of her family.

“The Things She Carried”

by Mia McWethy

She carried a small aluminum tin of wintergreen Altoids. She carried a travel-size Chanel No. 5 perfume roller, a lanyard embellished with an abundance of keys, flimsy nail files, a tube of her signature plush red lipstick, kleenex, spare change, oversized sunglasses, receipts, a small cylinder of pepper spray, a Blackberry, a coupon book, declined credit cards, rosary beads, and a metallic flask filled to the brim with gin. Tuesdays and Thursdays were her escape. Work was out by 4:30, and you'd find her at Aurora, Illinois' only bar in town, sitting in her usual spot, the second to last barstool in the corner, with a whiskey on the rocks in hand by five. She carried a heavy heart. It was the kind you could visibly notice too, for veins of grief and exhaustion seared through the creases under her dull eyes, burning past the layers of her paper-thin skin. She carried the heavy hand of her husband; those black and blues hidden under the shroud of her cotton white turtlenecks had been around since the love of her life had become the monster in her darkest nightmares. She carried on with her daily routine; the way she had lived for twenty years, not a single day spent differently. In the back of that musty old bar, she found herself out of sight and out of mind; life was the same cluster it had always been, except the alcohol in her veins made the pain elude, replacing it with an austere numbness. There was a time she marched to the beat of her own drum. Those days were behind her, for numerous reasons, all of which she carried in the crevices of her tequila-soaked brain. She carried fond memories of her mother, the love she had once felt for her only niece, and the recurring image of her husband's animal eyes. Now, there were no feelings left: no opinion, no emotion, not even the capacity to say, "I love you." A beautiful, dark, twisted nightmare; she, Aunt Nancy, carried her life itself as baggage. In another life, it may have been printed with classical Louis Vuitton monograms, but now, it was simply considered useless. She carried tears, drunken phone calls, and pain that radiated to the outskirts of her extended family. She carried her demons on the verge of her crystal scotch glass until it got too heavy, shattering into a million unfixable pieces.

I carried her up to my bed on the weekends I spent consoling her; the distinct stench of rotgut arose from the seams of her turtleneck and filled my lungs at every inhale. I carried the heavy heart she confided in me, the tears shed, the words screamed. I, her only niece, carry the memories of Nancy, who could not escape the weights of her own mind.

“The Things I Carry”

by Kathryn Libertini

I carry my wrinkled and slept-in sweats, and the messy hair on my head, which is tangled in two black coiled up hair ties. But most importantly, I carry a restless brain, still ringing from the infamous ‘Radar’ setting from my six a.m alarm. My legs carry me to my closet, and my arms slump the polo carried by my back and the khakis on my legs. My legs then carry me to my desk as my weak eyelashes assume the daily job of carrying gloopy mascara on them. I gather my things, expertly placed before me on the right corner legs of my desk, so that they would be easy to grab in the mornings. So, I carry my three bags down the fifteen steps on my wooden staircase. The same fifteen thuds every morning- sludged converse, weighted by the ball of my foot, knocking on the hardwood, and echoing through a resting house. My arms carry the hand that flips the kitchen light switch on, freeing the walls from the light darkness of dawn. Soon, I carry the buttered toast in my belly as well as the bags I drag to school each day.

“The Things I Carry”

by Erin Donlan

I carry a backpack filled with a basketball, sneakers, knee pads, extra shoelaces, gum, scrunchies, headbands, pre wrap, lanyards, a water bottle, granola bars, and a jewelry holder. I carry two uniforms, for home and away games, just in case I need them. I carry pride, as I have been on the team since freshman year. I have been a starter for the past two years and I hope to continue that trend this year. With this pride, I carry pressure. I carry memories of fans cheering about how well I’m doing. I carry the voice of my coach telling me to do better, do this, or do that. I carry pressure to be as great as everyone expects me to be. The team made it to the state championship last year, but lost. I carry the high expectations of all those around me who believe I can lead us to be better than last year. I carry the high expectations of my mom and dad who think I’m the best, a very biased opinion I must add. I carry the fear of letting people down. I carry the struggles I go through. I carry the pain of the hard work I put in. Currently, I carry a stress fracture that’s holding me back from working out. I carry insecurities. I carry nightmares of the other teams fans yelling “airball” at me whenever I get the ball. I carry a constant reminder

to myself that I'm not very talented. I carry responsibility. I am a junior captain this year, which comes with a lot of extra pressure. I carry hopes of doing well. I carry dreams of getting a ring that says "state champion" on it. But I also carry fears of failure. I carry nightmares of being the reason we don't achieve our goal as a team. I carry my phone, filled with calls and texts from college recruiters who wish to speak to me. I carry happiness hoping I get scholarship offers to play basketball at the next level. I carry nerves as I play in front of a baseline filled with college coaches. I see them and my stomach tightens, as the games I play in front of them determine my future. I carry the thoughts in my head telling me I will never make it to the next level, that I will never be good enough. I carry nervous habits that come out before every game. I carry the need to chew on something to relieve my stress. I carry superstitions. I carry the same sports bra and spandex, my lucky ones, to every playoff game. I carry the best memories of my life. I carry memories of basketball trips to Georgia, North Carolina, Washington DC, and Kentucky. I carry memories of winning at the TD Garden. I carry new friendships that will last a lifetime. I carry trophies, medals, and ribbons. But most importantly, I carry myself. In basketball, I have become the person I am today. The struggles and memories I carry, the people I've met, and the experiences I've had are the most important pieces to who I am. When I carry a basketball, I carry my whole being.



Photograph by Sage Chircu

“The Things I Carry”

by Michael Svolos

I have my phone and wallet and the shoes on my feet. I have headphones, my shirt, my pants, my glasses, and my socks. In my wallet there is cash, some change, a credit card, and my school ID. On my phone there are countless apps, each with their own individual function, a camera, and a flashlight. Some of my friends carry gum in their pockets, others have lanyards with keys for their car and home. But I can not see everything people carry. For instance they can not see if I am specifically happy or sad on any given day. They do not know if I stand there before them confidently or with doubt in myself. They will never know my burdens, living with only my mother for example, or the true reason I moved from my lovely grand house to the adequately sized structure I now call home. If I had not been told I would not have known the true reason why the person I once saw as a respectable business man does not leave for work every day like he once did. I would never have guesses what caused my neighbors slight ticks and twitches. Or why my neighbor, despite his large heart, is just so anti social and shy. Little did I know that Joe the businessman got laid off from work, but was too embarrassed to make it known. Or that the lady with the slight twitch in her lip has lived through five lifetimes worth of stress and pain. I would not have guessed that my neighbor was raised differently, and was seen as very social and “adventurous” in his family. One day maybe Joe will find more work and go back to the same businessman he once was, gone early in the morning, back late into the night. Maybe the lady with the twitches finds peace and can cope with what happened in the past. Maybe my neighbor can take a step out of his comfort zone and try socializing a little bit more. And maybe one day I will move back to that grand lovely house so I can call it home again. As much as people may be able to see or think they can see, what they see is just the tip of the iceberg, 90% is below the surface.

“The Things I Carry”

by James Martorilli II

My phone, my wallet, my keys, my headphones. The core of my items, all serving daily important functions. My backpack, my iPad, my pencils, my pens, my folders, my notebooks, my binders. All the “necessities” that steer my life towards the never ending horizon, in hopes of one day reaching land. The weight of these necessities never outweigh the weight put on the shoulders of those who carry them. Without these I see myself to be lost in the endless void of blue, nowhere to go but straight, and nothing to do but drop my head and fall into a deep slumber. My happiness, my sadness, my excitement, my angels, my demons. Whether these items interact with one another, or simply just give their presence, they are always being carried. The good memories, and the bad, the good ideas, and the bad. My angels - an image of innocence and goodwill shining through the halo that floats above their heads. My demons - dark, possessive creatures native to every human - their hunger for destruction unmeasurable, and their thirst for inadequacy unquenchable. These brothers of thought continue to fight for control and attention - giving no mind to the grounds in which they're waging war upon. The skeletons attempt to stay hidden, unbeknownst that the demons strive in the darkness, and the angels continue to cast their light upon the darkest corners of my mind. The war continues to rage - as it has been for years. Never has a white flag been predicted nor seen, for red has become the dominant color in the grueling wars. These angels - happiness, love, hope, desire, faith, belief, excitement, surprise - all desire peace and sanctity, but are constantly foiled by red. They continue to fight for the good of their host, only to find themselves doing the opposite. On the other hand, the demons - lust, greed, selfishness, anger, anxiety, depression, laziness - all attempt to shadow the light in hopes of expanding their cascade of evil further than ever before. Without balance - a perfect mix of black and white, dog and cat, water and fire - can you truly call yourself the perfect human? Can you truly call yourself perfect if you carry unfiltered hatred? Or if you are pure without the slightest hint of human error? What you carry, is what defines you as a person - as a human. Imperfection of balance are seen everywhere with undeserved poverty, illness, crime, power, but imperfections do not define who you are. What defines who you are are how you deal with these imperfections. How you learn from them. How you grow from them. How you view them. If you feel you go through life with imperfections around every turn, sometimes learning how to deal with these are key to

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reaching sanctity. You have to be able to decide that you are stronger than the demons inside of you, and use that as your strength, and only then can you truly cast a light upon the darkest of places. Trust me, I've done it myself.



Photograph by Sage Chircu

“The Things (I Think) I’ll Carry When It’s Time For College”
by Christina Dolan

I carried my shirts and pants and sweaters. I carried my bathing suits, my sweatpants, my t-shirts, my sports trophies, my perfumes, my jeans, my socks, my picture frames, my old dresses, and that grey turtle neck I had forgotten about. Here everything was - the entirety of my childhood room deconstructed laying in front of me. I will be leaving for my dream college in less than two weeks; my mom comes in with supplies of bins to put the clothes I will be taking along with me in, black trash bags for clothes I should donate, and a pile to keep in my room while I’m away. That one-size-too-small for me t-shirt from Canobie Lake Park goes into the donate pile, while taking a fragment of that amazing summer day

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in 2012 with it. My favorite picture of my family in a grey frame, gets tucked away in one of the bins I will be hauling away with me to college. I couldn't bear to leave behind that memory captured in a perfect photo. The softest blanket ever made, given to me by my grandma, is also being taken away with me to my college endeavor; it gives me comfort physically and mentally. They all shared my childhood memories; everything in this room. But now, I can only bring along half of them to the next chapter of my life. Each item in this room made up the journey of my childhood, cleaning this room out seemed almost like the closing of a book. Looking around at this purple room however, I recall the not-so-beautiful memories. This room carried insecurity, regret, tears, and worry. This room carried the sleepless nights of procrastination. I slowly carried my worn maroon sweatshirt into the donation pile, I couldn't carry that to college; it would make me feel too comfortable, unable to change. I carried my sketch notebook filled with drawings into my drawer, that would stay here. It needed to. It had to. That sparkly white dress I wore to a sweet 16, would go in the donation pile; for another eager young girl should have the chance to feel as confident as I did in that dress as that time. My flowy lavender dress my mom bought me would come with me to college, it would always remind me of my mom's caring heart. I carried my copper bracelet with the letter "C" dangling off of it into my college pile, my sister has a matching "J" one- it would remind me of her when I would become lonely. I looked around one last time, making sure I didn't miss anything. Scanning the light purple room slowly, carefully, meticulously. Everything was in a pile, everything was ready to be in a new place, much like myself. I carried myself through the two weeks before I moved into college. I found myself back in my room, right before I was about to leave. I may be abandoning some materialistic items, but I would never be at a loss for the memories they carried and the lessons they taught me.

The following pieces are part of a collection inspired by a poems from the book *The Trouble with Poetry* by Billy Collins:

“Carry”

by Andra Preda

“I want to carry you
and for you to carry me
the way voices are said to carry over water.”
And even though I cannot carry you in my arms
or hear you speak any longer,
I hear your voice echo in my head anyway. Wherever you are, I hope my
voice carries to you... I hope you hear me speak—or attempt to speak—
through my tears.
And I hope you hear me pouring out my soul
like an endless rainfall from my heart;
I hope you hear me whisper how much I love you and how I always will.
Do you hear me sing your soul away
with the other people in this church?
Do our voices drift towards you?

Carry me, my love,
carry me through the thunderstorm
that follows the sunlight you gave me every day. Carry me, please, away
from my thoughts
and the feelings that drown me.
Carry me, I beg you, to the surface of this treacherous ocean and help me
breathe again. Carry me to better days, love.
Carry me to a time when I can smile again
and feel again and love again.
Wherever you are, carry me with you
and know that, no matter how many
oceans or skies or mountains separate us,
I will always carry your picture in my pocket
to see your beautiful smile.
And that very smile I will carry in my heart
every day until I am carried directly
back to you.

“The Lanyard”

by Christina Coukos

“Here is a breathing body and a beating heart,” to go out and experience the world. All you need is a heartbeat to live. Isn't that so crazy? I mean every day I make up excuses in my mind as to why I have it harder than the next. Too much homework, not enough time, away game in Brockton at 4--won't be home until 8-- eat dinner at 8:15, shower, too exhausted for homework, but I'll still trick my brain and sit empty-minded, writing notes like a robot until 10 when I give up and head to bed. I allow myself to become a prisoner to what I know, to my routine. I forget to live because I'm too focused on maintaining what I already have. But my heart's still beating, my body's still breathing. I was created for more than completing a single-replacement chemistry packet by 7:45 the next morning. Sometimes I ask, “What's all this work amount to? A good grade? A good life? But who died and put society in charge of deciding what's good for me?”

“After A Long Day”

by Suzy Duong

“If the British call Z zed
I wondered, why not call B bed and D dead?”
And then Hamlet will ask
“To bed or not to bed”
Like every student
Deprived by homework
And formulas for everything
Like B is bee
And D is dee
And combustion creates water and carbon dioxide
And the range is negative infinity to infinity
That they don't think that
Infinity is just a sleeping eight
And if D is dead, the alphabet would just be a,b,c,e
And if B goes to bed, it'll only be a,c,e
But again, school is tomorrow
So yes, to bed.

"My Tangible Mind"

by Sophie Pratt

I lay staring at the blank white ceiling,
The white ceiling fan slowly turning,
Like a swing pushed by the breeze.

The big soft grey blanket cocoons me
In my own personal home of comfort.
I lie completely still.

Funny thing about bedrooms,
Everyone has one and each one is different,
Looking at one is like looking into that person's world.

Some have floor to ceiling bookshelves,
Some have posters of beloved pop stars and favorite movies,
While others are empty, waiting to be created.

My room holds books,
Some from years ago I refuse to throw away.
Binders filled with playbills and programs
Kept from every show I have seen.
The floor holds every step,
From the times I danced recklessly without care.
The walls hold every word,
Uttered from my mouth.
While the air holds thoughts, memories, and secrets.

My room holds everything,
It's my tangible mind.
Outside this room
There is nothing that I need.

“Untitled”

by Veronica Caruso

It's early and I am consumed by something in the shadows of corruption and death; rise, fall, mischance, disaster. There is a longing for immortality despite time or pain; Nature's return, man's rush to the grave. I could lie in sweet pursuit of the beauty, he despondency, of the fountain or creativity. To fall from maturity leaves me with no choice but to surrender to the governance in hopelessness of a love, desire, and affection, met with disregard.

“Flock”

by Andra Preda

“All of them squirming around to find a little room.”

First day of first grade and they have already been tossed together like sheep in a holding pen.

The looming, gaudy yellow bus has come to collect the students.

Each one now sits crammed between two others—the bus is overly full.

Already, they are shoved together.

Already, all they crave is just a little space of their own.

Is that too much to ask for?

Maybe.

Because maybe they feel too similar in their matching khakis and choking polos, and maybe they believe they can never be different. But one day, one of these little sheep will wander off, confused at first, but then hit suddenly by the startling discovery of freedom, of individualism. And the sheep, away from its claustrophobic flock, will dream of being a light hummingbird or a mighty lion, king of all that stands in its path.

The following pieces are part of a collection inspired by opinion articles from sources like *The Boston Globe* and *The New York Times*:

“Stress”

by Rachel Yore

Today I learned that the stress from today
Does not need to travel with me tomorrow
Like weights on my shoulders
Crippling me and latching on so tightly
Or chasing me like a loose predator with big teeth
Until I fall and can no longer stand

The only thing that can chase down the monster that is stress
Is me.
The pounding heart beats, the bullets of sweat that stress has gifted me
with
These are the tools that will help me climb mountains of obstacles.
And when I reach the top,
My stress will dissolve into an enveloping feeling of joy,
Telling me that making stress my friend
Will continue to keep me alive.



Photograph by Sage Chircu

“Meaning To Be Something”

by Angela Caggiano

I read today that happiness is a false completion,

That the desire for a smile and laugh

Will never fill the hole deep and barren.

Satisfaction will not come

Without the four pillars as priorities:

Belonging,

Purpose,

Transcendence,

Storytelling.

A person must feel accepted in their surroundings,

While acknowledging their worth,

Zoning into serenity,

And editing their past, present, and future.

I thought that being happy was the path,

The path to succeed in life.

My worthiness and importance in life

Should make me happy.

But what is happiness?

Can it ever be succeeded?

Maybe I am accepted on this page,

Maybe my purpose is to learn and act with this,

Maybe this inspired me internally,

Maybe my life from now on will be glorified.

Maybe acting on love will make others understand.

Maybe happiness is nothing compared to meaning.

“If This Art Could Speak”

by Samantha Klein

If words could be spoken by these murals,
That were so intricately crafted,
By average individuals —
With average minds, average ideas;

Whispers would be heard from spraycans
On the other side of town.
They'd tell you about their horrible intentions:
To restore heritage, peace, humanity.

“Vandalism” you hear the mayor exclaim in disgust.
“Beauty” you hear the artists murmur in unison,
The same group that decreased the crime rate by 46%,
The same group that united the outsider Muslim population.
All of which started with a paintbrush
That dipped its hairs in a rose-petal red
And sprawled across a blank canvas.

The backside of the vulnerable brick building:
Otherwise known as the wall of infinite potential,
Opened itself up like a butterfly's wings
Only to be remembered as property damage.

A damaged society, a broken promise
To the children who aspire to color
The pleasure is nonexistent,
Determined by officials that there is
No room left for creativity.

“I Am”

by Anonymous

Today I learned about how I am somebody. I was somebody when I came to this class. I'll be a better somebody when I leave.

I am powerful.

I am strong.

I deserve my education.

That I have people to impress, things to do, and places to go.

I learned about the connection between students and teachers. How teachers do not do their job for the money,

But in order to teach us.

Us, the students.

To impact us

To make a difference in our lives

Whether it be a great or small difference doesn't matter. All that matters is that they were there.

They didn't give up on us.

They left a lasting imprint on our lives.

And yet we don't acknowledge them enough.

Whenever it gets tough and we don't understand a concept,

We instantly start groaning in protest.

Instead of trying to work through it all

And learn,

We just complain.

We no longer thank our teachers at the end of it all. We don't give them the respect,

Or credit,

That they truly deserve.

And yet they still come everyday.

They still teach us through the complaints. They help us understand.

They are our champions.

And they have given us a mantra for our lives.

I am somebody.

I was somebody when I came in.

“Untitled”

by Rachel Yore

Today, I learned that, possibly, the meaning of life
Does not involve empty possessions that consume my world
Money, success, power, beauty
All of which promise me false happiness.
But why should I crave being happy?
Will success put a smile on my face every morning
And fill the void of loneliness instilled deep inside?
I learned that the only way to achieve a life of meaning
Is to find where I belong
To seek out a purpose, a reason, something to hold onto
To escape the boundaries within myself through transcendence
To tell my own story
The story that reminds me who I desire to be.

I stop for a moment
And I cannot help but ponder about
My story
The endless story crafted by only me
The story that I tweak when something is wrong,
That I erase when life has lost its meaning
That I can share with the world.
Happiness, success
These things will not satisfy my hunger for meaning
But remembering that, possibly, the meaning of life
Is just about me and my story
Fulfills me just enough.



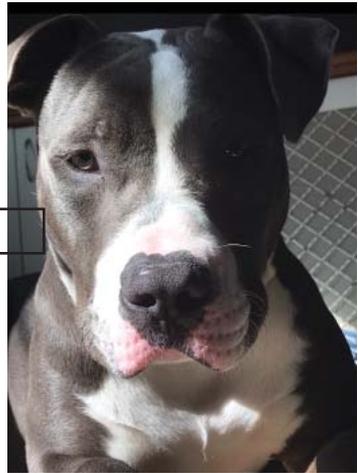
by Jack Connaughton



by Lauren McInnis



by Sage Chircu



by Jack Connaughton



by Sage Chircu

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“Theme for: [Undecided]”

by Sage Chircu

Today my teacher told me
To write a truth that upholds me.
“Sage,” she said
“Compose a page,” she said.
Now here I stand with a pen in hand,
Wondering if my thoughts are just too bland.
But now I say, I’ll write for you my truth today:
I am fourteen and I love all things lime green.
I may be one of the youngest students in my grade, but of this I am
unafraid.
People often misjudge me,
Assuming things about how my life should be.
They think I have no fun;
Little do they know that of fun I have a ton.
They think my efficiency is great,
When in fact, I tend to procrastinate.
They observe my visage, masked by serenity,
And mistake it for my entire identity.
But most of all, they think I have it all figured out,
When most of the time, I don’t even know what I’m all about.
I guess what I want to say is that I have not yet discovered my truth today.
I will not let my talents be belittled,
But of my future, I still know very little.
Such indecision can be frightening,
Consuming, heightening,
Striking you like lightning.
I wonder how I will know
Which path is the right way to go.
Will I feel a pang of passion in my heart?
Will I be able to pinpoint it with a dart?
Or will the right path fade in with the rest of the array,
Indistinguishable among all the other ways?
Of this, of the potential to regret choices I have made,
I am truly afraid.
But even so,
Essentially, I trust that somehow, eventually,
I’ll figure out the right way to go.

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“Theme for English Two”

by Shandelle Gomez

I'm writing a page for English Two—
I hope it resonates within one of you.
And you too, or you two, me, we, or us.

This is a rendition of Theme for English B,
So I assume I must write what comes out of me.

At fifteen a lot is foreign and unknown,
The world is not truly what it may seem.
But I guess, for all of you and for me,
We're in the midst of finding a dream—
Something to latch on to,
For the benefit of our future
Not something temporary,
Or susceptible to change.
A fresh new start; a dive into something strange.
We find comfort in knowing,
Planning things out
It's truly scarier when you have some doubt.
For someone like me, or you, or we,
It's all just a part of some big plan.

Or maybe it's not, like a Dream Deferred,
It just sits there, waiting to be heard.
Maybe it's simply unknown,
That too is true,
And we search for it in me, in us, in you.

This is my page for English Two.

“Moving: An Event That Shaped Me”

by Lily McDonald

A New York City girl in a box. Multiple boxes, actually. Boxes labeled “Kitchen” and “Lily’s Room” in blue Sharpie. Small towns are in abundance here, there are no boroughs or taxis or crowds of people. A new sight fills my eyes. Quiet streets and manicured gardens. Change is overrated.



“The Traveler”

by Sage Chircu

There was once a traveler who stopped in every location imaginable, but he never stayed in one place for too long. He did not wish to arrive in any particular place. Instead, the traveler just wandered wherever the currents of life took him. Some might have said he was just another bumbling wanderer whose life had taken one wrong turn too many. They said he had no purpose and nothing to live for.

Little did they know that he lived for far more things than they could ever imagine. He lived for the sun’s shining rays, the rush of rapid rivers, the beautiful bloom of the first spring flower, triumphing over a harsh winter. He lived for all the beautiful things of the Earth.

His loose, limp rags hung on him like lifeless beige dishcloths and his unruly beard made him look wild and savage to anyone who didn’t know better. Passerbys would walk past the man, failing to recall the lessons their parents taught them about the unrefined act of staring, and would look at him as if he were a freak. Or worse, they would walk past him as if he were invisible, too busy with their own problems to acknowledge this “weird” man. They just assumed the traveler was not worth their “precious” time.

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Little did they know that, despite not having been educated in the orthodox way, in a cold, impersonal classroom with neat little desks all lined up in rows, the traveler’s mind was brimming with knowledge; knowledge of the many vivid cultures, beliefs, and languages of the people and places he visited.

People felt pity for the traveler because they thought he had no real home. He seemed to be in one temporary “home” one day, and another one the next.

Little did they know that the traveler had the biggest home of all: the entire Earth.



Photograph by Sage Chircu

“Staring Project”

by Mari Ball

The sun is shining down at me, laying warm fingers along my legs.
My puppy is chasing an ant, as a lion chases a gazelle.
Lemonade in one hand, pencil in the other.

My backpack sprawled across the dark wood deck,
Recently built by my father: his prized work.
And I feel as if that bag keeps crawling closer,
A silent reminder that time is slowly creeping towards me.

But as the project lies within reach of my left hand, all I can think of
Is what my future holds.
Certainly not this project at this rate.

Will get into a good college? Will my team win our next game?
Will my children's children want to watch Christmas movies by my side
As I did with my grandmother?
Or will I live my life, surrounded by cats?
Good morning, Boots, Fluffy, and Cookie.

This project keeps eyeing me; I swear she is taunting me,
For she knows that tonight, late in the witching hour,
I will finish her as I do this poem,
And she will laugh at me, for
Her future is a definite, unlike mine.

“Monday Morning Thoughts”

by Andra Preda

I stare blankly at the paper before me,
hoping that, somehow, my glazed eyes will transmit something
to my half-asleep brain.

It is first period, Monday,
and the calculus test that perches menacingly on the edge of my desk
seems nothing more than a set of squiggles and a meaningless mess of let-
ters that I am supposed to transform into something sensible, cohesive.
Yet I’m stumped.

Who knew that a math test could perfectly mirror my junior year?
Who knew that the numbers on the paper felt as out of order as I do?
I am sixteen and I don’t worry about my hair or makeup or clothing
anymore; I worry about my future now.

I just want someone to tell me that I am going to be okay. That I am going
to make sense of the confusion that greets me in the world—
the senseless heap of violence, conformity, and detachment that I have
grown up witnessing in the world.

The crash of a pencil on the ground tells me that I have completely zoned
out.

I exit my head and become a thoughtless machine, writing the formula of
a derivative and hoping my fingers still remember how to evaluate it.

Finally, the nonsense on my paper becomes an answer.

And maybe, just maybe, I am given an answer too:

there will always be difficulty and confusion and a sense of being lost,
but there will always be an answer.

So, as I drag my feet to the front of the classroom to turn in my test,

I tell myself that, somehow, some way, some day,

I will define my own sense of order.

“Hurling Ball”

by Jack Connaughton

I woke up this morning
To the most beautiful cotton candy-colored sky.
The wispy clouds were given
An illuminating background light
From the reddish rays of the sun,
And the sky itself
Reflected a lush lavender blue
Off of the ocean.
But instead of capturing the moment with my camera,
I allowed my covers to wrap me up
And pull me back to bed.

And when I woke up again,
I longed to have that sky back.
But then I came to this realization—
“That sky was just an illusion.”
The sky is not actually lavender blue,
For it is simply a reflection of the ocean.
And behind those red-tinted, wispy clouds,
Lies the ever-expanding void that is outer space,
Through which our planet is just a hurling ball of matter.

And the objects we see are just held together
By atoms bouncing off of each other so quickly
That they create the illusion of solid matter.
Now, I am at peace with not having captured that sky,
Because I know that no matter how beautiful something is,
It is all just an illusion created by my mind.
While visual beauty is satisfying and good,
It is constantly fleeting
And truly unattainable.

“Soar”

by Jack Connaughton

Life starts out and we are told to conform,
To be like everyone else, and to relate to the norm.
We are told there should be no need to transform,
And no need to influence or alter society's system and form.
What we have is good and safe, so don't brainstorm.
By that logic, tweaking our working hours or economy must create a
chaotic storm.

But is there something more?

Imagine a world void of a work-based, money-driven mentality.
A world where we can enjoy life outside of work and embrace our
personality.
A world where we can tend to our over-arching vitality,
And a world where we can experience a happy generality.
All of this work and drudgery breeds superficiality
And rejects a society with a liberated directionality.

We all deserve to be happy, and that is fair to say.
Much of our stress is rooted in our overworked day.
It is no question that we are told where to go in life,
And then proceed to toil, toil, toil away.
So stop working so much, and do things that make you happy in your
own way.
Enjoy the fruits of life, namely: finding fulfilling hobbies, spending time
with friends and family, and taking the occasional rest day.
Detach from conformity, for it will keep a deflated mentality at bay.
Our existence is finite, we have a set number of days.
So be happy and be yourself, unapologetically. Live life the real way.

“Silence”

by Brendan Looney

The blood flows through my veins,
Like maple syrup in a bottle,
Slow and steady.

I am lifeless as I stiffen up,
Praying that I am not found...

The door creaks open
And I struggle to hold a gasp in,
Hoping to not reveal my location.
A silhouette engulfs the doorway,
Growing bigger and bigger with every step.
As the footsteps begin to inch ever so closer to me,
I feel my heart rate intensifying
And the sweat beginning to bead on my face.
As the figure stands right in front of my hiding spot,
I can feel their icy breath through the cracks in the closet door.
I then hear a cheery voice say:
“I found you!”
And we begin the game all over again.

“To the Sister I Never Met”

by Julia Hourihan

To the sister I never met,
I hope you get to spend time with our dad,
And go to Friendly’s,
and watch Dukes of Hazzard,
and eat Reese’s peanut butter cups.

I hope you got to meet Grammy Janice
And drink gallons of eggnog with her during Christmas time.
I hope you get to listen to her stories about our great-grandpa.
I hope you get the chance for her to teach you how to be a princess.

I hope you know how much we look alike.
Long brown hair touched with hints of red,
Brown eyes that turn hazel when you’re happy.

I hope you get into a good college,
And experience true love.
I hope you have the opportunity to plan a traditional American
wedding.
I hope you get the chance to raise a family
in a big blue house
With a white picket fence bordering it
And matching white shutters beautifully complementing the windows.

But most importantly,
I hope you know who you are,
And where you come from,
And who you want to be.

“Green”

by Kailey Lane

Green is the color of a bed of grass, soft and lush
Just like my toy turtle, warm and plush

Green is the color of a frog
Posed exquisitely sitting on a log

Avocados are also green, inside and out
You have to spread it on toast, no doubt

Green is the color of the peas, uneaten in my soup
Don't forget about the army men in their designated troop

Green is the color of recycling a bottle and a can
The color of the eyes of a full grown man

Green is the emerald ring I have for my birth stone
But Kelly Green has to be my favorite tone

Green is the color of celery, topped with peanut butter
Don't top it with raisins, you'll hear kids mutter

Green is the shamrocks on St. Patrick's Day
Also for the leprechauns, what more can I say?

“Stunning Blue”

by Lauren McInnis

Blue, a huge wave of freshness
It's a blue jay soaring through the subtle sky
It's ripe blueberries being washed under the clear water
It's the bright ocean speaking to us through nature
It's the shiny sapphire just pulled up from the ground
It's the new soft blue walls in a baby boy's room
But it can also be the coldness of winter
Or the way we feel when we listen to the blues
Or the piercing blue in his eyes.



Photograph by Sage Chircu

“Blue”

by Heather McShane

Her mind a constant current, within the deep blue sea
And her heart, a riptide sea,
Her soul was a shipwreck in the deep
And her tears so salty and blue,
Her hair is a bright green seaweed,
And her eyes were a golden sandy beach.
Her feet are made out of beautiful conch shells,
Her fingers, the coral reef.
For a bright orange clown fish, she is quite blue.

“The Color of Love”

by Jess Rushton

Red is love.

It tastes like lobster on my family’s annual vacation to Maine
And apples fresh off the farm every September with my cousins.
It tastes like the pizza sauce me and my friends enjoy on Friday nights
And the gravy that covers my macaroni every Sunday at my grandmas,
This specific one being interrupted by
the siren wailing on both the fire truck and the ambulance
As the blood rushes out
Because red can also be danger
But after the red second hand on the clock in the hospital waiting room
goes around countless times
The nurse with the red lipstick shares the good news with my family
And red is love again as my family is reunited
Gathered around the tiny hospital bed
As my little cousin comes in with a big card for our papa,
With a big red heart on the front.
Red is love.

“Gramps”

by Nicole Ferrero

I adored my great-grandfather,
but God had to take his caring soul away from me.
I witnessed him slowly fade away —
and slip through my fingers like granules of sand.

Regular house visits became a norm.

My grandmother showed me what it really means to care for someone —
bringing groceries every week and preparing meals —
and tending to his tomato garden — which he used to care for so
meticulously.

His house on Lake Street had a distinct aroma —
musk mixed with my grandmother’s perfume.
The couches in his house were a bold mustard yellow;
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it was the type of couch that when you laid into it, you automatically sank into the waves of the velvet covering.

Hearing the muffle of Italian with a hint of English,
his voice carried through the house on Lake Street like the wind.
He became weaker day by day —
until it was best he moved out of the house on Lake Street.

Then, he only left the nursing home to come to Christmas Eve dinners;
he dissected his steaming lobster —
and drenched his bib in the salty juice and guts.
He finished his dinners with chestnuts and took great time to crack them one by one.

At seven, I remember walking into his room with my family hovered over his bed —
I saw him connected to monitors and tubes and ran out the room.
I then remember running my little fingers through the green shag rug as tears rolled down my cheeks.
I never saw him after that.

Today, I wear his bib and wish I had a greater appreciation for lobster when I was younger —so I could eat it with him.
I attempt to crack my own chestnuts now,
wishing he was there to help me.

“Untitled”

by Alianna Sampson

As a child, my most prominent memories are of dusk. Great pine trees line the horizon as the sunset paints the sky red with as a final testament before the moon reclaims its starry canvas. The grass itself is cool underfoot and the stones are hard and rough, yet they are bleached by the sun's warmth and worn from the pattering of feet. This time was spent chasing the fleeting sunbeams and racing the bats as they streaked across the sky like colorless comets. It was a way for me to learn how to think, to dream, and to imagine.



Photograph by Lauren McInnis

“Eye Contact” (College Essay)

by Kailey Lane

What is the first thing that you do when you meet a person face to face? Make eye contact. My whole life, I have struggled to make eye contact. Not because I am nervous or guilty or anything, but because I physically can not. My condition, strabismus, affects only around one percent of children born in the United States. I am a rarity.

When I was around three years old, I was given corrective surgery in order to eliminate my imperfection. “They will take your eyeballs out and play bowling with them,” my cousin Amanda humorously told me at the time. My family comforted me with the utmost support while I was recovering by wearing eye patches so I did not feel alone. However, I knew I was different. Aside from the surgery, strabismus required me to wear glasses from age three to right around the fourth grade. When my glasses came off, I thought my eye-problems were behind me. I was wrong.

“Are you even looking at me?” Eighth grade science classmate, thank you for pointing out my rediscovered lazy eye. I became extremely insecure about my classmate’s discovery. As the days crawled by, not only did I notice it was getting worse, but it seemed to me that everyone around me noticed as well.

“It looks like you have one eye”. New “friend” at school, thank you for pointing out the worst school picture I have ever taken. By the time the second surgery came around, it was September 29th, 2014. The date was roughly two weeks after my first day of highschool, and I knew barely anybody. A blue eyed redhead, dubbed, “the girl with the lazy eye”; a rarity.

School after the surgeries was a breeze; I thought so at least. Teachers gave me extension after extension because my eyes “hurt” or “I couldn’t see.” I used any excuse I could to get out of work; I let myself become lazy. Ultimately, I suffered. Freshman year came and went with all the special treatment I had received.

I had another surgery during the summer going into my sophomore year. I went into the new school year with the same mind set; I can get accommodations. After my first days of school,

I realized the accommodations were gone. I realized I needed to work for my grades and earn them on my own. I spent every waking moment I could studying for any subject you could possibly imagine. I changed. I could not hide behind the shield of special treatment; I was on my own.

I made my eye contact. Not with my teachers, but with my inner self. I had relied off the extra accommodations I was given. I had taken advantage of everything I was given and my grades, ultimately, suffered. The daily conversation with my conscience grew more routine, and the eye contact grew stronger. This was my turning point.

Because of my freshman year, I thought I could just skim by in high school without a stitch of work, but I was wrong. When I showed effort, my grades reflected it. I went from getting “C’s” to gradually “B’s” and “A’s” as I rededicated myself to being a student. When I made honor roll, I have never felt such a surge of self confidence in my life. It was one of those goals I had always thought of, but never fully executed. I proved to myself I could do it.

My low self confidence, at first, was boosted through all the accommodations I had received. After I came to terms with what I had done, I changed. I realized, I can not become dependent on being given the easy route in life. I have to take what is given to me, and work my way through it.

“When I Picked Up a Putter”

by Anonymous

I first learned how to golf with a putter. Arguably the most important club in a golfer's bag. I don't remember how I could wield a tool that was almost as big as I was, nor can I remember why I took that particular club out of my father's bag. I cannot remember the hole, nor the course on which I was walking with my father. I can remember the following: I was six years old, a small kid who was up in New York visiting his grandparents and going to a small Ukrainian sports camp (they didn't have golf at the camp, I was with my dad). It was cold and rainy the whole week, and we didn't bring any rain gear. But my brother and I didn't care. We would run from under the porch to the neighbor's yard and back, seeing who could stay the most dry. There was no way we could measure how dry the other person was, but I always won. I thrived on victory, whether it was imagined or real, fun, knowledge, and the advice of others.

My dad, probably the single most driven man I have ever met, taught himself how to do nearly everything. He learned what he needed to from college, his coworkers, and his parents. Everything else he sought out for himself. Golf was a big part of his life. He taught himself everything. He bought the cheapest set of old clubs he could find, played with them for several years, then started winning prizes and updating his set. I'll never forget finding golf balls in the strangest places; in the backyard, on the beach, in the porch room in a cup, they would pop up from everywhere. I would always love to play with them in the street, throwing the ball into the concrete and watching it rocket into the sky. One time I gave one to my father, and learned why they were where they were. He told me that he would practice: short shots in the backyard, sand shots on the sand at the beach, and putts in the porch room. So I started watching him practice at home, and eventually, he would let me join him in the golf cart to watch him play.

“On Writing” (Imitation)

by Jack Connaughton

This is my canvas

I'ma paint it how I want it . . .

Cause there, there is no right or wrong, only a song

– J. Cole’s “Apparently” from the album 2014 Forest Hills Drive

Like Jermaine Cole, I believe that writing starts out as a blank canvas. Although this may seem like the ultimate cliché, I do not believe there is a more powerful group of lyrics that relate to representing one’s self through writing. Just like writing, coming up with what you want to paint on the canvas is the hardest part. Often painters will compose a two-dimensional rough draft, similar to a simple first draft used in writing. Once this draft is finished, the painter can begin to add supporting elements such as depth, contrast, dimension, foreground and background, and so on. After a first draft, a writer can alter sentence structure, verbs, add metaphors and similes, use specific diction, and so much more.

Despite all of these beautiful elements of writing, the best part of writing is that you can paint it how you want it. Writing is not objective, and that is why it is beautiful—it is fully open to interpretation. For example, I could read a book about cows and pick one of two ways of thinking about the book. Firstly, I might argue that the book simply discusses the biological development of cows and how they help us humans survive. Or, I could argue that the book about cows is offensive and degrading to the animals, and I could start an animal rights protest. That is how writing is open to interpretation when you read it. Writing is also open to interpretation when you write it. For example, I could use a semicolon in every sentence for the rest of this paragraph. Yes; this may seem a bit weird; but it is my choice to make as the writer; and the reader cannot take that away from me. This is my interpretation of my writing; I can easily disregard the preferences of the reader if I want to; and instead I can write something that pleases me. This is how writing is open to interpretation when you write it; pretty cool, write?

There is no right or wrong, only a song. You may compose your own song. How will you strike the first note? What will the first lyric be? What is the message? What is your song?

“The Stanford Prison Experiment”

by Caleb Dolcius

Created to find evidence
And reveal the testament
Of those locked up in prison elements

What happens when we put good people in a bad place
Will they create an environment that isn't safe
Or will they show the good in the human race
We know good people doing good things isn't always the case

Is this a cruel simulation?
Or are we trying to find good in a bad situation?
Perhaps this is good for psychological education
To take part in this prison demonstration

In an attempt to observe perceived power
We watch good people turn sour
This experiment is for no coward
To participate you can't be soft like flowers

In an attempt to find a relationship
The guards formed a dictatorship
With all the information in hand
Zimbardo could educate on demand

Zimbardo put people's attributes to the test
And when it was over he could rest
Afterwards, participants were in a psychological mess
If I were there within the first hour I would've left.

The following poem inspired Sophia Struzziero's "Letters About Literature" piece:

"A Letter to the Playground Bully, From Andrea, Age 8 ½"

by Andrea Gibson

Maybe there are cartwheels in your mouth
maybe your words will grow up to be a gymnast
maybe you have been kicking people with them by accident

I know some people get a whole lot of rocking in the rocking chair
and the ones who don't sometimes get rocks in their voice boxes,
and their voice boxes become slingshots.
maybe you think my heart looks like a baby squirrel.

but you absolutely missed when you told the class I have head lice
'cause I one hundred percent absolutely do not have head lice
and even if I do
it is a fact that head lice prefer clean heads over dirty ones
so I am clean as a whistle on a tea pot.
my mother says it is totally fine if I blow off steam
as long as i speak in an octave my kindness can still reach.

my kindness knows mermaids never ever miss their legs in the water
'cause there are better ways to move through the ocean than kicking.

so guess what,
if I ever have my own team
I am picking everyone first

even the worst kid
and the kid with the stutter like a skipping record
'cause I know all of us are scratched,
even if you can't hear it when we speak.
my mother says most people have heartbeats
that are knocking on doors that will never open,
and I know my heart is a broken freezer chest
'cause I can never keep anything frozen.

so no, I am not "always crying"

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I am just thawing outside of the lines.
and even if I am “always crying”
it is a fact
that salt is the only reason
everything floats so good in the dead sea.
and just ‘cause no one ever passes notes to me
doesn’t mean I am not super duper.
in fact, my super duper might be a buoy or a paper boat
the next time your nose gets stuck up the river
‘cause it is a fact
that our hearts stop every for a mili-second every time we sneeze
and some people’s houses have too much dust.

some people’s fathers are like attics
I’ve heard attics have monsters in their walls and shaky stares.
I think if I lived in a house with attic
I’d nightmare a burglar in my safety chest
and maybe I’d look for rest in the sticks and stones
‘cause my mother says a person can only swallow so much punch
before he’s drunk on his own fist

but the only drunk I ever knew
was sleeping in the alley behind our church
and jesus turned water into his wine
so even god has his bad days

but on your bad days couldn’t you just say
“hey I’m having a bad day,”
instead of telling me I’m stupid or poor,
or telling me I dress like a boy
‘cause maybe I am a boy AND a girl
maybe my name is Andrea Andrew.
so what.
it is a fact that bumblebees have hair on their eyes
and humans, also, should comb though everything they see.

like
an anchorman is not a sailor.
like the clouds might be a pillow fight.
like my mother says,
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“every bird perched on a telephone wire
will listen to the conversations running through its feet
to decide the direction of its flight.”

so I know every word we speak
can make hurricanes in people’s weather veins
or shine their shiny shine

so maybe sometime you could sit beside me on the bus
and I could say,
“guess what, it is a fact that manatees have vocal chords
but do not have ears.
and Beethoven made music
even when he could no longer hear.

and I know every belt that has hit someone’s back
is still a belt that was built to hold something up.

and it is fact that Egyptians slept on pillows made of stone
but it’s not hard for me to dream
that maybe one day you’ll write me back
like the day I wrote the lightening bug to say,
I smashed my mason jar and I threw away the lid.
I didn’t want to take a chance that I’d grow up to be a war.

I want to be a belly dance or an accordion or a pogo stick
or the fingerprints the mason left
in the mortar between the bricks
to prove that he was here,
that he built a roof over someone’s head
to keep the storm from their faith,
my mother says that’s why we all were born.

and I think she’s right.
so write back soon.
sincerely yours.

Congratulations to AC student, Sophia Struzziero, on the following letter, for which she was recognized as a 2017 Letters About Literature Massachusetts Level 3 Semi-Finalist.

Dear Andrea Gibson Age 8 1/2,

You may no longer be 8 1/2. You may have not been 8 1/2 when you wrote your famous poem *A Letter to the Playground Bully*. But that poem is spoken from the voice of a broken 8 1/2 year old little girl and you are brilliant for that.

When I first heard your work, I was thirteen years old. The age of ignorance and awkwardness where fitting in was the only thing that mattered. Nothing has ever given me goosebumps as intensely as the words in your poem did the second my ears had grabbed them. *A Letter to the Playground Bully* highlighted the feeling a child gets when they are being belittled or excluded to its full, raw extent to the point where the reader can be brought back to that wretched feeling of their childhood days. Most importantly though, your poem changed me. As I read along and listened to the voice of the young girl, I asked myself how I would feel if no one ever sat besides me on the bus or if I was always picked last for recess games.

From that moment on, I realized that every single person had a story. It didn't matter whether you were black or white, rich or poor, or straight or gay. Every individual person has a story. Some may be harder than others but it still exists and unless we know and have lived through the toughest parts of that story we do not judge, we do not belittle, and we do not exclude because we are a team. Every human being on this planet is made of the same flesh and bones. So why do we find happiness in others' sadness? Why do we find humor in making fun of someone who cannot change the way they are? Why are we so against different?

I never was one to bully. I knew what it felt like to be called names. I luckily knew how to brush it off and laugh with the rest of them so I could fit in. But after reading your poem I knew what to do from then on. I never would stay quiet anymore when someone was being picked on so the "cool kids" would still want to be friends with me. Instead of following the crowd and sitting in the exclusive lunch table, I would start a new table that everyone would eventually join. I would smile at the girl having a bad day, instead of calling them "stupid or poor."

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I admire you Andrea Gibson age 8 1/2, and your marvelous strength to inspire the world with the hard times of your childhood. Thank you. Thank you for throwing a bucket of water in my face as I sat in the auditorium of the Boston Seaport Center listening to your poem, A Letter to the Playground Bully. It changed me and my view on the world. We are all a team. You got me to realize that.

Sincerely,
Sophia Struzziero Age 16 1/2



A special thanks to Mr. Tallon, who named the literary magazine “Imaginary Gardens” based on Marianne Moore’s poem. Shown below is an excerpt from Moore’s “Poetry.”

“Poetry”

Marianne Moore, 1887 - 1972

“One must make a distinction
however: when dragged into prominence by half poets,
the result is not poetry,
nor till the autocrats among us can be
“literalists of
the imagination”—above
insolence and triviality and can present

for inspection, imaginary gardens with real toads in them,
shall we have
it. In the meantime, if you demand on the one hand, in defiance
of their opinion—
the raw material of poetry in
all its rawness, and
that which is on the other hand,
genuine, then you are interested in poetry.”



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Imaginary Gardens Staff meets every Thursday, after school, in room 313.
New Members are always welcome; please join us!

Thanks to:
Mrs. Butt
Mrs. Lee-Ann Pepicelli-Murray
The English Department Teachers
All students who submitted their work

Imaginary Gardens is accepting art and writing submissions for our next issue. Please see your English teacher or any staff member listed above for details, or you may email your work to imaginarygardens@achs.net.